



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

March 8, 2016, to December 13, 2016  
and Index

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker







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Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 8, 2016

Day 1

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Vacant, Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
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Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)

Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
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Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
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McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
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McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
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Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
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Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND)  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
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		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
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Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

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### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Nielsen

Cyr	Sucha
Ellis	Taylor
McKitrick	Turner
Renaud	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Miranda  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hanson
Carson	Hunter
Connolly	Jansen
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Ms Gray  
Deputy Chair: Ms Payne

Anderson, W.	Miranda
Clark	Nielsen
Cortes-Vargas	Nixon
Cyr	Renaud
Jansen	Starke
Loyola	Swann
McLean	van Dijken
Miller	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

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Jansen	Rodney
Littlewood	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
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### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Horne	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	Vacant

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
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Cooper	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Nixon
Luff	Piquette
McIver	Schreiner
McLean	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, S.	Kleinsteuber
Anderson, W.	Littlewood
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
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### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
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Coolahan	Nielsen
Cooper	Schneider
Ellis	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	Woollard
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Ms Gray

Barnes	Malkinson
Bhullar	Miller
Cyr	Payne
Dach	Renaud
Gotfried	Turner
Hunter	Westhead
Loyola	Vacant

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Rosendahl
Dang	Stier
Drysdale	Sucha
Horne	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

3 p.m.

Tuesday, March 8, 2016

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order! All rise, please.

[The Acting Clerk read the Royal Proclamation dated February 19, 2016, summoning the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to convene on this date]

**The Acting Clerk:** Please be seated.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber]

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order! Order! Mr. Speaker.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Speaker, accompanied by the officers of the Assembly, entered the Chamber and took the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Please bow your heads, and let us reflect or pray each in our own way. As we gather in this place of we the commoners, let us learn from our past, appreciate our present, and dream and plan for our future. When we reflect upon our past, let us never forget the counsel of our elders, elders like the great Blackfoot Confederacy Chief Crowfoot, who said: I will be the first to sign Treaty 7, and I will be the last to break it. When we experience our present, let us seek to understand each other before trying to be understood. When we plan for our future, let us dream no little dreams for it is our children, indeed our infants, who represent hope. Let us remind each other that it is hope that has always bound we commoners together. Amen.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would now invite Mr. Robert Clark, accompanied by the Royal Canadian Artillery Band, to lead us in singing our national anthem. Please join in in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members and Guests:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor

[The Premier, the Acting Clerk, and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the brass section of the Royal Canadian Artillery Band, whom we're pleased to have with us today, will now play a brief musical interlude. The piece to be performed is entitled *Another Cat: Kraken*. It's composed by Mr. Chris Hazell. The RCA Band, Canada's oldest regular army band, was formed in Quebec City in 1879. It was subsequently stationed in Montreal and in Halifax. It has seen service in both world wars

and in Korea, and it has travelled across our great country of Canada and beyond our boundaries. Reconstituted in 1997 in this city of Edmonton, the band is under the direction of Captain Patrice Arsenault, CD, who is in the Speaker's gallery.

We're very fortunate to have a band like that at an event like this. I think it warrants another applause from the entire Assembly.

As we await our protocol, let us enjoy this time together.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Ladies and gentlemen, all rise, please.

Mr. Speaker, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

**The Speaker:** Sergeant-at-Arms, admit Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[A fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, and Mr. Mitchell, their party, the Premier, and the Acting Clerk entered the Chamber. Her Honour took her place upon the throne]

### Speech from the Throne

**Her Honour:** Please be seated.

Friends, today is the first day of a new session of this Legislature, and it is also International Women's Day. It is therefore right to begin this address by remembering the remarkable achievements of Alberta women. There is much to tell, like, for example, the story of Alberta's Famous Five, who are remembered in a display on the fifth floor of this House.

In 1927 Emily Murphy, Irene Parlby, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, and Henrietta Edwards went to court to ask the following question: "Does the word 'Persons' in section 24 of the British North America Act . . . include female persons?" Their fight was a fundamental one, the principle that no public office should be barred to women because of their gender. Courtesy of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London women were indeed found to be persons, which was a good start.

I think you'll agree with me, looking at this House, at the ministerial bench, and at the seat from which I speak, that we are still making progress. The fact that my government's new Ministry of Status of Women is led by a new mother tells us that further barriers are beginning to come down.

As UN Women puts it well, International Women's Day is a time to reflect on the progress being made. It is a time to renew our call for change, and it is a time to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities.

Today, on International Women's Day, we recommit ourselves to carrying on this work. And today we return to this House to carry on our work for all the people of Alberta.

### The Latest Energy Price Shock and Its Consequences

As I speak, we are facing another deep slump in the international price of oil. Let there be no doubt; Albertans are going to get through this together as we have done before. We will address the difficult choices that lie before us, in keeping with our deeply held values. Albertans are an optimistic, entrepreneurial, can-do people, and Albertans are community minded, caring, and neighbourly. Ours is a society of friends. In tough times we always pull together.

We have each other's backs. We support each other in these times instead of making a bad situation worse.

We don't need to put our short-term bottom line over the interests of long-term recovery. We do need to understand that this latest price bust is prolonged, deep, and driven by important and fundamental changes in the world market. And so we do need to act.

We are currently overdependent on a single commodity, a single price, and a single market. Alberta will address this in a number of ways.

First, we will diversify our energy markets. Second, we will pursue a coherent and effective economic development strategy at last. Third, we will invest in a greener, more sustainable economy. Fourth, we will pursue a responsible approach to public finance. And fifth, we will pursue ongoing democratic reform to ensure public accountability in all of this work.

### **Diversifying Our Markets**

Canada's inability over the past 10 years to pursue a strategic energy policy supported by Canadians has made it impossible so far for our country to diversify our markets, and the result is that Canadian energy exports are heavily discounted even at these low prices. That must change.

Canada's energy industry, which is so important to the livelihoods and futures of Alberta families, must have safe and efficient pipeline access to tidewater so that the energy production that is permitted under our climate leadership plan can command the highest possible value on world markets.

Furthermore, Canada's energy industry needs access to the Canadian market itself. Canada currently imports almost a million barrels a day of oil from other countries. It makes no sense to finance the economies of other countries in this way, when it would be both more economically and more environmentally responsible for Canada to rely on its own abundant energy resources.

My government has been pursuing these issues since its first days in office and will continue to do so with focus and determination.

We will erase any doubts about Alberta's environmental reputation within Canada and around the world through our climate leadership plan, which places our energy economy in the ranks of the world's most progressive energy producers.

As I will detail in a few minutes, a key enabling bill giving effect to this plan will be presented in this session of the Legislature.

Alberta will also continue to strongly engage with the federal government and with all other provincial and territorial governments on these issues.

We are making progress.

The Canadian energy strategy adopted by the Council of the Federation last July provides Canada with a balanced framework both to protect the environment and to develop our country's energy industry.

At a meeting of first ministers in Vancouver last week every government in Canada committed to the view that these issues are urgent and must be dealt with in a timely fashion.

As a first step to that end, the government of Alberta welcomes a new interim federal assessment of the environmental and climate issues that arise from new pipelines, because the strength of our climate leadership plan places Alberta in the ranks of the world's most progressive energy producers.

We will continue to work towards a permanent regulatory regime that is effective and predictable and that has a beginning, a middle, and a timely end.

### **Action on Income Security, Diversification, and Job Creation**

There is much that needs to be done here in Alberta in the face of the current economic shock. First, we must help the many Alberta families who are facing immediate financial hardship. Albertans are rightfully concerned about their livelihoods and their income security.

At times like these we must think of our children first.

Starting this summer, my government will implement an important new Alberta child benefit plan for low-income families, a \$340 million investment in new direct help to the Alberta families who need help most. So, for example, a low-income single parent with two children will begin to receive just over \$3,000 a year in benefits from enhancements to the Alberta child benefit and the family employment tax credit. In all, 380,000 Alberta children will benefit from this initiative, direct help now, to the most vulnerable and needy among us.

Alberta is also vigorously urging Canada's new federal government to reconsider federal employment insurance rules that exclude too many Albertans from benefits. These rules must be updated as quickly as possible to take account of the current economic shock affecting the resource industry and related industries in western Canada.

Measures will be introduced in Budget 2016 to expand access to workforce and skills training and retraining so that many people facing unemployment can upgrade their skills.

And we will protect Albertans who are experiencing economic distress from being preyed upon by unscrupulous lenders. In some cases these lenders are charging exploitative interest rates of up to 600 per cent a year to Albertans least able to afford such fees. This has been allowed to go on for too long. Albertans need a government that will stand up for them when they are most vulnerable. To end these abuses, my government will introduce an act to end predatory lending.

Second, we must do everything we responsibly can, as quickly as possible, to promote job creation and economic diversification.

Alberta is investing \$34 billion into our provincial capital plan to help build the roads, transit, schools, and other facilities our province needs to support the economy and create jobs.

A province-wide slowdown in the construction industry has accompanied the drop in oil prices. Timely, worthy investments in infrastructure today will help keep thousands of tradespeople, equipment operators, engineers, and other professionals at work, giving them the means to support their families.

Our province is also making \$1.5 billion available to Alberta Treasury Branches to support lending to small and medium-sized businesses and has directed AIMCo to earmark half a billion dollars for Alberta companies with growth potential.

In an economic slowdown businesses, whether large or small, new or established, often find their access to credit or investment capital restrained when they need it most to maintain or grow their operations. These programs will help give entrepreneurs the stability they need to weather this economic storm and create new opportunities for employment and growth.

The government of Alberta will do more to promote economic development in Budget 2016. Alberta will introduce further measures to promote access to capital for job creators. My government will set out plans to build on strengths in our economy, including in our agriculture and forestry industries, and to partner with communities and regions so they can act on their local economic strengths and opportunities. And my government will work with leaders in Alberta's \$23 billion credit union system to ensure they have the business tools necessary for their work and to encourage them to support small and medium-sized businesses in their

communities. After a careful consultation with the credit union system my government is aiming to modernize and strengthen Alberta's credit union legislation in the fall sitting of the Legislature.

My government will introduce the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act to provide the minister of economic development with tools to pursue these initiatives and to report on results.

Third, we will build on our strategic partnership with Canada's new federal government. The government of Canada has committed to a significant new investment in Canada's infrastructure. Alberta will work closely with Ottawa to ensure that federal investment in Alberta infrastructure promotes diversification and job creation as quickly as possible.

Finally, we will work closely with our province's energy industry to ride out this storm and look for opportunities within it. My government recently completed a review of Alberta's royalty system and will now proceed to reform it. This modernization will promote innovation and efficiency. It will remove disincentives to develop different forms of hydrocarbons, and it will provide full transparency and accountability to the public in the operation of royalties. As prices improve and costs decline, the public return from our resources will also improve.

Alberta will work with focus and determination with partners to create new jobs and diversification in the energy industry. Our aim is to move the energy industry up the value chain, to process and add value to our resources, and to diversify the energy industry into new end products.

As a first step to this goal a few weeks ago my government introduced a \$500 million Alberta petrochemicals diversification program. In further pursuit of these goals my government looks forward to the advice of a new, broadly representative energy diversification advisory committee to drive this priority forward and advise my government on additional steps Alberta can take to build a more diversified and resilient energy economy.

### **Investing in a Clean Energy Future**

My government will introduce the Climate Leadership Implementation Act to give force and effect to key elements of Alberta's new climate plan. Every penny raised by this plan during this period of low energy prices will be reinvested back into the economy to create jobs and to promote diversification in our economy.

Key elements of Alberta's plan include a phase-out of emissions from coal power generation, reducing pollution and the harm it causes to the health of the very young and very old; a carbon levy to create a market-based incentive to build a more efficient and less emission-intensive economy; an investment plan that will fully recycle revenues from Alberta's carbon levy into renewable energy, innovation, public transit, and other measures that will reduce the carbon intensity of our economy; and an adjustment program to assist coal-dependent communities, indigenous communities, low-income families, and small business to adjust to and succeed in a diversified, lower carbon economy.

A new, lean agency called Energy Efficiency Alberta will help families, businesses, and entire communities reduce both their energy costs and their greenhouse gas emissions.

We will work with the energy industry and with civil society to implement Alberta's climate leadership plan, which is strongly supported by key industry leaders in the oil sands, to help Alberta's energy industry achieve the goal of being one of the most environmentally progressive in the world.

To that end, my government looks forward to the advice of a new, broadly representative oil sands advisory group to ensure measures are effective and widely supported.

### **Responsible Public Financial Management**

The collapse of the price of oil and therefore of public resource revenues has gone directly to our province's bottom line. In these circumstances the government of Alberta cannot meet current deficit targets because the commodity price crash has proved to be deeper and of longer duration than projected. Alberta's fiscal plans must therefore be revisited as part of the prudent, balanced approach my government will set out in its budget later this spring.

We will protect health care and education services. In the circumstances we face, we will also ensure that all public spending, including on these services, is carefully and efficiently managed and that all possible economies are found.

Further to this goal, my government will introduce the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Act. Over the years compensation practices between the public service and our province's agencies, boards, and commissions have diverged, in some cases significantly so. This reform will address this issue by introducing a framework to narrow and rationalize this growing divergence.

This act will also improve public oversight and stewardship over these important public bodies, which will become more transparent and accountable and follow good governance practices.

My government will have a great deal more to say on all of these issues when its budget is put before the House.

### **Ongoing Democratic Reform**

My government is looking forward to the report of this Legislature's all-party Special Committee on Ethics and Accountability. The new minister of democratic renewal will receive that report and lead early action on it. My government's aim is to present legislation on the key democratic reform issues addressed by the committee in the fall sitting of this Legislature, with a view to adoption before the end of this year.

### **Other Measures**

My government will introduce a number of other measures this session.

At the request of most of Alberta's indigenous governments my government will repeal Bill 22 and will engage indigenous communities on how the Crown should fulfill its consultation duties and support the capacity of indigenous people.

My government will consult indigenous people on a new indigenous people's sacred ceremonial objects repatriation act, that would facilitate the return of sacred objects to the nations to whom they belong.

My government will introduce an act to implement a Supreme Court ruling governing essential services to comply with recent rulings by the Supreme Court of Canada and Alberta's Court of Queen's Bench, which invalidated existing provincial labour legislation.

My government will introduce draft legislation this spring modernizing the Municipal Government Act and will then invite comment by citizens and municipal governments with a view to adopting a final version of the legislation this fall.

An act to modernize the enforcement of provincial offences will help police and the judiciary to focus on major offences, by simplifying and streamlining how minor offences are managed.

And amendments to the Securities Act will permit the further modernization, national harmonization, and streamlining of securities legislation.

### Conclusion

Friends, Albertans want to build an economy that is widely diversified and resilient to energy price swings, an economy that captures the full value of our resources, holds the promise of prosperous futures for our children, and shares its benefits widely and fairly among all Albertans; Albertans want to build a society that provides well-managed, efficiently financed, nimble, world-class health care, education, and other public services; and Albertans want to build a society that gives a hand up to people who need it, cares for the vulnerable, and opens doors for our children and our grandchildren. This is what we wish for ourselves and for all.

We have seen oil price drops before. We will get past this one, and we will draw the right lessons from it and act on them.

That is exactly what my government intends to do in the budget and legislative program it will put before this House this session.

Thank you, friends.

God bless Alberta.

God bless Canada.

And God save the Queen.

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order! All rise, please.

**The Speaker:** Ladies and gentlemen, I would now invite Mr. Robert Clark, accompanied by the Royal Canadian Artillery Band, to lead us in the singing of *God Save The Queen*. Please remain standing at the conclusion.

### Hon. Members and Guests:

God save our gracious Queen,  
Long live our noble Queen,  
God save The Queen!  
Send her victorious,  
Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us;  
God save The Queen!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Their Honours, their party, and the Premier left the Chamber as a fanfare of trumpets sounded]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

[The Mace was uncovered]

**The Speaker:** Ladies and gentlemen, it is truly an honour for me to stand here before you today as the Speaker of this Assembly and also on International Women's Day to relate to you events that I consider to be significant historical facts which occurred nearly 100 years ago. On April 19, 2016, Albertans will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in this province. April 19 is a momentous date in our history.

The campaign for women's suffrage, or Votes for Women, as it was called, was a long struggle in Alberta, as it was elsewhere in Canada. From the time of Confederation to the First World War only men could vote in provincial and federal elections. The movement of equal suffrage, which began in the 19th century, was clearly motivated by the drive for equality in public life, a sense that women deserved to participate fully in the democratic process. It seems so strange to us that in this 21st century we ask why it took so long.

By the way, it was pointed out to me that we refer in Canada to suffragists, which are significantly different than suffragettes, which are our southern neighbours.

Suffragists such as Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, and Alice Jamieson also believed that women could spearhead social reform if only they could access the levers of political power. The equal suffrage movement in Alberta was highlighted by the lobbying efforts of a number of dedicated suffragists. Alberta suffragists first brought their demands for the vote to this building to Premier Arthur Sifton, and the petition was rejected in their call for votes.

A campaign of protests and petitions continued the following year, in 1914, when suffragists returned to this Legislature. This time they had in hand a petition with some 12,200 signatures demanding that women be included in the Alberta Election Act. Although they were praised for their tenacity and their organization, Premier Sifton again rejected the suffragists' demand for the vote.

The most dramatic event of the Alberta women's suffrage campaign took place on February 27, 1915, when Premier Sifton and his cabinet agreed to meet with a small number of suffragists that afternoon. When the cabinet arrived in the Chamber – ladies and gentlemen, this very Chamber – for that meeting, we of my gender were shocked to see suffragists occupying the ministers' seats, and their supporters filled the gallery.

The government of the day was impressed by this show of solidarity and by the persistent campaign. Accordingly, in 1915 the Premier ordered the preparation of a statute placing men and women in Alberta on a basis of absolute equality. On April 19, 1916, the Equal Suffrage Statutory Law Amendment Act was granted royal assent. Alberta joined Manitoba and Saskatchewan, which had given women the right to vote earlier the same year, as the provinces where women could vote and hold public office.

It is of note that Roberta MacAdams and Louise McKinney, both elected in the provincial general election of June 7, 1917, were two of the first women to be elected to the Legislature anywhere in the British Empire, the forerunner to what we now call our Commonwealth.

However, it should be noted that the cause of women's equality in public life was not complete in 1916, as was demonstrated by the efforts of Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney, and Irene Parlby, the so-called Famous Five, who fought for the inclusion of women as Senators in the Persons Case of the late 1920s. This Legislature, which represents all of our people, has a wonderful exhibit dedicated to the Famous Five on the fifth floor of this building in which you will note: we are persons.

In addition, Voices for the Vote is a special exhibit that the Legislature will be hosting commemorating the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in Alberta. With a little bit of marketing on behalf of all of the Assembly members, I want you to invite your friends and neighbours to come and see this exhibit. The exhibit will run from early June to mid-August at the Borealis Gallery in the federal building, and I hope that all of you will plan to attend.

Hon. members and esteemed guests, it should be noted, in conclusion, that the injustices concerning the vote continued for other groups for a number of decades after 1916 and may well be continuing. It was only by the 1950s that in Canada electoral disqualifications on racial and religious grounds had been eliminated altogether. Only by 1960 were all status First Nations people finally granted the unconditional right to vote. We must again ask ourselves: why did it take so long?



### Tablings

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to table a copy of the speech graciously given by Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

#### Bill 1

#### Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and privilege to rise today to request leave to introduce the government's first bill, the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act.

In the upcoming budget the government will continue to move forward with our economic diversification and job-creation plan. This bill gives government additional tools to carry out the plan we will lay out in the budget and the requirement to report on progress.

Mr. Speaker, there is no minimizing the impact the collapse in global oil prices is having on our families, workers, and businesses. But while Alberta's economy is experiencing a major setback, I know that this is something we can and will recover from, and we will do it by supporting each other, making prudent decisions, and taking action instead of making a bad situation worse. That's why our government's number one priority is on protecting and creating jobs for today and building on our strengths for a stronger and more diverse economy for tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans want an economy that is resilient to energy price swings, captures the full value of our resources, offers prosperous futures for our children, and shares its benefits widely and fairly among all Albertans. Bill 1 will provide the government with additional tools to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a first time]

### Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the speech of Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to the Assembly be taken into consideration on Wednesday, March 9, 2016.

[Motion carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I consider this to be a very auspicious beginning of the session, so I am pleased to move that the Assembly adjourn until Wednesday, March 9, 2016, at 9 a.m.

**The Speaker:** For those of you who are watching, I've learned that when I stand up, the pages stop handing out the documents. So I've learned to sit.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:53 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, March 9, 2016

Day 2

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 29th Legislature

### Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
 Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
 Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
 Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
 Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
 Official Opposition House Leader  
 Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
 Government Whip  
 Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
 Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
 Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
 Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
 Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
 Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
 Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
 Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
 Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
 Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
 Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
 Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
 Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
 Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
 Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
 Leader of the Official Opposition  
 Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
 Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
 Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
 Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
 Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)  
 Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)

Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
 MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
 Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
 Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
 Government House Leader  
 McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
 Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
 McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
 Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
 McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
 McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
 McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
 Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
 Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
 Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
 Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
 Official Opposition Whip  
 Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
 Premier  
 Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
 Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
 Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
 Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
 Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
 Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
 Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
 Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

#### Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, March 9, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Please bow your heads as each of us in our own way contemplate the need for serenity to accept our responsibility to search for respectful solutions, courage to defend principles which may not be popular, and wisdom to understand the difference.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Election of a Deputy Chair of Committees

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to section 17(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act and Standing Order 58(2) nominations are invited for the office of Deputy Chair of Committees for the 29th Legislature. Do you wish to make any nominations? The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Absolutely. Over the last few months I've had an opportunity to work with all of my colleagues in different capacities, in committees, and we've really seen people that have taken that leadership role, that have a clear understanding of the procedure and the context and show leadership for our members. Heather Sweet has really identified herself as one of those people, and I would like to nominate her to take this on and to continue showing that role and to be of assistance to you, Mr. Speaker, in your role as well. I believe she has all the great intentions and capacity in order to do such, and her experience has enabled her to do so.

**The Speaker:** Ms Sweet, are you prepared to accept the nomination?

**Ms Sweet:** I'll accept the nomination, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there other nominations? The oppositional House leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Not oppositional, sir, just opposition.

Well, good morning, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to see you here this morning and all of the members of the Assembly. It's great to be back where I know we can put the needs of Albertans ahead of our own needs, and I think we have an opportunity to do that this morning. I appreciate the nomination from the government member. I just might briefly comment that the Member for Edmonton-Manning – some might address her by her first name, but in our case we'll stick to the rules – was recently appointed caucus chair of the NDP caucus, and this member plays a very important and partisan role inside the NDP caucus.

They have made a commitment to do things differently. In my opinion, appointing a caucus chair, who plays a very partisan role, to the very nonpartisan role in the Speaker's office is not doing things differently. In fact, I think you would find that many Albertans would say that this doesn't pass the smell test. While I have had the opportunity of working with the Member for Edmonton-Manning in a number of capacities and she is very capable and quite a lovely person, I'm not sure that her role as the caucus chair is an ideal fit to work inside the Speaker's office.

We can look at a number of things that they've said that they would do differently, but they're not, including by-election campaign-style announcements, finding ways to pay a caucus chair like the Deputy Chair of Committees, and other things where the government said they would do one thing and now appear to be doing it differently. But do not fret, Mr. Speaker. The Wildrose is here to help provide solutions, meaningful solutions that can communicate to Albertans that the Assembly is ready to do things differently.

So it's my absolute pleasure to rise in this place today and nominate my good friend and colleague the Member for Calgary-Foothills. The Member for Calgary-Foothills understands the importance of the role of the Deputy Chair of Committees and the need to ensure that it is done in as nonpartisan a way as possible. He has a long history, a long and proud history, of working in the private sector, where he has chaired hundreds and hundreds of meetings. As a professional engineer he understands the importance of process, the importance of following the rules that are set out by his colleagues in that sector to ensure that everyone is safe. That can easily be applied to serving in the role of Deputy Chair of Committees.

I think that we have a wonderful opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to do something unique, to do something powerful, to work across party lines, to invite a member of an opposition caucus into the inner workings of the Legislature, and I am confident that the Member for Calgary-Foothills could do just that for all members of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. Member Panda, are you prepared to accept the nomination for Deputy Chair?

**Mr. Panda:** I would be pleased to serve in your office, sir. I accept the nomination.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing none, I would therefore declare nominations closed. The nominees for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees are Ms Heather Sweet from Edmonton-Manning and Mr. Prasad Panda from Calgary-Foothills. Voting will commence after the list of nominees is posted in each voting booth. The table officers will proceed, and I think the Chamber doors will be secured after that.

[The lists of candidates were posted]

**The Speaker:** I understand that the members will have some instructions and a road map, but if you'll come forward, the voting will now begin.

[Members voted from 9:10 a.m. to 9:17 a.m.]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

I've been advised that there may have been some misunderstandings with respect to the voting process, as raised by several members. We will, therefore, based on what I hear, now secure the doors and have a revote.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, a number of members who were not in the Chamber when you initially said that the doors would be locked have now entered the Chamber and drastically changed the face of the results of the election. The honourable thing would be that the members who weren't in the Chamber at least remove themselves from the Chamber, and we can revote.

**The Speaker:** The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I appreciate the opposition's comments; however, to my knowledge, the bells did not go off, and therefore the doors were not tiled. Correct me if I'm wrong, if I actually heard the bells or not. I didn't hear the bells. Therefore, the doors were not tiled. Obviously, we'll respect your decision.

I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Table counsel, could you please come to the Speaker's chair?

### **Speaker's Ruling Rules and Practices of the Assembly**

**The Speaker:** Welcome back, everyone. On the point raised by the minister of economic development, I've checked, and there does not appear to be in the election of officers procedure a ringing of the bells.

The Opposition House Leader has raised the suggestion, what I would understand to be a point of order, that the members who entered the Chamber after what should have been the securing of the doors exercise their option as to whether or not they choose to vote on this. I would urge the government members to consider that matter at some length.

Opposition House Leader, you raise a very good point. The dilemma with respect to raising it is that it is entirely based upon the good judgment of each individual member because I'm not sure that you could identify who actually came in, nor could I. So I would stand by the ruling. However, I would ask those members who in good conscience believe that they came later into this Chamber, after what, in fact, should have been secured doors, to consider that if you choose to exercise your vote.

I would rule that we revoke. And to those members who were not here, who entered the Chamber after the House was advised that the doors should be secured, I would urge you to consider not voting.

Could we please proceed with a revoke?

Hon. member, do you have a point?

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, I know it seems that there was some confusion this morning as far as members coming in or not coming in for this time. Normally and according to the standing orders, there is a bell before a vote, which gives members the opportunity to come into the Chamber and be present if they have business outside of the Chamber, and there wasn't any bell this morning.

So our government will do the right thing, and I will therefore be asking our members who were not present when the vote was called to take it upon themselves to make a decision of whether or not to stay in here for the revoke.

Thank you.

9:25

**The Speaker:** Hearing that, could we please proceed with the vote? Are there any other comments?

**Mr. Cooper:** I have a comment, then, sir. It was our impression that the door had been locked. There was an opposition member who tried to enter the Chamber mere moments ago and was refused, in the form of the independent Member for Calgary-Elbow, the leader of the Alberta Party. Subsequently, we have seen additional members from the government side enter the Chamber. I don't think that this is the start that all of us were hoping for, sir.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to have the rule cited that members are not allowed to enter the Chamber when there has not

been a standing vote called. There are no standing votes in the morning. Could someone please cite the rule?

**The Speaker:** Government House Leader, to the House, the point in question is in schedule A, subsection 8. "The doors of the Chamber will be secured during the voting process." Schedule A, under Election of Officers Procedure.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I might just add that point 9 is that "ballots will be provided to Members present in the Chamber by the Table Officers of the Assembly prior to voting."

**Mr. Mason:** Okay. Mr. Speaker, I see the rule. I will withdraw.

**The Speaker:** I notice that hon. members are departing the room. I would respectfully request that those who entered the room when they believe the doors would have been secured would exit. Hon. members, thank you. Thank you.

Could we please proceed with the vote now?

[Members voted from 9:28 a.m. to 9:35 a.m.]

**The Speaker:** Please take your seats. Have all who wished to do so voted?

Hearing none, I would ask the table officers to retire with the ballot box.

Could the doors please remain secure?

[Ballots were counted from 9:35 a.m. to 9:43 a.m.]

**The Speaker:** For the information of the House, in this very formal manner discussed, if you read the procedures that are on your desks, the reason that I determined that it would be better to keep the doors secure is the incidents that led us to this point, and I felt that that was a better decision to make. There may well be a second vote that takes place, and I choose not to jeopardize the securing of the doors. Thus, my reasoning.

**The Acting Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the number of ballots cast for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees: 59. The number of spoiled ballots: zero. The number of votes required to achieve a 50 per cent plus one majority: 30. The member having received the majority of votes cast: Ms Heather Sweet.

Ms Heather Sweet is hereby the Deputy Chair of Committees of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for the 29th Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, would you like to say a few remarks to the Assembly?

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to be elected to this position by all members of the Assembly, and I look forward to working with everybody collaboratively.

Thank you.

## **Government Motions**

### **Committee Membership Changes**

2. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's committees be replaced as follows:
  - (1) Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund: Ms Miller, chair; Mrs. Schreiner, deputy chair; Mr. Cyr; Mr. Dang; Mr. Ellis; Mr. Horne; Ms McKittrick; Mr. Taylor; and Dr. Turner.
  - (2) Standing Committee on Legislative Offices: Mr. Shepherd, chair; Mr. Malkinson, deputy chair; Mr.

- Cooper; Mr. Ellis; Mr. Horne; Ms Jabbour; Mr. Kleinsteuber; Mrs. Littlewood; Mr. Nixon; Mr. van Dijken; and Ms Woollard.
- (3) Standing Committee on Private Bills: Ms McPherson, chair; Mr. Connolly, deputy chair; Mr. W. Anderson; Ms Babcock; Ms Drever; Mr. Drysdale; Mr. Fraser; Mr. Hinkley; Ms Kazim; Mr. Kleinsteuber; Ms McKittrick; Mr. Rosendahl; Mr. Stier; Mr. Strankman; and Mr. Sucha.
  - (4) Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing: Ms Fitzpatrick, chair; Ms Babcock, deputy chair; Mr. Carson; Mr. Coolahan; Mr. Cooper; Mr. Ellis; Ms Goehring; Mr. Hanson; Ms Kazim; Loyola; Ms McPherson; Mr. Nielsen; Mr. Schneider; Dr. Starke; and Mr. van Dijken.
  - (5) Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Mr. Fildebrandt, chair; Mr. S. Anderson, deputy chair; Mr. Barnes; Mr. Cyr; Mr. Dach; Mr. Fraser; Ms Goehring; Mr. Gotfried; Mr. Hunter; Ms Luff; Mr. Malkinson; Ms Miller; Ms Renaud; Dr. Turner; and Mr. Westhead.
  - (6) Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: Mr. Wanner, chair; Cortes-Vargas, deputy chair; Mr. Cooper; Mr. Dang; Mr. Fildebrandt; Ms Jabbour; Ms Luff; Mr. McIver; Mr. Nixon; Mr. Piquette; and Mrs. Schreiner.
  - (7) Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future: Mr. Sucha, chair; Mr. Schneider, deputy chair; Mr. S. Anderson; Mr. Carson; Mr. Connolly; Mr. Coolahan; Mr. Dach; Ms Fitzpatrick; Mr. Gotfried; Mr. Hunter; Ms Jansen; Mr. Panda; Mr. Piquette; Mrs. Schreiner; and Mr. Taylor.
  - (8) Standing Committee on Families and Communities: Ms Goehring, chair; Mr. Smith, deputy chair; Ms Drever; Mr. Hinkley; Mr. Horne; Ms Jansen; Ms Luff; Ms McPherson; Mr. Orr; Mrs. Pitt; Mr. Rodney; Mr. Shepherd; Dr. Swann; Mr. Westhead; and Mr. Yao.
  - (9) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship: Loyola, chair; Mr. Loewen, deputy chair; Mrs. Aheer; Ms Babcock; Mr. Clark; Mr. Dang; Mr. Drysdale; Mr. Hanson; Ms Kazim; Mr. Kleinsteuber; Mr. MacIntyre; Mr. Malkinson; Mr. Nielsen; Mr. Rosendahl; and Ms Woollard.
  - (10) Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee: Mrs. Littlewood, chair; Ms Miller, deputy chair; Mr. W. Anderson; Mr. Clark; Mr. Connolly; Cortes-Vargas; Mr. Cyr; Ms Drever; Ms Jansen; Loyola; Mr. Nielsen; Mr. Nixon; Ms Renaud; Dr. Starke; Mr. Sucha; Dr. Swann; and Mr. van Dijken.

9:50

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to Government Motion 2, Committee Membership Changes? Hearing none, closing comments?

[Government Motion 2 carried]

3. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve into Committee of the Whole, when called, to consider certain Bills on the Order Paper.

[Government Motion 3 carried]

4. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve itself

into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

[Government Motion 4 carried]

#### Evening Sitting on March 14, 2016

5. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) the Assembly shall meet in the evening on Monday, March 14, 2016, for consideration of government business.

[Government Motion 5 carried]

#### Adjournment of Spring Session

6. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2016 spring sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

[Government Motion 6 carried]

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

#### Transmittal of Estimates

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have received certain messages from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order!

**The Speaker:** The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary supply estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits interim supply estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province and of certain sums required from the lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the 2015-16 supplementary supply estimates. When supplementary estimates are tabled, section 4(5) of the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act requires that an update to the consolidated fiscal plan be tabled.

Accordingly, I also wish to table the 2015-16 third-quarter fiscal update, which serves as the updated fiscal plan. The quarterly fiscal update provides a framework for additional spending authority for the Legislative Assembly and for the government. These supplementary supply estimates will provide additional spending to six government departments. When passed, the estimates will authorize an approximate increase of \$106 million in expense funding for the government. These estimates will also authorize a transfer of \$25 million of the previously approved capital investment vote to the expense vote within the Department of Environment and Parks.

Finally, I wish to table the 2016-17 interim supply estimates. These interim supply estimates will provide spending authority to the Legislative Assembly and the government for the period of April 1, 2016, to May 31, 2016, inclusive. This interim funding authority will ensure continuity in the business of the province while the Legislature takes the time necessary to discuss, debate,

and enact the full funding required for government business for the 2016-17 fiscal year. When passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$30 million for the Legislative Assembly, \$7.1 billion for the expense funding, \$864 million in capital investment funding, \$164 million in financial transactions funding for the government, and \$363 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Government Motions

(continued)

7. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2016-17 interim supply estimates, and all other matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

**The Speaker:** The House leader for the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my displeasure to rise today and speak to the requirement for supply. While I appreciate that we need to ensure that our front-line services – nurses, doctors, teachers, paramedics – need to be able to continue to work and that this is the necessary process to make it happen, I just wanted to take a brief moment and highlight some of my concerns around the need for supply. This new government, as I've already mentioned once today, promised to do things differently. I remember some time that I spent around the precinct area and members of the current caucus standing in this place, much as I'm doing this morning, rallying against the government of the day because of their inability to plan on time.

Mr. Speaker, the end of March comes at the end of March every single year. The government of the day lays out the agenda for the government. They knew that the end of March was coming. In fact, we just passed a budget the end of November. They've had all of this time to be working towards having this done now. Now, they used to take a fair amount of time blaming the previous government for putting them in a bad spot, for having to have them rush things. But here we are now almost a full year into the mandate of this government, and they still aren't getting things done on time.

This problem could have been solved if we had come back to this Assembly, as Albertans right across the province would expect us to do, in early February, saw a budget in mid-February, and had all of the important tasks of passing that budget completed by the end of March. But today we see that that's not going to be the case. Not only that, Mr. Speaker; we've heard from the Minister of Finance that the budget isn't going to be tabled in the Assembly until the 14th of April, well past the end of the fiscal year. So it is more than a little disappointing to this side of the House that we haven't taken the necessary steps to ensure that the budget can be passed by the year-end. It's what we expect of all of the organizations that report to us, yet it's not what the government is delivering for Albertans.

So I will not be supporting this motion, and I would expect that many of my colleagues also will not be.

10:00

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who wish to speak to Motion 7?

The Deputy Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I just want to make it clear that this Committee of Supply motion only deals with six departments, extends by two months, and I encourage all

members of the House to vote in favour so that government business may continue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Government Motion 7 carried]

8. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2016-17 interim supply estimates for three hours on Thursday, March 10, 2016, beginning at 9 a.m.

[Government Motion 8 carried]

9. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2015-16 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

[Government Motion 9 carried]

10. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2015-16 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund for three hours on Monday, March 14, 2016, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry, hon. member. There's no debate on this motion, as I understand it.

[Government Motion 10 carried]

### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to open debate on the Speech from the Throne. I wish to thank Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for her carefully intentioned words that laid the groundwork for this spring session.

I would also like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your continued efforts and the wisdom that you bring to the chair. It is not an easy task that you have, managing the dynamics and the volume of this House, yet the balance that you show and the encouragement that you give us to work together from both sides of the floor continue to set a standard for us all.

It is my great privilege to stand in this House and share the voice of my constituents from Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, who so generously gave me their vote and who entrusted me to speak for them on all matters before this House. It is with humility and dedication that I strive to continually earn that trust. The experience and perspective they give me are the only way I can hope to represent a vast diversity of people: dairy farmers, corrections

officers, teachers, microbrewers, grandmothers, firefighters, people of all ages, all abilities, all income levels, all nationalities, all ethnicities, all faith communities, all genders, and, most importantly, all political stripes.

I wish to acknowledge my husband, Jeremy Johnston, for his long-suffering patience and endless support in allowing me to put the constituency and those that reside within it first.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a tough winter, not for its weather, which continues to get milder each year, but for the tough economic climate that has continued to impact Albertan families from every corner of this province. We have inherited a great responsibility, and we have been directed by the voters of this great province to tread down a path in search of stability: job creation supported by our government's investment in making capital available to small and medium-sized businesses; aggressive infrastructure investment to address the growing needs of a growing population in health care, education, and industry; diversifying our economy on the road to a more mature, resilient province that can weather world market prices and decrease our dependence on a single commodity price.

All of us in this Chamber in our role as Members of this Legislative Assembly hear and see the personal impact of sustained low oil prices on Alberta families. They have invited me to sit at their table while they tell me how they are afraid for their jobs or how the family has already experienced a loss. Executives share with me how they are working to examine every way to not lose any employees during this time of low market prices. Family farms are worried about the long-term viability of their homestead due to more and more families needing to rely on off-farm income and jobs to make ends meet. However, as difficult as these situations are, they reveal the tenacity that makes us Albertans.

This is a once-in-a-generation challenge, as the Minister of Finance rightly said. I have first-hand experience of it. Born in west Edmonton at the Misericordia hospital, my father worked hard as a journeyman painter. Going into the trades when my dad did, his future seemed fairly secure. A booming housing industry and a healthy, energy-based economy: it seemed like the right time to buy and build a house in Mill Woods in order to accommodate a growing family, that had become completely dominated by women. My poor dad. My mom had given her strong personality and her fierce individualism to three girls, all of which challenged my father in many ways. Then the worst happened. My dad, like many breadwinners, lost his job during the latest economic bust. We lost our house. My parents divorced, and like many families, the only thing we could do was to continue putting one foot in front of the other.

My parents being in separate households presented me with many challenges, two different lives that set me forever on a course towards compassion, empathy, and a thirst to see fairness for others. I have learned the phrase "social justice" as an adult, but to me what that means is that we need to examine what fairness means in this province. Is it fair that our seniors in rural Alberta live in poverty and without proper access to affordable transportation for appropriate medical care? Is it fair that we continue to move our grandparents away from their communities in pursuit of affordable housing? Is it fair that our small municipalities continue to struggle to pay for failing infrastructure? Is it fair that mothers continue to be left behind in workplace advancement due to a lack of both child care space and affordability?

Now, my father will never tell me that life is fair, but that, I believe, is where government has a responsibility to come in to help bridge the gap. If anyone has heard me talk about my constituency, they have heard me talk about the need for a bridge. My father did those things that he could to move us forward. He owned his own

small painting business, and, as I've shared in this House before, he worked long hours. My dad found affordable child care. He watched every dime that went in and out of the house, but he did not do this on his own. I grew up in Edmonton housing. I attended public school. We had access to publicly funded health care. Yes, my dad did pull himself up by his bootstraps, but the ability to do that, to take care of his family, hinged on publicly funded services.

Our relatively new government has taken the role of working to address systematic inequality and extending an invitation to those in our communities that are passionate about looking for solutions that benefit all of Alberta. Leaders and advocates are not something that my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville is in short supply of.

This past season I have had the amazing pleasure of introducing amazing people, people that work to improve their communities and continue to make these small, rural, and rural places – yes, it's a word; rural, urban, rural – great places to move to raise a family: Myron Hayduk, mayor of Vegreville and owner of The Garage, a classic car dealership; Taneen Rudyk, councillor of Vegreville, member of the Vegreville Region Physician Attraction and Retention Committee, board member of St. Joseph's hospital, Eskimos fan, and daughter of former Vegreville Viking NDP MLA Derek Fox, who served as agriculture critic under the leadership of Ray Martin; deputy reeve and councillor of Lamont county Daniel Warawa, proud Ukrainian, expert combine handler, and a true patriarch; Fort Saskatchewan Mayor Gale Katchur, vice-chair of Alberta's Industrial Heartland, proud grandmother, talented orator of *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*; Heather Boonstra, executive director of Families First Society, Eskimos season ticket holder, best hugger on my side of the North Saskatchewan; Don Segberg, high school social studies teacher at JP II, proud new dad, Alberta politics junkie. These are just a few of the everyday people that do extraordinary things every day.

#### 10:10

I have met groups of people brought together by cultural institutions created in Alberta, groups such as agricultural societies: Bruderheim Ag Society, Lamont and District Ag Society, Vegreville Ag Society, Josephburg Ag Society, Chipman Ag Society, Andrew Ag Society, Mundare & District Ag Society, and Tofield Ag Society. These societies were created to share farm and agricultural information and education. However, over the years, as you can see, these groups have forged their ways into the identity of the community. They not only host and organize rodeos; they have country and blues music festivals. They fund raise for necessities in schools, seniors' homes, hospitals, and community centres, and they do this with small armies of volunteers.

These people more often than not are on multiple boards. Your ag society member is also the library board member, is also your museum board member, is also your Lions Club member, is also the Legion member, and is also your chamber of commerce member.

Residents of these rural, rural, and remote areas of Alberta don't wait for help; they do. For that they deserve an enormous amount of respect, but we must do what we can to support the sustainability of these communities. This past fall AAMDC held its convention, and the tag line they used was *Where It All Starts*, because farming, oil and gas, and much of our tourism sectors reside in our most rural parts of Alberta. Our economy relies on these areas for jobs, tax dollars, Albertan culture, and the very food that we put on our table. Our future diversifying of the economy will depend on how we support these industries. My constituents have told me loud and clear that they want support now and for the future.

I am pleased to be able to stand and show my support for our government's new Alberta child benefit plan for low-income families. This \$340 million investment in new and direct help will make a difference for families in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and countless other Albertan families who need help now; 380,000 Albertan children will benefit from this initiative.

We will also help those families with legislation to protect Albertans in economic distress from predatory lending, a bold move forward to protect some of our most vulnerable.

Expanded access to workforce and skills training and retraining is integral to the financial health of our families so that people facing unemployment can upgrade their skills. Our tradespeople want to put their workboots back on.

We will address growing infrastructure deficits with \$34 billion of investment while retaining jobs: schools in Fort Saskatchewan bursting at the seams, kindergarten classes being moved into school gyms.

I'm also proud that our Premier and our ministers continue meaningful intergovernmental collaboration on pipelines. We cannot forget that we are a country made up of a federation of provinces that must work together towards the common good.

At the same time we can review how we practise consultation. Our government will repeal Bill 22 and will engage indigenous communities on how the Crown should fulfill its consultation duties and support the capacity of indigenous people. Together we can create a diversified future.

Our government announced a much-anticipated initiative in the new petrochemicals diversification program. Applauded by Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association, this program will help investors get over the initial hurdle of building such capital-intensive projects and help Albertans acquire greater value for products such as propane, that are market-exposed, and turn them into higher value products such as propylene and polypropylene. We will back that up with a broad-based representative group, the energy diversification advisory committee, that can not only look at diversification but help guide our government towards resiliency.

This government's royalty review has steps towards a plan to modernize royalties, to promote innovation, transparency, efficiency, and accountability. We now have a climate change strategy that focuses on a made-in-Alberta solution to how we can address both environmental impacts of industry and how we address market access issues, issues that thus far, no matter who you try to lay the blame on, have prevented Alberta from building a new pipeline to tidewater and add rail transportation costs onto an already price-disadvantaged product. But we rally on.

We heard from industry, First Nations, and nongovernmental organizations that now is the time to build a plan that will support our energy sector and also address the needs of future generations. In support of this our government plans to create a new, broadly representative oil sands advisory group.

Next year in Sturgeon county, Alberta, we will see the first refinery built in over 30 years, the North West refinery, a true marvel that is on the leading edge of technology, where they will not only refine bitumen but will also utilize the Alberta carbon line project, 240 kilometres of pipeline that will gather, compress, and store 14.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year from the North West project and Agrium fertilizer. Stored carbon dioxide from this project can be injected into depleted oil reservoirs and result in one billion barrels of oil.

Budget 2016 will take a prudent and balanced approach to fiscal plans, ensuring the valuable front-line health care and education services are intact. We cannot build a viable future without taking care of Albertans now. We can do so carefully and judiciously. We know Albertans expect and demand that their government act in

their best interests. That's why I'm so proud to highlight our government's ongoing program for democratic reform. I look forward to hearing and reading and now sharing as chair the report from the all-party special Committee on Ethics and Accountability.

Key democratic reform issues will also be presented in the fall, affirming our commitment to openness, transparency, and accountability. This means that we will not act alone. We want to ensure that we consult with our partners and the public to build an effective legislative environment. That's why we will invite public and municipal government comment on a modern Municipal Government Act. I know my constituents and municipal representatives who have talked to me over and over again about linear taxes – I'm sure that me and my colleagues have all learned more about linear taxes than they knew before – want to come and share because they are concerned about their areas. They want to come, and they want to contribute, and I look forward to hearing what their bold new ideas are.

Our tourism industry has grown to include new ways of interacting with rural Alberta. These include farm-to-table tours and dinners, historical church tours, rodeos, bull-a-ramas, country and blues festivals, vintage tractor pulls, and parades in every town for every season. These events are possible due to the long farming history that Alberta has, and it's that tie to history that makes us so special. Our agriculture sector is world class and has been the bedrock of this province for many generations. I choose to mention this sector last as it often gets overshadowed by our energy industry, and it is my hope that these thoughts will stand out.

Our province, built by French hands, German hands, and even including my father's Ukrainian hands – this province was built on agriculture. I have met resourceful people and visited their high-tech operations in farming and agriculture and have learned that we need to do a better job of trumpeting these successes. We have grain operations such as Alan Farms partnership, that farms 10,000 acres. We have award-winning black angus cattle breeders at Northline Angus, that ship beef genetics all over the world. Thiel's Greenhouses bring shoppers from hours away that count on Thiel's high quality of product bringing both beauty and sustenance.

10:20

Mr. Speaker, as I close I would like to share a *Hansard* quote from Derek Fox's maiden speech, which he gave on June 27, 1986.

Agriculture is certainly the most basic concern in rural Alberta, and I know all members recognize that. My concern . . . comes because of the value that I place on our rural life and the realization I have about how essential a healthy and strengthened agricultural industry is to [the] vital sort of growth that we want to provide. If I may be forgiven an analogy, if the roots are strong and healthy, I think the tree will grow tall, provide shade, and bear fruit.

I am proud of my family. I am proud of where I came from. I am proud of my government, and I am proud of my Premier, and I am very proud of my province. I am proud to call myself a heartland MLA.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of this Assembly, for this opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne in the Second Session of the 29th Legislature. It is an incredible honour for me to second the motion to accept Her Majesty's speech.

I'd like to thank my wife, my family, and all of those who have believed in me along the way to help me get where I am today. I'd

also like to thank the voters of Banff-Cochrane for placing your trust in me. We know that Albertans in my constituency and across the province are looking to our government for action, and the time to act is now. I'm proud to be part of a government that is taking action in several key areas as outlined in the Speech from the Throne, specifically supports for families and children, job creation, and economic diversification. I support the government's spring agenda on the areas that need care and attention for the benefit of Albertans now and in the future. The legislative agenda is a bold and ambitious one, replete with important and overdue items. I'm pleased to take this opportunity to tell you about how our legislative goals align with the values of my outstanding constituency of Banff-Cochrane.

Banff-Cochrane is home to many diverse, vibrant communities. These range from ranching and agricultural lands on its eastern edge in Cochrane and Bragg Creek to the majestic foothills and the Rocky Mountains towards the west in Lake Louise and all points in between. My constituency contains much of the essence of what characterizes the best of Alberta, from cattle grazing and pastures to world-class recreational areas for outdoor pursuits. Banff-Cochrane offers something for everyone and has captured the attention and imagination of the world.

Banff-Cochrane is home to the Continental Divide, on the border of British Columbia and Alberta. The Continental Divide helps form the watersheds of our eastern slopes that supply water to millions of Albertans. This majestic landscape also provides critical wildlife habitat and wetlands. It is crucial that we take steps to ensure the integrity of our headwaters and wilderness areas so they remain intact for the enjoyment of future generations of Albertans.

During his maiden speech in 1975 the Member for Banff-Cochrane at the time identified land-use planning as a mounting concern due to growth pressures from neighbouring Calgary. Indeed, decisions respecting land use along the eastern slopes can have a major impact not only on the land itself but also on those downstream. We have begun to demonstrate our commitment to addressing these types of concerns by protecting the Castle wilderness area. The United Nations declared in 2010 that access to clean drinking water is essential to the realization of all human rights. Here in Alberta we must act as stewards of this land and especially the eastern slopes. We depend on our headwaters to produce the quantity and quality of water necessary to protect the fundamental rights of Albertans to water.

I'm proud of our government's climate leadership plan, which will take concrete steps to further protect these wild spaces. I'm pleased to report that there are many organizations within my constituency that are already acting on addressing climate change. They are implementing innovative solutions to a greener, more sustainable future and taking a leadership role in reducing our environmental impact.

Take the Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley, for example. The Biosphere Institute is a nonprofit, charitable society dedicated to ensuring the ecological integrity of the Bow Valley for the well-being of the ecosystem through education, research, and outreach.

Yet another example of innovation is the Francis Cooke landfill, located near the community of Exshaw. The Francis Cooke landfill is considering technologies to use wood waste as an alternative heating source for buildings located on the site, thereby making them more carbon neutral. This is complementary to the Bow Valley Waste Management Commission's long-standing target of moving towards zero waste.

There are too many fine examples in Banff-Cochrane to elaborate on them all, but others include the towns of Canmore and Banff's successful Roam regional transit system and the Cochrane high

school's sustainability committee, that has installed solar panels on the school roof.

We have a lot to be proud of here, and there are many success stories to look towards that can show us the way forward to a more sustainable future. The people of Banff-Cochrane are keen to work in partnership with our government as we implement these long overdue initiatives to help reduce energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, a sustainable future and the protection of our land, air, and water are vital to the tourism industry in Banff-Cochrane, that supports good local jobs. Visitors from around the world are attracted to the natural beauty that is found in our numerous provincial and wildland parks, not to mention Banff national park, a UNESCO world heritage site and Canada's first national park.

So, too, is the natural environment important to the visitors of William Watson Lodge, located in beautiful Peter Lougheed provincial park. William Watson Lodge was opened by Premier Lougheed and his wife in 1981 with a goal of providing barrier-free facilities to those with mobility challenges and seniors. Last summer I had the great pleasure to visit the lodge to celebrate the opening of the first of several comfort camping facilities.

The availability of seniors housing in general was identified as a priority in Banff-Cochrane as far back as 1979, when the MLA at the time commented on the topic in his response to the throne speech. I'm pleased that our government is working to address this issue by supporting construction of seniors' accommodations in Canmore and Cochrane. We have more work ahead of us to further honour the years of hard work that seniors have put into building this province we are so proud of. Every Albertan deserves to retire in dignity.

Affordable housing is not only a challenge for seniors in Banff-Cochrane; it is a pressing concern for employees and employers alike. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Bow Valley. Here a small population of local residents is pressured to supply labour for the very successful tourism industry. Tourism-based towns like Kananaskis Village, Banff, and Canmore welcome visitors from around the world to take in Alberta's natural beauty. These towns operate, build, and maintain tourism infrastructure with limited financial resources. Affordable housing to accommodate the employees who cater to visitors is a perennial challenge for these tourism-based municipalities.

Banff-Cochrane is home to many talented artists and is considered as an incubator for inspiring creativity. Nowhere is this more apparent than the Banff Centre. In 1979 during his maiden speech former MLA Stevens noted his pleasure that the Banff Centre was given approval to operate year-round. Nowadays the Banff Centre continues to play a unique and pivotal role among postsecondary institutions in Alberta and – dare I say it? – the world. The Banff Centre provides an unmatched experience to thousands of students, lecturers, artists, performers, and visitors in the area of fine arts, performing arts, leadership training, and conferences.

Another aspect that makes Banff-Cochrane unique is the Stoney-Nakoda First Nation, part of Treaty 7 lands. The nation is composed of three bands led by three chiefs and councils known as Bearspaw, Chiniki, and Wesley bands. I have had the honour of recently meeting chiefs Dixon, Young, and Wesley. I look forward to further conversations with the view to supporting the nations' interests in economic diversification and job creation.

**10:30**

Repealing Bill 22 and engaging indigenous communities in consultation is a strong sign of our commitment to reconciliation. Furthermore, consultations on a new indigenous peoples sacred

ceremonial objects repatriation act demonstrates how much we value and respect First Nations across the province.

Job creators are abundant in Banff-Cochrane, and without exception they are optimistic and entrepreneurial. This is certainly the case in the technology sector in the bustling and charming town of Cochrane. Established in 1998 in Cochrane, the company Dynastream introduced its first accelerometer-based speed and distance wearable monitor in the year 2000 for shoe giant Nike. Only six years later Dynastream was purchased by Garmin, a world leader in the field of personal monitoring technology.

Economic diversification opportunities are also now presenting themselves like never before to my hometown of beautiful Bragg Creek. Communities across the constituency of Banff-Cochrane were hit hard by the floods of 2013, including Bragg Creek. Just like Albertans across the province, the people of Bragg Creek are incredibly resilient. In good times and bad they roll up their sleeves and get to work helping one another. Flood-affected Albertans got through those difficult moments by working together. They exemplified the strength, courage, and resolve that is common among all Albertans. Shortly after the 2013 flood the hamlet of Bragg Creek persevered by installing water and waste-water services to hamlet residences and businesses.

Recently, thanks to the hard work of the community, a hamlet revitalization plan has been created. Along with over \$32 million for local flood mitigation work provided by our government, the revitalization plan has re-energized the community to look towards a vision for the future. On the doorstep to Kananaskis Country, Bragg Creek already has an internationally recognized four-season trail system thanks to the hard work of local volunteers.

The community is increasingly being seen as a destination for Albertans and international visitors alike. Local groups such as the Bragg Creek chamber of commerce and the community association have been working hard to harness the entrepreneurial energy of local business owners. They are working to draw visitors to the historic hamlet, that was home to Canada's first hostel, which is located just down the street from my house.

In closing, I'd like to thank the people of Banff-Cochrane for placing their trust in me to represent them as their MLA. I will continue to take every possible opportunity to connect with communities, individuals, and businesses across the riding. I'd also like to thank the numerous volunteers across the riding who give their own time to make our communities the vibrant places that they are.

Our legislative agenda is ambitious, but I support these initiatives to create a better, more prosperous, more diversified, and more caring Alberta, an Alberta that provides well-managed, efficiently financed, nimble, world-class health care, education, and other public services. The throne speech lays out a path forward for all Albertans, including my constituents in Banff-Cochrane, and brings hope in a time when it is needed most. It is by working together and building relationships that we can accomplish great things and make Alberta an even better place than when we found it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to rise here today. While it might not be the first time that I've had the chance to rise in the Assembly, it is the first time that I've really had a chance on behalf of the citizens of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to speak briefly about the outstanding constituency that is Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Speaker, I arrive here thankful and gratified by the broad support of so many of my family, my friends, my neighbours. And

speaking of my family, it's an absolute pleasure to have them here in the gallery today. You know, so little can be done in this life of public service without the support of those closest to you. Today my wife, Tanya, and my dad, Harold, and my mom, Mary, are all in the gallery, and in many ways they made this day possible, because if it wasn't for their support, encouragement, long hours, with Tanya parenting our three children in such a wonderful, caring way that she does, it wouldn't be possible for me to give some of myself to public service as well as trying to be the best family co-worker and labourer and dad and friend that I can. To them I say thank you.

I also come to the Chamber on behalf of not just my family but the friends and neighbours and the people in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that asked me to come to work towards implementing a principled, optimistic, and truly conservative vision for Alberta. I remain fully committed to representing our province, our family, our communities to the best of my abilities in the days, weeks, months, and years, hopefully, to come.

I also want to assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I come to this station fully cognizant of the responsibility with which I have been entrusted. I'm just the third MLA to represent the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills in its current configuration and one of just 902 people ever elected to this Legislature, and I don't take that lightly.

When I think of the strong and capable representatives of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that have come to this Assembly to serve, I think of people like Bob Clark, who served in many roles in this Assembly, on both sides of the House, and I will strive to serve in the manner that he did, always putting the needs of the people of Alberta ahead of his own political gain. I think of people like MLA Connie Osterman, who served the people of this province with a vision and a passion that were second to none. She often put aside political differences to assist Albertans, members of the Assembly, and in particular had a passion for protecting children while she was serving as the minister responsible for that area. That is also something that's near and dear to my heart, protecting the children right across this province, that are so important to the future of this province.

More recently there were men like Richard Marz and Bruce Rowe. I'd like to take a brief moment to particularly thank Mr. Rowe. I had the opportunity to work closely with him, and while we didn't always agree on all of the decisions that were made, I had the chance to learn a lot from him, a lot about this place. We learned a lot about public service together. Bruce and his wife, Carol, have been so wonderful to Tanya and our children over the last number of years, and I hope to serve in a way that would reflect well upon them as well.

Thanks to their passionate representation over the years, our Legislature has been home to many invigorating debates leading to monumental changes. Living up to this legacy that they have left for me will be daunting, but as Official Opposition House Leader this duty is a duty that I intend to seize with both hands. The fact is that this year, Mr. Speaker, is like none that we've seen in approximately half a century. The past election brought true change to the Assembly. The people of Alberta elected both a new government and a strengthened opposition that were and continue to be dedicated to the cause of renewal. It's in this spirit of renewal that I offer my hand in co-operation to all members of this Assembly who seek to reinvigorate the role of the Legislature.

**10:40**

Mr. Speaker, you are now well familiar with my passion for the Assembly, for its rules, for its customs, and for its traditions. A strengthened voice of the Legislature will mean a strengthened



voice for all Albertans and will ensure that legislation receives full and thorough debate, much of which I have already had the opportunity to speak about in the Chamber. I look forward to continuing to champion these important causes for democratic renewal for all Albertans. Mr. Speaker, the people have spoken, and they deserve to be heard every day, not just on election day, and that's exactly what I intend to do during my time in the Assembly.

I'm proud, Mr. Speaker, to represent one of our province's leading agricultural regions. Looking back through the archives, I found a copy of former MLA Bob Clark's maiden speech, much like I'm giving today except that this one was given in the Assembly in 1961, in which he took time to encourage rural youth to take a longer, more serious look at agriculture before leaving for the city. Today that echo and that call remain true here in this Assembly and right across Alberta as I work to try and strengthen, do everything that I can to lay my voice to the importance of agriculture and rural Alberta right across this province.

Mr. Clark was one of the youngest members of any Canadian Legislature at that time, at the age of 23, and he became a leading voice for our region, calling the region the master farming constituency of our province. He also had the occasion while defending some of that farmland during debate – the debate was on whether or not the Red Deer River should be dammed – in this very Chamber to table a bag of that rich Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills soil right here in this very place. That bag of soil can still be viewed in the Legislature Library today, and that soil, Mr. Speaker, that was just as important in 1961, is important today.

Today across Kneehill and Mountain View counties hundreds of farm families remain on the land, harnessing the power of new technologies to continue the work that Alberta's pioneers started more than a century ago. While crop prices have fluctuated in recent years, beef and land prices remain high, providing strength for our economy and a key to our future. Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. Agriculture will remain a leading industry and a backbone to our economy, and it is the bedrock upon which many communities in this province have been built, and we all need to remember that long after the oil and gas are gone, our agriculture industry must remain strong, vibrant, and diverse so that the future of our province can continue to be as strong as we have enjoyed in the past.

Across the Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills region, Mr. Speaker, I can report that the people and the businesses are harnessing that power of innovation. In Linden we are the capital of Alberta for small rural industrial manufacturers. The innovation that is provided and delivered at Olds College is second to none, not only in this province but right around the country and, in fact, in North America. They are leading changes in industry and technology, and I encourage every member of this Assembly to visit the constituency and, in particular, to spend some time at Olds College and see the incredible work that is happening there.

In an era of global trade maintaining and building Alberta's competitive advantage helps create jobs and ensures economic growth. All regions of Alberta go through booms and busts, but I'm proud to represent a region where determination and vision continue to thrive in spite of present circumstances. They know that the government doesn't make Alberta strong, that the people of Alberta make this province strong, and that is exactly what they continue to press into even today.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills do have some serious concerns about some of the things that happen in this Chamber. They are deeply concerned about this government's risky economic policies, that continue to hurt jobs. They have seen lots of talk from this government but little action, particularly on jobs. Even in this recent throne speech we had the opportunity yesterday to have some significant talk on jobs, and

when we saw Bill 1, what we saw was more of a glorified job description for the minister than it was a plan for jobs in this province. I can tell you that the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are concerned about the direction of this government.

Another issue that is important to the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, not just those people but the people right across this province, is the issue of property rights. They were tampered with in many respects by previous administrations, and my predecessor, Mr. Bruce Rowe, was correct when he noted, and I quote: property rights are not optional; they are a basic human right, fundamental to the progress of free societies right around the world. You, Mr. Speaker, and many members of this Chamber were reminded of that when we had the absolute pleasure and honour of having the Magna Carta here just late last year. It's a reminder of the importance of these rights that all of us have. It is a cause that is important to all Albertans, not just rural Albertans, and it's a cause that we on this side of the House will continue to press forward for comprehensive reform when it comes to property rights.

While there are some significant differences between the current government and the opposition on a variety of issues, at times there has been lots of agreement around property rights. Now, unfortunately, in the last number of weeks we've seen the government vote against some concrete solutions provided by the opposition that would have moved us back in the direction of restoring these property rights. But I still have faith that a day will come when the government will do the right thing, restore the property rights that have been eroded in this province, and it will be done because of the continual pressure from the Official Opposition and the people of this province to ensure that that is taken into account and that it is an important issue not to the government but to all of Alberta. It's one that we will continue to champion.

In addition to the reinstatement of property rights, the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills also have significant concerns about the direction of this government with respect to rural health care, democratic reform, and the increase of taxes, particularly in the area of the carbon tax. Now, I look forward to working with all of my colleagues on this side of the House to provide concrete solutions that the government can adapt and adopt to ensure that we are putting the best foot forward for all of Alberta. In pursuing these policies, we must be cognizant of the fact that our province is now facing an economic downturn, that has left thousands and thousands of fellow Albertans looking for work. Moving forward, our top priority must be to take action to bolster the economy and avoid making the situation worse, which is exactly what, unfortunately, we have seen from this government.

We Albertans, Mr. Speaker, have experienced these storms before, and we know that it is Albertans that will get us back on track. We need to remember what makes Alberta different. We need to remember what made Alberta great. In recent years thousands of people and companies packed up their roots and chose to have a fresh start here in Alberta. They didn't come for government programs; they didn't come for corporate welfare. They came for jobs and for lower taxes. They came here for opportunity. And that's exactly what we need to do: ensure that we have an environment that continues to create opportunity so that Albertans can do what they do best, and that is drive our economy.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me first say congratulations to my good friend the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills on his maiden speech in this Assembly.

While, as he said, it's certainly not the first time that he has spoken in this place, it is his maiden speech.

I have the pleasure of being the member's neighbour both here in the Assembly as well as back home. Great lengths of our ridings are attached; we share many counties and many school boards. We do travel to lots of events together, so much so, Mr. Speaker, that back home they've taken to calling us Penn and Teller, the famous magicians. Both the member and I are a little bit confused as to why, but that happens. We both share some of the most spectacular areas in this province that have a tremendous impact not only on our communities back home but, as well, on the province as a whole.

10:50

I would like it if the member could spend the remaining time that we have under Standing Order 29(2)(a) elaborating on what has happened and, with the things that have been presented in the throne speech recently, the impact that is happening back home in our ridings on the important areas that both of us share.

**The Speaker:** Just to clarify for the House, it's 29(2)(a) that we're dealing with right now.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I appreciate the opportunity to just briefly expand on a couple of the points that I was just wrapping up, and then I'm happy to address some of the significant concerns that I've heard over the last 24 hours from the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills with respect to the throne speech.

The people in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have spoken about the need for opportunity in our province, not for these unnecessary interventionist sort of economic policies that we've seen from the current government but things like reducing unnecessary bureaucratic red tape, things like recognizing that strong families build strong communities and that strong communities support strong families, things like trusting Albertans to make the right choice for their family and for their community. They're talking to me about restoring the idea of putting Albertans first because the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, Mr. Speaker, have a vision for Alberta, one that's shared by people across this province. Their vision, our vision, is of an Alberta that's strong and free, where hard work and dedication are rewarded with new hope and new opportunity.

That's exactly what I and what we on this side of the House intend to do: find ways to enable Albertans to be strong and resilient and recognize that they are the solution, that a strong economy and strong jobs mean a strong Alberta and a strong Alberta means a strong Canada. That's exactly what at a time like this we need the government to do. That's exactly what we need our province to do – the people of Alberta, the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills – and together we can ensure that our province regains its place in Confederation, that the ideals of Albertans are once again lifted up, held high, and championed right across the world, those ideals of free enterprise, more personal freedoms, less government intrusion. These are the things that are important to the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and as a result they're the things that are important to me.

**The Speaker:** Any other comments under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today filled with respect and humility to deliver my response to the Speech from the Throne. Let me first thank the voters of my fine riding of

Edmonton-McClung for electing me to serve them as their member in this 29th Legislature. Most of those Edmonton-McClung electors knew that I had been a perennial candidate for the NDP. In fact, I ran four times before being elected last May, the fifth, and I'm still ecstatic at being given this opportunity to fulfill a dream of elected public service that I've had since boyhood.

Begging the forgiveness of Tommy Douglas, I must admit that my first memories of public discourse which attracted me to aspire to public office were the firebrand speeches of another well-known politician that I viewed on our family's black-box style, black-and-white Emerson TV in 1963. He actually presided over the opening in March 1958 of our federal building, a month after I was born. Provincial Legislative Assembly members and staff now occupy that newly renovated structure, located just north of our Legislature.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I refer, of course, to the passionate and often impassioned Rt. Hon. John G. Diefenbaker, the late former Progressive Conservative Prime Minister of Canada. Call me strange, but politics interested me even at age five. The deaths and televised funerals about that time of two other formidable statesmen from that era also made an impression upon me. They were of John F. Kennedy and Winston Churchill. They told me about how societies rely upon the dedication and commitment to service of their elected representatives. We are a privileged group, we legislators, with a massive responsibility placed upon our shoulders. Never must we take that lightly. We are being counted upon by this and future generations to govern well and with foresight.

I take some of this countenance from my late maternal grandmother, Winnifred Ada LaBelle, as well, who served numerous terms as councillor and deputy mayor of the village of Thorhild, located about an hour's drive northeast of Edmonton. Thorhild was my first home as well. We lived next door to what was known in Thorhild as the big house, the house my grandmother and her husband, Joseph Edouard Napoleon LaBelle, built in 1947 when my grandfather, Nap, as he was known, returned from overseas service after five years during World War II in the Canadian army. Part of the big house was leased to Canada Post. My grandparents were the postmasters in Thorhild, and the post office was built as part of the house. It was leased to the federal government. My grandmother, who was known as Winn, was an entrepreneur as well as a public servant. You can be both.

The late Michael Senych, who served two terms as a member of this Assembly with the Social Credit Party, lived in a basement suite of that house for a number of years. Mr. Senych was a pillar of community service to Thorhild throughout his life. As he could have told you after losing his seat along with most of his Socred colleagues, in a healthy, prosperous, functioning democracy governments change from time to time. His tenure at the Legislature ended in 1971, when the Progressive Conservative government led by Peter Lougheed was elected. Who knew then that it would be 44 years before Albertans finally elected new leadership to represent them in May of 2015? Yes, the fundamental rules of politics 101 apply even to Alberta. When the public loses trust in their government and there is a credible alternative party in the wings, a free electorate will vote out the stale government, and a new government will be asked to start afresh.

That is what has happened in Alberta. Our NDP government has been given a chance to effectively govern this province. We have been granted the public trust that the previous government forgot how to value. More than that, we've been asked to implement our vision for the future of this province and Alberta's place within the Canadian federation.

To turn our vision into action is something that we in the current Alberta New Democratic Party have been thirsting for since the early days of the precursor federal party, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, and pioneers like M.J. Coldwell, J.S. Woodsworth, Tommy Douglas, and of course later, Grant Notley. We must honour that proud early legacy by governing with our eyes clearly focused on both the current serious issues Albertans face right now as well as on the long-term obstacles and opportunities we need to prepare for to protect future generations. As we all discovered last May, Albertans expect their government to focus on their interests, not on political expedience. Our government caucus recognizes and embraces this demand. We immensely value the trust that Albertans have placed in us.

Now, the constituency that I represent is named after Nellie McClung, one of the Famous Five Alberta women activists who won the Persons Case as adjudicated by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, or the JCPC, then the highest court of appeal available to Canadians. The JCPC ruled that women were indeed considered persons under section 24 of the British North America Act of 1867 and, therefore, could be appointed to the Senate. Nellie McClung was also instrumental in the suffrage movement in Manitoba and Alberta, and she became a member of this Assembly in 1921.

I have a special favour to ask of the members as well as the pages in the House. I would ask that if any current member or page finds the name of Nellie McClung inscribed into their desk drawer to please allow me to view it.

I'm inspired daily by the steadfast commitment to principle that Nellie McClung and the other Famous Five women activists displayed in unyielding fashion in the face of overwhelming odds during a time when women were not considered legally to be persons. Nellie McClung is a strong role model to me as I represent my constituents in this Assembly.

**11:00**

Now, I've lived for almost 30 years in the Edmonton-McClung riding. I bought my first house in the Jamieson Place neighbourhood in 1987, early in my career as a real estate agent.

Over the course of my career as a real estate agent I estimate that I sold about 800 properties either as listing agent or selling agent. Most of these were residential transactions. However, I did obtain my commercial designation in 2012 to shift my focus onto raw land and land development. My licence currently is deactivated to avoid any conflict of interest while I serve in this Chamber. However, being a real estate agent was very good preparation for my new role as an elected MLA. For 30 years I've been used to working long hours in the service of individuals and families who relied upon my expertise to protect their financial interest and satisfy their housing needs.

During my real estate career I served on the board of homeEd, the city of Edmonton's nonprofit housing corporation, for six years. HomeEd publicly owned and managed over 700 units of affordable housing. That board experience illustrated to me the need for an ongoing government commitment to provide safe, affordable housing to those in our society who are not served by market housing. I will continue to advocate for creative financing solutions and public ownership models that allow our government to properly maintain our current affordable housing stock and to build or acquire new units to address the current serious affordable housing shortfall.

I also have a continued interest in real estate industry matters and am working with industry members to bring pertinent issues to the government's attention.

Now, in Edmonton-McClung up to 30 per cent of some of the populations of the schools are First Nations. Teachers must be aware of and sensitive to the history, culture, and languages of their indigenous students. Soon after I was elected, I discovered that Phyllis Cardinal, one of the founders of the Amiskwaciy Academy in Edmonton, lived near me. Her daughter Neva introduced us, and within three weeks Phyllis had me in meetings with other educators to discuss a pilot project to teach teachers how to properly teach their indigenous student populations. Very sadly, Phyllis Cardinal died a few weeks ago. I have pledged to her family that I will continue to work with them and their project team to move forward with Phyllis's goal that no indigenous child shall be shortchanged in their education.

Now, there are a number of adult bungalow complexes and one major aging-in-place facility in Edmonton-McClung as well. All MLAs can relate to the delicate situation of seniors' housing. Almost all seniors wish to stay in their own home as long as possible. We also know that this is by far the most economical way to house our senior population. I'm committed to exploring solutions which provide supports that allow our seniors to safely reside in their own homes or apartments even when faced with increasing mobility or health challenges. This is a win-win investment, in my view.

Now, Alberta society is very diverse; Edmonton-McClung is no exception. About 70 per cent of Edmonton's 5,500-plus Jewish population lives in Edmonton-McClung, which is also home to Edmonton's largest synagogue, Beth Israel. The K to 9 Edmonton Talmud Torah School is also located in the riding. The MAC, Muslim Association of Canada, Rahma mosque operates in Edmonton-McClung as well. This thriving mosque has a thriving youth group that outreaches regularly with the community. I've worked with them and focused on efforts to deliver hampers at Christmas and engaged with another effort, that I'll talk about a little bit later, with that group and others in the riding. Six Christian churches also call Edmonton-McClung home.

Many people believe that west Edmonton has a uniformly wealthy population. While some of Edmonton's most affluent neighbourhoods are found along the North Saskatchewan River valley in Edmonton-McClung, about 20 per cent of the population in the constituency actually lives below the poverty line. Many newcomers to Canada live in rented apartments or townhouses in the centre of the riding.

Our lower income families need to be a priority for our government. Children supported well early in life have a much better chance of becoming self-sufficient adults. Therefore, the immigrant population in Edmonton-McClung as well as all the children in those families are a very big priority to me.

Now, I've always loved to travel. I hitchhiked across Canada for the first time when I was 16 years old. I've thumbed across large portions of our vast and beautiful country three other times, once in the wintertime on the way to Europe, when I flew from Gander, Newfoundland, to spend time in Europe riding the trains and hitchhiking around at age 20. I rode in the back of beer trucks, pickup trucks, and even got a ride once from Joey Smallwood's youngest brother in a dump truck that he was delivering from Port aux Basques, Newfoundland, to New Brunswick. He had no interest whatsoever in politics or much respect for his brother. Nonetheless, it was an interesting ride.

We need to encourage and support travel by young people both within Canada and abroad. There's no greater way to appreciate one's own home than to experience someone else's. Now, I've been to every continent on this Earth at least twice except for Antarctica, which I've only been to once, in 2012. I was lucky enough to get inside of Captain Scott's hut, built in 1910, at Cape Evans on Ross

Island, which is located about 78 degrees south, nearly as far south as a ship can sail on the planet. Many places I've been to were functioning democracies; many were not. I wish democracy for the world. It ain't perfect, but it beats the alternatives by a country mile. Now, I could go on for some time, but I'll finish now by saying that there is no place on this planet I would rather be than right here, right now, representing the people of Edmonton-McClung in the Alberta Legislature.

Like all Albertans, I wish that our economic circumstances were better. However, we have endured numerous economic troughs in the past, caused in large part by our overreliance on energy royalties to fund our operational budget. We all know that this has to change. Our NDP government will approach this task in a responsible manner, in what I call the Hippocratic way, by taking great effort first of all to do no harm by maintaining our public services, like education, health care, and affordable housing initiatives, through this cyclical downturn while bending the cost curve over the longer term to keep these services sustainable. All the while we know how important it will be to keep Albertans informed about our objectives and the options we have to choose from to achieve them.

Now, Albertans can rely on our government to guide them through these stormy waters. We are completely focused on our service to them, and I promise you that we will be prepared to face their judgment come the next election based on a sound record of responsible economic management and innovative approaches to the chronic challenges we face today. Let's all get to work.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), hon. member?

**Mr. Hinkley:** Yes, please. Thank you, Madam Speaker. To my colleague from Edmonton-McClung, thank you very much. Thank you for your insight into our government's vision of a new Alberta filled with hope and change. I do appreciate your experience and passion that you bring to your job as MLA. I want to wish you all the best. What I would really like to ask you now is if you would take some time to elaborate on the engagement of youth in your riding of Edmonton-McClung.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you for the question. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I recently met with people in the riding who are going to help me in my effort to engage with groups that I've discovered, groups of young people who are really looking to assist their community, make it a better place, and engage themselves. My job, I believe, as an MLA is largely one of a facilitator, to identify groups of people and make connections between them, and this is one of the things that I'm going to do with the youth in the community.

I recently ran into a woman, named affectionately the Graffiti Granny, within the riding. She actually is Catherine Backewich, and along with Constable Trevor Henderson of the Edmonton Police Service she will engage to eliminate graffiti in the riding, which is really a nuisance as much as anything else. The students that have talked to me about it are quite excited about adopting this work.

**11:10**

Now, the Graffiti Granny has been doing this work all by herself, and it's a huge, huge effort. She and her husband will patrol the riding and actually erase and eliminate graffiti or paint over the graffiti that they've found using supplies given to them by the city of Edmonton under a program they have to accomplish this task. However, I do know that she needed help, so what we're doing is engaging the youth from mosques, churches, synagogues, schools

to create the Graffiti Granny's army, to ensure that whole neighbourhood is freed of this pest of graffiti, which is commonly reoccurring.

That's one way that we're looking to allow the youth of the community to get together and help each other make the community a better place. That I'll use as a starting point to hopefully find other tasks along with their self-appointed missions to ensure that they feel that they're making a contribution to the riding and the neighbourhood. That's really what they want to be given, an opportunity to serve.

Now, one other thing that I feel strongly about in the community as a way of engaging youth and the community is to really support the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. I grew up in a community league in Edmonton called Wellington Park. They are a real gem that is quite unique to Edmonton. In most cities, if you talk about a community league and you ask them about it, they really don't know what you're talking about because Edmonton is quite unique in having this system of community leagues, which have actually functioned very well under trying circumstances for decades.

In a situation where families now will bus their students or drive their students across communities, they won't necessarily be going to the school that's in their own neighbourhood. Therefore, you don't have the same cohesiveness and attachment to that community league that you once had. But even in the face of that dispersion of the population the community leagues have still stayed together and, I believe, now are filling needs that are different from what they initially did. You would have family members taking tap dancing lessons or going to the local arena or having other courses that were taken through the community league. Now the community league members get together and provide tennis opportunities, wading pools, splash parks, green shack programs, any program where, really, if a group of concerned citizens wants to get together at the community league level, they can actually approach each other and put it together at the community league. They deserve our support.

That's one other way that I'm hoping to serve and pull people together in the community and also engage our youth, to really make sure that the community leagues are continuing to be a vital element of the fabric of the city of Edmonton and, hopefully, maybe exporting it to other cities and communities in the province.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'd like to call on the Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my deepest honour to rise today and to deliver what is both my maiden speech and, in fact, the first maiden speech for the constituency of Calgary-Acadia. Members of this House may not realize that Calgary-Acadia was one of the new constituencies created in 2010, primarily from the former riding of Calgary-Egmont.

[The Speaker in the chair]

It is an honour and a privilege to serve in Alberta's first NDP government, with so many women and with Alberta's first openly LGBTQ MLAs. It's an honour for each of us to be here representing the people of our communities, and I know that we all take this responsibility seriously. As a mother who works outside of her home, it's also incredible to have the first sitting MLA to give birth while in office and to witness first-hand how our Legislature is becoming more family friendly, with members from both sides of the aisle supporting these efforts. Pregnant and employed mothers across Alberta can attest to the importance of a supportive work environment and supportive colleagues. With one new baby in our

midst and my own on the way, I am pleased to see the ways that our workplace is adapting to support parents with small children, and I look forward to seeing the ripple effects in workplaces across our province.

I would also like to take a moment to thank my beautiful family – my husband, Scott, and my daughter Zoe – for their love and support throughout this process. I would especially thank Scott for his encouragement to put my name forward for election and for his words of support during the campaign and, particularly, the night before election night, when he said: “Work hard tomorrow. You just might win this thing.” His support in the months since my election has been invaluable, and I couldn’t do this without his love and the work he does to keep our household running. I would also like to thank my parents, Jean and Henry Zimmerman, for instilling in me the values of hard work, of caring for others, and of public service. It is because of their unfailing love and support that I am here today.

I would also like to thank the voters of Calgary-Acadia for putting their trust in me and for selecting me to represent them in this Assembly. In the months since I was elected, I’ve had the honour and the privilege of meeting many, many people who live and work in my riding. We’ve met at barbecues, pancake breakfasts, skating parties, teas at seniors’ centres, classrooms, constituency office open houses, and everywhere in between. Hearing their stories, their concerns, and their hopes for the future has been an incredible experience, and I look forward to continuing to hear from the residents of Calgary-Acadia and continuing to represent their views as their MLA.

Calgary-Acadia is a vibrant constituency in southeast Calgary with a population that ranges from young families such as mine to seniors, who were among the original homeowners who settled when our communities were developed in the 1960s, and to everyone in the spectrum between. Calgary-Acadia includes the residential communities of Acadia, Fairview, Manchester, Maple Ridge, Riverbend, Southwood, and my home community of Willow Park. It also includes the industrial community of Alyth-Bonnybrook-Manchester and one of Calgary’s busiest retail hubs in the Deerfoot Heritage area.

We’re lucky to have two major fitness centres and recreation facilities with the Acadia recreation complex and the Trico Centre, and we will soon be home to an indoor and outdoor tennis centre. We have active and involved community associations throughout the riding as well as the FLC Seniors Club, which offers social and wellness programs to seniors in our community and throughout the city. In fact, it’s one of the largest seniors’ clubs in Canada.

Calgary-Acadia is also home to many schools of all grade levels. The schools feature a mix of mainstream programming as well as French immersion programs at all grade levels and an arts-focused middle school. It’s easy to see why families would choose to move to Calgary-Acadia, and I am proud to call Calgary-Acadia my home. I’m also proud to be elected as the first New Democrat in the constituency as well as the first woman MLA for this riding.

While I was campaigning and in the months since my election, I’ve had the opportunity to speak with constituents from all walks of life. They’ve shared with me their concerns for their families’ future and indeed for our province’s future. Parents expressed concern for their children’s education. Would there be enough teachers to meet the demands and the needs of our growing student population? Would there be enough supports for children with special learning needs?

I spoke with mothers who opted to stay out of the workforce or who limited their working hours because they couldn’t afford child care or because the waiting lists for placement were too long. I spoke with home-care workers, working hard to support the

members of our community, who are concerned about the level of supports available to our seniors. I spoke with people of all walks of life and all ages who are concerned about the future of our health care system and worried about cuts to front-line services. I spoke with people who’ve recently lost their jobs in our economic downturn or who are worried about losing their jobs and are worried about the future of our resource-based economy.

Each person I have spoken with was looking for change. They were looking for a government that represented them and was ready to listen to them, that was ready to work hard to make our province a better place to live. That is just what we will do as a government, work to implement the issues highlighted in the Speech from the Throne as well as the platform that I and my fellow MLAs on this side of the aisle ran on, promises such as working to get pipelines built to diversify our energy market, pursuing an economic development strategy to create jobs and diversify our economy, investing in a greener, more sustainable economy, taking a responsible approach to public spending, and pursuing democratic reform to ensure public accountability.

**11:20**

We will also continue to build on our platform commitments such as building a lifelong learning system that brings out the potential in us all, building a health system that is there when we need it, and restoring stable support for health and education through a fair and progressive tax system. We’re going to continue investing in stable and predictable funding for our schools and postsecondary education and in stable and predictable funding for our health system so that universal, accessible, and high-quality health care will be there when Alberta families need it, and that’s not just for emergency and urgent care but also long-term care and home care. In order to meet the many challenges facing our health system, we as a province must invest more in prevention and early intervention in both mental and physical health.

Mr. Speaker, these are the things that Albertans asked for. These are the things that I ran on. These are the things that matter to me and that I have fought for my entire adult life. In the months since the election I spoke with many hundreds of people in the riding who continue to echo those same wishes for our province’s future and who recognize that we face difficult times and that we must make wise choices with the resources we have. This is not the first time that we as a province have had these conversations, but it is the first time the government is taking a different approach.

When I was a high school student in the early 1990s, the government of the day began cutting spending for education, for health care, and for other essential services. I saw those cuts as damaging to our social programs, to the very fabric of our society, and I began speaking out against that plan. My very first political debate was at dinner with my father, who saw things a little differently than I did, and I’d like to take a moment to thank my dad for helping me hone my debate skills.

This is the debate that is currently happening at dinner tables, coffee shops, and workplaces across our province. How do we build an Alberta we can be proud of? How do we manage a financial downturn and a tough economy in a way where we support all Albertans to reach their fullest potential, in a way that supports Albertan families? How do we encourage our small and medium-sized businesses, and how does government support the job creators and innovators in our communities and in our industries? How do we ensure that Albertans have access to the workforce and skills training and retraining they need to build bright futures for themselves and their families?

Mr. Speaker, the road ahead is not an easy one. The ongoing low international price of oil has taken a huge toll on our province and

on everyday Albertans. The decrease in royalty revenues have had an enormous impact on our provincial budget and on the business plans for our departments moving forward. There are difficult choices to be made in order to hold our departments to the growth targets that were outlined in Budget 2015.

However, as an Albertan and as someone concerned with social justice and the well-being of all Albertans I am grateful that it is this government that will be making these choices. I am grateful that these choices will be made by a government and a caucus that respects Albertans and respects our valuable social services. I am grateful that these choices will be made by representatives that believe in taking a measured and thoughtful response rather than mandating cuts without thought to the impact on Albertans and on the services we rely on. I am grateful that these choices will be made by representatives who will not sacrifice our long-term recovery for our short-term balance sheet. There are difficult choices coming, and I know that I and the rest of this team are absolutely up to the task.

In my career before this I worked as a reporter for a small community newspaper in Ontario, which gave me a strong sense of community and of the way that decisions made at all levels of government impact the lives of all people. I worked as a communications co-ordinator and campaign organizer at a students' union in British Columbia, working to reduce tuition fees so that all students could access a high-quality postsecondary education, to promote academic freedom and the rights of students to organize. I saw how education changes lives and how people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds can benefit from access to higher education.

I've also worked in the oil and gas sector, both at an engineering firm and at a junior producer. I've seen boom-and-bust cycles in our energy sector, and I am confident that our communities can move through this current cycle, as we have the ones before it. I've also had the honour of managing someone else's small business and of starting my own. I know how hard small-business owners work and how much they care for the people who work for them and ensure that their people have a living wage.

I have spent my career working in small teams with common goals and a common sense of how to get there. While the size of our caucus is a little larger than the teams I'm used to working with, I am thrilled to say that we share common goals and a sense of how to get there.

Throughout my life I've advocated for our health care system, for our education system, for supports to families and supports to seniors. I have spoken out against cuts to social services. I have spoken out against measures that increase inequality in our province and that have hurt the most vulnerable members of our society. I am so grateful to be here in this Assembly, where I have the opportunity to vote in favour of and support all of those things that I have worked for and advocated for.

I believe that a great society is one that cares for all of its members and all members of our community. I believe that the best way to a prosperous province is to work for equality for all members of our society and to remove the systemic barriers that prevent members of our community from reaching their full potential. I am so proud to be a part of Alberta's first NDP government, a government that will work hard to support these vital programs and to support all Albertans.

I look forward to all of the positive changes that we will bring to our province and the ways that we will support Albertans through these trying times. It is an honour to be part of such a diverse caucus and one that is so representative of the people of Alberta and that works hard to support everyday Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to congratulate the previous speaker on her maiden speech, and also I'd like to congratulate her on her recent appointment to the Associate Minister of Health portfolio. As a former front-line health care worker myself I'm proud to have someone who's so dedicated to serving the public and who has spent, as she said, much of her adult life campaigning for these types of things that will support families here in Alberta.

She also mentioned how she's expecting an addition to her own family and the support that she's received from her family while she's gone through an adjustment, learning to be an MLA and now as Associate Minister of Health, travelling across the province, meeting with people all over the place and helping families to cope through these difficult times. She mentioned about making sure that teachers are in classrooms for the children and that we have health care workers in our hospitals that can take care of patients. I just wanted to see if she could elaborate a little bit on what the experience has been like for her as Associate Minister of Health over the last several weeks and on how her family has helped support her through that process.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you to the member for the question. In the weeks since my appointment I've had a lot of opportunity to journey to many of our communities and meet with health care providers, whether it be, you know, in a hospital environment in Calgary or visiting the town of Milk River and meeting with the town doctor there. Ultimately, what I've seen anywhere that I've been so far in our province – and there is still very much of it for me to visit – is that the folks who work in our health care system are deeply concerned about the well-being of their patients and care very deeply to make sure that they're able to provide the best care possible. I think that a big part of our role within the Ministry of Health is going to be finding ways to continue to support that.

We know that in the current economic situation we're not going to be able to throw money at problems to make them go away, so a big piece of the work we have going forward is going to be around an analysis of the programs that we provide and finding ways to do things better in our hospitals, drawing on the experience of our front-line health care providers – our nurses, our RNs, our physicians, and, really, everyone who is in the hospital environment as well as in our primary care networks – to learn from their experience about the things that are working, things we can do better.

Also, a long-term project – you know, any journey has to start somewhere – is beginning to move towards a larger focus on preventative care and moving towards a more wellness-based approach. We know that once we see someone in a hospital, there are many opportunities to help guide their health journey in a slightly different way if we were able to maybe intervene sooner in the case of a mental health illness or perhaps for someone who is a cancer patient or a cardiac patient. More focus and support for healthy living choices would have maybe made a difference in that person's life. So continuing to build upon that and supporting Albertans in their own health journeys is, really, a key piece of our role moving forward.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

The chair would recognize the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly. It's an honour for me to rise today to speak for the first time in this Assembly as the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek. I'd

like to extend first of all my very belated sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, and to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your elections to your demanding positions. I've thought a lot about how much we all appreciate your encouragement to all members to remember that honesty, integrity, and decorum play such a major role in the MLA job description.

11:30

I'd also like to congratulate all the members elected to serve in this 29th Legislature, especially those who, like me, are here for the first time. I especially want to congratulate our Premier, Rachel Notley, for her vision and her leadership. As we begin the Second Session of the 29th Legislature, I'm hopeful that we'll all be able to weather the storm of the current economic and energy downturn. The Speech from the Throne outlines some very positive measures to help us persevere and prosper.

There are so many people in the NDP who have inspired and helped me in this journey to this place that I'm not able to mention them all, but I will state my heartfelt and genuine gratitude to all of my volunteers. I'd also like to express my high regard for the hard-working volunteers in Edmonton-Strathcona who served as wonderful examples of how to be politically effective. Also, I'd like to thank my predecessor, Mr. Gene Zwozdesky, for his 22 years of service to the people of Edmonton-Mill Creek. His graciousness, his generosity, and his warmth of spirit were inspiring. I'm honoured to know so many wonderful people.

I'm frequently surprised when I stop to realize that I'm here in this distinguished building, charged with representing the people who elected me, the citizens of Edmonton-Mill Creek. That realization leaves me grateful and determined to fulfill my duties to be an active and involved representative for my constituents. I'm only the second representative in this constituency as it was formed in 1997.

The constituency that I represent is a diverse one with a growing population, many of whom are newcomers to Alberta, and changing boundaries as development continues to move south and east. The oldest of the Edmonton-Mill Creek neighbourhoods is Kiniski Gardens, which began in the 1970s and moved on from there, while the neighbourhood of Bisset was developed in the 1980s. The neighbourhood of Jackson Heights was developed after 1990. What's interesting about Jackson Heights is that it was named after Annie May Jackson, who became the first female police officer in Canada when she was appointed to the Edmonton police department in 1912. This is pretty significant the day after International Women's Day. So we have Annie Jackson.

The largest residential part of the constituency is the area primarily developed after 1995 and known as the Meadows, which is made up of seven neighbourhoods: Larkspur, Wild Rose, Silver Berry, Laurel, Maple, Tamarack, and Meadows.

Edmonton-Mill Creek supports many active businesses. The oldest business or residence in Edmonton-Mill Creek is the Millcreek Nursery, which operates from a 100-year-old family farm within Edmonton city limits. In a country atmosphere complete with a big red barn it provides a great selection of trees, shrubs, and perennials as well as decorative gift and garden decor, a coffee bar, and a children's play area. Eighty acres of field production are being maintained, meaning that they also have a wide selection of large ornamental trees.

Mill Creek also supports several breweries, one of which, Labatt's brewery, is the fifth-largest brewery in Canada, and Alley Kat brewery, which is one of the new artisanal breweries.

Edmonton-Mill Creek is also the home of many light industrial businesses, ranging from plumbing material suppliers, building suppliers, and petrochemical analysis companies, where oil and gas

samples from northern and central Alberta are analyzed. There are a myriad of other businesses and services within the constituency such as a television studio, which I toured, and several small radio stations, which I visited during the election.

In the not-for-profit sector one of the newest buildings in Edmonton-Mill Creek is the combined Meadows library and recreation centre, a facility which demonstrates the ability and willingness to collaborate to create something truly new.

The remaining part of the constituency is made up of large, light industrial parks with some scattered residences and mobile-home parks and acreages. Interspersed with the development in this area are a number of ponds and water flow collection sites, which are occupied by waterfowl, fish, and a variety of mammals in the surrounding grasslands and treed areas. What you see throughout the constituency is a variety of buildings and many open places and green spaces; what you don't see are high-rises and office towers.

Now, the question arises: how did I come to be the MLA of this growing and dynamic area of Edmonton? It all began many years ago. My family and I moved to Edmonton, just before I started school, to a small house near Hazeldean school. Our house at that time was on the block farthest south in Edmonton. Right across from us was a farm, complete with cows, which I found as a small child quite fascinating. We had no city utilities because it was too far south at that time, but there was so little affordable housing then that even a very basic, off-the-grid house was welcome as it allowed us to live and work in the city. Memories of living on the outskirts of a rapidly growing city came back to me when I drove around a new neighbourhood in my constituency and saw the houses being built on the eastern edge of the city with very few amenities in place yet. I felt that I had come full circle from my early years, and I felt again the sense of being on the edge of civilization.

I come from a long line of travellers and adventurers, with my knowledge of family journeys going back as far as the early 1800s, when one family branch came from Ireland, another came from Germany, and a third came from England. They all settled in Ontario, working in various occupations and providing their children with good educations. Many in the next generation headed west. My grandfather left Ontario in the late 1800s, first to take part in the gold rush in B.C. and later to take up ranching in southern Alberta where the village of Schuler is now, near the Saskatchewan border. He did well on the Drowning Ford Ranch raising a family, helping to support his brothers going through medical school, and serving as a justice of the peace. I still remember the pictures of him and his neighbouring ranchers taking their cattle, their Texas longhorn, through the dip after they'd been brought up to Canada on a cattle drive.

Another grandfather and grandmother came to Alberta from Manchester, England, settling in Medicine Hat to work for the Canadian Pacific Railway. They lived there, raised their family, contributed to their adopted community for the rest of their lives. All of these people left their settled lives looking for something better, knowing that they would probably never see their homes again but believing that they would find opportunities and eventual success in their new lives if they worked hard and never gave up.

I'm not that kind of adventurer, but my travels have taken me all over Alberta, where I've worked, lived, and raised my children. I come from Medicine Hat, in southern Alberta, near the Cypress Hills, moved to Edmonton at an early age, and as an adult lived and worked in Edmonton and throughout northern and central Alberta. I've stood on the edge of Lake Athabasca beside the cairn commemorating the fur traders and explorers who once lived in that area, watched the sunset over the frozen lake, saw snowmobiles hauling sleds coming off the lake in winter, followed trails marked with small trees across the lake up the Canadian Shield that flanks

the lake and into the town of Fort Chipewyan. A long distance away, in southern Alberta, I've stood at the top of Horseshoe Canyon in Cypress Hills, looking over into the Montana hills.

In the Rocky Mountains I've seen mountain sheep who chose not to move off the trail to make way for hikers; bears, both black and grizzly, who, luckily, were reasonably shy of people; elk, lots of them; the occasional coyote and eagle; and even a marmot and a pika or two.

I've been fortunate enough to have flown from Fort McMurray to Fort Chipewyan and have been truly amazed by the amount of impact humans have had on the landscape. I've also heard stories from local people about the changes they have witnessed in the north and how they've been coping with the changing world. I feel very privileged to have travelled to the places I've been to and believe my travels have led me to learn about many different ways of living.

11:40

I was not particularly political as a young person, but I did believe that everyone should bear some responsibility for ensuring that our fellow Canadians are cared for, with the poor and the vulnerable being most in need of our care and protection. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." These words reflect what I believed, and these beliefs became the foundation for my social-democratic principles.

After I retired from teaching, which had taken up a good portion of my life, I was able to become involved in politics as a volunteer for NDP campaigns and as a member of a constituency association. I also joined the Canadian Federation of University Women, an organization that's been working since 1919 to improve the status of women and to promote human rights, public education, social justice, and peace. To support education, they raised money to fund bursaries and scholarships for female University of Alberta students. I've been involved in – this is CFUW, the Canadian Federation of University Women – their active environmental group as well, looking at environmental issues such as how the neonicotinoid class of pesticides affects our bees, with the resulting information and conclusions shared with other CFUW members. CFUW provided me with the opportunity to meet and talk with women doing research in many different fields such as the effect of climate change on the northern environment, the history of Chinese restaurants in Alberta, and the role played by fungi in the pine beetle devastation.

In addition to work and family, which are always my priorities, my preretirement life focused on academic achievement, involving doing graduate work, doing a master's degree, completing the work necessary to become a registered psychologist, while my postretirement life has focused on applying my learning and experiences to issues that affect people in a variety of ways. This transition helped me to make the move from teacher and psychologist to politician, with the skills of listening, learning, and understanding being constant throughout.

I was first invited to run as an NDP candidate in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo in 2012, where I learned how to talk to the media, and I ran again as a candidate in Edmonton-Mill Creek in the 2015 provincial election. Meeting people in my constituency and listening to their concerns gave me the resolve to work hard to be elected so that I could represent them in the Legislature in Alberta. My fellow MLAs are stalwart, supportive, and compassionate people. I feel incredibly lucky to be one of such an Assembly.

When I was preparing to write this speech, I looked for inspiration and found some in the words of former MLA Marie Laing, who wrote: as a social democrat, a feminist, an academic,

and a New Democrat I have a dream and a vision for a world founded in compassion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address the Assembly, and thank you, fellow members of this Assembly, for listening.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to congratulate and thank the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Creek for her maiden speech. I enjoyed it very much. I would like to ask the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek: in her new role as MLA what are some of the challenges and concerns that she is hearing from her constituents?

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you for the question. This is one that I've been hearing from a lot of people. With it being such a new constituency, all the services are basically growing with the development. As people come in, then they're provided with the services, so what we're seeing a need for is schools. A lot of the schools, even though they're very new, are showing signs of being overcrowded, and parents naturally are worrying about what they will be looking forward to in a few years. For instance, a parent with a preschooler was asking me: well, what will I be expecting in a few years when my child enters school? It's a good question. I visited one of the newest schools in the constituency a few days ago and had some good conversations with the teachers about the portable classrooms or manufactured classrooms, basically portables, which they're using already to be able to make their school adequate, to provide adequate space for the new students coming in.

Now, one of the things I'm pleased to say is that, visiting in the constituency and doing my work last year as a university facilitator, I was able to go to a lot of schools to supervise student teachers, and I saw some incredible work going on in the schools. That was a really positive part. The worrying part is getting enough schools up and running quickly enough to meet the needs of the people moving into the area.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I'd like to begin by quite belatedly, perhaps, congratulating all the new members of this House along with those who are returning. It's truly a privilege and honour to join everybody in this Legislature. I wish to give special thanks to my friend and colleague the hon. Minister of Education because his encouragement has been exceptional and invaluable to me throughout my political career, and I'm sure it will continue.

I'm honoured and humbled to represent the constituents of Edmonton-South West. I was elected on a platform that promised change, promised new energy, and promised to do what is truly right for Albertans.

Edmonton-South West is a constituency located in the deep south and west in the city. This is an area that has seen much growth and prosperity over the last decade. We know that 5 out of the 10 fastest growing neighbourhoods in Edmonton are in my constituency. These people, the people of Edmonton-South West, are young, they're old, they're working families, they're men, women, and children. They are people who work hard every day and demanded



better of their government, and those people made that decision in this past election.

Mr. Speaker, we enter a new chapter in Alberta history with this Legislature. Under a new Premier, under a new government this Legislature is committed to serving Albertans. This Legislature is committed to serving the people. It's committed to diversifying our economy and getting Albertans and my constituents back to work through these difficult economic times.

What the people expect – no; what the people deserve, Mr. Speaker – is a commitment to things like stable education funding. A K to 12 education requires that we spend the time and money with our students. It demands that we have enough teachers. It demands that we have enough educational assistants. It demands that we keep these class sizes down. Quality student education should never be sacrificed to save a couple of bucks, and that's what I'm committed to fighting for in this House. Good government recognizes this.

Good government recognizes that when there is an infrastructure debt, the solution is not to cut spending; the solution is to invest in a quality future. The solution is to invest in a quality future for our children. Investing in this future actually requires investing in ourselves as well. My constituents, Mr. Speaker, are working families. My constituents are people who work hard every day to provide the absolute best that they can.

How do we do this, and how can we help invest in ourselves? We can start by supporting our parents. We can start by providing an affordable child care program, and that's why I'm committed to protecting our children, our families, and our communities by fighting for a child care program that will work for our families. This affordable child care would allow parents to spend more time with their children, and Albertans simply deserve better than to be stretched thin just to meet basic child care needs. Mr. Speaker, that's what I commit to fighting for every day in this House. These small things, these ideas of investing in our children, investing in ourselves, and investing in our families are the ones that I was elected on.

Mr. Speaker, it's truly an honour and a privilege to be elected as the youngest member in the history of this great province, to bring this much-needed breath of fresh air to this Assembly. I am the youngest MLA in one of the youngest ridings with many of the youngest families, and it was truly the passion and the drive of these young people that first inspired me to become involved in politics.

I, when I first got involved in politics, spoke at a rally organized by high school students against budget cuts to education, and it was actually at that rally where I met the hon. Minister of Education. From that fateful day, Mr. Speaker, from that sunny afternoon I've committed to protecting the interests of our education system, meeting with and consulting teachers, administrators, and educational assistants because the needs of our students and the needs of our families are at the forefront of my concerns.

**11:50**

As someone who recognizes the needs of the young families in my constituency and was very recently a member of the postsecondary education programs in this province, Mr. Speaker, it is near and dear to me to commit to advocating for education, students, and teachers because when I see schools in Edmonton-South West at nearly 135 per cent enrolment, it becomes obvious to me that they deserve an advocate, that they deserve someone who will stand up for them in this House and fight for what they need.

I am proud, I am excited, and I am beyond thrilled to be a member of a party and a caucus that will allow me to bring about the positive change that this province so desperately deserves. As we heard in the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, we are facing a deep slump in the

international price of oil, and we as Albertans must stand together. This government will be forced to make difficult decisions to protect Albertan families by keeping with our core values, that Albertans are optimistic people and that Albertans care for each other and their society. This is why I'm thrilled to be able to support a government that will stabilize services in a prudent and sustainable way, a government that will stimulate economic growth and diversification, a government that supports job creation, and a government that has a plan for sustainable spending through better decision-making.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to work with a government that recognizes the necessity for promoting job creation and diversification. Alberta's New Democrat government is focused on renewing hope, listening to Albertans, and leading change to create a fair and prosperous future for our province.

In the last several months that we've been on the job, I've been able to go back to my constituents time and time again with concrete achievements that continue to make things better for everybody in this province and especially my constituents. I hear time and time again as I'm out in the community and on the doorsteps that Albertans are excited about what we've been able to accomplish. They are proud of this government. I'm honoured for the opportunity to be part of the caucus that is able to make such a profound difference in the lives of Albertans everywhere and especially my constituents back home. Mr. Speaker, my constituents deserve nothing less than the best, and I aspire to meet their expectations every day in my capacity as their MLA.

Mr. Speaker, I became an MLA because I believe in Alberta, I believe in Albertans, and I believe in this government. It is the duty of an MLA to ensure that their constituents are represented both in this House and outside of it. It's with this province's historic and first New Democrat government that we are able to bring about all of this positive change, that I can represent my constituents and bring about for them what they have asked for and what they deserve. We can provide the schools my constituents desperately need, hire the teachers that our students desperately deserve, and deliver the services that Albertans expect.

Mr. Speaker, history was made on May 5. History was made by toppling a dynasty, and history is forged every day that this Assembly brings forward legislation that strives to support Albertans where they have been ignored before. No member of this caucus put their name on the ballot because they didn't believe in Alberta. No member of this caucus put their name forward for any other reason than that they wished they could make Alberta the best province it possibly could be. I am proud to represent my constituents. I am proud to have run because I truly believe in this government. I am proud to say that I will work as hard as I possibly can to change Alberta so that it can become the best Alberta it possibly can be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any questions of the hon. member under section 29(2)(a)? The Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** You got it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to congratulate the member on being the youngest member ever elected. As you can see by his speech, his political brain far surpasses his physical time on this Earth so far, though I do, you know, use pop culture references sometimes that he doesn't get, which makes me feel quite old, and I'm only 40. So thanks for that, Member for Edmonton-South West.

Your speech was quite impassioned. It's a pleasure to hear you expound on your constituents and what you want to do for them. To

that, speaking to your constituents and what you want to accomplish, I was just wondering if you could, I guess, elaborate a bit on kind of, maybe, what your goals are or what you'd like to do out there. I'd appreciate hearing that.

Thanks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the questions. We've definitely been doing a lot in my constituency. I've been door-knocking as often as I can. I've been meeting with constituents as often as I can because that's what matters. It's talking with the people in the communities. It's talking with the people and making sure that we can connect one-on-one, that I can bring their concerns back to this House, back to this government and represent them in a fulfilling manner.

We've been using things like MLA reports and sending notices of what we've been able to accomplish and when we will be having our town halls, Mr. Speaker, so that our constituents and my constituents can come and speak to me and say: these are the things I care about. We plan to do a lot more of these initiatives going forward, including things like MLA surgeries, where I will personally be going into communities and saying: come and see, and I will work with you one-on-one so that we can determine what we can do best to help you from our provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, we've spent a lot of time, I've spent a lot of time visiting things like seniors' centres, the schools in my riding, and when we receive the rest of them, I'll be visiting all of those as well because these are the things that matter as elected officials. These are the things that matter as MLAs. It is that we must be able to talk to the people. Hearing from constituents is what is most important to me in my job, and that's why I've done things like join constituents at community league meetings and community halls.

I will bring up one comment that a constituent made to me, the president of a community league, actually. He commented – their league has been established, I think, for 20, 30 years: Member, I think you may be the first elected official ever to stay for an entire community league meeting. That blew my mind because: why wouldn't you want to stay there for the entire time and spend time with your constituents and learn about what they care about and

learn about what's going on every day in their lives? Mr. Speaker, this is why I was elected. I was elected to serve my constituents. I was elected to go out into the community and meet with them. It wasn't to sit behind my desk all day and ruminate; it was to make sure that I understood what was happening in the community so that I could best help them be represented to the government, best help them be represented in this House, and best be able to make the decisions that we must as legislators, make the decisions that we must as elected officials.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour to have been able to go on and do all these things, and it is going to truly be my honour to continue to go on and continue to reach out into the communities, continue to meet with constituents and continue to have conversations frankly, one-on-one with as many people as I possibly can in my tenure here in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Westhead:** I'd like to congratulate the Member for Edmonton-South West on his impassioned speech and getting out in the community and really embodying what it means to be an MLA and listening to people. I also wanted to commend him for being, like he mentioned, the youngest MLA ever elected here in Alberta. You know, he became part of a very diverse caucus, people from all walks of life, all age ranges. We have the first LGBTQ members ever to be elected in Alberta. I wonder if he can tell us a little bit from his perspective as the youngest member ever to be elected what it's like to be part of such a diverse caucus, that really reflects the face of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** In a very short time.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will just note that it is truly amazing because we have this opportunity today, this opportunity to be . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I note the clock. Under Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. today. Thank you.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 9, 2016

Day 2

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 29th Legislature

### Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
 Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
 Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
 Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
 Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
 Official Opposition House Leader  
 Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
 Government Whip  
 Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
 Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
 Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
 Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
 Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
 Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
 Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
 Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
 Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
 Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
 Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
 Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
 Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
 Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
 Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
 Leader of the Official Opposition  
 Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
 Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
 Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
 Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
 Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)  
 Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)

Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
 MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
 Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
 Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
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 McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
 Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
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 McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
 McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
 McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
 Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
 Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
 Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
 Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
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 Premier  
 Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
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 Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
 Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
 Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
 Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
 Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
 Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

#### Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 9, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

Welcome. Normally there would be a prayer; as we move to the morning sessions, that has already taken place. One of the comments that I mentioned in the prayer, which we said together, our contemplations that we made this morning, was encouraging each and every one of us to show courage. To that theme, the morning's events that weren't as constructive as they might have been were based upon in part some learning that all of us made but most specifically myself, and I guess we become better and excellent by learning from our mistakes. So my respect to each of you for accepting those circumstances.

I would also, with the agreement of the House, because of some fairly significant guests and visitors and events that take place today, in anticipation that we may move past the 1:50 time period, ask in the event that we do for unanimous consent to move past 1:50 at this point if agreed.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute in this House to former members of the Assembly who have passed since we last met. Today we have the privilege of having the families of two of our former peers with us.

**Dr. Ian Wilson Carlyle Reid**  
May 27, 1931, to January 18, 2016

**The Speaker:** Dr. Ian Reid served the Legislative Assembly of Alberta as the Member for Edson from 1979 until 1986 and then as the Member for West Yellowhead from 1986 until 1989. After graduating from the University of Aberdeen, Dr. Reid immigrated to Canada and began a long career in medicine. His community involvement led to his election in 1979. Dr. Reid served as Solicitor General from 1984 to 1986, Minister of Labour from 1986 to 1988, and minister of the environment from 1988 to 1989.

**Hon. Donald Ross Getty, OC, AOE**  
August 30, 1933, to February 26, 2016

**The Speaker:** On May 23, 1967, the hon. Don Getty was first elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. During his tenure as a member he represented the constituency of Strathcona-West from 1967 to 1971, Edmonton Whitemud from 1971 to 1979 and again from 1985 to 1989, and Stettler from 1989 to 1993.

The hon. Mr. Getty served as minister of federal and intergovernmental relations from 1971 to 1975 and minister of energy and natural resources from 1975 to '79. On November 1, 1985, he was sworn in as Alberta's 11th Premier, serving as such until December 14, 1992. Throughout his service he made an impact on this Legislative Assembly and indeed on this wonderful province of Alberta, demonstrated by his 1969 motion to amend the standing orders to allow for radio and television coverage of session and by the establishment of Family Day in 1990. These were only some of his many accomplishments.

In a moment of silent contemplation and prayer I ask you to remember former of our members, Dr. Reid and the hon. Mr. Getty,

as you may have known them. If we could have a moment of silence, please. Amen.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with our admiration and our respect there is gratitude that needs to be shown to members of families. Each of us, let none of us ever forget that. For it's our families, the families that we have with us today, who have shared the burdens of public life and public office. Today I would like to welcome members of the Getty and the Reid families who are present in our Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your names and remain standing until all have been introduced.

From the Getty family: Mrs. Margaret Getty, wife of the hon. Don Getty; Darin Getty, son of Mr. Getty; Tanya Getty, daughter-in-law of Mr. Getty; and Samantha Getty, granddaughter of Mr. Getty.

From the Reid family: Neil Reid, son of Ian Reid; Andrea Reid, daughter-in-law of Dr. Reid; Kjell Reid, grandson of Dr. Reid.

Please let's show some emotion and respect for these families.  
[Standing ovation]

**Ms McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the 29 heads of mission, chargés d'affaires, and others who are participating in an economic diplomatic outreach mission. Among the delegation 26 distinct jurisdictions from five continents are represented. We are honoured by the presence of these representatives: ambassadors, High Commissioners, members of the diplomatic corps, and spouses. I would also like to acknowledge our federal partners from Global Affairs Canada, who were instrumental in arranging this mission.

1:40

Over the past few days our government has met with members of the international community and have told Alberta's story. We have also been able to exchange information like how Alberta has supported women entrepreneurship and how our best practices can be applied in the different regions represented here today. We also identified opportunities for international collaboration. As Alberta works towards greater economic diversification, we will need committed partners across the globe. Our province has always valued our relationship with our international partners, and as always we are equally dedicated to strengthening the links between us and to exploring new relationships as exciting opportunities present themselves.

Our honoured guests are seated in both the members' and public galleries. I would now like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** As is normally the case, we have some guests with us today. The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 18 grade 6 students from Parkallen elementary school, which is in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Riverview, which I represent. They are accompanied by their teacher Ms Jennifer Kolskog and parent volunteers for their visit today. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to welcome today the awesome grade 6 students from Velma E. Baker school accompanied by their teachers Ms Lynn Peacock and Mr. Philip Singh and their educational assistant Rose Miranda and parents Ms Nazreen Ali-Hefford, Ms Zineta Kulovac, and Ms Rose Petruk. If you'd stand up, please, we'll offer you the warm welcome of this House wherever you may be.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you 37 visitors from Lymburn elementary school from my Edmonton-McClung riding. They include teachers Ms Jeanne Commance and Mrs. Birgit Braid as well as parent helpers Mrs. Michelle Stead, Mrs. Kim Creighton, and Miss Debbie Diamond. I would ask that they now please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

I meant to say in our earlier introductions to our international guests that having children in this Assembly, in this Chamber, is one of the special events that all of us share. That you would be here as we honour two former members and particularly a Premier: you are at an historic event that's happened here today.

I would now recognize the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a friend and a mayor in my riding of Cardston-Taber-Warner, Mr. Henk De Vlieger. I'd like to have him rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you Peter Tindall and his granddaughter Emma Taylor. Peter Tindall works in my constituency office, and he is Chestermere-Rocky View's eyes and ears and is a gift to me and the people of those communities. He is a geologist and worked in the oil patch, and it's a background that's obviously instrumental to my portfolio. If you can't guess, I'm extremely grateful to have him on my team and consider him a part of my family. His granddaughter Emma is a resident of Okotoks and is 14. She's volunteered in my office in Chestermere and is hoping to one day intern there. Look out for this young lady; she's a real go-getter. I now ask you to rise and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to my friends in the Assembly a friend of mine, Robert Walker. Robert was a keen volunteer on my by-election campaign in the fall of 2014 and was so keen that he became my campaign manager in the general election this past May. I'm here in no small part because of Robert's efforts. It's also noteworthy that Mr. Walker was a law school classmate of the former Member for Calgary-Greenway and someone he considered a friend. I know we all did as well. Robert, if I could ask you to rise, please, and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud today to rise and introduce to you and through you several members of AUPE's

Legislative Committee. AUPE's Legislative Committee is made up of representatives from across the province who meet regularly to review the policies and procedures of the AUPE constitution as well as to routinely review legislation tabled in the House to provide their feedback from a labour point of view. Joining us today are Karl Clauss, Emille Currie, Derek Heslinga, Allan Lyons, and Bobby-Joe Borodey. I would ask that they please rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and introduce to you and through you a friend of mine, Ryan Rollier. Ryan I've known for quite a few years. He actually served as best man at my wedding. Because of the recent election, Ryan has become more involved in politics and currently serves as the vice-president of the Calgary-Shaw EDA. Ryan also has a long history of working to help build the oil industry here in Alberta through his contributions to sustainable tailings pond development. I would ask that he please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who have guests to introduce today?

## Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

### Hon. Donald Ross Getty August 30, 1933, to February 26, 2016

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with heavy heart that I rise to speak today about the passing of former Premier Don Getty. Alberta has lost a strong and compassionate leader, a man whose natural leadership abilities shone whether he was on the football field, in the boardroom, in this Chamber, or around his family's dinner table. Premier Getty was an incredible champion for this province, a dedicated public servant in the truest sense of the word, who gave nearly 20 years of his life to this Legislature. Who can forget the iconic photograph of the original six, Don Getty among them, arms linked and grinning from ear to ear, storming their way up the Legislature front steps full of energy and enthusiasm for their new job?

Mr. Speaker, one's contribution to history is always described and measured by those who follow. As time passes and our perspectives change and, I would suggest, as they become less driven by the events of the day and more reliant on a fulsome inventory of achievements in light of the historical context, on this basis I believe Premier Getty's record stands the test of time. He was a visionary whose contributions to Alberta and Canada made Canada and Alberta stronger, and they include laying the groundwork for the petrochemical industry that now thrives in our province; helping to grow forestry, technology, nonconventional oil projects in Alberta; working first with Premier Lougheed as Energy minister and intergovernmental affairs minister to establish Albertans' constitutional rights as owners of our province's natural resources and then continuing that leadership role at the federal level in the role of Premier of Alberta; creating the Alberta heritage savings trust fund; establishing the MacEwan University campus in downtown Edmonton; introducing the notion of a land base and self-government for the Métis people in Alberta; and helping our province take a leadership position in the country overall.

1:50

One of the greatest legacies, Mr. Speaker, was his support of families and the introduction of Family Day, a holiday where Alberta families can spend time together, strengthen bonds, and reconnect. Several other provinces have followed suit, and Family Day is now celebrated in Saskatchewan, Ontario, and British Columbia.

That legacy, of course, points to perhaps the greatest loss of all, that we've lost a dedicated family man, a loving husband to Margaret Getty for 60 years, a man who always made time to support his kids and contribute to their successes and be present throughout their lives, a compassionate and fair man, a man who was always, always a gentleman who treated others with respect and decency.

My father, Grant Notley, served as an MLA at the same time as Don Getty. They may have had opposing views on politics and policy, but they also had a mutual respect and understanding for one another. When my father passed away, Don and Margaret Getty reached out to us. The compassion they showed my family in that difficult time has always stayed with me. They knew that family and kindness should always transcend politics.

Mr. Speaker, for his decades of leadership in government, in business, and in sport Premier Getty has been honoured by Albertans and Canadians alike. He was an officer of the Order of Canada and a member of the Alberta Order of Excellence. He was an honorary chief, Kinnosayoo, of the Whitefish Lake Cree band and was awarded the order of the sash by the Métis Nation of Alberta for his work with indigenous communities. He's also remembered for his football career on the Edmonton Eskimos' wall of honour.

Mr. Speaker, we've lost a true Albertan, someone who helped shape our province's future, one that we are living today and will live for many years to come, and someone whose legacy will live on. His family is here with us today, as you have already mentioned, in the Speaker's gallery, and I'd like to ask the Assembly to wish them the warmest possible welcome yet again at this sad time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great honour that I rise today to speak on the passing of our former Premier. We first came to know Donald Ross Getty as a football player. He was a star quarterback at the University of Western Ontario. Then, like so many others in Canada, he picked up his young family and moved to Alberta. He moved to Alberta to chase an opportunity, like so many people, in this case an opportunity which was, unlike many people that came to Alberta, an opportunity to chase a football.

We all know what happened next. In his remarkable 10-year career with the Edmonton Eskimos Don Getty passed for over 8,000 yards, threw 58 touchdowns, and won two Grey Cup championships. Don Getty's name hangs on the Edmonton Eskimos' wall of honour at Commonwealth Stadium. He will be remembered as one of the greatest leaders in Alberta and a trailblazer for Canadian quarterbacks in the CFL. Who will ever forget some of the great, perfect passes that he made? Any football fan will remember those for sure.

What you don't know is that while Don Getty was winning Grey Cups, he was working in the energy sector by night, helping to build the industry that would benefit and continues to benefit all Albertans for generations to come. Back then football players almost had to take a job because they couldn't afford not to. They had to do that in order to make ends meet, but just making ends meet wasn't enough for Don Getty. He became a lands and

contracts manager and eventually an assistant general manager. Sooner or later – in fact, very soon – he founded his own company.

Then, as if football wasn't enough, he began here in the brutal sport of politics. He served as an MLA and continued to build our oil and gas industry as the Minister of Energy from 1975 to 1979. I was in Fort McMurray then, and he had a true impact on our community. In 1985 he was elected Premier. I remember that year because before he was elected, I met him and his wife, Margaret, in Fort McMurray at the Peter Pond Hotel. They influenced my own decision to join politics. I did actually vote to ensure that he became Premier. Don Getty will be remembered as a Premier who deeply respected Alberta and all its people. He was fiercely proud of our province and very proud of our resources. He made every decision with the intention of helping Alberta and not helping himself.

Don Getty said that his football experience played a key role in his political success. I'm sure it was probably some of those major hits that he took in football, but I think everybody in this room can relate to those words. Politics often feels like a contact sport. There's no doubt that in the throes of elections Don Getty took some of the hardest hits that he ever faced, but no matter how many times he got knocked down, Don Getty got up again.

Don Getty's life began in Alberta with just one single opportunity, and he took the ball and ran with it. He made the most of every opportunity he was ever given. He also fought for that extra yard every time. An officer of the Order of Canada, a member of the Alberta Order of Excellence, a winner of multiple Grey Cups, father, husband, and one of the greatest Premiers Alberta will ever have, Premier Don Getty lived his life as a champion. Let us all remember him as a champion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent of the House to permit the leader of the third party, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, and the Member for Calgary-Elbow to respond to the ministerial statement if they wish to do so.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition for their kind and moving tributes. Much has rightly been said about former Premier Don Getty's prowess on the football field, leading the Edmonton Eskimos to two Grey Cup championships in 1955 and '56. Much has also rightly been said about his many accomplishments and contributions over his years in public life as an MLA, cabinet minister, businessperson, and Alberta's 11th Premier. I want to thank the Premier for mentioning that picture of the six MLAs with arms linked coming up. I would like the family to know that that hangs in the PC boardroom now and still serves as an inspiration to us every day.

We've heard how skilfully he raised Alberta's profile on the national stage, forged new and lasting relationships with indigenous people, celebrated the value of family through the creation of Family Day, and shepherded our province through some of the most difficult economic times this province has ever faced. But what stands out to me in all the tributes we've heard since Premier Getty's passing are his qualities as an ordinary man. Those who knew Premier Getty have spoken of his kindness, integrity, his steady yet understated leadership style. Premier Getty was a modest man. He didn't crave the limelight or overplay the drama and theatre that are so often inherent in politics. He was a man who

came to work each day and simply got the job done. He did what needed doing with humility and to the best of his ability, and in so doing, he accomplished so much for Alberta. Despite having left politics some 23 years ago, we continue to reap the benefits of Premier Getty's work today in every corner of our province.

On Saturday as his family, friends, and loved ones laid the former Premier to rest, we heard of how much respect Don Getty had from his colleagues in this Legislature and, interestingly enough, especially from those across the floor. Mr. Speaker, as each of us in this Chamber knows, we all too often in politics get caught up in the emotions of the business. It's easy to get caught up in our profound and real differences, but Premier Getty taught us never to lose sight of the fact that our most important similarity is our mutual love for Alberta. And it is through this common thread that despite our disagreements on matters of policy we respect each other as people and as servants of the public, an example that Don Getty set. In our own way we are here to make life better for Albertans.

As Progressive Conservatives my colleagues and I can't help but remember Premier Getty as one of the architects of our party. He was drafted into politics by former Premier Peter Lougheed, and together they were first elected to the Legislature in 1967. Along with four other maverick Progressive Conservative MLAs, Lougheed and Getty spent four years as the Official Opposition, laying the foundation for the party's sweeping electoral victory in 1971. Over the next four decades successive Progressive Conservative governments would help shape Alberta into the extraordinary province that it is today.

In spite of the difficulties we are experiencing today, the Alberta built by Lougheed and Getty is resilient and strong. I have no doubt that there will be brighter days ahead for our province. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I are incredibly proud of all that Premier Don Getty accomplished during his time in public life and equally proud to carry on his legacy. Again, we extend our deepest and most heartfelt sympathies to his wife, Margaret, and to the entire Getty family as together with them we all grieve this terrible loss.

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and speak to the legacy of former Premier Don Getty and to pay tribute to his family here gathered. Don Getty served Albertans with commitment and dedication for many years as an MLA, cabinet minister, and, of course, Premier.

Looking back at his leadership, it's almost eerie to see how many similarities there are to today. As one of the original Progressive Conservatives Don was part of a movement which changed the face of provincial politics. The PCs ended the reign of the Social Credit and ushered in an era of young, innovative, energetic MLAs. He assumed the premiership at a time when the oil industry was faltering, and government likewise had to make tough, not always popular choices.

I remember Don for his dedication to indigenous people. In 1990 Don was named a Cree chief of the Whitefish band, a deserved honour. Particularly in relation to the Lubicon, whom I visited afterwards, he was held in very high esteem along with the Métis. He fought for fair treatment and recognition of the rights of all First Nations.

Don was tasked with guiding the province of Alberta through very challenging times. I can only hope we will show the same courage and determination and constructive engagement in facing the adversity of today's economic climate.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus, our sincere gratitude to Don and his family.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to honour former Premier Don Getty, and it is a particular privilege to do so in the presence of his family in the place where he dedicated so many years in service to the people of Alberta.

Premier Getty was the embodiment of service, serving Albertans as an MLA, cabinet minister, and, of course, as Premier during very challenging times in our province. He distinguished himself as a leader in all that he accomplished, not only in the political realm but also within business, sports, and human rights, where he advocated for the Métis people.

He also made a tremendous contribution to national unity with his support of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords. I've been told he took national unity so seriously that he responded personally, including handwritten notes, to every single letter sent to him by Canadians from across the country. His belief in a strong, united Canada will perhaps be his greatest legacy.

As I've come to learn since his passing, Don Getty was also a dedicated family man who along with his wife, Margaret, raised four boys to be great citizens and who, in turn, have raised seven of their own children to be the same. It's in this spirit that I'll remember Premier Getty fondly for the creation of Family Day, where Albertans spend time together to enjoy the tremendous recreational opportunities available in our great province, many of which were created under Premier Getty's leadership.

As some of you may know, I'm honoured to have the very desk that Don Getty sat at in the years 1967 to 1979. As I chart my own course in the Assembly in service of Albertans, I hope to live up to the example set by Premier Getty, an example I think we would all be wise to follow.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Again, please accept the respect offered to both families that are here today. Thank you for being with us, and thank you for your public service.

I recognize the Government House Leader. I understand you may have a comment that you'd like to make.

#### Member's Apology

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you very much. This morning there was considerable confusion about the election of the Deputy Chair of Committees, and I want to take full responsibility personally for that confusion and apologize to the House for the situation that developed. I want to also apologize to you, Mr. Speaker, to the Sergeant-at-Arms, and to the pages for when I came into the Chamber. When the doors were barred, it was my understanding, which was incorrect, that our members were not being allowed to vote on a key matter. I misunderstood the situation, and I wish to apologize to everyone in the Assembly for that behaviour and for the confusion that took place. This was something that was entirely my responsibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

#### Statement by the Speaker

##### Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we proceed with Oral Question Period, I'd like to outline the rotation that will apply for Oral Question Period and Members' Statements. As noted in my March 3, 2016, procedural memo to all members, the Speaker's

office received a document from the three House leaders confirming their agreement to the rotation of oral questions and members' statements. The projected rotation for Oral Question Period and a projected sitting days calendar, which outlines the Members' Statements rotation, were attached to that procedural memo.

With respect to Oral Question Period the new agreement stems from the House leaders' agreement agreed to in June 2015 and last used in the fall sitting. It continues to follow an eight-day rotation and provides for 20 questions each day. However, question 5 on days 4 and 8, which was assigned to the former independent member, is now allocated to a private member from the government caucus. Questions 7 through 20 from the rotation used in the fall have been moved up one spot, and question 20 is allocated to the Official Opposition. The current allocation of questions provides the Official Opposition a total of two more questions over the eight-day 20-question rotation. The remaining caucuses retain the same number of total questions.

I find the rotation on oral questions as proposed by the House leaders' agreement to be a fair allocation of questions amongst private members for this Assembly. With respect to the two one-member caucuses I am not of the view that continuing to have three questions over eight days is unjust or disproportionate. This averages out to 1.5 questions per week. In fact, when one looks at the previous Legislature, the pattern was to have one-member caucuses treated in the same way as independent members, with one question every four sitting days.

On the subject of asking and answering questions, I would ask, respectfully, that members keep their questions and responses concise and that they do not use preambles for supplementary questions after the first four sets of questions on days 4 and 8 and the first five sets of questions on all other days so that private members may ask as many questions as possible during the time allocated for Oral Question Period.

With respect to members' statements the House leaders' agreements continue to be based on a three-week rotation. According to Standing Order 7(4) each day up to six private members may make a statement of no more than two minutes in duration. The changes incorporated into the new Members' Statements rotation are as follows. The Official Opposition receives one more statement on Thursday for weeks 1 and 2 and on Wednesday in week 3. Private members from the government caucus are entitled to one additional statement on Thursday of week 3 of the rotation. The number and scheduling of members' statements for the third-party caucus, the Liberal member, and the Alberta Party member remain the same as during the first session of the 29th Legislature.

Thank you, hon. members. I will table a copy of the House leaders' agreement at the appropriate time in the daily Routine today.

2:10

I would take this final moment to say that I do not intend to give any lecturing to all of you. We have much to learn. I just would like to underline again to please respect each other, particularly with volume, and I speak to both sides of the House. On one side there seems to be a lot of desk thumping, which is very loud. On the other side there are often loud questions and voices. Please, I think I've been advised by all of you that you wish for this to be a part of the dynamic, so I urge you to practise respect for each other and listen.

Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Government Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans are worried. They're frustrated. They're anxious. Since the NDP was elected, 80,000 jobs have been lost, including just in January alone 26,000 jobs. Small business confidence is at an all-time low, and after almost a year of waiting for the government's often promised jobs plan, all Albertans got yesterday was a flimsy bill that does nothing but give the minister a job description. When will the Premier provide hope to the thousands of Albertans that desperately need it and come up with a real plan to grow Alberta's economy and get Albertans back to work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we said yesterday in the throne speech, we're very much aware that as a result of an unprecedented price shock with the price of oil and the impact on families across Alberta that people are worried, and they're worried about their jobs. So our government is doing everything it can. We're going to support Albertans by ensuring stability and services to Albertans, we're going to work very hard to diversify our economy and to create new jobs alongside job creators, and we are going to continue the very hard work we're doing to diversify our access to markets because this is the beginning formula of getting us through these difficult times.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Here are the facts of life under the NDP with low oil. They raised business and personal taxes, they took aim at farms and our energy sector, and now they're bringing in a \$3 billion carbon tax that will hurt every single Albertan. And they're not done yet. When the economy is hurting, governments must do no harm. The NDP have ignored that principle on almost every front. The Wildrose has promised a single point tax cut for small businesses as a very first step to restoring business confidence. Why won't the Premier take even just that one small step and help businesses and all Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, up to this point we've been working very closely with business and with industry on efforts to promote diversification and to promote job creation. We've introduced programs that will increase access to capital. We've consulted with business on what that should look like. We also, through our climate leadership plan, are using it as a tool to diversify and to help open up new markets while at the same time promoting a cleaner, greener economy and environment for Albertans. So in difficult times we're actually moving forward together with businesses. I'm looking forward to reading the many endorsements of our plan from business leaders to the member opposite.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** I am also very much anticipating that opportunity.

Last month both the Premier and I found ourselves in Ontario. We were talking about Alberta's energy sector. The message delivered could not be more different, though. While Wildrose pitched national unity on pipelines, the Premier was headlining a \$10,000-a-plate dinner for her friend the leader of the Ontario NDP. The leader of the NDP in Ontario calls our energy products toxic, campaigned against line 9, and she also attacked Northern Gateway. She is no friend of Energy East. We know that clearly. Why is the Premier secretly fundraising for opponents of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** Just one moment, please.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Matters Referred to Ethics Commissioner**

**The Speaker:** Members of the gallery, I've been advised that the matter which was addressed in the question is with respect to a matter that is currently being reviewed by the Ethics Commissioner. It is suggested that discussions of that matter would be inappropriate in the House when the matter is under review. So I would ask that we avoid that topic today.

#### **Government Policies (continued)**

**The Speaker:** Hon. Premier, any comment? If you'd like to, you've got 35 seconds.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to talk about things that have been done in and around Ontario and different comparisons of the same. Unfortunately, I think the hon. member over there has a slightly different version of history, because what I know is that while he was out there having taxpayer-funded meetings about navel-gazing amongst conservatives, I was actually out there talking to people about the value of Energy East, not only to energy industry people but to environmentalists, and making progress such that instead of exchanging childish tweets with people, I was able in Vancouver to get all Premiers and the Prime Minister . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

#### **Pipeline Construction**

**Mr. Jean:** Last month the Premier claimed that Alberta has a partner in Ottawa in Prime Minister Trudeau. Colour me surprised, Mr. Speaker. One of the Prime Minister's first moves after his election was banning tankers on the west coast, obviously limiting Alberta's ability to get energy products to market. Our partner in Ottawa won't commit to approving Energy East even if it successfully follows his own new regulatory process, one that this Premier says she supports. Why won't the Premier admit that her pipeline approach is not working, won't work, and start advocating for Alberta's best interests?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what I know is that the 10 years of what preceded what's going on right now hasn't worked. It hasn't worked at the federal level, and it hasn't worked at the provincial level. We're doing our homework on the environment. The federal government needs to establish a process that Canadians can trust, and then they will exercise their discretion. In the meantime I am making our case at every possible opportunity such that, as I said before, 13 Premiers and the Prime Minister signed onto a declaration agreeing about the urgency of getting our product to tidewater and getting a timely and predictable process in place, and that is progress.

**Mr. Jean:** When Ottawa announced further delays and regulations to our world-class pipeline review process, Alberta's environment minister said that she welcomed these new rules. Canadian producers lose up to \$50 million a day without a new pipeline. Approving the three major pipeline projects would mean an immediate private-sector investment of \$30 billion into the national economy. The next time the Premier goes to Ontario to stump for her friends, will she commit to telling this story, the truth, instead of allowing opponents of Alberta to tell our story for us?

**Ms Notley:** Well, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite ought to do better research because, in fact, that is exactly the story that has been told. And guess what? People are listening. They're listening because we have a credible record to show them and we have a credible plan to talk about with them. Those who are concerned about the environment have a right to be concerned about the environment, and now Alberta is doing its part so that those who are concerned about the environment can embrace the fact that Canada is a progressive producer of nonrenewable energy that deserves to have its product accepted in all markets.

**Mr. Jean:** The National Energy Board has already approved the Northern Gateway pipeline. This Premier opposes it. This pipeline would grow Canada's GDP by over \$300 billion over the next 30 years, all of Canada. But instead of acting in the national interest, the federal government has announced a tanker ban on the B.C. coast, and the Prime Minister has said that he won't approve the pipeline. The Premier also campaigned against this project in the spring election. Does she stand by that position now, or will she advocate for Alberta's energy sector to her friends in Ottawa?

**Ms Notley:** The position that I've been taking over and over and over, not only in Ottawa but also in Toronto, also in Montreal, also in Vancouver, also in Winnipeg, is that for our country's economy to grow, not only in Alberta but across the whole country, we have to have a mature, comprehensive, sophisticated, integrated energy infrastructure so that we can get our product to the best market at the best time at the best price. That is the case that I've been making all across the board, and the way to get there is for us to be grown-up participants in a national conversation where we . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

#### **Government Spending**

**Mr. Jean:** Almost every time we ask a question of this government about finances or, frankly, just about any other topic, they stand up in this place and make unfounded and baseless accusations about the opposition. It would be helpful for the government to take the state of our provincial finances seriously. We would appreciate it. Wildrose wants to protect the long-term viability of front-line services. Without responsible action now, the NDP puts everything at risk. Why won't the Premier commit to finding significant budget savings now so that front-line services that matter to Albertans will be protected over the long term?

2:20

**Ms Notley:** You know, it's really quite entertaining listening to this government – sorry. [interjections] It's very entertaining listening to this government. There's even something you have to do, which is listen to the opposition talk about restraint. They come to us and demand new hospitals, new school improvements, new roads, more flood protection, all in their own ridings. It seems that the only kind of restraint that they can demonstrate is in their tipping practices.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I was pretty sure the government would revert to their usual nonsense about draconian cuts from the opposition, and they did. But here's a tip and the truth: while this government fearmongers about fantasy cuts from the opposition, it's actually putting the stability of front-line services at risk. Without action, Albertans risk losing police positions, nursing positions, seniors' beds, and much more. Why won't she look at cutting out the waste – duplication and bloated ranks of management – instead of putting front-line services at risk, that Albertans want and need?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the deficit is an issue that we have to keep a very careful eye on, and we need to be prudent. Now, the folks over there would like us to start by blowing an extra \$1.5 billion hole in that deficit by giving tax breaks to profitable corporations and the wealthiest of Albertans. That does not make sense when you're trying to make prudent decisions. So that's the first place they need to look at in their deficit management strategy, because it's not going to work.

**Mr. Jean:** Here's another tip: no Alberta corporations are making profits, so it's not a problem.

Mr. Speaker, this government acts as if our suggestions to make targeted cuts to the bloat in our government are extreme. No economist would support them, the Premier said, but economists have looked at our ideas and think that finding 2 per cent savings in the waste inside government is possible; it's even reasonable and moderate. Not every dollar the government spends serves front-line Albertans. Surely, this Premier can find two pennies of savings in every dollar that Canada's most expensive government spends without laying off nurses or closing long-term health beds.

**Ms Notley:** Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, going back to the previous comment, it's a darn good thing that the Official Opposition leader is not selling Alberta as an investment place to people outside of Alberta because he needs to learn a little bit about promoting our province.

When it comes to reducing spending, we are taking a very careful look to ensure that we can reduce spending. But we need to understand that up until now the health care budget, for instance, which is 40 per cent of our budget, was increasing at 6 per cent a year. Simply by dropping that to zero, which is from these folks over there, or to 1 per cent would cause huge chaos if we did that in one year.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

The hon. leader of the third party.

### Support for Municipalities

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning at the AUMA breakfast we had a chance to hear the Minister of Municipal Affairs answer questions, and to be honest, I'm troubled. We heard from municipalities that they're concerned that the government may delay the requisition for education tax, which would delay municipalities' ability to collect tax, administer a proper appeal process, and manage cash flow, and the minister didn't have any answers. Would the Premier like to clarify the government's intent, please?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to take this question. Certainly, this morning it was a bit of a challenge, in fact, because there was some misinformation and lack of clarity on behalf of the person asking the question. Given the fact that the person asking the question was a little unclear on that, it became very unclear to answer that. I'd be happy to tell you that we will be proceeding exactly as to normal procedure in terms of providing the education requisition information to the municipalities. We will continue as expected, and the municipalities can expect them at the regular time.

Thank you.

**Mr. McIver:** I'm glad that the minister acknowledged that there was some misinformation and a lack of clarification because the minister was the source of it.

While she was doing that, the other thing she didn't provide information on was when a member of a municipality asked: is the government going to honour their commitment to MSI, including

the additional \$400 million from last year? Once again the minister did not know her files, did not know the answer. I'm giving her a mulligan here, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister now tell the House what's going on?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I made it very clear that we continue to recognize the importance of MSI to communities across Alberta. Our government remains committed to providing municipalities with the tools and resources they need to serve Albertans. But Albertans do expect us to be responsible fiscal managers, and we are taking that responsibility seriously. We are working incredibly hard to work within the budget, that is not yet finalized, to provide the support and meet the needs of municipalities across this province.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if that was the Charleston or the twist, but it was similar to the dance the minister did this morning.

I'm going to give the minister a third chance to answer questions that the minister was unable to answer about her own files this morning. A member of a municipality asked about the rural physician action plan and about their concern that if the government cuts it back, it will make it harder for rural Alberta to attract and retain doctors. This is very important, and the minister could not assure municipalities this morning that that was going to continue. A second mulligan. We failed in the first one. I now want the minister to have a chance to clarify, please.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, attracting and maintaining physicians as well as other health professionals throughout Alberta is a priority for this government. That's one of the reasons why instead of moving forward with a billion-dollar health care cut, which was proposed by the party opposite asking the very question, we invested \$800 million immediately as soon as we were elected. We're continuing to work with RPAP and with Alberta Health Services to make sure we get the right professionals in the right communities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Small-business Assistance

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Finance minister. Streamlining and reducing costs of government are more important now than ever. That applies even more to new businesses and start-ups trying to survive in this economic climate. Small businesses in Alberta constitute 95 per cent of the businesses, and they need a break. The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce identified serious increases in 2016 alone, including property tax increases; business licence fees; construction fees for gas, plumbing, heating, electrical, and development permits; and waste management fee increases. To the Finance minister: how about giving them a sustained stimulus and reducing small-business tax?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you to the member opposite. I just want to take you back to Budget 2015. Our government gave small businesses a hand up there through the \$2 billion in capital available through ATB, AIMCo, and the Alberta Enterprise Corporation. We're currently working on Budget 2016, as you know, and you'll see

more information there. This summer we also instituted something the previous government had shut down, and that's STEP. That'll be available to small and medium-sized businesses throughout Alberta so they can hire young people to help them out in the summer.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that this government is offering small businesses the chance to go into greater debt, with the impending minimum wage increases, why not offset these impacts by a reduction in small-business tax? They only have so much money.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you. As people in this House know, the small-business tax is kept at 3 per cent. That's in line with provinces all across this country. We are in the middle of all that. You know, we'll be bringing forward some initiatives in Budget 2016 which will assist small businesses, in fact all businesses in Alberta. The opportunity to go into debt, to get capital so that they can expand their businesses, is something we heard from businesses that they want to do.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that there's still significant red tape for small businesses, what are you doing to reduce red tape for small businesses?

**The Speaker:** The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm quite honoured to respond to this question. Our government has been working quite closely with not only chambers of commerce but small businesses and entrepreneurs across this province, looking at ways that we can help. Part of the reason that my ministry was created was, quite frankly, so that businesses have a one-stop shop. They have one place to go to access government. Whether it's an entrepreneur who's come up with a great new idea related to the agriculture sector, the forestry sector, a new clean-tech idea, they have a one-stop shop through my ministry.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

2:30

### Job Creation and Retention

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The dramatic collapse of the global price of oil is having a serious negative impact on many of the constituents of Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill and, of course, people across Alberta. Will the Minister of Economic Development and Trade tell the House what he's doing to encourage job creation and economic growth?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the hon. member for her question. I know that this is top of mind for all Albertans everywhere, in all corners of our province. First of all, I just want to acknowledge that we understand the impact that the global price of oil is having on not just our oil and gas sector but, quite frankly, on all sectors and the ripple effect that that's having. That's why yesterday we heard in our Speech from

the Throne, which is our government's vision for how we're moving forward, how our government is going to partner with the job creators, the private sector, to ensure that the right conditions are in place so Alberta remains the best . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this protracted downturn is expected to continue and with the layoffs mounting, again to the same minister: I'd like to know what steps are being taken by the government to put people back to work, especially in the construction industry, which has been hit very hard in Calgary.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Absolutely we recognize that the construction industry is one of the sectors that is hurting because of the global price of oil, but I can tell you that our government is taking action. We have a plan to address job losses, to encourage economic growth and diversification, and we're acting on it. Yesterday I introduced Bill 1, which gives concrete steps on how our government is working with the private sector to ensure that Albertans are working. I must say that the Infrastructure minister has announced \$34 billion over five years . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Ms McPherson:** Mr. Speaker, back to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: given the state of the economy why isn't the government looking at making further cuts to spending, especially in high-cost areas like health care and education?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Quite frankly, we're not going to make a bad situation worse. Now, I recognize that the opposition would love to and believe that firing nurses, doctors, teachers, front-line staff is the way to help the economy rebound, but quite frankly it's clear that Albertans want an economy that's resilient to energy price swings, which is why we're focusing on building on our strengths in the agriculture and forestry sectors, in clean tech, partnering with tourism, and leveraging what we're already doing well. That is how we're going to help Albertans . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Chief Adviser on Labour Negotiations

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I've got a big tip for the government. One of the top issues that the government will face in the next few years is bargaining with our government-sector unions, so I noted with interest that yesterday the Premier hired a new chief adviser on labour negotiations. He will advise the government on labour negotiations with government unions like AUPE. The problem is that as of this morning he is still listed on the AUPE's website as one of their chief negotiators. Please tell us, Madam Premier, that you didn't actually hire the fox to guard the henhouse.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The member says that he's got a big tip. That's exciting,



and I'm sure that the service industry will be very happy to hear that the next time he enters into a restaurant.

In terms of the question that's being raised, I think it makes good sense. When past governments struck deals that obviously weren't necessarily demonstrating restraint, I think it makes sense to look at who the best negotiators are in the province and make sure that they're on your side.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Admitting that their own AUPE friends are overpaid. Interesting.

Labour negotiations are governed by complicated laws and precedents. Hiring away one side's negotiator would be bargaining in bad faith unless, of course, the union agreed to it, in which case it would verge on insider trading. To the Deputy Premier: which is it? Did the government make the mother of all labour code violations, or are the government's negotiations with AUPE a sham?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to provide some answers on this question. Our government was very pleased to be able to hire one of the best negotiators available. This is someone who has experience on both sides, working for management as well as working for labour unions. He is known throughout the community as someone who is tough but fair, and we look forward to working with him through labour negotiations in the coming years.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Playing both sides against taxpayers is an interesting definition of good value.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans won't put up with sham bargaining given that the Premier's chief adviser on labour negotiations appears to be in a gross conflict of interest. Fewer issues are more important to the sound financial management of this province than having proper and effective negotiations with our government-sector unions. Will the Premier admit that this hiring was a serious mistake and dismiss Mr. Davediuk?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The chief negotiator who has been hired has over three decades of experience on the management side as well as the labour union side. He will be able to be tough but fair and make sure that our labour negotiations are properly done. My role as Minister of Labour, as a regulator is to make sure that that stays the case. We know that during these challenging times this labour negotiator will be able to work soundly with all parties.

Thank you.

### **Government Policies** (continued)

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, during the last provincial election the New Democrats ran a very successful campaign around the theme that our government was trying to scare Albertans by raising concerns about the effects of the declining price of oil. In spite of what the government said, our members are well aware that the government doesn't control the price of oil. However, they do decide the response and set the tone to inspire confidence in Alberta, and frankly that tone has been lacking. To the Premier: will you acknowledge that the platform your government ran on in the previous election isn't positioned to address the problems right now facing Alberta's economy?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the hon. member for her question. Quite frankly, we have addressed and acknowledged the current economic climate within the province, within Canada, and quite frankly world-wide, with the low price of oil and the effects that it's having on the international economy. Our government has a plan. We've taken action through Bill 1, which was tabled yesterday, looking at opportunities to partner with the private sector and the job creators to ensure that the government is acting in a supportive way, that we are laying the right foundations to encourage economic growth.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently spent a day at the doors in Calgary-North West and heard the fears and concerns and worries of Albertans. Now the NDP admits that their long-touted job-creation incentive program has not created a single job and needs to be reviewed after only five months since the budget was introduced. To the Premier: now that your job-creation program has sputtered, what have you learned from this failure?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll remind the member that in Budget 2015 alone our government made more than \$2 billion in capital available to entrepreneurs and small businesses through ATB, through AIMCo, and through the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, which funds a fund which then invests directly in Alberta companies. We're providing small businesses help in hiring talented young people through the STEP program, that we're excited to roll out. We have our 34 billion of new dollars that will be invested in infrastructure, which is going to help the economy as well as . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Ms Jansen:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, let's talk about small business. The PCs called on the government to reduce small-business taxes as a step towards encouraging growth, something your government wasn't prepared to do. To the Premier once more: are you prepared to include a small-business tax cut in the upcoming budget?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.  
2:40

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do find it a tad rich that less than a year ago the member and her party were in power and did nothing of the kind when they were government, yet now in opposition they'll call on us.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there are a number of initiatives and ways that our government is going to be helping entrepreneurs, small businesses within our province. Again, Bill 1 is the first way for us to enact some of our initiatives. The Finance minister will be tabling his budget early next month. I encourage members to look thoroughly at it, as there are . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### **Emergency Medical Dispatch Services in Calgary**

**Mr. Barnes:** Last fall I asked the Health minister in this Assembly why the government is charging ahead with bringing Calgary's EMS dispatch services under the grip of AHS centralization. The government has dumped millions into a project that the city doesn't want, AHS doesn't need, and the taxpayers are on the hook for it.

To the Health minister: why don't you stop ignoring the people of Calgary and keep their EMS services under their control?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. He does acknowledge that there have been some reviews of the situation, including the Auditor General, who recommended a consolidation, including the Health Quality Council of Alberta, who recommended a consolidation. This is something that is being looked at globally, not just for one community or another, and it's something that we want to make sure we get right. So I'm not going to commit to making a wrong decision; I want to make the right one and take the time to do so.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, seeing as the minister promised to this Assembly that she would work with local leadership and given that the mayor of Calgary is once again imploring the government to kill this ill-begotten experiment, I have to ask yet again: will the minister listen to the mayor himself, respect the ability of Calgary to make its own decisions, and stop AHS from trapping the city in an inefficient and costly system?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The provision of health care is actually the provincial government's responsibility, not an individual municipality's responsibility. So I'm going to do my job, which is to review data and make sure that I'm working with our partners to provide stability and that the citizens of Calgary, Edmonton, Medicine Hat, and every other part of Alberta get the very best service for their EMS.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, the city of Calgary deserves a real answer from this government. Given that local decision-makers don't want AHS to take over their EMS dispatch and given that quickly this is turning into a \$10 million boondoggle and given the fact that 46 Calgary dispatchers could soon find themselves out of work, will the minister at least tell Calgarians why she refuses to commit right now to protecting them from an inefficient, wasteful Alberta Health Services hijacking?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member says a lot of things in his preamble that don't necessarily relate to the situation.

My number one driver is to make sure that the people of Alberta get the right health care service at the right time, and we also need to make sure that that's at the right investment. So I need to review the data, and I've done so with the mayor. We've had two opportunities to meet about this so far, and we're going to continue to until I make sure that I feel confident in the decision that I want to make for the citizens of Alberta. That's responsible governance.

### Seniors' Care

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, every day in our province an average of 60 Albertans turn 65 years old, entering their senior years. There's a grey elephant in the room; in just 15 years there will be almost a million seniors in our province, meaning that roughly a quarter of Albertans will be over 65. Seniors helped our province to get where we are today, and we should be encouraging the development of senior supports which would allow them to live in dignity and to access the services that they require. Does the minister have a plan outside the highly controversial and centralized approach from AHS to deal with this growing segment of our population?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I can assure you that we do have a plan here in Alberta. We are very concerned about seniors. As the member said, we care very much about them and their contributions to our province. As we've said before, we're creating 2,000 long-term care spaces. We just announced the transportation tool kit to support them to age in their communities and to have access to many services.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, the minister is full of words about the importance of long-term care but not action that our seniors can see. Given that in many rural communities long-term care beds allow seniors to live in close proximity to family, friends, and communities that they helped build and given that the alternatives to long-term care beds in our communities are divorce by nursing home or sky-high costs due to placing seniors in acute-care beds when proper spaces are not available, will the minister explain why our caucus has received reports from across the province that long-term beds are now being closed?

**The Speaker:** Madam Minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. I can assure the member and all Albertans, seniors especially, that our government is committed to investing in long-term care beds and making sure that seniors are aging in their communities surrounded by their family and friends and that we as a government are moving forward on that. I just commend to the member to see the budget when it comes out and see the investment that we're putting in.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that our seniors deserve better than the flippant behavior the NDP government has given to date for our seniors. Given the fact that our population is aging and we need a plan in place before it's too late and given the fact that this government seems to excel at vague promises rather than real results, if not for me but for the seniors who built this province will the minister commit to developing a results-based system that will ensure that the long-term care beds desperately needed across this province are not cut to save a quick buck by the NDP government?

**The Speaker:** Madam Minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. This government is protecting the front-line health services that Alberta seniors rely on, not cancelling surgeries or throwing our hospitals into chaos, which is what the opposition would do with the cuts that they're proposing. They often think that the way through tough times is to deny seniors the care that they need. Our government is absolutely standing up to support seniors.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### Fentanyl Use Prevention in Indigenous Communities

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fentanyl killed 272 Albertans last year, and the crisis was so shocking for the Blood reserve that they declared a state of emergency. Recently the chief stated: if someone dies from drugs that you have sold them, we will do everything in our power to hold you legally responsible for your

actions. An Albertan who allegedly provided fentanyl to two parents who died, leaving their children orphaned, has been officially charged with manslaughter. To the Justice minister: what specific steps are you taking to work with the federal Crown to ensure that these types of offences are prosecuted as homicides?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Well, of course, our government is deeply concerned about the fentanyl crisis. We are working in concert with our partners in Health to ensure the supports that are necessary to help the vulnerable individuals who can fall into drug addiction and to ensure that we're making strides on the enforcement piece as well.

In terms of the specific case the member mentioned, obviously the federal Crown prosecutors exercise their own discretion, and I'm not able to intervene in that case. But we are absolutely committed as a province to doing our part in making sure we get these drugs off our streets.

**Mr. Rodney:** Albertans deserve really good answers to these questions, and I will now ask the Minister of Health. Given that the crisis underlines a serious opioid dependency issue, which the mental health review highlighted in its report, and given that you have identified that an opiate addictions plan for indigenous peoples is an immediate priority and given that you've had the mental health review for three months and that any delay in implementing this plan is literally a life-and-death issue, can you please tell us: what concrete steps have you taken in the last 100 days to fulfill this recommendation, which is guaranteed to save lives?

**The Speaker:** Madam Minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As was mentioned, the situation with fentanyl is tragic, and it's not just something that's happening in Alberta. This is something that many provinces are dealing with right now. One of the things I'm very proud of is that we've shown leadership in making sure that we get naloxone kits, the anecdote to this opioid, into the hands of communities and individuals as well as paramedics, EMTs, nurses, psychiatric nurses. We're increasing access so that a life-saving initiative can be taken here.

In terms of the indigenous advisory committee that's certainly a very high priority for us. My deputy minister has that on the top of his list, and I'll be happy to provide some further follow-up with the member opposite about success that we're having there.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Minister.

Finally, to the new Minister of Indigenous Relations: given that your government failed to mention anything in the throne speech about effectively dealing with the fentanyl crisis and how it affects indigenous Albertans and given that your government has chopped \$13 million from addictions treatment and given that a number of reserves such as the Blood tribe have established successful frameworks for dealing with the fentanyl crisis, what real-life strategies are you adopting, adapting, and delivering for the safety of indigenous individuals and communities on and off reserves?

**The Speaker:** The minister of indigenous affairs.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We have been working very closely with the members of the Blood tribe and, of course, with indigenous communities across this province to work on significant issues with regard to addictions and, in this case, fentanyl. We have increased public awareness through a variety of programs. We have increased the availability of naloxone for treating people who have taken an overdose, and of course we are ensuring treatment is available and doing all of that in consultation with the indigenous community through our Fentanyl Response Team.

Thank you.

### Women's Equality

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday was International Women's Day. I have been part of the struggle for equal rights for women for over 40 years, whether that was fighting for nontraditional jobs or advocating for pay equity in 1984, when I signed the complaint against the federal government demanding equal pay for work of equal value. To the Minister of Status of Women: what are you doing to address and settle the issue of pay equity for women in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** Madam Minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for my first question in the House. The member is right, and this is very simple. Women deserve to earn equal pay for work of equal value. We are committed to fair wages for women, and we're looking at different ways to close the wage gap. That is one of the reasons that we're phasing in the minimum wage increases. With the majority of minimum wage earners in Alberta being women – that's 62 per cent – our plan will make a real difference for them and their families. I'm so proud to be part of a government that has a real plan.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Minister.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that women in Alberta are still underrepresented in leadership roles in both our public and private sectors, to the same minister: what are you doing to support and encourage more women in leadership positions throughout this province?

**Ms McLean:** The strong women of Alberta have a place in corporate boardrooms, postsecondary administration, on public boards, and in elected office. We are reviewing agencies, boards, and commissions to ensure that new appointments reflect the diversity of Alberta. We're going to work with partners like AUMA's new status of women committee to get more women involved in politics and leadership. It's not enough to just talk about gender equality in 2016. That's why our government is walking the walk. We are leading by example, starting with the first gender-balanced government in Canadian history.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you.

Given that women have traditionally held the role for the daily care of their children, again to the same minister: what is your ministry doing to promote the sharing of this role and help increase women's participation in the workforce?

**Ms McLean:** Well, it's no secret that we have taken steps to make this Legislature more family friendly. But it's not about us in this House; it's about working to ensure that women across Alberta have the same opportunity. Our government will also help families

by addressing the cost of child care in a fiscally responsible way. We're giving immediate support to families by expanding tax credits to parents. A single mom with two kids who qualifies will receive \$3,000 more in her jeans each year. These are real, practical steps to help women in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Minister.  
The Member for Little Bow.

### Infrastructure Project Prioritization

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Wildrose has been calling for a transparent and prioritized infrastructure list for years. A new session, and still it's missing. This doesn't sit right because nearly a year ago now the NDP promised Albertans they would implement a sunshine list to end the backroom politics in infrastructure. Minister, last year your department lapsed a billion dollars in capital spending. Is this going to be another case of one thing said in opposition and another in government, or will you release the list?

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the hon. member that the list will be released, and I'd ask him to wait for the budget and the capital plan that goes with that.

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, the minister's actions and his words don't add up. Given that the NDP slammed the former government for putting, quote, political interests at the top of the infrastructure list, now he's doing the very same thing that he once condemned. Given that the government killed Bill 203, which would have limited government announcements during election campaigns, Minister, will you do the right thing and unless there's a nonpolitical emergency commit to making no more transportation or infrastructure announcements with taxpayer dollars in the middle of the Calgary by-election?

**Mr. Mason:** I think I can undertake to do that, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's much appreciated. Given that without an infrastructure priority list smaller communities are going to have to make some very hard planning decisions this year and given that Albertans are worried about aging and missing infrastructure in their communities and that they can't afford to pay a thousand dollars a head to talk to this government, Minister, if you aren't going to release a fully transparent sunshine list, will you at least commit to full transparency around what projects are being approved and what projects are being rejected under the small communities component of the building Canada fund?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs will want to have some more comments on that particular program, which is administered from her department. I just want to point out that I've got the five-year plan of the Wildrose. In the absence of a budget the Wildrose wants to spend about \$24.6 billion on infrastructure, which is a \$9.4 billion cut over what this government wants. They can't have it both ways. They can't have roads and bridges in their ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

### Energy Policies

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The precipitous and prolonged drop in the price of oil has certainly had a profound effect on the economies of all oil-producing jurisdictions, but while this government continually blames lower prices alone for every lost job and every lost dollar of investment, neighbouring jurisdictions seem to be weathering this storm more successfully. To the Minister of Energy. You recently spent four days in Houston conferring with your counterparts on how to cope with the current economic challenges. Minister, Albertans, who paid for your trip, want to know: what lessons did you learn, and how will you apply them?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Indeed, we had a great opportunity in Houston to meet with two presidents, 12 ministers – not my kind of minister but country ministers – 300 president/CEOs, and over 3,000 participants from 53 countries. In addition to sessions from 7 in the morning until 9:30 at night, we had ministry side meetings. We met with the minister from Norway, the minister from Mexico, our federal minister, the assistant to the U.S. MIT.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

3:00

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly interested in the guest list and the schedule, but it's not the answer to the question. I guess only time will tell if our \$22,000 that the trip cost was well spent.

Now, given that Husky energy has just announced three SAGD projects in the heavy oil fields near Edam, east of Lloydminster – I'll point out that if you go east of Lloydminster, you're in Saskatchewan – and given that these projects will employ over 500 workers during construction and create 90 permanent jobs and given that the price of oil in Saskatchewan is the same as in Alberta, to the minister: what are they doing that we aren't?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** We're certainly working with our companies in a few ways. We're working on, as the Premier had mentioned, you know, pipeline projects to get our products to market. We're also working with the economic development minister. He and I announced a project recently, the petrochemical industry, that'll get people with similar skills to build those projects while we're waiting for the price to go up, to build other SAGD and in situ projects.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this minister has already told Alberta oil patch workers to leave the province to find work, perhaps they'll go to Saskatchewan. That's where Lex management recently announced that 80 per cent of their \$142 million oil and gas investments will go, to the province of Saskatchewan. Minister, if low oil prices are the only reason that things are so slow here in Alberta, how do you explain Saskatchewan's ability to track investment? When will you pick up the phone and ask them for some neighbourly advice?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Well, certainly, we have different geology than Saskatchewan, so our projects are different. We have the SAGD, in situ, which are longer term projects, so to do the investment for that, we've got to wait for the prices to come up. But we are looking at through the royalty review the petrochemical diversification. We are also harmonizing the royalties going forward in 2017 so all liquids will be considered the

same, and that'll make it a lot easier for investment decisions to be made going forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was a little confused about your request at the beginning of the session about this, so I apologize to the House. I would ask unanimous consent to revert to the Routine and to extend it past 3 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### Government Policies

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just in time for Christmas Albertans were left with a special gift from this government: hurt farms, tax increases, and more flawed economics. Three months later it looks like we are going to get more of the same. In January Alberta lost 26,000 jobs in the private sector. We now have the highest business taxes in western Canada, a \$3 billion carbon tax, repeated serious miscalculations on resource revenue, and miscalculations on almost every cost projection possible. This is the NDP record.

As a result of this government's flawed agenda communities like Hanna are now literally hanging on the edge of a cliff. Over 250 coal and plant workers, who pay taxes, provide for their families, support local stores and businesses, are now under serious stress as companies cancel power contracts directly due to the punishing effects of the carbon tax. Good, hard-working men and women are literally seeing their futures, their hopes and dreams for their children destroyed before their very eyes.

And while the Premier was busy letting other provinces disparage our energy sector, when the sewage-dumping mayor of Montreal attacked Energy East, all our Premier could muster in response was to attack the hon. Leader of the Opposition for speaking the facts on pipelines. But the Premier did find some free time in her schedule to fly off to Toronto and collect \$10,000 cheques for an anti-Alberta, anti oil sands NDP leader that called our oil toxic. But somehow importing 600,000 barrels a day from despot regimes is not.

Albertans want leaders who defend Albertans, Mr. Speaker. Wildrose will provide that leadership by standing by and standing up for vulnerable Albertans suffering from NDP mismanagement, and we will stand up for all job-creating sectors of our economy.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

### International Women's Day

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me to rise today in recognition of International Women's Day. Worldwide, women continue to contribute to social, economic, cultural, and political accomplishments. We have much reason to celebrate in Alberta today.

Our government is committed to ensuring better equality and equity for all Alberta women. Our first step to address this was creating Alberta's first-ever Ministry of Status of Women, and I am proud to say that this is Canada's only stand-alone ministry for the status of women. Our province is home to many strong and capable

women, from the indigenous and the pioneers through to the Famous Five and right up to the present day.

In my community of Edmonton-Manning many of my constituents are working women: accomplished health professionals, teachers, veterans, and entrepreneurs. As an Alberta woman I am proud of my sisters who continue to stand up for their rights in workplaces and communities. However, the barriers continue. We have huge gender gaps, which force us to work longer hours and take up multiple jobs to provide for basic needs, and many of our sisters, as we witnessed in this House itself, continue to face domestic violence.

It is time for change, Mr. Speaker. It is time that all women feel that they have a safe place to call home for themselves and their children. It is time we encourage women to run for office, to believe that they, too, have the power to be executives and become leaders in their private and public lives. This will bring change for all of us.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's great to be back in the Legislature with my Progressive Conservative colleagues, working to find solutions to the issues that matter most to Albertans. One of those issues, no doubt, is the state of Alberta's finances. The low oil prices have done a number on the provincial treasury, and the Finance minister has only hinted that the deficit would be over \$10 billion. He wouldn't say it out loud, but the Municipal Affairs minister did this morning, interestingly enough.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: the NDP government is not to blame for the price of oil. They are, however, completely to blame for their own failed policies. These policies include an increase in personal and corporate taxes, royalty uncertainty, a \$3 billion carbon tax, a \$15 minimum wage, and absolutely no spending restraint. On top of that, they are racking up massive debt, with no plan to ever pay it back. These policies kill jobs, drive out investment, and lower our credit rating. NDP policies, Mr. Speaker, are making a bad situation much worse. Government needs to correct their course now to protect Alberta. Every day the NDP delays in reducing spending means bigger and more severe cuts later. We only need to remember Bob Rae's NDP government in Ontario to know that lesson.

Our Progressive Conservative caucus will bring forth pragmatic, common-sense solutions, something sorely lacking from both the government and the Official Opposition. Unlike parties to our left and to our right, PCs are focused on Albertans rather than on political ideology. Our PC caucus will promote job and economic growth with smart, fiscally conservative policies while having the courage to compassionately tackle complex social issues. The PC Party is Alberta's conservative party that believes all Albertans, no matter who they are, are equal. That, Mr. Speaker, is why this government would do well to take the PC caucus's advice.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

### Turning Point Overdose Prevention Initiative

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to talk about something that is too often overlooked in central Alberta. I'm talking about overdose prevention. As many of us have heard, Alberta is being ravaged by a wave of fentanyl and opioid overdoses. The overdoses and deaths that have occurred in Alberta represent a public health crisis requiring innovative, strategically

planned responses. We must continue to expand our overdose prevention education and naloxone distribution programs.

Many community organizations are already doing tremendous work in central Alberta to address this issue. One such organization in my constituency of Red Deer-South is Turning Point. Turning Point serves as a hub for a variety of street outreach programs as well as health promotion and prevention programs focused on sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections. Turning Point also provides a nonjudgmental, open, helpful atmosphere where community members know that they will be respected by staff whom they can trust.

3:10

Through effective harm reduction initiatives Turning Point is a leader in overdose prevention in central Alberta. I'm pleased to share that, to date, Turning Point has distributed 266 naloxone kits and recorded 70 lives saved. Because of the high level of trust they share with community members, Turning Point is able to gain first-hand knowledge of lethal street drug trends in central Alberta while promoting life-saving overdose prevention options.

Mr. Speaker, organizations such as Turning Point provide an example to us all. I commend them for the invaluable contribution to health promotion and overdose prevention in central Alberta communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

#### St. Mary's University Humanities 101 Program

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to ask my colleagues in the Assembly to see themselves in someone else's shoes. Imagine if you were marginalized and had little hope of attending postsecondary education. Imagine you're recovering from substance abuse or experiencing homelessness. How would you get back on your feet? How could you go back to school without support?

During the election I learned about the humanities 101 program at St. Mary's University, in my constituency. Offered to marginalized and low-income individuals, this program offers students free tuition, hot meals, assistance with child care, individual tutoring, and also cultural experiences. Many of the funds raised for this program are done through the hard work of the faculty and students at St. Mary's.

St. Mary's University's humanities 101 program has become a benchmark for many colleges and universities in Canada. The program is designed to empower marginalized Albertans and help address barriers getting in the way of their capacities and skills. Humanities 101 enables students to develop their talents and unlock knowledge that leads to successful futures. I have heard numerous stories from students coming from terrible circumstances and health, often as a result of living in extreme poverty. After graduating from humanities 101, some of these individuals are thriving and contributing positively to society and to their communities.

Mr. Speaker, last December I had an opportunity to attend the humanities 101 graduation at St. Mary's University. It was one of the most moving experiences I've had since taking office, to see these graduates filled with hopes of making a difference in other people's lives.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the hard work of St. Mary's University, and I encourage all members to look at their example of how we can help lift people out of poverty in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

#### Pipeline Construction

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring to light the stunning hypocrisy of this NDP government when it comes to the record on pipelines. I cannot help but laugh and shake my head when I hear the Premier spouting lines about the NDP government's support of access to tidewater since day one. We clearly have a very different interpretation of what support looks like. To date we have seen the Premier offering support for Keystone only after it was already rejected by the Obama administration. We saw the Premier offer the same strong support for the Trans Mountain expansion project by writing the National Energy Board only after the B.C. government said that they opposed the project.

But wait; there are more examples of this support. The Premier seems to think that strong support for Energy East includes flying to Ontario on a secret trip and selling access to herself for \$10,000 a plate. Where does the money go? Into the coffers of the Premier's BFFs in the Ontario NDP, a party that has been shown to be against pipelines, pipelines that are crucial for the success of our energy industry.

Mr. Speaker, if it sounds like I'm frustrated, it's because I can't help but think of the serious damage that is being done to our province and, more importantly, to everyday Albertans because of this significant lack of leadership from this government on pipelines.

Wildrose has shown real leadership on this file, and our leader knows what real support looks like. In this caucus we know that pipelines continue to be the safest, most effective, and environmentally responsible way of transporting oil over long distances. We will continue to proudly voice that support and stand up for Alberta, not the beg-for-forgiveness approach after projects have been denied. The NDP government must show strong support through their actions on Energy East; otherwise, the rest of the country will continue to walk all over us. Albertans deserve much better.

Thank you.

#### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice – and I present the original; I believe the Clerk already has the requisite number of copies – that at an appropriate time I will be rising on a point of privilege concerning the fact that I believe that by providing a copy of Her Honour's Speech from the Throne to the members of the media without providing the same information to members of the opposition beforehand, the government has breached the rights of the members of the House, obstructed the performance of our duties, and thereby committed a contempt.

Thank you.

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have three tablings today. I would like to table five copies of the House leaders' agreement, signed on March 4, 2016, respecting Oral Question Period rotation and Members' Statements, which I referred to in my statement earlier this afternoon.

In my capacity as chair and pursuant to section 39(3) of the Legislative Assembly Act I would like to table with the Assembly five copies of the following orders, three of which were approved at the February 9, 2016, meeting of the Special Standing Committee

on Members' Services and one at the March 1, 2016, meeting: the Executive Council salaries amendment order 12, being order 01/16; the members' allowances amendment order 31, being order 02/16; the members' allowances amendment order 13, being order 03/16; the members' allowances amendment order 32, being order 04/16.

Lastly, I'm tabling five copies of a report produced by the Chief Electoral Officer re failure to eliminate a campaign deficit for the 2015 provincial general election, listing those candidates who failed to eliminate a campaign deficit pursuant to section 43.1 of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act.

The point of privilege that was raised: I think this would be an appropriate time to hear the discussion on that matter.

## Privilege

### Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) yesterday afternoon I provided written notice to the Speaker of my intention to raise a point of privilege here today. In fact, the breach of privilege that I'm raising feels a little bit like reverse déjà vu: the issue of media receiving technical briefings ahead of opposition members and staff.

Yesterday, March 8, at about 9 a.m. an exclusive technical briefing for the media on Her Honour's Speech from the Throne began. Now, in point of fact, one hour previous to that members of the media were provided with an embargoed copy of the speech. At 1 p.m. opposition members and staff attended a technical briefing on the Speech from the Throne at the federal building, at which time we similarly expected to be presented with an embargoed copy of the speech. But at the 1 p.m. technical briefing in the federal building opposition members and staff did not in fact receive a copy of the Speech from the Throne but instead were given an incomplete summary of the legislation that would be referred to in the speech. Members of the opposition parties first saw the text of the Speech from the Throne at approximately 3:15 p.m., when Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor began reading the speech, some seven hours after it had been shared with members of the media.

Now, this is the first opportunity to raise this matter as per section 115 in *Beauchesne*. We were aware of the media briefing that was occurring at 9 a.m. and assumed, incorrectly as it turns out, that the same information would be shared with members of the opposition at the 1 p.m. briefing. It is clear that members of the media were provided with the full text of the speech and therefore a greater opportunity to study and examine the speech well before the opposition did. We would therefore submit that our privileges as members of this Assembly and indeed the privileges of the Assembly as a whole were in fact breached.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, the concept of privilege as it applies to members of parliaments throughout the Commonwealth is one of the fundamental tenets of parliamentary democracy. Section 24 of *Beauchesne's* sixth edition on page 11 states:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals.

Section 24 goes on to quote Sir Erskine May, stating:

The privileges of Parliament are rights which are "absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers". They are enjoyed by individual Members, because the House cannot perform its functions without unimpeded use of the services of its Members; and by each House for the protection of its members and the vindication of its own authority and dignity.

I cite these references to drive home the critical nature of the concept of privilege. Indeed, it has been a consistent finding of Speakers past throughout the Commonwealth that breaches of privilege are among the most serious contraventions of our procedures and practices. Privilege is so important, in fact, that at the commencement of every parliament – and you will remember this, Mr. Speaker – the newly elected Speaker, in the name of and on behalf of the members, lays claim by humble petition to the members' ancient and undoubted rights and privileges. Now, some may consider this to be a mere ceremonial rite or a quaint, traditional formality, but in those few words, that have been uttered over the centuries, the gravitas of privilege is reinforced. It is a concept that cannot and should not be casually dismissed as an anachronistic relic of bygone days.

In this specific case, Mr. Speaker, the abilities of members of the opposition to conduct their duties were obstructed, and therefore I would submit that important democratic functions of the Assembly were impaired. I believe that the government has committed a contempt of the Assembly by providing information about the Speech from the Throne to members of the media prior to the speech being read in the House and without offering opposition members a similar opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, the breaches committed by the government yesterday extend beyond the realm of breach of privilege to the very serious issue of contempt. Chapter 15 on page 251 of *Erskine May* opens with the words:

Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results, may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that failing to provide a full text of the Speech from the Throne to the members of the opposition yet placing said speech into the hands of the media a full seven hours before has impeded members of this House in the discharge of our duties. Specifically, during a media conference in advance of yesterday's speech attended by the leader of our caucus, the Member for Calgary-Hays, and me, a member of the parliamentary press gallery asked us for our opinion on the proposed repeal of Bill 22, which is outlined on page 11 of the throne speech. Of course, neither of us had seen the throne speech, and the technical briefing we had received from the government at 1 p.m. made absolutely no mention of any intention to repeal Bill 22. The government's failure to provide us with the information directly impaired our ability to discharge our duties as members of the opposition.

In that moment what we experienced yesterday was virtually identical to the scenario described as unacceptable by House of Commons Speaker Peter Milliken on pages 1840 and 1841 of *House of Commons Debates* on March 19, 2001, when he said:

To deny to members information concerning business that is about to come before the House, while at the same time providing such information to media that will likely be questioning members about that business, is a situation that the Chair cannot condone.

Speaker Milliken further ruled on March 22, 2011, on page 9113 of *House of Commons Debates*:

The member . . . is certainly not misguided in his expectation that members of the House, individually and collectively, must receive from the government particular types of information required for the fulfillment of their parliamentary duties before it is shared elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, this issue has come up here in our Assembly as well. On March 4, 2003, the leader of the third party opposition, which I

take some heart in noting happened to be the New Democratic Party at the time, raised a point of privilege under circumstances remarkably similar to the one we are dealing with today, except that in that case the briefing was on a bill, not the Speech from the Throne. Now, in his ruling Speaker Kowalski on page 304 of *Hansard* agreed with Speaker Milliken's conclusion and ruled that the disclosure of the contents of a bill to the media prior to the same information being shared with members of the opposition "constitutes a prima facie contempt of the Assembly [and] is treated in the same way as a breach of privilege."

Mr. Speaker, an excellent summary of these arguments can be found on page 299 of *Hansard* on December 2, 2014, in which the Member for Edmonton-Caldwell argued:

These findings further clarify that a member's duties are obstructed when they are provided with necessary information after other parties or if they are provided with sustainably less information than other parties. The Assembly should be the place where public debate about legislation begins, not at a press conference mere minutes after the opposition has seen the bill.

So I am arguing out of fairness to all members of the House.

Our privilege of being the first to see the details of legislation that is brought before this House must be maintained.

Well, I thought it would be hard to find additional compelling arguments to support my petition, but I was wrong. That's certainly not the case. On November 27, 2013, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was arguing a breach of privilege based on a media technical briefing on Bill 46 that had begun about 30 minutes before she had received a copy of the bill. Quoting from page 3167 of *Hansard*:

My understanding is that the media were invited to a technical, detailed briefing on the bill, which would have given them . . .

And at this point the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood interjects:

It's on now.

The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona continues:

It's on now, but it commenced at 2:45.

I made note of when I as a member of this Assembly received these bills, Mr. Speaker, and it was at 3:15. That is a profound breach of my privilege as a member of this Assembly. We should not be receiving bills and legislation after any member of the public but certainly not after the media has been provided access to it. There is precedent on that.

Now, I would point out that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was justifiably indignant over a delay of about 30 minutes. I would point out that in this case the interval was some 14 times longer.

Mr. Speaker, there is one other point to distinguish that must be considered in this particular situation. Whereas other breaches of privilege have involved improper disclosure of the information on proposed pieces of legislation, in this case the document in question is the Speech from the Throne. To my knowledge this situation is without precedent in Alberta and represents an even more serious breach of privilege and contempt for the Assembly because while the speech is prepared by the government and lays out the government's agenda, it is in fact Her Honour's Speech from the Throne. It is not just any document or any speech.

The Speech from the Throne is very different from the everyday Routine of the Assembly, and we saw evidence of that here yesterday. The galleries and, indeed, the floor space were filled with invited guests and dignitaries. We were graced by the presence of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor. Brass bands played *O Canada* and *God Save the Queen*. That's why it is considered improper and, indeed, a sign of disrespect to interrupt the speech by way of applause, comment, interjection, or desk thumping, a convention which I was pleased to see was followed yesterday but was ignored last June. My point is, Mr. Speaker, that the Speech

from the Throne is not just any document, and the actions of the government taken yesterday represented contempt not only for hon. members on this side of the Assembly but indeed for Her Honour.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of sharing government information publicly or with the media before members of the opposition has come up before both in this Assembly and elsewhere. I view with a measure of sadness that members opposite, who only a year or two ago waxed poetic in high dudgeon regarding breaches of privilege that they had suffered, are now so amnesiac that they perpetrate the exact same contemptuous actions in government today. Albertans were promised better, and indeed many voted for that change, and they, too, must be sorely disappointed. It is clear that these breaches have happened before and will continue to happen if we do not take specific action. I am prepared to propose a motion in that regard pending your ruling. For now I believe I have provided compelling arguments that yesterday's events constitute a prima facie case of privilege, and I ask that you rule accordingly.

3:30

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, there were two statements attributed to the Speaker. If you have it easily accessible, could you just read that first one back to me?

**Dr. Starke:** The first of the Milliken quotes?

**The Speaker:** Yes.

**Dr. Starke:** Certainly. The first Milliken quote, Mr. Speaker, was from March 19, 2001, and I'll repeat the quote.

To deny to members information concerning business that is about to come before the House, while at the same time providing such information to media that will likely be questioning members about that business, is a situation that the Chair cannot condone.

**The Speaker:** Are there other members? The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'll say at the outset that I'm quite surprised that members from the third party would raise this issue. Here are some facts. When the PCs presented their last throne speech, they provided embargoed copies of the text to the media with no technical briefing whatsoever to members of the opposition. So if there is a person or a party in this room that's being amnesiac, I believe it is the third party. That was their standing operating procedure.

The other point I'll make is that numerous examples that the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster made were in reference to a bill, not in reference to a Speech from the Throne. These are two different topics, quite frankly.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday for the first time, in addition to the media briefing, the government did in fact offer and provide a technical briefing on legislation in the throne speech to the opposition. This was a positive step which offered more to opposition parties than had previously been the case, an increase in accountability and transparency. I'll also point out that as a member since 2012 I have never received a copy of the Speech from the Throne when we were in opposition and the member who has raised this point of privilege was in government.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that when the opposition was contacted and offered the technical briefing, their leader was more than happy with the terms, and I also understand that he was well aware of what was being offered to the media. When I heard about this point of privilege, I wondered whether the House leader had not only forgotten what the practice of his own government had



been but also whether there had been a miscommunication between him and his leader.

On the specific matter of privilege, I would note that the member's letter to the Speaker does not indicate any information on how his rights and responsibilities have been infringed by the government action. When you look at the actual Standing Order 15(1), it states, "A breach of the rights of the Assembly or of the parliamentary rights of any Member constitutes a question of privilege." It's my submission there has been no breach based on that standard. This House has often debated matters of privilege related to governments providing media with copies of legislation prior to its introduction in the House and its distribution to members of this Chamber. However, this isn't a bill, so the same considerations around privilege do not apply. As I've said before, Mr. Speaker, this is historic practice, and it has never been found to be a breach in the past, nor should it today.

Lastly, the context under which this matter has often come to the House when it has been legislation has been because a member has been asked by media to comment on the contents of a bill that the media has seen but that the member hasn't. In this case, copies of the speech that were distributed were done so under embargo, which, again, has been the traditional practice of previous governments, until after the actual speech had been delivered in the House and that the situation couldn't and didn't arise.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I submit that this is not a breach of privilege. Our government is following the standards of previous governments, but the difference and where we've stepped up and made a positive step is that we've offered more to the opposition parties than has previously been the case or previously been the standard in our province in an effort to increase accountability and transparency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for his pointed remarks. Much of what my colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster raised in the House today clearly indicates that what we're dealing with here is a breach of privilege, and while the deputy House leader from the government side would like to stand up and say, "Oh, we're just doing what the third party did when they were in government," it is a bit shocking. For days and weeks and months and years the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona stood in this place and raised points that said that the standard that the then government was providing was not good enough. In fact, as the member has referenced, a number of points of privilege and *prima facie* cases have been found on this very issue. I speak specifically to the Speaker in the House of Commons on an issue just like this here in the Assembly when other points of privilege have been raised around the media receiving briefings prior to the opposition.

Now, let me be clear. If the government had provided the same information under embargo to the members of the opposition, what we wouldn't have is a breach of privilege, but that's not what happened. I heard the deputy House leader say that the opposition was more than happy with the terms, but let me be very clear that this side of the House was given the impression that we would receive a copy of the throne speech along with a technical briefing. What we received was exactly what the member has spoken about, a technical briefing. Some of the contents of the throne speech were not addressed in any capacity at the technical briefing, so while the interaction that took place between the media and the leaders of the opposition parties all took place in an embargoed environment, many of those leaders were asked to comment on information that

the media had that the opposition didn't, and that is clearly a breach of privilege. There is a lot of history on precedent – I encourage you to spend some time going back through those steps – that this is a clear breach of privilege.

I will just close by saying that the Deputy Government House Leader and all members on that side of the Assembly have been passionate about doing things differently, about providing more information to the opposition, about working together, yet their actions are what we saw this morning. When something goes awry, their two excuses are "Well, it's what the government used to do" or "I'm sorry." Quite frankly, in this case I believe that our privileges have been breached and that we need to see steps taken by your office to ensure that these sorts of things don't continue. Albertans expect better of this government and the opposition expects better of this government because it's what they said they would do, and we expect that moving forward, you will find a breach of privilege and that this government will take the necessary steps to ensure that these sorts of things don't happen in the future.

3:40

**The Speaker:** To the House leader for the loyal opposition: could you advise me what you understand a technical meeting to be? Could you share that with me?

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, typically speaking, when we see a technical briefing on a piece of legislation, it's done around types of issues that are quite technical in nature. Now, the throne speech wasn't that. I appreciate the fact that they made an effort to provide some information, but what happened yesterday is that they actually made the situation worse because they provided to the media information that they didn't provide to us. So the actual definition of what a technical briefing may or may not be is six of one, half a dozen of the other and splitting hairs amongst the real problem.

The real problem is that they provided information to the media that they didn't provide to the opposition and now are making claims that they're actually the best possible government because it's never been done. Well, the throne speech is just as important as a piece of legislation, and in fact my hon. colleague made the case that it could be considered more important. They want to go down that path of providing information to the media so that the endeavour is for the government to get the information out that they want, not the information that the opposition wants out, which is why I believe our privileges were breached and us not provided with all the information.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I will just be very brief here. If, in fact, you do find that our privileges have been breached – and I will absolutely agree with my colleagues on this side of the House that, in fact, they absolutely have in this case – I just want to identify that this government has done some things somewhat differently than the previous government, which I think we on this side welcome. I've seen evidence that the government has shown a willingness to work with us, and to the degree that that has happened, I think that's a positive thing.

My simple submission to you, Mr. Speaker, is that if you do find that there has been a breach of privilege here – and I would argue that there has been – the simple rule be that if the media gets it, the opposition ought to get it as well. If the media gets access to the budget in the morning of budget day, the opposition ought to have access as well. If the media gets a full copy of the throne speech, the opposition ought to have it as well under the same rules, under the same agreement that we also will respect the embargo. We have

made some progress with this new government, but I think that would go an awful long way.

What I would worry about if you do find, in fact, that there has been a breach of privilege is if the government says: "Fine. No one gets it until such time as that's released." I think that would not serve democracy well, not serve Albertans well, nor the media, nor the opposition.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other comments by other members of the House? Additional new information? Proceed.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I just will add one piece of information that just came to my attention, and I would be happy to table it once I get a hard copy if you are interested. It's come to my attention that the only reason the opposition were provided with that briefing was because they asked, because it came to the attention of our staff that this was going to the media in advance, and we contacted the government to make sure that we would be able to participate in that process. In fact, there was no intention, it appears, to allow us to participate in that process from the start.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Seeing and hearing no other members wishing to provide new information, clearly I appreciate the details that have been shared. I'd like to take that under advisement and consult with the table officers. I wish to indicate to the House, though, that I must be absent from the House because of some official responsibilities I have tomorrow, so it would be my hope that I would be able to make a ruling on the matter on Monday of next week if that's agreeable.

Thank you.

## Orders of the Day

### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great honour and privilege today to rise and respond to the Speech from the Throne. I know that in doing so I have some rather large boots to fill. My father, Leo Piquette, represented a large part of my present riding of Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater from 1986 to 1989. He used the occasion of his response to lay claim his right to speak French at the Legislature due to it being enshrined in law in the North-West Territories Act. Later he asked a question in French during question period to prove that point and was ruled out of order by the Speaker of the day, and this is what set off the famous Piquette affair, as many of you today may still remember. His eventual vindication and the government's response to it has now led to not only French being allowed in the Legislature – and this is a right that many of my colleagues have availed themselves of – but all languages.

However, this also does mean that I'll have to come up with my own theme for my maiden speech. Now, by the way, once he had made his point concerning the French language, he actually winged

the rest of his speech. What did he say? He said: I'm speaking straight from the heart. And so he did. Although I do admire my father's courage in winging his maiden speech, I'm not so certain I want to do quite the same thing. However, that does not mean that I'll be speaking any less from the heart than he.

I am also fortunate in that there is certainly no shortage of issues to discuss. Our Lieutenant Governor gave an excellent throne speech yesterday, and there is a lot to talk about. One thing I know that will really resonate with the talented and hard-working and fundamentally decent folk – okay, maybe I am winging it a little bit there, Mr. Speaker; I'm skipping around here – the fine folks of the four counties, one First Nations reserve, and the many municipalities, incorporated and unincorporated, that I have the great honour to represent, are the statements that she said in her closing remarks yesterday, which I quote.

Albertans want to build an economy that is widely diversified and resilient to energy price swings, an economy that captures the full value of our resources, holds the promise of prosperous futures for our children, and shares its benefits widely and fairly among all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, these are words well said, and they are also a very fair approximation of what my constituents have been telling me on doorsteps and in get-togethers and at meetings across the riding. It also speaks directly to the great sense of frustration that I felt myself as a lifelong resident of this province and in my various roles as teacher, businessperson, and parent. Indeed, it's one of the major motivations for my having put my own hat in the ring this spring.

Like so many of my friends and neighbours I'd gotten sick and tired of hearing the same old excuses for why we seemed to be so unsuccessful in not only capturing fair value for our common resources but also in preparing ourselves against the inevitable bust that follows. After all, how many oil booms do we need to let slip by before getting things right? How many knee-jerk and destructive reactions to the inevitable bust and decline in revenues did we have to suffer through? This is something that I was and am still convinced that we can get better at although I admit that this is not an easy nor a new problem. However, I'm very proud that I'm part of a government that is sincerely endeavouring to do its best to change that.

Now, I'm saying that this is not a new problem. In fact, this has been an issue that has been a problem for Alberta since there was an Alberta. Alberta has always had an overreliance on a few very cyclical commodity or resource-based industries. Energy is only the most current. We've had to navigate the centuries-old tension between concerted efforts to develop a few key resources necessary to help provide a prosperous future we want ourselves and for our children while at the same time not becoming so dependent on them so that when prices crash, all the good work wrought with their use does not come crashing down as well.

3:50

Now, although many today think of energy when they think of Alberta, it was not so many years ago that they would have thought of wheat instead. It was the lure of cheap land and high wheat prices that brought the waves of hopeful settlers from across Canada and indeed from around the world into Alberta. These would actually in fact include my own great-great-grandparents, who made the trek from Quebec and who were indeed the first settlers in Donatville, which is just a short drive away from where I presently live, in Boyle, Alberta. These are also the same people that populated the fine communities of Athabasca, Smoky Lake, Warspite, Waskatenau, Radway, Redwater, Gibbons, Bon Accord, Thorhild, and many others. Hopefully not too many of my constituents are

listening today for this in case I forgot their community, but be sure that, you know, I know where they are.

In turn, these communities boomed, both the service centres for the rapidly arriving homesteaders but also borne on the railway-driven hope that each new village might become the great city of the future, a hope that unfortunately was dashed when drought and the collapse in wheat prices in 1914 caused a crash so spectacular that it took decades to recover from. For example, it took Athabasca, one of the older communities in my riding, a good 60 years to get back to the population level it had achieved in 1914. Some of the communities in my riding have never achieved those original levels, so it's never been an easy thing.

Just the same, however, many farmers did stay behind, and over time they learned how to survive the vagaries of the weather and of grain prices and even prosper despite the often poor commodity prices, the rapacity of the grain monopolies, the railways, and the eastern merchants. Having grown up on a mixed family farm myself, I have to say that I have the utmost respect for the kind of hard work that it took and, you know, the work and struggles they had to go through to come up with solutions to these problems.

Now, how did they come up with these solutions? They did this by working together, by organizing their own producer co-operatives and associations, by working together with their friends and neighbours to build corduroy roads over muskegs to market, and, finally, by forming their own government, a government of farmers for farmers. That government, the United Farmers of Alberta, is a government that I'm proud to say the NDP in Alberta is a direct descendant of. And I don't think it's any accident that as we find ourselves in similar times, we have a similar type of government.

Part of my riding also helped set off the next great boom. Redwater went from a sleepy farming hamlet of about 140 people to a boom town in just a few short years when oil was discovered there in 1948, only a year after the great find in Leduc. Thus began the next great phase in the Alberta boom-and-bust cycle, a cycle that dominates our economy and politics to this very day.

This cycle is obviously not an easy problem to solve. It is also definitely not the kind of problem that has only one solution. It needs many solutions, and I'm happy to say that many of these solutions can actually be found within my own riding.

**An Hon. Member:** Ask a farmer.

**Mr. Piquette:** Okay. Actually, it's not customary to talk during somebody's maiden speech.

All right. Thus, I'm happy to report that I represent the riding that, despite the very challenging times we're in today, is still holding its own. Now, what are these sectors that are holding their own? Well, first of all, we're fortunate to have a very strong and innovative agricultural sector with very progressive farmers using, you know, world-class techniques and sustainable farming methods to produce agricultural products and commodities that are second to none in the world.

We also are blessed with a very vibrant and innovative tourism sector. These would include community-driven initiatives such as Bon Accord's dark skies certification. Bon Accord is, in fact, the only community in Canada and one of the first in North America to be certified for having dark skies sufficient to see all the stars that we can see.

We also have great work in developing some of our heritage resources such as Métis Crossing, Victoria Trail, and the remarkable Iron Horse Trail, that starts up from Smoky Lake. It kind of connects east and west. We also have unique attractions such as Jurassic Forest, Prairie Gardens, a rapidly growing historic

park in Gibbons, and we have great festivals and rodeos across the entire riding, including the famous Smoky Lake pumpkin festival, where I was pleased to give the opening remarks this year; Boyle Rodeo days; the Thorhild Stampede; the Athabasca Magnificent River Rats Festival; Redwater Discovery Days; Bon Accord Harvest Days; and, well, the list goes on. Needless to say that during the summer I get the opportunity to see a lot of different events and eat a lot of excellent pancakes.

Now, we also are very fortunate to have a strong forestry products sector. Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater is the home of Alberta-Pacific Forest products, which at conception was the largest craft pulp mill in the Americas and which today still remains a leader in sustainability and innovation. We are also quite recently home to a softwood lumber mill in my home community of Boyle, Alberta, and this is a mill that I'm hoping will be able to reopen soon.

We're also extremely fortunate to be the home of Athabasca University. Athabasca University is a world leader in distance education, and it is through their innovative approach that we're able to bring high-quality degree-granting postsecondary education to students in rural communities across the province and to nonconventional students from across the world. Through this approach we have been able to train the leaders and innovators that will be needed for tomorrow's diverse economy within their own communities. Athabasca University is not only an exemplar of distance education; it's also an exemplar of anchoring high-quality knowledge-sector jobs in the rural communities, showing that this is something that is possible and desirable to do, and for the community of Athabasca the university being there has been a real saving grace.

Now, finally, and especially relevant to the work going forward to diversify Alberta's economy, the riding is home to the North West Redwater Partnership refinery project, which at last count is providing over 8,500 direct jobs both on-site and in the surrounding communities. There are also other notable employers in that area, including Pembina Pipeline, Agrium fertilizers, M.G. Williams, and I'm very hopeful that with our royalty tax credit there will be many more enterprises setting up and helping to diversify our economy in that area.

Now, the success of this development is due to a very far-sighted and, I think, excellently conceived partnership between government and industry. The Industrial Heartland Association, which is a unique partnership between municipalities and industry leaders, provides a single point of contact to facilitate economic development and diversification in the area as well as the land base. I'm quite confident that our new economic development ministry, which is based on a very similar philosophy, is going to be successful in providing those types of jobs across the province.

Finally, I would be remiss, of course, not to mention Canadian Forces Base Edmonton, which is an essential feature of my constituency and serves to not only protect Canadians but is also a powerful centre of economic activity for our region.

It is by building our existing strengths by, as the Lieutenant Governor has stated, capturing the full value of our resources that will we succeed. But what resources are we talking about? I think that our greatest resource all along has been the hard-working, resourceful, and compassionate folk that I have the great privilege to represent. If we remember our history and respect the contributions of those who went before us while at the same time having the courage to make the kind of changes we need in order to secure that prosperous future we all want for ourselves and for our children, then I think that things will work out just fine for us, and I pledge to my constituents that I will do my absolute utmost to make this so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:00

**Mr. Nixon:** Standing Order 29(2)(a), Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to ask a question through you to the hon. member. Actually, let me first congratulate the member on his maiden speech before the Assembly. I know the area of his riding well, particularly around Athabasca. I've done a lot of stuff with Athabasca University over the years, which the member knows. I am curious if he could elaborate a little bit on the importance of Athabasca University to his riding and to the communities that he represents and what his intentions are as the representative for that community to advocate for that important university in the months to come as the government faces tough decisions in the community of Athabasca and the university faces tough decisions on the future of that university, which serves, last time I checked, about 44,000 students across this country.

Thanks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for the question. Athabasca University is responsible for, I think at last count, about 485 direct jobs within the Athabasca community, and beyond that, it enriches Athabasca and the surrounding community culturally and economically and all the other sort of synergistic effects of having a world-class institution in that community, including world-class research projects.

Now, as to the member's second question, about my intentions regarding Athabasca University, these are some things that I've made clear from the very first day that I, you know, was a nominated candidate, and they have not changed. I'm committed to seeing a vibrant and sustainable Athabasca University remaining in Athabasca, and I have done and will continue to do my utmost to make sure that it remains in Athabasca and that it remains the world-class facility that students get to enjoy today.

**The Speaker:** Member for Calgary-Currie, under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Malkinson:** Yes, 29(2)(a). The hon. member was speaking of his background as he has a long history in this province, and I was wondering if he could elaborate on some of his own background before entering politics. Since it sounds like he has such a rich history in the Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater area, I was wondering if he could elaborate for us.

**Mr. Piquette:** Okay. Thank you, hon. member, for the question. That's a pretty open-ended question, hon. member. Well, I've done a lot of different things. I haven't spent my entire life within that riding. In fact, I grew up in a little community called Plamondon, which is just outside of that, literally, by about five kilometres. However, I have been proud to call Boyle my home for the past five years, and previously I spent a few years living in Athabasca.

I've been fortunate in having a variety of occupations that helped inform my present position. I worked for some years while I was going to school as a chemical operator at Celanese Canada here in Edmonton. That's how I kind of got through my graduate degree, and that's kind of where I got a taste of just how important previous efforts at economic diversification really were. I mean, Celanese Canada, unfortunately, is no longer with us, but while it was here, it provided hundreds of very high-quality jobs, and it was the result of government policy.

After that, I worked in business, where I did a regional publication for local chambers of commerce, where I had an

opportunity to meet a lot of different small-business people from different areas and got to understand and hear their concerns. From there, jeez, I don't know where we'd go. Like I said, it's a pretty open-ended question. I've been at times, I guess going back, a farmhand. I've done mud jacking. You know, I've even chased cows on horseback, so I don't know if you'd call it cowboying or not, right? I've done that.

More applicable to this job, I had the great opportunity of teaching ethics in law education at the University of Alberta for several years. I think that gave me a great understanding of not only the critical importance that teachers and teaching ethical behaviour and open-mindedness have in the formation of, you know, well-rounded citizens but the general importance of education for our continued survival as a democratic country as well. So I feel quite honoured that way.

My last job just before becoming elected: I was a financial adviser and insurance agent for Co-op. Oh, I guess we're out of time.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure and honour as the MLA for Sherwood Park to respond to the throne speech. Thank you to the people of Sherwood Park for the trust that they placed in me last year when I became their MLA.

In the throne speech the Lieutenant Governor stated:

We are currently overdependent on . . . a single price, and a single market. Alberta will address this in a number of ways.

First, we will diversify our energy markets. Second, we will pursue a coherent and effective economic development strategy . . . [and] we will invest in a greener, more sustainable economy.

This is great news for my riding of Sherwood Park, which is home to many employed in the upstream, downstream, and midstream oil and gas industries. We already have industries that have been engaged in exploring diversification and value-added production and who have taken big steps to reduce gas emissions and use energy more efficiently.

The Alberta petroleum diversification program, the review of the royalty system, the proposed investment in small and medium-sized businesses are all great news for my riding. Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, introduced right after the throne speech, will provide the tools that are needed to support industries, small businesses, and Albertans in my riding.

The throne speech commitment to helping Alberta families who are facing immediate financial hardship and the implementation of the Alberta child benefit plan will help low-income families in my riding and support those families whose breadwinners have lost their jobs due to the price of oil.

Mr. Speaker, Sherwood Park is the urban hamlet of Strathcona county, a specialized municipality which I share with the MLAs for Strathcona-Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. I was also happy to discover that Nellie McClung was the MLA for what is now Sherwood Park, and I understand that the MLA for Edmonton-McClung has already claimed her. I am pleased also to note that I followed four other female MLAs when I was first elected, including the hon. Iris Evans, that many of you know.

Strathcona county includes the urban area of Sherwood Park and a large rural area with eight hamlets. I am sometimes asked about Sherwood Park's status as a hamlet. In Alberta the term "hamlet" describes urban centres because of the way they are governed, not because of their population or geographical size. If an urban centre is governed by the county in which it is located, then it's deemed to be a hamlet. On January 1, 1996, the province granted Strathcona

county the designation of a specialized municipality, and this is what it is known as.

Mr. Speaker, Sherwood Park is actually the creation of a developer's vision in the 1950s to build a community to serve the new petrochemical industries in the county. Today it is its largest hamlet. The developer, perhaps thinking of the area's forested background, combined Sherwood with park to name the new development Sherwood Park. By the end of 1956 Sherwood Park had 30 families and has continued to grow. In 1961 it had 2,900 persons, with a total number of residents in Strathcona county of 12,000, which meant that the rural area had three times as many residents as the urban area. However, in 2015 out of a total of 95,500 residents, two-thirds, or 69,000, live in Sherwood Park and one-third in the rural areas, so as you can imagine, Sherwood Park has grown a lot in the last little while.

There are many special things in Sherwood Park. It is home to Festival Place, a 500-seat theatre, at which I hope many of you have gone to see a show. This theatre accommodates world-class performers, community theatres, musical recitals, and trains young people in the circus arts each summer. Each summer a favourite of the residents, including myself, is the weekly summer patio series, an outdoor concert featuring local and international performers. Maria Dunn will be performing at Festival Place in April.

4:10

It is also home to the Strathcona county library. However, it is a place that I have less time to visit these days. The library has wonderful pieces of art, including murals by artist Alex Janvier. This year the library board has decided to provide free library memberships for all residents, making the library even more resident friendly than it has been.

The Strathcona County Art Gallery @ 501 opened and unveiled its first exhibition to the public in 2011. The art gallery offers art education programs to children, teens, adults, families, groups, and schools. Currently the art gallery is showing photographs by Ethan Russell, photographs of important musicians, actors, and other celebrities. I'm hoping that many of you here today will have the opportunity to go and visit this exhibit. I am fortunate to have on loan in my office two paintings from the artist's collection of the art gallery.

The Strathcona county museum has done an incredible job of preserving the history of the county and its pioneer families, offering a rotating special exhibit and educational programs. I'm especially pleased that the museum offers an ongoing special exhibit highlighting the indigenous heritage in this area of Alberta, which also includes a mural by Aaron Paquette.

Unlike Edmonton, which has many community leagues, Sherwood Park has only one, the Gilmore Park Community League, headed by Tammy Greidanus. The Common Ground Community Cafe, run by volunteers and featuring fair trade coffee, local artists, and space for community conversation, is now becoming the community's gathering place. Kudos to Eileen and Ian Edwards, who spearheaded this initiative.

I am particularly delighted to see more and more ethnic and culturally diverse families moving to Sherwood Park. While door-knocking, I began to see that a change was happening in the Park, and the development of a mosque confirms that, like other communities in Alberta, Sherwood Park is a welcoming community for new and old Albertans.

Sherwood Park is home to a high percentage of families with school-age children. As a former hockey and soccer mom myself I appreciate the important volunteer work that parents and other adults do to ensure that children can be involved in team sports. We are fortunate in Sherwood Park with generous corporate

sponsorships of our sporting facilities and youth teams. Meyer's Insurance sponsorship of youth sporting teams is well worth noting. Millennium Place, in part funded by local industries, is a large complex with ice arenas, which is sometimes the home for the practice session by visiting NHL teams, youth lounge, pickle-ball and badminton courts, a running track, fitness equipment, competition-length swimming pool, and my favourite, a spin cycle studio.

Under the leadership of Mayor Roxanne Carr council is currently exploring options to ensure that there are more affordable housing options in the Park. Seniors, in particular, are concerned about their ability to stay in Sherwood Park. I would like to take this opportunity to compliment the mayor on this initiative, and I look forward to working with her and council.

Now, the riding of Sherwood Park contains a number of important industrial areas. One of the oldest Canadian refineries is located at the border between my riding and Capilano. This refinery, the Imperial Esso refinery, is the only refinery in Canada that includes a manufacturing plant. It produces oil for the retail market that is packaged on-site. This refinery, with its pipeline terminals, rail car terminals, storage facilities, and all the gas- and oil-related industries in the Strathcona industrial area, provides employment for many in my riding and in Edmonton. As midstream industries they have not been as affected by the downturn in the price of oil.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

While the Industrial Heartland area is now located in Sherwood Park, its activities are integrated in many of my riding's businesses. Located in the riding is also Alpha Steel, a steel recycling plant which uses discarded steel to make vials and rods. It was one of the biggest thrills, I think, so far in my career as an MLA when I went to this plant and in protective clothing watched the high-intensity furnace melt the old steel. I want to thank the intervention of our government, which allowed this company and others throughout Canada to successfully defend the Canadian International Trade Tribunal ruling that China, Korea, and Turkey were dumping steel, therefore preserving the local jobs in my riding and other ridings.

Many of the residents in the riding are interested in renewable energy projects. Two schools are exploring installing solar panels. These projects have been spearheaded by teachers who view these projects as a way to engage their students on climate change activities and to equip them with the tools for employment in the renewable energy industries.

Madam Speaker, my path to this Legislative Assembly is probably not that different from many of those who were elected on May 5 as we represent the most diverse set of MLAs ever elected. My first influence was as the daughter of a French Jew who as a young man deserted the French air force after the Vichy agreement and made his way to England to fight in the Free French Air Forces, in the famous Lorraine air squadron. My family's Jewish roots and the courage of the many who resisted and risked their lives to help others so they could be safe have been at the core of my own work in human rights and social justice.

I also have to thank my father for the second major influence in my life. When I was nine, we left France for New York City as my father had joined the United Nations Secretariat. Growing up I attended the UN International School, where I was exposed to cultures, languages, and ideas from around the world. I also spent a number of years living in England and Thailand before obtaining the international baccalaureate and graduating from the UN International School. The highlight was receiving my high school diploma in the General Assembly from the then Secretary-General

of the United Nations, U Thant. I then went on to attend McGill University in Montreal as this offered me the possibility of living in French while pursuing my studies in English. I have to be grateful to the then Prime Minister of Canada, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, for the amnesty program that granted draft dodgers and students like me permanent resident status.

J'ai ensuite travaillé avec des jeunes francophones pour les aider à conserver leur langue et leur culture en Colombie-Britannique. Cette expérience me fait une ardente défenseur de nos communautés francophones. Je comprends leurs besoins d'écoles francophones et l'importance des programmes qui favorisent le maintien de la langue et de la culture. Je suis fier de faire partie d'un gouvernement qui reconnaît le fait francophone, d'un caucus composé de 15 francophones et francophiles, et de pouvoir parler en français dans l'Assemblée.

[Translation] Moving to British Columbia, I worked with francophone youths, helping them to maintain their language and culture. This experience has made me a strong advocate for our francophone communities in Alberta, understanding their need for francophone schools and the importance of programs that encourage the retention of language and culture. I am proud of belonging to a government that recognizes the francophone presence in Alberta, of belonging to a caucus with 15 francophone and francophiles, and of my ability to speak French in the Legislative Assembly. [As submitted]

I want to thank my colleague from Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater for reminding the Assembly of the Piquette affair. I am thankful to Leo Piquette for his leadership in allowing me to speak French today. I am proud to belong to this government, that recognizes the francophone presence in Alberta.

The government's support for the resettlement of Syrian refugees is one I can well identify with as I worked in the early 1980s helping match refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam with sponsors in Canada and initiating programs in refugee camps throughout southeast Asia. In Sherwood Park there are at least five different refugee-sponsoring groups. One of them, the ecumenical refugee group, under the leadership of Marion Bulmer and Stephen London, has sponsored a family of 15, including a disabled adult.

My third major influence on the path towards becoming a Member of this Legislative Assembly is my marriage to an Albertan. Since my husband had followed me to Thailand in the late '80s, where we worked with leprosy patients and on sustainable farming practices, I thought it was only fair for me to follow him back to Alberta. While we lived in Thailand, we adopted two boys from a government orphanage. Our sons were brought up in a household where Thai, French, and Canadian cultures were intermingled. I am proud of their success. One is a teacher in an elementary school in China, and the other is a finance manager for a car dealership.

I have lived in some of the world's biggest cities, but I have also been fortunate to work and live in rural communities such as the county of Newell in southern Alberta. This is important for me as the MLA for Sherwood Park because while my riding is in the urban part of Strathcona county, it is really difficult to separate urban issues from rural issues in this municipality or, I think, throughout Alberta.

As I look back on a career and a path to this Legislative Assembly, I could not have chosen a better time in the history of Alberta. As an ecologist I am part of a government that has drafted a forward-thinking climate change strategy. As someone who has worked towards eliminating discrimination, we have amended the human rights legislation to include transgendered individuals. As an advocate for those living in poverty and of fair employment

practices, we have increased the minimum wage and given farm and ranch workers the same coverage as other workers. As a francophone I am delighted by the efforts that our government is making to support language and culture retention. As the MLA for Sherwood Park I am proud of the work our government is doing to ensure diversification of our petrochemical industries and the focus on job creation.

Thank you.

4:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Please, Member, I would love to hear more.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Ms McKittrick:** I'm not sure if the hon. member would like to hear about some of my adventures as I lived in other countries, but maybe the Assembly might be interested in one of the things that I have done that probably was the most moving thing in my life. In 1980 I was sent to Cambodia, Kampuchea at the time. It was just after the fall of Pol Pot. The organization I worked with was one of the first aid organizations in this country. I remember that the first time I was there was just before Christmas. The country was devastated. There barely was running water in the place where we stayed. There was no food. It was a very, very difficult situation. There was garbage all over Phnom Penh.

I think that this experience of spending Christmas in this country has moved me profoundly to always think about what happens in a country that has been subjected to war, discrimination, and hatred. It's very hard for me to describe the experiences that I lived when I went to see the tombs, the devastation, the people around that had no limbs because they had stepped on mines, the devastated hospitals, just the beauty that had been Cambodia totally destroyed by war and hatred. Like many people who now visit Cambodia and go to Phnom Penh, I went to the museum, where there were pictures of all the people that had died in that thing.

The other experience you might be interested in, if you want to hear about my experience overseas, was that in 1997, around the same time, I went to Bosnia-Herzegovina to be an observer for the Canadian government in their election. Again, I was in a country that was devastated by war. I was a European. You cannot imagine what it's like to be in Europe, that looks like World War II because things have been bombed, farmyards had been burned, and people had died. People had been murdered. There were graves everywhere. Here I was as an international observer having to watch out because the countryside was totally mined. When I was there, we were shot at. I don't know if anybody has been shot at in a country at war, knowing that people hate you so much because we happened to be in a car with Serbian plates even though I was part of an international observing mission. There we were, and it was in the night, and people shot at us because they didn't want any Muslims there.

Again, this experience has stayed with me, to know how much hatred is causing division, is destroying the economy. Can you imagine this country, just like Cambodia, if the economy of this country had been totally destroyed?

Anyway, those are just two of the incidents in my life that I think have made me as passionate and why I'm so happy to be part of this government, that has those issues at the core of who we are.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to congratulate and thank the Member for Sherwood Park for her maiden speech. I would like to thank the member for not only the work she is doing in her constituency but for the work she is doing in other constituencies in our beautiful province. Because of her knowledge and passion for co-operatives, the member recently joined me at a co-operative meeting held in Red Deer. Also, because of the member's fluency in French, she has very graciously accepted an invitation to help with the 2019 Canada Winter Games, to be held in Red Deer. I would like to ask the Member for Sherwood Park how she feels her fluency in French has been or could be an asset to Albertans.

Thank you.

**Ms McKittrick:** Madam Speaker, I think fluency in another language is an asset for whomever, and because I've had the opportunity, the pleasure, and the experience of being exposed to an environment where everybody spoke more than one language and to the importance also of retaining your mother tongue, I am a promoter of anyone speaking another language and of programs in our school, be they French immersion, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, or Ukrainian, the opportunity for young people to speak another language and to be proud of their cultural heritage.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Next on my list I have Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Today I am pleased to give my maiden speech to the House, and with it I'd like to tell a bit of my story, the story of where I came from and why I'm here. Some of the members of this House may know some of the story, the story of how I came to this province seeking a better life and how I found it in Alberta. I came to this province in 2011 after feeling the economic crunch of 2008 in very real ways. After bouncing from tech start-up to tech start-up in an environment where surviving was the new success, I left B.C. to find new opportunities, and I found them here in Alberta.

For generations the saying was: head west, young man. It was uttered to young men seeking opportunity. I found myself heading east from my home in B.C. over the Rockies to a land that I saw as full of opportunity. When I came east to Alberta, I found a place where I found not only a job but a career, a community, and a home. When I got here, I looked around for any kind of job, whatever was on offer. Madam Speaker, given the common knowledge of my love of automobiles, finding a job in a mechanical field, I think, was a stroke of serendipity. At the time the guy who was hiring me painted a picture of what Alberta was like at that time. He asked questions such as: "Can you show up on time? Can you do that most of the time? Could you show up sober?" And it was a bonus that I grasped the concept of lefty loosey, righty tighty as it applies to bolts.

At that time Alberta was bleeding for skilled labour, and I found a niche bolting bits of industrial generators together. From there I soon found myself on the way up the ladder, going from the shop floor to shipping manager to project manager, eventually settling into a sales position that I held before getting elected. In a few short years I had gone from making diesel generators to selling them to a wide variety of industrial oil and gas clients right across this province. I am proud that I have helped energize Alberta industry but also to recognize that Alberta is more than just a set of economic numbers. Alberta is the people that make it up. Whether you are one of the people who have been here all their lives or if you're a relative newcomer, it doesn't matter. We are all Albertans, and we are all a part of this great province.

In coming to Alberta, I found the career, the home, and the sense of community I was looking for when coming to this province. Here I found a diverse group of people: people to go skiing with, people to enjoy tinkering with cars with, you name it. Wherever I went, I found people in the midst of building strong communities.

4:30

Today I sit in the New Democratic caucus proudly representing the communities that make up Calgary-Currie. Calgary-Currie is a vibrant inner-city riding that has seen great transformation over the years, from its pre-World War II airstrip and barracks to lumber mills and factories in the postwar boom and now as a developing part of Calgary's new urban, commercial, and residential cores.

Things change over time, and Calgary-Currie has grown with the city. The constituency has matured and is host to a diversity and vibrancy that excites me. Why does it excite me, Mr. Speaker? Because diversity and vibrancy are at the core of quality communities, communities of people who through thick and thin have stood for their community, stood by their neighbours, not because their families came from the same place in the old country or because they are in the same income bracket. No. They stick together because they are part of a community. They share the streets, the grocery stores, coffee shops, and parks. It doesn't matter that on one side of the street there is subsidized government housing and on the other multimillion-dollar homes overlooking the beautiful Bow valley. It doesn't matter because they are a community, and that is the important thing.

This diversity extends from our streets and into our schools, where we see a great number of different types of learning environments: elementary, high school, traditional learning, various immersion and Montessori programs. The list goes on, from private schools like Clear Water Academy, based in the former Currie barracks, where I actually attended Remembrance Day ceremonies this past November, to Richmond elementary school, where I spent a morning with students talking about environmental issues and waste. I have to admit that that was one of my toughest crowds to date, as I've never seen a group of 10-year-olds so excited about garbage. And it doesn't matter what we do or where we are from or how much money we make; what matters is that we come together as fellow Albertans and fellow human beings.

As members of the community residents of Calgary-Currie know that it takes more than strong families to build strong communities. It takes people willing to look past their differences. It takes people looking at the ties that bring us together rather than hurling insults across the aisle at those we disagree with, which we are often prone to do in this House.

I am so proud to be a part of the communities of Calgary-Currie, community associations like Killarney, Glengarry, Sunalta, Bankview, Richmond, Knob Hill, Rosscarrock, just to name a few. All offer an assortment of programs and services, from youth soccer and outdoor skating rinks to consultations on road speeds and community gardens. Beyond community associations we can find seniors' groups and service-oriented groups like the Calgary Society for Persons with Disabilities, HIV Community Link, and even the Federation of Calgary Communities. All find a home nestled in Calgary-Currie. We also have groups that draw on their cultural and ancestral ties like the Ukrainian cultural centre and the Hellenic society, who certainly cater to a particular group but are always willing to open their doors to curious neighbours or MLAs.

From LGBT activism to seniors' care to immigrant supports, Calgary-Currie has communities of people working together to make the world around them a better place. Honestly, Madam Speaker, it warms my heart whenever I think of the good work being done by all sorts of people in my community and my

constituency because that is why we are here, to make the world around us better. Sometimes we disagree with each other, but we are all here in this Chamber working to make our world better, and we are all here due to the hard work of others who have supported us all our lives.

In my life I have a number of people who have helped me get to where I am today. Without a doubt my parents, Stuart Malkinson and Denise Paluck, have been the largest contributors to the man I am today. They instilled in me a sense of duty and respect to all people, and I'd like to think that the caring and empathetic man I am today is because of my parents.

My grandparents Eugene and Verna Paluck also played a huge role in my development as a person. It was with them that I first explored this province, visiting them every summer for a month, camping, fishing, and hiking along with their ever-present family dachshund. In all, I enjoyed the wilderness that we have in this province and am privileged that here in Alberta we have all of those recreational activities at our fingertips.

On the other side of my family Gladis and John Malkinson truly earned the title of grandparents, and while they passed away some years ago, I know in my heart of hearts that they would be beaming at the knowledge of where I am today.

Madam Speaker, more than the family I was born to, the family I chose has also played a huge role in my life. Long-time friends like Issa Kamisky, Rob Mackenzie, Steven Davenson, and David Wildmen were my partners, my compatriots, and my comrades in arms. Even those like my dear friends David Hollywood and Martin Carr, who were unable to live to see this day: I'm sure I'd be doing them proud now as well.

Among all those people who've supported and mentored me, Barry Bell is the one who got me into politics. He was a man of integrity, a man who meant what he said even if he knew it wasn't what you wanted to hear. He was honest to a fault at times, sometimes having a crowd of allies around him and being clear that he disagreed with them on a particular point. He wasn't going to lie simply to appease the crowd, but he was never beyond listening, having his mind changed, listening to the evidence and facts in front of him.

It was in their honour that I stood for election with the Alberta NDP three times, and I've always aimed to conduct myself with the same level of integrity and honesty that these people I've previously mentioned have instilled in me throughout my life. It is these people who've made me the man I am today, the family I was born to and the family I chose. These are the people who've made up my community through my life.

Whether it's the schools, community organizations, or even just community gardens, the greatest thing about Calgary-Currie is the people. I've worked with parents who give days, weeks, and months of their lives to seeking solutions, to providing for their children the greatest opportunities possible. I've sat down with groups of seniors who were incredibly interested in a gamut of controversial topics. I've also met with business owners, both large and small. Even those who've come into my office in crisis situations, I feel, have come away with a greater sense of purpose and courage, not because me or my staff are able to solve their problems in that moment but because, before they came into my office, they felt alone, isolated, and in fear. No. They leave my office knowing that there are people out there who care, that there are communities of people out there willing and able to support them.

When I used to cast my ballot on election day in the past and now on a daily basis here as part of daily Routine, I looked beyond the policies, beyond the rhetoric and tried to find the people who we are trying to help in this Assembly. When we vote on farm safety,

when we vote on job creation, when we vote on LGBTQ rights, I strive to find the people behind the policy. I think of the tradespeople who work often late at night, outside or in shops, fixing our infrastructure, keeping our utilities running and the literal gas and diesel engines of commerce running. I started my career in Alberta working with these people and understand their concerns, their hopes, and their dreams of making a life for themselves and their families. As a result, concerns of safety and fair taxation will always be close to my heart.

I think of the men and women who I marched with on February 14 at the murdered and missing indigenous women's march which took place in my riding, recognizing the abhorrent situation that faces too many of our First Nation, Métis, and Inuit friends. It is not okay that we have let so many of our sisters fall through the cracks, and it is not okay that for so many years we have been systematically ignoring their plight.

Policies, community, and politics: it all comes down to people. It all comes down to what people do. I am here because I was supported by people, and I want to support people. It takes more than individuals to build a strong province. Just like it takes a village to raise a child, it takes vibrant communities to build vibrant communities. Madam Speaker, I am so proud of where I have come from and what I have gone through, but I am even more proud of the work that I'm doing now supporting communities of people who form the backbone of what makes Alberta great.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

4:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Madam Speaker, thank you so much for recognizing me this afternoon. Just very briefly, while the member and I may see the path to getting there significantly differently, I just wanted to point out that his passion for people and his words that he shared with the Assembly today are certainly heartfelt, and I myself will be taking them home, if you will, as I look at my own family and as I look at the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. It is a wonderful reminder to us all why we're here, so I commend the hon. member for his remarks today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Edmonton-Mill Creek, 29(2)(a).

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you very much. Member, I was wondering – I was really moved by your words as well – if you'd like to elaborate any more on some of your experiences, especially about some of the inspiration you derived especially from Mr. Bell and any possible examples you'd like to share of how he inspired you to develop those honourable qualities that you saw in him.

[The Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to also commend the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I think it's important that we think about the people that we represent.

You know, the story that comes to mind when speaking of Mr. Bell and sort of how he did politics: in 2006 Mr. Bell was running for the federal NDP, and at that time I was still in university, and I had decided that I wanted to get involved. You know, I didn't like what I saw of the government of the time, so I went out to an all-candidates debate that was hosted by a local church. In that election all the candidates were up there, including Mr. Bell, and at some point in the evening a member of the congregation asked the valid question about gay marriage, which at that time was a very



controversial issue. The question was something to the effect of: would the people up there vote against their party if enough of their members wrote them or phoned them? Something to that effect.

Now, one of the things that struck me is that at that time all of the other candidates, you know, pandered to that particular audience. At the end to speak was Mr. Bell, who said something to the effect that for him on that issue it was a very deeply held personal belief and that for the party he was representing, it was also a deeply held belief. He also pointed out that for at least some of the other candidates that were up there, that particular point was a deeply held belief of those other parties. One of the things he suggested was that maybe those other members didn't quite get how party politics works when it's a core belief of the party, suggesting perhaps that they were willingly misleading that particular crowd. Of course, as you can imagine, that particular answer went over very well. I believe there were pieces of paper thrown and some boos. What I took away from that was sort of what I alluded to in my speech, which is that we need to be able as politicians to say what we mean.

Many people have come into my office who have suggestions that perhaps I don't agree with or I feel that they haven't given me enough evidence that I would want to take up that particular cause or a particular change to legislation. I feel it's important that when I have those constituents come into my office who, like I said, I feel haven't convinced me that that is something that I want to take on, that I don't want to have them leave my office feeling like I'm going to, you know, do that just because I want to make them feel happy leaving my office. I always tell them that, for whatever reasons I have at that moment, they haven't convinced me. If they have some new evidence or things change, they're welcome to come back into my office and meet again and attempt to change my mind. I feel it's important that I'm honest with whoever I deal with in the community about what my position is that I'm bringing forward on behalf of the community. I think that's something we can all strive to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

If the Assembly would allow me, it's a privilege to represent our people, but I can tell you, as someone who has a little bit more grey hair than most of you in the House, that it's also a privilege to be serving here with people and to get an opportunity to learn so much about their lives and stories. It really is quite a unique opportunity that happens for very few, so we should consider ourselves extremely lucky.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct honour to rise today as a representative of the good people of Edmonton-Centre to reply to the hon. Lieutenant Governor's delivery of the Speech from the Throne. When I received the nomination to run as my party's candidate in Edmonton-Centre just over one year ago, I couldn't have imagined that I would find myself standing here today in this Assembly among such a diverse representation of the people of Alberta, having the privilege and the responsibility of helping to lead our province.

Having been awarded that honour, I embrace it with all of the joy and gravity I learned from one of my early mentors, a woman named Yin Liu. I met Yin in the summer of 1995 when I was enrolled in the outdoor leadership training program at Crowsnest Lake Bible Camp. Now, Yin was not your average woman nor what one might expect from an instructor in wilderness survival. She stood about five foot six, weighed maybe 120 pounds. She wore large-framed glasses, and her daily uniform consisted of a white lab coat, T-shirt, khaki pants, hiking boots, and an ever-present camp

baseball cap. She was, in fact, a doctoral student studying medieval English literature, but she was also one of the greatest examples of a leader that I've had the privilege of knowing. She was quiet and unassuming. I don't believe I ever heard her raise her voice. Yet Yin rarely ever had any trouble commanding respect, and that was because Yin led by example.

One of the first things Yin introduced us to as part of our training program was the concept of servant leadership. Yin believed that the role of a leader was to take on the jobs that no one else wanted to do. Not only that, she believed that you didn't just do them with a sigh of resignation. Yin believed in taking on the things that no one else wanted to deal with and doing them with joy. The jobs and the problems that leave everyone standing around, looking at their feet or quietly making for the exits, were the things that Yin would make her own.

She'd jump up after dinner, and she'd race to the dish pit for the privilege of scrubbing the burnt pots. After a four-day out-trip she'd be the first one to offer to stay behind and clean and hang the groundsheets to dry so that others could go and take a hot shower first. You know what? That kind of attitude is infectious. It didn't take long before our group of trainees began to adopt a similar attitude. It became a game to see who could outdo the others in taking on thankless tasks.

That, I believe, is the mark of a true leader. Leaders inspire. They bring out the best in those they lead, and they do it not just by standing in front and telling others what needs to be done. They do it by rolling up their sleeves, getting down in the dirt, and working alongside everyone else. They do it by taking on the jobs no one else wants to do and taking ownership of the problems no one else wants to tackle.

**4:50**

In the first months after my election as an MLA I took the opportunity to immerse myself in the rich diversity of Edmonton-Centre and connect with as many of the people, communities, and organizations who call it home as I could. Mr. Speaker, I daresay that Edmonton-Centre is one of the most diverse and dynamic constituencies in the province of Alberta. Between 2001 and 2014 the population of our downtown core more than doubled, from just over 6,000 to over 13,000 residents, and that growth continues with 140 new residential units in 2015, another 1,500 currently under construction, and another 2,000 planned. That population is incredibly diverse, including new Canadians, postsecondary students, professionals, public servants, families, and seniors. They span all income levels, social classes, ethnicities, ages, and gender and sexual identities, and I'm proud to have the honour of representing them all.

I've met with the Oliver and Downtown Edmonton community leagues, committed collectives of young leaders who have stepped up to build real community in our urban core through gardens, potlucks, community investment, local advocacy, and civic engagement, building a better city not only for themselves and their members but for us all. Oliver is also home to a significant portion of Edmonton's LGBTQ community, members from whom I've had the pleasure of learning of their deep, local history, working to build and support their community and advocate for their rights. I've also had the honour of accompanying them to meet with the Minister of Justice and celebrating with them as our government moved forward with adding gender identity and expression to the Alberta Human Rights Act and aided our schools in adopting policies to support full inclusion of trans, nonbinary, and two-spirited youth.

These neighbourhoods are also home to many buildings and facilities for seniors, many seniors' homes, and I've enjoyed the opportunity to visit with the residents at each, to hear their thoughts

and perspectives and make note of their concerns. I look forward to building on these relationships and continuing to learn from their years of experience.

I've had the pleasure of supporting the work of community volunteers in Central McDougall, a community that is home to many new Canadians and many families, all of whom are working to reach out to their neighbours to provide programs and facilities that bring people together and offer much-needed support. I've spoken with the residents of Queen Mary Park, also home to many new Canadians, who are regularly invited to connect with the longer term residents, again to build community and work towards the revitalization of these historic family neighbourhoods. In the river valley I've connected with the residents of Rosedale and learned of their work to build stronger community and work with the city towards a new redevelopment plan.

It's important, Mr. Speaker, to recognize that Rosedale and indeed much of the land on which we are currently standing were historic meeting grounds for Alberta's indigenous peoples. I recognize that within my constituency there are many residents of indigenous descent. With them we are all treaty people, here by the grace of an agreement to share in the bounty and prosperity of this territory and to provide for the health, welfare, education, and infrastructure of Alberta's First Nations and their members. I am proud of our government's commitment to see this treaty truly and fully honoured.

I was moved by the Premier's heartfelt apology last June for the legacy of residential schools, the effects of which we still see rippling through the heart of our city. I've been pleased to see First Nations given increased prominence, their voices being heard in our consultations on the climate leadership plan and mental health review. I look forward to new opportunities for us to continue to rebuild trust that will come with the repeal of Bill 22 and repatriation of indigenous sacred objects.

Mr. Speaker, in my 10 months since being elected, I've had the opportunity to meet with countless community groups and organizations who embrace the philosophy I learned from Yin Liu and take on the challenging work of supporting many marginalized communities. In Edmonton-Centre there's no hiding from the fact that there are many in need. Every day our residents see people who are homeless or inadequately housed; who are struggling with mental health, addictions, or emotional trauma; or who are simply caught in the economic turmoil caused by the recent historic drop in the price of oil and our overdependence on a single commodity, a single price, and a single market.

I am constantly amazed at the number of dedicated men and women I meet every week who roll up their sleeves day after day to do whatever they can to help meet these needs. There are far too many for me to name, but I look forward to opportunities to introduce some of them in the future to this House. These organizations are out there fighting homelessness, promoting harm reduction. They're offering safe spaces, meals, bathroom and laundry facilities for homeless youth and adults; affordable, accessible health and dental care and mental health supports; assistance navigating government programs and services; and, most importantly, a chance to reclaim the dignity that should be afforded all human beings.

Mr. Speaker, I ran for this position in no small part to ensure that government would continue to support this important work while endeavouring to reinvest in key services as we are still recovering from the effects of poorly planned or considered cuts by previous governments. I'm pleased to have the honour to serve with a government that is holding that line.

I also have the honour of representing two strong postsecondary institutions. NorQuest College offers a wide range of ground-level

programs and offers thousands of Albertans, including new Canadians, indigenous students, and students with disabilities, access to new and better careers. I'm excited to see that impact expand with their new Singhmar Centre for Learning.

Grant MacEwan University, which is my first alma mater, though it was a community college when I attended, is a university that now offers a wide range of degrees in a uniquely student-focused learning environment. I graduated from their internationally acclaimed music program in 1995, and I'm incredibly pleased that it and all of their arts programs will be coming to Edmonton-Centre in the fall of 2017.

Edmonton-Centre has long been one of the city's main hubs for the arts, being the home of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and the Winspear Centre, the Citadel Theatre, the Art Gallery of Alberta, the upcoming new Royal Alberta Museum, music venues like the newly launched Needle Vinyl Tavern, and a wide variety of galleries and artist spaces. It's been my pleasure to offer my vigorous support to all of these organizations, and it's amongst my highest priorities to continue to see them thrive and contribute to the vibrancy of our city's culture and economy.

I'm also thrilled with the growth of new independent businesses within our downtown core, particularly along its northern edge, and will continue to work with partners and local government and community to remove barriers to their success and help them access the many tools our government is making available to help them thrive.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that I have the honour of representing many public servants, men and women who spend every day working on behalf of the people of Alberta, including many who provide the essential supports that allow us to do our work in this House. I'm proud to stand with our government in our commitment to maintain secure and stable funding to our key services and a rational, evidence-based approach to improving the operations of our public service so that my constituents, from the front lines up to our ministries, are not needlessly vilified but, instead, are engaged as willing partners in offering the best service for value to the people of Alberta.

In conclusion, there's one more story, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share about my time at Crowsnest. On the final full day of a six-day out-trip our training group was descending from a mountain ridge, and we began making our way towards our final campsite. This trip on a normal day would take about two to three hours. On that day it took nearly seven. That's because in the upper areas of the Rockies in late May it's not unusual to still have several feet of snow. That day was especially warm, and as at that time I weighed about 250 pounds plus the weight of a 50-pound pack, with every step I took my leg would plunge up to my hip in snow. A phenomenon known as postholing.

As a result I was forced to progress at a snail's pace. But as I did, Mr. Speaker, our leader, Yin, and all of my fellow members stayed with me every agonizing step of the way. They offered encouragement and handfuls of trail mix and ensured that I was never alone because true leadership, true citizenship, true community lies in not abandoning those in need and ensuring that no one gets left behind.

To quote the Lieutenant Governor's gracious speech: "In tough times we always pull together. We have each other's backs. We support each other in these times instead of making a bad situation worse." Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we don't make short-sighted decisions for short-term gain that hurt the most vulnerable and see them left behind.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to coming alongside the people of Edmonton-Centre, hearing their voices, understanding their challenges, and supporting their work. I pledge to take on the

difficult jobs, to make their issues my own, and to work with integrity with my colleagues on both sides of this aisle to ensure that the Alberta advantage extends to everyone.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you very much. Through you to the member I want to thank him for his maiden speech. It was phenomenal and inspiring. I have to say that I share this philosophy of servant leadership and leading by example. I'd like to know from the member what lessons learned he has had in the last eight months from implementing this style of leadership in his own constituency. Please expand on it.

5:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, as I said, one of the incredible things that I've found is just the incredible spirit of Albertans and their willingness to pull together and help each other. Again, the number of volunteers or people that are working for nonprofits, for pay far lower than they could be making in other industries, because of their passion, because they care, because they want to help people in need is astounding for me, and it's incredibly inspiring. It's been amazing for me to see how much it means for them simply to have their representative from government come to see them, to encourage them, and to be willing to listen to them and hear what their concerns are.

Mr. Speaker, these are the people that know best what needs to be done. They're on the front lines every day. They see what the needs are. They see what the challenges are. They see the effects of the decisions that we make in this House. It's an incredible privilege that I have as a member of this Assembly and as a representative to be able to go out and see the work they do, to learn about it, to share in it, and to encourage them going forward. I've seen that being done by my colleagues in many instances as well, you know, and from what I've seen on social media, I've seen that from the members and my colleagues across the aisle. That's one of the most wonderful things, I think, about this new Legislature that we have. We have so many here who are just thrilled, who are so excited to have this opportunity to serve Albertans, to be able to go out into their communities and truly listen, represent their constituents, and bring a new voice to this House.

We have such a wonderful diversity of people representing every part of this province: the number of women we have here, the number of people from so many different ethnicities, the fact that we have the first LGBTQ members to ever sit in this House. Again and again when I go out to the community, I hear people who are so excited to see that their government, that their Legislature, that their representatives represent who they are.

These are some of the lessons that I've learned. These are some of the opportunities that I've had. Again, every day I get up and I just recognize what a privilege it is to have the honour to serve in this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was with great interest that I listened to the Member for Edmonton-Centre's speech, particularly the part where he said that he graduated from Grant MacEwan College with a degree in music. I know that in my time as Advanced Education minister it's been fascinating to find out all the interesting things that are going on with the training and

investment in fine arts and music training across the province. I do have to say that I am disappointed that none of our postsecondary institutions offer any specific instruction in accordion, but I would like to ask the member to expand upon the value that he thinks a training in fine arts and music in particular adds to the quality of life and the standard of living for the people of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I can honestly say that the skills I learned working as a musician and studio engineer I use every day in this work. You know, the ability to stand in front of an audience and hold a crowd: this job certainly involves a certain level of performance, and I've certainly got good training in that. But, of course, the creative abilities that I explored there, the ability to take a theme and expand on it, to be able to find new arrangements for new ideas, to be able to explore different directions, different ways to approach a particular piece: again, all those things, that creativity, those critical-thinking skills, I put to use every day.

Certainly, the opportunities I had to work with so many other people, to learn about collaboration: there is no greater collaboration, in some ways, than to get on a stage with a group of people, have a simple melody line, and from that create a whole new piece of music. To be able to improvise, to be able to work together, to be able to listen to the people you're working with: an incredible opportunity and another set of skills that I gained from music that, again, I have the opportunity to use every day, including in my work here in this House.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm deeply honoured to be able to rise today and address the Legislative Assembly for the first time in response to the Speech from the Throne, delivered by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor. Before I begin, I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to the Honourable Lois Mitchell for her work as our Queen's representative in Alberta. This is clearly a new era for our province in more than one way. This is an exciting time, and I'm thrilled to play a part in it.

Now I would like to say a few words about why I'm here in the first place. Bonnyville-Cold Lake has been represented as its own distinct constituency since 1997, when it was originally established. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you today the constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake, who have graced me with the privilege of being their voice in this Assembly. The riding encompasses a geographical area of well over 7,000 kilometres, and we have a very large collection of communities who call this home, about 35,000 Albertans, and that means about 10,000 households. The communities are the MD of Bonnyville, the city of Cold Lake, the town of Bonnyville, the village of Glendon, the Elizabeth settlement, the Fishing Lake settlement, Cold Lake First Nation, Frog Lake First Nation, Kehewin Cree Nation.

I do not take the responsibility of representing my community members lightly, Mr. Speaker. In a number of ways Bonnyville-Cold Lake encompasses much that makes Alberta unique. As a largely rural community it retains the foundations of our province's initial success. The oil and gas industries are by far the largest employers in our communities, and they are a key component of the province's economic backbone. In fact, the oil and gas industry alone provides the livelihoods of over 17 per cent of Albertans in Bonnyville-Cold Lake, and it actually is one of the richest oil-producing regions in all of Canada. As such, it is an industry near

and dear to our hearts as well as to all Albertans, who prosper as a result.

We are proud of the role the residents of our communities have played and will continue to play in the tradition of Alberta economic independence, and this tradition of hard work and community building goes back a long way, Mr. Speaker. Long before Bonnyville-Cold Lake came into its own as a presence in 1997, the people of this area were hard at work building the communities and contributing to Alberta's future. These people are proud and diverse groups. We have a significant francophone community as well, complete with two French-speaking schools as well as several French immersion schools, which, proudly, I will announce, my two daughters, Amelia and Charlotte, both attend.

Many hon. members may be aware of the strong Ukrainian presence in the Bonnyville-Cold Lake area as well. In fact, we boast the world's largest perogy, in the town of Glendon. I recommend going to see it. Throughout the riding we have a strong, proud indigenous and Métis presence. These communities have always made me feel welcome at any event that I've attended. This shows the compassion that flows through the indigenous communities, and I am very thankful for all of the outreach they have done to me to date. You also might know that we are the host to a major military base, which plays an integral part in our community. The base brings real stability to Bonnyville-Cold Lake through these hard economic times. It also puts our great constituency on the map as the ambassador of the province to the rest of the country and ultimately to the rest of the world.

5:10

I need to also recognize the veterans within my riding. We have the veterans volunteering, and through the community spirit that they bring – we have a stronger community because of it. Throughout my riding these veterans hold my greatest respect for the contributions that they have made to Canada and our province and the municipalities that are all within my riding.

We as residents also take a great deal of pride in our responsibility of representing the province and the contributions to Alberta's development. We aren't just oil and gas. When people hear Cold Lake, they hear oil and gas, and that is true. We do have a very large oil and gas base, but we also have an agriculture base. The agriculture base adds to our rich, diverse heritage. Cold Lake encompasses so much that makes Alberta unique and competitive. When you talk about my riding, though, to ignore our farms and ranches would be a mistake. These are the hard-working men, women, and children who feed us, and many Albertans and Canadians have forgotten that the food that is on their table isn't actually grown in the supermarket. I have dedicated local farmers and ranchers who take the time to go out to our local schools and teach our local children the value that farms have in Alberta, and that makes me proud.

We as constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake understand that diversity in our riding is paramount. Mr. Speaker, it is a truly humbling privilege to be entrusted to represent all of the communities within my riding. However, I do need to credit all of the retired MLAs from the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency, who have worked hard moving my constituency forward through the difficult times before. I'd like to name a few because I think it's important that we don't forget these important MLAs that have represented us in the past: retired member Genia Leskiw, who is known for her work within the Ukrainian community and with the senior citizens within our community; retired member Denis Ducharme, who is known for his work to create opportunity within the business community and who served as the minister of community development; retired member Leo Vasseur, who brought

change to our community and brought a new direction, is a well-respected businessman still in the town of Bonnyville; retired member Ernie Isley served as the minister of manpower, the minister of public works and supply and services, the minister of agriculture, the minister of agriculture and rural development, and the minister of agriculture, food, and rural development.

It is an honour to be following such great men and women, and I would like to actually bring forward a statement that past member Ernie Isley had spoken in his original maiden speech on May 28, 1979, at page 39.

Mr. Speaker, over the years governments have probably earned the reputation of being reactors as opposed to actors. I think we're now in a situation where we can reverse that conception. This means that all departments of our provincial government must be prepared to play some real leadership in conjunction with the local governments in making the growth of the Cold Lake area a positive success story.

This government needs to consider the wisdom of retired members. They need to go through what has happened in the past and see what has gone wrong. The wisdom of retired member Ernie Isley is brought through by the fact that we need to stop acting and we need to start working towards bringing jobs to the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency. I wish I had more time to list all of the extensive successes of past members, but unfortunately we'd be here for the rest of the evening. We've had some really great MLAs in Bonnyville-Cold Lake that have shaped the future of Alberta, shaped the future of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. The responsibility the constituents have granted me I do not take lightly, and I can assure you that I have men and women before me who are good examples to strive towards.

We do have our own struggles that I am sure the past MLAs have navigated through. We have seen a large migration out of Bonnyville-Cold Lake, which has brought a very large inventory of houses on the market, which is starting to show in lower house prices. The fact is that people are moving away to feed their families. How do we prevent this? We are proud Albertans, and we've forgotten that we have gone through this before, but it's worse. It's worse than it's ever been. And we can blame the price of oil, but it's not solely the price of oil that is responsible for what we are going through right now; it is the instability that this government has brought through legislation in the past, well, almost year.

My conversations with local businessmen and -women across the riding have shown that we have about a 25 to 40 per cent job loss rate happening in Bonnyville-Cold Lake right now, and that is across all industries: restaurants, insurance. That is almost everything that is happening in my riding right now.

This is insane. I have people hurting. Their voices need to be heard. It hurts me to see people that have lived in the riding for 10, 20, and 30 years moving away to get more jobs in either B.C. or Saskatchewan. I understand their need to find work outside their riding. It is important to show that we are still able to provide. We can't. They're looking to us for direction as the MLAs, and we are showing repeatedly that there is no direction that we are going in to help my riding. We're also seeing this across, in my opinion, Alberta.

Now, we have seen the fact that the government has tried, and I will give them credit; they have brought out some legislation that is meant to be job friendly. Let's start with the fact that we have the job creation grant that came out. I have no businesses in Bonnyville-Cold Lake that are hiring new hires right now. It is a shame to see that these grants were never targeted to where the worst layoffs are happening.

We've also seen that the announcement of the carbon tax is affecting our local business community. The fact is that right now they can barely make ends meet. We heard our Premier today state that, really, businesses are rich. They're just holding on, trying to get through this, and to state that a 1 per cent decrease in the corporate tax rate is something that our government can't help our small-business community through is preposterous. The fact that we have more expenses coming on our local business community in this time frame through that carbon tax . . .

5:20

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drumheller-Stettler. Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under 29(2)(a), to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. It's an honour to rise and question the member. You know, he's talking about the passion of facing people who are out of their jobs. We heard the Member for Calgary-Currie comment about his humble beginnings as he came to Alberta from British Columbia. I was pleased to hear that. You are also facing those types of people. Can you elaborate a little bit on the numbers of people that you've had crossing the doors of your Legislature office or the people that have approached you on the streets or at public functions that you've been at? I think that people and the members in this Chamber need to know in many ways the absolute social cost to what's occurring in the economy in Alberta today.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What isn't widely known – and I thank the member for the question – is that a lot of the companies across Bonnyville-Cold Lake right now are holding on to their employees and rolling back their wages. They're cutting off the overtime. They're job-sharing. And that's very admirable. But what we're not hearing is the fact that there are a lot of contractors that also support the oil and gas industry, contractors that right now are asking: where can I go to find work and be able to bring food for my family? I've had several contractors go through my office, and they've been saying: "Scott, what do I do? Where are we going?" I say: "Well, we've got this job-creation credit. Job-creation credit. You need to hire people." "Well, I'm one man and a truck. How's that \$5,000 that's going to be paid in 2017 going to help me?" You're right; it's not going to help you. You aren't qualifying for employment insurance because you are a contractor. You have no choice but to find work elsewhere. That's what the real flaw in all of this comes down to, that we have an industry that is saying: we need some stability from the Alberta government, and we aren't seeing it.

We had a royalty review that came back with no change; seven months, no change. This is crazy. The fact is that when we're looking at the royalty review, that has done so much damage to my riding, now we've got oil and gas companies saying: well, now we've got a carbon tax; where else are we going to go? The fact is that when we're looking for answers from the government, stability from the government, we are not finding it, and my riding – my riding – right now is hurting because of it.

We need to start looking to move forward in a direction that is best for all Albertans. The fact is that we are not seeing that right now. We have brought forward that that job-creation program that the government had put through wouldn't work, and the government just didn't listen. We continued to say: yeah, raise corporate taxes; you're going to hurt us. They didn't listen. If you raise minimum wage, it's going to hurt us. They didn't listen. You continue to raise taxes and – guess what? – you're going to put my

businesses out of business, and that is where we are not going to have any taxes to collect. That means that we're not going to be able to supply money for our most vulnerable because there's not going to be any. How can we have any support for our most vulnerable when there's no tax base left because they've all gone to Saskatchewan or B.C.? This is a travesty.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to ask the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake a question about a comment that he made about the carbon tax. I know that a good portion of the oil and gas development that occurs in his riding is conducted by CNRL at their Primrose and Wolf Lake facilities. I'd like to remind the member that when we rolled out our climate leadership plan, it was, in fact, the CNRL chairman, Murray Edwards, who said: on behalf of Canadian Natural Resources Limited, my colleagues from Suncor, Cenovus, and Shell we applaud Premier Notley for providing us a position of leadership on climate policy. So I'm wondering how good a job the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake is doing in representing the concerns of his constituents when a major producer of oil and gas has specifically endorsed our climate leadership plan.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The oil and gas industry don't even know how to deal with the NDP government. They're jumping on ship just because they have no choice. The fact is that we are going to have a carbon tax that's going to cost my average resident and business a thousand dollars a year. A thousand dollars a year. When we're looking at carbon taxes, we're looking at a tax that is going to attack our most vulnerable. It is going to attack my residents. It's going to attack my small businesses, and the fact that we've got oil companies that are jumping on ship with the NDP government distresses me to no end, but it is what it is. You know what? I am still proud to say that CNRL is an active business in my community employing Albertans right now, and the fact that we've got Cenovus, we've got EnCana, we've got all of these other oil, gas, and pipeline companies that are still functioning in my riding – we need to say: "Good job. Let's keep moving. Let's get through this whole NDP government in three years."

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions?

**Mr. Hinkley:** I guess I just also want to check if the hon. member would like us to go back to the good old days to help his people, and I would remember the Alberta advantage if that's where he wants to go back to. I will refer back to the corporate tax rates and the small-business tax rates of Mr. Klein in 1994. It was 15.5 per cent for corporate tax. We now have it at 12 per cent. For the small-business tax rate it was 6 per cent. We now have it at 3 per cent. So, I guess, who ruined Alberta?

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to respond to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar regarding his question with the . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. What was your question?

**Mr. Yao:** I wish to ask a question through Mr. Cyr.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Yao:** All right. I'd like to ask you, sir: do these oil sands companies, especially these ones that have made these ...

**The Speaker:** Directly to the Speaker if you could.

**Mr. Yao:** ... agreements with the government, have any projects planned here in the near future?

**Mr. Cyr:** I could think of one example. We've got an oil company called Osum up in my riding right now. They actually have a full plant ready to go, and it's sitting there. They're not installing it. They're not putting it in. They're not going to build it. The whole plant is sitting on the site. That's in my riding right now. That is what the reality is of what is happening in Alberta right now. They've actually got plants here right now ready to go, and they're not building them, and it's because of the instability this government continues to show our economy. The fact that our economy is the backbone of Canada and we've got no pipeline access is insane. The fact that we've got a Premier that doesn't appear to be supporting the fact that we need pipelines going from Bonnyville-Cold Lake out to start getting our ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Education.

5:30

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if I can top that last performance, but I will certainly try. I'm here to respond to the Speech from the Throne this afternoon. I would like to thank, first of all, the Lieutenant Governor for her delivery of the speech. Certainly, it was a very important occasion, and the messages within the speech I think were both edifying and give us a sense of direction of where we'll be going in this legislative session and beyond.

Certainly, as the Minister of Education I'm always looking at each of our policies through the lens of how we can improve and build our K to 12 education system here in the province of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, really, so many of the policies that we do around the economy, around climate change, around building social services all serve, in my mind, to help to build the education for our children for their future.

When we look at ways to have a healthier society, to have long-term stability in our economy and other functions that help to build our society, I always look at it as a means by which we can strengthen our education system here in the province of Alberta. We know that we are in an economically unstable circumstance, but that doesn't mean by any means that we should compromise the more than 659,000 students that we have in our charge from kindergarten to grade 12 here in the province of Alberta's schools. Their need for different education at different stages in their lives does not change with the price of oil. We know that we're willing to make sacrifices, and significant sacrifices, to ensure that education is not just surviving here in the province of Alberta, but it's evolving, and it's thriving, and we have the best education in all corners of the province regardless of where our children live.

I'm proud of the commitment each of these caucus members here and our Premier have made to K to 12 education. From the beginning, when we first took office, when I first took this position, we restored funding for enrolment in the province of Alberta, and we are continuing to do so today. Now, nine months in, we've tabulated at least 740 new teaching positions, new hires, and more than 800 support service jobs that were saved and/or hired again to meet the growing enrolment. We know from each corner, each of the 87 constituencies that we represent, that enrolment in our schools is growing precipitously. We have to make sure that we

plan ahead, long-term planning, to meet that growth over time. The biggest growth, Mr. Speaker, is for children between one and five years old, so you know that they will go right through our school system and need those facilities and need the top-notch teachers there in front of them every step of the way.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, we are embarking and/or are in the midst of – all of you know it, right? – the most ambitious infrastructure building projects in the history of this province: 232 schools across the province from K to 12 in every single constituency here in the province of Alberta. I enlist each and every one of you to make sure you keep a close eye on those projects to see where that progress is so that we have those schools being built for the kids when we need them and in a reasonable fashion.

I'm seeing some promising signs across the province. We've put in a very strong mechanism by which we can monitor the school capital projects as they're being built. I'm starting to see some promising signs in regard to schools being built on schedule or even ahead of schedule now in these last few months. We know that contractors are looking for work, and it's a great time to build public infrastructure here in the province of Alberta. I see some incredible progress.

I was speaking to Edmonton public schools, for example, in the last day or so. They had two schools on tender. The bids were coming in on average 19 per cent below what we were expecting them to, and they chose one bid, or one contractor, that was at 23 per cent below, saving more than \$9 million dollars, Mr. Speaker, in building those two schools. It's great. I mean, it's a great time to build infrastructure.

We will continue on with that strong monitoring process. Each and every one of you must make sure that you're giving me the information – I've been getting it as we've come back here to the Legislature – of where your school projects are at. Bring it on. That's what we need. We need that information, and I need to make sure that we're keeping on top of these things. From October I built a much more transparent mechanism by which to know when those schools – what state they're in. When you're building more than 200 projects, of course, you run into all kinds of individual circumstances. We have schools that were sited on some wells and some methane gas, underground coal mines, but we will overcome those individual circumstances and make sure that these schools are being built.

As well, certainly, as I said, restoring funding is not an easy thing for our caucus to support because of the difficult economic circumstances that we're in, but now more than ever, Mr. Speaker, is the time for us to invest in education, to ensure that the fundamentals of education are there for our children when they need it. We know that education is always evolving, but we always go back to basic numeracy and literacy to ensure that kids have those basic building blocks – mathematics and language and critical thinking skills – that they can apply to all circumstances throughout their lives.

People often say: well, you know, we have our education to make sure that we get people to jobs. Yes, that's true, but it's also to make sure that we enrich each child's life and that each child has the tools as they grow up to have an enriching and meaningful life throughout their adulthood as well and to pass on the spirit of education to their children and so on and so on. It's a daunting task, Mr. Speaker, but certainly what other task do we have as a society than to ensure that our children are educated now and for the future?

It's not to say that we're not looking for innovative ways by which we can work to allow our children at various levels to see what the working world can provide for them. Certainly, we've had some very, very productive and promising dual credit programs with colleges and universities around the province that allow access

for kids that maybe wouldn't normally go to postsecondary school to see that smooth transition from high school into that postsecondary institution. It helps to buttress, I think, our colleges around the province. You know, I think of Olds or Fairview or Keyano or Red Deer College and so forth with literally hundreds of these dual credit students moving through from high school to postsecondary.

Our intention as well is to extend the career and technology studies into grades 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 so that kids have access and opportunities for career and technology studies in those lower grades as well. People are looking for ways to have hands-on experience – right? – to evolve the shop class and home economics class into a much wider sort of experience for children, employing all subject areas from mathematics to language arts to social studies to building that birdhouse, that I never was particularly good at building when I was in junior high school. These are some of the innovative programs that we will be talking more about here during this spring session.

We certainly see as well lots and lots of room to help to improve performance in our education system. Of course, as a teacher myself for 20 years I look, first and foremost, to the professionals that we have in the classrooms, that are best suited to make the judgments and to make the choices for students in their charge to ensure they get the best education that they possibly can.

5:40

We know, of course – we had party support for it, and I thank you for that – that we're entering into negotiations with those same teachers here across the province over these next few weeks and months. It's our firm commitment as the government of Alberta to make sure we get a fair deal for our teaching professionals but that we get an affordable deal as well for all Albertans to ensure that those scarce and difficult public dollars are spent in the best possible way: in the classroom for our children's education. Obviously, the negotiations will carry on. We are very proud to have the funder at the table for those negotiations, but of course every step of the way we're working with each of our school boards to make sure they're getting the deal and the regional variations that they require for those contracts as well. So it's an interesting process. It's an interesting time. Certainly, it's very important that we focus very carefully on the teachers' negotiations because, of course, it sets precedence for the rest of the public service in the subsequent negotiations that we must undertake here in the province.

Yes, indeed, this throne speech might not have a great deal of education announcements in it, but I say, Mr. Speaker, that all things, all announcements in here, whether they're in regard to the energy efficiency program, the Alberta petrochemical diversification, energy diversification committee, climate leadership implementation, focus back to our capacity to build stronger communities and to look after our children and give them the best education possible. So education does infuse this document. It will infuse each thing we do in the subsequent budget that we have coming up. Certainly, while we are in difficult times, we always have to take the long view to ensure that we are building a better society during good times and difficult times and looking ahead for more stability and a better future for our own children.

I know when I go to schools that there are wonderful things going on. I was in St. Catherine school right here in Edmonton-Centre a short time ago. I met a young kid, first day in school, first day in a Canadian school, from Africa. I thought to myself: you know, what an exciting time that we live in, where we have young children from so many different cultures not just learning reading and writing but learning about the Canadian experience and the Alberta sense of

community, that we look after each other here in the province of Alberta. And what better place and what better way for us to exemplify how we look after each other than the investment and the lessons that we put into our public education system.

I know that if we measure all the things, the responsibilities we have in our constituencies, that education will take up a great deal of that time along the way, and I thank you each for the work that you do. Certainly, my ministry gets the job done, but we require all of your help along the way to just make sure that our education system is there when all students need it.

We are supporting all education across the province. I mean, there's a lot of misconception. I know people are talking about private schools, home-schooling, charter schools, public education, separate school systems. I need all the capacity that I can get my hands on, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we educate those 659,000 students and the growing enrolment that I see coming across my desk every day. I need every mechanism and every form of schooling that I have, and I need to have it in the highest quality that's available and to ensure that I provide that regulation for that highest quality as well.

We have to make sure that our education system is working for all students and that we have school board policy that's in line with the legislation that we provide here in the province. So, of course, I've instructed each of my 61 school boards, all schools and teachers, really, to develop LGBTQ guidelines to ensure that human rights and basic equality for all students is extended to every one of our students in the province of Alberta regardless of their sexuality or their gender identity. It's been an educative process, Mr. Speaker, and an edifying one as well. It's generated a lot of discussion around the province, and I'm thankful for all of the input I have received thus far.

It's very important for us to clarify what we're trying to do and how we go about doing it. First and foremost, I recognize the responsibility of each of my school boards to create policy that works for them in their communities regardless of where they live.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The House leader for the opposition party.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the minister for his comments in the Chamber this evening. It's nice to have you join us.

Well, the throne speech didn't specifically speak to the relationship between the department and school boards at present. Given that you've spoken at some length about some of the things that are happening in education and how the throne speech might interact with those, I have heard from a number of school boards in and around central Alberta who are a little bit concerned about some of the new reporting mechanisms or requirements that they have. I have heard things like: is it the case that the ministry doesn't trust us in the way that we're expending our resources? I'm wondering if you could just provide a couple of comments on the current relationship that school boards and the ministry have as well as any other details of the requirements of the reporting. I know they would be appreciative.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, before you answer, I know I don't need to remind the Opposition House Leader to direct his comments through me next time.

**Mr. Eggen:** He was thinking about you. He was looking at me, but he was thinking about you.

Those are very valid comments. You know, it's very interesting, Mr. Speaker, to remind ourselves that 97 per cent of the monies – I mean, obviously, my ministry is considerable, the second largest in

the government. So 97 per cent of that money I distribute to the individual school boards for their responsibility. I think that our school board governance system is very strong, and I am a firm believer in recognizing and empowering that level of elected government to get the job done. They are on the ground in their specific jurisdiction. They know what needs to be done, and probably that has efficiencies built right into it inherently just from that knowledge.

Perhaps I've been reminding each of the 61 school boards, for example – and they don't need much reminding. They live in the midst of economic difficulties, and they know that money is tight. You know, we are reminding them to make sure they spend that money efficiently, and that is job number one. But also I do recognize their right to make choices about spending in their schools, especially in different areas. There are different geographic circumstances that they have to deal with, varying distances, special programs that might be required for different areas. That's very important.

I think that I've had a fairly good relationship with our school boards so far. Every step of the way I remind them that I want to empower them to make sure that they're making the decisions and that they are empowered to make those decisions.

You know, a very good example – I always say: judge me on my actions – and a very important initiative that I'm starting on, Mr. Speaker, is to make sure that the Northland school board is reinstated as an elected school board in these next rounds of municipal elections, in 2017, and to respect the decisions of school boards in a wide variety of circumstances as they conform to law as well.

I mean, on the negotiations that we're entering into with the teachers, for example, people seem to accept the combination. We've built a negotiating team, the representative team, which is school board members and government, and they're working together as one single unit. It's not like, you know, government versus the school boards versus the teachers. Rather, it's working as a unified negotiating unit. I've been very pleased to see how that's been going so far. I also have a representative assembly of 61 school boards that are there. Relationship building is always something you must invest in every day, so I am endeavouring to do so.

5:50

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for your statement today. It's been an honour to work with you for three of your terms, one more for me.

I have two topics. Since this is directly related to the speech – and that's what 29(2)(a) is all about – constituents in the communities of Evergreen and area are really eager to learn. It's Calgary-Lougheed based, obviously, in the southwest corner of Calgary...

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I believe your time is up.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to be able to rise this afternoon to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I apologize that I've cut short the enthusiastic discussion brought forward by the Education minister, but I am going to take this opportunity to speak to how my constituents in Calgary-East can benefit from the initiatives outlined in the Speech from the Throne.

I do want to mention that my constituents are definitely concerned about their livelihoods during this economic downturn. They are concerned about finding work and about sons and daughters who have lost jobs. They're concerned about the cost of

living and if they'll be able to continue to afford mortgages, child care, and transportation costs. The Speech from the Throne shows that we are listening to these concerns. It outlines initiatives that will make a direct, positive impact on the lives of the constituents of Calgary-East.

I want to take a moment today to just speak about how the direction outlined aligns with the goals and directions of the people in my constituency. First off, I'm very excited about upcoming legislation regarding payday lenders. We have a particularly high concentration of these establishments in my riding. There are 11 on 17th Avenue S.E. alone. The prevalence of payday lenders, unfortunately, distracts from the image of the area. International Avenue, as I have mentioned before in this House, is a wonderful, vibrant, and diverse commercial area in Calgary. It has amazing restaurants, corner stores, and ethnic markets, and there are also a wide variety of professional services: banks, financial advisers, lawyers, doctors, and dentists. However, payday lenders affect this vibrancy negatively. Their high interest rates contribute to a cycle of poverty. I've heard stories of individuals who have paid \$2,400 worth of interest on a \$600 loan. This is unacceptable and can't continue to happen.

This type of predatory lending affects people who can least afford to pay these rates. It affects them disproportionately. And \$2,400 is a lot of money. That can be two months of rent or mortgage payments. I am so pleased, as I know my constituents are, that this government is doing something about this. The 17th Avenue BRZ has been fighting payday lenders for many years at city council and at the provincial level, so they're going to be very excited to hear that some work is being done in this area.

Sunrise Community Link and Momentum are organizations that work with low-income individuals and have programs that match the savings of folks enrolled. They allow people to save for down payments on homes or for RESPs for their children or for university tuition for young people, and they do financial education to make sure that people are aware of the options that they have. These organizations are helping to break the cycle of poverty that some people fall into.

Secondly, I am very excited also about the implementation of the Alberta child benefit plan because that is going to help a lot of families in Calgary-East. There are, unfortunately, a disproportionately high number of children who live in poverty in my riding. Families are working hard to make sure that their children have all of the opportunities to succeed that they themselves might not have had. However, there are continued barriers to the success of these children. Lack of access to quality child care is one of these things, and I was excited to hear from the Minister of Status of Women this morning that that's something that ministry is going to be working on.

Poverty itself is another one of those things because it's hard to concentrate in school if you're hungry. Research shows that low-income children are more likely to enter kindergarten unprepared for school. They often have vocabularies a third the size of their peers from wealthier homes. As a teacher, like many others in this House, I absolutely believe in the power of education to create equal opportunities for all children and that all children can succeed in school. That was why I was so excited to hear our Education minister just now speak of how this government has priorities for education.

What I'm really speaking to is the fact that the Alberta child tax benefit is going to help those low-income people. It's going to help them plan for the future. It can put up to \$3,000 directly into the pocket of a single parent with two children, and that's going to help people in my riding. I have a lot of single parents in my riding and I have a lot of low-income families in my riding who are going to



be able to benefit directly from that, and it's going to help them to provide a better education and a better future for their children.

The third thing that I was really excited about was the continued commitment to capital spending, and this is going to have a direct impact on my riding, too. I just want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Transportation, who is, unfortunately, not in the room, for the \$65 million worth of GreenTRIP funding that's been allocated for the redesign and the addition of a bus/rapid-transit line to 17th Avenue S.E. This is a project that has been in the works for at least a decade, and it's going to help to make our neighbourhoods in east Calgary more walkable, more cycle friendly, and it's going to provide new opportunities for development and more reliable transit.

This commitment to capital investment will also help the many tradespeople in my riding who have been laid off due to the downturn in oil. Capital construction projects will help to put many of these people back to work and give them the means to continue to support their families. I have a deep respect for these Albertans, who work actively to build things, to create the homes, schools, roads, and bridges that we all rely on for our daily livelihoods. I'm excited that we have the vision during this economic downturn to actively build things for the future instead of tearing things down and leaving an infrastructure deficit for our children.

Lastly, the constituents of Calgary-East will be impressed with the creation of Energy Efficiency Alberta and an energy efficiency strategy. I've heard from many constituents – homeowners, entrepreneurs, small-business owners – and they're committed to improving their carbon footprint. Having help from government will mean a lot to them. There are also folks in my riding who will be more than happy to help government with their efforts on this front. I've talked to entrepreneurial young engineers who are starting their own residential solar business. I have talked to energy efficient window companies, and I've spoken with large businesses who are already working to excel in carbon reduction.

I was recently very excited to tour Executive Mat, which is a business in my riding that rents matting for businesses, cleans

mechanical and printing cloths, and also helps to provide businesses with paper towels and food and beverage containers. The difference with this company is that they have an almost zero carbon footprint. They take back all of the coffee cups and paper towels that they lend out to companies, and they turn them into biofuel. They use that biofuel to run their boilers, and then they turn the carbon that comes out of those boilers into carbonic acid that they use to neutralize some of the water that they use to wash things. And that's just a little bit of what they do. It doesn't do nearly justice to the work that they're doing. They will be very excited to hear that the government wants to work on energy efficiency because that's something that they're really keen on and that they are doing amazing work in.

Mr. Speaker, I continue to be inspired daily by the residents of Calgary-East, by their resourcefulness, entrepreneurial spirit, and commitment to being engaged in their communities and with their government. Not everybody I talk to agrees with me, but they are unfailingly polite, respectful, and committed to making Calgary-East and Alberta better places to live. The Speech from the Throne speaks to the priorities that my constituents have for Alberta in these tough times: a focus on jobs, diversification, and encouraging high-quality services that Albertans rely on; caring for our most vulnerable; and increasing transparency and accountability in government. These are things that my constituents expect from government, and I was pleased to have the opportunity to speak to them today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, we have two minutes left until the Assembly stands adjourned. I would suggest that what we do is that we leave 29(2)(a) to the next session.

I therefore would suggest that under Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow, March 10, at 9 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]











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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, March 10, 2016

Day 3

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 29th Legislature

### Second Session

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Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, March 10, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect. Let us take time to understand and prioritize our duties so that we can properly fulfill the requests of our constituents and of all Albertans who are counting on our help.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Committee of Supply

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

#### Interim Supply Estimates 2016-17 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

**The Chair:** Before we commence the consideration of interim supply, I want to briefly review the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which is as follows:

- (a) the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (c) for the next 20 minutes, the members of the third party, if any, and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak . . .
- (d.1) for the next 20 minutes, the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent Members and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (e) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak, and
- (f) for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply with the speaking times set at 5 minutes as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

During the first rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. Once the first rotation is complete, speaking times are reduced to five minutes. Provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking times, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined period.

Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 8, approved by the Assembly yesterday, the time allotted for consideration is three hours.

So the Committee of Supply has under consideration the 2016-17 interim supply estimates, and I'll now recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move the estimates.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move the 2016-17 interim supply estimates for the Legislative Assembly and

government. This bill, consistent with previous interim supply bills, identifies the total amounts requested for each ministry for three types of spending: expenses, capital investment, and financial transactions. This is simply the legislation required to provide the spending authority to continue government operations beyond March 31 until Budget 2016 estimates are debated and approved.

As it notes in the preface of the estimates, expense amounts are cash disbursements for the purpose of salaries, supplies and services, operating grants, and capital grants to parties outside the consolidated government reporting entity. Madam Chair, what these estimates do is give government the spending authority to carry on day-to-day operations, including commitments to health care, education, social services, and all other programs and services Albertans rely on.

When passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$29.6 million for the Legislative Assembly, \$7.2 billion in expense funding, \$864 million in capital investment funding, \$164 million in financial transactions funding for the government, and \$363 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund. These interim supply estimates provide funding authorization that will allow the normal business of the province to continue until the full 2016-17 estimates are approved before the end of May. These estimates also follow through on specific commitments this government has made to the people of Alberta. These estimates will be included and fully debated when the budget documents are tabled next month.

Madam Chair, the budget we will introduce next month will elaborate on this government's priorities, and they are to put Albertans back to work through infrastructure expansion and economic development initiatives, to be a fiscally prudent and responsible government that is focused on minimizing our deficit without making a bad situation worse, and to maintain a high-quality and efficiently run education system and access to health care and social services throughout the province. Our budget will continue to elaborate on economic development initiatives designed to put Albertans back to work, and it will continue to show how our government is restraining spending in light of our significant revenue shortfalls.

Only weeks ago I was proud to share the government's third-quarter report with all Albertans. That report showed clearly how this government is reining in spending on nonessential programming and doing that while continuing to focus on our priorities, priorities like our announcement that this government was investing an extra \$51 million in our children's schools to ensure we don't return to the days of overcrowded classrooms. That's nearly 400 new teachers in classrooms, educating our children and helping them shape this province's future leaders.

Madam Chair, approval of interim supply estimates pending the release and approval of the budget will allow the Assembly the time it needs to review and debate those plans in detail as we move forward in the interests of all Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** I'd like to call on the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks. Hon. member, before you speak, did you want to combine your time back and forth, or would you prefer the 10 minutes?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I have remarks that will last approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

**The Chair:** Okay. You have only 10 minutes at one time, so if you want to do your remarks for 10 minutes.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** If I can take 10 minutes, I'll engage with the minister and then resume my closing remarks afterwards.

**The Chair:** I believe you could do it that way. You have 10 minutes – that’s your limit right now – and then we would go on to the next member, but you could speak again. Go ahead.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity today to speak to the interim supply bill before this House. There is almost nothing that I enjoy better than debating budgets and how we spend the people’s money in this province. I’ve spent years debating budgets, both inside and outside of this House. I’ve found it quite enjoyable, my time with the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board and our back-and-forth conversations. As enjoyable as they have been, they have not always been productive, however.

We are here not debating a budget but interim supply once again. In March 2015 this House voted \$12.6 billion in interim supply to get us over the unnecessary election period. Months later, in June 2015, this House voted \$18.6 billion in interim supply to get us through the federal election period. The NDP refused to give Albertans a budget so that they could go out and campaign for Thomas Mulcair and the federal NDP. They refused to give Albertans a budget so as to not worry Canadians about what a federal NDP government might do. That didn’t work out so well for the NDP. It took until late October 2015 for the NDP to finally give Albertans a budget, and that budget gave Albertans a deficit over three years of at least \$27 billion. That deficit will be significantly larger, as we pointed out at the time, but it took us until October 2015 before we finally got a budget.

**9:10**

We are now debating our fifth spending bill since this Legislature was elected, and we will be debating our sixth on Monday. Why are we debating another interim supply in this House? Where is the budget? Why is it late? Is it because the NDP doesn’t want the people of Calgary-Greenway to see what they’re doing? Some Calgarians are going to be voting their judgment on this government. Perhaps the NDP doesn’t want to alarm the folks there about just how well their so-called jobs plan is going.

Perhaps we don’t have a budget because the government caucus didn’t want to show up for work. They weren’t here. I’m not sure what they were doing. The Wildrose believes we should not only have a budget today; we believe we should have had a budget several weeks ago. The Wildrose Official Opposition called for the early return of the Legislature to debate jobs, the economy, the deficit, and out-of-control spending in this province. The NDP said no. They had better things to do than to debate the people’s work.

**An Hon. Member:** Like sleeping in.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** They were sleeping in, Madam Chair.

After they refused to call back the Legislature, we called for a jobs summit. You know what they said? Nothing. They were sleeping, Madam Chair.

The NDP have not done their homework, and that is why we don’t have a budget before us today. They are instead proposing \$8.7 billion in an interim supply minibudget to paper over things until the end of May. This is a payday loan from taxpayers. It is a predatory attack on the poor, beleaguered taxpayers of this province, asking for a blank cheque without any details about how they actually intend to spend the money. Instead of doing the work that needs to be done, the NDP are wasting the time of this Legislature with a dog-and-pony show. They are not doing their job. That is why we don’t have a budget in front of us. Instead, they’re asking for a blank cheque. They are asking us to give them \$8.7 billion of taxpayers’ hard-earned money with no details

whatsoever. The Wildrose does not believe in spending money without details first.

In the June interim supply debate the Finance minister and other ministers of the Crown were repeatedly asked how they were going to be spending the money. The Official Opposition asked pointed and pertinent questions about each and every single department in the government, about how money would be spent. You know what most of the ministers told the Official Opposition? “Wait and see. We don’t know. Wait for the budget.” Well, we have real questions to ask, and my colleagues in the Wildrose Official Opposition are going to have tough questions for the ministers here to try and get some answers about how the government intends to spend taxpayers’ money.

In comparison to the 2015 budget estimates this interim supply, for this short period of time until the end of May, has 85 per cent of the capital spend in the Advanced Education department for the entire fiscal year’s budget. Eighty-five per cent from now until the end of May will be spent relative to the entire fiscal year in Advanced Education on capital spending.

Seventy-five per cent of last year’s Economic Development and Trade spending is here at \$209 million. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade is asking for 75 per cent of the entire fiscal year’s budget for his department for just a few short months – that’s \$209 million – and so far the minister has only managed to create one job, his own.

Fully 25 per cent of last year’s capital spend on schools is here, \$300 million, 25 per cent of the entire year’s capital spend for just a few months.

Infrastructure – capital expenses should be huge in this section to account for the construction season – is only 7 per cent, though, of the entire fiscal year’s budget, \$73 million. It’s hard to connect the dots between where the government says that it’s going to spend money and where it’s actually spending money.

Municipal Affairs, where one would expect to see huge dollar amounts going out the door for MSI in the construction season, is only about 19 per cent of the expense vote.

Madam Chair, the Official Opposition was elected to hold the government accountable for its spending. The Wildrose was elected to stand up for taxpayers, and the Wildrose was elected to give a real voice for fiscal conservatism in this province, not to give the NDP a blank cheque.

The people of Alberta need a budget. They need certainty on taxes, economic development, and government services. Municipalities need to be able to plan for the year ahead. MSI, which is so critical to the sustainability of our municipal local governments, needs to be known in advance so that our municipalities can budget for their year. The unemployed in this province need a budget. Right now, Madam Chair, there is a population the size of Red Deer out of work. We haven’t seen unemployment levels like this in a generation, and we see nothing from the government but talk and bluster.

Last week I met with a group of unemployed oil field workers in Brooks, a group that calls itself Oil People Helping Oil People. They were organizing fundraisers to support other people out of work. These are real people helping other real people. I asked them what I as their MLA and their representative to the government could do to help. They said that they don’t want government handouts. They don’t need more government programs and intervention. What they said that they want is for us to stopping making it worse. They want us to get out of their way. They want us to stop killing jobs. They want the ideological experiments of the NDP to stop. They want the NDP to stop hurting people.

**The Chair:** The minister to respond.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, I just want to say to the hard-right, ideologically based people on that side that their demigod, someone like Joe Oliver, the former federal Finance minister, brought forward his budget last year – when did he bring it forward? He brought it forward on April 21. On April 21. What he said at the time was: I am bringing this budget forward now because of the price volatility. “I’m waiting on delivering the budget,” he said, “because of the price volatility,” that was once in a generation, that he was experiencing at the federal Finance level.

We are bringing our budget forward – we are doing him one better – a full week before his. We are beating their demigod, which is Joe Oliver. So from where I sit, we’re doing better than your demigod. We’re doing better, and we’re not kind of bringing forward an ideological, hard-right perspective. We’re saying to the people of Alberta: this is a once-in-a-generation experience regarding the drop in revenues, and we are taking the time to get it right. We will bring forward the budget when it is ready. It is ready on April 14 and not before. In the interim we need to provide a supply bill that’ll get us through the next two months, April and May. When that is done, when May is done, we will have a full budget debated in this House, where everybody will have that opportunity. So it’s not right and it’s not accurate in terms of many of the things that the far right is saying on that side.

9:20

We are taking the time, as I’ve said, to get it right. Ministers here will get up and defend and answer the questions with regard to why there are certain estimates put in their budgets. For instance, I can tell you that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has said that he needs that kind of upfront money to be able to pass on to the many Innovates and others that are going to expect those monies so that they can continue to do the jobs to employ Albertans and get things working. So that’s why there are some estimates that seem from that side to be out of whack in terms of the full budget, but there is no truth to that. There is explanation for everything that is going to be brought forward.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, do you want to continue, just take the full 10 minutes, or would you rather go back and forth?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yes, Madam Chair. The Minister of Finance has said that the government is facing a once-in-a-lifetime challenge with the price of oil, but Albertans are facing a once-in-a-lifetime challenge by having an NDP government here right now.

The NDP might believe that the government of Alberta should take its cues from the federal government. I believe that Alberta’s government should take its cues from the best of our own traditions. I don’t believe that we should allow the federal government to dictate the way we do business here in Alberta.

In the last interim supply budget the minister couldn’t even tell this House what its effect would be on the deficit. He couldn’t tell us what the revenues would be, what the expenditures would be. Madam Chair, the Minister of Finance had one job, and he couldn’t do it. The Wildrose told the Minister of Finance that his revenue projections were unrealistic and that he had his head in the sand during the budget debates. Well, the Minister of Finance had the same kind of excuses as now: “Oh, shucks, what can I do? The price of oil and all. No government of Alberta has ever faced volatile oil prices before.”

Well, we said that their projections were rosy and unrealistic. They called it scaremongering from the Official Opposition. Well, it did turn out to be scary because we were right, Madam Chair. We

projected a deficit that would exceed \$9 billion. The deficit will now be north of \$10 billion. For some historical context, this will be more than twice as large as the next-largest deficit that this province has run in our history, even adjusted for inflation. It is a shameful record of fiscal mismanagement. The NDP has no plan to deal with the deficit. This isn’t a budget; this is a brochure. The NDP government, instead of putting together a budget to deal with the jobs, unemployment, and financial crisis in this province, are lining the pockets of NDP ideological friends and allies.

The Premier went to Ontario to raise close to \$200,000 for the Ontario NDP. Andrea Horwath is an enemy of Alberta, and her opposition to the reversal of line 9 and Energy East, which are critical to Alberta, speaks volumes to the priorities of this government. While the leader of the NDP was in Ontario raising money for the opponents of Alberta jobs and pipelines, the leader of the Wildrose Official Opposition was in Ontario at that same time selling Alberta. The Leader of the Opposition was speaking about the great story we have to tell of responsible economic development. The Wildrose did not raise a penny for the opponents of Alberta’s jobs, and that’s something I’m very proud to stand with in this caucus.

The NDP government is lining the pockets of AUPE union bosses. Just yesterday the Wildrose sounded the alarm on the appointment made 48 hours ago. Kevin Davediuk was hired by the NDP government from the AUPE to negotiate with the AUPE. Yesterday this guy still looked very much like an AUPE union boss. Think about it. An AUPE union negotiator negotiating with the AUPE. This is hiring the fox to guard the henhouse, Madam Chair.

A constituent of mine, you know, sent me a link to a National Car Rental commercial after this, and it had one guy talking about how great it was to negotiate with yourself. He said: “How about a 5 per cent raise? How about a 20 per cent raise? How about done? Isn’t it great to negotiate with yourself?” Well, that is the NDP’s relationship with the AUPE right now, Madam Chair. This is a gross conflict of interest that will be a rip-off to taxpayers. “Don’t worry; this guy will be tough,” the government is telling us, so tough, in fact, that his appointment was defended by none other than the Alberta Federation of Labour’s big union boss and failed NDP candidates. Government-sector union bosses are so terrified of the government’s new negotiator that they are singing his praises all day long in news releases. If the NDP had put half the effort into the budget that they do to appointing their union boss cronies, we would have had a budget before the end of this fiscal year. The NDP is distracted by the shiny objects of power.

I have a First Nations proverb to share with them. When you are hunting moose, don’t get distracted by the rabbit tracks. Many rabbit tracks they are following, Madam Chair. The NDP House leader said that the NDP, when they were in opposition, was like a dog chasing a car. If it caught the car, it wouldn’t know what to do with it. Well, the NDP have caught the car, and now the economy is reeling. Albertans are hurting. We have a record number of Albertans out of work, and all we have is one bill to write a job description for the minister responsible for jobs. We have a government with no plan whatsoever to control the expenditures of this province, which have been out of control for a decade. We have a Minister of Finance who has given us a brochure instead of a budget and a government that is more concerned with rewarding its friends with contracts, perks, and payouts than with standing up for the people of this province, who elected them to govern for all.

Madam Chair, the Wildrose Official Opposition was elected to hold this government to account. We were elected to stand up for taxpayers and for fiscal responsibility, and by any of those measures no member of the Official Opposition can in good faith vote for this bill.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to just respond a little bit to some of the comments made by the hon. Finance critic for the Official Opposition. First of all, I want to say that he has become a past master at portraying the routine functions of government as some sort of scandal and taking advantage of people who may not be fully aware about the internal details of the operation of government. He has managed and his party attempts to fabricate issues where none actually exist. I'll just maybe give a few examples.

9:30

First of all, the question of the timing of the budget. I think the Finance minister has dealt with this. If you look at the history of budgets in this province, you will find that they have ranged from February until May, depending on the circumstances of the situation, and very, very rarely have the opposition, at least when we were on that side, made an issue. In one particular case, as I recall, under Mr. Klein's government, the budget was delayed very significantly, I think far more than normal, back into May, and we did make an issue of it at that time.

An April budget is not unusual. But for the Wildrose any excuse to try and generate some sort of public controversy and to vilify the government is good enough. They'll take advantage of the fact that maybe some people don't really keep track of when the budget comes down every year to try and create the impression on the part of the public that there's something unusual about the routine functioning of government. And this, I think, is a theme that we've seen played out again and again.

Again, with respect to the use of interim supply and the amount of detail contained in interim supply, I recollect that in almost every case that I've been in opposition criticizing the previous government, they have introduced interim supply because of the scheduling of the spring session, the time that it takes to put together a budget, and a number of other factors. Again, it is routine to have interim supply, but the Wildrose would like the public to believe that there's something unusual about this and that it is in some measure a failure on the part of this government that we're utilizing interim supply when every government across Canada, including the federal government and certainly historically here, has utilized interim supply. Again, the Wildrose is misleading the public by claiming that there's something, in fact, amiss or unusual about the use of interim supply.

Similarly, Madam Chair, the Finance critic has indicated that the interim supply estimates are nothing more than a pamphlet. Again he's trying to take advantage of the fact that people don't really have a detailed knowledge of how interim supply works in the parliamentary system, not just here but across the country, and takes advantage of the fact that most people don't understand that the interim supply has been prepared according to the standard format that has been utilized in this place for many, many years and many, many budgets. So there's nothing unusual. Everything that the Finance critic has said with respect to this matter is an attempt to throw dust in the face of voters and to try and create an impression that something is wrong when, in fact, everything is proceeding exactly according to the traditions, the norms of this place, and the history of this place and that our government is performing exactly as it should with respect to the budgetary process.

Now I'd like to deal with another matter in which the Official Opposition is attempting to misinform Albertans. Although it's a little bit off the track, I gave some thought to standing up on a point of order and interrupting the hon. member when he went into his rant about the chief negotiator for the province. But I suppose

there's a budgetary implication because, obviously, the allegation there is that we will not be vigorously protecting the finances of the province when it comes to negotiations. So I think, you know, that there is a case to be made, that this may in fact be a budgetary matter.

Now, it turns out the individual in charge has worked for many years as a negotiator. Most of his career has been on the employer side. He is a trained negotiator, highly skilled, that was recruited by AUPE in order to negotiate on their behalf, and he has been recruited by the government to negotiate on our behalf, not because he's a union person and not because he is going to misrepresent the interests of this government. I think that's a scandalous assertion and a real insult to the integrity of this particular individual. In actual fact he's a highly professional trained negotiator and one of the best in the field, and we've retained him in order to make sure that the interests of the taxpayers and the public expenditures are carefully looked at. The Wildrose does not stop, Madam Chair, to consider or to ask questions; they shoot first. They didn't get their facts straight. They didn't look into this matter. They don't have an understanding of collective bargaining. I think many of them would just wish that unions would go away. If they were in government, they would probably legislate them away.

The fact of the matter is, Madam Chair, that we are implementing a Supreme Court decision with respect to the duty to negotiate collectively and the rights of workers to organize. That is now the law of the land. That is something that we need to change, and we will be bringing in legislation. The opposition and the public can judge that legislation when we do bring it forward for debate. But in the meantime we have a responsibility to negotiate with our employees fairly, and we are going to do so. We have retained what we believe is the best talent in order to accomplish the goals of the government.

The scurrilous suggestions on the part of the Official Opposition that this government is in some way hiring some union hack in order to sell out the public is just too much to be stomachied, Madam Chair. That is offensive. They do not get the facts straight. They do not wait for the facts. They just think: oh, this guy worked for a union; we can make an issue of this, and we can again throw dust in the eyes of the public. These are the tactics and approach that we've seen from the Wildrose. They claim that they want to debate substantive issues. They claim that they want to be talking about the budget. You know, the size of the deficit is a legitimate question that should be addressed. We are looking forward to the alternatives of our friends across the way in terms of dealing with the financial stresses. Let's be clear. In about a year the revenues of the province have declined by about 20 per cent. That is virtually unprecedented. That is a huge, huge hit.

Now, the Wildrose has a different philosophy than we do, and I wouldn't expect them to embrace the solutions that we've put forward. We want to protect front-line services. We don't want to cut. But it's important that the Wildrose also provide what their alternative is. Speaking of flimsy pamphlets, I had tabled yesterday the Wildrose financial plan from the election because they haven't produced an alternative since the election, Madam Chair. What they've got is a flimsy pamphlet from before the election, and that is about the size of their contribution.

There's no question that dealing with the province's finances at this time is a daunting challenge. It's a very daunting challenge. It's a huge issue, and there is no question about that, Madam Chair. But what is their answer? This is what we want to know.

**The Chair:** Next I have on my list the hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Chair.



**The Chair:** Do you wish to do an exchange with your time with the minister?

**Mr. Schneider:** I'll just take my 10 minutes if that's possible.

I just have to preface by saying that it's always nice, Madam Chair, to get an education from the senior-most member that sits within these walls. His comments to the previous government are well documented and run along the same lines, so it's always nice to hear that history repeats itself.

9:40

I, like my colleagues, however, am somewhat aghast at what we are being asked to do here today. When we left the Legislature on December 10, we were all left with the understanding that we would be coming back to the dome to start the spring session on February 8. Now, that seemed like a normal time frame for the House to start sitting again and seemed like a good time frame for the government to produce an actual budget before the end of the fiscal year. The government introduced a budget only at the end of this past October, some 135 days ago, and now it appears that that budget wasn't quite right. It didn't have enough money allocated to it to get the government of Alberta's expenses covered until the end of the fiscal year, so instead we are here being asked to vote to let this government spend beyond their previous budget. It's kind of like a partial do over.

Now, the Infrastructure ministry is looking for an addition \$115 million for expenses, \$73 million for further capital expense money, and an additional \$8.4 million for financial transactions. Well, that's great, but what does that all mean? What projects are being funded, for instance? What programs are supported? Is this all just administrative overhead, Madam Chair? You know, I have to wonder why the Legislature would authorize this government to spend this much more money and not just in Infrastructure, every ministry. Why would we authorize that much spending when there's no plan? It's hard to understand what you're intending to spend the money on. It seems like there's no accountability. There's no plan, and there are no answers on the pages that we were given here a day ago. So I'd like to ask what projects these funds are requested for. Along with that, I'd like to know how they were chosen.

You know, I asked about it yesterday in this place, but if Alberta had this promised sunshine list, we would all know exactly what Infrastructure funding was required for which project, how the project was chosen, and where each project appears on the list. I asked about it last session, I asked about it again yesterday, and I'll keep asking for it because municipalities deserve to have it.

As any Albertan knows, construction season is coming up, but the jobs created in the construction season certainly matter now more than ever. Is there any estimate at all available for how many jobs will be created with the extra Infrastructure spending dollars indicated here? Are the Infrastructure dollars here even going towards actual projects?

I talked about this yesterday, too, but last year Infrastructure lapsed a staggering \$1 billion in capital. Based on this additional request for \$115 million in expenses and \$73 million in capital investment are we to assume that there was no lapse this previous year? Realistically, those are significant numbers that we are being asked to approve for a department that lapsed so heavily on projects last year. How was this number decided? Is it based on an annual figure? Is it loosely based on funding only specific projects? Are there determined project costs? Are we to assume that \$115 million for two months is the forward-going rate for all Infrastructure spending? If that's the case, we are looking at \$690 million per year for Infrastructure expenses. If that is not the case, then why this number? Where did the government come up with it?

Once again, \$73 million in capital investment over two months equates to \$438 million over 12 months if that is indeed the magic number going forward. Last year's lapse, that I just talked about, was more than twice that. Is this the kind of Infrastructure capital plan that Albertans can look forward to seeing while this government is in power?

I really need to ask this question again. Can the government confirm that none of these funds were rushed and put forward for projects to be announced during the ongoing by-election?

I have only one more thought. Deferred maintenance in this province is a rather large number. This is the maintenance that's needed on our public buildings: hospitals, schools. It's money that actually hasn't happened yet. For the two public schools boards in the largest cities in our province, they each cite about a billion dollars for maintenance that's been ongoing or not completed. Those are just the schools and only the schools in the two major cities, just Edmonton public and Calgary public schools. That doesn't even take into account the separate schools in those cities or any of the schools outside of those cities. Now, the government has a much different number estimate on deferred maintenance. It's much less, but that's not what's important here.

Here's what matters. There's needed maintenance on public buildings that Albertans rely on: our hospitals, our schools. If the government's province-wide number is half of what Calgary and Edmonton say the deferred maintenance bill for their schools is, that's still a billion dollars in needed maintenance. Is any of the interim supply allocation for Infrastructure being put towards that?

The final question would be: is any of the money that is being put forward in this proposition money that would be used to offset some of that potential \$1 billion to \$2 billion maintenance backlog?

So I think it's plain to see that asking me or my colleagues to approve the suggested spending begs more questions. Albertans are hurting in this economy. Many are struggling to make ends meet while looking for a new job. We here owe it to them to ensure that their tax dollars are spent wisely. With so few details how can we in good conscience vote in favour of interim supply? Where did the money go that was budgeted in the last interim supply in the fall budget? Why wasn't it enough?

Madam Chair, I think that's all I have to say for now. I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. In terms of the questions from the hon. member I want to thank you very much, but I want to remind you that we're dealing with interim supply and not supplementary supply. We're requesting a total of \$196.4 million through interim supply to support our day-to-day operations. The expense vote, as the member noted, was \$115 million. The capital investment vote is \$73 million, and the financial transaction vote is \$8.4 million. Funding to support our operations covers items such as the day-to-day operations of about 1,600 government-owned buildings, including caretaking, utilities, property taxes, and security. It includes leasing costs, including rents, utilities, and property taxes. Capital construction costs are to support the delivery of major government capital projects such as the Royal Alberta Museum and the health and school projects and the development work at Parsons Creek in Fort McMurray.

The interim supply period is April 1 to May 31, or 17 per cent of the year. Alberta Infrastructure cash spending under the three supply votes includes expenses for items such as salaries, supplies and services, and capital grants for maintenance of government-owned buildings and capital planning. It includes capital investment

for the acquisition and construction of government capital assets valued at \$5,000 or more and financial transactions for the purchase of inventories and the payment of liabilities.

Infrastructure's 2016-17 estimated cash spending. In terms of the expense item the interim supply is estimated at 20 per cent of the estimated total cash spending, 10 per cent of the capital investment that's going to be required, and 17 per cent of the financial transactions.

The 2016-17 expense interim supply vote requested of \$115 million includes funding for property management, day-to-day operations of about 1,600 government-owned buildings. These include caretaking, landscaping, utilities, property taxes, and security as well as the operation of the Swan Hills Treatment Centre. Realty services for leases include rent, utilities, and property taxes and for land management.

Ministry support services include the minister's office, the deputy minister's office, communications, human resources, and corporate strategies and services. Capital construction includes support for delivery of major capital projects such as the Royal Alberta Museum and major health and school projects. I might add that the Minister of Education has informed me that their payment schedule, rather than being done quarterly, is on an as-needed basis for the schools, which has already saved \$15 million in terms of those things.

Asset management includes the continuous business improvement of the department; the asset analysis and portfolio planning; parking administration and maintenance of the asset data inventory; capital grants for maintenance of government-owned buildings and for planning, estimation, reporting, and monitoring of capital projects; the 2013 Alberta flood program for reconstruction and accommodation projects and administration of the floodway relocation program.

**9:50**

Capital investment. This is a question that the member raised. The 2016-17 capital investment interim supply vote request of \$73 million includes funding for health facilities support, including health facilities infrastructure that will be owned by Alberta Health Services and Health capital maintenance and renewal, the capital construction program for the delivery of major capital projects like the new Royal Alberta Museum, which I've mentioned, as well as funding to accommodate the new building Canada fund program, the courthouse renewal, and other potential capital projects across the government of Alberta.

Property management includes government-owned facilities maintenance and renewal and accommodation projects and capital maintenance at the Swan Hills Treatment Centre.

Realty services includes land transactions for government initiatives.

Ministry support services includes information technology equipment and software development and, as well, as I mentioned, the 2013 Alberta flooding capital projects. I want to just indicate with respect to that that I know that the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow is interested in this project. We are proceeding with negotiations to gain access for an environmental impact assessment, and we expect that that is going to be done and concluded in a timely fashion so that we will not risk losing a season.

Financial transactions. This is an interim request for \$8.4 million. It includes funding for realty services and property management, inventory purchases, and minor site remediation and reclamation work for Swan Hills and debt repayment for the Evan-Thomas water and waste-water treatment facility.

I want to also talk about our work to support the economy and to provide jobs for workers who may have lost their employment

during the downturn. In Budget 2015 the government committed to invest \$34 billion over five years through its capital plan to build needed public infrastructure across the province. During these tough economic times we will make use of the capacity in the construction industry to build infrastructure needed by the public at a lower cost than otherwise. Our investments will create jobs and build a strong economic foundation for our children and our grandchildren. The interim supply provides funding to continue building the important projects we have across the province.

Cities and towns across Alberta, Madam Chair, struggle with aging health care infrastructure, and we have funded \$491 million for health facilities infrastructure spending, which is on page 163 of the government estimates. These projects are progressing and nearing completion.

The 2015-16 budget of \$491.2 million for health facilities infrastructure supports delivery of health capital projects, and these facilities will of course be owned by Alberta Health Services once completed. These include the High Prairie health complex, where construction is under way and is expected to be completed by 2016; the Medicine Hat regional hospital, where construction is under way and expected to be completed this summer; the Edson health care centre, where construction is under way with the clinical and continuing care buildings and expected to be completed in spring 2016; the Grande Prairie regional hospital, where construction is under way and expected to be completed in 2019; the Lethbridge Chinook regional hospital, where construction was completed in October 2015 on the main project, with work on impacted departments expected to be completed by 2017; the Calgary cancer centre, where construction of the centre is planned to commence in 2017, with the new facility opening to the public in 2024.

Maybe, if I have a few minutes left, I'll talk about our work on flood mitigation. We're responsible for acquiring properties through the floodway relocation program. Under the program the government purchased residential properties located in designated floodways in affected southern Alberta communities with the intent to remove or demolish the structures in order to reduce the potential financial impact of future flood events. We've purchased a number of homes across the province in the communities of Calgary, High River, the county of Foothills, Turner Valley, Rocky View county, Mountain View county, and Red Deer county. A number of these properties have been demolished, with the remaining work expected to be completed in 2016-17. In Calgary we're working with the city to obtain the necessary demolition permits, with work expected to begin later this month. All work on these properties is expected to be completed by September 2016. Questions related to the disposition of the properties would probably be better referred to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

The capital construction program includes funding for manpower and supplies and services to support capital project delivery. This is the government estimates of \$17 million for the capital construction program. The program is responsible for the planning, design, and implementation of government-owned buildings as well as the provision of a wide variety of professional and technical support to other ministries for capital projects such as schools, postsecondary institutions, hospitals, and social housing. We're hoping that this ongoing program will support the delivery of capital projects which are approved in the capital plan.

We have a number of initiatives under way to make our public infrastructure more environmentally sustainable. [Mr. Mason's speaking time expired] If I get another question, I'll answer that, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If I could, I'd like to go back and forth with the Health minister, please. Is that okay? Thank you.

To the House and to the minister. The amount requested for operational supply over the next two months is \$3.44 billion. The total amount supplied last year was \$18.6 billion. Annualized, the amount requested from the Assembly here today: that will work out to be \$20.6 billion for the operations, of course, over the entire year. Now, you've spoken out quite a bit that you want to bend the cost curve from this 6 per cent annual growth to, I believe, approximately 2.5 per cent. But, Minister Hoffman, you're starting with an 11 per cent increase, making it much harder, you know, over the 10 next months to achieve that cost when you already are 40 or 45 per cent of our budget, when the government is slipping a further \$10 billion into debt. The degree of difficulty in placing those bonds and paying back that interest is of great concern and, of course, is directly related to the value that Albertans get out of our health care system and to the cost of our health care system.

My first question – and I have six. Why does your ministry need such a large amount of money for the first two months? Is this a sign of continuation? Are you going to meet your goal?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and the member for the question. As you've heard, government requires interim funding to continue to provide services to Albertans until the new budget has been passed. Health, of course, is the largest part that needed funding. I'm here to share information on the funding required by my department to make sure that Albertans can have access to the quality health care that they require in the coming weeks, 61 days, to be exact.

To begin, I'm asking for approval of \$3.4 billion, as was mentioned by the member, in interim supply funding to cover Alberta Health expenses. This funding is needed for things like paying doctors so that they can continue to provide care that's required for Albertans. And given that we're still in the flu season, of course, it's better to err on the side of caution when you're asking for funding for 61 days because there could be higher need for physician billings during this first two-month period than there might be later in the summer and other portions of the year.

It's also needed for Alberta Health Services for the multiple services that they provide, and it's required to cover drugs and other supplementary health benefits for Albertans, particularly those who are low-income. There's nothing new. It's simply funding that we need to keep our health care system at the current level of operations.

We're also seeking \$3.6 million for capital, which might be one of your further questions. Just to advance that, the capital needs are to support the work of the department and for Alberta Health Services, to maintain the current IT systems that we use. It would also cover eligible capital purchases so that AHS can continue to replace or upgrade machinery and equipment. Again, my experience is that it's better to err on the side of caution. If an expensive piece of equipment is to break down in these first 61 days, I'd rather we have a little bit of a cushion or room for a margin of error than to have to come back for further interim supply requests in the first 61 days. So, to be very open, I'm just asking for that little bit of insurance room in the first 61 days so that we can be able to operate prudently and not impact patient health and well-being.

Thank you.

10:00

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you; \$3.44 billion is a staggering amount of money.

I guess the heart of my question, Minister Hoffman, is – you're up 11 per cent on an annual basis. Are there any specific items in the first two months that are pushing this number higher? Where are you going to achieve the 4 per cent savings that you're talking about, especially now, when you have to make up the ground? How did you decide on this number? I mean, okay; you want to keep things flowing – yes, we want to make sure our good, front-line professionals are there and are paid, absolutely – but how did you decide on an 11 per cent increase instead of a 2 and a half per cent increase? What are the specifics, please?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to the member for the question. As we're well aware, this was a leap year, and in a leap year there are increased costs for that one extra day in terms of education budgets. We have a certain number of minutes per year of instruction.

In terms of health care, we provide health care to Albertans at all times, and having that extra day of operations costs about \$55 million for health care. That's about the average cost of running health care for Albertans for one specific day. To be completely honest, we looked at about \$55 million a day by 61 days, and we added room for a margin of error because if there are increased costs in these first 61 days, when we're still in the middle of flu season, while construction season is picking up, while there are opportunities where health costs could be higher in these two months as opposed to two months later in the year, it's important to have that room for a margin of error so we don't have to come back yet again asking for an additional interim supply bill. So we're looking at about \$55 million a day with room for additional costs in these two months because health care costs are driven right now primarily based on need – right? – the need of the patient. If a patient shows up, we're going to find a way to make sure that we can continue to offer those services.

Right now we're also in the middle of negotiations with physicians. They've returned to the table with the AMA – this is two years prior to the last agreement, that was made by the previous government, being up – because they know and we know that the current model is not sustainable. Increasing at about 6 per cent a year has not been something that we can continue to do moving forward, so we're back at the table with the AMA. We're making sure that we can find ways to find efficiencies and sustainability for the system. And physicians, like all Albertans, are members of Alberta. They want to make sure that we have a system that's here long term for the benefit of us all.

We certainly have a lot of opportunities in this 61-day period to make sure that we're achieving our goal. The last budget that was passed: we had about a 4 and a half per cent increase last year, 4 per cent this year, 3, and then 2 after that. So we're certainly looking at bending the curve, getting from 6 per cent increases instead to a more sustainable increase model. This is simply money that we need for the 61 days to get us through this very initial stage.

Thank you.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thanks again, Minister.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, just a reminder: through the chair and, as well, avoid using personal names.

**Mr. Barnes:** Okay. Thank you. Yeah. Sorry.

Alberta Health Services. Our number one cost in our entire budget, of course, does not include our payment to doctors and doctors' salaries. I was concerned – very, very concerned – in our budgeting discussions some time ago that Alberta Health Services wasn't even at our supply meeting that night. I'm very concerned, and I'm wondering now: in this number presented that you're asking for for the 61 days, what was the Alberta Health Services' role? It sounds like you're just, you know: steady, same course, worry about extra value and extra savings down the road. But is this what Alberta Health Services requested? Did you have them at the table at all? Do they get whatever they asked for?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, there is a dialogue, as there is with other orders of recipients of large grants. Alberta Health Services is a grant recipient. They, of course, provide the front-line health care that we all rely on, just like school boards, our front-line education providers. We, of course, don't call the school boards to come to estimates of the province. This is the province's budgeting process.

Certainly, Alberta Health Services does have a budget. Their budget, that is passed on to them, is passed on by the government of Alberta, and then they, of course, work to determine how they're going to achieve their needs within that allocated budget, just like the municipalities; when they receive funding from the provincial government, they aren't at our provincial debate or our provincial estimates. That's our budget, and then they, of course, make their budgets in turn. It's the same process with Alberta Health Services.

We have a dialogue about needs, just as I'm sure other ministers do, with those who help provide services on behalf of the government of Alberta. We are working with them to make sure that we're optimizing best practices, not just best practices from within Alberta, but looking at other jurisdictions, hospitals from across Canada to make sure that we're using the best practices. And it's been a very positive last few months. We're certainly making great progress, and I'll be happy to discuss this more with you in detail, I'm sure, at the full budget debate in just a few weeks.

Thank you.

**Mr. Barnes:** Okay. Thank you again, Minister. I'm still not clear on why we need an 11 per cent increase compared to just the 2.5 or even the 6 per cent increase.

Laboratories have been in the news quite a bit the last while. In Medicine Hat I absolutely believe that moving the Medicine Hat Diagnostic Lab is going to provide tremendously inferior services for the citizens and cost the taxpayers of Medicine Hat and all the taxpayers of Alberta more money. I'm thinking of our north zone lab services, the situation between Sonic and DynaLife, that \$300 million that was out there, and the situation as to how people in Edmonton and how people in northern Alberta are going to get the laboratory services that they need. Is any of that 11 per cent budgeted towards some of these changes, that we haven't seen the full numbers on and are going to have considerable cost increases? What is the plan for the north zone lab service, please?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we are having ongoing dialogue, and I understand your perspective on the Medicine Hat change, from having a private lab and a public lab to having one public lab. Certainly, the business case is there, and I've shared it publicly with you and with others in the area. There will be multiple pickup sites. The level of service is going to be comparable if not improved, but being able to maintain one lab as opposed to maintaining two labs – certainly, I think, just having two sets of infrastructure versus one set of infrastructure makes sound

infrastructure sense. If you can achieve the needs of the regional area with one centralized lab, why wouldn't you do that? Why would you maintain two separate systems?

Certainly, there was an intention initially to try to maintain two separate systems, but given the fact that it was operating at significantly higher costs than other areas that are offering similar service, there just wasn't a business case there to be able to do it. I'm sure that members opposite like hearing me talk about the business case, right? I think it makes prudent sense to make sure that you're offering stable, predictable service in a way that is sustainable for the taxpayer and for the system. Certainly, I take your feedback into consideration and the feedback on all sides of that issue. I look forward to working through the next few months to offer sustainability to the people of Medicine Hat.

In terms of the latter question that was asked, about Edmonton and the north zone, we certainly are making great progress on our review of that. As I've mentioned in the past and will continue to in my days ahead, I really want to make decisions based on evidence and best practice, and I think it was demonstrated that there was not a consideration of either maintaining the current mix of private and public lab service in the Edmonton and north zone or expanding public service in the Edmonton and north zone.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** That brings us to the end of the first hour segment.

We will now move to the members of the third party if they wish to speak.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If we could, I'd like to go back and forth with the ministers and share also my time with my colleague the Member for Calgary-Hays.

**The Chair:** You'd like to go back and forth.

**Dr. Starke:** I want to start by just thanking, actually, the Government House Leader for bringing some explanation to the processes that occur within this House with regard to the timing of interim supply and supplementary estimates and those sorts of things. Actually, he took a lot of what I was going to say. What is going on here is nothing nefarious, nothing illegal, nothing that is a smoke-and-mirrors situation. You know, quite frankly, I get a little frustrated when this opposition, when we were over there, tried the strategy of obfuscation constantly, and they continue to do it now, trying to make the general public believe that something wrong is going on. Nothing wrong is going on.

I'd like to actually compliment the Finance minister when he says the words: we want to take the time to get it right. You know, I have full confidence that you're going to take the time; I have less confidence that you're going to get it right. But that's fine. April 14 to introduce the budget is two weeks into the fiscal year. The truth of the matter is that we do want to have the opportunity to have a good and fulsome discussion through the estimates process, and that shouldn't be rushed. So to have the interim supply go until the end of May: I have no issue with that whatsoever.

The other thing I actually have to find a little bit humorous is that, you know, on the one hand my Teutonic friend the Member for Strathmore-Brooks says that he likes nothing better than to discuss budgets, and then he complains that this is the sixth time we've had to do this since we've been elected. I mean, we know what's not in his top 100 list of things to debate, but I'm going to be relatively certain that discussing numbers and budgets is in the top 100 list somewhere, that and tipping practices and where to go for breakfast.

Moving on, Madam Chair, I do want to get to the substance of the matter today. A question to start, first of all, to the Finance minister. I do want to ask: we're looking at \$8.7 billion in interim

supply. If you pro-rate that out to the full year, that runs to about \$52.2 billion, which would represent a 5 per cent increase. Now, I realize that it's a little bit dangerous to simply extend two months out to the full year, but can you assure this House that we're not going to be looking at a 5 per cent increase in the operational expenditures of this budget when it gets introduced in April?

**10:10**

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, what I can assure the House is that the growth of the budget – the operating expenses of this budget will grow very close to population plus inflation.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. That number actually is going to be considerable, but we'll see, again, when the actual numbers come out.

Now, there was another comment made, I believe, by the Minister of Finance with regard to explaining why it would be a little bit dangerous to simply take the annual budget, divide by six, and say: well, that's what you need for the first two months. He was mentioning that specifically in relation to the Department of Economic Development and Trade and, you know, mentioning that additional monies were going to be sent out earlier and faster to get those jobs created and to get that economic diversification happening that, of course, all of us want to see. So I guess my question to that minister is: given that you've asked for additional monies at an accelerated pace early in the fiscal year, what measurements do you have in place or will you be developing within your department to let this House and Albertans, indeed, know what jobs have been created, what numbers, and what level of diversification you've achieved through your ministry?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes, Madam Chair. I'll thank the member for the question, a very prudent question. One of the things that we're doing with my ministry is that we want to make sure that we are tracking, through performance measures, outcomes so that we can return to Albertans, return to this House to inform everyone on the progress that we're making and that dollars that are being spent are in fact going to help small businesses, entrepreneurs and that we're seeing real, tangible results. I think that at the end of the day Albertans want to see that the initiatives that we're undertaking are in fact helping to turn the economy around, which I do think is absolutely critical.

With the increase in the funding for interim supply – and I appreciate your comments, hon. member – first of all, the formula is not, you know: take the annual budget, divide it by 12, times two, and this is the number that we have. Quite frankly, especially with Economic Development and Trade – and I'm sure you'll know this, having been on this side of the House – costs like our international offices: the federal government requires that we pay for those up front. Many of our international offices, Alberta's international offices, are housed within our embassies throughout the world. That cost needs to be paid in the first two months. That's not something that we can divide up over the 12-month period. That's one of the significant costs that is driving this number in the interim supply bill.

The other is that, looking at our Innovates corporations and, again, the fact that we have four different Innovates corps. and much of the money is a flow through, they need the money up front. But the other aspect of our Innovates, especially when it comes to health solutions and tech futures, is the R and D component. Much of the R and D from Health comes out of the Innovates' budget.

We're talking about paying full-time professors, full-time researchers that are doing very critical research. Those monies need to be given up front, and, again, they can't be divided over the 12 months.

But what I can tell you, hon. member, is that we are developing not only performance measures but outcomes, metrics. We want to ensure that we have a way and I have a way of knowing that our programs are in fact achieving the goals that we are setting out. I can tell you – and I will make this commitment to this House – that if there are programs that are not achieving their outcomes, we will make changes, because at the end of the day my priority is doing everything that we can to set the right conditions to continue to make Alberta the best place to do business and to attract investment and support our entrepreneurs and businesses.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, I'd certainly like to thank the hon. minister for his answer.

I want to move on to two ministries, though. Although he's pointed out correctly, and certainly the Finance minister has as well, that there are foibles with the prorating, there are two ministries that certainly stand out in terms of where the expenditures for the next two months represent a very high percentage of the total expenditures for last year and one case where the expenditures for the next two months, if they're prorated out to a full year, represent a huge cut. As it turns out, it's the Ministry of Status of Women, that got a two-month allocation of \$1.255 million, yet last year's entire budget was \$1.447 million, and the Ministry of Indigenous Relations, where the budget for the full year would prorate out to \$69.3 million, yet last year's budget for the previously named Aboriginal Relations was \$204 million. For those two ministries, because there's such a variation in the prorated amount and the two-month amount, I'd just like to know what the explanation for that is. Is it the case that there's not much happening in these first two months and there's a lot happening later or vice versa?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. Yes. You've basically answered your own question as it comes down to it. A significant part of the Indigenous Relations budget is actually just flow-through money that comes from the casino budgets on First Nations reserves, and that money is not allocated until June every year. About \$126 million or so is just excluded from our considerations right now. We haven't, as well, got any calculation of capital costs because there aren't any taking place in these particular two months because money has already been allocated. New expenses will come out in June in that case as well. So it's just simply a matter of: this is a period of time that money doesn't happen to flow. It will indeed flow when the appropriate time happens.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** I don't see the other minister here.

**Dr. Starke:** We'll move on.

**Mr. Ceci:** Okay.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. I will say that based on the estimates for last year that the government brought in in the ninth or 10th month or pretty late in the year, which we did criticize – and I stand by that because I did think that the government dragged it out too long. The fact that the government is out with these estimates before the end of the fiscal year for the next year – for me, anyway, I'll give the

Minister of Finance the most improved award this year. Frankly, the people of Alberta need to have an idea before the year is mostly over how their money is being spent, and I think there's a chance of that happening. So credit where it's due and criticism where I thought it was also due before.

The Finance minister did talk about reining in spending and suggested there's evidence in these estimates of reining in spending. Could he briefly tell me where he reined in spending?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Holding the third-quarter fiscal update and economic statement, that I delivered a couple of weeks ago, it identifies places where there was a reduction in expenses as a result of I think it was \$463 million. We were able to constrain spending in the areas of assisting – because the crops did much better than was planned, the insurance monies that were put in place, that were put forward to Agriculture and Forestry, weren't all needed. We then didn't have to spend that money. That was one of the main areas where we have constrained spending.

Going forward for Budget 2016, we have a number of constraints, restraints in terms of hiring that are identified. We are in the situation where if there are four vacancies or three vacancies in an area of a department, only two will be filled or one will be filled in an attempt to spend less on labour costs going down the road in these difficult times.

We, of course, have had a severe reduction in terms of the revenues. I think I identified \$600 million less in revenues as a result of the oil and gas royalties not performing to the extent that we had hoped, what all Albertans had hoped. So we've had to tighten up our spending.

**10:20**

We've of course tightened it up in relation to Alberta public service workers, who have taken a two-year wage freeze. Starting this April 1, the 2.5 per cent wage increase that was anticipated or agreed to with those management, opted-out, and exempt employees will not be taking place, nor will grid movement as a result of their time in the public service. So we're constraining spending on the salary side, replacing fewer workers than the ministries have allotments for in terms of FTEs. I need to thank all the members here, too, because we led the way with taking a four-year wage freeze, during the length of this term, as well as our political staff. So on the salary side both the elected, management, opted-out, and exempt have taken these steps. Of course, Budget 2016 will provide the full information in a few short weeks around other initiatives that are going to take place.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, and I thank the minister for the answer. But you'll have to forgive me; I'm left a little wanting. While I accept what the minister said, I think that if you were to restate what the minister said, it wasn't so much restraint as that we got lucky that the insurance claims weren't so high in forestry and agriculture. And we're happy about that – don't misunderstand me – but that's not really what I would call reining in spending. I would say that it was a lack of hail and rain and things that destroy crops and forest fires. While we're happy about that, it definitely doesn't fall under the category of reining in spending.

Where the minister did actually make claims about things that you could call reining in spending is, of course, the wage freeze for some senior management and elected officials, which are good things. Good things. Compliments on all the good things. But the

fact is that in relative terms to the rest of the budget, it's very much chewing on the edges and not getting to the heart of the matter at all when it comes to reining in spending. Although I will say that even with that, the minister did actually talk about reining in spending, and he talked about it without actually saying that we were laying off doctors, nurses, and teachers. Every time on this side of the House that we talk about reining in spending, the government says that the only way to do it is to lay off doctors, nurses, and teachers, and I think the minister just admitted that's not the case. There are other ways to rein in spending without laying off doctors, nurses, and teachers, and we'll hope to see some of that from this government as time goes on. Hopefully, we'll see them resist characterizing any reining in of spending as that being the only choice.

Now, there are lots of things in here. Let me also say that from my municipal background when people talked about tipping practices, I thought you were talking about tipping fees because, of course, that's what you pay when you go to the dump with a load of garbage. The fee is a tipping fee.

Here's something. Now, I appreciate these are estimates, but they are prebudget estimates, so my question is for every minister. I'll tell you why it's an every minister question. I want to know in detail – and I thank the Government House Leader, the Minister of Infrastructure as well as Transportation, for giving us some of those details, but not all, on the health care things – about capital. You should be able to tell us what every single capital dollar here is used for. I hope no minister will say, "Wait for the budget," because these are estimates for money before the budget. So if you want the money before the budget and you're asking permission today, every single minister on that front bench ought to be able to tell this House and every Albertan what every single dollar in every single capital budget that's being asked for here today is going to go to. I think it's a fair question. I hope the ministers are prepared for the answers, and I genuinely hope we get full, detailed answers.

I think people would be particularly interested in schools. While they're giving their answers, I hope that they will clarify how much the government was able to save in their capital expenditures, and I hope that there are some savings based on the difficult financial times right now and what I believe are opportunities to get lower bids and tenders in because of that. If they could expand on that, if they have more detail than they can give in the two or three minutes they have remaining, I would appreciate some written acknowledgement in answer to those questions since it's only right and reasonable that every single minister should already have those answers, or they should not have asked for the money in the first place.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for those questions from the leader of the third party. My capital projects are considerable with 232 new schools on the books. It's very interesting to see the school building and modernization budget as we move forward. In fact, we've developed since October a pay-as-you-go system, a mechanism by which we can track through Infrastructure with the large boards, that are assuming the projects themselves, much more closely where they are and what instalments they require. As I mentioned to the Infrastructure minister just this morning, on an annualized basis, actually, we expect to save more than \$15 million by paying as the projects require the money instead of paying in perhaps quarterly and/or in a larger time area. I think that's an innovation that should bear noting by the public. Certainly, you know, with the very large capital project list that we have on the go here, it's very important that we get the full value of each of those projects.

Another issue that I mentioned in my reply to the throne speech yesterday and that I'll say here again today is that we're seeing a lot of promise with projects and bids coming in under our estimated costs considerably. Edmonton public informed me a couple of days ago that two of their projects had come in 23 per cent lower than what the estimated cost was going to be. So good for them. You know, I think that bodes well. There are many more people bidding for the contracts as well, and again that reinforces, I think, the utility of building at this juncture. We get better savings for the schools that we're building, and we are getting more bidders. Quite frankly, we're providing considerable employment for contractors and tradespeople by having this unprecedented build.

With my estimates, we are moving forward \$240.8 million of capital investment, and it's money well spent.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

We've moved into the next segment for the next 20 minutes with the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow. Did you wish to do a back and forth?

**Mr. Clark:** Yes, please. I will go back and forth with the minister.

One of the joys of going third, I suppose, is that a lot of the territory that I had hoped to cover has already been covered, so my apologies in advance should some of this be a repeat.

Also, I'm a little troubled and unsettled by the differences I have here with my good friend from Vermilion-Lloydminster. We tend to get along and see the world in a very similar way on most issues, but I do have to disagree on the timing here of interim supply and the fact of interim supply at all. Standing orders state that we are to be in the House on the second Tuesday of February. Had this government followed the standing orders, we would have been in in plenty of time to see and debate a budget in a fulsome way in time for the end of the fiscal year. It's equally unsettling, I have to say, that I am onboard with my friends in the Wildrose opposition on this issue as well.

You know, the government wants us to believe that it's not really a big deal to be debating interim supply here again, but it is. While, of course, it's not totally unheard of, there is a reason that the standing orders start us in February, when they do, and that is so that we have enough time to debate and pass a budget such that we don't have to be going through interim supply.

**10:30**

When we're talking about two full months, the \$8.7 billion number we've talked about here annualized would take us to \$52.18 billion, which is fully a billion dollars more, if we were to trend that out, over Budget 2015. Now, that's a worrisome trend. We've heard some explanation, and I'll dig a little deeper into some of the specific line items here when I do get to my questions. I know that there's some explanation, particularly in Health, as to why that is, and I can accept some of that. But the overall trend is worrisome insofar as it shows no indication of any interest in trying to bend not just the cost curve of health care but the cost curve of government.

It seems to indicate that this government is going to double down on all aspects of spending, including operational spending, and when we're borrowing for operations in the way we are, that's very troublesome. That is akin to carrying credit card debt as opposed to borrowing for capital, which is akin to having a mortgage on an asset, which is a good thing. When you're borrowing for operations to just keep the lights on, to buy pens and pencils, and to pay salaries, that's troublesome. That then creates a spiral that's very difficult to get out of. I know this government will say that they

intend to be here beyond the next three years – they may not – but someone eventually is going to have to get us out of that significant debt spiral.

One of the other concerns I have is that we only debated Budget 2015 a scarce three months ago, four months ago, but a lot of the projections in that budget are already way off. We know that the revenue projections are already significantly off, off by \$660 million, which is roughly 1.5 per cent, which would have been 2.1 per cent, or \$910 million, had the federal government not ponied up with the fiscal stabilization program. Equally troubling, perhaps even more so because we know in Alberta that the history of energy prices has a big impact on our revenue forecasts – I acknowledge that this government, no government anywhere, perhaps with the exception Saudi Arabia, can determine the price of oil. We know that.

**An Hon. Member:** They have a huge deficit, too.

**Mr. Clark:** They do have a huge deficit. They've got a big problem.

We know that oil prices, energy prices are unpredictable. We know that. But Budget 2015 has undeployed capital of nearly a billion dollars; \$948 million of capital is being rolled over, undeployed from Budget 2015. That really raises a bigger question here about this government's ability to actually deploy capital in an effective and timely way. If we're going to borrow to build capital assets, it's important not only that you borrow and put those numbers in a spreadsheet or in a financial statement; it's very important that we put that capital to work. That's been a question I've had and a concern I've had from the very beginning.

Although the \$34 billion, if I'm not mistaken, capital plan – broadly speaking, I agree with the principle of borrowing to build, especially in a down time. Our Minister of Education has just told us that we're finding that we're getting better prices on certain projects. All of those are good things. But if we find that we can't deploy that capital, are we actually having the desired effect? I encourage the government to think of those things as they move forward and as we move into the budget.

We've already talked, of course, that interim supply ought to be the exception rather than the rule. It seems to be the rule from this government, and I would hope that come Budget 2017, we're in fact in the House early in February such that we can debate and pass the budget without the need for interim supply, which by its very nature is less detailed.

My overall concern is that our strong financial position, which has allowed us to borrow money at reasonably attractive rates, will continue to be eroded, that we have significant risk of further credit-rating downgrades. This is an issue that I've raised before in this House, but I have a significant concern that we face that further risk.

What is the plan to curb borrowing for operations? That's a big concern, which I've talked about earlier.

These are all questions that Albertans have asked me, questions that I have that ought to be answered in a budget, in the hundreds of pages of budget documents. While I know that we ultimately, eventually will receive that budget, I think it's important in this very difficult time that those questions are not only answered but that they're answered in a timely way. There was a way of doing that, but here we are: we find ourselves debating an interim supply bill.

I'm going to dive into some specific questions here as I look at the numbers. Interestingly, although certain line items have gone up in the interim supply bill or plan that we see before us, overall program expenditures are \$156 million under the two-month expectation. Capital expenditures are \$136 million underexpended, which means financial transactions and lottery fund transfers must

be above expectations. In plain English for, I'm sure, the thousands of Albertans who are watching at home online, that means the government is spending more on debt servicing and increasingly relying on transfers from the lottery fund. I'll ask the Minister of Finance: please, can you quantify exactly how much we expect in terms of financial transactions and transfers from the lottery fund to help explain this discrepancy?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. Thank you very much to the member opposite.

I neglected to appreciate and thank the leader of the third party for the most improved award. I should have mentioned that. Thank you very much. There is a magazine, called *Alberta Views*, that did give me a B plus as well, and I wonder: when was the last time a Finance minister in this province got a B plus? We'll have to check that out.

A couple of things I want to address with regard to this interim – no. Budget 2015 first, I guess. The energy situation in this province: as many know, royalties have dropped significantly, about a 20 per cent drop, I think was mentioned, from 2014-15 to 2015-16, about \$7 billion. The situation with regard to when the energy prices were put into this budget, I think, goes back to about the first part of June, July 2015. Of course, we brought this budget forward on October 27. In that interim our experts and experts around the world didn't see this coming in terms of the dramatic drop in energy prices, so we were out, like everybody else was, in terms of an estimation of where the revenues would come from.

The undeployed capital. I just want to identify that that \$800 million that you talked about is happening because we pushed that forward and reprofiled it so it could be drawn down when it is needed. We are not reducing the capital amount. We are just putting it in the right time frame for when it's necessary and needed, and we did increase the capital expenditure over the previous government's \$30 billion over five years, I think it was. We put 15 per cent more on top of that.

Budget 2015 – and it'll be carried through in Budget 2016 – will significantly maintain public services so that Albertans can be assisted through this challenging time in the sense that we're telling them that we're going to carry the operational costs. It's not ideal that we're borrowing to do that in some amount, but that's what we have to do to show Albertans and tell Albertans that the services they rely on will be there when they need them. We have their backs with regard to operational spending. We will carry a debt and a deficit as a result of that. We are bending the curve not only in health care, but you'll see in Budget 2016 where there's additional restraint in our spending going forward.

The amount from the transfer from the lottery fund of the \$362 million exhibits the quarterly transfer from that fund that we can expect. We use those monies to address general revenue fund expenses. It's about 25 per cent. If you multiply that by four, you'll see what we anticipate coming in during the course of the year, and that's only 25 per cent. You wouldn't multiply that by six in this case; you would by four.

I think those are some of the answers I wanted to provide.

10:40

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Your comments about borrowing for operations, I think, are exactly the point. Sorry; I have two points here. The reprofiling of the capital dollars from last year to this: that's exactly my point. If those dollars were in Budget 2015, one would expect that they would be deployed in 2015. That's the point of having those dollars in that budget. Reprofiling

means that we didn't spend it last year, but we're going to spend it this year. So that implies delays; it implies an inability to actually put those dollars to work. That's the point.

I guess my request to this government would be: as you consider those capital expenditures, can you actually deploy the dollars? If not, let's figure out why that is. That's entirely the point because, frankly, that will prevent us from perhaps even borrowing more. It would make the deficit number smaller. Perhaps that's not advice I should be giving you because if you take it, it's actually going to look better on you. But ultimately that's what I'm here to do. I am really just here to help.

Some questions specifically about some of the line items. If we were to annualize the per-day expenditure, as has been done in health care, of Education, we would see that the operating expense for Education is actually substantially underspent. Same thing for Advanced Education. Now, I presume that has to do with the time of year that these expenditures are happening, but can I ask, please, the Minister of Education to just confirm that or exactly why those dollars are a relatively low expenditure here at this point?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the question. It's very important to realize that in general as well we will always have interim supply for Education simply because the financial year for Education is from September to September while our financial year here is otherwise. So unless we sit in July and pass budgets in August, which we could do if you like, then we will always have interim supply at least for Education. So that's a very important lesson to remember if we try to suggest that we don't need interim supply. We will always need it for K to 12 education; such is the structure.

Specifically to your question around our operating expenses: yes, indeed it's just the cycle of how the money is required by the 61 school boards to which I distribute the money and so forth. It's very important as well to remember when we are analyzing K to 12 education that 97 per cent of the monies that pass through my ministry are distributed to the school boards. They are empowered through democratic election to make decisions around their school boards and their expenditures, so our operating disbursements reflect that reality.

Thank you for the question.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for that answer.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs – apologies if this is ground that's been covered previously by another minister. Program spending over the interim supply period is \$216 million more than one would expect on a straight-line basis over the next two months. What is the plan for that extra spending? Does it have anything at all to do with changes coming either in this legislative sitting, perhaps in the MGA? Can the minister please speak specifically to why that might be?

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you for the question. Looking at what's requested for interim supply, it's kind of expected to be actually well within reason. Some pieces of it such as the federal gas tax fund are flow-through funding from the federal government, and we have to include that as an expense. It's also a revenue item. A hundred per cent of that will be received and disbursed during the first two months, so that portion is included within there. We're expecting to have to disburse a portion of grants in place of taxes, a portion of Alberta community partnership grants. Also, because of



the requirements we have with previous agreements, we have to disburse 50 per cent of our library grants within the first couple of months with that.

Also, again, the 16.7 per cent, which is kind of the portion of two months, will continue to go to the programming that we deliver to Albertans on a regular basis, so the support we provide to the municipalities in terms of strengthening their accountability, their viability. I mean, as you know, we're currently reviewing the MGA and all the work entailed with that and working with Edmonton and Calgary in terms of charter development. There are a number of municipalities across this province that are looking for support in terms of help with determining viability and sustainability.

We continue to support the Alberta Emergency Management Agency and the work they do in protecting people, property, and the environment in terms of emergencies and prevention as well as responding to them in that situation. We continue to support the work of the MGB in terms of supporting that independent agency to provide the answers to Albertans and decisions they need regarding municipal matters; continuing to support the public safety division and the work in terms of supporting the code development, the standards development, and the enforcement of those; as well, supporting the office of the fire commissioner and the work they do in supporting our fire departments across the province; supporting our assessment division in terms of the work they do in developing standards, which includes auditing municipalities, dealing with complaints and appeals, the assessment of linear properties, setting and enforcing rates in terms of industrial property development. All that work will continue to happen, and I'm happy to continue to fund that.

In terms of financial transactions that's what we expect to disburse within a couple of months in terms of supporting the 2013 southern Alberta flood disbursements that we're expecting to make.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. Asking specifically on some of the capital spending, I notice that in Health there is a \$140 million underexpenditure from what we would expect on a straight-line basis in the first two months. Could perhaps either the Minister of Infrastructure or the Minister of Health speak to that?

**Mr. Mason:** With respect to the hon. member's question about the lapsed amount, I just wanted to indicate first of all that 87.9 per cent of the capital budget in this year has been expended. According to Ernst & Young the benchmark for other jurisdictions is 85 per cent, so we are very much in the normal range. It's a little higher than we had hoped. There are a number of reasons for this.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, the time has elapsed for that segment, and we're now moving into the next 20 minutes, where private members of the government caucus may ask questions.

First on my list is the hon. Member for Red Deer-South. Did you want to do a back and forth?

**Ms Miller:** Please.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm interested to know about the STEP program, which was announced last fall. Our students need every possible opportunity to succeed. My understanding is that with STEP's reinstatement, doors will be open again for students to gain skills and on-the-job experience, and employers will in turn grow their businesses further. Hon. minister, how many

students will be subsidized through STEP, when does the program start, and how much money are we committing to it?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much for the question. Madam Chair, I'm pleased to provide an update on the summer temporary employment program, or STEP. I'd like to take just a few minutes to share with all members the benefits of this program. As you know, our government committed to bringing this program back this summer, and the work to have that happen is well under way. The program benefits high school and postsecondary students who are looking for work experience that will help create a path towards their chosen career fields in the future.

STEP will help to open doors for students to gain the skills and on-the-job experience that they need to enter the workforce and be successful. For a student, having work experience is crucial for getting that very first job. We want to make sure we're giving that leg up to students so that they can take the first step up that ladder of their career to something rewarding and empowering that they can succeed at. Not only will the students be getting hands-on experience, but the work can inspire them to continue pursuing their chosen field. By investing in STEP, we are investing in students and supporting employers across the province so that they can grow and be successful.

**10:50**

Now, small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and it's important that we support them, especially through these challenging times. That's why this year we made STEP available to small businesses. With the government's commitment of \$10 million for this program, STEP will provide employers who hire students a wage subsidy of \$7 an hour for summer work from May to August. As part of the program we are working to make sure that the positions are distributed across sectors and across all of Alberta.

Over the past several weeks staff in my ministry have been working hard to make Alberta employers aware of this program. More than 70 information sessions were held in 41 communities across the province, and I'm really encouraged to see the number of employers who are taking advantage of this great opportunity and excited for this program to begin in the summer. Applications closed on February 29. We received 2,606 applications from employers, so I think it's safe to say that employers are just as excited about the program as I am. Selected employers will be notified in April, with some students starting work as soon as May. The \$10 million allocated to this program will support approximately 2,500 to 3,000 student jobs all across Alberta. This program is a real win-win. It will benefit organizations and support our future of bright, new young Albertans.

I was able to connect with one specific applicant, a business called the Paint Spot here in Edmonton. It's a local artist-run visual arts centre and art supply store. They had put in an application for two STEP students because, as well as running a small business in Edmonton, they also run the very wildly successful Art Walk, an outdoor studio and gallery event showcasing hundreds of working artists every summer here in Edmonton. I believe it runs for two or three days.

A lot of work goes into setting up this Art Walk, and they were so excited that the STEP program was back because it was something that their team – the ownership and some of the staff – were having to do kind of around the business of the Paint Spot. Now they'll be able to have two students, hopefully, organizing, running, co-ordinating, learning about the business, and making invaluable business contacts through the summer, continuing the work of – perhaps they're in an art and design program in university. It also lets the owner of this store focus on business

because, of course, with the downturn in the economy this owner wants to make sure that things are running smoothly. So it's very much a win-win here and a great program. I'm happy to provide an update.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Madam Chair. When we look at the many issues and concerns in my constituency of West Yellowhead, the question is this: with the support of Budget 2015, what initiatives has the minister undertaken to promote jobs and diversification in Alberta, and what is available in this interim supply to continue this important work?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'll thank the member for the very pertinent question. There are a number of initiatives that my ministry has been working on since it was first stood up in late October of last year. One of the initiatives I'm quite proud that we've rolled out is the petrochemical diversification program. You know, quite frankly, our government, long before we formed government, and the Premier talked often about value-added opportunities and ways that we can support the oil and gas sector in looking at adding more value, whether that's downstream or upstream.

This program that I jointly announced with the Minister of Energy is significant in the sense that within our province we have an abundance of natural gas. We have a fairly significant amount of cheap propane, cheap feedstock. Up until now, Madam Chair, in our country there was not one facility that takes propane and upgrades it, whether it's to propylene or polypropylene. So this project is the first of its kind. But what we wanted to do was basically level the playing field, quite frankly. Many facilities that upgrade propane are found on the Gulf coast, in Louisiana and Texas. They are heavily subsidized by governments in the south. As well, you know, there is a difference in costs. Alberta has a much colder climate, and we traditionally have a little bit higher building costs.

Our government has been approached by a number of companies interested in upgrading, whether its methane or propane. We're looking for some kind of project or some kind of partnership that could be struck between the government and themselves. This program was a \$500 million announcement of royalty credits, forgoing future royalty credits, with no dollars coming out of our budget, nothing coming off our books. We project that up to three facilities will be constructed within our province and will create thousands of construction jobs and, after that, hundreds of long-term, high-paying, quality jobs.

The other significant part of this program is that there will be additional spinoffs that come from this. Again, once we move forward up the value chain in a new area, there will be businesses that will be attracted to our province and also those that will start within our province.

That leads me to one of the next things that we've done, which is through our voucher program wanting to support small to medium-sized businesses through their movement into the commercialization process. There are significant costs for start-ups when they're looking at testing their products, when they're looking at testing the market. Those cost a significant amount of money. We announced not long ago an additional \$5 million to a voucher program, which is going to provide some assistance to them.

The other thing: just last week I signed on behalf of the government of Alberta a letter of intent with the Business

Development Bank of Canada, which is our federal partner. It's a Crown corporation that provides assistance to businesses. The exciting part about this letter of intent: first of all, in no other province in our country is there a letter of intent signed. So this was really a historic signing between the government of Alberta, the province of Alberta, and the Business Development Bank of Canada, truly striking a partnership, one where we have a common goal, and that is to provide as much support as we can to our business community, to our sectors that are struggling but also to our entrepreneurs.

One of the things I love to brag about in our province is the fact that we are the youngest province, we are the fastest growing province in the country, and we are one of the most educated provinces in the country, so Alberta truly is the best place to start or grow a business. As well, you know, as the Finance minister often points out, we have the strongest balance sheet of all the provinces, and Albertans still pay the lowest taxes compared to other provinces. Something the opposition often fails to recollect is the fact that Alberta is one of the only provinces that does not have a PST, which means that we are a very competitive province. [interjections] Despite what others may think, it was our government that chose not to bring in a PST and to keep Alberta very, very competitive. As well, within our province there is a vast amount of opportunities for trade and investment, which I will maybe expound on the next time I stand up.

Thank you.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, hon. minister, for your answer. My second question, then. Because of the many exports that occur in the constituency, we know that expanding our market access is one of the most important things that this government can do to support Alberta industry and businesses. Our royalty review highlighted one of the best examples of this problem in that the American market, which was once our biggest energy products purchaser, has now become one of the biggest competitors. Can the minister speak to efforts that will be supported by this supply bill to increase market access and trade?

11:00

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll thank the member for the question, again a very pertinent question. Many Albertans are wondering about market access, and I'd like to assure them that that is one of my top priorities as well as the Premier's top priority, gaining market access.

Now, our approach to this has been different from the opposition. They often think that jumping up and down and shouting is a way to get pipelines built. Quite frankly, it hasn't worked in the past, and I don't think it will work. Our approach has been one to take meaningful action for our province to do our part. Last fall the environment minister along with the Premier made a historic announcement, one in which – again, I was quite proud to be in the room to see leaders from the oil industry alongside indigenous leaders, alongside environmental NGOs, all saying that our climate leadership plan is the most robust that we've seen within our country. Quite frankly, we are now and will be a world leader on the environment, which other countries have already taken note of.

Madam Chair, I'll make this fairly quick. I had lunch with many of the high commissioners from the embassies that were here over the past couple of days, representatives from many, many different countries around the world, from all different continents. Their governments are aware of our climate leadership plan. They not only praised our government for taking action, but I can tell you

that they are much more interested in trading with Alberta and strengthening our collaboration between our province and their countries. What I found the most fascinating, especially, was the fact that European Union countries have been waiting for the province to take meaningful action on the environment and are quite excited at future partnerships that we're going to have and opening up doors for expanding trade.

To the member's question. Market access and trade are absolutely critical for our province. As I've said before in this House, Alberta last year exported \$120 billion worth of goods; \$109 billion went to the U.S. alone. They are our number one trading partner. However, it is of the utmost importance that we expand our trade networks, that we access other countries, that we look at opportunities to do more business in Asia, in Europe, in South America and Africa, and that is exactly what we're doing.

Work through our international offices. Again, as I mentioned earlier, in our budget the growth in the interim supply for Economic Development and Trade: much of that is because our international offices are required to pay the bill up front for the year, so that's a significant reason that my budget has increased.

Madam Chair, I'll conclude by assuring the member that our government is doing everything that we can, working with our provincial counterparts across the country, working with the federal government to ensure that they understand the economic benefits of projects like Energy East and how much it benefits all Canadians, not just Albertans: tens of thousands of jobs, billions of dollars in GDP. Quite frankly, I think our approach has already produced results where previous governments, in their approach of doing nothing but hoping that we can just sell our product, have failed. So we will continue to work on that. That is a commitment that the Premier has made and that I've made, that the Minister of Energy has made, and I'm confident that we will achieve just that.

Thank you.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, hon. minister.

I'll yield my time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is to the Minister of Health. Minister, speaking with my constituents and my colleagues on the front lines in health care as well as Albertans across the province, a key message I've been hearing time and time again is that Albertans are really pleased with the increased health budget that we saw last year. I'm particularly impressed with the distribution of naloxone that happened recently, the expansion of midwifery, and the expansion of access to electronic medical records for all of us health care workers. There is a concern, though, about access to affordable medication. It's critical to Albertans' health and quality of life. I'm particularly concerned about our vulnerable populations' access to health. Could the minister speak to this, as to what she's doing with these estimates?

**Ms Payne:** First, I would say to the member that we've heard similar concerns in ridings across the province. With respect to the increase for drug and supplemental health benefits, that \$146 million increase has benefited Albertans by allowing us to continue to add new therapies to our drug coverage plans, which includes 26 new products through the Pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance as at the end of Q3 of this fiscal year. With the shift by the pharmaceutical industry to focus more on high-cost but higher precision treatments such as Sovaldi and Harvoni for hepatitis C, our government anticipates higher expenditures for these types of products. However, these therapies have also been proven to increase the cure rate for treated patients. All drugs that are being

added to the health program are ones that have evidence of similar and often increased clinical benefit to our patients.

Thank you.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Minister. I can attest to the benefits of that sort of approach to our cancer patients as well.

Minister, a highlight of Budget 2015 was a desire by your ministry to upgrade medical equipment. I say that this is significant because upgrading old equipment ensures that Albertans are receiving the services they require. Can the minister speak to some of the upgrades that have taken place? How does the interim budget help facilitate this ongoing need?

**The Chair:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you. The medical equipment replacement and upgrade program was established to help ease the strain of replacing and upgrading aging and obsolete medical equipment and technology throughout our province. In Budget 2015 \$23.5 million was committed to addressing these needs and to supplementing new clinical program technology requirements. We are continuing to work with Alberta Health Services to fund targeted high-priority technologies, including the replacement of medical equipment. There is an allocation in the interim supply to continue this important work until the upcoming budget is fully approved.

Thank you.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you again.

Minister, on page 136 of the government estimates addictions and mental health were provided with an 11.2 per cent increase in funding compared to 2014-15. I've heard concerns from my constituents and elsewhere regarding the state of addictions...

**The Chair:** Hon. members, that concludes that segment of time.

We're beginning the rotation again, and we'll be moving over to the Official Opposition. Times now are shorter. We've got a combined 10 minutes per speaker.

Hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, did you wish to do a back and forth?

**Mr. Stier:** Yes, Madam Chair. Thank you. I would like to address my questions to the Minister of Municipal Affairs if I may. I'd appreciate, if it's okay, going back and forth, Minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Sure.

**Mr. Stier:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Good morning, all. A pleasure to be here at this moment to discuss the budget and, specifically, Municipal Affairs. Minister, it's been a while since we've spoken, and I just have a few things to get out because of the limited time.

Madam Chair, did you say that I have 10 minutes, one block of 10 minutes?

**The Chair:** Ten minutes in total if you're doing a back and forth.

**Mr. Stier:** Okay. Ten minutes. That's great. So now we know. Would you mind giving me the heads-up at nine minutes?

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you very much.

**Ms Larivee:** It has to be shared, 10 minutes.

**11:10**

**Mr. Stier:** I understand that, Minister. Thank you.

Minister Larivee, I was just looking over, as a start here – I have several questions. I hope we can have some brevity if possible. According to your interim supply estimates you're budgeting roughly \$265 million for operating and capital expenses. For the same period last year it was around \$233 million. It looks like about a 13 per cent increase in spending for this period. I'm just wondering if you could explain where that \$31 million increase is. Is it spread out over a lot of things, or are there a couple of significant items that you can tell us about, please?

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you very much. Salaries and supplies and services are anticipated to be just meeting our general expenses. I spoke already to the Member for Calgary-Elbow about all the amazing things that Municipal Affairs is doing to support the everyday work of the department, some flow-through in that, some general expectation around grants that need to go. In terms of our capital investment it's to do with the IT requirements of the department moving forward, and that's the allocation that we're expecting to need at this point. The financial transactions, in particular, are around the southern Alberta flood in 2013 and disbursements with that, so all well within expected and in line.

**Mr. Stier:** Okay. Thank you for that. That's interesting, and I appreciate your brevity in those answers.

The mayor's caucus is here in town this week, and they certainly are concerned about a lot of things. As always, MSI is one of the key things for our municipalities and how they work and how they get their funding to operate. There are a lot of small towns in every riding, including my own, of course, and possibly yours, where there are very few revenue streams to work from. Normally we see that delivered in June, roughly, and we have not had any inkling as to what's going on with MSI funding so far in any specific way. You know, the construction season is quite short already. We're not really necessarily being clear, I don't think, yet so that municipalities can look ahead and say, "Okay; the government said that there are X amount of dollars to work from," so that they can take their formulas, do their calculations, and they can present to their councils what they expect to do with their construction season coming up and other spending they need to do.

We're just wondering and I'm wondering: is it possible that we could have seen some more specific information here that would have told us how much was going to MSI in this interim supply, or would it have been possible – and I know the Finance minister is looking at me at the same time – to incorporate what was going to be in MSI at this early stage to provide the municipalities an earlier opportunity than what they're left with currently to get to work and get their budgeting under way and get their capital projects going?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Based on the fact that this is interim supply only and not the budget, payments for MSI and the basic municipal transportation grant and the small communities fund cannot take place under those programs until the budget is passed. This is not the place for them. They cannot be included in interim supply. I certainly look forward to your support as we move forward with passing the budget as quickly as possible so that those municipalities can get those funds as soon as possible and we can get that budget tabled.

I mean, moving forward, certainly, you know, the municipalities are incredible partners with us. We recognize the incredibly valuable support that they provide to Albertans right across this province, and it has been my greatest pleasure since

becoming the Minister of Municipal Affairs to have the chance to interact with the leadership of the municipalities across this province, who are so committed to taking care of the Albertans we all are responsible for.

Certainly, as you know, there are significant budget challenges that we are looking at, that potential \$10.4 billion budget, and Albertans do expect us to be fiscally responsible. So with that, we are taking the time to ensure that the budget we put forward is the very best budget that makes the most sense for Albertans, and the portion for MSI will be a part of that.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Minister. I think that's good on that. I appreciate your extended comments.

You know, last time around, prior to the last election, the previous government delivered an additional \$400 million to the MSI package, and I'm just wondering if there are plans that you could share at this time with regard to that same amount coming up for this year. Obviously, it may not be a portion of this supply estimate – is it? – or is that something you're considering? Can you shed any light on that, please?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As previously stated, MSI, because it has to be passed in the budget, cannot be a part of interim supply. There's no portion of this that includes MSI. Again, I look forward, when we have the opportunity to discuss the full budget as opposed to interim supply, to having your support for providing the municipalities with MSI funding as part of the various supports that we provide to municipalities. Again, we recognize the fact that municipalities depend on MSI for their capital funding in order to provide that support to municipalities, and we still value and support the MSI program.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Minister.

Operating grant, so on and so forth: \$30 million in the last one. Will that be continuing to be funded moving forward? How much of the interim supply is allocated here towards operating, please?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you so much. I will state for the third time that MSI cannot be disbursed, including the operating component, until the programs have been passed in the budget, so I look forward, again, to your support with providing that valuable funding to municipalities.

When we move forward in the future, there certainly are some other supports that we will be doing. The portion that Municipal Affairs provides for, grants in place of taxes: we will be providing some portion of that to municipalities within the first two months. Supporting the amazing hubs, that libraries' function, in municipalities: we will be providing them with their grants within the first couple of months. Also, we will be providing a certain amount of support to municipalities in terms of the regional collaboration program, projects through the Alberta community partnership grants. We will be delivering their share of federal gas tax funding to municipalities. MSI, however, cannot be addressed until after the budget is tabled and passed.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Minister. Sometimes getting on the record on certain subjects is as important as hearing your repeated answer, so I appreciate your patience here. Fair enough.

Then let's move on to something else. The MGA will be reviewed coming up. I'm just wondering: because that's an ongoing situation, are there some funding mechanisms, some monies in

place going towards that work within this budget here that we're working on today, the interim supply, please?

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak about the valuable work that my department does in terms of providing support to municipalities. We're very committed to strengthening the capacity and viability and sustainability of municipalities and proud of the work we do in supporting them. Part of that is the development of the Municipal Government Act, that we plan to table here in the spring. We really expect it to be about modernizing the MGA and supporting municipalities to be the very best that they can be moving forward. That is part of the ongoing work that my department does. Certainly, the salaries of the workers who are continuing to work on the MGA are included as part of the expenses within my budget.

**Mr. Stier:** Okay.

**The Chair:** You've got about 20 seconds left.

**Mr. Stier:** Oh, thank you. Well, thank you, Minister. It's been enjoyable.

Just one last thing, I guess. Growth boards are coming up. Is that part of the ongoing work that you just described a moment ago within this interim budget, too?

**Ms Larivee:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Moving along with the rotation, do we have a member of the third party wishing to speak? The hon. leader.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We'll go back and forth, and I will share some of my time with our House leader, please.

Questions. The Finance minister – and I appreciated that, although we didn't agree completely – did say that they are reining in spending. That was his phrase. He did actually mention reducing FTE, full-time equivalent, people. I know there's been some talk about doctors, nurses, and teachers. To the Education minister: when you were reining in spending, how many full-time equivalents were you able to rein in, and did that include any teachers in your area, please?

11:20

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, we've been instructed by both Treasury Board and the Finance minister working together to outline demonstrable ways by which we can contribute to very careful and prudent spending. You know, in Education this will be – you'll see this in the budget, right? Certainly, we've been looking very hard at our department. My department did take a 9 per cent, I believe, cut previously, so it's not easy to do that. Then, of course, I've been having very strong conversations with our 61 school boards, for them to be looking for ways to save money as well. As I said earlier this morning, I distribute 97 per cent of the total Education budget to the 61 school boards.

Perhaps the most interesting saving, that we saw just appearing in the last couple of weeks, is how we've been running our pay-as-you-go capital disbursements of funds. As I said earlier this morning, we found that this will continue on an annualized basis to save about 3.5 per cent in interest expenses, which would add up to about \$15 million.

In regard to the disbursements of funds with the new budget – I never thought I'd say this – you'll have to wait and see on that one

in the next couple of weeks. [interjections] Yeah. I learned that from elsewhere.

That's what we've been doing. Certainly, we've all been instructed and have looked at every dollar very carefully in K to 12 education.

**Mr. McIver:** Okay. Respectfully to the good minister: you didn't answer the question. But we'll come at this a little bit differently, of course, because I believe that Albertans, like people in the PC Party, think that we need to make sure that teachers are there for our kids. So let me go here: have you talked with the school boards about the percentage of funding for education that actually goes into the classroom, and are you contemplating increasing the percentage that goes into the classroom in order to have those classrooms well supported by teachers and aides and books and all those wonderful things that kids need and deserve while still controlling your budget? What have you done that way?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes, Madam Chair. Thank you for the question. As part of our annualized funding for school boards we, of course, restored the funding for enrolment as soon as we began. The third-quarter instalment of that was just put forward. We've seen over the last year, by restoring funding and budgeting for funding, about 740 teaching positions and the retention and support of more than 800 support staff positions as well.

Certainly, we're talking with school boards very carefully so they recognize that we made a commitment to fund for enrolment. We're watching those numbers very carefully. We saw a 2.7 per cent increase in enrolment this last year. It's very interesting. I saw the ATB report on population this morning, which suggested that our population is holding steady and continuing to increase, in fact, and that probably will be reflected in my K to 12 enrolment increases as well.

It's very important, as I said before, and I'll say it again: we need to fund enrolment and provide a high quality of education regardless of what the price of oil is because we have children at every development level – I can see one at the end at the very first development level – and we have to make sure that those teachers and support staff are there in front of the kids at each stage along the way. We're prepared to make sacrifices in that regard. I know that the rest of this House is prepared to make sacrifices in that regard, too, because ultimately I believe that that is our purpose, to provide something better and high-quality for the next generation in regard to their education and quality of life.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Madam Chair, I'm going to ask the minister to maybe be a little more specific in his responses because, you know, in the light of the old hockey players he's ragging the puck very well here.

I do want to look specifically at capital investment and capital builds. Minister, earlier you said that you're pleased to see that in the case of some school builds things are ahead of schedule. I mean, one thing that I think we've seen right across the province, from municipalities and right across – one of the, I guess, good things that comes out of our current economic situation is that construction projects are actually being completed at a lower construction cost. Labour costs are lower. I hear the Finance minister nodding his head. I think these are positive things, but what I do want to ask is: if there indeed is a 10 to 20 per cent saving or whatever the number is, does the number that's in the capital budget reflect a 10 to 20 per cent decrease in the capital budget, or does it reflect a 10 to 20 per cent increase in the number of schools that are being built?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Chair and to the hon. member for that question. It has not been adjusted for the new decrease in – this was anecdotal, that I saw from Edmonton public schools in the last 48 hours or so. With the more fluid system that we've developed, pay-as-you-go, disbursing the funds to each of the school boards across the province, we can make those adjustments much quicker in our budget. Disbursing those funds to the boards: we will see that on an ongoing basis. You can look at [projects.alberta.ca](http://projects.alberta.ca). It has, I think, some good information on the state of each of the projects across the province, and I believe that we will be able to save money over time.

Like I said before, just by disbursing funds on a more fluid basis, we figure that we can save at least \$15 million in interest this year on this new process. No. It is as it is right now, but we will be moving those monies and seeing the appropriate savings from borrowing on capital or another way. Of course, we have another round of schools that we will evaluate, and we will need to build some of those schools based on the very small number that EPSB gave me. You know, if you're building five at a 23 per cent discount, you get another school off that, potentially, or, of course, a 23 per cent savings. So that's good news, certainly.

**Dr. Starke:** Madam Chair, specifically, though – you know, the pay-you-as-go is actually a good initiative; I know the school boards like it – I would ask the minister: will he commit to the House today that once we're farther down this process and more school builds have been done he will give an indication as far as what the initial budgeted cost for a project was and what the actual cost was and indicate the savings? Either you build more schools for the same amount of money or you build the same amount of schools for less money, but if the construction costs are going down, Albertans want to know what those savings are.

**Mr. Eggen:** Madam Chair, yes. Absolutely. I will certainly be transparent and forthcoming in all those numbers. You know, I'm hoping that with very hard work from school boards, Infrastructure, and my department we'll have some good news in that regard.

Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Madam Chair, I'm going to actually address the same question to the Infrastructure and Transportation minister. Again, his area would also be affected by these lower construction costs. Will he commit to the House today that at the end of each fiscal year we will receive an accounting of what the projects were originally budgeted to cost and what the cost savings were and whether we see more projects for the same money or the same number of projects and what the cost saving would be?

**The Chair:** The rotation now goes to the independent member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll just pick up on that question from the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. Will we see the same number of projects at a lower cost or a greater number of projects at the same cost? [interjection] Thank you. I'll let you answer that question, Mr. Minister.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

11:30

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. It goes from a deep blue to a light blue. It's a spectrum. So to my sky-blue colleague over there I wanted to indicate that as savings are found in the capital budget, we don't automatically build new projects. We account for the

money that's been saved, and we make a decision about what we're going to do with the money that has been saved. It's a conscious decision to use the money in one way or another, and it may well be to build, you know, additional projects, but we don't just automatically start adding schools because we found a 10 or 15 per cent savings in the cost.

If the member would like, I have a more fulsome answer for him on the question of the lapsed capital.

**Mr. Clark:** Certainly. That actually goes to the question I would like to ask. On your earlier comment about the shade of blue, the official Pantone colour is known as brilliant blue. Optimistic sky blue is the other one as well. Thank you very much. Yes, my work here is done. No. Madam Chair, thank you very much.

I will go down the path here of digging a little deeper into the ability of the government to actually deploy the capital, and I will give the minister the opportunity to answer that question. But I just want to make this point, that we're in a time here of borrowing substantial amounts of money to build capital, which, again, I broadly agree with. It looks like our friends in the federal government – if indications are correct, we should receive a substantial amount of money from our friends in Ottawa for capital spending in this province. We'll see if, in fact, they come up with that, how good as friends they actually are of this province. That remains to be seen, but I am ever optimistic that we will receive substantial support from the federal government. But in so doing, I have that ongoing concern about the ability of this government to actually deploy that capital efficiently, cost-efficiently, and deploy it effectively in a timely fashion. So when we see money rolling over from year to year, that's a big concern.

With that I'll ask an open-ended question to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to try to address that concern. Thank you.

**Mr. Mason:** To the brilliant-blue member, I guess that means our PC friends are royal blue and our friends in the Wildrose are midnight blue.

I just want to talk a little bit about some of the reductions due to reprofiling and capital lapses identified by the ministries. This includes reprofiling of \$130 million for schools into future years to reflect construction progress, \$10 million of which is capital grant funding for the Peerless Lake and Trout Lake First Nations communities; reprofiling of \$101 million of capital grants for carbon capture and storage initiatives to future years because the projects have not met the planned milestones that they were required to for grant payments; net capital investment lapse of \$63.8 million for Transportation due to various project delays; net decrease in capital funds for Environment and Parks of \$59 million; a lapse of \$55 million from the climate change and emissions management fund; and a lapse of \$4 million from the Alberta land trust grant program. The reduction of \$948 million is comprised of \$694 million required in future years to complete ongoing projects – this reprofiling will be reflected in the 2016-21 capital plan – \$77 million in SUCH sector self-financed reductions, and the remaining \$177 million is due to capital funding that will not be spent in the current fiscal year and is not required in future years to complete projects or is capital items that are offset by revenue.

Overall, capital spending will be reduced by 12.1 per cent for this fiscal year compared to Budget 2015. Our goal is to move this closer to 5 per cent in future years. Having said that, I want to just indicate that that reprofiling of cash flows is a normal part of the capital plan. It does not represent increases or decreases to projects but, rather, represents adjustments to the timing of cash flows to match projected needs and progress. Often delays due to weather,

building permits, site access issues, and other unforeseen circumstances result in some funding going unspent in a given year and project cash flows needing to be adjusted to maintain the approved funding required to complete the project.

The Financial Administration Act recognizes that it is often difficult to forecast capital spending and has a provision to allow capital investment funds to be carried forward, in section 28.1. Ernst & Young has advised the government that other jurisdictions, including Ontario, B.C., Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, target to spend 85 per cent of the annual cash flows for each year. The city of Edmonton has also confirmed that 85 per cent is the spend goal, but it may vary from year to year depending on unforeseen circumstances. We are forecasting to spend 87.9 per cent of the capital budget in 2015, which is somewhat above the practice of other jurisdictions. Nevertheless, it's more than we expected.

Now, with respect to your question about: can we spend the money that we're borrowing going forward? There are two factors, I think, that need to be taken into account. First of all, a number of projects are in a planning phase, and they will be available and be moving towards construction as we move through the five-year capital plan, so there will be more projects that will be available that we'll need the money for. Secondly, a number of projects, of course, will be winding down that are currently under construction, major construction projects, particularly in Edmonton but in other parts of the province as well, that will then free up resources in order to make them available for the projects that we have in mind in the next several years of the capital plan.

For those two reasons, hon. member, I believe that we in fact will be able to spend money that is provided for in our capital plan and be able to put Albertans to work and get good infrastructure built for the people of Alberta at a lower cost than otherwise. I continue to believe that our plan is a good one.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Minister, and thank you, Madam Chair.

In my remaining brief, few minutes here I want to shift to operating costs. I know we've talked a lot about overall operating costs, and they're embedded here through the interim supply. My question to anyone on the front bench is: specifically, what are you doing to bend that operating cost curve? I've a significant concern here that in challenging times people all around this province, businesses all around this province are doing more with less in a meaningful and substantial way. That means efficiencies. That means hard conversations with people who work in your organizations. I'd like to just open that up and ask that question. What specifically are you doing, and can we expect a significant reduction in costs without significant reductions in front-line services?

**Ms Hoffman:** Since I've got the budget that needs the most curving, I thought I'd take the question, so thank you for the opportunity. We're certainly committed to carefully managing the costs that we have and ensuring that Alberta families get the best care for the best value. That's, I think, something that we should all share as a guiding value, and finding efficiencies to improve care and ensuring that our health care system is sustainable for Albertans over the long term are very high priorities.

For example, last session I made the announcement about RAPID, a new drug treatment for people who are experiencing macular degeneration at far lower cost to both the taxpayer and without a copay for the actual recipient. These are some of the decisions around drugs. The three biggest cost pressures in health

care, increasing at the highest rates as well over the last number of years, are hospital operations, physician compensation, and drugs. That was one example about drugs.

Another is that this year by switching to generics over brand name, we're saving another \$18 million. We're working with other provinces to come up with lower generic drug prices for all Canadians. As well, through FPT initiatives we're working on efforts around a common formulary, hopefully, so that we can have greater consistency in pricing and also service to Canadians around the cost of drugs. Right now about 1 in 5 families isn't actually fulfilling their prescriptions Canada-wide because they just can't afford the copay pieces.

We're also building 2,000 long-term care beds, which is an expense but is far more efficient to operate than having people living in acute-care hospital beds who should be living in long-term care.

Of course, another big piece is that operational best practice, working with counterparts in other provinces around efficiencies in operations, making sure that we have the right professional providing the health care services rather than always going to the highest educated or highest paid.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll now go to the government private members again. Next on my list I have Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to ask some questions of our Minister of Energy in a back-and-forth manner if that's okay.

Minister of Energy, the market access and diversification were always key priorities for your ministry in Budget 2015. Can you provide an update on what is being done to increase global market access?

11:40

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Yeah. We're doing a few things to ensure that we get greater market access. Certainly, the first and foremost are our pipelines. We recognize that they're crucial to getting our oil to market, and they're a national energy infrastructure piece, and it's dire to our whole nation, not just Alberta. Alberta is an economic engine in Canada, and pipelines are a fundamental part of our economy. So just like the federal government led the construction of our national railway many years ago, we see the need for playing a role in getting these pipelines built in the 21st-century economy.

First of all, we're working continually with our federal counterparts and with our industry partners to assist them in getting market access, both east and west. We're working on market access with a clear approach. First, we're improving our environmental record, which we've done with our climate leadership plan, and I have to say that days after that was revealed, the conversation nationally really changed. Second, we're looking to our federal government to play a leadership role as well in helping us get our Alberta products to market. Lastly, we've changed the strategy, as previously Minister Bilous mentioned. We're taking the drama out of it and the emotion, and we want the pipeline projects to be considered for their merit, not as an emotional, political issue.

The second thing we're doing is petrochemical diversification. Alberta is an energy province, and we are always going to be an energy province, but we cannot underestimate the change and the shale gas revolution that take the United States from being our primary customer to our primary competitor. So we've revealed a petroleum diversification program that is a direct result from talking

to industry. This program will attract investment and create jobs. We heard clearly from our petrochemical industry in Alberta that that sector is an attractive and competitive place to operate a value-added facility, but due to factors beyond our control, like the way winter drives up construction costs – and we are a tougher place to build than around the U.S. Gulf coast – we need to look at some incentives. The petrochemical diversification program is designed to help overcome some of these challenges for our industry and create a bit of a level playing field with places like Louisiana.

Since launching this program we have heard from many industry people that projects that were once being strongly considered for Louisiana are now being considered for Alberta. This program can and will generate up to 3,000 new jobs in construction. As well, we'll generate more than a thousand jobs when the new facilities begin construction. So this program will help leverage about 5 billion new dollars in investment in Alberta that would have otherwise gone to the U.S.

So those are two things that we're doing.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you for that fulsome response, Minister.

I have an additional question. Promoting Alberta's energy industry to oil and gas investors is of particular importance given the current economic situation. We must assure energy investors that we are open for business and encourage investment to stay here in Alberta. Can the minister please follow up with how Budget 2015 and the work for her ministry are promoting investment in Alberta's oil and gas sector?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you for the question. Certainly, as Minister of Energy I look for any opportunity to promote our energy industry to our country and, indeed, to the world, and I'm very proud to do that on behalf of Alberta.

I recently went to Houston to do just that. My focus while there was to get people to look at investing in Alberta and creating jobs. A lot has changed for the better, and I want the world to know that. Our new royalty framework is competitive like never before. We have replaced an out-of-date, risky framework with one that is modern, competitive, and gives investors the certainty that they need because the industry has changed significantly in even the last five years. Our climate leadership plan positions Alberta to be one of the most responsible energy producers. I was thrilled, in fact, when I was in Houston that Steve Williams of Suncor personally promoted our leadership plan as a reason to invest in Alberta during his address in Houston.

As I mentioned, we are working to change the conversation on pipelines. One of the intents of our climate leadership plan was to take the drama, as I said, out of the pipeline and work collaboratively with our counterparts and ask them to please consider the merits of the project rather than the emotion of the project. I was thrilled to read in the *Globe and Mail* recently that Murray Edwards, of CNRL, and Brian Ferguson, of Cenovus, have also endorsed this approach. They know that yelling and screaming hasn't worked in the past and that telling people they're stupid doesn't work, so we're looking to be collaborative and educate people.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to share my time with the ministers as well.

Obviously, we know there are a lot of eyes on the economy right now in the province. This is for the Minister of Culture and Tourism. Seeing that tourism is one of the major economic drivers here in Alberta and that over \$8 billion is spent in Alberta by visitors that support over 127,000 jobs and more than 19,000 businesses, how are we using interim supply to support this sector to help with its continued growth?

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am very happy to direct my comments to the Chamber today and talk about an industry that's actually doing remarkably well despite the economic downturn that we've seen around the globe. I think we can also think about tourism – I would like to think about tourism, actually, as an economic pipeline that brings people into this province with their money. It actually allows us the opportunity – you know, we've seen the challenges that a low dollar places, but it also gives us the opportunity again, like I said, to showcase the natural beauty of this province and, of course, to hopefully attract some of our friends from the south to come up here and spend some time.

I think I've had the opportunity now to talk to a lot of our friends from the opposite side, who are also very excited about the economic development that can take place by growing our current tourist destinations and perhaps expanding them as well and exploring new ones and actually finding ways – because when it comes to tourism, especially in the rural areas, we have a lot of potential. It's one of those things that I can tell you I'm truly excited about.

As I mentioned, we've talked about bringing people here, and one of the things that I did – I think it was the first day on the job – was to actually go down to my hometown of Calgary to announce the beginning of flights directly from Beijing to Calgary. It's going to be a fantastic opportunity, again, to grow our market share and, of course, give us the opportunity to then, hopefully, have them stay in the city a couple of extra days before they go off to their final destination. What it does do, actually, Madam Chair, is again open up our markets to new destinations and bring those people to this province, which, you know, all of us can very much agree is very desirable.

The other thing that our ministry does is that it provides funding for grants and programs. It supports places like the Royal Tyrrell Museum, which last year celebrated their 30th year of being around. What we've seen and what I've been told by my ministry staff is that we've seen attendance up by 14 per cent. So when we're looking at all of these different things, the destinations that we already have that are established, the attractions that are in this province that make this the desirable and diverse and very dynamic province that we know and very much love, we see that there's a lot of potential here, a lot of opportunities to keep growing and diversifying our economy, creating new jobs as well.

In terms of what this interim supply will do, it will allow me to continue funding those programs. There are many of the programs that we give funding to that have deadlines that have to be met by ... [A timer sounded] Sorry.

**11:50**

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Today I'm speaking specifically about Economic Development and Trade. I'll do a back and forth. I have comments and observations. Then I would like to share some of my time with my colleague the Transportation critic.

Four months ago, when we went through last year's estimates, I had an opportunity to discuss with the minister specific



performance metrics and measures of his ministry, and we both agreed that we should measure the outcomes, too. For this year's review I'm hoping he'll bring back some of those reports.

But talking about this year's interim supply, this Legislature has no information on the spending details of this supply bill. There are no details regarding how much of this is for grant money or for operational costs, how much is for staffing, or how much is for travel and who knows what. We have no details. This interim supply is just for two months, and two months of the budget should be approximately 16 per cent of the total budget for the year. Knowing well that there could be other expenses at the beginning of the year, like the minister mentioned earlier, that may push the amount over 16 per cent, we have to watch out. The extra money should be justifiable. If the minister could tell the House why the budget is more than 16 per cent.

My other question to the minister is: why does this bill give the ministry 75 per cent of last year's total budget? Last year the total budget was \$278 million, Madam Chair, and this interim supply alone is \$209 million. That's nowhere near 16 per cent of the normal budget that is required for two months' worth of operations. Why does the minister need nine months' worth of supply for just two months, and why is the ministry spending 75 per cent of its total budget in just two months? The entire budget for Economic Development and Trade would be \$1.25 billion if you prorate that. That's how much the budget would be if the \$209 million was just 16 per cent of the budget.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I thank the member for his questions. I'll go in the order that the member asked. Last year in estimates he did raise the point about performance measures and outcomes. I agree with the member that we need to have specific targets. They need to be measurable, and that way we can be accountable to Albertans for the dollars that we're spending and ensure that we're reaching the targets that we're setting. I will assure the member that when we go into estimates, there are specific, concrete, tangible performance measures in my budget that we will be able to discuss, and I think that the member and all

members of the Assembly will be quite pleased to see the approach that we're taking on that. Absolutely.

As far as the question about 16 per cent, or two months, of the budget, as was mentioned earlier, we don't just prorate the budget. I'm not taking my yearly budget and dividing it by 12 and then adding two months together, and that's the total that we have. The \$209 million, which is a significant increase from the past, is for a few different reasons. One, I mean, as with all of my cabinet colleagues, interim supply is meant to cover off the day-to-day operations of each of our ministries and to ensure that government doesn't grind to a halt or that suddenly services that we all depend on don't abruptly stop. Really, interim supply is a carry-over method.

I'm just going to add a couple of quick pieces, Member. We're looking at the international offices that we pay up front. There are significant research and developments costs, R and D costs, as well for our Innovates.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions relating to the 2016-2017 interim supply estimates, reports progress, and requests leave to sit again.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Those opposed, say no. That motion is carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m.

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



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, March 10, 2016

Day 3

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 29th Legislature

### Second Session

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 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
 Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
 Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
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 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
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 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
 Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

#### Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Dang	Taylor
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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 10, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 19 students from St. Angela elementary school. They're here to observe the proceedings today, so please act accordingly, everyone. They're with Mr. Richy Trinh, their teacher. St. Angela's is just a great school, and I'm so proud to have them here today. If they could stand and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly students from the grades 7 and 8 class of the Rosemary school from the beautiful village of Rosemary, Alberta, led by Mr. Blumell and Brent Meyer and accompanied by seven teachers. These students have joined us today, and they are actually the very first people I've introduced to this Assembly. Rosemary is a beautiful village about 30 kilometres northwest of the city of Brooks. I'm so pleased to be joined by them today. Please give the students and teachers and parents the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the students, teachers Ms Carla Samuelson and Ms Schmitz, and parents Mr. David Zebak, Mr. Jason Wax, and Mr. Jamie Marino from Nellie McClung elementary school. Nellie McClung elementary school is a highly reputable school, and the residents of Calgary-Glenmore are rightly proud of it. The teachers, staff, and parents work very hard to provide quality education to the students. I experienced this first-hand when I did a session on politics in the classroom. I'm very pleased that the same students are here today with us to learn about politics by actually experiencing it. I would like to request that the students, teachers, and parents from Nellie McClung elementary school rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other school groups to be introduced?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my delight to introduce today to you and through you Mr. Dan Balaban, who joins us here today in the Chamber. Mr. Balaban is a formidable wind energy entrepreneur. As company founder, president, and CEO of Greengate Power Corporation, he is responsible for over 1,500 megawatts of wind projects on 200,000 acres of private Alberta land. That's a greenhouse gas emission reduction of 3 million tonnes per year. Known as Canada's wind energy cowboy, Mr. Balaban is changing the way Canadian energy is produced, proving

that innovative green energy technology is not only environmentally responsible but highly profitable. As Alberta continues to diversify our economy, Mr. Balaban is committed to working with our government to make Alberta North America's wind energy leader. I ask that Mr. Balaban rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Infrastructure, do you have a guest?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a proud, hard-working Albertan, Brent Morton. Mr. Morton hails from Rothesay, New Brunswick, originally but has called Alberta home for the last 10 years. He helps build our province as a welder with pipefitters local 488. I would ask Mr. Morton to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is indeed an honour and a privilege to introduce to you and through you two distinguished individuals to this House. These gentlemen work for and serve the people of Okotoks, which is one of the two major urban centres in my constituency. Rick Quail is the chief administrative officer for the town. He's a committed, prudent, and extremely valuable member of the town's team and someone I am proud to call a friend.

Here also today is Okotoks' mayor, Bill Robertson, or, as everybody calls him, Mayor Bill. Mayor Bill is a very popular teacher in Okotoks and is now a natural in his role as mayor. Mayor Bill was one of the first people to call me and congratulate me on my election last May. I remember because he told me: now go to work and get my water pipeline. Since then he has guided me through developing strategic relationships with his fellow council members and the inner workings of the town of Okotoks. This year, with the dedication and hard work of thousands of townsfolk, Okotoks has been nominated as one of the top nominees for Kraft Hockeyville. Voting is this Sunday, and I encourage everybody to vote for Okotoks.

I consider both Rick and Bill and the other members of the town council friends. I look forward to mutual, beneficial business and personal relationships. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Legislature.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Today it certainly is an honour for me to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly some great councillors and a mayor in my area. Also, I'd like to make mention of the two folks that were just announced, because Okotoks is my hometown, and I'm so proud to have them here as well.

But to go on, I'm here to introduce and welcome Rick Everett, the mayor of the town of Nanton, and Jamie Cutler, a recent addition to my list here from Claresholm. Both Jamie and Rick bring a bright, fresh, and well-organized approach to operational aspects and lifestyle to the good folks in both of their towns. I've really thoroughly enjoyed working with both of their councils. It's a pleasure, really, to have them here today for their first time, and I'm sure they're enjoying this. I would now like to ask Mayor Rick Everett and Councillor Cutler to please stand and enjoy the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Health, you have some visitors you'd like to introduce?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to introduce to the Assembly, for those of you who haven't met them yet, four very important men in my life. The first that I want to mention is Reg Basken, who has been a long-time member of our party. He was party president during some of our difficult times, and when I said that I was running for school board, he immediately took a sign and helped me out. So it means a great deal. Of course, I wouldn't be here if I didn't have that great start. Thank you, Reg.

I also have three guests in the Speaker's gallery, Madam Speaker. Those are three former MLAs from our party. The first, Alex McEachern, represented an area very similar to the part of the city that I represent now. He was very recently the president of the riding association and has always been, through many decades, committed to volunteering, donating, and keeping the values of social democracy alive and well in Alberta. So thank you to Alex.

As well, Raj Pannu was the leader of the party when I first got involved. He was a professor at the university, and when I asked him for some life advice, he said: get involved in politics. He wished he would have started before 65, and he thought we needed a lot more women involved. I have to say that I think his vision has come to life in this Assembly today.

1:40

The third introduction is a very good friend, Ray Martin, who was a member of this House many times, a leader of our party, and who stepped up when we, of course, faced a tragedy, losing the current Premier's father. He did a great job for our party, and he also continues to do a great job representing Albertans on the Edmonton public school board. I had the honour of working for him and with him, and now I get to work for him again as a member of this Assembly.

Thank you very much to all four of you for your support over the years. Please rise.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It's always an honour to have former members of this Assembly with us here in the House.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly from the town of Two Hills His Worship Henry Neufeld, the mayor of Two Hills. As a business owner as well as the mayor of Two Hills I'm sure he could provide this Chamber with some insight into the economic situation that faces our province and businesses and individuals every day.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to make a plug for my hometown of St. Paul, which is also in the running for Kraft Hockeyville, so please vote on the 13th.

Mr. Neufeld is a very innovative man who has some great ideas for diversifying the economy in our area. We look forward to working with the various departments of this government to get some of those innovative projects off the ground as soon as possible. I'd like to ask him now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Ms Ellen Campbell, a friend of mine, a fellow cyclist, and an instructor at the CCI-LEX Cultural Connections Institute.

With her today are some of her students: Maria Dumont, a student from Quebec who has work experience as a hairdresser and health care attendant; Felipe Ganz, a kinesiologist from Chile who is hoping to study physiotherapy at the University of Alberta; Diego Palma, a Chilean high school student who hopes to study medicine; and Gan Zhihui, an English tutor from Harbin, China, who is seeking work in Edmonton while her husband is pursuing his PhD. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a thrill today to be able to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a wonderful organization from my constituency, KARA Family Resource Centre. KARA is a nonprofit organization that was formed in 1984 by a collaborative of 16 community agencies and individuals who identified a need for services to low-income single mothers. Today KARA provides numerous programs and services to many families at no cost, and I'm very proud to have them in my riding of Edmonton-Decore. Visiting us today from KARA are Pam Doubleday, executive director, and Rick Thomas, director. I would now ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce three great Albertans, one of whom is Ron Brochu, who ran for the Liberal Party in Edmonton in the last election and is staying with us, strong. He's bringing with him Léo and Henriette Laverdière. They're former farmers from the francophone hamlet of Girouxville, located in the Smoky River-Peace region of Alberta. Always leaders in their community, their ability to work together as a team, not to mention Léo's tenacious work ethic, led them to be recognized in the 1960s as a model farm by the department of agriculture here in Alberta. Now in their retirement, Léo and Henriette live in Edmonton at the Saint-Thomas Health Centre in Bonnie Doon. Will the three of you please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured today to introduce to you and through you two members of the global education program at the University of Alberta, director Nancy Hannemann and global education co-ordinator Lisa Lozanski. Ms Hannemann has been a strong advocate for human rights in this province and in this country for her entire life, and I'm proud to call her a friend. Ms Hannemann and Ms Lozanski co-ordinate the well-known International Week at the U of A, which continues its 31-year-long quest for a better world, to understand global issues that define our era and to connect people who can and will make a positive difference. I ask the members of this House to provide them with the customary traditional warm welcome. Please stand.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature Ms Laila Goodridge. Laila was a candidate for Grande Prairie-Wapiti for the Wildrose. She's a hard worker on a campaign. In fact, her hard work on my campaign got me here. Of

course, she didn't quite make it. She put a little more energy in my campaign than her own. Laila, if you could stand up and receive the warm welcome of this House.

## Members' Statements

### Watershed Management

**Mr. Westhead:** Madam Speaker, our government is committed to the protection of our headwaters and species at risk. Healthy watersheds, sustainable resource development, and responsible recreational activity are not mutually exclusive. Planning for watershed health must always be a primary consideration.

In making these complex decisions, we will take a thoughtful, measured, and respectful approach. We must also ensure that First Nations have access for traditional land use and preserve constitutional treaty rights. Our government's action to protect the Castle wildland and provincial park in southwestern Alberta embodies these goals.

Water security is a common denominator that we simply cannot ignore. As author and naturalist Kevin Van Tighem articulates: water does not come from the river; it comes to the river. He observes that a river is a product of its watershed. It is the landscape that produces the water, which in turn determines water quantity, quality, and its rate of discharge.

The constituency of Banff-Cochrane contains one of the most significant watersheds for western Canada. The water this landscape produces supports nearly 3 million people, including agricultural and industrial users. The landscape itself supports good local jobs through the tourism, television, and film industries.

Clearly, we must make prudent and responsible land-use decisions now to safeguard water security into the future. To accomplish this goal, we are designing a parks management and tourism strategy for southwestern Alberta. This will involve months of engagement with local communities, Albertans, land users, and First Nations. Broad consultation is necessary in order to get it right. I am proud to be part of a government that is taking its responsibility to the environment seriously.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood.

### Water Management in Okotoks

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. One of the most urgent issues facing the residents of Highwood and in particular Okotoks is access to a sufficient amount of water to accommodate the dramatic growth of this community. With the town's current water supply at full capacity immediate action is required to move critical infrastructure projects forward, including much-needed schools, to attract investment, and encourage and establish businesses to grow.

Okotoks' proactive approach to water conservation has been recognized by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which awarded Okotoks in 2015 the sustainable communities award for water conservation. The town of Okotoks and the residents have done all they can to use their water allocations wisely. Unfortunately, it is no longer enough. Further action is required.

Okotoks understands that provincial capital funds need to be considered in the context of co-ordinated regional priorities. As a member of the Calgary Regional Partnership Okotoks helped to develop CRP's 10-year capital investment plan. The first step of this comprehensive program is for the construction of a water pipeline from the city of Calgary to Okotoks. The proposed water pipeline was designed to extend and meet the needs of the MD of

Foothills and the adjoining communities of Turner Valley and Black Diamond. The proposed water pipeline has the full support of the city of Calgary and will ensure that no additional withdrawals from the Sheep or Highwood rivers will be used, as a clean and secure water supply will be withdrawn upstream from Calgary's sewage effluent release.

This regional approach will ensure the protection of critical agricultural land while meeting the growth requirements of the region. The Okotoks water pipeline is shovel ready, and its construction will create jobs and economic development during this time of economic instability. This government has the opportunity to put its words into action and support the construction of this water pipeline. I'm sure that as this government reviews the town's application, it will see the value of this infrastructure project. I urge this government to act and act now. Build this pipeline.

Thank you.

1:50

## Oral Question Period

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

### Job Creation

**Mr. Jean:** With 80,000 full-time jobs lost under the NDP government thus far, Alberta families expected a plan from this government on how to get Albertans back to work. That plan was revealed on Tuesday, and now the experts are weighing in on the NDP's flagship economic initiative. One calls it, and I quote: an act to allow a minister to do ministerial stuff. End quote. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business calls it a skeleton of a job-creation framework. Can the Premier explain why, after a year of making so many promises to Albertans for some kind of jobs plan, she still has not delivered one?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In fact, we have made quite a bit of progress with respect to the development of our jobs plan. Acting on the advice of David Dodge, we increased our investment in capital in order to create more jobs, and that's something which, in fact, is about a \$9 billion larger investment than would have happened under the plan of the Official Opposition. So that's part one.

Part two was that we established a new ministry and we introduced programs last fall that involved introducing more access to capital as a result of consultations and requests from business leaders. But we have more.

**Mr. Jean:** Certainly, I think that a lot of businesses are really excited about this and that it will help: that was the jobs minister that said that last fall as she revealed a \$180 million job subsidy program. A week ago the economic development minister's office said that the program was still going ahead. Well, it seems like the Premier's press secretary has a better handle on the government agenda than the front bench because she told a columnist just yesterday that after creating a grand total of zero jobs, the program has been cancelled. Can the Premier please explain who has the correct information, her minister or her press secretary?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As members of the Assembly know, over the course of the last 10 months the price of oil has dropped much more significantly, and the duration of that drop has been predicted to go on much, much longer, so we're

dealing with a different economic situation. As a result, we thought it was prudent to carefully examine all of our programs to make sure that they are the best programs to deliver the most and the greatest number of jobs. As a result, we are reviewing that program because that's our job, to make sure that we get the best program out, and you will see more in the budget.

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans were told last fall that the job subsidy program would create 27,000 jobs. They were told that it would begin in January. When the Wildrose actually questioned the effectiveness of the program, the NDP told Albertans that the Wildrose was wrong. Six months later the job subsidy program has been scrapped by the NDP, but the layoffs have continued. We went from a bad plan to no plan. Can the Premier explain to the tens of thousands of unemployed Albertans why she spent time raising money in Ontario for opponents of Alberta's jobs instead of developing a plan to create jobs for Albertans right here in Alberta?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As I've said, we have developed a plan. We are working on a plan. There are many elements of the plan that we've already rolled out. I was able to announce an excellent diversification opportunity earlier today, and the specific elements of that job plan will become clear when we introduce the budget. There are monetary items to it, and we can't talk about it before then, but we expect that members on that side will probably be saying good things about it when they see it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, second main question.

### Energy Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you. The Premier's carbon policies and other electrical grid experiments are putting people out of work and will lead to much higher power bills for every single Albertan. Instead of creating an environment favourable to job creation, the government's top priority is a policy that leads directly to the shut down of mines and power plants that sustain communities like Hanna all across the province. What does the Premier have to say to the community of Hanna and the families who live there whose futures are very much in doubt as a result of her ideological agenda?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Madam Speaker, I would begin by saying that fearmongering doesn't help anybody. When it comes to the announcement by TransCanada, let's be very clear. They are trying to work their way out of a power purchase agreement as a result of a loophole that's the size of seven different large trucks that was negotiated by the previous government. That being said, the price of coal has gone down a great deal, so that's the situation that we're dealing with now. But right now those coal plants will continue to run, those jobs will continue to be there, and reliability will continue. No one should suggest otherwise, and to do so is irresponsible.

**Mr. Jean:** After TransCanada cancelled the major power contracts because of NDP policy, the Energy minister said that it would have little impact on consumers. Well, the former head of Alberta's Balancing Pool said that those changes will put Alberta power consumers on the hook for an extra \$500 million per year. That means higher power bills for every single Albertan, for seniors, the unemployed, struggling business owners. All will feel the pinch

when they can least afford it. This is life under the NDP. What does the Premier have to say about this?

**Ms Notley:** Madam Speaker, blaming the fact that the price of coal is low on the NDP is almost as ridiculous as blaming the fact that the price of oil and gas is low on the NDP. This is a function of the oversupply of energy in the market. This is the free market that those folks over there love so much. That's what we are dealing with right now. This is a result of it not being profitable anymore to sell coal energy within this market. So we will manage it. That's exactly what we will do because that's our job. But as I say again, fearmongering helps nobody.

**Mr. Jean:** What we're not seeing is any plan to deal with the huge challenge faced by consumers when it comes to electricity costs: that was the now Premier in 2012. Four years later the situation for many Albertans is much, much worse. Thousands are unemployed, and this government is about to implement a policy that will lead to power bills that families just can't afford. Why won't the Premier step back and think about all the damage her ideological agenda is causing for those she used to advocate for just a few short years ago?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think the member opposite is referring to our climate leadership plan, which is an excellent opportunity for me to talk about the fact that today in Washington the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of the United States are talking about implementing a plan which is in fact a complete and total replication of the plan developed here in Alberta by industry, by energy leaders, by environmental groups under this government's leadership. It is something of which this government and all Albertans should be very proud.

### Government Caucus Calgary Office

**Mr. Nixon:** Madam Speaker, today we released information that shows that some time after the need for a by-election in Calgary-Greenway the government set up a secret outreach office in northeast Calgary. This office is staffed by taxpayer funded NDP campaigners and former Leadnow activists. Their actual roles are shady at best. In Ottawa the NDP got in big trouble for just this thing. Simple question for the Premier: was the Premier involved in setting up a secret satellite office in northeast Calgary in the lead-up to the by-election?

**Ms Notley:** You know, Madam Speaker, at a time of serious economic struggles for the people of Alberta throwing poorly researched, mudslinging tactics is a ridiculous use of this opposition's time. You know what? This office was so secret that it's on a government of Alberta website, right above the listing for your staff, who apparently are also secret to you.

2:00

**Mr. Nixon:** Orange is clearly the new blue, Madam Speaker.

In the Members' Services Committee a week ago I asked about this office. The answers we got made it seem like this office didn't exist. In committee the answers caused the Speaker to declare that this office didn't exist. The chief government whip looked mighty relieved. But this office does exist; we've been there. Will the Premier tell us what sort of public outreach can be done with such a secret office, and if nothing is wrong, why hide it?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I've just noted, we haven't hid it. But, you know, I will say this. This is common practice. When the Liberal caucus was the Official Opposition, they actually had a caucus office in Calgary, which is a reasonable thing to do. But you know what? I would suggest that the Wittle Rose might want to think also about having a caucus office in Calgary since they're clearly not spending their money on either spell-check, proofreading, or research.

**Mr. Nixon:** Madam Speaker, when Albertans threw out the previous government, they knew we might get weird economic decisions with the NDP, but we all expected the government to be more honest and ethical than the last one. But what did we get? We got a Premier that is under two ethics investigations, that bans union and corporate donations but attends \$10,000-a-plate union and corporate fundraisers. Now we have secret offices in the neighbourhood of a by-election. Was this what the Premier meant when she said that Albertans deserve a government they can trust?

**Ms Notley:** Madam Speaker, notwithstanding the indignant volume of the last question, I believe that I've answered this question. This issue's not secret. Caucus offices are often in different jurisdictions. I would suggest that it's a good way to reach out to communities where you don't have a whole lot of representation, and I suggest that maybe you consider it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

#### Pipeline Construction

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yesterday at the AUMA breakfast in front of many municipal leaders the Premier boasted about getting some form of agreement with other Premiers on Energy East. While you were in Vancouver, did you manage to meet one-on-one with Premiers Clark and Wall, our closest neighbours and allies, and can you tell Albertans what progress you made with them on getting Alberta's energy to tidewater?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. In fact, meeting with Premier Wall is not really part of the need to get energy to tidewater because he's already onside of that, so that's good. I did have conversations with Premier Clark, and we are going to have additional conversations, as the member probably knows. Some of it was reported already in the media. I think there are some opportunities for us to work with them, and we will continue to do that because it's our view that while Energy East is an important project, I would love to see success and progress with respect to Kinder Morgan as well, and I think there may be some opportunities there.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, it wasn't in the throne speech, but it's interesting when another Premier gets told that they're not important.

Given that just a year ago you, Premier, were against Alberta's pipelines and took a strong position and now you seem to be selling yourself as the champion of pipelines, when you explain this complete turnabout position to other Premiers, how much of a hindrance will your previous position be in securing their co-operation now to access tidewater?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the member opposite knows, my previous position was that the Keystone pipeline was simply going to be another mechanism to sell to the very market

which is now our competitor, so it wasn't necessarily in our best interest. My position with respect to the Gateway pipeline was that with the many, many conditions applied to it, it was just not likely to happen in the near future. My position always had been that Kinder Morgan was an excellent opportunity and should be pursued, and that's always been my position, as with Energy East. Indeed, I believe we have made great progress, and I look forward to making more.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, it appears the Premier is on the road to Damascus.

Later today, Madam Speaker, I will table two media reports from before we had an NDP government. In those reports it indicates that Ontario's Premier gave unconditional support to Energy East. Since then, since we've had an NDP government, the Premier has added conditions. To our Premier: how do you explain to Albertans that you've actually gone backwards on this file since becoming Premier?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I suspect that those previous reports were not actually accurate because that's not the way Ontario had been previously, but they have moved forward. I've had, more importantly, very productive discussions with Premiers across Canada since that time, and the understanding of the need for that pipeline is growing, and it's becoming even more clear as everybody experiences the results of the drop in the price of oil and the results of Alberta struggling. Premiers in every other province are seeing it in their provinces as well, so they're starting to understand more and more the urgency of this issue.

**The Deputy Speaker:** My apologies, hon. members. I just need to confirm. Hon. Premier, you had a document. You will be tabling that in the House?

**Ms Notley:** Oh. Which one? This one?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes. Just a reminder that props are not appropriate, and anything that's brought against would need to be tabled. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

#### Government Policies

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, the budget is delayed again this year, and Albertans are wondering why in this very difficult time the government is waiting to release its plan. Maybe they don't want to hurt their chances in the Greenway by-election. Perhaps they're waiting for the federal budget, or maybe – maybe – it's because they don't want to embarrass their federal cousins at the national NDP convention to be held here in Edmonton the weekend of April 8. Given that last year's budget was delayed to boost the federal NDs' election chances, I think we know why this budget is delayed. To the Premier: will you commit to moving up the release of the budget so Albertans know how your government plans to address the fiscal crisis?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. No. My Minister of Finance has indicated that the budget will be introduced on April 14, and that's when it will be introduced. But I think it's really important to understand that eight of the last 14 years the budget has been introduced and passed after March 30, so that's quite common. It's not an uncommon timing for it to be done this way,

particularly because the federal budget was put back by a week, so we need to get a sense of what's happening there before we finalize the numbers.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. Well, no budget means no solutions. Albertans are hurting and looking for solutions. I happen to have some solutions, and so do our neighbours in Saskatchewan. Premier Brad Wall suggested that tackling the orphaned well problem is a great way to get people back to work and very quickly while solving a big environmental problem. Now, currently Alberta has a backlog of orphan wells that no longer have an owner but still need to be reclaimed. To the Premier: will you add to the orphan well fund to get Albertans with oil field experience back to work while solving a big environmental problem for our province?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. You know, it is interesting, and to be honest, I think there is some merit, personally, to the proposal that was put forward by Premier Wall on that issue. The first thing that, of course, we need to be very, very clear about is that we have a strict polluter-pay policy in Alberta, and we do not want to be subsidizing or somehow watering that down. That being said, we also know that there are a number of abandoned wells where there really is no polluter left, unfortunately, and it may well be the case that in terms of immediate infrastructure investment and immediate ability to get people back to work this is something worthy of consideration.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you for that answer, Madam Premier. That's an encouraging answer, and I hope you follow through on that.

Now, you talked about industry's responsibility to reclaim wells, but the fees already charged burden many producers, especially smaller producers. There are about 705 orphan wells in Alberta, but the orphan well fund only has enough money to reclaim about 40 every year, which means it will take nearly 20 years to clear that backlog. Unfortunately, because of the downturn, the total number of orphan wells is likely to go up. To the Premier again: will you commit to a four-year plan to clear the backlog of orphan wells while service costs are low, fixing the problem and getting Albertans back to work?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. There's no question that this is a very important issue. It's a liability, quite frankly, that has accrued over decades and decades of neglect and inaction, and it's probably not something that can be cleaned up in four years specifically given the current fiscal restraints that we're operating under, but we're very aware that it's a critically important issue. The AER is working with oil and gas producers on this issue. We've asked for advice on it, and we hope to be able to make some important steps forward in the near future.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

## 2:10 Workplace Safety and Employment Standards

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the past year we have seen tragic incidents happen with employees on the job in regard to gas station attendants and convenience store employees. To the Minister of Labour: what action is the government taking to prevent incidents like these happening again?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. These are indeed very tragic situations, and they should be preventable. My heart goes out to the families that have been impacted by injuries and deaths on the job. Workers should be able to go to work, do their job, and come home safely. On March 1 we announced a review of 200 work sites, gas stations, and convenience stores across Alberta by occupational health and safety inspectors, and this review will help inform our next steps.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Minister. Madam Speaker, I think I speak for everyone in the House when I say that the safety of Albertans, especially while at work, needs to be a top priority of this government. Given that every day that goes by without a concrete action from our government is another day we are leaving vulnerable Albertan workers at risk, will the minister commit to introducing worker safety legislation this spring?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Protecting workers and preventing deaths is a top priority for this government. One concrete action that we will be taking immediately is through those 200 work-site inspections. The inspectors are empowered to write orders on the spot, including stop-use and/or stop-work orders or other orders as necessary. We are committed to working with our stakeholders to review the results of this survey and determine the next steps that way.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Minister. Madam Speaker, given that it's been quite some time since Alberta's labour laws have been reviewed and updated, will the minister consider including a thorough review of occupational health and safety and employment standards to reflect the needs of Alberta's most vulnerable workers?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We do want to make sure that Alberta is the best place to come to work in Canada and in the world. That means ensuring that there are good, modern standards in place that are fair for workers as well as for employers. Unfortunately, some of our labour legislation hasn't been reviewed in over a decade, so I am committed to reviewing these laws in a sure-footed way and bringing back to our partners and bringing them to the table so that when we do introduce changes, we can do it properly.

## Chief Adviser on Labour Negotiations

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Madam Speaker, yesterday I asked this government some questions about why they hired one of the AUPE's top negotiators to be their new chief adviser on labour negotiations. The government couldn't help but congratulate themselves on a job well done, to the disbelief of even some of their own supporters. I believe that this is a serious conflict of interest. Albertans believe that this is a serious conflict of interest. The Finance minister himself even hinted to the media that this might in fact be a conflict of interest. Will the Deputy Premier finally admit that this is a conflict of interest?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. A conflict of interest may arise if a person is able to use confidential information from their past employment. In these circumstances a conflict of interest will not arise because Mr. Davediuk will not be in a position to use that confidential information as he won't be at the table for anything that

he was directly involved in before. As well, our government has a code of conduct that governs all of our employees, and we trust that the public service will continue to act impartially.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Given, Madam Speaker, that he's going to be at the same table sitting right across from his former comrades – I'm sure that Mr. Daveiuk is a wonderful person and great negotiator. He might have even served on both sides of the table over his career. But it is unheard of and totally unacceptable for a labour negotiator to move from one side of the same table while negotiations are currently under way one day to the next. Does the Premier . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, we do not have lengthy preambles on the supplementals. Please get to your question.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Given that the Premier needs to recognize that her actions have severely damaged Albertans' confidence that this government will negotiate on the side of taxpayers and not their government-sector allies, will the Premier finally stand up and defend her actions to this House?

**Ms Gray:** As is common in the labour relations world, Mr. Daveiuk has experience on both sides of the table, over 28 years' experience in labour relations and contract negotiation. Those who know him know that he is fair and firm. He is an asset to our team as we go toward reaching fair bargaining with our public-sector employees.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Madam Speaker, given the NDP's plan to have a big union negotiator negotiate big union contracts – he received a big union endorsement yesterday. The brass at the AFL are so terrified of the government's tough new negotiator that they even put out a press release praising the government's new hire. Premier, the big unions love this appointment; they couldn't be happier. The NDP are stacking the deck and laying the groundwork for sham negotiations.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I need to remind you again: no preambles, please.

Go ahead, hon. Minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To bring some experience to this conversation, University of Alberta labour law professor Eric Adams said: it doesn't strike me as illogical to think that somebody who had been working at a high level for the AUPE might be extremely good at negotiating and bargaining with the AUPE, based on that knowledge; switching his orientation and his objectives at the bargaining table from one side to the other is not unheard of and, in fact, can be quite effective.

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

#### Job Creation Tax Credit Program

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just a few short months ago this government sang the praises of their job creation tax credit. According to their own website it was supposed to create 27,000 new jobs and be up and running "as soon as possible after the election to support immediate job creation." I guess 10 months and counting is considered "as soon as possible" on the government side, but I suggest that it is an eternity to unemployed Albertans. To the minister of economic development: how many jobs have directly been created by the job creation tax credit?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. In the last 10 months there's been a significant, continued drop in the global price of oil, which is affecting not only workers and businesses in our province but as well is having a profound impact on communities around the province. Our government is doing our due diligence to ensure that the program we roll out will in fact meet the objectives that we've stated. Unlike the opposition, who would prefer that we just throw things out the door, our government is going to take the time to get it right.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, I hope that we're not waiting for the not quite ready for prime time *Seinfeld* bill to solve problems.

Again to the minister: given that this plan has created no jobs except yours, actually, and according to various reports the information for this program is not available and no one has applied – we all make mistakes – will you admit to this House and, more importantly, to the people of Alberta that this highly touted program has been an abject failure?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Our government has taken action since last fall in providing supports for, especially, our business communities. We've freed up over \$2 billion in capital available through the Alberta Treasury Branches. We've increased their lending limit by \$1.5 billion. As well, we've injected new money into the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, which invests directly in Alberta companies. We've also allocated money from the heritage savings account to be invested through AIMCo in our economy here in Alberta.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Unfortunately, the money that you've been putting out is nothing compared to the money you've scared away.

Given that this program was costed at \$178 million and given that this program was supposed to be fully functional two months ago, one can assume that that money has been spent without any tangible outcomes. So the government either spent money on a program, with absolutely no results, or the government was being disingenuous when it stated that this program would get off the ground . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, that sounds like a preamble to me. Please get to the question.

**Mr. Gotfried:** I was giving it. Given that it has to be one of those, Minister, which is it? Disingenuousness or no results?

2:20

**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Speaker, once again, our government wants to ensure that every dollar that we spend is going toward the outcomes and objectives that we've laid out. We want to work with businesses, municipalities, and industry to ensure that our programs are supporting them and are in fact creating and supporting the job creators. Our government is taking the time to do our due diligence to ensure that every dollar spent is well spent and will achieve those outcomes.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

### Economic Development

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As those of us in this House know, the Minister of Economic Development is new. I'm also the new shadow minister for this portfolio, and I continue to learn what the duties and abilities of the minister are. My question today to the minister is: does he feel that his ministry has the ability to create partnerships that support entrepreneurship and help businesses to grow and succeed?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll thank the hon. member for his question. Absolutely. The purpose in creating my ministry was for a number of things when the Premier created my ministry last fall, not only to work with the private sector, those that are the job creators, entrepreneurs, and businesses, but to look at ways to set the right conditions in order to attract investment and to provide assistance, again, through the \$2 billion that we've allocated over the fall through ATB, AEC, and AIMCo. As well, Madam Speaker, many of those in the business community have said that they not only need access to capital; they also need mentorship and support.

**Mr. Panda:** Excellent, minister. I'm glad to hear that those in the department have the ability to help Albertans.

Given that jobs are a key concern for tens of thousands of Albertans, does the minister also have the ability to help working people upgrade their skills, secure employment, and increase the development and production of Alberta innovations?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I don't think 35 seconds will be long enough to get into many of these. In addition to looking at ways to improve and enhance our innovation system in order to encourage start-ups, encourage Albertans to go and start a business, we're also looking at ways to help businesses grow, whether it's moving from small to medium size, those that are of medium size being export ready. Preparing them to help expand their markets is a critical part of my ministry. You know, quite frankly, I think there's incredible opportunity within our province. Training and apprenticeship is another avenue that . . .

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, minister. I'm glad to hear that you feel you're empowered to create jobs.

Given the fact that I just read out phrases from the minister's Bill 1, that has as much information as the ingredients list on a box of Shredded Wheat, and our clients' criteria that he just acknowledged are part of his job, why doesn't the minister get to work and do what he was appointed to do instead of waiting for this useless legislation to be passed?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I think "useless legislation" is quite offensive, and I think the private sector will find that quite offensive where our government is taking action on partnering with the private sector to create jobs.

Quite frankly, Bill 1, again, provides a framework for jobs, investment, and diversification. Already Bill 1 is being praised province-wide. The fact is that not only municipal leaders but others as well want to see that the government is in a position to be nimble, to act quickly, to adapt, and to support the very sectors that create jobs.

### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. Taylor:** Madam Speaker, the NDP's ideological agenda is costing Albertans. Its \$3 billion carbon tax will discourage investment and destabilize communities. This week TransCanada cancelled contracts with Alberta power plants because of the NDP's carbon taxes, and in my riding Enmax refused to renew the Battle River plant's contracts for the same reason. These cancellations kill job security in rural Alberta. This government promised an adjustment program. When will the minister take real action to help communities?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question. You know, the fact of the matter is that 12 of the 18 coal-fired electricity plants that we have here in Alberta were scheduled for decommissioning under the federal coal regulations, and the reason for that was their health effects. Those were Stephen Harper's federal coal regulations. The only difference between the Harper federal coal regulation plan and the Notley provincial coal regulation plan post-2030 is that there will be adjustment in those communities, and no one will be left behind by this government, which was not the case when the Official Opposition leader was in government federally.

**Mr. Taylor:** Given that rural communities are looking for hope and a government that will stand up for them and given that these jobs are not just statistics, empty words won't help. Over 20 per cent of Forestburg works at the plant and the mine, and now these people face uncertain futures, which the NDP can't blame on low oil prices. Can the Minister of Energy explain: why didn't the NDP think of the human cost before deciding to forge ahead with their job-killing carbon tax?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Madam Speaker, the plants at Forestburg and Hanna were scheduled for decommissioning under the previous federal government's coal regulations, which were passed for reasons of safeguarding health for the very young and the very old. The fact of the matter is that we have made a commitment to coal communities, which we will have more details about in and around the budget. Finally, I might just add a little bon mot from Mr. Preston Manning, who observed that the carbon tax involves less interference by governments in the marketplace than a cap-and-trade approach. I wonder if maybe that came out over breakfast meetings and some tips were given.

**Mr. Taylor:** I'll be looking forward to the details.

Given that coal-powered industries are the backbone of communities like Forestburg and given that by killing key industries, the government will kill whole communities like Forestburg and Hanna and that the cancellation of these contracts will cost Albertans an extra \$500 million a year for power, can the minister explain: why does the NDP insist on pushing through risky, ideological policies that will drive up power costs, decimate rural Alberta, and turn our communities into ghost towns?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. First I might observe that this language around killing communities is quite overblown and does not befit the honour of this House. Having said that, we are committed to a thoughtful engagement with communities who are affected by these coal-fired shutdowns,



whether it was under Stephen Harper's federal coal regulations or our post-2030 plan. If the hon. member is so concerned, then perhaps he should bring up the Stephen Harper coal-fired regulations, supported by his boss, that left those communities with nothing.

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

### Public and Police Officer Safety

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. One year ago Shawn Rehn, a chronic offender who was out on bail, shot and killed Constable Wynn and injured Auxiliary Constable Bond. A report on this tragic fatality prompted a review of Alberta's bail hearing system. I was pleased to meet with the Justice minister to offer my input as a former Calgary police sergeant who had been involved with the 2009 task force that resulted in changes to the bail process. To the Justice minister: given that you expected to have the report by the end of February and it is now March, do you have the report, and if you do, will you commit to immediately releasing it?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for the absolutely critical question. Well, of course, this government committed to do a review of the bail process because we felt it was incredibly important to be sure to balance both officer safety, on one hand, and the rights of individuals brought into conflict with the justice system, on the other hand. As a result, we put in place a process that's taken some time to move forward, and we will be examining the recommendations that have come forward so that we can move forward in a careful and prudent way because these interests are so fundamental.

2:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again to the Justice minister: given that the purpose of the bail hearing review was to offer recommendations for improving the system for the sake of public safety and given that the quicker you release the report and act on its recommendations, the more likely you are to protect the public and the police, when will you receive the report, and when you do, will you immediately implement its recommendations to ensure a tragedy like the one that occurred in St. Albert does not happen again? Why the delay, Minister?

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, it is because these interests are so fundamental and so important and because the safety of our front-line workers and our public is so important to us that we're going to take the time we need to ensure that we understand what the recommendations are and what the best way to move forward is to implement those while safeguarding the rights of offenders.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that a workplace investigation into the shooting found that the RCMP breached federal health and safety rules because the officers' radios could not transmit from inside the casino building and given that other Alberta police services also face radio transmission problems, which can put officers and members of the public at risk – communication is key in these situations, Minister

– what measures have you taken to ensure that all police services in Alberta are able to fully rely on their radios?

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, the safety of our front-line officers is of paramount importance to this government. All people should be able to go to work and return home safely. The government is in the process of moving forward on the Alberta first responder radio communications system, which is slated to start coming online later this year, and as services transition onto that radio communications service, those communications should be improved.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

### PDD Service Consultation

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Members of my constituency in Calgary-Currie, particularly those who are members of or advocate for the disability community, are interested in what the government is doing to ensure that persons with developmental disabilities can live and thrive in their communities with dignity. I was pleased to see that the PDD standards committee recently held public consultations in Westlock; Grande Prairie; Edmonton; Calgary, which I attended and was well attended; Red Deer; Lethbridge; Brooks; and today in Fort McMurray. Through you, Madam Speaker, could the hon. Minister of Human Services please provide an update on the status of these consultations?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I share Albertans' concerns for the safety of persons with developmental disabilities in their homes and in our communities. I believe that the people are better judges of their problems, and that's why we established that committee and engagement process on these complex issues, to seek direction from the persons with disabilities, their families, and the agencies serving them. So far 700 Albertans have participated in those sessions.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that update. I'm glad to hear that the government is engaging in thoughtful consultation with the disability community. Given that persons with developmental disabilities may face mobility challenges, what is the government doing to ensure that these consultations are accessible to everyone who wishes to share their ideas and solutions?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Member, for raising this important concern. Our government is absolutely committed to ensuring that all members of the disability community who wish to participate have the opportunity to participate. Aside from these face-to-face forums, we have also set up an online portal where so far we have received around 700 submissions. I would encourage all Albertans to weigh in. The cut-off date for that is March 13.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that many Albertans, including the constituents who have brought this issue forward to my office, will be eager to hear the results of these consultations, could the minister please provide an update on what the next steps for this consultation will be?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Today is the last session. As we speak, it's going on in Fort McMurray, and then the online submission date, as I said previously, is March 13. Following that, I will be receiving a report from the committee, and that report, essentially, will determine the next step and inform our future direction.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

*(continued)*

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. With the accelerated closure of coal-fired plants and the subsequent cancellation of power contracts this government's environmental policy is running the risk of turning communities like Hanna into an economic wasteland. It has already put hundreds out of work, and it will cost consumers millions of dollars, not including the human cost. Will this government do the right thing and reconsider its plan to accelerate the phase-out of coal?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate the hon. member's question. I actually had a conversation with AUMA earlier today, talking about communities that are affected by the phase-out of coal and that our government and my ministry are taking the lead on working with not only our municipal leaders but as well with workers and their families and looking for opportunities for them, whether it's through transition, identifying strengths in their communities and ways that our government can help support a transition.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Madam Speaker. Since the government is blaming the low oil prices for job losses when clearly their risky ideas are putting people out of work, the hundreds of job losses in the Hanna district will rest squarely on their shoulders. To the minister: what is your specific plan to ensure those who lose work because of your risky ideas land on their feet?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think, first of all, I need to clarify the fact that 12 out of our 18 coal-fired facilities would be phased out because of a federal regulation. It had nothing to do with our government. But I'll tell you one thing that differentiates us from the other side of the House. The previous government, the PC government, here in Alberta had no plan – had no plan – to support the communities where the existing facilities are to help them transition. Our government is looking at working with communities around all 18 of the facilities. We have committed to that. I have

made that commitment not only to municipal leaders but to labour leaders and to those communities.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Madam Speaker. Minister, since your economic policies simply don't add up – they're hurting our communities and their economic potential – will the minister table the specific scientific research upon which these policies are based?

**Ms Phillips:** It's quite interesting that I'm going to have to rise in this House and explain the science of climate change to an opposition caucus, half a dozen of whom ran on a platform of rejecting the science. To further have to explain the science of NOx and SOx in addition to GHGs, nitrous oxide, and sulphur oxide, Madam Speaker, and then to have to explain the health effects of coal-fired electricity to this opposition caucus is a little bit rich when Albertans already understand the science of climate change. They already understand the health effects of coal-fired electricity.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

### Coal Strategy

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm encouraged to see the government follow through on the Progressive Conservative national energy strategy and our climate change framework. What's puzzling, though: the NDP climate action plan released in November spoke of the immediate need to phase out all coal-fired electricity in this province. However, the throne speech reads "a phase-out of emissions from coal power generation, reducing pollution," not a phase-out of coal-fired plants. An important distinction, one would think. To the environment minister: did the throne speech mistakenly avoid stating your government's position on coal, and/or are you stepping away from your NDP climate change plan?

2:40

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for his thoughtful interventions on this matter. I don't have to explain the science to his caucus. It's perhaps why they can't seem to get together.

First of all, I'm sorry, but it's not a PC plan. I have in front of me an op-ed written by Murray Edwards and Brian Ferguson of Cenovus and CNRL that says, "the plan reflects a fundamental shift, acknowledging that polarization and conflict is not constructive," which is, of course, the approach of the Official Opposition.

Now, on this matter of the coal-fired emissions, Madam Speaker, we have said that our quarrel is with the emissions and not the electrons. If there are ways to ensure that there are no emissions, we will look at them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, that's encouraging because it is clear within the industry, including renewables, that there should be a healthy mix of our energy.

To the Energy minister: given that our coal is sold and exported for other purposes such as metallurgy, can you share with Albertans that you haven't completely vilified coal, its uses, and its importance to Alberta's finances?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Yeah, for sure. Thank you, Madam Speaker and the hon. member. Metallurgic coal is not included in the coal strategy. It is still being sold to any of our customers, so that one is not in. Metallurgic coal is still vital in the manufacturing industries. That is not included.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We've heard lots today about the TransCanada decision to abandon multiple power purchase agreements. Whatever the government's position is, perceived or real, it's important to understand. To the government, the question to the same minister: what specific incentives is this government planning to afford power providers, including those in the renewable sector, to ensure the stability of our electricity system, and how much will it cost Albertans if you can't provide that stability?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you for the question. Of course, the climate leadership plan outlined a competitive bid process for renewable energy, and we'll have more to say about that through the budget and through consultations with industry through 2016, Madam Speaker, because of course the carbon levy does not take effect until 2017. So we've given ourselves some time to engage thoughtfully on this matter. I thank the hon. member for the question. I will be pleased to update the House on how we are structuring those, likely through budget and also through the fall.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. minister, you had a quote there. Just a reminder that we would like that tabled; your soonest . . .

**Ms Phillips:** Oh, sure. It was in the newspaper.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

### Members' Statements (continued)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Mental Health Review Report

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. At some points in life every Albertan is touched by mental illness and addiction. Released last month, the Alberta report on addictions and mental health highlights the system changes which are critically needed to reduce wait times, improve quality care, and reduce the cost of our current systems of care. There are many concerns that the report does not focus on well-recognized underfunding for mental illness beds and the important role of psychiatrists. Child and adult psychiatrists do play a vital role with severe mental illness along with teams of supporting professionals. However, it's clear that the great majority of mental health and addictions issues could and should be handled by other professionals, including psychologists, family physicians, and their teams.

Furthermore, to improve patient outcomes, there must be a shift of resources upstream into prevention efforts with individuals, families, and communities at risk. Without a dramatic shift in the planning and allocation of resources to identify and reduce risk factors earlier and prevent breakdown, the human and financial toll will continue to rise in Alberta. Alberta Health and the new health board must take leadership and also provide a new planning partnership that includes education, human services, housing, and police.

Two questions must lead the transformation this report calls for. First, how do Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services lead a dramatic change within a massive and entrenched top-down culture let alone include other ministries in a new collaborative planning process? Moving across silos, including critical expertise from the front lines and shifting more resources to prevention, will take extraordinary and courageous leadership. Historic communications difficulties and distrust must be confronted if a new culture of respect is to develop both within Health and across the other ministries.

Second question: how do the primary care networks step up to a larger role as the mental health home for the 1 in 5 people who need ongoing treatment-based, team-based care to be well? Again, Health must take bold leadership with the doctors. The evidence is clear. We can prevent much suffering and death and save millions of dollars annually, but transformative leadership is essential to co-create the patient-centred, team-based preventive care that we urgently need.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### University of Alberta Human Rights Lectureship

**Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Every year the University of Alberta hosts the Visiting Lectureship in Human Rights. This event is envisioned as one of the pre-eminent annual events there at the university and is part of Equity Diversity Inclusion Week. Individuals and organizations that have made an outstanding contribution in the field of human rights and human rights protection are invited to share experiences with students and the public. I was honoured to be part of this team when I worked at the U of A.

Every year this program intends to offer the people of Alberta a good way of celebrating the commitments we undertook as signatories of the United Nations declaration of human rights and to support and nurture our continuing interest and involvement with human rights issues at home and abroad. The program helps us by providing a safe environment to discuss challenging human rights issues. Faculty and staff get an opportunity to learn, question, and participate in events, thereby shaping the world in which we live. The learnings from this program have helped me to design a human rights related project for young constituents in my beautiful constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie.

This year's Visiting Lectureship in Human Rights will take place on Monday, March 14, at 7 p.m. and will be delivered by Kwame Anthony Appiah, an author, lecturer, and professor of philosophy and law at New York University. His lecture is titled Culture, Identity, and Human Rights. Kwame Anthony Appiah is known for his work on multiculturalism, global citizenship, identity, honour, and religion. He was named as one of *Foreign Policy's* top 100 global thinkers and has taught at famous educational institutions: Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Cornell, Duke, and the University of Ghana. From 2009 to 2012 he served as president of the PEN American Center, the world's oldest human rights organization.

I invite you all to the Visiting Lectureship in Human Rights. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

### Syrian Refugee Resettlement

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since we last met in this Assembly, Calgary has welcomed hundreds of Syrian refugees to our city, and many of them have settled in Calgary-East. I'm so

proud of Calgarians and east Calgarians in particular for being so welcoming and for making a concerted effort to help our new neighbours feel comfortable and safe in their new homes.

Both the Calgary Immigrant Educational Society and the Centre for Newcomers in my riding have added additional English classes to help address new language challenges, and the Centre for Newcomers is also holding employment information sessions in Arabic.

The Syrian Refugee Support Group is a group of over 1,900 Calgarians who have come together to do what they can to welcome refugees to Calgary. They started out by collecting gently used household items in a warehouse to help in furnishing new homes for refugees, but it quickly became much more than that. People met new arrivals at the airport, found Arabic interpreters, helped with resumé writing, and even spent overnight shifts with a sick baby in the hospital while his mom was in surgery.

I was also pleased to attend an event, held by the Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary, welcoming our new Syrian neighbours. It brought together community members and new Syrian families to tell their stories and to meet each other. Around a hundred people attended the event and listened to stories and mingled over food.

There has also been an outpouring of support from everyday people in the neighbourhood, people who have learned that refugee families have moved in next door and took the time to go say hello and ask what they needed. Sometimes this was done via broken sign language, but people went out of their way to take the time to welcome their new neighbours. While there certainly have been some negative incidents and there has been some racism, the events that I have described show that Calgarians are welcoming, friendly, resourceful, and kind. They know that during tough times we are most successful when we help each other.

There will continue to be challenges: housing is a big one; employment in this economy will also be a struggle; children fitting in at a new school. However, I am overwhelmingly encouraged by the work my constituents are doing to ensure that our new neighbours have the best possible start.

2:50

### Medical Procedure Wait Times

**Mr. Barnes:** You may expect to wait in line for a table at your favourite restaurant or wait in line at a supermarket, but waiting months, even years to schedule your medical procedure is something nobody wants. Located just minutes from the Canadian border in northwestern Montana, Kalispell Regional Medical Center offers a wide range of medical and surgical services. Madam Speaker, you may recognize this as a quote, a snippet from one of southern Alberta's biggest radio advertisers.

People cannot access their own system here, and that is a true embarrassment to this government. The 90th percentile benchmark for hip replacement is 182 days. Alberta didn't hit that target even once last year. The south zone, including Medicine Hat, is among the worst in the province. My constituents are waiting close to a year. The benchmark for knee replacements is also 182 days. Province-wide we didn't hit that a single time either. Unfortunately, it won't surprise anyone to hear that we're missing on cataracts, too, while CT scans and MRIs continue to get worse.

Madam Speaker, these are shameful numbers, but please never forget that behind these numbers are people, people who are suffering, people that the system is failing. These are Albertans that can't go to work, costing the economy hundreds of millions in lost productivity. But, again, more importantly, you can't put a price on the lost quality of life and the pain.

Madam Speaker, this government loves to boast about how much borrowed money they're spending. They're noticeably more silent,

though, when it comes to what they've actually accomplished for Alberta patients and their families. When will this government realize that efficiency and effectiveness in health care mean serving patients and not just bragging about dollars? Albertans expect results, not talking points. This is a system in crisis.

We will continue to stand for publicly funded health care that has the patient at the centre, a system that treats Albertans with respect.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

#### Bill 201 Election Recall Act

**Mr. Smith:** Yes. Madam Speaker, it is my great pleasure today to request leave to introduce a bill, the Election Recall Act.

Democracy is an amazing system of government, and the idea that the people could rule, that the wishes of the majority through their elected representatives would guide the Legislature is breathtaking in its scope. That the people through their elected representatives would be responsible for creating the laws under which the citizens would live was at one time regarded as a radical proposition. While we live in a representative form of democracy, I believe that the system of democracy that we practise in Alberta can be made to be even more democratic. We need to increase the accountability of MLAs to their constituents and to reduce the power of party discipline. We need to increase citizen engagement in the democratic process.

So it is my pleasure to request leave to introduce a bill, the Election Recall Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a first time]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

#### Bill 202 Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act

**Ms Luff:** Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce a bill being Bill 202, the Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act.

This is a crucial issue for folks in my riding of Calgary-East and, I believe, for folks all across Alberta, and I look forward to discussion and deliberation with my colleagues in the House.

[Motion carried; Bill 202 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have two tablings today. One is a copy of an article from December 3, 2014, where Premier Wynne supported Energy East without conditions when the PCs were in government.

Also, the required copies of the Alberta Energy Regulator's Report 2013-B: Pipeline Performance in Alberta, which indicates that there were nearly 300,000 pipeline sections approved in Alberta at December 31, 2012.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other tablings? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have two tablings. First of all, I would like to table a flimsy document, a flimsy pamphlet, which is the last available information on what the Wildrose would do with respect to the budget and the capital plan. This document was from their platform before the election, and it shows that they would cut \$9.4 billion out of the capital plan as currently proposed by the government.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, I have here a document showing that the secret government caucus office in Calgary was hiding in plain sight on a government website just above the bullet for the Wildrose members. This document clearly shows that the secret office was in fact not secret at all.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Environment and Parks, a tabling?

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an opinion piece written on February 9 by Murray Edwards and Brian Ferguson – they wrote on behalf of BP Canada, Canadian Natural, Cenovus, Devon, Statoil, Suncor, and Total – in which they articulate that the Alberta climate plan benefited from consultation with a broad range of stakeholders and that it reflects a fundamental shift, acknowledging that polarization and conflict is in fact not constructive.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I just want to say that it was a true pleasure to have no points of order today. Thank you, all.

### Orders of the Day

#### Committee of Supply

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

#### Interim Supply Estimates 2016-17 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

**The Chair:** We are at the point in the rotation where we have a question from the Official Opposition to the minister. You've got five minutes. We only have five minutes left.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Good. Thank you, Madam Chair. My question is: where is the budget? The Finance minister's excuse that other governments fail to get budgets prepared and delivered on time is not an acceptable excuse. Business best practice would have a properly planned and prepared budget in place before the fiscal year begins. The fact that this government has failed to deliver a budget on time is another example of this government's inability to properly plan, prepare, and deliver on what would be normal best practice in the private sector. I would suggest that the Minister of Finance would do well to encourage his department to focus on business best practice and not measure his success by the failures of others.

3:00

Madam Chair, a budget brings certainty to the municipalities and the construction companies that need the work in this construction season. Alberta Transportation is the only department in this interim supply where the capital dollars exceed the expense dollars. Roads and bridges are expensive, but without a transparent list of projects completed and projects ready to go, we don't know what this interim supply is going to be spent on. For me as well as for any other member in this House, a properly delivered budget would

allow me to let my constituents know what they can expect to see get done during this construction season.

Madam Chair, the municipal transportation grant programs allow our municipalities to plan and complete critical infrastructure projects needed in their communities. We know that water and waste-water grants are a huge issue for municipalities, and of the \$173 million in expense how much is directed to municipal water and waste water? As well, how much is directed to the Alberta municipal infrastructure program? How much is directed to the strategic transportation infrastructure program? How much is directed to the green transit incentives program, to municipal transit initiatives, to the municipal water infrastructure grant? How much to the municipal waste-water program? Any money for the water for life program?

Madam Chair, what do I tell my municipal leaders? Do I tell them that they can get ready to start their projects? They have a limited construction season available to them. Good government does not paper over their failures by comparing themselves to other government failures. They call it as it is, a failure of best practice, and they build plans to do better. The failure of not bringing a budget forward on time is not acceptable in the private sector and should not be acceptable here in the public sector. The failure of not bringing a budget forward on time impacts the ability of our stakeholders to properly prepare and plan.

Madam Chair, our taxpayers should not be expected to give the government a blank cheque to spend, a payday loan until a budget is passed. Let's see a real budget and not pass this Band-Aid solution. Let's call this what it is, a failure to bring forward a properly prepared budget on time.

**Mr. Ceci:** I thought I heard the Premier earlier today in question period say that in the last 14 years there have been 18 interim supply bills. [interjection] Eight. Oh, I'm sorry. Eight. You're right. Math is hard sometimes. Eight in the last 14 years. So, you know, the overblown statement of failure this, failure that, failure everything else is just what I said, overblown. There's no accuracy to it if we look at the last 14 years.

I would like to also point out that the Ministry of Finance in less than a year will produce three full budgets. They produced one for the previous government – in March of last year they produced an interim supply – they produced a full budget for the NDP government in October of last year, and they will produce, with our help, another full budget in just a few short weeks. So the men and women who are doing that work know that they have done extraordinary work to deliver on behalf of Albertans every single day. I also want to . . . [A timer sounded]

**The Chair:** The rotation now takes us to the third party. You've got about a minute and a half left.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I had on my watch that actually the time was going to expire, but I do have a question, actually, conveniently, for the Minister of Environment and Parks. I noticed that in the interim supply estimates there was some \$51 million allocated for capital within that, and I'm just curious to know – as you know, Minister, I have a keen interest in Alberta parks and would like to know how that \$51 million in these next two months is going to be allocated.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Yes. Thank you, and thank you for the question. There are some Parks initiatives that are moving forward now that we are in a building season. We are having a look at some of the campgrounds and other facilities through the South Saskatchewan

regional plan, not necessarily this piece, not necessarily the Castle pieces – those are still yet to come – but some of the other pieces around the Kananaskis area. So that is part of it. There will also be some investments in flood recovery and those pieces even within the Parks budget because there's some riparian restoration and other pieces that need to happen. That's what that is about. You know, stay tuned in Budget '16 for further investments in Parks and in our environmental – certainly, watershed management is top priority for us.

Thank you for the question.

**Dr. Starke:** Does any of the anticipated spending, Madam Chair, include improvements to William Watson Lodge?

**Ms Phillips:** There are some William Watson Lodge improvements that are happening right now, hon. member. We'll have a little bit more to say about that fairly soon. I will be happy to extend an invitation to you when that happens.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the time allotted pursuant to Government Motion 8, as agreed to on March 9, 2016, has elapsed, so I now must put the following questions.

#### **Vote on Interim Supply Estimates 2016-17 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund**

Agreed to:  
Support to the Legislative Assembly \$21,000,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Auditor General \$3,500,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Ombudsman \$555,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Chief Electoral Officer \$1,200,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Ethics Commissioner \$195,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner \$768,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate \$2,207,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Office of the Public Interest Commissioner \$206,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Advanced Education  
Expense \$579,334,000  
Capital Investment \$184,713,000  
Financial Transactions \$57,900,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Agricultural and Forestry  
Expense \$304,000,000  
Capital Investment \$2,500,000  
Financial Transactions \$100,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Culture and Tourism  
Expense \$69,000,000  
Capital Investment \$350,000  
Financial Transactions \$150,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**3:10**

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:  
Economic Development and Trade  
Expense \$209,140,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Education

Expense \$728,000,000

Capital Investment \$300,765,000

Financial Transactions \$1,200,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Energy

Expense \$42,000,000

Capital Investment \$902,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Environment and Parks

Expense \$129,379,000

Capital Investment \$51,584,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Executive Council

Expense \$5,969,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Health

Expense \$3,440,716,000

Capital Investment \$3,638,000

Financial Transactions \$7,000,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Human Services

Expense \$780,000,000

Capital Investment \$2,230,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Indigenous Relations

Expense \$11,558,000

Financial Transactions \$8,162,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Infrastructure

Expense \$115,000,000

Capital Investment \$73,000,000

Financial Transactions \$8,440,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Justice and Solicitor General

Expense \$240,190,000

Capital Investment \$16,000,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Labour

Expense \$36,079,000

Capital Investment \$120,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Municipal Affairs

Expense \$265,232,000

Capital Investment \$504,000

Financial Transactions \$61,413,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Seniors and Housing

Expense \$68,224,000

Financial Transactions \$1,666,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Service Alberta	
Expense	\$52,530,000
Capital Investment	\$14,120,000
Financial Transactions	\$1,275,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Status of Women	
Expense	\$1,255,000
Capital Investment	\$8,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Transportation	
Expense	\$173,715,000
Capital Investment	\$212,628,000
Financial Transactions	\$14,781,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Treasury Board and Finance	
Expense	\$25,090,000
Capital Investment	\$746,000
Financial Transactions	\$1,442,000
Transfer from the Lottery Fund	\$362,770,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.  
The committee shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Luff:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again. The following resolutions relating to the 2016-17 interim supply estimates for the general revenue fund for the fiscal period from April 1, 2016, to May 31, 2016, have been approved.

Support to the Legislative Assembly, \$21,000,000; office of the Auditor General, \$3,500,000; office of the Ombudsman, \$555,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$1,200,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, \$195,000; office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$768,000; office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$2,207,000; office of the Public Interest Commissioner, \$206,000.

Advanced Education: expense, \$579,334,000; capital investment, \$184,713,000; financial transactions, \$57,900,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$304,000,000; capital investment, \$2,500,000; financial transactions, \$100,000.

Culture and Tourism: expense, \$69,000,000; capital investment, \$350,000; financial transactions, \$150,000.

Economic Development and Trade: expense, \$209,140,000.

Education: expense, \$728,000,000; capital investment, \$300,765,000; financial transactions, \$1,200,000.

Energy: expense, \$42,000,000; capital investment, \$902,000.

Environment and Parks: expense, \$129,379,000; capital investment, \$51,584,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$5,969,000.

Health: expense, \$3,440,716,000; capital investment, \$3,638,000; financial transactions, \$7,000,000.

**3:20**

Human Services: expense, \$780,000,000; capital investment, \$2,230,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$11,558,000; financial transactions, \$8,162,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$115,000,000; capital investment, \$73,000,000; financial transactions, \$8,440,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$240,190,000; capital investment, \$16,000,000.

Labour: expense, \$36,079,000; capital investment, \$120,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$265,232,000; capital investment, \$504,000; financial transactions, \$61,413,000.

Seniors and Housing: expense, \$68,224,000; financial transactions, \$1,666,000.

Service Alberta: expense, \$52,530,000; capital investment, \$14,120,000; financial transactions, \$1,275,000.

Status of Women: expense, \$1,255,000; capital investment, \$8,000.

Transportation: expense, \$173,715,000; capital investment, \$212,628,000; financial transactions, \$14,781,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$25,090,000; capital investment, \$746,000; financial transactions, \$1,442,000; transfer from the lottery fund, \$362,770,000.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Those opposed? So ordered.

I would like to alert hon. members that Standing Order 61(3) provides that upon the Assembly concurring in the report by the Committee of Supply, the Assembly immediately reverts to Introduction of Bills for the introduction of the appropriation bill.

## Introduction of Bills (reversion)

### Bill 2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 2, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a first time]



### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Debate adjourned March 9: Ms Luff speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-East, you still had a few minutes left. Did you wish to use the time?

**Ms Luff:** No. Thank you. I cede my time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The next member I have on my list is the hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise in this House to speak in support of the Speech from the Throne, and I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you a little about the constituency I represent, my personal journey, why I'm so proud to be a part of this government caucus, and how our policies are going to help those who elected me.

I'd like to begin by recognizing the visitors that I introduced earlier and their stamina in still being here at this point to hear this speech. It means a great deal to me, so thank you. They certainly have played an important role in inspiring me to enter partisan politics and supporting me personally when I decided to do so, whether it be through contributions, door-knocking, helping put up hundreds of signs, all of the above. And, of course, they are Ray Martin, Raj Pannu, Alex McEachern, and Reg Basken. All of these men are my godfathers in the NDP as well as many others that I will mention down the road.

I also had asked Starr Curry to be here. Starr is the president of our women's caucus and has made it her primary volunteer duty to make sure that we get women to run for the NDP and has had that task as a key charge of hers since the early 1980s. Certainly, I really appreciate her support of myself and other women candidates in our party and making that a priority going forward.

I also want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the people of Edmonton-Glenora, who elected me last May. Edmonton-Glenora is a dynamic and diverse constituency which includes the neighbourhoods of Westmount, Inglewood – my home neighbourhood – Prince Charles, Sherbrooke, Dovercourt, Woodcroft, North Glenora, Glenora, Grovenor, McQueen, High Park, Canora, Britannia Youngstown, and Mayfield. We are home to people who rent and who own, those who are indigenous and multigenerational Canadians as well as many newcomers who have recently arrived as part of the Syrian refugee initiative.

We are employers and employees, students and teachers, pregnant and parenting teen moms who live in the Brentwood homes, who are supported by the Terra Centre, seniors who live in lodges like McQueen Place, operated by the Greater Edmonton Foundation, working families who are proud to send their children to well-supported schools. We also have three business revitalization zones – 124th Street, Inglewood, and Stony Plain Road – as individuals who are concerned about how the low price of oil is impacting our economy, their livelihoods, and the livelihoods of each other.

We also have many dynamic businesses and cultural and service centres, including the Telus World of Science; small businesses like the Remedy Cafe, Studio Bloom, and the Duchess Bake Shop; big businesses like Safeway and Home Depot; the Woodcroft public library; Jasper Place Health and Wellness; Government House; the Woodcroft public health centre; the Peter Hemingway Fitness and Leisure Centre; the amazing art gallery district along 124th Street; and many top-notch schools that work to help children reach their full potential each and every day.

I was overcome with gratitude by the support that Edmonton-Glenora showed me in May, and I am devoted to serving them to the absolute best of my ability. They told us in May that love is better than fear and that a welcoming and inclusive world is one that they want to continue to build. They told us to support jobs, to support families, to be a government that operates with the public and the citizens of Alberta always top of mind.

I'm proud of my Alberta roots, growing up in the rural communities of Altario, Castor, and Kinuso. My parents were faithful public servants, a teacher and a principal. They instilled a sense of service, a love of learning, and a pride of public education. You won't be surprised to hear that my father did not encourage me to follow his career pathway. As a principal during the deep cuts of the Klein era my dad had to make tough decisions that resulted in staff members being laid off, class sizes increasing, less one-on-one support for students who were falling behind, and he even went so far as to take every other light bulb out of our school.

So when I asked my dad for career advice, he discouraged me from entering teaching because both he and my mom felt incredibly disrespected by that government of the day, and their reward for making very tough decisions, as I just mentioned, was a 5 per cent pay cut to both of them. He told me that if we lived in another province, he might suggest teaching, but Alberta needed macro change before it would be a profession that he would want his daughter to work in. It may not surprise the hon. members in this Assembly that I'm stubborn, however, and that I did follow my own heart and chose to pursue education and a teaching career. I'm so proud that I chose to do so, having an undergraduate and a graduate degree, both from the University of Alberta.

While I was completing my M.Ed., I had the pleasure of getting to know the hon. Raj Pannu. My parents had always told me to work hard and ask people that I respect for advice, so I did just that. As I mentioned earlier, Dr. Pannu recommended that I get involved in politics as soon as possible. I took that as an endorsement for applying for a job and a reference. So I heeded his advice, and I applied for a researcher position at the NDP caucus. Madam Speaker, this was the beginning of my beginning. I had the honour of working for Raj Pannu, Ray Martin, the current Education minister, and our Government House Leader as well as our Premier. Every one of them has made a significant contribution to the people of Alberta through their public service and has supported me personally along my political path, and I am forever grateful.

I am in awe of the opportunity that the constituents of Edmonton-Glenora have provided by allowing me to participate in this Assembly as their representative in creating macro change, that my parents spoke of Alberta needing. Today I'm part of a team that is committed to making tomorrow better than yesterday.

3:30

We know that it is not an easy goal in a province that is very dependent on one industry. We are so fortunate to have a strong oil and gas base, but with price volatility and today's low oil prices, it has never been more important to diversify our economy and to stabilize our public sector so that families can count on the public health care system, that we are so proud of as Albertans, to be there

when we need it, to count on our schools, to fund growth, to ensure that children get the very best start in life, to ensure that everyone here pays their fair share to support our province, our home, as we weather this economic downturn. Albertans are resilient, determined, and we have each other's backs. I have no illusions about how tough things are right now in Alberta. Alberta families know the challenges that lie ahead for themselves and for our government.

But while the choices government makes might be easy in the boom times, the choices government makes when Albertans are hurting are even more important. While government strives to diversify and strengthen our economy to ensure that future Albertans are less vulnerable to drops in the price of oil, while our government invests in job creation and protecting Albertans from exploitative payday lenders, while our government invests in cleaner and stronger energy futures, while our government improves public oversight and stewardship of services and encourages democratic renewal, there is one message that needs to be delivered to Albertans today. Know that I am here to work for you, that our government is here to work for you.

I will be working for you because I will be working for my friends: friends in Kinuso, who are working hard on the farm; friends that I worked with at the university, who continue to serve their students and are so relieved that we haven't seen drastic cuts in a volatile budget cycle like they've lived through so many times before; my friends on the school board like Ray Martin, who is here today, who have many times heard commitments to stable, predictable funding, but we haven't realized them yet. Well, not until last May, Madam Speaker.

Last May the people of Alberta spoke loudly. They had a choice. They had a choice between reliving the life that we lived two decades ago, the one that caused my family so much anxiety and so many other families in Alberta so much anxiety, the reality that we've continued to allow for deferred maintenance to increase throughout the province. We heard that from both sides of the House, how devastating it is that we've got buildings that aren't in the best condition, that our children deserve better, that our hospitals deserve better, and it's true. The only way to get through this is to continue to invest in each other and support each other.

So I'll be working for the kids, working for the teachers that they learn from every day, working for the nurses and doctors their moms and dads depend on to keep their families healthy. I'll be working for my mom, who first taught me what a privilege and responsibility it is to serve the public, a lesson I take to heart every day in this province, and for my dad's memory, who I think would be very proud of me today.

I want to say thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to share my story today and so much gratitude to the people of Edmonton-Glenora for allowing me the honour to serve as their MLA.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

**Mr. Connolly:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for your very emotional speech. As some of you may know, my mother was also a teacher back in the '90s and before that, even, when there were drastic cuts. I remember being in elementary school, and I think I had a parent-teacher interview in grade 3 or 4, and I expressed my wish to also be a teacher. Both my teacher and my mother said: no, there's no money in that; you should do other things. I was still planning on being a teacher, but sometimes life gets ahead of you, and your plans change on a whim.

I would just like to ask the hon. minister what she – I'd like her to kind of explain a bit more about how the teaching profession has really influenced her life and her ministry and her job now.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. What a lovely opportunity. Certainly, I think that the skills that one acquires in an education degree serve you well whether you choose to pursue the classroom or not. I think that investing in postsecondary is always a worthwhile investment, and I have to say that the skills that you acquire even in something that's focused on a very specific job like teacher, I think, are transferable to lots of other sectors.

Actually, I remember on my first day of sociology of education class the professor saying, "Welcome to pre real estate," and that studies had shown that about 10 years into their career as many teachers would be selling real estate as would be practising teachers. I thought that was quite interesting. I think it speaks to the types of skills that you can acquire.

I also think it spoke to some of the realities of the classroom and the pressures that teachers are facing on a daily basis and how those first five years, in particular, can be a real struggle. That's one of the reasons why I'm so proud that we have a government that invested in growth, that invested in supporting front-line education and classroom services. It's hard enough when you're walking into a classroom for the first time with 30 students, but the idea of there being 40 students there was very scary, not just to those new teachers but to the parents of those children in those classrooms. That's one of the reasons why I'm very proud that we worked immediately to restore the funding to education to reverse the decision that had been made by the previous government.

So those are some of my experiences. I know we have many people in this Chamber who have been trained as teachers and as farmers and as lawyers and other professions, and I just think that investment in postsecondary is so fundamental to pursuing a variety of opportunities in life. I'm very grateful that my parents, you know, encouraged me to study and supported me even when I didn't follow my father's direct advice.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will call on the next speaker. The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today in response to the Speech from the Throne by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor and to take this opportunity to speak to the experiences and values that brought me to stand for election in the fine constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. I have heartfelt gratitude to the residents of Edmonton-Rutherford for their support of my candidacy and for setting the record in the election for the greatest improvement in percentage vote for any party in a single riding in the spring election. I intend to honour your faith in me through hard work and to ensure that the values and policies you supported will be reflected in the work of this New Democrat led government.

Thank you to all the members of this House for electing me to the position of Deputy Chair of Committees earlier in the year. I believe that my time in that position provided me with learnings that will assist me in my role as MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford. I would also like to thank the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker for all their support and kindness toward me during my time as Deputy Chair of Committees. I finally would like to congratulate the Member for Edmonton-Manning for her interesting election to the

role. I know she will perform her duties to the best traditions of honour and impartiality in this House.

I come to this Legislature from a 34-year career as a social worker in the city of Edmonton. That work has inextricably led to my journey to this House. But before I speak to how the values of that profession and my experience with thousands of Albertans seeking to improve their lives has shaped the work I intend to pursue in my role in this House, I would like to tell you about the family that shaped me in my growing years and the family that has sustained me with love and affection for the last 56 years.

My parents came to this great city in 1954 from Saskatoon, where my father had earned both his bachelor of arts and his law degree and my mother had earned a bachelor of arts and subsequently a bachelor of social work from the University of Manitoba. Once they came to Alberta, they adopted their new province with a zeal that was breathtaking. They raised seven children, all of whom went on to university, earning 15 degrees among them.

3:40

My father served on the Edmonton Catholic school board and unsuccessfully ran for the provincial Liberal Party in 1967. He was appointed a judge of the district court of northern Alberta in 1973, the district court of Alberta in 1975, the Supreme Court of the Yukon in 1978, the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories in 1979, and from 1979 to 2003 was a justice of the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta.

My mother, who completed a master's of social work degree from the University of Calgary after raising all seven children, served as the chair of the MacEwan University department of social work and has received numerous awards, including the YWCA women of distinction and an honorary doctorate from St. Stephen's College at the University of Alberta for her work on more than 20 boards and commissions in the city of Edmonton.

From these two, my loving parents, I received many gifts. I have benefited from all of the bounty that Albertans all hope their children will enjoy, but perhaps more importantly they taught me that not everyone was as lucky as me to win the lottery of kind, generous, hard-working parents. Indeed, my father and mother bequeathed to me something much more important than the trappings of my education and career success. They taught me that nothing matters so much as who you are as a person, how you live your life, not acquiring but giving, not being solely concerned with success but finding a way to participate in the injunction to bring justice to this world.

It is said of my family that the children were served politics and Pabulum from the same spoon, much as the young man beside me today. The words and indeed the actions my parents lived by enabled me to see the need to embrace the world with both the open arms and the firm grip of social justice. Taking that lesson to heart, I entered my career of social work with the belief that all people were deserving of the opportunity to achieve, to contribute, and to love but knowing as well that there were many barriers that prevented people from achieving, from contributing, and from loving or being loved.

Fortunately for me, my early career as a child welfare worker for the province of Alberta led me to pursue a master's degree at Wilfrid Laurier University, where I met a wonderful person who would teach me and push me and love me into a deeper understanding of social justice, an understanding of the nature of equal relationships and the role of critical feminist analysis and transforming our exquisite humanness into personal and social transformation: my wife, Kathaleen, who is in the gallery. Together we have raised our children – Antoine, Kate, and Brenndan – and have endeavoured to build upon my parents' gifts of love and

justice in our desire to be a part of the eternal historical movement toward a fair society. Without Kathaleen and my children I would not be here. I would not have the passion in my heart and, apparently, the tears in my eyes and the determination and soul to make this opportunity of being an MLA everything that it should be.

This brings me now to the throne speech, that reminds us that Albertans are an optimistic, entrepreneurial, can-do people and Albertans are community-minded, caring, and neighbourly. Ours is a society of friends. We have each other's backs. We support each other in these times instead of making a bad situation worse. We are people who dream no little dreams, who wish for ourselves only what we desire for all: freedom from poverty, freedom from violence, and freedom from discrimination. We seek reconciliation with our First Peoples, opportunity for our children, and a prosperous, entrepreneurial, diversified economy in which everyone will share. Our expectations are high, and our ability to achieve them is even higher. We have been blessed in this province with exceptional people, unmatched resources, and a political system dedicated to uplifting the whole people.

Reflect for a moment on those words, "uplifting the whole people," spoken by Henry Marshall Tory, the first president of the University of Alberta. He does not say: for the benefit of the fortunate few or for those with a genetic gift of intelligence or good looks or opportunity based on family or race or religion. He reminds us that the focus of whatever we do is the whole people. We have accomplished little if some of us can afford good homes in wonderful communities like Edmonton-Rutherford, but others cannot; if some of us can expect to live healthy lives well into our senior years while others cannot; if some of us reap the benefits of living in the best place in the world, but others cannot.

Now, I know that everyone in this House shares my belief, this belief that what we want for ourselves we also want for others. For the First Session I sat on the side of the House with the members of the opposition, and I've come to respect them for who they are as compassionate men and women, the common values we share, and the obvious fact that they are good people with good hearts, just as I strive to be.

But there is a place where our paths diverge, a place where my 34 years as a social worker have led me to believe some things differently than the members across the way. Simply wanting people to have a share in the benefits of society is not enough. The structures of society have to exist in a manner that invites and, whenever possible, ensures real opportunity and the strengths and resources to enable a true ability to utilize those opportunities. Believing that individuals succeed individually is inconsistent with the life experience of most of us. Every member of this Legislature arrived here not because of their individual effort but because of the contributions of hundreds of others: people who donated significant amounts of money, people who answered phones, people who put up signs, people who knocked on doors and delivered flyers.

Of course, our individual efforts were important, but the greatest MLA could not be an MLA unless the systems and structures of democracy were made available by a community of people with a common purpose. We can celebrate the fact that Alberta is a land rich with opportunity, but we need to understand that the opportunities are not evenly available. When we look at this House, we see only one party with gender parity in candidates and in elected officials. Throughout Canada we see that women represent only 25 to 30 per cent of most Legislatures.

We can choose to believe that women fail to have the individual qualities to get themselves elected, or, more correctly, we can realize that women face a number of barriers that men do not face. Women are met more frequently with behaviours and attitudes

inconsistent with their own way of being. They are less frequently on the minds of decision-makers to be considered for leadership roles, and they face systematic devaluation of their achievements. In social work we call these structural barriers, not barriers intrinsic to the individual but barriers that are ingrained in the order of things around them. Because these barriers exist outside of the individual, they need to be eliminated at the structural level, not at the individual level.

We can achieve gender parity in this House not by hoping somehow that individual women will find the courage to face the odds but by changing those odds, making them even. We know that without government some individuals will do well, and then we can say: "See? The individual succeeds on their own merits." But any analysis will tell you that the success of those individuals isn't random. It isn't based simply on individual merits but on many structural invitations, those factors and the order of things that make success more likely, that invite some people to exceed more frequently than others. We know that you are more likely to attend university if your parents are university educated. We know that you are more likely to save adequately for your retirement if savings are deducted from your paycheque.

Unfortunately, we all know that these structural invitations can be negative ones. We know that if you were raised in poverty, you are more likely to experience periods of poverty in adulthood; if you are anything other than a white male, you are less likely to get elected to the Alberta Legislature. The response to structural problems is structural. We have a healthy nation when we have a systematic universally accessible health care. We have safe working environments when we have systematic worker protections and consistent external inspections. We have equal workforce participation by women when we have affordable, accessible daycare. All of these things are achievable not through isolated individual effort but through social co-operation, a belief in the value of all people, and the creation of societal structures that invite success for everyone.

While some others decry government as an imposition on the citizens of this province, I celebrate government as the fruit of collective community action. I know that I have not succeeded alone, and I know that most people cannot succeed as isolated individuals. I succeed in co-operation with my family, my community of Edmonton-Rutherford, and with the vision and values of the New Democratic government.

3:50

I look forward to a government that understands its role as the voice of common people, not a special-interest group; a government that actively seeks to remove barriers and to increase positive invitations for success; a government that I can believe in with all my heart and soul. To that end, I will dedicate my tenure in this House to those pieces of legislation that make possible the circumstances of success; a focus on a stable, dependable economy without devastating cycles of boom or bust; a focus on establishing a new industry of renewable energy that meets our needs for economic growth while preserving the integrity of our cherished lands, air, and waterways. I will focus on creating those structures that invite the success of our children, that ensure to every extent possible that each child receives the safety and security needed to move forward in the world, where they may find their success in a community among others doing the same thing.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I must thank the hon. minister for that. I was so excited that I just had to jump up. Thank you for sharing that little peek into the history and the journey coming to the Legislature and the motivation and passion that has brought you here.

I was hoping we might have gotten a little peek into what it's been like since taking over the Indigenous Relations ministry. I wonder if you could share that with us.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question. I must say that I feel that having been given the opportunity to serve as the Minister of Indigenous Relations has been an extreme privilege. I'm not sure how else to say it. It is a privilege because I've had the opportunity to travel over this great province, to go to the Blood reserve on the very southern end of the province, to the very north in Paddle Prairie and many places in between. I've had the opportunity to meet the chairs of every one of the Métis settlements in this province. I've had the opportunity to meet perhaps almost two dozen chiefs and community members around the province. I visited almost a dozen communities – Enoch and Alexander and Montana, Samson band – all around this province.

There's something that consistently happens when I go to those places. I am received as an equal, trusted human being, with the expectation that I will respond to them in the same way, as equal, trusted human beings. It's a lesson that they give me every single time. It's a lesson that they invite me to remember. I might have the privilege of being here in this position, in this ministry, which truly, I must tell you, is an extreme privilege, and I am received as a representative of this government, but beyond that, they don't want to know that I have a position; they don't want to know that I'm there because I have these privileges. They want to know that I will understand who they are: human beings who have needs and desires to participate fully in this province.

I can't tell you the number of times that people have said to me: "We want to be fully Albertan. We know that we are treaty people; we know that we are members of the Piikani First Nation or the Cree Nation or the Métis Nation." What they also want me to know is: "We are fully members of the Alberta community, and we want to participate in that. We want to participate in that by raising healthy children who will participate in that. We want to participate in that by being members of the business community and help to grow the industry that we need in this province to ensure the future for our children. We want to participate in that by bringing the special gifts that we have, the understanding of ceremony and protocol and respecting our elders and bringing the values and the traditions that we have built up over the years in this province and sharing those values and traditions with the children who have been gifted to us by the Creator."

All of those lessons have continued to make me self-reflect and understand that I stand here as a representative of a government. I've been given the chance to fulfill a role, but it really isn't about me. What it's really about is every single individual in this province being given the opportunity to participate, being given the opportunity to share what gifts they bring, and to benefit fully and equally from the benefits, the glorious benefits, that we have in this province, one of the most fruitful and exciting and dramatic provinces in this country.

We are being invited by the world to pay attention to the issue of the indigenous people in a way that has not happened in the history of Canada up until this point. We have the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples inviting us to consider the truth that is being spoken around the world through the United Nations about indigenous people being neglected and

oppressed, and it's time to invite them in fully as participants in our society.

We've had the round-table, and I had the privilege to go to Winnipeg to represent this province at the round-table on murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, where the stories are so dramatic and heartfelt and, frankly, just disgusting to have to hear. We're invited to hear a group of people who don't scold us and tell us that we are bad people but who say that their hearts are broken. They want those hearts to be healed, and they want us to be a part of that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I call on the hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today in response to the Speech from the Throne. Like many of my colleagues here, I was disappointed. I was really disappointed by the agenda that this government laid out on Tuesday. At a time when Albertans are looking for hope, the government promises nothing but more of the same, more risky policies that will hurt Albertans. They're hurting. There's more emphasis on ideology and a continued lack of practical, common-sense solutions, more of the government picking winners and losers, and more reasons for Albertans to fear that the government does not in fact have their back at all.

Albertans are worried, and it's no wonder. The Conference Board of Canada is forecasting that every other province in Canada will grow their economy this year while ours will shrink for the second year in a row. We haven't seen an economy like this since the 1980s, and it shows. The Conference Board is also reporting that consumer confidence hit a new low here just in February.

Our province is hurting, and while good governments recognize that in times of economic distress it must do no further harm, this government can't seem to help itself. It claims that it won't make things worse, but the agenda it has set certainly doesn't provide a road map for making things better. The looming threat of this economy is its effect on Alberta jobs. Since the NDP government was elected, 80,000 jobs have been lost – 80,000 people, Albertans – 26,000 of them just in January of this year alone. This government shirks responsibility for their part in this job hemorrhage and lays everything at the feet of low oil prices. Today we heard new messaging with low coal prices.

Well, of course, nobody blames the government for these low prices, but its response to those prices, its ideological policies and risky economic experiments, are indeed making the situation worse. The NDP climate policies, especially their \$3 billion tax grab, are pushing investors away from our province. We have evidence of this from as recently as this week, when TransCanada announced it would cancel its contracts with three Alberta power plants. As a result, over 250 people will lose their jobs in the community of Hanna and face uncertain futures. The community will be devastated. This government has broken their trust and destroyed their job security.

In terms of electricity costs, the hon. Minister of Energy assured us that the impact of these cancelled contracts would be minimal, but today we heard from the former head of Alberta's electricity Balancing Pool that it could cost Alberta consumers an extra \$500 million a year. I say this loudly so that you might hear it.

TransCanada isn't the only one on the run from Alberta. As my colleague from Battle River-Wainwright raised in this House earlier today, over 20 per cent of the town of Forestburg faces the same uncertain future because Enmax has refused to renew the Battle River power station's contract. Why? Because of the NDP job-killing carbon tax.

**4:00**

The cost to Albertans of the NDP government is clearly skyrocketing. These companies are being driven away as a direct result of the government's policies, and these jobs are at risk as a direct result of the risky, ideological agenda. And it's not just towns like Hanna and Forestburg that will be punished by this agenda. Families in my own riding of Airdrie and right across this province will feel the pain and not just in higher electricity costs because this tax won't only kill jobs; it will raise the price of consumer goods and cost the typical Alberta family an extra thousand dollars a year. This is before your additional power costs are factored in. This is at a time when people can least afford it, when tens of thousands of people are out of work. Shameful.

This government's approach to this jobs crisis, that it is helping to create, has only given Albertans more reason for concern. What's most shocking is that despite the fact that this jobs crisis is older than this 10-month-old government, they still haven't done a single thing to help Albertans. Not a single thing. You'd be fired. Its failed job subsidy program has created zero jobs. Not only that, but the government made a mistake even creating this program. With its \$178 million price tag, it's just an example of government waste and ineffectiveness.

The Wildrose is listening to businesses. We've been talking to businesses right across this province. Businesses don't want the NDP's failed subsidy program. They want better business conditions. Alberta currently has the most expensive business tax in western Canada. This is a very simple Google search for you, very easy. We also have the lowest investor confidence right now. The Wildrose proposal to lower the small-business tax rate from 3 per cent down to 2 per cent would not only create a better climate for business investment and job creation, but it would send a message that this government is not the enemy of job creators, like you are now. But this government won't listen to common sense. Instead, they are being driven by their ideology and refusing to present viable solutions to Albertans.

This government would have us believe it is fighting for job creation with the first bill it introduced in this House. This bill is so vague. It proposes no concrete solutions, no specific programs, and no real path to job creation. In fact, it is a glorified three-page mandate letter telling the minister to do his existing job. This is just an insult to the tens of thousands of Albertans that are out of work right now. What's worse is that this minister has to tell us to wait five more weeks for any details because his government still can't put a budget together on time. Albertans are anxious, and they're frustrated, and this bill does nothing to reassure them. The government had a real chance to act in good faith for Albertans with this first bill of the session, a chance to regain some broken trust. Instead, it did make things worse by choosing their ideology over sound policy.

The Wildrose is ready to provide strong, common-sense leadership that stands up for Alberta. We are ready to stand in the gap left by this government's failure to put forward a real plan with a real solution for the job crisis situation. In the coming weeks the Wildrose will release a plan that does propose solutions such as reducing small-business taxes, getting out-of-work Albertans skills upgrades, giving some reasons for our energy sector to regain the confidence that the government is their partner, not their foe, specific solutions that will focus on helping Albertans get back to work.

The other thing Bill 1 intends to do is promote economic diversification. Without any details, this doesn't give anybody any confidence since usually this means the government is picking certain industries or businesses and gambling on them to be the next

big thing. Governments who try this almost always fail, and we've seen it in this province before. Not only are the taxpayers left with the boondoggle, but the rest of the economy is discouraged because there's not a level playing field. Governments shouldn't be in the business of picking the economy's winners and losers. The loser almost always ends up being the taxpayer.

What about fighting for the economy we have already instead of trying to roll a boulder up the hill? This government talks about improving market access at home and abroad, but actions speak louder than words. To date this government has done nothing but act against the interests of our most important sector. Despite the Premier's claims that she wants pipelines, she's refused to support key projects like the Northern Gateway pipeline. Northern Gateway is currently being strangled by the federal government's plan to impose a tanker ban on B.C.'s north coast, a ban that will kill almost 1,500 jobs and the billions of dollars of revenue that the pipeline could have created for Alberta. What has the government done to stand up for these jobs? It has said and done nothing to oppose the tanker ban. Not only that, but when the B.C. government opposed the Trans Mountain expansion, this Premier shrugged it off.

Throughout the recent escalations in Energy East's struggle, the Premier seemed more interested in defending Quebec's decision than she did in standing up for Alberta. Energy East is a no-brainer for those who have eyes to see. Right now eastern Canada imports 86 per cent of its oil from foreign countries. More than 10 per cent of Quebec's oil comes from Saudi Arabia and more than 5 per cent of it comes from Nigeria. These are repressive regimes and no more climate friendly than you would think they were. But how is the NDP government making the case for Alberta pipelines? It tried to secure the social licence by announcing it will saddle our energy industry with a carbon tax that severely damages its competitiveness, but continuing opposition in B.C. and Quebec shows that that bid has clearly failed.

Now, the government is trying to convince Albertans that lip service to pipelines is enough, but we recently saw the Premier's real agenda last month when she secretly participated in a \$10,000-a-plate fundraising event for an extreme antipipeline party. Cousins, I think. Instead of lobbying the federal government forcefully to kill the tanker ban and approve pipelines, she prefers to save her strength, asking the feds for handouts, and to focus her government on preparing to diversify the economy by picking winners and losers.

Well, I would note that Alberta's economy is more diversified today than it has ever been. Here's a history lesson. Pay attention. In 1985 the energy sector made up 36.1 per cent of Alberta's \$66.8 billion GDP. By 2013 it made up only 24.6 per cent of our \$331.9 billion GDP.

This diversity in our economy can be seen in other areas such as agriculture, to which this government's agenda barely gives a passing nod. After losing the trust of thousands of Albertans over the Bill 6 fiasco, this is unacceptable. It reveals just another area where the NDP government has failed to put forward a clear plan. Agriculture has been a way of life for many Albertans for over a hundred years, and it's currently sparing much of southern Alberta from feeling the pain of the economic downturn. Yet the farming and ranching families that have helped build our province are still receiving only begrudging concessions from this NDP government.

In fact, after we pushed this government relentlessly to amend its ill-conceived Bill 6, it is still trying to escape accountability to farmers by making consultation meetings extremely difficult to attend. It has scheduled these consultations right in the middle of one of the busiest seasons for farmers. The months of April and May are calving and planting months, when farmers work around the clock to invest in their livelihood for the year. Hardly an

appropriate time to call them away from that important work. Hardly a good way to regain Albertans' trust.

4:10

This is not a good start to this session, and the NDP of past years would have recognized that. When he was in opposition, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood criticized the previous government for putting forward a throne speech that "would fail ordinary Albertans because it had no economic focus, no plan for real job creation." Well, things have come full circle. This NDP government's first basic throne speech makes the same mistakes it once despised in the previous government. Furthermore, this speech sends a message to Albertans that the NDP government would rather stick it's hand out to the federal government than do the actual work of producing solutions for Albertans.

I don't need to tell the House this: Albertans are proud, and Albertans are fiercely independent. But I will point out that yesterday's speech showed Albertans just how much this government betrays their deeply held values, refuses to stand up for Albertans. Have no fear; Wildrose is here. We will stand up for all Albertans. We are here.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), Calgary-Hawkwood.

**Mr. Connolly:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Airdrie for her speech, but it has given me a number of questions. The member talks about social licence, homelessness, job losses, and a number of other things. However, her party has stated that they will not discuss social issues and that if – God help us – they ever become government, they will not legislate on social issues. So my question for the member is: if they will never legislate on social issues, how do they intend to deal with homelessness, jobs, ministries such as Human Services, Seniors and Housing, Culture and Tourism, every ministry that deals with social issues, including the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Transportation? These are all social issues, and I have no idea how the Wildrose ever intends to govern if they will not legislate on social issues if they ever become government. So how will you legislate on these social issues when you've promised never to legislate on social issues?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. Member for Airdrie wish to respond or make a comment?

**Mrs. Pitt:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Okay. Go ahead.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is certainly interesting to see the member across the way stand up and completely say many untrue statements.

What I would like to ask the member about today – and she touched on this a little bit in her response to the throne speech – is about how her constituents feel about the ethics and accountability of this government across from us. Now, why this applies to the throne speech is that the government has indicated in their throne speech that they will move forward to try to make things more democratic, to make things more ethical, and to do things better than the previous government. That's what they've said in their throne speech. The Member for Airdrie has discussed some of the concerns that she's hearing from her constituents in regard to this. Again – and this is a prime example – what we just saw was a government member step up and say stuff that is completely untrue, and that's disappointing.

But let's talk about some stuff that's going on with this government. Unfortunately, we have a government here that is under ethics investigations yet again for donation problems, and that is the same . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I need to remind you that we can't discuss a matter that's currently under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner.

**Mr. Nixon:** So can I get some clarification on that, Madam Speaker? I can't discuss the current ethics investigation that the government is under, but I can discuss the ones that were done. I'll go there, then, Madam Speaker.

We have a government that's already had to cancel previous fundraisers because they did the same actions, that they railed against, as the other government. We have a Premier – the ethics investigation aside – who's travelling to eastern Canada, raising money for a party that works . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Once again I will remind you that this is a matter under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner and cannot be dealt with.

**Mr. Nixon:** Okay. Thanks, Madam Speaker. How about this? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler brought forward a very reasonable bill in the last sitting, something that was very similar to what the NDP had asked for as well when they were in opposition. This government killed that bill instead of allowing it to go forward. So they stand here and they say, "Hey, we're going to do things different," and they do exactly what they did in the past.

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation on a point of order.

#### Point of Order Question-and-comment Period

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. According to section 29(2)(a) in the standing orders it says:

Subject to clause (b), following each speech on the items in debate referred to in suborder (1), a period not exceeding 5 minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses to each Member's questions and comments.

So the questions or the comments must be relevant to the speech of the previous member, not to the response that was made under 29(2)(a) by another member.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, did you wish to respond to that point of order?

**Mr. Hanson:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think that we're approaching the 4:30 hour, and I think that after the functions of this week, tempers are getting a little bit to the point where a member opposite actually flipped the bird over to our side. Thank you very much. We noticed that. [interjections] My eyes are pretty good.

I'll just end with that response. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would urge all members to respect the traditions of this House and to treat each other with respect while we're in this Chamber.

Yes, I believe the point of order is valid. I was about to remind the hon. member that it needed to be in response to the Member for Airdrie's comments.

You still have a little bit of time if you want to continue.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In response, then, to the Member for Airdrie, who brought up very clearly in her speech concerns that she . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have another point of order. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

#### Point of Order Gestures

**Mr. Connolly:** Sorry. I would just like to clarify that I did not flip the other side off. I made a gesture such as this because I was angry. However, I did not flip you off. If you did perceive it as that, I do apologize. That was not my intention. I was frustrated. I just tried to throw my hand up in the air as a signal of frustration, and I did not try to flip you off.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.  
The hon. member.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Member for Airdrie, who did discuss her concerns about the specific comments about accountability and democratic performance in the throne speech: I'll just ask her how her constituents feel this government is doing so far on that file.

**Mrs. Pitt:** I would love to speak about and address to this House how my constituents are responding to the current climate in which they find themselves. I have people on a daily basis, when I'm in my constituency, that meet with me. They come in with their resumés, and these are extremely well-qualified people. These are pretty heavy taxpayers. They haven't worked in a year. They can't find work. Nobody will hire them. There's nobody that is willing to help.

Constituents in Airdrie, very few that voted for the NDP government, thought: "Oh, man. This is great. We might – we might – have an adequate health care system in our constituency." We don't see it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am honoured and humbled to be speaking to you today in response to the Speech from the Throne. I first ask your indulgence to thank some key individuals and groups for providing me with the support to be able to make this speech today. First and foremost, I must thank my family. My wife, Sarah, has endured two elections and many days of being a single parent to our beautiful and brilliant children, Mehna and Kieran. She is not only the Rock of Gibraltar; she is an amazing partner and mother who has taught me the value of looking beyond the status quo and outside of one's comfort zone for wisdom and knowledge. And she's willing to endure a third election.

I have a brief story about how I knew that I had met my life partner in Sarah. We were riding the C-Train home from work one evening when a young man wearing a turban was being verbally

abused by another passenger. Yes, this still happens, Madam Speaker. Sarah confronted the abuser, delivering a lesson in ethnic diversity, tolerance, compassion, inclusion, and ultimately in humility. This is not the only time that Sarah has inserted herself into a situation such as this, but it was at this moment that I knew I had met the one.

4:20

I would like to thank my mother, Suzanne, who has always been there when we needed her and who taught us that strength is found in the family and about the value and importance of having a strong moral centre, which includes looking out for those less fortunate, not that we were of any financial status. I also want to congratulate my mother on her recent retirement from Canada Post. Now she lives in cottage country in Ontario.

My father, Thomas, who passed away far too early, was the epitome of hard work, and he taught me some amazing values that I hold today and will pass on to my children. I asked my mother how they were able to afford putting my brother and me through all the sports that we played growing up and into our late teens. You know, sometimes you don't know these stories until you ask. She said that they made many sacrifices and that there were times when my father had to work two jobs, unbeknownst to us. It's a shame that he was not able to see me graduate from university and see the important role I have as MLA for Calgary-Klein. He would have been very proud.

I also want to acknowledge my brother Chris, who has been my little brother all his life. While I can only hope I paved a good path for him growing up, I hope he knows that his friendship is immeasurable to me today. I'd also like to thank my in-laws, Cynthia and Chanta Somasundaram, who have been very supportive to me and my family. Cynthia is a teacher in Singapore, and Chanta was an oil and gas engineer in Calgary for many years. Sadly, we lost Chanta this past August, and he is greatly missed.

Of course, Madam Speaker, I want to offer an enduring thank you to the constituents of Calgary-Klein, who supported me and put their trust in me to represent them as their MLA. Calgary-Klein includes the dynamic communities of Thorncliffe, Greenview, North Haven, Highwood, Highland Park, Collingwood, Cambrian Heights, Rosemont, Mount Pleasant, Tuxedo Park, Winston Heights, and, of course, my own community of Capitol Hill.

I used to joke that after being impacted by the floods of 2013, when we lived in Erlton, we were looking to move to a community, any community, that had the name "hill" in it. While this is only partially a joke, we were very pleased to move to this amazing community of Capitol Hill. Capitol Hill has Campus Pre-school, which is the oldest co-operative preschool in Calgary. My daughter also attends there, and my son will attend there as well. This preschool was started by a group of female graduate students at the U of C 50 years ago this year, as a matter of fact, as a means of providing affordable daycare while they attended school. Campus Pre-school continues to operate much the same way that it did 50 years ago, where all the parents rotate volunteering to keep costs down. I will be volunteering there again this Friday myself.

Of course, in Calgary-Klein we have one of Calgary's largest inner-city parks, Confederation park, which my family can access right at the end of our street. It's quite wonderful.

These great communities have very active community associations from which I've learned a great deal about the strengths and challenges of these communities as well as what can be accomplished when people work together. One thing I can say about these communities is that I've never seen them resort to NIMBYism. When new projects are presented, they are thoughtful

about what it means, good or bad, and they are always there to help with advice on these matters.

Calgary-Klein is a diverse constituency that starts in the south along 16th Avenue. It's very urban, with many young families in older communities and residential areas living in new infill side by side with one-room bungalows that have residents that have lived there for 50-plus years. It extends north to the more spread out suburban areas, and it also includes several industrial parks that employ many Calgarians without them having to travel to the outer industrial areas. There is a great diversity in income levels, ethnicity, and backgrounds, from long-time residents to new Canadians, but to attend an event in any of these communities is to witness the strength of the collective.

Madam Speaker, the constituency of Calgary-Klein has seen many changes to its electoral boundaries as the city of Calgary has grown. It is steeped in history, and it's had many significant representatives in its boundaries and significant changes in government representation. Some notable individuals include Ernest Manning, a Social Credit Premier who is still distinguished as being the longest serving Premier as well as the youngest Premier in Alberta's history, at the age of 34, not much older than several of this government's caucus. Perhaps we have a future Premier among some of our younger caucus members.

**An Hon. Member:** For sure.

**Mr. Coolahan:** For sure.

Liberal Leader of the Official Opposition and eventual Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Grant MacEwan also held this seat between 1955 and 1959. There has also been a Dominion Labour Party MLA, Fred White, between 1921 and 1935 and Aylmer Liesemer, who was a Co-operative Commonwealth Federation MLA from 1944 to 1952. Madam Speaker, there have also been a few Progressive Conservative MLAs in this riding since 1971. In fact, it was redistributed and renamed in 2012 after former Premier Klein, which provides me with great delight when I say that I am the first NDP MLA to represent the great constituency of Calgary-Klein.

While the constituents of Calgary-Klein are diverse and resilient and have seen an economic downturn before, what they haven't seen, Madam Speaker, and something I am proud to be a part of is a government that is working through this difficult downturn in the economy in a way that has the least amount of impact on Albertans in need of support right now. This means not cutting front-line services and not reducing jobs that cripple family incomes and reduce their spending capacity at our local businesses and restaurants. Rather, we ask corporations and the wealthy, who have had – and many acknowledge this – many years in which they haven't paid the same as their counterparts in other provinces.

At the same time, Madam Speaker, our government is working to strengthen Alberta's economy, which will help us weather future economic shocks due to sharp drops in oil prices. We are doing this by encouraging investment in Alberta, not only in the oil sector but in other areas that this province has a competitive advantage in such as agriculture, forestry, and tourism and in other areas where we can build new and dynamic industries.

The Alberta petrochemicals diversification program, that was introduced a few weeks ago, is a great initiative to what many have seen as a problem that perpetuates economic slumps in Alberta's oil sands, and that is that we rely too much on the raw materials for our source of revenue. Madam Speaker, the real money is always in the finished product. We only have to look to the west at British Columbia's forest industry and its many years of shipping raw materials and the incredible negative impact that this played on that



industry. The Alberta petrochemicals diversification program will also help with employing those currently employed in the coal industry as the province begins to wean itself away from this form of energy.

Madam Speaker, I believe that we are looking down the road to a new and prosperous future in Alberta's most important sector. I believe that this government is taking Alberta in the direction to truly have the diversified economy that we've always talked about but have never seen come to fruition. I've had several companies in my office over the last year excited to become part of these new initiatives and part of the new energy sector, companies that are not now in the generation business but see the opportunity to diversify their own portfolios and increase the bottom line of their businesses.

Part of this diversity strategy and bolstering the oil sands through the building of future pipelines is to ensure that our products are seen by the rest of the world as produced in a responsible manner. To this end, Madam Speaker, our climate strategy will help put us back on the map as not only a resource-rich province but a leader in thoughtful energy resources that will not only protect the environment for future generations but also prolong the production

capacity of the oil sands to keep Alberta as a world leader in resource extraction.

In addition, Madam Speaker, this government has committed to investing \$34 billion into the capital plan to help build the roads, schools, and other infrastructure that this province needs. This will not only help alleviate the infrastructure deficit that we have, but it will also help to put Albertans back to work while we get on with getting the oil sands back on track with pipelines built and getting our oil to tidewater and new markets.

Madam Speaker, the risky economic experiments are over. The experiment that suggests tax breaks to wealthy corporations and individuals will somehow manifest in the creation of economic and social equality, that experiment has failed, and it's time to move on. There has been too much emphasis on this aspect over the last 30 years, which has created a vacuum for those not fortunate enough to work in these high-paying industries.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned till Monday at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to March 10, 2016**

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

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fallittings.

- 1            Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**  
First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)
  
- 2            Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)
  
- 201        Election Recall Act (Smith)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)
  
- 202        Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 14, 2016

Day 4

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
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Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)

Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Government House Leader  
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

W.J. David McNeil, Clerk	Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### **Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee**

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 14, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Let us reflect. Hon. members, let us be reminded of the great privilege it is to be a servant of the public and the great responsibility that it places upon us. As you will hear in a few minutes, today is Commonwealth Day, and this year's theme is An Inclusive Commonwealth. Let us, each of us, in our own way reflect on this message and on our responsibility to search for ways to increase the inclusivity of our very own institution and indeed all persons across our wonderful province. Hon. members, let us continue to keep that thought in our minds.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark. I would invite all of you to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Commonwealth Day

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, today is in fact Commonwealth Day, and throughout the world our fellow Commonwealth nations will be celebrating with a special message given by Her Majesty the Queen. This year's theme is An Inclusive Commonwealth. Let us use this day to promote the values of tolerance, respect, and understanding amongst the Commonwealth's 2.1 billion citizens. Please note that this message from Her Majesty has been placed on each of your desks for review and for sharing with your constituents.

In honour of today I am pleased to have some members from the Royal Commonwealth Society seated in my gallery to recognize Commonwealth Day. I would ask that our guests rise as I call their names: Lieutenant Commander (Retired) Roy Busby, Dr. John Dugan, Miss Brittany Phillpotts, Mr. Gordon Smith, and Mr. Joe Zasada. Could we give our guests a welcome and appreciation.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly students from Holy Spirit school in my riding. I was delighted to go to the school and present them with a provincial flag and to learn of their original school song. The students are with teachers Kathy Knox, Jenna Bishop, Pat Stanbridge, Cathy Hopcraft, and also two student teachers. I'm delighted to see the student teachers learning their craft so they can become great teachers in the future. The student teachers are Mary Gillis and Baylee Frissell. Would you please

stand up so that the Assembly can give you the customary welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** I'd like to compliment the three or four ministers who have arrived late that they didn't walk between the Speaker and the person who was speaking from the floor. Let that serve as an example for everyone.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you the students from Muriel Martin school today. They're joined by Mrs. Jody Bialowas and Mrs. Susanne Ambrose as well as Mrs. Heather Kerschbaumer. If they would please rise and accept the warm legislative greeting.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three guests visiting from British Columbia: Norah Miner; her 12-year-old son, Andrew Lirag, and nine-year-old daughter, Isabella Lirag. They're here to learn about politics, to observe the political process, and hear something about the law. I would like to ask them to rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. It's my honour first to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two of the founders of SAFQEY, or Safe Accommodations for Queer Edmonton Youth, Carla Segura and Sam Leibel. Carla works with Homeward Trust and the Poundmaker's Lodge. Sam is a social worker with the Alberta government. Together they have partnered with Boyle Street Community Services to secure housing for SAFQEY that will be used to provide shelter and much-needed specialized supports for Edmonton's sexual and gender minority youth. I'll be honoured to speak more of this work in a member's statement later today.

Also here today are five students from the CCI-LEX, Cultural Connections Institute, which teaches English language classes to temporary and permanent residents of Canada. With us here today: Angel Vivas, a petroleum engineer from Venezuela; Weilan Wang, an electrical engineer from China; HaJung Kim, a business owner from South Korea; Praneet McCoy from Thailand, the owner of Ruamit Thai restaurant in Sherwood Park; and Sonal Modi from India. They join us here today with their instructor, Ellen Campbell.

I invite them as well as Carla and Sam to stand and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a wonderful organization from my riding of Edmonton-Decore, the CapitalCare Foundation. My riding of Edmonton-Decore is home to two CapitalCare centres, CapitalCare Dickinsfield and CapitalCare McConnell Place North. Dickinsfield centre has 275 long-term care beds and offers specialized programs for those suffering with dementia, and for young adults who require long-term care McConnell Place North provides 36 supportive living spaces for individuals with dementia. I visited both of these

centres and look forward to spending more time with the wonderful residents in the near future. Visiting us today are Dave Jamieson, Sherry Schaefer, Francine Drisner, and Maureen Flynn. I would ask that they now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**1:40**

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and to the House the student group Alberta Students' Executive Council, here in Edmonton to advocate on behalf of fellow students. They've taken time from their busy lives as scholars and executives to speak with MLAs on issues affecting postsecondary students: ASEC Chair Kristen George; Vice-chair Joshua Bettle; Finance Officer Katie DeRuyck; Executive Director Teresa Currie; vice-president internal for Concordia Students' Association, Kelsea Gillespie; VP academic for SAIT Students' Association, Kimmi Nguyen; vice-president of operations for the students' association at Red Deer College, Luke Neilson; Advocacy Co-ordinator Cameron Dykstra; and from the mental health initiative project, which I've had some significant exposure to and been impressed by, Aala Abdullahi. They're standing. Please give them the warm welcome of the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other members who have a guest that they would wish to introduce?

I see some more students here today. One of the privileges of being in this House, that I know we all share, is the opportunity to see people from literally around the world who join us here. It's really quite our privilege.

Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to rise to introduce to you and through you two guests who are sitting in the members' gallery. Jason Silvert has brought his father, who is visiting from Ontario, here to visit us and see the proceedings in this House. Jason is a constituent of mine, and it's great to see him along with his father, who've come to witness the proceedings today. I wish them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

### Victim Services

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the overwhelming aftermath of crime or tragedy in Alberta people can access support, information, and referral services through our network of victims' services societies. I am proud to say that the first RCMP victims' services society was formed in my constituency of Stony Plain to serve the entire region in 1986. Last year the local unit assisted over 2,600 people in our communities. Trained volunteers, called advocates, provide services for those in need by working with RCMP and various community agencies. They assist victims by helping them to lessen the effect of immediate crisis.

We often think of crime or tragedy as something that happens to other people, but in fact anyone can be a victim of crime. It is a daunting and traumatic event that can cause physical, emotional, and cognitive difficulties.

It is a fact that early intervention always reduces the long-term effects of trauma suffered. Victims' services intervention correlates to victims experiencing increased confidence when dealing with the RCMP.

There is much to be proud of in this made-in-Alberta solution; however, the needs and challenges are growing, and funding resources are limited. An incredible amount of valuable volunteer hours are contributed to make victims' services a success. While the number of crimes has risen from over 58,000 files in 2008-09 to a staggering 71,000 files in 2013-14, funding has been a continual challenge.

I am thankful to see how local communities have come together repeatedly to raise funds for this important issue. It requires dedication and a tremendous amount of time and resources.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February Alberta's unemployment rate jumped to 7.9 per cent, the highest it's been in 20 years. Folks in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills fully understand what's required in these difficult times. When the statistics turn against us, we fight back, finding strength in our numbers. We rely on our friends, our family, our neighbours to help us weather the storm. Our province's greatest strength has always been Albertans. Our faith in one another is what gives us the stability to persevere through any crisis.

Over the past few months I've been gathering input from constituents, including seniors who have seen their fair share of economic downturns. Here's some advice they've shared with me. One says: times are tough, but we can't lose sight of the big picture; spending wildly is not the solution; we need to focus on upgrading skills and helping those who've lost their jobs and can't pay their mortgage; we can't spend ourselves rich. An elderly couple, aged 86 and 90, said this: we know what it is to live within our means, and we're not in favour of going into large debts. A third says: we can't afford tax increases; get us working, and we'll support the province. The last one has struck a chord with me personally because I think it illustrates a sentiment felt right across the province: given the freedoms to do what we do best, Albertans trust each other to overcome these hardships; we need a government to demonstrate some faith in us, put policies in place that allow us to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for this government to step back from their ideological policies and start showing some faith in Albertans.

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

### The Right People

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to share a little story right now that I like to call The Right People. It's a story of the pitfalls that one can face when they don't associate with the right people or have the benefit of the right ideas.

Now we're beginning to get an idea of who the right people are. They raise a ruckus at the idea of coming in to work at 9 a.m., not because they're lazy but because they have no computer and support staff. The right people know that the best way to help an abused woman get out of a lease is to add the swearing of a statutory declaration to their burdens. They have a limitless energy for outrage, pointing out all manner of tax dollars wasted, yet they filibuster with glee.

When their bills and motions are rejected, they bring them back over and over. Now we see that the right people are prepared to introduce Bill 201, likely to be uniquely known as Yet Another Recall Act, and they're doing it for the third time in a row. So while Alberta is dealing with a serious economic crisis, low commodity prices, increasing debt, and unemployment, the right people are intent on making us relive a political issue that was dealt with in the 1930s by the Social Credit Party.

The right people can help you decide who to talk to and who not to talk to, like: for heaven's sake, do not talk to B-list reporters; and for heaven's sake, do not articulate your position on social issues. In fact, push them way, way down the list, past 100, so the public cannot absorb just how unpalatable they actually are. We are so lucky in this House to know the right people, who proudly state that they wouldn't legislate on social issues because the right people don't need to protect the vulnerable; they don't need to stand up for parents or start their workday at a reasonable hour. What kind of province would we be, Mr. Speaker, if we did things like that?

**The Speaker:** Government House Leader, I understand that you have a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Interrupting Members' Statements**

**Mr. Mason:** I do have a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is very clear in the rules of this place that members' statements are supposed to be delivered without interruption by other members. The prolonged clapping from the right people over there was a clear violation of that rule, and in future I would ask that people be allowed to give their members' statements without being interrupted by other members.

1:50

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to speak to the point of order. I think you're likely to find that there's a fairly long tradition of not calling points of order during members' statements as well, but since we're here, whether it was the clapping or the laughing, I'm not really sure which one it was that was interrupting the member's statement. But here we are at a matter of debate – at a matter of debate – and this is exactly the challenge with calling points of order during members' statements.

**The Speaker:** Both sides' points are well taken. I'll deal with this matter later. I have a feeling that there may not be a simple answer. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

#### **Alberta Sports Teams Accomplishments**

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to join all Albertans in marking the remarkable achievement of three Alberta sports teams.

The 2016 Scotties Tournament of Hearts was a very successful event hosted by the city of Grande Prairie, and it energized the entire province and all of Canada. On February 28, at Revolution Place in Grande Prairie, Chelsea Carey used her final stone to draw to the four-foot to win the Canadian women's curling championship. Chelsea was joined by Amy Nixon, Jocelyn Peterman, and Laine Peters. They train at the curling centre of excellence here at the Saville centre at the University of Alberta. They will be representing Canada at the world women's curling championship from March 19 to 27 in Swift Current.

Yesterday, by winning the 2016 Canadian men's curling championship, the Brier, Alberta won its 27th title, tying Manitoba for the most by any province. It was also the third championship for Kevin Koe, who won in 2010 and 2014. Joining Koe were Marc Kennedy, Brent Laing, and Ben Hebert. This is a new team, but it gelled at the right time, with coolness, consistency, and tremendous shot-making. They will now represent Canada at the world championship in Switzerland in early April.

Thirdly, in a major victory by the underdog, the Calgary Inferno overwhelmed Les Canadiennes de Montreal to become champions of the Canadian Women's Hockey League. Led by five-time Olympian Hayley Wickenheiser, the Inferno captured their first-ever Clarkson Cup. Many of its players will now go on to represent Canada at the world championships.

All of Alberta is extremely proud of the accomplishments of these teams and will be intently following their progress at the world championships.

Another Canadian curling championship is happening this coming weekend in Canmore and Banff. The Canadian Medical Bonspiel is attended by curling doctors from across Canada, including my team. You're all welcome to attend and wish us good luck as we follow in the footsteps of Carey and Koe.

#### **Oral Question Period**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### **Government Policies**

**Mr. Jean:** For months the Wildrose has been pleading with the NDP to do no further harm. At a time of economic uncertainty that should be any government's top guiding principle. Today 15 employer organizations representing thousands of job creators in Alberta wrote to the Premier warning her of the effects of her policies. "The rapid deployment of... ambitious government policies... have further undermined business confidence and competitiveness." These job creators are simply asking for a moratorium on further job-killing policies from this government. Will the Premier heed this warning?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms. Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying that there will not be a moratorium on governance in this province. What we will do, however, is to work with stakeholders and Albertans across the province. Now, when we were elected, we asked the companies that benefited the most from economic growth who continue to be profitable to pay just a little bit more and the same in the case of wealthy Albertans. Most Albertans still support that. Going forward, we have a number of different plans to work with business leaders, to grow the economy, and to create jobs, and we look forward to meeting with the folks just mentioned to talk about that.

**Mr. Jean:** Home and road builders, restaurateurs, small-business owners, steelworkers, landscapers, and oil well contractors: all are asking the Premier to please just stop, stop with the ideological agenda and economic experiments, stop with the tax hikes. Now is simply not the time for more red tape and regulation, and it's not the time for a \$3 billion slush fund under the guise of a carbon tax. This advice is not just coming from Wildrose now; it's coming from thousands of businesses who want to create jobs and grow the economy for the benefit of all Albertans. Why won't the Premier just take their advice and stop with bad, ideological policies?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, we're exceptionally proud of our climate change leadership plan, and we are looking forward to moving forward with it because not only does it reflect the growing concern of all Canadians about our need to act on climate change and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but it will actually serve to be an incredible stimulus for economic diversification in Alberta. So I'm looking forward to moving forward on it. I think it's actually good governance, and I know there are many, many people in the business world who agree with me.

**Mr. Jean:** I haven't met any.

What this letter makes quite clear is that while the Premier has spent precious time fund raising for the anti-Alberta Ontario NDP, she isn't meeting with groups that employ hundreds of thousands of Albertans. Wildrose has called for a job summit to bring leaders from business, nonprofit, and charitable sectors to the table with legislators and government to share ideas on how to get Albertans working again. All that this would cost the Premier is some of her precious time. Will the Premier spare just a few hours to meet with Alberta's job creators and launch a job summit today to actually listen to what Albertans have to say?

**Ms Notley:** Well, let me just begin, Mr. Speaker. I need to take issue with one point made by the Leader of the Official Opposition. I am absolutely sure that he has met with business leaders that support our climate leadership plan because I know who they are and I know they talk to him, too. So that's simply not true.

As far as meeting with people about where we're going forward and consulting with them in terms of our job-creation plan, that's absolutely what we will be doing. The Minister of Finance and I will be consulting with Albertans over the next few weeks, and I look forward to meeting with these folks to hear about their ideas.

**The Speaker:** Second major question.

### Public Service Compensation

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, for months Wildrose has been recommending that the Premier negotiate a wage freeze with public-sector workers. The media has asked the Premier about such a freeze. She always responds that there are contracts in place, so she can't freeze wages unilaterally. That's true, but there are also new contracts that are currently under negotiation. We have learned that AHS has been offering raises to its employees for 2016 and 2017. Premier, is it the NDP's policy to offer raises for this year and next year on all new public-sector labour contracts?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite is a little bit confused. The agreement that they are referring to is the continuation of negotiations that were begun by the previous government, so we are somewhat bound by those. But let me be very clear. Going forward, that set of negotiations will not form the pattern for new negotiations. Beyond that, as I've said before, I will not negotiate, respectfully, with our employees in public or in the media. I will save that for the bargaining table.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, a little over three weeks ago AHS went into arbitration with local 58 of AUPE. AHS is actually offering three years of raises. Since the government is offering raises, the arbitrator can't very well come back with a wage freeze offer. Meanwhile across the private sector in Alberta pay cuts of 10 and 20 per cent are not unheard of. Can the Premier explain why her government is actually offering up raises when private-sector workers are taking massive pay cuts if they're lucky enough to keep their jobs?

**Ms Notley:** As I said previously, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite doesn't quite understand what he's talking about. This is the continuation of negotiations that began well over a year ago, probably more than a year and a half ago, and it's, hopefully, the completion of those negotiations. We are bound by the positions that were taken, to some extent, at that point. Beyond that, I'm not going to bargain in this House with our employees because that's not respectful. We will, however, take an exceptionally prudent approach going forward. These negotiations do not in any way, shape, or form form the pattern for future negotiations going forward.

**Mr. Jean:** In Edmonton CapitalCare nurses just got a 3 per cent raise while the government gave provincial judges a raise of over 2 per cent. For the first time in a generation Alberta is paying its bills on a credit card, yet the government is offering raises in labour negotiations. Thousands of Albertans are without work, worried about their EI running out. Those who still have a job have offered to take a pay cut to keep that job. Meanwhile this government is actually offering raises. What Albertans want to know is: how can this Premier be so out of touch with Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the member across the way is not super well informed on this issue. First of all, this government will not break contracts that are already in place.

The second thing. With respect to the judges let's be very clear. Those recommendations came from a judicial committee over which this government has no discretion. We followed those recommendations, and that's what governments do.

Thirdly, going forward, it is not our view that we create jobs by firing people. It is not our view that we create jobs by publicly beating up on our old employees. It is not our view that we're going to raise the price of oil by . . .

2:00

### Rural Health Care

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, every day this government fearmongers about opposition plans for public services. In fact, listen; just a few days ago the NDP used this fear-and-smear campaign in a fundraising e-mail. The facts are that the only people here who are laying off nurses is this NDP government. They just laid off as many as three dozen nurses in Sundre. To the Premier: why is her government shutting down long-term care beds and laying off nurses in Sundre?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The opposition continues to struggle with the facts. They're still trying to scare people about what we're doing. The government has actually looked at the 15 beds that were in Sundre, and we're replacing them with 40 new beds and a brand new facility. So for the benefit of the opposition Finance critic and the Leader of the Official Opposition, 40 beds is 266 per cent of 15 beds.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, this government is bloated; AHS is even worse. It has managers managing managers managing other managers. So what is the NDP's solution? Do they target the waste? No, they don't. They cut long-term care beds and replace them with lesser levels of care, and then they say that they are full levels of care, and then they lay off nurses. So on one side this government is offering raises to union, and on the other side they're laying off front-line nurses. Is the Premier closing long-term care beds and



laying off nurses so that she can afford to give all the other public-sector workers raises?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm really proud of the fact that we're working to make sure that we get the right care in the right place by the right provider. Certainly, when we're looking at some of the demographics that are in the community, we want to make sure that we have dementia beds, we want to make sure that we have the right levels of support, and I think that that's responsible from a level of government.

The opposition still wants to have it both ways by making empty promises to seniors and midwives while boasting about massive cuts in the first set of questions, reckless cuts that would make our public health care system very – that we would not be able to recover from. So the opposition can indulge in fact-free attacks, but the truth is that more beds are going to be in Sundre, and we're moving forward on more beds across Alberta as well.

**The Speaker:** Could I again underline to both sides of the House: please direct your comments through the Speaker.

I believe we're at the second supplemental.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, it actually gets much worse. When AHS told Sundre that they were shutting down half the beds in the hospital and laying off up to three dozen nurses, they wouldn't actually confirm that the Sundre hospital would even stay open. They didn't want to talk about it. Well, Albertans expect this government to actually tell them about their plans. Will the Premier assure Albertans today that this government isn't planning to lay off nurses and shut down hospitals right across rural Alberta?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, again I would ask both sides of the House: please, through the Speaker.

The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and for the opportunity to talk about health care, which, of course, is one of the big reasons why the Official Opposition wasn't elected in the last election. Albertans want a government that can make sure that they have the right care in the right place at the right time by the right provider. Of course, in some communities that's a hospital, and we're really proud to have those hospitals. In other communities we want to make sure that we've got midwives and nurse practitioners and family care centres, so that's exactly what we're doing. We'll continue to have these conversations very publicly with Albertans and with members of the Official Opposition as well.

**The Speaker:** Fourth major question. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you. I'd love another question.

**The Speaker:** My apologies. The leader of the third party.

#### Linear Property Assessment and Taxation

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have heard that changes to the linear assessment may be coming as part of the MGA review. Both the AAMD and C and the AUMA have provided recommendations to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. To the minister: given that the minister has told the AAMD and C she will share information on the linear assessment review this week, will the minister tell Albertans now in this House what exactly she plans to change with linear assessment?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, being from rural Alberta myself, I understand the challenges that rural communities face. As this province grows, it is very important to recognize that our communities transcend municipal boundaries. I know that many districts and counties rely on linear tax as a significant source of revenue, so we are approaching this issue with one question in mind, how best to ensure that rural Albertans receive the support that they need.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, it sounds like we're still going to be short information, so I'll try again, Mr. Speaker. Given that the AAMD and C and the AUMA have both said what they want done or not done with linear assessment, is the minister aware of which municipalities benefit most and least from linear assessment, how much they're receiving, and will you help municipalities that are negatively affected by your decisions?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this is a complex question, and we've been doing a thorough analysis, including looking at the information that both the AUMA and the AAMD and C have provided as we see them as incredibly valuable partners. I have stated very publicly that we will not be funnelling linear assessment dollars to Calgary, Edmonton, or any other city. We certainly are examining what the best assessment structure is that will work the very best for rural Albertans.

**Mr. McIver:** I didn't get my question answered, but I got a little bit of actual information, and for this I'm grateful. I have with me the AAMD and C recommendations and the AUMA recommendations on linear assessment, which I will table later today, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: when considering how you will resolve this difference in opinion, will you (a) disappoint the AUMA, (b) disappoint the AAMD and C, or (c) disappoint both, and how?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I value the well-being of our rural residents here in this province. Like other rural Albertans, I am concerned about the sustainability of our municipalities. The decision that we make will ensure the health and well-being of the various rural regions in this province, and I look forward to sharing that information relatively soon with the members of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. Again, would you direct your comments through the Speaker.

**Dr. Swann:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

#### Income Support Program Access

**Dr. Swann:** Unemployment in Alberta is the highest in 20 years. In response this government has made repeated requests to the federal Liberal government to make changes to EI so Albertans can make ends meet. Here in Alberta the responsibility for helping those with income needs falls to Alberta Works. Unfortunately, those needing access to this vital service are being turned away in droves, not because they don't qualify but because of apparent understaffing. To the minister: why is it that increasing numbers of Albertans needing income support can't get the help they need?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We have seen an unprecedented increase in the demand for Alberta Works services in the past six to eight months, and we are absolutely committed to making sure that when Albertans fall on tough times, we are there and we provide the necessary services. We are taking immediate steps to deal with this situation.

**Dr. Swann:** So what exactly are you doing to improve access?

**Mr. Sabir:** That was the question I was waiting for. We have taken three, four steps that have helped us improve the situation. The situation was particularly concerning in Calgary and Edmonton, so what we have done is that we have made our helpline available 24 hours a day, we have reassigned staff from other regions where we have capacity to the Calgary and Edmonton regions to deal with the lineups and capacity issues, and we have also increased the timing of Alberta Works offices so the staff has more time to clock.

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, is this government looking at the earned income and allowing more earned income because of the straitened circumstances that people are in before you get cutbacks in EI? Have you examined that question, that earned income can be left in the hands of those who need it?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to EI we are pursuing that with our federal government, and the Premier has talked about it with the federal government. On that note, I want to mention here that there was a motion moved by the federal NDP in the House of Commons that was watered down by the Liberal government and their Conservative fellows in the federal government. We are still pursuing EI, and we will make sure that we provide Albertans all needed support when they need it and where they need it.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

### Royalty Framework

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many in my area of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville are reliant on the oil and gas sector for their livelihoods, both in Alberta's Industrial Heartland and further in the province, and the economic downturn has them worried about their futures and their families. I heard from countless folks involved in the industry who are nervous about the royalty review and how this would impact their jobs. To the Energy minister: what has been the reaction from Albertans to the royalty review report?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. So far I'm very pleased with the reaction from all Albertans, including industry and Albertans themselves. They see our new framework as a means to ensure transparency, certainty, competitiveness for our industry as we move forward. On Friday we got a big vote of confidence with the announcement of \$2 billion worth of investments from Imperial Oil in Cold Lake. This announcement certainly is a sign that our government is creating the certainty that industry needs to make these investment decisions.

**The Speaker:** I'll underline again that, particularly, I had difficulty hearing it with the clapping.

First supplemental.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that at the end of the day Albertans are the resource owners of our oil and gas and given that many expected a larger overhaul of our royalty system, to the Energy minister: what new benefits can Albertans expect to see from the new royalty system?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, our new royalty framework responds to the pain and uncertainty that workers and families are feeling across this province. The opposition would have us believe that the sky is falling if we even dare to look at the royalties on these important resources. The do-nothing approach has kept royalties stuck in the past, and we need to be ready for the future as we move forward. Albertans can count on this government to take a hands-on approach to modernizing our royalty framework and to bring in investment for jobs and create new projects.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the sharp decline in the price of oil and given that many companies in the oil and gas sector were worried about how changes to the royalty system would affect their bottom line, again to the same minister: what are the benefits to industry with the new royalty system?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, our new royalty framework recognizes the realities of today's economy. The framework is designed to encourage more investment such as we saw last Friday from Imperial Oil, \$2 billion. We will incent better management of costs, and the industry will remain efficient and competitive moving forward. We'll extend drilling incentives that were scheduled to expire into the new process, and we will act on opportunities to diversify our energy industry.

### Long-term Care in Sundre

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it has taken less than a year for the NDP government to turn its back on front-line services. In my constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre locals received the worst possible news when AHS dropped the hammer on closing down half of the Sundre hospital. This closure will result in as many as 36 front-line health care workers losing their jobs and residents being forced out of their community in the later years of their life or when they are most vulnerable. To the Minister of Health: how can you campaign on not laying off front-line workers and then sign off on closing half of the Sundre hospital?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member, for directing your comments through the Speaker.

The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in a previous answer, we're actually looking at the 15 beds that were auxiliary hospital beds in the hospital and increasing them to 40 beds. It will be a slightly different level of care, but it will be the right level of care for the citizens who are living in them. We're working to make sure that we've got the right care in the right place at the right time for the citizens who need it. Of course, we're going to make sure that there are opportunities for all 15 individuals to stay in the community should they choose to because we know that's really important to them and it's important to us as a government.

**Mr. Nixon:** Perhaps it's time to brief the minister on her own department. Given the fact that the long-term care beds in the Sundre hospital require RNs and given that the lodge in Sundre's highest available level of care is nowhere close to long-term, the numbers don't add up, and seniors that are most vulnerable will be displaced, and given the fact that the lodge is already full and there is a waiting list, how can the Minister of Health say with a straight face that she is not displacing our seniors as well as our most vulnerable and putting our front-line nurses out of work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question and for the opportunity to inform the member a little bit more about the project in his own riding, which is not about the lodge. It's about a brand new facility that will have 40 beds. We're looking at a brand new facility that will have the right level of care for the individuals who are living there. It will be a higher level of care. It won't necessarily be long-term care because we don't think that that's necessary for the community. We're looking at the demographics of the region and making sure we have the right beds in the right place for the right members of the community.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I find it more than a little disappointing that the NDP government has turned their backs on the most vulnerable in our rural communities. Given that those in Sundre are now waiting for the other shoe to drop and for the NDP government to shut down their entire hospital and given that this hospital saved my own life in 2007 and since it is crucial to all the residents and visitors of Mountain View county, will the minister commit right here and right now that the NDP government will not shut Sundre's hospital?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Glad to hear that the health care system has served him and many others well, as all of us have experienced in this Assembly. In terms of the specific beds, the people who are living in them are living in the hospital, and they are long-term care beds. Obviously, we all know that nobody wants to stay in the hospital more than necessary. You want to be in a home-like environment if that's possible at all. We're certainly working with the individuals to make sure that they land in the right place and have the very best place to live. We're going to continue to have conversations in a respectful environment with the members opposite about health care throughout Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

#### **Farm and Ranch Worker Regulation Consultation**

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this government moves forward with consultation planning to draft the regulations on Bill 6, I hope they're planning to include the newly formed ag coalition. This group has formed an industry leadership advisory committee that will engage with farmers and ranchers to represent their interests. They are the ideal group to include in the Bill 6 consultation process. To the minister of agriculture: will you commit to having at least one, preferably more, members of this ag coalition on the technical working group for the Bill 6 consultation?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I can guarantee that there will be some members from the ag coalition on the technical working groups. I very much welcome their input. I thought it was quite interesting that they met on January 29 in Red Deer to get together. I think any opportunity that we have to expand our consultation process, even if it's arm's length, is a welcome opportunity, and I welcome the opportunity to work with them in the future as well.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the minister has not made an effort so far to work with the ag coalition, which includes 29 important agricultural groups such as the Alberta Barley Commission, Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Canola Producers Commission, Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association, Alberta Chicken, Alberta Milk, Alberta Pork – I could go on – and given that you recognize the importance of this coalition, can the minister explain how he plans to actively involve the coalition in the Bill 6 regulation process?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I want to correct him on just one small point. We have been working with the ag coalition. I've met with them once in person, several times via the phone. I've talked individually with the chairs of the ag coalition as well. I'm very much looking forward to working with them and working with all other people in the agriculture industry as well across the province as we move forward on the consultation process.

Thank you.

2:20

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was different information than I was given.

Given that the ag coalition is holding consultation meetings all across Alberta to hear feedback from Alberta's producers, not just a select few, and given that it seems to me that they're doing your job, will the minister commit to giving them a bigger seat at the table?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member asked if they can get a bigger seat at the table; I'm not sure if that means physical size or number of members at the table. Agriculture will be, of course, very well represented on the technical working groups. It's important to have very good representation not just from the ag coalition but from others as well that perhaps don't have a voice at the ag coalition, making sure that we have all of that represented. Agriculture, as you've probably realized, is very diverse in this province. We need to have all of those voices at the table.

Thank you.

#### **Athabasca University**

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, Athabasca University is a success story. It serves over 10,000 Albertan students and provides much-needed learning alternatives. It's also a major employer. But rumours are circulating that Athabasca University may close its doors and leave. These rumours are creating uncertainty in a region that's been devastated by low oil prices and risky policies. Will the minister put

the rumours to bed and assure the people of Athabasca that this university will remain open and operating in its current structure in Athabasca?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question and for giving me the opportunity to address this issue here in the House. It just so happens that I had a meeting with the president, the board chair, as well as faculty association representatives last Thursday to discuss the future of Athabasca University. I was quite direct in my guidance, and I was quite clear that the number one priority for any path forward for that university is to make sure that Athabasca University stays in Athabasca.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you. Given the fact, then, Minister, that you sat down recently with the president of Athabasca University and considering the hundreds of Albertans that would face job losses as a result of potential closure or relocation, was relocation discussed at this meeting with the president, and does the minister retain confidence in its current governing board?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that supplementary question. I believe I answered the question the first time that I answered, but I'm happy to state again that our government's number one priority with respect to Athabasca University is to make sure that that university stays in Athabasca. We know that it's a valuable institution not just to the students of Alberta and around the world but to the community that it's in, so Athabasca University will stay in Athabasca.

**Mr. Taylor:** Out-of-work Albertans are flooding back to school to further their education, and this minister is playing coy with the future of hundreds throughout various schools. The NDP bases their decisions on ideology over common sense. Has the NDP government examined the impact that a closure like this in the future, if it happened, would have on Alberta postsecondary students and the economy, or is the government simply planning on leaving another community high and dry?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would recommend to the hon. member across the way that he actually listen to the answers when he stands up and asks the minister responsible so that he doesn't look ridiculous in his supplementary questions. I'm quite pleased to be able to give a clear and direct answer, that Athabasca University will stay in Athabasca. I could write it down on a piece of paper if the member would like it because he can't understand what I am saying. I don't believe I can be any more clear than that.

### Municipal Infrastructure Funding

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, last week the Municipal Affairs minister had the opportunity to provide clarity to Alberta's Mayors' Caucus and come clean on this government's plan for MSI funding but failed to do so. Sadly, again later here that day and today, too, all we hear are more platitudes and misdirection on the subject. Minister, MSI is critical for planning and building strong and resilient communities. For the record, again, will the minister do the

right thing and clarify MSI funding intentions for our municipal partners that are here in Edmonton today?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I have great respect for all of the municipal leaders and the work they do in working with us to ensure that Albertans have the services they need, which is why we consider them a valuable partner and understand the importance of MSI to their communities. Given the extreme fiscal challenges of the province we are having conversations around that; however, we remain committed to providing the support to municipalities that they need to take care of the Albertans they serve.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, Mr. Speaker, once again, I don't know if we heard any facts here.

Given that the construction season is short, by not presenting a budget this past February, this government has cost our municipal partners some of their most critical building months. To the same minister again: for what mysterious reason did this NDP government delay session, delay the budget, and delay this vital information when there is so much important work to do in our communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are working incredibly hard to work within the budget as we present that budget well within normal timelines. However, it's not formalized, and I expect to have amazing support for that whole section from the member across from me. We are investing \$34 billion in necessary roads, schools, transit, and other public infrastructure to provide communities with the facilities they need to get Albertans back to work, and we are committed to supporting municipalities, again, in providing for their members.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the minister for some detail there.

Given that the Premier herself said that a significant portion of the carbon tax revenue would be cycled back to municipalities for, quote, green initiatives but municipalities, though, really need bridges, roads, and water-treatment facilities among other core infrastructure projects, and while solar panels and green-roofing systems are nice to have, can the Minister of Municipal Affairs say if any of the carbon tax revenue collected will be allocated to those priority infrastructure projects instead?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a couple of quick points. You know, it's quite correct that municipalities require and rely a great deal on infrastructure funding. Let me just be very clear that infrastructure funding is a key part of our jobs plan, and that's why I'm proud that we have invested \$9 billion more into our plan than would have been invested under the Official Opposition's plan. So that's the first point.

The second point is this. When we make significant changes, we're going to talk to people first; we're going to consult. Now, there are rumours out there. There are always rumours out there, but let me be clear that if municipal leaders haven't met with us and haven't advised anything, then I think they should be pretty comfortable.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Northwest.

**Bill 1**

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government promised change and, boy, are they delivering. They promised a more open government and did a bait-and-switch briefing for the opposition parties on the throne speech. They promised a jobs program worth 27,000 new jobs and had to cancel it because it failed to create more than one job. The response to this was Bill 1, which was literally the first time in my memory that we had to pass a law to tell the minister what his job should be. To the Premier: given that Bill 1 is the job description for the minister, what will he be doing until Bill 1 is passed and proclaimed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll clarify for the member that Bill 1 provides the legislative tools and framework for government to be able to respond and act very nimbly. Now, the global price of oil and the continued drop in the global price of oil have had significant impact on Albertans, on their families and communities. Now, unlike the opposition who governed for many decades and failed to adequately diversify the economy and move us off one resource and unlike the opposition who would rather we sit on our hands and do nothing, our government is taking action and showing leadership through Bill 1. Thank you.

2:30

**Ms Jansen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister may be nimble, but he's not very quick.

Given that the minister should already have been doing the work mandated in Bill 1, is the Premier ready to acknowledge that Bill 1 is completely pointless as a job-creation plan?

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will thank the hon. member for the question and for giving me the opportunity to speak of the initiatives that our government has rolled out since last fall, since the creation of this ministry, which are exactly what businesses and industry have been asking for: a one-stop shop in the government, to have a ministry that focuses exclusively on the economy, on diversifying the economy and supporting our sectors and building on our strengths. In addition, Bill 1 is going to give us the legislative tools that we need to be able to respond to our current economic climate in a very concise and straightforward way. [interjections]

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** It's getting a little noisy, folks.  
Second supplemental.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans' unemployment rate is climbing at a startling rate and given that they are abandoning their first flagship job-creation plan faster than the House leader rushed his way into the House last Tuesday, to the Premier: are you actually planning to listen to and accept amendments and constructive solutions from the opposition to make Bill 1 better and turn it into a plan that can actually be executed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're still waiting for some constructive suggestions from any of the opposition parties, quite frankly. But let me again be clear that our government is taking action. You know, I want to take a second to talk about that. While the Official Opposition and the opposition

run down the province and are actually fearmongering, we have some great news. There are great examples of how Alberta is a great place to invest and to do jobs. Just on Friday Imperial Oil announced a \$2 billion investment here in Alberta. We welcome that news, and we'll continue to work with . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Tourism Promotion**

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the government's throne speech there was a commitment made to diversify the economy, and given Alberta's diverse landscape, increasing tourism is one of the ways we can do this. Given today's economic climate, promoting Alberta as a destination of choice would create more jobs and move Alberta towards long-term diversification. To the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what is being done to grow the tourism industry?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for my first question during question period. Tourism remains the one shining star in our economy right now, contributing over \$8 billion to our economy and 127,000 jobs to our province. I have had the opportunity to meet with stakeholders. I will continue to do that and look for opportunities to grow this great economy.

Thank you.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our tourism industry will grow more quickly if visitors can more easily travel to Alberta, again to the same minister: what is he doing to increase air access to this province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. During my first week on the job, actually, I got to go to my hometown, Calgary, and announce the beginning of three-times-a-week flights directly from Beijing to Calgary. We are going to continue working on that. We will continue to do that, talking to our members from across the way and talking to people from our government as well. We're going to continue talking to our partners and look for new ways to increase travel to Alberta.

Thank you.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are great tourism opportunities in all corners of our province, not just in our major cities, to the same minister again: what is he doing to promote tourism across rural Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. A tourism and entrepreneurship program started in late September of last year, attracting approximately 200 participants. We also had Open Farm Days last year, which is another program that we continue to encourage. We're looking forward to it again this year. [interjections]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Could we keep the volume down, please?

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Student Learning Assessments

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to an ATA survey nearly three-quarters of grade 3 teachers think that the pilot student learning assessment is of little benefit to the students. This pilot has cost the government millions of dollars, and for two years Albertan parents have not received information about their child's achievements relative to expected outcomes, yet the government is committed to this pilot again for another school year. This is no longer a pilot but a commitment to failure. To the Minister of Education: will you listen to teachers and cancel this failed experiment?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question as well. Certainly, I've been looking very carefully at all of our assessment tools, from diploma exams to PATs and, of course, the SLAs. From the time that I assumed the ministry, I decided to make them optional for the school boards this year. I had 59 out of the 61 take up that option. Certainly, I'm open to looking for ways to more effectively use the student learning assessment tool so that it is diagnostic and it helps our kids to learn and parents to understand what they are learning.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always nice to hear that the Minister of Education will listen.

Given that teachers voted at the ATA's annual assembly to put this test on pause until the issues surrounding it were resolved and given that parents have also expressed deep concern about the effectiveness of the SLAs, Minister, these tests have not proven to exhibit any real, positive impact on student learning. Will you agree to reinstate the provincial achievement tests until the issues surrounding their learning assessments are rectified?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. Certainly, I'm assessing many different options, but let's remember what we are using these SLAs for at this time, which is our grade 3 students. I don't know if you've seen grade 3 students: they're seven years old, and they're so wonderful, but they're very, very young. So it's very important that we design diagnostic tools that will help the teachers be able to build a program for kids but not make it onerous on seven-year-olds, putting in PATs.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Alberta Education website states that the government will, quote, co-ordinate with education partners and given that the Alberta Education website states that the learning assessments will remain in the pilot phase "until we are certain we have it right," can the minister explain why he's ignoring front-line teachers, parents, and education experts who are telling him that the pilots are a waste of time and money that do little to improve student learning?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly, it's important to be objective and to weigh all the different options around testing and assessment in general. I'm listening very carefully to teachers. I know as a teacher myself that the best tool that we have to determine the outcomes for students is to maintain the professionalism of teachers and the integrity of their capacity to analyze where their kids should go. We will give them any

assistance along the way to do so, diagnostic tools such as SLAs, other ways to make sure that kids learn and they get the best education possible.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-West.

### Naloxone Kit Availability

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give this government credit for making the fentanyl antidote naloxone widely available. However, many Albertans view naloxone as a cure for overdosing on fentanyl when it is not; it simply buys time for a victim to receive life-saving medical care. With that critical piece of knowledge lacking in the general public, Albertans will continue to die needlessly. To the Health minister: given that the grave misunderstanding that naloxone is a cure can result in death, how are you ensuring that Albertans are aware that it is critical for someone who has received naloxone to obtain medical attention as soon as possible?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

2:40

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for asking a question of such importance to Albertans and members on both sides of this House. Certainly, fentanyl is a deadly threat, and we're working through public awareness around making sure that the awareness of the risks is available; also, harm reduction, which was mentioned. Naloxone: every one of our distributing centres is working with citizens who are getting these kits to explain to them how to use them and to follow up with proper interventions afterwards. Certainly, there are lots of community groups helping to distribute these kits to those who most need them, and they're providing the education on the ground.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that most addicts are in denial and will not proactively obtain a naloxone kit from a doctor or a pharmacist and given that family and friends who desperately want to help their loved ones cannot obtain a kit and training unless the addict is with them and given that this government's naïveté of addictive behaviour is failing to ensure that everyone who wishes to save the addict's life has the opportunity to do so, why are you not allowing family and friends to obtain naloxone kits upon request?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're working with evidence to make the best decisions on behalf of citizens. Certainly, the evidence has shown that those who self-identify as using, so anyone who self-identifies as having a history of use or having used in the past or currently, have access to one of these kits. We're making them available through a variety of means, including pharmacies, but where we started, actually, was with the service agencies that are working most closely with the addicts; for example, here in Edmonton at Streetworks, a needle exchange program. They are the ones being trained on how to distribute and share the information, and they're doing a great job of getting it into the hands of those who most need it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that addicts are solely focused on their next fix and act defensively if someone offers them help and given that placing the onus on addicts to obtain naloxone reflects a common misconception about a drug addict's typical behaviour, will you commit today to let family and friends obtain naloxone kits if their loved one is resistant to taking that proactive measure?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Certainly, any citizen who has a history of use has access to these kits if they express that they've self-identified as being a user having a history of use. We would encourage people who have that history to disclose that to either a pharmacist, to EMS – RNs are now able to prescribe the kits as well – or to any of these on-site programs that work with populations who are at risk typically. We're very proud of that, and we're continuing to work with the fentanyl response team as well as developing an opioid reduction strategy that will consider expansions to other demographics, potentially. But we certainly want to make sure that we're using evidence to derive . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Members' Statements (continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

#### Safe Accommodations for Queer Edmonton Youth

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past September I had the opportunity to view a powerful documentary, *For Want of a Home*. The film shares the stories behind a troubling statistic, that although only 5 to 10 per cent of our population identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning, they make up over 25 per cent of homeless youth. These youth are often reluctant to turn to shelters, where they may face discrimination from other residents, inflexible gender binaries, or a lack of understanding from staff and volunteers.

In 2014 SAFQEY, or Safe Accommodations for Queer Edmonton Youth, was formed to try and address this need. Currently Toronto is the only city in Canada that offers dedicated beds for LGBTQ2S youth; SAFQEY is working to make Edmonton the second. Through Boyle Street Community Services they've secured access to a housing facility, and they're now working to raise the funds needed to operate it as a shelter for trans, nonbinary, and two-spirited youth.

Mr. Speaker, it's heartbreaking to see the challenges faced by these young Albertans who are left homeless, often due to a lack of understanding of their identities, and rejected by their families, an unfortunate truth that confirms for me the importance of supporting the right of LGBTQ2S youth to feel safe and protected in other social spaces, like their schools.

To the board and members of SAFQEY I would like to say thank you for the incredible progress that you've made in two short years. This government and, I dare say, the majority of this House stand with and support you.

Thank you for your commitment and dedication.

#### Cold Lake Air Show

**Mr. Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand before you today and represent my home constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. In our constituency we have various events throughout the year, including the Glendon Pyrogy Festival, cabane à sucre, and Cold Lake First Nations Treaty Days, to list a few.

One of the most anticipated events this year is the Cold Lake Air Show. This year it is being hosted by 4 Wing and the Canadian Forces base Cold Lake in conjunction with the city of Cold Lake. The Cold Lake Air Show itself has a very special significance for myself as my daughter Charlotte was born during the 2009 air show, and that year especially I was floating in the clouds, up there with the Snowbirds. The air show is always an exciting weekend for families in and around Cold Lake, with something for everyone. It attracts performers from across North America. We're proud to showcase our Royal Canadian Air Force and to welcome a number of celebrated performers to our skies. Mr. Speaker, we have the CF-18 Demo Team, Snowbirds, F-16 Demonstration Team, SkyHawks, Firefly Aviation, Ace Maker, Pemberton Aerosports, Indy Boys, and AV8FX pyrotechnics coming to the Air Show this year.

This year Cold Lake is proud to announce that it has solved a problem that plagues many local air shows: parking. With an all-new, professionally developed plan there will be room for everyone who wants to come out and enjoy the show and no more long waits to get in or out, so this weekend will be hassle-free.

Whether you're an aviation enthusiast or a family looking to fill a weekend, the air show is an exciting, jet-blasted spectacle that's guaranteed to please. Just make sure that any young ears are equipped with hearing protection. I would like to take this opportunity to invite everyone to come out and witness the thrill of the Cold Lake Air Show on July 16 and 17.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and in accordance with section 5(5) of the Property Rights Advocate Act I am pleased to table five copies of the committee's report on the 2014 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate. Copies of the report are available through the committee office and online.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund it's my pleasure to table the report covering the committee's activities during the 28th Legislature, September 2014 to March 2015.

I would also like to table the committee's report covering activities from the 29th Legislature, June 2015 to November 2015.

These reports fulfill the requirements of Standing Order 55 and section 6(4)(c) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act. These reports are posted on the Assembly website, and copies are also available at the committee's office.

I would like to take this opportunity to quickly thank the officials from Alberta Treasury Board and Finance and AIMCo and the staff of the Legislative Assembly Office for the continued support of this committee.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I have two reports to table this afternoon. I'd like to table five copies of the report of the committee recommending the reappointment of Mr. Merwan Saher as the Auditor General for a two-year term.

I'm also pleased to table the report of the committee recommending the reappointment of Mr. Glen Resler as Chief Electoral Officer.

Copies of these reports are available online or through the committees branch. Thank you.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour and the minister responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have an introduction of a bill. I would like to give oral notice of a bill to be introduced tomorrow, that bill being Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, go ahead.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today, two that I promised in question period, advice for the Minister of Municipal Affairs on linear assessment, one from AAMD and C and one from AUMA.

Also, I rise to table the required number of copies of an open letter from the highly regarded Alberta Enterprise Group to the Premier, with advice on government policy.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I rise today pursuant to section 25(16) of the Conflicts of Interest Act to table the report of the Ethics Commissioner dated March 14, 2016, regarding the allegations involving the Premier of Alberta, the MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona.

### Point of Order

#### Interrupting Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** There was a point of order raised during Members' Statements by the Government House Leader with respect to the interruption of the Member for Calgary-North West. While the desk-thumping was somewhat – my word, it seems to be robust of late. It did not in fact deter the member from proceeding and making her statement. She was able to complete her statement.

I would note, as Speaker Kowalski did on April 5, 2006, at page 733 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day, the principle that members should have the opportunity to speak on any subject they wish without being interrupted. He seems to have been also at the same time referring to points of order. So while there may not have been a point of order, the chair, as you may have noted today, wishes to underline again to all members that we need and I need to be vigilant, particularly around the volume of both comments as well as noises.

### Privilege

#### Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

**The Speaker:** At the same time, while I have the floor, I would speak to the matter with respect to a point of privilege that was raised about an early release of the throne speech on March 8, a purported question of privilege raised by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. Hon. members, the chair is prepared to rule on the purported question of privilege raised by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster on Wednesday, March 9, 2016.

The discussion on this matter can be found on pages 38 through 42 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day. To state the purported question of privilege in the proverbial nutshell, the issue is whether the dissemination of copies of the Speech from the Throne on an

embargoed basis to media but not members prior to its delivery in the Chamber that afternoon constitutes a contempt of the Assembly.

The notice provided by the hon. member complied with the procedural requirements found in Standing Order 15(2). The Speaker's office received notice of the purported question of privilege on Tuesday, March 8, at 4:51, which far exceeded the requirement for notice to be provided two hours before the opening of the afternoon sitting. I would like to thank the member for proceeding by way of notice instead of raising the matter during the proceedings, during the Speech from the Throne, which would have disrupted this proceeding. It would not have been dealt with until the following day in any event. Thank you for that.

As I understood the hon. member's argument, it is that the distribution of the Speech from the Throne and the briefing impeded members in the performance of their duties and constituted a contempt of the Assembly. There did not seem to be a dispute as to the facts surrounding this purported question of privilege. As the Deputy Government House Leader confirmed, it seemed that there was an embargoed media briefing at which copies of the Speech from the Throne were distributed.

In terms of providing a basis for his claim, the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster was good enough to provide a definition of contempt from page 251 of *Erskine May*, 24th edition. In this Speaker's ruling on November 2, 2015, found at pages 400 to 401 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day, I relied upon the distinction between contempt and privilege at page 82 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition. To quote in part from that longer excerpt, a contempt is

any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House, such as disobedience of its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its Members, or its officers.

The member also acknowledged that there was no precedent, by which I mean a Speaker's ruling on the dissemination of the Speech from the Throne prior to the delivery. Without a precedent the arguments proceeded on the basis of an analogy, with the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster claiming that this situation is the same as when copies of a bill are distributed prior to its introduction in the Assembly. To be clear, a possible contempt could occur in the circumstances where a bill is on notice on the Order Paper and before it is introduced, the bill is distributed to persons other than members and the specific contents of the bill are revealed. This was the essence of Mr. Kowalski's March 5, 2003, ruling, where he did find a prima facie question of privilege when the contents of a bill on notice were revealed at a media briefing. His ruling relied upon the March 19, 2001, ruling of then House of Commons Speaker Milliken on the same issue, which the member quoted in his presentation last Wednesday.

Although not raised in the discussion of this purported question of privilege, there is a subsequent ruling by Speaker Milliken on whether disclosure to the media of the Speech from the Throne prior to its delivery by the Governor General constituted a breach of privilege. In his ruling, found at pages 282 to 283 of *House of Commons Debates* for October 23, 2007, Speaker Milliken ruled that there was no breach of privilege. He stated at page 283, "The Chair can find no procedural authority for the claim that the premature disclosure of the Speech from the Throne constitutes a breach of the privileges of the members of this House."

I find this argument to be persuasive and applicable to this situation. As did Speaker Milliken, the chair finds that the situation surrounding the disclosure of the Speech from the Throne is



analogous to budget secrecy, which is a matter of parliamentary convention rather than of privilege. I would refer members to paragraph 31(5) of *Beauchesne's*, 6th edition, and page 894 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, which state this proposition.

Accordingly, for the reasons I have provided, I find there is no prima facie question of privilege. The matter is now concluded.

3:00

### Orders of the Day

#### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 201 Election Recall Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today in the Legislature to move second reading of Bill 201, the Election Recall Act.

This bill is intended to strengthen Alberta's democracy by putting the power of our system further into Albertans' hands and giving them the ability to recall an elected official should the need arise. The premise of this legislation is simple, to ensure that any Member of the Legislative Assembly stays truly accountable to their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, it wasn't so long ago that many of us here in this Legislature were elected for the first time. For me personally, it was an honour and a privilege – and I'm sure it was for everyone – to be chosen by their constituents to represent their interests in this Legislature. It's an honour that I do not take lightly.

Mr. Speaker, our representative form of democracy is not perfect. There are some inherent flaws in it that have existed as long as Alberta has been a province. Indeed, Sir Frederick Haultain, the first Premier of the Northwest Territories, from 1897 to 1905, which then included Alberta and Saskatchewan, envisioned a very different western Canada. He wanted a single province called Buffalo, that would be governed on a nonpartisan basis; in other words, a democratic government where elected representatives did not represent political parties and where party politics did not dominate the Legislature. Sir Frederick Haultain did not get his way, and today we have a representative form of democracy that is dominated by party politics. Indeed, Albertans have experienced the great harm that can occur when we elect an MP to Ottawa or an MLA to this Legislature. We can see what happens when they believe that they can consistently ignore or not represent the wishes of the people that elected them.

My first introduction to this idea of recall began when I met Preston Manning and helped build at a local level the Reform Party in my constituency. The slogan The West Wants In resonated with western Canadians and with Albertans, and it spoke to our dissatisfaction with a government that could rule over us without representing our interests in this Confederation. Recall along with other democratic measures were proposed by the Reform Party, and I personally believe these bills and the actions of the Reform Party allowed western Canadians to channel their dissatisfaction back into the political process in a positive fashion rather than to support the more radical notions of separatism that appeared at the time to be raising their heads and which perhaps today could be raising their heads again in Alberta.

Recall should not be easy. It should be hard to recall an MLA or a Member of Parliament. But allowing for recall brings the benefits of accountability. It provides a positive path of action for an

electorate that realizes that the representative they have chosen is not enhancing democracy but perverting it by their personal actions or by placing emphasis on party politics rather than their constituents' desires. Our party's system brings many advantages to our system of democracy. For MLAs and constituents alike it also creates an uneasy dynamic where the MLA must sometimes choose between supporting the wishes of their constituents and the desires of the political party to which they belong. This issue of "How should your MLA vote when caught in the middle?" is difficult. It's difficult when two divergent forces are clearly seen to trap the MLA or the Member of Parliament. We saw that, I believe, during the Bill 6 debate prior to Christmas, and it's not a nice place to be. As we clearly saw these government MLAs caught in the middle, it was hard to see that they had to make a choice between their party and their constituents.

Bill 201 is an attempt to rebalance our democracy so that the people of Alberta will be able to hold their MLA accountable for their voting record and their public actions so that we really will have a system of democracy where the people rule rather than the party. The elected representative may happen to be in any political party, but they must be representative of their constituents. Let me make it clear to all that are in this House that I do not believe that this is a partisan bill. This bill is not left wing, it's not right wing, and it really shouldn't matter whether you're on the government or the opposition side. This bill speaks to Haultain's vision of a less partisan House, a House where the elected representatives are better able to balance their constituents' desires with those of their party.

Bill 201 does not speak to the wider issue of when an MLA should be able to speak and to vote against a party or an electorate that is asking them to vote against their personal conscience or to pass legislation that does not respect the rights of minorities and would therefore be tyrannical. I will always seek to serve, at least to the best of my ability, my constituents and to make sure that the voices of those in my constituency are heard loud and clear. The discussion surrounding this issue, about when an MLA should follow their conscience or defend minority rights, I will leave for another day and for another bill. I do believe that we should have those discussions in this House.

If passed, this bill would provide a mechanism where when 66 per cent of the electorate's signatures from the previous general election are collected in a constituency in 60 days on a sanctioned petition, an electorate would have the ability to recall their local MLA. A threshold of 66 per cent is not so impossibly high, Mr. Speaker, that it could never be reached, but it is also not so low as to ensure that the law is frivolously used. Indeed, this percentage is an attempt to address some of the NDP's concerns regarding Bill 206 from last session. They said that setting a percentage of 20 per cent of the electorate was just way too low.

Any canvassers pushing for a recall of their MLA cannot be paid in any way, Mr. Speaker. This would prevent wealthy groups from having undue influence, ensuring that a campaign is truly grassroots. A canvasser could not be paid and would also have to be a registered voter who's been a resident of Alberta for at least six months. This would prevent influence from outside jurisdictions or an attempt at manipulating the recall system.

Finally, a payment of \$5,000, payable to Elections Alberta, would ensure that the petitions would not be paid for by taxpayers and that an individual is serious before initiating a recall petition.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to have introduced this legislation, that has been adopted again and again as a party policy by the Wildrose.

3:10

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak early this afternoon to Bill 201. You know, we have recall in this province. It happens once every four years. I know there are many people in this province who are deeply frustrated by the political situation we find ourselves in that perhaps didn't expect the government we have now to win election, and I know there are members opposite who also didn't expect to be elected to this House and certainly didn't expect to be sitting in government, but there they are. They're making the best of the situation and, I believe, doing the best they can.

But here we are. We have three years and perhaps two months until the next election, and that's when the people of Alberta have the opportunity to once again pass judgment on this government and to elect, I think very likely, a new government.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I have a lot of concerns about this bill. There seems to be the intended or perhaps unintended consequence of creating loopholes which seem to go far beyond what this bill's stated goals are. It is not simply, I think, about recall. But what I worry is that it's perhaps a stalking horse for something else, perhaps an opportunity to subvert important rules we have in this Assembly and in this province around campaign finance. I'll get into that specifically as I go through this bill.

First, I think I'm going to just point to the example of the only other province in this country that has recall, and that's our friends to the west in British Columbia. They have recall. It's been used 26 times. It has been unsuccessful 25 times. And the one time it was successful, the MLA in question resigned before the petition actually went through, which raises the question of: what's the purpose of recall? If in the one jurisdiction of this country that has it it has never been used successfully, why would we want to pass that here in this province?

Let's talk a bit about the thresholds and some of the details of this particular bill. The \$5,000 fee may sound like a lot of money, but it really isn't. It really isn't. When you have a bill that says that although you need to wait 18 months past an election to then try to institute a recall petition – but if we look at section 2(5), if that petition fails, you can try again and you can try again and you try again and try again. So what we're going to do, if we observe our friends to the south, the frankly chaotic process of constant campaigning that we've got in our friends in the U.S. – there's a big risk that we fall into exactly the same situation here in this province, a situation I am sure none of us want to find ourselves in.

Now, we've talked about the 66 per cent threshold as well as if that is a significant number. My staff and I did some simple calculations earlier this afternoon. We've determined that in the constituency of Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, based on the number of votes cast in the last election, it would only be about 6,300 signatures needed. That's not a very significant number. In Lesser Slave Lake it would be even less than that, 5,978 signatures required. In Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo: 6,323 signatures. These are not significant numbers; these are not large numbers.

Now, my hon. friend from Calgary-Mountain View issued a news release earlier today and talked about perhaps 40 per cent of all electors as an option. That difference in some cases – in Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley it is as little as 218 votes difference between the 40 per cent threshold and the 66 per cent threshold. Again, I think what we're talking about here is a fundamental principle of the way that our democratic system operates and is intended to operate.

The cost of holding a by-election is in excess of \$200,000. That is a significant cost, which I think we need to be very mindful of

should we be in a situation. The other is: who can actually organize and advocate on behalf of the recall petition? Although the bill says that a person in the constituency must officially be the one to raise the petition, anyone from around the province could flood into that constituency to then work on behalf of organizing that recall petition.

What I want to spend most of my time talking about, though, Madam Speaker, are the financing provisions of this bill and what I see as being significant loopholes. Nowhere in this bill is the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act referenced. By the literal and strict reading of this bill, monies could be raised under the auspices of a recall petition. Let's say that we have a union that wants to raise \$100,000 and donate all of that to a petition to perhaps remove a member of this Assembly. Now, that petition fails, that money is put in trust, and that union says: you know, I'd like to see that money flow directly to the New Democratic Party. According to this bill, that's exactly what can happen.

Let's say that a wealthy individual wants to organize a recall petition and donate that money to a registered political party, any registered political party. More troubling, we turn to the very last page of this bill, section 16(1), penalties. If any of the rules in this bill are contravened, particularly the sections that relate to chief financial officers and other areas, if they're found to be guilty of that offence, they're fined a maximum of \$10,000. Well, let's say that we have this wealthy individual who puts in \$100,000 – by the way, no disclosure of who that wealthy individual or that corporation or that union is, which contravenes the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. They put \$100,000 into a campaign which they know is going to fail because that wasn't the purpose. The purpose wasn't really to recall the MLA; the purpose was to find a way around the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. But they do none of the things that they're required to do under this bill. They're fined \$10,000, they've put in \$100,000, which are now directed into a political party or a constituency association, and they're \$90,000 ahead.

There are significant, significant problems with this bill. Section 10(2) says that all expenses must be recorded by the campaign and that the chief financial officer must incur recall petition expenses, but section 10(3) says: "with respect to the personal recall expenses of an authorized participant." What's a personal recall expense versus a campaign expense? That's unclear. That's terminology I've never seen before and that I don't believe exists in the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. I'd be happy to stand corrected if, in fact, that's the case.

There are significant problems with the form and structure of the bill, and while I think it may be tempting on democratic principles to want to have recall in Alberta, I know of no other jurisdiction except British Columbia in the entire Commonwealth that has recall. Now, I could be corrected on that. If some hon. members want to correct me on that, I'm certainly happy to be corrected.

I have significant concerns with the concept of recall in principle. It's not the way our democracy works. There are opportunities for Albertans to have their say, and that opportunity occurs once every four years, frankly, whether we like the current situation or not. I can assure you that there were plenty of times in my lifetime when I haven't liked the situation very much, to the point where I chose to stand for election, as each and every one of us has done. That is the way the system works. In fact, I think, Madam Speaker, what I like about our system is the fact that there is that stability. In a majority government situation we're not in constant campaign mode, and I think that what we would have should this bill pass is exactly that.

I think I've made all the points that I wanted to make. With that, I will sit and say that I cannot support Bill 201.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

3:20

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak in favour of Bill 201. I think that this is an important piece of legislation when it comes to ensuring that people have access to democracy, and I'd like to just spend a little bit of time chatting. You know, our critics will say: "Oh, you don't like the current government. This is a case of sour grapes."

[The Speaker in the chair]

Well, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. This is not about recalling the Member for Banff-Cochrane. This is not about recalling any particular member in the Assembly. This is about providing access to democracy. This has been a long-standing policy of the members of the Wildrose. In fact, one of our founding principles was just this, finding ways to ensure that politicians are significantly more accountable between elections to their constituents.

While my good friend the independent Member for Calgary-Elbow, my good friend at the end of this side of the House, would like to make statements like "We'll be in constant campaign mode," I think that if we look at other jurisdictions that have recall, it's just not true. British Columbia, for example, isn't in constant campaign mode, and I can tell you that there are a lot of people in British Columbia that aren't happy with the current government. But the point is that the very presence of recall requires politicians and elected officials to be more accountable to their constituents. That is exactly why members of this Assembly should be supporting it, because if they believe in being more accountable, more transparent, then they ought to believe in recall.

I would also just like to mention that in conversations that I've had with colleagues on this side of the Assembly – and I would hesitate to speak for them all – I know that it was the intention of the mover to try and get this bill right. So if the threshold is the big hang-up, I would suggest that we and he would be open to amendments. If there are loopholes in the financing of petitions and recalls, I would suggest that we and he are open to amendments. This isn't about the opposition passing a piece of legislation. This isn't about us trying to score political points. This is a long-held belief of many folks that we represent, that MLA recall is a positive way to ensure accountability and transparency to the constituents and to the people of Alberta.

I might just add further to the comments from my colleague that when it comes to the threshold, 66 per cent of all those who cast ballots in the previous election is in response to some of the concerns when the previous Bill 206 had been tabled and, unfortunately, was unable to be debated here in the Assembly. Now, while members who, I might suggest, might not be the right people would like to say that we're just rehashing ideas, things that have already come before the Assembly, in fact this recall legislation has never been debated in the House in the last number of years. So this gives a good opportunity to talk about some important issues when it comes to democracy and accountability with Albertans, and here we have a change from the initial bill because we're listening to Albertans, and the threshold was a concern to some.

We've heard that in some constituencies the threshold would only be 5,000 or 6,000 petitioners, but in others we see a significant amount of requirement when it comes to petitioners. For example, in Edmonton-Gold Bar, one of the highest voter turnouts in the

whole province, with over 22,000 voters, it would take 14,000 petitioners to initiate recall. In Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, with just over 20,000, it would take more than 13,000. To get those 13,000 signatures in just 60 days works out to be over 200 people a day signing the petition. This is a significant effort. For Edmonton-Strathcona it would be over 10,000, and for Calgary-Hays, the leader of the third party, it would be over 11,000 signatures. The point is that there is a significant effort that would be required.

The other important factor that this threshold would provide that just a percentage of the voters list doesn't is that it places importance on every vote and would encourage, in my opinion, voter turnout in the general election. Politicians and elected officials who have done a good job would be more inclined to do a number of tasks that would increase voter turnout that, in turn, should a recall petition ever be launched, then would require even more work. So there is a dual benefit of requirement on petitioners in that the voter turnout is likely going to be higher because for all elected folks or those running for office, it's of benefit to ensure that voter turnout is high.

So it would be my hope that in some of the other constituencies that have been highlighted this afternoon, the turnout would actually be increased, and as a result a recall would be more difficult or the threshold would be higher than the numbers pointed out by the independent member.

There are a vast number of good reasons for recall, many of which we've laid out. I just want to reiterate as I wrap up here that this isn't about recalling a particular member or the government. It's about a long-standing belief held by the Wildrose Official Opposition of being more accountable, more transparent, and giving the people of Alberta more of a voice to hold their members accountable. Certainly, we've seen in just the previous government that there would have likely been a significant change in behaviour of many of those members who certainly made some poor decisions, and as a result recall in place may have stemmed some of that. The long-standing belief on behalf of many of our members: this is a great way to provide more access to democracy.

I would just end with: if members of the Assembly haven't been involved in activity that is scandalous, if they have been busy meeting the needs of their constituents, if they are listening to the people of Alberta, there is no reason to be concerned about recall, and it's exactly what I'll be working on in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, ensuring that the good people there are represented well. I consider it an honour to come into the Chamber every day and represent them, and I will do my best to ensure that they would never have a need to enact such legislation. But I also believe, Mr. Speaker, that they should have the ability to fire me if I'm doing the exact opposite of that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity today to rise and speak to Bill 201, the Election Recall Act. I think we should maybe consider calling this the Election Redo Act, but I'll speak to that in a few minutes.

Mr. Speaker, during the election in 2015 Albertans were presented with a number of different platforms by various parties, and on May 5, 2015, everyone had the same opportunity to vote in support of the platform that they felt best represented their beliefs or where they felt the direction of the province should go. It's a democratic process that repeats itself every four years. Obviously, it needs to be repeated here yet again, that Albertans chose a government that will make decisions in a responsible way and one that is not willing to leave people behind. They chose an NDP government. Yet here we are again debating how to change the

democratic process into something that – well, if we don't like the results, then let's come up with something else to just simply hijack the process.

3:30

**Mr. Smith:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** There's a point of order.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if the opposition would actually speak to the point of recall. This is not a bill that is talking about a general election or how the results of a general election come together. This side and the person that brought forward this bill completely agree with the fact that general elections choose MLAs, choose governments. This bill is about recalling those members that have not been doing their job, that have not been speaking for their people. So it would be nice if he would address those issues, please.

**The Speaker:** Any comments on the point of order raised by the member?

**Mr. Carlier:** Yeah, Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. I believe that the member is speaking on the bill. It's in relation to the entire democratic process that we enjoy as a parliamentary system in Canada, and he should continue on with his line.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, your point is well taken.

I would ask the member, however, to get to the point. I believe that's where you were intending to go. I would urge you to get there sooner.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Nielsen:** As has already been pointed out by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, it's the third time in six years that we have seen the Wildrose opposition bringing forward this type of distracting legislation. You might be asking, Mr. Speaker, why I call this distracting legislation. Well, instead of working on how to navigate through this economic downturn and concentrating on things that matter to Albertans, like diversification and job creation, we're getting ready to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money on unnecessary by-elections because they're not happy that they didn't win. Overturning election results will not get Albertans back to work. For an opposition that does claim to be such fiscal hawks, rather than working collaboratively to propose solutions, they are solely intent on overturning these election results and spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on these costly by-elections.

Mr. Speaker, this government has already taken steps to specifically address democratic accountability with the passing of Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta, banning the corporate and union donations. But it didn't end there, which is why the all-party ethics and accountability committee was formed. Contrary to the transparency and accountability shown by this government, Bill 201 is an attempt by the members opposite to put corporate money back into politics: the \$5,000 process; the petition can come from anywhere; and the campaign to get those signatures can be corporately financed. They are trying to find a way around no corporate, no union donations, and this would be the first step in that plan to do it. This bill proves that the Official Opposition thinks

corporate money belongs in politics, and they obviously can't be trusted to do what they say they will.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's time for the Official Opposition to stop taking its orders from the Kudatah folks. Rather than trying to find ways to have a do-over of the last election, maybe they should be spending their time presenting constructive alternatives and contributions that work with government to ensure that the needs of all Albertans are taken care of. Mind you, this, of course, would mean having to address some of the social issues in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I don't see how Bill 201, the Election Recall Act, does anything to support democracy and political engagement. Rather than being a tool to hold MLAs accountable during election periods, this legislation will pave the way for special-interest groups to hijack the political process and create even more political discourse in this province.

The all-party Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, Mr. Speaker, has a mandate to discuss this exact type of legislative proposal. They are currently engaging with Albertans on changes to our democratic institutions, and we should let this committee do its work. Quite frankly, this bill distracts from that mandate and the work that is already being done.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's no secret that voter turnout has been in decline for the last several years, and we need to do better to engage voters. But this bill will set a floor of only 66 per cent of previous votes cast rather than a majority of the electorate. It feels like one of the intentions of this bill is to exclude people simply because they didn't vote the last time. Given that it's Commonwealth Day, with a message of inclusiveness, this bill falls a little bit short on that point.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, this bill would allow in some cases fewer than 6,000 signatures to overturn the results of an election. Great news if you're trying to exclude people. If I may use the example of Lesser Slave Lake, in the May 5 election there were 20,227 eligible voters. Unfortunately, only 9,057 ballots were cast. This means that under the proposed legislation only 5,977 signatures – I'll say that again: 5,977 signatures – would be required to overturn that election result and create a \$250,000 by-election. A minority of people allowed to make decisions for the majority: again, great news if you're looking to exclude people.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are expecting much more from this Assembly than useless discussions on how we can get election do-overs because the Official Opposition didn't win. I cannot support this bill in any way, and I urge everyone else to do so as well. I think there are much bigger things that we should be spending our time on and are expected to be spending our time on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of Bill 201, the Election Recall Act. Recall of elected members has been a core western Canadian, small "c" conservative principle for over a generation now. Every once in a while, in spite of nomination contests, party vetting, and elections the electorate will elect a dud to office. Finding out that your MLA is a dud can be very disappointing. It is particularly galling when the elected MLA won't do the right thing and resign. It is a privilege to be an MLA. Some are reluctant to do what's right in spite of whatever scandal, investigation, criminal act, or dishonourable action is conducted. Winning an election shouldn't give an MLA immunity from a performance review for four years. Four years is a long period, and there are not too many jobs where employers have no recourse for improper actions of their employees, like sitting MLAs enjoy.

Albertans are their bosses and should be afforded the ability for corrective actions.

The only province currently to implement recall is British Columbia, and it was the B.C. NDP under Mike Harcourt in 1995 who brought in recall, feeling duty bound by a referendum on the topic initiated by the Social Credit Party. Although recall can be considered a small “c” conservative principle, it was Harcourt’s NDP government that also supported this principle. British Columbia has lived with recall for 20 years and has had the distinction of having 26 recall petitions launched. Only five ever made it back to Elections BC for verification. Four petitions did not have enough valid signatures.

Around 1998 the Liberal MLA for Parksville-Qualicum was accused of writing letters to newspapers under assumed names, praising himself and attacking political opponents. A Parksville newspaper had asked a former RCMP handwriting expert to compare a sample of the MLA’s handwriting to that of letters to the editor submitted by a Warren Betanko. The newspaper then ran a story entitled *MLA . . . Is a Liar, and We Can Prove It*. The MLA was ejected from the B.C. Liberal caucus although he chose to remain as a Member of the B.C. Legislative Assembly. He resigned his legislative seat on June 23, 1998, when a recall petition led by Mark Allan Robinson had enough signatures from the electorate and was about to be certified. Can you imagine having a situation like that in Alberta and having no recourse?

3:40

A long time ago Alberta had recall legislation. It was during the time of the Social Credit government of William Aberhart. As soon as the legislation was used directly against the sitting Premier, however, the legislation was retroactively repealed from the books lest the Social Credit lose their leader. With the third party’s past issues with leaders it’s no surprise that one of their MLAs spoke against recall earlier. With the possibility of recall it makes government more accountable and ensures that MLAs have the freedom to stand up for their communities’ best interests.

Some Canadian elites have mocked recall. Perhaps scandal provides fodder for newspapers and content for social media, but – make no mistake, Mr. Speaker – elected officials deal in serious matters, and recall is a serious matter, not to be taken lightly. That is why Wildrose has placed some hurdles in the proposed legislation to ensure that a recall drive is not a frivolous, vexatious, or nuisance act. A petition could not be started until 18 months into the term, and an MLA could only be subject to recall one time in a term, so the NDP MLAs, that have just been elected 10 months ago, wouldn’t have anything to worry about for at least eight months.

Again, a \$5,000 application fee to the Chief Electoral Officer being required to start a petition is a hurdle that many will think twice about before launching a recall drive. Most people do not have \$5,000 lying around to launch a recall drive. It will take time to raise the money. In contrast, B.C. only has a \$50 requirement, making our proposal much more challenging.

Then there is the requirement to obtain physical signatures of electors from that constituency within a 60-day period. It will not be an easy feat to obtain physical signatures of eligible voters in a constituency equalling 66 per cent of ballots cast in the previous election. For a petition drive to succeed, the petitioners would have to be well organized and the MLA’s offence would have to be quite serious.

In addition, no canvassers can be paid in any way, preventing wealthy groups and special-interest groups from having undue influence and ensuring that the campaign is truly grassroots. Canvassers must be Albertans, ensuring that groups from other provinces don’t meddle in provincial affairs. As you see, Mr.

Speaker, these are good hurdles to disallow any frivolous, vexatious, or nuisance recall drives.

If an MLA is doing their job and they respect the office that they have been elected to, they have nothing to fear from recall. Recall is an emergency valve in democracy in order to restore dignity and honour to the elected offices. An MLA need not fear recall if he stands for the values, ideals, and people that elected them to represent their constituents. Recall would also make backbench MLAs less inclined to quietly toe the party line when unpopular, dishonest, or irresponsible policies are being implemented by leadership.

Former MLA Paul Hinman summed it up nicely when speaking in the House on the version of the Recall Act, Bill 208, that he presented in 2010.

In conclusion, this bill is about ensuring that the people of Alberta are the ones holding the power and that when elected representatives no longer represent the people, they have a process that allows them to remove politicians with hidden agendas who are not putting the interests of the people first. Recall is the only 24/7 way to hold elected people accountable and in check. If we want people to be engaged in politics, then they must be empowered.

I trust that my colleagues in the opposition and the benches of the governing majority will support this honourable piece of legislation. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood :** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak against Bill 201 and the intentions of the bill. For an opposition party that claims to be fiscally responsible, rather than working collaboratively to produce solutions, they seem solely intent on overturning democratic elections instead of getting Alberta back to work. If this bill were passed, progress would not happen. This legislation is intended just to bog down the Legislature in democratic process. This bill has been tabled by an opposition party that can’t move past May 5 of last year, which sometimes seems like a huge leap forward in time given recent statements by some members.

When this government was elected, it ran on a solid platform that spoke to the will of the people. We committed to creating a mature, resilient, diversified 21st-century economy. We committed to working to restore honest and open government. We committed to protect vital public services like health care and education. We committed to restoring a progressive income tax structure. The government you see here today was chosen by the people of Alberta because they knew the issues, and the government was elected democratically. This government works to do things that would move our province ahead.

Instead of working together on the issues that really matter to Albertans like economic diversification and job creation, this bill and the members opposite are distracting from the issues that Albertan families expect a government to focus on. The members opposite would prevent this government from diversifying Alberta’s markets through supporting value-added markets with our new petrochemical diversification program, a program that will spur billions in investment.

They would prevent us from doing anything about climate change. NASA has all of the evidence a person would need to show that climate change is real and that we do contribute to it. This opposition would continue to risk the health of children and seniors due to the burning of coal, which puts NOx and SOx, nitrous oxide and sulfur dioxide, into the air and have no plan on how to transition towards clean and renewable energy. That research, if the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler would like to look at it for himself,

can be googled. I am sure that the LAO has supplied the hon. member with a smart phone.

They would have this government reverse the reinstatement of funding that saw to the needs of a growing student population, that needs teachers to go along with them, and would work to remove a government that has committed to stable funding for our hard-fought health care system.

Mr. Speaker, this government ran on a platform of honest and open governance, and the first act of this government was the passing of Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta, banning all corporate and union donations. Prior to these changes our political system had been far, far too dependent on funds from a narrow range of donors with deep pockets and far too removed from the interests of ordinary people. Now, for a second time, the members opposite present a bill that puts corporate money back into politics. The \$5,000 can come from anywhere, and the campaign to get the signatures can be corporately financed. They are trying to get a way around corporate and union donations, and this would be the first step in their plan to do it. This bill proves the Official Opposition thinks corporate money belongs in politics. Our government under leadership of the Premier created the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, whose mandate is to review the legislation governing democratic processes in Alberta and is currently engaging Albertans on these exact issues.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite could not connect with enough voters to form government, and they're trying to get a do-over. The matters they spoke about did not resonate with voters. As the economy started to take a hit last winter and spring, all the opposition could talk about was lowering taxes. They had no plan to create jobs. They had no commitment to protect all of the work that had been done by teachers, nurses, and the previous government to undo the Klein cuts of the '90s. At the time we had a government that had fallen out of favour and out of touch with voters and an Official Opposition with no clear plan on how to improve the economy or how to protect the services that Albertans rely on.

What people did pick was a government that had a clear plan, laid out in our platform, that clearly reverberated through the whole election. Me standing here in this House is proof positive of that. I intend like everyone else here to run during the next election on a four-year record.

**3:50**

Mr. Speaker, there will be legislation that is popular with some and unpopular with others, but we do so with accountability, knowing that we will be judged according to what we hoped to do versus what we accomplished. I stand proud in this House that I supported farm worker safety legislation. I can go to work knowing that as of January 1 of this year farm workers can expect workers' compensation if they are injured or, God forbid, if someone is killed. Their family will have something to help them pay the bills. I can hold my head high knowing that occupational health and safety for the first time has the ability to investigate a serious accident like someone breaking their back, losing their arm, or losing their life. We can take that information, and we can actually use it to inform policy that will ultimately help everyone. I can be proud that for the first time in history farm workers will not have to worry about having no legal recourse if there are bad employment and labour practices.

As a province collaborating between producers, commissions, and experts in the field, we will create a floor that provides a minimum set of standards that farm workers can count on to protect them. This is how we create social change, when someone has the courage to stick their neck out and take the heat to fight for the

rights of others. If we were judged on a recall basis, task to task, we would never have the ability to fight for those bold changes that, while controversial, are necessary to create a fair and just society.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important pieces of legislation we have is the institution of publicly funded health care. Powerful interests fought against this bold and, at the time, provocative move from Tommy Douglas. Ninety per cent of doctors went on strike, private insurance providers spoke out against it, and \$114,000 in 1962 money was spent to spread propaganda, making threats of doctors leaving the province and threats of having out-of-country doctors come here to practise. This is exactly the type of chaos that Bill 201 would create. I will tell you that without out-of-country doctors choosing to move to Alberta and choosing our rural communities as their home that we wouldn't have access to proper medical care. Out-of-country doctors were once upon a time some sort of terrible threat, a threat that shows that with time social attitudes change, as evidenced by the support for Bill 7, which enshrined the rights of gender identity and gender expression as rights no one can discriminate against.

Attitudes progress over time but only with the work of those prepared to stand up for what is right. That work can't be done when the person prepared to argue is under the threat of powerful interests that would take a person's democratically elected seat away, these recall attempts and public smearing through paid advertisement and personal abuse by those empowered through the new double-edged sword of social media. Mr. Speaker, this opposition continues in its attempts to sow fear and dissension within Alberta instead of finding constructive solutions that would bring hope to those same people.

Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that included in this bill are details pertaining to fundraising. Under section 13 it includes that a report must be made to the Chief Electoral Officer of what the amounts of donations and contributions are and that after the recall campaign any leftover funds are put into trust. But then this person who has initiated the campaign may direct that same Chief Electoral Officer to transfer these funds to a registered political party, a registered constituency association, or a candidate, or all of them. What this would suggest to any thinking person is that this legislation is not intended to hold an elected member of this Assembly to account but is intended to be used as a campaign fundraising tool for opposition parties to help build their war chest for the next election.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I have to think about small communities, that hinge on very intricate social relationships and economic relationships. What would I do if I had someone come to my door, that I know has status and power in the community, and they asked for my signature to help vacate the seat of my local MLA? If I sign it, I could potentially feel that I am undermining someone I support, that I may have voted for. But if I don't sign it, then this person at the door may use that information as ammunition against me at my parents' group at the school or they could discourage patronage at my business. Every voter has the right to privacy when it comes to who they choose on the ballot, and I fear that this puts that fundamental aspect of democracy at risk.

And if we were to adopt this, why stop at one recall? Why not just use public funds to recall each . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about one of my favourite things. That is democracy. I'm one of the

unique examples of democracy. I'm a new Canadian, and since I immigrated, I have had amazing opportunities in Alberta, one of which was to pursue a political career. Even though I was not born a Canadian citizen, I was granted the ability to run for political office. The reason I was able to run for this office is because of democracy.

I came here from the largest democracy in the world, but there democracy works differently. You need lots of money and muscle power to be appointed as a candidate in an election. Here in Alberta democracy actually works, and sometimes it works differently here, too. So I'm not an accidental MLA. My life was put on display for all of Calgary-Foothills. I ran three times to get here. My record as a professional engineer working in the energy sector was examined and compared to my competitors. The knowledge that I was born in a different country was well known. My work and participation in the community was another determining factor in voters' minds. With all of this information, it was decided that I would be the best person to represent the people of Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Speaker, you may be wondering why I am telling you all this. I'm coming to the point. I'm going to talk about just this bill. I'm not going to talk about – circling about all other things like Bill 201 and all and which has no details. That's some of the reason, you know, so that people have an option to recall their legislators when they bring in the wrong bills and they are doing a disservice to Albertans.

Because I have led the people of Calgary-Foothills to believe that I would be the best choice as a representative of their concerns, I have led them to believe that I represent their values, both social and economic, the best out of all the candidates. If I start to show the people of Calgary-Foothills that I lied, then what recourse do they really have? Do they have to wait for four years, for three and a half years to un-elect me, or should we empower them with options? That's what I'm talking about. If I went back on my promises to the voters, then the voters have no recourse under the current laws. The people of Calgary-Foothills are stuck with me until another election is called or I vacate that position. They should be able to give me a job performance review more than once every four years.

The people of Calgary-Foothills could protest on the steps of this Legislature and demand my resignation, or they could sign petition after petition to stop me from passing legislation they never agreed to, or they could write letter after letter asking me to reconsider bills, legislation, or suggestions that they do not want me to pass. We have seen, Mr. Speaker, what happened on Bill 6, how much people had to struggle to come here, driving hours and hours to come to this Legislature and to make their voice heard. We can make it easier for people, but with the way Alberta's electoral system works, none of that would matter. Once I am elected, I could do whatever I wanted, propose any legislation I wanted, and if my constituents did not agree with me, there is nothing they could do to stop me other than wait till the next election.

4:00

Of course, I would never go back on my word or pass legislation that would cause my constituents to protest against my decisions. I won't do that, but just for argument's sake – just for argument's sake – if I really screw it up and my constituents are really so unhappy with me that they drive three hours from Calgary to protest on the front steps of the Legislature, they should have some way of channelling that anger, that frustration, that unhappiness into real action. Of course, it should always be peacefully.

One of the reasons I ran under the Wildrose banner, Mr. Speaker, was because of the option to have free votes in the Legislature. These free votes are designed to give an MLA the ability to

represent their constituency in the most accurate way possible. In the same way, voters should be given the option to recall someone who does not vote in the Legislature the way their constituents desire. That is what this legislation is about. Bill 201 puts the power of democracy back in the hands of the people.

I as an elected official should not be able to run rampant with the government's abilities, especially if it goes against people's wishes. Democracy should not only work once in every four years. The people should have the ability to recall an elected official prior to the election if they feel that the MLA they elected has misled them. The legislation is not a threat to the government, as some of the members opposite mentioned. I mean, they made it sound like a coup, that the opposition is trying to destroy the government. It's not true. This legislation is not a threat to the MLAs who represent the people as they want to be represented. When the people elected me, they were given a picture of who I am, where I am from, what I believe, and where I stand on voter issues. If after the election it is discovered that this picture of who I am was photoshopped beyond all recognition, then the people of Calgary-Foothills should have the right to recall me.

I'm not afraid of this legislation. I'm not afraid of being recalled. I gave my constituents the most accurate representation of who I am and what I believe. My constituents know exactly what I will and will not do. There will be no surprises for them in the months and years ahead. I encourage every single MLA in this House who believes that your constituents elected you because of your values, because of your beliefs, and where you stand on voter issues to vote for this bill. If this bill is passed and you are right, that you are doing exactly what your constituents wanted from you, then this bill will never affect any one of us here. But if you are afraid that you turned out to be someone completely different than who your constituents voted for, then vote against this bill. If you know that you're not doing what your constituents elected you to do, then vote against this bill. If you are a photoshopped version of the picture you painted for your constituents, then vote against this bill. If you are everything that your riding voted for, are now doing everything they wanted you to do, then vote for this bill because this bill will only affect those who misrepresented themselves to their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I ask everyone in this House to vote in favour of this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm standing today to speak against Bill 201, Election Recall Act. I'm proud that some of the first actions our government took were the passing of Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta, and the establishment of the all-party Select Special Committee on Ethics and Accountability, of which I am the deputy chair. These two actions are just a few of the steps this government has taken to increase not only accountability but democratic participation as well.

Mr. Speaker, our committee is already hard at work reviewing legislation and recommendations to strengthen our democratic institutions, and we need to let that work continue. This bill before us today is a distraction from those efforts.

Bill 1 banned all union and corporate donations, finally removing big money from Alberta politics and giving all Albertans a stronger voice in their democracy, a voice that for too long had been drowned out. However, this bill before us today strikes me as an attempt to undo that work and, instead, put corporate money back into politics. This bill proves that the Official Opposition thinks that corporate money belongs in politics and that they can't be trusted to do what they say they will.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to point out the irony of this bill. This is an opposition party that, rather than working in collaboration, seems totally intent on overturning the results of a democratic election and, in turn, spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on by-elections instead. Each by-election carries a price tag of around \$250,000. Wouldn't this money be better spent on infrastructure and front-line workers, keeping Albertans working in these tough economic times?

Mr. Speaker, we've all heard some of the dangerous rhetoric going around right now, and this bill seems to me just another attempt to stoke the fear and anger of Albertans. The people of Alberta expect that the opposition should be proposing more constructive solutions to Alberta's economic climate rather than suggesting that we fire teachers and nurses and attempting to overturn the results of an election.

This is not a game where you can have a do-over if you don't like the results, Mr. Speaker. An election is a fair, democratic process, and the Official Opposition should be using their time to put forth constructive alternatives and contributions, working with the government to ensure the needs of all Albertans are met in these tough economic times. The Official Opposition may not like the results of the last election, but like I said, you cannot have continuous do-overs till the candidate you prefer has been elected.

Albertans voted for change last election, and it is a change for the better. During the election our government promised to introduce reforms to our democracy, and we are following through with our promise. This bill does nothing to support democracy and political engagement. During this period of prolonged economic slowdown our government is focused on issues that matter to Albertans, including economic diversification and job creation.

Rather than being a tool to hold MLAs accountable between elections, recall legislation paves the way for special-interest groups to hijack the political process and the political discourse in the province instead. I will not be voting in favour of this bill, and I encourage everyone else in the House to do the same.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise on Bill 201, Election Recall Act, which is fraught with problems, as we've been hearing. Let me reiterate some of what has been said before, but for the record the Liberals put a recall bill before this House three times in the last 20 years, and we can only support this if it was amended substantially.

Most importantly, the caucus should insist that the required signature threshold would be 40 per cent of all electors in a constituency at the time of the last general election. Democratically elected people sometimes don't do the job, so there has to be a mechanism for checks and balances on somebody who simply is not doing the job and may be harming the constituency. But there have to be very strict and well-managed controls on that.

4:10

Additionally, the rules around who may contribute to a recall campaign initiative and in what amount need to be tightened up and brought in line with new and impending political donation rules, which we supported when this government was elected last year. Long before the Wildrose the Alberta Liberals had a lengthy history of championing an accountability mechanism such as this, but we appreciate that there should be a high level of respect for the democratic process and election outcomes. Any system of MLA recall should not be an easy one to achieve. Striking the right balance is key.

Under Bill 201 the number of signatures required will vary from constituency to constituency. In some of the most remote constituencies or some of those constituencies where very low voter turnout is a concern, it doesn't seem reasonable to have such a low bar. For the Liberals, we accept 40 per cent of electors in a constituency at the time of the last general election, the same figures we proposed in 1993 and '96 and which B.C. adopted in 1995.

In the present form Bill 201 could be used to circumvent the new pending political donation rules pursuant to the work now being undertaken by the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee by not placing any limits on donors and donations and allowing excess funds to be transferred to a registered political party or a constituency association or candidate.

At \$5,000 this bill chooses to make the cost of applying for a recall petition the more challenging part of the process. We think the challenging part of the process should be collecting the signatures, not so much the financial barrier. In fact, neither of our two recall bills even proposed a processing fee to be able to apply for a recall petition. In B.C. the recall fee is \$50.

Wildrose has had three different bills, including this one, in the last year, with different rules. I guess I would ask them to think deeply about what it is they're trying to achieve. What Bill 201 effectively means is that it is going to favour certain constituencies, perhaps more rural than urban. It looks somewhat self-serving in that respect. It could be used to circumvent the new spending rules, and the bill is too open ended in terms of its finance suggestions. As written, one could raise unlimited funds from unlimited parties and transfer what remains to a political party.

I can't support the bill as written and will be recommending substantial amendments. I hope the party will be open to those.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always an honour to have the opportunity to stand in this House and provide my insight into the ongoing debate. Today I rise against this bill. Our government is committed to further strengthening our democratic institutions and ensuring that all Albertans are reflected in our decision-making processes.

I happen to be one of several members of this House that currently sit on the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, which has been mandated to discuss these exact types of legislative proposals. We are currently engaging with Albertans on changes to our democratic institutions, and it's important that we permit the committee to continue doing their work. I would simply state that Bill 201 distracts from the mandate and work that is already being done.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk a little bit more about the bill in front of us today. It's well known that voter turnout has been on the decline world-wide for the last several years. Despite this fact, this bill sets a floor of only 66 per cent of the previous votes cast rather than a majority of the electorate. In constituencies where turnout is lower than 50 per cent, this creates a serious problem, allowing even fewer people to have a say in who their representative is. We do not believe that a minority of voters should be allowed to make a decision on behalf of the majority of constituents and overturn the results of our democratic process.

Another aspect of this bill for you and the other members of this House to consider, Mr. Speaker, is that this bill is an attempt to put corporate money back into politics, as many of my colleagues have already stated. They're trying to find a way to get around no corporate and union donations, and this is the first step in their plan to do it. This bill proves that the Official Opposition thinks that



corporate money belongs in politics, and they can't be trusted to do what they say they will do.

Mr. Speaker, the passing of Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta, which banned all union and corporate donations and finally removed big money from Alberta politics, was one of the first steps towards ensuring all Albertans a stronger voice in their democracy. Bill 201 now wants us to take a step backwards. Starting a petition requires a \$5,000 processing fee to the Chief Electoral Officer, and there's nothing that stops corporations and special-interest groups from contributing to that campaign. Instead of strengthening democracy, as the Official Opposition claims, this recall bill would put these same narrow interests back in charge of our political process.

Recall legislation is a distraction from the issues that Alberta families expect their government to be focusing on. Rather than being a tool to hold MLAs accountable in between elections, recall legislation instead paves the way for special-interest groups to hijack the political process and the political discourse in this province. Rather than finding ways to work with government and other constructive criticisms and ideas, recall legislation instead offers an avenue for well-organized, well-funded parties to try and eliminate MLAs they disagree with or even just find irritating to their own particular causes.

During this period of prolonged economic slowdown our government is focused on the issues that matter to Albertans, including economic diversification and job creation. Attempting to overturn the results of an election will not put Albertans back to work. It will instead create more instability in a period of time when Alberta businesses and families need their government to be stabilizing our economy. Our government has a concrete plan to weather this economic downturn that involves putting Albertans back to work through investing in infrastructure projects and diversifying our economy.

One week ago we brought forward a throne speech that lists a lot of very important matters that will help Albertans get through these difficult times. Instead of wanting to debate those matters, the opposition is more interested in navel gazing.

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**Loyola:** Instead, they seem to be interested in spending their time talking about uniting the right and coming up with systems to undo . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, there's a point of order.

#### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, just on sections 23(h), (i), and (j), language likely to create disorder. The hon. member continually has been referring to this piece of legislation as an opposition piece of legislation. I find it quite insulting to the hon. member. This is not an opposition piece of legislation. This is a private member's bill, who was duly elected by his constituents and is doing his very best to represent those constituents. If the member across the aisle would like to refer to the legislation as private members' business, as it is, I'm sure that this could just be a matter of debate.

**The Speaker:** Any other perspectives with respect to this item? The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's just, you know, a matter of wording. I'm sure the member would be okay with adding the opposition "member's" bill.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. member, I think there is some point being made here. I would prefer that you refer to it as a private member's bill because this is private members' business, and it should be, I think, most appropriately referred to in that manner.

If you would proceed.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I retract the statement although I believe on several . . . [interjections] Okay. I retract the statement. I retract the statement.

**An Hon. Member:** Great apology.

**Loyola:** Okay. Well, I am truly and sincerely sorry.

4:20

#### Debate Continued

**Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, each by-election costs about \$250,000. This would be better used and invested in supporting our front-line workers or contributing to infrastructure projects that keep Albertans working during these tough economic times.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members of this House to vote against this bill.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been interesting to listen to the spinmeisters today. They've been very busy. I wasn't exactly sure how they were going to spin this, other than the fact that the best way to convince the electorate that this is something that's not for them is to make it seem like there is some big conspiracy by the Official Opposition. I find that rich. The interesting thing about this is that as I've listened to the arguments here today, it seems to be that everybody got these speaking notes, especially the people of the third party. Yet we didn't get those same speaking notes. So it's interesting that they had an interesting way of approaching this.

What I'd like to do is I'd like to be able to stand in favour of this bill. The person who actually first introduced me to this concept is from my riding, and we've had many conversations about this issue. He said that one of the things you can do to be able to help people – if you become government, the first thing you should do is that you should introduce a recall bill because what that will do is it will help people understand that you are not there to rule from the top down but that you are there to rule for the people.

Yet I think what's interesting is that if we were on that side of the House, I really question if we were to have introduced this bill in the first days of our governance whether or not the House members on that side, if they were on this side, would vote for it, whether they would support it. Would they say that, no, this is not something that's acceptable? I really doubt that they would be opposed to it. I really doubt it. I would ask the members from the opposite side to think about that and to remember that four years will be up and at some point you could be on this side. If that was the case, what would you do in that situation? Would you support it or not?

I am grateful to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for presenting this bill. When it was first introduced, last session, we heard a lot that it was not presented in a way that would be palatable to the members here, so there was great work done to be able to make it more palatable.

Each of us in this place today is here as a result of the ballots cast by our constituents. The decisions we make here affect Albertans greatly. Their jobs, their finances, their schools, their livelihoods, and their property rights are all potentially impacted by what is done and decided here. Yet there is something profoundly wrong, Mr.

Speaker, with the fact that anyone in Alberta can return and exchange an appliance that doesn't perform to expectations, but they can't do so with something so important as an MLA.

We have an obligation to respect the wishes of our constituents not just on election day but every day that we sit in this House, Mr. Speaker. That's what this legislation is about, and that's why I support it. At a time of worry and uncertainty like this, when the unemployment rate in this province is now at its highest level in 20 years, it's particularly important that we always stand for our communities' best interests. I believe that this is in the communities' best interests. Simply put, our constituents are our employers.

This shouldn't be news to anyone. We were willing to put our names forward on election day, and we should be willing to put our names forward every day that we sit in this House. We should never be ashamed of the fact that we are doing what we're supposed to be doing in this House, and if our record is true to what we campaigned on, then we should never have any problems with this bill. The ballots cast in elections should not be a *carte blanche* to do as we please over the course of four years. We were elected based upon the promises we made in our campaigns. Winning an election shouldn't make politicians immune from job performance reviews for four years.

The possibility for recall makes governments more accountable to Albertans and ensures that we have the motivation to stand up for our communities' best interests. Nobody in this place should be insulated from the needs of their constituents – never – and if election promises are broken or the person engages in inappropriate conduct, those who voted should be able to say: this is not what we voted for.

We have seen over the last 10 months where many people throughout this province have said: we are not happy with what's going on. They have tried every way they can, Mr. Speaker. They have tried to write letters. They have tried to sign petitions. They have tried to come to the Legislature, to speak through blow horns. They have tried everything they can to help this legislative body know their will, yet those things seem to have fallen on deaf ears. Now they have asked us, the elected representatives for their constituencies, to represent them once again, to bring forward a bill so that they can have the opportunity to be able to say what they think so that these legislators will listen. I don't think that it's a difficult thing to ask for.

Now, of course, as we also know, there is a cost to taxpayers that comes from having a by-election and there is a cost that constituents face when they don't have an MLA for a period of time and, thus, have nobody standing in this place on their behalf such as when a member resigns or, should this bill pass, if an MLA is recalled. That's why I'm pleased to see that my colleague's bill has important safeguards in place to ensure that electoral recall does not become a right that is open to abuse and various distracting measures.

A successful petition would require the physical signatures of eligible voters in a riding equalling 66 per cent of ballots cast in the last election. It's pretty hard to get 66 per cent of people to agree on much, never mind get them to physically sign off on a petition for it. This is a substantial threshold – we realize that that threshold was not met the last time and that it needed to be increased – and it helps ensure that a recall represents the will of constituencies.

A recall petition could not begin until 18 months after an election. This discourages postelection knee-jerk reactions that are not based on the actual job performance of an elected member. Petition signatures can only be acquired within a 60-day period. This, too, is a barrier but ensures that MLAs won't have a petition hanging over their heads for too long. Starting a petition requires a \$5,000

processing fee for the Chief Electoral Officer. This discourages frivolous nuisance attempts at recall.

If successful, a recall petition would force a by-election where the unseated MLA would be eligible to run. This negates the government's comments that minorities should not be able to rule what the majority do. They would still be able to run in an election, and if this was not the will of the electorate, then they would get in again. And an MLA could only be recalled once in a term. Many U.S. states have recall provisions, but British Columbia is the only province with recall legislation here in Canada. It is used very sparingly, not commonly as those opposed to this bill may believe.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that time and again in our history we have seen the interests of Albertans take a back seat to the political class. We saw it once when a one-time cabinet minister awarded a \$400,000 consulting contract to his recently departed staffer, for which there was no physical work produced, paid for by the taxpayers. And let's not forget the misuse of government aircraft or the lavish Premier's suite constructed on top of the provincial government's federal building beside this place, a sky palace, a shrine to excesses of the political class, paid for by the taxpayers.

Voters had clearly had enough of that type of government by the time of this last election, and the continual contempt they felt led to a new government. Perhaps, had recall been in place over the last decade, voters could have kept that last government from getting so out of touch with Albertans. We will never know. But my point is that the MLAs in this House should not look at recall as a threat but as a tool which can keep MLAs and, in particular, their caucus leadership in touch with what our constituents want.

I've heard the argument once today – and I would like to state it again – that backbenchers on the opposite side would not vote for some of these bills coming forward if in their ridings they would pay for it. So I believe that's something that would definitely empower backbencher MLAs. If we are the place that we proclaim to be, an Assembly that represents the people of this great province from the top to the bottom and everywhere in between and beyond, then we cannot have a political class that rules as it sees fit without consequences between elections.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is so important to make sure that every person in this House, every elected legislator has the ability to represent their constituents, their ridings, and their ridings' interests. The interest of . . . [Mr. Hunter's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:30

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think it was quite interesting to hear from the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, who talked about this being a Wildrose policy that they campaigned on and earlier said in a member's statement – and I apologize if this is not verbatim as I've not had the chance to see the *Hansard* Blues yet – to put policies in place that make us succeed that are not based on an ideology. It seems almost contradictory on my impression, anyway.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill, and I don't need to remind the House of the cost that's associated with running a by-election. We've thrown around the number of up to \$250,000. Need I remind the members of this House that the members to my left, which sounds weird, who are supporting this bill, campaigned in the last election against the previous government's calling an early election due to the costs associated with that election? Now we're here in this position, where they're talking about spending extra money on by-elections.

Now, I'm also very concerned about the requirements for collecting the signatures under this proposed law. Under this proposed law this will have the Chief Electoral Officer potentially contacting every single person and confirming that they did in fact consent and sign this petition, not to mention that the Chief Electoral Officer will be responsible for cross-referencing these individuals to ensure that they voted in that specific riding in the last election. If Elections Alberta did not confirm with these people, I'd be very concerned about the potential issue of fraud occurring in these by-elections.

In Calgary, Mr. Speaker, we have seen in the past few years issues related to fraud in regard to the democratic process. When I lived in ward 10, I saw fraud first-hand as allegations were made about an individual requesting ballots on someone else's behalf. This led to a court battle, where the city ended up picking up some of the costs, a councillor resigning, and a new election being called, having extensive costs to the taxpayers in Calgary. We have also been hearing new allegations about people misleading individuals to sign petitions in Calgary opposing the southwest transitway.

It is important for the sake of transparency that we remove any opportunity people have to extort our electoral system. This also puts our elected officials into a position where they could be subject to blackmail if a trade union during a contract negotiation, a businessman who's putting a contract to tender, or an unhappy fringe group who can't manage spell-check properly could all try to force an elected official's hand by threatening to recall them.

I am troubled that this may be the hon. member's way to get around Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta, that we all passed unanimously through the House, which is supported by all members. I suspect that this is indicated by the fact that a \$5,000 price tag is required for this process, which would prevent everyday Albertans from participating in this electoral process. In Bill 1 corporate and union donations are banned from the political process, and this bill before us today is an attempt to reverse this decision. Instead of strengthening our democracy, as the members to my left claim, this recall bill would put the same narrow interests that we worked so hard to remove back in the political process. Our government is committed to further strengthening our democratic institutions, and we're ensuring that all Albertans are reflected in our decision-making.

Now, I also must remind us, Mr. Speaker, that last week we had the Speech from the Throne, and it reminds us that we are all members of the Crown. With that being said, I am extremely concerned that this may contradict our Westminster model, which outlines that the Queen, who is the head of the state through the Lieutenant Governor, has the power to dissolve the Legislature. This was reinforced in the verdict of Engel versus Prentice last March, when Tom Engel attempted to prevent an early election from occurring due to fixed election dates that were proposed and passed through this House. The judge ruled against Engel, stating, "Nothing in this section affects the powers of the Lieutenant Governor, including the power to dissolve the Legislature, in Her Majesty's name, when the Lieutenant Governor sees fit."

While B.C. has recall legislation, with 26 attempts there has never been a successful recall application, and some of these applications have dealt with heavy irregularities. I feel that if one of them ever became successful in B.C., it would be tied up in lengthy court proceedings and that the rule would be overturned, with a similar verdict to that which we saw in the Engel versus Prentice case.

I'm also a little unsettled that the members who sit in the Official Opposition continue to bring this concept forward when we need to work towards finding ways to diversify our economy, create jobs, and work on challenging social issues. The members next to me say

that they have a plan, but I consistently see the subject avoided when they have an opportunity to bring it forward.

We as a Legislative Assembly have already started working towards creating more accountability with the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, which I am excited to now sit on. This select special committee has a mandate to discuss these types of legislative proposals. The committee is currently engaged with Albertans on changing our democratic institutions, and we need to let this committee continue to do this work. This bill distracts from the mandate of work that is already being done.

Like the Member for Calgary-Elbow said, we already have a system in place for recall, and it's called a general election. It is why I'm the Member for Calgary-Shaw and not the member before me. I am very concerned that this practice could tie up important work that needs to be done with battles over recalls and by-elections, and that is why I'm urging all Members of this Legislative Assembly to vote against this bill.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand today and speak on Bill 201, especially, I think, from the point of view of someone who's been very interested in parliamentary democracy for most of his life. I will tell you that there are a number of things about the bill that trouble me, and there are also a number of things about the proposal, about the discussion in general, which I have to say has gotten a little off the track on a number of issues.

I want to state from the outset, though, that I understand the concept that our electors are our bosses. I want to make that very clear to members on both sides of the House, because I think we all know this. The question really becomes: exactly how do they exercise that influence? It really comes down to a debate between the delegate versus the trustee form of representation. I am an ardent supporter of the trustee form of representation. I know that the delegate form of representation is the form that is more commonly used in the United States, but in my view and certainly in the view of most parliamentary democracies around the British Commonwealth it is the trustee form of representation that has won out.

I'm concerned that this bill will drive us towards even more short-term thinking when we consider things, and the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville made a good point, in that sometimes there is a requirement to take a stand on things, and those stands can sometimes be unpopular. Sometimes it takes great courage to take those stands because it is those stands that move the social progress of our societies forward. I would personally be very concerned that there might be less likelihood to take courageous but unpopular stands if there was a possibility of being recalled at such a low threshold, as low as 27 per cent of the electors in some ridings if you apply the 66 per cent to the actual turnout in some of the ridings.

You know, there's a quote from James Freeman Clarke that really resonates with me, and it goes like this: politicians think about the next election; statesmen think about the next generation. Our job in this Chamber, ladies and gentlemen, is not to just think about the next election, and it's certainly not to think about what will avoid getting us recalled in the middle of a term. Our job is to build this province, not for the next five years or 10 years but the next 50 years or 100 years, like the people whose portraits hang on the walls outside did consistently. That's our job. We have to understand that our time here may be very finite, but indeed our job is to think about that next generation. I'm concerned that this legislation will in fact promote short-term rather than long-term thinking.

4:40

I'm also concerned about the mechanics of this. Now, Mr. Speaker, recall is something – and we'll talk a little bit about our neighbouring province, British Columbia, that has recall – that is primarily an American construct. Nineteen of the states in the U.S. have recall. Six of 26 Swiss cantons have recall. It was put in place somewhere between 1846 and 1892, the thresholds are vastly different, and it has never once successfully recalled a state or a cantonal representative within the canton system in Switzerland.

Now, in the United States the experience has been a little bit different. I give the example – and this is, to me, a strong argument against recall – of the city of Covina, California. In Covina they had recall legislation for their municipal council. Now, the municipal council brought in a 6 per cent tax increase in order to keep essential services going. There was a recall of those municipal councillors. They were all recalled and replaced by a new council, led in large part by the folks that ran the recall legislation. When those folks actually got into a position of government and found out what the books actually were and found out what the cost of the essential services actually was and that there would be 43 layoffs if they, in fact, went ahead and didn't go ahead with the tax increase, they went ahead and increased the taxes, not this time by 6 per cent but by 8.25 per cent because of the loss of intervening time. So you tell me how recall served the people of Covina in that situation. To me, it didn't serve them at all.

You know, the mechanics of recall really run contrary to our British parliamentary system. In fact, in British Columbia in 2003 – and I'm actually surprised that the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon didn't sort of do some more research on this because there's an excellent review of the British Columbia recall. It's in a 71-page report that he published in 2003. I'll table the document tomorrow. He says on page 13:

The Select Standing Committee noted that recall is "alien to our parliamentary system of government and posed special problems if it was to be integrated effectively into our legislative system."

It found that the concept of recall was highly complex and required careful consideration to the practical challenges of implementing recall in British Columbia.

There are some other problems with recall that this report found, and I want to go into them now. The Official Opposition espouses itself as a party of fiscal responsibility. Well, I can tell you that while it is perhaps a dangerous thing to put a price tag on democracy, recall is not cheap, and \$5,000 per recall petition doesn't even come close to covering the cost of recall. In this same report, for the first nine petitions, that were covered in the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 fiscal years the Chief Electoral Officer came up with an estimate of \$553,954 required to administer those nine petitions, an average of over \$60,000 per petition. So – I'm sorry – the \$5,000 figure is hardly cost recovery. As a fiscal conservative you should be promoting cost recovery. This is scarcely cost recovery.

Now, the other thing is that they say: well, if there are no petitions, there are no costs. Well, actually not. According to the Chief Electoral Officer of British Columbia

it should be noted that although the number of recall petitions actually issued and returned affects the costs of administering the Recall and Initiative Act, Elections BC must incur recall-related costs even if no applications for recall petitions are received. The infrastructure necessary to administer the recall process must be in place at all times to ensure that Elections BC can meet the requirements of the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we have in our democratic system in this province a system of recall. As the Member for Calgary-Elbow says, it's called a general election.

You know, the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills said that if recall were in place, it would have changed the behaviour of those past Legislatures, those legislators from past governments.

Well, recall wasn't in place, but I can tell you that when I meet with constituents and they specifically tell me that they have an issue – and specifically, one of the most difficult issues I dealt with in the last Legislature had to do with pension reform. When I met with a group of people who were part of the pension plan of government and they told me how it would affect their lives, I did change my mind, and I went to our government and I said: we have to pull this bill because it's just not fair to people who are in the middle, who have been counting on a certain set of rules, that we change the rules in the middle of the game. I was very grateful that our Minister of Finance decided to withdraw those changes that were proposed to the pension system. I'm not pretending that I had a lot to do with that. I'm sure I had a lot of colleagues that said the same thing. But recall wasn't going to change how I approached that problem.

Now, I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, however, that I'm a little bit frustrated with some of the speakers who have spoken against this, who have tried to drag in things like backdoor financing through corporations, who have tried to state that this is some attempt to do a do-over. I don't honestly think that that's the case here. This has long been part of the policy of the party that's in the Official Opposition and its forerunner, the Reform Party of Canada, and the Social Credit Party, for that matter, going back to the '30s.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I'm a big believer in the trustee system. I believe that the trustee system of representation serves us well. But, above all, I'm a big believer in long-term thinking, and I don't believe that recall legislation serves us. I don't believe that an American style, an American construct, serves us. Just look at what's going on in the United States right now. That's all the proof you need. We are a British parliamentary system – today is Commonwealth Day – and this is not the time to bring in an American construct to make us more American in this country. Indeed, we should be proud of our heritage and stay where we are.

Therefore, I reject Bill 201.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Labour and democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 201. As the minister responsible for democratic renewal I, in particular, welcome suggestions and ideas for how we can reinvigorate our democratic system, how we can improve things, make things more transparent.

I'm very proud of our government, which created a facility for this discussion to take place through the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, and I'm proud of the work that that committee has already done, which includes having some very open discussions amongst all parties about things we would like to see changed within our democratic system, ideas we would like to get more research on to help support our discussions. We've had briefings from the electoral officers involved with all four pieces of legislation that we are reviewing, including the Election Act, election finances act, Conflicts of Interest Act, and whistle-blower act. We have created a space where not only the ideas brought forward from the parties but also ideas from the public as well as special stakeholder groups will be able to be discussed and really debated so that we can prepare a report that I as the minister will be happy to receive and work on from there.

The public was invited to provide feedback on all four acts, and that feedback window just closed on February 26. We received quite a few submissions, I'm pleased to say, not only from impacted

stakeholder groups but from private citizens who took the time to fill out their thoughts on any one of those four acts and submit them to the committee. Committee members are reviewing that. Committee supports is preparing a compilation of those suggestions so that these things can be discussed. Because we have such a strong forum for collaboration among all parties, it seems interesting to me that this bill has come here for discussion rather than to the committee, particularly when we have such large issues in the state of our current economic climate, when we have so many major things to discuss.

4:50

This is the second time in a single session that this bill has come forward from a group of individuals who tell us that they have many, many great ideas, which I'm sure is true, but here we have the same idea twice in a single session when there is another forum for these ideas to be brought forward to. So I find that interesting.

I would like to echo the members for Edmonton-Decore, Red Deer-South, and others about the concerns around cost when it comes to by-elections, the increased frequency of by-elections, potentially at \$250,000 per by-election. I agree with the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster in his concerns about wanting to keep things more long-term planning as well as the potential influence of special-interest groups. I very much appreciated his phrase "courageous but unpopular stands" becoming more difficult under a framework where recall legislation is in place.

So those are some initial concerns, potentially the financial loopholes. The Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee I anticipate will be having in-depth discussions around the remaining donation limits and third-party advertising and its impacts on our elections, those types of ideas. Similar to that, here in the recall legislation there seems to be some ambiguity and some concern raised by, again, many members of this House around the impact of those donations and how they could be improperly used by special-interest groups.

For some of those reasons, concerns around the legislation and the suggestion that the committee is likely the best place to have this discussion, I will not be supporting Bill 201. I will be very interested to see if recall legislation is something that has come forward from our public members in their submissions. I think that might be an interesting discussion. For now I do not support Bill 201, but I look forward to talking more about democratic reform and democratic renewal as we go forward.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour today to stand before everybody again. I've listened to this debate for the last two hours, and I guess what distresses me when I've gone through this debate is to hear several of the MLAs saying that this is a waste of time. I don't believe any debate is a waste of time. I have to say that the hon. colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster brings up some very good points, and it is only through debate that we can bring these points forward. The fact is that by limiting debate or saying that debate shouldn't happen is where we have a real flaw.

The fact that this is a long-standing Wildrose policy, Bill 201, should say that we don't have an intent to actually displace this government because our intent was to form government. That means that we were looking to put a bill in that held Wildrose MLAs to account. If we didn't do our job, we would have been removed. We had a process in place, and this process could always use discussion, debate.

Now, I hear the other side talking about Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta. They use this as a reason for corporate and union donations and how we have some sort of nefarious reason for wanting this recall legislation through. But I will point out that it was through debate of Bill 1, through debate of An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta, that the Wildrose put forward an amendment and changed what that bill was going to look like. To further that, we had the government amend our amendment through more debate. This isn't a waste of time. This is important.

I would like to say how exactly this, for me, is very important. Four years ago we had a candidate go forward in our constituency. I supported this candidate, thinking that he was the man that was going to win our constituency. Now, the fact is that I didn't do anything. It's my failure. I'll admit it. My candidate, Roy Doonanco, a man that I very much respect, lost by a few hundred votes. Had I been out there door-knocking, putting signs up, getting donations for Roy, he might have been that MLA. He worked hard, but he wasn't successful.

Does that mean that I held the MLA responsible that had won? No. Do I think that the MLA, the member that had won, should have been recalled? The answer is no. The fact is that when we're looking at the different legislation that comes through, it comes down to debate. It comes down to actually saying: what is the intent of this bill? The intent of this bill isn't to displace government; it is to promote accountability.

Now, I do hear the comments that the independent member and the third party make that the general election does dictate who gets elected, and that is the primary reason for that election. But sometimes – sometimes – during that four years something goes very bad. Sometimes we actually need to say that a specific MLA needs to be held to account.

A member from the third party while on government business was caught in a prostitution sting. That member was thrown out to be an independent. That member soon went back to the government, eventually. Was that appropriate? No. Did that member get another three years? Absolutely. Was that right? No. That member should have been thrown out. But that's not my call; that's his constituents' call. If they put the work into moving the recall legislation forward, to sign those petitions, then absolutely he should be held to account and removed in a by-election.

We've heard repeatedly that this is not something that happens all the time. This isn't something that is going to happen every day. I know for a fact from talking to government MLAs that they work hard at their jobs, too. Do we see eye to eye on everything? No. Do I think that everybody on the other side should be recalled? Absolutely not. Do I believe that you are the government that Alberta has brought forward? Absolutely. Do I believe that we need to move forward with recall legislation? Absolutely. We need this to bring accountability back to Alberta. Now... [Mr. Cyr's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

5:00

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, under Standing Order 8(7)(a)(i) it provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's bill to close debate. I would invite the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon to close debate on Bill 201.

I'm advised that in actual fact we go immediately to 5 o'clock. Therefore, I would ask the Clerk to outline the motion.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, point of order.

**The Speaker:** Yes. Go ahead.

## Point of Order Closing Debate

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, I'll find the citation here fairly quickly, but my concern is that I do believe it is quite correct that the hon. mover of this piece of legislation should be afforded the opportunity to close debate on this piece of legislation but that we have now used the two hours fully elapsed to discuss it in second reading. I believe that one way or the other we're either going to have to add an additional five minutes of debate time in two weeks' time, or, alternatively, I would actually prefer that we conclude the matter today and allow him to finish debate and then move into the 5 o'clock matter. But that, of course, sir, is up to you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. There was time consumed at the beginning by the points of order that were dealt with, and the 5 o'clock time has come into effect. However, if you or another member would like to get unanimous consent to grant the five minutes in a vote, I would be prepared to accept that.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, I would so beg leave of the House to ask for unanimous consent to allow the mover of the bill five minutes to close debate.

[Unanimous consent denied]

## Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

### Housing for Vulnerable Albertans

501. Ms Drever moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to review current policies and strategies with a view to increasing community capacity to deliver transitional and low-barrier housing for vulnerable Albertans suffering from complex mental and physical health needs.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise today to bring forward this important motion regarding the delivery of transitional and low-barrier housing for vulnerable Albertans. And may I say that it's so nice to be on this side of the House speaking.

Mr. Speaker, I'm here today on behalf of my constituents of Calgary-Bow and the many Albertans that have spoken during my time as an MLA to speak on this urgent issue. Access to safe, secure, appropriate, and affordable shelter is a fundamental human right, but in recent years it has become an ever-increasing challenge for Albertans with complex mental and physical health needs.

Decent housing has several requirements. It must be safe, free of dangers. It must be secure, without the threat of eviction hanging over one's head all the time. It must be appropriate and meet the social and physical requirements of the person's life circumstances, and it must be affordable. Typically, 30 per cent of income is considered the maximum a person should be paying.

Research and observation tell us that when people have decent housing with the related services they may require, they will be much more likely to successfully manage all aspects of their own lives: to find and keep appropriate employment, to stay healthy, to develop relationships, and to contribute to community life. They will be positive members of the community and will not be in need of emergency services to address crises and problems.

Without proper support systems in place, many vulnerable Albertans with mental and physical needs are at increased risk of becoming homeless. It is imperative that government in collaboration

with ministries, departments, the housing industry, community organizations, and Albertans work together to increase community capacity to ensure that all vulnerable Albertans can receive the powerful benefits of having decent housing and access to housing. Mr. Speaker, I'm extremely proud to be a part of a government that is continuing to protect the most vulnerable even in these challenging times.

Mr. Speaker, the 2014 Alberta Point-in-time Homeless Count identified that 6,663 Albertans were homeless. In my hometown of Calgary alone 3,555 Albertans identified themselves as homeless. Members, more than 50 per cent – 53 per cent, to be exact – of homeless Albertans live in Calgary.

Now, the correlation between mental and physical needs issues and homelessness is not a new link. Countless studies focusing on the link between health and homelessness have resulted in the same conclusion. Those experiencing mental and physical needs issues are at increased risk of falling into the traps of poverty and homelessness. In 2014, for example, the Library of Parliament released a study titled *Current Issues in Mental Health in Canada: Homelessness and Access to Housing*. This study concluded that mental illness, often undiagnosed in vulnerable populations, is a significant barrier to obtaining housing and may cause unstable employment and lead to high levels of stress, substance abuse, low self-esteem, hopelessness, and depression. People who are homeless or living in inadequate housing experience a wide range of physical health challenges and are more likely to die younger.

As you are all aware, Alberta's homelessness plan takes a housing first approach that provides people with wraparound supports, including mental health counselling, addiction treatment, and other services they may require. The Mental Health Commission of Canada's landmark research project on homelessness and mental health indicated that housing first resulted in lower costs associated with other services. For every \$10 invested in the housing first model, \$8.27 was saved in public dollars as having a home reduced the services utilized in health care, shelters, police services, and the judicial system for high-needs participants; \$7.19 was saved from moderate-needs participants.

In Alberta between April 2009 and June 2014 43.5 per cent of housing first clients had mental health issues. During the same time frame 44.7 per cent of housing first clients had physical health issues. It is clear that individuals with developmental disabilities have complex mental and physical health needs and require access to a continuum of integrated, specialized housing options that are available across the province, both in rural and urban settings.

In addition to having access to a range of housing supports, these individuals require access to other personal supports to live in the community. Access to a range of community-based housing options is an outstanding need for Albertans. As Albertans endure this tough economic climate, it is critical to be reminded of the fact that getting people into stable, accessible, and affordable homes reduces the strain on other services. People successfully housed through housing first programs are spending 83 per cent fewer days incarcerated, making 51 per cent fewer emergency room visits, and spending 67 per cent less time hospitalized.

Many of the people who struggle with homelessness have a need for permanent supportive housing, not only for assistance during a temporary period. Permanent supportive housing, when combined with a range of housing first wraparound supports and an increased supply of low-income affordable housing, is demonstrated to be a cost-effective method of addressing homelessness by assisting formerly homeless individuals to remain housed rather than just accessing more costly interventions in the health and justice systems. For example, the province may spend up to \$100,000 annually to support a homeless person in the health and justice

systems versus perhaps \$40,000 to serve them through good supportive housing facilities and services. Not only is affordable housing a basic human right, but for a province in an economic downturn it makes fiscal sense. I have no doubt that the members opposite will agree with me on that point.

5:10

I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the tremendous work already being done by the provincial government and Albertan communities. I've spoken about the housing first program, through which 12,250 homeless Albertans have been housed. More than 4,200 have graduated from the housing first program since 2009. Out of 3,631 women housed through housing first from April 2011 to September 2015, 49.9 per cent have self-reported being exposed to or fleeing from a family violence situation. The Ministry of Seniors and Housing works closely with the ministries of Health and Human Services to ensure that those receiving housing supports have access to the additional resources and supports they need.

Many excellent community-based organizations work closely with Alberta Health Services to ensure access to addiction and mental health services. In addition, AHS, or Alberta Health Services, has contracts with operators for supportive living beds, targeting individuals with chronic mental illness. Special-needs housing through the Ministry of Health provides operating subsidies to nonprofit organizations, municipalities, and housing management bodies that provide subsidized housing to approximately 1,300 Albertan households.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the great work that is being done by the Student Run Clinic, an organization founded by medical students from the University of Calgary, which provides health care services to Calgary's vulnerable population. I believe the government in collaboration with local community organizations has the opportunity to reduce the increased barriers for vulnerable Albertans, especially those with mental and physical issues.

This motion reaffirms my commitment and this government's commitment to the most vulnerable Albertans in these challenging economic times. Albertans living on the streets or in unsafe housing such as couch surfing or emergency shelters represent an insufficient use of public spending. As such, affordable housing for vulnerable Albertans reduces stress on public services. Moreover, affordable housing increases the overall well-being of individuals, families, and communities by reducing the risk of violence, sexual and economic exploitation of vulnerable Albertans.

Thank you so much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Motion 501, to "urge the government to review current policies and strategies with a view to increasing community capacity to deliver transitional and low-barrier housing for vulnerable Albertans suffering from complex mental and physical health needs."

Before I begin, let me state for the record that the Wildrose is one hundred per cent committed to protecting Alberta's most vulnerable, especially when it comes to providing real housing solutions for those with complex mental and physical needs. Recently my colleague the Wildrose shadow minister for Health released our mental health strategy, which maintains our strong commitment to improving mental health services. Part of this is assessing access to shelter and how difficulties accessing shelter are compounded when combined with other health factors.

Mr. Speaker, this is just one type of the common-sense ideas that Wildrose is putting forward. Given our common-sense, best-

practices approach we support this motion to review the current policies. The review proposed in this motion is absolutely needed. I thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow for joining us in calling this government to account in this area. These are systemic problems which need to be addressed, and it is up to this Legislature to bring them forward when cabinet will not.

So let's talk about some of these problems. This motion is targeted toward Albertans with complex needs. This means multiple issues, which can include mental health and/or addictions, developmental issues, involvement in the criminal justice system, problems finding and maintaining housing, and so on. As a province Alberta needs to be innovative and flexible and co-ordinate between many different programs and services in order to help vulnerable Albertans with these needs. One of the most important things we need to do is to ensure that persons with disabilities and with complex service needs have access to a safe and appropriate range of appropriate housing options. This starts with community capacity, with ensuring that appropriately skilled human resources and other community supports are in place to serve this unique group of clients.

To provide some background to this Assembly, in February 2013 Edmonton hosted the AHS-PDD Best Practices Symposium. This conference drew on the expertise of service providers and respected researchers to create balanced policies on living and housing for those with complex needs. Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned that this government is not reading legacy best practices, so let me read a passage from theme 2 of the AHS-PDD best practices statement.

There is compelling evidence that persons with developmental disabilities and complex service needs achieve better outcomes and higher quality of life when they reside in appropriately supported independent living homes in the community.

I appreciate that this government was just elected in May, but let me take this chance to remind them that there was an institutional government that was there before this government, and it will be there after it. Reviews often tie up the functions of the government that should be focused on helping the most vulnerable. We all understand the importance of social services and supporting the most vulnerable members of our communities, but we are concerned that this government is getting caught up in endless reviews. We cannot stress enough that viable, substantial, actionable improvement must be the end goal of all policy reviews. Protecting the most vulnerable is something that we all need to be concerned about.

Wildrose supports this motion as it shares the spirit of our own recommendations. I hope it renews Alberta's commitment to build community capacity to deliver transitional, low-barrier housing for vulnerable Albertans suffering from complex mental and physical health needs. I also encourage all members to support this motion in helping set up this cabinet's agenda for them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak in support of this thoughtful and important motion. I stand both as a nurse and as the proud co-chair of the mental health review that was so recently completed. One of the first actions Premier Notley took as Premier . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Name.

**Ms Larivee:** Yes, I know. Sorry.

. . . was to establish the Alberta Mental Health Review Committee to comprehensively review addiction services, mental

health services, and the mental health system. At that time the Premier appointed both myself and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View as co-chairs, a truly nonpartisan effort. Together we travelled the province to hold engagement sessions with individuals, including those living with addiction and mental illness and their families, NGOs, professionals, First Nations and Métis people and communities, front-line workers, community groups and associations, government ministries, and service providers.

We received during that time nearly 2,900 responses to an online questionnaire and over 100 written submissions and presentations. Throughout that process we resoundingly heard everywhere we went in Alberta the significant concerns with the lack of this type of housing, that has existed in this province for so long. Inherently, all those who came to share their thoughts on the review understood that access to safe, secure, appropriate, and affordable shelter is a fundamental human right. Mr. Speaker, they understood that people with complex mental health needs have greater difficulty than others in accessing housing and other supports. They understood that when these individuals cannot access housing, there is both a personal cost for those individuals and their families and an economic cost for all of us. These individuals are overrepresented in Alberta's homeless, which is incredibly unfortunate. Homelessness both complicates and amplifies the symptoms of addiction and mental health problems and also makes it more difficult for those individuals to get needed services.

Our conversations across this province made it very clear that this long-term lack of adequate housing has greatly increased the personal suffering for these individuals and for their families. Not only is there that clear personal cost, but as the member pointed out, Mr. Speaker, there is great economic cost to the province as a lack of adequate housing for these vulnerable Albertans leads to far more costly interventions. Obviously, this is a lose-lose situation for all of us, and it makes both ethical and fiscal sense to start working across all jurisdictions to begin to address the marked deficit of adequate housing for these vulnerable Albertans, that has lasted for so long, as was requested by so many during that extensive consultation.

5:20

Mr. Speaker, the review team compiled all that we heard during the review and put forward the recommendations in our report entitled *Valuing Mental Health*. Upon reviewing those recommendations, our government accepted the recommendations from the report and committed to progressively implementing them over time, including committing to collaborating across jurisdictions and departments as well as with NGOs to increase the availability of permanent supportive housing for those Albertans with addiction and mental health issues, who have difficulty accessing other forms of housing and supports. Together we can improve current use and future planning of housing and prevent homelessness due to addiction and mental health.

I welcome this motion as complementary to our committee's recommendation and look forward to the support of those in this Assembly to better address the needs of our vulnerable Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today very much in support of this motion. I'd like to just start off by thanking the Member for Calgary-Bow for bringing it forward. My experience around housing is primarily around homelessness in our province. I spent many years of my career working with the poorest of the

poor in our province, as did my father and most of my family. While some of what I'm going to talk about focusses a lot on addictions, I do want to be clear that housing is needed for more than people with addictions. It's just that my primary experience, of course, has been around people suffering from addiction issues, that are usually primarily related to mental health issues.

I do want to start by telling one of my favourite success stories of my career about a young lady. I won't name her. If she's watching, she'll know who I'm talking about, though. I was running one of the Mustard Seed facilities, and I got a call from a gentleman who said: "I have a niece who's arrived at my house. She's suffering from methamphetamine addiction. Her parents have kicked her out, have cut her off, are not providing any more resources to her because of the frustrations associated with that addiction." He didn't know what to do, as most people wouldn't. I think most of us here would appreciate that. If your niece arrived suffering from a methamphetamine addiction, which is a very serious addiction, what would you do?

I had to tell him, Mr. Speaker, that all my beds were full. "I can't take her; try calling here; try calling there; try calling there." He hung up. He tried to call all those places. They were all full, too. Not enough housing, not enough facilities that could deal with somebody suffering from this. So I gave him another list, and he called them, and he called that, and he called that. He called back; he still had nothing. So finally I went out to my staff, and I said: "What are we going to do? This guy sounds so scared and so frustrated. He doesn't know what to do." So we agreed to put this individual up in a motel until a bed came open. They brought her to our facility. I'll never forget her. She was probably weighing in at 80 to 85 pounds, looking terribly ill. We put her up in a motel, helped her detox, to go through that. Then she was able to make it into one of our beds and was able to go through our programs. She ultimately would be sober for a year, would move on to become my executive assistant while I was the executive director there, and then ultimately went to Mount Royal College and just this year graduated with a degree in accounting and has her CPA.

The reason I bring that up is because without housing or resources, this person couldn't succeed. It is the first and most important step to being able to help somebody in that situation to be able to move forward. If we can't even provide basic shelter, food, and the basic needs for somebody like that, they can never move forward. In this case this person was able to move forward and become a very productive member of society, which is excellent.

When my father started the Mustard Seed in Calgary, there was only the Booth Centre that had housing. There was nowhere to go. It was almost always full. He would often, I remember, try to call local churches and stuff to try to get individuals who needed help to be able to sleep there, particularly when it was cold because of the concern about people freezing to death. I can remember that sometimes, particularly when it was cold, Mr. Speaker, he would bring home individuals from the Calgary streets to sleep at our house. My dad always worked late at the Mustard Seed, and he would often, mostly on Fridays, bring home people. Now, I have five brothers, and we would often on a Saturday morning race down, all six of us, to see who dad had brought home. Sometimes my mom would be very upset because he didn't use sheets on the couch, different things like that, but they would always welcome them into our home, and we would feed them. Often, I think, we had a tremendous impact, but we could not have the impact that we did later, once we had housing units. So dad and his team and the volunteers and all the donors worked very hard and began to build housing all through Calgary, and now, last I checked, they're able to house over a thousand people a day through the Mustard Seed



programs. It is absolutely critical that we are able to provide housing. That's why I support this motion.

I will also echo my colleague from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo's comments that the time for discussion on this issue is done. We know that this is important. This motion, I hope, will help move this issue forward. It's time for action, and I strongly encourage this government to stand up for what they say they believe in and to make sure that we're able to provide the most adequate housing for all the areas that people need in our province, to make sure that we can have more success stories like my former executive assistant, to make sure that single moms and kids can get into homes, to make sure that people suffering from alcoholism can get the help that they need. As a province, Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe that we will be judged by how we treat the least fortunate amongst us.

So I challenge you to do that, and again I ask all of my colleagues to very much support this motion. I thank the Member for Calgary-Bow for bringing it forward.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I've seen your other brothers, and I can only imagine you coming down the stairs together.

The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak in support of this motion. Ultimately, everyone deserves to be housed. Everyone deserves to be supported in moments when they find themselves in need. Not only is this the compassionate answer, but it's ultimately more financially responsible. Jail isn't the right place for people who've been unfortunate enough to fall into poverty as this results in increased interactions with the law going forward for these individuals.

As was pointed out by the Member for Calgary-Bow, housing for supports costs considerably less. The average annual cost for housing for supports is \$40,000 for an individual compared to an estimated annual cost of about a hundred thousand dollars a year for emergency room costs, hospitalization, jail, and other expenses. People who are successfully housed have 83 per cent fewer days incarcerated. They have 51 per cent fewer emergency room visits and 67 per cent less time in hospital. I feel that these statistics bear repeating because this isn't an issue just about the individuals; it's about government as a whole and how we want to respond to things going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard from multiple groups in my constituency on this issue, including community service advocates as well as a number of municipal leaders in other areas. It's also an issue I was very familiar with in my work at Student Legal Assistance. We would often see people who would come into conflict with the justice system, and in many cases these people had just gone down an unfortunate path. They had lost their housing for whatever reason, often as a result of a medical emergency in the family that imposed additional costs on them, sometimes as a result of losing jobs, and sometimes just as a result of the incredibly high cost of housing, that has sort of begun to become the case in Calgary and in other places throughout the province. These people would lose their homes, and then they would come into conflict with the justice system. That would result in criminal charges, which further marginalized them and pushed them further to the outside because once they had been convicted on criminal charges, they then had difficulty finding employment, which made it difficult for them to afford housing.

This issue was also recently raised by a group of doctors working with an organization in my riding, about the cost of discharging people from a hospital into homelessness, which is interesting

because similar costs can be seen when we discharge people from a correctional institution into homelessness. They often come back very quickly and not for reasons of being people that need to be locked up but for reasons of just being marginalized.

This issue was also raised in one of my very first meetings with the chief of police right here in Edmonton. Mr. Speaker, it's often the case that, unfortunately, individuals who suffer from mental health and addictions and who have been rendered homeless as a result of this wind up turning to the police because they are essentially the emergency room of society, and those are the only people they have left. This is not only incredibly costly personally for the individual who is homeless, but it's incredibly costly for the system generally.

5:30

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out that homelessness disproportionately affects indigenous persons, and this homelessness can often result in poorer health outcomes and increased interactions with the justice system. As we know, indigenous people are often overrepresented in our justice system, and as we move forward in my ministry to try to address this particular issue, I think it's critical that we be able to address the underlying drivers of this problem, one of which is this issue of a lack of affordable housing.

I thank the member very, very much for her incredibly helpful motion. In summary, I suppose I will simply sum up by saying that ultimately this is about giving people back their dignity, but it's also about saving on costs to the system as a whole.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise on the motion before the House and speak to this. In my view, this is of utmost importance. During my time on city council in Calgary – a lot of members probably don't know this – I chaired the Calgary Housing Company for three years, which at the time was and probably still is today the largest landlord in the city of Calgary, at that time about 10,000 units and about 25,000 people living in those units. While it was a good thing to do, what's sad is that it's probably still the largest landlord in the city of Calgary today, and probably the same thing is true for Edmonton and every other city in Alberta that has a public housing corporation.

What I think I learned during that time, Mr. Speaker, is that having this transitional housing and the services to help people get into a home and have the wraparound services that they need is not only the right thing to do – and it's clearly the right thing to do – but it's actually also good business. It's both, interestingly enough.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. Justice minister talking about some of the things that happen in the justice system, and there was a word for it or a phrase for it when I was on city council. It was called the catch-and-release program. If you have someone that needs care – you know, some people are just low income, and they need support, but other people need more than one support. Some people have mental health supports that they need, some have addiction issues, and if you don't give the wraparound services, then they end up on the street again. They end up in the hospital, they end up in the court system, and they end up in the health care system again and again and again. It's no good for the health care system, it's no good for the courts, it's no good for anything, and it's surely – surely – no good for the citizens of this province.

That's why I'm going to support the motion. It's the right thing to do. It's something that, frankly, while it's a good motion and I'll support it, probably should be done every three to five years

anyway. It's not that it can't be done right; it's just that societal changes happen on a regular basis. Sometimes it's a matter of what drug is on the street. It sometimes is a matter of what country immigrants are coming from, because different countries have different backgrounds, different political backgrounds that affect the supports that people need when they get here, different languages that they need. Somebody from a war zone obviously needs different care than somebody from a western European country when this happens. There are just people that are born and live their whole lives here that need help, too, and they all need to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I congratulate the member for bringing this forward. Vulnerable Albertans need, deserve, and ought to get the care that their individual circumstances require, and it will never happen by accident. It will only happen if we in this House agree to do it. It will only work if the government – the government is in control; let's be clear on that – commits to working with municipalities who are dealing with the issue, if the government commits to working with NGOs, if the government commits to working with charities, other organizations that care for people that need supports and really gets behind it and digs in and does it together.

Mr. Speaker, if there was ever an issue where we're in it together, I think this is it. As the saying goes, there but by the grace of God go I. Every one of us in a different circumstance could lose our job, could suffer from mental health, could fall into addiction.

For this reason, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand up and speak in favour, and at some point later I will sit down and vote in favour.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise and speak in support of this motion. As a long-time advocate for affordable and supportive housing it is a pleasure to see how much time we are devoting to this issue in the 29th Legislature. Thank you to the Member for Calgary-Bow for recognizing the need for housing for persons who are the most vulnerable in our communities.

I am wondering if any member of this Assembly has been involved in building transitional or low-barrier housing for vulnerable persons in their communities. I have, and I think that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and possibly the Member for Calgary-Hays also have. If so, they will know the challenges faced by organizations who do so: finding the capital funding, then finding the operating funding to provide the needed support, then the NIMBY campaigns by local residents – these are usually very ugly, and they attack those most in need of housing – and then you have to navigate between government ministries to create the right kind of housing and so on. So kudos to the organizations who have successfully navigated the current barriers to creating the needed housing for Albertans with complex mental and physical health needs.

Given the current challenges to creating and sustaining the right kind of housing, I would like to highlight one organization in my riding that is providing housing units to these Albertans. Brittany Lane Housing Co-operative in my riding has set aside six units for persons who are part of community living and two units for persons with mental health challenges. These residents are part of the housing co-operative that by its nature provides support and opportunities to volunteer and take an active part in community life.

There are now a number of academic and community-based research results that have demonstrated that a housing first approach for vulnerable persons is cost-efficient and reduces demands on hospital emergency rooms, emergency responders, police, the justice system. But, more importantly, it's a path to wellness, community integration, and community contribution by these people.

All communities struggle with this issue. The Alberta Rural Development Network recently released a study on rural homelessness. In it they note that some rural communities have a greater need of housing for those with complex mental and physical health needs than those in the major urban centres.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members of this Assembly to support this motion. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. House leader for the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to also rise and speak in support of the motion. I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Bow for bringing the motion forward. I would also like to perhaps see if she might be able to give me some advice in the future as to how one could be so successful at the private members' draw. That streak that she's been on in getting these wonderful numbers is both impressive and something to long for at a future date.

So much has been said, and so much I support. I know there are lots of other speakers, so I'll keep my remarks very brief. I agree with the Member for Calgary-Hays, who spoke about the need to be reviewing these sorts of projects on a quite regular basis. The need to assist is so great, particularly as pointed out in the motion, for those with "complex mental and physical health needs."

5:40

I just want to spend a very brief moment urging the government as it certainly seems the motion is going to pass with overwhelming support. As the government, you know, moves quickly to act upon this motion, which I'm sure that they will be doing, inside the motion it speaks to "strategies with a view to increasing community capacity." Only because I've had a number of folks in the Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills constituency contacting my office about underutilized existing capacity, I just want to urge the government, when the review is conducted, that they will look not just to shiny, new announcements, as sometimes can be so attractive in politics but, you know, look at the great capacity that we're increasing. I know that there are a number of units in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that are currently set aside for low-income housing and those with housing needs that are currently not being utilized for a wide variety of reasons. I just think it's so critically important that we maximize the capacity we have and then move to try and expand that capacity.

So in the vein of co-operation and knowing that my full support is already behind the motion and some of the things that have been said, I'll be happy to continue to listen to the debate.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to a motion that speaks to an issue that deeply affects the communities I represent. It's an issue that I'm pleased to hear we have much support for in this House.

You know, in the many meetings I've had with residents and stakeholders in Edmonton-Centre, there's been one request that I've heard from pretty much every group, whether it's local community leagues, business associations, seniors' groups, nonprofits, my municipal colleagues, or at our consultation with the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce and the Finance minister in the fall. They've all asked for one thing, and that's increased government investment in affordable, accessible, and supportive housing.

Mr. Speaker, we're seeing an unprecedented level of growth in Edmonton's downtown right now. It's fantastic. The construction of the new arena is sparking a new era of investment, some real excitement, some genuine revitalization, but with that is also coming an increased awareness of the challenges that we face in a

lot of our core neighbourhoods for individuals who are homeless or precariously housed.

The Member for Calgary-Bow brought forward some statistics, you know: Edmonton is currently home to as many as 600 men and women who are considered chronically homeless. Those are individuals who've been continuously homeless for a year or more or have a disabling condition that's led them to experience at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. The majority of these individuals, Mr. Speaker, live in our central neighbourhoods.

Now, as the Member for Calgary-Bow noted, these individuals face some complex challenges with their mental or physical health, and it often involves addictions or substance abuse. As she noted, the research clearly shows that these challenges are most effectively addressed when these individuals are first provided with a stable, safe, and secure place to live. In the case of the chronically homeless it's essential, as has been mentioned by some of the other members, that the housing incorporates wraparound support services that help them address their complex physical, mental, and emotional health needs.

A great example here in Edmonton: a facility called Ambrose Place, which provides a home to 42 aboriginal men and women who are challenged by disabilities and substance abuse, some of whom were homeless for as long as 40 years. Ambrose Place is a wet facility. It operates on a harm reduction model that aims to help the residents moderate and reduce the harms that come with the use of drugs and alcohol while also providing supports to address their underlying physical and mental health issues. This is a model that's been proven to improve the physical and mental health of the individuals it serves while dramatically reducing costs for the communities that they live in. However, in February of last year Ambrose Place had over 100 people on their waiting list waiting to secure a space there.

Mr. Speaker, if we're going to make serious gains in the area of poverty reduction and the elimination of homelessness, all orders of government must come together at the table to co-ordinate our efforts, to increase and improve our stock of transitional and low-barrier housing for the most vulnerable and needy among us.

As the Justice minister mentioned, just this past Saturday I had the opportunity to also speak with Edmonton's deputy chief of police, who echoed conversations I've had with many community groups, that being that when we take people off the streets and we give them the dignity of a safe, secure place to live, we cut costs to our system. It reduces the need for police officers to act as mental health and social workers, which reduces our municipal costs.

It frees up hospital emergency rooms and beds and reduces the need for expensive urgent care and treatment of the effects of untreated, chronic conditions.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of Edmonton-Centre have made it clear to me that they stand with government in the commitment to look out for our most vulnerable during these challenging economic times. I'm pleased to hear that's true for members on both sides of this aisle. They are in favour of our government taking all possible steps to invest in and encourage the construction of the affordable, accessible, and supportive housing that we so desperately need.

I thank the Member for Calgary-Bow for bringing this motion forward, and I look forward to working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to see this initiative realized. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I feel like I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the comment made previously by the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills about the member having a

bill last session and a motion this session. It's true that that is amazingly good luck in the draw.

The other thing that is true is that there was a very intense campaign right after the member was elected to have the member thrown out of this House and to have the member recalled. I have to say how proud I am today to hear all members of this House speak in support of the motion and how proud I was last session when we unanimously supported the bill that was being proposed by the member as well. I think it goes to show that the potential that individuals have in this House is immense, and no matter how you ended up here, you have an opportunity to make great change for Alberta.

I have to say that the piece around complex mental and physical health needs I think is really timely. I think this is important if we continue to – we have massive deferred maintenance when it comes to our social and affordable housing in this province, so a number of them will have to be taken off stock and replaced or will experience major modernizations. I think thinking about those two barriers is certainly a priority as well as, of course, looking at community capacity and how we can increase that. Times are tough financially in this province. But as members have mentioned, if we don't make an investment in affordable housing, certainly, times will be tougher not just for those individuals but for our society down the way.

Thank you so much for the comments that have been made by members on all sides and, most importantly, to the member for bringing up this important topic for debate today.

**The Speaker:** Seeing no other speakers, I would invite the member to bring closure to the discussion.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the members who stood up and spoke to my motion. I'm so incredibly happy that every member here again is in agreement. It seems so. Thank you for that.

I also wanted to echo what the minister just said, that with me being almost recalled, I wouldn't have had this opportunity to present this motion and I wouldn't have had the opportunity to present my private member's bill that would help victims of domestic violence be safe. I just want to say how proud I am to be the MLA for Calgary-Bow.

Well, it's no secret that there is a housing crisis here in Alberta. With my private member's bill passing in the Legislature last session, we gave people hope for ending violence here in Alberta. It was a small step forward to end violence against women and girls and domestic violence in this province; however, we still have a lot of work to do. I would like to add that although this motion is specific to persons with complex mental and physical health needs, this motion is also to help all vulnerable Albertans, which also includes people who are affected by domestic violence.

Housing is a key factor in addressing the problem. Homelessness and domestic violence often go hand in hand. Frequently, domestic violence is a combination of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Due to this, many vulnerable people, especially women, are leaving their partners to seek safety for either themselves or their children. Women that flee violence are forced to deal with many significant barriers such as inadequate employment opportunities, lack of accessible and affordable housing, and too often are discriminated against by landlords when they're just trying to find a safe home. Because of this, women and children are often homeless.

5:50

As I stated before, access to safe, secure, appropriate, and affordable shelter is a fundamental human right, and every Albertan

deserves a warm and safe place to call home. We as legislators owe this to the people here in this province.

Again, thank you so much.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 501 carried unanimously]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we've done a lot of very good work this afternoon, and I thank all members for their input into these important decisions and for their participation in these debates. As such, I'd like to move that the Assembly stand adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:51 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, March 14, 2016

Day 4

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
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Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
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Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Loyola	

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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, March 14, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good evening. Please be seated.

### Committee of Supply

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order, but before we proceed with the business of the evening, we have a new person at the table. I just would like to take a moment to introduce him. We have Trafton Koenig. Trafton was born and raised in Edmonton and obtained his undergraduate degree from the University of Alberta in 2005. He also holds a law degree from the University of Ottawa and a master's degree in international law and international relations from the University of Kent in the U.K. Outside of work he likes to run and travel, and he's combined them by completing long-distance road races on three different continents. A lot more energy than I've got. Trafton works as a lawyer in the Parliamentary Counsel office and has been with the Legislative Assembly since April 2013. So please join me in welcoming Trafton to the table.

### Supplementary Supply Estimates 2015-16 General Revenue Fund

**The Chair:** Hon. members, before we commence the consideration of supplementary supply, I would like to review briefly the Standing Orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which is as follows:

- (a) the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (c) for the next 20 minutes, the members of the third party, if any, and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak . . .
- (d.1) for the next 20 minutes, the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent Members and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (e) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak, and
- (f) for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply with the speaking times set at 5 minutes as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

During the first rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. Once the first rotation is complete, speaking times are reduced to five minutes, and provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking times, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined period.

Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 10, approved by the Assembly March 9, 2016, the time allotted for consideration is three hours.

The Committee of Supply has under consideration the 2015-16 supplementary supply estimates, and I will now recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move the estimates.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's great to have another runner here. Just don't run near me because I'm quite poky.

I'd like to move the 2015-16 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund. When passed, these estimates will authorize an approximate total increase of \$106 million in expense funding for the departments of Education, Justice and Solicitor General, Labour, Municipal Affairs, Seniors and Housing, and Treasury Board and Finance. These estimates will ensure, for example, that enrolment in our schools is fully funded and that the affordable supportive living initiative has the capital grants it needs to develop long-term care and affordable supportive living spaces across the province. These estimates will also authorize the transfer of \$25 million of the previously approved capital investment vote to the expense vote within the Department of Environment and Parks to provide funding to the town of High River for building flood mitigation berms.

Let me add that estimates are consistent with the fiscal plan as presented in the 2015-16 third-quarter fiscal update, which has been tabled in the Legislature.

While the government will have more to say on the specifics of our plan moving forward when we deliver Budget 2016 on April 14, since we are here to debate the supplementary estimates, I believe it's worth while to recap some of the information I presented during the third-quarter update. Right now we are experiencing the steepest and most prolonged slide in oil prices in recent history. Oil prices have dropped more than 70 per cent in the last year and a half, and projections for a quick recovery have proven wrong. There is no minimizing the impact that low oil prices are having on people's jobs, on our economy, and on the government's fiscal situation. This is a once-in-a-generation challenge.

The decline in oil prices has resulted in a 20 per cent drop in government revenue, in part from decades of inaction on diversification. This represents a one-year drop of \$6.4 billion in government revenue. It is now crystal clear that we cannot continue the same old way of doing things. The same old way of doing things includes knee-jerk reactions that we know won't help, like laying off teachers and nurses.

Our government won't do that. We won't make a bad situation worse. We will continue to partner with job creators to promote economic growth, and we will offer support and opportunity to those who have fallen into hardship during these tough times. Simply put, we'll continue to put the best interests of Albertans and their families first. We'll also continue to make fiscally prudent decisions, as these supplementary estimates infer.

As this Legislature knows, we have put a freeze on political and management salaries. We are also reviewing the number of agencies, boards, and commissions, and we are freezing or limiting operating budget increases so that we can focus available resources where they are needed most. Madam Chair, these supplementary estimates make clear where our government believes those resources are needed most.

We committed in the election that we would fund school enrolment, and with these estimates we are delivering on that. We are providing schools with \$51 million for high-quality K to 12 education. That's nearly 400 more teachers in the classrooms all across Alberta.

Madam Chair, these estimates also make clear that the government remains committed to deploying the tools at our

disposal to focus squarely on growth. Our capital infrastructure spending is one tool that we are employing which will provide much-needed jobs and lay the groundwork for continued success into the future.

Our economic development initiatives are another tool to support jobs and business development. Specific actions taken thus far include a new petrochemical diversification program worth up to \$500 million, supporting access to capital for growing businesses through ATB, using the heritage fund to invest in Albertans and their jobs, and supporting a growing venture capital industry.

Madam Chair, as I wrap up these remarks, let me remind members that when passed, these estimates will authorize an approximate total increase of \$106 million in expense funding for the departments of Education, Justice and Solicitor General, Labour, Municipal Affairs, Seniors and Housing, and Treasury Board and Finance. The ministers and I, that are responsible for these departments, will be pleased to answer any questions from members of the House.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, did you want to combine your time with the minister back and forth?

7:40

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I will take 10 and then allow the minister a chance to answer some questions if that's all right, Madam Chair.

I want to begin by thanking the minister for joining us this evening to debate and discuss the supplementary supply before us today, but it is seriously concerning that this government has failed to budget properly for these worthy initiatives in the first place. To budget properly means not coming forward in the same year, just months later, asking for more money. If a government does need to bring a supplementary supply forward, it should also bring forward a budget impact statement. We should know what the impact of this new spending will be on total levels of expenditures and the deficit and our balance sheet.

The fact is that the 2015 budget was passed at the end of November, just three and a half months ago. This Assembly and all Albertans deserve more information about what new spending will be contained here. Nothing in this supplementary supply is an emergency. Asking for supplementary supply isn't necessarily an uncommon or unreasonable thing to do. However, is it possible that this new spending could have waited for the budget itself in just a month? The private sector knows when to tighten its belt. It wants to avoid insolvency, so it cuts costs when necessary. But our government seems incapable of doing the same.

The government's bill here will ask for an \$11 million transfer to Horse Racing Alberta. Now, this isn't tax dollars we're talking about; it's gambling revenue from the lottery fund. It's an agreement for a portion of slot machine revenue at race tracks. That's largely because revenues are up from the new facility at Balzac. I want to know if the hon. minister could give this Assembly some more information about the urgency of this transfer, why this transfer will not wait for the budget.

After years of unchecked government bloat, why is it that the government cannot find \$106 million in savings to cover the costs that we are being asked to provide to the government here? We'll go through a few ministries.

Education. Now, the Wildrose supports our teachers, some of the best in the world, some of which are in my family, and we believe that every Alberta child should receive a world-class education. But could the government please specify how many new teaching positions the \$33.8 million will create when the department already has an existing budget of \$4.3 billion?

The Department of Labour. This young government already has an appalling record of job creation. One of its budgeted expenses, \$178 million over two years, has already been committed, and it has failed to create a single job. A program has already been cancelled, yet somehow this department is here today asking for another \$3 million in unbudgeted funds. I must say, Madam Chair, that I am skeptical that the department is being responsible with the funds already provided to it. I would like to know if the minister can explain what programs this money will fund and how many jobs it will create.

Seniors and Housing. How many spaces for seniors will the \$50.5 million create? The lack of detail here is extremely concerning. This government cut \$50 million from the 2015-16 budget for infrastructure support for the affordable supportive living initiative, the ASLI grant. To give credit where credit is due, even when the former government's budget of March 2015 was going to increase this funding from \$50 million to \$91.5 million, the new government undid that. So you gave the green light to long-term care and dementia spaces without putting the money in the budget that they rolled out first. Now the government wants to put the \$50 million back in when it was already there just a few months ago. We support Alberta seniors, but why was the money not there to begin with? Why was it removed from the budget that they already had? The money was in, then it was out, and now it's back in again. I'm happy it's there, but we need to know why this was. We would like to know if the minister can explain why this wasn't in the fall 2015 budget to begin with.

One project that I have advocated for in my constituency is in urgent need of funding and is covered in this bill. The Newell Foundation's Bassano continuing care centre: this is a critical, critical project to the constituents of Strathmore-Brooks and many people around southern rural Alberta. The intent of the program is to integrate independent living, supportive living, long-term care, primary care, and acute care into a fully functional design that supports a variety of community amenities. The integration of these resources will enhance the financial and building design efficiencies of the centre.

In 2015 the Newell Foundation received the approval of a \$3.4 million grant from ASLI for 34 affordable supportive living spaces at the Bassano continuing care centre. As well, the governments of Canada and Alberta jointly approved \$9.6 million under the investment in affordable housing agreement 2014-19 for the project. This was all put on hold without any good reason given when the NDP came to power and decided to review these projects despite having all-party agreement among the candidates in my own constituency: PC, Wildrose, NDP, and even the Green Party.

Madam Chair, with NDP financial tactics like this Albertans have real cause for concern about the political games being played here. The NDP are hurting Albertans where it matters most: in their pocketbooks, in their seniors' care, in their health care, and in their education. The New Democrats will say that this is only a single decimal point on a \$10 billion deficit, but, you see, that's the point. It is a deficit. It is a massive deficit. It is a record deficit, that we haven't even come close to in this province, and the gap must be closed. We should be spending less, not more. This is not how we're going to move the ball towards a balanced budget.

Madam Chair, this government needs to learn to budget prudently. The ministers have an obligation to answer real questions about new spending in their ministries. We understand they have talking points, and that's okay, but when our questions veer from your own talking points, I ask you in all honesty to give us real, substantive answers. We are willing to support this if you will work with us. The Minister of Finance has an obligation to tell us how this new spending, much of it positive, will impact the

deficit. What level will the deficit be once we approve this spending? What will our total expenditures be? We should not have to wait for the budget for that.

I look forward to hearing from the ministers with their answers to our questions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you. Just to recap a little bit, supplementary estimates are part of the normal legislative approval process to ensure that planned government initiatives receive the necessary funding to move forward. Supplementary assessments seek approval from the Legislature for spending requirements that were not expected during Budget 2015 and for changes, including urgent, unforeseen expenditures like floods.

The amount of money that Horse Racing Alberta – I can see it on pages 37 and 36 of Treasury Board and Finance, the reason supplementary supply estimates requested. It says there:

\$11,083,000 to address the higher than anticipated flow-through portion of net revenue generated by slot machines at Racing Entertainment Centres which funds the Horse Racing and Breeding Renewal Program in accordance with an agreement with Horse Racing Alberta.

You can see what we had estimated; \$28 million was going to flow through. As was indicated, with the opening of a new track partway through the year, that amount of money now is \$39,083,000. So we are remitting the flow-through amount of \$11,083,000 to HRA for that additional amount of money.

7:50

There is a reduction in expenses as a result of our pension fund expenses being less by \$9,083,000, so we have a supplementary amount of \$2 million that we're requesting. That's how this department is coming forward with supplementary estimates.

This is amongst the lowest supplementary supply estimates in the last 15 years. These minor increases we're talking about should come as no surprise as they were reported in our recent third-quarter fiscal update, which was released on February 24. As has been noted, the government is seeking supplementary estimates in a number of areas, adding up to \$106 million. They're based on the government's third-quarter fiscal update, as I said, that we released on February 24.

I think I don't need to get into talking about how HRA will use these funds. This agreement with them works out to their benefit, obviously, this year, in 2015-16, and we're certainly hopeful that they will see a benefit in going forward with regard to a renewed agreement with them in future years.

Thank you.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the minister for responding; however, I don't think the substance of most of my questions was answered. We're talking about a very substantial sum of money here.

Now, the minister is correct when he says that we've done supplementary supply before in this province and that it's not unprecedented. What we're asking for, though, is that you exceed the standard of the previous government. You can do better than the previous government. Albertans expect you to do better than the previous government.

Now, the minister is quite correct when he says that this is, compared to historical examples, a relatively low supplemental supply of just over \$100 million, but that is only because we're three and half months into the budget. Normally when you want supplemental supply, you're at the end of a long fiscal year. Well, we've had two budgets already this year. We're going to have a

third soon. We just finished passing a budget in November, and we're being asked for more money. We're being asked to approve more money. Some of these are very good funds that we would otherwise support, but you've only been three and a half months into the fiscal year, and you've already blown your budget.

So, Madam Chair, the substance of my questions has not been answered. I appreciate the minister trying. I'm going to give him another chance here to explain why only three months since the budget was passed – three and a half months since the budget was passed – they have to come back here and ask for more money.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you. The final thing that I'd like to say, I guess, is that since the budget was passed toward the end of November, the forecast deficit now – I've been clear about that – is significant, obviously. It's \$6.315 billion. We know that, going forward, the deficit will grow much larger. We have looked carefully at oil prices and have a number of things that we'll bring forward with the 2016 budget that will mitigate the challenges in predicting oil prices going forward. The unprecedented drop in oil prices has made budgeting extremely difficult. There is no doubt about it. Like the rest of the world who are involved with revenues from oil production, we all hope to see stabilization occur in the years coming up so that we can do a more rigorous, accurate job of predicting where that's going to be, but it has been challenging. So the deficit is identified here, as forecast in the third-quarter update. That's what the deficit is.

Going forward, we will be bringing forward Budget 2016 in a very few short weeks, and then all members of this House will have an opportunity to debate that. We're here to debate supplementary estimates today, and I know members of the front bench who are here to explain their supplementary estimates will do a wonderful job at that. Mine are identified on page 36 and page 37, and I've explained those.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the minister: I appreciate the talking points, but I'm asking questions, very specific questions, that perhaps were not anticipated in the briefing binder. I'm asking for answers to those questions, very specific questions, and I'd appreciate specific answers. Now, you've given us a figure for the deficit from the third-quarter update, but we're being asked to approve new spending here above and beyond authority to spend money that the government already had. Surely what we are doing here will have some impact on the deficit. Now, I'm asking you to tell this House, even if it's just an estimate. Give us your best guess, Minister. What will the deficit be following the supplementary supply?

Now, you have referred correctly to the significant shortfall in revenues that the government is facing here, but we warned you about this in budget debates, and you warned us of fearmongering. We stood here and debated into the late hours of the night, telling the minister that their revenue projections were not just rosy but they were fantastically rosy. Everybody knew. Every member of this House not on the government side knew that their revenue projections would not even be close. We projected – we projected – that the deficit would be \$9 billion. It turns out I was too optimistic, Madam Chair. We're now staring down a deficit that will exceed \$10 billion. But during that debate the minister just said that we're scaremongering, we're fearmongering; trust the government. Well, we can't trust the government anymore. We've

proven that their numbers cannot be relied upon, and that's why we're asking for real answers and real numbers.

Now, I asked some very specific questions that the minister's talking points I don't even think touched. I asked: could the government please specify how many new teaching positions the \$33.8 million will create when the department already has a budget of \$4.3 billion? That is a very straightforward question that I would hope either the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Education could answer.

**Mr. Eggen:** Ask me.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. The Minister of Education seems very eager. I hope he's got very good notes, Madam Chair.

We asked very specifically why the ASLI grant was taken out of the last budget and is being put in now. It was taken out of the March 2015 budget in the October 2015 budget, and now they're proposing to put it back in. We're glad it's back in, but could the minister responsible for Seniors and Housing please tell us why it was taken out of the last budget and is being put back in now as unbudgeted money to begin with?

These are very simple questions. I'm hoping that the ministers can answer them. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Madam Chair. It's so great to see some new table officer action over there as well. Congratulations on your position. You had all of those hobbies that you mentioned before. You won't need those hobbies anymore because you'll be here for the rest – until the end of June for sure.

The hon. member was asking about Education. First, in general, around Education our sup supply is to reflect the increase in enrolment growth from our original estimates. So we saw the actual enrolment growth to 2.7 per cent for the 2015-16 year. It certainly was healthier than we had anticipated, which is great. I mean, it speaks to the high-quality education that we provide in the province and that families with children are more likely to stay where they are once they've rooted themselves into a school and into a neighbourhood. So the sup supply for us is that number, primarily.

8:00

Now, in regard to the \$33.8 million that we've put in for that, that covers off, I would say, about 240 teachers' positions, FTEs. That's based on sort of all of the materials and extra money that are associated with those FTEs. So it's not just their wages, but it's the whole deal. I mean, that's great. We saw on an annualized basis, because we restored funding to Education based on the increased enrolment, more than 740 teaching positions across the province. That's what we need. We need high-quality teachers, especially those new, young teachers, getting into the system. Mission accomplished, Madam Chair. We did very well in that regard. Then on an annualized basis as well probably more than 800 support staff positions were spared by our restoration of funding. It's a good-news thing.

It's certainly very common, making those adjustments. Of course, the school budgets are always from September to September, and ours are from March to March, so you always see those K to 12 adjustments anyway. Then when we get the enrolment numbers – they don't come until later in the fall. That explains that.

The only other two adjustments I had in Education were actually two decreases based on the Alberta flooding numbers that we didn't require and then a delay in the Peerless Lake school project partnership that we have in northern Alberta. That was a \$10 million thing there.

Yeah. I mean, it's very straightforward, and certainly it's interesting to make those calculations. I'm always happy to do so for the service of the public and transparency and the fine members on the opposite bench.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the minister for the answer. I think we got a little bit closer there, but I would specifically ask: of those teaching spaces you noted, is that how much it would create if you had \$33.8 million going towards creating spaces, or is this \$33.8 million specifically geared towards only teaching spaces? If it is towards other things as well, how much of that is towards new teaching spaces?

I also will repeat some of my other questions, which no one has even attempted to answer.

To the Minister of Labour... [interjections] We'll give the minister his chances. To the Minister of Labour. We need to know. Since you've been given \$178 million over two years for the job-creation program, which has not created any jobs except for the minister's job, I must always add, and you're asking for another \$3 million, how many new jobs will the new \$3 million add?

As well, specifically we asked questions around ASLI. How many new seniors' care spaces will the ASLI funding provide? More importantly, why was the money removed from the March 2015 budget, in the October 2015 budget, and is now being budgeted again? We'd really like to know why the money keeps moving in and out and in again.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd be very pleased to answer the questions about the affordable supportive living initiative, otherwise known as ASLI. Of course, the supplementary amount of \$50.5 million is requested to provide funding for this program. This actually was already in Budget 2015, but it was in the Ministry of Infrastructure's \$4.4 billion that was set aside. The supplementary supply moves the funding to my ministry, just so that's clear. It's moving it over here.

I'm pleased to say that 22 of the 25 project proponents have received their grant approval letters. We're working with the remaining three proponents on their proposals. They're securing their land titles, development permits, and master service agreements with Alberta Health Services. Once these are secured, they will enter into an ASLI grant funding agreement, and the initial payment of 50 per cent will be issued to them.

ASLI capital funds were targeted to dementia and long-term care spaces as the need for these care spaces is urgent. Of these 25 approved projects approximately 2,200 units total have been created, but these have been started by the previous government also, and of course I've already said that we've targeted long-term care spaces as well as dementia units. The member opposite did talk about the Newell Foundation, and specifically there are 34 units that will be created through the ASLI program for them.

So I believe I've given the member some specific answers. Thank you.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you. Madam Chair, I think that was actually a very helpful answer. Thank you, Minister. I would ask for a point of clarification later. [interjections] Yeah, don't get used to it. A point of clarification from the minister, if she could nod one way or another, just on the ASLI grant: the money is simply being moved from one ministry to another; it's not being put back in? Well, that is just fantastic, Minister. Thank you very much.



I'll now give the Minister of Labour an opportunity to answer the question as to how many jobs the new \$3 million will actually create. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you very much for the question. The Ministry of Labour requested a supplementary estimate for just over \$3 million. This is to provide Alberta's employers with funding for skills training and development for their employees. This is dedicated revenue, fully offset. It essentially is money that we are getting from the federal government as part of the Canada-Alberta job fund agreement, and it must be used for the specific task of training. There's a very specific program set up with requirements for that.

The fact that we are asking for the supplementary estimate is happening because as part of the annual program the federal government adjusts its allocations to provinces and territories based on changes in their population and the availability of funds being carried forward from the previous fiscal year. The federal government confirmed our fund allocation in November 2015; therefore, this amount could not be part of Budget 2015, which was released in October. So we are receiving this just over \$3 million specifically for training and supporting Alberta's employers and training their employees.

I'm happy to answer any further questions.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would actually like to ask the Minister of Labour a few questions. The first question I would like to ask is talking about the Canada-Alberta job fund. Nearly \$3 million was transferred into this fiscal year from the previous year because of the slow uptake of the Canada job grant. This provincial government has an obligation to promote that job grant, so why is there excess funding? Also, what is being done to actually promote it?

**The Chair:** Sorry, hon. member. I should have clarified: did you want to do back and forth?

**Mr. Hunter:** Yes, please.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much for that question. Our intention is for the full \$3 million or just over to be provided to Alberta's employers through this program. We are looking at an increase from \$17 million to \$20 million. This is an employer-driven program, which means the employer decides who gets the training, what type of training may be needed for new and existing employees. These are challenging economic times right now, so we understand that Alberta employers may not have the ability to spend on training and developing their employees. However, the federal government has made these funds available to us, and we are making sure that they are available for our employers in Alberta to use them and have that opportunity to continue to do so.

You asked me the question of how we are advertising this to our employers. I'm afraid I don't have a direct answer for you here, so what I will do is to find out more about that and return to you with an answer.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the minister.

The government claimed that their jobs program would cost about \$178 million over two years. Last week a government spokesperson hinted that the plan was being reconsidered. I'd like

to ask the minister: why are these funds not being used to offset this increase?

**8:10**

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much for the question. On February 2 there were several changes in government, and one of these changes included an order in council which transferred the job-creation incentive program from the Labour ministry to the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. That was effective immediately, so these funds are not available to my ministry to offset in this case.

Thank you.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you to the minister for that answer.

I would like to know, actually, though, from the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: is that money, that \$178 million, still allocated for this year? Is this going to be rolled over to the next fiscal year? How much has been used? If you could just answer that, please.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'll thank the member for the question. Unfortunately, I'm limited as to how I can answer this question because it doesn't deal with supply, but I can tell you that we're continuing to evaluate the best programs moving forward that will provide the most support for our private sector. It's being reviewed, and I'll be happy to talk about it in great detail as of April 14.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Now, the last provincial budget, introduced only this past October, allocated close to \$100 million for workforce strategies. Before we approve further unbudgeted spending, it's important that we know the following: number one, how many Albertans were connected to available jobs with those funds? Number two, how many Albertans were provided with skills training so they qualify for new, in-demand jobs? Number three, how many Albertans benefited from employment services with those funds?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much for those questions. Those are all very good and important questions, but they're outside of the scope of this supplementary estimate process, because my \$3 million that I'm here prepared to discuss has to do exclusively with the Canada-Alberta job grant program. These funds are all being used for the support of Alberta employers and making sure that they're able to train their employees, so I'm not able to answer your broader questions within the scope of supplementary estimates.

**Mr. Hunter:** Unemployment in Alberta is now at 7.9 per cent, Madam Chair, the highest in 20 years. What labour market programming and what specific results is this government anticipating from this supplementary supply, then?

**Ms Gray:** Through this supplementary supply we will continue to support the training under the Canada-Alberta job grant. To be eligible, Alberta employers must have current or potential employees who need training to fill current or future positions. It is expected that the individuals will be hired upon completion of the training. The program is available to increase the skills and competencies of current and future employees.

There are some requirements in order to receive this funding. Eligible trainees must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents.

The training providers must be eligible third-party training providers who are separate and distinct from the employer. The duration of training must be a 25-hour minimum within 52 weeks from the application approval. The type of training must be incremental, meaning that the training is in addition to the employer's invested training and would not have otherwise taken place without the grant. The training format is quite flexible. It can be e-learning, part-time, full-time, on-site, or in a classroom and must result in a form of credential.

Thank you.

**Mr. Hunter:** Madam Chair. I'm sorry. I'm not sure whether I heard what the answer was for the specific results that this government is looking for, anticipates from the supplementary supply. I'm looking for specific results.

**Ms Gray:** The specific results as a result of this supplementary supply are that the just over \$3 million that the federal government has made available to our government and to our employers here in Alberta will be made available and can be used to provide training and support Alberta employers in these tough economic times.

The requirements for the use of the Canada-Alberta job grant have been negotiated with the federal government. They're very specific, and we must use the funds in this way. We do not have any latitude because it is considered dedicated revenue, so we must use it to fund this program and to provide training.

Thank you.

**Mr. Hunter:** Madam Chair, specifically what existing job training programs are benefiting from this increase? Does the government have any evidence to support that these programs are actually working here today?

**Ms Gray:** The requirements for the use of the Canada-Alberta job grants are actually fairly open. As I was reading the requirements: 25 hours minimum, must be Canadian citizens, and so on. This allows Alberta employers maximum flexibility in being able to apply for and receive this. We do need to use the frame that the federal government has provided for us, but outside of that it is a fairly open program, allowing employers to apply and to participate.

It does need to engage training on top of the training that the employer is already providing. I do think it's of note that you do need to use a third-party training provider, so this isn't to supplement in-house training but, rather, sending someone to a course or having them take a course online.

Thank you.

**Mr. Hunter:** I'd like to thank the minister for that answer.

I'd like to find out: how many employer-related stakeholder groups has the government met with regarding job-creation and skills-training initiatives recently, and how many were consulted on how these funds are best used?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much for the question. This additional \$3 million comes about because the federal government adjusts its allocations based on changes in population. So this is money that was made available to us because of Alberta's population.

Consulting with employers about how to use these funds we cannot do because it's provided under a dedicated frame. We need to use it for training; we need to use it for training that meets the guidelines as I've read out. We can't take the money and use it for something else or change our minds about how we might implement it. We're in a very narrow box when it comes to using this Canada-Alberta job grant. That being said, the additional \$3

million I think is a good thing right now, during the tough economic times, and supporting our employers in providing training for employees right now makes a lot of sense.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chair, I actually have one last question, and then I'd like to turn the time over to my colleague from Drayton Valley-Devon. I'd like to ask the minister: specifically how many Albertans will undergo skills training as a result of these funds that are being allocated?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much for the question. I'm afraid that I can't give you a direct number because, of course, the training cost, depending on job type or what type of training, whether it's an in-person classroom for a week or whether it's an online course, varies greatly. So I don't know how to translate the \$3 million into exactly how many hours of training or how many numbers are training. I will ask my department, and if we can pin down a quantitative answer for you, I'll follow up with you on that.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If it's okay with the minister, I'd like to go back and forth. Okay. Good. By the way, congratulations on your first day on the job here. You know, I think that there's an awful lot of us that can remember what it was like to be here the first day. You're doing a much better job than I think I ever did.

Here we go. I don't know if you have kids, but I just recently had my kids leave teenagehood and go into the university life. If I could take a minute or two just to brag, my eldest graduated this year from Grant MacEwan and has just been accepted at Concordia University in Montreal for a master's program in philosophy. So there you go. He's doing his dad's heart a lot of good here.

Now, when my kids were teenagers, like many of you, I think, in this Legislature, they would often come to Dad and say: Dad, can I have some money? Anybody here who didn't have their teenage kids do that? I don't know about you, but in the best parenting tradition of my parents – I learned a little bit from my parents. The first thing whenever I went to my parents and asked for money was: well, what do you need the twenty bucks for, son?

8:20

**Mr. Barnes:** Twenty? You only asked for \$20?

**Mr. Smith:** Yeah. Shows you how old I am, okay?

So whenever my kids would come home and ask for money, I would say: well, what do you need the money for? They'd roll their eyes, and they'd look at me like I was stupid, and maybe I was, in their teenage eyes. I'd say: "Well, what are you going to spend it on? You know, what are you going to do with it?" Perhaps even more importantly: "Why don't you use your own money? Why are you coming to me? What is it that says that you don't have your own money and that you've got to come to me and ask for more money?" Finally, perhaps this is when you'd walk over with a bit of fear and trembling because you're not sure about the response you're going to get: "Okay, son. I'm going to give you this twenty bucks for tonight. When am I going to get it back? When am I going to get it back?"

I don't know about you, but this supplementary supply bill reminds me a little bit of these conversations. Okay? This government just passed a budget four months ago, and now you're coming back – and I get to be Dad – and you're asking me: can I have some money? I know some of you are going to roll your eyes at me, and you're going to pretend that I'm just really being

unreasonable here. I know. But I think it's time that we had the old money conversation here in this House.

So I would ask the Minister of Education a few questions tonight, and I hope he takes it with the spirit that it's meant, an attempt from the father to the son to get him to consider just a little bit how he's spending his money. I want to thank the minister for his earlier answer because it sort of speaks to the first question, so maybe the first question can go a little quicker here. Why do you want this money? Well, you said earlier that it's about \$33 million, a little bit more, that's needed to probably meet some contractual obligations. I think you said that it was 240 teacher positions that were coming out of this \$33.8 million, at least a portion of that. If we could just start there, then we could move on. Did I understand you correctly when you said that that's where a portion at least of this money is coming from?

Thank you, Mr. Minister.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Madam Chair, thank you. Yes, in fact, my supplementary supply for K to 12 education is a total of \$51 million for enrolment growth spending for the quarter. As I said, we can probably calculate that using a wider estimate of 240 FTEs of teachers.

Also, part of my sup supply is a \$10 million decrease for the Peerless Lake project and a \$7.2 million decrease from the flood fund, so the net is actually less than that. As I said before to the Finance critic from your party, it's a reflection of enrolment growth. We have made that commitment to funding enrolment, and it's very important because, of course, it allows school boards to make plans much more carefully and in a more realistic sort of way, and it also allows more surety around teacher positions, those teachers themselves and then having more consistency of the teachers in front of the kids. So I think it's quite a good investment, and I think that it's in keeping with the supplementary supply function, which is to make adjustments.

You noticed that I made adjustments up based on enrolment increase, and then I also made adjustments down based on projects that we deemed to be further down the road and/or money that was not required for the Alberta flooding. In sum, I think, you know, that we've done a pretty good job, my ministry, and we're working really hard to ensure that we have a good budget that will come forward for Education here in the next few weeks.

**Mr. Smith:** Madam Chair, you know, I can remember at one point in time one of my kids coming to me, having done some miscalculations in their own budget halfway through their university year and saying: Dad, I think I might need some money. Being one of those hard-working teachers that the minister is finding money to fund, while I worked very hard, sometimes the money at the end of my month didn't stretch far enough. So it was a pretty big deal for one of my kids to come to me and say: Dad, I have to have more money. I know that we had to have a very serious conversation because the money came hard for me. I guess the question I've got for the minister here is that I think the money is coming very hard from the taxpayers of this province. Many are struggling. So to miscalculate your budget for this year after only four months, and while you may have found some savings in other areas, which you should be lauded for – I thank you, and the taxpayers thank you – you're still asking for more money. Yeah, you're still asking for more money. Could you explain: why the miscalculation?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Once again, the reason

that we need supplementary supply is that we have more students enrolled. The numbers come from the beginning of the school year, and then we calculate them from the end of September and then the end of October or November. That pretty much falls on the number of months between now and then, so once we had the increased numbers – we'll see this on an annual basis. It's quite common, right? We will hit the number of how many students are in our schools sometimes above, sometimes below, and sometimes closer to the money. This year, based on the numbers coming out from the end of September and then us calculating the end of October into November, we found that there was an increase, a 2.7 per cent growth. So this is the difference. I think that we would be hard-pressed to find people who would not be willing to make sure that we fund for enrolment growth in our schools across the province. We know that it's a very top priority for Albertans, and it's a top priority for this government, too.

I think that this is a fair choice to make, I think it's a prudent choice to make, and certainly I believe that I have the support of the public in doing so. In fact, as you did point out as well, I am also bringing \$17.2 million in reductions to my same budget, based on calculations that we had made. You know, honestly, this is how it works with the supplementary figures, and we've actually hit pretty close to where we should be.

It's going to be difficult. The member and myself had a discussion just previous to the Legislature opening about enrolment and about the population of our province in general and then our school population specifically. It's not easy to do that, to make that calculation. We calculated lower, and it stayed high, which is good. I think it's a good-news story. I think that the same day that the hon. member and myself had that conversation in my office, ATB came out with figures demonstrating that our overall population was remaining strong and growing as well in the last 12 months.

We're always monitoring it. We always monitor based on the schools and their numbers when they come back to us. Those numbers always do change over time. I expect to see an increase in enrolment over this next school year as well, and we will probably be here around the same time seeing whether we came close or high or low or right on the money on that calculation next school year.

Thank you.

8:30

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. I remember that conversation, and it's why I guess I'm a little confused and wondering about some of the figures. You said that one of the reasons for the increase in capital projects, the increase in, obviously, your supplemental bill here, has been an increased growth, yet when I look at the third-quarter update, it states pretty clearly that population growth is levelling off. The chart that's there on Alberta population and growth rate shows a steady decline starting around 2013. I guess I'm having a hard time. I'm a little confused. Maybe you could explain why the statistics that come from Alberta Treasury Board and Finance, which seem to state that there's a declining population growth rate annually in this province, are different from the ones that you're stating. If you could explain that for me, please.

**Mr. Eggen:** Once again, we can supply that information to the hon. member. Our numbers are from Treasury Board and Finance, and they made an estimation of that 1.5 per cent. We ended up with 2.7 per cent, so this is the difference to cover off that discrepancy in numbers. Yeah.

That's what we heard from the schools as well, who had the school kids in their classrooms. You know, they give us that information every fall as well, so it's pretty accurate.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't doubt that you're trying to use the best figures that you can lay your hands on. I guess it's just that if we want to use anecdotal comments and what we're hearing from schools, I know that the school that I was in up until last year is actually down in students. [interjection] Yeah. Actually, they are. I've talked to the principal, and I know that they are. I know that that goes up and it goes down across the province and that sometimes it's a very difficult thing to do, but I guess I would encourage the minister to make sure that not only are we looking at exactly what the student population is now but what the projections are because we do budgets based on projections at times.

Okay. Well, let's move on. Let's talk about what you're going to do with this money. In item 2.1 we have the operational funding. It says that it's going to be an increase of about \$37 million. Could you, Mr. Minister, please tell me what is included in the operational funding, and what exactly will those dollars be used for just in a general sense?

Thanks.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Sure. Thanks to the hon. member and to Madam Chair. I mean, the vast majority of those funds in a school are directed to the teachers and support staff that make the school function. As I calculated for your Finance critic just earlier this evening, we could say that there's about 240 teachers' worth of funding in there if you wanted to use that as your base measurement, and that would include all of the materials and operational costs and supports that each of those teacher units do require. So that is one way of looking at it.

I mean, obviously, schools and school boards make their decisions about the funding that they need on the ground to make sure that their kids get the education that they deserve and need. That structure, I think, is quite successful in the province of Alberta. We fund our boards. The money passes through my ministry with direction and is 97 per cent distributed to the 61 school boards and other charter schools and so forth around the province. They make those education choices, and I think they do a good job. They make good choices based on putting teachers in front of kids and so forth.

We watch carefully over time, and certainly I've directed all of my school boards to be very, very careful with the funds because, of course, now more than ever these public funds are very difficult to get. Overall, I would tip my hat to how school boards work with their teachers, work with their principals and so forth to ensure that the money is spent in the classroom.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Let's start digging down just a little bit, see if we can drill down. This would be sort of akin to when my children gave me vague answers for how they were going to spend money, and then we just had to drill down a little bit deeper. Item 2.2., the regional collaborative services delivery. It says that there's going to be an increase of \$800,000 there. I guess my first question is this. Is the \$800,000 for regional collaborative services delivery matched by funding from Health and Human Services?

**Mr. Eggen:** I have no idea.

**Mr. Smith:** Pardon me?

**Mr. Eggen:** I have no idea.

**Mr. Smith:** You don't have that knowledge? Sorry. Madam Chair, thank you. Would you be able to get that for us, please?

**Mr. Eggen:** Probably.

**Mr. Smith:** Probably or yes?

**The Chair:** Hon. member, if I can remind you that it needs to be on the supplementary estimates.

**Mr. Eggen:** Could you repeat the question, please?

**Mr. Smith:** Okay. Sure. Absolutely. I'm sorry. If you didn't hear the question, I'd be glad to give it to you again. Item 2.2, regional collaborative services delivery. Is the \$800,000 for regional collaborative services delivery matched by funding from Health and Human Services? In other words, is it \$800,000 from Education that is then matched by Health and then matched by Human Services so that it's a larger figure altogether, or is it just the \$800,000?

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Certainly, there are times where there are matching funds. In this allocation we're simply asking that the money be released to Education so that they can continue to fund their programs. Any Health funding that would have been required previously or Human Services funding that would have been required previously has already been budgeted for and, therefore, is not relevant to this discussion.

**Mr. Smith:** Madam Chair, thank you. Sometimes I can be a little slow, but I'm not sure. We have \$800,000 budgeted for regional collaborative services. Was the answer telling me that you are not going to be matching that from Health and Human Services, that it's just simply a stand-alone figure of \$800,000 and that when it comes to regional collaborative services, it's solely funded by the education system? If you can help me with that.

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm trying to say that there is no money – I'm not coming with any supplementary supply requests as Minister of Health. I'm not asking for any funds to be able to match in terms of this specific line item that you're referring to. So there is no Health component that we're asking for approval for today.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you for clarifying that for me because my understanding is that during a full budget, not the supplementary supply estimates, there would be matching funds, usually, for the regional collaborative services delivery. I just wanted to find out if it was one way or the other. Okay. You've given me an answer, so thank you. So the total funding for RCSD, the supplementary supply, is just going to be totally from the \$800,000. [A timer sounded] Okay. Well, we can get back to this later.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** You still have one minute left in this first hour if you have another.

**Mr. Smith:** Do you want me to continue for the last minute?

**Mr. Hunter:** We'll cede our time.

**The Chair:** All right. We will continue in the rotation, then. The next 20 minutes will belong to the members of the third party.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. If it would be possible, we're going to take the first 10 minutes and then turn the final 10 minutes over to the members of the government. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays and I are going to share the time.

Well, this process is sometimes called the Oliver Twist bill because it's, of course: please, sir, I want some more. You know, as much as I enjoy Dickens, I am concerned about a number of aspects of this, so I'm going to ask a number of questions. I'm going to just ask the ministers to sort of keep track of the questions, and then we'll hope that they can sort of take their time as far as the 10 minutes that they have to reply.

First of all, to the Finance minister. The Finance minister stated in his opening remarks, which I kept very close track of, that this is consistent with a third-quarter fiscal update. But I do have some concerns because there are a number of things that don't show up in supplementary estimates that were in the third-quarter fiscal update. For example, Minister, an additional \$147 million in spending for the Department of Health. There is no supplemental estimate for the Department of Health. I'll ask you or the Health minister to perhaps give us some explanation as to that.

8:40

The next thing that I wanted to just mention was that I'm personally very gratified to see, for example, the Minister of Education finding the \$17 million in his budget, which is from other areas, and also the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance and the \$9 million balanced from the expense loan. Trust me; that does not go unnoticed. I think that demonstrates, at least to me, that you're looking for restraint in other areas of your budget.

I guess what I'm concerned about is: what about all the rest? What about the other departments that are asking for additional funds? Can they not find funds in their budgets similar to what the Minister of Education has done and what the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance has done? The Minister of Environment and Parks: that's a transfer from capital to expense, so we're not going to worry about that. But, for example, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General: an additional \$8 million for correctional services expenses. I can understand that. Obviously, we need to pay those staff. But \$8 million represents .6 per cent of your total budget. Could you not find \$8 million somewhere else in the budget to offset that \$8 million as your colleagues have done?

The Minister of Municipal Affairs: an additional allocation of \$9 million for Chestermere for some flood DRP programming. Hey, you know, that's fine. That's an understandable request under supplementary estimates. But \$9 million, again, represents a mere .6 per cent of your total budget. Do you mean to tell me that you could not find .6 per cent of your total budget in savings elsewhere as your colleagues the Minister of Education and the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance have done?

Finally, you know, moving on to the Minister of Labour. I agree that the program that is present in the Ministry of Labour and the \$3 million for the labour market programs is good, but once again this is 1.6 per cent of your total budget. It seems to me that the first attempt should have been made to find savings elsewhere, and other ministers have proven that that is possible. Indeed, the third-quarter fiscal update shows that some ministries have lower than expected expenditures for a number of reasons. I would have hoped that rather than asking the taxpayers of Alberta for an additional 100-plus million dollars, some of that should have been found by being more diligent and being more, shall we say, prudent in terms of the spending.

Finally, Minister of Treasury Board and Finance, I do have to take issue with – and since you brought it up, I think this is entirely within order – the quote of “decades of inaction on diversification.”

Sir, I will tell you that if you want to continue to perpetuate that myth to Albertans, I guess you are welcome to do so as an attack on past government. But when you do so, you in fact attack the very Albertans who have been diversifying our economy: people in the construction industry, that has grown by nine times in the last 30 years while our economy has grown by five and a half times; people in biotechnology, who have built that industry to a \$1 billion industry that employs 4,600 people; people who produce canola, the production of which has gone from 30,000 tonnes to 20 billion tonnes in the last 45 years, worth \$6 billion; and your favourite, the ethane-based petrochemical industry, which – indeed, I'm glad you have a program, but it is hardly a new program, sir; it is a continuation of an existing program – has grown to \$15.5 billion and employs 7,700 Albertans.

So, Minister, if you want to continue trashing past government, that's fine because from time to time we do the same back to you, and that's okay. But I would ask you, sir, that at least you should acknowledge the efforts and the accomplishments of those Albertans who have in fact diversified our economy, rather than simply trashing them at the same time.

Those are my questions. I'll turn it over to the Member for Calgary-Hays.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, do we want to give this side a chance to respond? Then we can come back to you. That's a 20-minute segment in all.

**Mr. McIver:** No. We're going to take our 10, and then we're going to listen intently if that's okay, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay. If you prefer to do it that way.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. We'll carry on here. I'm going to start off on a little bit of a different tack. Now, it says in the fiscal plan highlights in the third-quarter update that the unfunded liability for the teachers' pension plan is unchanged at \$18.9 billion. I guess my question would be about the other unfunded pension liabilities. Are they up, down, or not changed? I would like to know what that is because those are big numbers when you talk about pensions, and of course it's a big number for the taxpayers. But equally or more important is the fact that the people that toil for this government night and day and do great work for the citizens of Alberta have earned those pension payments. They need to know that they will be there when they are retired and that they have them coming, so knowing what's happening there.

Along with that, I would like to know from the Finance minister or whoever might have the answer: what effect will it have on the unfunded liabilities should our credit rating slide further... [interjection] Yes. Thank you for that. I'm glad you're trying to listen, Minister. I'm grateful for that. What effect will it have on our unfunded pension liabilities if Alberta's credit rating slides further and we end up paying, say, a percentage more on all the borrowing we're doing?

Of course, with the government's projected \$10.4 billion deficit – and, respectfully, the Finance minister hasn't said that out loud publicly that I've heard, but the Municipal Affairs minister managed to say that out loud in front of the municipal meeting, the AUMA breakfast the other day, in part of her remarks, so I'll take from that that the two ministers are in agreement. So, again, how will that change it?

Now, moving along a little bit here – and I'm trying to go a little bit fast – in personal income tax revenue it said that it decreased \$762 million from budget. To the Finance minister. My concern for both this year and for the future is: how many people prepaid their taxes at the end of last year for several years ahead? I've heard from

several people that actually are fairly well off that they prepaid their taxes as much as four years in advance in order to catch the lower tax rates before the government increased tax rates. One fellow told me that he prepaid \$10 million worth of tax, and his accountant said that he'll be \$800,000 ahead four years from now because he did that.

My concern, obviously, for the government's revenue and for paying for services that Albertans need is that if it's already decreased by \$762 million and some people have prepaid their taxes, then of course I wonder how much less the government is going to have in the next few years. Particularly, I'd like to know how many people prepaid and how many dollars were prepaid because that might give a sense of how much less revenue the government will have in upcoming years.

Also, does the government have any idea of how many high earners have left Alberta because of the higher personal and corporate taxes that the government has put in place? If those people have left, then of course we can't look forward to their taxes in future years. I keep hearing – again, the plural of anecdote is not data, but some of the anecdotes are that for some people their holiday home in B.C. is now their permanent home because, unbelievably, now it's cheaper to pay taxes in B.C. in some cases than it is in Alberta. So the Alberta advantage has sailed across the border since this government has been here. As a result of that, I am asking these questions.

Now, I'll just revisit in the last 40 seconds – and these are questions that I asked the other day and that I didn't get an answer for. For each of the supplementaries, on capital I'd like each of the ministers to say exactly what that money is being spent on, which schools, which hospitals, which roads, which seniors' housing, whatever it happens to be. It's not a budget issue, so the ministers should know. If they didn't actually know what the money is being spent on, they obviously should not have asked for it in the supplementary benefit. Because they did, they obviously should have a very full and detailed answer for every single ministry on where each of those capital dollars is going.

In the last six seconds I will say that I would love to hear those answers. Thank you.

**Mr. Ceci:** Madam Chair, I'll start off for the government side and then pass off to other people to address specific questions that we have.

To the member opposite, around me saying about the decades of inaction on diversification, I mean that very narrowly around the other side but in particular around the significant drop in revenues from nonrenewable resource revenues. They are significant, and they have made the job of budgeting quite difficult. The whole world is experiencing that, too.

**8:50**

One of the first things we did when we came in was put a more stable income tax situation in place with regard to a 2 per cent change on corporate and a marginal tax raise for the rest of the population. That has helped our situation as a government and the ability to be able to pay for necessary programs and services that this government provides across many different platforms for Albertans.

There has been, as was indicated, a drop in personal income taxes; corporate taxes, not so much.

We do not know the exact number of people that are prepaying in advance, as was being requested, but I will see if that information is available.

I want to point out that when we bring forward the full tabling of the results of the 2015-16 budget, what you will see is that not only

this ministry and the one to my right, Education, but most ministers have found savings in their departments as a result of being asked to look closely for savings, recognizing that we're in a tough financial situation. Over \$250 million has been found. Going forward, we may need to do more each and every year.

The situation with regard to the credit slide: as you know, one bond-rating agency has identified that we're now AA plus as opposed to triple-A, and the other two agencies are saying that we're triple-A. This is something that all companies and governments are experiencing in terms of re-evaluations by those credit-rating agencies. I've said before in this House, and I'll say it again, that when we borrow as a result of the bond-rating agencies' information, the people lending money have already factored in – they can read balance sheets just as well as anybody else, and they know the challenges that we're experiencing going forward with revenues – that change, and we're accounting for that. We will show that in our future budget as well.

I think I'll turn it over to the Health minister with regard to any sup changes on the Health side.

**Ms Hoffman:** I'll speak to both Health and Energy. Neither ministry, Health nor Energy, has any supplementary supply requests that are being debated this evening, so zero.

There are other ministers who can answer, of course, as well.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the question because, of course, I think it's important for all Albertans to understand sort of what we're doing here and what we're dealing with. In terms of Justice and Solicitor General the primary cost drivers for my ministry are population and inflation. In fact, I was somewhat surprised to discover that the incarceration rate is actually increasing at a slightly faster rate than the population. We're still trying to pin down the exact reasons for that. So those are the main drivers.

When I came in, the projected overage in my ministry was significantly higher than this \$8 million. It was closer to the \$30 million range. We were looking for a significant amount of funds originally, and we projected to try to bring down corrections. We found a lot of that money by transferring \$13 million from other divisions. We also have been running significant vacancies. We're tending to run at about a 7 to 8 per cent vacancy rate with the exception of corrections. A lot of the overage in corrections comes as a result of overtime because there were vacancies. So the opposite problem, I suppose, would be the answer there. We looked for a significant amount of that money. We found a significant amount of that money. We didn't quite get there, and that's what this \$8 million is.

I think the other important thing to note is that in my \$1.3 billion budget for Justice and Solicitor General about half a billion dollars, so \$500 million of that, just over two-thirds, is in fact funding for police. That's obviously something that is also driven by the same costs, population and inflation, and we didn't feel that this was a moment that was wise, I think, to sort of cut down on the funding flowing to our police partners. So we were unable to find money there, but we did find a significant amount of money elsewhere in other places.

This \$8 million was just sort of the piece that we couldn't quite get to. Actually, the ministry found a significant amount of funds internally. The \$8 million is just the piece we weren't quite able to do. Going forward, we intend to do a number of things to address that. But that wasn't the question in this case, so I won't answer it now.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll talk specifically about Seniors and Housing and the \$50.5 million that is identified here. It is for the ASLI program, which is the affordable supportive living initiative. This was actually in Budget 2015, but it was in the \$4.4 billion that was set aside in the 2015 capital plan which showed up in the Ministry of Infrastructure. So it's just actually a transfer to this program.

We have 25 projects that have been approved and are going ahead, and they're working on providing seniors' long-term care, dementia care in 15 communities across Alberta. It's approximately 2,200 spaces at this point that will be created for people, and we know that there is a great need in these communities. I don't have the detailed list with me right now, but I could make that available to the member if he so wishes.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, we understand that Albertans do expect the government to be good stewards of the public purse and to be strategic about business plans and wherever possible plan ahead for funding pressures, and I can say that my ministry has been tremendously diligent in that responsibility. However, there are circumstances at times that require adjustments, and a responsive DRP program, or disaster recovery program, is part of that. It is essential to keep Alberta's communities strong.

Disasters are not predictable in number or magnitude, so ministry-based funding does not include funds for specific disaster response and recovery efforts. So from that perspective, not having been addressed in the budget, we do need to move forward and request the funds in terms of the 2015 south-central Alberta DRP in order to help the residents of Chestermere and Rocky View county who suffered damage to their homes after severe weather last July. It also will provide support to the municipalities that were affected in terms of ensuring that their municipal infrastructure that may have sustained storm damage is repaired as well.

Ensuring that our municipal partners are supported in times of need, ensuring that Albertans are supported in times of disaster is a commitment we do not take lightly. Our focus is on safe, resilient communities, which is why we are asking for the supplementary funding.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other ministers wishing to comment?

That takes us to the next segment, the next 20 minutes. I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** All right. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I don't think that I'll take my full 20 minutes. I will take the opportunity, however. I know you're all very disappointed. [interjection] Maybe I will; maybe I will. We'll see how this goes; we'll see how this goes. I will go back and forth with a variety of ministers.

I'll make just a brief opening general comment. I'm curious as to why we're here at all and why we're doing supplementary supply. I mean, I know technically why it needs to happen. But with the House sitting a full month later than standing orders would have had us come in, there was ample time. The reason standing orders have us go in the first Tuesday in February is so the government has the opportunity to introduce and for all of us to fully, thoroughly, and robustly, if that's a word, and, I would hope, respectfully debate a budget in time for the end of the fiscal year so that we don't have this process of either interim or supplementary supply.

9:00

You know, I share a lot of the concerns that I've heard here tonight. There seems to be very little effort in a meaningful way to address costs, and I have a worry that I carry over from the interim supply process, that there seems to be at the very least a gradual increase in costs, certainly not a flattening or even a decrease. That's a significant concern at a time when revenues are more than just tight; they're plummeting. So every process, every bill, every interim supply, supplementary supply sends a signal to the people of Alberta, and I'm afraid the signal that we're being sent here is not a positive one. I worry what we're actually going to see on April 14, when we finally do see the full budget.

I will start with the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. You'd been asked earlier by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster or by Calgary-Hays about the \$8 million supplementary supply estimate. You've indicated it's for overtime expenses. I'm wondering if you could elaborate a little bit on any of the work that's been done by you or your department to evaluate staffing level requirements, to hire if there are vacancies, to avoid costs for overtime, or if these are the sorts of things that are embedded in a contract, if as contracts come due, you will find ways of reducing the overtime allocation.

One thing I guess I want to be very clear about. When we're talking about correctional workers in any context, that's a thankless job. It is a difficult and dangerous, thankless job, and I think nowhere is that more true than in the remand system. I want to be very clear that I have a tremendous amount of respect for the work that they do, but at the same time, when we see overtime expenses causing us here in this House to allocate extra dollars, I always wonder if there's an opportunity perhaps to find regular full-time employment as an alternative to that. I'll let the minister answer that question.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to the member for the question. I actually have some very exciting answers to that question. Actually, just to be perfectly clear, certainly I saw my colleagues and myself I know I certainly struggled significantly to find internal reallocations, so I think that to say that we didn't look is a little bit unfair.

In terms of going forward, as I've mentioned, the sort of cost driver in my ministry generally and the cost driver specifically in terms of incarceration is the people who are incarcerated and the cost of the staff who are guarding them. Obviously, there is a contract signed that's in place, so there is an increased cost associated with that, and we will be honouring that contract going forward. But, as the member points out, I think he is correct that we maybe need to start doing a better job – and we are working to do a better job – of ensuring that we aren't sort of incurring these additional overtime costs, and part of that starts with ensuring that we're properly staffed up.

The cost of running a correctional institute can be a little bit unpredictable because it depends on sort of who's coming in and when. It can be difficult to predict, so the result of that is that we have introduced what are called float pools within adult correctional facilities to backfill vacant positions so people that are coming in and are already trained up can start taking on shifts right away and can be there if someone falls ill or if someone is unable to come in for whatever reason or if we have a higher capacity than anticipated. This is obviously important because the challenge has been that, you know, when we see an increase in the remand population, we can't just grab someone off the street to fill in. They have to be

trained. Correctional workers are extremely well trained, and they have to be well trained because their position is dangerous and they do some very important work.

Another thing we're doing is that we've procured some new shift scheduling software, so we're hoping that that will help to achieve more efficient staffing in adult correctional centres. The combination of those float pools and the software should help us to optimize manpower so that we can reduce overtime so that at least with respect to the hours we're paying for, we're paying at straight time rather than paying at overtime rates. Those are some of the things we're moving forward with.

A lot of our other initiatives are going to relate to ensuring that we are using correctional institutes for the right people, if you will. Often correctional institutes are used to incarcerate people who have basically been criminalized due to homelessness, who have addictions problems, who are suffering from mental health. Moving forward, we will be working on multiple solutions to address those problems and ensuring that people who are sort of coming into and out of correctional facilities in very few days, only two or three days, who are obviously not presenting a danger to the public but are in there for whatever reason, are maybe being directed to more appropriate places.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Minister, for that thoughtful response, especially about trying to reduce the incarceration rates for at-risk populations. I know we've had one particular case I'm aware of that was a real tragedy, and I know obviously you're aware of that as well. So, yes, anything we can do to reduce incarceration rates, obviously without jeopardizing public safety, is absolutely welcome.

I'm going to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs about one of my topics that she and I have talked about in the past and one that I'm sure all of us wish we'd have less need to talk about. That's the disaster recovery program. The \$9.045 million: I know we've talked about that being related to the flooding in Chestermere. My questions are: what exactly is that very specific number based on? How much confidence do we have that that is, in fact, the right number?

I know the event was last summer, so I wonder if perhaps enough time has passed. Given that it's relatively recent that the province has indicated that we as a province will be funding DRP, especially for residents, if in fact we've received all of the applications, if there's a deadline, and in fact if we know that that number is what likely it's going to be, is there a risk that it goes up or an opportunity for it to go down?

I also assume, with the rest of that program, that it is, in fact, eligible for federal reimbursement as well. If so, what percentage? I suspect you know that answer. I believe it's 90 or may only be 80 per cent now. That's why I'm asking. I believe there may be some changes there. If you could speak to that.

The ongoing challenges, I know, that we've had with the expediency with which claims have been processed in the past: is any of this money going to be used to help improve that process, or are there other areas where that's happening?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, DRP is enough of a passion for me. One of the very first things I did was tackle the concern, talking to them in High River about the challenges, so absolutely moving forward. Having implemented the case manager tool, the Chestermere DRP is

our first chance to use that, and I'm really looking forward to getting feedback on that moving forward.

In terms of DRP, like a lot of other items, there's something to be said for the fact that there's some estimate based on what the municipality presented to us in terms of the homeowners they felt were affected who had let them know. We hope the majority of the claims are in. However, it's not completely closed yet, so there is the opportunity still that it may be changing. We do, however, build into that estimate a certain contingency fund, so there is actually the opportunity to come under. I would think it would be highly unlikely we would go over.

With a budget that is 97 per cent grants based that we provide to the municipalities, obviously at this point in the game, with no budget for disasters because we don't anticipate what they are in any year, we did have to bring it back for approval by the members of this Assembly. There being no consistent line item for disaster recovery in the budget, it is something that we need to ask for your permission to go forward on.

In terms of the federal funding, the federal government essentially asked us to pay the deductible, for lack of any better term, on any disaster that happens. We will not have reached that, so this will be all on Alberta taxpayers. None of it will be reimbursable from the federal government.

I do believe I have addressed all your questions, so thank you very much for sharing them.

**9:10**

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Minister, and thank you, Madam Chair. That's interesting. I didn't realize there was a deductible. Can the minister please tell me what that deductible is? Given that there was a significant time lag from the event itself till now, is there anything that we could have done to combine it? I just am very curious. I've never heard that there was, in fact, a deductible for federal reimbursement.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, recently the federal government raised the amount that was required to be paid, which is part of the challenge going forward with disaster recovery and why we certainly need to have ongoing conversations about choices we want to make as a province. However, at this point what it sits at is \$3 per Albertan, which adds up to a substantial number, so you have to have a fairly substantial disaster before federal funding kicks in.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Minister.

Madam Chair, I'll pose my final questions to the Minister of Finance. You talked earlier about credit rating, and that's obviously a big concern that we've discussed in this House. We've discussed it in person. We know that one agency has downgraded Alberta. There are two that have yet to downgrade Alberta, but I'm worried, frankly, that once the budget is released and they can see those numbers, we face further risk of credit-rating downgrades. I'll ask again: have you calculated the cost of further credit-rating downgrades, either by the other two agencies that have yet to downgrade Alberta or perhaps by even further downgrades from the agency that already has downgraded Alberta? What do you feel is the risk that the other two agencies who have not yet downgraded Alberta will downgrade once the budget is released or at any other time?

Thank you.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much for the question. I can tell you now that we're planning to go out and visit, of course, the three bond-



rating agencies and talk with them directly about the upcoming Budget 2016 and our efforts in Budget 2015. I think that as a group government has taken significant effort to ensure that our expense growth in Budget 2015 stays under population plus inflation. We will probably be putting a chart in Budget 2016 that shows where that is tracking, both for Budget 2015 and Budget 2016, what we project, and previous years' budgets and where it projected with regard to population plus inflation and where the government's growth on expenses year over year was. We're concerned, of course, with regard to the revenues that are coming into the province and how we're going to address all of the programmatic needs that Albertans still require.

I'll be going out to see the three bond-rating agencies and talking to them, as I said, about the results for 2015 and where we're planning to go in 2016. While the three different agencies have made changes to the province's credit rating, they all link that decision to the drop in global oil prices, commodity prices, so Alberta is not any different than any other jurisdiction in that regard. In fact, many companies are feeling the same downgrades to their ratings with regard to those agencies. Oil prices are beyond our control but not our response. Our response: as I said, we're trying to find efficiencies. We're working very hard to ensure that we stay at a reasonable rate of growth, around 2, 2 and a half per cent on our expense side, and we're trying to bend that even further.

The borrowing we do already recognizes the challenges on our balance sheet. We still have a really good balance sheet, but the borrowing we do is already priced to reflect the changes that we know are coming with regard to – let me just back up. It already reflects the challenges that we're experiencing. People, like the agencies, look at different things. Some look at debt to GDP, and we know that as of this third-quarter report, that was 5.7 per cent for 2015-16. Others look at revenue to GDP, and we know that that is going to be a challenge for us.

I just want to say that I feel like we're already paying the price. When we do borrowing, they understand the difficulties we are in in terms of the situation and the diversification, that is not as robust as it needs to be to ensure that we have revenue lines that don't take the significant hits that this one has taken. Going forward, we're going to be talking to them and explaining our situation fully, and they will do what they do.

I do want to say that Standard & Poor's already has complimented Alberta. They say that we have exceptional liquidity, very strong financial management, and we have some budgetary flexibility. I know that's code for different things, but we have said that we're not going to bring in additional, significant taxes. That's what Standard & Poor's is kind of pointing to, but that's not what they're going to hear from us when I go and see them in approximately a month and a half.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This seems to be taking more of my time than I thought. This is a very enjoyable exchange but I also think important. There are a couple of things the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has said here that I just want to pick up on quickly. Yes, the price of oil has gone down, but you know, it's very clear that the bond-rating agencies link Alberta's credit rating not just with the price of oil but with our overall fiscal performance. You've alluded to something here that I really do want to pick up on. One is, of course, those spending choices that this government makes. The other is the revenue side. When you talk about fiscal flexibility, you've just said that you will not bring in significant tax changes. Will you bring in insignificant tax changes? What is an insignificant tax change? Are you going to do anything at

all on the revenue side? I'm very curious, and I know Albertans are very interested in that as well. That's one question. Will Budget '16 raise any taxes or fees or levies of any kind?

The second question is: have you calculated the cost of any potential future credit-rating downgrade and what that will cost Albertans as we go deeper and deeper into debt and borrow more and more?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me be clear. We have already talked about the changes to revenue going forward. People here have heard several times that we have a significant challenge getting acceptance for pipelines across this country. One of the things that we believe is necessary to create that greater social licence is a levy on carbon pricing across the economy, and we are doing that. We have said that we are bringing that in. That is going to be revenue neutral, back into the economy one hundred per cent. I am going to only say that that's the change that will happen. There will be no insignificant changes. There will be no changes to any of that.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we move into the next section, and we will call on Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you also to all of the members in this Assembly for the important . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, do you want to share your time?

9:20

**Mr. Carson:** Oh, excuse me. I just have one question, and then it will go to the minister. Thank you. Sorry about that.

Thank you, Madam Chair as well as all members of the Assembly for the important and insightful questions that they have asked so far tonight. As I said, I only have one question for the Education minister. Now, we know that a priority for this government has been supporting our vulnerable students; namely, those who are English language learners as well as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. To the minister: what does this funding do to ensure that those students continue to receive the necessary supports that they need?

Thank you.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you for the question from the member. Madam Chair, certainly, it's very important for us to maintain and to strengthen our funding for English language learners as well as for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. We have been working hard to do so, and certainly the supplementary money we put in here is a continuation of our commitment to fund enrolment.

Perhaps the Chamber and the public hear me talking about funding enrolment over and over again, but the depth and the breadth of that responsible choice is significant in every corner of our public education system. The supplementary supply is a reflection of our supporting the ELL and FNMI students. As you probably know, we take a significant number of students from abroad, from different nations around the world. We know that a new Canadian student's degree of success is directly dependent on their success in learning to speak English here in Alberta, so we put a great emphasis on that. We've developed plenty of expertise around the province in accommodating the needs of new Canadian students in our classrooms.

I'm just so proud of the programs that have been set up, that I've visited in Calgary and Edmonton and other centres, that are not just teaching the three Rs to our new Canadian students but are helping to accommodate them in the broadest possible way into Canadian culture and the welcoming sense of community that we provide here

in the province of Alberta. It's one of the hallmarks. So often education is the front line for so many services that we disburse to our population. Certainly, we want to use our school outreach to extend to all students but especially to students that have special needs.

Another area that we're working on very diligently – you might have seen some of that in the paper this morning – is around the restoration of the elected ward for Northland school division in 2017. That preparation work is already beginning and is bearing a lot of fruit.

I think that working together with my colleagues in Health and Human Services and fortifying each of those school sites as a contact point for all provincial services is a very good strategy. Already some preliminary work that we have done has provided some modest gains in measurements around attendance and so forth. I know there are high expectations across Northland school division, but I believe that that is an investment that will reap considerable rewards.

I know our commitment to FNMI funding is significant, and certainly the supplementary estimate that we have here today is a direct reflection of that, putting our money where one's intentions are and where the priorities are for our government.

I'm so proud of our caucus and cabinet, that they again and again reinforce the importance of making sacrifice in other areas for us to make sure that we fund education properly from K to 12, be it for ELL students, for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, for any number of our 659,000 students for which we are responsible for education here in the province. I'm just so proud every day to see that our government is supporting those students and their education regardless of the economic circumstances that we find ourselves in.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other government members wishing to ask questions?

If not, we'll move on to the final segment. The rotation now allows for speaking times to a maximum of five minutes. We will begin again with the members of the Official Opposition.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Airdrie, did you wish to combine your time back and forth?

**Mrs. Pitt:** Please, yes. I should be brief. I'm really just looking for a clarification. I'm going to bring up ASLI again. Minister, you mentioned that the \$50 million for ASLI was coming from Infrastructure. We don't see that in Infrastructure as a reduction. Can you explain how that works?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the question. The \$50.5 million that is being transferred from the Infrastructure budget to my ministry was in the capital plan 2015. My understanding and what I've been briefed on is that it has been transferred, so there should be a reduction. I can follow up with the hon. member about that, but certainly there's not new money. It's just the same amount of money. I can follow up further. I'm not sure why that wasn't – it certainly is a transfer from one ministry to another.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Okay. Thank you. Yes, I'd be interested to know where that reduction comes from. If not Infrastructure, where do we see that reduction?

I did see a list of projects that you were funding. How did you come to those conclusions? Did you honour all of the existing ASLI contracts moving forward, or were there some decisions that you made in there?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the question. There were 31 projects, that were approved by the previous government, that we did a rigorous assessment of in the fall of this year. Of those projects, 25 of them are going ahead. There were six that we found didn't sort of match that rigour of what we wanted. It fulfilled on, certainly, providing long-term care and the dementia care spaces that we need. So after the thorough review that we had in the fall, we did agree upon 25. Twenty-two of those 25 have already, you know, had the approval letters. Three we're still working with the proponents of to make sure that everything is in place.

We're certainly doing our due diligence to make sure that these projects are solid and that they're going to be serving the communities that they need. That is the current situation for the ASLI program.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Well, thank you. You answered some questions down my list. The delay in the funding for the groups: do you know what impact that had on these groups? How much longer do we expect to wait for the other three that are waiting for funding?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yeah. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, there was a delay in the funding – the member is quite right – but we felt that as a new government we needed to look at these. We are responsible for these projects moving forward, so we needed to do our due diligence to make sure that these were solid projects that were serving, certainly, the needs of the communities. So there was a delay. We know that more needs to be done to support long-term care spaces and dementia spaces in the province, but we didn't think it was wise for us to go ahead on projects that we weren't solidly behind. It did take some time. We know that the proponents were, you know, respectful of our decision and were patient with us, and we appreciate that.

Now 22 of the 25 are going ahead. They're going ahead and they're getting their land titles, development permits, master service agreements with Alberta Health Services. The other three we're working on diligently to make sure that they have everything in place so that we can go ahead with their grant agreements. So despite the delay – it was a wise one – we have now almost completed that process.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Minister.

Can you explain to me what the process was for your decision and what role you played in that decision-making process?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

9:30

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you to the member for the question. Well, I was appointed to be the Minister of Seniors and Housing on February 2, 2016, so when the program proposals were reviewed, I was not the minister responsible. Quite honestly, I wasn't involved in that process, but I know that the minister at the time was very involved in the process and made sure that it was fulfilling on our commitment. I mean, one of the commitments that we made in our campaign was for 2,000 long-term care spaces, so we made sure that these ASLI grants were fulfilling that. They were making sure that these projects made sense for the communities in which they were being proposed, that they were fiscally prudent, and that they were needed in their communities.

There are many other indicators that were gone through, and certainly we did our due diligence to make sure that these projects made sense and fulfilled our promise of 2,000 long-term care spaces.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Pitt:** All right. Lastly here, just performance measures. I'll be really quick. What are your priorities? What are your performance measures? How will you report these? Why haven't you included these?

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the question. Well, certainly, what we want to fulfill is our commitment to make sure that seniors have the accommodations that they need at whatever level, and we know that here in Alberta we don't have enough long-term care, dementia care spaces. That was our commitment during the election, to create 2,000 new long-term care spaces, and that's what we're fulfilling on. When we were assessing the ASLI grant proposals, we were looking at how they would be able to give us those kinds of outcomes to make sure that the communities that needed these facilities would have them. We certainly did take our due diligence, and we are very proud of that.

I've just been informed, too, that performance measures are not really in the supplementary supply, but they'll be in our budget on April 14, so at that time the member will see the specifics of that.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My questions are to the Minister of Justice. Have there been any new hires for this supplementary? You spoke of float pools, shift scheduling software, and possibly new assessment people for transitioning between the prisons or the correction facilities.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to the member for the question. Just to be very clear with respect to Justice and Solicitor General as a whole, we're exercising hiring restraints, so we're running a fairly high vacancy rate to stay within our targets.

With respect to corrections in specific, they're exempt from that hiring restraint, so we have been hiring people in corrections. The intention there is to ensure that we have people available to cover off shifts so that we're not paying overtime because it's not only costly for the government but it's actually – being a correctional officer is very hard work, and it's not good for our officers to have to be on shift for long periods of time, sometimes being held over or coming in for shifts that they didn't expect. So it's good on several fronts. We have hired. We're introducing float pools. Essentially, what that means is that we'll have employees available and already trained to cover sort of temporary or permanent vacancies if someone else decides they want to move on to a different career.

Then what we've procured is new shift scheduling software. We're hoping to use that to ensure that we have the right number of people in the right places because obviously it's sort of a large, complex system. We'll also be looking to conduct an audit to optimize manpower and reduce overtime. I guess that with respect to corrections specifically, yes, we have been hiring some employees to ensure that we're not going into overtime.

**Mr. Cyr:** Sorry. I meant to go back and forth.

**The Chair:** That's all right. You only have six seconds left.

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. Was there more than one facility that this went to?

**The Chair:** We'll now move to the third party if you have some questions. The hon. leader.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Do you want to go back and forth?

**Mr. McIver:** You know what? We'll go back and forth because I've just got a few little things to cover off here.

The money that was talked about towards ASLI: I know that the government actually criticized the program in the past and now is putting money into it. Has something changed about the way you're spending money? Are you doing something different, or is this just money towards the program as it was before you were in government?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the question. There were 31 projects that were approved by the previous government, which was represented by the member asking the question, of course, and of those projects, 25 we reviewed and felt that they should go ahead. Many of them were far enough along that it was important for us to respect the process that had gone on. Some of them were changed somewhat to fit with, you know, our request for 2,000 more long-term care spaces. So we made the program work that had been existing and that many had been working hard on to make those beds available. We did continue with that program.

Moving forward, we're looking at other ways of, you know, setting out proposals and doing that, but we decided that it was in the best interests to get the beds that we needed very much to care for seniors in this province, to go ahead with what the previous government had started. Of course, we did do the review, as I mentioned earlier, and did shift it somewhat, but we thought it was the most prudent decision at the time.

Thank you.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. That leads me to another question. On the delay that the minister just talked about, I'm just curious how much that added to the cost of the projects?

**Ms Sigurdson:** I don't have those figures right now. I mean, I can follow up with them. This is supplementary supply. This is about money being transferred for infrastructure to my ministry for the ASLI grants. I think the communities are working with us the best they can to keep the costs low. I can ask my ministry to see if we can find a more specific number for that, but I don't have that number right now.

**Mr. McIver:** With the supplementary estimates now, Madam Chair, there's a temptation always within governments, within administrations, for March madness, which, of course, is people spending their budgets before the end of the year before they don't need it. Since the government is coming forward with supplementary estimates, what efforts has the government made to control March madness? Since you're asking for more money, what direction, what efforts, what has the government done to control unnecessary year-end expenditures that might happen just because certain departments may have money left in their budgets?

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. As I said, when we table the results of Budget 2015, we'll be showing the efforts by all ministers and ministries to control operational spending. We identified that we needed to look at over \$200 million in 2015-16, and I'm going to be showing you where we exceeded that amount. In the third-quarter update here you'll see where there's a reduction of \$463 million in expenses. Some of that was as a result of the crop insurance not being needed as much as we thought it would be needed, the crop doing better. The ministries have all been asked to contribute to that over \$200 million reduction. I don't have the exact numbers that each of them was able to deliver, but we have good results in that regard, and I'll be able to show you.

As everybody knows, there will be no increases to legislators' salaries for the entire term. Political staff in our government are taking the same wage freeze. For the management, opted out, and exempt people that starts April 1, so that's not this budget year, but the others have occurred. So we have salaries that we've frozen for some people here. We have asked all ministers and ministries to contribute to program reallocations, and I'll be tabling the full results of those when we table the full budget finalization.

9:40

**Mr. McIver:** My friend the Finance minister keeps saying this. Just because you were lucky and it didn't hail so much, that's not really cost control. You keep selling it as cost control, a reduction in crop insurance. So while we're all happy that it hailed less and less crop needed insurance, I would prefer that the Finance minister would stand up and agree that that does not qualify as tightening the belt or cost control on the government's part but, rather, good fortune that the weather smiled upon our agricultural people.

I will ask one question. I said it before, but it would be nice to hear it pass the Finance minister's lips. Does the Finance minister agree with the Municipal Affairs minister that the deficit this year is now projected to be \$10.4 billion?

**Mr. Ceci:** No, the Finance minister wouldn't agree to that. The deficit is identified here for Budget 2015-16, and it is \$6.315 billion, but if you're talking about next year's budget, that's a different thing. Next year's budget is not going to be \$6.315 billion.

**Mr. McIver:** In fairness to the Municipal Affairs minister, I believe she was referring to next year's budget. I would not want to misrepresent unfairly what I heard her say. I was curious to see if the Finance minister agreed with that in that correct context. I don't mind picking on the government when they have it coming, but this is the case that the Municipal Affairs minister was referring to next year, not this year. I didn't want to be unfair to the minister with my comments.

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, we're talking about supplementary estimates and, I guess, rightly, the third-quarter fiscal update and economic statement. When I talked about this I think on February 27, I did say that the deficit projections for Budget 2016-17 would be \$5 billion larger than we anticipated. Add them together – I know you can – and it's \$5.4 billion and \$5 billion. So the Minister of Municipal Affairs is correct in her statement that the deficit projected for Budget 2016-17 is way larger than we forecast back in Budget 2015, and it's \$10.4 billion.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Madam Chair, that will be the end of my questions. I just wanted to express my extreme satisfaction from being the first one to pry those words out of the lips of my friend the Finance minister. I want to thank the Finance minister for giving that straight answer.

**The Chair:** Moving on to the next part of the rotation, are there any members on this side?

To the Official Opposition, then. The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Did you want to combine your time?

**Mr. Cyr:** Back and forth, please. Yes.

This is again to the Justice minister. All right. Let's go to: how much of the \$8 million is going to be overtime? Do we know that number, Minister?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to the member for the question. I don't think we have right now – I certainly don't – which part of it is overtime and which part of it is sort of additional staffing that we had to provide. I can undertake to get back to the member with the best information we can provide. I'm not actually sure if our software will allow us to break it down that way because, of course, the \$8 million isn't the only part; it's \$8 million in addition to, you know, the large number previously. So I will get back to you with the best number we can provide, but I can't guarantee that we'll be able to break it out that way.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

Are the corrections staff working in a safe environment, with the additional overtime?

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to the member for the question. I mean, our corrections staff are highly trained professionals. I am not of the view that it's the best-case scenario that we have them working additional, and I don't think that they would be either. But I'm confident that we are absolutely committed to ensuring that they are safe, and they are absolutely committed to working really hard to make sure that each other and all of their co-workers and the people they're guarding are all safe as well.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The changes you were talking about before, the float pools, the shift-scheduling software, and the new positions: was the decision to go in this direction done by the previous government or once you took over and formed government?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to the member for the question. I can't honestly speak to what the previous government was doing about it. When I came in, projections were running in the sort of \$30 millionish range in terms of overage in terms of corrections, so we started to sort of move immediately to address that. These were the measures that were sort of brought forward to me, the scheduling software and the float pools.

The measures with respect to ensuring that fewer people are incarcerated: I mean, certainly, we think that that's an important way to move forward, but I honestly can't speak to what decisions would have been made had the election gone differently.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Minister.

Now, these changes that you had implemented: is this a pilot project in one or two of the facilities, or are all of the facilities involved in this decision?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to the member for the question. The overage represents a series of facilities, obviously. The new shift-scheduling software will be available. It's software, so we'll make it available to everybody.

With respect to the sort of staffing requirement, trying to audit to ensure that we're not having too much staffing, and in terms of the float pools, I mean, obviously, auditing to ensure that we're doing our best job not to have overtime will apply to all facilities. As I understand it, the float pools are going to exist at all facilities, but if I am incorrect, I will get back to you with that information.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Were there any new contracts or amended contracts during this last year that created a part of this \$8 million for the salaries and wages?

**Ms Ganley:** Thanks very much, Madam Chair and to the member for the question. As I understand it, the correctional officers' contract was negotiated previously, and I'm actually not even sure what year we're in in terms of that particular contract. This money was specifically because we had to sort of schedule additional people and have overtime for people that sort of exceeded what our initial expectations were. I don't believe that that was a contributing factor in this case, but the contract with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, I believe, has been in existence for a couple of years already.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have no more questions. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any further questions from this side?

It appears that all the members who wish to speak have spoken, so I shall now put the following questions.

**9:50      Vote on Supplementary Supply  
Estimates 2015-16  
General Revenue Fund**

Agreed to:	
Education	
Expense	\$33,800,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

## The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Justice and Solicitor General	
Expense	\$8,000,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

### The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Labour	
Expense	\$3,089,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

## The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Municipal Affairs	
Expense	\$9,045,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

### The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Seniors and Housing	
Expense	\$50,500,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Treasury Board and Finance	
Expense	\$2,000,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.  
The Committee of Supply shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again. The following resolutions relating to the 2015-16 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016, have been approved.

Education: expense, \$33,800,000.  
Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$8,000,000.  
Labour: expense, \$3,089,000.  
Municipal Affairs: expense, \$9,045,000.  
Seniors and Housing: expense, \$50,500,000.  
Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$2,000,000.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

I would like to alert hon. members that Standing Order 61(3) provides that upon the Assembly concurring in the report by Committee of Supply, the Assembly immediately reverts to Introduction of Bills for the introduction of the appropriation bill.

**Introduction of Bills**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Bill 3****Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016**

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 3, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a first time]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing as we made very good progress this evening and looking at the time, I move that we adjourn until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:54 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, March 15, 2016

Day 5

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 29th Legislature

### Second Session

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 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
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 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
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 Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
 Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
 Official Opposition Whip  
 Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
 Premier  
 Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
 Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
 Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
 Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
 Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
 Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
 Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
 Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

#### Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, March 15, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Let us bow our heads and reflect each in our own way. Hon. members, as we contemplate the matters before us today, let us be reminded of the importance of the impact of our decisions on all Albertans. Let us remember the children and families of our province, some of whom fear for their financial security.

Thank you. Please be seated.

The chair would recognize the minister of agriculture. I believe we have a request for unanimous consent.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm asking for unanimous and clear consent of the House to introduce a guest.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, it is my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an energetic youth leader and her family. This young woman is in her ninth year as a 4-H member in the Irricana 4-H Beef and Multi Club and has been chosen as the recipient of the 4-H 2015 Premier's award. She has held numerous positions in her club, has attended numerous camps and programs, and has represented 4-H Alberta in various competitions. This fall she plans to attend the University of Alberta and is enrolled in the pre-vet program. I would like to ask Brennan Munro, her family, and friends to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Nine years is a long time. I still reminisce on why I had to sell Blackie, my 4-H calf.

The chair would recognize the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

### Member's Apology

**Mr. Connolly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before the House deals with government business, I'd like to rise and make a brief statement regarding my actions on Thursday during debate on the Speech from the Throne. I want to make it clear to this Chamber that on Thursday I made an inappropriate gesture to members opposite, which I regret and for which I apologize. My actions were not befitting of this Chamber and the dignity herein. When this matter was raised at the time, I sought to minimize the matter instead of taking full responsibility. To be clear, my actions were not acceptable, and my apology and explanation were not good enough.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The member of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me this morning. I'd just like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood. We accept the apology fully and consider the matter dealt with.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to all members.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 3

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and members of the House. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 3, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016.

The supplementary amounts provided by this bill reflect the fiscal picture outlined in the third-quarter fiscal update, released on February 24. These amounts are necessary for the government to conduct business and fulfill its commitments for the current fiscal year. The additional amounts mainly relate to: first, support for the affordable supportive living initiative, ASLI; second, to support increased student enrolment for public and separate schools, private schools, and early childhood service operations; third, to support flooding mitigation in Chestermere, Langdon, and Rocky View county; next, to support salaries, particularly overtime for adult remand centre operations; next, to support labour market programs; and, finally, to support the horse-racing and breeding renewal grants program.

I respectfully urge my colleagues in this House to support this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I'll recognize another member with respect to this. The Member for . . .

**Mr. Smith:** Drayton Valley-Devon.

**The Speaker:** . . . Drayton Valley-Devon. My apologies yet again. My apologies.

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I guess I will start off by saying that if I had to pay a nickel for every student's name that I had not remembered over the years, Mr. Ceci wouldn't be having a deficit. I'm sorry. I apologize for using his name.

**The Speaker:** I'm pleased to see that one time, with humour, you call yourself a student.

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I know that today we're addressing the issue of the supplementary supply bill. I'll start off by saying that as the opposition, obviously, our job is to hold the government accountable for its spending and for the actions of this government. To that effect, there are some concerns that I have with this bill. We see and we believe that a government should not get into a habit, that it's not a good practice for a government to be asking for a hundred million more over and above the approved budget that they've received. This is especially problematic for me given that this government just passed the budget a little over or around four months ago. So there have obviously been some issues, miscalculations perhaps, perhaps some issues that have arisen that have had to be dealt with within this supplementary supply bill, but it's a concern.

On the other hand, as legislators and as a part of the opposition while we strive to hold the government accountable, we don't strive to simply oppose for the sake of opposing. We would believe on this side of the House and in this party that the services that the government provides for our citizens are of importance, of great importance. While I have concerns and while this sometimes places

me in an awkward position of having to decide just where we should go on this supplementary supply bill and while I do not support poor fiscal management, I do recognize that the government needs this increase in funding to provide services, especially in areas like health or education.

I suppose I should start this off by saying to the government – and I'm sure it will bring them a great deal of comfort – that I will be supporting this bill. Now, having said that, I do think that there are questions that we have to ask about the expenditures in this supply bill. It is a concern, I think, not only to this party but to Albertans with regard to the detail that is provided in this supplementary supply bill.

**10:10**

It's important to ask the questions. What's going to be funded, and what will the impact be on the lives of Albertans? More importantly, how are we going to know that these funds are actually going to make a difference? I think these questions, Mr. Speaker, need to be asked and the government be allowed to answer these questions.

In my area as shadow minister of Education: are there indeed fewer numbers of students in our classrooms as a result of this increase in funding? Are we going to see a benefit for the students? Do we have the evidence and does the minister have the evidence to be able to provide that? Are there enough aides in the classroom to ensure that we will have a truly inclusive classroom?

There are teachers in this Assembly. It's nice to have a fraternity of teachers here. We've been in that classroom, and we've seen the kinds of challenges that each of our students has had, Mr. Speaker, many of them unique. I know that in my 30 years I could name student after student that have had some very unique challenges. I have had students that have had no arms, and I have watched that student come into my classroom, shrug off his backpack, open it with his teeth, pull out his books, put a pen in his mouth, and write for 60 minutes with the pen in his mouth. I've seen students that have been blind who have brought their Seeing Eye dog into my classroom. I've had students that have had issues with temper and have sometimes had to have an aide there simply to guide them through the issues and the questions of the day that they sometimes felt frustrated over.

So I think it's important to ask the questions, Mr. Speaker. Is the money that's going forward into Education from the supplementary supply bill actually going to be spent on providing the aides and the resources that are necessary to help the students in the classroom? Are our schools being maintained properly? Is that plant operations and maintenance funding actually going towards helping schools maintain an environment for our students to be able to actually learn in?

Transportation: we know that that's come up in the news in the last 10 months that I've been in this House, busing. Are we providing reasonable distances for our students in the cities for them to walk to the bus, or are we asking five- and six-year-old students to walk many kilometres, crossing busy streets? Is the funding going towards helping that issue?

There are lots of questions that we could ask, and we need to make sure that this government is providing us with reasonable answers to those questions. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, if these are such priority issues to rate an increase of funding after less than four months after the budget has been passed, why did the original budget just not include adequate funding in the first place?

I guess, therefore, that on behalf of Albertans I'd like to ask some questions. Can we afford these increases? Is there no way that the government could have found some efficiencies in programming to reduce the increase in expenditures? Out of an incredibly large

budget, a hundred million dollars, couldn't we have found the efficiencies somewhere?

You know, we had an example I think last night in some of the questioning that I asked the minister with regard to the RCSD funding. We find that Education is asking for \$800,000 more, but the Health budget and the Human Services budget – at least the Health budget for sure – don't appear to be matching those funds. If Health could find the efficiencies in their budget to not have to ask for \$800,000 in RCSD funding, then why does Education have to? It's a question that I think Albertans have a right to hear and to understand and then to judge. Were there no places in the original \$4.3 billion Education budget where the government could have reduced spending to offset the increased costs?

That's an important question to ask, I believe, because the government is actually paying for the services that it provides for the people of Alberta using credit. At some point that credit is going to have to be repaid, and as with all credit it's going to have to be repaid with interest. I can remember having the conversation with my kids about the student loans that they've had to accrue as they've gone through university. No, dad's pockets couldn't necessarily pay for all of the university education that my kids have received. Yes, they worked very hard in the summers to try to save money and be able to afford that university education. Yet to the best of their ability, in all three of my kids' lives they've had to, to one degree or another, have several tens of thousands of dollars worth of student loans.

I can remember the conversation that I had: "Oh, dad, everybody takes out student loans." "Yeah, I know. Some kids do." "Dad, it actually makes financial sense because, you see, the government will actually pay down some of it. When I go to pay it back, they'll cut it down, so I'm actually getting some free money." "Yeah. Son, is that the way you really want to live your life? You know, if you borrow money, don't you think you should pay it back, all of it, with interest? You know, son, it's certainly a whole lot easier to borrow than it is to pay back." Is there anybody in this Legislature that doesn't understand the truth of that?

**An Hon. Member:** Just those guys.

**Mr. Smith:** Oh, I think they understand.

I guess the question that I've got that I'd like this government to consider is: when we are paying for government services on credit, how at some point in time are you going to pay it back? Is this increase in funding intended to meet the needs of Education until the end of this fiscal or until the end of the school year? In other words, will these increases see us through until June? A reasonable question that we wouldn't mind the government being able to answer.

I don't expect that we will get complete answers to these questions. Part of that will probably come as we begin to move through the next year or two, the budget estimates and the new budget, and we get to see some of these answers about how you're going to deal with debt and deficit, where that money has been spent and where you're planning on spending it again in this coming budget. But Albertans do have the right to have their concerns addressed.

I guess my major issue with this supplementary bill is not that the money will be used to provide for a solid educational foundation. I know that the teachers are going to work hard and that school boards are going to work hard and that they're going to try to make sure that that money is spent wisely and that it provides for a solid educational foundation. But I think that given the little detail as to what we know from the supplementary supply bill, we don't know how it will be spent.

10:20

For instance, nobody argues that we need plant operations and maintenance budgets. You're asking for more money for that. Well, it would be nice to know where or on what that particular budget line is actually going to be spent. Mr. Speaker, is there an updated list of the maintenance projects that will be completed through this infusion of cash? Have the allocation criteria been changed? Has the applicable per-student rate changed? How will this additional funding impact the coming budget estimates? It would be nice, before we had the chance to vote on this bill, if we had some of these questions answered.

The Minister of Education has said that the number of students is growing, but there seemed to be a little confusion yesterday when other figures within the government showed that the population isn't growing. We've got some confusion there. But even if we set that aside, Mr. Speaker, \$3.2 million is going towards class size initiatives. It would have been helpful for Albertans if they knew how that money was going to be spent. How did the government underestimate the funds required for ensuring that class sizes stay reasonably within the parameters set by the government when this budget was passed? Will this increase in funding mean that current class sizes are actually maintained? I'm hoping so, but I don't have the figures to be able to show Albertans that.

Although the class size funding is allocated based on a specific grade level or for specific CTS courses, school jurisdictions do have the flexibility to use this funding to hire or retain teachers at any grade level, based on local needs. That's one of the reasons why we have school boards, to make local decisions. Is this increase of over \$3 million intended to keep K through 3 classrooms within parameters? Has he had conversations with the school boards to decide just where that's going to go, or has he given them carte blanche to make those decisions?

Item 2.6 in this supplementary supply is equity of opportunity, and it includes a \$1.3 million ask. Well, are the per-student or density-and-distance allocations staying the same with this increase? How is it going to be split up? How will this increase impact students in the classroom? What additional supports will the school authorities expect as a result of this increase? See, we're asking questions that allow us to make an informed decision when it comes to this budget and to this supplementary supply bill.

Mr. Speaker, Wildrose has always supported the things that we hope this supplemental supply bill will provide for education. We've always supported the concept of small class sizes and reasonable and safe transportation for rural and urban students. We've supported small schools to ensure that their students enjoy the same opportunities as larger schools. We believe that secure funding is needed for independent schools and for private ECS operators.

Wildrose also believes, however, that even this NDP government should be able to find hundreds of millions in ineffective spending after a 44-year dynasty has left the government benches. This bill would be much easier to swallow, Mr. Speaker, if the government could show us that they had bothered to find some of that waste, if you'd eliminated a lot more than this hundred million or so that you're asking for above and beyond in this supplemental supply bill. The concerns of Wildrose that we've raised over the fiscal management of this government – they continue to raise red flags. But while we hope that these funds are used effectively for their intended purpose, it does not abrogate the need for this government to begin developing sound fiscal management policies. That would be our advice to this government as the Official Opposition.

While I said at the beginning that we will support this bill, we would encourage this government to ensure that when it comes to

the finances of this province and the taxpayers of this province, they are fiscally responsible and accountable for the decisions that they make.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you. I will try and address some of the issues that were brought up. I do want to point out that on October . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, I thought you were speaking to 29(2)(a). Is that correct?

**Mr. Ceci:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** You're on 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Ceci:** In terms of responding . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, my apologies. We need another speaker.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address the supplementary supply estimates. We had an interesting discussion with considerable question-and-answer back and forth last evening. You know, I will say that I will pick up on the threads of some of that discussion from last night. Some of those same themes were developed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

My primary concern: I think or I hope, at least, that the Finance minister in his concluding remarks on this bill will take fuller opportunity to answer it because, you know, quite frankly, I found some of the answers from the ministers when I asked this question to be lacking. I was very pleased to see the efforts made by both the Minister of Finance and also the Minister of Education to find your savings and other parts of their budget that, in fact, balanced off some of the requirement for an additional ask: the \$17 million in the Education budget and, sir, I believe it's somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$9 million in your own budget. My disappointment, quite frankly, is that the other ministers were either not similarly diligent or not similarly able to find those types of savings. Quite frankly, I found the answers that they provided to be lacking and wanting.

You know, there are a wide number of reasons in business why you don't end up spending as much money as you had budgeted for. Sometimes certain initiatives that you'd planned on doing simply do not go ahead at that same pace. As has been noted in a couple of responses, sometimes you don't end up having as many staff members, or you have a larger number of vacancies and you don't fill those vacancies quite as quickly. There are a large number of reasons where cost savings can be found.

Sometimes they can be found not so much as a matter of good fortune but rather as a matter of good luck. Exactly. The Finance minister knows that saying that having to pay out less in agricultural insurance claims is somehow belt-tightening is almost akin to someone on a city council saying: we were careful stewards of the taxpayers' dollars because we made it snow less and our snow removal budget was lower than we expected. So let's not kid ourselves. Some of these savings are, in fact, more a matter of good fortune than good management.

I did want to mention one thing because this is something that the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon pointed out and I had this question as well, and that was with regard to the Education requisition for the \$33 million. Health made no supplementary

estimate requisition, and that means that Health must have done a very careful job in terms of managing resources. Well, it's a little bit of a nuanced thing, but, in fact, the Health department is needing more money – it's stated in the third-quarter fiscal update – an additional requisition or an additional amount budgeted of some \$147 million, roughly one and a half times the total amount of all the supplementary estimates. But it does not appear in supplementary estimates because it is additional funding for AHS. That's a subtlety. The Health minister was good enough to point that out to me in an exchange that we had.

10:30

Nonetheless, it shouldn't be construed that somehow the Education department did less work than Health or that the Health department was able to get right back down to budgeted levels because, in fact, the Health department, specifically AHS, will have higher expenditures than what was anticipated.

As I said before, Mr. Speaker, my primary concern with this is the failure of the various ministries that asked for additional funds to find savings within their department so that that additional ask would be unnecessary, and I pointed out last night the small percentage that we're talking about. In a couple of the departments it's less than 1 per cent of the overall annual budget, some .6 per cent in the case of both the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General and, I believe, the Ministry of Labour and 1.6 per cent in the case of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

You know, in business when you have an unanticipated expense come up during the course of a fiscal year, something that you hadn't really expected to come up, and if it comes up partway through the year, which is going to cost you more, you look for other savings that you can apply, other things that you can do to save that money so you don't have that additional ask. In a scenario, as the Minister of Finance has pointed out on more than one occasion, where we've had this precipitous drop in government revenues – and we'll leave the debate as to exactly why that's happening to another day – when you've had that situation come up, I think it's incumbent upon all of the ministers of the Crown to do a better job, a more diligent job of finding where those savings are.

Now, clearly, some of the ministers have done that. We only have roughly seven ministries that are asking for additional funds. For the remaining ministries, you know, I'm sure that some of their programs have gone over budget, but they found other programs that, in fact, are under budget or they've exercised the necessary restraint so that a supplementary supply request was not needed.

To me, the message that needed to be sent to Albertans was that we will not have a supplementary supply estimate request at all, that we don't need to ask Albertans, who are already suffering significant financial hardships, for yet another hundred million dollars. The fact that this government is finding itself in need of doing that and that the departments in question were unable to find the necessary savings is, to me, a great disappointment. I'm hoping that the same level of diligence is in fact not applied going forward in the preparation of the April 14 budget but that a much higher level of diligence is applied because, as the Finance minister was finally able to articulate late last night, we are looking at a \$10 billion plus deficit. That is a number that should cause grave concerns to all Canadians when one considers that the federal budgetary deficit, the budgetary deficit of the federal government in Ottawa, a budget that is many times greater in size than our provincial budget, is only going to be marginally larger than that \$10 billion. Well, I guess we'll never know. We won't know until March 22. It could, in fact, be considerably larger. I guess we'll see what happens.

Mr. Speaker, to me, successful stewardship of taxpayers' dollars could have been demonstrated by this government by stating: we have found internal economies and internal savings that make supplementary estimate requests unnecessary. As we see now, that in fact was not the case. We have seven departments that are requesting extra funds. As the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon stated, you know, we support a lot of the initiatives that are included within that. Certainly, the ASLI grants were something that we are absolutely in favour of.

In fact, our disappointment there was that there was a delay, and that delay will have not only cost additional funds but will have caused significant anxiety in the communities that had approved projects. I know that in Lloydminster with our Pioneer home project, which was an excellent project and was finally approved – and we're certainly grateful for that – we lost the better part of a summer construction season because of the delay. Really, that's not helpful at a time when we need to be as prudent with taxpayers' dollars as we possibly can. Now, we've been blessed. We've been very fortunate. It has been a relatively mild construction season this past winter, and there's been tremendous progress on that project, and I'm looking forward to the opening of the project perhaps later this year or early next.

So we're not against those, and because of that, like the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, we too will be voting in favour of supplementary estimates because these dollars are necessary. I understand that. But I guess I did want to make sure that we have on the record what I stated last night in Committee of Supply and that we have it on record today that as a caucus – and certainly I as an individual member – we are disappointed in the fact that we even have to have supplementary supply estimates and that we have to ask the taxpayers for an additional \$106 million. In my view, those are efficiencies that should have been able to be found. There's demonstrated evidence that some of the ministries were able to find those, and I applaud those ministers for their efforts, but quite frankly I think it should have been across the board.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise – sorry. I was chasing children in the new family-friendly environment. I'll catch my breath here.

**An Hon. Member:** Whose kids?

**Mr. Cooper:** My kids. Sorry. I wasn't chasing school groups, sir. I was chasing my children, and I might just add that it's a pleasure to see them. I know it's hard to believe, sir, but on days when the Assembly sits, I even beat the toddler out of bed. That means you have to get up pretty early in the morning to beat a three-year-old to work.

Anyway, let me get to the meat of the matter. It's my pleasure to rise to speak to the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016. Like my colleague, I just wanted to highlight a couple of quick things. We in the Wildrose caucus believe that we need to have world-class education facilities for our students to learn in. Our education system is building the future of our province, so it's important that we are ensuring that the resources are in the right places at the right times for the right reasons.

My colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster mentioned the ASLI grants, another good, positive step forward for the province at a time when housing is desperately needed right across the province, including in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Essentially, in every constituency there is a need that outweighs our dollars, but



we do need to be taking some proactive steps, so I look forward to supporting some of the measures in this legislation. Having said that, I do have some significant concerns about why and how we got here today.

Just over a hundred days ago – I know it might feel like an eternity – we were here, and the government's budget was passed. I know that the current NDP caucus has some track record of blaming the former PC government for putting them in a bad spot, and I seem to recall some blame on the former government for the budget being delayed. At that time they didn't want to rush it. They wanted to make sure that they'd made the appropriate choices. Just a little over a hundred days later here we are back in the House to require supplementary supply. I'm not sure if that's because they rushed it or they didn't get the decisions right in the first place or exactly what transpired, but I know, Mr. Speaker, that this is the exact type of thing that the NDP caucus, when they were the fourth party, used to stand in this House and express such displeasure about having to do.

Mr. Speaker, I will acknowledge that it's possible that someday members in the Wildrose caucus may be there, and I will live to regret this particular statement in expressing my complete displeasure with the inability of the government to deliver a budget on time, to call the House back when the standing orders say and for whatever reason to continually delay the proceedings of the Assembly, not necessarily once we get here but certainly prior to arriving. The standing orders are very clear that the House should be reconvened in early February, and as you know, good sir, the House only reconvened last Tuesday, which is in March, which is not February.

#### 10:40

It's disappointing to see these patterns of behaviour emerging from the government caucus. This government was elected on a commitment to change, and so far we are seeing more of the same. We've seen that in delaying the budget now till April 14, and as a result of the government not finding efficiencies inside the existing budget and the delay in the upcoming budget, we're here to debate this supplementary supply.

Now, the government of the day likes to rise in their place and say that these are within normal timelines. Yesterday in *Hansard* the Minister of Municipal Affairs said: "We are working incredibly hard . . . within the budget as we [will] present [the] budget . . . within normal timelines." I'd like to just take a moment to talk briefly about what normal timelines look like.

Since 2000 only on three occasions in this Assembly was the budget presented after April 14, and on two of those three occasions, Mr. Speaker, there was an election that year. Well, this government has been in office for 315 days, and they continually try to blame the former government for our position. Listen, the former government was not very good, and now we see the Minister of Municipal Affairs making statements like: these are within normal timelines. We saw the Minister of Economic Trade and Development rise in this House just last week and say on a point of privilege that in comparing what they're doing, it is basically what the last government did except maybe slightly better. Well, let me be clear. The last days of the former PC government are not the standard that we should be reaching for. We should be reaching for much better than that. That government ran on being better than the former PC government, but so far what we've seen is a lot more of what we saw.

Frankly, as an Albertan I'm disappointed. I know that many people in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are also disappointed. They wanted to give the government a chance, and they've had 315 days. That's a fair shake. Unfortunately, we continually see the blaming

of the former government or by saying, "We're basically as good as they were" or by saying that these are normal timelines. Since 2000 this is the fourth-latest presentation of a budget that this Assembly has seen.

Mr. Speaker, this government has made some significant commitments on democratic reform, but just like we're seeing here in supplementary supply estimates, with them doing exactly what they said that they wouldn't do, we are seeing that in the area of democratic reform as well.

The Minister of Labour likes to talk about how awesome the Special Ethics and Accountability Committee is, but as I mentioned, we have now been elected for 315 days, and that committee, sir, that supercommittee that's going to solve all of the ethics and accountability problems of this Assembly, has met a whopping five times. That's approximately once every 63 days. Mr. Speaker, the former PC government had some significant ethical challenges and lapses of judgment, and meeting to try and correct 44 years of the pendulum swinging in the wrong direction takes more work than once every 63 days.

Just recently we heard the Premier speak about wanting the work of this committee to be done in the next 90 days, or by June. Well, Mr. Speaker, they've met five times in the last 300 days. To the best of my knowledge, there's no scheduled meeting of that committee, as I stand in my place today. They've only met five times, and much of those five times, sir, were about the details around the next meeting. Not one thing has been heard from the public, just reporting from the legislative officers. Just like we're disappointed about being here to debate supplementary supply, albeit some positive things in that, we are disappointed that this government is continuing to say one thing and doing another.

Mr. Speaker, the Wildrose believes in providing solutions, and we've been doing that. [interjection] While the government might think it's funny, good sir, just today this side of the House presented a 12-point jobs action plan. So far on that side of the House what we've seen is a massive program that's created one job and then was cancelled. We've seen the introduction of Bill 1, where the preamble is two-thirds of the total bill. If we learned anything yesterday from the Ethics Commissioner investigating this Premier, it's that the preamble of a bill does not give any credit to the rest of the bill because if the preamble of the bill did, then she would have been able to use some significantly stronger language about the current ethics of this government.

So I think it speaks to a much larger narrative. What we're seeing here in supplementary supply we've now seen in their lack of commitment to democratic reform. We've seen it in their ethics and accountability lapses. I mean, this former NDP caucus proposed amendments to legislation that would prevent announcements during by-elections, and then, Mr. Speaker, much to my disappointment and the disappointment of many Albertans who were expecting more from this government, we saw two weeks ago in Calgary-Greenway two separate funding announcements that took place in Calgary. This government used to criticize these very sorts of actions. They used to criticize the former PC government for selling access, for using government resources for partisan purposes.

Now, I will agree that the Ethics Commissioner has cleared the Premier, but the Ethics Commissioner also cleared former Premier Redford, using the exact same language in her ruling about how these types of behaviour are likely to raise questions of the general public. While she did not break the actual law, a case may be made that she broke the spirit of the law. The Health minister yesterday in a press conference said: we've been exonerated by the Ethics Commissioner.

10:50

I remember on many occasions from just down the aisle the current Premier, when she was the leader of the NDP fourth party caucus, rising in this place and saying that just because the Ethics Commissioner said it was right, it doesn't mean you did the right thing. Again, Mr. Speaker, I see the same sort of issue around supplementary supply. Exactly why this conversation relates directly to supplementary supply is because this is a pattern of behaviour that we're seeing from that side of the government. Albertans deserve better.

The last thing that I'll leave you with when it comes to this continual departure of saying one thing and doing another, in particular around supplementary supply, is that we're likely to see later this week the introduction of the essential services legislation, but we're also likely to see debate on second reading later this week. This is just another example of the type of things that this NDP caucus used to rail against.

### Speaker's Ruling Referring to a Legislative Officer

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would like to remind you to keep in mind in your comments that when implying criticism of a legislative officer – it's certainly not in the standing orders, but it has been a matter that has been discussed and addressed in other Assemblies, and we all collectively need to be responsible and recognize that point.

Do you have another question?

**Mr. Cooper:** No. I just am happy to withdraw those comments if they were perceived as criticism of the legislative officer.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Noted.  
The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move adjournment of debate on Bill 3.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016

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

**Mr. Ceci:** We are on Bill 2, did you say? Thank you.

Thank you very much. It's my pleasure to open debate to briefly talk about the additional bill that we have before us now and to say that this one takes us further, of course, down the road with regard to second reading of Bill 2, the interim supply act.

The Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016, will provide funding authority for the offices of the Legislative Assembly and to the government for the period of April 1, 2016, to May 31, 2016, inclusive. The approval of this act will provide the funds needed to continue the business of the province while the Assembly takes the time necessary to present, prepare, review, and debate the government's 2016-17 budget plans, which are further under work and discussion and development with respect to its presentation in this Legislature on April 14.

I would urge my colleagues in the House to support this bill. We are of course taking into account many of the views from groups, individuals, associations, and business in the development of this

Budget 2016, but to get there, we need the time. The interim supply act will allow us that time to ensure that all the important programs, services, and partnerships that can be funded through this Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act continue to happen.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to talk about this NDP government's lack of a financial plan, to talk about Bill 2, the interim supply bill, which asks this Assembly to approve \$8.7 billion of unbudgeted funds. This bill asks us to give this government free rein to do whatever they want instead of being held accountable to the people with a budget. Bill 2 includes no details explaining where these funds will be spent.

Wildrose reluctantly supported Bill 3, the supplementary supply act. While we were skeptical, we believe in the importance of the initiatives that the bill will fund. If this bill's \$8.7 billion has no specific funding direction, this government is looking for the authority to spend with impunity. With the looming deficit for the next year, the government needs to come clean about how much of this money will have to be borrowed.

You know, I also can't help but wonder if the real reason for this interim supply bill is because of the Calgary-Greenway by-election. Is this government trying to avoid being held accountable for their reckless spending? Is the NDP afraid that voters in Calgary would think twice if they were reminded of this government's true colours?

Spending like this isn't really news. It's just perpetuating the spending problem this government seems to have. How can it justify asking Albertans for their hard-earned money without providing a plan for how it will be spent? Albertans want to know they can trust their government, and reckless, unbudgeted spending is no way to build trust.

This government has a real problem that needs to be addressed right here and right now. Alberta already has the highest per capita spending of the largest provinces of Canada, and its spending is growing faster than inflation and population growth. This NDP government is out of control and is proving once again to Albertans that they cannot be trusted. With its economic experiments and reckless spending the NDP government will only further increase the risk for mistakes with this \$8.7 billion in interim supply.

The government has provided zero-detail plans to bolster their claims to be focused on job creation and to care about Albertans. Its lack of a plan betrays this government. It has clearly given no serious thought to the more than 80,000 Albertans who are out of work, no serious thought to the elderly who struggle to survive, just partisan thoughts on how to push an ideological agenda through on the strength of empty words.

The NDP claims to support job creation, but its \$178 million failed job-subsidy plan created zero jobs – sorry, one job – and its Bill 1 is void of any actual plan to help Albertans. The government needs to stop saying that Albertans must wait for its beleaguered and long-awaited budget for a jobs plan. Our economy is in a deep nosedive. Albertans need hope now, today. The longer you take to produce a plan, the longer Albertans are left scrimping and saving, trying to make ends meet while they look for work, wait in line at the food bank.

So why is the government so light on details? This interim supply has none. Albertans are worried about everything that is happening to our economy, and this NDP government can't take the time to create a real jobs program or outline savings to counter bloated spending. How much of this money that you have asked the

Assembly to approve will be borrowed money? Can you answer that one question?

**11:00**

You ask us to support a bill that provides very limited details. Wildrose will stand up for Albertans here today and oppose this bill. We and all Albertans know that you had plenty of time to bring forward a budget. The NDP government is hurting the economy, hurting jobs, hurting Albertans, destroying our province with its inefficiency, and it doesn't want to show Albertans its plan. It doesn't even know what it's doing. Who asks for an interim supply of this size without any explanation or accountability? Only a government full of a sense of its own entitlement would do such a thing, one that doesn't think about or truly care about anxious and worried Albertans.

An \$8.7 billion interim supply bill, advanced funds, with no detail of how much will be borrowed or details of what it will be used for: with this government's previous track record Albertans have every right to be anxious and afraid, and – believe me – they are. The Wildrose caucus is very concerned, concerned enough to ask questions and to oppose the right-to-spend bill. Wildrose will stand up for Albertans. We will stand up for the unemployed, for low-income seniors, and we'll offer them strong leadership, the leadership they so desperately need. We will stand up for them in this Legislature because no one else will.

The PCs won't. They've decided that instead of doing what is right for Albertans by uniting and parting with their pride, they would rather cause a further divide by attacking us in the House instead of rallying together to fight this untrustworthy NDP government. I sure hope they oppose you today. I sure hope they take a stand for Albertans, especially during a time of economic uncertainty, and show that they have changed their ways when it comes to spending.

How are we supposed to support this without a plan, without a budget? Of course, you know that even without our support, you'll ram this piece of legislation through without any thought of the repercussions to Albertans. How shallow, how thoughtless, and how needless, because didn't you just do this a few months ago? How is it that you have been in government for 10 months and still don't have a plan? Instead of the Premier going to spend time raising money for antipipeline NDP parties in other provinces, maybe she should stay home and figure out how to help her own people, maybe help put a budget together.

Just a few short months ago an additional \$5.9 million had to be added to the 2015-16 operating budget for the Ministry of Indigenous Relations, which, as you know, is a special interest of mine. Now, only a few months later you would like for us to give you free rein to run this ministry for two whole months without a budget or a plan. It's a small amount when you consider the other ministries but still too large of a cheque, in the amount of \$11.5 million, without a breakdown or a plan.

In a few short months this government has become arrogant and entitled to the point that it doesn't feel the need to explain itself. Where is the \$8.2 million that you have termed "financial transactions" coming from? From which account are you transferring these funds?

Albertans deserve real leadership, leadership that brings hope to a hurting people. This is something Wildrose will offer. Wildrose will continue to stand up for Albertans, to stand up and fight for jobs, fight for pipelines, for an efficient government, fight for strong communities, strong democracy and lead Alberta back to the prosperity it used to enjoy. This government hasn't been providing that leadership, and this interim supply gives no indication that they intend to.

Albertans have no interest in kowtowing to Quebec, yet our Premier seems to be more interested in defending Quebec's Premier than the interests of Albertans. Quebec's government doesn't have Alberta's best interests at heart. Shouldn't Albertans be making decisions that drive the province?

What this government is offering is not leadership. Do your job, the job you were voted in to do, that you claim to have been voted in to do. You were not voted in to produce bills like this, that reek of directionless entitlement. Please prove me wrong. Do your job. Explain the details of your plan to this Assembly. Doing so would be one step toward countering the fact that there is no accountability for this spending spree.

Wildrose cannot and will not support handing you a blank cheque so that you can further hurt Albertans with increased taxes to pay off the loan you are really asking for here. I implore all of you to do the job you were elected to do. This is not the time to be playing politics. This is the time when you are called to act responsibly and act like a government. Produce a budget and a responsible plan for this province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, thank you. I'd just make an observation that in the speeches where the phrase "you" is used, since you are speaking to the Speaker, you ought to speak in the third person, and I would remind all members of that.

I would recognize the Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for granting me the opportunity to speak on Bill 2, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016. Of course, it needs to be said how disappointing it is that we have to be here discussing this very slim document. One of the most important duties of a government is to present and pass a budget annually. By all accounts, we won't be seeing the full scope of this government's plan until well after the end of the fiscal year. Whether this is for political reasons or simply due to a lack of preparation, it is very distressing that we cannot get this budget so much as presented before March 31. Albertans deserve to see exactly what they're being asked to pay for.

On both sides of the House we've talked about the importance of stable and predictable funding. I see nothing stable or predictable in what we're being asked to accept in this interim appropriation bill. Now, I know that government members will claim that this isn't all that unusual and fall back on the line that the previous government did it, too, but as I look back over previous years, I see that there was some interim supply that was not necessary. The entirety of the budget was passed on time. In many other cases, the House was asked to vote on interim supply, but they had also been presented a full budget for context. In those cases, the interim supply amount was pro-rated based on the fully costed budget. Even then I don't think that that was in line with the best practices, but at least it was something.

In any case, I find it a little rich that the government is now falling back on practices of the previous, now unseated government, especially since they never miss a chance to speak about the unique circumstances we're facing today. The severity of the times calls for action. At the very least it calls for transparency and clarity. When I look at this interim supply document, I don't see a steady hand on the wheel; I see a hastily drawn-up plan that comes up empty on specifics. Albertans are facing tremendous challenges right now. The government, which has grown completely unrestrained by even population growth plus inflation for years, is headed for a record-breaking spending spree, and is this interim document to be trusted? I don't think so.

Of course, I've heard the government's reply to this as well, that this is not just a straight appropriation. But if it's not simply prorated, then that implies a level of complexity that I think necessitates a full budget even more. There still is some confusion around these numbers, and that stems from not having a fully costed and transparent process. In the Health interim estimates, for instance, we heard that the number \$55 million was used, the per-day cost, which was then multiplied by 61 days to be covered. But last year's supply worked out to be less than \$51 million per day, so where is the difference coming from? The minister in that instance mentioned needing a bit extra as a cushion, but now that cushion is undecided. The Health minister mentioned that she didn't want to have to come back again and ask for more interim money. I have to question why that's a fear of theirs. Do they not see that this budget is getting passed by May 31 now? I should hope they do.

It doesn't sit right with me to allocate billions of dollars based on vague fudge factors. This is an imprecise way of conducting business. This is truly a blank cheque. The government has provided long-range budget estimates that the current interim supply estimates do not seem to jibe with. I believe it's only proper that we be provided with more information for these ministries than we can fit on a business card. We see that there's a ministry like Economic Development and Trade that has been created from a whole cloth. It's so new, in fact, that the minister apparently doesn't even have the mandate to do the job yet. Despite the lack of clarity, they ask for over \$200 million to do this role until a budget is passed.

Of course, we've heard a lot about the strain that this puts on municipalities and other local decision-makers. They must have their budgets drafted and projects planned well in advance of the construction season. This method of allocating funds leaves them uncertain and unclear about what the provincial government has committed to funding for the year. It's somewhat unfair that they should have to budget for their constraints and constituents and residents in a timely manner while this government cannot do the same for them.

**11:10**

This is just a sampling of ministry numbers, of course, but they demonstrate that this interim supply process is fundamentally flawed. The numbers are incomplete, vague, ill defined, and unjustified. That's not to say that the sum of the money is not well spent or needed, but no justification has been given for its use. The detailed line items that we typically expect to see in a budget process are absent here, and those line items provide justification to the Assembly. Out of respect for this House and the Albertans we all represent, I expect the government to present more detail or better explanations of its actions, especially when it requests \$8.7 billion from the public coffers.

In addition to basic respect for the House and for the process, we need a more thorough budget to ensure that good governance is there. During these economic challenges it's more important than ever for every single dollar to be scrutinized and well spent. We want to see an efficient, lean, well-managed operation, but that becomes so much more difficult when we have absolutely no metrics, targets, measures, or measurables to hold this government machinery accountable.

In the private sector when times are tight, it causes a renewed focus on deliverables. When there is no room for waste, one has no choice but to focus on clear, measurable outputs from the system. Right now businesses and households across this province are poring over their internal budget line items line by line, and they're measuring the usefulness of spending based on quantifiable

deliverables. They have no choice but to streamline their process through careful consideration. That consideration is noticeably absent from this bill at a time when we need it most. When I hear things like "a little bit extra," I can't help but think that now is not the time for being fast and loose with the province's finances.

In closing, I cannot support a bill that speaks so much in broad hypotheticals and undefined terms. I encourage the government to go back to work crafting a full, complete budget that outlines the money it intends to spend and the results it expects to achieve with our hard-earned tax dollars.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** No.

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. Under 29(2)(a), were there any questions? Were there any comments with respect to 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Ceci:** I wanted to share with the member the information behind the Treasury Board and Finance interim supply amounts that he was wondering about. The Treasury Board and Finance specific voted interim supply amounts allow my department to continue working on Budget 2016 as it co-ordinates program budgeting and fiscal planning across government. You're probably wondering about that. That's what the amount of money will assist with. It will allow my department to continue to manage the treasury, the borrowing – you asked about borrowing – issuing and collection of payments, and to ensure that payments are secure to protect Albertans, financial institutions, and the government. It will also allow us to provide the needed policy and regulatory oversight for the financial, insurance, and pension sectors, which serves to protect the economic security of all Albertans.

With regard to the total amount there are also flow-through amounts for the lottery fund in the amount of \$362 million, that end up providing a great deal of support to volunteer and community-based initiatives across this province.

Again, it's important to note that these are just interim amounts until the full appropriation bill can be tabled in Budget 2016, which is going to be on April 14. You know, that is after, of course, the fiscal year – you were asking about that – but I just want to point out that last April Joe Oliver brought in the federal budget on the 21st. We're beating that by a week. And the reason is the same for the delay. His delay was because of the significant drop in oil prices and the challenge that that posed to fiscal planning. That's the same reason we're bringing ours in on April 14, though we are beating his by a week.

In April this Assembly will have the opportunity to debate the full budget, where we will fully present our plan to responsibly manage public finances, invest in a greener and more sustainable economy, drive economic development and diversification, and continue to invest in jobs and 21st-century infrastructure for all Albertans.

Those were some of the points, I guess, that I wanted to clarify and provide you as you were wondering about the Treasury Board and Finance interim supply request. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think this will be any surprise to my colleagues across the way, but I rise most definitely to declare that I will be voting on behalf of the people, the good

people, of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre against this bill, and I encourage all my colleagues in the Assembly to do the same. There are several reasons, but a couple of the main reasons are that, first, it's a blank cheque, and that concerns me very much. There also is clearly still no effort by this government to find spending efficiencies, which is something I'm hearing from my constituents as one of the most important issues that they see with this current government and the current financial situation that we're facing as a province. I'm also concerned about the Alberta advantage.

First, let's start, Mr. Speaker, with discussing this blank cheque issue. This government is essentially bringing forward what I would call a blank cheque supply bill. They're asking us on this side of the Assembly to vote with them to approve \$8.7 billion – \$8.7 billion – without any adequate details of what it's for or what it'll do. After we debated Bill 6 in the last sitting and we went back to our ridings, I know I heard loud and clear lots of concerns about blank bills. I have to say as the elected representative for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre that I find it offensive that this government will continuously bring forward stuff that has no details and expect us to vote on it and support them. That's a blank cheque, and I don't think that's good management, and I know that the people that I represent are deeply concerned about it.

As far as spending efficiencies, Mr. Speaker, our province has the highest per capita spending among Canada's largest provinces. Last year we spent \$8 billion more on operations than B.C. did; \$8 billion more. I don't think the government could stand up here today and attempt to justify \$8 billion more and try to look Albertans in the eyes with a straight face and say that we receive \$8 billion more in services than B.C. We repeatedly come to this Assembly and we say: "Hey, we spend more than every other province. We have a spending problem in this province. We did when we had \$100-a-barrel oil. The old government had a spending problem."

Now, the response that we get from the government, Mr. Speaker, is, "Hey, you want to cut front-line services; you want to cut front-line jobs" when we talk about efficiency. Well, I'll tell you that the people in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre know that that's not what we're talking about. In fact, the government across the way, as you know, in my own riding just this last week ambushed the town of Sundre and laid off front-line health workers and shut front-line health care service beds, so I think they should probably look at themselves if they're concerned about who's going to be shutting front-line services or front-line health care or front-line workers.

Again, we spend more than all the other provinces, Mr. Speaker. As you travel around Alberta – and if this government would leave the Legislature a little more often and come and see some of the people throughout Alberta, they'd probably hear what I'm hearing, which is that the concern is about the bloated bureaucracy in our system, not about nurses, not about teachers. Nobody wants to fire nurses or teachers, but we have to get our spending under control, or it's going to continue to escalate. We're going to continue to have to borrow more and more, and in the end we're going to lose services because we can no longer afford to pay for them, and that's wrong. I can tell you that right now in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre that is the biggest concern. The number one thing that you hear is: "Go back and tell that government to get their spending under control. Go back there and tell them to deal with the bureaucracy. Go back there and tell them to spend our money better."

That's something that's also important, Mr. Speaker. This is not our money. We're the stewards of Albertans' money, hard-working Albertans, hard-working farmers, hard-working tradespeople, businesspeople, teachers, nurses. We're stewards of that, and what this government does with this bill is that it brings forward a blank

cheque and says: "Here. Just vote for that." I can't do that. I have to respect taxpayer dollars, and I expect everybody in this Chamber should do the same.

**11:20**

When we're looking at reckless, unbudgeted spending at the same time that a government has done tax hikes for businesses and families and has created instability in our energy sector through many ways, we have to discuss what happens if we continue to spend money in this way. Now, Alberta businesses have also asked for a moratorium on risky NDP policies. Again, I would suggest that coming forward with a blank cheque bill seems extremely risky over and over and over and disappointing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I will say in closing that I hope that – I look at the government members across the way as I talk about what people are saying in my riding, and they seem to not agree. That's disappointing. Again, I just want to close with that I encourage the government members, I encourage the Premier, I encourage her cabinet to leave the Legislature. Come to Sundre. Come to Rocky Mountain House. Come anywhere in this province and talk to the people that are being affected by this and who do not find this acceptable behaviour, and I am sure that you will find what I have found, that the people of Alberta expect much better than blank cheque bills from this government, which is why I'll be voting against this bill, and I encourage everybody in the Assembly to do so.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions under 29(2)(a) with respect to the last speaker?

The chair recognizes the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the House. I will, by the way, do my best to recall the third-person approach to language. It is a bit of a challenge.

I have to say that while I desire to see the government function and I recognize the importance of ongoing supply and the importance of continuing the services that are so essential to our Alberta people, I guess my biggest difficulty with this question of interim supply is just, more than anything else, I guess, a disappointment that the government has not been able to provide for Alberta a budget that is in place on time. The practices of the previous government and other governments that don't attain that level: well, just frankly, they're not a good measuring standard. They're not a best practices standard. In this province the previous government was severely punished in the polls for some of their practices, and I really do believe that we should be reaching for and attaining a new and a better way, a much more professional way.

I guess my disappointment hinges on the fact that the budget was just done three months ago. It's not like it's something that has to start completely from scratch. I do recognize the realities of changing income with the oil industry would have impacts on that, but budgets are living documents. They're not started completely from scratch every time they're created. In fact, the reality is that many of the ABC agencies in this province that must report to the government on a regular basis are required in their legislation that governs them to actually provide multiyear – I'm quoting from legislation there – budgets, which contribute to the validity of living budgets and ongoing. Multiyear budgets: part of the point of them is to make it easier to produce the budget for the upcoming year. The reality is that most business plans build multiple-year budgets, and many of the NGOs in our province function on multiyear budgets.

I guess my plea to the government would be to try and raise the standard, raise the standard to best financial practices that are, in

fact, required by legislation of the agencies in this province. I think that as the parent agency of all of our province we should have no lesser standard for the government itself. Multiyear budgets and the ability to adjust them then and have budgets on time would be extremely valuable and something that I would encourage the government to consider doing. I just don't think that it's acceptable for the people of Alberta to have late, missed-due-date budgets.

When I was in high school – and I know times have changed; we have a much softer attitude toward accountability and responsibility these days – when I missed an assignment, it was not accepted. Now, today, I know, we're afraid we might hurt somebody's feelings and that it might wound them eternally. The reality is that at some point in life we have to learn accountability and reliability, and that's acceptable, for high school students to wrestle with that. But I don't think that it's acceptable for business, for nongovernment agencies, or the government itself to miss important due dates because they do have profound effects upon our province, particularly upon our municipal governments.

Our municipal governments need to know what's going to happen. Can they plan? What can they plan on? They don't even know when they can start to plan because the budget, which is essential to their ability to function and to represent their people and to serve their people well, is withheld from them when it should be given to them. So the municipal governments are extremely frustrated. I think we saw that just this last week in meeting with them, some of the frustration which, quite frankly, actually, is mitigating over to the side of anger. They need to know what the rules of the game are this coming year. So there are profound effects for municipal governments.

I would also suggest, Mr. Speaker, that there are profound effects, ongoing profound effects, for business and industry in our province. It just perpetuates and continues the uncertainty of them knowing what's going on. I've had three if not four – I don't quite remember – business members from my riding in the last week phone me and ask me, "When are we going to get a budget? We need to know what's happening, where we're going, what we can count on, what we can't count on," and this ongoing uncertainty continues to create the loss of confidence, the loss of investment, and ultimately the loss of jobs in our province because the businesses in my riding are not going ahead with many of their plans when they don't know what the regulatory regime and the processes and all the implications are going to be for them.

So there are profound effects that do affect the people in this province and their jobs and their livelihoods, and I just would plead with the government: if not this year then next year let's try and have it on time. The fact that there are no details – as a representative of my constituents I find it extremely hard to assure them that, yes, I voted for effective and well-managed spending. Therefore, I can't vote for this. I just can't do that and then go to my constituents and say: yes, I supported that. There is just too much left unexplained, unclear, and I would appreciate it – and the hon. Minister of Finance has made a bit of an effort at that, but even in more detail I would be interested to know: what are the process issues that prevent the preparation of an on-time budget, especially after almost a year knowing that this is coming? When did the budget process begin? It takes time and human resources and money to crunch the numbers and create an interim budget. Wouldn't it be more effective just to apply that time and money and resources to creating the actual budget and having it on time?

I think, Mr. Speaker, which is why I'm going to cut this short right now, that in a way we're wasting our time. We're wasting resources. We should stop doing stopgap budgets, and we should just do the real thing.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane. A question under 29(2)(a). Please proceed.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question to the hon. member who just spoke there. He spoke about having uncertainty, the process being unclear about when the budget was going to be released. I know the Finance minister has been extraordinarily clear about when that process will happen, and he said April 14. I'm not certain why the member feels that there's some uncertainty, so I wonder if he might be able to address that.

He also talked a little bit about ambiguity, and he was wondering what the process is for the issue that caused the budget to, in his words, be delayed. I'd like to ask the member what the issue is from the Official Opposition, what the process problem is that they can't come up with a plan to show Albertans what a potential alternative is. We've been asking them to propose alternatives. They've even recognized that the role of an Official Opposition . . . [interjections]

11:30

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Westhead:** The members opposite have talked about the fact that the role of an Official Opposition is to propose solutions and alternatives, and frankly, Mr. Speaker, we haven't really seen any of that.

I know that the hon. House leader a few days ago tabled what he termed a flimsy document from the Official Opposition's campaign platform, that showed that they were going to cut over \$9 billion in infrastructure spending. You know, these are the kinds of things that we're seeing from the opposition. It doesn't really present Albertans with an alternative. Clearly, on our side we're the ones that have the plan, and they don't. So I wonder if the member can go on and explain why it's taken them so long and they haven't even produced an alternative.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane to respond.

**Mr. Cooper:** Yeah, under 29(2)(a), questions and comments, I'm more than happy to continue adding some comments through you to the member with respect to – perhaps if there's time remaining, he can share some of his thoughts.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to delaying the budget: in the year 2000, February 24; in 2001, April 24, an election year. Basically, this is the fourth-latest budget since the year 2000, so when it comes to delaying the budget, this current government is an expert. They passed a budget in December, and now they're going to pass a budget in May-ish. That's exactly what we've seen from the government.

With respect to the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka and some of his concerns, through you to him and around the House, I think it's critically important. When we look at a number of the things that the opposition has done, whether it's an actual jobs plan, that was released today, that is full and robust, 12 points, these are the types of solutions that we're happy to provide. The other thing I might add is that in all of the years . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I've seen the clock tick by, and I just was reading 29(2)(a) a little. It does say in closing, "to allow . . . each Member's questions and comments."

I'm wondering if Banff-Cochrane could address both questions or points raised. [interjections] The question was asked over here, as I understand it, and I was simply allowing for that member to answer, and there have been additional ones.

Proceed.

**Mr. Cooper:** Yes. I think that the definition of “briefly” included in 29(2)(a) presents a bit of a challenge. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I from time to time rise in this House, and brief to me is about 15 minutes, and here we have five minutes of questions and comments. I would like to be able to provide my comments in addition to the comments from the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, but in a spirit of co-operation, good sir, I will finish . . . [A timer sounded]

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to this matter? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m proud to rise today to support this bill, that the Finance minister and his team have worked so hard to put together. It’s something that is not unusual in the course of business in the parliamentary system, to have these types of interim supply bills come before the House. As I said, it’s consistent with previous interim supply bills, that this House sees on a yearly basis. It’s not unusual whatsoever, and it seems as though the opposition is making some inferences that the interim supply bill is out of the ordinary, in their opinion.

On the other hand, this legislation simply provides the spending authority to continue government operations beyond March 31, until Budget 2016 estimates are debated and approved. I’m sure, Mr. Speaker, that once the budget is tabled by the Minister of Finance on April 14, in the days and weeks that will follow the budget, the opposition shall take plenty of time to fully debate the main estimates when they come before the House.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the interim supply estimates speak for themselves. I’d just like to reiterate that we are being asked to allocate \$29.6 million for the Legislative Assembly, \$7.2 billion in expense funding, \$864 million in capital investment funding, \$164 million in financial transactions funding for the government, and \$363 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund. In reality, Mr. Speaker, these amounts that I’ve just read will keep our teachers in the classrooms and will keep nurses in our hospitals, unlike the opposition, who would rather see those people let go.

These monies will continue to fund the government services that Albertans rely on as we all deal with the unprecedented decline in oil prices and its impact on government revenue and all Albertans. I ask everyone to support this interim supply bill until we have the opportunity to debate the full budget in just under one month’s time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I think I may have been confused on the last point. I used the phrase “Banff-Cochrane.” I see that the Government House Leader has left. It was my intention to speak to the question there, but we have moved past that.

Now, is there 29(2)(a) for the Member for Banff-Cochrane?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to close debate. I don’t believe there are any other members.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. Just with regard to the interim supply estimates before us, you know, there were a number of questions with regard to: what will these additional monies for the two months actually do? What will they achieve? I would just point people back to the business plans and targets that were submitted to this House for Budget 2015 on October 27. If you follow those business plans for each of the ministries through, you’ll see that they identify what the minister and ministries have undertaken to do with the monies available, and that’s not changed, Mr. Speaker. They still have to achieve those targets that they laid out to achieve.

The other things that were brought up that needed some clarification, I think, were with respect to – now, it was on the previous supplementary supply estimates. But, you know, many of the ministers have found in-year savings, and we will be talking about those when we bring forward the full review of Budget 2015. We’ll show how they have done yeoman’s work, in my estimation, in reining in spending.

I just wanted to correct one thing that I heard during some of the debate. We will be bringing in expense spending that will be lower than population plus inflation. Somebody over on that side said that it was not, and that’s not accurate. We are ensuring that we follow through with the goals and objectives set out in the targets. We have reined in spending – and you can look at the Q3 update for some of those – in a situation where revenue has fallen dramatically. So we have done, we believe, good work on this side.

11:40

We have brought forward the interim supply estimates. As my colleague behind me says, this is a fairly regular action to continue the expenditures on important programs and services and to work with our partners all across this province while we look at the budget, take the time to get it right, bring it in, and have a fulsome debate with each other on all of that in the next few weeks.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance has moved second reading of Bill 2, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:41 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Payne
Bilous	Hoffman	Phillips
Carlier	Horne	Renaud
Carson	Jabbour	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kazim	Schmidt
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Schreiner
Dach	Littlewood	Shepherd
Dang	Loyola	Sigurdson
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	McKitrick	Turner
Feehan	McPherson	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Woollard
Ganley	Miranda	

Against the motion:

Aheer	Fraser	Schneider
Anderson, W.	Gotfried	Smith
Clark	Hanson	Strankman
Cooper	Loewen	Swann
Cyr	Orr	van Dijken
Drysdale	Pitt	Yao

Totals: For – 41 Against – 18

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a second time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to everyone in this House for doing good work this morning. I move to adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:59 a.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 15, 2016

Day 5

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
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Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
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Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)

Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
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Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
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Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
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Gotfried	

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Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

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Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

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Kazim	

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Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 15, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** I'll recognize the Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the Member of Parliament for Edmonton Centre and parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Randy Boissonnault. If you would rise while I continue the introduction. Mr. Boissonnault was elected in the 2015 federal election, and he's a passionate Albertan who has a long history of giving back to the community as a Rotarian and as cofounder of Literacy Without Borders. A francophone, our guest has worked as a lecturer at the University of Alberta's Campus Saint-Jean and served as chair of the board of directors for the francophone economic council of Alberta, the francophone sport federation of Alberta, and the Canadian Francophone Games.

Every member of this House knows the challenges and responsibilities and the rewards which come with representing our communities, and I'm sure that Randy can count on each of us to wish him all the best in his new role as Member of Parliament and for him to be a good partner to us as well when it comes to the many areas where our province and the federal government need to work together.

I ask that we give an official round of welcome to our honoured guest. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Steve Clark, Ontario Progressive Conservative MPP, and his son Mitch, who lives here in Edmonton and is a member of the Edmonton Police Service. Steve Clark was first elected to the constituency of Leeds-Grenville in a landslide by-election in March 2010. He is the deputy Leader of the Official Opposition, a member of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, and the critic for tourism, culture, and sport. Steve and Mitch Clark are seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I'd ask all members to join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, have your visitors arrived now? Please proceed.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly Martin Shields. Martin Shields is the former mayor of Brooks, in my constituency, and is now our proud Member of Parliament for the constituency of Bow River. I might add that in my neck of the woods federal Conservatives get north of 80 per cent of the vote. We're very proud to have him here.

I will also add my thanks to the deputy leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario for joining fellow Conservatives here today.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** We have school groups first. The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I proudly stand in this House to help represent Fort Saskatchewan Christian school. They are led by Miss Natalie McIntyre, their teacher, along with helpers Mrs. Linda de Koning, Mrs. Mary Rietveld, and Mrs. Jill Burns. They came to the House today and brought me a wonderful picture that says Bright Through Nobility. Of course, because I did not clear it through the Speaker's office, I won't show it to you at this time, but I will proudly display it on my desk. I just want to quickly say that I really appreciate the letters that they brought with it. I'll just mention a couple of names: Avery, Ethan, Carter, Aliya. Thank you for your letters, and I look forward to continuing to, you know, earn their . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Trust.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** . . . everything. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you today two classes from Muriel Martin school in St. Albert. Teachers Mr. Pawsey and Mrs. Surmon are joined by Mrs. Kennett, Miss – I'm scared I'm going to mispronounce it – Amyotte, and Mrs. Clarke as well as their students. If they would please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three groups of introductions today. First, it is my delight to introduce to you and through you well-respected labour lawyer Andy Sims. Andy was instrumental in leading the government's consultations on our essential services legislation, which I will rise to introduce in the Assembly later today. Andy is an experienced arbitrator and mediator, practising throughout western Canada. Based in Edmonton, he served nine years as the chair of the Alberta Labour Relations Board plus 21 years as a vice-chair. Andy worked hard to ensure that our government found an essential services model that works for employers, employees, and for all Albertans.

Also here today are Liane Lawford and Justine Hetsler, who have worked on essential services for years. Mr. Speaker, they've exhibited the highest level of dedication and professionalism in their work, and I'm proud to have them working in my department.

I would also like to introduce to you some members of Alberta's labour community who will no doubt be interested in the legislation I'm introducing today. From the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees I would like to introduce Guy Smith and Carl Soderstrom, and from the Alberta Federation of Labour I would like to introduce Gil McGowan, Siobhán Vipond and Gwen Feeny.

I ask them all to stand and receive the warm welcome from the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the

Assembly some constituents from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. There are several of them, so I'll ask that they rise as I say their names. Sarah Gander and Diana Kleinloog are nurses whose colleagues are facing cuts at the Sundre hospital, and they're here to see the proceedings of the House today and hear the minister's thoughts on the matter. They're accompanied by Dr. Robert Warren, who also works at the hospital and is an active leader in our medical community; as well as Mr. Terry Leslie, the mayor of Sundre; Councillor Verna McFadden, whose offices are being flooded by distressed residents worried about the long-term care of their parents and loved ones; also, Mr. Gerald Ingeveld and Mrs. Shelley Ingeveld, who are concerned citizens who took the time out of their week to come and join us today; as well as Ms Heidi Overguard, a member of the Sundre chamber of commerce.

These are the faces of my community, Mr. Speaker, these are my neighbours, and these are the fine folks that stand to lose from the closure of half the hospital in Sundre. I ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm thrilled to be able to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a couple of my constituents from Edmonton-Decore, Nicholas and Kathy Fonseca. Nicholas and Kathy have lived in Edmonton for over 30 years and are a devoted couple focused on giving back to the community. After a trip to the Legislature, they contacted my office and asked if they could come view a session of question period. I sincerely hope that you enjoy your time today here at the Legislature, and I thank you for your interest in the political process. I would now ask that Nicholas and Kathy please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two councillors from the greatest city in Alberta, Grande Prairie, Kevin O'Toole and Kevin McLean, as well as a constituent of mine and a member of NADC, Andre Harpe. Please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other guests or visitors that we have today?

Then on behalf of the Assembly welcome, all, to our event today.

1:40

## Members' Statements

### Women's Equality

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, last week we acknowledged International Women's Day with some celebrating. For my entire life, whether consciously or unconsciously, I along with many sisters, mothers, daughters, aunts, grandmothers, and some brothers fought to gain equality for women. The Famous Five right here in Alberta fought to have us acknowledged as persons and won, and that is part of the reason that there are so many women here in the Legislature. But why did they even have to fight that battle?

I became a public activist for equity in 1984 when I signed a pay equity complaint against the federal government. Equity does not necessarily mean equal. Equity means the levelling of the playing field, and it is a step towards equality. The question is: how do we level that playing field?

Mr. Speaker, one organization in my community provides an example. Since 1993 the Womanspace Resource Centre has focused on community education, advocacy, referrals, and programming for individual women. Womanspace also conducts research on women's issues and serves as a recognized source for media on issues surrounding domestic violence. Womanspace has undertaken numerous large-scale projects and programs in our community, including women and AIDS, women and nonstandard work, and the good food club. In 2007 Womanspace began providing financial literacy training and workshops for local women, which continue to be a focus of the organization today.

When we reach a point in our society where attitudes have changed and women are treated with real respect . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Long-term Care in Sundre

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Alberta Health Services announced the impending closure of 15 long-term care beds at the Sundre hospital and care centre. Over the next three months patients face a choice between leaving the community in hopes of finding comparable care elsewhere or trying to secure a bed at a lower level of care at a new housing facility in Sundre which is set to open this summer.

While Sundre certainly welcomes this new facility, it does not cover the full range of community care needs. Let's be clear. This facility isn't open yet, and it's already full. Worse, it does not actually have any long-term care beds or any beds near the level of the long-term care beds that are being closed at the Sundre hospital. While the hon. minister deflects questions about the closure of these beds, she fundamentally misunderstands the needs of our community. It's not about the numbers she throws around; it's about the level of care these people need.

Now, our community fought for 12 years to reach our goal of having a holistic community of care for our seniors. In 2013 we were finally able to take a real step towards this goal, and now the new facility will be operational in June. Yes, this new facility will accommodate levels of care from independent living to SL 4 care, and we're proud of that. However, it does not provide long-term care beds. We need the hospital for those, and those are exactly the beds this government is closing in Sundre.

Not only will these closures affect our ability to take care of our seniors within our own community, but we recently learned that they will also trigger layoffs for up to three dozen front-line workers. The announcements of these front-line cuts came with no warning and no public consultation. Mr. Speaker, the AHS central bureaucracy is building quite a reputation for disregarding the will of rural communities. At the very least the people of Sundre deserve a public meeting where their questions could be answered.

As it stands now, AHS stands ready to pull the plug out from under the people of Sundre, and we want to know if this government intends to do anything about it. If the government cared to listen to our communities, they would realize that Sundre needs these long-term care beds. As such, I urge the government to reconsider the closure of these beds and to come to grips with what communities like Sundre really need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### Agriculture

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Life in rural Alberta is far different than anywhere else in Canada. The days are different, the work is different, and the lifestyle is also very different. I feel honoured to be a rural Albertan and to be able to raise my family on a farm outside of Grovedale.

The Alberta agricultural community has long been one of the driving forces behind Alberta's economic success and behind the Alberta advantage. In communities from Manning to Milk River the farms and ranches are the lifeblood of the local economy. Across Canada Alberta's agricultural industry is the envy of every other agricultural community. Around the world Alberta's agricultural products are held in the highest esteem. Alberta's agrifood exports account for almost \$10 billion annually and employ over 80,000 people. As Alberta is one of the lowest cost regions to feed livestock, we remain the largest cattle-producing province in Canada. The majority of Canadian beef processing also occurs in Alberta. Alberta's agricultural producers are among the best in the world, and agriculture is the largest renewable industry in the province.

I hope that even though there was little attention paid to our ag industry in both of the government's throne speeches, they'll see our ag industry as an essential part of Alberta's economy. Our farming industry is brimming with talented entrepreneurs who are proud Alberta businesspeople. Alberta families can find a huge selection of high-quality local agriproducts at their neighbourhood grocery store and thriving farmers' markets.

I will continue to advocate for good policy and expanded market access for ag producers. With 50 million acres used for crop and livestock production, Alberta is one of the world's most productive agricultural economies. Canada remains one of the few countries in the world to produce more food than we consume. The growing world population is an abundant market of mouths to feed for Alberta-produced foods. The question is: will this government allow the ag sector to keep up?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

### Pink Shirt Day

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 24 I had the honour of taking part in Pink Shirt Day. Pink Shirt Day was started when two Nova Scotia high school students united youth and teachers in their school to wear pink shirts in support of a classmate who had been bullied for wearing a pink shirt at school.

I was approached by the Kinsmen Boys & Girls Club in my riding as one of their children had asked if they could hand out free hot chocolate in front of my constituency office as a random act of kindness. Well, of course, I said yes. My constituency office was full of happy children who spent their evening giving out hot chocolate to anyone interested. It was cold that night, but not a single person complained. The children wore their pink shirts with pride, and it was a wonderful evening filled with joy, laughter, and love for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, my staff and I strive to ensure that my constituency office is a safe place for our constituents, one that is welcoming, caring, and respectful for everyone in my riding. As the MLA for Edmonton-Decore I strongly support a safe and inclusive society, whether it be in schools, at work, or in the home. I'm very proud of the children from the Kinsmen Boys & Girls Club. We can

work towards a society free of bullying, discrimination, and intimidation in any form.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

### Canadian Agricultural Safety Week

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize Canadian Agricultural Safety Week, celebrated from March 13 to 19. I'm proud to see that each year this week is dedicated for producers and their families to reflect on the importance of farm safety in their lives. This year's theme is Keeping Kids Safe.

My constituency, the beautiful riding of Leduc-Beaumont, is ranked the second-largest in the county and the region for farm receipts. We grow barley, oats, hay, alfalfa and raise livestock, poultry, cattle, and calves.

Education and awareness are important in preventing hazardous incidents while working on the farm, especially when machineries are involved. I'm proud of my government, which continues to work closely with producers and industry stakeholders to promote children's farm safety and on-farm risk management for caregivers and supervisors. Our farm safety co-ordinators distribute safety resources and co-ordinate education and awareness programs for children, teens, and producers. They also developed the farm safe Alberta program, which is now available to producers. I must stress that these interactive educational resources are available free of charge to producers, and we will make the best of these in Leduc county.

Last fall the government introduced new enhanced legislative protection for waged farm workers. I'm happy to see that the government is in the process of consulting stakeholders in the ag industry to help develop recommendations and regulations. It is a priority for the government to ensure that farm workers come home safely at the end of the day to be with their family and their children. I and our government know that the safety of their children is paramount to farmers, and we will continue to work with them to promote safety awareness.

Mr. Speaker, I know that producers keep farm safety for the whole family top of mind throughout the year, and I know they will continue to do so, and I commend that.

Thank you very much.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Job Creation

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans are worried. They're watching businesses close down, friends lose work, or they themselves are out of a job. What they're looking for is hope, leadership that understands Albertans aren't looking for a handout but a hand up. That's why Wildrose today released our 12-point jobs action plan to get Albertans working again. Our plan would help restore confidence and bring stability back to Alberta's economy. Will this Premier tell Albertans when they can expect a real jobs plan from this government instead of more ideological experiments?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms. Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've had a chance to review the opposition's jobs plan, and I will say that I'm pleased. It's very clear they've been listening to a great deal of

what's been said by our minister of economic development as well as myself because there is a lot within it with which we agree. There are, however, some things with which we don't agree. For instance, we believe that Alberta's energy future includes phasing out health-attacking coal emissions, but they think we should keep right on polluting. That's not the way forward. That's not going to create jobs, and that's not going to create a bright future for Alberta.

**Mr. Jean:** This week job creators asked for a moratorium from this government on further red tape and tax increases. Wildrose's action plan for jobs is exactly the type of leadership and policies that Albertans are asking and looking for. Policies like a small-business tax cut, cutting red tape by 20 per cent, and stimulus through a WCB premium holiday for new hires make sense. These policies would stimulate the economy and restore business confidence in Alberta. Will this Premier implement any of these Wildrose policies to get Albertans working again, and which ones?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting because when asked at his press conference about this very issue, reducing red tape, the Leader of the Official Opposition couldn't come up with one example of what he would do. When we talk about red tape and regulations, let's be clear what some of those are: minimum wage, environmental protection, health and safety, speed limits. These are not the kinds of things that Alberta needs to arbitrarily reduce. What we need is thoughtful governance working together with job creators to help diversify the economy and create new jobs going forward.

**Mr. Jean:** The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that the only job-creation plan the NDP put forward created zero jobs, not one single job in all of Alberta except for the minister. To date the NDP has rejected an emergency debate on the economy, they rejected a jobs summit, and they rejected several reasonable proposals from Wildrose that would help all Albertans. It's evidence that this government is keen to follow its risky ideological agenda on the economy instead of doing what's right for all Albertans. Why can't this Premier just accept good ideas instead of putting forward an economic agenda that continues to hurt all Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One thing I can say that I definitely disagree with the Leader of the Official Opposition on is that in his press conference today he said specifically: I don't think right now that diversifying the economy is the number one job. Well, you know what? I think Albertans disagree. You're not going to be able to create new jobs from businesses that have closed. We have to move forward. We cannot do more of the same. It's time to abandon the dinosaur approach that some of our science friends over there are still embracing, and we need to move forward to move all of Alberta forward.

**The Speaker:** Second major question.

### Pipeline Construction

**Mr. Jean:** Since May I have been saying that pipelines are the first step to Alberta's future prosperity. I've pressed the Premier continuously to fight for pipelines right across the country. She hasn't. She tells us that she prefers quiet diplomacy. Well, it's so quiet that you'd be forgiven if you didn't hear it. Since she was elected, B.C., Manitoba, Quebec, and Ottawa have all thrown new

roadblocks at pipeline projects. Can the Premier give us one single example of a pipeline – any pipeline – that is closer to construction or approval as a result of her quiet diplomacy?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I've had eight months, and the government that that member was part of had eight years, and they didn't get a pipeline built, so I really think it is time for them to rethink their talking points. Tweeting adolescent name-calling at mayors in Quebec is not the strategy to build the nation. We will engage in negotiations, we will engage in respectful conversations, and that will bring about a change.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister Trudeau isn't supportive of our pipelines. He doesn't even like to say the word "pipelines." Premier Clark of B.C. is opposed to both of our pipeline projects in her own province. Trudeau announced a tanker ban on the B.C. north coast, but B.C. will need federal approvals for LNG tankers for its liquefied natural gas terminal at Kitimat. It seems like B.C. might just need the tanker ban lifted as well. Will this Premier remind Premier Clark that it is in both our interests to have the federal government lift the B.C. tanker ban?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said, I've been working very hard on the issue of improving everybody's understanding of why getting access to tidewater is so important for Albertans and, quite frankly, for all Canadians. I make that case at every possible opportunity. I also made that case with Premier Clark, who is very keen to talk with us about selling hydroelectricity. I indicated to her that that was a wonderful conversation for us to have and that we'd be happy to do that when she was interested in talking about us getting our pipeline and our energy to tidewater.

**Mr. Jean:** The Premier has an opportunity right now to get B.C. onside with pipelines. Both Alberta's and B.C.'s energy products are ridiculously called dangerous by some of the NDP's radical friends, and both Alberta and British Columbia need Prime Minister Trudeau to lift the tanker ban. We have a chance to form a common front on an issue that is of mutual concern. If Ottawa treats us differently, then we have a very different issue. Will the Premier make it clear to the Prime Minister that the B.C. north coast tanker ban has to be lifted if only for the sake of national unity?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said a number of times already, I've been having ongoing conversations with both representatives of the federal government, including the Prime Minister, as well as other Premiers, and that's what I will continue to do. I won't do it on Twitter. I won't do it by grandstanding. I won't do it by calling people names. What I will do is that I will engage in constructive dialogue, and I will also remind all those folks about our climate change leadership plan, which has very much changed the conversation and changed the willingness of people to consider that Alberta has a progressive, modernized energy product to offer to the world.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, today we released our 12-point jobs action plan to get Albertans working again. One of our key points was to fight for pipelines. Every day Canada loses up to \$50 million because of lack of market access for our oil. The throne speech said that this government would work towards solid timelines for approvals for pipelines. What, if any, progress has the Premier made in getting the federal government to set predictable timelines for pipeline approvals?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, two weeks ago in Vancouver, when we were discussing primarily climate change at the request of the Prime Minister, I made it very clear that we also had to talk about market access and pipelines. As a result of that, we got all of the Premiers and the Prime Minister to sign onto a declaration that specifically said that they understood the urgency and the importance of timely, predictable, stable decision-making with respect to pipeline approvals across the country. That was language that we put in there, and now we're going to keep pushing them on it. I welcome the constructive effort . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

2:00

**Mr. Panda:** Jobs matter. In Calgary and all over Alberta people are losing their jobs or taking pay cuts to keep their jobs. Maybe this isn't important to the NDP, but in Calgary and across our province it's a big deal. The fastest way to improve job prospects is to get the pipelines built. There is no better shovel-ready infrastructure project than a pipeline, and it won't cost the taxpayers any money. Why won't the Premier be a strong supporter of market access and get these pipelines built?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. I think the member needs to listen more closely to what the Premier has already said, that we are strong advocates of market access. The Premier as well as myself and the Minister of Energy have been working with our counterparts both west of us and east of us as well as our federal counterparts, looking at having a constructive dialogue. The end goal is to get our product to market. It's not about jumping up and down and screaming in the media. That approach clearly has failed. It's failed for 10 years when the Leader of the Opposition was a federal MP, and it's also failed the previous PC government in Alberta.

**Mr. Panda:** Believe me, people in Calgary want to get back to work. They want their NDP government to have an actual jobs plan. This government had one – just one – job-creating idea, and it was a bad idea. And then the NDP went from a bad plan to no plan. This Premier could actually show Albertans that she's serious about jobs by wholeheartedly – wholeheartedly – taking up the fight to get pipelines built. Will the Premier do so, or can we expect more silent diplomacy from her?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that on the issue of pipeline advocacy I've answered the question several times.

But I would like to speak to the other issue. You know, all last fall the opposition over there said that a plan with rules that gave a \$5,000 grant to employers to create jobs wouldn't work, and now they're introducing a \$6,000 grant to employers with no strings attached at the cost of billions of dollars, which, suddenly, they think will work. Which side are these guys on? I can't figure out if they're coming or going. It just doesn't make any sense at all.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

### Carbon Pricing

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last November this government announced a climate change policy that will push out coal and

bring in a carbon tax. We've heard that the carbon tax will be revenue neutral, but the details don't support this. One key partner has been completely left out of the conversations on how this carbon tax will affect them, and that partner is Alberta's municipalities. To the Municipal Affairs minister: please tell your municipal partners what assistance they will receive to deal with escalating costs caused by your NDP carbon tax.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we're very proud of with respect to our revenue-neutral carbon levy is that we will be reinvesting money back into the economy and that, quite frankly, municipalities will be very generous beneficiaries of this plan, so we are moving forward with it. When we introduce the budget, the details of the overall amounts of money will be demonstrated, and then we will engage in very active consultations with our municipal partners on how best to work with them, and we look forward to that.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. More revenue-neutral double-talk.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this government will allow large emitters in the oil sands to offset the carbon tax through a royalty reduction and incentives for large producers to reach lower thresholds. What we don't know is how small and medium-sized oil and gas companies and oil field service companies will be able to weather this government's policy storm. To the Minister of Energy: what specific programs have you implemented that will help small drilling and supply companies and operations, prevent them from shifting their business east to places that are more business friendly, starting with Saskatchewan?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, let's be clear; 79 per cent of Canadian oil and gas is in Alberta. We were working through the royalty plan. We have status quo for oil sands. They go the same. We've harmonized liquids for the smaller companies. And the cost of carbon will be calculated as expenses moving forward.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you. Mr. Speaker, given that this government's approach to energy development in rural areas will mean that many people will lose their jobs – some have already lost their jobs – and some will need to change industries or learn new skills, to the Premier or one of her ministers: what changes to your climate change plan will you make to have explicit long-term provisions that could stimulate local skills development in green tech or some other industry so people can continue to be employed as they were before you became government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the first thing, to be clear, is that the loss of jobs in the oil and gas sector is because the price of oil has dropped by over 75 per cent. Let's not forget that. The carbon levy has not even been introduced, so that's scaremongering, and it has nothing to do with the very serious job loss problems that our whole province is facing and we are very, very aware of. That being said, the carbon levy will actually provide us with an opportunity to incent and to generate green infrastructure and additional work that will provide job opportunities for people who've lost their jobs in the energy industry.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
The Member for Red Deer-North.

### **Physician-assisted Dying**

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As someone who has worked in end-of-life care for many years I feel very honoured to rise and ask these questions today. Since the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling in the Carter versus Canada case last January the issue of physician-assisted dying has become a matter of open public discussion. While I am heartened to see that both the federal government and the government of Alberta are finally acting to ensure that there will be laws put in place to uphold this recognized Charter right as of June 6, what is the ministry . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much to the member for the important question and for her service to Albertans. Certainly, following the Supreme Court of Canada's decision, the federal government needs to bring changes to the Criminal Code, and we also need to make sure that we move forward in a way that respects people's values, that brings about compassion, and that supports families in what is clearly a very difficult time of their lives. We know and agree that it's a profoundly difficult and touching situation for many individuals. That's why I'm really proud that I have an associate minister and an MLA panel that are receiving feedback and hearing presentations from individuals on this perspective as we continue to move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
First supplemental.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for outlining the consultations under way.

Knowing that many Albertans are concerned about the issue of conscience rights related to physician-assisted dying, can the Minister of Health please address what will be done to ensure that the rights of physicians who may object to participating in this procedure are protected?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm happy to assure the member and all Albertans that the conscience rights of physicians and any other health care professional will be without question protected. Just as physician-assisted dying is a Charter right, the moral beliefs of any individual are equally protected by the Charter. Physicians who object to the procedure will see their rights respected. Our work going forward will be to balance these rights with a commitment to providing informed and compassionate care for patients and ensuring that their rights are respected as well.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for her response. I have been directing my constituents of Red Deer-North to the online survey to share their views on physician-assisted dying. After speaking with many of my constituents, I'm finding that their number one concern is regarding the vulnerable populations. What safeguards will be in place to ensure that vulnerable people are protected?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We need to ensure that no one ever feels coerced in making a significant decision, especially this one, and we also need to be certain that any patient assessing physician-assisted dying is fully competent and aware of all of the options that they have. These are questions that we are asking about in our consultation, and they are questions that are familiar to the medical professionals in all aspects of the care that they provide. As we prepare social policies around this issue, I believe that we will arrive at a solution that will reflect the values and compassion of Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would remind you again about the standing order with respect to preambles.

### **2:10 Rural Physician Action Plan**

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, one of the most pressing health issues that we face in rural Alberta is access to primary care and doctors. The rural physician action plan receives funding to place medical students and residents in underserved communities. Through these initiatives and others RPAP promotes physician recruitment and retention in our towns and small cities, but there are questions swirling around whether the NDP supports this program at all. Our communities are already hurting. Let's end this uncertainty. Can the minister commit right now to leaving this vitally important program in place?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, RPAP is one of the programs that we're very proud of and has brought about many great outcomes for Albertans, just as the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary, being physician-training universities, have also brought about great outcomes. So I think the responsible thing for a government to do at the end of a funding cycle is to review the objectives and review the outcomes. Certainly, RPAP will continue to exist, and we have continued their funding at the current level until the fall while we continue to figure out how best to use the resources we have to make sure that physicians and all health care professionals are available throughout Alberta.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, given how important this program is to families across the province, it's a shame that we can't get a real answer out of the minister. Seeing as she talks a great deal about giving Albertans access to the right health provider at the right place at the right time, will the minister take this chance to reassure rural Albertans and guarantee that our smaller communities will have the local access to doctors that they need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me be very, crystal clear. RPAP will continue to exist as we move forward. I've said that in my first answer; I'll say it in a second and a third if you need to hear it. I think the responsible thing for us to do at this point is to look at all the health professionals and how we make sure that we can attract and retain them in communities throughout Alberta. Physicians are certainly an important component, but so are nurse practitioners; so are midwives. We're working on those instead of threatening to cut billions of dollars from the public's treasury.

**Mr. Loewen:** Well, at least she's actually committed to it, too. It wasn't what she said in the first answer. She said that she was reviewing it.

This government spends a lot of time boasting about reviews, but it finds itself paralyzed with fear when it comes to taking real action. Why can't the minister bring herself to make a firm commitment to rural Alberta, promise families in our towns and small cities that she will not gut their access to doctors, and promise to leave this plan in place and other plans to make sure that we have access to doctors in rural communities?

**Ms Hoffman:** I've answered the question. We're absolutely committed to making sure that we have a stable health care system. That's why when we were first elected, we restored \$800 million that was proposed to be cut from health care. That doesn't make sense. Members opposite keep proposing more cuts. They keep talking about how important it is for us to make sure that we don't run deficits. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. The only way that's going to be happening is if we were to cut every nurse, every doctor. That's not going to be happening. The people of Alberta elected a government that stands up for public health care, and that's what they've got.

### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, the coal industry has been a steady source of gainful employment for thousands of Albertans for generations. In any economic climate holding onto these jobs would be very important to the affected communities but critical to their survival in the current economic and policy environment. Many of these affected communities are here with us this week for the AAMD and C conference. To the minister of environment: with mayors and reeves from across Alberta expressing significant concerns from fallout from your plan to rapidly phase out coal, will you consider taking a more balanced, job-protecting, and taxpayer-conscious approach on this issue?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. It's very clear that over the next 15 years there will be some coal-fired electricity retirements. Those are under the federal coal regulations that were brought in by the Stephen Harper government, that were supported by the Leader of the Official Opposition. The only difference between the 2016 and 2030 plan – that is, the federal coal retirements – and the post-2030 provincial NDP plan is that for everyone there will now be investments in those communities for transitioning those communities. The Leader of the Official Opposition, when he was in federal government, would have left those communities with nothing.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems that we're saving Albertans while killing their jobs. Given that a number of the municipalities who signed the open letter to the Premier expressing concerns around economic fallout, high electricity rates, and lower tax revenues are from NDP-held ridings and given that this makes them constituents of your own MLAs, one would hope that these concerns are taken seriously. To the minister of the environment: given that community leaders have publicly called for caution in the government's approach, will you heed their concerns and take what could be characterized as rash actions back to the drawing board?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if rash actions are Stephen Harper's coal regulations, then I don't quite – I'm just not getting

the connection here. The fact of the matter is that our government has made commitments to those communities for transition plans, including all of those areas that were covered under the federal coal regulations. Now, what is avoided by those Harper coal regulations? Let's see what was gazetted by the federal government in 2012 when they passed those regs. Over the next 20 years it is estimated that 590 premature deaths could be avoided in Alberta, 530 emergency room visits in hospitals . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Gotfried:** It's nice to see that the Phillips plan is now the Harper plan.

Given that the PC caucus has been advocating for an innovative approach combining industry research and their commitments with government objectives and given that 30 municipalities signed the open letter to the Premier advocating for a common-sense, dialed-down, dialed-up strategy as advanced by TransAlta, ATCO, Maxim, and others, again to the minister: given that a balanced strategy could achieve positive emission outcomes while maintaining jobs and grid stability, why are you rejecting this approach brought forward by conscientious leaders of both community and industry?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the climate leadership plan, which was praised by many of the electricity generators . . . [interjections] Well, it was; that's a stone cold fact.

It was clear that we needed to do something about the remaining six plants after 2030. Now, the commitment that we have made to Albertans is that we will assist all of the communities, not just those who are affected by the post-2030 closures, with economic development. We have made those commitments clear to them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

### Employment Training

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People across Alberta are worried. They're frustrated that they can't get back to work and upgrade their skills. I hear about it in Airdrie, people coming into my office dejected and confused about why the NDP doesn't understand the importance of growing our economy. Many Albertans are finding that they do not qualify for existing government programs because they must already have a job offer in their hands in order to receive funds for training. To the minister: how many people are applying for learner income support, and how many are being turned away?

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Member, for the question. Let me begin by saying that we are committed to ensuring that Albertans falling on these tough times have the needed and necessary supports, and that's why we have increased funding in our last budget for the Alberta income support program, and we have been providing those supports to Albertans. I can provide the specific numbers in terms of caseloads. The overall increase in the program is 50-plus per cent.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that many workers have suddenly found themselves without a job and want to upgrade their skills, and NDP policies are not working. Seeing as the Wildrose job action plan calls for investing in Alberta's knowledge infrastructure and increasing apprenticeship usage on government projects and maximizing the use of existing training programs and given that employers are receiving hundreds of applications a day for a single job, what plan does the government actually have to

keep workers in Alberta and get them the skills they need to get back to work?

**The Speaker:** The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. As the Premier outlined initially, there are a couple of points in the Wildrose plan – actually, they've been listening to our Speech from the Throne and to many speeches that I've been giving as far as investing in Alberta. When the Finance minister tables the budget on April 14, there are a number of initiatives that our government is rolling out, partnering with the private sector, the job creators, in order to get Albertans back to work. To the member: as well, I'm working very closely with the Minister of Labour, and we are looking at opportunities and ways to support workers through retraining programs.

Thank you.

2:20

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, what Albertans want is a hand up, not a handout. Considering that education and training has proved to be one of the best methods to combat unemployment and that the average Alberta Supports centres are seeing increases in demands between 50 to 70 per cent over the last year and given that the NDP has failed to maximize the use of existing skills training programs that could make a difference here today, will the NDP adopt the Wildrose's 12-point action plan on jobs, that will get these workers the skills that they need?

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues that we fundamentally disagree with the opposition on. As far as their 12-point plan, first of all, we believe that phasing out cancer-causing emissions and protecting the health of our children and our families is very, very important. We've seen the lack of new pipelines being built over the last decade, and we've seen who is in power and why they couldn't get them built. Jumping up and down and screaming, cursing at people, and tweeting at them is not the way to get a pipeline approved and built. [interjections] We are having very constructive dialogue with our counterparts across the country, including the federal government, and we believe that this is the approach to take.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, tone it down.

Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

### Water and Waste-water Infrastructure

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Towns, villages, and counties across Alberta are worried about their water and waste-water infrastructure. Raw sewage will flow into the Crowsnest River if Blairmore's waste-water treatment plant is not fixed now. The systems in Blackfalds and Lacombe can't currently meet environmental standards, which is unacceptable under a government that claims to care for Alberta's environment. To the Minister of Transportation: when will these critical projects receive funding so municipalities will not have to sink to Montreal's level and pollute a major waterway with raw sewage?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. This government has committed significant new funding for the water for life and water/waste-water treatment plants. That's about \$107 million over the next couple of years. Those applications have been received and are being

considered. We expect that sometime in June we'll be able to start making some announcements about what those projects that have been funded are.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a regional water line is needed for consistent water supply to the town of Okotoks and given that towns like Westlock, in my riding, act as central hubs for regional water supply and the Westlock concrete water tower is literally crumbling, putting the entire region's water supply at risk, Minister, what is your government's plan to support regional collaboration when it comes to water/waste-water infrastructure, and will the town of Westlock receive funding this year for its water reservoir project?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. I've been meeting with mayors, reeves, and councils. I met with four of them today at AAMD and C to hear their concerns. I will indicate that we're very sympathetic to some of these requirements. I met with the mayor of Okotoks just a week and a half ago as well. We're considering all of these things. We've put significantly increased resources into these projects, and they will be evaluated on the basis of their merits. Clearly, there are far more requests than money available to pay for them.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wildrose would protect waterways and supply water by providing consistent funding to municipalities instead of keeping them in limbo.

Given that 56 projects were approved under the small communities fund and that 49 of those were for water, waste water, or storm water and given that we have a duty to manage our natural resources and protect them from raw sewage dumps, would the minister agree that there is a crisis in water/waste-water infrastructure in Alberta and that this government has a responsibility to help address the crisis?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. Well, you know, it's a good question, an interesting question. Yes, we would say that there is a serious problem. Infrastructure spending, of course, was reduced under the previous government, particularly during the Klein period, and we're struggling to catch up. We've put additional resources. But it's a bit rich coming from a member of a party that would cut \$9 billion out of our capital spending. Nothing would get done, Mr. Speaker. He wouldn't get his water tower. He wouldn't get his waterline. Unless the NDP government is here, nothing will happen.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-South East.

### Climate Change Strategy

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I applaud this government for following through with the Progressive Conservative climate change framework. The new investment of \$10 million to SBI BioEnergy from the climate change and emissions management fund shows just how much this government appreciates this funding framework. However, in the past trends from biofuel projects have shown that it's difficult to create a business plan that will provide



the energy at a cost-effective price and generate a profit. To the minister of environment: what is different about this business plan with SBI BioEnergy, and can you assure Albertans that this isn't just a cash handout with a feel-good story to it?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question. It is true that the previous government's bioenergy initiatives and investments did attract some raised eyebrows from the office of the Auditor General, and that's why we're endeavouring to fix them. Now, this piece, though, was funded through the Climate Change and Emissions Management Corporation, which is leveraging funding from the private sector as well in a number of different investments. Those decisions are made at arm's length from government. They are made possible through the specified gas emitters regulation, and that's how the corporation is funded.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given that this bioenergy project is said to have the potential to take the equivalent of 23,000 cars off the road annually, that's welcome news.

You mentioned in your throne speech that you'll be funding mass transit through your carbon tax. The Calgary green line has the potential to prevent 52,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from being released into our atmosphere. That's pretty significant. Minister, will you commit to the green line project in Calgary as it clearly falls within the climate change plan and is a significant benefit for Calgarians and future Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for speaking out on behalf of his constituents on important public infrastructure projects, particularly with such important green ramifications to them. We are in the middle of a budget-making process and a capital-planning process, and we'll have more to say about these important priorities at that time.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given that this government is continuing to use the existing specified gas emitters regulation framework and continuing to fund projects from the climate change and emissions management fund, Minister, what will become of the climate change and emissions management fund when the new carbon tax framework is in place? Will you expand the mandate of the fund, or will the fund cease to exist?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, some thoughtful questions from the hon. member. What I can say at this point in the budget-making process is that we will be making significant investments in green infrastructure and in innovation and clean technology, which is, of course, the mandate of the climate change emissions management fund, the latter with respect to ensuring that we get good ideas out into the market, whether it's reducing our per barrel emissions or whether it's investing in new and innovative solutions like SBI.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

#### **Agricultural Assistance for Drought Recovery**

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Farmers and producers in my constituency were hit hard last year. In some cases states of agricultural emergency were declared, and now low precipitation levels and warm temperatures over the winter have left many of these same farmers worried about a repeat of last year's conditions

and wondering if they'll be able to cope. To the minister of agriculture: what are you doing to prepare for potential dry conditions our farmers and producers are facing again this year?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The year 2015 was a challenging year for many Alberta producers who were concerned about dry growing conditions and feed supplies. Snowpacks in many agricultural areas are below normal this year due to a number of factors such as a late start to winter, below-normal precipitation, and above-average temperatures. However, at this point it is difficult to speculate on what the long-term impact on this year's growing season will be. Nevertheless, department staff continue to monitor conditions and will ensure that our robust suite of existing programs and services such as crop insurance, AgriStability, and AgriInvest continue to be available to help producers during difficult times.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplementary.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we are already facing dry conditions and the growing season hasn't even started yet, again to the minister of agriculture: what are you doing to ensure that our farmers and producers can be confident now as they're planning what they'll have to grow and the supports that they'll need for this growing season?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. There are also a number of important resources available to support producers in their decision-making during dry conditions. Alberta Agriculture and Forestry posts regular crop reports and soil moisture condition updates on its website to ensure producers have current information about growing conditions in their area. Alberta Agriculture and Forestry offers business risk management programs that are designed to assist producers facing challenging growing conditions. Agri-insurance products provided through Agriculture Financial Services Corporation include protection insurance. Producers are insured for 50, 60, 70, or 80 per cent of their individual normal yield history.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that producer uptake of insurance for hay and pasture continues to be below average, to the same minister: should we have another repeat of the challenging growing conditions, will farmers and producers, including ranchers and livestock operators, have access to appropriate levels of insurance?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, the government heard from producers and is working with AFSC to improve the system. AFSC has engaged producer groups such as the Alberta Beef Producers to help improve this coverage. We've added more weather stations to more accurately assess conditions. The AFSC is considering numerous changes, including simplifying the options offered, changing the pricing mechanisms, reviewing the payment function, reviewing the hay normal yields, especially with respect to the age of the stand. These changes should be ready for the 2017 growing season.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Long-term Care in Sundre

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the Health minister about the closing of half the hospital in Sundre. Alberta Health Services, with the minister's blessing, blindsided Sundre by announcing the closure of 15 long-term care beds. This will directly result in front-line job losses. In the gallery today are front-line workers from Sundre whose colleagues' jobs will disappear because of this. How can the minister justify to these doctors and nurses the breaking of NDP promises by not only shutting down front-line services but also laying off front-line workers?

**Ms Hoffman:** Clearly, it's another day in the land of make-believe for the Official Opposition, Mr. Speaker. Let me make the record crystal clear. One, the hospital in Sundre will remain open. Two, all of the residents will be able to transition to a new facility, and we'll make sure that they get the right level of care. I think it might be long-term care for a couple of the members, and we'll make sure that that level of care is available at the new facility. Three, all staff will have a landing place consistent with the collective agreement. I'd be happy to meet with the members in the gallery afterwards to offer them that assurance in person.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll take the minister up on that.

The minister is trying to downplay her decision to shut down 15 long-term care beds in Sundre by pointing to 40 lower level care beds that are being created at the new lodge. Given that the NDP used to know that long-term care beds are the same as supportive living 1, 3, and 4 and given that the NDP promised more long-term care spaces across the province in the last election, can the minister explain how cutting all of Sundre's long-term care beds moves us towards that goal?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me again make the clarity around making sure that we get the right care in the right place by the right professional. For the individuals that are currently living in the long-term care facility: that's not the right care. Just like if I was waiting to live somewhere where I needed to have some support with my meals and with my daily hygiene, I shouldn't be stuck living in a hospital. I should have the right facility. The new facility will have 40 bright, brand new, welcoming beds, and I'm sure that the hon. member will be happy to be there with me when we open the facility.

In terms of the transition, for the couple of people that do need the higher level of care, we're going to make sure that we have the right supports for them in the new facility so that they can receive long-term care.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday in question period I asked the minister point-blank if she would commit to not closing the Sundre hospital, but she would not in question period. She has now; I thank her for that. Given that hospitals in NDP-held ridings like the hospitals in Tofield, Lamont, Manning, and Grande Cache are statistically used less often than Sundre's, can these communities expect to see their beds cut, or is the Sundre hospital the only hospital in the minister's sights?

**Ms Hoffman:** I said it in the first question; I'll say it again. The Sundre hospital is staying open, and I'm proud of that. I'm proud that the people of Alberta elected a government that actually believes in public health care. Instead of pushing for queue-jumping and for people to be able to go over the border, we're investing in public infrastructure. We're looking at facilities that have 45-year-old beds, that aren't up to today's best standards, that aren't as welcoming as the new facilities, and we're finding ways to replace those 15 beds with 40 appropriate-level care beds. This is very good news not just for Sundre but for rural Alberta, and we'll continue to look at ways that we can move forward to make sure that people get the right care in their communities throughout Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

### Bioenergy Initiatives

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, last week the Premier and the environment minister announced a \$10 million government grant to SBI BioEnergy for the construction of a new biofuel production facility. Now, the announcement actually reminded me of mating elephants. It was done at a high level, there was a lot of trumpeting and stamping of feet, and it will take two years to see if we get any results. But it got me to thinking: producing 240 million litres of biofuel is going to take a lot of canola. To the environment minister: what is the total annual volume of canola feedstock that will be required to provide input for this venture, and how many seeded hectares of canola does this represent?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, as I understand the matter, the feedstock for this particular bioenergy refinery can be very varied. The fact is that they are using off-grade canola for which there is currently no market, providing a market to farmers for that product.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's good to know that the minister knows that it will use off-grade canola as the feedstock, but, you see, our farmers don't set out to grow off-grade canola. Our farmers set out to grow feed-grade canola, that can be sold at higher prices, and the amount of off-grade canola depends on weather and environmental conditions. Can the environment minister inform the Assembly: if growing conditions are good and farmers are fortunate to grow enough food-grade canola, how and where will SBI BioEnergy source enough feedstock to run their operation?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very innovative technology that can use a number of different feedstock inputs for its bioenergy refining, and that's why the technology itself was so interesting and so worthy of support from the CCME and a variety of private-sector partners. I will add that Dr. Inder Singh, who is the head of SBI, is a leader in this field.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we're certainly proud of Dr. Singh as well, and that's why our previous government actually provided some of the original funding for this project.

The production of biofuels presents us with many challenging moral and ethical questions. Given that many Albertans are asking whether it's more important to feed the hungry or feed Humvees, to the minister of agriculture: would you please comment on the moral and ethical implications of diverting agricultural products out of the global food supply?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Those concerns are valid, and that is why this particular technology takes other kinds of feedstock not

used in the agricultural food chain supply. There are a number of different waste products that it can use, and that is why this technology is so important for one of the pieces of our journey towards sustainability in this province.

### Indigenous Peoples' Economic Development

**Mr. Hinkley:** Mr. Speaker, all Albertans are aware of the current economic challenges our province is facing. My constituents in Wetaskiwin-Camrose, which has a large indigenous population, are not immune to the downturn and have shared their stories about job losses with me. In 2015 the unemployment rate for Alberta's indigenous population was 11.7 per cent. That's double the 5.8 per cent for nonaboriginal Albertans. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what are you doing to ensure First Nations and Métis Albertans are supported when it comes to employment opportunities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I am very proud of our government's role in working with indigenous Albertans to help them to be included in the business community in this province and to benefit from Alberta's economy. Our Alberta economic partnership program provides about \$2.4 million in funding to 44 different projects to help the indigenous communities to build their feasibility studies, their business plans, and economic development. We'll see that spreading throughout the province over the next year.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we need to ensure that our indigenous communities have access to the same economic, social, and community development opportunities that all Albertans have, again to the same minister: what supports are in place to ensure our province's indigenous communities have the same chance to survive right now?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. You know, as a social worker in this province for the last 34 years the socioeconomic well-being of the indigenous community has been very close to my heart, and it's central to how I'm going to practise in this ministry that I've been granted the privilege of leading. This year the First Nations development fund provided \$128 million for more than 300 economic, social, and community developments, and we are helping to move the indigenous community to have greater quality of life for themselves and their children.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Again thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we need to ensure that our government's words are being backed up by our actions, how specifically will the First Nations development fund make a positive impact on specific Alberta communities?

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. I've really had the wonderful opportunity of going around this province, all the way from the very south, the Blood Tribe community, to the very north, the Paddle Prairie community, and I've seen the wonderful economic development

that's going on in many of our indigenous communities. In the last year, for example, the First Nations development fund has supported the Bigstone Cree Nation Women's Emergency Shelter, the Cold Lake First Nations hotel construction, and the Tsuu T'ina Nation fire department. In total, the ministry provides about \$165 million.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

### Lac La Biche Apartment Fire

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the very early hours of Saturday, March 12, the Lac La Biche fire department responded to a fire at an apartment building in Lac La Biche. In spite of the early hour the response was almost immediate. The firefighters worked very bravely to evacuate all 91 residents of the building safely, with zero injuries to the residents and only two minor injuries to the firefighters. The blaze caused approximately \$1.2 million in damage and was found to have been started by a cigarette butt in a flowerpot.

The Red Cross funded the first 72 hours of temporary housing for the displaced residents, and the owners of the Parkland Motel are still accommodating residents who have no place else to go at their cost. BCM Inns also donated accommodations for some of the residents for up to a month. The people and businesses in Lac La Biche have stepped up to help the many displaced residents. There have been donations of everything from towing services and lock services to those who lost their keys in the scramble to free taxi services, gift certificates, and cash. Big Dog radio held a radiothon on Monday to help out, and my Wildrose caucus MLAs stepped up and donated cash to help as well. Cash donations continue to pour in from the members of the community, to the tune of over \$16,000 so far. I would like to commend the people of Alberta for helping those in need, especially in these economic times. I also commend His Honour Mayor Omer Moghrabi and the county council for their immediate action in supporting their community.

I was not surprised at all to hear that this wonderful community and people from around Alberta stepped forward to help out their fellow men and women in crisis. I was, unfortunately, very surprised and dismayed to hear that Alberta Human Services chose this time to seek cost savings by ignoring the temporary foreign workers who also lived in the building. These people are now displaced because it is apparently not the provincial government's problem. What a terrible message this sends to those dedicated workers already removed from their families and homelands and who are trying to build a life here in Alberta. Luckily, Albertans' compassion and sense of responsibility for each other is stronger and more forthcoming than this government's bureaucrats.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

## Bill 4 An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and introduce Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services.

This bill acknowledges many unionized public-sector workers' right to strike while also protecting Albertans' access to essential public services. The legislation modernizes Alberta's labour laws to reflect decisions by the Supreme Court of Canada and the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta. Both courts ruled last year that public-sector workers have the right to strike. As a result, Alberta's Public Service Employee Relations Act and the Labour Relations Code must be changed to lift the prohibition on strikes and lockouts. If passed, Mr. Speaker, Alberta's essential services legislation would be similar to the laws in other provinces. This legislation is fair to unionized employees, employers, and the general public, ensuring access to essential services in the event of a labour dispute.

As a final note, thank you to all in the gallery who contributed to this legislation.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of a report entitled Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Recall Process in British Columbia, dated November 2003, which I referenced during the course of debate on Bill 201 yesterday.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, I rise with two tablings this afternoon. One is the *Canada Gazette* from August 30, 2012, and the other is clippings from Capital Power and AltaLink, both of which make the case for the phase-out of coal-fired electricity undertaken between 2016, now, and 2030.

### Orders of the Day

#### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Debate adjourned March 10: Mr. Coolahan speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to continue my response to the throne speech. This government is taking an approach to the economy that encourages investment not only through incentives but through the fact that we are working to ensure that we have the best standards; the best workforce; the best infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, and schools; great access to capital; and, yes, competitive tax and royalty structures. We will

ensure that those who are struggling do have access to the services they need, services that can help to raise standards rather than services that keep people in the same place.

In addition to this government's pragmatic management of the budget during these lean times, I am proud, Mr. Speaker, that this government does not find social issues stale and understands that this province's legislation needs to move forward on making Alberta equal for all. Last session's Bill 7 immediately comes to mind, legislation that added gender identity and gender expression to Alberta's Human Rights Act.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also extremely pleased and proud that we will introduce the Alberta child benefit, that will see Alberta's low-income families with two children receive an additional \$3,000 a year. This is the type of policy that not only helps families on a day-to-day basis, but it helps to level the playing field. This is also the type of policy that anticipates changes to the energy sector that may impact the price of utilities in the short term.

I'm also proud that this government has moved to ensure that the LGBTQ children will feel safe in their schools and that the school boards are moving to ensure the same.

Mr. Speaker, as noted in the throne speech, this government is moving towards ending the poverty-inducing cycle of payday loans in this province, and we'll be looking at ways to ensure that small loans can be given out without families going into further debt.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, Albertans need a government that puts the interests of all Albertans at the forefront of its policies and its responsibilities. We need a government that removes the tunnel vision and sees the diversity of people that live in our great communities and the diversity of challenges that we all have. The Lieutenant Governor has reinforced that this government is, in fact, the government that understands Alberta's current and future economic needs. It is also the government that understands the need to ensure that the economy works for everyone.

Thank you.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other members who'd like to speak to this matter under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to say thank you very much to the Member for Calgary-Klein for his insightful and informative response to the throne speech. I was wondering if he could tell us more about the importance of government putting money into infrastructure in his area.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Sure.

**The Speaker:** Proceed.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. Well, infrastructure dollars are very important to the province and people in my constituency. Firstly, we simply have an infrastructure deficit in this province. We have crumbling roads, crumbling bridges. We need to update schools. We need new schools. We need to update hospitals. We need to ensure that people move through our communities, communities like mine, in an efficient manner as a means to get to work every day.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Not only that, Madam Speaker, but the infrastructure projects and the money that we're putting forward will help put Albertans back to work while we work on getting pipelines built and getting our oil to tidewater and to new sources. Last but not least – and I think this is what we need to remember – is that when we have first-class

infrastructure in our province, that helps attract investment. It helps attract head offices for corporations. These businesses want to know that when they move here, their employees can get to work on time and their children will go to safe schools and they will have the hospitals that they can send their children to.

That's all. Thank you so much for the question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other comments or questions under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, do I have another speaker on this? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is truly my pleasure to speak today in response to the Speech from the Throne delivered by Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, Lois Mitchell. It is a privilege to congratulate her on her appointment as our Queen's representative in Alberta. As I watched the installation of Her Majesty's Lieutenant Governor last year, I couldn't help but reflect upon the traditions that have shaped not only Alberta and Canada but also the Commonwealth nations and much of the world's responsible democratic governments, traditions that go back 800 years to the Magna Carta, that today define us and give us a shared purpose in governing this great province of Alberta with pride, the use of the Westminster parliamentary style of government.

I am blessed to be part of this Legislature, these halls that have now seen many great men and women that have preceded us, people like Alexander Rutherford, Alberta's first Premier; or the Famous Five women – Emily Murphy, Irene Parlby, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, and Henrietta Muir Edwards – who asked the question: does the word “persons” in section 24 of the BNA Act include women? Thereby, these five women ensured that all women had the legal – the word “legal” meant that women were indeed persons and had the right to vote. By looking at how many female representatives we have in the House, we sure have come a long way since that question was first asked.

One other person of interest to me that I want to talk about is Anthony Henday. Everybody here seems to know Anthony Henday as the drive that goes around Edmonton, and that's the name of the drive that they understand. But Henday is actually credited as the first European to enter Alberta, arriving in the area that was to become the town of Chauvin in my riding of Battle River-Wainwright. So, Madam Speaker, I am very honoured that the constituents of Battle River-Wainwright graced me with one of the greatest privileges and chose me to be their representative to bring the issues and problems to the Legislature. I would like to thank the constituents of Battle River-Wainwright for supporting me and giving me the honour to serve them.

Since the provincial election on May 5 I've been very, very busy throughout my constituency and have had the pleasure of meeting many of the constituents first-hand and hearing their concerns and taking comfort in their triumphs. But I've also despaired with their challenges. I promise I will do my very best for the constituents of Battle River-Wainwright.

I'm a proud Albertan and have called Battle River-Wainwright my home for over 35 years. I have deep roots in the riding, both personal and through business ventures, and I have raised my family of five here. We consider ourselves blessed to be part of the community, replete with good people and abundant resources.

I believe that this riding and its people have played a significant role in the economic and the historical prosperity of our province. Battle River-Wainwright is a large rural riding, almost 17,500 square kilometres in size. There are 24 municipalities, nine hamlets, four counties, and two municipal districts. Its population

is approximately 38,000 people, predominantly involved in Alberta's two biggest economic drivers, agriculture and oil. Agriculture occupies about 16 per cent of the workforce while a further 11 per cent operate in the energy industry.

At Hardisty there's a large petroleum tank farm that is the nexus of pipelines. I had the privilege over this summer to visit both Gibson's and Enbridge, and I have to say that I was most impressed with the cleanliness and the organization and care that they have for the work and the environment. It was truly impressive.

Another interesting town for me in my constituency is Forestburg. It is a strong, vibrant town of approximately 880 people which has a vital agricultural and coal mining background. Westmoreland Coal and ATCO Power are the main employers there. Unfortunately, this government wants to accelerate the phasing out of coal-fired electrical generation without a clear plan to help with that transition. This town and towns like Forestburg are afraid for their economy. Consequently, I fear for this town's future, too, but I will continue to work for the municipality to find ways and means to keep this town vibrant.

At the AUMA convention this fall I was able to meet with many of the town councils, and in my riding a common theme came from them. They wanted to see stable, predictable, transparent funding for the municipalities through the MSI grant. Now they've been concerned about any changes to the linear taxation structure. They, however, particularly liked the Wildrose's 10-10 MSI plan. They told me that funding of this nature would help them to remain strong and viable.

Towns in my riding include Alliance, Amisk, Bashaw, Bawlf, Chauvin, Czar, Daysland, Edberg, Edgerton, Ferintosh, Forestburg, Hardisty, Hay Lakes, Heisler, Holden, Hughenden, Irma, Killam, Loughheed, Provost, Rosalind, Ryley, Sedgewick, and Wainwright, my home.

There are two other towns in my constituency that I want to talk about, Strome and Galahad. They have chosen dissolution and have ceded their governance to the county of Flagstaff. There are other towns that are considering this option at this time, too. I believe that we as legislators need to tread carefully and look closely at programs that support rural towns as the heart of Alberta is still in rural Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I have a unique community within my constituency, Denwood. This is a Canadian Forces base in Wainwright. Last year they celebrated the 75th anniversary of the base. Denwood is home to approximately 500 full-time service personnel and their families, who bring a welcome boost to the local economy both as customers and as workers. During training exercises this population can expand up to 10,000 personnel, and there are many services provided both on and off the base to support these families. These military families bring a wonderful richness of national and international experience to the Wainwright region and have helped make Wainwright a vibrant community.

CFB Wainwright, Madam Speaker, is one of the busiest training bases in all of Canada, being home to two major training organizations, the 3rd Canadian Division Training Centre and the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre, or CMTC. Training exercises for both the Canadian and multinational forces take place in the area, adding a touch of colour and excitement. Of course, these exercises are not without dangers. During recent exercises 17 personnel were injured in a live training exercise over a weekend.

3:00

Madam Speaker, there are issues that pose challenges to all communities in my riding. Infrastructure is a concern, particularly the roads, the Wainwright hospital, the school in Irma, and facilities for seniors. Roads are not being maintained to an acceptable level

in many places. Highway 14 east of Wainwright has seen better days and is now starting to break apart in many places. The hospital in Wainwright is in desperate need of replacement. In fact, there have been many studies that have shown major deficiencies in the hospital such as size and crumbling infrastructure. In fact, the previous government had placed the Wainwright hospital at number two on the priority list. The hospital is widely overused, and there is no weekend medical coverage on the base. In the event of an emergency the Wainwright hospital is often the only available option for base personnel and the residents of Denwood and the surrounding Wainwright area.

Facilities for seniors are, in too many instances, substandard and failing. With our aging population it would be responsible for us to ensure that there are proper facilities for our seniors.

The school in Irma has been a great school for many years, but now it's 65 years old, and I'd say that it's time to look for retirement of the school and have a new, fully functional school that meets the needs of the town now and for many years to come.

I hope to continue to provide a strong voice for our constituency this session to address these and other concerns.

Madam Speaker, I would be remiss in telling you about this great part of Alberta that makes up Battle River-Wainwright without specifically thanking two beautiful ladies in my life, my wife, Eileen, and my daughter Ashley. Ashley is working on her fifth year of university for a bachelor of education degree, and she'll be finished in about three weeks. Eileen is tireless in her support for me in my new career as an MLA. These two women helped, and they worked tirelessly throughout the campaign, helping me to knock on doors, driving me from town to town, putting up signs, setting up the campaign office. The list goes on. They continue to support me as we go into this session.

I'd also like to thank my son Matthew and his wife, Rebecca; my oldest daughter, Chantel; and her husband, Nathan. They have been an inspiration in my life and mean everything to me.

I've been truly blessed with a family and would like to leave them with a government and an Alberta that will make Alberta prosperous for generations to come. On that personal note, I will close with the same words that Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor used in her Speech from the Throne: God bless Alberta, God bless Canada, and God save the Queen.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the member. In my own riding we have the Cold Lake air force base, which brings a ton of stability during this economic hard times. I would like to know: does he have the same kind of stability within his riding with the base that he has?

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you for that question. Yes. I'd be happy to address that question. Wainwright is absolutely one of the strong economic drivers in our town. It's there. The people are being posted in and out, but there's a large contingency of people. Denwood had 500 people in it, but we have at least that many, if not more, that live right in the town itself. The people that are hired as a result of the base: that's numerous people here, too. Towns such as Irma, Edgerton: people from the base go to those towns as well. The riding is well supported by the military base. They're a blessing to have.

Sometimes it's a challenge when they're doing their exercises. You can certainly tell when they're going on because the walls and the doors and the windows can literally shake when the bombs are

being dropped. It sounds like somebody is actually pounding on your door, so you go up to the door and you try to open up the door to see who's there. Nobody is there. But if you listen outside, you can hear the base going boom, boom, boom. Often you can see the light in the sky where the bombs are being dropped. It's quite an exciting town, and it's really a boost to our economy.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments?

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to deliver my maiden speech as the Member for Lethbridge-West. I want to use the occasion to pay tribute to my community, and I hope to do them justice both in this speech and in the discharge of my duties as their elected representative.

Lethbridge-West sits in the heart of Treaty 7, a treaty between the Blackfoot and the Crown signed by Chief Crowfoot in 1877. The descendants of the people who signed Treaty 7 live in my city just as they do throughout the Canadian and American plains and foothills as members of the Piikani and Kainai mainly, of the Blackfoot Confederacy.

My city is bordered by Canada's largest reserve lands, the lands given to the Kainai people and the Piikani reserve, home to some of the most beautiful riparian landscapes in the Oldman River valley. Blackfoot people tell us stories of the abundance of the foothills and plains, the great herds of buffalo now disappeared from the landscape, their presence still held in the ecosystem by the flattened earth, the medicinal shrubs, the rich native prairie and soil.

Madam Speaker, the worst of Canada's colonial history was played out in Treaty 7 territory. Smallpox and the extirpation of the bison herds robbed the people of their economy. Residential schools stole from parents the right to time and teaching of their children, stole dignity from the children and subsequent generations, and robbed the whole people of their language, spirituality, foods, medicines, and stories.

The last great battle between Canadian indigenous peoples took place in the middle of Lethbridge-West, literally in the heart of my community. Its very centre is the spot in the Oldman River valley where the Blackfoot and Cree clashed for the last time, in 1870. It is called the Battle of Belly River in the history books because the white settlers renamed the river the Oldman some years later. The term "Belly River," as the story goes, was too risqué for Victorian sensibilities. The battle was about the Cree's view that the Blackfoot had been sufficiently decimated by smallpox to lose an invasion. The river ran red with the blood of the Cree, as the stories go, and while the Blackfoot elders now smile wryly at the recollection of that battle or its stories, this is still a gentle reminder for all of us that the people are fierce, they are tough, and there are lines one does not cross.

Madam Speaker, the sun dance has never stopped in southern Alberta, the ceremonies, the centre of spiritual life for the Blackfoot people. Sun dance had to go underground during the most vicious generations of white settler colonialism, but today it thrives in Kainai and now Siksika.

Time is an enormous, long river, and I stand in it just as my indigenous sisters and brothers stand in it. Our work is now, after a great, destructive flood of historical events, to move the stones back into place, to remove the deadfall of history but set it aside and, in its place, as a reminder of what we have done and seen, repair the river together. We are all treaty people.

On the west bank of the Oldman River, a short jog up a steep coulee from the scene of the last great battle, sits one of North America's finest art collections, tucked away in vaults at the

University of Lethbridge. This is something that not everyone knows or appreciates. In the middle of my riding there are Picassos, Matisse, Group of Seven, Warhol, de Grandmaison. One of North America's most impressive collections of art was built in the 1980s by the art department at the University of Lethbridge, where Billy McCarroll and others cleverly leveraged a Lougheed-era arts policy to build one of the best collections anywhere. Those province-building initiatives, deployed through the heritage fund and an activist government in the early 1980s, reverberate until this day. It is my hope that we can as a government get back to this ethic of building a common heritage via an inclusive and proactive approach to the arts.

The Lethbridge arts community is not just locked up in a vault. It spills out to one of the best things about our city and is a major contributor to artistic inquiry and endeavour for the province. In my small city you will find musicians like Leeroy Stagger and Dave McCann, queer theatre and cabaret at Theatre Outré, a symphony, the New West Theatre, a pride festival and parade, independent artist studios, spoken word, zines, and a comic book, Eric Dyck's *Slaughterhouse Slough*, dedicated to the history and the present of the city. The Allied Arts Council, admirably steered by Suzanne Lint, supports many of these initiatives and ensures that the whole community has access to the arts via Casa, the community arts centre that anchors the downtown of my riding.

3:10

The city of Lethbridge has also been home to generations of immigrants. We have been at the centre of some of the defining moments of the 20th century. In World War II, after forcible confiscation of their property, Japanese-Canadians were relocated to southern Alberta to forced work on the sugar beet plantations just outside my city. After the war many of those families ended up staying. This is why, Madam Speaker, Lethbridge is home to a Japanese-Canadian population that owns businesses, has become judges and elected officials, and has contributed to all of Canada's understanding of displacement, racism, and the value of immigration.

Joy Kogawa, who grew up in Lethbridge, is one of Canada's most recognized authors. In *Obasan*, her award-winning novel, she says:

Where do any of us come from in this cold country? Oh Canada, whether you admitted it or not, we come from you . . . We grow where we are not seen, we flourish where we are not heard . . . We come from cemeteries full of skeletons with wild roses in their grinning teeth. We come from our untold tales that wait for their telling.

Madam Speaker, my city has also become a national leader in welcoming Syrian refugees just as we have welcomed immigrants from all around the world – from Italy, Hungary, the Americas, Asia, and the Arab world – for a century. Lethbridge was even featured in international news coverage. We have contributed very significantly through public and private sponsorship of Syrian refugees. To those refugees I say: [Remarks in Arabic] Welcome to Lethbridge.

Lethbridge is also home to a vibrant Franco-Albertan community. The community centre, la Cité des prairies, is the cultural hub that celebrates the fact that we are a bilingual society. I am proud that my own children attend the francophone school La Verendrye, and I commend the school and the staff at la Cité as well as their board for building a community where all francophone heritage in all its global diversity is celebrated and woven into how we understand what it means to be at home in Canada.

Madam Speaker, Lethbridge-West encompasses the downtown. It encompasses the north end, with established communities, and, of course, the west side. The west side is growing, with new housing

starts among the leaders in the province. The growth of the city of Lethbridge is an object lesson in diversification of the economy. The community is home to value-added and agricultural processing. It is home to manufacturing: steel, aerospace, oil and gas components. We have a tremendous renewable energy potential. Lethbridge is home to a growing technology centre – the tecconnect centre is a project of Economic Development Lethbridge – geospatial mapping, and new physics endeavours.

The riding also acts as a public services hub, Madam Speaker, for the region. This is important as our government's approach to stable funding for public services has ensured that our small-business sector continues to thrive. This is why you see collaboration between the public and private sectors in Lethbridge in ways that you may not see in other regions. In all this, Economic Development Lethbridge plays a key role, and Trevor Lewington and his whole team deserve recognition for their creative problem solving and commitment to diversification.

On that topic, I would like to pay tribute to some of the most progressive and forward-looking small businesses in Lethbridge-West. My friends Erica Joose at Plum restaurant, Lorelee and Paul Edwards at Drunken Sailor clothing shop, and Kyle Baynes at Andrew Hilton fine liquor all merit a shout-out for how they support our community, how they embrace paying a living wage to their workers, and how they have faith in our city as a place where diversity can take root and grow. All of the downtown businesses in Lethbridge are supported by the Downtown Lethbridge Business Revitalization Zone, which is ably and progressively steered by Ted Stilson and his wonderful staff, including my Deathbridge Derby Dames teammate and friend Melissa Johnson.

We have a history of strong women in southern Alberta, Madam Speaker. I am only the fifth or fourth woman, depending on when Maria Fitzpatrick was declared the winner, to ever be elected south of Calgary. The first was Louise McKinney in Claresholm in 1914, one of the Famous Five. The second was Edith Thurston in 1944. The third was Bridget Pastoor in 2008. Numbers four and five did not come until 2015. There has still never been an indigenous person, a new Canadian, a person of colour, or an LGBTQ person represented in our Legislature from south of Calgary. There is much work left to be done.

Lethbridge is home also to a significant labour history. It was the epicentre of the coal mining communities which were, of course, the first boom that powered this province. Lethbridge was the place where the first industrial disputes resolution act was written by Mackenzie King before he was Prime Minister and was the place where the first occupational health and safety rules were developed in response to the Hillcrest mine disaster in 1914, which killed 166 people. That project of occupational health and safety finally saw its full implementation in Alberta in December 2015, Madam Speaker, when OHS was extended to all paid workers in the province. The Alberta Federation of Labour was founded in Lethbridge in 1913. I was proud to assist with the centennial celebrations when I worked for the AFL with the leadership of Nancy Furlong, Gil McGowan, and Siobhán Vipond.

Madam Speaker, a few words on what brought me here and what sustains us all. I am a mom to two boys. Finn is seven; Hudson is five. They are beautiful and smart and hilarious. They don't always love mom's new job. I don't blame them. I'm away a lot, and that's why I carefully guard the time that I do have. But many Alberta kids grow up with a parent who works out of town. I know I did.

My dad was an electrician, who worked on oil rigs. He was gone a lot. But in the early 1980s, in economic conditions not unlike these ones, with a prolonged drop in the price of oil, my dad lost his job. My mom went back to work as a teacher. If Peter Lougheed had pursued policies of dramatically cutting health care and education

in response, my family would have been left with nothing. I think about that a lot.

My dad taught my sister and me that we could do anything we want. He used to say: you can be an electrician if you want. That was a radical thing to say in the 1970s to a little girl. My mom is a strong woman in and of herself and will never ever leave you wondering where she stands. But my mom is still here to speak for herself, and my dad is not, so let me share a little bit about him.

My dad had an inborn intellectual curiosity that did not come from a university; it came from who he was. He was monumentally impatient with inequality. He loathed overt displays of wealth or opulence. He loved to fix anything he could and reuse it and think creatively about all the stuff that piled up in his Quonset. He used to say that you can learn anything you like in a school, but you must also learn, above all, how to work.

My dad did not live long enough to see me get elected, though I think he would not have been surprised. Sometimes I look up in the gallery and wish he was sitting there. I think about how he would have been here to watch this speech, to watch question period. I think of him also in his market gardening role. After my dad retired from the oil patch, he ran himself a little strawberry and vegetable market garden along with a million other things my parents were doing. Dad used to talk to me all the time about how the weather was changing, how the availability of water was changing. Ross Phillips, you were ahead of your time. You knew things in your bones that the rest of us need a book to learn.

Madam Speaker, I found the compassion and empathy that I learned from my parents in my party as an adult. I found it in those I worked for, Raj Pannu, who officiated my wedding, and Brian Mason, who, when I delivered my father's eulogy and looked out, there he was. I found it in the incessant hard work of Jack Layton, who was an early inspiration. I found the impatience with inequality in my friend Niki Ashton.

Madam Speaker, when I and a small group of dedicated New Democrats began knocking on doors in 2011, I did not expect to sit in government; I expected to serve the people of Lethbridge-West. I would like to thank Dave McCaffrey and Melanie Decillia for going out with me on that first day in September 2011 after I won the nomination and for so many days since. My entire riding association makes sure I have the right supports to do this job, but none more so than my good friend Keith McLaughlin, who once pledged to me that he would knock on every door between 13th Street and Copperwood, and he's made good on his word.

I'd also like to recognize the hard work of New Democrats over the years in this area. Over the years Gordon and Sylvia Campbell kept this ship moving and founded the Southern Alberta Council on Public Affairs. Others – Marshall and Angie Jaremco, Tad Mitsui, Mark Sandilands, Leona Jacobs, and Muriel Mellow – are giants on whose shoulders I stand.

Madam Speaker, it is my honour to stand in this House and enjoy the privileges of service in the public interest and the trust afforded to me as a parliamentarian. It is indeed the culmination of my adult life's work, and I think that you will agree that the community that sent me here deserves all of my effort to ensure careful and thoughtful consideration of the pressing matters before us. The people of Lethbridge-West have asked for a legislative program that is inclusive, that works toward equality, where justice is our guide, where everyone has access to personal liberty and expression, to a responsible relationship with the planet and our place in natural ecosystems.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will take my share of the work for the people of Lethbridge-West.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** First of all, Minister, thank you. You said one time that I was way more effusive than you were in describing our community. You've learned, and I'm very happy that you did. I've just received an e-mail a few minutes ago from GREENSENCE about a meeting this week. So I'd like you to tell me a little more about the environmental ethic and activism in Lethbridge because I know you're part of it.

3:20

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, there are, of course, a number of organizations and initiatives under way in southern Alberta with respect to renewable energy and also broader sustainability initiatives within the city. We have Environment Lethbridge, which has just begun its storefront operations along with the Oldman Watershed Council to work with citizens on matters related to distributed generation, on matters related to composting, recycling, and general environmental outreach within the city. I commend those efforts, and I congratulate them on the opening of their storefront facility with the Oldman Watershed Council.

On that topic the OWC has also been a leader in the community on headwaters protection and putting that question front and centre for all of the citizens of southern Alberta, protecting habitat and protecting the headwaters for the Oldman River. That was one of the reasons, Madam Speaker, that there was a community-wide consensus that we needed to do more to protect the headwaters of the Oldman River, because it does feed the entire city of Lethbridge and is our drinking water source, and that is why we followed the lead and the call of those in the community throughout southwest Alberta, but in particular in Lethbridge, in establishing the parks in the Castle southwest Alberta region.

So you will find a great deal of engagement on environmental matters. There are environmental days in June as well, a celebration in Galt Gardens, and a number of other initiatives that our city undertakes.

I would be remiss if I didn't discuss as well, Madam Speaker, the wind turbine tech program at Lethbridge College. Some years ago Lethbridge College took leadership with respect to apprenticeship and training programs for those who were looking for employment in the expanding wind energy sector in southern Alberta. They have a very sophisticated program in which one obtains their first-year electrician certificate as well as a turbine tech certificate. We look forward to working with them on expanding those efforts as we welcome the billions of dollars of investment that are going to be coming to Alberta with respect to renewable energy, not just in southern Alberta, which, I may add, is the best solar resource and one of the best wind resources in North America, but also across the province.

There are a number of ways in which renewables has become a business in southern Alberta, Madam Speaker, and we're very proud of that. It's just another in a long list of stories that we can tell out of Lethbridge-West about diversification and making for a resilient, sustainable economy.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to commend the member for her speech. In her speech she mentioned her father fixing things and putting his mind to, you know, putting things together and making things better. I think the member herself has exemplified those qualities that she mentioned in her father in doing things like fixing the environment, fixing our watersheds, making sure that we have clean air and water for our future generations with the climate change leadership plan that she has created along with



a strong team that she has assembled. I wonder if the member might want to speak a little bit more about how important it is to her to have run and put in all the strong work that she has done, and now one of the first things that she has done is created this excellent climate leadership plan.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Madam Speaker, I don't have long, so what I will say is that, you know, the approach that we took for the climate leadership plan was one of broad consultation and involvement of all industrial sectors in the province, looking at where our strengths are and looking at what we can build on and what we can improve, and that's exactly what we did. That's why so many groups have endorsed the plan, from the environmental organizations to industry. And it's not just the oil sands industry, although they do support the plan, but the cement industry, petrochemicals, and others have concluded that it is a balanced approach.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The next speaker on my list that I'll call on is the hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today so that I may share my maiden speech in response to the Speech from the Throne. I begin by acknowledging the indigenous people of this land, specifically the people of Treaty 7, on whose land my constituency of Calgary-Cross now stands. I want to give the most earnest and heartfelt thanks to the people of Calgary-Cross, who trusted me to be their voice in the Legislature. I strive hard every day to continue to deserve the faith that they have placed in me.

It is with sincere gratitude that I thank the residents of Calgary-Cross for turning what was supposed to be a safe seat into an election. My constituents continue to tell me that health care, education, job creation, and the overall economy are of major concern in Calgary-Cross and to Albertans across the province. I am proud to say that these are issues that the government is focused on, and I am happy to be the voice of Calgary-Cross on these matters.

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about myself and my journey here, my early life as an Albertan as well as my hopes and aspirations for the future. I am going to touch on a variety of issues such as immigration, women's issues, diversity, and equality. Alberta is a large, vast, and diverse province. The people of this province come from different beginnings and backgrounds. They speak different languages and have unique customs. I believe I share a lot of these traits, and I believe all of them should be shared with you today.

Madam Speaker, I came to this country in 1988 as a refugee from Nicaragua. Like so many other Albertans who started their journey elsewhere, I made my home in this beautiful province for the last 28 years. The majority of my family left Nicaragua when the civil war tore apart our country. Ultimately, our search for a better life led us here. We were looking for a better home, a safer home, a welcoming home. We found it in Alberta, Canada, in northeast Calgary, to be precise.

Northeast Calgary has been my haven ever since. Even as work took me away for short periods of time, northeast Calgary has always and will always be my home. My love for my home, for Calgary-Cross, and for Alberta runs very deep. As a flight attendant I travelled the world. I went to many countries, visited many, many places, yet always I longed for home. At the end of the trip home was Calgary-Cross.

As I mentioned, upon my family's arrival in Calgary we moved all over the northeast. In fact, I have managed now to have lived in every single community that makes up Calgary-Cross: Pineridge, Whitehorn, Rundle, Temple, and Vista Heights. The majority of my

experiences in the province were extremely positive. My family was welcomed and treated well. I made a lot of friends growing up, attending high school and graduating from Father Lacombe. I enjoyed many things I would not have had the opportunity to experience had my family not moved to Canada.

That being said, like many visible minorities, I fought through some adversity. When I was 17, about to graduate from high school, I was offered a full-time job at a local business I had been working at. I was advised to take the job; otherwise, I was told that I would likely end up in a gang and then prison. I did not take the job, and given where I stand today, I think it turned out to be okay. Instead of taking that job, I pursued my education. I graduated with a bachelor of arts in the humanities from the University of Calgary. I am proud of the education I received in this province, and I am proud of the opportunities it afforded me.

During my time as a flight attendant I became a union president and then a national union representative. It was my time with the union that cemented my drive and my passion for representing the collective. Giving a voice to the people is a wonderful job and not something that I take lightly. I eventually realized I wanted to keep representing my fellow Albertans but on a larger scale. The NDP is the party that I felt best gave me an opportunity to speak and support the people of this province.

3:30

I am a visible minority, I am an immigrant, I am a member of the LGBTQ community, and I am the Minister of Culture and Tourism. What a truly beautiful indication of the change in diversity that Alberta is currently undergoing. Last week we saw International Women's Day being recognized here at the Legislature. During the proceedings that day we celebrated with a female Premier and a mother and her baby. In last year's election four generations of women in my family voted for me: my grandmother, my mother, my sister, and my daughter. It is a miraculous thing. I would also like to thank my daughter who, upon turning 18, voted for the first time and was my campaign manager.

This province has made giant strides. We are witnesses to the true progress that has been made and continues to be made in Alberta. However, we still have a long way to go. Whether it is with gender equality, racial equality, or acceptance and inclusion of the LGBTQ community, we have barely scratched the surface of what we are actually capable of.

In closing, this province is a reflection of a collective, a large group of hard-working, innovative, and hopeful individuals living and thriving together. Given that we are the sum of all of our parts, I am genuinely excited for the future of this province. Thank you again, Calgary-Cross, for trusting me. Thank you to all Albertans for trusting this government.

We have many ethnic groups. We embrace many different cultures, traditions, and languages. Alberta is a richly linguistic province, and I want each and every Albertan to know that I am proud to serve you.

[Remarks in Spanish] I am proud to address this Chamber in the Castilian language. [As submitted]

J'ai aussi le plaisir de me diriger vers vous en français, me donnant l'occasion de parler aux Franco-Albertains dans notre province. [Translation] I also have the pleasure of speaking to you in French and speak to the Franco-Albertans in this province. [As submitted]

[Remarks in Portuguese] Also, to give you thanks to all the Portuguese speakers in Calgary. [As submitted]

[Remarks in Italian] Including, as well, the Italian speakers. [As submitted]

Gracias. Merci. Muito obrigado. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to thank the hon. member for his insightful story and speech. I would remind all of us that in 1988 we were enjoying the Calgary Winter Olympics and the hon. minister was going through a rather different time and stage in his life, coming to this country as a refugee from civil war torn Nicaragua with his family to establish themselves in another part of the world, another climate, another language, many of which he has mastered better than most of us, becoming a graduate of the University of Calgary with a bachelor of arts, a union president, a member of a visible minority, an immigrant, a member of the LGBTQ community, a father of a daughter. What a story.

I'd like to hear a little bit more, though, about the experience of coming from another country to Canada, to Alberta to engage in this fantastic journey that you've just hit the high spot in telling us about. I've got nothing but the highest degree of respect and admiration for people who do make the decision to immigrate or flee to immigrate to another part of the world to better their lives for themselves and their families. I'd like to hear a bit more about what it was like and at what age you came. I think about seven?

Thank you.

**Miranda:** Thank you, hon. member. I was a little bit older than that, but there was pretty much nothing that would have allowed somebody to ever forget what it's like to have bombs dropped around you or have people shooting at you, trying to kill you for no reason. But even though all those things happened in my life, I remember how grateful and how much at peace we were when we finally reached this place.

In a small turn of events, I guess you can say, upon landing at the Calgary airport – we came very late at night, and there was no place for us to go because the immigration officers were not ready – they put us in an office at the Calgary airport, the same office which many, many years later became my union office when I was elected as president. You know, it tells you that people come to this province, people come to this country with lots of hope and with lots of things that have happened in the past but with a desire to contribute to society and be part of our society and do things that are positive for our fellow citizens.

I have had the opportunity on many occasions to continue that tradition in my family, who have always been very much empowered by a sense of community and a sense of obligation to our fellow citizens, to give back to this beautiful country, that has given us so much. Now being an elected official and to be able to do it in a different capacity has been truly, well, the most amazing experience of my life until now. I don't think there's anything that will ever top that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes.

**Dr. Starke:** Madam Speaker, I'd like to certainly thank the Member for Calgary-Cross, the Minister of Culture and Tourism, for his comments. It is an incredible story and one that is constantly inspiring to me as a native Albertan, to hear the stories of people who have come to this province for greater opportunity. I'm very impressed with this, a little disappointed that there's no German. But, hey, it's all good. We can swap. You can teach me some Spanish.

I would like to ask one question. In your role as the minister of tourism, specifically, linguistic ability is a huge asset, a massive asset in terms of reaching out to key tourism markets that, you know, visit Alberta. Specifically, I would say our Latin American market and our market in Brazil, Argentina, and especially Mexico now that visa requirements have been relaxed. I just am curious to know: have you had opportunity yet in your early days in this ministry to, shall we say, parlay your linguistic abilities into something that will increase visitation from those markets to Alberta?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. [Remarks in German]

Yes, I've had the opportunity to speak. We actually had the corps of diplomats. We had the opportunity to actually meet with some of them and talk to them, especially the ones from Brazil, specifically. Absolutely, there's so much opportunity.

One of the reasons why we've learned that . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As one of several new members in this House it is an honour for me to rise and address the other members of this Chamber and the people of Alberta by way of my maiden speech. Before I begin, though, I would like to extend my congratulations, although considerably belated, to all the members of this House for being elected to represent the people of their electoral districts.

Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by sharing a little bit about my family's history as it's quite unique compared to most in the House, with the exception of the Member for Calgary-Cross. My family came to Canada from Chile, fleeing violence, as many other Chileans, after the September 11, 1973, military coup. My father came to Canada in March of 1976, and my mother, older brother, and I joined him, arriving on Canada Day, July 1, of that same year.

When we first arrived in Edmonton, we lived in the Westmount neighbourhood. From the beginning of my parents' stay in Canada they worked extremely hard to provide for my brother and I as they worked diligently in positions in which they were underemployed. Their credentials and qualifications were not recognized here in Canada, a challenge that many new Canadians continue to face here in our province to this day.

My parents eventually decided that they wanted to stay in Canada and were determined to purchase a property of their own that we could call home. We packed our limited belongings and headed to the newly developed area of Mill Woods and moved close to a Chilean housing co-operative named after Salvador Allende, Chile's first democratically elected socialist president. It was there in Mill Woods that we felt supported by other diasporic Chileans, Canadians, and other new Canadians to this province.

3:40

As many other new Canadians, my parents worked multiple jobs. They worked 9 to 5 during the day and then did a number of janitorial contracts during the evening. For 17 years my parents worked day and night to make ends meet and make sure that my brothers and I would go without need. Some evenings they would come home tired around 11 p.m. only to prepare for their job the next day. When old enough, I began to join them so that I might also do my part to support the family. It is these humble beginnings from which I came, an experience I share with many other new Canadians from the electoral district of Edmonton-Ellerslie.

As some may know, southeast Edmonton has a high demographic of new Canadians. Many immigrants and permanent residents continue to move into the district to build their homes for them and their loved ones. The area truly is a cultural mosaic of many different ethnicities, predominantly South Asians, those from the Caribbean, Latin Americans, the Philippines, and the more recent from the Middle East and northern Africa, specifically Somalia and Eritrea. Indeed, we must have people from all over the world that call the electoral district of Edmonton-Ellerslie their home.

As we all recognize, all Canadians immigrated to this land. Before it was settled, Edmonton-Ellerslie was part of Indian reserve No. 136, now recognized as Papaschase territory. I'm happy to say that Chief Calvin Bruneau, chief of the Papaschase, and I have become brothers through our common work in the community, which was solidified by our participation in the Idle No More cultural movement focused on engaging all treaty people to learn about our common history and to find a path forward in the traditions of the First Nations people. This occurred at the same time that as a nation we engaged in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which identified for us calls to action to correct the injustices of the past committed against our indigenous sisters and brothers.

For this reason, I'm excited that this government and specifically Premier Notley offered an apology for the residential schools and advocated that there be a national inquiry into the more than 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women in this nation. I'm excited that she also called on each ministry to implement how they may implement the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples as well as the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This session the Alberta NDP government will be repealing Bill 22 as well as consulting with indigenous communities regarding sacred ceremonial objects and how they may be repatriated to the Nations to whom they belong. It is important that new Canadians learn about the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples of this land and the obligations of treaties 6, 7, and 8 as we move forward to build a stronger province which celebrates diversity, pluralism, and inclusion.

Now, I've spoken at great length about new Canadians. However, it should not be misconstrued. I am here to serve each and every constituent of Edmonton-Ellerslie, no matter their race, colour, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or any other status. This is a principle upon which I will never falter as it is my duty to do so as part of our free and democratic society.

Edmonton-Ellerslie is home to many young families. It is common to see children accompanied by their parents playing in the many playgrounds throughout the constituency. Whether when I was door-knocking in 2012 as a candidate or when I continue to door-knock in the constituency to this day, child care continues to be a top priority for the people of Edmonton-Ellerslie. I'm eager to help usher in change through the new Ministry of Status of Women, providing Albertans with access to quality and affordable child care in a financially responsible way.

I also hear from constituents that education is an important priority for them. Edmonton-Ellerslie currently has two K to 9 schools south of the Anthony Henday that are considerably overcrowded. The good news is that three new schools are slated to open in that area of the district in September of 2017. Parents, however, are also concerned with regard to assessments for their children with special needs and how their children may be better served within the education system. There are challenges, but I'm sure that by working together with the Minister of Education, we will find the appropriate solutions.

My constituency is also home to many seniors, and I'm eager to identify and work towards reducing the burden for our seniors as we move forward. They passionately express their desire to age in place. They don't want to lose their connection to their loved ones and to their community.

Madam Speaker, one of my passions as a community organizer before becoming an MLA was mentoring and guiding youth and young adults interested in creating social change. I'm happy to announce that I'm continuing to do just that. This past month along with my constituency staff I launched the end domestic violence Edmonton-Ellerslie youth mentorship program. The program kicked off with nine participants between the ages of 12 and 24.

The program consists of four full-day workshops dedicated to educating the participants on the issues surrounding domestic violence and how they may be addressed. The learning includes equipping the youth and young adults with the skills to be effective leaders and community organizers. Utilizing Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, the training aims to empower and encourage young men and women to be more active in their communities and to use their knowledge and skills to generate positive change. I also designed the mentorship program to further discover details on gender equity and social justice as well as providing opportunity for young leaders to develop crucial life and career-building skills, all this while establishing a working relationship with their MLA.

In Canada women are three times more likely than men to be killed or to be sexually assaulted, choked, beaten, or threatened with a weapon by their partner. The majority of women who experience violence report that their perpetrators were male. These appalling facts urge us to mobilize our communities to finally end violence against women once and for all. The first workshop of the series provided an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their own values and how they have internalized them. They also embarked upon the process of discovering how gender stereotypes are socialized constructs put on us by society and how those stereotypes are not biological in nature. We engaged the participants in processes where we dispelled the myths of the causes of men's violence against women, and together we identified how we may all build healthy and strong relationships.

Madam Speaker, I'm eternally grateful to the constituents of Edmonton-Ellerslie. I owe them an immense debt of gratitude for putting their faith and hope into Alberta's NDP, our leader, Rachel Notley, and myself to represent them in this Legislature. Due to each and every constituent that cast their ballot for our party, politics in Alberta have started to transform and bring hope to Albertans regardless of whom they voted for. We have implemented several of the policy changes highlighted in our party's platform, and this government is determined to follow through with its vision, a vision that Albertans overwhelmingly voted for on May 5.

One such piece of legislation that I'm proud to have supported was the banning of corporate and union donations to political parties. The time has come for democratic renewal in this province and in this country. I'm also incredibly proud to have served with the now Minister of Labour on the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, focused on renewing our approach to democracy in this province. I'm excited to continue working on this committee and bringing forward the many recommendations we will have on the four pieces of legislation we are reviewing.

This is an important time for Alberta, and I'm excited to be a part of it. A great opportunity lies before us as representatives to engage in meaningful dialogue with our constituents and focus on overcoming the challenges we are currently experiencing while at

the same time recognizing what parts of the system already work for Albertans. It cannot be stated enough: I'm here to serve the constituents of Edmonton-Ellerslie. I'm here to listen to them, to help identify solutions to the issues that they are facing, and to implement those changes in the best interests of all of our communities.

Last week my colleague from Edmonton-Centre talked about the virtues of leadership and service and leading by example. Since day one as an elected official I've approached my role in that spirit through building genuine relationships focused on strengthening our communities. I'm eager to continue building unity among the members of Edmonton-Ellerslie so that together we may increase engagement and participation in our democracy.

It is with a humble heart that I again take this opportunity to thank the people of Edmonton-Ellerslie for the confidence that they have placed in me by electing me to be their representative. They voted for change, and Rachel Notley, the hon. ministers of this government, and I along with the many other great MLAs in this House plan on delivering that change.

Madam Speaker, I am and always will be a proud democratic socialist. However, I must be clear. I have never been dogmatic. I am one of the worst kinds of idealists, the kind that dreams with my feet firmly planted on the ground and who becomes excited at the challenge of finding solutions that will benefit the most humble, hard-working individuals that make up society. As I stated prior, it's those humble beginnings from which I come.

3:50

One of my passions is debunking the public versus private myths, to share with others the important role that the province can play not only regarding the important social human rights of providing access to education, health care, and housing but also in working to stimulate economic growth. It's not about picking winners or losers; it's about investing in research and development when the risk is too great for individuals, firms, or groups of the private sector to do so. It's proper that the provincial agencies and postsecondary educational institutions play their role by innovating and introducing new technologies that explicitly fit into the new course that the government may envision.

For this reason I'm incredibly proud that the current government will introduce the climate leadership implementation act, focused on investing in a clean energy future. This investment plan will fully recycle revenues from Alberta's carbon levy into renewable energy, innovation, public transit, and other measures that will reduce the carbon intensity of our economy. This coupled with the work of the energy diversification advisory committee, focused on promoting innovation and efficiency, will strengthen the oil and gas industry, which has and will continue to be for years to come the backbone of the Alberta economy.

As any scientist or inventor will express, it is important to ask one simple question: what if? What if begs that we change our perspective, that we look at the problem in a different way so that we may find the solution that has been staring us in the face all along but we were just too figuratively blind to see it. This government has asked that simple question and is now moving forward with the solutions that it deems necessary to serve the people of Alberta now and in the future generations to come, and I along with many of my colleagues are incredibly proud of what this government will implement in this legislative session and the following years.

Madam Speaker, I welcome all in this House to work together in finding solutions to the challenges that Albertans are facing. After all, that is the important role of government. We are an extension of the communities that we represent. This government is not here

to govern for Albertans; it is here to govern with them. By bringing the most gifted and talented front-line workers together with researchers, academics, and industry experts, we will find solutions. I know we are making the people of Alberta proud now, and they will continue to be in three years' time.

In conclusion, I would like to leave you all with an alarm bell of great importance shared with me by many representatives and especially elders of First Nations communities. It is our duty to protect the sacred waters of this land. If we do not, we put at risk the very future of all our children and the generations to come. Responding proactively to climate change is not only needed; it is absolutely essential.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, before we go on to 29(2)(a), I did not want to interrupt your extremely passionate speech, but you did use the Premier's name a number of times. You're not the only one to have done this this afternoon, using colleagues' proper names, so I would caution all members that when you're preparing these maiden speeches, to keep that in mind and take note of that. Thank you.

Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just encourage the member to expound upon his faithfulness to the principles of democratic socialism.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. You know, as I stated in my maiden speech, I've never been dogmatic, but it's also very important to look for solutions. For me, as is well known, I come from Latin America, where over the past 15 years we've had many experiments in democratic socialism. Yes, some things have been failures, but there's also some amazing, positive work that is being done. I basically make reference to research that's been done, where the government is involved in helping the private sector in order to bring about economic change.

So it's these things that we shouldn't just automatically close the door to. We've got to look at what's happening, what is possible. That's what I'm here to do, to be able to, from my perspective, just look at all the opportunities that we have in front of us and be able to, like I said, ask the question "What if?" so that we can take a different perspective and take a different look at something. Maybe it's something that hasn't been tried before, but it's always important to ask and always look at things from a different perspective.

Thank you for your question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments?  
Seeing none, the next on my list is Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my honour to rise today in the Assembly to respond to the Speech from the Throne as the member for the wonderful constituency of Calgary-Glenmore. Calgary-Glenmore is a multifaceted riding. There are eight strong community associations, that serve the needs of 52,000 residents in the riding. In addition, we have Rockyview hospital, highly reputable schools, beautiful parks, and the Glenmore reservoir. These facilities are used and enjoyed by not only the constituents of Calgary-Glenmore but by people all over Calgary.

The constituents of Calgary-Glenmore believe in living an active lifestyle, as you can probably tell if you have ever taken a walk through our neighbourhoods. My constituency is also an excellent example of the community coming together to ensure that our land,

air, and water are protected for generations to enjoy. The residents of Calgary-Glenmore are devoted, dedicated, and responsible stewards, which is why this riding is known for its history.

In the Speech from the Throne Her Honour talked about all the work that's ahead of this government, and I'm pleased to be able to play a part in this. One of the biggest focuses of this session will be the implementation of the climate leadership plan and the diversification of our economy. I'm proud to step up today to work with the government in the diversification of our economy and to support the climate leadership plan because it is a key step to creating a balance between the economy and the environment.

I can extensively contribute to this plan. I am a chemical engineer with a master's degree in environmental engineering. My thesis was on devising the methodology for carbon dioxide sequestration, that can be used to help various industries reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I think it's fitting that last week, when we honoured Don Getty in this Chamber, I noted his connections to the University of Western Ontario, now known as Western University. I say with pride that I also went to Western University to study engineering. I always aspire to make a difference and strive for the sustainability of communities. In my previous life I was offering my services in volunteering through NGOs, finding solutions to problems using my engineering skills, and offering my help in various forms to the residents of our society.

Madam Speaker, when there is balance, there is fairness, and when there is fairness, there is success. Calgary-Glenmore is a perfect example of this balance, and I'm honoured that I have the opportunity to bring my constituents' voices to this Assembly every day. Fairness is also at the heart of our government, and the Speech from the Throne highlighted this commitment.

During this time of economic difficulty we must be committed to making things better for all Albertans and ensuring that the front-line services our constituents rely on are protected and strengthened. My constituents can be confident that this government has a plan to get Albertans through this difficult time. This plan will help put Albertans back to work and help our communities recover from the trauma of job loss. Our government has created a dedicated Ministry of Economic Development and Trade to put this plan into place, and I'm confident that the minister and our Premier have the tools and the vision to get our province back on track.

One of the key planks of our government's plan is an investment in infrastructure. The throne speech mentioned that our government will be investing \$34 billion into infrastructure projects. This investment in infrastructure during an economic downturn will not only help put my constituents back to work but also help reduce our province's infrastructure deficit and finally build the much-needed school modernizations and hospitals many Albertans are waiting for.

4:00

Calgary-Glenmore is lucky in that we have fantastic schools and facilities, and investments in these schools now will ensure that for generations to come they'll continue to provide the excellent standards that they have become known for. These investments will help secure the future of our children and improve our health care services.

Madam Speaker, families and children are the centre of Calgary-Glenmore, and I'm proud that our government has made the well-being of children and families the centre for our government as well. In the Speech from the Throne Her Honour talked about the fact that our government will be investing in the Alberta child benefit and the family employment tax credit. This investment will benefit not only my constituents but all Alberta families.

Calgary-Glenmore is a very diversified constituency, but like any community in Alberta my constituents have been affected by the economic downturn. My constituents are highly educated, and many of them are choosing to go back to school during this time of economic difficulty to retrain and diversify their skills. I'm sure that my constituents will be pleased to hear that our government has plans to support this retraining and skill development.

Madam Speaker, even in these tough economic times Calgary-Glenmore has a vibrant and active business community. I'm proud to say that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in my constituency. During this economic downturn many Albertans are taking the chance and striking out on their own by starting their own businesses. Small-business owners are some of the biggest contributors to job creation and economic growth in the province, and my constituency is an excellent example of the benefits that these small local businesses can have in our communities. Our government values their contributions and therefore is taking measures to support them. The Speech from the Throne last week highlighted that our government is taking steps to support these businesses by making \$1.5 billion available to Alberta Treasury Branches in order to support lending to small and medium-sized businesses. This is in addition to directing AIMCo to earmark half a billion dollars for Alberta-based companies with growth potential. I'm confident that some of these companies may come from the innovative entrepreneurs we have right now in Calgary-Glenmore.

The Speech from the Throne also emphasized our government's commitment to economic diversification and the need to move away from relying on a single commodity with a single price in a single market. I'm proud to say that my constituents are already stepping up to this challenge, and many are in the process of starting new businesses and creating new technologies in the green energy sector. These businesses will not only help support the vision of our climate leadership plan but will create good, diversified jobs for my constituents and Albertans as well.

I'm very proud to say that I'm the voice of the residents who work day and night for the success and sustainability of the communities in Calgary-Glenmore. As a resident of Calgary-Glenmore I want the best for my neighbours. I want to ensure that my constituents are employed with good jobs that can support their families and enjoy the quality of life that makes Alberta the best place to live. Madam Speaker, in conclusion, community building is my passion, and I will continue working hard to strengthen communities in Calgary-Glenmore. I will ensure that my constituents are continuously engaged and involved in this process to build the best vision for our constituency.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you. I really appreciated the speech of my fellow MLA, Madam Speaker, and I was just intrigued. Being a chemical engineer, what was your path towards seeking political office? We don't often get engineers in this House. I'm not sure if you're the first one or if you're one of the first. It may be something interesting to find out. I was wondering: what was your path to political office?

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you very much for the question. I'm happy to share a little bit of the story here. The reason I joined engineering in the first place was basically to make a difference and to provide solutions to problems and help society in different ways. After I finished my engineering and acquired some work experience, over

time I realized: why not consider something that has a philanthropic side to it as well as a technical side to it?

Politics is something that allows us to look at things with a holistic approach and look at every aspect of an issue. If I'm looking at something from an engineering perspective, that would be most likely technical whereas there are legal, social, and various perspectives that could be taken into account when looking at a problem or a situation. That's why I decided that if I want to make a difference and really contribute to society in multiple ways, then politics will be the path that will allow me to do so. That's why I chose to get into this field. I felt that I would be able to bring a lot to the table and represent the people of my constituency, particularly, in a very good manner.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was really pleased to hear about the member's approach to politics and the unique perspective that she brings. I also know that she has another unique story to tell us about democracy. Oftentimes people complain about democracy, saying: my vote doesn't count. In this member's instance, if I recall correctly, she won by six votes, so that tells us all that every single vote really does count. I wonder if the member could maybe tell us a little bit about what it was like while she was waiting to hear the results of the different recounts that were undertaken and how enthusiastic she was when she finally had the final results and was declared elected.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you very much, Member, for the question. That was indeed an exciting moment, when I felt that actually every vote counts. Being in a situation, especially on election night, I would say, when people were either winning or losing, when I had a tie, I was, like: "What is that? Can that even happen?" So I was not sure how to actually react, either to be happy or to be sad. It was an interesting experience, for sure, because through that process I learned a lot about how the policies of Elections Alberta work and how a judicial recount happens.

I was just actually laughing about the fact that I started my political career by stepping into court. That was something interesting. It was a rich experience, and it gave me confidence. Life is full of ups and downs, and this career, particularly, is also full of ups and downs. So that was a good experience for me to get ready for what to expect once I entered into this role.

At the same time, in my riding people have learned the lesson of what can happen if they don't vote. After the results were finalized and even now, we have people in our constituency who come and share their story: oh, I'm so sorry; I could not vote because I was out of town or out of country. Then people would share stories of how much effort they put in to make sure that their vote was counted. They contacted Elections Alberta from different islands where there was no access to the Internet. They wanted to vote; they did not want to miss the opportunity to vote. Through that experience I learned a lot about the importance of democracy and how much our participation matters towards our society.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise today to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I would like to start by acknowledging that we stand here today on Treaty 6 territory and that my constituency is also on Treaty 6 territory. This

government recognizes the importance of a strong relationship with our indigenous communities, which is why we will repeal Bill 22 and find a better way to carry out consultations in the future.

4:10

I feel it is quite fitting that the throne speech took place on International Women's Day, delivered by a female Lieutenant Governor on behalf of our female Premier. Look to our caucus and you'll see near gender parity. Look further to our ministerial bench, including the newly created Ministry of Status of Women, and you will see the importance that we place on balanced representation.

It is something this province can take great pride in. The diversity that Albertans see in the Legislature is a reflection of the diversity that makes up Alberta. There are more young MLAs than ever before in our province. This is something that I am reminded of daily as I spend time in my constituency visiting with residents. I don't think I've ever visited a constituent who wasn't curious about my age. What is interesting, though, is that when I reveal that I am only 24 and there are actually MLAs still younger than myself, I am met with excitement. People are happy to see such diversity, with new energy and new ideas, in the Legislature.

I hope that through the example that my young colleagues set, there will be more young leaders willing to put their names forward. That is, in fact, one of the main reasons I got involved with politics from a young age. I realized that the youth voice was not at the table. Thankfully, we have seen the landscape changing at all levels of government. It is an important step because the decisions we make as legislators have lasting effects on the broader community, and these effects are felt differently based on a number of circumstances, including but of course not limited to age.

When I think back to the career opportunities that I've had that led me to this point, I realize that they have all been in the Meadowlark community: first, working in retail at West Edmonton Mall; then in radio at K-97, once again in West Edmonton Mall; and eventually as an electrician at two local businesses within the constituency. It is quite fitting to be able to come full circle and represent these same businesses that gave me the incredible opportunities that led me to this very Legislature.

I've lived in the Meadowlark community for the better half of my life, moving here from Saskatchewan around 2003. I attended Britannia junior high in the constituency of Glenora but completed my diploma at Jasper Place in the Meadowlark community. I have built lasting relationships both with the teachers and students that accompanied me on my journey through the public school system, and I think about how our legislation will affect them any time we make decisions in this Chamber.

Through the many years that I have lived in the community, I've had the opportunity to meet with many leaders and organizations, including most, if not all, of the community leagues. These leagues are truly the grassroots of our communities. The volunteers spend countless hours organizing sports leagues and fundraisers to create the sense of community, which we all cherish. It is an incredibly selfless and sometimes thankless job, but I know that the community as a whole appreciates the work that these volunteers put into our neighbourhoods.

Meadowlark is an incredibly diverse community. There are families who have called the area their home long before West Edmonton Mall was a destination and also new Canadians, including newly arrived Syrian refugees, who have come to this great province after years of struggle. Our job as representatives of our community is to ensure that we are doing what we can to help these families, regardless of socioeconomic circumstances, to realize their potential as members of our community. It is our duty to ensure that the public services, of which we are so proud in this

province, are efficient and accessible to those who need them most. It is also imperative that we create an economic environment that encourages growth and creates opportunity for every citizen in this province.

One of the most rewarding opportunities we get as elected officials is to visit with the remarkable people who make up our communities. Since my election to this Assembly, I've had the chance to visit with many seniors in my community. They're often politically and socially active, and the residents have some of the most insightful questions, ranging from fracking to the heritage trust fund and everything in between. The wealth of knowledge our seniors hold is invaluable, and the contributions they have made to our province are enormous. There are a lot of lessons in history that can so easily be lost if we don't learn from them. This has become clear to me when I have talked with the people in my community who have been through economic downturns before and have seen what can happen when we don't diversify our economy.

Madam Speaker, the throne speech outlines many of the key challenges and opportunities our province will have moving forward. Alberta has suffered from not diversifying our economy, and governments past have not been able to achieve the market access our province needs for the full value of our products as well as a royalty system that did not have the full support of Albertans based on a perceived lack of transparency and accountability.

I believe that the initiatives this government has undertaken, as presented in the throne speech, are important issues and will help move this province forward. I can tell you that my community has been hit hard by the falling commodity prices. The industrial park in the Meadowlark community is one of the largest service providers to the oil and gas industry, and when this industry struggles, so do the many businesses and families in my community. While West Edmonton Mall is still an incredible economic driver in the Meadowlark community and in this province, especially with the low dollar, we are still seeing a slowdown in local purchasing power.

As I mentioned earlier, before getting elected to this Assembly, I was an apprentice electrician, building and servicing sleeping quarters that are utilized by oil field workers while they are in camp. Many of the companies I worked for, as I said, are in my community, and I've seen these companies slow down because of the slump in global oil prices. It is not going to be an easy road forward, but I know that these businesses are run by passionate families and entrepreneurs constantly adapting to changes in the market and finding efficiencies. As we realize increased market access and plan for recovery, these companies will continue to thrive within our province just like they have for so many years before.

For those who are looking to retrain, our government will support you because we recognize that a diversified workforce is a strong workforce. It is increasingly important as we move to diversification that we offer our communities the opportunity to grow with us. Through access to capital and measures introduced by the Economic Development and Trade ministry like Bill 1, the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, and the petrochemicals diversification program, we will support the creation of new jobs in emerging markets. Countercyclical investments will keep this province moving. While we can't control the price of oil, we can put people back to work, and we will, by investing \$34 billion in capital projects. We have seen the devastating effects of deferred maintenance in the past, and investing the money now means we can keep people working while reducing the laundry list of maintenance and construction that needs to happen throughout this province.

My community has been waiting on a valley line LRT for many years now. I think we all recognize the importance of having effective modes of transportation within our cities and, of course, across this province. It is, in fact, the lowest income communities who need these services most, and we're doing a great disservice to them every time we put these projects off.

This is a difficult time, like I've said, for Alberta, brought on by circumstances that we cannot change, but it is also a great opportunity. We are a province of ambitious, determined, hard-working people who will forge ahead even if it means treading new ground. We know what hasn't worked in the past, and we know what has to change now. We have taken steps toward a better future, and we will continue on that path to innovation, accountability, and responsibility to Albertans.

As Albertans we are proud of our natural resources, that have built this province and created many good-paying jobs, yet past practice has been to import almost 1 million barrels of oil per day from other countries. This has been a point of confusion and frustration for Albertans for many years, and I believe it is important that we transition to a made-in-Alberta approach. This will not only benefit our economy, but we as Albertans also recognize that our product is produced in one of the most environmentally sound jurisdictions around the world, and it is something that we can all be very proud of.

As a member of the West Edmonton Business Association I've had the opportunity to meet with many of the businesses in the Meadowlark community. They are an incredibly resilient group of people who collaborate to support the local economy and not-for-profits. The association consists of everything from small IT companies to the Fantasyland Hotel, in West Edmonton Mall, the perfect example of how we can work together for the betterment of our community.

Edmonton-Meadowlark is also home to the Misericordia hospital, a hospital that people across this province depend on and a place that employs many families in my constituency. I will add that I have both gained and lost family members at this hospital, but the staff have always been accommodating and professional, though their work environment is often high stress and the staff increasingly overworked. We know that cutting funding to essential public services only worsens these problems, increases costs in the long run, and downloads responsibility to our communities.

4:20

I would also like to acknowledge the incredible number of not-for-profit organizations in the community, that have growing clientele while facing budget restrictions. Portions of many not-for-profit agencies' budgets come directly or indirectly from government, and many of these important service providers are working at capacity. To reduce funding or to add to the growing number of service users through downloading would put additional strain on our communities and add to the daily struggle of many families. We need to support our communities now more than ever. I recognize the reality that so many of the constituents of Edmonton-Meadowlark are facing, and I will do everything that I can to support them through these tough times every step of the way.

Every child in this province deserves a bright future. Those futures will be realized because of the investments we make in education. In a time of much talk of austerity measures our government committed to supporting this province's front-line workers, including restored funding to education, which resulted in the hiring of 740 new teachers across this province. That means we're able to offer more programs to the families and students as well as, hopefully, reducing class size, which is so important.

Though there are many initiatives within the throne speech that I am proud to support, among the most important to my community is our government's move to protect Albertans from high-interest loans. There are many lenders within the Meadowlark area, something the local associations have been trying to deal with for several years. This overaccumulation of lenders in our low-income communities has created a troubling situation, which I have seen first-hand. This commitment to protect Alberta families is especially important now as many families are juggling their daily expenses and often consider these high-interest loans, that can put them in unfavourable situations.

For those Albertans struggling to find work in these tough times, our government has committed to working with the federal government to reconsider employment insurance rules as the program has often been hard to access. I have had these struggles myself in the past.

This throne speech, I believe, reflects the needs and expectations of my community. The fallen commodity prices have affected my community, my friends, my family, but we must work together to create new streams of revenue while finding efficiencies within our government departments. We must not, however, make broad cuts or expect our already stretched public services to somehow make do with less. I am proud to stand here today with an alternative way forward. While this year has been tough on our province, I am still proud to stand here as an Albertan, and I know that Alberta is still the best place to invest your money.

In closing, having the honour to represent the constituents of Edmonton-Meadowlark here in the Assembly is, no doubt, one of the greatest accomplishments of my life. I'm sure many of the other members within this Chamber would say the same thing about their own journey. I do not think any of us take this responsibility lightly. To the citizens of Edmonton-Meadowlark who put their trust in me to represent them and to my friends and family who helped me along this journey both before and during the election: I owe you everything. Thank you to my parents for letting me use their home as a campaign office and a hotel during the election. Thank you to my partner of eight years for believing in me from the very beginning and to my little sister for being the light of my life.

It is also important that I mention Raj Sherman and the incredible work that he did both while in government and in opposition representing the Edmonton-Meadowlark community. Your ability to advocate on behalf of your constituents is something I hear of often in my community, and it inspires me to be a better representative every day.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark for his remarkable speech about his constituency. I noticed that he mentioned a lot of his stakeholders. I was wondering if he could elaborate on those and how he was engaging with them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the important question. As elected members of this Assembly I think it is imperative that we do our best to reach out to our entire community, really, and get feedback on the decisions that we have before us. Personally, I've held budget consultations, open houses, and I actually have a town hall telephone conference coming up very soon, which I'm excited to take part in.

Other examples. My office does advertise in community league newspapers, explaining the services that we offer, including, you know, help getting through some of the hurdles that a lot of constituents have when they're trying to access government services. I think that we're well equipped to do that considering that I have a social worker in my office. I know many of our New Democrat colleagues do have the same services as well.

You know, I made it very clear at the door and any time I have a chance to speak with constituents that my door is always open. Like I said, I have met a number of people who have had to jump through these hoops, and it's really frustrating. I mean, even up to last week I had somebody that was having trouble getting services for their brother, and it's been a process of many, many years. They sit down and, really, it's all put in front of you, and they won't hold back, by any means. To really understand where they're coming from, I think, is a learning experience for all of us.

As I mentioned before, I think the most valuable asset that we have when forming policy decisions is to be able to talk to our constituents. They know how it's going to affect them better than I think any of us might, so it's important that we carry out these consultations.

Going back to the stakeholder relations, you know, though I'm very proud of the work my office has done, I do recognize that we're always working to do a better job. I think that's something that we work on every single day.

I'll just wrap it up by saying that the biggest habit that I've taken forward is visiting with the seniors in my community, as I did mention in the throne speech response. They have some incredible stories, even dating back to the amalgamation. Well, actually, Jasper Place was its own town. The east side of the Edmonton-Meadowlark constituency was the town of Jasper Place until the amalgamation in 1964. So there is some incredible history that we can learn from the seniors in our community and from everyone.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark for his comments. I appreciate the story. I was quite encouraged to hear the mature and measured response to the Alberta oil industry and our oil. I was wondering if you could just confirm to us that it's actually the position of your caucus or just your own personal position that maybe we don't need to talk about dirty oil in this province anymore. I'm also interested to know how it is that you don't have that visceral reaction to the oil industry that says that it's somehow the evil enemy of our province.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much for the interesting question. Personally, I myself have never heard anyone in my caucus, at least in the time that I've spent with them, ever call the industry "dirty." But with that being said, you know, I've spent as much time as I have been able to so far – and I plan on continuing these conversations – with these organizations in my community and just talking about some of the innovations that they have moving forward. We do recognize that moving forward, the technology can only get better. So that's something that we will watch as we develop policy, and I'm excited to see some of the innovations that industry will have in the coming years.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.



**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and I certainly thank the member for that statement, especially the fact of being a fellow graduate of Jasper Place composite myself. I always enjoy hearing about the high school.

I was curious, if the member wouldn't mind sharing, if he's identified any goals that he's specifically looking at accomplishing in terms of serving his constituents and how he's going to be accomplishing those.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, you have five seconds.

**Mr. Carson:** Five seconds. Thank you very much. Well, we have a lot in the works, I can say that. But I mentioned some of the things in my throne speech response.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured today for the opportunity to rise and respond to the Speech from the Throne. First, I would like to thank my husband, Doug, for his unwavering love and support and belief that I can do anything I put my mind to. Without this support, I wouldn't have this amazing opportunity. I would also like to thank my children – Ashley, Kimberly, Matthew, and Kyle – and my two grandchildren, Austin and Payton. You are all part of the reason I ran for office, and I hope my contributions here to our government and this Assembly will ensure that Alberta is an even better place for you and your generation than it is today.

4:30

I have to acknowledge my parents, Gerry and Iris, for raising me to have values, humility, and a willingness to help others. One of the lessons my parents taught me while growing up was that if you don't like something, it is up to you to step up, to put in the work needed to make the change. I see this same attitude every day throughout my constituency, Madam Speaker.

Last but not least, I need to thank my team – Stephen Merredew, Karen Reay, and the rest – who work so hard to bring change to Red Deer-South, and my constituents in Red Deer-South, who place their trust in me and our government's vision for Alberta. Their trust has allowed me to be their voice in government.

I believe that things happen for a reason. People come into your life at the right time and place to help you to evolve into the person you are supposed to be. Some people call it luck, fate, serendipity. I have four such people who help guide me: Mrs. Betty Ryan, my friend and confidante – the world is not the same without you in it – Mr. Don Crissal, friend and mentor, whose gentle nudging helped guide my path; Ms Elisabeth Ballermann, a woman who inspired me to be the best at whatever I do; and Ms Marle Roberts. We are true sisters of the heart. Without these people, I would not be the person I am today.

I work with an amazing team of people led by an equally amazing woman, our Premier. Thanks go out to all of you for your help and support. On May 5, 2015, history was made in Alberta. We formed Alberta's first NDP government. Since that day I have been working nonstop for my constituents. I have met with countless people and have met with over 200 not-for-profits and organizations.

I would like to tell you about a few of these particular organizations in my constituency of Red Deer-South. Turning Point, formerly known as CAANS, works in harm reduction. Their team is an amazing group of people. Not only do they do needle exchanges, distribute condoms and naloxone kits; they are also a team that the people who are their clients trust. Some of the staff have been known to take in and foster the pets of their clients when they have been unable to care for them themselves. One such pet is

Bella, whose humans are struggling right now. Bella is in a safe and happy home, waiting for her humans. Turning Point, because they are trusted, gets info from the people on the street when a new substance hits the street. The staff of Turning Point are more than just a not-for-profit; they're an integral part of the community.

Another amazing organization is the Golden Circle. It is a seniors' drop-in centre and more. It is a hub where seniors can meet and enjoy the company of their peers. The centre has provided programs, activities, outreach, and resources for older adults and their families since 1977. The team at the Circle is led by a dynamic woman, Monica Morrison. She is very forward thinking. On August 18, 2015, the team hosted a rainbow tea, complete with a drag show. It sold out quickly. As Monica wrote in their newsletter: I never thought I would see the day that our local seniors' centre would be part of pride, let alone host a drag show in the middle of the afternoon.

Some of the weekly activities at the centre include Zumba, tai chi, square dancing, dancercise, and various card games. They also offer computer classes. There is a very active travel club. New York was the last big trip, with 43 participants. The centre is a one-stop shop for programs like home maintenance help, grocery delivery in partnership with the Co-op store, program referrals, support groups, transportation to and from medical appointments, and they spearhead the elder abuse program. I am very proud to be working with these wonderful people.

Another hard-working group of people is the staff of Women's Outreach. The programs they provide are invaluable to the community, programs like domestic violence support and safe visitation, which is a neutral-based program that allows children to continue visiting noncustodial parents in a supportive environment in situations when families are dealing with the impact of domestic violence. They support the premise that children grow up to be more healthy and adaptive individuals and contribute to the community while knowing both parents love and support them. They also do monitored exchange, where a safe transition of children from one parent to another is done to eliminate the children from witnessing a negative interaction between the parents. This group plays a key role in the struggle with domestic violence.

Madam Speaker, in Her Honour's speech last week she highlighted a variety of issues that will continue to put Alberta back on track. We know that we are in a period of prolonged economic decline, and I know my constituents are pleased to see that their government has a plan to put Albertans back to work and to finally get our province off the resource royalty roller coaster. Like all Albertans, my constituents are affected by the declining price of oil, and I know my constituents are assured by our government's commitment to do everything we responsibly can as quickly as we can to ensure that we are promoting economic growth and diversification and job creation.

Red Deer-South is not only home to a great many nonprofits, as I mentioned earlier, but we're home to a considerable number of small, locally run businesses as well. I know our government's commitment to making \$1.5 billion available to ATB to support lending to these small and medium-sized businesses in combination with AIMCo's earmarked half a billion dollars for investment in companies with growth potential has these local businesses excited. Small businesses are often the driving force behind local economics and job growth. I know that these companies in our constituency are ready to lead the way.

Madam Speaker, while Red Deer-South is home to great schools, a hospital, and other facilities, like many other cities across the province we're still facing a crunch when it comes to infrastructure. That's why I was so pleased to hear that our government will be investing \$34 billion into the provincial capital plan to help build

roads, transit, schools, and other infrastructure projects across the province. Not only will the projects help address our infrastructure deficit; they will keep Albertans working during this period of economic decline.

My constituents of Red Deer-South know that when times are tough, we need to have each others' backs. I see this attitude every day in my constituency, and I'm pleased to see our government is taking the same approach. We need to work together to support one another in this current economic climate. Now is the time to invest in our front-line services and staff. Now is not the time to be making things worse by laying off nurses or teachers in the short term.

Part of taking care of each other means ensuring that vulnerable Albertans have the protections they need to succeed. That's why I'm pleased that the throne speech announced that our government will be introducing an act to end predatory lending. Madam Speaker, I've heard from constituents that use these payday loans, and I've heard the horror stories of up to 600 per cent interest rates over the course of the year. As Her Honour mentioned, this practice has been allowed to go on for too long, and it's especially important that we take action now, when times are tough, to make sure Albertans who use these services are not taken advantage of.

Madam Speaker, I'm honoured for the opportunity to represent the constituency of Red Deer-South, and I'm thankful to everyone that has placed their trust in me to ensure that the voices of our community are heard loud and clear through these halls and in this Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** The beautiful riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Red Deer-South for an excellent presentation about her history. I was particularly impressed with the many mentors and role models that you had. I can share that I see the member as a role model for me in the way that she leads the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. I noticed that she had mentioned the work that AIMCo is doing for the benefit of the province, and I wonder if she would maybe expand on that and talk about the advantages, the sort of investments that AIMCo can make in Alberta businesses that might benefit this province.

4:40

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Member, for the question. Chairing the heritage savings trust fund, we've – the whole committee has learned a lot more about how our nest egg is being invested, and this half a billion dollars is over and above what they already invest in Alberta companies. What they're looking for are companies that have a potential to grow but that just need that little bit extra, something that will also grow our fund. It's not just the Alberta government that's involved in AIMCo's investments. There is the teachers' pension fund and a lot more, so they're not just focusing on the Alberta government's portion but on what makes the best sense for everyone. Of the government's portion, the \$500 million is strictly for small and medium businesses that have the potential to become big businesses.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess I'm at a bit of an advantage as I do know the member's history and everything that she brings to the table, but I was wondering if you could share with other members, who are maybe not as familiar with your work in the labour world, how you used to interact with your members

and how that relates to what you bring to the table in serving your constituents.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you. I walked my first picket line when I was nine years old, and I'm very proud of it. My parents had no problem with it. I've always thought that you have to stick up for the underdog, and I've carried that through my life. When I worked in the school system, I was on bargaining committees. When I started working at Safeway, I joined, of course, the union and became a shop steward. Then I was elected to the executive. I was the president of the local labour council, part of the AFL, part of the Canadian Labour Congress. In every organization I've been part of, I've gathered a little bit more of an idea of what other people are going through, so I've been able to use that knowledge to help constituents when they've come into the office. It could be job related; it could be health related. I've been able to pick up information from all different facets of my varied career to help the constituents of Red Deer-South.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments?

I will recognize the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to begin by recognizing the indigenous peoples of Alberta. My constituency includes the Alexander First Nation as well as the historic land of the Michel people, both of whom signed Treaty 6. I am proud to see the continued efforts to implement the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, some of which are present in the throne speech.

[The Speaker in the chair]

As a member of the Métis nation I would also like to recognize that both Spruce Grove and St. Albert have a long history with the Métis, including the founding of St. Albert and the habitation of the Lac Ste. Anne Métis in the western portion of their lands.

I am proud to rise today to respond to the Speech from the Throne as the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

I was quite thrilled to hear the Famous Five recognized in Her Honour's address. The right to vote, indeed the duty to vote, is one of our most important rights, and I am proud to say that my family has long been committed to human rights and public service, a tradition I am honoured to continue in this Assembly. There are two members of my family tree I would like to take a moment to discuss a bit, but I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge some others.

On my father's side we signed the Magna Carta, starting the long road of human rights. On my mother's side we have James McKay, who served as a judge on the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal; Gladys Bigg, my 99-year-old great-grandmother, who served as deputy mayor of Westlock and is a member of the Athabasca University board; and, in addition, we had countless factors from the days when Alberta was dominated by the fur trade.

The first person I would like to discuss fits nicely into the throne speech. A few members have laid claim to Nellie McClung, and I'm sure they are all pleased to know that I am not about to do the same. According to family mythology I am related to Edith MacTavish Rogers, the first woman elected in Manitoba. As a result of her work with veterans, she was committed to working for labour rights against her Liberal Party lines. She represented Canada at the Geneva Convention, defining the rights of prisoners of war and civilians in a war zone. In sum, she fought for rights that are now fundamental both in Canada and internationally, and this is a tradition I wish to emulate.

The second person I would like to discuss a bit is my great-grandfather, Jack Bigg. He was a veteran of World War II, having previously served in the RCMP, and he played a season with the Saskatchewan Roughriders although we won't hold that against him. He was personally asked to run by John Diefenbaker, and as a veteran and in recognition of both his constituents and his Métis roots he committed his life to fighting for indigenous and veterans' rights. In recognition of his work he was named Chief Almighty Voice. Last I heard, his headdress is still on display in the Westlock museum. As a signatory to the Canadian Bill of Rights, I find his commitment to fighting for the rights of Canadians inspiring though I am sure we would not agree on much policy beyond that.

Mr. Speaker, as one of the youngest members in this Legislature I am honoured to represent the people of Spruce Grove-St. Albert. The two cities I represent are routinely named among the best cities in Canada to raise a family. Both Spruce Grove and St. Albert are served by wonderful teachers, school boards, and they both offer a wide variety of services. This has brought recognition, but it has also brought a lot of growth. Spruce Grove in particular has exploded in population, especially in the past 10 years. This growth has brought with it new challenges, some related to the median age of the constituency and some to growing population.

The first big issue my constituency faces is that of an infrastructure deficit. Years of cuts and delayed projects have left us with a pressing deficit. One road in particular has been discussed and re-examined and rediscussed since the Social Credit was on this side of the aisle. Another project, a school in St. Albert, had originally been promised a renovation by Premier Getty, and they are just now receiving that renovation. Neither of my communities has seen a new school since Premier Getty although we have seen replacements. Having said that, we are seeing three new school builds, so I'm optimistic on that now.

Certainly, being recognized as some of the best creates a certain level of demand. This leads us to the other issue in my constituency, that the recognition for being a great place to raise young families has brought a young population. Like many young Albertans, my constituents are faced with the fact that tuition rates and school fees are climbing faster than incomes, making it that much harder to access postsecondary education. This is forcing many parents to take out a second or even a third mortgage to provide their children with a chance of an education just while mom and dad are trying to save for retirement.

4:50

On top of that, many students – I dare say most of the ones I have met – are forced to take out student loans. Textbooks are becoming increasingly expensive, and those students from out of town, whether they're from a rural setting or simply a different urban one or who don't live with their family, have to find housing and cover the cost of living. With an eye on that, I'm not going to get into the impact of finding employment around class times and studying on top of that, Mr. Speaker, but I will say that it has left many of the younger MLAs well equipped to deal with the long hours of debate we experienced a few months ago.

So now our students have an education. They have the marketable skills they need to find employment, but they now face a market where most positions are asking for experience, where the positions they are qualified for are often taken by people a few generations older. This is for a position that used to be an entry-level job. Faced with a cycle of debt, compounded with a difficult market to make use of the education that started it – I completely lost that.

Mr. Speaker, Spruce Grove-St. Albert is noteworthy for finding grassroots solutions to problems that face our whole province. Our

citizens have developed some especially amazing programs supporting mental health as well as young mothers. Compassionate Connections is committed to helping young mothers with accessing food, clothing, and household supplies, efforts that I'm sure that the Famous Five would have appreciated.

Now, both Spruce Grove and St. Albert are suburbs, and there's a lot of research proving that suburbs can be a lonely place, leading to mental health issues, but we have many organizations working to address that. The Spruce Grove and area friendship connection is an online support network helping people face feelings of isolation and loneliness. We also have Auggie's Café, a group who meets every Tuesday just a short walk from my office and endeavours to provide individuals who feel isolated a place to socialize and enjoy a nutritionally balanced meal. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, the spirit of the community-minded, caring, and neighbourly Albertan is alive and well in Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

I am proud to note that my constituency has led on environmental causes. It's no mistake that the minister of environment is a graduate of the Spruce Grove education system. The city recently opened a new public works that makes use of passive lighting, geothermal, and water conservation to strive to be as environmentally friendly as possible. Also in Spruce Grove we have Greenbury, a neighbourhood using wind turbines to power their street lights in a push towards carbon neutrality, and these are but some of the initiatives in my constituency. I look forward to many more.

In Her Honour's speech there was a commitment to help the many Albertans facing tough economic times. While the current environment makes that much more important than ever, we need to work towards this through boom or bust. My constituency along with the rest of the province is faced with a lack of affordable housing. This is true in both rural and urban settings, as I'm sure all members in this Assembly are aware. While there are many great organizations working to address this gap both in my constituency and throughout the province, I cannot stress enough that we have fallen short. From our younger Albertans trying to start a life on their own to families working multiple jobs to our seniors and our most vulnerable, the challenge in finding affordable housing is daunting and something that all Albertans should be concerned about.

Now, it's not as simple as just finding any old house. Many groups are faced with additional restrictions. One group in particular, our Albertan families, especially single parents or those working irregular hours, are faced with the added challenge of finding housing that allows children and that has reasonable access to schools and child care.

It's not all gloom and doom on this file, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased to see that affordable housing will be a priority for the new Minister of Seniors and Housing, and I look forward to following the results of their work going forward.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech notes that we need to diversify our energy markets, and I couldn't agree more. For too long we have relied on a subset of energy products and on a narrow selection of customers. I'm sure all members in this Assembly can appreciate the impact hydraulic fracturing has had on the market to the south of us, especially as our best customer has now found a cheaper product. Now we have to change how we act. While in the past it was sufficient to focus on our southern neighbours, we now need to look for new markets, whether that's to tidewater or to our eastern Canadian partners, who are currently importing oil from the Middle East more than they are from us. We need new markets.

As Her Honour mentioned in the throne speech last week, Canada's inability over the last 10 years to pursue a strategic energy policy supported by Canadians has made it impossible so far for our

country to diversify our markets. I'm proud to see that our Premier and our government are taking significant strides to promote a drama-free and collaborative approach to pipeline construction.

The implementation of the climate leadership plan will further improve Alberta's reputation, allowing us to access new markets and protecting jobs in our largest industry. Mr. Speaker, the politics of division, the politics used and promoted by the opposition, have failed. It is my opinion that if a project passes through six Premiers without shovels in the ground, we should probably readdress how we are approaching it. If our partners in every direction are calling for action on climate change, the answer is not to ignore these calls but to work toward them. I am proud to say that this government is working towards that. We need to look at a variety of energy sources – solar, wind, natural gas, and, dare I say, geothermal – alongside continued efforts to make sure that we continue to have the cleanest oil on the market.

Now, many are concerned that an increase in renewable energy would be an overnight change, and I would have to agree that such an approach would only shock the system. What we need to do is create a blend of products, and I am proud to say that I am seeing this approach from our government. The beginnings of this are the access to supports that municipalities and farmers have when they're looking at solar power.

We have a long way to go, Mr. Speaker, but Albertans are hard-working and entrepreneurial people, and I believe that with a little support from this Assembly we will all enjoy a stronger, resilient, and diverse economy.

**The Speaker:** The chair recognizes Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to congratulate the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert on a fantastic speech, and I think I join in celebrating with pride no more so than the two individuals who sit in our gallery to watch that speech, the member's parents, who are probably bursting at the seams right now. I have to agree with the hon. member that the cities of Spruce Grove and St. Albert are great places to raise a family for I began to raise my young family in Spruce Grove over 20 years ago, when I first moved there after being married and adopting three children who were then seven, nine, and 11. We lived for a year in Spruce Grove before moving to an acreage nearby in Parkland county.

However, I'd like to know what the special challenges are for a member who serves a constituency that does have that split of rural and urban components to it because I am sure that there are different things that you would look at on a daily basis in terms of serving those constituents compared to what I would in a more urban setting, and I'd be interested to hear what you, as one of those MLAs who serve a split riding with urban and rural components, might be able to tell us about that experience.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. There is certainly a bit of a challenge in making sure you're juggling your time. It's very easy to get caught up, as I'm sure many members on both sides of the House can appreciate, in just agricultural issues or just housing issues or indeed almost any issue you can lose all of your time in, so making sure I maintain that balance is certainly important and something I strive for on a daily basis. There are also a lot of different points of view that come forward with having such a, well, rural riding, including a lot more concern on the loss of ag land. Both of my cities are growing in every direction they can. As well, a lot of the counties right around the capital region are starting to move towards

some acreages, so there are a lot of farmers who are concerned about the loss of their land and a lot of the land of their colleagues. That's certainly a concern that I've been hearing a lot about and that I'm trying to keep an eye on.

5:00

In addition, there are challenges that are unique to both, even within the same file, like affordable housing, for instance. In a rural setting it tends to be a bit more – a lot of people will describe it as invisible, although I don't think that that's entirely accurate. There are a lot more people living in a trailer or out of the back of their truck, where in a city setting it can be what most people think of, living around the downtown core. So trying to address both of those different situations is an ever-present challenge.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** First of all, I'd like to congratulate my seatmate here on a wonderful speech. I was quite intrigued by your history of political activism. I'd like to ask you a little bit about your own steps towards this position because I know that there's a little something there that we're all quite interested in as well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Well, when I first graduated high school, I went to NAIT and took a program that wasn't the right fit for me, and then I decided to go back, originally thinking, like many members of this House, that I might go into education. Then I ended up taking a political science course and somehow ended up majoring in it, attending many political functions, and door-knocking out in Beverly-Clareview with the minister. And from there I started to become more and more active with the youth branch of the NDP, starting to protest many of the actions of the former government. From there I just continued being more and more active, setting up the association in St. Albert, and starting to grow both the federal and provincial levels as well as continuing . . . [A timer sounded]

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I wonder if your parents still speak to the member from Beverly now that you ended up in this place.

I would recognize the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to reply to the Speech from the Throne and to speak about my constituency of Wetaskiwin-Camrose. I actually have to divert for two things right now thanks to the Edmonton-Meadowlark speaker – he's brought up something that I wanted to mention – and also to Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

My wife, unfortunately, is not in the gallery today, so I want to publicly and online apologize to her but not for miscommunication. I'm speaking today and not later, so it was not that I communicated incorrectly. It's really important in a relationship, a marriage relationship between husband and wife, that there's good communication. So I have to clear that with her right away. It's important in a good relationship that you have communication. In a marriage longer than possibly both of these colleagues have existed, again, not to re-emphasize it too long, communication is important.

The other thing is that when I go to schools, much like my Edmonton-Meadowlark colleague, I will give my spiel. I'll talk about all of these issues, all of these things that go on, and the very first question will be: how old are you? We have the very young and the very enthusiastic and energetic, and they've actually revived my interest in politics. I had been retired for four years, and

coming back today, I'm excited that I'm going to be serving for eight years or more. It comes from their enthusiasm, and I'm really proud of that.

I would like to compliment all of the previous speakers for their eloquence and passion. I am proud of the commitment and dedication they have shown to social justice and humanitarianism, and I'm honoured to be part of their team and join together with them in this House.

The constituency of Wetaskiwin-Camrose includes two progressive cities but is also the home of the town of Millet and the village of Bittern Lake, which, if you haven't been there, is a cozy little village that is near a wildlife preserve and has many walking trails. Bittern Lake is known for its beauty. Our constituency also includes the hamlet of Gwynne, which has its own ski hill, and some day you might want to come and ski there. We are also privileged to encompass two of the four Cree Nations, Samson and Montana, at Maskwacis. Now, Wetaskiwin-Camrose has two county councils and is part of four school districts: Wetaskiwin regional, Battle River, Elk Island Catholic, and St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic.

Mr. Speaker, I may be a little biased, but I think Wetaskiwin-Camrose is one of the best and most diverse places in our entire province. We are a dynamic community, and it would take me days to list all of the fantastic features of our constituency, so here are just a few of those highlights.

We have the University of Alberta Augustana campus in Camrose offering a fine liberal arts program under the guidance of Dean Allen Berger.

Recently we have a very modern, up-to-date Peter & Jean Loughheed Performing Arts Centre.

Likewise, the Camrose city centre has the Bailey Theatre, which is a beautiful heritage building, and one of the festivals that they held just in February is called the Nordlys film festival. It was actually started by the previous MLA and his wife, and I compliment them on that. It features a number of international films but also some Canadian ones from Alberta as well. Hans Olson, the son of the previous MLA, produced a movie that was shown at this film festival. It's called *Figurine* and was filmed in Edmonton. You just don't get to see that at commercial theatres, but you may want to watch that sometime.

The dramatic pride of Wetaskiwin is the Manluk performing arts centre, located in another historical building, the waterworks building.

A fairly famous Camrose event is the Big Valley Jamboree of country and western music under the present direction of Tom Gerling, his board, and a tremendous number of volunteers. I'd venture to guess that at least some of you have been to the Jamboree, and if you haven't, you're welcome to come this year because we're going to feature Blake Shelton, Carrie Underwood, and Autumn Hill.

Jaywalker's Jamboree is a June extravaganza of food, fashions, and fun that you may also want to attend.

Mr. Speaker, as many of you who are from rural constituencies will know, our communities can be as close as family, with everyone having at least one connection to another. For example, one of Camrose's councillors, Kevin Hycha, is a former student of mine. Max Lindstrand, is a former baseball teammate. Wetaskiwin's mayor, Bill Elliot, is another retired teacher. Actually, Bill and I coached volleyball but often on the other side of the court. Also on council in Wetaskiwin is Wayne Neilson, like me a retired school principal, and Wayne and I shared basketball coaching duties for a few seasons. It is these connections that are the lifeblood of rural communities, and these connections run deep throughout my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, in my home of Wetaskiwin, which means, appropriately, hills of peace, there are countless things to keep you very busy. If you are a history buff like myself, you can go any time of the year to see the Reynolds-Alberta Museum. In fact, some 10,000-plus people do so yearly. In Her Honour's speech last week she mentioned that our government is taking steps to diversify and grow our economy. Despite the current economic downturn, tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in our economy, and the number of visitors we see through the Reynolds museum perfectly highlights the potential of this industry in our province.

The Reynolds-Alberta Museum has something for everyone. If you appreciate – and I know many of you do – or would like to explore our rural heritage and historical artifacts, you can explore some amazing farm machinery and buildings. If you are a car enthusiast like our colleague from Calgary-Currie, some of the restored vehicles are incredible, and you can see restoration happening in their shops.

5:10

As a side note, just outside of Wetaskiwin is the Edmonton international speedway – Edmonton is too small; they had to bring it to Wetaskiwin – for those that like fast cars and racing.

Reynolds is also the home of Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, where you can get up close, sit in some of the airplanes, and touch those exhibits. Wetaskiwin also has an air show. Due to very generous donations from the Reynolds family – the artifacts are now beyond the space. There's a space crunch to display more, so they are looking at further expansion.

As many of you know, in my previous life, before being elected to this House, I was a teacher. I was delighted to hear in the Speech from the Throne last week our government's commitment to protecting and strengthening our public services such as health care and education. Education plays a major role in our constituency, with Wetaskiwin-Camrose, as I said, having Augustana university, part of the U of A, but also NorQuest College. I know many of my former students have gone on to continue their studies in these institutions and are continuing to make contributions to their community.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to briefly mention one of our local businesses; that is, Parkland Fertilizers. In a period of prolonged economic decline our government is committed to doing everything that we reasonably can as quickly as possible to promote job creation and economic diversification. Businesses like Parkland Fertilizers are a perfect example of the potential that local businesses can bring to the diversification of our economy. Parkland is also currently building new, expanded facilities in Wetaskiwin's southeast industrial park, and since we know that small and medium businesses can help drive job creation in this current economic climate, I am hopeful for the future.

One of their buildings, I'm also proud to share, has 350 solar panels on its south side. By their numbers they tell me that the life expectancy of those panels is 30 years. They expect the cost to be recovered in 10 years, and that leaves 20 years of free electricity and cost savings, not to mention the contributions to the environment and the goals of the climate leadership plan.

Mr. Speaker, Millet is one of Alberta's prettiest towns, as evidenced by the fact that they have won the cities in bloom championships for many years. I'd like to congratulate the recently elected new mayor of Millet, Tony Wadsworth. Tony attended the Speech from the Throne and, with his English background, really appreciated the significance of the ceremony and traditions in this House. I am sure that like many other municipal leaders in our province, Tony appreciated our government's commitment in Her Honour's speech to investing \$34 billion to help build roads,

schools, transit, and other facilities in our communities, that need and will help support the economy and local jobs.

To the south of Wetaskiwin are the four Cree nations of Samson, Montana, Ermineskin, and Louis Bull. While all citizens of Alberta are welcome to Maskwacis, which means “Bear Hills,” you will find a very rich cultural heritage by attending either or both powwows in July and August. I would like to thank the MLAs, my colleagues, that were there this last summer. You would not believe how amazed they were that MLAs would actually come to Maskwacis. When we had so many there, they really, truly appreciated that.

With the growing population amongst First Nations it is important to see how Maskwacis Cultural College is helping to provide postsecondary opportunities. I want to compliment their president, Patricia Littlechild, because today is her birthday. Patricia, if you are watching, happy birthday.

I was incredibly proud to hear in the Speech from the Throne last week of the government’s commitment to respect the request of most of Alberta’s indigenous governments and to not only repeal Bill 22 but also start consultations on a new indigenous people’s sacred ceremonial objects repatriation act, which will facilitate the return of sacred objects to the nations to which they rightfully belong. I look forward to these discussions, and I know my constituents do as well.

In addition to the three chiefs – Kurt Buffalo, Darrell Strongman, and Randy Ermineskin – I would like to pay tribute to the late Rusty Three Fingers, chief of Louis Bull. Maskwacis also has Chief Craig Makinaw as the Alberta First Nations grand chief. Craig and councillors Marvin Yellowbird and Kirk Buffalo were also former students of mine. Something must have gone right to get so many of those students in social studies into politics. Councillor Vernon Saddleback is one of my former cross-country runners. Chief Randy Ermineskin and I shared the coaching bench of the junior B Hawks hockey club.

Speaking of hawks, I would also like to inform everyone that Maskwacis has Hawk Radio 89.1 FM and promotes all things First Nations: music, singers, drummers, and events. Sometime please have a listen. Actually, I wanted to mention some of the other radio stations that we have in Wetaskiwin. Wetaskiwin has two, and Camrose has one, CFCW.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne last week contained numerous initiatives that my constituents are excited for. Our investment in front-line services, workers, and infrastructure is greatly welcome. Everyone is quite aware of the stresses of the present economic situation, which one year ago during the election campaign was rarely a topic of discussion. They are reassured, however, that our government has a plan to put Albertans back to work and will focus on diversifying our economy. My constituents are excited about the reinstatement of the STEP program and the introduction of the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act and the \$340 million investment in new direct help to Alberta’s families who need help, including the enhancement to the Alberta child benefit and the family employment tax credit.

I am proud to have supported last fall the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act. My office has had numerous inquiries about how people could participate on the technical rules, and I was informed today by the agriculture minister that there have been hundreds of applications. I’m very impressed with that because I think this not only shows that the people of Alberta are ready for safety and ready for compensation to include all workers, but they are excited to get on with forming the best of the best policies unique to Alberta’s farms.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to end today by thanking all my constituents who placed their faith in me as their MLA – it has been

an amazing experience – and especially thanks to all my team of volunteers and supporters. We will go into history as one of Alberta’s best reformative provincial governments: gender balance, gender rights, reforming Alberta health care, human rights, environmental stewardship, the sunshine list, building schools and moving forward with badly needed infrastructure, and rectifying many treaty wrongs for our First Nations.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Again, I want to thank the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose for his insightful maiden speech. I’d like to ask him: eight years, and what do you plan on doing after that?

**Mr. Hinkley:** Well, I have an amusing story. After that, I’m going to write the book about my experiences in this House, and I’m going to call it *My Bargain with the Wildrose Party*. If they promise not to tell any more lies about us, I won’t tell the truth about them.

**The Speaker:** I would caution the members about certain adjectives that might be directed at other members of the House.

The Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Yeah. I wanted to thank the member for his speech. I didn’t realize how diverse his riding was and how many interesting cities and places are there. I just wanted to ask him about the importance of the REAs in his riding. I know that you have a couple in your riding.

5:20

**Mr. Hinkley:** First of all, I guess I need to apologize for using an inappropriate word in my last comments. At that time I will not be a member of the House.

With regard to the REAs I do want to mention a bigger part of that. I have been the co-chair of the rural caucus and advocating on many issues, one of which is co-operatives and the rural electrification associations. As part of the rural caucus we are also talking about food security, surface rights, and property rights. Early in the year, last June, we had Motion 501 about fair compensation and the right to appeal for property rights. Also, our rural caucus is concerned about the electrical rates and consumer protection, environmental stewardship, rural hospitals and schools, and rural economic diversification and sustainability. We also have lots of concerns about urban sprawl. So there are many, many topics that we would like to look at.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Yes, under 29(2)(a). I’d like to thank the member for the fine speech. I just wanted to mention that I’d met the member in Camrose a few years ago as he had organized a rural contact event. As a retired teacher I was wondering what got him involved in these activities and if he could expand on his current outreach activities and if he has any such events maybe lined up for the future.

Thanks.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Okay. How I got started. I guess that being a social studies teacher, I’ve talked about politics in many, many classes and, of course, always tried to be neutral. It became very obvious from the students and their passion for politics that they actually guided me into looking at our political issues and deciding to take some action, because in school we always talked. I always

encouraged them: "Well, if that's what you believe, why don't you do something about it?" They bounced the question back and said: "Well, why aren't you in politics?" And I did become so involved and very active with that.

I do continue being quite concerned about education and do want to be a voice and advocate for Augustana University College. They do need a new facility, as does Maskwacis Cultural College in Maskwacis. They have been working out of temporary trailers for many, many years. If we do believe that education is one of the tools to get out of poverty, to help people go to work, to do many positive things, I think we have to continue to support the infrastructure that builds schools.

I continue to attend many schools. I continue to support students getting involved. Of course, in grade 6 they study the Alberta Legislature, and it's amazing how many students come up and will want to shake my hand and say: I'm going to become an MLA, just like you. I really appreciate that.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Any questions under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and speak to the Assembly about the fantastic constituency that is Edmonton-Castle Downs. I am proud to represent the community that I have called home for over 20 years and wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you for believing in me and for choosing me to be your representative. I adore Edmonton-Castle Downs as this is where I chose to raise my family, nurture my friendships, and pursue my career as a social worker.

Immediately prior to being elected by the incredible people of Edmonton-Castle Downs, I worked for almost a decade with children's services. In this role I worked with Alberta's most vulnerable children and families, facing what could have been seen as one of the worst times in their lives. I worked hard to ensure that these children and families were always treated with the utmost dignity and respect by both myself and all the other professionals that they interacted with. It is with these values and beliefs that I will continue to advocate for and represent our community to the best of my ability.

Mr. Speaker, Edmonton-Castle Downs is filled with community leagues, associations, and societies that work to support all residents in this constituency. I would like to highlight a few of the many leading organizations that play a role in the engagement of the individuals and the families in our community, one of which is the Castle Downs Recreation Society, that was formed in 1983 with representatives of the community leagues in Castle Downs and several other members.

The society has many successful accomplishments and has invested over \$900,000 in the Castle Downs area. Examples of these contributions to the community are the Castle Downs Recreation Centre, sports fields and parking, the creation of the Castle Downs YMCA, the playground and spray park, the skateboard park, and the Castle Downs district park development. These accomplishments were successful due to the collaborative work with the city of Edmonton, the YMCA, and both federal and provincial grants. Their efforts are celebrated within the community and are an important part of Castle Downs.

The CDRS are also well known for their amazing Canada Day celebration, that has had an increased turnout year after year. I highly recommend that you and your families come and participate in the festivities. The work of all the individual community leagues cannot be emphasized enough as they co-ordinate organized sports,

playschools, and many other opportunities for our families to participate in the development of their community. Edmonton-Castle Downs is an inclusive and cohesive constituency that is celebrated for its diversity.

Another strong community organization is the Castle Downs YMCA. They provide a wide variety of social programs and community events such as the BMO NBA All-Star KidsFest, the healthy kids event, a weekly youth drop-in, child care services, and the alternative day program for youth suspended from school, to name a few. I recently was a guest of the Castle Downs YMCA for the YMCA northern Alberta Strong Kids campaign, which was a fundraiser to support programs in our community. They are an invaluable community centre within Castle Downs for our youth, families, and individuals.

I would also like to mention two of our sports organizations that are housed in our community. The Edmonton Seahawks football organization finished the season with the peewee team as the tier 3 champions and the midgets as tier 4 champions. My son Dre and the Member for Edmonton-Centre's nephew were players on this peewee team, and my husband, Shane, was their coach. The Edmonton Hawks Athletic Club had a great year in the 2016 minor hockey week. They had 14 hockey teams in the tournament, and nine of those teams won gold and silver medals. My son's peewee team just won the gold in the city championship this last Sunday, and my husband coaches this team as well. I would like to extend a huge thank you to all of the players, coaches, and families for participating in children and youth sports.

We had a busy season in my constituency office and hosted an open house in December. We had an excellent turnout, with constituents supporting both the Food Bank and Santas Anonymous. We received an overwhelming donation of over 100 toys for Santas Anonymous that evening, and I would like to again thank the families and individuals for their generosity. Our community demonstrates time and again that we support each other in tough times, and as mentioned in the throne speech, in tough times we always pull together.

As many of you know, we recently celebrated Chinese New Year in February, and I was invited to participate at the Chin Yin Buddhist temple to ring in the new year of the monkey. It was amazing to see the community come together and celebrate a time of new beginnings. The children and youth drummers and lion dancers entertained the room filled with people of all ages. I also had the privilege to participate in the Chinese New Year celebration at the Golden Age Manor, where the singers, dancers, and drummers were of all ages, performing for the residents and their loved ones.

This January I was able to celebrate with Baturyn elementary school on reaching a milestone of 15 years participation in the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Jump Rope for Heart campaign. Congratulations to all the students, staff, and families who supported this campaign.

In the summer the St. Charles Catholic church held an incredible dialogue around Christianity and Islam, and I was honoured to be part of that. This was the third city-wide event organized by the collaborative Edmonton-based group. It was a powerful discussion where Christians and Muslims together grew in their understanding and appreciation of each other's faiths and traditions.

This winter I participated in the Edmonton Islamic Academy's Syrian refugee fundraiser. This was put on in collaboration with the Al-Rashid mosque, which spearheaded the launch of a new centre aiming at addressing the needs of the refugees and complementing the government's efforts simultaneously. All proceeds went to the new Edmonton Islamic Relief centre. The outpouring of funds and supplies for the Syrian refugees was immense. Thank you to the

Islamic community for once again showing that Edmonton-Castle Downs steps up to the plate for their community when in need.

5:30

I have also been fortunate to be appointed to the role of the Alberta government liaison to the Canadian Forces. I have met and maintain an ongoing relationship with Brigadier General W.D. Eyre, who commands the 3rd Canadian Division of Edmonton and the Joint Task Force West; and Colonel Eric Kenny, who commands 4 Wing of CFB Cold Lake. While meeting with the 3rd Canadian Division, I've been able to speak with officers and tour the facilities available to both the military and their families. This summer I had the incredible experience to ride in a tank that crushed a car, and I did it in heels.

This fall I was able to emcee the Helmets to Hardhats event and the launch of the new Support Our Troops licence plate at CFB Edmonton along with the Minister of Transportation and the former minister of jobs, skills, training, and labour. This was an opportunity to highlight Alberta's support of veterans' transitions to new jobs. The Helmets to Hardhats agreement was made with this government to now allow current and retired Canadian Forces members to operate commercial vehicles without additional testing, which was not an option under the previous government.

I was honoured to attend the 100th anniversary celebration of the 3rd Canadian Division in December. This highlighted the efforts that the 3rd Canadian Division has made in both international and domestic matters. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Brigadier General W.D. Eyre for all his hard work and collaboration to support and lead the 3rd Canadian Division. We wish him all the best in his new role and congratulations on his new appointment in Ottawa. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to the new commander of the 3rd Canadian Division, Brigadier General Simon Hetherington, who will begin in July of 2016.

In September I had an opportunity to speak at the Royal Canadian Air Force commemorative park dedication ceremony. The date of the commemoration coincided with the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, in which the RCAF played a vital role and helped turn the tide during the Second World War. Edmonton has a rich history with military aviation, and this was showcased at this event.

I was also honoured to attend the unveiling of the Flanders fields park within the village of Griesbach. The park was created by the Castle Downs Recreational Society and commemorated the 100th anniversary of Lieutenant John McCrae's iconic poem *In Flanders Fields*. The park is a great symbol to honour the strong ties between Edmonton and the Canadian military.

I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to tour 4 Wing of CFB Cold Lake, hosted by Colonel Eric Kenny, 4 Wing commander. The base was able to showcase how 4 Wing effectively protects the Canadian west through aviation. I met with the 4 Wing commander and fellow officers, who took the time to showcase all of the positive work that the base is doing to support those stationed, and their families, at 4 Wing as well as those deployed with Operation Impact. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome and thank all the men and women who played a role in Operation Impact as they now return home.

This fall I travelled to Penhold to participate along with Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, Lois Mitchell, at the commemoration of the Penhold cenotaph, which honours those from the town and surrounding rural community who served in the Great War, of 1914 to 1918, and the Second World War, of 1939 of 1945. The cenotaph was commissioned with private donor funds and was completed in time for the Remembrance Day celebrations at the Penhold Regional Multiplex. To honour our veterans, I participated with Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the

celebration of the 90th anniversary at the Kingsway Legion here in Edmonton. As a democratic, independent, and member-based organization the Royal Canadian Legion has improved the lives of thousands of veterans and their families, including serving military and RCMP members. It was a powerful moment that showcased the importance of supporting our veterans through the Legions. I look forward to maintaining and building new relationships while touring the impressive military facilities across our beautiful province in my role as the Alberta government liaison to the Canadian Forces.

Now to an issue that is near and dear to my heart. It's incredible to think that over 100 years ago women were having to fight for their right to vote and that now, today, we govern. It's an exciting time to be a part of history, with women represented in all levels of government. Mr. Speaker, as I stand beside my peers, I am inspired by their accomplishments. Our caucus is roughly 45 per cent female, where our cabinet is fully gender balanced, the first time in Canadian history. Under the leadership of the Premier and the Minister of Status of Women, a new mother, we are working towards more diversity and inclusive measures. It's important to continue to nurture and support women from all backgrounds to step into leadership roles and community engagement with the goal of representation and equality in all aspects of policy and programs. I have chosen to do this in my life's work and in the Edmonton-Castle Downs constituency office. As a social work practicum student supervisor I encourage the social work students who are in our office to feel empowered and supported in leadership roles.

Mr. Speaker, education is so important. I've had the wonderful and insightful opportunity to visit our local schools. I'm inspired to see so many young people asking insightful questions about government, my role as an MLA, my role as a mother, my role as a woman, and about how they, too, can one day run and become leaders of our community.

When I attended the Daughters Day celebration with my own daughter, Adrien, it was overwhelming to see so many young, engaged women who look at us here in the Legislature as role models and see how we can participate in standing up for equality.

Now, having mentioned my daughter, I want to close with acknowledging the love and support of my family. To my children, Allan, Adrien, and Dre: you have been a constant source of comic relief, which is always a breath of fresh air. To my mom, Lorraine: you're an incredible woman, and I appreciate all that you have done to encourage me to strive for my goals and to hold a high standard in all of my pursuits. To my husband, who has remained a steadfast partner, supporter, and who is always ready to step in when I need you most: I want to thank you for all that you do and want you to know that I appreciate how much you do for our family. To my family: you inspire and motivate me every day to be the best that I can be as a mother, a wife, a daughter, a friend, and an MLA. I could not do this without all of your support.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if your children need some comic relief, you might advise them to watch this place sometimes.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I have to thank the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for a fantastic maiden speech. I'm very grateful that I share borders with you between our two constituencies.

You, of course, had mentioned that in your former life you were a social worker. I was wondering what kinds of skills and experience have come from that area that contribute to serving as an MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs.



**Ms Goehring:** Thank you very much, Member, for the question. I see my role as a social worker as being what I do. I believe that in this role as an MLA, I am doing social work. I'm advocating. I'm standing up for and looking out for Alberta's most vulnerable, for the people that come to my office, for the people that don't come to my office but send me an e-mail or a phone call. I'm advocating. I'm reaching out. I'm being their voice. I see my role as being an MLA doing social work. I think all of us here in this Assembly are here because we truly want to see a better place for Alberta, and I believe as a social worker I'm able to do that. I'm so grateful for the experience that I have had.

I want to just acknowledge that today is international Social Work Day. It's such a privilege to be able to stand in this House today as a social worker with all of my fellow social workers, doing what we do.

Thank you.

5:40

**The Speaker:** No others under 29(2)(a)?

I would recognize the Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It's truly an honour. I rise in the Chamber today to deliver my maiden speech, as we've heard ladies and gentlemen across the floor and on this side do very good jobs as such. It's truly an honour to have been elected to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. The spring election of 2015 was an election that was not expected. As such, a couple of the parties were not quite ready for the event. A poor showing was expected by many, but as per the outcome it became clear on May 5 that those that were not expected to be able to put forth a strong showing indeed were able to demonstrate to this province that hard work really does pay off. I mean that sincerely as a reflection of both sides of the House.

I don't remember what the name of the girl in the back row's riding was, but she had a very close race. In my own there were less than a dozen votes, actually eight, that separated me from the incumbent. When I arrived in Edmonton to my first caucus meeting, I was promptly given the nickname "Landslide" by our House leader. What the outcome really did confirm for me, as for my fellow MLAs, is that every vote counts.

Mr. Speaker, I have congratulated you on your position and your election to that position personally, but I did want to say publicly that I congratulate you. Many well-respected folks have accepted the job of Speaker, several from my riding, and I'm sure you will be as fair and impartial as any of those that came before you.

Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor in her throne speech of June 15, 2015, neglected to mention agriculture in that speech. The March 8 throne speech this year mentioned the word "agriculture" once, and that was a general comment about the government setting out plans to build on strengths in our economy, including the agriculture industry. I look forward to seeing what those plans will be to build on the strengths of this industry, that has provided so much to Alberta.

I just want to be real clear, Mr. Speaker. With respect, agriculture has been a key industry in what would become Alberta since the 1870s. Short of the fur trade, as Canada opened up the west, agriculture was for decades in this province the number one export industry, those exports being wheat and beef. It's an industry that I hold dear and an industry that has contributed to the gross domestic product of Alberta in a huge way over the years.

My maiden speech today will focus on an area in this province that is special to me. I was born and raised in the southern portion of Alberta, and I'm proud to speak about that area in the House today. I think it's fair to say that Alberta is a province that was built,

shall we say, by wave after wave of pioneers and settlers. As a member of the Little Bow riding I can attest to that fact. As the railway came westward, these pioneers and settlers founded the communities inside my rural constituency.

As a matter of fact, my grandfather sailed across an ocean from Scotland to come to this new land. He arrived in eastern Canada in 1904. He promptly got himself a job on the Canadian Pacific Railway and worked his way across Canada in that capacity. In 1908 he arrived in a very new province called Alberta, and he settled on a quarter section of land two miles away from a very small community called Armada, about 30 miles east of the town of Vulcan. He paid \$10 to the province of Alberta for that quarter section, and he homesteaded it, which meant breaking 20 acres, fencing the quarter, and building a shelter, no small feat while using horses and what would be considered today ancient, primitive pieces of equipment and sheer manpower. He proved up and received the adjoining quarter section for his efforts two years later.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate, particularly since it is your maiden speech, to interrupt; however, I am required under the standing orders to interrupt.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 3

### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** In accordance with Standing Order 64(3) the chair is required to put the question to the House on the appropriation bill on the Order Paper for second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a second time]

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy for the hon. member to continue with his response to the Speech from the Throne until the clock adjourns us for dinner.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Much appreciated, I think. Please proceed, hon. Member for Little-Bow.

## Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

(continued)

**Mr. Schneider:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member that has given me another chance here.

In every corner of my riding, Mr. Speaker, similar stories can be told, like the one that I just reiterated. Those settlers broke the ground, tilled it, and turned my constituency into a picturesque agricultural Garden of Eden, a landscape that today produces all manner of foodstuffs, those being wheat, canola, barley, oats, sugar beets, potatoes, beef, pork, chicken, eggs, and dairy. Those same producers, their offspring, and their offspring were charged with setting up secondary processes for the very commodities that they were creating. As a result, the Little Bow riding relies on a good highway and railway network, good rural roads and bridges in order to move those commodities to markets around the globe. Without that criss-crossing grid of infrastructure the residents of my constituency that are charged with feeding the world would be hard pressed to produce the products that they do and get them to market.

Right now I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge a well-known area of southern Alberta which resides within the Little Bow riding which has been given the nickname of Feedlot Alley. This area, because of naturally occurring chinook winds, which produce milder winters than other areas of the province and allow for a better feed-conversion rate, is home to over 2.3 million cattle. Sixty per cent of all of Canada's beef is finished in this area. This industry creates its own economy. It requires grains and roughages and supplements and manpower to finish those cattle for market to be shipped not only to Canadians but to markets all over the world.

Little Bow was also blessed with energy resources early on. Coal was discovered upon the arrival of the pioneers, and this combustible black sedimentary rock, which revealed itself in seams and beds and veins and eventually became the largest source of energy for the generation of electricity in this young province, was being discovered and excavated throughout many areas of my riding. The names of communities were closely tied to the discoveries of vast stores of the mineral, communities like Coaldale and Coalhurst. Just south of where I live there is a 10- or 12-mile stretch of road named the Coalmine Road for obvious reasons. Along that stretch are several small coal reserves that pioneers of the area mined many years ago. The product was sold to folks that travelled by horse and wagon for a load of the precious heating fuel from areas a day's ride away.

Coal Banks, today's Lethbridge, which does not make up part of but is surrounded by the Little Bow constituency, has been home to generations of those that pioneered the land around her and home to the services required by those that live within her and home to the services required by many that still occupy the same lands of those that came so long ago. Drift mining of coal led to the development of Lethbridge. Nicholas Sheran and Sir Alexander Galt were early entrepreneurs for the market of coal from that area.

Along with coal other energy resources were discovered. Oil and natural gas became a large industry in my riding in the early '60s. After the discovery at Leduc No. 1 in 1947 an eruption of exploration around the province made our home a true success story. Like many rural ridings in Alberta, Little Bow is home to the two top industries within our provincial boundaries, energy and agriculture.

5:50

The villages and towns that grew up within the areas that were settled as a result of rail running west in my riding are vast. They include Coaldale, Coalhurst, Picture Butte, Nobleford, Barons, Vauxhall, Carmangay, Champion, Lomond, Vulcan, Milo, and Arrowwood. These are all places where pioneers of all types gathered to do business. This in turn gave opportunity for more businesses to begin. General stores, implement sales, blacksmiths, poolrooms and dance halls, barbershops, taxi services, restaurants, doctors, lawyers, banks, and schools all began the century-long growth of Alberta.

There have certainly been tough times, the weather on the farming and ranching side and the economy on the town and village side, but residents of Little Bow, no matter their chosen vocation, have persevered and stayed on to proudly build a portion of this great province, a testament to the values passed on by those original pioneers. But that testament also applies to the new settlers and Canadian citizens, who can also be considered pioneers in Alberta. These are the citizens that continue to add to the rich tapestry and diversity of this province in their own right.

Quoting from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's throne speech, we are "an optimistic, entrepreneurial, can-do people [that] are community-minded, caring and neighbourly." Those words

describe the people of the riding of Little Bow very well and honour the people that came before us.

While talking about my riding, I need to mention the politics of the past. Little Bow is proud of the people that it has sent to the Legislative Assembly. In 1913 James McNaughton as a Liberal candidate. In 1921 Oran McPherson as a United Farmers of Alberta candidate; Mr. McPherson was the Speaker from 1922 to 1926. In 1935 Peter Dawson for the Social Credit; Mr. Dawson is still the longest serving Speaker in Alberta history, from 1937 to 1963. In 1963 Mr. Raymond Speaker for the Social Credit Party; Mr. Speaker also was elected as an independent, a Representative, and finally a Progressive Conservative in his 29-year tenure. In 1992 Barry McFarland for the Progressive Conservatives; Barry served until 2012. Little Bow chose Ian Donovan, a Wildrose candidate, in 2012, and the results of the 2015 election are fresh in our minds.

As I wind down my maiden speech to this Assembly, I wish to recognize the Siksika Nation constituents, located on the northern edge of my riding. The people of this proud area are descendants of the first known inhabitants. The present population of the Siksika Nation is near 7,000. The community has facilities such as the Deerfoot Sportsplex, the Old Sun Community College, a provincial courthouse, police station and emergency services, elementary and high schools, and the Blackfoot Crossing historic park, where Treaty 7 was signed on September 22, 1877. As a matter of fact — my colleague isn't here — but my colleague from Strathmore-Brooks and I are working at setting up a visit with the elders of the Siksika Nation this summer and, for me, a highly anticipated personalized visit to Blackfoot Crossing, where the respected Chief Crowfoot, who was instrumental in the signing of Treaty 7, is buried.

Just a few hundred feet to the west of my home, Mr. Speaker, on the edge of a coulee which is a tributary of the West Arrowwood Creek, are five teepee rings. This small piece of land has never been broken and looks as it would have hundreds of years ago. Before there were fences and farms and towns and railroads, the nomadic Blackfoot people travelled all directions of this area for major tribal ceremonies. These rocks in circular formation, that were touched by the hands of those that came before us, will not be disturbed in my lifetime. I'm proud to have a part of history that is so close to my home and will protect it.

So, Mr. Speaker, with all of the history of the Little Bow riding and, indeed, of every riding within our glorious province we have now begun the Second Session of the 29th Legislature of Alberta. Eighty-seven people have been sent to this hallowed Chamber to conduct the business of the people. They've been sent here as representatives. We are charged with debating the issues that are put before us on behalf of those people. We are charged with making laws that the people of Alberta must live by. We are charged with taking the ideas and concerns of those that sent us here and bringing them forth within these walls for strong discussion and resolution.

I can't express how much it means to me and my family to be a part of the 29th Legislature, how much it means to be the 895th Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to be sworn and the seventh MLA of the great riding of Little Bow. I am positive, Mr. Speaker, that every elected soul within this room, no matter what political stripe, garners those same feelings. Ladies and gentlemen of the Assembly, I respect each of you and those that sent you here. Let us begin this session we have begun — I wrote this a few days ago — with healthy debate in a process of good and honest government, the kind of government that the people of Alberta can be proud of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Jabbour:** I just want to make a general comment that in the many years I worked for *Hansard*, I always said that I had the dubious privilege of being able to listen to every word spoken in this House. It wasn't always enjoyable, but my absolute favourite part was always the maiden speeches, and this afternoon my colleagues have not disappointed. It's been an absolute joy. Thank you for the wonderful stories.

To the Member for Little Bow: this summer I had the privilege of travelling in southern Alberta and visiting areas in your constituency. Of course, as a Trekkie I had to go to Vulcan. I wonder if you could just share with the House a little bit more about Vulcan and the *Star Trek* connection and what that's all about.

**Mr. Schneider:** Well, thank you for the question. Yes. I remember – dear, I would have to say 30 years ago – when the discussion to relate Vulcan to the member of the *Star Trek Enterprise* that came from – his hometown was Vulcan. I remember the discussions and people saying to those that thought it was a great idea: “What are you talking about? This can't work.” People persevered, and the county and the town became involved and thought: you know, this is a great idea; this will put Vulcan on the map. It really did. Whether you like *Star Trek* or not, when you say Vulcan, you understand what's going on there.

They've gone a long ways. They've built a centre. It looks like a church, kind of a synagogue looking thing, but it serves a purpose. It has lots of memorabilia for sale inside, has lots of unique little

things with every portion of *Star Trek*. If you happen to get inside there, it starts with *Star Trek*, like Captain Kirk and Spock himself, and moves on through every series of *Star Trek* that was on television. They're all represented within there.

It has certainly put Vulcan on the map, and it is a phenomenon that every town kind of looks for to make itself known across at least Alberta. I think that Vulcan has made it further than that.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely cannot help myself. I have to ask the question. Being a *Star Trek* fan here as well, I have to ask the member: which captain is it?

**Mr. Schneider:** Well, it was Captain Kirk, of course. Mr. Speaker, my hair is getting grey too, but I remember watching Captain Kirk and Spock and all of it for three years in the '60s, so of course I'm a fan.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we know that we have at least two Trekkies in the Assembly.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, I think that on that note I will move to adjourn until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, March 16, 2016

Day 6

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 29th Legislature

### Second Session

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 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
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 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
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 Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
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 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
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 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
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 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
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#### Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Clark	Malkinson
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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, March 16, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Please bow your heads. Let us reflect, each in our own way. Let us be thankful for the privilege we have to hear each other's stories, stories from our rural communities, stories from our urban cities. These stories are the threads that tie us together. When we stop listening to stories, we weaken those threads.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Debate adjourned March 15]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great humility and integrity that I respond to the well-intentioned words of the Lieutenant Governor in her Speech from the Throne. I wish to acknowledge appreciation for the mandate that is ours as a new government.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to express to my friends present today that we are on the cusp of change. The words of task that our Honourable Lieutenant Governor expressed represent our great opportunity for change, for it is change that allows us to bridge the gaps in perception and representation of the true essence of democracy. It is with personal pride and humility that I wish to thank today the trustful Albertans who elected me as their representative within their House. Their voices echo in my words as I stand here as their vehicle to change. Friends, we represent the community-mindedness that is our Alberta. In these current difficult times we are presented the opportunity to place emphasis on the family values that are the cornerstone of our great province.

Mr. Speaker, we come together in this House to represent the collective thoughts and needs of those who make Alberta the province of opportunity. Our collective communities may vary in political representation, but together we sit in their House, seeking resolution and stability for our constituents, their families' futures, and the future of our Alberta.

From our diversity within the House of Alberta stems my personal conviction that together we will champion this economic challenge. To echo our Honourable Lieutenant Governor's inspiring words: "Albertans are community minded, caring, and neighbourly. Ours is a society of friends. In tough times we always pull together." And as a government we must "have each other's backs."

I have called the community of Red Deer-North home for over 30 years. I have chosen this wonderful community as the home for my family. I have participated in and belonged to this community, which has allowed me to care for its Albertans, a responsibility never taken lightly. I engage the health care vocation with the heart and dedication that my fellow Red Deerians deserve. Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that I have been fortunate to listen to my constituents for over 30 years now, and I am proud to belong to a government that finally listens to them as well.

Our decisions to invest in our infrastructure respond to the common desire for Albertans to have full access to the resources they need, their aspirations to maintain their pride and fervent belief that ours is a great province. We can be their bridge builders.

I am an elected representative within the third-largest city in Alberta. The growth has put us over 100,000 strong, and I value their needs. Friends, I also value that the resources within this great city respond to the community needs of many surrounding municipalities. Red Deer is an important part of central Alberta as a community. Our government has responded to our growth and invested in aspects that reinforce our core values. The Red Deer Airport expansion is an example of bridge building. We are fostering the support for infrastructure that engages economic development, recognizes potential, and builds economic stability and job growth. Mr. Speaker, we are building our bridges with fundamental components: sustainability, fiscal responsibility, opportunity, and community-mindedness.

In appreciation of our 2019 Canada Winter Games this expansion proactively meets the needs to inspire success within Red Deer and central Alberta. We recognize that rural Alberta borders every city regardless of population. Our rural partners are very much our enterprising partners. Our rural communities support the agriculture, forestry, energy, and wildlife aspects, and I am proud to hear that our government is committed to building on these strengths in our economy. These are the great resources that underpin our Alberta.

Farmers provide our sustenance, and I wish to thank them for their hard work and dedication. I happily stood in support of the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act last fall and support the fundamental rights that are inherent in our occupational health and safety diligence. They are now part of the inclusion that echoes the importance of everyone's safety.

Thirty-one years ago I began my investment in Red Deer-North. As a constituent I exhibited the community-mindedness that is ingrained and engaged. I was submersed in the health care field by occupation, but I embraced the educational aspects from the lens of a mother. I participated to encourage the equity and opportunities that our children, our future, deserve. Lunch programs that satisfy the essentials of our being: our children need to eat, to grow, to learn, and to lead.

In these tough economic times we need to be supporting one another instead of making things worse. As Her Honour noted in the throne speech last week, "We don't need to put our short-term bottom line over the interests of long-term recovery." Cuts in education are a detriment to our future, and true democracy does not cap potential. It enhances the belief that education is a resource that is available and merited.

Mr. Speaker, as the member representing Red Deer-North, I am constantly presented with bridge-building opportunities that represent our inherited challenges, infrastructure needs that echo our responsibility for stronger foundations as well as foresight, our shared vision of Albertans having sustainable services that are prepared for growth and its required resilience. With our inherited responsibility is the opportunity, I believe, we can evolve from. Resilience is truly the belief that momentum is the most difficult to

initiate but the easiest to sustain. It is easy to impart mandate during the feast cycle, but how we execute sustainable measures during the famine cycle is our opportunity for momentum.

9:10

Mr. Speaker, May 5, 2015, was a benchmark. It was the day Alberta voted for change. A great testament to integrity is what vehicle we choose for change. We choose to deep-dive into our inherited responsibilities in an attempt to leverage the impact of less than sound policies and practices. We choose to invest in our province so that Albertans and their legacies benefit. We choose to impart accountability and gain efficiencies as well as value-added. We choose to be respectful and aware of our surroundings as well as those who are impacted. Collectively we choose the vehicles that we will drive over our bridges.

I am a strong supporter of our government's plans to diversify our economy. I believe that Albertans deserve options for opportunities. I believe that our economic development ministry is a bridge that fosters opportunities for our constituents. I believe that strong relationships between government and industry can be a catalyst to the changes that are sustainable for generations to come.

I am proud that our government recognizes that the Status of Women is an integral part of growth and equity. This ministry represents the importance of our entrepreneurial potential and how our contributions further our economic climate and expansion.

I believe that our Indigenous Relations minister will provide a bridge to rekindle the relationships between our First People and our government. I am proud to say that in Red Deer-North the groundbreaking of our Assoahum Crossing is the building block of engaging our First People locally. I want to thank you for recognizing the unforeseen challenges and circumstances that stalled this project and initiated the momentum to its realization. It is a great ministry and government that reunites people and their ways.

I am proud to belong to a family-friendly subcommittee that encompasses all political representation in order to ensure family-friendly policies and practices are recognized. These strides represent momentum. As we look around, we represent a government that is indicative of our Alberta demography. The diversity provides for more inclusionary measures and empowers a stronger recognition of the countless needs of our constituents.

It is great to be part of a government that recognizes that our current economic model has increased the vulnerabilities of the vulnerable. I applaud recognition that predatory lending as a business has a negative impact and that we cannot effect responsibility without building a bridge. Vulnerability requires backbone, and we are in a position to better support the structure so that we impart resilience to the cycle of poverty that is a result of current antiquated policies.

Mr. Speaker, I wish now to speak to our most vulnerable, the homeless. This is not their choice but the response to policies that are not cognizant of how many circumstances can impact an individual's well-being, how mental illness and addictions severely impede someone's ability to make sense of the systems, how decentralizing resources makes systems difficult to navigate through successfully. I have visited Medicine Hat in an effort to gain understanding of how they ended homelessness. Friends, I am happy to say that it is a result of strong relationships, which, in turn, are bridges on their own. Results are achieved when goals are common and relationships are transparent. We need to meet the vulnerable where they are at and listen actively to help them help themselves.

I am proud to say that our government responds financially to these needs and recognizes that strong investment in our programs

for the vulnerable is essential and value-added. Decreasing the incidents of our emergency services, law enforcers, and judicial systems flourishes into a stronger Alberta for everyone. It is a solution that represents social and financial responsibility as well as standardizes the fundamental rights to shelter, food, and comfort.

Mr. Speaker, it is with pride that I respond to the Speech from the Throne with actions that support the necessary steps to implement our current mandate. I am proud to stand here as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta with these members, my friends, and the conviction that our most resilient commonality is the best interests of our collective constituents, our Albertans. We are their collective shield and, as we brave a future of sustainability, economic change, and unification, share the confidence and restoration of a stronger, more resilient province. Let us realize that challenges are the backbone of growth and strength. Our economic tests have opened our eyes to what stark reality results when we continue to execute the same standards without contingency. We have chosen to diversify in order to mitigate impact.

Mr. Speaker, may I reiterate that we are on the cusp of change. We have all found ourselves in situations that test our boundaries, and I applaud and commend that through our individual adaptability we are still standing here together today, cumulatively effecting change. Our challenges are our opportunities, and I am proud that we did not shy from our calling because of the difficulty our province is under.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I would remind all the members on both sides of the House that there have been extended conversations going on, and I would appreciate and remind you that – hon. members, I was reminding the House that I would ask each of you to contain long discussions with each other inside the Chamber. If you need longer conversations – I've noticed it on both sides of the House, so please be conscious of that.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East under 29(2)(a).

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for a really well-thought-out maiden speech. I'd like to just go into a little bit about Red Deer. I lived in Red Deer myself for about eight years in the late '80s and early '90s. Last night we were at a presentation by the resources diversification council, and I happened to be there when you had a conversation with somebody. When they talked about Red Deer, they talked about Gasoline Alley, and I know that that's not all of Red Deer. Would you expound a little on that, please?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Before I do that, I would just like to finish off. I have a couple sentences I didn't say. Our challenges are our opportunities, and I am proud that we did not shy from our calling because of the difficulty our province is under. We chose to become instruments of change.

To answer that question, yes, I hear that from time to time. I hear Red Deer being referred to as Gasoline Alley. Red Deer is so much more than that. Once upon a time, when people were travelling from Edmonton to Calgary or Calgary to Edmonton, they would stop by Gasoline Alley, looking for the big teapot to go and have a cup of coffee, maybe stop off at Glenn's Family Restaurant for a bite to eat and to fill their gas tanks, but there is so much more to Red Deer.

9:20

Red Deer has 100,000 in population. It encompasses 320,000 in population. Red Deer has a regional hospital, and it is the fourth-

largest hospital in Alberta. It's the fourth-busiest hospital in Alberta. An interesting fact is that the STARS ambulance touches down at Red Deer hospital more than any other hospital in Alberta. I'm very proud of our hospital. I know that right now they're looking to expand two operating theatres, and they're looking to expand with a cath lab to service central Albertans. Red Deerians are known for their volunteerism and their giving nature. Jack and Joan Donald of Red Deer have committed to donating \$10 million towards the cath lab at the Red Deer regional hospital.

Red Deer was very, very proud to win the bid for the 2019 Canada Winter Games. I am so excited for this, and I would like to invite everyone here today to please come to the 2019 Winter Games. It's going to be an awesome time. I can't wait to show you around my city.

With that, there is a health and wellness centre that we are going to be having the groundbreaking for right away. This health and wellness centre: Gary W. Harris and family have donated \$5 million towards the health and wellness centre, and I wish to thank Gary Harris and family for that contribution. As well, I'd like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Donald and family for their contribution to the cath lab when that happens.

Red Deer has a college, Red Deer College, and it services Red Deer and surrounding area. It has trades, and Red Deerians are looking for a polytechnic university so that we can keep Albertans in their communities so that they are able to go to college.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, again I remind you that conversations are continuing. If you want to have extended conversations, please leave the House.

The Member for Lethbridge-East. Hon. member, is this with respect to 29(2)(a)?

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** No. This is . . .

**The Speaker:** No, it's done. My apologies, hon. member.

I think it's time for me to go to Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It appears your hearing is very good this morning.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the throne speech I would like to present my maiden speech. I have many concerns with the approach this government is taking to the latest energy price shock and its consequences. This government is proposing that Albertans should try and spend their way to prosperity with deficit and debt, keep spending beyond our means, all while they experiment with an economic development strategy of a greener, more sustainable economy. This greener, more sustainable economy has proven to fail in many other jurisdictions of the world. A move to a greener energy economy, while laudable, is not going to fill the revenue shortfall that we are currently experiencing. We must begin to address the large gap in our current cash flows. We currently spend far beyond our means.

Mr. Speaker, I am fortunate to have lived my entire life in and to now represent what I consider to be the best constituency, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, in the best province, Alberta, which is in the best country in the world, Canada. May we always be thankful for this wonderful place that we have the privilege to call our home.

My constituency covers a very large geographical area. There are over 200 kilometres from one end of my riding to the other. I am very thankful for the highway system we are able to enjoy. These highways allow me to travel with relative ease to all areas of my riding.

The town of Morinville is one of the oldest communities in my constituency and is found in the southeast end of my riding. It was founded in the late 1800s, when Father Morin brought many French settlers to the area. They were followed by several German pioneers, who together helped establish the agricultural industry in those early years. Today Morinville also serves as home for many commuters working in Edmonton and also home for many members serving with our Canadian armed forces at CFB Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, travel 200 kilometres to the northwest and you will find one of the youngest communities of my constituency, Swan Hills. Although considered to be in northern Alberta, it is the nearest settlement to the geographical centre of Alberta. Following the discovery of oil in September 1956, Swan Hills became the first township incorporated in Canada's centennial year, 1967.

There are many other towns, villages, and hamlets that I represent, some of them being Cardiff, Legal, Rivière Qui Barre, Alcomdale, Busby, Pickardville, Dunstable, Vimy, Clyde, Tawatinaw, Westlock, Manola, Barrhead, Neerlandia, Vega, Pibroch, Dapp, Jarvie, Fawcett, Flatbush, Meadowview, Thunder Lake, Tiger Lily, Fort Assiniboine, Goose Lake, and more, Mr. Speaker. All of these communities have a unique story of their own. All of them were established through the hard work and vision of individuals that came to this country in search of opportunity and the freedom to pursue their dreams.

Most of my riding was established thanks to the renewable industries of agriculture and forestry. During the early years many families worked their small farms through the summer, and the father would spend the winter months in the bush harvesting logs for sawmills located throughout the area while mothers and children stayed at home tending to the livestock.

Today we have modern large-, medium-, and small-scale farms growing diverse crops and livestock. Large farm equipment is common on many farms, but we also have smaller operations with the equipment to match. For anyone with a dream to farm, it is still possible with a little ingenuity and a good business plan.

The forestry industry, Mr. Speaker, has also evolved into a very well-organized operation, with large equipment doing most of the work. I went out to witness an operation harvesting logs north of Fort Assiniboine last winter. Seldom is there a need for a chainsaw anymore as the large machines fall, skid, trim, pile, and load the logs. A very impressive operation.

Like so many constituencies in Alberta, the energy industry has played a significant role in helping to advance the well-being of our communities over the last 60 years. The high standard of living that we enjoy today in this province and, indeed, in this country can largely be attributed to the discovery and sale of our natural resources. I believe that we have been very fortunate in this province to have been blessed with this nonrenewable resource.

Mr. Speaker, the people that settled in my constituency did not have an easy time. In fact, many joked that the government bet the \$10 filing fee that you would not last the three-times-six months required to get the title of your homestead. Times were very difficult, but many people did survive through tough winters and hard slogging.

The area of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock as we know it today has seen many changes over the last century, a relatively short time frame. Much of what was once undifferentiated forest is now farmland criss-crossed with many roads. We have highways that have been built, giving us the ability to safely move products and people throughout my riding.

I'll take you on a little drive through the riding. I'll start in the town of Swan Hills, in the northwest corner of my riding. The Swan Hills town: the province decided in the early '50s that it was prudent

to build a highway into the Swan Hills. The discovery of oil happened shortly after that. It was not necessarily much of a highway. It was more like a mud road. I have an uncle that delivered a lot of the supplies up into the Swan Hills work camps in the '60s and tells many stories of being towed through the Swan Hills gumbo by Cat at that time. It currently enjoys a highway, and the foresight of the leaders at that time gave the possibility for Swan Hills to be developed as a very strong economy.

9:30

If you travel southeast to Fort Assiniboine, you'll find a small town that was developed through the fur trade along the Athabasca River. The Hudson's Bay Company established it as a post, and to this day there are many traplines to the north of Fort Assiniboine.

Travelling west and a little bit north, you get to enjoy going on the Klondyke ferry. The Klondyke ferry is one of the few ferries left in Alberta currently operating. It goes across the Athabasca River into the Vega-Neerlandia area, which has some of the best farmland in my constituency. Neerlandia was settled as a Dutch farming community. That's the area in the province where I was born and raised. I'll get the pleasure of opening a new grocery store in a community that has less than a hundred residents. They have a grocery store, a co-operative, that will probably be one of the largest grocery stores in my riding.

Travelling south to the town of Barrhead, Barrhead is well known for its golf course, and people travel from all across the province to play the golf course in Barrhead. They also have a large business there, Northplex modular homes, developing and building modular homes to deliver throughout much of the northern part of the province.

To the east we come to the town of Westlock. Westlock this current year is celebrating their 100th anniversary. They have many events planned for this year. This weekend I get to enjoy one of the events by a charitable organization there, Rainbow for the Future, that is raising funds to build schools and help with literacy in Ethiopia. They have done this over many years and have several volunteers that continue to go to Ethiopia and help establish the economy there and help to bring education to the people of Ethiopia. Westlock is home to the Canadian Tractor Museum, a museum with well over 100 tractors, some dating over a hundred years old, and is well worth the visit for anyone interested in taking a look at some of the history of the farming in that area. Westlock also is home to a new generation co-op that exports grain all around the world. Westlock Terminals, I believe, is the largest new generation co-operative in Alberta at this time and is proudly owned by many residents in both the town of Westlock and the counties of Westlock, Barrhead, and Athabasca.

If we go a little farther east, we come to Clyde, a small village where we have the large North Central Livestock Exchange, that handles many of the cattle from the northern area of the province and sends cattle all over the province for finishing and trade.

When we head south from Clyde, we come to Legal and the start of a very francophone part of my riding. Legal is a small town. If you go to the café there, you can be pleasantly greeted in the French language or the English language. They're very proudly a francophone community, as is the town of Morinville.

Morinville, like I said earlier, in the very southern part of my riding, is home to close to 10,000 people. I was pleased to participate in the grand opening of one business's new lab and kitchen for their pet foods, Champion Petfoods. They are a company that develops pet food in their kitchen and delivers it to over 40 countries in the world. They're very proud to be exporting all over the world.

Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock are very resourceful people. The people of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock know what it takes to get through hard times. These people realize that sometimes hard decisions are necessary to get through difficult times. The renewable and nonrenewable commodities we harvest, add value to, and sell around the world will create the wealth necessary to provide jobs and to provide the services all Albertans need. If we manage our resources well, we will be able to supply the services Albertans need as well as set a solid foundation for the generations that follow us. We can set the stage for our children and grandchildren to be able to thrive with as much opportunity and vision as our forefathers came to this country with. If we fail to manage those resources well and continue to spend beyond our means, we will saddle the generations to come with a lifetime of debt and lost opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, commodity cycles will always be with us. We are currently experiencing a low point in the price of our number one commodity, oil. What the previous government failed to recognize and what this government needs to recognize is that we must manage our spending based on the bottom of cycles. We can no longer spend as if oil is at the top of the roller coaster. It is a recipe for disaster. If this government truly wants to get off the roller coaster of oil, they would begin to manage their spending accordingly. It will take this government many years to develop their dreams of diversifying our economy. By the time we see any significant payback from those dreams, we may well be broke if we do not get our spending in line with our revenues. This is not rocket science. We need action now.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne seems to promise that we will spend our way to prosperity. This is not a plan. This is an experiment, a gamble on the backs of hard-working Albertans. This government needs to get serious, get their fiscal house in order, present the road map for success, and get us off the road to just more deficit and debt.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a). The Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you very much. Thank you very much for that speech, colleague from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. You mentioned a project that your community is supporting in Ethiopia. I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit more about that project and what specifically you're doing to help this organization in your community.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Certainly. I'd be pleased to. Rainbow for the Future was started by a few individuals within our community that recognized the need to help beyond the boundaries of our local economy and recognized the need in the African area of Ethiopia. They focused on three main things: bringing literacy, education for the children there, so they built schools; bringing water to help with the sustainability of these communities so that they can have clean, fresh drinking water to help with their health; also, helping with some of the challenges with the AIDS epidemic, the single-mother families and the orphan children.

This weekend they're having a sports weekend where participants will participate in curling, hockey, or a walkathon, and I'm being challenged to participate in the hockey tournament. It's a tournament with hockey games going 24 hours a day. So I will be participating in that and raising funds to send to Ethiopia. Ethiopia is currently experiencing a drought. Not many in the mainstream media have been carrying the story of Ethiopia. They are in a serious time of starvation, so a lot of this money will be going towards the care of orphans in that country.

Thank you for the question.



**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

**Loyola:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock for his maiden speech. I really enjoyed it. I enjoyed the tour through your constituency. You talked a lot about, you know, the settler communities that were established, but I wanted to know a little bit about any experiences you may have had in reaching out to indigenous communities and what you believe as a member are your treaty obligations.

Thank you.

9:40

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you for the question. I tried to figure out a way to include the whole discussion with the indigenous people that lived in my area, largely Cree, and some of the negotiations that happened on the sale of the lands and that type of thing. One of the stories I will relate is that as a young man growing up in the Neerlandia area, we had farmland around Shoal Lake, and I got an early education on how the indigenous people were established in our area. During the time of clearing land, picking a lot of roots and picking a lot of stones, we would quite often stumble upon the odd arrowhead, the odd spearhead, and some stones that were used for peeling hides. So I recognized that the indigenous people came and were established here before the rest of us also arrived. How that's evolved over time is that we continue to work with indigenous affairs to recognize the obligations that we have to those communities and to those people and try to work together in a way that can move our province forward in a co-operative manner.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for an excellent maiden speech. Your predecessor in your constituency was one of the key Wildrose organizers on the idea of strengthening property rights against what the earlier government had put in for, you know, taking away some of our property rights and the covenants that are attached to property. I'm wondering how important it is to your constituents that property rights are key, that property rights are better protected, and I'm wondering if they're surprised at the inaction of this current government. [A timer sounded]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today to deliver my maiden speech and respond to the Speech from the Throne. Thank you to the Lieutenant Governor for delivering such a forward-thinking speech, looking to the future of Alberta. Now, even though this is my maiden speech, I've actually spoken many times in this Legislature about my community, and yesterday the MLA for Lethbridge-West expounded on more of the reasons we feel the way we do about our home. I love Lethbridge. Words can't accurately express the depth and breadth of the diversity of my community. To help you understand why I feel this way, I will give you just a few details about my constituency, which may give you a glimpse of the diversity in the place I call home.

My riding is home to 25 schools; 26 church organizations; 15 senior and care facilities; the Nord-Brige Senior Citizens Association, of which I am a member; the exhibition grounds, where, among many other things, Family Fest is celebrated on New Year's Eve; Spitz Stadium, home of the Lethbridge Bulls; Henderson Lake, probably one of the most walked pathways in all of southern Alberta, lays alongside Henderson golf course; Chinook regional hospital; and Lethbridge College.

There's a variety of businesses, large and small. They are evidence of the entrepreneurial spirit within my community. There are parks and community associations, the Sik-Ooh-Kotoki friendship centre. There is the Polish-Canadian club, the German-Canadian club, the Italian-Canadian club, the Nikka Yuko gardens, the Southern Alberta Ethnic Association, Outreach, the Bhutanese community, and now the Syrian refugee community.

My constituents are my neighbours. They sing with me in the church choir at McKillop. They volunteer with me at the Labour Day barbecue or weed the vegetables for the food bank with me in the community garden or be part of the team for the dragon boat festival or attend SACPA to keep abreast on what is happening in public affairs. We are a diverse group of people who work together to make our community better. This, my dream job, is to do the best I can to represent all of my constituents.

I spent some time thinking about how to incorporate what I want to share with you and how to do that while providing a reasoned response to the throne speech, so here goes. I will begin my story by telling you how I came to be here today. I grew up in a home in St. John's, Newfoundland, where political discussion occurred on a pretty regular basis at the kitchen table. It was there where I learned about the purpose of a government and a little about debate. There were six of us. I learned that the world of politics did not appear to be open to women and that in Newfoundland the church exerted considerable influence. This left me quite ill at ease.

I attended Memorial University in the late '60s and early '70s in the faculty of education and physical education. I played on the junior and then senior varsity basketball teams and was the only member of the university's women's track team. I saw the lack of funding for women's teams. In fact, for me to attend the university track and field championships in Winnipeg, my track club paid for my student flight pass because the university did not have money assigned in their budget for me to participate. I was a nationally ranked sprinter, so some pressure was raised, but money was not. Eventually, I believe, things changed, but not necessarily equal funding for male and female teams. The lesson I kept seeing over and over again was that things were not always equal for men and women, and that just seemed to be a matter of course. I believed and still believe this is wrong.

Throughout my life I have seen this inequality raise its ugly head over and over again. I have shared my story about my violent marriage and how inequality played a role in that situation, so now I will move forward to my career in the public service. Almost immediately after being hired within the federal public service in 1982 I became part of the fight for pay equity, which for the women of the public service lasted for 15 years. For the women working at the post office it was a 30-year battle.

During my time in the federal public service I was elected as local president for two different locals in which I was a member. I chaired three different regional women's committees and was elected to the senior executive of my national union, representing 60,000 members in the NCR. These experiences honed my skills to recognize what little changes can actually mean in the broader picture for good or bad, and that was certainly noted once the federal government settled its pay equity complaint. Changes began to happen within classification, and I would say that they were not positive changes but rather supported the status quo. Most of the clerical regulatory classifications became administrative services classifications, and those were top-loaded in the hierarchal classifications with males and the lower with women but now more difficult to prove disparity. Needless to say, I began searching for ways to stop this gender disparity. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, the tone of my presentation so far is about inequity and the ongoing struggle for gender parity.

9:50

The Lieutenant Governor's speech was given on International Women's Day, and as she said, we reflect on past accomplishments and renew our call for change. I have identified many areas where societal acceptance of gender disparity perpetuates this situation. I have committed myself to changing this behaviour by changing societal acceptance of the status quo. I challenge women to accept nothing less than being fully respected and to be fully valued for all of their skills and abilities. Their worth is no less or no more than a male counterpart. Equality lies in mutual respect and acceptance.

I challenge the men of Alberta to do a little self-reflection and decide what they can do to be part of that mutual respect and learn what it is to truly value the women in their lives. I hope that during my tenure as MLA for Lethbridge-East this change will be forthcoming for the betterment of all Albertans. I believe this was the first reason why I came to be here today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for the second reason why I'm here. During the 32 and a half years that I worked for the federal government I saw first-hand the steps that were being taken which began to erode services for the public, where the bottom line became more important than the required services to be provided. I saw the federal government change hands several times and the erosion grow. In the last 10 years I watched the destruction of so much of the incredible progress my own department had made towards protection of the public, reduction of the crime rate, and reduction of the cost to the public coffers, all of which was done by front-line staff, working with offenders, assessing their issues, identifying their needs to address those issues, and finally assisting them in changing their behaviour to become pro-social, law-abiding citizens.

I saw, Mr. Speaker, an incredible addictions research centre shut down, 30 years of research on addictions, much-needed research, when working with a population struggling with all kinds of addictions. I saw farming projects shut down, projects that not only provided much-needed job skills, pro-social activities but also which provided food for institutions. I saw similar cuts happening in almost every other department of the federal government. Service counters in CRA closed. I saw Canadians' individual income tax records being archived outside of our country with no way to protect the data included in those records, your personal records.

Mr. Speaker, I returned to Alberta for the last three years of my career in corrections and realized very quickly that things had not gotten any better since I left Alberta nine years earlier. The same kind of damage was happening here in Alberta with provincial departments under a previous government, with cuts to front-line staff and programs. For example, you no longer see work crews from the jails doing cleanup on the highways and secondary roads as you did in the past. There is no longer a work crew program, where inmates were hired as a crew to work on local farms. As time moved forward, things continued to get worse: cuts to front-line staff in hospitals and schools.

Despite the drastic cuts that were made, it was actually costing more. Nurses were being forced to work overtime on a regular basis to cover shifts despite not having sufficient rest between shifts. No time for oneself or family. Had these positions not been cut, the stress of working constant overtime, the possibility of mistakes because staff were exhausted would not have occurred. Patients would not be at risk because of the exhaustion that was created by being forced to work so much overtime.

Mr. Speaker, whether I was in the supermarket, walking in my neighbourhood, at the doctor's office, or even on the golf course,

conversations all around me were about how bad things were with the ongoing cuts to services and how the government must change.

A number of people asked me if I would consider running as I had a good understanding of the issues and could certainly represent their concerns and perhaps make change happen. I made the decision that I would run, and I retired from my position with the Correctional Service of Canada so that I could work full-time on a campaign. For 14 weeks prior to the May 5th election I went door to door, attended many events, and listened to Albertans. I continue to listen to Albertans and share their concerns with my colleagues in caucus and the ministries related to their issues.

Now, Mr. Speaker, to the specifics of the throne speech. With the current status of the economy being drastically affected by the price of oil, this throne speech lays out a plan for not just surviving the downturn in oil prices but thriving. It is a time to be encouraging businesses to grow. Not only is this a role that our government will be promoting, but this is a role that could easily be taken on by chambers of commerce in every single community. They could be encouraging local businesses to utilize the job incentive monies, to take advantage of the expanded access to workforce and skills training and retraining people facing unemployment so that they can upgrade their skills. We are all in this together, and we all need to be promoting job creation and economic diversification if we are to take advantage of this opportunity in our province.

In my community, as in every other community in Alberta, there is potential for growth. Growth does not happen unless we move on that potential. For example, in Lethbridge the thebaine poppy seed project has the potential of a \$5 billion industry. Our mayor has sought support from both provincial and federal governments. Our provincial government continues to liaise with the federal government for the required federal approval of the project before April 1 so that the project will be ready to go in time for this year's growing season.

There are projects at both university and college to provide more diverse opportunities, including a joint project in agriculture and growth in science programs, an example of which is the work done by Dr. David Naylor and his team on the Herschel SPIRE space program.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park; 29(2)(a)?

**Ms McKittrick:** Yes, please. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the MLA for Lethbridge-East about more of how the throne speech is helping her community of Lethbridge.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you to the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, since I didn't actually finish, I'm going to finish, and then I'll get to your question.

Dr. Naylor was the Canadian lead through the Canadian Space Agency on this world project. This kind of exposure to the world stage brings the university's programs and attracts incredible minds into these programs. This also helps to grow our local and provincial economy.

Mr. Speaker, there are groups in my constituency like Farming Smarter, the agricultural research centre who does the on-the-ground research to make the way we farm and our crops better. There are entrepreneurs in the city pursuing alternate energy: the biogas plant on the east side of Lethbridge. Wind, solar, thermal are being pursued by individuals and at the university. And, of course, there is the destination project at the university. All of these projects and forward-thinking people recognize that we need to invest in a greener, more sustainable economy. We recognize the need to diversify our energy markets. We need to supply the green energy for our own use as well as expanding market access. In Lethbridge

we know that, living in the Palliser Triangle, water is a precious commodity.

**10:00**

We know we have been successful in the agricultural industry because of the utilization of irrigation and protection of our water supply. We also know that this is the second year of very little moisture, either on the ground or in the mountains, which feeds our reservoirs. We know the importance of protecting this resource. This is why a group called No Drilling Lethbridge grew very quickly to stop a proposed project which had planned to frac within our city limits and under the Oldman River. The company pulled out because of the outcry of over 75 per cent of the population. My government understands the need for protection of our climate; hence, this is why our government introduced the climate leadership plan.

Mr. Speaker, there are vulnerable populations in my community as well: seniors, children, the homeless. This speech outlines that our government will not make things worse. We recognize that trying to survive on a single commodity whose price is controlled outside our borders is not a wise course of action. We will maintain excellent services for Albertans to protect our most vulnerable. Now is not the time to make things worse by cutting essential front-line services and staff.

Lethbridge sits on Treaty 7, Blackfoot territory, the edge of the largest reserve in Canada. Many of our indigenous brothers and sisters live in our community and deserve equal support. The vulnerabilities in our community are also their vulnerabilities; hence, the same supports are needed. Albertans are community minded, caring, and neighbourly. In tough times we always pull together. I can go on to each point, but I know I'll run out of time.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I was elected to represent my constituents and to make the best decisions I can given the circumstances which we are facing. I believe we can make the most of this situation by working together. We have an unlimited resource, and that is the people of this province. We can work through these tough times and thrive, and we will.

Now, I must acknowledge the support I have always received from my kids and grandkids, without which I could not go forward every day. It is also because of each of them and every constituent that I continue to fight for a better Alberta. I have also received and continue to receive support from my incredible staff and EDA. Sherry, Arie, Esther, Mary, Terry, Judy, Bob, Patti, Doreen, Johanna, Nick, Bev, Henning, Mark, Leona, Tom, and Anna: thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping me to be the best MLA I could possibly be.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Let me just draw to all members' attention that 29(2)(a) is really intended to be used as a response to specific questions from another member or additional information, so I want to remind everyone, when we're addressing that issue, to respond accordingly. Thank you very much.

The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to respond to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne. While this is the second throne speech delivered under this government, it is the first time that I've had the opportunity to respond since May of last year.

In the last 10 months we've started to see how this government intends to operate and the direction they would like to take us. Since last May I've spoken to thousands of Albertans both in my riding and the province at large. I've used these conversations to

get a sense of what Albertans feel about where we're headed under this government, as I hope my colleagues across the floor have as well.

With a year of trial and error under this government's belt the reviews are not good. The only guiding philosophy the NDP has seemed to display so far has been relentlessly extracting more money from the productive sector and Alberta's households. There has been an unrelenting focus on revenue, but on spending and the value all Albertans receive from spending we haven't seen any commitment to improvement. There's plenty to say about Alberta's spending problem, that has been created over several years of unrestrained, runaway budgets, but I'd like to touch on something that has been quite distressing to me about this government's attitude on the revenue side. There seems to be a pervasive view of the economy as nothing but a source for the government to tap. Through the raising of taxes on income, to taxes on consumption and the inputs of consumer goods, to increased fees on certain services and transactions, we've been told that Albertans are not doing enough for their government.

Albertans are having more of the burden of inefficiency and government bloat shifted onto their backs, and all the while the government has expressed an attitude that almost borders on entitlement when it comes to our hard-earned contributions. If they need more, they simply demand it from the people. The economy cannot bear these constant money grabs. The people of this province cannot be leaned on ever more heavily as they face the challenges within their own businesses, their own communities, and their own households.

The citizen of Alberta has a personal obligation to manage his or her finances prudently, cautiously, and carefully. The money left in Alberta households and businesses must be well spent because, frankly, there is no other alternative. There is no option but for families in this province to use what they have earned wisely, to scrutinize, to assess value returned on their own expenditures.

So I ask the NDP: why the lack of trust in the people of this province? Why the reluctance to unleash the human potential of Alberta? Why does this government feel that it knows better than the earners, job creators, and taxpayers that it is supposed to serve? We've seen the NDP government engage in a number of tactics and practices that it once spoke out loudly against. We've seen a further erosion of trustworthiness. Perhaps even more troubling than the loss of trust Albertans have in the government these days is the loss of trust the government has in Albertans.

As a province we find ourselves facing great hurdles in bureaucracy and taxation. We find it harder to thrive and grow at precisely the time when things need to be made simpler. The price of oil poses a challenge, yes. But these hurdles were not put up by the price of oil; they were put up by deliberate government actions. In all corners of this province I found one thing to be universally true: the people of Alberta are humble and determined. Albertans do not ask for more than a fair shake and equal chance. We've never shied away from hard work or a challenge.

We need a government that shows us the fundamental respect that leads to restraint. A government that respects its people is a government that knows its limits and stays within them. In my wide experience discussing these things with Albertans, it's clear that they are not asking for more than just an opportunity to show this famous resiliency. They want a government that acknowledges that they are and always have been the true drivers of the economy. The economic engine of this province is, thankfully, not determined by the government's coffers, which have been in a state of disarray for some time now. Albertan industry and commerce has managed to thrive in spite of flawed government fiscal management.

10:10

The throne speech promises more of the same erroneous thinking, that we can tax and spend our way to prosperity. Despite some misguided and failed experiments already, they seem undeterred in their quest to throw money around at risky and unfounded projects and programs. Mr. Speaker, this government has doubled down on its hubris, thinking itself far more wise and efficient than the people who make up this province. The NDP government has committed to picking winners and losers. They trumpet their ability to diversify the economy while displaying no particular joy or pride for what already exists. In fact, recent economic policy has done nothing but put the squeeze on productive, competitive, innovative enterprise. To borrow a famous line, the government's view of the economy could be summed up by three short phrases: if it moves, tax it; if it keeps moving, regulate it; and if it stops moving, subsidize it.

After creating barrier after barrier to economic growth in this province, methodically stripping away our competitive advantage, the NDP now sees fit to try to kick-start things the only way they know how: more intrusion, more spending. Having no sense of restraint themselves, they instead restrain the economic potential of Alberta. But, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that I know this province well, and I know that there are no people more capable of building a strong, resilient economy than Albertans. I implore this government to turn away from the temptation to intrude more and, instead, to give the people of the province the economic freedom to get to work, to build, to grow, and to prosper as Albertans always have.

Perhaps it's tempting when getting into this building to think that we have total power to solve every problem that arises. As nicely as the word "diversification" might tickle your ears, when governments dabble in the world of diversification by subsidy, they tend to create bad investment, skewed market incentives, and rent sinking. I have heard big dreams, but these are hardly backed up by any serious economic rationale. Precious little consideration has been given to value. When the NDP spends our money and that of future generations, are they doing it for just the sake of spending? Have they considered fiscal multipliers and whether they justify any public investment in their pet projects? Have they considered what measurable performance targets will be? In short, are they looking at this from the perspective of real, firm deliverables and value or just throwing around flashy numbers and unfounded hopes?

When Albertans are facing punishing increases in costs from the NDP's carbon tax – the PST in disguise – rising utility rates, increased prices of goods and services, and diminishing employment prospects, Albertans deserve better than vague assurances from the NDP government. They deserve a government that takes the stewardship of their dollar seriously and aims to return value for what they take and collect. And if the government relentlessly pursues its flawed economic strategies, refusing to show restraint and confront economic realities within its own finances, future generations – future generations – will ask why we did not give proper consideration to value. They will wonder why we were so committed to throwing good money after bad instead of thoughtfully asking if such priorities were actually well placed and well founded. Most of all, they will ask why we left them to pick up the tab for such folly.

This province could achieve great things now and for the future, Mr. Speaker, but it all hinges on putting the trust back in Albertans, where it belongs. If we wish to support the families, communities, and businesses of this province, we can begin by offering a level playing field and allowing the innate strength of our economy and exceptional ability of our residents to rise up and be in control.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to offer my response to the government's direction as outlined in their throne speech. I am honoured to once again represent Cypress-Medicine Hat in this House, and I promise that I will do all that I can to ensure that their voices are heard here every day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. I want to thank the member for the statement. We heard lots of talk about government finances. In particular, I enjoyed the discussion about Albertans and their strengths and how they're so hard-working and entrepreneurial and how they can really help us in this tough economy if they're given the chance.

Now, we have a government that brought forward Bill 1. This government talks about other bills being a waste of time, but when we look at Bill 1, we see that that's a real waste of time, so I want to get the member's opinion about that. You know, my thoughts on Bill 1, just in short, are that I guess that maybe this is described as a job description for the minister in charge of creating jobs, and since he's done nothing since he was appointed as minister, I would suggest that taxpayers are not getting their money's worth. This minister gets an extra \$60,000 or so a year to do his job, and of course he brought forward a failed jobs plan, so I would like to hear this member's opinion on that.

Also, I'd like to hear his discussion on the previous government, which, when we had a \$100 barrel of oil and all sorts of revenue, still spent more than they took in. This government now is spending even more than that. I'm wondering how they can ever expect to balance the budget when they're spending more than what the government did at \$100 a barrel. Carry on.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you for that question. Yeah, diversifying the economy: rules and regulations and the onerous, you know, costs that the extra government spending has caused have been exactly the wrong approach to what we need to do to diversify the economy, and more rules and regulations, more picking winners and losers are going to lead to the wrong way. The two questions are related.

The hon. member talked about the previous government's tendency to spend. You know, two things, to me, are important on that. There's a lot of information out there that shows Alberta on a per capita basis spends almost 20 per cent more than any other province. That 20 per cent more has led to many levels of bureaucracy, many levels of inefficiency. It's been very inflationary. We look at the almost 4.2 million Albertans at \$2,000 per year per person: that is \$8 billion in extra spending that could have been placed in the heritage trust fund. It could have been used to build necessary infrastructure to grow our economy or, best yet, left with Albertans to grow their businesses, to grow their communities.

You know, I've said it in the House before: we can debate whether we should have a heritage trust fund; we should have a trillion in the heritage trust fund. There are pros and cons on both sides, but the one thing that this exact situation has shown is the previous government's folly in not saving at least \$100 billion in the heritage trust fund. The interest annually on that \$100 billion would have gone a long way to offset the loss in oil and gas royalties right now and the loss in lease sales. I understand that the last time this government tried to sell some oil and gas leases, the net sales were zero, partly because of the uncertainty, partly because of the confidence that has been destroyed.

It would have been easy for the previous government to have saved that amount of money, I think, because they had over \$275 billion in royalties flow through their coffers since they were elected. With just the original \$16 billion, that was put aside in the late '70s, if they had just let the interest compound rather than directing this spending to bureaucracy, to picking winners and losers, it could have grown to well past \$200 billion.

Now we have a government that is doing exactly the same thing, a government that is not looking for the value when they spend, a government that is not recognizing the effort, the ingenuity, the creativity that wealth builders have put into building the wealth before they tax it and spend it without value top of mind.

10:20

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege and honour to rise here today to deliver to you and the other Members of this 29th Legislative Assembly my maiden speech as the Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for the impartiality that you bring to the chair. I believe that you represent the position with honour and distinction, and I wish you the best as we continue on this legislative journey together.

To the residents, neighbours, colleagues, and friends of Calgary-Northern Hills, thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you in this Assembly. During the election campaign I met many of the constituency's teachers, health care workers, construction workers, oil and gas sector workers, postal employees, parents and grandparents, community advocates, and the others that were ready for change and who expressed that desire at the ballot box last May. I was honoured when the constituents of Calgary-Northern Hills placed their trust in me, and I have continued to work every day to represent the constituency to the best of my abilities.

Calgary-Northern Hills is an electoral district on the northern edge of the city and comprises the neighbourhoods of Panorama Hills, Coventry Hills, Country Hills, Country Hills Village, and Harvest Hills. Also among the hills there is the community of Hanson Ranch in Hidden Valley, which happens to be the neighbourhood where I live. Calgary-Northern Hills is one of the newest areas of the city and has grown rapidly in the last two decades.

The 2011 Canadian census indicates that the area is exceptionally diverse, with only 42 per cent of residents born in Alberta. Take a walk along the streets of Northern Hills and you might hear Cantonese, Mandarin, Punjabi, Spanish, or one of many languages spoken by Canada's indigenous peoples. You'll find restaurants serving cuisine from around the world: Vietnamese, Chinese, East Indian, Korean, Thai, Japanese, and the two delicious shawarma shops from the Middle East. I've come to rely on these restaurants more and more since being elected as I'm finding it increasingly difficult to keep fresh food in my refrigerator. However, this does provide the perfect opportunity to sample the fine cuisine in Northern Hills.

Like many of my constituents in Calgary-Northern Hills, I came from a different region of the country to make Alberta my home, moving here for the unparalleled opportunities that Alberta has to offer when it comes to employment, lifestyle, and outdoor recreation. Not long after I transferred to work at Calgary's airport, I moved to a newly built neighbourhood in Cochrane. Shortfalls in service to newer neighbourhoods motivated me to get involved in local politics. During my run for a position on Cochrane's town council I learned much from others wrestling with how to best

provide public services, maintain quality of life, and manage tax rates amid a rapid population growth and nonstop urban development and infrastructure debt.

In the 2012 provincial election, as the NDP candidate in the riding of Banff-Cochrane, I was able to speak to the issues of the day and gain experience with which to serve the community in the years that followed, as my friend the Member for Banff-Cochrane can likely attest to today.

One aspect of greatest concern to rural residents was land-use planning, particularly in the Ghost valley, where the community has always advocated strongly for watershed health, wildlife habitat, and wetland protection. I know that the hon. member is a strong advocate for these issues as well, and I'm glad to work with him in the House on these issues, particularly relevant to our community as we are downstream from these resources and watersheds.

In 2014 my Cochrane neighbours and I founded a community association to advocate for path systems, road networks, and neighbourhood safety. We attempted to hold land developers responsible for fulfilling their commitments when building communities. This experience taught me that neighbourhoods must be good for people who live in them, not just for those that build them. Ideally, ways can be found to create win-win solutions for everybody, but good planning and follow-through are required.

Eventually I moved to Calgary-Northern Hills to be closer to my place of employment and airline colleagues. Shortly after the provincial election was announced for the spring of 2015, I again put my name forward as the NDP candidate. Between door-knocking and meeting with those active in the Northern Hills Community Association, one of the biggest in the city, I learned of the community's priorities.

At the door and at the community forums residents repeatedly told me that the area lacked school facilities even though 15 years earlier a public high school had been promised, with land already designated by the city for that purpose. Yet schoolchildren continued to endure long bus rides to other high schools in distant neighbourhoods. As a result, youth find it a challenge to participate in extracurricular activities with their school peers, potentially leading to feelings of social isolation. While it has been a long-time concern, I was encouraged to see that the Calgary board of education has recently designated a north-central high school for year 1 of its most recent three-year capital plan, 2017-2020, for capital priorities in new school construction.

In the constituency of Calgary-Northern Hills empty grass fields mark our infrastructure debt, the legacy of a previous government's neglect. With our government's commitment to invest in our provincial capital plan, these empty fields now give me hope.

One particular grassy field is designated for a north Calgary health centre. A decade of inaction means that over 50,000 residents travel to other neighbourhoods for health care, often to community clinics and sometimes to emergency rooms at the Peter Lougheed Centre and the Foothills medical centre. A significant number of residents from northern Calgary report travelling to Airdrie regional health centre for their health care needs as well. The residents of Calgary-Northern Hills would be better served by a community health centre on a designated site in Northern Hills. Such a health centre would take the pressure off facilities in the city and allow the system to run much more economically and provide needed care in a timely manner.

Calgary-Northern Hills is playing catch-up after two decades of rapid growth and shortfalls in capital investment. Fortunately, the community possesses a wealth of talented and engaged community members focused on bringing health, transportation, and educational services to the community. Those who volunteer with the Northern Hills Community Association and the Hidden Valley

Community Association demonstrate dedicated hard work and time commitment that are nothing short of inspiring. The future of Calgary-Northern Hills is bright with these passionate residents advocating for their community.

The Nose Creek Sports and Recreation Association is a living example of this community spirit. This not-for-profit organization was founded to spearhead the development of a community recreation facility. The organization has since evolved into a self-sustaining charity, Vivo for Healthier Generations, whose mandate is to help individuals and families in north-central Calgary live their best, healthiest lives, and is committed to pioneering solutions to get all Calgarians more physically active. The employees, play ambassadors, and volunteers that operate the organization have made it the hub for our diverse community in Calgary-Northern Hills, hosting events such as Vivo Culture Fest and making space available to other organizations who in turn host different events such as Chinese New Year Riddle Guessing Festival and an event called One Nation, which is a meet-and-greet to increase understanding of Muslim culture, food, and traditions.

During the Calgary Stampede as MLA for Calgary-Northern Hills I carry on the tradition of partnering with Vivo to host one of the biggest Stampede breakfasts in the city, feeding over 2,000 people while providing entertainment, bouncy castles, and fun for all.

10:30

I'm grateful to the many Calgary-Northern Hills residents who have worked so hard to establish and maintain our community's recreational facilities and after school programs, language courses, and seniors' programming in Calgary-Northern Hills. As an MLA I will continue to work with these outstanding community members to advocate for more schools, a much-needed community health centre, and the construction of the LRT green line, which will connect our communities to the core of the city.

Mr. Speaker, I'd now like to take a moment to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I believe it lays out a bold vision for the province as we begin the Second Session of the 29th Legislature. The throne speech references to income security, diversification, and job creation indicate that the government will take meaningful action to address concerns voiced by my constituents. The throne speech promises to invest \$34 billion into our provincial capital plan in order to build the roads, transit, schools, and other facilities we need to support the quality of life of a growing population. Not only could these capital projects address many of the infrastructure shortfalls in Calgary-Northern Hills; they will promote job creation and economic diversification.

Just as many Albertans are, my constituents are struggling with job losses and underemployment. It is reassuring to hear in the Speech from the Throne that our government will vigorously urge the new federal government to reconsider federal employment insurance rules that exclude too many Albertans from benefits. A successful outcome would provide much-needed relief to residents of Calgary-Northern Hills and the many other Albertans affected by the downturn in the oil and gas sector.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to conclude by taking a moment to mention a political role model from my youth, someone who inspired me to join the New Democrats. During trying economic times the people of Saskatchewan elected an NDP government. The words of Premier Roy Romanow's 1991 victory speech made deep impressions on me. He said then: "It will take a lot of hard work, a lot of tough decisions, and a little bit of luck, but I'm confident that we the people of Saskatchewan can do it. We shall do it. We shall overcome our obstacles and rebuild." Following that victory speech

the NDP in the province of Saskatchewan left a series of surpluses nearly a decade long and formed government for over 15 years.

It's true that Alberta has elected an NDP government for the first time ever, but like the people of Saskatchewan, we the people of Alberta can build an economy that is widely diversified and resilient to the energy price swings, just as the Speech from the Throne describes. We can build an economy that captures the full value of our resources, holds the promise of prosperous futures for our children, and shares the benefits widely and fairly among all Albertans. I will work to help make this vision a reality.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time to speak.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Yes, please. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my seatmate. A superb speech, I think one that's invigorated at least this side of the House.

I want to follow up on what you were talking about towards the end of your talk. It can be argued that the prosperity that Saskatchewan enjoyed from 2007 until recently was the product of the wisdom of the Romanow and Calvert NDP governments in Saskatchewan. They balanced the budget and helped Saskatchewan reap the benefit of natural resources revenue from potash and oil and gas. To my seatmate: do you think that our royalty review and the diversification plans that are well under way will lead to future prosperity similar to that that was seen in Saskatchewan with the Romanow government?

**Mr. Kleinstaub:** Well, thank you to my colleague here and fellow seatmate and member. Being a student at the time, back in the '90s, I think the Romanow government was a particularly inspiring government to learn from as a political and economics student, particularly also with some of the constitutional issues that were widely discussed at the time with the '95 referendum. He was a particularly strong advocate for Canada. Being a resident from Ottawa U at the time, it left a particular impression on me.

I think the Saskatchewan government had a bit of a rough start in the sense that they inherited a pretty rough financial picture, similar to what we've seen in this place. I think that with a lot of hard work and determination, we can definitely learn from that government and the experiences and the positive impression it left on that province, and hopefully we also can share a similar success story here in this province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I also want to congratulate my colleague. He mentioned my riding and the work that he had done in my riding in the 2012 election, and I'd like to thank him for sort of laying some of the groundwork, for going out and meeting people in the community and establishing those kinds of connections.

He also talked a little bit about watersheds and the importance of protecting our natural landscape, and I wonder if the member can talk a little bit more about the work that he did while he was in the community.

**Mr. Kleinstaub:** Thank you again to another colleague and member here in the Legislature. Yes, during my time in Cochrane it was a good chance to gain a lot of political experience and work with some of the organizations and groups out there, particularly learning how to advocate for organizations and communities that

hold sort of special relationships to the town and community. But I think that, more importantly, now that I'm living downstream in Calgary, some of the experiences from that time, concerns about watershed health and environment, definitely hold true as much then as now on the water quality that the city of Calgary and all of the residents there definitely need. Yeah, I think that these experiences are well placed and have helped me along in my experience and career so far.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Calgary-Northern Hills. I really appreciated your maiden speech and want to congratulate you on it. I wanted to ask you a little bit about maybe some of the experiences that you've had with constituents that you've met with. Perhaps you could share a few anecdotes of those experiences with us.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Kleinstaubert:** Yes. Thank you also to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. Definitely, since the campaign I've met with a lot of constituents and as well in the office worked with a lot of people that have had a lot of concerns with some of the resources available.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. Member for West Yellowhead, please proceed.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Is it okay if I remain sitting?

**The Speaker:** Yes. Hon. members, the member has recently had surgery. I passed a note, and I agree. Please proceed from your seat.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I have to congratulate you on being elected as Speaker of this great House. I would like to also recognize and congratulate the Deputy Speaker. You both have been doing a fantastic job keeping order and decorum in this Assembly and have shown great impartiality.

I rise with great pride today to give my maiden speech on behalf of the citizens of West Yellowhead. Eighteen individuals have represented this geographical area before me, and I'm honoured to be number 19. I believe that West Yellowhead is one of the most diverse and complex constituencies in Alberta. The constituency is large, covering an area of 37,331 square kilometres. Starting in the east, the constituency begins at range road 160, which is near Wolf Lake, and then goes all the way to the B.C. border. The southern boundary is the Brazeau River and ends north of Grande Cache at the Smoky River.

10:40

Mr. Speaker, my constituency is made up of the following major municipalities – Edson, Hinton, Grande Cache, and Jasper – as well as a few smaller communities, including Cadomin, Robb, Brûle, Carldale, and Millers Lake. All of these areas, big and small, consist of Albertans who work and play right here in our great province. Like the rest of Alberta, the prolonged economic slowdown our province currently finds itself in has not left our constituency untouched, but my constituents have all seen a drop in the price of oil before and know that we'll get past this one as well.

Mr. Speaker, when I tell you that my West Yellowhead constituency represents a snapshot of all aspects of our province's economy, I'm not kidding. My constituents work in industries and businesses that include forestry, coal mining, oil and gas, tourism, and recreation, all the while playing in the beautiful and world-

renowned Jasper national park, in many wildland parks such as Willmore and Whitehorse, in provincial parks that are scattered throughout the constituency, and also in their own backyards.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, as you approach the constituency from the east, you enter the prominent town of Edson, a town that is home to Weyerhaeuser, a strandboard mill that utilizes poplar trees in the constituency; a West Fraser dimensional sawmill and furniture product manufacturer that also supplies wood chips to the Hinton pulp mill; Coal Valley coal, a mine located south of Edson that produces lower grade coal that is primarily shipped overseas to China for the production of power and steel. The Duvernay gas field is also within this area. All of this industrial activity employs and provides spinoff jobs to the community in and around Edson.

Also, Mr. Speaker, approximately 975 farms and ranches surround this section of West Yellowhead and add to the agricultural industry of this great province.

Edson is also a recreational community that has prominent sales in all-terrain and recreational vehicles. It also features the upcoming completion of the Edson hospital this spring, Mr. Speaker, and has a plan to replace the pre-existing Dakin elementary school infrastructure. It is our hope that the province addresses this town's dire need for additional seniors' housing and works together with the Evergreens society at expanding current facilities such as the Parkland Seniors' Lodge.

Hinton, west of Edson, is also in need of additional seniors' housing as the Pine Valley Seniors' Lodge is in dire need of expansion while the Good Samaritan Society requires improved measures for providing its residents with consistent, quality care. Hinton, which I'm proud to call home, provided Alberta with its first pulp mill in 1956. It continues to strive as a resource-based town consisting of the West Fraser pulp mill and sawmill; West Fraser forestry and silviculture division; Teck coal, which is metallurgical coal; and it has many gas fields. It is home to the original forestry centre, a facility that has world-renowned training for forest firefighters and for their pilots, using the centre's flight-simulation technology, a facility that is looking to expand.

Nestled in the foothills, Hinton has a unique community of partners making up the forestry research institute, an institute that aims to drive Alberta towards sustainable land and resource management through increased research on the mountain pine beetle, grizzly bear study, caribou study, to name a few. Industry and government funding continues to be needed to pursue further research that will directly affect and impact our province as well as the rest of Canada.

Forest recreation, Mr. Speaker, is also key to the local economy within the foothills. Hunting, fishing, recreational activities, and annual events such as the Wild Mountain Music Festival attract hamlets of people to the region. The government of Alberta needs to actively continue to address the environmental impact and damage of random camping, ATV use, as well as the increased risk of forest fires.

Heading north up scenic highway 40 leads to Grande Cache. Mr. Speaker, with the recent shutdown of Grande Cache Coal in December the town has increased reliance on its production of dimensional lumber and pellets through Foothills Forest Products and its possible investment into a shakes mill, oil and gas, the Grande Cache Institution, the Maxim Power plant, and the spinoff industries within the surrounding area.

With the airport closure the town of Grande Cache has an ever-growing need to attract tourism and thus holds events such as the Canadian Death Race on an annual basis. West Yellowhead already has a strong tourism base, and we know that in this period of economic decline and with the low Canadian dollar tourism is an industry that is going to continue to grow faster than ever before.

The government of Alberta needs to continue to work with the town council and local citizens to address the closure of the coal mine and airport, and as the representative I'll continue to fight for the success here in the Assembly every day. Despite these minor setbacks I'm confident that our government's plan to promote job creation and economic diversification will help the people of West Yellowhead to get back on their feet. Our government's commitment to build on our strength in agriculture and forestry will be of particular importance to my constituents as we go forward. Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to the introduction of Budget 2016 and promises, mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, to expand access to workforce skills training and retraining. I expect many of my constituents will be interested in taking advantage of these measures.

Lying in the heart of Jasper national park, Mr. Speaker, is the picturesque community of Jasper. As an international tourism destination Jasper national park boasts some of the most photographed sites in the world, from Maligne Lake and Spirit Island to the local wildlife, Marmot Basin, Jasper in January. Jasper has a small-town infrastructure that attempts to host thousands of tourists. I'm confident that our government's investment of \$34 billion into the provincial capital plan will finally start to address the pressures on our local infrastructure and help us to build the roads, transit, and other facilities that are so badly needed.

As I've stated, Mr. Speaker, the West Yellowhead constituency is diverse, and a large aspect of the diversity is the First Nations peoples. Alberta contains eight Métis settlements; however, none are within West Yellowhead. There are, however, many indigenous peoples that live in the many communities and smaller hamlets throughout. When Jasper national park was created, a few of the First Nations indigenous people that were living and operating in the park were evicted to the area in and around Grande Cache. This relocation has left some of the people very bitter and has left an overall distrust of both the provincial and federal governments, and thus some are not very co-operative when meeting with government officials. Who could blame them?

There are also two larger settlements located within the constituency, one being southwest of Robb, and it's called the Alexis Cardinal River 234, and the other settlement is Alexis Elk River 233. These settlements rely on the hunting and trapping pursuits in their respective areas. The Aseniwuche group is a small group of indigenous people within the constituency that represents its members. This group receives money from the province and uses the funding for its members. I'm currently setting up meetings with the Aseniwuche group to better understand their function in relationship to the many other First Nations in the constituency.

Another issue, Mr. Speaker, in West Yellowhead is the issue of the co-ops. In most cases they lack the ability to raise funding to pay taxes and barely exist on the hunting and trapping that is practised. In some instances they have sold gravel to different companies to raise money. In some situations the money was never paid, and they were left to now deal with the large open pits that they cannot afford to remediate.

There's also a huge mistrust in the hunting community between the First Nations peoples, whose right to subsistence hunting and fishing is constitutionally protected, and other citizens who recreationally hunt. We need to ensure that we're all being effective stewards of the land, air, and water, and ensuring that our wildlife is properly managed as well is part of this equation.

10:50

Some groups of people, including poachers, Mr. Speaker, are disregarding the important role that our wildlife plays and have gone into certain areas and have taken all wildlife they could, in

amounts to fill a reefer truck. Thus the opposing points of view and different regulations have created many issues regarding big-game bag limits and the number of tags issued to Alberta hunters. Also adding to this situation is the number of guides and their allotted tag limits, which are issued to non-Canadian hunters. Many non-Canadian hunters support the local economy of West Yellowhead as they spend large amounts of money on purchasing tags, gas, food, and lodging.

Another area of mistrust, Mr. Speaker, involves the many confrontations on the application of the floods, forest land-use zones, and the many PLUZs, public land-use zones, that were created, and many of the wildlife management units.

So, Mr. Speaker, there has to be negotiation between these groups of individuals. Fairness needs to be applied to ensure that there's enough big game to be shared and the wildlife in the area is managed to sustain their respective populations. It has been my intent to meet with all these indigenous peoples and try to gain a better understanding of their needs. Better rapport and trust needs to be established so we can effectively work with them, try to find solutions regarding these and future problems.

Mr. Speaker, my journey into politics has been long. I believe it originated back in Saskatchewan when I was growing up on the family mixed farm. My father was a CCF supporter because my parents were raising a large family and issues of health care were always front and centre. When the party was changed to the NDP, I can still remember my father telling us that we need to vote NDP. As a result, there were many prominent NDP people that enjoyed the fruits of the family farm over the many years.

I graduated high school in Turtleford, Saskatchewan, went to college at Vermilion. It was called Vermilion agricultural and vocational college. Growing up on the family farm fostered a commitment and work ethic. There was no question. If you wanted to eat, you'd better do as you were told, no argument. That's the way it was. The success of the family farm was dependent on that philosophy.

It was this experience growing up on the family farm that was one of the major driving forces for my support for the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act last year. All workers deserve basic protection on the job, and I'm proud that our government was able to pass this important legislation.

At the college I entered the renewable resources and wildlife management technology program. The goal was to become a fish and wildlife officer. During the spring and summer of '72 I ended up, however, going to a forestry company in B.C. as they wanted farm people with an excellent work ethic and were not afraid of the bush. I received training as a timber cruiser and had to try out for the different positions. During the first week of training I was going with this long-legged forester who could literally run through the bush, leaving me behind in most cases. I thought I was going to die trying to keep up with him. I persevered and became the head compass man of one of the crews, and later that fall I returned to college after I stayed over in Quesnel for a longer period because they wanted me to finish up some work there. I graduated in the spring of '73. During my two years of college it was one thing that stood out. You had to be successful and basically never give up.

During my college years I put my name in the farm labour pools to work throughout the area . . . [Mr. Rosendahl's speaking time expired]

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just very interested in what the member is saying about his history in this province in a



very important area of forestry and in the rural communities, and I'd really love to hear a little bit more. I wonder if you might have something more you could add to it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you. Well, I eventually ended up working for provincial parks for a short time frame, and I eventually ended up working at the Hinton pulp mill for 32 years, where I got my third-class steam engineering certificate. During that time frame I worked for the union, covering many positions. Throughout my time there I was shop steward, chief shop steward, vice-president, covered the president position, presented grievances with the rep to arbitration, chairperson of the grievance committee, health and safety committee, chairperson of the environment committee, chairperson of the advisory committee on the environment, union chair on forest resource advisory committee, and sat on many negotiations.

I also worked with the AFL during that time frame. I was one of the main members that formed the AFL environment committee. I also worked on the AFL healthy and safety committee. I was also chair of the water caucus committee representing workers in this province. I was also the chair of the forestry caucus committee that represented workers in this province. Through that time I was also president of the Yellowhead labour council and sat on many functions for the Alberta Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress.

Through all of my union involvement I ended up becoming the president of the NDP federally and provincially in the riding. I was very busy, needless to say. A lot of friends and family called me Mr. Meeting. I was either at a meeting, coming home from a meeting, or organizing more of them.

So, basically, that's what I've done over the years. Also, I was president of Hinton Fish and Game for many years, and I'm a lifetime member of AHEIA, which is the Alberta Hunter Education Instructors Association. Through that organization we train new hunters and fisherpeople in the province, and through that organization I've been on many committees and organized things on behalf of those committees. I've also sat on many other organizations in the community, Hinton Search and Rescue, and so on and so forth. The list goes on forever. We also sat on many negotiations with the government on many things: Whitehorse wildland park, negotiating and discussion on other parks, provincial parks, and all those kind of things. So it's been forever since I've been involved.

I hope that answers the question.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, it's great to hear about the member's constituency. I think we can all agree it's a very beautiful part of Alberta. I do enjoy going there myself and enjoying mountains and the fresh air and the scenery there, too. It's beautiful.

I was interested to hear about the forestry background. Of course, I have a great amount of respect for timber cruisers because of the work that they do, and it's hard physical labour. You mentioned about the pine beetle and the concern that it has been. I'd like to hear the member's opinion about the pine beetle and how the past federal and past provincial governments had worked with this issue and if he had any ideas on solving this.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** The pine beetle is of huge concern. It's basically damaged the forestry in B.C., and it is spreading into the province of Alberta. We have a large amount of money that's being spent by

the provincial government in the battle of the beetle. We had a meeting this spring that was organized through myself and the mayor of Hinton to get everybody together so that we had a better understanding as to exactly what's going on. In some areas we are winning the battle. In some areas, however, we are not, and that is a huge concern. The thing is that it's an issue that we're working on with the federal park, Jasper national park. They need to address some of the concerns there as it is spreading over into . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I just wanted to reflect again on 29(2)(a). I'll just read you the last part of it: "to allow Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses to each Member's questions and comments."

I would recognize the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**11:00**

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am privileged to represent the wonderful people of the riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. The area is home to families who came here because Alberta had a climate of opportunity that was attractive to hard-working people. Along the eastern boundary of my riding you'll find the communities of Delburne, Lousana, Elnora, surrounded by rolling prairie and farms and ranches. It might be of interest that in little, tiny Delburne there is a factory named Noise Solutions that builds equipment for NASA space flights, right here in Alberta. These communities were settled in the early 1900s by immigrants seeking a new life and the freedom to own land, freedom and a climate of opportunity that was unavailable to them in Europe, where feudalism and socialism barred any rights people had to their own land.

Moving westward, we come to Pine Lake. It is a small but vibrant retirement and resort community known for great fishing in summer and winter.

In the southern part of my riding is the village of Bowden. The Bowden Daze rodeo is important to the area, and local cowboy Ky Marshall placed first in the Canadian professional association bareback challenge in Bowden this summer. Around Bowden we have long-time farming families, the Marshall and the Anderson families and many others, that are known for helping out whenever there's a community event or a community need. Bowden folks are very excited this year to be building their first-ever home with Habitat for Humanity.

Northward we come to Innisfail. It is the service hub to central Alberta ranchers and farmers, and here you're going to find some of the oldest Alberta family farms in the province still in operation, farms that have survived drought, depression, hail, BSE, and so far a socialist government. Antler Valley Farm, established by the McAllisters, was started before Alberta was even a province, and it is still owned by the McAllisters and still producing grain to this day.

The Daines family settled in 1911. It's famous for the Daines rodeo, the Daines auction market. We have the Edgar family. Founded in 1907, they host the famous asparagus festival right here in Alberta in the early spring of each year. You didn't know that, did you?

The area is also home to members of the Amish community, and we have the Rainbow and Pine Hill Hutterite colonies, integral partners in our farming community.

In the industrial sector of the town Johns Manville Canada employs a great many people making fibreglass insulation, and northwest pipe is a large supplier to the oil field sector.

Northward we come to Penhold and Springbrook, two of Alberta's fastest growing communities. It's attractive there to

young families just starting out in life. It's also home to Sky Wings Aviation and the Red Deer regional airport. What you may not know is that the Red Deer regional airport employs 225 people and contributes about a hundred million dollars annually to the local economy. As part of its mandate to be the aviation gateway for central Alberta, this airport is scheduled for a runway extension that will permit Boeing 737 service daily to Red Deer.

The western boundary is formed by the Red Deer River, where one can enjoy canoeing and fishing and the vista of the majestic Rocky Mountains. You would really enjoy a country drive in the summer to the hamlet of Markerville. It was settled in 1888 by industrious pioneers from Iceland. We have Vikings in Alberta. They were drawn here by our climate of opportunity. You have to pay a visit to the historic Stephansson House and enjoy the many flavours of ice cream sold at the creamery, which ran continuously from 1901 to 1972, and it is still a café today.

At beautiful Gleniffer Lake resort and Dickson dam you can find recreation fun all summer long. It is home to the award-winning Danish-Canadian National Museum and gardens. Dickson was originally settled in 1903 by Vikings, 17 Danish families, and in the following 10 years more Viking families were drawn here by the climate of opportunity.

Next we come to Spruce View, settled by – you guessed it – more Vikings. It is the service hub for surrounding farms and ranches, and it is home to the wild rose women's institute. No connection. Well, not exactly a connection. Long-time farm families, the Hillmans and the Thompson seed farm, and many skilled artisans actually live in the Spruce View area. It was also home to the Spruce View bachelors of paradise, which was founded during the Depression years of the 1930s because men in the area were too poor to get married. They're thinking of resurrecting it once again given the economic climate.

It's also home to the Tivoli Garden Cafe, famous for its Friday night authentic Mediterranean dishes. It's owned and operated by Lina and Samir Bou Saleh, who came here from Lebanon because Alberta offered a climate of opportunity to make a new life for their family. They just celebrated their 10th anniversary. My congratulations to Lina and Samir.

On the northern boundary is beautiful Sylvan Lake, and on its shores are the Nornglenwold, Birchcliff, Jarvis Bay provincial park, and the town of Sylvan Lake. Sylvan Lake is a young community, with 30 per cent of the population under the age of 19. The median age of our population is only 32. It is rated as the fastest growing rural community in Canada, and our growth averages about 4.5 per cent per year over year, with projections to reach 20,000 people by 2022, just a few short years away. Frankly, our needs for expanded drinking water, waste water, and 24-hour urgent care have not been properly addressed by the provincial government even during our boom times.

Now, tourism was strangely absent in the throne speech, yet it is a significant economic driver in Sylvan Lake. Our lake is arguably Alberta's most popular water playground, attracting 900,000 tourists annually during summer and winter for ice fishing and snowmobiling. Did I say that this town still lacks an urgent care facility?

Sylvan Lake is home to Alberta's most enthusiastic mayor, Sean McIntyre. Yes, we're related, but about 200 years ago. He may have been seen jumping into the icy waters with his fellow councillors during last year's polar bear dip to raise money for charity. In our area we also have the famous hockey family, the Sutters. They're well known around the town of Sylvan Lake. Sylvan Lake actually won last year's Kraft Hockeyville competition, and now we're busy building a new multiplex recreation centre. We are also home to two of the world's most famous ice cream stores, Big Moo and

More Moo. How many people have been to Big Moo and More Moo, right? Everybody. Did I say that this town still lacks an urgent care facility?

This riding is home to farmers, ranchers, oil and gas workers, teachers, health care workers, manufacturing workers employed in many industrial parks along Burnt Lake trail and highway 2 corridor. These are hard-working people, Mr. Speaker, who've invested their lives in this province because once upon a time it offered a climate of opportunity. They are struggling beneath the challenges of this current economy, aggravated by political instability and the pollution of that climate of opportunity that once epitomized our province. But these are hard-core Albertans, Vikings many of them, tough people, common-sense people that hold to the historical values of family and faith that made this province great. They will not give up, and I am privileged to be their voice in this place.

Now, in addition, I'm also responsible for the shadow portfolio of electricity and renewable technologies. Prior to politics I worked at NAIT in the alternative energy technology program. Based on the research we conducted in building that excellent program, I recommend that as this government forges ahead in its green revolution, it must take the time to accurately calculate the adverse economic impact to our already struggling economy. Any successful businessman knows that you have to perform a thorough SWOT analysis to really understand your risks, opportunities, and potentials for success.

I have asked various ministers repeatedly over the last number of months for their economic research, to table their cost-benefit analysis on the human cost of their energy policies and the economic cost of their economic policies and energy policies. To date this government has refused to provide that research, and now we know why. It was never conducted. Worse, this government refuses to accept that without such thorough analysis they are blind. They neither see the pitfalls, but they also do not see the opportunities right in front of them.

The incompetence of this government is profound, and the mounting devastation upon the hard-working people of my riding is equally profound. Fifteen organizations, comprised of thousands of businesspeople who grasp the value of research, have recently pleaded with this government to open its eyes. Will this government listen to the real job creators or continue to listen to so-called experts who told them last November to trust that oil would be \$50 today? Hello. Wake up.

In addition to economic analysis it is also absolutely necessary to take the time to accurately assess the human cost in moving forward with economic and green energy policies that can and will destabilize our people and threaten their personal investments in homes, businesses, and even their children's future. The primary responsibility of government in a democracy is to care for the well-being of its people. The overarching focus and litmus test of any energy management plan, including our own, must consider the well-being of all our people.

**11:10**

If I may, I'd like to give this House just a sample of what you could learn if you attended NAIT's program in the area of energy management planning. Alberta's electricity system is a complex blend of regulated and deregulated services. Its blended design was intended to provide Albertans and our business sector with stable, reliable electricity, priced at a level that was affordable for homeowners and also priced to keep our industries' goods and services competitively priced in a global marketplace. In addition, the system had to keep pace with our growing population and our growing industrial load without the need for the government of

Alberta to accumulate debt in building generation and transmission infrastructure.

In all of these criteria our electricity sector has proven successful, and the competitive nature of the Balancing Pool forced the players to constantly upgrade and improve their efficiencies. That, Mr. Speaker, is the beauty of open competition in a capitalist free market. By its very design the players always challenge each other to do better to remain in business.

I should add here that over time the practitioners of energy management have found some nonnegotiable principles which, if followed, can almost guarantee the sustainable success of an energy management plan. Conversely, if even one of these principles is not followed, the plan will not be sustainable for long, and it will fail.

Now, time doesn't permit me to go into detail here, but please consider at least a few proven principles. One, begin by using less. That is the beginning point of any energy management plan. A sustainable reduction in energy consumption through energy efficiency measures throughout an economy has proven to provide more jobs and sustain more economic activity, more innovation, more new small local businesses, and reduce pollution and energy waste more than any other component of a green economy plan. Begin by using less.

Two, create a competitive power market that results in affordable and stable energy costs. We already had this. It was in place, and it was working mostly fine until this government began meddling in it. Recent statements by the Premier regarding the power purchase agreements cancelled by Enmax and TransCanada provide proof positive that this government does not understand PPAs or our electricity system and is systematically engineering the demise of thousands of jobs and entire communities when we can least afford it.

Three, improve energy productivity and energy product quality. What does this mean? Well, there are proven market-ready technologies available to us today whose efficiencies far outperform conventional centralized generation. I'm talking about microgeneration, existing resource wells to generate power, run-of-the-river microhydro, microgeneration using modularized combined heat and power for new and existing developments. These eliminate the need for large transmission infrastructure at efficiencies that are more than double the current generation methods. These are significant.

These three proven principles that I've talked about – and there are more – are also couched beneath two overarching nonnegotiable principles, requiring that (a) the implementation process must do no harm; in other words, the process of transition must not adversely disrupt the economics, workflow, or quality of the region being transitioned; (b) the plan must achieve universal buy-in. This step is the most difficult of all yet also the most important, and unless everyone in the region takes voluntary ownership of the goals of the plan and everyone contributes to the thousands of small and large changes required to reach these goals, the plan will be destined for failure. Forcing a top-down plan fails every time. Ontario is one of the many places where that's being proven.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I and my Wildrose colleagues believe we can responsibly take Alberta forward in a manner that capitalizes on our current strengths, our current economic drivers and job creators, and works with them to gently move Alberta to an energy-efficient economy, doing no harm, substantially less reliant on carbon-based fuels, substantially more reliant on sustainable renewable energy sources, substantially more diversified in our energy portfolio, and strengthened by the wealth creation.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky on 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to hear about your constituency, fellow colleague. It's probably never happened that the word "Viking" has been used so many times in one speech here in this House, but I did enjoy hearing about your experience and your ideas on energy efficiencies, and I would hope that the government maybe will lean on you for some advice with the experience that you have. I would like to hear maybe a little bit of your background, your career and that sort of thing in this regard, and then maybe some additional comments you may have on energy efficiencies that could be used.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, and thank you to the hon. member. My background is in renewable technologies. I was sort of pulled into it by accident. I suffered an accident and couldn't work very well. I went and took some training and fell in love with renewable technologies and just started out down that pathway and ended up overseas as a consultant and then advising both the Israeli government and other jurisdictions around that area. I've done work in Jordan, Egypt, Malta, places in the States, and across Canada here within that technology field.

Then when NAIT was building their alternative energy program, they asked me to come onboard to help them develop that program and then eventually teach it. Then I got elected, and here I am. [interjection] And now I'm trying to teach here, right?

I honestly believe that renewable technologies have a very vital place at play in any energy market, but I also believe that the industries that surround renewable technologies must not be artificially propped up by subsidies or other burdens placed upon the taxpayers or the ratepayers. If they can compete head-to-head, then that is actually going to develop the strongest renewable industries that we have. I believe, like I said in my speech, that energy efficiency is the place to really start. We don't start by piling on high-technology generation to an inefficient system, where we are basically wasting energy.

Energy savings is actually the most valuable energy that there is. It's referred to in the industry as negawatts. You may have never heard the term before, but instead of megawatts it's negawatts, and it is the most valuable form of electricity that's out there. It's the power you don't use. This is where this government I hope would begin, rather than subsidizing all kinds of alternative energy technologies when we haven't fully maximized or optimized the energy we currently use. So to these ends, I'm going to continue to fiercely stand up for the best interests of the people of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and the best interests of the ratepayers for energy in this province.

I'll just bring one more thing to note here. Did you know – I don't know if the House knows this – that back in November industry volunteered to dial down coal-fired generation, that it was somewhere around, I believe, 20 per cent across the entire coal fleet, without compensation, without job loss, and without impacting power prices, and was flatly refused by this government? They offered to dial down. It just boggles my mind that this government hasn't got a clue about business or economics or our electricity sector or the impact of taxation on creating jobs. They had an opportunity to immediately reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Had they followed through, they would have been reducing greenhouse gas emissions immediately, starting last November, by .75 megatonnes per month. Since November.

Unfortunately, this government seems to never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity, and that's precisely what happened. They failed to take up industry. It would have been the effect of closing down two to three coal-fired plants without the loss

of any jobs, and this government refused to do that. Industry had a solution, and this government refused the solution. That to me is a shameful thing to do. Now here we are, faced with whole towns that are closing as a result of this government's actions. This government is putting forward what they refer to as a climate action plan – I see it as an energy management master plan because that's, you know, where I come from – and this government's climate action plan fails every one of those principles that I just laid out. In that discipline, in that field, if you fail even one of those nonnegotiable options, that plan fails.

11:20

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy for the opportunity to respond to the second Speech from the Throne. I would just like to thank the Hon. Lois Mitchell for her hard work since becoming Lieutenant Governor. She happens to be the first Lieutenant Governor that my grandma and grandpa had the opportunity to meet when she was presiding over the seniors' Olympics in their apartment complex.

Kind of to refer to a reflection that was made by some comments from the Member for Edmonton-McClung last week, who spoke about a great Progressive Conservative Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker, who was an inspiration to him, I want to open up about another great Progressive Conservative Prime Minister that I was very fond of, Joe Clark, a young politician with a drive for positive social change much like many of the members of this House. I first saw Joe Clark when I was in junior high in the early 2000s – sorry to date myself – and despite the challenges that the LGBTQ community in Calgary had faced and the fact that this very Legislature threatened to use the notwithstanding clause to prevent same-sex marriage, I saw him become the first Prime Minister in Canada to march in a gay pride parade. I think him taking a stand on social change was what inspired me to follow politics in Alberta more closely.

I also found the Speech from the Throne quite fitting in that it was on International Women's Day. As many of my colleagues have noted in their speeches, I am proud of the work our government and our Ministry of Status of Women is doing. Alberta still has a long way to go when it comes to gender equality, but I'm confident that our government will continue to make significant strides. It is amazing to see how far we have come with women's issues. Back in the '70s my mother chose not to change her last name when she got married. She dealt with countless amounts of discrimination, from government departments to people who challenged the strength of her marriage. Now, 40 years later, she is still in a strong, happy marriage. I am fortunate to have a mother so strong, who spoke up against the cuts to public service pensions to a committee that I am now honoured to chair myself.

Calgary-Shaw is home to a great number of fantastic schools, businesses, and organizations. One institution I feel most lucky to have is St. Mary's University. Members here are probably getting sick of me talking about the great things that St. Mary's University does. St. Mary's University's basketball team just left for nationals this week after a victory over the undefeated Lakeland College. Now, I feel it unfortunate that the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster is not here as I would take a jab at his college losing, but that's for another day.

I have enjoyed watching their games all season. They are only three years old right now, so it's quite an accomplishment to go this far, and I wish them all the best in the finals. These women have a lot of heart and passion. I'd like to recognize their star player,

Montana Romeril. This season broke the ACAC record for the most three-point shots scored, and that happened during mid-season. I am also inspired by Kassandra Harkema, who joined the team after being out for nearly 10 years after facing an injury from a car accident while she still played for SAIT. Not only have I enjoyed watching them play, but their professionalism and work ethic is something that I am proud to be able to share with my son, who enjoys coming to games with me. This is one of the many reasons I am proud of St. Mary's University, in my constituency of Calgary-Shaw.

Another inspiring woman, that I had the honour of hosting last week at the Speech from the Throne, is Catholic's Trustee Mary Martin. I must say that Mary is by far one of the most inspirational politicians that I've had the opportunity to work with. Mary sits on the Calgary Catholic board and is also vice-chair of ASBA. She is one of the most sincere people I have had the pleasure to know, and it's a joy working with her in my constituency. Her passion for caring for others is seen by the fact that she is still a practising nurse.

Mr. Speaker, family is very important to me, as I know it is for all my constituents. The other day I had a tear in my eye when I saw the Member for Calgary-Varsity in the Chamber with her son. I think it sets a great opportunity for young people to get into politics. There is nothing harder than going from being a father on parental leave to one who has to commute to Edmonton every week. The second week I came to Edmonton, my wife texted me, informing me that my son cried himself to sleep because of my absence. It is heartbreaking, but I know that the work we are doing in this House is not only making the lives of our constituents better but is making a significant impact on the lives of all people in Alberta. Leaving my family is the hardest part of this job, and I am happy that both sides of this House have committed to working towards making this Legislature more family friendly.

Being a stay-at-home father who was taking care of an eight-month-old daughter on election day, I can say that a stand-alone Status of Women ministry will not only bring equality to women but will even open up doors for men, too. A huge fear I faced as a father going on parental leave was what impact it would have on my career. The stigma hitting stay-at-home fathers still exists. I have seen it first-hand from my brother-in-law, Olaf Bakker, who has stayed at home to support my sister's career.

I have been inspired by my sister Melanie, who is the first Sucha in the family to receive a master's degree. She was given a wealth of knowledge and has given me a wealth of knowledge about the oil sector and the challenges that it faces. Many of my constituents rely on oil and gas for their livelihoods, and they can be confident that our government is doing everything it can to put Albertans back to work and to promote economic growth and diversification.

As the throne speech also outlined, Canada's energy industry must have safe, efficient pipeline access to tidewater so that energy production can command the highest possible value on the world market. As I see it, we have two choices. We can pound our chest or work collaboratively to get pipelines to tidewater. As we have learned from what has happened over the last 15 years, what we were doing did not get the job done. Canada's inability over the past few years to pursue strategic energy policies supported by Canadians has made it impossible so far for our country to diversify our markets. It is time to change our strategy, and our climate change leadership plan is just the start. And that's not coming from me; that's coming from industry leaders.

As a resident on Treaty 7 land I want to thank Métis Calgary Family Services, which has its office in my constituency, who have helped educate me on the many challenges that off-reserve aboriginal people face. I think it is important that we move forward

with meaningful dialogue with all aboriginal people, and that is why I'm happy we are moving forward with the repeal of Bill 22.

Before taking office, I used to lose sleep over the world we were going to leave our children due to the implications we are seeing with climate change. I am happy we are working with industry leaders to find solutions that will allow us to invest here in Alberta while supporting those who are low income and small businesses during the transition. I am happy to say that Alberta is now doing its part in conjunction with industry leaders to help provide a more appealing product to market.

As we move forward with our climate change strategy, it is important that we balance our economy with our social responsibilities. This will be a great way for us to diversify our economy and create jobs. As much as we spoke highly of how we paid off our debt, it came at a cost. At the time the previous government took tactics of massive slash-and-burns, and many Albertans lost jobs. I am proud that our government instead committed to not only maintaining our front-line services and staff but to strengthening our health care and education systems. We don't need to put our short-term bottom line over the interests of long-term recovery.

Because of these slash-and-burn tactics we have seen huge infrastructure deficits. Now with a lot of people out of work and delays in projects and deferred maintenance, I am pleased that our government has committed to invest \$34 billion in infrastructure. This investment will not only help put Albertans back to work, but it will help us build infrastructure projects that our province desperately needs. Investments like these are seen in my home constituency with Fish Creek park. This was not natural parkland space; it was natural farmland. But in the '70s Peter Lougheed had a vision to reclaim that land, and now it is something that I enjoyed as a child and that I get to share with my children, too.

Growing up in Marlborough Park, I have seen the struggles that working families face day in and day out. The current system in place with payday loan companies in Alberta only fans the fires of poverty. We need a system in place that does not hurt those who are most vulnerable. Both my constituents and I look forward to the introduction of an act to end predatory lending in Alberta.

11:30

One thing I heard on the doorsteps that is a challenge that small businesses face is access to capital. This in some cases leads to investment being made in large players that are from out of province. By promoting access to capital, we allow our small businesses to continue being the grassroots job creators they are today here in Alberta. Our government invested \$1.5 billion for ATB to invest in small businesses. It's something that will help our small-business owners in my constituency immediately.

Mr. Speaker, I think Her Honour put it best in her speech last week. "Albertans are community minded, caring, and neighbourly. Ours is a society of friends. In tough times we always pull together. We have each other's backs. We support each other in these times instead of making a bad situation worse."

As I move forward, being a business leader, someone who had an opportunity to run a business, and as we move forward through these hard economic times, I want to recognize a very key person, who really helped build me, in the foresight that I see as an MLA who's been here for 10 months, and that is my old general manager, Aaron Haynes, while I was a manager at Milestones. He put a lot of faith and trust in me. He challenged me and pushed me to my brink, taught me how to work hard, and also challenged me to make sure that we made our business the most profitable possible. As we move forward during these hard times, I will always reflect on the knowledge that he taught me during those times as well.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all members of this House for the hard work that they have put in day in and day out for Alberta. I have enjoyed getting to know you all, and I look forward to getting to know you all even better.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member's comments and his words today. You know, I have a young family as well. Fortunately for me, I'm not too far away in Beaumont, so when I hear stories like the member's son crying himself to sleep, it touches my heart. Luckily, I get to go home and at least see my kid sleeping in their bed when I get home. I live in the best riding in Alberta bar none, so I get to raise my kids in a pretty fantastic place.

You spoke about the park that Premier Lougheed had put in there and kind of what you grew up knowing. I don't know Calgary-Shaw really very well, so I was kind of curious about what it's like raising your family in that area, what it is that you like about that area to raise your family.

**Mr. Sucha:** Well, thank you very much, desk mate and hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont. Being, I guess, the second-best constituency in Alberta, Calgary-Shaw is a very unique, diverse community, and we're very fortunate because we have a lot of great parks, not only the provincial park but parks where people have banded together, worked hard to fund raise, and put together. One thing that I've enjoyed, having grown up or raised my kids there when we may not have had as much money, is that there are a lot of amenities that you can utilize that come at no cost, that we need to make sure that we protect, whether it is Sikome Lake at Fish Creek park or even the Somerset Waterpark. I have to show pride in the people in the community of Somerset because they were levied an extra tax to maintain that park. They could make it private, but they opened it up to all people in Calgary, in south Calgary. Right now I hope that as their infrastructure ages, we can work together to really try to restore that area as well.

We face some challenges in Calgary-Shaw as well. I'm probably one of the few MLAs who will say it with pride when a school is not being built in my constituency. It's because a lot of the students in south Calgary, which is growing at a very fast rate, filter into the schools in my areas, and we're starting to really be at the brink right now. I'm happy that our government is moving forward to really ensure that we build all these new schools in south Calgary. I've had an opportunity to attend quite a few sod-turnings in the last little while, and it gives me a lot of excitement because they face a lot of pressures right now, and it will have a major impact in the next two, three years for students in that area as well.

One thing I love about the area, too, is that there are a lot of small and independent businesses. Even the strip mall where my constituency office is has some great Vietnamese sub places, and there are also great sushi places. There are also a lot of independent businesses, that are going to be those job creators during these hard times as well.

I always enjoy Calgary-Shaw because it has that small-town feel to it. It has the old township of Midnapore, it has the university in it, it has basically everything you need, and it's all within walking distance. It's something that I'm so happy that my children can experience, just as many other constituents can as they grow up as well.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to take this opportunity to really thank the Member for Calgary-Shaw. His youngest daughter is the same age as my youngest daughter. We campaigned with our daughters together, and it was awesome. I just also wanted to thank him for lending his parents to my constituency association. I just wanted to ask him – he's been a wonderful advocate for east Calgary; that's my constituency but also the constituency where he grew up – if he could touch a little bit more on growing up in Calgary-East.

**Mr. Sucha:** The second- or third-greatest constituency in Alberta, Calgary-East. It was really great growing up there. It's a very diverse community. I got to learn so much, and it was not just from, you know, attending school but from learning from neighbours as well. People from all over the world live in Calgary-East, and that's one of the greatest things that I see about it. One thing that I loved is that everyone took care of each other, so you knew everyone on your street corner. Whenever there was something up in the neighbourhood, you knew that someone would have your back. Sometimes, you know, as we live in sort of this Internet age, where everyone is watching Netflix and is on their computer and never goes to play at a park, it's great to have that reassurance that that still exists. My parents still speak fondly of that. I think that how great that area is is really a testament to the fact that my parents after 30 years still live up in Calgary-East as well. After Calgary-Shaw you have a great constituency in Calgary-East.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize if my voice cracks today.

On March 8, 2016, Alberta's Lieutenant Governor took the opportunity to remind us all that in returning to this House, we are doing so to carry out the work of all the people of Alberta. As the days have passed, though, it's become increasingly clear that a number of Albertans will fall through the cracks.

This government continually commits itself to market-distorting policies that see our tax dollars directed toward a chosen few. The facts are undeniable. This government hasn't chosen broad-based policies based on macroeconomic principles to diversify the economy like the low taxes that once made Alberta the most competitive jurisdiction in Canada, a tax advantage that saw Alberta attract significant human and financial capital. This government hasn't chosen to listen to the pleas of Alberta's businesses as they call for a moratorium on policies hurting jobs. This government hasn't chosen to manage the province's expenses, ignoring the opposition's moderate recommendations to look inward and identify the rampant inefficiencies in a bloated public service.

Instead, this government finished dismantling the Alberta advantage. Instead, our debt grows and, with it, concerns about further tax increases. Instead, Albertans continue to face uncertainty about a carbon tax that fails to be truly revenue neutral. Instead, we see numerous financial incentive programs designed to help the few and not the many. If Alberta is no longer an attractive place to invest, it's not the high construction costs that have been a constant feature of our economy, and it's not that petrochemical investment is innately risky; it's because this government dismantled all of the pieces that made Alberta a place where business wanted to invest capital.

In the days since the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, all of the members of this House have been subjected to a series of hollow

talking points on government-driven economic diversification. Government-driven economic diversification seems to be something that the government misguidedly believes to have been an implicitly successful policy over the years. They probably say that Klein was wrong to move away entirely from this strategy, but in reality conservative estimates place the costs of these failed policies in Alberta at \$2.2 billion in 1990s' dollars.

**11:40**

Through what is colloquially referred to as their Dirty Dozen, Alberta has lost billions of dollars chasing the siren song of taxpayer-funded diversification projects, and I'm going to give you some examples of some of these projects: Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries, where the province was forced by falling pulp prices to write off \$155 million in interest owed in order to receive back the initial \$250 million it had loaned the mill; projects like the Canadian Commercial Bank, the largest bank failure in Canadian history, estimated to have cost Alberta taxpayers \$56 million; projects like Chembiomed, that saw government losses of nearly \$44 million. Gainers, after defaulting on a \$135 million loan, surrendered the meat-packing plant to the government, only to see the business operating at a loss, costing Albertans \$209 million in total; projects like General Systems Research, specializing in industrial laser technology, whose failure lost the government \$30.6 million.

Projects like the Lloydminster biprovincial upgrader. We know that the government is particularly interested in upgrading, but there are risks. Alberta made a \$423 million investment in this project, and from this multimillion-dollar project Alberta received \$32 million when it cut its losses. Projects like the magnesium company of Canada, which after construction saw world magnesium prices plunge, saddling Albertans with a debt of \$164 million. Millar Western Pulp Ltd.: what would come to be a \$272 million loan, initially intended to aid with construction costs, saw the province receive only a one-time payment of \$27.8 million from a company that consistently failed to turn a profit. Northern Lite Canola, a co-operative canola crushing plant, saw both losses of farmers' initial investments and \$50 million in government losses. Finally, NovAtel, a cellphone manufacturer: the extent of the financial hit to Albertans was estimated by Alberta's then Auditor General to be between \$544 million and \$614 million.

The province has experienced a handful of qualified successes, too, but most of these successes were based in the hydrocarbon energy sector. It did little to lower the province's dependency on the oil and gas sector.

We are stewards of the taxes Albertans pay, stewards of the resource rents that Albertans are entitled to, and we are stewards of the revenue received from the corporate taxes that belong to all Albertans. Subjecting Albertans to risk and liability has consistently proven to be a dangerous course, and Albertans are worried. This government won't even admit that targeted incentive programs with limited funding will consistently lead to choosing winners and losers. The government needs to recognize that this creates undue risk for Alberta's taxpayers.

The government needs to recognize that in this fragile economy you've already asked Albertans to pay more. When you increase the liability to Albertans with financially risky projects and when you fail to properly manage the province's expenditure, Albertans fear that further tax increases, which impact the businesses' bottom line, are pending. Even the \$500 million in grant money for petrochemical diversification is intended to help propane and methane projects and not, for example, ethanol developments or decarbonization projects whereas lower taxes, red tape reduction, further regulatory streamlining, or a commitment to reviewing policies like the minimum wage increases are all broad-based

policies that would help any industry with an idea supported by the free market and economics that enter this game. The government is choosing policies to help a select few, and the government is leaving Albertans behind. Governments are terrible at choosing winners – I'm sure you've heard this before – and losers are great at choosing governments. In choosing these winners and losers, this government will leave more and more Albertans behind. Governments face a terrible . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'd like to emphasize again: could you speak through the chair?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Absolutely. I'm sorry, sir. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, governments face a terrible and ultimately costly asymmetry of information when negotiating deals for government investments in highly technical areas. This is the fear we hold while the government pursues ambitious economic diversification projects that have not in the past proven to be a safe and prosperous economic course.

Mr. Speaker, there is an opportunity for moderation and caution here, and there is an opportunity to begin to restore the Alberta advantage, which was about making Alberta the best place to invest regardless of your industry and regardless of whether any bureaucrats liked your business idea. I truly believe that Albertans are going to get through this together.

We've seen the government recently take some well-thought-out ideas and policies from the Wildrose opposition and start to acknowledge that we may have some wisdom to impart. We've seen small changes in the government like moderate outcomes from the royalty review, but as an Albertan I still long to see the government show the same passion and conviction for the people of Alberta, their jobs, and the economy that they do for other matters close to the hearts of Albertans like schools, roads, and safe environments for all of our children. The government certainly has not held back from these issues, nor would we want them to. We simply demand the same time and energy and deep-seated convictions in their actions and words when it comes to the livelihoods of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I'm still waiting for a government that is actually willing to stand up for our resources and our talent, not to mention the diversity that already exists in this vast, beautiful, and resource-rich province of ours. This means understanding the industry that helped build the province that we all love. It means fighting for pipelines, not talking about them. It means being the front-runner in a world where we are now in competition with those who would once seek out our resources. Please do not turn your back on Albertans in their time of greatest need. Stand up for their jobs and for their livelihoods. The prosperity and respect you garner will come to you full circle as you implement the social programs that are sustainable and improve the quality of life for so many Albertans that you wish to help. You cannot do this if you attack the very prosperity that helped you get to where you yourselves are today.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie under 29(2)(a).

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you very much, and thank you to my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View. What a beautifully crafted lesson you delivered here today. I'm really curious, more specifically, as to in your home riding what a lot of these people are saying about the direction that this government is going or has laid out in the throne speech. What are some of the reactions from the people of Chestermere-Rocky View?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you for the question. In Chestermere-Rocky View, as I'd pointed out in my speech, there are a lot of issues with the things that are close to our hearts like infrastructure, schools, with all of the things that all of us have challenges with in our constituencies, Mr. Speaker. But I think that probably the thing that I hear about the most is the lack of action towards market access for our resources and the lack of action by the government nationally to stand up for the resources that are in our province and for the job creators and for the people who have helped build this province. There seems to be an innate lack of respect and understanding as to how this province got to the prosperity that we have. It's not an intentional lack of respect or anything like that – I would never assume that – but I think that there's a definite misunderstanding of how we've gotten from point A to point B.

11:50

I think that if the government can show that direction and show the initiative and show strength not only at a provincial level but at a national level, this would do so much to improve the failings of the province but also to encourage the people of the province, especially Chestermere-Rocky View, to understand that the government has their backs, has their best interests, that there's not only an agenda to one direction, that the agenda that the government has is one or two of the legs of the same stool.

But there are other pieces that need to be implemented in order to make succinct policy and to make sure that we're covering a broad spectrum of issues and things that need to happen. Mostly, again – and I repeat – it's market access and pipelines and making sure that within the projects of diversification, that are so highly touted, what we are hoping to see one of these days from across the way actually builds on our strengths. We have so many here. It's really important that within this space we don't forget what we've already accomplished. You can't know where to go if you don't know where you came from.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just rise briefly to thank the hon. member for her comments this morning in the House. I think that she's done a great job of bringing an important perspective to the House. There are so many issues that are before the government and that each and every one in this Assembly deals with on a regular basis, and balancing a lot of those issues is of critical importance to the province. I think it's a wonderful reminder about some of the risks that come when it comes to picking winners and losers. I'd just like to thank the member for her comments around just a refresher in some of the past history, both in this province and in other provinces, of the challenges that come when the government takes a position of believing that it knows better than the market, when the government takes a position that it knows better than business.

I think that we need to ensure that we keep these core principles at the front of our discussion. The process that we're going through: not only does it cost today, but it also costs tomorrow. When we invest in diversification and venture down these very risky investments, oftentimes there are significant losers, and generally speaking it's the taxpayer. What that prevents us from doing is helping the vulnerable. When we don't have the resources we need, it prevents us from being able to help the vulnerable, and I know that that's important to every member in this Chamber.

I just might be a little bit curious to know from the hon. member some assurances that when she spoke about losers picking governments, surely she wasn't referring to voters but to businesses.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been a tremendously entertaining and informative morning of responses to Her Majesty's Speech from the Throne, but given that it's five minutes to noon and I'm feeling a rumbling in my tumbling, I ask for unanimous consent of the House to adjourn.

**The Speaker:** I'm advised, hon. member, that you should adjourn discussion.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I move that we adjourn debate on the Speech from the Throne.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, in light of the spirit of co-operation amongst all members of the Assembly and given that it's almost noon and we've made some very productive work here this morning, I might move that we adjourn the House until 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:55 a.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 16, 2016

Day 6

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
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**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 16, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly three grade 6 classes from High Prairie elementary school. There are the students; their principal, Mitch Hammond; their teachers Andrea Pollock, Nicole Pratt, Joanne Murphy, Ashley Savoie; and a few of their parents as well. There's Mr. Josh Killoran, Ms Teters – I apologize if I butcher your names a little bit – Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. Lorraine Cunningham, Mrs. Candace Barber, Mrs. Kristylonn Barton, Mrs. Karen Lauck, Mrs. Teresa Glanville, Mrs. Jennifer Anderson, Mrs. Abbie Zelman, Mrs. Marion Peacock, and Mr. Michael Strebchuk. I ask the students, principal, teachers, and parents of the grade 6 classes to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms Larivee:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to apologize. I also have some other introductions. Would you like me to do those now as well?

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a few of my friends and family members who are here today in anticipation of me doing my maiden speech. We have Christopher W. Brown, who was my campaign manager during my campaign; Shaun and Sandra Woodard, long-time family friends and supporters; my parents, Marilyn and Gerry Larivee; and my partner, Marcel Desjarlais, is here as well.

Chris Brown came to a sign-building party I had at my home several days already after the writ was dropped. He'd never met me before. After a few moments' conversation he drove his life into the next few weeks. I will forever be grateful for him doing that. Of course, Shaun Woodard, despite living in Leduc, chose to drive to Slave Lake to drive me around my massive constituency, including making the trip twice in a 24-hour period. Last but not least, my parents, who are my greatest fans. They've supported me in all my endeavours to date and continue to support me and express their pride in me. Love you, Mom and Dad. I ask these friends and family members to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you another class from Muriel Martin school. Today we have Ms Danielle Jean's class, and they're joined by Jodi McKay, Lauri Morrison, and Nicole Toshack. I would be honoured if they could rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House

members of Bow Cliff Seniors. This amazing organization plays a key role in the lives of the many people it serves, and I'm excited to have a number of board members here today. I would ask that my guests remain standing as I call their names: Mrs. Doreen Dyer, Mrs. Jean Langdon, Mrs. Gail Martin, Mr. John Yannitsos, Mr. Wayne Naylor, Mrs. Janet Lymer. Let us welcome them to this House with the traditional greeting.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly the vice-president of corporate services for FortisAlberta, Mr. Karl Bomhof, based out of Calgary. Before becoming vice-president, Karl served as general counsel and secretary as part of the legal team at Fortis. For many Albertans FortisAlberta is the distributor of electricity to their homes and businesses from Lac La Biche to Hinton to Waterton to Medicine Hat to Battle River and in my constituency of Strathmore-Brooks. I ask that he rise and receive the traditional warm greeting of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two special guests from the world-renowned Banff Centre in my riding. The Banff Centre president, Janice Price, and the associate director of external and community relations, Jung-Suk Ryu, are generously hosting a reception for invited guests this evening to showcase the unique role that the Banff Centre plays in Alberta. Performing at tonight's reception will be Banff Centre alumni Don McIntyre and the T. Buckley Trio. I'm looking forward to enjoying the reception this evening and the opportunity for my colleagues to learn more about the unique role the Banff Centre plays in Alberta's postsecondary world. I'd now like to ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very faithful community servant in the form of Her Worship Mayor Vanessa Van der Meer, the illustrious mayor of the industrial manufacturing capital of Alberta, Linden, which is obviously in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I invite her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests or visitors today? The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests from the outstanding constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. The first is Mr. Patrick Alexander, who is the reeve of Clearwater county, and Mr. Fred Nash, who is the mayor of Rocky Mountain House. Both these gentlemen have the great privilege of representing one of the greatest and most beautiful areas in all of this province and also an area that has some of the most exceptional people in this province, and it is my pleasure to work with them every day to do that. I'd ask that they stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Energy Policies

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors launched Oil Respect, a campaign to provide regular Canadians an opportunity to stand up and demand respect for Canada's oil and gas industry. Alberta's energy sector has been unfairly targeted and pushed around for years. The message from Oil Respect is simple: stop smearing an industry that is unmatched in providing good jobs and economic prosperity to all of Canada.

The campaign's website, oilrespect.ca, highlights the personal stories of so many families who are hurting during these difficult times. People are losing their jobs, Mr. Speaker, by the thousands, businesses are going bankrupt, and families are losing their homes and savings. The Canadian oil and gas industry meets the toughest environmental standards in the world, employs 500,000 Canadians, is the largest private-sector investor in Canada, and contributes \$17 billion per year to government revenues. The fact is that Alberta can't just rely on oil prices bouncing back for our industry to thrive. The U.S. is now our number one competitor and consumer. Eastern Canadian politicians seem more intent on blocking Canadian oil in order to accept tankers from unenvironmental and unethical regimes like Saudi Arabia and Nigeria.

1:40

Oil workers are rightly demanding all levels of government defend and promote their industry and champion pipelines and stop treating them as second-class workers in Canada's most important and profitable industry. They demand that their government demonstrate that they value oil and gas, oil and gas jobs, and expect them to fight as tenaciously for pipelines as they fight for carbon taxes. They expect their leaders to stop working against them with more royalty reviews and higher taxes. They expect all political leaders to speak out against unnecessary delays in approving new pipelines, including Ottawa's challenges to the National Energy Board, that bring further uncertainty to an industry that is already suffering. If any government cares at all about Canadian jobs and the Canadian economy, it should fight for this industry and show it the respect it deserves.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

### Bow Cliff Seniors

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to have a wonderful community of seniors in my riding of Calgary-Currie. Let me tell you about Bow Cliff Seniors. Bow Cliff Seniors is celebrating their 40th anniversary. Founded in 1975, Bow Cliff Seniors has been an anchor in the community where seniors socialize, support one another, and learn new things. Bow Cliff cleverly uses their resources in partnerships with other nearby groups such as the Hellenic society, which hosts Greek fest; the Calgary lawn bowlers, which also teaches the young among us; and Spruce Cliff community centre, which hosts community events for local immigrant youth. All of these events are must-attend social events for both young and old. When not hosting large events, Bow Cliff members participate in arts and craft classes, music, games, and weekly luncheons. The renowned band the Rhythm Katz practises here and performs all across southern Alberta.

On May 27 Bow Cliff will celebrate the grand opening of their new building along with the new seniors-friendly parking lot and

other grounds revitalizations. I look forward to attending this exciting event with local city councillors and with a few of my colleagues from the ministries.

We know there is a need to help seniors remain in their homes as long as they are able, and Bow Cliff has helped seniors navigate the many layers of services offered in the community. I am happy to have members of Bow Cliff with us here today in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Through Bow Cliff Seniors members form lasting friendships that provide support for one another through various stages of aging. I couldn't be more proud of having such a vibrant organization in my constituency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

### Rural Issues

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, or AAMD and C, is meeting here in Edmonton. It's been a pleasure to reconnect with these hard-working mayors, reeves, and councillors, that truly have the pulse of the people.

But I must say that I've never seen this group of otherwise optimistic and hopeful people so discouraged, anxious, and angry. Why? It's because they feel that this government isn't listening to them or simply doesn't care. They see a government that has forged ahead with farm safety legislation without consulting farmers. They see a government that promised a robust consultation process to develop workable safety regulations and then scheduled the meetings during calving, seeding, and harvest. They see a government that rejected a plan to improve local input into health care in their communities. They see a government that has rejected a strategic plan to promote rural economic development. They see a government that won't give them a straight answer on linear assessment. They see a government that refuses to acknowledge that a carbon tax disproportionately penalizes rural Albertans. And to make matters worse, they know that electoral boundary redistribution is coming and that this government will in all likelihood reduce the number of rural constituencies.

Now, last year the AAMD and C adopted the motto Where It All Starts: Rural Alberta. This government would do well to remember that motto. It would do well to remember that rural Alberta is the source of much of Alberta's prosperity. Farming, ranching, mining, oil and gas production, forestry, and tourism all occur in rural Alberta. It would do well to remember that rural Albertans deserve fair treatment and respect from this government and that they don't appreciate being treated like second-class citizens. And it would do well to remember that it was the election of 12 rural MLAs that gave them their majority.

Rural Alberta is truly where it all starts. The AAMD and C municipal leaders will continue to put the needs of rural Alberta in front of this government. It's high time that you paid them some respect and paid them some attention.

### Delaney Veterinary Services

**Cortes-Vargas:** Mr. Speaker, I recently toured an outstanding veterinary facility in my constituency. It was my pleasure to recognize Delaney Veterinary Services. The passion that their staff has for equine care is evident from the moment you walk in. I was greeted by a caring staff, who shared with me how it all started.

Dr. Lana Delaney grew up on a farm outside of Grande Prairie, Alberta. She grew up around horses. Her family has always been active in thoroughbred horse racing, and in 2008 Dr. Delaney

opened up Delaney Veterinary Services, which works exclusively with horses, donkeys, and mules. It started by offering ambulatory services to the equine community but now has become a state-of-the-art, full-service medical, reproductive, and surgical referral centre of western Canada. Delaney specializes in acupuncture, performance, dentistry, and reproduction and is the only hospital providing multiple-board-certified specialists 24 hours a day. They provide extensive emergency care for all types of conditions, including wounds, fractures, eye injuries, and acute lameness and infection.

I'm very proud to have Delaney Veterinary Services, central and north Alberta's premier equine veterinary facility, in my constituency, and I look forward to continuing to support their work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

### Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to rise today to highlight the important work that the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton is doing in my constituency of Edmonton-Meadowlark and across this province. As representatives for our community we have an opportunity to learn about the important initiatives that nonprofits do to support the vulnerable people in our communities. SACE is a feminist-based charitable organization that supports children, adolescents, and adults who have experienced sexual abuse, assault, and violence.

On February 10 many of my colleagues and I had the opportunity to join SACE for their We Believe fundraiser. It was an incredibly well-attended event. Survivors such as the inspirational Sheldon Kennedy shared their stories while raising money to support this important cause. We Believe is SACE's most recent campaign to support and celebrate survivors for their strength and resiliency. The campaign was hugely successful. It raised awareness across the province while demonstrating our commitment to standing up against sexual violence, which affects people in all of our communities.

Nonprofits such as SACE are an incredible asset for our communities as they work with some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Recently they have come out in support of gender inclusivity within our schools by denying the harmful myth that the creation of trans-inclusive washrooms will lead to an increase in sexual violence. These harmful stereotypes are counterproductive. They often lead to violence and abuse against the trans individuals that we are trying to support.

I'm proud that our government is standing up for their rights. SACE's dream is to have a world without sexual violence, a vision our government fully supports. I would like to thank the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton for their ongoing commitment to creating a more caring and inclusive province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### Waste-water Treatment in Taber

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak about an issue that is affecting the town of Taber, in my constituency. The town's industrial sewage lagoon system is long past the end of its life. There was a waste-water overflow on January 14, another waste-water overflow on February 11, each of which was properly reported, thankfully.

Luckily, these weren't the worst of it. If the system fails, it puts the community of Taber at risk, and to make a bad situation worse, the town could be penalized and fined by Environment up to \$500,000 if it is not remedied. Their funding application under the Alberta municipal waste-water and water partnership was declined by Alberta Transportation. In fact, there are no present programs that will effectively and specifically help to rectify this problem. The town alone simply cannot afford to pay for this massive upgrade. If this government is looking for a shovel-ready project, this would be it.

My staff have been asking the minister of environment to meet with Taber's mayor for close to a month so that this problem can be addressed head on. Residents of Taber need and deserve at least a response. If the government has an internal assessment of this situation which is different from Taber's, we hope that they will share it. It is my sincere hope that this government can commit to working with Taber for an actual solution. Actions speak louder than words, but we would take at least a response on this issue.

Thanks.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Job Creation

**Mr. Jean:** The double impact of the NDP's risky economic agenda and low oil prices is being felt all over Alberta. According to Edmonton's chief economist over 1 in 10 jobs have been lost in Red Deer just over the last 12 months. In Calgary the unemployment rate is now higher than Windsor's and Halifax's, and for the first time in three decades unemployment is higher in Alberta than in Quebec. These aren't just statistics; these are people, Albertans, in need of hope. This Premier has done nothing for these Albertans in the last 10 months. Why?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I completely and entirely reject the premise of the Official Opposition leader's question. The fact of the matter is that while we have lost a number of jobs – and we understand that Albertans are suffering and worried and concerned, and we share that with them – that is the result of the price of oil dropping, and Albertans know that.

Secondly, it is not the case that we've done nothing. We are working very hard. We've already moved forward on several elements of our plan, which I am happy to talk about in answer to the next question, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jean:** Here's what this Premier has accomplished in the last 10 months: put our energy sector on pins and needles with a six-month royalty review; raised business taxes, raised personal taxes, and raised gas taxes as oil was plummeting; introduced a \$3 billion carbon tax that every Albertan will pay; and as the job situation became worse, the NDP sat on their hands. Wildrose wants to give people hope. Our 12-point action plan for jobs delivers for Albertans. Will the Premier accept more than just one of our proposals?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on diversifying the economy and creating jobs, which I know is something that the member opposite is not a fan of. He doesn't think diversification is something that we should focus on. Nonetheless, you know, there's one element of his plan that really raises a lot of

questions, this issue of getting rid of red tape. I'm curious: is the member opposite seeking to get rid of red tape in order to help his candidate in Calgary-Greenway, who apparently is not a fan of ensuring that minors are not sold alcohol?

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jean:** Shameful.

The Premier knows that red tape cost businesses in Alberta, just in the last 10 years, a billion dollars. Now, if we could reduce red tape alone in this province, we could do wonderful things for the people of Alberta. We could get rid of every single regulation when we introduce a new one, for instance. That would be a very simple thing. We could have a single business licensing system right across Alberta in the municipalities. We could actually help Albertans with red tape, not fearmonger and make up stories as the Premier is doing. Frankly, it's unbecoming.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that red tape is the right-wing version of regulations. Here are a couple of examples of regulations. When one runs a liquor store, one ought not to sell alcohol to someone they suspect might be a minor, so one should question whether someone is or isn't. Also, one should take a program in order to make sure that they don't sell alcohol to someone who is clearly inebriated. Yet these folks are supporting somebody who thinks that not following those rules is, apparently, a way to create jobs.

**The Speaker:** Second question. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### **Oil Tanker Transportation on the West Coast**

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the Premier about building a common front with the Premier of B.C. on lifting the federal tanker ban on B.C.'s north coast. The Premier didn't really answer the question. The tanker ban ends all hopes of ever getting a pipeline to Kitimat or Prince Rupert. I know that the Premier campaigned against the Northern Gateway pipeline, but surely she agrees that a sweeping tanker ban is a very bad idea for Alberta. Does the Premier agree that the Prime Minister's ban on tankers is harmful to Alberta, harmful to Canada, and that the ban needs to be lifted immediately?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the Leader of the Official Opposition is so concerned about B.C.'s LNG industry. However, the fact of the matter is that our government is focused on developing and establishing consensus across the country through reasonable negotiations for a pipeline either east or west, and that involves evaluating the options that are realistic in both cases and having respectful conversations with people, not tweeting at them, not calling them names, but having respectful conversations, which is what we will continue to do.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you for the non answer. Mr. Speaker, this issue is important, very important. B.C. will very soon need federal approval for tankers for its planned liquid natural gas terminals and export strategy. Alberta will also need the same tanker approval to get our oil products to market. Will the Premier write to the Prime Minister and make the official request that the tanker ban can be lifted so both Alberta and British Columbia can get our products to market?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what I will do and what I have been doing and what I will continue to do is to work with the federal government to promote the need for them to ensure that there is a

process in place that is reasonable and meaningful, with a beginning, a middle, and an end, to ensure that the necessary pipelines that we require are put in place. That is what we will continue to do. I've had conversations about this issue with the Prime Minister as well. He knows where we stand on it. But the key is that we need to work with them collaboratively, not grandstand, not position, to find a solution.

**Mr. Jean:** Like I said yesterday, the Premier has an opportunity to get British Columbia onside with pipelines. Media reports say that the Pacific NorthWest LNG project is now before the federal cabinet for approval. For it to be approved by the Prime Minister, we need to lift the tanker ban and not let federal GHG policies kill this project. Alberta is in the same boat with our pipelines projects as British Columbia. Now is the time for this Premier to take advantage of this important opportunity to make common cause with British Columbia on these issues that matter to both of our provinces. Why does she refuse to do so?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I've answered this question several times now. I don't refuse to do so. I've been speaking with our colleagues in B.C., speaking with our colleagues to the east, speaking with the Prime Minister, speaking with their officials, doing everything we can to look at all the options that are available to get our product to tidewater, and I'll continue to do that.

#### **Emergency Medical Dispatch Services in Calgary**

**Mr. Barnes:** The mayor of Calgary has publicly stated that centralizing ambulance services in Calgary will increase response times, lower patient outcomes, and cost more money, and Wildrose has the data to prove it. Last year Calgary experienced 39 red alerts. In Edmonton, where the dispatch system is operated by AHS, they had nearly a thousand. That's over 27 hours when Alberta's capital was left without a single available ambulance. Why is the Health minister making centralization a priority for Calgary when they clearly don't want or need it?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, certainly, red alerts were something that we were concerned about during the election, and we knew that it would only get worse if we went forward with the proposed plan from the last government, which was to cut \$800 million from public health care. That's why we restored that funding. I wish members opposite would have voted in support of it.

Obviously, we want to make sure that we have access to timely response times, and that's why we're continuing to work with both municipalities. Good news: in the city of Edmonton the red alert instances have gone down by half this year, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Barnes:** While Calgarians expect quality services and their local decision-makers need clarity, the minister dithers. The minister's indecision is costing more than \$60,000 per month to run an unnecessary AHS dispatch centre. AHS has sunk \$10 million and growing into an experiment that Calgary does not want, with the mayor asking: why are we even having this discussion? The current holding pattern is expensive and unfair to Calgarians. Will the minister focus her efforts and resources on real problems with EMS instead of looking for fixes in all the wrong places?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When somebody calls 911, the closest ambulance needs to be sent to provide medical care, and we want to make sure that we do provide a timely response to everyone, obviously. In rare cases – we have about 500,000 calls every year. Decades of mismanagement by the previous government undermined the hard work of dedicated staff. The Official Opposition plan to cut billions of dollars from public health care would only lead to longer wait times. In terms of getting it right for Calgary, I'm going to take the time to make the right decision; I'm not going to rush to make the wrong one.

2:00

**Mr. Barnes:** There are very real and significant problems with AHS's bungling of centralization, and once upon a time the NDP used to acknowledge this, too. With an EMS system in crisis and communities struggling to keep adequate ambulance coverage, it is inexcusable that AHS continues to obsess over ways to centralize Calgary's dispatch. This government has enough problems with Alberta Health Services to solve as it is. Will the minister listen to Calgarians and cancel what the mayor of Calgary has called, quote, a plan that is just not credible?

**Ms Hoffman:** I'll tell you what's not credible, Mr. Speaker: making allegations that you're somehow going to improve health care when you're proposing to cut billions of dollars from the provincial treasury. That's ludicrous. [interjections]

In terms of moving forward, we're certainly working with Alberta Health Services, the Health Quality Council of Alberta, with regions throughout the province, and with local leaders. That's why I'm taking the time to meet with the mayor, go through the data. I want to make sure that we get this right for the people of Alberta. [interjections] We owe it to them to make sure that when they call 911, no matter what, the fastest response time is available. So we're working on that, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Will you keep down the volume, please?  
The leader of the third party.

### Government Policies

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today at the AAMD and C ministerial forum I heard a few interesting answers that I think Albertans will want to know more about. Let's talk about paying back borrowed money. Today the Minister of Transportation said – and I thank him for that – that borrowed money must be repaid. Well, I could not agree more. To the Premier: with an upcoming \$10.4 billion deficit and no balanced budget on the government's schedule, other than selling pot in liquor stores, as the Finance minister suggested, when and how does your NDP government plan to pay back all the money that you are going to borrow on the backs of Albertans?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. There is no question that the fiscal challenges that we find ourselves in are huge right now. We've lost roughly \$8 billion of revenue. So there are different choices that we can make, and indeed this was something that the people of Alberta were asked to weigh in on last May. They did weigh in, and they said that they did not want dramatic slashing and burning in order to balance the budget over the interests of long-term recovery or community supports, which support all of

Albertans. So we chose to follow that line, and that's what we will continue to do.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, that's billions borrowed and no plan.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs, in front of hundreds of municipal leaders, today announced that the big-city charter is, quote, only a pilot project. I can't help but wonder if the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary have been told that. If they have been told that, that their big-city charter is only a pilot project, I wonder how long they are expecting the pilot to last and under what conditions. If the minister has not told them, will the minister now do so, or is it time to reconsider this morning's remarks?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Absolutely, we're going to develop substantial regulations, and we are tremendously committed to the city charter process, to build a new, enhanced relationship with Alberta's two largest cities. Our largest cities have both unique challenges and unique capacities that we look to deal with and address and harness as we move forward. In terms of those discussions we're having amazing conversations with the leadership of those two cities from right across the government, and we look forward to having very substantial things to bring forward that will make ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. McIver:** After laying this morning's egg ...

**The Speaker:** One moment, please. I heard someone whistling in the House just now. I'm not sure where that came from. Would you please desist from it in the future.

Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. After laying this morning's egg, I'm sure the conversations will be very interesting.

Mr. Speaker, the Seniors and Housing minister, when asked about affordable housing, spoke not of funding but rather of changes to the Municipal Government Act. I could not help but wonder and will now ask if the minister was hinting broadly to the introduction of inclusionary zoning, and if not, what mechanism in the MGA will the government use to encourage affordable housing across Alberta, and how will it work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The process of developing the MGA, as the member knows, involved extensive communication and consultation from right across the whole province, and there were many, many individuals who brought forward concerns that affordable housing could possibly be addressed through that. There were a variety of concerns that came from a number of stakeholders, and moving forward, we will find the right balance between all of them to support Albertans and move forward with the best options for a sustainable province and municipalities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Flood Recovery and Mitigation

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today marks exactly 1,000 days since the 2013 flood, and 1,000 days later there's still no certainty on flood mitigation. The DRP system is still broken, and the misguided floodway buyout program has created

gaps in our neighbourhoods. Nearly 100,000 people live or make a living in downtown Calgary. Those people, the businesses they work for, and the residents in river communities are waiting for confirmation of the timeline for meaningful upstream flood mitigation. A simple question to the Premier: will the Springbank dry dam be completed as planned in time for the 2019 flood season?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, hon. member, for the question. We're committed to keeping this project on time and on track, and I can assure the hon. member – I know many of his constituents are concerned about this – that we are moving forward with our negotiations with landowners, and we do believe that we will be able to get our environmental impact assessment completed this year. That will keep the project on time and on track.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I sincerely hope that's the case.

Moving on to the disaster recovery program, the DRP continues to let Albertans down, and the very same people who made the mess are being asked to fix it. Now, several reports have been written by outside experts and by end-users of the system, most notably a report written by the High River DRP action committee. The problems are clear, and now it's time for real change. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: will you make fundamental changes in your department and put new people in charge of the DRP to make sure the system works for Albertans, not for bureaucrats?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to stand in tremendous support of the staff who work on my DRP program for the incredible advances they have made recently. We have heard from the people of High River what changes needed to happen, and we have moved forward with them very aggressively to make the changes that they suggested, and we continue to respect and engage with them. The Auditor General questioned the previous government's decision in terms of advancing this program but very much supported and had confidence in the actions we're taking now, that will make a real difference for Albertans. We're already on the way there.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect, Minister, I've spoken and worked with many constituents who still wrestle with DRP, and I can assure you that some of the leadership within the DRP system has not met their expectations.

Another big issue still outstanding from the flood is the properties purchased in that ill-advised floodway relocation program. I'll again ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs: will you commit here and now to reselling those properties once flood mitigation is in place to recover at least some of the money wasted on that program and make our communities whole again?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree 100 per cent that that buyout program completed by the previous government was a disaster in many ways, that came after a disaster that they already had to deal with. However, we made the best of it and are dealing with the situation. I have very clearly in the past committed that as soon as we have mitigation in place, we will seek to resettle that community as has been advised, and I look forward to being able to

do that in the moment, once mitigation is in place, to make that community full of houses once again.

### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Mr. Speaker, my constituents of West Yellowhead are concerned about the government's decision to phase out coal-fired generation facilities. They're worried about this and what this is going to mean for them. Can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade tell the House why the government decided to phase out coal?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Pollution from coal-burning power plants is bad for our health, bad for the environment, and quite frankly it's economically unsustainable. People who are most at risk are children, seniors, and people who are playing sports outside. The fact of the matter is that 12 of the 18 remaining coal-fired plants were already slated for closure under federal legislation, with the remaining plants to be phased out under provincial regulation by 2030. Transitioning from coal to cleaner sources of energy is going to protect our health, our economy, and our environment.

2:10

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you for the answer.

Mr. Speaker, given that my constituents have been asking me for clarity on the process, again to the same minister: can the minister explain the role of the coal facilitator and why it is that he has been engaged to deal only with the companies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. Earlier today I announced that Mr. Boston will be responsible for working with coal-fired electricity companies, again, particularly with a focus on those that were scheduled to be online post 2030. Mr. Boston is tasked with providing recommendations to government to ensure, firstly, that transition to cleaner sources of power is as seamless as possible; secondly, that we maintain a reliable electricity system and stability and stable prices for Albertans; and, thirdly, that this process doesn't unnecessarily strand capital.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many constituents currently rely on the coal industry for their jobs, back to the minister of economic development: what support will this government provide for the affected communities, workers, and companies during this transition?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for this very important question. Our plan is based on three key principles: supporting communities and workers, protecting Alberta consumers and taxpayers, and fairness to companies and investors. I've already met with community leaders and labour groups who represent the workers in the affected community and will continue to do so. Our transition plan is going to work with all affected workers and communities to ensure their economic success and sustainability throughout this transition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### **Red Deer Regional Hospital**

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health on behalf of all central Albertans. At the beginning of March the Red Deer hospital was flooded. Today five of nine operating rooms are still closed, and the hospital is only able to operate at 37 per cent capacity. Critical surgeries are being cancelled. The chief of orthopaedic surgery has called the resulting delayed closure a disaster, chaos, just unbelievable misfortune for the patients of central Alberta. Now the wait time for repairs to these operating rooms is getting longer. Don't Albertans deserve better?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, the flood at the Red Deer hospital has impacted a number of individuals. It was on March 1 as a result of a sprinkler system being activated during construction work. We're investing in that hospital. The flood affected five operating rooms. Unfortunately, a number of elective surgeries have been delayed, but people who need important, essential, life-saving surgeries still are going to be expedited to the top of the list. We don't want anyone to wait, but it's elective surgeries, to correct the record.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you to the minister for the answer.

Given that we have heard that while AHS said on March 2 that the five destroyed operating rooms will be torn apart and rebuilt starting this week, in fact there were delays not to the cleanup but to the start of rebuilding due to arguments over insurance coverage and who's going to pay for the damage. Can the minister not put the full force of her ministry behind getting the hospital functioning and expedite construction while insurance issues are sorted out?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. There certainly is repair work going on literally around the clock, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to get these surgeries rescheduled as soon as possible and the space back online. We're hopeful that three of the ORs will be back up in the second week of April, with the remaining two in the following week. The 12 in-patient beds will be available around the same time. We're working to make sure that we bring the space back online. This certainly was an unfortunate incident that happened at the hospital, but we're doing everything we can to get the space back up and available to meet patient needs.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you for the timeline. That helps because AHS had stated that two of the ORs would be up and running probably within a week, and of course they're not. They were expecting to have full function again within four to six weeks, and now possibly because of mould they'd be required to completely gut the spaces and increase the repair time to many months while the medical equipment actually is in Sea-Can. How is the minister going to provide OR services in one of Alberta's essential OR centres for almost 500,000 Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The operating rooms have increased hours, including 4

p.m. to midnight operations as well, which allows for 20 to 25 additional cases per week, so that's certainly helping us move through some of the backlog. Two operating rooms remain open for emergencies that are happening right now in the evenings as well because we want to make sure that emergencies have opportunities to be life saving. We, of course, want to make sure that the ORs are absolutely safe and clean, which is why the timeline is taking slightly longer, because there's nothing worse than acquiring an additional illness or an infection because you weren't in a safe operating space.

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

### **Farm and Ranch Worker Regulation Consultation**

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the previous session of the Legislature we provided sound advice to the government on Bill 6. My colleagues from Grande Prairie, Vermilion, and Calgary-South East suggested numerous amendments to improve Bill 6 to make sure that the mistakes they made before weren't made again. In spite of the help offered, it appears the government wasn't actually listening. To the agriculture minister. Rural Albertans are still concerned about how Bill 6 is going to affect their families. What was the rationale behind holding the consultation meetings only in Calgary and Edmonton as opposed to, say, actual rural communities?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Initially, we're still working on the number of members and the names of the members who will be at these consultation tables, the technical working groups. Once we have that, we're going to remain somewhat flexible if it's looking like some of those tables would have a better location to meet. We're going to remain flexible. For now those initial meetings will be in Calgary and Edmonton, but we'll remain somewhat flexible to look around the province to see if there's another area that would make more sense.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Jansen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the time to be flexible was when you started the consultation.

It's no wonder rural Albertans are suspicious of this government. Holding consultations in urban centres, holding consultation meetings during seeding and harvest: it seems that they're doing everything in their power to keep farmers and ranchers from showing up. To the minister of agriculture. Everyone supports making farms and ranches safer working places. Will you agree to make a more fulsome consultation process so that all the voices are heard?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It was always the plan to be as flexible as possible to ensure that we have as many voices as possible. At the second stage of consultation, once we have the recommendations of the technical working groups, we'll be able to then have the government write draft regulations. Those draft regulations would be available as well, to hear from as many Albertans, farming and ranching communities, everybody interested in agriculture, all Albertans, to have their input at that time. I'm looking forward to continuing this process.

**Ms Jansen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've got a lot of folks here who can tell you where the rural areas are.

I recall the former jobs minister telling this House that consultations last fall highlighted democracy in action. Given that it's now clear that the government has decided that limited involvement from both rural Albertans and stakeholders is superior to actual feedback, to the Premier: will you hold back on drafting any new regulations until proper consultation is done?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There's absolutely no question that we will do that, and that is the message that we have delivered consistently throughout this. To be clear, the people who have already been talked to about participating in the working groups are rural Albertans, are farmers, are chicken producers, are canola producers. Those are the people that are being talked to, so it's absolutely ridiculous to suggest that we are not talking to rural Albertans because that's exactly who we will be talking to.

### **Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement** (continued)

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Premier recently said that she intended to review Enmax's transfer of unprofitable power contracts back to the Balancing Pool, claiming that it's due to the low price of coal. FYI, Enmax's move was pursuant to 4.3(j), a standard clause within power purchase agreements, that says that when a change in law could reasonably be expected to render continued performance unprofitable, a buyer may terminate the arrangement and shall not be liable for any termination payment, and these rights were confirmed by the Balancing Pool. Did this government create a climate plan without analyzing its contractual liabilities with the power companies?

2:20

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be clear, the contracts that were negotiated by the previous government with these power companies allow for them to rely on the contract when the prices are high and they get to charge consumers lots, but when the prices go low and the market would save consumers, they have a great big loophole that they can use to get out of the contract. Now, we didn't negotiate that contract. That just is what the previous government saddled us with. That being said, it's really very important to understand that we need to move forward on this issue in the interests of all Albertans.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** The reason for the return of the contract had nothing to do with the price of power in the Balancing Pool; it had to do with the change in the law under 4.3(j). After an answer like that, I wonder what else this government doesn't know.

Given that the hon. minister of environment has consistently demonstrated some ignorance of the actual economics of the federal coal phase-out and that this plan allowed Alberta investors sufficient returns and cost the taxpayer nothing and provided sufficient warning for retaining and redeployment of workers in communities like Hanna and Forestburg, can the minister explain how her plan has resulted in Sheerness, for example, facing closure in the next six months and how somehow that's better than the former 2034 timeline?

**Ms Phillips:** I'll just, Mr. Speaker, by way of response, I guess, read out the federal end-of-life dates: Battle River 3, 2019; Sundance 1, 2019; HR Milner, 2019; Sundance 2, 2019; Battle River 4, 2025; Sundance 3, 2026; and Sheerness is 2036. So that is one of the remaining six, which is why we have said that we are going to be accelerating some of those down to 2030. That one will have a short amount of time . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In November of 2015 the industry voluntarily offered to dial down 20 per cent of our coal fleet without compensation, without job loss, without impacting power prices. Not wanting to miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity, this government flatly refused the offer. Given that this government had an opportunity to immediately reduce greenhouse gas in November at a rate of .75 megatonnes per month, how can the minister of environment stand now in this House and claim that she's some kind of saviour to our planet?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the science is clear despite what the Official Opposition may claim. The health effects of coal-fired electricity are also clear. I know that the Official Opposition would like to throw shade on the science, throw shade on the health effects, but the evidence is clear. Now, this dial down, dial up business: we didn't find that to be particularly in the public interest, which is why we accepted the recommendation from the climate leadership plan to end coal-fired electricity in 2030.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### **Government Policies** (continued)

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, Calgarians deserve to know that ambulances will come when they call, but the fact is that this government's plan to centralize EMS could increase the number of times ambulances won't be there for Calgarians by over 2,000 per cent. This is not fearmongering; it's fact. Not only is this plan not needed, but it's not wanted. Calgary's decision-makers know it will hurt our community. The minister knows the facts. How can Calgarians trust a government that robs them of locally managed, reliable emergency services?

**Ms Hoffman:** I beg to differ with the reference to facts because, of course, you need to have apples and apples to be able to draw an inference. I think it's important that we actually do look at the science, we actually do talk to the chief paramedic and all the other paramedics who are working throughout the province to make sure we get the right model moving forward, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, we're going to make sure that that model is in place and that I have an opportunity to meet with the mayor on an ongoing basis. I've been working with him already for the last 10 months and will continue to work with him as we move forward.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Minister.

Seeing as Calgary is already hurting enough without this needless bureaucratic plan and given that Calgary now has a higher unemployment rate than Atlantic cities like Halifax and St. John's and given that the Wildrose has introduced a common-sense 12-point jobs action plan to get Calgarians working again, will the government commit to implementing the low-cost, high-reward Wildrose plan?



**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's good to see that there are a couple of points in the plan where the Wildrose has been listening to our Speech from the Throne and the many speeches that I've given as far as a real plan to work with industry, with businesses province-wide to look at creating jobs. What I find quite interesting is that the Wildrose is claiming that now is not the time to diversify. Well, quite frankly, part of the reason that Alberta is facing and feeling the impacts of the low price of oil more significantly than any other region is because of our overreliance on one sector.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Panda:** Well, we will not apologize that our jobs plan isn't just a job description. Considering that our plan would cost very little to get Albertans working and given that there are hours-long lineups at Calgary's Alberta Works and that hundreds of people who want to get back to work are being turned away, to the minister: besides the failed jobs subsidy and an empty jobs bill, what specifically is the government doing to help Calgarians get back to work?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll tell the member what we are doing. We've made a number of announcements, including freeing up \$2 billion worth of capital through ATB, through AIMCo, through the AEC as well. The opposition and the House will be happy to hear, when we announce our budget, the number of initiatives that we'll be rolling out. What I find quite interesting is that within their plan the Wildrose talks about infrastructure investment. Yet they can't have it both ways. They would cut \$9 billion from our infrastructure budget, yet claim in their plan that they want to help build infrastructure. I don't know if they're coming or going.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

#### AIMCo Investments

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has touted a few initiatives it claims are creating jobs. One plan, as outlined in Budget 2015, directs AIMCo to invest 3 per cent of the heritage trust fund, approximately \$540 million, in Alberta-based companies. That direction came four and a half months ago, and to date AIMCo has only invested \$46 million, less than 10 per cent, yet the economic development minister continues to boast about it. To the Finance minister: when you announced this new mandate, how many new jobs did you expect the \$540 million to create?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question, member opposite. When we worked to put together our economic stimulation plan for Budget 2015, we went to AIMCo and we talked to them about the amount of capital that they could invest in Alberta. We are not taking the approach that we're picking the winners and losers. We're letting the professionals do that. AIMCo is finding the best places to invest capital, and that's happening as we speak.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this new direction from your government needs to dovetail with AIMCo's legislative mandate and given that AIMCo has received guiding principles from Treasury Board and Finance to help fulfill the direction of Budget 2015 and given that on March 2 at the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund meeting I asked for a copy of the guiding principles, which we have yet to receive, again to the Finance minister: will you immediately make these principles public to all Albertans?

**Mr. Ceci:** If the guiding principles are there and they are not subject to protection in some way, I will make them public.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act requires AIMCo to maximize long-term financial returns when investing the fund's assets and given that the government's new investment direction may conflict with the fund's legislative mandate to ensure that its investment always achieves the best possible returns for Albertans, again to the Finance minister: is this government inadvertently restricting AIMCo's latitude to invest globally, or is it considering creating amendments to legislation to give your ministry more ability to direct AIMCo's investments?

2:30

**Mr. Ceci:** Nothing could be further from the truth, I guess – well, I know nothing could be further from the truth. What we are doing is working with AIMCo. They are the people who assisted us and Finance officials to say that the investment would work. Only 3 per cent of the heritage trust fund is being invested in this fashion. We are still getting the best return for the investments AIMCo is making on behalf of the heritage trust fund. There has not been a change in that regard.

#### School Construction Schedule

**Ms Drever:** Mr. Speaker, last October my constituents, like many Albertans, were shocked to learn that schools being built in their communities would be open later than expected. In Calgary-Bow we're still waiting for the modernization of Bowness high school. It's clear these delays came as a result of poor planning and electioneering by the previous government. Well, thankfully, there's a new government in place. To the Minister of Education: what is being done to ensure schools are being built in a timely manner?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Yes. We are in the midst of the very largest infrastructure school building project in the history of this province. Bowness is back on track, and so is Cougar Ridge middle school. We're working very hard through some new systems to make sure we track these projects, which affect not just, of course, your constituency but right across the entire province. The next time someone talks about borrowing money and being so far in debt, just remember that you're getting a school in your area, that your kids need and your community needs, too.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these schools have already been delayed and given that the schools are needed now, to

the same minister: is the funding required for these schools being advanced in a timely manner to keep projects on track?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we've done an analysis of tracking each of the projects, and it's already paid quite a few dividends. We've introduced a pay-as-you-go sort of model that moves the money when they need it for the next contractual development of the project. We believe that on an annualized basis this new system is going to save more than \$15 million for this calendar year. It's important that we build these schools efficiently and we get the job done and that every dollar is being used properly.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that schools can provide valuable supports to our communities outside of education, back to the same minister: can you detail for Albertans some of the vulnerable student groups that will benefit from these new and modernized schools?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, for example, in Calgary we've got a modernization of the aboriginal community school to support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. We have a replacement for Christine Meikle school to benefit students with severe special needs. We have, as I said before, 232 projects across the province during this economic downturn. This is a great time to make sure that we are getting these projects done. It helps with employment, and it helps to put kids in classrooms that have been modernized and built brand new.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### School Fees

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This House has seen minister after minister make and break campaign promises, and the members opposite are no exception. Many Albertans are still waiting for action on some key campaign promises that they made during the last election. After listening to the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow deliver a puffball question, I thought: let's start today off with an NDP-style puffball question. Will the Minister of Education please remind this House what the NDP campaign promise was regarding school fees? Hopefully he can answer that.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we can see that our collaborative and close work with school boards across the province is starting to pay some dividends. We had Calgary Catholic last night say that they are going to reduce instructional fees. We have Lethbridge, I believe, debating to reduce instructional fees and St. Albert as well. We're working very closely during these tough economic times to make sure that we fund enrolment, make sacrifices in other areas to put money into our schools to make sure the kids have the learning that they need and that we can make reductions where we can possibly manage.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental question.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the minister has forgotten his own campaign promises.

Since the Wildrose policy regarding school fees was to find efficiencies in education, which would actually allow us to

eliminate school fees across the province without raising taxes, and given that in the fall the minister had province-wide discussions with school boards to come up with a provincial guideline regarding fees, will the minister tell the House not only what his new policy on school fees will be but actually when it will be in place?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways. You want to make massive cuts in public services with education and so forth and then eliminate school fees as well. I mean, it's living in a fantasy world. We live in the real world here. We're making sure that we're making plans with school boards every step of the way. We're working to find ways to reduce school fees. We will do so, and we will do it under these difficult circumstances because – you know what? – we make it a priority for education in this province within our caucus. I'm very proud of my caucus and my cabinet.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Edmonton Catholic school board informed parents in a letter yesterday that they would step out in faith and in support of their families who were struggling through the downturn in our economy, that they would eliminate school fees this year, and since that sounds very much like the Wildrose policy, on which we campaigned, to eliminate school fees without raising taxes, is this minister prepared to implement the Wildrose policy on school fees province-wide?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, certainly, what I am committed to doing is to make sure that we fund public education based on enrolment. During tough economic times, Mr. Speaker, that is an extraordinary achievement that I'm very, very proud of. We know that there's a whole different fee structure around there. It's been a bit like the Wild West over the last dozen years or so. We're rounding up those school fees to make sure that we make rational decisions and make sure that we have an equitable system in place and that we're funding every student according to enrolment and according to their needs.

Thank you.

### Pipeline Construction

**Mr. Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, last week the Premier advised this House that the United States is now our biggest competitor in exporting oil. This isn't news to the Progressive Conservatives. We were well aware that in 2013 the United States produced more oil than Saudi Arabia. Last week the Premier said – I'm quoting from *Hansard* – that her position was that “the Keystone pipeline was simply going to be another mechanism to sell to the very market which is now our competitor, so [this] wasn't necessarily in our best interest.” That couldn't be further from the truth. To the Energy minister: isn't it even more important to make sure that we get as many pipelines to tidewater so that we can make sure that the United States doesn't take up our market share?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. It's absolutely imperative that we get pipelines both east and west to get our products to market, and we also need to go beyond our competitor, who is the U.S., and develop markets in all parts of the world and continue to move our product to anywhere that will buy it.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given that the previous government laid the foundation for pipelines to tidewater in all directions and given that this government is now expressing a desire to have a pipeline or two, which is, by the way, in contradiction to your election platform, to the same minister: is your department actively exploring the proposal to build a pipeline through northern Canada to access the Trans-Alaska pipeline to reach port on the Pacific?

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question is absurd. The previous government for decades was unable to get a pipeline built in any direction. Quite frankly, where our government has already made much progress is primarily, first and foremost, through the climate leadership plan, where I can tell you that Alberta is taking real action on the climate, as opposed to the opposition parties, that would prefer that we just talk about doing things yet fail to implement any meaningful steps. Our climate leadership plan is giving us the social licence to get pipelines built in all directions.

**Mr. Fraser:** Interesting, since your counterparts all over the country, NDP, blocked everything we tried to put forward.

Given that in opposition the NDP vilified Alberta corporations as corporate welfare recipients not paying their fair share and not diversifying the economy and given that the PC government had strong partnerships with companies such as NOVA, Agrium, North West upgrader, and more, today's announcement on the Resource Diversification Council is fantastic news, and it shows the quality of these corporations. To the Minister of Energy: how can these companies trust that you'll have their back when that hasn't always been politically convenient for you?

2:40

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, and thank you for acknowledging that important group that made their announcement today. I am spending lots of time developing relationships and working with industry, as we've committed, to see how we can work with them to best create policy, best create messaging that will work together to create all that important business and keep some of the resources in Alberta and diversify our economy here rather than always shipping raw product out.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I advise that I hold the requisite number of copies of a report prepared by the High River Disaster Recovery Program Advocacy Committee called Finish the Job; Fix the System.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there was a point of order, but it was withdrawn by the hon. member.

### Orders of the Day

#### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your

Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate March 16: Mr. Schmidt]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am tremendously honoured to be standing here with you today. With great respect to the indigenous people of this province I especially want to recognize the people of Treaty 8, on whose traditional territory my riding of Lesser Slave Lake exists. [Remarks in Cree] Hello; it is a fine day. Our Father, the Creator, I am thankful for all. [As submitted]

To the people of Lesser Slave Lake I give my deepest and most heartfelt thanks for choosing me to represent them in this honourable Assembly. It is my greatest honour to work hard for them every day to ensure that their best interests and the best interests of all Albertans are reflected in the decisions this government makes.

I would like to take a moment to share with you a little bit about where I come from and how I came to be brought here to this great place. From the time I was a young child growing up in Slave Lake, my parents, who are here in the gallery, made it very clear to me that not everyone was as blessed as we were. I have loving parents who made sure I had food to eat. I had a safe home to sleep in. I had clean and, quite frankly, nice clothes to wear. They had faith in me. They supported me. They encouraged me to pursue my education and to become whatever I wanted to be.

Let it be clear that I always knew that that was special and that not everybody had that and that that was an opportunity which I could never take for granted. I was raised to know that not everyone was as lucky as we were and that it was our obligation to take care of those in need. I was also taught that if you see something that needs doing, you just do it yourself, not expecting others to take care of it for you. I watched my parents live this and then followed suit myself as they quietly provided support to those in poverty, to the homeless in our community, to the elderly who lived in our community and in our neighbourhood as well.

Not only did my family personally help those vulnerable people locally and beyond, but never did I fail to recognize the role our government had to take care of them as well. We understood it to be a shared responsibility, and, Madam Speaker, in my home paying taxes was a privilege and not a four-letter word.

In my later years of high school and throughout my time in university I had several other great influences as well. I participated in the TUXIS youth parliament, which the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster did as well. I fell in love with the parliamentary process while there, and I revelled in the chance to discuss key social issues – and I have to say that I even had one year as Premier in which I got to sit in this great room as well – and spend time with young Albertans from across the province with varied perspectives. Many are amazing friends to this day, and they helped me to grow as an individual.

My career as a nurse furthered my vision and understanding of what caring for our vulnerable means. My understanding of population health made it clear to me that factors such as education, income, discrimination, housing, and the environment often have a much greater impact on health than our health care system actually does. I began to see the systemic issues that needed to be challenged.

One organization that I saw strongly advocating for improvement of our health care system and improved health outcomes for

Albertans was the United Nurses of Alberta. I then became president of UNA local 315 and became actively engaged in the work within the labour movement to improve the equality of all Albertans. Being a part of UNA was very empowering and eye-opening, and I am still very proud to call those men and women sisters and brothers.

Over my first 17 years as a nurse I became more and more disturbed by the systemic issues I saw, especially by the failure of our society to take care of our elders, for whom I have been given great respect. The straw that pushed me over and led me to this place here was listening to my colleagues who worked as nurses cry in moral distress over their inability to work in the system to take care of the needs of the people they were responsible for. Madam Speaker, that is why I chose to run for Alberta's NDP in the 2015 election.

I owe a huge thanks to those who helped me get here today. Several are here with us. Again, I mentioned in my introductions Chris Brown, who worked so hard as my campaign manager, tirelessly pulling it all together so I could focus on being a candidate; Shaun Woodard, who, again, travelled many times to help me around and has always been a great friend, along with his wife, Sandra. There were so many that helped out. I cannot name them all, but a quick shout-out to Nicola, Len, Gail, and Phil and others and, of course, always my greatest fans, my parents. Then, of course, there are the more passive supporters, who are my children, aged 16, 13, and 6, who always and forevermore deserve my thanks for their patience as they share their mother's time with the people of this great province.

Now, on that note, I want to take some time to talk about the amazing constituency of Lesser Slave Lake. I have to say that Lesser Slave Lake was an amazing place to grow up, as I'm sure the hon. Minister of Health can agree, and continues to be an amazing place to live, work, and raise my children. Covering a vast portion of central northern Alberta, it is incredibly diverse in its landscape, in its industry, and in its people. I am proud to share the territory with 12 different Treaty 8 First Nations and three Métis settlements, communities that are rich with culture, face significant challenges, many due, of course, to the legacy of residential schools, but that are filled with strong, resilient, welcoming people. I have been humbled by their faith in our government to form a new relationship and to deal with the substantial concerns that exist, and I look forward to making continuous progress on this as a government.

Lesser Slave Lake's communities are home to so many strong and resilient people, from Banana Belt to Smith, from Faust to Red Earth Creek, and the generous, caring people that I serve successfully deal with the challenges that living in northern Alberta presents for isolated communities and, of course, deal with fires and floods and droughts. They have tirelessly worked to make our northern area grow and prosper. They took on the challenge to settle in the north and have developed thriving agriculture, forestry, and oil and gas industries. Never afraid to take on new challenges, the amazing people in my riding continue to innovate and develop new and better ways of doing things. For example, we are home to the Friends of Historical Northern Alberta Society, the innovative not-for-profit group that is creating an online, self-guided tour of northern Alberta to preserve history and to promote tourism.

2:50

The forestry industry, that has such a strong presence in my riding, is focused on always doing things in new and better ways. For example, Slave Lake Pulp is in the final stages of their biomethanization project, a unique project in the world which converts pulp mill effluent into electrical power through anaerobic

digestion. This on-budget project uses Canadian technology and is only one small piece of the renewable energy projects happening throughout the forestry industry in our province.

We also are home to Northern Lakes College – it's centred in my riding – which has taken on the challenge of offering innovative postsecondary education programs to meet the needs of the northern community it serves. A model very different from other colleges, it addresses the isolation of many northern communities for whom leaving the community is not an option and has taken distance education to a new level in many ways. I'm very proud of that organization, and I'm happy to support the Minister of Advanced Education with ongoing support.

I'm also proud of the innovative health care solutions being developed for rural Alberta and piloted in Lesser Slave Lake. Our primary care centre in Slave Lake offers truly collaborative care with physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, chronic disease management specialists, physiotherapists, and a whole host of other health practitioners co-located to offer comprehensive care, truly modelling the right provider in the right place at the right time. This model has not only allowed for same-day access to primary care but has also greatly facilitated staff recruitment, such a huge issue in rural Alberta to which we are tremendously responsive, and has resulted in cost savings for Albertans.

Then oil and gas, you know, absolutely, is such a core part of our riding. Obviously, we've been impacted by that, but they are ready to take on the challenges. For example, CNRL's Pelican Lake field hosts a leading-edge polymer flood, one of the largest in the world. This advanced, enhanced oil recovery technique has garnered them international attention as it dramatically increased the life of the field so that it will continue to generate both jobs and revenue for Albertans for the long term. I'm so proud of the Albertans that live in my riding for bringing this amazing project forward.

Lesser Slave Lake obviously is threaded through with many beautiful lakes and rivers, fishing, camping, and glorious beaches close to home. While residents and guests can take advantage of the modern conveniences of our communities, they are always only about five minutes away from the rivers and trails that are amazing. Rich in culture, we have live music, powwows, rodeos, theatre productions, round dances, and a rich history that we share in our museums.

Madam Speaker, there is so much to offer in Lesser Slave Lake. It is my greatest wish that all of you come to discover at some point this unexplored diamond in northern Alberta, and I look forward to hosting all of you there at some point. Thanks again for allowing me this opportunity to share about the amazing riches that Lesser Slave Lake has to offer. Hai, hai.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** The most beautiful riding in the province, another unexplored diamond.

I really enjoyed the presentation by the minister. I have actually begged her on several occasions to be invited up to Slave Lake, so she knows that I'm looking forward to the big tour. I wonder if the minister could expand on her discussion of the family care clinic in Slave Lake. I know it was created at a time of crisis. You were responding to what was probably one of this province's worst disasters. I personally have been very impressed with the way that that community pulled together, both in dealing with the crisis but also in helping to facilitate the creation of that family care clinic.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I definitely see that clinic as a model for where we need to go in the future with primary care. It certainly was a response to the fire. After the fire of 2011 in Slave Lake we actually lost a number of physicians, which left us tremendously stretched, and the ability to move forward with this clinic was an amazing thing for the community. Within it the nurse practitioners in combination with the physicians work as partners, which has now enabled same-day service and access to primary care.

I would say that a number of you here in this Assembly understand how tremendous that is, that you can get in the same day. If you are sick and you need to see somebody because you have a cold or because you need a prescription renewal, you can see someone that very same day. I find that a wonderful thing, and it's certainly been responsive to the community's needs. I look forward to talking to you more about it in the future, but it certainly is an example of where we can go. I look forward to seeing that model roll out even in High Prairie, which has a new hospital coming shortly.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** I, too, enjoyed the minister's maiden speech. I know that when I was a union member, I got to have a much deeper insight into the problems that occurred. Could you just expound a little on your position with the union and how you could see a little differently the problems that were going on in health care?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to say that when I was in university, I didn't necessarily understand what unions were about. I bought into the idea, you know, that they were, I guess, selfish per se. There's this idea out there that's completely a myth. Once I became involved with the union, it became very clear to me that for every single nurse in that room their highest priority was the very best care for the people that they took care of. We fought way harder on issues such as ensuring appropriate ratios of care and ensuring the right provider be there at the right time and the appropriate decision-making than we did on any issue that affected us directly. I'm very proud to be involved with that. I'm very proud to have listened to the stories of so many of those women and men in that room for years, and I look forward to using that information to help move forward and support the Minister of Health in improving our health care system here in Alberta.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I too would like to ask the member a question under 29(2)(a). She mentioned in her statement regarding biomethane or bioenergy, I believe, that was developed in her area. I've been fortunate enough to travel to that constituency and am impressed about the idea of job creation. I'm also going to extend a reverse invitation to the member to come to the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler and actually visit the town of Hanna, which is the headquarters of her government agency known as the Special Areas Board. I wanted to ask the member if she could expound on exactly how many jobs are created by that type of diversification.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. minister, you have 15 seconds.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think during the construction phase there were over 200 jobs and there are actually an additional, I believe, approximately 25 . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to acknowledge that I am on Treaty 6 territory and that my riding of Calgary-Bow is on Treaty 7 territory.

I'm honoured today to rise and give my maiden speech. I cannot adequately express the privilege and delight I feel standing in this Assembly amongst my colleagues. I would also like to express my gratitude to the constituents of Calgary-Bow for putting their trust in me, and I promise every day to continue listening, learning, and working hard on their behalf. They are, after all, the reason I am here, Madam Speaker.

I was elected on a platform that promised change. When I went door to door to speak with the residents of my riding, I heard their concerns around health care, education, jobs, and the care of seniors. As I campaigned, I told them that I would hold true to my strong progressive values and the values of my party, and I promise to not let them down.

3:00

I thank you for the opportunity to respond to the throne speech and would like to first take note of the celebration of International Women's Day and the struggle for personhood. The government's recognition of the struggle for human rights for all genders is something I'm very proud of.

The throne speech addressed key priorities that will benefit Albertan families in a real way. The new Alberta child benefit plan will invest \$340 million, and that investment will directly help 380,000 Albertan children.

Another important priority laid out in the throne speech was the act to end predatory lending. This industry hurts vulnerable Albertans, and I'm glad this government is standing up to end predatory lending.

I am also proud of the investment of \$34 billion to build roads, transit, schools, and other facilities in our province that we need to support the economy and create jobs. I hear about the need for these infrastructure projects in my riding, and I look forward to seeing the West Springs/Cougar Ridge school open in early 2017.

I would also take this opportunity to thank my family for the support they have given in all of my endeavours. Many members of my family worked tirelessly throughout my campaign. The support I receive from my family is what keeps me strong, and I can always count on my immediate family of strong, stubborn women to let me know when I am wrong. I hope my nieces Gwen and Mara will inherit that strength.

Outside of family supports, my campaign was also organized by an amazing group of volunteers. People from all over the riding came to help, and it was the hard work of these dedicated folks that made sure the signs were ordered and the phones were answered. My campaign manager worked day and night to support me and the NDP, and I am so grateful for all he has done.

The campaign was an interesting experience, and balancing my university classes, part-time work, and an active door-knocking schedule in April and May was challenging. I knocked on doors, put up signs, met face to face with as many people as possible. I wanted to hear their concerns directly and began to understand the issues that faced the residents of my riding. However, it was something I would do all over again, and I will, Madam Speaker, in 2019.

Of course, the months that followed my election on May 5 were more difficult than I can express. My first few days after being elected as part of the NDP government were a quick and painful learning curve of what it meant to be a young woman in politics.

This is a story you might have likely heard, perhaps in the *Sun* or any other current print publication. Through it all, my family and supporters stood strong with me. I experienced online harassment, yes, but more accurately I experienced gender-based violence. Unfortunately, my situation isn't unique, and I recognize my privilege as I know that for many other women it would have been a lot worse. Gender-based harassment has become normalized within our society. Online or offline, it shouldn't be acceptable. Madam Speaker, I am dedicated to speaking out and standing up against harassment, and I expect my colleagues to do the same. We must set an example, and we must work together to end the culture around gender-based violence.

After I was elected, there was no shortage of discussion in the news and no lack of speculation on who I am and what I believe in. My work in Calgary-Bow and my work with social justice legislation are clear examples of some of what I stand for. Before being elected, I was a student at Mount Royal University working towards my degree in sociology. For a number of years I've been a committed activist on women's rights. Through that work I have met with many strong and inspiring women whom I call role models, role models like Ruth Ellen Brosseau, Niki Ashton, and my sister Jenn. They kept me focused on the work that I was elected to do and the importance of my role. Elected leaders are the voice of their constituents, and that responsibility is the most important part of my job.

Madam Speaker, I am proud of my roots in the riding of Calgary-Bow. I was born in 1988 in Calgary, where I was raised. That year we hosted the Olympic Winter Games, and people around the world were glued to their televisions watching hockey stars, figure skaters, bobsled teams, and other athletes compete. I'm proud to say that Canada Olympic Park is in my riding of Calgary-Bow, and I am proud to be an Olympic baby.

Calgary-Bow is located in the northwest and southwest quadrants of the city. It includes the communities of Crestmont, Coach Hill, Patterson Heights, Greenwood Village, Cougar Ridge, West Springs, Valley Ridge, and in the heart of Calgary-Bow is Bowness.

The 2013 flood greatly impacted my riding, causing serious damage, particularly in the community of Bowness. Many of my constituents were evacuated and returned home to damaged property. I have spoken to so many of those who were affected, and flood mitigation remains a major concern. I am proud that this government has taken serious action on this. The Alberta community resilience program is a necessary fund from the province that will build flood barriers and manage infrastructure. It is important that we do not forget the devastation that occurred in 2013 and that we continue to look at why the flood had the impact it did so that we are not faced with the same problems in the future.

Today there are so many active organizations within my constituency. The following are a few of the organizations that I have had the pleasure of visiting with: Pathways CSA, where I had the honour to participate in their 10th annual round dance, and, may I add, the first-ever MLA to attend that round dance; Simon House recovery centre, where I celebrated their paths to sobriety at the end of every month; Bowness Seniors' Centre, where I recently celebrated their 50th anniversary; Bowwest Community Resource Centre, that links individuals or families with appropriate services that will support them in their daily lives; the Boys & Girls Club, that works to provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop confidence and skills for life; the Irish cultural centre, where I had the pleasure of attending their 30th anniversary this month. As a child I took Irish dancing at this

centre, and going back as an adult gave me an opportunity to reflect on where I came from.

One of the things I love doing the most is visiting schools and talking to students about my role as an MLA. I'm very proud of the educational opportunities in my riding. Education is a priority for our government. In Calgary-Bow the government has recently funded a modernization project of Bowness high school. Construction is already under way as well as construction of the West Springs/Cougar Ridge middle school. By reversing funding cuts to education, the government is prioritizing the needs of students in our province.

I am so proud that alongside my work in my riding I have also had the opportunity to pass both my private member's bill and my private member's motion. Bill 204, the Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act, 2015, was a step forward in ending domestic violence here in Alberta. I'm so proud every single member in this Legislature voted for this bill. It's because of you that survivors of domestic violence can escape from their perpetrators by breaking their lease without financial penalty. It was a truly historic moment in this province.

Housing insecurity is one of the major barriers for women attempting to leave violence. Without safe houses, women and their children often end up living on the streets or returning to dangerous situations, where the cycle of violence can continue indefinitely. My motion to increase community capacity to deliver transitional, low-barrier housing for vulnerable Albertans suffering with complex mental and physical health needs is a step forward to end homelessness here in the province. This motion speaks to the need to provide wraparound services for vulnerable people living in poverty. This is an important commitment for our Legislature, and I'm proud of the unanimous support it received.

### 3:10

Before I conclude, I would like to say that I am proud to be part of a government that is prioritizing the hard-working people of Alberta and is focused on improving labour conditions. It is important that workers, who are the backbone of our economy, are protected. It is important that we do everything we can to help them return safely and uninjured to their families after a long day of work. As a member of this Legislature I take the responsibility seriously. My job is to fight for the rights of my constituents, many of whom sometimes work in dangerous conditions. I'm pleased to see that labour legislation will be reviewed and amended.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I would like to return to the personal. I would like to recognize the important role of my grandmother Dale in my life. She raised me, and like so many women, she has raised generations of Albertan women. Her active volunteerism and community involvement are reflected in the strong work ethic I hold today. My great-grandmother Frances was also a strong role model for me. She and her family came to Canada, leaving East Germany, seeking out a better life. I am so fortunate to have the resilience and humour passed down to me from my family matriarchs.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I would like to say that I am so grateful to the many women, young people, and progressive activists that supported me in my campaign and throughout my term thus far. I am here because of their beliefs and our shared values. Thank you so much.

Madam Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate on the Speech from the Throne now. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016

**The Chair:** I'll call on the hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. [some applause] I don't know if that's for you or me.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 2 with members of this Assembly, to say a few words about the nature of interim supply, and then to recap some of its contents here. This bill is consistent with previous interim supply bills that have come before the Legislature. It identifies the total amounts requested for each ministry for spending expenses, capital investment, and financial transactions. This legislation is required to provide the spending authority to continue government operations beyond March 31 until the Budget 2016 estimates are debated and approved.

Simply put, what these estimates do is give government the spending authority to carry on day-to-day operations for critically important items like health care in our communities, education, and social services. These are programs and services that Albertans rely on and expect their government to continue to provide. To be clear, when passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$29.6 million for the Legislative Assembly and \$7.2 billion in expense funding, \$864 million in capital investment funding, \$164 million in financial transaction funding for the government, and, finally, \$363 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to briefly respond to some of the discussions that occurred earlier during Committee of Supply. During that discussion there were some inferences that interim supply acts are uncommon in Alberta. For the record, Madam Chair, if you look at the past 15 years, this Legislature has debated interim supply acts in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015. Therefore, it should be clear that these acts are commonplace in Alberta.

More importantly, Madam Chair, I should emphasize that the estimates we are discussing today will be included and fully debated when the main budget documents are tabled next month. On that note, let me add that the budget we will introduce on April 14 will elaborate on this government's priorities, and they are putting Albertans back to work through infrastructure expansion throughout the province; being a fiscally prudent and responsible government that is focused on minimizing our deficit without making a bad situation even worse; maintaining high-quality and efficiently run education programs for our students, access to health care for our citizens, and an effective social services system when it's needed most. Our budget will also continue to elaborate on economic development initiatives designed to put Albertans back to work, and it will continue to show how our government is restraining spending in light of our significant revenue shortfall.

In summary, Madam Chair, approval of the interim supply estimates, pending the release and approval of the budget, will allow the Assembly the time it needs to review and debate those plans in detail as we move forward in the interests of all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak against Bill 2, interim supply. Wildrose cannot support a blank cheque, that this government says that it needs just because they choose to delay the introduction of their budget. Reckless, unplanned, and unbudgeted spending is no way to get Alberta back on track. Without details as to how this money will be used, we cannot vote in favour of this \$8.7 billion blank cheque.

The minister is right that there is nothing unusual about interim supply, but he can do better than the previous Tory government, Madam Chair. We and Albertans expect them to do better; they said that they would do better. Now, this isn't to say that reasonable governments would not engage in the practice of interim supply, but a reasonable government would provide a budget impact statement with their interim supply. They would provide at least an estimate of what their interim supply will do to the bottom line of the government, what it will mean for the balance sheet, what it will mean for the deficit, for expenditure levels on the capital and the operational sides. So when the minister stands and says, "We're not doing anything different than the government that came before us," he's correct. I don't think that's good enough.

There was nothing in this bill to tell us where the money is actually going. I am asking what specific programs this money will finance. Can the government pinpoint any specific deliverables that they expect to see from this \$8.7 billion supply? Without these, Wildrose cannot in good conscience support this bill, Madam Chair. And what about where the money came from? We would like to see the government specify what, if any, savings it has found in last year's budget to make up for spending in this bill. This \$8.7 billion bill is almost as much as the Finance minister projects the deficit will be in his upcoming budget. Before we vote for this bill, can the government tell this Assembly how much of this money will be borrowed? I have a sneaking suspicion that the answer is all of it. Relying on massive top-ups to keep the government running without a budget is unacceptable and fiscally irresponsible.

3:20

It is unacceptable when Alberta has the highest per capita spending of Canada's largest provinces. In fiscal year 2013-14 Alberta was spending \$10,964 per person on government programs alone. That is \$2,002 more per capita than in fiscal year 2004-05. Had the province increased program spending after fiscal year 2004-05 within the prudent limitations of population growth plus inflation, it would have spent \$295 billion between 2005 and 2013. Instead, it spent \$345 billion on programs. That, Madam Chair, is a \$49 billion spread, a \$49 billion overreach and overspend. With that \$49 billion, we would still be debt free. We would have more than doubled the heritage fund. Besides a \$10 billion annual fiscal hole, which is now nine years running, what do we have to show for this irresponsible, rather liberal spending increase?

Now, some members that got us into this mess are trying to elect another Justin Trudeau Liberal supporter to this House, this while the Trudeau Liberals are blocking Alberta's market access by holding up pipelines and banning tanker traffic crucial to Alberta on our west coast. Alberta needs more conservatives standing up for the province and market access, not another voice for the federal Liberal government in this Chamber. More of the same spending and tax increases of the last decade will not restore the Alberta advantage, that those in the Official Opposition are determined to rebuild.

Meanwhile our government still spends \$2,000 more per capita on operations alone every year than British Columbia. Last year that meant that Alberta spent about \$8 billion more on operations than B.C. That's right. Despite the price of oil we would have virtually

no deficit in this province if our government had restrained spending to just the level of British Columbia.

Madam Chair, reckless spending and experimental policies of the NDP government are getting noticed. Alberta's businesses and job creators have asked for a moratorium on risky NDP policies, and we couldn't agree more. We want to see a moratorium on reckless spending as well. It seems that the government can't get enough money bills passed by this Assembly. Since last March we have had supplementary supply, an interim supply, a budget that was not passed, an interim supply, then another budget, and now another interim supply and a supplementary supply. Why can't this government just produce a good plan and stick to it?

The government's total lack of a plan is becoming increasingly clear, Madam Chair. Just the other day we debated the supplementary supply bill before this Assembly, and we saw a fine example of budget bungling. The NDP cut \$50 million of critical ASLI funding for seniors' homes in its October 27, 2015, budget. Then just two days later for some reason these projects were given the green light, on October 29. Now these projects are showing up again as supplementary supply. Now we're finding out that the NDP buried the money for ASLI not in the estimates but in the \$4.4 billion, five-year mystery project line in the capital plan, just when Albertans need hope the most. They want to see their government taking strong leadership in this province, but they're seeing yo-yoing like this, that shows the NDP just isn't up to the job of responsibly managing Alberta's finances. You know, it's a common problem for ND governments across Canada. Many of my colleagues will remember the B.C. NDP in 1995 and 1996 claiming to run balanced budgets and then getting caught running secret hundred million dollar deficits. It is a tried-and-true NDP playbook to keep the good times rolling while our finances crumble into a shambles. I worry that last October's budget wasn't much better than 1995 and 1996 in B.C.

At the end of the day, we just need one real budget that outlines one plan with Albertans' priorities, a budget that should have been tabled a month ago and one that reassures Albertans that this government cares more about jobs and the sound financial management of this province than their ideology, not in the form of an interim supply from a government that we cannot trust that is hurting Albertans during an economic downturn. At the very least, we need a budget impact statement from spending provisions in this bill, that will tell Albertans what effect the interim supply will have on the bottom line of the provincial government's finances.

I trust my colleagues to vote against Bill 2 and to stand up against unexamined, unexplained, carte blanche spending bills like this. This Assembly needs to be demanding a real budget with a real plan to implement common-sense, fiscally conservative policies, ideas like what the Wildrose put forward yesterday in our jobs action plan, ideas that will get Albertans working again and provide clear direction for our province, ideas that I hope this NDP government will take under consideration when they finally decide to give us a budget.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is an honour today to rise before you to speak on Bill 2, the interim supply bill. I would like to address the House today and urge all of my colleagues to take a long, hard look at this government and how it has been shirking its responsibility to transparently present the state of our province's finances.

Now, I know that there may be some members of the House who like to rise and speak about how, when they were in government, passing interim supply bills was commonplace. That's all well and good, Madam Chair, but I hardly think that the past government is an appropriate standard to hold ourselves to, especially when we're talking about accountability. I know Albertans certainly don't think so. After years of government bloat and scandalous spending Albertans are looking for a government that they can trust to manage our finances responsibly. Instead, this government just keeps giving them more reasons to worry. I ask that the members of this Assembly raise the bar.

Last session we saw that the NDP government felt that it was appropriate to ignore the rules and simply avoid giving a quarterly update on the government's finances, a decision that sinks below even the previous lower standard that I spoke of. And now what do we see? We see that this same government thinks that it is both prudent and reasonable to float almost \$9 billion in spending through this Assembly just four months after passing its first budget. Its first budget. Worse, it wants to do so while providing little to no detail on how these billions of taxpayer dollars will be spent. This is inexcusable. This is what we came to expect in the past. This is not what we expect from our government.

3:30

Wildrose understands that the price of oil has not recovered to levels that we or any other Albertan would like to see. This is no one's fault. We recognize that. Albertans recognize that. No one could have predicted with a hundred per cent certainty what the price of oil was going to be, just as we can't predict what it's going to be going forward. We recognize that as well. But we must take a hard look at the commodity forecasting practices that this government used to build their last budget and ask ourselves: is this acting responsibly? Should they have used more logical numbers? Everybody had been telling them that this is not okay. Is \$8.7 billion in unbudgeted spending a reflection of inexperience or total inability to responsibly manage Alberta's finances? Is Bill 2 being used as a Band-Aid to cover miscalculations made last fall in the government's last budget?

Let me be clear. Wildrose is not blaming the NDP for low oil prices. That would be unfair. But we can expect more from them. They campaigned on change, and we're not seeing that. Now, it is fair to raise an eyebrow of scrutiny to the budgeting practices that predicted oil prices to be well above the parliamentary budget office's forecast and well above almost all private industry forecasts. Not only did this government choose to forecast lofty oil prices to mask even more serious problems and present a very misleading budget, but now it has doubled down and is hiding behind current prices, calling them a government revenue problem. A government revenue problem.

Madam Chair, this doesn't live up to the standard that Albertans expect either. For too long our province has had a spending problem, not a revenue problem. A spending problem. Our province spends \$2,000 more per capita than our neighbours to the west every year. That's \$8 billion more on operations last year. It is very troubling that this government does not show any indication of future restraint. Members of the government are happy to toe the party line and allow the Premier to keep spending her way into prosperity.

Madam Chair, I am truly in awe of this government's inability to find any – any – spending efficiencies. We hear every day in question period and in the media that the NDP is looking for efficiencies. They also tell us that they are conducting reviews for cost savings. When is the rubber going to actually hit the road and start to produce these savings? Albertans want to see results. My



constituency needs to see results. The people of Alberta are tired of waiting on empty promises that have just become another way for the government to dodge and deflect real questions about the habits of their governance.

How can this government sit in the Assembly and reasonably argue that an \$8.7 billion blank cheque is acceptable? We need to know where the money is going, and we need to know what the results are going to be. Point blank, Bill 2 is the problem. The nonbudgeted asks are hollow, and there is little to no substance in this document. There are also requests for a couple of billion dollars here and a couple of billion dollars there, yet more evidence that this government doesn't have a plan. Bill 1 is a good example. Their jobs plan is a job description. We have a bill before us that actually doesn't do anything other than tell the minister what he can already do. That's a monstrous waste of time.

The government is asking this Assembly to blindly trust them with a significant amount of taxpayers' money when they have given us absolutely no reason to trust them. I use the word "us" because it is all of us in this Assembly that are reflected by this interim budget. They're withholding detailed information on where the money will go because they are either choosing to hide the facts or because they don't know where it's going to be spent. Either is unacceptable. Or maybe the NDP is just using Bill 2 to hide something of an even greater concern, their spring budget. When we hear the Finance minister refuse to say that \$5 billion plus \$5.4 billion is equal to \$10.4 billion, that's a problem. They know it's a problem. They're deferring the problem, and they're waiting for Albertans to forget about it going into the summer.

Why would the hon. government do such a thing? It's a pretty simple fact, actually. The question is really: are they misusing their position in an attempt to give themselves an advantage in the upcoming by-election? Would the government really use stall tactics for partisan purposes, knowing the inaction of government leadership could stall or even paralyze investment in this province? The royalty review is a great example of how stalling a review for so long can impact my riding. Look no further than that private industry was forced to freeze any future spending as they waited for an ideology-driven cabinet to announce a whole lot of nothing. Promises of jobs, promises of stability, and what did we get? Bill 1, their first bill, which really does nothing for our province.

It matters very much to Albertans and to politicians who serve them that major milestones like budgets happen regularly. When Members of the Legislative Assembly are being asked to sign on \$8.7 billion in spending, they need to be given appropriate amounts of time and sufficient access to information to allow them to consider the decision. We need to see more details on the massive ask from the government.

Albertans are looking for a steady hand, one that they can depend on for reliable management of public funds. When they see large overspends, huge deficits, and a government operating in secretive and self-serving ways, it does nothing to stabilize the confidence in our marketplace. To the contrary, it adds to the anxiety, which we see with the credit downgrades.

3:40

I know that members opposite say that this is fearmongering, but that's not true. People are fearful. When I speak with my constituents, I hear their concerns and their worries. If you would take the time to listen to people who put you into office, you would hear the same thing. You would hear that people are leery about what is happening within this government.

I hear small and mid-size business owners saying that they aren't willing to take business-benefiting risks because they're worried that the other shoe will drop and that this government, which is

making things up as they go, will tax them more or price them out of the market. I try my best to calm their fears, but the truth is that I truly share their concern. When we have a government that sits with their hand out to Albertans for \$8.7 billion of unknown, unbudgeted spending, it's hard to not be worried. Where is that money going to come from? We all know the answer to that question. It's coming from Albertans' families and businesses, money that our families and businesses need to get through these hard times.

Madam Chair, when the hon. Finance minister comes to this Assembly with his pockets turned out and his hand out, saying, "Trust me; I'll spend the money wisely; just fork over the cash," we should all be highly skeptical. Even in the past when other interim supply bills came through this Assembly, at least there was a prorated budget that could also be released with the interim budget to be compared to. This isn't the case now. Now we have no idea how this money will tie into the greater context of the government's spending plan.

I cannot in good conscience vote in support of Bill 2 on behalf of my constituents in Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I also highly encourage all the members of the Assembly to think about their constituents, not their party affiliations or party ideology, and ask themselves if their own conscience will allow them to vote in favour of the \$8.7 billion blank cheque that our Finance minister is asking from us.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak specifically to Bill 2, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act. We have heard much in this House over the past couple of days and, I guess, since early last week about this particular piece of legislation: "Don't worry. There's nothing to be concerned or worried about. It's totally normal."

While I can accept that we have certainly used this process in the past, I do find it a bit disingenuous on two counts: one, folks that used to sit on this side of the House in the NDP caucus on numerous occasions would stand, just as I am today, saying, "If the government would call the House back to session when the standing orders say, we could get the budget passed on time, we could communicate to municipalities on time, and we could provide all of the details on time, but since they've failed to do that, here we are debating interim supply."

I will accept that it's possible that someday I, too, may sit on that side of the House and understand some of the pressures that they face that prevent them from coming back to the Assembly and being accountable to Albertans or that would allow them to get to this position. In conversations that I've had with members on that side of the House – you know, you don't know what you don't know from time to time. It's quite possible that someday I may regret railing against interim supply and the "Why can't we get it done on time?"

But until I have that opportunity, I will remain steadfast in my position that there is no good reason that the House couldn't have been called back to session in early February. That would have allowed for a budget to be introduced on time, not a budget that we're going to see introduced in the Assembly on the 14th of April, the fourth-latest introduction of a budget – the fourth-latest – since the year 2000, and on three of those four occasions they were in an election year, Madam Chair. As we all know, there wasn't an election this year, and we only passed a budget a mere 108 days ago. So for us to have to come to the Assembly to ask for not just a hundred million dollars, like we see in the supplementary supply

bill, but \$8.9 billion, I believe it is, here in the interim supply bill, that is more than a little disappointing.

Now, one of the other things that we have heard not just today but over recent days from the Finance minister is that this is a process that has been used 15 times in recent years. While I fully accept that this process has been used 15 times over the last few years, on a number of occasions – I believe that that number is five or six, but I will confirm, and I'll be happy to report back to the House, likely tomorrow – interim and supplementary supply were debated in conjunction or at the exact same time that the budget had already been presented. The wonderful thing about that is that it gave the opposition the opportunity to have a much better grasp and fuller scope of knowledge when it comes to exactly what the resources were intended to do.

While I'll also be the first to say that much of the resources that the government is going to be spending through the interim supply process and the supplementary supply process will be spent on positive things, the challenge, Madam Chair, is that the Official Opposition's role is to hold the government to account, and when we're provided with such little information, it is very, very difficult for us to be effective at being a part of the process, a very important part, that represents large numbers of Albertans. In some ways, just like they are the government to all Albertans, we are the opposition for all Albertans as well, and both of us play a very important role in that process. For the government to choose to pass the interim supply legislation without any of the additional information that is so desperately needed, without doing it by presenting the budget and then having interim supply and supplementary supply being debated in conjunction with it, lots of questions are raised about the effectiveness of the process, about the effectiveness of the dollars that are spent.

3:50

Let me be clear that the Wildrose Official Opposition believes in ensuring that we have a world-class education system here in our province. We believe in funding health care and ensuring that front-line health care workers aren't laid off, that their jobs aren't cut, even though there are those on the other side of the House who would like to have you believe differently. We recognize that there are portions of these resources that the government is coming back to the Assembly for that are important, but the process of how we get to those answers is sometimes just as important as the bill.

By not providing the information, it does present a significant risk. I know that some of my colleagues have spoken about it being a blank cheque, that the accountability that is in play when we have a full line-by-line budget is different than the government's ability to move money from one area to another without very much accountability to the Albertan public. We've seen the NDP make some wrong choices in the past. We've seen the NDP say one thing and do another, and it's the exact sort of thing that, when the NDP was on this side of the House, they used to join in the chorus against when it came to the former PC government, exactly as I spoke to earlier, this chorus against using interim and supplementary supply processes, not ensuring accountability in the House. We're seeing this real narrative of wrong choices that the government is making. We've seen reckless and unplanned spending, and this isn't the path forward for Alberta.

Now, I would be remiss if I didn't just mention that we have seen in the supplementary supply process some ministers talking about a little bit of restraint and some savings in terms of moving resources around, so if that is going to happen, I look forward to the budget. The path forward, as I mentioned yesterday in the House in corresponding with constituents, isn't spending wildly. While I appreciate that we need to spend money on capital investments in

the province, just as the Wildrose plan laid out, this belief that every government dollar that's spent is spent well: nothing could be further from the truth.

We need to make sure that we are looking at ourselves. I would hesitate to make comment about looking in the mirror because these sorts of comments have gotten people in some significant challenges in the past. However, it wasn't a comment that I had made.

**Mr. McIver:** Through the chair.

**Mr. Cooper:** Through the chair, Madam Chair.

We do as legislators need to look in the mirror, not blaming others but looking at ourselves and the ways that we can ensure that the dollars that government is spending are the most effective dollars possible. When the government chooses to come to the House with virtually no information, no accountability, just asking for \$8.6 billion, we should all pause, look inside ourselves, and ask important questions like: what exactly is this blank cheque going to be used for? While I have mentioned that we believe in ensuring that the government can continue to operate, I continue to return to this constant frustration that Albertans have, that the good people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have, Madam Chair, about the delay in the budget, because we wouldn't be in this spot if that wasn't the direction that the government had taken us down.

It seems that there are a number of challenges around this spending when it comes to the government not being able to point to specific programs that these resources will finance. It's light on pinpointing deliverables, which makes it a challenge for us to support. We want to ensure that the government can continue to operate, but the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills believe in providing deliverables, believe in providing information so that they can be assured that the government is going to be spending their money wisely.

You know, every dollar that the government takes in is a dollar that's been hard earned, so we need to make sure that we remember whose resources we're spending. At the end of the day, we're spending Albertans' resources, whether it's in the form of personal income tax, whether it's in the form of the taxes that are paid by the job creators in this province, or whether it's in the form of the taxes that are paid by the selling of our resources. All of these resources in one way, shape, form, or another are Albertans', so we need to do our very best in ensuring that those dollars are spent wisely and that the government can point exactly, Madam Chair, to how they're going to be spent.

Albertans are worried about their finances. They're struggling just to make ends meet, but when they do that, they are looking at their own books first to tighten their belts. They want this government to do the exact same. You know, I don't run into any constituents in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills or anyone here amongst my caucus colleagues that think we don't have a role to play in taking care of the vulnerable. I don't run into constituents that think we should be abandoning the people of Alberta, but I do run into constituents who question the vast amount of overspending, of government bloat, of mismanagement that this government, being in office for 316 days, is now a part of and that former governments failed to rein in all at the same time.

We are going to see an incredibly high deficit, and in fact the Finance minister just yesterday in the House finally had the courage of his convictions, Madam Chair, to utter the words of the size of that deficit, whether it was \$5.2 billion more than what was previously mentioned, or I think that he made some other statements that may be unparliamentary about – it's a significant amount of money. Finally, yesterday we heard him talk about it

being \$10.2 billion. The challenge with interim supply and supplementary supply is that we don't know exactly how these dollars are going to affect those numbers, not just the number for next year but the number for this year, whether that's going to be \$5 billion, \$6 billion, \$7 billion of deficit for this fiscal year that we're currently in.

**4:00**

The challenge, Madam Chair, is that while Albertans are looking to tighten their personal finances because they know that it's critically important to the success of their family and their family's future, we have a government that is doing the opposite, passing a budget in the dying days of November, whether it was the 29th or 30th I can't quite recall, and a mere 108 days later coming to the Assembly asking for significant resources. I on behalf of the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills certainly will not be supporting this particular interim supply budget, not because I believe in shutting down the government but because we don't have the information that is necessary to make a good-quality decision.

I spent some significant time at the Leg. Offices meeting not that very long ago, when members of the government were not prepared to move on a decision because they didn't feel like they had the appropriate information, and I don't begrudge them for that. But here we are, with significantly less information than was provided at that particular committee, with a significantly larger dollar number, and being asked to support a decision such as this.

So on behalf of the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills I won't be supporting the interim supply bill. I will look forward to some continued debate around these important issues, around government accountability, around a late budget introduction. I might remind the government that it was the fourth-latest introduction of a budget since the year 2000. While this government likes to blame the last government for the predicament that they're in, they have been the government now for almost a year, exactly 316 days.

**An Hon. Member:** Who's counting?

**Mr. Cooper:** I did. It's been a long 316 days, Madam Chair.

But I can tell you that the people of Alberta expected a budget on time. They expected that a government that's been in power now for 316 days could put that together, and while I perhaps should have been more sympathetic the last time we were at this process... [Mr. Cooper's speaking time expired]

**The Chair:** I'll call on the hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Madam Chair. I've been listening with interest to members opposite as they've been talking about this blank cheque that comes so late that it's just – my goodness. Until the actual budget comes forward, I guess they have to come up with some reason to be against this interim supply act.

But let's take a look at some of the things that they're talking about, Madam Chair. This political party over here, the Wildrose Official Opposition, complains, for example, that we are bringing forward this supplementary supply just 108 days after passing the budget in November, but at the same time they can't seem to understand why we couldn't have brought a budget about sooner. So let's go back and remind people about the history.

Just before the last election, when oil prices started to head south, the Premier of the day, Mr. Prentice, announced that he was going to be tabling a budget, which he did, which involved very significant cuts to health, education, and so on, and was clearly planning future cuts going forward, including a major tax on health care, a health care premium tax, and a number of other measures

that were unpopular. Then instead of letting the Legislature debate and vote upon that budget, he called an election, and he fought the election on that budget, which was a mistake, clearly, because he didn't win, but it also created very serious problems for the financial administration of the province because it meant that we spent the time we should have been debating the Conservative budget in an election.

Then you had a brand new government that had to come up with something that was not what Mr. Prentice had proposed because obviously it had been rejected by the people of Alberta. He wanted to fight the election on the budget, and people rejected the budget. Then a brand new government had to come up with some sort of financial plan, so we brought forward interim supply to keep the government working while we learned our portfolios, learned our jobs, investigated the situation facing the province, and looked at the uncertainty in all of the factors in a very, very complex exercise to create a new budget. Of course, the Wildrose opposition opposed having interim supply. They thought we should have been able to just whip up a budget out of nothing in no time at all in order to move forward.

So we passed the interim supply bill. Then in November we brought forward the budget. Well, that wasn't good enough for the Wildrose either. They claimed we were delaying that and that we'd been in office for six whole months and should have been able to come up with a budget sooner than that. They accused us of delaying the budget deliberately in order to wait out the federal election, which was pure speculation on their part. Political spin, frankly, is all it was because on this side ministers and, particularly, the Finance minister were working very, very hard and diligently to actually get the budget done in time. Of course, the Wildrose, having never been in government and unlikely ever to be in government, is completely unaware of the amount of work and the complexities that go into developing a budget.

Now, our friends on the PC side have some experience with government, 40-odd years of it, so they've learned a thing or two. They have to learn some other things, but they certainly know what it is to develop a budget. So their criticism was somewhat more muted than the inexperienced Wildrose opposition, who keep generating ideas. They seem to be very much focused on the timeliness of budgets without understanding what actually has to go into budgets.

So then we had the budget in November, what the Opposition House Leader called the dying days of November. You know, it was a dark and stormy night, and the government brought forward its evil and mysterious budget. But that was, actually, to be clear and to set the record straight, the first budget of this government. Because of the decision of Mr. Prentice and his government in the timing of the budget and the election, that was the first actual budget that was brought forward by this government, and it only covered the remaining five months of the year.

As the Official Opposition House Leader has accurately said, that was 108 days, and now he's saying that we should have been able to come up with a new budget, a second budget, in that short period of time. But, again, he doesn't recognize the realities of governing and that you can't just generate a budget in a very short period of time. It requires work not only at the political level but at the departmental levels. All of the departments have to review their budgets. They have to look at all of their programs. They have to estimate their costs and so on.

**4:10**

Now, why might we want to bring in a budget in April? By the way, just because it's the fourth latest in the last 15 years, that's not an impressive argument in any way. It's quite within the normal

range of time for a budget. But at a time when oil prices are falling farther than anyone expected, including all of the most respected people in the oil industry who estimate and project these things, and because we're staying down much longer, there's a great deal of uncertainty that this government has to deal with in terms of dealing with the revenues. I might just say that the revenues from oil royalties have fallen about 70 per cent, and that accounts for about 20 per cent of our revenues in about a year. It's an enormous drop in the revenues of this government, and the fact that the government might want to take a few more weeks to finalize a budget is perfectly normal. In fact, it's absolutely prudent to do so.

There's also the question of the federal budget, which will have a significant impact on the province, especially in the area of infrastructure spending. Wanting to have some sense of where the federal government is going is also a very legitimate factor to take into account when we're developing a budget, but the Official Opposition doesn't recognize that. They're not adopting a responsible position with respect to the budget of this province. They just want a budget, any budget, yesterday, and they don't care whether or not that budget is actually going to be able, as accurately as possible in very difficult circumstances, to project the revenues and the expenditures of the government. But this government is prepared to do that because we're prepared and, in fact, we are committed to governing responsibly, and that's what we're going to do.

Madam Chair, I just want to indicate to members opposite that there will be some significant issues when the budget is brought forward on April 14 that are worth discussing. It's worth discussing our dependency on oil and gas royalty revenue, something that was raised repeatedly with the previous government. The previous government over the years – and I was here for some of that – had made commitments to diversify the economy and to attempt to diversify the sources of revenue for the government. They did that when the price of oil went down, as it regularly does in this province. We all know that these drops in resource prices happen. They're not predictable. They're like the weather, but we know that overall in the winter it's going to snow, and we also know that over a period of 10 years or so there are probably going to be some drops in the oil and gas prices.

What they did is that they would make those commitments at the time when oil prices were down, but as soon as they went back up again and everything was good and the money was flowing again, they kind of forgot about that commitment, so it never got done. Now we are going to have to do that to get us off the roller coaster of oil and gas royalties at a time that is much tougher, when we have much less money to deal with in this province than we did at a time when the previous government was in office and oil prices or gas prices were quite a bit higher. Those are the difficulties that we're facing. We have to diversify the economy – Albertans expect that – and we have to diversify the revenue sources of this government.

I can go back to the Emerson report under Premier Stelmach, 2007. I was there for the release of the report, and it made a key recommendation that we have to get off royalty revenues, which at that time were accounting for 30 per cent of our program expenditures. But the government didn't do it, and that is why we're in this position. Everyone knows that sooner or later the price of oil and gas will go down, but we have to prepare for it. It's a little bit about the story of the ant and the grasshopper, and unfortunately the previous government was much like the grasshopper and didn't prepare for winter. Now we are in winter, and we are going to have to find a way to do that, and it's difficult. You know, I reject the arguments of the Wildrose opposition in terms of the timing and the blank cheque. All of those arguments are false, spurious. We need to get on with this.

Madam Chair, with that, I'm going to move that we adjourn debate in Committee of the Whole on Bill 2.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 3

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you very much, hon. Government House Leader, for that wonderful soliloquy. I want to say that I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak, of course, on the supplementary supply estimates for 2016. To recap, when passed, these estimates will authorize an approximate total increase of \$106 million in expense funding for the departments of Education, Justice and Solicitor General, Labour, Municipal Affairs, Seniors and Housing, and my own, Treasury Board and Finance.

As we have discussed previously in this Chamber, these estimates will ensure, for example, that enrolment in our schools is fully funded, Madam Chair, and that the affordable supportive living initiative has the capital grants it needs to develop long-term care and affordable supportive living spaces for our seniors and others across the province. These estimates will also authorize the transfer of \$25 million of the previously approved capital investment vote to the expense vote within the department of Environment and Parks to provide funding to the town of High River for building flood mitigation berms, which they will own.

Let me add that these estimates are consistent with the fiscal plan that was presented in the 2015-16 third-quarter fiscal update, which was tabled in the Legislature towards the end of February.

During Committee of Supply members of this Legislature had the opportunity to ask detailed questions of the ministers responsible for these supplementary estimates. I'd like to thank the members opposite for their questions. I'd also like to thank my colleagues for their detailed responses. I think we had good debate, and I look forward to this Chamber's support of these supplementary estimates so that we can deliver on our commitments like fully funding school enrolment, as I mentioned earlier.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We are here to debate Bill 3, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016.

**Mr. Rodney:** Correct.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Very astute.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** At the last stage of Bill 3 I went through a laundry list of savings in each department in the bill that have not been found to cover the \$106 million being asked for here. While some of these initiatives are worthy, I am skeptical that the government could not find the funds in monies already allocated in the budget passed just three and a half months ago. The NDP sound a bit like *Oliver Twist* here, saying: please, sir, can I have some more? But they've already taken more. In their June interim supply, in their June tax hike bill, and then in their October budget they have taken much more from Albertans.

They've already increased taxes and spending beyond the increases proposed in the former government's budget. Alberta's GDP is shrinking; we're making less money. When Albertan

families have less coming in, they know that it's time for belt-tightening. They expect their government to tighten its belt as well, looking for cost savings during the downturn, not coming back and picking their pockets.

Now, there are some important initiatives in this bill, that we certainly do support, Madam Chair. The transfer of \$25 million of the previously approved capital investment vote to the expense vote within the Department of Environment and Parks to provide funding to the town of High River for building flood mitigation berms is very important, and it has our support. No one wants to see High River face the kind of destruction it faced ever again. This is a straight transfer of previously budgeted money from capital to expense for distribution, and it's quite reasonable, but I question why this had not been done in the 2015 budget presented at the end of October.

4:20

I'll also applaud the Department of Treasury Board and Finance – and don't get too used to it, Minister – for finding \$9 million in savings in their budget to fund their emerging contract commitment. This is an example that other departments need to follow and take note of. A pity that they need to devote \$2 million more to close the gap, though.

In my questioning of the Minister of Seniors and Housing we managed to find out something about the mystery surrounding the \$4.4 billion over five years, that was in the capital plan, set aside for new projects and programs. It turns out that \$50.5 million of the \$148 million for this year of the five-year mystery fund is for the affordable supportive living initiative, ASLI. This is important funding that will support seniors across Alberta, including in my constituency of Strathmore-Brooks, where it will support the Bassano project, which I have long been a champion of. This is a worthy project. Alberta's seniors built this province. Providing seniors with predictable, sustainable, top-quality care that allows them to be close to their families and loved ones in their communities is a priority for the Wildrose opposition. But I still cannot understand why the NDP would play games and take this money out of the estimates and the budget process and hide it as a mystery line in the capital plan.

What really frustrates me is the government's inability to get education right in the budget. Teachers are crucial to our education system, and we need to ensure that they have the proper supports in the classroom and aren't overwhelmed by ballooning class sizes. Wildrose believes that every child in Alberta should receive a world-class education. Smaller class sizes benefit learners as well as teachers. But we have a request for \$33.8 million here, on top of a budget of \$4.3 billion for the department, and the Education minister cannot find half a per cent in his department to help cover those costs.

There is much that is worth while in this bill and well intended, but it is unfortunate that we need this bill at all. Reshuffling funding for ASLI that was previously allocated, departmental increases with little to no detail as to what specific monies are actually intended for, asking for new funding because departments have exceeded their budgets: just three and a half months after they passed the budget.

Now, I know that the Government House Leader and Minister of Finance have pleaded for the mercy of this House in understanding why their revenue projections were so far off. Well, if the opposition had not raised questions about their revenue projections to begin with when they were presented to this House, then perhaps they would have a point. But we spent countless hours here debating and warning the government that their revenue projections were not anywhere close. In fact, their revenue projections didn't even

provide details beyond year 3 of their budget. Years 4 and 5 were a pure mystery. In years 1, 2, and 3 of their budget their revenue projections were positively insane. Nobody – nobody – believed that they would meet those projections. The opposition regularly told them that they were unrealistic.

Between the time that the budget was introduced and the time the budget was passed, the price of oil was already off – I'll recall it off the top of my mind here – almost \$10 from their projections. When the budget was passed, the price of oil was significantly lower than their oil projections. I remember that we stood here and said to the Finance minister: Minister, will you not at least amend your revenue projections? And he stood up and said: trust us. Well, Madam Chair, I didn't get elected because I trust politicians. We can do better.

This government has been in office nearly a year, and it's time for them to start acting like the government. They know better. They criticized the former government for these kinds of actions when they were in opposition. During interim supply, the interim supply introduced right before the previous government's last budget, I remember the Government House Leader arguing against it, using the very same arguments that the Official Opposition is using today. But now he stands and up, and he's seen the light on the road to Damascus and thinks that the process of the budget has been fine for the last decade. Well, I know that is not in keeping with the Government House Leader's long contribution to this House. Regardless of our significant philosophical differences on policy and the role of government, he's always believed that we need to improve the processes in this House, particularly around budgeting. He believed it as recently as this time last year, when he argued against the former government's interim supply because it didn't provide enough detail. Well, my; how things have changed.

Madam Chair, it is time for the government to start acting like a grown-up government. It is time for them to take responsibility for their actions, to take responsibility for their own government.

This supplementary supply does have significant differences, however, from interim supply and should be treated differently. There are good spending measures within this bill that are worthy of support. However, the government should provide us with a budget impact statement before we vote on it.

Madam Chair, Albertans expect us to do better, and you're going to hear from my colleagues in the Wildrose Official Opposition about how we can do better. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'll call on the hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Earlier this session I had the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 2, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016. That bill was needed because this government was unable to provide a budget on time. Now, there are no penalties for that – I know – and I'm not aware of any government having penalties for that, but I'm sure if I didn't pay my taxes on time, they wouldn't be happy.

I rise to speak to Bill 3, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016. I would like to take a moment to note that I'll be supporting this bill, not because I support the government's lack of ability to stick to a budget. That budget, I might add, is being paid for by the taxpayers of Alberta at a time when these Albertans are facing real, daily budgeting issues themselves. Many of the Albertans that this Chamber represents are facing unemployment, mounting bills, and unfortunately there's no supplementary Hail Mary for them.

The people of Alberta elected us to put their trust in us that we would responsibly manage their money, and that includes making realistic budgets that do not need to be topped up on a regular basis.

If our expectation during these trying economic times is that our constituents tighten their belts financially, cut expenses, and budget realistically, then we should be leading by example.

This bill is necessary to keep the government operating, and it does support some important issues such as ensuring the jobs of front-line workers, providing affordable long-term care for seniors. However, with issues as important as these, why weren't these budgeted for in the 2015 budget? Why are they being tacked on now as if they're an afterthought? Albertans spend \$8 billion more than British Columbia in operations per capita, yet even with all this extra money, essential projects and services are still not being covered. It is beyond my comprehension how our basic operating costs and essential spending priorities were not included in the 2015 budget and now need to be supplemented.

While I am supporting this bill, I do have a number of questions, and I hope to have them answered as I have many reservations. My questions focus specifically on the proposed change in Environment and Parks. I see in the supplementary supply estimates that Environment and Parks is asking for an approval of a proposed transfer of \$25 million to the town of High River for the construction of flood mitigation berms. According to the government's supplementary supply this request "reflects the government's decision to provide funding to the Town of High River and surrounding communities to design and build local flood mitigation projects rather than to build a government-owned diversion channel."

I would like to commend the minister for finally listening to the residents and the town council of High River, who for a long time have been calling upon the province to scrap their ill-conceived diversion channel in favour of this berm project. As a long-time resident of and now the member representing Highwood, I understand how critical this project is to the mitigation effort and how crucial these funds are to the project.

4:30

Putting all that aside for a moment, I still have a number of unanswered questions, and I'd like to read them into the record if I may, Madam Chair. The decision by the minister to forgo the channel in favour of the berms was announced in early November, literally days before the fall budget was introduced. I'm wondering how the minister didn't know that the department would be changing its mind on this flood mitigation project a couple of days before and include this funding in the fall budget. When the department announced the funding in November, they said that it included funding for two berms and one bridge, yet the supplementary supply makes no mention of the funding for the bridge. The final phase of flood mitigation in High River – and this is important – is the raising of the Centre Street Bridge, a project that this government committed to but has not yet funded. When can we expect to see these funds?

The March 2015 Auditor General report, which reviewed Environment and Parks' flood mitigation, noted that "the department does not have the capacity to do flood . . . assessments." One of the Auditor General's recommendations included the department conducting risk assessments to support flood mitigation decisions. My question: has Environment and Parks satisfied the AG's recommendation in this case? Was a risk assessment conducted?

I noticed this transfer within the department of \$25 million from capital investment to capital grants. Was this \$25 million originally budgeted for the diversion channel? How much did the department originally budget for the diversion channel? I'm hoping that the minister will provide some clarity on these questions and, moving forward, will take the time to properly budget for these sorts of

important projects so that in the future they do not need to be added after the fact and this situation can be avoided.

This situation is a perfect example of how the government is breaking the trust of its constituents. Four months ago the budget for the year was proposed, and now what has happened? Now there are significant changes being made here. They're already asking for additional funds. A government's financial role is to comprehensively budget for a full year and, after that budget has been passed, to stick to it. In a few weeks this government will drop the next budget. This next budget will not need to last four months. No, it needs to last three times that long.

Now, I understand that there's a learning curve, and that comes with being a new government and having so many initiatives that you want to push through. If this budget was off a tenth or even a quarter of this amount, I might be more understanding, but this is the second time that this government has badly miscalculated the budget. They do not seem to be learning from their past mistakes. During last year's election their platform proposed a budget. It was off by a billion dollars. It was off by so much money that they were forced to delay their balanced budget promise by a year. While the discrepancy on their initial budget and their spending has decreased, they were off from their platform.

Ideally, there should never have to be this kind of supplementary bill because the government should set out realistic, fiscally responsible expectations and follow through with their promises. At least that's how it's supposed to work. I'm not going to be holding my breath.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak on the Seniors portion of this government's supplementary bill. This week the NDP government introduced two money bills. One is a supplementary supply bill to add money to, or supplement, the 2015 budget. The other is an interim supply bill to keep spending going after March 31 since the 2016 budget won't even be presented yet, let alone passed. As with all their bills, information is lacking. There was no consultation, no committee, just: trust them. I have questions I wish that they could answer.

Yesterday the minister stated that the \$50.5 million for Seniors wasn't actually a supplemental; it was a transfer from the Infrastructure budget, Madam Chair. I would ask if the minister could provide the line item which contains where they budgeted for these ASLI grants. What infrastructure project or projects were cancelled for this to happen, or were the efficiencies found somewhere else?

Another question. It seems that this funding was cut, and then it was reinstated, as we discovered last year in the estimates. Why did this happen, and what were the factors that led to this decision?

In May 2015 this government stopped services, spending, and commitments and placed many different sectors of our economy at risk. They started with the oil sector with their royalty review, eroding investor confidence and causing regulatory uncertainty. After nine months of uncertainty and pressure the NDP, thankfully, adopted restraint on royalties. Unfortunately, Madam Chair, it was too late to undo the severe damage to Alberta's economy.

Here we are in the same boat with the seniors' ASLI grants. For those folks out there, this is the affordable supportive living initiative, that was an Alberta government capital grant program that provides funding to develop long-term care and affordable supportive living spaces in the province. I had some more questions to this as well, Madam Chair, which I was hoping the minister could answer. I was hoping that they could give us more details about

these ASLI beds in particular. What is the intended use of these beds being created? We heard last night from the hon. minister that the funding commitments were reaffirmed, and only six of the 31 were deemed not to be suitable for the conditions. If the minister could ever explain to me why the funding for the six projects was not reinstated, the details would be important for us to move forward on. Going forward, under the grant process the government can contribute up to 50 per cent of the capital costs with the other monies coming from the organization.

In March 2015 the previous government committed \$180 million of funding to create some much-needed care beds for dementia patients. After the election this government cancelled these funds, cutting the ASLI grants to over 31 community organizations from the November budget. Madam Chair, this government has made it very clear that they were going to cancel the ASLI. Given that there was no new announcement of a plan going forward, I have even more questions about that. Exactly how many spaces will this create for patients with dementia?

The delay also put the AHS service contracts on hold. What is the minister doing to ensure that AHS processes their contracts promptly? Are there other interim mechanisms for seniors' facilities that require the capital to apply for? When can seniors' service providers expect to see a plan for stable funding for our seniors?

Madam Chair, seniors are going to be the hugest issue that this government will ever face in the years to come. They are going to be a quarter of our population by 2030 – it is an issue that we have to address – and with those seniors come all the health issues. It's a dire situation that we will be in. The longer the NDP delays money for these projects, the more expensive we can expect them to become and, more importantly, the longer Alberta's most vulnerable seniors go without appropriate accommodation. Reviewing oil royalties and negatively affecting jobs during an economic recession lacks understanding, but delaying dementia care spaces means delays and uncertainties for our vulnerable population, for the people who built this province. God help us all, but let them know that the Wildrose is here to stand up for them and their rights. The previous government recognizes this, and as of today it is clear now that so does this NDP government.

Going forward, this government must recognize the harm of stalling projects, especially when we are dealing with the quality of life for our seniors. Supporting our front-line workers, teachers, seniors, and those in need of supportive living as well as those affected by natural disasters and those who wish to train for work is a priority for the Wildrose despite the fearmongering by this NDP government.

The government's consistent use of supplementary and interim supply budgets highlights their reactive, ideological nature, which contains little consideration of individual dignity and no common sense. Yesterday, Madam Chair, this House learned that the government will actually be cutting front-line staff from the Sundre nursing facility. This is not the path that Alberta should be following. Alberta's gross domestic product is shrinking, and as a province we simply have to do things better.

When Alberta families are struggling, they will be looking to the government for leadership. This government needs to get past its ideologies and make some good, logical decisions. They expect the government to tighten its belt by looking for cost efficiencies in this downturn, and they also expect excellent planning by the government so that we can make the most of the limited public resources that we do have available to us. Households in Alberta cannot run a \$10 billion deficit, and the Wildrose is committed to

supporting our front-line services while finding ways to deliver those services with creativity and efficiency. These projects are critical for seniors in our province.

Consequently, I will be supporting this supplementary supply bill, but I hope the minister will take the opportunity to provide a little more clarity around some of the details and answer some of the questions that I have asked this afternoon.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

4:40

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 3. I was about to say "briefly," but I'm not sure how brief it will be, so I would hesitate to bring false hope to the House. I just want to expand on a couple of quick comments that I had made during the debate around interim supply as, you know, much about supplementary supply and the process that it takes to get there is similar. We've seen in the House a pretty consistent message from the Official Opposition about the disappointments around being here, and it's a disappointment that many people on this side of the House shared and do share.

I just briefly would like to refer to *Hansard* from March 18, 2015, just prior to the election last year, just prior to the introduction of the demise of the former government with the budget that was the Prentice plan. The debate in the House on that particular day, March 18, 2015, was just as it is today, around supplementary and interim supply, and the then Member for Edmonton-Centre said:

This is a mockery of this entire Assembly. It's a mockery of every financial officer that works for the public service. It's a mockery of every Albertan out there that expects there to be accountability and integrity in the way this government goes about producing a budget.

The current Government House Leader interjected and said: "Oh, I don't think there are many left." And the Member for Edmonton-Centre continued: "Well, my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood believes there aren't many left, and nobody is meeting my eyes." They were referring to government members and the way that they had introduced interim supply and supplementary supply and the process that they were using to get there.

Earlier today we saw the Finance minister speak directly – correction, Madam Chair. It may not have been today. But we have seen earlier in debate the Finance Minister speak specifically to the amount of detail that this government provided to the Assembly when it comes to making decisions around interim and supplementary supply. They were saying that it's exactly the same detail that the former government supplied, as if that was some sort of standard that we should all achieve or reach towards.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** It's the gold standard.

**Mr. Cooper:** In fact, it is the gold standard. It was according to themselves.

The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood on that day, March 18, 2015, spoke directly to the amount of information provided when he said: "The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre is absolutely correct. This is a very, very minuscule amount of information that is provided to the House, to the Assembly, in order to make the decision that is required." This speaks directly to the narrative that I spoke about earlier of the government saying one thing in opposition and another thing once they were in fact chosen by the people of Alberta as the government.

I think it's concerning. The people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are concerned about it. Often members of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills would speak to me about the former leader of the NDP and member of the caucus, about what a great legislator he was. There are many things that he did and that he does that we can all aspire to, but today he and the government have provided the opposition the same very minuscule amount of information, and to say that I'm a bit disappointed is probably an understatement. It's really too bad that we have to make this sort of decision.

Now, I want to speak just very briefly to the actual Bill 3, supplementary supply, and reiterate the fact that Wildrose believes in ensuring that the people who built this province have spaces to live in in the form of seniors' care. We believe in world-class education. We would have preferred to see additional efficiencies found to offset the current hundred million that we are currently debating, but ensuring that the ASLI grants are funded is an important initiative. So for that reason, among a number of other reasons, when it comes specifically to the supplementary supply bill, I am able or willing to support this piece of legislation.

I certainly don't support the process of how we got here. I certainly don't support the fact that the government used to complain about minuscule amounts of information provided to the House and to the opposition and now they do the very same thing that they used to hate.

It's with those comments in mind that I will rest my case today and look forward to when all of the answers come in April. And while I'm disappointed that we don't have more information today, I look forward to a very full and robust debate in April.

**The Chair:** Are there any further speakers to this bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is to do with the Ministry of Justice. For myself, being an accountant for a number of years, I haven't been familiar with how government does the budgeting process. So I started to look into exactly what all these supplementary and interim budgets mean to the province of Alberta. I started thinking: well, how is this different from what I did as a living? What we've got in my normal day's work would be that we would get a company that would come in – and I have to use companies. I did do municipal audits in my past, but companies are the ones that I best reflect to. Now, what we've got is: a company will do a budget, and in that budget they will have more or less funding, but overall they try to keep their budget spending within the amount that they have for a total budget. When we look at the government, what we've got is a budget up until March 31.

**4:50**

Now, you would expect that you would try to stay within the budget. But what happens is that if something comes up throughout the year that is unanticipated, you would bring in a supplementary supply estimate. It is to address things that were unforeseen, and it goes to March 31 as well. So that's the supplementary part of it. Now, what happens is that when we see supplementaries like this one go through, the question is: could we have anticipated these expenses during the year when we did the last budget? For a lot of them I would say that the answer is yes. They could have been foreseen and added to the budget.

This is where we go into the second part of all of this, the interim supply budget, and that is from April 1, so the day after the March 31 year-end, going to May 31. That is when the government says: we need time to work on our budget or to complete our budget so that we are prepared for the next year. I guess the question always

needs to be: when is the appropriate time for our Treasury Board to be working on their budget? Is it appropriate that they're working on our budget after the year-end date? I would argue that that's inappropriate. So when we're looking at the interim supply, I fully would say that that is something that needs to be addressed and needs to be stopped because in the end these budgets should be done well ahead of time. I hear the government saying: well, we need extra time to be able to prepare these budgets; we wouldn't have foreseen oil being the lowest ever. To the argument that the government makes on that: why not release next year's budget on March 31, 2017, after the whole year has been done?

In the end what we're looking back to is the supplementary one, though. I'll vote against the interim because I don't believe there's a real value, but for supplementary – things do happen in the year. That I can understand. You have a drought. You have something that comes up. It's something substantive that you can actually say: this happened; we couldn't have predicted it, and this is why we need to do it. It should be something that is out of the norm, not something that has become the norm.

Unfortunately, I am going to get a little bit more technical on the Justice side. I am going to go to the past government's budget. On March 26, 2015, the then Minister of Justice predicted that he would have \$250 million of needed spending for my department, which is corrections, that we're adjusting today.

**Mr. Rodney:** Expenditures.

**Mr. Cyr:** Expenditures. Thank you.

The government came out with – oh, sorry. I'll go back. This is an important point. The past government predicted three years of flat spending in that budget, so \$251 million in that budget. Now, the current government created a budget on October 15, 2015. Their budget was \$267 million, \$269 million, and \$269 million. So what we're looking at is a \$17 million difference for 2015-16, \$19 million for '16-17, and \$19 million for 2017-2018, and you're asking: why is this important, Scott? How could this be important? We're talking such big numbers here; \$17 million is not a lot. So let's go to this government's third quarter.

We were in the third quarter – this is nine months. The estimate was \$165 million, and the actual was – sorry. Let's go to Justice's spending; let's go to full on Justice, not just my corrections. Justice is \$1.065 billion, but the actual spent was \$1.46 billion. That means that Justice in the third quarter was \$19 million under budget – under budget – in the third quarter. Now, if we're looking at the past government's wonderful estimates that they brought forward, it shows that the government was actually spending according to what was previously budgeted for.

Now, how can we be over? Third quarter: we're at \$19 million underspent. Fourth quarter: we're expecting to be \$8 million overspent. That's \$27 million difference, not just \$8 million, that the government is asking for. This is important because in the fourth quarter we're seeing that the estimate was \$218 million, that the government had estimated, but it actually spent \$245 million. Madam Chair, \$245 million is an amazing amount of money. Now, the question is: what brought on that fourth-quarter extra spending? Is there something that happened in this last quarter that we're expecting, from January to March, to today, that brought on an extra \$27 million?

Now, we heard from the Justice minister that we brought in new float pools and scheduling software. I went back to the business plan that the minister had provided in the last set of estimates. Nowhere did the business plan say that corrections was going to be bringing in a new float pool or scheduling software or even address



that in the estimates or in the budget. What we do have in the business plan is to

formalize . . . information sharing practices between Correctional Services and other enforcement agencies so that intelligence gathered within correctional facilities is shared appropriately to prevent and detect criminal offences.

That is the only thing that is being mentioned when we talk about corrections services. So how exactly did we suddenly put forward an emergency, \$27 million worth of emergency, that says that we need to spend this money unbudgeted?

I asked the minister: were we unsafe? I understand that safety for our corrections officers needs to be a priority. These men and women work hard for Alberta, and they also protect the inmates that they have in their facilities. I asked that question, and the answer was that she didn't feel that it was an unsafe environment. So this isn't an emergency, then.

Now, I understand that things change, but in the end it appears that we've got a government that did March madness in Justice, spent more money just to spend out the wonderful rest of their budget. When we look at this, it actually is that after the third quarter we have an overspending of over 12 per cent. Twelve per cent. That's a lot of money that is being brought out now. I understand. This is dictated in here, saying: salaries and wages. Salaries and wages make up this. So if this overage was going to be there from salaries and wages, it would have been consistent throughout the four quarters, not just the final quarter, where it balloons. That's where we need to be addressing the fact that this doesn't appear to be emergency funding that the government needs.

5:00

Now, I will be supporting this bill. I will be making sure that our corrections officers have the funding they need, but it distresses me to no end that we have a float pool and scheduling software that looks like it was actually moved forward on our corrections staff without consultation. This is something that we have heard consistently, over and over, with this government. They consistently push things through without consulting the people that they're involving in the decision.

Now, I myself haven't ever been involved with a float pool. Last night I thought: "You know what? It's not a bad idea for us to look at what exactly a float pool does and the advantages and disadvantages." The fact is that float pools are positions where the government puts temporary or casual or part-time workers in place. The fact is that if there had been good consultation – and I'm not saying that there was none, because I am not in the ministry, but it does seem to be rushed through – these guards that are there would be bringing forward some of the concerns, saying: "These float pools haven't worked in some areas. Will they be working for us? How will the government work this through? How will the shift-scheduling software work? Are you spending a lot of money unnecessarily for Alberta if safety is not a concern?" The fact is that when we've seen this brought into other jurisdictions, it has created some confusion.

Now, I don't want to get stuck on float pools because in the end, if this is a concern, I'm sure the guards will bring that up, but I will reiterate that it doesn't appear that the Justice spending in the supplemental is an emergency. It doesn't appear that our government should be putting forward this \$8 million. However, I

still believe that this supplementary does have some things that we need, so I will be supporting this.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 3, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016?

[The clauses of Bill 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

## Bill 2

### Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016

(continued)

**The Chair:** Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The clauses of Bill 2 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Sucha:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 2 and Bill 3.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think we've made some great progress getting the province's finances in order. I want to thank the opposition for their contribution and the government members for their support. I will move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:07 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, March 17, 2016

Day 7

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

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**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKittrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, March 17, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning.

I'd like to begin with a traditional Irish prayer.

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;

and rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,

may God hold you in the hollow of His hand.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Third Reading

##### Bill 2

##### Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Again, it's my privilege to rise today and move third reading of Bill 2, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016.

When passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$29.6 million for the Legislative Assembly, \$7.2 billion in expense funding, \$864 million in capital investment funding, \$164 million in financial transactions funding for the government, and \$363 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund.

These interim supply estimates provide funding authorization that will allow the normal business of the province to continue until the full 2016-17 estimates are approved before the end of May. These estimates also follow through on specific commitments this government has made to the people of Alberta.

Madam Speaker, once again I would like to emphasize that the estimates we are debating today will be included and fully debated again when the main budget documents are tabled in under a month.

Madam Speaker, I should also add that this bill is consistent with previous interim supply bills that have come before this Legislature time and again. As members know well from the discussion yesterday, interim supply bills are commonplace in Alberta. Over the past 15 years this Legislature has debated and passed interim supply bills in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 – Alberta's centennial – 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015.

In summary, Madam Speaker, approval of this bill pending the release and approval of the budget will allow the Chamber the time it needs to review and debate those plans in detail. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Once again I rise to speak against Bill 2, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016. It may come as a great surprise to the members opposite, but the Wildrose Official Opposition cannot support this bill. As has already been said, this is an \$8.7 billion blank cheque for a government to do whatever it wants with for the next two months. The bill, unlike the budget that will be out in a month, contains no specific spending details on programs or capital.

Now, this is not to say that a future Wildrose government would never introduce an interim or supplementary supply, but this is to say that we would attach a budget impact statement. We would ensure in the event of interim or supplementary supply that the members of this Legislature, elected to represent all Albertans and protect taxpayers, would have the information in front of them to know what the impact will be on total expenditures for both operations and capital and to know what the impact will be on total expenditures and the deficit. This is basic information that members of this House should have in front of them before we responsibly vote on a piece of legislation empowering the government to spend another \$8.7 billion.

We don't know how much of this will be borrowed, debt taken on, and if that debt is for capital, operating, or both. We don't know how much is borrowed. I suspect that the entire amount is borrowed, considering the deficit we are expected to run this year. Alberta needs to get our spending under control. Spending has been out of control for a decade, Madam Speaker. The current government can blame the previous government as much as it likes – and there is lots of blame to go around – but it is their problem to fix now.

The problem is not revenue, because they'll never have enough revenue to satisfy their spending hunger, Madam Speaker. They will never have enough revenue to meet the NDP's ideological goals for the expanded role of government. We have had a spending problem in this province for a decade. We spend more than any other large province in this country. We spend \$8 billion a year more on operations alone than British Columbia, a province significantly larger than us, and British Columbia is no right-wing, neoconservative, feudal kingdom with no government. British Columbia has a well-functioning, rather large government, but somehow they manage to spend \$8 billion a year less than Alberta with an even larger population. This is a well-entrenched problem that we must get a grip on.

We heard just this week at the Public Accounts Committee, representing all members of this House, how government is losing money on its cash management. Hundreds of bank accounts all over the government are costing taxpayers money for no good reason whatsoever. Bureaucrats are forced to endure hundreds of hours of reconciliation using Excel spreadsheets in multiple departments. Can we imagine having separate bank accounts for travel, a separate bank account for telecommunications? We wouldn't pay our bills at home like this. I don't have a separate bank account for every single activity I engage in, but for some reason our government does, and they're using Excel spreadsheets to keep track of it. It's absolute madness, and it's costing taxpayers in this province hundreds of millions of dollars a year. It is money that we may as well put on a bonfire and light up. Meanwhile their colleagues in Service Alberta have a superautomated system that saves money, time, and manpower, an example to be followed.

Every time we run a deficit in this province – and we're going to be going on nine deficits in a row now, Madam Speaker – and take on more debt, we are taking money away from teachers, nurses, and doctors that could be hired to work. We are taking money away from critical infrastructure projects: roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, cancer centres. This might mean we spend more money right upfront, but in the long term we will spend less money on the critical infrastructure and programs in this province as debt interest payments begin to crowd out regular program and capital spending. Deficits and debt prevent schools and hospitals from being built, for no good reason. We will be paying billions of dollars a year in interest payments, and there will be no reason for it.

This is not akin to a mortgage, Madam Speaker. Most members in this House probably have a mortgage. I have a mortgage. A

mortgage is a reasonable financial program for you to take on debt to purchase an asset which can be sold at another time. You pay down the principal, and hopefully before you retire, you own your house at some point. On a mortgage we pay the principal. It is honest debt. We are obtaining an asset which can be sold.

This is not akin to the debt our government has taken on over the last decade. This is akin to buying yachts and airplanes for the people who loaned you the money. We have not paid a penny of principal on our debt since Alberta began going back into debt. We have been merely refinancing the loans. We take out more debt every year. This is akin to us not taking out a mortgage but taking out a new car loan every single year without paying any interest on it. The debt only gets bigger whereas our mortgages get smaller, and the asset we're obtaining at the end we'd generally expect to be able to sell at a reasonable price.

**9:10**

The vast majority of government assets that we purchase cannot be resold on the market at a reasonable market value compared to what we paid to build or purchase them. If we build a fire station, the fire station is critical and important, but I don't know many people in Strathmore who are interested in buying a fire station, Madam Speaker. Most government assets cannot be sold like a house or even a car, which would depreciate. Schools are important, but I don't know many people interested in buying a school. They might want the property to redevelop for some reason, but we are not going to be able to sell these assets anywhere close to the cost it took us to purchase the land and build it.

Comparing our deficit financing to mortgages is dishonest, and now we've gone beyond dishonest capital debt to dishonest operational debt. We are now borrowing on the credit card to pay for the groceries in this province, something we have not done since the early 1990s. In fact, our debt before the next provincial election, using the very rosy revenue projections in the budget, which they won't even come close to meeting – based on those rosy revenue projections, our debt before the next provincial election will be more than twice as large as the next-highest peak of our debt in 1992, our next-highest deficit. Our debt will be more than twice as large, Madam Speaker, and for no good reason whatsoever. They might tout the temporary benefits of all the money we can spend on different things, many of which are very positive right now, but in the long term we will spend less on programs and we will spend less on capital.

Now, to some members of the Assembly who style themselves progressive, debt is hope. No, Madam Speaker, debt is not hope. Debt is a ball and chain, and it is a burden that we place on future generations. It is an unethical thing for us to do to vote today to bind future generations with the taxes of tomorrow for the spending of today. But this is what we can expect from an ideological government that cannot be trusted to responsibly manage the finances of this province or to create the right economic conditions for growth and jobs.

I would hope that this government reads the Wildrose jobs action plan and implements the ideas that will get Albertans working again. I trust that my colleagues will vote against Bill 2 and stand up against unexamined, carte blanche spending bills like this. We wonder how we got here, where so many self-described progressives in this House consider debt to be hope. Well, we have a lot of hope right now, Madam Speaker. We're going to have about \$50 billion of hope before the next election.

How is it, though, that so many people who hold views so close to members of the government can even call themselves a conservative by any measure? Well, there's a bit of history in it. In 1942 the Conservative Party of Canada elected a man named John

Bracken, the leader of the Progressive Party of Manitoba, as their leader. Mr. Bracken had a condition for the leadership, and that was that the party had to change its name to Progressive Conservative. Given that party delegates had adopted some left-wing policies, this sounded reasonable at the time. Progressive Party members were generally disenchanted former Liberals with a populist flair. They supported things like free trade, marginal income taxes, and prohibition on alcohol. There was no party merger, just a party name change. In Alberta the local party followed suit with a change of name in 1943.

Fast-forward to 1991, when federal Conservatives were fighting in the PC-Reform battle. The PC Party of Alberta divorced itself from their federal cousins to distance itself from the federal civil war. Ken Kowalski said at the time: individuals in the province should be able to participate at a provincial level of politics that they want, and they should be able to participate in federal politics with the party they want. This sounds like comments to reconcile two factions on the surface, but in fact it was a welcome mat to federal disenchanted Liberals to join the PC Party of the day.

Who were some of those Liberals? Stan Woloshyn, Bridget Pastoor, and Gene Zwozdesky crossed the floor from the Liberals to join the PC caucus and cabinet. PC cabinet ministers Thomas Lukaszuk and Dennis Anderson openly supported federal Liberals like Anne McLellan and continue to do so today. What became clear is that the PC Party of Alberta was no longer a place for conservatives like myself and my Wildrose colleagues. It was no longer a conservative party any more.

**An Hon. Member:** Relevance?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Madam Speaker, the relevance is to the conversation around debt and how we got here today.

"I'm a Progressive Conservative," party members like the Member for Calgary-North West would say when they endorse federal Liberals in Calgary to help them defeat federal Conservatives, who will actually stand up for Alberta. In fact, it's happening today as we speak in Calgary-Greenway. All this means is: I'm a PC, but I'm no Conservative. Now, I've got some federal Liberal friends like Kent Hehr who are great people, but I would never think of trying to get the guy elected. There is nothing wrong with being a Liberal, but there is something definitely wrong with being a Liberal and running as a so-called Conservative just to get elected in Alberta. Political realignment is taking place right now in our province, Madam Speaker.

**Point of Order  
Relevance**

**Dr. Starke:** Madam Speaker, point of order. Leaving completely aside whether this is even relevant to the debate – and I would suggest that the relevance is a stretch, shall we say – citing Standing Order 23(h), the hon. member has just made allegations against another member, specifically the Member for Calgary-North West. While I can understand a certain level of sensitivity this day, I would suggest that perhaps the hon. member would do well to confine his comments today to the matter at hand. Although this little trip down memory lane is certainly instructive and interesting to all of us, I would suggest that in terms of the consideration of Bill 2 this particular narrative that he has entered into, including the criticism of a member of this Legislature, is not in order and should be ruled out of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, you want to comment on the point of order?

**Mr. Hanson:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really didn't hear any severe allegations against the member that would constitute a point of order in this case. As for the matter of relevance, I believe we're only 10 minutes into the member's speech, and I'm sure that the relevance will be shown toward the end of it. I believe he's right, that this is showing a pattern of debt and, as was delivered by the Finance minister over the years, the delays in delivery of a budget. That doesn't justify this government or any government using that as an excuse to prolong or delay a budget, especially when a lot of the municipalities at this time of year are counting on those funds to deliver their own budgets. So on those grounds I don't believe that this constitutes a point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know that the House leader for the third party does not enjoy trips down memory lane when we're talking about the record of the previous government. This is entirely relevant. We need to know how we got here if we're going to fix the problem. We have had a centre-left government in this province for the last three Premiers. We have had a government that has increased spending practically every year. We've had a government that tried to increase taxes on Albertans, and it's very relevant to how we got here. It's very relevant to the process of interim supply and interim budget measures, supplementary budget measures. It is entirely relevant to how we got here. We're discussing the process by which Alberta got to its current financial state.

9:20

Madam Speaker, it's a bit rich for a member of the third party to say that we are not allowed to point out an open statement and position held by the Member for Calgary-North West when the Member for Calgary-North West went on a vicious tirade against members of the Official Opposition just the other day. Members like to give it, but they don't like to take it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Do any others wish to speak to the point of order? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** For the sake of efficiency I will keep my comments very short. The hon. member is referring to governments of other jurisdictions. He's referring to governments of previous generations of other parties, not this one here and now. We're not here to grill them; we're here to take a look at Bill 2. If all of us narrow the focus on Bill 2, not things like by-elections that are occurring right now, as an example, because, let's face it, that's what this is about, then we would all be serving Albertans better. Let's keep the focus on Bill 2. Let's get on with the show.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Madam Speaker, I think members of the third party have made a good argument around the point of order. I wanted to stress that, you know, a member from the opposition is not debating the matter in question, and the arguments that they are making saying that he is flimsy at best, and I would very much like to move on with the business of the day.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further comments on the point of order?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to rule. We actually have two matters here. I would say that we don't have a point of order; however, I would caution the member that you need to stay on topic. You're straying into other areas that really are not relevant to the bill. You'll want to stay on the bill.

The other matter: we do have a long-standing tradition in this House that we don't make comments about another member who is not present to defend themselves. So keep that in mind as well.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would then ask that you would echo those very same comments to the member noted here regarding her comments towards members of this Legislature when we are not here.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Madam Speaker, it's been a long road to where we are today. Many Albertans remember proudly when Ralph Klein, one of the greatest Premiers this province has ever had, stood on the steps of the McDougall Centre and held a paid-in-full sign over his head. How proud Albertans were to be the only debt-free jurisdiction in Canada, a distinction which we held until a party that many of us were either members of or held a lot of affinity for went off the rails.

First, we began by drawing down the sustainability fund, which hit over \$17 billion in circa 2007. It was a massive fund designed for a rainy day, but we drew it down. We were promised that it would be temporary, it would not be permanent, and we would certainly never actually have to take on debt to finance the government. But the sustainability fund was drawn down year after year after year, and year after year Conservatives had to find a new voice in which to place their trust.

We are where we are today. We now have a debt that exceeds \$15 billion. The sustainability fund has virtually run out. Our debt will exceed \$50 billion, and we have no plan to get back even to a balance, let alone to pay off the debt. Madam Speaker, what we're dealing with today, an \$8.7 billion interim supply bill, is no trifling matter, as the members opposite would have us believe. We are staring down a financial crisis in this province. We are running the largest deficit in our history. We soon will have the largest debt in our history, and we have no plan whatsoever to even turn in the right direction. Our deficit is getting larger, not smaller.

Right now we have already run eight deficits in this province consecutively. We are staring down a ninth, and we will almost certainly run a 12th unless oil hits \$150 a barrel. That is no plan. In fact, it's been the plan of the government for about the last eight years to wait for the price of oil to continually go up and up and up to bail out the government. Well, guess what, Madam Speaker? It's not going to happen. A government that is responsible with the money that the people have entrusted to them in their tax dollars and their royalties would have a serious plan to get back to balance. We need to do it.

Madam Speaker, you will see from the Official Opposition a plan to reduce our expenditures in a realistic and timely manner to get back to balance in short order. We need to reasonably reduce our expenditures, focus on core, important front-line services. Things like the government's pitiful cash management program, corporate welfare schemes that are getting bigger, not smaller, overspending on the bureaucracy like appointing an AUPE union hack to negotiate with AUPE: those things will not bring down expenditures. The Wildrose Official Opposition will present a realistic plan to reduce our expenditures. We will produce a realistic plan to get us back on track and rebuild the Alberta advantage, that members of the conservative Wildrose Official Opposition believe we must rebuild.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise and to speak to Bill 2, the interim supply bill, on third reading. Yesterday the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort gave this Assembly an interesting lesson on dates the interim supply had been used in the past, and he did this morning as well. The minister stated, "For the record . . . if you look at the past 15 years, this Legislature has debated interim supply acts in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015." While we all appreciate this history lesson, I would like to take this opportunity to remind the government that it came into power saying that they would do things differently, and rattling off these numbers to make the case for unbudgeted spending does not look like things are being done differently. It looks a lot to me like this government wants to use interim supply just as much if not more than the previous government.

In fact, financially I don't see a lot of difference between this government and the last one. We still have the same reckless spending and mismanagement, the same empty promises. Now, to be fair, I do suppose they are differentiating themselves by spending the majority of the time that they're governing using interim supply rather than budgets. I guess that's different.

Madam Speaker, I think this Assembly can tell that I'm against passing this interim supply bill, and I'll give you a few reasons why. I've never made it a position of mine to write cheques without knowing who the cheque is going to and for what purpose. When I used to broker deals in real estate, I was required to have a complete accounting of all the monies. I had to account for the asking price. In this case, I suppose, we do have that, and it's a whopping \$8.7 billion. Possession date or a date of transfer: well, I guess we know when they want this money for, which happens to be April 1. We have a couple of comparisons that are equal to that part of the contract, so I'll allow the government credit for that, too. It has told us how long they're asking for this money for, which happens to be one-sixth of the year, or two months.

9:30

How about the parties to the contract? Yeah, I'd say we're fine with that, too. This government requests permission to spend taxpayers' dollars, so the parties of the contract are going to be the government and the people of Alberta. What concerns me is that this difference from a normal contract is the bill's total lack of details to point out what Albertans will get in exchange for that \$8.7 billion. You know, I would like to ask this government: what are Albertans specifically getting for this deal? Your interim supply bill has left this area blank.

Imagine if I tried to sell a house and I told the buyer what street it was on but not the house number: "Well, you know, ladies and gentlemen, after you sign here, we'll tell you which house you bought." I don't think that's a good way to do a contract. I think that would get me into trouble. That important part that talks about what's included, you know, the chattels – a fridge, a stove, a washer, a dryer, anything that would go as part of the deal: all those specifics, those little details are important parts of the contract as well. Not only would my buyers tell me to take a hike if I tried to do that, but if by some miracle I did manage to make that sale but my books were later audited, there'd be heavy fines, and I'd likely be out of a job or perhaps serving jail time for that. Proper accounting is absolutely super important when we're talking about other people's money, and in this case Albertans' money is other people's money. We are accounting for \$8.7 billion, and we're asked to be done with that in a very short order of time and with very little detail.

But this is government, and as you can surmise from the Member for Calgary-Fort's laundry list of interim supply years, this is just

the way it's done. They want to carry on the PC legacy of having interim supply. In fact, we've already seen two. So this government is asking for \$8.7 billion – that's a staggering amount of dollars – to cover one-sixth of the year, and it's given us no details about how this money will be spent and what the results will be from it.

I believe that my constituents would share my concerns and would tell me not to hand out money willy-nilly. I've heard it before, and I would expect them to say: make sure that whatever money you're spending is being spent in the best interests of Albertans. You know, they elected me to stand up in defence of their hard-earned tax dollars, and they expect me to fight for the right to see that those dollars are not going to fund, say, NDP pet projects. Frankly, we don't know if it's going to pet projects, if it's going specifically to that or bad ideological policies or, as is really the case now, toward unknown, unbudgeted projects. That's what we're getting. We don't know what projects are budgeted for.

We don't want to have debt, as the Member for Strathmore-Brooks was talking about. Debt is a problem. It takes away the government's ability to run programs, extra programs. I know this government would love to have those extra programs, but the more that we're in debt, the fewer options we have for running other programs that are out there, programs that would be near and dear to your hearts. There are programs here that are near and dear to my heart, but every time we take on more debt, we have to finance that debt, and we have to pay that debt back. Every time we take on more debt, we shrink our ability to have extra programs. That, frankly, scares me.

You know, throughout my life I've tried to save money. Every month I tried to save a little bit more money and set money aside so that when the inevitable day comes when you want to retire, you have that extra money; you don't have to worry about it. In fact, I was able to go into a semiretired state about four years ago because I saved a little bit more money each month.

In this case, the government of Alberta has the same case in point. What they were doing, the previous PC government – and it was instituted by Lougheed, the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. If we had extra money, we would set it aside in the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. Ralph Klein, in fact, had the debt paid in full in 2004, and in 2004 we were able to save money in the Alberta heritage savings trust fund.

It's very necessary to have our debt looked after so we can be able to have programs that Albertans want and need and have it in a sustainable, predictable fashion that is able to carry on from year to year. Madam Speaker, I would like to know what, if any, initiatives the government is putting in place to curtail spending. Or is this just going to be another spending spree, with no program parameters, no deliverables? In Advanced Education, the portfolio that I have, I'd like to know what exactly is being funded. Does any of this interim supply go towards operating grants? Does any of this funding go to universities to support their operating expenses?

I think that it was irresponsible to not be here in February, frankly, six weeks ago, to debate this budget, to go through estimates and generally get on with running this province. Frankly, this budget affects Albertans, all Albertans. Again, if you have debt, it's going to affect the programs that we are able to fund. Not having a budget done in a timely manner has put many of our municipalities behind on their infrastructure projects. Towns like Provost, who need to have their water and their sewer upgraded, are now going to be at least two months behind on their project because things just don't happen all at once. The town still needs to follow proper procedures to work and to complete their project.

Let's not forget that this is Canada. We have a small window of time during which we can count on good weather. Typically, you know, it can be June before the frost is out of the ground properly,

and then around June we can see the rains come. That is around the time that we get the majority of our rain in this province, so that puts us back a little bit more on the time for projects for towns like Provost that need to get into the ground, dig up the soil to be able to do this. If we had been here in February – the government knows full well that it's part of our orders, that this is when we should be looking at it – we wouldn't be two months behind on the budget negotiations and needing interim supply. But now we are needing interim supply because we weren't here in February debating this budget.

My riding is in central Alberta. You know, winter stays a bit longer there and comes a bit earlier than it does for our southern Alberta counterparts. This two-month delay will make a difference. Believe me. How can Albertans trust this government when it delays such important legislation as a budget for so long and then withholds information on how the money they need for interim supply will be spent? For instance, can the government give this Assembly any details about funding for capital projects for postsecondary institutions? Will this interim supply cover any of these projects? If it doesn't, then the consequence will be that the government will put capital projects, which postsecondary institutions desperately need, two months behind. Just like my analogy with Provost, we have a short window of opportunity to work in the ground to be able to do these projects. And you pay more to have projects done in the winter because there's just that extra cost to do work, to heat concrete, for example, for people to work outside. They can't physically work outside when it's 30, 40 below for as long as they could if they were working in the spring, summer, or fall, when the weather is predictably somewhere between 10 and, say, 25 degrees Celsius.

**9:40**

This government says that it needs to make room for more students in the province as a result of this economic downturn, which is an excellent point, but their actions have made it increasingly difficult to have more spaces open as we will now be two months behind in the construction of these schools. Postsecondary institutions need specific funding, and they need predictable funding, so even if there are token dollars for these projects here, these institutions can't know that because the details just, frankly, aren't in interim supply. At the end of the day, bringing in a late budget is not a stable, predictable approach to financing that these institutions need. They need predictable, stable financing.

So where are the details? If the government gives us simply no information . . . [Mr. Taylor's speaking time expired]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would just like to ask the Member for Battle River-Wainwright – we heard very clearly at the AAMDC meetings over the previous couple of days how they'll be affected by the delays in this budget. Can you just expand? You talked about Provost and how delays in the budget would affect their budget and their infrastructure projects. I was just wondering if you could expand a little bit more on how the delays in the delivery of this budget will affect the urban and rural municipalities in your area. Specifically, how will they be able to plan ahead, get their projects off the ground, get the bids out in time to take advantage of our very, very short season?

**Mr. Taylor:** Well, thank you for that question. You know, the people from areas like Provost and throughout my riding have all come to me. They were very concerned about this budget. They

were concerned about, frankly, the last budget, that was delivered in the latter part of November. Now they are saying to me: when is this budget going to be coming down? At the time I had no answer for them. I can tell them now with reasonable certainty when this budget will be delivered and debated. For them, they need to have that money. They need to make sure of what they're operating with. They have so many different parameters in their town to have things done. They have projects that are going on and that go on every year. Again, they need the monies, and they need to make sure that there's an accounting for that money. They need to know how much they're getting and when it's going to be there for them.

Frankly, they are concerned. They keep asking me: when is this going to happen? And time and time again I have to say that I'm not sure because we're not the government, so we don't dictate the time that the budget gets to be brought down. The government, as it stands, has that option to be able to say when the budget gets to be brought down. It seems to me like we've run with interim supply, not the budget, for the majority of this past year, since the election, and that has made it very difficult for all the towns within my riding to be able to operate. I implore them to get their budgets in on time so we can debate them in a timely manner and help out all of the towns in my riding. They want a sustainable, predictable approach to finance in all of these towns.

Thank you for that question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any others under 29(2)(a)? Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. I enjoyed the presentation by the member. One question I have – and I heard him elaborate a little on it, and I'm hoping he could expand a little bit – is on the difference in how much we spend compared to the province to the west of us, which is considerably bigger and spends about \$8 billion less.

The second thing, if the member could expand on, is what his constituents feel about the budgeting practices of the government compared to what they need to do within their own households. I know I hear from my constituents all the time a lot of frustration about the inefficiency that we see within the government of Alberta when it comes to budgeting. You know, I know in my household and in the businesses that are in my riding that if we followed those practices, we would be out of business. So I'd like to hear from the member a little bit more on that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The first question was: how much more do we spend here in Alberta than the province to the west of us, referring to the province of British Columbia? Frankly, we spend \$2,000 more per person than the province of B.C. does. That province is able to get this money and be able to do it for that much less than we do, and if they can do it for that much money, why can't we? Why can't we find efficiencies in this government in our interim supply budgets, in the budget itself to be able to operate at \$2,000 less?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Next on my list is the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll echo my comments from second reading and ask the question: why are we here? Why are we here debating interim supply? The Member for Battle River-Wainwright, I think, has covered a lot of the same question that I have, which is: just because it was done in the past, it doesn't mean it should be done now. In fact, I would have thought

that with a new government we would have the opportunity for a breath of fresh air, for a new approach, for a different way of doing things. I think that's what Albertans at least thought they were voting for on May 5, but apparently not. And it's not just a simple technical matter. As I asked the other day in the House, I wonder why it is that we're here.

There is a by-election going on, and there is, I suppose, a natural political instinct to try to defer what's likely to be not a good-news budget beyond that by-election. I understand that, and I can actually appreciate why this government would want to wait until after the federal budget to propose their budget . . .

**Mr. Rodney:** Will you have a candidate in the by-election?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, it's a fair question, a fair question. You just wait. You just wait. [interjections] That's right. It's all part of a bigger plan. Trust me.

. . . to find out exactly what the federal budget is going to offer to Alberta, and I sincerely hope it is a substantial amount of money, far beyond what our population is. But I really worry that the budget is coming down in the middle of April, on April 14, and not in the very first week of April, when we're back after this upcoming two-week break. When I asked myself why that is, I discovered, of course, that the federal NDP convention is the weekend of April 8, 9, and 10 here in Edmonton. And that's curious, Madam Speaker, that the party across the way here would defer the important business of this House, would delay letting Albertans know exactly how they're going to address the incredible challenges facing our province, for simple political reasons. It should always be province above party and not the other way around.

9:50

When I look at the interim supply bill itself, I see the continuation of an upward trend in spending that started in Budget 2015 and, without question, started in previous budgets as well. But we see our revenues falling off a cliff. Our revenues have gone down substantially. While the Finance minister may have mused yesterday at AAMD and C that certain new revenue streams may be an opportunity for the province, even then I don't think that Albertans will be able to smoke their way to prosperity.

What I want to see out of this government and what I want to see out of this next budget is more than just simple spending restraint. I want to see more than just nibbling around the edges. I want to see a government committed to innovation in the public service, not to massive salary cuts, not to massive service cuts, not to uncreative ways that these budget challenges have been handled in the past. What I want to see is a government committed to true innovation in the public service. I want to see the entrepreneurial spirit that exists in our province to exist in our public service and in our public services.

I want to see our health care system be truly innovative in its service delivery, truly focused on patients and end-users and not focused on empire building, on bureaucracy, on clipboards and checklists. I want to see it focused on people. I want to see a system that listens to those on the front lines. It's not just about the next incremental dollar in the system; it's about delivering proper health outcomes to Albertans. In education, the same thing. In the public service, the same thing. We have that opportunity because that's who we are as Albertans. We have the opportunity to build an entrepreneurial culture, but I see absolutely no effort or interest or instinct from this government to do that. That results in the continuation of an upward trend in costs even at a time when we are facing significant – significant – pressures on the revenue side.

What living within our means means is that we have to be realistic about the cost of delivering services and we have to be

realistic about our revenue and our ability to actually carry that cost. We've heard that the province of British Columbia, to our west, has substantially lower costs and a substantially higher population. This government needs to be truthful with Albertans to either reduce the cost of providing services to Albertans, to reduce the level of service it provides to Albertans, or to increase the revenues to pay for the services provided to Albertans.

None of those things is happening in this budget, in interim supply. Maybe it's going to happen in the budget. We don't know – we have to wait another month to find out – but none of the indications so far are positive. I worry that this government is going to simply drop back and punt for another year, borrow tremendous amounts of money with no real plan to get Alberta back to balance, and it's not easy. It's not easy, and I don't deny that it's not easy because it isn't.

We've put out a plan. The Alberta Party caucus, mighty MLA of one so far, has put out a plan, and we'll put out another one. I'll tell you here and now that we will put out another detailed shadow budget to tell Albertans exactly how we would address the challenges facing our province. I challenge again each of my opposition colleagues to do the same thing, to tell Albertans in precise detail how exactly you would make the tough choices required to get Alberta back to balance without impacting our entrepreneurial spirit, without unduly impacting the business community or Albertans as individuals.

These are very, very challenging times that we face in this province. What I want is a public service that has a clear strategic plan. I want to see a clear strategic plan from this government. In Bill 2 I don't see a plan. That's what interim supply is, just simply a continuation of the line that we had before. I want to see priorities from this government attached to that plan, real priorities, and I want to see those priorities flow down to each and every department.

I want to see this government, the front bench in particular, to rethink how the public service operates, to think creatively about that, to challenge some of the things that you're being told, to make personnel changes where required, and to truly innovate, to transform the culture of Alberta's public service to better fit who we are as Albertans; and that is, builders and innovators and doers. We do more with less in this province, at least we do in the private sector, at least we do in the not-for-profit sector in this province.

The only place that I don't see an effort to do more with less is the provincial government, and that, my friends, is on you. In this interim supply bill I see exactly the continuation of that model. I see a government with its head buried in the sand, and I see a continued spiral of debt with absolutely no plan to get out of it.

With that, my friends, I will cede the remaining time and indicate that I simply cannot support the interim supply bill. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak. I consider it a privilege to be able to participate in this debate. Of course, funding the government and all of the services that we provide in care for people is an extremely important issue, something that we never need to lose sight of. But this really is a very big request with very little detail, and that really is, I guess, the thing that challenges us.

We have to be able to go back to our ridings and say to people: "Yes, we voted for 8 point whatever billion dollars, almost \$9 billion, worth of spending by the government. But, well, sorry; we really don't know quite where it's all going, and we definitely don't know where it's going to come from." That's the one question we

get all too often: where are they getting that money from? It makes it extremely difficult for us to vote with confidence that we can actually answer those questions. That, quite frankly, is a very clear part of the reason why we will find it extremely difficult and will not vote in support of the principle of interim supply, not necessarily the fact that the government needs money to operate. We just question how it's being handled, and the fact that there aren't enough answers involved. As I said, it's an extremely large amount.

I've had the opportunity in the past, actually, to do a little bit of work in the area of credit and credit counselling with people and their family spending. One of the challenges in our modern society is the fact that as the cashless society comes upon us, there's a principle in which the awareness of spending becomes more and more difficult for people to realize. You know, it's credit cards, and now you don't even have to hardly use your credit card anymore. There are Flash payments. It goes out so quickly and so easily that people don't have a realization of how much money they actually are spending. As a result, we're seeing increases in the need for nonprofit credit agencies and debt assistance agencies and all those kinds of things. Quite frankly, I think that principle is a little bit at work here in our government.

First of all, this isn't our own money, which always, with all trusteeship, seems to make it a little bit less urgent for us to be careful with it. Secondly, because it's just numbers on a page that somebody else planned and it goes somewhere else and we never see it, we never feel it, we never touch it, we don't have a sense of how much money we're actually talking about here even for the interim supply.

I tried to do a little bit of research on how much \$8.7 billion in interim supply actually looks like. It's quite a staggering realization, actually. I'd encourage members to google it. So \$8.7 billion – well, make it simple: start with \$1 billion, and visualize the equivalent of 10 fork-load pallets neatly, tightly stacked four feet high, and they are approximately four feet each side, not quite, usually 42 inches on a pallet. We're talking about 10 pallets stacked four feet high with \$100 bills. There are 16 desks across that row there. I think it's 16. I did a really quick count. If we were to take \$8.7 billion, we're looking at 87 pallets stacked on the floor here. They would be over five rows deep, the full length. They would not fit in the aisle.

It's a massive amount of money that we're talking about, with very little accounting for, very little detail for, and the people are not likely to trust us that literally by the semi load full of hundred-dollar bills we just casually pass it and move on. I think that as trustees here we really do need to wrestle with: how much money is this? The numbers have become so big these days that very few of us – I find it a hard time conceptualizing and even imagining how much money we're talking about. As a result, we end up in our world with increasing numbers in credit counselling and increasing need for credit counselling in our society, and it is a problem.

**10:00**

I went back to my credit counselling days, and I just would like to remind us as a people – I'm not trying to take shots here or be partisan; I just am cautious – of warning signs of debt for an individual, for a family. There's a direct application to us here as trustees for our people. A warning sign of debt when you're getting in trouble with debt is living on overdraft, lines of credit. When we have to rely on that for our funding, we're in trouble. Spending more than your income: we are doing that with this interim supply, and as the Minister of Finance pointed out to us, it's just the precursor of what the actual budget will bring to us, so it's the same thing in a way. Not paying credit in full every month: we're going to be paying on this for decades. Impulsive spending due to money

worries: a sign of credit problems. When we just throw money into our economy because we're afraid of what's happening, it's actually a sign of debt problems. Declined by your financial institution: we've already had one downgrade in credit. There are others. I could go on.

There are warning signs here about the amount of money we're spending, and that is our concern, not just the interim supply and the fact that we need money to keep the government running. Yes. But the reality is that this is the precursor, as we have been told, of the budget that we're going to be having. There are warning signs all over the place here. At least, there would be for individual Albertans and families, and I don't see how it should be any different for us at the provincial level.

I just think we need to really, really take a look at our spending issues, our spending problems. I mean, it's been spoken of over and over, and I'm not going to repeat the aspects that have already been said, but we are spending significantly more than the others around us and spending too much. Because of that, when regular Albertans have to live in reality and the province doesn't seem to, it really, really impacts the hope of the people around us. They look at the fact that we're going to be under debt load for decades, and their hope is declining. As we've listened to both industry and business and the municipal governments in our province, the sense of hope is leaving them.

I'm reminded of a famous quote, that I often revert to in my own mind, from Oliver Wendell Holmes, who says, "Beware how you take away hope from another human being." You know, I understand that the goal here is to give hope to people who are in need, to people who are struggling, to try and keep the economy going, but we need to be aware that the countereffects or the side effects take away other kinds of hope. Too much spending has that profound effect on our entire province, so I would just challenge you to be careful about that.

In that regard, there was a recent submission just presented to a couple of your ministers. The initial letter was sent out March 8 from the Alberta Chambers of Commerce. These are the people that seek to actually create businesses and create employment and give jobs. Their most recent survey, which was taken just in February, is a bit of a report card on some of the current financial practices and principles that have been taken in the last few months. For them to measure the results of some of that intended spending – the employment outcomes in much of Alberta for minimum-wage earners have actually been decreasing. There's been a tremendous setback for businesses, and they detailed that. I'm not going to go into all those details, but what I do want to point out is that they detail in their letter that the issues in the province in the last little while have cost on average \$21,456 to each business in our province since the election. These are tremendous barriers to business, to their profit lines.

I did some quick research with Stats Canada on the number of small businesses in Alberta. In 2014 they report 158,000 small businesses in this province. If you multiply that by their reported \$21,456 cost due to recent legislation and decisions at the provincial level, Madam Speaker, that adds up to \$3.39 billion. It's a lot of money. That's a business hurdle, a hurdle or barrier to the survival of business in this province. It's small businesses that create jobs. It's businesses that allow people to be employed. If we had businesses and principles that were actually creating jobs and providing work for people, we maybe wouldn't need to be spending as much as we're spending at a provincial government level.

There's a real impediment to the survival of business in our province. As a result, the small businesses of Alberta – this is from a news release from March 14, so it's pretty current – simply say: what job creators most need right now is not to deal with further

burdens preventing them from doing what they do best, which is to create small jobs; a general policy of do no harm by government right now could be the best approach to help improve the labour market and the business market for all Albertans.

I just caution the government to be very careful about how they spend money, how they panic-react to spending money. The size of the interim supply is huge. It's a foreshadowing of a budget that's going to be huge, of debt that's going to continue to pile on and continue to hamper our province in massive ways. Recently a \$3.3 billion barrier to business, that they have to earn before they can even survive, is a huge impediment to business in this province.

Now, I'll change gears slightly and speak specifically about the interim supply for Culture and Tourism. The best place to start for future budgets is to look at past expenditure reports, comparing the expenditures that have been with the budget forecasts that are in the interim supply. Taking that as two-twelfths of the total amount, I see that there is a significant jump, a 40 per cent increase, in the Culture and Tourism budget. That concerns me. Is that reflective of the budget that's coming? I mean, it's almost a quarter of the budget for the year, now to be expended, supposedly, within a two-month period. I trust that this does not foreshadow the actual increase in the budget that might happen.

I do credit the government for having been able to save. Again, I'm looking back to the third-quarter report. There are some areas where some money has been saved – kudos to you for that, a good try, a good effort – but I'm quite concerned about what's coming forward, and the fact that I don't have the details makes it impossible for me to vote for this in principle. I could not defend myself before my constituents if I did.

Madam Speaker, I cannot vote for this measure. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill. I understand the need for the interim supply. The province needs to fulfill commitments until a budget is approved. I get that – we all get that – but what I don't get is why it is so difficult for the government to produce this budget on time. I would expect that there will be very little change in the coming budget from the one this government passed less than four months ago, other than another \$10 billion added to the deficit column.

Last year we waited, Albertans waited, only to hear: be patient; we're working on it. Madam Speaker, after waiting for six months, six months of uncertainty and a growing economic crisis, we received a budget very, very much like the spring budget that was delivered by the previous government. Why the six-month delay? Now, again, the budget is not ready on time, and again, like the last time, this budget will probably read just like the last one.

**10:10**

While we wait, we get not only the interim supply bill, which will keep the government functioning until the new budget comes out, but we will also get the supplementary supply budget, which asks for more money on top of the existing budget. Part of my concern with this whole process is that Bill 2 gives no details, simply amounts of money.

Transportation and Infrastructure show a total of \$288,715,000 in expenses for a two-month period, with, again, no details. The same two ministries have a combined capital investment supply of \$285,628,000. Can't we get some detail about what will be funded with these amounts of money? That's a lot of money. What are the

costs? Where will this money go? Who will benefit from these expenditures? How will Albertans know if the expenditures make a difference to their communities and to their lives?

Yesterday at the AAMDC the minister announced that the government would be cutting two major highway maintenance budgets, crack filling and weed control. Crack filling and weed control. That was very concerning to me and, obviously, to a lot of the other people present. The response was a lot of groans from municipal leaders. There was absolutely no applause for that answer. As a matter of fact, I didn't hear much applause for any of the responses to any of the questions from the ministers present.

The reason the delegates were so unhappy with that particular announcement is not hard to understand. Municipalities know the value of maintenance to infrastructure. Just as an example, there are sections of highway 28 that I have seen and, indeed, there are probably many other highways across the province, I'm sure, that are in dire need of repairs. I've seen cracks and potholes on the shoulders of highway 28 that are over 20 feet long, over six inches wide, and up to six inches deep. Just imagine swerving to avoid an obstacle and hitting something like that with a small car. How we haven't seen a major wreck on this highway as a result of these poor conditions of the road is beyond me. I only hope that drivers that drive these roads often enough to know that there are issues there continue to be extra cautious.

The problem with neglecting this type of repair is that the longer you wait, the more the water infiltrates the road base. With the freeze and thaw that we experience here in Alberta, the destruction to the road base is severe. By neglecting crack repair or the actual resurfacing to keep the highways viable, the weathering necessitates tearing up the highway and rebuilding the base. This is so much more costly than following a regular maintenance schedule, and it is extremely expensive and terribly disruptive to the very high volume of traffic we see, especially on that highway.

It doesn't make sense to me to neglect highway maintenance now in the interest of cost savings, that will lead to much higher costs later. This is not the place to be saving money. But the more important point is that we do not know in this interim supply bill what the funds are for. If I hadn't heard the announcement at AAMDC yesterday, I still would have no idea that this government is going to defund crack repairs. Why did I have to get that information from a Q and A session at AAMDC? Why is that information not included in the interim supply? It was obviously on the minister's mind.

Municipalities are very concerned about the delay in the release of this budget. They have infrastructure projects that need to be tendered for bid so that they can take advantage of our very, very short construction season, which was alluded to by my fellow member from Battle River-Wainwright. They're facing reduced revenue from defaults on linear taxes. They're very concerned about the uncertainty they continue to deal with under this budget process. They need stable, predictable funding, much like the Wildrose's 10-10 MSI plan would provide. They need funding that will allow them to plan and deliver services to the residents of communities in their areas. The lack of a budget does not allow them to do so.

Madam Speaker, the government delayed the spring session, and now we are delaying the budget again. This all adds up to uncertainty at the municipal level and all over the province. Many people have asked me: why are they delaying the budget? The only answer I can come up with is the possibility that it has something to do with the upcoming by-election in Calgary. I realize this is only speculation, but based on the delays last fall until after the federal election, people seem to be making this assumption on their own.



Albertans, municipal governments, both rural and urban, are very concerned about the direction or, actually, the lack of direction from this government. Generally and with respect to this interim supply bill specifically, Albertans are worried.

Madam Speaker, for all the delays, for all the lack of information, for the lack of accountability, for the lack of uncertainty, and for the pattern of political game playing with budgets I cannot and will not support this bill.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

**An Hon. Member:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Seeing none, it's the close of debate. I have a call for the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:16 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Fitzpatrick	McPherson
Babcock	Ganley	Miller
Bilous	Goehring	Payne
Carlier	Hinkley	Phillips
Carson	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Horne	Schmidt
Connolly	Kazim	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Shepherd
Dach	Loyola	Sigurdson
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Drever	Malkinson	Sweet
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Feehan	McKittrick	Woollard

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Schneider
Clark	Loewen	Starke
Cooper	McIver	Stier
Cyr	Nixon	Swann
Drysdale	Orr	Taylor
Fildebrandt	Rodney	

Totals: For – 39 Against – 17

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a third time]

### Bill 3

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and move third reading of Bill 3, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016.

When passed, these supplementary supply estimates will authorize an approximate total increase of \$106 million in expense funding for the departments of Education, Justice and Solicitor General, Labour, Municipal Affairs, Seniors and Housing, and Treasury Board and Finance. As we have discussed previously during the debates, these estimates will ensure that enrolment in our schools is fully funded and that the affordable supportive living

initiative has the capital grants it needs to develop long-term care and affordable spaces across our province. These supplementary supply estimates will also transfer \$25 million of the previously approved capital investment vote to the expense vote within the Department of Environment and Parks to provide funding to the town of High River for important flood mitigation work that they will own.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I look forward to this Chamber's support of these supplementary estimates so that we can deliver on our promises like fully funded school enrolment and other things. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little-Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the House today and speak to the government's Bill 3 on supplementary supply. I with many of my colleagues am here to say that, yes, I too am disappointed that we have to vote to spend more money for the 2015-2016 fiscal year, that's about to end, given that this government passed a budget less than four months ago. But there are some good initiatives here that require funding.

Now, it should not come as a surprise to anyone here if I were to suggest that I and my colleagues don't always see eye to eye with the government here, but I think that we can both agree that there was no shortage of waste or inefficiencies left behind by the previous government. That's why I find it odd that the new government somehow needs new, unbudgeted spending approved. Just last week I stood here and was critical of Bill 2 and the interim supply. Those criticisms of unbudgeted spending are just as valid in regard to this bill as they were to that one.

These are important initiatives in the supplementary supply – I have no doubt about that – but it was only a few months ago that we stood here and approved the last provincial budget. It's not readily clear to me why these important initiatives were not designated priorities by the NDP government in that budget.

I just want to talk about Seniors and Housing and Infrastructure. Why are these listed in supplementary supply, only afterthoughts set to receive unbudgeted funding that was not being offset by efficiencies in other areas? For instance, there's a sudden \$50 million transfer from the capital plan to Seniors and Housing. Just last week I stood here and noted that Infrastructure had lapsed, the massive \$1 billion last year, even though there's no shortage of much-needed infrastructure in Alberta. Despite that lapse there was a request in the interim supply, and suddenly, as noted here in supplementary supply, they found a \$50 million efficiency in Infrastructure to transfer to Seniors and Housing. That one I have a little trouble with. I would hope that there's a fair explanation for that forthcoming. Perhaps it's an accounting error.

Now, the more important questions are these. How many spaces for seniors will be created with this \$50 million? Let's not forget that Alberta seniors built this province. The government needs to ensure that it's not just throwing unbudgeted money around with no clear goals, no clear indication of how outcomes will be measured. That's important. It seems to be lacking.

That said, I'll admit that I'm glad to see here in the supplementary estimates that the government is taking action to protect Albertans in High River by transferring funds already budgeted to make sure that a berm is built. But I do have to say that I am perplexed as to why this is happening now and not several months ago.

As far as the debt is concerned, again, I want to preface these next comments by saying that we recognize that there are important items in supplementary supply appropriation, but this remains unbudgeted spending. Supplementary estimates are, of course, not

uncommon for any government at any level. This wouldn't be as unusual if the budget and subsequent main estimates had appeared in the spring, but that only came in November. I would add that we are discussing and voting on this in mid-March, at a time when we should be discussing an actual proposed budget.

Again, I have to ask: why didn't the government just take the time and effort and finally just release a budget? Look at all the departments that had to work and how much untold work went into interim supply and supplementary supply budgets. How many untold hours were spent creating those two documents? These same departments are now converged and working on the budget for this spring, that's going to be put out on April 14. Again I ask: why didn't the government just take the time and effort to just release a proper budget?

10:40

Now, I gather from the government's responses in recent days that there is a reasonable explanation for why some of these items could not be included in the previous budget. But even the government should recognize that it's somewhat ridiculous to need both a supplementary and interim supply appropriation only four short months after a proper budget was introduced in November. It's my sincere hope that in the next fiscal year the government will do a better job of trying to get their fiscal house in order.

My colleague made a good point about the difference between a million and a billion, and I had one that I remembered that was brought to my attention 30 years ago, and it always stuck with me. A million minutes ago it was 2014; a billion minutes ago Christ walked on the Earth. The difference between a million and a billion is so staggering that it becomes hard to remember and recognize what those numbers really are. My colleague also made a good point about the situation Albertans find themselves in with their own households. They have to make difficult decisions. In their businesses they have to make difficult decisions on those. They're now asking: why isn't my government being more responsible with my money and my children's future?

I'll just touch on jobs and labour. In fact, what's most disappointing about discussing a supply bill instead of an actual budget is that it means it's much longer before Albertans actually know what the answers will be that they've been asking for. Take jobs, for instance. This government seems to have diverted any substantial detail, any initiative that can actually help Albertans facing hardship in the economic downturn, with mere quips about waiting for the budget, which comes out on April 14.

That's a whole calendar month away, Madam Speaker. For Albertans unemployed that's one more month of trying to make ends meet, hoping that their savings can last at least that much longer. It's one more month for municipalities in my riding and ridings around this province to understand where the MSI funding is at so they can have some rock-solid decisions made here that they can build their budgets on. They rely on that money. While I'm talking about that, I would congratulate the former government. I wasn't a councillor at that time, but I became a councillor shortly after that program was brought in. I'm glad to see that this government is continuing with MSI. That is very important to those that require it in municipalities.

The supplementary estimates allocate \$3 million to labour. Allegedly, these are for labour market development goals, but they're not specific at all. What programs are they going to? There's no detail. How many Albertans can expect training? No detail. What is the cost per Albertan helped? No details there. In fact, it's not readily clear that this allocation will help Albertans based on the lack of information. Skills training and labour market development are important now more than ever. That's why it's

important that the government speak to actual numbers, actual assessments that anything they're doing is helping.

I know that my colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner asked the Minister of Labour a series of questions earlier this week inquiring about the surprising explanatory note on the labour increase. There didn't seem to be a ready answer. Specifically, the government claimed that the \$3 million would be offset by a federal transfer from the Canada-Alberta job fund for labour market development. Well, that's an existing agreement. It's been on the books since 2014. There's no reason the government wouldn't have known about it. So, really, if it's an offsetting supplementary increase, doesn't that really just mean that existing skills training and transfer wasn't being used? I think that's problematic because in this economy skills training is more important, more now than ever, with Albertans out of work.

Madam Speaker, the facts of this request for \$3 million tell Albertans nothing about how the money will be used to create jobs, provide skills training, or support apprentices. Alberta's unemployment rate is continuing to go up. Now it's 7.9 per cent at the end of last month. The government's failed job subsidy program has already cost Albertans \$178 million and created no jobs. The government has so far been shockingly vague on its further plans for supporting job creation. You know, Bill 1 is just a shell that proposes no concrete solutions, no specific programs, and no real path to job creation. So, yes, while we support labour market programming, there's some skepticism on this side of the House about what results this government is getting.

The government needs to outline which programs it will direct this funding toward and how it will be reporting on the successes of the programs. That's the part that's so important, how we report to Albertans on the success of each and every one of these programs. Success in this instance needs to be measured in jobs created, not just money spent. This doesn't mean we won't support this bill in principle, but I do hope for the sake of unemployed Albertans, good hard-working people around this province, that they have some specific goals and targets that they can share with all of us.

Just a comment on protecting front lines. You know, what strikes me as the most bizarre is that this government somehow has the audacity to accuse us of wanting to cut front-line workers, as if any level of constructive criticism about their massive overspending is interpreted as being a call to cut from front lines. No. Finding efficiencies is profoundly different from cutting front lines.

This accusation comes from a government that itself is cutting front-line workers. Last week it was announced that long-term care beds in Sundre hospital would close. My colleague at the front took exception to that, made everyone aware that that closure could result in anywhere from 18 to 36 long-term beds closing. Front-line workers would be losing their jobs. Vulnerable individuals would be moving away from their community, the community that they know. This government is at least \$10 billion in debt – yes, that's billion, with a “b,” the difference between an “m” and a “b” – and is still requesting more unbudgeted spending. Yet they find the time to cut front-line workers. That speaks volumes about the government's ability to manage our provincial finances and set priorities.

Madam Speaker, again, my colleagues and I recognize that there are worthwhile initiatives in the supplementary estimates, but my colleagues and I are strongly skeptical that this particular government was unable to find efficiencies in the last budget to cover the costs of these worthy initiatives. More problematic is that these important initiatives were not designated priorities by the government in their budget, which was only four short months ago.

Albertans are already hurting in this economy. Many are struggling to make ends meet while looking for a new job. We here

owe it to them to ensure that their tax dollars are spent wisely. For example, once again, I don't think anyone here is opposed to investing in labour market programming in a time like this, but in their last budget that department committed to spending nearly a hundred million dollars in workforce strategies, and Albertans should know what they have to show for it. Unless this government is capable of answering how many jobs they specifically anticipate creating and can fully defend those programs in working to the fullness of their ability in the current situation, then all they're really doing is racking up more spending.

I know some of my colleagues have already asked the same question, but, you know, there hasn't been a consistent answer, so we continue to ask. Regrettably, the government's request for the supplementary estimates looking to increase labour market spending somehow offset by a federal transfer via the Canada-Alberta job fund just raises more questions than it answers. Why isn't that transfer already being used for skills funding and skills training? Are these skills training and labour market programs actually working?

I think I speak not just for the constituents of Little Bow but for many across Alberta, Madam Speaker, when I say that I do hope this government has an actual answer for what they're doing here with this supply bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

10:50

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Happy St. Patrick's Day to everyone who's in the House. Before I dive in, I'd like to read an Irish quote that may be very relevant to what we're speaking about today. "A handful of skill is better than a bagful of gold." To that, I'd like to address some issues of supplementary supply.

Madam Speaker, like my colleagues, it's with dismay – and I can't help but remain skeptical about the government's inability to find any financial efficiencies within the bloated budget of the previous session. Albertans, quite simply, deserve better. Albertans deserve to have a detailed breakdown of exactly where their hard-earned tax dollars are going. That is their right.

Throughout the supplementary supply debate the government did identify many important sources of expenses that led to . . . [An electronic device sounded] Wow. Isn't that nice? My phone is talking to me. Sorry. There's a ghost in the House, too.

**An Hon. Member:** It's the Irish.

**Mrs. Aheer:** It's the luck of the Irish.

**An Hon. Member:** There's a wee leprechaun under your desk.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yeah. I don't know. Well, at least she told me that I said it nicely. That's good, hey?

Sorry about that. I'll continue on. Sorry, Madam Speaker. I apologize for my phone.

Albertans deserve to have a detailed breakdown. Like I said, that's their right. Throughout the supplementary supply debate the NDP did identify many important sources of expenses that led to a qualified need for some additional funds, and we support that because these funds will go towards front-line workers. We, however, remain skeptical because the government outlined things that all parties can agree are priority for Albertans, yet strangely enough, Madam Speaker, the government didn't prioritize these things. I would have to think that if you deem something a priority, if you deem it important, you would also prioritize this. You would

make it known to Albertans, to the opposition, to everybody who's involved what that priority list is and how you're going to allocate those funds.

The fact is that supplementary supply allows the government to ignore the base cost. Madam Speaker, in any business we start out with that base cost, and it's really important as a business owner that we allow people to know what that's going to cost. If we're nickelling and diming them along the way, it becomes very apparent that we as businesspeople don't understand the function of our business, that we don't understand the costs involved, that we don't understand how it is to bring together a plan to make sure that that person is receiving the service that they asked for based on a cost that we actually understand as a business owner.

When running the ministries, we want to see them focusing their attentions on the members of this House and the policies and the measures that require those additional funds. We need to understand that, and so does the government. All Albertans deserve that transparency to understand what those base costs are going to be. It's a simple, simple request. For any businessperson this artificial separation of cost is difficult to swallow.

One of the issues, Madam Speaker, with supplementary supply is that it fails to produce a holistic look at a department. What that will do is that it will clarify for Albertans what the possible trade-offs are. Within a full budget it makes it clear that there may be more money on one item and relatively, maybe, less money on another item, and it becomes clear that more money for a specialized program means less money for another. By using supplementary supply, you've prevented the opposition members from conducting a complete assessment of where the potential efficiency gains can be made.

Having pored over the budget from the previous session, Madam Speaker, and being acutely aware of the significant number of expenditures included within it, I find it alarming that the government was unable to find efficiencies: efficiencies that Albertans deserve, efficiencies that are demanded by the opposition, and efficiencies that would just make the running of the government better. It would bode well to the people of Alberta to see that the government has their best interests, that they're watching out for the purse, that they are seeing that these things can be done with an overview of understanding where they can also save and then, potentially, have that money for any other special projects that may come up or put it away or whatever the government sees fit to do with that. Albertans are left wondering if this government has any intention of prioritizing these expenses. There continues to be very little regard on the government side of the House for the value of a dollar.

Madam Speaker, it's very hard not to look around right now and see what's happening in Alberta, what's happening to our friends. My best friend just lost her job yesterday, and she's one of hundreds of people that I can state that, quite honestly, are losing their jobs hand over fist. They're suffering from depression. They can't put their kids into hockey or into music.

**An Hon. Member:** Aw.

**Mrs. Aheer:** And those kinds of comments are exactly why I'm asking about this, the fact that somebody across the way would actually have a comment and actually behave in such a manner towards people that we all love and know in this province, that are suffering. I'm sorry if extracurricular activities aren't important to the members across the way, but it's actually what defines people and their families and what keeps families growing and happy. Quite frankly, I'm appalled by the sounds that are coming from

across the way, but that's maybe just not a priority for our government at this time.

To continue on, Madam Speaker, Alberta families are struggling, and every additional dollar counts to a family – for example, when a layoff has occurred – and we still don't see respect for the difficulties of Albertans, as has just been proven. We still have MLAs that laugh and heckle when faced with the fact that Alberta's government is simply unsustainably expensive. The government needs to look at these programs, not only to get them started but to have some longevity, to create something that will actually last and stand the test of time far beyond any of our time here, and to think to the future of how that program will look in 10 years. Or are we just going to expect somebody else to pay that off?

Albertans spend \$2,000 more per capita than British Columbia for health care – and I know we've said this a thousand times, but repetition is key – and on far too many public services Albertans face a higher bill than our fellow Canadian provinces. Wildrose laid out its priorities for the province of Alberta to much acclaim. Again, if I could say it, Madam Speaker, programs start with a vision and an idea, but they have to have follow-through, and we have to understand how we're going to sustain them. There are some great ideas for programs – all of us can agree on that – but we'd actually like them to be more than a one-hit wonder. We'd like to see those be able to be sustained and carried through so that future generations are also able to benefit from programs that are close to all of our hearts.

We support worker training for individuals, Madam Speaker, that want to acquire new skills. We have been emphatically clear in this House that Wildrose itself would make only a modest cut of two pennies for every dollar. I'll say it again just in case you haven't heard it before: two pennies for every dollar. In doing so, we will protect our front-line workers, our teachers, our nurses.

Seniors' protection and support is of the utmost importance. We continue to advocate for victims of natural disasters in Alberta and the constituency of Chestermere-Rocky View.

We are supportive of a handful of policies that would see protection and relief brought to those impacted by the 2013 flood. Madam Speaker, I was there. Like many people in this House, we volunteered to help out during that flood. We saw the devastation. We know what occurred in many, many areas. It's absolutely a priority for this side of the House and, I'm sure, for the government side of the House as well. We will continue to fight for appropriate mitigation that will protect the most communities. The difference is that Wildrose would find support for these programs by properly identifying priority initiatives, something that this government up to this point has failed to do.

Madam Speaker, we need to identify what is most important. Then what we would do is find the money to make that budget work. That's the whole point of identifying their priorities. Then you have a base to go on, and you can find where that money is going to go and make that work out. Like Albertan families and businesses, we know that when we have fewer dollars that are coming in, we need to be more careful about what's going out. Every Albertan right now is tightening their belt. Everyone. The government has to be the first one to show that they're capable of doing that as well and to find ways of efficiency, especially in these hard times.

This isn't going to change overnight, Madam Speaker. This path that we're on right now: we're in this for a little while. We really, really need to show to Albertans that we have their backs when it comes to this and show them that not only do we care about the programs that we want to put forward but that we have a vision and a plan for how that's going to happen and that it's not going to be something that gets pushed down to another budget or other

supplies or deficits that come down the road. We need to actually show them how we're capable of handling that right now. The simple fact is that not everything that this government spends is done with a mindset of efficiency or an attempt to obtain the most value for our dollars. There is waste, and there are trade-offs to be made. Wildrose knows that Albertans want as many of our province's dollars directed to the front-line services as possible. That is a priority of Albertans, and we will continue to defend that in this House.

**11:00**

Where the skepticism arrives, Madam Speaker, however, is when the government is asking us to support a supplemental funding request for more front-line workers while firing nurses in places like Sundre hospital, as we've heard in previous days. This move seems entirely political, and I know that there have been some issues with speaking about the by-election in Calgary-Greenway, but it makes you wonder what the agenda is of those kinds of things. Albertans are left not fully understanding the extent to which this government struggles. They're blocked from understanding these budgetary matters, and I think that's disrespectful to Albertans, and they deserve to have that transparency.

I will support this request but with the hope that now, having done multiple budgets, the government has a sense of how long it takes to put a budget together and will plan appropriately in the future. I know that I can speak on behalf of the Wildrose Party, that we are very, very frustrated and dismayed by the lack of transparency in the budget. The interim and supplementary supply must not become a fixture in the future.

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?  
Seeing none, I'll recognize the leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll be brief, but in the spirit of St. Patrick's Day, to my colleagues I will say: may the sun shine gently on your face, may the rain fall gently on your fields, and at the end of your trip here may you be in the Lord's vest pocket half an hour before the Devil knows you're dead.

Now on to the business of the day. Madam Speaker, it's regrettable, in my opinion, that the government has not made their case to ask for more money from the taxpayers. We've had quite a bit of debate in the House, and – you know what? – it's unfortunate, because the government has had lots of time on this particular bill to actually defend it, and they just haven't done it, at least not effectively. They've talked about how they've made efforts to have savings. I think the number was \$463 million in savings, where they have gone to the wall to save the taxpayers money, but it turns out that it hailed less and the insurance claims were lower, so that doesn't at all reflect the government saving any money.

I stood twice in this House previously during the debate, and I focused on capital. All the dollars, capital and operating, are important. Every dollar is just as important as the other dollar, but the reason I focused on the capital, Madam Speaker, is because I wanted to give the government a chance to defend what they're asking for. What I mean by that is that operating is not always quite so straightforward because its biggest part is paying people's salaries and wages, and sometimes people get shifted between doing different things in the department and one thing and another. So that can be, in fairness to the government, a little bit harder sometimes to explain although I didn't think that the explanations that they tried to make were as fulsome as what the taxpayers deserve.

But on capital: the reason that I focused on that – and I'll mention it again this morning, Madam Speaker – is because when you're asking for more money for capital that's to build things, to buy things, you should actually be able to tell the taxpayers what you're building and what you're buying. You should be able to name every school. You should be able to name every section of road you're paving. You should be able to name every hospital you're building. You should talk about what the computer program is you're doing in each department. I asked twice for the ministers to do that, and we got very thin explanations or no explanation at all. In several cases ministers who were right there in front of me when I asked chose not to get on their feet at all and give any explanation.

Now, it's okay for the government to not answer my questions although, you know, I and my colleagues in the PC Party are here to hold the government to account. What's more troubling is that it's disrespectful to the taxpayers, Madam Speaker, because it's the taxpayers that they're getting the dollars from. As I pointed out before, and I'll do it again now, the excuse, "The budget isn't out yet, so we can't say," doesn't hold because this is funding outside the budget. This is funding that the government is asking for right now from the taxpayers. Well, if they're asking for the government right now from the taxpayers, they ought to show the taxpayers the dignity, the decency, the respect to tell them what they need money for, and they have been asked repeatedly.

Again, I'm giving the government as much credit as I can. I'm saying that operating is a little bit harder to get right down to the penny on explaining it although they should give a good explanation on that, too, but on capital there is no excuse not to get right down to the penny. If you can't tell the taxpayers which school, which road, which hospital, which IT system, which desks, which chairs, which buildings you're going to buy, then you shouldn't ask for the money. They have chosen to ask for the money, and they have chosen not to give any explanation, so that level of contempt and disrespect for the taxpayers does not deserve support, and it won't get mine.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?  
Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We've already debated interim supply, and we know, obviously, that we're going into this next year. I have several questions about the six areas for which the government is asking for supplementary supply. If we're going to go to interim supply, which we've done, we obviously need to fund priority areas, and certainly some of the areas under debate here fall into that category.

Educational growth: there's no question that we need to ensure that our students have appropriate resources, have classrooms to go to, have teachers to teach them. I am curious about whether or not these numbers will in fact be what the final tally looks like given recent reports of net out-migration from Alberta for the first time in a very long time. I very much worry that that trend will continue. It's not a positive trend for this province.

I continue my concerns that I raised previously about an inability or an unwillingness by this government to truly transform the public service, to truly transform service delivery, to find efficiencies. Finding efficiencies is easy to say and hard to do. I don't suggest for one minute that it's an easy thing to do. It's tremendously challenging, but you know what makes it even harder? When you don't even try, when you don't even try to transform the public service, you don't even try to transform service delivery. You don't ask the question: if we didn't do anything at all right now, how would we do it? Take it back to fundamental principles, and stop nibbling around the edges, and actually look at fundamentally

transforming how the government of Alberta operates. It's long overdue, it's badly needed, and I worry very much that this government is not up to that task.

Having said that, given the trajectory that we're on, funding educational growth make sense.

On the Justice and Solicitor General file, the remand centre correctional workers that we're being asked to fund: their work is very important and often forgotten by Albertans. If they do their job, we never hear about it. Their work is thankless, and it's dangerous, especially in the remand centre, so I have no quarrel at all with the folks who work in corrections. In fact, I have a tremendous amount of respect for them. I do however have concerns when what we're funding is overtime. That's a simple managerial question: do we have the human resources that we need to do the job? We need to make sure that we hire sufficient people, that we train them appropriately, ensure that they're safe and well-trained, and that we're not having to rely on overtime.

That, I know, has been a tremendous challenge in health care as well, not just in Justice. In health care I know that that's also a challenge in terms of staffing. The set-up seems to reward those who find a way to work overtime as opposed to working regular shifts. Those are challenging managerial conversations that are important to have, especially in this time of significant impact to our revenues, so I would certainly press the government to have those conversations and do that hard work to ensure that the money we're spending is on regular-time salary as opposed to overtime.

**11:10**

On Labour: the relatively small amount we're being asked to approve here, I understand, matches a federal program. There is a bigger discussion here around workforce training. Again, with our delayed budget that we're dealing with here, we won't know what this government's plan is for workforce training. They seem to bounce around. They had one idea, around the \$5,000 job-creation grant, that seems to be going by the wayside. I don't know if I've heard that it's officially cancelled. It seems like it's all but cancelled, as well it should be. As well it should be; it was not a very effective program. Many business owners and chambers of commerce, economists around the province have commented that that was not going to be a very effective program, and I absolutely agree with them.

My strong preference is not only for a small-business tax cut but an investor tax credit. The Calgary Chamber of commerce has called it a growth credit. I think that that would be much more effective. It would allow businesses to decide exactly how best to deploy that capital. It would be deployed perhaps in hiring, perhaps in buying property, plants, and equipment, perhaps in acquiring another business. That would create growth, and that growth will create jobs. Alberta entrepreneurs, I think, should be the cornerstone and always will be the cornerstone of economic growth in this province, something that the government would do well to remember.

On Municipal Affairs, the DRP: the \$9 million allocated for the flooding in Chestermere absolutely should be allocated to the people and the municipality in Chestermere to address the flooding that happened last summer. I have absolutely no problem with that. I reiterate my concerns with the DRP administration itself. I continue to help my constituents wrestle with this system, a system which is still broken and will not be fixed simply by hiring a few project managers and rolling out a computer program. There are fundamental problems within the senior leadership of the disaster recovery program. I do look for fundamental and significant change, which echoes my call for an overall rethink of how we deploy public services in this province.

I fully support the \$50 million ASLI grant for seniors' housing. In fact, I think it's something that we need to do more of. If we're going to be funding infrastructure projects and we're going to be borrowing capital dollars to do so, I think that funding seniors' facilities of all types, allowing people to age in place as best we can, and then stepping up that scale of acuity for people who need that supportive living or long-term care are very important. It's very important for the quality of life of Albertans. It's an area where, unfortunately, we've fallen behind, and it's an area where we will not only find an increase in quality of life, but of course we will find a decrease in our health care costs. People will not be stuck in hospital anymore. So I certainly will speak favourably of those sorts of investments, and I sincerely hope that as this next budget eventually rolls out, we see more of that.

On the Treasury Board side, I'll take this opportunity again to express my concern about further credit-rating downgrades and the risk of that to our province. I express my concern again that this government doesn't seem to want to do its homework on what the cost of those downgrades would be although we've calculated that to be in the neighbourhood of \$600 million or \$700 million over the life of the dollars that you're borrowing. Even a few points of interest, even a few hundredths of a point of interest will add up over time and will compound over time, and if you don't have a clear plan to ensure that that borrowing doesn't get out of control, the costs for debt service end up taking a greater and greater portion of your budget. It creates that debt spiral that I don't think any of us want to be in. But, again, I see very little in the way of a plan from this government to address that.

I will predict here and now on the record that the remaining two credit agencies that have not yet downgraded Alberta will downgrade Alberta. That's my prediction, and it's a real concern that I have based on the lack of action here on the fundamental cost structure of government and the fact that this government seems to have no plan to get out of it in any meaningful way any time soon.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you for the time and will retake my place. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments? The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the member for his comments. Something that I am working with – and it is a fluid thing, but what I've seen through the 61 school boards that I work with and then the Alberta Treasury Branches as well: the statistics on population would suggest that we're still seeing population growth. While it's perhaps uneven in some places and some boards see flat or some diminished school populations, my overall numbers from most all school boards and then the recent numbers from the Alberta Treasury Branches would suggest growth, so I'm just curious to know from the hon. member where he was getting that information showing a net population decrease here in the province.

The other question and comment that I had were in relation to, you know, funding for enrolment and the extension of that to school capital and building and so forth. I appreciate your comments around the necessity to fund for enrolment. It's something that we believe in very strongly. Of course, on the capital side – it's perhaps the leader of the third party that had this in his comments – we were not asking for supplementary supply for capital. I've built together with Infrastructure and our team a sort of pay-as-you-go system that reflects the needs of each project as they need more money to move forward on their projects. That has given us a great deal more efficiency, that precludes us from having to ask for any

supplementary supply whatsoever for capital projects in Education, for building the schools, I should say.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. My source for that is Stats Canada CANSIM 051-0017, which shows that in the fourth quarter of 2015 net interprovincial migration to Alberta dropped to negative for the first time since the first quarter of 2010. I'd be happy to table that, Madam Speaker, at the appropriate time. Now, the overall population is still growing, and of course that's because people continue to have children. Those children go to school. I acknowledge that. But this trend – and, again, I'll happily table this chart – drops off a cliff starting in about the second quarter of 2015. It's obviously a troubling trend. Again, I'm more than happy to table that at the appropriate time. Again, I guess it just speaks to the need for, you know, the Minister of Education and others to be aware of that as you plan for this next budget and be mindful of the impacts of that net population growth or not.

Of course, I think that all of us here, just to be very clear, are certainly not cheering for population declines. You know, we're not cheering for negative growth. We're cheering for – I'll tell you what. In this part of the House I'm certainly cheering for Alberta. I want people to come to this province and help us build as they have for generations, and I want there to be opportunity for those already here. That's, I think, what we all ought to be striving for.

I'll happily print out the appropriate number of copies and table them at the appropriate time. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Happy to rise and speak to supplementary supply. I preface my remarks with the comment that these are difficult times. I think that most of us, if not with family, have friends, connections that are suffering through these times. I would acknowledge that everyone on the front bench is doing their utmost to look at ways and means to reduce costs and improve effectiveness, efficiency and get the services and the infrastructure that this province desperately needs to provide for our short-term and, perhaps, longer term future.

Also, there's no question that we all want the best for Alberta. At the same time, we're challenged by a situation in which we have not had, as I have heard, independent reviews of these ministries. That, to me, should have been the first order of business with a new government coming in, an independent review of each ministry to identify strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, spending and management issues and to look for significant strategic weaknesses in the ministries.

The second thing that I haven't heard the recognition of is that every public service has opportunities for efficiencies. I'm most aware of health care, where I hear from colleagues regularly about lost efficiencies and waste, frustration, duplication, lack of communication, silo practice and silo thinking, and a failure to take advantage of opportunities.

**11:20**

So, I mean, if we heard more from the government on those two things, independent reviews of your ministries and independent assessment in each of these services around where there could be efficiencies, I think we'd feel a lot better about these supplementary supply numbers.

Delaying the budget, of course, means drawing down additional debt for operational budgets, and it does send a troubling message

about the commitment to prudence and the debt servicing that will go well into the future. I would certainly like to see more indications of how this government plans to deal with it, whether it's in relation to bonds, in relation to the various diversification plans that they have or printing more money with the federal government. I don't know how that's going to work.

I am pleased to see that federally there is a more positive relationship between federal and provincial governments and more common values between these two governments around issues that I care a lot about: First Nations, health, environment. These are encouraging.

The areas that I am aware that I can support some changes. Environment and Parks got an extra million dollars, which is largely flood mitigation. Unfortunately, it ignores some of the critical deficiencies in our environment department today: their lack of technical expertise, their lack of resources to do proper monitoring, their lack of enforcement capacity, and certainly their lack of any clear commitment to the Castle-Crown parks area. How are they budgeting for the kinds of changes that are coming to that park, with roads, with campgrounds, for any serious commitment to really bringing tourism, the tremendous opportunities of tourism, and attracting our own people to this wonderful new park that they have identified?

The second area that I can obviously support is Education. We are way behind in schools. There's no question that we need more teachers, and I applaud the government for stepping up with the needed teachers this year. Early childhood services: clearly a deficit. We are creating problems for the future if we don't identify children with learning needs, emotional needs, behavioural needs early, get them the supports they need, the families the supports they need, and gear them up for success.

The third area that, with reservations, I can support is the ASLI grants, the affordable supportive living initiative. Unfortunately, the conundrum there is that this government has repeatedly said that they do not support private long-term care, and here they are continuing the grant program to private alternate seniors' care, which has been shown to be of less quality and have standards that are not consistently met in terms of staffing – I mean standards of training for their staff – and quality of care. There are, obviously, some questions I have about a government that says in opposition that they don't support private alternatives to seniors' care, and here they are continuing the ASLI grants. So I think that needs to be looked at.

Overall, I feel the same as I do about interim, that there has been a lack of evidence that we've done the homework that we need to do, that we've limited, especially in operational budgets – it's something that's been raised again and again, but it needs to be said. If we're not prepared to do some of the tough work of limiting operational budgets and living within our means, then we're sending a very difficult message, I think, to our ratepayers, our taxpayers, and I can't support that at this time.

Thanks very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and good morning, all. It's great to see you here this morning. I have a few comments put together here regarding the supplementary supply bill. It's a fairly important document that we have to be looking over once again. I think that it must be looked at in some detail. It requires, therefore, I think, a full debate to reveal exactly what the line items are going to be used for, as many people have said today. I

certainly agree with that. Like any other budget, it requires a lot of diligence and scrutiny to ensure that proper use is being made of public funds.

While I understand the need for supplementary supply, you'll have to forgive me for being a little skeptical, really, as to why the government needs the extra money when they could have simply budgeted better in the fall or at the very least have found some minimal efficiencies in some part of their operations. I hope that this does not develop a precedent of the government of continually looking for supplementary funding at the end of intended budget cycles.

Instead, I think that we would all like to see a government that is capable of creating a budget, sticking to it, and steadfastly working on finding ways to save money within each respective department. I'd like to emphasize that any organization, especially government, should always be working towards finding and eliminating waste in all parts of its operations, but when we look at Bill 3, it's obvious that the NDP government does not share that sentiment. It's unfathomable that the government couldn't find \$106 million in efficiencies to cover these costs. It begs the question: has the government done anything at all to find efficiencies? For the record I will support, reluctantly though, Bill 3 and only do so out of necessity. I want to make clear a delineation between agreeing to setting precedent for governments blowing their budgets and agreeing to a short-term budget.

Now, I see some of the members on the opposite side rolling their eyes and laughing some of this off, I suppose, but this really is something we need to be cautious of.

**An Hon. Member:** You must be hallucinating that.

**Mr. Stier:** I'm not always hallucinating, hon. member. I have seen some people questioning what I'm saying.

As an Assembly we have to decide on the habits that we choose to adopt in order to prudently manage public dollars. Overspending and taking on more debt is not a habit that the people of Alberta want us to develop. Believe me when I say that spending practices and this kind of spending practice become a habit.

Madam Speaker, I want to emphasize something. Supporting our community's seniors, our teachers, our front-line workers as well as those who have been unfortunate enough to suffer from natural disaster and from the economic times we're experiencing these days is a big priority for Wildrose. It always has been. That is why, again, I've decided to support, reluctantly though, this bill.

I'm concerned, though, that this government has also made a habit of breaking its promises, as we've spoken of many times. Can we be certain that Bill 3 will be used for our front-line workers, or will it be used to feed the bloat that has been growing for decades in the province's bureaucracy? Even the members that I served with, as I got to know them, and my colleagues from the past term spoke of the same thing: the province's bureaucracies and the bloat that is there. I strongly urge the government and its ministers, therefore, to prioritize this money for front-line service delivery and not use it to hire more people in the already overloaded areas like communications or in special pet projects that do little to support our hard-working front-line employees.

When we put the resources directly into our front lines, it allows for public service to have deeper and more meaningful impact. When a teacher has a smaller class size, it benefits both the teacher and the student alike, for example. Alberta is the envy of the world for its thinkers, and to ensure that this tradition is upheld, we need to make sure that Alberta teachers and teachers' aides are getting the support that they deserve. Funnelling money into already overgrown bureaucracies, though, where managers are managing

managers, does not accomplish that goal. This, too, is a habit that I hope this government can kick.

We need to push the government towards developing better performance measures so that the people of our province can see that their hard-earned tax dollars are actually going towards teaching their kids, healing their loved ones, and providing world-class care to Alberta's seniors. I can't emphasize that enough. Seniors are the vulnerable, and we need to ensure that we're looking after that file, most importantly.

**11:30**

We've seen the government fail, though, to deliver on its first jobs plan, and now we have Bill 1, which seems more like a listing in the classified section of the newspaper for my friend and colleague across the way, the new minister of economic development, rather than a bill that's going to actually get Albertans back to work.

Included in Bill 3 is a request for an extra \$3 million in a labour-related fund. When we are looking at multibillion-dollar budgets, it may seem simple for this government to overlook this money, but \$3 million can do a lot to help skilled tradespeople across the province. Is this money going into developing more training spaces for apprentices across the province, as an example? Is it going to raise awareness about the RAP program or to bolster the program completely? Does this government even have a plan for getting more Albertans into high-skilled, high-paying jobs? These are the jobs that we should be fighting for, ladies and gentlemen.

It's important that the government realizes that the success of a jobs plan is measured by how many Albertans it puts to work, not by how much the government spent on the program. The \$178 million flop of a jobs plan from last session is far from any measure of success. It is also important to consider, Madam Speaker, how this money will impact the lives of Alberta seniors, as I've mentioned before, the people who turned this province into the place it is today.

As I look around the Chamber most days, I can assume some of you may have parents and grandparents that have needed the top-quality care that our province could provide. During the later stages of people's lives it is important that they are able to stay in the

community, where their families and loved ones are. I'm wondering how much of the 50 and a half million dollars will actually go towards making sure that seniors can stay close to home and that they're not moved to communities that make it difficult to keep families united and allow for seniors to get the much-needed support of their families.

Madam Speaker, as I've said previously, I believe that much of this debate boils down to what kinds of habits we want to set for ourselves. Do we want to make a habit of passing budgets only to go over them at the end of the cycle once again? Do we want to make a habit of spending hundreds of millions of dollars on jobs and programs that fail to create? Do we want to keep feeding the bloating bureaucracy we have, that has been developing in this province, or do we want to put meaningful resources into our front-line services? Do we want to help families stay close together when they have an aged loved one? These are all questions that we need to decide on very quickly.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, while I will be reluctantly supporting Bill 3, I hope that this government can go back and have some reflection on some of the questions that I've asked here today and choose what kind of habit it wants to have for the next three years.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, does anyone from the government side wish to close debate?

If not, I'll call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a third time]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to everyone in this Chamber for the hard work that was done this morning. With that, I'd like to move that we adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:35 a.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, March 17, 2016

Day 7

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

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**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 17, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Happy St. Patrick's Day. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a number of guests with us today, and we welcome all of you to this Chamber, starting with some school groups.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly visitors from the Dewberry school. Now, Dewberry is a village in the constituency of Vermilion-Lloydminster that boasts that it is the home of the two-time reigning Rangeland Derby champion of the Calgary Stampede, none other than Kurt Bensmiller. And not only that: tomorrow night they're hosting the final family skate. I'll be on the ice, and to find me, you just have to look for the tall guy who's going to where the puck was. Ladies and gentlemen, my colleagues, I'd like to ask that you all offer a warm Assembly greeting to the visitors from Dewberry school, who are in the members' gallery today.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you 24 visitors from George P. Nicholson school in the greatest constituency, Edmonton-South West, along with their teacher Mrs. Maxine Sprague, who are situated in the public gallery today. If the Assembly would please give them the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** I must tell the guests and the Assembly that we know why we have such a great province and the best province. Every time one of the MLAs stand, they come from the best part of the province.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a group from Woodbridge Farms elementary school. There are, I think, 24 students that are there, and they have as teachers Antonia Triska and Garth Baker and as parent helpers Heather Whittaker, Rebecca Campbell, and Celina Mysyka. I'm delighted that some of them have chosen to wear the dress code of the Assembly as they tour the Assembly. Would the students stand up and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

I would now recognize the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pride that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly nine members of the family of the late Edward John Polanski. The family members are here to hear me commemorate the accomplishments of Mr. Polanski later today, which include bringing proceedings of this Assembly to live television broadcast. The family members include – and I'll ask them to rise and remain standing – his widow, Phyllis Polanski; daughter Michelle Belland; daughter Kelly Polanski; son James Polanski; grandchildren

Drayton Trumble, Makayla Polanski, Lauren Polanski, Zach Belland, and Barrett Belland. I'd ask that they remain standing as they receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you a group of fourth-year journalism students from Grant MacEwan University. Led by their instructor Peter Ryan, the group is here to meet with the LAO manager of corporate communications and broadcast services, Rhonda Sorensen, to observe Oral Question Period, and then later to meet with the *Globe and Mail's* Justin Giovannetti, a member of the press gallery, for a Q and A on what it's like to work in this type of environment. I know they're going to have a great time.

Each year the fourth-year student journalists research and craft three news reports and one full-length feature, which can then be submitted to the volunteer editors of the *Capital Report*, so if any of these students contact you, I'd encourage you to treat them as you would any other reporter, and you just might find yourself as one of the subjects on the online annual political magazine [capitalreport.ca](http://capitalreport.ca), which is published May 1 and reaches over 50,000 readers.

As I read their names, I'd invite them to stand. Anthony Bacchus, Taryn Brandell, Paul Gazzola, Jennifer Henderson, Nicholas Hobson, Zach Howe, Jasmine Pushak, Pierre Royal, Sahar Saifee, and Jibril Yassin, please accept the warm, traditional welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly representatives from the SAIT Students' Association: the president, Brigitte Matheson; the executive director, Blair McCormick; and SAIT's director of external relations, Mr. Glenn Shepherd. As you may know, the student's association not only provides many services on campus, but they're a strong advocate for SAIT students across Alberta and the entire country. I know that SAIT students are well represented by Brigitte and Blair, so I'd ask all members to give a warm welcome to our honoured guests.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister and Environment and Parks and the minister responsible for the climate change office.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you Miss Ashlea Golding. Ashlea is graduating with her B.S.W. from the University of Calgary Faculty of Social Work in April and has been completing her senior practicum at my constituency office in Lethbridge-West. Ashlea has been a wonderful addition to my office and has significantly contributed to a number of important case files. My staff have told me that they are dreading the end of her practicum and will miss her contribution to the office. I thank her for her hard work and congratulate her on completing her degree. Ashlea is joined by my constituency manager, Lisa Lambert, who keeps the office moving at all times. I ask the House to join me in a warm welcome for Ashlea Golding and Lisa Lambert.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Keeping on that theme of constituency staff, I am honoured and privileged to be joined today by my constituency staff. We all know that the work we do here in this House and in our constituencies is a team effort, and I am truly

fortunate to have remarkable people on my team, as I know all of you are. I feel especially fortunate, though, to have the two folks on my team that I do. Jodi Christensen: she's been with me from the very start. Not only does Jodi help me keep on track, but far more importantly, she does remarkable work on behalf of and for the people of Calgary-Elbow. A new addition to the team, Miranda Martin, has a background in palliative home care and social work and has taken on a tremendous amount of work already as a caseworker in my constituency office. I'd ask that Jodi and Miranda please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two wonderful people from my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, Kevin Moore and Yolanda Pickett. If you could please stand. Kevin is a veteran with over 24 years of service in the Canadian military, and he'll be receiving the Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal. His wife, Yolanda, is an operating room tech for the Canadian Forces. They are also owners of Fort Saskatchewan's Two Sergeants Brewing, and I will be talking about them more later this afternoon. Of course, Kevin is joined here by his wife, his Rock of Gibraltar, and I invite everyone, please, to extend our warm traditional greeting to them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three individuals from the group RiverWatch: Cal Kullman, Andrea Myers, and Chris O'Brien. Cal is the RiverWatch founder and executive director, and his efforts to make the real world a valued teaching resource were recognized with the first-ever Alberta excellence in teaching award in 1989. Andrea is the group's business manager, and Chris is the director and was formerly the governmental relations specialist with EPCOR. RiverWatch is also involved in preparation for World Water Day, which will be celebrated on March 22. I'll ask all of my guests today to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly three grade 6 students and their parents from Aurora elementary school in Drayton Valley. Earlier this year I hosted an essay contest for the schools in my constituency around the theme of the Magna Carta, and Rylee Rogers, Jeremy Carefoot, and Jenna Harrison were the winners of the contest. They are accompanied by their parents: Heather Rogers, a former student of mine; Murray Carefoot, a former colleague of mine; and Benita Harrison, who I'm just starting to get to know. They've toured the Legislature today. They've collected MLA autographs on posters of the Magna Carta. They've had a meeting with Minister Eggen. Thank you, Minister. Could Rylee and Jeremy and Jenna please stand and rise with their parents and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Top of the afternoon to you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to rise in the Assembly today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a great Albertan. He's one of Alberta's top stand-up bass players and has represented Alberta well all across this great country of ours with the T. Buckley Trio. I understand that a number of you had the opportunity to meet him last night. You can see him all around our province playing with other great, wonderful Alberta acts in every corner, including folk festivals and community events. More importantly than all of that, sir, he's my brother-in-law, a great husband, and a superhero dad. Now, he does have one small fault. In this past election he voted for the NDP and his good friend the Finance minister, but I love him anyway, my brother-in-law, that is. Anyway, if you'll all join and welcome Mr. Derek Pulliam to the Assembly this afternoon.

**The Speaker:** Someone overheard the Finance minister in the hall saying that he loved you, too.

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The luck of the Irish would have it that I have to follow that act.

I rise to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly members of the Alberta Students' Executive Council who have been here all week advocating on behalf of postsecondary students across Alberta. I would ask that they rise as I call their names: Joshua Bettel, SAIT Students' Association, vice-president external; Kimmi Nguyen, SAIT Students' Association, vice-president academic; and Kristen George, ASEC chair from Grande Prairie Regional College. Please join me in welcoming ASEC to the Legislative Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise here today to introduce to you and through you Ms Janine Giles. If you could please rise. Janine has been active in politics for several years now. She has run as a candidate in the federal riding of Macleod and has volunteered on many campaigns in the past. Janine is about to submit her PhD dissertation to the University of Calgary and is a teaching assistant at the University of Calgary as well. She not only brings a wealth of academic training to her position but has also had international community development experience. Janine recently started as a part-time assistant to my constituency office, and she'll be joining Shannon Martel in providing a variety of services to the many constituents of Calgary-Northern Hills. I request that my colleagues now extend the fine traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Do any other hon. members have guests to introduce today? Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three wonderful pharmacist associate-owners of Shoppers Drug Mart stores in the absolutely amazing riding of Edmonton-Decore: Beverley Rushton, Londonderry Mall; Lynn Gilmour, Namao Centre; and Joanne Mostowich from Namao. The focus of my outreach in my constituency office in 2016 is to visit numerous businesses in my riding throughout the year. As such, I did spend a wonderful morning learning about Shoppers Drug Mart and about the pharmacy services in my riding. I want to thank Lynn and Joanne and Beverley for their continued hard work

and dedication to assisting the constituents in my riding with all of their needs. I would now ask Beverley, Joanne, and Lynn to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

#### Leilani O'Malley Muir

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to commemorate the life of Leilani O'Malley, who was victimized by those who were supposed to protect her but who emerged as a hero for thousands of Albertans sterilized between 1928 and 1972 under the authority of the government of Alberta. During a dark era in Alberta's history she experienced first-hand the horror of eugenics at the age of 14 and the thinking that some people have less value than others.

Leilani O'Malley died earlier this week, but her legacy is a reminder to us in this House of our obligations to uphold the fundamental rights of all Albertans. She never had an easy life. Born into poverty, she was neglected by her family. By age 10 she was sent to Michener Centre. Based on the belief that people with developmental disabilities were of, quote, inferior genetic stock, unquote, Leilani was among thousands of Albertans sterilized against their will and often without their knowledge. It was only years later, after failed attempts to conceive a child, that she learned the truth.

She sued the government of Alberta for wrongful sterilization and in early 1996 won her legal battle, paving the way for a class-action lawsuit for other Albertans who were forcefully sterilized. Her advocacy forced an about-face from the government of the day, an apology from Premier Klein. In part due to the advocacy of former NDP leader Pam Barrett, the government withdrew planned legislation that would have limited compensation to victims of forced sterilization.

Today the Michener Centre is no longer a place that people are forced into against their will. Though it remains open, decisions regarding its future rest in the hands of those who call it home and their families.

Mr. Speaker, Leilani O'Malley was a survivor who spoke up for so many who couldn't. While we mourn her loss, may Leilani rest in peace knowing that Alberta is a better place because of her advocacy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** I would recognize the Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great sadness that I rise today to pay respect to the late Leilani O'Malley Muir, who passed away last weekend. Leilani was a strong advocate for persons with intellectual disabilities and dedicated her life to exposing the institutional mistreatment of our most vulnerable Albertans. In 1928 this Legislature enacted the disgraceful Sexual Sterilization Act. It was a policy on eugenics and forced sterilization that targeted people with disabilities, mental illness, and undesirable social traits, and by doing so, it showed complete disregard for the inherent dignity of each human person.

1:50

Leilani was a victim of this act. At just 11 years old, after being abandoned to the care of a government institution, she was subjected to an impromptu intelligence test. She scored only 64. Based on this result, the Eugenics Board sentenced her to sterilization for the crime of being mentally defective. In 1965 she

was released from the institution but did not fully understand what the government had done to her until a year later.

Mr. Speaker, despite this tragedy Leilani persevered and became a strong voice in this province. She led the charge in protecting Albertans from the government's flagrant violation of human rights. Her story is moving, powerful, and should serve as a reminder to all members of this Assembly of the effects that policies made here in this Chamber have on Albertans. We must remember Leilani and never enact legislation that could cause such immeasurable harm to the Albertans we should be protecting, lessons which must be extended to all marginalized groups.

In the mid-90s Leilani became the first victim of forced sterilization to successfully sue the Alberta government, setting a precedent for thousands of other victims to receive financial compensation. Mr. Speaker, Leilani never gave up fighting for the 3,000 people who fell victim to the act, and for that, we should thank her. After being in place for a shocking 40 years, forced sterilization in Alberta ended in 1972. It is a disgraceful part of our history, and we must learn the lesson it has to teach us about the importance of respecting human dignity, the lesson Leilani fought so hard to teach us.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would request the unanimous consent of the House for a representative of the third party as well as independent members from Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Elbow to participate in a response if they so choose.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister and the member from the Official Opposition for their recognition of notable Albertan Leilani O'Malley. Ms O'Malley's legal victory in 1996 asserted that her most fundamental human rights and integrity as a person were violated. It also set a higher standard for government, Albertans, and Canadians not to stigmatize others we don't understand or judge for the appearance of mental illness. There are no spare people.

Every human being deserves to be treated with dignity and humanity. This case is an example of where that did not happen. The fact that we're talking about it today is due to Leilani O'Malley's courage, and it highlights the importance. It means that all Albertans know this must never be allowed to happen again. Ms O'Malley's willingness to publicize her tragedy and tell her story was an inspiration for others who are wrongfully judged and thereafter violated.

Although the harm done cannot be reversed, it is because of Leilani O'Malley's courage and the fight that she underwent that her tragedy and the tragedy of thousands of others cannot and must not happen again. We must do our best to honour that legacy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's truly right and proper for us here in this House to reflect on the passing of Leilani O'Malley. Ms O'Malley came from a dreadful home. Abused and ignored, she was eventually taken into care and entered the Provincial Training School for Mental Defectives. A more Orwellian name could be hard to imagine. Shortly after admittance she failed a trivial IQ test and was deemed mentally defective, a

diagnosis with tragic consequences. Leilani was taken into surgery and sterilized as a result of the Sexual Sterilization Act of Alberta, 1928, a law passed right here in this room.

A ward of the province for 11 years, she was eventually released and attempted to live a normal life, only for her world to be shattered again upon realizing the misdiagnosis and the consequences. None here can imagine the pain in overcoming such hardship, yet Leilani O'Malley did not crumble, nor did she simply accept what was done to her in silence. Instead, she decided to fight for all those who could not speak for themselves. Her courage and determination brought a light to one of the darkest chapters in Alberta's history.

During the trial that opened our eyes to this horrific practice, Leilani stood fast in the face of immense pressure to quietly accept a financial settlement. She was resolute in her belief that money mattered far less than revealing the injustice done to her and to many others. Because of her strength, thousands of Albertans received a long-overdue apology and some recompense for their suffering. After her court victory Leilani continued as an activist for the rights of others. I quote: people don't know what goes on behind closed doors. End of quote. But she did, and she was determined that others would know, too.

In 2001 Leilani O'Malley made an unsuccessful bid for a seat in the Legislature here in Alberta. The irony of standing here, where the Sexual Sterilization Act of 1928 was passed, would not have been lost on her or on the rest of Albertans. In remembering Leilani O'Malley, I want to recognize her remarkable achievements and express condolences to her loved ones. I also wish to remind myself and my colleagues that we must be vigilant during our time here in the Assembly. The actions we take while seated in this Chamber can have consequences far beyond what we could ever imagine. To quote Leilani: nobody has the right to play God with people's lives. End quote.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak of a tragedy, the horrifying law that existed in Alberta's past as the Sexual Sterilization Act, but, more importantly, to speak of the life of one of its most fearless opponents. Leilani O'Malley Muir and nearly 3,000 other Albertans were sterilized in a devastating program meant to prevent those in the province referred to as, quote, mental defectives, unquote, from passing on their genes, something referred to as unlawful, offensive, and outrageous by the judge presiding over her case. I'm sure that all those present today can agree that that is absolutely the truth.

Leilani was a remarkable person, one who had the courage to step up and say: this was done to me, and it was wrong. She took the government and its vast resources to court and won. Her courage led to many other suits being filed across the province as Albertans fought against this tragic program. She fought a battle that laid her personal life and her most personal tragedies out to the public, but it didn't matter. She wouldn't agree to a nondisclosure clause as she believed that Albertans had to be made aware of the legacy of sterilization in this province. She was an advocate her whole life. Working with the living archives on eugenics in western Canada project, she wanted to ensure that Albertans who were affected by eugenic sterilization had their stories heard so that terrible tragedies like this could never be repeated.

Many people sterilized were, in fact, members of marginalized groups: single mothers, First Nations and Métis people, eastern Europeans, and those living in poverty. She made it her life's mission that this would never happen again. Leilani O'Malley Muir is a role model for never giving up the fight, for always doing

what's right. Her perseverance and strength are a testament to what Alberta is. Her memory will live on, her work will live on, and the legacy she left us will continue forever. May she rest in peace.

2:00

## Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Government Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Another day gone by with more jobs lost under the NDP government. This time it's in Medicine Hat. Trican Well Service announced that 100 jobs would vanish, and Calfrac services announced that it is closing shop and laying off 200 workers. These are families out of work, desperate, and looking for hope, and what's the NDP's response? To raise taxes and bring in a \$3 billion carbon tax grab that hits every single Albertan and these industries very hard. What does the Premier have to say to these 300 Albertans who are now out of work?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, our hearts go out to anyone who's been impacted by the current state of the global economy. The international price of oil has had devastating impacts on families here in Alberta as well as in other parts of the country, including Newfoundland. That's one of the reasons why we believe the people of Alberta elected a government that actually had a job-creation strategy in the platform of their campaign last year. We continue to move forward. We're very proud of the fact that we're working to diversify the economy instead of doing what the members opposite propose, which is to sit on our hands and continue to rely on a single resource.

**Mr. Jean:** Here's what the mayor of Medicine Hat has to say about the NDP government record, quote: I don't see our provincial government doing anything; I don't see job creation; I see increased taxes at a time when I don't think the economy can bear it. End quote. Ouch. They're the same concerns that business leaders gave just earlier this last week, and it's why Wildrose released solutions through our Wildrose jobs action plan. Will the Premier listen to the mayor's advice, do no further harm, or will she stick to her government's ideological agenda?

**Ms Hoffman:** If you want to talk ideology, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are proposing to cut billions of dollars from the public treasury. They think that firing teachers and nurses because of cutbacks in the private sector is a way to find a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. They're delusional. What we're doing is that we're continuing to work on a job-creation strategy and ways to make sure that we continue to put Albertans back to work. Members opposite should be well aware of our climate change strategy. We're very proud of it, and Albertans are going to see the impacts very soon.

**Mr. Jean:** The Premier doesn't just have a problem with Medicine Hat. Municipalities right across Alberta made it quite clear how they feel about the NDP's economic agenda. Parkland county pointed out that NDP policies will lead to \$224 million in lost tax revenue. The mayor of Rocky Mountain House said that the Premier's policies have, quote, taken their toll. Business groups, mayors, employers: they all agree with one thing. NDP policies are hurting Albertans. When will the Premier back down from her risky policies and start helping Albertans instead?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of the fact that we are actually working to make sure that we stabilize public services while at the same time supporting industry and supporting small businesses and investing in other areas of the economy. This is very important for us. We take our responsibilities very seriously. Albertans are resilient, and they have elected a government that believes in them and is going to continue to work to make sure that our plan to create jobs results in a net increase for families. We're very proud of the fact that our energy future includes phasing out cancer-causing coal emissions, and we think that we should keep right on track. Members opposite want to keep polluting.

**The Speaker:** Second major question.

#### Oil Tanker Transportation on the West Coast

**Mr. Jean:** Speaking of jobs, Albertans deserve a Premier that will stand up for our interests. One of our key interests is getting access to tidewater for our energy. The Premier has been quiet and vague on this issue, to say the least. Even if you favour quiet diplomacy, you can still make it clear where you stand. The Premier needs to be clear to Albertans. Will the Premier stand up for Alberta and clearly state that she opposes the federal government's tanker ban on the Pacific north coast?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, we absolutely know that pipelines are the safest way to get our product to tidewater. We've been working hard on making sure that's communicated clearly. The Premier has said that over and over again. I'll keep saying it. We'll all keep saying it. We're very proud of the fact that we are actually making progress. Our climate change leadership strategy made its way to Washington, essentially. They're talking about the work that we're doing here in Alberta, a made-in-Alberta solution that's not only going to benefit us but, we think, has the potential to expand, and even our members to the west seem to agree.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, that was not the right answer. The government of Alberta should be clearly against the tanker ban. You either like the tanker ban and are against Alberta's energy industry, or you are a serious person who knows that this tanker ban is bad policy, and you oppose it. Is the Premier opposed to the tanker ban or not?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about diplomacy and how important it is to make sure that we respect each other's opportunities and our responsibilities. Certainly, the Leader of the Official Opposition's plan to address the difficulties that we're facing is kind of like a four-leaf clover, shrouded in mythology and hard to find. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, could we keep it a little quieter with the volume, please.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, this is not a laughing matter for Albertans. That wasn't an answer to the question. It's a very simple question. I know that this topic makes the Premier's NDP friends in British Columbia very uncomfortable, but the Premier represents Albertans, not the B.C. NDP. Is the Premier opposed to the tanker ban in B.C. or not?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I have a responsibility to the people of Alberta and our government has a responsibility to the people of Alberta – and I would hope that the Official Opposition would as well – to make sure that we have good working relationships, to make sure that people understand why our product is important to not just Alberta's economy but Canada's economy and the world's

global well-being. We're making sure that we have an environmentally responsible reputation here in Alberta. Instead of acting like dinosaurs from Drumheller, we're actually moving forward.

**The Speaker:** Third major question.

#### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. Jean:** Yesterday the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake asked some detailed questions about the government's plan for phasing out coal. The government front bench could not answer the questions. Three different ministers are mishandling the file. The environment minister doesn't get it, the Energy minister really, truly doesn't get it, and now the economic diversification minister doesn't get it. Was anyone in the government aware that their coal plan would result in the Alberta ratepayers getting stuck with half a billion dollars in costs for the PPAs?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important for us to acknowledge that science shows that the pollution from coal-burning power plants is bad for our health, it's bad for our environment, and it's economically unsustainable. It causes 100 premature deaths, 700 emergency room visits, and 80 hospital admissions annually. We are ensuring that we have a successful transition plan. We are moving forward on protecting our health and protecting our economy, and we're very proud of the moves that we've made in ensuring that we have Mr. Boston to help navigate those waters with us.

**Mr. Jean:** The government also had a hard time explaining how and what the coal facilitator was going to do. For \$100,000 a month I hope that Mr. Boston works some very long hours, but I doubt that anyone can develop a plan to shut down coal plants and get replacement electricity in just six short months. It seems that the government set a policy and is only now trying to figure out if it's possible or even advisable to implement it. Did anyone over there ever consider that their climate policy might lead to big problems in Alberta's electricity system?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've certainly hired one of the best businesspeople in the world to go to bat for Albertans as we support the transition, as we continue to move forward with the companies that will be impacted. Terry Boston has experience helping to guide the transition of one of the largest grids in North America away from coal while preserving reliability, and we're confident that we have the best man for the job. The opposition doesn't believe in science, so they want to keep on polluting.

**Mr. Jean:** So the answer is: no, they didn't.

It's becoming clearer that this government's coal plan was ideological rather than researched. Taxpayers could be stuck with some huge costs from cancelled coal PPAs just when we can least afford them. Recently coal-powered generators offered to voluntarily dial down 20 per cent of our coal fleet without asking for any compensation and without impacting Alberta's power bills. What was the answer? The answer was no. This would have immediately reduced greenhouse gases by eight megatonnes a year. Why did this government refuse this free offer and instead saddle taxpayers?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, we're working in partnership to protect the environment, taking a plan that was proposed at the national

level, and we're actually working to support communities in the transition. We're going to have clean air, we're going to have long-term jobs, and we're going to support communities in the transition. I am very proud of the fact that we've hired one of the best experts in the world to help us with that process, and I think that taxpayers will see that it's a wise investment on the return. Certainly, we are a responsible government, and we take our responsibilities both to the economy and to the environment seriously.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

2:10

### **Government Policies** (continued)

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday at AAMD and C the Health minister talked about some important issues, and I believe that Albertans will be interested in what the minister is thinking. I thank the minister for saying that the rural physician action plan is staying. She did however say that funding will only be extended until fall because they're not getting maximum bang for the buck. That sounds like change. To the minister: how are we not getting best bang for the buck with RPAP, and what changes to the program are you planning in the fall?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question and for the opportunity to make sure that I clearly communicate to the member opposite what seems to be a little misconstrued. Certainly, at the end of every grant cycle I think the responsible thing for any government to do – for our government, I am sure, for other governments, at the municipal level and so on – is to make sure that you look at the desired outcomes for that grant and the actual outcomes achieved. While that grant in its current structure is set to expire this spring, we've extended the current level of funding through to the fall so that we make sure that we have an opportunity to consider carefully how we're going to continue to move forward. RPAP will continue to be there. We need to figure out how to best use the resources.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Health minister was asked yesterday about funding for a helicopter ambulance service, called HALO, in Medicine Hat and another service in Fort McMurray. AHS pays for 25 per cent of STARS' mission costs, and the PC Party supports that. The minister told a municipal leader that she had no good news today and that an evidence-based decision would be made by AHS after a fair process takes place. To the minister. I know you believe that rural lives are as valuable as urban lives. Will you ask AHS to support air ambulance services in Medicine Hat and Fort McMurray?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Communities around this province have different ways of making sure that we can safely evacuate individuals in a time of crisis. Some municipalities do use STARS, some use HALO, some used fixed-wing, and some use ground transportation. The appropriate thing to do, I think, is to make sure that we have a budget that's reasonable and sustainable – I'm really proud that we are working to get through interim supply and supplementary supply in this House – and to make sure that money is given to AHS and that they most correctly work with communities to make sure that they have a safe evacuation plan.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday at AAMD and C our environment minister actually complimented Peter Lougheed. She said that his government's support for accelerated oil sands development was a good example of government leadership. Many of us are familiar with the environment minister's vilification of the energy industry in general and the oil sands in particular. My question for the environment minister is simple. After all the conflicting messages, please now make it clear for all of Alberta: do you now support Alberta's oil sands industry? Yes or no?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I made very clear in my response to the Speech from the Throne, I grew up in an oil patch community. My dad was an electrician who worked on oil rigs, and he was one of the people who lost his job in 1982, when the national energy program came into play. So I don't actually think I need to explain my history.

What I will do, Mr. Speaker, is draw attention to all of those folks who stood on a stage with me on November 22 and said things like the following: "I believe [this plan] will lead to Albertans and Canadians receiving full value for their oil and natural gas resources." Brian Ferguson, Cenovus. Brian Ferguson again: "I'm not sure that I would use the word 'radical' to describe being a leader. I would describe it as being bold."

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### **Emergency Medical Services**

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. The long-standing difficulties in managing emergency medical services in the province continue today. They risk not only public health; they risk the very people, the paramedics themselves. These professionals put their lives on the line when we are in crisis, yet a recent survey reveals that 25 per cent report an unsupportive culture of intimidation and bullying. Despite large increases in urban populations, there has been little increase in ambulances and staff, and with long wait times in emergencies and red alerts increasing, there's distress. What is the minister . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. Certainly, we continue to work with Alberta Health Services and with ambulance employers to make sure that we get EMS back on the roads as quickly as possible. I think that when I've talked to paramedics and other front-line first responders – certainly, frustration around having to wait for people to be admitted is a high frustration for some of the citizens who are transporting our most vulnerable. Of course, building the 2,000 needed long-term care beds in this province to ensure that the people who are currently waiting in acute-care hospital beds have somewhere to transition to will certainly go a long way. We will continue to work with the labour groups that represent the workers and the employers.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: we haven't addressed the question of low morale, bullying, and intimidation. How is that going to be addressed?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Certainly, conversations with both of the labour groups that represent the workers as well as with the employers are a priority for us. In terms of morale, there are lots of complex factors that contribute to it. Having an open dialogue, investing in public health care, front-line health care, when people aren't worried about the future of their jobs: that certainly goes a long way to people having a greater sense of satisfaction. If the member opposite has some feedback and advice, we'd be very happy to receive it.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, over the last year and a half the department has been examining effective approaches to PTSD, posttraumatic stress disorder. It provided some supports, but they are not comprehensive, and they are not seen to be reliable and valid. Will the minister look into the PTSD program?

**The Speaker:** The associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We are very encouraged that Alberta Health Services has a variety of programs in place, including the employee and family assistance program, the critical incident stress management and peer support program as well as the mental health line. Clearly, there's more work to do, and I look forward to working with Alberta Health Services and the Health Sciences Association of Alberta to make sure that our front-line responders have all the supports that they need.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

#### Athabasca University

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent report has caused significant worry in my riding of Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater. Many of my constituents are concerned that IT services at Athabasca University could be moving out of the community as it would mean many jobs leaving Athabasca. Can the Minister of Advanced Education tell the House: is Athabasca University moving its IT services to Edmonton?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my friend for asking the question and giving me the opportunity to clear the air around Athabasca University. I understand that this issue of IT is a sensitive one, and I want everyone to know that we are committed to working with Athabasca University to meet the needs of the students in the communities. I can say that the space strategy working group recommended consolidating two existing IT satellite offices in the Edmonton area into one location and that there are no plans or recommendations to move Athabasca University IT staff out of Athabasca.

**Mr. Piquette:** Mr. Speaker, given that the minister stated earlier this week that Athabasca University won't be moved or closed, can the minister tell me what work is being done to ensure the university remains in Athabasca?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to my friend for the question. Last week I met with the chair of the board, the president as well as members of the Athabasca University Faculty Association. At that meeting I provided some

direction to them for moving forward with the sustainability plan for Athabasca University, which included direction to work directly with students, faculty, staff, and community as they develop the sustainability plan. We're also working to fill vacancies on the board to ensure good, stable governance of this institution. Our government is committed to working with the board, faculty, staff and students, and the community of Athabasca to ensure the long-term sustainability of Athabasca University in Athabasca.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know my constituents will be very happy with this news.

Mr. Speaker, given that this government is committed to engaging with Albertans, what can the minister say is being done to properly engage the Athabasca University community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to my friend for the excellent supplemental question. I've heard from many community members, staff, faculty, and students about how important Athabasca University is to the broader Athabasca community. In the direction that I provided last week to the board and the chair, I emphasized the importance of developing a consultation plan that includes the community of Athabasca as part of the process. Conversations with the board and the faculty are ongoing, and we remain committed to working with university officials to help find ways for Athabasca University to thrive. I've personally spoken to the mayor and the reeve in this community on this issue.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

#### 2:20 Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement (continued)

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now that TransCanada and Enmax have turned their power purchase agreements back to the Balancing Pool, who reports directly to the Minister of Energy, the pool is the largest coal-fired generator in the entire electricity market, and it appears that this NDP government is now also the largest generator of greenhouse gases. To the Minister of Energy: who is ultimately on the hook for the carbon tax associated with those emissions, and when can they expect to see the bill?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Well, certainly, we're looking at the PPA structure, the structure that was given to us several governments ago, and it has a huge loophole in it that we are looking into at the moment. We're encouraging the Balancing Pool to work with the companies involved. It is a process. There are no closures involved with this, and there are no job losses involved with this process.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you for the answer to a question that wasn't asked.

To date we have not seen a single report tabled in this House from the Minister of Energy showing Albertans the actual economic and social costs to ratepayers and taxpayers of this accelerated coal phase-out. If the hon. Minister of Energy has that research, will she please table that research?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that the member wasn't paying attention the other day when the minister of environment tabled an article talking about all of the health impacts to coal particulates, to NOx and SOx, the impact that it's having and the number of deaths that can be averted by phasing out coal. We're doing this in a very orderly and structured way. This is why we've gone and found the best person in the business to go to bat for Albertans, to ensure that we're protecting our consumers and ratepayers.

**The Speaker:** House leader for the Official Opposition, could you ensure that the voice is down a little bit, please?

Second supplemental.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did say, "economic" research – economic research. Okay?

Today we have not seen a single economic report tabled in this House from the Minister of Energy. Will the Minister of Energy please agree that a significant amount of economic research should have been done before drafting any policy that impacts our electricity sector? Millions of Albertans who depend on it are looking for that research and proof for your economic – economic – policies.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for his question. I'll throw a few numbers at him, and maybe that will satisfy him: the fact that we spend and will save our health care system more than \$300 million, as far as transitioning off coal, from the detrimental health effects that it has not only on our children and on our seniors but on our population as a whole. Transitioning and phasing out coal is not only the right thing to do; our government has a plan in place that we will have an orderly transition. We are moving toward renewable electricity along with the rest of the world.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### Postsecondary Education and Employment Training

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's escalating unemployment rate of almost 8 per cent is one of the highest in the country, and it's the highest it's been in many decades. Over 100,000 job losses create huge ramifications, including increased enrolment as Albertans upgrade their skills for the new labour force or are staying in school longer because jobs they're seeking simply don't exist or have vanished. To the Minister of Advanced Education: as our economy is being shifted, how is your ministry specifically adapting to provide greater access for those seeking further educational opportunities?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government has already done quite a bit to assist students. We've reinvested in postsecondary institutions by providing predictable, stable funding over the last year, and we expect to do so again this year. As well, we've provided a two-year tuition freeze, which will make education a lot more accessible and affordable for students who seek spaces in our postsecondary institutions.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that close to 40 per cent of those who earn bachelor degrees or graduate from college do not find a job in their

chosen field and given that 30 per cent of those students pursue additional education, which means more debt burden for them and taxpayers who help fund our postsecondary educational system, to the same minister: what concrete actions are you taking to ensure that postsecondary education programs align with real job prospects?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We've already done a lot to make sure that education is more affordable. We've followed through on our promise of a tuition freeze, as I said. We've also introduced new awards for indigenous students, we doubled the low-income grant, and we made apprentices eligible for student aid. What we're not going to do is cut the budget to postsecondary institutions, as the opposition would have us do, and we're not going to hike tuition.

**Mr. Rodney:** I appreciate the review of what has been done. I am looking for things that are being done to meet the current needs, so we'll try this a different way. Given that the innovation portion of this ministry was moved to the new Economic Development and Trade portfolio last fall and given that innovation has naturally aligning and important ties with Advanced Education, can the minister please tell us: what specific processes has your department put in place to ensure that innovation maintains a critical connection with the Economic Development and Trade ministry to ensure collaboration between the two ministries, that are now separate?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. A very good question. My ministry works very closely with the Ministry of Advanced Education. In moving innovation over to economic development, we are doing two things. We are going to preserve and ensure that we continue to invest in R and D, research and development, in our fields, as we've been doing. We're also going to ensure that there are supports for would-be entrepreneurs and businesses to get their ideas and commercialize it and get it into the market.

Thank you.

#### Dental Care Costs

**Mr. Barnes:** With the economic uncertainty in this province we know that money is tight for many Albertans and their families. That's why Wildrose has offered this government constructive solutions for rising dental costs. We've seen a lot of talk about reviews from the Health minister but no real actions that would bring improvement or relief. If the minister needs a hand, will she accept our recommendations on reducing the restrictions on advertising, increasing price transparency, and improving governance practices at the Dental Association and College?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, making sure that Albertans get fair value for their dollar when they're going to the dentist is a priority for this party and for this government. This is an issue right across Alberta, but I know that it's felt particularly in some of the smaller communities where there is less opportunity to maybe consider other options. We need to make sure that we're doing a thorough review in collaboration with the college and with our partners. We've been working on that, and I'll be happy to update the House in a timely fashion.



**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, no answers; just more indecision and foot-dragging.

Given that about a hundred dentists are now alleging anticompetitive practices regarding advertising restrictions and given that this is a dental market that has been identified as crying out for price transparency for consumers, why won't you just adopt our common-sense proposals to drive prices down and help Albertans get the best value possible for their hard-earned money?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. It seems that for the members opposite the only possible solution for any problem could be more privatization, more competition. Certainly, we know that some of the other provinces that have got greater control around some of the fees and are getting better return for their taxpayers have a fee schedule. That's one of the things that I think a responsible government can consider and look into and see if it would be a way to help prevent some of the price gouging that's happening right across Alberta. Certainly, we are working in partnership with the dentistry industry to make sure that we have a thoughtful plan as we move forward, not making rash, ideological judgments like the members opposite.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Barnes:** Albertans need real solutions, not more evasive answers and dithering. Given that the minister has received advice from the Official Opposition as well as many other sources like Calgary-Mountain View on reducing red tape in the dental market and seeing as price transparency is key to kick-starting competition and innovation in market economies, does the minister recognize these basic principles, and will she make a commitment to reducing onerous restrictions on dental providers?

2:30

**Ms Hoffman:** Depending on the procedure, Mr. Speaker, Albertans can pay substantially more than our neighbours in B.C. or Saskatchewan do. We take that seriously. We are certainly taking time to look at the evidence – evidence – to make sure that we come up with the right decision as we move forward. I think that rushing to rash decisions is what certainly has not been helpful for us, and I don't think it's been helpful for their party either. We're going to move forward in a thoughtful way.

#### Waste-water Treatment in Taber

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, municipalities all across Alberta face no shortage of worries. Taber, in my constituency, is indeed one of those communities. They're facing major industrial sewage lagoon problems. Most of the infrastructure of the lagoon is on its last legs. If it fails, it puts the community at risk, and the town could be fined by Environment. Taber can't carry the cost of upgrades alone, so now they are stuck between a rock and a hard place. Will this government commit to working with Taber for a reasonable solution?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Taber has made a couple of applications under our water/waste-water program. One of them is under consideration for the municipal section. Those decisions will be made shortly, and they should be hearing some time this spring. With respect to the other one he's referring to, it's an industrial type

of situation, which is not covered by the current program and cannot be funded.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I guess that's why they call it stuck between a rock and a hard place. We're in a situation here where they need to have this infrastructure fixed, or else it will cause problems, with them being charged by Environment. So what do they do about this? They don't have the money to be able to pay for it. It's going to cost them \$6 million to do it. All that they are asking, all the Taber mayor is asking, is to have them talk to him. This is what we're asking for. This is what the mayor is asking for. I'll ask again: will you meet with the mayor to discuss this issue?

**Mr. Mason:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I am excited to hear that answer. I would like to know: exactly when will the minister meet with the mayor?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, next week I'm taking the opportunity to travel to southern Alberta to discuss with the mayors a number of issues, including our consultation around transit, rural bus service as well as to hear their concerns about the development of highway 3 through the region and important economic matters. If the mayor of Taber is there, I will certainly take the time to chat with him. Otherwise, we'll schedule it as soon as possible.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

#### Agricultural and Forest Product Exports

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recent months we've seen the United States Senate repeal the mandatory country of origin labelling legislation, that was having a multibillion-dollar impact on Alberta and Canadian farmers. However, we have yet to see any progress made on the signing of a new softwood lumber agreement, and we've heard little to nothing from Alberta's representative in Washington or this government about how they're helping Alberta's forestry producers. So while this government continues to give lip service to the diversification of our agriculture and forestry sectors, can the minister explain specifically how they have advocated for increased market access for our forest industry?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the very timely question, and 35 seconds is not going to be enough to respond to him. The softwood lumber agreement, as the member knows, ran out last October. There have been numerous conversations going on between my ministry, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, our counterparts across the province, and also with our counterparts in Ottawa. We recognize that we want a resolution that is going to be in the best interests of Alberta producers. We have spoken with and worked and are working with our forestry sector very closely to put forward a position that will benefit our producers moving forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member. First supplemental.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the answer. Given that the agriculture minister is busy hosting Bill 6 technical meetings in major cities during calving season and given that the only support to farmers that we've seen so far is a solar microgeneration project, which actually the previous government established, specifically what initiatives has this government launched over the last 10 months that will increase the value of

agricultural and agrifood products in Alberta and once again make this province a destination of agribusiness investment?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. We recognize that agriculture is a very, very important business to Alberta. This is part of the reason – and the member will have to wait as we unroll our budget – that we are continuing to work with our agricultural producers not just in primary production but in secondary agriculture as well. There are real opportunities to expand on our value-added opportunities as well as looking at opportunities to expand our exports. As the members may know, I will be heading to Asia, and that is one of the things that I will be talking to our friends there . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps when the minister is in Asia, he won't have to answer questions for other ministers on the front bench.

Given that global food demand is expected to double over the next 35 years, what specific supports to the agrifood sector has this government and, specifically, this minister provided that will look to increase the value of local products and allow Alberta and Canada to increase their export capacity and quantity?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Agriculture and forestry remain two of our most exciting industries in the province. While we see other industries taking a hit because of the price of oil and gas, I'm very optimistic that we can extend and broaden our markets world-wide, including here at home, with the value-added that we can do. There are some very exciting projects, and I'm very hopeful that we'll be able to announce them. The member over there and everyone else will have to wait until the budget.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

### Public Transit

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents have told me how important public transit is to the future of our community and the province. Increasing availability and access to public transit not only has massive benefits to the environment, but increasing public transit also has been shown to have a massive economic benefit as well. Construction of the green line in Calgary, for example, is a project that will create thousands of new jobs. To the Minister of Transportation: what are you doing to support public transit in Alberta and making sure that shovels get in the ground as soon as possible?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Our government remains committed to expanding affordable, accessible transportation across the province. On February 25 I announced the third call for GreenTRIP funding applications, making \$415 million available to support sustainable, affordable, and environmentally sustainable projects. The GreenTRIP capital spending will create much-needed jobs, employing construction workers to build transit projects and transit operators and maintenance operators to keep it running.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that increased transportation options are not only important to the constituents of Calgary-Northern Hills but it is something that will greatly benefit all communities in Alberta, to the same minister: what are you doing to increase the availability of public transit in our rural communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for the question. Unlike the opposition, we like to remain green year-round, not just on St. Patrick's Day. Now, we're providing \$285 million in GreenTRIP funding for municipalities outside the Edmonton and Calgary regions. From hearing from municipalities, we've extended the deadline for those applications to August because some of them wanted more time. We're engaging with the public and the municipalities on public transportation to hear what they think the criteria should be for grant programs going forward. Improved rural bus service will provide Albertans living in smaller communities with reliable access to essential services like health care in larger centres.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the changing needs of transit throughout our province, be it to reduce congestion in major cities or to provide adequate public transportation in rural areas, again to the same minister: what is the government doing to engage with our municipalities and Albertans to ensure that future investments meet these needs?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we're doing a great deal to consult with communities. We're consulting on the criteria to be used for future grant programs related to municipal transportation. We're consulting with them in terms of other programs as well. We want to talk to municipal leaders across the province about what these programs should look like, what can help those communities, what the criteria should be, what sort of programs or projects we should be supporting. We're consulting like crazy.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Premier's Calgary Office Employee Expenses

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The previous government did lots of things wrong, but one of the things they did right was to create an online database of government expenses. Now, they might have been working on the theory of hiding things in big piles in plain sight. However, we went looking into those big piles, and from that database we learned that Marcella Munro, the Premier's point person in Calgary, submitted 14 sets of expense claims in June and July of last year. The only problem is that it seems she only became an employee in August. How can someone who isn't an employee submit and get paid for employee expenses?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. I'll certainly be happy to look into the matter and get back to the House and make sure that any expenses that were incurred were appropriate. If they weren't, we'll make sure that they're paid back.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that government policy makes it absolutely mandatory that employees have to submit receipts for travel, accommodation, and ground transportation in order to get paid, why is it that the Premier's point person in Calgary got her expenses paid when she wasn't an employee and didn't have to submit receipts?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I've committed that I'll look into the matter. I need to make sure that we know whether or not we're talking about an employee or a contractor and what was involved. I'll certainly look into that. I'll look into the terms of either an employment agreement or a contract and will be happy to follow up with the member opposite.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, there are so many questions on this file that I could go on at length, but here is just another one that is curious to me. Given that the publicly posted contract for Ms Munro, the Premier's point person in Calgary, makes it clear that she started on the government payroll on August 10, why is it that her expenses and her online postings make it clear that she didn't actually start work until August 17? Did she get paid for a week that she didn't work?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, as is often the case with transitions or when individuals are being hired, sometimes they start on contract, sometimes they start as employees, and sometimes I think there's a combination. As I said previously, I'll be happy to look into the details of whether or not it was a contract or an employment agreement at that date and time and continue to follow up with the hon. member directly after we have a chance to look into the matter.

**The Speaker:** Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

#### National Bee Diagnostic Centre

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Grande Prairie Regional College National Bee Diagnostic Centre is an unqualified success. Since 2013 the number of diagnostic services provided has risen from 1,800 to 20,000 annually. This work provides beekeepers and researchers essential information about the health of honeybee populations and their contributing to the global food security as well as excellent research opportunities for students in northwest Alberta. To the minister of agriculture: how will Alberta Agriculture continue to support this important work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Last October I had the opportunity to visit the National Bee Diagnostic Centre. It's important to know that that is the only bee diagnostic centre in Canada. Actually, before that, all samples had to go to the United States for testing. So it's important that it's here in Alberta. It's important to this government. It's important to me personally. I have many friends in the honeybee industry. It's important to keep supporting it as we can. Even though the price of honey has taken a drop in the past few years, it still remains a very important industry in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the National Bee Diagnostic Centre has the support of the national advisory committee to deliver diagnostic services and given that the National Bee Diagnostic Centre has also demonstrated that national level research can and is being done in rural Alberta, to the minister: what specific plans does the government have to invest in rural Alberta to continue to grow and build these opportunities for rural Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the member's follow-up question. Another important thing to note is that Alberta remains one of the top 10 honey producers in the world. Even though the price of honey has taken a drop like oil and gas – as a matter of fact, it dropped about 35 per cent – we've still had a very robust industry. We should continue to support that world-wide. It's important. As people, you know, often view honey as a healthier version of sugar, it's an important commodity and is important not only for honey, obviously, but also for the pollination of crops.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that diversifying the economy is important to all Albertans and given that Alberta produces 44 per cent of Canadian honey and the Peace Country region in northwestern Alberta leads the province in honey production and given that the centre is an important piece of rural economic development attracting Canadian researchers to Alberta, to the minister: will investments in the diversification of the economy be made to support GPRC as well as our Alberta and Canadian honey producers?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm quite excited about when the Finance minister rolls out the budget. There are a number of initiatives that my ministry is working on directly with the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, the minister of environment, and the Minister of Culture and Tourism, looking at a number of initiatives that we're going to be working on with all regions of the province and working with existing regional economic development agencies. As well, we will be working with municipalities throughout the province. I ask the member to wait until the budget has been dropped by the Finance minister, and we'll see that we are working throughout the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

#### Online Registry Services

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been hearing from my constituents about the recently announced decision that we will be phasing out paper reminders for registration, licence, and identification card renewals. To the Minister of Service Alberta: what was the reason behind this decision being made now?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. You know, it's evident to this House that Alberta is facing tough economic times. As such, this government is looking for efficiencies in our own house just as any Albertan is in theirs. This

is an initiative that will save Albertans \$3 million annually. It also helps us move into the 21st century as we'll be putting these renewal reminders online. This is just a smart way to save money for Albertans and also to move us into the future.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've heard from some constituents, particularly seniors who do not have access to a computer at home and are concerned about no longer receiving their paper notice and potentially missing their renewal, again to the same minister: what supports are available to ensure that people can renew on time?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely important to our government to ensure that folks are renewing on time. It's important to Albertans as well that they're renewing on time. As such, seniors in particular will be receiving an extra renewal notice by paper that will let them know that they can contact their registry agents and let them know about this going online. So they will be notified, but additionally registry agents will be able to assist them with the reminder, and they can always check the back of their licence plates. As well, we're going to be ensuring that they continue to renew every . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many Albertans will be wanting greater access to online registry services as a whole, again to the same minister: what steps are you taking to make registry services more available to all Albertans?

**Ms McLean:** Thank you to the member for the question. I'm actually very excited about this initiative going under way with Service Alberta. We're looking at additional efficiencies and ways to ensure that Albertans are able to receive services from registries at their fingertips online into the future.

Thank you.

2:50

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

### Edward John Polanski

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and indeed a great privilege to rise today to speak about some of the many accomplishments of the late Edward John Polanski, Alberta's communications pioneer. Mr. Polanski died earlier, in October 2015. Many of his family members are sitting in your gallery to help commemorate his achievements today.

Known as Ed to his family and friends, he is remembered as an exemplary entrepreneur who connected Alberta's communities through cable television. He was attracted to the world of electronics and telecommunications from a very young age, when he repaired radios at the rear of his father's hardware store after school in Thorhild. He was attracted to that world of electronics and telecommunications because of strong curiosity, and after graduating from Thorhild high school, he went to study electronic communications at Ryerson, in Toronto.

His mission in life was to bring private television viewing into every Albertan home. In the early 1950s he set up the first-ever cable television system in Thorhild. In the early 1960s advanced systems followed in Athabasca and St. Paul. During his time TV transmission was being broadcast simply to the borders of Edmonton and not beyond.

In 1970 Mr. Polanski incorporated Quality Cable Television, otherwise known as QCTV, which was licensed to provide half of the city of Edmonton with international television viewing. He campaigned to broadcast daily sittings of the Alberta Legislature and encouraged other provincial cable systems to do the same. Mr. Polanski is responsible for originating television broadcasting of proceedings of this Alberta Legislative Assembly and the House of Commons that we now watch today.

Like Ed I also am from Thorhild originally, and I'm proud to say that I had an opportunity to work as an intern at QCTV in the early 1980s as a master control operator. Mr. Polanski was a great mentor. He would walk through the television station and offices to inquire as to how things were going. He was always engaging, and he really deserves the accolades of this House and all Albertans for his accomplishments.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

## Government and Official Opposition Policies

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No one wants to hear "I told you so," but sometimes there's just no better way to make the point. Time after time Wildrose has put good ideas on the table, and time after time this NDP government has ignored them out of spite, spite for our party and spite for our province.

We told them to make realistic oil projections. They didn't listen. Now we're facing a \$10 billion budget deficit. We told them to rein in spending or face a credit downgrade, that will cost Alberta taxpayers. They didn't listen. Now we've already seen one major credit downgrade and several major warnings. No doubt more downgrades are on the way. We asked them to hit the brakes on their royalty review or risk losing investment. They didn't listen. We've now lost billions of dollars in investment to our neighbours with stable royalty regimes east and west.

We recommended they support every possible pipeline project to get our oil to tidewater. They didn't listen. Instead, they put all their eggs in one basket and sat quietly on a fence while federal and provincial governments threw up roadblocks, that could cost us jobs and market access. We suggested that Bill 6 should start with consultation. They didn't listen. Instead, they made hasty amendments which didn't satisfy producers and forced farmers to protest on the steps of the Legislature month after month and even as recently as last week. We proposed a jobs action plan with good, solid ideas that all parties can get behind to kick-start the economy and get Albertans working again. Still nothing from the members opposite.

Albertans are worried. They're losing their jobs. Work is scarce. But if there is one message I could leave the government, it is this. When we in opposition come up with ideas and suggestions, it is out of a love for this province. So don't worry about the source; listen to the good ideas and work for Albertans. I don't want to say "I told you so" again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### End-of-life Decision-making

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent Supreme Court ruling means that medical assistance in dying, often called assisted suicide, will be legal in Alberta this June. I agree with the ruling. Legally competent Albertans who suffer from grievous, irremediable illnesses should be able to choose when and how they die. Medical aid in dying should be legal, but it should also be rare.

Maintaining quality of life to the end of life is the goal of palliative care, a service provided by a dedicated few in our province and one that we should look to expand. Palliative care is about ensuring that patients and their families feel valued and cared for not only in their last days but in the weeks, months, and even years leading up to death.

Death is a part of life, something we will all experience, and when we do, we want to be treated with dignity and we want to be as comfortable as possible. We all want to maintain control of our medical care even when we cannot speak for ourselves. It's important to know that even where medical assistance in dying is available, choice in dying means allowing natural death to occur in comfort and on our own terms.

Communicating your choice is critical. It means telling your family and caregivers what quality of life means to you. I encourage all Albertans, starting with each and every member of this House, to have these conversations while you're still fit and healthy. This will help your family and your care providers know what your goals are when the time comes, whether that's aggressive medical intervention to prolong life or comfort care that allows natural death to occur.

These conversations can be challenging, so Alberta Health Services has developed a tool kit to help. By visiting [conversationsmatter.ca](http://conversationsmatter.ca), you can learn about advanced care planning, which helps you think about, talk about, and document wishes for health care in the event that you become incapable of communicating your wishes. You may never need your advanced care plan, but if you do, you'll be glad it's there and you'll be glad that you've had these conversations to make sure that your voice is heard.

Death is a natural part of life, and part of living a good life is having a good death. Palliative care and advanced care planning can ensure that you and your loved ones' choices are respected. Advanced care planning truly is a gift to your family.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

### 100% Skate Club

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 1 the city of Calgary opened two skateboard parks, including one at 64th Avenue and Centre Street NW, in Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. The park is pretty popular. I've seen a lot of young men taking advantage of the park, and that made me stop and think: where are the women? I was fortunate to get connected with an organization called 100% Skate Club, a skateboarding club for girls and women that was established by Erica Jacobs, who was a semiprofessional snowboarder and competed nationally as a skateboarder. She started the club to encourage people to look at skateboarding differently and encourage girls to take it up.

The group started with a Facebook page just under a year ago and now has 45 members, girls and women from ages four to 53. Membership is free and promotes the idea that each member is a leader.

Skateboarding is relatively inexpensive as a sport, and it's available to virtually anyone. It promotes self-expression through healthy physical activity. Some of the projects that 100% Skate Club is spearheading right now are lessons for the Calgary Police Service as well as skateboarding lessons for women, which I'm seriously considering if I can find enough bubble wrap.

There is a vibrant skateboarding community in Calgary, including the Calgary Association of Skateboarding Enthusiasts, called CASE, who recently held a fundraiser to further their commitment to the growth of skateboarding in Calgary through consultation on future skateboard projects and providing opportunities to encourage skill development. Skateboarding is a thriving sport, and it's something that almost anyone can participate in.

I'm very happy to have 100% Skate Club and their commitment to encouraging girls and women to take up the sport and providing a community where we can feel safe and supported in trying it out. The club will be holding their season kickoff on March 30 at millennium skateboard park in Calgary at 6:30 p.m. I'd like to encourage all girls and women interested in skateboarding to come out.

Thank you, and Erin go bragh.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two requests. First of all, I would request unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 7(7) to continue the daily Routine past 3 o'clock. Secondly, I would request unanimous consent to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests directly following the end of the Routine.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

3:00

### Two Sergeants Brewing

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on St. Patrick's Day to talk about the wonder of craft beer. Budget 2015 saw the fulfillment of our government's commitment to small breweries who choose Alberta to brew their labours of love. Our government removed a barrier that previously capped production at 19,999 hectolitres because brewing any more, the tax per litre would more than double. This made it hard to grow. The new tax formula for breweries adjusted the per litre tax incrementally as production rises, making craft brewing more profitable at higher volume.

This brings me to a proud story that comes from Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. In August 2014 Kevin Moore, a veteran of the Canadian military, and Keith Edwards, a veteran of the British Royal Airforce, sat in the garage and spoke of how they wished they had a real pub to go to. Four months later they brewed their first brew. With undivided support from their wives, Yolanda and Lynne, Two Sergeants Brewing opened last month, and they began brewing on their own premises last week.

It's not a place for dinner though they serve sausage on a bun and soft pretzels. It is a place to go with your friends and enjoy an Alberta craft brew. Whether it is the Bangalore Torpedo IPA, my favourite, ringing in at 7.4 per cent with citrus and pine bitterness; or their Passion'D Ale, a lightly hopped wheat ale with coriander and orange rind; or a brew with a cause, the Patrolman's ESB, an easy, classic bitter with hints of coffee and caramel, brewed in memory of fallen Edmonton Police Service Constable Daniel Woodall, with part of the proceeds going to the Woodall family fund.

I visit once a month with my Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville EDA with our big-tent policy. Their staff are not only world-class, but they treat us like long-lost friends. And we haven't been kicked out yet. Kevin lobbied me for an Alberta flag, that now proudly hangs in their establishment, and also hanging on the wall is a clock that is stopped at 5. I encourage all members of the House who enjoy a good adult beverage to visit Two Sergeants Brewing, where it is always 5 o'clock.

Salud, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Seven point four per cent.  
Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### Government Policies

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nearly a year has passed since the provincial election, and Albertans are still struggling to understand exactly who or what this government is. They say that they're pro pipeline, pro energy, and pro Alberta. But the Member for Calgary-East used to call Alberta oil dirty oil, the environment minister wrote the foreword to a book called *An Action a Day Keeps Global Capitalism Away*, the Premier appointed a Soviet-era communist to serve as her deputy chief of staff, and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is a huge admirer of some of the worst leftist dictators.

This member recently said in the House: "I come from Latin America, where . . . we've had many experiments in democratic socialism." "I am and always will be a proud democratic socialist." So I ask: what exactly are these Latin American experiments in democratic socialism the member is proud of? Would they include the rule of Hugo Chávez, whose quasi-dictatorship rewrote the Venezuelan Constitution to allow him to stay on as President, whose policies drove Venezuela's economy into the ground and turned a once prosperous country into one that continually faces shortages of everything, especially freedom?

Did the Soviet-backed, communist Castro regime make that list, I wonder, a regime that repressed an entire nation, murdering and imprisoning dissidents, religious leaders, and minorities? You'll find the image of Che Guevara, Castro's most vicious lieutenant, on leftist T-shirts and even our Premier's watch.

We all know that members opposite need a lesson in economics, but apparently they need a lesson in history, too, unfortunately for this province. Wildrose is here to stand up for prosperity, freedom, and democracy, and we will proudly stand against this government's radical agenda each and every time it bubbles to the surface.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Can I remind each of you that you need to have respect for the entire House and be cautious about statements that might inflame the debate.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**The Speaker:** The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The debate was just a little inflamed. I was very distracted.

As chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts I am pleased to table five copies of the committee's report on 2015 activities from January to March 2015, during the 28th Legislature.

I'm also pleased to table five copies of the committee's report on 2015 activities from June to December 2015, during the 29th Legislature.

These reports will be posted to external committee websites. Copies are also available through the committee offices.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

#### Bill 203

#### Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to introduce Bill 203, the Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016.

Mr. Speaker, in these difficult economic times our government is committed to protecting Albertans from undue and unanticipated costs. As vehicles remain an important aspect of Albertan lives, it is my commitment to ensure everyone is protected against unforeseen financial stress. Bill 203 will establish guidelines that increase transparency, accountability, and peace of mind for both consumers and business owners.

I look forward to discussions and deliberation with my colleagues in the House as well as the broader community. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board I have three tablings today. The first one is the required number of copies of a document entitled Alberta Growth Mandate. This document explains the mandate that was referenced in Budget 2015; namely, that up to 3 per cent of the heritage fund be allocated for investment in growth-oriented, Alberta-based companies. As the document shows, the Alberta growth mandate does not contradict the heritage fund's legislative mandate. As this document makes clear, it will be professionals with expertise in business development and investment, not politicians, who will make these decisions in the best interests of Albertans.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to table on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance the required number of copies of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund third-quarter report. This report shows clearly the outcomes and success that the Alberta growth mandate has already achieved. Notably, AIMCo is implementing the Alberta growth mandate, having recently made a substantial investment in TransAlta Renewables.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, also on behalf of the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, I wish to table the appropriate number of copies of the Automobile Insurance Rate Board's 2015 annual report for the year ended December 31, 2015. The report was prepared under the board's direction in accordance with section 601(1) of the Insurance Act and must be tabled in accordance with section 601(2) of the act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a statement released yesterday from TransAlta responding to our government making good on its commitment by announcing a coal facilitator. TransAlta stated:

The appointment of Terry Boston, a credible and collaborative industry leader, is a major step forward in the renewables transition and will help to remove uncertainty in both the electricity sector and Alberta's broader economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of Statistics Canada Table 051-0017, which I referenced earlier today in debate on Bill 3, interprovincial migrants to and from Alberta showing that Alberta's interprovincial migration has in fact dropped as of the fourth quarter 2015.

Thank you.

3:10

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I rise today to table five copies of the page biographies for the Second Session of the 29th Legislature, spring 2016. I know I speak for all of the House when I say that we very much appreciate these young people's learning in support to this Assembly.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day Program

**The Speaker:** Fellow Members of the Legislative Assembly, as you know, the Legislative Assembly is hosting Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day program, which will be held on May 1 to 3, 2016, at the Alberta Legislature. There is only one week left to apply for the program. This is an opportunity for high school students from all corners of this province, all of your constituencies, to learn about what we do here. Please remind your high schools that this three-day program is fully supported by your Legislative Assembly Office, so there's no cost to the students whatsoever. Transportation and accommodation details will be arranged by the visitor services office. The application form is available on the Assembly website. I urge you to support the MLA for a Day program by promoting students' participation from your constituencies and also through your personal involvement in this program. Need I say that this is an opportunity where we can allow the youth of our province to have first-hand experience at the practice of democracy.

### Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** There are some guests that we missed before. I would first of all recognize the Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we have in the public gallery 58 visitors with the Alberta Girls' Parliament. These young ladies have enjoyed the day today. They've met with the Premier and various other ministers and with the Speaker and myself earlier. We also enjoyed during this morning's session, when we were doing a standing vote, their lovely singing outside. So thank you for entertaining us. They are with their teachers and group leaders: Shannen Hoffman, Deanna Michaels, Heather Robertson, Veronica Hoffman, Kathleen Robertson, Amanda Omelusik, Tracey Rogers, Laurie Robertson, and Imogen Pohl. Can we have the young ladies rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, do you have some introductions you'd like to make?

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly some members of my family and friends who are here today to hear my maiden speech. They're seated in the members' gallery this afternoon. I'll ask them to rise as I say their names: my mom, Dorothy Sigurdson; my eldest son, Maxwell Sigurdson-Scott; Carl Schouten, my middle son; my father, Barney Sigurdson, who is 86 years young; and my youngest son, Wade, is sick today, unfortunately, so he couldn't be with us. He's 14. Also two friends are here: Erica Bullwinkle – Erica was my campaign manager, and she's here today – as well as Brent Kelly, who's my ministerial assistant. I ask everyone to give them the warm, traditional welcome of the Assembly.

### Orders of the Day

#### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate March 16: Ms Drever]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Bow. I think, hon. member, you have two minutes left. Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

**Ms Drever:** No.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great honour that I rise today to give my maiden speech to this Assembly. It is truly an honour to sit in this 29th Legislative Assembly as the MLA for the constituency of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. Though these are not the first words that I have spoken in this House, I am proud to say that the first words I spoke were to address the issue of seniors' supports in my home riding.

I stand here today to speak of my constituency, my community, my home: Fort McMurray, a region also known as Wood Buffalo. This area is the second-largest municipality in Canada, at over 66,000 square kilometres. It is a land of hot, long summer days and cold wintry nights. During the hottest days the sun barely dips below the horizon, and energy abounds in all people. In winter it's a land where the aurora borealis lights up the sky with a shimmering and awe-inspiring beauty, where the light of the moon is reflected in the snow.

It's a land settled by people from across Canada, from across the world, people who truly have the pioneering spirit, that same drive that encourages people to explore, to leave their homes and their families with the hope of succeeding and ultimately creating a better life for themselves and for their families. It is this same pioneering spirit that created Canada, the greatest country in the world.

When I was young, my community was diverse. The people were Dene, Cree, and Métis. There were those who hailed from

Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, and British Columbia. There was even a family from Ireland and another one from England. Today there are people from places such as India and Pakistan, the Philippines, China, Peru, Brazil, Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sweden and Norway, Russia and Poland. Over 300 families moved to Fort McMurray from Venezuela after its socialist dictator, Chávez, found them to be no longer useful. It is an international community with a diversity that would rival any metropolis.

It's a land of natural beauty. The flora and fauna are as diverse as in any rainforest: jack pine, lodgepole pine, tamarack, white spruce, black spruce, balsam fir, willow trees, aspen, balsam poplar, birch trees, saskatoon berries in abundance, and especially the Alberta wild rose, thriving in Wood Buffalo.

This land is also home to an amazing variety of wildlife. This is the wildlife that was the original export of this region. Furs from these animals were the basis of trade. Today these animals flourish in this amazing habitat. Wood bison, moose, and caribou traverse this land. Wolves, coyotes, and black bears with muskrat, lynx, weasels, and red squirrels dot this region. Ducks, geese, whooping cranes, and swans nest in these wetlands. Bald eagles, hawks, and ravens fly overhead. Bats, nighthawks, and owls flutter through the wooded canopies of these forests. Grouse wander through the brush. It truly is an amazing ecosystem.

This land is the epitome of the Great White North. It has the world's largest dark-sky reserve and has the world's largest beaver dam. This area was first mapped by western peoples in 1778. In 1790 Alexander Mackenzie described the oil sands for the first time. By 1870 free enterprise thrived, with the Hudson's Bay and North West companies competing in this region. This region has a valued resource, a product upon which mankind so heavily relies, petroleum. The indigenous peoples of this area used this product to patch their canoes. This valuable resource has always been a controversial product. As it is expensive to wash sand of oil, so it is capital intensive. It is a product that Albertans have always known to be of great value, provided that oil was sold at a certain price point in the global market.

Dr. Karl Clark, a chemist and oil sands researcher, is best known for creating a process that separated the crude from the sand. It's interesting to note that his vision was that after an area had been mined, it would be reclaimed and used for farmland. Alas, this aspect is not prominent in the north. You would think that this new government, who desires to promote local food production, would recognize this interesting aspect of the developments.

Despite a footprint that is minuscule in relation to the region, with a vast expanse of boreal forest surrounding these plots of land that are being mined for this valuable resource, it is ridiculed and accused. It is made to be an environmentally unfriendly product, to be unethical oil, yet the hypocrisy around this abounds. Our energy sector has been a world leader in developing cutting-edge environmental technologies. We are proud of our history, proud of our industry, and proud of our stewardship of the land we love.

With their activist rhetoric, antipipeline scorn, the NDP has labelled Alberta's goods as not environmentally friendly, and sadly our Premier is leading the charge on this, labelling our province as Canada's embarrassing cousin. Instead of standing up for our beloved Alberta, this government continues to sympathize with regions that import unethical oil. By undermining our energy sector, this NDP government is damaging our competitive advantage.

Petrochemical developments in California or the Gulf of Mexico escape this criticism. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Algeria, and Angola, with their questionable policies regarding freedom and equality, let alone environmental policies, elude this scrutiny. It is

sad to see that there are Canadians that would prefer to support these regimes while discouraging developments that would create jobs and revenue for this country.

3:20

I entered this world of politics because I wanted to effect positive change. The old PC government ignored this region but greatly valued the money that it acquired for the products and the jobs that this region produced. That PC government had a culture of entitlement, questionable ethics, and cronyism, an incompetent government that refused to twin a highway despite the federal friends that my good friend from Fort McMurray-Conklin secured when he was in the federal government, a government that ignored the needs of this community to grow despite being landlocked by Crown land, only to sit back and watch as the real estate values rocketed and reacted to the basic economics of supply and demand, a government that tried to move a seniors' facility because the land where it was to be built was far too valuable.

It was a government that I encountered in my previous life with the fire department in 2006 at an accident along that treacherous highway that would take so many lives. Despite the attempts by two of their own esteemed members to draw attention to this highway, despite them encountering an accident where we were rescuing a person, no action was taken by that government. Their incompetence continued until 2015, when the people finally stood up and said: no more. Today I see a party who's lost its voice, whose only desire is to jockey for Senate seats in the federal Liberal government.

The people of Alberta have spoken but did not know this newly invigorated Wildrose. They were so disillusioned by the old government that they blindly supported a socialist party. This new government is made up of people who until recently picketed and marched and said: "No more tar sands. No pipelines. No more development in the north." This is a government made up of idealists with a naiveté unbecoming of a governing party, an attitude and position that they quickly learned was not in line with Albertans. The little support that they have shown is countered by them supporting groups in other provinces who continue to fight our ability to get our product to the world. They point to the birds that died due to the oil sands development but ignore the birds killed by wind turbines. It is a hypocrisy that is difficult to comprehend.

Let the people of my home know that they have a voice in our Legislature and that my good friends and I of the Wildrose will continue to fight for all Albertans. As the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo I will continue to respect our citizens, community organizations, and industry. I will support this government when they operate on common-sense values to the benefit of our region as well as all Albertans. I will advocate for jobs, health care, our seniors, and the economy. I will bring value-added ideas and engage with residents to also bring theirs. I will support and promote the Alberta advantage. I will represent.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to tell you about the wonderful constituency I represent and also to share the story of what led me to this new job I have as Member of the Legislative Assembly for Edmonton-Riverview. I am honoured that the citizens of Edmonton-Riverview chose me as their representative. My deep-felt gratitude goes out to them. The 2015 provincial



election was not my first time running. I also ran in 2012. Although I was not successful, we did make significant gains and laid the foundation for our later success.

As each MLA will attest to, my riding is the best. Edmonton-Riverview straddles the North Saskatchewan River and reaches from Whitemud Drive in the south to Stony Plain Road in the north and from 109th Street in the east all the way over to 170th Street in the west. The magnificent river valley parks provide a welcome connection to nature for all. Just a few of the parks that line the river valley include Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Hawrelak, Emily Murphy, and Whitemud. These parks provide an opportunity for city dwellers to find calm and peace amongst the trees and grass or snow, depending on the season. Right in the heart of Edmonton, this natural beauty is preserved.

Besides a network of trails for hikers, cyclists, skiers, snowshoers, and other person-powered transportation, Edmonton-Riverview is made up of walkable mature neighbourhoods. It is home to more than 40,000 Albertans living in active communities, including Windsor Park, McKernan, Parkallen, Lendrum, Malmo, Lansdowne, Grandview, Belgravia, Crestwood, Parkview, Laurier, Lynnwood, Jasper Park, West Jasper Place, Meadowlark, and Elmwood.

The community league system we have in Edmonton supports many activities, and the dedication of volunteers in Edmonton-Riverview provides opportunities to connect with neighbours, advocate for community initiatives, and develop our community together.

The communities of Edmonton-Riverview are also bustling with small businesses. The famous Bon Ton Bakery, Valleyview IGA, the Parkallen and Piccolino restaurants are just a few of the long-serving establishments. People from all over Edmonton come to enjoy their goods and services.

If this wasn't enough, the University of Alberta is also situated in Edmonton-Riverview. This world-class institution provides education to over 30,000 undergraduate students, nearly 10,000 graduate students, and employs thousands of academic and nonacademic staff. The University of Alberta farm is also on the east side of the riding. Not many urban representatives can say that they have a farm in their riding.

A good number of significant institutions are connected to the University of Alberta, including the University of Alberta hospital, the Mazankowski Heart Institute, the National Institute for Nanotechnology, the Stollery children's hospital, the Cross Cancer Institute, and the Canadian Blood Services clinic.

Another unique organization in my riding is the Whitemud Equine Learning Centre, where you can ride horses in the heart of Edmonton.

Now that I've told you a bit about my riding, I'd like to tell you a bit about myself. I was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, which is where a lot of Icelanders with the name Sigurdson come from. My dad was Icelandic, but since he married an English gal from Holden, Alberta, they were always planning to move to Alberta. My mom was a teacher, and my dad had his journeyman sheet metal ticket. They figured that wherever mom could find a teaching job and there was no sheet metal shop so dad could set up shop with no competition, we would live. This turned out to be Valleyview, a small town in the Peace River country. A short aside, the riding I represent has an area known as Valleyview, and what a fun coincidence.

The Valleyview I moved to when I was seven years old was markedly different than the one in Edmonton-Riverview. It was an oil town surrounded by farms and, to the west, the Sturgeon Lake Indian band reserve. My mother taught elementary at St. Stephen's Catholic school, and my father started a small business, Valleyview

Sheet Metal. Together my parents worked hard to provide for their three children.

Although my mother began teaching as soon as we moved into town, she did not have her teaching degree. She'd only completed the first year. But my mom was determined to complete her bachelor of education, and she took evening and weekend courses in Valleyview and Grande Prairie. After several years of burning the candle at both ends, she finally finished her degree. My mom did everything. She was a student. She was a worker. She was a mother.

My father started a business from nothing. This took guts and creativity. When I look back on this, I see my parents' tremendous courage as they built a new life together in an unknown community. Needless to say, they are both inspirations to me when I have experienced challenges in my own life. Their example helps me find my way through.

Besides being courageous, industrious, and perhaps a bit unconventional, my parents are also champions for fairness and justice. It was in their home that I began to understand inequality and the responsibility of governments to support all citizens. In Valleyview I witnessed the discrimination indigenous people experienced. When I was in grade 6, my best friend lived at Sturgeon Lake. When grade 7 began, I looked for her at Hillside high school. She never came. I never saw her again. I always wondered what happened to her.

My parents were stalwart New Democrats, which was extraordinary in my hometown. All my friends thought we were weird because we were NDP. Having different political views wasn't always bad, though, because sometimes when I came home from school, Grant Notley would be sitting at my parents' kitchen table. Despite my family being different from others in town, I was confident in our values. Then as now our values of inclusion and equality hold true for us.

### 3:30

I moved to Edmonton immediately after finishing grade 12. I studied political science at the University of Alberta, and I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but my education confirmed what my parents had taught me, that I was a social democrat. With my bachelor of arts completed, I needed to find work, and I was hired as a STEP student for the MLA for Edmonton-Norwood, Ray Martin. That experience, now more than 30 years ago, deepened my passion for politics. My connection with Ray and his wife, Cheryl, opened up a new world for me. Their support and guidance helped me get to where I am today. Thank you to Ray and Cheryl.

Throughout my 20s I looked for that career job that felt right for me. I struggled to find my feet, but looking back, I could see that there was a pattern. No matter what job I had, I was always drawn towards helping people. In my late 20s I decided I needed to go back to school again to become a social worker. This was challenging for me as I was also a single mom. Regardless, I was determined to do it. I went on to complete my bachelor and master of social work degrees at the University of Calgary. From then on I knew what my purpose was. I never questioned if I had made the right choice in going back to school and taking on a significant amount of debt to become a social worker. I knew I had made the right choice.

Being a social worker is truly a calling for me. In my 25-year career I have worked in many fields of practice. Whether it's supporting families involved in the child welfare system, treating children with mental health issues, serving those challenged by family violence, developing community initiatives, or teaching students enrolled at faculties of social work, it's all been a tremendous privilege. But through all of this I couldn't help but feel

that there was a piece missing. My social work career occurred during a time of retrenchment in social services. Every year we learned of new program cuts. Every year it was more and more difficult to serve vulnerable Albertans. Every year we had to figure out how to creatively serve our clients with less.

Social workers are taught to look at situations through a person-in-environment lens. Our work supports individuals to make healthy choices for themselves and their families, but we also look at the environment in which they live, the society. As we examine the society in which we conduct our work, we often need to ask questions such as: does everyone have the opportunity to be included socially and economically? What if an individual has a physical disability or a learning disability? Are there supports for people experiencing family violence? Are there programs to remove and minimize barriers to those with mental health issues? As I went about my work, increasingly I saw that vulnerable Albertans were being left behind by government decisions. I knew this had to stop, and I wanted to help make change, so I became even more involved in politics.

When I decided to run as a candidate in the 2012 provincial election, I must admit that it was a challenging decision for me, even with my frustration regarding the lack of progressive policies. This was due in large part to my personal circumstances. For 10 years I had been married and had two more children. Sadly, however, my marriage ended in divorce. I was again a single mom, but this time a single mother of three sons. It seemed ridiculous to think that I could run since I was already maxed out with a full-time job, teaching part-time at the university, and being a mother to three boys.

But our Premier, who back then was just MLA Rachel Notley, didn't seem to care that I was too busy to take on running in an election. Despite my firm no, she kept at it. She deconstructed all of my arguments against running, like the excellent lawyer that she is. She also looked at the situation through a gender lens, which for me was the most powerful. Needless to say, she didn't take no for an answer, and certainly her successful lobbying is a big part of the reason why I'm standing here today. Thank you, Premier.

Another amazing woman who greatly influenced my success is Erica Bullwinkle. Erica was my campaign manager in both the 2012 and 2015 elections. Erica has dedicated her life to ensuring that progressive women are elected to represent constituents. Her credentials are stellar. Back in 2008 Erica helped to get the campaign office of our now Premier up and running. In addition, Erica was the campaign manager for Edmonton Strathcona Member of Parliament Linda Duncan. When she was elected as an MP for the first time, it was an extraordinary accomplishment. MP Duncan has been the sole Alberta representative from any party other than the Conservatives for three consecutive federal elections. I know that this is in large part due to Erica's tremendous political acumen, dedication, and, most importantly, unreasonable hopefulness in the face of what others would say were insurmountable odds. Therefore, when Erica agreed to be my campaign manager, I knew she was the right woman for the job. Thank you, Erica.

I'd like to acknowledge another member of my family who could not be here today, my sister Karen Sigurdson. Now retired, Karen was a dedicated Alberta public servant for 30 years. She began in the role of communications but was eventually promoted to the executive director level. Karen's communication expertise was generously shared with me during both of my campaigns, but even more importantly, she was and is always someone I can rely on to give me the straight goods. In the political world this is invaluable. Thank you, Karen.

Before I close, I want to acknowledge my sons, Maxwell, Carl, and Wade. Now, as all members of the Assembly know, our

families sacrifice so that we may do what needs to be done to get elected and to then serve the citizens of Alberta. Too many times to mention, my sons figured things out for themselves or got one of their brothers to help them.

I want to thank my eldest son, Maxwell, for supporting his little brothers, making supper for them, helping them with their homework, and being a loving listener to their stories. Maxwell is also a tremendous support to me. He inspired me to pursue my dreams. At an earlier time I struggled with my own self-worth, but being a mother to Maxwell reminded me that I was important. I was important because I was his mother. He reminded me of this every day, and even though the challenges at times were overwhelming, he and I together overcame them. Maxwell is currently studying at the University of Alberta in the Faculty of Education, just like his grandma.

My middle son, Carl, is also here today. As any parent knows, witnessing our children grow is remarkable. Carl from a young age had a calm disposition, which I must say is welcome to a mother of three boys. Athletic star, soccer and hockey player, and an honours student, as Maxwell did before him, Carl inspired me and supported me to accomplish my goal.

Wade is my youngest son – and he's sick today, so he couldn't be here – or, as I prefer to call him, my baby. At 14 years Wade has a generous heart and unwavering determination when he sets his mind to something. Wade is also an honours student, currently in grade 9. He's perhaps the least enamoured with my new job. Last fall, at a time when I was away from home more than I was there, he declared: I don't like your new job. Things have calmed somewhat since then, and I'm able to be home more often now. But as we know, things can change quickly. Wade reminds me of what is really important, our connections with one another.

Thank you, Maxwell, Carl, and Wade, for understanding and, indeed, supporting my work and accepting my big dream. I love you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any comments or questions under 29(2)(a) for the minister?

Hearing none, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sure is an honour to rise today and speak in response to the Speech from the Throne. The throne speech is a wonderful tradition that helps the public understand what the government has planned for them in the upcoming session. As well, it communicates the government's vision for the future of our province; at least, it usually does.

Now, I would like to go through some of the items brought up during this throne speech and fact-check them against how this government has performed so far. As we learned earlier today, it's vital to understand what decisions have gotten us to where we are so that we can know which direction we are going. I'm going to begin with a subject that is of great importance to me, Mr. Speaker, a topic that affects the lives of all Albertans now and in the future, and that would be the state of our democracy. In the speech there was a brief mention of democratic renewal, and I'm glad to see that this is something that is on the government's radar. After 44 years of one-party rule there is a need to assess the state of our democracy and see if there's anything we can do to improve upon our system of representation. Making a more open, accountable, and transparent system of governance is attainable and is fundamental for a prosperous Alberta.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, in the throne speech it states: “[My] government is looking forward to the report of this Legislature’s all-party Special Committee on Ethics and Accountability.” I have to say, Madam Speaker, that I, too, am looking forward to seeing what this committee has to report, especially since this committee has only met five times since it was first struck last June. Not surprisingly, meeting for a couple of hours every couple of months has not yielded a great deal of results, and the committee is still working on the first of the three pieces of legislation that it has to review. So maybe I should correct myself. I am more curious than I am looking forward to what, if anything, this committee has to report.

3:40

On top of reporting, I am also curious as to when this government actually intends to publish its report. The public has been getting mixed messages on this as well, Madam Speaker. On February 2 the government announced that the committee would be reporting this upcoming June rather than in September, which was the original promised date during the committee’s first meeting. The minister of democratic renewal, who was the chair of the committee at the time, is on record as committing to that fact. Now we learn through the throne speech that the Ethics and Accountability Committee has reverted to the original reporting date. I hope that the first order of business for the minister responsible for democratic renewal is to correct this misinformation coming out government.

Madam Speaker, as a sitting member of the committee I can tell you that there is much work to be done. I am sincerely relieved to hear that we will now be reporting in September instead of June, but I still have skepticism. At the rate that the current committee is working, will there be any meaningful and thorough review of all three pieces of legislation? The provincial elections legislation, the Conflicts of Interest Act, and the public interest disclosure act are all laws that alter the very nature of our democracy. These are not to be taken lightly, and they are not to be glossed over, either.

We need to get this committee back to work, and I strongly encourage the minister to do so and to encourage the chair to bring it back to work, unlike the jobs plan that the government is doing, and to actually commit to producing some results and getting this committee back on track.

Thanks, Madam Speaker. With that said, I would like to now move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## **Government Bills and Orders**

### **Second Reading**

#### **Bill 4**

### **An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I’m honoured to rise and move Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services.

Currently in Alberta there are several pieces of legislation that govern public-sector workers. They include the Labour Relations Code and the Public Service Employee Relations Act. Both of these acts prohibit strikes by unionized employees as well as lockouts by employers. Last year, however, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the right to strike is a fundamental right for unionized workers. A subsequent ruling by Alberta’s Court of Queen’s Bench made the same point. The courts declared that certain sections of the Labour

Relations Code and the Public Service Employee Relations Act are invalid because they prohibit strikes.

Madam Speaker, Bill 4 amends these pieces of legislation to reflect the courts’ rulings. Alberta’s labour laws have not changed significantly, some in over a decade, and must now be modernized to protect public-sector employees’ Charter rights. Last year our government conducted extensive consultations with Alberta’s public-sector employers and unions regarding an essential services approach. The public also participated in this process. The legislation presented here is fair to employees, employers, and all Albertans, ensuring access to essential services in the event of a work stoppage.

The health and safety of the public is our primary consideration, and, Madam Speaker, Albertans can be assured that critical public services will be maintained during any labour dispute. With this legislation collective bargaining will now take on an even greater role than it does. That is because there will be less use of compulsory arbitration to settle labour disputes, the process used when workers are not allowed to strike. Employers and unions will be required to negotiate in advance of any work stoppage to determine which areas of their work are considered essential services.

Madam Speaker, the proposed legislation will put greater responsibility into the hands of employers and unions to negotiate essential services agreements that will give employees the right to strike while ensuring the availability of essential services. Each situation will be slightly different, so it is critical that the parties work co-operatively to set up an agreement that meets the spirit of the law that allows workers the right to strike and protects the public by ensuring that essential services are not unduly disrupted. I want to be very clear, Madam Speaker, that some unionized public workers such as police and firefighters will not be allowed to strike because of their essential roles. Our aim is to update Alberta’s labour relations legislation in keeping with the direction of the courts while ensuring stability for critical public services.

This legislation is similar to the laws in other provinces and is intended to balance the interests of employers and employees while protecting public health and safety. Madam Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues in the Legislature to support this bill.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to preface my comments by saying that it is the position of the Official Opposition to implement reforms that ensure that those employed in essential services are treated fairly. We want to make sure that any determination as to what constitutes an essential service is done fairly as a great number of Albertans will be affected by this decision.

Also, as we stated many times before, it is our position that the best practice is to refer bills like this to committee, where expert witnesses can provide us with the pros and cons of passing this bill. Given the size of the bill and the technical nature I would recommend that committee is the place to send this bill.

With those caveats I will start. This decision not only pertains to government of Alberta employees but also impacts employees of Alberta’s health care system, including continuing care facilities amongst others. There are vital services that Albertans depend on, quite literally for their lives, that are affected by the essential services agreement in those areas.

Now, we do recognize that the government here is responding to a Supreme Court ruling from 2015 and that they are working on a timeline established by a consent order that occurred under the

previous government. The Official Opposition accepts this and that the legislation needs to be drafted, but we have concerns. We hope to hear from the minister about whether some of our concerns are indeed problems with the bill. If so, we hope that she and the rest of the MLAs in the House will work with us so that measured and thoughtful amendments will occur because I know that nobody here wants to get this bill wrong.

We are consulting with our constituents and subject experts in this field with regard to this legislation over the upcoming constituency week and look forward to discussing the details of the bill with all MLAs when we get back to the Assembly. As I said earlier, let's have this bill sent to committee for further scrutiny. Let's take the time to get it right.

First, I want to address an important point regarding the scope of this bill. The title of the bill, *An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services*, does speak to the impetus for why this legislation was needed, but this legislation overreaches the Supreme Court ruling. For instance, the legislation includes a prohibition on the use of temporary workers while those bargaining for a new agreement are on strike or lockout. That's not required anywhere in the Supreme Court decision. Madam Speaker, may the record show that we want to have that discussion. We want to have that debate and give due assessment to such a legislative change.

The Supreme Court ruling stemmed from two particular findings within legislation in Saskatchewan. First, the court took issue with an employer's ability to unilaterally decide what is an essential service. Second, they took issue with the absence of an adequate, impartial, alternate mechanism for bargaining. The impact of these two factors taken together and the assessment that striking is a Charter right led to the current legislative onus upon Alberta. In no way does it derive from this that a public-sector employer cannot hire temporary workers to compensate for lack of labour during a strike. To wedge such a restriction into *An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services* when that particular provision is not actually being required in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling is, quite simply, disingenuous.

3:50

We understand the convenience of being able to do a swath of labour changes in one go as opposed to multiple pieces of legislation, but there is a fundamental difference between what the Supreme Court decision requests and what the government here would like to implement. A fundamental difference, Madam Speaker. Again, we want to debate that particular labour provision, but we want to study it first. It's unfair to put it forward under the guise of a Supreme Court requirement where there is a tight timeline to review and implement legislation. Does such a restriction on the hiring of temporary workers diminish the government's bargaining position when there are ongoing negotiations? Again, these are taxpayer dollars being bargained, so we need to be particularly prudent.

What's more problematic is that this gives bargaining unions a monopoly on labour and workers, thereby constraining the government's hand in negotiations. The government's role in these negotiations should be to stand up for taxpayers and how their dollars are negotiated. This is an area for study, and frankly it does not even seem like it needs to be part of the essential services discussion here today. If the government actually believes this provision to be relevant to the Supreme Court decision, I invite them to table before us any assessments showing that. Otherwise, perhaps the minister can consider leaving this as something to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis rather than legislating it for everyone.

But let's get back to the heart of the bill: proposing a framework where we can allow public-sector strikes while preserving essential services. The Supreme Court recognized the right to strike in their ruling. Specifically they found it to be a fundamental right guaranteed under section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The statistics across Canada show that when wage negotiations commence for a service that can't legally strike, it's a bargaining advantage.

A 2011 Fraser Institute study found that government employees in Alberta were already earning 10 per cent more than private-sector counterparts, that they also retired two years earlier on average and enjoyed better pensions, that 81.4 per cent of public-sector workers were covered by a registered pension compared to merely 21.5 per cent of private-sector workers, all in addition to better job security. As we have recently seen, they have enjoyed virtual immunity to downturns in the economy. Of course, Alberta had a prohibition on strikes and lockouts for workers in the public sector, so a lot of agreements may have compensated for that lost right.

We don't take issue with workers striking – that's their right – so long as there are safeguards in place so that Albertans can still access critical services regardless of whether or not there is an ongoing strike action. This legislation fundamentally changes a certain aspect of Alberta's labour relations regime. The bill does seem to want to limit service disruptions by trying to clearly establish what does and what does not constitute an essential service. We support this principle. But a scenario where some public-sector workers are deemed essential and stay on the job while perhaps many of the very people they work with are not deemed as essential and can thus engage in a strike or partial strike is a new experience for Alberta.

It is possible that the first essential services agreement missed some details. Perhaps we discover that a certain occupation at Alberta Health Services should have been classified as essential when the agreement was made but was not, and there are serious consequences in a strike situation. Let's face it; governments don't always get things right the first time. The mechanism described in the proposed legislation does not seem to allow for a quick fix should there be an emergency situation. Essentially, it requires the same process of the two sides to sit down and go through the negotiating process all over in order to amend the agreement.

I would remind those in attendance that ministers are responsible for the services their departments provide. That's also the case in a strike situation or emergency situation regardless of agreements in place. It is our hope that the government has assessed this scenario fully and can address the obvious concern. What if important essential services are not being adequately covered after the first week of a strike? What's the remedy? Can we be sure a minister can fulfill their duties to the public? Given how new this is, it is not unreasonable to consider a sunset provision of five years or so that forces a review of this legislation so that it can be improved if the experience shows that changes are warranted.

One of our major concerns pertains to the role of the commissioner as outlined in this legislation. There's an extraordinary amount of authority, where essential services agreements are concerned, all concentrated in the hands of one person.

As per section 95.3(2) of the proposed legislation the commissioner has the ability to determine whether . . .

- (d) an essential services agreement has been entered into, amended or terminated,
  - (e) a person is bound by an essential services agreement,
  - (f) a person is a party to an essential services agreement,
  - (g) an essential services agreement is in effect, and
  - (h) a service is an essential service
- and the Commissioner's decision is final and binding.

“Final and binding,” Madam Speaker. The position is by government appointment. It would be profoundly problematic if this appointment were to go to someone who is not a fair-minded Albertan. Ideally, it should go to someone with a background of expertise on labour matters who does not have a history of being on one particular side or the other. With the recent appointment of a top AUPE negotiator, who will not be named, as the government’s chief labour negotiator, we are less than sure that the government will get this one right for all Albertans. An appointment could yield profound consequences for several years and lead to precedents and impacts that will last much longer.

There is a valid debate to be had over who should be making these decisions. Perhaps the Labour Relations Board more broadly, not reduced to a single commissioner; perhaps another body. The concern is whether there are enough checks and balances on the commissioner to properly serve all Albertans’ interests. To have this concentration of responsibilities in one individual on a matter as impactful as essential services is troubling, Madam Speaker. I say this, in particular, because this bill also gives the commissioner the power to sit alone and hear and decide a question and to have that decision be considered that of the Labour Relations Board. It’s difficult to convey how absolutely impartial a commissioner needs to be with these sorts of powers and how problematic it would be to have a partial commissioner.

The ability to amend an agreement consented to by both parties is no small role or responsibility. It is my hope that in the course of this debate this government can give a clear reason as to why they feel the need to empower this position so much. Perhaps the minister and the officials that crafted the legislation and advised her have valid case studies and examples for why a role with such a concentration of responsibilities is needed. It would be very helpful for us as lawmakers to have the minister table these studies.

Another item of concern is under section 95.41(1), specifying what should be contained in an essential services agreement. As worded, this bill allows for this section to be vastly expanded through regulations. In fact, subsection (g) specifically invites that scenario. Defining the required contents of an essential services agreement is perhaps one of the most important parts of this legislation. It’s important that both sides have a clear legislative scope for what should and should not be included. This leaves room for cabinet to usher in a series of changes to what is required of employers or bargaining units, for that matter, without undergoing the scrutiny that accompanies a proposed formal legislative change.

As outlined here, Madam Speaker, we have concerns with this legislation, serious concerns. These range from the overarching powers of the commissioner to significant details left to regulations. Also troubling is that this bill goes a little above and beyond what the Supreme Court asked. But considering how involved the government party is with labour groups, I will commend them on their overall restraint and reiterate that I am very open to supporting this bill, depending upon where the discussion and perhaps amendments go during debate.

We do recognize that the government needed to put this legislation forward in part because of the consent order made by the previous government, but the bill is barely 48 hours old, so we are consulting with subject matter experts to ensure that this bill as presented will not yield negative consequences to Alberta. Also, as I have earlier said, we will be discussing it with constituents over the upcoming constituency break. We hope we can work with the government on some measured and thoughtful amendments should they be determined necessary to ensure a fair process for all Albertans impacted by this important legislation.

Seeing as today is St. Patrick’s Day and I am of Irish descent, maybe we will get lucky and have this government consent to this bill being passed on to committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

4:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I’m pleased to make comments on second reading of Bill 4, which proposes to amend the Public Service Employee Relations Act and the Labour Relations Code to make them compliant with the recent Supreme Court decision upholding public-sector workers’ fundamental right to strike. The legislation guarantees public-sector workers the right to strike with the caveat that unions and employers must agree on a contingency plan in the event of a labour disruption.

As far as the outcome of this bill: unions and employers will be required to have an essential services agreement in place before proceeding to collective bargaining. Such pacts will determine which workers are needed to maintain vital services and therefore must stay on the job during a strike or lockout. In the case of nurses, for example, their agreement would likely detail how many employees are required to keep basic hospital services running.

The use of replacement workers will be banned for groups covered by an essential services agreement. In cases where the parties are struggling to reach an agreement, they can bring in umpires to adjudicate the dispute. These umpires will be required to settle quarrels about existing agreements and, in the case of health workers, for example, would be people familiar with hospital scheduling and issues related to safety.

It’s important to remember that Alberta is unique, apart from Prince Edward Island, the only two jurisdictions that do not have legislation to allow essential public workers to strike. Bill 4 covers about 150,000 unionized workers under 77 collective agreements, including most health workers, government employees, and nonacademic staff at postsecondary institutions.

Bill 4 is a sea change in Alberta, Madam Speaker, from the former PC administration, which tried to legislate away freedom of association, which is guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and imposing, as it tried, wage settlements. On the whole the bill is a fair and balanced response, in our view, to rulings by the Court of Queen’s Bench and the Supreme Court which declared it unconstitutional for governments to impose a blanket ban on strikes.

Bill 4 effectively guarantees public-sector workers the right to strike while still ensuring access to public services in the event of a labour disruption. Perhaps the most striking thing about Bill 4 is that organized labour supports it, which is a far cry from the diametric opposition that PC bills 45 and 46 created in the last five years. This speaks, I think, volumes about what’s possible if we can get labour peace and fairness perceived on both sides.

Many on the political right will decry the so-called judicial activism in relation to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, yet this issue is a perfect example of how the courts can intercede when governments are running roughshod over fundamental rights. The reason people go out on wildcat strikes is precisely because they’re desperate. They cannot find any other way to communicate with their employer, in this case the government, to get a point across.

They absolutely must have that option. All of us will benefit. Bill 4 provides that with a reasonable caveat. Under bills 45 and 46 of the previous PC administration, it left workers no option and no bargaining opportunity. The ability to go on strike is really the only

card that workers hold as a tool to ensure some element of accountability and fairness.

Madam Speaker, pending a more detailed examination, I appreciate the leadership taken by the minister, and I look forward to hearing more of the elements of the debate that need to come out, the details around the commissioner and his or her role and how we may ensure that both sides, both the public and the union members, get a balanced approach, which is, I think, what the role of government is, to try and provide a balance of rights and freedoms on both sides to ensure that the public interest is being served long term.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Then I'll call on the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and speak in support of Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. Currently in Alberta the relationship between public-sector workers and their employers is governed by several pieces of legislation. Before being elected last May, in my former role as a front-line registered nurse and elected workplace representative I watched the case of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour make it through the Supreme Court with keen interest. I knew that the labour legislation in Alberta would be put to the test as a result of the court's ruling. These include the Labour Relations Code and the Public Service Employee Relations Act.

In their current form both of these acts prohibit strikes by unionized employees and lockouts by employers. Last year, however, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the right to strike is a fundamental right for unionized workers. A subsequent ruling by Alberta's Court of Queen's Bench reached the same conclusion. The courts declared certain sections of the Labour Relations Code and the Public Service Employee Relations Act invalid because they prohibit strikes.

In their ruling the Supreme Court justices indicated that freedom of association granted by the Charter protects the right to autonomy and the dignity of vulnerable people. They went on to say, "This collective action [of a strike] at the moment of impasse is an affirmation of the dignity and autonomy of employees in their working lives." More specifically, Justice Abella said that the right to strike is essential in evening the playing field between workers and employers. Justice Abella noted that there had been a long-standing "fundamental power imbalance [between employers and employees] which the entire history of modern labour legislation has been scrupulously devoted to rectifying." Bill 4 works towards a more even playing field between workers and their employers.

The Supreme Court ruling came as a result of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour's challenge of a 2008 law passed by the Saskatchewan government. That law limited the right to strike by workers deemed by the government to be in essential services such as jail guards. The law gave the Saskatchewan government the unilateral right to decide which workers were essential, and it denied them access to effective alternatives for resolving labour disputes, Justice Abella said.

In response to the Supreme Court ruling striking down Saskatchewan's unconstitutional law, University of British Columbia law professor Joel Bakan remarked that the view of the courts has changed as governments have become more hostile to unions. Mr. Bakan wrote:

Since the 1980s, organized labour has lost ground as a result of unsympathetic government policies and laws, not to mention economic changes, such as globalization. The court recognizes

that as workers' freedom of association is eroded by economic shifts and hostile governments, the judiciary becomes more essential for protecting this fundamental right. It's a classic case – like segregation in the U.S. South, or abortion or sexual orientation equality in Canada – where governments cannot be relied upon to respect constitutional rights and freedoms, so the courts step in.

Well, I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that unlike the previous government, this government can be relied on to respect workers' constitutional rights and freedoms. We are doing just that with Bill 4, and I say: it's about time. Bill 4 amends Alberta's labour legislation invalidated by Supreme Court rulings. Alberta's labour laws have not changed significantly for almost 30 years and must now be modernized to protect the Charter rights of public-sector employees. Modernizing our labour laws also works towards repairing the relationship the government has with its public-sector workers after the vicious attacks by the former PC government.

On the other hand, our government has achieved broad consensus with employees and employers alike. We conducted extensive consultations with Alberta's public-sector employees and labour groups. We are taking an approach towards essential services based on a negotiation and adjudication model. The public has also participated in the process. This legislation is fair to employees, employers, and all Albertans, ensuring access to essential services in the event of a work stoppage.

**4:10**

As always, the health and safety of our public is our primary consideration. Madam Speaker, Albertans can be assured that critical public services will be maintained during any labour disruptions. As a former front-line public-sector worker I know with certainty that when professionals like registered nurses and all other public-sector workers, for that matter, sit down to negotiate an essential services agreement with their employers, they will keep the safety of Albertans front of mind.

With this legislation, collective bargaining will be more meaningful and will take on an even greater role than it has before. The Minister of Labour mentioned this previously, but I believe it bears repeating. There will be less use of compulsory arbitration to settle labour disputes. Employers and unions will have the ability to negotiate in advance of any work stoppage to determine which areas of their work are considered essential services.

Under the model proposed by Bill 4, Madam Speaker, greater responsibility will be put into the hands of employers and unions to negotiate essential services agreements while ensuring the availability of essential services to protect the public. Each situation will be slightly different, and Bill 4 provides that flexibility. The parties will work co-operatively to set up an agreement that meets the spirit of the law, that allows workers the right to strike, and that protects the public by ensuring that essential services are not unduly disrupted.

I want to be very clear, Madam Speaker, that some unionized public-sector workers such as police and firefighters will not be allowed to strike at all because of their essential roles. Our aim is to update Alberta's labour relations legislation in keeping with the direction of the courts while ensuring stability of critical public services. This legislation is similar to laws in other provinces and is intended to balance the interests of employers and employees while protecting public health and safety.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues in the Legislature to support this bill. With that being said, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, I believe that we have had a wonderful, productive two weeks of session, where we heard from a great many of our MLAs on both sides of the House on matters of very significant importance and on matters that have a direct bearing on their experiences as new MLAs.

That being said, I believe that we've conducted as much business as we can for the time being, and I would move that we adjourn until 1:30 on April 4. Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:13 p.m. to Monday, April 4, at 1:30 p.m.]





## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to March 17, 2016**

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

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

**1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)

**2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)

**3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)

Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)

**4 An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., adjourned)

**201 Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 119-132 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft., adjourned)

**202 Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**

First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

**203 Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**

First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, April 4, 2016

Day 8

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
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Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)

Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Government House Leader  
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

## Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinstauber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinstauber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinstauber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 4, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let us reflect. Let each of us, in our own way, reflect on the great strength and courage of Albertans all across this province. During times like this we need to have confidence that strength can be found from within and from those around us. Let us welcome the small acts of kindness and recognize that like threads when tied together, they become a strong rope that prepares us for the future.

Let's now welcome the singing of *O Canada*.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

**Robert H. Reynolds, QC**  
**Seventh Clerk of the Legislative Assembly**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with the indulgence of the House I would like to make an announcement. It gives me great pleasure to announce the appointment of Robert H. Reynolds, QC, as the seventh Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. [Standing ovation] Hon. members, I think you may be standing more than once in this case here today.

As the seventh Clerk of the Legislature of Alberta, effective today, Mr. Reynolds, a long-serving and dedicated employee of the Alberta Legislative Assembly, is one of Canada's foremost experts on Westminster-style parliamentary practice. Rob's professionalism and commitment to the public service will ensure continued focus on the Legislative Assembly Office's mission to provide nonpartisan parliamentary support and to implement the innovative changes necessary to sustain the Legislative Assembly Office as a leader in parliamentary support organizations in Canada.

I would like to personally express my thanks to the representatives of the various caucuses who were consulted and participated in the process for their time and advice with respect to Rob's selection. I can truly say that Mr. Reynolds' selection was supported across all parties in this Legislature. I am confident that Mr. Reynolds will provide strong leadership to the dedicated LAO staff and employees and valued service and advice and decisive direction to this Assembly and to myself. I can tell you that personally I look forward to working with Mr. Reynolds.

I would now invite the Deputy Speaker to make some brief comments and to introduce Mr. Reynolds' family.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I first met Rob Reynolds about 10 years ago, when I began working here at the Legislature. I remember being in a committee room, and it was like this deep sigh of relief as soon as Rob came in the room because here was the

man with all the answers. I've come to know Rob very well over the last little while, and I'm so thrilled that he's taking on the role of Clerk because he is still the man with all the answers. Even if he doesn't have the answer to the question, he always has something really funny to say.

It is indeed my pleasure and my honour, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Ritu Khullar, who is the wife of our new Clerk, and their younger son, Nikhil. They're both seated in your gallery. Their older son, Samir, is also joining us but not physically. He's watching the session streamed at the University of Waterloo, where he is in attendance. I see they have risen. Would you please give them all the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. As we all know in this Assembly, family is the reason that we are able to do what we do.

Again with the indulgence of the House I would recognize the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations, Mr. Reynolds. It's my pleasure to rise today and give a warm welcome to the seventh Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Robert Reynolds. Now, they've written some stuff here for me, which I will read.

Mr. Reynolds brings to his new role a wealth of experience, having worked closely with the officers of the Legislature for 20 years. He has a long history in Edmonton, having articulated and practised in the city before joining the Legislative Assembly Office in 1993 as Parliamentary Counsel. He became Senior Parliamentary Counsel in '97 and moved on to the position of Law Clerk and director of interparliamentary relations in 2010. He is a frequent speaker on the subject of parliamentary privilege and is often why my privilege motions fail, I believe. He's recognized as one of Canada's foremost experts on parliamentary practice. He has also twice served as president of the Association of Parliamentary Counsel in Canada.

I just want to say that he's always been most helpful to us in opposition and again in government, has a tremendous sense of humour and an engaging laugh, which I'm sure that all of us will come to appreciate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome, Mr. Reynolds.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure – and thank you for the opportunity – to rise and just say a few words on behalf of my caucus on the appointment of Mr. Reynolds as the new Clerk of the Assembly. With over 20 years of service to this Assembly we know that Mr. Reynolds, Rob, is a model of professionalism and integrity, serving the Assembly with the unique ability to lighten any situation with that wonderful smile and his great sense of humour. We hope that this service will continue for years and years to come; however, whether he intends to beat Dr. McNeil's 28 years' tenure as Clerk is perhaps optimistic thinking.

I might just add a very quick thank you to you, Mr. Speaker, for ensuring a multicaucus approach to the appointment, one that the Wildrose fully supports.

1:40

It can't be escaped that Mr. Reynolds has a very particular sense of humour. Some would call it dry; others just don't get the joke. So in honour of that humour, a little bit of humour on qualities

found in that rare vintage of Queen's Counsel lawyers. Château Queen's Counsel is a rare, dry vintage, matured in remote corners of Edmonton and around the world. It has a prominent nose and a full, round body. It's rather crusty, with a price tag that makes it hard to stomach, and is best left stored undisturbed in dark cellars for many years.

Now that my own attempt at his sense of dry humour has either hit or missed, my absolute heartfelt congratulations on behalf of the Wildrose colleagues, Mr. Reynolds, on this new chapter of your life. I look forward to your orders du jour.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

I must tell the House that I'm still working on understanding all of the new Clerk's humour. I have figured out about 50 per cent of them. I also must tell both of you gentlemen that I have some new ammunition here to use as you two bring resolutions to the floor.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, very much. Certainly, it gives me great pleasure and it's a great privilege today on behalf of not just the current members of the Progressive Conservative caucus but past members of the Progressive Conservative caucuses that have served with Mr. Reynolds and, indeed, members of legislative staff both here in Edmonton and around the province – you know, one of the things that I think is important to realize is that as the head now of the Legislative Assembly Office Mr. Reynolds is in fact the boss of all of our constituency assistants as well, and that's an important role that he will play. I know that Dr. McNeil's role in that was certainly appreciated, and I know that Mr. Reynolds will carry that on in a way and in a culture that were established and, I think, will be maintained and carried on through his tenure.

You know, I'm well aware of Mr. Reynolds' wry sense of humour, and despite the fact that he is an Anglican lawyer, I'm quite prepared to serve under his direction because Lutheran veterinarians just do that. It's certainly a pleasure to congratulate him on his appointment.

I, too, echo the comments that were made that the process to ensure an all-party development and selection, I think, is something that is appreciated by all, given the nonpartisan nature that is so critical in this role.

One final comment. I'm certainly glad to know that I, too, may have the privilege of learning what it means to have my points of privilege turned down as well.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to stand, too, and congratulate Mr. Rob Reynolds as the new Clerk of the Assembly. I would hope in the spirit of the times that we're going to save some money on this man as well as get the results that we need. He's been approachable, deferential, diligent, and certainly in over a decade of my working with Rob, it's been a pleasure to both work and challenge some of the decisions that have been made here. He will be very instrumental in the critical decisions that we make over the next few years, and I have every faith in Rob, that he will serve this Legislature and the people of Alberta in a very exemplary way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I also rise and on behalf of my entire caucus would like to echo the praise that

my colleagues have rightly shown to Mr. Rob Reynolds and also echo my thanks to you, Mr. Speaker, for the thorough process, the crosspartisan, nonpartisan process that you went through in naming Mr. Reynolds as Clerk. Now, that's something that we know, as we've heard, doesn't happen every day in this Assembly.

Mr. Reynolds and I have a little bit of history. I'm sure he doesn't remember me, but I certainly remember him when he started in this role, if I'm not mistaken, 22 years ago. I was working my very first job, for the Official Opposition here in the Assembly.

**An Hon. Member:** Which opposition was that?

**Mr. Clark:** It was an opposition led by Laurence Decore. I had a tremendous respect for, a tremendous affinity for him and everything he stood for.

It is something, that our paths cross again, and I just wanted to echo and again offer my heartfelt congratulations and look forward to your strong leadership of the Legislative Assembly Office, something that I know each of us respects, and I know how important that is for all of us and all the work that we do in the Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

The first official action of our Clerk, to call for ...

**The Clerk:** Introduction of Visitors.

**The Speaker:** It gets better.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and also my congratulations to the new Clerk.

My pleasure to rise and to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 31 students plus four of their student supervisors, including teachers, from St. Martha school in the Edmonton-McClung riding. The teachers include Ms Shelley LaFontaine, educational assistant Mrs. Elizabeth Persad, parent helpers Ms Tracy Reyes-Fischer and Ms Anita Fuernsinn. I'll ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to introduce to you and through you the students and staff of the beautiful Bowden Grandview school. If you'd please stand when I call your name. We have with us today Ms Tracy Dreher, Ms Brenda Sherwood, Mrs. Carrie Chatt, Mrs. Amanda Minty, Mrs. Tracy Thorkman, Mr. Chad Hunter, Mrs. Sheryl Neilson, Miss Andrea Rainault, and approximately 32 students. If you'd all rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly the wonderful students of Meyokumin school. They are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Megan Gregoire Davis and Ms MacLeod as well as a parent, Mr. Jas Lallh. I ask them to please rise now and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly a true Edmonton superhero and her team of cancer-fighting avengers. We are joined by seven-year-old Mable Tooke, whose heroic alter ego we are familiar with, Spider-Mable. Spider-Mable is a cancer survivor who is the Canadian Cancer Society's daffodil champion this year, helping raise awareness and hope in the fight against this terrible disease. I'd ask that both Spider-Mable as well as her parents, Lisa and Neil, and grandparents Rick and Yvonne rise and please remain standing as I introduce some of their other avenger partners here. They include Christine McCourt-Reid, national board member of the Canadian Cancer Society; Angeline Webb, policy and health promotion department manager with the Canadian Cancer Society for Alberta and the Northwest Territories; Cerina Lee, a graduate student at the University of Alberta School of Public Health and a public policy intern at the Canadian Cancer Society for Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

Spider-Mable, you are such an inspiration to all of us. Thanks for being here today. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** I think we have much to learn, all of us, from the strength of children.

I'm going to ask for unanimous permission of the House to finish Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise today and introduce on your behalf two guests seated in your gallery, Dr. Terry Daniel and his 11-year-old grandson, Aiden Daniel. Dr. Daniel is a professor in the department of finance and management science in the School of Business at the University of Alberta. Aiden Daniel is 11 years old and has a keen interest in politics. I would now ask that Terry and Aiden rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly leaders and members of the Hope Bridges Society of Strathmore. I would ask that they please stand as I call their names: Cathy Lindon, Terry Gathercole, Patricia Timmermans, and John Ashton. Strathmore's Hope Bridges Society uses creative expression through the arts to foster meaningful relationships and change the perception of difference. Hope Bridges believes that everyone belongs and promotes inclusion and values citizenship in everything they do. In a spirit of hospitality and a standard of excellence, Hope Bridges facilitates the connection of community members through inclusive arts activities, where they are not judged and where all are uniquely valued. Hope Bridges works to build a stronger community using arts programming that promotes connection and well-being through participation and inclusion. Please join me in thanking and welcoming members of Hope Bridges Society to the Legislative Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my absolute pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly several members of the North Edmonton Minor Football

Association, NEMFA, the Edmonton Seahawks. NEMFA was created in 1993 to serve children aged eight to 17 years in north Edmonton and has grown from an organization first run out of the trunk of a car and a garage, with 17 players and only 13 uniforms, to today, with a board of nine, over 40 field staff, an average of 200 players registered annually, and their clubhouse in the glorious community of Edmonton-Castle Downs. Joining us today in the gallery are Marvin Mills, the president and sometimes coach; Ken Anderson, the vice-president; Mirella Horner, the general manager of football operations; her husband, Paul Horner, equipment co-ordinator and former coach; and Shelley Yuskow, secretary and former registrar. I'd ask them to remain standing and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce something new, the freshly minted member elect for Calgary-Greenway, Mr. Prab Gill. Though Prab is not sworn in yet, we look forward to him joining us down here, amongst the rest of us. With Prab today is Mr. Mandeep Shergill, who was Prab's campaign manager and who will be working with Prab in the Calgary-Greenway constituency office. I would ask them both now to please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

## Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

## Energy Policies

**Mr. Jean:** On Friday an additional 440 Albertans lost their jobs, this time at Cenovus. Wages are plummeting across the province, with Alberta seeing the largest year-over-year decline ever. And it's not just in the energy sector but in every industry right across the province almost. The NDP has responded with a failed jobs program, new taxes on everyone and everything, and damaging new regulations. To the Premier: what hope can suffering Albertans possibly have in a government that continues to do this type of damage to Alberta's economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government is very concerned about the consequences of the significant job losses that we are seeing across the province, and that's why we are acting to do everything that we can to support Alberta communities, to support Alberta families, and also to diversify the economy, something that the folks over there don't think should be a priority, and also to engage in job-creation measures. There are a number of issues that we've talked about before, and I look forward to talking about more of them today and in the budget as we go forward.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier recently applauded the federal budget, saying that she was pleased and that it was a good start. Seriously, we have the federal environment minister commenting on how the federal budget is about moving in the direction of no development in the oil sector. There's more red tape, there are more delays and more uncertainty surrounding the approval of new pipelines than ever before, and a tanker ban, of course, remains in place on the west coast, without any word whatsoever from the government. Ottawa is becoming even more distant and uncaring

about Alberta. When will the Premier actually stand in her place and stand up for Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, what we've said is that as we try to work with our colleagues across the country, we're going to engage in respectful dialogue and discussion. We're not going to engage in tweeting and name-calling and that kind of thing because that doesn't get us to where we need to go. Now, for instance, the member opposite began his questions talking about job losses. Our government went to the federal government and said: EI doesn't work for Albertans. As a result of the changes, which, yes, must be improved – and you've heard from me on that already several times – over \$300 million will come into Alberta, into the pockets of Alberta families who've lost their jobs, that wouldn't have been there based on the representations from those folks over there.

**Mr. Jean:** There is one issue Albertans want this Premier to fight for. The tanker ban on the Pacific north coast is bad news for Alberta's energy sector and all of Albertans. It blocks a pipeline that would get Albertans back to work and would grow our economy. I've asked the government nine times if they support the Liberal ban on tanker traffic. For an Alberta Premier this should be a very easy question, with only one right answer. Premier, do you oppose the B.C. north coast tanker ban? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Leader of the Opposition continues his campaign of intimidation and half-truth to get pipelines built. Here's a fact: there is no tanker ban in place yet on the west coast. So there's a thing you should probably know.

Secondly, what's delaying Gateway being built are the 209 conditions that the NEB put in place under the member opposite's government. That's what's delaying that pipeline getting built. We know, going forward, that shaming and yelling at our provincial and federal counterparts is not the way to get things done. We will work collaboratively. We will have discussions at all levels till we get what . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
Second major question.

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans are also worried about the looming increase of their power bills, and the NDP have no one but themselves to blame. Power purchase agreements have a clause to stop governments from making generation of electricity unprofitable. Instead of studying the economic impact, the NDP raised taxes through the specified gas emitters regulation starting January 1 of this year. Can the Premier tell Albertans if her government did any economic analysis whatsoever about possible consequences before plowing ahead with these ideological changes?

**Ms Notley:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, we've done a great deal of economic analysis. We know that we need to walk away from the archaic policies and practices of both parties over there in order to build our economy going forward and to improve our environmental record to get the very pipelines that those folks think are so important built, the same ones that haven't been built over the previous 10 years of ignoring the environment and ignoring people across this country. We won't do that. We will act responsibly on our climate change leadership plan, and that will contribute to getting those pipelines built, and it will also protect the environment.

**Mr. Jean:** The Balancing Pool, an independent body created to protect the electricity grid from political interference, has confirmed the rights of power companies to cancel their PPAs. The Premier apparently didn't get the memo. She's now preparing to use taxpayers' resources to challenge the Balancing Pool and these companies. It's a giant mess, and Albertans will be left to cover the cost of up to \$1 billion per year because of NDP incompetence. Why can't the Premier admit her government made a mistake and that all power consumers in Alberta will now be paying the price?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the issue here is what the power companies believe the previous government agreed to. It is true that it is outrageously shameful what they think, because they believe that they got to sign contracts that send the profit always in their direction and the losses always in the direction of the consumers. That is shameful.

2:00

**Mr. Jean:** We know that this is just the beginning of the NDP experiments with power bills. This government is paying a consultant \$100,000 a month to figure out how to shut down coal plants. There is no clear plan on how to replace the electricity except through either massive taxpayer subsidies or much higher power bills for Alberta families. My question is simple. How can Albertans trust that the NDP has their best interests at heart when everything this government has done has only made things much worse?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition says that he is 90 per cent agreed on everything with the leader of the third party, so my question is: are they 90 per cent agreed on a contract that power companies believe means that they keep all the profits and the public picks up all the losses? Do they agree with that? That is the question that I think should be answered.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Municipal Grants in Place of Taxes

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, municipalities rely on provincial grants in lieu of taxes to pay for the municipal services that provincially owned facilities use. The previous government's budget included cutting the grants in lieu program on social and senior housing facilities. Since despite municipal concerns this government kept that cut in place, to the minister of seniors: how does she justify the province dodging responsibility and sticking taxpayers with the bill by transferring the cost for provincial social housing to municipalities?

**The Speaker:** The minister of seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for the question. He's quite right; it was the previous government who made the decision to cut this funding. We haven't been able to restore every cut that the previous government has made, but we do know that now is the time to invest in infrastructure like roads and bridges, and that's what we're doing, and that is a significant support to municipalities. We're working with them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, that didn't precisely answer the question. Last month the AUMA mayors' caucus met with the housing minister. The minister refused to reinstate this grant program. This

hits municipalities hard; for example, Calgary, a \$5 million loss; Lethbridge, a \$913,000 loss. Now some municipalities are considering a moratorium on approving any further social and senior housing in their communities. Will the minister admit that they made a mistake and announce today the return of the grants in lieu of taxes program?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The unprecedented collapse in the oil price means that we need to make fiscally responsible decisions. Unfortunately, we're not in a position to approve every request for funding. Our government is proud of our relationship with municipalities and the investments we're making in these communities, and we're working well with our partners.

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has seen no issue with drastically raising taxes on Albertans. Increased business tax, increased income tax, and the NDP PST carbon tax have all resulted in Albertans handing over more and more of their hard-earned money to this government. Provincial facilities have cost impacts on municipalities, yet this government refuses to pay when it's their turn. To the Premier: does the Premier think that it is fair that this government refuses to pay its fair share?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, to begin with, let me just be very clear that Alberta continues to have the lowest taxes of any province in the country. Secondly, that will remain the case because we know that now is not the time for more to come out. It's very interesting watching the folks over there because, you know, one day is a spending day, the next day is a cutting day, the next day is a billion-dollar cut day, and the next day is a billion-dollar spend day. You know, we just cannot possibly keep track of whether you want us to spend or cut, spend or cut. The minister made a very good point. We need to be responsible. We need to manage our finances prudently. We can't say yes to everything, and we're going to move forward on that basis.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
The leader of the third party.

### Government Spending

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning the PC caucus launched Engage, a public conversation that asked Albertans what is important and how government should deliver its part of the picture. Time and again we've heard this government say that they can't cut spending without cutting front-line services. The PC caucus completely rejects this premise. Alberta's talented and knowledgeable public service, if empowered, will find a better way. Premier, will you empower the taxpayers' employees who are experts in Alberta public service to identify cost savings and then implement these savings quickly?

**Ms Notley:** Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, that would be better than announcing a billion-dollar cut to health care without the slightest idea of how you were going to do it, which is exactly what the members opposite did, which, of course, is exactly why they didn't win the last election. Albertans didn't want a billion-dollar cut to health care, nor do they want a \$4 billion health care cut, which is what they're talking about today.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, let me correct the Premier, who I don't believe was sincere with what she just said. In 2013-14 at a cost of

\$3.2 billion Alberta had 2.1 million emergency room visits, of which, according to AHS, only 10 per cent were real emergencies. Ninety per cent of that amount is \$2.8 billion annually. So we're not looking for cuts. Will the government do something to redirect this overexpenditure in one area and find a way to deliver those services in a more appropriate and cost-effective way, as we do suggest?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, making sure that we're using the resources that we do have efficiently and effectively is an ongoing priority for this government. That's why we keep investments in numbers like 8-1-1, where you can call anywhere in Alberta and have an opportunity to speak directly to a registered nurse, talk through your symptoms, and find out whether or not you do need to go to emergency. We're not going to shut down emergency rooms and fire nurses and lay off tons of public service workers. It's important that we move forward in a sustainable responsible way and find efficiencies and invest in primary care.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, the only ones talking about laying off doctors and nurses are on that side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, the government's spending is out of control, and they are borrowing for operational expenses for the first time in decades. Finding savings today will avoid deep cuts later. That's how it works. To the Minister of Health. You know and we know that abuse of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs places huge burdens on health, justice, and social services. What will your government actually do to prevent harm before it costs a fortune and further harms Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the first things this government did was extend the ban on flavoured tobacco products to include the exemption that the members opposite approved, which was menthol. We have consistent practices, and they're showing that the numbers are going down and that youth are less susceptible to smoking. As well, we're continuing to move forward in a sustainable and reasonable way as opposed to magically pulling \$4 billion of cuts out of thin air. If it was such low-hanging fruit, why didn't the members opposite address it when they were in government?

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Mental Health Services for Postsecondary Students

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mental health is an important topic and one that I'm pleased to see this government seems to be taking seriously. Now, there's very clear evidence to show that most mental health issues have first onset by age 24, and untreated mental illness has significant implications for academic success, productivity, substance use, and social relationships. Addressing mental health in Alberta's postsecondary system absolutely must be a priority. To the Minister of Advanced Education. This year marks the end of the three-year plan that allocated \$12.5 million to postsecondary mental health. In your opinion has this been an effective program?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, we've heard loud and

clear from students all across the province of the value provided by the programs that were initiated under the previous round of funding that was allocated to those programs, and certainly I'm working with my colleague the Minister of Health to look at options for continuing to support mental health services on campuses all across this province.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad we seem to agree that it's a worthwhile program, but I think that, very clearly, it's one that is in need of improvement. Now, the current program treats students in Alberta's schedule 1 universities differently than the rest. Per capita funding was in some cases 30 times higher. Students at NAIT received \$4 per full-time learner equivalent in mental health funding whereas the University of Lethbridge received \$146 per FLE. To the same minister: do you agree that this inequity is absurd and should have been addressed sooner?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for pointing out the fact that the previous round of funding wasn't in fact given on a per capita basis. One of the things that we need to address is that access to mental health services is not equitable across the province. A student at NAIT, for example, lives in a large city that has more access to mental health services in the surrounding community than perhaps a student in Lethbridge or Grande Prairie would have access to. Providing equitable mental health funding is a priority for this government going forward.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

2:10

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that the minister and I are on the same page on this one. I wish, though, that you'd addressed the issue sooner. You still have an opportunity, though.

The students in Alberta's 26 postsecondary institutions, I'm sure we agree, are key to our continued prosperity as well as economic diversification in Alberta, but they need the tools to succeed, and that especially includes support for their mental well-being, which is enabled through stable, predictable, and equitable funding that does not discriminate against students based on what school they choose to attend. To the Minister of Advanced Education again: will you commit to providing stable, equitable, long-term funding...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the acknowledgement that the hon. member and I are on the same page, which is odd because he's usually on the same page as the Wildrose and the PCs.

At any rate, we are looking forward to making sure that predictable, sustainable funding is in place for all of our postsecondary institutions across the province, and that will include mental health supports for our students.

### **Petrochemical Diversification Program**

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, the low price of oil is stressing families in my constituency of Edmonton-Manning. They tell me that they are worried about making ends meet and that they are looking at our government to take action. To the Minister of Energy: what steps

are you taking to diversify our petrochemical industry and help get Alberta off the resource royalty roller coaster?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Well, first of all, we believe that creating jobs for Alberta families is our number one priority. A few weeks ago the minister of economic development and I announced a petrochemical diversification program that is a competitive program that will leverage \$500 million of royalty credits into \$5 billion of investment.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, given that many Albertan families are feeling the effects of this downturn and are still looking for work, to the same minister: how many jobs do you expect these investments to create?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We estimate that this program alone will create two to three projects around Alberta, create 3,000 jobs in the construction phase and 1,000 permanent jobs after production begins.

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, given that I've heard from many constituents who have been struggling for some months now and are anxious about their future, again to the Energy minister: how soon can we expect Albertans to get back to work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We estimate that after this competitive program is done and the projects are awarded, work will begin by the end of this year in the construction; again, 3,000 jobs in construction, 1,000 permanent. And we, unlike what our opposition has said, are not picking winners and losers. These are 3,000 winner jobs and 1,000 winner jobs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### **Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation and WCB Review**

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recent internal government documents shed light on the implementation of Bill 6. The documents show that department officials warned the minister that Bill 6 would create – and I quote – panic. Now the government is preparing round-table discussions, and farmers need certainty, not panic. Can the minister commit to Albertans that actual farmers and ranchers, not just producer and labour groups, will be participating in these talks?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the member for the question. I can assure this House and the Alberta public that actual farmers and ranchers are going to be at these technical working groups as will workers. It's important to remember that the legislation is about farm workers, and workers will be involved as will the whole industry across Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Strankman:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the same internal documents recommended that there be a call centre established and manned by

experts to field the numerous questions that Bill 6 left unanswered. Given that the members opposite refused to answer their phones or make themselves available until thousands of farmers from every corner of the province started protesting, why did the minister ignore his experts' advice in this regard?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. I couldn't disagree with the member opposite more. I have been absolutely making myself available – I think he's probably aware of that – as have many people here on the front bench and behind me, who have made themselves available and continue to make themselves available. I'm absolutely looking forward to the next steps in this process.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government ignored advice on Bill 6's timing and consultation. Since the government is now launching a major review into the WCB, a broken monopoly that they're forcing upon rural Albertans, how can these same rural Albertans trust this minister to choose common sense over ideology on any recommended changes to WCB?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely critical that Albertans feel confident that the Workers' Compensation Board is providing fair compensation and meaningful rehabilitation. The review of the Workers' Compensation Board is long overdue. It hasn't been reviewed in 15 years, so we are taking a look at it. We will be engaging farmers, ranchers, and workers in all segments of the sectors that are covered by WCB to make sure that they are engaged in this conversation.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### **Government Spending** (continued)

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently hosted a prebudget round-table in Calgary-Lougheed, and the recommendations of my constituents mirror our PC caucus's \$4 billion challenge as outlined in our Engage document, which we are proud to launch today and which I will be tabling in the House this afternoon. So I'll ask the Finance minister: regarding the widespread economic concern, which has already negatively affected Alberta's historically stellar credit rating, will your government take the challenge of our constituents and our caucus to control spending through cost savings and efficiencies while ensuring quality front-line services?

**Mr. Ceci:** I appreciate the question, Mr. Speaker. Quality front-line services is a task we take very seriously in terms of funding appropriately, and we're doing that. We did that with Budget 2015. We'll continue to do that with Budget 2016.

I appreciate the engagement with your constituents. Many MLAs from this side have done the same thing and passed on the information. As well, thousands of Albertans have taken the opportunity to get in touch with us online and give us their feedback.

Thank you.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Minister.

Given that some accuse your government of having the same fervour for deficit and debt as the federal cousins and given that the constituents of Calgary-Lougheed don't share any ideologically different direction but do share the PC caucus's respect for fiscal restraint, again to the Finance minister: when might we expect a response from the government to the letter that I sent on behalf of our constituents, and beyond that, what assurance can you provide to all Albertans that your government will not slide into a damaging, unsustainable fiscal cycle of perpetual operating deficits?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm just thinking back to Budget 2015, where we presented that. One of the people who gave us a quote with regard to our borrowing for operating, the point you're bringing up – it's not unusual. Let me start with that. In fact, it's very usual at the point when the economy changes dramatically and revenues fall off. Indeed, the whole structure of budgets, whether they are provincial or federal, contains a certain automatic stabilization. David Dodge, former governor of the Bank of Canada, believes we're on the right track. We're going to be on the right track with Budget 2016 as well.

**Mr. Rodney:** And the Finance minister knows very well that there were other recommendations. I'm not sure how closely those are being followed.

Given that the constituents of Calgary-Lougheed have participated in this prebudget consultation, as have, as you have mentioned, thousands of other Albertans, and given that our constituents' advice to you is to control spending and debt levels and given that they are also urging your government to focus on job creation, which is another key focus of our PC caucus Engage document, to the Finance minister: how much of the advice from the constituents of Calgary-Lougheed and our caucus is reflected in the overall message that you've received from other Albertans? By the way, when did you send the budget ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, the budget will be coming out and will be tabled on April 14. As soon as we have it ready, you'll get it.

In our prebudget tour we went around the province. Many cities and towns have been engaged: the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, Calgary, Edmonton, Grande Prairie. We held two telephone town halls, where over 66,000 Albertans listened for a period of time. We have heard many, many things. Some of those are reflected in your consultation, and we will be presenting all of those on April 14.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Airdrie.

2:20

### **PDD Service Delivery**

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP have established a track record of implementing policy without consultation. We saw it with Bill 6, and now the government has taken aim at our most vulnerable by implementing a hasty transformational plan. A three-year consultation process was reduced to a rushed implementation period for all the hard-working PDD care providers in this province to complete the new and mandatory master service agreement. Why won't the minister acknowledge the need for a thoughtful and deliberate process for PDD care providers?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will begin by saying that our government has stabilized services for the most vulnerable people in Alberta. Regarding PDD, it was our government who started consultation on safety standards, and that's the way we will move forward. Going forward in all our policies, we will consult the sector and do what's the right thing to do in consultation with the sector.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that the NDP government's transformational plan includes a new provision where all service providers must now sign a master agreement and given that this agreement includes a gag clause preventing public commentary should care providers have comments or concerns about their industry, how can the minister say that Alberta's most vulnerable are being adequately protected when those directly involved in PDD care cannot be whistle-blowers?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned before, for any step, any policy going forward, we will consult PDD, and we will do what's recommended by the sector. That's the approach we have taken with safety standards, and that's the approach we will take going forward.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that these rushed timelines will harm and are harming service delivery for those with developmental disabilities and given the fact that the government's moves to date are removing local decision-making, showing that they have no faith in the great work that the providers do in our communities, how can this minister not see that his transformation of the PDD funding structure is rushed, ill consulted, and lacking the confidence of PDD leaders?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will reiterate one more time that these issues are important to our government. We intend to work with PDD service providers on these issues, and we will get this right.

I want to mention that I'm glad to hear that from that side of the House because these are stale issues for them, that they have no interest in legislating.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

### **Municipal Funding**

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week I received a very concerning letter from the village of Vilna. It was in regard to this government's decision not to reinstate the grant in lieu of taxes for 25,000 housing units across the province, over \$11,000 to this small village alone. Downloading the cost of these units onto municipalities is wrong, especially since the primary owner of the units is the government of Alberta. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: why does this government want everyday Albertans to pay extra to cover the government's share?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government is very proud of our relationship with municipalities. This decision was made by the previous government, and at this difficult time economically we can't reinstate every cut that the previous government made. We're working with municipalities and supporting them through investment in infrastructure.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are tired of this government raising their taxes. Given that without this funding municipalities will have to raise taxes on property owners, who are already struggling to make ends meet, many of them seniors and people on AISH, why does the minister want our municipal partners to take the heat for yet another NDP tax increase?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As the Premier said very well earlier today, we have the lowest taxes in the country, and that remains so. You know, the Official Opposition can't have it both ways. They can't be saying that they're going to have reckless cuts and then demanding that we invest more. We need to be prudently making good fiscal decisions, and that's what this government is doing.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last fall I asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs about a new tax category in the county of Smoky Lake called uncollectable taxes – these extra taxes were due to the uncollected linear tax from industry – and the minister didn't have a good answer for me then, but she assured me that the government was committed to working with municipal governments to meet their revenue shortfalls. How is this government helping municipalities and ratepayers by saddling them with yet another tax burden?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The truth is that our government is fully committed to providing municipalities with the tools and resources they need to serve Albertans. We are investing \$34 billion in necessary roads, schools, transit, and other public infrastructure to provide communities with the facilities they need. We are working hard within our budget to be responsible fiscal managers. We take that responsibility seriously. But again I have to say: spend money, you know, but don't spend money. Spend money; don't spend money.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

### **Job Creation**

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Small and medium-sized business are the backbone and job creators of Alberta. Their entrepreneurial spirit creates, sustains, grows, and diversifies the provincial economy. The most competitive business climate in Canada, known to many as the Alberta advantage, previously allowed them to succeed. This government instead introduced the 27,000 jobs plan, scrutinized by our caucus and the business community. To the minister of economic development: for the record, how many jobs out of 27,000 did your plan create? Just a



number, please, not a list of hollow promises, programs, or one-job platitudes around creation of economic development.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. Quite frankly, our government has released a number of initiatives that we're doing to help small-business owners and entrepreneurs, starting last fall, when we made more than \$2 billion in capital available through ATB, through the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, and through AIMCo. As well, the Minister of Labour announced our STEP program, which is going to be accessible to small-business owners this year. Let's keep in mind as well that under our government we still have the lowest taxes in the country.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take that answer as one job.

Given that it is painfully obvious that this government's flagship job-creation strategies are destined for abysmal failure, it is time for a different approach, and given that the Engage document released today by the PC caucus outlines a viable alternative, the small-business venture capital tax credit, to the minister of economic development: will we see this tax credit in next week's budget? If not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know it's not the members' opposite strong suit to be patient, but what they do need to wait for is April 14, when the Finance minister will table the budget. All of the House and all of Alberta will see that our government is committed to working with the job creators – that's small businesses, entrepreneurs, and our industry friends – in order to help create the right conditions to create jobs in Alberta so that Alberta remains the best province to invest in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government promised Albertans a very nimble 27,000 jobs plan, that was doomed to fail, and given that small-business venture tax credits have been proven in neighbouring jurisdictions to return almost \$2 to the provincial treasury for every \$1 spent in tax credits – it seems this government is intent on another failed plan. To the Minister of Finance: given that this very common-sense idea could yield exceptional results, if the minister of economic development refuses to help businesses and communities around Alberta, will you?

2:30

**Mr. Ceci:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade did not say that he wouldn't help. He's helping already. He's been involved with an international tour. He's been around this province. He'll continue to work as quickly and as hard as possible to support the economic development and trade that this province needs to get itself back on its feet. Stay tuned for April 14 at 3 p.m.

### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

**Cortes-Vargas:** Mr. Speaker, we know that gay-straight alliances and queer-straight alliances are providing essential supports for schools in Alberta. It's important to support students to continue

establishing these groups as it is their legal right. To the Minister of Education: what is being done to promote the establishment of GSAs and QSAs?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a very important question. We know that GSAs have the potential to save lives, and we're going to do all we can to support these groups, to make sure that they're in all schools that want them. We all know that many schools already have gay-straight alliances, and we will continue to work with school boards to ensure that students who want to form a GSA or a QSA can do so in any school in the province of Alberta. We know that GSAs and antihomophobic policies in place within schools have a positive impact for all students in the schools and help to save lives.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've heard some concerns from people who are worried about schools following through with implementation, the necessary policies to ensure that our students have the supports and protection that they need, again to the minister: what is being done to ensure that all authorities are following through with their legal responsibilities when it comes to establishing GSAs and QSAs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I've been visiting schools and meeting with students who belong to gay-straight or queer-straight alliances across the province. These students have been telling me how much it means for them to know that they are supported. They have told us that legislative changes to support LGBTQ students have the potential to save lives. The stakes of this work are very high, and I count on all of you here in this Assembly to help us get the job done.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You're right. It does save lives. I've actually known a lot of people that it's saved the lives of.

What other stories are you hearing from the community about the students involved in the GSAs and QSAs in the province, that make such a significant difference every day?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, we certainly all know that when kids are being bullied or are experiencing stress, they don't do well in school. The School Act requires school authorities to ensure welcoming, caring, respectful, safe learning environments for all students and ensures that students who want to form a GSA or a QSA are able to do so. These laws, Mr. Speaker, are already in place. Again, the establishment of GSAs as well as other policies being followed in schools helps to ensure that the most vulnerable students can thrive in a welcoming, safe, and respectful school environment. We expect nothing less for all of our students in the province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Government Agencies, Boards, and Commissions

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Culture and Tourism. There are many Alberta agencies, boards, and commissions under the Culture and Tourism banner. Alberta Finance defines ABCs as having some degree of autonomy from the government. They're arm's-length entities, independent boards

that are only required to report to the government once a year. Yet when I try and contact them, some have become tight-lipped and say that they need permission from the minister to speak to me. Is it possible that these so-called arm's-length ABCs are in fact being micromanaged by the minister?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Of course, that's not the case. What I understand is that there were some questions that were directed to different departments in the ministry. It is often the case that when you go into a ministry, the minister is informed that the questions have been asked, which I believe is normal practice. I believe that there is a review already under way for ABCs. We'll continue to do that, and once we have that report, we will present it to the Chamber.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, being informed is one thing, but given that I have received a letter from one of these minister's arm's-length agencies which told me that it could not meet with me without the minister's explicit permission, I fail to see how these boards are not being kept under the minister's thumb. Why do these organizations feel the need to seek permission from the minister instead of actually remaining at arm's length?

**Miranda:** Mr. Speaker, as the minister I am responsible for everything that happens in every single one of these agencies, boards, and commissions. Therefore, I will definitely – I do not know; I have not seen that letter. If you could please forward it to me, I will be able to talk more to it. But I can tell you right now that, absolutely, when everybody has a question, they come to the ministry and we decide how we allocate the resources and where I send the questions to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, information is one thing, but given that the members opposite ran on a platform of an open and transparent government, I would expect these boards and commissions not to feel the need to warn the minister when a member seeks to speak with them. Can the minister explain exactly how these types of controlling relationships create the open and transparent government that the NDP promised?

**Miranda:** Mr. Speaker, again I have to say that when a question comes into the ministry, of course I'm going to be informed what the question is. If the member across wanted to have a question, all the member had to do was contact my office, and I would be more than happy to have that discussion. You know what? This is what a ministry is supposed to do. It's supposed to be transparent. It's supposed to be responsible. However, I am accountable for everything that happens in that ministry; therefore, yes, of course they're going to ask me what's going on.

Thank you.

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

### Minimum Wage

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By now even this government must have seen that its minimum wage plan is hurting small business as well as the very people it wants to help. Our PC caucus's Engage document underlines the importance of a business-friendly environment for a strong economy. To the Minister of Labour:

given that an Alberta Chambers of Commerce survey indicated that businesses have laid off workers – since October 1 two-thirds of them have been minimum wage earners – what do your own numbers show about the wage hike's effect on unemployment for minimum wage employees?

**The Speaker:** Madam Minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure that single parents working for minimum wage can take care of their families, and that is why we are supporting a phase-in of a \$15 an hour minimum wage. We are working with our stakeholders and our partners as we go through this process. I have reviewed the survey done by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce as well as met with the Alberta Chambers of Commerce as part of the engagement plan. In the meantime we are currently monitoring the situation so that we can make informed decisions about the phase-in as we move forward.

**Mr. Ellis:** Given that this government indicated that imposing a higher minimum wage would particularly help single mothers and underskilled workers and given that the wage hike is actually causing greater unemployment for these workers and given that the business community is offering common-sense solutions that will truly help underskilled workers and other low-income Albertans while maintaining their jobs, to the same minister: what are your comments on the business community's well-thought-out alternative solutions?

**The Speaker:** Madam Minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are continuing to engage our stakeholders like the business community to review their suggestions as we continue supporting the phase-in of a \$15 an hour minimum wage. Nobody who works a 40-hour work week should be going to a food bank to support their family. We will work with our partners and look at all ideas as we support that phase-in going forward.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you to the minister for mentioning "engage."

Given that the way this government is layering on costs for businesses shows a lack of understanding of economic realities and given that as our province's most diverse base the small-business sector is a critical job creator during economic downturns and given that, as predicted, this ill-thought-out wage plan is actually hurting the people this government claims it most wants to help, to the same minister: why do you insist on pigeonholing people into minimum wage jobs when you could work with the business sector and help prepare low-income Albertans for better jobs?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. The member's premise of his first two questions is patently false as far as talking about all of the people earning minimum wage that are being laid off. Our government has been going around the province consulting with small businesses, looking for ways that our government can act as a partner with the business community. We recognize that small businesses account for 95 per cent of Alberta's GDP and that they are the economic drivers of our province. The member will have to wait for April 14, where all members of the House will see a number of initiatives our government is taking to support small businesses and ensure that Alberta is the best place ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

2:40

### Royal Alberta Museum

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Downtown Edmonton is undergoing an unprecedented era of revitalization. There's a lot of new construction, including the construction of the new Royal Alberta Museum, and I've got to say that the residents of Edmonton-Centre were very excited for this great addition. We recognize that there are great benefits that come from tourism to our province, and the opening of this museum has the potential to have a big impact on our economy here in Edmonton-Centre. To the Minister of Infrastructure: can you give us an update here in the House on how the construction is proceeding for this project and when we can expect the museum to be open for Albertans to visit?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much for that question, hon. member. I'm pleased to be able to report to the House that the construction of the new Royal Alberta Museum, right downtown next to city hall, is on time and on schedule and will be opening very shortly, some months from now. We'll be moving, then, the various displays and artifacts from the existing Royal Alberta Museum into the new one, and we're expecting it to open in 2017.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that with the opening of the new museum we are going to have an incredible opportunity and some real potential when it comes to redevelopment of the previous museum site and given that my office has received correspondence from many residents regarding its future use, again to the minister: does your department have at this time any specific plans for the Glenora Royal Alberta Museum site?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure the public that no decision has been made about the future use of the existing museum building. Due diligence for the Royal Alberta Museum at the old location means looking at all of the options. We have experts in-house who are looking at those options to repurpose the facility. Once we have all of the information, we'll also explore all potential uses for that building.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, along those lines, given that the Glenora site for the RAM will be expected to be home to staff for about another three years, thus allowing a fair amount of time here for consideration, and given that I've spoken with many groups and individuals who have ideas for the site's reuse, again to the Infrastructure minister: when you make future decisions about the use of this property, will Albertans have a chance to comment on potential proposals?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure the hon. member and all Albertans that this is an important facility. It will be in use for about three years as we transition to the new location – he's absolutely right about that – and we need to make careful, thoughtful decisions. There will be consultation with the community and with Albertans about the future use of that building.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

### Mountain View Seniors' Housing

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills we are blessed to have many nonprofits working towards the common good. One, Mountain View Seniors' Housing, operates seniors' lodges, self-contained apartments, and subsidized family housing in three local communities. It's come to my attention that more than a dozen of those provincially owned facilities operated by Mountain View Seniors' Housing are sitting empty, unable to be rented until urgent maintenance and repairs are completed. Is the Minister of Seniors and Housing aware of this situation, and what does she plan to do about it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Of course, investing in seniors' housing, affordable housing, making sure that Albertans have the housing they need is very important to this government. As has been said already today, I recommend the member wait for the budget on April 14, and he'll see significant support in that area.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, for seniors on fixed incomes and for low-income families every nickel counts, and every tax increase this government imposes makes it more difficult. At a time when affordable housing is in such short supply, how can the minister justify allowing 13 properties out of only 20 that are available, including 40 bedrooms, to sit vacant and in a state of disrepair?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. This is a very important question. The truth is that when we came into government, there was a billion dollars of deferred maintenance needed, so he's very right that there are gaps and challenges in this area. We as a government are committed to investing in this area. We want Albertans to have the proper housing for seniors and for people on low incomes, and we're working to have that happen.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, given that nonprofits like Mountain View Seniors' Housing strongly support direct rent subsidies to prevent these kinds of long-term maintenance deficiencies and costs, what is the minister going to do to ensure these are repaired and/or additional rent subsidies are provided so that more individuals can be helped?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. This is an area that I'm very concerned about and very passionate about. I just want to assure him that we as a government are very committed to making sure that people have affordable housing in Alberta, making sure that seniors have homes that they can stay in and live well in, and that there are facilities that they can move to when needed. We're very much looking forward to telling you more details about that very shortly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

### Spider-Mable and Daffodil Month

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is Daffodil Month, and I'm honoured to say that my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud is home to the local superhero Mable Tooke, who was here earlier. She's also known as Spider-Mable. Spider-Mable is a familiar face to Edmontonians and, in fact, the world after saving the Oilers captain Andrew Ference from an evil villain last year. Also last year, at a spinathon at Riverbend junior high I joined the Minister of Education and many politicians as well as sports figures and heard of Spider-Mable's heroics and her story as a cancer survivor, which offers hope to all Canadians living with cancer.

Mable was just four years old when she was diagnosed with ALL. She finished her last chemotherapy in November 2015, the day after her seventh birthday. But she knows the fight isn't over, and that's why she was here with her parents and her grandparents and her partners in cancer-fighting from the Canadian Cancer Society.

April is Daffodil Month, and our guests are asking us to purchase and wear the daffodil pin to show people living with cancer that they're not alone and to remember those this disease has taken. Mr. Speaker, I'm an oncologist who treats adult patients with ALL, and I, obviously, do clinical research. That research was supported by the Canadian Cancer Society and pursued in Edmonton and Calgary, and it has markedly improved the outlook for my patients and actually all patients in Canada with ALL. I'm a strong supporter of and a donor to the Canadian Cancer Society for over 35 years. We need to continue supporting them in this important research into preventing and treating cancer. That's why I challenge this House to stand with Spider-Mable and proudly wear this daffodil pin.

Thank you very much.

### Hope Bridges Society

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about a community-based not-for-profit organization in my constituency that works to change hearts and minds through the universal language of art, the Hope Bridges Society. The Hope Bridges Society grew out of Project HOPE, a therapeutic program in the Golden Hills school division for children aged 3 to 18 years with severe learning needs, including communication, cognitive, self-help, social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties.

When children involved with Project HOPE graduated high school, there were still barriers to entering the next phases of their lives. To bridge the gap, a group of concerned community members in Strathmore got together and discovered that these children were not the only marginalized members in the community. There were seniors and new Canadians as well.

2:50

How can we support those with learning disabilities, seniors, and new Canadians who are isolated and build a stronger community? How can we reach the hearts and minds of everyone who lives in the area of Wheatland county so that everyone belongs and is valued? For Hope Bridges, they found the answer in the universal language of the arts, where they are not judged, where they are all uniquely valued, where everyone belongs and everyone is welcomed. The isolation is overcome by using the arts to promote connection and wellness through participation and inclusion.

On April 16 the Hope Bridges Society will hold its third annual fundraising art and wine auction at the Strathmore Golf Club, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. I'll be there to support this terrific community organization, that sets such an excellent example for Albertans everywhere, and I hope that other members of this House will join me there, too.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The leader of the third party.

### Progressive Conservative Engage Initiative

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has a rich and diverse history. Together we have experienced prosperity and hardship, and through both we remain caring, innovative, and hard-working people seeking opportunity in striving to fulfill our potential. We share the vision of making that dream a reality for each and every Albertan.

Today the PC caucus kicked off a real conversation with Albertans by launching Engage. We are seeking frank and open feedback from Albertans. For us Progressive Conservatives this means going back to our roots. Simply telling people what we think is not consultation. What Engage does is that it goes to the next step. We are continuing the process of reaching out, listening, and learning. The web page is [abpcmla.ca/engage](http://abpcmla.ca/engage). Our caucus does not have all the answers; with Engage we are encouraging and welcoming all feedback. We will share the feedback in the hope that hearing from Albertans concerned about their province will inspire this government to change course.

Whether we sit on the government or opposition benches, the priority needs to be getting Alberta back to work. The need to achieve good government does not stop regardless of who is sitting in the Premier's chair. Our PC caucus will draw on our experience in government and from the many wins and losses we have experienced over the years. As Albertans we want to see this province at its best, and we have many ideas that we are keen to share. We also know that we don't have all the answers, but we do know and we're confident that in partnership with other Albertans and those people who work for Albertans, we can move forward in a positive and constructive way.

We invite all of Alberta to join our PC caucus in recommending positive changes to the current government. Won't you engage us in this important conversation?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

### Edmonton Seahawks Football Club

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to tell you and all members of the Assembly more about the north Edmonton football association the Edmonton Seahawks. NEMFA is a nonprofit that was formed in 1993 and is one of only two organizations providing minor football to children and youth in north Edmonton. The Edmonton Seahawks clubhouse is in my constituency of Edmonton-Castle Downs.

The football program is offered to children and youth at four levels, serving boys and girls aged 8 to 17, providing a safe, affordable football opportunity to the children and youth in north Edmonton. The Seahawks promote teamwork, leadership, sportsmanship, and healthy lifestyles with a focus on development of participants. There are not any paid staff, and a child has never been turned away due to financial difficulty. They provide in excess

of 40 trained volunteers, made up of current parents, former parents, and former players that went through the program. The Seahawks motto is Once a Seahawk, Always a Seahawk.

Our family joined the Seahawks when our youngest son was eight. I have been a team manager, and my husband has been and still is one of the coaches. The players still call me Lady Coach. Our son played on the peewee team last year, and they won the city tier 3 championship. Many parents and players from other Seahawks teams were there to cheer them on.

The Edmonton Seahawks have strong relationships with their community and with the Edmonton Eskimos. The Eskimos have been involved with the program for many years, and players have come to our practices to meet the children and to participate in practice. The Seahawks have also been invited to Eskimos games to cheer on the players through the tunnel run and to play half-time matches against other minor football teams.

Thank you to the board members that are here today. Go Seahawks go.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead. Please remain seated, hon. member.

### **Lignin Recovery Plant in Hinton**

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta government is positioning the province as a leader in addressing climate change issues by encouraging the use of renewables. I'm proud to say that West Fraser Mills Hinton Pulp, a company in my constituency of West Yellowhead, is a true leader pioneering this change. Hinton Pulp, with their partners FPInnovations and EcoSynthetix Corporation, are encouraging the use of lignin, a natural glue that holds wood together, as an alternative to petroleum-based resin. Hinton Pulp, by using FPInnovations patented LignoForce process to recover lignin from black liquor, will see the construction of Canada's first commercial lignin recovery plant.

The 30-ton-per-day lignin petroleum recovery plant is expected to be a boon to industries looking to incorporate lignin into their product lines. This \$37.5 million project has been funded in part by federal and provincial government programs and has received major investments from individual entrepreneurs and companies.

If processed properly, lignin can replace petroleum-derived resins used intensively in manufacturing of plywood and other engineered wood products. Lignin is as good as conventional petroleum-based resin and has the potential to lower production costs. Most importantly, it cuts down on greenhouse gas emissions.

The demand for lignin is forecasted to grow as more companies find suitable applications. To meet these growing demands, the Canadian codevelopers Noram engineering and FPInnovations intend on marketing the LignoForce system to other kraft mills trying to capitalize on their black liquor.

Current research focuses on diversifying the use of lignin as an adhesive application for plywood and other products.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### **Tourism Promotion**

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the weather starts to get nicer and spring and summer travel plans begin to take shape, I'd like to highlight the incredible opportunities that are available in Alberta tourism. As many in this House will know, tourism is a significant driver of our province's economy. Especially with the current downturn that our province is facing, attracting visitors and

encouraging Albertans to stay local during their spring and summer vacations is incredibly important. According to tourism stats almost two-thirds of Alberta tourism expenditures come from Albertans. With a low Canadian dollar and many Albertans having to cut back due to the current economic climate, staying in Alberta for a summer vacation does make good sense.

A quick Google search shows that articles are showing up in papers in Canada and the U.S., even the *LA Times*, marketing Alberta as the place to go this summer. I couldn't agree more. From the badlands to the Rockies, the Taste of Edmonton to the Calgary Stampede and, yes, even the Ponoka Stampede, world-class fishing in northern Alberta, other things: there's so much to see and do across our vast province. I know that my family will be enjoying Alberta's great backyard this summer, and I would encourage all members of the House to spread the same message and do the same.

Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that the NDP government isn't actually helping encourage tourism in our province because of the \$3 billion carbon tax. The fact of the matter is that the higher cost of keeping the lights on in a hotel or filling up on a tank of gas will inevitably be downloaded to that tourism consumer. I sincerely hope the NDP government will re-examine this risky and ideological antitourism policy.

### **Presenting Petitions**

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills I request leave to present the following petition that has been received for private bills under Standing Order 98(2): the petition of Laird Hunter, counsel to the Bow Valley Community Foundation, for the Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to request the unanimous consent of the House to waive Standing Order 7(7) to allow the daily Routine to be concluded.

[Unanimous consent denied]

3:00

### **Orders of the Day**

#### **Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading**

#### **Bill 201 Election Recall Act**

[Debate adjourned March 14: Mr. Cyr speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon to close debate.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to close debate on second reading for Bill 201, the Election Recall Act, and I do so with mixed feelings. This debate has highlighted for me the real strengths and weaknesses that are so clearly evident in our Westminster parliamentary form of democracy. This Legislature is made up of talented individuals chosen by the people of Alberta to be able to work together because of our commitment to this experiment in governance that we call democracy. Yet, obviously,

we are divided by political ideology, human frailness, individuality, and indeed uniqueness.

Let me be clear. This is a private member's bill. I did not ask my leader for permission to present this bill, but out of courtesy I informed him and my caucus. This is not an opposition bill, although it may have the support of some of the opposition. Nor should it be a mystery to this House if many of the Wildrose support this bill, as I am sure that many of our MLAs ran for the Wildrose Party because of our belief in recall.

There is only one MLA in this House that truly knows why this bill was chosen to be brought before the Legislature, and that person is myself. I brought this bill before this House to redress a serious imbalance of power that all Albertans know exists. A problem in our system, as I see it, is that all too often MLAs vote against the wishes of their constituents because of party discipline. I brought this bill before the Legislature because I believe, my constituents and many, many Albertans believe that it would make our democracy more accountable. Full stop. That's the reason.

So many of the concerns against this bill that argued it was a way to get around financing laws are mistaken. This bill is not an orchestrated attack by the opposition because we didn't like the results of the election. Indeed, the bill builds in an 18-month threshold before recall could be enacted to deal with that scenario. Similarly, this bill was not an attempt to do an end run around financing laws, which we the Wildrose voted along with the government to enact earlier this year. These and other arguments were nothing but political posturing and a visible reflection of the problem of how party politics can warp the debate in this House.

However, there were arguments presented that had merit in my eyes. For those members who had issues with this bill, I strongly suggest that you support the bill in principle and send it to Committee of the Whole. I assure the hon. members that I will be open to all amendments that would improve this bill, especially those around the thresholds of numbers and financing. That is how democracy is supposed to work. The creating and passing of legislation should be a collaborative effort of all of the MLAs in this House.

So I say to this House that a vote against this bill will not be a vote against thresholds and financing or other arguments that I have heard. Instead, a vote against this bill will be a clear reflection that you do not believe in the principle of recall. I leave it to you and your constituents to figure out at the next general election the importance of your rejection of recall as a way to improve our democracy.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster addressed the long-standing debate about whether an MLA is elected to simply obey the wishes of his or her constituents or has the autonomy to use his or her own judgment and to vote in disagreement with those who elected him or her. My answer to your concern is that recall will impact this debate in at least one way; it shifts the balance. Presently the MLA will often place his or her party's concerns above those of their constituents. With recall, a new balance evolves. The MLA must give more consideration to those who elected them while still wrestling with their conscience and the desires of their party. A vote against this bill will not eliminate personal conscience or the requirement to defend minority rights from the tyranny of the majority, but it will ensure that you must carefully consider the wishes of your constituents when you make your decision.

I close this debate with an appeal to this House for the support of this bill in principle. Send this bill to Committee of the Whole, where amendments can be proposed and either accepted or rejected.

Once this process has occurred, then the final judgment on this bill should be rendered by the House.

Thank you.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:06 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Pitt
Anderson, W.	Jean	Schneider
Barnes	Loewen	Smith
Cooper	MacIntyre	Strankman
Cyr	Nixon	Taylor
Fildebrandt	Orr	van Dijken
Hanson	Panda	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Nielsen
Babcock	Hoffman	Payne
Bilous	Horne	Phillips
Carlier	Jabbour	Piquette
Ceci	Jansen	Renaud
Clark	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Connolly	Larivee	Sabir
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Drever	Mason	Starke
Drysdale	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Ellis	McKitrick	Swann
Feehan	McLean	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McPherson	Turner
Goehring	Miller	Westhead
Gotfried	Miranda	Woollard
Gray		

Totals:	For – 21	Against – 55
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[Motion for second reading of Bill 201 lost]

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, point of order.

**The Speaker:** Yes, hon. member.

#### Point of Order Division

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, something that has created some concern for me. I think that it's perhaps instructive and useful for members of the House to be reminded of a matter of decorum during the course of divisions.

That matter of decorum is that during divisions, according to page 639 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, there is to be no movement around the House, and indeed there is supposed to be no noise in the House from the time that the question is put, while the Clerk is conducting the important work of taking the roll and calling the votes. I will remind the hon. members that during that time it is indeed the Clerk who has the floor and that all comments that are made on either side of the House are not recorded in *Hansard* and therefore do not become part of the public record. However, we have seen in the past and we saw again today that as

soon as certain hon. members stood to vote on an issue, they had comments directed in their direction. This is inappropriate. Votes should be taken, and hon. members should be treated as honourable members and allowed to vote their conscience and vote according to the procedures.

Although Standing Order 32, which deals with divisions in our standing orders, does not specifically make reference with regard to the conduct of members during the course of divisions, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* is very clear. We have seen, in fact, in a number of cases during the course of taking divisions in this House where that practice has not been followed. I would just encourage and urge you, Mr. Speaker, to encourage hon. members to follow that practice in the future.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other comments? The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just rise very briefly to thank the hon. member for raising the point of order today. Certainly, on behalf of the Wildrose caucus I'll take this under advisement, and if there's anything that we can do to add to the process during recorded divisions, we'd be happy to assist.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other comments?

Hon. member, thank you for drawing it to my attention, to the House's attention. I think the point is well taken. I did not see movement, but I thought I heard some sound. I think the principle that's being addressed to all sides of the House is: show respect at this crucial time. The hon. member is correct. It is the Clerk's floor at that particular time. It's a crucial part of the process, voting, and I'd ask that each of you show respect.

## Bill 202

### Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Mr. Speaker, thanks so much for allowing me to rise and speak about the Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act. I was very happy to hear that there's been lots of debate about affordable housing in the House today and in the past weeks, and I'm very excited to get the opportunity to talk about it again.

I just want to thank the members of my constituency of Calgary-East, whom I'm proud to represent here today. The idea for this bill arose from conversations that I've had with constituents on their doorsteps and in my constituency office. These people are our seniors, single parents, new Canadians, and women escaping violence. I've spoken with municipal officials and local organizations like Horizon Housing, Women Together Ending Poverty, Momentum, Sunrise Community Link, the Calgary Housing Corporation, the Wood Buffalo housing corporation, and the Alberta chapter of the Canadian Home Builders' Association. I just want to take a second to acknowledge Jim Rivait and Wendy Jabusch, who are here in the House this afternoon to watch debate on this bill.

All of these organizations are aware of the problem. We have too many people having a hard time finding and keeping a home here in Alberta. There's much expertise available in Alberta to draw from and much work being done. The aim of this bill is to hear from many Albertans and to take a big-picture look at this crucial issue. I want to allow a committee to conduct a comprehensive review of affordable housing issues in this province. I want a committee to make recommendations that would make Alberta a province committed to housing security, a province where every Albertan

has a safe, secure place to call home. These are recommendations that I hope will be realized.

Mr. Speaker, affordable housing is a priority for Albertans, and therefore it is a priority for our government. In order for housing to be considered affordable, it needs to cost less than 30 per cent of a household's before-tax income. Households exceeding 30 per cent are said to be in core housing need. Thousands of Albertans are in core housing need at this time. The latest census data, from 2011, found that over 23 per cent of renters in the province and approximately 10.7 per cent of all households in the province are in this core housing need. In 2015 the Edmonton Social Planning Council reported that the number of households in core housing need was trending upwards in the Edmonton area.

I'd like everybody to take a moment and just imagine someone who is in this situation, someone who makes \$15 an hour, which is currently above minimum wage. Thirty per cent of that person's monthly income is \$800 before taxes. I don't know if you've tried to find somewhere to live in Calgary or Edmonton or, really, anywhere in the province for \$800 a month, including utilities, lately. I think you'll find that it's extremely difficult.

3:30

I have a friend and former constituent who was able to come to Calgary and to leave her naturally devastated country of Nepal after the earthquake. She came here to try and make a better life for herself and for her young son; however, once she was here, her life took a turn into further, more difficult circumstances. Her husband became physically violent. She was fortunately able to flee with her young son, and she was helped by a women's shelter. However, at a point you have to leave a women's shelter, as we've discussed previously in the House.

This friend of mine had to find affordable housing, and she had to find daycare for her son. Her son had to move schools. This woman makes \$12 an hour working full-time at a fast-food restaurant. She looked for a suitable apartment for half a year, and she was finally able to secure a one-bedroom basement suite. Now, this suite is not legal. It doesn't have a separate entrance. It doesn't have separate laundry, and it's located, you know, some days an hour away from her job via transit. Now, it does include free Wi-Fi, but I still think she's not getting a very good deal.

Housing is a basic human right. It's something that we learn about in school very early on. I recall from fourth grade, la quatrième année de Mlle Labonté, that we learned about the human need for food and shelter and water, and we made posters about those things. Humans' need for shelter is something that we learned very early on in school. In fact, as I learned later on in school, there are many fundamental human rights. Adequate housing is a fundamental human right enshrined under article 25 of the UN declaration of human rights. Safe, adequate housing is essential to social well-being.

Mr. Speaker, emergency shelters are not adequate housing, and cars are not adequate housing. It's not acceptable for someone to be asked for six months of rent up front. It's not acceptable for someone's rent to go up hundreds to thousands of dollars with only three months' warning. What are we saying as a society when mortgages on most three-bedroom houses cost less than the monthly cost of renting a two-bedroom apartment?

Housing in Alberta is at a crisis point. My office deals with people who want to get into Calgary Housing every day. I have spoken with a father of a new Canadian family who has cancer, who wants to make sure that his wife and children are cared for. I've spoken to seniors on fixed income. I've spoken to, you know, a single mom whose roommate moved out, and she couldn't afford the rent anymore. These are all people who need social housing and

who are precariously housed. They are at risk of becoming homeless, and I have to tell them that the wait-list is huge. There are over 3,000 people on the wait-list to get into Calgary Housing and more than 15,000 people on the wait-list for social housing across Alberta. Wait times vary depending on the housing program or the type of housing requested.

I just want to tell you about another constituent who's in this situation, who's been on the wait-list for Calgary Housing for over a year. He's from Afghanistan. He's lived here in Canada for three years, and he works the night shift at Cargill as a side puller. This man lives in a three-bedroom house with five other adults. One of the bedrooms in that house is occupied by a whole family that has a baby. He lives in this situation because despite working full-time and taking English classes during the day, he can't afford his own apartment. His rent has recently also been increased.

There's a steadily increasing demand for affordable housing, but we have limited supply, as has been noted. Alberta is expected to grow by more than a million people in the next decade and two million people by 2041. This is a problem that urgently needs to be addressed, and it's not something that's going to disappear.

Alberta's affordable housing infrastructure is also aging. Many of the buildings are between 30 and 60 years old, and operating costs, including utilities and repairs, are increasing. Very few social housing units have been constructed since 1993, which is when the federal government stopped funding social housing.

We're facing difficult times in Alberta right now. Right now in Alberta more people are facing the possibility of homelessness. I would submit that hard times are, in fact, the best times to invest in solutions that will help our most vulnerable immediately and will help all of us in the long run. In difficult times Albertans have always worked together. Our government will not leave our most vulnerable neighbours behind, and this bill supports that commitment. I'm proud to be part of a government that is committed to making thoughtful decisions about how we move forward with respect to affordable housing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this bill seeks to establish a committee that is tasked with developing recommendations to ensure all Albertans have the benefits of safe, appropriate, and affordable housing. The committee will make recommendations to ensure Albertans can enjoy the human right of housing security. There hasn't been a committee on affordable housing since 2007, which was under very different economic circumstances, but housing remains a critical issue whether the economy is booming or contracting because each situation puts pressure on low-income households' ability to maintain housing.

There are too many Albertans, my constituents and yours, who are working hard to provide good lives for themselves and their children but have to deal with situations that make this very difficult. I believe that everyone here in this room wants to make a positive difference in the lives of Albertans. I believe that all Albertans – those in low-wage jobs, those with disabilities, seniors who've worked their whole lives in Alberta – should be able to afford their own safe, legal home. Mr. Speaker, I'm hopeful that we can do better for people, that every Albertan can have a comfortable place to call home, a place that they don't need to fear will be taken away from them.

Now, I do have a whole section on work that's currently being done, but as I am running out of time, I will leave that to further debate. I do want to acknowledge that there is plenty of work being done by excellent nonprofits and local organizations all over the province to fill the gaps that are due to a lack of planning on behalf of previous provincial and federal governments.

Really, people who know me know that I'm a big-picture person. I'm a systemic change person. I know that the social housing

solutions of the '70s aren't going to work for us today here in Alberta. We need new ideas. This is why I want to strike a committee instead of choosing to propose specific solutions. In order to achieve a change that works – whether that change is in a business, whether that change is in a school, whether it's in a community – you have to consult the people who are affected, and you have to use their ideas. For a problem of this magnitude we need a made-in-Alberta solution. A committee is a democratic process where everyone can be heard and all voices can be considered.

To achieve systemic change in how we house people, we need not only include but embrace all stakeholders. We need to honour all points of view on such a dynamic issue and set upon a course that examines our options in creating the most equitable path forward. Issues I've included in my bill are issues my constituents care about: rent regulation, mobile-home park rent, security deposits, and affordable home ownership. These are things I've said that I would work on, but I do want to note that the bill is not limited to those considerations. I wanted to keep it wide open.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. To confirm, you did say that you are moving second reading of Bill 202?

**Ms Luff:** Second reading, yes.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

I would recognize the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 202 and the concerns I have with this bill as it is presently laid forth. Albertans are taking note of this government's dependency on creating endless reviews on matters such as the one before us, the Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act. If this government insists on pushing these reviews instead of taking real action to help Albertans as they suffer during this economic downturn, they should at least be formulated in such a way that this can be helpful. Reviews like this should be launched with a careful balance between the dichotomy of market assessment and policy recommendations. Unfortunately, this government has tipped the scales of this review toward the side of policy recommendations. Their decision to do so only shows that the NDP government is becoming increasingly less concerned with market realities and more concerned with slanted recommendations.

The meat of this bill is contained in section 3(2), which stipulates that the report must include:

- (a) rent regulation;
- (b) rent subsidies;
- (c) security deposits;
- (d) affordability of rental rates including rates for the rental of mobile home sites;
- (e) affordability of home ownership and mechanisms to support affordability.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we start here. This proposed piece of legislation is a bill to create a committee to create recommendations to the minister on those five areas and others.

However, as I talk with more and more stakeholders, I'm hearing nothing but concern for the direction of this bill, and some of them are wondering about its very necessity. The concerns I'm hearing have to do with the possibility of rent control or other red tape and regulations that would discourage homeowners from becoming landowners, which would then, in turn, reduce the overall number of affordable rental properties available. Is the government hoping



this review will produce specific results that will support its ideological agenda and ultimately lead to rent control?

3:40

My question arises from a *Calgary Herald* article from October 2014 in which the Premier told the *Herald* that “the government should implement a form of rent control.” The Premier said, “If we leave it to the market, there will end up being a market for tent space in this park.” She said this last year while in downtown Calgary. Throwing around this extremely naive view of how the free market works is a shameless scare tactic used by the NDP across the country to advocate for large governments and overregulation.

Thankfully, in June of 2015, in another *Herald* statement, the then Municipal Affairs minister, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, said that

a lot has changed in the last year, and rent controls are not on the table for the government.

He said:

I can tell you, quite frankly, that our government is not at this time looking to rent controls.

He went on.

I can tell you in the same breath that we are focused on working with cities, with municipalities to ensure that we are building more affordable housing units... Our current direction is looking at working with municipalities to supply more housing so that rents can come down.

I don't think we need to look much further to understand why we're all a bit confused to be discussing a government-supported private member's bill that wants to establish a committee to review rent regulations. I believe Albertans, property owners, and tenants need to hear that this government has once again committed to a proper balance of regulations which benefit the people who really need help instead of treating private property as a government-owned public facility.

Wildrose believes in consultation, and since reading this bill, I have spoken with many stakeholders and consulted many leaders of those who work with those who need affordable housing. Of all of those I spoke with, there is only one group – only one – that said that they had actually been consulted. Many groups are telling me that they are downright concerned that this government already doesn't have this type of information. They keep asking me: where is the minister on this file? As review after review comes down the pipe, my honest answer is that I have no idea. This is information that the government should already have. By introducing this bill, the government has as much as admitted that it does not have a plan for dealing with social issues such as affordable housing in our province. Why else would our minister be directed by one of their own?

While the other side will be quick to dismiss my concerns as fearmongering or deny that this bill is connected to social issues, I want to remind them of our support for Motion 501. In March the Wildrose agreed to a review of current policies and strategies with a view to increasing community capacity to deliver transitional and low-barrier housing for vulnerable Albertans suffering from complex mental and physical health needs. This was a review that aligns with our policy of protecting our most vulnerable Albertans, and it is unique in its status as a specific issue-based review.

This bill, on the other hand, is a broad, overarching review aimed at providing policy recommendations with no real mention of a quantitative market review. It shows that private members are not doing their own research to either understand their own policies or the research that already exists. The hon. member may not know this, but the province currently has a board comprised of stakeholders and government officials who advise the minister on housing and rental related matters. I'm referring, of course, to the

ARTAC, the Alberta Residential Tenancies Advisory Committee. It seems that the member hasn't thought about utilizing already existing infrastructure within the government and furthermore has not asked the stakeholders already working in the industry to share information on what they know.

I'm also concerned about the committee this bill proposes to strike. As the bill currently stands, the members of the NDP government cabinet will be the only ones to have any say about who will be on this committee. Even with our other concerns I would like to point out that a nonpartisan appointment through the Standing Committee on Families and Communities would have allowed representatives of all Alberta's elected parties to have a say on the committee's members, which would have made this bill much more palatable. When bills are crafted so poorly and with such haste, it is not hard to see why all sectors of our economy and Albertans themselves are losing trust with this government.

Last year Albertans watched as the government announced a review on royalties in the oil and gas sector at a time when Alberta could least afford it. The economic realities were weighing heavy on industry, and the livelihood and jobs of many Albertans were on the line. This government forged ahead with a lengthy, delayed review which caused regulatory uncertainty that was bad for our economy, bad for investment, and bad for Alberta. How do they think this review is any different? Without any clear need for reporting and coming as it does on the heels of a previous commitment not to overregulate the market, why are we asking to approve a study that would open the door to more regulation? There will be a high level of uncertainty in the market, and investment will surely slow down while this committee crafts a new way to save our housing market.

But the government isn't using common sense. That's an old saying: if it's not broke, then don't fix it. I can't help but think that this bill is trying to fix a housing market that isn't broken. If this bill receives the cabinet's support, it will reopen the idea of policies like rent control. Every single person, agency, group that we consulted is a hundred per cent against rent control. Before we continue this conversation, the NDP needs to be honest about its agenda or come forward again in this House and state that it is against rent controls and needless government overregulation. Will the government clearly state its position?

This is the second private member's initiative that calls on the Seniors and Housing minister to produce action on her file. It is already within the minister's power to conduct these studies at any point. Whether the minister is collecting this information and choosing not to share it in this Assembly or whether there is just no information being collected at all, either way, the situation on this file is concerning.

Wildrose would like to see the scales back in balance, back toward a true market assessment focused on data, not heavily tipped toward policy recommendations from a committee hand-picked by the NDP. As legislators we should be the ones debating policies and learning from the data. Lazy governments in the past hid behind reviews, and this is not something we want to see continue. We're paid by our constituents to stand up, discuss the issues, and take meaningful action on behalf of Albertans. I think we should get back to that and stop trying to change Alberta one review at a time. Albertans are looking for a government that shows leadership and that stands up for them on the issues that matter with meaningful action, not endless, needless reviews.

For these reasons I will not support Bill 202 in its current form. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Member for Calgary-East for bringing forward this important bill. It's a big-picture bill, as the member rightly stated, and it's a bill that will touch much more than simply the items that it says must be included: rent regulation, rent subsidies, security deposits, affordability of rental rates. It is not limited in any way, shape, or form to those four items. It's a much bigger review than those four items might entail.

One of the most fundamental social determinants of health is safe, clean, well-maintained, affordable housing, and it's an issue that's close to my heart. I've been trying to cultivate my knowledge of the issue since being elected and meeting with stakeholders over the last 10 months to determine that this issue receives the attention it deserves. I'm, once again, grateful to the Member for Calgary-East for bringing it forward.

Affordable housing means a lot of things, a lot of different things, and it touches all of us. There's a perennial shortage, as the Member for Calgary-East indicated, of affordable housing in this province. Now, in 30 years as a realtor prior to becoming elected, I noticed difficulties in the area of housing where people weren't able to satisfy their needs with affordable housing and that the majority of people who were suffering a lack of affordable, decent housing were children and single mothers. Now, this teaches all of us to pay attention to this perennial shortage.

I was with homeEd for over six years, which is a city of Edmonton nonprofit housing corporation, and during those six years not one unit of affordable housing were we able to build or add to the portfolio. So it's been a common problem for housing management bodies throughout the province for decades that we've not been able to add to our housing stock and our portfolio, nor have we been able to properly fund the maintenance of this housing stock so that it's properly managed so that the people who need it most have the most fundamental right that they own, and that is to have an affordable, safe, clean, well-maintained property to live in.

Now, there's a wealth of experience on both sides of the House with respect to affordable housing. Many hon. members of both sides of this House, not only myself, have in their previous lives, before becoming elected, acted as volunteers in the affordable housing field. I respect that other members in this Assembly from both sides of the House really are knowledgeable about this issue. I think it's very well understood that we have not done well over the last 20 or so years in this province to not only keep up with the demand for affordable housing but also to maintain the housing stock that we have. All who have been involved will know that stakeholders are anxious to participate in a long overdue review of affordable housing in Alberta.

**3:50**

Now, it's not something that is going to be focused resolutely on rent regulation. It's a private member's bill that has a big picture in mind, and it'll be a much larger, encompassing review of affordable housing in the province. Clearly, it's not limited to simple rent control aspects of the bill. Safe, affordable, and appropriate housing is a priority for this government, but this is a private member's bill. We are committed to making thoughtful decisions about how we move forward with respect to affordable housing.

The latest census data, in 2011, found that over 23 per cent of renters in the province were in core housing need; 10.7 per cent of all Alberta households, or 137,485 households, were in core housing need. Now, the Edmonton area community plan forecasted a gap of 22,000 affordable housing units in the city by 2015. They also forecasted a shortfall of 2,000 supportive housing units and 1,150 permanent supportive housing units. Some populations are more affected by housing challenges than others, particularly

indigenous people, and newcomers make up a higher percentage of renters in core housing need.

So this is a pan-provincial problem that all members, I believe, should be interested in solving and really reaching out to all stakeholders across the province who have not had an opportunity to voice themselves towards the province in a really energetic way and in a comprehensive way.

It's a much wider issue than simply rent regulations and rent control. Whether you're talking about housing first; whether you're entering housing from homelessness; whether you're talking about families looking to gain an apartment that's affordable to them, that's clean, coming out of downtrodden housing which is unhealthy or unsafe or unaffordable, where they're spending 40 per cent, 50 per cent of their income on housing needs; whether you're looking at housing our seniors or those who are mentally ill, there's a vast panoply of housing needs in this province that really needs to be examined, and the time to do it is now.

We don't need to go forward without consulting the individual stakeholders who, in my 10 months of having been elected, are really thirsty for an examination, for a platform, for a venue within which they can review with government the real needs that exist and have existed for a long, long time.

Now, the bill seeks to establish a committee tasked with developing recommendations to ensure that all Albertans have the benefits of safe, appropriate, and affordable housing. It's not something we should take lightly. It's something that shouldn't be dismissed as just another review. It's a fundamentally important subject to people right throughout this province, urban as well as rural. There's a need for affordable housing in smaller rural communities that is not being met. Every Albertan needs a safe place to call home. The concept of housing security shows that when individuals have their personal security and a safe place to live in, other challenges in their lives become easier to confront, whether health challenges or employment, education or addictions. Safe, affordable housing is a human right. The UN Human Rights Council recently adopted a resolution recognizing the right to adequate housing.

We are committed to making thoughtful decisions about how we move forward with this, and that's why I support the concept of a bill which creates a review committee that allows all the stakeholders to coalesce and really bring their message forward to government about the necessity to make changes to affordable housing in a very thoughtful way and a long-term way and a sustainable way, a way that perhaps looks at innovations and creative solutions to affordable housing that haven't yet been tried in this province. Rather than looking at simply granting money, maybe you look at doing things that are incentives to create affordable housing that is sustainable, whether the financial input the government puts into affordable housing is a seed that allows a new framework of affordable housing to actually function in perpetuity without continuous injections of cash from the provincial government over the long term.

There are ways of incorporating mixes of market rent and subsidized renters within the same building. That was the homeEd model. We had an 80 per cent, 20 per cent mix of market renters versus subsidized renters. The market renters had no idea that there were subsidized renters within the building, but there was a cross-subsidization that took place. It was a healthy model, so you weren't creating ghettos of affordable housing or subsidized housing within a whole complex right throughout one corner of the city. It's important that communities share the responsibility for affordable housing so that it's implemented and that it's built within every corner of the city, no matter what community it happens to be.

Right now there are about 66,000 affordable housing units in Alberta with another 7,800 under development. Now, these housing units are located in communities throughout Alberta. With these units government is serving over a hundred thousand individuals, including low-income seniors, single parents, immigrants to Canada, and individuals with specialized housing needs. Alberta Seniors and Housing works with over 300 community-based organizations, including municipalities, nonprofits and for-profit organizations, and housing management bodies to deliver housing and related supports to Albertans. There are over 108 housing management bodies managing over 45,000 housing units in 250 communities across Alberta.

This is not something that is a small issue; it's something that we need to really sit down and review properly. This committee will allow these housing management bodies as they coalesce into umbrella organizations to properly present their arguments to this committee.

What I'd like to encourage all members to do is to support the bill.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I rise today to speak to Bill 202, the Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act. We do need to have a conversation on governance. I think this conversation needs to start happening now here in this House. It starts with us taking a look at ourselves and asking: what are our roles? For instance, the government is comprised of the cabinet of ministers, the backbench is comprised of government MLAs, and the opposition is made up of different parties' members whose duty it is to hold the government to account on legislation on issues as big as budgets and as small as private members' motions.

All too often in this House we in opposition rise to ask questions and raise concerns for the purposes of fulsome debate in the best interests of all Albertans. Full, reasoned debate is not what this ideological NDP government or its backbench is interested in. Instead, they rely on scare tactics and rhetoric to say that we are not up on social issues. This couldn't be farther from the truth, Mr. Speaker. The Wildrose is one hundred per cent committed to governing this province in the best interests of all Albertans and, in particular, in the interests of the most vulnerable. We support good legislation and good motions when they will benefit Albertans, and, of course, we also have the duty to our constituents and to this province to oppose bills that are not in their interests.

I've had the opportunity to join my colleagues in engaging with many stakeholders over the last few days, and I can tell you that people are really confused. They're telling us they are concerned with how this government rolls out its policies. We all know the NDP record on consultation leaves something to be desired. Whether it's oil royalty reviews, come-and-be-told meetings for farmers on Bill 6, or PDD sole-source contracting implementation, one thing remains clear; this government rarely consults, and when it does, it does poorly. One stakeholder I talked to has actually spoken with this member.

We need some questions answered. Can the member tell this Legislature who it proposes the committee would consult in the process of this review? Does the member have a list? I have some suggestions I would like to put on the record right now – it will be helpful – Alberta government services; the Alberta Residential Tenancies Advisory Committee, ARTAC; Alberta government residential tenancies dispute resolution centre; Canadian Federation of Apartment Associations; Realtors Association of Edmonton; Real Estate Council of Alberta; Alberta Barrier-Free Council;

Calgary Residential Rental Association; and the Canadian Home Builders' Association. Those are just a few that you can put on that list. They should be on your list of those to speak to before you introduce legislation, yet many of these groups were not consulted before this bill was even tabled. When bills come forward, they should be based on consultation, on information that takes into account the facts on the ground and weighs the necessity of the legislation.

4:00

Unfortunately, this bill is not really necessary. This is a government and backbench that is antimarket and truly fails to recognize that the market adjusts down to the economic realities. This review is not grounded in economic reality and fails to provide the most fundamental component of a review, market assessment information. Without this type of assessment of the market any recommendation coming out of this review would be based solely on opinion. We need to be assured that the recommendations are not created without context. We have heard some concerns about rent control. I actually heard them in a speech today. The members opposite are so quick to attack landlords and bring in studies on rent control, but this is simply irresponsible, Mr. Speaker.

In June this government's Minister of Municipal Affairs stated, and I quote: I can tell you, quite frankly, that our government is not at this time looking to rent controls. End quote. "Time" is the key word in that phrase, Mr. Speaker, because now we have a government supporting a private member's bill to study rent controls. In what has become its trademark ideological fashion, this NDP government is going around creating regulatory reviews, which can create market uncertainty. This drives away investment. It's like there's an industry you guys don't want to mess with.

As my colleagues have said, this government must reaffirm its commitment that it is not going to legislate on such risky economic policies, which burden businesses with red tape and overregulation. Mr. Speaker, the reality is that rental property owners are not often huge corporations. These are regular people. They're seniors. They're Albertans who have temporarily left this province to find work, thanks to you, or people who have moved for other reasons, who haven't been able to sell their property because of the market slowdown. Some are just simply trying to get ahead. They're independent business owners running family operations.

While I recognize that the intent of the bill is to strike a committee to create recommendations, I do feel the government must be forthcoming and honest with its policies. Businesses and families are already hurting from the NDP tax hikes. Rental property owners need to be assured that this NDP committee will not advocate for increased regulation and decreased security for them. Not only is the review's purpose unnecessary and undesirable, but the bill itself shows just how little this NDP government understands its roles and capacities.

Getting back to our roles in this House, the backbench is not the place to be driving large-scale, sector-wide reviews. The minister actually already has the power to establish a review committee of this nature. Yet here we are debating a bill to create a committee which the minister could just appoint, which will report to the minister. Why? Why would the minister not just undertake the study? Is the minister not really interested in doing her job?

The committee this bill seeks to establish needs to be more transparent and accountable. The government has chosen to ask the Legislature to take on the responsibility of creating the committee but doesn't want the committee to be responsible to the Legislature. Why have it only report to the minister? Why wouldn't the government consider allowing it to be a two-way street and have the committee report to the members of this Assembly, the elected

officials? Albertans sent us here. This is just another example of how the new NDP has reversed its stance on the importance of transparency now that it's in power. We would like to see the NDP government undertake meaningful consultation to inform committees like the one this bill would establish. We all know how strong the NDP record is on consultation or lack thereof.

Wildrose is committed to protecting our most vulnerable and providing results, not time-wasting reviews like the former PC government. The government has the ability to produce a report that can inform results without passing a bill, and it's concerning that they haven't really figured that out yet.

So, unfortunately, I will not be supporting this bill. We all must do better. We must recognize our duties to bring forth strong policy recommendations that will help Albertans, instead of the endless reviews.

Thank you very much.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be part of a caucus with such strong advocates for affordable housing, including the Member for Calgary-East. Bill 202 proposes the Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act, which is in keeping with our government's priority for safe, affordable, and appropriate housing. What I particularly like about this bill is that it addresses the complexity of providing affordable housing by engaging all the stakeholders involved. Stakeholders include municipalities, nonprofit groups, housing co-operatives, developers, house providers, shelters, and organizations that specialize in the different stages of the life cycle such as organizations for seniors.

This bill also addresses the reality that there is not one solution or one approach but many solutions and approaches to providing affordable housing. This has been reflected in the recently released report in my own riding of Strathcona county that was endorsed by council.

A substantial portion of my career and my volunteer engagement has been about affordable housing. I was fortunate to be involved in innovative approaches. I also saw how diligent and vigilant one has to be to ensure that affordable housing is maintained in the community. I really want to talk about the need for diligence and vigilance when you're talking about affordable housing. I could cite many examples of why the Affordable Housing Review Committee Act is needed in this province and why we need to work together to ensure that affordable housing is created and maintained.

I'm just going to give you one example from my own experience. As a housing activist I found that the threat to affordable housing stock sometimes came from groups who should have known better than to devise schemes to remove tenants from rental properties. A management company for a low-rent housing complex in the municipality I was working with decided to evict the tenants so they could renovate the building into a luxury rental building. A number of the tenants decided to fight the eviction and to seek help. The developers went as far as shutting off heat to the complex, earning the ire of the local council, which became appalled at the action of the developers and became very public about the desire for developers and management companies to stop this action. The residential tenancy office issued a ruling in favour of the tenants, but each time the developers did not comply, seeking appeal to a higher court. If it had not been for the actions of the tenants, the leadership of the local municipal council, and the weekly protest in front of the developers' office, over 240 units of affordable housing would have been lost in this municipality.

This fight has shown me that retaining, building, and maintaining affordable housing requires diligence, watchfulness, and a commitment to ensuring a housing first approach in communities. This is what I'm hoping the committee that the act is going to create

will be doing for us in terms of affordable housing. I will therefore urge all members of this Assembly to support this bill and to demonstrate their commitment to planning and action on affordable housing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

4:10

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today on Bill 202, the Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act. I want to preface my comments by acknowledging that I am certain that nobody in this place disagrees that there should be affordable housing available in Alberta. The Official Opposition caucus believes in positive affordable housing solutions. Unfortunately, while surely well intended, this bill may even hurt the economy if it results in risky experiments on the market or the perception that there could be new and onerous regulations, and it could actually provide fewer opportunities for families in need of affordable housing.

Now, this legislation as presented sets up a committee to review numerous aspects of the rental market: rental regulations; rent subsidies; security deposits; affordability of rental rates, including rates for the rental of mobile home sites; affordability of home ownership and mechanisms to support affordability. Earlier on today we heard from the Member for Edmonton-McClung that it truly is going to be talking about rent controls. Decisions in these areas can affect Alberta's rental markets greatly, but this bill as currently worded does not provide adequate detail on how consultations will be carried out on this matter. Frankly, this government's record on consultation is not exemplary, Mr. Speaker. We saw this, of course, with Bill 6 and the lack of consultation that this government bothered to do with farmers. There are questions about the consultation process.

The committee this bill seeks to establish needs to be more transparent and accountable. If the intention is to use the Legislature to create this committee, why has it chosen to make the committee accountable only to the minister? We know where this is going. We know where the Premier stands. As my colleague mentioned, in 2014 the Premier told the *Calgary Herald* that Alberta should implement rent controls, and the committee that this bill would set up could be the first step to that.

When prices are capped, people have less incentive to fix up and rent out their property or, frankly, to actually build more rental properties if they have the means. If there's decreased availability, landlords could become more selective with tenants and tenants may stay in more affordable properties longer than makes sense for their economic means given the smaller market that a rent-controlled environment creates. It's worth noting that evidence from New York shows that those living in rent-controlled apartments generally have higher median incomes than those who rent market-rate apartments. The losers in these scenarios are the very people the government is presumably trying to help through the bill.

I would encourage members to review one of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's rental market reports for Alberta. Here's what they'll see. Rental vacancies are going up. Rental demand is going down, specifically as a result of a weak labour market. Let me quote from CMHC's most recent Alberta rental market report for Alberta, released this past fall.

Reduced income growth and job prospects have contributed to reduced demand for rental housing . . . In terms of rental supply,

the overall universe of purpose-built rental apartments increased by 3,890 units in 2015, with the majority of the rise concentrated in two-bedroom units. This represents the second consecutive year the apartment universe increased, following declines from 2004 to 2013.

This is contrary to what we heard just earlier.

Low vacancies in the province over the past three years have contributed to more rental construction. By the third quarter of 2015, the total number of rental starts was already higher than any annual total since 1990.

You don't have to be an economist to know that in a market like that, no landlord will successfully rent out a property if they don't drop prices to meet the market.

Now, affordable housing is an issue for many Albertans because the economy is continuing in a downward spiral. We see this in Alberta's climbing unemployment rate, now the highest in 20 years. Just last week new Statistics Canada figures revealed that the average weekly pay in Alberta has dropped by over 4 per cent in the last year, a record drop.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The much broader issue isn't that Albertans are being squeezed out by escalating rent costs; the broader issue is that the job market is suffering and that more and more Albertans are struggling to make ends meet, not just to pay their rent but to meet all their other obligations as well. It is the broader context that we need to take a look at, Madam Speaker.

A committee can study affordable rental housing all they want, but that will not solve the real problem here. This government is treading water with no clear plan while the economy continues to decline. The economy is in a bad place. That shouldn't be a surprise to anyone here, but in an economy like this the government's priority should be to figure out what the barriers are to getting back on track to the Alberta advantage. Now is not the time for experiments with the rental housing market, especially when it can adversely affect so many Albertans.

I don't doubt for a moment that, unfortunately, there are unscrupulous landlords who are acting in bad faith with regard to the prices they ask for units, but it would be profoundly careless to allege that this is characteristic of all landlords in Alberta. The reality is that a great number of property owners and managers are everyday Albertans, and their rental units are their livelihoods. Who are we talking about here? They're seniors that rely on renting out property to supplement their sparse income in retirement. They're Albertans who have temporarily left our province to find work or people who have moved for other reasons and haven't been able to sell their property because of the market slowdown. While the government wants to establish a committee to review ways and means to bring rental prices down, the taxes, the expenses, the bills for property owners just seem to be going up on the way.

We know, for instance, that electricity costs are rising. There has been clear evidence in the last weeks that Alberta's electricity costs are heading in the same direction as Ontario's, and there are some significant warning signs for Alberta in the Ontario situation. It's a relevant detail to this discussion. Here's what happened. Ontario's coal-fired electrical plants were all shut down. As also seems to be the case in Alberta, nobody carried out a proper economic impact assessment to take into consideration how such a sudden shift from coal to other sources would impact everyday people, businesses, and families. According to information from the Association of Major Power Consumers, Ontario has the highest industrial electrical rates in North America. According to Ontario's Auditor General, during a single eight-year period Ontario electrical users paid a staggering \$37 billion more than the market price for their

electricity. I bring all of this up in this context because the rising cost of electricity and utilities under this government will likely be another pressure point on property owners, making the prospect of renting out their properties less and less gainful.

In conclusion, I want to say this. My colleagues and I in the Official Opposition believe that while the goal of this bill is worthy, the market intervention ultimately decreases options and choices for families and those who need affordable housing options. The reality is that many property owners who rent out housing are independent business owners or individuals looking to supplement their income. It's tough to see how they wouldn't be hurt by the effects of this bill. In this difficult economy rental property owners and all Albertans are looking for hope and looking for answers, not more regulations and especially not experimental regulations.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to begin by clarifying some misapprehensions of our colleagues across the aisle. To be clear, Bill 202 is a private member's bill. The bill's origin is solely with my colleague the Member for Calgary-East. I know this because I spoke with her at several points over the weeks during which she refined her vision and navigated the standard legislative process. I can also testify from my own work in developing and, yes, consulting on a potential private member's bill that our members have the freedom to independently explore areas of their own interest, discuss them with fellow caucus members and, yes, propose our own private members' bills.

I took the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon at his word today when he declared that the bill he put forward was of his own design and of his own volition. I would simply ask that the members opposite recognize that the Member for Calgary-East is simply doing the same.

That said, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill. I believe that I can honestly say that since being elected, there has been no issue I've heard about more consistently from both residents and stakeholders across the spectrum than that of affordable housing. Just yesterday afternoon, as I was out door-knocking in my community, I met a young man who works for a local social agency. He echoed the concern that I've heard from community groups, from agencies, and from local business interests, that we as a society need to find new ways to increase accessibility to and the affordability of housing in our province. He spoke of the challenges many residents of Edmonton's downtown face in accessing or maintaining housing that they can afford. Madam Speaker, this is a growing problem.

4:20

My constituency office is two doors down from the Capital Region Housing Corporation, whose wait-lists for affordable housing and rental supplements grow increasingly unmanageable. Many on those lists come to my office seeking help in maintaining the housing they have or finding a new space that they can better afford. In fact, I recently received a report from the caseworker in my constituency office outlining her work in helping my constituents access and maintain housing. These cases comprise nearly 40 per cent of her work. With Alberta's population expected to grow by 1 million in the next decade and the aging of much of our current affordable housing stock, this problem is only going to get worse.

As I discussed this yesterday with my constituent, he also raised another housing concern. He noted that he and his partner had been recently forced to move from the building they'd called home for several years when they found that they were expecting a child and the building they were in was adults-only. It's worth noting, Madam Speaker, that Alberta is the only province in Canada which currently lacks provisions in its Human Rights Act to address this kind of discrimination.

Now, the gentleman that I was speaking with had greatly come to appreciate the convenience and diversity of living in our urban core but, like others I spoke with, found significant challenges in finding affordable, family-friendly housing there. Eventually they were fortunate to be able to take over the lease on a townhouse from friends who moved overseas. However, there are many others who find themselves forced to leave neighbourhoods they love, communities close to services they rely on, including public transit, social agencies, schools, and sometimes even their employment due to challenges of affordability and accessibility in securing family-friendly housing in our urban neighbourhoods.

Edmonton-Centre, in particular, is home to many new Canadians who take up residency in what is affordable though often very low-quality housing along the northern edge of our downtown core. These individuals build community as their children attend local schools. They play in the local parks. They're enrolled in child care in excellent local facilities like the Oliver Centre. However, as these families settle in and become more successful and look to secure a better quality of housing, whether through rental or ownership, they often find that they cannot affordably do so in the neighbourhoods and communities that they have come to call home. They are forced to move into more distant neighbourhoods, away from their cultural communities, where they often face increased costs and increased isolation.

While I'm incredibly excited for the economic potential that comes with the revitalization of our downtown core, I am also concerned about the effects that it may have on the affordability of housing in Edmonton's urban neighbourhoods and the effects this may have on vulnerable residents and families.

Now, I recognize that this is a complex issue. This involves many stakeholders across the spectrum, community groups and business and developers, many of whom I had the opportunity to speak with in the pursuit of my own considered private member's bill. So I thank my colleague from Calgary-East for bringing forward this bill. When we're at a time when all three orders of government are coming to the table and recognizing the need to once again invest in affordable housing and when so many of the developers, realtors, and others I have spoken to in the housing industry have expressed a willingness to speak and work with government to discuss how we can best address these problems, it makes sense to me to establish a committee that could consult with all of the stakeholders involved, draw on the considerable expertise available on all sides of this issue.

We can't afford to simply continue the status quo. We know that we're facing a problem that's been ongoing for some time. We know that it's a problem that can only get worse. I can't see the difficulty, I can't see the problem in simply wanting to sit down, talk with all individuals, consider all options and possibilities to ensure that all Albertans have the opportunity to have a safe and affordable place to live.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in second reading of Bill 202, the Alberta Affordable

Housing Review Committee Act. I don't think there's any question that this is one of the paramount issues that Alberta faces today, not only because of the ongoing influx of new Canadians and new Albertans over many, many years but also now the economic downturn that has threatened thousands of people in their stability and their homes.

The housing review committee act proposes to create a mandate to prepare a report on accessibility and affordability and to make recommendations to the minister within nine months. I guess part of the concern is that those of us who have been around for a while have seen this story repeatedly unfold and, along with the government, who was formerly in the opposition, harangued the last government. To his credit, Ed Stelmach was a very staunch supporter of affordable housing and did a lot up until four years ago, and nothing much has happened since. A lot of good investment, a lot of recognition that the corporate sector has to be there, federal and municipal governments have to be there – municipal governments, of course, depend on what the provincial government is allowing and enabling them to do. Not least is recognizing some of the issues that the big cities face disproportionately to the rest of the province, but I think rural areas and smaller urban communities have similar problems.

I guess from the outside it appears that we're delaying something that we have all kinds of research, all kinds of information on for Alberta and all kinds of recognition that what's really needed is action. One of the most creative options that I've seen is coming out of Vancouver, where they have a similar, very hot market, very expensive, and the nonprofit organizations have taken over both public land and public buildings that are not being maintained or developed because the government of the day doesn't have the money. The nonprofit organizations can take the land and leverage it for loans and leverage the properties that need massive amounts of refurbishment, and they can actually get on with the job.

I don't think it should take nine months. I don't think it should take a committee to decide what we need to do here. I think many of us are anxious to see action, not more talk and more research, when we already know so much about Alberta.

Having said that, I hasten to add that there's no question that this is an important issue for this government to address. If they don't feel confident in their research, if they don't feel confident in what we already know about this province and the economic uncertainties or they don't have the will to borrow more money, then encourage municipal and even provincial buildings and lands to be transferred to those that can do it. There are tremendous examples across the country that we could learn from and that we could move on rather than delaying for nine months. There's a critical need.

I share the Member for Edmonton-Centre's concerns that every day or at least every week I have one member of the public or a family contact me about getting help to get into some kind of affordable dwelling or protecting them in the dwelling where they are because they're about to be evicted. They don't have the funding or they've lost some income, and they don't know where to go.

There are seven housing associations across the province that have been addressing this issue for the last 10 years. They have a plan in place, and somehow – I think they're as puzzled as the rest that we haven't gotten on with some of the great planning and opportunities that have been presented to the various levels of government in Alberta. They know what needs to be done in conjunction with – what is it called in Calgary? – the housing board. They have made plans over the last decade. The Resolve campaign is a combination of nine organizations that has gotten all kinds of great plans in place, ready to go, some of them shovel-ready. We presented one of those to the minister last week. The Alberta

Interagency Council on Homelessness: that's the body that has been planning these developments across the province for years and has many of them ready to go. I guess I'm concerned.

4:30

I understand that we're in a budgetary crunch, but there are options. If this government doesn't want to go into further debt to try and facilitate more of this, then ensure that we get on with the job by empowering municipalities and, indeed, transferring some of their own land and some of their own properties to the nonprofit organizations that have proven themselves, groups like Trinity foundation, Silvera, the Calgary housing corporation, a comparable one up here in Edmonton. They simply need to be able to leverage money, leverage properties, and borrow themselves, and they can do it in some cases as efficiently or more efficiently than the government can.

So if I were to make one amendment, I would say that if you're going to set up a committee, have them report in three months, not nine months. Let's make sure we get on with the job and start solving some of the problems here.

Thanks, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in support of this bill, and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-East for bringing it forward. As you know, I recently had the distinct honour and privilege of delivering my maiden speech in this Chamber. In it I spoke about the many great things that make up my constituency of Calgary-Cross and the many reasons why I'm so very proud to represent it. I also related to you about the journey to find my home in this beautiful province.

However, today I rise to tell you about the challenges that the constituents of Calgary-Cross face, and that is the issue of affordable housing. Madam Speaker, thousands of Albertan families have an extremely difficult time finding affordable housing. There are many heartbreaking stories of struggle and perseverance to find a simple and most basic dignity of having a roof over your head. While there are thousands of families facing this struggle, I want to tell you about one particular family in Calgary-Cross. Kerry and Randy have a family of nine, and over the past five years this family has faced homelessness a total of three times. Three times they have faced homelessness, and recently they would have faced homelessness a fourth time; however, they were lucky enough to apply to Habitat for Humanity and were actually accepted into the program. They learned that they would be facing homelessness when their current landlord told them they were going to sell their home. In the face of, actually, the prospect of being without a home again, we now have this family who has found new hope and new dignity and new purpose.

As you know, Habitat for Humanity is a wonderful organization that empowers families by providing home ownership through the use of volunteer labour and donations of money and materials to build a safe, affordable house. Habitat homes are then sold to partner families with no down payment, a no-interest mortgage. The mortgage payments are then put into a revolving fund, which is then used to build even more homes for more families.

I am proud to tell you that I was actually at a ceremony when the first shovels hit the ground and can report that in just a few short months the projects are near completion for the first units. I want to take the opportunity as well to thank the Member for Calgary-Shaw, who, along with many constituency assistants from Calgary, dedicated a day and volunteered their time to build this family a home. So I thank them for that.

Madam Speaker, Kerry and Randy are good, hard-working people. Randy is an active volunteer with Inn from the Cold and organizes an annual Christmas toy drive. His eldest daughter is also an active member of the community and actually volunteered to distribute food during the 2013 Alberta floods. By all accounts they are a model Alberta family, yet like I mentioned, three times they've faced homelessness. This is the problem we're talking about today.

I want to reiterate my sincere thanks to the member for bringing this very important issue forward for us to have a discussion, for us to begin the consultation process that is necessary in order to reach the decisions that are best going to address the issues for the people of this province. We all know that stable housing makes better families, better families make more vibrant communities, and vibrant communities make this province better. It's a very simple formula. Every Albertan needs a safe place to call home. The concept of housing security shows us that when individuals have the personal security of a safe place to live, other challenges in their life become easier to confront, to manage, whether it's health challenges or employment, education, or addictions.

Overall what this member's bill is proposing to do is to strike a committee that is going to look at issues in question and come back with recommendations. Now, I have heard many times the members of the Official Opposition express their concerns about consultation in this province, and here we are talking about not necessarily wanting to do that same process. So it's kind of confusing to me. I do look forward, however, to the day when we come to this Chamber and are talking about social issues and we actually hear something from that side that actually supports those kinds of issues.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that this is the kind of issue that I and many members of this government ran on as a priority of the issues that they were talking to their constituents about at their doorsteps.

In closing, I want to again invite all of you to vote in favour of this bill and to support it going forward. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, followed by the hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to start by saying that I absolutely agree with and support the goal of this bill and what it's trying to do in increasing access to affordable housing for all Albertans. There have been some very impassioned speeches here by the members previous, not the least of which came from the Minister of Culture and Tourism. I have a tremendous amount of empathy for anyone who finds themselves in that situation.

What I'd like to focus on in my comments here are solutions. How do we solve those problems? They're tremendous challenges still in our province, perhaps not as acute as they were as recently as a year ago but still a serious, serious problem in this province, that we do need to address and to address with some urgency.

I'd like to pick up on some of the solutions offered by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, which I think are very compelling solutions. There are a lot of things that we can do. One of the things the province can do is to increase the stock of affordable housing available in this province by providing dedicated and sustainable funding to a variety of agencies. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View referenced the Resolve campaign in Calgary, and there are many other groups like that. There is a seven-city group that's gotten together to tackle their various 10-year plans to end homelessness. Each are in various states of progress. All of them need that final push over the top. I

would suggest that this government providing substantial capital funding to affordable housing in this province would certainly be welcomed from this part of this side of the House, I can assure you, perhaps even if we need to borrow some money to do that. I think that would be a good use of those dollars.

We need different types of housing in this province. We need single units. We need multifamily units, townhouses. We need permanent supportive living. People need a path through the housing chain, be that rental accommodation or eventually, hopefully, as in the case referenced by the Minister of Culture and Tourism, to ultimately perhaps even own their own home as well. That's a goal of many, many Albertans.

Another option in terms of the solution is rent supports to ensure that rental costs do not exceed 30 per cent of income. I was having a good conversation with the Member for Red Deer-South about some of the challenges of food security for kids in school, kids going hungry. An inability to pay for both rent and food is a very real problem for many Albertans.

4:40

Fortunately, there are agencies like Horizon Housing, and I'm absolutely thrilled and proud to have Horizon Housing facilities in the constituency of Calgary-Elbow. They do tremendous work. They are part of that Resolve campaign, and they are in the process of building another remarkable development in Calgary-Elbow as well as the work they do elsewhere, which will help ensure that people do not find themselves in that situation. That's really important.

What this bill does is that it creates a committee to sit and talk about these things. What we don't need is more talk; we need more action. And while I have a tremendous amount of respect for the member for bringing forward the idea and focusing on housing, what I'd much rather see, rather than simply a committee to talk about these things, is action. I want to see action to support the 10-year plan to end homelessness. I want to see capital funding to increase the affordable housing stock.

I think there are opportunities that are nonfinancial for this government to remove barriers to information sharing between agencies that deal with people struggling with homelessness or on the verge of homelessness. There are many wonderful agencies in this province, but often they're working at crosspurposes, where people find themselves shuffled from agency to agency, where very often provincial tax dollars are spent in multiple silos, ostensibly trying to achieve the same thing but often working at crosspurposes. That will not only not cost the government more money; in fact, there's an opportunity perhaps to save money while at the same time then improving outcomes. These are all options. These are things the government can do right now without another report.

I want to be very clear. In my consultations and discussions with stakeholders my understanding is that a report not unlike the one contemplated by this bill is, in fact, either in progress or has been completed and submitted to the minister. So I believe that there has already been a very substantial consultation recently completed by the ministry of housing. Now, I know that the timelines on private members' bills are long, and I'm not sure if the member was aware of that report. But it's my understanding from multiple stakeholders that, in fact, this exact sort of report, perhaps even more wide ranging, has already been done. If that's the case, wonderful. That's great. That's good. Let's let the minister receive that report, let's see what it says, and I will absolutely and enthusiastically support this government taking action to increase the stock of affordable housing in this province.

Now, one of the other aspects of this bill that I do find troubling is any contemplation of rent controls. There has been, certainly, some discussion here in this House today about the challenges of rent control. Of course, I've done some research. I have a concern that even raising the idea of rent controls greatly elevated the blood pressure of many a landlord around the province although it may seem on the surface that it has beneficial effect. One would think: "Well, isn't this great? We'll reduce or constrain rental increases, and that will have a beneficial effect." On the surface I'm sure some would believe that.

But the Calgary Action Committee on Housing and Homelessness has created a document called rent control, perception versus reality, which I'll be happy to table tomorrow at the appropriate time. It finds that rent controls often erode the quality of controlled units, at the same time driving up costs for all other rental housing. It creates closed communities, reducing the turnover in rental markets. Now, why would reducing the turnover in rental markets be a bad thing? What it actually does is that it creates these closed rental communities, having an impact where perhaps black markets can develop and, ultimately, creating a housing shortage. That's not what we're trying to do here. In fact, we're trying to do the opposite.

What we can do in this province and what has worked well is that we allow the market to do its job. Now, the government has a big role to play in ensuring the stock of affordable housing is there, but it doesn't prevent people from moving through the housing chain. It doesn't disincent people from making an investment in rental accommodation even as a small entrepreneur.

Now, I want to be clear on this upcoming comment that I don't want the Minister of Culture and Tourism to take this as a sharp criticism of his example because I'm really encouraged and inspired by any story of a family who has found their way into permanent housing, and Habitat for Humanity is a remarkable organization. But the example he used was that they were in the situation where their landlord was selling the property. That's something that as a landlord you have the right to do. You have the right to dispose of your asset at any time. There are rules, of course, in terms of timeline, of notice, and that sort of thing. Now, I don't want in any way to diminish the experience that that family was going through and what it meant for them. I know that in their case that meant that they were facing homelessness, and that is the opposite of trivial. In fact, it's a very, very serious situation for a family that's faced that previously.

But I want to be careful that in talking about this bill, we don't create a situation where landlords or entrepreneurs feel like there may be a risk, a bigger risk, in investing in a rental property, which would reduce the stock of rental accommodation available in the province, which would exacerbate the problem that we're all here trying to solve. So I think we want to be very careful about that.

I just want to highlight a couple of other structural issues that I have with the bill.

I agree with the Member for Calgary-Mountain View that the nine-month time frame, if this bill does go ahead, is probably too long.

I've already talked about my concern about rent regulation, rent controls.

Section 3(2) says, "The report must include, but is not limited to, a review of" the five things listed. In section 4 it enumerates four stakeholder groups but does not use the wording "including but not limited to," which by the definition means that the only people that could be consulted would be landlords, tenants, home builders, housing organizations. That would mean that if someone perhaps



was contemplating becoming a landlord, they're not able to contribute.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 202, and I want to just indicate that I believe that the provision of affordable housing to all Albertans is a critical responsibility of all of us and that I believe that in our own ways everyone in this Assembly would like to aspire to that goal. The question is, you know, how to go about it.

Let me take some of the comments that I've heard from our friends in the Wildrose Official Opposition. The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo apparently has difficulty distinguishing between a private member's bill and a government bill because he repeatedly referred to what the government is doing with respect to this, and I just want to indicate to him that this is a private member's bill that is put forward by a member of the government caucus and not a government bill.

I think that's significant in a number of ways because government bills can take direct action, but private members' bills are often constrained. I've had considerable experience drafting private members' bills, and I know that there are limitations that have to be there that are brought to our attention by Parliamentary Counsel. One of the most common forms of a private member's bill that wants to move in a certain direction is on the advice of counsel formatted in this particular way; that is to say, to strike a committee to move in a certain direction. That's very common, and that is one of the limitations, I think, on private members' bills that I've experienced. So the suggestion that this private member's bill would be holding up government action in key areas for nine months, I think, is not necessarily the case.

Now, both Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and Airdrie went on and on about consultation, and I find that really difficult to fathom since the bill is precisely about consultation. Now, a private member doesn't have the resources of government to do the consultation to the same extent that the government could do, but I think that it's pretty clear that this is a bill about talking to stakeholders. It specifies four major groups, including landlords, tenants, home builders, and housing organizations, all of which will be consulted. There will be, in fact, public meetings. Section 4 of the private member's bill talks about public meetings that would be held. All of these things are envisaged by the bill, so to do a whole bunch of consultation so you can pass a bill to implement consultation strikes me as a bit ridiculous.

4:50

Now, the Official Opposition has made a great to-do about rent controls, and I think the minister – the statement that they've quoted by the minister of economic development, that the government is not considering rent controls at this time, is a definitive statement of where this government is at. Rent controls are one of many tools that have been used by governments, including the former PC government. At one point it brought in rent controls. That doesn't mean that they're the best tool or the most desirable tool or a tool that is available or is particularly useful at all times.

Quite frankly, I think that the key here is to increase the supply of housing, particularly the affordable housing, and to let the market work. That is, in fact, I think you'll find, where the government is focused, and I think members should stay tuned, going forward in the next couple of weeks, for some news with respect to that particular direction. I believe that we need to make sure that every family, every individual has at least some basic, secure housing and

that there's a responsibility, when the market doesn't work, for the government to play a role. That doesn't necessarily mean or usually mean rent controls.

The Official Opposition is trying to spin this in a way to frighten off investment, and I think that that's shameful. I think that it doesn't represent what's needed in the market – this is my personal opinion – and doesn't recognize the reality today and is not what's needed in the current situation. I want to indicate to hon. members that I think this bill is a good bill. It sets a clear direction for the House. It will not interfere with the government taking action in a more immediate sense, but I think that it's a worthwhile thing to do, to have that consultation, to continue to focus the efforts of all of us on making sure that every Albertan has a decent, safe place to go to when they come home at night. I think that that's the goal of this bill.

I think it's really quite despicable how the Wildrose opposition is trying to portray and spin this bill as something nefarious, something that is not going to help people, because it will help people, Madam Speaker. It will generate public awareness. It will give policy options to the government, not all of which have to come from the bureaucracy. There are lots of great ideas out there, and I think that anything we can do – anything we can do – to reach out and invite new ideas to solve these problems is welcome. I think hon. members should support this bill because I think it advances the cause of housing and of ending homelessness, making sure that everyone has a secure place to live.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon in the few minutes that we have left together to just provide some very brief comments about the bill before us. Let me be clear. Myself and the other members – I wouldn't speak for everyone, but certainly the members who've spoken today firmly believe in providing affordable housing if done in a way that increases access, and the hon. members for Airdrie and Fort McMurray both share that desire. Certainly, members of the Official Opposition have a desire to ensure that there is affordable housing in the marketplace.

Earlier today I rose to highlight this concern, that in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, in Olds, Didsbury, and Carstairs there are 20 affordable housing units available. In the community of Olds there are eight of the 20, and only two of those eight are currently inhabitable, and there is a waiting list of five to have access to those units. Madam Speaker, what those five individuals are calling out for is access to affordable housing. They didn't call up my office and say: please stand and vote for a piece of legislation that's going to study something that's been studied on numerous occasions, and nine months from now put that study on the shelf and don't do anything with it, just like the last number of studies that have been done. What are those five people on the waiting list in the community of Olds hoping for? They're hoping for action, just like – we heard the minister of tourism speak about people who are pulling themselves up out of homelessness through wonderful organizations.

What we need is more affordable housing in the marketplace. We need housing providers that are willing to invest in their community by purchasing homes and then providing them to others for rent. We have seen study after study. We have seen this government call for studies. If this is going to be a priority of the government – in fact, I hope that it is – they will take the necessary steps to go ahead

and ensure that this information can be realized. But more important than the study is action.

The government would like to say: "Oh, the opposition doesn't support access to affordable housing. Well, the opposition doesn't care about issues around social housing, affordable housing, seniors' housing." While they would like to make these wild and outlandish claims, what the opposition wants to see is a commitment to ensuring action on these items. The people in Olds want action. The people who are waiting for access to affordable housing want action, and that's exactly what we would like to see on this side of the House. Affordable housing is of critical importance. If families don't have access to housing, which is so important to the future success of those families, that creates such uncertainty in the home. Children underperform. Relationships are strained at the thought of being homeless.

What we don't need is more inaction. What we don't need is more studies. What we don't need is significant housing providers and stakeholders coming, as I know – I have taken phone calls that have raised significant concerns. While I appreciate the Government House Leader's commitment to not utilizing rent controls, the challenge with that statement, Madam Speaker, is that it went like this: the government is committed to not using rent controls at this time. So there is this uncertainty that is created amongst housing providers.

The Government House Leader likes to make accusations about the opposition's desires, the opposition's perceived role in affordable housing.

We've seen members like the Member for Medicine Hat work closely with the community of Medicine Hat to ensure that homelessness doesn't exist in that community. Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, that Medicine Hat should be congratulated. The housing community and the partner organizations in Medicine Hat should be upheld. What that community didn't need was another study. That community rallied around a cause.

As much as a study is nice, action by the government is exponentially better. Unfortunately, that's not what we see. I know that members on this side of the Assembly are committed to ensuring access to affordable housing, are committed to supporting our seniors . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but we're at 5 o'clock. We've run out of time to close debate. We need to move on to the next order of business.

## 5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

### Energy Sector Jobs

502. Mr. Rosendahl moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to engage with energy sector workers when developing strategies to diversify Alberta's energy sector and create value-added jobs.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to rise today and speak to the issue of government engaging with workers when developing strategies that diversify Alberta's energy sector and create value-added jobs. On behalf of my constituents of West Yellowhead, many of whom derive their livelihoods from the energy sector, and the countless Albertans I've spoken to who work in and are affected by the energy sector, it is my privilege to debate this motion today.

When we're talking energy sector, we also include forestry and coal. We also must include the spinoff jobs that these industries create, whether it's a single welder or whether it is a company that's providing plant turnaround maintenance. These workers are also affected by this.

Madam Speaker, as our province endures the current economic challenges due to the drop in the global prices of oil – and we must add coal to that – it has become more apparent than ever that we must invest in economic diversification to ensure that Albertans are not casualties in what has become a boom-and-bust economy. All we have to do is look at the town of Grande Cache when we're talking about this because it's happened to them before.

No one will hear me argue against the notion that Alberta is an energy province. As I engage with my constituents in West Yellowhead, I am reminded every day of the role the resource sector plays in the lives of Albertans and the role our resources have in creating a fair and strong economy. We are and we will continue to be an energy province. Regardless of what some may say, we are proud of Alberta's natural resources and understand the critical role these resources have in our economy.

Madam Speaker, diversification in the energy sector is essential for Albertans so that our province's economy becomes resilient to the changes in the energy and coal prices. It is our duty as members of this Legislature to ensure that our province captures the full value of our resources. This also includes forestry. In doing so, it is essential that our government engage with resource sector workers when developing new strategies. Listening to workers and industrial leaders must remain at the forefront of the government's agenda. By doing so, Albertans can be confident that we will be on the right path towards diversifying our economy and creating good, value-added jobs. I am proud to be part of a government that values the input and ideas of energy workers, and we are committed to supporting them in a variety of ways, especially in such difficult economic times. The fact of the matter is that front-line workers understand the challenges the energy sector faces, and our government respects their role and opinions.

Today's unique economic challenges should remind us of the importance of economic diversification. It also serves as a reminder that economic diversification requires a multipronged approach that includes looking at new areas of opportunity while finding opportunities to build on our current areas of strength. Through this motion it is my goal to ensure that Albertans working in the energy sector remain in the energy sector regardless of the price of energy. Alberta's resource sector remains a key driver of the provincial economy. If we want to create long-term, sustainable jobs, we need to diversify beyond just energy extraction into other areas of strength. But, again, we must engage with our community workers and stakeholders.

During the March 8 Speech from the Throne the government identified that it would establish the energy diversification advisory committee, which will provide advice on the steps needed to build a more diversified and resilient economy. As plans develop, I certainly urge the committee to engage with the various organizations that represent resource sector workers. Madam Speaker, my constituency of West Yellowhead has many organizations and energy sector workers who would be interested in sharing their input and ideas, and I'm more than happy to collaborate with the committee to ensure my constituents are being heard. This is vital.

During our current session the minister of economic development introduced the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. This will assist entrepreneurs and businesses to create new jobs and growth, which will become increasingly necessary during difficult

economic times. Madam Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government proactively working to support a diversified economy.

The fact of the matter is that Albertans are tired of these boom-and-bust cycles. Previous governments may have been content with having the province's economy depend on a single commodity and on a single market. Our government is taking a different approach. Our government is working towards a future where our resources hold full value. Our government is striving towards a prosperous future for today and for our children. Let me remind everyone: all Albertans deserve to benefit from their province's resources. This is the true Alberta advantage. Our government will not sacrifice long-term recovery for short-term benefit. Diversification within the energy sector is central to long-term recovery.

One of the four objectives of the royalty review advisory panel was to identify ways to encourage diversification opportunities such as value-added processing, innovation, or other forms of investment in Alberta. On January 29, 2016, the government of Alberta accepted all of the royalty review advisory panel's recommendations, including the fourth recommendation, to seize opportunities to enhance value-added processing.

Madam Speaker, on February 1, 2016, as part of the government's continued action on the economy to help create jobs, attract investment, and diversify Alberta's economy, the government announced the petrochemical diversification program, which will encourage companies to invest in the development of new Alberta petrochemical facilities by providing up to \$500 million in incentives through royalty credits. The benefits of this program are significant to Alberta workers and their families: between \$3 billion and \$5 billion worth of investment attracted to Alberta, up to 3,000 new jobs during construction of new petrochemical facilities, and more than 1,000 jobs once the operation begins. Madam Speaker, this program will attach investment and create necessary jobs in Alberta. I'm proud to say that the program came as a direct result of industry leaders' input. More than ever our government remains committed to engage leaders in the energy sector.

5:10

As part of the government's long-term climate change strategy the government is committed to phase out coal-generated energy by 2030. In my constituency coal mining has become integral to the local economy. Through this motion I urge the government to focus on public outreach with energy workers and coal industry leaders to ensure that West Yellowhead and all impacted communities in Alberta are engaged in this process. I have heard concerns from those in my riding about the future outlook of the coal mining industry, but the fact is that reducing fossil fuel emissions is central to a climate leadership plan, which will create more jobs and diversify our economy. Our opposition seems to think that it's okay for Alberta to ignore the realities of climate change, but this government is not willing to follow the same approach.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I rise to speak about Motion 502. I was one of those proud energy sector workers till recently. I don't understand why this government deems it necessary to waste this House's time and money. We are paid very well for the job we do or, at least, the job we are supposed to do. Taxpayers are paying for us to create and debate legislation that could better Alberta. Instead, the Member for West Yellowhead thinks it is important to create legislation that wastes everyone's time.

[The Speaker in the chair]

My first question to the member is whether or not he considered the energy sector workers before submitting this motion. In fact, did the member consider anyone before creating this motion? The irony of the situation would be quite hilarious if the member on the backbench decided to create a motion that convinced the front bench to consult when he himself didn't consult. Now, if the member did consult energy sector workers before creating this motion, then what is the point of this motion? If the member could already consult energy sector workers, then there is no need for a motion to tell people to consult energy sector workers.

Seriously, why is the member wasting our time with a piece of legislation that should be a normal part of anyone's job? That's our job. Our job is not to make decisions just based on our own ideas. Our job is to consult with Albertans and create legislation that they deem is important, necessary, and useful. The only way this piece of legislation could be any more wasteful is if we took some scissors to the bill and made it say: be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly ask the government to engage with Albertans before creating the legislation.

**An Hon. Member:** It's not legislation; it's a motion.

**Mr. Panda:** Okay. I hear you. Actually, I take back what I said.

That would be a far more useful piece of legislation since this government cannot seem to consult with Albertans before creating legislation. [interjection] Yeah. I'm coming to that. This motion is a perfect example of why this type of legislation is needed. I'm coming to your point. [interjection] You know what? This is probably the most important piece of legislation this government has brought to the table so far. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Panda:** I apologize for what I said earlier.

The Member for West Yellowhead has hit the nail on the head as to what this government needs. This government needs legislation that commands them to consult with Albertans. Albertans have been begging to be consulted with. Mr. Speaker, Albertans have been begging to be consulted with. The Member for West Yellowhead is probably more in tune with Albertans compared to any of his fellow NDP MLAs, who are making fun of energy sector workers. I'm sure the Member for West Yellowhead saw the outrage Albertans showed when they were not consulted during Bill 6. If we'd had this motion before, maybe the ministers would have applied the spirit of this motion to their legislation and consulted with farmers. Unfortunately, they did not consult, and instead we had protest after protest here at the Legislature asking this government to consult with them. The pain this government put itself through trying to calm the masses after they put forward Bill 6 without consulting Albertans could have been prevented.

If only the Member for West Yellowhead had put this motion through sooner. There are many Albertans who would have benefited from this motion being passed sooner, and I would like to read some quotes from Albertans who wanted this government to consult with them.

With regard to Bill 6 Shandele Battle said: it would be implemented January 1, and then where's our voice; for me, that's not democracy; that's dictatorship.

Also on Bill 6 County Councillor Bill Velichko said: that's my problem with the NDP right now; they just throw anything in without doing a study on it.

On Bill 8 the Calgary board of education published a release saying, "We are also concerned that Boards have not had a chance to discuss the Bill with the minister."

On the menthol ban the Western Convenience Stores Association issued a release quoting the association president, Andrew Klukas: "All we wanted was a chance to speak to this government about the impact of their decision . . . We were denied that chance."

**An Hon. Member:** To continue poisoning.

**Mr. Panda:** That's the record of your government.

On the climate leadership plan the *Financial Post* ran an article with the following statement: "Imperial Oil Ltd. chairman and CEO Rich Kruger, and MEG Energy Corp. president and CEO Bill McCaffrey, were not consulted and are reportedly outraged by the secret deal."

I'm saddened that Albertans had to ask so many times before this government consulted them. I'm saddened that this government could not consult with Albertans without taxpayers' money being spent on this motion, which reiterates the job description of an MLA. But, in the end, I'm glad that someone from the NDP government saw what the rest of Alberta saw. I'm glad that the member from the backbench saw that his front bench was not consulting Albertans and decided to do something about that. I'm glad that this motion was put forward. This government needs to understand that consulting with Albertans is of utmost importance.

I encourage every single MLA here, especially every minister on the front bench, to vote in favour of this motion. More consultation is needed, and this motion is a step in the right direction. A lot of money has been spent creating this motion when you consider all the staff involved. I really hope this is the last time we need a piece of legislation directing the ministers to do their job since every additional piece costs taxpayers more and more money. Hopefully, this motion is enough, and we don't need a separate motion directing every minister separately to consult on every issue individually.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

5:20

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll start by correcting the previous speaker in that this is a motion, not a bill. Motions are the rights of individual members of the Assembly to represent their own constituents but also to act in the best interests of their constituents and all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Motion 502. Quite frankly, there's no minimizing the impact that the collapse in global oil prices is having on our workers in the energy sector, but while Alberta's economy has experienced a major setback, I know that this is something that we can and will recover from because as Albertans we've always not only seen the challenges that we've faced but also the opportunities in those challenges. It's clear that Albertans need an economy that is resilient to energy swings, captures the full value of our resources, and offers prosperous futures for our children.

To do this, we have set out a strong economic/jobs plan that includes investing in much-needed infrastructure to build schools, hospitals, roads, and bridges, that Albertans rely on; supporting the private sector in creating jobs; improving access to capital for entrepreneurs; encouraging innovation across a variety of sectors; and increasing access to markets for Alberta's products and services. This spring we saw the introduction of the new Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, which will give the government additional tools to carry out this plan. In order for government to be successful in carrying out this plan, we need

strong partners. That's why we're seizing this opportunity to work with and invest in our workers.

Earlier this year, Mr. Speaker, we announced that the Alberta government will provide up to \$500 million in royalty credits to our petrochemicals industry. This program builds on the strengths of our energy industry and our skilled workers and will attract new investment into Alberta. It will capitalize on growing global demand for petrochemical products like plastics and textiles. We shouldn't just be shipping our raw resources out of the province. We should be processing them here and keeping the jobs here at home. This program will attract between \$3 billion and \$5 billion worth of investment. New facilities will generate thousands of jobs from construction through to operation. Additional benefits will flow to the manufacturing, transportation, and business sector services.

Mr. Speaker, the royalty review panel's report urged the government to accelerate the development and commercialization of partial upgrading and value-creation technologies for bitumen. The petrochemical diversification program was the first step in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, as part of our government's commitment to phase out coal-generated energy by 2030 and transition to cleaner sources of electricity, our government made a commitment to work with affected workers to support their long-term economic sustainability through this transition. We will be investing in new technologies, better efficiency, and new job-creating investments in green infrastructure. This transition will be good for our health, good for our environment, and be economically sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few examples of how the government is engaging with energy-sector workers to build a stronger, more resilient, and diversified economy defined by high employment, a strong workforce, and healthy enterprises, and I commend the Member for West Yellowhead for bringing forward this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for West Yellowhead for bringing this to our attention. I would hope everyone in this House has as much regard for the energy workers in this province as I do, and as the Energy shadow minister over the last year my immense respect for this industry has just grown. But I have to say that the motion is shallow, and it's another example of the NDP taking time out of the House with job descriptions.

Across the way they have mentioned that motions are for members to say what's needed in their constituency, and I completely agree. That's wonderful. However, what we're trying to find out here, I guess, is what the ministers' jobs are. So going forward from there, Albertans need leadership, Mr. Speaker, and instead the province's leaders are going to spend the next hour debating a proposal to remind the ministers of what their job is. As the Official Opposition we're a little baffled as to why the NDP feel they need to get House approval on something that is so implicit in governing. This is so far beyond common-sense policy. We have a minister that is currently pushing his mandate letter through the House, Bill 1, and now we have members of the NDP's own backbench putting up motions to remind their ministers that they should be consulting before they push through legislation. It's unbelievable.

The government still doesn't get it that Albertans expect consultation from their government. This is not a concept that should even be up for consideration. Consultation is not a debatable

entity, yet here we are debating the need to consult. Should Albertans be concerned that any time there's legislation that doesn't include specific recommendations to consult, the government will feel the need not to? What has the government been doing for the last 10 months if not meeting with groups in the energy sector, workers, as their industry takes the worst beating that we have seen in a generation?

Mr. Speaker, you would have thought that after the massive, province-wide Bill 6 rallies, motivated in large part by the failure to consult on the part of this government, those over there would get the importance of meaningful consultation. It is not just a few reps at the top but all the way through the sector. Congratulations – congratulations – to the NDP backbench on figuring out that consultation is important. That's fantastic. At least some members of the NDP seem to understand what the thousands upon thousands of protestors were trying to tell this government during the numerous Bill 6 rallies. It's a little more than disheartening to see that even the NDP's own MLAs feel that the cabinet ministers still don't understand and that this requires further action and that this has to happen in a motion.

I want to break down this motion for the members of the House, and I will try to be as eloquent as the Member for West Yellowhead. The motion reads: the members of this House ought to “urge the government to engage with energy sector workers when developing strategies to diversify Alberta's energy sector and create value-added jobs.” Yes. I agree completely.

It is difficult to know even where to begin. This might be the reason that we're struggling to understand what this government is trying to do. Over in the Wildrose our entire party is structured around the requirement to consult with people. We advocate for grassroots governance. We utilize the knowledge of everyday Albertans when crafting our ideas. Consultation is so essential to the soul of our party that it never dawned on us that our new government, who saw how out of touch the old one was, would need a reminder of this.

Mr. Speaker, the most ironic part of this is that the motion then goes on to address the notion of government-driven economic diversification. How could you possibly expect to centrally plan economic activity without first consulting Albertans? Governments, especially those bent on central planning like this one, suffer from information asymmetry. Unlike the free market, where thousands of commercial exchanges provide the information necessary to define the relationship between goods supplied and goods demanded, this government strives to be the sole arbiter of what Alberta will supply and what the world will demand.

It seems that on their climate plan they only consulted a handful of oil executives, but here they are acknowledging workers, and that's fantastic. Thank you again to the member. It's important. But I'd like to note another group, the small and medium-sized energy businesses, who are so vital to the exact innovation that you're looking for and the job creation in our primary economic sector. Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely imperative that this government not only talk to the workers who have experience on the ground and a few top execs at multinationals but that they engage with those who run the thousands of smaller businesses and contractors because they actually will have the insights not only into what might work but what will also distort the marketplace and hurt others with the unintended consequences.

Over the next three years this government will be in negotiation with industry representatives that have infinitely more knowledge than all of the members in this House in their field. This is not something that anybody needs to be offended by. It's an implicit reality. They are the experts in their fields, Mr. Speaker. Even with the diversity we have here, there are so many professionals that are

not adequately represented, and this House alone does not have all the answers.

5:30

Alberta has an immense wealth of knowledge capital, and our people are well educated, they're entrepreneurial, and they're innovative. We should be relying on Albertans to tell us what the barriers are, and the government could responsibly move to spur new investment based on that information. That's where the consultation must come in. There is an undeniable arrogance seeping out of any government that does not understand that one of the greatest values a democracy has is the ability to download decision-making authority by designing our political process to be responsive to the demands of the people who put us here.

The Wildrose has been very clear and firm with this government that jobs need to be its primary priority. I was proud to stand beside our leader, the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin, when he released and we released our Wildrose jobs action plan to much critical acclaim. Mr. Speaker, government-driven economic diversification is not a guaranteed path to job creation. A few weeks ago now I chose to rise in this House and use my response to the throne speech to detail for you some of the history of the government-backed economic diversification in the province of Alberta. I outlined for you numerous failures that previous governments embarked upon.

Now, maybe the government at this point didn't feel the need to listen to the Official Opposition that day, so let me be clear again. Corporate welfare is not a guaranteed job creator, and if you don't consult widely, as the Member for West Yellowhead has so eloquently said, you will surely do more harm than good. With the growing number of job losses, Alberta's tax base is shrinking. This government needs to be certain that the returns promised on a government investment aiming to diversify Alberta's economy exceed the tax burden that it creates. We still haven't seen this government define what diversification means. We still don't have a well-thought-out plan for development.

It is time to govern. Where are the concrete plans? Why hasn't the government presented a detailed vision for diversification? We're talking about diversifying petrochemicals, yes? But beyond some certain business grants to certain businesses, I haven't seen a plan. There are so many opportunities in this province of Alberta, and as the shadow minister for Energy I have in the last 10 months had the pleasure of meeting with numerous workers and executives in the petrochemical sector.

Mr. Speaker, I will of course support this motion, and, yes, this government absolutely – absolutely – needs to do more consultation. I'm just completely baffled by the necessity to state it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise and speak to the hon. member's motion. I also would like to thank the Official Opposition for reminding us at length about this motion being such a time-waster. For many Albertans, especially those who work in the energy sector either directly or indirectly, this is a stressful and frustrating time. We all hear and see the stories daily, the strain of job losses and the pressures that are put on hard-working families. While we cannot control the global price of oil or natural gas, we can control how we react to it. I believe that our government is taking strong and balanced action that will provide the industry with new tools and policies to add value to our resources, diversify our markets, and create good jobs.

Please allow me a few minutes to outline some of the actions our energy workers have either been involved in or will benefit from. As previously mentioned by our minister of economic development, our government has announced a new petrochemicals diversification program that will attract investment, create jobs, and provide long-term benefits to Albertans. This program will encourage companies to invest in the development of new petrochemical facilities in Alberta through royalty credits totalling up to \$500 million. It's expected that these credits will leverage \$5 billion in new investment. This investment is investment that otherwise would have gone to the U.S. Gulf coast. In fact, we have heard first-hand from industry that projects they were considering and planning for Louisiana are now being rethought in favour of Alberta, all because of this diversification program.

Projects will be selected through a competitive application process, with credits awarded only once the approved projects are built and operating. The goal is to support the construction of several facilities using methane or propane as feedstock. These feedstocks are abundant in Alberta, and it's a value that we should be tapping into. This program will result in jobs both in construction and operation of these facilities and can create more demand downstream for their resources. It is expected that it will create 3,000 jobs in construction and 1,000 permanent jobs afterwards.

Recently I did visit several major hubs for petrochemical diversification areas in Alberta such as NOVA Chemicals in Red Deer and Methanex and CF Industries in Medicine Hat. I recognize how important the industry is to Alberta and the potential it has for further growth.

My department also continues to move forward with the implementation of our new modernized royalty framework. The new framework is based off recommendations that we received from industry and from Albertans and through the panel. I'm pleased to inform the Legislature of some of the consultations that went into the report. The panel conducted an open and transparent examination of our royalty system that included direct discussions with industry and Alberta unions that represent thousands of workers. The panel met with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, Alberta Federation of Labour, United Nurses, Building Trades of Alberta, and many, many industries. Additionally, the panel held four public open houses in several cities and conducted telephone town halls across Alberta, reaching thousands of individuals.

Mr. Speaker, our government values the input from these organizations and from these individuals. These are workers who are on the front line of this industry and understand the challenges as well as anyone. In their consultations the royalty review panel found fundamental flaws with the old framework, flaws that were holding Albertans back. The panel found that the old framework was out of date, causing us to lag competitively. It was too rigid for the advances in technology. It was too risky, with built-in uncertainties that deterred investment. It lacked incentives to encourage more efficient and environmentally responsible development, and it lacked transparency to allow Albertans to see for themselves how their royalties were being collected without a plan to diversify our economy.

Albertans can't afford a royalty system that isn't up to the challenges of today, which is why our new framework will encourage all companies to drive down costs, making us more competitive; provide greater certainty for investors; remain adaptable to advancements in technology; support a more efficient and environmentally responsible development; and it will help to diversify our energy economy. Taken as a whole, the modernized framework makes it easier for companies to understand their long-term costs so they can invest with confidence and support jobs in Alberta.

Our support for energy workers does not end here. As part of our recent Speech from the Throne our government was pleased to announce the energy diversification advisory committee. This committee will be made up of a broad representation of Albertans who understand the importance of promoting more value-added industries in our province. While the membership of this committee has not yet been finalized, it will consider the views of energy workers in this province and the importance of their opinions as it reviews opportunities for our province.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, our government continues to support the building of new pipelines. Better market access will support our energy sector and, by extension, energy workers. Our country's inability over the past 10 years to pursue a strategic energy policy that Canadians support has made it impossible for our country to diversify its markets. Canada currently imports almost a million barrels of oil from other countries when there is no need if the proper infrastructure could be built. Canada does not need to finance the economies of other countries when we have the resources to be self-sufficient and support energy and construction jobs in our own country. This is an argument we continue to make publicly and privately with stakeholders at home and across the country. The construction of these pipelines will support energy workers as well.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to bring these facts to the attention of this Legislature, and I am pleased to support energy workers in Alberta. Our government supports them. I thank the hon. Member for West Yellowhead for his motion.

5:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it would be amusing if it wasn't kind of sad, but here we have one of the government's own backbenchers that wants to urge the front bench over there to do something that any competent government would understand is their daily duty to do; namely, to consult with all stakeholders before it makes major policy changes. But, then, if this socialist government has one undeniable hallmark, it is its utter lack of seeking input from all Albertans before making up its mind on important policy directions. Let's not be fooled by the climate action consultations. The Minister of Energy admitted her staffers were so-called assisting the panel from the very beginning. With so many pressing issues facing our province, from skyrocketing unemployment figures to the plummeting price of oil, Albertans expect us to be here working on the pressing issues of the day and not wasting our time with motions like this, designed to remind us of our most basic duties as legislators.

The worst part about this is that the motion doesn't even meet its own apparent goal. Perhaps the member doesn't understand the true nature of policy consultation. It needs to be very broadly based, and I don't understand why this motion only urges government to engage with energy sector workers, for instance. What about the contractors? What about the independent businessmen and businesswomen, who don't qualify for employment insurance, by the way, and who don't show up in some of our unemployment statistics? And what about the communities, the municipalities like Hanna and Forestburg, whose very existence is now threatened by this government's policies rolled out without consultation in the first eight weeks or nine weeks of this government taking office? Where was that consultation before rolling out a policy? How about the chambers of commerce? The Rotary clubs, who represent the job creators in our province: why aren't they worthy of mention in this motion? They're not worthy of engagement?

Well, we saw the disastrous effects of this government failing to properly consult not that long ago with the botched implementation of Bill 6. The members opposite thought they knew better than the

farmers and ranchers and even their own government experts, who warned them that this bill would create, and I quote, panic amongst farmers and ranchers who were begging, pleading to be consulted with. But the government pushed forward without broad-based consultation, and now we're having round-table discussions after the fact. The government said that it learned its lesson following the Bill 6 debacle, but clearly that is not the case.

Clearly, the government's own backbenchers don't want to go home again to thousands of Albertans who have been ignored on legislation, and sadly I would have to concede that maybe this government needs to be constantly reminded that consultation is critical on policy changes to our most important industry. This comes as second nature to most people, but time and again we've seen this government make some head-scratching decisions with very real consequences for workers and businesses, families, and entire communities with no prior consultation.

No doubt the member putting this motion forward is sharing a sentiment he's heard in his constituency. I realize there are coal miners and plant workers in his constituency who are probably in a state of shock right now that this member over here for West Yellowhead is representing a party that is putting their communities at risk and putting those families out of work. They were never consulted ahead of time, but this government just rolls on anyhow, and people just don't trust this government to diversify the energy sector or properly consult while it seeks to do so and needs a reminder.

Being that this is one of our most important industries – and, frankly, this government has many members who just can't be trusted to act in a way that is fair and reasonable – the list of groups who would be left out of consultation under this motion is quite shocking. Why doesn't this motion urge the government to engage with those who represent consumer groups, for example? Sectors of our economy that use energy like farmers, small-business groups, and, as I mentioned before, chambers of commerce, these small and medium businesses who consume energy to produce products who are also the job creators and the drivers of most innovation and diversification in our province: why are they missing from this motion? Is it because the Member for West Yellowhead and most of the NDP caucus don't have the life experience to see this world and Alberta's economy from multiple perspectives? I'm trying to understand why any member of this House would put forward a motion that states the obvious yet misses so very much; namely, the scope of broad consultation in the development of policy.

Once again we see a motion from the NDP caucus urging the government to do what any competent government should already be doing anyway. It's as unnecessary as Bill 1, which lays out the job description for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. This motion is another kind of job description for a government that doesn't appear to know how to do its job. But I'll tell you what. If the front bench of the NDP caucus really aren't sure what to do and they need legislation and motions like this and Bill 1 to give them job descriptions and tasks on a week-by-week basis, then okay, I guess we'd better help them along and support this motion. Any step towards more consultation is a positive step under this government.

So I am encouraging everyone in this House, especially the ministers across the aisle who need the support and understanding of what their job is, to all support this thing. Maybe once this is done, we won't have to revisit the issue again. Everybody over there will know that you need to consult Albertans before you make policy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to rise today and speak in favour of my colleague's motion about engaging with workers when developing strategies that diversify Alberta's energy sector and create value-added jobs. It's something I engage in daily, as I know our government MLAs and ministers do as well, contrary to the belief over here. On behalf of my constituents of Leduc-Beaumont, many of whom derive their livelihoods from the energy sector, and the countless Albertans I've spoken to who work in and are affected by the energy sector, it is my privilege to stand in this House and speak in favour of this motion today.

As I engage with my constituents in the fantastic constituency of Leduc-Beaumont, I am reminded every day of the role that oil and gas plays in the lives of Albertans and the role our resources have in creating a fair and strong economy. There are approximately 500 oil and gas companies in the Alberta international region, with many in my constituency, and that's just the oil and gas ones. There are also a growing number of renewable companies as well. I've had a number of constituents in my office speaking about the issues they are facing, the troubles they are having after losing their jobs, and being left out of the new EI changes certainly hasn't helped them on this journey. These Albertans aren't looking for a handout; they're just looking for a hand up.

Mr. Speaker, I digress. I've also had some very positive stories of companies diversifying their services. One company I know of had to let go of about 20 people not that long ago, then turned around and hired them back plus more because they knew their company could use the skills that they had to enter into the renewable sector as well as oil and gas, and they are now very well placed to continue to succeed well into the future.

Mr. Speaker, the historical overdependence on a single commodity has made us vulnerable to external factors our government and Albertans are unable to control, but Albertans are resilient. Albertans have shown they are a resilient and entrepreneurial group during this economic challenge. We need to look no further than Leduc and Beaumont to see that.

Albertans want and need a government that stands up for their interests during these economic times. Mr. Speaker, diversification in the energy sector is central for the long-term growth of Alberta's economy, the whole sector. As my colleague stated, it is our duty as members of the Legislature to ensure that our province captures the full value of our resources. Diversification to me means not only moving into and utilizing more green and renewable energy sources to complement and supplement fossil fuels but also realizing the potential of the companies, the technology, and the people we have already to expand into other areas and other markets. It is essential that our government engage with the over 158,000 natural resource workers in Alberta when developing new strategies. Listening to workers and industry leaders must remain at the forefront of this government's agenda.

I was recently at an energy services breakfast, listening to experts and innovators in the energy industry discuss exciting opportunities in their fields, from Columbia to Mexico to India. It was a fantastic and very positive morning, learning not only about new opportunities but also about some of the amazing things already happening here in Alberta. And there are a lot of amazing things that have been happening and continue to happen. As Canadians and Albertans we do a fairly poor job of patting ourselves on the back with that. One of my focuses is to try to get more of that positivity out there and to talk about the things that we already are doing.

5:50

It's not always about reinventing the wheel per se but building on what we already have as well. I'm proud to be part of a government

who is actively seeking the input and the ideas from these energy workers. During these difficult times we remain committed more than ever to supporting those affected by the energy sector. Mr. Speaker, front-line workers have the valuable knowledge and experience to speak to the issues as we move towards energy diversification. They are the boots on the ground who are in the thick of it and who know well the different ways we can diversify in this tough economic climate.

Today's difficult times also serve as a reminder that economic diversification requires a prolonged approach in finding opportunities to build on our current areas of strength. There are no quick fixes. Mr. Speaker, Alberta's energy sector remains a key driver of the provincial economy, and if we want to create long-term, sustainable jobs, we need to diversify beyond just energy extraction into other areas of strengths.

Earlier, during the Member for West Yellowhead's statement, I was happy to hear about the innovative TM lignin recovery plant project happening in West Yellowhead. It's a great step towards economic diversification and finding new opportunities. As my colleague stated, in the March 8 Speech from the Throne we highlighted our government's will to establish the energy diversification advisory committee, which will provide advice on the steps needed to build a more diversified and resilient economy. As plans develop like my colleague's, I certainly urge the committee to engage with the various organizations that represent energy workers, whether that be PSAC, CAPP, Green Energy Alliance, or other groups in Nisku like Fox Oilfield, Trinidad Drilling, and Bulldog Energy. There's also a new initiative out there called Iron and Earth, which is led by oil sands workers committed to building Canada's green energy future. I encourage you guys to look it up. It's quite interesting.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are tired of these boom-and-bust cycles. Previous governments should have done a little better job of working with the companies in the energy sector to help them weather the storms of these global commodities markets. Workers and their families are struggling because of low prices of resources, something this government cannot control, but there are steps we can take. I'm glad that our government is fighting to include Edmonton, Leduc, and Nisku, which have been badly hit by the collapsing oil prices, in qualifying for the employment insurance changes that benefit workers in the rest of Alberta. It would certainly help people in my region to get through this downturn.

I support my colleague's motion as it speaks to our government's commitment to create value-added jobs during a time when Albertans are concerned about their economic security and represents the values of Albertans, who want a fair and prosperous economy. Mr. Speaker, I want this province to be an all-encompassing energy province. I know we can and I know we will get through these tough times stronger on the other side.

Thank you.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise today on behalf of my constituents in Lethbridge-East and to speak in favour of this motion put forward by my colleague the MLA from West Yellowhead. It is about engaging front-line workers.

In Lethbridge-East some of my constituents are affected directly through the loss of their jobs in the oil and gas industry, and some are affected indirectly through oil services industries. Nonetheless, they are affected as are we all. In Lethbridge-East we are affected a little less so than in other areas of the province because our economy is much more diversified, having much greater involvement in agriculture, being home to both a college and a university, and the spinoffs to those areas. We also sit next to the largest wind farm in

western Canada and a top-of-the-line biomass energy generator. We are an excellent example of economic diversification and energy diversification.

Mr. Speaker, given the lessened impact in Lethbridge compared to other areas in our province, specifically because our economy is diversified, this really speaks to the importance of investing in economic diversification throughout the province. Obviously, the natural course of action to deal with this crisis should be for our government to engage with energy sector workers when developing these new strategies, and we are.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the member, but under Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for West Yellowhead to close debate on Motion 502.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that Albertans need a diversified economy, an economy that is strong, tough, and flexible. This resilient economy will provide a buffer to energy price swings and will capture the full value of our resources. I'm proud to share that the government has set out a strong economic plan that includes investing in much-needed infrastructure to build the hospitals, schools, roads, and bridges Albertans rely on; supporting the private sector and creating jobs; improving access to capital for entrepreneurs; and encouraging innovation across a variety of sectors.

As I indicated in my member's statement earlier today, Hinton Pulp, by using its collaborator FPInnovations patented LignoForce process to recover lignin from black liquor, will see the construction of Canada's first commercial lignin recovery plant. This local project is an example of true collaboration, entrepreneurship, and a community dialogue that was open to new and innovative business ideas.

We must not forget that Albertans' resource sector remains a key driver of the provincial economy. Mr. Speaker, as our province endures the current economic challenges due to the drop in the global price of coal and oil – and oil is still below \$40 a barrel – it has become more apparent than ever that we must invest in economic diversification to ensure that Albertans are not casualties in what has become a boom-and-bust economy.

We have about 158,900 people working in the natural resources industry, which includes workers in our mines, quarries, natural oil and gas sectors, and we must not fail to mention the other spinoff companies. Hence, Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely essential that our government engage with resource sector workers when developing new strategies. Listening to workers and industrial leaders must always remain at the forefront of the government's agenda. They should be informed, consulted, and discussed with so that they, too, have an equal say in their future. Hence, I urge the government to engage with resource sector workers when developing strategies that diversify Alberta's energy sector and create value-added jobs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to stand up in the House and speak to this issue. It is a privilege. I look forward to hearing from and working with all my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly on this important issue.

Thank you very much.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 502 carried]

**The Speaker:** The Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, April 5, 2016

Day 9

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

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New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, April 5, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** If you would bow your heads, hon. members.

Time is precious. Let us use our time as public servants to dedicate ourselves to achieving our common goals and working towards the betterment of our great province, which is in our care. Let us remember that strength and success are accomplished by working together. Listening, understanding, and respecting one another's views can open up new possibilities and new opportunities.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate March 17: Mr. Nixon]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** I'm done.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.  
The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I've changed districts, but that's fine.

**The Speaker:** Well, you're shorter than I'd thought.

**Mr. Carlier:** Yeah. Thank you for this opportunity as well to, you know, give a response to the Speech from the Throne as it will relate to my maiden speech. On May 5, 2015, like many Albertans, I watched the results of the provincial election on television. Surrounded by family and friends in the home I share with my beautiful wife, Michèle, I came to realize that I would be successful and would become the third Member of the Legislative Assembly for Whitecourt-St. Anne since its creation in 1993.

I couldn't be more honoured to serve the wonderful people of this district. This amazing constituency is rich in diversity in not only its people and communities but also its natural wonders. The hard-working people of Whitecourt-St. Anne are farmers, ranchers, foresters, machinists, plumbers, electricians, welders, truckers. They serve meals, clean hotel rooms, work in stores, provide financial and legal advice, teach and guide our young. We can't forget the many men and women who serve the public good as nurses, peace officers, and firefighters. Some work in or near their town while others commute to Whitecourt or Edmonton, but all contribute to the prosperity of Alberta.

Much has been said about the need to diversify our economy, especially in light of the current downturn in the price of oil and gas. Whitecourt-St. Anne, with its abundant resources, is well positioned to take advantage of that diversification. Oil and gas, for sure, will become more diversified, but so will the other two major industries in Alberta, agriculture and forestry. As the largest of our renewable sectors both have a lot to contribute by way of value-added products. Research in forestry and agriculture will allow us to continue being world leaders in new wood and agriculture products.

Our climate change leadership plan will allow for increased innovation in the use of biofuels and green electricity generation. There are already some exciting things happening in the district to demonstrate to the world that we take climate change seriously and will do something about it. Whitecourt-St. Anne will have a large role to play in the new green economy. As we continue to invest in the future of this great province, we will strive to diversify our economy so as to ensure that those in Whitecourt-St. Anne who find the current economic times tough will be able to look forward to a brighter future.

That future is in large part possible because of the good people of Whitecourt-St. Anne who spend some of their free time helping others. The single greatest asset to the social well-being of our communities is its volunteers. You might be a member of a service club or a leader with a youth group such as Scouts Canada or coach a hockey team. You might help out with the community lunch box program in Whitecourt or perhaps the Legion in Evansburg or other towns. Perhaps you spend some of your free time at the agricultural societies or the 4-H club and not only contribute to the prosperity of our rural district but also play a huge part in maintaining that rural lifestyle we all love and cherish. Whatever you volunteer for, I am grateful for your contribution. Your efforts are what make Whitecourt-St. Anne the great place to live and raise a family that it is.

From the vistas of the Pembina River to the amazing trails of Carson-Pegasus provincial park the constituency of Whitecourt-St. Anne is one of the most beautiful areas of the province. Many of us enjoy spending time near the many small lakes that dot the landscape. We are blessed with wonderful farmland and an abundance of forested areas. Tourists come to Whitecourt-St. Anne to hunt and fish, ski, snowmobile, camp, and hike. The district is large, with over 70 villages, hamlets, towns, and summer villages. It spans from Onoway, Alberta Beach, and Alexis First Nation in the east to Whitecourt, Blue Ridge, and Mayerthorpe in the northwest to Peers and Wildwood in the southwest.

Michèle and I moved to Lac Ste. Anne over six years ago. It was one of the best decisions we ever made. We got married on our property and celebrated in the Darwell hall. We have met so many wonderful people, especially over the past year or so. It seems everyone has a passion for their hometown or their family farm.

Like many Albertans, I grew up on the family farm, a farm that my brother now runs as a fourth-generation farmer. He's 10 years older than I am, so I knew early on that he was most likely to continue the family tradition. I, instead, found work as a geotechnical technician with Agriculture Canada. That job saw me working on many different irrigation projects across the country, mostly in Alberta. Little did I know that those 20 years as a public servant with Agriculture Canada would serve me so well in my future job as a public servant for the province of Alberta. As the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Whitecourt-St. Anne I am a public servant. As a public servant I feel that my role is to represent the citizens of the district the best I can. It does not matter whether you supported me in the election or not. I am here to represent all.

After so many years with only one party ruling, we all had to learn to transition. That transition has had its bumps, but I'm proud of what we've been able to accomplish in 10 short months. We have shown that we put people first. Whether it is maintaining funding for education or health care or implementing a stimulus plan that will put many Albertans back to work, we continue to show that people are our greatest resource and our first priority.

A few days after we all realized that after 43 years there would finally be a change in the government of Alberta, the Premier asked me to meet with her. I was not sure what I could have possibly done wrong in so short a time. We had not even been sworn in yet. To my great relief I was not in trouble. Instead, the Premier asked me if I would like to be the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. I was absolutely overjoyed and immediately said yes. I also told her that if I'd had the choice of ministry, it would have been agriculture as I know how important farming is in my district.

I have to admit that I did not know a lot about forestry at first, but I always knew that forestry is also an important industry in Whitecourt-St. Anne. People in the industry have been fantastic in bringing me up to speed with respect to the challenges and opportunities in forestry. In fact, only three days after the election I was asked by Alberta Newsprint Company and Millar Western to tour their facilities in Whitecourt. I eagerly accepted their invitation and proceeded to visit as many mills across the province as I possibly could.

The people of Whitecourt-St. Anne, like the rest of Alberta, face some challenges, but I believe the opportunities outweigh those challenges. I have vowed that I will work with all Albertans to do what I can to face those challenges and to explore those opportunities. The good people of Whitecourt-St. Anne should expect no less.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Questions and comments to the member? The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

10:10

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was really quite happy to hear from the minister about his Whitecourt-St. Anne riding. I spent many, many summers in the Alberta Beach-Lac Ste. Anne area, and I know the riding reasonably well. It has a number of interesting issues that are ongoing there, and one of them happens to be the water supply to some of the smaller towns within the riding. I'm wondering if he might comment on what might be happening with respect to consideration about the water supply, particularly for Alberta Beach and some of the other surrounding communities which might get together to share costs in providing a better water supply.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the follow-up statements. There are, you know, some water supply issues with many of the small communities right across Alberta. It is, as a matter of fact, probably a phenomenon that's felt right across Canada. A lot of the small communities in the district of Whitecourt-St. Anne, including Alexis First Nation, are in the process of developing projects and plans that include pipelines and include other forms of improving their water quality.

While we're on the subject of small villages, the summer villages in Whitecourt-St. Anne are abundant. I do believe that there are more summer villages in Whitecourt-St. Anne than any other district in the province. As a matter of fact, there are 14 summer villages just in my own county of Lac Ste. Anne. These are a vibrant part of a very unique municipal designation in Alberta. They have

been around since about 1910 or so. The hon. member had mentioned Alberta Beach, which until recently had been a summer village but actually now is considered a village, but it's surrounded by many summer villages just the same.

If you haven't had the opportunity to visit any of the summer villages, I would encourage anyone in this House to do so. They are vibrant and wonderful little communities. Here's a bit of a plug. There's recently a new mobile phone application for farmers' markets. If you want to find out where your farmers' markets might be, there are currently about 168 or so Agriculture and Forestry designated farmers' markets across the province, many of those in those summer villages. I encourage you, if you haven't done so already, to find that application, load it onto your mobile phone, and have a great opportunity to visit summer villages and communities right across this province, looking at the many wonderful farmers' markets and what rural Alberta has to offer.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I frequently hear plugs for each community as I sit in the House here. Good for you.

The Member for Drumheller-Stettler, 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to rise and congratulate the Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne on his maiden speech because I've come to the realization that it's not even been a year since he's been elected to the role, and I believe he's exhibited himself reasonably professionally. I have had the honour to work with and confer with him in private and in public, and it's been an honour.

I just would like to question the member on his acumen as an agriculturalist and his acumen in irrigation, an irrigation-involved specialist, possibly, if I could use that word, and what he feels the way forward for the province could be in these trying times of economics and job creation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member was speaking, I was trying to think: how can I weave that question about irrigation into the district of Whitecourt-St. Anne? That's going to be a challenge. There are no large-size irrigation projects in Whitecourt-St. Anne, but as a matter of fact, Alberta has close to 50 per cent of the irrigated land in Canada. We have about 1.4 million acres under irrigation in Alberta. It's been a success story not just for Alberta but for Canada. We have a wide range of diversification of crops in our irrigated areas, everything from forage crops to specialty crops of potatoes, and currently about 20,000 acres of hemp also in the province.

Some good news as of late: the sugar beet crop this year will expand by about 6,000 acres. That's great news. That's an industry that has over the past few decades found, you know, some challenges, so to be able to this year expand their acreages is very good news. I'm hoping in some large part, if all the stars align, to be able to take advantage of the implementation of the trans-Pacific partnership.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Now the Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Like you watching out for everyone here in the House today and every day, my parents watch me from above and bless me every day.

Today I have the honour to rise and respond to the throne speech on behalf of the entire Wildrose Calgary caucus. After three

attempts at running for this office, I finally can rise and give my maiden speech. I would like to first thank my constituents who voted me, as the 904th MLA, to this 29th Legislature. I thank you for your confidence in me to represent your interests in the best possible way I can. I would like to thank the members of the Wildrose who nominated me as their candidate. I'd also like to thank all my volunteers, donors, and friends for their continued help and encouragement, without which I wouldn't have run three times.

I would like to thank the previous MLAs of my riding for their service to the people. One of the MLAs I have to extend special thanks to is MLA 830. If it were not for his abrupt service to the people through his departure, I would not have arrived here as soon.

Last but not least, thank you to my wife, Santhi, and our son, Himanish, for their unwavering support to me. I love them both so very much, till my last breath.

Since being elected, I have had the opportunity to attend many different community events such as a multicultural event called One World, several Chinese New Year festivals, and a couple of family skating parties organized by the community associations in my riding. I also attended Holi, the festival of colours, and a Muslim-Christian interfaith family gathering. I look forward to celebrating the greatest outdoor show on Earth, the Calgary Stampede, for the first time as an MLA.

I'm also proud to now represent the schools that my son went to as a child. Those schools gave him a world-class education, and I am beyond thankful for the time and effort teachers put into helping our future generations. My son was the reason we moved to Canada. My wife and I wanted him to have the best education possible in Calgary, the best city in the world. Ironically, he cheers for the Oilers. Well, I'm trying to make up by wearing the Calgary tartan today. Actually, tomorrow is the celebration, but I'm wearing it today to make up for my son cheering for the Oilers.

Calgary-Foothills is a very diverse riding. It's filled with old and new Canadians such as myself. It's filled with people of many different faiths, backgrounds, and many different cultures. I want to know more about everyone in my riding through meeting every single one of my constituents. My goal is to knock on every door in the riding several times before the next election, and in the process maybe I can lose some of the weight I gained as an MLA. I cannot do my job as a representative of the people unless I meet and listen to them on a regular basis.

I have some big shoes to fill when comparing myself to past MLAs of Calgary-Foothills. Constituents from my riding have had the benefit of being represented in the past by former Premiers Ernest Manning, William Aberhart, and Jim Prentice. Although I cannot promise I'll live up to their fame, or infamy, depending on your opinions, I can promise I will represent the people of Calgary-Foothills in the best possible way.

#### 10:20

Of course, I'm not the first MLA here to rise and give their maiden speech in the House, but reading my predecessors' speeches has taught me valuable information about the area I represent. In 1975, before this area was the city of Calgary, MLA Kidd talked about the vast lands filled with trees, creeks, and agricultural land. The riding used to stretch all the way to the B.C. border, but since Calgary has grown by leaps and bounds in the last 40 years, the riding has shrunk to a small portion of the size it used to be.

Today I have the opportunity to interact with my constituents on a much more regular basis. Living in such close proximity to those I represent allows me to understand their needs and issues better since I am their neighbour, issues that plague my riding and my neighbours such as the half-built interchange, that poses a safety risk to children travelling to school every day. Most importantly,

people in my riding are very concerned about the economy and jobs. They know that when we have a thriving economy, we can afford the best health care, education, and seniors' care. These issues and any other issues that my neighbours have will be addressed by myself in the most effective way possible. Whether this means sending letter after letter to the ministers in order to address issues or volunteering at local associations to help people on the ground, I will help my neighbours any way I can. I will work with all levels of government to find solutions.

Helping my neighbours was something I learned from my father. He was always very helpful to the neighbours. He went out of his way. His elder brother used to manage their joint family finances and the family business, which went through some difficult economic times to the point of almost poverty. Then my father took control of the family responsibilities, and he worked hard to repay every single debt and followed through by stabilizing the family finances of four of his siblings. They had a giant family.

My father did not have higher education since there was no high school in his area. He thought education was very important to enable the next generations to find well-paid jobs. He collaborated with the neighbouring villages to raise funds and built a high school in the middle of all the villages. Due to my father's generosity and hard work, today we have 11 doctors and 12 engineers who are his direct descendants, his bloodline.

His generosity extended beyond the family. He would pay for priests to travel to bless the land for the whole community along with supplying all the materials for the celebrations. He even built a temple in his community as a way to give back to the community. He was a farmer, a small-business man, and a fiscal conservative. From his own experience he learned that debt is expensive, and he realized that interest paid to the lenders could be used to pay for education and health care. He said that one's hand should always be like this, not like this. That's how he lived his entire life. Now you all should understand why I ran for a party which wants to balance the budget.

I was born late in my parents' lives. Perhaps I was an afterthought. But that meant my mom brought me up like a rare species, a cute panda. I think the term is "helicopter parent" today. I'm sure I caused her more trouble than I was worth. Even so, she loved me regardless. I learned persuasiveness and gentle bargaining from my mother, which helped me to succeed in my professional career in oil and gas.

My parents taught me and my older siblings to share with others and to care for those who are in need and to love everyone, even your enemies. Coming from the political system in India, the opposition was seen as the enemy. For the record I do not think the NDP are the enemy; my political rivals, yes, but not my enemy. I'm very glad that I do not have to fear for my safety after I point out negatives about the government such as bills that are a job description or a job creation program that creates no jobs.

Running for office here in Canada was not the first time I was involved in electoral politics. I was tired of the one-party system in India, so I campaigned for the opposition in a federal seat held by my relative. We both lived on the same street, and he was the longest serving federal minister in India. I was only 14 then, and my parents were not too happy that I campaigned against their own cousin. I heard the agriculture minister when he mentioned about one party ruling for so long, and that's the reason I am in politics here. I didn't like the one-party system either.

I was elected to students' union leadership positions that were fiercely contested. Active involvement in student politics was not only fun but also shaped me into a fearless fighter. I ran my own brother's unsuccessful campaign for public office. In India to win a seat is not easy or open as it is here in Alberta. You need a lot of

muscle and money to win an election there. Since then my resolve to ensure that people get representation from more than one side has stayed with me. That's why I chose to run for the Official Opposition. I knew that for democracy to work, we need more than one opinion. We need an effective opposition to keep the government in check. So despite the last two by-elections, I hope the members opposite remember that your jobs will be important in 2019.

Alberta has always had a cyclical economy. We have our ups and downs, but we have always come out stronger in the end. During these tough times Albertans are looking for hope and strong leadership. We are down, but we are not out. We are in these tough times together, but we should not be attempting risky, ideological economic policies that add to the problem. I don't blame the NDP for the price of oil, but I do blame them for the decrease in business confidence due to increased taxes, royalty reviews, carbon tax, and the unpredictability of what policies they'll implement next. Luckily there are Albertans who support our economy, who support our oil sands and promote Alberta instead of calling us embarrassing cousins.

This government should be looking toward patriotic groups like Canada Action and Oil Respect for how to properly represent Alberta. Instead, this government proposes bills that do not help Albertans to get back to work. In fact, the government's very first bill refers to those who already have work instead of those who do not work now. It's a shame. I'm part of APEGA, and its membership is about 80,000, Mr. Speaker, many of whom are looking for work now.

My constituents are telling me that their biggest concern is that their family and friends need to get back to work. I have no idea who the NDP are talking to that made them decide their first bill should not be directed at those needing work, but I'm here to tell this House that my constituents are very unhappy with how this government is operating. I hope that this government will listen to the opposition and help get Albertans back to work.

My party created the Equalization Fairness Panel and proposed a 12-point jobs action plan. Wildrose continues to be the only party that is a strong advocate for Alberta's energy sector and pipeline projects to get the product to tidewater.

Before I conclude, I would like to quote a few verses from Gita, the scripture Mahatma Gandhi used to refer to to derive fresh joy and new meanings from it every day. When you refer to chapter 3, Karma Yoga, and relate it to our contemporary politics, Mr. Speaker, it says that the parents, the schoolteachers, the professionals, and the political leaders are all in general considered to be the natural leaders of the innocent people. All such natural leaders have a great responsibility to their dependants. Each one of us here in this House, Mr. Speaker, each and every MLA of every party, of every political stripe, is expected to perform our duties as servants of society.

10:30

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, your time as allocated is up.

Allow me to just say to all of the House that it's a privilege to listen and learn. We saw evidence this morning again of hearing and learning a lot about individuals. It's really quite a privilege.

Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Nixon:** I was just wondering if the hon. member would like to expand a little bit on what he was trying to say at the end there. I was quite interested in his closing comments.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Opposition Whip. I was saying that each one of us, every MLA here in this House, being natural leaders – I was quoting the Gita, and in the scripture it describes teachers and political leaders, all of us, as natural leaders. So we have the natural responsibility to our dependants. I mean, they all expect us to perform our duties as servants of society, as learned and mature professionals. Selflessly, with purity and perfection, we are expected to serve the public. As the MLA for Calgary-Foothills I promise to do my part to help Albertans and to represent my constituency to the best of my ability.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes, sir. I'd also like to comment to the Member for Calgary-Foothills. I've found it very intriguing in the brief time that I've come to know the member about his agricultural background, and I find it honourable that the member would come from a farming background in a foreign country with a foreign language and achieve the political prowess that he has in this country. I was wondering if the member could just expound upon that perspective a little bit, coming from another country to this country and from that to this Chamber.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Member, for the question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a dream for many immigrants like me to come to a country like Canada to fulfill our dreams. You know, it's the people here inviting everybody and the opportunities that are provided here. I'm not a career politician. I'm an engineer by training. I'm a professional engineer. But the opportunities we have here in Alberta – the reason I chose Alberta was that we had lower taxes and great job opportunities and world-class education and, I mean, top-class health facilities and all that. That's why we moved here.

There were some challenges initially, you know. It's adjusting to the climate and adjusting to the new country. It was a little bit tough for my family and me, but it's the people, the Albertans and Canadians, that made it so easy for us. They're so welcoming, and they helped us succeed in this country. Based on my upbringing in a conservative family, that's the way to give back to society, and that's why I chose to run for politics.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Member for Calgary-Foothills: it's been an incredible journey for you. This was your third time running, and you were successful. Not only that, but you used to work up in my neck of the woods, up in Fort McMurray. You worked for one of our biggest employers up there, Suncor. Not only were you an engineer, but I believe you were also on the management side. From what I know of the oil sands, that's quite the pay drop to take on this position in public office. You chose to run for the opposition, when you could have perhaps applied to run for the governing side. You chose to give a balanced representation to the people of Alberta, to ensure a strong opposition. What was the driving factor behind all of these decisions that you made?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you. Thanks for the question. I chose to run for the best party because the best people, like you, are also involved

in the best party. You know, you're doing a great job as MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. I mean, that's the place we should be celebrating, actually. That's the best resource we have in the world, and very few countries are blessed to have that kind of resource. We should be leveraging that and taking full benefit of that. I mean, the reason I left my career in oil and gas is that, like I said before, that's what my parents taught me, to give back to society. My family condition is that my son is grown up, and I've fulfilled that responsibility as a family man, so today I'm available to serve the public.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today in the House to respond to the Speech from the Throne and to deliver my maiden speech. I was elected on May 5 to represent the constituency of Calgary-Buffalo, right in the heart of downtown Calgary. Calgary-Buffalo is a beautiful riding. It's filled with life, culture, and community. It's bound by the Bow and Elbow rivers and is probably the smallest geographical riding in the province. What makes the riding so unique is its diversity. Calgary-Buffalo contains some of the oldest and newest buildings in the province. It includes affordable housing only blocks from some of the most expensive square footage in the province. It contains thousands of small businesses that speak to the ingenuity and spirit of the province, including all manner of restaurants, retail stores, and health care practitioners. The riding is also home to many corporate headquarters that help to drive the economy.

Calgary-Buffalo also has many innovative social service agencies and a thriving cultural scene. The riding is full of life. Residents can walk to shops, parks, restaurants, galleries, music and theatre venues. Also integral to the riding are many agencies dedicated to helping newcomers join the Canadian community, helping those who fall into homelessness, who struggle with mental health or addictions, who are fleeing domestic violence. Calgary-Buffalo is a riding with people from all walks of life, a riding where people are joined together by common values, common culture, common struggles, or common interests and can come together to celebrate those things and where all are welcome.

Mr. Speaker, the diversity and complexity of this province is truly represented by my riding. In Calgary-Buffalo people from all backgrounds come together. Residents interact with people from a variety of circumstances. It's these different cultural backgrounds, diverse experiences, and varied perspectives that make the riding and our province so strong. Fundamentally, it is in this coming together that we create the space for Albertans to see from a broader perspective than their own. It allows each person to understand and share the lived experiences and perspectives of another. This sense of community allows people to come together to help their neighbours through tough times or to work to create ingenious new businesses and technologies to grow our economy while protecting our environment for future generations. I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to represent this diverse, progressive, and constantly evolving riding.

In preparing to speak today, I reviewed many of the speeches delivered by members of this House that preceded me in the riding of Calgary-Buffalo. I was struck by many similarities between the challenges and opportunities facing governments of the past and people of the past and the challenges and opportunities that face the government and people today. One of my predecessors spoke of the optimism of a new government replacing one that had been in power for decades, another of the trepidation that accompanied the

significant economic and fiscal challenges in the '80s brought on by the drop in the global price of oil.

It was very moving to think that those who have gone before have wrestled with similar challenges and felt a similar sense of obligation to those that sent them to this place, and it reminded me that at the end of the day most people want the same thing. They want to work hard and to make a contribution to their community. They want their families to be safe, prosperous, and happy. Times change in many ways, but those fundamental values remain, and they bind us together as members of the Alberta community.

**10:40**

When I chose to run for election, it was in part out a sense of duty to that community. Alberta has given me so much, and I felt that I should give back. I was lucky enough to be born and raised here in Alberta. In this province, Mr. Speaker, we are blessed with amazing opportunities. We are surrounded by hard-working, decent people who want to contribute to the strength we have in this province. We receive a world-class education in a public system available for all and never have to fear that our families will be bankrupted by an unexpected illness because of our public medical system. We are blessed with natural resources that provide wealth and opportunity to so many. We live in a safe and democratic country, and our rights are protected by the rule of law. I have lived here all my life, so I might be biased, but I believe it is the best place in the world to grow up.

These amazing gifts that we have in this province and in this country, in my view at least, come with obligations, and I feel that one of those obligations is to give back to the democracy that has given us those gifts. So when I was given the opportunity to participate, to go out and suggest a certain vision of the future of this fine province to the residents of Calgary-Buffalo, a vision that aligned with my values, I took it. I expected that it would be both challenging and rewarding, and it was, though ultimately it worked out rather better than I ever could have dreamed.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that words can truly express what a genuine privilege it is for me to stand here in this place. I was given the opportunity to stand with a group of my peers, people I didn't know at the time but whom I have grown to respect immensely, and to offer the people of my riding and of this province a vision of the future. It's a vision based on shared values like ensuring that every Albertan regardless of origin or circumstance has access to the same high-quality education and has the right to feel safe and respected in pursuing that education, values like the belief that no person should be left behind simply because they have had an unlucky turn of fate such as struggling with mental health problems, addictions, or any number of things that are not their fault but have left them in need of the compassion and assistance of their fellow Albertans; a vision of a province where decisions are based on evidence, not outdated rhetoric, where everyone has the right to equal treatment before the law and those who struggle deserve a second chance; a vision of a province where the decision-makers recognize that putting more money in the hands of middle-class Albertans benefits all of us and that criminalizing poverty serves no one and harms everyone; a vision of a province where leaders communicate honestly with the electorate about hard times and the hard decisions that face us so that we can work together to make decisions based on the evidence instead of selling fairy tales or hiding the truth.

That vision of Alberta was chosen by the people on May 5, 2015, and it was that choice that sent me here today. I now have the opportunity to stand amongst some of the smartest, hardest working, most caring, and dedicated people I have ever met. Every day I am amazed by the opportunity I have to work with this amazing group of people to try and make this province better for all

Albertans, to make sure that the wealth and opportunity of this great province benefit us all, not just a privileged few.

Many steps have been taken to implement this vision. I had the great privilege of introducing a bill to prohibit donations by corporations and unions less than a month and a half after I was elected, and on my birthday. We put campaign funding back into the hands of the electorate and reduced the impact that wealthy corporations can have on the outcome of elections. I worked with my colleagues to ensure that enrolment growth in education is funded, to increase protections for women fleeing from domestic violence, and to ensure that LGBTQ youth and their allies have a right to come together.

I also had the opportunity to follow through on a promise I made during the campaign to protect the rights of transgender and gender-variant Albertans. In consulting about this bill, I was deeply moved to hear the stories of many transgender people. Many of these stories contained struggles that most of us are lucky enough never to have had to overcome, but many also contained amazing acts of strength and kindness by friends and strangers alike. It was such an honour to meet so many brave Albertans who fought for so long not just for their rights but for the rights of transgender people to come after them in the hopes that those youth will never face the same barriers that they've had to overcome. Many of them said that this was the first time they've ever felt welcome to share their lived experience here in this building. Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity that few people will ever have, to stand as an ally alongside so many who have worked so hard simply to be accepted for who they are.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the many people that assisted me along this journey: my family, who stood with me and supported me despite their differing political views; the friends that came out on a really tiny campaign run out of the back of a car to work so hard to bring me to this place; and, most of all, my husband, who stood by me through this incredible ride and has continued to support me as I grow and learn in my new position.

Mr. Speaker, I'm humbled by the optimism, ingenuity, hard work, and genuine care and concern for their neighbours demonstrated by the residents of Calgary-Buffalo, whom I serve. I've had the opportunity to meet with many of my constituents, and many of them are excited to see a more diverse economy. Oil and gas will remain a cornerstone of our economy. That industry has given us so much, and we can and must support it, but it's also time for us to ensure that other sectors have a chance to grow as well. There are so many great ideas in Calgary-Buffalo, including green businesses and entrepreneurs with new technology to offer. I'm excited to watch these businesses develop.

Mr. Speaker, as I speak today, the province is facing tough times, maybe the toughest that we've seen in a while. We can and will pull together and weather the circumstances we find ourselves in as a result of the drop in the price of oil. This province has a history of pulling together and working hard to make it through tough times, and we will again. I am inspired by the residents of my riding: their hard work, their dedication to a better future, and their fundamental desire to help their neighbours even through difficult economic times. I am strengthened by the incredible dedication and compassion of my colleagues, by their fundamental desire to leave this province a little bit better than they found it and to ensure that all people have the tools to share in the many opportunities in this province.

I'm so grateful to the citizens of Calgary-Buffalo, who voted for the vision of Alberta that we offered them, of an Alberta where everyone has an opportunity to participate and we pick our neighbours up when they fall on hard times. I am thankful to stand

here in this place and work every day to act on those values and to strive to make the lives of everyday Albertans just a little bit better.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler on 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to reflect to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo as well that it's also been not quite a year since her election, and I think it'll be interesting to hear her further responses to this. As an Albertan that grew up in a period of time when the Premier and the government of the day amassed a vast sum of money in what was known as the heritage trust fund, that created a savings account, I'd like to understand what the member's feelings are now, when we're in a difficult economic time, on what level of debt the member would accept as a personal level. If she could expound upon that and possibly on a level that might be an acceptable level for a government to accept: is there a feeling of a level of acceptance of debt that she personally espouses or that the constituency relates to her in that regard?

10:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I did grow up in this province, and I'm familiar, I think, with the ups and downs of the oil market. My father was a geophysicist, and he worked in that area, so I have recollections of what it has been like in the past. I think that with respect to what the member said about the heritage trust fund, I mean, I certainly find myself somewhat frustrated that given that this cycle was a little bit predictable, governments of the past didn't do a better job of saving to ensure that in these lean times, when we know that revenues are going to drop significantly, as they have done, there were funds available for the government to draw on to ensure that it can protect all Albertans in these times when they have such greater need.

With respect to the member's comments on acceptable levels of debt, I think that the sort of critical first piece to recognize is that there are more debts than simply financial ones. One of the frustrating things that I have experienced coming into this position is that there's sort of a significant infrastructure lag in this province. So that's one debt. The result of that is that people don't have access to hospitals and schools that they need. That's deeply frustrating, that that sort of debt has been handed down to us.

Other forms of debt include what I would call a sort of educational debt. If we fail to invest in education now for our children, we will be investing very heavily in the future in my ministry, actually, in justice services for those people. I think that, you know, when we're looking at what we're willing to pass down to the next generation, we have to consider whether we're leaving them with clean water to drink, whether we're leaving them with a well-educated population who will be able to take the economy and take this democracy and rule of law forward where it needs to go, whether we're leaving them with the necessary infrastructure, the roads to support the economy, the hospitals, and the schools to support the people of this province as we move forward.

In terms of acceptable levels of debt it's my view that a government should always be fiscally prudent. We should always struggle to do our best job to make sure that we are not passing down money that needs to be repaid, but we also need to struggle to ensure that we're not passing down other things, that we're not passing down buildings that haven't been repaired in so long that they become useless, that we're not passing down a situation in which our people don't have access to schools and hospitals

because they haven't been built, and that we're not passing down a population who doesn't have the fundamental education to carry forward the things that we have built here, to carry on with the rule of law, and to carry on with the vibrant economy we have, that has the skills to transition – as we know, we need to broaden and diversify the economy, and I think that education and the ability to think critically and respond to circumstances are really critical in that way.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say thank you to the hon. minister for her passionate speech on behalf of her constituents and her own journey to arrive where she is today. Of course, congratulations on her election and the position that she holds. I think myself and the minister have . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today and speak to the 29th Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Since May, when I was first elected, it has been a profound privilege to stand here on behalf of the men and women of my constituency.

Cardston-Taber-Warner is an incredible place to live, and I'm honoured to live there. It's the most southwestern part of Alberta, right up against the U.S. border. Many of the towns and municipalities trace their heritage to the end of the 19th century. It is a place where a man or a woman could come with a dream. All they needed was \$10 and a willingness to work the land and make something of it. It's the same entrepreneurial spirit and can-do attitude that has made our province so great for so long.

It is also home to the largest First Nations reserve in Canada, the Blood reserve, which was established under Treaty 7. I am thankful for their rich culture and their contributions to our communities and for the opportunity to work with them and to learn from them.

Cardston is home to the Cardston Alberta temple, one of Canada's designated national historic sites. On the east end of my riding one can taste the world's best corn. The Taber area, which has a phenomenal irrigation system, boasts the highest heat units in Alberta, which makes it an ideal place to grow world-class produce. On the west side of the riding sits one of the forgotten gems of Alberta, Waterton Lakes national park. With its beautiful mountain trails and cascading waterfalls, Waterton is one of the most beautiful places on earth. My constituency is a remarkable place, and it's an honour to represent it.

I chose to run for election, Mr. Speaker, because I honestly believe that Alberta is the best place to live. I attended university down in the United States, but when that period of my life was over, there was little question in my mind about where I wanted to settle down, about where I wanted to start a business, and about where I wanted to raise my family.

Next month my first grandson will be celebrating his first birthday. When he grows up, I hope that he sees Alberta as the same land of promise and opportunity that so many of us have seen for so long. I would hope that he chooses to settle in our province not because it is where he is from and where his roots are from but because it is Alberta, a land strong and free.

In my career I built and ran numerous businesses, from start-ups to large enterprises to the residential and commercial construction company that my dad, Roy, and I operated over the past decade. Over the years I saw first-hand what policies gave Alberta that advantage, and I saw first-hand the impact of policies that took it away. Throughout the last decade a slow and growing cobweb of thick red tape and increased government size began building up.

Any sense of responsibility has fallen under the long shadow of a shameless descent into debt and deficits. If we are to pursue an irresponsible high-tax regime, one filled with debts and deficits, it may take more than a generation to undo this mess. There are jurisdictions here in Canada that can reveal what that looks like. Ontario now spends \$1 billion on interest payments to service their debts each and every month. That's one of the largest line items in their budget. They spend more on servicing their debt than they do on postsecondary education. It is my sincere hope that we halt our descent towards that path. If Albertans managed their finances like this government does, they would soon be bankrupt and homeless.

I am thankful to have a place here among my fellow conservatives in the Wildrose caucus. I'm a conservative because I believe in the worth and dignity of every person, that no matter who you are, where you came from, what you were, or where you were born, every individual has worth and value. That's the compassion at the heart of conservatism, that every individual should be free – free to pursue opportunities, free to pursue their own goals and to raise their own family, free of overbearing governments, and free to save or invest their own earnings as they best see fit – the freedom that no matter where anyone started, every individual can pursue their own livelihood and their own destiny.

But we cannot truly be Alberta, strong and free, if there is a segment of the population for whom all of these freedoms and opportunities are out of reach. When we talk about jobs and the economy, we're talking about how to prevent serious social problems like poverty and homelessness, the myriad personal and family problems that come from bankruptcy and depression, and other illnesses that can result from not having a job or from losing a business. One of the greatest fallacies of the last century has been that such problems can be solved through heavy-handed government spending. Look at the United States, for example, which has spent between \$15 trillion and \$20 trillion over 50 years on a war on poverty, yet the poverty rate has barely changed.

This fallacy of government spending is a recurring one, especially in the circles that many members of the current government seem to find themselves. I note that the Premier and others on the government benches are no strangers to the Broadbent Institute events. A few days ago I was surprised to see a media report that former federal NDP leader Ed Broadbent had claimed in a speech that much of the inequality we see today is a direct result of austerity budgets in the mid-1990s, when the federal government of the day sought to balance the budget and pay off the debt. It's a peculiar claim, Mr. Speaker. The time when average wages barely grew, family incomes fell, and poverty was in double digits was actually in the period preceding the 1990s.

#### 11:00

The share of the national population below the low-income cut-off line has been generally declining over the past 20 years. In fact, when Statistics Canada brought out their income of Canadians report a few years ago, it showed that fewer Canadians were below the poverty line, the low-income cut-off, than ever before. The trend was generally mirrored in Alberta, where the low-income number was in double digits during the early 1990s but then steadily declined downward, dropping even below 6 per cent at one point.

In recent years many left-leaning groups had put out studies that income inequality was worse in Alberta than anywhere else in Canada. To this I can only quote former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who said, "So long as the gap is smaller, they would rather have the poor poorer. [You do] not create wealth and opportunity that way. [You do] not create a property-owning democracy that way."

The reality, as we know, Mr. Speaker, is that for years upon years Canadians from every province and territory came to Alberta because there were jobs and there was opportunity. When their own provinces suffered job losses and no opportunities, they chose Alberta. Why? Because we were doing something different here and something good. It's a status that we should be working to regain.

I know that many of the government's pursuits, especially as they pertain to Alberta's energy industry, are predicated upon the idea of social licence. It's a concept that has come up repeatedly through modern history in numerous iterations. I'm reminded of a certain quotation from the 19th century that underlies it.

Even a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors . . . [and] they must hand it down to succeeding generations in an improved condition.

That, of course, was from Karl Marx in *The Communist Manifesto*, a text that for all its good intentions has led to immense suffering throughout the 20th century and even today. It's an extreme example, but frankly recent centuries in human history are filled with suffering as a result of brazen, blinded pursuits of ideological goals by governments. It's why we're so opposed to this government's social engineering experiment.

I'm a conservative because I believe in results-oriented solutions. No matter how well-intentioned, all government programs and initiatives need to be accountable to Albertans. We work for everyday Albertans, and we owe to them that their tax dollars are used wisely and that their elected officials are not passing initiatives that will actually harm them.

I looked forward to hearing the government's Speech from the Throne but was disappointed to find that the government was only offering more words, not practical solutions. The throne speech failed to address the NDP's failed job subsidy program, which has created zero jobs. This new legislation offers no concrete solutions and, as such, is an affront to the tens of thousands of Albertans who are out of work.

In this session the Wildrose focused on delivering positive, alternative solutions to get Albertans working again such as reducing small-business taxes, providing relief for families in need, and stability for our energy sector. One such solution was the Wildrose jobs plan, which I had an opportunity to work on, which gives specifics on how to stop the bleeding that's happening in our province's suffering labour market. It is my sincere hope that this government looks to implement these recommendations.

In a prominent place in my home, Mr. Speaker, hangs my favourite picture. In this picture one can see a man standing in the doorway of a lighthouse while a storm rages all around him. One is drawn to the picture, and at first he is awed by the size of the waves that are crashing around the lighthouse. However, as you look closer, you are drawn to the man's face. You notice that this man is calm. How could he be so calm in such a raging storm? He is calm because he knows what that lighthouse's foundation is made of. He is calm because he knows that, as in times past, his lighthouse will weather the storm well. He is calm because he knows that the sun will come out again and that the winds and the waves will subside. This picture has hung in my home for close to 15 years, and I have had many moments to think upon it. What if the lighthouse's foundation were to be undermined? I am sure that the man would not be so confident. In fact, I doubt he would even stay in the lighthouse.

These days Alberta's new canvas has me and, quite frankly, many of my fellow Albertans questioning: is the foundation of Alberta strong and secure? Is it a place that can weather the storms? We have seen the storms of low oil, and we have weathered them well,

but this new, tumultuous storm, a.k.a. the NDP government's policies: well, we will just have to see if we survive this one.

On an adjacent wall in my home hang pictures of my family: my wife, Angie, and my five children; my son-in-law; and my 11-month-old grandson. As a father it is my responsibility to try and provide my family and future generations with a bright future. The storms of life will come and go, my friends, but let us not be the creators of those storms. Let us instead create a place where all people can come and realize their dreams.

In closing, I again extend my heartfelt thank you to my constituents in Cardston-Taber-Warner for electing me to represent them here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon on 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner for his thoughtful speech. Earlier we heard from the Member for Calgary-Buffalo that debt can be found not just in economics, but you can also have a social debt, and that social debt can be created when you choose to balance a budget. I think the implication was that compassion is found when we as legislators choose to accumulate an economic debt in order to address a social debt. Could you elaborate on this perspective from your point of view as a conservative, on how compassionate we are when we accumulate economic debts as a result of social debt?

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you to the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, I do know that there's a balance that you need to strike. I do know that. We live in a very complex society. I think that a lot of people, when they're younger, grow up having dreams and hopes and aspirations, and they hope for a bright future. One of the reasons why I ran was my concern for what future we're offering our children and grandchildren. Is it going to be a future laden with debt and with loss of hope because of that debt? When you take a look at some of the jurisdictions like Greece, where young people have no hope for jobs, for opportunities to be able to advance themselves, there is a loss to that society for generations.

My concern is that in Alberta we chose something different. We chose to have no debt. We chose to be able to have low cost of living, low taxes, and because of that we offer hope and opportunity for our future generations. We've unfortunately, over the past few years and recently, deviated from that course, which was once called the Alberta advantage. That Alberta advantage was so amazing that people from all over the country, all over the world, actually, said: "Let's go to Alberta because there's opportunity there. There's hope there. There's a place where we can raise our family in dignity." Now, that's the kind of social licence we should be fighting for because there's no better social program than a job.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, it's a great honour to speak in response to the Speech from the Throne this morning. I'd like to take a moment to express my gratitude to the people of Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for the opportunity to be their voice in the Legislature. It's a privilege to represent these good people in the government, and I will do my best to listen and bring their concerns and ideas forward here.

I'd like to take this chance to tell you about myself and the riding I represent. The riding of Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill was established in 2005 and includes some of the best parts of the city. The name of the riding is derived from two namesakes. Calgary's 26th mayor, Donald Mackay, served the city from 1949 to 1959,



and he's credited with starting the tradition of presenting a white stetson to visitors, cementing a custom that continues today and has been adopted by Tourism Calgary, which annually presents their white hat awards to celebrate inspiring individuals in the tourism industry that go above and beyond to provide service to visitors to our city.

#### 11:10

Nose Hill park is the second largest urban park in Calgary and in Canada. When you drive into Calgary from the west of the city, you can see the remnants of an ancient river when you look to the north. It was this river along with a retreat of glaciers from the last ice age which created the hill and began forming the distinctive shape that it has today. The park is home to many native plants such as the prairie crocus and has some of the last existing natural grasslands in North America. Ninety-five per cent of North American grasslands have been lost to development, pollution, and cultivation. The park covers 11.27 square kilometres and has more than 300 kilometres of trails, worn there by walkers, runners, cyclists, my dog, and almost 200 species of animals that have been recorded in the park.

Mackay-Nose Hill is comprised of five great neighbourhoods in the northwest quadrant of Calgary: Huntington Hills; Beddington Heights, where I make my home; MacEwan; Sandstone; and Calgary's fastest growing community, Evanston. I'd like to talk a little bit about Huntington Hills. It was established in the late 1960s, as was I, and has one of the most active and vibrant community associations in the city. I was happy to present the community association with a cheque for \$350,000 recently, and that was from the community facility enhancement program, which normally has a limit of \$125,000, but there was such a deficit and it is such a vibrant part of the community that an exception was made for them. This grant is going to go towards refurbishing the gymnasium, which is home to many sports and recreation programs in the community and is used by groups city-wide.

The community association is also home to child care and community programs. Parent link runs a triple-P parenting program, and this is funded through Human Services. It supports parents with a proven program to develop the skills, strategies, and confidence to handle any parenting situation. I'm sure my colleagues here that are parents will agree with me that parenting is the singularly most challenging role that any person can take on, and I'm so grateful that this program is available.

Huntington Hills Community Association also offers curling, skating, and meeting spaces for many organizations in the community and holds one of the best Stampede breakfasts in the city, where last July I skillfully caught every one of the pancakes that was thrown by our very popular mayor, and that was no easy task.

On the east side of the riding is the Calgary airport. The airport is managed and operated by the Calgary Airport Authority. This is a nonprofit organization that ensures that YYC continues its role as a vital part of the Calgary economy. The airport contributes in the neighbourhood of 7 per cent of the GDP to the city of Calgary. It's a vital gateway for both people and goods – 15.48 million passengers and 134,695 metric tonnes of cargo travelled through the airport last year – and YYC is a major hub for both WestJet and Air Canada. The airport authority owns and leases hundreds of thousands of square feet of warehouse, industrial, and office space. This space is home to a number of local and international businesses. Due to the continued growth of the airport, a number of new hotels and commercial facilities have been built around the area in the last five years and have really transformed it. YYC is opening a new international terminal later this year and will have 24 new gates to serve travellers.

I recently helped one of the companies in the Skyline industrial park open their new location. CCI Wireless provides wireless Internet access to rural Alberta and is one of the kinds of companies that can benefit from the \$1.5 billion, announced in the throne speech, that is available to Alberta Treasury Branches to support lending to small and medium-sized businesses, which are the backbone of our economy. Rural Internet access allows our farmers, ranchers, and rural businesses to participate in the economy in ways they haven't been able to. A cattle rancher with wireless Internet access has the ability to stream live auctions and bid on animals that previously they would have had to spend time and money to travel just to see. Some of these farms may even be in Mackay-Nose Hill as there's a large area on the north side of the constituency that has some farms and acreages. CCI Wireless employs around a hundred Albertans with good-paying, stable jobs and has plans to expand, creating a couple of hundred more jobs.

It's this kind of diversity that will make our economy more resilient to the changes in the energy industry and the effects that we are all facing because of the protracted and unexpected drop in the price of oil. The government has also directed AIMCo to earmark half a billion dollars for Alberta companies, those with growth potential, giving our small and medium businesses the chance to grow their enterprises and position themselves for the economic recovery that Alberta will see.

The throne speech was delivered on March 8 this year, which was also International Women's Day. This day has grown to celebrate the gains that have been made in striving for the equality of women and men. Actually, Mr. Speaker, this is feminism. Feminism is simply the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It's not a scary agenda of hatred or hurt. I'm proud to be part of a government caucus that is gender balanced, with equal numbers of men and women who are committed to serving the people of Alberta.

I'm proud of our government for leading the way in equality by establishing the Status of Women ministry. One of the outcomes I'm committed to as an MLA is that women and girls can walk alone without fear, and I'm excited that a ministry exists that is leading the effort to end violence against women in conjunction with other ministries.

Sexism is what allows violence against women to continue, the belief that women and girls are less than, that they are inadequate, that they're incapable. Women face prejudice based on our gender every day in so many ways that it is difficult to relate the experience to others. Sexism is a type of bullying that is deeply ingrained in our culture, and it hurts everyone, men and women, girls and boys, by constraining us to narrowly defined roles and ideas of what we should be. Sexism makes achieving the same wages as men very difficult for women, especially in Alberta, where women are reported to earn less than 65 per cent of the wages that men make. Companies are shown to be more successful when they have more women in management roles, yet we still see women underrepresented at boardroom tables across our province. It would take a woman working in Canada 235 years to earn the average yearly salary of a male CEO in our country.

I'm a single parent. I raised a daughter and a son – and I'm very proud of both of them and their support – in Calgary, then in a small town called Kenley in the United Kingdom, and in North Attleboro in Massachusetts. I moved my family to England to work for a manufacturing company and experienced blatant sexism on the job. My male colleagues made higher salaries than I did, they enjoyed a closer relationship with our manager through their trips to the pub and the golf course together, and they were encouraged to fly business class while travelling for work while I was given economy tickets until I insisted on equitable treatment. I look forward to

ending sexism and the damaging effects it has on our society, Mr. Speaker, and I urge all of my colleagues in the House to join in the effort.

One of the biggest challenges I faced was finding reliable child care. I had to fly my mother over from Canada to watch my children for me so I could travel for my job. Being able to afford good child care even when working in a professional capacity is a challenge for single parents. I know that single parents and their children especially will benefit a great deal from enhancements to the Alberta child benefit and the family employment tax credit, announced in the throne speech.

As any parent can tell you, health care and education are very important to families, and it's these issues that got me more involved in our political process, Mr. Speaker. In late 2014 the Premier at that time was telling Albertans to be prepared for 9 per cent cuts in health care and education. That is a lot to cut from these essential services.

I remember when Albertans had to cope with the fallout from the deep cuts to health care in the 1990s. I remember taking my kids to the store. We were driving down an alley off 14th Street in the northwest, and we saw a man eating food out of a dumpster. He was digging through the food that had been thrown out by a local restaurant. At that time I was working as an administrative assistant at an oil company, and I didn't make a lot of money, but it broke my heart that anyone in our province would be so hungry that they'd have to eat food from the garbage. So I stopped, and I gave him \$20 to get something safe and healthy to eat. The man was mentally handicapped, and he'd been discarded by a government intent on making deep cuts, with no support for him to navigate a world that he'd never had to live in alone before. It wasn't the sort of world I wanted my kids to live in then, and it isn't the sort of world I want kids to live in now.

We are all connected, and we are stronger together when we take care of one another. The prospect of more people facing homelessness, more people having to wait even longer to see a doctor, larger classrooms, longer waiting times for surgeries that make life bearable: well, this was unacceptable to me, so I decided to get involved. I joined a campaign called Better Way Alberta, and we encouraged Albertans to sign a petition against the deep cuts the government at the time was proposing.

**11:20**

It was through that work that I was approached to run as a candidate for the NDP in last May's election, and I met a former MLA who is deeply committed to public service, Bob Hawkesworth. Bob was the MLA for Calgary-Mountain View previously, and he served as a long-time city council member in Calgary. I'm really fortunate to have such a generous person in the riding of Mackay-Nose Hill. During the election Mr. Hawkesworth was a wealth of advice and support for me, and he was my biggest cheerleader. He was out knocking on doors with me every night. He helped me to distribute thousands of flyers – some of them even had my face on them, which was very cool – and he stood with me and other great volunteers in the early mornings when we stood and waved signs and greeted commuters on their way to work. I really would like to thank him for his support.

Mackay-Nose Hill has been hit quite hard by the economic downturn, Mr. Speaker. An estimated 2,500 people have been directly impacted in the riding through job losses, and I know that many more have faced wage cuts. I've heard from constituents about the economic and personal struggles they are facing, and I know that hope is what helps pull people through tough times. I was happy to hear that the government is committed to putting many Albertans back to work through the investment of \$34 billion in the

provincial capital plan to help build the roads, transit systems, schools, and other facilities that the province needs to support our communities and our citizens.

I've lived in Alberta most of my life. I was born in Edmonton, just in Oliver, and I grew up in Sexsmith and Grande Prairie. I've lived and worked in the U.K. and the U.S., and I chose to come back to Alberta because of the diversity and the opportunity we have here.

As you can tell, Mr. Speaker, Mackay-Nose Hill is a diverse riding and not just in the communities and the parks and the industry. Young families, senior citizens, people who weren't born in Alberta, people who recently made Calgary home after fleeing war, people who need support because of disability, people who have created companies that employ many of our neighbours, people who cook for us, take care of our roads, drive our buses, people who serve our community in a myriad of ways, all of these people make Mackay-Nose Hill home, and it has been my honour to tell you about our riding and how the throne speech will impact us.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler on 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill: it's an interesting comment that you make there. As a former rancher I know what it's like to have Internet access out in the rural community. Also, Member, you made some comment in regard to the CFEP grants in your constituency, and you made a comment that there was an exception made to the funding there. I was wondering if you could elaborate on that, how that funding worked, because we've also received some of that funding in our ridings as well, and I'd like to know what the limits are for them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the question. I'm afraid I'm not going to be very helpful in giving you more information. I do know that the limit is normally \$125,000, and I know that the community association made an appeal to have more funding granted to them through the program, and that is how they came to have the amount that they did.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for her reply to the throne speech. Our constituencies are adjacent, so I've got to know the member quite well. I know that she was in the oil and gas industry for many years, so I'd like to ask her to elaborate on her experience in that industry.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. I actually started off as a receptionist at an oil company a long time ago. It was through that work that I developed two different interests that I ended up parlaying into a career. One of them was business. I was working for the business development department of the oil company. We did deals, we sold properties, we bought properties, we created strategies in order to move the company forward, and one thing that I got really good at was developing applications. I developed a database to track acquisitions and divestitures. Yeah. I started working in IT. I've

worked for lots of large oil and gas companies. I've also worked for TransAlta Utilities.

My career is what took me overseas and to the U.S. as well, where I worked for manufacturing in the electronics industry. Coming back to Calgary and moving into a business analysis role definitely gave me the opportunity to understand even more in depth how oil and gas companies work, and it's been an amazing learning opportunity. Of course, being from Alberta, I've been through the economic ups and downs before, and I can really empathize with what people are facing today, regardless of what area of the industry they're working in.

Thanks.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I just urge the members – it could be my hearing; it could be the sound system – in the back corner to just raise your volume up a little bit. I'd appreciate it.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to rise today and share my thoughts in response to the Speech from the Throne. I'd like to take this moment to acknowledge Alberta's Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Lois Mitchell, who not only safeguards the constitutional traditions and principles of this House but also engages with Albertans on a continual basis. It is the examples set by strong women of our past and present that lay the groundwork for the change we expect to see in our future.

So let's look to the future, not today, not right now, to our children's and our grandchildren's future. We need an economy that is resilient to energy price swings, captures the full value of our resources, and offers a prosperous future for our children. We are working hard to improve public services, minimize the impact of the current recession on Alberta families, and mend the infrastructure deficit throughout Alberta. I'm very proud of the work that we as a government have accomplished by reinstating the STEP program as well.

I'm privileged to rise today to espouse my riding of Stony Plain, and I'm privileged and humbled to represent what is, I am sure, the most diverse, hard-working, and beautiful constituency in all of Alberta. We are farmers and ranchers, business leaders and entrepreneurs; we are coal miners and teachers. Our riding encompasses everything from Winterburn Road in Edmonton to the Pembina River, the North Saskatchewan in the south to the Yellowhead in the north, except that we scooch down around Spruce Grove.

Stony Plain is one of the very few original ridings with the original name, formed in 1905. The boundaries may have changed, but the location hasn't. The town of Stony Plain, historically known as Dog Rump Creek, is the town of the painted past due to our nearly 40 murals painted in various locations throughout the town.

Another one of the great attractions in the town of Stony Plain is the Multicultural Heritage Centre, which is housed in the town's first school. One of the biggest draws at the multicultural centre is Homesteader's Kitchen, where you can get artisan breads, homemade soups, and an endless selection of homemade pies. As a new draw for the Stony Plain region Ryan Smyth, the former player for the Edmonton Oilers, is now playing for the Stony Plain Eagles triple-A senior men's team.

The Multicultural Heritage Centre is just off Main Street. On Main Street there are boutique shops of every description, from village fashions to Phina's, from Blue Diamond Jewellers to Bing's restaurant. Across from my constituency office is Pet Foods Etc., and I'm kitty-corner to the co-op.

Recent census data shows that the town of Stony Plain has 16,127 residents and Parkland county has 30,568 residents, a growing and vibrant community rich with culture and history. I'm advocating for infrastructure enhancements such as roads, vibrant businesses, local health resources, local agriculture, and our local schools.

Rural tourism is a strong industry west of Edmonton. In one day you can have a picnic at the Devonian gardens, run through the corn maze, catch a fish for dinner at Jackfish Lake, and sleep under the stars at Wabamun. It is a true destination located just around the corner.

The Stony Plain constituency is on the traditional territory of Treaty 6. There are two indigenous bands that also call Stony Plain home, the Enoch Cree First Nation and Paul First Nation, and I am proud of the ongoing work with these nations. As a result of what our government has heard from most of Alberta's indigenous governments, we will repeal Bill 22 and will engage indigenous communities on the consultation they as nations would like to see to support the capacity of First Nation and Métis peoples. This government will also consult indigenous people on a new indigenous people sacred ceremonial objects repatriation act that would facilitate the return of sacred objects to the nations to whom they belong.

**11:30**

These are tough economic times, especially for my constituency of Stony Plain. However, the residents in my constituency are resilient, innovative, and hard-working, and there is no doubt in my mind that we will get through this together. Taking care of the people around us while encouraging industry to grow are goals we need to work towards as a community, a government, and a province. To move forward in a careful, considered way while encouraging growth in consultation with those affected is of the highest importance. There will be a measured approach for the spring session at the Legislature. We have laid the economic framework, and now it is time to tweak some of the smaller pieces so we can continue to play the role of a shock absorber for the economy and encourage diversification and job creation while in this downturn.

We're also investing \$34 billion in infrastructure to build the roads, schools, and other vital facilities that Albertans need, which will help keep our tradespeople and our professionals at work. Investing in infrastructure, public health, and education have been priorities during this downturn. We have one of the youngest, strongest workforces in Canada, and maintaining that workforce is part of what will help get us through these rough times. Our greatest resource is our people, the way we care about and care for one another. Our government will continue to act with focus and determination to engage the citizens of Alberta in skills training, retraining, and expanding access to the workforce for people facing unemployment. We will ensure access to venture capital. Updated credit union legislation and, of course, Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, will help entrepreneurs and businesses in my riding to create new jobs and growth.

The opposition members have obviously been listening to our economic development minister's speeches, and they were paying attention to our announcements in our throne speech, as proven by the approximately six points of their 12-point job action plan that our government has obviously already mentioned. I'm excited to be able to share and discuss with my constituents in Stony Plain details about our expansion of access to workforce and skills training and retraining for the unemployed. This is a commitment for the present and the future, the future of Albertans in our economy.

We are extremely proud in Stony Plain to supply 40 per cent of the energy for all of Alberta. In the region there is Keephills,

Sundance, and some work across the river at Genesee. Many more people support our energy by working at the Highvale mine in pits 03 through 09. The hard work of our men and women ensures that people's lights stay on across our province. Over 1,300 people in the riding of Stony Plain help produce that power and will continue to do so for the next 14 years. New legislation will give force and effect to key elements of Alberta's climate leadership plan such as phasing out harmful emissions from coal-powered generation by 2030 to protect our health and our environment.

A modern royalty system will promote innovation and efficiency and provide full transparency and public accountability on the calculation of our royalties. Alberta is an economic leader, buoyed by our energy sector, and we know that right now we need leadership to ensure that we get our product to tidewater. The continued engagement on pipelines is proof that our government is fighting hard for Alberta, its interests and its economy, and we will not back down.

A fair number of Stony Plain residents are employed in the oil and gas sector, the sector that has seen some of the most drastic fluctuations of all industries in this past year, and I understand the stress that puts on our communities. To that end, our government is vigorously urging the federal government to take account of the current economic shock affecting the resource industry and reconsider employment insurance rules that exclude too many Albertans from those much-needed benefits, those of us still around Edmonton.

The new child benefit plan will help 380,000 children living in low-income households. The plan to create new jobs and opportunities while building on traditional economic strengths is what our province needs right now. My constituents have told me that, as I'm sure others have around the province. There are too many low-income households in Alberta. Many of those households are single-parent families.

My beautiful children spent much of their lives in one of those households. We have lived in government-funded housing and other low-income situations. When my children and I moved to the capital region, it was so I could pursue educational opportunities. As a single parent I returned to school, and one of my greatest accomplishments was earning my licensed practical nurse diploma. Though it was difficult, I taught my daughter that pursuing an education is always worth the hard work, and I taught my son what a strong woman looks like. Since my partner, Will, has come into our lives, he has continued to encourage me to always strive for my goals, and he has supported my work as a nurse and as a legislator.

As a nurse and a caregiver the most important part of my job was service and advocacy, to serve those who couldn't always perform the activities of daily life that healthy people take for granted and to advocate for those without a voice to those who needed to hear the message. I spent a number of years working diligently with vulnerable populations. My first role was working with individuals with developmental disabilities. It is where I found my passion for health care. There were many challenges for both my clients and myself, and one of the biggest challenges was the high staff turnover. It can take an individual who lives in care a minimum of six months to come to trust a new caregiver that comes into their lives due to the high turnover in that profession. When there is no trust between caregivers and clients, it makes many situations more dangerous and more difficult for both. Everything from personal care to outings is more stressful for the individuals and the caregivers. Unfortunately, if a client doesn't have capacity to emotionally handle stress, the person may, understandably, lash out at caregivers.

Sometimes due to these stresses an individual may lose their housing supports. If a person loses their housing, the chances of

other supports falling to the wayside are very high. People in this situation often run out of money, which leads to a person with no income on our streets. When the physical health of a person on the streets is compromised and, with luck, that person ends up in a hospital, the individual must stay in an acute-care bed until supports are found for that person. This leads to many people staying in acute-care beds for much longer than is needed, and as we all know, acute-care beds are not the appropriate place for long-term care. This is why we are investing in health and housing.

As an acute-care nurse I specialized in patients with acute stroke and acute geriatric patients. This involves many aspects of care, from total care to rehabilitation, from palliative care to dementia care. All care is essential, and every situation is unique. There's an old saying in nursing: they may not remember your name, but they'll always remember how you made them feel.

There are many parallels between nursing and serving as an elected representative. Both professions are about serving people and advocating for them. When a constituent contacts my office in Stony Plain, many times that person is at the end of their rope. Whether it's an agency they are having difficulty contacting or not knowing what resources are available in our community, it is my job and the job of my staff to advocate for each and every constituent who contacts us. We advocate in many ways, from directing a constituent towards a resource to connecting the constituent to the services and supports in our community to bringing forth their concerns to the relevant ministries.

We also value the role that local government plays in supporting our interactions with local residents. I am heartened by the opportunity this government will provide by inviting the public and municipal governments to comment on a modern Municipal Government Act. The trimunicipal region, which encompasses the town of Stony Plain, the city of Spruce Grove, and Parkland county, is well known for their strong co-operative projects and initiatives. It should be a model for every municipality in Alberta. Having a strong region makes for resilient communities, which makes for sustainable living. There are many ventures in our trimunicipal region such as the trimunicipal leisure centre, the Meridian Foundation, the heritage pavilion, the EMS facility, and the soon-to-be new RCMP detachment, to which two if not all three of these partners contributed. The trimunicipal region works because a small community can do something good, but a strong region pulling together can do many great things.

I'm proud to be a voice in the Alberta Legislature for Stony Plain and Parkland county residents and families, promoting solutions that will make Albertans' lives easier and more prosperous. This agenda is large and ambitious, but I support this initiative to create a better, more prosperous, more diversified, and more caring Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**11:40**

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've had the privilege of being able to give my maiden speech early in the First Session, it's still both an honour and a pleasure to be able to rise on behalf of the people of Edmonton-Decore and address the Assembly in response to the Speech from the Throne. Of course, I'd first like to thank Her Honour the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of Alberta for delivering a speech filled with hope, optimism, and a path to future prosperity for all of Alberta. That path speaks of managing an energy price shock, the likes of which we haven't seen since the '80s, and how we must support the energy sector during these very

challenging times. But it also speaks of a future with a diversified economy, stable public services that Albertans rely on every single day, and an environment that also produces clean energy so that we can protect our land, our air, and our water.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech also addressed a concern that was growing in my riding of Edmonton-Decore, and that concern is democratic reform. Our political process cannot be for just a select few, and it cannot be administered by just a select few. It must be for all Albertans. I'm already hearing about how pleased my residents are with where this government is leading on that, and they are excited to see what will be coming in the future.

The days and weeks ahead are no doubt going to be a challenge, Mr. Speaker, as we navigate through these very volatile times, but Albertans, like the residents of Edmonton-Decore, are optimistic, they are hopeful, they are also entrepreneurial, and they are very resilient. With qualities such as these the future does indeed look very bright, and together we will build a future that will stand the test of time.

If I may quote from Her Honour's speech, "Albertans want to build a society that gives a hand up to people who need it, cares for the vulnerable, and opens doors for our children and our grandchildren." Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Edmonton-Decore I'm humbled and honoured to be their representative in this House as we work towards building this future together, a future with that diversified economy, with stable public services that future Albertans can count on, a future where the environment we live in protects the land, the air, and the water for generations to come, all of that under a democratic system that doesn't exclude any Albertan and where everyone is equal and respected equally.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, under 29(2)(a)?

**Dr. Turner:** Under 29(2)(a). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the member to elaborate on a few things. I had the honour and pleasure to work with the member before the election and campaigned with him and saw him working on the front lines, actually, and the tremendous reaction that he was getting at the doors. I was also impressed with the work that he had done in the last session promoting the local band, the Emeralds. My first question to him is actually to get an update on what has happened with the application for the Walk of Fame for the Emeralds.

I had another question, though. I really do appreciate the sense of optimism, forward looking, and care and compassion that he has for all of his constituents and indeed all Albertans. I saw a notice the other day that he had been participating in a job fair in northeast Edmonton. I wonder if he could bring us up to date on what happened with that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to answer those questions. I guess that to start with the update on the Emeralds, there has been a significant letter campaign going on, with the intention of being able to show people that the Emeralds, who have been in the business for 45 years, which is remarkable, are very, very worthy of a star on Canada's Walk of Fame.

To my understanding, we have a deadline of roughly around the end of May now to get those letters in. Those letters will be filling a box at this point. Of course, with the letters that came in from the members of the Assembly, we are expecting letters very shortly from members of Edmonton city council, and all the letters that the band themselves have been able to get during their somewhat boosted career since this first came out will hopefully sway some

folks into taking a very hard look and bestowing that honour on them. We're getting prepared to send those letters off very, very shortly.

The second question, the job fair: that was put on by the Member for Edmonton-Manning. A fantastic idea, I think, to bring not only employers but also unions, different organizations together and the ability to not only network within each other but to reach out to communities and folks and let them know that there are still things happening. You know, even with this downturn in the economy, there are still a lot of great things happening. Businesses are expanding, businesses are coming online, and they have those things to offer to people.

That job fair was a great example of being able to reach out to people, and I certainly thank the Member for Edmonton-Manning for putting that on and for the chance that I had just to go and speak with some of those people who were attending that. The feedback was very, very positive, and it very, very excited people to hear that although we are experiencing those challenges in our energy sector, there are many other sectors that are growing and that are coming online now. I look forward to maybe being able to participate in something similar in the future with Edmonton-Decore's participation.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member across the floor for talking about the job fair. It was a great event that happened in Edmonton-Manning, and we had a really great response from it.

It truly is my honour to stand and speak in this House today and be part of a historical shift in the politics of Alberta. Today I am proud to stand with the first-ever NDP government and the first gender parity caucus in Alberta. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this is not the norm for Alberta or for Canada. Women continue to fight to become leaders within the political world. School boards, municipalities, provincial and federal politics continue to struggle with supporting women to run. Many ask: why is this; why don't women run for politics? Well, the first thing is that no one has ever asked us. That was until last year when our now Premier asked Alberta's women to run for the NDP, and I am proud that women represented more than 50 per cent of our candidates in the last election.

Mr. Speaker, a government that understands that we need to represent our constituents is something I am extremely proud of. In Alberta our population is more than 50 per cent women, so it seemed only fitting to have the throne speech delivered on International Women's Day and to recognize the work that women have done before us and to honour the work we continue to do today. I think, as Her Honour noted in the throne speech a few weeks ago, the fact that our new Ministry of Status of Women, the only stand-alone ministry in this country, is being led by a new mother is proof that further barriers are starting to come down, though we still have a long way to go.

In the work of building this province, from the stay-at-home mother to women who run the farms, work in the trades, and support our public servants, women make this province run, Mr. Speaker, and it is time that this is celebrated and recognized. Before being elected, I was one of these women. I worked as a public servant in the Ministry of Human Services as a child protection worker, a role that I still miss and cherish today. I had the privilege of not only working with a great team but also continuously being humbled by the families and children I was able to work with.

11:50

Child protection is not an easy profession, Mr. Speaker. Workers are exposed to constant conflict and crisis and at times are threatened. With a pencil and a pad of paper they go into homes that police officers will not enter without guns or backup. They see domestic violence, neglect, sexual and physical abuse, and abandonment. Yet every day workers show up over and over because they believe that they have a responsibility to keep children safe, no matter if this means that they will miss their own children's soccer games or school concerts. They put Alberta's children first, above all else, something that truly needs to be respected.

What also needs to be respected, Mr. Speaker, are the families that the workers in Human Services work with. Each family has their own story, each as unique and challenging as the next. But no matter what the challenges, Albertans are resilient. I have seen the changes that people can make when given a little support. That's why I'm so proud that our government is going to be introducing a new Alberta child benefit plan. This is a \$340 million investment in direct support that goes to Alberta's families who need this help the most.

Mr. Speaker, from my experience, this investment and the introduction of the family employment tax credit, which will help at least 380,000 children throughout our province, can't come soon enough and will have a direct impact on all Albertans' lives. From the single mother who leaves an abusive partner to the teenage parent to the street youth who goes back to school and graduates, we have many success stories within the Ministry of Human Services, and this is why I am so glad to be part of a government that values the work of all of our front-line public servants.

So many have asked me why I became a social worker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I was raised in a loving and caring family with strong women. First, I would like to tell you about my grandmother. She was a strong believer in the good of all people and dedicated her life to taking care of not only my father and his siblings but the community of Pincher Creek. She was a dedicated Baptist, attended the church in town and also at times the Mennonite church beside my uncle's farm. She was well respected and loved by many in the community of Pincher Creek and was known for her generosity towards others. After retiring from running the Home Hardware store, my grandmother volunteered at the Christian Life Outreach. She would be there every day making food bank boxes or sorting through donations from the second-hand store, and most of the time she would be having coffee or offering a listening ear. She was a true gift to have in my life, and I hope that I can be half the woman that she was to the people of Alberta.

Then there are my parents. My mother stayed home with my brother and me when we were growing up. She was a very patient woman with a kind heart and didn't speak negatively of others, qualities that I believe my brother probably picked up. As many people can say, I am definitely my father's daughter. My father was a welder who worked through the boom in Alberta. He was a labour

activist, a shop steward, and a strong believer in social justice. He is also a fiscal conservative, so many know that I am not totally like my father. However, like all of us in this House, while we may not always agree with the ways to approach different issues, we are still respectful and we are still understanding. Even with our political differences, my parents came from Vancouver Island to help me on E-day, a day that I will never forget, for even my conservative dad was calling on behalf of the NDP and was so excited to see us become government.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I will give thanks to the constituents of Edmonton-Manning for providing me the honour to represent them in this House. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Manning for giving us that glimpse into her life, her past, and her reasons for being here in this House today. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Manning has the opportunity to represent a considerable amount of farmland in the north of Edmonton, farmland that I grew up quite close to. There's less of it there now, but there's still some. I know she's been working on behalf of protecting that and the persons that are working that land. I was wondering if she could expand a bit on her experiences with that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Edmonton-Manning is a very diverse community. I'm quite fortunate. It's very large. It's one of the larger ones in the city of Edmonton. My constituency goes from 66th Street and 137th Ave all the way to the Fort Saskatchewan boundaries. I cozy up to Strathcona county and Sturgeon county, so I have farming communities. I have diverse ethnic communities. We basically have everything in Edmonton-Manning. The privilege of that is that we back right onto the North Saskatchewan River, which has some of the best land in the province and a very unique microclimate. We have Riverbend Gardens, and they provide a lot of the fresh vegetables and a lot of different things to many of the farmers' markets here in the city.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and would it be okay if we adjourned debate?

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, I think we've made some excellent progress today. I think it was very interesting for us all to sort of hear a little bit about our members and their values. I move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 this afternoon.

Thank you.

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

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, April 5, 2016

Day 9

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
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## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 5, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House fantastic students from the school of Greenview in my home community of Woodvale. This school is located just blocks away from where I've resided for the past 15 years. I've had the pleasure of reading to these classes, and I hope they very much enjoyed their visit here today. I'd like to ask them to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be able to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a fantastic grade 6 class from St. Philip Catholic school. It's an honour for me to have 21 schools in my riding of Edmonton-Decore, with St. Philip being one of them. The last time I visited St. Philip was for their carnival, and the students did a great job teaching me how to use code to take a selfie. It was a wonderful display of Italian culture, which is just another example of the cultural diversity of Edmonton-Decore. I truly look forward to visiting them again later on in the school year. I would now ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce the members of the Education Advisory Committee. This provincial committee offers pedagogical expertise to the visitor services office in their development of educational programming and represents elementary, junior high, senior high, and postsecondary education across Alberta. With us today are Dr. Carla Peck from the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta; Dr. Craig Harding, social studies learning leader, Calgary board of education; Corvin Urbach from Wolf Creek public schools in Ponoka; Lauren Wheeler from the Alberta Museums Association; Dr. Wally Diefenthaler, educational consultant; Brian St. Germain from the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learning services, Red Deer public school district.

The committee is also joined this year by Karen Aitken, director of the parliamentary education office of the British Columbia Legislature, here to observe the committee's activities. Would you please give them all the warm traditional welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly staff from the municipal services and legislation division of my ministry, Municipal Affairs. With us today we have Linda Lewis,

Susan Thomson, Angela Markel, Doug Walter, Abdel-Rahman Ahmed, Ida Dei, Laura Klassen Bullock, and Jayne Nicol. These staff members all work in the legislative projects unit and provide valuable support on a wide variety of initiatives. For the past several months they have been heavily engaged in our major priority, developing proposed amendments to the Municipal Government Act. I am so grateful for their tireless work on the MGA, and I am looking forward to bringing the legislative amendments forward later this spring. I ask these staff members to all please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Members and guests, the highest priority, visitors to this House, is school groups, and it appears that there is another school group that was to be mentioned. The minister for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you this afternoon another school group, also from the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods, the Millwoods Christian school, who are here for the entire week for School at the Leg. I hope they find lots of interesting things to learn and do, and I'm looking forward to speaking with them later in the week. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Tanis Dubé, and I'd like them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Council of Alberta University Students, commonly known as CAUS. This group represents the interests of more than 100,000 university students from the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, Mount Royal University, and MacEwan University. We admire the work that these students do in their advocacy and lobbying to ensure quality, accessible postsecondary education for all Albertans. Seated in the gallery, a safe lobbying distance away from all of the members here on the floor – and I'd ask that they stand as I read their names – are Romy Garrido, Brittany Pitruniak, Danika McConnell, Levi Nilson, Erik Queenan, Madina Kanayeva, Navneet Khinda, Fahim Rahman, Dylan Hanwell, Virginia Brickley, and Beverly Eastham. If we could give them the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly members of the Canadian Institute of Steel Construction. They are Todd Collister of Supreme Steel, the bridge division; Paul Collins of Collins steel; Andy Boelee from Empire Iron Works; Jesse Kornelsen from Sierra manufacturing; Michael Hladun from Leder Steel; Jim Kanerva from Waiward Steel; Etienne Vachon from EZ-Steel; Gayle Holtz, Northern Weldarc; and Neil Kaarsemaker of the Canadian Institute of Steel Construction. Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Institute of Steel Construction promotes dialogue, collaboration, and commerce between industry and stakeholders, advancing the benefits of steel to the consulting community, builders, buyers, academia, and government. I would like to thank the institute and its members for working together with the government as we build quality infrastructure to meet the needs

of Albertans. I would now ask that our guests rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Gerry Turcotte, president and vice-chancellor of St. Mary's University in the beautiful riding of Calgary-Shaw. Gerry, who will be launching a book, *Small Things: Essays on Faith and Hope*, on April 14, joined STMU five years ago and, since becoming president, has led St. Mary's University to being one of the fastest growing universities in Alberta. He's accompanied by Debbie Osowy, St. Mary's vice-president of business and finance. I would ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Lorraine Woollard, a friend and cousin who, after retiring from a long teaching career, became part of a University of Alberta group that developed an internship program, the nonprofit board student internship, that lets students work with nonprofit community organizations. The students use the know-how gained to help other students find community-based learning opportunities and, along the way, grow as citizens. As Lorraine has said: anything we can do to open more doors to learning makes for a better society of fully engaged citizens. Lorraine, if you would stand, we would like to offer you the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm honoured to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly three experts in financial trading, including carbon markets: Andrew Hall, Claude Cyr, and Blair McDermid. Mr. McDermid and I grew up together, played hockey together. Mr. McDermid went on to represent our country on Canada's national volleyball team, and I ended up here. I think we know who wins that exchange. I'd ask the three of them, please, to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

#### Transition from Coal-fired Energy Production

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to share with you and the House some perspective from my constituency. Spruce Grove is rated as one of the best cities in Canada to raise a family, in no small part due to the hard work of our school board. However, many of my constituents are worried about the health of our children caused by air pollution from burning coal. It can affect the respiratory system, the heart, and the central nervous system. Medical research shows that these impacts on our health result in lost days of work, increased hospital visits, and chronic respiratory illness.

However, I do realize that these coal plants are a significant source of livelihood for many families in my constituency. That is

why I am proud of our government's transition plan to phase out coal emissions by 2030 to protect Alberta's consumers and taxpayers while supporting communities and workers and to ensure fairness to companies and investors.

Under the federal regulations several plants were already slated to close; however, there was no plan in place to support the affected communities through the transition. I am proud to say that this government is working with the affected communities, with indigenous people, industry, environmental groups, municipalities, and many other partners. This is the right plan for our province, and now is the right time to implement it. I am so glad that this transition will bring in heavy business opportunities in alternative energy.

I am proud to say that my constituency, especially in Spruce Grove, is already a pioneer and leader in alternative energy. For example, the neighbourhood of Greenbury is using wind turbines to power their street lights, and the city's new public works facility makes use of passive lighting, geothermal heating and cooling, and solar power to heat its water. These are just a few examples of Alberta's leadership with alternative energy.

In the long run I am happy to see how alternative energy will diversify Spruce Grove's economy. Alberta's ingenuity and entrepreneurship, that made Alberta, will continue to build our province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

#### Emergency Medical Dispatch Services in Calgary

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago I asked the minister why she would rob the people of Calgary and surrounding areas of their reliable, locally managed emergency medical services. I compared it to Edmonton's dispatch model, where code red events outnumbered Calgary's by over 2,000 per cent. I and a few other MLAs toured the facility and heard directly from the commander that Calgary has the best dispatch model in place. The government has promised time and again that AHS takeovers come with all sorts of benefits and successes. We can plainly see that it doesn't play out like that in reality.

Right now the city of Calgary's integrated dispatch model is internationally considered as best practice. In fact, it's the only dispatch model in Alberta to be an accredited emergency medical dispatch. Instead, this government would like to use subpar dispatch models. They would like to force the city to stop using the best practice in the world and risk the lives of people in and around Calgary.

If transitioned to the minister's suggested substandard model, response time could increase due to the additional call transfer. It would hamper integration with the Calgary fire department, who are often the first on the scene at a medical emergency, and complicates situations requiring a multi-agency response. It could result in confusion and potential loss of critical information as callers are required to repeat their details.

The city of Calgary strongly believes that EMS call evaluation and dispatch services should remain with the city, not AHS. They're willing to negotiate dispatch costs so that front-line workers . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-North West.

#### LGBTQ Seniors

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the most important roles that a government plays is to take care of our seniors, making sure that our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents have the

support and respect they deserve. An often overlooked element of this area is making sure that LGBTQ seniors are able to live their lives openly, honestly, and without fear of discrimination. A sad trend that we're seeing is LGBTQ seniors feeling ostracized and struggling to find supports simply because of who they are and whom they love. Ensuring that support programs for our seniors are inclusive, supportive, and affirming is a must.

As a society we've made tremendous strides towards equality and acceptance, but I am saddened, Mr. Speaker, that there still exists elements of homophobia and transphobia in an area that is necessary for the safety and security of our seniors. No one should have to lie about who they are just to get the support and respect they need. No one should be made to feel shame about who they are. It is 2016 and any type of discrimination should not be tolerated in any form.

Mr. Speaker, getting this issue right is key. Yesterday we began a public conversation with Albertans when we launched Engage. We want and need the feedback of Albertans on this issue. What can we as legislators do better? How can we make sure all Albertans are treated with equality and respect from childhood to old age? Our caucus doesn't have all the answers. The Progressive Conservatives will walk the walk and make sure each voice that reaches us is listened to and what they say is treated with the respect they deserve.

The topic of this member's statement came from a concerned Albertan. We are glad she engaged us, and we look forward to more conversations like this one in the future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

#### Northern Alberta Travel Issues

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've spoken previously in this House about the resourcefulness and resilience of the people of my constituency of Peace River. Today I'd like to talk a little bit about the unique challenge we face, transportation and getting around. Everything we do in the north involves incredibly long distances, whether it's a 16-hour round trip to Edmonton for medical treatment or a four-hour drive to shop at the nearest Walmart. A woman in labour can face a 90-minute commute to the nearest hospital. We think nothing of driving 600 kilometres to enjoy a concert or an evening out. Every aspect of our lives involves hours of travel.

We have only two highways coming north, one east-west corridor that depends on a ferry in summer and an ice bridge in winter. Road conditions are always unpredictable and sometimes downright scary. First Nations communities are connected primarily by gravel road, with sections that can be impassable when it rains.

If you don't own a vehicle or hold a driver's licence, transportation challenges are even greater. At present we have just one daily bus through the region, and there are very few scheduled flights between Edmonton and Peace River or High Level and none within the constituency itself. Of course, flights are costly and out of the reach of most.

A related challenge is gasoline price. At any given time we pay on average 20 cents more per litre than the rest of the province. Not only does that impact our personal travel costs, but the increased costs of transporting goods and services are passed on to us in higher prices for everything.

We love the north, however, and as northerners we find ways to manage even during difficult economic times. I'm confident that our government is trying to understand the unique challenges we face in the north and is willing to listen to our concerns. I want my

constituents to know that I've been advocating tirelessly to ensure that these challenges will always be considered when legislation and regulations are being developed, and I will continue to speak up on their behalf.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

#### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### Interprovincial Trade

**Mr. Jean:** Wildrose believes that Alberta must continue to be a province that fosters free trade across Canada. It grows our economy, it creates jobs, and it saves consumers money. One study estimates that internal trade barriers in Canada cost the average household nearly \$7,500 per year. We know the NDP has a long history of ideologically opposing any free trade despite the obvious benefits it has for working Albertans. My question is simple. Will the Premier advocate for or against breaking down interprovincial trade barriers?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. As the minister responsible for trade I can tell this House that I've engaged in meetings with my counterparts across the country as we are in the midst of negotiating or renegotiating a new agreement on internal trade.

**Mr. Jean:** I'd like to congratulate Brad Wall and the conservative Saskatchewan Party for a convincing victory in their election last night. In fact, last May Premier Wall made a plea for Alberta to stay part of the New West Partnership, an agreement that benefits our economy and saves consumers money. By the end of next month with a change in government, we're hoping, Manitoba could be asking for membership. Will the Premier commit to working with Premiers Wall and Clark to expand partnership in the New West agreement to other provinces that may be interested in removing trade barriers that hurt our economies?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We certainly do congratulate Premier Wall on his win last night in Saskatchewan. It's been only 11 months since we won power here in Alberta, so the feeling is quite familiar, and we understand and share in that celebration.

Notwithstanding Mr. Wall's desire to have his family reunited in his home province, we welcome people from across the world, including 7,500 more people who came to Alberta just in the last quarter, and we continue to work with our partners, including other provincial leaders, right across Canada.

**Mr. Jean:** This Premier has been silent when it comes to the trans-Pacific partnership trade agreement even though we know it would increase access to new markets for all Albertans. They've been cagey on the New West Partnership even though it removes barriers for trade between provinces in Canada. Meanwhile this government is set to further reduce competitiveness for Alberta businesses with a \$3 billion, uncampaigned-for carbon tax. Why is the Premier creating barriers that prevent economic growth instead of working aggressively with provincial partners to tear down these barriers?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of our climate leadership plan. We stood on stage with leaders from industry all

across Alberta who said that this is going to help us move forward in building the pipelines that we so desperately need, that members opposite should be advocating for instead of poking people in the eye on Twitter. That certainly isn't in the best interests of Albertans. We're going to continue to move forward on economic diversification, including our climate leadership plan, to make sure that we can sell our current products and diversify the economy, something I know they have no interest in doing, but Albertans do, and we're going to do it.

**The Speaker:** Second major question.

### Energy Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Here in Alberta people are worried. Late yesterday Sanjel sold off its energy assets in North America while seeking protection from its creditors. But the NDP remains committed to an economic agenda that directly hits our oil and gas sector: a \$3 billion, uncampaigned-for carbon tax; much higher power bills for all Albertans; and higher business and personal taxes. While our neighbours to the west and the east are trying to attract business investment, the NDP is simply pushing it away. When will this Premier start standing up for our oil and gas sector instead of working against it?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that the hysterical language that's coming from the other side of the aisle certainly isn't conducive to the work that we're doing to make sure that we continue to have jobs here in Alberta, diversifying the economy. We can't control the low price of oil, but we can get Albertans back to work by investing \$34 billion over the next five years in infrastructure projects. That certainly is not something that members in the party opposite have been advocating for unless its in their own home riding. We're actually putting people back to work. We're making sure that we have opportunities to increase access to small and medium-sized business loans. ATB is ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier accused Wildrose of spreading a campaign of intimidation and half-truths when it comes to the federal government's tanker ban. Well, here are some facts for the Premier. The Prime Minister, this Prime Minister, has instructed his minister to legislate the tanker ban, and as of February he has restated his opposition to Northern Gateway. That's a tanker ban. This pipeline could grow Canada's economy by \$300 billion. That's a lot of money. These are not half-truths or misinformation. These are the facts. Why won't this Premier even acknowledge them and stand up and fight for Albertans' interests?

**Ms Hoffman:** Certainly, the Leader of the Official Opposition continues his campaign of misinformation, half-truths. [interjections] I suggest that his research department do a little bit of reading and find out that there is no tanker ban in place, Mr. Speaker.

Having conversations with his cabinet, we're going to continue to make sure that everyone knows what our needs are. We're working full speed ahead on making sure that we have drama-free access to tidewater. As opposed to the member opposite who has nothing but wants to create more drama, we're actually working collaboratively with our partners in other provinces and the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'd just remind the loyal opposition to please keep the volume down.

**Mr. Jean:** We have a federal government that says no to tankers on the west coast. It puts up red tape and roadblocks on building new pipelines, all the while allowing foreign oil to supply Canada's east coast. The federal environment minister even said that the recent budget was a first step to halting the development of our energy industry. Why won't the Premier see these moves for what they are and stand against these direct attacks on Alberta's interests and stand up for Albertans?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, we're absolutely standing up for Albertans. There is no tanker ban off the west coast of B.C. The tanker ban isn't stopping Northern Gateway from being built. There isn't a tanker ban. It's the 209 NEB conditions for approval that Enbridge needs to meet, and the company is certainly working through those conditions. We know that shaming our provincial counterparts in B.C. and other areas of the country certainly isn't helping to get pipelines built. We're working in partnership with the federal government and actually having face-to-face meetings as opposed to putting out aggressive and disrespectful tweets and misinformation.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Organ Transplantation

**Mr. Barnes:** The most recent data shows an alarming trend in this province. Life-saving organ transplant rates have plummeted over the last decade. In 2005 our health system provided 321 transplants. A decade later we are down to 290. During that time the rest of Canada saw much better results, with some provinces surpassing us as leader. Could the minister explain to Albertans why we performed fewer transplants despite a million more people and a 60 per cent spending increase?

**Ms Hoffman:** I have to say that this is more sloppy math and poor research from the Official Opposition, Mr. Speaker. They are being hysterical on something that we are certainly moving forward in a reasonable and balanced way. We're working to make sure that people know about the ability to sign up to be organ transplant donors. Whether they're live donors wanting to donate kidneys or partial livers or whether they suffer the unfortunate incident of a fatality at an early stage, their organs can certainly be put to use in saving up to five other lives. We're doing a positive information campaign, not more hysterical fearmongering and badmouthing.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, this is life threatening, and the NDP's approach to health care seems to be as flawed as ever. New boards, new CEOs, but the same broken system. While they talk about spending more money on a wasteful Alberta health system monopoly, they can't say what results will be achieved. We already have the most expensive hospital system in Canada and cannot even be a leader in a critical area like transplants. Will the minister tell us how she intends to improve value for hard-earned tax dollars?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We certainly are a leader in a number of areas, including liver transplants, right here in Alberta. We're very proud of that. It's unfortunate that they're using misinformation and fearmongering because the point they're trying to make is an important one. We need to do a better job with organ



donation and transplant in Alberta for Albertans. I'm pleased to have met with the Canadian Transplant Association as well as Alberta Donates Life Coalition, and we are certainly making a number of positive moves in that direction. I've signed my organ donor card. I hope the members opposite have as well.

**Mr. Barnes:** Organ transplants are just the latest window into the failures of a broken system, for which Albertans are always paying the price. Despite having a system that only gets more expensive, we are now being outperformed nearly across the board. No matter how much we give it, this bureaucratic, inefficient centralized system cannot do something as essential as providing life-saving transplants. How will the minister ensure that the billions we spend on AHS actually go towards saving the lives and . . .

2:00

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** To all of the staff that are working in organ donation and transplant every day in Alberta I say thank you. They are doing life-saving work, Mr. Speaker. Almost 220,000 Albertans have already registered to be part of the organ donation registry, and we want that number to continue to grow. It's important that we have a single agency to co-ordinate organ and tissue donation, and we need to make sure that we move forward in an honest, reasonable, and balanced way rather than making inflammatory speculations and sloppy research. It just isn't becoming of this Chamber.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

### Environmental Monitoring and Reporting

**Mr. McIver:** Today the environment minister announced that the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Agency, AEMERA, will move from an independent agency to one held within the confines of the ministry. To the environment minister: will the industry still be required to pay \$50 million per year for an independent agency that no longer exists as an independent agency?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. As part of our broader review of agencies, boards, and commissions to find efficiency, our government conducted an independent review of AEMERA, where we found that it was a failed experiment in outsourcing a core responsibility of government to an arm's-length body. The financial arrangements remain the same. We are in the beginning stages of a new agreement with the federal government on the joint oil sands monitoring, and we will be investing the savings that we find back into front-line monitoring services.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, an answer, Mr. Speaker. I'm grateful for that. What we've learned here today is that the industry is still going to pay for something they're not getting. This is taxation without representation if ever I saw it. The question to the minister is: what will you name this new tax, and under what guise will you impose it?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, with all due respect, just has his facts simply wrong. There is an agreement on monitoring, that industry will pay for monitoring in the oil sands. That agreement continues, and they are grateful for the fact that we are ensuring that every single one of those dollars is being put to use properly and being reinvested back into front-line services

rather than the duplication, the administrative replication, and inefficiencies that the previous government built.

**Mr. McIver:** The only duplication I hear is the double-talk from the minister.

Today the environment minister took an external, independent committee and moved it under the minister's direct control, the same minister with a long, well-documented history of attacking the energy industry. To the Premier: who will monitor your minister?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, question period is for matters of government policy, not for personal attacks. It is not for drive-by character assassination. I will not answer the question.

### Palliative Care

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Mr. Speaker, as a health care professional I have seen how Albertans' experiences with our health care system affect them personally at all stages of their lives, and in my experience with the Good Samaritan Society I also witnessed how conversations about certain life stages come more easily for some compared to others. Given that this government has been actively consulting on the immediate issue of physician-assisted dying, to the Associate Minister of Health: can we expect more long-term conversations on palliative care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Absolutely, this government is committed to supporting a range of options for people facing decisions about end-of-life care. Palliative medicine is central to end-of-life care, and it will remain so even after June 6. As we move through our consultations, what we're hearing from Albertans is that they want a choice about how they are cared for and how they end their care and how their choices are respected as they make end-of-life decisions. During the break Minister Hoffman was able to visit hospice and palliative care facilities in Olds and Lethbridge, meeting with doctors, nurses, and other caregivers, who give so much of themselves.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given how important these services are to Albertans, again to the Associate Minister of Health: what are you doing to ensure quality of access to palliative care across our diverse province?

**Ms Payne:** We have committed to expanding benefits available to caregivers through compassionate care leave in recognition that no one should go through this process alone. We also know that the need for palliative care is there regardless of location. Palliative care is currently offered in every health zone. We are looking to increase availability, especially outside of Edmonton and Calgary. We remain dedicated to ensuring people get the right care at the right time from the right professionals.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given how critical palliative care is to the overall health and well-being of Albertans, to the same associate minister: how can we make sure that it is not ignored in the run-up to legislation on physician-assisted dying?

**Ms Payne:** Thank you for the question. It is abundantly clear to me that Albertans need access to appropriate information to support a

range of choices for end-of-life care. We have included access to and discussion about palliative care and end-of-life options as part of our newly revised continuing care standards, and these conversations must happen among all of us regardless of age or health situation. I want to make sure that any choice about end-of-life care is well informed, well supported, and well enacted so that patients and their families can experience this process with the least amount of disruption and distress.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### **Municipal Grants in Place of Taxes**

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Seniors and Housing dodged around my questions addressing this government's cut to the grants in lieu of taxes program on social housing. Her response that new anticipated provincial infrastructure funding will adequately compensate any shortfalls is unfair and overlooks the individual needs of municipalities, many of whom have no capital projects in mind. How can the minister possibly justify her ineffective response when this government's system is delinquent, leaving municipalities who have individual specific shortfalls for property taxes remaining unpaid?

**The Speaker:** The minister of seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It's very important. Our government is proud of our relationship with municipalities and the investments we are making in our communities. The previous government made a decision to cut this funding, and we haven't been able to restore every cut the previous government has made. The Official Opposition can't have it both ways. They can't support reckless cuts and also stand in this House and ask for more.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, Mr. Speaker, really, I mean, we need it reinstated. Smaller communities will be hit hardest. St. Paul faces a revenue shortfall of \$50,000; Ponoka, \$11,000; Black Diamond, \$35,000; Elk Point, \$20,000; Boyle, \$13,000; Lacombe, \$75,000; Vilna, \$11,000; and Slave Lake, \$186,000; and I could go on. Given that many municipalities have had to cut services and raise property taxes as a result, why isn't this government prepared to fulfill their financial obligations to municipalities, not all of whom have an infrastructure project slated for this year?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. With the unprecedented collapse in the global oil price, this means that we need to be fiscally responsible in our decision-making. Unfortunately, we're not in the position to approve every request for funding, but we do know that now is the time to invest in infrastructure like roads, bridges, and that's what we're doing. These investments will help keep Albertans working and support municipalities by getting shovels in the ground on important projects. It's not rocket science; you can't spend less and spend more at the same time.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. This time to the Premier. This entire infrastructure theory in place of taxes, that has just been mentioned, is faulty. Given that it doesn't correspond directly to the taxes owed from government-owned social housing facilities, what's next? Courthouses? Provincially owned land in our

municipalities and other provincial buildings? Maybe the province will stop paying its water bills. How many other key municipal funding systems will be harmed by this government trying to cover this faulty infrastructure-replaces-municipal-taxes theory?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, certainly, municipalities have needs, and we're working to make sure that those get addressed in a variety of ways. I have to say that they're very appreciative of the fact that we are continuing to move forward with MSI, that we're continuing to move forward with infrastructure investment in their communities. I understand their frustration that we can't reverse every bad PC cut, but sometimes we need to take the resources we have and figure out how best to make them work. I'm really proud of the fact that we are supporting municipalities.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-South East.

2:10

### **Energy Policies** (continued)

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not all refineries are set up to process bitumen, and due to geopolitical factors beyond our control we're lucky that the U.S. Gulf coast has the capacity to take on large quantities of Alberta bitumen. We can't miss any opportunity to strengthen our partnerships with the U.S. Gulf coast, and it's crucial that new energy infrastructure such as pipelines is championed at all levels of government. To the Energy minister. When in Houston earlier this year, it's my hope that you advocated for increased energy infrastructure development. When asked the question, did you show support for the approval of Keystone XL, and if not, what did you actually advocate for?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, when I was in Houston, actually, I talked about all our pipelines with several groups. We talked about: what are the ones that have the most chance of being successful? I did talk about Keystone XL. Unfortunately, there's an election going on right now, and there are a lot of factors beyond our control, but I still advocate for pipelines east and west in Canada right now.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given the fact that the Gulf coast refineries were originally built to refine Venezuelan heavy oil and given the fact that the relationship may change between the U.S. and Venezuela to the point where the Gulf coast refineries actually accept Venezuelan crude, to the minister: would you agree that there needs to be a strategic, long-term vision for transporting bitumen to the Gulf coast, and if not, why not? Respectfully, Minister, do you understand the urgency to get our product to new markets?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, absolutely, I understand the importance of market access. With the American election currently going on, while Keystone is a possibility, it's not the best possibility right now. Going east, going west: I'm working on both right now with my government. We're advocates with industry to see how we can get the process through as smoothly as possible because it is critical. We need pipelines.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given that Alberta has an abundance of natural gas and that, in fact, it can be key to reducing our provincial emissions footprint both in electricity generation and in subsidies for new natural gas upgrading facilities and given that our natural gas exports to the U.S. have essentially stopped because of the Marcellus shale gas production in the U.S., Minister, will your government show leadership on energy efficiency and test the

feasibility of moving provincial government fleets from gasoline to natural gas?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. You're absolutely right. Our number one customer was the U.S., and they're gone. They've got their own gas. Right now, you know, less than 1 per cent goes elsewhere, so we have to look at all kinds of possibilities. I think that with the climate change implementation plan, that will be one of the matters discussed. We also have to look at other markets or other uses such as in the petrochemical diversification plan. We have to take responsibility for making better use of our resources.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

### Rural Health Services

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last session I asked the minister about a procedural error by AHS that harmed Valleyview residents by losing a qualified doctor. Given that bureaucratic bungling like this is a result of the government's overly centralized health services, to the minister: what reassurances can you give worried rural families that centralization will not get in the way of their having local access to good doctors?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to talk about some of the engagement we've been doing throughout the province. Certainly, any time there's a break, I try to make sure that I'm out and connecting with front-line citizens throughout Alberta and people who are working in hospitals. For example, during the break I had the ability to be in Lac La Biche and announced to the community that we're investing \$3 million in making sure that we have dialysis in the hospital. It was very well received there.

**Mr. Loewen:** Considering that the minister received a letter outlining this problem in November and that I reminded her about it in December and that she finally responded in February this year – Wildrose believes in world-class health services, but I have to ask – to the minister: are the ongoing inefficiencies only within AHS, or are they systemic throughout your entire department?

**Ms Hoffman:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I have encouraged the hon. member to reach out to our office. I've taken opportunities to meet with many of his caucus members, and if he has a specific issue he'd like to address moving forward, I encourage him to take that direction or to work with his Official Opposition critic in doing so as well. I like to make myself very accessible. We believe in public health care, Mr. Speaker, and we're very proud of that.

**Mr. Loewen:** Considering that rural communities are rapidly losing health services at local hospitals and patients needing specialized procedures such as MRIs and CT scans are being sent to urban centres for these exams and given that these cities are often hours away and poorly linked to transport systems, to the minister: what is your department doing to ensure Alberta's vulnerable citizens are afforded reasonable access to the specialized health care they need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there are a lot of efforts to make sure that we get the right care in the right place, and that isn't necessarily Edmonton or Calgary. We all want

to make sure that we have access to the right specialized equipment as close to home as possible, and I have to commend the health foundations throughout Alberta who take this as a local initiative. When they think that there's a need in the community, they're stepping up, they're rolling up the sleeves, they're working in collaboration with Alberta Health Services, and they're fundraising often to make sure that they get that equipment. This is happening all across our province, and we're going to continue to work with local leaders in local communities to make sure that we continue to have a great health care system across . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Provincial Cash Management

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General found that Alberta Treasury Board and Finance does not have an integrated cash management system, that they rely on manual processes and Excel spreadsheets to manage their cash flow. Alberta is the only province in the country that does this. Can the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board explain the government's failure to resolve this problem, identified more than a decade ago?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. In response to the question, this problem had been worked on by ministry officials back in 2014. Actually, in 2014 they identified it, and the AG also picked up on it at that time. The issues that they brought forward have been accepted by the ministry. We understand the issues, we are working on them, and in the future we will have a leading banking practice because of the work that's been done by ministry officials.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that we need something more specific – it looks like the Finance directors are having an interdepartmental turf war, trying to protect their own antiquated spreadsheet systems – and given that bureaucrats broke the Financial Administration Act by opening new bank accounts without your department's involvement, will the minister knock some heads together and bring in a cash management system that will save taxpayers money?

**Mr. Ceci:** Of course, it's critical that we have a cash management system that reduces the cost to the taxpayer, reduces the amount of borrowing, and handles cash in the best way possible. That is the work that's going to be done by officials. They'll be bringing that forward, and I understand that that will lead us towards a best practice banking system in this province.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, we're looking for a concrete commitment to follow the AG's recommendations. Bureaucrats identified this problem more than a decade ago, and those bureaucrats have requested a solution that has been sitting in limbo for two years now. Officials at Public Accounts Committee even told us just this morning that they have an office pool going as to how much cash will be left in the kitty at the end of the year. Will the minister end the departmental turf war and implement the common-sense, tax-saving solutions recommended by the Auditor General?

**Mr. Ceci:** I think it's already clear that the ministry and this minister have accepted the recommendations of the AG that were made after things were identified by people in the ministry. We're working on this, I'm working on this, and we'll be bringing the results forward shortly.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-North West.

### LGBTQ Seniors

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we launched Engage, our plan to seek out feedback from Albertans. We've been getting a lot of feedback on what should be included in our document. [interjections] Yes, I'm talking about social issues. You can nap. One of these concerns was raised on the topic of LGBTQ seniors and the struggles they face. To the Minister of Housing and Seniors: what steps have you taken to make sure that the supports we have available to seniors are inclusive, compassionate, and understanding so that we can end all aspects of discrimination in our system?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The minister of seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you also to the member for the question. Of course, the seniors have built this province, and we care very much about making sure that they live in affordable, accessible housing that respects their dignity. We make sure that we are investing in facilities that have a billion dollars of deferred maintenance, unfortunately, because of choices the previous government made. I just want to assure this House that our government is very much investing in seniors and supporting them.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speak with anyone in this field and you will hear heartbreaking stories about people being forced to hide their sexual orientation and their identity in order to find a safe place to live. Again to the Minister of Seniors and Housing: given that no one should have to go back into the closet out of fear that they won't be able to find support or take care of themselves, are you prepared to follow up with concerns to make sure that these appalling situations don't happen again?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Well, of course, our government is committed to ensuring that LGBTQ people of all ages, right from school-age up to seniors, are protected. That's why we brought in amendments to the Human Rights Act recently, that's why the Minister of Education has been working so hard to ensure that all schools are implementing guidelines to protect children, and we will be working as well with the ministry of seniors to make sure that seniors who are LGBTQ are protected as well.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: given that we have seen a profound effect that support groups like GSAs and QSAs have had on improving the lives of our LGBTQ youth, will your ministry be prepared to work to develop similar support programs for LGBTQ seniors?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Well, of course, I think that our government is moving forward on a number of fronts on this issue. We're deeply committed to ensuring that all Albertans have their rights protected and that all Albertans have the right to be true to who they are. If there is a demand from the community for such

programs, we will certainly look at ways in which we can set those up and ways in which we can support them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

### Service Dogs

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have heard from my constituents, many of whom are men and women in uniform as well as veterans, about concerns regarding wait times for service dogs for persons impacted by posttraumatic stress disorder. Given the important role service dogs play in the lives of persons living with PTSD as well as those impacted by blindness, autism, epilepsy, and other mobility challenges, to the Minister of Human Services: what are you doing to address the high demand for service dogs?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government has heard the concerns from veterans' advocates and from the disability community who have called for more service dogs to be available. The service dog qualification regulation expires in 2017, and prior to that expiry we will be exploring potential changes to the regulation to increase Albertans' access to qualified service dogs under the Service Dogs Act. We are committed to upholding the safety of persons requiring service dogs while ensuring . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the update. I'm sure the persons requiring service dogs will be encouraged that our government is taking this issue seriously. Given the ministry's approach can the minister elaborate on how service dog regulations keep Albertans safe?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the important role service dogs play in the lives of those they serve, Alberta has a robust system in place to ensure a balance between service and safety. Service dogs that successfully complete a training program by an institution accredited by Assistance Dogs International have qualifications under the current regulations, and individual schools determine the type of training. There are nine accredited training institutes in Canada, only two of which are in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I have heard from some veterans who tell me that the regulations currently in place limit public access, again to the same minister: what is our government doing to ensure regulatory changes preserve Albertans' right to access public services?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, again. I want to assure the member and all Albertans that we will take a thoughtful and thorough approach as we explore potential changes to the service dog regulations. Qualified service dogs must meet high standards to protect the health and safety of the public. Under the existing regulation owners of qualified service dogs can

apply for a government identification card that can be shown when their right of access is questioned. As we explore changes, we will work to ensure that the need to uphold public safety is balanced with . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### **Tobacco Recovery Lawsuit Investigation Review**

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday Justice Iacobucci released his report into Tobaccogate. Now, I hope that the current Ethics Commissioner will accept the justice's recommendation and reinvestigate this matter. It is obvious that many senior officials in the previous government went to great effort to be less than fulsome with the previous investigation. They didn't tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but that did not stop this government from promoting them. What does the Premier want to tell Albertans who might be concerned that officials who mislead an ethics investigation were promoted by her government?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, these allegations are deeply concerning to the government, and it is for that reason that we retained a former Supreme Court justice to provide us advice on how to proceed in this matter. That report has now been issued, and we are following the recommendations outlined in that report. The Ethics Commissioner has, I understand, reviewed the letter that I sent to her, and I believe she provided a response just before we came into the House here. The government will also be reviewing its response and any other steps that may be necessary.

Thank you.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, given that this isn't the first time that officials who facilitated wrongdoing in the Redford administration were rewarded by this Premier – for example, the incoming Deputy Minister of Executive Council, the top bureaucrat in Alberta, built the sky palace and refused to come clean on how it happened – will the Premier explain to Albertans why her NDP MLAs ran interference for that deputy minister at the Public Accounts investigation of the sky palace? Why is this government covering for the wrongdoings of the previous government?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, the government is deeply concerned by any allegations of wrongdoings. When asked just yesterday about this matter and why it was that we had investigated it despite the fact that the former member involved is no longer with the government, I indicated – and I will indicate again in this House – that it is absolutely critical to us that this government be transparent and accountable to the public and that the public be able to have full confidence. That's why we have received the report, and that's why we're moving forward with the recommendations.

Thank you.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, given that Justice Iacobucci made it clear that he did not have the investigative tools to look for criminal wrongdoings and given that the documents uncovered suggest that a minister, senior bureaucrats, and political staff may have conspired to rig what may be the largest government contract in Alberta history, will the Premier join the Wildrose in calling in the

RCMP so that we can clear the air, or will this government cover up the wrongdoings of the previous government?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, this government has no intention of covering up for the previous government. That is why we brought in former Supreme Court Justice Iacobucci to investigate this matter. He has made his recommendations, and we are proceeding on the basis of those recommendations. With respect to further steps that the government can take, we are still reviewing the report, and we will determine whether those wrongdoings are criminal wrongdoings. Not all wrongdoings are criminal wrongdoings, so we will determine whether that is . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### **Tourism Strategy**

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating the new Minister of Culture and Tourism and joining with all Albertans that celebrate the significance of his recent appointment. I suspect that the minister would prefer to build a legacy not just on the ground that he's broken but on the future paths that he will tread. In that light, to the minister. Tourism industry stakeholders were dismayed when your predecessor's 2015 ministry business plan made no reference to the Alberta tourism framework, the first industry-led, multiyear tourism strategy ever developed in Canada. Will you commit to including it in your business plan for Budget 2016?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. I have been briefed on a variety of issues. Like the member has stated, tourism showcases this province's vibrant communities and our unique destinations. Of course, there are many things that we can do. I will be taking all the information and making the best decisions going forward.

Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, the best information is in that strategy.

Given that Alberta's tourism levy was established in 2005 and given that it is the model that many other provinces have adopted for funding their tourism promotion efforts and given that the full amount generated was historically allocated to tourism promotion and given that this past fall's budget marked the first time that funds from the levy were siphoned off into general revenue, to the same minister: what conversations have you had with your colleague the Finance minister to end this parasitic and predatory practice?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Absolutely, we are going to support the industry. We're going to do the best that we can. But we also understand that we have to support the things that Albertans care about, health care and education. We're going to continue with that focus, and we're going to continue also promoting tourism in this province.

Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Minister, if you want to fund health care and education, let me tell you something. Every tourism levy dollar that escapes the insatiable clutches of your colleague the Finance

minister and actually goes to promote tourism in this province gives the Alberta treasury some \$19 to pay for those essential services.

Will the Minister of Culture and Tourism tell this Assembly what the projected amount of the levy is for this fiscal year, and will he take the action proposed in our Engage document and commit to allocating the full amount of the levy to the promotion and marketing of our province as a . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I know you're a very veteran and experienced member of the House. I want to urge you, hon. member, to put your comments through the Speaker next time. I'm sure that it was an oversight on your part.

The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Of course, we're going to take all the information that we have and make decisions that are going to support the things that are important to the people of this province, health care and education. Those are the things that Albertans tell us are important. We also understand that tourism is an absolutely fantastic way to diversify this economy and to support the services that this government is going to support. Again, we will take the information and make the best decisions possible.

Thank you.

#### Wildfire Season Preparation

**Mr. Westhead:** Mr. Speaker, last year our province faced one of the most challenging wildfire seasons in its history. Communities in our forested areas saw the third-highest number of wildfires ever, with an area more than twice the size of the 25-year average being burned. The threat of forest fires is a constant concern for the residents of Banff-Cochrane. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what is this government doing to ensure that Alberta's forests and our forestry communities are being protected from the very serious threat of wildfires?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the Member for Banff-Cochrane for the question. Our government is committed to protecting people and property from the threat of wildfire. To properly prepare for this wildfire season, on February 16 I authorized the acceleration of preparation activities by moving the start of wildfire season to March 1. This helps our province prepare in two ways. First, it helps by monitoring burning activities so that we can manage and mitigate risk by requiring stakeholders to obtain a no-charge fire permit one month earlier in order for the department to proactively and co-operatively address burning projects. Second, it ensures that firefighting preparations and training are well under way and that we'll get into the middle of spring by facilitating early recruitment, retention, training, and mobilization.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this has again been a very dry spring for most areas of our province and given that this year's fire season will likely be intense as well, to the same minister: what are you doing to prepare Alberta's forest communities for wildfire threats, to make them safer and more resilient in the face of these natural disasters?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, our province has learned some very tough lessons about wildfires and the risks associated with them. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, a fact well known to Alberta's forest communities. One of the ways our government is helping to mitigate the risk of wildfire to Alberta's forest communities is by working to implement the recommendations coming out of the Flat Top Complex. More than this, my department is working hard with communities and property owners in Alberta's green areas to implement FireSmart initiatives such as vegetation management to remove fuel for wildfires to spread, improved interagency co-operation for better responses, and better emergency planning in the case of evacuations.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that your department estimates that half of last year's fires were human-caused and given that your department spent over half a billion dollars fighting wildfires last year, what are you and your department doing to stop or minimize human-induced behaviours that lead to wildfires, that threaten communities like those in Banff-Cochrane?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many things that we can do to minimize human-induced activities. For example, I've taken the opportunity to order a review of the Forest and Prairie Protection Act and regulations, parts I and II. Public engagement is a key step in the amendment and reform of legislation. We're asking Albertans if fines for burning fires without due care should be increased. We're also asking Albertans if they think the rules on debris disposal need to be changed to better protect our forests.

Additionally, we also support fire chiefs' and municipalities' efforts to provide information on active fire bans in the province. I encourage everyone to visit [albertafirebans.ca](http://albertafirebans.ca)

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### Maintenance Enforcement Program Privacy Review

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Ministry of Justice reported a breach of as many as 60 highly sensitive files. The Justice department didn't even know its employee was snooping in personal records until the Edmonton Police Service discovered it in an unrelated investigation. To the Minister of Justice: are there currently protections in place to prevent breaches like this? If not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, I was extremely disappointed to learn that an employee of the maintenance enforcement program had been involved in these alleged activities. Currently the maintenance enforcement database is accessible only by log-in, so we're able to track where our employees touch. All employees are subject to a criminal record check. Obviously, as a result of this incident, we will be reviewing what policies and procedures we have in place to make sure that we can do better in the future.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these breached files may contain highly sensitive information, including Albertans' banking records, addresses, and social insurance numbers, and given that the information pertains directly to families navigating the justice system, are single parents now at risk of fraud due to the actions of a Justice department employee?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, the reason that we were so disappointed to learn of this particular incident was because this employee did have access to information of vulnerable Albertans and Albertans who are subject to the justice system. We have begun reviewing our files. Edmonton police are contacting all affected people. The most important thing, I think, to note is that the employee in question no longer has access to this database or any information on file.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this department is clearly vulnerable to privacy breaches and given that this breach could be just the tip of the iceberg and that the Department of Justice seems unable to live up to the standards of Alberta's privacy laws, again to the minister. Yes or no: is the minister looking for any further breaches of privacy that may have gone unnoticed in her department?

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, we're always deeply concerned with the privacy of Albertans, so we are always looking to ensure that no further privacy breaches occur.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, point of order.

2:40

**The Speaker:** Yes.

#### Point of Order

#### Oral Question Period Practices

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, just as a matter of procedure and a matter of past practice in the House, typically right around that 50-minute mark, which is sort of that magic time period, if the questioner starts his first question or is recognized by the chair any time before that 50-minute mark, that full question, whatever question number it is, is allowed to start, and then we finish all three series of questions. Since, clearly, we were a good 20 seconds short of the 50-minute mark, I would encourage you to move on to the next questioner.

**The Speaker:** Your encouragement is very much appreciated. I believe that most of the House and, certainly, the table officers agree with you. It was an attempt to move the process along. It was closer to 10 seconds.

Nonetheless, the next question: I believe we are at Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Is that right?

#### Infrastructure Capital Funding

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta industry is asking for government co-operation to allow them to fund and build

infrastructure to support economic diversification. One major push by industry has been for a toll bridge on highway 15 over the North Saskatchewan River that would allow for a wide heavy-load corridor, which would improve efficiency and safety on roads in the area. Enabling industry to build a new toll bridge would create hundreds of jobs for Albertans at a time when we need them the most and when material costs are low. To the Minister of Transportation: when will this government release a plan to co-operate with industry to build . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the position of the government is that toll roads are not on our agenda.

But I should point out that in the Progressive Conservative's document they call for a restoration of funding of the strategic transportation infrastructure program, or STIP, which they cut three years ago, and we reinstated \$100 million for that over five years in the last budget. Mr. Speaker, if they want to engage, they should engage by reading the budget.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Mr. Speaker, given that capital bonds enable community members to vote with their wallets to get local infrastructure built and given that larger projects attract more attention and money and given that community members can invest directly in their future to get results sooner and earn a financial return on investment which remains in Alberta, to the Minister of Transportation: why has his government not chosen to allow Albertans to invest to build our infrastructure but, instead, has chosen to issue \$2.1 billion in bonds with international investors between January 1 . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. Our government increased infrastructure spending in the capital plan during the last budget by 15 per cent over the previous government's amount, and that is going into a number of programs that will support transportation, municipal infrastructure, or transit across the province. This government is doing far more to invest in infrastructure, badly needed in this province after years of Conservative mismanagement.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Mr. Speaker, it's too bad they haven't announced one new project since they've been there a year.

Given that Alberta has successfully spent billions on infrastructure and ring roads and the largest multiple school build in history using P3s, which have proven to be reliable long-term models for infrastructure building, and given that ministers opposite have admitted that on school builds alone P3s will be able to deliver schools hundreds of millions of dollars under budget while being profitable to investors, when will this government enable Albertans to finance . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, well, I can name one single project that this government has approved that the previous government tried to cancel, and that is the Calgary cancer centre, a major project to provide good cancer care, badly needed by the people of Alberta after being jerked around by the Progressive Conservative government for 10 years.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, might I say now that in 15 seconds we shall continue with Members' Statements.

## Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

### Safe Harbour Society

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a unique organization in my constituency of Red Deer-North called the Safe Harbour society. The Harbour, as it is warmly known, is a prime example of the importance of centralized wraparound services gauged to attend to the complex needs of Red Deer's most vulnerable population.

The Safe Harbor society is a result of an amalgamation of three previous nonprofit agencies and currently operates addiction services, transitional housing, and an emergency shelter. This combination of services allows guests to have access to supports along the health and housing continuum while only telling their story once. Executive director Captain Kath Hoffman and director of operations First Mate Trish Haggarty-Roberts are the proud leaders at the Harbour's helm. They recognize the efficiency of an integrated approach to providing services for a rising number of vulnerable central Albertans.

The Harbour recognized long ago that it is difficult to address addiction issues when basic needs for food and shelter are not met. The continuum of health and housing supports offered by the Harbour addresses the relationship between addiction and homelessness in a collaborative and dynamic approach. Indigenous supports offered by Safe Harbour recognize the diversity of our vulnerable population and acknowledge the links between suffering and disconnection from one's family and culture.

I am proud that such a unique organization exists and belongs to my riding of Red Deer-North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

### Megan Wolitski

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In honour and loving memory of 11-year-old Megan Wolitski I would like to remind this Assembly of a horrific accident that took place in my riding on October 25, 2012. That day, as children in a grade 6 classroom at l'école Racette had barely settled into their desks, a vehicle came barrelling through the wall of the school into their classroom, pinning three children underneath and traumatizing the rest of the classroom and the entire community. The following day Megan Wolitski passed away from her injuries. One of her classmates was left with a lifelong debilitating injury, and another suffered trauma that she will struggle with for years to come.

The sad fact is that the accident was completely avoidable. The driver of the vehicle had a medical condition and wasn't supposed to be behind the wheel. When a judge sentenced the driver to two years in prison and a lifetime driving ban for criminal negligence, he made it clear that it was not punishment for the medical condition but for driving when he shouldn't have been. His punishment won't protect other Albertans from those who drive despite having medical conditions that make it unsafe.

Megan's grandmother asked me to see to it that Alberta enacts legislation to protect all Albertans from her granddaughter's fate, legislation similar to what is already in place under section 283 of the Saskatchewan Traffic Safety Act and section 230 of the British Columbia Motor Vehicle Act. Both of these provinces require qualified medical practitioners to flag for authorities any patients suffering from medical conditions that make it dangerous to the

public for them to operate a vehicle. They also require them to tell authorities if they have reason to believe that a patient continues to drive after being warned that it would be dangerous to the public and to themselves. Mr. Speaker, current voluntary provisions in the Alberta Traffic Safety Act need to be made mandatory so that our roads are safer and no more Alberta families suffer from this gap in our laws on traffic safety.

My heart goes out to the family of Megan Wolitski, to all of her classmates, who will never be able to forget that day that changed their lives forever. Thank you.

2:50

## Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to table this document and the requisite number of copies signed by approximately 11,000 Albertans in support of Bill 201, the Election Recall Act. While Bill 201 was defeated in this House yesterday, democracy has a way of continuing to evolve and progress, and these 11,000 Albertans will now be on record as supporting a vision of a more democratic Legislature.

## Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office, responses to questions raised by Dr. Swann, hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View; Dr. Starke, hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster; and Mr. Loewen, hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, on November 18, 2015, during the Ministry of Environment and Parks 2015-16 main estimates debate.

On behalf of the hon. Ms Gray, Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal, pursuant to the Government Organization Act the Alberta Association for Safety Partnerships' Radiation Health Administration Organization annual report for the period September 1, 2014, to August 31, 2015, with attached financial statements for the year ended August 31, 2015; the Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors' Radiation Health Administrative Organization annual report for the year ended June 30, 2015, with attached financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2015; the Alberta Dental Association and College's 2014 Radiation Health and Safety Program annual report dated January 1, 2014, to December 31, 2014, with attached financial statements dated December 31, 2014; the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association's Radiation Protection Program 2014 annual report, November 1, 2013, to October 31, 2014, with attached financial statements dated December 8, 2014; the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta's Radiation Health Administrative Organization annual report for the period January 1, 2014, to December 31, 2014, with attached statement of financial position for the year ended December 31, 2014; the University of Alberta's Authorized Radiation Health Administration Organization annual report 2014-2015; the University of Calgary's Radiation Health Administration Organization annual report for the period April 1, 2014, to March 31, 2015.

**The Speaker:** I believe that members may have missed my eye earlier. Banff-Cochrane, we could go back to Tabling Returns and Reports. Is that your intention? We need unanimous consent to do that.

[Unanimous consent granted]



## Tabling Returns and Reports

(continued)

**Mr. Westhead:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of a document outlining the support that ATB is providing to Albertans during this economic downturn. The document outlines that ATB is helping business owners as a result of the \$1.5 billion expansion that our government recently provided.

**The Speaker:** Next tabling. The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've been looking forward to this opportunity to table the five requisite copies of the document Engage: Connecting with Albertans. It's something that the government side has asked for. So has the Wildrose, and others have. Albertans are very excited about this, as are we. On behalf of Progressive Conservatives I simply turn to page 3 for one sentence to explain. "Engage is intended to start a conversation with Albertans to build a better future for our province. It is our intent that through conversation, we will encourage Albertans to get involved, and identify new ways of doing things." You can get one of these copies or go to [abpcmla.ca/engage](http://abpcmla.ca/engage).

It has also been the request of a couple of members on both sides of the House for examples of cost savings. Again, this was ready more than 24 hours ago on behalf of Progressive Conservatives in Engage: Connecting with Albertans. They wondered how we would come up with all these savings. Again one sentence: "These four examples alone total savings of over \$1.5 billion. We are confident that the Alberta Public Service can find even more."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an article written in the *New York Times* recently, appearing on March 20, that indicates that JPMorgan Chase

would no longer finance new coal-fired power plants in the United States or other wealthy nations. The retreat follows similar announcements by Bank of America, Citigroup, and Morgan Stanley that they are, [in fact] in one way or another, backing away from coal.

Thank you.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 4

#### An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services

[Adjourned debate March 17: Mr. Westhead]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I yield the rest of my time.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services: this is important essential services legislation. It will modernize Alberta's labour laws as the current legislation is almost 30 years old, and it will bring legislation in Alberta in line with the Supreme Court of

Canada ruling regarding essential services legislation in Saskatchewan stating that the right to strike is a fundamental right and integral to the bargaining process. It's needed because bans on public-sector strikes within the Public Service Employee Relations Act and the Labour Relations Code are unconstitutional and violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Compulsory arbitration, which is provided within the legislation in place, is not sufficient to encourage employers, government, and unions to work together within a meaningful collective bargaining process. This legislation will revert responsibility for reaching a settlement to employers and unions, and this will minimize the use of compulsory arbitration. It must be a meaningful bargaining process, not each side attempting to force others or interfering with the rights of public-sector employees or employers.

An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services has been arrived at through extensive consultation with Alberta public-sector employers and unions to ensure an effective, made-in-Alberta approach that is fair to employers, unions, and the people of Alberta. This consultation began in September of 2015 between those employers and unions, and the public was also invited to provide input by way of an online survey. In this way, even in the event of labour disputes or strike action the people of Alberta are ensured continued access to essential services through this legislation.

3:00

Creating an essential services agreement, which determines which services must be maintained during a work stoppage: it must be written between an employer and a union before any negotiations can take place for new contracts. In this way if there is a labour dispute, which has been ruled a fundamental right by the Supreme Court of Canada, our people in our communities are always taken care of. Albertans deserve the best health care, with the right provider at the right time in the right place. This legislation will help ensure that this priority will remain at the forefront for all Albertans.

The Alberta Union of Provincial Employees president, Guy Smith, said that the legislation is a fundamental shift toward levelling the playing field in labour negotiations, which is sorely needed. As a unionized employee and a union shop steward I have sat at the bargaining table. Though it is expected for both parties to arrive at the table in good faith, if things go awry when there is not an equal balance of power, it makes fair negotiation unlikely. By supporting all parties at the bargaining table, an agreement that is equitable for the employer, worker, and public is more likely to occur. For a nurse and a caregiver the entire focus is on your patients and how to care for them in the best way possible. This legislation allows skilled, competent employees to continue those essential day-to-day operations if a labour dispute is in progress.

For many of these essential services providers, the work hours encompass the entire 24 hours in a day. This means shift work, and being on call is a normal practice. I understand the toll it takes on your family to work a split shift, a night shift, the demands on my partner to ensure that the obligations of our family were always met.

To support the work of this government in creating an equal and fair bargaining process supports all of our most important front-line service industries and their workers. Labour negotiations go beyond compensation. Many times that is the least contentious hurdle. Hours of work, working conditions, health benefits: these and many other things are also major factors to be negotiated at the bargaining table.

These negotiations affect more than just employees; they affect families. Many times here in Alberta the stable income provided by working in a front-line service is the sole income in a household, or

it supplements an income affected by the boom-and-bust economy that many Albertan families face. How are we to impress upon the next generation that these careers are valued by our communities if the compensation to perform these oftentimes dangerous or demanding tasks is diminished by an unfair bargaining process? The people that choose to perform these roles are in service to their communities, and the contributions they make go beyond their salary to the true meaning of community. An investment in our front-line service is an investment in those communities.

People employed in critical service areas such as police officers and municipal firefighters will continue to be prevented from striking due to the integral services they provide our communities. This legislation doesn't apply to teachers within Alberta either as they already have the right to strike within their bargaining agreements. It will only affect government employees; those employed by agencies, boards, and commissions; nonacademic staff at postsecondary institutions; employees of AHS; and employees at other approved hospitals.

I urge everyone in this House to support this bill for our families and our communities, that support us every day.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions or observations under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, I would call on the Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to stand in this House and speak to this bill. The intent of the bill: I absolutely do support it. It's encouraging, and we've heard from the hon. member that respect is important in the workplace. Being an advanced care paramedic for over a decade, working for Alberta Health Services in the city of Calgary, being the president of CUPE 3421, president of the Calgary paramedics, I've also sat at the table. You know, I encourage the government on this bill, absolutely, and, again, those departments and agencies to collaborate because it is time that there is a paradigm shift in terms of government and public service, how they negotiate, and creating a new path forward.

To speak to the critical services, I hope that as we move forward in further readings and into Committee of the Whole, the government would perhaps take a look at one thing. One issue that I have with this, again, being a paramedic – you referenced police officers and firefighters. Paramedics work alongside that very group, and I know, listening to the stories of the strike in 1990, that if you ask any physician, any nurse, most of the collaborative health care, who do amazing work, they say: "Bring the paramedics back. They're crucial. They're vital." I can attest to that. They're one arm of that collaborative practice front that makes, I think, our health services one of the best because of the quality people and the skills that they have. So to take that front-line service off the street, I think, is a danger to Albertans.

I think it also, unfortunately, messages to that group, with the day-to-day work that they do – again, still a registered paramedic in this province, I am. It seems to diminish their role. They have one foot in public safety, and they have one foot in health care. I know that in discussions with the hon. Health minister there is a role to expand the practice of paramedics to work in the community to help fix some of those things. I go back to what we launched in Engage, just for a minute: if people would take the politics out of it, take the hyperbole out of it, and listen to that one particular cost savings when it comes to health care.

We heard that there's only 10 per cent of what's going to the emergency department – and my friends in allied health care know that, that there's a lot of people that make it to the emergency

department that don't need to be there. Paramedics can play a vital role, and I know the minister is working on this, and I applaud your government and the work that she's doing around this, around more collaborative practice, allowing nurses, advanced care, critical care paramedics, even basic life-support paramedics, our EMTs, you know, to do the work they were intended to do, to do the work they were trained to do, which will create alternate destinations. We're talking about saving billions of dollars, creating efficiencies, and paramedics and emergency medical services will have a crucial role in that, being a lot of the time the first door, the first window for many people to enter our health care system.

I hope, looking forward as you discuss in your caucus, that paramedics will be included as part of that group with police and firemen as an essential service because I would hate to see – one of the odd things, too, is that we know that there's the direct delivery that Alberta Health Services provides, so the city of Edmonton, Edmonton metro and Calgary metro EMS services. What's odd is that they would be allowed to strike under this law, but a private operator that owns a private ambulance service is considered essential. The messages are mixed there, so my hope is that you'd take a look at it, include paramedics and emergency medical services under that line. In fact, I think my colleague from the Liberal Party would probably agree as we have many friends on that front-line staff.

Thank you for your time, and I hope that we can work on that.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions to the hon. member under 29(2)(a)?

**Dr. Swann:** I wonder if the hon. member could expand on the distinction between the public and the private ambulance services and what he's, I think, alluding to in terms of their capacity to strike. That's news to me.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Fraser:** Yeah. The private care is a contract that goes through Alberta Health Services, so it's an outside contract. Then there's direct delivery, directly owned and operated and managed by Alberta Health Services. That's what we call direct delivery. That's the majority in the province, but there are private operators. Again, maybe it's worded in the legislation – and I may have to correct myself – that anybody who's contracted to do a service falls under this legislation as an essential service. That's what I'm guessing. But those seem to be the highlighted pieces from the members on the street and some of our dear colleagues and friends that you know. You know, there just seems to be a mismatch there in terms of: why are paramedics in direct delivery not considered essential, and why are private contractors considered essential?

3:10

**The Speaker:** Any other question for the hon. member under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. As has been stated, this bill will modernize two key Alberta labour laws to reflect rulings by the Supreme Court of Canada and the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta.

The courts have been clear. It's every Canadian's right to join a union and, not only that, also to collectively bargain, which includes that right to strike. Now, I stress this because, as many of the

members from my own caucus may know – and I'll remind the other members of the other parties – I used to be the president of the Non-Academic Staff Association at the University of Alberta. Under PSERA we were told that we could not strike. This kind of put things in a difficult spot for us because it was already like the system was purposely set up so that it would be an antagonistic relationship between the union, the staff at the University of Alberta; and the employer, the University of Alberta. Bill 4 will ensure that labour legislation is fair to unionized employees and employers while ensuring essential public services are maintained for all Albertans.

I'm really proud that this is a made-in-Alberta solution that addresses our province's unique needs. It's important for all of us to consider that Alberta's public-sector labour legislation is almost 30 years old and needs to be modernized to protect public-sector employees' Charter rights. Public-sector groups have been forbidden from striking since the 1970s in Alberta, which has pushed the parties into arbitration to reach settlements. The legislation covers about 150,000 unionized workers under 77 collective agreements, including most health workers, government employees, and nonacademic staff at postsecondary institutions.

A move to an essential services model for key components of Alberta's public sector would serve to bring Alberta's labour relations legislation more in line with the Supreme Court's position on the right to strike. The proposed legislation, Bill 4, was carefully developed based on government's extensive consultation with Alberta's public-sector employers and unions regarding an essential services approach.

I want to stress that because, you know, often our friends from the opposition say that we don't consult or we don't consult extensively enough, but here's a perfect example of how we have. We are listening, and we have been doing our homework and making sure that we're hearing the opinions of the people that we are here to legislate on behalf of. Beginning on September 16, 2015, the government started consultations on essential services legislation. Face-to-face meetings were held with key stakeholders, and the public was invited to provide input in an online survey as well. The well-respected labour lawyer Andrew Sims, Queen's Counsel, was contracted to lead the consultations and provide a report with advice to the government.

In fact, this legislation places greater responsibility for reaching a settlement in the hands of employers and unions, minimizing the use of compulsory arbitration. I couldn't agree more with the member from the Conservative Party across who stressed collaboration. I couldn't agree more. It's completely time for a paradigm shift. We need to move away from this antagonistic model that we currently have and work towards finding solutions together. I would say to our friends across the way, the opposition, that this is truly the relationship that we'd like to have with you. Let's work together to find solutions, right? Unfortunately, to date I don't think we've had that opportunity with what's coming from across the way, which to me is more rhetoric than fact.

Determining what essential services will be maintained during work stoppages will be decided by public-sector employers and unions by working together. If they can't reach an agreement, a neutral third party will resolve the dispute quickly and efficiently.

So it is without reservation that I support this bill, and I strongly suggest to all the members of this House that they support it as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments for the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie under 29(2)(a)? I would recognize the minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. member could share with us some of the steps in collective bargaining. Given that the SFL case was decided by the Supreme Court on the basic right to free association and therefore of collective bargaining, could the member talk a little bit about how collective bargaining is, in fact, impaired when there is no right-to-strike provision?

**Loyola:** Thank you to the minister for the question. Really, I'd like to highlight this by sharing a little anecdote. Under the previous government they had gone to the University of Alberta and basically were pressuring the University of Alberta because they were cutting funding to postsecondary education. The University of Alberta, our employer when I was still under the Non-Academic Staff Association, found itself in the peculiar predicament where it actually even had to ask us to open our own collective agreement.

Now, at the time – and this just goes to show how important I believe democracy is – being president, for me what was most important was that we go to the membership of the union and ask them if we should open up our collective agreement or not. I'm proud of the fact that out of the more than 5,000 members of the Non-Academic Staff Association more than 630 members showed up at a lunchtime meeting to have this discussion about opening up our collective agreement or not. It was at that meeting, after presenting the case of how the previous government was really locking the hands of the University of Alberta administration because the underfunding to postsecondary education was causing this question to even be answered – but what was really important is that of the members of the union that showed up to that meeting, more than 600, 639 voted to not open the collective agreement, and two members voted to open it. Just to show that that's the way the democratic process works inside of a union.

When we go to the collective bargaining process, it's so important to have the voice of the union membership be a part of that process. To me, unions are a perfect example of the democratic principles that we should try to further within our own society. Have the members themselves, have the citizens themselves be a part of the process. This is what has happened with the consultation process. Stakeholders, employers as well as employees have been consulted on the process.

Again, to all the members of this House: I highly encourage you to vote in favour of this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A brief question on Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. I'm just curious to know if the member would provide any comments on whether or not there are any portions of the legislation that are outside of the scope of the Supreme Court ruling.

3:20

**Loyola:** To be quite honest, I am not one hundred per cent sure, but I will reread the bill, and I'll get back to you personally, Opposition House Leader.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. If this bill is just to implement a Supreme Court ruling governing essential services, then I will support it. I am cautiously optimistic about the bill. However, in labour relations

the proof is in the pudding. Any decision on what constitutes an essential service needs to be reviewed carefully to ensure that those in essential services are treated fairly but also that vital provincial responsibilities that we are obligated to provide are carried out, and as with any bill concerning government negotiations with the public sector, we need to ensure that it also respects taxpayers.

As with any important piece of legislation, our discussions with stakeholders and constituents as well as analysis and debate in the Assembly will inform the position of this caucus. We have already identified some points in this bill that I am seeking clarity on. These include ensuring that key officials in charge of the process to certify essential services are Albertans with an understanding of our situation and circumstances and ensuring that the restriction on replacement workers is negotiated, not legislated, on a case-by-case basis. It is my hope that we can work with the government to pass reasoned, measured, and thoughtful amendments, should they be necessary, to ensure a fair process for all Albertans impacted by this legislation.

The Wildrose Official Opposition understands the importance of meeting the requirements of the Supreme Court ruling by the required date. On principle we support the notion of ensuring that nonessential workers are not lumped in with essential ones, but we look forward to hearing the government's response to our several questions on the details of this bill. We are particularly interested in its process to define essential services, its rationale surrounding the commissioner's powers, and the government's ability to make regulatory amendments to the act once passed. We must be extremely careful, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the government has a fair and open process for defining what services are deemed to be essential and thus prevented from striking. Defining essential services is a delicate matter which requires a balanced and measured approach.

It may be commonly assumed that designating a service as essential decreases the number of strikes. In terms of full strikes this is true. However, a study by the C.D. Howe Institute showed that between 1977 and 2008 there were over 600 partial strikes by services declared to be essential. Moreover, it may also be assumed by some that being an essential service and thus barred from striking would mean less bargaining power and lower salaries. This is false. The right to strike does not mean higher salaries. It is, in fact, generally the opposite. The same C.D. Howe study showed that officially designated essential services had an average 13 per cent premium over negotiated nominal wage increases.

From a fiscal perspective, ensuring that we have a clearer understanding of what is an essential service will potentially save Albertans' tax dollars. It will remove services that are not actually essential, however important they may be, from the path to an automatic and often expensive arbitration process. It will mean that the government is fully accountable for wage agreements and can't blame irresponsible raises on arbitration.

This legislation has the ability to affect Albertans for decades to come. In light of the fact that labour laws continue to evolve, would the government consider implementing a sunset provision for this legislation as recommended by the Canadian Association of Counsel to Employers?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Another element of concern is how the government has decided to respond to the Supreme Court by appointing a single commissioner vested with a great deal of power. Accordingly, the commissioner appointed to oversee essential services agreements must be committed to securing agreements that respect Albertans' needs and Albertans' tax dollars. This commissioner should be an

Albertan familiar with our own unique labour laws and history, not someone dropped in by the NDP, as they have done with several government posts already. It needs to be someone committed to Alberta, Alberta services, and Alberta's tax dollars. It should not be a patronage appointment or an AUPE insider whose professional history makes Albertans wonder if the public interest is his or her one and only priority.

But even if all of these conditions are met, the government still needs to explain the need to concentrate so much power in the office of a single appointed commissioner. Section 95 of the bill states that this commissioner will have the unilateral power to amend essential services agreements. These agreements will then be binding on both the employer, taxpayers, and the employees, the providers, even if they had a mutually agreed upon arrangement to something else. That is incredible power, Madam Speaker, power without appeal. These agreements need a measured approach. Can the government explain why it decided to give the commissioner such extensive powers instead of requiring the commissioner to obtain the agreement of both parties if he or she desires some change to voluntary agreements?

Furthermore, the bill states that this commissioner must be either the chair or the vice-chair of the Labour Relations Board, which is appointed by the cabinet. The appointment of the commissioner from among the chair or vice-chair of the Labour Relations Board cannot be a patronage or insider appointment, as we saw when the government appointed a veteran from the AUPE to be their new chief negotiator on public-sector contracts. The government wants to grant this political appointee the ability to have significant authority without any means to appeal their decisions. My question is: why isn't the commissioner subject to ministerial authority? Why isn't the Labour Relations Board as a whole charged with adjudication of the essential services agreements?

Now, we know the elephant in the room. We know that organized labour is deeply entrenched within the NDP, and that's okay, but we need to be open about this. The Alberta Federation of Labour is written into the constitution of the NDP and receives delegate spots at NDP conventions. The NDP also have a labour caucus, that elects two vice-presidents to the executive. The Provincial Council of the NDP has five members from the labour caucus, two from the Alberta Federation of Labour, and one member from each of the five largest affiliates in the province. Could you imagine having corporations and chambers of commerce being entrenched in the constitution of the Wildrose? No. We wouldn't. Then we have the big union bosses who step up as NDP candidates during elections but are safely allowed to return to their positions as union bosses when they lose.

I want to support this bill, but I am skeptical about several sections of it, Madam Speaker. We must ensure that our laws comply with the Supreme Court, but we should go no further than required by the Supreme Court for reasons that are thus far not adequately explained. The NDP's history and recent actions give us real cause to carefully study this bill to ensure that the final product is fair to the essential services workers, responsible to the Albertans who rely on those services, and respectful to the taxpayers who pay for them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Strathmore-Brooks for his comments. In light of the fact that already there have been two members of the House that have gotten up to talk about collaboration and a paradigm shift, I

would like to hear from the Member for Strathmore-Brooks on how he thinks that we can better work together in order to reach agreements between employers and employees moving forward.

3:30

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for the question. I think it's a very pertinent question. On some matters there is obviously a very big difference of opinion between parties and we have to agree to disagree – in fact, most days might be like that – but sometimes we're able to find areas of collaboration between parties. We've done it on several bills already, and it is my genuine hope that we can do so on this bill. It is my intention to support this bill at second reading, but further support of the bill from myself and the Official Opposition will depend upon how we're able to collaborate moving forward.

We have very serious concerns about the bill. I do believe that the bill is written with the best of intentions to comply with the Supreme Court ruling. No matter which party was in government, a bill of some form would have to be brought forward to comply with the Supreme Court ruling. My concerns rely primarily around the significant powers given to the commissioner and the inability to appeal those decisions and around parts of this bill which appear to go beyond what was required by the Supreme Court, particularly surrounding replacement workers. It's my belief that agreements around essential services and replacement workers should be negotiated, not covered in the legislation, particularly here. I think it would unfairly tip the balance of negotiations out of the hand of employers when trying to negotiate fair and reasonable essential services agreements.

It is my intention to support this at second reading. I know that the Minister of Labour provided a very thoughtful and thorough briefing to members of the opposition that I think went a long way to reaching out to us. If it was simply tossed on the desk without us seeing it, perhaps it would have been less collaborative. I think it was a good process to brief the members of the opposition, to bring us into the process for our feedback. I do believe it was genuine and in the best of intentions. But we do have real concerns about this bill that will have to be brought forward in the form of amendments later. I think that members on this side of the House genuinely would like to see a spirit of co-operation to ensure that this bill can receive the support of all parties at third reading.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** This is 29(2)(a)?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In response to comments from the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks I was wondering – you talked about the sunset provision in the bill, and I had a question for the hon. member. When you have a suggestion like that, it seems like adding a sunset provision in the legislation would create red tape and bureaucracy, something that I know the member often speaks against in this House, and requiring government staff to spend more time renewing the legislation in the future: I would think that we wouldn't want more cumbersome clauses in our legislation. I was thinking that would not be a good thing.

I can imagine a scenario where a contract with the public service would be up for negotiation sometime when, say, a sunset provision would be coming due. You know, with your concern for taxpayers you could imagine the chaos that would create and potential feelings of bad faith when you had a sunset provision coming due

and a contract negotiation. You would have some sides of that debate trying to understand whether that provision is going to be there for them and whether their rights would change halfway through the negotiation process. I was wondering if the hon. member would agree that that would potentially be a problem with adding a sunset provision and, if not, maybe enlighten us.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm always happy to enlighten the Member for Calgary-Currie. That is a thoughtful set of questions, which I am happy to speak to. Our suggestion of a sunset clause in the legislation comes from I believe it is the council for employers in the province. Coming from a perspective where when we're putting forward legislation and there are ...

**The Deputy Speaker:** Moving on to the next speaker on my list, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. It proposes to ensure that our code, Labour Relations Code, is compliant with the Supreme Court decision, as discussed. This dialogue has been helpful for me to further clarify some of the nuances of this important legislation. The legislation basically guarantees public-sector workers the right to strike with the caveat that unions and employers must agree on a contingency plan in the event of labour disruptions.

I take us back to 1977, when Premier Peter Lougheed made it illegal for any public-sector employee to strike, declaring them essential even if they weren't, and to compensate for removing their right, he ...

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, it's just been drawn to my attention that you did already speak to this bill in second reading, which means you can't speak again. You can in committee but not in second reading.

**Dr. Swann:** I don't believe I have spoken in second, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'm advised by Parliamentary Counsel.

**Dr. Swann:** We disagree, do we? I'll have to ...

**The Deputy Speaker:** I guess we'll have to check *Hansard*.

**Dr. Swann:** Must have been my double.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll now call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to stand to speak to the important issue around essential services. As many of the members are aware, I represented the Human Services members who worked in PDD, office of the public guardian, AISH, and children's services. In this position I participated as a member of the bargaining team and have had the experience of going through binding arbitration.

Let's spend a few minutes talking about the bargaining process. During former Premier Peter Lougheed's leadership he deprived public employees the right to strike in the event of an impasse in bargaining. However, in return they received access to compulsory arbitration processes; in other words, an arbiter who looks at the facts, the laws, and the public- and private-sector compensations

and who then has the right to impose a settlement on both parties, binding arbitration. This process was a compromise that was established due to a respectful relationship between the government and the essential services employees.

However, things have changed, Madam Speaker. In recent years the past government under the leadership of Premier Redford engaged in the process to dictate the salaries of all employees by introducing Bill 46, Public Service Salary Restraint Act, that would impose a two-year salary freeze and negate the collective bargaining process by removing binding arbitration. In addition to this legislation a second piece was introduced: Bill 45, Public Sector Services Continuation Act. This act significantly increased the penalties for illegal strikes by workers who are determined to provide essential services. This bill was introduced as a response to the wildcat strike by correctional officers that began at the Edmonton Remand Centre earlier that year. The government proposed to introduce harsh fines of up to a million dollars per day on a union in the case of an illegal strike or even the threat of an illegal strike. Neither of these bills received royal assent. However, it was this tone that was set by the past government that raised serious questions around the ability to have a fair bargaining process between the essential services workers and the government.

A court challenge was launched to the Queen's Bench with an outcome that ruled that workers have the human right to strike, so here we are today, Madam Speaker. It needs to be reinforced, the importance of the bargaining process. As all members of this House will recognize, the language that is developed in contracts is extremely important when ensuring transparent and working relationships. In fact, the language within the collective agreements that are negotiated is where the most time and work is spent. This language can focus on things such as occupational health and safety, hours of work, caseload issues among a variety of other things. Financial compensation is the last thing to be negotiated and is usually the quickest part of negotiation.

Madam Speaker, why do we need to amend our labour laws to ensure that essential services workers have the right to strike? Let us refer back to the Redford government and the strike at the remand centre, a strike that was not started due to compensation but, in fact, was a response to imminent occupational health and safety issues found within the remand centre. Members have tried to have the issues addressed; however, they were ignored, and the workers were being injured. So the workers struck, and it created stress on supporting the inmates because there was no plan in place to ensure that there were significant workers available to keep the building running.

We can do better, Madam Speaker. Our government understands the importance of being proactive and ensuring that we plan to support the essential services that so many Albertans need and that may also be affected by a strike. This is why the essential services agreement is so important. These agreements are essential to protecting the public services Albertans depend on. That's why our essential services legislation sets out a commissioner who will assess and verify essential services agreements to ensure requirements are being met.

3:40

The language in place in our legislation also provides flexibility by allowing essential services agreements to be reassessed in order to accommodate a change of circumstance or a continuation of care. This is important legislation, Madam Speaker. Not only does it address the fundamental right of individuals to strike; it also ensures that Albertans continue to receive the quality of care that they deserve.

In closing, Madam Speaker, we need to remember that workers' rights are human rights, and it's our job as a government to ensure that human rights are protected here in Alberta. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services is the title of the bill. Lots of really important technical information in there. I'm just wondering: from the hon. member's perspective, is there anything inside the bill that's outside of the scope of the Supreme Court ruling?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I would think that what the member is trying to hint at is looking at the replacement worker component within the bill. I just want to really reinforce how important it is that we ensure that the people that are working during strikes are the qualified people that need to be there. We want to ensure that when we are entering into these essential services agreements, the staff that are going to be replacing the workers that need to be in there are the qualified nurses and the LPNs and all of those people that have been working in those facilities, not private contractors that are going to be brought in that could potentially put Albertans at risk.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the member for her response to the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. However, that's not what the people in the briefing told members of this caucus when we asked about that specific provision concerning replacement workers for essential services. There are ways to replace people for essential services that are – you know, you could bring in other workers from the same field, perhaps even from the same workplace to cover off those positions. It was not a public safety provision, as explained to us in the briefing. It was explained to us in terms of a balance of negotiations.

Now, I'm of an opinion that your essential services workers probably shouldn't be replaced, but those provisions should be negotiated in the essential services agreements, not in the contracts later on because that would remove a significant bargaining chip from the government when negotiating a fair and reasonable essential services agreement.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm actually quite happy that the member has decided to stand and ask me a question, partly because when we're looking at how we engage with the commissioner in developing these essential services, all of those conversations are happening around who the workers will be that will be able to provide the essential services in case of strike.

The part that I found really interesting, though, is that there was a conversation that had just happened recently around some inconsistencies with the Wildrose and the member of the Official Opposition and how they were feeling about this piece of legislation. The member who just asked me the question was speaking to the fact that "moving forward, the province should amend the legislation governing binding arbitration to reflect the fiscal realities of the province" in the *Edmonton Journal* on June

11, 2014, but then we also have another member that spoke up last week and was arguing in favour of the status quo and using arbitration as a good mechanism. I guess what I'm trying to understand is that – I'm not quite sure where the Official Opposition actually stands on this legislation and why there's such a resistance when looking at, you know, trying to figure out, really, whether arbitration or commissioners or any of those things actually matter.

**The Deputy Speaker:** No further questions under 29(2)(a)?  
Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Yes. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Manning for the knowledge that she's shared with us regarding her own personal experiences and if she could elaborate a little bit more on the importance of this legislation from her perspective.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, I think that there are two key components that are extremely important about this legislation. Thank you again for the question. The key component is the fact that there is a fundamental right for individuals who affiliate with the union, the right to have a bargaining process that includes the right to strike. There will be conversations that I'm sure will happen in this House over the next few days that will try to make it be perceived that this will somehow hinder the ability of the bargaining process. What we know is that when there is the ability for a right to strike, the bargaining process tends to work a lot more efficiently because there is a mutual understanding that this needs to be resolved or work will stop. There is this ability to move forward and to make sure that everybody is working collaboratively together.

I think the other important thing about essential services and that we're going to have an essential services agreement is the fact that it protects Albertans.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Next on my list is the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today this House is considering Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. In our democratic system, which carefully separates the powers of this Legislature and government, this Legislature must now make changes to how we treat a large number of workers. The Supreme Court, which exercises judicial power, has determined that the right to strike is a fundamental right for unionized workers. The prohibitions that the Alberta government has put in place in the law banning strikes by public-sector workers have been deemed by the Supreme Court to be an unreasonable infringement on the workers who belong to a union.

A further court decision by the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench in 2015 ruled that parts of the Labour Relations Code and the Public Service Employee Relations Act needed to be replaced. New legislation needed to be drafted that would allow workers, at least those not considered essential to public health and safety, to now be able to go on strike and for employers to be able to lock out their employees as in another unionized environment. The ramifications of these changes, Madam Speaker, will have huge implications on employer and employee relations in the public sector provincially.

An essential service as currently defined in this bill is a public service that if it was interrupted "would endanger the life, personal safety or the health of the public" at large. An essential service would also include those jobs where "the maintenance and the administration of the rule of law or public security" could be negatively affected. That is what's going to make this a difficult task. We must ensure as legislators that this bill balances the safety and security rights of Albertans with the right of Alberta citizens

who work in public-sector jobs to fairly bargain for their wages and their working conditions.

Under current legislation teachers and teaching support staff, health care employees at nonapproved hospitals and those not working for Alberta Health Services, privately owned and operated senior care facilities, all staff at not-for-profit continuing care facilities, and most municipal workers have had the right to strike. But there have been many unionized workers in Alberta who have been deemed by legislation to work in a job broadly deemed as essential services: all unionized government of Alberta employees, including agencies, boards, and commissions; nurses; technical and professional staff at approved hospitals; postsecondary faculty and support staff, police, firefighters, and emergency medical services. As we debate the relative merits of this bill, we are going to have to be very careful. This bill must balance two legitimate sets of rights.

Earlier this year this Legislature debated whether to raise personal and corporate income taxes. At the time I argued that while every government must assess taxes on its citizens, if it is going to provide for public community services, this should be done with the realization that these taxes are not just the government's by right, and therefore the government must be very prudent when setting tax rates. A worker or a business owner has the right to their labour, and there must be compelling reasons to assess those taxes before the state is justified in imposing its will to compromise your right to keep the efforts of your labour.

3:50

In this instance, when we are talking about a worker's right to strike, I would also argue that as an extension of a person's right to keep the profits of their labour, that same worker has the right to bargain for their wage, including the right of unionized workers to strike. Indeed, it was only a few years ago, when the PC government was threatening that right to strike by public employees, that the Wildrose Party defended that principle in this very Legislature.

Indeed, as an educator for 30 years and therefore a member of the Alberta Teachers' Association I became well acquainted with the process that teachers had set in place for local bargaining. While I never had to exercise my right to strike as part of the process of collective bargaining – I always was very grateful for that – I was always appreciative of the fact that that option was there for teachers. Why? Because unless there are compelling reasons to show differently, every worker should be able to influence the compensation and the working conditions, et cetera, under which they are agreeing to work.

Now, Madam Speaker, I'd better be careful here because I don't want my colleagues in the House across the way, my colleagues of the NDP, to believe that like Paul on the road to Damascus I have been blinded by the light of progressivism and suddenly have come to see the light. Unions and collective bargaining and, in extreme circumstances, even the right to strike may have a place in labour relations, but as in all things in life, especially for conservatives, there must be a balance in life and a balance in rights.

There are jobs and there are circumstances under which it would be deemed reasonable to restrict the rights of a worker and to exclude the right to strike. Under Bill 4 police, firefighters, and non Alberta Health Services ambulance operators will continue to be deemed an essential service and will therefore use compulsory arbitration to solve disputes and will not fall under this particular piece of legislation. This, too, is proper. Workers are not the only ones with rights; the society as a whole has a legitimate right to expect that their society will not be destabilized or become unsafe because of a labour dispute. Society must depend on the police, the firefighters, the doctors, and the nurses that provide these essential

services to be available at all times. People's lives and the very safety and security of society depend upon these jobs.

The workers that enter these professions know ahead of time that their chosen profession is of critical importance to the well-being of the society as a whole and that when they chose to enter that profession, they were giving up their right to strike when bargaining collectively. This does not mean that these professions are not at the end of the day compensated fairly. In fact, those who are granted compulsory arbitration in exchange for the right to strike have generally profited from it. A study by the C.D. Howe Institute showed that essential services had an average 13 per cent premium in their negotiated nominal wage increase.

In a democracy all rights have restrictions, but those restrictions must only be applied in what would be commonly viewed as a reasonable restriction on that particular right. The Supreme Court has ruled that we must review our legislation to ensure that the right to strike is being restricted only in what would be viewed as a reasonable fashion. We must ensure that Bill 4 does exactly this. We must ensure that it is a good piece of legislation. While this bill titles itself after the need to meet a Supreme Court requirement, the way it has chosen to meet it and the ways it has gone beyond what the court demanded are what we must deliberate upon. In case we have not quite got it right after deliberation – and let's clarify that the courts were not entirely clear in their ruling on what is required to make any fixes in this important act – I believe we should consider a sunset clause; that is, a clause that automatically forces this Legislature to review this bill by having to revisit it four or five years from now.

In section 95 of Bill 4 a commissioner is appointed to oversee essential services agreements. The bill states that this commissioner will have the unilateral power to amend essential services agreements even if both parties agree. I worry that this does not pass the smell test of what would be considered reasonable in a democratic society. All officials and all agents of the government in a democracy must always face a reasonable level of accountability in order to maintain good government decisions. The power of unilateral decision-making is almost never a good idea. I believe that this commissioner needs a check, whether it is by the Labour Relations Board or the minister who is subject to the House and therefore accountable to the people of this province. That is something I hope we can think about when we are in the Committee of the Whole.

As we look for the right balance, let's keep in mind the need for nonessential public employees to have similar rights to other individuals but also the Crown's duty to provide basic services to Alberta and to Albertans. There will always be some grey areas in what is determined to be essential, but with rights at stake on the one side and lives at stake on the other, we need to act in good faith here in this Legislature to ensure that the process we set up to adjudicate those differences is a fair one.

While I approve in principle the direction of this bill – it will not only improve individual rights, but I believe that it will bring in an ability for the people of Alberta to ensure that essential services are still maintained – I believe that we need to make sure that we have at the end of the day balanced individual and societal rights in an appropriate and a democratic fashion.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for his statement. I'm just curious around how you see the arbitration process working and how you would, then, perceive the

commissioner working. I keep hearing these comments around: too much power for the commissioner. Yet there is an actual arbitration process that is a binding process. Does your party support arbitration? Does your party support commissioners? How do you decide who gets the ultimate binding agreement when it comes to the bargaining process?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question. You know, I think that as we come together as a Legislature, that's a discussion that is probably best had at the Committee of the Whole.

**An Hon. Member:** We can't hear you.

**Mr. Smith:** I'm sorry. I will make sure that I speak to the Speaker there, and then you can hear me speak, okay?

I believe that, for the members across the way, when we take a look at the whole arbitration process – I know that while I've had some understanding of that as a part of being an educator for 30 years and having seen some arbitrated settlements both with nurses as well as with teachers, I would be remiss if I said that I had a full understanding of it. I believe that probably her questions and how we see things going – I'm still open. I'm still very fluid on how we do this. I believe that we need to have that conversation about whether or not the commissioner will have some checks on his power where that has the ability to impact arbitration and whether or not we need to work down that path. I remain open as a legislator to the comments that are here, but also at the end of the day we'll have to make a judgment as to whether or not we've come to a good decision on this.

4:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a question for the member. He indicated a bit of concern around unilateral decision-making of the commissioner. I just want to make sure that he understands that there is a procedure leading up to the fact before the commissioner were ever to get involved. You know, this process involves a negotiation and adjudication model, so there are several steps and checks and balances before it comes to the commissioner getting involved. One of the reasons that the Supreme Court ruled the way they did is because in the SFL case the government was the one making a unilateral decision, and that's why they threw that law out. I just wanted to ask the member if he feels that all the processes leading up to the point where the commissioner would get involved, those processes prior to the commissioner, would satisfy his concern about unilateral decision-making.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question, or for the comment at least. You know, obviously, again, what I say is that, really, Committee of the Whole is going to be important, and that's what it's there for. These are issues that are very important. We have to balance those rights. I look forward to hearing the conversation so that I can make a better decision as to whether or not we've actually found that right balance. So thank you for the comments.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll move to my next speaker, Edmonton-Decore.



**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. I should probably provide a little bit of background here as to why I'm a little bit interested in this. Before being elected as the MLA for Edmonton-Decore, I worked in various positions at Lucerne Foods over 26 years. Out of the 26, I spent 18 of those as a shop steward as well as volunteering on various committees and also performing the duties of a relief representative with the United Food and Commercial Workers, local 401. So you could probably say that workers' rights have been a bit of a top priority of mine for quite some time, and I very clearly say that I support the collective bargaining process, which I've even participated in a few times, and the rights of both the union and the employer.

But I also know that Albertans need to have reliable access to essential services in the event of a work stoppage. This is why essential services legislation recently introduced by our government is so important. This will modernize Alberta's labour laws and ensure that employers, government, and unions work together for the benefit of all Albertans.

Now, why is this so important? Well, again a little history. In 2015 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the right to strike is fundamental for workers. Then, of course, only two months later the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta declared that strike prohibition in the Public Service Employee Relations Act and similar strike bans in the Labour Relations Code are unconstitutional. Needless to say, Madam Speaker, the courts have been quite clear that public-sector workers have the right to strike.

Now, currently Alberta legislation forbids strikes and lockouts in the public sector. It requires compulsory arbitration to solve disputes. Bill 4, an act to implement a Supreme Court ruling, will change this by placing a greater responsibility for a settlement in the hands of the employer and union negotiations, minimizing the use of compulsory and often very costly arbitration. It's been a little bit too easy for both sides to simply say: "Well, it's not working out. We can't reach a deal. Let's let somebody else go and make those decisions for us." The bill can really get out of hand sometimes when that happens. We need to have this process so that we can begin good-faith bargaining at all times, not just sort of when we feel like it or when, you know, sunset clauses step in and we can just decide: well, we'll just bide some time.

This legislation has been brought forward after, of course, extensive consultation with Alberta public-sector employers, unions, and employees and the general public. If passed, it will bring Alberta's labour legislation in line with the courts and, finally, the rest of the country. It would also ensure stability for public services in our province. I think the last thing we want to see is people going out on strike and chaos ensuing. That's why it's so important to have this essential services component.

Albertans shouldn't have to worry about care and safety when two parties can't agree. Bill 4 will ensure that essential services like emergency health care are provided to the general public during strikes and/or lockouts. Determining what essential services will be maintained during work stoppages will be decided by the public-sector employers and the unions working together, something that we've kind of created an atmosphere of not being able to do. I think this will finally open it up and allow these folks to get to the table, get a deal hammered out so we can move forward. If they can't reach an agreement, a neutral third party will resolve the dispute quickly and efficiently. The last thing we need is these things dragging out forever on end.

This legislation will create a fair and level playing field, will provide Alberta workers basic rights that they've been denied, allowing them to bargain with their employers in good faith. It will

also create a collaborative atmosphere for employers and unions working together to reach an agreement that is fair for both sides.

Madam Speaker, in summary, this legislation helps us achieve our goals: to comply with the Supreme Court of Canada and the Queen's Bench, to protect public services that everyone relies on, and to balance the right of unionized workers to a fair collective bargaining process. I would certainly want to encourage all of the members of this Assembly to support this bill because I think we can finally put to rest this combative atmosphere that we seem to have always had.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was listening to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, he was talking about working together with the government and with the particular bargaining unit in regard to figuring out which employees would be essential services employees. Now, since he, as he mentioned, has experience in the union movement and the public sector and other contract negotiations, I was wondering what his thoughts would be on whether having both the employer and the union work together on who is an essential service would foster goodwill amongst the parties as they go through the negotiation process.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, when you can get both sides at the table actually talking, it's amazing what starts to happen. One of the biggest roadblocks in bargaining is just simply stalling out and hoping to just go to a process where somebody else will do it for you. It's so important that when you're coming to the table to bargain, it's done in good faith. You're actually trying to work with each other. The employer can actually come to the table, you know, and let the other side know what it is they need to make everything happen. The union can then come to the table, doing the exact same thing.

4:10

It's amazing how often you actually come to a fair and equitable agreement when both of those stories are allowed to be told rather than just simply pushing it off to an arbitration process that generally doesn't tend to favour either side. I think that once we can get these two sides actually talking, it will be pretty exciting to see what the employer, what the union, and what even the bargaining members can put together.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, next on my list is the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and debate this very critical and important piece of legislation, Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, and for the record a few other sundry items in there.

**An Hon. Member:** Sundre?

**Mr. Cooper:** Hey, I like what you did with "sundry" there.

This is an important piece of legislation. This is a highly technical piece of legislation. We have already seen, just this afternoon, some varying of opinions on what is in the bill, what isn't in the bill. Is the bill's only desire or scope to fulfill the mandate of that Supreme

Court ruling, or are there other items inside the piece of legislation that go beyond that Supreme Court ruling?

[The Speaker in the chair]

My intention this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, with my questioning of my colleagues in this Assembly on “Are there items inside the bill outside of the scope of the ruling?” is actually not to trip anyone up. The intention was merely to say that there is a wide variety of knowledge on this particular piece of legislation. There are many members in this Assembly that are very, very knowledgeable about every step of the process, and there are members of the Assembly that know very little about the process.

What I consistently come back to in this place – and many of you have had the pleasure or not pleasure, depending on one’s perspective, of being here when I’ve had the opportunity to rise and speak about the importance of getting legislation right. While I appreciate that the government has engaged Mr. Sims to put together the report on the Supreme Court ruling and while I appreciate that they have done some consultation on this particular issue – you know, they are doing consultation better on some issues that are perhaps more important to them than others, as we’ve seen in some other pieces of legislation where the consultation hasn’t been quite as robust as it has here in the lead-up to Bill 4 – I get back to the fact that while the consultation may have been good, certainly that same type of consultation hasn’t been afforded to all members of the Assembly.

We see a situation here today with Bill 4 where in all likelihood we’re going to conclude second reading of Bill 4 today. Committee of the Whole is going to come quite likely tomorrow given the very few pieces of legislation that this government has introduced in this session. So Committee of the Whole is going to come tomorrow, and then it’s very possible and reasonable that on Thursday morning Bill 4 could in fact become law.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. There are many things in this piece of legislation that I and many of my colleagues – and I can only speculate because of the free-vote system that we have on this side of the House – will be supporting. In fact, it’s my belief that the vast majority of the Wildrose caucus will be supporting Bill 4 at second reading.

So I find it a little disingenuous when the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie rises and says that he just wants to have a conversation with the opposition and just wants to work with us when, in fact, there has been more than one occasion where we have had this opportunity to work together. It appears that we’re going to support Bill 4 at second reading. We certainly had some good co-operation on Bill 1 in a previous session, when we were getting union and corporate donations out of the influence of politics. Now, there are some significant loopholes in that legislation. I think that the government should take steps to fix those, but certainly we worked together on that.

There are a number of other areas, including the Official Opposition proposing a significant number of reasonable amendments to legislation, most of which haven’t been accepted. But, in fact, at this very moment, while we speak, it’s my belief that the Official Opposition, a member of our team, is meeting with a member of their team to discuss some of the possibilities around amendments because what’s important to this side of the House is getting legislation right for all of the province. That means that it’s possible that there is going to be a wide variety of amendments that we’ll propose that, in fact, are good ideas. In times past when we’ve tried to work together, particularly on a previous piece of legislation in the form of Bill 203, the government said, “We want to talk about

it,” killed it, brought it back. So it’s not just the opposition that prevents communication inside this place.

I agree that we ought to ensure that pieces of legislation best reflect the interests of Albertans. One of the ways that we have the opportunity to do that is in committee, because tomorrow or whenever Committee of the Whole is called in this place, likely tomorrow, when we introduce a number of amendments, the government is going to have to make decisions very, very quickly as to whether or not they support those amendments. It’s one of the reasons why we’ve reached out to the minister responsible for this bill, to try and have a sense so that there can be some mutual agreement, perhaps.

But the best way, Mr. Speaker, the way that happens in almost every jurisdiction across this great land, is that these sorts of critical decisions aren’t made on the floor of the Assembly but are in fact made in a legislative policy committee. We saw and just heard the Minister of Economic Development and Trade across the aisle here say, “We’re working on Bill 1 in committee,” and the special ethics committee is certainly doing that. While he may have not said it out loud so everyone could hear, he certainly said that we were working on it in committee, fixing the loopholes around Bill 1, and it’s my belief that the special ethics committee is working to do that if they would ever meet, sir.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister raised a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Allegations against a Member**

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I refer to, in the standing orders, 23 ...

**Mr. Cooper:** Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j).

**Mr. Bilous:** Sounds pretty good.

Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, what the hon. member just said – his claims are patently false. I did not speak to Bill 1 going to committee, nor did I talk about making amendments to Bill 1 whatsoever. It’s completely untrue and false, and I request that the member withdraw his comments.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, certainly, I will be happy to withdraw my comment. I would just add a point of clarification for you, that I certainly wasn’t referring to Bill 1 in this legislative session but Bill 1 in the last legislative session, which was to ban union and corporate donations. I believed that he had implied that the special ethics committee was dealing with some of the loopholes at committee, and in his jest across the aisle during my presentation, perhaps that wasn’t the case. Either way, I am more than happy to withdraw the comments and consider the matter dealt with.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Do you wish to continue?

4:20

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Cooper:** I’d love to continue. As I was saying, the role of committee can be used as an important tool here in the Alberta Legislature, as is done in many jurisdictions, because we get to have that conversation that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie so wisely desires, this conversation between the government and the opposition that isn’t done oftentimes in the highly partisan manner that, in the nature of the government and opposition, particularly in the Chamber, it typically winds up in.

So I would just like to propose an amendment to Bill 4 that would allow that committee to take place. I'm happy to pass those around, and I'm happy to continue as well, whatever your preference is, sir.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, do you have copies of the proposed amendment, 95 copies?

**Mr. Cooper:** I do. Do you mind if I continue while they're distributed?

**The Speaker:** Proceed.

**Mr. Cooper:** The notice of amendment is for Mr. Cooper to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Mr. Speaker, what this amendment does is that it would provide an opportunity for all members of the Assembly to have the chance to reach out to experts, to labour lawyers, to union leaders, to business owners, to essential service providers. Earlier today we heard that there may be some confusion around the role of paramedics, some paramedics being included inside the legislation and others that may not be included inside the legislation. These are the exact type of loopholes – it would be great if we could get them solved prior to the legislation becoming law.

We have heard from Albertans that what they would like us to do is to make sure that we get it right, and I believe that the government's intention is to get this piece of legislation right as well. But the best place for us to ensure that that can happen is – if we send this piece of legislation to committee, the committee can do a great job calling witnesses to ensure that we get the information that everyone needs so that we can make the best decision for Alberta.

Now, it's my guess that the government members will rise and say: "You're just trying to delay this. We've had a Supreme Court ruling that requires us to implement this." Let me be very clear. We are in full support of ensuring that the Supreme Court ruling is adhered to, and we in no way, shape, or form are intending to delay this bill for months and months and months on end and, in fact, are just wanting to get the information that is available to us out there on the record through the committee process.

While I've proposed amendments in past times and there were some hard-and-fast deadlines that existed on other pieces of legislation and the government used those hard-and-fast deadlines as an excuse to not send legislation to committee, the former government can no longer be blamed for timelines in this Assembly. The timelines that currently exist are because of this government. So it's critically important that we ensure that legislation is debated in a robust manner that can put stakeholders of the legislation at the fore, because what I would hate to see, Mr. Speaker, is something that we saw regularly in this place in the past, running risks, particularly if Bill 1, the act to ban corporate and union donations, ever has to come back to have those loopholes closed, perhaps as early as this fall, because we didn't do the due diligence at the time.

Certainly, when the third party was in government, this place regularly passed pieces of legislation and came back in the fall to fix the unintended consequences that they created. I think the point around which paramedics are in or out is a perfect example of the concern. We have the time, we have the ability, and I think it's

critically important that Bill 4, a bill that's important to the future of our province, important to labour relations in our province, be sent to committee so that we can get it right the first time.

I encourage all members of the Assembly to support the motion.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, have all of the members received copies of the proposed amendment?

Seeing none, I remind the House that, as I understand the process now, the discussion is with respect to the amendment. Subject to the resolution of that amendment we would go back to the motion.

With that recognition, the Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As much as I love to hear the opposition members speak out there – I understand where he's coming from – I do rise in opposition to this, sorry to say. I apologize, you know, for upsetting him. He did mention what he said about the Supreme Court. I think the Supreme Court has called upon us as legislators to bring in clear and concise legislation on essential services, and as law-abiding members of this government we will and we should comply.

Now, this legislation has been endorsed already by employers and employees alike, by AHS, United Nurses, and other providers, whether they be health care or other public services that we've discussed, that our Labour minister has talked to. On the topic of health care, you know, we always want to make sure that those people are taking care of the patients, the families and are getting the people they need, the professionals they need.

This means not compromising the spirit of essential services in agreements by bringing in replacement workers – it was alluded to before – who could possibly do more harm than good. You know, I've seen that. It was in the private sector, but I have seen it at a mill that I worked at as a young fellow not long ago. There was a strike, which nobody likes, and it's never good for any side, to be honest. It's always hard on everybody. I had a friend of mine's dad who wasn't trained, who wasn't professional, but he was put in a situation, and he was killed because he wasn't a professional. That's not to speak to, you know, public service workers in this respect, but it was a replacement worker. Anyway, I digress a bit, but that's just from personal experience. Honestly, it just kind of popped into my head there.

The bill already I see as a clear framework, and it encourages employers and employees to work together and to collaborate and decide who isn't or who is essential in the workplace.

In my previous career as a communications technician with Telus I wasn't an essential service, but – I'll tell you what – when I showed up at a house with a family with kids that hadn't had Internet for a few days, they most definitely felt like I was an essential service, you know, in restoring their sanity. So I was kind of a health care worker in the same respect.

As much as I think that I was essential, you know, somebody like my wife, who's a health care worker and who saves lives every shift and never ceases to amaze me with what she does – those are the people that we're talking about here. Those are the essential services, and I have the utmost respect for them. She's a respiratory therapist and essential to the patients in her care.

You know, there was a previous members' statement about – again, this is personal. I can talk to what a member said in here because he was confused about something. He made a statement about a union worker going back to his job after being elected or not. Personally, in my union we bargained a fair contract where I can take a leave of absence for a political position or to run for a political position, and if I win, I have a leave of absence for the term of that position. If I don't, I can go back. That holds true for next time, in which I determine that I will win again because how could

you not with this handsome face here? And because of all my hard work that I do in the constituency. Sorry. That's what I should have said first. I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

4:30

Talking on the bill again, you know, Albertans deserve to know how their vital public services are being protected when there is a labour dispute. There's a lot of uncertainty out there. A lot of people don't know. Even in my previous union, the steelworkers, there were guys in the union who didn't know how this worked and how bargaining worked. As a shop steward and a VP and a delegate for conventions that was my job, right? Right now this bill is encompassing all of this. It's letting us communicate with people already. It's already given us the opportunity to consult with people out there.

As the Supreme Court said – and I go back to the Supreme Court because this is who we are ultimately listening to – it is every Canadian's right to join a union if they choose and to collectively bargain, and that includes the right to strike. Under the essential services model, bargaining will take on an even greater role in making sure that contracts and agreements are fair for everyone involved, and that's what we are going for here. It's a very positive step. It's going to be clear and open bargaining, making it fair on all sides. I think it will go a long way in enlightening citizens on how these agreements work and when they are needed.

I am also hopeful that throughout this process and debate the Official Opposition will come to understand exactly how collective bargaining works and that contracts are legally binding agreements and that you can't simply break them to cut workers' wages and benefits when you feel like it. I'm just saying. [some applause] Thank you.

So I will speak against this amendment. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** We are now dealing with the amendment to Bill 4. Speaking to the amendment, the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll look forward, perhaps, to speaking to the main motion later on.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment brought here is to basically stop it in the House and send it to committee, which, frankly, isn't the worst idea in the world. I would have preferred that the mover had done it after second reading as opposed to at this point, and perhaps the mover will try it again at that point. I think this is a pretty important piece of legislation, one where we would want to hear from members of the House, anybody that wants to speak to it, before we send it away. That would be preferable. I think we got a signal from the government side that it may not pass, but on the off chance that it does, I feel obligated to say a couple of things here.

During my time as Labour minister if there was one thing or a couple of things impressed upon me, it was that labour legislation is super important. It affects everything that happens in Alberta, every family's livelihood, every business's opportunity for future opportunities. Certainly, one of the things that was made clear to me by people much wiser than I am on matters of labour is that one needs to be careful. One needs to be careful because labour legislation is one of those things in government that can actually tip the scale, and if you want to talk about creating winners and losers, it can really create winners and really create losers and not necessarily to the benefit of all Albertans if it's not done with great care, which is why I will say that I'm hoping to get a chance to talk on this more again in second reading.

But at some point, perhaps even in Committee of the Whole after we've heard from more members of the House that want to speak to this, having the most fulsome discussion possible, including at

committee, is probably a good idea, Mr. Speaker, even if it does not happen at this particular point.

**The Speaker:** Questions under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Calgary-Hays?

All right. Are there any other speakers with respect to the amendment? The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to express why I think it's so important that we move forward expeditiously as opposed to stalling this unduly. Certainly, both levels of court have declared that the right to strike is important as a Charter right. Both courts found that Alberta's public-sector strike prohibition interfered with collective bargaining. Certainly, being the minister for a very large public sector of employees, I think it's important that we have fair collective bargaining processes that lead to consistency, ideally in terms of patient care as well as moving forward and making sure that we have replacement worker legislation and processes outlined to make sure that if we ever are in the unfortunate situation, which, again, is neither the employer nor the employee's desire – it's important that we make sure that we do have that legislation in place. I have to say that by stalling on moving forward with this legislation, I'm concerned that it could lead to unsafe conditions, which we've seen.

Obviously, having the legislation in place that the previous government passed didn't stop strikes from happening. It meant that there were wildcat strikes and that they put the citizens of those facilities in danger, I would say. Rather than continuing to have legislation that isn't in compliance with the Charter, that isn't in compliance with the court rulings – this is simply a Supreme Court ruling. Delaying this further, I think, would threaten the safety and well-being of the citizens I'm thinking about who are sitting in hospital beds, who obviously want to make sure that when they ring the call button, somebody is there to deal with their needs, that somebody is there to respond to them.

I think it's really important that we move forward in a way that has been outlined, through a careful legislative bill, that seems to have great support on both the employee and the employer sides of the equation, to make sure that we protect the interests of our citizens, that we honour the rights of workers, and that we can move forward as a responsible government in a timely fashion.

Certainly, Alberta's public-sector labour legislation needs to be updated. It's almost 30 years old, Mr. Speaker, and it needs to be modernized to protect public-sector employees, respect their Charter rights, and, again as I mentioned, respect the citizens who rely on those essential services to be delivered in their hospitals or in their communities. Prisons are another example, another place where we saw wildcat strikes because we simply didn't have legislation that enabled safe and respectful bargaining processes. As a result, it led to a very unsafe situation, I'd say, for inmates as well as guards in those facilities.

With that being said, I would urge my colleagues to oppose the amendment as proposed, an amendment that would essentially stall this process which I think is very important. It's timely. You know, given that there are only two provinces that need to comply, I think it's about time we acknowledged that we are in 2016, updated our labour legislation, and made sure that the rights of both the workers as well as those who rely on those workers are respected and reflected. I worry that the amendment as proposed, which is basically for it not to be read a second time, would impede that.

I think that the person who moved the amendment actually said that he'd be voting in support of it at second reading, so I find a remark that he'd be voting in support of this and at the same an amendment saying that it not be read a second time very

contradictory and would ask that my colleagues vote against the amendment and that we move forward with this essential legislation to enact the Supreme Court ruling. This is a very clear Supreme Court decision, and it's time that we got on with it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:40

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other members who would like to speak to the amendment to Bill 4?

Seeing none, before I call for the vote on the amendment, I understand there may be an agreement with respect to the length of times on the bells. I'm not sure if that's . . .

**An Hon. Member:** No.

**The Speaker:** Okay.

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 4 lost]

**The Speaker:** Back to the bill. Hon Member for Calgary-Hays, you'd like to speak to the bill?

**Mr. McIver:** Yes, please, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak on Bill 4, the essential services legislation. First, let me say that I will compliment the minister on bringing this forward. It's not that many months ago, when I was Labour minister, that this was on my plate for the very same reason that it's on this minister's plate: because of a Supreme Court of Canada decision in Saskatchewan, as has been referenced by many members here today, that says that people have to be offered the right to bargain collectively and strike and join a union and the other things that the Supreme Court of Canada decision made clear. So this is something that we as legislators in the broader spectrum have to do. Frankly, in the broader spectrum most of what's in the bill I certainly agree with.

As I said earlier, labour legislation is one of those things. I was there in the Labour ministry just long enough to know how little I know. While I probably learned a hundred times more than I knew when I started there, I still believe I don't know much because labour legislation is pretty complex, pretty far reaching into society, pretty far reaching into the economy and, in my view, should never be trifled with or taken lightly because you really can change people's lives. When you change people's lives, I think we get paid in here to try to change them for the better instead of the worse, which is why the care is required with legislation like this.

Mr. Speaker, I once said something that got misunderstood. I think I said that the fewer people that don't have the right to strike, the worse that it is. That's a double negative, which is, of course, the exact same meaning as the more people that have the right to strike, the better it is, which is how I feel. I sincerely believe that if you're going to have a good result and you're going to have people's voices heard on their own behalf when you're searching for that good result, the very best way to do it is to negotiate. If you're going to negotiate, there are certain elements that are required, and one of those elements is to have equal power between the parties negotiating, or more or less equal power. Pure equality is probably hard to achieve, but some manner of equality simply because, otherwise, if that's not the case, then one party with less power isn't actually negotiating; they're begging skilfully, or not skilfully in some cases. Nonetheless, it's not a real negotiation unless both parties at the table have some leverage. I believe that is what essential services legislation is intended to achieve.

Now, under the previous government, the PC government, there was legislation in place, that is still in place now, where the vast majority of employees whose paycheques are funded through the Alberta government either directly or indirectly – you know, through AHS or education or other means – don't have the right to strike. In fact, this is what's a little bit unusual about this legislation coming to Alberta compared to when it has come to other provinces. In most provinces when essential services legislation is put into place, fewer people have the right to strike because some are considered essential. They were all able to strike before, and this is done to protect the public in those cases. In Alberta's case, which is quite interesting, most of the employees already don't have the right to strike. This is very unusual compared to most provinces in Canada where this has happened in that a lot more employees will have the right to strike than do today.

Mr. Speaker, I will repeat this for the record and to be perfectly clear: I think that's a good thing. I think when that is the case, without the right to strike, negotiations have a built-in default from day one, and the built-in default is that you go to arbitration. So we're going to go in, go to the bargaining table, and see what we can get. If we don't like it, we can throw up our hands and say, "Let's go to arbitration, and we'll see what those folks give us," or on the government side, "We'll see what those folks make us pay or do or whether they take our side or not," whereas with a genuine, across-the-bargaining-table negotiation I think it really requires not one side or the other but both sides to take a serious look at what they should be asking for and what they should not be asking for.

Now, there's a saying in business that I think applies to government and probably applies to family life and everything else, too, and that saying is: when the money runs out, then you have to think. Mr. Speaker, if you can always spend more money, you can solve lots of problems simply by paying for the solutions without really having to think, in my view, hard enough about what's the best solution, not just the solution you can get away with. I think essential services legislation, if we do this correctly, should take us to that place. It should take us to a place where when the employer and the employees are sitting across the table negotiating, they are truly thinking about everything, not just thinking about a number that they think the arbitrator will or will not give but, rather, thinking about that number – of course, numbers matter when you're talking about people's paycheques. But I really think there'll be a more sincere conversation about working conditions, about conditions that keep employees safe and healthy and also about what's a management decision and what's an employee decision.

In my view, too many of those decisions under an arbitration system – not every time, of course. But there are a lot of times where people think there's an attractive number on the table and they don't get to the nub of the working conditions and they don't get to the place where the employer and the employees can best work together and find a way to deliver best value to whomever you're doing the work for.

Delivering the best value has great benefits. It has great benefits, obviously, for the employer because they just get better value for the money they're spending. But, in my view, it gives better value to the employees, too, because it puts them in a position to negotiate for better job satisfaction. I don't know anybody that goes home and says to their husband, wife, son, daughter, mother, father: I went to work today and did the lousiest job I could do. Nobody says that. You know why they don't say that? Because it's not true. People go to work, and they do the best job they can do.

Under a proper negotiation part of the conversation ought to be and I believe will be in most cases about: how can I do a better job? How can we work better together? What is the fair rate of

compensation for that both in outright pay and in benefits, time off and all the other things that go around that? Only through negotiation, in my opinion, can you actually get to the best result because that takes work. It does take work. And when you've got the safety valve, where you can always throw up your hands when you're frustrated – because people that negotiate sometimes aren't all that easy to deal with, Mr. Speaker. We know that in this House. We're not always easy to deal with. Sometimes it's easy to throw up your hands and say, "Send it to the arbitrator," or throw up your hands and say, "We're the majority in the House, and we're going to do what we want," or throw up your hands and say, "We're the minority over here, and the government is going to do what they want anyway." I think the way you get to the best result is by negotiating and working it through to the best logical ends that you possibly can.

4:50

This does modernize, as has been said here, two pieces of legislation. It certainly codifies the Supreme Court's decision that people have the right to bargain collectively. It actually puts us in a position where the employer and the employees will negotiate on what's an essential service. I believe that's what the Supreme Court of Canada decision says has to happen, and I think we're bound to get a better result. There are going to be some interesting and probably difficult negotiations.

What's interesting is that when I was Labour minister and I started this process before the current minister was there, we talked to different labour groups – and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie will be interested – and we talked to some of the faculty groups that weren't allowed to strike. Interestingly enough, there was a mixed opinion. Some actually didn't want the right to strike because they thought they were treated pretty well, and other ones wanted it very much. I believe they were both sincere. I'm not saying anyone was right or wrong. Everybody has the right to express what they think is in their best interest. But we're going where we are.

I think I'm almost out of time. I actually have quite a bit more to say. I will say this, Mr. Speaker, that we will have some questions as time goes on about the power of the commissioner, where the checks and balances will be for that role as described in the legislation. We will have to talk about replacement workers and the changes that go beyond the Supreme Court decision. I look forward to getting to those discussions. I look forward to asking questions. As I expressed to the Labour minister earlier today – she was gracious enough to say that she would try to accommodate that – I'm hoping to get an opportunity to sit down with her before we actually make a decision in this House on this and talk about a couple things in the legislation. I'm grateful for the fact that the minister said that that could probably be accommodated. That's something that I appreciate.

I would be remiss if I didn't say that while we disagree with a lot of things the government does, getting advice from Andy Sims is a good idea. Andy, if you're listening, you know you and I don't agree on everything, but you are one of the smartest people I've ever met on labour issues. If there's any little bit I know about it, he taught me four times that much, and I only remembered 25 per cent. I think he's not a bad person for the government to get advice from. Again, while I would say that I don't agree with them on everything, boy, he has a lot of things figured out that most other people in this world do not have figured out when it comes to labour legislation. I feel pretty confident that I'm right in saying that.

Mr. Speaker, I'll stop right now. I'm sure I'll be on my feet again before this debate is over. Again, on the face of it essential services has to be done. We don't know whether it will save the government money or cost the government money. We actually don't know

whether it will get the employees better wages and working conditions. That, as it ought to be, will be the subject of negotiation, which I think in my heart is the right way to sort things out between human beings, to sit down in the same room at the same table at the same time with a pot of coffee or something and actually talk about what your interests are, both mutual and in conflict, and just sort it out.

Again, I'll stop. There are some few issues that we need to talk about and maybe have some amendments on this legislation before we're done, but at the core of it, Mr. Speaker, going the essential services route is the right thing to do. I would implore all members on all sides of the House to make a big effort to get this right. There are 220,000 or so people – not jobs but people – in Alberta who get paid out of the government purse, and we owe it to them to get it as right as we can.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions for the member under 29(2)(a)? The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. I would hate to miss the opportunity to ask you. Mr. Sims lives in my constituency. I see him from time to time on the street. What's one of the biggest life lessons he gave you in your time you worked together?

**Mr. McIver:** Life lessons? Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if he gave me life lessons. He surely gave me labour lessons. I think that I've said some of those. You've got to be careful because you can really change the balance of power. You can put a whole bunch of people out of business and put a whole bunch of people in business. I suppose that sounds good if you're putting people in business, except for the fact that you can't get the employees you need if you're the winner because if you're in a jurisdiction where the labour law is out of balance, you actually can't get the employees to come in and work there. So the biggest lesson? Be careful. Don't think that any of this is easy or simple.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for your statement. I'm just curious, going back to the fact that you were a past Labour minister and that you've worked in the area. We've had a lot of conversations here in the House around salary freezes and trying to freeze the salaries of the front-line workers. I'm just wondering from your experience if you have any learnings around how negating the bargaining process and trying to freeze salaries when you're not in an actual bargaining period would potentially impact the relationship with the public servants.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think the last part of the question is probably the easiest one to answer, that if you try to change the rules of an agreement before the agreement is done and you try to change it in such a way that it's more negative for the party you're dealing with, it's probably not going to help the relationship very much at all. In fact, it's probably going to be harmful. Again, I'll go back to my core belief that the best deals are negotiated, not imposed.

That's really the basis of a lot of the legislation that we have, actually, even the legal legislation that we have, even within the Human Services ministry, to provide equality of power between people dealing with each other, whether it's spouse and spouse or husband and wife or parent and child or senior and caregiver or

whatever it is, to make sure that there is some balance there. When there's an agreement made, you know, and it gets changed, then that's a change from the established balance of power and influence.

I'm sure there are times in life when difficult situations make it tempting to go there and pull that lever, and I understand that, but it's more ideal – much, much more ideal – in my opinion, to negotiate, to make an agreement based on both sides having some relatively equitable leverage, and then live with that agreement. Life doesn't always allow that, but that's way better than the alternatives, in my opinion.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?  
Hearing and seeing none, the Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, I feel I absolutely must speak in support of Bill 4 given my personal history as a former regional executive vice-president – that's REVP – and a member of the senior executive of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, which represented about 180,000 members and was the union that represented me for 32 and a half years as a public service worker. I was also a union president and steward as a volunteer in two separate locals. During that time I had the opportunity to work on essential services agreements for our members on a number of occasions.

First of all, I must reiterate what a number of my colleagues said, and that is that under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms Canadians have the right to unionize and a right to collective bargaining and to strike. Essential services agreements provide protection to the public while also balancing the employer and employee rights under the collective bargaining process. Union members are workers, citizens, and taxpayers, and I believe that they care about what happens in this province. I have participated in many, many strikes during my previous career as a public service worker. Just in case you didn't know, I was a union member.

5:00

In 1989 the welfare programs group, of which I was a member, were not identified as essential. The 1,250 members of this group across Canada went on strike. It had a profound impact on our department and the public. We were all parole officers. All of us recognized there should have been a number of our members designated as essential, not all but a significant number. Our department did not do this, and the public was at risk because of it. Every strike in which I was a participant was for many reasons, but first of all it was about respect. As a parole officer I was a front-line worker. No one ever wanted to jeopardize the safety of the public.

As an example, on September 11, 2001 – you should remember that date – we were on a strike line as members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada were officially on strike. As a parole officer my position had been identified for that particular strike as an essential services worker, and along with my colleagues I was in line to cross the strike line to go to work. We got word of the attacks on the World Trade Center, and as soon as it became known to us, our union nationally took down that strike line until the security risk was addressed. All of our members recognized the importance of providing essential services and what essential services actually are.

As an REVP I was the executive member on one of our bargaining teams. We came to the table to negotiate in good faith. As the team all had been or were front-line workers, we understood the need to have some employees identified as essential. In terms of protection of the public we know that that has to happen. We

knew when the essential requirement was for a few positions or many positions. We knew because we were the front-line workers who provided protection to the public.

Having negotiated what work positions needed to be essential, this provided the balance between both the employer and the employee, and it balanced that with the protection of the public in mind. It also brought a level of respect and credibility to the process that was missing when essential services agreements were not in place. When these agreements were in place, bargaining team members on both sides of the table felt that they could actually really negotiate because they recognized that both sides had some tools if an issue could not be negotiated.

I support this bill, and I urge every one of my colleagues on both sides of the House to also support it. Essential services are – I can't even express to you how important they are. The public needs us to have this agreement, and so do our employers and our employees. Please support this bill.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions for the Member for Lethbridge-East under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, I would call on the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise and speak in support of Bill 4. [some applause] Well, thank you. I'll take that. Absolutely, yes. There's a lot to like in addition to the obvious, you know, keeping up and adhering to the Supreme Court ruling, which is nonnegotiable, of course, and not optional.

The previous comments by the Member for Calgary-Hays I think are very well made, that this legislation puts an emphasis on negotiation. I want to recognize those comments and the experience that backs those comments and brings what I think is a very welcome nuanced view of this issue. There is, I think, an opportunity here for us not just to work together in a spirit of collegiality for the sake of doing that but, ultimately, in recognition that there is perhaps a better way to get things done. The best way to do that is at the bargaining table, where open conversations, perhaps hard bargains, can be driven both ways but done so in a spirit of openness and negotiation.

I also, I guess, want to just build on the comments from the Member for Lethbridge-East. I think it's very timely, and I'm glad that you had the opportunity to go immediately before me because one of the things I like about this legislation is section 95.45. Should there be a situation, should something change – I think the perfect example is what you talked about, the 9/11 scenario – should workers who have not been deemed essential services be on strike and something changes – there's an emergency situation – there is a provision, section 95.45, Significant Change in Circumstances, which allows for application to be brought to deem certain workers and certain services to be essential given a change in circumstances. That's the sort of flexibility that I think we'd all like to see in legislation, and it's a very good example here in this bill.

I do have some questions about the bill. There has been some talk about the power of the commissioner. You know, I do agree with the Member for Edmonton-Manning that – my concerns about the commissioner are not so much the power that the commissioner has. Frankly, someone ultimately needs to be that ultimate arbiter. Somebody needs to decide at the end of the day. What I like is the umpire model, where both sides agree to an umpire and allow that umpire to then make that decision.

The question I have about the commissioner – I'm not even sure I would go so far as to call it a concern, but it is a question I have. It's a nagging question that I have about any sort of appointment

done by Executive Council. Who exactly is appointing the commissioner? While I don't question this government's integrity in choosing someone who will be a truly neutral arbiter, let's just say that perhaps in future governments there may be a risk that that person is weighted in one direction or the other.

I ask that as a question and raise that as an issue not so much because I have a firm answer to exactly how we address that. Of course, it's not a position necessarily, I think, that we would expect to report to the Legislature. I think we need to let the management of the public service ultimately run this, and this Legislative Assembly certainly can't micromanage every single issue. It is just something as I read the legislation and I thought about the model of the umpire. Again, liking very much that we have a scenario where both sides agree who that umpire will be, is there some way we could incorporate that same model or something similar when we're deciding who the commissioner may be?

There's been a lot of discussion about replacement workers and whether or not, in fact, that is strictly within the purview of meeting what the Supreme Court laid out. I suppose that in any legislation there's always a risk of overreach. When I look at that replacement workers provision, I do worry that perhaps that feels a bit different. I've looked at other provinces. British Columbia and Manitoba both have prohibitions on replacement workers in one form or another although I believe that those prohibitions were put in place through a separate process, through separate amendments to labour relations legislation, and not as part of those provinces' efforts to meet the Supreme Court ruling.

Having said that, I just raise that simply again as a question, as to whether or not, in fact, that's an absolute requirement to meet the Supreme Court ruling. You know, perhaps that's something we can discuss further. Maybe even amendments will be brought at some point although I don't think by me. That's something we may have an opportunity to further discuss.

Those are certainly not issues that will cause me to vote against Bill 4. I think it's an important piece of legislation. With that, I will return to my place, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

5:10

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments with respect to the Member for Calgary-Elbow under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise, of course, to speak in favour of Bill 4 for a number of reasons. I think, first of all, I'll see if I can speak without notes here and recall all of the things I apparently used to know about labour legislation. Of course, as my friend the Deputy Premier and Health minister indicated, she thinks about this legislation through the lens of the people in hospital beds and the people that she is sworn to ensure get the services. For me, I have spent less of my time in the last 10 months thinking about labour relations and more time thinking about critters and air, land, and water.

So I'll return to a job I once had with the Federation of Labour. As part of that job I used to teach labour history, Mr. Speaker, and in fact a couple of my students are in this House now. The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane and the hon. Member for Peace River both had to endure my lectures at labour school on the topic of the Public Service Employee Relations Act and the prohibitions on the right to strike. We'll see if we can recall some of that information as we go along here, and these poor people will have to endure yet another Phillips lecture on the matter.

I think it's useful to sort of back up and think about why the Supreme Court ruled in the way it did in the SFL case. The hon.

Member for Calgary-Hays, the leader of the third party, is quite right. These are complicated matters. That is why, you know, PSERA under Lougheed was passed, I believe, in the late 1970s and essential services regimes have been introduced in various provinces through the 1990s, various legal interventions that were found to have overreached. Of course, it took that long to work its way through the court system, resulting in the SFL case.

It's useful to think of why the SFL struck down essential services legislation in the Saskatchewan case. The reason is that the Charter guarantees us the right to freedom of association, and that right, Mr. Speaker, extends to the right to join a union. Now, we don't join a union for no purpose at all. The right would have no real effect if the act of belonging to a union did not result in a meaningful process for collective bargaining.

That is the nub of the SFL case, that what a government may not do is interfere in that right of free association that we have as individuals. As part of that, the substantive exercise of that right is that it must result in something. What was found was that the result of impairing collective bargaining, Mr. Speaker, impaired our right to free association. Collective bargaining as a right, then, its foundation, is the right to withdraw labour. You do not have a collective bargaining process that is meaningful if workers do not have that right.

As the Member for Calgary-Hays indicated, labour relations is a balance. We know this, all of us who have experience with the labour relations environment. There is always a careful balancing. Labour relations boards and others are always interested in this balance. It should be noted that in the SFL case and in the legislation here there must be limits on the rights of employers to impose a lockout, Mr. Speaker. It's both strikes and lockouts. It's not simply the withdrawal of labour, but it is also that there must be reasonable limits on the employers' exercise of simply locking the doors as a way of influencing the bargaining process.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's where the decision to strike down the essential services laws in Saskatchewan came from, and it's where the Alberta decision to reject elements of the Public Service Employee Relations Act came from as well. You know, this was a long process, and Alberta is already overtime with respect to us having appropriately balanced essential services legislation in place. That's why we need to move forward with some haste and not further mire this process in various committees and so on.

Now, I think another really important piece of this is how thoughtfully the minister and the minister before her proceeded in this matter, again with an eye to the careful balance of labour relations and the appreciation, certainly on our government's part, that a careful balance of labour relations leads to appropriate negotiated outcomes. That means, Mr. Speaker, as an extension of that, that it is not appropriate to rip up public-sector contracts, that it is not appropriate to bargain in the media. What is appropriate is to have a regularized, rationalized legal system in which we resolve bargaining between employers and employees.

This legislation comes on the heels of some thoughtful consultation on the part of the minister involved. It also comes as a result of expert advice given to us by Andy Sims, for which we are grateful, quite a robust process given that we also have some exigencies of time, that we must have this piece in place in order to conform with the courts and the law.

Now, I talked about strikes and lockouts, and this is not just about a right to strike. It is also about an appropriate balance for employers, in this case and in many cases the public sector or, in fact, government, to have appropriate steps for a lockout as well. There is a balance here. There are employers and employees. So that's an important point.



I want to talk a little bit about what compulsory arbitration resulted in under the previous essential services rubric, where almost everyone who was very clearly not deemed essential was banned from exercising a right to strike. You ended up at compulsory arbitration, and that was not good for either employers or employees. It was not good for workers, and it was not good, necessarily, or in the public interest for government. The reason for that was that compulsory arbitration forced the hand, and it didn't require anyone to engage meaningfully in negotiation. It just simply pushed everything into the red zone immediately. "Okay. Fine. We can't agree. We're going to compulsory arbitration."

That is not in the public interest. What's in the public interest is for worker groups to understand the current situation facing government and for government to understand the facts that, you know, it may be that in the public sector we have had years of austerity, of cuts, and of devaluation of the important work that public-sector workers do, the majority of whom are women, I might point out.

You know, there is an appropriate balance here that needs to be struck that was not reflected in a compulsory arbitration process. You know, usually arbitration results in higher awards to unions. Unions were happy to go to arbitration quite often. This will ensure that we have a better balance and perhaps a consideration of more of the nonmonetary pieces and so on; in other words, a regularized labour relations environment that prevails in every other mature jurisdiction. That is what we will end up with with the passage of this legislation, which, I'm very proud to say, strikes the right balance.

5:20

On this matter, Mr. Speaker, of its breadth, the fact of the matter is that without some consideration for how replacement workers might be dealt with in an unlikely event of a strike or lockout, there is an impairment of collective bargaining. That is just a simple fact. If the withdrawal of labour does not result in some kind of movement in negotiations, then you, again, have an impairment of collective bargaining. That's why we see similar language in legislation in other provinces.

I want to talk a little bit about what it means to impair collective bargaining and why collective bargaining is so important and why the courts have seen it as a fundamental right, a Charter right, of all individuals to free association and therefore everything that accrues to us from that, what it has meant in practical terms, in substantive terms, the substantive equality that that Charter right confers. Of course, we have legal equality, and we have, then, the substantive outcomes for people. What does it mean on the ground for the women and men in this province?

I would argue that what collective bargaining has done, Mr. Speaker, particularly for women, is that it has led to better pay equity. Women have been able to bargain in family leave. Women have been able to bargain sexual harassment and other components into collective agreements. The other thing that women have been able to do under the pay equity piece – and this is why it's important – is that they've been able to ensure that work done by women does not fall behind on the wage grid as it might do in the private sector, where there is an absence of collective bargaining. So you do see a public-sector wage premium for some work done in hospitals, for example, like laundry and maintenance and so on. Why? Because women have been able to democratically bargain for that, and it has resulted in better wages and a better life for families across this province.

I will remind the House of other things that have been bargained for, in fact through a strike, and that is that Canadian postal workers back in the 1970s, a predominantly male membership, went on

strike for maternity leave, Mr. Speaker, and then that was bargained in. You know, that led the way in this country for an appropriate approach to balancing work and family life that all women and men now enjoy, and that is a result of collective bargaining and that fundamental human right.

A couple of other pieces are important that have been bargained in in the public sector, and again this is on the nonmonetary, Mr. Speaker, and shows the value of bargaining. Joint worker-employer health and safety committees are something that keep people safe. They ensure that there is a negotiated process for workplace hazards where both parties can sit down and – again, to the Member for Calgary-Hays, who recognizes this – seek that balance for safety and ensure that safety on worksites doesn't balloon into an injury or, heaven forbid, a death. They have been proven to save lives, and that's the kind of thing that gets bargained in.

Another important piece that is now becoming bargained in is discrimination based on one's gender identity or gender expression. Those are the kinds of reasons why this right is so important. I think it's important to take a step back and understand what the court has underlined and what this process delivers in terms of a good life for families and workers across this province and the other Canadian provinces, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions or comments with respect to the minister of the environment under 29(2)(a)?

**Ms Jabbour:** Well, as a former student I just have to say that that brought back some wonderful memories. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about labour history. I think what you've helped us understand here today is that by learning the context and understanding where a piece of legislation comes from and why it has developed, it can really give us insight that's absolutely essential. I really want to say that I appreciated that you shared that with us. When you mentioned the laundry workers, again, for me that brought back thoughts of, you know, one of the lowest paid professions, one of the most vulnerable groups, yet they advocated for huge change here in this province. I'm very proud of the work they did, and I'm very proud that we can bring forth this legislation. Thank you for reminding me of all of that.

I think that was all. I don't really have a question, just a comment.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Red Deer-South.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to speak in favour of Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. This bill simply modernizes Alberta's labour laws to reflect the rulings of both the Supreme Court of Canada and the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta. The courts have been very clear. It is the right of all Canadians to join a union if they so choose and to collectively bargain, which includes a right to strike.

Despite what some people may think, not all strikes are about money. More often than not a strike is about work conditions. Prior to my election to this House I was involved in the labour movement for many years, and in that time I have walked many picket lines. My first picket line, though, was in 1969 in B.C. I was nine years old. The meat cutter strike wasn't just about money. It was about safer work conditions. These people were lifting heavy carcasses, causing back injuries. They had no PPE, personal protective equipment, which resulted in broken bones from things like dropping a frozen carcass on your foot. A 400-pound carcass on the

foot crushes toes. They lost fingers because they didn't have meshed gloves, and they weren't allowed them in their bargaining agreement. These were the most important issues that they were fighting for, and everyone has the right to fight for these kinds of issues.

This bill will enable government of Alberta employees, nonacademic staff at postsecondary institutions, employees of Alberta Health Services, and others the right to fight for better work conditions. Working double shifts, working short-handed: these are some of the reasons they need not only the right to bargain collectively but the right to strike. I encourage all members of this House to join me in support of this bill.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think we've had an excellent conversation here this afternoon in our debate on Bill 4 in second reading, so with all the progress that we've made and the things that we've learned, I would move to close debate on second reading of Bill 4.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a second time]

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Seeing as we've made some great progress this afternoon with second reading of this very important bill and that it has now moved into committee, I move that we adjourn until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:29 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, April 6, 2016

Day 10

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
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Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
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Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
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Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
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Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, April 6, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us bow our heads, contemplate, and/or pray in the manner in which each of us chooses. Let us prioritize our duties in this Assembly in order that we can properly fulfill the requests of all Albertans, who are counting on us for assistance and for leadership. In times like these we must remember that we are here for each of them and for one another.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Debate adjourned April 5]

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Status of Women.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to reply to the Speech from the Throne and embark upon my maiden speech as a first-time elected member of the Assembly for the constituency of Calgary-Varsity.

Firstly, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Premier. I'd like to thank her for her leadership, passion, honesty, and care for this province. It is her strength and trustworthiness that Albertans voted for when they elected the NDP to form a majority government. I was elected in a historic sweep in which the people of Alberta voted en masse for dramatic change after 44 years of the same governing political party. I'm still so proud and amazed at what Albertans accomplished when they rallied together on May 5 to effect change. It proved to generations of Albertans that voting actually means something and democratic participation is worth while. I'm proud to be part of a dynamic and diverse caucus. I'm proud that our government was the first in the country to have a gender-balanced cabinet and near gender-balanced caucus. I'm also proud that Albertans elected the first openly homosexual MLAs in the province's history to our government.

Our caucus and government brought in a ministry responsible for the status of women, which had not existed for the past 20 years. As recently as 2009 a prior member of this Assembly and then governing party was recorded to have said that if women want equal, they can find it in little packages at Starbucks. Not on our watch, Mr. Speaker. On our watch women will be represented and will represent the people of this province.

I'd also like to thank the people of Calgary-Varsity, my neighbours, for electing me and trusting me to be their representative in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Being given

the trust of the electorate is perhaps one of the most humbling experiences any citizen can have.

I was born in Calgary at the Holy Cross hospital but raised in Edmonton when my parents, unfortunately, decided to move to the colder city to the north. When my parents divorced, my father returned to Calgary, so I came to know two homes and two cities. I obtained my first degree, a bachelor of arts, from Concordia University college of Alberta, in Edmonton, where I met my husband. We then moved to the fairer city to the south, Calgary. This was a more difficult transition for my husband, a self-identified Oilers fan, but easier for me, a Stamps fan.

It was in Calgary, at the University of Calgary, that I obtained my law degree. Through my studies I had the opportunity to learn much about our justice system. I worked in provincial prosecutions and then in criminal defence. I then began a career in family law, practising mostly in the area of high-conflict parenting litigation. Through my time in practice I helped many people at their worst, and this sparked a burgeoning desire to help folks on a much larger scale through the law and legislation.

Being an independent kind of person, I started my own law practice. I hung out my own shingle so that I could pursue the areas of law that I felt most passionate about and so that I could represent many clients pro bono and without the imposition of the billable hour. I experienced the trials of starting and running my own business in a profession that is still dominated by men. I grew this business into a partnership with another young female lawyer and two employees. Starting my own business gave me a keen understanding of small-business entrepreneurship. Starting and running this business was one of the most trying things I'd ever done yet one of the most rewarding.

After the floods of 2013, in which my own home was flooded, my husband and I sought higher ground. As two young professionals we were looking for a neighbourhood where we could grow roots. We wanted a home that was affordable but not on the outskirts of the city. No, we wanted a place where we could become involved in our community, where we could raise our family close to schools and off-leash dog parks yet still home to the many urban conveniences and amenities to which we had been accustomed while living downtown. We moved to Calgary-Varsity.

Calgary-Varsity encompasses the communities of Varsity, Dalhousie, Brentwood, Banff Trail, University Heights, Montgomery, and parts of Charleswood, which is part of the Triwood community: all communities with proud, active, long-standing, and successful community association representation. While Calgary-Varsity once represented the outskirts of the city, the suburban northwest, Calgary-Varsity is now very much an urban constituency which successfully retains its family and community-centred focus. How is it that in our fast-moving society an urban area can maintain its sense of community? I attribute Calgary-Varsity's ability to maintain its sense of neighbourhood, family, and community to its strong community associations, to its many public schools, its scenic parks where the community gathers, and the many community organizations that call Varsity home.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention the very families that inhabit Calgary-Varsity, new and young, and the many seniors who raised their families in Calgary's northwest. Our seniors in Varsity maintain our community and our sense of neighbourhood and family. Our seniors in Varsity are vibrant and active. They're strong advocates for our constituency and our province. Our seniors have witnessed where we have been, where we are and have a strong sense of what will take us boldly into the future. The bedrock of our province, the information keepers and wisdom givers, our seniors in Calgary-Varsity keep us a family and community-centred

constituency in the midst of whirlwind urbanization and development.

There is no avoiding development. The residents of Calgary-Varsity know this well. Varsity is being thrust into an ever-increasing urban future, but its community-minded residents have created an environment that attracts new families and makes Varsity the kind of place where people grow their roots well into their golden years.

Calgary-Varsity is truly blessed to be named in recognition of such a world-class postsecondary institution, the University of Calgary. The University of Calgary celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. A young university that punches well above its weight, it is the heart of my constituency. Many of Varsity's residents work at, go to school at, or have a degree from the University of Calgary.

Varsity constituents, I believe, are unique from all others. Rarely do they arrive at our constituency office looking for assistance but, rather, to assist. Passionate about the environment, disability issues, education, and seniors' concerns, Varsity constituents will take the time from their busy workdays to educate my staff and me and advocate for positive change in our province and our community. I am increasingly thankful to represent the constituency of Calgary-Varsity and, above all, to call it home. I know that my family, including my husband, Shane, my newborn son, Patrick, and our two dogs, Mokie and Shakespeare, couldn't agree more.

Thank you.

9:10

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Are there any questions for the hon. Minister of Status of Women under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the chance to rise and speak in this hallowed hall. I am humbled. I am honoured to speak to the Speech from the Throne. If you would have told me 10, 11 months ago that I would have been standing here in front of some of the brightest, most hard-working people in the province, with this Mace on my lapel, speaking about the constituency that I call home and the people and the businesses that keep that community running, I would have told you that it was a dream. If you would have told me 10 years ago that when I moved to Beaumont and started working in the community to help my wife support our growing family, I would have had the opportunity to run in a provincial election, talk to thousands of my neighbours and community members about what they hope for the future of this province, I would have told you to keep dreaming. But I am here, I am in front of you, and I do have the incredible honour of telling you about the unique, diverse, and interesting riding that I now call home.

First, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the amazing people of my riding, who have given me the privilege of representing them here, and I endeavour to work every day my hardest for the people of Leduc-Beaumont. I would also like to thank the incredible volunteers on my EDA, who worked tirelessly to get me elected. They were and are truly fantastic teammates, friends, and people. I'd also like to thank my CAs, Colleen Copley and Kim Slomnicki, who keep me organized and on the straight and narrow and who do incredible work serving and helping our constituents. They are the backbone of our constituency office and invaluable, to say the least.

But my biggest thanks go out to my beautiful wife, Kelly, and my two boys: Declan, who is seven, and Maddoc, who is five. They are my heart and my soul, and I would be nothing without their love and support. I am truly blessed to have them in my life, and I'm extremely grateful to them for always being there for me when I

need a hug, a smile, a kind word, or a good wrestling match. My five-year-old now thinks he's John Cena for some reason. My compatriot would love this right here.

Since being elected as the MLA for Leduc-Beaumont, I have had the distinct pleasure of working with three mayors, many councillors, and hard-working admin staff for the town of Beaumont, the county of Leduc, and the city of Leduc. Immediately after being elected, I was welcomed into my role with hearty handshakes and a sense of belonging. I am very grateful to have experienced municipal leaders like Mayor John Whaley from Leduc county, Mayor Greg Krischke of Leduc, and Mayor Camille Bérubé of Beaumont helping show me the ropes. Public service at all levels requires a special kind of commitment, and my community is lucky to have leaders who have been champions of prosperity and community-mindedness as well as co-operation. I am so glad to work as a team with these leaders to weather whatever may be.

Ours is a community of hard-working entrepreneurs and business owners that are hugely committed to giving back to their communities. Large corporations and organizations like the Edmonton International Airport are still supporting local initiatives and organizations there because this is where their employees live and where they are raising their families. The people of Leduc-Beaumont have strong ties there, ties to groups like the Knights of Columbus, who were recently present at the Franco-Albertan flag raising in Beaumont; the Optimist club in Leduc; Lions clubs; Rotary clubs; Kinsmen clubs; the Golden Pioneers in New Sarepta; Leduc & District Food Bank; Linx Connect; the community living association; the drug action coalition; the Boys' and Girls' Club of Leduc; St. Vital Seniors Centre in Beaumont; the 4-H clubs in and around Leduc county, Leduc, and Beaumont; the Riseup House; and Leduc and District Emergency Shelter. These are just a handful.

There are also the business associations like the Leduc chamber of commerce, the Beaumont Chamber of Commerce, and the Leduc-Nisku Economic Development Association, who have all helped me immensely in doing this job. We have the second-biggest industrial park in North America; some say first, but we don't want Texas to be mad, so we say second. With that title comes hard-working, skilled, and educated labour and business owners who know what it's like to roll up their sleeves and find solutions and a community of people who find strength in each other. There are all manner of businesses there, from oil and gas service operations to advanced manufacturing to green energy and renewable operations. The technology created and used in this industrial park is used all over this country and all over the world. They are creating technologies and processes that prove that economic sustainability and environmental sustainability are not mutually exclusive. Renewable energy and fossil fuels will supplement and complement each other and help us to build a more sustainable society and world for future generations. It's most definitely a partnership and not an us-versus-them scenario.

We will continue to be an economic driver in this province. The businesses in Leduc, Nisku, and Beaumont are finding ways to move forward, finding markets, manufacturing to the needs of industry, and finding solutions for businesses who need to adapt to the changes put in front of them, as they always have. Part of my job, I feel, is to listen to these entrepreneurs and innovators and to find out what roadblocks or hurdles are in the way of new and emerging technology and to remove them or tweak them if feasible and to help them have the ability to diversify and create new job markets whenever possible.

Mr. Speaker, I've said some general things about my constituency, but here are a few more specifics. The history of Leduc can be traced back to 1889, when Robert Taylor Telford

settled on a piece of land near a scenic lake, Telford Lake. This piece of land would become the cornerstone of the new town. During those earlier years Robert Telford was the first postmaster, general merchant, and justice of the peace of the settlement, that was informally known as Telford. He also served the community as mayor and as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

In 1890 a government telegraph office was being set up by Mr. McKinely, a settler in the area. He needed a name for the place and said: we shall name it after the first person who comes in. And in through the door came Father Leduc. In 1899 Lieutenant Governor Dewdney of the Northwest Territories decreed that the settlement of Telford should be called Leduc in honour of the notable Roman Catholic missionary Father Hippolyte Leduc, who had served the area since 1867 and later went on to become the vicar-general of the diocese of Edmonton.

I was going to speak French here, but I don't see the translation. I'll give the English first, and then I will give you the French. Beautifully situated, known for its picturesque church on the hill, the town of Beaumont began as a French colony in 1895. Ten acres of land were purchased in 1894 from the Hudson's Bay Company, and a founding resident donated 20 more acres. These 30 acres were the foundation of what became the hamlet of Beaumont. St. Vital church was constructed and completed in the spring of 1895 on these 30 acres of land. In 1899 a group of 38 farmers formed an incorporated company called la Compagnie du Moulin de Beaumont Limitée, Harvest Company of Beaumont. Beaumont moved into the 20th century firmly established as a community with an active commercial base whose social and spiritual life revolved around the church.

Here we go. Située dans un lieu magnifique et reconnue pour son église au caractère pittoresque bâtie sur la colline, la ville de Beaumont fut établie en tant que colonie en 1895. En 1894 10 acres de terrain furent achetées de la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson, et un résident fondateur fit le don de 20 autres acres. Le hameau de Beaumont fut donc fondé sur ces 30 acres de terrain, et au printemps de 1895 l'église Saint-Vital fut construite à cet endroit. En 1899 un groupe de 38 fermiers établirent une compagnie constituée en personne morale, la Compagnie du Moulin de Beaumont Limitée. Ainsi, c'est à titre de communauté bien établie que Beaumont fit son entrée dans le 20e siècle, jouissant d'une saine activité commerciale, ayant l'église au coeur de sa vie spirituelle et sociale.

Located 30 minutes from Edmonton on highway 21, the village of New Sarepta is just moments away from Joseph Lake centennial park and Miquelon Lake provincial park. This village derived its name from a group of German immigrant settlers from Russia. The railway, built in 1912, provided a nucleus for a town, and homesteaders were quick to make the area a farming community. This thriving village is striving to become the cartoon capital of Canada, which I'm sure most of you didn't know, and you can visit its famous fence of fame. Many of the walls in New Sarepta high school are adorned with original cartoon murals created by Yardley-Jones. It's pretty interesting to see.

Looma is a small hamlet of approximately 37 people east of Beaumont, and most I met on my election campaign. Kavanagh is a small hamlet of approximately 38 people south of Leduc. The hamlet was created and settled by workers of Kavanagh block of the CNR and was named for Charles Edmund Kavanagh, who was the railway superintendent.

9:20

There are many amazing places and attractions in my riding, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to highlight just a few of those for the House today. On February 13, 1947, on a farm just southwest of Edmonton news of a huge oil strike at Leduc No. 1 was transmitted around

Alberta, Canada, and the world. This famous discovery marked the birth of western Canada's modern oil industry and has been called one of the most important economic discoveries in Canada's history.

Today the grit, determination, and success of our early oil patch pioneers are preserved at the Canadian Petroleum Discovery Centre, with 13 acres and 23,000 square feet indoors of models, fossils, working rigs, antique equipment, machinery, murals, archives, classrooms, theatre, and more. It's a truly unique museum experience, and I was pleased this past summer to have some of my ministerial and MLA colleagues join me at Leduc No. 1 for the summer rib cook-off and to see the world's oldest drilling crew set to work on the working rig there. I hope you guys join me this summer because we're actually going to be cooking. I hope to have more of you visit this summer, and I also hope we can showcase some of the green and renewable energy sources that will illustrate how we can be an all-encompassing energy province.

The riding I have the honour of representing not only has deep roots in the energy sector, but long before there was Leduc No. 1, there was some of the best – and there still is – agricultural land in the province. In Leduc county we have about 1,250 farms – many are in my riding – with roughly 228 hectares of land used for farming, which is about 15 per cent of county residents who are employed in agriculture. A few years ago Leduc county, out of all the counties in the capital region, ranked first for total crop acreage; had the largest barley, oats, hay, and alfalfa acreages in the region; and also ranked first for the value of livestock and poultry and the largest number of cattle and calves, approximately 60,000 head, which are things to be very proud of.

We also have an amazing Food Processing Development Centre in Leduc. It's a modern, fully equipped pilot plant and product development laboratory facility. It's staffed with experienced food scientists, engineers, and technologists. The centre's services are designed to strengthen and expand the capability of Alberta's food processors to meet the challenges of the marketplace through application of new technology and the development of new or improved products and processes. I had the opportunity to tour this facility last summer and to welcome a Chinese delegation there to see it as well. They were so excited about the place that they inquired about how much it was to purchase within about 15 minutes of being there. I can tell you that we're very lucky to have such a facility in our riding and in our province.

I mentioned the Edmonton International Airport before. It is an integral and very important part of the riding. It provides a good tax base that the county of Leduc uses to invest into our communities, keeping smaller rural towns and villages alive. They also give back to our communities through many different charitable initiatives. Ever wonder where all those liquids and interesting things confiscated at security go? Many of those are donated to the Leduc food bank for families in need.

It is also Canada's largest major airport by total land area and the fifth busiest by passenger traffic and by aircraft movement and Canada's first, I'm proud to say, LEED gold certified airport. Over this past year we've had the pleasure of welcoming Icelandair, KLM airlines, and Air China Cargo, and these new flights in and out of EIA have helped boost our economy and have shown we have a first-class airport here serving the capital region and Alberta.

Speaking of boosting the economy of the capital region, with significant growth projections for this region and the ideal location presented by seamless air-to-ground-to rail connectivity at and around EIA, the city of Leduc, and Leduc county, they are currently embarking on an aerotropolis viability study. Aerotropolis is a land-use strategy that focuses on economic development around an airport. It also leverages the strengths of existing businesses on

airport lands and surrounding areas to encourage further economic diversification and job growth. We're very excited about the positive impacts this will have on our area and surrounding areas going forward.

But wait. There's more. We also have a thriving music and arts community in the riding. In Beaumont we have had since 2008 the Beaumont Blues and Roots Festival, that has been presenting the Alberta capital region with the best in live Canadian blues, roots, folk, rockabilly, and country music. I hope some of you get to come and experience it.

In Leduc we have the amazing Maclab Centre for the Performing Arts. It is a pre-eminent performing arts facility serving the whole county with music, theatre, dance, and more. It is also connected to the Leduc composite high school, giving the kids a wonderful opportunity to explore the arts.

Mr. Speaker, I'm Albertan by choice. I love living in the town of Beaumont and in my riding of Leduc-Beaumont. It has everything my family and I need. It is a beautiful place to live. We've chosen to raise our kids in the county of Leduc because it is an amazing place to raise a family. We love the communities, the people, and the land.

Like some other members of this Assembly and like a lot of Albertans, I moved here with my family for the opportunity that this province provides. I originally grew up in Duncan, B.C., on Vancouver Island, and I come from a long line of farmers and forestry workers. I have family in Saskatchewan, Alberta, B.C., and the U.S.

I am proud to come from a family of hard-working men and women, a family who has worked the land and continues to do so to provide for themselves and those around them. My twin brother – we're fraternal, not identical, and he certainly can't grow a beard like I can – my sister, who's four years younger, and I grew up on a small hobby farm of about five acres, and over the years we had cows, pigs, laying hens, and horses. We had apple trees, and Mom would say on the way to the bus: grab an apple for your lunch and . . . [Mr. Anderson's speaking time expired]

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition member.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My pleasure to rise. I'm so enthralled by the comments from the Member for Leduc-Beaumont. I wondered if he just might like to take a few minutes to conclude his thoughts there.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. You know, we had cherry trees, hazelnut trees, plum trees, blackberries, and grapes. We were a 10-minute bike ride from one of the best fly-fishing rivers in North America and about 15 minutes from the ocean. It was truly an incredible childhood.

I'm blessed to have the two most amazing parents a person could ask for. They are two of the most kind, honest, hard-working, selfless people you will ever meet. We weren't rich, but we never lacked for anything. The love that my parents showed to us and continue to show to us and to everyone who comes into contact with them continues to drive me today. My dad is a strong, stubborn, and honest man, sometimes to a fault. He is blue collar and hard working, and I don't say it enough, but I love you, Dad. I would put my dad's work ethic up against anyone's. Even at 62 that man works harder than anyone I've ever seen in my life. All of my life he has done what it takes to feed and clothe our family.

The forest industry was our main source of income, so, Mr. Speaker, I'm no stranger to the ups and downs of the economy and people losing their jobs and having to do whatever it takes to care for their families. When I have constituents who come in and have

lost their job, who are worried about losing their job, I get it. We've been there. I know they want to work hard and provide for their families, just like my dad did and does. I will always do my best to help those who need a hand up. My mom and dad taught me that you take care of the people around you, and maybe it's my Norwegian and Irish blood and the clan system ingrained in me, but I feel that if you aren't going to help those around you who need it when they most need it, then what are we here for?

My mom is probably the most caring and empathetic person you will ever meet. She consistently puts other people's needs above her own. From her I learned compassion, caring, empathy, and how to listen. I used to joke that we couldn't go anywhere without a random person stopping her to bend her ear and tell her their life story. She's always been there for anyone at any time. I used to joke about it, but not any more because it started happening to me day in and day out. I guess I love people, and they see past my exterior and realize that I am a big teddy bear and that I care deeply for people around me and will always lend an ear and help.

I am fiercely protective of those around me and those that I care for. I will always stick up for the little guy. I guess that's part of why I'm so pro labour. You know, to me, it doesn't matter if you're union or not; I'm going to stand up for you, and that's who I am. That being said, I am proud of my union roots and background and will not back down from them. I am a steelworker, and I am proud of that. My time as a shop steward, vice-president of my local, and delegate to convention gave me the push to run for MLA. My union brothers and sisters were and are behind me, and I will always be thankful for that.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me say this. I hope my colleagues from all sides can see this about me: what you see is what you get. I'm honest. If I don't know the answer to something, I'll admit it, and I'll try to find it for you. I won't ever be purposely misleading or untruthful. I can agree to disagree, and I respect all sides of a conversation or debate, even though I'm mostly right. I don't like playing games unless it's fastball or rugby. I'm straight up and straightforward. I dislike conjecture, speculation, and will always try to base my opinions and judgments and decisions on facts, as I believe we all should. Being informed on a subject is a wonderful thing.

Thank you, everybody, for listening to me today. I appreciate it. It's a pleasure to be here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**9:30**

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Leduc-Beaumont?

Having heard none, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues in the Legislature. It truly is an honour to rise to speak in response to the Speech from the Throne. I want to first of all express my appreciation to the Lieutenant Governor for the grace and dignity that she exhibits in all of her activities, particularly in presiding over this Legislature.

To you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Deputy Speaker, I offer my appreciation as well. The tenor of this House and the quality of the discourse is due to your influence. I know it's frustrating from time to time, but I certainly empathize and appreciate your activities.

I actually want to express appreciation to other members of the House. Like my colleague from Leduc-Beaumont, I really do appreciate the cut and thrust of debate and sometimes interjections across the floor. I'm hoping that my interjections are received in the



spirit in which they're given, which is with some humour and in an attempt to raise the quality of the debate.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank very much the Premier of this province and the other senior members of our caucus. A year ago there were four New Democrat members of this Legislature. They certainly hit above their weight, or whatever the analogy is there. Some of you will recall that my first foray into provincial politics was as a candidate in the by-election in Edmonton-Whitemud in October of 2014. That was a very positive experience for me. It was made much more positive by the support of the four sitting members, and I really do appreciate it. One of them is in the House at this time. I learned a lot from going door to door with the Minister of Education. I learned how to actually listen to people, to appreciate a variety of opinions, and to validate those opinions. I think that is something that all of us should take to heart as we're dealing with our constituents.

I had another experience which was very positive but has left me with some nightmares. I was actually door-knocking with the now Premier. It was getting towards evening, and the Premier in her inimitable way decided that she actually knew how to door knock and didn't need somebody like me hanging around and we could knock on twice as many doors. So I went off with another constituency person and really did do a good night of door-knocking, and then I realized that I'd lost her. I'd lost the Premier, and I wasn't sure where she was.

Any of you that know Edmonton-Whitemud realize that we don't live on the square in Edmonton-Whitemud. There are cul-de-sacs and curved roads, and there are not a lot of lights out and about, so it took a while. What I was most concerned about, actually, was that her husband was back at the constituency office and I was going to have to explain to him that I had misplaced his wife. Fortunately, she was smarter than me and actually tracked me down. Anyway, that was an interesting experience.

I had the now Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure as well as the Minister of Economic Development and Trade out helping me campaign. That was a very positive experience. I was taking on a formidable opponent in that election. Some of you may recall that the three-term mayor of this city was parachuted into that riding by the ex-Premier of this province. I ran because I thought that that was basically an insult to health care, which he was going to become the minister of, and probably an insult to the citizens of Edmonton-Whitemud.

Edmonton-Whitemud was a very fertile ground for the New Democrats. I actually was able to obtain the support of over 5,000 voters in Edmonton-Whitemud in the by-election. That was actually more votes than some of us in this House have obtained in a general election in our ridings. I'm very appreciative to the citizens of Edmonton-Whitemud for their support.

When it came to the general election last May, the results were actually turned right around. Fifty-seven per cent, the majority of the voters in Edmonton-Whitemud, voted for the New Democrat candidate. They voted for the vision, the compassion, the caring that our Premier had shown in that campaign. It was an easy campaign for me, a very easy campaign. Every day during that campaign I was at the doors bringing to the citizens of Edmonton-Whitemud the positive message that this party, the New Democratic Party of Alberta, has.

And it was well received. It was well received because a lot of my constituents are teachers, nurses, laboratory technicians, and, fortunately for me, doctors. The many doctors in Edmonton-Whitemud really appreciated the message that we were bringing funding back to health care, bringing funding back to education. And not just to the primary and secondary schools, we were bringing funding back to advanced education. So colleges,

apprenticeships, the universities knew that they were going to have a supporter in the New Democratic Party.

I want to turn back to the history of developing my interest in politics. Let there be no doubt that I am a democratic socialist. Like the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, I am proud of that designation. I'm proud to say that I am a socialist and dare say that all of you are socialists. You all care about the welfare of man, the social justice, the rights of people. That's what we're here for, so I am proud to say that I am a socialist.

My socialist background actually comes from my heritage. Like the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake – I'm guessing that he has a Scottish background from his dress today – and like the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, who admitted to having a Scottish grandmother, that he wasn't following the precepts of, I'm proud to say that all of my grandmothers are Scottish. And all of them were socialists.

My paternal ancestry goes back to the Highlands in Scotland. My ancestors immigrated from the Highlands to Ontario county in Ontario in about 1850. They were very successful farmers in that area, and then they immigrated to southwestern Manitoba in the late 19th century. My grandfather Andrew Turner, whom I'm named after, was the western Canadian plowing champion in about 1910. It was a real accomplishment. That was done with horses, a single-bladed plow. I have the trophy. It's one of my proudest possessions.

#### 9:40

My father was a child of the Depression, and I certainly gained an appreciation for the nickel and the dollar through his influence. He had to leave school before he was completed because of the Depression, and he went on to work, buying grain in an elevator, and then going to war and spending several years overseas as a radar operator. Like other speakers here today, my father has been a massive influence on me, and I am disappointed that he's not here today for me to tell him.

My mother's parents immigrated from Glasgow to Winnipeg in the early 1900s. My grandfather was a painter. My mother was a product of what was called in those days normal schools, and normal schools basically taught you education. She went out to a one-room schoolhouse in Pipestone, Manitoba, and had to break the ice in the water supply before the kids got to the school, that sort of thing. She was a tremendous influence. She died when I was 20 years old, but again was a tremendous influence on me.

My political influence goes back to Grant MacEwan. Grant MacEwan was the dean of agriculture in Manitoba after the war, in the early '50s, and he ran in Brandon-Souris as a Liberal candidate. My father was a poll captain for him and was very disappointed when Grant MacEwan didn't win that election. It was actually a victory for Alberta since Grant MacEwan moved to Calgary and became dean of agriculture here and is the namesake of our great university in this city. Hearing about that really validated politics as a useful avocation.

My first connection to a political figure actually was with John Diefenbaker. When I was about 12 years old, I received a copy of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms from John Diefenbaker in school. I would recommend that everybody in this Legislature read that document, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We've been talking about rights for workers that are essential services. We've been talking about rights for people that are transgendered. We've been talking about rights for individuals to access physician-assisted dying. When you go back in history, look at that document. John George Diefenbaker, the prairie renegade, was the designer and the writer of that document, and he needs a lot of credit. I don't give him enough credit to ever vote Conservative, but I do see him as a model for my involvement in politics.

My next hero is Tommy Douglas, no doubt. I mean, everybody on this side of the House loves Tommy Douglas. But I have a different connection to Tommy Douglas. October 1970 is a date that should go down in everybody's memory bank. In October 1970 I was a medical student at McGill University, actually living not far from the Royal Victoria hospital, which happened to be right next door to where the British commissioner's office was – well, not next door but very close. The British commissioner was kidnapped, and we all know the story. What happened was that Pierre Trudeau invoked the War Measures Act. The War Measures Act didn't need to be invoked, in my opinion, but the upshot of it was that several hundred people like me, college students, just regular people walking around that area of the city, got put in jail, and they were kept in jail for several weeks without charges, without legal representation.

It was an abomination. It should never have happened. And, you know, the only person that stood up to Pierre Trudeau, the only person who said that this was wrong, this should not have happened in this country, this country which is democratic, was Tommy Douglas. I can tell you that I have voted New Democrat ever since. In every election I have voted New Democrat, no doubt about it, because Tommy Douglas and the people who have followed him in the national party as well as our party here, Grant Notley, when I first moved here, and all of the successive leaders, have had that same gumption, that same devotion to human rights, the same desire to make sure that all of us and all of our rights are protected. I am definitely a democratic socialist as a result.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was really engrossed by the comments of my fellow member here. I was wondering if he could finish his comments.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Well, thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to finish. I apologize to the House for getting so wound up about the importance of human rights. We need to always remember that it is those human rights that are the basis of our democracy and our prosperity.

I do want to mention in response to the Speech from the Throne that there are many things in that Speech from the Throne that are very important; in particular, climate change. I'm a person that put solar panels on their roof several years ago because I am interested in reducing my carbon footprint. This is not a treasonous act. This is not an act that is going to subvert the oil and gas industry. It's my way to reduce greenhouse gas things.

I am very proud of our government's leadership on climate change. This will affect our ability to get our oil and gas accepted in the world's markets. This will improve our environment; this will improve health. I am particularly proud of the fact that we're going to phase out coal generation of electricity, particularly in this area, where this city is subject to the particulate emissions from coal plants to the west. We need to find an alternative, and I am confident that we can do that.

Just last night several of us were discussing advances in the energy field and diversification with members of the Building Trades council as well as the Alberta Construction Association, very positive discussions about how we're going to promote alternative energies and improve the climate of this area.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to make those remarks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Hunter:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I have appreciated the comments made by the hon. member. I have one question, though. As a Wildroser I've had the opportunity to be able to research solar panels and wind energy and have been very interested in it. You talked a lot about, you know, a person's rights and a person's ability to choose their own destiny. You say this is very important. So my question to you, hon. member, is: where do you find the balance between a buy-in from individuals versus legislation that dictates that everybody has to do something?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Dr. Turner:** I'm actually not sure what the question is there. Really, I'm positive that nobody is going to force anybody to do anything along the lines of putting solar panels on their roof. What we want to do is to create the economic situation for transitioning to alternative energies and also to do other things like retrofitting your house by putting more insulation in and, you know, having access to alternative energies like biomass or geothermal. All of these things, I think, are important in how we are facing this climate dilemma.

9:50

**The Speaker:** Are there any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

I would recognize the Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and privilege to rise today to respond to the throne speech. I'm able to speak here today because of the constituents of Calgary-McCall who put their trust and confidence in me to represent them and shared their hopes with me for a better and more inclusive Alberta for everyone. I thank the people of Calgary-McCall for their support and assure them that I am committed to working hard on their behalf, having their best interests in mind, and earning the trust they have shown in me.

Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for Calgary-McCall, first and foremost, I speak for and on behalf of my constituents, and in view of that, I will start by talking about the constituency and the people of Calgary-McCall. Let me begin by saying that Calgary-McCall is the most beautiful constituency in this province. I understand that you and my colleagues in this House might have heard similar claims before, but I'm sure that by the time I finish describing my riding, you will be convinced.

I want to recognize that Calgary-McCall is on traditional Treaty 7 territory. It is located in the northeast quadrant of the city of Calgary. It includes the communities of Castleridge, Falconridge, Martindale, SkyView Ranch, Redstone, Cityscape, and my own neighbourhood of Saddle Ridge, where I have been living since 2007.

Calgary-McCall is one of the most ethnically diverse ridings in the province and, by extension, one of the most culturally vibrant. Calgary-McCall is home to people of aboriginal, European, Asian, Caribbean, African, and Central and South American origin. The people of Calgary-McCall get to experience this beauty and strength of cultural diversity and religion every day of their lives, whether it's through building relationships across ethnicity lines, within neighbourhoods, eating out at restaurants in the community with cuisines much different from their own, or learning a new language and culture through interacting with other parents at the park where their children play. This is what makes Calgary-McCall truly unique and most beautiful.

Mr. Speaker, Calgary-McCall is a riding that celebrates Christmas and Stampede with the same vigour as it does Eid festivals, Vaisakhi, Diwali, and many other religious and cultural events. It's a riding that hoists the Canadian flag with pride on Canada Day and builds a large human poppy to honour fallen soldiers on Remembrance Day. It's a riding that sees people play cricket and field hockey in its fields in summer and boasts of outdoor skating rinks in winter. It's a riding that truly reflects and upholds Canadian values of democracy and harmony in diversity.

Mr. Speaker, Calgary-McCall is home to people from all over the world who, like myself, came to Alberta with a dream of a better life, quality education for their children, reliable health care for their families, and opportunities to reach their full potential. I came to Canada in 2004, and I have been living in Calgary ever since. When I came to Canada, the challenges in front of me were the same ones facing every newcomer who comes to this country in search of a better life. I had to restart my career and my life from a new beginning, and all things considered, I would say that my journey has been exceptionally rewarding. I owe my success in a huge way to this country, to this province, and to the people of Calgary-McCall, who enabled me to be who I am today.

I'm a firm believer that no success ever belongs solely to the success holder. There is always more to it: families, friends, organizations, institutions. Therefore, I would take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank everyone who has helped me in any manner through the course of my journey. I'm also certainly indebted to everyone who stood up for the progressive values and NDP principles in this province that I identify myself with today.

Mr. Speaker, I have a rural and farming background, but the farm life that I witnessed growing up was much different than modern-day farming. It was more of a struggle for survival, and it required a lot of manual labour and hard work in the fields. Despite all of those struggles at home, I can't be more thankful that my family prioritized my education and that I was provided the opportunity to pursue and complete my education. Those values of hard work and sacrifice are the values that I will try to live by while serving my constituents, as I know many colleagues strive to do.

I came to Canada with a master's in economics, but as a newcomer to Canada I worked in all kinds of starter jobs to make ends meet. One common thread in all my jobs in those days was that they were all minimum-wage jobs, which helped me relate first-hand to and appreciate the financial hardships that minimum-wage earners go through. Based on that experience, Mr. Speaker, I can say with authority that an increase in the minimum wage does and will help. It will make a difference. It will make a difference in the lives of so many hard-working Albertans, including Albertans living in my constituency whose families depend on minimum wage. I know that, and I have lived that. That is why today I'm very proud to stand with a government that recognizes the struggle of families who live on limited income and means and has committed to improving their lives because in a healthy, productive, and inclusive society everyone matters.

Mr. Speaker, in 2007 I went to the University of Calgary to pursue further education, and I completed my master's in social work and a law degree. During my time at university I worked at a homeless shelter, but financially that wasn't enough to put me through school. I wouldn't have been able to finish my schooling without the support of my eldest sister, who also lives in Calgary, and the financial assistance that I received from the government in the form of student loans and scholarships. Given the trajectory in my life I am convinced that education has been the single most important investment that I have ever made, and I wouldn't be standing here today without it. As outlined in the throne speech, in this province what we wish for ourselves, we desire for all.

Mr. Speaker, I want every Albertan to have the same opportunity that I had, and this is why I fully support my government's priority and focus on children's education and advanced education, priorities clearly articulated by the government's decision to reverse funding cuts to education and to provide stable and predictable funding to school boards and universities and to freeze tuition fees for postsecondary students.

Mr. Speaker, while I was campaigning for my election and going from door to door, talking to my constituents, I repeatedly heard concerns respecting health care, education, and recreational facilities in the area. Many parents shared with me that they had to send their children to school in the northwest and southeast quadrants of the city. That was not just an inconvenience for the parents but also was unfair to the children, who spend a lot of time commuting.

Other concerns that have been shared by my constituents are the need for schools with an English as a second language focus and the need for more facilities such as funeral homes with culturally appropriate services, and additional sports facilities. Although we do have an amazing recreational facility called the Genesis Centre in my riding, which welcomes over 1 million residents per year for a variety of programs and services, we do still need more such facilities. These issues reflect the social and infrastructure deficit that we inherited and that need to be dealt with. Mr. Speaker, it makes me proud that our government has committed to an investment of \$34 billion in much-needed infrastructure projects that Alberta currently lacks but crucially needs. I'm pleased that there are six new schools planned for Calgary-McCall, including the Nelson Mandela high school, which is due to open this fall. In the coming days and months I look forward to working with my colleagues on all issues that matter to my constituents and all Albertans.

10:00

Mr. Speaker, I also held two open houses, on January 9 and March 26, in my constituency to learn about the constituents' views on various issues and gather their feedback and input so that I am able to represent them better. The constituents shared their views and valuable feedback relating to many issues; however, the economy and job situation topped the discussion. Also, like many other Albertans they stressed the need to cut reliance on a single commodity, a single price, and a single market.

I also note that my constituency is home to many new Canadians and lower income Albertans, and based on available data, the average household income in this constituency compares lower than other constituencies in Calgary, and the unemployment rate in this constituency has remained higher than the provincial average.

I'm pleased that the throne speech prioritizes expanding access to workforce skill training and retraining for the unemployed. It articulates the government commitment to diversifying the economy and supporting small and medium-sized businesses with venture capital, investing in a green and more sustainable economy, and investing in necessary infrastructure. I'm confident that the initiatives and priorities identified in the throne speech will lead Alberta to emerge with an economy stronger than ever, thus benefiting my constituents and all Albertans.

I'm also very pleased that our government is standing up for Albertans who are facing immediate hardships. At times like this we must think of our children first. The new child benefit will provide \$340 million for up to 380,000 children in low-income families, and it certainly will go a long way to address child poverty in this province and help families make ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, prior to getting elected, I was practising law in the field of aboriginal law, and I'm very pleased that the throne speech

indicated the repeal of Bill 22 and a commitment to engage indigenous communities on future consultation frameworks. I also note that the throne speech outlined the government's desire to consult on a new indigenous peoples' sacred ceremonial objects repatriation act. From my previous work experience and conversations with my colleagues from the legal profession I can appreciate how important these steps are for indigenous people, and I am very proud to be a part of the government that believes in and is taking steps towards renewing the relationship with indigenous communities in this province.

Also, it shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone that I have a background in the labour movement, and I'm very pleased to see the government taking steps to implement the Supreme Court of Canada ruling respecting workers' right to strike. I'm confident that the Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services will protect and strengthen the rights of hard-working Albertans who dedicate their lives to serving fellow Albertans.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge and thank my constituents once again for putting their faith in me to speak for them. I would also like to thank my family and my friends, whose consistent encouragement gave me the strength to follow my passion and my dream. Also, I am indebted and thankful forever to everyone who supported me in my journey and inspired me to do my best and be my best. I know that I am here because of all of them and the people of Calgary-McCall, and I pledge to never let them down.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to congratulate the hon. minister for the great journey he had and for the great success he had. In fact, both of us moved to Canada at the same time. We took different paths to politics, but both of us are here today. He had the opportunity to actually make a difference, and he also represents the most diverse riding in Calgary, in the northeast part of Calgary. Very few have had the opportunity to serve in the cabinet being new Canadians, and he has the opportunity today to do a lot for other new Canadians, so I would like to know from him: what is he doing to help new Canadians with respect to recognition of overseas graduates, I mean, their educational accreditation in Canada? There are so many foreign medical graduates driving cabs in his part of town.

Also, Calgary was hit due to this low oil price economy. What is he doing to help all those jobless people looking for jobs? How is he advocating for them within his caucus, and how does he plan to help those new Canadians?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the kind words. I think there were two questions. One was relating to education credentials for people coming from overseas. I indicated that I came here with a master of economics degree only to find out when I went to university that that was equivalent to a BA, and when I applied to the department of economics, I further found out that I didn't have math 30, so I'm not even eligible to go back into the master's program. Those are the differences between the education systems in various parts of the world. Where I was coming from, we have a bachelor's degree that we complete in two years while across Canada and all G-8 countries and even many developing countries it's four years.

Those things I believe that we can't change unilaterally here unless the systems in other parts of the world are on par with the

modern education system in the developed countries. For the most part those credentials are recognized within the framework of immigration, which is a federal matter, but I am willing to play my role if I can help in any way to change that and facilitate that for the newcomers.

The second thing: the member mentioned how I am helping Albertans during these tough times. As I indicated, the throne speech has outlined many initiatives and priorities that will help Albertans get back to work, and I'm certainly part of those discussions, and I fully support those initiatives. The first bill that was introduced in this House was focused on job creation and economic diversification, and that certainly indicates that that's the priority of our government, that's our priority as a caucus as a whole for us and to get Albertans back to work. There are many investments and initiatives that are listed in the throne speech, and I'm confident that those initiatives will help Albertans to get back to work, and I fully support those initiatives.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting to note the educational background of the hon. member. I have a particular interest in economics, of course, as you might have guessed, and I would be interested to know, based on the education you have in economics, your thoughts on governments taking limits off spending. From your educational background could you maybe explain to all of us your thoughts on borrowing money for operational expenditures by a government and the impact that might have?

Thank you. [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

**The Speaker:** I don't think you'll get the opportunity.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the last session of the Legislature I was able to stand and deliver my maiden speech. Those 15 minutes were easily filled because St. Albert is a remarkable community. I won't tell you that it's the most beautiful, but it is. [interjection] Thank you. St. Albert is remarkable in a lot of ways. It's remarkable for its history – it's one of the oldest communities in Alberta – for its growth, and for its people. There are a lot of famous people that come from St. Albert: Lois Hole, Jarome Iginla, and Mark Messier, to name a few.

St. Albert has been recognized nationally as one of the best places to raise a family. I could go on and on, but I won't. That's not what I'm going to focus on today.

**10:10**

Always the nerd, I used to watch question period on my computer while I was working, and I can remember saying so many times: I wish I could get all of those people trapped in a room for about an hour so I could let them know what I think about certain issues. Surprise.

I wanted to explain some of the issues about the sector that I worked in most of my adult life, so I'm going to give you a little history. Before being elected the MLA for St. Albert, I was the executive director of the Lo-Se-Ca Foundation. I managed an organization in St. Albert that was one of the largest employers in that community, and we offered community supports for people with developmental disabilities. We offered residential supports, which means we had staff go into people's homes so they could live independently in the community, as independently as possible, from living in their own apartment, their own condominium to having a roommate, having a couple of roommates. We also offered

employment supports and day program supports, all the way from supporting someone to do volunteer work in the community to helping someone find a job that they wanted and making sure that that job was doable for them.

The lens that I viewed St. Albert through was always focused on the people of St. Albert with disabilities, their families, and their friends, so I'd like to share some of those things, and I'd like to tell you about some remarkable St. Albertans that you probably have never heard of but were giants in my life.

Bryan Muntjewerff: he's no longer with us. He grew up in St. Albert. He lived his whole life in St. Albert. His family was instrumental in getting the Special Olympics started in St. Albert. It actually was his dream to have his own place, to live as independently as possible, and with staff support he did do that. For the last 15 years of his life, I believe, he had his own condominium. He participated in his community, and he volunteered.

Sonny Rochette was a young man, originally from Quebec, who also wanted to live as independently as possible: have a job, have a girlfriend, get married one day. That didn't turn out. He died at a very young age, but we were able to be part of his life and to support him.

Len Bambush, another fellow who's no longer here, spent the majority of his life in the Michener Centre. He was taken there as an infant, grew up there, but in his 40s actually managed to transition to the community. We were lucky enough to get him, so we were able to support him for about 15 years, I believe, and he was able to live out the end years of his life in the community with friends. He didn't have family anymore, but he had friends. He had a meaningful life.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I would encourage you to raise your voice.

**Ms Renaud:** Oh, sure.

Joanne Lewis, another woman, who was all of about four foot two, was the most powerful woman I've ever met. She had Down syndrome, and she always wanted to have her own life in the community, and she did. She lived her life that way. She lived her life exactly the way she wanted to.

Lastly, Gordon Opleta, another man who we supported to live in the community, to have a job. He was somebody that had the same job for 20 years. I don't think he ever had a sick day. I don't think he was ever late, and I don't think he ever had a mean word to say to anybody.

These were giants in St. Albert. These were people who shaped my life, but what I wanted to say about them is that none of them ever suffered from a disability. None of them were defined by the disability that they did have, and they were only the most vulnerable when their power was given away by a label. They were always people first.

Getting back to the point of having you locked in a room, I wanted to explain a little bit about this sector because I think it is very complex. It was very complex for me to learn when I first started out. Persons with developmental disabilities is a department of a very large ministry. What it supports are people with developmental disabilities right across Alberta, and it provides supports, staff supports, for them to live in the community and for them to work in the community.

AISH is a whole separate issue. It's assured income for the severely handicapped. It provides income to people who are unable to work, and it allows them to also live in the community. I think there are many times that people get those things confused. Housing is very much a separate issue in many ways from supports for people with disabilities.

I've said a number of times in this House that, you know, we use the word "inclusion" a great deal. I want to remind you that inclusion is a verb. It's not a buzzword. I think that we have to be careful when we use it because we have to back it up. There are approximately 10,000 people in Alberta that are supported by PDD. There are thousands and thousands and thousands of people who work in this sector. I'm pretty sure that in every single constituency right across this province there are people with disabilities and there are people that work in this sector.

In 2009 a woman with Down syndrome died in a flashover flame fire. At the time of the fire she was in a basement, and she tragically died of smoke inhalation. A couple of other very tragic incidents involved some scalding deaths. As a result, you may have heard that there were some safety standards that were drafted by the bureaucracy of PDD at that time. There were eight actually. They focused on safety inside and out of the home, furnishings, environmental requirements, medication administration, water temperature, compliance with the Safety Codes Act, zoning, and inspection by public health. There were some strange exceptions to those regulations, but I won't get into that.

What that was was an example of absolutely well-meaning regulations and work done by a group of people that were absolutely well-meaning, but they missed the mark. They missed the mark because they did not consult the people. They didn't consult the people whose lives were affected by these changes. As a result – and I'm sure you've heard recently – there was a lot of confusion, there was a lot of anger, and there was a lot of talk about these regulations really missing the point and, really, in a way, bubble-wrapping people with disabilities to the extent that it removed choice.

If we didn't already know this, I'm certain we've learned in the last 12 months, for sure since May 5, that active engagement by families and communities is at the heart of social and cultural reform. People with disabilities, their families, their friends, unpaid supports know that community living is essential. The alternative is segregation and congregation, and we all know those ugly stories. We know the ugly legacy of eugenics, forced sterilization. I was so thrilled to see us all stand in the House out of respect to Leilani O'Malley Muir, who died just a few weeks ago. This woman was a fierce advocate. She was sterilized for failing an IQ test, and she successfully sued the province of Alberta in 1995.

The reason that I was telling you a little bit about the PDD safety standards and the services that we as a government offer was that what was incredibly meaningful for me – and I never would have believed this over a year ago – is that we actually had the ability to go back and to consult where a consultation should have happened. I am thankful to the Minister of Human Services, who chose to strike a committee to look at these regulations. This was a very, very different consultation than what we were used to. During my time in the sector I can't even count the consultations that I had been to. I don't really know why sometimes they were called consultations; they were more of a lecture.

But these consultations were about sitting down and having conversations with people, and I think the first few were a bit odd. People walked in the room and didn't really know what to do. Where do I go? Who's speaking? When does it start? We had to let them know: no, we're just here to listen. Just sit down. We have some very general questions for you. Tell us what's working. Tell us what you'd like to see and what your ideas are. Again, it was very unusual to do a consultation like that, but it was so incredibly meaningful. I think we received over 1,200 online submissions, and I think we met with about 750 people across Alberta. We stopped in Westlock, Grande Prairie, Edmonton of course, Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Fort McMurray. I understand

that people are busy – I get that – but I was really disappointed that there wasn't even one MLA from any of the opposition who showed up at these consultations.

**10:20**

One of the biggest questions that we asked people at those consultations is: what is safety? What makes your home safe, and what makes you safe? What we heard again and again and again is that what makes people safe is a real home in a real community, no different than ours, no different than people without disabilities. What makes people safe is a decent income, a job, access to qualified and consistent staff. Certainly, every Albertan deserves to live in the safest environment possible, but we can't legislate all aspects of people's lives. What we heard very loud and clear was that more than anything people with disabilities, their families, their friends, their biggest fear was of creating a home that looked like an institution. What keeps people safe is learning from tragedies and creating inclusive policies that don't create more complex barriers.

Our next steps are phase 2. You heard last week that the PDD safety standards were repealed. I am so incredibly thankful. The many, many people that I know in St. Albert, people with disabilities, their families, are overjoyed, and I don't think any of us ever imagined that this would happen.

These are very complex issues. I hope that my time here has created a little better understanding, and I hope that you'll remember at least some of what I've said when you face difficult choices that shape policy for people with disabilities, their families, and their friends. I hope that you're all better equipped to make informed decisions.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much to the member for her comments. I really do appreciate them.

I have been doing some significant work in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills on this particular file and engaging with service providers and individuals that require assistance. On behalf of the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and particularly individuals in this community that raised many of the concerns with me that you have raised in the House today, I appreciate the work that you're doing on that file in whatever way the work is getting done. I know that there are members of this caucus who are passionate about this particular issue, particularly my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View and some of her personal experiences in this region. There is so much important work that needs to be done in and around this file. There is a long way to go, and I appreciate the work that's been accomplished on the safety standards and an effort to try and get that right.

From the members of the PDD community that I represent, from myself, I appreciate that work and hope that in future – unfortunately I was unable to make it to the closest event, and the only one that I could have gotten to was in Fort McMurray, which was distance prohibitive. I do appreciate the work that has been done.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to respond quickly. At one of the consultations, actually in Red Deer, there were a number of people from the surrounding communities that did tell me how supported they felt by their MLA, who was actually

willing to listen and had gone out of their way to listen. So thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** First of all, thank you very much to the member for her speech. This is an area that touches me quite personally because I have a hearing impairment challenge. I was at the meeting in Lethbridge, and I got incredible feedback from those persons who attended that meeting.

Could you share a little bit some of the major issues that you heard about when you were doing your consultation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you. The biggest thing that we heard was that people wanted to be consulted. Before decisions were made, whether it was about funding or the structure of a system, people wanted to be heard and consulted. Safety was less about sprinklers and fire extinguishers and slow-burn drywall, and it was more about inclusion. It was about being accepted in the community, being part of the community, being employed in the community. That was what we heard again and again everywhere we went. You know, I wasn't totally surprised, but it was incredible to hear it from hundreds of people across the province.

Thank you.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I've been really touched by the fact that the MLA for St. Albert actually named people that she worked with in her speech because very often we don't recognize people that we have worked with. I wanted to really thank the member for that.

I also wanted to thank her for her work that she has done on the PDD review. I was really interested in what she and the minister thought would happen in the second phase of the PDD review.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you. Well, the regulations that were created are repealed, but they do need to be replaced with something that will keep people safe. Although it sounds like a very simple question, I think the task ahead of us is huge. I don't think that at the very beginning we envisioned this process going as long or being as complex as it is, but I am quite thankful that we're going to be given the time to do this properly. I'm not entirely sure what phase 2 will look like, but it will look at crafting or designing some solutions based on what we heard and then testing them and then really listening to people.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today in reply to the Speech from the Throne for the 29th Legislative Assembly of this great province of Alberta. I'd like to begin by thanking the Hon. Lois Mitchell, who is doing Alberta proud in her work as Alberta's 18th Lieutenant Governor. I'd also like to take this moment to congratulate our Premier for leading us into a new government and for all of the advice and work that I have been able to accomplish with her. She's served as a role model in my involvement with politics.

I'd also like to take a moment to congratulate the new ministers of cabinet, but especially our minister responsible for the status of women. As you know, this minister is also a new mother, the first in Alberta to give birth while in office. Minister McLean's bright and steadfast spirit is not only something I deeply admire; her spirit

also reminds me of the strength and persistence in my constituency of Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Each time I enter a meeting with my constituency, I see a fierce love and dedication to their community reflected in their eyes. I see dedication to co-operation and knowledge of how to get things done. I have a deep respect and appreciation for this community, and it holds a special place in my heart, having been the first place I called home upon arriving in Canada.

See, I was born in Colombia, and my family immigrated to Alberta when I was five years old to pursue a better life. My brother and I and my parents, too, went through a huge culture shock. I was born blocks away from an ocean in a small town that barely had running water. We were to move to Sherwood Park. It was a vibrant community, but it's quite different from where I was used to. Often my brother and I were told we were being too rambunctious, and I struggled to learn English. When you live by an ocean, you talk louder. It serves me well here, but maybe it didn't back then.

#### 10:30

The community of Sherwood Park was so welcoming that that's where we thrived. My dad taught me to step outside of my comfort zone and start public speaking from a very young age. I remember a lot of microphones being put in my hand with very little instruction as to what I was supposed to do next. He was a leader in the Spanish community in Sherwood Park and the surrounding areas, and a lot of new Canadians would have his phone number and would call him up as soon as they arrived in order to get help in getting employment and guidance in situating their new lives here without family. So I remember sitting under tables playing games as a young child, listening to a lot of stories of resilience, hardships, and new beginnings. A lot of these immigrants, from refugees to the newly immigrated, created a lot of sacrifices in order to get here, and from them I learned that I have the motivation to make sure that there are opportunities for everyone moving forward.

My mother worked with people with disabilities. I started helping her when I was 12, babysitting children with autism and learning more about behavioural strategies. I followed in her footsteps and became an educational assistant for children with disabilities before focusing on my social work studies. My mother also helped me figure out that resilience is one of our strongest qualities as humans.

You know, the MLA for St. Albert was discussing the importance of working with communities with disabilities, and I absolutely agree with that. I actually have a learning disability myself. I actually learned to read using some of my technical skills, and, luckily for me, my mother was a speech pathologist. I actually didn't know how to read very well until I was in junior high. I learned to read by programming the first iPod at that time, and I converted it into something that was visually something that I could actually read. What I know from that is that our ability to problem solve allows for the adaptations necessary for anyone to be successful.

You see, my parents always taught me the value of community spirit and the importance of helping to take care of others, and they always encouraged me to challenge myself and to step into leadership roles. It's an attitude that I see everywhere in my constituency. I want to express my deepest appreciation for the sacrifices my parents made in putting their children first and moving to Alberta to ensure a brighter future for us children. It requires a lot of sacrifices from immigrant parents in sacrificing their own future for us.

Being one of the first elected openly LGBTQ Hispanic MLAs – and I don't think it takes long to realize that I am also one of the youngest and definitely the youngest whip in Alberta's history – it

is clear that these sacrifices are not only worth while but that I am proud of this province and what this recent election has shown to a lot of minority groups, that this is a welcoming and inclusive province, abundant with opportunity. It's a message well received by those minority groups when I go to visit youth, when I go to visit LGBTQ communities and Spanish-speaking communities. Largely they've been left out of the mainstream conversation, and to be able to identify within the language and the community that they come from is a significant step forward.

I'd like to acknowledge my partner, Aleisha, who has been instrumental to my overall success. She is my sounding board and my calm in the storm, keeping me grounded, which allows me to be at my best and to focus on serving my constituents. As you might know, this job can be a little time consuming, and I am grateful that she is always there to bring some balance into my life. Aleisha has been an Edmontonian all of her life. She is coming to love Sherwood Park as she gets to know the community.

Strathcona-Sherwood Park is a community made of leaders. From business leaders to agricultural leaders to educational leaders, we are what it means to be rural, and we are deeply proud of our diversity. The advantages of rural-urban constituencies are apparent to many that visit our community. Our agricultural sector regularly works hand in hand with our business sector to find solutions to issues of our province and that our world is facing.

If any of you have had a chance to visit the Beaver Hills initiative, you'll know what I mean. The Beaver Hills initiative was recently designated as a UNESCO biosphere reserve to conserve the valuable cultural and ecological resources that exist within my community. This initiative will not only provide rural landowners with economic incentive to take advantage of their natural capital; it will also create new business opportunities for agriculture and rural tourism in a sustainable way. Much of our sense of pride comes from innovation like the Beaver Hills initiative and contributions we regularly make to the world around us.

Acreages, farms, and ranches make up a large part of my constituency, and on a smaller scale my constituents are proven stewards of the land. Many of my constituents work in the Industrial Heartland as well, whose contributions to Alberta's economy are remarkable.

Our innovations in refining have provided many of the building blocks necessary to capitalize on the province's new petrochemicals diversification program. Adding more value to our resources while creating economic activity and jobs is more important than ever. Our government made a commitment to support greater economic growth and diversification, and we're acting on that commitment. The new petrochemicals diversification program will help our province compete for new investment and job opportunities by turning our raw resources into foundations needed for plastics and other goods. My constituents are excited about this opportunity to strengthen our local economy and contribute to the economic success of Albertans and all Canadians.

I would be remiss not to mention one of the groups that drives economic activity in Strathcona county, the Strathcona and district chamber of commerce. They work tirelessly through luncheons, breakfasts, trade shows, and many more networking opportunities, and they play a vital role in supporting our business sector and are always willing participants in both government and community activities.

I've said it once, and I'll say it again: Strathcona-Sherwood Park is a community made of leaders. Leadership is cultivated in my constituency through a culture of empowerment. Residents are empowered and inspired to join community leagues and start businesses and join their condo boards. Many opt for all three

because they know that the opportunity to have your voice heard is endless. They believe in the power of consultation and advocacy.

One of the most vocal groups in my constituency is Seniors United Now. I had the pleasure of sitting down with about 40 seniors to discuss ideas for a better Alberta. One of their main concerns was affordable housing. Many of our seniors have been living in the constituency for decades and are intent on continuing to contribute to their communities for the years to come. We all know that Albertans deserve to live in a safe and secure home no matter what their income. Seniors built this province, and we need to do the best we can for the wisdom-givers of our community.

I was pleased to share with them the fact that our community, our government have made affordable housing a priority, and we are working with the federal and municipal governments to find a solution that will increase flexibility and sustainability in the current affordable housing system. We must take care of one another, and I know that on the municipal level, as previously mentioned, there has been a task force in our county that reflects the need for affordable housing and proposes some recommendations. That also reflects the mantra that we must take care of one another.

When it comes to walking the walk, our emergency response teams are a strong example of this. Our community, like many others, struggles with domestic violence. Many folks from our emergency response system have ties to women's shelters and serve our communities, and they make an effort to raise awareness and provide volunteer assistance to these members of our community that are in a vulnerable situation. This dedication to gender equity is important to the communities across this province and a priority for our government. Alberta's Ministry of Status of Women is focused on decreasing violence against women and girls, increasing leadership and democratic participation, and increasing women's economic security. We know that we cannot build a stronger, more prosperous province if we leave women behind. That is why our caucus is committed to including the voices of women in our policies, programs, and legislation, and Alberta will be better off for it.

**10:40**

Strathcona-Sherwood Park is an example in community collaboration. This is an expansive constituency spread through many communities, but they always find ways to connect with each other. Strathcona county came together to build a rec centre in Ardrossan, providing those rural communities with access to much-needed services. They have created a bookmobile, essentially a travelling library, that becomes a weekend hub of connection for the surrounding communities.

In December I had the privilege of visiting many community leagues in Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and I would encourage every member of the House to buy a ticket to the Christmas in the Country event, where you get on a bus in the morning and tour through my fantastic constituency. I won't get into a fight about who has the best community. This bus makes a stop at various community leagues, providing an opportunity for you to explore the diverse and beautiful parts of the province, meet interesting locals, and acquire all the gifts that you may need for the holiday season.

Albertans voted for a government that would begin investing in their future immediately. This means investing in their schools, roads, health care, and public services. Strathcona-Sherwood Park is filled with advocates, experts, and private citizens passionate about being engaged and involved in the democratic process, that is leading Alberta to more prosperity. I'm honoured to support and collaborate with these inspired people in a journey to a stronger and better Alberta.

My constituency elected me to be a fresh, young, new voice, and it is time for these new voices and new faces to create an opportunity for all Albertans to be reflected in the Legislature. I believe that our caucus has the energy, the tenacity, and the diversity of abilities and knowledge required to lead Albertans through this challenging time. I look forward to the coming opportunities to represent my constituency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

### **Bill 4 An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services**

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm really pleased to rise and speak to Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, here in Committee of the Whole. During the debate at second reading there were a lot of really good questions asked about this legislation, and I'm really excited to get into more of a dialogue about this bill and what we're doing with it.

Just to frame the discussion, the purpose of this bill is to bring Alberta's public-sector labour relations legislation into alignment with the directions from the Supreme Court of Canada and the Court of Queen's Bench, making sure that workers have the right to join a union if they so choose, to collectively bargain, and the right to strike, that was deemed to be fundamental. What we've tried to do with this legislation is to strike the right balance between the right to strike and making sure we're protecting vital public services. With that, we have implemented a framework that puts the responsibility on the two parties to come together to negotiate an essential services agreement. Both parties need to come to the table in good faith, and it puts a lot of that negotiation and that determination of what is essential on the parties, who understand each work environment the best.

When looking at setting up this legislation and looking across the country at the types of essential services approaches, we found that across Canada there are generally two types, a co-operation centred approach, in which both parties work together to negotiate essentiality, or the mandate-centred approach, where the government makes a determination and says, "This is essential; that is essential," and names, perhaps, specific job titles or other specific determinations. It was a mandate-centred approach in Saskatchewan that was ruled inappropriate by the Supreme Court, so Alberta has chosen to use a co-operation centred approach and, in determining this legislation, has really focused on creating a system that is going to allow the parties to work together to come to an amenable conclusion.

With that – I won't go on at length at this point – I am looking forward to the discussion and working with all of my colleagues to get the best Bill 4 we can. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.



**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's important that any legislation like this, which pertains to integral and often life-saving services that Albertans depend on, is carefully scrutinized. The legislation as presented lays out minimal requirements for the contents of an essential services agreement, but as worded it allows for the government to quietly expand upon those regulations at a later date. In fact, the way the legislation is laid out, those requirements that are in the legislation and those that can be quietly added on at a later date would be requirements of equal significance. This backdoor ability allows the government to make significant changes to essential services agreements without the oversight and transparency of the Legislative Assembly.

I wish to introduce an amendment to address this. Now, I have the requisite number of copies of the amendment. Just let me know when you would like me to continue reading.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Hunter:** Madam Chair, I move that Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be amended in section 8 in the proposed section 95.41: (a) in subsection (1) by striking out clause (g) and (b) by striking out subsection (4).

There's nothing in the Supreme Court decision that promoted this legislation requiring backdoor regulatory expansion of the mandatory contents of an essential services agreement. I want to be clear that this is not meant as an indictment of the current government or the minister. Frankly, it isn't helpful if any government of any political stripe is able to make significant alterations to what is required to be in an essential services agreement. Given the significance of essential services legislation any expansion of what needs to be in such an agreement should be given proper oversight through the Legislative Assembly. The requirements of what is to be in an essential services agreement between the two sides at the bargaining table is perhaps one of the most consequential parts of any legislation on essential services. Accordingly, it should be given due scrutiny and legislative oversight when changes are sought.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Albertans need to know that essential services agreements will be thorough and capture the unique aspects of each workplace in order to ensure vital public services are maintained during a strike or lockout. The section that is being amended, section 95.41(1), defines the contents of an essential services agreement, stating that "an essential services agreement must include at least" and then goes into some of those minimum requirements.

**10:50**

The intention of this section and the inclusion of (g) was to allow the government a little bit of flexibility in that definition of what's required in an ESA should it need to be expanded as the parties enter into essential services negotiations for the first time in Alberta. I do want to be clear that there was no intention here to pass the legislation and immediately add regulations, rather more the thought that this is something new and if we needed to add additional items, through regulation might be a way to do that.

That being said, I can understand the opposition's hesitancy to support this section. We do have other mechanisms. The legislation allows the parties themselves to add additional requirements to an essential services agreement, depending on the nature of the workplace. The commissioner will have the authority to send an

essential services agreement back to the parties if he or she feels that the requirements to meet essential services for a particular workplace have not been met.

Our government has committed to working with all parties. I know that I myself have enjoyed that privilege as chair of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee and then through my role as minister, being able to reach out to opposition critics and have these discussions. So I really appreciate that this is a reasonable amendment. I know that I and my other government members are prepared to accept reasonable ideas and good suggestions regardless of where they may come from. That's not something that's always been the case in this House, but I think it makes sense.

With that, I am prepared to support this amendment. I am interested to hear what others in this House might think of this, but I think removing the referral to regulations would be reasonable and that the other mechanisms we have in the legislation will ensure that we still have good essential services agreements being negotiated by the parties.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to the amendment. I'd like to begin by thanking the minister for her comments and just acknowledging that she is right when she says that good ideas can come from anywhere. I know that from time to time the government likes to say that we have no good ideas, but we can all circle the calendar today because the day has come where we had one.

Anyway, I think it's wonderful that we have the opportunity to have a conversation about this. I certainly would have preferred the ability to have this conversation at the committee level so that we could have had other voices, not just legislators' voices. But we're going to spend the rest of the morning and likely some of the afternoon talking about a number of amendments that the opposition is going to propose.

Our goal when we come to the Assembly isn't just to oppose the government. We will bring a number of amendments this afternoon, all with the same intent of strengthening a piece of legislation. There are many good things about this piece of legislation. Many of those things have been set out by the Supreme Court, and we need to ensure that we are respectful of that decision.

Certainly, I know that the government, when they were the fourth party, would have spoken out strongly against this particular provision, where it would have resulted in a consolidating of power into regulations, and those are often in the minister's office. So it's great to see them today being respectful of some of the things that they have said in the past and ensuring that these sorts of loopholes, where governments can change regulations on the fly without the proper scrutiny of the Assembly, are tidied up.

I hope that in the future we're going to be able to find other areas, perhaps even areas in other legislation that have been passed over the recent years. Not to harp on it, you know, but we've seen Bill 6 pass and now all the regulations coming after. I appreciate that the government perhaps has heeded some of the warnings when we pass legislation and do regulation after, and this amendment prevents that sort of action.

So I am also pleased to stand in support of this amendment that puts accountability, trust, transparency into the hands of the Assembly and works to reduce some of the consolidation of power in and around the minister's office.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of this amendment. I think it needs to be outlined that our government is very committed to working with all parties in this House, and it is important to recognize that the purpose of Committee of the Whole is really to provide an opportunity for members to bring forward amendments in order to strengthen bills and act in the best interests of Albertans. Having reviewed this amendment, I do agree with my colleague the hon. Minister of Labour in her assessment that this one provision is not necessary in the bill and her support of the hon. member who moved this amendment in the first place. So I'm happy to support that.

I just wanted to make a note, Madam Chair, that in previous years, when I sat as one of four members of the fourth party, there were times where I approached the previous government with amendments that were quite reasonable and strengthened a bill, which again is the intention and purpose of Committee of the Whole and the reason for our democratic system having multiple parties and perspectives represented. Quite frankly, there were times where I was told that the previous government would not accept an amendment because it came from our party, which I think is quite disappointing for the fact of the matter that it shouldn't matter where an amendment comes from or who's putting it forward. We want the best ideas possible in order to bring forward the best quality of legislation. Again, if our goal is to serve in the best interests of all Albertans, then that's in fact what we should be doing.

With that, I will conclude my remarks and urge all members of the Assembly to support this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any further speakers, questions, or comments with respect to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Chair:** Moving back onto the bill, are there any further comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's been a great day so far, and we'll see whether we can keep this going.

Now, we appreciate the government's recognition that illegal strikes and lockouts that violate essential services agreements should face monetary penalties. Regrettably, the monetary penalty proposed is a mere symbolic gesture. The legislation as presented only fines unions up to \$1,000 per day for an illegal strike, which is not an adequate penalty or deterrent for an illegal strike whatsoever. The same principle applies to employers who wage illegal lockouts.

I wish to amend the legislation to remedy this situation. I have the requisite number of copies, and I'd like to present them now.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be amended in section 33: (a) in the proposed section 70(1) by striking out "\$1000" and substituting "\$ 750 000" and (b) in the proposed section 71(1) by striking out "\$1000" and substituting "\$ 750 000."

11:00

If we agree that essential services provide much-needed services and that anyone who willingly and deliberately seeks to interrupt

those services should be penalized, then it naturally follows that there should be real penalties, not symbolic ones. Further, if a big union can afford to easily wage illegal strikes or if a large employer, for that matter, can easily afford an illegal lockout, then not only does that negatively affect workers, but it cheapens the value of essential services for everyone. I think everyone here can be in agreement on this. If we are to recognize that something is illegal, that a certain act should be discouraged and penalized, then we had better make sure that any such response actually has the desired effect.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. We brought this legislation forward because of the Supreme Court of Canada ruling, making sure that we are respecting the fundamental right to strike of our workers and balancing that right with the need to protect our vital public services, maintaining health, safety, and well-being as well as public security while we're doing that.

With the amendment that's been proposed,

in the proposed section... by striking out "\$1000" and substituting "\$ 750 000",

we are treading into territory – the Supreme Court did not address these types of prohibitions. As well, it's my understanding that during the consultation process adjustments to the amounts were not part of that consultation, so this is something that we haven't had an opportunity to talk to the stakeholders involved about. I would want to do that to understand the implications. I would suggest that this is potentially a good conversation to have, but it might be better suited for a larger discussion around labour legislation in the future because I would want to engage all the necessary stakeholders.

Again, we are interested here in protecting workers' rights, protecting the public service, and making sure that we're putting forward solid legislation that does that, and I don't think that this change to the penalty amounts helps in that case. So I will not be supporting this amendment, but I look forward to hearing additional comments on this.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We had a good thing going there for eight minutes.

It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment and to respond to some comments from the minister. Here we have a perfect example of the case that I made yesterday about this type of legislation going to a policy committee. It's highly technical, and clearly it's not perfect. We just heard the minister say that she didn't have an opportunity to consult all the stakeholders. Yesterday we were given the impression that the Sims report did everything that it needed to do, and now, less than 24 hours later, we see a part of the legislation that the minister acknowledges might be a good idea, but we haven't had the time to have the discussion on some of the implications that it may or may not have around the Supreme Court ruling.

It pains me to think that we're going to likely, because there's a lot of support in the House, pass a piece of legislation that we acknowledge on the second day of debate is flawed. Listen, Madam Chair, we're never going to get to a spot where it is absolutely one hundred per cent perfect, foolproof, is never going to need another change, but the fact is that we haven't even got it close to the finish line yet, and we've already acknowledged that it might need some more study, that we need to contact some stakeholders, that we need

to get some feedback around how it may or may not impact the Supreme Court ruling.

If it currently doesn't impact the Supreme Court ruling to say that it could be \$1,000 a day, what is inside the Supreme Court ruling that's preventing an actual deterrent? While we recognize that \$1,000 per day may be a significant amount for a small employer or a small union, \$1,000 a day for a massive employer or a massive union is pocket change to some. There is no deterrent in \$1,000 a day. We've taken these steps, recognized that there's a flaw in the legislation, proposed a solution. Our solution doesn't say that it will be \$750,000 a day, because that wouldn't be reasonable either, but that it could be up to that, so I think that it's very reasonable.

I think it's quite unfortunate that the government has chosen not to recognize that there are some uniquenesses in the size of employers or unions. I think it's unfortunate that the government has recognized that this is a potential challenge in the legislation, one that we might have to come back as soon as the fall to fix, when this all could have been done and corrected by sending the legislation to committee and moving forward at that point. We would have been able to bring in experts on the Supreme Court ruling, experts around some of the other issues, and have this very discussion and then, when we pass the legislation, have the best piece of legislation that we could offer to Albertans.

So I'm disappointed on that hand, and I'm also disappointed that we haven't acknowledged the fact that up to \$1,000 per day for an illegal strike or lockout is, quite frankly, a little embarrassing. I would encourage members on the other side to support the legislation based on that information, and I hope that there's some continued debate.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much. I'm pleased to rise to respond to some of the comments that I just heard. The penalty amounts were not inside the scope of the Supreme Court ruling, and it really isn't the case that it was a flawed process or flawed legislation in this case. Rather, it's the case that we asked our experts as well as all of the stakeholders that we brought in to participate on this to take a look at how an essential services agreement could work in Alberta and to help us create that made-in-Alberta solution. It was an opportunity to potentially open up Alberta's labour legislation incredibly broadly and to make changes throughout, but this government very deliberately chose to take a narrowed focus, to look at the pieces that were key within the essential services agreement framework.

As well, it's my understanding that in many cases board-levied fines are largely irrelevant because the most common process is to file board orders in court and then ask for civil or criminal contempt penalties. Essentially, with what we're talking about now, these fine amounts are not likely to play in very often, and I think it will make sense to refer to a larger, more fulsome labour codes review process going forward, where we're looking at things beyond the scope of the Supreme Court ruling.

I look forward to the opposition engaging in that process when it's taking place as they had the opportunity to engage in this process because it was public. Over the year we used an expert, Andy Sims, a renowned labour lawyer. We had stakeholders from both sides. We engaged the public through surveys. We asked all Albertans what they were thinking on this piece and consulted fulsomely as well as provided technical briefings to all involved.

Again, I will continue to not support this amendment. I appreciate the comments, but certainly the references to flaws when we're talking about pieces that aren't necessary to be changed around the Supreme Court ruling – I just wanted to comment on that.

Thank you.

11:10

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a couple of questions for the hon. minister regarding what I perceive to be some contradictory statements. First of all, if this fine amount of \$750,000 in this amendment falls outside the purview of the Supreme Court, why do we have a fine amount of up to \$1,000 included in this document?

Furthermore, if a more fulsome consultation is required before we can consider this yet the hon minister just went through a great lengthy explanation of just how much consultation went into this already, we have some contradiction here. On the one hand she's suggesting that more consultation is needed before we can address this issue of \$750,000, but then there was this great long list of consultation that she claims did take place in regard to this bill. So we have some contradictions here.

If the fine amount is outside the purview of the Supreme Court, why is there even the \$1,000 figure in here? If it is within the purview, then why is it so small? And if there was all of this consultation that took place, why in the world was the \$1,000 figure even suggested? Just exactly who were the experts that were consulted in this? Might it be that they were all union people and that there were not very many people outside of that? These are contradictions this minister has made, and I would like her to answer, please.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much for the questions. I'm sensing a measure of distrust with those questions being asked, but I'm happy to discuss them quite clearly. The fine amount as it stands is the fine amount that was there before this consultation began. It has been the fine amount. I don't know if it's from the original drafting of this legislation in '88 or if it might have been adjusted throughout, but essentially this was the fine amount before we started the process. So we've not made any changes to that.

Section 70 read:

- (1) No person or trade union shall cause or attempt to cause a strike by the persons to whom this Act applies.
- (2) No person to whom this Act applies shall strike or consent to a strike.

It has the language that we explicitly need to remove to meet the Supreme Court ruling. This is a section that is touched because we need to adjust it so that it can say,

- 70(1) A trade union that causes a strike contrary to this Act is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding \$1000 for each day . . .

because the bill has changed the fundamental right to strike here in the province of Alberta.

So language throughout the Labour Relations Code as well as inside of PSERA needed to be adjusted. That's one of the reasons why Bill 4 is so lengthy. It's not because the essential services provisions are long – they're actually fairly condensed – but the ripple effect of those changes in the legislation needed to be handled carefully, and it involved touching many different sections. So that's why the fine amounts are there. They were there previously. That's why the section has changed, because the language needed to be changed, and if you read the old language, I think that is fairly clear.

Regarding the consultation that I am discussing, we had consultation regarding the implementation of the Supreme Court ruling to implement essential services here in Alberta very fulsomely with all members, not just with one side but all sides:

employers, employees, people impacted by the changes, people involved in the labour relations system as well as the public. The focus in that discussion was to talk about an essential services framework and how that system might look in Alberta going forward. The results of that conversation were incredibly detailed and included a lot of great information but did not include a recommendation around the fine amount and whether that should be changed.

Again, I refer to the fact that we could have looked at this as a very broad opportunity to make changes all across the Labour Relations Code, PSERA, to make major, sweeping changes, potentially. We've chosen to take a very narrow focus, to look at the essential services pieces, in this case changing sections – I'll refer to them as sections 70 to 73 although I'm certain that that's not the longer name of them – to accommodate essential services but not to change the fine amounts.

I hope that might clarify that we consulted extensively with all stakeholders. But there are things in the labour code that various stakeholders would like changed or looked at differently. The Official Opposition as a stakeholder may have things that you'd like us to review more thoroughly. A larger labour code review is appropriate and needed and long overdue because one hasn't been done in decades, and I look forward to considering how we might do that and to bringing a plan forward. In the meantime I'm very, very pleased with our made-in-Alberta solution that addresses Alberta's unique needs, making sure that our labour legislation is fair to unionized employees and employers while ensuring that essential public services are maintained for Albertans.

Thank you for your questions.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for the answer. I just have actually one more question if I might ask. So it's up to \$1,000, but the question I have is: in terms of your legislation who will determine what that amount is? Is that the umpire? Is it the commissioner? Who determines that?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much for the question. The fine amounts in the case of an illegal strike or lockout are, I believe, determined by the courts, but I'm actually not a hundred per cent certain. I have many experts and assistants, potentially. When it comes to the fine amounts, there may be someone else who can answer that question for us.

**The Chair:** Any further questions or comments with respect to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Basically, just a quick comment. I mean, what we're talking about in this section, of course, is wildcat strikes. Based on my experience in the labour world, when you're getting into a position of a wildcat strike, somewhere before that the one single thing that has happened has been a failure to communicate. Somewhere along the line somebody stopped listening, and the concerns that are being brought forward are not being addressed. A wildcat strike is just not something that you, you know, pull out of the drawer as a willy-nilly thing to do. It's gotten very, very serious when workers are prepared to go out in the midst of a contract period, feeling that their concerns have not been addressed. Most of the time it's usually been around things like health and safety, where the workers felt that their safety was imminently at threat.

When we start talking about putting very large sums of money as a deterrent to this, again it just simply does not solve the problem

of not listening to what those concerns are. So I just wanted to put that out there for folks.

**The Chair:** I'll recognize the hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I always find it funny in here, the phrase "wildcat strike." It's an illegal strike. It's against the law. Trying to make it sound like it's not against the law doesn't serve this House very well and doesn't serve Alberta very well, when you're trying to make an illegal act sound like it's legal. It's not legal. The phrase is kind of offensive that way because, frankly, in my view, it's a way to disrespect the law, labelling something that's illegal and trying to make it sound like it is not.

**11:20**

I will say, more to the point on the legislation, that I heard the minister talk about a larger labour code review, which is probably a good idea. But it does beg the question that if the government is going to do a larger labour code review, why have they gone in this legislation beyond what the Supreme Court of Canada decision requires? If the government was only to put through what the Supreme Court of Canada requires – and I agree with that; actually, I'm not sure I've heard a single member of this House say along the way that they don't agree with that – then we could get this done easily.

The problem is that the government is trying to slip in other elements of legislation, a Trojan Horse as some would say. Others would just say that they're trying to do things in some cases that are beyond that legislation, that haven't been fully discussed and vetted. In my view, the proper place for that would be in the larger labour code review that the minister referred to. If along the way we can get the minister to agree to pass what the Supreme Court of Canada requires and take everything else out for now until we get to the larger labour code review, that would be a step forward and one that I would applaud.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** I rise against this amendment, and I'm going to just refer to what the Member for Edmonton-Decore had said. I will refer to it as an illegal strike. I was involved in, actually brought in as a third party to, an illegal strike at the Grande Cache Institution. The issue at hand was the safety of the staff and other inmates at the institution. The institution had many blind spots, where there was no camera, where there was no ability to see if staff or an inmate were in a certain area, and staff had actually been attacked by inmates in the area. They'd gone to the department. They'd asked over and over and over again to at the very least put a camera into those blind spots so that there would be some semblance of safety for anybody who would be there. The department did not do that.

I'm not saying that an illegal strike was the best way to do it, but that's what happened. The staff could not tolerate putting their lives at risk every single shift when they worked, and they had an illegal strike. The result of that was that every staff member who was involved was fined, and they were prepared to live with that rather than lose their lives. Eventually the department fixed that problem. As my colleague said, those kinds of strikes do not happen unless there is something incredibly significant that occurs and is not being fixed. I would say that looking after your life when you're working in a correctional facility is a pretty significant reason for doing that. They had attempted to have that conversation over and over again with management and the department to no avail.

I am absolutely opposed to this amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I would like to thank the Member for Lethbridge-East. I feel that was very important to say. It's also important to say that, actually, this amendment doesn't say that we should change the law in terms of the amounts because a wildcat strike is good or bad. It's not pointing that out. What it is saying is that if it's an illegal strike and we have changed now the labour laws under the Supreme Court ruling, this issue of a wildcat strike is actually not as needed in the environment that we now see in Alberta.

Remember that this amendment speaks not only to the union responsibilities but also to the business or to the government responsibilities as well, saying that if there is an illegal action taking place, the consequences will be severe. This is the reason why we've brought forward this reasonable amendment. We feel that it is a check and balance on the system so that this isn't being done willy-nilly, as the member said. This is something that they need to really think seriously about, that if they're going to go down this road, there are significant consequences to their actions.

And remember, once again, as the hon. member to my left said, this is an issue dealing with an illegal strike or an illegal action by a government or department or business. We're not talking about the right to strike. We know that the Supreme Court ruling has said that is a right. We're just talking about the nuances of this.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any further speakers to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to make a clarification. Let me just present the idea that when there is a wildcat strike, what's happening is that it's not the union itself that makes the decision that these members are just going to go out and cause the wildcat strike. I can think of no greater democratic process than the members from a workplace not even consulting their union and saying: hey, there's something here that's not okay. In most cases, as far as I know, it has to do with the workers' own safety, right? Not even their union is involved in the process of saying: hey, you should do this wildcat strike. They're not being told to do it. They're doing it because they see it as an infringement upon their safety while in the workplace.

Now, what happens when they do go on the wildcat strike? Well, it's the Labour Relations Board that would deem if it is an illegal strike, in their words, and then would ask the union to do something about it. It would be a judge that would then determine the amount of the fine, and it would be determined within the courts. Okay? Again, as my two colleagues here have expressed, this really has to do with workers themselves within their own workplace determining that there is a safety risk and then highlighting what that risk is for them to actually go on a wildcat strike. Fines are determined by the judge, and if it is an illegal strike, it is determined by the Labour Relations Board.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:29 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Ellis	MacIntyre
Cooper	Hunter	McIver
Cyr	Loewen	Panda

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	McKittrick
Babcock	Goehring	McLean
Bilous	Gray	McPherson
Carlier	Hinkley	Miller
Carson	Horne	Miranda
Ceci	Kazim	Nielsen
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Coolahan	Larivee	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Sabir
Dach	Loyola	Schmidt
Dang	Luff	Sigurdson
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	Mason	Sweet
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick		

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 43
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** Back on the bill. Are there any further comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The legislation as presented removes the ability of a public-sector employer to bring in outside temporary workers to get the job done while there is an ongoing strike or negotiation. In no way, shape, or form did the Supreme Court decision require this. I am proposing an amendment to address this issue. I have the requisite number of copies, and I will present them to the Clerk.

**The Chair:** You can go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be amended in section 8 in the proposed section 95.41(3) by adding, "unless permitted by the essential services agreement" after "bargaining unit that is on strike or lockout."

As ministers of the Crown would know, they are responsible for the services their ministries provide to the public. This amendment simply allows those services to be provided while strikes and negotiations are still ongoing. This amendment is not – and I want to be absolutely clear about this – about an unfettered right to use replacement workers to get around negotiations. It simply amends the bill so that replacement workers can be allowed when both sides agree as part of their essential services contract. This is a fair measure, aimed at ensuring that Albertans can have access to essential services while respecting the rights of all parties.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With our essential services agreement framework we are asking both sides to come to the table in good faith and to come to an agreement together, termed an essential services agreement, where we are outlining an environment of what will happen during a strike or lockout. We want to ensure in the event of a work dispute that patients or anyone

impacted will be continually cared for and looked after throughout any strike or lockout or work action that may be happening.

**11:50**

The replacement worker discussion was held at consultation. It was something that various parties included in their submissions around what might make sense. My view on the replacement worker discussion is that we need to make sure that the agreement negotiated by the parties is what is used going forward. In this case the opposition has proposed an amendment that says, “unless permitted by the essential services agreement,” implying that a replacement worker provision might be negotiated into the essential services agreement, which I think is perhaps a misunderstanding of what’s happening.

If there is a function that needs to be continued during strike or lockout action, that needs to be determined as an essential service and provided by the members of that bargaining unit during the strike or lockout. If it’s work that’s not essential, then those workers deserve the right, as defined by the Supreme Court, to be out on the strike line. The idea that both parties might choose to include other parties or someone hired during a strike or lockout only is very unusual and is not something that I think would happen very often or at all as we look at this going forward.

The amendment as I read it adds “unless permitted by the essential services agreement” after “bargaining unit that is on strike or lockout” and begins on the premise that both parties, employer and employee, would come to an agreement that involves hiring outside employees in this case. This may not be in the best interest of Albertans because in many cases it is the employees who have worked in a facility – I’m thinking in this case about health care environments – who understand that work environment, who understand the patients, who understand the needs. In that case, through the essential services agreement we need to be determining that someone needs to stay and continue to perform those functions.

I’m looking forward to hearing more debate on this issue and discussion. At the current time I will not be supporting this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. leader of the third party, followed by the hon. minister.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I’m looking at this amendment – and I know I’ve had a couple of chats with the minister about this particular section – and I’ll ask members of the House to consider how important this might be. Of course, under the legislation anybody who is an essential service can’t strike anyway, so that wouldn’t apply. This is people that are not considered essential. But as we all know, “essential” is a word that means something different, probably, to every one of us in this room, right? I think the minister talked about health care workers and hospital workers. I think we could have a long and interesting discussion about who is essential and who is not in a hospital room. Is the person that mops up vomit and blood off the floor essential? I think there’s a pretty good argument for yes, and there are some arguments that some people could say no. Doctors and nurses, I think most people would say, are essential.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report.

**Mr. McIver:** Oh, okay. Thank you.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 4. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. In view of the hour, I would move that the House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:55 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, April 6, 2016

Day 10

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
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van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 6, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am pleased to introduce a class of students from Erle Rivers school in the town of Milk River in my constituency. With a population of less than a thousand people, the school draws students from other rural communities. They come from a school with a proud history dating back to 1909, almost as old as our province. I was pleased to meet this remarkable group of students earlier today. They have a clear interest in the work that we do here on behalf of all Albertans and how it affects them. Well, at least all but one of them. I would not be surprised if we saw many of them back here in this same place at a future date doing work remarkably similar to what we do here. In fact, one young man, when asked what he wanted to do when he grew up, stated without hesitation: I'm going to be the Prime Minister.

I would like them to stand as I read their names. I'm going to read the names of the teachers and the parents that have come to help, and I'd like the school to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly. Mrs. Sharalyn Patching and Mrs. Cheryl Stewart are the teachers, and the parents that are helpers are Jody Miller, Lane Bellew, Connie Robertson, and Terra McCulloch. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. I met your class earlier today, hon. member.

The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 35 grade 6 students from Crestwood elementary-junior high school. They're accompanied by their teacher and parent volunteers. Their teacher is Ms Ludwig. Their educational assistant is Mrs. Zyke, and their student teacher is Ms Drawbridge. They are also accompanied by two parent volunteers, Mr. Klassen and Ms Si. I hope I got it right. Anyway, please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel honoured today to rise and to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly the grade 6 students and teachers of Holden school, but that also includes the towns of Holden and Ryley. You might be interested to know that Holden was named after James Holden. He was a former MLA. Today we have with us three teachers – Mrs. Cheryl Oslund, Ms Karen Arychuk, Mrs. Joanne Elliot – and two parents, Mr. James Bichel and Mrs. Lavonne Svenson. Could the students, the parents, and the teachers please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise in the House and to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the grade 6 class from St. Anthony school in Drayton Valley. St. Anthony school was just down the block from my high school, and I have spent many hours in the school gym coaching with and against the basketball teams from this amazing school. So it gives me great pleasure today to ask the students and the staff – Trudy Henley, Andrea Maduik, Colin Webb, Nancy Dodds, Lynne Motkoski, and Susan Huska – to please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school guests here today, hon. members? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year thousands of underground facilities in our province are damaged by digging. This not only interrupts services, but more importantly these incidents can lead to environmental contamination as well as injury or even death. I nearly lost my own job 10 years ago when I inadvertently came this close to hitting an underground infrastructure along highway 2. April is national dig safe awareness month, and several of our hon. members are sporting Dig Safe pins today.

It's therefore my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly members of the Alberta Common Ground Alliance seated in the gallery, sporting the bright orange safety vests. We've often heard, "Call before you dig," and that's awareness that this organization is trying to spread, advocating for the safety of workers and the general public. They're working hard to keep Albertans safe, running countless education and training programs to raise awareness of these issues. I'd ask all of the members seated in the gallery representing the Alberta Common Ground Alliance to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

To all the students in the building: remember to call before you dig.

The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly Ms Karen Bardy. Karen had the pleasure of being a parliamentary intern with NDP leader Grant Notley in 1982. She then spent her career in program development and community partnership work at the Edmonton public school board. She's a lifelong supporter of the NDP and an avid political enthusiast.

She's also the mother of my ministerial assistant, Kelta Coomber. My constituency staff for Calgary-McCall recently received the following feedback from the office of a colleague about Kelta. "Can you do me a favour and tell Minister Sabir that Kelta is an amazing MA and responds in crazy record time. Make sure that he knows that all of the [constituency assistants] love her." I agree with the statement, and Karen should be very proud of Kelta.

I ask Karen and Kelta to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you student members of our LGBTQ community from three Alberta schools. We have a number of students from Lindsay Thurber school in Red Deer, which was the first school in Alberta to establish a queer-straight alliance. We also have two

Forest Lawn high school students from Calgary, who are important advocates for human rights and have worked to build acceptance and understanding in their community. We also have a student joining us from Edmonton's Boyle Street Education Centre, where students and staff worked together to develop their LGBTQ policy, that they submitted to my office, to ensure that everyone in the school is in a safe and caring environment. These students should be commended for their efforts, and I would ask them to rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of Citizens for Public Justice. This is a member-driven, faith-based public policy organization focused on ecological justice, refugee rights, and poverty elimination. CPJ has had a long history of working for the common good of society, and I'm proud to say that the organization was originally founded by people in Edmonton.

Joining us today are Dr. Janet Wesselius, professor at the University of Alberta, Augustana, and former chair of the CPJ board of directors; Mr. Mark Huyser-Wierenga, Crown prosecutor with Alberta Justice and a former chair of the CPJ board of directors; Kathleen Felix, an assistant to Mr. Mark Huyser-Wierenga; Mr. Wayne Groot, a farmer and a current member of the CPJ board of directors for Alberta and, I'm proud to say, a member of the MLA for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater's constituency association; and Dr. Darlene O'Leary, CPJ's economic policy analyst. I would like to ask them to stand and receive the usual warm welcome of the Assembly.

**1:40**

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour to be able to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the board of directors of the Ukrainian Youth Unity Council. My riding of Edmonton-Decore has a very rich and vibrant Ukrainian community. One of the pillars of this community is located within my riding, the Ukrainian Youth Unity Complex, which is owned and operated by the Ukrainian Youth Unity Council. It's been a tremendous honour to attend several events at the Ukrainian Youth Unity Complex, and I look forward to attending very many more. I would now ask that the board of directors please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my delight to introduce to you and through you representatives of some of the irrigation districts, who have helped create Alberta's aquatic invasive species conservation canine program in support of aquatic invasive species prevention. The program is a model of what successful collaboration between government and stakeholders can be. The partners provided the funds for us to create the first-ever conservation canine program focusing on detecting invasive mussels, a major threat to Alberta's environment and economy.

I'd like to invite the representatives of the irrigation districts to stand as their names are called: Mike Wind, vice-chair of AIPA and board member of Taber irrigation district; Tony Machacek, chair of Taber irrigation district; Harold Unruh, chair of Bow River; Richard Phillips, member of AIPA and manager of Bow River

irrigation district; Bob Chrumka, chair of the Eastern irrigation district; Carl Chomistek, member of the AIPA executive committee and board member of the Eastern irrigation district; Terrence Lazarus, manager of St. Mary River irrigation district and also my neighbour; Bob Dykstra, member of the AIPA executive committee and board member for the St. Mary River irrigation district; and Martin Van Diemen, board member of the Lethbridge Northern irrigation district.

Mr. Speaker, I have an additional introduction to make to you and through you because the Legislature has well and truly gone to the dogs today. I would like to introduce to you Hannah McKenzie, Heather McCubbin, and Cindy Sawchuck with the K-9 unit and, of course, our friend Hilo, who is a valued member of the Environment and Parks team.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that they all rise to receive a warm welcome from the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other guests or visitors? The Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my absolute pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly several staff and students from National Sport school, located at Canada Olympic Park in the constituency of Calgary-Bow. Founded in 1994 to support student athletes with Olympic potential, the school allows students to train and travel internationally, all while studying in school. I will be talking more about this tomorrow in my member's statement. Joining us today in the gallery – and I ask that you stand when I say your name – are Ken Weipert, the principal, Brooke Apshkrum, Carter Malyk, Rachel Thibeault, Kent Zado, and Leanne Topp. I ask them to all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, any other guests or visitors today?

## Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

## School LGBTQ Policy Update

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a special occasion and to update this House on the important work that we are doing to support students and staff in Alberta schools. Last Thursday marked International Transgender Day of Visibility. It was a day to celebrate and embrace our differences and to stand together and support one another as equals. This day was also when I was pleased to inform Albertans that most of our province's public, Catholic, francophone, charter, and private schools had submitted their policies in an effort to support safe and caring schools for all students.

We know that the development of these policies has at times been challenging, but the most important things in life, Mr. Speaker, are not often easy to achieve. We know that our work is far from over as we now review the policies and discuss their contents with our school leaders. We will also work in the months ahead with students, parents, and teachers to support and educate each other. This House deserves plenty of credit as well in this endeavour as members voted to amend the Alberta Human Rights Act in the fall and, prior to that, approved An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children, formerly known as Bill 10, legislation that received all-party support. Our work over these past few months now has been to align school board policy with these existing pieces of legislation.

It should also be noted that these laws would not exist without the tireless efforts of so many LGBTQ community members and advocates who have fought for years for recognition and to be afforded the human rights that everyone should be entitled to. It is their work in the face of adversity that has spurred a movement towards equality and social justice. I had the privilege of sitting down with a number of these brave champions earlier today, and I want to also thank members from the opposition parties for joining me in that same conversation. I think we all came away, Mr. Speaker, with a better understanding of the need to support our students fully in this matter. I hope each and every one of us will do our part to educate others in the spirit of peace and understanding, that we will reassure parents that they have been and always will be invited to be involved in all aspects of their children's education, and, working together, we will be able to protect and nurture all of our children in the province of Alberta. We will be the stronger for it, all of us standing together.

Finally and most importantly, to the dedicated LGBTQ advocates gathered here today and from around the province and in the light of last Thursday's commemoration, I want to deliver a simple message to you all. Our government sees you, we hear you, we are inspired by you, and we will do everything in our power to support you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today the Wildrose shadow minister for Education and I had the pleasure of sitting down for lunch with the minister and a group of LGBTQ advocates. It was a great lunch. We discussed some issues that, frankly, LGBTQ children face in a school environment. Some are bullied, some are marginalized, and there are some who wake up in the morning to a feeling of dread at the thought of going to school that day. That's unacceptable. They don't feel comfortable, and they don't feel safe.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, there's not a member in this House who feels that this is acceptable. No child, whether they are gay, straight, transgendered, of a different race, religion, or ethnicity, should ever, ever feel unsafe at any school. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is absolutely clear on this matter and all matters dealing with this, and it is absolutely right on these matters.

Now, over the last few months there has been vigorous debate on how to ensure that these rights are upheld in schools right across the province. There are actually some who believe that this debate ought to be shied away from or tempered. I disagree. Something as fundamental as ensuring the safety of all children in schools deserves fulsome and reasoned discussion by all of the members in this place. I, too, am very proud of the work this Assembly has done, and I'm proud of the efforts of my colleagues in the Wildrose caucus to ensure that the safety of LGBTQ kids remains front and centre in all the conversations that we have with children, with school boards, with parents, and amongst our colleagues in this House.

Today does not mark the end of this conversation. I expect there will be continued discussion on the best path forward to providing a safe environment for LGBTQ children, for all children, and I believe that these discussions ought not be looked at as destructive or as dangerous as long as they always remain respectful and productive, with the clear objective always being the creation and

the enforcement of a safe and caring learning environment for all of Alberta's children.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would request unanimous consent of the House to allow the leader or a designate of the third party as well as the two independent members to respond to the ministerial statement.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-North West.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to join with all my colleagues in this House to recognize the fact that this province has never been more proudly inclusive. Like the minister and so many others, I was honoured to attend the International Transgender Day of Visibility. It was a fantastic event to share in, and it was an emotional one. The significance of so many members of Alberta's trans community gathering to celebrate proudly and publicly was lost on no one in that room and no one around the province.

I also rise today to thank so many people for the hard work and dedication that they put into fighting for equality, acceptance, and understanding in the LGBTQ community. As associate minister of family and community safety I was honoured to preside over the raising of the Pride flag for the first time at the Legislature. I was also pleased to bring forward the relationship statutes and the Vital Statistics Act, removing the preamble to the Marriage Act that states that marriage is between a man and a woman, and removing the onus to be 50 per cent of the way through gender reassignment surgery in order to get the sex changed on your birth certificate.

I want to send out a particular thank you to our Education minister. You have been incredibly inclusive, and I thank you for including us in the discussion about the LGBTQ guidelines. The progress that has been made on these guidelines is a great start. There is still, however, work to be done to ensure that our students, our staff, and parents in this province know that our schools are inclusive places of learning and acceptance. The Progressive Conservatives support the guidelines. We offer our full support and guidance to the government to get this task done.

Lastly, our deepest thanks to the many advocates in the LGBTQ community for their courage and for their dignity. We stand side by side with you now and in the future to ensure that the human rights afforded to every Albertan are your rights, too.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to speak on this historic bill near and dear to all our hearts, in particular to two Liberal members, Laurie Blakeman and Kent Hehr, who in this Legislature fought long and hard to put LGBTQ interests on the legislative agenda.

Last year this House, to its credit, rose as one to say that in Alberta there's a fundamental principle that as a matter of public policy all persons are equal. I was encouraged when watching the hon. minister pursue this mandate, which, as he has shared with us today, is now being implemented by most school boards in the province. However, it is the "most" in the minister's statement which causes me concern. Most school boards accepting the laws in Alberta isn't enough. Safe environments for all children, not for

most children, is the order of the day. It's not enough that most Albertans are equal.

I understand there are significant challenges facing the minister. Even greater are the challenges of the LGBTQ youth. Not everyone in Alberta understands the incredible difficulties that face these young people in school: the suicide rates, the bullying, self-rejection, mental anguish, and addictions in many cases because of being different and being judged to be different. Nonetheless, members of the LGBTQ community have fought for too long and too hard to accept anything less than the full implementation of the government's regulations.

The near-unanimous vote in this House was a clarion call for change in Alberta, and I for one will be watching to ensure that the spirit and the letter of the law are experienced by all children, present and future, who deserve our respect and our protection.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, there's an old saying that 90 per cent of life is just showing up. Now, that sounds easy, but it is not. Today at lunch we talked about the great work that goes on in GSAs and QSAs in Alberta schools, how students and staff support one another, and about the need to expand these important clubs to all parts of the province. Now, there's no doubt that a small group of determined people can make big changes, and it's important to recognize the work of these remarkable people when discussing inclusivity and human rights in our province. I want to recognize all of those who celebrated with us the Transgender Day of Visibility last week, and I especially want to thank the students who joined us for lunch today. I want you to know that we in this House may be the politicians, but you're the leaders. You are the leaders, so thank you.

But we also need to recognize that the work is not done. Rights are rights no matter where you live in Alberta or which school division you belong to, and I do commend the government and this minister for pursuing consistent policies across the province. My message to you is this: keep going. It's too important to stop now, and you have my full support for the path that you are on. At lunch earlier today the Minister of Culture and Tourism challenged all of us to speak up, to be allies of the LGBTQ community, and to take an active role in making change happen. I can assure you that on behalf of all members of the Alberta Party we will always be your ally. We will do everything we can to ensure that rights are rights for all Albertans everywhere.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Alberta Health Services

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All of my questions today will be about the serious issue raised in the resignation letter of the former CEO of Alberta Health Services, but let me first commend the integrity of Vickie Kaminski in writing that letter. The CEO of the largest organization in Alberta walked away from her \$600,000-a-year dream job without severance simply to protect her professional reputation from political interference. This show of integrity is an example of the best of Alberta's great public service.

My question is this: has the Premier read the damning resignation letter, and what will she do about it?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No, I haven't read the exact letter, but I've certainly heard about it in great detail. Let me be very clear. Our government was elected to protect and promote public health care and to do so specifically by promoting public delivery of public health care. Those were critical issues that we ran on, that we spoke to Albertans on, and that we got a clear mandate on. Our Minister of Health has now followed the act, followed the roles and responsibilities of AHS, and has done her job to move forward on the very things Albertans elected us to do.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, last fall Vickie Kaminski sat in my office and committed to me that she would fix AHS. She believed she could make AHS more effective. I believed her. Just a few weeks later she was gone. Her resignation letter makes it very clear that detailed business cases were regularly overridden by this NDP government for ideological reasons. AHS has had five CEOs in five years. Political interference is rampant. Does the Premier still believe that it was a good idea to put her most ideological minister in charge of the health care system in Alberta?

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I could not be more convinced of the rightness of the decision to have the current Minister of Health in that role.

**Mr. Jean:** In her resignation letter, Mr. Speaker, Kaminski says that she told the Health minister, and I quote: if all AHS activities are going to be micromanaged by the government and all decisions have to be reviewed and vetted by the minister before they can be acted upon, then there are simply too many decision-makers. End quote. I couldn't agree more with that statement. Can the Premier tell us what qualifications the Health minister has that would allow her to micromanage, review, and vet every single Health decision? Is the minister going to be the new CEO of AHS?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the Health minister was elected by the people of Alberta, and she was elected to oversee the spending of almost 40 per cent of our budget, not to hand it over to some self-made CEO who thinks that they get to operate independent of the very people who put that money into their budget. This is a function simply of the legislation that governs the relationship and the very practices and policies that AHS itself has. It is unfortunate that the former CEO did not read either of those documents.

**The Speaker:** Second major question.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, one part of the resignation letter is truly shocking. The former CEO of AHS says that she was instructed to conduct her business with the Health ministry in, quote, voice mode, meaning there should not be any e-mail trail. She got orders without substantiating documentation. She described it as, quote, an environment lacking in trust and transparency. It is very clear that this government is trying to do things in secret. What agenda is the Premier hiding by having her minister give political orders to top public servants without creating any records whatsoever?

**Ms Notley:** Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is taking one comment and blowing it right out because, of course, there are loads of records, absolutely loads of records. Now, I



appreciate that the member opposite would probably prefer if I just sent him notes rather than getting up and speaking, but many people in the world do actually speak to each other. To suggest that they not speak to each other is really, really, quite silly. I suspect that the deputy minister has a phone in his pocket, I suspect that he uses it, and I suspect that that's the way many people operate with each other. The speculative comments that were included in the letter really are simply that.

**Mr. Jean:** AHS is the largest organization in Alberta. It employs 100,000 Albertans and keeps Albertans healthy. It is not silly. Yet we learn that its CEO would get cryptic e-mails from the Health ministry saying that instructions would be coming in voice mode. Albertans know that you cannot run a successful business without writing things down. This is a very important organization to Albertans, but this Health minister was trying to run AHS in voice mode to hide her political interference. Will the Premier acknowledge today that hiding things from Albertans is unethical and commit that it will never happen again?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that – I mean, there are a lot of issues here, but let me first of all remind and bring to the member opposite's attention section 8 of the Regional Health Authorities Act and the mandate and roles document of Alberta Health Services. I would suggest that it outlines exactly the kind of oversight that the minister has engaged in and should consider continuing engaging in. When you talk about political interference, I would suggest that the letter's admission that a critical decision affecting the people of Calgary was intentionally withheld until after the election is political interference.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, this voice mode issue is very serious. Albertans know that when someone wants to leave no record, it is likely because they are doing something wrong. Albertans know. This NDP government wants to do things in secret. It isn't the interests of Albertans that they're looking after. Running a government without a paper trail is simply not ethical. Will the Premier make public the full details of every single instance where the Health ministry asked AHS to operate in voice mode?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what our minister did do. When our minister came into the role, what she said is that going forward, we want to have evidence-based decision-making. So when we looked at decisions that had been made previously, we said that we want to see the evidence for that particular decision; we want to know why that decision was made; we want to consider all the facts. It was a little alarming to discover the number of decisions that had been made without any kind of written evidence, without any kind of written record. But that being said, that's exactly the way we're going forward. We are making evidence-based decisions. That's why the minister decided to reconsider the issue of the Calgary ambulance. That's good governance, and that's what we will continue to do.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Third major question.

**Mr. Jean:** Keeping secrets from Albertans is not right.

In her letter Kaminski details two examples of political interference. In one case: AHS ordered to the bargaining table just so the Premier wouldn't be booed at an AUPE speech. But she says

that there are also other examples. Apparently, there was political interference in linen outsourcing and laundry outsourcing. AHS is being stopped from changes that, quote, have solid business plans, are more effective and efficient, and would save significant public dollars. To the Health minister: what was Kaminski talking about?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what former CEO Ms Kaminski was talking about was section 8 of the Regional Health Authorities Act, where the minister gives directions to a regional health authority for the purpose of "providing priorities and guidelines for it to follow... and co-ordinating the work of the regional health authority with the programs, policies and work of the Government." Our government got elected on a clear decision that we would not promote the privatization of public health delivery in Alberta, that we would do the opposite, and that's what the minister is working on.

**Mr. Jean:** Kaminski told the AHS board that there was political interference in the decisions on Edmonton and north zone lab services. Let me paraphrase her letter: even though AHS has identified the right things to do and the right way to do them, AHS is being stopped. That type of political interference is very concerning and unacceptable. To the Health minister. What did Kaminski mean when she said: will the Health minister release the AHS briefing notes on lab service, that Kaminski referred to in her letter?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, as I said before, the minister very clearly made a decision that we wanted to see evidence for what was the best decision, so she sought out that evidence. As I said before, when we first took over this role, we discovered that there was no evidence. There was no written evidence to suggest that that particular issue was a good decision, so this minister set about getting evidence on which to base her decision. There is a review under way. That will be disclosed, and the completion of it will be happening very soon. We look forward to talking with Albertans about it because that's what good governance looks like. We are the ones elected to run this, not a CEO.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Kaminski also told the AHS board that the government is politically blocking, quote, workforce initiatives that are simply everyday good management practices. End quote. The CEO of AHS has accused the NDP government of interfering in everyday people management. Can the minister tell us what is going on here? Is this an example of what Kaminski called, quote, the ideology of the new government, that does not allow AHS to do what needs to be done and should be done?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, prior to the last election AHS was operating under a plan which did allow and plan for laying off thousands of front-line health care workers, including nurses and other front-line workers. After the election we said that we're not going to do that. That's not the way we're going to control costs in Alberta. Yes, the minister said that we want to know: how exactly are you going to save this money, and how many front-line service workers are you laying off? That's exactly the kind of questions that the minister does have to ask because that's what she was elected to do.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the leader of the third party.

## 2:10 Openness and Transparency in Government

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today Albertans learned a new Orwellian phrase: voice mode. Apparently voice mode is how the Health minister and senior staff avoid creating traceable paper documents surrounding their decisions for both Alberta Health and AHS and, by extension, avoid being open, transparent, and accountable to Albertans. To the Minister of Health: if you stand by your actions and characterize them as being governance rather than interference, why the attempts to keep them off the public record by using voice mode?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for this question, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very happy to answer in voice mode. We are on the public record. There are times when there certainly needs to be dialogue, where you can get much clearer outcomes and you can have the back and forth necessary to have a conversation. Some people like to communicate that as voice mode; I say, "I'll give you a call." Whatever it is, certainly it's important that we have an opportunity to have dialogue, respectful conversation, and that doesn't prevent anyone from putting things in writing after the fact.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, evidence-based decisions can't be made after voice mode because there's no evidence.

Yesterday we established that the environment minister eliminated the independence of AEMERA, an arm's-length review agency for the environment, by interfering; we heard that the tourism minister requires permission for people to talk to MLAs from agencies, boards, and commissions; and now we hear about voice mode at AHS. To the Premier: is making government less open, less transparent, and less accountable part of the change your government brings to Alberta?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to greater openness and transparency. Absolutely. There are a number of forums within which that has already happened. The all-party committee on democracy and accountability and transparency, something that, frankly, never existed in the previous 44 years: that is a wonderful, open forum for us to move forward on a number of these important issues, and we will continue to do so because we respect the right of Albertans to know about what's going on in their government.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, the all-party committee will be documented and not in voice mode.

The government is currently reviewing all agencies, boards, and commissions, which we think is a good idea. One of the main focuses, of course, of agencies, boards, and commissions is to provide independence from political interference to protect the public interest. Again to the Premier: do you plan to gut independence of all ABCs so you can voice mode your way out of any accountability and transparency?

**Ms Notley:** Well, the irony of that, Mr. Speaker, is that many of those agencies, boards, and commissions by actions of the previous government are actually exempt from the very rules and regulations that would make them more open, more accountable, and more able to be reviewed by Albertans. It's very ironic that he would suggest that by eliminating any of them, we'd be reducing that. Nonetheless, what we are actually doing is that we're going to be looking forward to how we can get costs under control, get a little

bit of connection between what the public service is earning and all the friends and insiders and many of the ABCs created over the last four decades and, instead, work on behalf of Albertans . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

## Alberta Health Services

(continued)

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Health services, the largest budget in government at \$19 billion, continues to be plagued by inconsistent governance, which is reflected in the high turnover of senior staff and continued low morale in the workforce. Allegations from Ms Kaminski suggest that the dysfunctional relationship between the ministry and AHS continues to erode confidence in the organization and threatens not only fiscal responsibility but, more importantly, quality of care, findings also made clear to me in the Premier's provincial addictions and mental health review. Can the minister tell us how she will improve relations between her ministry and AHS?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Certainly, public health care is public business, and I'm very proud to be a part of a government that makes sure that we don't placate our responsibility by pretending that we've got a business organization operating a business when, really, we're talking about essential public health care, which Albertans count on so desperately. Certainly, I have a very positive working relationship with my deputy minister, with the board, and with the interim CEO. I have to say that it's been a breath of fresh air, and I look forward to that continuing to be the case as we move forward.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister commit today in conjunction with the new board to survey Alberta Health Services staff to better understand current attitudes and concerns in relation to the organization? Yes or no?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the proposal. Mr. Speaker, certainly, it's an interesting idea. I want to make sure that I'm aware of what types of surveys there are currently in place and make sure that I have an opportunity to review those. As well, I make sure that I'm out on the front lines having opportunities to engage first-hand. During the two-week constituency break I was at 11 communities meeting with AHS leaders and front-line staff, and that continues to be a priority of mine as well as my associate minister.

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, given that the government changed the rules for appointments to the board and appointed Mr. Richard Dicerri, then head of the civil service, to the AHS board, will the minister review this decision as a barrier to the kind of accountability and transparency and independence that are needed?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, certainly, I'm very proud of the complex skills and the expertise that are around the table. Mr. Dicerri was selected because of his extensive experience understanding both the public service and Crown corporations. He has over 35 years of experience, and even

though he is retiring from the public service, he's agreed to stay on the board, and I'm very proud of that.

Certainly, the rules that were in place under previous boards of AHS were that you couldn't have any revenue from the government of Alberta, you couldn't be engaged as an Alberta Health or Alberta Health Services employee. I think it's important that we have expertise around the table, including health expertise and government expertise, and I am proud of the board we have.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

### Trade with Asia

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been hearing a lot from my constituents, who want to share that if we want to be successful as we diversify our economy, we must expand and diversify our trade markets as well. Can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade update my constituents of Edmonton-Mill Creek and all Albertans on his recent trade mission to Asia and explain why he went there at this time?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. My 14-day trade mission was to try and create and simply attract new investment and to increase market access for our energy, agriculture, forestry, tourism, and petrochemical sectors. Given the challenges that Alberta's economy is facing right now, it's absolutely critical that we expand our markets and opportunities for Alberta businesses to grow and move into other markets as well as attract investment dollars back home into Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, minister.

Mr. Speaker, given that many of my constituents have been affected by the economic downturn and are looking to this government for results, again to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what tangible results did you get from this trade mission?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. I mean, this trade mission was absolutely critical, and there are quite a few tangible results that we got from it. First of all, we signed a memorandum of understanding with the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce. This MOU supports investment and collaboration in sectors like environmental management and technologies, health, and infrastructure.

I signed as well an MOU with the Korea Importers Association and want to point out that Alberta is the only province in our country that has an MOU with the Korea Importers Association and that we're the third jurisdiction in North America. This is absolutely significant as far as increasing our opportunity to get our agriculture products . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, minister.

Mr. Speaker, given that we already have trade offices in Asia, again to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: how will opening a third international office in China help create jobs for Albertans and diversify the economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. That was one of our three concrete tangibles from this trade mission, opening a new Alberta office in Guangzhou, in the province of Guangdong. Very simply, Guangdong province is very similar to Alberta in the sense that it is one of China's biggest economic engines and driving forces. That province alone is responsible for one-fifth of China's GDP. It is absolutely critical that we have staff there in Guangzhou not only to help support Alberta businesses with entering into the China market but, as well, identifying opportunities and attracting investment . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### 2:20 Emergency Medical Dispatch Services in Calgary

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, Wildrose has risen in this House 10 times to highlight the issue of EMS dispatch services in Calgary. Calgarians deserve to have quality services when it comes to dispatch and to be kept in the loop on matters that will directly impact the delivery of those services. That's why I was so alarmed to discover the revelations of the AHS former CEO. Answers the Health minister gave in this House about Calgary ambulance dispatch do not reveal what is really happening, so I will ask the minister, plain and simple: what exactly is the government's plan for Calgary dispatch?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, plain and simple, our plan is to continue to make sure that we have reliable EMS service and to improve it, actually, throughout Alberta, and certainly the best way to do that is to have a dialogue with the local community. When the mayor expressed concerns about the transition, I made it a priority to make sure that I can meet with him and have an ongoing dialogue, expose some of the evidence, and make sure that we come to the right decision. The members opposite have asked me to make rash decisions. I'm actually making sure that we have time to talk and work through the details, and I plan to keep doing that.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, this NDP government just can't seem to help itself when it comes to meddling. Whereas in less than a year of governing they have no problem exercising political interference when it's to their advantage and given that we've learned that the Health minister was hiding facts about Calgary EMS and that we also know that she wasn't telling the mayor of Calgary the full story about a crucial issue, I want the minister to come clean and say when and what exactly the mayor was told about the dispatch plans.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, this has certainly been an issue that's been ongoing for many years under the previous government. There were messages conveyed, including in the letter of resignation, that the last government said publicly that they weren't moving forward but that their plan actually was to move forward just after the election. Certainly, the mayor of Calgary didn't want that to happen, and I made sure that our government stepped up and asked for the evidence. We have an opportunity to go through it with the city, and the mayor is very grateful.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, seeing as the Health minister knew full well that AHS is locked into a lease of at least 20 years for the new EMS dispatch and given that we thought it was bad enough when there was a short-term problem of an empty building at \$60,000 a

month and whereas now we know that Albertans are on the hook for \$15 million – \$15 million – to move ahead with a Calgary EMS dispatch that the city doesn't want, why did the Health minister try to cover this up? Does she really think this is the way to run Alberta's most expensive ministry?

**Ms Hoffman:** Since the member opposite has been referring to Mayor Nenshi, I thought I'd actually put his own words on record. From a statement he just released:

Minister Hoffman, to her great credit, put the transfer on hold and has repeatedly promised that she would get answers to The City's questions about the 911 service change – questions which AHS had refused to answer over a period of [very] many years. Minister Hoffman did the right thing for Calgarians and she should be applauded for her actions.

... Minister Hoffman's putting a stop to these games is not "political interference," it's proper governance of Alberta's largest expense.

**The Speaker:** I'd just like to caution both sides of the House. Let's be cautious about statements that may be interpreted to reflect upon the character and reputation of members.

The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### Trade and Development Initiatives

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before in this Assembly, agriculture and forestry play an integral role in the diversification of our economy. I've heard from Alberta ag and forest industry producers that they're excited about exporting their innovative projects to new markets. Recently the minister of economic development travelled to China to talk to stakeholders there and promote Alberta industry. Although I got scooped by the member behind you, I would like the minister to tell what tangible results he got on this trip.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. I mean, agriculture and forestry are two of our priority sectors in addition, obviously, to our energy sector. At the moment we do a significant amount of trade, especially with Asia. I want to highlight the fact that, first of all, China is Alberta's second-largest trading partner; Korea is our fifth-largest trading partner. There's much more as far as opportunities to increase the amount of trade that we're doing. That's one of the objectives and one of the tangibles that we got out of this trade mission.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this trip to China led to promising new market expansion for Alberta's forest and agricultural industry, which I support a hundred per cent, to the minister: how are you going to be able to deliver our products to these new markets? Maybe use Zeppelins?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for his question. I mean, absolutely, when we talk about diversification, which I've spoken on a number of times, it's not just diversifying our products; it's also diversifying our markets. And the fact that we want to increase our opportunities for trade is absolutely critical.

Mr. Speaker, we're also looking at increasing our market access. That involves working with our different rail companies, our

different modes of transportation to ensure that we're getting Alberta products to tidewater and overseas into new markets.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Related to economic development, I would like to thank the minister given that he took my advice last fall and moved NADC to Economic Development, which was absolutely the right thing to do.

Now my question is: seeing that NADC has been a year without direction or leadership, when will this government appoint a new chair to NADC?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question, a very pertinent question. Absolutely, it's one of my priorities, to work with our different organizations throughout the province. It's very critical that we not only keep a watchful eye but that we're acting in a supportive way to support especially our entrepreneurs, businesses in northern Alberta. I think there are great opportunities to expand the great work that's already going on. So to the member's question: we will be doing this in a very timely manner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Red Deer Regional Hospital

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The former CEO of Alberta Health Services doesn't trust this Health minister, and Albertans don't either. After major flooding shut down nine Red Deer operating rooms on March 1, Alberta Health Services first said: one or two weeks to restoration. Then later the minister said that three of these operating rooms would be running this coming week. Now we've learned from AHS documents that these rooms will not see full completion till May 31. The finish line keeps moving. Can the people of Red Deer trust this new timeline?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, the flooding that happened at the Red Deer regional hospital on March 1 as a result of a sprinkler system being unintentionally struck and causing flooding is certainly not something that could be planned for and certainly is something that we're responding to in a way that makes sure that patient care is the top priority. Making sure that you have operating rooms that are clean, sterile, and fit for operations is our number one priority. We are hopeful that we'll be able to get these online quickly, but obviously we're not going to put patients in unsafe situations.\*

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, the minister said that Red Deer residents could get their surgeries done in Olds and Innisfail, but given that workers from these communities are reporting very few surgeries being added to their queues, can the minister explain why front-line workers in Olds and Innisfail are telling us that they just aren't seeing the positive benefits of this good-news announcement?

**Ms Hoffman:** I'd certainly be happy to follow up with the specific information that the member has raised in this Chamber, in voice mode or in e-mail, after the fact. I would like to have the appropriate information to be able to give the appropriate response in a timely fashion, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there are operating rooms in other parts of the province that can accommodate elective surgeries,

\*See page 446, left column, paragraph 6

including nearby communities but in other areas of the province as well.

**Mr. Orr:** Given that the minister has been accused of micromanaging and slowing down processes at AHS, it appears that the minister's political interference is hurting front-line care and increasing already dismal waiting times for patients in Red Deer. Even the doctors are, I quote, getting grumpy because they can't perform needed operations for patients. What does the minister say to the citizens of central Alberta as they see wait times getting longer while operating rooms remain closed?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I'd be happy to follow up with Alberta Health Services and the hospital administrator and find out what specifically is happening on-site. I think that's what's being asked of me, and that's what Albertans ask of me, to make sure I'm accountable for the system. Certainly, we want to make sure that when patients have surgery, they're not in a situation that makes it worse because they have contracted an infection. Making sure that those environments are sterile and fit for surgery is our number one priority. Urgent situations are moving forward, but elective surgeries have had to be postponed. As soon as those rooms are back up, we'll make sure we get people caught up as quickly as possible.

### Organ Transplantation

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Health minister why our per capita transplant rates have been steadily falling over the past decade despite increased spending by Alberta Health Services. The minister refused to acknowledge the plummeting numbers and called it hysterical fearmongering. This isn't hysteria. Albertans are deeply worried about the troubling trend, and Wildrose shares these concerns. Could the minister cut the baseless attacks, care about Albertans, and tell us exactly what her ministry will be doing to restore Alberta as a leader in organ transplants?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. What I spoke to yesterday was the fact that the member opposite was saying a decade, but his research department was being very creative and picking nine specific years to show a point where there might be a blip in the data. I understand, Mr. Speaker, that that's what opposition researchers do. They try to find something salacious.

In terms of what's happening in neighbouring provinces, I'm really happy that B.C. is increasing their capacity so that people don't have to travel outside of province. I think that's important. Of course, in Alberta we want to continue to make sure that Albertans have access to transplants. We'll support neighbouring provinces, but certainly their province stepping up to the plate is not something that we should be condemning them for.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, this data the Health minister refused to look at comes straight from CIHI, which gets it from her own ministry.

Given that Alberta's average transplant rates have decreased 21 per cent over nine years while rates have vastly improved elsewhere and given that we have one of the most expensive hospital systems in Canada while spending far more than any other province on an age-adjusted per capita basis, will the minister finally accept the evidence from her own department, and more importantly what will you do about it?

**Ms Hoffman:** I'd be very happy to give the research department of the Wildrose a lesson in actually looking at, when your member is going to say a decade, making sure you look back at the decade, not picking specific numbers in a nine-year random sample. That is more sloppy math on the part of the Official Opposition. I think that they should be questioned on it.

In terms of what's happening here, what's happening here is the records in terms of liver transplants, lung transplants, life-saving surgeries, Mr. Speaker. Being disrespectful to those recipients and the staff is not a way to move the system forward. I am proud of them.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that I will be tabling this information today and given that the bottom line is that Alberta families suffer under the weight of a bureaucratic, inefficient, wasteful Alberta Health Services monopoly and given that we were once leaders in organ transplants and seeing that the system is clearly failing our patients and excellent front-line surgical teams, can the minister just put down her talking points and tell us: what you will do to get the resources directed to Albertans, who desperately need and deserve a higher quality of care than our broken system can deliver?

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm pleased to respond to your talking points, through you, Mr. Speaker, of course. I'm very pleased for the fact that I've signed up to be an organ donor. I imagine many members of this House have, including members opposite. It's important that we have living donors for opportunities where we can, as with partial livers or kidneys, but often in these situations it's very tragic outcomes that lead to the high number of increases. We're looking at small sample sizes, but there are hundreds of people's lives in Alberta that are saved every year through organ transplant. I'm proud of the system we have. I hope that members opposite think about public donation and public health care as they continue to move forward.

### Physician-assisted Dying

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, our Progressive Conservative Engage document has already provided thousands of Albertans the opportunity to raise issues of concern. One of these is physician-assisted dying. This is a complex medical, ethical, legal, and moral issue, and people have strongly held opinions on this subject. There is a widespread understanding and desire that there will be a fulsome debate on this subject so that hon. members from across the province can express the concerns of their constituents. To the Associate Minister of Health: will you commit to Albertans that physician-assisted death will be debated here in the Assembly?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Absolutely, we know that physician-assisted dying is a very, very sensitive issue, which is why our government has engaged with Albertans through an online survey as well as the online portal for sending in comments. At the close of the survey over 10,000 Albertans had submitted their views.

Additionally, myself and other members of this House are consulting with stakeholders to prepare a what-we-heard document so that we are able to bring forward a framework that fully represents the views of Albertans.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, no indication if we're going to debate it here in the Assembly.

Given that the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that physician-assisted suicide is legal and given that a federal panel on this issue has made a number of recommendations that many feel fail to adequately protect vulnerable Albertans against undue pressure to request this terminal procedure, what measures is the minister considering to ensure that Albertans facing this profound stage in their earthly journey have full access to palliative care and receive full counselling support as well as the opportunity to reconsider and renege on end-of-life decisions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Protecting vulnerable Albertans is a key part of any framework that we'll be bringing forward. To that end, we know that an individual is the one who's required to make the request of their physician and that they will be required to reiterate that request and that at any point in the process an individual may withdraw their consent and the process will be halted.

Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, many Albertans have also expressed concerns about doctors and medical personnel, who previously focused solely on healing and relieving suffering, now being called on to end the lives of their patients. Given the profound burden that this places on these professionals, none of whom have had training dealing with the mental strain of performing euthanasia, to the minister: working with the College of Physicians & Surgeons and the Alberta Medical Association, what measures are being developed to support medical personnel suddenly faced with this challenging ethical situation?

**Ms Payne:** I'll thank the member for the question. To date we've had 80 doctors who've stepped forward and indicated their willingness to participate in physician-assisted dying. Working with the college of physicians in Alberta – I had a meeting with them earlier today – we've been talking about different training modules that will be available as well as supports that will be available for any of the medical professionals that aid someone in the decision to end their life as part of their end-of-life care. As we continue to move forward with this issue in advance of the June 6 Supreme Court deadline, we will continue to work with our partners across health care.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

#### School Board Autonomy

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I have heard concerns directly from both the Calgary Catholic and the public school board that the new MGA may challenge the autonomy of school boards and impact student learning. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what impact will the new MGA have on the autonomy of school boards and student learning?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for sharing the concerns from her constituency. The modernized MGA will be about building strong, sustainable communities, and that includes support for schools and for our children. No element of the new MGA will challenge the autonomy or authority of school boards. Instead, we are striving for greater collaboration among all the stakeholders to come together to build complete communities that serve Alberta's families. The Minister of Education and I have

met with a number of school boards from across Alberta, including Calgary and Edmonton . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental question.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these school boards have also raised concerns around the development of city charters with Calgary and Edmonton and given that these boards have stated that they believe elements of these charters could potentially undermine the authority of school boards, again to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: can you please explain the effect that city charters will have on the authority of school boards?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to clarify that the MGA and the city charters are separate processes. The city charters are looking at potential enhancements in terms of creating and building better collaborative partnerships between the cities and school boards, none, however, which will affect a school board's authority, which both myself and the Minister of Education have reiterated to a number of school boards from across the province. It's quite simple. Municipalities and school boards serve the same communities, the same families. We want to support those collaborative relationships so that Albertans are served effectively and efficiently by their governments.

2:40

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and again in regard to the city charters: when will school boards, other stakeholders, and the public have an opportunity to weigh in on the development of city charters?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the opportunity to speak about the fact that both city charters and the MGA will be a very transparent process. The MGA will be presented this spring, but it is not final. Everyone, including our school boards, will have the opportunity to provide feedback before the final legislation is passed next fall. We are committed as well to openness and transparency on city charters. Any proposed changes for Calgary and Edmonton will be posted publicly for a prolonged period of time so everyone can view and provide feedback on the charters before the final approval of this government.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

#### Grande Prairie Hospital Construction

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Grande Prairie hospital fiasco has caused a great deal of anxiety among the citizens of the Peace Country. They're worried that the NDP can't be trusted to get this project on track. Can the minister tell the people of the Peace Country when she first became aware of construction delays to the Grande Prairie hospital?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member. There are a number of problems with the project at Grande Prairie, and they originally stem from the announcement of the building of the hospital with a price tag attached, a political

announcement which then forced the department to design to the political announcement instead of taking a careful look at what the needs were, doing a business case, doing your design, and so on, and then announcing the project. So we've changed this process since coming into office. Now we scope out our projects before we make a political announcement, and that way we can keep . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that these delays due to mismanagement by consecutive governments do nothing but continue to break the trust of Albertans, can the minister at least tell us if it was before or after she met with the MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, the mayor of Grande Prairie, and myself on September 9?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. As I mentioned during a previous session and I'm happy to reinforce today, at that time what I said to the room of stakeholders – and I was happy to meet with them – was that I wasn't aware of any deadlines. That's absolutely fact. What I did do is that as soon as I found out there was going to be a delay, we scheduled an opportunity for me to call the MLAs and, of course, the mayor as well to tell them in person over the phone. Then afterwards we released a formal communication to the broader community. So as soon as I found out, I made sure I communicated it publicly.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given this hospital has been not only plagued by cost overruns, poor oversight by consecutive governments, and delay after delay and given it is apparent that only the Wildrose cares enough to stand up for patients and front-line workers, can the minister tell us here today if she has received any current information regarding any further delays, budget changes, or changes of scope of the hospital?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, what a ridiculous assertion. Only the Wildrose. What a ridiculous assertion. Furthermore, the assertion that consecutive governments are responsible for the problems of the Grande Prairie hospital is patently false. We are working very hard to reduce the costs of this hospital. It was built far too big. It was built with many problems because of lack of planning on the part of the previous government. We are working hard to clean up that mess.

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

### Affordable Housing

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Engaging in critical housing issues with constituents and stakeholders is a commitment of the PC caucus. Addressing these issues requires an overarching housing strategy, a clearly defined one-stop shop for private and nonprofit partners. We are proud of early strides our government took with respect to leveraging public funds to maximize outcomes in seniors' and affordable housing, but it is clear that more work needs to be done. To the minister of seniors: are you working on the development of an overall housing strategy which addresses the entire housing continuum geographically and demographically, and if not, why?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question also. All Albertans deserve to live

in a safe, secure home no matter what their income, and we in Alberta have a spectrum of services for people to support them, whether they're low income. We are as a government very committed to this. Certainly, in my career as a social worker I know that it's so fundamental. It's fundamental to the social determinants of health to have good housing, and we are absolutely as a government diligently working on this.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that one of the most effective ways to tackle affordable housing is to partner with the private and nonprofit sectors and given that multiple stakeholders are providing innovative and sustainable concepts in redeveloping and densifying underutilized properties in both rural and urban settings, the government would be wise, of course, to engage in leveraging these partnerships. To the minister: can you specifically outline for the House any current initiatives or programs from your ministry to partner with private and nonprofit housing entities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Just yesterday I met with the Horizon association in Calgary. They're a nonprofit agency. I met with Resolve. They're working for several nonprofit agencies in the Calgary area to make sure that there is affordable housing across the spectrum. I've met with many, many other stakeholders since being appointed to this ministry February 2. I just commend the member to be very alert during the budget because I think we'll have some very good news for him.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A little short on specific initiatives, but I'll take that as an answer.

Given that another issue to address within the housing continuum is the ever-present need for additional seniors' housing and given that our PC Engage document outlines a plan heard from multiple stakeholders to co-locate seniors' housing with other services and forms of attainable, affordable market housing and given that this would allow seniors to age in place as vibrant, active contributors within communities they built, to the minister: are you exploring new and innovative ways to fund capital investment or to deliver new concepts in seniors' housing, and if so, what are they?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We know the importance of keeping seniors in their communities, keeping seniors in their homes, keeping seniors in facilities that support their needs and making sure that they're integrated into the community. I again just support the member to be alert and watch for further details coming out very shortly.

Thank you.

### Payday Loan Service Review

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Mr. Speaker, like many parts of Alberta, my constituency of Red Deer-North is working hard to cope with the challenges of the current difficult economic times, but we're seeing that in these tough economic times some Alberta families are still turning to payday loan services to help them deal with financial challenges. Last fall the Minister of Service Alberta announced a

review of the province's payday lending regulations, and since then my constituents have been anxiously waiting for action on this important issue. To the Minister of Service Alberta: can you update the House on what you heard from Albertans during this consultation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you for the question. The member is correct. We launched a consultation last October. Fourteen hundred people participated in our online survey. My department also held many face-to-face meetings with borrowers, community and nonprofit organizations, and industry, and we received in-depth submissions. We heard Albertans loud and clear. About 80 per cent of respondents overwhelmingly said that they want lower rates, limits on borrowing amounts, and want lenders to offer longer payback periods and allow for instalments. In response to this feedback we will be moving ahead with changes to better protect Albertans who use these payday loan services.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

2:50

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in many cases people who use payday loans can end up paying upwards of 600 per cent interest on their loans but given that I've heard from some companies who argue that the use of the term "predatory" is unfair, to the same minister: is this a fair characterization, and why are you introducing legislation on this issue when you could just change the existing regulations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. This is a very important issue. We feel that it deserves the full attention of the whole Assembly. It affects many Albertans and is important enough to warrant legislation. Six hundred per cent interest rates are predatory. Period. We want to end practices that expose Albertans to vicious cycles of debt.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Mr. Speaker, given that in some communities payday lenders may be the only option for Albertans and given that these folks are worried about being able to make ends meet, again to the Minister of Service Alberta: will Albertans still have access to short-term loans that they may need to bridge gaps in their finances?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely. Our changes are to limit the excessive interest rates that are charged by payday loan companies. We will continue to allow for more reasonable lending so that Albertans who need these services will have access to them. We are also working with the Finance minister and community partners to put better lending alternatives in place. As Albertans we look forward to helping each other and doing so in tough times. These alternatives will help Albertans who just need a few bucks to get to their next paycheque. I'm proud of the action that we're taking on this, and I look forward to discussing this more in the coming weeks.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Minister of Health has requested an opportunity to supplement an answer given earlier.

## Red Deer Regional Hospital

(continued)

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's to a question raised by the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka. It was mentioned in a question by the member that the operating theatres weren't on track to open. I'm pleased to inform this House and all Albertans that there are three operating theatres scheduled to open the second week of April. So they are indeed on track to open on time, and they will be safe.

**The Speaker:** You have the opportunity for a supplementary question, hon. member.

Not seeing that, I would advise the House that it appears we will not be able to finish the Routine on time. Is there a desire to have unanimous consent to continue?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to continue the Routine past 3 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Forgive the indulgence, but I forgot to mention that you do have 15 seconds if you'd like to leave.

Hon. members, 15 seconds has subsided.

## Members' Statements

### Health Care System

**Mrs. Pitt:** Albertans are worried about an NDP government that is more concerned about ideology than working in the best interest of patients. They have watched as a centralized superboard in AHS has grown more distant and uncaring about the concerns of patients, families, and our most vulnerable. The more power centralized in health care, the more patients have suffered every single time.

It started with doctor intimidation, queue jumping, and public inquiries that revealed a fundamentally broken health care system. In communities across Alberta it meant ripping effective ambulance and dispatch systems away from their communities, creating higher wait times. Emergency room wait times increased while wait times for key surgical procedures spiked. All the while, whether it's the previous government or our new NDP government, the only solution they offer is to dramatically increase spending without any concrete ideas to improve outcomes for patients.

Today we have the town of Sundre bubbling with anger over long-term care cuts and now in a damning letter from former AHS CEO Vickie Kaminski clear signs the government is not only ideologically interfering in our health care system but misleading Albertans on several key files. The letter shows the NDP keeping secret information like a 20-year lease space that cost \$750,000 a year to centralize Calgary EMS services. We heard that the government used labour negotiations to try and build goodwill for the Premier at a government-union AGM. We also found out that the government is on track to negotiate wage increases. We heard that the government is blocking innovative initiatives to save the health care system money while protecting front-line services.

What it all adds up to is an NDP government who is more interested in keeping secrets and interfering in a broken health care model. Albertans are tired of the experiments and the broken trust. They are sick of the secrecy, and they are angry about it. Albertans deserve better.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.



### Dig Safe Month

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about safe digging. April is known as the Dig Safe Month across Canada. Dig Safe Month coincides with the unofficial start of the spring digging season.

Every year thousands of buried lines such as cables, wires, pipelines, water mains, and sewer lines are accidentally damaged by excavators. As a result our everyday utilities – namely, heat, electricity, water, telecommunications, and Internet – along with emergency services are interrupted. These incidents lead to serious injuries and significant environmental contamination that add huge costs on public tax dollars. Hence, this campaign serves as a reminder to homeowners and contractors that they need to click or call before they dig because all these unnecessary risks are preventable.

Alberta was the first province in Canada to create a one-call service, in 1984. Thirty-two years later Alberta One-Call receives and processes over 500,000 locate requests from the digging community. Despite that, over 2,500 damages to underground infrastructure occurred in 2015, most because the person digging failed to click, which means failed to identify and locate the buried lines before they dug, and initiate the damage prevention process. Requesting a locate is free, and the notification centres are easily accessible through websites. In my constituency of Calgary-Glenmore awareness around protection of buried lines is an important issue due to the upcoming southwest ring road construction project.

Several members are sporting the Dig Safe pin to spread awareness. With us today are some members of the Alberta Common Ground Alliance, who have already been introduced in the House. They are working hard to keep Albertans safe by raising awareness of these issues.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### Wellness Strategy

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's not-so-new government has racked up the highest deficit projections in the history of our province. So in our Engage document our PC caucus asks: how can we create a culture of increasing quality of life and improving health outcomes while decreasing costs?

The previous government designed programs and policies that were positive, proactive, and preventative. Through a rigorous province-wide consultation, the most comprehensive framework of its kind on Earth, Alberta's strategic approach to wellness was created, but we've heard nothing about this or other groundbreaking initiatives for aboriginal Albertans, students, employees, and seniors.

The NDP have made no commitments to continue hosting international wellness symposia, provincial wellness forums, and Alberta workplace wellness summits, which were previously supported by stakeholders clear across Alberta and all parties in this House. A few days ago the NDP canned the internationally recognized Healthy U campaign and shut down healthyalberta.ca. The minister in charge assigned the recently appointed Associate Minister of Health, not wellness, her first job: dealing with assisted death. With great respect I say, Mr. Speaker, that I fear this government is overlooking wellness.

Finally, the NDP has been silent on the Alberta Get Outdoors, or GO, Weekend, an act passed by all parties of this very House and which just happens to be this Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. GO has

been supported by every ministry in the past and organizations across our province, but the NDP has literally dropped the ball on this as well.

With skyrocketing rates of chronic health diseases of all kinds and ever-escalating health care costs, I implore the government to concentrate on root causes so that Albertans can be as happy, healthy, and out of the hospital as much as possible while decreasing health care costs and taxes.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

3:00

### Tartan Day

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we celebrate Tartan Day, which recognizes Scottish heritage around the world. I do want to recognize the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, who's sporting his kilt today, and I am wearing the Calgary tartan, designed by the St. Andrew-Caledonian Society, a Scottish historical and heritage organization in Calgary. The century-old society has done an amazing job by recognizing and celebrating Scottish heritage in Calgary since the time of George Murdoch, and it presented Calgary with its very own tartan. It is now a symbol of Calgary that any person can wear anywhere they choose, wherever they like, whenever they like.

The colours truly represent the beautiful diversity of Calgary: red, the colour of the North West Mounted Police and a Calgary colour; blue for Calgary's rivers, the Bow and Elbow, that connect together; yellow for the prairies and wheat fields that are found in the east; grey for the Rocky Mountains found to the west; black for the oil and gas industry, that has made Calgary prosper; and white represents Calgary pride in the symbol of the white stetson and white hatter awards.

Many Scots were and still are vital in the building of Calgary, which was named after a small hamlet in Scotland. As a Calgarian I was proud to wear the Calgary tartan kilt when I was sworn into the 29th Legislative Assembly. This tartan symbolizes our history, where we have come from, and where we are going. Later on I'll be tabling five copies of a description of the Calgary tartan from the St. Andrew-Caledonian Society. I want to thank them for developing a unique piece of Calgary's history and especially thank Robert Henderson, the president, for ensuring that we, the elected officials in Calgary, are educated about this important historical footprint in our city.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all those of Scottish descent who have helped make our province the amazing place it is today.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Citizens for Public Justice

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to rise to highlight the important work of Citizens for Public Justice, or CPJ. CPJ is a member-driven, faith-based public policy organization focused on ecological justice, refugee rights, and poverty elimination. With offices now in Ottawa, CPJ has a long history of working for the common good of society, and I'm proud to say that the organization has strong roots in Alberta and specifically in Edmonton. CPJ has been very formative in my own understanding of public policy through a social justice lens. The hours I have spent discussing, reading, and listening to faith-based public policy analysis have been instrumental in my own path towards choosing to seek election as an NDP MLA.

Through its 53-year history CPJ has remained a constant, active voice in Canadian public affairs, influencing public conversation around issues such as the Mackenzie Valley pipeline and Edmonton's recycling program as well as advocating for indigenous and ecological justice. Throughout the years politicians like Grant Notley have attended events as well as persons from all political persuasions. While I served on the CPJ board, we developed a policy in favour of a guaranteed livable income for Canadians. This was supported by politicians from diverse political parties, including former Conservative Senator Hugh Segal and NDP MP Paul Dewar.

Recently CPJ's work on climate change has gathered over 60 signatures of senior faith community leaders in Canada on a statement calling for action on climate change, poverty, and indigenous rights. I was proud to have introduced to this Legislature current and former board members and staff of CPJ. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Citizens for Public Justice for their commitment to informing public policy and advancing social, economic, and ecological justice in Canada.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

### Lethbridge BioGas

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to share with the members a unique business that I recently toured in the great riding of Little Bow called Lethbridge BioGas. Opened in 2013, this is a waste-to-energy process where organic waste material is recycled to make other value-added products by employing an anaerobic digestion process as well as providing electricity to the grid.

When certain organic products are sent to the landfill from processing plants, the value of this potential energy goes untapped. It also breaks down over time and releases deadly methane gas. Every industry related to food processing has something that this plant can use to reduce this problem. Lethbridge BioGas employs proven technology and has a working solution. In partnership with producers they take manure that would have been previously land applied, mix that with other organic materials, and they use their process to safely remove the methane under a controlled environment. The end product is able to be applied back to the land. It's high in nitrogen and good for the soil. The methane that is removed is used to power two huge engines that have a generation capacity of almost three megawatts on a 24/7 basis that would power a town of 3,000 people. In Europe there are over 17,000 similar facilities.

Lethbridge BioGas is an example of an off-the-shelf design. This particular facility is big in technical terms but can easily be scaled down and tailored to the quantity of feedstock that is available. There are a lot of opportunities and potential for this technology. This just makes so much sense. Why aren't there more of these? There is a regulatory environment in place in Alberta that isn't set up to handle industry like this. We need to fix that. Members, rural areas can diversify by using these very scalable facilities, helping to grow and sustain Alberta's economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

### Bill 5

#### Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and introduce Bill 5, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act.

This bill will help Alberta seniors receive the financial support they need to remain safe, secure, and independent in their own homes for as long as they choose or are physically able.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I table the requisite five copies of the description of the Calgary tartan, which I had the fortune to wear at my wedding, my graduation both from college and high school as well as when being sworn in. A member of the opposition asked why I wasn't wearing it now. It hasn't accommodated the 30 pounds I've gained in this job.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two reports to table. The first one is the government's own information that the Health ministry gave to CIHI, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, which unfortunately clearly shows that over a 10-year period we have slipped 28 per cent in the number of transplants that we do. As our population has grown by a million people, we're doing, actually, less, and we are no longer a leader. It is very, very important to our citizens, so please take a look at the copy of this, and please sign your organ donation card.

Secondly, I have five pictures of a building that we think is the \$15 million boondoggle on Macleod Trail that Alberta Health Services has rented and paid for, a nice big building with not a vehicle or a person around it. I'd like to ask you to take a look at this as well. I have the five requisite copies, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any other members for tabling returns?

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a letter from the AAMD and C to the Resource Stewardship Committee dated January 29, 2016. Yesterday during question period the Minister of Transportation highlighted that although the strategic transportation infrastructure program, or STIP, was restored in Budget 2015, it is not necessarily for rural bridges as specifically suggested in our Engage initiative. Additionally, the government website on STIP states that funding won't be realized until at least 2017-18, and more interestingly the letter from the AAMD and C reads: "Comments made by Minister Ceci about not being able to afford all promises made . . ."

3:10

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, as I understand practice and precedent, you table a document rather than speak to the details. Could you summarize the substance of it and table it?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Well, as the letter stated, Minister Ceci said that all promises may not be able to be afforded. I'll table the requisite number of documents, and I'd like to thank the minister for promoting the Progressive Conservative Engage initiative.

Thank you.

**Orders of the Day**  
**Government Bills and Orders**  
**Committee of the Whole**

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 4**  
**An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling**  
**Governing Essential Services**

**The Chair:** We are on amendment A3. Are there further members wishing to speak to this amendment? The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I had the floor. I know that everybody was hanging on the edge of their chairs waiting for what I was going to say next at 5 to 12, when I was cut off, so I'll continue now.

Madam Chair, this amendment says to add "unless permitted by the essential services agreement," which is an indication that an agreement bargained across the table could vary this section of the legislation. As I started to say this morning, all of us in this room might have a different definition of what we would determine as essential work from nonessential work. That is at the heart of my argument here. Because of the fact of the wide range of important work done by Alberta civil servants, everybody's definition of what's essential will be different. Again, there are some obvious cases, a doctor or a nurse who's in the middle of a procedure with a patient. I think most Albertans if not all would agree that that is essential. There are other jobs that Alberta employees do that, while it's all important work, could be defined as other than essential.

The problem, Madam Chair, is those grey areas, areas that are really important but that somehow in the determination by the government – and I know the government will do their best to get it right. I'm not saying otherwise. But I say that even the government would agree, I think, that some things are almost essential. You know, you draw the line somewhere, right? There are so many different jobs that the 220,000 employees on the government payroll do. With the ones that are just right on the line of being almost essential, the government should probably support this in the event that they're not a hundred per cent right.

I know they're going to try to get it right – I give them credit for that – but if there is a situation where the health or safety of an Albertan or perhaps even the protection of a really expensive piece of infrastructure is suddenly at risk because of a legal strike action, then without this or some other change the government or the agency, that uses government money, wouldn't be able to bring in replacement workers to protect that piece of infrastructure, to protect that Albertan, to protect the public safety and good. Madam Chair, this is, I think, a responsible way for the government to say: we recognize that there may be unforeseen circumstances where something that is deemed nonessential is so important that during a labour disruption you'll want to bring in somebody else to look after those people or that piece of infrastructure. This, frankly, as opposed to being really at odds with the government's legislation, may save the government's butt in a circumstance that they honestly, sincerely, and despite their best efforts did not foresee.

For that reason I intend to support this, and I encourage other members of the House to do so. I think it's a responsible amendment made here in the Legislative Assembly.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to put my thoughts on the record about this amendment. Bill 4 as presented sets out a framework to allow employers and employees to work together to determine who is and is not essential in the workplace. I believe the honourable minister has already spoken about this, the situation that the member who brought forward this amendment mentioned, where it might be agreed that temporary workers may be allowed. The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, I think, would potentially logically expect that allowing workers from the nonbargaining unit to be involved in the initial stages of those negotiations would perhaps be misinterpreted by the various bargaining parties or misunderstood and would potentially create a negotiation environment that might not be conducive to a good deal for both sides and might hamper the process.

For that reason, I will not be supporting this particular amendment. I believe the concerns that the member brought up have been addressed by the minister, and I don't believe this amendment is needed and might potentially be harmful. I will not be voting for this amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and debate Bill 4 on national Tartan Day. I have no idea what tartan this is. My wife picked it out, so it can't be that bad.

**An Hon. Member:** Tip-top.

**Mr. Cooper:** No, I don't think it is.

On to important issues of the day and this particular piece of legislation and on to the issue at hand. I think there are just a couple of quick things that I'd like to point out. Just prior to the House rising at noon, we heard the hon. minister speak to a previous amendment that wasn't included or some concerns around whether or not it was included inside the scope of the Supreme Court ruling, so there was a decision amongst the government to hold off on making any movement and, in fact, keeping a fine in place that was, you know, set in the mid-80s. This government has said that this legislation needs to be updated, and we agree, but the rationale for not doing that was that it wasn't inside the scope of the ruling, and here we have another piece of the bill that is also outside of the scope of the ruling. It seems that the government wants to move in some areas that are inside and other areas that are outside of the ruling, so I do have some concerns around that particular issue.

3:20

When it comes to this particular amendment, the government, the ministers of the government are responsible for providing services to Albertans no matter what's going on in negotiations. I want to be absolutely clear about this, and I want to be absolutely clear that our discussion around the right to use replacement workers is not to get around negotiations. It's not to provide unfettered access to replacement workers but to acknowledge the fact that there very well may be circumstances that arise where both parties decide that that is an appropriate and fair measure and would then allow and ensure that Albertans could receive service.

An example, and I think the leader of the third party was moving in that direction: perhaps a boiler breaks down in the middle of the negotiations or strike, and there is no one able to repair that boiler, and there is significant infrastructure damage to that particular building. Perhaps it's in the middle of a very cold winter, and the whole building is going to freeze up. On both sides of the discussion there is agreement that it would be advantageous to get that done. However, the striking workers aren't willing. Whatever the case

may be, the point is that there are a lot of scenarios where it may be good to be able to have this at the discretion or the availability of the minister to try and negotiate it. Absolutely ruling it out does not serve Albertans well along the process.

I think it's a reasonable amendment. I think it's an amendment that is pretty measured. It's not hysterical, as some would call us. I think that it's important for ministers to remember that at the end of the day they are responsible for ensuring that the services are provided, and this could and should be considered as a reasonable tool that they may need in the eventuality of circumstances that are unforeseen.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. There are a couple of items that I've heard so far that I just want to take the opportunity to respond to. The first is the question of scope. You're absolutely correct. I have used the argument that we're trying to use a narrow definition, that we're trying to keep this to the Supreme Court ruling. Through reading the Supreme Court ruling, you can see that the consideration of replacement workers was part of it. It wasn't in their ruling per se, but if you press Control F, you can find that replacement workers were discussed or considered in three different places.

It was considered and discussed in our consultation, so we were able to engage the stakeholders and have a conversation about replacement workers and the impact that replacement workers have on that collective bargaining process. The Supreme Court ruling fundamentally was about making sure that the collective bargaining process is fair, balanced, and provides the right to strike to the workers, which they do require. Through the discussion about replacement workers the employers were able to express that replacement workers did not seem very likely, particularly during a dispute, because the skills and qualifications of a bargaining unit are not easily replaced. So that's definitely something to be considered. There were some employers that talked about replacement workers in case the negotiations of essential services were delayed until there was job action, but our government has decided that you must have those conversations and make those determinations upfront.

In our determination replacement workers are an important piece of this legislation. We have considered it carefully, making sure that this is an important step in how we're moving forward. That's my response regarding scope. Who is doing the work during a strike or lockout directly impacts how long that strike or lockout takes place. It directly impacts the people impacted, the public who might be using those services.

Now, in the case of emergency scenarios we have considered what that might look like. What we're asking the parties involved in an essential services agreement to do is to also consider that during the essential services negotiation. If an employer requires someone to do a function, then that should become an essential service under the essential services agreement that gets negotiated. That's the process we expect them to go through.

The wording of the replacement worker clause refers to the work of an employee on the bargaining unit that is currently on strike or lockout. In the scenario that we were just hearing regarding a boiler failing, for example in the case of an emergency, if that is work of the bargaining unit that is out on strike or lockout, the legislation allows the use of the umpire, that person who is on the ground to help make these decisions.

I'm not sure if I've spoken enough about the umpire in this system because it is a pretty key part of the legislation. The term "umpire" is used because, as in baseball, this is someone who is

supposed to be there, on the ground, making decisions in a very flexible and nimble way. Umpire decisions, rulings, you would say, will happen at 3 in the morning during a strike or lockout because these are high-pressure scenarios. Things happen. We need to make sure that essential services are protected. If there's a dispute about that, that will be dealt with within X number of days. The legislation talks about it. It can be escalated up to the essential services commissioner.

But that umpire on the ground, when that boiler fails, to help rule on if the bargaining unit should come back to fix the boiler because of this, this, and this implication: that will absolutely happen. As well, if the boiler being fixed isn't something that the nurses of HSAA typically do, well, the employer is able to hire someone because it's not the bargaining unit that's out on strike.

We really want to emphasize that during the negotiations of the essential services agreement – the legislation is really intended for the two parties to come to that table, negotiate together. The entire point of our approach, which is that co-operative centre approach, is for those conversations to be had well in advance. That allows, when a strike or lockout starts, for that confidence that the parties have negotiated and determined what needs to happen. In the case of something unexpected, the parties can amend their essential services agreement, the umpire can make rulings on the ground to adjust what's happening, or the commissioner can be involved, but ideally the umpire is what's going to happen in most cases. All reasonable scenarios so that services for Albertans are protected must be considered. We have confidence that in the mature and modern labour relations community we have in Alberta, we are going to be moving forward with this best approach.

My final thought on replacement workers is that the people who are best suited to provide services in the case of the health care industry are the professionally trained staff that are familiar with the needs of patients, the environment, and clients as well as the unique workplace. So bringing in other people, replacement workers in a health care setting, for example, could compromise patient care as replacement workers are not familiar with the unique needs of patients. Albertans want and deserve professionally trained and highly qualified staff that deliver the vital public services that they depend on. Potentially, replacement workers could put that at risk.

In fact, a scenario where replacement workers could be used to the negative impact of Albertans is if, for example, a union advocated for: oh, yes; we'll use some replacement workers because we're going to take all our best people out onto the strike line. You're going to end up having to hire people with maybe the same qualifications, but they don't know the environment well enough or they don't have the particular skill set potentially, so then you have people delivering the service that aren't as familiar with the environment.

My preference and how we've laid out the legislation is that during the negotiations we need to know who is going to do what work. We're going to have that negotiated by the two parties with the existing staff, with the bargaining units in play.

**3:30**

Those are the reasons that I do not support this amendment. I appreciate the thought that the opposition has put into this. It was considered by the government. It was discussed with the stakeholders at the consultations. Moving forward, I truly feel that adding any discussion of replacement workers into the essential services agreement will lengthen the negotiation process that it will take to negotiate that essential services agreement. It adds a whole other complicating factor.

I, again, look forward to hearing more discussion on this, but I do not support this amendment at this time. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have one final question that I'd like to ask the hon. minister. Going back to the question of who would be – so if we have a boiler go down in an emergency situation, you've indicated that the umpire's responsibility would be to determine whether or not that is a five-alarm fire, as we like to call it, and if someone needs to come in off the picket lines or if someone needs to come in in terms of a temporary worker. This is the question that I'd like to know.

More importantly, I'd like to know this, Madam Chair. In the event that the process breaks down and this umpire is not able to move on something quick enough and there is a multimillion-dollar problem, who is liable at that point? Would it be the umpire? Would it be the government? I think that this would be an interesting quagmire to have to go through to figure out who would be liable.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much for the question. The first part of your question was around: in the case of an emergency how does that get decided? I really want to emphasize that the first way that gets decided is by the two parties discussing it, because the system is based on collaboration and on them working together. It isn't the umpire necessarily, first and foremost, particularly because the care and well-being of patients that are being served in a health care setting or even just the environment, the work environment – if something is going wrong, the employees impacted will know emergency status, what might make sense. They may not completely agree with the employer, but I anticipate a lot of disputes to be negotiated just between the two parties. If that doesn't work, then the umpire does step in and can make judgments or rulings as necessary. Absolutely, that's the process, but I really don't want to lose that co-operation based focus that is the focus of this legislation, to bring those two parties together to come to an agreement and to make sure that any strike or lockout is done in a safe way and continues to provide the vital services to Albertans. We can't lose that thread.

In the case of a theoretical multimillion-dollar – that something has gone terribly, terribly wrong. I couldn't speculate as far as liability just because it's such a hard thing to pin down. We don't know what scenario that might be or what that looks like. But I do know that all parties involved will be working to avoid anything like that. We are trying to minimize disruption while still respecting the fundamental human right to join a union and go on strike.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruling was very clear that we need to bring forward legislation that does that, that allows for strikes and lockouts. We've used the Supreme Court ruling in formulating our approach while talking to Albertans who are using the labour relations system, both employers and employees, consulting widely. I'm very proud of the essential services legislation that we've brought forward and the process that we are using. I think it's going to serve Alberta well. I call it an Albertan-made solution because there's nothing exactly like it in Canada, and we're getting a lot of positive comments and support on it.

I appreciate your feedback and your amendments and thank you for the question.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to stand in the House and speak against the amendment that the

Official Opposition, the Wildrose, have put forward. The question is as to why we would not allow replacement workers as part of an essential services agreement that is created between the employer and the employees. What the opposition doesn't understand is that in good-faith collective bargaining both sides come to the table and work on what each needs and wants, and the agreement would determine what workers are needed to perform those essential services, therefore making the need to allow replacement workers unnecessary. So this will be my opportunity to educate these members opposite that would support the amendment as to why it would be in the worst interests of patient care to support it.

To highlight, I would like to share my experience working for the Good Samaritan long-term care facility. I worked in geriatric care for a number of years. What you learn when you work in health care is that you are all in it together, that your strength comes from working as a team and that part of working as a team and part of teaming in long-term care is to have rotations through the teams of residents that you serve. At Good Samaritan we had four wings and four-week rotations on each, and this allowed you to learn the specific care for each resident. In the case of one staff being sick, if you needed to bring in someone to help, the rest of the staff had the experience to deliver quality care to those patients. In the case that you couldn't find someone, you had the rest of the team to pull together and take care of those residents.

If you bring in a team of replacements, you lose consistent care, and consistent care is the key to safety and dignity. Consistent care is critical in all areas of patient care. Areas such as meals and food: you need to know as a health care professional working in long-term care, as a caregiver for those people, what that person's choking hazards are. Do they need their food puréed? When I give a glass of juice to this person, does it need to be thickening level 1, 2, or 3? Residents eat at least three times a day, so they are at risk if you don't know their needs.

Sometimes it's less serious: how do you like your coffee? After working with all four wings, I knew exactly what each resident wanted. I knew how they took their coffee; I knew how they took their tea, if it was cream, milk, sweetener. I knew it for every one of 50 people, and I knew specifically what they needed for every meal. I could do that because I cared about the people that I worked for and that I worked with. Those things are simple, but they're important because these residents can't do it for themselves. They deserve just like you and me to have choice and quality of life.

Or bathing. I had a resident who always looked forward to my turn on her wing because I knew how she liked to have her hair washed. She was someone who liked a good scalp massage. But there are more serious issues when it comes to bathing. Do they have a fear of bathing? Do they need a more gentle approach? What's the sensitivity of their skin? As we age, our skin becomes more delicate, putting us at greater risk of burns in bathing. What are the transfer techniques that that person needs to get safely from their wheelchair into the bath or into a shower?

Or medication. What time? Which ones? What's the method of delivery that you use? Critical issues needing professionalism and familiarity.

Or toileting care, a thing that people don't really like to talk about but that is a critical facet of resident care. What's the time that you take them? It's not even just a matter of healthy hygiene, but it's maintaining skin integrity. You need to know their schedules because this helps give them autonomy, and you can mitigate potential harm that could be caused if you don't.

Sometimes a lack of care is not as easily identified. To underline this, I'll provide members with a couple of examples. I worked with a sister who had very specific needs. You had to make sure that she was busy. You had to make sure that she was kept on her correct

bathroom schedule. Most importantly, you had to ensure that that sister was not dressed too hot. That was a matter of dignity for her. Madam Chair, if you didn't monitor this on her behalf, you would run the risk of finding her naked as the day she was born, kneeling, holding onto the hallway railing, praying for our souls because she loved us. So it was in her best interests for us to know what she needed because we needed to be the people that maintained her dignity.

There's also an example of a gentleman that I worked with that you would think hated getting up in the morning, you would think he hated getting dressed, you would think he hated taking his meds, you would think he hated taking baths, but that was only if you were new. He suffered from dementia, so being in care and not being with family, it was imperative that you knew him and that he knew you. If you were to replace that critical person in that critical role, you're making this his problem, and that's not a burden that we are meant to do. We are meant to provide a good quality of life, good quality of care, things that are only managed through consistency – consistent people, consistent teaming – the investment that you make in the people that you work with and the people that you serve.

3:40

Madam Chair, I applaud this section of Bill 4 because it would prevent replacement workers and because I understand the issues. I bring my experience as a long-term health care worker to the table as a legislator in the Assembly in order to help those that are lacking some knowledge in these areas to be able to make a well-informed conclusion. That conclusion would be to vote against this amendment, and I encourage all in this House to do so.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to echo some of the comments my hon. colleagues have made already and the hon. minister as well. I want to talk a little bit about what I really believe we as legislators and we as service providers are obligated to do, and I think that's to provide a quality of care that's unparalleled anywhere else and to make sure that when we provide this quality of care, we're doing it with quality employees, quality people and making sure that we are consistent throughout all of this process.

While I understand that the spirit of this amendment and the intent of this amendment is not to impede that in any way and is not to get around negotiations, as the hon. member across had mentioned, I think that there are some very valid concerns with allowing the replacement workers clause into this bill. When we look at this – and as one of my colleagues had mentioned before, quality of care is important to make sure that you know the needs of the patients in the area. What that means is that in the case of when we are negotiating our ESAs, we must be able to negotiate our essential services agreements in good faith.

I think that by putting in a replacement workers clause, it becomes much more difficult to negotiate the ESA. Whether it's the bargaining units themselves or the employers, there's now another wild card part on the field, and because there's that wild card on the field, we're looking at saying: "We're going to have to push back how long this is going to take. We'll have to look at different provisions. We'll have to look at more things." All that does is prolong the negotiation process, and nobody wants that. We want to be able to provide that quality of care to Albertans everywhere.

These loopholes that we're leaving inside ESAs could cause significant problems for any bargaining unit that did want to go into strike action or for any employer who did want to enter into lockout

action. I think that the violation of that spirit of negotiation would be detrimental to Albertans everywhere because Albertans and Canadians, as we know, do have that right to strike. The longer it takes for us to negotiate those ESAs, the longer we'll leave Albertans without that right.

Madam Chair, I think that once an ESA is negotiated with or without these clauses if they were there, we would have significant issues with the length of strikes. As the hon. minister had mentioned before, umpires are available, and umpires will be on the ground to make sure that when there are significant problems such as a boiler exploding, we will be able to service those issues immediately, and we will service those issues with the people that know the environment, the people that know what needs to happen, the people that know the area.

If we were to bring in replacement workers instead, Madam Chair, I think this could severely hamper negotiations and extend the length of a strike or lockout action. What would that mean? That would mean, quite simply, that we'd be hampering the quality of care for Albertans because, as in the nursing example, if you are extending the lockout, then whether there are replacement workers or not, that means that they're running with fewer services. Albertans will be receiving fewer services during that lockout, and if we extend it by allowing replacement workers in – we know it to be true that when you bring replacement workers in, strikes last longer. If we were to extend those strikes, you are saying to Albertans: we are comfortable with letting you be without services for longer. I'm not comfortable with voting in favour of that. I am not comfortable with telling Albertans that I'm okay with them being on some reduced level.

Madam Chair, I think that every Albertan deserves the absolute best we can possibly provide for them. I believe that Albertans deserve the absolute best at all possible times. Once the ESAs are negotiated, we will know which employees are essential. We will know which employees need to be there to provide the basic level of care, and if there was some emergency, that was not expected, the umpires would be able to bring in the required persons to assist with that emergency. I do really, strongly believe that allowing these replacement workers would be impeding our duty, would be impeding our obligations as legislators, our obligations as service providers and would really hamper our ability to help and protect and serve Albertans everywhere.

Madam Chair, for those reasons I have no choice but to stand in opposition of this amendment. Thank you.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** I, too, stand in opposition to this amendment. Yesterday – I think it was yesterday – I gave you an example of what happened on 9/11 when a strike line was taken down immediately when there was a national emergency. But right now I'll talk about, first of all, as several other people have said, that any time replacement workers have been brought in on any strike line, it has continued the strike for much longer than was necessary. It removed from the employer the necessity of sitting at the table and actually negotiating.

The next point I want to make – and I'll speak to this from my 32 and a half years of working in the public service. I took pride in my job along with everybody that I worked with. If there was an emergency, if something happened and there was a person on that line who had the expertise to deal with it, I'm telling you right now that we as members on that line would support that person going across the line to fix it.

I'll give you an example. I was on a strike line at Edmonton Institution a number of years ago, and as we were on the line, a person drove up in a car and went to the farm across the road from the institution. When that person drove up, I myself and several

other people on the line recognized who that person was. He'd been a former inmate who'd served his sentence, but we knew what his offence was. We knew his history; we knew about him. We also knew that the people across the road were now vulnerable based on what we knew about that previous offender. We immediately went to management, who were also out on the line, and we talked to them, informed them about what was going on. They immediately got the RCMP out to that farm and took care of the situation because workers have pride in their job and don't want to see anybody hurt or anything that shouldn't be happening happen.

We absolutely do not need replacement workers because the workers that work in those jobs do care about their jobs and do care about the safety of the public or anything that would be at risk. So I stand absolutely opposed to bringing in replacement workers and to that amendment.

**Mr. Hunter:** Madam Chair, I appreciate the comments that have been made. Perhaps if I clarify once again what this amendment is for, we can save multiple people from standing up and saying that this is about replacement workers. This is about mitigating potential loss to machinery, about potential multimillion-dollar losses. This amendment was never intended to allow employers or companies to be able to have replacement workers carte blanche.

I appreciate the comments that have been made, I appreciate the impassioned pleas, but this was not the intention of this amendment. So I hope that the members opposite understand that this amendment was specific in its intentions.

I'll leave it at that, Madam Chair.

3:50

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Yes. I've been involved in labour issues probably going on the better part of 38 years and the whole issue of taking clauses and – I call them muddying them because I've been at the negotiation table many times. Many times that you were in negotiations and you ended up adding the words “and,” “or,” “but,” “because,” and “why,” it took away from the essential meaning of the clause, and you can twist it later so that the intent isn't even there anymore.

This has been done over many years. In our place of work we couldn't even agree on what “emergency” was because they thought they had the right to phone you at 2 in the morning and say, “I phoned you, so it's an emergency,” in their opinion. These kinds of things have gone on over the years, and there are all kinds of things that employers have done.

I've participated, I'm sad to say, in many strikes across this province over many years. The worst one, I'll say, was the Gainers one. I don't know how many people in this room were there on that. [interjection] Yeah. I was, too, and it was ugly. Was it necessary on our part as labour? Yes, it was because of the issues and what was being pushed by the employers. It was the employer that decided that they could address the labour issue by replacement workers.

It doesn't matter whether you look at the strikes at Lakeside Packers down at Brooks, Finning, Zeidler's, and so on and so forth. I mean, the list goes on and on, and it was always the same thing. It's important to understand that from labour's point of view, we have to make sure that when we put legislation in, it's going to protect the workers, protect the employers, and make sure we're doing the right thing so that somebody else can't read something else into it that wasn't there to begin with.

This amendment, in my opinion, is muddying this clause and creates indecisiveness as to the way it should read. So I'm opposed to it, as we should be.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to just point out from the last comment that was made there that in the event you were trying to not muddy the waters, I'm not sure if you would consider the size of this bill. I would say that this is actually doing exactly what you said that you don't want to see happen. So that's something to think about.

Anyway, we'll move on here. I have another amendment that I'd like to present. While the legislation as drafted did not adequately include a proper deterrent against waging illegal strikes or illegal walkouts, it also does not include an adequate deterrent against other violations under this act. A one-off sum penalty is not necessarily enough. Furthermore, it is entirely unhelpful if the monetary penalty faced by an individual is paid for by their employer or their trade union. Again, it is entirely unhelpful if a corporation or a trade union facing a monetary penalty can pay it without difficulty and without it being a deterrent.

Accordingly, I wish to propose an amendment, and I have the requisite number of copies that I would like to submit.

**The Chair:** This amendment will be A4. Proceed, hon. member.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be amended in section 33 in the proposed section 73 by striking out clauses (a) and (b) and substituting the following:

- (a) in the case of a corporation or trade union, to a fine not exceeding \$750 000, or
- (b) in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding \$75 000, which may not be paid on the individual's behalf by a corporation that employs the individual or by a trade union to which the employee belongs.

This proposed amendment simply recognizes that individuals should be responsible for their own actions, amending section 33 of the legislation by striking out the proposed section 73 and replacing that with fines not exceeding \$75,000, which may not be paid on the individual's behalf by a corporation or trade union.

It's clear from the wording of the legislation that the government does recognize already that, yes, individuals who are guilty of offences under this act should be penalized, but it profoundly defaces the spirit of the bill and what it intends to achieve in this section if a corporation or trade union of means is able to pay those fines on behalf of an individual.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for this amendment and for giving us the opportunity to consider it. Similar to discussions about amendment A2, the fine amounts and the process for how fines work in this legislation was something that had to be adjusted to accommodate the essential

services framework and some of the language. But the actual amounts as well in this case, the payment of particular fines depending on who may pay something or whatnot, is not what I would consider in scope and was not discussed at length at the consultations, particularly because essential services agreements are about avoiding any illegal strike scenarios through negotiations rather than using highly punitive fines in this case. The fine amounts, again, were not something that we had the opportunity to discuss.

I would say that suggestions such as this would be entirely appropriate as part of our larger review of the labour code, something that I hope to bring a process forward on and work on with the members of this House to determine what might make sense. I certainly suggest that that might be something that we do in the future or have a conversation about with major stakeholders and get into this larger issue.

But for our essential services bill, Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, we just need to focus on making sure that that labour legislation is fair to unionized employees and employers, making sure that essential public services are maintained for all Albertans. I think that we've done that through Bill 4.

I will not be supporting this amendment but would invite the member to potentially bring this forward as part of a larger labour code review. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

4:00

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise, as always, and speak to the amendment, an amendment that would create stronger penalties for other violations inside the legislation. We have heard on numerous occasions from the government side of the House that this bill is long overdue. When it comes to the Supreme Court ruling, we couldn't agree more. Ensuring that all aspects of that ruling have been addressed is certainly important.

We've also heard that this legislation has been the same for approximately 30 years. While a \$1,000 fine in the '80s may have been a significant one, it's certainly not as significant today. We had the opportunity to debate a similar amendment in a different section. The principle remains the same, that when illegal actions take place, it is important that there is a deterrent.

Now, I recognize that there are times when individuals will make decisions that they feel are necessary at the time. We've heard of many situations where those actions may be and quite likely were justified. The fine that is proposed by my hon. colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner doesn't say that it will be \$750,000 or that it will be \$75,000 but that it would be up to. We learned earlier from the Minister of Labour that a judge would determine that. It's quite easy for a judge to hear the facts of why the decisions were made along the way that led an individual or union to act illegally. If in the judge's opinion it becomes justified, one could only imagine that the judge wouldn't then use the maximum fine amount, and it could be quite reasonable.

But it is important in all cases, particularly around essential services, that all parties count the costs, that they recognize that there are consequences for their actions. We have the opportunity while the bill is before us to ensure that it is as robust as possible. To let an opportunity go by – I think the former member for the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre used to say in this place all the time that oftentimes bills don't get back before the House for a number of years. So today is the day. Barring the government's decision to send this bill to committee and allow more fulsome and robust debate at committee, which, as we all know, I am consistently

in strong support of – but given that that's not going to happen, today is the day to make additional meaningful changes to the legislation. That's exactly what we are proposing here. It isn't a licence to use the maximum fine. When individuals break the law and can make a reasonable case, it's quite likely that the judge will respond accordingly. But when that doesn't happen, it at least provides teeth and deterrence.

The government, much to their credit, is attempting to put forward legislation that will create the best possible environment for negotiations. We've heard the minister refer on numerous occasions to the lead-up and negotiation in good faith. I think that's wonderful when all of those things happen, but we have to be realistic. There are times when it's not going to be as ideal. There are going to be times when people act inappropriately and illegally, and when they do that, they should be held accountable. That's exactly what this amendment does, and I strongly encourage all members of the Assembly to support the amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just a little disappointed with some of the conversations I heard recently because we're talking about this not being 1980. I've cited the Bank of Canada's inflation calculator for this, and it has been determined that if we were to match the rate of inflation for \$5,000, it would only be about \$15,000, not \$75,000. The challenge is that, as the member who brought forth the bill alluded to earlier, this may not be the best time for us to discuss this. You know, ultimately, from time to time there are instances for safety reasons that individuals may need to move away from the workplace, and from time to time it may be individuals who are younger and naïve.

You know, the best example I've seen when I was working in the restaurant industry is that we had an unsafe piece of equipment. We had to make a judgment call because we had an employer who was not looking at the option to fix that piece of equipment. What we made the decision to do – and this was a very naïve decision because we did not know about the right to refuse – was walk off the job. Ultimately, our employer moved forward to remedy the situation. At the time I don't know if a heavy fine would have been necessarily the best option for someone who was of a young age to face.

With that being said, I'm not going to support this amendment on the basis that, realistically, we need to look at that as a potential challenge that we could be facing with this at play.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wish to speak to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Any questions or comments? The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, I'd like to make an amendment. I have the requisite number of copies here. I don't know; may I speak to it before the copies are out?

**The Chair:** Just wait until I see it.

**Mr. McIver:** All right. Of course. It has gone through Parliamentary Counsel. What I will say by way of background, with your permission until you see that, is that the minister said that there's going to be a larger labour code review. Yes, she's nodding. Okay. You can't see that at home, but she's nodding.

What I'm suggesting – I won't talk about it until I get permission.



**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** Okay. I just got permission.

I move that Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be amended in section 8 in the proposed section 95.41 by striking out subsection (3), which is the subsection disallowing replacement workers.

Madam Chair, the government is doing something important here, which I support. They are putting Alberta in compliance with the Supreme Court decision. Truly, bravo. Happy to support that. The section that I'm asking to be taken out is not part of complying with that Supreme Court of Canada ruling. I guess what I'm suggesting to the minister and to government is that if you want to consider this section, my recommendation is to do it as part of the larger labour code review. This is an item banning replacement workers.

**4:10**

I know it's fashionable with certain groups of people, but the fact is that when we've talked about this, members on the government side of the House have, I believe, agreed that this is about negotiating with a reasonable balance of power between the worker and the employer. To outright ban replacement workers really tips the scale one way beyond the level that is reasonable. As we've talked about, there may well be cases where public health or safety is in jeopardy, and in those cases it's important to be able to bring in workers to do the important work that's there.

There are so many important things that we do here as a province. We look after seniors. We look after disabled people. We look after sick people. We look after highways and roads that keep Albertans safe when they're travelling from point A to B. We plow those roads. We operate safety devices. We inspect workplaces to make sure that workers remain safe. There are so many jobs that after negotiation, whether they're considered essential or not, are still very important. In some cases they're life-and-death important; in other cases they're important for other reasons: to keep the economy going, to keep people safe, to maintain a good quality of life.

What this motion does is that it really says that the work that Alberta civil servants do is important. Passing this would be the House saying that we value the work that Alberta civil servants do, so much so that each time when those occasions come along and when there are labour disruptions, that situation needs to be evaluated on its own merits, and the government and the minister of the day, who – and we all recognize here that the current government is the one elected. Congratulations. Someday it will be another one, but right now it's this one. But the fact is that government is responsible to ensure ongoing health and safety, and this will help them to do that by not taking one of their options away when there's a labour disruption.

For that reason I will move this amendment. I'll ask the members of the House to support it, and I will sit down and listen carefully to what members of the House have to say about it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for his comments in making this amendment. I think we have a difference of opinion regarding the scope on this. You did mention that it's not part of the Supreme Court ruling, but I think the discussion specifically around who is doing the work during a strike or lockout is critical. It needs to be discussed and negotiated inside of the essential services agreement so that we can make sure that our essential public services are being maintained

for Albertans. It's clear that we need to implement this legislation now.

For those reasons we've included this ban on replacement workers within the essential services agreement. Putting this into place now rather than deferring this piece until later – because I do see it as something that is in scope and that will become key in the negotiations between the employers and the employees as they set out their essential services agreement. We do not want replacement workers to lengthen any job actions or to lengthen the amount of time that it takes to negotiate an essential services agreement. We do need to make sure that this legislation is fair to all parties. The member referred to it as tipping the balance, and I do not agree in that case. When replacement workers were discussed with employers at the consultation, employers stated that in many cases they would never consider replacement workers because they don't have the skills, training, and knowledge that the employees and the members of the bargaining unit have.

It was discussed at consultation. We did consider it as we were preparing this legislation. I see it very much as an important piece of our essential services framework, to make sure that as the two parties come to the table and have this conversation, the situation on the ground during a strike or lockout doesn't spontaneously change through the hiring of replacement workers. In my mind, if we're asking both parties to come in good faith to negotiate in a mature and responsible way, making sure that what gets discussed at that negotiation is what happens is key, and allowing replacement workers says: you can discuss your essential services agreement now; when a strike or lockout happens, the employer can change the ball game. That doesn't make sense.

For those reasons I will not be supporting this amendment, but I'll thank the member and listen to additional comments.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I find myself rising to echo some of the sentiments of my colleagues from earlier with regard to replacement workers. I guess I can draw on my experience in my former life as a shipper/receiver at Lucerne ice cream. Certainly, I wouldn't say that shipping ice cream out is what you would call an essential service, I guess, depending on how you feel about ice cream. Maybe there's an argument there.

We spent a week on our own strike line. I guess for fear of maybe sounding like I'm tooting my own horn, I was very good at my position as a shipper/receiver. I ran a very, very efficient warehouse. We were able to move product out the door at a very incredible rate. During that week off – once I came back to what I thought was going to be, you know, cleaning up a few things here and there, I literally spent the next month trying to undo what had occurred in that simple week's time. I had asked management: who did you bring in? They told me that they had brought over a very qualified shipper/receiver to do my job. Of course, when I saw one trailer, that I knew was bound for Vancouver, and a load that I could do personally myself within about a three-hour period taking upwards of seven and eight hours to do, I question someone's perception about what they necessarily feel is a qualified temporary worker.

When we're talking, again, about ice cream, maybe it's not necessarily a significant thing, but translated into other areas of government and health care and whatnot, I shudder at the fact of what could be considered as a qualified temporary worker. I guess, you know, with that experience behind me, I don't think I can support this amendment, and I would urge my colleagues to not support it as well.

**The Chair:** The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Let me say this. We heard from the minister that these things need to be negotiated. Well, with all due respect, if you leave this section in, there will be nothing to negotiate because it will just be outlawed, so what the minister said needs to happen won't be able to happen if this section is in there.

Further, the other thing that I heard government members say – and I agree with them on this, just for the record – is that which jobs and which work are essential services and which are not needs to be negotiated. Now, Madam, that's important. I know the government will do your best. I know you will. But here's the interesting thing about negotiations. There are two people at the table. They're both defending their own interests. Sometimes people make mistakes. Sometimes one party is a better negotiator than the other party.

Because of that, despite the government's best efforts – and again I will give them credit that they will make their best efforts – with the number of positions, 220,000 roughly, paid out of the provincial payroll, if one of those positions is wrong in the negotiation between what's essential and what's not and there's a labour disruption where something should have been deemed essential and it wasn't, either because of an honest, well-intentioned mistake or one side of a negotiation being a better negotiator or having better information on that day, the possibility surely exists that something that's pretty darn important or essential will be deemed nonessential and, as such, be open to strike action. If the bill passes with this in it, then the government will by their own law be very much powerless to deal with that.

4:20

The other thing that I would remind the government: if you really feel that strongly about it, the time to do it might be at the larger labour code review, after the negotiations about what's essential and what's not, when the government can be more sure about whether they got it right, that one side didn't outbargain the other and deem something essential that shouldn't have been or not essential that should have been. Actually, there might even be a few months that go by where the government will have experience with the results of the negotiations and be able to look at it and say: "Wow. We negotiated to the best of our ability with the best intentions on behalf of Albertans, and somewhere along the way one negotiator had a bad day. Somebody made a mistake. Somebody's judgment wasn't as good as they would have liked it to have been." Then they'll be caught when there's a labour disruption and unable to undo that.

For the government, by supporting this, I'm offering you insurance that you don't end up looking bad later. If you're going to do this, you should do it later, after you have some experience, after you negotiate, after you, the employer, and the employees have the benefit of second thought. That would be an appropriate time to do it. This is an insurance policy, that you're throwing out the window if you leave this section in right now. As such, respectfully, I think I'm doing Albertans a favour, and respectfully I think I'm doing the government a favour by suggesting that they leave that insurance policy intact until they have a little bit of experience with this because this is a big change. If I'm not mistaken, there are well over 100,000 employees that are going to get the right to strike that don't have it now. That's a good thing, but with that many positions, that many job descriptions – none of us is perfect.

I don't know, but if I was in the minister's shoes or in the Premier's shoes, I was thinking that if I was going to make a change that big, that profound, I might want to have an insurance policy in

my back pocket just in case I get 95 per cent of it right and not a hundred per cent of it right. That's what I'm suggesting that the government do, to keep that insurance policy in their back pocket so that they can protect themselves if they're imperfect. No disrespect to the government. We're all imperfect. There it is. I'm trying to help.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you for trying to help. It's very much appreciated, and I'm happy to talk about this a little bit more because I want to make it clear that in the legislation if the negotiation is wrong, if we missed somebody who was essential – these are being negotiated in advance. To be clear, strike or lockout cannot happen until an essential services agreement is filed with the essential services commissioner. That means that the process needs to happen in advance of the collective bargaining process starting.

Again, negotiations for essential services are going to happen in advance, and if we miss something, if something's not included, we've actually got provisions within this bill that will help us to deal with those scenarios. Either party can initiate a renegotiation of the essential services agreement because something was missed. If something is missed, on an emergency basis, as some of the earlier scenarios discussed, on the ground those two parties can come to an agreement, and we've heard from some of my colleagues that that is what happens in most scenarios during a strike. Alternatively, the umpire can make rulings, and then the commissioner can come in and suggest adjustments. So we're not in the scenario where we write up this document and then everyone has to live by it and if something's wrong with it, there's nothing we can do.

The clause that's included and that we're discussing with this amendment is needed now because we are implementing the essential services agreement to fulfill a Supreme Court ruling. The timing on this is incredibly tight. We need to put in a system that works as soon as possible, and for that we relied on people with experience. We relied on people with experience to advise this government through the process. We made sure to consult the people who use this system on both the employer and employee side, those impacted, labour negotiators, mediators, arbitrators, and others within the labour relations world. While the hon. member is right to point out a lack of experience in myself as a new minister, we had a lot of experience that went into creating this legislation.

I am always happy to take good advice, as we've seen earlier today. Good advice is always welcome.

I would like to echo that this a public safety issue. We need to make sure that highly skilled, trained, familiar-with-the-environment people are the ones that are delivering the services to Albertans. We get the best results when we know that's happening, having staff that know the clients, understand the workplaces and the scenarios. If they're needed during a strike or lockout, then that can be negotiated.

To hear the language that leaving this in is an insurance policy for the government – it's an out in case something goes wrong – doesn't sound like going to a bargaining table in good faith. If one side has an insurance policy and has an out, I think the other side knows that, and I think it influences the discussions. We want our two parties to come to the table as equals. We want there to be respect and trust when we're talking about the essential services agreement and respect and trust as we're talking about collective bargaining because there are a lot of elements where we are in the same position or on the same side of the table. We want to serve Albertans. We want to have safe, healthy, and fair workplaces.

That's very important to this government. There's a lot when it comes to the negotiations that the two sides could be in agreement on. Respectful negotiations are key, and I think that's what we're striving for going forward.

We've got 150,000 employees that are impacted by this legislation, so it does impact quite a few people.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this legislation once more. I think it is made in Alberta and addresses some of our unique needs.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. When dealing with essential services legislation, it's absolutely integral that the precise definition of what constitutes an essential service is carefully considered. Any wording should be carefully considered and assessed based on what would and would not be included. Accordingly, there are some omissions in the government's definition of essential services that should be corrected. The current legislation only includes those services which, if interrupted,

- (a) . . . would endanger the life, personal safety or health of the public, or
- (b) that are necessary to the maintenance and administration of the rule of law or public security.

Without a doubt, we agree that any service that falls into these definitions should be considered essential, but there are important services that would not necessarily meet this criteria.

I wish to introduce an amendment to address this issue. I have the necessary requisite copies, that I would like to submit at this time.

**The Chair:** This amendment will be known as amendment A6. Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be amended in section 8 in the proposed section 95.1 by striking out "or" at the end of clause (a) and by adding the following after clause (b):

- (c) that are necessary to prevent serious environmental damage,
- (d) that are necessary to prevent major deterioration of workplace machinery, equipment, or premises, or needed to secure workplace premises, or
- (e) that are necessary to properly manage the finances or investment funds of the Government of Alberta.

4:30

I believe that these amendments will ensure that essential services are better defined in order to better serve Albertans. Under the definition proposed in the legislation by the government, those who manage Alberta's significant investment funds and make important decisions based on when there are sudden market changes would not be declared essential nor would those who maintain machinery or help prevent serious environmental damage. We recognize the importance of the work done in these areas and that there are potential devastating consequences if they are all

suddenly off the job. This amendment helps ensure that Albertans are protected.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for this amendment and the opportunity to talk about the definition of essential services. As I think most people will agree, the definition of essential services is a key part of this legislation. It's critical, and it was something that the Supreme Court of Canada spent a lot of time discussing and considering. It's something that we talked about quite a bit in our consultations. There are three different types of definition of essential services across Canada: consequence-based, which is what we have here, where you describe the types of consequences or things you need to avoid through defining essential services; there's an enumeration approach, where you say that this role is essential, that role is essential; and there's the option of removing the definition entirely.

The enumeration approach of saying this is an essential role, that is an essential role was the style of essential services legislation that was happening in Saskatchewan when the Supreme Court ruling came down. Saskatchewan has since updated its essential services legislation based on the Supreme Court ruling. What they chose to do was remove the definition entirely. In Saskatchewan they don't have a definition of essential services. Rather the two parties need to negotiate and determine what essential is, without the legislation providing any guidelines or guidance. So that's how one jurisdiction chose to react to the Supreme Court ruling.

All other definitions have not been tested against the SFL decision of the Supreme Court. I think that that's really important to note because I know that some pieces of this amendment, some of these new definitions, come from other jurisdictions. They are in place in other places, but they have not been tested against the Supreme Court ruling. The only jurisdiction that has updated based on the Supreme Court ruling chose to not include a definition at all.

In the Supreme Court ruling – and I will endeavour to read just a little bit of this – it talks in paragraph 84 about the importance of knowing what essential services are. It talks about some previous decisions, and it reads:

These decisions have consistently defined an essential service as a service "whose interruption would endanger the life, personal safety or health of the whole or part of the population" . . . In my view, and without attempting an exhaustive list, persons essential to the maintenance and administration of the rule of law and national security would also be included within the ambit of essential services. Mere inconvenience to members of the public does not fall within the ambit of the essential services justification for abrogating the freedom to strike.

In our case here in Alberta what we are bringing forward now is a more narrow version. Specific words in any definition can be too narrow, can be too broad, or can cause insensitive interpretations. We are relying on the unions and the employers to work together to decide what is essential and potentially a neutral third party to help with that. In order for the neutral third party and those involved to make good decisions, we settled on a definition that focuses in on some of those key life, health, safety, public security discussions, taken directly from the Supreme Court interpretation, so endangering the life, personal safety, or health, that type of language. I would argue that our definition is very closely aligned with the Supreme Court of Canada decision and with our obligations under the international obligations, so the international labour organizations.

Employers aside from the essential services bargaining unit members must always plan for and make contingency plans for the

types of things listed in the amendment under (c), (d), and (e). They do so by the use of management employees and others. They do so by shutting down equipment that might be vulnerable. Specifically around (e) I'm concerned that it is very broad. Finances and investment funds of the province could extend to every clerk that's checking expense accounts. How do we determine exactly what that implies? I think it includes maybe more people as essential, where I'm not entirely certain that that's the intent. As well, the finances and investment funds of our province are largely handled by persons outside of the bargaining unit either because they're management employees or because they're employees excluded in section 12 of PSERA.

In order to create legislation that gives that power, that negotiating flexibility to the two parties, that allows us to make sure that we're truly dealing with essential services, and gives guidance to a neutral third party to make recommendations, our feeling is that by broadening the definition and including environmental damage, deterioration of workplace machinery, managing finances or investment funds, that's going too broad. I think mirroring the Supreme Court decision and keeping a bit more of a narrow focus and then relying on our two parties to come to an agreement on what is essential for each workplace is going to serve us better.

Again, I will state that through the consultation process with our various stakeholders, labour relations experts, unions, and employers there was a lot of discussion around this. In the end, the government chose to go with something that really closely matched the Supreme Court ruling.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to highlight a few things. I found the comments from the minister quite interesting, particularly around the fact that the only jurisdiction that has a quasi-tested definition – no jurisdiction has an actual tested definition – the jurisdiction that was first to respond and responsible, if you will, for the Supreme Court ruling in the SFL case, has no definition. So we're, you know, trying to navigate the waters in the best way possible. Certainly, we rarely consider following the lead of some of the other provinces in this country, but we certainly do see the environmental protection piece of this amendment in other jurisdictions.

Madam Chair, I think you can imagine a situation in a far-off, significantly rural portion of the province. In fact, you drive those areas of the province on a very regular basis. I think yesterday in the House you referred to driving 600 kilometres just to go and see a concert and then returning home because that's what people do in the north. So we can see a situation where there's significant cause for serious environmental damage with this definition. It wouldn't endanger life or public safety because of the remote nature of it or health of the public because of the remote nature of it or it wouldn't be necessary to the maintenance or the administration of the rule of law or public security but is potentially causing significant damage to our province. The breakdown in negotiations or a strike might prevent action on this because it's not deemed as part of the essential services definition.

4:40

As I mentioned, there are other provinces that have this parameter, and I think that it's one that we would be wise to adhere to. We on this side of the House would not want to see serious environmental damage taking place over a prolonged period of time because a service hadn't been determined to be essential, the same as there are people who manage the finances of our province who,

quite likely, aren't going to fall into the realm of essential services because of the definition that's been put forward in this piece of legislation.

There are times when the market has been extremely volatile, and it could potentially expose significant risk in terms of the costs that could be incurred by the province of Alberta if the financial management side of our province isn't considered to be essential. Now, we all know that there can be negotiation that would take place should they be considered essential, and then we can move the path forward. But the problem is that if it's not in the definition, we can get into a situation where the province could be losing millions and millions and perhaps tens of millions of dollars on a daily, weekly, or, depending on the length of the disruption, monthly basis, in which case it could move into the hundreds of millions, all because we don't have the definition quite right. So I think that this amendment is quite reasonable.

We have also used examples already in this Chamber today about some other areas that may be beneficial to be considered essential, particularly in the case of the deterioration of workplace machinery, equipment, or premises where should they fall outside of the scope, we could see significant risk to the province, particularly in the maintenance of our assets.

I think that today is a great day to have some discussion around exactly what should be included inside the definition. This is a very critical portion of the debate. It's something that we have the opportunity to get right today. While I recognize that there are some unquities and some challenges with the fact that no definition has been tested, I think we ought to err on the side of ensuring a robust definition that includes things like the protection of the environment where there is serious environmental damage, to err on the side of preventing major deterioration of workplace machinery and equipment, and to err on the side of ensuring that the finances of the province can be managed through significant disruption.

We have a responsibility and certainly the ministries across government and the ministers have a responsibility to ensure that services continue to be provided. By accepting this amendment, it puts some additional tools certainly in the hands of the Environment minister, certainly in the hands of the Finance minister, and perhaps in the hands of the Infrastructure and Transportation minister to make sure that the needs of our province are being met no matter the state of negotiations that are taking place in the province.

We all, while we're in this place, need to be taking a very long view on our approach to public policy. We need to make sure that we are trying to foresee circumstances ahead of us that are going to have a positive impact on the province over a long period of time. Much of this bill does that. Much of this bill works to try and mitigate labour disruption while ensuring essential services are continued. It changes many things about the environment around labour negotiations, all of which are very important both to the province or to large employers as well as to employees and members of unions and Albertans in terms of their rights that we've seen granted by the Supreme Court ruling.

I encourage members on all sides of the Chamber to consider the ramifications that could exist if the definition isn't broadened, to consider the significant financial risks that we would be then placing our province under, and to consider the significant potential damage to infrastructure that could exist if this amendment isn't accepted and, in turn, these services deemed not essential. I encourage members on both sides of the Chamber to consider the amendment, to support the amendment to ensure that our province has the best possible definition moving forward. Should that definition be challenged, we would then need to deal with that at that time.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:47 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Smith
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Strankman
Cooper	MacIntyre	van Dijken
Cyr	McIver	Yao
Ellis	Rodney	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Nielsen
Babcock	Hoffman	Notley
Bilous	Horne	Phillips
Carson	Kazim	Piquette
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Connolly	Larivee	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	Mason	Sigurdson
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Feehan	McKittrick	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Turner
Ganley	McPherson	Westhead
Goehring	Miller	Woollard
Gray	Miranda	

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 50
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[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Regardless of how many members in this place feel about the proposed legislation, how it addresses the needs identified by the Supreme Court decision, there is one thing we can all agree on. The aftermath of the Supreme Court decision is that the labour relations and employment law landscape in Alberta is significantly changed. We recognize that the government needed to put this legislation forward, but it is a significant shift from labour relations in Alberta. Accordingly, given this new experience there should be an onus on the Legislative Assembly to revisit this legislation after a time. There could be unintended consequences. There could be matters pertaining to vital, essential services that we have not yet considered. Frankly, we owe it to Albertans to always be mindful of essential services.

Accordingly, I am proposing an amendment, and I have the requisite number of copies, and I would like to present those now.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A7.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm saddened to see that so many won't be able to hear how good this amendment is going to be. I move that Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be amended by adding the following after section 34. It reads:

Part 4

Expiry

35. The amendments brought into force by this Act expire on April 1, 2021, and the affected provisions shall revert to the form that they were in prior to the coming into force of this Act, unless the Assembly adopts a resolution no earlier than April 1, 2020, that this Act not be repealed.

As members will note, this is not an ad infinitum call for countless reviews. An overt and frequent use of sunset clauses is merely red tape upon the machinery of government. That's why this amendment calls for a single revisitation. This is a one-time obligation upon the government of Alberta to revisit this particular piece of legislation. In several years' time there will be feedback from stakeholders from all sides of the bargaining table about whether or not the final version of this bill to pass through the House got it right. Perhaps there will have been strikes and lockouts in which the successes and shortcomings of this act will have been on full display. Creating a particular window that requires the government to re-review the legislation, whether that is this government or a future government, is simply a common-sense measure when it comes to significant legislation like this.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the member for this amendment. Albertans need to know that our vital public services will be protected in the event of a labour dispute. For this legislation we've held extensive consultation on essential services with employers, employees, and the public to make sure we get it right. The Supreme Court has ruled that if the bill expires, it will leave Albertans with either a void of no essential services exceptions or, given the language in this amendment where it reverts to this earlier form, then it would provide back to the compulsory arbitration phase.

But I'm also concerned that it says: "revert to the form that they were in prior." Knowing that this government would like to do some labour code reviews as the labour code is continually changed after this is put in place, how does that impact that need? When I do do a labour code review – let's say that that happens in, you know, six months – does that meet the requirements of this expiry? Does my larger labour code review mean that we've fulfilled the needs here?

5:10

I appreciate that the member opposite doesn't think that this is red tape because it's just once, but we've seen the members opposite propose sunset/expiry dates in the past, so it does feel a little bit like red tape although it is just the once. I don't think that this expiry date adds reasonable value. Again, I think it puts us at risk with the Supreme Court ruling if anything were to happen that removes our essential services legislation. It is the intention of this government that should there be needed adjustments to this legislation, to do that in a timely manner, not in a scheduled manner, waiting four or five years out.

For some of these reasons I will not be supporting this amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that the comments made by the minister maybe are a little misleading on this in that the law will still be the law. The Supreme Court ruling will still be the Supreme Court ruling. The point with the sunset clause is that it allows legislators to be able to revisit this issue based upon a lot more evidence, a lot more time having passed, and it's not an out because that Supreme Court ruling is still the precedent that is being set.

What this allows the Legislature or the government at the time to do is to be able to address this issue in a way where we have a lot more information, and I think that that's something that would benefit this government to be able to take a look at. This is just an option for them to be able to make sure that in the end, if it has to be tweaked, it still can be tweaked.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise in support of this amendment. I know that people on all sides of the House will be surprised by that, but I think what we have here is an important amendment that strengthens the legislation. One of the reasons why we got here, outside of the Supreme Court ruling, is that the fact of the matter is that this hasn't been done for 30 years. There are some significant challenges in the legislation because there was no requirement for the Assembly to act.

I know it's going to be hard to believe, but from time to time politicians are sometimes not that incentivized to deal with tough issues. They sometimes don't like to tackle the issues of the day as promptly as perhaps they need to, so what happens is that decades go by, and we have legislation that has the tendency to become antiquated. While the Supreme Court ruling is very unlikely to change, there are certainly many aspects of the legislation. While we've heard the minister commit to a more fulsome review, that may or may not happen. And I don't mean that because the minister is disingenuous in her comments. I just mean that there are often additional political pressures that wind up guiding a government's decision-making process.

I hesitate to talk about things that may not be entirely relevant to the amendment, but the political decisions that were around the presentation of the budget, a budget that is the fourth-latest presentation in the last 15 years, were very likely made because of political pressures. So if we don't have a firm timeline and a requirement upon the Assembly or perhaps the minister, from time to time we wind up in situations where decades go by and nothing has changed. The great thing about this amendment is that it would ensure that that doesn't happen.

What needs to continually be a process in this House is that we make a commitment to ensure that the legislation we're responsible for remains current, that it is in the best interests of Albertans: union workers, employers, the government, all of the stakeholders. When we pass bills with just a commitment, that commitment is from time to time not fulfilled, particularly when there are changes in government and the new government may be distracted by other tasks at hand. This requirement ensures that that won't happen. The minister is quite right that we don't want to see the province getting into any significant challenges with the legislation lapsing, so one can only imagine that the government of the day would ensure that that didn't happen.

I strongly support this type of legislation. I agree with my hon. colleague that it's not red tape. You know, the minister had said that it adds red tape. A very good case could be made that this isn't red tape but good governance. Our decisions have ramifications in the Assembly, and it's important that we review those decisions in

reasonable timelines, and I think the timeline laid out in the amendment is more than reasonable. It allows for the bill to be in place for significant contract negotiations to take place all across the province with some of our largest employee groups. At the end of that, we can come back and find out if the decisions made today accurately reflect the decision, accurately reflect the things that are inside the scope of the Supreme Court ruling and the large number of items outside of the Supreme Court ruling that have been included in Bill 4.

I encourage all members of the Assembly to support the amendment. I look forward to an additional amendment passing in this Assembly today. As we saw this great spirit of co-operation that took place earlier in the day, I hope that we can continue such teamwork.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. member wishing to speak to this amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A7 lost]

**The Chair:** Back on Bill 4, are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

**Mr. Hunter:** Madam Chair, it's been a great day. Actually, maybe I'll amend that and say that it started out as a great day.

As my colleagues and I have previously stated, members who have reviewed the legislation will know that there is a disproportionate amount of power in a single commissioner who makes key decisions on essential services. Albertans, regardless of which side of the table they are on in an essential services negotiation, deserve to know that their interests are being served by a commissioner who is in touch with the situation in Alberta and with Albertans' needs. When things go wrong in essential services agreements or negotiations, when other avenues like going through umpires have failed, it's the commissioner that makes the call.

Alberta's labour environment is different than in other provinces. The employment and labour landscape is different than in British Columbia or Saskatchewan or Manitoba. While it's possible that there's someone in another jurisdiction who has valuable experience in essential services discussions, it is not the same as having someone from Alberta. For any government to unilaterally parachute in someone from out of province would simply betray the trust of Albertans. Only an Albertan will truly fight for Albertans' best interests.

For this reason I wish to move an amendment. I would like to present the requisite number of copies of an amendment speaking to this issue, and I do so at this time.

5:20

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A8.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be amended in section 8 in the proposed section 95.3 by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) The Commissioner must be a resident in Alberta for at least 6 of the 10 years preceding designation under subsection (1).

With this amendment we do recognize that many Albertans, like other Canadians, do migrate to other provinces for shorter or longer periods of their lives. They may still be gaining valuable professional experience elsewhere, but given the prescribed role of

the commissioner it's good common sense that the commissioner is someone who lives in Alberta and actually files their taxes here.

I think that out of all the amendments, Madam Chair, this is my favourite one, and one of the reasons why I would say that it's my favourite is because we have a lot of jobs that have been lost in Alberta; wouldn't it be nice to be able to keep at least one here?

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the outstanding people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to speak to the amendment. I think that we have seen some significant changes in our province. We have seen some significant changes in the leadership of our province, and this role, the Alberta commissioner, the commissioner in the legislation, is a critical role in the future and in the functioning of the province of Alberta.

While we can recognize that there are lots of talented people that live right across this great land of ours, there are some unquities about Alberta. There are things that make Alberta unique. That is the actual definition of unquities, particularly for the good people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. In fact, I think you'll find that that is an Alberta-specific phrase, something that a commissioner that had spent six out of the last 10 years in Alberta would fully understand. It is exactly why we need to ensure that the commissioner is, in fact, an Albertan. We have some of the most talented people that live right here in our province, and I think it's critically important that we celebrate that.

Madam Chair, I've said many times in this place that the government of Alberta isn't what makes Alberta great; it is Albertans. It is Albertans that make Alberta great. In fact, Albertans have been making Alberta great in spite of the government, particularly in the last few years of the previous government. So I don't know why we wouldn't ensure that an Albertan fills this critical role of the commissioner.

We're not suggesting that people should never leave Alberta so that they can have a career here. We're suggesting that six out of the last 10 years is reasonable for an expert in the area to have a continued understanding of the issues of the day, to have full knowledge of the legislation, to have full knowledge of the current issues of the day in Alberta. I think it's critically important that we celebrate the success and the incredible talent that we have here in Alberta, to have a commissioner from Alberta. To ensure Alberta's interests, the interests of all of those engaged in the negotiation, including the government, workers, employees of the government, those providing essential services, and taxpayers, it's critically important that we have an Albertan defending the interests of all of those people.

That's exactly what this amendment would ensure, that the commissioner needs to reside in the province for six out of the last 10 years, and I think it's very reasonable. I think that all members of the Assembly should support such an amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I listened with great interest. Now, I did hear that Albertans make Alberta great, and in the context of this amendment I'm wondering if you give preference to those who've been here longer, six years out of 10. Are those the Albertans you're talking about?

The best person for the job of essential services commissioner is going to be someone who understands the law and the Albertan community. Absolutely. In my short time as the Labour minister I

have learned a few things, and one of those is that the Alberta labour relations community is tight-knit, relatively small. Everyone knows each other. They understand the unique needs of the Alberta labour relations system.

I can commit to you that I will be making sure that an Albertan is the person we select for the labour relations essential services commissioner, making this amendment not necessary. I mean, within the legislation we state that the commissioner is a member of the Labour Relations Board, and Labour Relations Board members are required to understand the unique environment here in Alberta. So understanding the Alberta labour relations environment is a key component of that. We will be selecting the best person for the job. As part of that, I will be engaging the labour relations community – that's a process that I've already begun because we will need an essential services commissioner sooner rather than later – talking to the community and hearing what makes sense.

I certainly hope that all members will support our new essential services commissioner once that person begins what will be a very tough job for the first few months, implementing and overseeing vitally important legislation that protects the rights of our employees to strike and protects the public service and those vital public services that we all rely on.

For these reasons, the fact that it's unnecessary and a bit odd, I will not be supporting this amendment.

**The Chair:** Cardston-Taber-Warner.

5:30

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As encouraged as I am with the scout's honour, we will make sure we do the right thing in this situation. It's always better to make sure that you have the legislation in order to be able to get this right. What's interesting about this is that this is a reasoned amendment, yet it almost seems like the minister is stopping what she says she's going to do anyway. So I'm not sure why we shouldn't just pass this and get on with the work of the day.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just like to say that finding an essential services commissioner, making sure we have the right person for this job is going to be an incredibly important task, making sure we get the right combination of people who can understand the labour relations environment and oversee an incredibly, vitally important service. If I find someone who's been a resident of Alberta for five years and I'm not able to make that person an offer because of this amendment, that would be a shame if that was the best person. I don't have an essential services commissioner in mind, but this type of a hoop that must be jumped through does not seem productive in selecting the best person for the job for Alberta.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a very quick question. Seeing how we're just chatting about the commissioner, what do you think is a reasonable timeline for the hiring of the commissioner? What do you currently have in mind?

**Ms Gray:** That is a very good question. We're currently getting a legal opinion on whether we can start posting now or if the legislation needs to be passed before we can do that. We want to make sure we do this properly. We're having conversations.

Certainly, the labour relations community, who were engaged heavily in the development of Bill 4, are aware that we need an essential services commissioner and that that position is coming up, so we can have a lot of great conversations about it. As far as posting and timeline, we're waiting on a legal opinion before we go there.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any further members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, just listening to the debate back and forth – and there are some good points on both sides, I guess – I had to stop and think here just a little bit about the fact that when we lost our net for a new Clerk, one of the things that we found was that the best person for the job was the person that we had home grown, the person that intimately understood this Legislature, not the other Legislatures, intimately understood the job that we have to do and how the various rules of the Legislature apply to us. We chose very wisely, and we can see the benefit of that, of choosing somebody that was experienced and talented and knew what we needed to have done here in the Legislature.

I want to contrast that with a similar decision that's been made in this province that some of my constituents have brought forward with some concern. We have a position in our province called the Chief Firearms Officer, and when we went to make the decision as to who that person would be, we allowed in this province for that individual to be appointed by somebody from down east. Many of the people in the hunting and gun community of my constituency have been very concerned with the fact that the persons or people that have been appointed to this position haven't understood the culture of Alberta and haven't understood what they needed to and how to interpret the Firearms Act in this province. They've been very concerned with the fact that somebody coming from outside, who didn't understand how things were done, was making decisions that would affect everybody's life in Alberta.

I can't help but think that that analogy or that situation, that case study example, is similar to what we're talking about here. All this amendment is asking us to do as a Legislature is to assure us that not only are we looking for a very competent and experienced person but somebody that also understands Albertans and Alberta and that when we start talking about essential services and balancing those rights to strike versus the right to protect public services, they understand what we want and what we have done in the past in this province.

So I would speak to this amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just really wanted to stand and say one last time that I am going to be looking for someone who knows Alberta and is the best person for the job.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to this amendment?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A8 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:36 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Smith
Anderson, W.	MacIntyre	Strankman
Cooper	McIver	van Dijken
Cyr	Rodney	Yao
Gotfried		

5:40

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miller
Babcock	Horne	Nielsen
Carson	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Sweet
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	McPherson	Woollard
Gray		

Totals:	For – 13	Against – 37
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[Motion on amendment A8 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill, Bill 4. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

**Mr. Hunter:** I think I'm winning them over. I thought I heard a clap over there.

Madam Chair, when this legislation comes into force, employers and bargaining units for workers will be negotiating essential services agreements for the first time in Alberta. Given that essential services are vital and integral to the day-to-day well-being of Albertans, it's important that we get as much of this legislation right the first time as possible. As currently worded, Bill 4 does not allow for quick emergency amendments. It may be discovered in the middle of a strike or lockout while negotiations are ongoing that a certain service should have been designated essential but was not. Accordingly, there needs to be a mechanism that allows for a quick return of those services should such a situation arise. Any such provision should recognize the rights of workers but would also recognize that there is important work to be done.

That's why I'm seeking an amendment. I have the requisite number of copies, that I will present to the Clerk at this time.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A9.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment moves that Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be amended in section 8 in the proposed 95.45 by adding the following subsection:

(1.1) Upon the filing of an application under subsection (1), notwithstanding section 95.41(3), an employer may use the services of persons hired by the employer or supplied to the employer by another person to perform the work of those employees in the bargaining unit that is on the strike or lockout until such time as the Commissioner makes a declaration under subsection (1) or advises that a declaration will not be made.

This amendment will allow for temporary workers to get the job done should it need to be done. The legislation already does account



for back-to-work situations, as would be the case in a large-scale public health emergency such as SARS. Not every emergency would be of that size or magnitude but would be significant regardless given that it would pertain to an essential service. This amendment would allow for a short-term solution in those scenarios while negotiations are ongoing.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much. I am rising to speak to this amendment because I think there might be a misunderstanding with the legislation. There is a mechanism built into this legislation so that if there is something happening on the ground and decisions need to be made, that's where our concept of the umpire comes in. This essential services framework, which is a made-in-Alberta solution addressing our province's unique needs, ensuring that the legislation is fair for unionized employees and employers and making sure that the essential public services are maintained, does this through a couple of mechanisms, including the use of an umpire. That umpire will be involved in the negotiation of an essential services agreement and will become familiar with the workplace involved. Likely someone who has worked in health care would be the umpire, the mediator/arbitrator for a health care environment, for example.

That umpire plays another role, and that is to make decisions or rulings in case of a need during a strike or lockout. In the scenario, as I understand your description, the umpire is the one who will come and, on the ground, make a call. The legislation refers to the questioning of the umpire's decisions. It could get escalated up to the commissioner, especially if someone disagrees. But we very much needed a mechanism that – if something was going sideways during a strike or lockout, it needed to be dealt with immediately, and that is where the umpire comes in. Again, the umpire, that terminology, comes from baseball. It's somebody on the field making the call immediately.

In this case, I am not going to support this amendment because the legislation already has this. I think that your introductory comments neglected to mention that this is another form of replacement worker in that you're allowing the employer to hire additional people during that strike or lockout, something that is prohibited in earlier sections, that we've had a few conversations around. I would mention that this touches on the replacement worker argument again.

But the key point in my mind is that this legislation, intended to protect vital public services, does allow for a mechanism so that if there's a change or something that needs to be done rapidly on the ground, that can happen.

**Mr. Hunter:** With respect, Madam Chair, I just need some clarity from the minister, if I could. If I understand you correctly, you're saying that the umpire has the ability and the right to possibly bring in temporary workers. My question is, then: you're going to ask a person that may not have the necessary knowledge of the industry to make a decision about whether or not these temporary workers would be needed in this situation whereas an employer, whether it's government, public, or private, would have the best understanding of the situation. That's my first question.

The second question that I have for you. If you are saying that the umpire's role is going to be – say, for instance, in the example of health care they would have a knowledge of health care. Are you going to have umpires for every industry that have an understanding

of every industry? I mean, we're talking about now creating a WCB or an OH and S. Is this the scope of what you're trying to do here?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you for the questions. I believe that I was misunderstood. There is a ban on replacement workers in the legislation. The umpire would not be making a ruling to hire someone for the employer. It would be, rather, to potentially ask one of the strike line employees to come back to fulfill that function.

As well, umpires are not necessarily going to be subject matter experts in every industry or field. Someone who is a skilled mediator/arbitrator could be an umpire in most scenarios. I did refer to an umpire potentially understanding health care scenarios because there are a few more technical or difficult to negotiate, where understanding some of the nuances could be more important, but I don't believe it's the case that we need highly specialized umpires throughout. Mediation and arbitration are the main skill sets. Umpires or people who could fulfill the role of umpires exist today in our labour relations system performing different roles. We have people who can do this job. It's going to be a new role, but it's going to essentially be mediation and arbitration in its focus. Someone who's done that before for health care might do that job again.

I hope that clarifies for the member.

5:50

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A9 lost]

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to speak to this bill, and in principle I've told you that I agree with it, but there's some conflicting information in this that speaks to a group of people that are near and dear to my heart, the profession that I come from, and that's emergency medical services.

Consider: it's the middle of summer. Your child is in the back, in the pool. They're playing, and they've drowned or nearly drowned. Is that not a public safety issue, that harm to your child and having an ambulance, a skilled professional there to save that child's life? Would you agree? Would the government agree? I think you would. I think all Albertans would.

We see in this bill that firefighters are an essential service from the start. Compulsory arbitration: rightly so. Police: compulsory arbitration. What's missing is paramedics, that are out on the street every day saving lives and providing essential care to people that are in pain, quality of life, until they can get further care. Mental health issues are on the rise, particularly now with the way the economy is, yet the government – and, believe me, I've worked all day on this to try to get them included as essential services. I can tell you right now that if I did a poll in this province, people would agree that emergency medical services should be an essential service along with firemen and police.

My question is to the minister. Minister, can you just fix this one nuance, and then when you get to the negotiation piece after the fact around the essential services, you can figure out what that looks like inside a bargaining unit? We have firefighters with their own union, police with their own union. We have an effective bargaining unit that represents two-thirds or more of the emergency medical professionals, and they do a good job, but this group or part of them can be hived off immediately by this government.

It's the right decision. We don't want to have to worry if the ambulance is going to show up or not. Everybody would agree, especially if you're the mom or you're the father and your child is nearly drowned, sick, with a broken leg, or in a car accident. They're essential to life. They are essential to making sure that when your loved one is in pain and they're crying and they're writhing in pain, the trauma that that brings to a patient – and I know there are other health care professionals. Our job is to take that pain away. Our job is to make sure that the community has confidence that when you call the ambulance, they're going to be there. There should be no negotiation. There should be no threat of a walkout, no threat of a strike for something that you need to save a life.

What I can't understand after all the work that I did in CUPE 3421 and all my brethren did before then to get parity with police and fire is why today this government can't recognize emergency medical services as an essential service to the life and well-being of Albertans. Now, I tried to make this so that this could be your amendment, so that you can make this decision. To be honest with you, anybody who has a special interest, whether it's a union or anything else, to leverage the skill and the responsibility that paramedics have shouldn't even come into question. The right decision, Minister, respectfully: recognize paramedics along with firemen and police as the core backbone of the safety and well-being of Albertans, I implore you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 4. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Madam Speaker, I move that we adjourn the House until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, April 7, 2016

Day 11

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
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Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
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Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, April 7, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect. When we focus on possibilities, obstacles and barriers diminish. At the close of this week in service of the people of this province let us continue to focus on what we can do, not on what we cannot.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 4

#### An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To continue our work and discussions from yesterday, I'd like to speak to some of the comments we heard around ambulance attendants. Our government supports front-line workers, our paramedics and our emergency services technicians. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that the right to strike is fundamental for public-sector workers to engage in meaningful collective bargaining. In crafting this legislation, we relied on two key sources, the Supreme Court of Canada ruling itself, which we are legally obligated to comply with, and the experts – employees, employers, the public, and labour relations stakeholders – consulted during the engagements, led by Mr. Andrew Sims. Through this process and with that guidance we chose a consequence-based approach to defining essential services rather than an enumeration approach, where the government would name individual categories of essential services.

Ambulance workers, including paramedics and EMTs, working for Alberta Health Services are part of a larger bargaining unit for which many essential services agreements will need to be made. It is highly likely that these workers would be considered essential and not permitted to strike, for many of the compelling reasons that we heard yesterday. For independent ambulance operators the bargaining units are smaller and would result in a situation where nearly all the workers would be considered essential, and any strike or lockout scenario would be ineffective to the collective bargaining process. In that case, the bargaining unit will remain subject to compulsory arbitration, and this was discussed and agreed to during the consultation process.

We have engaged with the Health Sciences Association of Alberta, and they are in favour of this legislation as written, which provides these workers with the opportunity to negotiate essential services. More broadly speaking, the Supreme Court ruling is clear. These workers have the right to strike.

I want to speak specifically about the vital role that paramedics and EMTs play in emergency care. We know that paramedics and

EMTs are some of our most courageous front-line emergency responders, providing advanced medical care in life-threatening situations. In Alberta there are over 4,000 emergency medical responders, emergency medical technicians, and emergency medical technologists, paramedics. In the Edmonton zone alone EMS professionals respond to more than 157,000 events annually. We know that when lives are on the line, the skills and knowledge of a paramedic can make the difference between life and death. We are tremendously proud of these paramedics and EMTs, and we are all thankful for the emergency services workers who bring their skills and professionalism to patients every day.

Make no mistake; we understand these workers are absolutely critical to the public health and safety of Albertans. I can't stress enough how grateful I am – I believe we all are – for the brave and courageous work they do. I would like to invite Albertans to visit [thankaparamedic.com](http://thankaparamedic.com) to show your appreciation. This website is hosted by Alberta Health Services. It lists hundreds of amazing thank-you letters to paramedics from Albertans. While so many of these stories would have you in tears, I will share just one.

On Thursday, Sept 17 I had collapsed while calling 911 . . . I'm not sure of the paramedics' names. But I want to thank them for saving me. You are the ones that you never get to speak to. You are the ones that sneak out the back door once everything is under control. You are the Angels!

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have one quick question for the minister. In your remarks you said that it's not likely to affect this group of courageous individuals that serve our province so well. What if you're not right? What if a situation arises where it is likely that they wouldn't be considered and the legislation hasn't met the needs of the public and of those individuals?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much for the question. The process in negotiating an essential services agreement begins with the two parties, the union and the employer. At that point the case that emergency medical technicians fit the definition of essential services, which involves life, health, and safety of everyday Albertans, is extremely high. I used the word "likely" because I cannot predetermine the outcomes of these conversations. This needs to be happening with the workers themselves, who can make a better argument than I can as to the critical nature of their work, and we'll have that discussion there.

If in that case there is a disagreement – because I do not believe that a union would ever agree that these are nonessential workers – they would make the case very, very strongly that they are. An umpire might be brought in if there was a disagreement, and the umpire would make a ruling at that point. If, in that case, the employees are still not satisfied that they have been determined to be essential through this process, the commissioner would be brought in to make a ruling.

Again, both the umpire and the commissioner as neutral third parties would be using as their definition the definition of essential services that we've included in this legislation, which makes clear that an essential worker is one that impacts the life, health, and safety of Albertans. I believe that that closely matches the exact definition of what some of these workers are doing.

This is why I used the word "likely." I cannot predetermine the nature, but I do mention that there are two neutral third parties who will be validating that we are meeting the essential services definition as outlined in the legislation and making sure that the health and well-being of all Albertans is protected in the event of a

strike or lockout. That is fundamental to the nature of this legislation. We've written it this way in consultation with experts, stakeholders, and to comply with the Supreme Court ruling, which says that we must make sure that Albertans that are citizens have that right to strike while still protecting vital public services.

**The Chair:** The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise. I listened to the minister's remarks, and I'm sure the minister is sincere. But I also listened yesterday to the remarks of my colleague the Member for Calgary-South East, who, as members of this House know, is one of at least two members in this House that are paramedics. With no disrespect to the minister I think the minister is missing the point that my colleague was trying to make yesterday.

It's really about respect, Madam Chair. It's about the fact that when we in Alberta – and a lot of other places in the world, but we're talking about Alberta right now. When we dial 911, we're in a time of great need. We expect people to come to us in a hurry, we expect them to be professional, and we expect them to be prepared. And you know what? Many times we expect them to be prepared to risk their life. We expect them to be prepared to put themselves in harm's way.

One of the other expectations is that we actually expect them to see things that most people shouldn't have to see. What's at a scene many times when an EMS or a paramedic professional or a police officer or a firefighter shows up – and they show up at the worst tragedies, as you can imagine: a human tragedy, a house fire, a motor vehicle collision, some other tragedy. They oftentimes are exposed to things that the rest of us don't have to be exposed to, and they do that willingly.

9:10

In legislation it's codified that there's a requirement in the legislation, not through a negotiation. And, Minister, I know that what you said, you said in good faith. I'm not questioning that. But it is an important difference. The difference between having it codified in the legislation and subject to a negotiation really puts it in a different category.

I think what my colleague did yesterday was to really explain well to this House how paramedics deserve the same respect as the other first responders. It's not special treatment. I hope that no one in this House would say that it's special treatment. It's a special job they do. It's a special risk they take. It's the fact that they go and do the things wearing a uniform, where they can't hide, where they're identified. They're separated from the rest of us by the uniform, and we depend upon them to be there at our times of greatest need, not most of the time when we call 911 but every time.

Again, they are subject to the same hardships and the same personal payment that they make as part of being EMS. They have PTSD from seeing unspeakable tragedy, terrible personal events, terrible physical events. Frankly, they come to us at the time that we need them most, and they deserve the same respect. They deserve the same respect. I can tell you that what I believe strongly is that they have that same respect from Albertans on the street. What we're hoping for is to show that level of respect from here, the place where laws are made in Alberta, the Legislative Assembly, the same level of respect from those people who are elected from across this province.

This is a day when we can actually say out loud that we appreciate the sacrifices that they make. We appreciate the fact that their families don't always look at them the same way when they leave home as they look at us. When I leave home, my wife is pretty

sure I'm coming back. In fact, I would say that, in fairness to the first responders, most of the time their families expect that they're coming back, but there's an additional risk that they take above and beyond what other Alberta workers take. I don't think any of us would doubt that. So this is really about respecting that.

If there's one thing that I think I hear out of the NDP playbook, you know, it is that you talk about equality all the time and equal recognition of things. This is an opportunity where if we treat in law our first responders who are paramedics the same way that we treat our first responders who are firefighters or police officers, it would send a very positive message. It would send a very positive message to all Albertans, and it would send a very positive message to a whole bunch of men and women that go out there and do that work every day.

I will ask the minister to consider carefully what she just said, and at some point soon, Madam Chair, I'm going to ask, by way of an amendment, the minister to reconsider what she just said because I believe that for all of us in this House I don't think this is partisan. I think that on both sides of the House we all agree that first responders go a great job. You know, there are a lot of issues in this House that can tear us apart across the aisle. I think this is one that could probably bring us together, and that's what we're asking for.

So, Madam Chair, with your permission I would like to move an amendment, please. I'm guessing you don't want me to talk about it till after you see it, right?

**The Chair:** Until I've seen the original.

**Mr. McIver:** This, to be clear, is on behalf of my colleague from Calgary-South East. It's certainly my hope that if we can agree on this, this will bring us all together and be something we can all walk out of here with and be proud of and say that we did the right thing for the right reason today.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A10. Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be amended in section 9 in the proposed section 96(1) (a) by striking out clause (b) and substituting the following:

- (b) employees who act as ambulance attendants as defined in the Emergency Health Services Act and, to the extent that they bargain collectively with ambulance attendants, employers who are ambulance operators as defined in that Act,

(b) in clause (c) by adding, "excluding employees to which clause (b) applies" after "all the employees of those employers," and (c) in clause (d) by striking out "clause (c)" and substituting "clauses (b) or (c)".

It's a little bit wordy, but I tried to explain. Madam Chair, I could never be as eloquent or articulate as my colleague from Calgary-South East was, who works as an advanced care paramedic and has lived the life that those first responders live. Respectfully and not up to the standard that he would do, I move this on his behalf.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the comments and this amendment for our consideration. This legislation is not a value judgment on any particular type of work. This legislation is the creation of a framework under which we recognize that there is key and essential work happening throughout Alberta, particularly from our first responders, whom we value and respect. It is through this process under negotiating an essential

services agreement that we will be going through with the employees themselves, with the employers and having the conversations about what we can do to make sure that Albertans are maintained in a safe, healthy, functioning environment during any strike or lockout.

I do want to stress that we engaged the Health Sciences Association of Alberta, so the representatives of some of those front-line workers, who are in favour of the legislation as it is written. We carefully considered the advice of all of the experts involved, from renowned labour lawyer Mr. Andrew Sims to everyone engaged in that consultation process. Understanding very much the appreciation and the passion that there is for our front-line workers, this government echoes that as well. We know, again, that when lives are on the line, the skills and knowledge of a paramedic can make the difference between life and death. But this legislation is not about judging a particular type of work; it's about creating a framework that all Albertans can use so that as roles change, as careers evolve, regardless of what happens, we have a framework that serves Albertans in any case.

Because we have the support of those who were consulted, because we have carefully considered these issues repeatedly, I will not be supporting this amendment. We do value our front-line workers, absolutely. We think this framework, which respects their right to strike, which is critical – the Supreme Court has ruled that all Canadians have that right. By not removing that right to strike at this point but instead including them inside of the essential services framework, we are showing our respect to these workers and all Albertan workers.

I look forward to continued discussion on this, but I believe that this framework is fair, balanced, and serves Albertans. I look forward to the discussion. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

9:20

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a couple of quick questions for the minister, following on from some of the other comments made in the House this morning. The minister has made statements this morning that she wouldn't want to prejudge something in terms of the discussions around whether or not paramedics would be determined to be essential, and she said that they would likely be. The question is, then, because she doesn't want to prejudge the discussions: is it possible, because of the legislation, that they wouldn't be? I think that that is part of the larger discussion. That's important. If we're not prejudging it, then both "likely to be considered" and "possible that they wouldn't be considered" could be within the realm of a judgment.

I think one of the things that we saw so clearly yesterday afternoon from my colleague from the third party is that this legislation carves out space for firemen to be absolutely, one hundred per cent guaranteed to be considered to be essential, not likely to be considered but absolutely considered essential. We see that same respect given through the legislation to our police services. A very clear case was made that that is the exact same respect in legislation that paramedics and EMS should receive.

While I can be sympathetic to the fact that the minister believes that they're likely to be considered, the possibility that that wouldn't be the conclusion exists. We have the opportunity to ensure that paramedics and EMS are given the respect they so rightfully deserve through legislation, the same respect that the other forms of first responders receive, that this legislation ensures they have. This is a wonderful opportunity for the best idea to win, for the fact that we have the opportunity to communicate to all paramedics, first responders, and in fact all Albertans that this

Assembly understands the value that they provide our province. We have the chance today to ensure that in legislation.

Now, I can see that there was some significant back and forth to try and get an amendment that would provide the Chamber the ability to do that. Here before us that is exactly what we have. Now, I recognize the legislation is likely to, but we ought to remove all doubt from our first responders' minds and ensure that they are communicated to that they are essential, that we value the work that they do and communicate to Albertans that fire, police, and EMS are viewed on an equal playing field, are given the respect that they each deserve. Pass this legislation, pass this amendment to ensure that there can be no strange rulings, meddlings, or miscommunications to our first responders. I fully, without reservation, support the amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. As I always try to do, I listened carefully to the minister's response. Let me add a little more context for the minister. There is an element of respect here that probably needs to be given to these workers. The history of paramedics is an interesting one. They've always done a great job. They've always been extremely well respected by the public. This is something that you're not responsible for, this government and this minister, but it's something that I'm going to say because it's something you should be aware of. You might be aware, but if you're not, I'm going to make you aware.

Over time the profession of being a paramedic has been kicked around a little bit. What I mean by that, Madam Chair, is that I spent a few years on city council in Calgary, where the EMS service used to reside. Over the years they were kicked around from pillar to post a little bit. There were times where they had been their own free-standing department in the city. A couple of times they got moved to be under the direction of the fire department and then under the direction of some other body and then independent again and back and forth. There's been some ping-ponging done over the years. That's some history that actually is worthy of consideration here when you consider maybe it's about time that this particular profession got the respect that it deserved. I can tell you that that's the case.

Now, the minister said, you know, that she can't prejudge, but by saying that you leave – it's the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde thing, Madam Chair. What I mean by that is that if you say that you're going to do the right thing now, you leave the paramedics worried that some day with a different minister, different government, a different day, they – and no, that's not a shot at the government. I'm just saying that the fact is that things change over time. It might just be the minister. Maybe she'll get some better job. Who knows? The fact is that the people in charge of things change from time to time. Even if while you're here the EMS will be an essential service, they are left hanging, wondering whether they still will be when you move on to something bigger and better. That is the uncertainty that we need to remove for those people. They deserve better. We owe it to them.

The minister also said something that my colleague from the other party talked about, prejudging. Well, Madam Chair, I would submit to the minister that Albertans have prejudged: EMS, paramedics are essential. Albertans have prejudged. What I'm asking the minister and the government to do is to show that we hear Albertans and we're going to reflect what they believe. My colleague said it last night when he was speaking, that if he was to do a survey of Albertans, he's sure that there would be 90-plus per cent of them that would say that EMS is essential, and I believe he's

right about that. Albertans have prejudged. Why? Because they're essential.

Our job here is to recognize what all Albertans know. Show them that we're awake. Show them that we hear them. Show that we agree with them. Show them that we are respecting them and we're representing their views. They've prejudged, and they've prejudged correctly. We work for them. Now would be a good time to demonstrate that. Respect those people. Don't leave them hanging out there wondering whether the respect is temporary or at the whim of the current minister or whether it's codified in legislation as it ought to be, the same as it is for police officers, the same as it is for firefighters, as it ought to be for paramedics.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you very much. I would like to speak a little bit about the fact that I absolutely want to be clear that I value paramedics. In fact, just this past summer I came across someone who eventually ended up passing away in an MVA, and I ended up being the first person on the scene. You know, when the first responders came and helped bring that individual to the hospital, once I was off the road and dealing with all the emotions of being the first on the scene, dealing with someone who'd gone through that kind of trauma, the first thing I did was call up my paramedic friends. "How do you do that? You're amazing. I'm so proud of all the work you do. Thank God you are there and doing the work that you do."

Having said that, the health care that we provide – I mean, specifically this is looking at health care, and as a nurse for 17 years I feel very happy to speak on behalf of health care – is a very complex connection of a variety of workers that provide services to Albertans when they are in need. Certainly, there are many workers within the health care system who are considered to be absolutely essential. We value all of those workers. When we look at this, certainly the reason that we have included firefighters and police in this legislation is because the Supreme Court specifically recognizes them. In the spirit of respecting the negotiations and collaboration that would go into developing this essential services agreement, we are only including what we have to include based on what the Supreme Court references.

9:30

I have to say that I have faith in the negotiations of employees and employers to come together and to decide what's in the best interests of Albertans, to ensure that we recognize what are truly essential services. I have faith in that process. I have faith that they will recognize that there are a variety of people who will be essential. Examples would include, absolutely, ambulance attendants. You know, I have full expectation that they will be on there. There are also OR nurses and ER nurses. There are X-ray technicians and lab staff. Without them Albertans could not get access to the quality of services that they deserve. I think it is a very complex interaction of staff, and I look forward to seeing the results of employees and employers coming together to come to the very best conclusion as the experts in this, the experts in terms of their particular situation, to decide what are the essential services.

We have to be very clear that we value all the workers in the situation. We certainly value ambulance attendants, but we also value the process and collaboration and respect the importance of having both employees and employers have the conversation together to come up with the essential services that make the most sense for Albertans going forward.

Thank you.

**Mr. Ellis:** I can't believe that we are even for a single moment debating whether EMS is an essential service. I cannot. That's shameful. Let me tell you something. I have commanded many, many incidents. Do you know who's at every one of those incidents? Not just the police, not just the fire, but EMS. I always have EMS on standby. Without them the police officers have no support. Without them the firefighters have no support. Without them the victims of crime, the victims in fires, the victims of emergencies – so then I'm going to ask you this, Madam Chair. How are you going to tell that person who dials 911 in a medical emergency: well, we're going to get somebody to you, but EMS is not quite essential, we've determined. Not quite essential. How are you going to tell that person that? It is not even a question that EMS is an essential service, not a question in my mind, not a question in any Albertan's mind, and it's embarrassing that we're even having this conversation.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Emergency medical services. Let me give you a little bit of insight into the emergency services, what they perceive EMS to be. It has always been considered, pardon my language, the bastard child of the emergency services. It's always been a barely funded system that just adequately provided the bare-bones minimum for emergency services. Police: we require them for so many aspects, to control and maintain order on our streets and whatnot. Fire departments: there's a perception that no one wants to die in fires, so it's always been a tragic thing over the previous years. But EMS has always been one of those things that people just seem to avoid because they always think that they'll never need that, never need an ambulance.

We have to understand that EMS has evolved over the years to truly providing health care in the field. Dr. Norman Bethune, a great Canadian who in the late 1800s, early 1900s was the first person in the world to do blood transfusions, introduced the first levels of EMS to our world. After that, in the modern era, it was the Vietnam vets that came back from the war and joined the fire departments in the United States. It was in the Vietnam War when they also accelerated the type and quality of health care in the field, in the combat setting, and they brought those skills back with them here to North America. When they got on with those fire departments, they started providing a different level. At that point society started to recognize that not just physicians could provide health care out in the public setting, that there was a need for providing true health care in the field, not just a load-and-go situation. When I say load and go, back in the day the hearses would be called; the funeral homes would be called to transport a lot of people who required a stretcher because they were banged up from a car accident or something like that.

So we have come a long way. Today they do everything from intubation to defibrillation to starting that intravenous and doing so much more in the field. They are very, very vital. It is providing, truly, health care outside of a hospital setting. It is the most extreme situation. People underestimate what these people do, what they've seen.

As the other members in this House have talked about, we do see a lot. It's not too many people that have to deal with dead babies with families crying around them, and you just see this rigor mortis child sitting there on a bench. That's disturbing stuff. Or to see someone who'd been burned in a car fire after it hit a welding truck. The skin: it's not like a true burn. It's like the skin melted, and it's like a sheen mask. That was quite disturbing to see. There are a lot of instances, a lot of situations that paramedics run into very equivalent, if not more so, than some of the other emergency

services, and the fact is that they have to deal with that medical situation. And God bless the firefighters for pulling that patient out of that burning house, but then it's the paramedic that has to take care of that guy and try to keep him alive until we can get him to the hospital, which might be, say, in a case in Airdrie, 20 minutes to half an hour away, or in some other rural setting where the closest acute hospital is a couple of hours away.

It is a difficult job. I'm torn on hearing from the government side that they may not consider it to be an essential service despite the things that they do. It is as vital as anything. Working for a combined service, providing both EMS at the highest level as the paramedics and providing the fire and rescue side of things, the EMS call volume was anywhere between 75 per cent and 85 per cent of our total call volume, and those are standard statistics across the province. There is a sheer number of calls that come out.

Not only that, but paramedics are forced to wait in hospitals as they try to clear beds because of the low capacity of our beds and stuff like that as they fill the backlogs, as they get filled by people like seniors and others who don't have a long-term facility that they can call home. So they adjust, and they accommodate them in the long-term care beds, which compounds it and influences other areas where patients could sit but, instead, all just get bumped down to the point where there are patients sitting in emergency departments who could or should be in some sort of longer term facility or bed.

EMS is a hard job. We don't have X-ray machines and blood-testing machines with us. We have to determine by the mechanism of injury how hard we think that car hit that wall to determine what kind of injuries they got. We have to evaluate, based on their history, if they took their medications properly, what they did, because there might be a metabolic issue that's within them. It's a lot of deciphering, a lot of inquisitive actions in order to determine the best course of action for these patients in an environment where it's very, very difficult to get this information sometimes.

9:40

It's really unfortunate, Madam Chair, that this government would not consider this amendment, this change. It's a subtle change, but it will impact so many help providers that are currently dealing with a lot of stresses, including posttraumatic stress syndrome. It's unfortunate, and they require more support. I hope this government doesn't underestimate the things that they do and that they will recognize them as truly an essential service. When these people aren't on the road, people won't have that health care provider at their door.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Often we get up in this Chamber and at this point we say that we are pleased to rise. I'm very disappointed and I'm very upset to have to rise to speak to this today, to what I think is an absolutely common-sense amendment, but it is my honour to do so.

It's my honour to thank the gentleman who spoke last night, who wanted to bring this forward, and I thank our interim leader, the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, for bringing it to the floor and speaking eloquently about it. I thank the previous speaker, who was a professional in the field and risked his life, and his brethren and sistren who have done exactly the same thing. Having one less paramedic, one less emergency medical technician, having one less person who provides safety to Albertans will make Alberta a less safe place.

This amendment is, as I say, common sense. It will save lives. I have some friendly advice for our friends in the new government,

whether it be the Premier or the cabinet. We cannot refer to members' absences – I will not – but I trust this message will get through to the people that are authoring this bill and everyone else here. Take it from me. I've served the second-longest amount of time; only the House leader on the other side has served more time. I seldom get emotional. I feel myself getting emotional about this situation. Here's the thing. When we sat on the government side, guess what? Every once in a while we took an amendment; we accepted it. It's this sort of situation. They thought of something we didn't. Good thing. Let's do it now before it's too late. It's not: throw them a bone; it's just the right thing to do. In my time I even voted against my own government. So I can tell you this. If you have advice on your side that you should vote against this, ask yourself, your family, your constituents: what is the right thing to do in this situation? I think the answer is very, very clear.

At this point, Madam Chair, I feel the need to paraphrase the hon. Member for Calgary-South East from yesterday evening. His words are so powerful. They come from the experience of having worked a career in EMS. Not everyone has been privy to what happened at 10 to 6 last night, so here it is:

Consider: it's the middle of summer. Your child is in the back, in the pool. They're playing, and they've drowned or nearly drowned. Is that not a public safety issue, that harm to your child and having an ambulance, a skilled professional there to save that child's life? Would you agree? Would the government agree? I think you would. I think all Albertans would.

We see in this bill that firefighters are an essential service from the start. Compulsory arbitration: rightly so. Police: compulsory arbitration. What's missing is paramedics, that are out on the street every day saving lives and providing essential care to people that are in pain. [We're talking about] quality of life, until they can get further care.

I would add, Madam Chair, that it's not just quality of life; it could be life and death.

Additionally,

Mental health issues are on the rise, particularly now with the way the economy is, yet the government – and, believe me, I've worked all day on [trying] to get them included as essential services. I can tell you right now that if I did a poll in this province, people would agree that emergency medical services should be an essential service along with firemen and police, as our Member for Calgary-West has already articulately alluded to from personal, professional, not just political experience.

He goes on:

It's the right decision.

We should be able to leave it at that, but I'll continue.

We don't want to have to worry if the ambulance is going to show up or not. Everyone would agree, especially if you're the mom or you're the father and your child is nearly drowned, sick, with a broken leg, or in a car accident. They're essential to life. They are essential to making sure that when your loved one is in pain and they're crying and they're writhing in pain . . .

By the way, Madam Chair, I've been in many of these situations as well, and I agree.

. . . the trauma that that brings to a patient – and I know there are other health care professionals. Our job is to take that pain away. Our job is to make sure that the community has confidence that when you call the ambulance . . . There should be no threat of a walkout, no threat of a strike for something that you need to save a life.

Again, I'm paraphrasing my hon. colleague from Calgary-South East.

What I can't understand after all the work that I did in CUPE 3421 and all my brethren did before then to get parity with police and fire is why today . . .

Today.

... this government can't recognize emergency medical services as an essential service to the life and well-being of Albertans. Now, I tried to make this so that this could be your amendment, so that you can make this decision. To be honest with you, anybody who has a special interest, whether it's a union or anything else, to leverage the skill and the responsibility that paramedics have shouldn't even come into question. The right decision, Minister, respectfully: recognize paramedics along with firemen and police as the core backbone of the safety and well-being of Albertans, I implore you.

Again, on his behalf.

Madam Chair, I know that you're listening intently. I know from your time over a decade ago up in *Hansard* that you have seen this happen. For anyone who has just tuned in on the web or otherwise, I'll just repeat what I said. This is the right thing to do. It's okay to take an amendment once in a while. Honestly, if you were to take the time and not rush this through, if you were to call up anybody in your constituency and say, "Who's an essential service?" do you honestly think people would leave out those that are the first responders to save people's lives, that put their lives on the line every day? I don't want to use the term "no-brainer." I know some people in colloquial language would do exactly that. But I have yet to hear one good reason from the government as to why they should be excluded.

So I encourage the minister, the Premier, any member of cabinet, any member of the caucus to stand and convince everyone else here and, I really believe, towards one hundred per cent of the Albertans out there why you should exclude EMS from this common-sense amendment.

Over to you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my honour to speak to the amendment. As somebody who drafted a number of opposition amendments, I think that in my over four years I got one through, so certainly I know the frustration sometimes when amendments don't get through. I imagine that for a great deal of the members on the opposite side of the bench it wasn't because the amendments were coming from us; it was because, I hope, they had done the research and thought through the nuances of the situation. When I had an opportunity to meet with the member from Calgary, certainly, on first response, I was like, "Yeah; that's sounds like a really good idea," and then I did my research because the important thing is to make sure that we understand the context, not just what might be public perception.

Certainly, the context is that we are here today debating An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. That act itself names two first responders. Unfortunately, it doesn't name three, but it does name two first responders. It names police, and it names fire. The decision of the Supreme Court was to impact both Alberta and Saskatchewan, who had legislation that was in contravention of the Supreme Court ruling. When Saskatchewan passed their legislation, they wrote in other essential services that were not named in the Supreme Court ruling, and the Supreme Court overturned that legislation because it wasn't compliant with the Supreme Court ruling.

9:50

When I did my research, I found out: "Oh. We need to make sure we're complying with the Supreme Court ruling. I understand." We also went a step further to reach out to those who were elected to represent a vast number of emergency first responders, who I have tremendous respect for. I know everyone in this House does. If you are ever in a situation where you need to call 911, you need to know that somebody is going to show up. So we reached out to those who

were elected to govern a large number of them through the Health Sciences Association of Alberta, and they said: "You're right not to write it into the legislation. We will work this out at the table. Thank you for approaching us about this idea. It certainly is an interesting idea, but you're right. Don't write it into the legislation. This is about implementing a Supreme Court ruling."

With all respect to all members of the House, the passion that they bring to the debate, and to anyone who might be listening, this is about implementing the Supreme Court ruling. We're certainly going to have conversations with the employer and employee groups to make sure that we get this right for other areas. But in terms of the actual legislation itself, as we've seen from the precedent in Saskatchewan, I think it's very important that we implement the Supreme Court ruling, which specifically names two, not three, types of emergency first responders.

While I certainly appreciate the merit – and that's why I and I'm sure other members of our caucus as well went that extra step in doing additional research before we decided how we'd be feeling on this amendment – it's the research that's guided me to this decision. I certainly appreciate the passion that you've presented here today and, of course, the service of first responders sitting in this House and anywhere else in Alberta. Many are in ambulances at this very moment.

We continue to work with them and look forward to finding ways that we can make sure that when you do call 911, you have the confidence that those emergency first responders will be available. But in terms of the research I think that the Supreme Court decision as well as the Saskatchewan legislation and the fiasco there show us that we shouldn't be writing additional essential services into this legislation, that we should be working that out with employers and employees.

So with all respect, Madam Chair, I'll be voting against this proposed amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am disappointed to have to rise again and speak, with my colleagues from the Official Opposition and the third party, in favour of this amendment. The hon. Minister of Health I don't think has quite grasped the gravity of this bill. The minister stated that this amendment would be going beyond what is required by the Supreme Court, that it is outside the scope of what was required.

We have stood here and talked about how significant sections, very substantive sections of the government's own legislation go beyond what is required by the Supreme Court. In their own briefings, that I participated in, their own experts told us that sections of this bill go beyond what is required by the Supreme Court, particularly in legislating out options for replacement workers in essential services before the essential services agreements are even negotiated. That is not required anywhere by the Supreme Court. It was put in by this government for reasons that have not yet been properly explained. Yet they stand there and tell us that any amendment here, which would make very clear, crystal clear, in the legislation that our EMS workers, who we rely upon every day to save thousands of lives every year, who are, beyond any question, an essential service, would be going beyond what they're intending to achieve in this legislation.

Well, let's look at what the title of this bill is. It is an act to comply with a Supreme Court ruling. Well, they've already gone well beyond that. The Supreme Court was clear. While all public-sector employees have a constitutional right to organize and to strike, that right is not absolute, and the government has a right and a responsibility to protect essential services. It is our job, and we

would be negligent if we passed legislation in this House that jeopardized the safety and security and health of Albertans by neglecting to make crystal clear in the legislation right now that our EMS workers are essential services.

Now, the hon. Minister of Labour has stated that EMS workers would likely be covered by an essential services agreement: likely, not certainly, Madam Chair. We wouldn't know for sure. If there is any possibility whatsoever that our EMS workers would not be covered by an essential services agreement, then there is a problem. Our EMS workers save thousands and thousands of lives every year in this province. The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, who has worked with our EMS workers, has described how critical they are. The Member for Calgary-West has described how critical they are. The Member for Calgary-South East has described how critical they are, having been one himself. There is ample experience – first-hand, front-line experience – in this very House from its elected members to know that EMS is not an optional service. It is an essential service, and we should recognize that in this legislation.

I call upon the members opposite to do the right thing, disobey their party whip if necessary, and vote for this necessary amendment.

**Mr. Taylor:** You know, Madam Chair, I'm frankly floored that anyone in this House does not want to support this amendment. What I see here, echoing what the member had just recently said, is that there have been many changes to this Supreme Court ruling. There are many changes that have already been done. This government's bill would have been that much more palatable had it actually just stuck to the Supreme Court ruling, but it went beyond, and it made changes. Now when they're asked to make a change that would support and help people, help Albertans and keep them safe, all of a sudden: no, we can't make any of these changes.

This is wrong. You know, I've been a firefighter. I've been on many calls, and on these calls we're experiencing trauma, we're experiencing a lot of problems. The EMS, the paramedics, they come, and they're assisting us. As a firefighter I can't transport these patients. We just have to provide comfort. We can't provide them with, really, anything but the basics. We need to have the EMS and the paramedics on-site in a timely manner.

They have to be able to go from that incident, whenever that incident occurred, into an operating bed within an hour's time. That's the golden hour. If an incident happened – there was a car accident – that was 20 minutes away from the hospital but it took 10 minutes to get it called in, that's going to delay the times that much more. If you don't get them in at the golden hour, the chances of them actually having a successful recovery go down. It goes down significantly, exponentially, as the time goes on.

It's absolutely imperative to me to be able to have these people on-site. When we have a fire, we have an accident, we're able to call them out, and they're there. They're ready, and they're able to go. If we make these changes, I fear for the lives and the welfare of the people in Alberta. They backed us up so many times. I'm just surprised that the government has not decided that this is essential. To me, this is essential.

It is clear that I will vote in favour of this amendment, and I believe that everybody here should. I frankly believe that everybody must vote because at some point in time you'll need the services of the ambulance, the firefighters, the paramedics – they all come together – the police. When you're on a scene, it's not just one person or another person; it's a team. I can't emphasize enough that I believe we must vote in support of this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm going to echo my colleague from Battle River-Wainwright. We have two major highways going through part of my district, being highway 63 and highway 881, where there are a lot of major accidents. They've been the focus in the news for the last 10, 15 years as, you know, a couple of the most dangerous highways in Alberta, for sure.

One of the problems is that the first responders on most of those accidents are volunteer fire departments. They're not qualified or prepared to deal with these accidents other than by giving comfort. They're not allowed to assist more than by giving comfort, as much as they'd like to. The idea of a volunteer fireman standing on the side of highway 63, watching somebody die, knowing that there was not an EMS en route is just astounding to me, and I can't believe how anybody across the way could not support that.

10:00

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This government is relying on a Supreme Court ruling to guide them in this. When the Supreme Court made their decision on EMS, we have to recognize one thing about emergency medical services, that it is not on par across this country. There have been attempts at trying to standardize the levels, but we have to recognize that there are differences. I want everyone in this House and in this province to know that Alberta for over 20 years has been known to have the pinnacle of emergency medical services.

For many, many years Alberta was the only province to provide true paramedics, people who could provide advanced life support. They could give injections of medications. They could provide electrical treatment in the form of defibrillation. Intubations. Many of the things that only doctors can do in operating rooms and emergency departments paramedics were empowered with. In Alberta we were blessed with having some very good doctors who very much believed in emergency medical services and in paramedics.

Strathcona county – where is the Member for Sherwood Park? – is renowned across this province and this country as having one of the finest emergency medical services in this country. They were a model for the rest of the province in reaching those highest levels. Their physician medical director: he was on the board of the province for many years, providing that guidance.

To make people understand more what I'm talking about, when you go to Quebec, if you go to Montreal and you require an ambulance, you'll notice that they sit in the streets. They don't have regular fire halls or emergency services halls. Like, police have a police station. The fire department has a fire hall. The EMS sit in the streets because they don't want to pay for any shelters for them. Also, the fact is that they are very busy. We have to note that there, when there's a critical emergency – and my brother can attest to this as he was an emergency physician in Montreal – they would grab the doctor if the call was deemed critical enough, and the doctor would go in a chase car, which is basically a car of sorts with all the advanced life support, all the medications in the back, with the lights and sirens so they could stream down the street and rendezvous with that ambulance. The ambulances only had basic life support.

Basic life support: what does that mean? It has advanced in the last few years, so they can give things like sugar for diabetics and Narcan for narcotic overdoses, but for the most part in other places they do very, very little. They can maybe take your blood sugar test, but they can't give you the glucose. That's probably changed in this day and age, I hope, in the last few years. The point is that we are not at parity.

When I was taking my emergency medical technician course back in the year 1991, there was a fellow in there, and he was all the way from Nova Scotia. I was amazed at this fellow because he was here in Alberta to take our basic life support course and bring that education back to Nova Scotia and teach it. Today Nova Scotia's emergency medical services are considered on par with Alberta's. It is a provincial program there, but we also have to recognize that it is a smaller region. I mean, that area is as big as one of our constituencies, with a much smaller population, albeit diverse. They have evolved and are run by, I believe, you know, a province-wide service.

Sometimes Alberta Health Services and other agencies take note of that, and they look and see them with their centralized dispatch, and they think: well, if they can do it in Nova Scotia, we can do it here in Alberta because of the efficiencies. We have to recognize that we can't compare province to province because, again, there are different dynamics involved, the logistics around the actual physical factors involving territories and whatnot, and Alberta is a large territory. Again, we should be happy to know that Alberta does continue to have the highest level of paramedics and EMS in this province and that they do provide a high level of health care, which we have deemed over the course of time to be very vital, so vital that Alberta Health Services took that service over from the various municipalities and centralized it.

If Alberta Health Services recognizes the importance of emergency medical services here in Alberta, we have to recognize that they might be on to something. They've recognized that the level of treatments that the paramedics were providing was something that they wanted under their umbrella. Running EMS in with the Wood Buffalo region my last four years there and then encountering the interaction with the provinces – Alberta Health took it over – was a difficult time, but the one thing that we do have to recognize is that they did recognize that it is a true medical service, and it is in the prehospital setting, and this is something that we have to take very, very seriously. Even though the folks in Ontario and Quebec and the Supreme Court don't consider EMS to be at the high level, we have to look at Alberta and adjust things accordingly and recognize that perhaps this is the place where we do consider it an essential service because it is a medical service here in Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to bring us back, with all the passionate and well-thought-out arguments here that we've heard today, you know, to why we're here in the first place. The title of the bill is An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. As the hon. Health minister said earlier, members on this side did a little bit of further research into deciding how they would include or not include certain services as being essential or not. One of the things that I found out in reading the actual Supreme Court ruling itself was that one of the primary reasons the Supreme Court struck down Saskatchewan's law was because of the unilaterality of deciding which services are essential or not.

I've got a couple of passages from the Supreme Court ruling that I'd like to share with the members here today. I'll read a couple of passages. The first one is that "the unilateral authority . . . to determine whether and how essential services are to be maintained during a work stoppage with no adequate review mechanism, and the absence of a meaningful dispute resolution mechanism to resolve bargaining impasses" justify the conclusion that the Saskatchewan essential services act is not minimally impairing, and

their conclusion is that that essential services law was unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court specifically mentioned police services and fire services as two services which are absolutely essential, and they left it at that, so by adding other professions into our legislation, we run the risk of unilaterally deciding which services are essential or not, therefore, you know, potentially violating the provisions of the Supreme Court ruling.

I just wanted to add a couple of other things here. The Supreme Court ruling: their reasoning why they deemed Saskatchewan's law as unconstitutional is that the definition of that law, of essential services, was "very broad." "In the absence of an agreement with the Unions about what the definition means, employers are entitled unilaterally to decide what they included." That's one of the reasons the Supreme Court gave for making the decision that they did.

Another passage here is that "the power of public employers during a work stoppage to designate how essential services are to be maintained and by whom was unilateral and required no consultation with the Unions." On the other hand, the reason that we've written the legislation the way we have is so that consultation with the union does occur and that the negotiation can occur between the employer and the employees. The Supreme Court goes on that "the unilateral decision-making power granted to public employers was unnecessary. There was no explanation for why the Unions were denied any input into naming essential services employees."

Madam Chair, in light of the Supreme Court ruling and what has already been said by the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Minister of Health, and other members on this side, it's quite clear that the services that have been deemed essential in our legislation follow the spirit of the Supreme Court ruling. Those that were not included also follow the spirit of the Supreme Court ruling because the point is that it's up to the unions and the employers to negotiate the process of deeming what's essential and what's not.

**10:10**

We need to stick with the spirit of what the Supreme Court has said. Otherwise, you know, we run the risk of a constitutional challenge because this is a very recent ruling. They've been extremely clear in what should and shouldn't be included and why it should or shouldn't be included and also the process by which those services not deemed as essential should be worked out between the unions and the employers themselves.

I feel confident in the legislation that's been proposed by the Minister of Labour. You know, in that respect, I am not able to support this amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We've had a couple of ministers in this room state that one of the reasons they're not in support of this amendment is because it overreaches the requirements of the Supreme Court ruling when, in fact, there are segments, large segments, of this entire bill that overreach the bare-bones requirements of the Supreme Court ruling. So that argument, actually, has no foundation in fact whatsoever. If this government was really just concerned about implementing the very bare bones, the minimum requirements of the Supreme Court ruling, this bill would be substantially different than it is. I absolutely reject that argument against this motion.

Secondly, something that appears to me to be a fundamental flaw in some of the logic, so-called, coming from the other side is this notion that we are somehow not the lawmakers. The Supreme Court



does not make law; we make laws right here in this room. This is where laws are made. This is where the laws in the best interests of Albertans are created. If the Supreme Court in our collective judgment has left something out, we have a solemn responsibility to the people of Alberta to put that something in, and that's what this amendment does. If this government is somehow . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Beholden.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Beholden, or afraid to do something in the best interests of Albertans because the Supreme Court of Canada didn't include it, then what in the world are you doing sitting over there? We are here to represent the best interests of Albertans, and that's what we need to do. This amendment is vitally important. EMS is an essential service. Period. The end. We are the lawmakers in this room. Let's get something straight.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just had to rise again because some of what I heard is – I'm trying to think of a parliamentary word – balderdash. Balderdash, I think, is still parliamentary. What was balderdash? I hate to say this. The Health minister, whom I have great regard for – I do. I think she's a fine legislator, and she works hard, and I think she does a good job, but today she said something that I don't believe she believes. She was saying that they have to do this because of the Supreme Court of Canada decision. This is beyond the Supreme Court of Canada decision.

We put in amendments to get rid of the lack of replacement workers, which is way beyond the Supreme Court of Canada decision. The government is holding that tight, tight, tight, tight because we asked them to be reasonable on it. Yet on this issue that matters all of a sudden it's all about the Supreme Court of Canada decision. We can't do anything outside of the Supreme Court of Canada decision. Nonsense. Balderdash. I don't believe it. I don't believe the minister believes it.

Then the minister went on to say, as if that wasn't bad enough and she hadn't buried herself enough on this issue, that the bargaining group that they're in right now doesn't want it. Now the government has decided to reduce EMS paramedics to a bargaining chip. An essential service: they have reduced them to a bargaining chip, a shiny pony. Shame, shame, shame, shame. Terrible. There is no excuse for that. The government needs to get on their horse. They need to do the right thing. They know what the right thing to do is. Everybody in Alberta knows what the right thing to do is. The government knows. They just need to do it.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much. I just want to take a moment to speak to this issue. It's a fundamentally important issue. [interjections] Exactly. It is one, I think, that betrays a certain contradiction on the opposition side of the House in terms of their thinking about the issue.

To begin with, I am very pleased to see the right-wing parties in this Legislature finally defending public servants after years of doing everything possible to define them as the enemy, to define them in derogatory manners, and to push things back. I understand. I've been listening to what they've been saying and listening to the passion that is coming from that side of the House. I welcome that passion. I think it's extremely important. As you know, I bring passion to the types of things that I talk about all the time. I appreciate that, and I respect that.

I have the same passion about the work that is done by the members of the EMS. I am very pleased to know that we have people out there who are highly respected, who are highly trained, and who I think should be highly paid to do fundamentally important work in our society. You know, the left wing of our politics in this province has been working to support exactly that kind of service provided to the citizens of Alberta for years. We absolutely think it's important that we continue to support them.

What I'm finding interesting, though, in the conversation that's here is that the sense of the relationship between the government and the employees is so fundamentally different between our two sides of the House. What the opposition wants to do is that they want to find a place to put a dark line and controlling rule into place so that they can impose their sense of rightness onto the situation.

What we're asking to do instead is to engage in a relationship with the people, whom we respect, and allow that relationship to play itself out in its fullness and to give the respect to them so that they can come forward, define their own work, and go forward with this legislation to the boards and the committees that they need to address and say: this is who we are; this is what's important about what we do. Fundamentally, I believe that the work they do is critical. I believe that that work should be supported. I want in my relationship with them to allow them to have the opportunity to define themselves, to express who they are, and to use a process put in place and not to be cornered by a rule, a process that allows self-definition, that allows them to bring their knowledge forward, that allows them to gather the support that the opposition keeps saying is out there.

They keep saying that everybody out there thinks that they're essential services, yet they do not trust that if we actually asked the people involved to define them in a way that expresses that essential service – they don't think it'll happen. What I'm seeing is tons of passion and no faith whatsoever. I don't believe that that's the way we should be treating our people, who work every day to provide services for the citizens of this province. I think we should be saying that we don't want a hard and fast rule. What we want is a process that guarantees that the language, that the considerations are all brought out, put on the table, and everyone has a chance to invest in that conversation. If we do that, if we have the chance for people to invest in that conversation, then it's going to last a much longer time.

I'm reminded of the movie *Hawaii*, in which the minister coming from Britain puts on his long johns on November 1 of every year because that's what he always did. His Scottish grandmother told him that that's when you put on your long johns. He defined a rule, and he lived by the rule. It made no sense in the circumstance.

10:20

The alternative is, of course, that you define a process, that you define a way in which people communicate with each other, a way in which people can actually say: this is what I stand for, this is what I want to see happen, and this is what I believe is important about the work that I do. Then you provide an opportunity for people to listen to that, for people to hear that and to respond to that by negotiating an agreement that recognizes what it is that they're telling us. That's what we're doing. We are creating an opportunity for a relationship, and we're respecting and having faith in the people who provide the services that they will be able to best articulate who they are and best describe what it is that they need.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. There are two things I want to say in response to comments made by the leader of the third party. Certainly, I appreciate the kind remarks at the beginning of his statement in terms of him respecting my legislative capabilities. I want to say that I appreciate that and certainly respect as well the democratic process that workers have to elect a voice for those workers. That, of course, is the organization that they've elected through a democratic process, and that would be the HSAA leadership for the vast majority of these attendants that we're talking about. To refer to the democratically elected leadership as a bargaining chip I find really disingenuous and disrespectful to those workers. I find it really disrespectful in terms of the tone. Certainly, we reached out to the bargaining unit that represents the vast majority and the democratically elected representatives of those folks. That certainly is a priority of mine. We want to have a really good working relationship with them, and I want to have a good working relationship with all members of this House.

I think the passion that you're expressing is felt for EMS and EMR and paramedics across our province. We have great respect for them, as do all Albertans. I also think that understanding what happened when only two jurisdictions were impacted by the Supreme Court decision – obviously, there were many decades that it could have been addressed by the third party when they were in government without having to have a Supreme Court decision, but we're here today. We're implementing the Supreme Court decision.

When the other jurisdiction took a path of naming other essential services that weren't named in the Supreme Court decision and that was overturned by the Supreme Court, it seems very strange to me that we'd be trying to set ourselves up for a similar fate in the only other province that has to move forward with this legislation. When we can look at what's happened in our neighbouring province when they took a very similar path, why would we set ourselves up for failure?

Instead, what we've done is that we've reached out to the democratically elected representatives of the vast majority of ambulance attendants, and we've said to them: do you think it's best to be included? Obviously, the Supreme Court didn't put it in. Mr. Sims, who I know the leader of the third party has tremendous respect for, said: don't put it in. We need to follow the names of the essential services outlined by the Supreme Court decision and work in collaboration with employers and employees, and of course their democratically elected leadership would be the representative of the employees.

With all respect to the members of this House and, of course, to our first responders, I stand by my earlier comments. I want to make sure that we get this right, that we don't waste lengthy time having work that we do in this House overturned by the Supreme Court. I'd rather that we do the work hands on, in a way that abides by the Supreme Court decision, with the first responders and with other essential service providers as have been mentioned in this House by other colleagues as well.

Thanks again for the opportunity to provide that clarity.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I'll call the question on amendment A10.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A10 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:24 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Jansen	Schneider
Clark	Loewen	Starke
Cooper	MacIntyre	Stier
Cyr	McIver	Strankman
Drysdale	Orr	Taylor
Ellis	Pitt	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Rodney	Yao
Hanson		

10:40

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Payne
Babcock	Hoffman	Piquette
Carlier	Horne	Renaud
Carson	Kazim	Rosendahl
Ceci	Larivee	Sabir
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Eggen	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	Mason	Sweet
Ganley	McLean	Turner
Goehring	McPherson	Westhead
Gray	Miller	Woollard

Totals:	For – 22	Against – 39
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[Motion on amendment A10 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I think it's painfully obvious today that it's very disappointing to see that this government is not willing to accept numerous common-sense amendments that would work to make this legislation better and would also allow for appropriate evolution over time. Strangely, it reminds me of a debate in this House that occurred shortly before Christmas, when we were debating Bill 6, about an issue that a majority of Albertans were supportive of in principle: the idea to keep farming families safe. Everyone agreed on that, but beyond these walls or at least the walls on that side of the House people out in Alberta were very much against the process in which it occurred. That's why there were numerous – numerous – amendments that occurred from this side of the House in very, very good faith on behalf of the people who demonstrated in front of this House by the thousands and across the province day after day after day.

For some people not quite sure what I'm talking about, one of the last amendments was a hoist amendment, where I suggested, with great respect, that the government take the time to consult with farmers, especially because we were told that regulations would take a couple of years to design. Yet somehow there was a cause, apparently, for debate to go through the night, day after day after day, to slam this through, utilizing a majority, before the Christmas break. It was nonsensical, and this reminds me of the same thing.

Let's take the time to do this right. Even though the same thing could happen here again today, we will try one last time to give the government the opportunity to do the right thing. I will caution that this amendment is not going to have the desired effect of improving the legislation right here and now, but it will provide an avenue for issues related to and created by this legislation to be brought back to the table in the not-too-distant future. Therefore, on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Hays I move that – if it please the chair, I can

mention that we can have this passed around, and I'll read it into the record while we're waiting for it to be distributed – Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be amended in section 8 in the proposed section 95.41 by adding the following after subsection (3):

(3.1) A committee of the Legislative Assembly must begin a comprehensive review of the operation of subsection (3) within one year of the coming into force of this subsection and must submit to the Legislative Assembly, within 6 months after beginning the review, a report that includes any recommendations for amendments to this subsection by the committee.

Madam Chair, would you like me to wait for further distribution?

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Rodney:** I can continue? Thank you. Yesterday on this side of the House a number of amendments were brought forward, as mentioned. They looked to address this very section. One of them tried to repeal this subsection altogether. One of them looked to establish temporary use of vetted replacement workers in an occasion within the confines of the current legislation. Madam Chair, this amendment would bring the discussion of the application of this subsection, that being what effect the blanket ban on replacement workers has had on the carrying out of essential services when a strike has occurred and an essential services agreement is in place.

Madam Chair, by putting this arbitrary ban on replacement workers and going above and beyond legislative changes required, which we've heard is something this government is reticent to do even if it may be the right thing, the validity of the arguments we have seen against amendments to section 95.41(3) of the proposed legislation from the government are cast in a hurricane of doubt. The least that can be done now is to have a committee of the Legislative Assembly review the application of this particular part, this extremely important issue, after the effects of what it has actually done have become visible. Having sat in this Chamber for some time, this is exactly what these committees were created to do on an all-party basis. There has been great success on this in the past. The rationale is that we have to ensure that the balance of the scales is not tipped beyond the level of what is reasonable. I urge all members to support this amendment so that we can best monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this particular change that is being made.

Madam Chair, in politics it's very common for one side of a House to use the words that another has utilized against them in the past. I'm going to resist the temptation for that. We've had a number of ministers and members come forth, you know, and they've been trying to be conscientious and reflect their own view, but we need to reflect the views of all Albertans on this issue. So I'm not going to say that the minister of this, that, or the other thing has said this, but I will ask the question: is this the right thing to do? I think we could all agree that the answer is yes. Consult.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for his amendment and his comments. I would like to address a few of the statements that he has made. He began by talking about common-sense amendments. We are always happy to work with all parties in this House collaboratively to create the best legislation possible. We saw that with the acceptance of amendment A1. I certainly hope that the opposition would give credit that this has been as collaborative as we could make it, willing to listen and willing to discuss the issues as we go.

I do want to address the member's comments around Bill 6 because the hoist amendment, that the member himself put forward, would have prevented 46 Albertans who have been covered for time lost through worker compensation injuries between January and March 16 from receiving anything. We've had 106 approved claims through WCB this year for farm workers. Of those, 46 were time lost, and that means that a worker was injured to such an extent that they were not able to go to do their job. WCB has provided them the compensation that they need in those scenarios. That is the reason why this government made it a priority to make sure that all workers in Alberta are covered. That is why Bill 6 was important. We continue to work with our stakeholders to make sure that the regulations will be solid. I'm happy to discuss that at more length, but I really must address that hoist.

The amendment before us now refers to consultation, and I would like to remind this House that an extensive consultation took place for this legislation, that was led by renowned labour lawyer Mr. Andrew Sims, that involved experts, employees, employers, the public, those in the labour relations community through a series of very in-depth working groups that received submissions and discussed the issues as well as online feedback from the public. I have great confidence in the consultation that took place because I've spoken to the people who participated, and a number of them told me that through the process Mr. Sims led, they adjusted their feedback; they adjusted what they were thinking because they heard and reflected back on really good, collaborative consultation.

**10:50**

To honour that consultation, this government has put forward legislation that reflects what we heard, that incorporates that consultation. We are not talking about an arbitrary ban. We are not talking about something that is out of scope. We are talking about something that the Supreme Court considered, that was discussed at our consultations, that is necessary for an essential services agreement to be properly reached because we need both sides to come to the table with confidence that there is a fair and respectful negotiation happening for essential services agreements, not that one side has something in their back pockets.

For these reasons, I do not support this amendment. I am proud of Bill 4, the essential services framework that we've created. We've consulted heavily with our stakeholders. We have listened to the experts. We have complied with the Supreme Court ruling. The need to come back to review this one piece: I disagree, and I will not be supporting this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to support the amendment moved by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Hays. I think this is a reasonable amendment that will help make this bill less bad. I think we've gotten to the point where our amendments to make this bill a good bill are clearly being rejected at nearly every turn by the government.

Now, I think that it's very reasonable for the opposition to ask that a committee be struck to study how well the legislation is actually working, in effect. This is something we should do right across the board. Legislative committees should be more regularly utilized outside of the main estimates process. We need to give committees good, valuable work to do and utilize the capable members who sit on these committees, who are doing great work during the estimates process but are left often without enough substantive work to do in between the estimates.

We put forward an amendment, that the government rejected, calling for a sunset clause in this legislation, effectively requiring that after a period of time, this House must either renew or not renew this legislation depending on how well it is working or not. This is new ground for the government. This is a significant piece of legislation. This is not a housekeeping piece of legislation. This is not a technical change. This is a significant bill that will have significant effects on the delivery of essential services in Alberta, on the availability of essential services during labour disputes. It will have a significant effect on the ability of the government to negotiate with our public-sector unions in good faith on behalf of the Albertans who require these services and the taxpayers who pay for them. We asked for that sunset clause so that at a designated time this House would be able to give a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down on how well, or not, this piece of legislation has worked. That was unfortunately rejected by the government, as were most of the common-sense amendments put forward by the opposition.

I believe that this amendment, put forward by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, is an even more compromising amendment than that. This is not asking a lot. This is asking us to look at a particular section of the bill to determine how well it is working six months after it comes into force.

The commissioner is given extensive, extensive powers. We'll be speaking a bit more about the powers of the commissioner quite soon. The commissioner here is given massive powers without any check on those powers. The commissioner is able to come in and impose an agreement on essential services. Even if both bargaining parties have come to a mutual agreement, he can override that decision. That is a huge, huge set of powers given to a single individual when we don't know who it will be. We don't know if that individual will be a credible, long-term civil servant or if they'll be a patronage appointment or if they'll be appointed from the AUPE. We don't know who that person is going to be. This is a powerful, powerful position that can make significant decisions, with significant ramifications on public policy and the treasury and essential services in this province, with no means to appeal their decisions. They do not report to the minister. The minister has no ability in emergencies to override decisions of that commissioner.

If the government feels that that is an appropriate way to go, we would be well advised to review the role and powers of the commissioner in six months. This is a reasonable thing to do. I imagine that even if we review it and find that it's not working out, members will have the ability to reject that anyway. But we should at least take the time six months hence to review how well subsection (3) of this bill is working, because it is such a powerful and, arguably, draconian section of the legislation to give a single commissioner those kinds of powers.

I encourage all members of this House to listen to the arguments made by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, which I think are reasoned and fair and moderate, and vote for an amendment to require a review of this section of the legislation by a committee of this Legislature in six months.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Since I see no other speakers, as is the case with you, Madam Chair, perhaps we could close with this. With kindness I say that the government has admitted that they have a really rough record when it comes to consultation on a number of bills in the past. I trust they would take this as a friendly amendment that would provide the perfect opportunity to do exactly that, to consult. Perhaps this record of consultation, or lack thereof, is simply a reflection of the fact that before last spring only four members

sitting over there had ever sat in this House before. That being the case, why don't we have a safe exit for them on this? The spirit and intent of the bill are maintained. It's intact. It can still pass, just not immediately.

This would provide the opportunity, in the words of the Health minister, to go out and talk to the people who we are referring to in this bill. I've seen the negative reaction to the fact that it's been referred to as a bargaining chip. Nobody wants to hear that. Nobody wants to see that. Nobody wants that to be the reality. So let's make sure that that's not the case. Let's allow the folks on the other side to have those consultations with these different groups and make sure that when it comes to the House, there is agreement out in Alberta.

I can assure you, at least from my perspective, Madam Chair, that if that indeed is the case, I could vote for this bill. I think a bunch of other people could, too. We just need to know that the homework has been done, and that has yet to be proven. Over the next few months that could happen, and we could come back in the fall, and we could get this done.

I urge all members on all sides of the House to just take a breather. Let's take the temperature down. Let's do the right thing. Let's bring this back after the proper consultation and agreement has been done, where we can all vote for bills such as this.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to this amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A11 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As we've said before, we recognize the need for this legislation to comply with the Supreme Court decision, but we want to improve on this piece of legislation. As my colleagues have noted, the legislation as presented gives a single commissioner an inordinate amount of power, with binding decision-making powers that cannot be appealed. As worded, it allows a single individual to unilaterally make binding decisions on essential services agreements. The choice of the commissioner as proposed is not a mere token appointment. It requires not only that the government be confident in their choice but that they have the confidence that this individual will perform their role properly going forward. It is not unprecedented that an appointee does not perform their role as they should.

**11:00**

Again, this is not an indictment against the current government. Such problems have arisen for parties of all stripes across all jurisdictions in this country. But given the power that the commissioner wields in regard to essential services agreements, it is important that there be proper checks and balances on that office. That's why I am proposing an amendment to pull back the commissioner's ability to make binding unilateral judgments, replacing them with an adjudication panel.

Accordingly, I wish to move an amendment, and I have the requisite number of copies for the Assembly for distribution. It's a rather extensive amendment in terms of text. Would you like me to read the entire thing?

I move that Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, be amended as follows: (A)

“Commissioner” be struck out and “Adjudication Panel” substituted wherever it occurs. (B) Section 3 is amended in the proposed section 8 by striking out subsection (4.1) and substituting the following:

(4.1) The Adjudication Panel may designate another member of the Board to act as part of the Adjudication Panel when a designated member of the Adjudication Panel is unable to act or is absent.

(C) Section 4 is amended in the proposed section 9 as follows: (a) in subsection (13) by striking out “may sit alone” and substituting “may sit as a 3-member panel” and (b) by striking out subsection (15). (D) Section 8 is amended in the proposed section 95.3 as follows: (a) by striking out subsection (1) and substituting the following:

(1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council shall designate the Chair, vice-chair, and one other member of the Board to form the Adjudication Panel.

And (b) by adding the following after subsection (2):

(2.1) A decision of a majority of the members of the Adjudication Panel is a decision of the Adjudication Panel.

And (2.2) a quorum of the adjudication panel is the chair, the vice-chair, and one other member of the board.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I don’t see that in my version of the amendment.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I’m sorry?

**The Chair:** That last line you read is not in this amendment.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I can withdraw that last line. Do you want me to continue, Madam?

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Replacing the commissioner with an adjudication panel on the Labour Relations Board, which already exists, is a common-sense oversight mechanism for this bill. Instead of a single individual making unilateral and binding decisions, decisions would now be made by a majority of a three-person panel. Individuals are already on the Labour Relations Board because of their experience in these matters. Taking their input and expertise into account is a common-sense measure that improves accountability for the commissioner without prolonging the process.

I urge all members of the Assembly to vote for this common-sense amendment which, I think, will improve the accountability of this process and ensure that the commissioner is making the best decisions possible.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the member for giving to us for consideration this amendment adjusting the legislation to remove the commissioner and replace it instead with an adjudication panel. These types of oversight or governance decisions were considered through the consultation process by the experts, employees, employers, labour relations community as well as by the government while drafting this legislation. In this case, I cannot support the amendment because, with the commissioner and their appointment, essential services is a new facet in the Alberta labour relations process. It’s something that hasn’t been done before, and we need to make sure that we have a person who understands the Alberta context, who understands essential services, who is able to guide this system, especially in its initial years.

With the Labour Relations Board we will be looking to do some capacity building so that others will become aware of essential services, but having that essential services commissioner, who understands the system, who is trained and is experienced – this is someone who sits on the Labour Relations Board either as chair or vice-chair, someone highly experienced and trained – is what the government has chosen to do with this legislation after considering multiple options.

One comment that the member opposite made was that having a panel does not prolong the process. Unfortunately, we’ve seen in the past that, yes, scheduling more people who need to be involved in any individual case does prolong the process whereas a single commissioner is able to review and act in a more rapid manner.

As well, I’d really like to stress that the purpose of this legislation, the design of this legislation, is for the majority of the negotiations and decision-making to be on the ground. This is not a lawyer’s playground; this is for employers and employees, who understand the work environment that we’re talking about, to work together to negotiate essential services agreements. In the majority of cases we anticipate that the commissioner will be doing an oversight role, reviewing an essential services agreement and then filing it.

We need and want the parties involved in bargaining over an essential services agreement and determining what essential work needs to be protected so that the public, if a strike or lockout is happening, can rely on health, safety, well-being, and the rule of law continuing to be maintained in Alberta through this process. Having the umpire available to negotiate any disputes that may be happening at that level and having the commissioner validate that is, I believe, the best solution to move us forward.

So thank you to the member for this amendment and for considering some of these options. They were considered. We consulted with experts. I cannot support this amendment because I think that having that commissioner role is critical in overseeing our new essential services process here in Alberta.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me be clear. We need and want the majority of the negotiations to take place as has been laid out. But the challenge is that when we create legislation, it’s rarely important when everything is going well and critically important when the ideal isn’t being reached. That’s exactly why we propose this amendment because it is in times when the commissioner is going to be needed extensively that, at the end of the day, being a grassroots organization, we rarely feel comfortable with one person being the be-all and end-all. It’s one of the reasons why we regularly seek in this place to keep as much regulation out of the hands of Executive Council and the Premier’s office as we can.

So I’m thankful that in this piece of legislation the government made the decision to remove the provision that would allow significant regulation changes by Executive Council or allow one individual, the minister’s office, to be able to make sweeping changes. The principle that was in place there, Madam Chair, is the same principle that is in place here. Putting extensive control and power in the hands of the commissioner has a real risk and an opportunity to create challenges when one individual has the ability to make unilateral decisions that have significant impact on the negotiations.

I, quite frankly, am surprised that any side of this argument – be it the employer, the union, those negotiating the agreement – would feel comfortable with it just being one person. At the end of the day part of our role as government is to ensure that there are the

appropriate checks and balances on individual power. It is a fundamental tenet of democracy, and it should be applied wherever possible in a number of things that we bring to the Chamber. It should be applied throughout government structure.

**11:10**

We've seen, certainly, when the governing party was the fourth party, then stand in this place on regular occasions, fighting the consolidation or advocating strongly that power not be consolidated in ministerial offices or around the cabinet table or in the Premier's office. Quite frankly, the third party, when they were government, didn't have the best record on this. We saw property rights legislation that created significant challenges when it came to the opportunity for cabinet to make decisions. In fact, we've heard a commitment by this government to correct some of these challenges that were created by the opportunity of unilateral decision-making. We saw those same sorts of actions when they were introducing other labour legislation. I firmly believe that we should be negotiating, not legislating. We saw the previous government doing these types of behaviours, consolidating power around ministers, the cabinet table, or single individuals.

The amendment that we propose prevents that sort of thing. It prevents this consolidating of power. I guess part of my question is: why does the government feel that it's reasonable to consolidate this type of power? Can the government tell the Assembly why it prefers to centralize power in the appointment of this official instead of making the commissioner subject to ministerial authorities or other labour relations boards as a whole to adjudicate these issues? I understand that time was used as one of the concerns, but these critical processes aren't going to be happening regularly. It's very reasonable that the members of the panel could be available during these critical negotiation steps. So to use time as the only reason I don't think holds as much water as it ought.

It is so fundamental to the process, to the moving forward and ensuring that we are respecting democracy, particularly in this case, that we ensure that no single individual holds such significant power over critical negotiations. The government has made a case that they want to, wherever possible, have the negotiations happening, and we agree. But when they don't break down, we shouldn't take all of the negotiating power of the parties and put it in the hands of one person. It is the opposite of what they're trying to achieve.

Here is an opportunity to do the right thing. Frankly, part of the challenge that we're going to face as we move forward is that there are so many decisions that we've made in the last two days that are outside of the scope of the ruling. While we support ensuring that all of the aspects of the Supreme Court ruling are held and are enshrined in legislation so that we can meet the requirements, we're getting to a point where the entire bill becomes a real challenge. I'm happy to hear from the minister if she chooses to continue to comment.

I hope that members of the Assembly will support the amendment. We had a good thing going yesterday afternoon. I might add that unless there are some significant changes, I believe that this is the last amendment that the Official Opposition has to present. Perhaps we can start on a good note and end on a good note, and we can move this legislation forward in a positive direction that respects democracy, prevents decisions from being less transparent, less secretive, lessens the consolidation of power because that's exactly what Albertans would want.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A12?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A12 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 4 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

**Mr. Carlier:** Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report, please.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Woollard:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 4.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Those opposed, say no. So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 4 An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and speak to Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. The purpose of this bill is to bring Alberta's public-sector labour relations legislation in alignment with directions from the Supreme Court of Canada and the Court of Queen's Bench. The courts have been clear. Workers have a right to join a union if they so choose and to collectively bargain, which includes the right to strike. Certain segments of the existing Labour Relations Code and the Public Service Employee Relations Act that prohibit strikes and lockouts have been declared invalid and must be revised to ensure that they do not interfere with the public sector's right to strike.

As a result, Madam Speaker, we have brought forward Bill 4 to introduce a proposed new model for public-sector legislation to Alberta, known as essential services legislation. This type of legislation is common in other parts of Canada. It allows for strikes and lockouts by public-sector workers while still requiring essential services to be available to the general public during labour disruptions. In developing this proposed legislation, government held extensive consultations with Alberta's public sector, led by well-respected labour lawyer Andrew Sims, to engage both employers and unions. They have known for a year that this legislation was coming, and we ensured that they had ample opportunity to provide comments and suggestions.

11:20

We have reviewed all this input carefully and have developed legislation that, if passed, will meet the direction of the courts and be fair to all parties involved. Essential services legislation will change the way public-sector collective bargaining is done in this province for the better. This is because the proposed legislation will put greater responsibility into the hands of employers and employees to negotiate essential services agreements that will give employees the right to strike while protecting the provision of essential services.

Compulsory arbitration is coming out of our legislation as the primary means to resolve disputes. It will still be used in certain circumstances, but for many public employees it will no longer be the fallback position when negotiations get tough. Currently, Madam Speaker, if public employers and unions can't settle their dispute, they can call on the arbitration process to solve it for them. That will no longer be the case if this legislation passes. The parties involved will need to work harder to find common ground. I'm confident that Alberta's public sector is up to the task. After all, this is about employers and employees working together to create a balance ensuring the constitutional rights and protecting the public, both of which are important.

Yes, as directed by the courts, more public-sector workers in Alberta will have the right to strike if their unions are unable to come to an agreement with their employers, but Albertans will still have access to the services that protect the life, personal safety, or health of the public as well as maintaining the maintenance and administration of the rule of law and public security. This proposed new legislation will ensure that during times of labour disruption, including a strike or lockout, essential services for Albertans will be maintained. Madam Speaker, Albertans might be inconvenienced somewhat, but if a public-sector strike were to occur, they can rest assured that essential services will continue to be available.

We've had the opportunity to thoroughly debate this legislation in the House, and I would like to thank all members for their perspectives on this issue addressing some of the concerns and amendments we heard in Committee of the Whole. First, I'd like to thank the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner for his amendment removing the piece of this bill that deferred to regulations. I found that amendment to be entirely reasonable given that this bill has other mechanisms for ensuring that essential service agreements are complete and meet all the requirements for each unique workplace.

There were several other amendments that we were not prepared to support. Members across the way proposed some changes to penalty amounts that would have significantly increased penalties. We may revisit these fines in a more fulsome labour code review at a later time.

There was some thoughtful debate around the section on replacement workers. As stated, our government believes that the provision barring replacement workers is appropriate as it ensures a level playing field during labour negotiations. Replacement workers are against the spirit of what we're trying to accomplish with this legislation. We want employers and employees to come together on a fair and reasonable essential services agreement. If that process is successful, there should be no need for replacement workers. Albertans also deserve to know that they are receiving care and service from the workers who know their needs the best. Specifically, in health care this is about ensuring that Albertans are receiving care from professionally trained nurses and staff.

There was also some discussion of a sunset provision or a one-time review of the legislation in four years. Simply put, government can review legislation at any time, and I don't believe a scheduled

review is necessary. Rest assured, we will be watching very closely how this first round of essential services agreements is negotiated and are prepared to revisit this legislation if needed.

There was also the member's favourite amendment requiring the essential services commissioner to be an Albertan living in the province for six years or more. I'm not sure about you, Madam Speaker, but that maybe wasn't my favourite. I'm not sure that government should be legislating who is or isn't Albertan. I believe that if you choose to live here, work here, and pay taxes here, you are an Albertan. The commissioner will be a well-respected member of the Labour Relations Board, which is a board of Albertans doing their best for Alberta.

There was also a thoughtful amendment from the Member for Calgary-South East regarding paramedics, which, I know, is a profession that the member knows very well. While I could not support that amendment as it runs somewhat contrary to our consultations and the way bargaining units are structured in emergency medical services, I want to thank the member for his perspective. Paramedics and EMTs are absolutely vital to the public health and safety of Albertans. The Supreme Court has ruled that these workers, too, have the right to free and fair collective bargaining and to negotiate an essential services agreement. These workers will be considered essential because everyone knows that the actions of paramedics and emergency medical responders make the difference between life and death.

Finally, today we had some other good discussion around the makeup of the commissioner, the role of the commissioner and, again, reviewing the legislation in a timely manner, which we will be doing.

In closing, in this proposed legislation Alberta is following the direction of the courts and providing the basic rights that all workers must have access to. It ensures that bargaining rights are fairly and equitably applied to both employers and employees and their unions. This is the first of what I hope are many steps to be taken by this government, Madam Speaker, to modernize workplace laws in Alberta. I look forward to the passage of Bill 4 and the implementation of essential services legislation here in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to speak to the currently endorsed mandate of the Supreme Court of Canada in support of essential services and the right to strike. Albertans who provide these vital services deserve the ability to exercise the same autonomy as others covered by collective agreements. Our ability to support this progression gives rise to the modernization of our current labour laws.

The right to strike reflects a key element of the bargaining process. As the government it is our obligation to follow the precedents that our Supreme Court of Canada has established. The collective bargaining process relies on the right to strike as a key component of the employer and bargaining unit relationship. As such, it represents a fundamental principle that is inherent to the collective agreement, that is achieved through communications. Our vital services act with integrity and abide by this agreement.

It is our priority to ensure that the services provided are just as protected as those who require them. In support of this mandate we support that those qualified to provide these services also have a voice in the execution of their function. The ability to use replacement workers can compromise patient care and potentially violates the spirit of essential service agreements between parties. Our diligence requires us to establish the framework to first determine who is essential in order to mitigate the impact on the

negotiation position of employers or employees. We are confident that our experienced commissioner will provide the necessary expertise to support the implementation of this mandated legislation. This allows us to deliver the best interests of our Albertans efficiently.

Vital services are an extremely important part of Albertan infrastructure. Currently they echo a less effective model within their framework that prohibits the essence of collective bargaining. Without this ability our workers are forced to compulsory arbitration as the mechanism of resolution. Madam Speaker, I recognize the importance of communication as it pertains to dispute resolutions, but I also recognize that the right to strike provides a sound message in moving past conditions that do not reflect a relationship balance.

Our government looks to the transparency of consultation as it moves to implement a model that protects the Charter rights of public-sector employees. For over six months our government has opened communications with Albertans to ascertain their input regarding this important subject. As a result of this new precedent, key stakeholders will engage in stronger communication, that supports effective, more balanced resolution. As a result, it will minimize the use of costly third-party mechanisms and place a greater onus on a more cohesive relationship between employers and unions. The key characteristic of unionization is the ability to strike. It is not to say that it is the only resolution to conflict, but it paves the way to stronger, sounder relationships. It takes good faith and places that importance back in the relationship.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

11:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is an important bill with significant implications for public policy in this province, for the delivery of essential services, for our finances, and for the essential service workers who deliver those services. This bill is required in some form to comply with the Supreme Court ruling concerning the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. But this bill goes further than is required by the Supreme Court, and this bill does not get the balance right. Now, a bill would be required to comply with the Supreme Court ruling regardless of which party was in government, but this bill goes further and adds several little nuggets into the bill which are not required by the Supreme Court, which gave me real cause for concern.

I will preface my further comments by noting that the Wildrose does not oppose nonessential workers having the right to strike. In fact, that's the position put forward by our members as well, that we will carefully examine what should be included in essential services and ensure that they are treated fairly. That is Wildrose member past policy. In fact, we did agree with the aim of the bill in principle, and that is why we voted in favour of the legislation at second reading, as an expression of that support. We agree that compulsory arbitration should be reserved for truly essential public servants in exchange for a reasonable infringement upon the right to strike. Members confused the Supreme Court ruling or have not read it when they say that the ruling gives an absolute, unchecked right to strike and that it does not require the government to provide essential services during a labour dispute.

We agree with the government's stated intention in the bill: solely to implement a Supreme Court decision. Perhaps the most flawed part of this bill is its title because it does more than just implement a Supreme Court decision. It gives a few little nuggets, like Easter eggs spread throughout the lawn, that really give cause

for concern, and we have to wonder why those things are in the bill, Madam Speaker. We agree with the stated intention of the bill, to implement a Supreme Court decision, but we fundamentally disagree with the suggestion that that is all the government is trying to achieve here.

The bill goes well past what is required by the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court struck down the Saskatchewan legislation because they found that striking is a Charter right and that public employees do not have unilateral authority to determine what is essential without an adequate review mechanism and that those laws lacked an impartial alternative bargaining process to settle disputes. That is the substance of the Supreme Court decision, Madam Speaker. It is not an absolute, unchecked right of public employees to strike, illegally or legally. The court came to its conclusion based on these factors handled together, not separately. There was not a line in the court decision that speaks to how they would have ruled if only one of those factors were present such as if it was a compulsory arbitration process, but there was never any doubt that, following the ruling, the labour relations landscape in Alberta would change as a result of the ruling and its implications for Alberta.

When the legislation goes into effect, public-sector employers and the employee bargaining units will be sitting down and negotiating essential service agreements like this in Alberta for the first time. Unfortunately, however, this bill in its current form is not a balanced approach, and as a result I am not convinced that it secures the delivery of essential services that Albertans rely on. It was regrettable that the government defeated almost every single proposed amendment that sought to correct areas where this bill was deficient.

Many aspects of the bill also potentially weaken the government's bargaining position with public-sector unions. That's a disadvantage for the taxpayers of Alberta. Albertans have reason to be suspicious of this government's relations with big union bosses. The NDP, of course, constitutionally recognizes an entitlement for certain union representatives to be delegates to conventions. Again, we all remember that just last month the government appointed a top AUPE negotiator to lead the government's side in bargaining talks with AUPE. We raised a valid concern, that we still hold. How are Albertans supposed to have any confidence in the upcoming public-sector negotiations when the Premier is appointing a top AUPE negotiator as the government's chief adviser with AUPE? Even if he's not at the table, what role will the same individual have when the government is negotiating with AUPE bargaining units for essential service agreements? More problematically, this government voted on and defeated nearly every single amendment aimed to correct this part of the legislation that particularly benefits the power of big union bosses that hold particular sway and power within the NDP.

Again, I would remind members that my caucus colleagues and members of the third party and I were clear from the start that we were cautiously optimistic about this legislation. We voted in favour of it at second reading on principle. I wanted to be able to support this bill at its final stage and potentially have all-party support for it. I was optimistic that that would be one of these rare moments where all parties can agree on something. Unfortunately, that does not seem to be the case. This government chose to defeat significant amendments, leaving the original problems still front and centre, that will require correction from a new government in the future.

Government members chose to defeat an amendment to help ensure that the essential services commissioner is a fair-minded Albertan. No, the government members chose to have that reasonable condition defeated, leaving open the possibility that this



powerful new role could be filled by another partisan drop-in from places like Manitoba, where we expect there to be many unemployed NDP staffers in the next month.

When I read the proposed legislation, I was particularly surprised that the government chose to outright shut down the possibility of replacement workers before an employer and employee bargaining unit even had the chance to negotiate an essential services agreement. As my colleagues and I pointed out, this was completely and entirely outside the scope of the Supreme Court ruling, which the minister claims she was only trying to implement and nothing else. That is just not true, Madam Speaker. Obviously, the number of times unions and the government would think of the limited use of replacement workers would be necessary but few, but it's disappointing to see that the government forced a blanket ban on replacement workers based on ideology under the guise of implementing a Supreme Court ruling.

The amendments proposed by my colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner yesterday were modest, common-sense solutions to improve this bill. Instead of having a blanket ban on replacement workers, one modest amendment simply proposed that they only be allowed when an essential service agreement allows it, one that is valid and agreed upon by both parties and states that replacement workers can be used under specific circumstances in a strike or lockout. Unfortunately, the government opposed this.

Another modest amendment would have allowed replacement workers in an emergency situation, should one arise while there is an ongoing strike or lockout, until a decision by the umpire and commissioner is made on the best remedy for an unforeseen emergency. Unfortunately, the government defeated that amendment, too.

**11:40**

Of course, given that this sort of legislative framework for essential services is relatively new to the Alberta experience, it would have made sense to have a one-time impetus on the Assembly to revisit this bill in a few years, once there's been an opportunity to see what is working and what's not working and what we can do to improve it. So my colleague for Cardston-Taber-Warner proposed an amendment for a sunset clause. Unfortunately, the government rejected that, too.

My colleague from the third party, Calgary-Lougheed, proposed a committee to review subsection (3) of this bill in six months' time, a reasonable, rational, and very modest amendment to ensure that the powers of the commissioner are appropriate and being exercised properly. For reasons that are not yet duly explained by government members, that amendment, too, was rejected.

Madam Speaker, even an amendment to ensure that EMS workers are defined as essential services – a no-brainer – was shamefully defeated by members from the government side. I cannot think of any definition under which EMS workers would not be considered an absolutely essential service, deserving of being enshrined in the legislation.

You know, I know that if the four original members who sit on the government side were still in opposition, they would have voted for that amendment. If they were still in opposition, sitting in the seats they occupied last year, they would have voted for an amendment like that because they knew it was the right thing to do. But now that they're in government, they like to reject anything that comes from the opposition unless they have no choice politically but to accept, or amendments that they'll accept are technocratic in nature and not substantive. It's funny what government can do to how one sits in this Legislature at times.

The legislation does not recognize that an illegal strike under the act merits a financial penalty for trade unions or a corporation, yet

the government has chosen to keep the monetary penalty to a sum that is little more than a symbolic gesture, a slap on the wrist. We shouldn't be kidding ourselves. Canada's largest public-sector unions have multimillion-dollar strike funds at their disposal. They would not be deterred by a mere \$1,000-a-day slap on the wrist.

First, keeping penalties so low cheapens the value of an essential service agreement. If there isn't an adequate deterrent on an employer against staging an illegal lockout or on big union leadership against organizing an illegal strike, then it's easier for them to conclude that such acts may be worth doing in certain circumstances. A \$1,000-a-day penalty is laughable if you are a big union boss and you have a multimillion-dollar reserve fund. One thousand dollars a day is not a lot if you're an employer and are saving much more from wages not paid to workers locked out.

Now, if a union, let's say, had \$20 million in their strike fund, at \$1,000 a day that means that that union could strike illegally for 20,000 days. Twenty-thousand days. That is almost 55 years. Now, I don't expect that this would actually come to pass, but the legislation proposed levies a trivial \$1,000-a-day penalty for illegal wildcat strikes. That would allow those strikes to go on, even though they're illegal, for 55 years. It's almost laughable if it wasn't so deadly serious to the delivery of essential services in this province, Madam Speaker.

In proportion to the salaries a private member is paid in this Legislature, that is the equivalent to us getting a speeding ticket and paying about \$6.35 for it. I think a lot of us would continue speeding if we paid only \$6.35 to get home down the QE II. It would be no deterrent whatsoever, and \$1,000 a day for a penalty for illegal strikes is just as laughable as a speeding ticket of \$6 to Members of this Legislative Assembly.

Not only does this laughable sum weaken the government's bargaining position on behalf of taxpayers, but it does not protect Albertans who rely on essential services. An illegal strike by a designated essential service against a government that is prohibited by the same law from having replacement workers leaves the government with almost nothing to bargain with. The essential services that would be jeopardized in that scenario are essentially used to force or at the very least strongly pressure the government to concede their position in a negotiation or risk the well-being or even health and safety of Albertans.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to rise and speak to Bill 4 today. As we know, this legislation is necessary as a result of the recent Supreme Court decision, and while it is necessary, it is up to the ministry to develop and implement this legislation.

I believe that Bill 4 is a good piece of legislation. It's drafted in consultation with one of the greatest labour law minds in the province, drafted in a way that creates a balance between the right to strike and the need for public safety. What's more, Madam Speaker, I am pleased with the approach to allow both sides, labour and management, to be the ones that draft the essential services legislation. This is the right place for this to be done, not here, not in the Assembly. These two parties are the experts in their industry and what it takes to have their operations run efficiently, without endangering the public. In the legislation there's incentive for both parties to reach an essential services agreement as the legislation states that bargaining cannot commence until the ESA is in place.

Madam Speaker, I believe that the ban on replacement workers is appropriate. This ensures that the best people suited to provide care are always in place. Quite frankly, to add replacement workers would completely undermine the essence of the legislation.

This bill, Madam Speaker, does not need to go to committee. Not only is it the government's obligation to get this done, but it is thoughtful and fair legislation that will ensure both the rights of workers and the rights of the public to have essential services.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party, followed by Chestermere-Rocky View if we have time.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know what? This is a little bit of a disappointing place to come to. When this bill came forward, members from all sides of the House, all parties, said quite clearly that they were pleased that the government was moving to satisfy the Supreme Court of Canada decision based on what happened in Saskatchewan, and I was one of those. When the debate started, I congratulated the minister for bringing this forward, and I meant what I said. That was a good thing to do.

Had the government stuck with that plan, I suspect there may well have been one of those rare cases where we may have had unanimous agreement on the legislation, and we could have all left and said that we had done the right thing. Unfortunately, the government took the right thing and could not resist the urge to throw some gifts at their friends. I don't mind that the government has friends. That's okay. We should all have friends. But when we sit in this House, we need to remember who we're serving. We need to serve Albertans, all Albertans, and not our friends. Sadly, that's not what has happened here.

The government, using a really important piece of legislation as a smokescreen, has added other things that are outside of the requirement of the Supreme Court of Canada. Over the course of debate our party and the other opposition have tried to point this out and guide government into the right direction, but they have rejected that good advice at every turn.

11:50

One section in particular is the outright banning of replacement workers in the public sector. Now, I agree and I think members of all sides of the House agree that workers should have the right to strike. There needs to be some balance in the negotiations. That's what the Supreme Court said. But the government could not resist tipping the balance on one side instead of leaving the balance where it is. They, unfortunately, used a really important piece of legislation as a smokescreen to hide that fact, but I don't think that Albertans are going to be fooled.

As has been said – and I will repeat some of it but not all of it – our party and some of the other opposition have tried hard to correct this legislation. I know that we made an amendment to remove the section where the government bans replacement workers and even said that if they really want to do this, do it by the light of day, do it honestly, do it in the bigger labour review. If you really, truly in your heart believe it's the right thing to do, do it by the light of day, not under the smoke of a Supreme Court decision. But that's not what the government did. In my view, they have chosen to hide this fact from Albertans under the cover of something important and good.

We tried to reason with them. We tried to take the reasonable approach. If they wouldn't ban it, we offered them an opportunity, through another amendment moved by my colleague from Calgary-Lougheed, to review this change in a year to see how it's working. Why? To make sure that Albertans are kept safe, something that I think all Albertans would agree with and something I used to think that all members of this House would agree with. But that's not the way it has unfolded.

Along the way, you know, the government has been bobbing and weaving, which is really interesting. When they stand up to talk, they say, "Well, we're doing this great thing for the Supreme Court of Canada decision," which is a good thing. Then in the next sentence they talk about the stuff outside of the Supreme Court of Canada decision: why it's important to ban replacement workers, and why they can't include EMS as an essential service. When they get challenged and pinned down on that, because they have not got a single argument that actually supports either one of those things, they retreat underneath the smoke of the Supreme Court of Canada decision.

Anybody watching that wants to review the proceedings here and the arguments on the government side, that has been very consistent, bobbing and weaving. They lead with the Supreme Court of Canada, but what they're really doing is other things. And that's a shame. Albertans deserve better, and I don't believe that Albertans will be fooled.

The fact is that the government missed an opportunity here, too. They had a chance to fix a long-standing situation where EMS paramedics are not considered essential. They could have stood up today for all Albertans who care about their safety. The government could have said: "We care about Albertans' safety. Of course, we know paramedics are essential. Of course we know that, and we're going to codify it in law the same way that it has been done with firefighters and police officers." Almost all Albertans agree with this.

In fact, you know what's really telling? It's a tradition here, and it's not a bad one. When there's a standing vote in the House, the government – and they always win the standing votes because they have the majority – pound on the desk, quite proud of themselves. Well, when they won the vote slapping the EMS paramedics in the face, you could hardly hear anything, very gentle, like they were ashamed. And I believe they were ashamed. I believe when they go back to their ridings, when people learn what they have done, the paramedics will not be happy.

I wish every one of them good health. I wish every one of them good health for a long, long time along with everybody else in this House and everybody else that's watching. But I particularly wish the government members good health, because when that day comes when their health isn't good, who will come? One of those people that they would not say today were essential. They would not say that they were essential. When they come to pick them up from wherever they need help, they will be calling someone, who will come dutifully and do a great job, who the government would not say, given the opportunity, were essential.

It is shameful. It's shameful and made worse by the minister saying that the bargaining unit they're in wants to keep them. The government is using essential workers who keep Albertans safe as a bargaining chip, as a shiny pony to deliver to one of their friends. Shameful. Absolutely shameful.

You know what? For EMS workers, paramedics watching, I have no idea what they might be thinking. But I can tell you – and I don't blame the government for this – that paramedics have been kicked from pillar to post, as we've heard from people here and I certainly know from my time on city council. Lots of times they've been kicked from being an independent part of municipalities to under the fire department to some other group, back and forth, and really not given the identity that they have earned and deserve through their years of selfless dedication and hard work in looking after Albertans during their time of greatest need. But this government couldn't find the gumption to recognize that.

They were offered and offered. And you know what? My colleague from Calgary-South East, as he said in his remarks, went to the government and said: "Why don't you do it? You be the hero."

We'll cheer for you. Just do the right thing, and we'll cheer for you." We would have cheered for them on this side of the House. We would have if they just agreed to do the right thing. And it's so obvious. There are lots of things that we do in this House that are a matter of opinion, of legitimate debate, that you could disagree about. Are paramedics essential? Yes. There is no debate. We all agree, and the government wouldn't act to recognize it. Shameful.

Not only would they not take the lead on it and be the heroes of the day, but they wouldn't let us give them some friendly advice, that we would have had to thank them for, because they're more interested in looking after their friends than all of Albertans, and that really is telling. It's really, really telling. It's okay that they have friends. Again, I support that. Everybody should have friends. But we all have public records here, and they show whether you're supporting all of Albertans or just your friends. Well, we got a pretty clear answer today from this government.

They're not supporting all Albertans, and they're surely not recognizing what paramedics have earned for as long as they've been around, that they are a key part of the social safety net and the physical safety net for Albertans, something that we all depend upon, people that we admire and look up to and depend upon. They had a chance to say it out loud today, and they slid under a rock and said: nah; we're going to look after our friends instead. You know what? That is shameful.

If it were not for those things, I could support this legislation because I and our party do support adhering to the Supreme Court of Canada decision. We've made that clear through the debate, and we're very firm on that. Unfortunately, the government of today has chosen – has chosen – to sully what should be a very good-news story by not looking after Albertans. It makes me sad, Madam Speaker. It disappoints me.

You know what? I guess when I see paramedics, I'll tell them that our party and the other opposition did our best for them, but we could not overcome a government that was more determined to please their friends than to do the work that they get paid for by 4.3 million Albertans.

It's a sad day. It's a sad day, and it's almost fitting that it's Thursday so that when our government friends go back to their own ridings, they will be subject to the wrath and disappointment of the people. When they got elected, they said, as we all did: we're going to represent what you say when we go to Edmonton. Well, today the government didn't do that, and it's not like they didn't know. They knew very well what the people who elected them believe, as I do and as I believe everybody in this House does. Many of the government members said that the work the paramedics do is essential.

Yet when given the chance to make it official, to recognize them, to put it into law, to not leave it up to a negotiation that could change later, when there's a different minister or a different government or a different something, those paramedics, although the minister said, "Well, for now you'll be essential," are left wondering whether that will change with the weather, with the change of a minister, with the change of government or the whim of the current government.

Madam Speaker, it saddens me that I'm going to be unable to support this legislation. There is no good reason why this had to happen, but the government . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1), the Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, April 7, 2016

Day 11

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)

Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Government House Leader  
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

# STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

## Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

## Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

## Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

## Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

## Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinstauber	

## Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

## Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinstauber
Babcock	McKittrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

## Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

## Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

## Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinstauber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 7, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a very distinguished guest and former MLA, Barrie Chivers. Joining Barrie today are members of his family: Tamara, Daniel, Darren, Wendy, and Batya Chivers, Katie Clackson, and Peg Chivers. He is also joined by a number of colleagues and friends.

In 1990, following the death of his long-time law partner and MLA, Gordon Wright, Barrie was elected as the Member of the Legislative Assembly representing Edmonton-Strathcona. As MLA Barrie was the Official Opposition critic for the Attorney General, Solicitor General, consumer and corporate affairs, and at the time the native affairs portfolio. Few people have had more profound influence on labour, employment, and human rights legislation in Alberta than Barrie Chivers. It's fitting that today, as we consider third reading of Bill 4, we recognize him. His firm, Chivers Carpenter, intervened in the Supreme Court case upon which Bill 4 is based. It was in 1987 that Barrie first argued at the Supreme Court of Canada that the right to strike is a Charter right. Mr. Speaker, it took almost 20 years for the Supreme Court to agree with him.

Barrie's distinguished law career dates back to 1970, when he was admitted to the bar, and in 1973 he cofounded the law firm Wright, Chivers & Co. Barrie's defence of workers is legendary. His clients have included numerous labour organizations representing firefighters, teachers and educators, nurses, municipal food service and maintenance workers. His impeccable legal work has led to more progressive legislation in our province. As a result Albertans enjoy greater fairness in the workplace. We recognize Barrie today as he finally retires from the practice of law. Knowing Barrie, I expect he will pursue new opportunities in his retirement with the same devotion that he has given to his legal career.

Please join me in thanking Barrie for his incredible contribution to Alberta and wishing him well as he now rises with his family to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to encourage the Assembly to witness the wonderful presence of my local school, the H.E. Bourgoin middle school. As I read your names, I'd like the parents and students to rise, please, and we can actually thank you for coming up here and visiting the Legislature: Ms Cheryl Law, Ms Gina Elock, Mrs. Vonda Worthman, Ms Brosseau, Ms Katherine Heppner, Ms Mandee Urlacher, Ms Amanda Shideler, Mrs. Chawnsa Dutertre, Mr. Dutertre, Ms Rondeau, Ms Pitcher, Kelly Bowman, Stacy Sartan, Jennifer Genster, Christina Matwychuk, Lana Patey, and Odette Gagne. Sorry about that to those whose names I brutalized.

This school was named after one of the first teachers at the Duclos school. This school was formed on March 5, 1982. Their colours were brown, orange, and white. They actually took on sensibility, and it looks like they dropped the orange and went black, white, and blue. Currently they have the vision of working to meet the needs of students, which is admirable. Their mission statement is Maximizing the Learning of Every Student. I have to say that I am proud of this school in my riding, and I'd ask that everybody in this Assembly join me in welcoming them here today.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school groups here today, hon. members?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly guests from the Calgary Stampede. The Calgary Stampede has been bringing together people from across Alberta and attracting visitors to our province from across the world for an incredible 132 years. First held in 1912, the Stampede has become a long-standing Alberta tradition that preserves and promotes our western heritage, culture, and community spirit. The Stampede contributes to our goals of building strong communities and a robust, diverse economy. Generating more than \$400 million in annual economic impact, the Stampede provides more than 5,000 jobs and stimulates tourism and business throughout the region.

As a not-for-profit organization the Stampede owes its success in large part to the people behind it, including 2,300 volunteers and 1,200 staff who commit their names, energy, and talent to this great organization. I would like to ask Mr. Warren Connell, chief executive officer, and Alison Buie, the government relations manager, to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Michael Gardiner. Michael is a good friend, an accomplished campaigner for postsecondary education and for workers' rights, and, according to both himself and the judging panel of myself and my husband, the best dancer at my wedding. I'd like to ask him to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my incredibly dedicated constituency staff. Jocelyn Stenger, my constituency manager, has been an incredible asset to my office and the Edmonton-Meadowlark community as a whole. She worked for two of our current ministers while in opposition, and her social work background has helped many of my constituents navigate programs and receive the results that they need. Jim Storrie, my constituency assistant, is responsible for helping me reach out to the people of Edmonton-Meadowlark to keep them informed about the services and programs that we offer. Finally, Bobbi Schuring is currently in the Edmonton-Meadowlark office as a social work student studying at Grant MacEwan.

The people we put in our constituency offices are, I believe, a reflection of who we are as MLAs, and I am able to come to this House every day confident that my community is receiving the best support possible because of my staff. I'd ask all three to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Barbara Warner and Carie Fargey-Scott. Barbara is a former legislative counsel and page at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and is also the daughter of the hon. David Warner, a former Speaker in Ontario. Currently her private law practice helps Canadian charities and not-for-profit organizations. Carie lives in my constituency of Edmonton-South West. She's also a former parliamentary page in the House of Commons in Ottawa and currently is a team manager in claims assurance services at Alberta Blue Cross. Barbara and Carie bonded over their love of politics in their first year of university many years ago, and Barbara's trip out west wouldn't be complete without a visit to this Legislature. I'd ask them both to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

1:40

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you I wish the Member for Edmonton-South West a happy birthday.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my newest constituency assistant, Michelle Hoare. Michelle joined my team early in the new year, and I and the people of Calgary-Shaw are incredibly happy to have her onboard. She's a born-and-raised Calgarian who is passionate about social, feminist, and political issues in Alberta. Michelle has a bachelor's degree from the University of Saskatchewan in international relations. In her spare time she volunteers at the Brenda Strafford Foundation and the Calgary drop-in centre. I'd ask that she please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** I wonder if it's true that the Member for Edmonton-South West can now vote. Is that right?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you the Council of Alberta University Students, or CAUS, well named. They're wrapping up their week of advocacy here with all parties in the House. I regret that I missed their green muffins last night as they celebrated the end of their advocacy week. Joining us today are incoming members of the council, who will officially start their term May 1, including – could you stand as I mention your names – Stephan Guscott, Tristan Bray, Mike Sandare, Carley Casebeer, accompanied by the executive director, Bev Eastham, I hope, and by research and policy analyst Josh McKeown. Join me in giving these fine folks a welcome from the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my delight to introduce to you and through you several members of the Metis Settlements General Council. I met with them this morning: Sherry Cunningham, elected treasurer; Randy Hardy, president; Stan Delorme, vice-president; and Alden Armstrong, executive director. The MSGC is a governing body that enhances, preserves, and promotes Métis settlements collectively while addressing socioeconomic needs through good governance and community involvement. They also seek to preserve and protect their land and culture. I ask that they rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am so honoured and pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly the three most important men in my life: my husband, Malkeet, who I've been with for 25 years and who holds my heart and has my back; my oldest son, Akesh, who is 19 and who put his own school career on hold to come home and take over my business of 20 years, my music school, and has done a phenomenal job; and my youngest son, Seheran, who has overcome absolutely every hurdle that's ever been put in front of him and has gone on to prove that all children with special needs are of absolute importance and has just proven over and over and time and time again that he is a magnificent human being. I would ask that all three of you stand right now and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a friend of mine and a former university roommate – the less said about that the better – who is here all the way from British Columbia. He is working hard to continue to develop business opportunities in Alberta's Industrial Heartland. If I could have Mr. Cameron St. John please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

### Solar Power

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to share that the transition from coal-fired generators by 2030 is generating a positive future for alternative sources of electrical power to meet our needs. In my constituency of Wetaskiwin-Camrose business owners and communities are using solar power more than ever. For example, Parkland Fertilizers has installed 350 solar panels on their new building. The Montana Cree Nation admin office is powered by solar panels, and the community of Maskwacis is negotiating with a company for renewable energy production. The city of Wetaskiwin is offering homeowners a \$500 rebate for installing solar panels.

Industry experts say that Alberta is set to produce 2,000 megawatts of solar power by 2025 and that by 2030 renewables will produce 30 per cent of Alberta's electrical energy. The government's new \$5 million Alberta municipal solar program will assist municipalities all across the province with capital cost rebates for solar system installations and create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we have some of the best examples of alternative energy facilities. The largest solar farm in Alberta is the Green

Acres Hutterite colony east of Calgary. In Vulcan there are plans to build a project 30 times larger. Another solar farm north of Lethbridge, that will produce enough power for 8,220 homes, is on the way. Other companies are getting into the solar race, too, and when completed, these companies will put \$900 million in new spending and produce 352 megawatts of electrical generating capacity. I have read in news articles that Enbridge and TransCanada, which operate solar power plants in Ontario, are ready to shift into Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, on June 4 and 5 the Eco-Solar Home Tour will feature 18 homes where you can talk to the homeowners about their energy efficiency features.

Hence, Mr. Speaker, the scenario for Alberta's emerging solar power looks a lot sunnier. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

#### Shane Dawson Jr.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is never out of order to highlight the positive accomplishments of others. I've coached some amazing athletes, but regardless of their athletic skill or abilities I was always proud of every athlete that attempted to live up to our school motto, Strive to Excel.

On the weekend I had the opportunity to watch the Toronto Blue Jays play the Boston Red Sox. Just a baseball game for some, but for me it was an opportunity to watch one of my starting basketball guards, Shane Dawson Jr., pitch in his first major league game for the Jays, one of those times that makes us as parents and coaches and teachers and indeed the entire community proud. I am proud of Shane because he has taken a natural athletic talent and honed it through many long hours to achieve excellence in his chosen field. He is an example that a passion for life and hard work can result in excellence.

I'm proud because Shane knows that while success is good, it is not success that makes you a good person. Having a little sister that struggles with Smith-Magenis syndrome has meant that Shane knows that all people have value and must be treasured. I'm proud that Shane understands that he has been able to achieve his dreams in part because of the efforts of others. He invests time in kids through volunteering. He has learned the lesson that he must repay what he has been given.

Excellence is never easily achieved, but when it is, it should be celebrated, and I am proud to bring to the attention of Albertans one of our own, Shane Dawson: a great baseball player, a proud Albertan, and an even better person. I wish Shane the best of luck. May his fastball always be in the high 90s, may his curveball continue to break hard, and may his changeup continue to fool batters. As he continues to grow in life, may he always move forward in service to others with the speed of his fastball . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

#### National Sport School

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a unique and exciting school located in my riding of Calgary-Bow. The National Sport school is located on the Canada Olympic Park grounds and caters to students who excel in and are dedicated to competitive sports.

Since opening its doors in 1994, the National Sport School has helped Alberta's youth achieve their athletic goals and also, along the way, teach its students how to be leaders and productive members of their communities. Recently Principal Ken Weipert

shared a story with me of how, through the school leadership program, the school was able to bring together enough food supplies to provide the local Mustard Seed Community Support Centre with over 1,000 sandwich lunches.

1:50

The student body of the National Sport School represents athletic excellence in over 30 sports, including alpine skiing, figure skating, luge, bobsledding, gymnastics, water polo, and equestrian sports. Yesterday I had the pleasure to introduce several students. Brooke Apshkrum successfully brought home a gold medal in luge at this year's Youth Olympic Games, which were held in Lillehammer, Norway, in February. Congratulations, Brooke. Carter Malyk competed in luge and bobsleigh and would be continuing a family tradition when he achieves his dream of representing Canada in future Olympic Games. Keep up the excellent work, Carter. And Rachel Thibeault, 16, is a competitive swimmer, member of the University of Calgary Swim Club, and has been competing since 2007.

While the dedicated staff support these children in meeting their academic goals, these young athletes travel the world representing Alberta and Canada on the world stage. The National Sport School can be proud of the fact that in the last two consecutive Winter Olympic Games the students and alumni made up 10 per cent of Canada's athletes.

It was an absolute pleasure touring the facility with the principal and learning about the programs the National Sport school has to offer. This unique school is an asset to our community, and I'm very proud to be representing them here today.

#### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### Energy Policies

**Mr. Jean:** It's time to elect Thomas Mulcair as our Prime Minister. Those were the Premier's words last October in the federal election. Today the federal NDP leader says that if his party tells him to, he will do everything he can to keep Alberta's oil in the ground. We know this Premier has fund raised for the NDP politicians who have said this in the past, but Albertans expect her to condemn this when she speaks at the convention on Saturday. Will the Premier stand in her place and commit that she and her cabinet will do everything they can to condemn this motion in the strongest terms possible?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to make it crystal clear that I absolutely do not agree with what Tom Mulcair said about keeping oil in the ground yesterday. Those remarks are unacceptable, and I will certainly be there to convey that message to membership and to make sure that they know how important it is that we get our product to market.

**Mr. Jean:** I'm very glad to hear the minister say that. I hope to hear the Premier say exactly the same thing because . . . [interjections] I understand, and I'm glad to hear that the Premier understands the damage from the federal NDP advocating to stop oil production here in Alberta.

The fact remains, however, that the Premier has fund raised for anti-Alberta leaders in Ontario, and the federal NDP has made several statements campaigning against Alberta pipelines. My next question is a very simple one. Will the Premier advocate to her provincial and federal colleagues, proudly stand in her place, and

support Alberta's oil sands and our pipelines right across the country and around the world?

**Ms Hoffman:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We've been consistent on that. We know that pipelines are the safest way to get our product to market, and we absolutely are committed to making sure that we have a drama-free method of getting our product to tidewater.

In terms of party members not always agreeing, for example – we have a few people here – a former colleague of the hon. leader not that long ago said that Nelson Mandela was a terrorist. Did he agree with what that party member said? I sure hope not, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jean:** I hope that this government can understand why Albertans need some clarity from the Premier on this issue. On pipelines the Premier has campaigned against projects like Keystone and like Northern Gateway that are so important to our resources. Members of her cabinet have campaigned for B.C. politicians asking to keep Alberta's oil in the ground, and the Premier refuses to oppose plans for a crude-oil tanker ban. Will the Premier stand up and advocate for all our pipeline projects and against tanker bans to her federal NDP friends, and will she stop fundraising for these people that oppose our industry?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, we've been really clear that we absolutely are committed to making sure that we get a pipeline built to tidewater. We are focusing our efforts on making sure that the paths of least resistance and of most benefit to Canadians are the pipelines that we're moving forward with. So we will certainly be talking about opportunities to move our products east and west with our colleagues from across Canada over this very weekend.

Another example of a former colleague that the hon. leader shared a party with, Brent Rathgeber, just said a little while ago that the Official Opposition's job . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, I believe there was use of a name in your statement. As I understand, it should be avoided in the House. [interjections] I'm sorry. You're correct.

I'm advised that I was incorrect. I did interrupt the member. My apologies.

#### Alberta Health Services Decision-making

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, last fall the Premier delivered a keynote address at the AUPE's annual convention. What's concerning is the allegation from the former CEO of AHS, the highest paid person in Alberta by the government. In advance of the speech, to avoid embarrassment for the Premier, AHS was ordered back to the bargaining table to offer a raise to AUPE. This move will cost taxpayers millions and millions of dollars. Can the Premier confirm if anyone in her office instructed AHS to offer raises to the AUPE in advance of her appearance at this convention?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has spoken to this issue before, and I'll be proud to speak to it again. Certainly, when there is an opportunity to get back to mediation, we encourage both the employer and the employee to go to mediation. We've all said in this House that we think the best way to get deals is to have people sit down and talk, and that's certainly what we encouraged them to do.

In terms of what was said yesterday, the Leader of the Official Opposition said that Ms Kaminski's professional reputation was exemplary, and then a few minutes later his colleagues said that the system that she led was bureaucratic, inefficient, and wasteful. Get

it right. Mr. Speaker, which way is it, (a) or (b)? I really think they need to straighten their facts.

**Mr. Jean:** It's (c): this government keeps interfering.

The NDP government offering pay raises to public-sector unions so that the NDP Premier could avoid embarrassing herself when speaking to our union brothers and sisters is exactly what Albertans feared may happen with this government. It's a serious allegation, and the Premier needs to provide a serious answer, not avoid it. Did the Premier or someone in her office order AHS back to the bargaining table with the AUPE in advance of the Premier's attendance at their convention after they'd already received instructions in the bargaining unit?

**Ms Hoffman:** As has been said, this is a long-outstanding negotiation that broke down under the previous government. When we saw that there was an opportunity to get the parties back to the table, we thought it was important to encourage that. We do not apologize for that, Mr. Speaker. This is being negotiated right now, and certainly I am proud of that.

In terms of interference, certainly, if that's what you want to call it, I guess I'm guilty. When the opposition whip asked me to meet twice recently to talk about Sundre, I said: absolutely. I think that's important. I think that he's doing his job, and I think I am, too.

**Mr. Jean:** Yesterday, when asked about interference in the Edmonton lab services project, the Premier said, "There was no written evidence to suggest that [this] particular issue was a good decision, so this minister set about getting evidence on which to base her decision." Well, we actually FOIPed that decision, and it is one of the most researched AHS decisions that we have ever seen in Wildrose's history. I will table those documents later. Did AHS not share this evidence with the minister, or was the minister mad that the evidence didn't fit with her ideological agenda?

**Ms Hoffman:** Certainly, there was lots of evidence that the one model that was being considered had been considered. There wasn't evidence that either of the other models or three other models, maintaining the current mix of private and public delivery or expanding public delivery, was considered. That, to me, is evidence on one specific model. That's not evidence to make good decisions.

How about other interference? The opposition Health critic just yesterday asked me to interfere in that promotion of organ transplants. That's good governance. The opposition Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky suggested yesterday that the Minister of Infrastructure and myself should interfere in the Grande Prairie hospital construction. He's doing his job; we're doing ours.

**The Speaker:** Third main question.

2:00

#### Energy Policies (continued)

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another day and more grim news for Alberta's economy. Canada's oil patch has suffered the biggest drop in investment in almost 70 years, and instead of providing stability for our energy sector, the NDP has done everything it possibly can to drive investment out of this province. When Albertans asked for a steady hand, they got higher taxes and risky economic experiments. When will the Premier start restoring confidence in our oil and gas sector instead of pushing it out of the province?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.



**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The unfortunate news that capital investment is down significantly is a direct result of low global prices of oil, and certainly we feel for those families. The decline has resulted in devastating job losses here in Alberta, and it's made it more difficult for governments across the country to invest in education and health care. Only the opposition thinks that Alberta's government decides the price of global oil. We know that's not true. We're continuing to work with other partners like Texas and North Dakota, both of whom have governments other than the NDP. We need to find ways to put people back to work, and we're doing that.

**Mr. Jean:** Just this year a shocking \$50 billion of investment has been pulled out of our energy sector. That's like Canada's entire aerospace industry being wiped off the map in just a short period of time. Rig workers and the men and women who rely on oil and gas to put food on their tables are tired of a government that fights harder for carbon taxes than for their jobs. Can the Premier explain how introducing damaging new tax hikes, experiments with our electrical grid, more regulation, and a \$3 billion carbon tax, that wasn't campaigned on, provides hope for these Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the United States two-thirds of their rigs have been decommissioned. The hardest hit state is Texas, which is led by a Republican governor. Does the opposition blame the Republicans for the low price of oil, too? For the first time in 10 years oil production by America's second-largest producer, North Dakota, is falling year after year. North Dakota has a Republican governor. Are you blaming them? We're taking responsible action. We're moving forward on climate leadership and diversifying the economy and getting a pipeline built so that we can get people back to work.

**Mr. Jean:** Here's what Tim McMillan, with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, said: "Canada needs urgent action to remain [a competitive] market for oil and gas investment." The NDP's own royalty report shows that Alberta's competitive advantage is slipping both here in Canada and in North America. The Premier's response: a \$3 billion carbon tax, higher business and personal taxes, and punishing new regulations. Can the Premier please stand and explain how higher taxes will help increase Alberta's competitiveness in the world?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are incredibly proud of the work we are doing to address climate change and be climate leaders. As a result, people are looking at Alberta differently than they have in the past. They know that we take climate change seriously. They know that a price on carbon is the best way to make sure that we address easy emissions and to diversify the economy by reinvesting that revenue back in green jobs and other local initiatives to support communities. I'm incredibly proud. This is going to be good for the renewables, and it's also going to be good for getting us pipelines built, which is fundamental.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

#### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The PC caucus this week launched Engage and challenged the government to seek out ways

to save Albertans \$4 billion over two years. [interjections] The Official Opposition may think saving money is funny, but we think it's serious. One way to achieve this is to empower the public service to find efficiencies and cost savings while maintaining front-line services. When I asked the Premier about it, she didn't answer my question. To the Minister of Finance: when the public service identifies cost savings that don't require layoffs or cuts to services, will your government then act quickly to put these savings into action?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, we had a very rigorous engagement process this time last year; it was called the 2015 election. Albertans sent a very clear message: keep your hands off our health care and our education. That's exactly what we're doing. We are making sure that we're moving forward strategically, that we are moving forward thoughtfully. We reinvested \$800 million as opposed to what the member opposite proposed, which was to cut significant resources from front lines. I find what he was proposing this time last year and what he's suggesting today very ironic.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, what's ironic is that I read in the paper this morning that the minister is proudly putting her hands on health care, and then in the same day she's not. That's really interesting.

Alberta municipalities receive revenue through linear assessment. Linear properties include pipelines. Sometimes the pipelines are owned by companies that go bankrupt, and the companies, of course, stop paying their taxes. Despite that, the municipality is still on the hook to pay the Alberta government's linear assessment for education. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: when are you going to correct this unfairness and stop assessing municipalities for linear property owned by bankrupt companies that cannot pay?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I'm very proud of the broad range of supports that we provide to municipalities right across Alberta. Despite our own 20 per cent budget reduction, we continue to provide strong support to municipalities right across this province to ensure that they can take care of the residents that we share together. I'm proud of the relationship we have built with our municipalities. I look forward to ongoing conversations with them. I'm very proud of our continued support for all of the communities across Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, at a mayors and reeves meeting in Lethbridge last week, in front of one of the private members over there, they were told that the government never answers the questions, and that's still consistent today.

Purchasing is an area where government could assist municipalities to deliver stable, cost-effective services. The government of Alberta is a major purchaser of many commodities also used by municipalities. To the Municipal Affairs minister: will the government of Alberta work with the AUMA, the AAMD and C, and municipalities to help them reduce their expenses by combining purchase volumes that result in a net savings?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Again, since becoming the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I have worked tremendously hard to build a relationship with AUMA and AAMDC. It's tremendously respectful. We have a great relationship with one another and have exchanged a number of ideas over time. Certainly, if there's any kind of opportunity to work together to enhance services to Alberta, to increase the efficiency, I'm happy to work with them on a variety of options and have those conversations.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has a competitive electricity system, one that should be maintained to enable the orderly retirement of coal-fired generation and a careful transition to gas-fired power and renewables, all without jeopardizing reliability or substantially increasing the cost to Albertans. Now, that is a tall order. I've heard many concerns about the impact the government's plan will have on electricity bills and also whether the government thought through the implications before they acted. To the Premier: before today, have you or any of your ministers met with leaders from the Balancing Pool to discuss the potential impact of your policy changes before those changes were made?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, we undertook a very robust engagement process through last fall that led to the launch of our climate leadership plan, which included an economy-wide price on carbon, action on methane, action on energy efficiency, and the phase-out of coal-fired electricity. Now, we engaged with experts across the economy and did some very deep dives on technical engagement. That was in the hands of the Climate Leadership Panel, which then reported to us in November.

**Mr. Clark:** I'll take that as a no, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier has said previously in this House that the change-of-law provision of power purchase agreements allows owners to return their unprofitable contracts, and she's called them a failed legacy of the previous government. Mr. Speaker, that is simply untrue. PPAs have generated about \$4 billion for Albertans since 2001, and we currently get a credit on our electricity bills. If the minister had engaged with the Balancing Pool and other experts, you would have known that. What assurance do Albertans have that the government has done their homework before making such major decisions?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we're working currently with the Balancing Pool and looking at the overall issue, what some of our options are, so, yes, we are engaging. As much as this morning we had a meeting. Yes, we're working on that.

**Mr. Clark:** It's taken you nearly a year to sit down with the Balancing Pool to actually have that meeting, which is very troubling.

Given the risk of significant added costs to consumers will the Premier engage the experts and request AESO, the Balancing Pool,

the Market Surveillance Administrator, and the coal phase-out negotiator to work together to prepare a detailed impact assessment, including the cost of new transmission lines, and release their findings before you move forward so that all Albertans know the cost and impact of your plan?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. To correct the hon. member, today was one of many meetings we have had. We've had previous meetings with the Balancing Pool, and that's exactly what we are doing right now. We are bringing all the players in to look at the whole picture and the whole issue holistically. There will be more to report, but at the moment we're working with all the different players.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

### Arts and Culture Industries

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Calgarians were thrilled to be able to host the Junos and Junofest in our beautiful city. Over 17,000 Calgarians signed up to volunteer, including my CA, and I know myself that I and many of my colleagues got out to see shows over the weekend. While it was wonderful to see Calgary and Canadian music highlighted, I have heard some concerns from my constituents regarding the costs associated with hosting arts and culture events during our current economic climate. To the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what are the economic impacts of arts and culture events like the Junos last week?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. I was very proud to actually participate as well and be part of the events of the week. We know that when we have large events like the Junos come to our city, it generates about \$10 million, or more than that, perhaps, in revenue. I believe that's a very good investment. I know that this is the year of music for the city of Calgary, and we were happy to participate. We are going to continue working with them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given the impact our arts and culture industry provides by having a significant return on investment and given that our government remains committed to diversifying our economy, again to the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what additional supports are available to our arts and culture sector?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. My ministry continues to work with this sector to support growth in the arts and culture industries. Our government is committed to continuing this approach and ensuring that Albertans have access to top-notch cultural experiences. We have continued our investment. Earlier today I went on a tour of the Royal Alberta Museum to see the progress that's being made there. The Calgary film studio will attract business from around the world to this province. I think that's a great investment. We will continue to support that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the minister. Given that in an economic downturn tourism remains one of the fastest growing sectors of our economy, again to the same minister: what are you doing to promote Alberta's arts and cultural festivals to the rest of Canada and the world?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Our tourism sector showcases this province and our vibrant communities to the entire world, and that leads to the strengthening of our economy. I am proud that a French language travel guide will soon be available as well to attract visitors from across the country and across the world. I am confident that the upcoming flights from Beijing to Calgary will also bring an additional number of visitors to this great city. It's going to be a great contribution to this province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

### **Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement** (continued)

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's risky plan to phase out coal is going to kill thousands of mining jobs in communities like Forestburg and Hanna. These are good-paying jobs, family jobs, and workers are worried that this ideological government hasn't done its due diligence. What exactly is the minister's plan to take care of these families after she kills their way of life?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just as a matter of decorum in this House, might I remind the member that this phraseology of killing things is entirely inappropriate in this House.

As to supports for coal communities, on November 22, 2015, when we released the climate leadership plan, we made a commitment that we would phase out coal-fired electricity in the remaining six plants after 2030 in a manner that would not unnecessarily strand capital, in a manner that would support communities and ensure transition for workers.

**Mr. Taylor:** You know, I asked exactly what you were going to do. That answer is not good enough for the families who need certainty right now.

Given that the federal plan to phase out coal has given these families in my community up to 15 more years to plan their shift away from coal and given that the minister has no plan and provides no certainty and no predictability, can the minister explain why she made this decision as an order in council and didn't sit down and consult with workers, officials, and communities like Forestburg and Hanna before she came to this radical decision?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact of the matter is that 12 of the 18 plants were scheduled for decommissioning by 2030, and that was under the federal environment coal regulations. Now, the previous government did not have any kind of plan to transition those workers throughout those communities. We have committed to that. We'll have to wait for the budget in order to get some details on that. However, for the

remaining six plants this is why we have appointed a facilitator: in order to ensure that we do not unnecessarily strand capital, that we transition the communities, and that we are fair for workers.

**Mr. Taylor:** Given that these coal plants are the lifeblood of communities like mine and given that these are major employers that provide good, solid jobs you can raise a family on and that they fuel our economies, does the minister even care that her ideological actions are killing jobs and the local communities that they support?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, I might point out that the real ideology at work here is stranding workers and communities, which the previous government planned to do. So immediately we took action, and we looked at the fact that 12 of these 18 plants were going to be decommissioned beginning in 2019 because they had reached their end of economic life and that we would need to put some kind of transition plan in place for those plants, which we are doing, which will be in the budget. Now, why did we make this decision? One word: health.

### **Environmental Monitoring and Reporting**

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, listening to the debate yesterday, I heard the minister of economic development tell this House they're interested in good ideas regardless of where they come from. There are some solid ideas like, for instance, that in October 2013 the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview called on the previous government to create an environmental monitoring organization that is independent and at arm's length from the government and free from any political interference. To the minister of economic development: how does eliminating AEMERA, an independent, arm's-length agency, work to help you achieve your goals?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, absolutely, Mr. Speaker. You know, as part of our broader review of agencies, boards, and commissions to find efficiencies, our government conducted an independent review of AEMERA. Our government has always said that we need to do a better job of monitoring the environment, and that's what this decision will deliver.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Science Advisory Panel that we are retaining will report directly to Albertans. We have asked the Auditor General to examine the matter within two years' time. In addition, the good work that was happening within AEMERA will continue, without the costly administrative duplication that the previous government built into it.

**Ms Jansen:** That's wonderful news. So the jobs are on panels. Good. It's nice to have clarity.

In the statement by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade he noted that unless there was an independent and arm's-length body, the organization would be at the mercy of the minister and their political direction. To the minister of environment: how can Albertans feel assured this new body will be accountable when it's now at your mercy?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, as part of a broader review of agencies, boards, and commissions the fact is that this province looked at the duplication, the administrative bureaucratic inertia within duplicating efforts, and we decided that monitoring is on the level of public safety and public health. It is core government business for which the government is responsible. And you know what? We will see how it all works out. But the fact of the matter is that the Auditor General will be examining it in two years' time.

**Ms Jansen:** See how it all works out. Well, that's comforting.

Mr. Speaker, on October 31, 2013, the minister of economic development said: "When you don't have an ... arm's length, a distance between government and a body that they're selecting, questions arise, questions about judgment." This statement is directly at odds with what your government has done by eliminating the independence of AEMERA. To the minister: who in your government made the judgment to walk away from accountability and transparency?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

2:20

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of the ABC review I requested the former Deputy Minister of Environment Canada to conduct a thorough review of AEMERA, and what we have come up with is the fact that the Science Advisory Panel will report directly to the public, will work with the chief scientist to identify gaps and address those gaps through peer review. That is the core good business that we are carrying forward with AEMERA. What we are eliminating is the former government's proclivity toward appointing friends to boards and the costly duplication of executive teams. That is what we are eliminating, and that is how this government is going to move forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

#### ReThink Charter Academy

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Research clearly demonstrates that charter schools cost less on a per-pupil basis and are closed down if they aren't effective at meeting student achievement goals in their charter. There is an incredible need for the special program being offered to some of the most vulnerable Albertans through ReThink's charter school in Calgary. This school had received preliminary approval from the previous government, and all edits to the application had been made to receive final approval. Will the minister explain to the families why he rejected the application?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. One of the very first things that I embarked on as Minister of Education was to make sure that we're using due process and following due process in all of the endeavours that we have, including applications for new charter schools. So we made a point of using the regulation process that we have set up and not pre-approving like the previous government did. It was very inappropriate and sent the wrong signal. Based on the way that we went through the process, some charter schools did not make the grade.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that special-needs advocates state that spaces are tight for special education in this city, independent schools are full, and kids within the public system are falling through the cracks and given that Alberta is the only province that has charter schools and that the Education ministry itself reported that overall charter schools appear to have provided enhanced student learning outcomes, will the minister revisit his rejection of the ReThink charter school application and provide an important option for some of the most vulnerable students in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question as well. As I said before, we went through due process using the regulations that were provided, and until we review and revisit those regulations, then I am bound to using the process as it was designed.

Let's not forget as well that we have a very vibrant public school system in the city of Calgary and right across this province that's constantly innovating and constantly building to make sure that kids get the education that they need.

**Mr. Smith:** When the public schools are full, it's hard to get them in.

Given that I am worried for the parents, who are seeing an opportunity to help their children with learning disabilities reach their potential, and given that these families desperately need the special programming and supports that were to be offered through ReThink charter school, will the minister please help me explain to these families why they are not being allowed to exercise their parental rights to choice in education?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, our ministry has reached out, and we can reach out more to ensure that all students and their families in the city of Calgary and right across the province as well have all of the different opportunities available to them, the different choices available to them, too, through all of the forms of school education that we have in the province. We are very proud of the different alternatives that we offer throughout the province and in the city of Calgary, and we're very proud of following due process to make decisions in governance.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

#### Energy Policies (continued)

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canada's oil patch has suffered its biggest drop in investment in almost 70 years, the largest two-year decline since 1947. Capital spending has dropped by \$50 billion over a two-year period, and the protracted plunge in oil prices means that Albertans don't see it getting better any time soon. It's time to wake up. To the Energy minister: why with stark investment numbers and ever-climbing job losses is the NDP government still pushing ahead with ideological policies that are hurting everyday Albertans?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, I think the key in that article is that it's Canada's oil and gas sector, not Alberta's. When I was in Houston a month ago, there were 53 countries attending. [interjections] We all had the same story: a decline in capital investment, job losses, low oil and gas prices.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Given that it is the junior oil sector facing the brunt of this economic downturn and given that the juniors are the heart and soul of the Alberta story, forging new ground and entrepreneurs, and that since juniors sink their own hard-earned dollars into these ventures, the economic downturn has real-life implications like loss of income, companies, and even one's house, will the minister explain to Albertans why this government has failed to take urgent action for Albertans to remain an attractive market for oil and gas investment?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we're picking up some pieces of lack of planning in pipelines over the past 10 years. That's what we're doing daily right now, working with the companies to get our product to tidewater. We know that Albertans will prosper more if we can get that product to market. Right now we get significant discounts, and that's hurting Albertans.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans are disheartened to see that this NDP government is clearly missing the big picture, continuing to damage our economy, and using failed soft diplomacy. Given that energy is a key economic driver in our province, this NDP government needs to realize that energy companies will suffer. There is a ripple effect across the economy. Given that there is a surefire way to spur this energy economy, market access, and given that to date the NDP government's record for promoting market access to tidewater has been astoundingly poor, will the minister commit right now to stand up for Albertans and stand up for Northern Gateway, Energy East, and the ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. [interjections]  
Hon. members, keep the volume down, folks.  
Proceed.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. In fact, this week I have spoken to four different companies who have complimented our approach on pipelines. One company today asked us if we would go to the U.S. to talk about our climate change plan because they see it working. In fact, these same people asked us if we could ask our colleagues to work with us and not against us. Three to four of them have told us that they have spoken to you folks about your approach.

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

#### Registry Service Renewal Reminders

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are no longer receiving paper reminders for various renewals such as vehicle registration and ID cards. This for the most part is a common-sense, cost-saving measure that meets our PC caucus's \$4 billion challenge. Most Albertans are comfortable with living solely in the electronic realm; however, this is not true for everyone. To the Minister of Service Alberta. You continue to tell seniors that they will receive paper reminders for another year, except this is not quite true. Only seniors over 70 will receive these reminders. Why have you not included all seniors in the paper renewal reminders?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In tough economic times like these it's no secret that we're facing some trials, so our government is committed to finding efficiencies within government that can help us save money. This particular initiative will save Albertans \$3 million per year and will move us into the 21st century, I'm proud to say, by bringing renewal reminders online.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that you are creating confusion about the registration and licence renewal reminders and given that going full stop for a segment of our seniors' population may result in some of them unintentionally failing to renew their registration or licences and given that any plan to phase out paper reminders in favour of electronic ones deserves

a transition plan and not a full stop, how will you ensure that seniors under 70 do not fail to register their vehicles because they are waiting for a reminder that will never come?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you for the question, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we have a plan here to ensure that this transition is smooth because it's important to us that Albertans do renew on time. The way that we're going to take this going forward is by educating Albertans about this. As you've mentioned, seniors over 70 will receive an additional renewal reminder by paper letting them know about the online service, letting them know to contact their registry agents, who also play a part in this system. Additionally, just like clockwork, they will continue to renew in the same month that they always have, and all Albertans can always just check the back ...

2:30

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that all Albertans are being asked to set up electronic reminders and given that it's a big expectation to assume that everyone will do it proactively, let alone seniors and many rural, remote, and low-income Albertans who may not have access to the technology, and given that you surely don't want Albertans to inadvertently break the law, to the same minister: what is your ministry's ongoing communication plan for ensuring that innocent Albertans are not unnecessarily caught up in the justice system due to this government's procedural change?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure my friend across the aisle and the minister of seniors will agree with me when I say that our seniors are vibrant individuals. My own grandmother is over 90, and she has a smart phone, so I think it would be incorrect to suggest that at someone's age, particularly because of their age, they would not be able to remember what month they need to renew or that they wouldn't have access or know how to navigate online systems.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

#### Métis Consultation Policy Development

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard from constituents and Albertans alike about their concerns regarding the government's historical relationship with Alberta's indigenous population. I've also met with many Métis settlements members who are concerned about industrial development in their traditional territory. Given our government's commitment to developing new relationships and implementing the objectives and principles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what is Alberta doing to understand and address the potential impact of Crown decisions on settlement members' harvesting and traditional use activities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government understands and recognizes how important traditional practices and harvesting practices are for the Métis people of this province, and we are very

proud to have signed on April 4 a consultation agreement with the Métis settlements in consultation with the Métis people. It's a formal, meaningful consultation policy. It's a crucial step toward our goal of fulfilling the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and providing a stronger, more collaborative relationship with the Métis people.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the update. I'm glad to hear that the government is engaging in meaningful consultation with settlement communities. This is certainly a deep-rooted value that Albertans support. Given the importance of this policy to industry and Métis settlements what kind of consultation occurred in the development of the Métis settlements consultation policy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. When we formed the government in this province, we immediately declared our intention to change the relationship with the indigenous people in this province, and as a result we have used the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples to help guide us. As part of our consultation process in developing this policy, we worked with the Metis Settlements General Council and ensured that their interests were brought to the table and fully respected. We are very proud to say that we received unanimous support from all eight of the settlements and, as a result, have a consultation policy, that was definitely lacking in the previous government.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this policy is critical to developing respectful relationships, what is the government doing to ensure that nonsettlement Métis communities – I'm a member of those myself. How are we ensuring that those communities are consulted?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We are very proud of the movement we have made forward with the settlement Métis in this province because they had been a neglected group of the indigenous population in this province under the previous government. Again, we have found another neglected group, and that is the nonlanded Métis people. As a result, we have begun our process of engaging the Métis Nation of Alberta Association in building a consultation process, and we expect over the next year or so to be able to complete that consultation, just as we've done for the settlement Métis.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

#### Seniors' Advocate

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard from many Albertans, care providers, and many social service groups that our health care system has continued to let Alberta's seniors down. Systemic cases of abuse, poverty, and inadequate care are things our seniors are often forced to deal with on a daily basis. Wildrose

is renewing our call to create a truly independent Seniors' Advocate to help seniors navigate confusing government programs and identify key areas where we can better support our seniors. Will this government do its part to protect our most vulnerable by creating a truly independent Seniors' Advocate?

**The Speaker:** The minister of seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you also to the member for the question. It's very important for us to make sure that our seniors are receiving the services they need and have the proper housing. We know that there was a billion dollars in deferred housing left over from the previous government. Our government is committed to making sure that there are services for seniors in Alberta, and we're working closely with all the organizations.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there exist other independent officers in Alberta like the utilities advocate, like the Child and Youth Advocate and considering that the previous government showed no interest in protecting our seniors, who are often amongst the most vulnerable groups in our population, what steps will this new government take to answer the Wildrose call to create an independent advocate for our seniors?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, we do have a Seniors' Advocate. Seniors in Alberta are welcome to give any kind of concerns or complaints they have to the Seniors' Advocate, and we'll move very quickly on responding to their questions. We're open to hearing what the opposition has to say about that, and we'll take this under advisement. We appreciate the feedback.

**Mr. Yao:** Given that the October 2014 Auditor General's report highlighted limitations of the current Seniors' Advocate's office, which does not have the mandate to compel facilities or AHS to take action to provide detailed information related to seniors' concerns, and given that these are standard, necessary powers equivalent to the powers of other independent advocates, why doesn't the minister recognize that the current PC system does nothing to actually help our seniors and that we need an independent advocate?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. We as a government are extremely concerned about seniors in this province. We know that this is an area that has been neglected by the previous government, and we are very excited about some of the major initiatives that are coming forward very shortly. I encourage everyone to stay tuned about the budget, and we'll be talking more about that. We know that the process we have in place now does respond very well to seniors' concerns.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### Adult Learning System Review

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When this government announced the current tuition freeze last spring, it also promised an

adult learning review to advance our postsecondary system. Last fall the minister at the time claimed that the government was very quickly rolling out the review. Having spoken on numerous occasions with student and institutional leaders, I know they're eagerly anticipating the onset of this consultation, but as of today the government is still silent, almost a year later. Sound familiar? To the Minister of Advanced Education: does your ministry actually have a timeline for this, or is this just another NDP promise that's gone by the wayside?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite, of course, being a member of the PC Party, is familiar with promises that get thrown by the wayside. I'm proud that we are a government that has kept its promises, including the tuition freeze, which we introduced last year and will continue this year. Of course, institutions are wondering what's going to happen once the tuition freeze is lifted, and we are working to make sure that institutions have the certainty that they need to go forward with that in the next year.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that one of the guiding themes of our recently launched PC Engage strategy includes the need for government collaboration and inclusive policy development, the NDP is failing miserably in this regard. Consultation is not occurring for the adult learning review, and this is extremely challenging for students who are trying to plan their finances during these trying economic times. To the same minister. We'll try this a different way. With whom and how exactly does the minister plan to conduct this consultation, once it begins, at a time when postsecondary students, hopefully, will be working at summer jobs if they can find them?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the issue of summer jobs, of course, our government has reinstituted the STEP program, so he'd better be a little bit humble when he's talking about reducing employment opportunities for students.

We are certainly going to conduct engagement with postsecondary institutions, students, faculty members, and concerned community members about sustained, predictable funding for our postsecondary institutions, and we will be launching that review in the fullness of time.

**Mr. Rodney:** That's strike 2 on questions and answers so far. Let's see if we can hit a home run on this one. Given that this government conducted the Bill 6 so-called consultation that they themselves admit fundamentally failed in terms of process and then resulted, as you remember very well, in protests across the province, including on the steps of this very building, and given that it appears that this government is reticent to begin yet another important consultation, to the same minister: is the government going to begin conducting the adult learning review in voice mode, or will documents be produced if there ever is a consultation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I just said in my previous answer that we are going to be conducting the consultations around the adult learning review so that postsecondary institutions will have certainty about what will happen to their funding once the tuition freeze is lifted for the 2017-2018 academic year. I'd be happy to include whatever documents

we produce and submit them to the hon. member and all hon. members for their consideration when that is completed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South. [A timer sounded] I've recognized the member, of course.

### Legal Aid Review

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are aware of the importance of maintaining a fair and accessible justice system that includes the role of legal aid. In my constituency of Red Deer-South I've spoken to vulnerable constituents who are dealing with the justice system and have shared their stories regarding barriers to accessing legal aid. To the Minister of Justice. You recently announced a review of the legal aid system. What issues are being considered as part of the review?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much and to the member for the critical question. Of course, we all know that legal aid plays a vital role in our justice system in ensuring that the most vulnerable have access to a fair justice system just like everyone else. This review was undertaken to ensure that we're using taxpayers' money in the most efficient possible way while respecting those rights. We will be reviewing governance, scope of services, financial eligibility guidelines, and the delivery model to ensure that we're doing the best work for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the process has been started and given that my constituents are anxiously awaiting the results and looking for an update, again to the Justice minister: what work is going on now, and when can we expect it to be completed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the critical question. Well, of course, in performing this review, we want to consult with all participants in the justice system, so we are talking to people from Legal Aid staff as well as the legal community, service providers, and the court. We anticipate finishing these conversations and having this come to a close later this year so that we can provide Albertans with the certainty that legal aid is working in the best possible way.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that at the same time that you announced the review, you also mentioned some interim changes on how legal aid services are delivered and given that our province is currently experiencing difficult times, again to the same minister: can you tell us how these changes have helped Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. When we announced the legal aid review, we did announce in concert with Legal Aid some interim changes. These included an increase to the financial eligibility guidelines to ensure that more low-income Albertans can receive those services and a targeting of that service to make sure it's supporting the most

vulnerable. We know now that legal support officers are able to complete applications in a much lower time frame. We've also launched a pilot project that will allow for discretionary coverage, and this has cut down on Rowbotham applications before the courts.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I've been advised that the Minister of Health has a supplementary piece of information as a result, as I understand it, of yesterday's question.

The hon. Minister of Health.

### Red Deer Regional Hospital

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have an update for the Assembly on the ongoing repair work in response to the flooding at the Red Deer regional hospital. The question was asked by one of the hon. members yesterday. Work continues around the clock to bring the five affected operating rooms back online. My office was updated just today to say that one room will be online on Monday, which is sooner than was expected. The other four remaining rooms will be up the following week, which for some of them was slightly later than we'd expected, but between next Monday and the following week they should all be back up and online. Of course, patient safety is the top priority.\*

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

### Roberta MacAdams

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Roberta MacAdams, whose portrait hangs on the fifth floor of the Legislature, was a very private but very important woman in Alberta's history. She was elected in 1917 as the first woman MLA in Alberta, and she was one of the first two women elected to a Legislature anywhere in the British Empire.

A book, *Give Your Other Vote to the Sister: A Woman's Journey into the Great War*, written by Debbie Marshall, tells the story of this extraordinary woman. Not only did she run for office while serving as a nursing sister overseas during the Great War, but over 90 per cent of her electors were men, Alberta soldiers stationed in England and in the muddy trenches of the Western Front.

MacAdams grew up and was educated in Ontario, but in 1911 she accepted a domestic sciences teaching position with the Alberta government's department of agriculture and moved to Edmonton. She was a dietitian and enlisted in the Canadian Army Medical Corps in 1916 in order to contribute her skills as a hospital dietitian.

Following the introduction of the Alberta Military Representation Act, MacAdams decided to run in the 1917 general provincial election to be one of two soldiers' overseas representatives in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. MacAdams sat as an MLA until 1921 and was the first woman in the British Empire to introduce and pass a bill. After her term ended, she returned to devoting her life to education, providing nutritional education to the farm wives in the Alberta countryside.

Roberta MacAdams was a courageous and determined woman who shows us how, with conviction and perseverance, we can make change happen.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Rwandan Genocide Day of Reflection

**Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to rise and acknowledge today, April 7, the International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda. In 1994 more than 800,000 people were systematically murdered throughout Rwanda. The vast majority were Tutsi, but moderate Hutu, Twa, and others were also targeted. On this day we remember all who perished in the genocide and renew our resolve to prevent such atrocities from ever being repeated anywhere in the world. Stories of the survivors' courage demonstrate to us that reconciliation is possible even after such a tragedy.

Edmonton has its own vibrant Rwandan community, many of whom arrived after the Rwanda genocide. Today Edmonton's Rwandan community has more than 2,000 members, and the majority of them are under 45. This hard-working community lives mainly in north and central Edmonton. After 22 years many members of the community are still dealing with the trauma due to the loss of family, friends, and other loved ones. It's a very close-knit community, which tries to heal its wounds by organizing private vigils and awareness campaigns throughout the month of April right here in Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, July is the month of celebration to mark the end of genocide. In August community members set up one of the most beautiful tents at our Edmonton Heritage Festival in Hawrelak park to showcase Rwandan heritage through Intore dance, which is a traditional ballet form of Rwanda.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon writes:

The history of Rwanda teaches us an essential lesson. While the capacity for the deepest evil resides in all societies, so, too, do the qualities of understanding, generosity and reconciliation. Let us nurture these hallmarks of our common humanity to help build a life of dignity and security for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

### 2:50 WiseGuyz Program for Junior High Boys

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about a program that finds a home in schools throughout Calgary, run by the Calgary Sexual Health Centre. The WiseGuyz program acknowledges the pressure on boys and young men to behave in certain ways, and it seeks to address the effects this has on society, including social isolation, poor communication, homophobia, risky sexual behaviour, and violence.

We can take heart in seeing teen pregnancy rates dropping, but it is hard to ignore the fact that STI rates continue to rise. Even more alarming is the troubling reality that sexual violence rates are on the rise. Mr. Speaker, this is not okay.

While most sexual health services are targeted toward women – combine that with the damaging attitude that boys will be boys – WiseGuyz addresses the growing discussion of cultural and media messages about what it means to be a man in our modern world. WiseGuyz engages junior high boys in a weekly program that covers four modules: human rights, sexual health, gender, and positive relationships. It helps young men understand the connection between masculinity, male norms, sexuality, and violence. My favourite description of the program is from a young boy in the program who describes it as a program where you learn not to be a jerk.

I could go on about why I like this program, but frankly the results speak for themselves. They're available at [calgarysexualhealth.ca](http://calgarysexualhealth.ca). The outcomes of this program are remarkable. There's a marked decrease in homophobia, a huge increase in sexual health awareness,

\*See page 392, right column, paragraph 12



and a meaningful uptick in the attitudes toward embracing progressive male norms.

With huge steps being made in the development of our young men, WiseGuyz has quickly gained a reputation for being a strong model in changing behaviours and reducing incidences of bullying, homophobia, and dating violence. Mr. Speaker, I am so thankful that programs like WiseGuyz are in this province, and continuing such supports is critical. By challenging the stereotypes about masculinity, teaching young men to respect themselves and others, and giving them the skills . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**Mr. Connolly:** In accordance with Standing Order 99 the Standing Committee on Private Bills has reviewed the petition that was presented on Monday, April 4, 2016. As deputy chair of the committee I can advise the House that the petition complies with standing orders 90 to 94. Mr. Speaker, this is my report.

### Introduction of Bills

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

### Bill 6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to introduce Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016.

As you know, the securities regulatory landscape has become more complex, sophisticated, and international in scope. It is being driven more by technology than ever before. Our goal is to ensure that Alberta's securities regulatory system reflects the realities of today's capital markets and evolves with international standards and global regulatory reform initiatives. This requires continuous review and updating of provincial securities laws. The proposed changes in this act will update and further harmonize Alberta's securities laws with those in other jurisdictions across Canada and will enhance the protection of Alberta's investors, promote the operation of a fair and effective Alberta capital market, and minimize systemic risk.

Mr. Speaker, as I recently announced, our government will continue to regulate our own capital markets right here in Alberta instead of joining the national securities regulator. Our government strongly believes that Canada's capital markets are best overseen by local regulators who know the industry, have street-level knowledge, and can respond to local regulatory challenges quickly and effectively. We are not alone in this belief, but we also understand that we must work together with all of the provinces and their security regulators to ensure effective regulation across the country. Introducing this bill is a reflection of our commitment to the continuous improvement of Canada's existing securities regulation system.

Mr. Speaker, I now move first reading of Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

### Bill Pr. 1

### Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in my remarks during question period I made reference to some quotes, and I'd like to table the articles from which they came.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. As the first one I would like to enter into the public records three documents, which are the trading cards for the three canine conservation team dogs that do the mussel-sniffing activity on all of our watercraft or many of our watercraft entering into the province. They are Diesel, Hilo, and Seuss. These are the cards that are given to boat owners as their watercraft are being inspected, and they certainly seem to ensure that people are not so angry when they have to sit in traffic lines. That's the first piece about that.

Now, the second thing I'd like to table. Canada's Ecofiscal Commission has put out a recent report, Mr. Speaker, entitled Choose Wisely: Options and Trade-offs in Recycling Carbon Pricing Revenues – now, of course, the Ecofiscal Commission contains as members folks like Preston Manning and is funded by companies like Suncor and TD Bank – in which it is not that we must price carbon; it is how we best price carbon.

**Mr. Hanson:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table 100 pages of information that Wildrose obtained under a freedom of information request on the strategy of Edmonton and north zones lab services. The minister and the Premier have claimed that this evidence did not exist. We suggest that if she needs help finding these business cases, briefing notes, and analysis, I'm sure that one of the pages will deliver one of these to her office.

3:00

### Orders of the Day

### Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

### Auditor General Appointment

12. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the February 2016 report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices (Sessional Paper 19/2016) and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that the Auditor General, Mr. Merwan Saher, be reappointed for a two-year period commencing April 29, 2016.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 14, 2016, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices reported to the House concerning the reappointment of the Auditor General. It is now my privilege to move the motion.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour today to rise in this Assembly to acknowledge the work of Mr. Merwan Saher, the Alberta Auditor General. Mr. Saher is receiving reappointment to his position, and I am confident that I speak for all members of the Assembly when I congratulate and thank the Auditor General and his colleagues at the office of the Auditor General. Your work is crucial to the maintenance and transparency of government. Whether it be through the reports that your office puts out or by answering questions at a committee level, your efforts assist both the public and the members of this Assembly in having a better understanding of the performance of our government.

In my time as the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake I have sat on the Public Accounts Committee. Mr. Saher has produced reports and made appearances which have assisted all members of the Assembly in understanding the complexities of our system of governance. This is a difficult and a thankless job that fundamentally works to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the public sector.

Mr. Saher, congratulations, and again my most sincere thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members to speak to this matter? The hon. minister to close debate.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think I can speak for everyone on this side and probably everyone over there, too, that we're very pleased by the report, and we're happy to support the recommendations. I would encourage all members to vote in favour.

Thank you.

[Government Motion 12 carried]

### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate April 6: Cortes-Vargas]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have an opportunity to respond to the throne speech. I lived in Alberta during the global recession of the '80s. It was a difficult time, but we made it through. Unfortunately, decisions made by the government of that time were not in the best interests of Albertans. The slash-and-burn of front-line staff such as nurses and teachers is something that we're still feeling the repercussions from, so I'm very glad our government has promised in the throne speech to draw the right lessons from our current economic situation by supporting front-line workers and families. I note the help to families through the new child benefit program. During the '80s I was a single parent raising four young daughters, so I know how important those kinds of supports are.

The throne speech has me reflecting on my own role and how I came to be in this House with the great honour of representing the constituency of Peace River. My journey has been one of change, often very dramatic change. Integral to my ability to be successful

in my new role is the love and support of my daughters Carla, Marni, Amaya, and Naomi, who have stood alongside me and encouraged me every step of the way, and, of course, my four amazing grandchildren – Noah, Reuben, Virgil, and Rhea – who are as proud of me as I am of them. I love you guys and couldn't do it without you.

I've lived all my life in Alberta. My grandparents on both sides came to Canada in the early 1900s. My maternal grandparents were Ukrainians from Austria, and they settled in Hairy Hill, where they farmed and raised a family. I spent many wonderful years growing up on their farm, and I also had a semirural upbringing on my paternal side. My grandfather was sent away from England at age 12, one of the home children who were sent to Canada during the war to be fostered. He eventually made his way west, married my grandmother, and for a time they homesteaded in Grande Prairie. They soon moved to a farm in southeast Edmonton near Refinery Row. My grandmother opened a small restaurant to serve refinery workers, and this eventually became the Ham Shack, a popular high-class dining establishment that served many of Edmonton's movers and shakers of the time.

When my parents married, they settled on a piece of land behind the Ham Shack, and my dad built the house where my siblings and I were raised. Overall, we had a good life and a happy, intact family. Summers we would explore Alberta, driving forestry trunk roads, camping in the bush, or spending time at my aunt's lakeside cabin up at Crane Lake. Every winter my mom would build a giant skating rink on the empty lot next to our house where all the neighbourhood kids would come to skate. My mom was a hard worker, kind, generous, and devoted to her children. She was fiercely independent and taught me to think for myself, skills which helped me manage the profound changes I would experience later in life.

But there was something rather unusual about my upbringing. My mother was part of a very conservative and fundamentalist religion that interpreted the Bible literally and taught that the end of the world was imminent. My dad was not of the same faith, but he allowed her to take the lead in raising us, so the church was a key focus of our lives, and friendships, relationships, and activities outside of the church were very, very restricted. Higher education was discouraged, and the focus was on missionary work.

My dad, on the other hand, values higher education. He's an extremely intelligent and creative man who spent a lot of time in his basement workroom, where he experimented and built things. During a time when computers took up whole floors at the U of A and were programmed with punch cards, my dad built a small home computer. He also constructed a theremin, which was an early electronic synthesizer. One of his most wonderful creations was a Tesla coil. I'd round up all the neighbourhood kids, and we'd enjoy a lightning show in the basement. My dad later became security manager for the government of Alberta and, in fact, was responsible for security here at the Legislature until his retirement.

My mom didn't believe in voting or supporting political parties, so politics was not part of our lives. The one exception was my uncle Dave. He was a tireless advocate for the underdog, passionate about fairness, and always ready to fight to see justice done. He took this to the next level, running as a federal candidate in 1984 and '86 for two western separatist parties. He inspired me and planted the early seeds.

I began teaching piano when I was 13 and started my first band when I was in high school. Eventually the band included all my siblings, and we travelled the province performing for weddings, parties, and graduations. At age 19, driven by a desire to do something more meaningful with my life, I moved to Central America and lived for two years in Honduras, where I met my first husband, who was a popular singer there.

We returned to Edmonton and began to raise a family. Unfortunately, he had addiction issues and was abusive, so after some years I made the decision to raise my daughters on my own rather than live in fear. I returned to music as a way to support my family. I formed a band with my brother and sister and managed to earn a living as a musician in Alberta for a number of years.

After some time I remarried, and this proved to be another key change in my life. Circumstances around that marriage led to a crisis of faith. I began to question the things I had been taught all my life. I realized that what my mother believed and taught me as a child did not make sense and did not fit with my world view. I began to experience a sense of enlightenment and freedom for the first time in my life as I broke free from the shackles of the fundamentalist religion in which I had been raised.

This freedom came at a cost, however. I learned first-hand how religion can divide families, how deeply held religious beliefs, no matter how sincere, can be used to judge, marginalize, and hurt those among us who are perceived as different or who do not believe the same things we do. This experience, while incredibly painful, has helped me learn to be inclusive, welcoming, and understanding of everyone in the province and in my constituency regardless of where they come from or what they believe. The process took a profound toll on me personally, however. I lost family and friends, and I went through a bout of severe depression that almost cost my life. My marriage was another casualty. With the love and support of my daughters I came through.

Key to managing the change was my decision to go to university. I enrolled in my first university course, and at the age of 45 I became a full-time student at Athabasca University, eventually earning my master's in psychology. I became active in my student union and embraced politics. I joined the NDP under Raj Pannu's leadership, attended my first political convention, and, incredibly, voted for the first time in my life.

### 3:10

When I graduated in 2002 with my BA in psychology, it was one of the proudest moments of my life. I shared that proud moment with my daughter Marni, who graduated the same week with her BA in chemistry. While attending university, I found an ideal job that fit my study schedule, *Alberta Hansard*. Soon I was completely hooked on politics, watching the activities in the House on a daily basis. Listening to the members, often till the wee hours of the morning, ignited something in me. I would see the dismissive way the opposition was marginalized, the way legislation was rammed through in the middle of the night without consulting with Albertans. I saw arrogance and inflated self-importance and a government completely disconnected from the needs of average Albertans, and I longed for a better way.

But I was caught up in trying to make a living while finishing my degree, and the recession of 2008-09 put serious financial pressures on me, to the point where I was facing foreclosure. As I struggled to save my home, I encountered many predatory lenders who were eager to take advantage of me. That's why I'm so pleased to support the act to end predatory lending, as these unscrupulous lenders truly need to be stopped. Even though I was still a full-time student, my student loans went into repayment, and my efforts to work with the student loan system were incredibly frustrating and unsuccessful. This is another area where I'm looking forward to seeing some changes under our government. Soon I was working multiple jobs, caught in a treadmill of day-to-day survival. I know what it feels like to be forced to choose between feeding your family or paying rent. I know what it feels like to be penalized for having no money by having your lights and heat turned off and then having to pay extra for reconnection. Too many Albertans live like this.

My youngest daughter, Naomi, who was building her own career as a welder, kept encouraging me to focus on my dream of being a psychologist, so I accepted a position in High Level where I could complete my registration requirements and once again faced major change. I packed up my car and headed north to parts unknown. I quickly fell in love with the north and its people. I saw the wonderful community spirit and the ways people worked together. I learned first-hand about the profound long-term effects of residential schools on generations of our indigenous peoples. Working within the mental health system, I saw the many service gaps and the way the system was failing citizens with top-heavy bureaucratic delivery that meant year-long wait-lists for mental health treatment and inadequate crisis response, and I knew we could do better.

I became active with my union and was sponsored to attend winter labour school. One of the teachers of my labour history course happened to be a dynamic, passionate young woman I'd first met during my student union days, who also happened to be the NDP candidate in Lethbridge-West. You know her now as the minister of environment. In the course of our conversations that week I made a decision to embark on yet another major life change, and here I am. Being elected as the MLA for Peace River last May has been an amazing experience. I consider it a great privilege to represent the Peace River constituency, and I'm deeply honoured that constituents have entrusted me with this responsibility.

Peace River, as you know, is the largest constituency in the province by square kilometres but one of the smaller by population. There's a lot I wish I could tell you about my fabulous north, but I don't have a lot of time. My constituency is home to Alberta's oldest community, Fort Vermilion. Established in 1788 as a key trading post, Fort Vermilion quickly became the main trade corridor, opening Alberta up to the rest of the world and serving as Alberta's economic trade engine. The beautiful Bay house along the Peace River is currently being restored by the community and stands as a testament to the role Fort Vermilion played in Alberta's early development. Bush pilot Wop May made his historic open biplane flight in minus 34 weather to Fort Vermilion to deliver diphtheria antitoxin to keep the area safe from epidemic. My constituency is also home to several of Alberta's youngest towns. High Level celebrated their 50th anniversary this past year, and Rainbow Lake will reach that same milestone this year.

Our communities are diverse and unique. In the far north we have Zama City, which is not a city but actually a small hamlet of only about 250, but it has been home at times to more than 4,000 oil workers because it sits in the centre of one of Alberta's largest gas and oil fields. At the southern tip we have Reno, where only a few families still remain but which has the distinction of having three original structures, including the Holy Ghost Catholic church, which date back to the first Ukrainian settlers in the 1930s.

My hometown of High Level is an incredible place. When I first arrived, I was bemused to see the hotels. We have the Mirage, the Flamingo, the Stardust, Caesar's, and indeed in the early days we branded ourselves as the Vegas of the North. High Level is also a model for diversification. Our economy is only about 20 per cent reliant on oil and gas as we are diversified into forestry, lumber, agriculture, and service industries, so we are managing much better than some of the communities further south.

Other areas in my constituency aren't doing as well, unfortunately. Some smaller towns are struggling to remain viable. Peace River itself has felt the impact of the oil and gas downturn with the loss of some major projects. Although gas and oil has slowed, it continues to be very important to our economy in the north. Peace River is home to the fourth-largest oil sands in Alberta.

Our companies there are looking for ways to increase efficiency and diversify into petrochemicals and other areas, and I'm hopeful that our government's focus on infrastructure rebuilding will help my constituency, particularly with the construction of an essential new Peace River bridge. We are well placed to support construction in the north because we have several large sand and gravel companies and excellent potential feedstock for asphalt.

Lumber is key to our economy. We have two lumber mills in High Level. We've got La Crete Sawmills, Fraser mills in Manning, and the DMI pulp mill in Peace River. These companies are leading the way in environmental responsibility. A number of large trucking companies provide support to that industry, and during the winter logging trucks are constant along the Mackenzie highway.

Farming and agriculture is also important to my constituency. Many people don't realize this, but the north is actually taking advantage of climate change to plant new crops. We are opening up agricultural lands, helping to compensate for key agricultural areas lost to urban sprawl further south. I'm proud to say that we have almost 20 per cent of Alberta's organic farmers in Mackenzie county alone, and the Mackenzie Applied Research experimental farm in Fort Vermilion continues to research new and innovative crops.

My constituency is home to two of Alberta's seven remaining operational ferries, Shaftesbury in the town of Peace River and Tompkins near La Crête. The La Crête ferry takes traffic across the Peace River from May to September. Then from December to March we cross the ice bridge. It's quite the experience to drive the ice bridge in March as the ice begins to melt. You drive through surface water that rises to the top of your tires, trusting that the ice underneath is still solid enough to hold the weight of not just your vehicle but that huge semi that's following you.

Integral to my constituency, of course, are our First Nations and Métis. My constituency is on Treaty 8 lands and is home to three different nations: the Dene Tha', the Beaver, and the Little Red River Cree as well as the Métis in Paddle Prairie. The Lubicon and Tallcree also come into my constituency. These communities enthusiastically supported my election, and I'm deeply grateful. They've not experienced a positive relationship with past governments, and I'm working hard to change that.

The Peace River constituency in Alberta's far north has been described by some as being like the original western frontier. It's a place of incredible opportunity, where you can arrive with a dream and turn it into reality, where newcomers can build a successful life creating something from nothing. Northerners are resilient and resourceful. We find ways to cope and manage the most difficult possible circumstances, and we come out successful on the other side. We survive by being creative and innovative. We're taking the lead in adapting and diversifying and innovating in the north, and one of my goals is to help the rest of the province understand the important role we play in making Alberta great.

I love this province and its people. I consider it such a privilege to be a part of this Assembly, where I can play a small part in supporting the people of my constituency of Peace River through this difficult time. I want to thank my constituents for entrusting me with this responsibility.

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 4

### An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services

[Debate adjourned April 7: Mr. McIver speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays is not present.  
The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since this legislation was introduced, our caucus has made it clear that we recognize that there was a need for the legislation. Any other party here could have won the last provincial election, and still they would have found themselves obligated to introduce legislation on essential services. The reality is that, yes, there was a Supreme Court ruling in the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour case, and, yes, the last PC government agreed to have us tied to that decision. So, yes, there is an implication for Alberta, one that fundamentally changes the labour landscape in Alberta in a way that we are not opposed; namely, rather than define all public-sector workers as essential, come up with a fair way to determine which ones truly are.

Regrettably, while the title of the bill is An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, the legislation itself goes substantially beyond what the Supreme Court required. As my colleague the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner said during his second reading speech, there are a number of items in this legislation that we would be more than happy to debate, but they should be done separately in their own context. To debate them as part of a legislation that claims to merely be implementing a Supreme Court decision is profoundly disingenuous. If one were a pessimist, they could reasonably conclude that this demonstrates a certain cynicism on the part of the government.

3:20

But let me be perfectly clear. Wildrose does not oppose nonessential workers having the right to strike. We agree in principle and voted in favour of second reading as an expression of that. We agree that arbitration should be reserved as a last resort for truly essential workers in exchange for the necessary compromise on their right to strike. For other workers a deal should be worked out by the parties, and the government should be fully responsible to the public for the agreements as opposed to leaving it up to compulsory arbitrators.

Again, we agree that the government had to put something on the subject together now, and we agree with the government's stated intentions solely to implement that Supreme Court decision. But we disagree with how they went about it. It's clear that they did much more than that.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We are opposing the bill in the end because there are just too many flaws and too much uncertainty about ensuring the public good. They set up a full resolution mechanism that puts the union's authority and their workers' rights ahead of the people's representatives and the need to protect public safety and public dollars. We are opposing the bill in the end because there are just too many flaws and too much uncertainty about ensuring the public good, too much authority in the all-powerful commissioner, who the government wouldn't even agree to keep Albertan, defeating our amendment and leaving open the suspicion that they will parachute in another partisan pal from elsewhere.

Now, a number of members here spoke about this bill and mentioned the Supreme Court ruling. It's clear that many members are not all that familiar with the actual text of the Supreme Court ruling. The Saskatchewan law that was court challenged and Alberta's existing regime are substantially different. While Alberta uniformly didn't let the public sector strike since the Loughheed era, they allowed for impartial binding arbitration. There was no such mandated alternate resolution system in place in Saskatchewan. It's the pairing of those two circumstances that led to the Supreme Court decision. If this is of surprise to any members, I invite them to review that decision. The ruling against Saskatchewan's laws was based on the facts that Saskatchewan's public employers do not have unilateral authority to determine what's essential without an adequate review mechanism and that those laws lacked an impartial alternative bargaining process to settle disputes. However, the SFL decision nowhere alludes to what they would have ruled if only one of those factors had been in place, so the findings of the court in SFL cannot be transplanted upon Alberta.

Nowhere does the Supreme Court require public-sector employers or bargaining units to make considerations about whether or not temporary workers can be employed temporarily to deal with unexpected issues that emerge while workers are striking, yet there is a strict ideological banishment of all replacement workers in this legislation. It's not even something the two parties can agree to as a conditional element.

The Supreme Court does not give any indication of how essential services should be defined other than that public-sector employers cannot unilaterally define them, yet there is a section of this legislation in which the minimal contents of an essential services agreement are prescribed by government. Were it not for an amendment put forward by our caucus, any future government could go to the regulations and expand the mandatory requirements of essential services agreements. Of course, I should acknowledge that the government voted in favour of that amendment, and we do want to give them credit for that.

However, most of these amendments pertained to the fact that large parts of this legislation were well outside the scope of the Supreme Court ruling. I observed with surprise that there were some groans and audible expressions of dissatisfaction from some members in the government benches when amendments continued to be put forward.

Madam Speaker, yesterday our caucus put forward substantive amendments concerning monetary penalties against illegal strikes and illegal lockouts. Speaking against these amendments, the Minister of Labour and others said that raising monetary penalties and fines was somehow against the Supreme Court ruling. As I noted earlier, there is nothing in the Supreme Court ruling that would have necessitated this. More disturbingly, a few members over there rose to defend the low fines by suggesting illegal strikes even by essential workers were not something to worry about.

Yet even the government in this proposed legislation acknowledges that the largest public-sector union here has a multimillion-dollar defence fund. Who here honestly believes that they would be fundamentally discouraged and dissuaded from an illegal strike by a mere \$1,000-per-day fine? Let's be realistic. They likely wouldn't even notice. My caucus colleague's amendment also raised the monetary penalty for employers who take part in an illegal lockout. Would a large employer be genuinely dissuaded from an illegal lockout by the prospect of a mere \$1,000-per-day fine? Of course not.

It was disappointing to see the government members vote against these amendments. Nobody is implying that public-sector unions are wanting and willing to wage illegal strikes with frequency, but we do have to recognize that these are essential services agreements

that are being discussed. The services involved here are those where it is generally recognized that there is a major threat to life and public safety and well-being if those services are unavailable for a time. That's why it is vitally important that big union bosses are discouraged from organizing illegal strikes of these workers. The potentially devastating consequences are what make the action so effective. Now that strikes for general workers are permitted, we can only imagine what levers might get pulled in the middle of a contentious strike. The government should have agreed with our amendment and agreed to put some actual deterrents in the fines.

Madam Speaker, yesterday my caucus colleague proposed an amendment that whoever is the commissioner for essential services should have a recent background of living in Alberta, working with and for Albertans and understanding our unique labour history. The role of commissioner, as defined in this legislation, is a profoundly powerful one. As noted in the legislation, the decisions they make are final and binding where essential services agreements are concerned.

Alberta's labour history is different than that of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, or anywhere else in Canada. Alberta's labour relations community, as I understand from stakeholders and others, is also relatively close. There are qualified professionals here who know the background on a lot of major files as they pertain to the public sector. To have these overlooked in favour of someone with essential services or other labour relations experience in another province is problematic. To have them overlooked in favour of another NDP crony from another wing of their organization is frightening.

There are certain private-sector positions as well where there is some requirement of local familiarity for desired candidates. For example, some private-sector companies will require that a candidate have experience and existing relationships with local media before being hired for a media relations position. Some private-sector companies will require that a candidate have experience with the local jurisdiction's regulatory requirements before being hired to advise on government relations and policy framework. So there is nothing illegal or unusual about such a common-sense provision for any candidate to serve as commissioner. Yet the government defeated this amendment.

3:30

There is no restriction keeping this or a future government from appointing someone from out of province to oversee one of the most significant and delicate labour relations positions in Alberta, unilaterally making final and binding judgments on essential services that greatly affect Albertans and their government. It was disappointing to see the government vote against this motion and have it defeated.

I should note as well that the power of the commissioner and the authority that is wielded by whoever has that position is, again, not something that was prescribed by the Supreme Court in the SFL decision, so the government cannot use the cover of the Supreme Court for the structure of the essential services regime that this act prescribes. If this is the desired wish of stakeholders that the government consulted with, that is a somewhat different matter, but there are still relevant concerns about the checks and balances on the role of the commissioner. If the government wanted to discuss the creation of such a role and to structure Alberta's essential services regime this way, that is a matter that should be debated on its own terms. To frame that as being part of what the Supreme Court required is just not correct, and we never heard a good explanation for why there couldn't be a small panel rather than a single person.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I want to note the following. Wildrose understands the importance of meeting the requirements of the Supreme Court ruling by the mandated date, and on that principle we understand why the government had to put forward this bill. But there is overreach here beyond what the Supreme Court had asked, so we wanted to make the bill better. We proposed several amendments to ensure that essential services are better protected and treated fairly and to ensure that the public interest is protected at the same time. Regrettably, this government had chosen to defeat those amendments. Credit where it's due: they approved one amendment. But that amendment alone does not resolve the numerous problems that exist within this legislation as proposed.

Given all of the consultation that had been done with Alberta stakeholders and given how quickly this government is able to push legislation through when they actually want it passed, there is still more than adequate time to do a better bill on essential services, so I will be opposing this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, next on my list is the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Essential services pertain to the most vital services that Albertans rely on, that they depend on. Accordingly, it's important that the government gets this legislation right. Wildrose does not oppose nonessential workers having the right to strike. All individual rights should be respected, and it's just not necessary to tell nonessential workers that they can't strike, even if it has proved convenient for many over the last 40 years.

We agree in principle with reducing that category of essential workers and voted in favour of that at second reading as an expression of that. As my colleague the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner noted when he spoke about this bill in second reading, we were open to working with the government on this proposed piece of legislation. As several colleagues had outlined earlier, we recognized that there was a need for this bill in some form given the Supreme Court ruling and the previous government's agreement to have us bound by it, but the approach that this NDP government took for this bill went beyond what was required and didn't do enough to ensure that Albertans can rely on the sometimes life-and-death services that government is duty bound to provide regardless of labour disagreements. We do not agree that this bill only implements the ruling by the Supreme Court.

There were several reasonable Wildrose caucus amendments that were defeated. This bill could have been considerably improved, and it's a shame to see that this was not the case. One of the amendments put forward by my colleague was to raise the monetary penalty to discourage illegal strikes or illegal lockouts. A maximum \$1,000-per-day penalty does nothing to dissuade a big union boss who thinks an illegal strike by certain essential workers would be strategic to him or a large employer who wants to lock out workers. When we talk about legal strikes and the need to have adequate penalties, we're not talking about any service. The government's own legislation as it appears here speaks to that.

- (a) the interruption of which would endanger the life, personal safety or health of the public, or
- (b) that are necessary to the maintenance and administration of the rule of law or public security.

Albertans shouldn't have to worry about whether or not these workers are available.

Emergency services – police, fire, EMS – all save lives in different ways. They all help to protect life and protect our society. Police attempt to help by enforcing laws with the ability to restrain predators and bullies, people who would commit violent crimes on each other. Firefighters: not only do they alleviate emergencies, but in many communities such as Fort McMurray, Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Airdrie, fire service supplements EMS by providing EMS-qualified staff. This is especially important when ambulances are caught in code reds, which is still often happening.

Of the three, EMS is the one that provides the most direct medical intervention. It is health care, so much so that our government, Alberta Health Services back in the day, recognized this and took them under their own umbrella. They recognized that the quality and level of care that they were providing was on par. In Alberta virtually anything that can happen in an emergency department, paramedics can do out in the field, and that is a valuable service indeed, the ultimate interventions. People call these agencies in the most dire situations, yet EMS remains on the outside. You need these people. These emergency medical service workers, the paramedics and EMTs that are in this field, they can keep you from becoming paralyzed out in that field. They will keep you breathing. They will make sure that you are breathing. They will keep your heart beating. They have all the interventions, all the medications, all the implements to help assist with this, yet we don't consider them essential, not entirely.

I'm sure that many members here have had the misfortune of experiencing an emergency, a situation where someone's life is on the line. The life-saving services in those cases are the ones where illegal strikes need to be discouraged. There is no talking point. There is no explanation that can comfort those who are adversely affected by an illegal strike in these service areas. Nobody should have to rush a loved one to the hospital and find that much-needed services are only operating at a partial capacity or not at all. Nobody should have to wait by a phone in the case of an emergency only to find that a response is taking too long.

Madam Speaker, in the early 2000s I was in the EMS profession. I was fortunate enough to be working for a fire service, though, a service where we were integrated and we could not strike, but during that time there was a provincial-wide strike in EMS. I was way up in Fort McMurray. We tend to be a little bit isolated, but I could hear through all my friends and whatnot what a terrible time that was. Many of my brothers and sisters were working down south with a lot of these agencies and were put in difficult situations, but again it was a service that was never treated appropriately. Many of my instructors who were teaching me when I went to school, many of the managers that I was learning under, many of these supervisors had to work on the floor in the field to cover these bases, but there were not nearly enough of those to cover so many that needed to be protected. Yet in the police and fire services, even though they may have work disagreements, labour disputes, they're able to get through these without the ability to strike. They use arbitrators, and there's no reason why emergency medical services, who provide health care in the field, can't be under this umbrella.

Some members may also recall what happened in Montreal in 1969, when 3,700 members of the Montreal policemen's brotherhood walked off the job over pay issues. It's regrettable that the sides involved couldn't come to a conclusion beforehand, and there were consequences. I raise this example because police and security are a prime example of what many people think of when they think of an essential service, something needed to maintain the general welfare of our communities. The result of that 16-hour strike included violent protests, mass burglaries and lootings, assaults, and so on. Off the top of my head, I believe there were over a hundred arrests that day.

3:40

Of course, the circumstances there were significantly different than the current labour environment in Alberta, but the broad point is this. There is a real human consequence when essential services disappear. Services that have that designation have it for a very particular reason. So, yes, there should be significant monetary penalties for big unions that want to go ahead with an illegal strike and put their bargaining interests ahead of the interests of Albertans. A small fine of no more than \$1,000 per day is simply not adequate to deter an illegal strike.

One of my colleagues' amendments yesterday would have expanded on the definition of essential services. The government's bill as introduced does not adequately define essential services, meaning very important functions concerning infrastructure and the environment and financial security that would be neglected in a strike. Wildrose believes that what is essential to the public interest goes beyond just safety and the rule of law.

Do the folks over there really believe it is not essential to prevent an environmental disaster just because there are no human lives at risk? Well, you voted the inclusion of that down as a consideration of what is essential, so you'd better hope that managers can handle everything on that front in case of a strike. It simply might not be possible for managers in a strike or lockout scenario to be able to make all of the necessary decisions quickly without some of the unionized workers. If it is possible, well, I guess that poses a different problem for those unionized workers.

As members will recall from yesterday's debate, the reality on the ground is that certain workplaces will become hazardous and certain machinery will be devalued if not maintained. We therefore asked that the bill be amended to include, as Ontario's does, the designation of preventing the major deterioration of workplaces and equipment and machinery as an essential service. This does not mean that every position pertaining to equipment and machines would have been declared essential.

The amendment would not have altered the fact that legislation lets both sides negotiate an essential services agreement. In workplaces where this would apply, there are simply a few roles that might be designated essential for simply maintaining expensive, important equipment or financial interests or environmental concerns. Who and what would be is between those negotiating, but the definition here precludes many interests from even being considered by an essential services agreement under this act given this particularly narrow definition. We do not want to needlessly expand the definition of essential to too many positions because that has consequences as well. But there are some legitimate concerns that the current definition, as proposed legislation, does not capture what is actually essential to the public interest. Whichever side of the bargaining table you're on, that interest has to come first.

Yesterday my colleague also sought an amendment concerning a change in circumstance. It will be a significant event for many Albertans in the public sector when this legislation comes into force as employers and bargaining units for workers will be negotiating essential services agreements for the first time in Alberta. As currently worded, Bill 4 does not necessarily allow for quick emergency amendments. It may be discovered in the middle of a strike or lockout while negotiations are ongoing that a certain service should have been designated essential but was not.

Governments do not always get things right the first time. That's true of any government in any jurisdiction of any political stripe. Accordingly, there needs to be a mechanism that allows for a quick return of these services should a situation arise. In yesterday's discussion the minister and other members made a point that an umpire could handle the scenario. The minister suggested that the

umpire will be there on the ground and can direct one of the public-sector workers to cross the picket line and perform an emerging essential service. But what if the union disagrees and appeals to the commissioner? How long will that take? And last I checked, it is not mandatory for every worker to be full-time on the picket line, so what if that skilled employee is not available to just come back into work?

The amendment would have allowed a public-sector employer to use temporary workers to get the job done for a narrow period of time if negotiations are ongoing and the bargaining unit for whatever reason is unwilling or unable to let workers return. Some on the government benches made the case that there are scenarios where an unfettered right to replacement workers would tip the scales of fair bargaining, but that's not what this amendment would have done. This amendment would have allowed the commissioner to put an end to the use of replacement workers as soon as a decision on the new circumstance was finalized. We think that was a fair compromise to ensuring that Albertans have access to the services they need while respecting the rights of all involved.

Our caucus recognized that an essential services agreement needed to be passed. I want to once again be clear. Wildrose does not oppose nonessential workers having the right to strike. Our caucus agreed and voted in favour of second reading as an expression of that.

But there are still some serious questions remaining in this bill. In the end there are simply too many flaws in the legislation. Like so much of the legislation you guys write, there are a lot of flaws. The government still has time and the opportunity to not only implement what was actually required by the Supreme Court but to separately discuss other labour legislation. It's just so important that we get this right when the essential services this government provides are at stake.

I cannot support this bill. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. minister of culture.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in support of this bill, and I thank the minister for bringing it forward. Prior to my election to this Chamber I was actually working for a union, and most of the work that I did there involved research. Prior to that I was actually the president of the local union for flight attendants, and I can tell you that in the federal jurisdiction we do have legislation that actually considers flight attendants an essential service. The reason for that is because you need to get mail from one end of the country to another. Other reasons as well are because you need to support communities that are in the north, for example, that rely on air travel to bring perishable foods and replenish food items. In the federal sector there already is a law that has a provision to compel workers who are, you know, going to entertain the idea of perhaps withholding their services or being locked out of their work by their employer to have a resolution mechanism, to resolve and to establish a number of people, of workers, that can maintain a level of service that is acceptable, that doesn't put the public good, the public welfare, into question.

I actually had the fortune, or misfortune, of having to deal on several occasions with the possibility of going on strike. In my situation, of course, it was a little bit tricky because, you know, I had members all over the world, and if we did go on strike, we would potentially have picket lines, well, around the planet. So when we entered into negotiations, we would actually often start with our discussion on an essential services agreement. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that oftentimes those were quite difficult, but they were not impossible to do, and the reason for that is because

employers have a vested interest in ensuring that services are being delivered according to their business plan. From the workers' perspective I can tell you that not a single one of us wanted to ever put a single person in the north in peril. We were representing workers who were extremely proud of the work that they did, and they were actually very much willing to listen and were very much willing to enter into this dialogue. Oftentimes those kinds of discussions took place at the beginning of bargaining, when things aren't so heated.

One of the things that I saw in this process here and one of the questions that I myself had for the minister when we started talking about this was: at what point do you enter into these discussions? Well, as you can see, it's going to be part of the bargaining process. It's going to allow for workers who right now don't have the right to actually strike to be able to do that if that is the case. However, we are providing now a mechanism that determines whether they are an essential service and whether they are required to actually stay on the job and at the same time protect their collective bargaining rights, their rights as workers, now guaranteed by the Supreme Court of Canada. So, to me, this mechanism makes a lot of sense. I have seen it practised. I have practised it myself.

3:50

To the concerns that have been raised, for example, pertaining to EMS workers, I actually have organized them. I was an organizer as well, so I actually signed up a few locals into a union and turned it over, of course, to somebody else to negotiate their first collective agreement. I can tell you that EMS workers, much like flight attendants, are extremely proud of the work that they do, and I can tell you that they're extremely reasonable people, and they don't get into that job because they want to go on strike; they get into that job because they care about people. They care about providing the services, and they're not going to be the ones who are going to prevent people from getting all the medical attention that they need just because they're having a dispute with their employer.

That is the pride that a person feels when they enter into those kinds of jobs. They do that because – let's face it – it's not always about the money; it's about the pride that you feel, the reward that you feel from being part of your community and providing a service that is so, so essential to the fabric of that community and the well-being that a lot of them do their hours and work a lot of hours for free as well because they care that much about the patients that they look after.

So I have no doubt, Madam Speaker, that if the situation were ever to present itself where EMS workers would need to have that discussion, they themselves would tell the people who represent them to look into that and ensure that they can provide a level of service that will never put a single Albertan in harm's way. I believe that. I really do. And why is that? Because the workers of this province are extremely proud of the work that they do, proud equally of being union members as well, and now, under this bill, they will have the same rights as every other Canadian, and I stand behind that. I support that.

I thank the minister for bringing this bill forward. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the next speaker, the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Let me be perfectly clear. Wildrose does not oppose nonessential workers having the right to strike. The Supreme Court was very clear on that. We agree in principle and voted in favour of this proposed legislation in second reading as an expression of that. We agree that

arbitration should be reserved for truly essential workers in exchange for their right to strike. For other workers a deal should be worked out by the parties, and the government should be responsible to the public for the agreements, not compulsory arbitrators.

We agree that the government had to put something on this subject together now, in light of the Supreme Court decision. We acknowledge that. We agree with the government's stated intention solely to implement that Supreme Court decision. We just disagree with how they went about it. We disagree with any suggestion that all they are doing here is implementing the Supreme Court decision.

We are opposing the bill in the end because there are just too many flaws and too much uncertainty about assuring the public good, too much authority in the commissioner role created in this legislation, who the government wouldn't even agree to keep Albertan. You know, it's simple. We asked them to, you know, just make sure that it was at least an Albertan. They defeated our motion. Whatever side of the bargaining table you're behind, we are all public servants. That public interest needs to be protected above all.

The proposed monetary penalties, up to \$1,000 per day for an illegal strike, are not real penalties. It's an acknowledgement that something wrong has been done with a symbolic punishment. Someone with a multimillion-dollar defence fund will not be deterred by a daily penalty that barely, barely cracks four figures. The same thing goes for the penalty of up to \$1,000 per day for an illegal lockout. An employer willing to wage an illegal lockout on their employees is unlikely to be deterred by such a small figure; let's be reasonable.

Even the government will acknowledge that this legislation represents a significant shift for Alberta labour relations here in Alberta. Inexplicably, the government felt the need to oppose our amendment to raise the value of monetary penalties up to \$750,000. That's not a minimum; it just ups the scale a little bit. That doesn't mean that every offending trade union or employer would face that maximum fine, but the ceiling on fines would have been lifted for those who are larger, who can quite literally afford the monetary fine proposed in the bill.

Yesterday the government claimed that lifting the monetary penalty was beyond the scope of the Supreme Court ruling. That's absurd, to suggest that a maximum fine of \$1,000 is within the scope of the Supreme Court decision but a maximum fine of \$750,000 is somehow not within the scope of the Supreme Court ruling. The reality is that neither of these decisions are within the scope of the Supreme Court ruling; they're within our scope. The Supreme Court ruling did not speak to what is an adequate monetary penalty for someone who wages an illegal strike or lockout.

The title of the bill, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, does speak to the impetus for why this legislation was needed, but this legislation overreaches the Supreme Court's ruling. For instance, the legislation includes a prohibition on the use of temporary workers while those bargaining for a new agreement are on strike on the lockout, you know, overreaching the Supreme Court ruling. That's not required anywhere in the Supreme Court decision. Madam Speaker, may the record show that we want to have that discussion. We want to have that debate and give the due assessment to such a legislative change.

The Supreme Court ruling stemmed from two particular findings within legislation in Saskatchewan. First, the court took issue with an employer's ability to unilaterally decide what is an essential service. Second, they took issue with the absence of an adequate, impartial, alternate mechanism for bargaining. The impact of these



two factors taken together and the assessment that striking is a Charter right led to the current legislative onus upon Alberta.

In no way does it derive from this that a public-sector employer cannot hire temporary workers to compensate for lack of labour during a strike, so to wedge such a restriction into An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services when that particular provision is not actually being required in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling is, quite simply, disingenuous. We understand the convenience of being able to do a swath of labour changes in one go as opposed to multiple pieces of legislation, but there's a fundamental difference between what the Supreme Court decision requests and what the government here would just like to implement.

My colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner yesterday proposed two common-sense amendments to this aspect of the legislation. These did not strike out the ban on replacement workers that this government insisted on. One such amendment merely said that in an unforeseen circumstance, such as if it is discovered in the middle of a strike scenario that a service should have been designated essential but was not, the employer can temporarily use replacement workers. Not an unreasonable request. If the commissioner were to have found that the use of replacement workers in such a context damaged good-faith bargaining negotiations, they still could have the ability to shut down the use of replacement workers. Our amendment specifically allowed for that, but that, too, the government defeated.

The reality is that the government has overstepped the boundaries of the Supreme Court ruling. When this bill was introduced, my colleagues and I were very cautiously optimistic. We recognized the need to carefully define essential services workers and ensure that those workers in those services are treated carefully and fairly. We do not oppose nonessential workers having the right to strike, and we want Albertans to have the access to the services they need at all times, 365 days a year. That's why I will not be supporting this bill in this form. If this bill were simply about implementing a Supreme Court decision, that would be a different matter, but this bill goes far above and beyond that.

It is just so important that we get this right when the essential services this government provides are at stake. Ministers of the Crown are responsible and accountable for the services, especially essential services, that their departments and agencies provide. They are still responsible for those services when there's a strike, legal or illegal. They should be mindful of that when voting on this bill.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister of culture, under 29(2)(a).

**Miranda:** A question under 29(2)(a). I was wondering if the member could tell us if he knows how many illegal strikes there have been in the province of Alberta over the last five years and a rough idea of how many collective agreements are actually bargained in this province over the same period of time.

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, the fact is that I don't have those numbers in front of me, and I really don't think that it's relevant to the discussion we're having. [interjections] So why didn't you just tell us that, then?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments?

Any other speakers wishing to address the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

4:00

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all members who have contributed to the debate on Bill 4. This piece of legislation is one that was done because of the Supreme Court ruling but also because of the Court of Queen's Bench ruling, which tested Alberta's legislation against the Supreme Court ruling and was the true impetus, the reason why we needed to do this. I am very confident that this made-in-Alberta solution is going to respond to our province's unique needs, making sure that the right to strike, which is fundamental and was ruled on by the Supreme Court, will be protected while making sure that we are protecting the public safety, the health, and the well-being of Albertans, protecting the rule of law during the case of a strike or lockout. We need to make sure that Albertans are able to rely on that, and that's what this legislation does. We've had a lot of discussion here in this Chamber about the importance of some essential work, and we all agree that's important. That is what this framework is here to recognize, that essential work, essential services need to continue in the event of a strike or lockout.

This is a fundamental change to how labour relations will move forward here in the province of Alberta. I look forward to working collaboratively with all of those in the labour relations community to start implementing this legislation and putting it into practice once it has been proclaimed. We believe the courts have been clear. It's every Canadian's right to strike, and we have set up a framework so that that can happen safely, securely, protecting first and foremost Alberta's public health, safety, security, rule of law.

Again, thank you to all members who've contributed to the debate on this bill. I very much enjoyed the discussion. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 5

#### Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll hear from the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of Minister Sigurdson I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act.

Madam Speaker, I'm pleased today to rise and speak in support of Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. The bill will help senior homeowners remain secure and independent in their own homes. It speaks to the needs of an aging population and addresses the current economic reality. Home means comfort and security for all of us. Our homes and communities contribute greatly to our sense of well-being. Seniors have told us that being able to stay in their own homes and their communities as long as they choose to or for as long as they are able is enormously important to them. Being able to live in a place they have called home for years or even decades is often critical to an older person's quality of life and sense of independence.

We all have aging parents, family members, or friends who are facing difficult decisions about whether they can stay in their own home. We know that more people are facing this decision and more want to remain in their homes and communities. Life expectancy is increasing as well, and many seniors are enjoying more active lives and are able to maintain full independence for longer than was possible in earlier times. Right now there are more than 515,000 seniors in Alberta, and the numbers of seniors are growing faster than the general population. We as government want to support

seniors to be self-sufficient in their homes for as long as possible, and it is our responsibility to address the needs and priorities of a growing population who are aging.

Under the previous government the special-needs assistance program provided eligible low-income seniors with a grant to cover a portion of certain home repairs. The previous government made a decision to cut that funding of \$8 million and replace it entirely with a loan program. Today our government is presenting a new option that would help more seniors to finance the home improvements they need to do to remain in their homes. The program, housed in Bill 5, provides a loan program to help seniors with home equity to make needed repairs and stay in their homes. In addition to the loan program, we are restoring \$2 million in grants to help the seniors who most need it.

The act we are debating will support the seniors' home adaptation and repair program, a great example of how we can help more seniors remain independent in their own homes. Now, the program could help as many as 145,000 seniors' households or about 260,000 seniors afford a wider range of home repairs and renovations than what is currently offered under the previous special-needs assistance program for seniors. We know that the majority of seniors own their own homes in Alberta. About 90 per cent of seniors live in private households, and of these about 83 per cent actually own their own homes.

Now, a low-interest home-equity loan with the Alberta government would help seniors make those repairs or adaptations to homes that are not currently covered by these grants. Many senior homeowners have home-equity value that they can draw on to improve and adapt their homes. Now, this is a voluntary loan program that will give seniors another option to make the repairs and improvements they need in order to stay in their homes as long as possible. As I mentioned, the loan program is designed to cover a broader range of supports to more seniors than is currently available under the special-needs assistance program. We are proposing an implementation date of July 1, 2016, to allow time to develop the regulations and for communication activities to be planned and implemented.

Now, as I mentioned, to ensure that we continue to support the most vulnerable of our seniors, the loan program would also include a grant component. We want low-income seniors who are currently eligible to access the special-needs assistance home repair benefit program but lack sufficient equity or are mobile-home owners who do not own their land to still be able to access supports for essential home repairs.

We also must ensure that the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act includes strong consumer protection measures to ensure that seniors know their rights when they apply to the loan program. The act includes four sections to legislate consumer protection concerning a range of important issues. The act will ensure

measures to consider the reasonableness of the cost to the individual for the home repair, renovation, or adaptation as part of the loan approval process. It will require the contractor to advise the consumer that the loan program is available to eligible individuals. It will ensure that consumers are made aware of their cancellation rights if they are not eligible for a loan. It will state how contracts may be cancelled and how the consumer may notify the contractor. It will state the effect of a contract cancellation and the responsibility of the contractor to refund any money paid if a contract is cancelled. As well, the regulation under the act will confirm that cancellation rights must be prominent and in writing and included in the contract.

The application form will ask if a senior entering into a contract has been notified by the contractor about their cancellation rights. Seniors who indicate they have not been advised will be contacted by phone to inform them of their rights if they are not eligible for the loan. Contractors will also be contacted to be informed about their obligations under the act and to be advised how they can access further information. The consumer protection mechanisms in the proposed act in no way diminish or exclude consumer rights or existing protections under the Fair Trading Act or its regulations.

The value of this act to seniors in our province is clear. We are, Madam Speaker, mindful of the need to propose fiscally responsible ideas, particularly given the current economic environment. The new program will not cost more to administer since the resources that administer home repair grants through the special-needs assistance program will be shifted to the loan program. We believe this is a positive step for seniors and is fiscally responsible for our government.

**4:10**

We have addressed the needs and priorities of our growing aging population. We will be able to help up to 260,000 seniors with needed repairs or modifications to their homes, and we will support seniors to remain safe, secure, and independent right in their own homes, exactly where they want to be.

Thank you.

With that, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think we've made some good progress today, and I move that we adjourn the House until Monday at 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:11 p.m.]

## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to April 07, 2016**

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

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

**1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)

**2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1]

**3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)

Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2]

**4\* An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft.), 349-66 (Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 399-409 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.), 378-84 (Apr. 6, 2016 morn.), 415-28 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 450-55 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 428-33 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn.)

**5 Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading -- 398 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 455-56 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., adjourned)

**6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.)

**201 Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 119-32 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft.), 303-304 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division)

**202 Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**

First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 305-16 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., adjourned)

**203 Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**

First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)

**Pr1 Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed)







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, April 11, 2016

Day 12

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1      Vacant: 1

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Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 11, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Bow your heads, and let us reflect. As we reflect, let us commemorate the 99th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge on April 9, 1917. Life is precious. When it is lost, we are all weaker. On this day I would ask that all members of Alberta's Legislative Assembly reflect upon the lives of Canadian military personnel lost in service. When we think of them, let us remind ourselves that war is sometimes the result when we fail to reach agreement through dialogue and diplomacy.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark.

**Hon. Members:**

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a very special guest who spent many years serving Albertans. Mr. Denis Ducharme is the former MLA for the constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake, which he represented from 1997 to 2008. During that time he served as whip and as Alberta's minister of community development. Mr. Ducharme also sponsored the Fair Trading Act, and he is here today to listen to the debate on Bill 203 as president of the Motor Dealers' Association of Alberta. My guest is seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I ask him to stand and accept the very traditional warm welcome from this House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly a school group from Sherwood Park, Our Lady of Perpetual Help school. I have a very special place in my heart for this school because it's a French immersion school, and I had an opportunity to talk to the students, and their French was very good. Alors, félicitations à tous les étudiants. I would like to ask them to rise and to receive the customary welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you Mr. Glen Metzler, president and managing director of API Labs, and members of the board of directors, including Blaine Takeda, operations manager and director, John McFadyen, and David Mercer. API Labs is an early stage pharmaceutical fine chemicals processing company establishing the groundwork to create a poppy industry in western Canada. The development of this industry will provide opportunity for agriculture, processing, and research in southern Alberta, creating good jobs and diversifying our economy. I ask that our guests rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three people helping to diversify our economy and create jobs right here in Alberta through a partnership between Alberta Garment company and Olds College that has resulted in the creation of the Apparel Innovation Centre, that we'll hear more about today. Adrian Bussoli is president of Alberta Garment, Michael Bussoli is general manager of the Apparel Innovation Centre, and Tammy Forbes is the associate vice-president of external relations at Olds College. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three wonderful people and business owners from my constituency of St. Albert: Anna Gimpel, Sabrina Roy-Westra, and Jennifer Thomson. All three have a wealth of knowledge and experience in midwifery, and together they own and operate the St. Albert Community Midwives, which opened in 2015. I'd ask them to rise if they're here, unless they're out helping someone give birth. There they are.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House guests who have come to watch the proceedings this afternoon on Bill 203: Sheldon Seefried and Mark McKeown from Fountain Tire, Pauline and Jessica Andruik of Superior Automotive, that's NAPA Autopro, Rita Kause of Mewassin Automotive and the Canadian Independent Automotive Association, Ian Hope of the Alberta Automotive Recyclers and Dismantlers association, Biju Abraham of Speedy Muffler, Peter Finstad of Tirecraft, Garth Hough of West End Tireland, and Terry Dulyk of Dulyk's Automotives as well as Rick Schwabe of Schwabe's Automotive Centre, and John Schmidt of Smitty's automotive. Mr. Speaker, my guests are seated in the members' gallery. I ask them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly

our guests from the Camrose primary care network, who exist to meet the primary health care needs of Camrose and area through collaborative, comprehensive, team-based patient care, and they are here as part of their team. If you would rise as I call your name, I'd like to introduce Stacey Strilchuk, the executive director; Colleen McKinstry, clinical director; Pamela Fankhanel; Eryn Petiot; Colleen Lindholm; Stephanie Loosemore; Pamela Sherman; and Alysa Bartman. Yes, you've risen, and if everybody could given them a warm, traditional welcome to the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly three Albertans engaged in driving our economy forward and supporting our not-for-profit sector. Robbie Kreger-Smith, Trevor Aboussafy, and Jason Gold are also stalwart members of the Alberta Party and part of our Edmonton regional organization team helping us put together a fantastic event this coming Thursday evening. I'll ask Robbie, Trevor, and Jason to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Highwood.

1:40

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a number of automotive industry stakeholders here today to witness debate on Bill 203. I ask that they stand when I call their names: Nancy Suranyi, owner of Namao Automotive Repair and board member of Alberta Independent Automotive Association; Simon Weller, vice-president of sales and marketing in Canada for NAPA Auto Parts; Troy Sawada, director of national accounts, west Pacific, for NAPA Auto Parts; Alvin Chibi, general manager, NAPA distribution centre here in Edmonton; Duncan Dalzell, owner of Dalzell's automotive; Bruce Church, owner of Tristar Collision; Scott Shewchuk, owner of Fountain Tire; Dale Meyn, general manager of Midas auto service; Kent Asselstine, owner of Legend automotive; Bruce Stewart, owner of Bruce Stewart's automotive; and John Fisher, owner of Midas auto service. I ask that the House provide the traditional warm welcome. They're sitting in the members' gallery.

**The Speaker:** Welcome

The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you three guests. Two are senior executives of British Petroleum, or BP Canada, headquartered in Calgary. They are Stephen Willis, president and chairman, and Anita Perry, vice-president, communications and external affairs. Joining them also is Del Robostan, senior vice-president of British Petroleum oil marketing for BP's global oil Americas division. British Petroleum Canada is a valued partner in developing Alberta's energy resources and is a significant investor in our Alberta oil sands. The company holds interests in three oil sands assets in the Athabasca region of northeast Alberta: the Sunrise, the Pike, and the Terre de Grace projects. If Stephen, Anita, and Del would please rise, I would ask you to give them the warm, traditional welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, M. le Président, it is my honour today to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the House three visitors from Quebec. They are staff members with Members of Parliament in the House of Commons in Ottawa. I would like to introduce Charles Chateauvert, Julien Fournier-Dorion, Helene Gagnon. Helene Gagnon actually works for the Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Strathcona. I will ask them to rise and receive the customary welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I would like to introduce a very dear friend and a colleague who sat with me on the Alliance executive and the national board of directors of the Public Service Alliance of Canada from 2008 until 2011, M. Jean-François Des Lauriers. In the gallery, if he would please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the chief executive officer of Parkinson Alberta, John Petryshen. He is joined today by members of the Parkinson Alberta board, clients, and care partners. Today, on World Parkinson's Day, we draw attention to the second most common neurological disease affecting 10,000 Albertans. April is Parkinson's Awareness Month, a time when we shine light on the great work done year-round for Albertans living with Parkinson's disease. Last fall Parkinson Alberta moved into a new home in Edmonton, the Buchanan Centre for Parkinson's. This one-of-a-kind facility in Canada is located in my Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood constituency.

The tulips we wear today symbolize that hope will bloom this spring. This spring Parkinson Alberta brings hope to people across the province. Helping those living with and affected by Parkinson's through support services, programs, and educational opportunities is key to living with the disease. It is Parkinson Alberta's main focus. Today we applaud the important work of Parkinson Alberta as they rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

### Apparel Innovation Centre

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm happy to be speaking about a great Alberta company, the Alberta Garment company, and its new state-of-the-art garment testing facility, the Apparel Innovation Centre. The Apparel Innovation Centre is a partnership between Alberta Garment and Olds College. Olds College has a fashion marketing and apparel technology program, so it was a natural fit. It is western Canada's first apparel and research facility, and I'm proud to say that it is located in Alberta's greatest constituency, Calgary-Klein. The facility boasts such state-of-the-art machinery as a hot liquid and steam protection testing chamber and a thermal comfort testing chamber, that allow

designers and entrepreneurs to test prototypes for protective gear to be worn by workers in the oil patch and other industries. As the only facility of its type in western Canada, Alberta designers no longer have to use similar facilities in Montreal or the United States. Instead, they can design, test, and cost their visions right here in Alberta.

Since opening the facility in January, Adrian Bussoli, the president of Alberta Garment, and Michael Bussoli, general manager of the Apparel Innovation Centre, have already had many established brands, established businesses, and new designers taking advantage of the facility's unique opportunities. What's more, they are a bright light in today's otherwise challenging economy, with many new hires in the last few months alone. Having had the pleasure of touring the facility, it is an impressive facility, and it shows the hours of testing, design, and manufacturing that go into the garments that keep Alberta's workers safe and warm on the job, and it really is a facility that fuels more innovation and entrepreneurial spirit right in our own backyard.

Congratulations on the new facility, and I look forward to Alberta Garment's future endeavours and the possibility of more partnerships.

Thank you.

### Energy Policies

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, let me take you down memory lane. Just a few years ago, in fact, the Premier was standing outside taking pictures at antipipeline protests; the Education minister was chanting, "No new approvals"; and the environment minister was penning a how-to guide for anti-Alberta protesters. But then something happened. They stumbled blindly into power. Now they want us to believe they're not the same radicals who have been a thorn in the side of our province for years.

But Albertans aren't fools. No one was surprised to see the NDP vote to shut down the energy sector this weekend. The Leap Manifesto is the embodiment of everything the NDP, including the members opposite, have espoused for years. The ideas contained in this radical manifesto are in the DNA of every single member across the aisle. They call our oil dirty. They demonize our energy workers, and they tell them to take a hike. They hold our energy communities hostage to their extreme ideologies. Sure, they're being very careful to say the right things now, but the fact is that their past actions are in perfect harmony with every paragraph, every sentence, and every word contained in the Leap Manifesto.

This manifesto didn't come out of nowhere. It was released during the last federal election, when the members opposite were ignoring their jobs here and working to elect anti-Alberta candidates in other provinces. This manifesto serves to remind us, however, that this government is fundamentally un-Albertan. This government does not represent our hard-working people. This government cannot be trusted to do the right thing at the right time for the right reason.

The Wildrose is proud to stand up for the values of Albertans. We're focused on stopping these radical members from killing jobs. We will proudly be Alberta's voice until this government and the manifesto it rode in on are nothing but a bad memory.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** A point of order by the Government House Leader. I've been advised of that.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Energy Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2014 there were 375,000 Albertans whose livelihoods relied on the energy sector; 100,000 of those jobs have disappeared in the last year. But that's not enough jobs lost for the Premier's friends, friends the Premier's cabinet campaigned for, friends the Premier herself has fundraised for. The Premier promised that by taxing families with a \$3 billion carbon tax, by shutting down coal in Alberta, and by capping oil sands growth, Alberta would get a pipeline. Not even her own party members are buying that, however. How does she expect Albertans to actually trust this government?

1:50

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I find it a little bit ironic to have the member opposite asking about trust given that just last week your own supporters said that building a pipeline was a, quote, doomsday scenario that might possibly result in support for our government, and you are ready to put your party's interests over that. So who should Albertans trust? Who should Albertans trust? Not those folks over there.

**Mr. Jean:** The Premier can't do \$10,000 fundraisers for NDP members who back radical anti-Alberta manifestos and then pretend that she has nothing to do with it. The Premier stood with ForestEthics just in November promising that her own manifesto against our energy sector would build pipelines. It turns out ForestEthics is actually a founding signatory on this NDP Leap Manifesto. So is Public Interest Alberta, a group with very close ties to the Premier's own cabinet. Why should Albertans have to pay a \$3 billion carbon tax when the Premier's own friends don't support our energy sector?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, let me be perfectly clear. If you didn't happen to see it on Saturday, let me do it again. Our government completely repudiates any part of that document's reference to the energy sector and pipelines. We will continue to work hard to get to a pipeline, and I will not be lectured by somebody who stood in government for 10 years and couldn't get it done.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta NDP has done everything possible to make life harder in our energy sector. They raised business taxes and taxes on heavy emitters, they are shutting down coal, they are capping growth in the oil sands, and to top it all off, they are asking Alberta families to pay a \$3 billion, uncampaigned-for carbon tax only to have the Premier's closest friends vote to shut down our energy sector altogether. Will the Premier back down from her own risky manifesto, seeing as she has failed to get Albertans the social licence she promised this would?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm hearing from a former MP who sat in government for 10 years and failed to do anything to build a pipeline. We have no lessons to learn from this hon. member, who accomplished nothing while in government on this issue, and what the member is now asking us to do is to return to a policy of science denial and climate change denial and do nothing for another 10 years. We will not do that either.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

**Mr. Jean:** Oh, Mr. Speaker, that's funny. The Leap Manifesto is a complete rejection of the energy industry and resource development in Alberta as a whole. The manifesto calls for a total moratorium on pipelines and oil sands development. Albertans know that it is a radical set of policies that would shatter our way of life and our quality of life. Albertans also know that the members across the aisle would have been voting for this manifesto if they were still in opposition. Does the Premier not recognize that part of the reason she didn't sway her party members is that they don't believe she's actually sincere about it?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we are clear. We must get to yes on a pipeline, and we will repudiate again the suggestion that we would ever stop building energy infrastructure in Alberta. But what I want to know is this. Supporters over there called building a pipeline a doomsday scenario. We've repudiated our problem. Have you repudiated yours?

**Mr. Jean:** It's true, Mr. Speaker. Even NDP members are now supporting the Wildrose.

The Leap Manifesto isn't just against pipelines; it also opposes trade agreements. It thinks that trade agreements are wrong because they might "stop damaging extractive projects." The Premier might have more credibility in her opposition to the Leap Manifesto if she actually supported the trans-Pacific partnership or even the New West Partnership, but the Premier has opposed international trade agreements and even interprovincial trade agreements. Will the Premier take a stand today against the entire Leap Manifesto by recommitting Alberta to the New West Partnership?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I've already answered this a couple of times now. Our government absolutely repudiates the manifesto. We will not support that part of it that talks about energy infrastructure because we are committed to supporting a progressive, sustainable energy industry in this province, supporting the workers that that supports, and moving forward on responsible environmental development, including the climate change plan, because that's the way to move forward. You don't look backwards. You don't look at the dinosaurs. You don't stick your head in the sand. You actually take responsibility for the future when you're asked to govern.

**The Speaker:** Third main question.

**Mr. Jean:** I think supplementary 2, Mr. Speaker.

The Leap Manifesto calls for adopting an iron law of energy development. If you don't want it in your backyard, then it doesn't belong in anyone's backyard. Think about that. It rejects pipelines and mining of all resources. It makes NIMBYism the law of the land. Reasonable people know that that sort of policy is just crazy. Albertans know that lots of government members and many of their senior staff are on the record supporting crazy ideas just like this. Will the Premier purge her government of this type of crazy antidevelopment ideology?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, what could be helpful is if we all actually work together to get the pipeline that members across say, some days, that they want. You know, their supporters are out there saying that they don't want a pipeline, that it would be a doomsday scenario. I suggest to the member opposite that instead of hoping for failure, they come together and work with us to get that kind of energy infrastructure in place. He spent 10 years not doing it. Maybe if we work together, we could actually see success.

## Government Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Today the government had a jobs plan announcement. Albertans were hoping to actually hear something positive or productive. Maybe the government might even act on one of our, you know, great ideas in the jobs action plan. Instead, the minister announced the cancelling of their failed job plan. In their winter newsletter to NDP members just a couple of months ago this government listed the jobs plan that they abandoned today as one of their top three accomplishments. How exactly does a failed program get listed as a top government accomplishment?

**Ms Notley:** Well, first of all, I would ask the member opposite to read the documents he is receiving – strangely, as a member of our party – a little bit more carefully. Today what happened was that the minister of economic development, in talking about one small part of our jobs plan, did something that I know the folks over there would find difficult. After doing the research, after looking at the evidence, we decided that there was a better way forward, so we acknowledged that there was a better way forward. We made a different plan because that's what you do when you're trying to do the best thing for the people who elected you. You go with the research, you go with the evidence, and if you get it wrong, you admit it and . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** I will stay on failed programs. The opposition and business groups spent the fall telling this government that their job subsidy program would not work. Time and time again the Premier and ministers rose in this place and said that it was a great idea. The NDP listed it as one of their top three accomplishments in their January newsletter to members. Today they acknowledged the truth and killed this program. Let me save the Premier some time and trouble. Her carbon tax, the evidence clearly says, will also be a failed program, and she will have to kill it. Will she save Albertans the expense and abandon the carbon tax today? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, when you're asking questions, please listen.

Madam Premier.

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the contrary, our government is very proud to be moving forward with a climate leadership plan that will lead the country in making progress on greenhouse gas emission reduction while repositioning ourselves for better economic diversification and for a more progressive, sustainable energy industry in the future, where we will be more effective at exporting our resources, not less. That's what good governance is about. It's not about denying climate science. It's not about challenging whether the dinosaurs walked with us. It's actually about using the research and . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** This weekend the agriculture minister was talking about opportunities in agriculture. Apparently, he is really excited about having more greenhouse businesses to grow locally produced vegetables. This might be a good idea if it wasn't contradicted by the government's other bad policies. Last fall Hotchkiss Herbs & Produce greenhouses of Calgary announced that the carbon tax, this carbon tax that the NDP likes so much, was going to put them out of business. Owner Paul Hotchkiss listed several NDP plans that hurt greenhouses. Will the minister acknowledge that this government's carbon tax will kill more greenhouses in Alberta?



**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I found it interesting at the time that a carbon levy which was about 14 months away from being introduced was actually killing a business right at that point.

But, no. What we will do is that we will work with all Albertans. We will work with industries that are particularly impacted. We will also ensure that we're able to move forward in a way that is sustainable. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation to future generations to reduce our emissions in this province, and we have an obligation to future generations to lead climate change action across the country. That is what our government is doing.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

### **Energy Policies** (continued)

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend the government's parent party, which they belong to, advanced support for a halt to pipeline construction and an end to all fossil fuel use by 2050. Since the NDP ideology includes putting Alberta's largest employers out of business, for many Albertans this may be the last straw that will break their family's back. To the Premier: although a select few of your cabinet may now be half-heartedly speaking out about how harmful NDP policies are, where were they this weekend, when it mattered for Alberta?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to refer the member opposite to the link that actually showed where I was. I was at the convention on Saturday, giving a speech about where we stood in Alberta on the issue of our energy industry. I was proud of that. I was proud of our members. Again, as I've said, we've completely repudiated that part of that document. It is not going forward. Albertans can trust us to have their back.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have had difficulty hearing the Premier's remarks, as has the rest of the House. Would you ensure that you keep your applause so that I can hear them.

First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also saw that the Premier was in Jasper on Sunday, when people were voting on this.

Last week the Deputy Premier said: "certainly be talking about opportunities to move our products east and west with our colleagues from across Canada over this very weekend." Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans who watched the NDP convention did not see much of that minister on the microphone in their defence. To the Deputy Premier: what changed over the weekend, and why did you not speak up for Alberta when you had the chance?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address the question. Certainly, I was at the convention. I was working the floor. I was meeting with people who'd signed on to Leap and explaining to them exactly how important this was to our whole country's prosperity, not just Alberta's. I find that I've made a lot of progress in those conversations. I was also addressing national media and making it very clear that our entire government, Alberta government policy, our party, are opposed to this, we repudiate it, and we are continuing to move forward to get a pipeline built.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there's no record at the convention of what the minister said, so it must have been voice mode.

Just before today at noon in a media conference the Premier called the Leap Manifesto thoughtless, naive, and tone-deaf and also said: it's not about how I feel. I think that Albertans may think it is about how you feel since it's the most important thing to them. And then the truth. The Premier said: I haven't read it. Premier, will you read the document so you can defend Albertans and actually stand up for them in Alberta?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I believe, again, as I've already stated, that I have a clear record of standing up for the interests of Albertans on this particular issue, and I'm very proud to continue doing that because I'm fully aware how important it is to Albertans. When I said that it's not about me, the point was this. It's about how we help Albertans and Alberta families and those people who have lost their jobs and those people that are looking for jobs and those people that are building businesses and new businesses. That's what our job as government is, that's what we will focus on, and that was what my point was.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### **Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation Communications**

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's been four months since the acrimonious passage of the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act. While the benefits to the workers themselves are obvious, there remains misinformation and confusion about the benefits to the farm and ranch owners. Not only does the bill bring Alberta practices into line with the rest of the provinces in the country; the bill is essential to honour the Canadian Charter, our international obligations, and Albertans' opportunities to sell to international markets. To the minister of agriculture: given that the bill was passed in December last, when will the minister communicate more clearly and convincingly what the benefits of the bill ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It happens to be a very good question, a very timely question. We're still in the process of tweaking the membership for the technical working groups. It is important to remember – and I'm sure the member would agree – that this is about protection for farm workers, for nonfamily wage farm workers, and making sure that that remains the focus going forward, to talk to all working groups, for sure, getting input from the farm and ranch employers as well but making sure to remember that this is about the workers themselves. I'm very much looking forward to those technical working groups and their recommendations.

Thank you.

**Dr. Swann:** Again to the minister: given that Bill 6 protects farmers and ranchers against lawsuits, protects against criminal liability, and meets increasing international trade obligations around health and labour standards, when and how will the minister counter the misinformation with accurate public information on the benefits to farm owners and ranchers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. There has been a lot of communication. I've had the opportunity to go to many different meetings, talking with many different stakeholders, some who were quite interesting, but, you know, going to many different stakeholders, talking to them as much as I possibly can to ensure that they know the benefits to them around WCB, around how the upcoming regulations will benefit their operations, will give them additional social licence so that they can market their goods worldwide that much more easily.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the Minister of Labour because this is fundamentally a labour bill. What support is available to enable vulnerable paid agriculture workers to participate meaningfully in consultations, especially when many of their bosses oppose the changes?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to supporting our farm workers. We know that farm workers are already benefiting from the passage of the farm and ranch worker enhancement act through the WCB system. As of March 19 106 farm workers had injury claims approved by the WCB, more than double the 49 approved claims throughout all of 2015. Of those approved claims, 45 were for lost time, meaning that those workers were compensated for an injury that took them off the job, where they could no longer work. We will continue to engage with farm workers and include . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

### Education Concerns

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that Alberta schools play a critical role in shaping Alberta's next generation of leaders. We know, too, that our students will continue to require an education that prepares them for their careers in a diversified economy. To the Minister of Education: what is being done to support our students?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. You know, we are all living in very difficult economic circumstances here, but our government is committed to public education from K to 12, funding for enrolment, and making sure that all of our kids get the education that they deserve. We do not depend in Education on the price of oil but, rather, on a moral obligation to make sure that kids get the education that they need. We're working with dual credit programs with our colleges across the province. We're working with career and technology models so that we have different possibilities for kids to make sure that they get the education they deserve.

2:10

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given the economic difficulties facing our province, have we seen more families moving out of Alberta and a reduction in student enrolment as a result?

**Mr. Eggen:** That's a very good question, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, our ministry is monitoring and each of the school boards across the province are monitoring their enrolment very carefully. Of course, that's how they fund each of their 61 school boards. We are watching. We saw in this last year – we were estimating for about 1.5 per cent enrolment growth. Instead, we saw 2.7 per cent enrolment growth, which is very healthy. It's an indication that people are here with families. They're staying here. We're building the infrastructure to have our students in the facilities that they need and have teachers in front of those students as well.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've been hearing from parents in my constituency that they are worried about their children's job prospects when they graduate, to the same minister: what steps are you taking to prepare students for success in a diversified economy?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you for the question. Certainly, it's important for us to be creative, to have those links between postsecondary education and our high schools. In fact, we've expanded that now in a more broad way for career and technology foundations for students between grade 5 and grade 9 to have some fundamental interaction with the possibilities for different jobs in the future. We want our education to enrich the lives of each of our children, but we also want them to have a clear understanding of where that can take them in regard to the career in the future working world in which they will live.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

### Environmental Policies

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently had a member's statement in this House titled I Told You So, and unfortunately that's a message that I'm going to have to bring up again. In July 2015 the Alberta Conservation Association informed Environment and Parks about certain legal liabilities regarding the aeration of about 20 lakes in Alberta. Environment and Parks came up with a last-minute, haphazard plan for aerating these lakes this winter. It was a disaster. To the minister. A lot of those lakes have had massive fish kills, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of fish, possibly entire fisheries. Will the minister stand up and accept responsibility . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Is there a minister that will take the question? Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am aware of some of the challenges with lake aeration this past winter, and we are examining the matter. We are taking it very, very seriously, and Environment and Parks will be working with the Alberta Conservation Association to get it right.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that the minister assured us in this House on October 27 and again on November 18 in estimates that the matter was taken care of and given that the minister stated, "Of course, the Alberta Conservation Association is a delegated administrative authority of the Department of Environment and Parks" and given that it may take decades for a fishery to recover, to the minister:

what plans does she have to fix this ecological disaster and ensure the survival of these fisheries for future generations of Albertans?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. Of course, one of the first ways we're going to do that is to ensure that we do not cut the heart out of environmental budgets in this province. We are going to ensure that we've got the resources in place to protect our air, land, and water for future generations, which is not something that you can do with multibillion-dollar cuts.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, this government can't seem to get anything right. Given the failure of their farm safety bill, their job-creation program, their oil projections, and the recent Balancing Pool fiasco and given this government's inability to simply keep fish from dying throughout Alberta, to the minister: how can Albertans trust this minister to manage Suffield elk, grizzlies, bighorn sheep, or any of our resources in light of this most recent environmental disaster?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we will be working with the department scientists and the ACA on this matter of the fish and fish hatchery resources.

Now, I know that the hon. member opposite takes a personal interest in hunting matters, being that he was an outfitter, so certainly I'm surprised that I'm finally getting a question on the environment. I'm not surprised that it's exactly within his personal interests, Mr. Speaker. We will be moving forward with a number of different initiatives over the spring and fall, and certainly conservation is a big part of that.

Thank you.

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

### Child Care Supports

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has one of the youngest populations in Canada. Working families are the key to the Alberta advantage, but with the economy in the state it's in, they need a government that's going to be there to support them. With a \$3 billion carbon tax, job losses piling up, this government needs to take serious steps to make sure Alberta families are taken care of. One clear way is to support families and ensure access to child care and early childhood learning for children. To the Minister of Finance: will the 2016 budget contain the funding and planning for child care that your government promised back in May?

**Mr. Ceci:** We have a budget coming out in just a few short days. There'll be everything laid out there, including where we are in platform commitments, which I think is what the hon. member is asking about.

**The Speaker:** Supplemental.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous Alberta government created over 10,000 child care spaces with the intent of broadening Alberta's workforce and providing parents with the security they need to work and contribute to Alberta's economy, to the Minister of Human Services: what is your targeted goal for opening affordable child care spaces?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As a government we recognize that providing affordable, quality child care is important from many different angles, for the better development of the children and for the better participation of women and parents in the workforce. We will make sure that with the coming budget we include plans that provide for these opportunities.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all due respect, I wondered how many. We all know how important it is.

Given that since the October budget the Minister of Finance has backedpedalled on commitments made during the election and given the silence of the government on child care, we need assurances that Albertans won't have to choose between child care and feeding their kids. To the Minister of Human Services again: what steps will you be taking to alleviate the financial burden on families with low incomes, families who rely on child care to work?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to assure the member opposite that, unlike their budget, we will not be further cutting from Human Services. The second thing: what steps we will be taking will be laid out in the budget, and I say, "Stay tuned."

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Charter Schools

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I asked the Minister of Education why the ReThink charter school application was not approved by his ministry. The application met the requirements of the previous government, yet this minister replied, "Based on the way that we went through the process, some charter schools did not make the grade." Apparently, the ministry has made some changes with respect to charter school regulation. To the minister: what changes have been made to the regulation, and what made you decide that this charter, designed specifically for students with special learning needs, did not make the grade?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Certainly, our government has a wide range of different choices for education, and they all provide some value across the province. No, we had not made any changes to regulation in regard to the application of new charter schools. Rather, the previous government minister made a presumption, leaping over the regulation to make a promise for that particular school. Then with the proper application of the regulation, it was found to be wanting.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister stated last week, "We can reach out more to ensure that all students and their families in the city of Calgary and right across the province as well have all of the different opportunities available to them," when will this minister's rhetoric be matched by action? Will the minister contact ReThink charter administrators and work with them through the regulatory process so that parents can access this unique stand-alone and critically important special-needs program?

2:20

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you for the question. Certainly, we've seen over the last number of years a dramatic increase in the breadth and the scope of our public schools in Calgary and Edmonton to provide unique programming to meet the needs of students in our school system in Calgary and right across the province as well. Mr. Speaker, this is part of the criteria that we use in regulation. Does the charter school provide unique programming that's not available in a public school or a separate school across the province? That was one of the reasons that, in fact, this one didn't make the grade. In fact, the public schools are . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that one charter school in Calgary has reported that, quote, we have 11,000 additional children waiting to be admitted into our school, end quote, and since Albertans obviously want the alternative charter schools and given that there are two spaces for charter applications to be filled, will the minister support the right of parental choice and allow Albertans, including ReThink charter school, access to this valuable educational alternative?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I think perhaps the hon. member is mixing up the idea of the right for people to choose and the right for charter schools to impose that they somehow have a right to have a new application come through and be approved just like that. There was confusion from the previous government because there was some leaping over the proper regulatory procedures. We do follow the procedures, and we continue to do so. We know that public education is serving a vast majority of parents and students very well – thank you very much – in this province, and there is choice . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

### Transportation Infrastructure

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP's recent Leap Manifesto dreams of uniting every community with high-speed rail powered by renewables, but we need this government to come back to reality and ensure our current transportation infrastructure is properly maintained. Albertans need a safe and reliable transportation network both now and well into the future. Will the Minister of Transportation commit to restoring the necessary operational funding for proper crack sealing, grass mowing, and ferry operations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would just indicate to the hon. member – and thank you very much for the question – that we are facing difficult economic times in our province, and the financial position of the government has deteriorated with the international price of oil, as the member is well aware. The reductions in last year's budget were unfortunate. We would have preferred not to have done them, but the opposition is constantly asking us to find reductions and to find cuts. Any cut is something that they will challenge, yet they'll want us to cut . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that farmers in my constituency have been informed that the Klondyke ferry across the Athabasca River may open late and close early this year due to budget cuts and farmers need this ferry to safely move their equipment, which cannot fit through the truss bridge at Fort Assiniboine, does the Minister of Transportation intend to keep this road closed unnecessarily, or will the Klondyke ferry on highway 661 be launched in time for seeding?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I will take that under advisement, and I will get back to him.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, we all care about safety, and what we need are common-sense plans that help Albertans on a daily basis. Given that the 2015 budget cut operational funding to maintenance and preservation of the provincial highway system by almost \$50 million and considering we saw accidents and close calls occur with wildlife and other vehicles due to reduced summer maintenance and grass mowing, can the minister advise when the summer maintenance directives will be given to the highway maintenance contractors so they can prepare their work schedule for the summer?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Well, as I indicated earlier, we have a difficult financial position in this province as a result of the drop in the price of oil. The difficult financial decisions that the government has to make pale in comparison with the difficult decisions that would have to be made if that party cut billions of dollars from our budget.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### Mandatory Country of Origin Labelling for Lamb

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard great disappointment from the Alberta Lamb Producers, which is one of Alberta's many sustainable and thriving industries. In December of 2015 the United States repealed COOL legislation for beef and pork but not for lamb. The expectation of Alberta's livestock industry is that the federal and provincial governments would fight for the U.S. to repeal COOL and settle for no less than its removal from the entire industry in Canada and Alberta. To the minister: what are you doing to ensure that Alberta's lamb producers are no longer legislated by COOL?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. You know, it gives great pleasure to know that the repeal of COOL was a great victory for Alberta, a great victory for Canada, and a victory for our livestock industry. It helps enhance our mutually beneficial trade between the two countries, it helps restore those markets for Alberta's producers, it helps agricultural products. It's important to note, Mr. Speaker, that agricultural products are our second-largest export sector, and the United States is our most important trading partner.

Repealing discriminatory labelling requirements was a good step in the right direction, and I believe we're working with our federal government on looking at other – thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's lamb producers sought help of not only their MPs but of their Alberta MLAs and given that they were still included in the country of origin labelling, to the minister: how are you advocating for Alberta's lamb producers, and when will you listen to their concerns given these tough economic times?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It was my understanding that the Alberta sheep producers first raised concerns to our federal government about their requirements under COOL in 2015. At that time it was not legally possible for the lamb producers to get their concerns into that case for COOL. So I do, you know, encourage our lamb and sheep producers to contact the national Sheep Value Chain Roundtable and the Market Access Secretariat so they can address that very valid concern.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that COOL continues to discriminate against Canadian lamb and that this decision to repeal COOL for only beef and pork isolates the sheep industry as the sole livestock sector to be subject to country of origin labelling, which undermines the industry's position with the Canadian livestock sector, to the minister: what are you doing to re-establish equitable trade agreements with our U.S. trading partners?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It's important to remember that labelling requirements are still in place for poultry, lamb, and venison as well as fruits, vegetables, and certain nuts, you know, produced in Canada, so it's important that we continue working with our federal government to address those concerns. I couldn't agree more with the member that we need to do more for our lamb producers. It's also important to note that our sheep producers last year had one of the best years that they've ever had, and I hope that this year they continue to grow their industry both domestically and internationally.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

### Postsecondary Institution Governance

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard from many postsecondary students in my constituency regarding concerns about their institution's governance. An institution's board of governors plays an essential role in the guidance of Alberta's postsecondary institutions, and their role as a public body only increases that accountability. These boards have also become essential in allowing institutions to meet the educational needs of Alberta's diverse population, yet there are dozens of vacant positions on these boards, including those of public members and board chairs. To the Minister of Advanced Education: why haven't these vacancies been filled yet?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank my hon. friend for giving me the opportunity to address this issue. It's no secret that our government intends to reinvigorate public boards. There's a thorough process in place for applications, in which there has been significant interest. It's important that we take the time to understand the needs of our colleges and universities to ensure that board members have the appropriate expertise to meet those needs, and we're working closely with colleges and universities to find and interview the right people to serve in those critical roles.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Minister, for that answer, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given Alberta's diversity and unique needs of students and given that part of the government's mandate is to enhance the diversity of postsecondary boards, can the minister tell us what this means in a practical sense?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My friend is right in saying that we want to encourage more diverse perspectives on our postsecondary boards, which flies in the face of the past government's practices of only offering these appointments to their friends. Our government believes that these boards should represent the gender, social, and cultural diversity of our college and university students and that of all Albertans, and we remain focused on appointing the best people for the job. That's why we're taking the time to interview qualified, respected candidates for these crucial positions.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the governance role these boards have, again to the same minister: how can Albertans be assured that public members appointed have the right experience?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my hon. friend for this excellent final question. During our thorough interview process we assess four core competencies for all board opportunities, including senior leadership and governance, and then we assess additional competencies specific to the needs for each opening. Each and every applicant is assessed against these identified criteria. This is important to our government because postsecondary boards are responsible for guiding the future of our colleges and universities.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Airdrie.

### Midwifery Services

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased to see the Health minister respond to the Wildrose's call to recognize the importance of midwifery services to families and our health care system. However, midwives operating in clinics in places like St. Albert, Lac La Biche, and Cochrane are still worried. They need real evidence that there will be stable funding, not vague platitudes from the minister in the face of a late budget. Midwife clinics hang

in the balance. Will the minister be straight with Albertans and commit to removing the cap on access to midwives and implement a stable funding model?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We value the role that Alberta midwives play in our system and the important role they play in the health of mothers and their babies. We're very pleased to be meeting with midwives across the province and mothers both here in Edmonton and in Calgary on various events that have happened in the last little while. This last year our government invested an additional \$1.8 million for midwifery services, funding up to 400 more midwifery-supported births than the year before, and we continue to work with our partners in midwifery.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Associate Minister of Health says that the government is still working on the details of what funding for midwives will look like in the budget and given that the NDP Member for St. Albert has reportedly been requesting a meeting with the Minister of Health on the St. Albert midwife clinic for weeks, how can midwives and families trust that the minister's claim to be listening to midwives on this issue is genuine, and has the minister even met with her own NDP MLA to hear the clinic's concerns yet?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As a matter of fact, I regularly meet with my colleagues on any of the issues that are a concern for them, and I am pleased to report in this House, particularly given our guests here today, that the Member for St. Albert and I have met and had a thorough discussion about this issue. As I said, we are continuing to work with our partners in the midwifery college, within the Alberta association of midwifery, as well as with practices across the province.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given the simple fact that midwifery care saves money and given that families deserve to have the option of midwife services and that there are 1,800 women waiting for a midwife right now, adding a mere 400 courses of care last year was just not enough. Does the minister recognize that she is breaking Albertans' trust by refusing to save taxpayer dollars and ignoring the growing demand for midwifery care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. Both myself and my hon. colleague the Minister of Health have restated our position that we are continuing to support choice for Albertans in childbirth. We have some good news coming in the upcoming budget.

I have to say that I find it very interesting that the opposition Health critic will tell one audience that his party would provide unlimited funding for midwifery clinics while at the same time their Finance critic constantly talks about cutting billions of dollars from our public services.

## Foreign Trade Zones

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, under the previous federal government Port Alberta and the Calgary Region Inland Port were designated as foreign trade zones. By positioning these two cities as major international trade hubs, we can attract and leverage significant capital investment while allowing potential international partners faster and more efficient access to western Canada. To the minister of economic development. Preserving foreign trade zone status is integral to Alberta's competitiveness on the global stage, allowing greater opportunities for economic diversification. Given this announcement is less than one year old, have you received a firm commitment from your federal counterpart on Edmonton and Calgary FTZ status?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the hon. member for the question, a very good question at that. I am having dialogue and conversations with the federal government. At this point in time, to answer his question directly, no, I have not heard back yet.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that trade is very, very critical not only to Alberta but also to our country and to our government. We take it very seriously. That's why I recently returned from a trade mission to China and Korea, where we are looking at opportunities to leverage our successes. We had a number of concrete, tangible outcomes, that I'm happy to talk about momentarily.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the aforementioned authorities, Port Alberta and Calgary region, are noted experts in attracting and sustaining international investment and trade and given that their initiatives and strategies are integral to building the relationships we need to access global markets for a variety of our products, including oil, again to the minister: are you working with these authorities to develop an Alberta-wide plan, part of our engagement strategy, which seeks to leverage the strengths of both groups to maximize Alberta's competitiveness in the global economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question and remind the House that, again, you know, market access is a key priority for our government. This is why our Premier, our government created this Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, to have a focus on working with the private sector, the job creators, but also looking at opportunities to increase our trade opportunities. We will continue to do that.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take it that that means you are meeting with those organizations.

Given that the minister was recently in China and Korea for 14 days and given that these are the very destinations to which we need to market and sell these two ports, again to the minister: during your trip to Asia did you mention these two entities and their status as foreign trade zones, and did you seek feedback on how your government can assist in making Alberta even more attractive as a place for international business community investment?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again I'll thank the member for the question. Trade is absolutely critical and a high priority for our government. I can tell the House that, quite frankly, this trade mission to China and Korea was my first trade mission outside of North America. It was very intentional to go to our second- and fifth-largest trading partners for the province of Alberta. We recognize that there are incredible opportunities to increase trade, whether we're talking about agriculture and agri-food products, forestry, looking at our energy sector, as well as looking for opportunities to leverage tourism. Quite frankly, we were quite happy, and I was proud of the culture minister for announcing . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Child Benefit Program

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a community advocate for more than two decades I have heard and witnessed the effects a tough economy has on children, families, and communities. Given our government's commitment to stand up for Albertans in need, could the Minister of Human Services please update the Chamber on what our government is doing to support children and families in need throughout Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our government knows that Albertans are feeling the shock of low oil prices. In tough times Albertans pull together. Our government has made a commitment to help Alberta families who are facing financial hardship. That is why we have created the Alberta child benefit, a new program that provides financial support to lower income families. The Alberta child benefit will help families make ends meet, support a better quality of life for children, and ensure every Albertan has the resources they need to reach their full potential.

**Loyola:** Thank you for the update on this initiative.

Given the current economic challenges my constituents will be pleased to hear that our government is being proactive to address economic hardship. To the same minister: could you elaborate further on what impact the Alberta child benefit will have on Alberta's children and families?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. The Alberta child benefit will improve the lives of 235,000 children in 130,000 lower income families. The ACB, Alberta child benefit, will provide \$195 million in annual benefit to Alberta families in need starting this August. All Alberta families earning less than \$41,220 will be eligible for this benefit, including those families on AISH and income supports benefits. The maximum annual benefit . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents, especially those with difficulty accessing financial resources, have been in my office and have asked how they can receive the Alberta

child benefit. Again to the minister: how can families take advantage of this important program?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are basically four requirements: first, they have been living in Alberta for one month; second, they have at least one child under the age of 18; third, they have filed their tax return; and fourth, they meet the income threshold of \$41,220. I would encourage all eligible parents to file their tax returns to CRA. There are many community organizations here in Alberta who provide free tax-filing services.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 15 seconds we will move to Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

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

### Environmental Monitoring

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans agree the environmental impact of the oil sands must be effectively tracked and monitored. The previous government took steps to enhance oversight and ensure appropriate stewardship by creating the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Agency, or AEMERA, which was charged with the oversight of key air, water, land and biodiversity indicators. Establishment of this truly arm's-length, independent body removed potential for and optics of ministerial interference. In the House during debate one opposition member was particularly passionate and steadfast in calling for this independence. Was that just any MLA? No. It was the now minister of economic development. The minister was correct then, but can we count on him now to implore his own government to do the right thing by saving AEMERA, thereby reaffirming his principles?

Now, the government would have us all believe that AEMERA was a bureaucrat-heavy nightmare which accomplished nothing, except perhaps turning the environmental reins over to seasoned professionals and qualified independent scientists. They will tell you that an integral responsibility was offloaded and that by moving it back under the minister's control, they are doing Albertans a service. They've said again and again that they are on the side of science. Is this subjective ministerial science, characterized by the stone cold facts of the questionably funded Pembina Institute? Ten internationally recognized scientists recently signed a letter which says that the environment minister was naive in her conclusions, pointing to multiple inaccuracies in making this rash decision. This government has again put ideology ahead of objectivity, rejected professional stewardship, and it is revisiting the tired drone that all decisions of the previous government were bad, instead of doing what is best for Albertans.

As my colleague from Calgary-North West stated just last week, opposition does indeed have some valid perspectives and good ideas, and as right as your minister was in 2013 . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

### Silver Springs Community Activities

**Mr. Connolly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to rise in this House and speak about Silver Springs Botanical Gardens Society and the Silver Springs Community Association, two great organizations in the best constituency in Alberta, Calgary-Hawkwood.

Mr. Speaker, we say that April showers bring May flowers, and for these two organizations 2015 applications brought 2016 grants. I want to congratulate the Silver Springs Botanical Gardens Society for receiving a community initiatives program grant so that they could conduct renovations and buy new gardening equipment and the Silver Springs Community Association for receiving a community facility enhancement program grant to improve the conditions of their community hall so that they could keep holding unique community events like the Silver Springs family barbecue, Christmas craft fair, and, my personal favourite, the annual Lego building competition. The community of Silver Springs and the Silver Springs Botanical Gardens are truly hidden gems of Calgary.

I had the pleasure of touring the botanical gardens just a couple of weeks ago and was able to see first-hand the incredible work that the volunteers have been able to accomplish in just a few years. As someone who loves literature, my favourite area is the Shakespeare garden, which features quotations from some of Shakespeare's greatest works, my favourite being the quotation from act 5, scene 1 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was my line when I was in the play in high school and reads, "O Wall, sweet and lovely Wall," placed beside the sound barrier that divides Silver Springs and Crowchild Trail.

It's these little heritage points that make Silver Springs so special. Silver Springs is one of five vibrant communities in Calgary-Hawkwood where neighbours and families work every day to make our little corner of Calgary beautiful. Due to the hard work of volunteers in the community of Silver Springs, everything is coming up roses. Mr. Speaker, April 10 to 16 is also National Volunteer Week in Canada, and I am proud of what these two organizations have managed to achieve for our community through dedicated volunteering.

Thank you.

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

### St. Albert Community Midwives

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and recognize a new midwifery clinic in the community of St. Albert, as my friend across the way mentioned. Midwifery is a holistic and science-based practice, based on the belief that pregnancy, labour, and birth are profound experiences for women and their families. Currently there are 85 registered midwives in Alberta.

In September of 2015 three brave women left their jobs at an Edmonton clinic to open a new clinic in St. Albert called the St. Albert Community Midwives clinic. One of these women, Jennifer Thomson, practised in the United Kingdom before moving to Alberta and starting her practice. It was very interesting to hear that midwifery in the United Kingdom is essentially a given. Any woman that would like to use a midwife has access. I hope that one day Canadian women will enjoy the access to midwives that women do in the United Kingdom. When I asked Jennifer why she chose midwifery, she simply said: it's all I ever wanted to do; it's not a job; it's my life.

Anna Gimpel, originally from the Ukraine, trained and practised as a midwife in Israel before coming to Canada.

Sabrina Roy received her education in Canada and practised in Ontario before setting up shop in Alberta. Sabrina is a brand new mom to the very beautiful Anja, who also happens to be the great-great-granddaughter of Tommy Douglas, father of medicare in Canada. So, of course, I'll use this to, you know, segue into one of my favourite Tommy Douglas statements: social justice is just like taking a bath; you have to do it every day or you start to stink.

Between them these three women have 32 years of experience in midwifery, and we are blessed to have them in St. Albert. I hope they'll be there for many years to come.

I am proud of our government's commitment to midwifery and empowering women to choose what is best for themselves and for their families.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Olds College

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Formal education is much different than real life. In formal education we learn our lessons to prepare for our tests. Meanwhile in real life we get tested and learn from those lessons.

Last Thursday my colleagues and I had the distinct privilege of attending the Olds College black-tie gala. For the unfamiliar, Olds College campus is a historical landmark dating back to 1911, when it was a demonstration farm. Two years later it opened and became known as the Olds school of agriculture and home economics. This college has gone from humble beginnings to becoming a world-class facility, developing hands-on training, applied research, and innovation. The scope and breadth of programs there has expanded to the fields of fashion, hospitality, and agribusiness. They recently added a brewmaster and brewery operations management course, where students have hands-on brewing experience. They also have their own retail store and market these fine craft beers.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, I was absolutely enthralled with these students' entrepreneurial spirit and the confidence that they exuded. It speaks to the very core of the agricultural sector. At a time when many young men and women are leaving the family farm, it really gladdens this farmer's heart to see such passion and self-initiative.

These qualities are exactly what Olds College is all about, from a small-town agricultural college to a modern, high-tech institution that all Albertans should be proud of. Like a family farm, it has grown and prospered in no small part through the perseverance of its students, faculty, and alumni. My colleagues and I were truly honoured to attend their gala and wish them another 100 years of continued success and tradition.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 204 Alberta Tourism Week Act

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today and request leave to introduce a bill being Bill 204, the Alberta Tourism Week Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Centre.



**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 4(5) of the Election Act I would like to table five copies of the following report, the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Provincial General Election, May 5, 2015. Copies of this report will be provided to all members.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there were two points of order I noted today, raised by the Government House Leader. The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think with respect to the first point of order that it was in regard to a member's statement. I understand that a point of order may not be permitted with respect to a member's statement, in which case I would withdraw that one.

**The Speaker:** The second point of order.

#### **Point of Order Factual Accuracy**

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During question period one of the hon. members opposite made a statement which I believe violates Standing Orders 23(h), (i), and (j), and that was – and I don't have the Blues in front of me – to the effect that all hon. members on this side would have voted for the Leap Manifesto or would have voted to shut down the oil industry had we not been in government. That is completely untrue. That is a smear upon the members on this side, on all of us, whether we're in cabinet or members of caucus.

I want to bring to the attention of the House and to your attention, Mr. Speaker, that since 2008, when I was the leader of our party, we've had clear policy in place to support the orderly and responsible development of the oil sands. We have spoken in this House on many occasions, in public on many occasions, and at our conventions through the passage of motions and the debate thereof to the effect that we support an orderly and responsible development of Alberta's oil sands and that we support pipelines that meet the criteria set out for environment, for agreement with First Nations and that we further support the maximum upgrading of products here in Alberta to create jobs.

For the member opposite, throughout question period and in Members' Statements, to use such provocative and insulting language, to impute motives to this side of the House is quite frankly a clear violation of the standing orders and the standards of dignity and decorum that have existed in this House. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, it is an attempt to mislead the public as to the position of this government and this party over many years. We are clear on the record. We were supporting the orderly development of the oil sands and access to tidewater before their party was even a figment of someone's imagination.

Mr. Speaker, they can attempt to smear us, they can attempt to mislead the public as to our positions, but they can't do it here in direct violation of the rules of this House. I ask that you would rule that there is a clear violation of sections 22(h), (i), and (j) in this case.

**The Speaker:** Could I just clarify with the Government House Leader that when you said section 22, you meant 23?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, I did. Sorry. I misspoke.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and continue what clearly is a matter of debate. There are many things that happen in this Assembly and a wide variety of opinions. Not very long ago you rose in this place and gave the government permission to call this side of the House climate deniers. There is a wide swath of what should and should not be able to be spoken in this House. As shocking as many of the ideas may be to most Albertans, the Leap Manifesto and the ideas behind it are nothing new to NDP policy. The fingerprints of many in the NDP government can be found all over the ideas of the Leap Manifesto.

While the government would like to distance itself from itself, the Premier's chief of staff ran for the leadership of the federal NDP on a plan to end the use of fossil fuels right across the country. Our own environment minister here in Alberta sought and received the endorsement of the main author of the Leap Manifesto, Avi Lewis, prior to her election last May. A number of former anti-oil and antipipeline activists currently work in the minister's office, and that's been well documented both here and outside of the Chamber.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, can you focus your attention on the government rather than the party.

**Mr. Cooper:** My point, Mr. Speaker, is that what we have here is a matter of debate. This side of the House has presented one perspective of the facts. While the hon. House leader may disagree with those facts, that is exactly what they are. We have this sort of back and forth all the time. In fact, on the 15th of March, at approximately 5:15, the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, as part of his maiden speech, stated that he'll be writing a book on his time here and said: if the Wildrose will stop lying about the NDP, he will not tell the truth about the Wildrose.

This is the exact challenge, Mr. Speaker, that they believe one thing to be true and we know another to be true, particularly around the issues that were debated here in the House. It's been well documented that if you are a member of the provincial NDP, you are a member of the federal NDP. We are merely discussing those important issues as they are important to Albertans, and they need to understand the nature of this government.

3:00

**The Speaker:** The House leader for the third party.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to offer some comments on this particular point of order. Very clearly, this is not a point of order. This is a matter of debate, and it's very clear within our standing orders and indeed within the traditions of parliament that the standing orders and the rules of procedure within our parliaments are not to be used to somehow shield or protect the government from issues that are to be debated within the House. The reference to the various standing orders in section 23, quite frankly, do not hold in this matter. They are clearly a matter of disagreement and not a matter of an infraction of any of the rules.

You know, it's interesting to me that one of the burdens of governing that the government is learning, one would hope – and they'll learn more as they go along – is that you have to become a little more thick-skinned. I find it actually curious that the Government House Leader is so vociferous when he himself would regularly participate in exactly those kinds of comments, and we had to just sort of sit quietly and take it because it is within the rules entirely. As long as we're borrowing Shakespearean phrases here: it's part of the slings and arrows of office. This government would do well to learn to accept the responsibility of the slings and arrows of office and to accept the fact that you will be criticized. You have to accept that criticism and defend those critiques rather than simply try to hide behind the rules of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Government House Leader, you had something you'd like to add?

**Mr. Mason:** I just wanted to add one thing, Mr. Speaker. I wrote down the quote, and you can check it against the Blues. It's specific to members, and it says: all members opposite would have voted for this had they not been in government. It's absolutely unfair and untrue.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have looked at the Blues. I also anticipated that 23(i) through (j) would be referenced, and in addition to the Blues, I also was listening carefully. I found, as has been mentioned, that the practice is to give "considerable leeway" to members, the widest latitude, as I recall a ruling by Mr. Zwodzesky in 2012. I would also draw your attention to page 510 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. There is occasionally disagreement on facts, a difference of opinion. I think in this particular instance that there is no point of order. However, I would draw to the attention of the members yet again that the intent of section 23, those specific references – you are causing emotion in the House which is not necessary to the important substance of the debate. I would therefore rule in this particular instance that there was no point of order.

### Orders of the Day

#### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 202

##### Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act

[Debate adjourned April 4: Mr. Cooper speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the few minutes I have left today on this piece of legislation, Bill 202, to just wrap up a couple of quick final thoughts for the Chamber on our roles and responsibilities when it comes to this important issue. There are many great issues that are facing us today. Certainly, Bill 202 touches on some of those very, very important issues when it comes to affordable housing – when you wrap that into some of the great organizations right across this province of ours that provide these sort of services to those in need. There is often no better solution to the issues of poverty and those that affect children than providing a home.

Let me be clear that my desire is to ensure that we can do the most possible when it comes to providing affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, what folks in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills don't need is another study. There have been many studies brought forward to this place, a number of them very extensive, comprehensive, and all of those studies call for action. It's my hope that the government, upon the passing of a motion very similar to this piece of legislation and upon hearing the desires of the House, will in fact move on the issues surrounding affordable housing. But it will be difficult for me to support such a piece of legislation that will delay this important work. As I mentioned earlier, in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills there are 20 available residences that are managed by Mountain View Seniors' Housing, 13 of which are not currently in a state that can be inhabited because of this government's and the previous government's inability to keep those up. What the people in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills want is for those 13 properties to be repaired and provided to those in need.

While I appreciate the hon. member's desires for this piece of legislation, while I appreciate the hon. member's intent in trying to move the needle, what the government needs to do is to take this intent, take this desire, and act upon the things that need to be done to ensure that there is appropriate affordable housing available across this province. It is with some sadness that I won't be supporting this piece of legislation in encouraging the government to do the right thing in the area of affordable housing.

**The Speaker:** Does 29(2)(a) apply here? Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today and speak on a topic which is close to my heart, that of affordable housing in this province. It is a subject which is on the minds of many of those stakeholders within the industry as well as those who are providing housing to individuals and families in support of families-first housing and affordable housing for seniors all across the province in different jurisdictions. The province's desire, of course, is to act on affordable housing.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, it's been pointed out to me that, in fact, you have already spoken to Bill 202. You cannot speak again.

I would therefore recognize the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise today to speak to Bill 202. I would like to say that I would like to commend the member for both the intent and the objectives of this bill. Of course, it's an important issue for all Albertans. It is about politics, of course, but it's not only about politics. It's not about partisanship, and it's not about pushing forth competing ideologies. It's really about people. It's about their lives, their stability, and their futures.

Often a key component and arguably one of the most important factors for all Albertans is safe, affordable, and appropriate housing for today and into the future. So we need to get on with that discussion, with developing viable, sustainable, solutions, not Band-Aids, not more talk when we need action, not controls, and not investment-killing measures. Let's strongly consider the opportunities that may lie ahead with respect to federally, provincially, or municipally owned lands that could be brought to the table to help to solve this problem, one of the other investments that the public sector can bring forth.

3:10

Is housing security a basic human right? Is 30 per cent or more of income onerous? And should we be only helping those that fall below the core need income threshold? These are many questions that are being discussed, as we speak, in the housing community. I would assert that bringing innovation, creativity, and collaboration to bear to address what I think of as the elephant in the province – having spent over a dozen years in the building industry myself, also engaged with both affordable housing and attainable home ownership, housing affordability is not just about homelessness. It's not just about low and middle income; it's actually an issue for all Albertans.

Does the government want to solve this problem? Is the government prepared to invest in, to plan, to build, to own, and to operate an adequate supply of affordable rental housing? Can the public purse meet these demands? I would suggest that that's not the case. I believe in what I often refer to as PPNP, public, private, and nonprofit partnerships, to leverage public investment from the various levels of government, not heavy-handed, ideologically driven controls. Those don't work. But we have a public responsibility, and there is an opportunity there. The public responsibility is there to invest in housing for our vulnerable and for all Albertans. The private sector brings forth capital and

expertise, which is much needed and which we can leverage against. I found that the nonprofit sector brings passion and a lean-and-mean operating environment to assist with addressing this issue.

So I would assert that we need to find innovative ways to create more inventory – that's what this is about at the end of the day – but not only to create more inventory. We actually create more inventory by creating movement through the housing continuum, closing the gaps and reducing the barriers efficiently in cost-effective ways to leverage public investment, to help people to move through, which allows people to move up through that continuum as time goes by. Rent controls will further limit supply. I'll talk to that a little bit later, but it is proven that that is very often the fact.

I agree with investing during this economic downturn to maximize returns on the public investment and, as importantly, to stimulate job creation. Having been in that industry for many years and having watched the houses go from excavation to forming to foundations to framing, residential construction creates probably more jobs per dollar invested than almost any other type of infrastructure investment. Therefore, I would advocate and hope that both our Finance and Infrastructure ministers will put a significant percentage – 5 per cent would probably be significant – of the \$4.3 billion of slush that we've heard about towards not only the huge economic stimulus that that would create but the delivering of much-needed housing stock and jobs.

The previous government had some good plans in place. I was able to actually engage in some of that, in some affordable housing initiatives, highly successful capital grants to stimulate affordable rental and ownership development for not only low- but middle-income working families in Alberta, who are sometimes forgotten in this discussion and in this argument. I think we need to take that into account here, that it's not just those that are homeless and low income but it's middle-income workers who are just scraping by and just going paycheque to paycheque who often need our assistance and are also those people who we need to attract here when we're lucky enough to have a robust economy.

Those are some of my key concerns. But with respect to the bill itself I do have some other concerns that I'd like to bring forward. One is that there is no specification that this is an all-party committee, and that concerns me.

Second, it's meant to include members of the public and specified stakeholders. If so, what is the representation? How many? How many relative to the – I'm hoping – all-party MLA members? How will we ensure transparency and accountability? Public stakeholder groups: assuming that public, private, and nonprofit representation will be included on that committee, how will they be chosen? What roles, authority, and responsibilities will they have? How and how much will they be remunerated? The cost of the committee administration is in the bill in remuneration for nongovernment members and travel and other costs, but they're not clearly specified, so we don't really know what the cost of this initiative is. All the costs will be borne by this Legislature, and the people of Alberta will demand transparency. Is this just to become another agency or board, and if so, why is it not just under Seniors and Housing as a permanent working group?

I have some other concerns. There is talk of rent regulation, rent subsidies, security deposits. I do not see any mention specifically for seniors in this plan. I'm concerned that this bill currently focuses on the symptoms rather than the root causes, not focusing, really, on the long-term, sustainable solutions that we require in this province.

Missing from the list of included representatives are developers. Anybody who's been in the business knows that there is a distinct

difference between builders and developers in the building community, their focus and operations often significantly different.

The question of social engineering. Has this gone awry? Is it not meeting the needs of the community without significant and unjustified public investment?

Then I hear about rental caps and rental controls. I've got a document, which I'll table tomorrow, called the international experience with rent controls: a summary of studies and experiences. In short, it says that rent control inevitably leads to a rental housing supply shortage, rent controls make a short-term housing supply shortage permanent, overall supply of rental units to the market drops, and as we all know, units get converted to other uses, condominiumization. The other thing that can happen on the development side: demolition and redevelopment is accelerated because of the opportunity to move more profitably to other forms of use of the same land.

The other issue, of course, is security deposits. I agree. Let's put in a mechanism to protect against a few landlords who might abuse the system, but I can't condone putting in place a policy or law that protects or limits liability on those that may wilfully damage other people's property.

Failure to return damage deposits, I understand, is a Service Alberta complaint, but I'd like to know what that percentage is of the total number of rental units. Is it significant enough to put in heavy-handed legislation for? Anecdotally, from the Calgary Residential Rental Association: in a 2013 survey of 103 members there were \$367,000 in landlord damages, increasing in 2014 to \$492,000. If you're a small, independent landlord and you suffer one of those losses, that can wipe out that entire often not even a return on investment as we know that many of those people buy that property for long-term appreciation.

Inclusionary zoning is mentioned as well. Usually that's a 10 per cent requirement and a major initiative pushed by many whom again I would characterize as social engineers. This encourages meeting quotas, not developing the best and most innovative affordable housing stock within an integrated community, and may lead to ghettoization for low-income renters and owners. I don't think that's the way we want to go.

To me, innovation is key, and as we have hinted in our Engage document, we believe that co-location of seniors; affordable, attainable, and market housing; possibly along with services such as day care could be the wave of the future in innovation and in creating community hubs for housing and services not only for seniors but for families.

I have a motion coming down the road which I think is a little more prescriptive than what this bill is in terms of what the stakeholders are, but I can tell you that I think the best recommendation – and I was lucky enough to have spent some time with the Minister of Seniors and Housing this morning – is to create a permanent working group, which would include members of the private, public, nonprofit organizations, AAMD and C, and AUMA, to develop, really, initiatives and a direction for seniors' care issues and other identified affordable housing needs across this province, looking at demographic and geographic issues, doing the studies about where that inventory needs to be, and to put that in place with the leaders of this industry as a permanent working group.

Again, as I said, I am very appreciative and thankful for the member bringing forward what I think is a very noble initiative and objectives, but given the shortcomings there and the opportunity to create this within the ministry, I will not be supporting this bill today.

Thank you.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not stand to support this bill. As a number of my colleagues have said, this is one of the top issues from their constituents and certainly from my constituents. I would offer the following two stories. The first is about Daniel and his wife. They were thrilled to learn that they were to be parents. The baby was born, and they were so excited. They came home only to receive a notice of eviction in 30 days because it was an adult-only complex.

3:20

The second story is about Tim. Tim, 68 years of age, who's wife had recently passed away, received notice that his rent was increasing by a hundred dollars per month. That might have been fine except that it was the third increase in 18 months. He worked all his life at survival wages, but he worked, and he paid his bills, and he survived. He was receiving OAS, GIS, and a very small pension of a hundred dollars per month. While his wife was alive and also receiving a small amount, they could make ends meet. Now with the rent increase he had to make a choice about paying rent or buying some groceries.

It is for these constituents that I must stand and support this bill. No one in Alberta should be left in this position. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support Bill 202. As mentioned in my motion, housing is a fundamental human right, especially appropriate and affordable shelter. We need to make sure that all Albertans are looked after. I'm so proud of the fact that this government is protecting the most vulnerable even in these challenging times. What can be considered decent housing for one person is not necessarily for another. Without proper support systems in place many vulnerable Albertans are at risk of becoming homeless.

I would like to echo some of my colleagues with the latest census data from 2011. It found that over 23 per cent of renters in the province were in core housing need, that 10.7 per cent of all Alberta households, or 137,485 households, were in core housing need, and that some populations are more affected by housing challenges than others. Indigenous people and newcomers make up a higher percentage of renters in core housing need.

I also would like to address the issue of survivors fleeing from domestic violence situations. Of 3,631 women housed from April 1, 2011, to September 20, 2015, 49.9 per cent self-reported being exposed to or fleeing from a family violence situation.

You see, Mr. Speaker, housing is so fundamental, and it's just so important that we have adequate housing for our most vulnerable people here in Alberta. This is why I will be supporting this, and I encourage my other colleagues in this House to do same.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly my pleasure to rise today to talk about Bill 202 before us, the Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act. I'll echo some of the comments of the other members of the House. I'm sure that the intent of the act is good. Affordable housing is a big issue. It's not a now issue; it's an always issue, and it always will be. It's something I'd like to think I know just a little bit about. During my time on Calgary city council I spent three of those years as chair of the Calgary Housing Company, which is the largest landlord in the city of Calgary. It was then, and I believe it still is now. At the time that I chaired the Calgary Housing Company, there were about

10,000 units under our care and about 25,000 people in those units under our care.

From that, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that I know that this is a complex issue. One size does not fit all. Of the people that need help with affordable housing, there's probably a different explanation for every single one. Some just don't make enough money. Some have had a difficult event in their life. It could be a job loss. It could be an injury. It could be a mental or physical breakdown. It could be a family breakup. The point is that it's not entirely that simple to solve the problem.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we need to try. When I was on city council, we did launch at that time – it was about 10 years ago now. I guess I know that because one of the police chiefs was talking about it today. We launched the plan to eliminate homelessness. That was a well-intended effort that, with the help of a lot of people, has put thousands of people in a position where they have roofs over their heads, and that's pretty important.

In fact, I believe that the housing first plan is one that is certainly well worth supporting by us. Not only is it good on the human side, in that it looks after people; interestingly enough, as a fiscal conservative, it's actually good business. Mr. Speaker, not only does it give people more dignity to have their own address and a place where they can go at the end of the day and a place where they know they start from at the beginning of the day, but for those people that need extra help to maintain and improve their lives, it actually allows society to help them.

For those that might need financial support, it's a place to deliver the support to. For those that might need mental or physical counselling or help or other types of wraparound supports, it's a place to go to deliver those wraparound supports. In some cases it's a place to pick the people up from to take them where they can get the help. The point is that you can't help people if you can't find them, and giving them a home is the best way to be able to find them so that you can help them. Some people, Mr. Speaker, just need to get temporarily past the situation.

I will echo some of the concerns. The bill, while I'm sure it's well intended, falls short in some pretty important areas, Mr. Speaker. There is no indication that it would be an all-party committee. Affordable housing is not a left/right issue. It's not a Conservative versus a Liberal issue versus an NDP issue; it's a human issue and one that I would like to think that people in this House would want to work together on. I would like to think that looking after people that need housing doesn't belong to any particular section of the political spectrum. I think it's something we should all turn our minds and our efforts to together.

Mr. Speaker, this bill doesn't do it. Just the fact that the number of people on the committee doesn't allow for contributions from all parties: that's a concern. People that need homes should not be made a political football; they should be made something that we should all turn our efforts to together. Unfortunately, this bill doesn't really allow for that.

I'm a little concerned with some of the text in the bill. I can tell you, as one of my colleagues talked about, that rent controls – I think it's called "rent regulation" here in (2)(a) – typically make the problem worse. Rent controls can sometimes temporarily make the situation better, but where studies have been done, over time it takes away the incentive for investment.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but under Standing Order 8(7)(a)(i), which provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's public bill to close debate, I would

invite the hon. Member for Calgary-East to close debate on Bill 202.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to all my colleagues who took the time to stand up and speak to this bill in second reading. I just want to quickly reiterate the purpose of the bill. The purpose of the bill is simply to create a committee that will look at solutions for affordable housing in Alberta. I think everyone in the House has agreed that affordable housing is an issue, that it's something that we need to address, and it's something that we need to address quickly. I don't think anyone disagrees on those facts.

The bill does leave it open in terms of the membership of the committee. It says it can be three members, but it could be more than that. I'm willing to look into that if that is a concern that folks have.

However, I do want to address some arguments from the opposition. When the official opposition was advocating their point on this bill, they accused me of not consulting on a bill that's about consulting, and then they said we didn't need more consulting. So you'll forgive me if I'm a little confused about what their points were. Really, all I want to do is to get people together who have the expertise to make good recommendations to this government to solve a problem that is a critical issue.

3:30

The other party has also accused me of, you know, ideologically driven social engineering. The topics that I included in this bill were topics that were drawn from the most important people to me, and those people are my constituents, Mr. Speaker. I would argue that opposition to a bill that seeks to provide solutions on affordable housing simply because it includes rent regulation would indicate to me that you are more ideologically driven than you're accusing me of being.

Mr. Speaker, I have a science degree; I was a science teacher. I am someone who values research, who values actual solutions that are proven based on research and evidence, and I believe that that is true of everyone else in this government. Now, I pride myself on being open minded, and I'm open to any solutions that the committee may put forward. That actually doesn't really have much to do with me; these are just issues that folks in my community wanted me to work on.

In terms of concerns, there were some concerns brought up surrounding the timeline. When I did speak with some groups, including the Calgary Housing Company, they felt that nine months was already quite a short turnaround and that three months would probably be entirely too quick. This committee's recommendation should certainly not be seen as something that's doing the work of the ministry. It does not in any way prevent the ministry from moving forward with actions and programs to improve the housing situation in Alberta. It should be seen as an opportunity for the public to engage with the government on a crucial issue, and recommendations the committee makes can support the ministry moving forward. But it's something that supports the work of the ministry; it certainly does not replace the work of the ministry.

I did hear today that the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation is starting work with federal colleagues on undertaking broad-based consultations on a national housing strategy, and this is good news. This is something we haven't had in a very long time, and it's something that I think we're looking forward to working on with our federal partners in coming up with some solutions.

I think everyone in this House, Mr. Speaker, agrees that affordable housing is a critical issue. I would argue that I have

consulted with my most important stakeholders, as I have mentioned, who are my constituents, although they are not the only people that I have spoken to. They have inspired some of the provisions included in this bill. I also know that there are solutions out there. I know that there are plenty of people working on solutions every day in communities all across Alberta, and this bill is an opportunity for government to hear those solutions.

Mr. Speaker, given that every Albertan absolutely deserves a safe and secure place to call home, I would ask my colleagues to support this bill. Thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 202 read a second time]

### Bill 203

#### Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy today to introduce debate on second reading of Bill 203, the Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016.

Other than buying a house, the purchase and maintenance of a vehicle is often one of the biggest investments a person can make. We need to ensure that we are doing everything we can to protect Albertans from undue and unanticipated costs. We can do this by enhancing consumer awareness and consumer rights as well as supporting all players in the industry.

We know that this is a competitive industry and that many business owners take great pride in doing things right for consumers. I am pleased to have met with several of them over the past weeks, and there is certainly agreement from them that consumer protections are important. There is, however, also concern that not every business is operating at the standard, and in fact these businesses that are lagging behind and not keeping pace with industry standards are causing harm to the reputation of the industry as a whole. This is causing difficulty for consumers when they are choosing where to have their vehicles repaired. I believe that consumers should never have to worry about being taken advantage of, especially when they may be in a position of financial vulnerability.

I've had many conversations with people in my community who are asking questions. I think there are a lot of additional avenues that can be explored to increase consumer protections in this area, but these are outside of the scope of this bill here before us. This bill will establish guidelines that increase transparency, accountability, and peace of mind for both consumers and business owners. With this bill I am working to ensure that these consumers are protected against potential unforeseen financial stress should they need to repair this important investment. The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that this bill is about consumer protections. I hope that the debate here today will be the start of a larger conversation about the need for increased and updated consumer protections here in Alberta.

Bill 203 takes steps to make sure all Albertans have the information they need about their rights as consumers when it comes to automotive repair. This bill creates a framework for both the consumer and the business that will reduce the potential for conflict between these two groups. This bill will establish a process that both parties can understand and can rely on and will provide consumer protection and a process that is easy to follow.

Both prior to and since the bill's introduction I have received a lot of positive feedback, and I certainly continue to welcome any and all

input on the bill and look forward to additional suggestions for areas that might increase consumer protections. The goal here is to ensure that consumers have the greatest possible protection and to ensure that they have clarity and confidence that they will not be taken advantage of.

Mr. Speaker, I have met and continue to meet with a number of stakeholders in the automotive repair industry. It's been great to hear their perspectives on the proposed legislation, and I look forward to hearing more from them as we move through this process. I've had great discussions with organizations like AMVIC, who is the regulator for the auto industry here in Alberta, the AMA, the Canadian Independent Automotive Association as well as individual business owners and consumers alike.

My consultations with AMVIC have been extremely positive. We've had numerous conversations about this bill and how it would affect the industry and what we could potentially do to further strengthen the consumer protection efforts within this bill. I've had excellent feedback from the industry and have heard several suggestions on where we can strengthen this bill and areas where there is opportunity to create clarity.

I've also had very positive conversations with the AMA, who have been very supportive of the bill to date and have offered invaluable insight throughout this process. I'd like to point to a quote from an article in *Collision Repair Magazine* that I think really emphasizes what I'm trying to accomplish with this bill.

The move to pass bill 203 is a step in the right direction, according to [AMA] Senior Policy Analyst, Scott Wilson.

"It's an appropriate direction and echoes some of the provisions in other jurisdictions, which is what I think they were trying to achieve," said Wilson. "I think anytime you can provide a consumer with a little more certainty around a transaction at a collision repair facility, it's a good thing."

At the end of the day, this legislation simply will allow consumers and automotive repair shops to come to a written agreement on the estimated cost of work before it's started. Before a repair shop does any work, the business must offer to give the client a written estimate for the total work expected, and the client must sign off on the estimate before work will begin. In keeping with practices already followed by businesses in Alberta, the final cost charged can't be higher than 10 per cent of the quoted price unless the consumer specifically agrees to the new cost. Many repair shops already follow the practice of offering to provide an estimate to their customers. This just ensures that everyone is playing by the same rules. By asking every business to provide an estimate prior to work starting, this will help reduce the potential for conflict between consumers and businesses. Consumers will know up front the expected costs of the work, and business owners will have protection since the customer will have signed off on the cost before work has started.

After work is complete, the consumer will be provided with a clear invoice that explains all charges and costs. This will help customers feel confident that the work they were charged for was not only fair, but they will have a better understanding of what exactly was done and what the associated costs were. The intent is that this bill will help both consumers and business owners know what is expected of them during their transactions and will ensure clarity in the process.

Further, this bill will ensure that consumers' rights are posted in all repair shops as well so that parties know what exactly is expected of each of them. This is something that people have been very supportive of throughout my consultations.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, this bill builds on the best practices already in place in the industry both here in Alberta and in other jurisdictions like Ontario and Manitoba. Many repair shops are already following many of these initiatives laid out in the bill. By enshrining best practices into legislation, we're strengthening their effectiveness and strengthening consumer protection efforts here in Alberta. The hope is that this bill will be the first step in an ongoing discussion around consumer protections in Alberta, and I look forward to the opportunity to continue the debate about consumer protections here in the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sorry, but I must have missed it when the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark did all of his introductions earlier and introduced all of the stakeholders. Maybe I just happened to miss that.

It is with mixed feelings that I rise today to speak to the second reading of Bill 203, the Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016. First off, I guess I'd like to thank the representatives, those who are the stakeholders in the auto industry, for attending this discussion on Bill 203 here today. It is critical that Albertans feel confident that when they need the service of repair, they will get it in an open, transparent, and honest way.

Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the member who is moving this proposed bill, the current Fair Trading Act, specifically section 12, automotive business regulations, positions Alberta as a leader in Canada and is certainly superior to that of Manitoba and Ontario, where it is clear much of this legislation has taken its inspiration from. Alberta is the only province in Canada with a regulatory body, the Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council, AMVIC, to monitor repair services by operating under designated provincial legislation.

Before I get into the meat of what I want to say, I just want to touch briefly on the number of complaints the industry receives. From June 30, 2014, to July 1, 2015, the motor vehicles association of Alberta recorded only 45 consumer complaints that were submitted to AMVIC, and none of these resulted in any charges or fines. So let's put this in perspective, Mr. Speaker. This is 45 of over 5 million vehicles serviced. That is an absolutely minuscule number. Furthermore, throughout the 2015 cycle the Canadian Independent Automotive Association has outlined that AMVIC received 251 complaints specifically relative to the independent service and repair sector. This resulted in only 12 undertakings and no administrative penalties or warnings. Again, putting it into perspective and context, another minuscule number.

Mr. Speaker, this all tells me that our system is designed very well indeed. I am not one of those folks that will say, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" because I'm a firm believer that things can always be improved. As legislators we should always encourage each other, especially Albertans, to do better and to always try and get the job done. This being said, I want to break down this legislation so that we can all see the faults in what is currently before us and so that we do not turn a system that is working relatively well into one where there is heightened confusion and unnecessary angst.

Let's start with the estimate fee section. Under the current Fair Trading Act repairs may not exceed an estimate by "more than 10%, to a maximum of \$100," and consumers must be informed and consent given in advance of the fees that are going to be charged.

The proposed section 57.3 of the bill will mean that an estimate fee cannot be charged if the consumer agrees to and authorizes repairs because the definition of “estimate fee” is not clearly defined to distinguish between inspections and diagnostic services. One or both of these fees would have to be waived by the repairer.

Furthermore, an estimate fee should not be subject to a government-prescribed maximum. Repairers invest a considerable amount of time and money into equipment and labour to be able to diagnose and inspect vehicles simply to determine the cause and course of action to complete the repairs. Diagnosis requirements are so vast in scope that to prescribe a maximum would be illogical.

Again, to put this in perspective, the people that work on your vehicles are not mechanics; they are technicians. They are highly trained individuals that have to figure out what a problem is. To understand the vehicle is to understand that some vehicles have miles, if not several miles, worth of wires, and it is not a simple fix when we’re fixing the vehicles that we currently have on the road today.

Consider this, for example. A vehicle has an electrical issue and requires six hours of diagnosis time by a skilled and highly trained technician with high-tech equipment. A broken wire is found to be the problem, and 10 minutes of repair is then required. As this section of the proposed bill currently reads, a repairer could only charge for the 10-minute repair time, not the six hours of diagnosis time. Again, very illogical. This section must be taken back to the drawing board as to retain the current Fair Trading Act intent and to ensure that the language used to describe estimate fees clarifies that all fees that are going to be charged receive consumer consent prior to commencement.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on about other flaws that are evidenced in this proposed bill, and there are clear problems with section 57.7, additional work, as well as 57.9(3), return of parts, among others. However, in the interest of time and seeing that I am entering the end of mine, it is important I talk about the section of warranty. Currently, government does not impose mandatory warranties, but if a repairer extends a warranty and does not provide what they promise, they would then be in violation of the Fair Trading Act, and action from the consumer could be taken against them. This proposed bill looks to create a mandatory 90-day, 5,000-kilometre parts and labour warranty on all repairs, including new and reconditioned parts. The repairer will also have to compensate the consumer for towing costs when the warranty is applicable. The consumer will be able to take the warranty repairs to another shop if deemed reasonable, and the original repairer will have to compensate the consumer. Suppliers under this proposed bill will be responsible to the repairers for, quote, retail warranty reimbursement amounts.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the intent of the bill is to protect the consumer. I get that, and I agree with this notion in principle, but there are many complicated issues that contribute to the argument that the application of these laws in practice would be supremely detrimental. If we look at the current situation – we’ll take the example of a new vehicle manufacturer’s replacement parts, new or reconditioned. These parts are warrantied for, in most cases, two years. With unlimited kilometres, parts, and labour included, it is necessary to put an additional layer of red tape on this that would yield no positive results. Again, illogical. When other types of parts are used, whether they be used parts or jobber parts from other jurisdictions, it becomes vastly more complicated. There is already an element of risk for the consumer using, quote, used parts, and a judgment call is made by the consumer when balancing against the price. By putting arbitrary warranties across the board on these

parts, we may in fact sacrifice safety of the consumer as more and more used parts are put back into service under perceived safety and warranty. Furthermore, how do we enforce compliance on warranties of parts that are made and constructed on other continents – again, something that is completely illogical – when their warranties are only good, for example, for 30 days?

Mr. Speaker, until more public consultation and industry input is considered, I believe that the future of this proposed Bill 203 is indeed very bleak. It would have widely felt negative repercussions that the member has clearly not anticipated, and I cannot support this bill in its present form.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

3:50

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am here to speak in support of this motion. I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark has done some great work on this bill consulting with various organizations. I’d also like to thank the various members of some of those organizations that are here today. He has been going out and listening to feedback throughout this bill process, and his goal is to strengthen and improve the current regulations as set out in the Fair Trading Act and the automotive business regulations.

Now, as some of you may know, I have a mechanical background. I am both a car enthusiast and have worked in the industry. I just wanted to point out for some of the guests here who are mechanics as well that at this particular stage of the legislation we cannot do amendments. We are here just to speak on our thoughts of the bill.

Now, with that in mind, one of the goals of this is for peace of mind for the consumers. When a customer comes into a shop that is reputable, the customer is paying for the expertise of those mechanics or heavy-duty mechanic, whoever it may be, to solve the particular issue they are having with their car or whatever mechanical difficulties they may be having, in a quick and cost-effective way. That is the difference between a do-it-yourself mechanic, who may enjoy doing that in their driveway but would take a long period of time or may not have the resources to properly diagnose the problem. It is important that customers feel confident that the advice they’re getting from their mechanics about what the problem is is there for the customer.

However, when I worked in the industry, I know it annoyed me and my co-workers when we heard from customers of shops that were not being honest, stories of consumers who’ve gone to a shop, for example, had something wrong with their car that, to somebody who was a mechanic, had a very simple solution that should have been solved in a short period of time, and our friend comes back to us and says: oh, I took it in for an oil change, and they told me that there was a problem with my starter and some, you know, large amount of money later I also have a new rear axle in my car.

Now, stuff like that was annoying because it hurts the trust of the industry. For example, the Better Business Bureau: the list of their top 10 complaints actually goes toward automotive repair shops. Now, one of the other members brought up AMVIC and the complaints they had, and I don’t at all dispute that number. However, I would think that the general public often thinks of the Better Business Bureau first when they think of complaints as they result to the automotive business.

Now, this is not at all to knock on the integrity of good shops out there. As an automotive enthusiast I will be the first person to sing the praises of a shop. I can think off the top of my head of transmission shops, custom car shops, muffler repair, brake repair,

and tire shops that I would not hesitate in a second to send any member of this House to should they happen to have car, brake, transmission, exhaust related issues in their car if they happened to be visiting Calgary-Currie.

What this law strikes to do is to normalize best practices. We've heard a lot of talk on the bill about estimates for repair. I will note that in the very first line of this bill it quotes "estimate" as meaning "an estimate of the total cost of the work to be performed on and repairs to be done to the motor vehicle being repaired." There was some concern from another member that perhaps that left too broad a definition about diagnostics. My interpretation of the word "estimate" is that it's indeed that, an estimate for the cost of repair.

In my experience in the shop I worked at, an estimate for repair usually came after some sort of diagnostic work, once we had an idea, potentially, from the service writer. Usually that's what I do, report to the service writer and say that I think this is wrong with said person's car or industrial engine, which was the field I worked in. They would go to the customer and provide an estimate of repair. It's going to cost X amount of dollars because your starter is gone, and that's the problem. That is normal, and that normally comes after some diagnostics.

If we had a situation where somebody came in and, frankly, it's not obvious what the problem is — as mechanics we've all had situations where somebody comes in and they're missing a driveshaft or their brake rotors are ground down to practically the venting fins, where the diagnostic work is: "Hey, look. It's broken. We know what the problem is." So it's easy to do an estimate. But when we have situations where, you know, perhaps it's a whistling sound, a ticking sound, the proverbial "it doesn't feel right," it makes sense that a diagnostic would have to take place that would take a meaningful period of time. It is true. As a mechanic I myself own several diagnostic tools. I have several tens of thousands of dollars' worth of tools in my tool box from when I worked in that industry. Those diagnostic tools are important. In that case, you know, the best practice would be that you let the customer know that there are going to be some diagnostic costs. I don't believe that this bill would be counter to that normal practice.

Now, one of the other things that this bill seeks to do is to have some signage in the shops so that those particular customers would know what their rights are. Often for most people who are coming to a repair shop, mechanics is not their specialty, so it is important to have that there so the customers are aware.

I'm going to go with another story about the importance of estimates. As somebody who, like I said, is a car enthusiast, I've had experiences where when I've gone out to a shop, it is always worth while for me, especially when I was new — I may have an expensive repair. I'd often ask the shop, "Hey, my budget to fix this is going to be this. I am fine with you taking a look at it, having a diagnostic, but if it's going to go over a certain price, that is just outside of the range of my budget for that particular car," especially when the car is older and more used and it may not be worth it to do an extensive repair on that. That is perfectly reasonable.

Again, going back to that idea that there are some shops that would take advantage of somebody by not giving an estimate, not letting them know how much it's going to cost because they think, "Oh, that \$600 repair for front CV joints on a Honda Civic is going to be no big deal for that customer," well, for that customer, depending on their budget, that may be a lot of money. It is important that the customers have those estimates. Frankly, to go back to a point I made earlier, it annoyed me when shops would take advantage of somebody like that by not providing an estimate or giving an idea to that customer about what it would cost. Frankly, that makes other mechanics look bad. It's about helping customers understand what they are getting into for their repair.

I'm going to read a bit of a quote here about this bill. The AMA, for example, said that the move to pass Bill 203 is a step in the right direction, according to motor vehicle association Senior Policy Analyst Scott Wilson.

It's an appropriate direction and echoes some of the provisions in other jurisdictions, which is what I think they were trying to achieve . . . I think anytime you can provide a consumer with a little more certainty around a transaction at a collision repair facility, it's a good thing.

The hon. member, I believe, is sincere in his desire to carry forward a good bill that protects customers and protects mechanics.

I'm going to give you another story from when I was a mechanic. I was working on an engine. It was going to be a very simple repair. It was going to be adjusting valves. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, somebody else working on the engine had abnormally tightened down some bolts on the valve cover, and when I went to remove the valve cover, which should have been a simple job, I ended up snapping off a couple of them, which means that I turned a very simple repair job into a very long repair job. I'm sure the mechanics in the gallery right now can all relate to a story where they've had a repair job that's just not their day. That's what happens sometimes. So, of course, when I went back to the service writer at my shop, they went to me and gave me the: so, why did this take an extremely long period of time? I had to explain to them what happened. Of course, while I was doing this, the customer was calling, wondering where their engine was, why it wasn't ready, and why it was taking us an abnormally long amount of time to get it done. [Mr. Malkinson's speaking time expired]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member . . .

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:00

**The Speaker:** I was waiting with bated breath as to whether it would start.

The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to remind the member across, you're not the only mechanic in the room. Forty-five years ago I was licensed as a mechanic. I spent five years in the trade, so I know a little bit about it. Long before diagnostic equipment was available, it was much more of a manual process. [interjections] We even had running water.

Anyway, I rise today to speak against Bill 203. That I'm disappointed to have to rise to speak against this bill would be an understatement. I would have liked to have risen today to speak in support of a comprehensive jobs plan, a jobs plan that lowers small-business taxes, reduces needless government red tape, increases apprenticeship usage on government projects, empowers local economic development, reduces WCB premiums, and stops the NDP carbon tax. But, hey. Instead, I'm forced to stand opposed to a bill that would be more appropriately entitled the Needlessly Redundant Solution in Search of a Problem Act.

If my hon. colleague across the aisle had done a modicum of research before introducing this ill-conceived and needless bill, he would have found that the existing Fair Trading Act already protects consumers from the issues raised in Bill 203. Where the Fair Trading Act falls short, the automotive business regulation covers specific consumer protection concerns related to the automotive industry. Section 12 of the automotive business regulation lays out an extensive code of conduct, rendering Bill 203 needlessly redundant.

Bill 203 proposes to protect consumers from incurring charges for "work or repairs for which an estimate was given, an amount



that exceeds the estimate by more than 10 per cent.” The Fair Trading Act, in section 6(2)(e), already does this. In fact, I’d argue, it does it better. Section 6(2)(e) protects consumers from incurring charges for goods or services that are more than 10 per cent, to a maximum of \$100, higher than the estimate given unless the consumer has expressly consented to the higher price before the goods or services are supplied or the consumer and the supplier agree to an amended estimate.

Bill 203 promises to protect consumers by legislating that any parts removed in the course of work or repairs shall be returned to the customer unless advised by the consumer that they do not want the parts returned. The hon. member opposite should have taken the time to read the automotive business regulation before proposing Bill 203. They would have found that under section 12(n) automotive repair shops must offer to return all parts removed from the vehicle in the course of work or repairs to the consumer unless advised by the consumer that they do not require the parts returned. Now, to be fair, Bill 203 is broader in its scope and requires parts to be returned to the consumer to be kept separate from any other vehicles being repaired and that the parts be returned to the consumer in a clean container.

The independent automobile repair shops and the dealers’ association last year had over 8.8 million automotive repairs that were completed. Of those 8.8 million, only 296 resulted in complaints being filed. Of those 296 complaints, only 125 were deemed to be in need of further investigation. Of those 125, only one resulted in further action being taken. That means that just over three one-thousandths of a per cent of repairs resulted in complaints being filed. I find it very hard to imagine that of those 296 complaints, any of them were because the repair shops stored the parts too close to other vehicles or they returned the parts in a dirty container. It could be funny if it wasn’t so absurd.

Bill 203 mandates that repair shops cannot charge a fee for an estimate unless the customer or the consumer is advised that a fee will be charged. I think we can all agree that this is pretty reasonable. It’s a reasonable requirement, and it’s a wonder it took so long before it was included in our consumer protection legislation although – wait a minute. Hold on. There’s more. That requirement is already included in the Fair Trading Act in section 6(2)(f). It already prohibits a company from charging a fee for the estimate unless the consumer is informed in advance that a fee will be charged, has expressly consented to be charged the fee. Not only is Bill 203 redundant in this requirement; it doesn’t even mandate a repair shop to disclose the estimated cost.

Bill 203 proposes to amend the Fair Trading Act to be explicitly and needlessly repetitive. The automotive business regulation and the Fair Trading Act already include sufficient, broad consumer protection to the point that they include almost identical protections to what this bill would amend in some cases. The few abuses that do take place under existing legislation and regulation could be far more effectively addressed by educating consumers than by introducing this needless redundant legislation.

In fact, the government already has an agency responsible for this. The Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council, AMVIC, was established in 1999 with a mandate “to provide consumer protection in Alberta’s motor vehicle industry through mandatory . . . licensing for motor vehicle businesses and salespeople” and “to provide a fair marketplace for both [automotive] consumers and businesses.” Furthermore, it defines that its mission is “to protect the public interest and promote trust and confidence in the motor vehicle industry through heightened awareness and the fostering of a positive exchange of information among industry stakeholders.” If the hon. member opposite feels that AMVIC has failed to adequately protect Alberta automotive consumers, then they should

have proposed a bill that addresses that issue, not propose needless, redundant legislation.

It’s become apparent that this government has not learned the importance of consultation. If there had been consultations, we wouldn’t be here wasting time debating a bill that has no support from industry stakeholders and does nothing but repeat what is already established in current customer protection legislation.

Now, I’ve met thousands of Albertans since being elected, and though my memory isn’t what it once was, I can assure you that not a single person I’ve spoken to has told me that we should be focusing on eliminating dirty automotive parts containers. Let’s say for a moment that this poorly conceived bill is passed. What is the government’s plan for enforcing these new, unnecessary measures? Can we expect the government to create a clean-container brigade that travels the province ensuring that repair shops return used parts in clean containers? To be fair to my hon. colleague across the aisle, the establishment of a clean-container brigade would result in the creation of more jobs than the government’s recently cancelled failed jobs plan, which created zero jobs.

The last thing Alberta businesses need right now is more red tape and more regulation. Albertans are already hurting from the NDP’s hikes on taxes and the minimum wage. Albertans are looking for a government that will stand up for them where it matters, not one that tries to reintroduce protections that already exist. Do not do that.

According to the government’s own website the unemployment rate in Alberta is now 7.9 per cent. For the first time in 27 years Alberta’s unemployment rate is higher than the national average. Since this government took office last year, unemployment has increased 34 per cent. It is estimated that nearly 100,000 Albertans have lost their jobs. That is 100,000 families that have experienced the devastation of loss of employment. According to StatsCan the average size of an Albertan household is 2.6 persons. That means that approximately 260,000 Albertans have already been directly impacted by job losses. We have nearly 100,000 Albertans out of work, more being laid off every day. Albertan families are struggling. The average Albertan has seen their personal debt increase to a staggering \$27,000. Alberta’s three-month delinquency rate shot up over 13 per cent. The food banks are running out of food, usage has increased 23 per cent, and the shelters are at capacity.

*Merriam-Webster’s* dictionary defines a crisis as “a difficult or dangerous situation that needs serious attention.” If Alberta’s current economic situation doesn’t fit the definition of crisis, I’m not sure what really does. Albertans are looking to Edmonton for reassurance. Instead, what do they see? Debate on a needless and redundant piece of legislation that mandates that automotive repair parts be returned to the customer in clean containers. We can do better. We must do better.

For these reasons, I oppose this bill in second reading, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of this bill, and I do so for several reasons. The first, of course, is that I believe that every single Albertan should be protected as a consumer.

Now, you’ve heard me speak to other bills, and I usually provide a personal anecdote or something about one of my constituents. I was living in Ottawa in January 2010 when I found myself in need of a new vehicle. I purchased a Volkswagen Golf TDI, which met

my requirements for a vehicle: environmentally friendly, good gas mileage, heated seats for the winter, air conditioning for the summer, big enough for four people to sit comfortably, big enough for four sets of golf clubs, a roof rack to pack luggage for four golfers, and solid feeling when I'm driving on the road. Now, the golf is because that's what I do to keep myself healthy.

4:10

When I came to Lethbridge, I went to Lethbridge Volkswagen, the dealership in Lethbridge, and they looked after me and my vehicle. Yes, my vehicle was one of those vehicles that was identified with the emissions problem. As soon as the problem was identified, I received a letter from Volkswagen, and I received a phone call from either Mike or Craig – I can't remember which one it was – to advise me of the problem and to assure me that the company, in particular the dealership in Lethbridge, would walk me through the problem and that once the fix was identified, my car would be in and be fixed. I received some compensation, and I received regular updates from Mike and Craig.

Now, I came to need a new vehicle because my previous vehicle, which I had bought privately, was just a couple of years old, was in good shape, and had low mileage. I saw a mechanic when I bought it here in Edmonton, and he did a great job for me. Then when I moved to Ottawa, I had to find another mechanic. I did not have great luck. I went to a shop that looked after the make of vehicle that I had. At least, they advertised that they did. The first time I went – I brought it in for my spring checkup and to get my tires changed – it seemed like they did a good job. The second time I went was in the fall, and they told me that my brake pads needed replacement. That was done.

Very shortly after there seemed to be a clicking noise. I was having some difficulty with the car starting. I went back, and they told me that it was an alternator. I got that fixed. A few months later it was something else. Within a year and a half I had to get my brake pads replaced again. I asked if there was a warranty on the brake pads, and they said that they wore out more quickly because my wheels were out of alignment. Now, I couldn't figure out why they were out of alignment because I would have thought that when they fixed the brakes, they also would have made sure that the tires were aligned.

So the story went on, and I spent \$2,000 to replace the brakes. Within two months the brakes failed, and I was advised that the warranty was only for 30 days because it was an older-model car.

Now, my car didn't drive in the wintertime when I was in Ottawa because I had a transit pass. It came out occasionally on the weekends, when I went to get groceries or had some errands to run. It took me to play golf in the summertime, but that was it. I didn't put very many miles on it, and I couldn't figure it out. I looked after this car. It just shouldn't be falling apart the way it was. So I thought: every time I get something fixed, something else seems to break. That's when I bought my Volkswagen. I talked to the mechanics at the Volkswagen dealership in Ottawa where I bought it, and I brought in the invoices for the work that I'd had done on my old car. They looked at it, and they kind of shook their heads, and they said to me, "I think you might have been scammed," but they weren't going to go to court with me on it.

Now, I didn't file a complaint, but I did talk to lots of friends, and I found out that this company, in fact, had done similar things with their vehicles. So even though it was mentioned across the way by the opposition that there weren't many complaints, it's probably because there were lots of people like me, who didn't go and file a formal complaint on it. I did talk to my friends, and I complained a

lot about it, and I did pass the word on that I would never go back to that shop to have any work done on a vehicle again.

I'm pretty happy with my guys Mike and Craig. They always take the time to explain what needs to be done and any future concerns that there might be.

Now, I'm not a mechanic, but before I got my licence, my dad made sure that I knew how to change a tire and how to change the oil. My younger siblings actually got to learn how to change the engine, but he didn't do that with me.

I believe that this bill is about consumer protection. I urge you to support this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to stand to talk about this bill. I'll acknowledge that I'm sure the hon. member that put it forward has good intentions. But what I hear from people in the automotive industry, to be plain about it, is that it's kind of a *Seinfeld* bill. It's a bill about nothing. What I mean by that is that while what's in there seems to make sense, where it becomes a bill about nothing, as has been pointed out by a couple of people here, is that most of what's in there has already been done. It's already in the consumer protection legislation. So what we're contemplating doing is redoing something that's already done. You know, it's a little troubling here.

Here's an excerpt of something that a constituent of mine that owns an automotive shop said for my edification, but I'll read it for the House.

Alberta is the only province in Canada that utilizes a regulatory body such as AMVIC (which works under the arm of Service Alberta) ...

I'll come back to that when I'm finished.

... to monitor and mediate repair services under the ...

Wait for it.

... Fair Trading Act. To operate an automotive repair facility legally in Alberta you must have an AMVIC license and you must renew it each year. The money we as automotive shop owners pay to AMVIC is used to police our industry and protect the consumer. We are extremely fortunate to have AMVIC in our Province of Alberta and I feel Bill 203 does a huge disservice to the men and women on the AMVIC Board of Directors and the AMVIC Society Members.

There is always room for improvement but this Bill 203 has many flaws and it needs to consult with industry members to resolve them.

Wait for this.

Why not work with people that understand how the repair industry works, understands the terminology that is used in the industry, understands how warranty works and understands the difference between authorizations, estimates, and diagnostics.

I am all in favour of creating a better industry that protects both the consumer as well as the repair facility but let's involve the people and associations that understand the automotive industry. This is not something that can be done quickly but should be given the time to properly refine the legislation.

Thank you ... for taking the time to read this ...

Et cetera, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I would say that the mover, the sponsor of the bill might want to take a little bit of time to read the Fair Trading Act to find the sections that are extremely similar to what's in this act.

I would also suggest politely to the mover that they might want to talk to the AMVIC representatives to find where they're at. Just to make it a shorter trip, I would respectfully suggest that the hon. member talk to the Minister of Service Alberta, under which the Fair Trading Act resides, and maybe find out how much of what's

being presented today is already there and how little of it is actually new. However, in the spirit of my constituent, who's in the automotive business, that sent it, what they did say – and I'll repeat it because I think that it's important – is: why not talk to industry members? There are probably some things that can be improved.

Mr. Speaker, I guess what I would say is that if the hon. member and his government colleagues could consent at some point to sending this to committee so he could invite industry members in, we could probably pull some value out of this bill. You know what? I would suggest that you do that. As a member of this House who's not on the front bench of government, in other words not a minister – I'm not one; you're not one – we don't get bills that often. We have to wait till our name gets drawn, so it means a lot more if you can have a bill go forward that actually makes Alberta better. There's still time for this one. There's still time, if this one went to committee, to go and search for those things that would be improvements on what's already happening. We could probably get advice from the industry. We could probably get advice for the minister who's in charge of the Fair Trading Act, the Service Alberta minister, and probably make something out of this inauspicious beginning. As I said, it's not too late.

4:20

Now, I appreciate that not everybody here in this room has been in Alberta that long and that some may not have driven for that long, but the fact is that there are a lot of people around in Alberta that have been here a long time and there are a lot of people that have driven a long time and there are a lot of people in the automotive industry whom we could get excellent advice from. So my polite suggestion is to get some of that excellent advice, that's probably very easily obtainable, and let's do it together. If we did it in committee, we could probably still make this into a bill that could improve Alberta without duplicating what Alberta businesses are already required to pay for by provincial legislation. We might actually be able to then, at the end of the day, if we go through this process, feel good about having made Alberta better when we're finished.

I'll stop now with that encouragement to work together. Let's get to a place where this bill could actually improve what's already on the books now.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I spoke with one of my colleagues, sidebarred with him recently, who knows how the industry works, and he told me about how his story ended, so with bated breath I can finish that off. Ultimately, the Member for Calgary-Currie did tell me recently that they did explain to the customer what had happened and that they would not be facing any extra charges. Then, moving forward, however, he did indicate to me that it would only take one individual to tarnish a shop's reputation. It would only have taken one shop out of the hundreds that are in Calgary to ruin the reputation of those hundreds by unfairly charging the customer for their time because of that bad day.

You know, ultimately, when I hear that story, one thing that I'm always reflecting on is that sometimes these protections can also protect the business as well. Having two parties sign on to an agreement can help protect the shop from an individual who is wanting to pull a fast one on that shop, who is going to change their mind after this job has been completed.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, going on to serve my side of these experiences, I spoke with my father after this bill was introduced because my grandfather was an automotive mechanic in Calgary after he served as a soldier in World War II. One thing that he and his peers really tried to work hard to develop was a society in Calgary that would set guidelines and best practices for the industry as a whole because they did realize that it does take just one person to ruin the reputation of all parties and all players.

To kind of sidebar and to give an example of that, when I started managing a seafood restaurant out in Ottawa, before I moved back to Calgary, they told us a story about how entire seafood restaurant chains all across the city, no matter what brand they were, almost went under. It was because at the time Ontario didn't have sufficient regulations in place to protect individuals and to set guidelines for how seafood restaurants conducted themselves. Basically, the short end of it was that someone got sick from eating spoiled oysters. It was basically one big outbreak that happened in the city of Ottawa at one restaurant, and it almost made all the restaurants that serve seafood in Ottawa go under because people stopped eating seafood. While it isn't automotives, it is an example of how one bad seed can ruin the entire scope of things.

Now, we live in a capitalistic, free-market economy – it's how I made my living – and as legislators it's our responsibility to protect consumers. To kind of give some sort of examples of legislation that came from the previous federal government to protect consumers, we saw the Harper government move for more transparent ticket sales by companies like Ticketmaster. They mandated that credit card companies show how long, if you paid the minimal payments, it would take for you to pay off that credit card. They mandated that airline companies could not provide hidden fees. They basically set a system in place to make sure that our industries were more transparent. So it is our responsibility as legislators to make sure that we provide as transparent a market as possible.

Now, in reflecting on my grandfather's scenario, he was a mechanic, and my grandfather Sucha, rest his soul, passed away. Subsequently my grandmother did not know a lot about cars because my grandfather always dealt with them. There was one time when my grandmother took her car in for routine service, and sadly it was one of those bad shops, one of the very few in Calgary, and they scammed her. They basically added new tires, which she didn't ask for, and then billed her for it. At the time my uncle and my father were not available to back her up on this, so at risk of not having her car, which she needed, she paid for it. She was on a fixed income, and this was very harsh on her. So, sadly, this one shop could potentially, as my grandmother shares this story, probably not even knowing the name of the shop anymore, ruin the reputation of an entire industry.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Ultimately, you know, we're all trying to find a more transparent way of ensuring that industry can help conduct itself. Reflecting back to even myself as a restaurant manager, some of the systems that we had in place to ensure that we were transparent – and this was mandated by the AGLC – were that we had to post and provide costs for every single amount of liquor and provide the ounce quantity for it so that, at the end of the day, we couldn't pull a fast one on our consumers. This was every restaurant, and if we didn't do it, we would pay penalties.

Ultimately, we want to ensure that we provide our industry players with the tools they need to be successful so that they do not

have one small player ruining their reputation. That is why I am going to be supporting this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against Bill 203. You know, when I reflect on the folks here who've joined us in the gallery and the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw and his comments talking about how essentially one bad apple spoils the bunch – I think what happens is that if someone gets a bad deal at one particular dealership or repair shop, they don't go back to that repair shop. They tell everyone about that particular repair shop, and everyone knows about that. It's not that you never go and get your car serviced anywhere else ever again. I can assure you that the people who are here in this gallery today as well as many others understand that fully. That is the nature of a market-based system, and I think it's one that we need to be very mindful in this House not to overlegislate.

I have many concerns about this bill, many of which my hon. colleagues have already spoken to. One of the things that I worry about when we come to this place is that sometimes we legislate. In fact, we often legislate; sometimes we overlegislate. The question I always challenge my staff with, my remarkable, tremendous staff, who support this big machine called the Alberta Party caucus . . . [interjections] It's quite an operation. I ask this question every single day: what problem are we trying to solve, and what's the right thing for Albertans?

The Member for Calgary-West brought up quite a remarkable statistic, that of 5 million possible repair jobs, 45 of them had complaints. That is 0.000009 – that's five zeroes – per cent of the time. The only thing that happens less often is a pipeline rupture. I have a real concern that this fixes a problem that doesn't exist, that is already covered by existing legislation, and that we're piling legislation one on top of the other.

You know, it makes me wonder. Of course, we need rules. I don't think anyone is suggesting that we have no rules. We need rules. Perhaps we can tweak those rules or improve them, but we have those rules. At some point we're going to have so many rules that all we do is follow rules and we never actually get any work done, and that's not helping anyone.

So I encourage my colleagues on all sides, on both sides of the House, to think critically about this bill as I think we ought to think critically about every bill but no more so than about private members' bills. All of us in this Assembly, barring the few members from the front bench who've joined us today, are private members of equal standing in this Legislative Assembly.

4:30

We can vote how we please on these bills, and I encourage each one of you to think very hard for yourselves on how you consider this bill. Ask yourself well and truly if you feel we're actually solving a problem here. I think it will be a great day in this Assembly when on private members' business there's perhaps a little bit of interplay, perhaps an opportunity for one or more members, in particular the government caucus, to say: "You know, maybe this doesn't actually make sense. I know it's my colleague that brought this up." I will be the first one to rise and praise you for doing so because you stood up for what you think is right, what you think is in the best interests of your constituents, and what you think is in the best interests of this province.

I'm going to talk now about some of the specific concerns I have with the bill, many of which have been raised here today. What I'm going to start with is concerns of unintended consequences, so let's

take section 57.11(1), which talks about the 90-day warranty. Many parts only come with a 30-day manufacturer's warranty, so what you may find is that repair shops no longer stock parts that only have a 30-day warranty. What that means is that the parts they stock will be more expensive. This is not a zero-sum game. Somebody has to pay, and that somebody is the consumers of the province of Alberta. If people choose a cheaper part, that comes with a lower warranty. This section, 57.11(1), makes it less affordable for Albertans. That's the net effect of this. That's not helping Albertans.

The Member for Highwood talked about the Fair Trading Act, section 6, unfair practices, and section 12, the automotive business regulation general rules of conduct. The requirement for authorization, section 57.4, already exists in the Fair Trading Act. This is not new. This is again a very clear example of solving a problem that doesn't exist.

I want to come back to a point the Member for Calgary-Hays made, which I couldn't agree with more, and that is that I don't question that the member who's brought this forward is doing so from the best of intentions. I believe that absolutely this comes from a good place. I believe this comes from a place of wanting to help people. Perhaps a constituent has come into your office, written you a letter, visited your office, and raised a question and said: this happened to me, and it's a problem. That's entirely possible, but we have to look at the numbers. We have to look at the data. I'm sure you want to protect people, but until I see compelling data and evidence to the contrary, that this is in fact a problem that is rampant and not something that happens only on an occasional basis, not something that isn't already addressed through existing legislation in force and in place in the province, I simply cannot support it.

If we look at sections 57.6 and 57.7, the term "in writing": what does that mean? Does that mean that you need to leave your job, take a cab back to the repair shop, that you need to sign something, physically go back to do it? Can you give authorization over the phone? What happens if you do that and there's a dispute later? Who's at fault there? How does that work? Again, these are provisions that, broadly speaking, are already covered in the Fair Trading Act. What we're doing is not only making it more cumbersome for the repair shop and the business owners, those individual, very often small-business owners, entrepreneurs who run their own shops on a tight budget but who have perhaps struck out on their own and taken some entrepreneurial risk. We're also making it more cumbersome for the consumer as well. All of this takes time, and time costs money, so ultimately we make car repair less accessible and less affordable for the people of Alberta.

I will just try to jump ahead here to parts that have not already been spoken about. Section 57.11(9), talking about subcontractors. My understanding of the industry vernacular is "sublet," not necessarily "subcontract," but regardless, by involving the customer in that process, again we're perhaps burdening customers with more work or more risk or exposure than otherwise they may have had, again making things more complicated for consumers than perhaps they are currently.

In conclusion, I will say, then, that although I think the bill is well intentioned – I don't question that it comes from a good place – I think it tries to solve a problem that either doesn't exist or it doesn't exist broadly enough for us in this House to be passing legislation about it. It raises costs for consumers. It puts more laws on the books than are necessary because we've already got laws that cover this. For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I simply cannot support Bill 203.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you. It's like my mom's in the room, with that kind of reception.

It's an absolute pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 203, Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016. I think we've heard a number of very, very good points this afternoon on the need for input from important stakeholder groups, the fact that there are some conflicting pieces of legislation, that perhaps there are already adequate protections. I know that the member opposite has moved this piece of legislation with the intention of trying to assist constituents and all Albertans.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you'll be quite familiar with my rising from time to time and speaking about the importance of committee, so it's my delight to rise today and propose, as the Member for Calgary-Hays and some other members on this side of the House mentioned, that we move an amendment that would in fact result in this piece of legislation being studied at committee and allow expert testimony and witness.

I have the appropriate number of copies. Do you mind if I continue with the amendment?

**The Speaker:** Please proceed as it's being distributed.

**Mr. Cooper:** I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 203, Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 203, Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Now, I know that we in this House all have some history together on referring bills 203 to committee; I know that at the end of the day we got there with the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's bill. It, in fact, was referred to committee and the subject matter studied there. It's my hope that all members of the Assembly will do that this afternoon.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for that, and thank you to the hon. member for introducing this particular bill. I want to commend the hon. member for working diligently to prepare a piece of legislation and his clear desire to protect consumers, to make sure that people get treated fairly. I think this is a very important principle, and I want to stand in support of the principle of this bill, which is what second reading is about. It's to talk about the principles of the bill. I think that this is, in fact, something that we should be concerned about here. We need to be considering how people are dealt with to make sure that they are dealt with fairly.

I take the other points that have been made with respect to maintaining the reputation of the industry. I know that the vast majority of members of this industry treat people fairly, try to get the vehicles back on the road or maintain the vehicles at a fair price, and that they're diligent and so on.

A number of things have been raised with respect to this bill, and I think that it's a good bill. I think that there may be an opportunity to hear from members of the industry – a number of them are present here today – and to gather their input and find ways to improve the bill in its specific clauses, which is the role of committee. We have Committee of the Whole or, as the hon. Opposition House Leader has indicated, we have the opportunity to refer a bill to a standing committee, which provides a little more flexibility. It allows the committee, if it wishes, to hear from the

public or to hear from stakeholders that may be affected by the bill and to make amendments that could improve the bill.

**4:40**

I think that that's probably something that we should do in this case, and I want to just indicate to all hon. members that I would encourage them to support the referral motion that has been moved by the hon. House leader of the Official Opposition. I think it's a good bill, and I think that with further input we can make it a better bill, and we can work together in this House to provide improved legislation to further the interests of the public and the industry. I would urge all hon. members to support this motion, and I look forward to the opportunity for members of the industry and members of the public to come forward and help us improve the bill and to work together with all members on all sides on that committee to do the right thing for consumers, to do the right thing for the industry, and produce a bill that actually will strengthen consumer protection and, at the same time, take into account the complexities of the industry, make sure that we are not creating any unintended consequences as a result of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I'll take my seat. Hopefully, there are other speakers. We at 5 o'clock go to private members' motions, so I would encourage people to talk until then.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

We are speaking to an amendment on Bill 203, referring it to committee. The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, always wanting to co-operate with and accommodate the Government House Leader whenever I get a chance, I'm pleased to be on my feet, Mr. Speaker. Every morning I get up and say to myself: what can I do today to make the Government House Leader's life better? Today I am presented with an opportunity. Let me say that it's a happy occasion that I get to try to accommodate the Government House Leader today, and I appreciate his stated willingness to support moving this to committee.

As I tried to say in my earlier remarks, I think there genuinely is an opportunity for all of us here to improve this bill, to make it something that the hon. member who moved it, when it's all done through the legislative sausage-making process – if we all work together, which we can, and I think that there's perhaps a spirit in the House to do that, we could actually make something that we could all be proud of, including the mover.

When you get an opportunity like this – and I see here in the gallery that we even have members of industry willing to take the time out of their lives and their business to participate, to contribute, to share their expertise with those of us that may have less than them – then I think we should take that opportunity to hear from them. I also think that when we get a chance to work in a bit of a multipartisan way on something that could make a positive difference for Albertans, that's a good opportunity as well.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the process. You know, this can be a crazy place, but every once in a while you get to do something where, when you're finished, you can say: we did the right thing for the right reasons, we did it together, and we did it for the benefit of Albertans. I think we may well be heading for one of those instances here.

On that basis, I will sit down, but before I do, I will just state, to be perfectly clear, that I have every intention of supporting this amendment because I think, again, that it's the right thing to do for the right reason. I'm grateful for the Government House Leader's

indication that they may well support this as well as my colleagues in the PC Party and the other opposition colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity, and I'm finished talking for now.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I'm understanding that the definition of luck is when opportunity meets circumstance.

Other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of the amendment. I think that it makes sense to engage more people like the experts that are up in our gallery. I had that wonderful opportunity. My community is great because I have people that have learned that they can reach out to me and talk to me about legislation that is proposed. A gentleman by the name of Frank Garritsen called me, and he knew that I would be able to come down and speak to the owner of Heartland Ford. As a side note, I have their cards in my pocket. I'm happy to talk about the fact that they are happy and willing to talk about legislation that comes from other parts of the country, about this very legislation. The owner, Kelly O'Connell, sees the intent to work on consumer protection for people. He knows that the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark wants to do what's best for his constituents.

I think that once you start to engage these people – you know, these people sit on national-level boards and work with other provinces, so they have a real clear understanding of what needs to be looked at and what could be amended and what can be accepted. I think that there are good things in here that we could adopt, things like putting signs up in repair shops to understand what it is. I know that for dealerships, repair shops are hugely important to their industry. It's something that keeps them working with their customers. It's good customer service. It maintains relationships so that the next time you need a new vehicle, you go to the dealership where you know the owner and you know your salespeople and you know that you have good repair people that you can depend on.

I'm really happy that this amendment has come forward. I am glad that the Government House Leader is supporting it, and I intend to do the same. I hope that everyone in the House supports it as well.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is good when the Legislature is like this, and it's great to be a part of speaking to it. Some thanks, I think, are in order to the member for bringing forward the bill and certainly to the Government House Leader for his eloquent words and to the government caucus and all private members who have indicated that they will support this.

What I like about this idea, what I like about sending it to committee, is that it is an opportunity to quantify the problem we're trying to solve and to truly understand the scope and scale of the challenge that we're trying to solve. Is it a big problem? Is it not a big problem? Are there aspects of it that deserve more attention than others? I think that's always – always – a worthwhile exercise and in this case, I think, absolutely needed based on some of the feedback that I've heard from industry stakeholders.

Of course, we always want to make sure we're looking out for Albertans and consumers and identify any gaps that may exist in the Fair Trading Act or other legislation to make sure that what we pass in this House is appropriate and not simply piling onto other legislation that may already exist. But if there are gaps or things that need to be addressed, that's a wonderful opportunity for us to do

that, to simultaneously ensure consumer protection, which, of course, has to be a big focus for us here in this House, but also to enable the continued viable and vibrant business operations for repair shop owners so that more people can choose to go into that line of business and do so knowing that the rules they need to follow are reasonable and appropriate and do not overburden them simply with bureaucracy and administration for its own sake.

I'm pleased, absolutely, to support the motion to move it to committee, and I certainly encourage others to support it as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:50

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise to speak to the amendment. I can support sending this to the committee. As I was listening to the debate earlier, if there's a message that I could convey to that committee as they're talking about how to strengthen this bill, that the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark has brought forward, and in the good spirit of making sure that we're putting together the best legislation we could, I did hear a couple of comments from the other side. You know, based on the number of repairs that we've seen and how many complaints have come forward and how many were actually dealt with and even quantifying as much as a percentage of, well, .0000, however many other zeros, those that were actually affected, I would hope that we would not think about minimizing those people's experiences when we're trying to create the best bill that we can. When you're not in that percentage, it might not necessarily be a big deal, but if you happen to have fallen into that .0000, or whatever, percentage, it could mean a substantial amount of dollar figures for them, which could present hardships. So I would certainly encourage that.

Again, I will support this to move it into the committee but that those committee members try not to use that kind of line of thinking as they're amending that motion. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to also rise in favour of the amendment sending this bill to committee. I was greatly impressed by the attendance in the gallery and the representation made by members of the industry who sought to gain the ear of government and by the mover of this bill to seek further input and improve the legislation, and I welcome the opportunity to do so by sending it to committee. I don't think that there's a member of this Legislature who does not have an automotive business repair shop in their riding. I myself have three, and I think that all three of those businesses have strong, positive reputations and, by and large, serve their customers well.

The bill itself, of course, is a consumer protection measure. There are issues of consumer protection which we should all be concerned about, but I think we can all agree that with the amount of time and energy spent by industry members to come here today and make representations to us, talking about their concerns with the bill, that should be respected and considered during time spent in committee debate. I look forward to hearing their concerns once the bill reaches committee should the amendment be passed.

Thank you.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to agree with my friends from across the way and suggest that this bill be referred to a committee. I have a lot of repair shops in my own riding, and I haven't had the time to speak to all of them about this bill, so I am delighted at the motion that was made by my friend

from across the way, and I suggest that we all support the amendment and refer the bill to committee.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Other parties who wish to speak to the amendment to the motion? Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm sorry that I had to step away from the House for a moment, but this amendment certainly falls in line with consultation. Of course, consultation with stakeholders is vitally important to any sort of success with a bill or an operation, and certainly I'm proud to stand up and support this amendment. It is wonderful that we can work as legislators in a co-operative manner, both as opposition as well as government and opposition, to ensure that we come up with a bill that is certainly best suited for all involved, all stakeholders and all consumers, and certainly that will be in addition to my message going on to this committee as well.

I agree with one of the hon. members on the other side in that we certainly do not want to minimize anyone in regard to being a victim of any sort whatsoever, but I think it is vitally important that we come up with a solution, or that at least the committee comes up with a solution, that will certainly be in the best interests of all Albertans and all stakeholders involved.

I certainly support this amendment, and I thank you for your time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, on the motion for amendment, are there any other members who would like to speak to the referral to committee?

[Motion on amendment carried]

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to request unanimous consent to call it 5 o'clock and move to Motions Other than Government Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

#### Prescription Drug Costs for Seniors

503. Ms Kazim moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to consider measures that would further lower the cost of prescription drugs for Alberta's low-income seniors to ease their financial burden and reduce their health care costs.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise today and speak to the issue of mitigating the cost of prescription drugs for Alberta's low-income seniors. As Albertans face the challenges resulting from the current economic situation, I remain proud to be part of a government that has maintained its commitment to ease the financial burden of low-income seniors and reduce the overall expenditures of our health care system. Mitigating costs for prescription drugs is a step towards meeting these goals. Therefore, on behalf of my constituents of Calgary-Glenmore, who have shared their concerns regarding costs of medication, and specifically on behalf of Alberta's seniors population, who have spent decades contributing to the growth and prosperity of our province, it is my privilege to debate this motion today.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans along with the rest of Canadians are paying among the highest prices for prescription drugs in the world. In 2016 Canadians will fill over 500 million prescriptions, at a cost of \$30 billion. Of this, approximately \$6 billion is paid out of pocket by Canadians and \$12 billion is paid through public drug plan coverage, for which Canadians are still paying deductibles and copayments. Among the larger provinces Alberta spends the second most on drug programs, next to Ontario.

Currently the Ministry of Health sponsors affordable drug and supplementary health plans for all Albertans, including plans for seniors. Government-sponsored programs cover approximately 20 per cent of Albertans, private employers or insurers cover 57 per cent, and federal programs cover approximately 3 per cent, leaving roughly 20 per cent of Albertans without coverage. This 20 per cent includes vulnerable Albertans and seniors, who need a government to stand up for them and their needs.

Under the government-sponsored coverage for seniors plan, drug coverage is available to Albertans 65 years of age and older. Seniors pay 30 per cent of their prescription costs, to a maximum of \$25, regardless of income. While a \$25 maximum copayment may seem low, I urge everyone to put themselves in the shoes of low-income seniors, whose only income is their pension or a low-wage job. Seniors in my constituency have told me that this is not affordable. This is a \$25 max copayment for medication, and many seniors require multiple prescriptions to manage their health. Having costly and inaccessible prescription medication is having a very real and adverse effect on their quality of life.

5:00

To all those I have spoken to and to all Albertans who share this concern: I am standing up for you today. I want to remind you that our government is committed to improving the quality of care and overall well-being of our seniors, families, and communities. The fact is that high costs for critical prescription drugs is not the Alberta way. Albertans, especially low-income Albertans, should not be in the position where they choose between their medication and food or shelter, but evidence indicates that 1 in 10 Canadians does not take their prescribed medication because of costs.

A study completed by Dr. Braden Manns from the University of Calgary's Cumming School of Medicine indicated that up to 30 per cent of low-income seniors reported not taking their medication to treat chronic health issues due to costs. Given that medications prescribed to seniors are primarily used to treat chronic diseases and given that the costs associated with chronic diseases represent a high proportion of total health care costs, this motion represents our government's commitment towards rectifying past mistakes, promoting good governance, and being fiscally responsible to taxpayers.

I would like to remind all Members of the Legislative Assembly that seniors are not usually prescribed one or two medications. In Dr. Manns' study it was found that seniors typically take six to 10 different medications. Again, given that Canadians are paying more than most other countries for prescription drugs and given the cost of copayments for those who are covered under a plan, high medication costs are coming at the expense of individual health, families, communities, and taxpayers.

In Canada studies have found that an estimated \$7 billion to \$9 billion is spent on health service because individuals did not take their prescribed medication, but by mitigating the cost of prescription medication to low-income seniors, this will reduce health service expenditures. Research shows that low-income individuals are less likely to adhere to their prescribed medication due to financial barriers. Often this results in additional health complications and higher costs to the health care system. Given the

current economic circumstances I'm confident that all members of this Legislature can support a motion that supports low-income seniors and promotes responsible public finances.

There are a variety of mechanisms which the hon. Minister of Health can use to mitigate the costs of prescription medication. However, I am inclined to urge the Minister of Health to examine the benefits of pharmacare. Pharmacare must be viewed as a central pillar to mitigate the financial burden on seniors and Albertans as well as to reduce the spending in health care. Given that the cost associated with the coverage for seniors plan in 2014-15 for prescribed medication was over \$523 million and given that Canadians pay higher prices, we can do better, and we must do better.

Governments throughout the world have implemented public drug plans that follow pharmacare values. The results have been overwhelmingly positive, with citizens having a system based on access, fairness, safety, and value for their taxpayer dollars. Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve a system based on these values as well. Prescription drugs and supplementary health benefits are important in ensuring quality health care treatment and support important clinical outcomes for patients and the health system. Just because prescription drugs are not considered part of publicly insured services under the Canada Health Act, it does not mean that we as members of this Legislature should ignore this issue. Access to affordable medication is a human right and should not be determined by one's level of income.

I urge the Minister of Health and members of this Legislature to work collaboratively with organizations and other provinces and jurisdictions to ensure Albertans are getting the best prices possible in a system that is comprehensive, evidence based, and sustainable. Mr. Speaker, reducing the cost of prescription drugs, especially for low-income and vulnerable seniors, will reduce expenditures for government and households. During our current economic challenges this is what good governance looks like.

Having spoken to many seniors in my constituency, I know seniors are proud and independent Albertans. This motion is central for Alberta's seniors to maintain their health, quality of life, and sense of independence. From a government perspective, reducing the overall costs to the health care system ensures the long-term sustainability of a public service all Albertans rely on. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that is protecting Albertans, their public services, and is fighting to ensure equitable access to necessary medications.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start by thanking the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore for her remarks and for introducing a motion, a private member's motion, that, I have to confess, at times during her opening remarks sounded much more like a government motion than a private member's motion because, indeed, it introduced a great deal of additional material that I don't think is germane to the discussion that is specifically before us with regard to this motion. This motion is very specific with regard to the cost of drugs for seniors. I would suggest that we confine our commentary to that rather than getting into debating the merits of a pharmacare program and some of the other things that the hon. member raised during the course of her remarks.

There are a number of things that were raised by the hon. member, but there are a number of realities that we do need to know when we're discussing these issues. The statement that Canadians pay higher prices for pharmaceuticals: that is a true statement, but the thing is that you have to understand why that comes about. With

a population of about 35 million people, Canada is, in fact, a small market. One of the things that we do have in Canada that I think we can be quite proud of is that we have a very strong regulatory framework for new drug approvals. Health Canada does a very specific and a very good job of protecting Canadians to make sure that all new drug approvals have to go through a rigorous and science-based mechanism to make sure that these drugs are, in fact, safe. That's part of what drives up the cost of drugs for Canadians. That approval process is costly, and it gives access to a relatively small market. We think of 35 million people as being a lot of people, but in point of fact it is not, from a pharmaceutical company standpoint, a large market. So the price of pharmaceuticals is a reality.

The other thing that is a reality is the burgeoning cost of pharmaceuticals as a major cost driver within our health care system. We want to encourage pharmaceutical companies to do research, to develop new and exciting medications, but that research is extremely costly. In order to recoup those costs, as we know, pharmaceutical companies are constantly bringing in new medications, new drugs, and in fact over the last 40 years the cost of pharmaceuticals as a total, nation-wide cost has gone from \$1.1 billion to \$30 billion in Canada. At that, it is the second-highest contributor to overall health care costs in Canada. It passed physician costs in 1997. The only other thing that costs the health care system in Canada more than pharmaceuticals is hospitals, and the percentage that hospitals contribute to the overall cost has dropped by nearly half in terms of a percentage. It used to be close to 50 per cent; now it's down to 28 per cent. So the issue with regard to the cost of pharmaceuticals is real, and it is one that, I would suggest, systemically we can't do a lot about.

But the hon. member did raise some important points with regard to how it affects seniors. Now, she mentioned very briefly in passing that seniors currently have a situation in Alberta where they are offered or afforded an opportunity through a copay mechanism of a maximum cost of \$25 per prescription. It's 30 per cent of the cost of the prescription up to \$83.33, and beyond that, the eligible senior pays nothing more. There are medications now that are used for a number of conditions. For example, the biological drug Remicade is used, and it's a very effective drug for a number of immune-related conditions. The individual cost of Remicade can be over \$3,000. The cost to the patient, the cost to the senior, is \$25. So, you know, while I appreciate what the hon. member is saying, the truth of the matter is that there is a great deal being done already to shield seniors and other vulnerable Albertans from the cost of these increasing pharmaceutical prices.

5:10

I think a more effective way to decrease the cost to seniors, which is the financial burden that the hon. member speaks of, is working on reducing the number of medications that seniors are on. That number of six to 10 medications is a huge concern to me because, quite frankly, as you increase the number of medications, you increase the risk of drug interactions, and you increase the risk of drugs that are working, in fact, in contradiction to each other.

One of my concerns is that sometimes some seniors are not fully aware of why they're taking certain medications. I know that that was the situation with my mother. When she was quite elderly, she was on three or four different medications, and when I asked, "Do you know why you're on them?" she was not entirely clear as to why she was on the different medications.

I would suggest that if we want to help our system, if we want to help, most importantly, our patients, one of the things we have to do is that we have to do a better job of medication management, and quite frankly an underutilized resource in this regard is our



pharmacists. The pharmacists of Alberta are highly skilled individuals, and in this province we have been a national leader, Mr. Speaker, in giving them a broadened scope of practice to allow our pharmacists to do a better job in terms of co-ordinating the needs of patients and, in fact, speaking to patients and co-ordinating with their doctors to say: "Look, Mrs. Smith is on nine different medications. At least three of these, in my professional opinion, are unnecessary, and we could reduce them." By doing that, you reduce that \$25 or whatever the copay amount is. To me, that is the better way to move towards a lessening of the financial burden.

To simply look at the cost of drugs, which is what this motion does, zeroing in on the cost of drugs, it is, I think, quite frankly, an incomplete analysis of what the cost drivers are. There's much more that goes into the overall cost both for the patient and for the system. While I certainly applaud the member for bringing forward the issues on behalf of her constituents, I think that it would be wise for us in the consideration of this motion and in the consideration of any situation where we're looking at cost drivers within the health care system to get the best advice from the people who are skilled in this area, who are trained professionals in this area, and certainly that would be our physicians, but it would also be our pharmacists.

Our pharmacists are very familiar with that, and certainly our pharmacists working in communities in Alberta, especially in rural communities, often provide the continuity of care that, unfortunately, has been a challenge to provide in Alberta. In many small rural communities they have difficulty retaining physicians for prolonged periods of time whereas the community pharmacist has often been there for 20, 25 years or longer. I think this is a resource that we should make full use of during the course of the rural health review. We spoke to the RxA, to representatives, and they have many, many good ideas as to how we can reduce the costs not just to the system but indeed to the patient, which is the goal of this motion.

So it is with some hesitation and some reluctance that I'm actually opposed to the motion. It's not because I don't think it's a good idea to reduce costs, but I think that the motion is incomplete. I think that the motion does not take a broadly enough based look at the overall cost drivers. The motion itself simply talks about reducing costs to reduce the financial burden. I think there are better ways of doing that. I think there are more broadly based ways of doing that. Therefore, reluctantly, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting in opposition to the motion.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 19(1)(c) I must now put the question on the following motion for consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech.

### **Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Motion carried]

## **Government Motions**

### **Address in Reply to Speech from the Throne**

11. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are members of Executive Council.

[Government Motion 11 carried]

## **Motions Other than Government Motions**

### **Prescription Drug Costs for Seniors**

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today in support of Motion 503 and to speak to some of the work that the Ministry of Health is already doing to assist our seniors with the cost of prescription drugs.

As was noted, all seniors in Alberta are eligible for premium-free drug coverage that ensures they have access to essential medications at a more affordable cost. The coverage for the seniors' drug program is one of a number of provincial government sponsored drug and health benefit programs that were developed as targeted solutions to protect individuals and to provide access to appropriate medications. This program helps over half a million seniors in this province right now, but we know that these costs are not going down and that the need continues to rise.

Alberta Health will continue its work to give seniors access to appropriate medications while managing expected growth in drug program costs. We've already seen success with one of these medications. Lucentis, a drug used for the treatment of macular degeneration, is one of the most costly medications that Alberta currently covers. We have launched a pilot program that allows ophthalmologists to prescribe the drug Avastin for this condition at no cost to the patient. Through this program seniors get the care they need with no out-of-pocket costs and at a much lower cost to the province overall.

This is one area where Alberta has been successful at bending the cost curve while also improving quality and access for Albertans. We must remain diligent in our approach to continue to build on these successes. Joint efforts with drug plans across Canada capitalize on combined purchasing power, leading to increased access to drug treatment options, lower drug costs, and greater consistency of listing decisions for everyone.

Many Albertans face challenges with the cost of prescription drugs. Our government has drug coverage programs that provide access to needed medicines for many Albertans, but we know that these programs can be improved. We are working with our provincial and federal partners to explore an evidence-based approach for funding and delivery of drug coverage in Canada.

There are a number of ways to design programs that provide access to prescription drugs. A national pharmacare program that provides coverage for all residents with minimal or no cost sharing is just one option. Considering who would be eligible, what drugs they would be eligible for, and how much the program would cost is important regardless of the type of program being considered. Together with other provinces and territories our government continues to find new ways to improve review processes to make prescription drugs more affordable and to enable appropriate access to both brand name and generic prescription drugs.

I thank the member for drawing attention to this important issue, and I call on the members assembled to support Alberta seniors through this motion. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore for bringing this motion to the floor of the Legislature. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Motion 503, which would urge the government to consider measures to lower the cost of prescription drugs for low-income seniors.

I would like to begin by saying that I will be supporting this motion. Furthermore, I believe that good governance requires that we continually explore such matters and always work towards improvement. We know that Albertans are currently struggling a little more these days with our economic growth slowed and Albertans being asked to shoulder more and more of the load for our government.

5:20

This weekend in Medicine Hat I was talking to a gentleman, a small-business owner, an oil field services contractor, who relayed his struggles to me. He is making the exact same income as in previous years, but because of recent increases to taxes and fees, he is now taking home \$800 per month less. Mr. Speaker, that's nearly \$10,000 a year. While some may be tempted to label him a person who has not done his fair share, I can assure you that his contributions to his community, to charity, and, most importantly, to his family have always gone above and beyond. He, like so many Albertans, does not use the fruits of his labour to live lavishly or extravagantly. With his income, above and beyond business expenses and the cost of living, he has been supporting his elderly parents.

So when I consider this motion, that aims to consider measures to ease the financial burden of our seniors, I think also of their families, their caregivers, who willingly and lovingly carry so much of the burden themselves. It is only right and proper when we consider every way to ease some of the burdens on those in the greatest need that we do this. What forms these measures take remain to be seen, but I encourage the government to keep an open mind and truly explore all the options available at their disposal.

It's important to note, Mr. Speaker, that we currently have several programs available to low-income seniors for prescription medication on top of the universal coverage for seniors' benefits, which provides prescription coverage to all residents over 65 premium free. In my four years I continually find in my constituency office – and I'm sure other members in this Assembly can relate – that many seniors can become overwhelmed reviewing the various programs currently available to them. The forms can often be confusing, onerous, and numerous, and the process seems very disjointed at times. So if the government wishes to support low-income seniors, I would also suggest that the easiest thing they could do right away would be to streamline the programs and simplify the application process. Right away I think we could see improvements in the quality of life of seniors and added efficiency in government, that can serve all Albertans so well.

If the government does consider measures in line with this motion – and this consideration should, of course, already be ongoing from the minister – we as Albertans must continually ask whether we are getting the best value possible. Mr. Speaker, it has been said that improvement is not a destination but a never-ending journey. So I hope to that end we constantly strive – constantly strive – for the best value possible and the best use of Albertans'

dollars. How well we do in achieving value will ultimately be measured in how well people are served and their quality of life.

Many words have been spoken in this House about the need for fiscal responsibility and sustainability, but as I consider this motion, it really drives home to me what these concepts mean. At the government level the sustainability of our system means having the resources in place long term – long term – so that they're there when we need them. It means not having this generation and future generations trapped under the weight of crippling debt and interest payments. It means having the means to cover our province's priorities, not lost to these bloated interest payments. At the personal level it means ensuring that the province's families have the opportunity to thrive. It means ensuring that folks like my constituent can give like no other to their family, to their parents, and to their community.

Mr. Speaker, I will absolutely be voting in support of the consideration of all measures to reduce the financial burden for seniors' health care. At the same time I encourage this government to consider how it may ease the burden on all families and caregivers across the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to speak in support of the Member for Calgary-Glenmore's motion, that encourages our government to reflect on measures that further lower the cost of prescription drugs for low-income Alberta seniors. We stand together because I, too, have seniors in the constituency of Red Deer-North whose well-being is adversely impacted by the financial burden of prescription costs. I thank you for the opportunity to rise today and speak to the importance of this motion.

Alberta and Canada are paying among the highest prices for prescription drugs in the world. To some seniors this means compromise on various levels. Fixed incomes, low incomes do not have flexibility to sustain an increase to monthly expenses. As a result our low-income seniors' options are conflicting; that is to say that if I buy these prescriptions, I may have to decrease my food budget for the month. Our Alberta cannot tolerate that as a status quo.

Currently our government-sponsored plan for seniors makes drug coverage available to all Albertans 65 years and older. Through this program seniors pay 30 per cent of their prescription costs to a maximum of \$25. This is not variable. All seniors have this available regardless of financial disposition. Mr. Speaker, as I have engaged with the senior constituents in Red Deer-North, I have heard many times as a constant concern that the unaffordability of prescriptions causes duress. On behalf of my constituents of Red Deer-North who have shared this concern, I am indeed proud to stand up in the House and speak in favour of them and this motion.

Seniors are prescribed medications that primarily combat chronic diseases; that is to say that without these medications, their health could and would deteriorate. If we refer to the numbers as presented in Dr. Manns' study, we are presented with the fact that seniors typically take between six to 10 different medications at a maximum of \$250. In consideration of those low-income seniors who are extremely limited, the cost potentially represents the difference between health and hunger, as though either compromise is acceptable. It is apparent that we have placed our seniors in a position that is undeserving to them.

As we suffer through the economic challenges that Alberta is experiencing, our government needs to look at how we can mitigate the impact. With the current economy our seniors may experience less support from their families. As a result our low-income seniors

may compromise their resources by not taking medications as prescribed. It is apparent that any compromise will certainly bring greater demands on our health system.

Mr. Speaker, this motion reinforces the government's commitment to protecting Alberta's vulnerable while remaining responsible public finance administrators. Today's motion is about protecting our low-income seniors. The constituents of Red Deer-North have been very transparent that the \$25 maximum copayment per prescription is not affordable on their limited income.

Very often in the House we speak to the community mindedness of our Albertans. Let us acknowledge the decades of contribution to Alberta's growth and prosperity at the hands of our seniors, including our low-income seniors. Our province has been fashioned by their hard work, and regardless of our difficult economic climate, seniors deserve our protection. To ignore seniors, especially low-income seniors who depend on essential prescription medication, is not the Alberta way.

5:30

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the Member for Calgary-Glenmore for bringing this important motion before the House. I echo the statement made by the member that access to affordable medication is a human right and should not be determined by one's level of income. Reducing the cost of prescription drugs, especially for low-income and vulnerable seniors, will result in the reduction of expenditures for government and households. Considering our current challenges, this motion resonates sound governance, fiscal responsibility, and our ability to remedy past mistakes. Our government needs to look to responsible measures to reduce costs and barriers.

Mr. Speaker, may I say once again that I am proud to speak to this motion, presented by the Member for Calgary-Glenmore, and also proud to be part of a government that shares this commitment. We as members of this Legislature cannot allow income to determine the quality of health for low-income and vulnerable seniors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to speak on Motion 503, a motion to consider measures that would further lower the cost of prescription drugs for Alberta's low-income seniors to ease their financial burden and reduce their health care costs. For too long the government has not given the seniors' file the attention it deserves. Seniors' facilities went unbuilt, patients ignored. Palliative care centres were shut down in a manner which lacked both efficiency and compassion. It is good to see that these issues are now being discussed and that this Legislature is working to address some of the ongoing issues.

Our seniors built this province, and the Wildrose believes they deserve the best. Seniors are among Alberta's most vulnerable population and shouldn't have to worry about how they're going to pay for the medicine they need. When considering measures to lower costs, it is important to ensure they are fair across the board.

This is a debate that is happening because of the current system we have in place. Currently in Alberta the Alberta group coverage plan is charging a copay towards seniors accessing necessary prescriptions. It is the government who is charging a copay amount to our seniors of up to \$25 per prescription. The current plan that governs seniors' prescriptions and drug coverage is in need of a full review to ensure that all of our seniors are incorporated into a plan

that works with their individual needs. We also have to recognize that this is a very complex issue.

We believe it is important to reduce costs for our seniors whenever possible in a fair, transparent manner. We all know Alberta's seniors have worked hard to get where they are, and it is so important we help those who are accessing care. Too often I hear from seniors that they are struggling with costs . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I would just like to interrupt a sec.

I notice that there may be a telephone conversation going on, which is not consistent. I'm sure one of his peers may point that out to him, I believe.

**An Hon. Member:** No. There's no telephone conversation, sir.

**The Speaker:** No? It wasn't a telephone conversation? My apologies. Okay. Thank you.

Please proceed.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Too often I hear from seniors that they are struggling with the health system. Perhaps the government should also consider creating an independent Seniors' Advocate who would be able to provide information to address systemic problems and stand up for our seniors by helping them navigate these complicated government programs.

The fact that people live longer than ever should be celebrated as one of the biggest success stories in history. As the saying goes: getting old is better than the alternative. But we must ensure that we are creating programs that are reflective of these facts and that when we are debating these pieces of legislation, we are always cognizant of the most vulnerable.

There are many concerns about this motion and alternates to this motion that should be considered, ensuring that all pertinent groups are consulted, ensuring that this is sustainable. It is my hope that the government will bring in a reasoned, common-sense approach that will address the major shortfalls for seniors.

At this time I will support this motion. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to rise today and speak to this important motion brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. As the member of this Legislature stated, considering measures that would lower the cost of prescription drugs for Alberta's low-income seniors to ease their financial burden and reduce overall health care costs is critical during the current economic climate. I am proud to stand beside the Member for Calgary-Glenmore and privileged to be part of a government that remains committed to protecting Alberta's most vulnerable. On behalf of my constituents of Wetaskiwin-Camrose, who have also shared their concerns with me on this issue, I am proud to stand up in the House and speak in favour of this motion.

Mr. Speaker, as I door-knock in Wetaskiwin-Camrose or meet with constituents in my office, a constant theme I encounter is the unaffordability of prescription medication for seniors, especially low-income seniors. Reducing costs of prescription drugs, especially for low-income and vulnerable seniors, will reduce expenditures for government and households. During these challenging times it is how good governance functions.

Given that this motion aims at removing income as a barrier to health and seeks to improve the overall well-being of Alberta's low-income seniors while being fiscally prudent to taxpayers, I fully support this motion.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore for putting this forward. I really want to extend my appreciation to our colleagues across the way for the very positive comments that have been made about this. I think this is a situation where all of us can come together to recognize that there is a vulnerable population amongst us. Some of us have reached that vulnerability already, I could say. Maybe you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know. [interjections] In any case, this is a matter that the Legislature should be putting its mind to. This is a situation where there is hardship going on, and I'm hoping that with the efforts of the Member for Calgary-Glenmore and others that we will gradually improve the situation for our vulnerable seniors, particularly those that have a low income.

I did want to make some comments about some very positive things that are going on in our health care system at the present time. The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster mentioned the important role of pharmacists in controlling drug costs, and I've been very impressed with meeting several pharmacists, including the head of the College of Pharmacists, who lives in my riding of Edmonton-Whitemud, along with several of the pharmacists who operate stores or outlets in Edmonton-Whitemud. All of those people are very interested in this vital issue. They every day see seniors who can't afford their medication, and as an association the pharmacists have been looking at ways that they can help deal with this.

Seniors have issues that really are compounded in this area. Many of them have chronic diseases: diabetes, chronic lung disease, chronic kidney disease, hypertension, chronic heart disease. I could go on and on. These conditions are not curable in the sense that I can cure somebody with leukemia with the appropriate chemotherapy or that we might be able to cure somebody's eye disease with an injection of Avastin. These conditions require a combination of several different medications. Often those medications have drug interactions. We count on the pharmacists as well as the pharmacy information network – that's one of the good things that we've got in health management in this province – to try to mitigate that.

5:40

I'm really proud as a physician that I can have access through the Netcare system to the pharmacy information network, and I can actually look at the list of medications that have been prescribed for the patient. It was mentioned by at least one other of the speakers that patients often don't get their prescriptions filled or that they don't take the prescriptions on a regular basis because of the cost, but at least you know what medications were prescribed. I think it's the responsibility of physicians like me as well as pharmacists to take a look at those lists and to try to limit the polypharmacy that is going on. What I do think – and I agree with the mover of this motion – is that we need to be looking at a national program, something like pharmacare, although I think that's sort of the golden temple on the hill. But there are things we could be talking about early on.

In cancer therapy in this province we're actually very fortunate. Very expensive medications, which are very effective, for instance, in treating leukemia, which is my area of expertise, are provided by the government through the drug benefit plan of the cancer program. Some of those medications – and I can give you an example from my own practice. If I treat a patient for chronic myelogenous leukemia with imatinib, which its brand name is Gleevec – I think some of you will have heard of it – the cost to the taxpayer is about \$35,000 a year. I've been treating some patients for over 15 years, so you can do the math on that. Fortunately, none

of my patients are noncompliant because of cost, unlike the experience in the United States, where about 30 per cent of the prescriptions that are given out for imatinib are never filled, and then the leukemia basically goes untreated.

We need a catastrophic drug program to deal with, for instance, multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, dementia – that may be coming to me some day – chronic kidney disease. These medications, as was mentioned by another speaker, are catastrophically expensive. What I think we need to be thinking about as legislators are ways to get a catastrophic drug program, probably through federal-provincial co-operation since another component of this would be negotiation of pricing with the pharmaceutical companies through the 10 provinces and the three territories. Generic drug pricing is very important. It's a complex issue, and it's one that I think we need to collaborate with the pharmacists on as well as the pharmaceutical companies.

I do want to bring up one thing that relates to the policy of this government, and that is that the trans-Pacific partnership needs to be looked at very carefully in this regard. The trans-Pacific partnership would result in the lengthening of the patent period for medications. This will cost Canadian governments billions of dollars, actually, over the next five years if the provisions in the TPP are not covered.

In summary, there are lots of things that we could be looking at as legislators to try to improve the lot of the senior with diminished financial resources to ensure that the senior can live out their life in comfort and in good health.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. I am happy to support the motion from the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. The issue of drug affordability for seniors is one that I often hear as I meet Sherwood Park constituents in my office or attend community meetings. Seniors are having difficulties paying for the drugs that their doctors prescribe to them. While seniors can access the government drug coverage plan, where they pay only 30 per cent of the prescription cost to a maximum of \$25 per drug, this still leaves many seniors with the choice of affording drugs or food. Not taking the prescribed drugs not only endangers the life of the senior, but it also means additional costs to the health care system when they have a health setback or their health is seriously impaired just because they cannot afford the drugs prescribed.

This morning I spoke to local physicians, members of my local primary care network, about this issue. They told me that they are very well aware of how the cost of drugs impacts seniors, especially those with chronic diseases or those for whom a nongeneric drug needs to be prescribed. These doctors try to help by giving out drug samples or ensuring that they find a replacement generic drug if possible. The PCN even tries to find funds when all avenues have been exhausted for the senior. I have also spoken to pharmacists, who take great care to make sure that seniors do have access to the prescribed drugs by working with their doctor, the PCN, or other health care providers to ensure that the drug prescribed is affordable to the senior. I want to take the opportunity to thank the doctors, the pharmacists, and the PCNs who are helping seniors to afford the needed drugs when they cannot afford the drugs even though part of them are covered, and I think they need to be thanked, some of them.

Unfortunately, few seniors are able to keep the extended health benefits when they retire, which would help them to manage the cost of drugs. Few employers offer this option to their retired employees. I am fortunate that my husband's former employer did

offer this option to its retired employees, so when it's my time to retire, we will have an easier time to manage the cost of our drugs. But this is offered to only a very small proportion of our seniors.

No one knows what chronic disease or health problems might strike them in the future and can therefore plan accurately for the cost of all their needed medicine. Some seniors, in addition to the cost of drugs, have substantial out-of-pocket costs for such things as diabetes testing strips or other supplies that are not part of the drug program. This seriously depletes their limited funds, making their ability to afford the needed drugs even more challenging.

Given the challenges that seniors face in affording the needed drugs, I would urge all members of this House to support Motion 503, that asks government to consider measures that would further lower the cost of prescription drugs for Alberta's low-income seniors.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this motion. First of all, I'd like to thank her for highlighting Dr. Manns' study, which highlighted the seriousness of this issue. Having 30 per cent of low-income seniors unable to take their medication due to financial implications is putting a lot of stress on our health care system and public finances. Adherence to prescription medication is key for controlling and stabilizing health. As such, nonadherence increases the risk of developing additional chronic diseases and developing acute related symptoms. This worsens overall health and increases health care costs.

We are aging. Our population is aging. Our life expectancy is increasing, and more and more we are seeing seniors not just living with low incomes but living in grinding poverty. Women are living longer, and we know there is a wage gap, so it's not unusual to see – in my community I've seen older women who probably should have retired and spent time with their grandchildren, but they're working in low-paying jobs, minimum wage jobs like Tim Hortons or like Home Depot. I see it all the time.

5:50

I know from my own life, in my own work life, when people do not take their medications properly, there are all kinds of related problems. If people don't have access to medication that slows down the rate of Alzheimer's, there are huge implications for seniors and for their families. As well, failure to take correct medication results in injuries from falls.

My parents were entrepreneurs, I'll call them. They liked to try a lot of different businesses, and they liked to move around a lot. So they never had a pension, and financially they were not able to put a lot of money away to save for retirement. Now my folks are in their 70s, and life is tough. They live in a rental apartment, and they don't have a lot of extra money for anything. Thankfully, I and my siblings are able to help them, and I'm grateful that we can. However, I have seen the decision-making process. I have seen my father sort of wave off my mother about the diabetes test strips because "it's really not necessary," because they really need to contribute to the grocery budget. So it's real. I think the implications of not testing properly or not having the money to buy the correct food to manage your health is hugely expensive in the long run. Anything that can help is a good thing. Twenty-five dollars might not seem like a lot, but it's huge.

I can remember one time leaving the Cross. We were at the Cross for some treatment for my father, and they were going to try a different medication. I'm not sure what the name was. I think it was interferon. I might be wrong. It was hugely expensive, and even

though he only had to pay a portion of it, he knew that that would not be possible. Now, there was a social worker there. Actually, we were able to stop, fill out some forms, and get some assistance through the Cross, which I will be eternally grateful for. That's a reality for far too many seniors in Alberta.

So it's my absolute pleasure and I'm very thankful that this motion was put forward, and I am overjoyed to support it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd really like to thank the Member for Calgary-Glenmore for bringing this motion forward into the House. You know, I can't imagine living and working an entire life in this province and getting to that stage where I would then be a senior and not having the economic resources in order to pay for the medications that I would need. That would just be horrible. Perhaps there are even Albertans that are watching us right now, listening to us right now, that are experiencing that very reality. It bothers me so much that there are individuals that have given their lives to the service of this province, and that's the reality that they're going through. It's a shame.

Albertans and low-income seniors should not be in a position where they must choose between their medication and food or shelter. Given that the costs associated with chronic disease represent a high portion of total health care costs, this motion represents a step forward toward rectifying past mistakes, promoting good governance, and being fiscally responsible to the taxpayer. On behalf of my constituents of Edmonton-Ellerslie, who have also shared their concerns with me on this issue, I'm proud to stand up in this House and speak in favour of this motion. Mr. Speaker, as I door-knocked in Edmonton-Ellerslie and I met with constituents in my office, this was a constant theme I encountered, this unaffordability of prescription medication, especially for those low-income seniors.

That being said, you know, Albertans are community minded, and they value that our government is standing up and protecting those who are facing immediate financial hardships. To ignore seniors, especially low-income seniors, who depend on essential prescription medication is just not the Alberta way.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Calgary-Glenmore has shed light on the fact that Canadians pay higher prices for prescription medication than most around the world. In Canada Alberta is spending the second most on drug plans.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, but under Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore to close debate on Motion 503.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't guess that a collection of facts and thorough research on the matters especially identified as serious issues by my constituents could be perceived as not a private member's motion. I would like to thank the members of this Legislature for speaking today on this issue and having the voices of their constituents heard.

Mr. Speaker, vulnerable, low-income seniors need a government that is willing to stand up and protect them during these difficult economic times. Health and stable quality of life must not be dependent on one's income or whether they have a strong support system that is able to assist the seniors. Low-income seniors deserve the right to accessible and affordable prescription medication, which means the maintenance of health and independence.

Mr. Speaker, consideration of measures that would further lower the costs of prescription drugs for Alberta's low-income seniors represents a needed step towards easing the financial burdens faced by low-income seniors and a reduction in overall health expenditures. In other words, this motion represents a commitment to protecting Alberta's most vulnerable seniors while remaining fiscally responsible to taxpayers' hard-earned money as this province endures the current economic challenges. These are the recommendations Albertans expect and deserve.

This motion is not based on ideology, but it is based on practicality. The fact is that Canadians pay among the highest prices for prescription drugs in the world. Among Canadians Albertans are paying the second-highest prices on drug plans. We need to find solutions that reduce the cost of prescription medication. The current system is not built for the long-term sustainability of our health care system. As previously mentioned, approximately 20 per cent of Albertans remain without coverage. With higher than average costs 1 in 5 Albertans are unable to purchase their necessary medications. Many low-income seniors fall into this category, and the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot cast aside the issues facing Alberta's aging population.

All the Alberta senior population is eligible to be covered under the government-sponsored coverage for seniors. The costs resulting from copayments are still too high for seniors to bear, especially for low-income seniors. I have heard from constituents in Calgary-Glenmore who tell me that the cost of prescription medication is unaffordable. There are eight seniors' care facilities in my

constituency, and I have been visiting them and talking to seniors on a one-on-one basis to listen to them and hear what their concerns are. They have mentioned that it has been unaffordable for themselves, unaffordable for their aging parents and grandparents, unaffordable for their neighbours and friends.

Mr. Speaker, as Dr. Manns' study highlighted, seniors rely on multiple prescriptions to manage their health. Sure, a \$25 maximum copayment may not seem like much, but given that most seniors are paying much more than \$25 every time they need a refill, it is clear why 30 per cent of low-income seniors are not taking their medications. The costs are simply too high. The results, of course, are obvious. Seniors are experiencing less comfortable lives and are at increased risk of losing their independence. This adds pressure to our health services. The costs associated with chronic disease represent a high percentage of overall health expenditures. Consideration of the measures that limit these services, that result in nonadherence to critical medication, is what we need in this province. This would represent effective and responsible management of public finances.

This motion also represents a commitment to all Albertans that as members of this Legislature we are standing up for their interests regardless of whether the province is in an economic boom or bust. Reducing the cost of prescription drugs, especially for low-income and vulnerable seniors, will reduce expenditures for government and households.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 503 carried]

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, April 12, 2016

Day 13

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, April 12, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us bow our heads and reflect. Today, as we welcome a new member to our midst, let each of us take the time to build a relationship with him; to know him as a person, not just as a politician; to listen to his story about his history, his family, his hopes and aspirations for this province; to appreciate that we are all stronger now that he is with us.

Please be seated.

### Presentation to the Assembly of Mr. Prab Gill Member for Calgary-Greenway

**The Speaker:** I would now invite the leader of the third party, the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, to proceed to the main doors of the Chamber.

Hon. members, I have received from the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta the report of the returning officer for the constituency of Calgary-Greenway containing the results of the by-election conducted on March 22, 2016, which states that a by-election was conducted in the constituency of Calgary-Greenway and that Mr. Prab Gill was duly elected as the Member for Calgary-Greenway.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. McIver escorted Mr. Gill to the Mace]

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to you Mr. Prab Gill, the new Member for Calgary-Greenway, who has taken the oath as a member of this House, has inscribed the roll, and now claims the right to take his seat.

**The Speaker:** Let the hon. member take his seat. [Standing ovation]

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 5

#### Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act

[Adjourned debate April 7: Mr. Dach]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung is not present. Is there another member to speak to Bill 5? The Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I rise in this House and am able to say how proud I am of our government and the work that we're doing around affordable housing and ensuring that everyone has an affordable home. In particular, I'm very, very happy to stand and speak about the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act.

In my riding of Sherwood Park we have a lot of seniors who have their own homes, and with their age and as their income has become limited, they have a lot of challenges in being able to maintain their homes to continue to live in them and also with the adaptations that they need to remain in their homes. The adaptations may be as

simple as putting a ramp in their front yard or bars in their bathrooms or ensuring that the walkways between the bedrooms and the living room are accessible with a wheelchair. This is a big issue in my riding of Sherwood Park, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank groups like Seniors United Now, who have a big chapter in Sherwood Park, for all their advocacy on this issue. I also have a seniors' committee in Sherwood Park. I've brought together a group of seniors, and one of the main issues that they've been talking about is the challenge that they have in terms of staying in their homes and being able to afford just staying in their homes.

I'm delighted that the minister has introduced this bill because this bill will help the seniors in my riding to be able to stay in their homes and to not worry about leaking roofs or damaged doors or any other things that go on when you have your own single home. I'm especially delighted about this bill because I did studies around rural housing and rural homelessness when I worked in the county of Newell. One of the biggest causes of homelessness in rural areas was the fact that a lot of seniors had no place to go. When their homes were in disrepair, they had no funding and nothing to do, so their homes became condemned. It was no place for them to live. So I'm very delighted that this Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act will meet the needs of not only urban seniors but also rural seniors.

One of the really great things about this act is that the minister has ensured that seniors are protected. We all understand some of the challenges when older people enter into contracts and try to negotiate with contractors in terms of home repairs. A great deal of the act talks about the need to protect seniors and to make sure that they have some protection if the contractor does not deliver what was agreed upon.

I would like to urge all members of the House to support this act. This act will definitely meet the needs of seniors. I really appreciate that the income test is \$75,000 for a single or a combined couple income and that the loan amount is \$40,000 because I think that all the repairs that seniors will need – home repairs, adaptation for mobility, or other issues – will be managed under \$40,000.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe, with the permission of the House, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has a brief introduction to make. We need unanimous consent to do that.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Introduction of Visitors

**Mr. Ceci:** I appreciate that, members of the House. I'd just briefly like to introduce a dear friend of mine, a city councillor from Toronto, Joe Mihevc. He originally started political life as a city councillor in the city of York, I believe. Then when amalgamation happened in those seven cities, he moved over to the city of Toronto. I've known Joe since FCM. We met back at an FCM in some city in this country back in 1996, and we've kept in touch with each other. He's a big proponent of inclusion of people, low-income people, and support for those who need our help. He was the chair of the poverty reduction initiative in the city of Toronto as well as something called DiverseCity Toronto.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Assembly, it gives me great pleasure to introduce Joe Mihevc, from the city of Toronto, up there in the gallery.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

10:10

**Government Bills and Orders****Second Reading****Bill 5****Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act***(continued)*

**The Speaker:** I would recognize the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about Bill 5. Bill 5, the seniors' home equity loan bill, is a major piece of legislation that proposes to create a home equity loan program. It's very important that the seniors in our province are able to age in place in the communities that they have built and in a place that is safe and adaptable to their needs. The programs we debate and vote on here in the House will have long-lasting impacts on people's lives and on the economy, so I appreciate the chance to debate Bill 5 at second reading.

Having looked at this bill, I have a few concerns about how this government intends to approach this issue. The legislation as it currently stands sets a framework that will get this government, essentially, into the business of banking, and I can't help but wonder why and how. You see, Mr. Speaker, this is yet another bill that gives a minister the power to create all the substantive details in regulation. This is a massive government home equity loan program. We're debating putting in a program with vague details and with the possibility of high financial risk to seniors and taxpayers.

The speed with which this government is moving through legislation is unacceptable. Right now Albertans are already worried about the economy, and right now their concerns are mounting as they watch the actions of this government, a government with an attitude. The NDP hasn't even been elected one year, yet we have already seen it make the same mistakes bill after bill, with little or no progress on the learning curve. For instance, last fall's Bill 6, a bill which would force farms into subscribing to a broken WCB program and also which initially took aim at the family farm, promised that details would be in regulation. The government ignored consultation and broke the trust of farmers across rural Alberta.

I firmly believe that if I'm going to be voting in favour of any legislation, then I need to be able to get back to my constituents of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and say: "Look, this is a bill. Here it is. Here's what it does. What do you think?" But this government is not interested in that. This government is not interested in respecting the time of other duly elected officials or in respecting Albertans, who expect a certain level of legislative policies. Governing through regulation allows the NDP to avoid tough questions, and Albertans deserve better.

Mr. Speaker, for many years I served as a firefighter, and I was always running from one fire to another. I have now transitioned out of that role but can see myself slipping back into my old habits because, you see, the only difference this time is that the fire is the NDP's ideology, and unfortunately their 911 line is ringing off the hook.

Mr. Speaker, we have not even entered into second reading of Bill 1. Bill 1, which is the government's flagship jobs bill, was tabled on March 8 but has received no time for discussion in this House though it has received plenty of time for consideration for a bill with a preamble longer than the legislation. Now we stand in the second reading of Bill 5, a bill to create a home equity loan program for, according to the minister, approximately a quarter million seniors in Alberta. A program of this magnitude deserves thorough discussion and time for consideration.

Having now had a few days to consider this, it seems to me that there are a lot of important details that are simply missing. This government must explain and put into place real legislation before any member of this Assembly should be voting on this. We must not fall into the habits of the old government, which gave sweeping powers to the cabinet to make drastic changes with the stroke of a pen.

Mr. Speaker, last May the people voted for change. They did not vote for more of the same old, same old with the added benefit of a manifesto. Therefore, I would ask the minister to rise and explain why she did not include the following elements inside of the legislation, things like grant eligibility, loan eligibility, grant amounts, loan amounts, grant definitions, loan definitions, a list of approved repairs and adaptations, loan repayment schedules. They even have to provide a list of winners and losers in regard to contractors who would be able to work on a lot of these projects.

There are key components of the bill that are notably absent, and it's actually quite staggering. How does the minister expect seniors to trust this government when the program terms, eligibilities, approved repairs and adaptations, and money amounts are all subject to the whim of the minister? I recognize that the minister has come forward in recent weeks with press releases and statements on certain aspects of the program, but these numbers are not substantiated in the actual legislation.

For example, on April 6, 2016, the minister released a statement, which reads:

Under the proposed program, a maximum home equity loan of \$40,000 would be available to seniors with a qualifying income threshold of \$75,000, and who have a minimum 25 per cent home equity.

Elsewhere I've heard that the qualifying senior must maintain 25 per cent equity after the loan is taken, so I'm unsure whether it is 25 per cent home equity to qualify or it's 25 per cent home equity that must be retained after the portion of the equity loan.

The government needs to understand the importance of putting these details into legislation and the importance of the wording of the bills because if this legislation is passed, this will be what the department relies on when it puts this idea into motion. I can't help but feel that many of the most important parts of this bill are going to be in regulation. Essentially this means that the government would be creating a loan with no defined maximums and a grant program with few details as well. I understand that it's common to put the finer points in place through regulations; however, it is not common to use them for the most substantial components of the legislation.

The intent of the bill is worth while and respectable. Seniors should be afforded every opportunity to age in place or age in communities in a home that is safe and comfortable. This is something that the Wildrose is very much in favour of. But how can we agree to a program when we have no idea what it is going to look like and when we have no idea what future risks it may unintentionally present?

Mr. Speaker, I also think that one of the most serious questions that must be answered is: what is going on with the grant program? The minister has not yet stated publicly or formally what this grant portion will be or how it will be enacted. The legislation is so broad that it literally points out nothing. It states:

5(1) The Minister may, in accordance with the regulations, make a grant to . . .

(c) the owner [who] does not qualify for a loan.

Does this virtually mean that all of Alberta's seniors are eligible under either the loan or the grant portion of the program? Again, why has the minister chosen to leave questions of eligibility up in

the air, to be decided later in regulation? Don't seniors deserve to know who is eligible for this legislative program and who isn't?

This is a government that is constantly asking for trust from all sectors of society. Our seniors and most vulnerable deserve to know the details of this program and deserve to be reassured that this government can be trusted. I would love to see a program that actually encourages meaningful impacts and helps our seniors, and I encourage the minister to step up to the plate and answer these questions and put forth the government's policies in writing. Our seniors deserve better than this skeletal legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions of the member under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none – I'm sorry. I would recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 5. I think this is an important piece of legislation.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, we are on 29(2)(a). Are you speaking on that, or is it to the ...?

**Mr. McIver:** I wasn't on 29(2)(a), Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I would be recognizing someone else, then.

The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 5, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. As has been noted, this proposed act will allow seniors to use their home equity to make modifications to remain in their homes and maintain their independence.

In Edmonton-Centre I have a number of specialized seniors' facilities, but I also have some neighbourhoods where there are a number of seniors who own their own homes, particularly the neighbourhood of Queen Mary Park, where we have a number of people who have lived in that community for many years and would love, I'm sure, to continue to do so. Having had conversations with many, that is, in fact, the case, and I know that many of those residents remain in those homes until they are no longer able and then pass them on to their children, so there are some families that have some very deep roots in that area. This program, I believe, is very important in supporting those constituents of mine, allowing them, as other members have noted, to be able to age in place.

As noted, this proposed program includes a \$75,000 income test – that's either single or combined income – with a maximum loan amount of up to \$40,000. I think that those are both very generous amounts, allow plenty of room for seniors to be able to make the accommodations that they need to in their home, and provide for people within a reasonable range of income to be able to do that. On average, we know that Alberta's seniors' homes are older than those of the general Alberta population. Certainly, I know that that's true in my urban neighbourhoods and downtown here. Many of these were the first neighbourhoods in the city of Edmonton, so certainly we do have some aging homes there that will be in need of assistance.

10:20

The bill reinforces our commitment to supporting seniors and reinforces our commitment to addressing the needs and priorities of Alberta's growing and aging population. We certainly recognize that we have a growing number of seniors in our province, both urban and rural. As my colleague the MLA for Sherwood Park

noted, this is a program that benefits seniors across the province, both in our cities and in our rural areas.

Under this program seniors will not be required to make monthly payments, as they would with traditional loan programs. Instead, the loan and interest charges would be repaid upon the sale of their property when the senior passes away, when the senior moves, or earlier if the senior chooses to do so.

As noted by my colleague across the aisle, of course, this will require some new regulation, as is common with most bills, to support the new loan program. It's proposed that this program therefore be implemented on July 1 of this year. It's a good timeline, I think, that allows for regulation to be developed, for there to be some reasonable and significant stakeholder engagement to occur and would certainly be a time, I'm sure, when our colleagues across the aisle could submit their thoughts and ideas as well.

As we've shown, we've certainly been open to reasonable amendments on some bills or moving some to committee when necessary, as we did yesterday. I think this is something that we share common goals on, this is something where we all want the same effects. Certainly, if there are concerns about loan amounts or those sorts of things, we're open to discussion. I'm sure that the minister is happy to hear from you on that as well.

In that regard, however, I think the minister has clearly stated what her intent is in those regulations so far, proposing that the program be for those 65 years or older; that it be a maximum loan amount of \$40,000; that we have the income test, as I noted, of \$75,000; that in order to qualify, it would require 25 per cent home equity; and that it would be implemented on July 1 of this year.

In terms of the grant portion, that the member was concerned about, the new program does include a grant component for low-income seniors who do not themselves qualify for a loan. The grants will be limited to repairs or adaptations currently available under the special needs assistance program and would be subject to frequency limits, to maximum annual amounts, and to maximum lifetime amounts, those being \$5,000 and \$15,000. These are things, again, that I'm sure the minister would be happy to discuss. She's mentioned these, discussed them, and these are the things that will be negotiated and looked at during the process of regulation.

As was mentioned, the draft act that we're looking at today includes four sections to legislate consumer protections concerning the following: making sure, then, that the loan program will consider the reasonableness of the costs to the individual for the home repair, the renovation, or adaptation as part of the loan approval process; ensuring that contractors will be required to advise the consumer that the loan program is available to eligible individuals; advising the consumer of their cancellation rights if they are not eligible for the loan. It is important to ensure that seniors are provided with clear and proper information on the loan and the impacts it may have on them, including information like how the contract may be cancelled, how the consumer may notify the contractor, the effect of a contract cancellation, and the responsibility of the contractor to refund any money paid if the contract should happen to be cancelled.

I believe this is an excellent program. I believe this is a solid bill. I look forward to its implementation. This is a program that will increase the types of repairs and adaptations of the current special needs assistance home repair grants, expanding them to any reasonable repair or adaptation that will assist a senior who chooses to remain in their home. Those proposed adaptations or repairs will be deemed eligible if they improve or increase any of the following in a senior's home in support of aging in place, those being their physical safety, their mobility, their independence, or their health. I think that these are reasonable parameters, these are good supports.

I believe it's an excellent opportunity. We as a government can use the opportunities that we have and the levers that we have available to ourselves financially to be able to help seniors who are in need to be able to repair their homes, to be able to refurbish their homes and bring them up to a standard where they will be able to remain there for as long as possible, a benefit to themselves and to their communities.

I appreciate the opportunity to stand up and speak today in favour of this bill, and I look forward to further debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions for the Member for Edmonton-Centre under 29(2)(a)? I would recognize the Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Well, yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, agree and have great and admirable respect for the seniors of our province, the people who are the fabric of our province and who have built this province. I do also recognize that there are different jurisdictions in the province and different relationships that are required for implementation of a provincial legislative regulation, that we're talking about here today. So with that in mind, to the Member for Edmonton-Centre. I'd like to understand. To my question about different jurisdictions, in a community similar to one in my constituency like Hanna, that has some 2,950 residents – and a good part of them, too, sir, are seniors – I'd like to know how a government agency would define a risk liability when they take ownership or take assets in that home to create loan eligibility and grant loan capability, a home that may not necessarily be of use when the population of that area declines to 25 per cent of what it is now.

**Mr. Shepherd:** I appreciate what you're saying. If I understand the Member for Drumheller-Stettler correctly, he's concerned about an issue which is certainly one of concern to us here in the province, the dwindling of the rural population in some areas. We're aware that we are losing population in some of our smaller towns, some of our rural areas as people move into the cities. Certainly, that can be the case as seniors age and may have to access other services that are no longer available or that simply have not been available to them in that community. So I can appreciate the member's concern for that.

Certainly, we want many of our seniors to be able to remain in the communities where they have grown up and where they have lived. As the member noted, of course, many of those seniors are the people who have built those communities, who have made those communities strong and ensured that those communities have been able to continue and where many of their family may continue to live and remain.

In respect to his, I guess, more specific concerns about the calculations and how the government agencies would determine precisely how they would calculate the value of those homes, how they would determine the equity, I can't personally speak to that. I am certainly not a realtor or a person who has that information. Again, that's, I believe, where the minister would be working with her ministry and those persons who have that expertise, who have that knowledge, who are providing her with the advice on this file. We'd be more than happy to hear from the member if he has any specific suggestions on how that should be addressed because I recognize that, yes, we can't simply treat all communities the same. We do have to recognize that home values do differ from city to city, certainly between city and rural. There are many factors that do need to be considered in that.

Certainly, in the process of drafting the regulation, I think it will be very important that we meet with all stakeholders, have the opportunity to discuss with persons who have more expertise in the areas of real estate, in home value, in looking at repairs and renovations, ensure that we find a way to make sure that we have a fair balance so that more seniors, who have helped build these important rural communities, who have contributed so much to this province, are able to continue to stay in their homes and have fair and equal access to this excellent program that's being put forward by the government and to the opportunities that it would provide, then, for them to be able to upgrade their homes, to be able to stay in their communities, and age in place.

Thank you to the member for the question.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hawkwood under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Connolly:** Yes. I'd like to thank the member for his speech and his comments on the bill. Just a brief question. I'd like to know how he thinks this bill and the SHARP program will help his constituents in Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you to member for the question. As I mentioned, certainly within my own communities, particularly the community of Queen Mary Park although also the community of Central McDougall, I know that I do have a number of seniors who have lived in these areas for quite some time, who have contributed quite a bit to their communities and helped to build them up and to whom I'm very thankful for having inherited the opportunity to represent the communities that they've added so much to. Certainly, as I said, I think this will be of great help in allowing them to stay in their homes for much longer periods. Certainly, we are aware that allowing people to age in the community is cheaper in terms of health care. It helps people maintain better physical health, better mental health.

I think this will support my constituents.

10:30

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today on Bill 5. Let me say this. This bill has the potential to do good things. I think, again, it's long been an interest of mine. As I've said before, during my time on Calgary city council I chaired the Calgary Housing Company for three years. Keeping Albertans in their own homes, keeping seniors in their own homes, and providing homes for those people that have a hard time providing them for themselves is something that I think all members of this House should be concerned with. And, I dare say, I expect all members of this House are concerned with that.

Looking at the bill, Mr. Speaker, it talks about allowing seniors to make repairs to their homes and the government loaning the money, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. I will say that I believe the intention of the bill is good. At least, that's my sense of it. In this House we deal with a lot of money, and dollars and cents matter.

The other thing that we deal with is the way that we affect the lives of Albertans, Mr. Speaker. Beyond dollars and cents, quality of life is something important and something that members of this House should be thinking about all the time. Seniors, a lot of them that I have met along the way, have told me in no uncertain terms that staying in their own home is a big contributor to their quality of life. Now, there are some, too, that have said, "I just can't cut the grass anymore; I just can't do the yardwork; I just can't do the stairs



anymore,” and they need to move on somewhere else by their own choice. But for those that want to stay in their own homes and for those that have made their own judgment as adult senior Albertans that they want to stay, giving them an opportunity to do that is, in my view, a good thing.

But what concerns me about the bill, Mr. Speaker, is that some of the details haven't been sorted out yet in terms of the regulations. Now, the bill talks about doing loans to seniors based on the equity that they have in their home, and I will say that that makes sense. At least, it does to me. I think it keeps the government from being at financial risk, and that seems prudent from the government's standpoint.

Where I'm not quite as satisfied with what's in front of me yet, Mr. Speaker, is from the standpoint of seniors themselves. Seniors, like other Albertans, have a variety of levels of financial literacy that are not the same from person to person. That's not just seniors; that's all Albertans. We all have a different level of financial understanding. When this bill talks about inserting seniors into a pretty important financial transaction, it's important that the steps be taken to make sure they understand it: they understand what their obligations are, they understand how they gain, they understand how they lose, they understand what could go wrong and, of course, what could go right.

Again, I fully expect that the government's side is wanting to deal with this in the proper way. I don't doubt that on this bill at all. What concerns me is how we explain it to seniors across Alberta in such a way that they will (a) appreciate it and (b) like it. The reason I say that, Mr. Speaker, is because this isn't the first program that's been launched in Alberta that provides seniors with financial benefits based on the equity in their home. There have been opportunities before for seniors to use the equity in their home to mitigate the effect of property taxes that, due to their income, in their later years they may not be able to easily pay and still buy groceries and medications and pay the utility bills and other things that I think we can all agree are truly important.

The reason that I raise it, Mr. Speaker, is that those other programs which are, I dare say, similarly designed – I guess, what I'm asking for us to think about is the fact that with some of those other similarly designed programs, there hasn't been a lot of uptake from seniors. I believe they are pretty good programs, but there still hasn't been a lot of uptake. So what I don't see here in either the bill or in the government members' explanations so far is whether they've had enough conversations with seniors and seniors' groups in Alberta to understand adequately why they haven't taken up these other opportunities to mitigate the financial pressures of a shrinking personal income – because pensions don't always rise at the same rate as the cost of living – and rising expenses and allowing seniors to stay in their homes, which I think we all agree is a good thing.

Aging in place was mentioned. I think it's something we agree with. Having seniors stay in their homes saves society – this is one of those interesting places in government where it's kind of fun, one of those places where you can actually contribute to people's quality of life and save money if you do it right. You can actually do both. This is one of those rare things. Again, this is a suggestion. To me, what I haven't heard in the explanation yet and that I'm listening for is how you're going to get seniors to take the government up on this. I only say it because of the experience with other similar programs, which I also think are good, and the seniors aren't taking the opportunity on a very large-scale basis.

Now, I will say – and this is an anecdote. The plural of anecdote is not data. I get that. Nonetheless, I'm going to share an anecdote, knowing that I'm not representing it as being universal across Alberta. But I have talked to several seniors anecdotally that have

said that they haven't taken the government up on the plan to take a loan against their home to mitigate property tax because they don't want the value of their home eroded. How can you argue with that?

I guess we need to take the time with people to talk about how – and, of course, there is no guarantee over time. There is an average, of course, that we can point to historically, but anybody that sells financial instruments knows that you can talk about historical trends and historical things that have happened, but you can't guarantee that those historical things will happen in the future. We know that historically, not every year but most years, the average value of homes in Alberta goes up. Technically, I suppose, if a senior stays in their home and they take a loan from the government for \$10,000, you know, and a home is worth – I don't know the average price across Alberta. I think in Calgary it's around \$450,000. In Edmonton it's probably something similar. So if their property goes up 10 per cent over three years, that's potentially a \$30,000 or \$40,000 lift, and if they take a \$10,000 or \$20,000 loan against that, they could have, well, not on a percentage basis but in actual dollars, an increased value.

The reason that seniors have told me they're concerned about this is not out of concern for themselves. What they always say is: I want to have something to leave the kids. Now, a line of thinking that I've heard, that is probably as wise as any, is to make sure that you spend the last dollar you have on the last day and, some even say, bounce the cheque to the funeral parlor. I'm not suggesting that anybody bounce a cheque. I'm just recounting a story, sayings that I have heard. Nonetheless, despite that, Mr. Speaker, a lot of seniors are truly interested and care about their children and their grandchildren and want to leave them something. Again, it's anecdotal. I'm not calling this data, but anecdotally I've heard a lot of seniors say that the reason they don't want to take the government up on loans like this is because they don't want to degrade the value of what they're going to pass on to their children. Completely selfless. Completely selfless.

So what's missing for me is that I haven't seen, again, either in the bill, in the black-and-white text, or in the explanation from the government that they have made the effort or taken the time or talked to enough seniors' groups to get them to the place where they say: “Oh, okay. I understand. This is a good idea. It will help my quality of life. If it will help my quality of life if I can stay in my home longer, then it will help my quality of life if it's not so drafty because I have new windows and doors. It will help my quality of life because my monthly bills will be lower if I can replace that furnace that's not working as well as it ought to. It will help my quality of life if the roof isn't leaking, and it might even keep the value of the rest of my house in good shape.”

10:40

All of these things are potentially good, and I give the government credit for thinking of these things. But it doesn't solve the one big question that I have, which I'm posing here – I hope they don't take this as a criticism of the bill but, rather, a place where I think some work needs to be done – and that is getting seniors to the place where they can say: I will accept this. If the government passes this bill as it is now, it's potentially a good thing, but my advice or my suggestion or my thoughts for the government are that a good thing is only good if it truly is good for those that take it up. Okay?

I'm thinking that the government members probably want to help – I don't know. I don't know what their target is. I'd be interested to hear what their target is and how many seniors they want to help and what their strategy is to get there. If they want to help half a million Albertans that are seniors over the next 10 years – that's an

out-of-the-air number, so don't take that too seriously; I only use it for illustrative purposes – but only 10 Albertans take it up, well, it's a nice piece of legislation that didn't do any good. Still nice but just didn't do any good.

My counsel for the government is: do the work, talk to the seniors' groups, and try to make sure before you set this in stone that it is something that seniors will actually take the government up on. I'm sure that while everybody likes to have a piece of legislation passed with their name on it, they'd be more proud if they could say, "I helped a hundred thousand seniors," or "I helped half a million seniors." They'd be less proud if they said: we passed a bill 12 years ago, and we helped 10 seniors. That would be less impressive. I'm sure the people on the government side would agree with that as well.

So that's my concern. And because we're early in the debate, I'm not even saying that the government hasn't done this, but I am saying that if they have, I haven't heard it. I'm hoping before we're done here to hear that.

The other piece that is probably worthy of taking some time for, that my colleague in the second party talked about, is the regulations. Again, you know, seniors have been around long enough that almost any rodeo they go to is not their first rodeo. They've been to places where they've been treated fairly before, and they've been to places where they've probably been treated unfairly before. And if they're not sure that this is the place that they're going to be treated fairly, they're just not going to take the government up on the offer no matter how well intentioned it is.

Two pieces, Mr. Speaker, that I'm counselling on – and I hope the government takes it in the helpful spirit in which it's intended. One is that before they pass this, if they can make sure that the regulations are known to the public and seniors, in particular, to know whether they will be comfortable taking a loan from the government, guaranteed on their house value; and, two, just in general what do they need to see to give them comfort that this will be a good deal for them and that whatever concerns that they have, including, "Will there be anything left for my kids?" are satisfied.

With that, I will sit and listen. Perhaps by the time we get to the end of the debate on this bill, we will have some of those things resolved and – who knows, Mr. Speaker? – on this bright and shiny day perhaps even amicably.

**The Speaker:** On 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, thank you to the Member for Calgary-Hays for his kind comments about the intent of the bill, the focus of the bill. I'm glad that we are in this House, it seems, pretty much united in spirit and intent on moving forward with this legislation, which is an excellent place to be.

In regard to some of the other things he pointed out, I appreciate the thoughts that he provided. I think there were some very thoughtful comments on, first of all, the issue of consultation and, secondly, on the issue of communication.

First of all, on the area of consultation. Now, while I was not personally involved in the consultation process, which the minister undertook in the drafting of this legislation and in working with the ministry – and I don't know how long this has been at work in the ministry. It wouldn't surprise me if it may have even predated our government as many of these things often do. But that aside, I do know that we have spoken with some seniors' groups and had the opportunity to talk with some folks who do work with seniors closely, frequently consult with them, and have a good sense of what seniors' concerns are throughout the province.

Here in Edmonton-Centre I'm very proud to have the head office for SAGE, or the Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton, who

offer a great number of excellent programs for seniors throughout the city and at their headquarters, just off Churchill Square. Karen McDonald, the assistant executive director of SAGE, did come out and in our government press release was in support of this bill, stating that "research consistently shows that seniors prefer to age in their homes, so it is critical that [they] are able to adapt and maintain their homes" and that SHARP, the seniors' home adaptation and repair program, "is a crucial step towards making aging in the right place a possibility for all Alberta seniors."

We also did engage with Seniors United Now, another seniors' group here in the province, who also stated that they embrace the proposed program as it's written, believing that "a loan for needed repairs and modifications to seniors' homes can [in fact] assist them to remain in the comfort and safety of their homes for a longer period of time" to their greater benefit.

So some consultation has occurred, but I do appreciate that the member suggests that we do so on a thorough basis as part of the regulatory process to ensure that, in fact, if this program is enacted as of July 1, as is proposed, the program will best meet the needs of seniors and be something that they would want to participate in. Certainly, it's important if we're bringing forward programs in government that we want those to be taken up and used as much as possible.

In terms of the communications aspect I also really appreciate what the member had to say there. Certainly, having spent five years working in the communications field on such controversial topics as, say, the Metro Line here in Edmonton, I'm well aware of the importance of having good communication with the public. I'm well aware that, you know, how well a program functions, how well it's taken up, whether people are willing to participate is very contingent on how well the factors of that program, the uses of that program, the eligibility and accessibility to that program are communicated to the general public. So I certainly think the alliances we've already begun to build with these seniors' organizations here in Edmonton and across the province will be a very important part in communicating that information, working with all of our community partners to make sure we get that information out on the ground, particularly, as the member noted, on the issue of consumer protections to make sure the seniors are well aware of everything that's available to them and all the protections that they have in the operation of this program.

I appreciate the comments from the member there and his thoughts on that. In terms of that I guess I was wondering if he has any suggestions for particular groups or individuals that he would recommend that we approach to discuss this with.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, probably there are a number of seniors' groups that I could identify and get at. Perhaps the member would give me a day or two, and I could probably accumulate a note of some seniors' groups that the minister may want to consult with. Again, it's simply with – I think seniors understand that this is to loan them money to keep them in their house. It's the financial arrangements, in my view, that we need to make them comfortable with. I will take the offer up from the hon. member to have some seniors that I know, some representatives of seniors' groups, contact him and put some questions together that I think they will find necessary to be answered from the legislation. Perhaps we can get to a place where we'll not only have a piece of legislation that's passed and not only well intended but used.

**Mr. Dach:** It gives me great pride today to rise under 29(2)(a) and speak to Bill 5 and some of the concerns raised by the Member for Calgary-Hays, and I do ... [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today in support of Bill 5, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. I can tell you that during the election many people in my community were concerned with the fact that similar programs by the previous government were going to receive cutbacks, leaving many seniors wondering how they might afford important repairs on their homes. These costs are often unforeseen and can force people to move out of the communities which they've spent their entire lives in. We need to do everything in our power to keep these seniors in the comfort of their homes, and the broadened scope on repairs which is offered through Bill 5 will do exactly that.

I can think of many people in my community who will be able to access this program, in particular the many seniors in Meadowlark who are on fixed incomes. Our office sees many of these seniors, and it is sometimes and often a last resort for them. These seniors are often one unforeseen cost away from losing their homes, which they worked their entire lives to save for. I am proud that, if passed, I will have one extra tool to support them.

10:50

We know that aging in place is important for seniors and their families. Not only does it promote independence and a better quality of life, but it also benefits our health care system and our communities as a whole. This program will be available to about 260,000 seniors, and unlike a bank loan, seniors will only pay simple interest, not compound. The loan can also be paid on the sale of their house instead of month to month if the senior so chooses.

There are many pieces within this proposed legislation that I am happy to support. It broadens the scope of repairs and renovations, increases consumer protections for the contracting process, and promotes aging in place. The initiatives within this bill – increasing consumer protections, making life affordable for seniors, supporting the idea of aging in place – are all ideas that we as New Democrats campaigned on. We told our communities that we would support our seniors and their families, and that is exactly what this legislation will do. I think that we can all agree that our seniors deserve to live out their lives where they choose, with dignity and independence.

I am proud to support Bill 5. I know it will benefit the seniors and their families in the Meadowlark community. I know this because they have asked for programs similar to this. Seniors need help now. This is not about ideology. This is about doing the right thing for seniors in our communities today. I'd like to thank the Minister of Seniors and Housing for putting Bill 5 forward, and I encourage all members to support it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to stand up under 29(2)(a) and ask a question to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. I'd just like to touch on what my partner here from Drumheller-Stettler was alluding to earlier, when he talked about Hanna.

I'd just like to use an example that happened in the recent past in British Columbia, where the community of Tumbler Ridge was, you know, a very vast and vibrant community. Housing there went from an average starter home of about \$300,000 and dropped down to \$25,000 with the closure of the coal mine. So when you talk about a community like Hanna or Forestburg, where you have a senior that's lived in the house that maybe they only paid \$40,000 for, and now the house is worth \$200,000, and they go and apply

for this loan, and they get approved for \$40,000 – then we close the coal-fired generation and the coal mines in those communities, and housing drops through the floor like it did in Tumbler Ridge. I mean, that's an example that you can look up, and it's a fact. What do we do with these seniors? Does the member think that this could cause a financial stretch to the seniors living in those communities like Hanna, as previously mentioned? What does he propose the government do in situations like that?

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much to the member for the question. I believe it was the Member for Edmonton-Centre who said: I apologize, but I'm not a real estate agent. Unfortunately, I definitely see where you're coming from. It's quite possible that situations like that could happen, I suppose. Well, they have been proven to happen, but unfortunately there's not a whole lot that we can do about that. I think that this program will support the seniors in my community, and it's up to the senior to really evaluate whether this program is right for them. It won't necessarily be right for everyone, but this is just another tool for them to have when they're looking at making life more affordable for themselves.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Cooper:** Please. Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments. I'm just a little bit seeking some clarification on, then, why we would want to be in the real estate business.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you to the member for the question. I don't think that we are in the real estate business. I think that we're in the business of supporting seniors, and that's what this bill does.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just reflecting as I was listening to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark and, of course, listening to the important questions from our members opposite on some of the issues that they were raising and that were raised by the member here as well and then just sort of reflecting that, certainly, I think it's beneficial, then, that our government is moving forward with our climate leadership plan, which will be providing a transition for communities like Hanna and some of the others that have been mentioned that may be affected by coal closure so that when we're looking at situations where seniors do have their homes in these communities, these communities will be able to benefit from a transition to more renewable products, finding new economies, new businesses that can operate in these areas to ensure that we can continue to allow people to remain in these rural Alberta areas, to be able to support those communities, to be able to continue and themselves be able to age in place in those communities and then have the opportunity to benefit from this program.

I was wondering if the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark had any thoughts on the possibilities that that offers there.

**Mr. Carson:** Sure. Well, I agree with everything the member just said in terms of how these programs could help rural communities in terms of transitioning.

But, I mean, it's been said before that any opportunity that we have to support seniors aging in place – honestly, I can tell you that I've had conversations with our counterparts in the municipal government, who have been talking to me about programs that they would like to start that would directly benefit from this program.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yes, 29(2)(a). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member: are we to understand that when the people in Hanna, 500 of whom may be losing their jobs because of this climate action plan of this government, are going to lose their jobs and their real estate values are going to decline, this transition thing that this hon. member is talking about is going to completely replace those 500 jobs, which average \$92,000 a year in income?

**An Hon. Member:** Is that the question?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** That's the question.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much to the member for the question. You know, I stand here today in full support of our climate leadership plan, thank you. I believe that it will lead a way forward. As has been said before, our federal counterparts were unable to offer a solution to these communities that they were planning on phasing out in the first place, so we will make the transition, and we will help these communities.

Thank you very much. [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Coward.

#### **Point of Order Inflammatory Language**

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite just called the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark a coward. I demand that he stand up in his place and apologize.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I apologize for said comment. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I apologize for calling the hon. member a coward for not answering my question.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. I didn't hear the last part of your comment.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I will certainly apologize for calling the hon. member a coward for not answering my question.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, that still leaves an implication that the hon. member refused to answer the question. In fact, the time ran out, as that hon. member well knows.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, are you prepared to make any other statements with respect to the point being made?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I just withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Did you apologize, sir?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Could you please stand?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yes, sir. I apologized, and I withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for the opportunity to stand and talk to Bill 5, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. I have a huge heart for all seniors and especially for the seniors in my community. I meet almost monthly with the region 2 Council on Aging, and I'm here to represent their needs and hope that you will truly take to heart what I have to say here today.

While I support the stated intent of this bill, which is to help Alberta seniors stay in their homes for longer, I have a few concerns I'd like to bring forward, one of which I brought forward in my question there. Seniors I have talked to so far would rather see government offer help with day-to-day services to help keep them in their homes rather than a loan program that allows them to renovate their homes when low-interest loans are already available through local banks if needed. With this in mind, I have to ask: what research and consultation led to this legislation? Can you please tell all of us here in this Legislature and all Albertans why the minister chose to introduce this new, untested program instead of focusing on improving existing programs?

I fully support seniors staying in their homes and staying in their communities that they've been part of for years. I know that this adds to their longevity and health and also to the value of our communities. We know from studies that when seniors remain in familiar surroundings close to family and friends, they generally fare better mentally and physically. Most important of all, we know that the majority of seniors want to stay in their homes.

**11:00**

Top-quality care and services for seniors is a Wildrose priority. While I'm sure this bill was brought about with good intentions, I certainly do have a few concerns with the structure of the program. I do hope that I'm able to get some answers from the minister and the government in response to some of these issues.

Just like all Albertans, seniors are worried about their futures and the future of this province. They're worried about the consequences of risky, ideological legislation and the effect it could have on their futures. Just last week I rose and spoke in this House about the 4.6 per cent increase to property taxes for the residents of Vilna due to the NDP government's inaction because they refused to reinstate the grants in lieu of taxes program. I know that a lot of residents have moved out to smaller communities because the houses are cheaper than they are in the city, and now the town has to raise their taxes because of these actions, or, rather, the irresponsible actions of this government. I'm hearing this concern often as I travel in my constituency. Municipalities, like all other forms of government, only have one source of income, and that is the taxpayer.

The government can't continue to download costs for provincial responsibilities onto municipalities. When it does, the NDP government forces municipalities to in turn download these costs, this time to the residents, many of whom are seniors on fixed incomes. On issues like these it's a matter of priorities. Wildrose believes that an efficient government should cut wasteful spending so that it can afford to meet its financial obligations. In other areas such as reinstating the grants in lieu of taxes program to ensure that seniors and other Albertans' property taxes don't go up, we need to support our municipalities. Our seniors deserve our very best. We're talking about our parents and grandparents, who have cared for us all our lives, and we have the opportunity here to ensure that Bill 5 does only the very best for those people, who have always tried to do their very best for us.

Some Albertans are fearful and have reservations about this bill and other decisions this government has made. I would like to take

the time to express a few that I've heard or identified so far. I've heard concerns about the government allowing adequate time to consult with seniors to see if they truly think there is a need for a loan program like this. Personally, I know I would like to have much more time to speak with the groups from my riding such as the Council on Aging, that will be meeting in June. I'm scheduled to meet with them again. It would be really nice to sit down with them and discuss their thoughts on this.

I'm also concerned because there seems to be a lot of information missing from Bill 5. The bill states that "the amount of a loan, together with interest, is a debt owing to the Crown in right of Alberta." It also states that "a loan is subject to the terms and conditions provided for by the regulations." So the terms of the loan will be in the regulations, which could at any time change, under the sole direction and discretion of the minister after the bill is passed. This is a real concern for me, and it should be a very big concern for seniors.

It also states in subsection (6):

The Minister, in consultation with the Minister determined under section 16 of the Government Organization Act as the Minister responsible for the Financial Administration Act, shall periodically determine the rate of interest applicable to loans based on an estimate of the Government's cost of funding loans under this Act, including the cost of making and administering the loans.

Again, the government can change the interest rates on loans our seniors become responsible for when they sell their houses, and these changes will come through regulation, at the discretion of government, with no legislative oversight. These questions deserve our attention because taking care of our seniors is vitally important. The people who have built this province with their sweat deserve our best.

Another one of my concerns is that seniors have often scrimped and saved, have paid taxes their entire lives, and worked hard to purchase their homes. For many of them that home is their retirement plan. Anything that affects this major investment is a big deal and one that I know seniors will not take lightly. It's okay to take out a loan when you're in an advancing, growing economy, but when you're in one that's in flux and likely to decline, it's very, very risky.

With the taxes that they already incur in my riding, especially in one small village that saw an increase in their taxes last year of 80 per cent at one point, many of these people are on fixed incomes, and they simply cannot afford it. They will likely face increases to their energy bills due to the decisions this government has made in addition to increased taxes on their properties, all of these increases when they are on a fixed income.

There are precautions in this legislation to regulate and oversee the construction work that is being done and to make sure that the seniors are being protected financially. The desire to protect seniors from those who would take advantage is an excellent idea, but there are other acts and laws that also have provisions for this sort of protection. Could the minister assure this Assembly that there is no overlap or conflict with other consumer protection agencies?

Mr. Speaker, this bill needs to be done right the first time. We should take the time to get this right for the seniors of our province. So far the government has had a hard time monitoring infrastructure projects. How will it possibly monitor up to 140,000 new home renovation projects? Who will oversee this? Does the government really have the capacity to administer what could potentially be a very large volume of loans? The minister has claimed that it will be managed without any additional government resources, but will she clarify in this Assembly whether we will require government hiring to make this program a reality? We're very unclear on that.

I'm sure that the intentions of Bill 5 are good. We all agree with keeping seniors in their homes. I have an aunt who is 97 years old. She farmed all her life. She now lives in town, and she still gets out and gardens every year. Now, she doesn't need a loan to stay in her home, but she could sure use some daily help or even a couple of days when somebody would come and visit just to make sure she is eating right. You know, she doesn't need a loan to stay in her home, but a little bit of help from the government to assist with her living and to make her more comfortable would be great.

Let's make sure we work together to come up with some fair legislation and show the seniors of this province that we will take the time to get it right for them. Seniors are living longer and healthier lives than previous generations, and more and more seniors are able to live in their homes longer, a situation that is simply good for everyone. As I mentioned before, it's good for our communities to have these seniors as mentors for our children.

According to a government of Canada report, between 2014 and 2036 the average life expectancy for a 65-year-old is projected to increase by 1.8 years for women and by 1.9 years for men to 86 and a half years of age. Let's make sure that there are safety mechanisms in place to protect their interests and to help them succeed not only in their homes but also if and when they decide to sell their homes. Retirement homes are very costly, and we know that these seniors will rely on the sale of their homes and the profit from them on the day that they may need to leave their homes.

I look forward to hearing the continuing debate on Bill 5 in second reading, and hopefully we can come to some agreements on this. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 29(2)(a). The member opposite raised a number of issues and concerns with respect to the bill, and I'd like to respond to a couple of them.

In the spirit of supporting seniors, we know that we're talking about a quality-of-life issue and the ability of seniors to stay in their home for longer than they otherwise might by offering them, basically, a reverse mortgage type of program, which will not replace but will enhance the former grant program that was in place with the former government. This program will see a savings of about \$6 million for this government by ensuring that the grant program is retained, a \$2 million component, and offering an opportunity for seniors who are eligible to expand the types of repairs that they might be able to do to their home under this loan program.

The loan program that we're offering is expected to be taken up by probably in the neighbourhood of I would think about 5,500 people. The grant was adopted or taken up by around 7,000, so we expect that about 1,750 may take up the grant. We're estimating that a further three-quarters of that 7,000 might be willing to take up the loan.

**11:10**

As far as the uptake is concerned, we don't know for sure about it. Certainly, it definitely needs to be properly advertised and really communicated well to our seniors population. I understand and accept that the program whereby people who are seniors, eligible and owning their own home, could defer their taxes did not have a huge take-up on that opportunity for the reason that I and other members have indicated in the past, that seniors do want to protect their equity for their loved ones and pass on that asset to family members.

However, we do believe and have good reason to believe that the uptake will be higher here because seniors are not looking at an

intangible here. It's a very tangible thing they're doing with this money. They're accessing the equity in their home to improve it and probably improve the value of their home so that when it does change hands upon their passing or upon their sale of the property, they'll have an asset that's worth more than it otherwise might have been. So there's also security in the investment that they're making in improving their home. It accomplishes a number of things. It allows them to stay in their own home longer, and it improves the property itself, increases the value of the property.

As well, another thing it does is that by keeping those seniors in their home longer, it also keeps them out of longer term care, which is a huge savings to the government. It's a quality-of-life issue as well because the average lifespan of somebody going into longer term care is shorter than that of somebody who is staying in their own home.

As far as overlap with other programs or with other legislation, we've determined that that won't be the case. In addition to the act that the member opposite referenced, this loan program will be established. The equity retention of 25 per cent is a safety measure for all concerned, particularly for the senior who may qualify for it. We wanted to ensure that seniors did manage to maintain at least 25 per cent of their equity after the loan maximum that had been applied for was applied to that equation, and this gives a measure of protection to seniors so that they don't end up having a situation where they're under water financially because of the loan that they've gotten.

There were some points raised by members opposite regarding properties that may be in smaller communities, where the value of properties is quite a bit smaller. The department will be paying special attention to those, but the same equations will apply as far as making sure that the home equity retention of 25 per cent is still applicable. It may be that in some cases where the home value is quite low, the grant portion of this program may be more applicable.

I could speak to a number of other issues, but in the interests of time I'll allow the member opposite to perhaps respond with questions you might have.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To be clear, I don't disagree completely with this bill, and I don't dismiss it in its entirety. We agree with it in principle.

You did mention – and it's been mentioned quite a few times – that there has been consultation on this, yet you state that you have no idea what the uptake is going to be.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning to speak in support of this bill, and I would like to say that my colleagues have made some excellent points on why this bill should be supported.

What I'd like to do in my few moments is that I'm going to talk about maybe a couple of issues that people haven't addressed so far. The first is that I don't think it's just about keeping seniors at home. It's also about keeping seniors safe at home, so I'm going to talk a little bit about why I think it's important in that regard. Then I want to spend a few minutes just dealing with some of the criticisms that the other side have made on the bill.

When I say that it's more than just about keeping seniors at home, I'm kind of drawing on my experience as an insurance agent in rural Alberta, where as part of my job I inspected, well, hundreds of homes, many of them belonging to seniors. We have to inspect homes for insurance purposes. We're basically looking at: what is

the likelihood of this house burning down? What is the likelihood of having liability issues; for example, somebody falling down the cellar stairs and breaking their neck, and so on? We also look to issues like: is there going to be any degradation of the house because of a faulty roof, things like that?

Going out and inspecting, you know, some of these farms in my area sometimes would just create some real moral dilemmas for me as an agent. You'd go to a property that maybe 20, 30 years before had been in good condition but had degraded very considerably, and you'd have maybe an old widow staying in the house by herself and in unsafe conditions but without the funds available to be able make the necessary repairs but – and this is true of a lot of our rural folks – too stubborn to actually move, right? The dilemma would be: well, what do I do? Do I put in an accurate evaluation of the property and see this poor person's insurance get cancelled because the home is in fact uninsurable, or do I try and work with the family and work through other means to try and get it up?

I think it's a real misnomer for people to think that this is an issue about whether a person is going to be going into a home or staying in their house. A lot of these seniors are going to be staying in their homes regardless. This is just one more tool that we can have in our quiver to make sure that they have the funds available to be safe – right? – to replace that outdated electrical breaker box, to repair the roof so they don't have leakage and then get black mould and issues like that, to put on railings for going down into the cellar. I think it's really important that way. In that sense, we already have people that are living in dangerous circumstances, so I think the sooner, the better.

Also, I think another reason that sooner is better is because this is the ideal time for this type of program. Why is that? We are in a situation where, unlike just a few years ago, you have contractors that are looking for work and are prepared to do that work at very reasonable rates. I think this actually does speak as well to the Member for Calgary-Shaw's concerns about communication and uptake. Right now we actually would have a very motivated group of people to inform seniors about the existence and availability of the program, and these would be the contractors that are looking for work. I think that kind of addresses some of those concerns.

Just to step back for some of the concerns expressed by the Official Opposition about a lot of it being left to regulations, I'm having some difficulty quite understanding their argument because it seems like they're saying two contradictory things. The one thing they're saying is: well, we can't trust the government to put these through as regulations; we need to have this all in legislation because it all has to be up front. Now, of course, when you do that in legislation, we actually have to come back before the House in order to change it. It's something that's very difficult to change on the fly, to adjust for circumstances, that type of thing. That's the one concern: put everything up front.

The second concern: well, what happens if there are changes in home equity, you know, if the value of homes in particular neighbourhoods decreases, and what happens if the interest rate goes down? I mean, you have all these variables, so how do you have bills or acts that can actually adjust for things that are variable? You put them in the regulations so that they can be adjusted as they need to be.

It's for those types of reasons that I think this bill does make a lot of sense, and it makes a lot of sense to do it now. Now, we do have a consultation period, as the minister stated, from now until July 1, and there will be plenty of opportunities, I think, for seniors and other associated stakeholders to have a chance to work with it.

I'm in favour of this bill, and I really appreciate the minister thinking of our seniors and doing our best for them while at the same time not imposing undue burdens on the taxpayer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

11:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a). The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater. I certainly respect his input when it does come to seniors, but I'd also question the understanding that he brings forward of government involvement in legislation regarding seniors' development when in his own personal life he's come from a private industry relating to insurance whereas in other jurisdictions; i.e., Saskatchewan – recently, I guess, they've changed it – have only government-mandated insurance. It'd be my question as to why the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater on one hand would advocate for government involvement, government relationships primarily when it comes to seniors but not necessarily in an industry that he comes from.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you. I'd like to thank the member for the question. I'm not sure that I really see a conflict between my previous role in the private insurance industry and my support for this program. In fact – and this might be a bit of speculation on my part – I think that the private insurance industry could actually help alleviate some of the concerns other members have expressed over this.

Now, the reason why I don't think it's a conflict is because it actually speaks to an unfortunate catch-22 when it comes to private-industry home equity loans because what happens in your private home equity loan, just going beyond the terms and all that, is that generally you have an obligation to show an insurance certificate to be able to guarantee that the bank's equity in the house is protected in case of a fire or some other unforeseen event. Now, unfortunately, if you're a senior in a situation where your house is uninsurable and, in fact, that is the reason why you need to do these renovations, you're caught in this catch-22, right? You can't get the loan from the private company until you make the changes that you're borrowing to make. Whereas in this program – and I looked carefully, you know – unless this gets changed in committee, although there is a requirement to keep it at about 25 per cent of equity, there is no insurance requirement. So what this would do would be to provide an avenue for seniors who wouldn't otherwise be able to qualify for home equity loans in the private market to be able to bring their residences up to code. I think that addressed that.

Was there a second question? If so, I could cede the floor again to you, but I think I may have addressed it. If I haven't, I'm happy to.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Under 29(2)(a)?

**Cortes-Vargas:** Yes. Thank you very much. It was really interesting hearing the member's experiences going to the different homes. I know that one of the changes with this bill from the previous program, the example program, the special needs assistance program, is that it allows for an increased cost of the loan. I guess my question to you is: do you see a benefit, having seen some of the houses, in seniors having access to more money in order to make, specifically, home repairs? That's also the difference with this one versus the previous program being offered. It had a limit to how much home repair they were allowed to make with that application.

**Mr. Piquette:** Yeah, I'd have to say that there is definitely a benefit, as my colleague has stated, in having this, where you don't have that limit on the home repairs.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a). The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the member to further expand on this concept of insurability. I would have thought that by putting improvements into the home, we would see increased levels of insurability. That that might include things like lifts in the home or accessibility things as well as fire protection.

**Mr. Piquette:** Well, lifts and that type of equipment, if I understand the question, wouldn't really impact the insurability either way. However, things like repairs definitely would.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I just want to use the opportunity to remind the entire House, not just a few, under Standing Order 23 to be conscious of the language that we use and the respect for each other. That's what produces productivity here, and I just would like you to continue to keep that in mind.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. [interjection]

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Coincidental, I'm sure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. This bill seems to be a well-intentioned attempt to help seniors stay in their homes for as long as possible, which is an excellent idea. Albertans are increasingly worried about how they're going to make ends meet, and as this slump continues and more people are out of work for longer periods of time, the government's lack of meaningful action, of course, is a huge cause of concern for Albertans. As one of the hon. members from across the way said, Albertans need action from this government now more than ever, but I do want to add: let's not leap into something before we've taken the time to have a thorough conversation with all of our seniors to make this bill a better one.

Bill 5 sets out to tackle a noble goal, and we know it's a goal shared by Alberta seniors, 91 per cent of whom state that they would prefer to stay in their own homes as they age. It's a goal we should work toward because they have a right to stay where they're comfortable, among friends, their family, and in familiar surroundings, which is very important to seniors' health, so that they can be independent for just as long as possible. Through their hard work and sacrifice, their years of patient perseverance and fierce tenacity our seniors built this great province. They and their parents worked to make our province the best place in the world to live and raise a family. Ensuring that seniors who need assistance can receive it in a stable, reliable, and efficient way is a priority for Wildrose, as it should be for any government, and giving support to seniors who need it to be able to enjoy their well-deserved retirement in the comfort of their own home for as long as possible should certainly be a priority, too.

Is this bill the best way to achieve that outcome? I'm concerned that it may not be as complete as it needs to be. A bill of this nature and of this scope, one that proposes to introduce an untested system, apparently the first of its kind in the whole country, deserves some time for serious consideration and broad consultation. We rely on this engagement to inform us about what Albertans want and what Albertans need, and there is no room in a democratic government for elected representatives to lose sight of their responsibility to fully engage the citizens who elect them.

We saw the response to that kind of governance just a few months ago with Bill 6. The government presented a bill before taking the time to hear from the very people it would impact. It tried to throw

its weight around and shake things up in a very specific area on a broad mandate to govern, but Albertans across the province made it clear that the government could not act like this with impunity. They told us and they told this government loud and clear that they were not happy with a government that broke their trust and tried to push through legislation without broad, meaningful, careful consultation.

Unfortunately for the NDP and for Albertans, the comparisons to Bill 6 don't stop with this inherent discouragement of consultation. The government's approach to Bill 5 mirrors its original approach to Bill 6 in that it is trying to pass skeleton legislation, with the understanding that it will flesh out the details through regulatory changes after the law is in place, regulatory changes that will not be open to debate. This is exactly the same thing they tried to do with their ill-fated Bill 6. The NDP government is asking this Assembly and all Albertans to trust them to make wise regulatory additions to this legislation through the back door, so to speak.

**11:30**

Albertans have watched this government fumble on a variety of issues, with mistakes like the mismanagement of the power system, which will end up with Albertans seeing their power bills go up; by imposing ideological, job-killing policies like a \$3 billion carbon tax, that they did not campaign on, that will raise the price of everything in this province; and by completely failing to present real action on any substantial plan to get Albertans back to work. I remember time and again members opposite claiming that 23,000 jobs were going to be created by their jobs action plan, and to date we have seen not one – not one – except for the minister's job.

Bill 5 doesn't even include the key points that will have to be clarified later on through regulatory changes, not even the headings. Can the government tell this Assembly how many seniors are going to be able to stay in their homes directly as a result of this legislation? We know how many seniors might qualify, but how many will actually succeed in staying in their homes through this legislation? Can they tell us whether the bill will really address the issues seniors have identified as priorities? Can the minister give us information about how much this program will cost to administer both in terms of operational cost and how much the government will expect to borrow?

I can tell you that in my riding, which is home to many seniors, the average age of farmers in my community is 60. We have, I would say, a higher than normal aging demographic in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. And the biggest priority that they're telling me about, a higher priority than repairs or adaptations to their home, happens to be the need for people. They need in-home care, people who can be there for them, to support them, to help them when they need that help, whether that's family, friends, neighbours, or some extra helping hands. They're looking for people. That's the number one concern I hear from my constituents. I'm sure my colleagues will have other priorities to raise on behalf of their constituents as we continue to examine this bill.

Now, wouldn't the government agree that something as important as looking out for the people who built Alberta is worth getting right the very first time? Will the government consider slowing this process down to make sure that we truly help seniors where they tell us that they need that help and do so in a very transparent, responsible, accountable, and fulsome way? By sending this bill to standing committee, the government could ensure that this Assembly presents and passes a fully documented, well-thought-out program that would do right by our seniors. These people didn't build us a sloppy, haphazard province, and they don't deserve last-minute, rushed legislation like this. I am willing to believe the government wants to genuinely help seniors, but even

the best intentions are no substitute for fully reasoned, sensible initiatives that can reliably produce positive outcomes. That requires the collective input that the standing committee structure was originally created to provide.

I'll close with this. Wildrose is fully committed to helping seniors live in the comfort of their own homes for as long as possible. Not only is it the wish of most seniors, but it also reduces strain on our health care system so that it's there when they really need it. It allows them to have a much better quality of life in the communities and surrounded by familiar surroundings. I would like to see a bill that addresses this issue effectively, and I wish it was more clear at this stage that this Bill 5 would actually do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act, today. I'd first like to share that I actually had some personal experience in the past. In 1994, when my father was 87 years old, he was in a position where he did not have a fixed pension and wanted to live in his own home for as long as he was able to. That was 22 years ago. We did after much research embark on a reverse mortgage for him, which did a little bit more than what this program does. It allowed him to take out a certain amount of cash, which was converted into an annuity, which allowed him to then access home care, live-in home care, which he required at the time. Again, I think it was a tough decision for him to make but easy for me to make because I didn't expect anything from his estate and wanted him to live in his home as long as he possibly could. Quite frankly, I didn't care if there was one penny left of equity in that home if he was able to live where he wanted to live.

You know, I think, as my esteemed colleague said before, there is a reluctance amongst the seniors to give up equity in the homes. This was a generation that burned their mortgages after 20 or 25 years of fixed 4 per cent mortgages and were very proud to do so and are very, very reluctant to give up that equity. They feel an obligation, I think, to pass on an estate to their children or grandchildren, which I would hope in most cases is not an expectation from most people – but in fact it is – and/or a feeling of obligation from this generation, which feels that they have that necessity to do rather than taking care of themselves.

I have some concerns. I mean, there are many programs out there. We've seen in the past from the federal government the HASI program, home adaptations for seniors' independence, which I did some research on. It does not appear to be in place broadly. The RRAP, residential rehabilitation assistance program, also does not seem to be in place, which also concerns me, that the federal government is not stepping up to do their part, but that's not the issue today. There is also the special-needs program, which is available through the Alberta government for special needs, more for adaptation for homes as well. So it's not that we're without programs, that there are not programs there.

In principle this is a very good approach and a very good opportunity, I think, to move forward. However, I do have some concerns. The tax deferral program as reported in the *Calgary Herald* in June 2015: that program was established in 2013. There were fewer than 2,000 people who had actually taken advantage of that tax deferral program, which is, of course, in my mind, a first step to assisting seniors with supplementing their income if they're on a fixed income to be able to live a better life while living in their homes. That concerns me.

This is versus an uptake in British Columbia of 36,555, with an additional 6,000 people per year taking advantage of that program



in British Columbia. Now, they have a flat 1 per cent rate as opposed to a prime rate. Maybe there is a game here not only of education and concerns of the education of the program, which I do not believe that we've done as well as we could in this province, to allow people to at least consider this option, but there could be something about the fact of looking at the interest rates possibly being higher than what they're willing to accept, so that 1 per cent in B.C. The other thing is that they allow it for 55-plus, which is interesting. I'm not sure if that's something I would advocate for, but certainly that's what they do in B.C. and are able to move forward with that.

The other concern I have with this legislation in speaking with the minister, the proposing minister, is that there are current reverse mortgages. As I noted, 22 years ago those programs were quite fledgling at the time, but I did some homework, and the HomeEquity Bank and the CHIP, or Canadian home income program, were established in I believe 1986 in British Columbia. So that product has been available for over 30 years or about 30 years at this point in time, and I didn't get the sense from the ministry that they'd actually talked to the industry, and I think that we need to be cautious although again I agree with the opportunity to assist Albertans. But I also think that we should also talk to the private sector, who is already engaged in this marketplace in a deeper way. Of course, this is not just for home repairs and adaptation, but they can create equity and annuity programs to help people live in their homes for an extended period of time, up to a maximum of 55 per cent of the equity in their homes with no requirement to pay either on that particular program. In fact, it looks like this legislation was modelled after many of the private models we've seen.

I've put in a call to a former colleague who has been involved with the reverse mortgage business for about 20 years, and I'm hoping to get some insights from him on whether they're actually viewing this as government competing with them. I wonder, again, whether the cost of administration of this program is something that we need to take on as an additional expense to government during tough times when, in fact, we have an industry that is administering it. Having been myself in the building industry, buying down mortgages is not an unusual thing. The rates that I've seen are not usurious. It might be cheaper for the Alberta government not to get into the business of mortgages and to actually buy down the mortgages through companies that are already doing it or to negotiate with them to maybe saw it off for them to offer better rates and for us to buy down those rates at a much lower cost to the Alberta taxpayer.

**11:40**

It concerns me that maybe we have not done as much deep research on some of the other options to achieve the same result for Alberta seniors and possibly to allow them a greater breadth here not just to do home repairs but to have an income which will last as long as they are able to stay in that home, which, I think, is in many cases what is the challenge for many of these seniors. The repairs are one thing, but that's a one-shot deal. For many of them it's actually not having that income. So the tax deferral program would give them that additional income on an annual basis and/or having a longer term opportunity to get an annuity to help them to manage costs, possibly of increasing home care. Those components that are not handled by government assistance programs currently could be a big issue.

I think, as noted again by my esteemed colleague, that there's a bit more work to be done here and a bit more consultation with seniors. Again, we're not seeing that uptake on the tax deferral program. What are the reasons that we're not having that? Is it informational? Is it educational? Is it insuring? What I've heard

from many seniors is that they don't get the full, robust information they require until they're in a crisis situation. When I'm hearing that, I'm hearing that the crisis counsellors have that information. Why are we waiting to get to that point? So the front line, the first line of attack, counsellors that are meeting with the seniors, is not able to provide them the full solutions whereas the crisis ones are, and there seems to be a disconnect there, that we can't provide all of those services until there is a crisis.

So it looks to me like we do need to do a little bit more research on this. I'm fully supportive of anything that we can do to help seniors stay in their homes. I think it is a positive thing. I also believe that when we talk about aging in place or seniors in their homes, it's not necessarily in the 50-year-old bungalow that they've lived in for their entire life; it's about appropriate housing. I'm currently going through a situation where we're moving my in-laws from a single-family residence into a seniors' retirement residence, which, of course, is another interesting challenge and initiative in itself. But what it is is that they've actually found a place where they're happier.

To me, aging in place is not necessarily, again, where you are today. It's about looking at and creating more innovative solutions and choice for seniors as they age so that they can have lower maintenance expectations and costs and those sorts of things, which will allow them to age in a place which is appropriate for where they are in their life and to maybe move through that aging in place within a community which has great choice.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill. Thank you to the minister for bringing this particular bill forward. I think it is a very positive initiative, needs a bit of work, but I hope that we can get to a point where we're offering the best options at the lowest cost to the Alberta taxpayer.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Dach:** Yes, under 29(2)(a) I plan to speak, and I appreciate the member opposite's comments with respect to Bill 5. The Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act is a targeted bill which is designed to assist seniors to stay in their homes as long as possible. Those eligible seniors, homeowners who wish to take advantage of the loan program, can do so, of course, voluntarily. It's not anticipated that we would turn this into some kind of annuity program. There may be other opportunities to discuss some type of program like that, but this was really designed to very quickly allow seniors to take advantage of a program which would allow those that couldn't otherwise afford to do these renovations to access the equity in their homes to take advantage of the opportunity to stay in them longer.

I don't think the uptake on this is something that one can a hundred per cent anticipate until the program is in place. The concern, of course, expressed by members opposite that the uptake will be similar to what was found under the tax deferral program I think is unwarranted because there is an actual, tangible benefit that will be realized by seniors who do access the loan program in that they will be making improvements to their property, increasing the value of their property while at the same time making it more convenient, comfortable, and livable for them to stay in, therefore saving the government money, of course, because they're staying in their own home and they're not accessing long-term care earlier than they might otherwise.

Now, as far as the communications process, the ministry will facilitate a targeted communications strategy upon the launch of the program. We publish as a ministry communications to seniors annually, and as cosponsor of the bill I also know that the ministry

connects directly with seniors when administering seniors' benefits. The ministry's community partners and seniors' umbrella organizations will all inform their members as well.

As far as the outside factors that can contribute to or impact the equity in your home, to address concerns by other members who may have thought that properties in smaller communities would suffer because of perhaps a closure of a coal mine or other resource industry, lots of factors will affect home equity, not only this. They're certainly considered and anticipated in this bill. Outside factors can include many things that we're well aware of by taking a look at our annual tax assessment, knowing that that does go up and down.

We know that seniors and their families will ensure that they evaluate all the factors before applying. Certainly, those that do apply aren't going to be the seniors who have a ready lump of cash sitting in their bank account. They're going to be those seniors whose incomes have diminished because they're no longer in the workforce, whose homes still require maintenance, and who aren't able to afford it otherwise because they don't have the savings that they need in order to make the investment to improve the home. This is a very targeted program designed to assist those eligible seniors who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford to do the improvements to their home. It's not designed to be a be-all, end-all annuity program as the member opposite alluded to.

This targeted program, we think, will be very beneficial and will have significant uptake. We'll monitor that. As far as the capacity for the department to handle it, we anticipate that the department will be able to absorb the demand upon its resources as far as the application process. There's not going to be a huge surge of applications anticipated. It will be more of a flat line level. We've consulted with the department, and we're certain that the cost of the application process can be absorbed within the staffing levels that they have, and there won't be an operational increase required as a result of the implementation of this new loan program and the grant alternative as well.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Gotfried:** Yes. Thank you to the member for his comments, and thank you for filling in some of the blanks there. You know, I've been involved in the past with some volunteer efforts. One was called paint the town, through volunteer Calgary. We actually went to seniors' homes and painted their houses and renovated some of the outside spaces. So we did what this program actually does on a volunteer basis. Maybe it would be really nice if we could see more of that happening in our communities as well.

You know, really, I think that this program is meant, as you said, for a short term and is meant for an immediate capital investment in the property. To me, that is also one of my concerns, that it does achieve that in the short term.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and speak in support of Bill 5. What we can't forget in this Assembly here is what this bill is really about, and that is about allowing seniors to stay in their homes and to age in place, and that is exactly what seniors want.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I'm going to tell a little anecdote about my own maternal grandmother and how this program may have benefited her. She

lived to her last day in her own home. We made arrangements to find a seniors' housing arrangement that would allow her to live in assisted living with her modest means, but as many seniors want to do, she wanted to stay at home. They have their own furniture, their hobbies. They don't want to leave their possessions behind. How do you force somebody out of their own home? It's not possible. You don't want to do that to somebody, and they don't want to have it done to them. The best we could do for her was to agree to get her one of the medical alert bracelets, where she could alert us that something was wrong as well as go to 911 on that.

You know, this would have been perfect in her situation. It would have allowed her to actually use the equity in her home to make her home safe, because it wasn't safe at that point. We all knew it, and I think she knew it as well, but stubbornness runs in the family.

11:50

You know, this bill is going to, as we've said, allow 260,000 eligible seniors to apply for this, and for those that are not eligible, we have restored a grant program that will allow people to access grants to improve their homes when they're not eligible under the other part of the program. Now, what I see this loan program doing as well, as part of this act, is improving the quality of life for seniors without impacting their finances on a day-to-day basis, and that's simply because the loan and interest charges don't have to be repaid until the sale of the property, which I think is going to entice a lot of people to do this.

One of the members asked earlier: well, how are you going to entice seniors to use this loan? Well, I can tell you that I've heard anecdotally from other members of the Assembly and I've already had many people in my office inquiring about this. The reason is that if they can't stay in their home, they want to stay at least in their neighbourhood, and they're not able to do this at this time, particularly in ridings like mine, which are very urban. The seniors' housing facilities are full, and it's hard for them to get in. There are huge waiting lists. So this is the alternative to this to allow them to stay in their neighbourhoods and their homes. The sheer fact of the matter, Madam Speaker, is that we need to address as a government and as a province the aging population right now, and this is one way to have an immediate impact on this.

The timeline for implementing this, which is July 1, 2016, will allow for further consideration, further development of regulations, and further consultation. However, there has been extensive consultation done on this already, and many of these organizations endorse this. I'm just going to name a few here: the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, the Alberta Council on Aging, the National Association of Federal Retirees, the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council, Seniors United Now, and the Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton. So there have already been several consultations done on this.

Just to go back to why seniors would use this, one aspect, other than that it's a necessity to stay in their neighbourhood, is the fact that we have mandated in this act that contractors will be required to inform seniors of this program, which is going to be a benefit. Not only will they inform the seniors about this and help them with their needs at home, but we also anticipate that this is going to put more Albertans back to work in the construction and adaptation of these homes.

We are constantly hearing about scams, if you will, that happen a lot to seniors, of course, so I'm very happy to see that the act includes four sections of legislation of consumer protection in addition to the Fair Trading Act.

There was also mention from one of the members about the special needs assistance program. Perhaps seniors don't want to adapt their home, but what they need is services in their home. Well, that piece

of the SNA is still available with this act. So you can still get health and personal supports under that section. That's still available.

Now, Madam Speaker, the issue of what happens if property values go down and towns are moving on, I guess. I don't know how to put that. The reality of this act is that it's not designed for the government to make money. Believe it or not, not everything has to make money. This is being done in an altruistic manner that allows seniors to age in place, to make their homes livable as their needs change. I think we have to never forget that that's what this bill is about.

I'm very proud that we are moving in this direction, and I anticipate maybe using this myself one day. I anticipate many of us using this one day. If you haven't experienced caring for a senior yet, we all will. Let's be clear on that.

Anyway, I applaud this act. I am very confident that there will be a lot of use and that it is going to make seniors' lives in Alberta better. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just a question. We keep hearing about the uptake and the consultation, and you mentioned the Alberta Council on Aging. I deal with them on a monthly basis, and to my knowledge, at least, that branch hasn't been consulted on this. My question is that if we have a hundred per cent uptake, which has a potential of 140,000 homes at \$40,000, it comes out to \$5.6 billion. Where is that money going to come from? Are we going to be borrowing more again on top of what's already been stated in the upcoming, or potential, budget? Don't you think that if we wanted to address seniors better, we might give them

some assistance in reducing their property taxes on a monthly basis and their utility bills on a monthly basis? Would that not be, maybe, better to keep them in their homes?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I didn't quite hear that organization that you mentioned. Can I just hear that again?

**Mr. Hanson:** It's the Alberta Council on Aging, that you mentioned, sir.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Oh, yes. Thank you. I don't know if they were in fact consulted. I don't have them. But they may have been, and if not, they can be. That's why we have that time, right? That's why we have that space between now and when it's going to be implemented.

In terms of costs, yeah, I agree. I think we should reduce costs for our seniors who are in need, and there are deferral programs for seniors when it comes to paying utility bills and these sort of things. But I think that this is, as somebody put it, one more tool in the tool box to help seniors age in place and have a better life.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** With a look at the clock, Madam Speaker, I suggest that we advance the clock by a minute and call it 12.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:59 a.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, April 12, 2016

Day 13

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 12, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure today to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House the fabulous students of Meyonohk school, who are here for School at the Leg. and will be spending the week with us. I've had the pleasure of hosting them in my office. There were quite a few of them – it got very crowded – but they had lots of wonderful questions. I'd like them to please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Chamber.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 41 grade 6 students from Notre-Dame elementary school, located in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Riverview. They're accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Paulin Larochelle and Ms Monique McBride.

Maintenant en français. Il est un honneur de présenter 41 élèves de la sixième année de l'école Notre-Dame. Ils sont accompagnés par leurs enseignants, M. Paulin Larochelle et Mme Monique McBride. L'école Notre-Dame est une école française.

They're seated in the public gallery this afternoon, and I ask that they all rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. Bienvenue.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister. Welcome.

Hon. members, I'm privileged on behalf of all of you to acknowledge, because I'm about to acknowledge him at the first point in the Alberta Legislature, the Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly my guests who are seated in your gallery. First is my wonderful wife, Harmeet. She is a constant source of inspiration and is a wonderful mother to our two boys. Without her I wouldn't be here today. My two sons, Arjun and Jeevan, are here as well. Arjun is in grade 6, and Jeevan is in grade 3, and both attend a science charter school. I'm so blessed to have them with me here today as well.

My aunt and my uncle, Sukhwant Sandhu and Surinderpal Sandhu, are here with me today. They have been integral to my successes and a source of strength over the course of my life. I'm honoured they could join me for this special day today.

Next is my brother, Kanwardeep Gill. He is both my brother and a close friend. As a result of my family, a great deal of any successes I have had, including my election as an MLA, wouldn't be possible without my brother.

Last but not least is Mr. Mandeep Shergill. Mandeep was my campaign manager and a point person throughout my campaign. Now he's working out of my constituency office in Calgary-Greenway, where he will have the difficult task of keeping me on

schedule – as you know, Calgary-Greenway is a lot of fun – and making sure everything runs smoothly. He was an integral part of the campaign team, and I thank him for his tireless effort in getting me elected.

I ask them to please rise, which they already did without my permission, and accept the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome, and welcome to the new member.

The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly many individuals from the Alberta Federation of Labour who are here for a lobby day event. The focus of this year's lobby day was child care, something we can all agree is important to this government and important to all Albertans. They met this morning with a variety of MLAs over breakfast and in meetings, and I trust that their conversations were productive. Our government is working to meet the early learning and child care needs of Alberta families. There are quite a few here in the gallery, so I will simply ask them to rise together and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House my husband, Scott Payne, who, actually, many of you already know. It is no exaggeration to say that I wouldn't be here today in this House if not for his love, support, and encouragement. I am eternally grateful to have him as my life partner and as coparent to our one, soon to be two daughters. Scott is a tireless advocate for workers' rights and social justice and a steadfast campaigner for progressive values in our province. Many of my colleagues had the opportunity to work with him during last year's election, and I think I speak for all of us when I say that we're happy he could join us today to watch our government in action. I would ask that he now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly two sets of guests. The first is Dr. C.V.B.T. Sundari. Her full name is Dr. Chintalapati Venkata Bala Tripura Sundari. She is the retired principal of an undergrad college in Nellore, India, and is visiting Canada these days. She has a PhD in English literature and is an avid artist who specializes in the Tanjore style of painting. She is also the mother-in-law of my constituency assistant, Roop Rai. Joining them today is Arohi Rai Elapavuluri, the four-year-old daughter of Roop Rai. They are also joined by Gurpal Gill, a friend and a firm supporter from my constituency of Calgary-McCall.

I also would like to introduce three Calgary Sikh youths representing the Basics of Sikhi, an organization. We are joined here today by Harman Singh Dhillon, Parmeet Sidhu, and Yog Sadra from that organization. The Basics of Sikhi is a Sikh educational campaign that uses digital and printed media to tell the story of Sikhi at faith-based and multifaith events. They are working to spread a spiritual and social message and to effect change by making educational resources free. They are supported by Everything's 13, a registered Sikh education and humanitarian charity.

I ask all my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As Minister of Transportation and of Infrastructure I'm blessed to have a hard-working, very diligent public service to serve the people of this province. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly staff from the strategic services branch of Alberta Infrastructure. They are Correna-Lyn Kerich, Kieren Trimbee, Martijn Groen, Jacqueline Lee, Bev Ricard, and Francis Santiago. They are visiting the Legislature as part of their public service orientation, and I would ask these guests to please now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

1:40

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two individuals, Linda Stewart and Merrill Stewart. Linda and Merrill were constituents of Sherwood Park for 28 years, from 1976 to 2004, before they moved to Belleville, Ontario. They were very active in the Sherwood Park NDP riding association, and both worked in the NDP Legislature office for the Hon. Brian Mason and for Raj Pannu, who was the former leader of the NDP here in Alberta. In 2001 Merrill was the provincial NDP candidate for what was then called the Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan constituency. Merrill ran again as the NDP candidate in the 2014 Ontario provincial election. They returned to Alberta to attend the NDP convention, held last weekend, and to visit their son and his family. As the MLA for Sherwood Park I am very honoured to introduce them to the House today. Would Linda and Merrill please rise to receive the customary welcome from the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of this House Dr. Trent Keough. Dr. Keough is the president and CEO of Portage College, and he's here today in his capacity as lead partner in the Boyle pipeline training centre, which is the subject of my member's statement later today. He is joined by Mr. Stan Delorme, vice-president of Metis Settlements General Council, a board member of Portage College, and the former chair of the Buffalo Lake Métis settlement. Buffalo Lake Métis settlement is a charter partner in the pipeline training centre. I now ask both gentlemen to rise and receive the customary warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, I'm so pleased today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Miss Krysty Munns, a friend and fellow advocate for affordable and safe child care. Krysty moved to Lethbridge from B.C. in 2004 to complete her bachelor of science degree and then her master's of science in molecular biology from the University of Lethbridge. She is a scientist at the Lethbridge agricultural research centre and an active member of her union, the Public Service Alliance of Canada. Today she is very involved within her community advocating on women's and aboriginal issues. I ask that Krysty rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to stand up and share a beautiful story from my constituency, Lethbridge-East. There is a lovely building on 13th Avenue and 18th Street north in Lethbridge. It is the home of Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre, one of two seniors' centres in Lethbridge. The centre is a home away from home for its 1,300 members. On Monday morning the doors are opened at 8:30, and members begin to trickle in slowly. However, by 9:30 the rooms are packed because it is the Monday morning jam session. One can listen, sing along, or be the lead entertainer. As the music plays, coffee and tea are served, and sometimes people have breakfast. Above all, what you see and feel are comradery and pure enjoyment. There is so much energy in the air.

There are always events happening. It could be the first Wednesday of the month for the breakfast buffet, or it could be the president's dinner. The Dunford dining room is always packed. If you step into the hall, you can feel the energy buzzing with activity. It may be yoga or table tennis in the gym, a card game, a game of chess, or selling raffle tickets on my Irish whiskey bread pudding with Irish whiskey caramel sauce.

On the first Friday of the month you would probably see myself, as the MLA for Lethbridge-East, and one of the city councillors there meeting with the membership. On any day you would see volunteers helping out, seniors helping seniors with OAS . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

## Government Policies

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's grass fire season again. MDs and towns all across this province are already putting on fire bans and restrictions. Towns in my riding all have concerns about the damage fire can do. As a firefighter I've seen grass fires grow from small, controllable flames into a wall of flames 12 feet tall in just seconds. Frankly, that's scary and dangerous.

Similar to grass fires, municipalities across this province are also concerned about what this government will have done in less than a year and what it will do with their upcoming budget. For instance, the costs of grants in lieu will cause towns not to go up in flames but in taxes. They are being burned nonetheless. In fact, this will cost Holden over 2 per cent in tax increases and will result in the removal of grants in lieu. The accelerated shutdown of coal will torch Forestburg and singe Heisler and Killam by turning down the coal-fired heat and turning up the tax heat. Not only these towns will get smoked but so, too, will Hanna and 10,000 Albertans who rely on these good-paying jobs.

The royalty review made oil companies see red, and many fled. The NDP government is putting accelerants on this fire to the tune of a projected deficit of around \$18 billion, with a record debt sure to be announced this Thursday, leaving Albertans feeling like they're going from the frying pan right into the fire. The leap of flames from a grass fire is like the Leap Manifesto, that could potentially cause damage all across the province, killing oil field jobs. The combustion caused by the carbon tax will make many jobs

go up in smoke and smother a thousand dollars out of every Albertan's pocket.

On behalf of Albertans I ask this government not to fan the flames of economic disaster with further bad legislation. Please put out the fire.

**The Speaker:** I continue to be impressed by the hidden talents in this Assembly.

The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

### Homelessness in Calgary

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2008 the homelessness rate in Calgary was growing exponentially. We saw an increase of 35 per cent every two years. Using those calculations, we should now have more than 10,000 homeless Calgarians, but we don't, and the reason is the 10-year plan to end homelessness.

In 2008 Calgary became the first city in Canada to create a plan to end homelessness, and the results have been phenomenal: 7,000 people have found permanent housing, and we've seen a 17 per cent reduction in Calgary's homeless population. This is a remarkable achievement considering the phenomenal rate of Calgary's growth. Even with over 200,000 new people moving to Alberta, the rate of homelessness in Calgary has slowed. Since 2008 more than 12 cities across Canada have adopted Calgary's strategy.

Recently I saw comments from Edmonton's police chief giving the homelessness plan a failing grade. I could not have been more disappointed. Those comments undermine and devalue the heavy lifting done by government staff, front-line professionals, community organizations, and, most importantly, the Calgary Homeless Foundation and its CEO, Diana Krecsy, who have dedicated their hearts and souls to this critical endeavour.

I am privileged to contribute to the Calgary council on homelessness, which is a nonpartisan systems check on homeless supports in this province. Along with my esteemed colleague the Member for Calgary-Elbow we are charged with identifying gaps in the system and looking for solutions. I would ask the government to consider the work we are doing on the issue of homelessness in Alberta. We believe the answer to this issue lies not in criticizing current efforts but in building on successes like Calgary and Medicine Hat and sharing our resources and information by working together through collaboration, not criticism.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Premier announced her carbon tax plan last fall, she said that the \$3 billion price tag that Albertans would pay was simply the cost of a social licence we need to build pipelines. She claimed a buy-in from the energy industry and the radical environmentalists who have opposed our pipelines for years. Since then a billionaire energy CEO has moved away due to the higher taxes, and this morning the Premier's environmental ally is claiming that Energy East would poison the drinking water of eastern Canada. Premier, what are Albertans getting exactly in exchange for the \$3 billion carbon tax?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, our plan is helping to change opinion around the country and internationally. It is not something that will happen overnight; difficult things are not, but good governments take on difficult tasks. We have been working on this for five months; that member over there worked on a plan for 10

years and got nowhere. Suggesting that our five-month-old plan has failed, while it fits into their political objectives, is not helpful and quite frankly denies the kinds of good governance that we are demonstrating, which will get us to yes on a pipeline and improve our record on climate change.

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** That's simply not true, Mr. Speaker.

It seems the only buy-in the carbon tax has gained is from the former pipeline opponents in the Premier's caucus. Unfortunately, it's going to cost Alberta families \$1,000 a year to keep her backbench from protesting. The unelected opponents, however, continue their opposition. Energy East risks our drinking water, they say, while the federal NDP debate how to keep our oil in the ground. Why does the Premier continue to try to appease our opponents instead of calling them out for their outright lies about our energy industry?

**Ms Notley:** Well, speaking of outright lies, the member opposite has been misinformed and has incorrect information with respect to the implications for families around our carbon levy. That being said, as I've said before, we are going to move forward with our carbon plan because it's the right thing to do for our environment, for future Canadians, and also for our energy industry. These folks over there want us to react, to panic, to stop doing anything, and to go back to the 10 years of failed policies that have gotten us nowhere. We will not do that, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jean:** So let's actually review the Premier's progress from that day in November when she proudly announced her new social licence for Alberta. A billionaire who she linked arms with thinks taxes are too high now to stay in Alberta, and the environmentalist who joined her on the stage continued to campaign and fund raise against our oil sands. Her own party – her own party – signs on to a plan to end all oil and gas development in Canada. Premier, if this is the social licence Albertans have paid for, can they please get a refund?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let us review the member opposite's progress on the issue of a pipeline. Ten years, no pipeline. And you know what? Albertans asked for a refund, and they got one. They have a government that's taking action, and that's what we will do.

**The Speaker:** The second main question.

### Government Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Yesterday we found out the Premier was against the Leap Manifesto. Well, actually, I should correct myself. The Premier's statement says that the government of Alberta repudiates the sections of the Leap Manifesto that addressed energy infrastructure. End quote. I'm curious to know how the Premier feels about the rest of the four-page, large-font document. Why didn't the Premier reject the section that says that the drop in oil prices isn't a crisis but a gift or the part calling for financial transaction taxes or even the increased resource royalty request?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I've been exceptionally clear from coast to coast on our position with respect to that manifesto.

Interestingly, as I mentioned in this House yesterday, conservative supporters have actually come out and called building a pipeline a doomsday scenario. I asked the hon. member to repudiate that comment, and interestingly, Mr. Speaker, he has not

because they are still willing to put their political interests over the interests of Albertans because they want Alberta to fail for their outcomes.

**Mr. Jean:** I would reject any supporter that suggested pipelines are that, but I would ask the NDP leader to reject the NDP federal party for all their ridiculous comments.

Another section of the manifesto calls for an end to the animal agricultural industry as we know it, saying that it relies too much on the energy products extracted by our number one job-creating industry. The Premier's qualified repudiation of the Leap Manifesto didn't mention that part. Does the Premier agree with the sections of the Leap Manifesto that pit our number one wealth-creating industry, oil, against our number two wealth-creating industry, agriculture?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member opposite ought to do his homework because, in fact, in my speech on Saturday I specifically addressed that issue, and I did specifically repudiate that issue.

You know, I'm hearing from a former MP who sat in government for 10 years and failed to do anything to build a pipeline. We have no lessons to learn, Mr. Speaker, from the Official Opposition on this issue. They want us to do nothing. They want us to walk away from our plan to deal with climate change. They want to cut \$2 billion. They want to just sit in their offices and cross their fingers and hope that things change. That's not the . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Jean:** That's simply untrue, Mr. Speaker. Hundreds of thousands of kilometres of pipeline were built across this country.

But capitalism is "designed to extinguish our dreams before they have a chance to be born." I haven't heard a repudiation of that statement from the manifesto from anyone on that side of the House, nor have I heard anything about the Leap Manifesto's desire to replace, quote, profit-gouging private corporations with co-operatives elected by, I assume, NDP members. Is there anything in either of those two statements that the Premier doesn't agree with?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I've answered this question over and over and over again. Albertans know where we stand. We have been very clear that the Leap Manifesto – and I will say it again – is naive, is thoughtless, is ill informed, and is tone deaf, and we will not be moving forward on any part of it. What we will be moving forward on is a progressive climate change policy that moves the ball down the field, across the country, that supports the development of a diversified, progressive energy industry that is more successful in the decades to come.

**The Speaker:** Third main question.

**Mr. Jean:** While the Premier cautiously, slowly, and quietly distances herself from the Leap Manifesto, the fingerprints of many of her government can be found all over the ideas behind it. Her chief of staff, for instance, ran for the leadership of the federal NDP on a plan to end fossil fuels in Canada's cities, and the number of former anti-oil and antipipeline activists working for her ministers has been well documented and reported. Does the Premier recognize that the federal NDP is simply picking up the mantle formerly carried by members of her own caucus and cabinet?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, that is the most ridiculous premise I've ever heard. I believe that Albertans and Canadians have heard very

clearly what the position of my government, my cabinet, my caucus, our party is on the Leap Manifesto, and they have heard very clearly that we are on the side of Albertans, that we will continue to push for progressive, successful, sustainable energy . . .

**The Speaker:** I suggest that I should remind members – and you can go to the procedures book, page 502 – that we ought not to be seeking opinions during question period.

The first supplemental, I believe, hon. leader. Is that correct?

**Mr. Jean:** The Premier's own environment minister sought and received the endorsement of Avi Lewis, who is the main author of the Leap Manifesto, just prior to last May's election. Cabinet ministers and government backbenchers alike have campaigned for NDPers with radical opinions about Alberta and our energy sector. We're happy that the Premier's social licence has apparently convinced her own caucus to change their tune, but will the Premier acknowledge that what happened at her party's convention was as much the making of years of past efforts from members of her own government as it was anyone else's?

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite suggests that he believes that climate change is real, but his environment critic ran under their banner at a time when the party suggested that climate change wasn't real and the science wasn't settled. So, you know, I would suggest that the member opposite might want to focus more on what the statements are of the elected representatives who are here on behalf of the people of Alberta and what they say is the position of their government because the waters start to get a little murky if we start looking at statements made by supporters of parties in times past, not too far past.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Yesterday the Government House Leader argued that under his leadership the NDP tried to be more positive towards Alberta's energy industry. Some argue that they simply became less adversarial – as the Speaker ruled, this point is debatable – which is why Albertans are concerned that the Premier filled her government with NDP advisers from outside of Alberta who have a history of working against Alberta's interests. Were there no qualified or moderate Albertans ready to serve in this government?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the staff who we have working for our government. We have managed to attract some of the best minds across the country to support us, and I would suggest that perhaps the folks over there might want to think about the same kind of recruitment drive. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please.

The leader of the third party.

### Environmental Monitoring

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, clearly, when the environment minister reviewed AEMERA, her mind was already made up. She refused to meet with AEMERA's leadership despite their repeated attempts to reach her. No amount of truth or facts was going to change her mind. It was set on something much more powerful, political ideology. Why else would she ignore advice from well-respected scientists and dissolve AEMERA anyway? To the minister: why are you ignoring credible advice from industry-leading experts?



**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. You know, there was a third-party external review conducted of AEMERA by the former deputy minister of Environment Canada which found a significant amount of overlap and administrative issues that were already being dealt with within the department. In addition, we ensured that there was independence maintained through the role of the chief scientist and the legislated role of the Science Advisory Panel. There was no need for an extra board or an extra layer of administration in this matter, and that's what we've committed to.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, that's not true, Mr. Speaker. Last week top Canadian scientists raised questions and concerns about the environment minister's plan to dissolve AEMERA and move its functions back under her direct control. Not only does this discredit her, quote, independent review, which was actually a tightly orchestrated charade with a predetermined outcome, but they raised concerns around internal manipulation and politicization of scientific monitoring data. To the minister: now that you've shot the credibility of yourself and your ministry, how can Albertans trust anything that you call data that you present to them?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact of the matter is that the Science Advisory Panel will be reporting directly to Albertans and providing the advice to the chief scientist in a peer-reviewed fashion on how we might fill some of the gaps of analysis and data collection within environmental reporting.

Now, what the scientists did flag was the future of environmental reporting. They did not want to go back to the failed past under the PCs, Mr. Speaker, and that is something that this government has pledged not to do.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the scientists discredited what that minister calls an independent review.

I find it curious that when the NDP was in opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview said, "When you don't have an independent arm's length, a distance between government and a body that they're selecting, questions arise, questions about judgment." Well, in government now it seems that the NDP no longer shares that same commitment to transparency and honesty. To the minister: when did your government decide that providing Albertans with independent scientific data was less important than your left-wing bias?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that the independent arm's-length reporting to Albertans continues within the act. It will continue by maintaining the Science Advisory Panel and the traditional knowledge panel within the act. They will report directly to Albertans in a more timely and regularized fashion than the previous monitoring agency, which had some problems getting that moving, would have done. Now, the fact of the matter is that we've also maintained the role of the chief scientist and the role of the chief of monitoring in this matter. What we have eliminated is the previous government's penchant for appointing their friends to boards.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

## Rural Health Care

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For too many years the health care concerns of rural Albertans have gone unheard. Albertans want to ensure that our government will invest not just in health care in our cities but ensure that access to services is strengthened and protected in rural communities, too. How is the Minister of Health, after hearing concerns of rural Albertans, going to provide quality health care close to their homes?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the important question. Our government is absolutely committed to protecting health care for all Albertans no matter where they live, and that's why, immediately after being elected, we cancelled cuts that were proposed by the outgoing government and refused to move forward on cuts that were proposed by the Official Opposition. We think that it's important to work on listening to rural Albertans. That's why during the constituency break I toured communities like St. Paul, Bonnyville, Lac La Biche, Fort Vermilion, Vegreville, High Level, Olds. We're out on the front lines getting opportunities to meet with rural Albertans and to thank the public service for their excellent . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplementary.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has been on tour and given that there is a need for quality care in rural Alberta, will the minister highlight some real health initiatives that will have positive impacts, and can she discuss any local programs that are working from the bottom up?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much to the member for the question. Certainly, there are a few announcements we did in the opportunities we had to tour during the break. One excellent example is the dialysis unit that will be permanently integrated in Lac La Biche. I'm also really proud of some of the work happening in the Lakeland regional health care initiative, where communities are working collaboratively. As well, High Level is doing excellent work around mental health. In terms of having an opportunity to be involved at the local level, Alberta Health Services launched just last week a recruitment initiative for 70 public members to the health advisory councils.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the opposition parties are calling for significant cuts in health spending and given that we need to ensure that rural Albertans have access to those professionals and the physical health infrastructure, equipment, and facilities to deliver quality care, can the minister outline her approach to ensuring that this happens?

**Ms Hoffman:** The member is right that opposition cuts would lead to rural hospitals closing and for our nurses and other health professionals being available for Albertans where Albertans need them most. On my most recent trip, of course, Lac La Biche received an announcement of their much-needed dialysis unit. These are the kinds of things that we're moving forward on because this government, this side of the House, voted for a budget that has new money and the infrastructure maintenance plan and will continue to move forward on making sure that Albertans get the care where they need it, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### Job Creation

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the government confirmed that they are finally ending their failed job scheme. Job creators, economists, and Wildrose were skeptical from the start. The NDP government doubled down, with the Finance minister saying that it will be, quote, good for business. Finally, yesterday the Premier said that the cancelling was based on evidence. Given the state of our economy, why isn't the government conducting economic impact studies first, not in hindsight? Is it because they don't care or because they don't want to see the results?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. You know, our government is responsive to Albertans. We've listened to the private sector and decided to pivot on a program that, quite frankly, wasn't going to deliver the outcomes that were originally intended, but I can tell you that jobs and the economy are the number one priority of our government, of our Premier. The opposition will have to wait for budget day to hear more details.

2:10

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that economist Jack Mintz has said that the failed job scheme is, quote, not going to be very effective, and the Calgary Chamber of commerce questioned why they were doing it at all, it's clear that the government didn't do their homework. Now they tell us that Thursday's budget will include new initiatives for job creation. Will the government commit to sharing all internal economic impact assessments so that Albertans know that these new initiatives will actually work this time?

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, let me start off by saying that our government will not exacerbate a situation by cutting billions of dollars from the front lines: nurses, teachers, health care professionals. Our government is committed to working with the private sector, the job creators. On Thursday the opposition will have to wait for a number of initiatives. But I'll remind the opposition that our government has already been proactive since last fall, announcing \$34 billion in infrastructure over the next five years as opposed to the opposition, that would cut more than \$9 billion.

**Mr. Hunter:** Apparently, Mr. Speaker, it's easier to come up with accusations than an actual job plan for Albertans.

Given that this past February Alberta's unemployment rate hit its highest level in 20 years and that weekly wages are plummeting, it's clear that when it comes to job creation, this government's record speaks louder than their assurances. We still don't know what Bill 1 will actually do, and neither does the government as they let it wither on the Order Paper. Will the government finally admit that their approach to putting ideological experiments over sound policy simply isn't working?

**Mr. Bilous:** I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker, our government has a jobs plan. It is being proactive in acting on this as opposed to the opposition that, first of all, thinks that you get pipelines approved by jumping up and down and berating people over Twitter and social media.

The other thing that's quite interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that the member talks about the unemployment rate. Well, again, the Wildrose solution to unemployment is to create more unemployment by laying off thousands of public-sector workers. Our government values our public sector, and we will continue to invest in the economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Environmental Monitoring (continued)

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week we saw the NDP government take an unprecedented measure by folding an independent, arm's-length organization back into the ministry. AEMERA provided a scientifically structured, industry-funded watchdog over energy development; however, the minister says that it cost too much. For a function that took up less than 3 per cent of the department's budget, it is not acceptable to sacrifice transparency and accountability to save minuscule amounts of money. To the environment minister: can the minister explain how these dollars will be repurposed, or is this just another time where we have to wait until the budget?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for the question. In fact, when we made the announcement, we made it very clear that savings that were realized would be reinvested back into front-line monitoring services. You know, the reason why we did it: the analysis showed that

previous administrations failed to fully consider the implications of transferring the bulk of scientific capacity from [Environment and Parks] to AEMERA and the impact such a transfer would have on AEP's ability to carry out its environmental stewardship role.

That's why we made the decision. We'll be reinvesting those dollars back into monitoring.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Given that you said in your press conference that this measure to roll an independent, arm's-length body into two ministry-led panels will save money and given that you also outlined that all money saved will be recycled back into the environmental monitoring, evaluation, and reporting, which one is true, Minister? Are you saving money, or are you actually spending the same amount?

**Ms Phillips:** I'm sorry, but the hon. member just actually doesn't understand the structure of the issue here. We have a Science Advisory Panel, which advises the chief scientist on gaps in a peer-reviewed fashion. There was then a board, which we have dissolved, Mr. Speaker, and a full executive team of various VPs and so on to do the actual management of the day-to-day operations of AEMERA. So he's wrong; we're right. You know, that's really the explanation.

**Mr. Ellis:** Wow. That's all I can say.

Given that industry has funded more than two-thirds of the budget of AEMERA in 2015-16 through the joint oil sands monitoring initiative and given that many Albertans believe it would be inappropriate to take money provided by the energy industry and expense it to everyday department spending, to the same minister: how will you justify the redirection of the spending

towards two new panels, how many panels has this government now created, and will these new panels be reviewed by your current review of Alberta's ABC system?

Thank you.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, you have to forgive me, but I think it's a little weird that the previous government is asking me about how many panels when they were the ones who put them in the legislation in the first place. So it's the science advisory panel, the traditional knowledge panel, which will report to Albertans. They will flag various gaps in analysis and data and so on with the chief scientist. They will report to Albertans on the matter.

You know, I'll just read from what the McMurray Métis have said: the mandate was wrong from the get-go; core issues that were frequently raised by McMurray Métis and other communities just never made into their mandate; AEMERA needed to change. There you have it from the source.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

### Adoption

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wildrose believes that strong families build strong communities and that every family should have the opportunity to thrive and grow. When families decide to reach out and grow through adoption, the last thing they need is to find this government standing in their way. Adoption profiles are often the easiest way for biological parents to connect with those wishing to adopt. Unfortunately, current regulations prevent Alberta families from posting those profiles online. To the minister: why is this regulation still in place, and when will it be removed?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our government is committed to making sure that when children are not safe in their homes, they have homes to go to where they can stay and flourish. We will take steps to make sure that we review the policies in due course and make sure that we consult the relevant stakeholders and all Albertans going forward when we put into place a new policy, so we will work with Albertans and stakeholders.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, adoption is an issue that is near and dear to my heart, and it's something that parents and families face with equal parts of both sadness and joy. The decision a biological parent makes to allow another family to raise their child can be agonizing, yet their generosity gives incredible joy to an adoptive family. What is the minister's department doing to help biological parents and those who may have signed a permanent guardianship order to ensure the adoption process is as smooth as possible for all involved?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, was there a preamble in there somewhere? I'll just remind you that after question 5 you are to manage that differently.

The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As I've stated, our government is committed to working with the foster parents, with all of the stakeholders to make sure that when children can't stay in their home, we'll find them a

home where they can flourish and where they'll have opportunities to succeed in their lives.

Thank you.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, given that we're talking about all types of adoptions and not just ones inside the department and given that we recognize that checks and balances must obviously be in place but there are significant hurdles that stand in the way of anyone that wishes to grow their family through adoption and given that in some cases the costs are high and there is often bureaucratic, stressful delays with little to no accountability, why isn't this minister's department doing more to break down those barriers so that families can more easily welcome adoptive children through public, private, or international adoption?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would have been nice if the member, in the name of disclosure, had disclosed his personal interest in that.

Every adoption case is different. There are many issues that need to be looked into, and every adoption case is looked into, the particular circumstances of the case. Our government is committed to making sure that all children in Alberta have all the needed and necessary resources to flourish in their lives and succeed in their lives.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Canola Diseases

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clubroot is an extremely serious soil-borne pathogen that has already been found in well over 30 municipalities in Alberta as of 2014. Given it has devastating effects on canola yields and is so pervasive, it is declared a pest in Alberta's Agricultural Pests Act – it's been a problem since the 1970s, when it was first reported in Edmonton area greenhouses – to the minister of agriculture: what is your department doing to update their management plan on this dangerously pervasive pathogen?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. He's absolutely right that clubroot and Fusarium – there are a lot of pathogens out there in the landscape that we continue to monitor, working with our agriculture services boards, with counties right across the province to ensure that pests don't spread and that we can control what we can right across Alberta. It's important to our producers and important to the industry.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that Canada exports nearly \$2 billion worth of canola to China and given that as of September 1 this year the Chinese will impose stricter standards on foreign material to our canola exports, can the minister tell us what programs and protocols are in place to ensure that other canola-based diseases such as blackleg don't end up destroying crops here and reducing trade with some of our largest partners overseas?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Absolutely, canola is very important to Alberta. Our agricultural sector is our second-largest sector in the province. Recently I returned from China and Korea, where at every opportunity that I had I engaged with officials in China to talk about this issue and the fact that we are looking for science-based, evidence-backed decisions and are advocating very, very profusely for our agricultural sector. We recognize that China is an important market, and we will continue to grow that market.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that clubroot spores can survive in soil up to 20 years and given that landowners are seriously concerned that energy construction projects, including renewable energy projects, increase the risk of transferring infected soil, can the Minister of Energy tell this Assembly why there are no biosecurity protocols currently in place to reduce the spread of these dangerous pathogens across hundreds of acres of farmland?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I agree with him wholeheartedly that we all need to do what we can to stop the spread of pathogens, the ones existing. Perhaps there are new ones on the horizon that we haven't even yet recognized. Knowing that the producers are doing what they can around rotation of the crops, knowing that the energy industry as well needs to take responsibility for that, I will ask the member to give me some leeway to get back to the Energy minister to find out exactly what we can do about this issue because I would agree.

Thank you.

### Energy and Environmental Policies

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, the circus was in town this past weekend. On Saturday the Premier walked the tightrope. On Sunday the acrobats did a triple somersault and landed on the Leap Manifesto platform. On Monday we watched the contortionists. Well, actually, it was the NDP government caucus desperately trying to distance itself from this document. Now, we've seen this sideshow before. Just last week the environment minister was forced to defend her attempts to politicize AEMERA after harsh criticism from prominent Canadian scientists. To the minister: when will you stop flip-flopping on issues that have a profound effect on the energy sector and Alberta's economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm pretty sure I was clear in the national newspaper on Friday where Alberta stands with respect to our climate leadership and our access to tidewater, but I welcome every available opportunity to underline the matter to Albertans that this province and this government has energy workers' backs. No problem.

Now, as to AEMERA, Mr. Speaker, we have acted on good external advice from the former deputy minister of Environment Canada, and I thank him very much for his advice. He found duplication. He found ways in which we can do better on monitoring. Certainly, indigenous peoples have welcomed this approach as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a difference between having workers' backs and stabbing them in the back.

Mr. Speaker, every caucus has a ring, every circus has a ringmaster. Given that the Alberta NDP takes its policy marching orders from the federal NDP mother ship and given that the federal party has proven once and for all that they care nothing for the well-being of Albertans and our key industry, to the same minister: was the decision to make environmental monitoring in Alberta less transparent and less accountable a product of your own personal ideology or were you acting on a mandate from your federal bosses?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the mandate that we were given last May 5, that the hon. member's caucus was not given, was a very, very clear mandate to review agencies, boards, and commissions given all of the silliness that had been happening under the previous government with ABCs. That is why we will see more action on this matter within the budget.

Now, the fact of the matter is that we found duplication, we found ways to do better with our environmental monitoring. And when we know better, Mr. Speaker, we will do better.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, you can always tell they've run out of answers when they start talking about the ABC review.

Given that the environment minister believes that a \$3 billion carbon tax and dissolving independent monitoring agencies will give her government the social licence to build much-needed pipelines and given that her government was unable to convince even their most vocal supporters of the merit of these decisions, to the minister: if you can't persuade your own comrades who share your ideology to stand in solidarity with you, how do you expect to convince people outside your circus tent, you know, the ones who actually have the authority to approve these projects?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not super sure if there was a question in there, but let me give it a try. Okay. I think we were pretty clear over the weekend that this government is committed to a climate leadership plan that will lead the country, stop being a laggard, that will embrace the science of climate change, unlike some of our friends or those who would propose that we do nothing. That's a form of rejecting the science. We will move forward on a plan that is thoughtful, that is carefully calibrated to respond to the existing environmental conditions, and we will make sure . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Job Creation (continued)

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, last year the government announced in Budget 2015 a job-creation incentive program as a way to help businesses hire new employees. I am pleased to ask the Minister of Economic Development and Trade about an issue that is very important to my own constituents in Sherwood Park. Could the minister please explain why the government decided not to proceed with this program?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. First and foremost, creating jobs and diversifying the economy is the number one priority of our government. I can tell you that that priority has not changed from last year's budget to this year, but I'll tell you what we did do. We heard feedback from businesses, from chambers of commerce, from industry, and what we've decided to do – the focus of the job-creation program is the same, that we are going to support the private sector to create jobs – is to retool that instrument and instead have a . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
First supplemental.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for listening to the business community.

Given that business owners throughout the province are continuing to look at our government for ongoing support to help get Albertans back to work, can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade explain what incentives the government will provide to start-up companies and entrepreneurs to support innovation and job creation?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, quite frankly, in challenging economic times people tend to seek new opportunities and to explore starting up their own businesses and to innovate. That's why yesterday I announced a \$10 million investment that will be provided through Alberta Innovates to Innovate Calgary, to TEC Edmonton, and as well to regional commercialization organizations to support start-up companies, innovation, and job creation.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to tangible, concrete action. There is a suite of initiatives that we'll be rolling out on Thursday, and there will be more news to come.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade explain why expanding funding for incubators is important as part of the government's plan to create jobs and diversify the economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the very pertinent question. We have great assets in our province with two of the best university-based business incubators in the world. They are already at capacity. That's why our government is providing \$10 million in new funding to these initiatives and strengthening their supports and the support that they give to businesses.

I want to give a quick statistic here. TEC Edmonton's clients have grown an average of 25 per cent per year in revenues and employment compared to the national growth rate of 10 per cent for early-stage Canadian companies. This is a success story which needs more support.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

## Agriculture and Energy Policies

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Leap Manifesto has farmers and ranchers in my riding worried. The Premier says that she rejects the pipeline components of this manifesto, but she hasn't said anything about agriculture. Meanwhile, the Leap Manifesto document states, "One single industry is destroying the planet more than any other. Animal agriculture," and calls for an end to the entire industry. Will the Premier give our farmers and ranchers some peace of mind and clearly state her opposition to this component of the manifesto right here and right now?

**Ms Hoffman:** It's always fun to be able to take an opportunity to clarify and reclarify and say it yet again. Our government repudiates the entire Leap Manifesto, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there were many provincial delegates there who voted in opposition to it, not just from Alberta but from across Canada. We're going to keep making sure that they understand the importance of having wide industries, including strong energy, agriculture, forestry. The list goes on. We're going to fight for workers.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental question.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the issue of trade is also very important to ag producers in my riding. They're worried about access to foreign markets given that the Leap Manifesto calls for an end to existing free trade deals. Does the Premier understand the importance of trade to producers, or, like her federal brothers and sisters, does she think that these deals should be thrown out?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, this is an opportunity to debate government policy, but I'll make it very clear yet again. A document that was debated this weekend by a different party, not by the provincial NDP, was passed. [interjections] It is not government policy. We repudiate it. We will continue to stand up for Albertans. I was proud to do so throughout the weekend and will for the rest of my days.

**The Speaker:** The volume in here is getting excessive. Could you please listen to each other?

Second supplemental question.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Premier says that this manifesto has not been adopted, but she also says that it will be discussed. Given that the Leap Manifesto calls to end trade deals, oil and gas, and our farming and ranching industries, why doesn't the Premier fight hard for these industries instead of discussing such radical, anti-Alberta ideas?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, every day our government is working to increase market access to make sure that we get a fair price for our commodity, get workers back to work. The opposite members' sole priority is to make this government fail instead of making Alberta succeed. That's irresponsible. We're going to stand up for Albertans, and I'm proud to do so.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

## Environmental Monitoring (continued)

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week the environment minister received a letter from well-respected scientists from clear across Canada warning her about dissolving

AEMERA. These experts stated that the minister was mistaken in her assumptions regarding public trust in government science. Now, by ignoring this advice, the minister has demonstrated that she believes she knows more about environmental monitoring than trusted experts. Minister, please clarify while all Albertans are watching. What was the exact methodology utilized in this review of AEMERA, and why was it completed by an economist and not an environmental monitoring scientist?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be very clear, the problems with public trust were under the previous government's approach to environmental monitoring, which were found so wanting over a period of years that the only, the last idea that they could think of was to outsource core government business. That is not the way to govern this particular matter. We are committed to independent reporting to Albertans to ensure that that piece stays in place. The chief scientist and the chief of monitoring of AEMERA move over into the department.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
I will recognize the second supplemental.

**Mr. Rodney:** Mr. Speaker, with respect, that's not what the scientists said.

I wonder: are Albertans actually asking the NDP to stop blaming and start governing? Given that the predetermined review was neither robust nor a fair analysis of the so-called arm's-length agency and given that just because the minister rejects something over and over again and repeats it over and over again to herself doesn't make it true, to the same minister: your commissioned review highlighted a number of other options to improve AEMERA instead of dissolving it. So please tell us: why are you throwing the baby out with the bathwater and refusing to even consider other options over ideological preferences?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that environmental monitoring is core business of government like public health and public safety. The accountability for monitoring rests with government, not an outsourced agency run by a board with a former PC environment minister as its chair. So we have retained the best aspects of AEMERA's work, including the chief scientist, including the chief of monitoring, and including the best parts of the enabling legislation, the Science Advisory Panel and the traditional knowledge panel, which indigenous peoples in the lower Athabasca have embraced.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Rodney:** In the words of the minister, given the fact that the scientists are pleading with the minister – they're leaders in the field from across the country; they've refuted every aspect of the minister's dubious report such as the fact that AEMERA was working hard to build stronger working relationships with the federal government and the fact that their salaries just happened to be comparable to or less than other public servants in the same rank – will the minister utilize this opportunity to take the professional, expert advice from these scientists, to put their respected opinion over personal political bias?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. You know, environmental monitoring in the lower Athabasca has been governed by the joint oil sands monitoring agreement between the federal and provincial

governments. It actually became quite difficult to negotiate that agreement between an arm's-length agency, that was outsourced, core government business, and the federal government and, I would argue, a government-to-government-to-government relationship, which is why indigenous peoples had so many questions about AEMERA. We are going to fix that and ensure that we've got the appropriate governance in place so that we've got a monitoring system that everyone can agree on.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Calgary-Bow.

2:40

## Services for Seniors

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that we are all concerned about the difficult economic times in our province and the impact on Albertans, especially on more vulnerable people like low-income seniors who live on strict incomes with little flexibility. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what is our government doing to protect vulnerable seniors and provide them with the financial and social support they need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for advocating on behalf of seniors. It's true that low-income seniors have restricted incomes and often face the challenge of dealing with limited funds. The Alberta seniors' benefit helps protect low-income seniors most in need by supplementing old age security and the guaranteed income supplement provided by the federal government. Alberta's benefit program supports about 150,000 low-income seniors each month here in Alberta. This summer we will be adjusting qualifying thresholds to ensure that seniors don't see a reduction or clawback of their benefits because the cost of living . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many seniors have told me that remaining in their communities for as long as they choose or are able is vital to their independence and well-being, again to the same minister: how is the government helping seniors to stay in their own communities and remain independent?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many seniors have told me that remaining in their communities for as long as they choose or are able is vital to their independence and well-being. How is the government helping seniors stay in their own communities and remain independent? We're doing this through supporting them with programs like the seniors' home adaptation program, that supports seniors' staying in their home through home renovations that they couldn't afford otherwise, and we're very proud of ourselves for doing this.

Thank you.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** A point of order.

**The Speaker:** The point of order is noted.  
Second supplemental.

**Ms Drever:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many seniors are struggling to find transportation to get to medical appointments, to buy groceries, and to get around their communities, back to the

Minister of Seniors and Housing: what is your ministry doing to help seniors with transportation challenges?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that affordable and accessible transportation options help seniors remain independent and active in their communities. Seniors may need to get around town, go to medical appointments, run errands, or visit family and friends. I was pleased to announce in February the launch of the new tool kit to help communities build their own seniors' transportation programs. The Wainwright and District Handivan Society built a successful program that provides 150 rides per month for local seniors. It served as a pilot project for the tool kit. I encourage communities across Alberta to get involved.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Decorum

**The Speaker:** Members, one of the members of the Legislature pointed out to me and I have noted in the past that when members are speaking in the Members' Statements portion, there has been a practice, as I understand it, to not be disrespectful and disruptive. There have been conversations throughout the House on various occasions, and I'd just like to remind you of that practice. I believe it's a good one.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

#### Portage College Pipeline Training Centre

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise today and recognize a world-class pipeline training facility in my constituency. Portage College's pipeline training centre is located on 130 acres near the village of Boyle. The college provides a live-in learning environment with a 40-person camp. Eventually the college hopes to accommodate as many as 300 students at this facility.

Portage College is currently in the design phase of a process loop, a pipeline track used to train workers by simulating operations, maintenance, loss and leaks, and design testing in a real-world environment. This project will make technology-based education available in the north and provide students with hands-on experience on an environmentally secured pipeline. The project is also the first of its kind in Canada and represents an estimated \$25 million investment.

Portage has an exemplary record when it comes to aboriginal engagement over their nearly 50-year history. In the college's heavy equipment operator program, which shares the same site as the pipeline college, approximately 75 per cent of the graduates have been aboriginal students. These students have an 85 per cent rate of posttraining employment. Seven First Nations and four Métis settlements were consulted on land use for the pipeline training college, and they have supported the project, with the Buffalo Lake Métis settlement being a charter partner in the site.

Portage College pipeline training centre not only trains Albertans for the economy of today and tomorrow, but it also makes sure that Alberta's pipelines workforce remains second to none in the world for technical ability and commitment to safety. I'm extremely proud that my hometown will be able to make this contribution to our province's and our nation's economies.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a member of a party that stands up for pipelines, stands up for First Nations, and stands up for Albertans, and that's why I'm proud to support the Portage College pipeline training centre.

Thank you.

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

#### Volunteers in Edmonton-South West

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is national volunteer appreciation week, and it's my privilege to rise today and talk about the amazing, hard-working people who volunteer in my constituency of Edmonton-South West. Their contributions can be especially felt in newer areas such as my constituency, which is experiencing such phenomenal growth. Parents and neighbours work hard every day to promote community development in our area, especially when it comes to gathering resources for building facilities like playgrounds in our neighbourhoods.

Mr. Speaker, Edmonton-South West currently has six schools, with another eight schools being slated to open in just the next two years. In these schools parent council groups have taken an active role in fundraising and in developing resources for their children. To give you just a little bit of an idea of how hard these parents work, it took the parent council of Sister Annata Brockman school over five years to raise enough money to build their playground, and the Bessie Nichols school group has spent the last four years fund raising for theirs.

Mr. Speaker, I really do want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Culture and Tourism for making funding available for playground and community projects through the community facility enhancement program grants and the CIP programs. Building a playground or a facility is expensive, and it takes years for these groups to raise the hundreds of thousands of dollars required for these services. These grants make our neighbourhoods and schools much more family friendly.

I want to thank all the volunteers of the community leagues that I represent as well. Edmonton-South West has Glastonbury, the Hamptons, Twin Brooks, Greater Windermere, and Blackmud Creek community leagues, that rely on countless volunteers to run programs, to raise funds for halls, playgrounds, sporting facilities, and other community activities. In Edmonton-South West we simply could not have achieved all that we have without support from these tireless, unsung heroes. I'm proud to dedicate my time today and honour all the volunteers that make Edmonton-South West the best place to live in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

#### Grain Rail Hopper Car Fleet

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertan and Canadian farmers are experiencing record harvest, but now they're worried about a new issue, a lack of railway hopper cars for their grain. There are 21,000 hopper cars for grain between our two railways; 9,000 of these cars are owned by the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, or Canada. Alberta bought 1,000 of these blue-and-yellow cars over 35 years ago with money from the heritage fund to ensure that Alberta farmers could get their crops to market. Those hopper cars also serve as rolling billboards for our province, advertising Alberta's productivity across the country and around North America.

CN and CP combined have 6,000 hopper cars of their own for grain. Those cars are forecast to reach the end of their useful life by 2020, only four short years from now. Between the years of 2022 and 2027 the 9,000 government-owned hopper cars, including Alberta's, will also reach the proverbial end of the line. Within 10 years, Mr. Speaker, there will only be 6,000 hopper cars left to move our grain unless orders for replacement cars begin to be placed soon. If they're not, we risk a situation where the hopper car fleet is reduced to 28 per cent of its current size at a time when crop yields are growing. There's no denying that the industry needs new hopper cars, but there is no certainty on who is responsible to replace them.

The longer we delay orders for new hopper cars, the longer they will take to make and deliver, which will put the livelihood of farmers at risk. One thing is certain, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is in the perfect position to help bring all of the stakeholders together to find solutions on the best way forward for this critical issue. I encourage the minister to start these conversations now and stop this crisis in its tracks.

2:50

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

#### Bill 7

#### Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce first reading of Bill 7, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016.

Bill 7 proposes amendments to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act in order to authorize appointment of an Electoral Boundaries Commission on or before October 31, 2016, which is earlier than is currently allowed under this act, and to clarify the commission's authority to consider recent information respecting population that is not collected on a province-wide basis such as municipal population information. This information would be used along with the federal decennial census of the population and the more recent province-wide census.

A commission's role is to review existing electoral boundaries, hold public hearings, and make recommendations for the Legislative Assembly to consider. Under the current wording of the act the commission cannot be appointed before July 31, 2017. If the act is not amended to allow earlier appointment of the commission, there will not be enough time for new electoral boundaries to be drawn before the next general election. This change was necessitated as a result of the early election call.

Bill 7 also seeks to clarify the current section of the act dealing with information the commission must and may use when determining population in Alberta.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 22 of the Auditor General Act I would like to table five copies of the report by the Auditor General titled Report of the Auditor

General of Alberta April 2016 Education and Infrastructure: Systems to Manage the School-Building Program. Copies of this report are being distributed to all members today.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it's been requested by the Minister of Human Services that he would like to make a comment about a question that was asked earlier in the House. If I can do that now.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. Could you just wait a second?

Again, a sequence of events I might have missed. There was another item that the Clerk was to be drawing to. But now that you have the floor, hon. minister, let's proceed on it.

### Member's Apology

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During question period the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills asked me an important question that certainly impacts the lives of many Albertans. He certainly as an elected representative has interest in that important issue. I may have misunderstood the question, and in response the reference to his personal interests was not appropriate, was not respectful, and I would like to apologize without any reservation.

Thank you.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you. I appreciate your apology, and I accept it without reservation.

**The Speaker:** There are, I believe, two points of order. The first one was raised by the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

### Point of Order

#### Factual Accuracy

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in question period members of the government side – I guess I should begin with that I'm rising on Standing Order 23, in this case 23(i): "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." During question period today and, in fact, for a large number of days in the past number of weeks we've heard government members stand up and spread untruths about the Leader of the Opposition, and I could no longer stand idly by while these untruths and statements, that are not based on fact, were made.

The government likes to say that while the Leader of the Opposition spent time in Ottawa, 10 years, that he did nothing. These are the exact words that they like to use. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, over a 10-year period, between 2006 and 2015, there were a number of major pipelines that were built in Canada, including Keystone phase 1, Hardisty, Alberta, to Illinois in June 2010. The Keystone pipeline phase 1 delivers oil from Hardisty, Alberta, over 3,400 kilometres, or 2,147 miles, for those following along at home, to the junction at Steele City, Nebraska.

The Alberta Clipper was April 1, 2010. Alberta Clipper, also known as Enbridge line 67, is an oil pipeline in North America. It is owned and operated by Enbridge and is part of an extensive Enbridge pipeline system. The pipeline runs from Hardisty, Alberta, in Canada, to Superior, Wisconsin, in the United States, integrating the company's Canadian oil sands pipeline system with the Lakehead system in the United States. Construction of the pipeline began in the summer of 2008. The pipeline was placed into service on April 1, 2010. The first shipment was moved October



2010. It has pump stations at Hardisty, Alberta; Kerrobert, Glenboro, Viking, Clearbrook, and Deer River, Minnesota. The diameter of the pipe is 36 inches. That's 910 millimetres.

The major pipeline expansions in the time while that government . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, can you speed it up a bit?

**Mr. Cooper:** I'm clearly making the point that they have been saying untruths about the Leader of Opposition. That's disrupting the House.

There is additional expansion of the Kinder Morgan anchor loop, the Trans Mountain expansion, Enbridge line 9 reversal, and so on.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, could you speak to the . . .

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, what happens is that in this House disorder is created by that side when they spread untruths and, some would go as far as to say, lies about the Leader of the Opposition doing nothing during his time in Ottawa. I think it's clearly an untruth and should not be spoken in this place any longer.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other parties?

The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. I've been listening to him very carefully, but I do not hear in what he is saying any argument for a point of order. This is a matter of debate over the facts. The fact of the matter is that when he was in Alberta, the Leader of Opposition didn't get done over decades something that he is criticizing us for not getting done in ten months, and that is actually a pipeline to tidewater.

Another, I think, point we need to be aware of, Mr. Speaker, that I know that you've ruled on before, is that a point of order can't be made for something that happened weeks and weeks in the past. I don't think that argument is being made . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** It happened today.

**Mr. Carlier:** It just wasn't today. It was, you know, previously as well, the matter that we are arguing.

As a matter of the fact, the Leader of the Official Opposition, you know, wasn't able to while in government get a pipeline to tidewater, and we stick by that. It's matter that we're debating, and it's matter of facts. It should not be a point of order.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to the point of order raised by the Opposition House Leader?

I, in fact, am provided with a copy of the Blues with the comment that was made, as I understand, that was the point of order that was raised. "That member over there worked on a plan for 10 years and got nowhere." That was the phrase that I think the member was addressing. In my opinion, this is somewhat similar to the issue that we dealt with yesterday. It doesn't appear that this is really a point of order; it's, rather, a difference of opinion. I would again draw the House's attention to page 510 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the second paragraph. This is a dispute amongst members on the facts surrounding the issue, more a question of debate, not a point of order.

To that end, the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, I believe, also had a point of order. Is that correct?

## Point of Order Anticipation

**Mr. Cooper:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll rise on the point of order that the Member for Strathmore-Brooks called towards the end of question period. I specifically speak to a similar section in the standing orders, Standing Order 23. The letter in this case is (e), anticipation: "contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day."

During the end of question period the Member for Calgary-Bow rose and asked – and I don't have the Blues in front of me – something very, very similar, asking specifically about programs that the government had announced on seniors' housing issues, which is Bill 5, and the name of the bill escapes me at this point in time.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Bill 5.

**Mr. Cooper:** Bill 5, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act.

It's my belief that the member was asking specifically about programs that were announced in Bill 5, which is on the Order Paper to be debated later today. Under Standing Order 23(e), anticipation: "contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day." Clearly, Bill 5 is on the Order Paper for today. She was speaking about Bill 5. I believe that the question should be ruled out of order.

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Opposition House Leader. On this matter I have a tendency to agree with him, so on behalf of the Minister of Seniors and Housing I would offer an apology and do what we can to endeavour that that will not happen again.

Thank you.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the apology and will consider the matter dealt with.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 6

#### Securities Amendment Act, 2016

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016.

I'd like to take this opportunity to say a few words about this bill and our government's approach to securities regulation. As members of this Assembly are likely aware, our government recently announced that we will continue to regulate our own capital markets right here in Alberta instead of joining the national securities regulator. [some applause] That's a first from that side.

We will be sticking with the Alberta option, with our first-class provincial regulator, the Alberta Securities Commission. We firmly believe that our unique capital markets, driven by the enormous needs of the resource sector, are best served by a street-level

regulator in Alberta, a regulator that knows the industry and can provide local oversight right here in Alberta, not thousands of kilometres away on Bay Street.

Our government was also pleased to announce a new chair of the ASC, Stan Magidson, an accomplished securities expert with roots right here in Alberta. Stan is an excellent choice to lead the ASC as our government ensures that we have a robust framework for capital formation while ensuring strong investor protection. Stan is an Albertan.

This bill, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016, is an important piece of legislation. It codifies our government's commitment to ensuring that our capital markets are well regulated and done so within the framework of a provincially led regulator.

As members of this Assembly are well aware, the securities landscape is becoming more complex, sophisticated, and international in scope every year. It is being driven by technological change like never before. Therefore, our system of securities regulation must keep pace. We must keep pace with evolving international standards and global regulator reform initiatives.

As part of the government's commitment to effective oversight, we have been working with our partner regulators in other provinces to create a more harmonized regulatory framework across the country. The proposed amendments in this bill will further update and harmonize our laws and meet international standards while still respecting our decision to continue with a provincially led regulator in the ASC.

Before I address the most important aspects of the bill, I should state that it is common for the Securities Act to be amended every year. It is just good governance. The act has been amended every year since 2003 with the exception of 2012. Amending this act will ensure that we have effective investor protection, strong market integrity, and an efficient system of capital formation.

Now let me draw the members' attention to the more important items in this bill. First, the bill will update definitions of a derivative, a reporting issuer, and a security in section 1 of the act. Updating the definition of a derivative will allow the Securities Commission to regulate hybrid products, those with characteristics of a security and a derivative, more effectively and on a harmonized basis across the country. Updating the reporting issuer definition will eliminate a gap in section 2 of the act as the current definition is not necessarily complete, and updating the definition of a security will ensure that a security that is prescribed by rule to be a derivative is not also captured in the definition of a security. These are the common-sense reforms to this Securities Act. They are supported by the ASC, regulators across the country, and, I hope, by all members of this House.

Second, Mr. Speaker, amendments to sections 29 and 42 of the act will allow our regulator to act more quickly when there is risk of potential illegal activity. Currently the ASC is required to follow the *Alberta Rules of Court* notice requirements before a witness can be summoned to appear before a hearing or an investigative interview. While these rules are appropriate for civil matters, the 20-day notice requirements are just too slow when it comes to the rapid nature of our capital markets. Therefore, the ASC is proposing a shorter time period of a 10-day notice period, and our government agrees.

Third, Mr. Speaker, this legislation will amend the wording of the halt-trade provision of section 33. The halt-trade order is a new tool and one that ensures investor protection. It allows the ASC to quickly and temporarily halt trading in securities.

Fourth, Mr. Speaker, the act proposes an amendment to section 42 which will allow a justice of the peace to issue search warrants rather than a Court of Queen's Bench judge. This will allow the

ASC to move quickly again and free up the courts so they can deal with more pressing and substantive matters.

Fifth, Mr. Speaker, the act will update regulation provisions related to exchanges, self-regulatory organizations, trade repositories, and clearing agencies. These updates will make the provisions more consistent and easier to understand and are part of this government's commitment to keeping securities regulation current.

Sixth, Mr. Speaker, as part of this government's mission to harmonize regulatory provisions across the country, through our work with the CSA we are proposing changes to part 17 of the act related to civil liability provisions.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this act will make amendments to the Lieutenant Governor in Council regulation-making powers to assist Canada in meeting the G-20 commitments relating to the use and trading of derivatives. This is a fine example of how we can work together with other regulators across the country to meet national and international standards while maintaining a provincially led regulator here in Alberta.

3:10

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we're on the right track. We're sticking with our provincial regulator, but we're also ensuring that we have a world-class regulatory framework. Alberta is doing its part and more to ensure that we are protecting investors, and we are ensuring that the Alberta spirit will continue to thrive with one of the world's most vibrant and efficient capital markets.

It is in the interests of all Albertans that we adopt this bill. I ask for all members of the House to support the proposed amendments.

Thank you very much for listening.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016. This might be one of the rare times where I find myself mostly in agreement with the Minister of Finance. Even a broken clock is right twice a day. I will congratulate and thank the minister for standing, I think with all-party support in this House, in support of an independent, Alberta-based Alberta securities regulator to ensure that Albertans control their own financial destiny right here. This may not be the most exciting and colourful bill we've debated before the House, but it is an important one nonetheless.

Securities and derivatives are complex financial vehicles. Most people aren't familiar with what exactly they are or how they work. A show of hands from members in this House as to who here has ever bought or sold a security or derivative.

**An Hon. Member:** I don't think you actually get to do that.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Well, perhaps I'm not allowed.

Well, it is a rather small minority of the House who have traded securities or derivatives, so for the record I would like to lay out exactly what we're talking about here. A security is a financial instrument that represents an ownership position in a publicly traded corporation, or stock; a creditor relationship with a governmental body or corporation, a bond; or rights to ownership as represented by an option. A security is a negotiable financial instrument that represents some type of financial value. The company or entity that issues the security is known as the issuer. In other words, when you invest in stocks and bonds and mutual funds, you are buying securities.

A derivative is a security with a price that is dependent upon or derived from one or more underlying assets. The derivative itself is a contract between two or more parties based upon the asset or assets. Its value is determined by fluctuations in the underlying

asset. The most common underlying assets include stocks, bonds, commodities, currencies, interest rates, and market indexes. In other words, derivatives are not real, but you can buy them. It's like making a bet on someone else's bet, if you will, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 6 is talking about the regulation of our capital markets here, and the market works best when everyone is playing by the same rules. In capitalism the market thrives on innovation and ingenuity. What would happen if we took a security and bundled it with a derivative and then sold this hybrid investment vehicle? What would this hybrid be? A security? A derivative? Is it neither? Is it both? This is what the core of Bill 6 is about, and may I say that it is a significantly less exciting Bill 6 than the last one this House debated.

The Alberta Securities Act is being amended in order to accommodate these rather exotic financial products of hybrid securities and derivatives. This is in keeping with the passport system of the 13 provincial and territorial securities regulators to enable harmonization across Canada given what we do not have and Alberta does not want, one single national securities regulator. It is also in keeping with international agreements that Canada has made with the G-20 on the international financial system. Alberta's investors need these amendments in order to ensure the Alberta Securities Commission is able to regulate and police these products and protect consumers from fraud.

Now, besides changing these definitions, the Securities Commission will also be allowed to go to a justice of the peace to obtain a search warrant for an investigation instead of waiting to see a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench. This change aligns with the criminal law process. In addition, there will be some changes and definitions amended.

Wildrose has approached a number of stakeholders in the financial services industry, who have reported no concerns with Bill 6 but have encouraged additional amendments to the Securities Act to further protect consumers. Securities laws can be very difficult for the layperson to follow. They can be very dry and boring, yet they are fundamental to our capital markets, that we enjoy and rely on to produce wealth and prosperity in this province.

We need to align ourselves with our provincial and territorial cousins, and we need to be able to regulate the various products that the market engineers in order to protect consumers. But we also want to make sure that with every change we are enhancing a competitive advantage for Alberta's investors and encouraging more investment here. Given the complexity of these issues and our desire to fully understand and assess them, we believe the minister should consider our recommendation that all bills go to committee and allow us to have a little more time to go through this carefully with expert witnesses to ensure that we are getting it right for Alberta's securities market.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that members will consider this referral to be in the best intention, to make this bill right. The Wildrose supports the principles of it, in fact even the contents of it, but we hope that when a member of the Official Opposition comes forward soon with a motion for referral, all members of this House will support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to the government's Bill 6, Securities Amendment Act, 2016. I suspect that we may have more points of agreement on this particular bill than the last Bill 6 that was put forward by this government. My caucus doesn't expect that there will be people from all corners of Alberta standing on the steps

of the Legislature, carrying placards that say "Kill Bill 6" in this instance.

Now, on its surface this is a housekeeping bill, generally administrative. The proposed changes would update the legislation and keep Alberta operating in a co-ordinated way with other Canadian provinces. It speaks to a certain need in the world of securities. Most sections pertain solely to updating and harmonizing definitions. More substantively, the proposed legislation before us today looks to authorize a justice of the peace to issue search warrants under the Securities Act; this instead of a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench, as is the case in criminal law. This move would shorten the time taken to potentially catch criminals in the act.

The market has put forward something as it pertains to securities and derivatives, and it appears that the regulators are just catching up. But given the subject matter and the economic climate that we find ourselves in, this bill certainly deserves proper scrutiny. The reality is that the securities regulatory landscape, not just across Canada but globally, has become more complex, and it has become more sophisticated. It is understandable that the government would wish to undertake a regular view, a regular update of its securities laws in order to simply ensure that the securities order of the regulatory system reflects the realities of today's markets and then that it stays in line with international standards and global regulatory reform initiatives. So it makes sense that in section 1 of the bill we seek to update the definition of a derivative, the definition of a reporting issuer, and the definition of a security.

But, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that over the last two decades the focus of Canada's securities regulatory system has also been changing. I believe that this is an important context whenever we are discussing any proposed changes to the Securities Act. For better or worse, the regulatory environment has in many Canadian jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, been tightening. For a time regulatory authorities, well, in most Canadian jurisdictions, anyway, only resorted to regulation when a clear problem presented itself, one that the market itself could not resolve. Now this has been replaced by a new approach – a new approach – that resorts to regulation first before a clear need arises, a system wherein a solution is identified before there is a manifest problem.

**3:20**

For these reasons, legislation of this nature, however much it's a technical, housekeeping bill, should not be waved through the legislative process without asking proper questions. It seems to me that we should have the opportunity to put questions to officials from Finance or Treasury Board. It is not adequate to simply ram this legislation through this place.

I would hope that the government is able to answer this question: how do the proposed changes to this legislation compare to other Canadian jurisdictions specifically, and how is Alberta's securities climate taken into consideration here? Part of the Alberta advantage stemmed from the fact that Alberta had its own securities regulator and made decisions conducive to a good environment.

The role of this place we sit in today is not to give rubber stamps to whatever proposed legislation members of the government and their ministries have put forward but to give whatever has been put forward the due scrutiny that it deserves. Members, the government should refer this bill to the proper standing committee. The relevant departmental officials should be able to speak to this bill, this bill that contains very specific and complex suggested protections for those that invest. It would be helpful to have other subject matter experts speak to this bill. This is not only for matters pertaining to this bill but more broadly than that.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the privilege to represent my constituents in the great riding of Little Bow for just about one year now. I have to be honest. The frequency with which the government lets proposed legislation receive due scrutiny in the proper standing committee is astonishingly minimal. What we have witnessed since we first sat in this House as members of the 29th Legislature is a government that has demonstrated a profound disregard for doing due diligence on their legislative initiatives. We saw this with the last Bill 6 that was put forward in this House. Imagine the mess that could have been avoided if they'd actually done their due diligence beforehand and actually bothered to consult with farmers and all those affected. Regrettably, this government's inability to properly consult with Albertans and those most affected by prospective legislation has poisoned the well for anything they're trying to put forward.

Mr. Speaker, it's difficult not to be skeptical. When this government is in a hurry, it is amazing how fast they can pass a piece of legislation. Consider Bill 4, which pertained to essential services. Very impassioned speeches were given throughout this House from members across that had strong opinions on the content or potential content of that bill. It was introduced on a Thursday, which is the last day of the week that we sit in this House. By the end of the following Thursday it had passed its final vote. Alternatively, when this government is not in a hurry, they have a way of dragging legislation out. We saw this with Bill 1, which was allegedly a job-creation bill, that the government paraded as a priority. It withered for a month on the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's recent economic situation, as we all know, is startling. In many ways this is the worst economic situation in a generation. This proposed legislation before us today deals with securities and investment considerations for Alberta at a time when we have before us a shaken economic climate. We owe it to ourselves to be familiar with the subject matter and speak in the best interests of our constituents.

While speaking about this proposed legislation, one point that I do want to acknowledge is that I appreciate, as should all members of this House, that we are able to have this debate here today in our Alberta Legislature. Successive federal governments in Ottawa have been seeking to establish a single, centralized regulator. It is something they've been trying to do since the '60s in one form or another.

Looking forward now, it is integral that Alberta develop its own expertise when it comes to Alberta's securities regulation, something that helps build Alberta's own financial services sector. Each of us as members of this place would likely have significantly less information to deal with if matters pertaining to securities were not made here in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and at the Alberta Securities Commission. Discussions about security amendment acts such as this would be more difficult if they were done through long-distance first ministers' conferences, held regularly probably down east somewhere, in which Alberta would be but one voice among several.

Recently Bill Rice, the former chair and CEO of the Alberta Securities Commission, addressed this issue, and he said, I quote: I believe the independence of the regulation of that territory becomes more important when times are tough because certain adaptations can be made, local imagination can be used, and certain changes or differentiations can be undertaken in the province to accommodate difficult circumstances. End of quote. I would say that the fact of that matter is, Mr. Speaker, that Albertans know Alberta best. I'm sure that the members on the government benches can sympathize with this concept given what went on at the convention of their federal organization here just this past weekend.

Alberta governments of all stripes have stood proudly in favour of Alberta's jurisdictional right to regulate its own securities. Therefore, it was a relief, quite honestly, to see the current Finance minister do exactly the same thing. This is not just an isolated Alberta concern. Six years ago Alberta's Finance minister and Quebec's Finance minister stood up jointly to Ottawa's attempts to centralize security regulators in Canada. Given the inclination of Ottawa to pursue a single, centralized regulator, we should not take what we have for granted.

If we are simply to fire through this House the matters pertaining to securities regulations without the proper scrutiny, are we not helping to make the case for the next attempt by Ottawa to encroach on this matter? We make the case for Alberta to maintain its own regulator not through complacency but by having a successful and thriving system, a system where we maintain a vigilant eye, recognizing both what's best for the market and what is needed by international obligations.

Accordingly, I strongly urge the government to ensure that this bill finds its way to the appropriate standing committee before it becomes law. After all, when it comes to our securities regulator, we want Alberta to be an example to other provinces. This is relevant and should be at the top of our minds in any situation where we find ourselves with a proposed change to the Securities Act such as the one in front of us today. Having a routine housekeeping bill in front of us should never be an excuse to not give legislation the due scrutiny it deserves.

Any discussion about securities in Alberta should be seen in the broader context of the ongoing debate on a national securities regulator. The new federal Finance minister made it clear in January that the new federal government supports a national securities regulator. It was something they did not campaign on, something they had no mention of in their platform. This was, of course, also supported by previous federal governments and supported by many in provincial jurisdictions as well. To this effect we have British Columbia, Ontario, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Yukon, who last year announced a draft capital markets act, one that would form the basis of a new co-operative regulatory system. This means that Alberta's geographic neighbours on both sides as well as Canada's largest province, an Atlantic province, and a territory are all on board with a centralized approach. As that plan moves from draft to reality, there will be an increased pressure in Confederation upon Alberta to not hold out.

3:30

Again, Mr. Speaker, we make the case for Alberta to maintain its own regulator not through complacency but by having a successful and thriving system. We do that by paying attention, by giving scrutiny where needed to any proposed change to the Securities Act.

Mr. Speaker, we saw in this House just yesterday a private member's bill that some in the House suggested, firstly, had not seen any consultation with the industry that the bill would affect and, secondly, contained verbiage that industry was offended by. We saw that this House can and indeed did refer that bill to committee for the proper input and scrutiny that it requires before pushing that particular legislation through this House. Shouldn't a matter as delicate as securities undergo the same examination?

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity.

**The Speaker:** Any hon. members under 29(2)(a)? Please proceed.

**Mr. Orr:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to both respond and maybe ask a question. I think this is an extremely important issue in spite of the arcane boringness of it all in some ways. Truthfully, securities markets transact millions if not billions

of dollars a day or even in an hour nowadays, and this is an issue of the highest risk to Albertans, to Alberta pension funds, to Albertans' savings, to seniors, to anyone who might be invested in the market.

While I am encouraged to see some language here with regard to consequences for those who engage in criminal activity in the markets, I'm still a little bit concerned about issues of prevention. I think it's important to remember that this crime can actually be some of the most costly and most destructive of the criminal activity that is out there. We only need to recall Enron and some of the subprime mortgage scandals and other things that have been in recent history. So I do have a concern.

I appreciate the member's comments with regard to the importance of consulting experts in the field. I guess I want to push that a little further and ask the member: do you not think it would be important to have market risk experts review not only the legislation but also the systems that are in place, particularly with regard to the fact that most transactions today are millisecond software transactions? We need to ensure that we have the highest level of software encryption to work on this issue of prevention, not having to deal with consequences after it's too late.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my friend to my right. Yes, of course. And I think all members of this House would agree one hundred per cent that most transactions are probably done electronically in today's day and age. The more security you can have to protect securities would be something that's advantageous.

I definitely want to cautiously support Bill 6, but as the member to my right said, having more eyes scrutinize any bill is always advantageous and something that this side of the House or at least this party certainly recommends, seeing more legislation passed through committee without going through the House in a hurried manner.

With that, I'll leave that alone. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any other hon. members under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a privilege to stand in this House and address all the members of the Assembly. It's quite an honour, I would say, and I'm sure that the members from across the way completely agree with me. It's wonderful that, you know, we're here discussing Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016, and that we have agreement yet again. So I want to thank the members across the way for that.

I would also like to share with them perhaps something that they don't know about me personally, and that's that, you know, when I graduated from university, I actually ended up working at RBC Dominion Securities as a marketing associate. I had the opportunity to work with many stockbrokers there at RBC Dominion Securities and learn a great deal about how markets work. It was at that time that it really became imperative to me that securities regulation – at the end of the day what we're talking about and what we're focusing on is ensuring effective investor protection, number one – right? – ensuring strong market integrity, and ensuring an efficient system of capital formation. So I'm glad that the members across the way agree with Bill 6 at least in principle. As they like to say: I agree in principle.

This bill will continue to regulate the province's capital markets right here in Alberta instead of joining the national securities regulator. I mean, I think on that we were in complete agreement, on no to a centralized federal regulator, which is interesting

because, you know, my understanding is that it was the Conservatives at the federal level that were trying to push this through, as I'm sure that the members across the way will agree, right? So this bill will stick to the Alberta option, with the first-class provincial regulator, the Alberta Securities Commission, as the unique capital markets, driven by the enormous needs of the resource sector, are best served with a street-level regulator. As the Minister of Finance stated in his opening remarks, a new chair of the Alberta Securities Commission was appointed, Stan Magidson, an accomplished securities expert with roots right here in Alberta.

It's important to update this piece of legislation to keep pace with a rapidly changing international market, as we have also agreed upon. In order to ensure that Alberta's securities regulator system reflects and evolves with the realities of today's international regulatory landscape, Alberta must undertake a continuous review and updating of its securities law. As the Minister of Finance also stated in his opening remarks, it's common for the Securities Act to be amended every year. It's just good governance. So there's already a practice of amending this act on an annual basis as we go forward.

Hence, we're creating some common-sense reforms to the Securities Act. The bill will propose to bring amendments in seven key areas: firstly, to update the definitions of "derivative" and "reporting issuer" and "security" in section 1 of the act, as has already been stated; secondly, to amend sections 29 and 42 of the act to allow our regulator to act more quickly when there is a risk of potential illegal activity by proposing a shorter notice period from 20 to 10 days; thirdly, to update the wording of the halt trade provision in section 33 to ensure investor protection; fourthly, to amend section 42, which will allow a justice of the peace to issue search warrants rather than a Court of Queen's Bench judge, as has already been stated by the Member for Little Bow; fifthly, to update provisions in regulations related to exchanges, self-regulatory organizations, trade repositories, and clearing agencies; sixthly, to update part 17 of the act, related to civil liability provisions, to harmonize regulatory provisions across the country.

Here's where I'd like to stress something really important. The Member for Little Bow asked a question: well, how does Alberta compare to other jurisdictions across our great federation? The truth is that Alberta is actually the leader when it comes to securities regulation here in the country. Something to be proud of, right? Indeed.

**3:40**

Lastly, it will bring amendments to the Lieutenant Governor in Council's regulation-making powers to assist Canada in meeting its G-20 commitments relating to the use and trading of derivatives. We've been working with our partner regulators in other provinces to create a more harmonized regulatory framework across the country, as I've already discussed. These amendments will update and harmonize our laws, meeting international standards, and uphold our decision to continue with a provincially led regulator in the Alberta Securities Commission. Alberta made a commitment with other provinces and territories and their securities regulators in 2004 to the ongoing support of the modernization, streamlining, and harmonization of securities law in Canada, and since then Alberta has typically reviewed and updated the securities laws on an annual basis, as has already been stated.

It's so wonderful to see the members across the way agree with what's being stated in this act. But, again, we've come to that crossroad, where they want to refer it to committee. I understand that you would want to have a consulting process in order to really look into it. I believe the Member for Little Bow called this a housekeeping bill. I wouldn't necessarily refer to it that way. We

have industry experts not only from Alberta but in other provincial and territorial jurisdictions that are constantly working on bringing forward new recommendations so that they can be introduced into what eventually becomes the act. This is ongoing practice not only here in our own jurisdiction, but we're working with others across the land.

I would recommend to all the members of this House that they strongly support the Securities Amendment Act, 2016, and that we pass it. In future if there are more recommendations, they can be brought forward again in another year. We're ready to move forward on this, and I strongly recommend to all the members to vote in favour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions of the member under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, the Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise on this bill. It's the Securities Amendment Act, 2016, which is Bill 6. The last time we had a Bill 6, it was a little more action-packed than this particular rendition.

Mr. Speaker, when the Finance minister stood in the House and introduced it, I think you heard people from all sides of the House pounding in approval because, basically, there's general agreement that this is a good idea, and I'm not going to vary from that. I'm just going to make a few comments because I think it's important.

A good thing that needs to be said – and you can't overemphasize it, in my mind, Mr. Speaker – is that there is an element here that will see investors receive slightly more protection in regard to misleading prospectuses, and that is important. It can't be overstated because not all who invest – you know, it's been said to me that if you put money in the stock market, then you are to some degree gambling. But you should be protected by having true and accurate information when you place that bet on a company or a group of companies. That is a protection for consumers that can't be taken lightly, and I think this bill is true to that.

It also allows for more ability for the government to act faster when they see something that looks suspicious, which I think is important. I think that's a good improvement by the government in this particular bill. It enables cabinet to make regulations around derivatives. While I'm not expecting anything bad, as long as they do that right, that's a good thing. Again, there's no subtext of a negative there. I'm just saying that as long as cabinet is careful, then that can be a good thing. It does explicitly point out some minor details of the Securities Commission's implied powers, clarifies the liabilities for parties issuing misrepresentative prospectuses and responsibilities in order to receive protections for correcting incorrect prospectuses. It clarifies the limitation period for purchasers of misrepresented securities to take action, which I think is important. If you happen to be – and, hopefully, Albertans in the future won't be, but some in the past surely have been – a victim, somebody that invested money on a prospectus that was not accurate, either through an inadvertent error or a fraudulent misrepresentation, either way, having a clarification about when you can take action on that is important, so I thank the government for that, too.

It also clarifies liabilities and penalties for insider trading. The sad truth, Mr. Speaker, is that while Alberta's system is a leader in Canada, as the member opposite said, we have not been without bad actors from time to time in Alberta. There are certainly a couple of shining examples of where Albertans lost money because they were taken to the cleaners by fraudulent misrepresentation. So for

clarifying the penalties and the liabilities for insider trading, again I'll say: good work. It's something surely worth doing.

It repeals an unproclaimed part of the act that the previous government passed in 2011 in regard to definitions of a clearing agency. I would say that since the previous government between the period of 2011 and early 2015 didn't see fit to proclaim it and the definition that served Albertans well not only up to 2011 but thereafter until today is still in place, I don't see any harm from the government getting rid of the unproclaimed portion. That might be one of those things that falls under the category of housekeeping, and there's someone in my life that would tell me that housekeeping matters. If you leave one coffee cup on the counter, Mr. Speaker, that's probably not a big issue, but if you do it constantly, it soon gets to the point where it's a problem that's not so easily solved.

While I will call some of the changes in the legislation housekeeping, I will try to make it clear while I'm standing here that that in no way demeans those changes, because if it's something that is better for the future, it's better to make those housekeeping changes before one or more of them create a bigger problem. While it may not make the headline on the evening news, it is nonetheless important to keep up with these things as they crop up and as those people that look at legislation take the time to discover them and recommend those improvements.

The bill does nothing, in our view, that would promote inbound investment. On the other hand, I'm not sure that that would necessarily be the proper thing for this bill to do. This bill's purpose, this legislation's purpose, is to make sure the financial transactions that take place are accurate, pure, true, and fair to all involved. That's a good thing.

Overall, I congratulate the government on this. The only not entirely positive point that I will make is that this is important because it does clear the way for people to invest in our province, and investment in here is what creates jobs in the future for Albertans. Of course, we've talked in this House, all of us, about how there are 100,000-odd Albertans that are out of a job right now, and investment really matters. Investment loves certainty. Investment loves honesty. Investment loves the rule of law. Accuracy and the rule of law I think are supported and bolstered by this legislation and even the changes from today. Some of the benefit of new investment coming in here may wait until there's a government in place in the future that does other things outside of legislation to promote investment more so than the current government has. So Albertans might have to wait for those benefits, but that doesn't change the fact that this piece of legislation the government is putting in place is a good thing even if there are other issues.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, overall, I have to say that I think it's a positive event, what we have here. I think protecting the security of Albertans who invest and protecting the security of people from outside of Alberta that choose to invest within our province should never be taken lightly even though this bill may be in the top five or six this year under the boring category. Nonetheless, it's still important. Important doesn't have to be exciting because when you're investing and you're talking about investing legally, none of us wants to be the investor when the rules make it exciting because then somebody gets hurt, and then somebody who doesn't deserve to lose their money loses their money.

On that note, I will say thank you to the government for this boring bill. Thank you for keeping it boring. I think that's the right thing to do in this instance. I think that in this instance that's a compliment, and I hope the government accepts it as such.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will stop talking.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills, do you have a question under 29(2)(a), or are you speaking to it?

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** My apologies. I am speaking to it.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise here today to speak to Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act. This bill signals our commitment to the continuous improvement of Canada's existing securities regulation system. The changes in this act will update and further harmonize Alberta's securities law with the securities laws in other provincial jurisdictions in Canada. The bill will enhance investor protection, minimize systemic risk, and promote the operation of a fair and effective Alberta capital market.

Mr. Speaker, our local regulator understands our local market. This has been and will continue to be an advantage to Albertans. There is value in having a street-level regulator, a regulator that is on the ground where the activity is taking place. With this bill we are committing to stick with the Alberta option and with our first-class regulator, the Alberta Securities Commission. Alberta deserves and is best served by a local regulator who understands our unique capital markets and who understands the enormous capital needs of our resource sector. Let me clarify that our government will not be joining the national securities regulator, and we will continue to govern and regulate our capital markets right here in Alberta.

As we stick with the Alberta option, our government has also recently appointed a new CEO of the ASC to lead our world-class regulator. Stan Magidson is an accomplished securities expert and has deep roots in this province. We are confident that under his leadership Alberta will continue to have one of the most vibrant, innovative, and well-regulated capital markets in the world.

In closing, let me add that as we continue moving forward with the ASC, the government is committed to ensuring that our capital markets work efficiently and in tandem with those in other provinces. Therefore, this bill will continue to modernize and harmonize our securities laws with those of other provinces right across the country, and we will continue to work with other provinces through the Canadian Securities Administrators to modernize and harmonize.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be supporting this bill. It's a strong piece of legislation that ensures we can continue to effectively regulate our world-class capital markets. I strongly encourage all members to do the same.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise in the Assembly to discuss an important piece of legislation. There's nothing more riveting and engaging than hearing the Member for Little Bow, with his silky smooth voice, speaking about such an important piece of legislation.

I think that one thing we've seen here today is some agreement upon many parts of this legislation, and if the former government did things well, this was probably one of them, when it comes to having this securities legislation amended on a very regular basis to ensure that we are remaining as current as possible and to be addressing the challenges at hand.

Having said that, shortly after the election, about a year ago, the Official Opposition proposed some changes to the way the Assembly works. While there is widespread agreement on the vast majority of this particular bill, there certainly are a few nuances,

some might say uniqueness, around a couple of the clauses in this bill. I think it's important that on every piece of legislation there is the opportunity for experts in the field to provide feedback and education to members of this Assembly so that they can be assured that, in fact, everything that is presented is exactly as can be expected, that there are not unanticipated consequences or unintended consequences of legislation like this, and that we have a full and robust debate.

In that document from approximately a year ago we proposed the need for a change to our democratic process here in Alberta that would allow for more pieces of legislation to be studied at committee. In addition to the items that we agree on in the legislation, the other thing that I believe we can all agree on is that this piece of legislation and certainly securities and the regulation of those is a very complex and technical field that not all members of the Assembly have the benefit of experience on that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie does. When it comes to his previous employment at RBC Dominion Securities, I wasn't sure in his remarks how many times he was going to be able to work that in, but I commend him for his efforts while he was there.

Given that we don't all have that background and a fundamental belief on this side of the House that the work of committees is valuable work – in fact, we had an acknowledgment from many members on the government side of the House just yesterday on the importance of committee. The Government House Leader indicated just yesterday that

we have the opportunity to refer a bill to a standing committee, which provides a little more flexibility. It allows the committee, if it wishes, to hear from the public or to hear from stakeholders that may be affected by the bill and to make amendments that could improve the bill.

I couldn't agree with the hon. Government House Leader more. I think that that's probably something we should do in this case. Now, he was speaking yesterday specifically to Bill 203, but the principle remains the same, Mr. Speaker.

I want to continue quoting from *Hansard* from yesterday. "I want to just indicate to all hon. members that I would encourage them to support the referral motion that has been moved by the hon. House leader of the Official Opposition." I do make it a bit of a habit to move this particular motion, and that's because I believe that this is important legislation and that value can be added.

**4:00**

Now, typically speaking, and often under the former government, while I am willing to heap praise where it's necessary, I'll also point out some shortcomings. While, typically speaking, in this Chamber committee was the place where bills went to die – we certainly saw that in the past with the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler's Bill 203 – I don't believe that that was the intention yesterday when we sent Bill 203 to committee. We've seen in the past the former government send bills to committee that became too contentious or a challenge, and they went there forever. So in light of that and the recognition that this is important legislation that needs to be passed this year, I've also included a timeline in which the committee could and should report back.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move an amendment, and if it's fine with you, I'll have that distributed and continue while that's happening.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Cooper:** Notice of Amendment. Bill 6, Securities Amendment Act, 2016. Mr. Cooper to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 6, Securities Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 6, Securities Amendment Act, 2016, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2 and that the committee report back to the Assembly no later than October 31, 2016, if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Mr. Speaker, here we have an opportunity to send an important piece of legislation through to committee, a reasonable timeline that doesn't add any undue stress to the work of the Resource Stewardship Committee and still allows the legislation to be passed this year. In fact, October 31 is currently the first day of the next scheduled sitting. The amendment does provide some flexibility should the House not be sitting on October 31 but then allows the committee to report back to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, one of our responsibilities is good governance, and we have that opportunity to provide good governance at every stage of the bill on every piece of legislation. Even when there's agreement amongst the members – and I think back to, if I'm not mistaken, the very first bill that this government introduced. It was Bill 1, an act to ban corporate and union donations, I believe. Even when there is significant agreement amongst members in this Chamber, as on that piece of legislation, the Official Opposition still feels it is our duty, responsibility to Albertans to strengthen legislation wherever possible. In that particular case we offered an extensive set of recommendations and amendments. We offered the opportunity to close some loopholes that, unfortunately, the government left in place when it came to Bill 1. I say all that to say that we agreed with Bill 1, but we all have a responsibility for due diligence. We all have a responsibility to ensure that the legislation that's passed in this Chamber is done in a manner that reflects the needs of Albertans and, in this case, the securities industry, those who are investing and those who are providing those securities.

While I appreciate the fact that we have this great agreement amongst members on the intention of the bill, I think it would be great for us all to be able to hear from stakeholders, not just the Minister of Finance, although he has done many things in the past that are reasonable, some more reasonable than others. My point is not just to hear from the Minister of Finance on the things that he has heard from stakeholders and industry players as well as those who utilize securities as an investment vehicle but for all members of the Assembly, particularly members of that committee, to be able to hear from those same stakeholders so that it allows us all to make a good, solid decision for the long-term viability of our province.

That's why I encourage all members in the Chamber to vote in favour of the amendment. I think the timeline is reasonable. It meets all of our needs and will allow the legislation to be reviewed in a manner that is appropriate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we will refer to the amendment as RF1.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having been alerted by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks that there was an intent to move this to committee, I believe that in my initial statements I addressed the issue – right? – number one being that Securities Act amendments are something that happen on an annual basis.

I also want to bring light to what the leader of the third party said in terms of what we're really focused on here. The real question at hand is ensuring effective investor protection, ensuring strong market integrity, and ensuring an efficient system of capital formation. Now, as far as I know, the best of the best that deal with securities regulation all across this province are dealing with these issues on a regular basis, and we're harmonizing what is occurring across different securities regulators.

What's happening is that good recommendations that are coming forward in B.C., in Quebec, in Ontario are then – you know, the Alberta Securities Commission and the CEO are taking a look at that along with other stakeholders, and they're saying: okay; well this makes sense that we would do this as well here in Alberta. Again, I want to remind all members of this House that Alberta is the leader in securities regulation as it is. If our primary concern is ensuring effective investor protection – I could read through all seven sections again, but I'm going to be easy on you guys. I'm going to be easy on you all.

We already have some great recommendations here that need to be implemented. Let me just stress a couple, though. The halt-trade provision: I think this is something that is incredibly essential. If we do see something illegal occurring, the Alberta Securities Commission needs the power in order to stop trading on a particular stock and address it so that nobody continues to lose money.

**An Hon. Member:** Agreed.

**Loyola:** Agreed. We're all in agreement with that.

I think these are things that just need to be implemented right now. Another example is amending sections 29 and 42 of the act, that would allow the regulator to act more quickly when there is a risk of potential illegal activity by proposing a shorter notice period, from 20 to 10 days, right?

I'm sure that all the members in the House would agree that we need to move forward on this. We need to pass this. So, perhaps without regret, I will not support this amendment, and I highly encourage all the members of this House to vote this amendment down.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:10

**The Speaker:** Are there any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie?

Hearing none, are there any other parties that wish to speak to the amendment? Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I'd just like to echo the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie when he said that, basically, we need to take a more prudent approach to this. The timeline that applies to this bill is somewhat essential because, I mean, the amendment here basically puts it forward to October 31, and that's nearly November. That's eight months away. Earlier we talked about the timeline on this bill, and it was mentioned that it comes up annually for these things to be reviewed. So it would make sense to me, then, with such a tight timeline that it just echoes what the leader of the third party said, the Member for Calgary-Hays, that kind of rings true, where I think he was quoted as saying that the passage of this item – and I don't have the Blues in front of me, so I'm just taking it from memory – clears the way for people to invest in our province, and the sooner the investment comes, jobs will follow.

On that note, I think that's all the more important reason why we need to proceed with this in a more timely fashion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to amendment RF1? The minister – the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I'm pleased to rise as the minister for Strathmore-Brooks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the referral motion before us here. I'm not sure why members across would be



opposing this. There is all-party support for the bill in this House. The government, the Official Opposition, the third party are in support of both the intent and, from what we can tell, even the contents at this time. The Wildrose had consulted with stakeholders before we took a position on this bill. We made sure we spoke to people who know what they're talking about. I spoke to many people in southern Alberta and in Edmonton who understand capital markets, and they could find no major, significant problems with this bill. And I imagine that even sending this bill to committee would not significantly delay the bill.

The government did the right thing yesterday when they sent one of their own private member's bills to committee. Now, I really hope that sending things to committee here is not just a way for the government to shelve bills that they don't want to pass without actually having to vote against it. No one wants to vote against a private member's bill from your own private members in the government. I understand the politics of that, but that shouldn't be a backdoor way to kill a bill. Sending something to committee – it should be sent there to be legitimately studied, to listen to experts and witnesses, and to debate the bill in more detail. In fact, it would probably, almost certainly, speed up the operations of this House. If bills were to go through individual, specific committees, we wouldn't have to spend time on the floor of the House here in Committee of the Whole. It would make our whole program more efficient.

Now, I thank the NDP for the most boring bill that they've brought forward so far. As far as I'm concerned, a boring bill is much better than the less boring bills they've brought forward. I'm grateful when their bills are relatively unexciting. I think that it's probably better for Albertans. We're talking about getting things right. I think that members would have the assurance of the Official Opposition that if this went to committee, it wouldn't be used to drag out the process. It wouldn't be used to even filibuster. I mean, this is a bill that has the support, I believe, of every member in the Legislature. I wouldn't be surprised if the bill received unanimous support.

Yesterday the Government House Leader stood right across from me here and spoke to the need to get things right, to consult with stakeholders, to consult with experts. Well, the Wildrose has consulted with experts and stakeholders, but I think that it would be appropriate for us to do so in a public forum. I hope that the hon. Finance minister has consulted with experts. I hope that the government has started to get in the habit of speaking to people, witnesses and experts in their fields, before introducing bills. We know that the private member's bill that yesterday was sent to committee for study very obviously had not seen consultation with stakeholders. They were absolutely shocked to see the contents of the bill before it was introduced in this Legislature. It's my opinion that the government has done a little more homework on this bill, and they're to be congratulated for that.

We are talking about having a public forum, where witnesses could come and speak before us. I think the bill would receive a relatively speedy passage through a legislative committee of this Assembly. I'm asking members to vote on the same principles of the way they voted on a bill just yesterday to send it to committee for study.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) of the Member for Strathmore-Brooks?

The question is called with respect to the amendment moved by the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, identified as RF1.

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 6 lost]

**The Speaker:** We're now back to the original motion. Are there any members to speak to the motion?

Deputy Government House Leader, would you move a motion to close debate?

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'd like to make a motion to close debate on second reading.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a second time]

4:20

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 6

#### Securities Amendment Act, 2016

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to speak to, really, the implementation and implications now of the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act, a bill that proposes to establish new, low-interest . . .

**An Hon. Member:** We're on Bill 6.

**Dr. Swann:** We're on 5?

**The Chair:** No. We're on Bill 6, hon. member. Apologies.

**Dr. Swann:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act? Go ahead, hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm Liberal. I'm flexible.

I'm very pleased to instead speak to Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016, a bill proposing to amend the Securities Act to provide for continued modernization, harmonization, and streamlining of Alberta's security laws and the ongoing reform of the Canadian securities regulatory system.

The Securities Act has been amended regularly for several years: Bill 15 in the spring 2015, Bill 5 in the fall of 2014, Bill 3 in the spring of 2014, Bill 42, which apparently died on the Order Paper in the fall of 2013, and Bill 4 in the fall of 2011. The bill is lengthy, technical, and somewhat esoteric for many of us, but a general overview suggests that it's vital to get on with the job of bringing us again up to date and consistent with the rest of Canadian securities law. It bolsters the investigative and enforcement powers of the Alberta Securities Commission. It proposes to authorize a justice of the peace to issue search warrants instead of a judge, to reduce the notice period required for people being summoned to attend an interview with the ASC's investigators or to appear at a hearing, and to amend the section of the Securities Act dealing with halt trade orders.

Other aspects of Bill 6 will update civil liability provisions, revise the provisions that deal with recognition of exchanges, clearing agencies, credit-rating organizations, and trade repositories, and it proposes to expand the ASC's ability to make rules to enhance derivatives regulation. An annual review and updating is required

to support the ongoing reform of our Canadian regulatory system, and the process is largely internally driven by our Treasury Board and Finance. It's not that political. Ongoing amendments proposed by both former PC administrations and the NDP are consistent in tone and intent.

The memorandum of understanding regarding securities regulation that was passed in 2004 included all except Ontario in these regulations, and it recognizes that securities regulations in Canada is a matter of provincial jurisdiction, that the securities regulatory system requires constant innovation and reform to keep pace with the rapid evolution of capital markets. The council of ministers is committed to maintaining and enhancing the status of Canada's securities regulatory system, which is already ranked by the OECD and the World Bank as one of the best in the world. One of the key objectives of the 2004 MOU was to establish a passport system, providing market participants with a single window of access to Canadian capital markets.

With respect to derivatives regulation, following the summit, the G-20 issued a formal declaration calling for common principles for the reform of financial markets, including derivatives. In the ensuing period there has been considerable and ongoing regulation around OTC, or over-the-counter, derivatives that pose significant risk to many unwary investors. Since Canada, unlike most countries, has a decentralized securities regime, it must rely on its provincial governments to enact legislation providing for increased oversight and regulation, specifically on over-the-counter derivatives, through individual provincial securities regulators.

My full support and that of my caucus will be put forward for this. Canada, unlike most countries, has had a decentralized securities regulatory regime. The changes proposed in Bill 6 are part of a national effort to harmonize securities rules, and they mirror those being made in other jurisdictions. Bill 6 builds on the earlier regulatory changes that caucus supported during the spring of 2015, the spring and fall of 2014, and earlier. As a province, as a country we need to be doing everything possible to protect investors and maintain the integrity of our capital markets.

If the 2008 global financial crisis taught us anything, it's that complacency and lack of regulatory vigilance can quickly and catastrophically shake world markets and all of our economies. No country or jurisdiction is immune from the effects of market collapse; therefore it's important that we do all we can to support the health and stability of the world financial system.

Alberta Liberals acknowledge that the proposed changes are necessary for Alberta to be able to honour its national and international commitments to improve regulatory security.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak? Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I wanted to take this opportunity to share with members of the House a couple of quotes referring to the very issue at hand that we're all speaking about right now. I wanted to touch a little bit on this whole issue of the centralized federal regulator.

I have a quote here from Eric Spink from the *Financial Post*, where he's quoted in an article called Why Alberta's New NDP Premier Rachel Notley Is Not for a National Regulator.

**An Hon. Member:** Uh-oh. Name.

**Loyola:** Oh, pardon me. The Premier. Well, I'm quoting the name. I'm quoting the name.

Okay. I'll go ahead with the quote.

Canada already has one of the best regulatory systems in the world; the current proposal is a massive constitutional power grab,

again referring to a centralized federal regulator,

and Alberta should work together with Québec and other provinces to strike it down, as they did with the proposal that was struck down in 2011. From an Albertan's perspective, those are compelling reasons, and Tedesco's suggestion that our "affable" new premier might sign on to the current proposal (in effect, selling the constitutional farm) seems to underestimate her political acumen.

Bill Rice, the former chair and CEO of the Alberta Securities Commission, quoted in an *Alberta Venture* article by Robbie Jeffrey published on February 16, 2016, states that the oil and gas industry

consumes huge amounts of capital, so the raising of capital and the structuring of an environment in which capital can be raised and traded appropriately is a very significant issue for Alberta. I believe the independence of the regulation of that territory becomes more important when times are tough, because certain adaptations can be made, local imagination can be used and certain changes or differentiations can be undertaken in the province to accommodate difficult circumstances.

Again, we're all in agreement with how important this issue is and how we need to move forward on it.

Terence Corcoran, *National Post* columnist, business writer, quoted in a *National Post* article published on December 22, 2014:

Key industry associations, including life insurers and public sector pension funds, also weighed in on what they see as an unwarranted expansion of regulatory power. The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan and other pension funds balked at proposals to add them to the list of institutions that should be regulated by the new authority, due to their potential contribution to "systemic risk." The pension brief said pensions are "concerned about the potentially onerous regulatory requirements."

I've saved the best for last, especially for the members across the way. Former Wildrose Finance critic Rob Anderson, quoted on the party website on May 7, 2013:

This government needs to immediately strengthen the Alberta Securities Commission and beef up enforcement measures so Albertans don't fall victim to predatory fraudsters. The livelihoods of thousands of Albertans are at stake. It's up to the government to do something to address this serious issue.

4:30

**An Hon. Member:** What year was that?

**Loyola:** In 2013, Member. There you go.

Albeit it's important that we move forward with this legislation – we're all in agreement on that – I think that we should have, you know, a buy-in from the members from across the way. I don't know if the members of the third party are – they're not speaking too much.

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

**Loyola:** Pardon me, Madam Chair.

Again, I will highly suggest to all the members of this House that they vote in favour of the Securities Amendment Act, 2016. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, amendments? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Dr. Starke:** Are you going to quote Rob, too?

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, interestingly enough, I don't have a quote from the former Member for Airdrie ready this afternoon, but I can raise my fist angrily when I need to.

Well, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016, here in Committee of the Whole. Of course, Madam Chair, our caucus recognizes the need for administrative updates on legislation from time to time such as the Securities Act, but as previously mentioned, we would have appreciated seeing this bill go to the proper standing committee for adequate study to ensure members understand this particular legislation in greater detail.

The reality is that our securities legislation does not exist in isolation, and there are numerous factors at play. This includes changes in the markets. It includes what goes on in other jurisdictions. While I appreciate that we are a leader on securities regulation, it is important, or would have been important, that we take the necessary time to ensure the legislation allows us to continue to lead. In an economic climate like this one any amendments to securities legislation do not just exist for the purpose of housekeeping. They could potentially affect the draw of Albertans for business and investment where securities are concerned.

In my opinion, any legislation that pertains to securities, however routine or robust or modest, should be carefully scrutinized. In fact, the federal government sends virtually every piece of legislation to an all-party committee. For almost every legislative item that goes forward, officials from whichever department is affected will appear and speak to the proposed changes at that committee in the federal government. These are subject matter experts. They're able to explain and go into details on the implications of the proposed legislation in a way even some ministers cannot.

Those discussions, those committee proceedings, are a matter of public record. It means that we can have a more open Legislature. It means that Albertans can get the same sort of feedback that we get when we speak to industry experts and stakeholders, but then that feedback can also be on the public record as these issues around securities affect Albertans and their livelihoods, their future, and their past. Those discussions at committee are of critical importance to Albertans. They are of value to constituents who want to learn why a certain piece of legislation was introduced. They are of value to researchers and subject matter experts. It is a disservice to Albertans whenever the legislation here is fired through without the standing committee stage.

After 40 years of single-party governance in Alberta we find ourselves in a system where this resource of proper scrutiny is used far too infrequently, far too rarely. The rare use of committee for study seems to have been inherited by the new government, that was elected last May, just like the previous government, who also didn't believe in a robust committee system.

I have only seen the current government, nearly a year into their mandate, refer legislation to committee twice, once yesterday and once on a previous private member's bill, Bill 203. We recognize why the government put forward this bill, and we support it, but we would have liked it to go to committee to receive that proper scrutiny. Simply put, pushing securities legislation through in mere days or a short afternoon is bad precedent. We saw this particular piece of legislation introduced last Thursday under Introduction of Bills, only to be debated today at second reading. Now we are already in Committee of the Whole, and quite possibly this bill will become law tomorrow.

It's important that any changes sought in the Alberta Securities Act do not undermine competitive advantage in any way. The ability to have officials speak to this particular legislation would have been of immense value. Whenever any amending legislation

is proposed, the first question we should ask is not merely about what is being changed but also about what is not being changed. The officials who advise the government on matters such as securities are no doubt aware of matters pertaining to securities in other jurisdictions. They are no doubt well aware of the regulatory changes that have or are having a positive or adverse effect in other jurisdictions. That sort of subject matter expertise is invaluable to us as legislators, especially when we need to be thinking about what's best for Alberta in the long term.

Now, this bill is an excellent example of the importance of an independent securities regulator for Alberta. I appreciate the ability to discuss this legislation in the Assembly without having to consult a national oversight body and try to find relative agreement amongst nine other provinces before we're able to debate the legislation. I suspect that the government appreciates this ability as well, and we've certainly seen that in their support for a made-in-Alberta solution.

In no uncertain terms the federal government has made it clear that they will want a national securities regulator. The previous federal government had stated their ambition, and now we have a new federal government. In recent years some provinces have gone to court to fight this. The idea of a national securities regulator itself is not a new one. It's been discussed by Canada's various federal governments with various levels of intensity throughout the last number of years. There are certainly areas where harmonizing securities rules could make sense. It is, of course, advantageous to be harmonizing our securities rules with the provinces while still maintaining our independent control over securities regulation.

Breaking down any sort of provincial barrier is most often a net benefit to all Albertans, but it is important that Alberta ensures its independence when it comes to a securities regulator. In a recent *Financial Post* column it was noted that interprovincial red tape costs Canadian households over \$7,500 per year. Anything we can do to work against this costly red tape, regardless of whether it's trading securities or more straightforward commercial trade, makes for a stronger and more free Confederation.

**4:40**

But harmonization should not be confused with amalgamation or sharing of information. Having our own regulator means that decisions can be made with regard to Alberta's best interests. It has allowed investment in Alberta to be a consideration in how securities are regulated. It is responsible to conclude that a regulator that is headquartered on Bay Street in Toronto may not have the same priorities as one headquartered here in Alberta. The fact is that a great deal of Alberta's capital markets pertain to the natural resource sector. An Alberta-based regulator understands that sector. An Alberta-based regulator knows how to respond when those markets change; a Toronto-based one does not.

This government and this Finance minister have said that they will maintain an independent securities regulator. As long as they keep their word this time, our caucus will be happy to see our securities rules harmonized with other provinces' to improve interprovincial flow of capital. That's good for Alberta. That's good for Canada.

Whether or not Alberta is joining a national regulator, of course, is not what's being debated in this particular bill. If we're simply here to go through the motions, if we are simply here to wave this bill through without due scrutiny, we would be setting a bad precedent for matters pertaining to how securities are handled. Regulation is not the answer to every problem, of course, Madam Chair, but if we are to take pride in the fact that Alberta has its own securities regulator, if we are to think of ourselves as a successful

jurisdiction in this regard, then we should take securities and the matters around securities seriously here today.

I note that the Finance minister recently wrote a newspaper article favouring Alberta having its own regulator. The third party, when they were in government, also spoke in favour of having its own regulator. So if there's actual agreement here on the source of strength for Alberta, to have our own regulator, we should be paying particular attention to the matters pertaining to securities that come before us.

That said, this bill itself seems to be a responsive one. It's a response to market needs rather than telling the market what it needs from a top-down approach. The changes this bill introduces respond to the confusion in market trading surrounding hybrid securities and derivative products.

It would be immensely helpful if the government were able to answer a few questions on the legislation. Which experts were consulted? I know that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has mentioned some of those. On the need for amending legislation, presumably those experts had particular concerns in mind. On the securities or derivatives themselves, are any of those individuals potentially involved with a conflict of interest? This is speculative on my part, but it serves to illustrate why proper scrutiny is needed, even on matters where we deem them to be housekeeping such as the Securities Act. It is important that we debate and robustly discuss these important issues.

Madam Chair, as we have noted, there is a need for administrative updates to legislation. The Official Opposition has proposed in a number of cases in the past additional clauses to legislation that would require updates to legislation where necessary, and this particular legislation is an example where those updates are needed and required. On the surface there doesn't seem to be anything untoward or amiss, but given the subject matter it makes sense that we should have studied this at a committee. The decisions made pertaining to the Alberta Securities Act are important as it relates to Alberta's competitive advantage, and more broadly, as the saying goes, the devil is in the details.

I am pleased to support this piece of legislation at Committee of the Whole while I would have preferred the opportunity to hear from expert witnesses and testimony at a policy committee.

Madam Chair, it was my pleasure to speak to the bill today, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? Questions? Comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I know it's not customary to ask questions when you're in committee, but I wanted to ask specifically the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. As soon as I got my hands on this bill, as soon as it was presented, one of the first things that I did was that I sat down with friends who are stockbrokers to ask them: what do you think about this? Like the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, the stockbrokers that I spoke to didn't seem to have any issues with any of the regulations that were being brought forward. I don't have the Blues in front of me, so I'm paraphrasing, but I believe your statement was that the stakeholders you consulted with didn't seem to have any issues with any of the regulations that were being brought forward. I was hoping, if he's so inclined, that the Member for Strathmore-Brooks could speak to that issue.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I look forward to the days when the member can ask me more questions in this House, perhaps about two hours earlier in the daily Routine.

The member is quite right. On this side of the House we've consulted with stakeholders. In fact, during this invigorating debate I've been corresponding with certain stakeholders involved in our capital markets, who know what they're talking about, and most of them have said that this is a bill that they have not seen any issues with.

I think the point that we've made on this side of the House is that every bill – every single bill – contentious and noncontentious bills, should go to committee. I contend that this Bill 6 would go through a committee rather quickly. The last Bill 6 may have been held up a little bit longer, and if that last Bill 6 had gone to a committee, it probably would have saved a lot of the members across a lot of sleepless nights and headaches.

I think that it's a basic principle that every single bill should go before a legislative committee, the way we do in Ottawa. When federal NDP members wish to make their views known on a piece of legislation introduced by the former Conservative government or the present Liberal government, they're able to bring stakeholders and witnesses and experts to testify at committees that develop a degree of expertise and knowledge. I mean, the number of members in this Legislature with any expertise on this bill is going to be rather slim, as it would be on many topics, and committees have people who develop a degree of expertise on topics, and we can bring witnesses forward. I think it's the process that we're talking about, not that there's any particularly disagreeable part of this bill.

Again, I have been speaking with stakeholders. I've not found anyone who had any negative problems with the bill. In fact, the only feedback I heard was from a single member, and I'll speak about this soon. I heard from a member who wanted the bill to be toughened up, potentially, on a particular part of the bill, who wanted it to actually go a little bit further. That's not to say that I agree or disagree with that position but that I would like to hear from witnesses like that so that they could bring their views forward to us and we can hear expert testimony. I think that bills should not be written only by the executive branch of government and rubber-stamped by the legislative branch. It should be that when the executive brings forward a bill to this House, this House has meaningful input into it, that this House has the opportunity to bring stakeholders forward, and that the only opportunity for stakeholder engagement should not be in the minister's office before the bill is actually written.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

4:50

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to speak to some of the concerns that we've been hearing, I guess, from the Official Opposition, basically, with regard to some more comments about why there might be a need to further delay the bill for further inquiries and discussions. In the spirit of what the Member for Strathmore-Brooks just mentioned – I think he just mentioned there that he hadn't heard any direct disagreements to the bill, not to say that they couldn't come up. But, quite honestly, I just don't see the need to further delay this bill.

We just saw an amendment, which was RF1, that proposed kicking the can down the road, so to speak, on the bill nearly eight months, to the 31st of October. But what we're really talking about here is November. It kind of speaks to the point: why does the Securities Act need to be updated so frequently? I think one of the

points here is that Alberta must ensure that its securities regulatory system reflects the realities of today's capital markets and evolves with international standards and global regulatory reform initiatives. This requires continuous review and updating of securities laws.

Another point is that today's financial environment is more complex and more sophisticated and more international in scope and more driven by technology than ever before. The proposed updates would further harmonize Alberta's securities laws with those of other jurisdictions across Canada as part of Alberta's commitment to improving Canada's existing securities regulatory system.

Finally, the changes will also enhance the protection of Alberta's investors and foster the operation of fair and effective Alberta capital markets and minimize systemic risks.

As we've mentioned here about the timelines, basically, one of the concerns is: what would happen, I guess, if these amendments were not passed? Maybe not too much in the extreme short term, but one of the points that we're trying to make here is that if these amendments do not promptly proceed, Alberta could jeopardize its leadership role in securities regulatory reform. Without continued modernization and harmonization of the Alberta Securities Act it would be difficult to ensure a continued vibrant capital market. This will require enhanced market transparency and investor protection along with the detection and mitigation of possible systemic risks and market abuse.

It's for these reasons, I think, that it is more prudent at this point to proceed with Bill 6. I just thought I'd make those comments.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It has been truly an honour to hear about the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie's passionate commitment in defence of capitalism and market regulation.

I rise today to speak to Bill 6. I have some questions for the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board about this legislation that I hope he is ably able to answer, specifically on the origins of the amendments to the Securities Act before us here. This bill does not look like a traditional piece of legislation, thank the good Lord. We want to know where it came from. Can the minister explain the process for developing these Securities Act updates? Did the financial services industry request these changes, or was it the Alberta Securities Commission who asked for the changes in our law? Or was it officials in the minister's department who diligently did their job and this is just an annual update? Was it, in fact, stakeholders reaching out to the government asking for this?

We spoke with stakeholders involved in the financial services sector about Bill 6. One industry member indicated that they would be personally in favour of more stringent rules that protected investors around offering memorandums being placed in the Securities Act. For those who don't know, an offering memorandum is a legal document stating the objectives, risks, and terms of investment involved with a private placement. This includes items such as financial statements, management biographies, a detailed description of the business, et cetera. An offering memorandum serves to provide buyers with information on the offering and to protect the sellers from the liability associated with selling unregistered securities.

Sometimes investors are being sold a product by offering memorandums when they really shouldn't have been sold the investment to begin with. I understand there have been an increased number of enforcement actions against real estate promoters who

frequently try to rely on the offering memorandum exemptions although they might prepare deficient offering memorandums. We would like to know if the minister could tell us if he has heard this concern as well.

Another piece of feedback we received involves dealing with limitation periods, Madam Chair; that is, the time in which legal proceedings are brought forward for a transaction gone sour. It is my understanding that the Securities Act places this at six months presently. This is a very short period of time to take any action for damages. This needs to be extended to a minimum of one year, or more appropriately it ought to accord with the time period set out in the Limitations Act, which is two years.

These are a few of the changes the government may want to examine and consider changing in the near future. This is a technical bill with much to wade through about securities that are not securities, derivatives that are securities, securities that are derivatives, and derivatives that are not derivatives. Are members confused yet? I'm sure this is an exhilarating way for the new Member for Calgary-Greenway to spend his first day in the Legislature.

I'm glad that we have professionals like those at AIMCo who manage the heritage fund and pension funds, who understand all of this in depth and understand its ramifications. Those people can navigate all of the risks associated with these products and do a good job of creating a steady rate of return for these products. I'm also pleased to see the time and cost-saving measures brought in to allow the Alberta Securities Commission to get a search warrant from a justice of the peace instead of waiting for a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench. It is my estimation that this will increase the likelihood of halting a crime in progress.

Wildrose recognizes the need for periodic or even regular administrative updates to legislation such as the Securities Act, and we recognize the importance of our Securities Act in providing a competitive advantage for Alberta while protecting Alberta's investors. This government has said that it will maintain Alberta's independent securities regulator. As long as it keeps its word, we are happy to see our securities rules harmonized with other provinces' where it is needed to improve the interprovincial flow of capital.

We would caution, however, that we should always take time to reflect on whether these changes are actually good for Alberta. The ability to make that decision for ourselves based on our own province's need is the biggest reason for having our own regulator. Again, Madam Chair, I will repeat my call that legislation that is this serious, however much it may receive the potential unanimous support of members in this House, should be studied properly to allow for stakeholders and outside experts.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 6?

[The clauses of Bill 6 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do now move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

**The Chair:** The committee will now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Woollard:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 6.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the committee concur in the report? All in favour, say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Those opposed, say no. So ordered.

**5:00                    Government Bills and Orders**  
**Second Reading**  
**(continued)**  
  
**Bill 5**  
**Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act**

[Debate adjourned April 12]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 5? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really am looking forward to discussing this vital piece of legislation. I think that looking after vulnerable seniors is one of the major responsibilities of any legislator, and I think that this bill really does go a long way to improving the situation, particularly for our low-income seniors.

The proposed seniors' home adaptation and repair program – and I'll call that SHARP in the future – will allow seniors to use their home equity to make modifications so that they can stay in their homes and maintain independence. More seniors will be eligible to access these funds to do a much broader scope of work than what was available under the special needs assistance program. SHARP will include consumer protection measures to ensure seniors know their rights when hiring contractors or having to cancel contracts. The SHARP program promotes effective and responsible governance, and it's anticipated – this is important – the proposed program will save this government about \$6 million a year. I think that for all of those reasons, all of us should be in support of this.

This is social justice. As I said the other day, all of us in this Legislature are interested in social justice. I know some of you across the floor might not want to be called socialists, but in this case I know you are all in favour of promoting social justice.

At the same time as we're promoting social justice, particularly for vulnerable Albertans, we're actually promoting the creation of jobs for Albertans, jobs that the contractors will create through the funding that comes out of this program. These are jobs that might not have been made for Albertans without this legislation being passed. It's a stimulus to the economy. Again, I'll go back to the importance of countercyclical investments. When the economy is at a low point, it's our time to actually invest in the economy, to promote job creation through programs such as this. For all of these reasons I'm fully in support of this.

It is a very important program that's being suggested here. A key part to this is the consumer protection. We have to recognize that low-income seniors may not have the financial literacy that we would like them to have. What this bill will help do is protect these consumers, these vulnerable seniors, from predatory activity by unscrupulous contractors. This is an important issue. You hear news reports of this all the time. It's a regular occurrence here in Edmonton, which I'm most familiar with, but I'm sure it happens

across the province. It may even happen in rural areas and smaller cities more often since the consumer protection services that we have available in large cities sometimes don't reach out to the outlying areas.

As a physician I also am interested in this. I have a lot of experience looking after patients in their later years, and I can tell you that people that might develop a stroke or might have cancer or might have a heart attack or might, for instance, develop kidney failure are often kept in our acute-care hospitals for very long periods of time solely because sending them home is not an option. Their homes are not capable of taking them back. With this kind of program we might actually be able to get some of those patients who are sitting in the hospitals for long periods of time back into their communities, and I'm sure that they would be much more comfortable there than sitting in the hospital or in a long-term care facility if it were available.

What this program is going to do is actually increase, for instance, accessibility to a home. That means putting in bars in the bathrooms, putting in lifts so that a person might be able to get from the first floor to the second floor if that's where their bedrooms are. I'm sure the security of the home could be increased. We could put in video cameras and other security equipment that would make the home safer and the person more comfortable in their home. It's even possible – and I would look at my own situation and hope I'll never be in the financial situation to qualify for this program – in my own home that if I were to have a stroke, I would actually need to do some renovations to allow the creation of a first-floor bedroom with bathroom facilities. That would mean that I could still age in place at home with this sort of thing.

It's going to help people stay in our communities, and, like the elders in indigenous societies, the seniors are a very important component of that. If we don't have seniors in the communities, we lose all that wisdom that they've accumulated over the years. I'm hoping that in some small way this legislation is going to improve the quality and quantity of life for seniors so they can stay in their communities and age in place.

I was interested to hear from my colleague in front of me about the insurance issues. I think this was a very important observation that was made. These homes often need renovations to meet codes or other things that the insurance companies require, not to mention just, say, replacing a roof or fixing a furnace or perhaps doing some alterations to the kitchen or to the bathrooms that would make the house livable.

I would urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the House to vote for this legislation because I think it is really an important piece of legislation. I'm proud to be part of a government that is promoting this program so that our seniors can live in dignity, can be proud of their own homes, can continue to contribute to the welfare of this province, and also that we as a government can save money – the \$6 million, I think, is not an insignificant amount – and we can get at one of the real problems in seniors' care, which is the overuse of acute-care facilities for our elderly patients.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**5:10**

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche . . .

**Mr. Hanson:** Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**The Deputy Speaker:** . . . St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Just say dialysis. We're good.

Thank you very much. The question is to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. You mentioned a couple of times the savings

of \$6 million. I was wondering if you could expand on that a little bit and give us some details on how we're going to save \$6 million with this program.

Also, while we're talking about money, I had mentioned earlier in the day and had asked the question about where the money was going to come from. We're going to be potentially exposing Albertans to \$5.6 billion of debt with these loans, you know, based on 140,000 homes at \$40,000 per. If we maxed it out, that's what we'd be looking at, \$5.6 billion. So if you could expand a little bit on where the \$6 million savings is coming from and if you could share with us where the \$5.6 billion potential is going to be coming from as well.

Thanks.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you very much for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to respond. This legislation basically allows us to make the approach to seniors' housing a lot more efficient. The special needs assistance program really has a lot of limitations, and what we're going to be talking about is a much broader scope of work than what was available.

We're also going to be saving money when you look at keeping persons in their own home in the community. This legislation really is all about making the senior who doesn't have the financial resources more capable of directing their own existence and adding to the quality of the communities as well as to the qualities of that individual's own existence.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka on 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Just a further question, curiosity in a way, but I think it helps to dialogue. I'm interested in the discussion between the home adaptation needs for seniors and the home services needs for seniors, home-care kinds of issues. Yes, there definitely will be homes that need adaptation, but I think we also all realize that seniors get to the point where they can't mow their lawn, maybe they can't care for themselves adequately, those kinds of things. I guess my question relates to: have you been able to do any studies or are you aware of any studies that would help us to understand sort of a cost-benefit analysis between the benefits and costs of home adaptation versus just providing home-care kinds of services, that would allow seniors to stay in their home for a longer period of time as well?

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. I think he's raising an important issue. There are a lot of varying needs for our seniors population. We need to look at, for instance, the whole area of consumer protection and the area of supporting what I heard about earlier today, the sort of community centres that provide support. I think it was the MLA for Lethbridge-East that was talking about a really vital program in that community to support the integration of seniors into the community. That sort of thing is very important. We need, probably, some changes in the traffic laws to slow down traffic in areas around seniors' facilities or in residential areas. That might apply to the seniors' care as well.

Certainly, I think that looking at programs to improve home care, to improve access to other community services is vital. But what we're talking about here in this legislation, in my opinion, is looking at home adaptation as a way to make sure that the individual

can stay in that home and can . . . [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. It's my time to get up again and give my support to this important innovation. To be fair, the past government had funding for renovations for seniors; however, it didn't carry the kind of weight and implications that this does. It's been alluded a little bit earlier by some of the members opposite that this could take a very sizable budget to cover if everybody jumped on board. Obviously, it would be a good deal to have an interest loan at prime to the tune of \$75,000, recognizing that it has to be paid back at some time. But it's pretty good. As my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview indicated, these are important and cost-saving renovations that could keep people in their homes for much longer, could get people out of institutions, whether it's long-term care institutions or hospitals, or in some cases perhaps even prevent them from going into a lodge or secondary assisted living program.

Tremendous leadership on this, I think, but a little bit uncertain about just how one might deal with a huge influx of many, many people taking advantage of this. So I hope that there would be some careful scrutiny of applications and that we don't get too far ahead of ourselves with this. Clearly, issues like widening doorways and hallways, installing walk-in tubs, roof repairs, and electrical repairs: these are essential, and obviously many people in our province, perhaps 10 or 15 per cent at a minimum, don't have the money to make some of these very basic changes that would keep them safe and keep them longer in their homes.

Section 2 of the bill authorizes the minister, then, to make low-interest home equity loans "for the purpose of making repairs, renovations or adaptations . . . reasonably necessary for the maintenance, structural integrity or energy efficiency . . . or for the health, safety or mobility of the occupants." That does give the minister and the department some discretion about approving or not approving some of these very generous offers.

Section 3 authorizes the minister to file a caveat in the land titles office against the certificate of title for an eligible residence in respect of the loan.

Section 4 contains provisions regarding loan repayment.

Section 5 permits low-income seniors who don't qualify for a loan to apply for a grant in accordance with the regulation. The government has suggested that \$2 million in grants will be available annually as a separate aspect of this. I don't understand fully how that would enhance some of the rest of the loan program, but again I would hope that there would be very careful scrutiny of that.

Section 6 allows an individual who was refused a loan or a grant to request a review of that decision in accordance with the regulations, and sections 7 and 8 offer measures to protect consumers, including provisions to review the reasonableness of the costs of a home repair as well as the right to cancel contracts.

The government has estimated that about 145,000 households will be eligible for the program. That, again, amounts to a very sizable potential budgetary item. The cash for the loans is coming from Alberta's general revenue fund, so it'll be interesting to see how this relates to the budget coming up this week. The program is believed to be the first of its kind in Canada. If passed, it will take effect on July 1 of this year. This will be the second home equity program available.

Senior homeowners have also got access to the seniors property tax deferral program, which was a progressive element that the last government put into place.

**Dr. Starke:** Bravo.

**Dr. Swann:** Yes. You can take credit for that.

I have no hesitation in supporting this bill given the caveats that I've mentioned. Anything that will keep seniors in their homes for longer and remove seniors from institutional care and the extremely costly implications of that as well as give them quality of life and much higher potential for rehabilitation in their own home, for mental health issues, for longer term connections with their community and family. So I'm very pleased to support this and will take my seat and wait for the rest of the debates.

Thanks, Madam Speaker.

5:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Dach:** Yes. Thank you. I rise under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Madam Speaker, to bring clarification to some issues raised by the hon. member opposite regarding certain matters about the program. One number that was mentioned by the hon. member was that he thought the maximum loan amount would be \$75,000 under this program when it is actually a \$40,000 maximum loan, so that number should be clear.

He was right that the program does offer a lot of leeway to the government department members who are analysing these loans and requests for these loans to determine and positively grant such a loan because we're not looking to minimize under the loan program. After all, it is the senior's own money that they'll be lending; it'll be their equity that they're accessing.

In terms of what types of home adaptations or repairs will qualify for the loan program, the program will increase the types of repairs and adaptations over the current special-needs program, which was a grant. As far as being reasonable to repair or adapt to assist a senior who chooses to remain in their home, the proposed adaptations or repairs will be deemed eligible if they improve or increase any of the following in a senior's home in support of aging in place: their physical safety, their mobility, their independence, and their health. So within those wide-ranging parameters a lot of discretion is involved, and it was put in there on purpose so that we wouldn't be unnecessarily limiting what a senior thought might help with their ability to continue living in the house.

It could potentially mean painting the kitchen, and sometimes it's just something that they couldn't have afforded to do otherwise, and this could make that house more liveable. It's their money that they're accessing. We wanted to give the maximum amount of choice possible in this program to allow seniors to improve their property so that they would feel better living in it as long as possible because, as the hon. member will know, especially the member opposite who just spoke to the bill, it costs a whole lot more to have a senior in long-term care or acute care than it would to have them continue in their home.

Other hon. members have asked how the program will save the government \$6 million, and I can tell you exactly how it will do that. The current special needs assistance program provides about \$8 million a year in grants to low-income seniors for essential home repairs. Now, with the introduction of the new loan program, the special needs assistance program will no longer provide these grants. Thus, the government will save about \$6 million. As well, \$2 million is being retained to provide grants to those low-income seniors who need essential home repairs but don't qualify for the loan. That's where the \$6 million in savings is realized.

One might ask: is the government trying to save money on the backs of seniors? Well, we recognize the demographic shift and the

current economic reality. We wanted to maintain supports for seniors. The program not only allows us to do this, but it expands the range of supports to more seniors, gives them the choice of what improvements they want to make to their property to satisfy their physical safety, improve their mobility needs, maintain their independence, and look after health needs while they remain in their home, using money that basically is their own.

A program where people access the equity in their home isn't something that is going to be available or would be readily available through a typical home equity loan program. This is more generous, and it was designed to be more generous. Interest rate wise, it's going to be prime. Right now it's about 2.7 per cent. The 55-year-old minimum-age senior who is the surviving spouse of the initially eligible senior who got the grant can stay in the home as long as they live, and the loan will not have to be repaid until the surviving spouse passes away or sells the property. That's a bit more generous than what you typically find in the normal home equity loan market.

On top of that the home equity loan program typically will have a higher interest rate than what we offer at 2.7 per cent. You'll find also that there may be a variable rate, which could have a really onerous effect on the amount of equity or amount of debt that piles up in a regular home equity loan program, so it's designed to be generous and effective.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Before I call on the next speaker, just a little clarification. With 29(2)(a) the intent is that it could be a point of clarification for the previous speaker, not a response to other speakers in general, so if you could kind of keep it in that spirit. Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to second reading of Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. One thing that we have certainly seen today is a sense amongst members of the Assembly that the intention of assisting seniors is of critical importance. We have also seen some significant concerns on this side of the House to . . . [An electronic device sounded] Some sort of legislative fine, I think, comes with whatever just happened there.

We have seen some concern, certainly from this side of the House, around the government's ability to administer the program. We've heard that no additional resources will be required to administer the program but that it's possible that up to 140,000 seniors would access the program or at least that that would be the number eligible. Now, the member across the way has said that they guesstimate a significantly smaller number than that, but the risk still is there.

As you know, Madam Speaker, I am of the firm belief that these types of pieces of legislation need to be studied. I know that the government has written into this piece of legislation that they would like to have the regulations dealt with by the 1st of July, which doesn't give committee a whole ton of time to study, but there is certainly time between now and even before the end of the session. Keeping in mind the fact that we have a couple of weeks of estimates to debate the budget, where committees can't sit, immediately following that, the week of what's likely to be the 17th, 18th, 19th of May and the following week, because there's no constituency week in the month of May thanks to the government's schedule, there is time in the month of May to allow the committee to sit.

One of the reasons why it would be so important is that we've heard from stakeholders, particularly those in the banking industry and those who have provided this kind of product in the past, that



they were quite surprised that this piece of legislation was being brought before the Assembly and that they didn't have an opportunity to provide any sort of feedback to the government on this particular legislation or even on the concept of the legislation. I think it's important that we hear from folks just like that.

I've also heard from some seniors' groups that while they are pleased with some portions, particularly the intention of trying to keep seniors in their homes, they're concerned about whether or not this is actually going to get to the core of what keeps seniors in homes. One of these groups in particular has said: you know, while it's important that seniors may be able to use some equity for a new roof, a new roof isn't going to provide the care that they actually need to keep them in their homes. These are the types of stakeholders that it would be important that we hear from.

5:30

Also, it would be important that we could hear from members of the public service and those in the Finance department because there does run a certain risk of significant liability that the government would be taking on: whether or not the government has the appropriate checks and balances in place to assess risk, whether or not they have the appropriate checks and balances in place to determine the viability of the home or the project. All of these sorts of things are significant exposures.

While I fully support the intent of trying to keep seniors in their homes, it's a good opportunity to stop and take stock about: is this the best path forward? I'm not talking about delays of months and months and months.

I would like to propose an amendment – and then I'll speak specifically to the amendment – to send this bill to committee. It's my personal favourite of all amendments that I rise to make. It's a notice of amendment, and if it's fine with you, Madam Speaker, I will send it out and proceed when you're ready.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Go ahead, hon. member. The amendment will be known as RF1.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you. Mr. Cooper to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2 and that the committee report back to the Assembly no later than May 31, 2016, if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Madam Speaker, while we recognize that the government would like to move forward on this bill, passing this bill by introducing it last Thursday, when there was one speaker in debate, then debating the bill this morning at second reading, spending probably only close to an hour at second reading today, then Committee of the Whole, likely tomorrow morning, and quite possibly third reading tomorrow afternoon is passing legislation at breakneck speed. Often when that happens, there are errors or omissions or challenges that occur. We're not asking for the legislation to be delayed in such a manner that it would prevent the government from accomplishing their task of regulations by the 1st of July but certainly ensuring that we can get some experts to come and speak specifically about the bill and some of the potential risks that are included in the legislation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung on the amendment.

**Mr. Dach:** Yes, on the amendment. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak against the amendment. I feel almost like I'm back in the real estate business on a referral marathon. The opposition members seem to be intent on installing a practice in this House of referring pretty much every motion it can to committee. Next we'll be asked to have a referendum on every motion that gets through this House. It seems to please opposition members.

However, the bill is rather straightforward, in my view, and this referendum simply looks to stall it and unnecessarily send it to committee. It's not rocket science. It's a straightforward bill which allows seniors to access the equity in their home and improve the property while they live in it so that they can avoid going into long-term care. It gives them lots of consumer protection that is above and beyond what would have been found under the grant program in that the contractors must inform the consumer that they have rights of cancellation. The rights of cancellation extend quite extensively beyond the time frame as to when they actually got the invoice, but as long as the work has not been started or supplies have not been made, the cancellation still can be made within, I believe, 30 days of having been approved for the loan. There are consumer protection elements in it. There is an ability to access home equity, which gives a senior a wider range of abilities to make different improvements to their home that will allow them to stay in it longer.

There's no need to delay the process. We'd like to have people working on seniors' homes very shortly after the bill is proclaimed.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** On the amendment, the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to rise again to speak to the referral motion on Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. There are so many unanswered questions that I have. I was very pleased that we got an explanation finally from the Member for Edmonton-McClung in regard to the \$6 million in savings that they expect from this new bill. He made it quite clear that it would be due to grants no longer being provided to seniors, but they will now have to apply for loans. As I said, I found it very interesting, and I'm sure that the seniors will as well.

We've heard from Albertans that they are worried about their future. They're worried about their parents' and grandparents' future. This government shouldn't be adding yet another concern that could potentially hurt Albertans' future. This is just going to end up being another mistake that we can add to the long list of risky mistakes that have already been made.

People are worried that our seniors will lose valuable equity in their homes and have to face even harder choices down the road when it comes time for them to sell their properties and move into retirement homes. What if the senior passes away? Will the family have to wait for the government to take their share before the estate is divided among family members? What if money that was meant to provide for that senior's bills is tied up in the estate? Will the family have to take care of the cost of the funeral and other bills the senior has until the government has taken its share, all because the government has placed a lien on the property?

Madam Speaker, this bill definitely needs to go to committee and be discussed further before we can possibly pass it. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would have to stand against this request for referral to the Families and Communities

Committee. As many of the members in the House will know, there is actually already work that's being done within this committee, with the amendments to the Mental Health Act, and that report is required to be done just soon after the May 31, 2016, date. They're in the middle of doing their consultations and looking at ensuring that they are calling witnesses and working on that process. In addition to that, we also know that they have to do the estimates process, which can take up to a couple of weeks. The timeline within this amendment is not a realistic timeline, so I would at this time have to stand against this amendment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) does come into effect now should anybody have any questions or comments for the previous speaker.

Seeing none, are there any other speakers to the amendment?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Just a comment or maybe a question. It seems to me that the savings that this government is claiming they're going to realize from this thing are on the backs of the senior citizens in this province. I mean, this is unbelievable. You know, you're taking an \$8 million grant system, which I understand is an expense to the government, and turning that into a loan environment, which is actually an asset to the government. So, yeah, you can do some fancy bookkeeping now and look like you actually did something good, but it's on the backs of our senior citizens, for crying out loud. This is unbelievable from a, quote, socially democratic government over here that seems to claim to care for people.

5:40

Furthermore, it's apparent that the members opposite haven't learned their lesson from Bill 6. The Member for Edmonton-McClung was talking about how this isn't rocket science, that this is so straightforward, that this thing just needs to be approved because we need to hurry up, and we need to get this out there. Those are the identical, same kinds of comments that we heard about Bill 6, that they wanted to get shoved through in just two or three days. And then, after the farmers in this province – God bless them – rose up, this government woke up to the reality and issued six pages of amendments to a bill that they originally claimed wasn't rocket science, was just fine, and could be passed just like it was. And that turned out to be bogus. Now we're hearing the same kind of rhetoric from over here: "There's nothing wrong with this bill. We did our homework. Let's just push it on through the House here."

We have standing committees in our legislative process for this very reason. What will the senior citizens say if they could come to a standing committee and you presented to them, Madam Speaker: "Okay. We're going to take an \$8 million grant program, that is just money that we give to you, and we're going to change that to a \$6 million loan program on your back. Tell me something, Mr. and Mrs. Senior Citizen. What do you think about that?" I guarantee you that this government did not consult on that issue with our senior citizens, or they would have heard, loud and clear: "Don't you dare. We're on fixed incomes. We need those grants. We don't need to go deeper in debt. Thank you very much."

The committee process would solve these kinds of silly problems that this so-called not-rocket-science bill is going to create. This thing has to go to committee. It's the right thing to do for the good people of Alberta, for them to come into this building and talk directly to the lawmakers and fix this bill before it just gets shoved down their throat, like they have attempted to do with every single piece of legislation that's come through this House. Shame.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members under 29(2)(a)? Previous speakers?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka on the amendment.

**Mr. Orr:** I'll make it quick. I do think that this is going to come back and that it is not straightforward. There are a hundred questions here. How is the government going to administer this? I mean, are we going to create a legal loan corporation to manage this kind of money? How are they going to deal with defaults when seniors don't pay their interest? Are they equipped to deal with defaults? How is it going to look, taking seniors to court because they haven't paid their interest? What about approvals? How about terms? How about renewals? How about rates?

The real question, for me, is that this is going to come out of the lives of seniors: 2.7 per cent, which we just heard a few minutes ago, times \$40,000 is \$1,800 in interest per year coming out of seniors' income. And if you factor into that inflation – and the average senior lives today until their mid-80s – and they take this out at 65, the inflation factor is going to reduce their income even more. And if you take that over the 20 years, it comes to \$21,000 out of a senior's income in their senior years. If you multiply that by the 140,000 households we've been talking about here, we're taking \$3 billion over the next 20 years out of seniors. It's another tax on seniors.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Yeah, under 29(2)(a). I have to rise to challenge some of the comments that were most recently made with creative math by the member opposite. It was a calculation that I had a little trouble following, that's for sure. It didn't add up, that's for darn sure.

The loan program is one that doesn't have to be repaid until either the senior sells the home or passes away or the surviving spouse sells the home or passes away. It's not a matter of the senior making payments while they're still living in the home. It's a home equity loan program. It's not one that you make payments on at all until the home is either sold or until the homeowner passes away and the home is therefore disposed of by the estate. So there's a bit of misinformation there that we should correct right away.

Should this bill pass – and I hope it will – when the loan program is offered to seniors, the expectation is that seniors will say: yes; where do I apply? Beyond the grants that were available under the former \$8 million program, which were rather limited in their scope, what we have here is a program that allows seniors to do a whole panoply of things which are much more suited to their taste than the limited grant program might have offered them. So it's a whole lot more choice that they have to use their own equity to improve their own property.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further comments under 29(2)(a)?

Any other speakers to the amendment?

I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment RF1 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am happy to speak in favour of this bill. I proudly represent the constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, and one of those municipalities, being Vegreville, has a large aging seniors population. Twenty-five per cent of the population is actually made up of those over 65, so my constituency office is very busy. My constituency assistant has a large caseload, and she's out there working with seniors all of the time and is a huge asset to the community.

I know that one of the things that she talks to me about is how she runs out of the seniors' benefit program application packages all the time because seniors know where to go when they need help, and they know that we have things that make their lives better. Also, one of the reasons why they know about these programs is because of FCSS. They're a huge asset for sharing info, and these are just some of the ways where we want to make sure that seniors are aware of all of the options that they have.

You know, one of the issues in a community like Vegreville is that the housing stock is a lot older. Unfortunately, one of the things that happens is that when these houses are not renovated on a regular basis, they have a lower value, so it makes it much more difficult for them to be able to make home repairs against the value of their houses. They also have a greater need for repair. The figure I have is that 56 per cent of houses that seniors live in were built over 35 years ago.

Some of the concerns that are most often shared with me when I meet with constituents is that they're concerned that they are not going to be able to live in their homes anymore, and that impacts them being near their family. One of the hugest issues in my constituency is that there is not enough assisted living, there is not enough affordable housing. This is one of those ways that we can try and bridge the gap that needs to be bridged now. We're looking for ways to help seniors in the meantime, you know, between budgets, between infrastructure announcements.

You know, there's a lot of things that we know need to happen, but things like this can help seniors stay in their homes for longer periods of time. In small municipalities that are rural municipalities they're always concerned that they're going to be taken further away from their doctors. These relationships that they have, that lend to their quality of life, are incredibly important. They don't want to be sent to large urban areas where they don't have access to their regular doctors.

There is also the fact that they don't often have enough money to do repairs. I often hear from seniors that they're limited in the projects that they can do, the maximum amounts are restrictive for them to be able to actually do these renovations on their homes, and of course this just further leads to negative impacts on their lives.

5:50

I know that my grandparents have owned a home in Jasper Place for about 55 years. It's a community that they have strong ties to. They belong to the Lions Club. You know, my father grew up there, and my grandma does everything humanly possible that she can to keep her and my grandpa at home. She's lucky that she has children that are invested in their parents, that have experience with renovations.

I've shared in this House before that my dad is a master painter, but he's also a jack of all trades. So he's been able to do things over the last 25 years, renovating the bathroom to have the accessibility for my grandparents to be able to use it, to be able to use the shower, to be able to use the toilet, to be able to use the sink. It's incredibly important. Really basic things that we take for granted all the time. Also, the kitchen is something that is a huge expense. Without having family or friends or the means to do renovations, these

things, if left to deteriorate, make quality of life very difficult and dangerous. My dad also was able to install handrailing down the hallways. He was also able to install a wheelchair ramp out the front door.

This is a means for these seniors to be able to do this, to be able to find good, qualified contractors. A huge part of this is that we know that we need to make sure that we protect our most vulnerable populations, so we need to be really concerned when we put these sorts of things into effect in our province. We need to make sure that they're protected as consumers.

Some of these points here are incredibly important, you know, that the loan program will consider the reasonableness of the costs to the individual for the home repair, renovation, or adaptation as part of the loan approval process. Contractors will be required to advise consumers who are entering into a contract that the loan program is available to eligible individuals, which is a huge issue. We want to make sure that people who are accessing this are not being pointed in the wrong direction, to advise the consumer of their contract cancellation rights if they are not eligible for the loan.

Also, another point is how contracts can be cancelled and how the consumer can notify the contractor, the effect of a contract cancellation and the responsibility of the contractor to refund any money paid if the contract is cancelled. Really simple things that we know are important to protect our seniors. We know that, unfortunately, these populations can be targeted unfairly. Other members have mentioned things like phone scams. Unfortunately, the seniors population has a tendency to be isolated because of lack of mobility, isolated because of a lack of transportation, and these things make some of our populations really vulnerable to exploitation.

I'm really happy to stand and talk some more about my grandma and my grandpa. They lost their licence, so they couldn't drive anymore. We don't want to continually have to negatively impact these people. They're our grandparents, they're our parents depending on what age we are. You know, my grandpa volunteered at the Edmonton public library downtown, helping other seniors learn how to use the Internet. He volunteered at the Edmonton Space and Science Centre for decades, teaching kids science. The Telus World of Science is what it's called now.

When he lost his licence, he couldn't do the things that he wanted to do. He couldn't be involved in volunteerism. And I know all of the members in this House know that we need to keep supporting our volunteers. It's very difficult to recruit, and we need to have these people that have, you know, a real core passion. We need those people so that they can bring up the next generation of volunteers. So we need to not be putting these extra barriers for our seniors to having a good quality of life.

With that, I will say that I am happy to support this bill. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, do you wish to close debate?

**Mr. Dach:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Home means comfort and security for all of us. Our homes and communities contribute greatly to our sense of well-being. Seniors have told us that being able to stay in their homes and communities as long as they choose or for as long as they are able is enormously important to them. Being able to live in a place they've called home for years or even decades is often critical to an older person's quality of life and sense of independence.

We as a government want to support seniors to be self-sufficient in their homes for as long as possible, and it is our responsibility to address the needs and priorities of a growing aging population. This bill helps address those needs and is a great example of how we can help more seniors remain independent in their own homes.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a second time]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really enjoyed the debate today. I think we've done some very good work, and I would move that we adjourn until tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, April 13, 2016

Day 14

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, April 13, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect. Let us be diligent in our work today in this Assembly. Let us work towards protecting and preserving our great province for generations ahead of us, just as was done by those who came before us.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 5

##### Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, good morning, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise in the Assembly this morning and discuss this important piece of legislation. We have had some good discussion on this bill over the last 24 hours. I think it's a little unfortunate the speed at which the current government is choosing to introduce pieces of legislation and then pass that legislation through. This particular bill was introduced last Thursday with one speaker, and then, as we all know, Mondays are private members' business, and then yesterday this was passed through second reading, and now here we are in Committee of the Whole and quite likely going to be passing this bill later this afternoon.

You know, this is the exact sort of thing that the members on the opposite side, at least their returning caucus members, used to rally against in this Chamber. I remember times when the Government House Leader rose in his place, quite a ways to my left there . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Quite a ways to the left.

**Mr. Cooper:** Quite a ways to the left.

. . . rising and speaking about how the then government was passing legislation at a speed that didn't allow for proper consultation, that didn't allow time to connect with stakeholders and constituents, or allow the appropriate diligence and due diligence on pieces of legislation. It's unfortunate that we're here today.

I understand that there may even be debate on Bill 7 later this afternoon, which was only introduced in the House yesterday. I think that's a big shame, particularly in light of the fact that Bill 1, Madam Chair, was introduced on the first day of the session, yet for whatever reason the flagship piece of legislation, the jobs creation plan that this government introduced, has yet to see the light of day in this Chamber. I know that this side of the House is very excited about talking about jobs, talking about the economy and the role of the minister. We would love to be debating that flagship piece of

legislation that is going to give the minister the ability and the authority to do everything that he needs to do. I don't know what the minister of economic development has been up to over the past couple of weeks. He needs a piece of legislation to be able to deliver on their promises, which is what Bill 1 was as it was presented to us.

It would have been great to be able to debate that. Instead, the government is moving quickly on the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. While there are some very noble goals in Bill 5, Madam Chair, this bill in many respects falls short of meeting the actual needs of seniors. There are a number of items in this piece of legislation that are concerning. Particularly, we on this side of the House are interested to know about the consultation process that took place to arrive at Bill 5.

I know that I have reached out and members of our caucus have reached out to those in the banking industry, those who provide very similar products to what the government is going to be providing should this bill pass. I wouldn't want to prejudge the success of a bill like this, but should this bill pass, the government in many respects is going to be fulfilling the role of private institutions. We reached out to some of those institutions just to find out if they had any comment or desire to provide feedback, and one of the most surprising pieces of feedback that we received was that they were totally unaware of the government's direction.

Now, while they were happy to provide comment around some of the noble points of the bill, they did have some apprehensions about whether or not the government was best placed to be able to deliver those programs, whether or not the government was in the best place to assess some of the financial realities that come along with this piece of legislation. These are the types of conversations that create pause on this side of the Assembly. These are the kinds of conversations that make us believe that perhaps we should stop and reflect and ask pointed questions about whether or not this particular piece of legislation is exactly what's needed to keep seniors in their homes and particularly to keep a wide range of seniors in their homes.

We've seen that the government has made statements that they see this piece of legislation as a way that they could save \$6 million from the grant programs that used to go to support seniors. You know, it's interesting because the opposition sees it quite differently. While we are always in support of reasonable fiscal management, what we don't think is appropriate is that the government is going to be saving dollars on the backs of seniors, and shrinking the grant program to then drive seniors in the direction of this particular program should cause us all to pause, cause us all to take stock about whether or not that is the direction that is going to best affect our seniors. One of the concerns that I have, Madam Chair, is that those who aren't homeowners, who don't have access to the loan program and only had access to the grant program, are going to have a reduced capability to in fact access those grants.

9:10

Now, I know that the grant isn't going from \$8 million to zero; it's going from \$8 million to \$2 million. But my big concern – and I know that in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills I have lots of seniors who arrive in my office who are concerned about access to government programs. Now we see a program that has been working fairly well, that has been getting resources to seniors, being cut from \$8 million to \$2 million, a cut on the backs of our seniors. So it is concerning, particularly with those who haven't had the fortune of owning a home, who are tenants in our province but have just as equally provided to our province. Many have worked diligently and built this province but for whatever reason didn't

purchase a home or were unable to under the circumstances, and now we run the risk of those individuals not having access to the grant program. There are challenges around that.

There are certainly other risks and concerns with respect to the role of contractors in this new program. It seems to me that the government is taking steps to download some of the responsibility onto the contractors when it comes to informing them of the program. I know that I've heard from some contractors and some home repair providers their concern about who is going to be responsible for the forms that are going to be required for this program. Will seniors have the support that they need, or will the contractor come to the senior and say: "You know, we could do this and this and this in your home. The good news is that there's a loan program that can assist you with that. In turn, here's a giant stack of paperwork that needs to be completed."?

Listen, I believe that there needs to be the checks and balances on our programs, so there's naturally going to be that paperwork, but who is responsible for administering that? Is it the senior, who already may have challenges navigating the bureaucracy that we have, or is it going to wind up at the desk of the contractor?

It brings us to another point. I know that the government's intent is to provide some consumer protection inside this bill with respect to contractors, but there is some significant risk of predatory contractors and contractors that really go out of their way to advertise specifically to seniors around this program. Perhaps there are times when seniors may or may not need what the contractor is offering, but they make a great case for that, so the senior decides: well, maybe I should do this even though there isn't the need. They wind up carrying some debt because of pressure that was applied by a contractor.

While I appreciate the fact that there are some consumer protection points in the legislation, part of my question is: is there going to be additional enforcement around contractors that may be a little bit more predatory because of the ease of access to the loan? That's a big concern because, you know, we need to be doing the things that we can to ensure that our seniors aren't being taken advantage of. Listen, I know that there are a lot of great contractors out there who have a desire to help, but I also know that we've seen specifically in the seniors bracket more fraudulent behaviour, more untoward behaviour than in many of the other demographics.

I think of just a number of years ago in the town of Carstairs. We had a significant hailstorm that came through, and as a result all sorts of contractors, roofing and siding contractors, were popping up out of the woodwork because literally every home in Carstairs had to have their siding and roof replaced. I personally know a number of seniors who wound up being taken advantage of by a contractor that wasn't as skilled or as experienced in the industry as they claimed. The challenge is that that contractor is now long gone, nowhere to be found. They got into business just to chase the hailstorm, and they got their money and their deposits and left. This is one of the potential exposures when we have such broad eligibility.

I'm not naïve enough to think that everyone wants to take advantage of seniors, but part of the government's responsibility, because they are going to be the deliverer of the program, will also be to ensure – the flip side of that is also taking care of the consumer protection, some of which is mentioned in the bill, but also the enforcement of that. We're making 140,000 seniors eligible for this program, which on the surface is excellent, but whether or not there will be the enforcement tools and departments there is a concern.

Then, when we get to the size of the eligibility of the program and the enforcement side, we've heard from the government that there will be no additional costs to administer this program. Well, if 140,000 seniors – while I acknowledge it's highly unlikely that

every senior that owns a home that's eligible in the province would in fact take advantage or engage in the program, even if only half of those people did, 70,000 seniors, there is no way that within the context of the current structure the government would be able to deliver the program.

To say that there are no costs or that it can be managed within the current confines of the department is a bit concerning because we don't know the exact number of uptake. We also don't know the capacity of the department. Part of my concern is if there's been a cost analysis done within the context of the department, and if there has been, is that information available to the opposition? We have heard that they expect approximately 5,500 seniors to engage in the program, but what if it's twice that much? What are the costs associated with administering the program?

**9:20**

Then we get back to the start of this discussion as to whether or not the government is in the best place to do that or whether partnering with industry, be it ATB or engaging in a project with all financial institutions in the province, because only engaging one institution may not be the best given that we can assume that seniors bank with all sorts of different institutions – this question about whether or not the government or industry is in the best place to do that. And will this program significantly increase the size of government or not? When the government increases, there are costs, and that means that the costs associated with a program sometimes mean that seniors who actually need care can't receive the revenue from that, which is very similar to the discussion around whether or not we should be cutting the grant side of the issue on the backs of low-income seniors or heading directly in the direction of the act.

As you can see, there are unfortunately more questions than answers. And let me be very clear that I speak in strong support of doing things that honour and respect those who built this province. I speak in strong support of ensuring that our seniors have access to the care that they need, particularly when it comes to the delivery of health care in their homes. You know, often there's nothing that's more important to a senior than staying in their home, and more often than not . . .

**The Chair:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm seeking unanimous consent of the House to revert briefly to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the House. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you some of the leadership of the Equis rural electrification association. Equis REA provides safe and reliable electric distribution services to commercial and industrial developments, production facilities, and farms throughout 26 Alberta municipal districts and counties and is the largest member-owned utility in Canada. Here today are Glen Fox, board chair; board directors Ed Beniuk, Allan Nimmo, Doug Drozd, Dave Wigmore, Wanda Okamura, Ben Vanden Brink; and CEO Pat Bourne. In my constituency and in many across this province Equis is contributing to a stronger, more diverse, and more prosperous economy, and I thank them for their work. I'd ask them to now stand and receive the traditional warm welcome.

Thank you.

**Bill 5**  
**Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act**  
*(continued)*

**The Chair:** Continuing on with Bill 5, are there any further speakers to this bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the government's Bill 5, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. How we take care of our seniors, our most elderly, speaks volumes about ourselves. Top-quality care and services for seniors are a top priority for my colleagues and I. We're talking about our parents and grandparents, those who raised us from infancy and were there for us when we needed them throughout our lives. Many seniors have worked hard their whole lives, guided solely by the certain knowledge that when they reached their golden years, their families, friends, and their communities would be there for them. For these reasons we respect the good intentions of this particular bill.

As I said, we do appreciate the intentions of this bill. The government here is trying to set up a home equity loan and grant program for eligible seniors to make modifications and repairs if they are under an income threshold. The bill also wants to include a grant component for seniors who do not qualify under the loan program but need financial support for critical home repairs. Essentially, what the government is doing here is creating a de facto bank.

The proposed legislation states:

5(1) The Minister may, in accordance with the regulations, make a grant to . . .

(c) [an] owner [who] does not qualify for a loan.

This raises a few questions, Madam Chair. Does this mean that all Albertan seniors are eligible under either the loan or the grant portion of this program? Again, why has the minister chosen to leave questions of eligibility up in the air, to be decided later in regulation?

There are several serious elements of this legislation that are left to regulation: grant loan eligibility, grant loan amounts, grant loan definitions, lists of approved repairs and adaptations, and loan repayment schedules. Perhaps the very question of whether this program is worth while can be found not in the legislation that the government is putting forward but later on in the regulations they are able to pass into effect without the scrutiny of this Assembly. Don't seniors deserve to know for sure who is eligible for this program and who isn't?

So far the government seems to be confused about the eligibility numbers as different members are giving conflicting answers about it. The minister first said that 145,000 households would be eligible, and then her colleague contradicted that yesterday and said that the actual uptake is expected to be closer to 5,000. These questions of eligibility are part of a much broader question of sustainability. It's a level of uncertainty that seniors don't need at this time of uncertainty. Will there be money for this program if 100,000 seniors sign up, or will this be like the failed jobs incentive program, where businesses started hiring because the government said that they were going to do something and then recanted on that?

Given the ambition and the scope of what this proposed legislation is actually trying to accomplish, it should be reviewed and studied by the appropriate committee, but the government members did not care to take that step when my colleague proposed it yesterday. The lack of details and what appears to be an attempt to rush this bill to debate do nothing to reassure Albertans that this government can be trusted or that they will get this right. Our seniors deserve deeper consideration, Madam Chair, and forethought than this.

The manner in which this government is yet again firing legislation through the Assembly and into law is worrying. There's an opportunity to make all legislation better through proper study in a committee, but that seems to be particularly true for legislation of this magnitude. What would you find if you went to committee? You would find that the experts in the field have a better chance of getting it right than bureaucrats in Edmonton. Given the number of key details that are missing in the proposed legislation, deferred to regulations, an opportunity to further study this proposed legislation would greatly benefit Albertans.

There's a lot of uncertainty for seniors already, and I don't just mean the elderly today but for all of us who will eventually retire and be seniors ourselves. A few years ago the age of eligibility for old age security was changed from 65 to 67.

**An Hon. Member:** By a Conservative.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you very much.

The former federal government had justified this decision by saying that there simply weren't enough Canadians of working age to sustain the program. They had explained that in the 1970s there were seven workers for every one person over the age of 65. Twenty years from now there will be only two. Whereas in 1970 life expectancy was about age 69 for men and 76 for women, it is now 79 for men and 83 for women. All the while Canada's birth rate is falling. The most recent federal budget lowered the age of eligibility back to 65. Of course, it's good news for Albertans that they have to work less before retiring and that they have more time with their loved ones, but the new federal government did not fix the worker-to-retiree ratio problem when they moved OAS eligibility back to 65.

So, Madam Chair, there is yet a looming uncertainty over the long-term sustainability of that program as well. It's an uncertainty that will affect every seniors' program: the increase in older Albertans, the falling birth rate, and the question of whether our old age programs are sustainable in these circumstances. The reality is that a lot of seniors' programs depend on an assumption that government programs are all working as they should be and that they will be there when they are needed. That is an interesting assumption that I think legislators need to take into consideration very seriously.

**9:30**

Just this past February we learned that thousands of low-income Alberta seniors had not received their guaranteed income supplement payments because of a technical error. It was a technicality that federal officials referred to in media reports as a misunderstanding at their processing centres, but it made a huge difference to thousands of seniors in Alberta and across Canada who depend on these payments. I say this because it is in this climate of uncertainty that this government is now introducing this program.

By their own admission this provincial government is looking at running a deficit over \$10 billion. According to the Finance minister last month, the government has no idea when it will be able to balance Alberta's budget. That means bigger long-term borrowing costs and bigger interest payments on our debt. That means more of what we could be spending on helping Albertans and especially seniors is instead going to paying off interest payments. Members on the government benches like to fearmonger about the cutting of programs, but the fact is, Madam Chair, that the surest way to invite deep cuts to programs is by running long-term deficits and being unable to control spending. That is not sustainable, and that is not something that seniors want to hear. The

government's predilection for long-term deficits and increased program spending simply invites higher and higher cuts in the future.

Now, one of the questions that I have to ask is: what is the real need for seniors? Is it in-home support services? Is it cost-of-living increases? You know, it's really tough, when someone is on a fixed income, to have to deal with these cost-of-living increases. Maybe this is something that the government needs to take a look at. In committee we might hear from expert witnesses that the real problem seniors are facing isn't access to infrastructure but perhaps aging-in-place supports. These are some of the things that I believe this government needs to address.

This bill is filled with good intentions, but there are some overarching questions that it leaves unanswered. Looking at other Canadian jurisdictions, this loan program appears to be as yet untested in Canada. Other provinces offer a combination of grants and tax credits. It would be helpful if the government could make a case for how they arrived at the conclusion that this legislation is what is missing.

Because what they are also doing here is moving on an accelerated timeline, I believe there is substantial merit in studying this legislation before it moves any further. Alberta seniors are already worried about the economy and their future. Many are trying to do what they can to help their children and grandchildren who are struggling in the job market. Governments shouldn't be adding to their concerns with an untested program such as this without allowing for a thorough study of its potential ramifications. An opportunity to examine this legislation accompanied by subject matter experts from relevant departments and agencies as well as seniors' organizations would greatly benefit Albertans and especially seniors at this time.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 5, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. Opposition members have raised a number of their concerns, and I'd like to respond in kind with some information that might satisfy some of their worries.

Of course, the program was designed to target a specific population of Alberta senior homeowners who may not otherwise have the financial capacity to alter their home to make it more suitable for them to continue living in it as they age. It was not designed to be, as I mentioned yesterday, a be-all and end-all program. Its specific purpose is to ensure that as many seniors as possible who wish to take advantage of this voluntary program can do so by accessing their home equity if that's something they wish to do.

Concerns were raised about whether this will be a program that will suffer a limited amount of uptake in the same way as the tax deferral opportunity has suffered. I mentioned yesterday – and I'll repeat it again today – that, no, we don't believe this will be the case because the tangible result of the senior accessing their equity will be the improvement of their property, thus gaining more livability for the home, the ability to live in it longer. Also, from the government's standpoint and from the standpoint of the protection of taxpayers, it improves security for the loan as well in that the value of the property is secured. In the meantime a minimum equity, 25 per cent, must be maintained during the ownership of the property, including the amount of the loan that is finally approved.

As far as the types of home adaptations or repairs that will be allowed to qualify for the program, the new program increases the types of repairs and adaptations from the current special needs

assistance home repair grants to any reasonable repair or adaptation that assists a senior who chooses to remain in their home. Leeway will be granted to departmental officials looking to make decisions about what will be accepted or not.

Basically, we're not looking to have any luxury items financed under this program. Even though it will be the senior's own money, we think maybe a tub cut-out or an accessible tub will be something inside the house that might be allowed, but a hot tub outside the house for bubbly enjoyment on the weekends isn't something we'd consider. It's really to improve the physical safety of the senior in their home, the mobility of the senior in their home, to allow them to be maintaining their independence in their property and also in consideration of their health.

Now, is the government trying to save money on the backs of seniors? Absolutely not. The former program, the special needs assistance home repair grant, had an \$8 million annual amount that could be accessed, and this program that we are enhancing right now will still have a \$2 million grant component.

Members opposite thought that maybe this would be a limitation upon seniors who otherwise might not qualify for the loan, but in fact what we're doing and what we're anticipating is that the uptake on the access to the home equity will be taken up by some seniors who otherwise might have applied for the grant because the home equity loan portion allows the senior to do a much wider range of things to their home than they would have been allowed under the grant program, which had a limited scope of items that could be repaired such as things that were directly related to urgent health and safety matters.

The savings of \$6 billion is a fiscally prudent thing to do. Also, we don't believe that the \$2 million in grants that is still going to be available is a limitation. If indeed we find that there's a high demand still and the subscription for the grants is taken up really quickly, it may be something that we could reconsider. But the anticipation is that we won't have much more than a \$2 million demand for the grant component.

The administrative cost was another question that the hon. member opposite rose to express concerns about. Now, there is no new funding for the administration of this loan program. The administration of the new loan program will be leveraged through existing resources, specifically shifting those resources that administered the home repair grants provided through the special needs assistance program. Department officials have expressed confidence that because of the balancing of different loan application periods, resources within the department can be shifted so that extra expenditures aren't needed to administer this new, enhanced program.

Wondering whether or not the grant program being proposed is unfair to seniors who worked hard to save money and build equity in their home by only offering them loans as opposed to grants is a concern that people really shouldn't have. This change will improve seniors' access to home adaptation and repair assistance as under the program significantly more seniors will be eligible for low-interest loans than the current benefit. Further, loan recipients will be able to access supports for a greater range of eligible repairs and adaptations and loans that cover a greater portion of the cost of repairs.

**9:40**

Now, the program will help us address the needs and priorities of a growing and aging population by allowing seniors to use their home equity to remain in their homes and preserve their independence. It's not going to be something that will appeal, necessarily, to the full range of seniors that are out there. Those with savings will use those savings to improve their homes as they so



choose. What this loan program targets are those seniors who, for whatever reason beyond their control, haven't been able to save money to effect home repairs that are necessary as they age in their property, and they are faced possibly with the choice of having to move out because they no longer are able to function in their homes.

We focused on this group of seniors so that we could save money in the long run as well by keeping seniors in their homes and out of longer term care. It will help us address the needs and priorities of a growing number of seniors, who not only by population demographic are becoming a larger percentage of our population, but our older seniors are actually aging as well. Their average age is getting higher, and the need to adapt their homes to be able to stay in them is greater. That's where we're targeting the program.

We believe that the savings to the government in making these changes aren't an attack upon seniors. We're enhancing a program that will allow greater opportunities for seniors to access their home equity, and we'll probably see a diminished demand for the grant program. If indeed when the program is rolled out we see a massive leap towards it and 143,000 families jump towards it, we'll obviously have to readdress things, but we don't anticipate that type of a huge demand because, as has been noted before, seniors do wish to maintain the value of their homes and pass along a good chunk of their equity to surviving generations.

The program that existed before had about 7,000 subscribers to the grants, so we anticipate that kind of a number for the combined grant and loan program. Once we roll it out, we'll know for sure. But we believe, quite confidently, that the staff capacity will be able to handle the demand and that we won't be needing to empty the treasury to finance the uptake of the program. We think it will be quite within our expectations.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Sure. Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a quick question, and I'm not sure if the hon. member will choose to respond or not. He mentioned that the bill's purpose wasn't for luxury items, so I'm making the assumption that there's some threshold of what is going to be considered luxury and what isn't. I'm curious to know if the government, then, will also be involved in determining quality or any of the other items around what a contractor may or may not do. For example, if one senior would like to install a \$10,000 sit-in tub and another senior would like to install a \$5,000 sit-in tub, are both going to be eligible? Who determines the criteria of eligibility of the expenses and that? Some of the issues that would surround those types of decisions may, from the sound of things, have to be made by a staffperson in Edmonton.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would be happy to respond to those concerns of the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Departmental staff will be scrutinizing applications. There are charts and information and data available which very readily show the range of costs for certain types of repairs and supplies that may be asked for under this loan program. If indeed they fall outside of the parameters, that will trigger a response by the departmental officials to contact the senior and say, "Hey, what's happening here?" or to dig a little deeper, to contact a contractor, to be a guardian, actually. This is one of the consumer protection elements in the program. So there indeed will be a means of having red flags show up if the costs are outside certain ranges of normality for various types of repairs or supplies.

The word "reasonable" is found in a lot of contracts; in fact, it's quite a common word to find. This is basically the type of yardstick

that will be applied by departmental officials when they're considering what will be approved under the loan program or the grant program. If it's reasonably going to assist a senior to stay in their home comfortably and safely and allow their physical mobility within the property, it's going to be allowed. Lots of leeway is going to be granted because, after all, under the home equity loan program it is the senior's own money.

However, it is a government program, which is going to be accessing money loaned from the government treasury, so we will be responsible with it. If there are things that just really seem outside the realm of reasonableness, they will be red flagged and dealt with. But by and large, the rule of thumb will be to be lenient as far as allowing the senior to improve their home in a way they wish as long as it just doesn't get a little bit silly. We'll let the word "reasonable," the yardstick that is found in lots of contracts, be the one that rules here as well.

**The Chair:** Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have one question, for clarity, for the Member for Edmonton-McClung, who just spoke. He said: we're not worried about having 100,000 or 145,000 people get involved in this. My question is: just seeing the failed jobs incentive program go from spending of \$178 million down to \$10 million, which seems to be a little more within their ability to do, wouldn't it be more prudent for the government to set a threshold on how many people are going to be able to access this? If 100,000 people access this or, I think, 145,000 people, we're talking about \$725 million. Wouldn't it be more prudent for the government to set a threshold for how many people will be able to take up this program? I'd just like to ask the member that question.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, hon. member, for the question. I don't believe that setting a threshold is a necessity at this point. As I mentioned, the uptake on the previous grant program was around 7,000. We anticipate that numbers will be somewhere in that neighbourhood as well. There are, for those seniors who wish to and could afford them, more expensive home equity loan programs in the open market. If there was that attractiveness of those higher interest rates of private loan programs, there would be an uptake that would be noticeable. The expectation is that we will have, hopefully, a strong uptake of the loans program, but there will be numbers that are similar to what the grant program had over the past number of years. We're confident that the numbers won't be exorbitant, and we'll monitor it over time.

**The Chair:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to again discuss this very important bill. I think this is one of the most important pieces of legislation that this Legislature is going to deal with in this current session. It's important to my constituents in Edmonton-Whitemud and, I dare say, to every legislator in this Assembly. There is a need for improvements in our housing stock. There is a demonstrable lack of maintenance of our core housing stock, and a lot of that is occupied by seniors.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills commented that not a lot of consultation had gone on. I really want to dispute that. I think there was consultation as we were running during the election. I certainly heard about this problem frequently, and it's a real pleasure for me to be able to go back to my constituents and tell them that we're actually doing something that they asked about. I

know that it will look good on all of us no matter what side of the aisle we're on.

9:50

The Edmonton Social Planning Council in 2015 reported that the number of households in core housing need was trending upwards and that the census data from 2011 showed that over 10 per cent of Alberta households, or approximately 135,000 households, were in need of improvements. The Edmonton area community plan – and, again, this is part of the consultations that you're asking about – forecasted a gap of 22,000 affordable housing units in the city by 2015. This legislation is going to help close that gap. It's not going to close the gap entirely, and there are certainly other things that we need to do to assist our seniors in living in their homes, but this legislation will be very important in doing that.

I'm really surprised that the opposition is interested in delaying this. Let's get this going by July 1, and let's get the seniors more comfortable in their surroundings. Let's get some jobs created in the renovation industry. I found it passing strange that the Opposition House Leader was complaining about the possibility of predatory contractors when just a couple of days ago, in discussing Bill 203, he was so sure that no businessman in Alberta would ever do such a nefarious thing. I think that we have to trust our contractors and other businessmen. There's the Better Business Bureau. There are the sorts of safeguards that the Member for Edmonton-McClung has talked about.

I also found it passing strange that the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills would suggest that we go to the banking industry for information on this. The banking industry has failed us in this regard. The reason that we need this legislation is that the banks won't provide an equity loan on these terms to our seniors. They're in the business of making money. This legislation will provide support to seniors that couldn't access money through the banking industry. So it's no surprise to me that the banks would say that this isn't a good idea. I think that's the role of government, to actually take the lobbying and sift the chaff from the wheat and try to come up with a reasonable plan.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I just want to remind the House of what the government is actually proposing because there have been a lot of questions about: who qualifies, and what are the loan limits? You qualify if you're 65 years of age or older. Survivorship is permitted as long as the spouse is aged 55 or over when a loan exists at the time of the senior's spouse's death. The maximum loan amount is \$40,000. There were some queries about this; \$40,000 is the maximum amount. There will be an income test on this, and the income test limit is \$75,000. As the Member for Edmonton-McClung was speaking about, there is a requirement that there be 25 per cent home equity. And, of course, we want to get it going by July 1.

In my opinion, what we're talking about is a very fiscally responsible income-based program to help, in particular, our low-income seniors. The grant part of this program is going to be particularly useful to those low-income seniors who wouldn't qualify for a bank loan, who face basically being evicted from their homes if they can't have access to this sort of program.

I would urge all of the members of this Legislature to proceed with alacrity through this process and get the bill passed as soon as possible so that we can provide this sort of assistance to our seniors.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Comments or questions? Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud: I'd like to ask for some clarification. In his comments he said that the banking industry has failed us. I'd like to ask not the hon. minister but the member what his thoughts are on the people of Alberta owning ATB. I'd like to ask him why he thinks that the banking industry, with their years and years of experience, their well-trained personnel, wouldn't have the ability to administer such a type of loan.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you to the member for the question. I think this is an important aspect of this legislation. We're talking about low-income seniors who would not have a good credit rating and who actually may be ineligible under any banking system. I was referring more to the major chartered banks than to ATB or to the credit unions, but all of those banking institutions do have fairly strict limitations as to who they will lend money to. That credit rating, which is done through people like the Dominion credit rating system, et cetera, in my opinion, often has a very arbitrary view of what a good credit rating is or how that's created.

I really, basically, want to bring this up. I'm sorry that the folks from Equis aren't here, but this morning several of us had the opportunity to meet with the Equis folks. They have two initiatives in their service area, which, I think, includes your area of the province. Their staff actually has collected over \$100,000, just the staff of Equis, and that \$100,000 is used to pay low-income folks' power bills that run into trouble. I heard a story of somebody this morning who had an \$800 power bill, and I think this was a senior. The reason that they had the \$800 power bill was that the gas had been cut off, and they had to use space heaters. Now, I'm not saying that this new legislation is going to fix that particular problem, but that is an example of the systemic need throughout the province to help our low-income seniors.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm like the Whac-A-Mole. I keep popping up here on this Bill 5. I wanted to add some clarification and information to respond to questions from members opposite with respect to the consultation process that's taken place regarding Bill 5 and what level of consultation there was. There have been extensive meetings with industry stakeholders or stakeholders with respect to seniors' housing concerns.

There were two minister-led round-tables with the following groups in Calgary and in Edmonton. It's an extensive group. I won't read through all of them, but I'll say: Frank Hoebarth, region 6 representative for the Alberta Council on Aging; Luanne Whitmarsh, executive director of the Alberta Association of Seniors Centres and president of the Kerby Centre; Louise Yarrow, the committee of Alberta retired people, representative of CARP, Public Interest Alberta seniors' task force, and a senior adviser for Alberta Health Services; Alanna Hargan, chair of the Calgary chapter of Seniors United Now; Katherine Christiansen, team leader for seniors at the city of Calgary, helping to make Calgary age-friendly by 2020, also a member of the Older Adult Council of Calgary; Raynell McDonough, project manager for age-friendly Calgary of the city of Calgary; Lisa Stebbens, representative of Older Adult Council of Calgary and of Carya; Orrin Grovum, a semi-retired chartered accountant who worked in financial services for the last 20 years; Edmonton consultation round-table member Rick Brick, Canadian Association of Retired Persons, chair of advocacy group with over 4,500 members north of Red Deer; Donna Durand, Alberta Council on Aging; Noel Somerville, Public

Interest Alberta, chair of seniors' task force; Ed Hamaliuk, Seniors United Now board member; Al Kemmere, Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties; Karen McDonald, Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton; Kelly Santarossa, policy analyst, Alberta Urban Municipalities Association; Wayne Sorenson, Seniors United Now. So there were a number of individuals who attended these round-tables.

**10:00**

On top of that, hon. members, the department was also in consultation with these groups throughout the creative process during which this bill was designed and drafted. So extensive communication has taken place with stakeholders, and it wasn't a simple process. There was a lot of communication back and forth.

There have been a number of different drafts, as is often the case with legislation before it reaches the floor in the form of a bill, and I've been privy to some of that process. I know that the communications, departmentally, were extensive in order to draft this bill right. I was quite impressed, being cosponsor of the bill and privy to the process for the first time, with the amount of consultation and energy and departmental consultation and stakeholders that have to come together to produce a piece of legislation in a form that is ready to be presented as a bill in the House. It has undergone a lot of consultation, and we believe the bill is in a form that is ready to be passed in order to satisfy the aims of the legislation.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you again, Madam Chair. To the hon. member. I'd like to ask if that was an exhaustive list of all the consulting that went on. I didn't hear a single contractor mentioned of the many, many thousands of good contractors we have throughout Alberta. I didn't hear ATB on the list. Our credit unions in so many communities – big communities, mid-sized communities, and rural Alberta – provide so many good services. I didn't hear that on the list either. Maybe in light of what was said earlier by one of the NDP backbenchers about our banking system failing us, I wasn't surprised to not hear any of our banks on your list. Was that an exhaustive list? Did you talk to contractors? Did you talk to bankers that understand this business already?

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** I can respond to that. No. I can say that it's not an exhaustive list. Should the member wish, I will endeavour to see what other elements were contacted and report back.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and welcome to the chair for what I believe is the first time since your uneventful election. I'd like to welcome you to it. In all seriousness, it is nice to see you there.

Just a quick question and comment. I want to sort of remind the House, in light of some of the comments about passing this bill speedily, quickly, whatever the comments were, and that this side of the House is a Whac-A-Mole and keeps popping up and keeps asking questions, that this is an important part of the process. No one in Alberta sends their MLA to the Legislature to rubber-stamp legislation.

While it may be disappointing or sometimes boring to sit in the Chamber for extended periods of time, we have debated this piece of legislation for less than four hours. It is a meaningful piece of legislation that has good goals. But questioning legislation and discussing some of the finer points about definitions or expressing some concern about the fact that we're going to make more of this bill in the regulations than in the legislation: this is not untoward. This shouldn't be disappointing for anyone in the House. This is a very critical portion of what we all have been sent here to do, both the government in defence of the legislation and the opposition's intent, which is often to strengthen legislation that we agree with and oppose legislation we don't agree with.

It is not entirely clear, certainly, for members of the opposition exactly where we will end up on Bill 5, but the point is that this is a very, very important part of that process and one that I'm proud as a member of the opposition and as an elected official representing the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to be here to do on their behalf. It's not a matter of delaying legislation but more so of speaking to the importance of that legislation. It is why we have questions and seek clarification, because we don't do this in a policy committee to review the legislation, where we more likely ought to. It has to be done here in the Chamber, which is our only opportunity and location.

With that said, I just have, at this point anyway, one additional comment or question to the hon. member who was speaking about utilizing the "reasonable" clause in the legislation as the barometer for decision-making in that if the proposal falls outside of the "reasonable" clause, there will be checks and balances and red flags will be raised, were I think his words, and someone inside the bureaucracy will try to sort out what's going on.

My question for the member is: if the red flags are the regulations or processes that are going to be put in place to protect seniors, if the red flags fail, who is responsible? Is that then the bureaucracy, who allowed the expenditure to continue, or is it the senior because at the end of the day it's the senior's money? You know, are we opening up doors for a system that fails, and then ultimately the department will be responsible? I think it's a fair question to ask because if I was the senior who was taken advantage of by a contractor and there were supposed to be systems in place to protect me, I would be concerned if they are in fact not in place. I'm just a little bit curious to know a little bit more detail around those checks and balances that the minister assures us are in place.

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm happy to rise and address those concerns of the hon. member regarding consumer protection items in the legislation. The departmental officials will of course scrutinize the applications and look to ensure that the cost parameters don't exceed norms, that are readily ascertainable within certain schedules and data that the departmental officials have access to. But in the final analysis, hon. members, with respect to any contractor who might be trying to take advantage of a senior and who flips through the system and it ends up that a senior ends up paying more than they should for a particular service or maybe gets renovations done that they didn't really need, I think under the Fair Trading Act, that exists already, you will find that there's ample ability for penalties.

As well, under this legislation it's relatively difficult for that to slip through the cracks. If indeed in the unforeseen circumstance that we do have somebody who is unscrupulous, there are penalties that already exist under legislation, which will stay in place as well,

to protect consumers such as the Fair Trading Act. That would be most likely where redress would be sought.

10:10

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you very much. I do wish to ask the member a question regarding the financial burden of this. I recognize that math is difficult for the other side, but if they recognize how many households are available for this program and how much money is allocated for each household, if they can do the math and tell me what the total is and whether this is budgeted or unbudgeted in this upcoming budget we have tomorrow.

**Mr. Dach:** Well, as the hon. member knows, I can't speak to budgetary matters. We all anticipate tomorrow's budget with great excitement and look forward to the Finance minister's announcements and proposals for Alberta's economic future tomorrow afternoon.

With respect to the program and the debate at hand we do anticipate that enrolment in the program will be lower while the program is newer but will increase as the communications roll out and outreach of the program is announced. So we expect that the enrolment will increase over time as awareness of the program increases.

As far as the precise numbers, that's certainly something we're going to be monitoring. As noted already, the former grant program had a subscription of about 7,000 people, so to suggest that we're going to have an uptake of a hundred thousand in the new program that we're enrolling people in now or are offering now is unrealistic. We expect the numbers will be somewhere in and around the same that the grant program anticipated or that it had as a subscription number. We'll see.

If indeed there's no uptake on it, we'll know that the program needs to have another look. But we do expect and hope that seniors will take advantage of this as those that the market isn't satisfying, those that don't have the savings, who still need to improve their home to be able to stay in it will be the target market for this program. That, we anticipate, will be attractive to those individuals who don't have the savings. If you do have savings, you're going to spend them yourself on your own home to satisfy the needs that you have to improve the property. But the program itself is designed to target those individuals who live in their own home, are now retired, are 65 years of age or older, a couple or a senior, with a maximum \$75,000 threshold income, and they have to keep 25 per cent of their equity in place during the program with respect to value of their home.

We anticipate that the amount of uptake will be similar to the 7,000 or so individuals that did take advantage of the grant program, and we'll be monitoring numbers. We hope that at least that many will take advantage of this program because we'll know then that it is properly targeted.

On top of that, it'll have increased savings to the government not only of the \$6 million which is going to be saved as a result of the grant program being changed to \$2 million but also in terms of keeping seniors out of long-term care and out of acute care. Having them in their own homes, having a higher quality of life is going to be a huge savings to the government and taxpayers as a result of this home renovation and adaptation loan program.

We think that, all in all, net value to taxpayers will be a lot larger than what is actually seen on the face of it because of the number of seniors that will end up staying in their own homes longer. We hope to be able to tabulate that savings as well. It's something that

we are looking into to try to determine over time which seniors are actually taking advantage of the program and what cost savings as a result of their not being in long-term care is realized.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and also welcome to your first time sitting in the chair today as well. I have some questions and concerns on this bill. On the surface, of course, we see that this bill is a positive step and can assist home-owning seniors. I've been through this situation myself before in helping my father and, more recently, some in-laws that have looked at moving from their own principal residence, a single-family residence, to a seniors' facility. I think that these are all positive opportunities for us to help those seniors.

Some of my concerns are around the fact that far too much of this bill is pushed into the regulations, and that's always a concern when things are left unprescribed and they're not laid out not only for the benefit of this House but for the benefit of those hopefully accessing these programs.

I have some concerns with the low uptake, which has been referred to on the tax deferral program, which is of concern. That was highlighted in a June 2015 article in the *Calgary Herald*. The program not only was not living up, possibly, to expectations but was under some scrutiny as to whether it should even continue. My concern is that it's now nine months later, and we have not seen any significant efforts to either communicate that opportunity for tax deferral more broadly to Albertans, to educate the public, or to enhance the program.

For example, in British Columbia that program only has a 1 per cent interest on the accrued tax deferral balance for those individuals. They have some 36,000 individual households taking advantage of that. So that's of concern, that we have a program in place, we are now layering another program in place, and we have not even taken steps in the last nine months to enhance the opportunity for Albertans to access that nor even to know about the viability and access to that to enhance their lives, which is what this is about.

We also don't know if this new SHARP program will allow flexibility with respect to market reverse mortgages. I spoke just yesterday to a fairly senior representative here in Alberta of the HomeEquity Bank, which is part of the Canadian home income program, which has been in operation, as I referenced yesterday, since 1986 and at least 1994 in Alberta. A group that has 30 years' experience: I didn't hear that on the list of those stakeholders that were addressed. So it is of some concern for me that not only were they unaware of this legislation, which they are now taking a look at, but I'm assuming that the industry, which has been active in Alberta and is quite well known, I think, amongst those individuals, and mortgage brokers – that they're brought forward to mortgage brokers is, actually, a lot of where the referral business comes from – have not been adequately consulted. So I look at that from two sides. One, they haven't been consulted on how we can make this program better, but also we're competing with the private sector, and I think we always need to know when we're doing that as government, particularly with taxpayers' dollars.

I have some questions with regard to the bill as well, that is sort of pushing so many things into the regulations, which concerns me. Again, pushing everything into regulations is a problem. We have reference here to a \$75,000 income maximum for singles and couples. I guess one of my questions here is: if an applying household is doing so and there's a combined income of the two members of the household over \$75,000 – let's say, for example,

two people with incomes of \$40,000, so individually they would qualify, but combined they would exceed the threshold; however, both of their names are on the title – would they still be eligible? That's one of my questions.

The second one relates to my comments about the tax deferral program. In British Columbia not only do they have lower fixed interest rates, but the private market reverse mortgage companies are allowed to do a reverse mortgage concurrent with the tax deferral program. That is not allowed in Alberta either. That is a problem because we're dealing with seniors who are facing issues. If they're going to tax deferral, they may also have income shortages for other needs in their lives, which may mean that they need to move to another program, not necessarily for home adaptation and repairs but maybe to allow them to hire a home caregiver or live-in home care that can stay in their house, which will allow them to then do that. If they do that now in Alberta, they have to then pay off the tax deferral loan, which, really, then, is handicapping the handicapped, in my mind, as well.

10:20

The question with regard to the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act, of course: is it going to be allowed concurrent with a reverse mortgage? That is a big question, again. They've now repaired their house so that they can stay in it, but now they can't afford to live in it because they need to access more of their equity, of course, assuming that they would still meet the equity requirements as laid out in the regulations and in this bill. Those are some concerns for me.

You know, I guess the other side of this is that even if we had a 5 per cent uptake, which, given the numbers given to us by the government, would be about 7,250 clients, that would be about 10 times larger than Calgary's largest home builder, which would probably employ about 130 people. They don't actually do the work; they contract out the work. Those are the people that actually are there to estimate and ensure that the finances and everything are going forward. That concerns me, that we are going to set up this entire infrastructure here in which, in fact, it looks like we will have to have somebody go through each individual homeowner's contract to ensure that we're not putting in the hot tub versus the accessible bathroom; that we are putting in the ramp and not the fancy, huge deck on the back of the house; that we are putting in things that are not termed luxuries. I don't think that's what this bill is intended to do, to provide access to cheap money for luxuries. It's meant to allow somebody to put in a new furnace, a new roof, to allow them to stay in their homes longer.

I'm concerned that the costs of administration of this program are going to be such that even if we get a 5 per cent uptake of this, we will need to put into effect an infrastructure that is 10 times larger than that of the largest builder in Calgary. That could number into the hundreds and maybe even thousands of individuals to administer a program, which could be done in the private sector if we possibly investigated the opportunity to let them administer a program, to assist them with allowing access to equity in people's homes as well.

Those are some of my questions with respect to this. I'm not against this; in fact, I think this is a good bill. I think any opportunity for seniors to be able to stay in their homes – and, as I said, I've been involved with some programs. We went and helped seniors to paint their houses and repair their fences and things like that – these are good things – and I did it for a 93-year-old woman in Ramsay in Calgary years ago and numerous other households. It's gratifying to see that you can help someone stay in their house, and I think that that's the intent of this bill, but I do have some concerns and certainly would welcome any clarification of that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** I can stand and speak to some of the concerns and questions expressed by the hon. member as far as the flexibility and so forth and getting the private banking industry involved. We're not competing with the private sector because we're going to be providing a loan opportunity that is something that's not offered by the private sector in terms of the equity requirements. You'll find that the home equity loan programs will need the consumer to retain a higher level of equity in their home. The 25 per cent is not something you'll find as an industry standard. Usually, you'll find that 45 to 55 per cent is the amount of equity that they will lend up to as a maximum. Also, the interest rates that are being offered are advantageous, and that's something that we as government are able to do as a support to seniors, to allow them to access these loans and take advantage of an opportunity that's affordable to them to effect repairs and stay in their homes longer.

As far as competing with the banking industry, no. We're doing this as a means of supporting our seniors in a way that governments can and private industry really can't necessarily be expected to do.

The income eligibility requirements: I mean, we had to set a threshold somewhere. We're looking at median incomes of couples and individual seniors and finding that the median income for the couples was – I believe the last figures we had were for 2013, so we upped it a little bit – about \$69,000, so we figured that the \$75,000 mark would be a reasonable level at which to set it. So that was the threshold that was used, and we believe it's a reasonable number.

As far as the uptake – again, it keeps arising as an issue – it seems that hon. members opposite really are concerned in two directions. Some hon. members are concerned that nobody will take advantage of the program and it'll be a program that has limited uptake, similar to what some of the tax deferral programs have. Other hon. members are concerned that the department will be flooded with applications. So I take it from that that hon. members across aren't certain as well as to what the uptake will be. We're not positive either, but we expect the demand should be similar to what the grant program was, in and around there.

We hope that seniors find it an attractive program, those that are targeted, those that don't have savings but have a house which needs repairs that will allow them to stay in it longer. That targeted market of individuals who will be served by this program are those that will save taxpayers and Albertans a lot of money by staying in their homes longer, but it in turn improves their lives. We think it's an excellent program that saves money for the government but, in the meantime, allows seniors to really improve their quality of life, to stay in their communities, to have communities with a wide range of age groups in their population. All kinds of good things happen as a result of this bill.

We are in the middle of the construction season right now. Not all of the projects that will be undertaken, that are anticipated under this program, of course, will be seasonal types of construction projects, but there are some that will be reliant upon good weather to be done, so we don't want to miss the opportunity of having projects started within this construction season, to get shovels in the ground and hammers and saws going and to get your neighbours to work fixing your house. We look forward to having this bill passed and implemented by July 1 so that construction activity can take place and you can get your brother-in-law to work on your mother's house.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.  
Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Ms Woollard:** Oh, thank you, Chair. I'm very happy to be able to hopefully give a little bit of a slightly different perspective on the whole issue. I appreciate the detail and the information given. I'm looking at it from the point of view of kind of a microcosm of rural Alberta and how this bill may have impacted some of the people that I have had the pleasure of getting to know over the years.

I married into a very large family, a very large but very close family, seven sisters who came up to this part of the world, west of Edmonton, in the '30s, when they were dusted out of farming from the Consort area, so they thought this was like Eden on Earth. They stayed in the area, they grew up, they married, they settled. Some farmed, some coal mined. They were all very proud, very hard-working people. With seven girls on the farm you can imagine that everybody took a turn at working hard and doing what needed to be done.

The houses were basically home-built, and they all, even the ones that were in town because they worked at the mine, were very proud of their houses, of their land, of their property. They were very capable people. They grew up. Their children grew up, finished school, got married, moved away.

Over the years, of course, they got older, but because they were such independent and hard-working people, they always tended to want to do everything themselves. If there was something that needed to be done, if the well needed to be shocked, they would be the ones that would be down in that well, doing what needed to be done. It started to make my blood freeze when I would see one of them up on a ladder to be doing the shingling at 75 or 80 years old. They saw no problem with that.

But the thing is that they were hard-working, but they didn't have a whole lot in the way of pension. They had their land. They were land rich, cash poor, as so many people in rural areas still are, and that took a toll. They did not extravagantly go and hire people to do work. Their children were occupied with their own children and their lives, so it was hard for them to find a way to get work done without endangering themselves – of course, they never saw it as endangering themselves – and it was hard for them to appreciate that there was another way of getting it done.

This would be perfect. They could use the equity from their properties. They all wanted to stay in their homes for as long or longer than humanly possible. It would be a way for them to do it, maintaining their independence, maintaining their dignity, maintaining their ability to make the decisions about what happened to them, and they would be the force behind anything that was done. This wasn't too much of a problem for them, usually, in getting legitimate and competent contractors because, as you'd know, in rural areas everybody knows everybody else, and if there's somebody who's out there to scam people, they're usually identified pretty quickly. Especially in a close-knit community and a close-knit family, if somebody spread the word that somebody was not terribly trustworthy, that word would spread pretty quickly. As with anything else, it is something to be wary of, and I like the provisions in the bill to make sure that the contractors are reputable and will do what they promise to do.

I just wanted to mention that to help people be independent and safe in their homes, in the living that they have chosen, is really important, and I support this bill because of that. Thank you.

10:30

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My pleasure to stand up and talk about Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. I want to start off by saying that top-quality care and services for seniors is and always has been a Wildrose priority. I'm very, very

proud and pleased that in the four years I've been fortunate enough to represent the good people of Cypress-Medicine Hat and the Wildrose Party, we have consistently stood and talked about improving the quality of the lives of our seniors, whether it's been the expansion of home care, money for home care from our budgets, money for home care reallocated from the layers and layers of bureaucracy that can make the lives of our seniors better, even down sometimes to those crucial, crucial daily care situations, where in the past Wildrose members have stood up when food in seniors' homes was inadequate, when baths weren't properly taken care of, when beds in institutions weren't in order for the quality of care that seniors deserve. It's been the consistent theme of the Wildrose for four years.

With that, I respect the good intentions of this bill, but I'm very, very concerned about this government trying to use this bill to yet again introduce a very expensive, risky, centralized experiment.

We've heard – and we're guessing a lot because the bill is fairly thin and fairly limited – that bureaucrats in regulations are going to determine much and most of this. We're hearing about a government that wants a big bureaucracy, huge administration costs, potentially, to handle lending, to administer and control contractors, to develop and control oversight, and of course doing this without consulting, without involving what our taxpayer-owned ATB could offer, what our tens and tens of good, strong credit unions already with great reputations and interfacing through all parts of Alberta, big urbans, mid-sized urbans, and rural Alberta, could offer, and of course our chartered banks, which understand the risks, understand the costs, and understand the opportunity. We're seeing a government that once again thinks they know better than individual Albertans, individual businesses, individual Alberta companies.

Let's not stray too far from the main point. The main point is what we all owe senior Albertans for, my goodness: how they built our province, how they turned Alberta into the best place to live, work, raise a family, and be strong in our communities. We owe them what we can to ensure that they have the opportunity to have quality of life, to stay in their homes as long as possible, and to take every benefit of the advantages that Alberta can offer.

This experimental program is untested in Canada. That concerns me greatly. Every single piece of legislation has unintended consequences, never mind one where the government wants to create layers and layers of bureaucracy, become another layer of lender, oversight on contractors, and oversight on the programs.

Most of the details are coming through regulatory change. We all remember the reaction to Bill 6 – thousands of people on the steps here, thousands of people throughout rural Alberta, thousands of people signing petitions – and it's still not done. I was at the meeting last night of the Alberta school boards, and one of the consistent things I heard was complaints about the regulations put into Bill 8. Well, colleagues, we didn't get a chance to debate that in this House. We didn't get a chance to represent the 4.2 million Albertans that we represent, the 41,000 Cypress-Medicine Hatters that I represent. When that bill was on the floor, those regulations were nowhere in sight. This legislation that could go so far to help our seniors, this legislation that could go so far to take advantage of our good businesspeople in credit unions, ATB, and banks and has been totally ignored and totally neglected by the NDP government, could be full of unintended consequences, could be full of administration costs at a time when deficits, interest costs, and the burden on taxpayers and families are already at a peak.

You know, when I bump into a senior in Cypress-Medicine Hat, I hear the story several times about how, when they were a baby or maybe just before they were born, their parents got off a train and walked five, 10, or 25 miles to a half section of land that nobody

had ever seen and built a homestead, built a life, built a community. I think: my goodness, how strong are these people? What are they made of? Then a week later one of them on a limited income will come into my office and show me their utility bill, show me their bill that they can't afford, show me the transmission costs rising, and they now have a fear of where the generation costs may go with this government's other risky concerns and risky experiments.

There are many, many ways to help seniors, but in each and every thing we do, we have to get it right. Anything that strengthens their independence, allowing them to keep more of their money and allowing them to stay in their home longer, we owe it to them to do, but we owe it to the taxpayer of Alberta to do it in the most efficient and effective way possible.

You know, I asked earlier for the government to elaborate on the research and the consultation that led to this legislation. I appreciate their promise to get back to me, but here we are at Committee of the Whole. The bill is moving along, and it was mentioned from the other side: "Seniors need this quickly. We need to hurry." At this point in time there was no consultation with our contractors as to what may be out there, what the opportunities may be, what they may be willing to provide, what their suppliers may be willing to provide in terms of – you know, it ranges from bulk buying to discounts to opportunities to new services. Let's get it right. Let's not let the unintended consequences and the inefficiencies add to the burden of the hard-working Albertan. Let's work hard to get it right, and if that means taking more time, if that means referring this to a committee, if that means more consultation, please, I ask the NDP government to do it.

You know, I'd also like to know why the minister, why the NDP government chose to introduce a new, untested program instead of improving the existing programs that already have the infrastructure, already have the administration costs in place, and, most of all, providing increased access to home care.

**10:40**

I've talked to several good front-line workers about it, professionals, from doctors to nurse practitioners to nurses to good home-care providers to many people who were on the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung's list, you know, seniors' groups and people who work very, very hard and diligently for our seniors. We have huge gaps in seniors care, money that could be reallocated from high-level bureaucracy, money that first of all has to be put into ensuring that we have enough training, that we have enough qualified people, that we have enough people there to provide and meet the needs. But in almost 11 months I've heard nothing from this government to do something that could have immediate benefits.

You know, as well intentioned as this bill seems, there is a reality that this NDP government has probably already faced; they don't need me to remind them. The reality is that we have a government that is building a reputation for breaking trust with Albertans. It tried to push through Bill 6 with minimal consultation and then put farmers at a huge disadvantage when it launched its consultation panels.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I wonder why.

**Mr. Barnes:** Yeah, I wonder why. A foregone conclusion.

What I hear in Alberta is a government with an ideology, a government bent on a certain way. It launched a needless royalty review that destabilized investor confidence at a time when we could least afford that. It is still refusing to back down on their carbon tax, which will raise the price of absolutely everything for all Albertans, seniors and otherwise, and this week it will release a

budget with a deficit of over \$10 billion, clearly abandoning the principles and the pretense of any fiscal responsibility. As our interest costs hit a billion dollars a year – we're almost there now – I think of the services that that money could provide. I've said it in the House before. I think of how opposite that is to the NDP ideology. Those that receive interest are the rich. Paying interest makes the rich richer; it costs all Albertans all of their services.

Yet despite these facts here we have the NDP government again asking Albertans to trust it, this time to flesh out the legislation that concerns citizens who are among our most vulnerable and the most deserving. The most deserving and vulnerable are seniors, the people who built our province, built our economy, started our social programs. And now again you're asking them: "Just trust us. We'll get it right in the regulations. We can control our bureaucracy."

Adding key details regarding eligibility and amounts for this home equity loan and for the grants through regulations means that the government will not be accountable for it, not accountable until next election. Even interest rates on these loans will be set through regulation, maybe because we don't trust our banks, maybe because we don't trust our businesses. We'll see. Furthermore, there has been no substantive detail released regarding the grant portion. The NDP government owes it to those of us who represent 4.2 million Albertans to have the chance to debate this, to have the chance to make it as good as possible, and the sunshine that that would provide for all Albertans – all Albertans – to know what's available to them.

In fact, the legislation broadly points out in section 5(1) that the minister may in accordance with the regulations make a grant to an owner who does not qualify for a loan. That last part is in section 5(1)(c). What does that really mean? Does that mean that all Alberta seniors are eligible for either a loan or a grant portion of this program? Demographics, of course, being what they are, the economy being what it is, do we dare leave this to the bureaucracy in the regulations? Do we dare trust the administration to be anything close to efficient? The importance of efficiency is that the more efficient this program is, the more we can help seniors, the more we can actually put the money to the front lines to help seniors stay in their homes, which, of course, is what the Wildrose wants.

Again, why has the minister chosen to leave the questions of eligibility up in the air, to be decided later? Does she want to decide? Does she want it chosen in regulations? Don't seniors deserve to know who is eligible and who isn't? The broader question must be asked: why has the government felt the need to leave all the important details out of the legislation, where Albertans' elected representatives can have a say and a voice? If the minister is confident enough in certain details about own eligibility to announce them publicly, why are they not set out in the legislation for debate? Why has she been so silent on the issue of grant eligibility? Albertan seniors, Albertan taxpayers, and Albertan communities need to know.

Last week this bill was scheduled for debate 24 hours after it was introduced. Thankfully, concluding debates and other business meant that we had a little more time to come to a reasoned position after all, but the impression still remains that the government wanted to push this through despite the bill's lack of details. What is the rush? Let's get it right. Let's consult with experts, all experts, to make sure this program is as effective and as efficient as possible so we can do the most good with our tax dollars. The lack of details and what appears to be an attempt to rush this bill to debate does nothing to reassure Albertans that this government can be trusted. It does nothing to reassure Albertans that this government has learned anything from the Bill 6 mess.

Madam Chair, our seniors deserve better than skeletal legislation and leaving all the regulations to bureaucracy. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any additional comments or questions?  
The Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak on Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. Let me be clear right off the bat. Seniors built this great province of ours, and I believe we need to respect our own seniors. I'm sure all the Wildrose members here and, I think, everybody in this Chamber believe that we need to respect all seniors.

I feel like I must start out by saying that I, too, am very disappointed that we're here talking about Bill 5 when, clearly, the government's flagship bill, Bill 1, seems to have been left to collect dust. Bill 1 addresses jobs, and right now Albertans are hurting. Each day more and more Albertans are without jobs. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud said that this is their most important bill, so why wasn't this Bill 1 if it's their most important bill? I'm kind of confused about that.

10:50

At the same I want to be clear that ensuring our programs for seniors are working well for seniors is very important to me and to our caucus, and I appreciate the chance to talk about this. The protection for seniors and the home adaptation and repair concept is a positive idea; however, this bill has raised some concerns for me as I've listened to the debate so far. The bill requires that the government provide loans to seniors, which will be paid back upon the sale of the home or the death of the senior and which will incur interest in the meantime.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

I appreciate that it's simple interest and not compound interest; nevertheless, this could be a significant amount of debt as time goes on. Just looking over the numbers we were provided, the government says that they think there will be around 5,000 loans, I believe. I understand that this is just an estimate. There was a press release that says that there could be up to 145,000 households that could qualify. You know, according to my calculations if all who qualified were to receive loans, that could cost, well, frankly, an awful lot of money. I wonder if the government has really taken into account how much money this really could cost.

As my colleagues have mentioned previously, it seems unlikely that the department will be able to administer this without adding increased staff, especially given the goal of monitoring the costs of the projects to protect the seniors. The point that I'm trying to make here is that there are some real unknowns about the uptake of the program and the costs of the program.

My colleagues asked for this bill to go to committee so that more details like this could be worked out, but the government was not interested in doing that. The more we need to weed out these concerns, the more I believe we need to do this. We need to take that and bring it back, and it should go to committee. Bills this important should be looked at very closely, in my opinion.

In Bill 5 the government is acting like a bank. Perhaps we could hear whether any banks or credit unions or financial institutions were consulted on Bill 5. If yes, I would like to know what issues they raised. The starting of a bank could really take years, and there are many details that would have to be worked out. While this might be a little different than starting up a bank, the fact is that acting as a lender is a complex undertaking, and we should not take that lightly.

I'll just review a couple of things and some of the basics. You'll need a department to take applications. You'll want to find out who the people are that want to have this. Then they have to go through these applications to determine if the client meets the criteria.

They've got to make sure that the client has ownership of the property. But that's just the beginning of all this. Madam Chair, I could go through all the different steps to getting a loan or even a grant. These steps are time consuming and complex. The administration of these loans is considerable. Does this government have the people in place to put together these loans? Does it have the necessary infrastructure?

I truly do see the benefit of having seniors stay in their homes longer; of that I have no question. In fact, most seniors today say that they want to stay in their homes as long as possible. With seniors living that much longer than they did, say, 50 years ago, living longer at home just seems to make sense. Many seniors may be able to benefit from physical alterations to their home such as widening doorways, building ramps, and doing maintenance such as shingling a roof or replacing flooring. If these renovations to enhance their lives and make their homes safer are truly what makes the difference between them being able to stay at home or having to go elsewhere, then the seniors' home adaptation and repair program may have potential in the area that they've identified as a priority. But does this government have a thorough grasp on how many seniors will be able to stay at home because of renovations made with this?

Basically, this bill is like a book with a great title. That is, if you don't actually crack open the book and read it, you can easily believe that it has great potential, but once you get past the introduction, the details emerge. These details make me very nervous, and at this point I have to say that I don't support the bill. Most of the time the government should not be in the business of business. Whether or not this is an exception, I'm afraid, remains to be seen. It might be, but in fact we have too many questions at this point about details to be supportive.

I believe it's less expensive to have seniors live in their homes as long as possible and that not only is this actually better for the seniors but less expensive for long-term home care.

You know, I have a few more additional questions. This program will use prime lending rate, but what prime lending rate? Is this an ATB prime lending rate, or is it a Bank of Canada prime lending rate? I kind of have a question on that.

Will there be inspections before or after to see what work should be done? If you look at Bill 203, they talking about that being a very important aspect of that bill, looking at what has to be done and what should be done and all estimates to make sure the proper work is done. I'd like to know how that's addressed. I would like to know: if you're going to do home renovations such as widening doorways or removing a wall, has an engineer been involved in this? I would hate to see one of these roofs collapse as a result of: yes, we gave them money, and, yes, they had some repair done by Joe, the neighbour next door. Was it a qualified repair? Did they have an inspection before and after? I don't know. That's my question. Is the government going to do something of that nature?

Are they going to have appraisals on the homes? If so, whose cost for that appraisal to determine what the value of that home is? Does the minister know how much this will cost taxpayers? Because in the end the government will have to provide the money to create these loans. Does the minister have an estimate to put together this program, with all the necessary layers to do a great job, a job that taxpayers expect? Will this program cost a hundred million dollars to put together, a billion dollars, \$5 billion? I would like to hear an answer because if they've done their due diligence, they should know what that cost is to put this together.

Are there any other programs that will be cut besides the grant program that the Member for Edmonton-McClung told us about yesterday? You know, provide this. We know that one is being cut, so are there other ones?



Where has this piece of legislation been used? Can you give me an explanation of where in the world this has been used, and successfully, or at least in Canada? Canada would be a great place to start because we have very similar laws and legislation. This looks to be untested and unknown. What study has been done to see all the potential consequences that could happen if it's not done right, all the unintended consequences?

July 1 seems to be too soon with all the questions that are surrounding this bill. I'm sorry. Members of this House, I'm afraid that without a more comprehensive examination of this concept, it's not wise to proceed, and I will not be supporting Bill 5.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to propose a motion, an amendment to this act, if I could. I've got the requisite copies here available to table for the House here.

I'd like to move that Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act, be amended in section 2 by adding the following after subsection (6):

(7) Notwithstanding any other provision in this Section, loans made by the Minister under subsection (1) to an owner with an annual income for the preceding year that is equal to or less than \$24,600 shall be subject to the rate of interest determined under subsection (6) minus one per cent.

Hon. members, this is intended, really, to recognize the fact that we are here today under this act to help primarily low-income seniors who are in their houses and prefer to stay there. These individuals may face other challenges as they go through this. Obviously, the opportunity for them to adapt and repair their home so that they can live and age in place for longer periods is of great importance to us. However, they may also require further access to the equity in their homes at a later date, and we certainly don't want to have them in a situation where the 25 per cent requirement is accelerated too quickly for them to do so.

**11:00**

We believe in helping seniors of all ages and all incomes in actually achieving independence, aging in place, aging in community, and, most importantly, maintaining their dignity and their health and their safety as time goes on. However, we need to recognize that there are many of them on fixed incomes, that they're facing increased civic and other taxes, and that these costs could accrue to them over time, which may ensure that they have to go forward for other equity opportunities. Again, as mentioned earlier, I would hope that in the regulations we can address the fact that a reverse mortgage could be actually held concurrent with the Bill 5 opportunities.

I'd like to encourage members of this House to work closely with low-income seniors, to support this bill so that those that are earning very much, arguably, in the low-income regions will be able to stay in their homes longer, that that accruing loan that will be against the value of their property will be reduced over time, and that we'll be able to help them for longer periods of time.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View on the amendment.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's eminently sensible to make special concessions to those who are lower income taking on another loan, in fact, what may be a loan on a loan if they still have a mortgage to pay. It would make a tremendous amount of sense to stimulate both our economic development and ensure that more

people at lower incomes are able to take advantage of this opportunity. So I will be supporting this amendment.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to the amendment. I think one of the important things to highlight here from my perspective on this amendment is that when we create legislation that is so heavily focused on regulation, it makes it difficult even to provide meaningful solutions to the legislation. I think what we saw from the hon. member is exactly that, that we have an amendment here that ultimately is based upon something that's to happen in the future, and that is the development of regulations. It will always be determined under subsection (6) minus 1 per cent. While subsection (6) may ebb and flow, this is really an amendment of intent to help even lower income seniors than the bill recognizes.

But when we do this, make legislation that is heavily reliant on regulation, it's more than a little concerning, not specifically to the amendment, because the intention of the amendment is noble in its cause to assist low-income seniors, but the consolidating of power, if you will, into the minister's office, which ultimately develops the regulations, should always be a concern to every member of the Assembly. We've seen this in a number of pieces of legislation that the government has proposed. The government used to stand in its place and fight tooth and nail against exactly what we see in this bill, and that is broad-based, sweeping regulations and a skeleton, if you will, of legislation.

So while I support the amendment in principle and its desire to assist low-income seniors, the ramifications of what this actually means in terms of costs, in terms of total amounts, what this is going to mean to the budget – because it's prime less 1, I believe. We don't know what that number is. If the legislation gave more clarity to the House and the regulations weren't going to be developed at a later date and, quite frankly, at a speed which is very fast, by the first of July – it's certainly concerning to this member of the Assembly. You know, Madam Chair, we are here to stand up for constituents and to try and ensure that we are doing what's right, and when we make legislation that is regulation focused, this is exactly the risk that we can open up.

While I look forward to some continued debate to have a better sense and perhaps some more time to determine whether or not I can support the amendment as proposed, I think it's important that we keep those factors in mind as we move forward.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise in opposition to the amendment for a couple of reasons. We do believe we're being fiscally prudent by offering prime as the interest rate benchmark under the program.

I did have a question, actually, for the member opposite, the mover of the amendment, regarding the \$24,600 amount that was mentioned in the amendment. It indicates "an owner with an annual income for the preceding year that is equal to or less than \$24,600," and so on and so forth, but it doesn't say anything about couples. There are those distinctions. I'm wondering if the member has taken into account that there's a means test for couples as well as singles. The amendment doesn't address that, and I think it's a flaw in the amendment.

But on the main issue of the fiscally prudent decision by the government to stick with the prime rate for the benchmark interest, I think for that in itself the amendment does not deserve my support.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I stand to support the amendment made by my hon. colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek. You know what? We've had some discussion in here, and the discussion has all been around helping seniors stay in their homes. Not only do I believe that's the case; the debate and the discussion in the House, in my view, supports that case. I think that all members of all parties have demonstrated with what they've said when they've been on their feet that their intention truly is to help seniors stay in their homes, to be independent, to have dignity and a good quality of life.

While there's been apprehension with some elements of the bill expressed, particularly the lack of regulations, we certainly give the government credit for wanting to do something good for seniors, to help them to be independent and make decisions about their own future, particularly when as they age, the cost of living in this world sometimes rises faster than a senior's income rises. Of course, that can easily happen because many seniors are on a fixed income. They don't control the rate at which that fixed income increases, and of course none of us individually control the rate at which the cost of living increases.

11:10

What we have here is an amendment from my colleague that really says that we should actually protect seniors and make it even just that little bit easier for those of particularly low income. As we've discussed before, this is one of those bills that I've been happy thus far to support the government on because sometimes we have to choose here in this Legislature and the government has to choose between saving money and increasing Albertans' quality of life. Here is one of those rare cases where we actually have the ability to increase Albertans' quality of life and save money because, of course, by keeping seniors in their own homes, there's a very good chance that they, obviously, won't be in government-supported, -funded, -provided housing of another format. So any efforts that we can make to make this bill more widely usable by a greater number of seniors.

My colleague wisely picks on – and by picks on, I mean picks on in a positive way – seniors of particularly low income, saying: these people need more help, so let's give them more help. It's been said by even some members on the government side that a lot of seniors find themselves, again, when they're past their working careers and are on that fixed income, to a certain degree while using the word "rich" a little bit liberally, asset rich and cash poor, where they perhaps are living in a house that they paid for through their or their family's toils and labours over sometimes 25 or 30 years. I suppose having a home paid for doesn't make you rich, but if your income is below \$25,000 a year, or \$24,600 as this amendment says, you're surely not cash rich. When you compare that to a home that could be worth \$400,000, \$500,000, \$600,000, or even \$200,000, this is about allowing the seniors to use the wealth that they have created by the sweat of their brow and the work of their mind over, in many cases, decades to remain independent.

I would implore people in the House to support this because it really takes those seniors that have earned their way into having paid for that asset to the point where there's enough equity there that even without an increased working income, they could use it to increase their quality of life and stay off of the taxpayers' dime. Again, the legislation the government has put forward truly is not the government paying for seniors' housing. It's a loan from the equity that the seniors have paid for. This isn't charity. This isn't even necessarily a hand up. This is a recognition of the work the senior has done over decades, a recognition of the equity that the

senior has built up through their own good management of their financial affairs. This is only a financial mechanism. It is not putting the taxpayers at risk because, of course, the loans are backed by the equity of the senior's own home, and it is not a gift, just a genuine recognition of what the senior has accomplished in their life and a mechanism by which the government can help the senior use that equity to maintain their dignity, maintain their choice about where they live and where they stay.

What we have here before us, hon. members, is a slight improvement. That's not a criticism of the government's bill. Nonetheless, it's a slight improvement, and it's one that is well worthy of our support. I would encourage all members of this House to give this amendment that support.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, go ahead.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Sure. Am I allowed to respond to the question from the Member for Edmonton-McClung with respect to the income?

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you. To the hon. member: thank you very much for your comment. In fact, our original amendment had included a qualification for both a single and a couples applicant. However, as noted in previous conversation, nowhere in this bill at this point in time is there a reference to coapplicants. It's just a single applicant; hence, the fact that there's only one single maximum income allowed in there, not an allowance for a coapplicant or household income. Hence, we were advised by Legislative Counsel to remove that.

In fact, we had suggested that that lower income for individuals be at \$26,400, which is the number referenced in much government documentation and income thresholds, and \$40,000 for coapplicant members of a household in that regard. So that was something. However, we've seen so much of this bill pushed to regulation that we would allow that to obviously be addressed as regulation in interpretation of this as an amendment.

Thank you.

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

Then we will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I wish to speak to the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act, Bill 5. I cannot express strongly enough how important it is to get this right. I do want to talk a little bit about the process that we've seen this government conduct themselves by and suggest an improvement even in that. It seems like when this government conceives an idea, a policy idea, they convene a limited group of people most of the time, and over many weeks and months they create this policy, a bill. The bill hits the floor, and then this government is suddenly in a great big rush to push the bill through the House and not give the Official Opposition, whose job it is to scrutinize these things, a whole lot of time to take a look at this. Then when we do start raising questions, we get accused of delaying some vital piece of legislation.

Well, if that's a problem for this government and they don't like to be scrutinized, then I would honestly suggest a little bit of a change in their process. How about this? When you conceive a

policy idea, use some of the legislative processes that we have in place here called standing committees, which I know this government absolutely is loath to make use of, and have the standing committee call witnesses, call experts, and go through a very thorough and fulsome investigation process to ensure that all Albertans, not just the select number of witnesses that the government likes to hear from but all Albertans, even those the government doesn't like to hear from, can come in and address this.

I noticed in the extensive list that the hon. member gave for the people whom they claim they consulted, there was this organization from Calgary, that organization from Calgary, and an extensive list also from Edmonton. Well, I have a news flash for you. Alberta is bigger than Calgary and Edmonton. There are people all across this province who, no doubt, would have loved to be part of this process, in particular senior citizens that come from the wonderful riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, who were obviously not consulted and who form a significant demographic amongst the 43,000 blessed people that I am so pleased to represent here in this place.

If the government is unhappy with the Official Opposition questioning them here, well, that's part of the process. You can fix that a little bit by making use of the legislative systems we have called standing committees, that I know you just absolutely hate to use.

Now, our seniors are indeed the fabric of our society. This bill has excellent intentions to help our senior citizens. As was stated yesterday – I'm not sure what riding the hon. member is from – and I'm quoting from *Hansard*, page 534:

The current special needs assistance program provides about \$8 million a year in grants to low-income seniors for essential home repairs. Now, with the introduction of the new loan program, the special needs assistance program will no longer provide these grants. Thus, the government will save about \$6 million.

And on and on he goes.

11:20

Under the current program, though, some of that money, as I understand it, was for people to help our seniors. One of the needs that was expressed to me by the seniors in the riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake was: yeah, home improvements are great, but we actually need people to come in and help us. That, for many, is the greatest need. They have maintained their homes, if that's where they are, and my concern – and perhaps the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung can elaborate on this in a little bit – is that with the cancellation of the special needs assistance program, we are also seeing a cancellation of funding for people, home-care people and staff, to come and help our senior citizens. If that's the case, we have a serious problem. We're taking away a program that helps our seniors who have a need for people to come in and help them and instead are telling them: go get a loan and fix up your house. I don't think that's a fair swap at all.

Another issue I have here is that we heard today from one of the members opposite that our financial institutions have been a failure, that they have failed. I'm sure the financial institutions in Alberta are surprised to hear that. I just want to point out something here, some of the other things that we heard. We heard words like "we anticipate," "we expect," "we have an expectation," and "we are confident that." That tells me that there is a significant amount of uncertainty about this bill and what it may or may not do and that a lot of unintended consequences have not been considered throughout this consultation process.

The other thing that concerns me, going back to "The banking industry has failed us" – I believe those were the words from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud – is that there is a fact, and the fact is that government administration of most things is rarely

efficient, always becomes cumbersome, it seems, and always becomes very expensive. I would say that the financial institutions in our province are run as efficiently, as effectively as any financial institutions anywhere in the world and, for sure, more effectively and efficiently than this government could possibly run a banking set-up like what we're talking about that this bill is going to do.

Secondly, we were told repeatedly by the Member for Edmonton-McClung that department officials – how are we going to put this? – will scrutinize, that department officials will assess, that department officials will oversee. Madam Chair, I have a document here called the Auditor General's report, and the Auditor General had some things to say about the government's ability to oversee, assess, scrutinize, and manage projects with regard to schools. The things that the Auditor General had to say were not very nice. They pointed out that the government has been rather inefficient in these areas, and now some of our most vulnerable people, senior citizens, are being told by this government: just trust us to care of you; trust us that we know how to assess your needs, that we know how to scrutinize these projects. Then the government is saying: well, we're going to have the contractors involved in making sure that the seniors know exactly how this thing needs to roll out.

This is just craziness. There needs to be a use made of those institutions in this province, like financial institutions, who have the experience for these sorts of assessments and scrutiny. Let's, you know, understand that when we go for a student loan, for example, who do you suppose administers that? Who takes care of that? I mean, we've got institutions in place that have the skill, have the staff, have the means to already administer this, and if the financial institutions, as one member pointed out, don't want to make these loans, it's a simple matter for the government to underwrite them, and then the banks would. It would be significantly cheaper on this government than the government creating a banking bureaucracy within itself, which will be hugely ponderous, enormously inefficient.

In my studies in my MBA we were studying banking institutions in Europe, I believe it was, and in one of the reports that I read, banking institutions there have an efficiency in the administration of loans somewhere between 1.4 and 2 per cent. I guarantee you there's no way this government could possibly administer this program for that low a price. It's not going to happen. Taxpayers are going to be on the hook for an enormously ponderous bureaucracy to become a bank.

This government's particular performance when it comes to rolling out programs: well, let's have a look at the \$178 million that was given to a certain minister, with the minister pulling down a salary as a minister. How many jobs of the 23,000 we were repeatedly told he was going to create got created? One, his own. That's the performance of this government's ability to roll out a program in an effective, cost-effective, and jobs-effective manner. Now they're saying: "Okay, seniors. You're the most vulnerable group in our whole province, practically. Just trust us. We're going to create a bank, we're going to assess your needs, we're going to scrutinize projects, and we're going to take care of all this." Just as well as the 23,000 jobs that were not created? Good grief. You want Albertans to trust you. It's not going to happen, not any time soon.

Going on, again I'm going to say that it would have been a wonderful thing to send this bill to committee to allow senior citizens to come to this House and help make this bill better. That is the process of those standing committees. I would like someday, personally, to see all bills at second reading go to standing committee just as a matter of course. We are living in very turbulent economic times. We have legislation without studied economic implications here.

Also of note here, the hon. member was asked about the subscription limit to this program, and if I understood him correctly – and the Member for Edmonton-McClung can correct me here if I misheard that – there was no subscription limit. There was no subscription limit. Now what we have is an unbudgeted liability on the taxpayers of our province with no subscription limit. There isn't going to be a limit annually. As many or as few can subscribe to this. So now we have a government going forward in these very difficult times with a significant debt load already, and the government is saying: well, you know, for whoever applies, we'll just take care of it with no limit. That's called an unfunded and unbudgeted liability, which in the world of financial management is very irresponsible financial management, especially when you're managing the money of the good people of Alberta.

There are a significant number of questions that are raised in this bill and very few answers that are provided except: trust us; we'll figure it out in the regulation process. I'm not prepared to do that; I don't think the good people of Alberta are either. We've seen what this government did through Bill 6.

We're talking now about intending to iron out the details through regulation, but this is not a government that has taken right actions to earn the trust of Albertans in the past. It's not a government that has shown its dedication to really fulsome consultation. After pushing Bill 6 through by invoking closure, it created its consultation panels without any regard to the demands of farmers at that time, that they so desperately needed feedback from. Furthermore, they set up these panels in major cities, and we heard that the consultation, that the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung listed, was again in the two major cities with the exception maybe of AAMDC representation. Where was the consultation in Innisfail? Where was the consultation in Sylvan Lake? Where was the consultation in Grande Prairie or Peace River or around this province? Where were they? Where were the seniors invited to come?

Again, I come back to this thing regarding standing committees and that process. It might seem too slow for this government, but – you know what? – it's there to be thorough. I am quite certain the senior citizens of this province, that built this great province, wouldn't mind some carefulness in the crafting of legislation rather than hurriedness in the development of legislation.

**11:30**

What else do I want to cover off? Just a couple more things. The cost-saving opportunities for the entire systems if resources are allocated efficiently: we need some data, some research that has been done on this. Are there some significant cost-saving opportunities that the government can point out in the allocation of resources to our seniors? Wildrose supports the spirit of this bill. We really do. However, we do not support an untested program that this bill represents without really fulsome consultation. It has yet to be shown by the minister that sufficient consultation has occurred to demonstrate that this program is what senior citizens are saying is the fullness of what they really need.

In the end, I can't support this bill as it is, and I am hoping that we can have some amendments put through to make this bill significantly better.

I thank you, Madam Chair, for this time.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to table an amendment. [interjection] Yeah. One more. I will now give the

requisite number of copies of the Wildrose amendment, and I'd like to read it into the record as the pages are distributed or at your convenience.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you. I move that Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act, be amended by adding the following after section 12:

13 This Act expires on April 1, 2021, unless the Assembly adopts a resolution on or after April 1, 2020, that this Act not be repealed.

Madam Chair, this is an amendment that would set in place a legislative mechanism forcing the government to review this piece of legislation. This is a substantial piece of legislation which places caveats on homes and requires significant changes from contractors, and most of all it affects the largest asset of most seniors. It is our responsibility to ensure that this program is helping seniors in a prudent and effective manner.

This government is cancelling programs or saying that they're going to cancel programs that are currently in place that address our most vulnerable. They're choosing to cancel these for a broader based bill that doesn't necessarily capture what we're trying to provide to our most vulnerable. When we're assessing these programs – and we've yet to see any reasons why they're cancelling the previous programs because they have to determine the quality and the effectiveness. That is good management, and that is your responsibility as the government, to be very thorough and understand what you are cancelling and make sure that you have good due diligence and reasoning why, because when you do not do this and when you just follow your ideological policies, you destroy this province, and you do not address the issues.

I recognize that this government has access to a lot of money now, more than you've ever noticed and ever seen and grasped, and you're throwing it left, right, and centre. As much as we appreciate some of the spending that is required, you've demonstrated no savings either.

This amendment is just to address this particular Bill 5. It is to ensure that we do a proper evaluation, and we're hoping that this government will also provide measures in there to understand if this bill is working effectively and that we are addressing the most vulnerable. If this is just an ideological bill, then you'll ignore all the facts, but if you are a true government and truly wish to provide good, common-sense approaches to our citizens, you would evaluate these things and assess whether they are of true quality.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise in opposition to this amendment regarding savings that might be approved by a government. I think that one element of the savings might have been savings on the paper they expended on this amendment because it really is totally unnecessary and redundant. A government, upon the evaluation of any program and legislation it adopts and passes, can choose to end a program if it's unsuccessful. We believe this program will be successful. Of course, it may be something that runs for a long period of time. If not, as with any government program or legislation, it can be monitored and adjusted as time goes on. But to spend money on even the paper that this amendment is written on is really an unacceptable expenditure, in my view, because it's an unnecessary, redundant amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any further speakers to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment to Bill 5. This amendment, of course, adds the sunset clause to Bill 5, and it will have the bill expire unless the Assembly adopts a resolution on or after April 1, 2021, that this act not be repealed. Now, some may ask: why is this sunset clause important? Well, we know that the NDP has a history of trying untested, unproven, and risky ideas. Since we really have no idea what the outcome of this bill will be, it would be wise to not commit ourselves forever to this program should this program not work as designed.

I have no doubt that the NDP wants to keep seniors in their homes. We in the Wildrose support this idea as well. Keeping seniors in their homes does add to a better quality of life for seniors and, of course, cost savings to the government. It's a win-win situation. However, the road to disaster is paved with good intentions. This is why a sunset clause is important. The NDP thinks that they mean well and that that's enough to govern effectively. Well, I have news for them. It's not enough to mean well. We must also have effective programs that achieve desired outcomes, making wise use of taxpayer dollars. A sunset amendment will ensure that if this program does not meet its objectives, we can roll up the program without wasting further taxpayer dollars.

The government of Alberta is in a large deficit situation. How large? We aren't really sure. I guess we find out tomorrow. It's surely a large enough number, though, to make my eyes water. Therefore, it is imperative that we do not rush and commit ourselves to untried programs and risky experiments with taxpayer dollars. They expect us to do well. However, risky experiments with taxpayer dollars are what the NDP government is known for, so we expect that pattern to continue in this bill.

Our amendment will ensure that at least the experiment has an end date and we won't be paying forever for a program in the event that it doesn't work and that there are some unexpected complications. The Auditor General, of course, cannot audit every government program every year, and this amendment will ensure that at least this program has a deadline for a review and it won't be throwing good money after bad year after year, perpetually. It is a lot easier to start poor government programs than it is to get rid of them. This will ensure the government of the day in 2021, which will likely be us, will revisit the program.

11:40

We do want to support seniors in this province, Madam Chair, and certainly we're interested in any improvements to government programs that already exist to help seniors age in their homes. But we're not sure that this is the bill to improve any government program. It's creating a new program, but we would like to have just a little more research done on how or why it will work. We're kind of flying blind here.

Here the NDP is saying that staff should add 20, 30, 40 minutes into their days to implement this new program. Well, no doubt this time allocated will come at the expense of some other program that the bureaucrats are already administering. So our seniors could be worse off as delays and approval processes in every other program take longer. This is why several of my MLAs here in the Wildrose caucus are concerned. Ultimately, we need to have a government that undertakes new programs with a lot of care and forethought. We really need to be careful here. The sunset clause will ensure that at least there is a built-in evaluation ahead. That's not as good as studying the program more now, but the NDP leaves us no choice on the matter of this bill.

I will be pleased to vote in support of my colleague's amendment.

**The Chair:** Are there any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment today. As has been stated in the Chamber this morning by all members that have risen, there is an important need, requirement, desire on behalf of members to ensure that seniors are well supported. As highlighted by a number of members of this side of the House, there are some concerns around this particular program and the creation of new programs that may or may not actually meet the needs of seniors, as good intentioned as they may be, particularly in light of the fact that there is a significant cut to other programs and in this case a \$6 million cut to the grant program that may in fact be meeting the needs of seniors, particularly low-income seniors, even better than this new proposed program.

In fact, Madam Chair, a case may be made that when new programs are introduced in government, other noneffective programs should be removed from the books. Similar to this sunset clause amendment that my colleague has introduced, perhaps if there was a commitment on behalf of government to do those sorts of things, where you remove one program if you're going to be adding another to prevent significant growth in the size of government, we wouldn't need amendments like this. Certainly, we've seen in other jurisdictions who have made a commitment to reduce red tape that when one new regulation with respect to red tape is introduced, another must be removed.

My hon. colleague has proposed a reasonable amendment. I understand that the member across the way said that the amendment isn't worth the paper that it's written on. While I find it relatively offensive that he would make such comments about another member in the Assembly trying to do work on behalf of their constituents, he's certainly entitled to his opinion. I don't agree with his opinion because the desire of the member is to ensure that we have the right program at the right place at the right time. I think you may have heard the Minister of Health rise in this place talking about similar sort of language around ensuring that the right health care is available at the right place at the right time. Just like that's a noble cause — while I don't know that she is meeting those same statements, certainly that is the same kind of desire that the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo has, that we are going to wind up with the right program meeting the needs of the right people at the right time. In this case it is the seniors that we're hoping to be able to meet the needs of.

All this amendment does is provide an opportunity to ensure that the program is reviewed. Often what happens in government is that the government of the day gets busy, caught up, focused on only the issues that are right in front of them. Oftentimes those issues are very important, but sometimes they may be politically motivated. Certainly, it's my opinion that we've seen that with the introduction of Bill 1. It was significantly more politically motivated than actually based on facts when it comes to giving the minister the ability to do his job. But you can get caught up doing things that are pressing for that day and not focused on the big picture.

What amendments like this do is require the government of the day to keep their eyes on the big picture, to keep their eyes on ensuring that the machine of government is actually delivering the right program that is meeting the needs of individual Albertans. When we don't do that, we see programs that wind up on the legislative books, if you will, continuing at length. It may very well be that this piece of legislation is passed and that it winds up being a good program that needs to continue. While I think this program is intertwined with lots of potential risks, it's possible that the government will in fact mitigate those risks. It's possible that

contractors won't take advantage of seniors. It's possible that the checks and balances, that the hon. member assures us will be in place, will in fact be there to ensure that seniors aren't taken advantage of.

But the reverse is also true. It's possible that this isn't going to be a good program and that many of the items that the opposition has highlighted today will in fact come to pass. We've seen that already in the short time that this government has been in power. We've seen that in the form of the jobs program, where the government was convinced that they were providing for and meeting a need. The opposition warned them of some of the pitfalls, but the government was steadfast in their assurance that they were right. Now, we learned just two days ago that, in fact, the opposition did have some merited points, that we brought to the table at that time.

Now, in the government's defence, not that I'm in the business of defending the government, they did heed the warnings and stopped the program before it went on for a long period of time, potentially creating exposure and risks to employers that believed the program was on when it wasn't, and so on and so forth. All that we're doing is saying that this program may in fact get into place and may meet some needs, but if there's not a requirement for review, often there isn't a review. Not only is this amendment worth more than the paper it's written on, but these types of amendments provide Albertans with assurances that good governance will happen.

#### 11:50

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View was recently part of a mental health review. That mental health review was in place because of a clause similar to what's being proposed today. For so long in this province these sorts of acts weren't reviewed until clauses just like this one were put in place to ensure that it happens. Sometimes a review of legislation can be politically unpopular. Sometimes it can create exposures to current governments that they would prefer not to bring up. Some would make a case that we saw that yesterday in the Auditor General's report, that the politics of the day would get in the way of good governance.

Now, I'm not saying that that is the case for this government. I'm not saying that they would allow the politics of a particular situation to get in the way, but there is a very good possibility that at some point in time in the future there will be a change in government. I know that it took quite some significant time for there to be a change in government most recently, and in fact this government may govern for multiple terms. I think, given their record, that that's highly unlikely, but it is possible.

When we pass legislation, Madam Chair, we're not just passing it for ourselves or for this government. We're passing it on behalf of Albertans and in many respects future governments. While this government may have the best of intentions and review legislation in an appropriate manner and timely and promptly, the next government may not in fact do that. It's important that we build into legislation these sorts of clauses, amendments, rules that prevent long-term exposure of a program that may not be helpful. There may be ongoing costs that aren't meeting the needs of seniors and, in fact, just costing bureaucratic time and resources. If there are clauses like this, we prevent that concern.

I think that if members of the Assembly believe in good governance, if members of the Assembly believe in ensuring that legislation will be appropriately reviewed, if members of the

Assembly believe in putting principles ahead of what could be politics, these are exactly the type of amendments that ought to be passed in this Chamber to ensure that this government, future governments, and Albertans, more importantly than anything, are respected in the legislative process.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak on Bill 5 in Committee of the Whole. Protecting our seniors is something that all Albertans are in favour of, and I believe that all members of this Assembly are in agreement that seniors should be afforded every opportunity to age in place for as long as possible.

However, this bill has so many problems with it as it stands that it cannot reasonably be supported. As my colleagues and I have indicated to the minister in second reading, this is a bill without any substance to it. I've heard member after member on the other side rise to speak to the value of the \$75,000 income threshold, rise to speak to the \$40,000 loan maximum, rise to speak about the wonderful grant component, and rise to speak about all the consumer protection mechanisms in this bill.

I take exception to this because, actually, we're voting on giving the minister the power to establish all of these rules in the regulations. We're not actually voting on the numbers themselves. For the \$75,000 income threshold we're debating the minister's promises. No hard number is in the legislation itself. For the \$40,000 loan maximum again we are debating the minister's promises.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the bill, Bill 5. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Looking at the time and seeing the progress we made this morning, I move that we adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:57 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, April 13, 2016

Day 14

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Babcock	MacIntyre
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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 13, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you from the unsurpassed city of Lacombe a class of students from l'école Lacombe upper elementary school, home to the province's most exciting Mock Rock, I hear, a grade 4 to 6 school with both English and French immersion classes. I was pleased to meet with this remarkable group of students earlier today. French immersion was something I missed out on, and now I kind of envy those students who have the opportunity to learn both of Canada's great languages from such a young age. I am proud of my community for providing this kind of opportunity to learn under these awesome teachers. I'm going to read the names of the teachers – and I ask if they would stand as I do so – and some of the parent helpers as well, I understand: Maryann LaFrance, Alison Ferguson, Gillian Marshall, Justin Peterson, Jenn Schimke, and Liz Clegg. I would ask that the students also please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 44 students from Rio Terrace elementary school in the fantastic riding of Edmonton-McClung. These students participate in either German immersion or French immersion programs, and I had the opportunity to speak in both languages with them earlier this afternoon. The teacher group leaders are Josie Smith and Mrs. Rita Sarrate and parent helpers are Mr. Derek Heslinga and Ms Sharon Springer. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the teachers and students from the grade 6 class from Holy Spirit Catholic school in Devon. I'm just starting to get to know this school, but I have been so very impressed with the parent involvement in this educational community of faith. Together the teachers, parents, and administrators work to ensure that all of their students are challenged to learn in an environment that encourages love, respect, and faith. Would the class please rise, and would the members of this Assembly please say hello to these students by giving them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school guests, hon. members?

I would therefore recognize the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Newton & Neighbours Seniors Society, which is a newly formed club with a mandate to bring joy and happiness to seniors and residents in my constituency of Beacon Heights and in the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood's constituency in the Newton area of Edmonton. The club gives their members enjoyable cultural experiences around the city such as visiting the Alberta Legislature, which they're doing today. Every month they support a wide array of local organizations with various donations, so this is not just a social club. The organizations they support include Newton preschool, Candora Society, Edmonton SPCA, Edmonton's Food Bank, and the Olde Towne Beverly Historical Society.

I will ask them to rise as I call their names and to remain standing: Pat Moffitt, Jenny Kolada, Hilda Royer, Michael Rezko, Joyce Busch, Jean Johnston, Mary Schneider, Joe Danchuk, and Audrey Peltier. I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join me in giving them the warm traditional welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to present to you and through you two introductions today. My first introduction is Adele Boucher. Adele was born and raised in the Grimshaw area and went to university in Edmonton and taught for 22 years in Peace River. Adele was married to a local farmer, and they raised bison for 20 years. She also operated a local tour guiding service and still provides commentary for visitors from afar. In 2002 Adele was awarded the Queen's golden jubilee medal. Adele helped campaign in the north for Grant Notley and has been an NDP candidate in three provincial elections and one federal election. She has travelled extensively in Canada and to many parts of the world and hopes to do more in her retirement. I would ask Adele to stand, and I would ask my colleagues of the Assembly to provide a warm welcome to her.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I have a second one. Secondly, I would like to welcome – and I want to thank the Speaker for allowing me to do this – Mrs. Simmonds' grade 5 and 6 class from Bonanza school, who, thanks to the special permission from the Speaker and through technology, are joining us virtually today by way of live streaming, being viewed from their classroom. Bonanza school, whose motto is the Best Little School in the West, is a small kindergarten to grade 8 school located in a rural community of Bonanza and Bay Tree, approximately 580 kilometres northwest of Edmonton, in my constituency of Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley. The school is part of the Peace Wapiti division No. 76, which has its head offices in Grande Prairie. Bonanza is one of many small schools in my constituency who face challenges in coming to the Legislature in person, so today I'm trying to bring the Legislature to them through technology.

I had the pleasure during constituency week to meet these students in person in their classroom, and, believe me, they asked very good questions. They asked me thought-provoking questions, and I very much enjoyed meeting the 13 grade 5s and 6s of Mrs. Simmonds' class. Today they are also being joined by the grade 4s from Ms Spragg's class, and they are all learning about how citizens can work with government to bring about change. I ask the students to rise in their classroom and receive the warm virtual welcome from our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** If you can hear me, welcome. I thought the House saw that this was something, as technology changes our world, that we may need. Today I tried it as a pilot, and we may need to discuss this matter in the future. Nonetheless, I thought it was worth some value.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you my constituency assistant from my High Level office, Margaret Meyers, along with her husband, Tyrone. Margaret and Tyrone moved to High Level a few years ago after the Slave Lake fires. Since joining my office in January, Margaret has become an avid follower of all things political, so I'm thrilled to have her. I'm so pleased that she's part of my office. I'd ask Margaret and Tyrone to please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

I would recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me considerable pleasure today to rise and introduce a friend of this House, former MLA Ray Prins. Ray served in this House as a representative of Lacombe-Ponoka. He's a modest man, but I can tell you that he's well respected in the worlds of business, politics, public service, and of course personally. I would ask now for Mr. Prins to rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a distinct pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you two very special individuals from the Edmonton Public School Archives and Museum, the McKay Avenue school. I've spoken with the culture minister about this important institution. This august institution is a research facility containing records and artifacts from the earliest days in the Edmonton public schools. It's housed in the oldest standing brick school, just a few blocks from here, built in 1904. Some of you will know that this was the first Legislature, this school's top floor. It's really worth a visit. I happen to live right beside it. In addition, my mother went to school there in the '30s, so it has a special meaning for me.

It's currently undergoing massive renovations, and an important institution needs a solid roof, which is now under threat. We are hoping that the budget tomorrow will show some support for this important historic institution. I'll ask the museum's manager, Cindy Davis, and archivist, Lori Clark, to stand for the first time in this Legislature, to be introduced to the Legislature.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

## Members' Statements

### Government Spending

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** In just a few short years Alberta's debt will reach \$50 billion. That's \$50,000 of debt for every household in Alberta. With interest payments soon to be the most expensive branch of government outside of health, education, and social services, it's critical that we take reasonable but serious steps to get the costs of government under control. Taxes will be raised, not to pay for government programs but to pay back the banks. Today's deficits are tomorrow's taxes.

The problem didn't just start with this government. Alberta has run eight consecutive deficits under four Premiers and one NDP Premier. Despite record revenues and \$100 oil in many of those years, we went from having \$17 billion in the bank to \$18 billion of savings.

Only the Wildrose has consistently stood on the side of everyday Albertans and fought for getting spending under control while protecting the Alberta advantage that made us the economic powerhouse of North America. We believe that government should act like families who are being forced to save to make ends meet. That's why I was proud to release the Wildrose budget sustainability recommendations, a 10-point plan with common-sense ideas that will save our government \$2 billion this year and even more going forward. We can get the costs of government under control.

We are calling for a hiring freeze throughout the bureaucracy, with money set aside for critical new hires like teachers and sheriffs. With job losses and wages dropping, we believe that it is only reasonable for a wage freeze to be implemented across the public sector, which enjoys job security that those in the private sector could only dream of.

While this government continues a decade of reckless overspending, Wildrose stands for fiscal responsibility and restoring the Alberta advantage that made us great.

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much, hon. member.

Could I again remind the House, as we discussed yesterday, that on Members' Statements there's been a past practice that you listen to the member speaking and not speak at the same time, and I would request that you do that today as well.

## Īyāhé Nakoda First Nation

**Mr. Westhead:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell you and members of this Assembly about the First Nation in Banff-Cochrane commonly referred to as the Stoney Nakoda First Nation. In accordance with their distinct heritage the nation is restoring and preserving their authentic identity by working to eliminate the name Stoney from common usage in favour of their preferred identity as Īyāhé Nakoda, meaning mountain people. I'd like to thank those behind the website rockymountainnakoda.com for their rich history and vocabulary guide. The age-old method of cooking with stones resulted in nonaboriginals referring to the Īyāhé Nakoda by the contrived name Stoney. They are the only indigenous group in Canada that, after signing a treaty, were assigned a single land allocation for three individual groups.

Tourism and hospitality along with commercial and industrial developments are key to the economic sustainability of the nation. In upholding the traditions and culture of the Īyāhé Nakoda, environmental stewardship remains a priority when any proposals for land development are considered. The Īyāhé Nakoda groups nowadays are referred to as the Bearspaw Nakoda Nation, led by Chief Darcy Dixon; Chiniki Nakoda Nation, led by Chief Aaron Young; and Wesley Nakoda nation, led by Chief Ernest Wesley.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that our government has made a commitment to renew the relationship with indigenous peoples. Repealing Bill 22, repatriating sacred and ceremonial objects, and having relationship agreements with the three treaty organizations are just a few ways our government will continue to demonstrate this commitment. I look forward to continued discussions with the Īyāhé Nakoda Nation with the view to supporting their interests in economic diversification, environmental stewardship, and a more prosperous Alberta for all.

Īsniyēs. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

### Calgary-Greenway Constituency

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to all of you for your kind words and congratulations over the past days and weeks. I am honoured to take my seat in this Assembly as the MLA for Calgary-Greenway.

Within my constituency is the diversity that makes Alberta and Canada such wonderful places. There is a vast array of religions and ethnicities and a wide range of socioeconomic conditions within my constituency. It is the diversity that brings us closer together as a community by focusing on shared goals and shared values instead of getting caught up in the issues that divide us. I hope that our riding can be a shining beacon for what makes Calgary and Alberta such wonderful places to live, work, and raise a family. Many of my constituents want nothing more than to work hard every day to give their children the opportunities that they may not have had personally, and I feel that this is something that we can all agree on.

As we are well aware, the Calgary-Greenway seat became vacant because of the tragic passing of Manmeet Singh Bhullar. Manmeet was a dear friend of mine, who I had known since he was a young, passionate, and inspiring university student. There's no one in this province who could step in and fill Manmeet's shoes. All I can do is to wake up every morning and learn from what Meeta taught me: listen to your constituents, their concerns; work hard every day; and serve the public with dignity and respect and seva, or selfless service. These were the things that Manmeet was passionate about and employed every day. Hopefully, I can employ what I learned from Manmeet to improve the lives of my constituents and my fellow Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

### Pipeline Development

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week we heard noisy claims that our Premier is not standing up for Albertans and the need for economic growth and the development of pipelines to get Alberta's energy resources to tidewater. This is not true. Under this Premier's leadership Alberta will be an economic driver in the energy industry while ensuring that we are being environmentally responsible, too.

A few days ago our Premier spoke to the steelworkers of Canada and made it clear that we are supporting the development of pipelines using Canadian steel. She spoke to over 2,000 delegates at the NDP Federal Convention and was very clear that we as a government are going to continue to work across all provinces and with the federal government to get our resources to market via tidewater, something that neither the past provincial or federal governments have been able to do.

So let's make it very clear, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government supports pipelines. I support pipelines. This government understands that all Canadians will benefit from the economic success of Alberta. We have entered into an economic age where we are competing with the United States for oil production, and now it's time to get our resources to new markets.

The opposition will say that this government doesn't get it, but let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. No member of the opposition has been successful in getting a pipeline built to tidewater while in government. As the MLA for Edmonton-Manning I will continue to advocate for pipelines and for value-added production in Alberta's Industrial Heartland. These are things that I know my

constituents support. We must get to yes on a pipeline, and that is what this government will do.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### PDD Bathing Safety Standards

**Mr. Jean:** David Holmes was only 35 years old when he died from severe burns while living in a PDD group home. David had severe epilepsy and was not able to communicate the intense pain he felt when a caregiver placed him in a bath of scalding water. Only when his skin started to blister was he removed from the bath, but he wasn't taken to the hospital for two and a half hours. This tragedy has since been repeated in other scaldings of persons with developmental disabilities. Mandating the use of water temperature controls is a simple way to prevent these deaths. Why has this government failed to do that?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the previous government and also this government, carrying on with that, have been working very closely with service providers and caregivers in the PDD sector to ensure that scalding protection measures are fully implemented. In fact, that work has been under way. It was under way a couple of years ago. We continue to work with providers to make sure that the standards that have been put in place are fully implemented.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, the opposition has been raising the issue of scalding injuries for over a decade. The Premier herself raised the issue when she was in opposition. The Education minister actually talked about it as well. Training is good, but human error will always exist. The solution is simple. Install a relatively inexpensive technology. Will the Premier mandate changes to the regulations to make it impossible for someone to be scalded regardless of the training of their caregivers?

**Ms Notley:** Well, let me, of course, again reinforce the same sentiment that the Leader of the Official Opposition has made. This was a very tragic situation. Our thoughts are with Mr. Holmes's family, who continue to feel his loss, as well as the other families.

It's important to understand that even though there have been clear rules put in place about antiscalding technology in the settings, even where those exist it is still possible for human error to come into play. So that's one of the things that we're working on, both the technology as well as the training, to ensure that there's no way the mistake...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** It's a tragic situation that continues to happen, Mr. Speaker. When I read the fatality inquiry report, I was hoping that the judge would say that changes had been made to ensure that the senseless scalding of David Holmes would be the last to happen in Alberta. But the judge couldn't say that. Temperature controls have not been mandated, and Mr. Holmes's father says: extra training for caregivers is just not working. The solution is simple, it's inexpensive, and it should have been implemented a long time ago. What exactly has the Premier or this minister done to ensure that scalding deaths never happen again to Albertans that are in our care?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, a great deal of work has been done on the antiscalding procedures as well as, as I say, the technology, the changes to the taps and the actual material. So that work has been done. In addition, though, our minister and our government have moved forward in engaging in very extensive consultations with service providers in terms of how we move forward in a way to ensure safety while at the same time not inadvertently creating homelessness among the very population we are working to protect.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

### Government Spending

**Mr. Jean:** This NDP government is taking our province down a dangerous path. Their economic policies have seriously damaged our ability to compete, and to date the Premier's fiscal plan has been more spending, more taxes, and a path to a dangerous amount of debt by 2019. By the time this NDP government is done, the average Alberta household will own \$50,000 in government debt. This will hurt in the long term hospitals, schools, teachers, nurses, and families. Will the Premier commit to Albertans today that overall spending will not increase in this NDP budget?

**Ms Notley:** You know, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker. I know that the members opposite have come up with a couple of their ideas, or maybe it was the third party's ideas. I couldn't quite get them straight. They can work it out on Twitter, which idea was which. I will say that although they deny climate change, they are certainly very good at recycling. A number of the things that they talked about yesterday are things that our government is already doing. We're already saving through hiring restraint. We're already holding the line on wages that we're legally allowed to do that for. We're already implementing results-based budgeting. We're doing all the careful things that we're going to do. We are not, however . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** We've already seen what happens in other provinces in Canada when NDP governments fail to get spending and debt under control. It means in the long term fewer services for families, increased taxes, and new sales taxes. All Wildrose is asking for is just a few pennies of savings for every dollar spent. Freezing wages is a good place to start or implementing a hiring freeze. These ideas alone could save Albertans \$700 million per year. This is a simple first step and will start bending the curve to get us back to balanced budgets. Will the Premier commit to taking up just one of these ideas?

**Ms Notley:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, the savings that are projected from their plan have no connection to reality. But let me just look at one of their proposals. They're suggesting that we stop hiring for any vacancies. Now, we already do have a hiring restraint policy in place. Nonetheless, here are a few positions that the members opposite would have us not hire for: a registered nurse in Strathmore, a home-care aide in Fort McMurray, an X-ray technologist in Hardisty. What the opposition is saying is that we shouldn't fill these important front-line positions, and we disagree.

**Mr. Jean:** We disagree as well. That's why the hiring freeze is for nonessential services. Surely the Premier understands that. If you can save a few pennies spent on every dollar, our budget will put

Alberta back on a path to sustainability and to balance. It sends a message to markets that Alberta is serious about getting its fiscal house in order. It's important. If we put the right principles in place to grow the economy, it allows revenues to catch up to expenses. It protects Albertans from higher taxes and protects health and education over the long term for all Albertans. Will the Premier at least commit to providing a timeline for getting Albertans . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. It appears as though the member opposite ought to read what it was that his Finance critic introduced yesterday because – let me tell you – those positions were not ones that they would have saved according to their plan. That being said, here's the bottom line.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Point of order.

**Ms Notley:** We will not roll back front-line services that support Albertans, and we especially won't do it so that we can finance a tax cut to wealthy Albertans so that these guys can help their friends. That is not what we will do. We will move forward carefully. What we will do is ensure . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
Third main question.

### School Construction

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General report released yesterday is a scathing criticism of the previous government's practice of making funding announcements and promises that they couldn't keep. In fact, "the ministers announced new schools, replacements and modernizations and committed to completion dates . . . before school sites were ready." Wildrose spoke clearly and consistently about the broken promises made by the previous government. Under the current minister's leadership the first comprehensive management report on the program was produced in 2015. What were the results of that report, and are they consistent . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the member for the question. Certainly, it's very important for us, considering that we're in the midst of the biggest infrastructure build for schools in history, that we make sure that we get it right. We need those spaces for thousands of kids across the province. The Auditor General gave us very valuable information about what to do and what not to do as well. Certainly, you have to make sure that you have money in place to actually pay for those schools. You have to have those sites in place to make sure that they will be actually, physically in the ground. We've done that job, and, quite frankly, we're very proud of the reforms that we've made.

2:00

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General's report states quite clearly that neither department has adequate systems to plan, deliver, and report on the program; no one was responsible for overall results, so information on project schedules, including completion dates, was not known; internal reporting on project progress was lacking; and public reporting was consequently weak.



The Auditor General is absolutely correct. This must change. Would the minister take the advice from Wildrose and consider tendering a bid for outside project management to provide the two ministries with the expertise they obviously lack?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, I am very, very proud of Alberta's public service and the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Infrastructure, and the school boards that take on these projects as well. What we took from the Auditor General – and thanks for his efforts and for using KPMG as well – is that we've integrated and found ways by which we can communicate with each other. One interesting innovation that we found is that we can save \$15 million a year by financing the school projects as they need the money, at each stage of the way. I'm very proud of the progress that we've made. Thanks to the Auditor General . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The report states very clearly that project management needs to be addressed, Education must establish the necessary processes to provide oversight of the school building program, Education needs to implement a gated project approval process, Education needs to agree on project expectations with school jurisdictions, including scope, budget, and schedule. To the Minister of Education: has KPMG been hired to get these schools built or simply to consult with school boards to identify these problems with your government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We hire contractors to build the schools, and I'm very happy to say – I've said it before, and I'll say it again – that we're getting bids that are coming in far below what we had anticipated, I believe 23 per cent for two schools in Edmonton public, saving a considerable amount of money, more than \$20 million. I think that the public service and the school boards around the province are doing a very, very good job of this. You know, this idea of contracting out: we know that it was a failed idea to run P3 schools in the first place. We've moved past that, and we're getting the job done in an effective way.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

### Support for Business

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, PC caucus and Alberta business said that the failed job program would not work. The minister finally admitted his mistake and cancelled the program. Business also wants a reduction in taxes so they can keep their current employees. If they really want to show, quote, leadership and partner with business as the minister said, please listen and get it right. To the economic development minister: can Albertans now expect that their government will do the right thing and reduce the new heavy tax load that NDP policies have placed on job-creating businesses?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, again, our government has been out consulting with business and industry, and we're listening. We've decided to reprofile the tool to help spur job creation and economic growth. That is and will continue to remain our number one priority.

As for questions the member has asked, first of all, we'll have to wait for the budget tomorrow, which the Finance minister will table. But, quite frankly, our government has been very proactive in doing a number of things for our economy, investing over \$34 billion into infrastructure, increasing access to capital, \$2 billion through ATB, AIMCo, and AEC.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, that was after the cattle prod from business, Mr. Speaker.

In the Premier's kitchen address her advice to Albertans was – wait for it – apply for benefits. Albertans want jobs, not just benefits. Creating dependency does not equal economic activity: this just in. Will the new job-creation program that replaced the old job-creation program be a social program, or will it create jobs to support families, jobs that pay a good wage? Is it more of the same poverty-level program that you failed at last time?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, two points. In my address one of the things that I said, when I was speaking particularly to the federal government, was: give Alberta the tools that we need to create our own jobs and build our own economy, and that's why I was talking about the need for a pipeline. In addition, I talked about our focus, just as identified by the minister, on job-creation and job-creation programs. I can assure the member opposite that, in fact, the programs that are described tomorrow through the budget will indeed create jobs.

**Mr. McIver:** Here's another tool they've asked for. Business groups across the province have asked this government time and again to hold back on minimum wage increases. Last week, with the circus in town, the Premier doubled down on committing to \$15. We know minimum wage jobs do not always pay the mortgage, but they provide opportunities for Albertans to get on the first rung of the economic ladder. To the minister: will the government now get it more right and hold back on increases to minimum wage to allow Albertans that need that job to get on the first rung of the economic ladder so they can work their way up?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what I find quite rich is taking advice from a party that was in power for 40 years and failed to diversify the economy or from another party that doesn't believe in diversification to begin with. Quite frankly, our government has been out consulting and engaging with the business sector and with industry, looking at ways for our government to be supportive, to partner with the private sector, who are the job creators. Unlike one party that talks and another party that failed to act, our government is taking meaningful action.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Public Accounts Committee Activities

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's public servants make a tremendous contribution to our province, but there have been some troubling allegations over the past couple of days. Yesterday the Official Opposition released a document called Budget Sustainability Recommendations. In this document, which I will table, they allege that \$25 million is "wasted or stolen" by members of the public service. Given the mandate of the Public Accounts Committee to oversee allegations of fraud, a question to

the chair of the Public Accounts Committee: have you received any specific examples of fraud or theft, and if so, has this issue been added to the schedule of the Public Accounts Committee?

**The Speaker:** Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, I think from what I'm advised that there has been a ruling, a precedent on that.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, questions addressed to the chair of the Public Accounts Committee have to be addressed through issues upcoming on the agenda of the Public Accounts Committee. It is therefore out of order, but I will say this. There's plenty of evidence of fraud. We saw it in the special duty report of the Auditor General from 2014.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try again. Now, I do know, based on that answer and past history, that the chair of the Public Accounts Committee and the committee itself . . .

#### **Speaker's Ruling Questions to Committee Chairs**

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I think it needs to be made more clear with respect to this precedent. As I understand it, there are some generic questions that can be asked in terms of next meeting and location, et cetera. However, I sense by where you may be headed on the next supplementary that you're going much deeper than that, so I would urge you to reconsider if, in fact, it is not focused on those matters.

#### **Public Accounts Committee Activities (continued)**

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do base this on a question asked on the 26th of November by the Member for Rimby-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, where he was asking about Tobaccogate and whether there's information that would be put on the agenda going forward.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, again, if you read *Beauchesne's*, chapter 10, there are some illustrations that give more clarity to yourself and to the House. I think I have to rule, suggest that your question has gone too far.

Is there another supplemental?

**Mr. Clark:** Sure. I will ask a second supplemental. This time, Mr. Speaker, I will go to the Government House Leader. Having heard these remarkable allegations – and I believe you've read the document – I have a tremendous amount of respect for the people who serve our province, and I want to know from the Government House Leader or the Premier or anyone on the front bench: how do we create a healthy culture within the public service so people feel confident coming forward with evidence of wrongdoing if, in fact, there is such evidence?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

2:10

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. First of all, let me reiterate the fact that our government has tremendous confidence in the public servants who serve the people of this province. Secondly, I don't believe, even in a time of economic insecurity like what we have now, that scapegoating public servants is the way to move forward.

Thirdly, I will say that our government is committed to working with all members in this Assembly through our democratic accountability committee to improve whistler-blower . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

#### **School Construction (continued)**

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the doorsteps during the last election my constituents of Calgary-Shaw were concerned about the number of students crowded into classrooms. We know that we need more schools in communities like the ones I represent. I was concerned to read the findings of the Auditor General's report released this week when it comes to the capital planning by the previous government. To the Minister of Education: what did this report uncover?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. I certainly do agree with the member that with increasing enrolment we need new schools across the province, plenty of them. We thank the Auditor General for his investigation. He found schools were being announced without proper funding and sometimes without even proper sites in place. We are in the midst of fixing that problem, building schools, and we've accepted all of the recommendations of the Auditor General's report.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what is being done to ensure these scales of delays never happen again?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, our government has moved to better reporting and data collection on all these projects. We're also streamlining funding to projects, as I said, for which we expect to save at least \$15 million annually. We now expect 48 projects to be completed in time for the fall school session, so I encourage everyone to go to those openings. Albertans can count on us to build these schools, and we will do so.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Auditor General's report states that the previous Tory government did not include the money necessary to build these schools, how exactly would school projects have been affected had you not put the necessary funding in place?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. For example, I know the members from Calgary have seen a surging student population there. In Calgary-South East, for example, they're waiting on 13 projects in one constituency. I mean, who knows when these schools would have actually been built under the previous government? It's a good thing that we changed the government to allow this to actually happen. Again, I'm happy to say that in Calgary, as you mentioned, we have 17 projects being completed by September. These schools will serve thousands of students in the city of Calgary, of which I'm very proud.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
The hon. Member for Airdrie.

### Safety Standards for Persons in Care

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are right to feel upset after seeing the report released by Judge Shriar after the tragic and unnecessary death of David Holmes. The fact is that a tragic death like this should never happen again. Whether it's having the technology or regulations in place or ensuring that front-line staff are not suffering from burnout, Albertans need to know their government has the ability to protect our most vulnerable in care. What will the Human Services minister do to ensure that there is better support and oversight in care homes across the province?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. It's an important issue. It was a tragic situation, and my thoughts are with the Holmes family, who continue to feel the loss. Although a number of changes have been made in response to this incident and similar ones, I know that we can certainly do better. There is a safety consultation going on within the sector. The first phase has been completed, and these topics will certainly be discussed at the second stage of the consultation.  
Thank you.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, over the past several years half a dozen seniors have either been severely burnt or have died because of injuries. It's 2016. We can and must do better for our most vulnerable. Given that we know the previous government held off on implementing new regulations in care homes, when can the minister assure Albertans that there will be new mandated provincial regulations to help protect those in care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Member, for the question. The safety of the individuals we serve is of paramount importance, and the first stage of the consultation respecting safety has been completed. That report was made public. The second stage of the consultation is under way, and they are expected to complete it within six months, before the end of this year.  
Thank you.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that we know that the staff who work in these homes care deeply about their patients but need supports in place and given that Judge Shriar found in the report that there's clearly not enough support in our homes to not only prevent human error but value "professionalism of care" – Albertans want more than just assurances. They want to see action. What will the minister do about it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Member, for the question. These are all very important issues, and that's why we have put together a team, led by John te Linde, and my hon. colleague from St. Albert, who has worked all her life in this sector, is also part of the team. These important issues will be discussed within the community, within the sector, and recommendations will be brought forward to the government. At that point I will be able to tell the House and Albertans what steps are recommended and what the action will be going forward.  
Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### Rural Health Services

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our PC Engage document promotes strengthening access to primary care networks to provide proactive health care. Our previous government initiated the rural physician action plan over 20 years ago, and it's been extremely successful. To the Health minister: considering the uncertainty that your review is provoking and the fact that you've finally confirmed that RPAP will continue but in a different form, can you please provide Albertans with details about your government's change in direction?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the opportunity to talk about how important it is, obviously, to make sure that no matter where you live, you have access to the right health professionals, which, of course, includes a physician in many circumstances. Immediately when rumours were speculating about the future of RPAP, I put them to rest. I made clear that RPAP will continue. The responsible thing, though, I'd say for any government to do – and I was shocked that it hadn't happened previously – is to at the end of a funding cycle review the funding that was allocated and make sure it's meeting the objectives for which it was intended. I'm proud to do that as a government on behalf of the citizens of Alberta.

**Mr. Rodney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the hon. minister is aware that our House leader a full year ago made insightful recommendations for enhancing RPAP. Given that the NDP's vague musings now about RPAP have shaken the stability of many rural communities and that the review recognized that access to medical care increases quality of life while stabilizing the economic base for rural communities – it's not rocket science – can the Health minister please tell us: which of the rural health service review's recommendations are you considering implementing or dropping so that these fine people can plan?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To be very clear, RPAP does some very great work, and there is no question of it being eliminated, but it's simply good governance to review a program when it approaches the end of its current funding cycle. We've extended the funding in certainty through to the fall, and during the next few months we're taking the time to liaise with communities to make sure that we're achieving the right outcomes for rural Albertans. Unfortunately, over the last several years the percentage of physicians practising outside of Edmonton and Calgary has actually declined, so I want to make sure that we can find a way to address the needs of everyone throughout Alberta. It might not just be physicians. There might be other health practitioners, like nurse practitioners, that we need to be attracting.

**Mr. Rodney:** In my previous role in wellness I learned this very well, but I wonder if the minister is aware of this. Given that the rural health services review actually consulted with Albertans across the province already and it recommended expanding the mandate of RPAP to include other health care professionals – nurse practitioners, midwives, and nurses – and given, as Engage attests, that fostering a healthy society reduces the strain on our health care system, thereby reducing costs, exactly when will the Health

minister provide details on NDP changes to this already successful program, and will you be doing this solely in voice mode?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you for the question. That was delivered in voice mode. I'm happy to respond in voice mode or via e-mail, whatever way you would like it to be responded to.

The \$10 million that is committed currently through RPAP is an important investment, but it's actually only about 10 per cent of what we do in terms of investing in rural-specific education, training, recruitment, and retention programs for rural communities. Certainly, it's an important piece, but it's not going to be the stand-alone be-all and end-all. We need to make sure that we continue to consult through a variety of modes with our partners like the AAMDC, which I was very proud to attend just a few weeks ago and continue to get feedback from them as we move forward.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

### Sport Fishing Management Strategies

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In this House we often hear from this government the desire to diversify our economy. We also hear that tourism may be the next great industry to save us from our dependence on energy resource development. I agree that Alberta's lakes, parks, and communities have a lot to offer, but my constituents have some questions. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: do you think that the current sport fishing management strategies are doing anything to help promote tourism, especially in our northern communities?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I have certainly heard from various communities on this matter of tourism and our fish populations. That's one of the reasons why we expanded the Castle park, and that's one of the reasons why we're embarking on a robust parks management plan and working with the tourism minister in the development of that plan. We're very proud of Alberta's natural heritage and very proud of the contributions of the angling community that underpin much of that economic activity.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that possession limits for most Alberta lakes for walleye are zero, pike have a slot limit of one, and many lakes are also zero and given that in Saskatchewan anglers can keep four walleye and five pike, to the minister: with the recent suffocation of thousands of fish and the current fish management strategy, are we now sending our tourists to Saskatchewan along with our workers and companies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, our fish population and allowable catch and catch-and-release programs and all of those various regulations are studied every year to make sure that they're consistent with the science and consistent with the fish population. That's one of the reasons why, as well, we need to ensure that we

are investing in environmental monitoring, so that we can keep a good eye on our biodiversity monitoring indicators, and that is exactly what this government has committed to do.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that walleye are very aggressive predator fish that have significant effects on all other fish species like perch and whitefish and given that in many lakes like Lac La Biche it's hard to keep them off your hook but anglers are not allowed to keep any, to the minister: will you work with Alberta fish and wildlife to at least review the restrictions on catch limits to help communities attract more tourism, please?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for the question. I have certainly talked to the county of Lac La Biche about this matter, and other fish and wildlife stakeholders have brought it up with me. I will commit to the member that we will review this matter, and I'll get back to him as soon as practical.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

### Crime Prevention

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans want to be safe in their communities. Safer communities is a top priority of Wildrose. It is deeply concerning for me to see how crime rates are increasing across this province. In my constituency a deputy mayor has been both robbed and vandalized in the past six weeks, and in Red Deer various types of crime have almost doubled. To the Minister of Justice: what are you doing to reduce the crime rates and keep Alberta safe?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, we're all deeply concerned when crime affects any citizen of Alberta. We will be working with the police to ensure that they have the necessary resources going forward to address these issues, but I think that it's also critical that I work with my colleagues to ensure that we address the underlying drivers of crime by making sure that funding for mental health, for health care, for education, for affordable housing all remains in the budget. I think that that is the best way to move forward.

**Mr. Taylor:** Given that a gas station convenience store in Wainwright, located right beside the school and mere blocks from a police detachment, was just recently held up at gunpoint and that normally quiet, peaceful towns like Amisk and Wainwright are turned upside down by crime and since this is a major concern across the province, where can Albertans turn when this very government is not working to keep their communities safer?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, I think I'd like to begin by saying that, actually, we work very hard with our police partners. Our police partners are doing a very good job. They are working to address these crime issues. You know, as I've said, it's really critical to ensure that front-line services are there, whether those be services for the police, whether they be health care or mental health supports, whether they be supports for people who have lost their

homes. Moving forward, we will continue to ensure that those things are in place. You know if we follow the . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Taylor:** Since the Wildrose have put forward recommendations to combat some of the systemic problems that may lead to an increase in crime and given that fentanyl is having a devastating impact on our communities and can be tied in part to the rising crime rate and given that Albertans don't want to hear platitudes – they want action – will this government commit to implementing all 10 recommendations found within Wildrose's fentanyl report, that would lead to safer communities and saving lives?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, fentanyl is an issue that is of concern to all of us. It has a devastating impact on our communities. We are absolutely committed to working to correct that problem, but I think the ways that we work to correct that problem are by investing in jobs for the people in Alberta, investing in the public service. If we followed the recommendations from the folks over there and hollowed out those services, crime would only get worse.

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

#### Homelessness Initiatives

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's 10-year plan to end homelessness was initiated in 2008, almost eight and a half years ago. The nationally recognized program provides permanent affordable housing to homeless Albertans and offers crucial support services to help them avoid returning to the streets. As a former member of the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness I can attest to this program's success. To the Minister of Human Services: how do you plan to continue to build upon the success of the 10-year plan to end homelessness?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. The member raises a very important issue. We as a government believe that every Albertan deserves a place to call home, and our government will work with our community partners, with organizations working on that plan to make sure that we do proper investments and we provide homes to every Albertan.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As per our PC Engage document, taking care of Albertans proactively before they are in crisis is not just the right way to govern; it's the fiscally prudent way to govern. Given that according to the government's own website Alberta's homeless strategy has helped more than 4,400 Albertans leave the streets and given that more than 1,900 housing units have been developed for homeless Albertans, the program's value in reducing crime as well as social services and health needs is clear. To the Finance minister: is ongoing support for the homelessness plan the kind of proactive cost-saving measure we will see in your budget?

**Mr. Ceci:** Well, let me see. You're about 24 hours and 37 minutes too early for that question.

You know, subsequent to the budget presentation there will be briefings by each of the ministers, and you'll find a great deal more about the Human Services funding in the briefing that'll take place after my budget presentation.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Minister. I've always been a man ahead of my time.

Given that Edmonton's police chief has publicly questioned the success of Alberta's groundbreaking homelessness initiative and given that any erosion of Alberta's homelessness plan will put Albertans at risk and cost taxpayers more money and given that there are ways to make a good program even better by building on its success, to the Justice minister: what meetings have you had with the Edmonton police chief regarding homelessness, and what have you told him about the 10-year plan to end homelessness?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the critical question. Well, of course, I've had the opportunity to meet with the Edmonton police chief and several police chiefs across Alberta on numerous occasions. I've also met with mayors of various cities, with AUMA, and with AAMDC, and I think that everyone is committed to moving forward to address the homelessness issue. In terms of what I've told the chief of police about our programs, for the most part what I've done is listened, you know, to his views on what the impact has been because he is the person delivering the front-line services. I mean, certainly, our government is committed to providing those services, but we're also committed to listening to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

#### Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans and Canadians love Alberta beef. Albertans also know that our livestock sector is one of the most important parts of our economy, creating prosperity and jobs in rural Alberta. They also know that BSE, or mad cow disease, threatens that prosperity and those jobs in our province. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what is your department doing to protect Alberta's cattle industry from BSE?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm pleased to say that Alberta and Canada have a world-class BSE surveillance system, which has been recognized internationally for the effectiveness of its surveillance, management, and eradication measures. My ministry is continuing to work with industry, veterinarians, and the federal government to continue this good work and to improve and refine our excellent system. I take this issue very seriously. Alberta's beef industry is one of our province's highest quality exports, and we need to ensure that our markets remain open.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

First supplemental.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta is expected to test 10,000 cattle for BSE annually and given that in recent years the number of animals tested each year has dropped to

about 5,000, how is the same minister acting to ensure that these low numbers do not impact market access for Alberta beef?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Leduc-Beaumont is correct that fewer cattle are being tested. The trend is seen in other provinces as well such as Saskatchewan. Some reasons for this include increased cow cull prices, shrinking cow populations, and perceptions among producers that the program is over. I want to make absolutely clear that testing is voluntary in Canada, and this has not had any implications for our international BSE status, the safety of our herd, or market access for our beef. That being said, my department has launched extensive education and awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of surveillance. More recently we contracted with several private veterinarians to work with us in promoting the program.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Canadian Cattlemen's Association estimates that the BSE crisis of the last decade cost producers between \$6 billion and \$10 billion and given that a case of BSE was confirmed in this province as late as 2015, what does the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry plan to do to protect Alberta's livestock industry in the event that a new case of BSE is discovered in our province?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in a previous response, Alberta has an internationally recognized surveillance and response system for BSE that allows us to systematically determine the origin of animals, any risk to the food chain, and fight any unfair trade barriers that might be erected should a new case be discovered. I've had the great fortune of meeting with some of the folks who work in my department while they were conducting a simulation similar to a new case of BSE. I can tell the House that I, personally, have never been in a room with so many capable experts, veterinarians, and dedicated public servants. The success of our system was evidenced when the last case was detected. Prices were not affected, and our trading partners ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Little Bow.

### Capital Infrastructure Planning

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's Auditor General's report made it obvious why we need a clear and transparent sunshine list for infrastructure projects. In her TV address last week the Premier said that tomorrow's budget would be setting out more details of a major five-year infrastructure plan. It's also been one year now since members on the government benches promised a transparent infrastructure sunshine list for all Albertans. Will the government finally unveil the list so communities can see where their needs stack up?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. The hon. member is right. This government is coming forward with a capital plan that will help build communities, that will help build the economy and create jobs for all Albertans. I'm very proud of it.

With respect to the sunshine list I think I can tell the hon. member that he can stay tuned for the budget tomorrow, but it seems that it is dawn for the sunshine list.

**Mr. Schneider:** Given that postsecondary institutions have shovel-ready projects, many would benefit from such a list. The Wildrose jobs action plan includes a proposal to invest in knowledge infrastructure. Recently the University of Calgary said that they have shovel-ready projects that could support over 500 person-years of employment during construction. Given that this government proposes to spend more than double British Columbia's capital plan, there's no excuse to not include this sort of investment. Will the government commit to prioritizing knowledge infrastructure investments to better Alberta's future?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the hon. member for the question. Infrastructure, of course, takes many forms, and it's a key part of this government's strategy to put Alberta back to work, to make sure that we have the infrastructure that's needed for the growth of the economy when the price of oil recovers. I think that the hon. member will find that if he's patient and waits until tomorrow, when the budget is released, he will understand the priorities of this government.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given this government's ambitious capital spending agenda, the government should give procurement priority bids to include more opportunities for apprentices. Our Wildrose jobs action plan also called for an increase in apprentice usage on government infrastructure projects. Rather than have apprentices waste their training and stay at home, will the government sit down with the construction industry to figure out the best way to fairly incentivize the use of apprentices on provincial projects?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given the hon. member's question, you know, I can tell him that we are having discussions with respect to the question of apprenticeship. We do want to make sure that as many young people as possible have a chance to learn their trade and to become proficient and to be certified in their trade. Those discussions will continue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### PDD Service Delivery

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past year under the NDP government a procurement policy has been put in place related to adults with disabilities. This policy has resulted in a deterioration of PDD supports the likes of which this province has never before seen. It is time for this government to start paying attention. To the Minister of Human Services: why do you continue to advocate for procurement given the massive damage this policy has done to some of the most vulnerable people in our province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the important question. In all of our policies relating to procurement, our government is committed to making sure that we do it in a transparent and accountable manner, and that's how we intend to do this one as well. We will work with the community and the sector who are affected by that policy to make sure that we get this right.

**Ms Jansen:** Now, the problem is that you're not working with them.

Given that procurement essentially puts PDD clients up for bid by service providers, even out-of-province providers, who might have dubious experience, again to the Minister of Human Services: why would you reduce our citizens to such a humiliating process?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. First, I will reject the premise of your question. That's not what the government is doing. We are working with ACDS, which is the representative organization for 139 members who serve the PDD community. I got an e-mail – I can submit that later – and I will quote:

There is an openness to listening and pursuing solutions together that I believe was demonstrated in the review of PDD Safety Standards by this Minister and I am confident he values collaboration and respects our perspectives and contributions.

**Ms Jansen:** To the minister: you can say that you're listening, but I'm hearing you're not.

Given the hard work and dedication of those who work and advocate for Albertans affected by developmental disabilities, I am shocked to hear that it has become almost impossible for them to meet with the minister to face the challenges that they are facing right now. Again to the Minister of Human Services: how can Albertans trust you to make any decision that puts health and dignity over politics when you won't meet with them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I am in touch with the community and with their representatives. These are all the social deficits which we inherited from this government when this hon. member was the minister of disabilities. All these policies we are fixing today: that's the mess created by the previous government. We are working with the community to make sure that we collaborate and get this right for vulnerable Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

## 2:40 Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was a lot of heated conversation in this House last fall around the extension of workers' compensation and basic labour rights to Alberta's farm and ranch workers. At the time my office and I heard from some people who wanted us to slow this legislation down, but we heard from even more workers who said that this legislation couldn't wait even another day. To the Minister of Labour: how many farm and ranch workers have accessed WCB in the time since coverage was finally extended to them?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to update the House. As of April 9 154 farm workers have had approved claims through the WCB. Of those approved claims, 61 were for lost time, meaning that the worker was injured so severely that they were not able to continue work, and they have received compensation from the Workers' Compensation Board. With the WCB coverage farm workers are benefiting.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that you recently announced a review of the WCB and given that farm and ranch workers have only recently been given protection under WCB, again to the Labour minister: will the concerns and perspectives of farm and ranch workers be included in this review?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely. The WCB review panel will be having meaningful discussions with farmers, ranchers, and their wage farm workers, who are new to the WCB system and will have recommendations. The panel will also have access to any feedback on WCB that comes through the consultations, being led by our Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. Our government is committed to taking as long as needed to get good feedback into the system and to make sure that the WCB system is serving all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that consultations on the regulations for the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act are still being developed, again to the same minister: can you update the House on how these conversations have been going?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is putting the final touches on the consultations, that will include representation from all stakeholders in the farm and ranch sector. We also know that we're moving into some very busy months for farms and ranches in Alberta, so we need to be respectful of those farmers and ranchers. The timing of when things will get started will depend on the availability of these very busy people. These are important issues, and we look forward to getting them right.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds we'll continue with Members' Statements.

## Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

### Red Deer Regional Hospital Flood

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today and speak about the outstanding AHS staff at the Red Deer regional hospital. On March 1, 2016, an accidental cut was made to a pipe in the Red Deer hospital's sprinkler system. The response time in this disaster was extremely quick, with equipment being moved in minutes. As a result of this accident the hospital received major water damage. The damage took out four operating rooms – they went offline immediately – as well as 12 patient beds and medical device reprocessing. After the first week they found one more operating room in need of remediation. As you can imagine, ORs are built to the highest standards and cannot be compromised. All this work is being done within a functioning OR system at a major hospital.

Mr. Speaker, as you can imagine, AHS staff have been working day and night since March 1 due to the flood. They have had to juggle hundreds of surgeries, run operating rooms into the evenings, and work around the clock on repairs. They have made sure patients with critical needs have received surgery without delay. The region

has been very responsive to our hospital's needs, with staff from Olds, Stettler, and Innisfail stepping up to help alleviate pressure in Red Deer by taking patients. It has been hard on patients who have had to have surgeries rescheduled, but people realize that AHS is taking all the precautions to make sure that the operating rooms are up and running as quickly as possible without compromising patient health. The first OR came back online on March 11, and the rest are scheduled to come online in the coming days.

I want to thank all of the hard-working AHS staff for their help and dedication during this time of crisis. Every employee in this hospital has gone above and beyond.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### Seniors' Housing in Fort McMurray

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend I returned to my constituency of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, and I spoke with residents in my community about seniors' care. I was asked, "When is it going to be built?" and "Was it cancelled?" I was disappointed to have to tell my constituents that this NDP government still won't provide any answers on this important issue. In fact, it seems like not much has changed since the last government. We're still being told to sit tight while time is wasted on needless bureaucratic delays. This is a project which already has assessments. It already has allocated money and a prime location across the street from the hospital, close to all amenities, from shopping to major public transit routes. It is time that we act now.

All Albertans deserve to age in dignity and, for those who require palliative care, in a safe living environment, which is not in a hospital. Seniors who have built our province and have lived in Fort McMurray all of their lives deserve a home where they can age with dignity. This project, to be built on the site known as Willow Square, has the ability to address seniors' residential needs for the next 20 years if it is done properly. To do this properly, you should consult with the community, with the seniors of Fort McMurray, and with the municipality of Wood Buffalo. Until this project is built, the local hospital, the Northern Lights health centre, must accept the burden of housing for long-term care residents, taking away much-needed acute-care beds from this isolated community north of Edmonton, a staggering 450 kilometres away.

This government must recognize that ensuring that seniors are able to have a good quality of life is a priority. This shouldn't be a partisan issue. The community needs this place for their seniors as it was promised to them. Now it's up to this government to keep that promise. We must not forget that this government's local NDP candidate in Fort McMurray also campaigned on Willow Square. It's time for this government to do right by the seniors of Fort McMurray, not only to answer their questions about the Willow Square facility but also to take the necessary steps to take this project and move it forward.

Thank you.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills I would like to report that the Standing Committee on Private Bills has had a certain bill under consideration and wishes to report as follows. The committee recommends that Bill Pr. 1, the Bow Valley Community

Foundation Repeal Act, proceed in the Assembly. I request the concurrence of the Assembly in this recommendation.

**The Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All in agreement, say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** All opposed, say no. So ordered.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women.

#### Bill 8

#### Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016.

The Fair Trading Act is Alberta's primary consumer protection legislation to safeguard Albertans from unfair business practices and to promote a level playing field in consumer transactions. Under the act the minister may establish regulatory schemes for certain types of businesses and create regulatory organizations to whom powers, duties, or functions set out in the legislation may be delegated.

The proposed amendments will enhance ministerial oversight of delegated regulatory organizations in a manner similar to other legislation. The provisions of this bill are necessary to ensure that organizations delegated responsibility for consumer protection are held to a high standard.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

2:50

#### Bill 9

#### An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce first reading of Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences.

Bill 9 proposes amendments to the Provincial Offences Procedure Act and the Traffic Safety Act that will streamline and simplify how our provincial laws and bylaws are managed. These amendments will help protect vulnerable Albertans and create efficiencies in our ticketing process.

Mr. Speaker, the first amendment serves to end the outdated process of jailing individuals to enforce tickets for minor infractions. Under the amended legislation Albertans will not be arrested for failing to respond to their ticket, nor will they face jail time for failing to pay a fine for a minor infraction.

The second amendment will enable the expansion of electronic ticketing in Alberta. These amendments will help ensure that the thousands of hours spent annually by police, courts, and corrections staff processing warrants for minor infractions are dedicated to more urgent and serious matters. The change to the e-ticketing will help to ensure that processing times for tickets are simple and errors are reduced.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a first time]



## Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The minister of Strathmore-Brooks. The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I'm always pleased to rise as the minister for Strathmore-Brooks, Mr. Speaker.

I have several documents to table today, so if you'll please entertain me. First, I'm very proud to table the Wildrose 2016 budget sustainability recommendations. I have five copies of the document here. There are 10 points laid out by the Official Opposition to move Alberta back towards budget sustainability. This would bring a \$2 billion reduction in operational spending from the baseline of last year's budget. Moving forward, this would continue to build savings in a direction of a balanced budget in this province, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to table these now.

Further, the Member for Calgary-Elbow graciously was interested in my role as Public Accounts chair during question period today. Unfortunately, while the questions were ruled out of order, it's a topic near and dear to my heart, fraud or malfeasance within the government of Alberta. I'm happy to table . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, could you just clarify where you're headed with this?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I'm tabling documents.

**The Speaker:** The documents being what?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Auditor General's reports.

Mr. Speaker, the member was asking about examples of government fraud within . . .

**The Speaker:** Table the report. There's no need for references, particularly since it was out of order.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I'm happy to table five copies of the Auditor General's report of August 2014, Special Duty Report on the Expenses of the Office of Premier Redford and Alberta's Air Transportation Services Program, a clear example of corruption and possibly fraud within the government as well as . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, have you got the report tabled? Have you already finished?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I'm tabling it here.

**The Speaker:** Then do it.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** As well, five copies of an article from the *Calgary Herald*, titled Disgraced Alberta Public Servant Now Faces Charges in Manitoba, regarding the former executive director of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission who was sentenced to three and a half years in prison.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm tabling five copies of the list of unproclaimed legislation under the Statutes Repeal Act. The Statutes Repeal Act was intended to spur review of all legislation that remained unproclaimed for an extended period of time. Upon review unproclaimed legislation may be found to be unnecessary or obsolete, and repealing it may help to reduce legislative confusion and duplication. The act requires the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to table a report listing the unproclaimed legislation for all departments that is more than five

years old. The report I am tabling lists all unproclaimed legislation passed prior to January 1, 2011.

Legislation on this list will automatically be repealed on December 31, 2016. However, if legislation is still required, the repeal can be avoided as follows: the legislation can be proclaimed into force on or before December 31, 2016, or the Legislative Assembly can adopt a resolution that the legislation not be repealed. This ensures that any useful or necessary legislation can be retained. My ministry has been communicating with the departments responsible for any unproclaimed legislation to ensure that they are aware of the options and are taking the necessary action.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table the required number of copies of the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal 2015 annual report. As you know, the appeal tribunal is a quasi-judicial body with a mandate to resolve disputes over land and membership and other bylaws set out by the Metis Settlements General Council. The tribunal promotes self-governance, certainty, and respect within Alberta's eight Métis settlements. In tabling this report, I wish to thank the tribunal for the important work that it does preserving and enhancing Métis self-governance under the laws of Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive 7(7) to extend our daily Routine past 3 p.m.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a document published by the Mining Association of Canada taking the position of calling on governments, in fact, to "establish a broad-based carbon price" that is "revenue neutral" and to "address competitiveness and carbon leakage concerns." Its revenue neutrality is defined

by investing revenues generated through carbon pricing into the development of lower emission technologies to manage the transition to a lower carbon future, including climate adaptation, and to ensure a level playing field for trade-exposed industries.

I would like to table the requisite number of copies.

## Speaker's Ruling Interrupting Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we move on, I would like to first of all mention that I reminded the House yesterday as well as today that during Member's Statements the past practice and tradition of this place have been that you listen attentively and not interrupt. I, in fact, noted in one of those statements today that the noise in the House during one of the speakers was excessive, and I believe I should have stepped in on that at an earlier stage. Again I remind you of the common principle: respect and treat the same on both sides.

There was also a point of order that was made today. The Member for Strathmore-Brooks, I believe. Is that correct?

Opposition House Leader, are you doing it on behalf of the member?

**Mr. Cooper:** I certainly am today, sir.

## Point of Order

### Factual Accuracy

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on Standing Order 23, essentially language that's going to cause disorder in the Chamber. During question period the Premier made an allegation that the opposition wouldn't replace front-line workers that were essential to the operations of the province. I'd just like to highlight two quick statements that would give some indication that her statement was untrue: "By implementing a broad hiring freeze across the government (with exceptions only for essential employees)." That can be found on page 3 of the document. On page 4 of the document:

There should . . . be no expansion of positions across the public sector except in rare cases such as for needed front line health workers, . . .

As the Premier specifically referred to front-line health workers in a number of communities, including Hardisty and some other areas around the province.

. . . or new teachers and teacher assistants to meet enrolment growth and to staff new schools.

3:00

The Premier, from time to time, likes to make allegations against this side of the House, particularly of what she may or not believe to be true, and, in fact, misleads the House with some of her statements. Clearly, this is not just a matter of debate because the statement of this side of the House is clear in the document that was just tabled by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. It's my hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier will take some time to read the document as opposed to just making allegations about what this side of the House would or would not do. There is one side of this House that is currently in the process of laying off front-line workers – they are the only ones that have that ability – and it's the government.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, could you clarify again? Section 23: which subsection?

**Mr. Cooper:** Subsection (h), (i), and (j), or whatever it is: uses language that is "likely to create disorder," "imputes false or unavowed motives" – that could be possible – or "makes allegations against another Member." Clearly, that's what happened today when the Premier made allegations about what we would and would not do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll rise and begin by cautioning my friend across the way as far as allegations and his comments toward the Premier because the very document that he just cited actually contradicts itself. I will draw attention to page 2 of the very document, that says that there will be "no increases on wages or positions for the rest of the public sector beyond new teachers." Well, the public-sector workers that the Premier was referring to were a registered nurse in Strathmore, a home-care aide in Fort McMurray, and an X-ray technician in Hardisty. Those three are nonteachers. Yet page 3 in the very same document then goes on to talk about "a broad hiring freeze . . . with exceptions only for essential employees." Either it's only for teachers, or teachers suddenly have become essential employees. I'm not quite sure of the definition of essential.

That brings me to my point, Mr. Speaker, and to why this is not a point of order. Quite frankly, people disagree – and when I say "people," I'm talking about this also going through many different systems – on the definition of essential services. There is much disagreement. There is no one universal definition of essential

services. It is an opinion. It's a difference of opinion, which again brings me back to the point here, right now, that this is not a point of order. This is a difference of opinion about essential services. Therefore, like I said, this isn't a point of order.

I'll just remind you, Mr. Speaker, that you've made several rulings over the past couple of weeks as far as differences of opinions. You yourself have ruled that "a dispute amongst members on the facts surrounding [an] issue [is] more a question of debate, not a point of order." That was what you had spoken of on April 12 this week. Therefore, this is not a point of order; this is a difference of opinion.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** New information to cite to the point. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, is there new, additional information?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I congratulate the member for being able to read the cover page, pages 2 and 3, but he has not read page 4. On page 2 the member is referring to highlights, bullet points, high-level points of the document. I congratulate him on reading the highlights. Then in the weightier aspects of the document it says: for essential employees such as teachers. On page 4, if he were to have made it as far as page 4, the member would see that there is "no expansion of positions across the public sector except in . . . cases such as for needed front line health workers, or new teachers and teaching assistants." Very clearly, this is not a matter of debating an interpretation of a document. It's in black and white if the member would read as far as page 4.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. It is my view, in listening to what I've heard, that the point of order was raised in response to the Premier's comment about the Wildrose policy. In my view, there is no point of order. This is a dispute of facts and a difference of opinion similar to the ones that we've dealt with.

Sections 23(h), (i), (j), and (k) seem to have come up in this House a lot of late, and they continue to be referenced. The relevant citation, that all members may draw their attention to, page 510 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, in fact, suggests that these kinds of points should not use the point of order to engage in debate on an issue. I therefore would rule that there is no point of order.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

## Bill 5

### Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to continue on what I was speaking about this morning. I rise today to speak to Bill 5 in Committee of the Whole. Protecting our seniors is something that all Albertans are in favour of, and I believe that all members of this Assembly are in agreement that seniors should be afforded every opportunity to age in place for as long as possible. However, this bill has so many problems with it that as it stands, it cannot reasonably be supported. As my colleagues and I have indicated to

the minister in second reading, this is a bill without any substance to it

I've heard member after member on the other side rise to speak to the value of the \$75,000 income threshold, rise to speak to the \$40,000 loan maximum, rise to speak about the wonderful grant component, and rise to speak about all of the consumer protection mechanisms in this bill. I take exception to this because, actually, we are voting on giving the minister the power to establish all of these rules in the regulations. We are not actually voting on the numbers themselves.

For instance, the \$75,000 income threshold: we are debating the minister's promises because there is no hard number in the legislation itself. For the \$40,000 loan maximum, again we are debating the minister's promises because there is no hard number in the legislation itself. For the grant we have no figures on exactly how much the maximum amount will be or exactly how the \$2 million promise will be disbursed. Again, we have vague talk from the minister with no specifics, and – it's a big surprise – there are no hard numbers and no concrete details in the legislation itself.

For consumer protections what we have are a lot of rules around contracts being cancelled, and we have an emphasis on the contractors' responsibility to educate seniors on the government's complicated home equity loan program. Not surprisingly, this government has paid little heed to the construction industry. In fact, five pages of the 12-page bill are focused on restrictions and responsibilities that this government is placing on contractors.

Madam Chair, here we are in Committee of the Whole debating a bill with huge implications for seniors, for industry, and Alberta's taxpayers. Looking at the bill itself, it is clear that the only thing this government is prepared to legislate is the role of and restrictions on industry, while at the same time it isn't prepared to legislate what the government's roles would be. This is a double standard and typical of an NDP government's antibusiness approach.

**3:10**

In the minister's press announcement she was asked how much the government expects to loan out in total under this program, what this full amount will be from the government's perspective. She was unable to provide a firm answer, but she did state that you can multiply the number of eligible households by the loan amount. That is exactly the problem. The minister herself was not sure of the parameters of this program. Originally, she had stated that this program would have an eligibility of up to 145,000 households. Multiply those seniors' households by the stated maximum amount of \$40,000, as the minister suggested. I would ask the government side to consider these numbers and see if they can provide a simple calculation.

Yesterday the government reported that the actual expected uptake number is only around 5,000 people and that this would equal a taxpayer-funded liability of around \$200 million. That's a substantially different figure, and frankly it's worrying to see this government give such widely different answers to simple questions like these. How can we be expected to vote on a government bill with little to no insight into the actual or expected numbers or the parameters? I realize that the members opposite may have blind faith in their government, but let's make something clear. The people of Alberta absolutely do not. The faith and trust that Albertans gave to this government a year ago are quickly dissipating as risky ideology and failed policies have come forward from this radical government again and again.

Madam Chair, I'd like to echo a few concerns that I've heard over the course of my stakeholder outreach. This government is getting into the business of high-risk lending and is forcing contractors to take on the lion's share of consumer education, outreach, and work.

This first point comes from the fact that there are currently products on the financial market for seniors and homeowners to access in cases where they do not necessarily qualify for a traditional loan.

As my colleagues and I have mentioned before, we just think that we need more time to consider this legislation from all angles and to hear from all experts in finance to learn more about the home equity loans and the risks that may be involved here. In second reading the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills recommended that this bill be sent to committee for more consideration, but that motion was defeated.

Another question I'd like to ask here in the Committee of the Whole is whether the government has considered the problems that may arise by taking on a loan program directly. Currently Alberta Treasury Branches is responsible for the seniors' property tax deferral program, so I'm wondering why that hasn't been considered here. It presents an option for the government to use already existing financial infrastructure instead of duplicating services and mechanisms in the bureaucracy. I'd like to hear more about this option from the members opposite.

The third issue that I've heard about has to do with the \$75,000 income threshold, which is for both couples and single seniors. I've heard a number of questions about how the government came up with this figure and why they're getting into the business of providing home equity loans to single seniors with incomes of up to \$75,000 a year when they would more than qualify for a competitive, market-based rate.

Madam Chair, these are just some of the many problems with this bill.

We need to remember that our seniors are the ones who built this province. They are the ones who have passed on good Albertan principles such as freedom, family, hard work, and compassion. Seniors' ability to age in place is something that I certainly want to support. However, I believe that we need to be looking at better options than what is presented here in this bill. Rather than competing with the market, we should focus on creating a real strategy for those with the greatest financial hardship. We have still not heard all the details of the grant component, which is for the most vulnerable, but this government did cancel the previous grants that were available for the most vulnerable seniors.

This isn't all of it, Madam Chair. There are many more questions I could ask, but I would like to now give the government the chance to respond to the points that I have raised.

Thank you very much for your time.

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

**Mr. Cyr:** Madam Chair, it is my honour to rise and speak on Bill 5, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. I'd like to start by noting how incredibly grateful I am to our senior citizens for all that they have given to our wonderful province. The seniors are the ones who built this province, which we've heard many times from our side, and through their hard work, dedication, and sacrifice they deserve to be protected and supported. World-class care for seniors is one of the core principles of the Wildrose Party. I can see that this government also sees the value of our seniors and that this legislation comes from a good place. I see that they feel for and want to help seniors, which is why this debate on this bill is so important.

The ability for our seniors to age in their homes is an important part of supporting our mothers, our fathers, our grandparents, and it's commendable that this government has taken up the cause. The unfortunate reality, however, is that once again this government is trying to rush through experimental legislation without taking the essential time to do the foundational work. This is precisely the

legislation that should be sent to a standing committee. This program is untried, untested, and many of the details remain fuzzy, and this is simply unacceptable. These are real people with real homes, real lives, and real bills to pay, and they should be able to count on consistency and reliability of well-planned-out, thoroughly researched and tested legislation.

For myself, I have worked doing personal taxes for 15 years. I have worked with a lot of vulnerable seniors throughout my career. My concern is that when these seniors finally need to move on to the next step of their lives, they're not going to have the ability to be able to continue with the lifestyle that they are going to need. We won't be in essence protecting these seniors in their time of the most need because they'll already be in long-term care. We are taking equity from the houses that will later serve as income for these senior citizens. Many senior citizens that came through my office, the low-income, the most vulnerable, had between \$10,000 and \$12,000 per year in income. They need the equity from their homes to continue on to that next stage.

Now, the other problem in all of this, taking equity out of your home and using it for repairs, is that normally repairing your home doesn't add to the value of your home. Once all the equity is gone, then really there's nothing to protect that senior should home prices go down in, let's say – I don't know – a low-oil environment. You will lose, like in my riding, 22 per cent of the value of your home. This is a concern because now we've got a senior that is overleveraged. That is a problem because then we've got seniors going into bankruptcy. Bankruptcy.

Now, we've seen this government time and again move forward with broad-based, unsubstantiated legislation. These changes will have real and meaningful impacts on the daily lives of Albertans. This cycle of legislating first and figuring out the regulations or details later, in fact, does not make for an accountable, transparent, or reliable government.

3:20

With so many details not worked out yet, this is taking a risk with the most vulnerable part of Alberta's residents, Alberta's senior citizens, again, people that have built this province. Implementing a program for seniors that has not been proven to be economically sustainable does not do them any favours in the long term. Having to renege on promises made now could prove to be devastating for seniors in terms of their financial planning and ability to provide for themselves, which is something that I've already mentioned. If this program is not financially viable long term, it will do far more damage than good.

If the Alberta government decides that this isn't working for it, what exactly happens to these loans? Do we suddenly turn them over to a bank? The bank is not going to accept loans that don't actually bring any profit; they bring too much risk. These are exactly the kinds of things that got passed down in the United States when the subprime loans went through. When Alberta is in billions of dollars' worth of debt and can barely afford its own interest payments, it will be programs exactly like this that will be cut. In this economy we cannot afford to be reckless and thoughtless with commitments in legislation today for things that we will have to pay out some day in the future.

I truly believe that it is imperative that this bill and its implications be studied further to ensure that we protect the interests of both the Alberta government and its most vulnerable citizens. According to this bill we could affect up to 145,000 households.

I have questions regarding the personnel required to properly monitor and maintain this program. Has the minister fully laid out the costs and long-term commitments associated with this program?

It is large and complex. Who is eligible for grant versus loan? What will the interest rates be? The list goes on. This is a key piece of legislation. The minister should be able to clearly and concisely answer now. If she is so confident in this program, why are all the details of this bill to be decided later? Are we voting on a bill, or are we voting on an idealistic idea? They are two different things.

I am personally of the opinion that the bulk of the bill should not be created after the bill and that we should have gone to a standing committee, which would fully debate this legislation. As representatives of this province we have a duty to our constituents to do our due diligence and ensure the legislation that we are passing in this Legislature will be recognized to its fullest extent.

Now, we have heard already from one of my fellow members that this legislation has a range of costs, just for the loans themselves, of approximately \$200 million to \$5.8 billion. That's like throwing darts at a dartboard with a blindfold on and hoping that you hit it. The fact is that we start looking at what exactly we're going to need to help facilitate this program. I started to look at it, and I did a quick calculation. One loan per hour, eight per day, 40 per week, four weeks in a month, 11 months in a year: that works out to be 1,760 loans per year.

**An Hon. Member:** What happened to December?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** They're on holidays.

**Mr. Cyr:** We do give holidays in our government.

When we start even looking at the lowest one, which is 5,000 loans sent out, well, that's three employees. It doesn't seem like a lot, three employees. Then I went and I talked with a friend that's a loans officer, and she said: Scott, it takes a lot longer than an hour to get a loan done; loans officers normally get a loan done about 20 times a month. So when you start looking at 11 months, again, for that same employee at 20 loans per month, that's 220 loans for the year. That's 23 loans officers getting paid probably – I'm going to estimate – \$80,000 a year. We're looking at \$2 million just for the loans officers. We're not talking about the senior loans officers. We're not talking about the loans managers. We're not talking about the CEO that's probably going to need to be set up here. That's just for the loans officers: \$2 million on the \$200 million.

Now, if we look at the highest for the loans officers, that would be 660 that we would need. That's \$53 million. Now, I understand and I agree that it's unlikely that every household is going to take a loan – that's unreasonable – but we've got a range now. We know probably what the minimum is going to be, and we know what the maximum is going to be.

This is where my next point comes in. Instead of just leaving this to luck and throwing at that dartboard with a blindfold on, maybe we should put some kind of a maximum on this so that we can protect the taxpayers from unlimited liability.

Finally, we've heard about the new loans program reducing the amounts that we provided under the grants program, and this will be about a \$6 million reduction to that program. The problem is that we don't have a good price tag on the administration of this program, which has already gone through, on how much it will cost, on how it will be rolled out exactly. In the end, we have no plan. This, actually, with a rollout of July 1, seems very unreasonable for the scope of what we're trying to do.

Let's do our research on these bills and ensure that we can deliver on the promises that we make. Why would we want to let down the seniors like we let down the people that were looking for jobs? We came up with the wonderful \$5,000 for every new employee. We told you that it wouldn't work. It didn't work because the plan just wasn't right. You didn't go to the right people to get the answers

you needed. Had you done that, you would have found out. Now that's cancelled. Coincidentally, that was a \$178 million program. Guess what? Two hundred million dollars is what we're bringing in now, potentially, as the minimum. Really, it's like we're just picking numbers out of the sky now and hoping that this works for our seniors.

I believe, like many of my colleagues, that really we need to find the support for those seniors in the households. The fact is that reducing the already existing funding means that we're probably going to end up with less. I know that for my own parents, when I had told them that the Alberta government was going to consider bringing out a home equity line program, the only thing they could say was: "Scott, why would I ever let the government put a lien on my house? Why would I ever let the government do that?"

3:30

Even if they needed that \$40,000, they're going to be too terrified to allow our government to put a lien on it. Again, in the end, potentially, this has the ability to flop just like our wonderful jobs program. This could have been identified if you'd just sent this to the standing committee, which – guess what? – you didn't do. In the end, we're rushing things through the House.

The fact is, too, that we need to be doing a better job here because we continually put legislation through just too fast, and when it's time to actually do our job, it's hard to do it because it's too compressed a schedule. We get this legislation, and a week later it's implemented. That's just not enough time. By the time the opposition, all the opposition parties, have time to actually get through that bill, we've got three other bills right on its back. That tells me that, in the end, we're rushing things through. The government needs to slow down. In this case it especially needs to slow down when it comes to our seniors because if we get this wrong, our elderly pay for it, and that is your fault.

Now, I ask you to reconsider. I am asking you to send this to a standing committee. This is something that we cannot afford to get wrong.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak against Bill 5. Now, I'm not here to speak against the title of Bill 5 or the intent of Bill 5. I believe that Bill 5 is a very well-intentioned bill, trying to address a real problem and address a real social need, that lower and sometimes even medium-income seniors who own their homes sometimes have difficulty turning the capital asset of their home into cash to make renovations or do whatever they need to do. That is a real issue that the government is nobly trying to address. But the road to hell is paved with good intentions. The bill here is trying to address a real social need, to allow seniors to access the capital in their own homes to improve that property. Well, if we were just passing a bill of intent, if that was essentially a motion, I would support it. The problem is how the government goes about it.

Governments can do some things well and other things horribly. Governments can set broad policies and goals. They can set direction, strategic direction. Governments are almost always bad at specifically doing. That's why the minister doesn't personally manage doctors on the floor of the operating room. That is why the Minister of Justice doesn't personally manage cases of Crown prosecutors, the minister of social services does not direct the casework of social workers. It's the idea, the broad principle that government can set the direction, the goals of a department, but it

should never be specifically directing the implementation of those policies. That is for experts to do.

The government is proposing here to create what amounts to a second government-owned bank in the province. The government is proposing to create a financial exposure to the balance sheet of this province of just under \$6 billion if the eligible population were to take the government up to its maximum. That is a \$6 billion exposure for the people of Alberta, with an exposure based on our seniors. We're now going to put liens on seniors' homes, where the taxpayer is responsible and where the government comes collecting.

But it's not even going to be managed by people who know what they're talking about. We're not talking about putting this in the hands of ATB, who have bankers, who can do credit checks, who actually are familiar with how banking and lending work. We're talking about running this through a department. This is insane. This is absolutely insane, to say that the bureaucrats in a department are capable of intricate financial management on a case-by-case basis. Alberta Treasury Board itself would be almost swamped by a task of this magnitude. If Alberta Treasury Board was responsible for administering this, Alberta Treasury Board would have to hire scores of new employees to manage this. It is ATB which is mostly independent and has experts in it who know what they're doing.

The same cannot be said of government department bureaucrats. Bureaucrats are meant to administer a program. Bureaucrats are meant to carry out the policy directions of the minister. They are not qualified to approve people for loans where their houses are on the line. This is grossly irresponsible in the name of trying to accomplish a positive social outcome, allowing seniors to access the capital in their homes.

I would propose to the minister that she should think about this and send this to a committee where we can hear from financial experts. Let's hear from Alberta Treasury Branches. Let's hear from other banks and credit unions in this province. If the minister was serious about properly administering a program for seniors to access the capital in their homes, they would alter the mandate of Alberta Treasury Branches. They would give Alberta Treasury Branches a political mandate to provide loans to seniors to access the capital in their homes if they're not able to obtain that capital through the private lending markets. They would allow the Alberta Treasury Branches to do this, experts who know what they're doing, who know how to manage risk, who are not going to make loans to people who might not be credit worthy, who might overleverage, who might not know how to conduct complicated financial matters.

We're talking about handing it to bureaucrats. This is grossly irresponsible. Now, I know that the minister is trying to accomplish something positive here. This is an act with a very good name, an act whose intentions I support and, I would chance to say, probably all members of the House support. But the mechanics of this bill are grossly irresponsible.

This will expose us to a potential subprime mortgage crisis in this province. We're talking about a \$6 billion exposure to the taxpayer. We're talking about a \$6 billion exposure, with loans made by people who don't know what they're doing; a \$6 billion exposure made from a department, not an arm's-length agency; a \$6 billion exposure from bureaucrats with a political mandate, not experts in the banking industry. We have to have people administer a program like this who know what they're doing, people who have experience making loans, people who have experience doing credit checks, understanding the creditworthiness of customers.

Are we saying that absolutely anybody can access this regardless of their past credit history? Is this now a true loan with risk management, or is this an entitlement program which anybody

whatsoever can access even if they have a poor credit history? Well, those are very, very serious questions that need to be answered before we pass a bill that could expose the province's balance sheet to a liability of up to \$6 billion. This is not a casual bill, members. This is a very serious bill that will have serious implications.

3:40

Now, this won't create a crisis overnight. This will set in over time. It'll probably be after the next election before the chickens come home to roost on this one. But if we are talking about a program where anyone can obtain a loan regardless of their history and the program is administered by bureaucrats without a proper financial background, who don't have the experience making loans, who don't know what the broader picture is going to be, as a bank does with its own balance sheets and lending ratios, we are setting ourselves up for a boondoggle here.

This is the problem with too many politicians. We get elected to play with other people's money like it was a casual toy. We are talking about passing a bill here with massive financial repercussions for this province, for the seniors we're proposing to lend money to, and also for the taxpayers, who will backstop this program. People want us to act responsibly with their money, and pushing a bill through here without even going to a proper committee to hear a single expert witness is being irresponsible with people's money. It is being irresponsible with seniors' money. It is being irresponsible with taxpayers' money. It is being irresponsible with the money of future taxpayers, who will be on the line to pay the unfunded liabilities of this if these loans end up going sour.

How many people here feel qualified to determine if someone is credit worthy? Who here? Not a single member of this Legislature is qualified to do a credit check on anybody. Not a single member of this Legislature has any qualification as to who should and who should not get loans and in what amount. This is not a lending program. This is a boondoggle in the making, Madam Chair. And, unfortunately, the best we're going to be able to do is say, "I told you so," when in four, five, 10 years we've got a balance sheet problem on our books because loans were not properly made. They were made by bureaucrats. They weren't made by financial experts.

We should at the very least ask people who know what they're doing at the Alberta Treasury Branches to come to a committee of this Legislature and testify as to who is best positioned to administer a program of this scale. Let's talk to economists. Let's talk to lenders, bankers, credit unions. Perhaps a better program would be to guarantee loans in the private sector, for private-sector banks and credit unions to make these loans rather than the government itself. I don't know. There are many different ways we can achieve this social outcome that the minister is trying to get to. Again, the minister's goals here are very noble and well intentioned and I think would enjoy the support of most members of this Legislature, but the way she's trying to do it is hugely irresponsible.

I don't want to just sit here and warn the minister and then six years from now have to say: I told you so. The minister should be here for the entire debate. The minister should answer questions from members of the opposition as to the administration of this program. This is not a casual bill to sweep through the House because it has a nice name. This is a serious bill, and the minister should answer serious questions about it, and she should answer as to how they will administer a bill that will expose the people of this province to a \$6 billion liability without a single proper expert in place to administer it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to table an amendment to Bill 5. If I may speak a little bit as they pass this out, Madam Chair. This government doesn't seem to demonstrate that they understand how to consult prior to drafting a bill, but they have said that they will consult after the bills have been drafted. This amendment that I'm going to be providing to this government is to simply review certain sections of this bill in order to measure, to identify concerns, and to identify issues and problems within one year. These are standard things that people do when they create new rules and new regulations, especially when they affect so many and especially when it can fiscally impair this province.

With that, I now give the requisite number of copies of my second amendment, and I'll read it into the record as the pages distribute it. I move that Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act, be amended by adding the following after section 12:

13 A committee of the Legislative Assembly must begin a comprehensive review of the operations of sections 2, 5, 7, 9 and 11 within one year of the coming into force of these sections and must submit to the Legislative Assembly, within 6 months after beginning the review, a report that includes any recommendations for amendments to these sections by the committee.

Madam Chair, this amendment will require a review in one year, tabled by the committee in the Assembly, on the sections 2, 5, 7, 9, and 11. Section 2 is loans, 5 is grants, 7 is the right to cancel certain contracts, 9 is the effect of contract cancellation and responsibility of supplier, and 11 is regulations.

Madam Chair, it is absolutely critical that this legislation be reviewed properly to ensure that this major government program is operating in a way which is in the best interests of our seniors and of those who work to support them. I ask that the members would support this amendment to add this safeguard to Bill 5, to review and evaluate it as time goes on. This is a responsible, decent amendment. It would demonstrate from this government that they are truly providing some diligence in their haphazard development of their bills.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I rise to speak against the amendment. I appreciate the hon. member's intent in bringing forward this amendment. I believe that what he's intending to do by that is to confirm that the government has ongoing oversight of this bill, and I certainly agree with that. It's a necessity for any government to, in an ongoing way, consider the effects and implementation of legislation, no matter what it happens to be.

That's exactly what we will do as a government with this piece of legislation and any legislation that we pass in this House. We will always have an ongoing monitoring of legislation. If indeed there seems to be a difficulty with functioning or outcomes, then we'll as a government take stock of those and take action to amend difficulties that may arise. But we do have full confidence in this legislation, that it will very positively affect the targeted seniors who live in their homes right now but may not have the savings to effect repairs and alterations to allow them to live in those homes longer. Therefore, I don't believe this amendment is necessary, and I would urge its defeat.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak this afternoon to the amendment of what we have reiterated over and over is an important piece of legislation. Obviously, the intent of this legislation is to ensure that seniors get the care that they need and the ability to stay in their home wherever possible.

3:50

What we had attempted to do this afternoon was to provide some additional checks and balances when it comes to this legislation and the need to review the legislation. While I can certainly appreciate the Member for Edmonton-McClung's comments about the government's commitment to review the effectiveness of a program, there are a number of questions that the opposition has raised that remain unanswered or cause significant concern, particularly for some members in the community of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, around this piece of legislation. Again, they certainly support the intention of a government that is respectful of our seniors but want to ensure that the program that's initiated actually is going to be a program that does that.

This amendment requires a review. The government chose not to send the bill to committee yesterday, which would have provided that review up front and would have provided some additional analysis to all members of the Assembly. That committee was going to need to report back before the end of May, so it wasn't like we had a reason or a desire to delay the bill. I know that the government is committed to getting the sweeping regulations in place by the 1st of July. That in itself is going to be a significant amount of work because so much of this bill is going to be in those regulations. This amendment here provides an opportunity in the future to review the legislation in committee, to see if it's going well.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung said that they promise to review it, but this House, this Chamber, the Assembly is larger than the government. I know that the government thinks they have all of the right answers all of the time and that they are going to continue to be right. The government has made a number of missteps, on some of which, as the Minister of Economic Development and Trade says, they've pivoted and gone in another direction, and hopefully that is going to be a better result for the province of Alberta. But one of the reasons why they've pivoted on those things is because issues or concerns have been highlighted by the Official Opposition. The Official Opposition, on a number of files, has done a good job of engaging Albertans to ensure that they are aware and familiar with what is happening here in the Assembly and, as a result, have spoken up and informed the government about some of those concerns.

So the government has pivoted, and this amendment requires the government to consider whether or not they need to pivot. It's not an amendment that would repeal the whole bill, although some in the Assembly would suggest that that might not be terrible. It's not an amendment that requires undue or uncalled-for red tape but that a committee of the Assembly provide a comprehensive review. These are the very sorts of things that we as members of this Assembly are here to do.

Just today in question period the hon. Minister of Justice tabled a list of legislation that has not been proclaimed. One begins to wonder how it's possible that legislation was passed through the Chamber but never actually became law or wasn't ever proclaimed at the time by Her Excellency or His Excellency, as the case may be. Some of that legislation is quite old. Sometimes that can happen when the Assembly introduces legislation that, as they find out during the consultation process, that should have been done before, that's happening after, has all sorts of different consequences or things they did not realize, so the legislation doesn't wind up being

proclaimed in the end. These are all examples of when governments haven't been a hundred per cent correct.

What this amendment does – in a number of sections, including section 2, which discusses the loan; section 5 in the legislation, which discusses issues around the grant; section 7, which discusses issues around the right to cancel certain contracts; section 9, the effect of the contract cancellation and responsibility of suppliers; and a number of these sorts of things, it would have been very helpful if these would have been dealt with prior, particularly when it comes to contractors and suppliers and their ability to provide feedback into the legislation, into a very robust conversation around this piece of legislation.

Then, again, section 11, which has to do with the regulations: one of the reasons why that committee ought to review section 11 is because so much of this bill is going to be done in the confines of the minister's office. I know, as the representative of the good people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, that they didn't ask me to come and provide sweeping powers to the cabinet but to do everything I could to ensure that the Assembly, the Legislature, the voice of the people are able to have input and feedback in as many areas of government as possible. When we consolidate power in the minister's office, the openness and the transparency of the government can come into question. We've seen that in other decisions that the government has been making. What used to be third-party, independent bodies are being brought into the confines of government, and the power and decision-making are being consolidated. That's one of the things that regulations do.

What this amendment provides is a real opportunity for a comprehensive review of the legislation and the regulations that this government is going to put into place with little to no consultation with the stakeholders. It allows us the opportunity to shine light onto whatever those regulations may or may not be in the future. So it is my strong recommendation that members of this Assembly support such a valuable amendment. If the program is going off the rails, light can be shed. If seniors are being taken advantage of, if there are contractors that aren't doing the right thing – unscrupulous, I think, is what I was heading towards there – then we will have the opportunity to review the legislation and have a robust discussion and make sure that this legislation is what's right for the province. More importantly than that, we can ensure that this legislation is what is right for our seniors because we've heard lots of concern and discussion from this side of the House about some of the potential risks. This would be an opportunity for us all to address some of those risks.

With that, Madam Chair, I'm happy to take my seat and encourage all members of the Assembly to support the amendment.

4:00

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak on amendment A3? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to my colleague's amendment requiring that a review be tabled once a year for Bill 5. You know, multiple times in this House we've heard members from across the way speak about how important it is to get it right. Albertans have been offered assurances over and over again that the government has their best interests at heart. Often, however, those assurances have fallen a little flat in the aftermath when it is discovered that there is not quite as much consultation as has been promised or has been claimed. Well, I believe all the members of this House can also attest to the fact that we have offered repeatedly to help the government get it right, and, yes, that's what we're doing here today, trying to help get this right.

Just recently the Member for Edmonton-McClung claimed we were intent on installing a practice in this House of referring pretty much every motion we can to committee. There's a reason for that. Often while in opposition the government also attempted to refer to committees. Often they accused the government of ramming through legislation. Often they accused the government of lack of consultation. We're all aware of how the vote went on our referral motion. We are, after all, still here debating.

At this point, however, I'm now going to the bones of this amendment. We're saying: "Okay; you're confident that this legislation is air tight. You're positive there's nothing that could go sideways, nothing that could go haywire, upside down on this particular bill. You're adamant that you've consulted extensively with stakeholders and individuals, and you're going to move forward come hell or high water." Okay. We get it. We understand that.

Now what we're suggesting – and it's a little thing, really, but a vitally important thing for good governance – is that the government task the legislative committee to review it once it's been rolled out. I don't understand what the harm could possibly be in that. Let's consider how such a review could play out. I'll give you three scenarios here.

Scenario 1: it's a success. Look, I'm even giving you the benefit of the doubt here. The committee reports back in a year, give or take a couple of months probably, and reports to the Assembly that everything is running remarkably well. The response has been great. The rollout goes smoothly. It's a complete success. In that event, everybody in the House is happy. Members opposite may gloat. We may applaud the government, pat them on the back, on its good work.

Scenario 2 is a bit of a hit and miss. Aspects have been rolled out that have gone smoothly while there have also been some bumps in the road. The committee reports back to the House and is able to relook at the legislation in order to improve it, to ensure it hits all the right points. We may have heard comments throughout that period, over the period of a year, that would tweak us to think that we could possibly make some changes to this bill that would improve it. What could possibly be wrong with that?

Scenario 3. Let's just say that it's a flop. I was giving the government the benefit of the doubt here a moment ago, so now I have to take it away to be fair. I won't go so far as to say that it's an epic fail, but it might be close. There's confusion, discontent. It's not properly utilized. Potentially the savings aren't there. Also, potentially it's a mess, with administration costs running away.

In any one of these three scenarios the committee reports to the Assembly, and a decision is made as to where to go from there. There are a few members opposite who know what I'm talking about because that's what happened with the previous government, and those same members before May 5, 2015, were quick to point out how they had warned and cautioned but that the government had done its own thing without listening first, which resulted in legislation having to be revised and repealed.

Contrary to popular belief, my colleagues and I are not trying to be difficult, believe it or not, and as I said earlier – we've said it, and you've heard it before – we're trying to help. We're trying to inject a bit of common sense into the process of all legislation that comes through this House. It's not unheard of. Federally bills are sent to committee all the time. This is part of the process, or at least it should be, and it would certainly be nice if it was part of the process of the Alberta Legislative Assembly.

Madam Chair, I'd like to share an analogy to make this clearer. When a person lands a new job, they're often put on probation for

three to six months. The point of that probation is to ensure that things are working out, that the employee is settling into the role, learning the ropes, putting in the effort. At that point the employer gets a better idea of how good a fit the new hire is in the team and as part of the company. At the end of that time there is a review that happens, where everything is laid on the table, and employment decisions can be made for the future of the company. Why apply a different standard to legislation? If there's nothing to worry about, why be nervous about a review? The legislation will already be in place. It's simply a means of seeing and learning how things are working out. Furthermore, an in-depth review of legislation by members of this House could provide opportunities for better knowledge and understanding when crafting the next piece of legislation.

Let's not forget that this program is brand new. There is no similar program anywhere in Canada. It could well be that our sister provinces are looking at us to see how this works, how it goes, so let's show them. Let's use a formal review to get formal results that can be shared. As we've heard often from the members opposite, that's just good governance.

Madam Chair, I urge all members of this House to consider the benefits of this amendment, not only to improve this bill but for the benefit of good legislative practice in general, and to vote in favour, as I will be doing.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:08 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Anderson, W.	Jansen	Smith
Cooper	MacIntyre	Starke
Cyr	Pitt	Strankman
Ellis	Rodney	Yao
Gill		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Goehring	McPherson
Carlier	Gray	Miller
Carson	Hinkley	Miranda
Ceci	Horne	Nielsen
Connolly	Kazim	Piquette
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Rosendahl
Dach	Littlewood	Sabir
Dang	Loyola	Schmidt
Drever	Luff	Schreiner
Eggen	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Turner
Ganley		

Totals:	For – 16	Against – 40
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[Motion on amendment A3 lost]



**The Chair:** We are back on the bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 5 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill: Bill 5. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 5

#### Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister of seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and move third reading of Bill 5, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act.

I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of this House for raising important issues for a good debate on this valuable legislation. I want to thank my colleague the Member for Edmonton-McClung for his support and commitment to this bill and his hard work during this debate. The principle of this bill, Madam Speaker, as I have said before and as the Member for Edmonton-McClung has said during this debate, is our belief that many seniors simply wish to remain at home. I know there is broad support for the worthy principle that is underpinning this legislation.

I wholeheartedly agree with another colleague, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, who said during this debate that one of our prime responsibilities as legislators is to look after vulnerable seniors. The member, who is also a physician, talked during the debate about his years treating elderly patients who have suffered strokes or heart attacks or are battling cancer. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud said that many of these patients may spend long periods of time in hospital because their homes are not equipped for their current needs. Their homes need the repairs or adaptations that they will be able to get under this bill.

This bill helps our health system and our seniors, and it benefits our communities. Seniors are valued members of the community, and we want them to be able to stay at home and age in their communities. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for sharing his understanding and giving us the benefit of his years of experience treating patients. This helps us to better understand that for seniors and for all of us home means independence, an increased sense of well-being, and greater quality of life.

4:30

This, of course, is not just about seniors who are sick or recovering from illness. Many seniors deal with the diminished physical capacity which is a result of aging. In those cases it would be tragic if a senior had to leave their home because a hallway to the bedroom was too narrow or because they couldn't afford to install a walk-in tub, but this is the situation many seniors face. To remain in their homes, they need to make repairs or adaptations.

One specific example of a senior needing home repair was a senior with thick shag carpet along the hallway. That shag carpet is difficult to navigate with a walker. A smooth flooring surface would make all the difference to this senior being able to navigate the hallway many times a day. Another senior is scared of falling as he carries a laundry hamper down a flight of stairs to the basement. The solution is simple: move the washer and dryer to the main floor for easy accessibility. It is these kinds of adaptations that can make the difference between staying at home and needing new accommodations. These are the kinds of projects that we will fund through the low-interest home equity loan proposed under this legislation.

A HomeEquity Bank and Ipsos research study in the news today surveyed 300 Canadian homeowners who said that they want to remain at home as they age. About 58 per cent of the respondents said that improvements to their homes would be necessary; 44 per cent said that they would need to make improvements to their kitchens or bathrooms to improve accessibility. The new program will also increase the options currently available for any reasonable repair or adaptation that assists the senior who chooses to remain in their home. Proposed adaptations or repairs that increase safety, mobility, independence, and health for seniors will be eligible.

The loan amount of \$40,000 will cover the costs of most needed repairs or adaptations and strike a good balance between access to financial assistance and ensuring homeowners retain sufficient equity to repay the loan. For many seniors another monthly payment is not an option given fixed incomes and pensions. We will charge simple rather than compound interest against the loan, which will allow seniors to maintain more equity in their homes than when using general market products. Seniors will be able to borrow up to \$40,000 without the burden of making monthly payments. The loan will be repaid upon the sale of the property or earlier if the senior chooses. The new program will include a grant component for low-income seniors who do not qualify for the loan.

We believe that many seniors will be interested in the program. Our projection is that as many as 145,000 senior households will be eligible.

We know that seniors need to be confident about the application process and entering into contracts for repairs or adaptations. As a colleague said, with the increasing use of fine print, some seniors may not be as financially literate as they once were or are not as confident about negotiating a financial arrangement. We want to protect these seniors. We have built consumer protection measures into this bill to ensure that seniors get the information they want and the protection they need. The application package will include the Service Alberta publication on consumer tips, home renovations. This publication provides important information about contracts

and best practices to select a supplier and about getting comparative quotes from more than one business.

The bill includes provisions to protect consumers, including the following. The loan program will consider the reasonableness of the cost to the individual for the home repair, renovation, or adaptation as part of the loan approval process. Contractors will be required to advise the consumer that the loan program is available to eligible individuals and to advise the consumer of their cancellation rights if they are not eligible for the loan, the effect of a contract cancellation, the responsibility of the contractor to refund any money paid if a contract is cancelled, details about how contracts may be cancelled, and how the consumer may notify the contractor.

As well, the bill details the consumer's cancellation rights. A consumer may cancel a contract with no penalties or costs if the consumer applies to the program within 45 days of entering into a contract and if the consumer is not eligible for that loan. The consumer can cancel a contract within 30 days of being notified that they are ineligible for the loan. The consumer may waive cancellation rights, and the consumer removes cancellation rights if the consumer accepts delivery of goods or services outlined in the contract.

Albertans will have access to application forms and the information they need prior to the launch of the program on July 1. We will have staff ready to assist seniors and answer questions as we enact this new home repair/adaptation loan program. This program is an investment in our economy. It will spur economic activity for contractors, skilled workers, and suppliers. In our current difficult economic climate we will be saving \$6 million while still supporting low-income seniors through the grant component of the new program.

Finally, this is, of course, a voluntary program. It will give seniors another option to make the repairs and improvements they need. Whether it's ripping out the shag carpet or moving the appliances upstairs, this program is designed to support seniors to remain in their communities. This bill supports Alberta seniors and addresses the needs of an aging population. As my colleague said, we are fulfilling our responsibility as legislators to help the most vulnerable segments of our population, and I thank all my colleagues for their support.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Airdrie, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, it's fairly obvious that there are some members in this House that aren't willing to listen to reasoned debate and amendments, but have no fear; I have some information here. I think it's very important for us to have an overview of what the rest of Canada is doing in regard to the situation of providing seniors with assistance to stay in their homes longer, which I really do think is very important. I think there's obviously, you know, cause for the concern that we've highlighted here today. The government being in the business of banking should definitely cause us to pause and to think and to really, really bring in the experts to debate this, and I would still encourage you to do that.

Anyway, I'd just like to point out, as we go through, what other provinces are doing, that I've pulled up through my research here. This is certainly not an endorsement of any of their projects, but I would like to point out that no other province or territory in Canada has actually gotten into the business of being the lender.

British Columbia has a program called home adaptations for independence, HAFI. It provides financial assistance to eligible low-income seniors and people with disabilities to live in the

comfort of their own homes. Renters and landlords can receive up to \$20,000 per home in the form of a forgivable loan. There's no age requirement for this, but you or a member of your household must have a permanent disability or diminished ability. The adaptation is for your primary residence, and it includes limitations such as that your household assets are less than \$100,000. These include your cash or bank balance, stocks, bonds, term deposits, mutual funds, business equity, land, real estate, or property holdings. These exclude RRSPs, RESPs, RDSPs, RRIFs, vehicles, and the home that you live in if you own it. It sets forth that the household income is within the housing income limit for your area, which also takes into account the household composition.

They also have a home renovation tax credit for seniors and persons with disabilities. It assists eligible individuals 65 and over and persons with disabilities with the cost of certain permanent home renovations to improve accessibility or to be more functional or mobile at home. This is maybe a little bit more similar to Alberta's RAMP program, which has been providing accessible upgrades here in Alberta in the form of a grant.

Now, Saskatchewan has the homeowner repair program. It provides financial assistance to help low-income homeowners make major repairs to their homes to meet the minimum health and safety standards. Eligible homeowners may receive up to \$23,000, and the program is for all persons, seniors and otherwise.

#### 4:40

Some highlights here. You must own and occupy the home as your primary residence, the household income and asset levels are at or below the established limits as determined by the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, the repairs address health and safety needs, the repairs will extend the useful life of the property by 15 years, and the property is substandard or deficient and requires major repairs to at least one of the following areas: structural, electrical, plumbing, heating systems, or fire safety.

Another program that Saskatchewan has is the adaptation for independence program, AIP. It provides financial assistance to low-income homeowners or rental property owners to make a home more accessible for a person with a housing-related disability. Eligible homeowners and rental property owners may receive a forgivable loan of up to \$23,000. It's available to rental property owners and homeowners if they rent the modified units to low-income households that include a person with a housing-related disability and maintain affordable rents based on Saskatchewan Housing Corporation's rent schedule for the term of the loan.

Manitoba has the Manitoba emergency repair program for homeowners. Homeowners with low incomes may be eligible for financial assistance for emergency repairs to their homes. Key facts: you're eligible if the house is in need of major repair, it's your primary residence, and it's located in Manitoba outside of First Nations communities.

There's also the homeowner renovation assistance program. Homeowners with low incomes may be eligible for financial assistance to repair or restore their home to a minimum level of health and safety. Up to \$20,000 for eligible repairs may be available to qualified homeowners. If your home is located in a northern or remote community, you get a little bit more, up to \$23,000 to qualified homeowners. Now, you're eligible if your house is in need of major repair, it's your primary residence, you're located in Manitoba outside of First Nations communities, the house is at least five years old, it's assessed at a value no higher than the current program limit, and your total gross household income is at or below the income set by Manitoba Housing for your community.

Ontario has the Ontario senior homeowners' property tax grant. This grant helps seniors with the cost of their property taxes. Those eligible could get up to \$500 each year. Key requirements of this: you or your spouse or your common-law partner paid Ontario property taxes in the previous year, you meet the income requirements, as of December 31 of the previous year you're 65 years of age or older, you're resident in Ontario, and you own or occupy your principal residence.

Quebec has the residential adaptation assistance program. Persons with a disability where everyday activities in the home are limited may be eligible for the residential adaptation assistance program. The program grants financial assistance to homeowners for eligible work to adapt a dwelling to meet the disabled person's needs. The work must provide simple and economical solutions. The financial assistance is paid in the form of a grant, up to \$16,000 per eligible person. In specific cases the Société d'habitation du Québec – I'm not great at French – may pay additional financial assistance up to \$7,000 in cases . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Housing society.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you. Housing society.

. . . requiring specialized equipment. Additional assistance not exceeding \$10,000 may also be paid based on certain criteria as set by the Quebec housing society. Key facts: you must reside in Quebec outside of a native reserve, and you must provide a report by an occupational therapist demonstrating that their impairment is significant and persistent and requires alterations to their home.

In Newfoundland and Labrador they have the provincial home repair program. It's designed to provide funding to assist homeowners with low income who require repairs to their homes to bring dwellings up to the minimum fire and life safety standards with improvements in basic heating, electrical, and plumbing services and for applicants who require accessibility changes. Funding is limited to the costs associated with repairs. The forgivable loan funding is available for homeowners up to a maximum of \$5,000, \$6,500 in Labrador, and for persons with accessibility needs, \$7,500 in both Newfoundland and Labrador. Repairs exceeding these levels may be addressed under a repayable loan of up to \$12,500 or \$15,000 in Labrador. Key facts here: homeowners with low income, a household income of less than \$33,000, who require repairs to their dwelling. There's a lifetime assistance cap at \$12,500, and an application for a second project can be submitted after seven years have passed.

New Brunswick's federal-provincial repair program for homeowners in need of major repair or disabled accessible modifications assistance is in the form of a loan, a portion of which may not have to be repaid. The maximum forgivable loan for a housing unit is \$10,000 for regular repairs and \$10,000 for disabled accessible items. The amount of a forgivable loan is based upon a sliding income scale and the amount of required repairs. The loan amount is at the provincial borrowing interest rate and can be repaid over a period of 15 years.

One of the things that's interesting, Madam Speaker, about the current legislation that's being put forward – at least, it hasn't been made clear that there is any sort of requirement to actually submit the work to the program to receive the funding. This one actually addresses that.

In addition to that program in New Brunswick, households may be eligible for a forgivable loan for both disabled accessible modifications and other major repair items, structural and electrical, to a maximum of \$20,000. Seniors are eligible for a forgivable loan for minor adaptations to facilitate independent living to a maximum of \$3,500. And landlords are eligible for a forgivable loan for

disabled modification to a maximum of \$10,000. The eligibility in New Brunswick for this program: your household income must be below the established housing income limits, you must own the home and live in it, and you must require major repairs or lack basic facilities. Adaptations required for seniors must facilitate and prolong independent living.

Nova Scotia has a home adaptations for seniors' independence program. This program helps homeowners pay for home adaptations so that seniors with low incomes can stay in their homes independently for longer periods of time, and a one-time forgivable grant of up to \$3,500 is available. To be eligible for this program, you must be of age 65 years or older, experience difficulty with daily activities due to your age, have a low annual household income, and be a permanent resident of the home that will undergo repair or adaptation.

P.E.I. has a seniors' home repair program. The program provides assistance to low- and moderate-income seniors to make necessary repairs to one of the major components of the physical structure; for example, the roof, the furnace, windows, doors. This program is not meant for cosmetic repairs or renovations. The program will contribute 50 per cent of the cost of eligible repairs to a maximum of \$2,000. To be eligible for this program, repairs must be essential to the structure of the building as well as to health and safety, the applicant must be 60 years of age or older, and the combined income of the applicant and spouse must be less than \$35,000 per year.

So right across this country there are many programs that other provinces have put in place to help seniors age in their homes. They are very diverse in nature, certainly a lot different than the one that's being proposed here today. There's a mixture of grants, tax credits, and loans. Primarily, the format of dispensing is through the grants, which has worked well in the past. In all circumstances the provinces primarily use forms of forgivable loans with very loose terms such as maintaining that structure as your permanent residence for an average of between two to five years, depending on the province. All of the loans are placed against the individual and not the property. Repayment options vary by province. Quite simply, no other province is getting into the business of placing caveats against our seniors' homes.

**4:50**

I would like to emphasize that my colleagues and I fully support seniors staying in their homes. During the election process my mother sat me down with her friends and a teapot and asked for some assurances on how this province is going to assist them as they go on. [interjections] Many unique things. And I hope to always be invited for tea. My mother herself is not as able as I hoped she would be at the age that she is, so there are things that we're going to need to be putting in my parents' home to assist them in their daily lives. Fortunately, my parents have been good fiscal conservatives over the years and will likely not need to access a loan program or a grant program or any of those.

Making sure that our seniors can live in their homes and live better lives for longer is extremely, extremely important to myself and to the members in the Wildrose Party. The quality of care and services for our seniors is certainly a priority. While I'm sure that this bill was brought with good intentions – I truly do. There is certainly a lack of access to capital for seniors. Actually, low income or not, the fact of the matter is that a retired person over the age of 65 is not bringing in a whole ton of cash and therefore has a hard time accessing loans for anything, quite frankly. I do really recognize that that's an issue that we need to address.

Again, my caution is for the government stepping in and being the banker. There's got to be a different way to do this, and you'd have less resistance if we could address that issue.

Anyway, I do have some data here that's been collected as to what other provinces are doing, you know, what's working and what's not. I urge you to take that into consideration if you, perhaps, may not have your minds fully made up on pushing through this piece of legislation. It's just something to consider.

With everything that comes through this House, I think it's really important that we're passing good, solid legislation, that we're not doing an oops later – we all probably have larger-than-life egos in this House – and I understand that that's hard to do. So let's get it right this time. Let's really do good for the seniors in this province and for the jobs that we were elected to do here in this House.

Thank you for listening to me. I hope it wasn't too dry.

**An Hon. Member:** Never.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Never. I'm losing my voice if you're that interested.

Anyway, please take this into consideration. Again, there are quite a few concerns with this bill, but I think this is something that we can work towards changing, really making a good piece of legislation that works here in the province and is something we can all be proud of. Certainly, I can assure you that if this is really, truly a good bill, you guys are going to look just great, and everybody's going to love you. So just consider that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand up in support of Bill 5, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. This is actually the first time during this debate that I am standing up.

As I've been listening to the debate over its various stages, like many people, I think of my grandparents. My grandparents on my mother's side are both alive and well and fairly deep into their 80s currently. I love them very much, as I'm sure you would imagine. I was thinking that many provisions of this bill are for them. As I was thinking of them as the debate went on, I feel that there are some very good parts of this bill as it would relate specifically to their situation. For example, my grandparents' house, which they have lived in since the early '50s, has a water softener in it, and recently that water softener had a catastrophic mechanical failure, and it needed to be replaced. Through the process of that, my grandparents were asking me about various salespeople that had come to their house to upgrade their water softener to a new, more energy-efficient unit or perhaps to fix their old one.

One of the provisions in the bill is about ensuring consumer protection measures to ensure that seniors know their rights when hiring contractors and cancelling their contracts. I think that's very important because, although my grandparents throughout their lives are still very sharp individuals in some ways, they don't have access to the Internet currently. They retired before personal computers were a thing. As a result, you know, they don't have access to online reviews such as the Better Business Bureau's. I do my best as a good grandson to help them out with that, but not all seniors may have family nearby to help with that. I'm thinking that that provision, in particular, about ensuring that seniors know their rights, would be very valuable to somebody in my grandparents' scenario.

Another thing is that when they speak of the home adaptations and renovations that this program would include, as I was listening to the hon. minister speak earlier, some of those my grandparents

have already had a chance to do in their house. A perfect example of that is moving the laundry machines from the basement up onto the main floor of their house. They jokingly refer to it as slowly decommissioning their basement. At their age going up and down stairs is a bit of a slow process, more so than it used to be. They've also done things like installing walk-in tubs so my grandparents can have showers without stepping over the edge of the bathtub to have a shower or a bath. There's another one here. This could apply for roof replacement, which I know is something that my grandparents are thinking about as well. As you can imagine, their house is now a solid 60 years old, so that's important.

Now, another part of it is that there was a quote that came from the Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton which basically says that research consistently shows that seniors prefer to age in their homes, so it is so critical that seniors are able to adapt and maintain their homes to meet their changing needs over time.

Madam Speaker, I couldn't agree more. I have this conversation with my grandparents all the time. My grandparents, like I said, are at a stage where they do need a little bit of help with their daily activities, and after looking at all the options, they decided that they wanted to continue to be a part of their community, the community that they've been a part of since that area of Calgary was first developed. They wanted to be with their friends. They wanted to go out and walk their dog. They wanted to be able to garden in their own backyard.

This program is to help those people like my grandparents do just that, which is why, Madam Speaker, I am going to be supporting this bill. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am, as always, honoured to rise, especially to speak about the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. Again, I'd like to say that the intention of this bill is exactly what I think all of us would like to see happen, but the bill has the potential to be wide-reaching, with perhaps a great deal of unintended consequences for our seniors and the taxpayer.

Seniors have worked hard their whole lives. Understanding that, when they reach their golden years, their families and friends and, yes, their province should be there for them. Certainly, I think there's a desire on all sides of this House to ensure that we do right by our seniors and to ensure that all can enjoy a high quality of life, especially in their own homes wherever possible. But when you look at a risky economic experiment, that does not seem to be the best way to go about attaining those goals.

I agree with many members of the Assembly who have suggested that we explore the viability of having a market mechanism to achieve the same ends, our banks. We are particularly unique in this province, having ATB Financial. And our local credit unions need to be involved in the discussion around a program such as this. I think that the government is underestimating what a complicated venture this has the potential to become in proposing that a banking type of operation can be set up within the bureaucracy.

The notion of simple interest is good. No monthly payments until a person moves, sells, or passes away sounds great. But once we get into the territory of government registering caveats against a senior's home, it introduces a great deal of complexity and potentially very significant long-term consequences. It's not really hard to imagine the complications arising around estates once the time comes for ownership to be transferred. And I would really

hope that the government had considered how delays and bureaucratic wrangling could impact the executors of the will and the families of these seniors.

5:00

Meanwhile, on the other side, this bill could create potential for tens if not hundreds of millions of dollars of liability for the province of Alberta. We can't take that too lightly. Has the government given any consideration, Madam Speaker, to the need to build a whole other entire bureaucracy to administer this program? The minister says that it will be managed with existing resources. I would really, really appreciate having an explanation as to how that will work.

Aside from any unforeseen circumstances or complexities that this bill entails, I have some extremely serious concerns with the rollout of this legislation and the manner in which it has been presented in this House. There is much of this bill that remains to be seen, parts that have been buried in regulations, with the government asking us to trust them. This is not a good practice. Such core points of a bill of this magnitude have to be debated in the House, in the open. Madam Speaker, for example, it seems that the government will decide by regulation what repairs will qualify under the loan. What sorts of things will this entail, and what mechanism will the minister use to ensure that these requirements are being adhered to? This is a humongous responsibility.

Now, another part of this bill is the requirement to have work be approved by the minister and done in an approved manner. Again, this is massive. It seems to entail an even bigger, more complex government apparatus and bureaucracy. We need to understand how that's going to work. We're left without clarity on what would be approved, who would be approved to construct it, and what would constitute a reasonable project. We are assured that these, too, will come once the minister is given regulatory authority. Of course, the implication with such wide regulatory authority is also that whatever we are being promised today can just as easily be changed behind closed doors at any point down the road.

This is extremely well intentioned. All of us see that. We understand that. But the reality is that at a time when we can least afford it, I strongly encourage the government not to get caught passing a piece of legislation in a rushed or haphazard manner, not when it has the potential to add unforeseen costs and bureaucracy, that stand to worsen the growing problem of debt. More importantly, what we're all talking about here is dealing with seniors' care in housing. We owe it to them to do things right and to get it right the first time.

I strongly urge all members of this Assembly to vote against passing Bill 5 at this time. Let's take some time, let's bring some experts in, and let's talk about this and figure out what is best for our seniors. In my culture these are the gems of our society. These are the wisdom; these are the storytellers; these are the people that have impacted absolutely every aspect of my life personally and my children. The respect that is due to these people, the group of people that have built this province up, is much more than what is entailed in this bill. It's so much more. We owe that to them.

I urge every member of this Assembly to vote against this at this time. It may be that there are some interesting parts of this concept and there are aims that we all share, but it cannot proceed in its current format.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments?

Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a remarkable opportunity to speak to Bill 5 in support of the seniors' home adaptation and repair program. During such variable economic circumstances it is important to look to the value-added strategies that recognize the balance between economic sustainability, fiscal responsibility, and strong, sound governance. I believe that Bill 5 embraces this delicate stability.

Bill 5, or SHARP as it is commonly referred to, will provide our seniors the element of independence by assessing the equity in their homes to make structural modifications that support the comforts of the home that they are so fond of. This, in turn, allows them the peace of mind that accompanies the quality of life they so rightfully deserve. Independent living provides continuum, and that is an important aspect to our seniors. Continuum provides the reassurance of safety, that is important to everyone. Continuum allows family to attend to family needs in the atmosphere that resonates, home.

The SHARP program not only echoes continuum; it is viable in that it does not require monthly repayment to sustain it as the equity exists within the home. Up to \$40,000 can be made available to provide our seniors with the safety mechanisms that ensure their well-being and their families the peace of mind that their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents enjoy the ultimate comfort they deserve.

Madam Speaker, sound governance echoes in this bill. I applaud our government for recognizing this opportunity as it addresses housing concerns for our seniors as wins on many levels. Recognizing consumer protection to mitigate the advantage of our seniors is strong accountability. Providing the essence of home safety and the independence of our seniors is a priority for the great work they have accomplished to make Alberta the great province it is and always will be.

This initiative provides work in these challenging times for our Albertans. SHARP provides a housing market for our seniors, with adaptations that already meet needs. The SHARP program is an innovative way to stimulate our economy through measures of opportunity. Madam Speaker, I think we can all agree that this bill incorporates the fiscal responsibility that Albertans are waiting for.

We need to recognize that Bill 5 incorporates many advantages that support value-added objectives and aims to resolve on many levels. Many of our seniors have equity as well as fierce independence. This initiative allows the continuum of their self-sufficiency while addressing the needs and priorities of this invaluable demographic. Bill 5 provides seniors the opportunity to access this value to improve their home as well as their quality of life. This provides greater opportunity than what is currently available under the special needs assistance program.

SHARP is an investment geared to increasing accessibility as well as ensuring the structural integrity of property. When we invest in infrastructure on any level, we are investing wisely. When we invest in Albertans, we are empowering Albertans. Madam Speaker, I am confident that the seniors' home adaptation and repair program will evolve to ensure we are speaking to Albertans' needs, maintaining the integrity of their essence, and building strong foundations for future generations. This program looks to almost triple the eligibility of households compared to the current special needs assistance program, and that defines value-added.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?  
The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, it's with the greatest respect that I rise to question the Member for Red Deer-

North in this regard. We've had some great conversations before and hopefully will afterwards. I also mean the greatest respect to the fabric and the foundation of the seniors of our province. They are the backbone of our province.

But to the member. She made a comment about investing in infrastructure, and I was wondering if she could further explain how she feels that the government involvement, the government investment in homes – because ultimately these homes will have to have a letter of credit applied to them for the government to allow these developments – could more properly adjudicate this than, possibly, a government backstop to a private institution that could do the same thing.

5:10

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the comment and question. The proposed seniors' home adaptation and repair program will allow seniors to use their home equity to make modifications to remain in their homes and maintain their independence. More seniors will be eligible to access further funds to do a much broader scope of work than what was already available under the special needs assistance program.

The proposed Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act will include consumer protection measures to ensure seniors know their rights when hiring contractors and cancelling contracts. The seniors' home adaptation and repair program promotes effective and responsible governance. It is anticipated that the proposed program will save the government \$6 million annually.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 5, at this point in third reading. As it currently stands, there are far too many unanswered questions about Bill 5, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. It is, quite frankly, unacceptable for this or any other government to pass a bill which commits the government to a major financial lending scheme until we can actually see what the details of the program will be. We need details, we need facts, and we should have research done and reviews done before we get Alberta's taxpayers into the practice of providing home equity loans administered by a bureaucracy with no experience in doing so.

Madam Speaker, we would all be better served and better able to fully represent Alberta's seniors and our constituents if this bill had been sent to committee, where we could have heard from the experts in financial transactions, the contractors, the experts in renovations, and so on. We had a motion to refer it to committee, which would have allowed the government the time that is necessary to think about what the program will look like and come back to the House with actual concrete terms. Instead, we have this government that's going to push this bill through regardless of this lack of research and this lack of broad, province-wide consultation with the experts, including legal experts because there are going to be a number of legalities surrounding this.

Some Albertans are already reporting their concerns about this bill in the media. Simply, people are somewhat confused on whether or not this is a reverse mortgage. Some have asked that question. Is this a home equity loan? Some are familiar with that instrument at their banks. Some are raising concerns that the government will be getting into – we even heard this – predatory

loan practices with our seniors. I mean, people are confused. They want answers to this. The committee process would have provided that kind of a forum where Albertans could have been more fully informed and have input into the finer details of this act.

While I am absolutely certain that it is not the case that the government is getting into something predatory, it's the type of problem that occurs when a lack of detail in legislation happens. One person said that she's afraid this will mean seniors will lose valuable equity in their home and face more difficult choices down the road. This is true.

Madam Speaker, it is incumbent upon the minister and this government to explain these things and why these details are not ironed out as we develop this piece of legislation. Albertans are already worried and with good reason given this government's record with regard to trust and consultation. It should not be adding to their concerns again with an untested program heretofore unseen in our country without allowing for a thorough study of its potential ramifications. According to the minister's own briefings and comments, a program like this has never been attempted before in Canada, and the minister needs to stop letting a manifesto govern policy choices. This bill apparently may make a loan available to up to 145,000 households, or 260,000 seniors, according to the government's estimates, and those not eligible for the loan may be eligible for a grant. That is a lot of people depending on a lot of mayes. They may be eligible for a grant; they may be eligible for the loan.

Madam Speaker, the eligibility and loan maximum in its extreme could lead to a whopping \$5 billion maximum liability for the government. It's an unbudgeted liability and an unknown and heretofore unbudgeted administration cost. There is no subscriber limitation put on this. Therefore, staffing levels are unknown. Debt levels are unknown. There are far too many unknowns here to be going down this road in such an irresponsible management manner. This is governing by guess or by golly. This is not really government as it should be. There ought to be a larger focus on ensuring that we get this right and that we're not rushing ahead on a very sensitive piece of legislation. We need to have proper research to use as the foundation for deciding our next steps forward for our seniors, so it's important that we take time to hear from Alberta's seniors.

Of all things that I have a problem with in this bill, it is that element right there, that it didn't go to committee. Seniors were not invited to come to this place and to talk to everyone and to ask all of the questions that they ask and make the suggestions that they have. This is the group of people that built this province, and they know a thing or two about what they need, and they know a thing or two about business and about home loans. They are the experience in this province. I am quite certain they could have provided significant amounts of input into this bill's development.

Madam Speaker, we took some time to reach out, and we heard from seniors, seniors' organizations, some banks, some contractors about this new program. These people are also going to be affected by this bill if it's passed, and the one thing we heard is that they really feel like they deserve to be consulted. How about that? Bill 6 all over. This loan program, as of yet untested in Canada – we heard from my esteemed colleague about some of the other programs similar to this in other parts of the country, and if we're going to veer so far off the beaten path, we do really need more information about the potential consequences of a program like this. We need the minister and we need the government to give some reasonable responses to some of these issues.

Just like all Albertans, seniors are worried about their futures and the future of this province, and their families are worried as well. They're worried about legislation that hasn't been fully thought

through, that could impact their future, the future of their children, their grandchildren, the future of the asset value, the value of their home, and on issues like these, in a matter of such importance, Wildrose believes that an efficient and compassionate government should be focusing on the most vulnerable in a very well thought through manner, and we just don't see that.

The government says that they think that there will be around 5,000 loans, I believe one of the other hon. members suggested. I understand that this is an estimate. The press release says that over 140,000 homes could qualify. This is a significant amount of money. As my colleagues have mentioned previously, it seems unlikely that the department is going to be able to administer this without adding increased staff, but we don't know because we don't know how many. There's no limit on the subscription to this. Given the stated goal of monitoring costs of these projects and the cost of administration and the cost of these loans, these are all great big unknowns, far too many expensive unknowns.

5:20

My colleagues asked for this bill to go to committee so that more of these details could be worked out. The government is not interested in doing that consistently. Madam Speaker, as my colleagues have clearly articulated, we do not believe government should be in the business of business. We just have too many questions at this point about the details to be supportive of this bill. So I encourage all hon. members that – unless this government is prepared to do some very serious research into this and allow for a more fulsome exploration of this bill, I cannot support it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?  
Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to finally get an opportunity to speak to Bill 5. I'm rising here to support Bill 5. I have over the past couple of days listened to the debates on both sides. You know, it's interesting. There are compelling points made on both sides of this argument. I've come down to the decision to support the bill on the principle that it is an opportunity to help seniors and one, I think, that we should take advantage of. It may not be perfect. I have many questions, as my hon. colleagues have raised those questions, but those questions do not concern me to the point where I would vote against it.

There are many other ways that seniors need help, one of those, of course, being help with daily living. This, of course, will not address those issues of income gaps or accessibility outside the home, those sorts of things, but it does address one of the very many important aspects of keeping seniors in their homes as long as possible and allowing people to age in place on their own terms, using their own equity and their own money. To me, it seems like a great example of a cost-effective program, allowing people to use the equity built up in their homes. Yes, there is some government expense to taxpayers, but it's minimal, and I have no grand concerns. The cost to administer that program, I think, is one that I do worry about. That's been spoken about at length by several people, hon. colleagues, in the House.

The regulations themselves are unclear. We have guidelines or indications from the minister about what those regulations will be, especially as they relate to asset limits. I have yet to hear a hard asset limit. If there has been one discussed, I haven't heard it, which doesn't mean it hasn't been discussed; it just means I haven't heard it. But what I would encourage the minister to do, if asset limits – of course, for seniors as well as many of us the most substantial asset we have is our house. A \$500,000 house in a small town in

Alberta is a very different thing than a \$500,000 house in Edmonton or Calgary, and that's something I would certainly hope that the minister takes into account. Then, also, I really encourage open communication as the regulations are developed, as the program is rolled out. I know, again, that that's been talked about, and I trust that the minister will in fact do that.

You know, my friends in the Wildrose opposition talked about several of the groups that they've consulted with – and I trust they have – who have concerns and questions about this. I know we perhaps didn't get off on the best foot earlier this afternoon, my friends in the Wildrose and I, but I hope you'll consider, you know, that the Alberta Real Estate Association does support this bill.

In summary, what I'll say about the bill is that although I have concerns – and I won't enumerate those concerns at great length here as we are short on time – the upside of the bill, the benefits of the bill outweigh the risks and outweigh the downside, and in this case, given the importance of aging in place, given the importance of allowing seniors to choose their own path, I think that I'll give the government the benefit of the doubt on this. So I would encourage all members, even with the concerns and hesitations, to support the bill. It has important aspects, and I would encourage everyone in this House to support the bill. Let's try and let's find out if, in fact, this can become an effective program for seniors in Alberta.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you for the time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?  
Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill?  
Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a third time]

## Bill 6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to move third reading of Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016.

On behalf of the Minister of Finance I would like to recap for members in this Chamber our government's approach to securities regulation as we have recently made our position quite clear. I would also take this opportunity to recap some of the key elements in this bill so that members are aware of the good work we are doing to carefully manage our capital markets right here in Alberta. Finally, I would like to briefly address some of the comments made yesterday during the excellent discussion on this bill.

As members of this Assembly know well, our government recently announced that we will continue to regulate our own capital markets right here in Alberta instead of joining the national securities regulator. We'll be sticking with the Alberta option, with our first-class provincial regulator, the Alberta Securities Commission. This decision was not taken lightly. We studied the issues carefully. We spoke with members of industry, with members of the financial sector, and, of course, with regulatory experts. After careful consideration we came to the conclusion that our unique capital markets, driven by the enormous needs of the resource sector, are best served by a street-level regulator. A regulator that knows the industry can provide local oversight right here in Alberta, not thousands of kilometres away on Bay Street.

This was the right decision. We are proud to be sticking with the Alberta option, and we are pleased that members of industry in Calgary and Edmonton and all across this province agree with us.

As our government moves forward with an Alberta-based regulator, I should also say a few words about the Alberta Securities

Commission. Recently, after a decade of noble service, Bill Rice retired as chair and CEO of the Alberta Securities Commission. He was a champion for Alberta, a first-rate regulator, and a leading voice on the national stage. Replacing Bill Rice was no small challenge.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Excuse me, hon. member.

Hon. members, can you please keep the conversations down or take them outside. Thank you.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, replacing Bill Rice was no small challenge; however, I'm so very pleased that our government met that challenge. The incoming chair of the Alberta Securities Commission, Stan Magidson, is a veteran lawyer and an accomplished securities expert, and he has deep roots right here in Alberta. Stan is an excellent choice to lead the ASC as our government ensures that we have a robust framework for capital formation while ensuring strong investor protection.

On that note, Madam Speaker, let me now say a few words about the very important piece of legislation, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016. This bill codifies our government's commitment to ensuring that our capital markets are well regulated and done so within the framework of a provincially led regulator. As members of this Assembly are well aware, the securities landscape is rapidly evolving. We all know that it is becoming more complex, sophisticated, and international in scope every year, and it is being driven by remarkable technological advances. In this context our government and all members of this House have a job to do. Our job is to ensure that our system of securities regulation keeps pace. We must keep pace with evolving international standards and global regulator reform initiatives, and we must make use of the best technical expertise that is available to us. That is what this government has done.

5:30

As part of this government's commitment to effective oversight we have been working with our partner regulators in other provinces to create a more harmonized regulatory framework across the country. It is our belief that this harmonization approach will create market efficiencies while still respecting our decision to continue with a provincially led regulator, the Alberta Securities Commission. To be clear, as our government seeks to amend this act and as we continue with an Alberta-led regulator, we are driven by three key goals. They are effective investor protection, strong market integrity, and maintaining an effective system of capital formation.

Now, let me recap for members some of the more important items in the bill. First, the bill will update definitions of a derivative, reporting issuer, and security in section 1 of the act. Updating the definition of derivative will allow the Securities Commission to regulate hybrid products, those with characteristics of a security and a derivative, more effectively and on a harmonized basis across the country. This change, while it might appear small, is crucially important to ensuring effective regulation of new financial products. Updating the reporting issuer definition will eliminate a gap in section 2 of the act as the current definition is not necessarily complete, and updating the definition of a security will ensure that a security that is prescribed by rule to be a derivative is not also captured in the definition of a security. Madam Speaker, these are common-sense reforms to the Securities Act. They are supported by the Alberta Securities Commission, regulators across the country, and I sincerely hope by all members in this House.

Second, Madam Speaker, amendments to section 29 and 42 of the act will allow our regulator to act more quickly when there is risk of potentially illegal activity. Currently the Alberta Securities Commission is required to follow the *Alberta Rules of Court* notice requirements before a witness can be summoned to appear before a hearing or an investigative interview. While these rules are appropriate for civil matters, the 20-day notice requirements are just too slow when it comes to the rapid nature of our capital markets. Therefore, the Alberta Securities Commission has proposed a shorter 10-day notice period, and our government agrees. This change to the act is just one illustration of this government's serious commitment to investor protection.

Third, Madam Speaker, this legislation will amend the wording of the halt-trade provision in section 33. The halt-trade order is a new tool, another illustration of this government's commitment to investor protection. The halt-trade order allows the Alberta Securities Commission to quickly and temporarily halt trading in our capital markets. It is a quick-action mechanism that allows the Alberta Securities Commission to intervene in the market if it sees potential illegal or problematic activity. While we don't anticipate that this provision will be used frequently, giving the Alberta Securities Commission the best possible tools to regulate our markets is just good governance, and industry agrees.

Fourthly, Madam Speaker, the act proposes an amendment to section 42, which will allow a justice of the peace to issue search warrants rather than a Court of Queen's Bench judge. This will allow the Alberta Securities Commission to move more quickly and free up the courts so they can deal with other pressing matters. Once again, this thoughtful and measured amendment to the act is another illustration of our government's commitment to ensuring investor protection.

Fifth, Madam Speaker, the act will update regulations related to exchanges, self-regulatory organizations, trade repositories, and clearing agencies. These updates will make the provisions more consistent and easier to understand and are part of this government's commitment to keeping securities regulation current.

Sixth, Madam Speaker, as part of this government's mission to harmonize regulatory provisions across the country through our work with the Canadian Securities Administrators, we are proposing changes to part 17 of the act related to civil liability provisions. These changes are supported by regulators across the country, the Alberta Securities Commission, and by stakeholders.

Finally, Madam Speaker, this act will make amendments to the Lieutenant Governor in Council's regulation-making powers to assist Canada in meeting its G-20 commitments relating to the use and trading of derivatives. This is an excellent example of how we can work with other regulators across the country to meet national and international standards while maintaining a provincially led regulator right here in Alberta.

As I wrap up my remarks, Madam Speaker, I should say that we are on the right track. While I appreciate that some members opposite wanted this bill to be referred to further study, amendments to the Securities Act shouldn't have to wait. For example, I doubt you could find serious expert testimony that would suggest it was a bad idea to introduce a halt-trade order provision. My point is that experts have weighed in, the Alberta Securities Commission has weighed in, and our government has listened carefully to experts and industry.

The amendments to this act are reasonable, straightforward, and simply good governance. They deserve the support of all members of this House. Even Thomson Reuters, in a summary undertaken by their regulatory intelligence unit, highlighted the obvious. We are giving the Alberta Securities Commission new enforcement



powers, and we are doing so reasonably. These reforms are important, Madam Speaker, as Thomson Reuters correctly points out that Alberta is the second largest capital market in the country, with roughly a third of all capital market activity. We simply have to get this right and continue to evolve as our capital markets evolve. I should add that this is commonplace, for us to amend the Securities Act. In fact, it is amended nearly every year.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I am proud that we are sticking with our provincial regulator in the Alberta Securities Commission, and I am also proud that we are taking practical, concrete steps to ensure that we have a first-class regulatory framework. Alberta is doing its part and more to ensure that we protect investors, and this government is ensuring that the Alberta spirit will continue to thrive with one of the world's most vibrant and efficient capital markets. It is in the interest of all Albertans that we adopt this bill.

I ask all members of this House to join me and support these critically important amendments to the Securities Act, and I would offer, Madam Speaker, that as our government continues with its thoughtful and measured approach to the governance of our capital markets, we are always ready to listen to good and new ideas. If members opposite have suggestions, we ask that they share them with us. We are willing to listen, and we will consider their ideas as we move into the future with an Alberta-led regulator.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and once again I ask for all members' support on this important bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to see the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is evolving to support capital markets as a principle.

I rise to speak to Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016. The Wildrose recognizes the need for periodic administrative updates to legislation such as our Securities Act. We would have appreciated seeing the bill go to committee to ensure that members understand the legislation and to hear from the experts. It is important that the Alberta Securities Act provide a competitive advantage for our province while protecting our investors. This government has said that it will maintain Alberta's independent securities regulator, and the Wildrose caucus is very pleased to hear that.

At the same time we're also happy to see our securities rules harmonized with other provinces' where necessary. This is a positive step that will improve the interprovincial flow of capital. Harmonizing our securities rules with other provinces' while maintaining our independent control of our securities is important. Breaking down interprovincial trade barriers, whether we're engaging in commercial trade or trading in securities and derivatives, is sorely needed in this country.

This bill is a good example of what responsible government should do, one that legislates in response to market needs rather than trying to direct the market. I would hope that we see more legislation in that spirit.

5:40

We also appreciate that this bill streamlines the process for investigating shady trade deals. Specifically, amendments to sections 29 and 42 cut the 20-day waiting period in half so that there only needs to be a 10-day notice period before regulatory investigations can commence. Who here remembers Bernie Madoff? He wanted a few days to settle some accounts before the Ponzi scheme he was running collapsed. This reduction in days will

help ensure that Alberta-based Madoffs of the future will get investigated sooner, before they can do more damage to investors.

We've also seen that the amendment to section 33.2(4) updates language surrounding halt-trade orders, allowing for flexibility around how long such an order can remain in effect by making it equivalent to an interim order. By amending section 42 of the existing act, this bill will align our securities process with current criminal law by allowing a justice of the peace to issue a search warrant in the event that it is needed.

Most importantly, the changes this bill introduces respond to the confusion in market trading surrounding hybrid securities and derivatives products. The bill updates definitions of securities and derivatives in order to reflect the complexity of products in the market today. It makes it possible to have hybrid derivatives that are not designated or prescribed as derivatives. Likewise, it allows certain hybrid securities that are not designated or prescribed as securities.

It is often a bit nerve-racking to have to decide on a technical piece of legislation for a Legislature like this. Thankfully, we have experts like those at the Alberta Securities Commission to look into all of these market products and protect consumers. It is incumbent upon us to provide the Alberta Securities Commission with the tools necessary to do its job. At Committee of the Whole I outlined some of the changes that people in the industry would like to see made in order to protect and, thereby, encourage investors. Perhaps the minister would kindly answer some questions and take those suggestions and come back with those changes in the fall or spring when we next update this bill.

I will close with this, Madam Speaker. Oversight is increased by having a regulator blocks away, not miles away.

Albertans are the ones... with the best understanding of our industry. Given that our capital markets are defined by [our unique] resource sector, it only makes sense to have a provincially led securities regulator who understands our province's unique needs.

Those were the words of the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance on April 6 in the *National Post*. For once I agree with him.

I ask my colleagues in all parties to support this bill. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 7 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to speak about amendments to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. The proposed amendments in Bill 7 would authorize the early appointment of an Electoral Boundaries Commission on or before October 31, 2016, which is earlier than currently allowed under the act, and clarify the commission's authority to consider recent information respecting populations not collected on a province-wide basis such as municipal population information. This information would be used along with the federal

decennial census of population or more recent province-wide census.

As mentioned, the first proposed amendment would allow early appointment of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. The act's timelines for appointment of a commission are based on the assumption that general elections are held about every four years. The last election was held about a year earlier than anticipated. The current wording of the act provides that a commission will be "appointed during the first session of the Legislature following every 2nd general election after the appointment of the last Commission." However, if fewer than eight years have passed since the appointment of the last commission, the following commission is to be appointed "no sooner than 8 years" after that.

As the commission was last appointed in July 2009 and there have been two general elections since then, the earliest the commission could be appointed is eight years after that date. As such, with the current wording of the act a commission cannot be appointed earlier than July 2017 and must be appointed no later than July 2019. A commission needs to be appointed before July 2017 so that there is sufficient time for it to do its work, to make its recommendations to this House, and to allow candidates to prepare for the next election. It is anticipated that the next general election will be held between March 1 and May 31, 2019, as per the fixed election period set out in the Election Act. The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that the commission be appointed in the fall of 2016.

I will now explain why it's important to proceed with authorizing the early appointment of the commission from a legal perspective. The Charter right to vote includes a guarantee of effective representation. Currently Alberta has 87 electoral districts. The act says that the population of a proposed electoral division should be no more than 25 per cent above or below the average population proposed for electoral divisions. There is an exception for four special electoral divisions which have a population that is up to 50 per cent below the average population. This exception is intended to deal with situations where the riding is extremely or

unreasonably large and certain other provisions laid out in the legislation. The 25 per cent deviation from average population is intended to be rare and not the norm. The early appointment of the commission will give it time to consider the population of the electoral divisions and protect that right.

With respect to the commission's use of population information, the second proposed amendment would clarify a current section of the act dealing with information that the commission must and may use when determining the population of Alberta. The act says that the commission must use the population information in the federal census carried out every 10 years, the decennial census. However, if there is a more recent province-wide census, such as one that's carried out every five years, the commission must use that population information. The act does not explicitly state that the commission may use population information which is collected not on a province-wide basis such as municipal population information censuses conducted by individual municipalities. The proposed amendment clarifies this authority but does not represent a change in policy. The last Electoral Boundaries Commission used municipal census data and found it helpful in their determinations.

Madam Speaker, these amendments are important to protecting Albertans' rights to effective representation, and I ask for support on these amendments.

At this time I would like to adjourn debate on this issue.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise, first of all, to say that I think we made incredible progress today, moving through a number of very important bills.

Seeing the time, I'm actually going to request unanimous consent from the House to adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow at the request of the opposition to give them the opportunity to prepare for tomorrow's budget.

[Unanimous consent granted; the Assembly adjourned at 5:50 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, April 14, 2016

Day 15

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
Second Session

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Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
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Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

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Anderson, W.	Nielsen
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Cortes-Vargas	Starke
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Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
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### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
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Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

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Babcock	McKitrick
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Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
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Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 14, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us reflect. Today as we come together in this Chamber in this province of Alberta on Treaty 7 land, let us affirm our common commitment to enhance the lives of Albertans and to continue the pursuit of the common good. Let us embrace a culture of compassion and sharing, a culture that allows people to be true to themselves and to everyone else. Individuals who allow their inner authenticity to grow become sources of wisdom and agents of justice in our families and our communities. A compassionate society produces wise, creative citizens and leaders. A sharing society produces strength. Our strength is each other. Thank you.

Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Press Gallery Centennial

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would like to take a moment to briefly acknowledge that today is the 100th anniversary of the press gallery of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. I'm sure that many of the gallery's current and former members will be watching the proceedings keenly today. At another appropriate time soon, most probably next Monday, I will be making a further statement on this occasion.

### Introduction of Visitors

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a man who has contributed greatly to Alberta. Mr. George VanderBurg was elected as the MLA for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne for three terms. He also served as minister of seniors and community supports, and Mr. VanderBurg was a highly respected whip for our PC caucus and a legislative mentor to me. My guest is seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I'd ask him to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very pleased to introduce a class of students from St. Augustine school in the town of Ponoka, in my constituency. I was pleased to take a photo with this group a little while ago. St. Augustine school provides a faith-based learning environment for Ponoka students and the area. I'm proud of Alberta for giving parents a choice in education. A choice in education is something that adds to the incredible richness and diversity of education in our province and something that I hope we will all continue to uphold. And I'm proud of my community for providing these kids with this great opportunity to learn under their awesome teachers.

I'd like them to stand as I read the names of the teachers and the parents that have come to help, and I'd like the school to stand after and receive a welcome. The teachers are Mr. Ken Hackett and Mrs. Sharon Hackett. The parent helpers are Mr. Romeo Mandanas, Mr. Brandon Bishop, Mrs. Leanne Dillon, Mrs. Crystal Fleck, Mr. and Mrs. Tagupa, Ms Julie Evans, Ms Nicola Hoag, Mrs. Trista Loughheed, Mrs. Nancy Giles, Ms Loanna Gulka, and Mr. Ken Kustiak. Students and teachers, please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other hon. members with school groups here today? Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests from St. Mary's University, Dr. Michael Duggan and Ms Debbie Osiowy. Dr. Duggan is an old friend of yours, Mr. Speaker, and a professor of religious studies and theology at St. Mary's University, located in the wonderful constituency of Calgary-Shaw. Debbie is a vice-president of business and finance at St. Mary's. They are seated in your gallery. I'd ask that they both rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Kim Unrau and Karen Popal from the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta – Edmonton Chapter, also known as LD Edmonton. Their vision is that individuals with learning disabilities and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, commonly known as ADHD, are empowered to develop their potential, thereby enabling them to make positive contributions to citizens in their community. Karen Popal is the program co-ordinator at LD Edmonton, and she is the parent of two children with ADHD. Kim Unrau is the president of LD Edmonton and a registered psychologist in Alberta. Kim has been a volunteer with LD Edmonton for seven years and is an advocate for special-needs children. Many Albertans have learning disabilities. My youngest son, Wade, is among them, and I'm sincerely grateful to the association for their support in making a real difference in the lives of people like my son. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I'd ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a couple of individuals that I've had the honour to be able to call close friends for over 30 years, which, as the Member for Calgary-Elbow mentioned yesterday, produced some interesting stories from the past that, I'll suggest, should stay in the past. They are long-time successful entrepreneurs here in the city of Edmonton and provide superior home automation products with second-to-none customer service, all delivered by their highly qualified and amazing staff at Shore 2 Shore Automation. I would now like to ask my closest friend, Darryl Shore, and his brother Jay Shore to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two leaders from my constituency. The first is Mrs. Pam Hansen, who hails from Bentley, in my constituency, but is also a trustee for the Wolf Creek public school board, taking care of schools both in Bentley and within Eckville, in my constituency. As I said, she's from Bentley. I don't know if you've had the pleasure of being there, but they call it the model town for a reason. With her today is Her Worship Rachele Peters, who has the honour of being the mayor of the village of Caroline. While not only being the home of Kurt Browning, it's also the gateway to some of the most spectacular country that this province has to offer. I would ask that both rise in this Assembly and receive the traditional warm welcome of my colleagues.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my friend Connor and his dad, Don Staus. Connor helped me get elected, and he was a former constituency assistant for the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper back when pipelines were recognized as the lifelines for Albertans. Now, as someone who worked for the government, Connor took the advice of the minister seriously, and he's moving, not to B.C. to find work but to South Korea to teach English and experience a new culture. Don Staus, Connor's father, is the president and CEO of Carrick Petroleum, located in Calgary. Prior to that he built Culane Energy from scratch. I'm thankful to Don for creating jobs and wealth for this province. Don and oil workers like him are very proud of the contribution their companies make to Alberta's economy. Don, myself, and the rest of Alberta except those who voted for the Leap Manifesto hope that this government supports and approves pipelines so that Albertans can continue to reinvest back.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm waiting to see the individuals.

**Mr. Panda:** Sure.

I would like to ask Don and Connor Staus to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two good friends and distinguished guests, Lacombe Mayor Steve Christie and Ponoka Mayor Rick Bonnett.

Mayor Steve is a 21-year resident of Lacombe, a diehard community builder and volunteer. Steve is married to Cheryl, who is also my constituency assistant, and together they have two grown daughters and three granddaughters. Mayor Steve continues to strive for solutions that create a healthy, balanced Lacombe. Accountability and progress are key components in his eyes, but, most importantly, people are always the key element. Steve served for four years on the AUMA board and concluded his tenure as vice-president of cities up to 500,000. In this capacity he served on many provincial committees, notably the Premier's working group on the MGA review. Steve was first elected to council in 2004 and as mayor in 2010 and is currently serving his second term as mayor of Lacombe.

Mayor Rick was first elected to Ponoka town council in 2010. After serving a term as councillor, he ran for mayor in 2013. Get

this: he won the mayoralty in Ponoka by one vote. For those of you who believe that your vote doesn't matter, in Ponoka it does. Mayor Rick is an advocate for regional communities, full of ideas about collaboration for municipalities.

I would like to ask Mayor Rick Bonnett and Mayor Steve Christie, two excellent mayors, to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I say again: time is a valuable commodity in this place. We would urge you to have brevity in your introductions.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some guests from the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler. First off, I'd like to introduce the mayor of Hanna, Chris Warwick, and his wonderful wife and local school trustee, Angela. Secondly, I'd like to introduce a fine young man from my area also, Stettler, Cody Borek, and his lovely wife, Eva, who were instrumental in putting together our recent AGM and social event. It was a great success thanks in no small part to their efforts. I ask that they all please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two distinguished guests. We have with us the hon. mayor of Grande Prairie, Bill Given. I always considered Grande Prairie my home city even though my hometown is Valleyview. It's a beautiful place to be, and I enjoy my time in Grande Prairie. Also with us today is the mayor of the town of Sexsmith, Claude Lagace. Sexsmith is located about 20 minutes north of Grande Prairie and is the home of Chautauqua Days, which is a great event that everyone should have a chance to enjoy. I ask that they both please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two of the most important municipal leaders in my constituency. I would ask that they please rise as I call their names. They are Bud Massey, reeve of Westlock county; and Bill Lee, reeve of the county of Barrhead. Together Bud and Bill represent over 14,000 residents. They are most concerned about municipal grant funding, particularly water, waste-water, and strategic transportation infrastructure programs. Bud and Bill will be sticking around to take in the Budget Address later today. I ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly my pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a man from my constituency who helped me extensively throughout my election period last year, Kelly Innocent. Kelly owns and runs a small welding company, Keltan Consulting Ltd., and employs hard-working Albertans. He works closely with the oil

field and construction industries and is here today because he has a passion for his children's future and is looking forward to seeing what is contained in today's budget. He is seated in the members' gallery. Kelly, would you please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions. My pleasure today to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly prominent members of the Edmonton Sikh community in the gallery. This week, as we know, we celebrated Vaisakhi in the Legislature rotunda, the 300-year anniversary of Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh established Khalsa over 300 years ago, and the faith has grown throughout the years. The Liberal caucus congratulates the Sikh community on this holy celebration and encourages everyone to attend the Vaisakhi celebrations coming up in the Jubilee Auditorium on May 8 and the parade on May 22. I'll ask the members of the community to stand as I mention their names: Harjinder Singh Gill, Harpreet Singh Gill, Maghar Singh Ubhi, Gurcharan Singh Sangha, Baldev Singh Dhaliwal, Mehar Singh Gill, Sital Singh Nanuan, Karnail Singh Deol, Harjeet Sandhu, Last Bhinder, Jas Longowal, Charanjit Singh Dakha, and Amarjit Singh Grewal. Let us give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce Dave Truscott. He is a resident of Fort Saskatchewan.

**The Speaker:** My apologies, Member for Calgary-Mountain View. We'd lost time in some other earlier introductions, so I was trying to catch up. You have a second introduction.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm privileged to introduce two friends and colleagues, Dr. Avalon Roberts, a retired psychiatrist in Calgary, and Dr. Judy Johnson, a retired psychologist who taught for many years at Mount Royal University. Both are shrinks, basically. Avalon and Judy have distinguished careers, but I'll simply note here that they served for 15 years consecutively on Friends of Medicare. Dr. Johnson also happens to co-chair my board of directors, Calgary-Mountain View constituency. Please welcome my two friends, colleagues and shrinks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will start again. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce Dave Truscott. He is the owner, reporter, and editor of the *Sturgeon Creek Post* in the wonderful constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and located right in Fort Saskatchewan. It's my pleasure to introduce him. If he would please stand and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Does any other member have a guest to introduce today? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, I'm so honoured to introduce to you and through you Sherrie Cameron from Autism Speaks Canada. Sherrie started her working career and training in learning development management for Canada Post after receiving her certificate in adult education from the University of Alberta. For the past decade Sherrie has worked extensively and volunteered her time for the not-for-profit and charity arena, like Kids Help Phone,

Ronald McDonald House, Breakfast Clubs of Canada, and KIDS.Now, to name a few. After her son was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder three years ago, Sherrie wanted to put her career and background into charity work at Autism Speaks Canada. For the past two years Sherrie has led and managed the Alberta and Saskatchewan region for Autism Speaks Canada, an organization that focuses on awareness, advocacy, research, and family service granting for individuals and families living with autism. Sherrie currently lives in Edmonton with her husband and two children. Sherrie, would you please rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

1:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, did I miss somebody? Go ahead.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly Al and Pamela Koenig, who are close friends and supporters here today to see if perhaps this budget contains, among other things, any mention of our urgently needed urgent care centre in Sylvan Lake. Will they please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** My apologies, Members, for missing people.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Cancer Care Wait Times

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, despite having the most expensive health system in this country, this government is again showing that they cannot get resources directed to patient care. Under the NDP we lag far behind the national average for cancer surgeries. Wait times in Alberta are often the worst in the country for prostate, colon, and breast cancer surgeries, and it is happening under this Health minister's watch. What is the minister doing to correct these failures of her department to support front-line care and to help those on a waiting list and suffering for months?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, longer wait times are not something that we'd like to see continue. It's vitally important that people receive the medical procedures that they need in a timely fashion, and that's one of the reasons why the people of Alberta dismissed the previous government, which was proposing nearly a billion-dollar cut for the Health budget. Certainly, ensuring that we have stable health care funding and ways that we can continue to move forward was a priority for us in the election platform, and it will continue to be in the term of this government.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, the value this government gets for its growing health spending is dismal, but our broken system costs more than dollars and cents. On the ground it is the human cost that matters. It's the demoralized staff, frustrated communities, worried families, and ailing patients who are paying the price. The minister talks about the right professional in the right place at the right time, but for cancer sufferers the right time is apparently months from now. This is unacceptable and shameful. When will the minister stop the talk and start getting results?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Certainly, we ran on a platform of finding efficiencies in health care that will protect front-line services and improve patients' access, and that's why the people of Alberta elected a government that actually believes in public health care, and we'll continue to move in that direction. The stats that the member opposite is referring to talk about a number of years under a previous government and 16 weeks under this government. Certainly, 16 weeks isn't enough time to address many challenges that are created, but we're certainly working to get access to the front lines and increasing screenings. I'm very proud of the results we have in those areas.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP has bragged about their commitment to health care by spending more money. They boasted that they can run our centralized, top-heavy, broken, \$20 billion system better than anyone by adding yet more layers of management. But while the minister loves to hear herself talk, the performance tells a different story. This government is proving itself incapable. Will the minister commit to real action by restoring local decision-making, enhancing accountability, peeling away the layers of top-down bureaucracy, and actually helping Albertans?

**Ms Hoffman:** Only the Official Opposition thinks that the solution to long wait times is to slash billions of dollars from front-line care, to slash the opportunities that we've created through a centralized system, and to create more disorder by reorganizing, disorganizing, and unorganizing. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. It takes a lot more than just nuance and ideological spin in this House to find solutions – we're actually moving forward – and you'll hear about more of them in a few minutes.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### School Construction

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government inherited a mess from the previous government, but the Auditor General was very clear in his report that the two current ministries of Education and Infrastructure do not have the internal capacity to work together to get the schools built. While the Minister of Education says that he's very proud of what they've done, in fact very little has been accomplished in the last 10 months. To the Minister of Education. Albertans expect to see shovels in the ground instead of signs on empty lots. How many schools will this government build this year and next year?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, as we move through our constituencies, as all members in Alberta look through our province, we see that we literally have dozens of schools being built right now. We have 48 school projects that will be ready in September. It's very important to work through a process by which you can be more efficient. The Auditor General gave us a hand with being able to find those efficiencies, which is resulting in saving tens of millions of dollars so that we can build more schools, that we need even more.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General's report was clear that project management capacity is lacking in both ministries. They don't even have common policies and procedures in place. The Auditor General even included a school-building process model in his report to help this government, yet it seems

that this government has decided to hire KPMG to gather information from school boards rather than build schools. Why is the minister spending money hiring KPMG to meet with school boards when that won't build schools?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the hon. member in opposition might not see how you actually organize these things, but you use different mechanisms by which you can build the schools. You know, I find it quite ironic that the same people that are looking for schools in their constituencies want us to cut billions of dollars out of those same schools.

**Mr. Smith:** Throwing good money after bad is a practice of the previous government and one which this government appears to be following. Having more meetings was not a recommendation of the Auditor General. This government has been in power for a year now, and they need to start showing some accountability. Why is the minister wasting time and money holding meetings and hiring managers to manage managers in this oversized government when Alberta families need schools now?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've extended invitations for the first time, I think, in a long time where opposition can come and open some of the 48 schools that we're opening here in the fall. We have 232 school projects that we're moving ahead with even during difficult circumstances – you know why? – because we deserve the best to give to our children, and we expect that every step of the way, and that's what we're doing.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

### Job Creation

**Mr. Panda:** There was no doubt the government's failed job subsidy program was going to fail in the first place. It's a lesson that the NDP should listen more to the Wildrose, a party that truly has the pulse of the province. To blunt criticisms from his government's zero-jobs plan, the minister managed to find \$10 million for important business incubators like TEC Edmonton and Innovate Calgary. How did the minister manage to increase the capital while Bill 1, the government's flagship jobs program, is gathering dust and sitting on the Order Paper?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, again, get to the question sooner. I was waiting for it to come out.

Please proceed.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** [interjections] Excuse me.

Sorry; proceed.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's interesting in the House here. You never know with the Official Opposition if it's a cut day or a spend day. It depends on what they're talking about here.

I'll tell you this much, Mr. Speaker. Our government's number one priority – and Albertans have been telling us – is jobs and the economy. That's exactly what we're doing despite what the Wildrose would do, again, slashing our public services, cutting billions of dollars from much-needed infrastructure projects,

infrastructure that is going to help give the tools that our job creators need to get their products to market and infrastructure that Albertans . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Panda:** It is stunning that while jobs were being shed across the province over a year ago, the NDP government sat on its hands, and their so-called jobs creation program failed and created confusion in the business community. This type of instability and uncertainty has dramatic impacts. Today vacancies in downtown Calgary have reached a 30-year high. With extreme economic manifestos hanging a shadow over this government, how can businesses trust this government to get their next program right?

2:00

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the members of an announcement that I made a couple of days ago that we are investing \$10 million in incubators and accelerators that are going to help job creators. We're going to help start-ups, working through already successful systems in Innovate Calgary and TEC Edmonton and other regional commercialization opportunities. Our government is taking action. Our government later today will be unveiling our budget, and Albertans will see that our government has listened to the job creators, and we're doing our job partnering with them.

**Mr. Panda:** Here is an example of the type of economic chaos the government has caused to working families. I received an e-mail from one of the few Calgary companies able to use this program and that was about to hire, expecting the grant. Now the staff position might soon be gone, and this business has been twisted like a pretzel in confusing red tape and chaos coming from this minister. How can Albertans trust the NDP when their flip-flopping is doing real harm to working Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm not quite sure if the Wildrose is coming or going. One day they like the job creation incentive program; the next day they want it cut. The only people that are confused in this province are those across the way. Our government is taking meaningful action. We've listened to the business community. They've said: listen, this tool isn't going to have the outcomes that you've intended. We've retooled that. We are listening to the job creators, and I think they are going to be quite pleased with what they hear today.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

#### Minister of Human Services

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans were appalled this week by statements made in this Assembly by the Minister of Human Services. On Tuesday the minister called out the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for not disclosing his interest in adoption. Now, he later offered a sincere apology. Everyone can make a mistake. But on Wednesday the minister incorrectly identified the Member for Calgary-North West as the former minister of disabilities and blamed her for an egregious practice that was in fact introduced by the current government. These incidents call the minister's competence into question. To the Premier: what are you going to do about it?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important to understand that our government is working very hard to improve the situation for people who receive services from PDD and also to ensure that while we do that, we work very carefully with those service providers to ensure that the work that is done allows those providers to continue to provide that support so that people don't ultimately find themselves without homes. Our minister has been working very carefully and very closely with those communities and with those service providers and with those clients . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-North West raised serious questions about the new – and I stress: new – disgusting practice to have PDD clients essentially put up for bid by service providers, and all the minister can do is quote from old e-mails and blame the past. But his knowledge of that past is incomplete and inaccurate. He doesn't even recognize that my colleague's past exemplary service within his own ministry never included responsibility for PDD. It is clear that he doesn't know his ministry, either what's happening now or what happened in the past. To the Premier: what are you going to do about it?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what I'm going to do and what the rest of this government is going to do is continue to reach out to support the Albertans who require the services. It may well be that the minister misspoke and identified the wrong minister. That happens. It is not in any way indicative of whether or not he is working very hard every day to ensure that people who receive PDD services get the care they need, and he will continue to do that.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's try another place that he misspoke. During the Calgary-Greenway by-election the NDP sent out a fundraising e-mail, which I will table, signed by the Human Services minister. That e-mail said, and I quote: people of Calgary-Greenway are fed up with broken promises and empty platitudes; they want an MLA who can actually get things done for them. Really? He says these shameful and disrespectful things about a man loved and respected in our province and beyond, a man that five months ago both the minister and the Premier stood in this Assembly and honoured. To the Premier: what do you have to say about that?

**Ms Notley:** What I have to say, Mr. Speaker, is that the member opposite is engaging in a great deal of exaggeration and creative thought to suggest that what was said means what he is suggesting. [interjection] No. He was talking forward, and I think that that is quite reasonable. That's what we did in the election, and that's what we did in the by-elections, and that's what we will do going forward. You know what? Many, many Albertans did not have their needs met under the former government, and that's why there is now a new one. [interjection]

**Mr. Mason:** You pretend that it is so you can make an issue.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member. [interjection] Hon. member.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

#### Small-business Tax

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Premier. Small businesses, over 85 per cent of all Alberta businesses, are struggling in the current downturn. They don't need a handout, but they could use a level playing field and in these times a clear message that this government is not just about taxes. Other

companies in other provinces have enjoyed investment tax credits, which allow new dollars invested in new enterprise to benefit and reduce taxes and later provide increased income to government through more successful businesses. To the Premier: why is your government opposed to significantly reducing small-business tax?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by thanking the member opposite for that question and, of course, acknowledging that it is quite true that small businesses and small-business owners contribute to the greatest number of jobs in Alberta, and it's important for us to be able to reach out to them and to work closely with them. So we're very excited about the details that will be forthcoming in the budget in just a short period of time, and I am hopeful that members of the small-business community will agree with us.

Thank you.

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, small business in other provinces over many years has received investment tax credits. Why not Alberta?

**Ms Notley:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important, just generally speaking, to remember that in Alberta we don't have a sales tax, and as a result of that, all members, all Albertans, including small-business owners, benefit from the fact that overall we continue to have the lowest tax regime in the country. That being said, on the specific issue raised by the member, I would suggest that he stay tuned.

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, I am eager to stay tuned.

Given that the government's incoming carbon tax will have a significant impact on small business, what plans does the government have to compensate small business?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, again, as I said, even when the levy is introduced, Alberta will still enjoy the lowest overall tax regime in the country. That won't change. But that being said, there are a number of ways in which we are going to work with small-business owners. We, of course, just reintroduced the STEP program, which the previous government had cut, and then expanded it to small-business owners. We will be moving forward on a number of other supports for small-business owners. Again, as I say, stay tuned.

### Pipeline Construction

**Ms McPherson:** Mr. Speaker, many of the organizations and constituents in Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill rely on the oil and gas sector for work and for business, and in meeting with private citizens and companies who are stakeholders in the energy industry, I've heard how it's imperative that our government succeeds in getting new pipelines built. Our province's reliance on a single price and a single market for our energy products is having a negative impact, and my riding is feeling the brunt of the drop in oil prices. Can the Minister of Energy update the House on the work she's doing to get pipelines built?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this important question. I am very, very proud of the work we are doing as a government along with our Premier to get to yes to pipelines. We know that access to international markets

is critically important, not just for Alberta but for Canada. We are now in a state where the United States was our biggest market; now they're our biggest competitor. We have to continue with the drama-free dialogues and get a pipeline case that is judged on its merit, not on politics. We also need everyone to work with us.

2:10

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you. Thank you to the minister. Mr. Speaker, given the inability of previous governments to get pipelines built, again to the Minister of Energy: how is the minister working with her counterparts across the country to get pipelines approved?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. We are doing a new approach. Past approaches of bullying people and being dramatic about it have not worked. We are taking a conscious approach to work with people, work with industry, work with constituents in a concerted effort to get to yes. This isn't just about Alberta; this is about Canada. This is about our economy and the Canadian economy.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental question.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that pipelines will not only help my constituents and other Albertans get through this economic downturn but all Canadians as well, again to the same minister: how will a pipeline benefit our economy as a whole?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. We know that pipelines are the safest mode of transporting our product to market. We know that we lose a lot of money in Alberta, which stays in Alberta and that we could be using, because of the prices people have to pay, that companies have to pay for rail and other ways to get our product to market. We know there are benefits in pipelines. We know there are benefits to jobs here in Alberta and in Canada with the steelmakers, with our workers, and this is why we all need to work together to get to yes.

### Human Trafficking

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, recently the Action Coalition on Human Trafficking, also known as ACT, identified that there has been a massive increase in the number of human trafficking cases reported in our province. In fact, the executive director for this coalition stated yesterday that she is seeing the average number of trafficked victims doubling every year. Can the Minister of Human Services explain his strategy to ensure Alberta's men, women, and children are not trafficked for the purposes of labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, or the removal of organs?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, human trafficking is a serious issue that hits home for us all. Our government is committed to moving forward, working with our police partners, to ensure that the right information can flow from one organization to the other. ALERT is an organization that helps to bring all that policing information together so we can do intelligence-led policing. We will continue to move forward to fight this sort of crime.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this issue has received little attention in recent years, even as more and more Albertans are at risk, and considering that even one Albertan left to the heartbreaking fate of being a victim of human trafficking is one too many, will the minister tell this Assembly if his government is taking a strong stand for Albertans who may be vulnerable to human trafficking?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, this government is committed to protecting vulnerable Albertans, and I think it's a tragedy when any Albertan falls into human trafficking or into the clutches of any other groups that are trying to do these inappropriate things. You know, our government will continue to work with front-line services to ensure that these people have the protection that they need, and we will also continue to invest in front-line services to ensure that people don't become vulnerable to these sorts of groups.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the CBC article that came out yesterday could only cite conviction data from 2008 and that an up-to-date understanding of the situation is vital to our ability to tackle the problem of human trafficking in Alberta, does the minister have any current studies that she could share that would help organizations such as ACT and the members of this Assembly reach solutions to protect those who are at risk for human trafficking?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. With respect to the data that we keep, I'll obviously have to look into it and get back to the member, and I can report back on that issue. You know, in terms of this issue I think that the critical piece moving forward is to keep in mind that in addition to having the correct law enforcement measures in place, we need to continue to invest in front-line services, in human services, in health care and mental health care to ensure that people aren't vulnerable to these sorts of things.

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

#### **PDD Service Delivery**

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many people with disabilities don't have families to advocate for them. This means that their legal representation is crucial to ensuring that they get the quality and meaningful supports they need. When the Human Services ministry recently asked any PDD legal counsel who had worked with the previous government to recuse themselves, it sent service providers scrambling at the last minute for substitutes ahead of a much-needed meeting with the minister. To the Minister of Human Services. Forcing service providers to find alternate legal counsel before one of the few meetings you agreed to is more than a little mean-spirited. What were you . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member.

The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. It's an important issue, and today my ministry legal

team will be meeting with ACDS, which is the representative umbrella organization for 139 service providers, and they will work to deal with all issues relating to the procurement and the new contract.

Thank you.

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, given that according to one family member of a person with disabilities what they've seen from the Human Services ministry isn't collaboration – it's petty bullying – and that if not for the resourcefulness of this community they would have had to cancel one of the very few meetings they had with you, can the Minister of Human Services tell us whether this shameful behaviour is what service providers and stakeholders can expect in the future?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member refers to one particular incident. I would invite the member to send my office the details, and I will look into that issue.

The second thing. We took a collaborative approach. One example is PDD standard 8, that was slammed by the previous government onto service providers. We consulted with them, and we repealed those standards. We are working with them to make sure that we get this right.

**Ms Jansen:** And my last question . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, do you have a preamble? We're after question five. You were awfully lengthy before you got to the question, so when you use this one, please be more conscious of that.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the Premier. Given that you stood with the disabled community on the steps of this Legislature in solidarity, how can you defend the devastating changes to PDD that your government made and that left countless Albertans feeling helpless and hopeless?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. The allegations levelled against our government are not true. We are working with the community to resolve all issues. That includes PDD safety standards that were imposed on the community, that includes procurement, and that includes all issues that matter to that community. We will work in collaboration with them. We will not bully that community. We will work with them, and we want to work with them. I assure all Albertans that's our approach going forward, and we will stick with that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

#### **Transportation Infrastructure Priorities**

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents and those of neighbouring constituencies are grumbling about their increased commute time on highway 2 through St. Albert. Former Premier Stelmach did a deal to cover some of the costs and designated Ray Gibbon Drive on the west side of St. Albert as the future highway 2 freeway that will serve as the St. Albert bypass from south of Morinville to the Anthony Henday ring road. Can the minister tell the House where this entire project is on the secretive prioritized transportation sunshine list?

2:20

**Mr. Mason:** No, Mr. Speaker. I can't do that.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have many construction companies that are looking for work yet, and we can get going on this construction.

Given that the current two-lane alignment of Ray Gibbon Drive from the Anthony Henday ring road to Villeneuve Road has already reached and exceeds the traffic counts required for twinning and whereas the minister has the power to break up giant projects into smaller pieces, can the minister advise the House of when this section of the future highway 2 will be twinned to accommodate the current and future volume of traffic?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have many competing priorities for transportation dollars in our capital plan. The capital plan will be presented to the House and to the public in just a very short time, and I would ask the hon. member to stay tuned. But I do want to indicate there are very many priorities and far less money than is needed to meet them all. That doesn't mean they're bad projects. It just means that there are other projects that are a higher priority.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans fear losing construction seasons from bad planning and delayed tenders and given that the construction industry is trying to get some sense of when the work is coming so they can better plan their labour and equipment and given that this government has promised billions in infrastructure spending on projects not unlike the twinning of Ray Gibbon Drive, can the minister account for the absence of a prioritized infrastructure sunshine list?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, the sunshine list will be made available as part of the capital plan and will be released as part of the budget later this afternoon, so I can't make any further comment with respect to the member's question.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### **Urgent Health Care in Sylvan Lake**

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Twenty thousand people live in the Sylvan Lake area, and over 900,000 tourists visit annually. A committee of health care professionals and area mayors proposed a Sylvan Lake urgent care facility to the minister. With an operating expense of only \$2 million, it would have saved AHS well over that figure by diverting non life-threatening care away from Red Deer regional hospital. Those facts are clear. This business plan reduces patient trauma, reduces wait times, and saves money. What excuse does the minister have to give the mothers and fathers of Sylvan Lake for saying no to this common-sense proposal?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I haven't said no. I actually had a very productive meeting with the community last December. We continue to exchange materials and have follow-up conversations. Certainly, there is a desire to make sure that everyone gets the right care in the right place, and clearly Sylvan Lake is a very busy community and even busier during the

summer months. We'll continue to look at the data that we have on the central zone, including communities like Sylvan Lake, and find the best way to meet the needs of the community.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that might be welcome news, but given the fact that this government has a proclivity for grand statements and words about review and the right things in the right place at the right time, which is a lot of rhetoric, the fine people of Sylvan Lake would like to ask the minister: when can they expect this desperately needed urgent care facility to open? These families deserve a firm timeline.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to answer yet another spend question. I imagine in about an hour we'll be hearing comments around deep cuts that should be seen in the budget.

Certainly, in terms of electing a government that's going to move forward in a reasonable, responsible, and sustainable way, that's what the people of Alberta elected, and that's what we're pleased to give them. That includes making sure that we have the right access. Certainly, the physicians that I've met with in the community as well as the mayor and other local advocates are looking at ways that we can use the existing infrastructure as well to increase capacity. I appreciate that everyone is turning their heads to that, and as I've said in the past, when I . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, Mr. Speaker, just to correct the hon. minister, that plan . . .

**The Speaker:** Ask the question, hon. member.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** If I may ask the question, that plan, Mr. Speaker, was a cost-savings plan. Why didn't the minister just approve it? This minister has become very . . .

**The Speaker:** Is that your question, hon. member? Is that your question?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yes. It's been nearly a year. When will this minister . . .

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry, hon. member. You asked two questions, or I thought you did, at least, but you got it confused.  
I'm going to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Ms Hoffman:** Don't I get to answer?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister would like to reply?

**Ms Hoffman:** If you'd like me to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question that was asked around a cost-savings initiative: I know that the community worked very hard when the past government made an announcement about building a number of family care clinics that certainly didn't follow with the money. It created great confusion not just in Sylvan Lake but in many places across Alberta. Certainly, we're looking at ways that we can work with the community. I understand that there's a desire to increase expenditure in one area that may be offset in another. We're going to continue to consider their proposals and work in partnership as we move forward.



### Services for Indigenous Peoples

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, the identity of potential foster parents is often considered an important factor in the placement of indigenous children. According to a StatsCan report released just yesterday, in western provinces Alberta had the lowest proportion, at just 29 per cent, of these children living with at least one indigenous foster parent. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what current initiatives are you undertaking in this government to increase the number of these children placed with at least one indigenous foster parent?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. This ministry believes very fundamentally in the philosophy of indigenous children residing with indigenous foster parents, and as a result we've had many meetings with chiefs and councils from across the province to talk about the process of bringing foster parents up to speed so that they can take in children from their own communities.

Thank you.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, a lot of improvement to go from 29 per cent.

Given that today's Supreme Court ruling in Daniels versus Canada, that Métis and nonstatus Indians are indeed Indians, affirms federal responsibility for indigenous peoples and given that in the past Alberta filled the breach in providing requisite services with little or no help from the federal government, again to the minister: what will you do to ensure that Alberta receives its fair share of support from the federal government for continued provision of necessary programs and services for all indigenous people in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for the question. Alberta is very proud to have been ahead of the curve on the issues that have been brought forward under the Daniels decision. We are the only province in the country who has settlement lands assigned for Métis people. We have signed recently the consultation agreement with the settlement people, and we are also looking at a consultation agreement with the nonsettlement people. We are ahead of this, we are working very hard, and we are going to be working with the federal government for tripartite arrangements.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, according to the most recent Human Services child intervention data there were over 72,000 people who received child intervention services in Alberta. Given that 34 per cent were indigenous, despite making up only 6.2 per cent of Alberta's population, what is the Human Services minister currently doing to decrease this number, and how will he ensure that he addresses the needs of indigenous peoples across Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the very important question. Certainly, our indigenous children are overrepresented in our system, and that's a cause for concern across Canada. Even this morning I spoke to my federal counterpart exactly around this issue. We are working with our indigenous partners, indigenous communities, and federal counterpart to make

sure that we put in the right supports for the indigenous people so that we can decrease the number of people in our care.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

### Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After years of cutbacks by the previous government communities across the province are facing massive infrastructure deficits. Ensuring that our communities have strong and modern transportation networks and infrastructure is essential to the economic well-being of these communities. I've heard from many municipal councillors and leaders throughout my constituency who have told me how vital the transportation infrastructure program, or STIP, is to the future of their communities. To the Minister of Infrastructure: what are you doing to ensure that funding for this program is maintained?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, would you please contain the length of the preamble.

The minister.

2:30

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you. That was the first question, I think, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the hon. member for the question. Supporting rural communities and helping them build strong, resilient communities are key priorities of our government. The STIP program, the strategic transportation infrastructure program, will help to improve local and municipal transportation infrastructure that Albertans use every day. I announced in last year's budget that \$100 million will be made available between 2017 and 2019 for this program. I ask the hon. member to stay tuned this afternoon.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, given that we need to ensure that programs like STIP, which are designed to help municipalities continue to meet the specific needs of these municipalities, again to the Minister of Infrastructure: have municipalities and counties had the opportunity to provide input on how this program is working?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I promised last fall, we've been gathering input from stakeholders, rural and smaller municipalities that STIP is designed to serve. In March, at the start of the AAMD and C we launched our STIP engagement process, and over the last month my ministry has held four workshop sessions, including one at AAMD and C, where 69 members were represented. I've personally been meeting with mayors and reeves with respect to this, and we're getting excellent feedback on how this program can meet the needs of rural municipalities.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, given that municipalities across the province are all facing similar challenges when it comes to the backlog of infrastructure projects, again to the same minister: what are you doing to ensure that municipalities' specific infrastructure priorities are taken into account?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think that one of the key things about the STIP program is that it does provide

capital funding to municipalities, who work on the priorities that they have for their community, for their citizens within the scope of the program. So we're glad to partner with those communities to invest in local priorities like roads, bridges, and small airports, and we've engaged with them, as I mentioned, to find ways to improve the program and to tailor it to the actual needs of rural municipalities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

#### Infrastructure Project Prioritization

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Way back in 2014 the previous government promised a value scoping for Father Lacombe school for a much-needed modernization, but the school is still waiting. We heard from the Auditor General that ministers made promises without having adequate systems in place to deliver. Will this government do any better? So far, no. STAR Catholic's board was promised value scoping, but appointments have been cancelled multiple times by the current government. What will the minister do to correct the government's practice of leaping to promises without the leadership to deliver?

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for his question. Well, I think the best example is the Auditor General's report with respect to school construction, which was something that was initiated by this government because we were concerned that we needed to strengthen our processes within our own departments, but we were also concerned that so many schools had been promised without adequate planning, without even land being in place in many cases. I think the Auditor General has shown that there were very serious deficiencies.

In answer to his question – are we going to continue to do that? – the answer is no, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Orr:** Glad to hear the answer. That's the right one.

Mr. Speaker, also given that Alberta Education confirmed this project in September, well after the current government took control of the helm, and given that it's just one example of failed initiatives, which include the failure to deliver that promised infrastructure sunshine list, the question again, from another person, I guess: when will the Minister of Infrastructure be able to finally produce that sunshine list to give clarity to infrastructure projects, both for STAR Catholic and communities across the province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, I think the answer is on the face of my watch with respect to that, but the member knows that I can't disclose what's in the budget. He's trying to get me into trouble.

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, as long as the answer is actually in the documents that get presented.

Given that Father Lacombe school is 60 years old and that modernization has been a top priority for the board but they can't even get to the first step of assessment and given that it's been forced to create its annual capital plan while still uncertain of when modernization might be coming and as a result is struggling to provide properly for its students, will the minister commit to resolving this particular issue and establish a firm date for the value scoping of Father Lacombe school?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, thank you for the question. As part of the mechanism that we put in place with the Auditor General and better communication – what better communication is is to have individual MLAs give us some information about their schools and what they need. So I'd be glad to work with that to look for a mechanism by which we can scope that out. We let the school boards make those decisions about prioritizing where their money needs to go because they have the best eyes on the ground to see what their children need for the best education possible.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I was about to say that the Government House Leader does not need any help in terms of getting into trouble, but what is abundantly evident to the House today is that I, too, can do it alone.

The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

#### Agricultural Trade with India

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just over two years ago the government signed a historic trade agreement with the state of Punjab in India. That agreement focuses on the agriculture industry, which is one of the major drivers of the Alberta economy. Growing this industry is integral to diversifying the provincial economy. To the minister of economic development: can you provide an update on the status of the agriculture working group that was formed with this trade deal as well as an update on your ministry's recent trade initiatives with the state of Punjab?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member and congratulate him on his first question in this House. I'll begin by saying that trade is very important to our government. Alberta is a resource- and trade-based economy, so we are working to strengthen our ties with all of our trading jurisdictions. India, of course, is one of our major trading partners, and our government is committed to looking for opportunities, especially within the agricultural sector, not only adding value to our product here at home but also looking for opportunities to increase trade and get our products to market.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that when the trade deal was signed, in January 2014, there was an average of \$102 million worth of products and services exported from Alberta to India each year and given that this is a key portion of economic diversity, to the minister. As I mentioned, Alberta was exporting over \$100 million worth of products and services two years ago. What is the expected export value for this year, and what is your government doing to grow that number?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I want to thank the member for the question, a very good question. There are a number of initiatives that our government is undertaking. Unfortunately, the member will have to wait about another 40 minutes to get more details.

But to his previous question: I don't have it off the top here as far as the status of the working group. I'm happy to get back to the member on the status of the working group and can assure this

House that we are looking at growing our trade and our exports to markets like India.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the creation of the agriculture working group as well as the deal itself was intended to promote the sharing of ideas, skills, and the best practices and given that facilitating and maintaining this exchange are integral to the success of Alberta business on the world stage, to the minister: what current initiatives is your ministry working on today to facilitate the sharing of ideas, skills, and best practices with our partners in Punjab?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for his second supplemental. Again, not only is trade absolutely critical; we do need to work collaboratively with our trading partners and look at opportunities to enhance that. I know that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has this at the top of his priorities as far as looking for opportunities to support Alberta-based businesses in agriculture, agrifoods, and forestry, looking for opportunities to increase our trade and at all corners looking to decrease any type of inhibitors that are cutting down our trade. Again to the member's question: I will get an update on the working group . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

2:40

### Community Development

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this is National Volunteer Week, a time for all of us to thank all the hard-working Albertans who are fostering community capacity, reducing barriers, and promoting inclusivity in Alberta, to the Minister of Culture and Tourism: how is your ministry helping volunteer organizations and community groups in this vital work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the member for the question. I was happy to attend an event and bring greetings on behalf of the government at a volunteer week celebration earlier this week. We know that Albertans value volunteerism and contribute thousands of hours each year to their communities. My ministry supports their efforts by distributing funding to community groups through programs like the CFEP and CIP grants. I'll also take this opportunity to thank every volunteer in Alberta for the amazing work that they do and the contribution they make.

Thank you.

**Dr. Turner:** Mr. Speaker, given that community organizations rely heavily on volunteers to provide vital services in their communities, especially during these challenging economic times, to the same minister: what are you doing to ensure that Albertans continue to have accessible and comprehensive programming in their communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the member for the question. I am proud of the work that my ministry does to promote keeping Albertans engaged in building their communities. We continue to provide funding to recreation facilities and programs,

which help to keep our children healthy and active. Additionally, we continue to support museums, heritage sites across the province to ensure that Albertans have access to high-quality cultural experiences.

Thank you.

**Dr. Turner:** Mr. Speaker, given that developing relationships with one's constituency is critical to the democratic process and given that my constituents were very pleased to have had personally delivered CFEP and CIP cheques in Edmonton-Whitemud, is this a common practice for all MLAs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the member for the question. Along with my cabinet colleagues I'm working hard to make our government open, transparent, accessible, and this includes the grant cheque distribution. I was pleased to give all MLAs in this House, regardless of political party, the opportunity to distribute CFEP and CIP grants in recent quarters. I look forward to continuing this type of work of collaboration across parties. I have received a lot of positive feedback from members of the opposition, and I think it's a very good way to promote working collaboratively in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 15 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

### Municipal Collaboration

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today in the House and speak about the collaborative relationship that we share with our municipal counterparts to develop our communities. As members of this Assembly we have a lot to learn from our municipal counterparts. Around the world municipalities are being recognized for their innovation and leadership on a wide variety of issues. Be it social or economic, municipalities are exploring cutting-edge solutions and developing innovative policies to help people. Most importantly, they are taking co-operative approaches in addressing socioeconomic challenges faced by families.

In my beautiful constituency of Spruce Grove-St. Albert we have many examples of co-operative spirit. All Spruce Grove-St. Albert municipalities are part of the Capital Region Board, a platform composed of 24 municipalities and representing 31 per cent of Alberta's population that tries to make the best decisions for the citizens of our communities and helps us grow our economy and standard of living together by working with Edmonton and area municipalities.

In Spruce Grove-St. Albert we also have the tri area, made up of Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, and Parkland county. Together these three communities strive to work together to address crime, build common community facilities like the tri leisure centre. This centre in particular opened in 2002 and strives to meet the recreational, social, and wellness needs of the tri-area communities and develop a sense of community spirit.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, municipalities are adept at coming together to work toward common goals, to compromise when it is needed, and, most importantly, to grow together as a society. Those of us in this Assembly have a lot to learn from our municipalities.

We can identify common goals and then take a unified approach to make them a reality and build a stronger community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Autism Spectrum Disorder

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on an issue very close to my heart. Autism spectrum disorder touches the families of 1 in 94 school-aged children in Alberta, and my family is one of those families. I remember the day that my beautiful blue-eyed boy was placed into my arms. He was sweet, affectionate, fully aware, and was our gift to our older son. For nine months he developed fairly consistently with our other son and was making sounds and starting to call us by our names. Music to any parents' ears. Then one day he disappeared. His eyes, that once lit up when he saw me, suddenly would not focus on my face, and his mind was trapped somewhere deep inside.

Autism spectrum disorder is a neurological condition that is characterized by repetitive, rigid behaviours and lifelong impairments in communication and social relationships. Anyone in this House who has encountered one of the over 515,000 people living with autism spectrum disorder in Canada knows that it is these initial challenges that make a breakthrough with any one of these children beautiful and precious. Because of early intervention and because of the amazing support that we received, we pulled Sehran back from autism. He is now 17 and a half and will graduate from high school in May.

Upon graduation my son Sehran will face a new challenge, the support cliff resulting from a less-systemized and less-generous support system available for adults with neurodevelopmental disabilities. As my son struggles to find his place in a PDD program that was not designed to see him have true independence, I will continue to cherish breakthroughs and advocate for his needs.

Globally 80 per cent of those with autism are not in the workforce. These beautiful minds need to be nurtured, their potential unlocked and not squandered. I ask that the members of this House work diligently to provide my son and other members of this vulnerable group with the care, consideration, and protection of this Legislative Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have an opportunity to rise and speak on an issue top of mind for most Albertans, of course, the impending budget and our children's economic future. In the last while Albertans have been bombarded with economic notions and posturing from all sides of the political spectrum. One side would have us borrow \$10.4 billion with no clear plan nor timeline for balance or repayment. The other side would have us cut 2,000 jobs from the civil service in the name of austerity while saying that this won't impact front-line services for Albertans. The PC Party would engage Albertans, hoping to listen better this time and undo the distrust over decades of financial mismanagement. Albertans deserve better than these ideological platitudes. The serious issues facing us transcend easy labels of left, right, or centre.

Our health care system is the most expensive in the country, with mediocre results, including today's report on growing cancer wait times. We know how to save millions in health care. We need leaders that will shift to prevention and make the changes needed in our primary care system.

Our power grid has been overbuilt, subsidized by oil royalties and ignorance of the different energy futures that we need. It will soon cost businesses and all of us far more in power than we've paid in decades.

Many years of promises to diversify our economy have resulted in naught. The lowest tax regime in the country didn't create the businesses that would sustain our economy through an oil crash, nor did the subsidies to some of the largest corporations in the world, whose profits went elsewhere.

Albertans don't need their government to hold their ideologies with both hands. Albertans need leadership, and they need us here in the Chamber to listen to them and debate thoughtful, evidence-based solutions that stimulate small business and advance our postsecondary education and training programs.

It's my fondest hope that today's budget will offer Albertans not another subtle reorganization of priorities based on ideology but real hope for all, including our First Nations, and a good way forward. My hope is that we in our collective will in this House will demonstrate vision of who we are becoming in our diverse and potential society, compassionate and secure, and . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### Government Policies

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For months now the opposition has been fond of accusing us of engaging in risky ideological experiments. Now the *Oxford* dictionary defines ideology as "a system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy," or "visionary speculation, especially of an unrealistic or idealistic nature." Since we're all here to defend our political and economic ideas and ideals, I assume the opposition is referring to the latter. On that point, I dare say, they're hardly immune.

2:50

Risky ideology is believing you can instantly cut billions of dollars from public services and not affect front-line workers. Risky ideology is blindly insisting, despite clear examples like Kansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, that slashing taxes always increases revenues and promotes growth. Risky ideology is wanting those cuts so badly that social issues aren't even on your radar. Risky ideology is questioning, in the face of 97 per cent of publishing scientists, the pressing reality of man-made climate change. Risky ideology is believing that a growing province could afford to adopt an experimental flat tax and depend on volatile royalty revenues to fund essential public services. Risky ideology is believing that you can run on deficits when oil was \$100 a barrel but must be austere when it's less than \$40. Risky ideology is saying little on LGBTQ rights because maintaining your base is more important than the safety of children in our schools. And risky ideology is insisting that anyone who doesn't embrace your own extreme views is some kind of red menace out to destroy our province.

Mr. Speaker, I was elected by the people of Edmonton-Centre to stand against these sorts of risky ideas. This afternoon we will table a budget based on compassion and common sense, a budget that will help create jobs, build and repair public infrastructure and affordable housing, and help all Albertans cope with the effects of the historic drop in the price of oil. And that is an ideology I can believe in.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

### Greater Forest Lawn 55+ Society

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a hard act to follow.

I rise today to recognize an amazing organization serving my constituents of Calgary-East, the Greater Forest Lawn 55+ Society. Recently I had the privilege of attending the society's 40th anniversary celebration. I was resoundingly teased, being the new kid on the block, and was mostly asked to relay messages to the hon. Minister of Finance, who has worked with this exceptional organization for years in his role as city councillor. It was a wonderful event, filled with good food, friends, and lots of laughs.

It's no surprise that the Greater Forest Lawn 55+ Society has been around for 40 years. Their membership fees are only \$5 a year, which is a pretty incredible deal considering the wide range of activities they offer. Carpet bowling, square dancing, bingo, crib, bridge, Zumba, Saturday night dances, and Wednesday lunches are only a few examples. They also provide a wide range of valuable services: snow clearing, lawn maintenance, good food boxes, and the memory plus program for seniors with dementia.

I have neighbours on my street who take advantage of the lawn services, and I can say from experience that they do an amazing job. They're working hard to help keep these seniors in their homes longer.

The society was recently able to secure funding to replace their old sign with a new electronic sign, which has been an exciting addition as they can now advertise all of the amazing activities they offer without risking anyone falling off a ladder.

It's important to note that almost all of these activities and services are run by volunteers. I think that's appropriate, considering it is volunteer week here in Alberta. They do this valuable work to create a sense of community, a place where everyone feels welcome. They want seniors to be engaged in the community and to not be isolated. Their goal is to keep members young, active, and as independent as possible, and from what I saw at the 40th anniversary, they're easily meeting that goal.

I'm looking forward to joining the club when I turn 55, which is a ways off, but based on their past success, I have no doubt that they will be waiting for me when I get there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood.

### Registry Service Renewal Reminders

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently this government announced it is switching to electronic reminders for registration, licence, and ID card renewals in an effort to save money. While this government certainly needs to start finding ways to save money, I'm concerned that it hasn't properly balanced savings with the priorities in this case.

Specifically, I'm concerned with the impact this change will have on the vulnerable seniors and rural Albertans that don't have access to Internet, let alone e-mail. Several constituents and their families have contacted my office with these concerns. I humbly suggest that the minister reconsider the government's position with respect to seniors and rural Albertans as Internet service is simply not reliable or readily available in all rural areas.

While the federal government's most recent budget left much to be desired – and maybe today's will, too; who knows? – it did include \$500 million for investment to further expand and enhance high-speed Internet infrastructure in rural and remote communities. I urge the provincial government to take advantage of this program

so that more Albertans can access the Internet and savings and measures like this can have a universally positive effect.

In the meantime, the NDP government should extend the grace period beyond one year for those vulnerable seniors and rural Albertans without Internet access so they're not left behind. It's only fair.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 10

#### Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016.

The proposed bill covers amendments in several different areas, including the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Act, and several tax statutes. These amendments will provide flexibility to address current economic and fiscal challenges, and they will also protect the integrity of our provincial tax system and provide for greater clarity and consistency in our financial legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to table with you a copy of the spring 2016 main budget estimates schedule.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-North West.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a letter from a concerned Albertan, the mother of a daughter with cerebral palsy, a caregiver as well to another individual with FASD, expressing her concern over the procurement plan – actually, concern is a mild word – with the policy and the treatment from Human Services. I have five copies here to present to you right now.

As well, my second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is five copies of a post-mortem on B.C.'s experience moving to their procurement policy. It is what I like to call a cautionary tale. It would have been nice if our government had actually read through it before they decided to go ahead with procurement, but better late than never. I'm tabling five copies.

Thank you.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Sabir, Minister of Human Services, an e-mail message dated April 6, 2016, from Ann Nicol, chief executive officer, Alberta Council of Disability Services, to hon. Mr. Sabir, Minister of Human Services, confirming a meeting regarding the new disability services contract, relating to comments made by hon. Mr. Sabir during Oral Question Period on April 13, 2016.

**The Speaker:** In order to allow adequate time to prepare for the Budget Address by the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance this afternoon, this House is recessed until 3:15.

[The Assembly adjourned from 2:59 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.]

## Orders of the Day

### Transmittal of Estimates

**Mr. Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, I have received certain messages from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order! All rise, please.

**The Speaker:** The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the offices of the Legislative Assembly for the service of the province of Alberta for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the government for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

### Government Motions

**Mr. Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the 2016-17 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates as well as the 2016-17 government estimates. In addition, I also wish to table the 2016-19 government of Alberta strategic plan and the Budget 2016 ministry business plans.

### Budget Address

13. Mr. Ceci moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

**Mr. Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, I now wish to table the government's Budget 2016 fiscal plan and move Government Motion 13.

I am pleased to present Budget 2016, the Alberta jobs plan. Mr. Speaker, the Alberta jobs plan supports families in a tough economy. The Alberta jobs plan protects health care, education, and the vital public services that Albertans count on. And, above all, the Alberta jobs plan diversifies Alberta's economy and creates thousands of jobs. In short, the Alberta jobs plan moves Alberta forward.

3:20

Let me begin today by expressing my thanks to the thousands upon thousands of Albertans who contributed to the plan. In telephone town halls, at public meetings, in homes, workplaces, and chance encounters on the street Albertans from every walk of life in every part of the province offered me, the Premier, and our government their views on the priorities we should set. I am extremely grateful for their thoughtful input. One thing was crystal clear in everything we heard: though the collapse in oil prices has shocked our economy, it has not shaken our spirit. Hope, optimism, and an abiding faith in a better tomorrow are in our DNA. They are how this province was built. So, too, is our deep commitment to the communities we call home.

Alberta is made up of people from every part of the globe pursuing their dreams as only we can in a province blessed by an

abundance of natural resources, talent, and entrepreneurial spirit. We share common ambitions for a future in which we all participate as full citizens and equal partners. As the throne speech said, in Alberta "we always pull together." Mr. Speaker, these are the values, the bedrock values, upon which the Alberta jobs plan is built, and these are the values that will get us through the collapse in oil prices and lay the foundation for a more resilient, more diversified, and more prosperous economy.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a critical moment in Alberta's history. In the past year and a half the price of oil has dropped by over two-thirds, from a peak of more than \$105 per barrel in the summer of 2014 to less than \$30 in January. In Alberta we're used to volatile oil markets, but this price bust is the most dramatic in generations. It is causing tremendous economic pain and anxiety. I see that every day in letters that arrive in my office and in the concerns brought to me by my constituents. Many Albertans are hurting. Unemployment has risen dramatically, peaking at 7.9 per cent this year, and revenues to government have fallen off a cliff. In 2013-14 the province booked almost \$10 billion in nonrenewable resource revenue. This year we are forecasting an almost 90 per cent drop to \$1.4 billion, less revenue than we've seen in 40 years. Dollar for dollar lower royalties mean there will be a higher deficit, and revenues from other taxes will be lower as well.

Mr. Speaker, the oil price shock has produced a deficit of \$10.4 billion in this year's budget. To account for the extreme volatility of oil prices, particularly in the last year, the deficit includes a \$700 million risk adjustment. Faced with the collapse in prices for our most valuable commodity, Albertans are confronted with a choice that will have profound consequences for generations to come. When oil prices fell in the past, Alberta governments responded by making reckless and extreme cuts to public services, firing thousands of teachers and nurses, cutting supports for seniors, and abandoning the most vulnerable. Some say that we should turn the clock back and do the same thing today, but on this side of the Legislature we fundamentally disagree. On this side of the Legislature we are standing with Albertans because Albertans told us how detrimental the slash-and-burn approach would be for our economy and our society. It would only cause more pain and economic anxiety, tearing at the fabric of our communities and making a difficult situation even worse.

Mr. Speaker, that's why our government is taking a different approach, a better approach. We are thoughtfully and carefully reducing the cost of government while protecting the public services we all count on. Let me provide you with a few examples. Instead of extreme cuts, our government is amalgamating or dissolving 26 agencies, boards, and commissions, saving approximately \$33 million over three years. Instead of slashing public services, our government is reducing budgets for salaries and supplies in government departments by nearly 2 per cent this year, saving \$121 million. Instead of taking a panicked approach, our government is deferring some of our platform commitments, slowing down the rollout, and reallocating savings to where they are needed most, and we are streamlining programs such as Alberta Innovates and community partnership grants and suspending payments to the access to the future fund.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to these careful measures to bring down the cost of government, we are also taking action to control costs in the public sector. We have frozen management salaries at government agencies, boards, and commissions, and we have commenced a review of salary rates overall in these agencies. Cabinet, MLAs, and political staff will not see a salary increase for the entire term of this Legislature. The same is true for managers in the public service for two years. Cost control measures such as these are not easy, but they are necessary.

Quite frankly, however, they are not enough to get the job done. For that, we need to tackle rising costs in our public health care system. I want to be clear. Public health care is a sacred trust shared by every Albertan, and this government is absolutely determined to protect it today and for future generations. Owing to the work of my colleague the Minister of Health and her dedicated health partners, the health care cost curve is bending down. Over the last six years the Health budget increased by an average of 6 per cent each and every year. Over the next three years the operating budget for health care will increase by an average of 2.5 per cent. We are making good progress, but to secure public health care, we need to keep at it. We have to reduce the cost of pharmaceuticals, we have to improve mental health care in the community, and we have to address the rising costs of compensating Alberta's dedicated doctors.

Mr. Speaker, our government's plan to control costs is working. Overall growth in the government's operating budget falls to an average of 2 per cent for the next three years. At the same time, Alberta maintains the lowest overall tax regime in Canada, with no provincial sales tax, no payroll tax, and no health premiums, and we have a significantly lower debt-to-GDP ratio than Canada and other provinces. That means we have the fiscal capacity to protect the health and education services Albertans count on, with thoughtful measures to control costs while maintaining certainty and stability for families.

3:30

But, Mr. Speaker, we have to stick to a plan that carefully brings the budget back into balance as the economy recovers, and we must take action to create jobs and diversify our economy. The Alberta jobs plan focuses on doing just that. As the Premier outlined in her televised address to Albertans, the Alberta jobs plan has four key pillars: supporting families and communities, investing in infrastructure, diversifying our energy industry and our energy markets, and supporting Alberta business.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to outline each of the Alberta jobs plan's themes in more detail. Almost every Alberta family in our province has been affected in some way by the collapse in oil prices. Many of our loved ones, friends, and neighbours have suffered a job loss or are worried they soon will. Some are having a tough time keeping up with the bills and paying the mortgage, and still more wonder how they will care for aging parents, help their kids get through school, and put something away for retirement when the future looks uncertain. That's why the first pillar of the Alberta jobs plan is to help Alberta families weather this economic storm.

As the Premier has said on many occasions, as we confront the consequences of the oil price shock, we must protect the most vulnerable Albertans, especially children, because the moral compass of any society is best judged by how it treats its most vulnerable citizens. No child in Alberta should go hungry, and no child's future should be sacrificed to the roller coaster of global energy prices. It's a fundamental commitment we owe to each other.

So starting this summer, Alberta families will receive the new Alberta child benefit and enhancements to the Alberta family employment tax credit. Mr. Speaker, this initiative is a major step forward for Alberta families: groundbreaking social policy to fight poverty, to ensure that children get a good start in life, and to help Albertans in need get back on their feet and into the workforce. Under our plan a low-income single parent with two children will receive just over \$3,000 a year in benefits. In all, 380,000 children will be better off. It's a powerful expression of that most basic of Alberta values, that in tough times we are all in this together.

Let me also take a moment to acknowledge the federal government for introducing a new national child benefit. Owing to its commitment, middle- and low-income families will receive significant new support in addition to that provided by our government.

Mr. Speaker, the oil price shock also means far too many Albertans are suffering from the anxiety that comes with not knowing where their next paycheck is coming from. Here, too, we owe it to each other to help these Albertans get the support they deserve. Year after year hard-working Albertans have paid into employment insurance, helping to finance a national system that supports all Canadians. When energy prices were high, very few Albertans qualified for benefits because unemployment here was lower than in other parts of the country and average weekly earnings were higher relative to the rest of Canada.

These rules need to change. That's why our government led the call for accelerated adjustments to EI rules to ensure unemployed Albertans were treated fairly and had more money in their pockets. The federal government responded in part, and for that it deserves credit. Some Albertans now have access to up to 20 more weeks of benefits, a step in the right direction, but still not good enough. The exclusion of Edmonton and its surrounding communities from EI improvements makes absolutely no sense. So today, once again, the Alberta government calls on Ottawa to fix this unfair situation and to fix it soon. Because it doesn't matter if you are an unemployed oil worker in Nisku or Fort McMurray, you deserve to be treated fairly.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to helping the most vulnerable through tough times, the Alberta jobs plan supports Alberta families by investing in education and skills training. It is well understood that in today's global economy our most important asset is our people, and education is the most important investment we can make in their future. Education is the key to building a strong economy and a healthy society. The last government didn't understand this. It imposed reckless and short-sighted cuts. We stopped those cuts. The Alberta jobs plan builds on our commitment to education by fully funding enrolment growth in our public schools. We are also increasing operating grants to our universities, colleges, and postsecondary institutions, and we are helping families cope with rising postsecondary education costs by extending the tuition freeze for a second year.

Today I am also pleased to announce two new initiatives aimed at helping unemployed Albertans acquire the skills they need to get back to work. First, I am announcing \$15 million to help apprentices complete their training and work experience requirements; and, second, \$10 million is provided to the training for work program. This program targets a broad range of Albertans who are underrepresented in the workforce, including women, indigenous people, and newcomers, to help them secure and maintain employment in high-demand jobs. These two initiatives, together with our government's unwavering commitment to giving our children and youth the tools they need to succeed, are strategic and prudent investments that support families today and will pay big dividends in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the second key pillar of the Alberta jobs plan is to invest in infrastructure for schools, hospitals, roads, transit, and other much-needed infrastructure. Infrastructure is the lifeblood of the modern economy; ask any of Alberta's global competitors. They know that those jurisdictions that invest now in schools, transportation, and green infrastructure will be best positioned to compete and win in a fast-paced and ever-changing global economy. With interest rates at historic lows and the economy and people in need of support, there is simply no better time to seize the initiative and invest for the future.

3:40

Acting on the advice of the former Bank of Canada governor, David Dodge, last October the province announced an ambitious \$34 billion plan to build and upgrade new roads, transit, schools, and hospitals. That plan increased investment by 15 per cent compared to the previous government, an additional \$4.5 billion in new investment over five years. Mr. Speaker, the Alberta jobs plan puts that commitment to work.

Over five years we're more than doubling investments in affordable housing, to almost \$900 million. As a result more Albertans will live in safe, affordable homes. The funding also funds housing in support of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. We're allocating \$365 million for continuing care, consistent with our commitment to fund more than 2,000 new long-term care beds for seniors. This investment will help ensure that the Albertans who built this province get the care and support they deserve. We're also financing critical new transit and transportation projects, including the ring roads in Calgary and Edmonton, a twinned bridge in Peace River, and the Gaetz Avenue interchange in Red Deer.

We're funding upgrades and new buildings on our college and university campuses such as the University of Lethbridge destination project. We're supporting our fast-growing tourism industry with expansion funding for the Calgary Zoo and Fort Edmonton Park. We're allocating \$3.5 billion to build and modernize schools, including \$500 million for additional school projects in future capital plans. And we're helping municipalities address their infrastructure needs with \$9 billion in funding, primarily through MSI grants. In addition, nearly \$700 million is allocated for flood recovery and protection projects. Today and for generations to come, Albertans will benefit from these investments.

Patients will benefit from Calgary's new cancer hospital and major improvements to health facilities in Edmonton and throughout the province. Students will benefit from good schools and modern classrooms. Commuters will benefit from significant new investments in buses, light rail, and other transit initiatives. Rural Albertans will benefit from improved water and road projects and new monies targeted to small and rural municipalities throughout the province. And Albertans are benefiting today from the thousands of good jobs these projects create.

Yes, these investments cost money. But with the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in Canada and with community infrastructure throughout Alberta in desperate need of attention, failing to act would leave a terrible legacy of overcrowded classrooms, longer health care wait-lists, and decaying infrastructure. Some argue that that's the choice we should make, that we shouldn't build new schools and hospitals, that we should let our roads and bridges fall into disrepair, and that we should leave our towns and cities behind. That would be a mistake Albertans can't afford, and that's a mistake this government won't make.

Mr. Speaker, the third pillar of the Alberta jobs plan is diversifying our energy industry and our energy markets. Achieving this goal is critically important to Alberta's future and to the economic security of every Albertan. That's why last November the Premier stood with industry, indigenous, environmental, and community leaders to set out a climate leadership strategy.

Alberta's climate leadership plan is the single most important step any Canadian government has taken to act on climate change. It's the cornerstone of our plan to build a greener and more diversified economy that creates jobs for Albertans. We are phasing out emissions for coal-powered generation to reduce pollution. We are implementing a world-leading methane reduction plan. We are investing in new, green infrastructure and helping to grow Alberta's

renewable energy industry. Mr. Speaker, the climate leadership plan erases any doubt about Alberta's environmental record.

Putting a price on carbon is at the centre of this strategy. Mr. Speaker, we are bringing in a carbon levy to do two things. First, a carbon levy sends a clear market signal to consumers and to businesses about the need to reduce their carbon emissions, and second, every penny raised will be rebated back to Albertans and reinvested in our economy. A carbon levy of \$20 per tonne will become effective on January 1, 2017. One year later the levy will increase by \$10, to \$30 per tonne. Beginning next year, single adults will receive carbon levy rebates of up to \$200 per year, depending on income. Couples will receive \$300. Parents will receive an additional \$30 per child under 18 to a maximum of four children. As the levy increases, so too will the value of the rebate.

Mr. Speaker, 6 in 10 Alberta households will receive the full rebate, and small businesses will benefit from a tax initiative that I will detail in a moment. All Albertans will benefit from investments in the green infrastructure and energy efficiency initiatives that the carbon levy will support, creating thousands of jobs, diversifying our energy economy, and driving new technologies that will add to our exports. It's a win for our environment, it's a win for our energy industry, and, above all, it's a win for Albertans, who will benefit from a stronger, more sustainable economy with good-paying jobs.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the steps we are taking to secure the future of our energy industry and the jobs it creates, we are also working to open up new markets for our energy. Think about it. With only one market available to us, Albertans and Canadians get shortchanged on every barrel of oil we sell. Since 2010 we have sold our oil at an average discount of 20 per cent. As a result, the price bust is even worse for Albertans than it is for other energy jurisdictions around the world.

Every school, every hospital, every road, every Canada pension cheque, indeed, every program and service that Canadians rely on owes something to the success of Alberta's energy sector. Arguments about Alberta's environmental record no longer hold water. Our province now has the most progressive climate action plan in North America, and pipelines are the safest and most environmentally responsible way to transport oil. We have the technology, we have the know-how, and we have the expertise to build a modern, safe, and well-regulated pipeline to tidewater. Mr. Speaker, we need to establish a framework that gets us to a yes to a pipeline so that Albertans and all Canadians can get full value and a fair deal for Alberta's oil on world markets.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, the fourth pillar of the Alberta jobs plan is to support Alberta business. In October I announced an increase in capital to the Alberta Treasury Branches of \$1.5 billion to support lending to small and medium-sized businesses in every region of the province. So I was pleased to see ATB announce that it increased loans to small and medium-sized business by \$335 million in the fourth quarter of last year.

I also announced a two-year, \$50 million investment in the Alberta Enterprise Corporation to help ensure that Alberta entrepreneurs have the venture capital they need to launch their businesses, drive innovation, and create jobs, and I directed the Alberta Investment Management Corporation to earmark half a billion dollars for investment in Alberta companies with growth potential. In each case financial professionals are making financial decisions in the best interests of Albertans.

We are also seizing an opportunity to diversify our economy through the petrochemicals diversification program. Up to \$500 million in royalty credits will be awarded to businesses that invest in petrochemical facilities that use methane or propane to produce



higher value products such as methanol and plastics. So instead of shipping out our raw resources and the jobs that go with them, we are adding value to them here at home, creating thousands of jobs and attracting billions of dollars in new investment.

Mr. Speaker, today I'm also pleased to announce additional measures to diversify our economy and support Alberta business, particularly small business. First, I am announcing today that the province is establishing two new tax credits. The new Alberta investor tax credit provides an incentive to invest in eligible small and medium-sized enterprises, and the capital investment tax credit provides an incentive for first-time acquisition of new or used property in value-added agriculture, tourism infrastructure, culture, manufacturing, and processing industries. These two new tax credits, valued at \$165 million, will help give Alberta's entrepreneurs access to the capital they need to drive innovation, diversify our economy, and create new jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the business community and others for their diligent advocacy for tax credits such as these to promote early-stage capital investment and make Alberta's economy even more competitive. Their advice and collaboration were invaluable. I am grateful for their input.

Second, I am pleased to announce a package of initiatives aimed at growing and attracting new businesses and creating new jobs. For example, \$10 million in new funding is allocated to the entrepreneurship incubator program, which helps entrepreneurs bring their ideas to market; \$25 million is provided to the Alberta Enterprise Corporation to spur innovation and job growth in Alberta's knowledge economy. The new funding is in addition to the \$50 million commitment made last year and will help the AEC build on its success in leveraging new investments to cultivate homegrown innovation across the province.

Ten million dollars is earmarked to expand the Agrivalve Processing Business Incubator program. This incubator is in Leduc, and it's having tremendous success creating new companies in Alberta's food industry. With these new resources it will do even better creating new companies and new jobs. There will be \$5 million in additional funding for potential investors to help Alberta attract major new headquarters to the province. Finally, \$10 million is set aside for the regional economic development program to encourage co-operation within regions to promote a wide range of industries, from tourism through to value-added processing.

Mr. Speaker, taken together, these job-creation incentives reflect our government's central commitment to Albertans: in tough economic times we've got your back. Faced with similar circumstances in the past, Alberta governments chose to do nothing except to impose reckless and extreme cuts to public services in a race to the bottom. The impacts were severe, they were long-lasting, and they didn't succeed in creating jobs or diversifying our economy. This government won't choose that path. This government is moving Alberta forward.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to talk about small business. Owning and operating a small business takes enormous grit and determination, with long hours and many late nights. Over my years at Calgary city council and now as Minister of Finance I've spoken to thousands of job creators, innovators, and entrepreneurs. Like the Premier and everyone in this Legislature, I have tremendous admiration for the work they do and the contribution they make to this province day in and day out. When oil prices collapse, I know that small-business people are some of the first to feel its effects. I know how hard they struggle to keep their businesses open. Therefore, to help small-business people in

Alberta, today I am announcing that the small-business tax is being cut from 3 per cent to 2 per cent, amongst the lowest in the country. It's the right thing to do to help our job creators weather this storm, and it's the right thing to do for jobs and our economy.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by remarking on the great Alberta story. Over many generations, beginning with Alberta's indigenous peoples, we have built one of the world's great societies. From the Great War to the Great Depression, through fire and flood, in times of prosperity and peace our strength has always been our people, and we have always stuck together as one community, joined by a common destiny. Today the Alberta family is younger, more diverse, more talented, and more ambitious than ever before. We are truly blessed. We can never forget that.

But it is also true that the collapse in oil prices is a threat to our collective future. Owing to years of inaction by previous governments, we are far too dependent on the price of one commodity. In the past when oil prices fell, the cost of that inaction was downloaded onto hard-working families through short-sighted cuts. Albertans paid in longer hospital wait times, overcrowded classrooms, longer commutes, higher fees, and lost opportunity. Some say we should repeat those mistakes. We say no. Our government won't turn the clock back on Albertans.

4:00

With the Alberta jobs plan we are moving Alberta forward. Our plan creates jobs and diversifies our economy. Our plan maintains stability for the important public services that support Albertans and their communities. Our plan supports families with new child tax credits and skills training to support good jobs. Our plan invests in new schools, hospitals, and transportation infrastructure to create jobs and build our province. Our plan diversifies our energy industry as we work to open up new markets, and our plan supports Alberta business with new tax credits and a cut to small-business taxes to grow our small-business sector and support our innovators, entrepreneurs, and job creators.

Mr. Speaker, there will be more difficult days ahead. The global economy remains volatile and uncertain. But as Premier Notley said, Albertans are resilient. "We've always shown that when we're faced with challenges we come together with optimism and determination." Today we are called upon once again to meet the challenges of our time head-on. We are called upon to move Alberta forward, and we are as one province, as one people united in our determination to build a more prosperous economy and a brighter future for every Albertan onward.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. House leader for Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've certainly waited a long time for that, and there will definitely be a lot of debate about that.

But for today I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn the House until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:03 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to April 14, 2016**

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

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

- 1        Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**  
First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)
- 2        Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)  
Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)  
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1]
- 3        Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)  
Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2]
- 4\*      An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**  
First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft.), 349-66 (Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 399-409 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.), 378-84 (Apr. 6, 2016 morn.), 415-28 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments)  
Third Reading -- 450-55 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 428-33 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn.)
- 5        Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**  
First Reading -- 398 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.)  
Second Reading -- 455-56 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.), 532-38 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed), 491-505 (Apr. 12, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 570-77 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed), 539-56 (Apr. 13, 2016 morn.)  
Third Reading -- 577-83 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)
- 6        Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.)  
Second Reading -- 519-27 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 527-32 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 583-85 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)
- 7        Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**  
First Reading -- 518 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 585-86 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., adjourned)
- 8        Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)
- 9        An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

- 10        Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 599 (Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed)
- 201      Election Recall Act (Smith)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 119-32 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft.), 303-304 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division)
- 202      Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 305-16 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft.), 470-73 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)
- 203      Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**  
First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 481-83 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities), 473-81 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft.)
- 204      Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**  
First Reading -- 468 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)
- Pr1      Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**  
First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed)





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, April 18, 2016

Day 16

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
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 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
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 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

# STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

## Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

## Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

## Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

## Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

## Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

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Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

## Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

## Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

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Babcock	McKittrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

## Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

## Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

## Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 18, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Let each of us reflect in our own way. Let us encourage the right to speak up for things you believe in, not only for those seated in this Chamber but for our constituents, especially our young children. It is important for them to know that their voice matters and that it can make a difference. Let us particularly remember the children of our nation who consider suicide as their only escape.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, we now will be led in singing our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Press Gallery Centennial

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, as mentioned last Thursday, I would like to take a moment today to point out an important milestone concerning the Assembly's press gallery. One hundred years ago, through amendments to the Assembly's standing orders, members of the press were afforded their own gallery in the Chamber to observe the proceedings. In 1916 Standing Order 92 read: "A gallery shall be reserved for the use of press representatives only." The standing orders also provided that the representatives could come from registered newspapers and that the Speaker controlled the gallery and rooms adjacent to it, which were made available to the press.

Today much has changed technologically and, in fact, continues to change, and reporting is often instantaneous in the world of social media. But what has remained constant is the essential role of the press in helping to communicate and report on what happens here in this Assembly to constituents throughout our province.

I'm sure I speak for all members when I share our appreciation for the critical role that media play in this our sacred democracy.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the wonderful grade 6 class from the Airdrie school C.W. Perry and their volunteers and teachers. Would you please rise as I call your names? Miss Stephanie Wilson, Miss Ashley Woronuk, Mr. Brian Jackson, Mr. Roel Suasini, Mr. Daniel Fortier, Mr. Keith

Foord, Mrs. Sarah Machan, and all the kids: please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school groups for introductions today? I would recognize the hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you a group of students who are leaders from across our province, who are part of the leadership program Forum for Young Albertans. We are joined by their executive director Jason Stolz and four alumni of the organization, those being Kathyne Davey, Samantha Hossack, Tanya Hrehirchuk, and Loryn Marcellus, who are chaperons for this year's forum participants. Thank you for rising.

We also have 23 students from grades 9 through 12 who are immersing themselves in politics during their week-long forum in Edmonton, which is this week, sitting with leaders at both municipal and provincial levels. The students have travelled from across the province, communities like Fox Creek, Bonnyville, and Fort McMurray, and they're forming lasting friendships with the unique experience, which we are sure they will remember as one of their highlights from their junior high and high school experience. I ask that our guests from the Forum for Young Albertans who are here with us today please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. I had the privilege of speaking with the group this morning.

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, it is my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the folks who work in my office as the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and the staff who work in my constituency office in Mayerthorpe in the great district of Whitecourt-St. Anne. Our work relies so much on the support that we get from our staff. They ensure that both the minister's office and the constituency office run smoothly and efficiently. They also do a pretty good job of keeping me out of trouble, more or less. I would like to ask my constituency staff, Epiphany Dober and Florence Henning, and my minister's office staff, Melanie Gaudet, Alice Marouelli, Renato Gandia, Keith Gardner, and Tony Clark, to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly one of the bravest constituents in Edmonton-Castle Downs, Austin Post. I had the privilege of being at his birth and the privilege to introduce him to you today. Austin is only 11 years old but recently underwent a heart transplant. During the process and while waiting for a donor heart, Austin displayed an unbelievable amount of bravery and positivity throughout such a difficult time. Austin is joined here today by his mother, Christine, one of my dearest friends for over 20 years; his father, Ian Post; his sisters, Ashley Reisinger and Meleah Post. Throughout this whole process the family was constantly a source of strength, love, and support for each other during such an uncertain time. I'd ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real privilege for me to introduce to you and to the Assembly the executive members of the Alberta chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. CPAWS is a society committed to ensuring a healthy and wild Canada, where people can experience and respect nature. Their tireless efforts have been pivotal in preserving Alberta's sensitive environments for the future. Most recently they've been integral along with the Alberta Wilderness Association in the designation of the Castle wilderness and Castle park area, protecting a vital watershed while concerns remain about off-highway vehicle traffic in those regions. Please stand as I mention your names. Joining us today are Pat Chan, Liv Vors, Alison Ronson, Gord James, Phil Nykyforuk, and Anne-Marie Syslak. Please give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

#### AdaptAbilities

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my privilege to join AdaptAbilities, a nonprofit organization that supports families throughout the Edmonton area, for their Fun-raiser gala last Thursday, April 14. It was an incredible opportunity to hear about the positive impacts that they've made on our community while raising money to support the important work that they do.

AdaptAbilities has been providing supports to our city for over 10 years, offering one-of-a-kind programs and services empowering individuals with special needs to grow, succeed, and belong. Relief care and community specialists work together with individuals and families to create a safe and caring community, enriching the lives of those with disabilities.

Under the direction of founder and Executive Director Michelle Hordal, AdaptAbilities has grown to serve hundreds of families who were often turned away from other programs. Michelle and her team have worked hard to create a home away from home for their participants, designed to enhance each individual's recreation and motor skills, life skills, and creative talents. Their services and support programs are developed as per the needs and wants of individual participants by promoting citizenship, valued social identities, supporting real relationships, and personal development first.

I am proud to be a part of a government which is committed to supporting an inclusive society and ensuring that the rights of all Albertans are protected, especially our most vulnerable. Our government recently committed \$65,000 through the community facility enhancement program to help AdaptAbilities as they move to expand to a larger location. I would like to thank AdaptAbilities for their ongoing commitment in supporting the vulnerable in our community, and I would like to congratulate them on their brand new logo designed by Catapult Marketing here in Edmonton.

Thank you.

#### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, on the drive up from Medicine Hat to Edmonton I'm sure you saw the same thing as me: empty buildings, for sale signs, and vacant parking lots. I'm sure you drove past the oil service businesses that have closed their doors and the construction companies with no orders on the books. But what

might not be as easy to spot is a family struggling to get through a layoff or the children who won't be enrolled in their favourite sport or the charity forced to do more with less.

In response to such crippling financial and human costs, this NDP government has decided to take a bad situation and make it worse. With the implementation of a carbon tax that will bring massive price hikes across the board, Albertans will face even more hardship: hardships on their utility bills, at the gas pumps, and at the grocery store. The NDP's carbon tax is regressive, punitive, and damaging to every sector of the economy and everyday life. Imagine the shock that a fixed-income senior will get when they open their monthly bills and see an increase of 8 per cent on electricity and 50 per cent on natural gas. Imagine the struggling family that will now pay 10 per cent more filling up their vehicle on the way to school. Imagine the business desperately trying to keep its head above water while being pulled down by the weight of this new tax.

Perhaps the Premier doesn't need to worry about the price of heating her home or buying a car, but I can assure you that these problems cause pain, worry, and sleepless nights for my constituents. Quite simply, this government has chosen to dishonestly foist a harsh new tax upon a province that can't bear it, a tax that they kept hidden from Albertans. Mr. Speaker, it's time that the NDP stop putting the price of its own mismanagement on the backs of hard-working Albertans. It's time they stop governing against us and work for us.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

#### Public Consultation

**Mr. Ellis:** In 2014 I had the honour of being elected as the MLA for Calgary-West. I put my name on the ballot because I believe strongly in serving my community and in serving Albertans. This is a great responsibility. If Alberta is succeeding, then it means that we the elected Members of the Legislature have done our jobs. This is the attitude of my PC colleagues, and I, too, have been working hard to bring this to the Legislature.

We reject the notion that as opposition it is our job to simply oppose the government. We do not believe that the responsibility of governing lies only with the government but that every single person in the Legislature carries this obligation as well. The Progressive Conservatives value professionalism and respect. We offer constructive feedback and common-sense suggestions. Our goal is to be the best legislators and best representatives that we can be.

I think that many of the issues facing Alberta can be resolved with plain old common sense. Many of the best policy ideas simply come from listening and talking with the people. Having the ability to interact with and gain insight from so many different people is a powerful tool at the disposal of every single MLA. Being prepared to listen to people and recognizing you don't have the answers should be the central qualification for this job. It is key for government to listen to the people on the ground who deal with the situations first-hand.

In the year and a half that I've been an MLA, I have learned that there are no magic spells for dealing with the issues and that no one has a monopoly on good ideas. I'm proud to be a member of the Progressive Conservative caucus, that is using this session of the Legislature to promote real, common-sense solutions to make sure this government is properly engaging with Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

### Organ and Tissue Donation

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The week of April 17 to 23 is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week in Canada. It is my privilege to rise and speak about this important issue today.

I'd like to share with you Austin's story, whom I had the opportunity to introduce earlier. Austin is a brilliant 11-year-old boy, full of life, like most other kids his age, but one major difference is that the heart that beats inside Austin is not the one that he was born with. Austin was eight years old when he suddenly fell ill and was diagnosed with end-stage congestive heart failure from an unknown cause. This required further medical assessment, and he had to be placed on the transplant list. Thanks to the generosity of a grieving family and the expertise of the transplant team at the Stollery children's hospital, Austin is alive today. Austin says that he loves life and that so many of his days are what he calls his best days ever.

Mr. Speaker, while heart transplantation is not a cure, it is definitely a life-saving treatment. We have seen people with successful transplants enjoy a high quality of life for over 30 years. In Alberta the list of people waiting to receive a transplant is growing. Although the number of donors has increased since 2012, we still need more. In 2014 we had 13.6 deceased donors per million population compared to 9.9 in 2012. People are six times more likely to need a transplant than to become a donor, and only 1 to 2 per cent of people die in a way that would make them a potential organ donor. Tissue donation is equally as important as organ donation. For example, donated corneas can restore sight, and heart valves are life saving.

About 2,500 Albertans register every week to become organ and tissue donors. Just one organ and tissue donor can save up to eight lives and make life better for up to 75 other people. Today let's take a pledge to spread awareness to ensure that everyone who needs a transplant has the opportunity to receive one.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

### Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Between the city of Calgary and the town of Cochrane is a stunning piece of Alberta ranchland paradise. The area was first cut open to settlement and industry by the CPR back in 1883. Shortly thereafter Glenbow townsite was established, with a post office, general store, and about 150 residents. On the neighbouring hillside Glenbow Quarry was founded and excavated the very stone used in the building that surrounds us here, the Alberta Legislature.

The area later became a successful ranch under the stewardship of the Harvie family. Over 40 years ago Neil Harvie recognized that a sprawling Calgary threatened the surrounding countryside and passed on the vision to his children to preserve the land as a park. In 2008 the family made a generous philanthropic land deal through a unique partnership with the Alberta government and the Glenbow Ranch Park Foundation.

Last summer, in August 2015, I participated in a spectacular trail ride, the Ride for the Ranch fundraiser, with Andy Crooks, chairman of the board of the foundation. The tour was guided by Tim Harvie and took us on an intimate tour of the ranch. Tim pointed out the ruins of the sandstone quarry, archaeological evidence of teepee rings, described vegetation such as native

grasses and fescues, animal habitats, and explained the importance of preserving the area as an active ranch. Later that evening the journey was complete with the narration of cowboy stories by poet Perry Jacobson.

**1:50**

Glenbow Ranch provincial park protects 1,300 acres of parkland, river, and forest landscape along the Bow River. Residents of Calgary and beyond can benefit from over 30 kilometres of paved trails and pathways, which is part of the Trans Canada Trail network and system. I encourage all Calgarians to take full advantage of this sensational park at their very doorstep. As Tim Harvie remarked at the end of the trail ride: where else in the world can you sit on a grassy hilltop like this with a vast river valley sprawled out in front of you, backed by rolling foothills, and witness 50 miles of mountain range on the not-too-distant horizon?

I'd like to thank the Harvie family for their generous vision that has preserved this wonderful landscape for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For many Alberta families life has never been more challenging than it is today. Thousands are out of work and struggling to pay their bills. Their main priority is putting food on the table and keeping a roof over their heads. On Thursday this government took a bad situation and introduced a budget that made things much worse for Albertans. A carbon tax makes the price of everything in Alberta more expensive for everyone, not just for gas and heating but also power bills, groceries, clothes, and rent. Will the Premier be honest with Albertans and give them the full cost of how much a risky new carbon tax is going to cost for families?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We certainly have been very open and will continue to be. The direct cost for an average family, including heating, gasoline, and electricity, will be about \$500. Two-thirds of Alberta families will be receiving rebates; 60 per cent of Albertans will receive a full rebate. So, certainly, this is very positive.

When it comes to doing accounting and math, I certainly think that the Leader of the Official Opposition, who had to recorrect his numbers in less than two hours this morning – I'd be happy to sit down with his research department and explain some of the math to them, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that this Premier just hit the typical family with at least \$1,000 a year in new costs. If you're lucky enough to qualify for a rebate, you'll still end up hundreds and hundreds of dollars poorer as a result of this carbon tax, brought in by this NDP government. Transportation companies already estimate that costs will rise by 5 per cent. For families it means that diapers, formula, hockey equipment, clothes, vegetables – anything moved in Alberta by truck – will be more expensive for Albertans. Why is the Premier downloading hundreds of dollars in new costs from this carbon tax onto Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We certainly take our responsibility and the evidence around climate change incredibly seriously. We know that what will be best for Alberta families is to be able to have a strong international reputation to get our pipelines built, expand our markets, and to make sure we move forward with a strong public service. The Official Opposition's proposal is to lay off at least another 22,000 jobs in the public sector. I'm sorry. That math doesn't add up, and Albertans know it.

**Mr. Jean:** Rebate or not, families that buy food, buy clothes, rent or own their own property will all see their costs go up. The cost of living for Albertans will go up under this government. Half of Canadians report they're barely scraping by and that losing as little as \$200 a month would bankrupt them. A carbon tax, that increases prices of everything, only makes things worse for everyone in Alberta. Only 10 per cent of revenue raised by the carbon tax is actually being returned to Albertans in rebates. Families will simply have to eat the rest of these new costs and new taxes. What does the Premier have to say to families that feel like they have just been kicked while they're already down?

**Ms Hoffman:** Our government knows that climate change is real, Mr. Speaker. Our government takes it seriously, and we are working to make sure that we have a reasonable plan, one that's modelled on climate leadership plans from other jurisdictions, that's reasonable and balanced, that actually creates meaningful change.

Mr. Speaker, 60 per cent of Alberta families will see a full rebate. That certainly is going to be very helpful to them. But, also, we're going to be reinvesting every other dollar in making sure that we have opportunities to diversify the economy, something that members opposite have no intention of doing.

**The Speaker:** The second main question.

**Mr. Jean:** Here's another example of how the NDP carbon tax will hurt Alberta families. The city of Calgary is estimating that this tax will cost them \$6.5 million a year. For cities across Alberta feeling the pinch, the Premier told them they get zero in return. I'm sure the Premier knows there's only one way for cities to pay for this tax, more borrowing or higher property taxes. Either way, it's Alberta families who will pick up the tab for this government's mismanagement. Why is the Premier downloading the cost of her carbon tax onto municipalities and onto Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, if the budget papers had been read on Thursday, the Official Opposition would have noted that there is \$2.2 billion in new green-infrastructure investments that will be recycled straight back into the economy, supporting municipalities, supporting rural municipalities as well as large cities. Certainly, those investments are over and above existing investments and will help municipalities adjust.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, that's going to take a lot of adjustment. You see, the cost of the carbon tax doesn't stop there. School boards across the province need fuel to operate. Thousands of kids every single day take a bus to get to school. It's not uncommon for parents to actually have to pay hundreds of dollars in transportation costs every year for their children to go to school. This new carbon tax will only make things worse by forcing school boards to increase

these fees, to download other new costs to parents. What does the Premier have to say to the families who will be further punished by this NDP government for having to bus their kids to school?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, this government kept our commitment to ensuring stable, predictable funding for schools and for students and for the next generation of children in this province. It's certainly not something that the Official Opposition is at all interested in.

In addition to that, we will be reinvesting the carbon levy in a series of efficiency initiatives that can be used to defray the costs for school boards, municipalities, indigenous communities, and other communities, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jean:** For Albertans already pinching pennies, the Premier's carbon tax will have a huge impact on fuel expenses. I'm not sure if the Premier actually knows this, but people do drive trucks for their livelihoods here in Alberta. The weather in Alberta also means that four-by-fours might be necessary from time to time. Trucks help Albertans move hay on the farm. They help move their tools to the job site even in the cities. For families, a larger vehicle is just a fact of life when you have to take kids to hockey practice or to ballet. Why is the Premier increasing the cost of living for everyday Albertans, and will she show leadership by changing herself from her own large Suburban to maybe a Smart car?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we are mindful of the impact on lower and middle-income Albertans, which is why we are implementing a rebate that will apply at the full rebate for 60 per cent of Albertans, a partial rebate for two-thirds.

In addition, we have exempted marked gasoline and diesel – that is to say, purple – for agricultural producers, Mr. Speaker. In addition, there will be a full array of energy efficiency investments for all Albertans to avail themselves of.

**The Speaker:** The third main question.

### Tax Policy

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans clearly know that this NDP budget is going to make things much worse. It will lead to fewer jobs. It will lead to a weaker Alberta economy. They know that this budget's carbon tax will have them paying more provincial taxes and more municipal taxes, more taxes on everything. They know that bad fiscal planning has lowered our credit rating and now makes borrowing more expensive for Albertans. Now they know that the Premier has considered a sales tax in Alberta's future. Why does this Premier reject any cuts at all but, instead, seems excited about a new Alberta PST?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta jobs plan takes a different path than the opposition would take. The path we will take will be to stand with Albertans. We will stand with Albertans by supporting families and communities, investing in infrastructure, diversifying our economy, and supporting Alberta businesses. They would not do that. They would cut supports to seniors, they would cut teachers and nurses, and they would abandon our most vulnerable. That's not the path we're going to take.



2:00

**Mr. Jean:** A direct question on PST; direct avoidance of the question.

Tax increases will only drive money out of our economy and jobs out of our province. When we look at the budget, it is clear that last October's tax increases will not bring anywhere near the revenue the NDP said they would. Nowhere near. Businesses are moving jobs out of Alberta. Wealthy individuals are moving to lower tax jurisdictions. Alberta will not be the most attractive place to invest when energy prices rebound, and now the Premier has chosen to signal that a sales tax is in our future. Why is the Premier so determined to drive investment and prosperity out of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. During and after the 2015 election we said that we would not introduce a sales tax, and during the term of this government we will not introduce a sales tax. We'll honour that commitment. We committed to bringing back fairness to the PIT, the personal income tax, and corporate income taxes. We moved quickly to make that happen in June because this province was behind all other provinces in terms of a fair, transparent tax for PIT, so a marginal tax rate is the right thing to do. We brought that in.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental. With respect, Opposition House Leader, I request that you direct your comments through the Speaker again, please.

Please proceed. Go ahead.

**Mr. Jean:** The Opposition House Leader, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** I meant the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has the most expensive government in Canada by a lot. When adjusted for population, B.C. actually runs its government operations for \$8 billion less a year than Alberta does. Think about that. If Alberta spent at B.C. levels, our deficit this year would be very, very modest. But, instead, the Premier wants to fearmonger and tell Albertans that any cuts to the budget would lead to thousands fewer teachers and nurses. Fearmongering. Albertans aren't buying it. They know this Premier won't do what needs to be done. Will the Premier commit to getting spending under control before she even considers a sales tax, and will she agree not to bring in a sales tax next term?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the Leader of the Official Opposition, who himself talked about the cuts of the '90s as something to be looking back on gloriously, recalls, but teachers were laid off, and nurses were laid off. Those are the plans of the past. The Official Opposition wants to recycle these failed plans. He wants to talk about cutting \$8 billion. That's almost the entire Education budget. Give me a break. That is not what the people of Alberta voted for. They voted for a stable, predictable government that's going to support them.

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** The point of order is noted.

The volume is getting excessive.

I think we're on the first supplemental. Is that correct? [interjection] The fourth main.

**Carbon Levy**  
(continued)

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know with the carbon tax that 40 per cent of that will be purely wealth distribution. We know that the carbon tax will increase costs to Alberta households. We know it will cost three times more to run and administer energy efficiency Alberta than the total amount being put aside for communities affected by the rapid phase-out of coal. What we don't know is what it will do for the environment. To the Minister of Finance: by what amount will your carbon tax reduce both emissions and energy consumption?

**Mr. Ceci:** I will jump up and say that I know the reduction in emissions by 2020. Thirty-five megatonnes is the forecast of the amount it will reduce the size of emissions. For the second part of the answer I'm going to turn it over to the environment minister to answer that in future questions.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to U of C economist Trevor Tombe, in 2018-19, combined with output-based rebates, the total tax revenue will only have 3 per cent returned to small business; 10 per cent returned to household rebates, which will not cover households' additional expenditures; 30 per cent for green infrastructure and energy initiatives. He says that we don't know yet the administration cost of the new tax. To the Finance minister: how many jobs will your carbon tax cause Albertans to lose? In comparison, how many can you actually say will be created, and when will you release an analysis of how you arrived at your numbers?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. On the matter of energy efficiency – we'll take that first – there are a couple of different ways that one can deliver energy efficiency programming. I'm not surprised that the previous government has no idea how that works because they did not do it and were the only people in Canada to fail in that regard. We have chosen to deliver these programs through a Crown agency. We could do it through a utility, but we don't have a Crown utility, so we will do it through a Crown agency. This is the leanest way to do it, and we will make sure that there are programs for small business, for municipalities, for individuals, for indigenous communities, and for rural communities through our energy efficiency investments.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that when the government calls it the jobs plan, the answer never included a word about jobs although they were directly asked about that.

On page 96 of the budget plan it estimates that in 2017 it will cost a couple with two children \$338, if you believe the government, and they'll get a rebate of \$360. To the Finance minister: how can \$22 possibly cover the additional cost of food, property tax, shelter, clothing, consumer goods, and all the other costs that will pile up on Alberta families as a direct result of your regressive carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, of course, you know, all of this talk of indirect costs is based on some faulty math coming from the Official Opposition in which they took a three-year-old

study that is Canada-wide and that does not have any appreciation for the investments that Alberta will be making, does not have any appreciation for even the current or historical PC climate policies, and then projects that outwards. That is faulty reasoning. It was certainly faulty math on behalf of the Official Opposition. The fact of the matter is that we know that investments in energy efficiency are very quick ways to make sure we are putting construction workers back to work.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Budget 2016

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For the second budget in a row the Alberta Party is the only opposition party to create our own shadow budget. We prove it's possible to find a middle way, a better way than sacrificing the present with brutal front-line cuts or risking the future on massive deficits. Unfortunately, the impact of the ND budget is already being felt as Alberta suffered yet another credit-rating downgrade. To the Minister of Finance. I asked you last session whether you had calculated the cost of a potential downgrade. Given your plan to borrow more than \$50 billion, have you done it yet?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. You know, we all know that the collapse in oil prices has had a significant effect on our economy and put people out of work. The opposition would have us respond to this with significant job losses of nurses and teachers and by cutting back on investments in infrastructure. We believe there's a better way to move Alberta forward, and we are. Alberta's credit rating is still among the best in the country even with the low price of oil. This fiscal year we expect to spend 2.4 per cent of our budget revenue on debt servicing.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Party's shadow budget balances in four years, funds front-line services to match population growth, builds badly needed infrastructure, all of that without taking on unsustainable levels of debt. Again to the Minister of Finance. The Alberta Party's plan calls for per capita spending to come in line with the national average within three years. Do you have any plans to meet this target, and if so, when?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. You know, in the past the member opposite has provided us with some good ideas on how we can work together to move Alberta forward. Thank you for that. There are also some ideas here that we've already included in our Alberta jobs plan, some ideas in his shadow budget. We're freezing the wages, of course, of MLAs, political staff, management, government, and executive staff in agencies, boards, and commissions. We're working with the civil service to find savings every day, and we've reduced overall spending, unlike the third party, to 2 per cent per year going forward. We will not recklessly cut back on . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect, Mr. Minister, that wasn't an answer, so I'll take that as a no.

The Alberta Party's shadow budget, which I will table later this afternoon, respects the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP law this government passed just a few short months ago. Again to the Minister of Finance: given your plan to repeal the debt-to-GDP limit, do you have a new target, or is the sky the limit?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. It's very clear in our fiscal plan that 15.5 per cent debt to GDP will be reached in three years. We anticipate staying under that if we are able to bend the cost on things like health services in this province and other programs and services, if we are able to see diversification take off in this province as we understand it will through Economic Development and Trade, and if we're able to invest all across this province with the biggest investment program for capital this province has ever seen, at \$34.5 billion over five years.

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

### STEP Program

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Times are tough right now for all Albertans, and that's especially true for young Albertans. We know that youth unemployment across this country is at an all-time high. Summer is coming, and students in my constituency are looking for work. With the reinstatement of the summer temporary employment program gearing up to launch, can the Minister of Labour explain to us how this will help our current economic state and support businesses?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government committed to reintroducing the summer temporary employment program, or STEP, a program the former government cut. The Alberta jobs plan brings STEP back at a critical time for Alberta and for Alberta employers. With the economic downturn impacting the bottom lines of many businesses, our government knew it could do more to help. That's why STEP was opened to small businesses for the very first time, in addition to municipalities, nonprofits, school boards, and postsecondaries. This program provides a wage subsidy of \$7 an hour to Alberta employers hiring high school or postsecondary students, who, in turn, gain valuable . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, given that this initiative is so important for employers and small businesses, again to the same minister: what has the ministry actually done to ensure that there was adequate uptake and information being relayed to businesses so that as many as possible were able to apply?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We engaged employers, municipalities, nonprofits through direct engagement, advertising as well as social media. We know that Albertans were engaged because the uptake was through the roof. We received over 2,600 applications between January and February 29. We received a significant number of applications from small businesses, the newest category that we included in the STEP program. It was clear that Albertans sorely missed this program, that was cut by the former government, and were eager to take advantage of it.

**Mr. Dang:** Given the significant changes made to STEP under the new government, to the same minister: how much money has actually been allocated, and how many students do we expect this program to help and to actually employ?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We plan to allocate the full \$10 million that was laid out in the Alberta jobs plan. This year 1,184 applications were approved. Businesses across Alberta and across various sectors will have received their notifications as of last week if they were successful. As well, up to 3,000 student jobs will be funded through the STEP program this year.

### Provincial Debt

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Finance tabled a budget that included \$56 billion of debt and a \$14 billion consolidated deficit. Soon we'll be spending more than \$2 billion a year on interest payments to the banks instead of on schools, hospitals, and roads that we need. This isn't just bad financial management; this is morally repugnant. Why is the minister making tomorrow's generation pay for today's reckless spending?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. We are doing what we think Albertans want us to do and what we ran on. We said that we would keep programs and services strong in this province, and that's what we're doing. Budgets 2015 and '16 keep funding enrolment, keep hospitals going, ensure that the capital spend is what this Alberta province needs, and we're going to do that because that's the right thing.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, when the Wildrose warned the minister that he would break his own 15 per cent debt ceiling just five months ago, he replied to us at the time, and I quote: we won't come anywhere close to the 15 per cent; I don't see where there's going to be an issue, like you the Wildrose do. Will the minister admit that he should have listened to the Wildrose now that he's going to break and repeal his very own debt ceiling law just four months, 11 days, and 14 hours after he passed it?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're dealing with a once-in-a-generation decline in our economy, two years of recession. The Wildrose did not predict it. The opposition over here did not predict it. The best minds and the people who are providing the economic forecast did not see this coming last July. They did not see it coming in October. We are doing the best for this province, and we'll continue to do that.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, the Wildrose predicted it, and he refused to listen to it.

The Premier admitted that she expected a credit downgrade from this budget. This is like knowing that there's a speed trap ahead and hitting the gas anyway. Is the Premier so ideologically committed to enlarging the size of government that she is willing to ignore the facts and take on limitless debt to satisfy her agenda?

**Mr. Ceci:** As I said to a previous question with regard to borrowing, Alberta's credit rating is still among the best in the country, even with the low price of oil. In this fiscal year we expect to spend 2.4 per cent of our budget revenue on debt servicing; B.C.

spends 5.5 per cent, and Ontario spends 9 per cent. We're well below those, and we'll continue to be well below them.

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

### Budget 2016

(continued)

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our PC caucus, in a spirit of collaboration, made a \$4 billion challenge that reflects Alberta's culture of fiscal responsibility. The challenge provided means for cost savings that would have sent a message to Albertans and credit-rating agencies that your government takes deficits and debts seriously. Instead, we are aghast to see a budget that ratchets up spending and debt to unparalleled levels. To the Finance minister: why did you not even consider our PC caucus's well-thought-out recommendations to control spending?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, I did engage briefly in your document, but I was kind of busy working on the budget for government and bringing that in. We also had thousands of Albertans, not unlike the opposition in the collection of information they provided, who through telephone town halls, e-mails to my office, and in our going around the province gave us their suggestions. Those, too, have found their way into our budget.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Finance minister misrepresents the limitation of his cost-saving choices to — and I quote from his budget speech — “firing thousands of teachers and nurses” and given that he is the only one talking about laying off teachers and nurses and given that there are efficiencies to be found in a \$51 billion provincial budget, Minister, are you seriously telling Albertans that there is no way of finding savings other than laying off teachers and nurses?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. The third party, in their election plan, planned on cutting nearly a billion dollars from health care. The Official Opposition in their address last week talked about returning to some of the proven mechanisms of the 1990s. Let's remember the 1990s. Let's remember teachers being laid off, nurses being laid off, the Calgary General hospital being demolished in that big plume of smoke. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. Albertans had a choice, and they chose our government because we believe in health care and education and protecting our future.

**Mr. Ellis:** That billion dollars had to do with administration and efficiencies.

Given that the Finance minister and Premier fail to credit our previous government for creating our low debt-to-GDP ratio, which they are now destroying, and given that business and individual Albertans have enjoyed the lowest overall tax system in Canada, once again thanks to the previous government, and given that Albertans recognize the carbon tax is an ideological effort at wealth redistribution, to the Finance minister again: why is this budget such a drastic departure from Alberta's long-held heritage of fiscal pride?

**Ms Hoffman:** There was a long-held heritage of electing the same government that made the same decisions time and time again. Albertans had a choice in the last election, and they chose a different vision. They chose a vision that would protect children, that would protect our seniors, that would continue to move forward and be environmentally and economically sustainable and reasonable.

Talking about pragmatism, certainly the Leader of the Official Opposition supported five consecutive deficit budgets. The only time he seems to oppose them is when he's on the other side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

2:20

### Job Creation

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has had almost a year to produce a credible jobs plan. Instead, it has admitted that its first plan has failed, and now it has released its second attempt, that is no better than the first. When he was asked how the plan would create jobs, the minister couldn't answer, and the details are not in the budget either. To the minister: you told everyone to wait for the budget, but where are the details of your jobs plan?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would encourage the member to look in the budget. I'll try to find the page number for you. Unlike the opposition over there, our government believes in diversification and believes that it's critical to moving our economy forward. Our Alberta jobs plan is very robust. We went out and met with many, many business leaders, industry leaders, experts, organizations, chambers of commerce, and they told us: there are a number of initiatives that you can do that will help get the economy going. And we've done just that.

**Mr. Panda:** Let me give you the page number. Mr. Speaker, I think the minister enjoys jumping up and down to tell us absolutely nothing. Given that page 10 of the budgets says that Alberta's unemployment rate will go up to 8 per cent but the minister says that he will create 100,000 jobs without giving details about how he is creating them, this is creating a lot of confusion. Will the minister tell us how the unemployment rate will still go up when he magically creates a hundred thousand jobs?

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, the more jobs that are created, the unemployment numbers will go down, actually, not up.

I'll give the member a few of our initiatives. Earlier today I talked about an investor tax credit, \$90 million over two years for an investor tax credit, that is being celebrated province-wide. This is something that other jurisdictions have brought in. It has been very successful in helping the job creators create jobs. This will create thousands of jobs by providing capital available to small and medium-sized Alberta businesses, much-needed . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Panda:** Given that this government promises to create jobs but also says that the government doesn't create jobs, I'm not surprised that Albertans are confused and worried. Given that the NDP's job-killing carbon tax will cost small businesses far more than the 1 per cent tax reduction will save them and that the new investor tax credit isn't even accepting applications until 2017, will the minister tell us how he's going to create any jobs this year?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll spell it out for the member. As I've said many times, government sets the right conditions to help economic growth and diversification. We believe in diversification; members opposite don't. I can tell you that we

have a robust capital infrastructure plan. We're spending \$36 billion over five years, which is going to create a number of jobs and fix much-needed infrastructure that the previous government failed to invest in and, quite frankly, that the Official Opposition wouldn't invest in. I'd love to know which hospitals, schools, and roads . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Government Policies

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are worried about job losses and the state of our economy. During the election I met Joan from Rimbey. Joan was concerned about the PC's proposed tax hikes. I saw Joan the other day, and now her husband has been laid off because of the NDP tax hikes. Only Wildrose is standing up for hard-working Albertans against these massive tax hikes. What evidence does the government have that says that higher taxes, more bureaucracy, and increased red tape leads to job creation and economic growth?

**The Speaker:** The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm guessing that it's coming to me. I wasn't quite sure there. Let me clarify to the member that, first of all, the creation of this ministry was exactly to provide business and industry with a one-stop shop, one place to come to government, where we can work with the private sector to help them navigate, whether it's through forms or whatnot. We also believe that we want to simplify and streamline processes. But let me reiterate that on Friday of last week the Finance minister and the Premier announced our small-business tax cut, where we're cutting small-business taxes by . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that during the election I also met Stan, a small-business owner who has a few employees in the Sundre area, some of them right around the minimum wage, who since the implementation of the NDP's radical and risky economic policy has let one of his employees go so that he could keep the rest of his staff and given that that means another hard-working Albertan is out of a job because of this NDP government, when will the Premier learn that her risky economic manifestos have real-life consequences in our communities?

**Ms Hoffman:** Certainly, our hearts go out to any individual who has been impacted. The record low decline in terms of oil and gas revenues has impacted all of us, whether it's provincial revenues, where we've seen royalties go down by 90 per cent, or whether it's a family who has been impacted by the low price of oil. This is one of the reasons why we're doing the prudent thing and working to diversify our economy. The strategies of the last 10 years under both Conservative governments, federal and provincial, didn't get a pipeline built to tidewater, Mr. Speaker, and it certainly didn't help us diversify our economy.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I just wish to remind you: preambles are being included and ought not be. Please proceed.

**Mr. Nixon:** Given that this government needs to stop experimenting with radical economic theories and get back to the business of governing and given that we recently saw the consequences of its negligence when the environment minister

refused to heed Wildrose warnings about serious aeration concerns and because of that Alberta's lakes have now lost tens of thousands of fish, to the Premier: how can Albertans trust you with their jobs when your government can't even keep this province's fish alive?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the question was about lake aeration. The Alberta Conservation Association's use of bubble diffusers instead of traditional surface aerators has resulted in a partial to complete collapse of a number of stocked fisheries. Environment and Parks is committed to managing fisheries to provide abundant and sustainable fishing opportunities. Through an MOU with Environment and Parks the Alberta Conservation Association is responsible for aerating many of our lakes to improve survival of stocked fish throughout the winter. This season, due to the ACA's concerns regarding section 263 of the Criminal Code, the ACA tested a bubble diffuser, and it did not achieve the results.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### **Budget 2016** (continued)

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP budget is an alarming departure from the fiscal responsibility that Albertans have to display in their lives every day. Six months ago this government legislated a 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio, which is a huge concern in and of itself, but now it has no ceiling whatsoever and there's no timeline or even an intention to ever pay it back. Last month Calgary-Lougheed constituents urged you to control spending. To the Finance minister: why have you ignored this advice from Albertans clear across Alberta, who simply want you to treat their hard-earned tax dollars with respect?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, this side of the House treats every tax dollar with respect. The 15 per cent debt-to-GDP limit that we have removed from the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act has been removed to provide the flexibility required to deal with the current economic situation. Unless they, you know, haven't noticed on the other side of the House, we're in two years of recession. It's the worst downturn this province has felt in a generation. We're dealing with that. That side of the House over here wasn't able to balance a budget with . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Rodney:** With great respect, I'm not sure if either party over here knew that I was talking about everyday Albertans.

Now, given that finding efficiencies and savings in a \$51 billion budget is something the NDP simply did not care to do in this budget, which Albertans are calling many things, including irresponsible, unconscionable, and I daresay much worse, and given that Albertans directed their government to be fiscally responsible by controlling spending and investing strategically, to the minister. Before the budget and our Engage document our PC caucus offered you a \$4 billion challenge. Why did you ignore this, not just this but the advice of Albertans clear across this province, who are now forced to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Hon. member, when I stand, please sit.

**Mr. Rodney:** I am sitting, sir.

**The Speaker:** Excuse me.

2:30

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, the number of people who have come forward to say that they validate and are supportive of this budget is significant. Ken Gibson of the Alberta Construction Association said that we applaud the number of measures in Budget 2016, and he goes on to talk about a number of things that will put Albertans back to work and assist those very Albertans that you're talking about. The University of Lethbridge President Mike Mahon says that the destination project will make it possible for the government of Alberta to transform the University of Lethbridge so there are validators for postsecondary, for business, for jobs . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Rodney:** We agree with infrastructure spending; we just would like to see a plan to pay it back.

Given that the NDP's fiscal left turn was so alarming that our hard-earned provincial credit rating was downgraded yet again – and this increases the burden on taxpayers by untold billions of dollars – and given that our municipal governments will face higher interest rates as a result of this, which they have no choice but to pass on to the same Albertans, which is an unmistakable message that the NDP is taking Alberta in the wrong financial direction, Minister, can you give Albertans one good reason why you think that this is a good idea in any way for any Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. I think the reason is that there won't be long hospital wait lines, there won't be crowded schools, and there won't be an absence of affordable housing throughout this province. Those are the things that we provide, the services to Albertans, and we're going to keep doing it.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Meadowlark.

### **Affordable Housing**

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, many families are struggling to find safe, affordable housing, especially during the current economic downturn. I understand that there are a large number of people on waiting lists for affordable housing programs, and that number is growing. My question is for the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what is the minister doing to address the waiting lists and help ensure vulnerable Albertans can find a place to live?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I share the member's concern about the number of families that are waiting for housing supports. I'm very aware of the need for housing for lower income Albertans. I can also tell the member that affordable housing is a high priority for our government moving forward. The fact that "Housing" has been added to my ministry's name is one sign that it is a higher priority for our government. We will continue to work with our housing management bodies and community partners to help as many people as possible.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Some affordable housing properties, like the townhouses in Londonderry

in Edmonton, are being closed because they are in very poor condition and no longer habitable. At a time when we are short of affordable housing units, why are these properties being allowed to deteriorate to the point where no one can live in them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member has touched on one of the key challenges that we face. Most of our government-owned or -supported housing stock is more than 30 years old and in need of significant maintenance and repairs. We inherited a \$1 billion maintenance and repair backlog from the previous government. We will ensure capital funding is targeted for repair and maintenance of existing units. Doing this helps us look after what we have and gives management bodies the ability to quickly turn units around to help address waiting lists.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the federal government has promised to invest in affordable housing, can the minister tell us if any of that money will be invested here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to tell the member that our partnership with the federal government gives me much hope for the future of affordable housing. As the member points out, the new federal government has committed to invest in social infrastructure, which includes affordable housing. We have had discussions with our federal counterparts about these investments, and I expect that these discussions will lead to a definite plan in the near future. I look forward to working with my federal counterpart, and I am confident federal dollars will find their way towards Alberta's affordable housing.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### Climate Change Strategy

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government created a climate leadership panel as a smokescreen. That panel clearly stated that a carbon tax must be made revenue neutral by offsetting reductions equal to the amount of the carbon tax. Instead, we have a scheme that will grow to cost Albertans an extra \$1,000 in taxes each year, financing government bloat on the backs of Alberta's poor, unemployed, fixed-income seniors, and others. Will this government do the compassionate thing and take a giant leap back from this harmful carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many, many ways to describe the mischaracterization of what the Official Opposition is doing with these numbers, that are wrong. One could try wrong, one could try economizing with the truth, misrepresenting reality, grabbing numbers out of thin air. I think earlier today I called it intellectually lazy. It is also slovenly. It is also like throwing spaghetti at the wall. There's a noun to describe what they are doing; it starts with an L and ends with an E.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier, who is driven around in a Suburban, flippantly said that those who are feeling the acute impact of her government's costly carbon tax should just change their car and given that this NDP government doesn't seem

to realize that the lucky ones in our current economy have seen their hours rolled back, their wages decreased, never mind over 100,000 who have lost their jobs, when will this government realize just how damaging this carbon tax policy is and put an end to it before they destroy Alberta?

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, when you answer the next question, I would like to draw attention to section 29 of the Standing Orders. Please adjust accordingly.

**Ms Phillips:** Understood, Mr. Speaker.

I would commend to the hon. member the Ecofiscal Commission Choose Wisely report. The analysis suggested that:

transferring between 3% and 9% of carbon revenues to lower-income households could fully offset this burden . . .

and that

. . . successful investments in innovation and emissions-reducing technology in Alberta would help improve the performance of the oil sands . . . Such improved performance would help to position it as a longer-term participant in global oil markets.

**Mr. Speaker,** this is about making our economy resilient for the future.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Mr. Speaker, given that these hard-core socialists are using the climate panel's report as a smokescreen to destroy our resource economy, destroy our agricultural sector, impoverish our people through oppressive taxation, and force the redistribution of wealth into the hands of a bloated government, since the Premier says with her mouth that she repudiates the Leap Manifesto but given her actions against our job-creating industries and private-sector unions and farmers and our most vulnerable, we have to ask this question: how are her actions different from the Leap Manifesto?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, the characterizations of the hon. member are false. One of the reasons we know that is that the largest employers in the Leader of the Official Opposition's riding had this to say about it. For example, Shell Canada: "I firmly believe that Alberta's climate plan is a win for both the economy and the environment." CAPP: "Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan provides direction that will allow the oil and natural gas industry to grow." Cenovus: "I believe it will lead to Albertans and Canadians receiving full value for their oil and natural gas resources." CNRL: Alberta wins at today's announcement. Those are the validators for . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Investor Tax Credit

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, our caucus called for the introduction of a small business venture capital tax credit in our recent Engage document. In this we noted unconditional success in British Columbia, where every tax dollar generated almost \$2 of provincial tax revenue. However, my concern is that this government has injected a lack of foresight into an excellent formula, diluting chances of success. To the minister of economic development: why are you handicapping this program with a narrow focus on a handful of industries? Instead of choosing winners and losers, why not make it accessible to all of Alberta's struggling small businesses?

**The Speaker:** The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, our government did listen to business and industry. I'm very proud to

have announced the investor tax credit, which will create thousands of jobs in our province, here in Alberta.

You know, it's quite rich coming from the third party. They had 40 years to do something like this and failed to whereas our government is committed. We have an Alberta jobs plan. There are a number of initiatives that we will be rolling out that will help Albertans get back to work and help create new sectors and build on our strengths, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that Albertans are getting dissed with this new Alberta disadvantage. Given that we heard this government campaign all through the election about how they would create 27,000 jobs with their job creation plan and given that they stuck with this method all through the fall only to scrap the plan without having created one job outside of the minister's office, one worries about the commitment that this government has to do their own job creation initiatives. To the minister: why are you delaying the rollout on this tax credit program until January 2017, and are you actually committed to following this program?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm quite proud of the fact that our government throughout the fall went out and consulted with business and industry leaders, and they said to us: your initiative, the job creation incentive plan, is likely not going to incent new jobs. So they said, "You know, we have other suggestions on wiser, more prudent ways to help the economy move forward," and that's exactly what our budget is doing. We pivoted that program. We've dropped the small-business tax by 1 per cent, which is something that we've been talking about for many years. We've implemented it, and we now have an investment tax credit.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, congratulations on the one job.

Given that our caucus and the small- and medium-sized business owners across Alberta are now waiting for details on this program and given that this program does have the potential to be highly effective if utilized correctly, I would like some clarifications on a few details. To the Minister of Finance: what is the annual maximum tax credit for individual investors? What is the annual maximum limit for corporate investors? Can these tax credits be rolled forward if they are not used in their entirety during a particular tax year? Some details, please.

**The Speaker:** The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question, a very good question. On our program that we announced today, throughout the summer and early fall we'll be consulting with stakeholders and industry leaders to ensure that we get the parameters of this program right. I can tell you, for example, that this program does exist in British Columbia. They have quite a low limit – I think it's around \$60,000 – that an individual can invest, and we've heard feedback from those that do business in that province that say that that cap is too low; it helps early start-ups, but it's not doing what it's meant to for medium-sized industries and businesses. That's why we will be . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

## Members' Statements

(continued)

### Horizon School

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you about a place where hope, opportunity, and education meet. Horizon school is a jewel in the crown of the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and Chinook's Edge school division. The school is a provincial leader in educating students with special needs. Students at Horizon face a variety of challenges, including communication difficulties, physical disabilities, cognitive delays, and significant mental health challenges. The school provides world-class educational programming that is custom designed for the individual. Perhaps more important than leading the province in special-needs education is that it provides hope for families, an inclusive place for students to belong, and opportunities for the community. Over the past 24 months Horizon school has doubled in size and is bursting at the seams. I am so proud of the hard work of parents and teachers to continue to provide this critical school environment for so many students, as many students as possible.

As a province we have a responsibility to our most vulnerable, yet one of the largest stresses that parents face is considering what life will look like for their child after Horizon. Graduation for most students, Mr. Speaker, should be an exciting day, but for students of Horizon it comes with a new set of fears and challenges. Community organizations, parents, and other stakeholders are currently working to provide new inclusive opportunities for students that may include Horizon university or an educational space called the hub. It's my hope that the province will work closely with key stakeholders to be leaders in Canada to work to continue these educational opportunities.

To the parents of these precious individuals: keep up the incredible work you do. You make all of our lives richer.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table copies of a graph provided by Trevor Tombe, assistant professor of economics at the University of Calgary, entitled *Where Will Alberta's Carbon Tax Revenues Go?* It shows that 56 per cent of them will be spent on output-based results to large emitters.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the Alberta Party shadow budget 2016-17, entitled *A Better Way*. It balances in four years, accommodates for population growth, uses more conservative revenue forecasts than the government but still continues to build infrastructure, all without plunging Alberta into crippling levels of debt.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg your amusement for a minute. I have the pleasure to table five copies of the Brooks-Spruce Grove junior hockey finals. It is my pleasure to challenge the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert to a friendly wager. I bet him \$100 to the winner's food bank and to wear the winning team's jersey in the Legislature at the first sitting after the final.

**The Speaker:** We'll have to talk about the jersey part.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to table five copies of the same schedule. Of course, the Spruce Grove Saints are obviously going to win because they started in St. Albert. How can two of the best communities lose?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a document from the Asthma Society of Canada. The Asthma Society of Canada has chosen to give an award to this government based on the announcement of our coal-fired phase-out, indicating that they know "there is a direct link between the burning of coal and asthma exacerbations, hospital admissions, and untimely deaths, not to mention climate change." The Alberta government, in their words, "has responded to protect the health of all Albertans."

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of the Workers' Compensation Board agriculture sector information package for the 14 weeks ending April 9. This summary report contains updated information on employer operations, injury statistics, and the 154 accepted claims.

Thank you.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table this document issued today by Iron and Earth endorsing our government's support for training opportunities included in the Alberta jobs plan. Iron and Earth is an organization comprised of oil sands workers who want to transition into new jobs in the green-energy economy, and this is definitely an organization that has an impact in my riding. I applaud the vision of this organization, and we are honoured by this endorsement.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I believe there was a point of order that was drawn. The hon. Government House Leader.

#### **Point of Order Parliamentary Language**

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today during question period during an answer that was being given by the Minister of Finance to a question, the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky shouted out: lies. Now, we should all know that that violates 23(h), (i), and (j) of the standing orders. As well, I'm looking at previous rulings that have been made by the chair in this Assembly. Since 2000 there have been 35 rulings from the chair with respect to the use of that word or words very much like it. That is unacceptable. I think that it is beneath the dignity of this House, and I would ask that the hon. member withdraw the remark and apologize to the House and to the minister.

2:50

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to rise. Certainly, Speakers in the past have ruled that this language is unparliamentary. I have a little bit of a hearing challenge today, so I'm not entirely sure if that word was used or not. Certainly, if that word was used – it sounds like it must have been – I would be happy

to withdraw it on behalf of my colleague and ensure he's aware of that being unparliamentary language. With that said, I understand that there have been times just in the past couple of weeks that that word has been used, particularly – well, it doesn't matter who. But it has been used. As you so rightly pointed out, sir, the minister of environment today was certainly leaning in that direction. Unless she was spelling the word "love," I would say that it was also inappropriate. For today I'm happy to withdraw and apologize on behalf of the member.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

Hon. Opposition House Leader, I'm pleased that you offered the apology.

I did not hear the remark, for the record. I did not personally hear it largely because, as I continue to remind you, it's that other words are being said. Trying to hear in here, it's the volume issue that continues to impair the dialogue in this place. I would urge both sides of the House to reconsider that as we move forward.

### **Orders of the Day**

#### **Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading**

##### **Bill 204 Alberta Tourism Week Act**

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to start off the debate on Bill 204, the Alberta Tourism Week Act. I want to first start off by thanking all of my colleagues, the people in my constituency, and supporters of this bill, who have encouraged me to think about this idea and help start a conversation and dialogue about creating a week dedicated to promoting tourism in our beautiful province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, This bill was born out of my conversations with stakeholders, with municipalities, and with many people who have told me that we need to find ways of promoting tourism in this province as a means of diversification. I've met with mayors and business and industry stakeholders in tourism across the province over the last several months, and the value of tourism and the value of these diversification opportunities has truly resonated with me. Time and time again I hear of the importance of supporting our tourism industry and promoting our tourism industry as an amazing opportunity to diversify our economy; not only that but so that we can be proud about our province because we have so much to be proud of here.

Mr. Speaker, our province has some of the most amazing man-made and natural heritage sites in the world. Some of my personal favourites include the pysanka in Vegreville, the perogy in Glendon, and, of course, the landing pad in Vulcan along with the *Star Trek* themed hotel. Whether it's digging for dinosaurs in the Canadian badlands or canoeing in paradise in the provincial parks, going ice-fishing with bannock in the bag, following the northern lights in Elk Island, driving the scenic highways in the breathtaking Rockies, enjoying international heritage in the August Heritage Festival, the Stampede in Calgary, Klondike days in Edmonton or still-standing grey and sagging pioneer homes and barns, mixed-wood forests, wind farms of Pincher Creek, and the centuries-old heritage of the indigenous peoples that we have here in Alberta, Alberta has it all. We are something to be proud of. We are something to be proud of that we should show off to the world.



Mr. Speaker, visits to these beautiful heritage sites is an \$8 billion industry employing over 127,000 people in this great province. Alberta is culturally and geographically diverse, a province with a multitude of opportunities for travel, tourism. The tourism industry contributes greatly to the economy, and the continued growth of this industry promotes that great economic diversification in Alberta. I think that a week-long celebration of tourism in Alberta will provide an opportunity for organizations, regions, cities, towns to collaborate and to promote the tourism that we want to show the world, to promote Alberta, and to promote this province.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I am bringing this legislation to the House today. The first week of June is traditionally Tourism Week in Canada. It's led by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada. This is a grassroots initiative that strives to bring attention to the economic opportunities available to Canada through travel and tourism and the public policy challenges preventing the sector from capitalizing on these opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, by embracing the vision of an Alberta tourism week, we will be contributing to the continued diversification of our economy and our shared goal to foster awareness amongst communities about the importance of tourism: its social, its cultural, and its economic value. The week would be an ideal opportunity to further showcase tourism in Alberta as a key contributor to the provincial economy, that helps to create jobs and encourages investments in all communities across our entire great province. It is a week that is already supported by the government of Canada and is celebrated in other provinces such as Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. By creating an Alberta tourism week, it will allow our local stakeholders a specific outlet to promote our province and our local tourism activities.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that the government of Alberta, through Culture and Tourism, is proud to support the growth of tourism, especially by promoting our rural tourism activities. I am proud to be a part of and supporting a government that is working to diversify and strengthen this provincial economy. Tourism has been identified as an important contributor to diversifying Alberta's economy away from energy dependence and away from a roller coaster that takes away from our ability to provide services for Albertans everywhere.

As I've already stated, Mr. Speaker, currently tourism is an \$8 billion industry, and the over \$8 billion spent in Alberta by visitors supports 127,000 jobs and more than 19,000 businesses, including many small and family-owned businesses across the province. Rural tourism is a growing piece of Alberta's tourism industry and is already making that significant impact that we all strive to achieve. Having said that, there is always the potential for more growth, especially given our province's incredible natural and man-made attractions, events, and destinations. This bill will help not only tourism operators and organizations but municipal representatives in promoting Alberta's many tourist attractions. It will also help support the job creators such as our local eateries, our local coffee shops, our tour operators, hotels, and bed and breakfasts. Small businesses in all corners of our province will benefit.

Mr. Speaker, as rightly pointed out by the minister in the House earlier this month, I think tourism is a pipeline that brings people to invest in our economy. A week-long celebration of tourism in Alberta will provide an opportunity for businesses, organizations, regions, and municipalities to collaborate and to promote tourism across this province. I'm confident that this piece of legislation will grow this industry, making it an even bigger contributor to our economy to support that much-needed diversification.

Designating this tourism week in Alberta will contribute to setting a common vision in our province. It will encourage everyone

to join forces in collaborating and maximizing resources that celebrate the passion and commitment of Alberta's tourism industry while attracting even more visitors, even more investors and attracting those people so that we can broaden our horizons and we can show off the amazing province that we all love to call home. Mr. Speaker, it will help us to grow our visitor economy in this province to over a \$10 billion industry in 2020, which will allow us to become a diversified economy and allow us to support our entrepreneurs, support our local businesses, support our small companies and our employers.

This is why I'm very proud today to introduce Bill 204, so that we can move forward as a province and move forward to make sure that we are supporting our economy and supporting our communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm impressed by the scenic trip that you took us through the province of Alberta. You neglected to mention Medalta and the largest teepee in Medicine Hat.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

3:00

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd really like to thank the Member for Edmonton-South West for proposing a bill that does no harm. That's the first and most important rule of government, and I really hope that your colleagues will be able to follow suit and create one-sentence bills from now on that do no harm.

Let me say right at the outset that I will be in support of this bill. I think it's got a great intention. I do have to say, though, that as a feel-good bill the intention is somewhat called into question by the actions of the current government. A few days ago Albertans were hit like a truck with this government's horrendous deficit and carbon tax budget. Talk about slashing our credit rating and burning our future in orange flames. While the Alberta Council of Technologies recently released a report that stated that tourism in Alberta was our third most resilient industry, the budget isn't making things better; it's making them worse. So I do feel like the words of this bill are getting drowned out by the actions of the government.

Fortunately, with the low cost of the Canadian dollar people have been inclined to come to Alberta to see our gorgeous mountains and our beautiful plains and our peaceful lakes. Tragically, though, they're now full of dead fish, which may have to be cleaned up. I truly wish the environment minister had taken our advice and saved the fish in our lakes while she had the chance. Now that aspect of our tourism will be suffering as well.

There are other aspects of our tourism industry, though, that are thriving, or at least they were last year. This coming year will see an increase to the carbon tax, which will cancel out most of the benefits of a low dollar. The cost of fuel will increase thanks to the carbon tax. Alberta is a huge place. You can't just walk to most places. It's tough for most people, especially tourists, to walk from Jasper to Banff. You have to drive or bus or fly across this province to really enjoy its beauty. One of the major drivers of tourism to Alberta is direct flights from other countries. The carbon tax will increase the costs to those airlines. Will this discourage the flights available and then people from coming to Alberta? The carbon tax will make flights more expensive, reduce scheduled flights, and hurt tourism.

Promotion is great – I do agree – but realities are more sobering. Let's be realistic here: 95 per cent of our tourism dollar is generated by Albertans in this province. Our own tourists are going to be hit hard by restaurant prices increasing due to carbon tax and minimum

wage increases. The cost of food will increase because every aspect of harvesting the food and getting it to markets will be affected by the carbon tax and wage increases. Hotels and restaurants will become more expensive due to these increased prices. Tourism will be put off by the increased cost to their living and eating arrangements.

The low Canadian dollar and one week promoting Alberta will not be incentive enough to make up for the lost revenue our tourism industry will see these next few years. Promoting tourism is good. Helpful policy would be much, much better. Tourism in Alberta will be hurt by the damaging, risky ideological experiments our government is implementing.

I also question a little bit the member's choice of date for this tourism week. Last year we already celebrated the week. The same as this bill does, we promoted Canadian Tourism Week. As has been mentioned, Canadian Tourism Week does happen the first week of June. So why choose the same date again? Is it to compound the value? Is it to promote Alberta? Will this government, then, not acknowledge Canadian Tourism Week in place of Alberta tourism week? Will that encourage more or less tourism? We all agree that there's a need to promote tourism, but the real question is: has the Tourism Industry Association of Canada or the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta actually been consulted about this choice of time? I mean, they know their needs more than anyone else. Have they had their input specifically on that? Alberta is special. Should it be hidden underneath Canadian Tourism Week? Maybe it's a benefit; maybe it's not. Alberta should probably promote its own week and not be overshadowed by the entire country.

Two weeks of promoting Alberta might be better than one, the first promoting Canada, the second promoting Alberta alone. We could have chosen, say, for instance, the first week of December or Alberta's birthday and invited the world to celebrate a birthday party with us by encouraging them to visit our province. We could have chosen a week during July or August, when kids are actually out of school and people take their vacations. Ninety-five per cent of Alberta's tourism is local. People would be encouraged to spend the entire week here in Alberta during our warmest months, when they can visit with their children.

Consulting is the issue, and I think that with this overlap with Canadian Tourism Week, the whole issue stems back to the endless problem of this government not actually consulting with industry. The government didn't consult on Bill 6, didn't consult on the failed job-creation plan, didn't consult on Bill 203. Have they consulted anyone in the industry before creating this bill? There are lots and lots of stakeholders that have an interest in this bill: the Hotel & Lodging Association, sport tourism, Seniors Games, Alberta Sport Connection, and dozens and dozens of other industry players. They all would have had valuable input into this bill. Did the stakeholders want the member to promote Alberta during a week that would be overshadowed by Canadian Tourism Week? Has he consulted with them?

I also have a few questions regarding the cost that this bill will add to Tourism's budget. How will Alberta tourism week be promoted by the government? How much will it cost to advertise Alberta tourism week? Has the member actually even consulted with the minister to ensure that they will be able to afford to promote Alberta during this week? The Tourism budget is, I respectfully acknowledge, down in a difficult time, where the government is trying to find cost savings. Will the ministry be able to fund this, or even should it? The cost is completely unknown. How are we to know what the cost will actually be? Could there be better delivery channels for this initiative? The Tourism Industry

Association of Canada actually delivers the Canadian one. Why not the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta? Questions to be asked.

Of course, tourism is important in our province. I am in support of tourism, and like every other industry, it's important that we support tourism and ensure that it continues to create jobs in Alberta. Personally, I've spent weeks and weeks canoeing the many rivers and lakes of Alberta. That's my form of tourism. If there's one thing I know, it's that Alberta is a beautiful place, and it deserves to be promoted, so I will be supporting the bill.

Furthermore, my riding of Lacombe-Ponoka has a great deal of tourism in it and would benefit from tourism in Alberta being promoted. We have many museums that would benefit. There's a corn maze, berry-picking farms, and beef and dairy farms that allow visitation, open to the public. During the week we have all kinds of festivals: Lacombe Days, the Ponoka Stampede. By this bill the promotion of Alberta tourism in general would be beneficial for those festivals.

I'm glad that the Member for Edmonton-South West believes that the promotion of Alberta tourism is important. I just wish that he would have consulted with industry specifically on it: on the date, worked out some of the costs, questioned a little more carefully who should actually take the lead on this. But it is what it is. I encourage all the members to vote in support of Bill 204 and support tourism in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to speak in support of the proposed Bill 204, acknowledging a provincial tourism week. I wish to impress upon the House that Bill 204 gives rise to our ability to celebrate and engage our communities with each other, Canada, and the world.

Mr. Speaker, tourism helps the economy immensely. It is another aspect of diversification that stimulates the economy while promoting municipal, provincial, and stakeholder conversations. What more than proud Albertans are our constituents? Alberta is unique and, as such, has great capacity to showcase the beautiful landscape that makes our communities. The raw glory that surrounds us makes Bill 204 a tremendous opportunity.

**3:10**

Mr. Speaker, I am the MLA for Red Deer-North. Red Deer is the third-largest city in Alberta and has many opportunities to celebrate as well as capitalize on Alberta tourism week. Nestled in the hub of central Alberta, Red Deer has numerous opportunities to embrace a celebration of itself as a central component to our great province.

My city has just over 100,000 citizens, who are fortunate to enjoy the breadth of what Alberta has to offer. On a clear day we can gaze to the west to glimpse the splendour that is our mountains. Within the boundaries of Red Deer municipally, however, is an excess of natural beauty. Red Deer is committed to promoting and enhancing a healthy lifestyle. With more than 100 kilometres of easily accessible trails inside the city, we have championed the connections between Red Deerians and nature. Amongst the trails are variable landscapes supporting the beauty of the Red Deer River and its accompanying wooded areas.

If you follow the right trail, it will lead you to our remarkable Kerry Wood nature centre, a beautiful, nature-based playground that encourages those who visit to learn more about the area's wildlife, environment, extensive history, and interpretation centre. It is a testament to the beauty that our central Alberta gem has to

offer. Its versatility allows 85,000 annual visitors to enjoy its exhibits, programs, tours, and heritage regardless of age.

Mr. Speaker, we also have an extensive paved trail system that is enjoyed by joggers, walkers, and cyclists and is kept clear all year round. Some of these trails connect to our outdoor gym facilities. On a beautiful day you can see constituents strive for excellence as each contains 12 double fitness machines. All outdoor gyms have benches, playgrounds, and picnic areas that connect to our widespread trail systems.

Some trails lead to our beautiful Bower Ponds, a classic setting where Albertans can rent a kayak, canoe, or paddleboat if they don't have one of their own. Nestled in the beautiful north end of our great city, Bower Ponds hosts our Canada Day fireworks every year. An outdoor stage gives opportunity for entertainment to be enjoyed in the beauty that is Red Deer. Overlooked by the historical Cronquist House, a Victorian farmhouse, Bower Ponds is steeped in history.

Mr. Speaker, I can speak to so many aspects of Red Deer that would benefit immensely from the proposed Bill 204. All of our constituencies make up the beautiful province of Alberta. What I wish to touch upon, however, is our ability to showcase the natural beauty, historical sites, and tourist attractions which promote the vitality of our Albertans.

Job development is key to our government right now, and this engages sound governance through economic development. In Red Deer our government has committed to supporting the expansion of our airport, and that aligns with Bill 204 as we become a destination that is accessible. As the future home of the 2019 Canada Winter Games, Red Deer has much to gain from the proposed Bill 204. Why come to Red Deer? We are a destination and a point of departure. We are central to this great province and, as such, have much to share with the rest of Alberta, Canada, and the world.

Mr. Speaker and fellow members, let us remember that we are currently amidst economic challenges. Bill 204 is not just a fantastic opportunity to capitalize on the greatness of our province, but it is truly a remarkable occasion to engage our Albertans positively. Positivity is a very important element to Bill 204. It is the very essence of why we should showcase individually the hidden treasures that our constituencies have in a week that celebrates our great province. It engages us to be proud and to truly appreciate Alberta as a beautiful province with much to share with everyone.

Mr. Speaker, I support Bill 204, the Alberta Tourism Week Act, and encourage all of our members to support this bill as well. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm absolutely delighted to speak in support of Bill 204, the Alberta Tourism Week Act. I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-South West for proposing this bill, and I'd like to thank him very much, indeed, you know.

The constituency of Banff-Cochrane is arguably one of the most delightful constituencies in the entire province, I think. We attract tourists from all around the world, who come to see our mountains, our agricultural landscapes, our forested areas, enjoy all sorts of activities in Banff-Cochrane. But I know that this bill itself isn't just about Banff-Cochrane; it's about the entire province, and I'm absolutely delighted to be showcasing Alberta in this way.

Just before I get started here, I'd like to respond to a question that the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka brought up earlier about who was engaged in the consultations and who did we speak to regarding this. I know that the Member for Edmonton-South West had spoken to various mayors, people in Travel Alberta, people working in the

industry such as Brewster, a very well-known travel company, and, of course, many others. I myself have spoken to, actually, the award-winning CEO of Canmore Business and Tourism. He's won an award for an event that I was fortunate to attend just this past week, which I'll speak a little more on later. Absolutely, the people that I've spoken to that are very interested in the tourism industry, especially in my riding, were extremely supportive of this and especially the first week of June.

One of the reasons for that was that in Canmore and Banff during the summertime their rooms are full, and they actually don't need to promote tourism because they've got almost too many people to begin with in those times of year. So they said that the beginning of June was a very good time because, you know, their hotel rooms aren't full. It's a good time to get out in the summer. There are wildflowers, lots of things to do outside, so early June was an excellent time according to them. So that's why I'm standing in support of this.

You know, tourism week would give the industry even further opportunities to collaborate to promote tourism in Alberta. I know that the tourism industry is already very collaborative, that they work together. I understand there used to be a bit of an adversarial relationship sometimes between communities. For example, Canmore and Banff would often sort of fight each other for tourists, but they've come to a better understanding of how to work together in a collaborative fashion to support each other. It's not about competing for tourists in general. They just want to bring people to the region, so having a province-wide collaboration would be absolutely positive for the tourism industry.

It's a way that we can work together and maximize our return on investment, and, you know, promoting Alberta and sort of concentrating it, perhaps, around one week as a group effort is a way for us to make better use of our advertising dollars, I think. It's also a great opportunity to acknowledge Alberta's hard-working tourism industry. We can attract even more visitors and investors around the province.

I'd like to just talk about a couple of attractions that we have in Alberta. I know the Member for Edmonton-South West mentioned a few earlier. I think that promoting tourism in Alberta also gives us a great opportunity to tell the story of Alberta to the rest of the world, and we have a great story to tell here.

Our climate leadership plan is turning heads around the world. People are looking to Alberta and saying: they're finally taking climate change seriously. So, you know, people around the world are saying: hey, I want to go and see what they're doing there; like, what is going on in Alberta, and what is this great climate leadership plan that they've come up with? This is groundbreaking stuff, and it's certainly attracting a lot of attention.

One of the ways that that's attracting attention is through some World Cup events. In the Canmore Nordic Centre just recently we had a World Cup of cross-country skiing and a World Cup of biathlon. There were millions and millions of television viewers watching these events live on TV. A lot of the viewers are concentrated in Europe and Asia. Showcasing Alberta in such a way, in Canmore we had beautiful bluebird skies, you know, beautiful white snow, and incredible athletes just showing off their talents. People from across the world are seeing Alberta in this kind of light, and they're hearing about our climate change plan, and they say: I want to go and visit that place; that place looks pretty awesome.

3:20

Another part of the story that we can tell through promoting tourism is through the Fort McMurray Oil Sands Discovery Centre. This is, you know, an excellent facility up near Fort McMurray. It

tells the story of our incredible energy sector in the province and all that we have to be thankful for, for the wealth that it's generated for our province and the jobs it creates.

We have stories in the energy sector that go back even further; for example, in Drumheller the Atlas coal mine. I believe they're doing some refurbishments and some community fundraising for refurbishing some of their infrastructure there. This tells the story of Alberta's coal mining past. If you haven't been there, I'd really encourage you to go to the Atlas mines. They have a working model of a train. You know, it's an incredible site to see. You can actually go in the old tippie and everything like that. It's marvellous.

Similar coal mining stories would be found in the Frank Slide in the Crowsnest Pass. It's a tragic event, obviously, that happened, but it has to do with our mining history and how resilient Albertans are, that we can go through disasters like this and, you know, still pull together and support one another.

We're fortunate here in Alberta to have Wood Buffalo national park. It's actually Canada's largest national park. It's also one of the biggest national parks in the world. This is a way for us to preserve our natural landscapes, work towards our conservation targets that have been set out in some respects for looking at interconnected spaces and protected spaces.

Another great attraction is the Royal Tyrrell Museum. This tells the story of Alberta's geologic past. We've got fossils and dinosaurs that people come from around the world to see in the Royal Tyrrell Museum and do research right there in Drumheller.

Of course, you know, I have to mention some of the amazing attractions in Banff-Cochrane. In Bragg Creek, my hometown, they have festivals throughout the year at various times, Bragg Creek Days, where they've got parades, incredible local vendors that are promoting some of the talents of Bragg Creek residents.

The charming town of Cochrane has MacKay's ice cream. Now, who here hasn't been to MacKay's ice cream? [interjections] So, you know, there you go. It's a charming little downtown. They've tried to maintain that real western feel in the architecture of their buildings. They have a lot of independent shops downtown. It's a great place to walk around with your family.

The village of Waiparous, just sort of to the west of Cochrane, has incredible off-highway vehicle trails for people to take their trucks and ATVs and whatnot on. This is another way that we can tell the story of Alberta and get people to come and experience what it's like in the forests of Alberta. You know, you can get on your ATV and go for a quick drive and see some incredible natural landscapes.

Of course, I have to talk about Ghost Lake. The Ghost Lake reservoir is another wonderful natural asset, of course, a man-made asset. It provides incredible recreation opportunities to people in the Calgary region. It's one of our best medium-sized reservoir water bodies where people can go water-skiing and sailing, that kind of thing.

There's the Stoney Nakoda Resort & Casino just at the doorstep to Kananaskis country. It's an incredible facility. The First Nation there is looking at that as an economic development opportunity for the nation. They've been quite successful. I understand that even during the economic downturn they're still doing quite well, and that's great news to hear. I know they're looking at possible expansion around the casino in terms of having an RV park and a gas station, coffee shop, and whatnot.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today on Bill 204. It's enjoyable every once in a while when all

members of the Assembly can find some agreement to latch onto, and certainly the intent of Bill 204 is positive. It has the potential to strengthen an industry that is already thriving.

I think what's important is that we all just take a moment to breathe because in this province it's very easy – you need to remember to breathe because when you don't, you can miss some incredible opportunities. Certainly, as we look across and around the province, we have a province that, in fact, does take your breath away, Mr. Speaker, and it is a province to be celebrated. From all around the world people come. People come to see this great land that we've been fortunate and blessed enough to call home, and it's not a responsibility or a blessing that we should take lightly because there are so many others who would love to be here, would love to be in this great province that we all call home. So when we have a chance to do things that allow us to share our community with others, I say that those are the types of things that need to be supported, and certainly tourism week has the opportunity to do that.

One of the potential challenges here, Mr. Speaker, though, is that if we get tied up or spend more focus and energy on just one week, it may divert some of our attention away from the rest of the year. I know that the good people at Travel Alberta have certainly done some great work in the past. That doesn't mean that Travel Alberta hasn't been challenge free, but they do some incredible work. So we need to make sure that we're not adding to the mix that would detract from the wonderful things that take place the rest of the year. Now, it's quite possible that inside the confines of Travel Alberta they'll have the capacity to move the Alberta tourism week forward, but I think that it's important that as we pass legislation, we do ensure that we're not passing on undue burden, that the return may or may not be there.

Now, in this case I certainly hope that it is there because I think what can happen is to expand that industry. While we are at a time where many people are talking about diversifying the economy, one of the things that the government ought to do is – and I recognize that this isn't a piece of government legislation. Generally speaking, one thing that we as legislators should do is look at our strengths and focus some of our time and attention on those strengths. I think of things like the agriculture and forestry sector, our number two industry. I believe that our number three industry is in tourism, so there is a real opportunity to work to diversify that economy, to take advantage of some of the things that are going on in the marketplace when it comes to the low Canadian dollar and encouraging our American friends to come and experience all that Alberta has to offer. We have an incredible place to share, and we ought to do that with as many people as we can from all around the globe and certainly from all across the country.

Now, I would be remiss if I didn't just mention that while the Member for Banff-Cochrane does a fine job of defending his constituency, I think we should all agree that the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is outstanding and, in fact, has so many great things to offer people from corner to corner and coast to coast and right around the world, whether it's our honey production or our mead production or the incredible number of innovative agrifood businesses that we have, that are so interesting that people actually come from all around the world to tour them, whether it's the postsecondary institutions that bring people to our province or the incredible number of day trips that can take place right in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for people to come and visit.

3:30

I think that it is a nice opportunity for us to join together and to support a piece of legislation like this. But I think it's important that

we do everything we can as legislators to support tourism right across the province all year round as we focus on ways to create environments and to strengthen industries that do so much for this province.

I'm pleased to support Bill 204, and I look forward to the rest of the debate and to seeing this bill proceed through the legislative process.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 204, the Alberta Tourism Week Act. I would like to commend the Member for Edmonton-South West for proposing this idea as a way to promote the many tourist attractions that we have here in Alberta and, in doing so, to support small businesses, who are the job creators in the province and help to diversify our economy.

Now, our province has some of the most amazing man-made and natural heritage, as you've heard from the speakers before me. However, today I wanted to speak about the world-class sporting events that we host and that bring tourists from Alberta, Canada, and the world to our communities. As this Assembly knows, myself and the Member for Edmonton-Centre are a bit fanatic about cycling. I am proud that the world is starting to recognize our wonderful roads and scenery, that provide for fantastic amateur and professional events. For example, for the last 20 years the Tour de l'Alberta has been held on the last day of the Tour de France. For 20 years this amateur tour, with distances from 50 kilometres to 185 kilometres and over 1,400 riders, has showcased the French communities outside of Edmonton such as Morinville, Legal, Bon Accord, and Gibbons.

For the first time this year the tour will start in another great francophone community, the community of Beaumont, and meander through Leduc county and visit Strathcona county. I would like to invite all of you on July 24 to join myself and, hopefully, the Member for Leduc-Beaumont in taking part in this cycling ride. There is no better way to discover rural areas than by cycling through them and discovering the joys of the yellow canola fields, the cows and the horses that follow your bike, and the occasional moose, fox, or coyote watching you.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Last Friday a professional Tour of Alberta was announced for 2016. This professional tour, that has 120 riders from all over the world, will start off in Lethbridge and end up in Edmonton. Last year the tour began in Grande Prairie, went to Jasper, and brought the amazing scenery of one of the national parks to millions and millions of world-wide cycling fans. I know that in Canada we're more into hockey than cycling, but – believe me – cycling is huge in Europe and many other parts of the world. While the peloton, which is the technical name for the group of cyclists, did not have not have an encounter with a black bear for a perfect tourist photo shoot last year, I can say that in the second year, while the peloton was going through Strathcona county, it was followed for a while by a huge moose. This was such an incredible way to demonstrate what Alberta has to offer to Europeans and others.

The Tour of Alberta is very unique as it is the only professional cycling race in Canada apart from one in Quebec. This event has for the last three years brought tourists, cycling teams, and fans from all around the world who have the opportunity to discover our wonderful province and, of course, spend tourist dollars here.

Another event is the Birkebeiner, which is held every year in Cooking Lake-Blackfoot provincial park in Strathcona county. This is the premier event for cross-country skiers. This event, with a

variety of distances, is only one of three held outside of Europe. Many participants come to our region from across Canada and Europe. This event is geared to both professional and amateur racers and also to people like myself who ski recreationally. I think that in past years they've had about 1,200 cross-country skiers who have skied the race. There are also miniraces for families, and it's been my pleasure to volunteer to sweep these races, knowing that the five-year-old who participates in this race may become the professional racer who wins medals for Canada in the future.

In my own riding of Sherwood Park we have hosted a variety of national sporting events that bring visitors and their tourist dollars to the community. This year we hosted the Olympic wrestling trials, with the winners going to Rio de Janeiro to represent Canada, and in 2014 we hosted the Canada 55-plus Games, which saw over 2,000 athletes compete furiously for medals and the pride of their province. If you've never seen a 55-plus athlete compete for their province, you know, it's just incredible how dedicated you are to actually winning the older you get. I have to say that when you have 2,000 athletes who are 55-plus who come to your community to participate in something, you know that the hotels and the restaurants and so on are very happy with that.

At the end of April my riding is hosting another world-class event. It is the Grand Slam of Curling. While I look forward to watching the curling and cheering for the Albertan teams, I also know how important this event will be in my riding of Sherwood Park, especially to the hospitality industry, that has lost a lot of its room usage due to the downturn in the oil and gas sector.

While I have no agritourism businesses in my own riding, I am very aware of how important this type of tourist attraction is to rural Alberta. Yesterday I visited a local agritourism business, Prairie Farms, located near Bon Accord. This business contributes to the local economy through employing many local residents and helps families understand how food grows and hosts and supports a sustainable-food feast. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, who was one of the promoters of the agritourism business when he was in cabinet. I see tourism week as an opportunity to promote the diversity of products grown in Alberta, be it the bison, the saskatoon berries, elk, rhubarb and raspberry wines, and, especially, the chefs and the restaurants that promote world-class meals using these products.

Madam Speaker, while some of us see Alberta as a place of our national parks and wonderful sceneries, I see Alberta and the promotion of tourism as promoting cycling and triathlon events and wrestling events and supporting our hospitality industry. I would once again like to thank the member for having put this bill to suggest that we have a tourism week.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I've had a request to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests. I will need unanimous consent, so I'll ask one question: is anyone opposed to reverting to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests (reversion)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you a group of grade 6 students that have come for a visit from Captain Nichola Goddard middle school in the riding of Calgary-Northern Hills. They are accompanied by

their teachers, Lindsay Gorday, Darren Grant, and Lindsay Wolkowski, and three parents as well. You'll also notice that many are wearing the purple sweaters for the Captain Nichola Goddard sports team, the Phoenix. I ask you all to please stand while my colleagues give you and your group the traditional warm welcome of this Legislature.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Welcome.

**3:40      Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Second Reading**

**Bill 204  
Alberta Tourism Week Act  
(continued)**

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills, you happen to be next on my list.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Well, thank you. Amazing how that worked here. Okay.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss thoughts on private member's Bill 204, the Alberta Tourism Week Act. As a few of you might know, I've been an airline employee for the last two decades, and in my spare time I packed as much leisure travel as I possibly could into those years. I have frequented many popular tourist destinations and hot spots. Other times I have discovered some that were off the beaten track. Some of these little vacation gems are some of my favourite trips.

Madam Speaker, each year travellers come to Alberta to visit our parks, visit family and friends, and check out the outstanding landscape this province has to offer. Tourism helps to diversify the economy and creates lots of jobs and encourages development investment in communities all across Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I represent an electoral district on the northern edge of Calgary. We're well known for our hills, our trail systems, and, of course, our hospitality sector. However, many of my constituents are employed in the tourism industry through the neighbouring airport and all the industries related to its operation such as air traffic control, border services, ground services, and in-flight services, to name a few. More air traffic and flight arrivals mean that more people will have employment opportunities in tourism-related industries.

Calgary Airport Authority recently opened its fourth runway, in 2014. The runway is 4.2 kilometres long and 600 metres wide and is the longest runway in Canada. Needless to say, Calgary has clearly laid out the asphalt welcome mat to the world. With the expansion efforts at Calgary airport, airlines have taken notice. Beginning June 30 of this year, Hainan Airlines announced that it will offer direct service between Beijing and Calgary. The airline will start with three flights a week and will add an additional flight later in the year. Stephan Poirier, the chief commercial officer of Calgary Airport Authority, was quoted as saying that the new service would bring an estimated 600 jobs and contribute to an annual economic benefit of \$75 million to the Calgary region.

New global markets are taking an interest in this province's abundance of travel experiences, and these efforts should be supported as much as possible. As the Member for Edmonton-South West mentioned earlier, tourism in Alberta is currently an \$8 billion a year industry, with over \$8 billion spent by visitors in Alberta annually. More than 127,000 jobs and more than 19,000 businesses, including many small and family-owned businesses, were supported across the province.

Madam Speaker, Tourism Week in Canada is lead by the tourism association of Canada. This generally commences annually on the first week of June. Many other provinces, such as Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, and British Columbia, already have a tourism week. In the case of Saskatchewan and possibly others it coincides with Canada Tourism Week. By creating an Alberta tourism week, local stakeholders could have access to a specific outlet to promote our province and add to our local tourism activities. As mentioned earlier, this could complement the efforts of the government of Canada as well.

Madam Speaker, it might surprise you to know that I grew up in a small town, Wellington, Ontario, with a population of about 1,200 people in the community of Prince Edward county. Among the many tourist attractions that the county offered, we had Sandbanks provincial park, a famous beach known to many in Ontario and Quebec. As we grew up, we were educated in the school system and taught about the ecosystems and the history and the touristic opportunities that came with living so close to such a wonderful landmark. As well, some of the best summer jobs for high school students were at the provincial parks.

Later in life I became a ski instructor in Zell am Ziller, Austria, and there are many parts of the program to becoming a ski instructor. First, was that I physically trained to ski. The course was intense, especially with jet lag. There was also an academic piece to the training as part of the program explained the theory of positions and ski movements as well as emergency procedures such as injuries and what to do in the case of an avalanche. Finally, there was a section on tourism and hospitality. For the duration of the ski season I became a host for the tourism board of Austria. The point I'm making here, though, through both of these examples is that everyone is involved in tourism, whether you grow up and live beside a tourist attraction or become employed in the industry directly.

Tourism week could also have a component to it that recognizes and brings awareness to all people involved in the tourism sector. Similar to Saskatchewan Tourism Week, this could be done by appreciating the efforts of many of the communities that organize special activities. This could also be an opportunity to educate students on the value of landmarks in the communities that they live in. Finally, it could educate and reward those that work on the front lines and give such a memorable experience to our visitors. I think that a week-long celebration of tourism in Alberta would provide an opportunity for organizations, towns, and cities to collaborate and promote tourism in the province.

Madam Speaker, by embracing the vision of an Alberta tourism week, we are contributing to the continued diversification of our economy and our shared goals, to foster awareness amongst communities about the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, or economic value. I believe that Bill 204 will not only help the tourism operators and organizations and municipal representatives in promoting the many tourist attractions but also support job creators such as local restaurants, coffee shops, tour operators, hotels, bed and breakfasts, and other small businesses throughout this province.

I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-South West for his efforts in bringing this idea forward. I'd be happy to support this bill in second reading, and I look forward to further debate on this topic.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I recognize next the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a valuable topic that we have here today. In my previous iteration of my life in the Chamber I, too, was a critic for tourism and the development of it in the province, and I came to know and learn of the value that it brings to the province. Coming from a sparse rural area and, even so, the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler, I've come to know the value of this benefit to our constituency and indeed to our province.

Madam Speaker, in Drumheller-Stettler and indeed in Drumheller there have actually been many movies made with the extreme terrain that the badlands provide. As a result of that, there are a group of municipalities that have joined together to create what's known as the Canadian Badlands tourism association, and actually, as we speak, they're meeting in Drumheller right now at their annual general meeting. It's a good diversification for the area. Out where I live, in the openness of the prairie, there are many ways that we need to diversify our economy.

One of the things that I brought forward to the minister – and the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster knows some of my questioning to him in the budget estimates – was as to the delivery model of some 50-plus million dollars in this province. The delivery model of this province primarily and generally is based on a government form of assistance, and I've come to learn and know that in many other jurisdictions that is not necessarily the case. Certainly, there are other and variable methods of bringing tourism forward, but wholly the licence of tourism in Alberta is through a government delivery model, and sometimes that may not necessarily allow for all the options that are available.

If I could just give people some idea of some of the things that go on in the province. The Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller is only one of three museums, not unlike the Royal Alberta Museum and the Glenbow Museum in Calgary although those museums are not and do not have the interactive model of the Tyrrell museum. Of the three brothers or three family members of those museums, the Tyrrell museum, Madam Speaker, is always the museum that makes the most money. They actually pool all their resource revenues together, and the Tyrrell museum happens to be for whatever reason – and I believe it to be the interactive model – the rich cousin that supports the other two. Now, is that necessarily the way that it should be done? It seems to be the government's idea that that's the case.

3:50

But 15 miles away from where I live is the potentiality, Madam Speaker, of an Indian artifact find and dig known as the Bodo archaeological site. The scientist who has done some of the exploration at this site says that it has and may have as much significance as Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump. Now, this facility is sitting there languishing because of the lack of government involvement and, with our financial economic implications that we have now, probably will, not unlike the reserves of artifacts in the back of the Tyrrell museum, have some 25 to 50 years' worth of artifacts that are simply going to be collecting more dust. If there was some interactive way that a philanthropic organization could allow the development of these artifacts and finds to come forward beyond government regulation, there could be economic development come forward in many diverse locations, including not necessarily in my constituency but in Battle River-Wainwright. That is what it's called. I live right on the boundary, on the border.

I want to implore and make it known to other members of the Chamber that there are other delivery models available and possibilities to come forward for these types of developments that do not necessarily always need or require government funding but could have a change of government policy to allow these

developments to come forward in a way that would increase the revenues that come forward from that.

That's primarily one of the reasons why I wanted to make my comments known. To the Member for Banff-Cochrane: I know that he has spectacular vistas, but I also believe that we have spectacular vistas in the prairie scenery, in prairie landscapes.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Those mountains don't block your view.

**Mr. Strankman:** Well, on the comments about blocking your view, I'd just like to relate a story of an aviation friend of mine who was flying to Brooks one day and happened to spot upon the horizon what he perceived to be a dinosaur. It was early in the morning. He was making a flight down there to get his aircraft inspected. As he got closer, Madam Speaker, and after some 15 minutes of peering over the dashboard of his aircraft, he realized that actually what was going on was that a balloon was being brought to life for a photo opportunity. Ladies and gentlemen, that photo opportunity – my friend was the first person to see it – actually became a cover photo shoot in *National Geographic* magazine. As he circled the thing many times, the gentlemen who were also airborne in a helicopter and hoping to get the photo radioed him and told him to move on because he was goofing up the photo opportunity.

I just wanted to let you know, Madam Speaker and other members of the House, that there are other delivery models available for tourism in the province, and we need to expand them. The idea of bringing forward more tourism is a diversification model that's renewable, sustainable, generally green friendly except when it comes to the requirement, the need for those horrible oil-laden bike paths that use asphalt for their delivery. We have many other ways to create revenue in the province.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Madam Speaker, thank you so much. I'd like to first of all start by commending the Member for Edmonton-South West for this bill and especially commending his enthusiasm for tourism. Through members' statements and questions to the minister involved, he has shown that tourism is something that he cares deeply about, and I appreciate that. I think it's good.

In addition, Madam Speaker, at least in the time that I've served, this is the first time that here in the Chamber we've had two hours to talk about tourism. As a former minister of tourism, parks, and recreation that does my heart a great deal of good.

Madam Speaker, I'll tell you the reason why it's easy to be positive about tourism. As a former minister I can tell you that I quite freely confided to my colleagues in cabinet and my colleagues across the nation that being tourism minister is the best job ever. It's the best job ever, and being tourism minister in the province of Alberta is the best job ever because we have in this province something that we can all be tremendously proud of.

One of the reasons that we're all so passionate about tourism and why, I would suggest, all 87 of us could stand up today and speak to this bill is that unlike a lot of our other industries, that may happen in only certain parts of the province, tourism happens everywhere. In all 87 constituencies across our province there is something to offer visitors. Now, those visitors may come from nearby, they may come from across the province or across the country, or indeed those visitors may come from around the world. Indeed, the tourism industry in Canada, I would suggest, was largely born right here in Alberta when William Cornelius Van Horne said on the completion of the CPR that since we can't export the scenery, we'll have to import the tourists. It was that vision, Madam Speaker, that really got the tourism industry going.

I'd like to again thank the Member for Edmonton-South West. I'll have to confess that I was a little bit cynical when I first saw this bill. I'll be supporting the bill, but to the member: don't take any offence to this, but in designating a specific week to promote tourism in Alberta, I question just how much good that will actually do. I don't think it will do any harm, and it might do some good, but I really don't know that it will have the effects because, indeed, tourism is something we really should be promoting in this province 52 weeks of the year, not just one week in June.

Beyond that, Madam Speaker, tourism is something that, quite frankly, our tourism industry is trying to expand outside of traditional times of the year. Our tourism industry is very, very busy in June, July, August, and into September. It's also quite busy, especially in areas where there are winter resorts, in January, February, and March. But it's the shoulder seasons – it's April, May, right around this time of year, and October, November – where tourism actually slows down a fair bit. One of the big challenges of tourism is its cyclical nature. It goes up and it goes down, yet you need to have skilled staff, skilled workers in the industry, and because of that variability in demand, one of the things that the tourism industry has worked very hard on is developing ways to make that demand more consistent.

Now, I said that there are a lot of things to be proud of in our province in the tourism industry, and there certainly are. There are 17 UNESCO world heritage sites in Canada. Fully five of them are right here in the province of Alberta. One of the things that really was a concern to me when I was tourism minister was that not very many Albertans had visited all five, and not even very many Albertans could even name all five. So for the edification of the folks here, the five Alberta UNESCO world heritage sites are Wood Buffalo national park; the Rocky Mountain national parks, Jasper and Banff; the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park; Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump; and Dinosaur provincial park, near Brooks. In addition to that, we have a sixth site that is being considered, which I hope is named soon – there's been a tremendous amount of work done on this by Alberta parks officials – and that's the Writing-on-Stone provincial park, Aísínai'pi provincial park, in the very deep south of Alberta. If you've never been there, I will tell you that you have to go. It is absolutely breathtaking.

Tourism is something that happens everywhere, and tourism is something that we can agree on, not just for its economic benefit. The economic benefit is wonderful – as the member said, \$8 billion, with 127,000 people employed – but the other number is really important, 19,000 businesses. If you do the math, that's roughly six people per business, so it truly is something that is delivered by small businesses right across this province. For every Banff Springs hotel or Hotel Macdonald, that employs hundreds of people, you have countless businesses that are one or two or maybe three people, and they're proud of the story they tell.

The other thing that I love about tourism is that tourism, in my view, is one of the most effective ways – and it's been said – to tell Alberta's story, and we tell that story proudly to other Albertans, to people from across Canada, and indeed to people around the world.

One of the things we sometimes talk about is establishing social licence. What are the ways to establish social licence so that we can continue on with the various things that we try to do in Alberta? Well, one of the most effective ways, in my view, of establishing social licence is by creating ambassadors and by creating people who love this province because they visited here. I will tell you from having hosted many, many international visitors to Alberta that one of the most effective ways is to have them come here for a visit. Not only does it create ambassadors; it creates investors. There are a lot of people who have invested in Alberta whose first

encounter with the province of Alberta was on a visit, and they found the province beautiful. They found the province an incredible place to have an opportunity for future investment, and as a result they invested.

4:00

Well, let me turn my attention now to, specifically, tourism week. Tourism week, if it was implemented, would indeed piggyback onto the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's Tourism Week, which has been practised in this country for the last five or so years. When I spoke to the chair of TIAC, she wasn't entirely sure how long it had been going on. What is interesting to me is that Tourism Week in Canada was brought in in response to a federal government cut to tourism funding, and it was to let the federal government know just how important tourism is to their industry. I can't help but think that there's a certain level of irony there because the hon. member wants to bring in tourism week in Alberta three days after the provincial budget cuts tourism funding by more than 10 per cent.

The reason that's important is that tourism is self-funding in this province. I want to say that again. It's self-funding. Not a nickel of taxpayer dollars goes into tourism. Tourism is completely funded by the funds that are collected through the tourism levy, the 4 per cent pillow tax that we pay on hotel bills. The multiplier effect of those funds that are created was estimated in 2012 at being 19 to 1. For every \$1 of tourism levy funds invested into tourism, the return in economic impact, in fact the return in taxation revenue to the province is \$19.

So to me it is unfathomable why this government would siphon away funds from the tourism levy, which have increased by 5 per cent in the last fiscal year, and cut tourism funding by 10 per cent. I recognize that we have to tighten our belt in some things, but every day we're told about how economic diversification is happening or it's something that should happen, and tourism is held up as one of the shining examples of that. How are you supposed to do it when you are starving the goose that lays the golden egg?

Madam Speaker, while I am in favour of anything that advances tourism in our province and I am in favour of a measure like tourism week, I would suggest to this government that they would do better by fully funding tourism and do what was always intended: take the tourism levy and fully dedicate it to tourism promotion and product development in this province and not have funds siphoned into general revenue.

One other thing happened on Thursday that I think is a tragedy for Alberta tourism. The Alberta Strategic Tourism Council was dissolved. This group of 17 industry experts, including the friend of the Member for Banff-Cochrane, the award-winning CEO for Canmore-Kananaskis who was on that council – that council of industry experts has been disbanded, and we've lost now the ability to consult with them on important tourism issues.

So while I support this private member in terms of creating a tourism week – and I think it's great. We should celebrate tourism all year round, but if we want to focus it on a week, I'm fine. But I really wish that this government would support tourism in more meaningful and productive ways that, in fact, will support and promote tourism as an economic diversification driver in our province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak in favour of Bill 204, put forward by the Member for Edmonton-South West. I thank him for bringing forward this



bill and giving us the opportunity to discuss the many great tourist destinations in our province and, as was ably noted by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, the many benefits it brings to our province, which, of course, he knows well from his time working in that portfolio, in which he accomplished many great things. I have previously thanked him, and I thank him again.

Just to comment on a couple things that have been mentioned by our friends across the aisle, I agree with the Member for Banff-Cochrane in regard to the questions around placing the week in early June. I know for myself here in Edmonton-Centre and in the city of Edmonton, certainly, we have a very crowded slate of festival events and many other activities which begin roughly around mid-June and run through the summer. So I think that placing this tourism week in early June would provide an excellent opportunity for us to celebrate tourism and begin to promote and look forward to the events that occur here over the summer months.

There was also some concern that was raised by the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that this could potentially take away focus from some of the larger efforts towards tourism during the rest of the year. The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster also mentioned that he had some concerns that this might not have a significant impact or that it wouldn't necessarily be something which Travel Alberta would be able to add a lot more to. I certainly recognize the concerns that are being raised there. I think, in general, this is a great opportunity for Travel Alberta to partner with a lot of our other community organizations which are also looking to promote tourism. I don't see this being, specifically, a burden that would have to land only on them.

I know in my own work I have the honour of sitting on the Downtown Vibrancy Task Force here in Edmonton-Centre. I'm on that task force along with members of the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, the city of Edmonton, and the Downtown Business Association. Certainly, it has been an education for me, and I'm so grateful for that opportunity as I've had a chance to see the work and the effort that all of these individuals put into promoting tourism here in the city of Edmonton and particularly within the downtown core. These are people, I believe, who would embrace this opportunity of a tourism week to work with Travel Alberta and to be able to bring forward some of their own initiatives and some of the work which they are currently doing to be able to help celebrate how tourism benefits our province.

Certainly, I know that it's a real benefit here in downtown Edmonton in many areas. For example, downtown Edmonton has only 16 per cent of Edmonton's hotel space, but in 2014 it captured 28 per cent of demand in the city. That generated \$420 million in direct expenditures, helped support over 6,800 jobs, and produced \$208 million worth of tax revenue.

Downtown Edmonton offers a lot of things to people who want to come to visit. We have amazing culinary destinations. In fact, downtown Edmonton's culinary scene has never been stronger. It's rapidly expanding. It's home to 15 per cent of Edmonton's restaurants. Whether it's Italian, Mexican, Portuguese, Spanish, French, Japanese, Ethiopian, or Lebanese, if a cuisine exists, you can probably find it at a restaurant in Edmonton-Centre.

For me personally, one of the things that I love most about downtown Edmonton is its promotion of arts and culture. There are many opportunities for tourists coming to our city to explore. We have the Winspear Centre with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, a fantastic, beautiful, acoustically perfect space. I've been told by many who have performed there and who have conducted shows there that it is one of the finest concert halls in the world. We have over a dozen galleries, including the Art Gallery of Alberta. We're soon to have the Royal Alberta Museum, and the new Royal Alberta

Museum will in fact be the largest museum in western Canada. We have the Citadel Theatre.

We have many, many – and this is of personal excitement for me – music venues. At a time when Edmonton has lost many music venues, we've gained many new ones. We have many classic ones here such as the Starlite Room, the Needle Vinyl Tavern, 9910, the Mercury Room, the Chvrch of John.

And we, of course, have the city of Edmonton archives at the Prince of Wales Armouries.

I know that the members of the Downtown Vibrancy Task Force and EEDC here in Edmonton have been working very hard to bring many sporting events to the city. They've been very pleased to participate in the Tour of Alberta, which, again, thank you to the member who spent many years promoting that and bringing that here to our city. They brought in the Red Bull Crashed Ice event last year, which brought thousands of people into the streets of downtown Edmonton. That was a fantastic event as well. We have the Edmonton Marathon, which starts outside of the Shaw Conference Centre. Of course, now with the building of Rogers Place, we will soon be home to the Edmonton Oilers and the new Ice District. We look forward to the many opportunities that's going to bring to us here as well. [interjections] We look forward to some eventual wins with that as well, absolutely.

We're home to over 37 festivals, including the Taste of Edmonton, the street performers' festival, the Cariwest Caribbean arts festival, the Edmonton International Jazz Festival, Hip Hop in the Park, the Works Art and Design Festival, and Edmonton Beer Fest.

From downtown Edmonton we have immediate and close access to Edmonton's river valley, which at 7,400 hectares is the largest stretch of urban parkland in North America.

Of particular interest to me as well is something I've been working on for a while. I've had the opportunity over the last year to work with the Edmonton live music initiative as well as some folks from Alberta Music and the city of Edmonton, and I've had the opportunity to learn about the Alberta music cities initiative. This is an initiative that was brought forward by Alberta Music along with the new National Music Centre in Calgary, Music Canada, and the Scotlyn Foundation. This is an initiative that's focused on building the music industry across Alberta and promoting Edmonton and Calgary as cities known for the quality of their local music scenes. We know how music drives tourism in such jurisdictions as New Orleans or Austin or other places like Nashville that have become known as music cities. I believe, Madam Speaker, that Edmonton and Calgary have the potential to become known for the same.

**4:10**

Right here in Edmonton we have an enormous wealth of resources. We have MacEwan University, which I'm proud to say is relocating their arts and music program to Edmonton-Centre in 2017, which produces an amazing calibre of musicians. We have so many talented people here in this city. We have the quality venues I mentioned, so many fantastic festivals like the Edmonton Folk Festival, Interstellar Rodeo, the Edmonton Blues Festival, and the Up and Downtown Festival, which all work to incorporate Alberta performers. We have talented performers that come from our province like Corb Lund, Joe Nolan, Shout Out Out Out Out, and the Wet Secrets, folks that are getting international recognition.

**An Hon. Member:** Nickelback.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, yes. We have others that we don't speak of so much as well.

The opportunity to celebrate an Edmonton tourism week offers us the opportunity to continue to work with groups like the music city initiative and others to promote the arts and culture of our province and to showcase that and have the opportunity to celebrate it not only with people that we would want to bring into the city but people within our city. We can have the opportunity to show them so much more of what they could come out and enjoy and where they could be spending their own dollars here within our city, supporting so many of our tourist attractions and opportunities.

With that, I'd like to thank again the Member for Edmonton-South West for bringing forward this bill. I look forward to supporting it and to the opportunities to continue to work with the folks in the Downtown Vibrancy Task Force and so many others to continue to promote our city as a fantastic place to visit.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** I just want to pull out my notes, Madam Speaker. I don't want to allude too much to some of the elements that were talked about before, but one of the things that I've spoken about is that I'm a proud born-and-raised Albertan. Growing up in the early '90s, when we dealt with a recession similar to the one that we're experiencing today, a lot of how we travelled on vacations was based around the stay-cations, if you will. As a young Albertan I got a great chance to really see this province from a very unique perspective.

With that being said, avoiding the clichés, like saying West Edmonton Mall or Heritage Park or the Calgary Zoo, I thought it'd be prudent for me to really share these amazing experiences that I had because I think that right now with the way the Canadian dollar is sitting and how a lot of Albertans are avoiding that travel to the United States just on the merits that it would cost a lot more now than it did two or three years ago, it's similar to how it was in the '90s. You know, some of the early thoughts that go through my mind are my visits to Drumheller, which I enjoyed as a child and now get to bring my children to, which I'm very fond of, too, and my visits to Canmore or Banff. I can spot a child of the '90s if I simply say: Banff Candy Store. They all know what I'm talking about.

You know, I had a great opportunity to really go camping in areas like the Cypress Hills. Trust me, though, I spent most of my time on the Alberta side. We used to go to Carseland provincial park and went camping in that area as well, and it was neat. I always was baffled by the fact that my parents would point at the Bow River and say that that cut through Calgary. At the time, I would not believe them. There was a lot of visiting of the Crowsnest Pass. I would spend a lot of time visiting Frank Slide, and I marvelled at Turtle Mountain located there, too, and visiting the Hillcrest Mines and learning about the Hillcrest mining disaster as well. That was pretty neat to see as I experienced the history that was vast to this province.

My uncle, actually, was partial owner and managed a hotel in Lloydminster, actually on the Alberta side of Lloydminster, and he led me to where I pursued a career in the hospitality industry. As we are very well aware, during these economic hard times in certain cities like Calgary and Edmonton the hospitality industry is having a little bit of a struggle, specifically in the downtown cores, so one of the things is for us to really encourage those people to travel throughout Alberta and, not only that but for those that are travelling abroad, who are going to the Rocky Mountains, which is seeing a tremendously busy year, find ways to encourage people, as they're coming from the United States or coming from abroad to

Canada, to stay that extra day when they're going to the hubs like Calgary and Edmonton.

I think that if we really promote a lot of the tourism that we have here in Alberta – and it's amazing, when I see people who've only lived in this province for two or three years, that some of them are unaware of the great things like the Frank Slide or the giant egg in Vegreville. I think that really driving this awareness – and it doesn't have to be expensive awareness. We've all seen the trends that come from social media and retweeting and sharing your favourite aspects of your childhood, similar to myself, how in leaps and bounds it costs nothing but can lead to a tremendous amount of return for different companies. We saw that with the ice bucket challenge, a prime example of that.

That being said, I want to applaud the hon. member for this private member's bill. When I heard about it, I started thinking of these fond childhood memories that I had as well and, to be quite frank, that I am grateful I get to share with my children now. So I stand here to support the bill in second reading.

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

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. I'd like to rise today and commend the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West for his insightful approach to this industry, which is of great interest to many Albertans at a time, particularly, when we're focusing so much on diversification.

I've been blessed and privileged to have spent about 20 years of my life in a career in the tourism marketing business for an international airline, which gave me a lot of opportunity and experience not only to promote tourism but to be able to talk with people around the world on what's important to them and what's of interest to them. I spent a lot of time promoting travel outbound from Canada to parts of Asia and Southeast Asia and other parts of the world, but I was blessed to have the opportunity, in meeting all those people, to always promote Alberta, which is, of course, near and dear to all of our hearts.

Now is an incredible time for us to leverage our diverse and world-class tourism assets. I think that this is an opportunity which we should always be driving towards, but of course we have a rather unique opportunity right now as Alberta is, unfortunately, on sale. The tourism assets we have are world-class. It is time to invest in our future, and it's time for us to invest in a hopeful future which is going to support some of the hard work done by the tourism sector – groups such as Calgary and Edmonton tourism, obviously Travel Alberta, the airport authorities of both Calgary and Edmonton and some of the smaller centres – bringing in flights finally from places like China and different parts of Asia and around the world.

It's even more important that we work hard now to maintain those flights because having been in that business, I know that the worst thing that can happen is that you attract a flight in and then you lose it because they rarely come back. Now is an opportunity for us to offset the fact that we have a challenge in our own economy, which is likely to translate into a reduction in outbound tourism, which, of course, sends our dollars out of the country, a time for us to take advantage of that excess capacity and bring people to Alberta, maintain those flights, and bring in the revenue that those people bring.

Of course, I think the other benefit is that when people come here for tourism, they maybe come here for short stays, but there are many people from around the world who, when they come here, look beyond that. They look for opportunities to invest; they look for other opportunities. Is this a place to send their children to school? Is this a place to buy recreational property? Is this a place to buy a business? Is this a place to emigrate to? Those are the fringe

benefits of tourism which I think we need to keep our eye on as well and an opportunity to do so with tourism week.

The other thing that we need to think about is the hotels that are now suffering. In spite of whatever we do within the tourism sector, the honest truth is that the 80-20 rule typically has applied to most of the hotels, particularly during the latest boom, which is that Monday to Thursday is when they generate about 80 per cent of the revenue, and then Thursday or Friday to Sunday is when they can offer all kinds of deals and opportunities to the tourism marketplace. Typically they don't want to displace that during the week when the market is robust. We do have an opportunity now, again, with Alberta being on sale, where those hotels are actually looking at promoting tourism and leveraging that opportunity seven days a week. Sadly, that's the truth of the current economy.

**4:20**

Tourism is always a key pillar of diversification. I think that we have a strong and robust infrastructure in place. We have passionate people in the industry who have invested not only their own personal skills and time and knowledge but many of whom are small operators who have invested their own capital and taken big risks to do that. We have, I think, an obligation to work with them to help them to diversify that. Again, with the low Canadian currency and an opportunity where there's very little competition for capacity, this is an opportunity for us to do that. You know, really, it's an opportunity to take small advantage of that soft business market and that soft business traveller market, which is what, of course, drove some of our average room rates to some of the top in North America over the last few years. Those are things for us to keep an eye on.

I've also been blessed to be involved with a group called Skål. It's world-wide, international travel and tourism. There are chapters in Calgary, Edmonton, and the Canadian Rockies: 17,000 members world-wide, 400 clubs in 80 countries. During my involvement I was president of that organization in years gone by, and I've been bugging the people there to make an opportunity to do a world congress here in Alberta, to bring in people, industry leaders from around the world. That's one of the groups. I'll encourage the Edmonton, the Calgary, and the Rockies clubs to work together to do that, to promote Alberta as an opportunity to bring world leaders, who tend to have great influence around the world, to see what we have here in Alberta. I think that's a great opportunity.

Many other organizations, as I referenced before, the tourism authorities – unfortunately, the Strategic Tourism Marketing Council, as we know, has been disbanded, which is sad, but there are many organizations out there to work with, not the least of which, of course, are those who represent the youth within the marketplace. Obviously, SAIT and NAIT have tourism and hospitality programs, and through the Skål organization we've invested in many scholarships over the years, which have helped to nurture that next generation. I think that an obligation for anybody who's in tourism is to always mentor and work with those up-and-comers in the industry, who really are going to be the lifeblood in the future of what we're doing.

Another concern I have, of course, is convention facilities. We've seen a lot of focus on the need for convention facilities. Sadly, I know Calgary is now, I think, the 11th-largest convention facility in Canada, and that's a sad, sad statement. You know, I guess the good news is that the Calgary Stampede is expanding their facilities, but it's not a downtown location per se, and that's often what a lot of the conventions are looking for. So I think those are some of the things we need to look at investing in, not only encouraging the private sector to do so but also looking at where we can assist in making that happen.

I was lucky enough to be at the Economic Developers conference just over a week ago, and I noticed that Pomeroy Lodging, which is actually headquartered in Grande Prairie, where my esteemed colleague is from, but with hotels across the province, are looking at expanding their convention facilities there in Kananaskis, which I think is, again, good for all Albertans as an opportunity. Of course, that was the Economic Developers of Alberta there. If you talk to them, they are about economic development, they're about tourism, whatever will work for them to promote and enhance what they're doing.

Tourism week is an opportunity which I think we need to embrace. It's another opportunity. As the esteemed Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster pointed out, it's always an opportunity, and if we have a chance to promote that, we should take it. I think everybody in this room, everybody in Alberta – I think there was a promotion many years ago about being a tourist attraction. I think we all have to be tourist attractions. I think we all have to be tourism promoters as well wherever we go, wherever we travel. Be proud, as I know we all are, of this province, of the natural resources and the opportunities we have for people to visit and see things that they won't see in their own backyards, and that's not just the natural resources but the cultural resources that we have here as well, that I think we're all too humble about.

You know, this is an opportunity, I think, for us to invest in the future. Again, I'd like to see the tourism levy being pushed toward promoting this. We do have an opportunity to do so. I'd like to see us invest although within very tight budgets we need to take this as an opportunity for further diversification. If Bill 204 helps that, then I think that that's a good thing.

I would like to hope, obviously, that we have the support of this entire House – obviously, we have the Culture and Tourism minister, we have Finance, we have Economic Development, and we have Infrastructure, who all have to keep their eye on this ball and work towards ensuring that we have an opportunity here to diversify, to grow, and to strengthen us while we have Alberta on sale – and that we can support not only the flights that we have now and maintain them but that we can grow those in the future in the Asia-Pacific market, which is all-important to us in the future.

I will be supporting this bill. Again, I thank the member for bringing it forward and for the opportunity here to speak about the importance of tourism in Alberta. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am honoured to rise today and speak to Bill 204, Alberta Tourism Week Act. First of all, I would like to thank the Member for Edmonton-South West for proposing such a brilliant way of promoting tourism in the province of Alberta. The bill is an excellent gateway to promote the amazing tourist attractions of Alberta as well as the small businesses that extensively contribute to diversify our economy and create jobs. I'm very proud to say that in my constituency of Calgary-Glenmore we have a number of attractions that bring people together from the city, province, country, and the world. Those big attractions include Heritage Park, Weaselhead park, North Glenmore park, South Glenmore park, and Glenmore Sailing Club.

We have discussed many attractions in the province, and I would like to focus a little bit on Heritage Park specifically because it's a very unique park we have in the province. It gives a very unique experience to its visitors and tourists. For example, touring Heritage Park is like living the history of Alberta, no matter if it is dining, entertainment, education, recreation, or a special occasion. One cannot miss a moment. Going back in time, the visitors of the park experience the diversity and rich culture of Alberta as it culminated

over time. In fact, the park is the pride of our province as it is a true example of how the west was once.

Whenever visitors go to Heritage Park, they feel that they're experiencing something that they cannot find somewhere else. It's basically bringing the province of Alberta all together in many forms. It has festivals going on all year-round, and every festival is representing a different culture or representing different values or something unique that you would experience. Also, it's a hub where indigenous communities get together as well because Heritage Park is right beside Tsuu T'ina Nation, and they work in collaboration a lot, so promotion of indigenous culture is also very dominant through that park.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Around Heritage Park there are many trails that allow people to come and visit and experience Glenmore reservoir as well. Walking or biking right beside the reservoir is an amazing experience. I myself go there quite often. Seeing the beautiful sights around that area is a commendable experience. There is a cliff right beside it that adds a beauty to the place that is hard to find in the city. At the same time, all four places that I mentioned before – for example, North Glenmore park, South Glenmore park – are also connected through Glenmore reservoir. In North Glenmore park we have canoe rentals available. We can see many people canoeing around, kayaking. Many competitions, even dragon boat races, take place every year in North Glenmore park. It is an amazing opportunity to celebrate diversity in our province because that's an excellent way to learn about Chinese culture. At the same time, at the dragon boat races they represent different cultures by allowing different groups to do performances on the same day, and through the entertainment every culture tells a story, which allows us to connect with each other.

I also mentioned Weaselhead park. Weaselhead park has a lot of history because it is basically a division between Tsuu T'ina Nation and the constituency of Calgary-Glenmore. It talks about the time when there was an army that used to use that place for their purposes as well as how it connects to the history of indigenous communities. It's a beautiful park. It was initially man-made, but over time due to its ecosystem and ecology it evolved into a natural park. Now it is known as a natural park, and its history and beauty make it a very unique attraction for the residents.

4:30

I also mentioned the Glenmore Sailing Club. That is a place where we have the opportunity to see many yachts, and it allows people to learn about sailing. Yachts are available as rentals as well, so this gives a very unique experience to the citizens of Calgary to enjoy seeing the mountains while they're sailing and also to enjoy the liveliness of Heritage Park. As I mentioned, all these parks are connected in such a unique way. That anybody who visits Glenmore reservoir gets to experience so many things at a time is hard to describe in words.

This was very specific to Calgary-Glenmore, but if I zoom out a little bit and look at the province as my other colleagues have been talking about, we are blessed with so many attractions. Either natural or man-made, they just are amazing. That helps make Alberta a very unique province and different and a very attractive place to be.

I have lived in different parts of the world myself, including Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and I grew up in Ontario. I can say with confidence that when I was living in different parts of the world and when I interact with people from different parts of the world, Alberta is seen as a very beautiful and attractive place, and people talk very passionately about how much they would like

to visit Alberta. Alberta has rivers. Alberta has mountains. Alberta has history. Alberta has diversity. Alberta has culture. Each individual riding has so much to offer. In fact, if I spent so many minutes talking about my own riding, we can imagine that if all the members sitting here in the Chamber start talking about their constituencies and the attractions they have, then I think we would definitely need more than the three, four hours that we are spending right now. The list goes on.

Also, when I've been to Banff or when I've been to different parts of the province, I have seen many tourists coming from all over the world for various reasons. Sometimes they would just come because they want to have a quiet moment. They are working on a book, for example, so they would probably go to a place like the Banff arts centre, where they could rent a place and just stay and work on their projects. At the same time, there are people who would just come for skiing. There are so many reasons why people would want to be in Alberta and want to have that experience.

Travelling is important. I can also share from my experience because I have not only lived in different parts of the world; I have been in different parts of the world as well. I could see that whenever I appreciated something or some kind of attraction or in any kind of experience that I appreciated, I noticed in depth how thoughtful people were when they designed something, even if it is a man-made attraction, having that convenience for tourists to be there and thinking about how we can make it more inclusive or how we can design it in a way that it would cater to families, it would cater to couples, it would cater to individuals so that different groups could enjoy the experience of being in that place.

By having this week of tourism, we're actually not only promoting the tourism of Alberta; we are actually encouraging all the industries in Alberta that are involved in tourism and other small businesses and giving them ideas of how they can get involved to diversify our economy. If they know that this is the week when we are expecting people coming from different parts of the world and different cultures, then they would consider having more modifications, innovation, and they would consider having more ideas. When there are ideas and creativity, then we are basically allowing our artists, allowing our businesses to think outside the box and to be in that competition. Once we have that competition going on and people striving for the competitive edge, then this will help build the reputation of Alberta's tourism in the world. Once we have that level reached, then basically that will help boost our economy because there will be more travellers coming in.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise and speak to the private member's bill presented today. It's absolutely something I'm in favour of. It also gives me an opportunity to talk a little bit about my riding and its wonderful opportunities there, as many members have already done. Recently in Strathcona-Sherwood Park the Beaver Hills initiative was recognized by UNESCO as an internationally, world-renowned biosphere, so it's now designated for ecotourism, which is an absolute accomplishment, and it also protects the land there.

Something that hasn't been discussed as much – you know, it's great to promote tourism but also to link it back to mental health. Having been in social work before and studying the importance of relationship with environment, one of the best things about the environment, Mr. Speaker, is that it doesn't actually require a connection with the amount of money that you make. The environment is something that is available to everybody, and that makes it one of the best resources that we have.

Opening up a tourism week not only promotes the great resources that we have in our communities, but it does something that recently the social work program in MacEwan University recognized. One of its main pillars is on the environment. The reason for that is that you're seeing a difference that is being made by people connecting to their environment in a nonhierarchical manner, in a way that builds a relationship in the way that many of our aboriginal leaders have demonstrated for many years. By building that relationship and creating that connection, it actually addresses some of the mental health issues that are all over our province, Mr. Speaker. So recognizing those opportunities – and sometimes all it takes is to demonstrate what resources are available to you when you're looking for a place to go with your family, with your friends, to go out and know that.

In Strathcona-Sherwood Park you can go and tour all sorts of really great lands and see something that is recognized by the world as being a place that needs to be protected for ecotourism. Also, to demonstrate the great food, you know, Open Farm Days is an opportunity for people to go into farms and visit those very farms that have our food and create that relationship, especially for people in urban centres, who don't get that opportunity every day. It provides that initial opportunity to develop that relationship. Again, that relationship is really essential to creating an overall strong mental health society, and it can't be lost. Yes, tourism is a great industry, but overall we need to address it in multiple facets, and this is one of the ways that we do it.

I mean, at the beginning of being elected, I was meeting with the president of the conservation society, and he was showing me that he had a book with a whole bunch of information on camping sites: the costs, the places that you need to go, and, you know, connecting those people with the resources, making it simple. The more barriers that you put towards people, the less they'll travel. Really, at the end of the day, promoting that pride in our local economy and things that we have to offer promotes a connection to our community, and that also is great in building a strong family unit.

With the work that is already being done, something like this just highlights that and gives it a space to shine and gives it a space for people to be there and to access that information, which, at the end of day, sometimes is what's needed. I remember that that was part of our conversation of how to highlight – they have a wonderful book. You know, it's pages, pages long, but people don't know about its existence. They'll search all over Google and try to find the camping sites that are most searched. But at the end of the day, if we start looking for other ways to express what is available to people and what the resources are locally, it also provides the opportunity that, you know, if you're struggling right now, you can still travel and you can still have those experiences. It's great for a lot of reasons.

4:40

Also, I would say that, you know, the Edmonton region has a very strong couch surfing community, and it's a community that is known in the world. Part of it is that you host somebody as they come in, and then you show them the great things that are a part of your area. If I were to host somebody in Strathcona-Sherwood Park, I would take them to the winery in the area. I would take them horseback riding. I would take them to just view the wonderful sights of this bioreserve. Those experiences are something to promote in different ways, having an opportunity to connect with people that want to see those things. Mr. Speaker, that's something that people at all ages are interested in. Travel is something that completely engages people, and it opens up your way of living. It just opens up your daily activities that you get kind of lost in.

Tourism is a way of opening up and expanding conversations and meeting people that you might have not met.

You know, back to the mental health portion that I was saying before, I have the Dreamcatcher ranch in my constituency. It's a connection to animals within therapy, animals as a therapeutic modality. It provides a connection, again, going back to nature, a way of connecting that is a way that people find very relaxing. It's an important element of our daily living.

There are so many places in my constituency where you can see these things: the great food that is to be had, a lot of local food that is being promoted in the area, and restaurants that are starting to pop up and demonstrate that they want to showcase that local cuisine, what the farms are offering and items of that nature. Something like this really allows us to promote things locally and promote what we have to offer and give a space for people all over Alberta to really know what their options are when they're talking about Alberta tourism.

Mr. Speaker, really, again, I'm absolutely thrilled that this private member's bill is with us here today and that we get to discuss it and that I get to mention the wonderful things that happen in my constituency. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms Drever:** I would like to start off by saying: how could I not support Bill 204? I commend the Member for Calgary-South West for his hard work on this bill. As someone who was born and raised in this beautiful province, I've had the pleasure of participating in many events that help promote all the culture and diversity Alberta has to offer. For as long as I can remember, growing up in Calgary I would go down to see the Calgary Stampede parade with my friends and family, and afterwards we'd go down to the grounds and check out the rides and the games. It was truly an honour to be part of that parade last summer. It definitely fulfilled a childhood dream for me.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is blessed to be a culturally and geographically diverse province with a multitude of opportunities for travel and tourism. The tourism industry contributes greatly to the Alberta economy, and the continued growth of this industry will in turn promote economic diversification in Alberta.

In my riding of Calgary-Bow I am so proud to have Canada Olympic Park, whose ski jump can be described as one of the most recognizable attributes in the city of Calgary. During the 1988 Winter Olympics, Canada Olympic Park was the primary venue for many different sports, including bobsledding, luge, figure skating, hockey, freestyle skiing, just to name a few. Calgary was the host to athletes from all over the world. In 1988 Calgary, with a population of 657,000 people, was put on the world map. As it stands today, people from all over the world are still taking advantage of all the great things COP has to offer.

COP is also the home of Canada's Sports Hall of Fame. Canada's Sports Hall of Fame was established in 1947 and was moved to Calgary in 2011. I had the pleasure of touring this museum, which is located at Canada Olympic Park. It is a joy to spend a day or two exploring what the museum has to offer. The hall of fame also offers programs that allow students to experience the museum's 12 galleries and to try over 50 hands-on interactive activities, including shadowboxing with Lennox Lewis, 3-D goalie and backcatcher experiences, sport challenges, rowing, wheelchair racing, and more.

Some of the items on display include Terry Fox's shoes, in which he dipped his foot in the Atlantic Ocean, a hockey stick with Wayne Gretzky's misspelled name on it, and the Calgary number one torch, which was used to light the cauldron at the opening ceremonies of

the 1988 Olympic Games. This museum is a perfect place for people of all ages. Throughout the exhibit you can interact with statues of honoured members. For example, you can see Herman Smith Johannsen, the famous cross-country skier, in action. He finished his last race at the age of 75.

Today COP is one of the landmarks in Calgary. It is a unique site. It provides a place to ski, ice-skate, cross-country ski, and, in the summer, to mountain bike and zip-line. For the residents of Calgary it provides a place to train Olympic athletes, host events, and bring award-winning snowboarders like Shaun White – he was here recently – to our slopes.

Mr. Speaker, I am so proud that I have the opportunity to represent them here today in the Legislature, and I'm also so proud of being part of a government that is working to diversify and strengthen the political economy. As mentioned, tourism has been identified as an important contributor to diversifying Alberta's economy away from energy dependence. This is why I stand in the House to speak in support of this bill, and I applaud the Member for Edmonton-South West for bringing this idea forward.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 204?

We have no one left to speak, hearing none. I would call upon the Member for Edmonton-South West to close debate.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to stand today and hear the support of all of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle for Bill 204. Bill 204 is one of those bills that we really can all get behind because we all believe in Alberta and we all believe in selling Alberta to become the absolute best that it can be. Like members opposite have mentioned, we do really want to be pushing Alberta every single day of every single week, and I really do believe that the Alberta tourism week will become one of those tools we use, one of the pieces of the puzzle that we can use to promote Alberta and create that diverse and vibrant economy that we speak about.

I just wanted to make some comments around what I really believe the Alberta tourism week will be able to highlight, because we do know that Budget 2016 made commitments to tourism. Budget 2016 made commitments such as investing in our world-class tourism facilities, with the expansion of the Calgary Zoo, with Fort Edmonton Park, and the Royal Tyrrell Museum. Mr. Speaker, these projects will attract more visitors to our province and enhance our reputation at home and abroad to ensure that accessible travel opportunities are available for families right here in Alberta.

4:50

Alberta tourism week will be something that we as communities, we as Albertans, we as citizens can rally together and rally behind. Mr. Speaker, it celebrates our passion for Alberta, and it maximizes our resources and our opportunities for Alberta. Our tourism industry will be able to attract even more visitors and more investors to our province. Each year visitors flock to Alberta's parks and attend our world-class sporting facilities, our world-class events, and our world-class communities. Alberta tourism week will be able to promote these important attractions and will help to build long-term success for the tourism industry province-wide.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to have been able to introduce a bill that will commit to diversifying our economy, that will commit to making sure that Albertans stay employed. Those 19,000 businesses, those 127,000 jobs, that \$8 billion that we're talking about, all of these very important not statistics but people, jobs, and lives that we are talking about in Alberta, the people that we must

support as legislators, will be supported by the Alberta Tourism Week Act. I'm extremely excited that we are able to utilize this bill to push forward and sell our province, that we all can be so proud of. We all can go and say that we voted for something that we will be able to present to the world and show to the world that we are the greatest province in Canada, that we are a great place to visit, and that we are somewhere that we can be excited to show off.

Mr. Speaker, being cognizant of the time here, I will be absolutely optimistic that all members of this House will absolutely support this bill. Thank you, all, so much for speaking about it today.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a second time]

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent of the House to proceed with Motions Other than Government Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

#### Educational Delivery Choices

504. Mr. McIver moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to affirm its commitment to allowing parents the choice of educational delivery for their children, including home, charter, private, francophone, separate, or public education programs.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. It's my honour to rise and talk about my motion, Motion 504. Now, this is something that I feel strongly about, and it's something that I think is really consistent with Alberta. The purpose of the motion is to simply have the government confirm what they're already doing. In fact, I'm asking the government to give Alberta parents the assurance that the choices they have today in educating their children will remain, the assurance that education will not go backwards in Alberta and that students can continue to benefit from the many options of education available for delivery today. Alberta has one of the best education systems in the world. [some applause] I agree, and we should all pound on that one. The PC caucus encourages this government to keep it that way. I know that the government wants to keep it that way.

Choice in Alberta education, including home, charter, private, francophone, separate, and public education programs, is about meeting the needs and interests of children so that they can reach their full potential and choice for parents to decide which school is choice for their kids. This motion encourages the government to ensure stable and permanent access to choice in education and to bring a sense of stability to students and their parents. These choices contribute to a robust system that respects the diversity of backgrounds and interests among Alberta children.

It is essential that all Alberta schools, whether they be public, private, separate, charter, home-school, all the choices that exist today, provide students with safe and inclusive learning environments. Anything other than that is unacceptable. Mr. Speaker, I didn't feel with what I've just said that I was going to have a really hard time convincing members of this House because these are things that we have talked about: safe and inclusive

communities, safe and inclusive schools, and recognizing the value of children to the future of Alberta.

One of the things that I think we all agree on here, again along those lines, is that all children are equal. But I think we can also agree that all children are not the same. Different children require different choices, different options. Some have special needs, and some have additional needs, other than other children's. Some children learn very well in one way and not so well in another. Sometimes we need to make sure that they can reach their full potential and the very best chance and opportunity that they can to live the most full life. To contribute to the top of their potential, to become the best contributors they can to Albertan and Canadian society, sometimes some kids need a little bit different education.

Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. Some kids are so very gifted that in a classroom that would be considered run of the mill or expected for most Alberta kids – for some Alberta kids that are gifted, that's too easy for them. And why would we as parents, why would we as Albertans, and why would we as legislators hold those kids back?

Of course, one of the things that really matters is that all kids are special. They all deserve to have the best chance. Who better to evaluate them and to work to decide for those kids what the best course of education is than their parents?

I recognize, too, that even there, even with this, while all Alberta kids are equal, they're not all the same. Some have two of their birth parents at home, some have one, some are lucky enough to be adopted, and some are living in other situations. But they, too, deserve the same chance as every other Alberta kid to have those that love them the most, those that know them the best, those that co-exist and live with them and care for them and put them to bed and feed them be able to have input into the way they're educated, because those are the people that love their kids the most.

Mr. Speaker, again I will emphasize that this is about doing what's best for Alberta's children. This is about putting Alberta's kids in the position to fully participate, to become – to borrow a phrase from the military – all they can be, and to fully access every success that they could possibly have. I don't think anybody in this Legislature is going to argue with that. I really don't.

The reason I bring it forward, Mr. Speaker, is because I've heard from a lot of parents from around Alberta. We have asked the Education minister about this in the past: are you going to continue to provide the choices? I'm comfortable enough in what I'm saying that I don't think the minister is going to argue with me – if he does, I will table documents – about the fact that he has stood up in this House and has said: we are going to continue to provide those choices. But there's been once or twice where he's said: for now. Or he's said: in this year's budget. I see he's not even arguing that, so that's okay. We're still getting along here, and there's no reason why we need not.

5:00

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, a lot of parents have said: well, what does that mean? There's an opportunity for, hopefully, the minister and the government to stand up and say: we're committed to this. While I guess I'm not sure they're going to do that, I'm surely hopeful that the minister and the government are going to say: we're still committed to that choice for parents in the way they educate their children. It appears from the budget that the government put on the table on Thursday that they are. At least, it looks to me like they are going to continue to fund the different choices that Alberta parents have now, and I think that's a tremendous, tremendous reassurance to Alberta parents.

I'm hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that members of this House can come together and say to Alberta parents: your kids are important; we believe in your ability and your right to make choices on behalf of

your children's education. Again, parents are a gift to those kids, and those kids are a gift to parents. I sincerely hope that members of the House can agree with this motion, which continues to give parents the choices that they already have – that they already have – in how they educate their children.

I thank you, all members of the House, for your attention. I will sit down and listen. I sincerely hope that I can look forward to the support of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to rise and speak to this motion in the House today. I am a teacher by trade, so I believe I share everyone's belief that education is really something extremely fundamental that can change lives, that will make the province better, that can make Canada better if it's something that's done well. I think that we do currently offer an amazing amount of choice in our system to parents, and I have some examples that I'd like to share about that.

I was a teacher in the CBE, the Calgary board of education. I do just want to mention the amazing, incredible job that the Calgary board of education is doing within the public system to offer choice to parents. The Calgary board of education has programs for exceptional and complex needs. They have gifted-and-talented programs. They have French immersion, a Spanish bilingual program, a Mandarin bilingual program. They have arts-based schools, they have sports-based schools, they have science- and inquiry-based schools, they have international baccalaureate programs, and they also have trades programs. And those are just a few. The Calgary board of education has responded incredibly well to parents' desires to have choice for their children.

I can speak to that a little bit personally. When I was teaching, I taught at the Alice Jamieson girls' academy, which is an all-girls program for grades 4 through 9. That's a program of choice within the Calgary board of education where, if parents so choose, they can send their girls to school in an all-girls environment. I think it has wonderfully beneficial effects. I taught math and science, and I have never been so privileged as to see so many girls just really excited about math. You know, that's something that doesn't necessarily happen in regular mixed-gender environments. It really has a huge amount of value. It has a huge amount of value in terms of self-esteem building, in terms of peer support, in terms of getting girls more involved in STEM, science, technology, engineering, and math. It really has a lot of benefits.

What was special about my school was that it wasn't only a girls' program. My school was housed within Stanley Jones school, which is a large, hundred-year-old sandstone building. Within that same school there were three operating programs. There is the Alice Jamieson girls' academy. There is the deaf and hard of hearing program, which is for exceptional students. It also housed a regular K through 6 elementary school.

The reason that that came about was because parents who lived in that area wanted to keep their regular K through 6 school, but there wasn't enough enrolment to be able to keep the whole building open, so the Calgary board of education brought in these alternative programs to keep the school filled. Now it's filled to huge amounts of capacity. We lost several of our rooms over the course of my tenure there – our computer room, our science lab, our library – to classrooms. The building of new schools, hopefully, will soon alleviate some of that issue. But it was an incredibly successful program, an incredibly successful program of choice, within the Calgary board of education.

I only can speak to the Calgary board of education, but I know that there are other school districts that are doing an amazing job with that as well. I can point to, you know, the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills' comments about Horizon school earlier today, which is also a public school doing incredible work for exceptional students.

I just wanted to highlight that there is, in fact, a huge amount of choice available within our public system.

At this time I'm going to bring forward an amendment to this motion. Now, if there are questions about the ability to do this, I do have examples where this has been done a whole bunch of times in the past, mostly in 2007, it looks like. The motion has been stamped by Parliamentary Counsel for approval.

Do I wait to read it?

**The Speaker:** If you would read it while it's being passed out.

**Ms Luff:** Okay. What this motion is doing:

Ms Luff to move that Motion 504 be amended as follows:

- (a) by striking out "affirm" and substituting "support public education, including francophone and separate schools, while affirming";
- (b) by adding "and" after "charter,";
- (c) by striking out "francophone, separate, or public";
- (d) by adding "in such instances where they offer alternatives not available in the public system" after "programs".

If I just read the whole thing, it makes a lot more sense. The amended motion would read as follows:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to support public education, including francophone and separate schools, while affirming its commitment to allowing parents the choice of educational delivery for their children, including home, charter, and private education programs in such instances where they offer alternatives not available in the public system.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

**The Speaker:** He has a point of order.

#### Point of Order

#### Admissibility of Amendments

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, I guess, first of all, the first part of the point of order is that under the standing orders it's extremely unusual and irregular for a private member's motion to be amended. In fact, I cannot remember an instance where this has been allowed or has happened in the Legislature. Part of that is because of the very limited time that we have to debate these motions. We have one hour; that is it. It has always been the practice of the House that we debate the motion as it is presented in the Legislature.

Second – and I'm sitting next to the mover of the motion – is that it is the mover's opinion, and it's certainly my opinion as well, that this amendment substantively changes the intent of the motion. Of course, an amendment is not allowed to do that. An amendment can, you know, make changes or alterations, but this substantively changes the intent of the motion. I would suggest to the hon. member, with all respect, and certainly to you, Mr. Speaker, that this amendment to this motion is out of order and should be disallowed at this time.

**The Speaker:** Could I just have a moment to read this myself.  
The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Amendments have come forward to motions other than government motions many times in

the past. I would agree that it hasn't happened, you know, in the recent past, but it has happened. I can also indicate, as the member has mentioned, that the amendment coming forward has been reviewed and approved by Parliamentary Counsel. Now, on those amendments to nongovernment motions that happened in the past, it happened on April 2, 2007, a motion that was amended by the current third party. Again, a motion, Motion 507, was amended on May 14 of the same year, 2007, and Motion 511 and Motion 515 in 2007 as well.

Mr. Speaker, it has happened. It is, I would agree, a little bit out of the ordinary, but it is not against the rules of order.

On the member stating that it is a point of order because it substantially changes the motion, I don't believe the amendment does. It still revolves around the affirmation and the sustainability, speaking to the nature of schools, especially public schools. I don't think it does change the intent.

I would look forward to your ruling, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

5:10

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would speak to this amendment. I believe that it actually does substantively change this motion, that when we take a look at the nature of education, this is about parental choice. This is not about whether or not the government has the ability to decide whether this is substantively different or whether the parents should have the right to this kind of an educational option or choice. That's the whole nature of this motion. It's about providing parents with the choice to make these decisions about their children's education, not about the state granting permission.

I believe that this substantively changes this motion. I believe that when we take a look at the nature of some of these independent schools, some of the charter schools or the alternative schools, they should not be held up to whether or not some bureaucrat or some individual decides whether or not this actually meets a definition of whether it's available in the public system. These people that are asking for these alternatives in their children's education are there because they want to see an alternative that is unique, that meets their desires for their children. Therefore, this amendment is substantively changing this motion and should not be accepted.

**The Speaker:** Member for Calgary-Lougheed, have you new information you'd like to submit with respect to the amendment decision?

**Mr. Rodney:** With great respect, Mr. Speaker, I would not be standing up if I did not have new information.

That's exactly what this is designed to do. It is true that this changes the intention to a great degree. But let's face it: it was great to speak for two hours on the tourism bill, and we had support from all sides of the House. This is not about a PC caucus or a third party or the opposition. This is about the students and the parents of Alberta.

The new information I'll offer you at this point, sir, is that I happened to be in the House on those occasions. The hon. House leader on duty at this time has brought up that they were favourable amendments. They were friendly amendments that were accepted by the mover to make the motion even better than what they had originally intended. They were never done with the intention of changing the original motive of the motion.

I'll be honest. As a former educator myself and a parent and an advocate I have a speech ready. The fact is, as my hon. colleague from Calgary-North West has pointed out, that we have very few devices in opposition to, you know, put forward any sorts of



agendas. Under private members is one of them. We had two hours a short time ago on tourism. We only have one hour now, and this is winding down the clock, that is now down to 46 minutes. I would like to read my speech and get on to the original motion. I would actually encourage the mover of the amendment to rescind this and speak to the original motion, perhaps outlining ideas why she may not vote for it instead.

**The Speaker:** Something new with respect to the point of order? Is that correct? Substantive?

**Mr. McIver:** Yes, I believe it's very substantive, Mr. Speaker. On the amendment passed out by the hon. member – I'll only read as much as I need to – at the end of the first line: "urge the government to support public education." Then it has "affirming" below that. Well, support can surely be interpreted as financial support, and I believe that's what it means here.

Of course, with a private member's bill it can't be a money bill. It cannot. If it has to do with money, it's no longer a private member's bill, Mr. Speaker. It cannot require the government to spend money or not spend money.

On top of the other good arguments from my colleagues on why this should be out of order, also another reason is the fact that this makes it a money bill, which is, in my view and, I think, according to the rules of the House, out of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I need to first advise that the clock stopped at the time the point of order was raised, so you are not consuming time. In an ideal world I might have taken more time to do this, but a point of order has been raised with respect to the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-East to Motion 504. That amendment makes several changes. You've all received a copy of that, a form substituting just some of the points.

Now, I'm advised that in *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition, page 175, paragraph 567 states that an amendment to a motion may seek to "modify a question in such a way as to increase its acceptability or to present to the House a different proposition as an alternative to the original question." At paragraph 578 the same book notes that "an amendment proposing a direct negative . . . is out of order." It is argued that this is what is happening with this amendment. In this case, however, I find that the purpose of the proposed amendment is to modify Motion 504 to present the House an alternative to the original question. The amendment is not a direct negative. Accordingly, I find that the amendment is in order as moved.

#### Point of Clarification

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, point of clarification. I rise under Standing Order 13(2), which reads, "The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member." I've also received a copy of the notes that you've liberally quoted from just now. I'm fascinated and puzzled, actually, that we should have such a completely drawn-out set of notes here given to us that clearly anticipates the challenge to this amendment. I guess my question as an hon. member to you as Speaker under 13(2) is to explain to the House, sir, when you first became aware of this amendment. You must have known ahead of time in order to have prepared the notes for this ruling, which was distributed to us before the ruling was actually even made. In fact, our first word of any amendment was just actually as the hon. member introduced it.

5:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm not exactly certain how you obtained the piece of information that you have. I was advised by

my table officers, and I did make a decision based upon a precedent, as cited in the decision that I made, and I would ask that . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, no. You made the ruling before you heard people make their arguments. That's a fact. This was printed out before people stood up in this House and made their arguments. I know because I had it in my hand, and it's in *Hansard*. This is not the way you run a Legislature. I'm sorry. I know you're unhappy with me, but I'm unhappy with you. When you make a ruling before you hear the evidence . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, would you please sit down?

**Mr. McIver:** No, I will not, not unless you reverse your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member . . .

**Mr. McIver:** I will not sit down unless you reverse your ruling.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, respectfully, could I ask . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Respectfully, I will not sit down unless you reverse your ruling. I'm happy to explain this on the front page of the newspaper tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member . . .

**Mr. McIver:** I will not sit down unless you reverse your ruling.

**The Speaker:** I'm asking you one final time if you would sit down.

**Mr. McIver:** My answer will not change, Mr. Speaker. I will not sit down unless you reverse your ruling, that you made before you heard the evidence presented in this House.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I received this, handed to me by one of the pages. Lest there be any suggestion that I had any notice of this coming to me – I did not. I did not receive this, and I am curious how this was received by you. That's another matter that needs to be discussed within the House in terms of practice here. You can only accept the word that I saw this at the same time.

Finally, therefore, you've made your request, that's conditional. I'm sorry. Unless you sit down, I'm going to have to ask you to leave the House.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I will not sit down unless you reverse your ruling.

**The Speaker:** Then I must ask that you leave the House now. Would you do that?

**Mr. McIver:** No, I'm not. You need to reverse your ruling, Mr. Speaker. This is not how it should be done. Rulings should be made after hearing the evidence, not before. I had this typed up in my hand before the evidence on the point of order was even presented.

**The Speaker:** As I continue this conversation with you, hon. member, in this particular context I recognize that we are breaching the past precedent and practice of this House, as I understand it. It seems to me, sir, that you ought to sit down so that we do not have to ask you to physically leave the place.

**Mr. McIver:** If you change your ruling, I'll be happy to sit down, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'm not sure that you as an hon. member can hold the House – the Speaker represents the entire House – to a condition

on a point of order, and that's, in fact, what I understand you are doing, hon. member. You're asking that the House, which the Speaker represents, based upon a belief, an allegation – the Speaker's honour has been brought to bear. You're saying that the Speaker received a ruling from staff prior to me making a decision. You can accept or not accept my word. I can only give you my word as an honourable member that I received this now from a page.

**Mr. McIver:** I believe I'm upholding the dignity of this House, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** By doing so, sir – one final time could I respectfully ask that you either sit down or leave the House?

**Mr. McIver:** I will sit down when the ruling is reversed, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'm afraid I cannot do that. I would ask that you respectfully leave the House with the Sergeant-at-Arms.

[Mr. McIver was escorted out of the Chamber by the Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms]

### Debate Continued

**The Speaker:** I believe that we are back to the amendment.

**Ms Luff:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Really, I don't believe that this changes the intent of the original motion. All that this amendment does is that it affirms our commitment to public education. In fact, the current way that the charter school regulations are worded is that the regulations state that charter school applications should only be approved in instances where proposed programs are not available in the public system. Those words currently exist within the way that charter schools are set up. So I would not say that this amendment particularly changes the intent of the original motion, sir. I do want to speak to a couple of really excellent examples where charter schools are providing a service that is not currently available in the public system.

I have a charter school in my riding, Almadina Language Charter Academy, that serves ESL students. Now, ESL students are served within the Calgary board of education, but this is a school specifically for ESL students that also offers an Arabic language program, which is not something that's currently available within the Calgary board of education. They do an amazing job. Their teachers love working there, their kids love attending there, and it's really providing a core service. They have a very long wait-list. Parents in my riding of Calgary-East really like this school. They like that their children can go and that it specifically targets children with ESL needs. Their test scores show that the scores of the children who attend this particular school achieve far higher than they would be expected to given their socioeconomic status and also the status of their language. I mean, that's an example of a charter school that's doing amazing work.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Connect Charter School in Calgary is also doing amazing work. It is a very intense, inquiry-based program that is doing a really good job.

There are some really excellent examples of where charter schools are providing a service that is not available in the public system, and this amendment simply speaks to the original intent of how charter schools were set up while also affirming our commitment to allowing parents to choose however they want to

educate their children, simply affirming that we have a strong commitment to public education.

I think that's all. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any others to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, I'm happy to say a few words on the amendment. Certainly, as well, it's very important for everyone to understand, judging by the two budgets that we have just passed in the last six months and all of the work that we have been doing, that we affirm our commitment to all forms of education in the province of Alberta as long as they're providing high-quality education that we regulate through the Ministry of Education.

We are, quite frankly, very concerned to make sure that we have all the capacity in our education system that we can. We have a growing enrolment in our schools, Madam Speaker, and certainly we are in the midst of a very large infrastructure build in regard to schools as well, the largest infrastructure build in history, quite frankly, in this province. Those are all indicators that we need all the capacity that we have available to us.

I certainly in the last 11 months or so have found wonderful examples of charter schools and private schools and home-schooling that are providing education choices for parents and children in our province. I mean, this is a very important point that I say every time I'm with people. Of course, you can judge us on the actions that take place in regard to funding that has happened and will continue to happen as well.

5:30

What is important – and I think the amendment speaks to that – is to talk about the regulations around starting new schools, starting new private schools and charter schools and so forth. You know, it's always important to remember that we do provide public funding for these schools as well. It goes through a regulatory process based on public funds, and being responsible for those public funds is very important. Our ministry works through those processes to ensure that there is a standard of education that's being met and that we are looking at ways to supplement education as it stands in the province as well.

The amendment simply is a manifestation of the regulations that already do exist when we do make an evaluation on a new private school or a new charter school as well. In the 11 months that I've been minister, I mean, we've made deliberations on both of those things. I have re-established licensing for charter schools, and I've evaluated other new applications as well through our ministry, using the criteria that is available to us. I think that's an important distinction for people to understand, and that's certainly part of the reason that, I guess, this motion is important and useful and that that distinction is made in the motion as well.

We, of course, are very proud of the steps that we've taken to ensure that our children have a high quality of education, especially during these difficult economic times. As minister I know how important stable and predictable funding is for our students, our teachers, and our education partners. The budget we just released on Thursday ensures that every new child entering our schools in the fall will be funded for that enrolment. They will have the teacher, the physical space, and the support staff that's available for them to succeed.

We know that the restoration of funding, which includes all forms of schools, Madam Speaker, has led to the opportunity to hire at least 740 additional teachers, protecting 800 support staff jobs. Now with this new budget from Thursday we can see another 360

teachers and 260 support staff hired. Of course, this is an important commitment and definition of commitment, quite frankly, and I think that it's been very well received indeed.

On Friday last week I held a phone conversation with public, charter, and private school boards after we released our budget, and what I heard on the other end was very pleasing indeed. They were very happy with our choices for funding and the hope for the future that that entails. I think that making sure that we establish funding and have long-term, predictable funding is what school boards have been looking for for a long time, and I think that our budget on Thursday was a reaffirmation of that as well.

It is obvious that I am an advocate and a product of public education, but I also recognize that there is very good work that does take place in charter and private schools as well as home-schooling. As a good example, I had a chance to meet a student and a principal of Boyle Street Education Centre, which is a charter school here in Edmonton. The students attending Boyle Street are often vulnerable and survivors of difficult circumstances, so the dedicated staff at this charter school go out of their way to support these youngsters and provide them with the tools they'll need to succeed.

A number of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students attend Boyle Street, and the centre works to make sure that its courses are culturally relevant. It's a school that's also a leader, Madam Speaker, in regard to developing policy to support all students, including those in the LGBTQ community. In that policy work teachers are actually involved and working very closely with the students, and it has a very positive effect on their learning and retention rates and graduation rates.

Certainly, as I travel around the province, we see examples of private schools that provide for students with severe special needs. You know, we value every step of the way the provision that these schools make for the children that they are responsible for. There are lots of great examples out there.

I say from beginning to end that we reaffirm that the needs of our 659,000 students, probably more as we speak, are paramount, and I look for the capacity, the stability, and the security that our fine schools do provide. Always we're working to adapt, and always we're looking to improve. But, certainly, everyone must hear my words and understand our affirmation of funding in support for different forms of schools as long as the quality and the standard that we expect from those schools does not waiver. I think that is a message that everyone should make sure they do understand.

Now, I've also spoken to my public school boards, which includes Catholic school boards, and challenged them, you know, to look to make sure that they provide alternative programming as well. I know Edmonton public has set a very high standard for offering alternative programming in their schools, and I think that it paid off very well in regard to the choices that parents have across the city. I know that the evolution of alternative programming is at different places and times around the province, but the more that we can challenge school boards to offer different choices, then certainly that is very helpful for the children and for students and parents and families, to have that level of high-quality choice available to them.

Madam Speaker, it's always a balancing. We know that it was not easy, by any means, to find those dollars to fund education, but this caucus, our cabinet, and our Premier reaffirm to me time and time again that we invest in education every step of the way during difficult economic circumstances or not because that's just who we are as Albertans, that's who we are as a community, and we certainly cannot waiver from that position. So you can watch us and look at the budgets – two budgets in six months – that reaffirm that

commitment, and moving forward, we will continue to do so as well. I've heard very strong and positive reaction from our partners in education – the school boards, parents, students, teachers – and I certainly am grateful for that input.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon on the amendment, followed by Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think we're all a little shocked at what has happened in this Chamber today. I would speak to the amendment – and I will be speaking to that amendment – but I want to start addressing it in this fashion. I believe that today, now more than ever, in Alberta we need educational choice and we need flexibility to choose and to allow parents to choose the educational choice and delivery method for their children.

I don't know if you've looked up the Treasury Board and Finance statistics with regard to immigration into this province, but I have. This province has consistently captured double-digit shares of Canada's immigrant population since 2009. Alberta has been attracting a large number of immigrants. As a matter of fact, we've been the destination of choice for immigrants into this country, Alberta.

5:40

It's because of that that we all recognize in this House we're a multicultural province and that we need to have this discussion about what educational choice will look like, and this amendment speaks to that educational choice. We in this province represent every language, religion, colour, political persuasion that you can think of. What ties us together isn't an ethnic sense of nationalism; it's a civic sense of nationalism. Albertans are tied together by our commitment to democracy, to the ideas of freedom and of equality, of personal conscience, and the right to religious freedom. It is these democratic values that draw us together, and it's probably why I'm so concerned about this amendment to the motion.

You see, I believe that Albertans are committed to these values. It's these values that tie us together, and they're the key to being in community in Alberta. Of all of the values that we uphold in this province, freedom is one of the greatest. We have a clear understanding and commitment as a province to a balanced understanding of freedom, a responsible freedom that understands that every citizen must be free to speak to their conscience, to raise their family, to pursue their own faith, and to do so within the balance of community. I don't believe that this amendment to this motion speaks to that.

It's a delicate balance that we have in this province, but we've exercised that balance in innumerable ways, and we've done it very successfully. We've encouraged all Albertans into a social compact that will allow for freedom, bound by a commitment to live in community in such a fashion that we respect all of our individual rights, including the rights of parents to decide how their children will be educated in this province. Not the state, not with any recommendation or guidance or final say by the state as to what we can or should not be able to have, but in a reasonable fashion to meet the needs of the parents and the students as they see fit in this province.

The Wildrose Party will support the motion, but we will not be supporting this amendment because we do not believe that this amendment fits with that vision of education, with the rights that we believe we should all have as Albertans. We believe that our system of education must reflect the historical respect for diversity and for parental rights that we have created in this province. There

are many ways to teach and there are many different communities that we have, and we expect our education system to be able to serve all of those communities, in all of their diversity.

It should be no surprise that we must craft an education system that will reflect the diversity of this province. We need an education system that will continue to serve a multicultural province, one that respects parental rights and choice and one that will be flexible enough to serve the different communities within this province, and this amendment attacks that. One thing that the PC government almost always did well was to encourage respect of parental choice in education, and we cannot let that principle erode. I believe that this amendment attacks that principle.

Alberta is a model of educational diversity in Canada and around the world, and we must support that vision of education, Madam Speaker. We have a diverse system with public schools, Catholic schools, home education, charter schools, alternative programs, independent schools, and all of it is driven by parental choice, not by the state. Taken together, they meet the needs of Canada's diverse community. Alberta has been a world leader in supporting educational choice within school boards and according to the priorities of the parents and the interests of the children, and that is what we need here. Not this amendment.

Indeed, Alberta's publicly funded system, I believe, is amazing in its diversity. The Fraser Institute has spoken to that, saying, "Generally speaking, Alberta offers the greatest degree of school choice in Canada." This needs to be maintained. We need to maintain an education system that has been able to meet the needs of all of our diverse communities, and that is why I want to be able to speak against this amendment, Madam Speaker.

We learned this early on in Canadian history. If nobody else across the aisle has learned it, we've learned it in the rest of Canada. Faced with a nation that was divided by French and English politics, in a nation that was being divided, we saw it happen in 1890 in Manitoba, Madam Speaker, when the English Protestant school system was going to be imposed on a French Catholic population. Out of this controversy was established what we call in our Canadian history the Laurier-Greenway compromise, a compromise that said that where numbers warrant, where there is significant interest by the parents to have a particular style of education – in this case in Manitoba, a French Catholic education – they would be able to have that. This was not driven by the state. It was the antithesis of that. It was the state recognizing that educational decisions are made by the parents, not by the state.

While the government currently says that they will support choice in education, what we have now is a question as to whether or not they actually do. The Minister of Education has stated quite clearly, Madam Speaker:

I think it's a bit duplicitous that we actually direct public funds to a private school, but that's a discussion for another day.

I guess we're having it today.

Why spend \$10,000, \$20,000, \$30,000 on a private school when you probably get a better education in the public school down the street?

Madam Speaker, to quote the Premier: "Our caucus is steadfastly opposed to private schooling and particularly steadfastly opposed to public dollars supporting private schooling."

So what this amendment speaks to cannot be held in isolation. It must be taken in the context of the things that have been said prior by this government and by the members of this government. It was with great interest that I was waiting to listen today to see what the members from the opposite side of the House would say. I guess we have got a very clear statement. They believe that it is not the parents. Rather, in this motion we see that it says: "where they offer alternatives not available in the public system."

**Mr. Barnes:** Who decides that?

**Mr. Smith:** That, I guess, is the job of some bureaucrat or somebody in government.

This amendment assumes that the public system has a priority. The very nature of this amendment attacks the very concept of the idea of parental choice. This motion is actually about freedom, the freedom of parents to decide, not the state, not the government.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by Vermilion-Lloydminster if there's time.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Madam Speaker, I'll pass for the moment. Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Madam Speaker, I see this afternoon's proceedings as being a tremendous lost opportunity. It disappoints me. Really, what we wanted to have this afternoon was a discussion about a principle that, as the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon has articulated, has long been something that has guided education in this province, and that is parental choice.

5:50

There have been concerns since the election of this government on the part of many parents across our province that in some ways those choices or that ability to choose would be eroded. Now, the Education minister, to his credit, has stated in question period that that is not his intent. He has said not equivocally in terms of going forward, but he has certainly said for the time being that those choices would still be made available. But for parents across the province the ability to have that choice is something that they need to have affirmed to them, and this motion gave government members the opportunity to do that.

In fact, because it's a private member's motion and because it's a free vote, if there are some members of government caucus that don't agree with the statement, they could vote against the motion. I think that given the diversity of the province of Alberta there would be some who would applaud them on making that decision to vote against the motion because they have a fundamental disagreement with the notion of parental choice. I will tell you that on behalf of parents who make choices that are alternate to public education we make them with the greatest of care, Madam Speaker. I can assure you of that and that we are concerned that members of this government do not necessarily honour that ability to make that choice.

Now, I spoke out in this Legislature in October 2012, and I'm quoting here from *Hansard*. At that time the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was speaking to government Bill 3. We were speaking that night about choice in education, and I'm going to quote. I'm going to go back a little bit in his quote because what we were talking about were some of the changes that had been made when Bill 3, the Education Act, was reintroduced. He's referring to basically some of the information we received from groups like charter school parents and home-school parents. The hon. member said: "I think it's deplorable. I think that it is pandering to fringe groups in our education system, and the vast majority of students who participate in the public school system will suffer as a result." Specifically, just to get the full context of the debate, he was referring to home-schoolers.

I saw it as recently as Monday night at the Alberta School Boards Association, when I had a school board trustee come up to me and say: "You know what the problem with our public school system is? It's those home-schoolers. It's those parents that make decisions to home-school their kids." I looked at that trustee and said: well, you probably picked the wrong guy to say that to. My wife and I

were blessed with two sons, and they were home-schooled K to 12. The one is currently completing a master's degree in theology, having finished a bachelor of arts degree in applied arts and philosophy. The other one has a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Calgary. I think they've turned out okay.

We made those choices, Madam Speaker, specifically because when my wife told a public school teacher, who was a friend of ours, that our oldest son had taught himself to read and that he was reading at a grade 9 level by the time he got to the age of three, that public school teacher told my wife: you know, I used to really enjoy teaching students like Roland, but now they're just a problem. That's what we were told, that our son, if he went to public school, would be a problem, a problem in the class of a teacher whom we respected for her ability and her passion for teaching. After that, after many tears were shed, my wife and I made the decision that we would home-school our children. There have been times when we wondered if that was the right decision, but we made that decision.

My problem with this amendment, Madam Speaker, is that I have a problem with the phrase "commitment to allowing parents the choice . . . for their children, including home, charter, and private education programs in such instances where they offer alternatives not available in the public system." Parental choice becomes conditional. It becomes conditional upon proving – and I'm not sure to whom or how – that those alternatives are not available in the public system. What would we have had to do? Would we have had to subpoena that teacher to appear in front of some sort of tribunal in order to get permission to home-school our sons? That's what we were told.

You may not want to believe that. That's fine. That's your prerogative. But my wife and I were told that our gifted son would be a problem in public school, so we chose an alternative. We didn't want to create a problem for a teacher or for a group of students, and we home-schooled that child. We home-schooled both of our sons, and throughout it was not just our choice as parents; it was their choice. Every year we sat down with them and said: "Do you want to continue on this path of home-schooling, or do you want to attend public school? That option is available to you." And every single year they chose to be home-schooled.

That choice is available in Alberta. That choice is funded in Alberta. Alberta and British Columbia are the only two provinces that actually fund home-schooling. In some European countries it's illegal. It's illegal to home-school in Germany. It's illegal to home-school in Sweden. And it's stunning to me that this amendment would move us closer to a situation where you have to prove to someone – we don't know who; we don't know how – that a certain course or type of education is not available in the public system. That's what the amendment says.

Instead of having a debate, as the original motion would have had, talking specifically about affirming parental choice and all of the variety of choice and allowing hon. members to speak to that either in favour or opposed – that's what private member's motions are for. It's a free vote. You can vote opposite to the person sitting next to you. That's okay. That's fine. But instead of having that, we

have this amendment that fundamentally changes this motion because now it makes parental choice conditional. It makes parental choice only an option where the parents can prove that the choice they want to make is not available in the public system.

Madam Speaker, that fundamentally changes what we're talking about here. I think, quite frankly, it sends a shiver down the spine of every parent in this province who chooses to educate their children in a manner that is not in keeping with what is preferred by that side of the House, and that indeed is a sad day for this province. If parental choice is removed from parents in Alberta, if the opportunity guaranteed by the United Nations that parents shall be the primary deciders of how their children shall be educated, removing it from parents and handing it over to the state, handing it over to somebody who decides whether the conditions in this amendment are in fact being satisfied, that will send a shiver down the spine of every home-school parent, charter school parent, private school parent in the province.

It didn't have to be that way. We could have debated the original motion, and we could have had a split in all caucuses for that matter, because some, perhaps, wouldn't have supported the motion in all the caucuses. Instead, we have this amendment that has fundamentally changed it and has fundamentally changed it into a situation where parents will only have the opportunity to choose these nonapproved courses, these nonapproved streams of education that have always been available purely on the choice of the parent because they now have to prove that that's not available in the public education system.

Madam Speaker, that's a sad, sad statement, and I can only think that observers of this debate today will be very disappointed in that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I don't know where to start. It's been quite the afternoon. You know, we've seen things this afternoon that we might never see in this Assembly again. That's certainly my hope. But the big challenge that we face is understanding who is in charge of the education of our children, and that's what we were doing this afternoon.

In fact, today my children happen to be in the gallery, and if you can believe it, Madam Speaker, they're at school. They are currently learning. I would imagine that some day I'll describe exactly what transpired this afternoon, and they will be surprised at what happened. They'll be surprised that the government moved an amendment that at the end of the day, should it be passed, would take away parental choice, would potentially expose those who choose to educate their children in alternative manners to not have that same choice.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to the standing orders it's now 6 p.m. and we do have to adjourn the House for the afternoon. The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, April 19, 2016

Day 17

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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# STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

## Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

## Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

## Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

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Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

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Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

## Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

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Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

## Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
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Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

## Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKittrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

## Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
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Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

## Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
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## Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, April 19, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect each in our own way. Hon. members, today marks the centennial of the equal suffrage amendment. One hundred years ago this act gave most Albertan women the right to vote in provincial elections and was a vital step in the continuing evolution of democracy in Alberta and, in fact, across Canada. This was a pivotal stepping stone in the lengthy fight for equality amongst all citizens of our province. Let us remember that the drive for equality around this world of ours is still something that we must all dedicate our efforts towards.

Thank you. Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Speaker's Rulings Admissibility of Amendments

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would like to address the situation that arose in the Assembly yesterday afternoon during the debate on Motion 504. While I consider that this matter is concluded, I do think it is important to clarify the events that transpired for the information of all.

During the debate on Motion 504 a confidential document containing advice from the table officers for the Speaker was inadvertently delivered to the leader of the third party. For those members who may not be aware, table officers anticipate issues that may be arising in the Assembly, and they routinely advise the Speaker on those matters. Yesterday was no different except that the advice went mistakenly to the leader of the third party. For clarity, the draft ruling that the leader received addressed the admissibility of an amendment to Motion 504. I want to assure members that I had not seen the amendment before it was introduced in the Assembly.

With respect to the decision let me be clear that I did listen and will always listen to the arguments very carefully in any decisions on rulings in this Assembly, but the decisions in the Assembly are mine and mine alone.

Finally, my ruling on the admissibility of the amendment stands in debate on Motion 504, and the proposed amendment will continue on May 2, 2016.

As members are aware, there are a lot of notes and documents that are delivered by pages in this Assembly. Sometimes members receive documents not intended for them.

I hope this assists the Assembly in getting clarity on the events that took place and that we might together move forward in a more constructive content and desire, which we all share.

The hon. member of the opposition.

### Point of Clarification

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order, Standing Order 13(2), "The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member." I appreciate your comments this morning. Just seeking some further clarification with respect to the ruling, and I recognize that the ruling was yours and yours alone.

Having said that, we have a long-standing tradition in the Chamber of allowing private members' motions to be debated without amendment. There are a few occasions in the past where amendments have been made when working in conjunction with the mover of the motion. While I appreciate the extension of an olive branch from the Government House Leader to the third party, that was proposed by another private member, it does cause some concern as to whether or not the effectiveness of private members' motions will continue if they can be amended at the whim of the Government House Leader or another member of the Chamber.

I'm just curious to know if you're able to provide additional comment with respect to your ruling around: are private members' motions going to be allowed to be amended, particularly in light of the fact that the member who introduced the motion certainly – they would no longer have been his words. From time to time members will wait three or four or five years in order to propose a private member's motion, and if the motion was passed, it certainly wouldn't have reflected the words of the member who proposed the motion. So it's troubling to me. As you know, the role of the Speaker is to defend the voice of the minority, and in this case it would have drastically changed that.

My question with respect to your ruling and seeking some clarification under 13(2) is: was the long-standing tradition of the Assembly taken into consideration with the ruling?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the point of order raised by the Opposition House Leader. There have been numerous occasions in the past where private members' motions have been amended. I will give you some examples and share them with the House.

Back on May 5, 2008, there was a motion that was amended by the PC caucus. A motion on April 2, 2007, Motion 503, was a Liberal motion that was amended by the PCs at the time. There are a number of examples, which I'm happy to table in this House. I just want to clarify for the House that this is a practice that has occurred many times in the past. This has been done. Motions can be amended.

Even in *Beauchesne's* parliamentary practice, in 569, "(1) A motion may be amended by: (a) leaving out certain words; (b) leaving out certain words in order to insert other words; (c) inserting or adding other words." That's under amendments in *Beauchesne's*.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important, number one, that we look at precedent in the past in your decision on this and that motions have been amended on numerous occasions. They may be amended in the future. What I also want to reiterate at this point in time is that the Government House Leader did reach across the aisle to the Member for Calgary-Hays and indicated that we intend to withdraw our amendment on this motion, extending an olive branch to members of the Assembly. But I do want to ensure that the House is aware that this is a normal practice, amending motions, and it is within the ability and authority of this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

10:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. You know, I rise because as a private member we have very, very, very few tools to present our ideas and to represent our constituents and the interests of Albertans. I just want to be very clear that although *Beauchesne's* 569 read in the literal sense . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, would you mind directing your comments with respect to Standing Order 13(2).

**Mr. Clark:** Yes. To the point of order, Mr. Speaker, I do want to further my hon. colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and his request for further clarification under 13(2) from yourself.

As a private member we do have very few tools, and while 569 read literally, I believe, could be interpreted to allow a government private member or any private member to propose an amendment, the amendments, as I understand it, that have been the tradition of this House have been friendly amendments that have been proposed by one side or the other and accepted by the mover of the amendment. It's important, I think, that we remember the traditions of this House, and I'm very curious and interested to hear your comments under 13(2) on this particular matter given the fact that we have very little . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, thank you.

I did address the 13(2) issue yesterday in the sequence of events that took place, but let me make some additional remarks. I did listen to it very carefully. I think the deputy House leader yesterday identified the points that had been raised with respect to precedent. I am pleased to hear that the Government House Leader had discussions with the opposition with respect to these moves. If there's anything that I've learned and understood in this House, it's that context has a great deal to do with the decisions that are made and that when one sometimes applies a broad practice and presumes there's one answer, there are usually several.

I can tell the House that in this capacity I take considerable weight and emphasis about the responsibility, as the members have identified, to recognize the rights and the opportunities of the opposition to raise matters because of the number of votes with a majority government. I do and will continue to do my best efforts to preserve that principle. I would therefore encourage the caucuses to reach out on these matters and approach these matters, particularly around those bills that we discussed yesterday afternoon, that part of our week. As the opposition members have all said, that is an opportunity for private members. Accordingly, please treat those times respectfully and address the points that are raised.

I have nonetheless made the decision with respect to 13(2). I did in fact cite in my decision several statements from *Beauchesne's*, and I would therefore submit that those reasons stand.

With the permission of the House, I would now go to Orders of the Day.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 9

#### An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and move second reading of Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences.

This bill makes amendments to make the enforcement of provincial laws and municipal bylaws more effective, efficient, and proportionate. The bill has two main components. First, it changes the enforcement mechanism for minor provincial and municipal offences. Second, it allows for the increased use of e-tickets.

I'll address the first issue first. Currently if a person is ticketed for a minor, non motor vehicle related infraction, like failing to pay a transit fare or failing to shovel snow, and does not attend court or pay the ticket in time, the court will issue a warrant for that person's arrest. If the person comes to the attention of police again and they cannot pay at that time, they will be sent to jail. This method of enforcement is disproportionate, resource intensive, and ineffective.

Mr. Speaker, in 2011 Barry Stewart died in the old Edmonton Remand Centre in a tragic incident that could have been prevented. A comprehensive fatality inquiry report was completed to look into this incident. The review indicated that Barry Stewart had been placed in the remand centre to serve a five-day sentence arising from his failure to pay fines for being intoxicated in a public place, trespassing, failure to appear, and jaywalking. With this legislation in place, individuals with overdue fines from minor infractions will not face jail time. Barry Stewart's tragic death I think is a poignant reminder of how important it is to keep people who don't belong in jail, who don't present a danger to the public out of jail.

Currently people are being sent to jail not because they've committed an offence where jail is the appropriate penalty but because they can't afford to pay fines. Mr. Speaker, this amounts to criminalizing poverty, and it does not serve anyone in Alberta. Jail is an incredibly expensive method of dealing with individuals, and it should be reserved for instances in which the person presents an actual danger to the public. It should not be used to criminalize those who have been unfortunate enough to find themselves struggling with mental health or addiction and find themselves living on the streets with insufficient money to pay tickets, some of which are often issued for violations like loitering, which essentially amounts to, you know, standing around where you're not meant to be. But if you have no private space to go to, if you are homeless, sometimes you will find yourself out on the street. It's, I think, deeply unfair to ticket these people for being homeless and then to ultimately send them to jail.

Of course, there should be consequences when someone violates a municipal bylaw or provincial offence, and there will continue to be. With these amendments if a fine is not paid voluntarily, it will be enforced through civil enforcement mechanisms. The main enforcement mechanism will be a restriction on motor vehicle registry services. This is very similar to what we do now with traffic tickets and parking tickets. If a person doesn't pay and they don't respond by the date in question, then when they go to register their vehicle, they'll be unable to register their vehicle and will be asked to pay. For those people who don't own vehicles or who refuse to pay their fines, other enforcement mechanisms will be available. These include filing writs against real estate or personal property and garnisheeing wages. You can also garnishee bank accounts or income tax refunds and GST rebates. In the case of the latter two, this will be done through the Canada Revenue Agency set-off program.

With these amendments, Mr. Speaker, our government and social agencies will be in a better position to work with individuals who are coping with poverty so that these individuals don't become trapped in an endless cycle of poverty and incarceration. Bill 9 will help reduce the criminalization of poverty.

In addition, using warrants to enforce fines for minor infractions is ineffective. The number of outstanding warrants in Alberta continues to grow each year, with warrants for minor infractions being a major contributor. Currently we have close to 187,000 outstanding warrants in Alberta, and half of those warrants are for relatively minor provincial and municipal infractions. Issuing and enforcing these warrants is resource intensive for the police. In addition, it's estimated that court staff alone spend more than 9,000

hours annually processing warrants for minor infractions. Law enforcement agencies also spend many hours each year entering these warrants into their system and transporting and processing the individuals they arrest.

The cost of using these police resources – and they really are resources. You know, police officers are highly trained people. These are resources that are best targeted for what they're intended to do, which is to deal with sort of criminal matters. Using these police resources on minor infractions instead of more serious infractions is deeply concerning. This proposed legislation will help address this issue, and it will allow police officers, who are highly trained individuals, to focus on what's most important for them. These amendments will make this enforcement more efficient, more effective, and more fair for the individuals who come into contact with the system.

**10:20**

Mr. Speaker, the other set of amendments in this legislation will enable the expansion of what we call e-tickets in Alberta. E-tickets are violation tickets that are filed and processed electronically rather than in paper form. These are already used for photoradar offences, which account for about 60 per cent of all tickets in the province. The proposed amendments will enable the use of e-tickets for offences where the ticket is issued directly to an individual, a process which other provinces, including Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia, have already implemented.

Currently when an officer issues a ticket at the roadside, the ticket is handwritten on a preprinted form. After the ticket is issued, the officer must bring the court and police copies back to be entered into the law enforcement data system. The court copy must then be physically transported to the court or clerk's file and entered into the court information system. Currently if a summons ticket is issued, an officer is required to take the ticket before a commissioner for oaths and swear that they have reasonable grounds to believe that the person they issued the ticket to committed the offence. Under the new system they will be deemed to have sworn. The standard required for charging will remain the same, but the administrative step of swearing the ticket will be removed.

These amendments will enable the officer to enter the necessary information about the offender and the offence into a laptop, print a paper copy of the summons ticket in their cruiser, and give that to the alleged offender. The electronic ticket in the laptop will be sent automatically to the law enforcement system and to the court information system, so paper copies will not need to be transported and clerks will not need to use their time doing data entry. By eliminating the need to file paper tickets with the court, processing times will be quicker, administration costs will be lower, and the opportunity for simple data entry errors will be reduced.

I would like to highlight that using e-tickets does not change the standard for charging someone with an offence, nor does it create new opportunities to issue tickets. The standard for charging will remain the same, and the offences with which one is charged will remain the same. All that will change is that the information will be entered once and transmitted electronically instead of having to be entered on separate occasions.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, these amendments have been discussed for the past decade, and many people have been waiting on the government to make these changes. I'm proud that not even a year into my role I'm able to bring this bill forward to work towards modernizing the enforcement of provincial offences. I think that at this time, when we are so short on resources, these sorts of initiatives, which will ensure that people's time, court clerks and police, is used efficiently and effectively to ensure that we aren't,

you know, enforcing warrants for issues we don't need to be enforcing and ensure that time is not being used for data entry which could be used in another way, are really critical because at this time the government faces significant financial pressures. I think it's in the interest of all Albertans to ensure that we are using resources most effectively.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I think it remains important to note that for a very long time community groups have been calling for some of these amendments. They have been asking to change the system so that people don't enter the cycle of incarceration, so that a youth who may be struggling, who may have left home early for whatever reason they have, who gets on a C-Train and doesn't pay for the C-Train doesn't find themselves in jail being exposed to people who are far more entrenched in a criminal lifestyle, that we maybe don't want them to be exposed to. You know, once someone enters the jail system, they can find themselves sort of moving into a lifestyle that will keep them rotating in and out of jail for years. This doesn't serve anyone. It's not in the interest of the individual in question, it's not in the interest of Albertans, and it certainly isn't in the interest of ensuring that we're targeting funds effectively.

I would respectfully urge all my colleagues in this House to support this bill. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** I would recognize the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today on Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences. There are a few elements of this bill that I'd like to speak to, and I would like to pose a few questions to the government so that we can get a better understanding of exactly how this legislation will affect Albertans. I think it is important to discuss some of the finer points now rather than have the teeth of this bill decided behind closed doors through regulations.

I would like to say that I am in favour of the policies that make it easier for men and women in our provincial law enforcement agencies to do their job. I am hopeful that if carried out properly, Bill 9 is a step in the right direction for the administration of our justice system.

This bill can really be understood as two different amendments to the judicial process. The first seeks to fix our current system, which requires the issuance of warrants for minor offences and which has developed an astounding delinquency rate and a disproportionate response from our legal system. The second component is the replacement of an officer's obligation to have another officer swear on the ticket for the day. This legislation takes away this extra and onerous step and allows for the e-ticketing process.

Wildrose acknowledges that the current formula for minor offences is not working for the taxpayer, for the convicted individual, or for the justice system or society as a whole. Right now there is a backlog of about 90,000 outstanding warrants, of which 16 per cent are over five years old. Clearly, there needs to be a better system of bringing people to justice. The current process of paper ticketing has also proven to be cumbersome since tickets can take a long time to issue in the field and are more prone to clerical errors. E-ticketing presents a unique opportunity for police departments to reduce administration time for police officers while increasing the accuracy of the tickets being issued.

When it comes to e-ticketing, I think that our province should be drawing on the success of the RCMP programs in Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and right here in Alberta. Through these programs police departments were able to create savings both in their departments' bottom lines and, more

importantly, by saving the time of their police officers in the field. If you ask any officer across the province, they will tell you that their time is better spent monitoring the community than doing administrative work.

Reports claim that through e-ticketing the issuance of provincial offence tickets would go from a total processing time, which includes the writing and swearing of the ticket, of 15 minutes down to three. If we extrapolate those savings to more than 7,000 police officers serving in Alberta, we feel that there's a real reason to anticipate some real savings to our judicial system. Eliminating administrative barriers to proper policing is exactly the type of red tape reduction that Wildrose has advocated for across government.

There are other savings that the NDP has promised with this legislation. Despite this government's unwillingness to find efficiencies in the daily operations of the bureaucracy, we will be waiting with a watchful eye to see savings that will come from the government's promised reduction of 9,000 hours per year of ticket processing time for judicial clerks. We'll be watching very closely because the government's most recent budget has estimated ticket processing to actually be \$2 million more in this upcoming year. Fewer hours, more efficiency, but somehow more spending. Strange, I know, and concerning.

While e-ticketing may seem like the best route for many streams of law enforcement, I think it must remain optional for municipalities to decide whether or not this system is right for their local policing needs. These folks know what works best for them, and we should be doing everything possible to empower our local decision-making. One size fits all is not always the right direction for this government, for its municipalities, and its citizens.

#### 10:30

At face value this bill does seem to resolve a problem that should not exist in Alberta. I am certain that we all can agree that a mom or a dad who forgot to pay their jaywalking ticket should not be arrested and jailed the next time they get pulled over for a broken tail light. Unfortunately, that could happen with the law in its current form. While this is bad enough for a person being arrested, it is also draining on government resources. When someone is convicted of a provincial offence like jaywalking, court clerks must process the issuance of a warrant. Then a police officer must arrest, process, transport, and jail someone for forgetting to pay that jaywalking ticket. This is a tremendous waste of taxpayers' money, and certainly it was not the intent of the original law.

Let me be clear. In no way am I advocating or condoning that people either (a) commit a provincial offence or (b), after being convicted, are delinquent about their punishment. I believe that we have these laws in place for a good reason, and that is public safety. People should have to pay their fine and be accountable for their actions. However, being arrested and jailed for forgetting to pay a jaywalking ticket seems unreasonable, and it's time to do away with an absurd process like this.

What is being discussed here is the enforcement mechanism through which we can ensure the most efficient use of public dollars in bringing people to justice. The enforcement being proposed here seems perfectly reasonable. The collection tool will mirror what happens to individuals who do not pay their traffic tickets, not that anyone in this House would know anything about that situation. Let me explain. If you have an unpaid traffic ticket, when you go to renew your driver's licence or registration, you have to pay the ticket in order to get your paperwork renewed.

The proposed legislation reads the same but has vague enough language which has left me needing further clarification. This is one of the points that I was hoping that we could discuss and nail down

in the House rather than leaving it to the regulation phase of this legislation. The proposed bill reads:

57 . . . the Registrar may,

- (d) . . . refuse to perform that function or service or to issue, renew or otherwise deal with any motor vehicle document or other document until the fine or penalty is paid.

Does this mean that a registry can refuse any type of service until a ticket is paid? Since the bill also applies to municipal bylaw infractions, does this mean that a person would not be able to get a new health care card until they pay their ticket for, let's say, not shovelling their sidewalks? This seems to undermine the common-sense solution that this government is painting this bill to be. Again, let's narrow this down here in the House so that members know what they're voting for.

On a note of clarity, I would like to discuss now this government's plan on dealing with repeat offenders. I am not speaking about the poorest members of our society who fall into what some have referred to as the revolving door at Alberta's prisons. These people are imprisoned on warrants for ETS fare jumping or having a dog without a licence. Eventually they are let out of prison, and due to their living conditions they are likely to repeat and go back to prison. Again, this does not seem to make sense. What I am speaking about are the people who may still not have the access that they need for registries. Is the door going to be wide open for them to trespass or be drunk in public over and over again, with no reprisal for their actions? It seems like there is a hole in this government's legislation that doesn't account for those who can afford to pay tickets, then don't, and then have no real need to access the registry. I am curious to hear the government's plan on how they are going to tighten this loophole.

I look forward to hearing the government's response to some of the ideas and questions I've brought forward today. I believe them to be legitimate concerns and in need of clarification.

With that, I say thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to discussing this issue further in Committee of the Whole.

**The Speaker:** I've been requested to revert to some introductions. Is there is an agreement for consent to introduce two guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Please proceed, hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning to introduce one of the women that has joined our Assembly today to mark the 100th anniversary of some women receiving the right to vote in Alberta. As everyone knows, each of us was provided with the opportunity to invite one person to join us for the celebrations today, and ours from Lethbridge-West is Dillon Hargreaves. Dillon is a trans activist in Lethbridge with the Trans Equality Society of Alberta and an active member of the Outreach Alberta society. She has a very bright political mind, and I expect continued municipal and provincial involvement from her. If Dillon would stand and receive the traditional warm welcome from the folks in our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the Assembly I, too, would like to introduce my guest, Kristin Krein. Kristin, if you'd stand. Kristin may be described as a ferocious fairness activist, a passionate social justice advocate, a staunch ally,



an effective community builder. She is a friend to both progressives and the marginalized that they seek to assist. Kristin's work is infused with the ideals of feminism, inclusiveness, and equity for all. This is evidenced through her tireless charitable and volunteer organizing activity, which continues to date, all while she pursues an academic degree at the University of Lethbridge. Kristin is truly an amazing woman, and I am proud to know her and call her my friend. I would ask that Kristin receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

## **Government Bills and Orders Second Reading**

### **Bill 9**

### **An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (continued)**

**The Speaker:** I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in support of Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences. This bill represents an innovative and fair way to help address the growing pressure on Alberta's justice system while protecting vulnerable Albertans from a cycle of incarceration and poverty, thus reducing the criminalization of poverty. Chris Hay, the executive director of the John Howard Society of Alberta, has been quoted as saying:

At the John Howard Society we see many people who are caught up in a cycle of poverty and incarceration and often their stories started with unpaid fines and other minor administration of justice issues. We truly feel that these amendments will help to break this cycle, ultimately saving taxpayers money while at the same time enhancing community safety.

This bill will free up police, court, and correctional resources to focus on serious crime while still holding those who commit minor infractions to account. This reinforces our government's commitment to improve the safety of our communities.

**10:40**

Given that the indirect cost associated with incarcerating individuals for minor infractions is approximately \$800,000, these amendments reinforce our government's commitment to responsible management of public finances. The electronic filing of tickets will create efficiencies and reduce errors and costs, freeing up resources in the justice system. It will allow law enforcement to focus more of their time on our streets, protecting Albertans. Chief Knecht, the Edmonton Police Service chief, has said:

The introduction of Bill 9 will allow police to free up officers and civilian staff to focus on predators and serious criminal offenders. As a result of modernized technology and this new approach, a significant reduction in administrative processes and paperwork is expected.

Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences, proposes amendments to the Provincial Offences Procedure Act and the Traffic Safety Act that will streamline and simplify how our provincial laws and bylaws are managed. The bill introduces two main amendments. First, it changes the enforcement mechanisms for minor provincial and municipal offences. Second, it allows increased use of e-tickets. These amendments will help protect vulnerable Albertans while making the enforcement of provincial laws and municipal bylaws effective, efficient, and balanced. If passed, these amendments will end Alberta's outdated process of

jailing individuals as a tool to enforce tickets for minor infractions and will reduce inefficiencies of the current model.

When Albertans, especially vulnerable Albertans, are unable to pay their initial fines and do not attend court, the court issues a warrant for their arrest. The fact is that vulnerable people are more likely to be issued tickets for minor infractions such as not paying for transit and are more likely to be arrested for failure to pay or appear in court. Thus, landing in jail further perpetuates a cycle of incarceration and poverty, which does not create safer communities. This method of enforcement is disproportionate, resource intensive, and ineffective. Therefore, these amendments provide a needed step towards ending the revolving door of poverty and incarceration.

Given our government's continued commitment to protecting all of Alberta, including vulnerable Albertans, if passed, these amendments will end the practice of punishing individuals for being unable to afford their fines. As the minister has mentioned, in 2011, for example, Barry Stewart was serving a five-day sentence due to his failure to pay fines for being intoxicated in a public place, trespassing, failure to appear, and jaywalking. During his stay at the old Edmonton Remand Centre Barry Stewart died in a tragic incident that could have been prevented. Significantly, Mr. Stewart was jailed for his inability to afford his tickets, not because jail was the appropriate response for his offences. Thus, if passed, this bill will end the practice of issuing warrants for people who have not paid their fines for minor infractions, a practice that contributes to criminalizing poverty.

As mentioned, the current model of using jail as a tool to enforce payment is ineffective and outdated. Moreover, the results of this practice are neither positive nor beneficial to Alberta taxpayers or to the broader community. Given that the indirect cost associated with incarcerating individuals for minor infractions is approximately \$800,000, these amendments reinforce our government's commitment to responsible management of public finances.

The proposed changes will also help the province defer costs by creating efficiencies that free up significant time for judiciary, court staff, police, and corrections officers. This will allow police officers and court staff to give time to more serious offences and offenders. Doing so will create safer communities in Alberta. Additionally, the province will benefit from more effective collection of fines and penalties that are payable to the province.

The main enforcement mechanism will be the restriction of motor vehicle registry services. In other words, these amendments will replace arrest and jail with civil measures such as motor vehicle registry service restrictions for people who have not paid tickets for minor infractions such as not paying a transit fare. For those people who don't own vehicles or refuse to pay their fines, other enforcement mechanisms will be available such as filing writs against property and garnishing bank accounts, wages, income tax refunds, and GST rebates.

In addition, evidence shows that warrants as a tool to enforce fines for minor infractions are not effective. Every year the number of outstanding warrants increases. Currently there are about 187,000 outstanding warrants, half of which are for minor infractions. Each year court staff spend more than 9,000 hours processing warrants for minor infractions, making this model ineffective and resource intensive. We will not actually see savings. The clerks are drowning in work. What we will get back is the ship righting itself. We can't lessen transfers to municipal police either. They'll just get more time.

The second amendment to the Provincial Offences Procedure Act is enabling the expansion of e-tickets in Alberta. The electronic filing of tickets will streamline the ticketing process by allowing

police to file tickets electronically with the court. The electronic filing of tickets will create efficiencies and reduce errors and costs to free up resources in the justice system. Currently when an officer issues a ticket, the ticket is handwritten on a preprinted form. After the ticket is issued, the officer must bring the court and police copies back to the detachment to be entered into the law enforcement data system.

For a summons ticket the officer must take the court copy before a commissioner for oaths and swear or affirm that they have reasonable grounds for issuing the ticket. The commissioner for oaths signs, and the ticket must be physically transported to the court, where the clerks file and enter them into the court information system. This process is time consuming, inefficient, and is ultimately hurting taxpayers and communities.

If passed, e-tickets will allow law enforcement to focus more of their time on the streets, thus protecting Albertans. Moreover, filing tickets electronically with the court reduces errors, improves service to Albertans by reducing filing times, lowers costs, and significantly improves ticket processing efficiencies by eliminating redundant data entry.

It is noteworthy to highlight that this amendment will not create new opportunities for police officers to issue tickets, nor will it change the standard for charging someone with an offence. Officers will still be required to have reasonable grounds to believe that an offence was committed in order to issue a violation ticket. However, it will reduce the number of ticket booklets that need to be printed, saving taxpayers money on printing and storage costs. It will also eliminate redundant data entry on the part of law enforcement and court staff, freeing them to attend to more important matters.

I encourage all members to support Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions of the member under 29(2)(a)?

I would recognize the Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am absolutely ecstatic to stand here in support of Bill 9, which is An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences. I've got a whole bunch of stuff here. I don't have anything, you know, prewritten; however, I do want to address quite a few things that I have heard, some mistruths. I think there are a lot of assumptions that have been made of what police officers do. I happen to have a lot of experience in this particular field as far as the judicial administrative law side of things. I want to start by really saying that the most important thing here, which makes me so pleased, is that the police and, essentially, society can now start focusing on the root causes of why people are actually falling into the justice system.

If I was to bring everybody back to the early 2000s – and I'll obviously address my own personal experience in this. Back in the early 2000s the only mechanisms for the police in Calgary, just to let everybody know – essentially, when we received enormous pressure from the public to deal with a lot of the homeless or the vulnerable folks that were in the downtown area, the only mechanisms we really had were to write a ticket or find a way to incarcerate that individual. We had no social services that were really available to the victims and those who were most vulnerable.

10:50

I'm very proud to say that I was part of a movement, part of, really, a paradigm shift in thinking which was started by former Chief Rick Hanson, which focused on the root causes of why people were actually falling into the justice system. The instructions from Chief Hanson were essentially, you know: let's deal with that

person who is intoxicated at a social level; let's not write him a ticket. In fact, those were his orders: do not write them a ticket so that that person finds their way into jail because that's not going to deal with their addictions problem and that will not deal with any mental health issues. In fact, that ultimately puts a huge cost on the justice system itself. When we look at it from the time that that individual, whether it be mental health or addictions problems, touches the system via the officers, via the courts, the promise to appear, and all this sort of stuff, which eventually reaches the point where they're in jail, we're talking numbers that are very, very large. I wish I had those numbers for you.

I want to dispel a couple of things that I heard. In regard to a jaywalking ticket I must say for my friends in the Official Opposition that, no, we don't write – sorry. I'm not a policeman anymore. I've got to remember that, right? The police don't write tickets to a mom who's jaywalking across the street. I'm not going to use that as an absolute. I'm sure there might be that odd occasion where maybe a police officer did that. The ticket, which is a pink ticket, a part 2, is written in what's called the public interest.

If, hypothetically, we stopped that person who had just jaywalked across the street, typically that is a part 3, which is just a yellow ticket. It's a fine of usually about \$25 or so, give or take. I think, actually, fines went up 30 per cent, so it's probably higher than that now. However, if I ran that individual and I deemed in my judgment that there's a concern that he or she is not going to show up to court or he or she is, you know, a perpetual offender, who's just going to continue to reoffend, then I would write that ticket in what's called the part 2, which is sworn to and could potentially go to warrant. Now, I will say that. That ticket then goes to warrant.

After it goes to warrant, then the officer, if that person is located again, arrests that person. The person is not typically brought to jail. The person is typically released on what's called a promise to appear. The officer can do that from the vehicle right there on the spot. Then what happens is that if that individual again fails to show up to court, the option for the administration of justice is to possibly release that person on a promise to appear if they so choose. My recommendation is that that person would then stand in front of a justice of the peace for release. Obviously, the person would stand there and then be released by a justice of the peace, which would apply a little bit more incentive for that individual to deal with said ticket. If again that person fails to deal with that, then the ticket usually goes in some variation to what's called a form 21 warrant, or the pay-or-stay warrant, and then that person can be incarcerated. Then a \$25 fine is basically – we say that's a day in jail, but a day in jail is really the arrest and then said release.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I just don't want the narrative to be out there that, you know, people who fail to shovel the walks or fail to obey the law by jaywalking across the street are given tickets and then rushed to jail. You're dealing with a person that is just not dealing with this, is clearly not dealing with this. The practice of, at least, the officers that worked for me and, I can say, my own personal practice was that – and I always hated writing tickets; I've got to say that – the tickets I wrote were usually to people that were either deserving of it or really, really bad guys.

You know, I want to touch another thing, too, and to say that there's a history to this. There's a history to this bill. It was actually on March 19, 2012, when the hon. David Xiao had a motion, and I'll read that motion to you. Motion 504 said:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to explore options for reducing the number of arrest warrants issued and offenders incarcerated for the repeated nonpayment of fines for minor provincial and municipal bylaw offences, with the

goal of increasing the efficiency of the criminal justice system and reducing the cost to taxpayers of sanctioning minor offences.

That's awesome.

I know that you guys are probably wondering what may have happened to that particular motion. Well, again, no disrespect to my friends in the Official Opposition. I know it's new; it's 2016. But this is not something that the Wildrose has been advocating for a long, long time. In fact, it was the Wildrose that were the biggest opposition to this particular motion.

Just to also educate folks, the private members, at least, on the government side, on the reason why this was shot down, it was brought forward by a PC member but was ultimately shot down by not only pressure from the Official Opposition at the time but also within their own party itself. On March 19, 2012, the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill stated: "Quite frankly, I don't know how we would do it if we didn't just go out there and ultimately arrest people. How else are you going to bring the offenders to justice?" So, you know, we had a situation where, obviously, in 2012 there was a clear majority, but there was disagreement with the private member that brought this forward.

Now, I personally in 2012 knew the Justice minister at the time. This is something that I have been advocating for quite some time, again, with my experience in the judicial administrative law portion of the Calgary Police Service because I saw that revolving-door justice system. I saw the vulnerable people that were coming in and out, and I saw the costs. I always look at things – I'm still a conservative at heart, right? I saw the costs to the justice system, to police as well as the prosecutors as well as defence as well as the judges that were having to deal with this. That certainly was, obviously, a massive and significant concern for me.

I would also like to talk about long-term care beds. I want to stay on topic, but I believe that there's going to be significant money that is going to be saved by doing all of this. You know, like my friend from Calgary-Mountain View, I would like to advocate for long-term care beds because we really need to focus on the root causes of a lot of this addiction that is going on. Recovery beds only deal with the immediate crisis but do not affect the long-term crisis, so that's something I certainly want to advocate for.

You know, Bill 9 will not just save money. I think Bill 9 will also provide a paradigm shift throughout Alberta, which, hopefully – and I'm glad to hear the Edmonton police chief talk about this as well because I know this is something that we've been doing in Calgary, and we would like this to be done throughout Alberta. I want to see the RCMP do this. I want to see Red Deer and Lethbridge and Medicine Hat do this. I want them to focus on ways of reducing not only the costs to the justice system but also freeing up the officers to deal with more serious problems.

11:00

You know, I can tell you right now that when I call 911 or any of my friends call 911 or my family calls 911, I want that officer to come now, not say, "I'm sorry; there's a delay," or "I'm sorry; we have a whole bunch of people that are stuck down in the arrest processing area," because they're dealing with these tickets, which are not really what the police should be dealing with.

In conclusion, I'm happy to answer any questions from anybody. I'm very passionate about this, and I'm very happy that the government is bringing this forward. I am absolutely in support of Bill 9, and I look forward to a hearty debate in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments for the hon. member under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the previous speaker for his comments. Knowing that he was a police officer and has quite a bit of experience in this, it's great for him to validate the effectiveness of this bill and the necessity of this bill.

I wanted to rise to speak to this, Madam Speaker, because I have a personal connection with many young people as I was a teacher at Inner City high school. I can tell you countless stories of students of mine who, because they were either born into poverty or living on the streets, would jump onto the LRT or jump onto a bus to get to school, didn't have any money, and would get a ticket. Of course, over time that ticket would turn into a warrant, and eventually they would get picked up, put into the system. As the Minister of Justice explained, really, it became a revolving door, and suddenly they had a criminal past. You know, part of the challenge as well and what would often happen inside prison is that youth who don't display criminal behaviours are now in touch with those that do, and they suddenly get pulled even further in a certain direction.

I can tell you that I also saw that when I was a corrections officer at the Edmonton Young Offender Centre. I worked there for a number of years many, many years ago, and I can tell you that it was very sad to see, especially, you know, young kids that would get incarcerated. Often if they spent a significant amount of time in EYOC around others that had already turned to a life of committing criminal acts, it influenced others. Had they not been incarcerated, that may have had a different outcome.

I think this bill is long overdue. You know, there are many different angles that we can support in this bill. I mean, number one, again, this is the right thing to do. Consequences should be appropriate to the level of crime or to the misdeed or misconduct. Again, not that riding the bus for free should be condoned or, you know, is appropriate, but at the same time, incarcerating a young person for not paying a ticket: I don't know if the punishment suits the crime.

From the point of view of doing the right thing, too, the fact is that this will save our justice system, taxpayers, Albertans many, many dollars as far as not incarcerating. You know, we used to say, when I taught at Inner City high school, that the cost to put a young person through a year of school was about \$18,000. The cost to incarcerate a person for a year is about \$85,000. So which one makes more sense where appropriate? There's a huge cost savings.

As the Justice minister talked about, you know, what we don't want to do is to criminalize poverty. I think that because there hasn't been a way for our officers, our law professionals to have alternative measures, tickets automatically become warrants, which then turn into incarceration. I don't think that that is the right way forward.

Quite frankly, the Minister of Justice has had a number of conversations – I know this for a fact – with police in Edmonton and Calgary and around the province, and they have been asking for it. As the member across the way affirms, he has many friends in the police service who speak first-hand as far as the need for this change. We need to deploy and use our police services most effectively and as efficiently as possible. I would rather see our justice system and police services investigating serious crimes and helping to keep, you know, our province and Albertans safe as opposed to being tied up in countless hours of paperwork for minor, minor offences. Again, there is a much more appropriate way to deal with that.

I just really wanted to highlight, Madam Speaker, that this bill is a win for all of the students that I used to teach at Inner City high

school and those that are currently there. This bill will be welcomed by many, many people, many young people who now aren't going to be incarcerated for minor offences. There are much more appropriate ways to deal with minor offences.

I am extremely proud of the Justice minister for bringing this bill forward and proud to stand in this House and support Bill 9, and I encourage all members of the House to do so.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll recognize, first of all, the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences, which amends the Provincial Offences Procedure Act and the Traffic Safety Act. I'm glad to see that the bill has the potential to save taxpayers money. Wildrose is in favour of freeing up time and resources currently spent on minor offenders. Minor infractions such as jaywalking, evading pay-to-ride tickets, drinking in public, and trespassing could have resulted in short jail sentences. Making changes to save money and keep thousands of people out of the province's justice system is a wise decision. I hope that under this current legislation streamlining the red tape in enforcement of provincial offences will allow law enforcement officers to focus on protecting Albertans from dangerous criminals.

Wildrose will be watching closely to see that this NDP government properly utilizes the extra funds that will be saved by this measure and puts them toward prevention and support for prosecution of more serious offences. Right now it costs the government a total of \$73,000 a year to feed and clothe just over 2,000 people who were incarcerated for minor offences. From 2014 to 2015 about 2,000 people were jailed for not paying provincial and bylaw fines of \$1,000 or less. With an average of three days in jail, the cost on the system is over \$800,000. This does not include the cost of other criminal justice resources such as prosecutors, court clerks, and judges. This change will save court clerks about 9,000 hours of work per year, freeing them up to deal with more serious criminal warrants.

Currently if a person is convicted of a minor infraction and does not attend court or pay the fine by the due date, a warrant is put out for that person's arrest. Right now in Alberta there are over 90,000 outstanding warrants that have been issued for these minor infractions.

There are some concerns that I have with the amendments, that should be looked at more closely, like enforcement of these minor infractions through restriction of motor vehicle registry services until fines are paid. Will Albertans who do not own a vehicle be held to the same accountability as those who will have to pay their fines before registering? I'm also concerned that the government's plan to bring repeat offenders to justice isn't quite adequately laid out. We should get some clarification there. Some things still need to be taken into consideration. Take, for instance, the person who cannot afford to pay their fines. What if they don't own property, own a vehicle, and don't do their taxes? Are they going to be forgiven on those?

**11:10**

However, on the positive side, this bill will allow the province to use civil enforcement measures with remaining offenders rather than arrest and jail time to address these minor legal infractions. These types of fines are typically \$1,000 or less. I personally know a person that was picked up on a speeding ticket and then found that

they had a \$10 left-turn violation from about two years back and nearly spent the night in the Remand Centre for a \$10 fine. It was just a matter of minutes before that person's parents came down and paid the \$10 fine and kept him out of the hoosegow, which would have been a terrible experience.

A lot of the time vulnerable people end up in jail for something as small as not paying for transit or for similar fines. These are usually people who cannot afford day-to-day luxuries. Wildrose wants to work towards safer communities, and one of the ways to achieve that is by stopping the revolving door of poverty and incarceration. Once a person gets caught up in the system, it becomes harder for them to actually, literally, get out of the system. The cost is very high any way you look at it.

The cost to one inmate was tragic. He died in the Edmonton Remand Centre when another cellmate killed him. He was fined for jaywalking and riding the LRT without proof of payment. He couldn't pay his fine and had to spend five days in jail, where he lost his life. That itself is a tragic, criminal offence. This is just one tragic example, one too many.

The bill is a good idea, and it appears on its surface to correct the problem. However, we want to be completely sure to talk to Albertans and front-line workers to make sure that this is the best strategy. Wildrose will be watching closely to see that police resources are indeed freed up and that our law enforcement system becomes more effective at fighting dangerous crime.

E-ticketing should free up time and resources for law enforcement. It will allow officers to file tickets electronically, something that has been tried in other places and that we hope will be helpful with our law enforcement. We are hoping that this will streamline the ticket process and reduce mistakes and eliminate police wasting hours on re-entering data for police and court staff.

Wildrose is committed to safety for all Albertans, and we will continue to fight for strong communities and efficient governing. We will continue to monitor the outcome of this piece of legislation to see if it will better catch offenders and hold them more accountable through other means. We are hopeful that this will break the cycle and save taxpayers money while improving safety in the community. Police will be better utilized on the streets for more serious matters and crimes and will not be spending valuable time on ticketing and court dates.

Wildrose is in support of this bill, and we hope that the government will also acknowledge the need to use this to its full advantage and further support our law enforcement workers as they strive to protect our communities and punish serious offenders.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments?

Seeing none, I'll call on Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Justice minister for bringing forward this bill to modernize enforcement of provincial offences. It's truly a progressive decision that is long overdue and helps to shift our focus from a punitive system to a restorative justice system. I mean, the primary issue is not even saving money; the primary issue is people and caring for people and rehabilitating people.

The kind of stories that we've heard today are extremely moving. Certainly, the mental health and addictions review that I was involved in last year highlighted the cycle, the revolving door, the recurrence, a pattern of people that – far from benefiting from a system that incarcerates them or punishes them, it actually adds to their burden, adds to their problems, adds to their breakdowns, and

makes more likely their failure to be rehabilitated, to get back to any kind of productive and satisfying quality of life.

The bill proposes to amend both the Provincial Offences Procedure Act and the Traffic Safety Act by putting an end to warrants and jail time for minor infractions and modernizing the way that tickets are processed. We are in an electronic age. Anything we can do to reduce paper and reduce time is obviously going to be a win-win for our system.

The moves are not only expected to save money, to free up police, court, and correctional resources and focus more time on serious crimes; they'll keep thousands of vulnerable people out of the provincial justice system. I must say that this is a win-win-win when one looks at the opportunities that present themselves for rehabilitation, the cost savings to all of our social supports systems when they're appropriately used instead of institutionalizing and incarcerating people. And the third win is a better policing service. They have more resources, and they focus where their own training leads them and where they can feel a greater satisfaction in helping to create a safer society.

The minister justly said that this will reduce the criminalization of poverty, and we could add mental illness and addictions, which are part and parcel of much of the poverty in our communities. The opportunity, then, for connecting with wraparound services in the community, the opportunity for dealing with cause, as the hon. Member for Calgary-West mentioned, are really a tremendous step away from a system that has been so backward in thinking about the place of rehabilitation, housing, supports for people who have many challenges in life, many of them from traumas, from inadequate social supports throughout their lives, mental illness, and indeed addictions. It's a welcome shift, which I'll certainly be supporting.

I know that the details and how we're going to regulate and monitor and identify where this approach will in some cases be abused have to be there. But the overarching question here is: are we using our resources to enhance people's lives, to strengthen our productivity and our economy, to use our highly paid and highly trained police force appropriately? We have not been. This is an opportunity to make sure we start to do that.

I don't want to draw this out, Madam Speaker. I think the arguments have been well stated, and it looks like there is all-party support for this very sensible and long overdue bill. I can just say that I'm proud of being part of the session that brings this important change to Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments?

Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As always, it's a pleasure to rise in this House and speak and debate on matters. I really want to thank the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General for introducing Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences.

The primary objective of this bill, as was stated by the minister, is to protect vulnerable Albertans from a cycle of incarceration and poverty, thus reducing the criminalization of poverty. In the debate so far we haven't mentioned a key issue, and that is the rate of incarceration of indigenous people here in our province and across Canada, which, I believe, this bill will address in a significant way.

Just to bring it to the attention of the members of this House, it's widely known that the indigenous population is overrepresented in provincial and territorial correctional services. I'll remind the members of this House that while indigenous people represent 3 per

cent of the Canadian adult population, they account for nearly one-quarter – that's 24 per cent – of admissions in correctional services. Even more concerning is that – I mean, 24 per cent is just the number in general – if you break it down and you look at indigenous females, they account for 36 per cent when compared to the overall population. This is truly concerning.

**11:20**

I'm really happy to see that members from the opposition, from the third party, and other parties are in agreement on Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences. You know, we've discussed at length that the cost associated with incarcerating individuals for minor infractions is approximately \$800,000 and that these amendments reinforce our government's commitment towards responsible management of public finances. The electronic filing of tickets will create efficiencies and reduce errors and costs to free up resources in the justice system.

I wanted to stress that if passed, these amendments will end Alberta's outdated process of jailing individuals as a tool to enforce tickets for minor infractions and reduce inefficiencies of the current model. When Albertans, especially vulnerable Albertans, are unable to pay their initial fines and do not attend court, the court issues a warrant for their arrest. The fact is that vulnerable people are more likely to be issued tickets for minor infractions such as not paying for transit and are more likely to be arrested for failure to pay or appear in court, thus landing them in jail. It further perpetuates a cycle of incarceration and poverty, which does not create safer communities, which should be our overall objective. This method of enforcement is disproportionate. It's resource intensive and ineffective. Therefore, these amendments provide a needed step towards ending the revolving door of poverty and incarceration, as stressed by others.

If passed, these amendments will end the practice of punishing individuals for being unable to afford their fines. As mentioned, the current model of using jail as a tool to enforce payment is inefficient and outdated. Moreover, the results of this practice are neither positive nor beneficial to Albertan taxpayers or the broader community in Alberta. Given that the indirect costs associated with incarcerating individuals for minor infractions is approximately \$800,000, these amendments reinforce our government's commitment towards responsible management of public finances. The proposed changes will also help the province defer costs by creating efficiencies that free up significant time for the judiciary, court staff, police, and correctional officers.

For those people who don't own vehicles or refuse to pay their fines, other enforcement mechanisms will be available such as filing writs against property and garnisheeing bank accounts, wages, income tax refunds, and GST rebates. In addition, evidence shows that using warrants as a tool to enforce fines for minor infractions is not effective. Every year the number of outstanding warrants increases here in Alberta. Currently there are about 187,000 outstanding warrants, half of which are for minor infractions. Every year court staff spend more than 9,000 hours processing warrants for minor infractions, making this model inefficient and resource intensive.

The second amendment to the Provincial Offences Procedure Act is enabling the expansion of e-tickets in Alberta, as has been presented. The electronic filing of tickets will streamline the ticketing process by allowing police to file tickets electronically with the courts, and the electronic filing of tickets will create efficiencies and reduce errors and costs to free up resources in the justice system. Currently when an officer issues a ticket, the ticket is handwritten on a preprinted form. After the ticket is issued, the officer must bring the court and police copies back to the

detachment to be entered into the law enforcement data system. This process is time consuming, inefficient, and ultimately hurts the taxpayers and our communities.

If passed, e-tickets will allow law enforcement to focus more of their time on the streets, thus protecting Albertans. It is noteworthy to highlight that this amendment will not create new opportunities for police officers to issue tickets, nor will it change the standard for charging someone with an offence. Officers will still be required to have reasonable grounds to believe that an offence was committed in order to issue a violation ticket. However, it will reduce the number of ticket booklets that need to be printed, saving taxpayer money on printing and storage costs.

Again, I wanted to stress Edmonton police chief Rod Knecht as a stakeholder, and I quote him:

The introduction of Bill 9 will allow police to free up officers and civilian staff to focus on predators and serious criminal offenders.

As a result of modernized technology and this new approach, a significant reduction in administrative processes and paperwork is expected.

A segment of the population that we haven't discussed – I mean, it has been mentioned by members of the third party – are those with mental health issues. From my own experience and being a community organizer and someone who has dedicated some time to working with homeless people, advocating on behalf of homeless people, especially with the connections that I have at Boyle Street, we know that a large portion of the people who are homeless are people who have mental health issues.

I've seen it first-hand, where – and I'm not saying anything bad about the Edmonton police, but they're having to deal with a homeless person and trying to do their very best in order to address the issue that, you know, the person is on the street. Sometimes it's presumed that they're intoxicated, but really, no, they're someone that has mental health issues, and it's not an issue of intoxication. But the police still need to deal with this individual, and it's a concern how they have to deal with them and then have to issue a ticket.

I'm really glad to hear from members from the third party. I believe that it was the Member for Calgary-West who brought up the issue of mental health. It's also a significant concern for members on this side of the House when dealing with this particular issue, and we feel that this bill addresses a lot of the root causes, as the Member for Calgary-West stipulated.

Again, I really want to congratulate the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General for introducing this bill. I think that it'll go a long way to address a lot of the issues that are being experienced by homeless people on the streets as well as people with mental health issues and – again I'll stress it – the indigenous population. I want to remind the members that, you know, indigenous people represent 3 per cent of the adult population in Canada, and to know that overall they represent 24 per cent of those admitted in correctional institutions is a serious matter. It's a matter that even many grassroots indigenous community organizers have brought to my attention. The fact that indigenous women represent 36 per cent of those admitted in correctional facilities is even a more grave concern.

I'm really hoping that this bill is the beginning of being able to address these very serious concerns that we have and being able to address the root causes of these segments of the population so that we can have a more compassionate approach, and I think that this bill goes in that line. This is perhaps the first step in addressing some of these issues, by first being able to reduce the criminalization of poverty, here in Alberta at least, and being able to take a deeper look at some of these serious concerns that I've brought up in the House.

11:30

Again, I really congratulate the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General for bringing forward this bill, and I'm really happy to see that there's wide support amongst many of the members of the House. I would encourage all members of the House not only to vote in favour of this bill but actually, you know, when we have an opportunity to discuss it further in Committee of the Whole, to go and share it with their constituents as well, to really get out there and talk about the positive impacts that this bill will have here in Alberta if it's passed. We can really share with our constituents, share with the population of Alberta that we're on the right track.

Yes, I agree that the argument of reducing the cost to taxpayers is a good argument. I mean, as government we're here to address the issue of costs – it's important – but this bill is not just that. This bill goes much further than that. You know, we are able to address these very serious concerns that I've brought up, and it's all connected. All these factors are connected: saving costs, being more compassionate with members of our communities that are considered vulnerable Albertans. We're taking a huge step towards the decriminalization of poverty.

I want to encourage all members to vote in favour of this bill at second reading, and I look forward to discussing it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I've actually really enjoyed the debate this morning. I think this is one of the finest moments of this Legislature, when we can see that all members of this Legislature really recognize what social justice is all about. I think this is the situation, and I really want to commend the Member for Calgary-West. I think his comments were right on. They certainly replicated the comments of people that I know in law enforcement. They have long recognized that there needs to be a streamlining of this process and a fairness applied to this process, that I think that this bill does. I do want to thank the minister for putting this bill together. I think that, as has been said many times, it is long overdue, but I really think the minister deserves a lot of credit for expediting these changes.

One of the real pleasures of being the MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud is that I get to represent the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General at the graduation ceremonies at the training centre, which is located in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. I've been joined there by the Sergeant-at-Arms on occasion and by other colleagues from this caucus. There are several types of law enforcement that are graduated from that training centre. I'm very proud of the training centre itself. It is a world-class facility, and I've learned a lot about the complexity of being a peace officer or a correctional services officer as well as a sheriff. Indeed, I don't think the members of this House need to be reminded about the fact that our safety as MLAs and the safety of the Executive Council is done by the sheriffs, and I'm very appreciative of that.

I make a point in my remarks when I'm at the training centre graduations to say how proud I am of the individuals that are in corrections or are peace officers or are transit police or wildlife officers or, if I haven't mentioned them, corrections officers. They are a tremendous resource to this province, and they need to be given the freedom to do their job.

I want to turn to one other factor. One of the first visitors to my constituency office was a constituent who works as a psychiatric nurse at the Royal Alexandra hospital, and that individual has come to my office on more than one occasion bringing up this

very cause. He mentioned to me that he has clients, as he calls them, that need to travel to the Royal Alexandra hospital mental health facility from places distant, and they often don't have resources to pay for the LRT fare or to buy a bus ticket, and on occasion some of his clients have actually been incarcerated and spent time in jail for fare jumping. This bill will help to reduce the chances of that happening, and I think that for that single reason this bill deserves support.

You know, I'm not the youngest member of this Legislature. My schooling goes back a long way, and it actually goes back to a time when the book that now you will all know as *Les Misérables* was written. I don't go back to Victor Hugo's time, but the book is called Jean Valjean. If you recall, what happened to Jean Valjean was that he was incarcerated and put to hard labour by Louis XVIII or Louis XVI, something like that – it was before the French Revolution – for the crime of stealing a loaf of bread. In my mind, the crime of fare jumping is probably equivalent to the crime of stealing a loaf of bread. It took the French Revolution to get changes to the French laws that led to that sort of thing. I think it's only taken us 10 months to make the changes in this province that are going to do that.

With those comments, I would actually ask that the debate be adjourned, Madam Speaker.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 7 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016

[Adjourned debate April 13: Ms Ganley]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to speak on behalf of Bill 7, Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016. Under the current wording of the act a commission cannot be appointed earlier than July 2017. If the commission is not appointed before then, there will not be sufficient time for new electoral boundaries to be set prior to the next election, in 2019. It is integral to note that the last commission was appointed in 2009, and we have had two elections since. The last provincial election was one year earlier than scheduled; thus, the boundary reform should be one year earlier as well.

The Chief Electoral Officer, Glen Resler, has requested a change in the legislation. Mr. Resler indicates that since the next general election will probably be between March 1 and May 31, 2019, as per the fixed election period set out in the Election Act, Elections Alberta must be ready for that election. Plus, I'm sure constituency associations and candidates want sufficient time to plan and campaign for the election as well. With boundary changes there may need to be new founding meetings for some of those electoral districts and their district associations.

11:40

Alberta's population has grown significantly since the last election. It's gone from 3.7 million to 4.1 million people, and most of that has been in urban areas. Also, there are First Nation reserves which are fast growing regarding population increases, and this needs to be factored into the new boundaries. Getting the census and data will take time. The Electoral Boundaries Commission needs time to hold public hearings and write an initial report. This report will set out the proposed electoral boundaries. Then there need to be additional public hearings which will be held to review the initial report. After the representations the commission will then provide a final report. The recommendations of the final report will

be presented to the Legislative Assembly for consideration, and the bill will go through the readings and debates and, when it is passed, will need royal assent.

Once that is done, Elections Alberta must provide maps, polling books, polling areas, and lists of voters. All of this takes time, and it is sensible to start reasonably early to finish by, say, January 1, 2019, if not earlier. In fact, electoral district associations I'm sure would appreciate having more than two or three months – I'm sure it would be more like one or two years – so the sooner they can get started, the sooner that can be done.

The commission needs time to consider appropriate factors in making those boundaries. For instance, the commission must consider the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. But along with equal representation rural factors of sparsity and density of population must be factored into the boundaries because some of the constituencies have a very large area but may be below critical mass in regard to the number of voters. The commission needs to look at common community interests, trading areas, and overlapping jurisdictions. Some counties, of which I have one in my constituency, may have three MLAs for that one county, and they may prefer to change that.

In my constituency of Wetaskiwin-Camrose we have two First Nations reservations, but just across the road are two more Cree Nations, which have been placed in another constituency, whose principal town is over one hour away. First Nations populations have been growing rapidly and could dramatically change the population size of some constituencies. These factors need to be considered and consulted upon. Likewise, in Edmonton and Calgary communities should not be divided, and there is the aspect of continuing urban sprawl and new urban development into rural areas. Where will these new communities be placed? Consideration, consultation, and time are needed to deal with these complex issues. Changing roads and travel systems need to be examined to see if geographical features have changed and if they have impacted the complexion of the existing constituencies.

Most importantly, it is desirable to have clear, common-sense, understandable boundaries which meet Albertans' Charter rights to vote, and their vote includes the guarantee of effective representation. This is fundamental to democracy.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, I urge everyone to support the democratic Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016, to have time to get it right and give Albertans the opportunity to participate in this democratic process. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The next speaker on my list is Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 7, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016. There are two major amendments happening here in this bill. The first seeks to accelerate the date of the appointment of a new Electoral Boundaries Commission, to have the commission appointed by October 31, 2016. This will start the commission ahead of the original schedule and complete its work in May 2017. This means that the new boundaries will be up and in place for the next election. Political parties will go out and create new constituency associations, and then the fun of fundraising and nominating candidates can begin.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The second amendment stands to change the population data which the commission uses for the purposes of its work. This allows

the more up-to-date and accurate municipal information to be used in some cases.

Now, Madam Speaker, it's interesting to note that if the last Premier had looked in the mirror and realized an early election was a bad idea, we wouldn't be debating this bill today. In fact, we would probably be in the middle of an election right now. The law as it is could have remained in place. The clock would tick, the stars would align as per the current law, and this boundary review would happen in 2019. But we are here, and the boundary review has to either be moved up or moved back, and the government has decided to move it up.

What we need to ensure is that this process is fair to Albertans. That includes my constituents in Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock and those who are in even bigger ridings, where their ability to be represented equally comes into question if the ridings get too large. Now, my constituency of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock is a pretty standard size for a rural constituency, but that still poses challenges. I travel over two hours from one end of my riding to the other to get to different events. I feel that if it was much larger, it would get very difficult to have constituency and town hall meetings as folks already often have to drive over an hour to make a meeting. You also have to think of those winter driving conditions. It can often be a challenge to provide that effective representation in these geographically larger ridings, and I know I have colleagues here who already have a tougher time than I do.

I'm pleased that this bill does not try to alter the overall parameters that the commission can work with, but I'd also suggest that there should be a goal of maintaining historical boundaries as much as possible. If we can avoid it, we don't want smaller municipalities getting swapped to a neighbouring constituency where they have no history or don't really belong. I know that there are a lot of folks out there worried that rural Alberta is going to lose seats in this redistribution, but I have faith in the commission to follow the law as established and not try to gerrymander the constituencies like some jurisdictions in the United States have done.

In general, Madam Speaker, I support the beginning of this process and will be watching to see how the rest unfolds. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Is there anybody wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Madam Speaker, I am delighted to speak in support of Bill 7, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016. This bill reminds me of a year ago when the whole issue of electoral boundaries and where I should be door-knocking was full front on my mind. It also reminds me that in three years all of us will once again be carefully looking at riding boundaries as we prepare our door-knocking and re-election campaigns.

First of all, election campaigns are important because they're a good way to remind all of us of the cornerstone of democracy, a guarantee of effective representation, which is what this bill is all about. This amendment in this bill was necessary due to the previous government's early election call. The last electoral boundaries review occurred in 2009. Since that time the population of Alberta has grown considerably, and the growth has occurred unevenly in the province. It is important that all Albertans, wherever they live, feel that their vote counts and that they have a guarantee of effective representation. This bill importantly clarifies the Electoral Boundaries Commission's authority to consider recent information respecting population growth that is not collected on a province-wide basis such as municipal census information. This

would be used along with the federal census or recent province-wide census.

I have spent a considerable part of my career working with census information, helping municipalities, nonprofits, and communities plan for programs, housing, and services. I know how population changes occur in neighbourhoods as housing changes and neighbourhoods move from single family to aging seniors. In Edmonton due to shifting demographics, school boards are currently engaged in planning in long-established neighbourhoods where there are excess school spaces. Municipalities develop new subdivisions as in my own riding of Sherwood Park. Rural families move from farms to nearby villages and then to the nearby town to access services. Albertans also move where jobs are, resulting in a very fluid population.

**11:50**

Alberta's population has grown by half a million since the last time the provincial electoral boundaries were redrawn to reflect population growth. From my own personal experience in working with the last federal census, especially in rural communities, I know that due to the concerted federal government's decision to no longer make the long-form census mandatory for the 2011 census, that data is not accurate. Thanks to the current federal Liberal government for having reversed that decision and ensuring that the 2016 federal census will be accurate. In the meantime, however, it is important that any decision based on population in Alberta uses all the available information, including municipal and county censuses. I applaud the government for making the amendment in this bill to allow consideration of additional population censuses, thereby ensuring that the decision on boundaries this time will be based on the most accurate population data available.

I am often reminded that every action may have unintended consequences. This bill is needed because the former government called the election a year earlier, and if the bill is not amended, it will not leave enough time for the new electoral boundaries to be established before the next general election. I personally want to ensure that every Albertan has the opportunity to know that their vote will count in the next provincial election, that every Albertan knows that their voice is important when they exercise their responsibilities as citizens and vote in the election.

The general rule is that the population of a proposed electoral division must not be more than 25 per cent above nor more than 25 per cent below the average population of all the proposed electoral divisions. This act provides for exceptions provided that the criteria set out in the act are met. In a maximum of four electoral divisions the percentage of population deviation can be as high as 50 per cent provided specific criteria are met. An important criterion is the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is an important criterion.

I was interested in how my own riding of Sherwood Park has changed over the years. Thanks to the work of the Legislature Library staff I was able to obtain a good history of electoral riding boundaries. In the 1905 election my riding was called Strathcona. In 1913 it was called South Edmonton. In 1921 it was called Edmonton, where five members were elected to represent three amalgamated constituencies. In 1926 it was called Leduc; from 1930 to 1971, Clover Bar; in 1975, Edmonton-Ottewell. In 1979 it was back to Clover Bar; in 1982, Edmonton-Sherwood Park; from 1986 to 1989, Sherwood Park; in 1993, Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan; and since 1997, Sherwood Park, the riding that I am now proud to represent. This is a good example of how population changes allow for different electoral divisions. In 2008 there were 28,349 electors in my riding and in 2010, 32,159.



I would urge all members of the Assembly to vote for Bill 7 and ensure that boundaries that guarantee effective representation are established before the next provincial election, which is anticipated between March 1 and May 31, 2019.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak?

The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to adjourn debate on Bill 7.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Seeing the time, I move to adjourn the House until 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:55 a.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, April 19, 2016

Day 17

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 19, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.  
I would recognize the Member for Calgary-Hays.

### Statement by a Member

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would like to thank you for inviting me back into the House today. That's very gracious. Yesterday was a day that I hope not to repeat any time soon for a number of reasons. At about 5 p.m. yesterday I was recognized to introduce my Motion 504, asking government to reaffirm parents' ability to choose for their children home-schooling, charter schools, private schools, francophone schools, separate schools, and public schools, something I feel strongly about. Not against the rules of this House but surely against tradition a member chose to introduce an amendment to the motion which, if carried, would entirely change the intent of Motion 504. That was when things in this House began to go off the rails.

As the amendment from the government side's member was distributed, I received not only the amendment but, in the same handful of paper, a copy of a ruling on a point of order not yet made, a ruling that in the course of the discussion became the actual ruling. I became convinced, rightly or wrongly, that all was not in order. At the conclusion of the ruling I stood and refused to take my seat though you, Mr. Speaker, asked me to do so several times. Eventually you asked the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort me from the House. I would like to acknowledge that when you did that, when you asked me to be removed from the House after I did not obey your request to sit down several times, you were correctly discharging your duties and acting within the scope of your authority. I recognize that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
I think it's time for us to move forward.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a distinguished guest, Mr. Josef Beck, consul general of the Federal Republic of Germany, visiting Alberta to build on the important relationship we share. Accompanying the consul general today is Mr. Harald Kuckertz, honorary consul of the Federal Republic of Germany in Edmonton. They are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Germany is a very valuable partner to Alberta. We collaborate in many areas such as research through the esteemed Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres and numerous ties between our academic institutions. Germany is a customer for Alberta-produced energy and agricultural products while Alberta benefits from imports of German-made precision instruments, machinery, and metals. We know that there are many opportunities to increase trade between Germany and Alberta, especially as Canada and Europe work to expand access to each other's markets, and I look forward to seeing our trade partnership with Germany grow.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to welcome Mr. Beck to Alberta, and I ask him and Mr. Kuckertz to now stand and accept the traditional warm greeting of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-North West.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce two amazing women who are mentors in my political career and dear friends as well. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I would ask them to rise now as I introduce them: Heather Klimchuk, our former MLA for Edmonton-Glenora from 2008 to 2015, our Minister of Service Alberta, of Culture, of Human Services, our Deputy Government House Leader, and a wonderful, amazing symbol for all of us in the Legislature – truly happy to have her here today – and, beside her, Genia Leskiw, the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake from 2008 to 2015, the first woman to represent her riding, which is a fantastic achievement, and who as a former schoolteacher always kept us in line in the Legislature. She will always be known to all of us so fondly as Momma G. I would welcome these women to our Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of students, teachers, and parents from l'école St. Joseph school from my constituency of Whitecourt-St. Anne. Twenty-five students are with us today to learn about the Alberta Legislature. They are accompanied by Mrs. Jennifer Jones Shaver, Mrs. Zenovia Wiwchar Crawford, Mrs. Debbie Davio, Mrs. Shauna Despins, and Mr. Terrence Corke. I would like the group of parents, students, and teachers to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly a school group from the MLA for Red Deer-North's constituency. The students come from Gateway Christian school, and they are with their teachers, Klaaske deKoning and Mr. Jesse Bourne, and parent helpers Cathey Monteith, Gina Thomsen, Andrea Samson, and Tracie Simpson. I would like to ask the students to rise and receive the customary welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there other school groups to be introduced today?

Seeing none, I would recognize the Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly a lovely young woman that I've known for quite some time, one of the kindest, most compassionate young women I know, who is currently in animal sciences at the university, hopes to apply to vet school soon, and will be interning at a wildlife rehabilitation centre this summer. I'd ask Madeleine, or Madeleine when she's in trouble, my daughter, to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request if I can introduce my guest in the next few minutes because she's in transit right now.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Joy Hurst, the president of the Edmonton branch of the Canadian Federation of University Women, CFUW. Joy has been involved in helping to arrange the CFUW activity today for our celebration of the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in Alberta. When she's not working on a CFUW project, Joy works as corporate lead in patient relations at Covenant Health Canada and has been a vital part in the health care system for many years. Joy, please stand now, wherever you may be, so that we may give you the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** She may not in fact be here yet.

The Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to introduce to you and through you guests from the Cement Association of Canada. The Cement Association of Canada is the voice of Canada's cement manufacturers. The industry provides a reliable domestic supply of cement required to build Canada's communities and critical infrastructure, and the CAC is committed to the environmentally responsible manufacturing of cement and concrete products, including support for economy-wide carbon pricing. Joining us here today are Michael McSweeney, president and CEO of the Cement Association of Canada; Justin Arnott, director of markets and technical affairs, western region, Calgary; and Ken Carrusca, vice-president, environment and marketing, from Vancouver. I ask that my colleagues in this Chamber join me in extending our guests, if they may rise, the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you a retired MLA, Genia Leskiw. She served two terms within our riding, and it is great that she was able to join us today as one of my guests for the women of suffrage.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you Ms Michelle Brewer visiting us today, a resident of Edmonton-Centre, a former instructor at MacEwan University, and founder of the You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down film festival, which debuted in March of this year as part of International Women's Day. I'd like to ask Michelle to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you the members of the organization Through the Eyes of the Children. Their project began with a 2014 trip to Ukraine. It was founded to form an educational bridge between 13 schools in

Ukraine and Canada and now as well Uganda. Three hundred students from Lacombe participate in this endeavour. I would like them to stand as I read their names: founder, Dr. Leighton Nischuk; Mr. Warren Kreway; Mr. Chase Bailey; and Mr. Blake Core. Please join me in giving them the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly staff from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Every day I witness the passion and commitment of our Culture and Tourism team, members of the Alberta public service, who deliver programs and services that contribute to making our province such a great place to live and to visit. They are Jennifer Babcock, Michelle Baronian, Sarah Boyer, Karin Buchanan, Devyn Caldwell, Danielle Fleming, Julie Helwig, Sean MacQueen, Aimée Shaw, Roney Simon Mathews, and Kaja Verret Holding. I would ask them all to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today on the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage and introduce to you and through you one of Calgary-Bow's female community leaders, Jacqui Esler. She is the acting board director of the Bowness business revitalization zone, or BRZ, and can be found on any given day out in the community on behalf of all small businesses in Bowness, some of whom have been a part of the community since the 1950s. The main goal of the BRZ, in Jacqui's own words, is to help make Main Street Bowness a safe, attractive, and prosperous place to own a business and to shop. Jacqui Esler's hard work and dedication to our community is a fine example of women's capacity to be leaders and advocates in our communities, and I'm so proud to be introducing her here today. If Jacqui could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other members' visitors? The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly eight women who helped organize today's event to commemorate the 100th anniversary of women finally having the right to vote here in Alberta. These guests are Gail Gravelines, Lea Craig, Michelle Brewer, Beatrice Ghattuba, Sinem Senol, Kristy Jackson, Susanne Goshko, and Janis Irwin. I'd ask these women, along with all women and girls who are in our gallery today as visitors or guests, to please rise to commemorate this historic day and receive the warmest welcome of our Assembly. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** I think we have another guest.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just handed this note to be sure to include a woman in the public gallery, Karen Leibovici, for introduction to all of us as part of this wonderful celebration and remembrance for the vote for women 100 years ago today. So, Karen, if you are up in the public gallery, please stand, and we'll give you a special welcome in the House.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women.

### Women's Suffrage Centennial

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today because people who sat in this room 100 years ago voted to let me do so. Today marks 100 years since the passing of the Equal Suffrage Statutory Law Amendment Act, the long title of the law that allowed women the vote in Alberta elections. It was a long struggle, as they tend to be for those seeking equality. It was more than a matter of passing a law but of changing opinions of women's place in this world. Today the place for women is in this House. It is through the grit and determination of the women before me that I can be here. Women made change happen in Alberta in 1916, and we are making it happen today.

Extending the vote to Alberta women opened a path for women to run for office, and it took just a year for Louise McKinney, followed shortly by Roberta MacAdams, to win their seats in this House in 1917. They were the first women to do so in Alberta, in Canada, and in the entire British Empire. We applaud their courage and efforts, and we remember that the law extended only as far as granting the vote to women who were property-owning citizens of the Empire. It was a great victory but an incomplete one. The fight for equality continued as women and men of different cultural and religious backgrounds sought the vote, and it was finally extended to Canada's indigenous people in 1960. We can do better.

Today I stood for a photo with women from across Alberta and women in this Legislature, women of different experiences, gender identities, sexual orientations, cultural backgrounds, and economic statuses. These are women who are leaders in their communities, and they are women who continue to strive for better outcomes and equal treatment. Looking around this House, I see not only a gender-balanced government bench but one that exceeds gender balance, and I see elected representation that looks a lot more like Alberta. It is my hope that in 100 years Albertans will look to our time to see that we did not squander the gains made toward equality but furthered them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to rise today to mark the 100th anniversary of suffrage in Alberta and to stand where Louise McKinney, the first woman to be elected to this Assembly, once pointed out that "the purpose of a woman's life is just the same as . . . a man's life: that she may make the best possible contribution to the generation in which she is living."

We owe the rights that we currently enjoy – the right to vote, the right to hold public office, and the right to own land – to brave trailblazers of every political stripe, who knew that they could make a difference in their society. We've come far in just 100 years, but we must remember that early suffragettes were setting precedent in an often hostile environment. Even in Alberta, the proud home of the Famous Five, who worked so hard to show our country that women had a right to vote and to be recognized as persons under the law, even here these women faced incredible barriers, and they overcame them. It is so important to note that women won the vote. They were not given it or granted it. Women and men fighting for equality won it in the same way any campaign is ultimately won or lost, with hard work and perseverance.

1:50

The work of Louise McKinney, the Famous Five, and countless others adds strength to my voice here today. I firmly believe that we in this Assembly stand united in a desire to have more women run for public office and to identify and remove barriers that women in our political system still face today. We have the opportunity to

investigate and respond to the realities of women of all income levels, backgrounds, and circumstances. We can keep shining a light on everyday sexism that women encounter in our own country and also stay alert to the women around the world who still fight to achieve basic rights.

To those who paved the way in 1916: thank you. To our leaders today: thank you. Let's keep working together with courage and respect and determination.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would seek unanimous consent of the House to allow a speaker from the third party and the other leaders to speak if they so wish.

**The Speaker:** Both of the other leaders?

**Mr. Carlier:** Yes. Absolutely.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-North West.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to stand here in the Alberta Legislature and join in a celebration of 100 years of voting rights for women. My thanks to you and to everyone who stood up and spoke on this historic and wonderful occasion.

It was February of 1916 when our then Lieutenant Governor Robert Brett stated that "equality should in Alberta be fixed by law." Bravo. Hard to believe that this was 100 years ago. So much has happened since then, much of it happening right here in Alberta. Prairie women are a hardy bunch, as I'm sure all women in here can attest to. Western provinces were the first to grant women the right to vote. When Alberta women took to the polls for the first time in 1917, Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams became the first two women ever elected in Alberta.

Now fast-forward to May of 2015, when only two women were re-elected in this Legislature, myself and our Premier. This time, however, there were a lot more new female politicians, ready to make their mark in the history of this Legislature. As I said earlier, despite our sometimes high-intensity exchanges in this House, I never tire of seeing so many amazing women gathered in this Chamber to guide our province forward.

We have very big shoes to fill as we fight for policy and legislation that will continue to make women's lives easier, the shoes of the Famous Five: Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, and Irene Parlby. I think about these courageous women and how their efforts have spawned a generation of political activism, and I promise to continue that work with my dynamic female colleagues and some pretty great guys, too.

I will stand tall with the women who despite threats, harassment, and intimidation still get out there every day to push the limits, to protect single moms like me, new moms like the Member for Calgary-Varsity and our minister responsible for the status of women, women diverse in their sexual orientation and their ethnicity, women with a vision of how to make life better in Alberta. And we are doing it just like women did 100 years ago, one vote at a time.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I quote Audre Lorde: "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are

very different from my own.” One hundred years ago, much like today, women were the cornerstone of Alberta society. However, until this day in 1916 they were denied the most basic of democratic rights, the vote. This was finally changed by the passage of the Equal Suffrage Statutory Law Amendment Act. It would be easy to look at the distant date – April 19, 1916 – and say that that’s ancient history. After all, a hundred years is a long time. If we did, though, we’d be deceiving ourselves.

While we here in Alberta can be proud that Louise McKinney was the first elected woman anywhere in the British Empire, serving this Legislature between 1917 and 1921, one merely has to look at today’s membership of Canadian Legislative Assemblies and Parliament to realize that despite it being 2016, equality in electoral matters is yet to be achieved. Nor can we forget that First Nations waited another 44 years to have the vote, nor that our wives and daughters and mothers still earn 70 per cent of what their male counterparts earn for the same work, nor that many women face a near impossible work balance of family and career, nor that safety of person is still a luxury denied to many, many women in this society.

So while we celebrate the achievements of those who tirelessly lobbied this House to include them in democratic society, we look to the future, when proportional representation is the norm in most countries. It will enable more people to be engaged and more people to influence the nature and balance of a government. We still wait for that day in Alberta. We must also recognize the long road ahead and commit, each and every one, to making the dreams of those early suffragettes a reality for all our citizens.

Perhaps Nellie McClung stated the dream best when she said: “I am a believer in women, in their ability to do things and in their influence and power. Women set the standards for the world, and it is for us, women in Canada, to set the standards high.”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One hundred years since most women were granted the right to vote, 100 years since most women could fully participate in democracy, 100 years since most women could share their voices and opinions by selecting those who represented them within government, but even more remarkable, only one year after women were granted the right to vote, the first women in the entire British Commonwealth were elected here in Alberta.

I am proud to be a descendant of a remarkable woman who ran for elected office, my grandmother, whose name was Alberta Clark. That’s true. [interjections] Exactly. Vote for Alberta. Absolutely. She ran as a Liberal in Calgary in 1952, and she used to tell me: it’s not as easy to be a Liberal in Alberta as you might think. I tend to agree.

In 100 years, of course, we have come a long way, but we have very far to go. It wasn’t until 1960 that indigenous women and, in fact, all indigenous people were finally given the right to vote. And inequality persists today. I’m sure many of you read the article yesterday by Calgary MP Michelle Rempel, who wrote about the sexism and sexual harassment she and her staff have faced working in the political world in Ottawa and beyond.

While legal barriers have been broken down, institutional and societal barriers to women in politics remain. As long as women are looked down upon, degraded, insulted, harassed, and assaulted, we have very little legitimacy in stating that there is true equality in politics. It may be 2016, but in some areas not much has changed. Certainly, not enough has changed.

The fight for equality continues, and I commit to continue to being an ally for women in all walks of life, for LGBTQ-plus individuals, and for those who are marginalized within our province. I commit to speaking up when someone makes a rude comment, a joke, or contributes to everyday sexism. I commit to confronting these barriers and addressing sexism in politics when it happens. I commit to working alongside women to further the cause that was started by women such as the Famous Five and support the women in my life in their advocacy. I ask each and every Member of this Legislative Assembly to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:00

## Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty’s Official Opposition.

### Property Taxes

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Calgarians are hurting, families are barely scraping by, many wonder where their next paycheck will come from. Unfortunately, this NDP government is only making things worse for Albertans. Yesterday we learned that Calgarians are in line for a 10 per cent property tax hike because this NDP government wants a larger take of their salary. That means that most families will be out another \$126 this year to pay for this NDP government’s spending addiction, and that’s on top of the carbon tax that will raise the price of everything for everyone. Why is the Premier raising taxes on the 76,000 Albertans that are out of work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To begin with, I reject much of the premise in that question, much of the reason for that being that it’s greatly inaccurate. What I will say is that this government very clearly committed to ensuring that education funding follows enrolment and increases on a predictable basis of 2 per cent each year. We did that because we understood that we need to invest in our education system, not starve it like the folks over there would like to do. Now, three years ago the previous government established a formula. We didn’t change it. We didn’t tell anybody we would. This shouldn’t be a surprise for anybody.

**Mr. Jean:** No, but you dramatically increased taxes for Albertans.

Calgary has been decimated over the past year. Home prices have dropped by almost 4 per cent, and home sales are down 11 per cent. So it’s hard to believe the minister could be so out of touch with this reality, where she blamed the government’s need to increase Calgarians’ taxes on, quote, an increase in the market values of homes. End quote. Nobody is buying these excuses. Albertans are already feeling the pain. This NDP government is just making things much worse. Did the Premier really think that Calgarians would buy that excuse for raising their taxes when the value of their homes continuously drops?

**Ms Notley:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the opposition take a bit of time to do their own research instead of believing everything that they read in the paper. Now, the residential education property tax is based on the assessed value of homes. The rate was \$2.50 per \$1,000 in 2015 and has been reduced by this government to \$2.48 per \$1,000 in 2016. The fact of the matter is that assessed values of homes have actually increased in some cases, so there is an overall increase, but it all relates to a formula that was established under the previous government with

respect to the percentage of property tax that goes towards education.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Hogwash.

The NDP's higher tax agenda on Albertans doesn't stop there. The new carbon tax will actually force Calgary to raise its property tax by another half of a percentage point. That's more money out of the pockets of hard-working taxpayers. We will see that effect in every single community across this province because of this NDP government's carbon tax. Higher property taxes, higher bus fees, more expensive groceries, higher prices at the pump, all at a time when Albertans simply can't afford these higher taxes. What does the Premier have to say to all those who will now be poorer while government has not had it so good ever?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The first thing that I will say is that notwithstanding all the Chicken Little-esque declarations coming over from that side of the House, the fact of the matter is this. All in, the tax regime in Alberta is still the lowest in the country, and that has not changed. We are maintaining that while we are investing in significant efforts to diversify our economy and to create jobs and to invest in the future, something that those folks over there wouldn't do. They would slash billions of dollars from our budget, put people out of work, and leave us worse prepared.

**The Speaker:** Thank you  
The hon. leader.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** We know that this NDP carbon tax will cost Alberta families at least a thousand dollars a year in direct and indirect costs, but what we didn't know until Friday was how the Premier expected Albertans to cope with increased fuel costs as a result of her policies. Her pitch to those who can barely make ends meet now and certainly can't afford to pay more at the pump was simply: change your car. What a brilliant idea. When faced with job losses and bills that pile up, just take on more debt. Why not? After all, our NDP government is doing that. Does the Premier perhaps have a better suggestion to those Albertans worried that they simply can't afford her higher tax agenda?

**Ms Notley:** Well, the first thing I would suggest is that those people get their information from someone other than the Official Opposition because these guys are making it up as they go along. Just yesterday they put out a chart that defied basic addition and subtraction, and they extracted it from a report where the author said: they're using it wrong, and they don't know what they're talking about. So the one thing Albertans can definitely do is not take advice from the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, this Premier just hit the typical family in Alberta with at least a thousand dollars in new costs per year, a tax on everything for everyone. Her answer to Albertans who are worried about another tax taking money is to laugh and to say: buy a new, fuel-efficient car. This is while the Premier travels the province in a large, GHG, gas-guzzling Suburban, and her ministers do exactly the same. What an example. How does the Premier expect Albertans to afford a new fleet of Teslas or Smart cars when

her policies in this budget are working so hard to drive investment and prosperity right out of our province?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, we based our plan on research and facts, and the fact of the matter is that the average family will pay roughly \$500 a year more than they would have previously. What that means, then, is that 60 per cent of Albertans will receive a rebate of roughly that amount of money. That's something that, interestingly, is not ever discussed by the Official Opposition, yet that's the way these things will work. In the meantime people can over time make choices to reduce their emissions. That's the way it works in every other jurisdiction with the carbon price, and that's the way we can change our emissions.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, this isn't the first time that this Premier and her government have been tone deaf to the pain of Albertans. Her Energy minister said that energy workers should move to B.C. to get a job. The Premier has since revised the message with a progressive jobs plan that simply asks Albertans to stay and apply for EI. Now when faced with higher gas prices, what the Premier is suggesting to Albertans is: change your car. Albertans want to know: once they return from picking up a new Prius, if they can't afford the groceries, will the Premier's next suggestion be to let them eat cake?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I hate to confuse the opposition with numbers and with facts, but here is something that's worth thinking about. In the last six months the price of gas in Edmonton has gone up 30 cents. When fully implemented, our carbon levy will be roughly 6 cents per litre. Interestingly, despite the Chicken Little-ism that's going on from over there, the economy did not drop dead with the price of gas going up and down. Quite frankly, it will not drop dead when we implement our carbon levy. However, what it will do is fund the diversification, the renewable energy . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Health Care System Manager Sick Leave

**Mr. Barnes:** Wildrose has been vocal in this House about mismanagement and waste in AHS and its bloated management ranks. The NDP government's response is to claim that these redundant and expensive managerial positions are crucial. Now it has been revealed that hundreds of AHS managers are collecting full pay while on sick leave. When the four-month maximum is up, they are magically better and return to work. This is just wrong, and it hurts those that are truly in need of leave. My question to the minister is this: what are you going to do about it?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's very troubling that the member opposite wants to find cost savings by compelling sick people to go to work in our hospitals. We're committed to improving health by finding efficiencies but absolutely not at the expense of patient safety. I can come to work with the flu. I don't want a nurse working in an ER or in an isolated immunosuppressed area to be doing the same.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please sit down.  
Proceed.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you. Clearly, this Health minister is more interested in protecting entitled AHS managers than actually improving our wasteful and ineffective health system. It makes me sick to know that under this government's watch wait times for cancer surgeries are climbing while millions are spent on a system that rewards AHS managers for deception. Again to the Health minister: will you fix the broken system, that rewards waste and abuse at Albertans' expense?

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** Now, we are all very clearly understanding that the Official Opposition struggles with math, but let me explain the facts. Over the last year the use of sick days in AHS has gone down, and it's below the average of health authorities across western Canada. Certainly, we are going to make sure that when people do get their cancer surgeries, they don't have somebody operating on them who's sick and expelling germs all over the place. These are managers, unit managers often in nursing units in acute-care health facilities, Mr. Speaker.

2:10

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, if a 1 per cent improvement is good enough for the minister, the management problem starts at the very top.

The Health minister's answers again confirm what we already knew, that this NDP government is more interested in allowing a broken sick-leave system to continue than ensuring better results. It's time for a reality check. In the real world abusing a sick-leave system would be stopped, not encouraged. In the real world hard-working Albertans don't get a third of the year off with full pay each and every year. Will the minister implement real accountability and . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** In the real world somebody would not stand up and accuse somebody of being fraudulent. In the real world AHS employees have documentation from a physician if they're not able to perform their duties. Are you saying that the employees are fraudulent, that the doctors are fraudulent? I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker; that side of the House is trying to create a bunch of spin and disrespect. These are dedicated front-line health workers, including unit nurse managers in hospitals. That is inappropriate, and he should apologize.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

### Budget 2016

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2016 is setting records as a disappointment to many Albertans. The Alberta chambers call it "simply irresponsible." They asked the government to "do no harm" to Alberta businesses, "reduce the cost burden on business, contain spending, [and] borrow responsibly." Government told small business that they would be sheltered from the cost of the carbon levy. The government has failed on all accounts. To the Minister of Finance: did you ignore the chambers' advice because you focused on the optics of the budget for yourselves rather than on the economy for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There have been a number of chambers of commerce, and I was just at one this morning up in Fort Saskatchewan, talking with them, and I'm going to see other chambers. They have been supportive of the things we're doing around small-business tax cuts, around investor tax credits, around capital investment tax credits. We are doing those things. I was at the Calgary Chamber of commerce on Monday, and they said: we commend the government for its leadership in establishing Alberta's first investor tax credit program to help equity capital flow. They are supportive.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That little piece there that they actually did like was recommended by the PCs.

Yesterday the minister of economic development said that his government was told by the chambers of commerce that there are a number of initiatives to help the economy move, and the minister suggested that his government adopted those initiatives. Clearly, based on what is stated in a release from the Alberta chambers, which I will table today, that cannot be true. To the minister of economic development: what's keeping you from telling Albertans the truth about how business and their chambers feel?

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, you know, first of all, again I reject the premise of this. It is almost laughable in this House that a party that was in power for 40 years, that failed to reduce small-business tax, to bring in an investor tax credit or a capital investment tax credit is now trying to take credit for something that we did. The Finance minister, the Premier, myself, and members of cabinet as well as members of our caucus have been out consulting with business and industry across this province. We've been listening to them. We have taken their feedback, and now we're implementing measures that will . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. McIver:** Every business I know would prefer the policies before May 5 compared with what's here now.

Last week the Premier flippantly disregarded Albertans' concerns with the carbon tax and suggested that Albertans should just change the cars they have. To the Premier: how are middle-income Albertans going to afford that when they're paying your carbon tax on food, shelter, clothing, consumer goods, vacations, and other costs not rebated back as a result of your regressive carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What middle-income and low-income Albertans will get is a rebate that would effectively cover the cost of the carbon levy based on estimates that we put together. The second point that the member outlined: as I've said before, there are no facts to back up that assertion. The third point, I would suggest, in terms of what I said last week is simply this. All Albertans, as they can afford it, as they have the opportunity, as they gain access to the other programs that are put off the carbon levy, the efficiency programs, the grant programs, can make choices to reduce . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

### Wildfire Season

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fire season has started early in our province, with some 37 fires currently burning. Overnight the hamlet of Duffield in Parkland county was evacuated along with residents of nearby acreages. The hamlet of Tomahawk was also evacuated as well as portions of the Paul First Nation. The residents of nearby Clear Lake are currently on evacuation standby. My question today is to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. What steps is your ministry taking to protect the residents of Parkland county from wildfire?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert for the question. While Parkland county is outside the forest protection area, the ministry is always ready to assist municipalities to protect residents. The department has sent four eight-person crews to help the county as well as a fire behaviour officer and one helicopter. All fires currently burning are human caused. While we are ready to assist where we can, I'd like to urge all Albertans to take necessary steps to minimize wildfires.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the ministry has started wildfire season early, to the same minister: what steps have you taken to minimize the likelihood of wildfires?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to the member for the question. It is important to note the unpredictability when it comes to Alberta's wildfire season. It is difficult to predict weather patterns two weeks from now, let alone a full season ahead. Nevertheless, the trend is for a drier, warmer spring. To address this, I moved the start of the fire season ahead by a month to allow the department to plan early and have resources in place. The government has also invested in the FireSmart program and the Flat Top Complex to reduce the risk of wildfires and their impact on municipalities.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my constituents value the important work of firefighters to fight these wildfires, again to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: would you please explain to the Assembly the variance between last year's budget and the one announced last week?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, let me be clear that safety is paramount and that this government will put the resources in place to ensure it remains so. Fire seasons are unpredictable, therefore difficult to budget. There's a base funding level to maintain equipment and personnel. The cost of actually fighting the fires is drawn from emergency funding, which is to reflect in the following year's budget estimates forecast in our actuals. This was the past practice of previous Alberta governments and is the present practice of governments across Canada. Last year's budget differed, however. It was introduced on October 27, so the cost was reflected in the budget rather than the following year's forecast.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Parental Choice in Education

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "Our caucus is steadfastly opposed to private schooling and particularly steadfastly opposed to public dollars supporting private schooling." That quote comes from our current Premier. Albertans are worried that this radical government has a hidden agenda to defund all but public school systems and destroy the Alberta tradition of honouring parental choice in education. To the Premier: is your caucus still steadfastly opposed to public dollars supporting independent, Catholic, charter, and home-school programs?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Certainly, since the time that I became the Minister of Education, I've made it very clear that we are funding all forms of education. Not only that, but we're funding for enrolment and enrolment growth for education across the province, which has allowed for significant growth. So you can talk about these things all you want, but you can actually walk the walk and put the money there, which we've done. Then you can see what we're actually supporting.

Thank you.

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, given that yesterday this government attempted to radically change the education system by tabling an amendment to Motion 504 that would have undermined parental choice in education and given that if this amendment was passed, the motion would have encouraged the minister to assume full responsibility for all decisions about what programs can be offered and funded outside of the public system, can the minister commit to funding all education options at their current levels until the end of this term, or is his hidden agenda of eliminating parental choice not so hidden anymore?

2:20

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting for people looking for conspiracies under any rock, right?

What you can see from us is that I've said very clearly that we are funding all forms of education. To suggest otherwise is to inflame and to get people upset for absolutely no good reason. We have home-schooling in this province. We have private schools in the province, charters, and public, and together they form one of the best education systems not only in North America but around the world.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister has waffled in his support for Catholic school education, reneged on his commitments to charter schools by disallowing ReThink charter school in Calgary, and engaged in clawbacks to home education programs run by independent school authorities and given that just yesterday he attempted to violate article 26 of the universal declaration of human rights and undermine parental rights in education, what other items from his hidden agenda will the Minister of Education be implementing?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, when people choose to fan the flames of disinformation, when they choose to put out information that simply gets people upset when it's simply not true, you know, that smoke smells like people just trying to cause trouble when we are trying to run an education system. We put that money into place. We fund for not just current levels, but we fund for enrolment and

growth as well, and for anybody to stand in the way of that, that is simply trying to cause chaos for no good reason.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

### Government Spending

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Government spending is a serious concern to my constituents. They work hard to do their part separating the wants from the needs. All they ask is that this government does the same. Yet this government will increase total spending by 4.3 per cent on average over the next three years, placing the burden for their mistakes on future generations. To the Minister of Finance: why did you not show the same restraint as my constituents and constrain spending to a more manageable level?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. I'm not sure where the numbers are coming from that the hon. member is using, but in the budget fiscal plan that I look at, it's constraining spending to about 2 per cent per year in the three years going forward. That is less than population plus inflation growth, far less than this side of the House had in terms of their spending year over year over year. We're bending the curve; they didn't.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That number comes from your jobs plan, hon. minister.

Given that this government has acknowledged that the province is in a difficult fiscal state and given that the debt-servicing costs will be 300 per cent from 2014 to 2017 and given that this actually has the potential to be worse as the government is overly optimistic about WTI prices over the next three years, to the Minister of Finance: if WTI does not hit your unreasonable targets, how much debt is your government willing to rack up and heap upon the backs of Albertans?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you for the hon. member's question. You know, I think I stood in the House yesterday and talked about what our debt-servicing costs would be. They would be 2.4 per cent. If we look at B.C., if we look at Ontario, respectively those numbers are 5.5 per cent and 9 per cent. We are doing a good job here, and we'll continue to do it.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think for this government the sky is the limit.

Given that the government continually blames oil prices for the immense deficit and given that even if resource revenues were the same this year as they were in 2014-2015, a year which produced \$1 billion surplus, we would still have a \$3 billion deficit, again to the minister: will you stop blaming low oil prices and admit that your government is unable and unwilling to show even the slightest intention to constrain spending?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. You know, the Alberta jobs plan in Budget 2016 invests in this province. In 1993 disinvestment happened over here. They cut programs and services. We won't do that. We will invest \$34.5 billion in building this province so people can get back to work, Mr. Speaker. That's what we need: jobs, not the kind of rhetoric over here.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Pipeline Construction

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canada has a long history of unity-building pipeline projects, and despite what the members opposite like to say, several projects were approved in the last 10 years, including Enbridge's line 9 reversal; Kinder Morgan's anchor loop to Trans Mountain, a pipeline that reaches tidewater; Keystone; and the Alberta Clipper. Today as antipipeline, anti-Alberta movements are on the rise, these same companies are being stonewalled. NDP members and staff have been involved in anti-Alberta movements and have politicized pipelines. To the minister: when will this NDP government apologize to Albertans for its role in delaying these job-creating projects?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. Again, as I've said many times, we're working very hard for pipelines in all directions. We understand some in the old system have some permits, but they still have conditions they have to meet. We're working hard with our energy companies to help them meet those conditions.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Mr. Speaker, given that the environment minister fed her radical socialist friends ideas for a book on protesting pipelines and given that the Member for Calgary-East, the Education minister, and our Premier have themselves joined in antipipeline rallies, it's a bit rich to ask Albertans to trust that this government really wants to get to yes, as it claims, or that it wasn't involved in politicizing the pipeline approval process. To the minister: when will her government finally realize that Canada's regulatory processes are robust and defend the integrity of their findings?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we are working constantly with our ministers across the way. I'm very proud of the work the Premier has been doing with her fellow Premiers across the country. We work with AER. We work with the NEB. We're working with everyone to assure people that pipelines are safe and they will continue to be safe.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Given that when the federal government announced it was working on a new regulatory framework, the CEO and president of the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association pointed out that the broader implication of this was that the NEB is broken and given that Canada and Alberta already have the strictest regulatory process in the world and that developing a new framework will delay approvals on key job-creating pipeline projects, why has the Energy minister refused to stand up for pipelines and the jobs that they create by publicly defending the integrity of our system?

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what's not helping the construction of pipelines east and west. It's the rhetoric coming out of the Official Opposition, that is making problems where problems don't exist and, quite frankly, actually slowing down the process. The Minister of Energy has been a champion of pipelines, both Energy East and the west. Our government recognizes the need to get pipelines built. There are a number of things that we are doing to make this happen, not only dialoguing with the federal government, but it's because we've also introduced the most robust climate leadership plan in the country that we will get the social licence to get pipelines approved and our product to tidewater.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.



### Job Creation and Retention

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just last fall this government was adamant that their previous jobs plan would somehow create 27,000 jobs at a cost of \$178 million. That's the math. There was never any evidence to back up that claim or jobs created, for that matter. Now, at \$250 million, they're claiming 100,000 jobs will be created by their shiny, new jobs plan sometime next year, I might add. Will the government table evidence on how and where these jobs will actually be created, or should we stay tuned for failed jobs plan number three next year?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I'm quite proud of the fact, and so are industry and business, that our government listened to the feedback they were giving. They told us that the incentive program that was initially designed would not meet the goals and objectives that we designed it for. But I'll tell you what hasn't changed: our commitment to working with the private sector, the job creators, to give them the tools they need to get Albertans working, to get them back to work, to diversify the economy, which, quite frankly, is something that the Official Opposition doesn't believe in.

2:30

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I teach my children that when we make mistakes, we correct them. This government needs to remember that important truism. Given that the Finance minister's own budget estimates that unemployment will hit a staggering 8 per cent this year and given that the 2017 start date for the government's investor tax credit is cold comfort for those Albertans who have been without work, jobs, for several months already, rather than making things worse, what is this government doing so that Alberta businesses are better prepared and positioned to create jobs now?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I'm quite proud of the work the Finance minister has done and the Premier has done as far as working with the private sector to create a robust jobs plan. What we did was actually increase our budget up to \$250 million. We are investing \$34 billion over five years to build roads, schools, bridges, and hospitals, which is going to create employment for Albertans. We introduced a \$500 million petrochemical diversification program, \$10 million to restore the STEP program, the \$90 million investor tax credit. We're investing in a capital investment tax credit. We have a series of initiatives that are going to get . . .

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, given that small businesses need to actually make a profit in order for the new small-business tax cut to have any meaningful effect and given that both personal and business insolvencies have increased by over 30 per cent in Alberta from 2014 to 2015, will the government back away from their job-killing policies like the carbon tax and the electricity scheme until full economic impact studies are done?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it is a very serious thing what many businesses and Alberta families are going through right now with the incredible low price of oil, that is having an impact on every Albertan across this province. I can you tell you

that is exactly why our government is acting and why we've introduced the Alberta jobs plan, which is a very robust plan with a suite of initiatives to help Albertans. What I can tell you is that for far too long we've remained overreliant on one resource, on a single commodity, on a single buyer, and that has had a significant impact. Our government is working to diversify the economy and get Albertans working.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Calgary-North West.

### Health Care and Education Funding

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard a lot of self-congratulations from this government about how their budget stabilizes front-line services in health care and education. Budgets for those ministries are certainly robust, but like all plans the devil is in the details. One health care executive I met at a breakfast this morning told me: we don't have a budget problem so much as an allocation problem. To the Health minister: how are you working to ensure that the dollars allocated for health care are going to the areas where they are most needed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Wanting to reduce the expenditures from what we've seen historically being about 6 per cent down to 3 per cent this year is a great challenge, but it's something that we're certainly up to the task. Part of that is making sure that we have ongoing dialogue and that we're making sure that we're allocating to the right areas. We're focusing on community initiatives like addressing midwifery wait-lists by expanding by 400 courses of care every year over four years. That's a significant increase. We meet regularly with Alberta Health Services. I was at that same breakfast and happy to meet with some of the stakeholders to address their concerns in person.

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, given that front-line workers can often provide the best guidance on areas of neglect and wastefulness, again to the Health minister: what does that dialogue with front-line workers look like, and because they're watching, when we ask them, will they tell us that they've been consulted by your government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I've met many times with folks at ACCA, one of the organizations that cohosted this morning. The work that they're doing to make sure that our seniors have the respect and dignity that they deserve as well as others who might have disabilities, who need supports to age in their community is certainly an important priority for our government. We are regularly in dialogue with front-line stakeholders, with local community leaders, and, of course, one of our biggest partners, being Alberta Health Services, which has the responsibility of delivering the actual front-line care. I met with them yesterday, and I'll be meeting with them again today.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, to our Minister of Finance: given that the cumulative deficit over the next three years is a jaw-dropping \$28.9 billion and given that no substantial new forms of revenue are being sought out, are you prepared to tell

front-line workers in health care and education that their long-term job security fears are unwarranted?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. You know, for the long term this government is committed to continuing to fund education, health services, human services. We are going to make sure that the people who are doing front-line work are not put at risk as the previous government would have done and as the opposition would do.

#### Investor Tax Credit

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, we all know that small businesses are some of the biggest job creators in our economy. Over the past few months I've spoken to many business owners throughout my constituency who are ready and able to help put Albertans back to work, and they've been looking to this government for support. Yesterday the Minister of Economic Development and Trade announced an investor tax credit for small business and start-up businesses. Can the minister tell the House what this new tax credit is and how it will benefit Alberta companies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta investor tax credit will provide a \$90 million tax credit over two years to support local small and medium-sized businesses. It will provide a 30 per cent tax credit to investors who provide capital to Alberta companies in sectors such as information technology, clean tech, health tech, interactive digital media, game products, postproduction visual effects, and digital animation sectors. We will work with members of the business community and stakeholders over the summer to develop an effective program, and we're open to looking at additional, nontraditional sectors once consultation is complete.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the current challenging economic realities we're facing, can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade explain to my constituents why he thinks this is the right program for Alberta at this time?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the very relevant question. You know, quite frankly, Alberta has been lagging in capital activity compared to other Canadian jurisdictions. This limits growth in commercialization potential of local small and medium-sized businesses. British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, and a number of U.S. states have an investor tax credit. In Alberta investors have typically invested in the oil and gas sector. The province has talent and ideas outside of that sector which also need capital support in order to grow, so this will help level the playing field amongst other jurisdictions that offer investor tax credits.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, given that we need to be providing businesses with as many different supports as possible, again to the same minister: how will this tax credit work with other existing government job programs in Alberta that could help businesses in my constituency?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta investor tax credit is part of the Alberta jobs plan, which will provide \$250 million in new funding through a series of initiatives that will go a long way to help build a strong, diversified, and resilient economy. It will complement existing Alberta programs and supports for small to medium-sized businesses without overcrowding the system. I'll remind the House again that the Finance minister and the Premier announced a small business tax cut, something that small businesses are applauding throughout the province. Our government is committed to working with small and medium-sized businesses to keep Albertans working.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

#### Métis Settlements Consultation Policy

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 6 this year the NDP government announced a new Métis settlements consultation policy. Establishing this policy is important and will hopefully help improve the relationship of Alberta's government with Alberta's Métis. The government doesn't have a very good record of effective consultation in other areas, however. Can the minister please explain how exactly this consultation policy will improve co-operation when it comes to land and natural resource management?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We are very proud of the fact that on April 4 we were able to bring to this House the new consultation policy that was put together with our government and the Métis settlements. We have been working with the Métis settlements to ensure that they have a true voice in terms of the development that is going on in this province and all of the development that is going on around them on their traditional lands. We'll continue to work with them to ensure their participation in our success.

2:40

**Mr. Hanson:** Given that the Métis settlements and all Albertans will benefit from having open communication and consultation with industry and given that Alberta has Canada's largest population of Métis, can the same minister please explain whether and in what ways this process will help Métis settlements in Alberta participate more fully in the economy and what he is hearing from project proponents on this issue?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We have been working with each of the individual settlements on particular projects in their areas, and we've been working very carefully with the general settlement council, who have been a participant fully in this consultation process. We have been having our technicians work with their technicians to make sure that they are involved in all of the options available for support for business growth and for involvement in industry as well as in the leadership plan that's coming forward.

**Mr. Hanson:** Given that I think we can all agree that consultation and conversation is important and given that reaching a consensus and taking meaningful steps forward is even more important, with respect to consulting and conversing with the federal government, can the minister tell this Assembly how he plans to co-ordinate with

the federal government to improve delivery of health and education services for Alberta's Métis people and indeed all of Alberta's indigenous people?

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I'm glad that they're paying attention to the good work that we're doing over on this side of the House because indeed we have. I'm very happy to say that the Minister of Education and myself met with the federal minister of indigenous relations earlier in the spring. We are continuing to work on a number of areas to bring them to a tripartite table, so we're involving all First Nations, all Métis people, and all the indigenous community in consultations in our work with the federal government.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

### Workers' Compensation Review

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Albertans were intrigued when the Labour minister recently announced that an independent panel would conduct a comprehensive review of the Workers' Compensation Board. Now, they were intrigued because on December 7 I had asked the Premier why WCB, a system that she so vociferously attacked while in opposition, was now being made compulsory for farm employers and employees. The Premier said, "We are in the process of trying to do a fulsome consultative review of how we can improve the service provided by WCB." To the Labour minister: if a fulsome consultative review is already in process, why is it necessary to start another one?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely crucial that Albertans feel confident that the Workers' Compensation Board provides fair compensation and meaningful rehabilitation. I announced the launch of our WCB review, where we have appointed a three-person panel that will represent the workers, management as well as a neutral chair. The last review of the Workers' Compensation Board was done more than 15 years ago, making this due time to take a look at this system and make sure that it was reviewed properly.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, when the Labour minister speaks of things that Albertans don't have confidence in, it's just once again an example of something the Premier wrecked the confidence in in the first place. Let me restate the question more specifically. Given that the Premier assured this Assembly that the flaws she saw in WCB were already being addressed and given that a fulsome consultative review was in process already last December, to the Labour minister: who exactly was consulted during that review? Is it complete? If so, when will the results of that review be made public?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The review that was launched this year is going to be taking approximately one year for that panel to bring forward recommendations into 2017. The panel is going to examine WCB's system of governance and effectiveness, the principles of compensation, the policies of WCB, including those related to privacy, confidentiality, and transparency.

This is part of our government's commitment to review all agencies, boards, and commissions.

Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, twice I've asked and twice I've not gotten the answer, so I'm going to try a different approach. Given that the Premier attempted to mollify farmers and ranchers four months ago by saying, "We have engaged in a review of agencies, boards, and commissions, and the Workers' Compensation Board is part of that," and given that the Labour minister has now determined there is a need for a new review, a simple question: was there in fact a WCB review underway on December 7? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A fulsome review of agencies, boards, and commissions has begun under this government. For the Workers' Compensation Board, which is a very large system that impacts hundreds of thousands of workers, we have determined that we need to take a closer look at the details. We are going to be looking at the governance and effectiveness, the principles of compensation using a three-person panel to take a closer look at a system that has not been fully reviewed in over 15 years. This is part of good governance, to make sure that we have a system that is working effectively for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Castle Downs.

### Organ and Tissue Donation

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that April 17 to 23 is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week and given that more than 600 Albertans are waiting for an organ transplant, with many more waiting for tissue donation, what is the Minister of Health doing to improve the rate of organ donation in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This certainly is a crucial conversation for this House and, I'd say, all Alberta houses. Only four years ago Alberta had some of the lowest rates of deceased organ donation in the country, sitting at 9.9 deceased donors per 1,000,000 population. We have some good news, though. Today the rate is at 13.6, and that's because 230,000 Albertans took the time to register online. Unfortunately, Alberta still has 600 people waiting for organ transplants. There's much more work to do. I hope all hon. members and all Albertans take the time to register.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the update. In addition to registering as organ donors and given the need to continue increasing organ donation rates to ensure Albertans have access to life-saving organs and tissue, are there other ways Albertans can support organ and tissue donations here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there is a green ribbon campaign that's about public awareness. Again I'd like to remind everyone to please register if you haven't already done so. We're actually going to have a clinic here tomorrow where people can take the time to register on their way into the House, so

please stop by. If you are a registered donor, I want to remind you to please take the time to talk about that with your loved ones so that they can support your choice if that tragic time does come. It certainly is still up to the family in the end. Alberta organ and tissue donation agency also has a mandate to educate Albertans using public awareness campaigns like the green ribbon.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
Second supplemental.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can you share any information about new initiatives that the agency is working on?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a new update around the Alberta organ and tissue donation agency that's just been launched, and that's the deceased donor patient potential audit next month. This is the first audit of its kind in the province. What's happening is that 16 hospitals from across the province will be used to help identify if any potential donors were missed in those specific facilities so that we can have an understanding of how improvements can be made and how we can reach out to families to increase opportunities. This audit is a crucial step for the agency, and the results will be used to create targeted education programs for professionals and for the public.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

#### Continuing Care Facility in Bassano

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I attended a breakfast on insights into continuing care and seniors' housing with the Minister of Health along with members of the Newell Foundation from my constituency. The Newell Foundation is trying to build a multi-use seniors' continuing care facility in Bassano. Having the AHS new acute-care facility integrated into the Newell project will save taxpayers \$5 million over a stand-alone facility. Can the minister commit that part of the \$365 million in continuing care listed in the capital plan is slated for the Bassano project?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for trying to get an announcement in the middle of question period. Good on you for asking. We'll continue to work with partners from across the province, to work with our Infrastructure minister to move forward on the sunshine list commitments and to work with all partners, like the Newell Foundation, through ACCA and ASCHA as well.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Oh, I'm looking forward to an announcement, but you can't blame a guy for trying for his constituents.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that AHS controls the land that the Bassano project will reside on and that the Newell Foundation could get to work on many parts of the project in anticipation of AHS coming through with the acute-care component, can the minister commit to expediting the land transfer and give a firm date so that another construction season is not missed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

2:50

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it was yesterday and probably last week, too, where were hearing the Finance critic from the Official Opposition talk about: if we only spent at rates like our neighbours in B.C., which would mean cutting – I think his number was \$8 billion – from our budget. Certainly, that would impact our ability to deliver on operational funding as well as our ability to deliver on capital funding. Instead, we have a government that's committed to moving forward, making sure we have the right infrastructure in the right place, and I'm very proud of that.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, I only prepared two questions in the hope that I'd get a real answer, but in the event of a non answer, I'm going to have to try again. We are asking for restraint in the government, but out of the current capital budget allotments we're asking that our constituencies receive our fair share of funding that's already been committed. We're asking: will the minister commit to expediting a land transfer, which won't cost the government a penny?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very proud of the fact that I am the Health minister for all Albertans. Some of the announcements we've made very recently were in ridings that your party represents; for example, the dialysis announcement in Lac La Biche. I think that's something that we can all be very proud of. Certainly, we are continuing to work with partners throughout the province in all ridings. We think it's important that we have access to good information and make good decisions. I'll be very happy to follow up yet again with the Newell Foundation.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I've had a request for unanimous consent to acknowledge some visitors that are in the House today. Is there an agreement on the matter?

[Unanimous consent granted]

#### Introduction of Guests (continued)

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a highly accomplished and dynamic constituent of mine from Calgary-Glenmore, Karen Lee. Karen Lee is a retired clinical trial and management consultant. She has lived in England for 11 years, where she taught part-time at Cranfield University business school north of London. At present she is a clinical psychologist and a published author. Karen's latest book is called *The Full Catastrophe: A Memoir*. I'm very pleased that she is here with us today. I would ask Karen to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

#### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

### Women's Suffrage Centennial

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the risk of sounding repetitious, I am also speaking about this proud occasion of it being the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote in our province.

Imagine what life would have been like for a woman living in Alberta in the last part of the 19th century. By 1900 municipal voting privileges for propertied women were general throughout Canada, but most 19th-century Canadians, women as well as men, believed that the sexes had been assigned to separate spheres by natural and divine laws that overrode mere man-made laws. This stood squarely in the way of achieving votes for all women as a democratic right. Rather than being discouraged, though, the women of these times began to organize and attract supporters to their cause.

Groups like the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Edmonton Women's Business Club, the United Farmers of Alberta, and its women's auxiliary all supported the suffrage movement. Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney, and Emily Murphy were the suffrage movement's main leaders. They argued that granting women the right to vote was a matter of legal right and that political decision-making would be improved by the participation of women.

On February 27, 1915, the leaders organized an informal sit-in at the Legislature. When the MLAs arrived for the day's session, they found their seats filled by women who read petitions and speeches calling for female enfranchisement. Premier Sifton would only promise that the government would take the matter into consideration.

Canada's suffrage campaigns were peaceable and urbane. They used humour, reason, and quiet . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I would remind the House that we try to limit the conversation during members' statements.

### Private Members' Business

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk about the importance of democracy and to ask all members to protect it in this Assembly.

Yesterday we had a serious issue over a private member's motion. The government chose to play politics and moved an amendment that fundamentally changed the intent of the motion. The Speaker allowed the amendment, which might be the correct ruling on a technical level but leads us down a very dangerous path.

This Assembly has a long-standing tradition of allowing debate on motions to proceed without amendment unless the mover agrees. Yesterday's ruling was inconsistent with past rulings, in particular a 1999 ruling that pointed out that allowing amendments to private members' motions would do a great disservice to members who "may only get one chance in every three or four or five years" to put forward a motion on a topic that matters to them. We have now overturned that ruling and opened the door to where it is very likely that every single future private member's motion will be amended or subject to potential amendments.

Allowing a private member's motion to be changed and remain in the name of the original mover is a clear example of the tyranny of the majority. It is my hope that government members will be much more respectful of the traditions of this Assembly. Yesterday the government played politics with private members' business, and then in fixing it, they made a mess. The government made it clear that private members' business will actually be government political games business, controlled by the Government House

Leader. What will flow from this is a further damage to our democracy.

As a leader in this House I hope that we can all work together to ensure democracy is respected, Albertans' voices are heard, and that you, Mr. Speaker, can continue to fulfill your role in defending the rights of the minority.

### Private Members' Business

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, with the exception of the Premier and cabinet, all other members of this Assembly are private members who share in a long-standing tradition to sponsor motions and bills on issues of importance to them and their constituents. These opportunities are very rare. It is done on a purely random draw, and it's not unusual for members to be drawn only once or even not at all. Private members matter.

In 2007 Speaker Kowalski stated that "the work and the advocacy of private members [is] to be paramount in the Assembly." Retiring members giving their farewell address often state that their sponsorship of a private member's bill was their proudest moment as a legislator. The three hours of private members' business yesterday saw those principles, those rare opportunities both honoured and trampled. For two hours we had great debate on the benefits of tourism in our province. Members from all sides participated in a spirit of respect. But that all changed at 5 o'clock. The Member for Calgary-Hays introduced the motion to affirm parental choice in education. An amendment that had not been shared with the mover and did not have his support was introduced. This amendment effectively denied the Member for Calgary-Hays his potentially only opportunity to introduce and debate his motion during the term of this Legislature.

Now, as I learned yesterday, private members' motions can be amended, but it is very rare, and it has always been done with the knowledge and consent of the mover. Sadly, both Deputy Government House Leaders either overlooked or purposely neglected to note this when they argued that these amendments are commonplace. This point, however, was raised by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, who was there and witnessed it happen along with the Member for Edmonton-Calder, today's Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, the 68 private members and their constituents deserve to have their limited opportunities to raise issues respected by all members of this Assembly and especially by those in government, that hold the majority. But at 5 o'clock yesterday that didn't happen. It was a sad day for democracy in Alberta.

3:00

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 7(7) so we can complete the daily Routine.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

### Investor Tax Credit

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I spent over 20 years in the technology field, and I'm very excited about new opportunities available to investors as a result of the investor tax credit announced yesterday by the minister of economic development and the potential upside for tech development in Alberta. Early-stage investment opens up opportunities for growth and sustainability,

and this new initiative makes a 30 per cent tax credit available for investment in local small and medium businesses in key areas of the provincial economy.

Alberta has been at a disadvantage nationally as one of the only jurisdictions without an incentive for venture capital investment. There are some very successful programs across the country like in British Columbia, which sees a \$2 return in tax revenue for every \$1 of VC tax credit. Access to capital for start-ups promotes their success. This tax credit will mean that Alberta can retain more talented technology professionals. I personally know of a number of talented people in the field of technology that have left Alberta for opportunities outside of the province, including my daughter, who works for a start-up in the United Kingdom.

A large part of the global economy is knowledge based. Keeping our knowledge workers and attracting new talent enhances our economy and will lead to an increase in non resource-based growth, and it's about time that Alberta joined this market in larger numbers. Venture capital investment is vital to innovation. Traditional investment institutions are not in the business of risk, and while investment in technology has made some people very wealthy – we think about Facebook, Amazon, and PayPal – it's also an inherently risky prospect. The investment tax credit acknowledges this risk by offering a healthy tax credit to venture capital investors who take this risk on. I'm excited about the economic and social benefits the province will reap as a result of this investor tax credit program.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

#### **Dickinsfield Amity House ESL Book Project**

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about an amazing book and story sharing project by the Dickinsfield Amity House ESL classes in my beautiful riding of Edmonton-Decore. It all started with a question: "Who reserves the right to create unrest, cause wars, and destroy the lives of people? Who has the right to endanger the survival of our children? Will it ever stop?" These questions were asked by the students. From this and a series of discussions in their classes the students were invited to speak about their experiences of war in their home countries. These students come from all over the world: countries in Africa, Iraq, Mexico, the Philippines, and many more.

As a result of these conversations the unique book project *And War Shall Be No More* was born. It's a collection of stories from these ESL students with the help of 16 volunteers, including students and professors from King's University who tutored and supported them not only through the challenge of putting their thoughts into English but also remaining beside them while they relived those traumatic experiences. I'm very proud to announce that the official launch of *And War Shall Be No More* is on May 12 at Glengarry Hall from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., where some of the students will be sharing their stories. I've had the honour of meeting some of these students, and each and every one of them has an amazing story to tell.

Finally, I would like to conclude with a quote from their teacher, Louisa Bruinsma, who is in the gallery here today: if there is any recurring theme of hope in these accounts, it is in the sigh of relief from each of these students that they could come to Canada, a place where they feel safe; perhaps we should honour their courage by working towards a future where all humanity can live together in peace and war will be no more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

#### **Parental Choice in Education**

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During my teaching career I was proud of being a public school teacher. I honoured the fact that students and parents are at the heart of our education system. The Alberta education system has always been about meeting the needs of students through a variety of authentic choices in educational models supported by government.

As a public school teacher I believed that I could provide a top-notch education to any child who entered my classroom, but I also understood that just as each child was a unique individual, I and my public school may not always be the right choice for that particular child. Where a child would go to school and which educational option was the most appropriate would be decided by the parent. This was a parental right. I was not the parent. It was not my call to decide if a public school or an independent school or a charter school or a home-school experience would best meet the unique needs of that child. To interfere in that decision was crossing a line into territory that I had no right to be in.

Yesterday this government crossed the line. Yesterday the government introduced an amendment that attacks parental choice in education. Through this ill-founded amendment Albertans would only be allowed an educational alternative outside of the public system if the Minister of Education determined that the public system did not provide that alternative. This proposal attacks parental decision-making rights and assumes a power that no minister or government should have. This government needs to remember that it is a servant of the people, not their master, and that this government does not have the right to undermine parents' ability to make authentic educational choices for their children. This government is trespassing onto parental territory, and like all trespassers it either needs to remove itself or be ushered off the territory.

Speaking plainly, this government needs to reaffirm its commitment to the long-standing tradition of authentic parental choice in education and not to its hidden agenda of restricting parental rights.

#### **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings for you today. First, I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of a document posted online yesterday by one Nicholas Rivers refuting the ability to use his study on the effects of the British Columbia carbon tax on the economy in Alberta.

Second, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to table the requisite number of copies of another document, authored by the same person, entitled *The Case for a Carbon Tax in Canada*, that lays out an argument for aggressive action on climate change.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of a document referenced earlier today by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade that contains 15 examples of instances where motions other than government motions were amended in this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I made reference today to a document, that I will now table, from the Alberta Chambers of Commerce, and it's entitled Alberta Jobs Plan Spells Pain for Job Creators and Passes the Buck Down the Line.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of Mr. Ceci, President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, erratum for page 124 of the Budget 2016 fiscal plan, which was tabled on April 14, 2016.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there was a point of order raised today at I believe about 10 minutes after 2. Does the Deputy Government House Leader wish to speak to that point of order?

### Point of Order

#### Reflections on Nonmembers

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During question period today, at or about 2:10 p.m., the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat accused AHS staff members of deceit. That's not only in contradiction of Standing Order 23(j) and (l), perhaps others, but it also contravenes *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms* at page 151, section 493(4), which states:

The Speaker has cautioned Members to exercise great care in making statements about persons who are outside the House and unable to reply.

*O'Brien and Bosc* on pages 616 and 617 states:

The Speaker has ruled that Members have a responsibility to protect the innocent, not only from outright slander, but from any slur directly or indirectly implied.

On June 25, Mr. Speaker, you yourself cautioned members, stating:

Members must remember that when they refer to people outside of the Assembly, those individuals have no ability to respond to the allegations that may have been made in here.

Your predecessor, Mr. Speaker, in 2012 made similar cautions; for example, on November 26.

We should not be referring to people who are not here and not able to defend themselves.

After having said all that, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the member retract his statement and apologize to our hard-working public servants at AHS.

Thank you.

3:10

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I missed the citation that the Deputy Government House Leader used. However, I'm happy to respond on a couple of particular areas here in the Chamber.

There has been much debate about who exactly can and cannot defend themselves and who is considered absent and who is not, and there is certainly a large school of thought that believes that that particular precedent is speaking specifically about members and former members. But more important than that position, Mr. Speaker, is that my hon. colleague never once identified an individual. It certainly would be difficult to bring in the over 50 managers a year that take 16 weeks of sick leave. It certainly would be difficult to bring the hundreds of managers at AHS here to the Chamber to have them defend themselves. If the hon. member may have identified one individual, perhaps there would be a point of order here, but nothing could be further from the truth about what happened today.

Furthermore, in 2014 the former CEO of AHS acknowledged that a policy surrounding sick leave needed to be revisited as it was costing the system \$190 million a year. They set in place a policy whereby managers would monitor sick leave to identify any trends or irregularities. Now it seems, according to the CTV report, that it's the managers who are actually the ones that are using up to four months of sick leave a year. This particular project was part of major cost containment measures that the former Premier ordered in light of a massive drop in oil prices. Whether or not there is an abuse of sick days is certainly a matter of debate and definitely – most definitely – one worth investigating.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Opposition House Leader, are there specific references that you might draw my attention to with respect to *Beauchesne's*?

**Mr. Cooper:** The only one that I will make is from the standing orders, where it speaks specifically to individuals, none of which were identified today.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to the point of order raised earlier today?

Hon. members, I would just make a general observation. I will tell you that I'm going to defer a decision on this until a later date, but I have noted, as was cited and as I've tried to mention several times, that it seems to me that the language and use of words may not be intended but is certainly pushing the envelope in terms of trying to maintain decorum in this place. However, I'll defer my judgment on that decision until a future date.

I do have a request before we go to Orders of the Day. We have another guest to introduce. I need unanimous consent to recognize Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this moment to introduce Dr. Mary Valentich to the House. She has had a 50-year career as a social worker and a social work educator. One of her many accomplishments is that she is the founding member of not one but two rape crisis centres, one in Ottawa and one in Calgary. She has over 50 referral articles, chapters, and is the writer of three books. She is currently a professor emerita at the University of Calgary. She embodies the ideals of feminism and social justice, and considering what we've been talking about in the House on this day, I believe she is an inspiration for us all. I would hope that she would stand and accept the warm welcome of this House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

#### Provincial Fiscal Policies

13. Mr. Ceci moved:  
Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

[Adjourned debate April 14: Mr. Cooper]

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Spendthrift, hopeless, extreme, ideological, reckless: these are some of the words that came to mind when I read the NDP's 2016 budget. But the word that stuck with me the most was irresponsible: irresponsible with our public services, irresponsible with our tax dollars, irresponsible with our future.

This budget is yet another extremely irresponsible budget in a long line of preceding irresponsible budgets that refused to do what needs to be done. Those previous irresponsible budgets kicked the can down the road for the next Minister of Finance or the next government to deal with. This is Alberta's ninth consolidated consecutive deficit. The operational deficit stands at \$10.4 billion. Looking at the change in net financial assets, which includes capital spending, this year's consolidated deficit will exceed \$14 billion. Even after accounting for inflation, this far exceeds the worst deficit run under Premier Getty, which was \$4 billion, in 1986.

This deficit would be irresponsible if it was taken in isolation, but it is even more irresponsible when taken within its full context. We have run a deficit on a consolidated basis every single year since 2008, and every single year since 2008 our government, under four PC Premiers and one NDP Premier, has made misleading and even false claims that the budget was either balanced or would be balanced just a few years from now if we would only trust them. Instead, between 2008 and this budget's projections for 2018 the net financial assets of our province – in English, the net value of our government – will have declined by an almost criminal \$65 billion. From \$17 billion in the sustainability fund and no debt in 2008 we have spent our way into a hole that will leave us with a debt that will soon exceed \$58 billion. This is irresponsible. This is driven by a decade of reckless, poorly-thought-out, and often wasteful overspending.

The operating expenditures in our budget right now on a per capita basis are projected to cost us \$1,000 more than Quebec, \$2,000 per capita more than British Columbia, and now \$3,000 more than Ontario. Quebec, fuelled by \$9 billion in equalization, offers all kinds of services that Alberta does not but somehow still manages to spend less. That's right. This government spends more than even Quebec on operations. Ontario has been run for 12 years by one of the most irresponsible Liberal governments in the country – and that's saying something, Mr. Speaker – and it still spends far less than Alberta's government.

But British Columbia is our best comparator, being an energy- and resource-based economy with significant population growth and some of the most expensive terrain on which to build capital projects and roughly the same population density as Alberta. British Columbia also has similarly high private-sector salaries and wages, especially in Vancouver, where the cost of living is significantly higher than most Alberta cities'. But British Columbia provides a high level of social services, higher than Alberta's when you look at wait times and other key metrics, and they do it at \$2,000 less per capita. Put another way, British Columbia manages to provide a similar level of government services for \$8,000 less per household than Alberta can. That's \$8 billion every year that we spend on operations just to get what B.C. gets. Folks, if that's not a sign of a serious spending problem, I don't know what is.

3:20

I made a full-time job before I was elected out of trying to convince the previous government to take this problem seriously. I did my best to explain that Alberta would be best served if we returned to the conservative principles that built this province and made us a beacon of prosperity and freedom, principles held by great Premiers like Ernest Manning, Peter Lougheed, and Ralph Klein. I did my best to warn them that unless they got spending under control now, our savings would run out, our debt would grow,

that all of the hard work, pain, and difficult decisions made in the 1990s would be for naught, and that this province would have gone through an extremely difficult period of time only to squander that legacy. And that legacy has collapsed. Both the former Premier and the current Premier believed that the cost of this should be borne by the Albertans who pay their taxes, go to work, and create jobs.

But as far as this government said it would go during the election, it has gone much farther. This government promised to balance the budget by 2019. It has now entirely jettisoned any commitment whatsoever to balancing the budget before any child born today reaches their eighth birthday. An eight-year plan that just waits for revenues to catch up with annual spending increases is not a plan.

This NDP government has gone much farther than it said it would on taxes. They have imposed a massive new \$3 billion carbon tax on businesses and individual taxpayers. With the Leaper federal NDP operatives running this government, from their own chief of staff to the Premier on down, they have decided to attack the single largest job creator and wealth creator in the province, and in so doing, they will cost the average family thousands of dollars a year. Try as they might to buy Albertans off with their own money, these government cheques will not compensate most families for the true cost of the ND PST carbon tax. They will not account for the increased costs of electricity, groceries, and everyday consumer goods. It isn't done fairly as it would appear that two single people sharing a space will get more of a rebate than a married couple.

The response that this government gives to concerned Albertans who don't think that they can afford this tax is: buy a new car. It's pretty rich for anyone in this House to be lecturing Albertans on gas when most of our gas is paid for. This is the kind of champagne socialist attitude that has distanced the NDP's modern hardline activist movement from its once proud working-class labour movement. The NDP, whose actions reveal that it is no longer the party of everyday blue-collar workers, shows its true colours by fighting for the antipipeline dreams of ivory tower environmentalists and acting as though everyone working for the government is anointed to sainthood while everyday working Albertans see their wages rolled back and their jobs lost.

Alberta deserves a government that works for all Albertans, not just for the Leap Manifesto brain trust of the NDP and those working for the government. We value our public servants. Many of them do critical work for Albertans, but we are deceiving ourselves and Albertans if we act as though each and every person working for the government, insofar as their private-sector counterparts are in difficult circumstances, deserves raises no matter what and they are entitled to pay increases and growing staff ranks no matter how many jobs are bled in the private sector. This is irresponsible.

It is also irresponsible to ignore advice just because that advice is coming from the Official Opposition. The opposition spent hours during the last budget debate warning the Minister of Finance that his resource revenue projections were grossly overoptimistic. They remember it. We warned him that his touted new debt ceiling was powerless. They remember it.

On November 17, 2015, I said in the House with respect to Bill 4 at the time:

This bill has no checks or balances being put into place to ensure that we do not exceed a debt limit of 15 per cent. There are no consequences whatsoever for exceeding the proposed 15 per cent debt ceiling. There is nothing to stop the minister from ordering his staff to exceed that debt ceiling.

I hope that the minister remembers that.



We warned the NDP until we were blue in the face that their 15 per cent soft debt ceiling was wholly inadequate. Just as Premier Redford replaced Premier Klein's strict and prudent restrictions on government borrowing with a flimsy debt ceiling, this Premier has replaced Premier Redford's lax restrictions on borrowing with what amounts to a debt skylight, and already this government has smashed through that skylight with a record level of debt between now and the next election.

We repeatedly warned the minister that this debt ceiling would be inadequate, but the minister said on the 3rd of November, 2015: "I believe that this 15 per cent [debt] limit will not be breached. In the three-year plan that's before you here, I think it takes us up to about 9.5 or 10 per cent of debt to GDP, so there's lots of cushion." Some cushion, Mr. Speaker. Now, just four months, 12 days, and 15 hours later the minister is claiming that he couldn't see any of this coming.

On the same day in 2015 the minister said: "We don't come anywhere close to the 15 per cent. So I don't see where there's going to be an issue like you [the Wildrose] do." Mr. Speaker, I would be embarrassed if I passed legislation promising that I wouldn't do something with much fanfare and then, just a few months later, had to repeal my own law because I didn't listen to what I was being told by the opposition. That is irresponsible.

The Finance minister said, again on October 29, 2015: "15 per cent debt to GDP is a prudent benchmark for limiting government debt. With this cap in place, Albertans can be assured that the government's borrowing will not get out of hand." Famous last words.

Speaking of irresponsibility, that eight-year-old that I was speaking of earlier is my niece Lucy. Lucy was born earlier this month, and she already has \$4,625 of debt to the provincial government alone to her name. By the next election my niece Lucy, when she's three years old, will owe almost \$14,000. By the time the Minister of Finance might balance the budget, by 2024, assuming he drops his borrowing by a billion dollars a year, eight-year-old Lucy will owe \$25,000 to her name, still 10 years from being old enough to vote for a representative in the government. If we follow the reckless path this government is laying out in its budget, after eight years of NDP government Lucy will have \$25,000 of debt to her name that she does not deserve. That is not just irresponsible; that is immoral, Mr. Speaker. That is intergenerational theft, and the minister should be ashamed of it.

If we believe in the principle of no taxation without representation, then we should not be so wantonly burdening future generations not represented in this House with this kind of deficit. Mr. Speaker, I believe that today's deficits are tomorrow's taxes, and the Premier has alluded to that, with the threat of a provincial sales tax hanging over our heads. One day those generations not yet in this House will have to make a decision about the generations that will come after them. They will have to decide either to be short-sighted and greedy and enjoy the instant gratification that comes with other people's money, or they will be responsible stewards of the greatest, strongest, freest, and most prosperous land in the world. I know what kind of representative I am, and that's why I will oppose this budget.

3:30

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 8

#### Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to speak in favour of Bill 8, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016. Through the government there are many delegated agencies, boards, and commissions that act as regulators and provide oversight on specific sectors and services that Albertans rely on. Albertans expect that these delegated organizations answer to the Alberta government and do the job that they were designated to do on behalf of Albertans. Given that the government is put into power by the will of the people, if an organization is in a position where they could act unethically, improperly, the expectation by the people is that this organization would have to answer to and be reviewed by the ministry responsible.

I've heard from my constituents, who expect their government to hold these organizations accountable because we are accountable to our constituents. Accountability and oversight, Mr. Speaker, are the standards which Albertans live by. We see this direct oversight through boards like AHS and various elected and appointed boards of governors. One issue that currently exists under the current Fair Trading Act is the lack of oversight for organizations delegated responsibilities. The current legislation limits the mechanisms available to the ministry to provide proper oversight of organizations that protect the rights of consumers whenever oversight is needed.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that Alberta consumers have confidence that the Alberta government can hold designated agencies, boards, and commissions accountable to the people of Alberta. That is why the proposed amendments to the Fair Trading Act are critical for protection of Alberta consumers. The mechanisms used to strengthen government oversight of delegated regulatory organizations are about good governance and public accountability given that the current legislation does not provide the Alberta government authority to verify organizations' practices. The oversight mechanisms will ensure that delegated regulatory organizations are held to high standards and that these organizations can be held accountable in ways that Albertans have come to expect. This bill represents our government's commitment to protecting Alberta consumers. Albertans expect and deserve these protections whenever a delegated regulatory organization exists and a consumer is involved.

I am happy that we will now have varieties of options available to remedy any problems that may arise. Given that these amendments are tailored to deal with any problems that may arise for Alberta consumers and given that the bill allows our government to continue to stand up for consumers, I am extremely happy and proud to support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Any questions or observations under 29(2)(a)?

The Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 8, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016, promises to bring good governance and public accountability to delegated regulatory organizations under the Fair Trading Act and will ensure that these organizations are properly regulating their industries. The Fair Trading Act is unique in that it does not provide the minister ultimate authority

over delegated authorities created under the act. This bill will ensure that any delegated authorities under the Fair Trading Act follow an existing precedent. My caucus and I support that change.

Bill 8, when passed, will allow the minister to order a review of a delegated authority, to issue orders related to such a review, to dismiss board members or employees if any order is not complied with, and to appoint a representative of the minister to oversee the management of the organization and/or its compensation fund. While there are a number of delegated authorities in Alberta, including the College of Physicians & Surgeons, the Real Estate Council of Alberta, and the Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board, among others, the only such delegated authority under the Fair Trading Act is the Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council, or AMVIC.

I'm quoting their website here. AMVIC

is Alberta's automotive industry regulator. AMVIC is an independent delegated authority and is . . . incorporated under the Alberta Societies Act as a not-for-profit organization for the purpose of administering motor vehicle industry regulations as outlined in the Fair Trading Act.

AMVIC is governed by a 13-member board consisting of six directors appointed from the general public by the Minister of Service Alberta, five directors appointed by the industry association, and two members nominated from the industry at large. AMVIC's status as a delegated authority is uniquely Albertan. No other province regulates their entire automotive industry through a delegated authority.

While AMVIC has for the majority of its life successfully regulated the automotive industry in Alberta, it has in recent years had progressively more serious allegations levelled against it, and its ability to maintain consumer and industry confidence has been questioned. Wildrose was among the first to raise concerns around the operation of AMVIC. While the government shouldn't make a habit of pulling arm's-length organizations under the government's wing, we do hope this measure allows AMVIC to function more effectively for the consumers it was created to protect. Wildrose is very disappointed in the previous government's failure to adequately equip AMVIC for success, and Albertans can count on us to be watching very carefully to see that this move actually solves the problems with AMVIC.

While Wildrose is committed to the principles of the free market, we know that the key to successful industry is consumer confidence and trust. Consumers deserve to know that they are protected by a properly functioning regulatory body, and we believe the proposed legislation does just that. Albertans understand that the former government used this government's agencies, boards, and commissions to reward their friends and donors. It was wrong then, and it's still wrong today. Wildrose will continue to watch these organizations closely to ensure that such practices do not continue under government's watch.

In my role as shadow minister for Service Alberta I have had the opportunity to meet with a wide range of stakeholders, including automobile industry and consumer stakeholder groups. It may surprise many in this House that I include myself in that group. This may be a rare example of the NDP government actually presenting legislation that's in line with what Albertans really want. The Motor Dealers' Association of Alberta is in favour. So are the Auctioneers' Association of Alberta and the Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association of Alberta given that this bill simply sets oversight of AMVIC on equal footing with other delegated authorities and because it will benefit the automotive industry to have increased consumer confidence.

Wildrose recognizes that efficient government is important to all Albertans and that there needs to be a balance between providing

effective oversight and micromanaging arm's-length agencies, boards, and commissions. We recognize that this is a positive move considering AMVIC's unique status and its scandal-ridden history. However, a word of warning to the members opposite: Albertans are paying attention, and so are we. We would advise the NDP to take a lesson from history and resist the ideological temptation to keep growing a government that is already so large that it can often take weeks and months to get back to Albertans.

Again, we support this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who would like to speak to the bill? Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to be able to rise from time to time and add my voice to some of the debate that goes on within the House here. It's certainly a privilege to be able to rise and speak today on Bill 8, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016.

Mr. Speaker, consumers have an expectation that when they're making major purchases such as a car, which, as everybody knows, is probably the second-largest purchase outside of a home that a consumer will make, they will be protected should a problem or an issue arise. I think it's safe to say that this government is committed to ensuring that consumer protection is maintained at the highest of levels.

3:40

Wherever an outside agency is acting as a delegate of the government, Albertans deserve to know that they will be fully protected, and they want to know that these delegated organizations are ultimately accountable to government as well. Mr. Speaker, the changes being proposed in Bill 8 will ensure that this indeed is the case and will serve as another way in which this government is continuing to stand up for Alberta consumers. For this I'm happy to provide my support to Bill 8, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016, and I certainly appreciate the members opposite supporting this bill as well.

Just so we're clear, the focus of Bill 8 is on ensuring that delegated regulatory organizations, or DROs, as the acronym goes, under the Fair Trading Act are held to a high standard and that they can be accountable and meet the expectations of the public. The minister would then have a variety of options available for remedying any problems that may come up at these DROs.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that every other DRO in all other pieces of legislation has this same type of oversight already in it. There's certainly nothing new that's being done here, with this piece of legislation merely duplicating what already occurs everywhere else, so I'm sure that my fellow members will agree that we have an interest in government having the appropriate oversight of all delegated regulatory organizations.

Now, although there is only one DRO currently under the Fair Trading Act – and it is an important one – going forward, this bill will also allow for any new DROs created under this act in the future to automatically fall under the same proposed oversight language, just like every other DRO, thus achieving what we're currently trying to do, to provide some oversight in this act.

Mr. Speaker, I guess just to sum up really quickly what I've been talking about here, Bill 8 will provide mechanisms to ensure that consumer protection is always maintained at the highest levels, that delegated regulatory organizations have the same oversight provisions already in place in other acts, and that they can be held accountable when those standards are not being met. Ultimately, everyone in the province is a consumer, and ensuring a fair

marketplace for all Albertans is something, I think, we all have an interest in here.

Again, I'm happy to offer my support for Bill 8, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016, and I would certainly urge all of my colleagues here in the House to support this bill. I do look forward to hearing some more views from other members in this House and what their thoughts are going forward while we debate this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 8? Standing Order 29(2)(a) does apply now. The Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Sorry; is this . . .

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Ellis:** No. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any under 29(2)(a)?

Go ahead, Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really proud to stand up in support of Bill 8, the Fair Trading Amendment Act. You know, I can tell you that after the last election, when I was assigned the role as the PC critic for Service Alberta, I actually received a lot of complaints from people that certainly had concerns with AMVIC. What I did do at that time – of course, as an investigator I wanted to investigate what the history was in regard to AMVIC and what the previous government had done.

Fortunately, I did have our good friend Mr. Manmeet Bhullar as a guide, who was, obviously, the Service Alberta minister during quite a time of, we'll say, controversy. I will pass on the words that Mr. Bhullar had explained to me, which were that when he got into the role of Service Alberta, many of the bureaucrats were not happy with him because he wanted to essentially change everything, and part of that change had to do with AMVIC. Sadly, prior to his arrival AMVIC had grown into this snowball, and it seemed as though there was no way of stopping it. It was really, you know, a *W5* report that kind of put AMVIC in line. Manmeet tried in his brief role with Service Alberta to certainly put people in a position that would try to make a positive difference in AMVIC but sadly to no avail. A lot of political infighting would occur in that particular organization and, obviously, Manmeet moved on to other things within the government itself. AMVIC was able at the time to hold off any, let's say, offence from Mr. Bhullar, who tried to do his best in a very challenging, challenging role.

To give you also a little bit of background here, in 2014 the then PC Service Alberta minister Doug Griffiths suggested that AMVIC had become inconsistent, arbitrary, and at times punitive in relation to the enforcement of responsibilities. The Service Alberta operational review of investigative practices, which was dated April 29, 2015, made 16 recommendations that fall under the following main topics, right? Eight recommendations were related to clarifying and making adjustments to policies or ensuring policies were followed, specifically relating to undertaking policies in the Peace Officer Act and regulations. There were three recommendations related to improving the quality of investigations as reflected in investigation reports. There were two recommendations related to improving operations, simplifying the charge approval process, and clarifying the complaint handling process; one recommendation related to ensuring that investigations were completed independently from the adjudication process; one recommendation related to ensuring that AMVIC followed through on Service Alberta's

recommendations; and one recommendation related to improving staff morale.

Recently AMVIC stated that they are pleased with the progress of the implementation of these principles, and a report on the status of these recommendations, of course, highlights the excellent work, to a certain degree, that AMVIC had been doing.

Also, in early March of 2015 a leaked document outlined the government's concerns, at the time the PC government's concerns, again with AMVIC in a letter written by the then minister, Stephen Khan. He raised several concerns such as misuse of administrative enforcement tools; investigations and hearings that have not been reached in a manner that is fair, impartial, and open; and high staff turnover rate with low morale among the investigators.

Additionally, an April 2015 internal draft of the Service Alberta review of the Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council expressed serious concerns about the welfare of the council's staff under the administration of the executive director at the time. This is a quote: the executive director acts as a tyrant and a dictator who interprets any question or decision, direction or process as disobedience and responds with intimidation. This, of course, is what Service Alberta investigators say that they were told by several staff, according to the review.

In a June 2015 class-action lawsuit against AMVIC for negligence the claim was that AMVIC failed to regulate the business practices within the auto industry and alleges that Service Alberta failed to oversee AMVIC. This is a key reason why this government is providing more ministerial oversight through Bill 8. The allegations related to the failure of Treadz, a Red Deer based auto consignment company. The lawsuit claims Treadz failed to pay the owners of vehicles and sold and failed on promises, and there was a lot of, of course, neglect.

3:50

Of course, now we are here in the current situation. I'm very pleased that the Service Alberta minister has listened to the concerns of people who have had significant issues with AMVIC, and here we have before us Bill 8. I'll quote our Service Alberta minister: because of how the previous government created the act, the minister has little power, if none, actually, to take action on behalf of Albertans when a regulator is not doing its job.

So, you know, although I'm not a significant fan of more power or having control, certainly I believe that it's important to listen to Albertans, and I believe in this particular case this is a bill that is listening to Albertans who have a concern with this specific area, which is called AMVIC. I believe that this government in collaboration with the opposition will do the right thing for all Albertans.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

Any other speakers for Bill 8? No one wishing to speak?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move to adjourn debate on Bill 8.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 10

### Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016.

As I mentioned at the bill's introduction, Bill 10 makes legislative amendments in several different areas, including the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Act, and several Alberta tax statutes. These amendments will provide flexibility to allow government to address current economic and fiscal challenges and will protect the integrity of our provincial tax system and provide greater clarity and consistency in our financial legislation.

Mr. Speaker, let me take a few minutes to review the key elements of this legislation. As I announced with Budget 2016 last Thursday, this bill repeals section 3 of the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, or FPTA. As members are no doubt aware, this section limits the government's debt to nominal GDP to 15 per cent. When this amendment to the FPTA was contemplated, our economic forecast and those from the private sector were very different. As it has now become clear, we are in a critical moment in Alberta's history. Oil prices have dropped by over two-thirds, from \$105 per barrel in 2014 to less than \$30 a barrel in January. As a result, the unemployment rate has risen dramatically, and we are forecasting an almost 90 per cent drop in nonrenewable resource revenue.

Mr. Speaker, as I outlined in my Budget Address, Albertans are confronted with a choice that will have profound consequences for generations to come. When oil prices have declined in the past, Alberta governments responded by making reckless and extreme cuts to public services, firing thousands of teachers and nurses and cutting supports for seniors. Some suggest that we should turn the clock back and do the same thing again today.

As Budget 2016 makes crystal clear, our government is taking a different approach, a better approach. Instead of slashing and burning, we are choosing to protect the health care of Albertans, that they have demanded, and the education system that our children rely on. Instead of sitting on our hands, we are moving forward with our capital plan, which addresses decades of inaction, and we'll rebuild the critical infrastructure that Albertans rely on. Mr. Speaker, instead of doing nothing, we are partnering with Alberta businesses to drive economic growth and diversification. Budget 2016, the Alberta jobs plan, will create the conditions for 100,000 new jobs right across this province. It is the right approach to address the most severe economic shock our province has experienced in generations and one that I was proud to unveil last Thursday, Budget 2016.

Mr. Speaker, as members are well aware, much has changed since Budget 2015 was developed and released last year. Back in August and September 2015 the private-sector forecasters told us that oil would average \$61 per barrel in 2016-2017. As I made clear last Thursday, the same forecasters are now saying that oil will average \$42 per barrel this fiscal year. Simply put, the economic outlook has changed dramatically over the last six months. All Albertans recognize this. This is why as part of Budget 2016 we have included a risk adjustment in our oil forecast to recognize the extreme volatility in our resource revenues. In these challenging times as a government we have chosen to respond by investing in jobs and protecting the vital services Albertans rely on.

Mr. Speaker, if the government had chosen to follow the advice of the Official Opposition to not exceed 7 per cent of debt to nominal GDP, we would have had to cut over \$8 billion from Budget 2016. That would have been the wrong decision. It would have made a bad situation even worse. An \$8 billion cut is more than the entire Ministry of Education. An \$8 billion cut is more than the combined budgets of the ministries of Advanced Education and Municipal Affairs. An \$8 billion cut is virtually the entirety of our

capital plan for this fiscal year, which was designed to put Albertans back to work while providing the required infrastructure that Alberta businesses need to grow and thrive. Put another way, even if we close the Alberta Energy Regulator and the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission and we cancelled the investment and investor tax credits, wound down the biofuels initiative, and suspended all monies for public security in the Ministry of Justice, we would still be roughly \$7 billion short of the Official Opposition's debt limit.

Mr. Speaker, I only raise this proposal for the \$8 billion in cuts made by the Official Opposition in December to illustrate the choice we face, and it's an important choice. Budget 2016 has made this government's position clear on how we should respond to this economic shock. The title says it all. With the Alberta jobs plan we spur the creation of 100,000 jobs, protect core public services, and partner with business to drive innovation and diversify our economy.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the change that I just identified, there are a few other elements of Bill 10 which I should quickly highlight for members of this Chamber. Bill 10 proposes a change to the Financial Administration Act, specifically to section 42.1, which requires that loans made pursuant to express statutory authority be tabled before the Assembly. The current wording of this legislation could be interpreted to apply to corporations and individuals. Under this exceedingly strict interpretation it's possible that several kinds of loans to individuals would have to be tabled in the Assembly, including loans made to individual seniors under the Seniors' Property Tax Deferral Act and loans made to seniors under the proposed Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act.

Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that making such loans public is not desirable and was not likely the original intent of the act, which was passed 20 years ago. Our government has no desire to see the personal information of grandmothers and grandfathers or students tabled in this House because this bill has not kept pace with the times and it was not explicit enough. Therefore, as a remedy Bill 10 proposes a \$500,000 threshold. Loans made to individuals below that threshold would not have to be tabled in the Assembly. The tabling requirement for loans made to corporations, of course, will still apply.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, this bill also makes changes to the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Act. As you may recall, the program was created in 2005, our centennial, and was designed to encourage parents to open up registered education savings plans. The program failed to support the very people it was meant to help. Bill 10 will give legal authority for the program's closure, with any application received after July 31, 2015, no longer eligible.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, let me highlight for members that the bill also proposes minor technical amendments to various Alberta tax statutes. The amendments are designed to ensure continued consistency between Alberta and federal tax regimes, clarify or correct technical deficiencies, repeal expired provisions, standardize administrative policies across Alberta tax statutes, and to make other technical changes needed to maintain current policy.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this proposed bill covers amendments in several different areas: the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Act, and several tax statutes. These amendments will provide flexibility to allow government to address current economic and fiscal challenges, and they will also protect the integrity of our provincial tax system. More importantly, changes in this bill will enable the government to respond to this once-in-a-

generation economic challenge and establish the conditions to put 100,000 people to work through the Alberta jobs plan.

I ask all members of the House to support this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really hope that the Minister of Finance will be here to take questions from the Official Opposition. It really would be a shame if the Minister of Finance didn't do his job to stand in this House and answer questions from the Official Opposition about a bill that will tear up the debt ceiling in this province. If the Minister of Finance weren't here to engage in questions and answers under 29(2)(a), it would be extremely disappointing.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, 29(2)(a) does not apply as I understand it with respect to the mover of the motion, nor will it apply to you, sir. So please proceed with your question rather than making reference to the other side of the House.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It certainly would be a shame if the Minister of Finance weren't to participate in the debate in a back and forth . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I think he was participating. Could you please proceed.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I'm getting to it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, also known as the Unlimited Debt to Infinity and Beyond Act. Some could say that this is the start of a provincial sales tax implementation act.

There is some housekeeping in this bill. The final wind-down of the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Act. It was intended to provide a way for parents to save for their child's college or university education through RESPs. Since its inception the program has paid out close to \$132 million. While the grant amounts are not large, they are meant to get parents started, and the effect of compound interest has made the program significant. It's too bad it's not affordable for many anymore.

There's also some harmonization going on in this bill, measures like aligning the federal Income Tax Act so that Alberta companies can report their earnings in U.S. dollars, Australian dollars, British pounds sterling, or euros.

As the law is written now, all of the loans the government makes are supposed to be tabled. I don't think that seniors getting deferrals for property taxes or for their home renovations want that kind of information out in the public, nor do students want to see their names in print that they took out loans, so the government has not been reporting these loans. Bill 10 makes changes to reasonably fix this problem. All corporate loans will still be reported. The only individual loans that will be reported are over \$500,000.

Dividend tax credit. The dividend tax credit is adjusted down to reflect the change in the small-business tax rate from 3 to 2 per cent. This is generally a positive thing and good housekeeping for individuals who take their income from their small business as a dividend.

That's the housekeeping in a nutshell, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, it doesn't stop there. The kicker in this bill is the elimination of the debt ceiling. Only four months and 12 days ago the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board passed Bill 4 in this House. It would be a positive thing if he were to debate its repealing today. I would certainly invite the Minister of Finance to get up and debate it, only Bill 4 brought in a 15 per cent debt-to-GDP limit as Alberta's debt ceiling. That was a high ceiling in and of itself

considering that we had a debt ceiling of zero just a few years ago. That's where Wildrose likes it. What good is the law if you're just going to break it and keep changing the law? Not even five months later year 3 of the new budget has a 15.5 debt-to-GDP ratio, so the minister will just want the law changed so he can break through the debt ceiling.

We are now on track to have a \$58 billion debt in just three years, Mr. Speaker. Bill 10 will allow us to break even that. Less than 24 hours after the budget was released last week the Dominion Bond Rating Service had already downgraded Alberta from a triple-A to a double-A rating. I don't know how the members on that side can look their constituents in the eyes and tell them that they are being responsible with future generations' money. I spoke about my niece Lucy just a few months ago in the budget debate. I don't know how they can look someone that age in the eye and say: we will saddle you with \$25,000 of debt before you can even vote on how we should be spending your money. It's shameful. Not even 24 hours after their budget the bankers were demanding higher interest rates.

The budget estimates the population at 4,247,000. That works out to \$13,563.93 owed by every single man, woman, and child in Alberta to the bankers who bought the bonds that create this debt, bonds that evoke images of being tied up, ropes and chains. And Albertans are tied up here. That debt over the next three years could build over 3,000 new schools, or it could repave the entire provincial highway network, or it could build 38 Calgary South Health Campuses. Say that 10 times fast, Mr. Speaker. How much of this debt is going to capital builds? We need to know this. We need to know how much could have otherwise gone, instead of to interest payments, to schools and ring roads around our cities.

Much is also going to pay for operating costs now, a whole new low for this government. The day-to-day government salaries will be funded by debt, those, too, of teachers, nurses, and AHS managers, those managers who suspiciously take four months of sick leave and then show up at work the day that their sick leave runs out . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** After their chemo is done?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** . . . when the average Canadian in the private sector only takes about 9.1 days a year in sick leave. We know that the Minister of Health is a bit sensitive on the topic.

In Alberta a portion of the teachers' pension plan is also paid for by taxpayers.

Is it wrong to pull Albertans into a debt spiral? Interest payments on the debt will be the biggest expense in the government after health, education, and social services before the next election. That means that this government will spend more servicing its debt than protecting our environment or keeping our streets safe.

We warned the Minister of Finance that his numbers were off. I heard nothing but excuses from the Minister of Finance, who I challenge to get up out of his seat and debate this in the House here. We heard nothing but excuses from the Minister of Finance, saying: we couldn't see it coming, Mr. Speaker; we couldn't see it coming; we had no idea this would happen. There are miles of *Hansard* transcripts in this House where we warned the minister day after day that his revenue projections were grossly optimistic.

4:10

Nobody was projecting that oil prices would recover the way that the minister was. Certainly, the Official Opposition sounded the alarm day after day after day when we debated Bill 4 and the previous budget, and the minister refused to listen. Perhaps the

minister wasn't in his chair at the time to hear. We warned the minister, and he refused to listen. Perhaps he wasn't anywhere near.

Mr. Speaker . . .

**Mr. Carlier:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been raised. The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

### Point of Order

#### Referring to the Absence of Members

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member across the way is referencing the hon. Minister of Finance, speaking disrespectfully and referencing that he has not been in the House. He's done that several times, earlier as well, in contradiction to 23(h), (i), (j).

**The Speaker:** Is there a specific standing order that you can point to? I, too, was looking for that. I think I would be asking for more detail. I will be looking at *Beauchesne's* and others with respect to that.

I need to remind all of the House, please, that it's certainly been the practice and my understanding that you do not make reference or allude to the fact of whether or not a member is in the House. That's been my understanding.

On a couple of occasions in the last few minutes, hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, you made suggestions that might have led that way. I want to caution you that you not do that in the future, and I apply that to all members of the House.

Please proceed, hon. member.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly didn't mean to allude to the minister not being in the House. I wanted to just encourage the minister to rise from his chair and speak to the issue at hand, the bill he is sponsoring.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** We warned the Minister of Finance repeatedly. We told him over and over and over that it was his responsibility to budget responsibly and that his oil projections were wildly off. And now he stands in this House and has nothing but excuses. He claims that nobody told him. There are miles of transcripts of *Hansard* where we told him over and over and over again. And just in case he was wrong about his oil revenue projection, we said that we don't trust your 15 per cent debt-to-GDP limit, that that needs to be a hard limit, that there need to be consequences if you break your own laws. We proposed that there be fines for cabinet ministers if they break their own debt-to-GDP limit. Well, it seems we were getting to the crux of the matter.

We proposed a referendum if governments wanted to raise the debt limit in the future. The government opposed it again. Either they intended to repeal their own bill or they weren't paying attention to the facts. The Wildrose has consistently pointed out that this government has not been budgeting realistically. And every time they blow their budget, they come back here and they complain. They complain with excuses, and they shirk their responsibility, which is why I encourage the minister to stand up and explain his actions about why he could not listen to the Official Opposition with regard to his revenue projections.

That's why I encourage the Minister of Finance to stand up in this House and defend his ignoring the repeated warnings about exceeding the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP limit he has put in place. That was only four months, 12 days, and 15 hours ago, give or take,

Mr. Speaker. On October 27, 2015, the minister said of the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP limit: "This act will limit Alberta government borrowing to 15 per cent of GDP, half the average of other provinces. That will provide enough room to allow our government to play its economic role without tipping into overdependence on debt."

The suggestion in the minister's own statement seems to be that going beyond 15 per cent would mean an overdependence on debt. For once I agree with the minister. And here we are today, blowing straight through a 15 per cent debt-to-GDP limit in just a few years, beginning with the current account deficit of \$14 billion this year alone.

Now, we know that the leaders over there inherited a 44-year-old dynasty that was spending far above the national average and far above our neighbours in cost-high British Columbia or over in Liberal Ontario, but are Albertans really to believe that there wasn't significant waste to be found?

Just yesterday CTV Calgary broke a story about scores of AHS managers going out on sick leave for months at a time. As soon as the sick leave was used up, they were back on the job. Mr. Speaker, the average private-sector worker in Canada takes 9.1 days of sick leave a year. AHS managers taking four months raises some real questions. It must be a very unhealthy workplace. No wonder we have wait times and people are not getting services that they need.

Some of them – and I'm only saying some managers, not all managers and certainly not all employees at AHS, who are doing great work – are worried about using up all their sick leave instead of serving Albertans. When the government says that it refuses to exercise any fiscal restraint whatsoever for the sake of helping Albertans and then has to turn around and tax those Albertans to cover up the cost of its short-sighted borrowing habits, it hurts the very people that they want to help.

I will conclude this part of the debate by telling a metaphor about finances. Alberta's finances remind me of going to a party where there's lots of promotional alcohol provided. It's a great party. Everyone can partake to their heart's content. But eventually the free stuff runs out. The party is over till someone finds that hidden bottle of moonshine: don't stop the party. Ladies and gentlemen, the party is over. We have run out of money. It's time for us to get serious. The minister is not serious; he has nothing but excuses. It is his responsibility to stand up in this House right now and explain his actions and debate the Official Opposition on this bill.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the government's Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. What this bill seeks to accomplish is nothing but a reckless disregard for future generations. This government is looking to get rid of their 15 per cent debt ceiling only a few short months after enacting such a bill. Alberta's debt will be \$58 billion by the next election. This government is simply passing down irresponsible governance and bad decision-making to future generations. My colleague for Strathmore-Brooks talked about a young child getting to their eighth birthday as we see where we'll be at with \$58 billion.

We know what large-scale debt entails. We know that it has deep and problematic implications not only for Albertans today but for future generations. Frankly, doing this to the next generation just seems to be immoral. By designating the next generation as the ones responsible for paying off the debt, this government is willingly depriving them of the advantages Albertans so recently had, and it's absolutely clear that they do not have a plan for that debt.

4:20

One year ago, during the election in 2015, this government claimed that, sure, they'll borrow and, of course, yes, they'll spend but that they will balance the books by 2018. Sure enough, they borrowed. Sure enough, they spent. Speaking here in October, the Finance minister claimed, "We will get back to balance in 2019-2020, and if the economy picks up, we'll get there sooner." They kept borrowing, and they kept spending. Last week, Mr. Speaker, they revealed that the books won't be balanced until 2024, and they continue to borrow and continue to spend.

It's clear that there's no plan to balance the books, not a real one, but they do have a plan to rack up debt, and now Alberta's credit is being downgraded, a development that has troubling consequences, to say the least. I was somewhat astonished to see just last week, regarding the Dominion Bond Rating Service's lowering of Alberta's credit rating, that the Premier said, and I quote: there's, frankly, nothing we could have done to avoid it. End quote.

But this credit downgrade is no surprise. DBRS warned this government as far back as January that their high borrowing agenda would lead to trouble. I read from the report, and I'll quote that: DBRS believes that the fiscal response is unlikely to be adequate to maintain credit metrics consistent with the triple-A rating, in particular maintaining a DBRS adjusted debt burden below 15 per cent of gross domestic product; debt is now expected to exceed 15 per cent of the gross domestic product as early as 2016-17. End quote.

Our caucus pressed the government to try and rein in spending, and repeatedly we were disregarded. The government could have tried a moderate budget, protecting front-line services while reining in spending, to show creditors that there is still some semblance of fiscal competence, fiscal responsibility. Instead, this government chose to present a budget that showed only disregard for the Albertans tasked with paying it down. Not even a day had passed after the budget was released last week and DBRS had already downgraded Alberta from triple-A to a double-A rating. It doesn't sound like much, but this is the first step to what? An A-minus rating? A B rating? Each incremental step that the rating is lowered means that a subsequent rise in the cost of borrowing is imminent. That's just a fact.

Albertans should be concerned with the mounting debt and the cost of it. Simply put, it's cheaper to borrow when the province has a strong credit rating than to borrow when it does not have a strong credit rating. Anyone who's ever borrowed money knows that a bad credit rating means higher interest rates. In Alberta's case it means that we're racking up debt faster, with larger interest payments. It means that taxpayers, everyday Albertans, everyday Albertans' families, are on the hook for more.

This government is now on track for \$2 billion in annual interest payments on their debt. That's \$2 billion not going to schools, \$2 billion not going to infrastructure, \$2 billion that could have gone to solving the numerous issues we talk about in this House every day regarding health care. Two billion dollars in annual interest payments means that thousands of families work and pay taxes in a given year just to pay off the government's debt interest year after year. That's shameful, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to try and give a history lesson here today, but I do want to speak about the past, as closely as I remember it, as far as debt and debt ceilings and the like have progressed. Now, remember that this is from memory, so please don't hold me to account if I miss something by a year or two or something like that. I'm not trying to offend or re-create 100 per cent accurately but just to recall, to bring some sort of understanding as to what we've done in the past.

My reflective cognizance of the era of the Alberta government in the mid-80s to early '90s is that a global oil glut saw the price of oil fall dramatically. Now, the price tumbled something like 60 per cent. The economy was already in a world-wide recession. The overproduction of oil just deepened that downturn. I was just a young man starting my farming career. Interest rates were abysmal, as I recall. For someone trying to begin that lifestyle and borrowing a lot of money – well, \$100,000 was a lot of money to a young fellow like me – 18 per cent interest was unbearable. Investing money would have been genius if a fellow had any money to invest. There were some, of course, who had been around for years and years and had some money to invest. They did very well. Their retirement was secure. But folks that were the same age as I was, that were trying to get their careers started, probably all remember some of those '80s years. Times were tough.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

But all that aside, the government of the day found itself in a deficit. Several more deficits followed, and Alberta ended up having a total debt of something like \$15 billion by the early '90s. The number itself isn't that important in this context, just that Alberta had managed to indeed run up a rather large deficit for the times.

The next Premier – and everyone here knows who we're talking about. It doesn't matter whether you believe that it was done correctly or incorrectly, depending on your political stripe, but the next Premier managed to get the debt under control. He managed to get the deficit under control, and he managed to see the books balanced in Alberta. That was 10 short years ago. It was a very proud moment for Alberta. We were all there, and I'm sure we all felt the same pride. Then a debt retirement act was introduced, which required the government to pay off debt until it was zero. After that, strict controls were put into government to stop them from borrowing except for some pretty small, specific things such as borrowing for municipal capital on the government's credit rating.

The era that followed brought in reasonable but modest, small changes to allow for something like P3s or something to that effect and other small amounts of legitimate borrowing. The next Premier, that came along in the era following that, kind of wiped out all that legislation that I just talked about and allowed the government to borrow for capital, to significantly borrow for capital. But the interest payable, as I recall, again couldn't exceed a certain portion of the government's revenues. It was really just a different way of doing a debt ceiling. As much as it went against what had happened only a few short years before that, all of a sudden it was okay for the government to borrow again.

Then the current government came in and did something that I really never thought would actually come to fruition. This government created a number and created legislation that allowed borrowing for anything, capital and/or operations, and that number wasn't to exceed 15 per cent of the gross domestic product.

4:30

Our Finance critic, my colleague from Strathmore-Brooks, expressed on more than one occasion in this House and directly to the government that there was no reason to believe that this government wouldn't test that number in the very near future. He's already talked about the discussions that he's had, and the speeches that he made reference those very points. The Finance minister called him a fearmongerer. Well, lo and behold, I'll take the Member for Strathmore-Brooks' comments to be the word: four months, 12 days, and I can't remember how many hours.

The Finance minister tabled a piece of legislation that took away the debt ceiling and has no cap on borrowing in legislation today. In other words, the NDP government can borrow any amount of money that they see fit, do whatever they want to do with it, and at the end of the day the Alberta taxpayer is on the hook. So the Wildrose fearmongerers, those feared folks on the right, turned out to be exactly right because this Alberta government cannot see its way clear to explore any kind of spending control whatsoever. You know, a deficit is a choice, and the government that sits in power today made the choice to put Alberta into the deepest throes of debt in this province's history, now without a ceiling to stop them from borrowing as much as they see fit.

When this government began discussions about both of the budgets that they have introduced, they made it clear that we had to get off of the royalty roller coaster, we had to diversify. The budget that was introduced on April 14 and the discussions that took place before and some since have revolved around the price of oil rising in order to see Alberta be able to start to use less borrowed money. Nowhere in the budget presented do we see a significant plan to diversify the revenues of this province, as we were told had to happen, certainly nothing that is significant enough to replace or even come close to substituting for the revenues required to service the proposed expenses of the government.

Rather than a balanced approach to a provincial budget that would address spending along with the limited income available because of the world price of oil, we now see no limit, no cap, no boundary that would define the largest amount of debt that is to be tolerated in the province of Alberta, and certainly no plan to pay this money back, short of annual interest payments, and no discussion of any consequence that would see some form of an interest in decreasing . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Listening to the remarks of the hon. Member for Little Bow, you know, I just had a couple of comments and a question. He mentioned that we don't have a diversification plan. I would note that our budget actually mentions many things that would result in a diversification plan. It involves investing in our petrochemical industry. It involves having AIMCo invest half a billion dollars in Alberta businesses with growth potential, in whatever industry those may be in. It involves ATB increasing its loans to small and medium-sized businesses as well as our investor tax credit and our capital investment tax credit.

Now, the hon. member also spoke a lot about a reckless disregard for future generations and talked about the fact that our plan includes some debt. Well, I'd like to ask the hon. member: where is his plan? We have made a clear choice that we want to support jobs, we want to support families, and we want to diversify our energy industry. To stay under the suggested debt limits that the opposition has often put forward, I would ask the hon. member: which schools would he cut, which children would he leave in overcrowded schools with overworked teachers, which hospital maintenance would he defer, and what long-term care beds for our seniors would he cut? So I would ask the member: where is his plan, and what would he cut?

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I do have right in front of me what I said when I talked about the revenues of this province. The hon. member took the liberty to change what I said, so I'm going to repeat it if that's all right. Nowhere in the budget presented do we see a significant plan to diversify the revenues of this province, as we were told had to happen, certainly nothing that is significant enough to replace or even come close to substituting the revenues required to service the proposed expenses of this government.

What I hear on this side is that we need to diversify and get away from the royalty roller coaster. It continues and continues. I was looking forward to seeing what we were going to be doing. I was really looking forward to seeing what the diversification was going to be that would replace or even significantly become noteworthy or newsworthy for a revenue source that was going to replace the oil that we sell in this province. That's what Alberta is all about. Alberta is about – let me think, now. I'm going to try to remember this thing. Alberta is about: rope calves, drill oil – what's the other one?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Eat cow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Eat cow.

You know, if it was my job, if I was sitting on that side of the House, I would make the decisions that you talked about. I would put them on paper, and I would present them, just as you have. But it isn't my job to determine how Alberta is going to spend its money or whether they're going to get enough income or any of the things you talked about. Those are the government's choices. They've made the choice. They've found a deficit number that they're happy with, and this is what the people that are just being born – eight years from now all the comments that the Member for Strathmore-Brooks made are all true. We are facing the biggest debt in Alberta's history, and it doesn't seem to bother anybody near as much as it does me or some of the people on this side of the House.

I wish I'd had the chance to come and sit in your meetings and discuss how you wanted to approach this budget, how you wanted to see diversification of income, and if you wanted to see how we could find some cuts. I'd have been happy to be a part of that. Nobody invited me. I simply wasn't involved, so it's impossible for me to answer those questions, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. Under 29(2)(a) I'm also interested in knowing – the Leader of the Official Opposition supported five consecutive deficit budgets when he was in Ottawa, so clearly there are opportunities where I imagine he . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The next speaker on my list is the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to speak to Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, or as we already have heard it called, to infinity and beyond.

Anyway, even though Christmas is barely over, I'm beginning to feel like the Grinch. I don't feel as though I'm stealing Christmas day after day when I come to work here in the Assembly. The reason I'm feeling Grinchy is that every time the government comes up with a bill, they're giving away any hope of future prosperity for our province. Dr. Seuss would have been really proud of that. You know, he liked the Grinch. He liked to show how he did that, took presents away.



4:40

Frankly, we're taking away future gifts for our children when we're looking at the \$2 billion that we're going to have to pay back just in interest payments. This is an outstanding number to me. How many hospitals could we build? How many roads could we build? How many schools? What are we taking away, Madam Speaker, from the future generations, from my kids and from my grandchildren and everybody else's kids and grandchildren? I think it's irresponsible, in my opinion, to go down that route and be able to take these gifts that we've been given in this province and change it to having to give this money to banks. I'm very much against this borrowing that we're looking at, of up to \$58 billion.

You know, while promising shiny, new things like massive infrastructure projects, unbelievable capital projects, new roads and bridges, and higher minimum wages, this government does not seem to understand that the cost related to these promises is going to bankrupt this province. I have to say that again. It's going to bankrupt this province.

We've gone from where in 2004, which the Member for Little Bow just alluded to, we were debt free. We were completely paid in full. I remember seeing that sign, Paid in Full, and now we're not. We're going to be looking at, again, \$58 billion or higher. This government seems to have the attitude that they can simply spend their way through the worst economic slump we have seen in decades and that someone else will pick up the tab.

Kind of like having a credit card, but you give it somebody else to deal with after you go on a spending spree. That's irresponsible. Sometime in the future, somehow, it's got to be paid for. Sort of like having a massive Christmas shopping spree, using maxed-out credit cards to pay these bills, every kind of credit card you can get your hands on, whether it be MasterCard or Visa. Go to all of the different stores, Walmart. Max them all out. Well, being the Grinch that I am, I'm looking at the end result of this uncontrolled spending spree, and I'm terrified that the full cost of this ill-funded economic plan is going to leave my children and grandchildren to pay it off.

The worst part of all of this, Madam Speaker, is that the government knows they can't pay for all of these promises, so they are demanding that Albertans pay for them and future Albertans pay for them, not just Albertans today but future Albertans. They have increased taxes on almost every part of our lives. They've increased taxes on businesses, they've driven out job creators, and they now are going to tax regular Albertans out of their ability to enjoy a comfortable standard of living.

Under this government's ill-founded economic policy we saw yesterday that an average Calgarian home will see an increase in their existing property bill of about \$170. This province will take about \$126 of that \$170. That's just over 74 per cent of it. Madam Speaker, that's an awful lot of money that is being taken out of Calgary by this province, you know, using a tax as a property tax at a time when, I think, Calgarians and Albertans can least afford it.

So many Albertans are out of work and underemployed and having to take less of a paycheque, a lower paycheque, rather than a raise in their paycheque. That \$170 is money that's going to be lost, that won't be circulated in the economy, that won't go for, say, somebody going out for a meal or somebody buying some new kind of a gadget, that could put money back and circulate it in our economy, money that would do so much more. Because when the money goes back into circulation, what you get is employment, employment at places that sell these things, whether it be restaurants or whether it be stores. These jobs will be lost because people will not have that \$170. Like the carbon tax or the sin tax of last fall, this is yet another case of the government indirectly raising

costs on families. It seems like their hand is in your pocket everywhere you turn. We're seeing it on everything lately, it seems.

Again we have more money being taken out of our pockets through gasoline taxes once they go to the pump. It was 9 cents a litre, and now it's going to be up to – I'm trying to remember what it's going to be up to.

**An Hon. Member:** I heard 6.

**Mr. Taylor:** An additional 6 cents?

**Dr. Starke:** Six point seven.

**Mr. Taylor:** Six point seven. Thank you.

An additional 6.7 cents: when you're talking about all the millions of litres, that's an awful lot of money that's going to be coming out of the pockets of Albertans and going into the government's coffers.

**An Hon. Member:** Out of the economy.

**Mr. Taylor:** Out of the economy.

Who can spend it better? I think Albertans should have a better chance of being able to spend it and seeing how their money should be spent.

Despite all these cost hikes for families we are somehow blowing through the debt limit that the government decided on last fall. That brings us to Bill 10. This is perhaps one of the most ill-conceived pieces of legislation this government has come up with. This bill removes any hint of fiscal control. It seems that the lid is off. Again, like, to infinity and beyond: where's it going to stop? This government intends to continue their spending spree and their reckless spending habits, and this is why they have tabled Bill 10. With this bill they can just break open the maxed-out credit cards and carry on with their Christmas spending spree, leaving the worry about budgets to others. The Grinch in me sure doesn't like that.

Their lack of concern for fiscal management is, according to them, actually a virtue as they attempt to prime the economy by creating jobs. But at what cost? Albertans need assurances that this government will get their spending under control. If this NDP government can't control the spending and work within the parameters of coming close to balancing the budget, how do we as Albertans know that in four years this debt number won't be the predicted \$58 billion but something higher than that? Will it be \$60 billion, \$65 billion, \$70 billion, \$75 billion, or \$100 billion in debt? There's no cap. There's no reason or rationale to stop this spending from going up from the \$58 billion to \$100 billion because there's nothing to stop that, Mr. Speaker.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Perhaps the minister could tell us if he will hit \$100 billion in debt by 2024. Is that what the projected budget beyond this will be, beyond \$100 billion? Mr. Speaker, I don't know where this will go. I don't want to become the most highly in debt subsovereign government in the world, and we're going down that road. If we look at it per capita, we're trying to compete with Ontario, and we're getting there quite quickly.

Contrary to what our Prime Minister said – you know, our Prime Minister said that budgets balance themselves – budgets really don't balance themselves. That's a fact. We as legislators and, apparently, the opposition as Grinches must do the hard work to ensure that the budgets are balanced so our children, our grandchildren will have the competitive Alberta that we have come to love and expect, the competitive Alberta that – you know, we could hold our heads up proudly and say: we're Albertans; we have

the Alberta advantage. But where has that Alberta advantage gone? It seems to be slipping out of our hands like sand slipping out of my fingers.

4:50

When this government puts Alberta in debt to the tune of somewhere close to \$60 billion, this has huge implications for Alberta, Albertans, and postsecondary institutions. If I look at the cost to service debt alone, the \$2 billion, and put this into capital projects that they have planned for this year, which is \$438 million, I can see that this is over four times the capital projects, all the capital projects that we wanted to put in in this province for our postsecondary institutions. That's four of those. We could have done four times as much this year as what was planned for this year, but that's going to be gone. That's going to be erased because we're paying debt, and that's irresponsible to our postsecondary institutions.

This goes across the board with all the different aspects of this province, again, the roads, the schools, the hospitals. The hospital in Wainwright, Mr. Speaker: it's projected to be \$240 million to have a brand new hospital facility placed in our town. That \$2 billion would provide us with eight of those hospitals. The size of hospital that we want, a regional hospital for our area: we could have eight of those dotting this province each and every year. That's what we're losing just based on what we're spending, the \$2 billion, to service that debt.

This means that we have lost the potential to build new postsecondary institutions, brand new ones – they could be done – just because we're going to have to service the debt with that \$2 billion.

The number seems to be, you know, just beyond belief. I had a person tell me before that if you took – they used the analogy of: what does a billion dollars look like? Well, if you looked at a million dollars and then you went and converted that to seconds, it would have been two years ago, but if you went to a billion dollars, you're going back around the time of Christ. So \$2 billion: I'm not even sure where that puts us, the time of Ezekiel or something. I'm not sure, but it takes us back into the Old Testament. Ezekiel talked about prophecy, and I'll tell you: this is a prophecy that it looks like we're coming up against.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The four horsemen.

**Mr. Taylor:** Well, that's Revelation, but I get your analogy about the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

This government, this NDP government, wants to become friends with big banks. Big banks seem to be their big buddies now. Obviously, it must be because they keep giving money to the big banks through interest and loans. In fact, every time we do this, we have to have a credit downgrading.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions for the hon. member under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was certainly intrigued by your speech on Bill 10 here. You seem to be very concerned about the debt-to-GDP ratio, and I note that on December 22 of last year your party had put forward a plan to hold debt to GDP at 7 per cent. I'm a little bit concerned that another member of your party has said that it's not the opposition's job to give any details to their plans. However, I'm going to try anyway. I was wondering if the member still stands by that plan of 7 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio and, if so, which services that his constituents rely on he would cut himself.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I really can't speak to what the Member for Strathmore-Brooks was exactly referring to and speak to what his words are or what he wants to articulate about this, but I am definitely concerned about the debt-to-GDP ratio. The more debt that we take on, the fewer projects, the fewer things that we can do, and it definitely does concern me. We need to make sure that we are looking at moving towards balancing our books, and balancing our books is the ultimate end goal. Nowhere in this do I see that we are going anywhere towards a balanced budget in the next four years. There's nowhere in there that I see a balanced budget coming into this, so I'm very concerned about what's happening here.

I'm sorry. I cannot comment on what the Member for Strathmore-Brooks would want to say, so I will sit down and say thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Schneider:** Yeah, 29(2)(a). I'd just like the member to be able to get back to his speech. I know that he had spent some time on it. I guess I can just ask: what would happen to them or what would they be experiencing, the folks that are going to have to end up paying this \$56 billion? This is the proposed number, \$56 billion or \$58 billion. It's all big numbers. What's life going to be like for those folks? If you have better information there that you'd like to share, I'd love to hear it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Little Bow. Thank you for asking me to continue on with these words that I had from the speech, from where I left off.

Although I advocate for capital projects, I believe that these capital projects should be on a planned, systematic, transparent, measurable priority list with a rationale for each project. The PC and the NDP governments have spent Alberta into an unbelievable, deep financial hole at times. Rather than reduce spending to try to balance the budgets, the NDP have chosen to keep increasing spending and take on massive debt. The government is amending the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP limit that they imposed last fall because Budget 2016 proposes a 15.5 per cent debt ratio. This government has done the unthinkable, and instead of slowing down their uncontrolled spending spree, they have chosen to remove the cap entirely.

In this way, they will remove all semblance of control and will incur approximately \$58 billion in debt before Albertans have a chance to vote them out. Our children and grandchildren will have to find ways to pay back this debt because this government won't make the tough decisions now. They have control of the books. They know what's going on. That was their complaint when they took over the government. They needed to wait until November before they came out with a budget because they wanted to make sure that they did it right. All I see is that we're going backwards, and we're late on this last budget.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to start off. I'm going to be speaking in support of this bill, which, I'd imagine, would not be a shock to anyone in this House.

What this bill does is – there's already been some discussion on the various parts of it. One of the things I'm happy with is that everybody seems to be onboard with the fact of, you know, changing the FAA, where we're going to be raising the limit for

individuals who are having a loan from the government to \$500,000 to protect the personal privacy of those who have a student loan or are going to gain a loan from various other programs that we're implementing. The same goes for us winding down the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Act and our various tax changes that we need to do just to clean up our tax code in order to bring it in line with our federal counterparts. One of the reasons why we're doing that, of course, is for an ease of accounting for businesses, which I know is something the members opposite are always very fond of making sure that we in government do, everything as efficient as possible.

5:00

There is also, of course, the one where we are removing the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio, which is something that's required because we've had a once-in-a-generation downturn, that no one could have predicted. That is what has changed since we were last in this House debating a debt-to-GDP level. It's one of those things where if it ends up being 15.5 per cent, Alberta's debt-to-GDP ratio would be roughly half the weighted average of other provinces.

What would that give us? I notice that the members opposite are very enthusiastic about using colourful words about our budget. They're saying that it's a to infinity and beyond budget. Well, I would say that it's going to be an infinity to wait times for surgery if they had their way. In order to cut back to the 7 per cent debt-to-GDP limit that the opposition had previously proposed – since the opposition had mentioned that it is not their job to come up with specifics, that is sort of the number I'm working with – to stay under that, we'd have to take \$8 billion out of that budget, which, as noted by the minister, is more than the entire budget of Education, it's more than the entire budget of Municipal Affairs, and it's almost all of this year's capital plan, which would leave one to wonder: what would they cut?

I'm going to digress from that. Oftentimes, you know, the opposition has said to us: you need to cut; you've got to do your part to make sure that government is running as efficiently as possible. Mr. Speaker, we have been doing a lot of that, actually. We have dissolved or amalgamated 36 agencies, boards, and commissions, which is going to save approximately \$33 million over three years. That is looking into government and finding ways to cut costs.

Instead of taking a panicked approach, we are slowing down some of our platform commitments to make sure we can roll them out in a fiscally responsible manner. In addition to these, we have also taken careful measures to bring down the cost of government. We have frozen management salaries at government agencies, boards, and commissions and also commenced a review of the salary rates of all of these agencies. Cabinet ministers, MLAs such as myself as well as political staff will not see a salary increase for the entirety of this Legislature. The same is true for managers in the public service for two years.

Also, Mr. Speaker, our projected growth and overall spending for the next three years is going to be on average 2.5 per cent for health care. I will note that previously the rate of growth in health care was around 6 per cent, which, since health care is the biggest part of our budget, created some serious pressures on our budget. By bringing this down, it allows Albertans to have a sustainable public health care system that they can rely on so that doctors and nurses are there when Albertans need health care.

One of the other things we're getting out of this is that we are going to be supporting Alberta families. One of the things we're doing is that starting this summer families are going to be getting a new Alberta child benefit. What that means, Mr. Speaker, is that a low-income single parent with two children would receive just over

\$3,000 a year in benefits. This would help 3,800 children, who will be better off because of the policies that are in our budget that are there for Albertans.

We've also called on the federal government to expand employment insurance to those in the Edmonton and surrounding areas who have been hurt by this economic downturn.

Also, we are going to be investing \$50 million to help apprentices complete their training and finish off their work experience requirements so they can get into the workforce. Second, we're going to be spending \$10 million on the training for work program, which targets a broad range of Albertans who are underrepresented in the workforce, including women, indigenous peoples, newcomers to help them secure employment in high-demand jobs.

Now, second, Mr. Speaker, which is something that I believe we've already talked about in the course of our conversations so far, is that we have a concrete plan to invest in infrastructure. We're going to be spending \$34 billion to upgrade with new roads, transit, schools, and hospitals. This is a plan that increases investment 15 per cent compared to what the previous government would do, an additional \$4.5 billion in new investment over five years. Previous governments, for example, were very fond of announcing schools without having funding for them, and that is something that this government will not continue.

When we talk of education for our kids, Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that there is a school for them, that there's a teacher for them, and that there's proper funding for each and every one of those children. We think that that's good for Albertans. It's a way to move Alberta forward and not backwards to the cuts of the '90s, which members of the opposition are often so fond of thinking back to as being a glorious time in Alberta's history, which I think many of us would disagree with because those times involved cutting back on schools. It involved literally blowing up a hospital, and I don't see how that benefits Albertans.

Also, Mr. Speaker, our plan involves diversifying our energy industry and energy markets. That was another thing that the hon. members across the way had spoken about. Part of that is our carbon levy. What that levy does is that it allows every cent of it to be reinvested in the form of a rebate back to lower income Albertans, and it also involves us to help diversify our economy by investing in energy efficiency programs, investing in alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, geothermal, and possibly other energy sources that we have yet to think of. All of that is reinvested into Alberta. I also note that our carbon levy, for those in our agricultural industries, does not apply to dyed diesel or dyed gasoline, which I think is definitely a help to our farmers.

Fourthly, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to supporting Alberta business, we have most definitely listened to Albertans' job-creating business community. In October we announced that the Alberta Treasury Branches is going to be spending \$1.5 billion to support lending to small and medium-sized businesses in every region of this province. Also, I'm pleased to note that ATB announced that it has increased loans to small and medium-sized businesses in the fourth quarter by \$335 million. That's \$335 million to small and medium-sized businesses to expand and to ride out this downturn.

We've also announced two tax credits, Mr. Speaker. I have to note that last weekend after we released our budget, I had a chance to talk to many people I know who live in my riding of Calgary-Currie and who I've worked with in the past who are frankly quite excited about this investor tax credit. It allows for investments and new start-up companies in the IT sector and other areas, and it's to encourage growth that is outside of the oil and gas sector. Increasing these sectors allows us to, when we have downturns like this, not

have such a drop in our other business tax revenues because we would have a diversified economy in that sense.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade is often very fond of talking about our \$500 million in royalty credits towards business that are investing in petrochemical facilities. They use methane or propane to produce higher value products such as methanol and plastics. This is the type of thing that we talked about and I talked about during the election campaign. When it talks to doing value-added for our petrochemical products here in Alberta, that means jobs in this province, that means tax revenue for us to pay for the things that Albertans rely on, things like hospitals and things like schools.

5:10

I will note, Mr. Speaker, that during the Budget Address by the Finance minister we decided that we were going to help small businesses by lowering the small-business tax rate from 3 per cent to 2 per cent. I will note that that is something that has been applauded on both sides of this House. I think it is an excellent example of how we are listening to the business community and supporting businesses, Mr. Speaker.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we are making a decisive choice to invest in the things that Albertans rely on, things like hospitals, things like schools, things like roads and other infrastructure. I believe that this is the way forward for Alberta and that it's a responsible way forward. I believe it is for the benefit of all Albertans, and I will proudly stand behind it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Strathmore-Brooks; 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I always enjoy my entertaining interactions with the Member for Calgary-Currie. He's normally wearing orange; I see he's in republican red today, trying to make Alberta great again.

I thank him for mentioning the small-business tax rate. This is something that the Wildrose and indeed all members of the opposition have supported for some time. Unfortunately, the Member for Calgary-Currie and the members on the opposite side didn't support it in October when the Official Opposition moved a motion to do the exact same thing. I'm curious and wonder why the Member for Calgary-Currie thinks that lowering the small-business tax rate from 3 per cent to 2 per cent is a good idea in April but it was a bad idea in October. Perhaps it was because it just came from the wrong people.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also curious. The Member for Calgary-Currie talked about the deep, brutal cuts they're making to agencies, boards, and commissions. They said that they're going to save \$30 million. Well, that's nice. I like saving \$30 million. But in the context of the overall consolidated deficit they're running this year, \$14 billion on a consolidated level, net change in financial assets, that savings of \$30 million, the only savings they could manage to find, amounts to about 2.1 per cent of the deficit for just this year. It's a pretty small start, especially when spending goes up every year. You know, I love it when elected people can say, "We're cutting spending" but actually somehow manage to increase spending. It's like: well, I cut the soda out and I bought a case of pop, but I am somehow cutting spending. I'm interested to know if the Member for Calgary-Currie believes that \$30 million in cuts out of a \$14 billion deficit, amounting to just over 2 per cent of the deficit for a single year, is very significant.

The member also talked about how tough they're being on freezing salaries for senior management in the government. That's a nice start. Unfortunately, though, public-sector compensation

costs are skyrocketing in the province. They're continuing to hire more people to work for government. They're refusing to renegotiate salaries. This government, at a time when people are losing jobs by the thousands across Alberta – downtown Calgary is emptying out. At a time when people are bleeding jobs in the private sector, I'm interested to know why the Member for Calgary-Currie feels that it's appropriate for the government to hire hundreds of new bureaucrats, not front-line service providers but bureaucrats.

I'm wondering why they felt that it was necessary to give a significant pay hike to officers of the Legislature, why they voted for that but now move to freeze it. They're talking about freezing salaries for a select number of people – that's a good thing – MLAs, senior managers in the government, but they don't talk about it for their union bosses, who really run the government. They haven't asked Kevin Davey, former AUPE negotiator, to demand salary freezes from the AUPE. I'm not sure which side he's negotiating on anymore. But I'd be interested to know what the Member for Calgary-Currie thinks and if the member has asked Kevin Davey, formerly of AUPE, to make tough concessions of the AUPE.

**The Speaker:** Why don't you ask and allow the hon. member to answer your several questions?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I would love to hear his answers, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think I've got the list of questions here. The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks mentioned that apparently this government had voted in support of raising wages for members of the Legislature. I'm assuming he means us.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** No. Unions.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Sorry?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Not us. Unions.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Okay. I may have misunderstood that question, then.

Anyway, moving on, the freeze or the reduction for ABCs, as mentioned, at 21 per cent is just an example of a first step. I also mentioned that we froze wages all across government for managers, for political staff, for MLAs. Basically, you know, in a nutshell, we froze wages in government for everyone we could that didn't have a current union contract in place, and one of the reasons why we didn't go after those union contracts, Mr. Speaker, is because . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to stand before we begin debate on the budget. Let me be clear – and this may come as a shock – that Wildrose does not like everything about this budget.

**An Hon. Member:** Shocking.

**Mr. Hanson:** Shocking. I just wanted to be clear.

We did see that the government took our proposal to drop the small-business tax, but with the carbon tax that small drop is completely negated except for non carbon-intensive small business with a lot of profit.

In our 10-point savings plan we advocated some reductions to the bureaucracy through attrition while maintaining front-line services. The government has found a way to hire 250 more bureaucrats and

a bunch of AHS managers over the last year instead. Clearly, this government has a problem with listening. This government has a chronic spending addiction, and removing the debt limit is the ultimate enabler.

In November the Wildrose Finance and Treasury Board critic, the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, recapped the history of Alberta's fiscal situation. We heard him warn the government about their risky ideology and reckless fiscal plan and what it would do. The government didn't listen. It's not just that the government turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to our warnings. The government flat out refused to listen to logic and reason and offered up poor platitudes instead. We warned the government in question period. We warned the government through the media. We warned the government in debate. We warned the government by submitting logical, no-nonsense amendments, and the government again decided to close their ears.

Let me remind you of what the Minister of Finance said to our repeated warnings last year. On October 27:

This act [the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act] will limit Alberta government borrowing to 15 per cent of GDP . . . That will provide enough room to allow our government to play its economic role without tipping into overdependence on debt.

On October 29:

The bottom line . . . is that a 15 per cent debt to GDP is a prudent benchmark for limiting government debt. With this cap in place, Albertans can be assured that the government's borrowing will not get out of hand.

On November 3:

I believe that this 15 per cent limit will not be breached . . . I think it takes us up to about 9.5 or 10 per cent of debt to GDP, so there's lots of cushion.

. . . the ability to get to balance, as we've predicted in the five-year projections, will mean that we can start to aggressively pay down the debt, which will mean that we don't come anywhere close to the 15 per cent. So I don't see where there's going to be an issue like you do.

He was referring to us on this side of the House.

On December 2:

We are going to stick to 15 per cent of GDP. That is sound. That is the lowest in the country. That is a debt cap that is calculated to help us get to where we need to go.

5:20

When I look at Bill 10, page 5, section 3 presently reads:

3(1) For a fiscal year, Crown debt shall not exceed 15% of GDP for Alberta.

Yet in this document that we have today, section 3 is repealed just like that. Well, clearly, that was a lot of hogwash. Clearly, Wildrose was right and is right to be concerned. Clearly, the government needs to learn to listen to common-sense arguments and stop putting their reckless fiscal plans and risky ideology into place on the backs of everyday Albertans. When it comes to finances, this government refuses to listen. This government refuses to learn. They are irresponsible, and they cannot be trusted to do what is best for Albertans.

This government's fiscal irresponsibility is making things worse. The NDP ideology and budget are making things worse by driving investment into the ground, chasing jobs out of Alberta, and raising taxes on all Albertans. Whether it's increased corporate taxes or their \$3 billion carbon tax on everything, everybody is being made to pay more. The government hiked personal, corporate, and sin taxes last year and have hiked more fees in this budget.

Don't be fooled by their promise that this carbon tax is revenue neutral. Don't be fooled by the idea that this carbon tax is just about the environment. Just last week Wildrose clearly showed that this

carbon tax will affect every Albertan. It's not just that the cost of your fuel will increase. Your heating bills will increase as well. Your grocery bills will increase. Your electricity bills will increase. The tax that will be charged will not just be swallowed up by business. It will be passed on to you and me in every sector on every item we buy.

The NDP's smoke-and-mirror rebates aren't going to give back to most families what they spend, but the government would like you to believe that. They're pretending that the average gas use and the average home-heating bill are all you will pay for. According to the Premier Albertans shouldn't worry. She says that this carbon tax is a levy you can control how much you pay on. Well, that sounds great. But wait; she goes on to say that if you change the car you have, if you do energy efficiency stuff – the word "stuff" is actually a quote – in your home, you can pay less.

Well, this is just another example of how the Premier and the government are not listening to Albertans and are completely out of touch with the current reality. Tens of thousands of people have lost their jobs. These people are fighting to put food on the table, and the Premier wants them to buy a new car and upgrade their appliances. Awesome. However, what Albertans know and what this government is about to find out is that you can't take on more debt and expect the old debt to disappear. You can't take your poor credit score to the bank and expect to get good interest rates.

When Albertans are hurting, this Premier casually states that Albertans can fix the problem themselves. When Albertans are struggling, this government adds to their burden. Five billion dollars of government debt is not enough. Ten billion dollars of debt is not enough. Fifty billion dollars of debt is not enough. That's another \$2,000 a year in debt repayment for each family, and that's before our credit rating was downgraded, making better interest rates a thing of the past. Additionally, with more and more money going toward debt-servicing costs, that will mean less and less money for social programs and infrastructure, less money for hurting, struggling Albertans, less money for those who need it most. We're looking at an average increase of 41.8 per cent per year in debt-servicing costs. This year alone we are looking at nearly \$1 billion in debt-servicing costs.

Let me put that into perspective for you. That's more than has been budgeted for the majority of ministries. That's more than Agriculture and Forestry is budgeted to receive, more than Environment and Parks, more than the Infrastructure ministry, more than Service Alberta. The NDP government's budget is only making things worse. As it sits right now, we would need oil to be at least \$122 a barrel to get us back in the black. That's probably not going to happen. Let me remind you that the price of oil is currently at \$42. This deficit is obscene. This budget is irresponsible, and it's yet another example of the NDP putting ideology before anything else.

Mr. Speaker, a year ago the NDP promised to balance the budget in 2018. Five months ago they said that it wouldn't happen until 2020. Last week they admitted that a balanced budget in 2024 is merely a goal. Let's be honest: 2024 is simply a year that was pulled out of a hat. There is no evidence to support that idea. Furthermore, there are more budgets to come, and I suspect that a balanced budget projection will just keep getting pushed back with each one.

History is clear. When socialist governments come into power – and we know that the members opposite support a lot of those governments – they leave behind a mess, and the next government has to wipe it up. But it's not just the next government that will have to wipe up the mess that this government is creating. It's the next generation.

If the government won't listen to logic and reason, perhaps it will listen to this. At some point this government is going to have to

learn to draw the line. They cannot continue borrowing and spending with no regard for taxpayers and future taxpayers. At this current rate of borrowing it won't be just grade 4 students who will be lucky if the province has a balanced spreadsheet by the time they vote. It'll be kindergarten kids. It's the children of today and tomorrow who will be paying the price. This government is robbing them of their future at a time when the whole world is supposed to lie before them. These children are saddled with debt before they've even made a dollar.

The seniors who built this province built it to be something great, and they worked hard to leave the province in good shape for their children and grandchildren. They budgeted hard; they knew what they could afford and what they couldn't. They made sacrifices so that future generations would not need to make as many. How does this government repay them? By increasing their costs when they're on limited income. This government, in effect, has told them that their sacrifice, their scrimping, their saving weren't enough. This government is going to take seniors' last pennies and tax their grandchildren on top of it. Mr. Speaker, this government is making it more than just a practice to spend recklessly and irresponsibly. They're making it a way of life. Their poor decisions no longer just affect Albertans today. This government's poor decisions will affect Albertans of tomorrow. Albertans are worried and anxious because this ideological government is taking risks and making mistakes.

Wildrose will stand up for Albertans. Wildrose will provide strong leadership and give Albertans the hope they need. We need an efficient government, not one that is bloated and breaking trust with Albertans. Thank you.

At this point, sir, if you would indulge me, I'd like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 7 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016

[Adjourned debate April 19: Mr. Bilous]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to rise today to speak on Bill 7, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016. Now, of course, this is a bill that we probably would not even be reviewing if it weren't for the snap election that we saw last year about this time, that was called by the former Premier in what I felt was his own self-interest. For the curiosity of the members across the way, there are actually two weeks left on the law to call the election, so we all would probably be right now pulling our signs out of the barns or, in your cases, printing them, but every single one of us knows that that's not the case. That's why we're here in this Assembly today, and we'll leave it to the pundits to debate whether or not it was a good decision to call that election because it's history now.

When we break down Bill 7, Mr. Speaker, we see that the proposed legislation makes two changes to the law. The first change is significant because it moves the timeline of the Electoral Boundaries Commission appointment date up to October 31 of this year. This advancement puts the commission appointment roughly about a year or two ahead of schedule. The last commission was appointed only seven years ago, making this proposal fall a little bit outside of the traditional eight- to 10-year timeline of the Electoral Boundaries Commission's regular appointment.

5:30

Now, with that said, Mr. Speaker, I would say that it is understandable that the government would like to appoint a commission and get the process started early, while we are not close to the next election. My caucus also recognizes that by appointing the commission ahead of schedule, it allows for all parties to establish constituency associations and begin the process of building support in the new ridings.

The second proposed amendment changes the data that will be available to the commission when they are appointed. This amendment presents a double-edged sword, Mr. Speaker. On the one hand, the government should always be striving for the best results, and one would think that using the most accurate data would allow for the best results, but as we all know, different municipalities have different capabilities in our province when it comes to deploying resources towards a regular census. Larger municipalities are able to organize door-knocking census teams, online portals, and even pay for advertisement in local media. A lot of our smaller municipalities have a much harder time collecting data at the same rate as the larger municipalities, and they cannot conduct a census every two years while many of Alberta's largest municipalities can. The only concern I have here is that when the commission is collecting population data, the smaller areas may not be represented in the same way.

On the same note, I have some questions about the commission's timeline and the data that will be used, the most up-to-date population data. The city of Edmonton is currently conducting its census and will stop taking submissions by the end of this month, with results coming back by the end of this year. Maybe the commission will use this as the most up-to-date information. However, the federal government is beginning its census on May 2, and Stats Canada will begin rolling out its results in 2017, with the population and dwelling counts being published as early as February 8, 2017.

My question is: due to the commission's early appointment, will it be rushing to use larger municipality census numbers from this year, or will it be waiting for the federal government's province-wide population survey in February? Whichever set of data is used by the commission, the most important part of its work is the commitment to effective representation.

I would like to echo what the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in 1991, when it reviewed provincial boundaries in Saskatchewan. The right to vote comprises many factors, which include representation by population but must also take in other considerations. Factors like geography, community history, community interests, and minority representation may need to be taken into account to ensure that the Legislative Assembly effectively represents all Albertans. The Electoral Boundaries Commission Act already compels the commission to make considerations based on those factors. In the act it is under the section area, and the Wildrose is glad to see that these provisions have not been changed.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to emphasize that the commission's work is of the utmost importance to the maintenance of a fair and equitable democracy. While serving on the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, I have been able to learn a great deal about the electoral process. I firmly believe that a fair, open, and transparent process is in the best interests of all Albertans. I will be supporting Bill 7 in second reading, and I believe my caucus will as well, but we will have several questions that we would like to hear more about from the government during Committee of the Whole.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hays under section 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. McIver:** No, not under 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions for the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre under 29(2)(a)?

The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise on Bill 7, the electoral boundary adjustments. I'll be brief, but there's a principle here that I sincerely hope the members of the House will consider and that it will be included in some form or fashion that's appropriate to whomever is on the commission.

Currently amongst Canadian jurisdictions, as I understand it, Alberta has one of the widest variances in population allowed between the highest and the lowest, as high as 25 per cent, and I understand there are other jurisdictions, many of them, where the variance is as low as 5 per cent. I understand the principle, Mr. Speaker, of democracy – it's an important one – the fact that every vote has equal weight, but the reason for the variance in Alberta has a great deal to do with the realities in our geography and the actual layout of the province. The ridings get so big in rural Alberta that if you try to make the population per Member of the Legislative Assembly exactly the same, it will be very hard for very many Albertans in rural Alberta to get any time with their MLA.

There is precedent for this, folks. The precedent, as I understand it, comes from way back in Britain with the word “riding.” The source of the word, as I understand it, was approximately the distance that a person could ride on a horse in a day, a very important principle that should not be forgotten. Now, I appreciate that most of the MLAs here don't ride horses to see their constituents.

**Dr. Starke:** We might go back to it with the carbon tax.

**Mr. McIver:** With the carbon tax it could become a more attractive option than it is today. That is correct.

On a more serious note, Mr. Speaker – and I really want to make this point, which is why I stuck around to get on my feet – there are two principles at work here. One is equal representation, which is an important principle, and we should take that seriously. The other principle is accessibility to your elected representative. If you can't get to your elected representative or your elected representative can't get to you, you are not being represented. There's a lot of rural Alberta that is depending on this House and the upcoming commission to keep that in mind. It's an important principle.

I don't have any trouble explaining it to my constituents in Calgary. Some of them might look me in the eye and say: well, Ric, that's not as good for us as it is for people in rural Alberta. But there's an element of fairness that has to be considered. MLAs have to be able to get to their constituents; constituents have to be able to get to their MLAs. It's not too hard to figure out in looking at a map of the ridings.

I know that in my particular riding, Calgary-Hays, while I haven't done it in one trip, I've surely door-knocked it many times. By my estimation, I believe I could walk from the two farthest points in my constituency in about two and a half hours, walking as fast as I can. There are constituencies in Alberta that it would be hard to drive across, from one side to the other, in two and a half hours and in some cases two and a half days. [interjections] Thank you. So I'm hearing some support for that.

I would just as a caution, I hope, ask that people consider the two principles when we go ahead with this. One is equal representation, which I'll again acknowledge is a very important principle and

perhaps the most important. But the other principle, that should never be forgotten, is the principle of accessibility to your elected official because leaving Albertans without any effective representation by virtue of geographic exclusion is something that we should caution against. In my view, it is a big reason for the fact that the variance is allowed as high in Alberta as it is, because we understand that people need to get to see their MLA when they need them.

So there it is. That's my speech. I think it's short. Mr. Speaker, maybe it's my own sense of urgency, but I think it's important, too, and I respectfully hope that members of the House will take this under consideration and seriously, I hope, as the debate continues here.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Questions for the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays under 29(2)(a)?

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief because I certainly support Bill 7, and I think that absolutely we do need to redraw electoral boundaries for all the reasons that have been enumerated in this House.

I want to pick up on and offer some support for parts of what the Member for Calgary-Hays has talked about but offer a different perspective, recognizing that it's the 21st century. One of the things that always struck me as odd: in the city of Calgary there are 25 MLAs; there are 14 city councillors in the city of Calgary. As much as I love each and every one of my colleagues – and it's wonderful to see them at events – there are times when there are upwards of two dozen of us at the same event, and I always wondered if that made any sense.

5:40

What I would like to just put out into the discussion is: are there other ways of ensuring that rural Albertans are effectively represented aside from having the number of MLAs that we have? Is there a possibility of actually reducing the number of MLAs in this province? Alberta has more MLAs per capita than our friends in British Columbia, substantially more.

Is there an opportunity to perhaps significantly enhance the budget for constituencies in rural Alberta? I find it striking, actually, how little difference there is between the constituency budgets for myself and for some of our rural colleagues. I find that actually remarkable. I think that rural MLAs ought to be funded to a point of having two good, proper offices, with staff full-time in both locations, perhaps even more than that for some of the larger constituencies. Does that introduce with technology, with Skype, with online access an opportunity to provide that representation?

I know that the work of an MLA is never done. I know that the work that we do is essentially infinite – it can't all be done – and we all have to make those choices. I recognize that I represent an inner-city, urban constituency, and that represents an entirely different set of challenges than it does to represent rural constituents, time to physically drive around being not the least of that.

I just wanted to put that out into the discussion as something, as the committee goes forward, for all of us to consider, you know, not just the cost for each MLA – that's certainly part of it – but is there an opportunity for us here to perhaps be more effective? I have to say that there's been more than one occasion where multiple members from both sides have risen to say basically the same thing so we've got something in *Hansard*, so we can distribute that to

stakeholders, and I wonder if, in fact, that's always the best use of our time, if perhaps this House would operate more effectively if there were somewhat fewer of us. I'll put that out there. That's something that's been brought to me by my constituents and by my party members, and I wanted to put that out there.

Having said that, I certainly enthusiastically support Bill 7, and I can hardly wait, Mr. Speaker, for the hallway conversations with my MLA colleagues, particularly those from rural Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions for the Member for Calgary-Elbow under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find the conversation of interest to me, particularly the last comments from the Member for Calgary-Elbow, because I have one of the largest constituencies in Alberta. I have over 22 communities, and I travel a lot of miles every month. I'm just wondering: is it the opinion of the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, would he therefore think that we should have fewer members in the major cities? Is that the direction you're going, hon. member?

Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. I mean, I think that the Supreme Court has been very clear about what the difference is. So the short answer is: yes, I think we actually should have fewer MLAs in the cities. We do need to consider maintaining proportionality between urban and rural.

You know, whenever bills like this come up, when we do redraw electoral boundaries, it gives us an opportunity to have that conversation. In fact, the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee also could consider this question, and perhaps that's something I'll bring up at that committee as well. It would mean fewer constituencies throughout the whole province. I think that's the job the commission has before it, to make sure that we maintain effective representation, not necessarily equal representation. I don't think that's desirable or attainable in any way. But I think that if we reduce, it should be on a proportional basis, perhaps starting with just a smaller number. Even going back down to 83 from 87: I wonder if that's an opportunity.

It also shows Albertans that we're willing to economize in challenging economic times and to frankly do more with less in this province. I think that's an opportunity for us to show some leadership by example. That's certainly a perspective that I've heard and something that I hope we can entertain as part of the process, all the while making sure that we consider all of the different impacts of that, positive and negative. I stand to be

corrected if this turns out to not be such a great idea, but I do think that it's something we should consider.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, are there any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Elbow?

Seeing none, the Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened with interest especially to the members for Calgary-Hays and Calgary-Elbow, their comments on the rural MLAs and their support for the rural MLAs. As one of those rural MLAs I don't have the largest district in the province, but I have well over 50 communities in my district. Many of those are summer villages, which I'm very proud of. I, you know, enjoy the support.

I'm looking forward to the commission's report. The Electoral Boundaries Commission has the opportunity to review the boundaries, you know, every few years. I'm looking forward to the report and perhaps looking for that support for the rural MLAs and for rural communities, that are so important.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone else who would like to speak to Bill 7?

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a second time]

## Bill 8

### Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016

[Adjourned debate April 19: Mr. Carlier]

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've had, you know, a lot of discussion around the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016, this afternoon. I don't have anything really to add to what we've already heard from both sides of the House.

**An Hon. Member:** Question.

**Mr. Carlier:** Yes, please. Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a second time]

**The Speaker:** Deputy Government House Leader, go ahead.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We listened to very good debate from both sides of the House this afternoon. I believe we've done some very good work. I would move that we adjourn until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:48 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, April 20, 2016

Day 18

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
Second Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
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McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
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Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
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Chair: Loyola  
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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
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Clark	Malkinson
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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, April 20, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect. As we reflect today, each in our own way, let's think about the future. What kind of a future do we look forward to, and what can we in this room do to make that future possible? Let us use the wisdom from those before us, our elders to inspire us and to reach new possibilities and to encourage each of us, in everything that we say and do, to come together for the greater, common good.

Please be seated.

### Point of Order

#### Reflections on Nonmembers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order was raised in the House yesterday, and I'd like to deal with that now. I listened to the arguments yesterday, and I also have sought the advice of the table officers with respect to this matter. The piece of paper that I'm reading but will only be referencing part of has got "confidential" stamped on the top of it.

Yesterday during Oral Question Period the Government House Leader raised a point of order concerning certain comments made by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. I listened carefully to the arguments from both the Deputy Government House Leader and the Official Opposition House Leader. I reviewed the *Hansard* transcript of the exchange.

I must tell you that I was unable to find that a point of order has occurred. In response to the citations raised by the Deputy Government House Leader that allegations were made against persons who are outside of the House and unable to respond, I would note that the member's statement did not make reference by name to specific individuals, which is a part of the precedent.

My concluding comments are that there is no point of order; however – however – it seems to me that all of us in this 29th Legislature have a choice. The choice is to push the boundaries of disrespect and negativity or to choose to reach out and to speak to each other and about each other as we would want to speak about and how we would want to see one of our loved ones treated or someone who was not in this House. This matter has breached the edges of those boundaries on a continuous basis, and I want to again remind you: act as if you respect this institution as being something sacred.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Second Reading

##### Bill 1

#### Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the House to speak to government's Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. There's no minimizing the impact that the collapse in the global oil prices is having on our families, workers, entrepreneurs, investors, and communities. But while

Alberta's economy has experienced a major setback, I know that this is something that we can and will recover from. That's why our government's number one priority is to help Alberta get through this downturn and position the province for future prosperity. Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, will give the government additional tools to carry out its Alberta jobs plan to do just that. We cannot control the global price of oil, but we can control how we respond. It's clear that Albertans need an economy that is resilient to energy price swings, captures the full value of our resources, and offers prosperous futures for our children.

Now, Mr. Speaker, members on the opposite side of the House believe that a solution to this economic crisis is to turn back the clock. They propose reckless and extreme cuts that will make a bad situation worse, billions of dollars in cuts to front-line services; firing thousands of teachers and nurses; cutting supports for seniors; and abandoning the most vulnerable; no new schools, hospitals, or roads; and no plan to open up new markets. Well, our government is not going to repeat those mistakes. Our government will not turn back the clock on Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, we have set out a strong Alberta jobs plan that will support families and communities, invest in infrastructure, diversify our energy industry and energy markets, and support Alberta businesses. Each of these pillars is based on the right policies, that will help us build a more resilient economy so that it generates and sustains good, stable jobs and attracts renewed investment.

Let me give you a few examples of how we are doing just that. Mr. Speaker, Alberta is known for its healthy small-business landscape and entrepreneurial spirit; 95 per cent of all businesses in the province are small businesses. Together they are responsible for 28 per cent of Alberta's GDP as well as 35 per cent of all private-sector employment in the province.

Alberta is also fortunate to have vast energy resources, a thriving agricultural sector, a vibrant high-tech sector, and forward-thinking companies but also the expertise, strategies, innovative technologies, and growth that potential investors and partners are looking for. Yet Alberta has consistently lagged behind other Canadian provinces in terms of venture capital dollars, especially outside of the oil and gas industry. That's why among the best things we can do to set the province on the path to recovery is to encourage investors to fund Alberta-based start-ups with two new tax credits that will support Alberta businesses to grow and create jobs.

The first is the Alberta investor tax credit. It will offer a 30 per cent tax credit to investors who provide capital to local small and medium-sized companies. This will foster a more diversified economy in Alberta, encouraging new investors to Alberta companies such as information technology, clean technology, health technology, interactive digital media and game products, and postproduction visual effects and digital animation sectors. Mr. Speaker, this investor tax credit will provide \$90 million to eligible investors over two years, boosting funding when it's most needed.

The second tax credit we'll be introducing is the capital investment tax credit. This tax credit will provide credits for the first-time acquisition of new or used property or spending in value-added agriculture, tourism infrastructure, culture, manufacturing, and processing industries. Mr. Speaker, I will have more to say on this \$75 million investment tax credit in the coming days.

Mr. Speaker, another example of the Alberta jobs plan at work is \$10 million in new funding through Alberta Innovates to Innovate Calgary, TEC Edmonton, and regional commercialization organizations to support innovation and job creation. We have great assets in our province, with two of the best university-based business incubators in the world, but they are already at capacity. In challenging economic times people tend to seek new

opportunities, to explore starting their own businesses, and to innovate, so a government that is committed to providing economic opportunities to Alberta families must strengthen supports for new businesses.

9:10

Our government also is laying out an aggressive plan to support job creators and workers in a more diverse and dynamic economy. That includes strong partners in the agriculture, forestry, and tourism sectors. That's why the government is committing \$35 million to attract and support new businesses and pursue regional economic development initiatives. Working closely with our regional and community partners, we will develop economic development action plans that target local business retention, expansion, and attraction. The regional economic development program will complement the community economic development program, that is focused on funding smaller, niche, community-level economic development projects that individual municipalities wish to undertake.

Mr. Speaker, it is the resilience that we have shown together, like in our current economic downturn, that defines us as Albertans. We don't just see the challenge; we see the opportunity that can exist within that challenge. Alberta's endlessly innovative spirit should never be underestimated. We believe that the many steps that we laid out in the Alberta jobs plan will help to create jobs and strengthen our economy, and Bill 1 will provide the government with additional tools to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought that today the minister was going to talk about Bill 1, but he was talking about the budget.

I would like to read two sentences to the House, one from Bill 1 and the other one from the piece of legislation that governs a minister's duties. First, "A Minister may establish or operate any programs . . ." and second, "The Minister may establish programs that focus on supporting working people." Working people, Mr. Speaker. Now, I'm not sure if anyone here thinks there is a difference between these two sentences, but for those who think there is a difference, I want to know: who thinks the difference is so great that taxpayers' money needs to be spent in order to issue legislation that defines this difference?

The first sentence I read out is from the Government Organization Act, which details the duties of all ministers. The second sentence is from Bill 1. One says that the minister can establish programs that support working people while the other says that a minister can establish any program relating to his or her portfolio. I'm quite sure that the word "any," in reference to your program, includes programs that support working people.

In fact, why does this bill not support the nonworking people? Shouldn't this government be concerned about getting people who are unemployed back to work? I can understand that supporting working people is important, but when I talk to people in my riding and they ask what this government is doing to get people back to work, what am I supposed to tell them? Am I to tell them that this government is passing a bill that is helping those who are already working and just ask them to wait for their turn? Am I supposed to tell them that the first bill this government passed in a time of economic crisis is to help those who have jobs instead of those who do not have jobs?

Let me go back and read these two sentences again. "A Minister may establish . . . any programs," and "The Minister may establish

programs that focus on supporting working people." Since there is almost no difference between section 2 of Bill 1 and the Government Organization Act, I was going to submit an amendment. For my first amendment I was going to propose the removal of section 2 due to its repeating established legislation.

But then I read a little further into Bill 1 and saw this sentence. "The Minister may establish any panels or committees the Minister considers necessary to provide advice." I thought this sentence also looked very similar to section 7(1) of the Government Organization Act, which reads, "A Minister may establish any . . . [panels or] committees . . . the Minister considers necessary or desirable to act in an advisory or administrative capacity." Both say that the minister can create panels and committees to help advise the minister. Other than a few wording changes in the definition of advice there are no new powers granted by this section to this minister.

I wanted to propose amendments that remove all sections that are already stated in the Government Organization Act. Here is the issue I ran into with this bill. Not only is section 2 copied from this act, but so are section 5 and section 3. The problem is that removing the sections of this bill that are very similar to sections in the Government Organization Act would take out so many sections that the amendments were out of order. To me, this says a lot about the substance or lack of substance of Bill 1.

I could be way off base, and the minister really did not know that he was already allowed to do what is listed in this bill. So I dug around a little bit more and found something that the minister published with his signature on it that is almost identical in wording to Bill 1. Less than a week ago we received the budget, and in the budget we had the estimates, and in these estimates was the minister's portfolio, which has the desired outcomes of his ministry. In fact, Bill 1's section 2(b) is written out on page 27, line 1.a of the minister's estimates. Section 2(c) is on page 27, line 1.4; and 2(g) is on page 28, lines 2.2 and 2.3. These are just the parts that are identical. In the previous budget these phrases are similarly repeated. I could explain how section 2(a) and (d) are similar to his estimates, but I'm sure the minister knows that they are very similar.

Then if we go to the budget overview, page 4, we see the minister handing out money. Actions fulfilling section 2(b) and (c) are already in motion. How is this possible if Bill 1 has not passed, unless the minister had these powers already? Not only does the legislation exist that is identical to this bill, but there are two documents signed by the minister and two signed by the Premier that are almost identical to this bill.

Last month I simply asked the minister in this House, line by line, if he had the powers listed in Bill 1. I asked the minister if he had the powers listed in section 2, the ability to "create partnerships that support entrepreneurship" and "help businesses to grow and succeed." The minister's response startled me. He said, and I quote: absolutely. Why did the minister put forward this bill when he knows full well that he has the powers listed in it already? I thought: maybe he only knew that he only had some powers, not all. Quoting Bill 1, I asked if the minister had the power to "help working people upgrade their skills and secure employment" and "increase the development and [production] of Alberta innovations." I expected him to say that he did not have the ability to do any of these and that that's why he created Bill 1, but the minister said that he absolutely has the powers and abilities listed in Bill 1.

9:20

My question is: why is this government wasting our time with the legislation that outlines powers the minister already has? Why is this government not focused on creating jobs instead of writing out

and working on the minister's job description? I'm not against the powers of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. These powers need to be used for creating jobs and making Alberta stronger. I'm not saying that these powers or any minister's powers should be stripped from them. What I'm saying is that I'm against wasting the Legislature's time by outlining a minister's existing powers in the form of a bill. I am against this bill for the fact that nothing new will be accomplished through passing this bill.

The province finds itself in a very serious situation today, with devastating job losses and a serious economic downturn. The people of Alberta need real solutions, not a statement of intent. I hope that the minister will have more to add to what he has published so far to encourage job creation, but unfortunately I'm not holding my breath. I will not be supporting this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Oh, excuse me. My apologies. Just with respect to 29(2)(a), it does not apply in this situation, to the first speaker. I'm sorry. After the next speaker 29(2)(a) applies.

Calgary-Bow, I have a request for you to speak.

If not, Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on this government's Bill 1. Within the time that I'm allotted to speak now, I could read the whole thing about four times, yet it is the government's Bill 1. This is interesting, as my esteemed colleague pointed out, well, as he was on his feet just a minute ago. I'm hard pressed to think of a single thing in this bill that will change a single thing should the House pass it.

It's, essentially, as has been said, a job description for a minister that's been in his job for several months. It includes things like, "The Minister must annually, and more frequently if the Premier directs, report to the Executive Council on the Minister's progress in establishing . . . any new programs under section 2," which essentially is code for: the minister should show up at cabinet meetings and answer questions. Well, all ministers show up at cabinet meetings and answer questions. That's what they do. That's kind of the nature of being a minister, yet somehow there's a section in this legislation that requires it.

It talks about establishing "panels or committees the Minister considers necessary." I believe that all ministers can do this without a piece of legislation being required.

And it talks about: "The Minister may . . . establish an investor tax credit program or a capital investment tax program" to introduce in the Legislature. Well, the government has beat themselves to the punch. We didn't do it. Congratulations; you beat yourself to the punch by introducing those things in the budget before introducing them in Bill 1, so that's already done.

Clearly, we're hard pressed in the House to think of any way, big or small, good or bad, old or new, that this will change Alberta should the Legislative Assembly pass this bill. It truly is a *Seinfeld* bill, a bill about nothing.

Happily, it does actually create one job, the one job that the government can lay claim to, the job of the minister of job creation. We're glad to have him. He's an hon. member of this Assembly, and I'm sure that he's going to do the best that he can in the role that he's been assigned. But in his comments, interestingly enough, when the minister stood up himself, Mr. Speaker, to defend and promote his very own Bill 1 – let me remind you; that's the same number as the jobs created, by the way – the minister actually talked very little about his bill. That's what I find really amazing. He talked mostly about the budget, which pre-empts Bill 1 in several ways. What this Bill 1 says that the minister can do has already been

done in the budget, or at least the government has already put it on the table to do it in the budget, with the government thereby scooping itself.

The minister went down different paths, all of which are interesting. He talked about reckless and extreme cuts to jobs. I know that the minister was talking about reckless and extreme cuts to jobs in the public sector. What I wish he would spend more time thinking about is the government's policies, that they've put in place since they've been in government, which actually have created reckless and extreme cuts to jobs in the private sector.

The minister talked about turning back the clock. Well, Mr. Speaker, those reckless and extreme job cuts in the private sector are really going a long ways towards turning back the clock to before Alberta was an energy superpower, before Alberta had the best economy in Canada, before Alberta had one of the best qualities of life in the free world, before Alberta had one of the best education systems in the world. The minister, I would suggest, should be more careful about the words he uses because they may echo back in a very, very unfortunate way, particularly as it pertains to this bill.

"Stable jobs," he said. "Renewed investments." I'm wondering how much investment will be renewed in the coal industry under this government's policies. We already know that there have been tens of billions of jobs that have left Alberta in the oil and gas industry under this government's policies. So, yeah, we do need renewed investment. One of the biggest reasons that we need renewed investment is because the current government's policies have driven the investment that we used to take for granted out the door as fast as they possibly could. Yes, indeed, we do need renewed investment. That's a good thing. It's unfortunate that one of the big reasons is the current government's policies.

The minister talked in his opening remarks about the small-business landscape and healthy small businesses. Well, I tabled in the House yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Chambers of Commerce document talking about how the government's jobs plan, the budget, actually makes it harder to create jobs in Alberta, more expensive and less profitable for small business.

On top of that, businesses across this province, the restaurants' association, many chambers of commerce, and business groups have almost universally – not universally; you will find one or two people who disagree. But for the most part they're dead set against this government's minimum wage policy to artificially drive up the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in a very accelerated way, killing jobs. We hear many, many examples where small businesses have actually had to lay off people that were making minimum wage because now they can only afford three instead of four or two instead of three. This is before the government has gone all the way to \$15, so this is only the beginning of the harm from the poor policies that are negatively affecting small business, Mr. Speaker.

The whole point – the whole point – of a job-creating ministry, one would think, is to create jobs. You know what, Mr. Speaker? I'm going to take a positive tone here for a minute and say: I'm sure that along the way this ministry will create some jobs.

**An Hon. Member:** One.

9:30

**Mr. McIver:** So far it's created one.

But the problem is, Mr. Speaker, that the number of jobs that this ministry and this minister – and I know that he will apply himself to creating jobs. The problem is that the policies that his government has put in place have already killed and taken away and reduced and driven out so many jobs that he's not starting at zero and working up; he's starting at about minus 20,000 to 30,000 and

working up and hoping to get to zero. And because I love Alberta and because I know the minister loves Alberta, I'm sure that he and I both wish that he can succeed in replacing all of the jobs that the policies of the current government have driven out and caused to go away and the hiring that this government's policies have stopped and the jobs that will never happen now because of the multibillions of dollars of investment that have been driven out due to uncertainty in the royalty revenues and the threats to turn the Energy Regulator upside down and the corporate tax increases and the income tax. I'm out of breath talking about the bad policies that this government has put into place and how much they truly, truly harm business and jobs.

We do wish the minister well in being able to repair all that damage. I honestly think that despite his best efforts, he won't be able to. But I will give him credit, for I'm sure the people of Alberta will get the minister's best efforts. Unfortunately, he's hobbled by the government that he belongs to and the policies that have put him so far below zero before he even starts that he has a Herculean task just to try to get back to breaking even, an unenviable task. I would say that in terms of turning back the clock, I think there are a lot of Albertans that would like to turn back the clock to when there was a different government here, when unemployment was well below 5 per cent, a rate that people considered full employment, when our biggest problem was not helping the people in Alberta that were already here to get to work. The problem was getting more people in for all of the jobs that didn't have enough people to fill them. There's a place that Albertans would like to turn the clock back to.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to be fair, because you know what? A part of this is because of the lower energy prices, and we won't blame the government for that because that is not their fault. Unfortunately, everything that has happened since – not everything but the vast majority of policy changes that have happened since are the government's fault, and it's making a bad situation worse as it continues.

So as I look through this bill, Mr. Speaker, I look for ways that this is going to make it better, and there are some nice words here: "increase access to capital," "help businesses to grow and succeed." Well, if the government had taken the last 11 months off instead of raising corporate taxes and threatening to turn upside down the Energy Regulator – and the government tries to get it right, I think. I remember I was in the room where they announced their royalty review, where they were going to leave royalties where they are despite the fact that the Premier and the many ministers on the front bench of the government were saying for years that Albertans were not getting their fair share and that the royalties needed to go up and that all of that was going to help. Then after some study with some smart people – and there's one thing that the government did right. They had a pretty smart panel talk about the royalty review. Good work. That panel actually advised the government not to raise royalties. That also was good work, and I would congratulate the government on that.

The problem is that they can't stand success. On the very same day that they announced they weren't going to raise the royalties, they added the words "right now," which, of course, sends a shiver through the spine of anybody considering investing in Alberta's energy sector. One would hope – at least, I was hoping, and I know lots of people in the energy industry energy that were hoping – that the Finance minister or the Premier of the day would have issued a clarification of their remarks by saying: "No, no. We've done our work. This is where it's going to stay. We feel confident this is the right decision, so don't be afraid to invest here." But, no. That clarification never occurred.

To double down on that lack of clarification in the jobs plan, that the minister in his introduction to the bill referenced several times,

there is a section where it actually uses the phrase – wait for it – modernize the royalties. Modernize. Now, what does modernize mean, Mr. Speaker? There are 87 members of this House, and 87 of us may all have a slightly different definition of what modernize means. Here's what I'm afraid that it means, and here's what I'm afraid it will mean for many people that would invest their money in Alberta. When the energy prices go up, the royalties will go up, so even if you do put your money at risk to create jobs, to make an investment, to extract Alberta's resources, to create tax revenue, to build roads, schools, hospitals, seniors' housing, and to provide social services, you will be rewarded with having whatever profit you might be able to earn after taking all that risk – you will be rewarded by this government modernizing the royalty regime. In other words, we're going to let you just barely survive until you make money, and then we're going to take that away from you, too. That's what I fear modernizing the royalty regime means.

Mr. Speaker, that takes us back to the title of the bill, the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. Of course, we know Alberta's economy can always be diversified. Every jurisdiction in the world's economy can be more diversified. We also know that Alberta's economy has become very much more diversified over the last few years. In fact, our party tabled a document that showed that I think in 1984 Alberta's gross GDP was worth about \$64 billion, and 30 years later Alberta's gross domestic product was worth north of \$600 billion, about a sixfold increase over 30 years.

Now, you say: okay; well, that's good, but that doesn't indicate the economy has been diversified. If that was the only information we had, I would agree with that, except that the very same piece of paper indicates that the oil and gas sector back in 1984 accounted for 36 per cent of Alberta's economy, and 30 years later it dropped down to 25 per cent of Alberta's economy. So what does that mean, Mr. Speaker? That means that Alberta's economy has been severely diversified during those 30 years. Could it be diversified more? Absolutely. Should we join with the government in looking for ways to diversify it more now? Absolutely. And we will.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) for the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to refer to the member's comment about the Chambers of Commerce. Now, I had a little experience with the chamber of commerce in my community of Lethbridge. When the minimum wage came out, they talked about how much it was going to cost. In fact, the chair of the chamber of commerce was a little aggressive with me about what was happening to a particular business in Lethbridge because of the increase in the minimum wage. I thought I should do some follow-up because I want to support things that are going to move the economy forward, not hold it back.

I was familiar with the business, and I followed up. The chair of the chamber of commerce had told me that it was going to cost \$86,000 for this business in one year because of this increase. Okay. So \$86,000 is 86,000 hours since there's an increase of \$1. I went out, and I thought: I need to find out how many employees are there. To get to 86,000, you'd need about 41 full-time employees working 40 hours a week, and that was not the case. In fact, I got the correct figures and went back to the chamber of commerce, and she said: no, no, no; I think that was over the next few years. I said: but you told me it was over one year.

I think when we're talking about any improvement to our economy, everybody needs to be onboard, in particular the Chambers of Commerce, because we're trying to move our economy forward at a time where the bottom has dropped out of the

price of oil, and that was the main pillar of our economy for many, many, many years.

My question to you is: what has the Chambers of Commerce said to you about this?

9:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. member for that question and applaud her for the work she just said that she did to investigate a claim that somebody made. I think she deserves credit for making that effort, and she certainly has my applause.

I think what she's talking about is that when it comes to these things, we need to try to do our best to get our facts straight, and I think the hon. member does a good job of pointing that out. I thank the hon. member for that. I know the hon. member is sincere, and I know that she faces people in Lethbridge and takes the heat because she and I were at a mayors and reeves meeting a couple of weeks ago, and she took considerable heat when they complained that nobody from the government's front bench would return the calls from mayors and reeves. She said that she would get to the bottom of it, and based on the diligence that she indicated that she placed on this other issue this morning, I have no doubt that any ministers that the mayors and reeves of southern Alberta are waiting to hear from, that hon. member will be on them like crazy to make sure that they get them those answers. I have tremendous faith that the hon. member will do that.

But it does not solve the problem. The hon. member asked the question: so what does the Chambers of Commerce say? What I hear from chambers of commerce – and, again for the hon. member, I tabled a letter in the House yesterday from the Alberta Chambers of Commerce talking about how the jobs plan is actually going to make it worse for creating jobs instead of better. What I hear from chambers of commerce is that the artificial increase to the minimum wage will drive up costs at an unnaturally fast pace, cause small businesses to have price increases. If those price increases put the small businesses at risk of having their sales volume go down, this means they'll need fewer staff to fill fewer orders caused by having a price increase. That's what I've heard. That's the risk.

Listen. I've never doubted that the government has the best interests of people in mind, but the fact is that even for those people on minimum wage, their money will not go as far due to the price increases at those places caused by the minimum wage. So there's the dichotomy, Mr. Speaker. It's not as simple as ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, I've had a request for unanimous consent to have the introduction of a visitor today. Is there agreement on that?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to have run into Calgary ward 2 city councillor, Joe Magliocca, and his communications and community liaison, Greg Hartzler, on the steps of the Legislature this morning as we walked in. Mr. Magliocca, Mr. Hartzler, and I had a nice discussion and a tour of the Legislative Assembly. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Joe Magliocca and Greg Hartzler, and I would ask the members to give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 1

### Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to finally be able to rise today and speak to numerous concerns that I have about this government's Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. My main concerns are that the bill does neither of these things and that, frankly, this government's credibility on job creation is deeply amiss. This bill, allegedly pertaining to job creation, has withered on the Order Paper for over a month. The last shiny job creation program this NDP government introduced languished in the twilight zone for about four months, and that's after it was supposed to be rolled out. Nine other government bills that came after this have curiously taken greater precedence where this government's priorities are concerned.

In the autumn budget this government was adamant that its previous jobs plan would somehow create 27,000 jobs at a cost of \$178 million over two years. There was never any evidence to back this up, nor were there any jobs created. Well, that's not true. There was one job created. But the government doubled down. The previous labour minister had this to say about the failed job scheme. Quote, certainly, I think that a lot of businesses are really excited about this and that it will help. End quote. The other day I heard the minister say, and I'm paraphrasing: after consulting with businesses and hearing that this plan wasn't going to work, we decided to pivot. Translated: we didn't do a proper economic impact study, so after the fact we are realizing our folly.

What were businesses really saying? The Calgary Chamber of commerce said this:

... no definitive answer as to whether these types of grants actually incent hiring and encourage job creation. In fact, some studies indicate that these incentives simply shuffle the workforce around, encouraging the laying-off of some employees, and the rehiring of new employees.

That failed job scheme was the only job-creation component of the last budget, and the Finance minister defended it saying, quote: it's good for business; it's good for the people who perhaps otherwise could have been left out. End quote.

As we all know, the government recently conceded that it wouldn't work. Now at a \$250 million price tag over two years they're claiming 100,000 jobs will be created with their new budget's job plan. Again, there's no evidence that the alleged job-creation initiative in the budget will do any such thing. When it comes to job creation, the sad reality is that throughout one whole year in office this government has failed to create a single job and has failed Albertans who are struggling.

Bill 1 itself is an illusion of a bill, the appearance of a government doing something on job creation in a suffering economy without actually doing anything specific. I want to preface further comments on this bill by noting the gravity of the situation before I continue, a situation that this legislation addresses so inadequately. As other members have quoted in this place, the average unemployment rate in February was 7.9 per cent, a 20-year high, Mr. Speaker. Calgary, often deemed western Canada's economic hub, had an unemployment rate of 8.4 per cent in February, higher than most cities in Atlantic Canada.

The government's own budget predicts that this year Alberta will average an unemployment rate of 8 per cent. That's an increase, Mr. Speaker, in unemployment. Let's do some quick math here. Quick

question: how can you expect to add 100,000 jobs when your own budget predicts increased unemployment? Quite frankly, the numbers don't add up.

Most damning is that in the last quarter of 2015 more people left Alberta than actually came here. And recently Statistics Canada released a survey of employment, payroll, and hours which showed the largest earnings drop in 20 years between January 2015 and January 2016. The average Albertan's weekly wage, for those fortunate to have been spared from the mass firings thus far, has declined by over 4 per cent. Week after week, more news of mass layoffs. The job situation is only getting worse, and Bill 1 merely adds insult to injury.

Frankly, given the economic climate, it's very distressing to see the vacuous nature of Bill 1. It is for all intents and purposes redundant in its current form. It does nothing but reinforce that in the worst economy in a generation, Albertans shouldn't look to this government for positive solutions.

Bill 1 allegedly gives the minister the ability to create programs and bring in regulations to implement said programs, which any minister can already do within their existing powers. I would direct members to review section 8 of the Government Organization Act. It reads:

8(1) A Minister may establish or operate any programs and services the Minister considers desirable in order to carry out matters under the Minister's administration.

(2) A Minister may institute inquiries into and collect information and statistics relating to any matter under the Minister's administration.

9:50

So any argument that this bill is enabling framework legislation is just a parody. Instead of wasting everyone's time with this sham of a bill, it remains entirely unclear why the government isn't actually acting on something specific for job creation. You would think that Albertans deserve at least that from this government. Why not instead take the time to evaluate what provincial government barriers are currently impeding job creation in this province and act to solve them?

Perhaps this all derives from a growing pains problem. It has, after all, not been one year since this government was elected. Perhaps the new government was unaware that a mere mandate letter from the Premier to the minister could have sufficed instead of this aimless bill. We know that the Premier didn't formally issue mandate letters to her ministers. Perhaps this legislation was a remedy to that in this case. If so, I do hope that this session sees something more productive than a series of legislative items outlining what ministers should do.

Now, I would think that a great deal of members on the government benches are embarrassed by the paltry piece of legislation known as Bill 1. If those members' constituency offices are hearing concerns from Albertans about the economic situation with the same frequency as my office, then, yes, those members should be embarrassed by this legislation. The government can save itself and its members a great deal of embarrassment by tabling whatever economic assessment or advice they received, whether from their own officials or outside groups that asked for this piece of legislation.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business dismissed this bill as the mere skeleton of a job-creation framework, a damning indictment. If the government has an assessment from another group that looks at this bill otherwise, they should probably make that public somewhere. Between this paltry excuse for action on job creation and this same government's failed job incentive scheme, it's clear that they need to start going elsewhere for advice.

The sorry state of jobs in the economy right now is not a mere set of talking points that the Premier's issue-management staff needs to periodically update. It's a very real problem, Mr. Speaker, that threatens the future of this province and the livelihoods of thousands and thousands of Albertans and their families, our children, and our grandchildren. There is a real dark side to the continued decline of Alberta's employment rate. A growing unemployment rate means that there are families who have been making ends meet by reaching into their savings month after month. It means that there are families worried about how to make their next mortgage payment at the end of the month because there is no new job in sight. When it comes to specifics about this job for a month, this government only offered that Albertans should wait for the budget for details. At the end of the day it's just not enough for those who need it the most.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give you an example of someone in my riding. He called me up, distressed, concerned about what was going on. He said: I'm 51 years old, and I've worked in the oil patch most of my life. He said: the price of oil has tanked. We've seen this before, but he said: Mr. Hunter, we have seen that there is a problem that is a lot more than the issue of low oil, and I want to give you an example of that. He said: when you get laid off in the oil patch, I would come back into my rural community; I have lots of friends, neighbours, and they're always looking for an extra hand. But he said: because of Bill 6, I can't even find a job in the rural community; I can't even find a job so that I can feed my family in this downturn in this economy. What happens is that now the people, his neighbours, who would normally hire him on a part-time job don't want to hire him because they don't want to have the full weight of WCB and OH and S come down on them. They won't hire him.

This is fully on the government's shoulders. This man, who wants to provide a decent living for his family to provide for their needs, the dignity that he deserves as a provider for his family: he's been robbed of that, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, this government is doing nothing to help him.

Aside from being a cynical communications opportunity, this bill does nothing for Albertans most adversely affected by the rapid economic decline. This bill as presented looks to be a product of the most well-meaning student asking: why don't we just legislate job creation? Again, I invite the government to table whatever document or advice they received that said that this bill is what the economic situation so desperately needs. I would love to see this information. I would love to be able to vet this information. We haven't seen anything that would help us understand where the government is coming up with these numbers.

What this government actually needs to be doing is removing barriers to job creation in this province. It also needs to make sure that it instills confidence. Business confidence, small-business confidence, is at an all-time low, Mr. Speaker. This is in part due to low oil prices, but it is also in large measure a result of an NDP government. Businesses do not believe the NDP government will have their backs. That is why this government needs to assure small businesses that they do have their backs. That includes both the barriers they have put up and the barriers their predecessors have put up throughout the previous decades.

Recently KPMG released the results of their 2016 competitive alternative study, which showed that Calgary was ranked dead last for business competitiveness in Canada. Second last in Canada was Edmonton. Our two largest cities, once seen as the economic hub of the west, are now ranked dead last for competitiveness. Quebec City, Charlottetown, Gatineau, Winnipeg all ranked higher than cities in Alberta. It seems surreal to say that, to see how far Alberta has fallen in recent years, especially now.

There are solutions, thankfully. Last month our caucus put forward 12 solid recommendations to help stop the devastating bleeding of jobs in Alberta's economy. We're glad to see that this government was willing to implement at least one of them. These are common-sense solutions that the government can implement. We recommend that they take a look at the other 11. These would reduce regulatory red tape and lift the burden off small businesses so that hiring new workers is not such a burdensome task in this economy. There are common-sense recommendations there, too, like utilizing federal training funds and programs more efficiently. That wouldn't cost the government a penny.

There's a lot that this government could be doing. It's a shame that they've opted to do nothing but put forward Bill 1 instead. Albertans shouldn't have to go elsewhere to find jobs. They shouldn't be asked to go to B.C. They shouldn't be asked to go on EI to be able to make ends meet. They should have the dignity of being able to provide for their families because of a robust economy. This can be done. We admonish the government to go forward with proper, well-studied, well-vetted ideas rather than their idealistic ideas. If this government has any sense of priorities . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
Any questions under 29(2)(a)?

**Ms Drever:** Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on Bill 1.  
[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

#### Bill 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

[Adjourned debate April 19: Mr. Hanson]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak on Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. This is a really interesting combination of changes that the government is attempting to make in legislation. There are several pieces of it that I think are important for me to touch on in my remarks this morning.

**10:00**

The government is discontinuing the Centennial Education Savings Plan Act, which is an important piece but probably one of the smaller pieces, one of the ones that will probably affect the fewest Albertans compared to some of the other changes to the legislation.

It appears that the government is going to align Alberta's personal income tax rate on taxable dividends with federal regulations. That section by itself, lowering the personal income tax, is a good thing.

Also, it gives some clarification about who is a distributor of fuel taxes, one who does so in Alberta, and it adds the Deputy Solicitor General to the list of individuals to be provided notice if a party wishes a judicial review of an authorization to the minister to issue a certificate stating an amount owed in fuel taxes, penalties, interest, and other amounts. That would be section 6 of the act.

It allows Alberta corporations to use different currencies to prepare and file reports, thus, hopefully, reducing administrative costs. That's another good piece, so I would compliment the government on that particular section of this legislation.

But, Mr. Speaker, it all pales – it all pales – when one considers the biggest and most negative piece of this legislation. It's all a detail when you consider that the government is going to remove the GDP-linked debt ceiling in section 5, the ceiling in the budget

that the government laid on the table very few days ago, less than a week ago, that debt limit. If you are to believe the government's documents – and Albertans ought to be able to believe the government's documents – they say that the debt ceiling would not be breached in the next three years. Yet today, three years ahead of the schedule that the government set itself and laid on the table less than a week ago, the government has said that it's going to take the cap off that debt ceiling, and if this legislation passes, Bill 10, the sky for Alberta debt truly will become the limit.

In fact, the only thing that might keep this government from reaching the sky with the debt is the world's bankers because I don't see any indication that anybody on the government's front bench or the government caucus as a whole is willing to pull on the reins to even slow down this train that's going to run over the future of Alberta children and grandchildren because they will be paying debt that this government accumulates for decades and decades.

**Mr. Bilous:** Pretty graphic way to put it.

**Mr. McIver:** The minister, the jobs minister, just chirped to me that that was an extreme description, and it is an extreme description. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it's also accurate, and that's the painful part. You know what? Sometimes it can be political business to embellish what's going on a little bit for your side of the political argument. I would suggest that many of us have been guilty of that on all sides of the House from time to time . . .

**Mr. Cooper:** Including them.

**Mr. McIver:** . . . including the government side, including the opposition side, including our side. But in this particular case no embellishment is required, Mr. Speaker. The government has said that they're going to take Albertans down a road where we're going to find ourselves three years from now in almost \$60 billion in debt. That's on the backs of 4.3 to 4.4 million Albertans. If you work out the debt that every child, every adult, every person in Alberta, every senior citizen is going to be responsible for, it's a number much bigger than it ought to be.

Now, Mr. Speaker, here's the thing . . .

**An Hon. Member:** You're making me uncomfortable, asking him to . . .

**Mr. McIver:** No. I could do the calculations. I just don't have a calculator in front of me, and it's always a bad idea, hon. member, to give numbers in the House if they're not going to be accurate, so I choose not to do that. That's something the government could probably take a lesson from.

Mr. Speaker, here's the thing. The government has said themselves that they're not going to breach the 15 per cent GDP debt limit, which is way too high in the first place, but they're still going to breach it in three years, and now they need to take that limit off this year. It does lead to: what does the government actually expect to happen? Do they have spending plans way beyond what they've actually disclosed so far in their budget legislation and other legislation? Or is the government recognizing that their policies are going to damage Alberta's economy so much that the GDP is going to shrink that much, that they're going to breach the debt ceiling not because they borrow more but because they shrink the economy so small? There is a problem. To shrink the economy small enough that the government would be afraid of breaching that 15 per cent GDP is a very, very damning indictment of what the government believes is the harm that they could do to this economy.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? I don't know which it is. I don't know. Maybe they think they're going to shrink the economy and they're going to borrow a lot more than they've said because there's room in this for both of those things to be the government's inspiration to take the ceiling off the debt.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans can't live their lives like this. They can't go out and say: we are going to keep using our credit card, and we are going to ignore those pesky bills that come every month because we don't really like opening those envelopes, and we surely don't like paying the piper. Albertans know that if they were to do that, there are bankers that would create some common sense if we don't apply some ourselves, and at some point – it'll take a little longer because, as this government likes to say, they have the strongest balance sheet in the country after the previous government. You're welcome. That previous government, to be clear, was not perfect, but the government acknowledges on a regular basis what a strong balance sheet they inherited from that imperfect previous government.

Mr. Speaker, they are taking their strong balance sheet that they're now in control of down a very rocky road and a path to a very negative future. Here's the thing. We don't know whether they're doing this because they plan to spend way more than they've disclosed or whether they think the economy is going to get way worse than they've admitted. But what we do know – again, I don't need to embellish this at all – is that to just pay the annual interest at the end of three years will be about \$2 billion a year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, \$2 billion will buy a lot of things every year. Our government came under some criticism, rightly so, for not having the Calgary cancer centre built yet. It's something we had planned. We hadn't got it done yet. This government says that they're going to do it, but here's the interesting thing. At the end of the three years, when this government is far enough in debt that the interest payments are \$2 billion a year, they won't have built the cancer centre. They say that it won't be open till 2024, yet Albertans will pay so much interest every single year that you could build one and a half cancer centres on that interest every single year, just for an example.

They like to brag about, you know, building \$34 billion of infrastructure, and you know what, Mr. Speaker? Building infrastructure is a good idea, so I'll compliment the government on that. But it's a good idea if you have a plan to pay back the money that you're spending to build the infrastructure, and in this area the government falls not a little short; they fall a hundred per cent short because they have zero per cent of a plan to pay it back – zero per cent of a plan to pay it back – and that's in their documents. You can't make this stuff up.

**10:10**

As they say, sometimes this stuff writes itself. Only with this stuff we were helped because this stuff was written by the government, and they actually put in black and white that they're going to take the people of Alberta into debt about \$60 billion a year with \$2 billion-a-year interest payments with zero per cent of a plan to pay it back.

So \$2 billion: that's not one year, Mr. Speaker; that's every year. What will \$2 billion a year buy? I don't know. It could buy one and a half cancer centres every year. It could buy, depending on the size of the school, 50 to 100 schools every year. It could buy enough interchanges to solve a lot of traffic problems around this province. It could probably, if not in the first year, house every homeless person in Alberta every year or every second year and provide housing for them. The \$2 billion a year can make a big difference, and that's \$2 billion a year that this government is going to saddle Albertans with. You know what? The government might even be

able to make an argument that Albertans could swallow if they said: it's just for a little while because we have a plan to pay it back over 10 or 20 years, and it's all going to be okay, Alberta.

**Mr. Rodney:** Do they have that?

**Mr. McIver:** They don't have that plan. They don't have any plan.

**Mr. Cooper:** One job and no plan.

**Mr. McIver:** One job and no plan. That is a huge problem and one that I can't get past, Mr. Speaker. You know, I pointed out two or three parts of this that actually could be good things in this legislation, and then the government dropped this big, ugly section of legislation that is so harmful for the future of Alberta, so harmful for all of our children and all of our grandchildren, so harmful for the successful future of Alberta that you just can't get past it. What I'm hearing from Albertans that are understanding and hearing what's in this government's budget is that they can't get past it. They are afraid, and that's why they say: what can you do to move this government out because we can't afford what they're going to leave us behind?

Unfortunately, one must vote carefully because when they elect us, on all sides of the House, we're here for four years unless we make a mistake and call an election a year early. I thought I would throw that in before somebody else does. But you are, generally speaking, stuck with your Member of the Legislative Assembly for four years, whether they do a good job or a bad one. So is the case for all 87 of us.

Unfortunately, what this government is telegraphing by taking the cap off the debt ceiling is that when they get the next chance to go to the polls and make a decision that is in their best interest, they will already be under water by almost \$60 billion. They will already be on the hook for \$2 billion of interest payments that do not even take a piece off the debt that's already there. They'll be paying, again, enough interest every year to build one and a half cancer centres, 50 to 100 schools, a whole bunch of interchanges, a countless number of seniors' housing, a countless amount of support for those that might need care for mental illness or health or addictions or things that this government says that they care about. They're hobbling Alberta's ability to give that care by not going about the things that they want to do in a careful way.

Unfortunately, the story's even that bad when you give the government full credit. Building some of the infrastructure that they say they're going to build is probably a good thing. Building, you know, the schools, the roads, the seniors' housing, the hospitals that they talked about: this is a good thing. But at the end of the three years we won't have a cancer centre in Calgary yet, but we will have a \$2 billion interest payment every year that would more than build that cancer centre. We will have a lot of new schools, and that's a good thing because I'm not sure after that point how many we're going to be able to afford to build.

What's really scary, Mr. Speaker, is the government keeps talking about how much better the debt situation in Alberta is than compared to places like Ontario, as if they're comfortable taking us up to those levels.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions for the hon. member? Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was definitely interested, in listening to the hon. member's discussion, in his thoughts on Bill 10. I was struck by this sense that investing in our infrastructure is just money out of the budget without really recognizing that those



are Albertan jobs that we're creating by investing in that infrastructure. I was wondering – and I'm sincerely hoping that I get a good answer on this – can the hon. member tell me which Albertan jobs he would not create if he was in government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually grateful for the question, the question about creating jobs from infrastructure. I think what I said here just a second ago – so I don't have any trouble repeating it – is that building infrastructure can be a good thing as long as you have a plan to pay the money back. So I would say to the hon. member that I acknowledge that building infrastructure will create some jobs, and that is a good thing.

What I'm afraid of is that the jobs that will be created will come to a grinding halt sometime between five and 10 years from now, when the money runs out, when the government has borrowed on Albertans' credit card to the limit so that they can't borrow any more and the interest payments are not palatable to Albertans.

Frankly, this is what the construction industry is worried about, too, they tell me. They're happy to have those jobs created, building roads and infrastructure that the government is going to do. They are, so the government can feel good about that. What they should feel a lot less good about, to the hon. member, is that the industry is afraid that there's going to be no work for a few years, five or 10 years from now, when the government finds itself in such a deep debt hole.

Again, we're only talking about three years from now, when there's a \$2 billion a year interest payment. At that point that will be \$2 billion a year less in construction jobs. Now that this government has taken the limit off, how many jobs will it cost Alberta when they raise that to \$3 billion and \$4 billion? There's the problem, Mr. Speaker.

If the government actually said, "Okay; we're going to borrow our brains out; we think we need to catch up on some things, and here's our plan to pay it back, and we think we're being responsible," then they might be able to sell that to people that care about money. But they're not saying that. They're saying: let's take the lid off how much we borrow, let's have no plan to pay it back, and let's pretend this can go on forever. See, that's when jobs get cut.

That is an NDP legacy in other provinces. Bob Rae comes to mind, who spent his brains out in Ontario. I grew up in Ontario. I have friends that live there, and I have friends that work in the public sector there. For the first year and a half that the NDP government was there, they said: "This is great. We get everything we want. There's no problem, and life is good." Then they were presented with Rae days. At first they said: "Oh, great. Every Friday off or every second Friday off. Isn't this great?" Then they said: "Wait a minute. We don't get paid for that Friday, so now my income just dropped by 10 per cent. But wait a minute. I've got a car payment and a mortgage and kids to put in sports and kids to put in dance lessons and piano lessons, and now I don't have enough money to pay for that." So now living in an NDP world isn't nearly as much fun as it was 18 months ago.

That, Mr. Speaker, is where this government is taking Alberta. It may take a little longer than Ontario simply because the balance sheet this government started with was a lot better than the NDP government started with, probably, in Ontario at the time. My family still lives there, and many people there still say that the economy has never really recovered in Ontario since they had an NDP government. It never really has fully recovered and may never fully recover.

That is what we need to try to avoid in Alberta. That is why I appeal to the government to save future jobs. Yes, if you spend your brains out in years 1, 2, and 3, there will be people working, spending that money, but those people are going to need a job in years 4, 5, 6, and 11, 12, and 13. When they don't need a job anymore, their kids will need a job and their grandkids will need a job. Under this government's fiscal plan there will be a lot fewer jobs to go around.

Even for the jobs the government doesn't create, with the tax burden on businesses they will be less competitive. Most of the world's economy is international . . .

10:20

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will start by talking about the Alberta centennial education savings plan. You know, with respect to the Member for Calgary-Hays saying that it's not terribly widely used, it is certainly used. We have been fortunate to take advantage of that program as we save for our daughters' education, and I would suggest that many Albertans do take advantage of that.

It's unfortunate to see that that plan is ending. It seems to have come without warning that that's gone. It sort of comes as a surprise to me that that's no longer something Albertans can avail themselves of, and that it's retroactive back to March 31 of 2015 is also troubling. I know that will come as a surprise to many. It's that death-by-a-thousand-cuts problem. In and of itself it's not the most egregious thing this government has ever done, but it's certainly a big concern and something, I know, that parents will have a concern about.

We know that education, in particular postsecondary education, is a real key to economic diversification in this province. Every barrier that can be reduced, every opportunity for parents to save for their children's education is important, so I think it's noteworthy that that is now no longer something the government of Alberta will provide as an incentive and an encouragement to parents to save for their children's education.

But I will spend most of my time talking about the debt-to-GDP ratio of 15 per cent. This is something, I know you will all recall, that I've asked about many times in this House because I have a real concern about the impact of future credit-rating downgrades. When we have a government that is willing to borrow such tremendous amounts of money, the impact of a downgrade, even a couple of basis points of increased interest cost, has a tremendous impact on our ability to fund ongoing operations of this government.

In fact, it won't likely be this government that will be funding those ongoing operations, but it will be future governments having to do that and deal with that. It really will tie our hands and constrain our ability to operate the government going forward because so much money will be taken up by debt service. When you have a cap and then remove the cap, it sends the wrong signal to the very credit-rating agencies that determine how much we in Alberta will be paying for interest on the debt.

This also seems to me to be the easy choice. Instead of putting in limits, it's just, well – you know what? – the sense that money is infinite. "We'll just borrow all the money that we need and not worry about it. At some point down the road we'll be able to . . ." We don't even think about how we're going to pay it back. It's like the person that moves out of the house for the first time and doesn't realize that they need to pay back the credit card, that at some point that interest payment starts to catch up to you. But it's actually worse than that because in this scenario it's not really even their

credit card. It's Albertans' credit card. It's not even mom and dad's credit card. It is your and our and all Albertans' children's credit card that you're borrowing this money on.

Now, I want to be very clear. I don't have any problem – in fact, I'm encouraged by it – with borrowing money responsibly for capital. Capital investment leaves us with an asset. It has ongoing, enduring value to Albertans. It creates jobs in a very difficult economic time. I have no trouble with that whatsoever. To me, that is responsible borrowing, akin to taking out a mortgage on a home. That's something Albertans do every day.

But when you're borrowing money on your credit card at such a huge rate – it's not a few hundred million dollars. It's not even a couple of billion dollars. We're talking \$4 billion, \$5 billion, \$6 billion annually in operating borrowing. That's a huge number. A huge number. More than 10 per cent of the entire budget will be borrowed just for day-to-day operations. That's why a debt-to-GDP cap of 15 per cent is so important.

You know, what's equally troubling is the number of different plans this government has presented through the campaign and through their time as government to balance the budget. Their first plan in the campaign was to balance in 2017. They realized there was an error in their document – it happens – and then it went to 2018. Then in the fall of 2015 it was 2019. [interjection] You've got it. You know what their fourth plan is? The fourth plan is no plan at all: 2024. What in the world could happen between now and 2024? Well, everything can happen. [interjections] So forecasting out that far is no plan at all, which is why it's so important to have debt-to-GDP caps such as we had.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let's stay focused.

**Mr. Clark:** I'm going to quote the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board from October 29, 2015. That's 174 days ago, not quite six months. He said that this

sets firm limits on borrowing and spending growth. This is a key part of our overall fiscal plan and, coupled with the budget and strategic plan presented earlier this week, represents the principles upon which our government will operate.

That sounds like a good idea. Let's have some principles. How long do those principles last? Well, until they're not convenient anymore. What other principles are we going to abandon? What other constraints are we going to have on spending?

Now, I want to be really clear that I'm not advocating for massive cuts to the public service. Alberta's public servants do a tremendous service to the people of Alberta. They're an important part of what drives tremendous quality of life in this province. But surely to goodness we can do better. Surely we can find some efficiencies within the public service. Surely we can find ways of doing more with less, because I can tell you, based on the conversations I've had with my constituents and with Albertans all around the province, so many Albertans are hurting right now. So many people have lost their jobs. So many people have taken wage rollbacks, are working shortened weeks just so they can pay the bills, and Albertans continue to give money to charity, to donate to food banks, to help their neighbours. All around this province people are doing more with less.

The only place where there isn't a sense of scarcity is within the provincial government. That doesn't mean we need to hack and slash and cut and fire nurses and teachers. It means we need to work with Alberta's tremendous public servants and find a way of doing more with less, to create a sense of urgency. There is no sense of urgency. There is no sense of scarcity, that anything is wrong. To the previous member's comments, we're going to fall off a cliff at some point. At some point this all comes home to roost, and this government may find that that's sooner than they think.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, I'd like to quote further from our friend the hon. Minister of Finance as he introduced Bill 4 last session. "The debt cap provides sufficient flexibility to the government as it implements its financial plan while maintaining a manageable limit on the amount of debt government can take on." For your information, Madam Speaker, two of three credit-rating agencies that rate the province report net debt to GDP as a measure of their credit reports. The Dominion Bond Rating Service states that a triple-A rated province should have a debt-to-GDP ratio of less than 15 percent. I agree.

I have tremendous respect for the Minister of Finance – I really do – but he was right when he said that back in October 2015. So why all of a sudden, when it's no longer convenient, do we simply remove the cap? Why not put in a new cap? What is the logical limit? This will take Alberta far beyond our provincial neighbour in Saskatchewan in terms of debt to GDP.

This government loves to talk about how wonderful Alberta's balance sheet is, and it is. We do have a strong balance sheet. We're very fortunate in that. Some of it's good luck, and some of it was reasonable management – mostly good luck – but regardless of why, it's important that we maintain that and not just for some principle or some high-minded idea. From a dollars-and-cents, bottom-line perspective, it really matters because it costs us more, and that money goes out purely to debt service. Debt service is interest that goes to the banks instead of going to Albertans. That's a significant cost.

We need a limit of some kind. If you can't hit 15, why not 17? Why not 20? Pick a number. This will take us beyond our neighbours in Saskatchewan, so Alberta will no longer have the strongest balance sheet in Canada, and the speed at which that's happened is breathtaking. We hear repeatedly that it's not the government's fault that oil prices dropped. It's not. It's not, but there are things this government can and should do to keep a lid on how bad things get.

**10:30**

I'm going to end with one final quote from the Premier from November 3, 2015. In response to a question I asked about this very topic, she said:

It's very important to understand that this government is in the position of having the lowest debt to GDP of any province in the country now and also five years from now, and the best way to make sure we stay that way is to pass our legislation that this minister will be introducing.

She was speaking of Bill 4.

What's changed? What has changed so dramatically in the last six months that all of a sudden this government needs to exceed this 15 per cent debt-to-GDP cap, that both the Minister of Finance and the Premier have promoted as being so key to their overall economic agenda? What has changed so radically? Things haven't changed that much. This government needs to understand the fiscal situation that we're in, and it's not a great situation to be in. There's no question. It's incredibly challenging. But it's important that you step up and find ways of doing more with less, of putting rules in place that you choose to follow. If you're not going to have a 15 per cent debt-to-GDP cap, what are you going to have?

The Premier herself has said that today and five years from now we're going to have the lowest debt to GDP in Canada. Well, that's not true as of right now. Our friends in Saskatchewan have a lower debt to GDP. How high is this going to go? Where's the limit? What's the ceiling? Are we going to be as bad as Ontario? Are we going to get to be as bad as Quebec? Will debt to GDP exceed half?

That's a huge problem, my friends, when we're talking about borrowing more than \$50 billion.

So my challenge to the government is to find ways of continuing to deliver top-quality service to Albertans. Engage the public service. Ask them their opinion. Ask them for ideas and advice. Listen to those ideas. Make some hard decisions. Have some hard conversations. It isn't easy – it really isn't – but this government, more than any, can truly engage with the public service and ask them for ways of finding efficiencies within the system, of spending less money. If we don't, ultimately it could lead to significant public-sector cuts down the road. We could just be forestalling significant cuts.

So I have tremendous concern. There's certainly no way I can support Bill 10.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments for the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow?

Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, with some concerns. Obviously, some good things in this bill, but like all omnibus bills, it raises real questions about the difficulties an opposition party would have in supporting one part and not the other. You have to reject the whole bill if you reject anything in the omnibus. I think it's unfortunate they've combined the removal of the debt cap with issues around the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Act, the Alberta Corporate Tax Act, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, and the Fuel Tax Act. It makes it very difficult to vote in a fashion that would discriminate between some of the things, most of which I can support, given our financial situation, and some of which I can't.

Most significantly, the bill repeals the provincial debt cap, which the government originally set at 15 per cent, and does not establish a new cap.

Under the Financial Administration Act it specifically exempts the government from having to table any loan agreement which involves a loan to an individual of less than \$500,000. Where's that coming from? Why would we be less transparent than in the past about loans to individuals of less than \$500,000? I don't get that. I'm looking for some answers on that one, and I'll waive judgment on that until I hear more.

Some of the areas have been alluded to before. The act restricts eligibility for the education savings plan grants or RESPs to children born between January 1, 2005, and March 31, 2015, and repeals the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Act effective July of this year. The winding down of this savings plan was actually started by the PC administration before they left office, so the government has opted not to reverse that decision. I understand; we're in difficult financial times.

Under the Alberta Corporate Tax Act this provides greater clarity around Alberta's calculation of corporate taxable income, which parallels the federal calculation. That's a reasonable thing to do, to try and harmonize with what we're doing at the federal level.

Under the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act it decreases the dividend tax credit rate for noneligible dividends from 3.08 per cent to 2.2 per cent in 2017. The government is keeping more money for itself by making the dividend tax credit less generous. I understand that. I can accept that.

But, again, under the Financial Administration Act, which requires the government to table before the House the particulars of

any loan agreement it enters into or shares of any capital stock in a corporation it acquires, it specifically exempts the government from having to table any loan agreement which involves a loan to an individual of less than \$500,000. Explain why you would want to be less transparent than in the past. I don't get that.

The big issue, of course, which has been so much discussed this morning, is repealing the provincial debt cap. It looks like we don't want to be disciplined about our borrowing. On the face of it, at least without putting another debt cap in place, it looks like we don't support fiscal discipline and putting limits. I can understand that these are extraordinary times, and it does mean that extraordinary measures are necessary. It doesn't mean that we can simply ignore guidelines, limits, caps.

In summary, Madam Speaker, this omnibus bill contains many noncontroversial amendments focused on improving clarity and consistency, and I'd be more than happy to support these if they were packaged together in a separate bill. However, as the bill also includes amendments to the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act that will allow the province to spiral into higher and higher debt, I cannot offer my support. Without a debt cap, how can Albertans have confidence that the government isn't dooming an entire generation into a black hole? What if oil prices remain low and are the new norm? There's a huge gap between government spending and revenues that can't be filled by wishful thinking.

In this regard the Member for Calgary-Elbow indicated that there are some ways to show much more commitment to reducing our expenses on the government side, and I for one would be willing to take a 5 per cent cut. I think many in our position would be. I think many in the public service would be willing to take a 5 per cent cut. Not only would it be an important symbolic gesture, but it would actually start to move us towards what I think demonstrates a personal commitment as well as a government commitment to bearing some of the burdens of this downturn.

Not only does the bill contain nothing in the way of a debt cap, but it also does not offer a debt repayment plan, and that's been alluded to before. If the province is not going to cap its borrowing, it should at least have a plan for paying off the debt. We need to have some assurances, whether it's through bonds or fees or new rental arrangements, user fees. What exactly are the areas that we should be considering in trying to recoup our lost revenue?

And have an adult conversation about how much debt we're prepared to pass on to the next generation. I believe that my generation, the baby boomers, have not been paying their way for the last 30 years. We have left a tremendous amount of social, economic, and environmental debt to the next generation. Let's not add unnecessarily. Let's not continue to pass on this huge debt to future generations. We need to start paying more of our way as we go.

I'm also somewhat concerned about the proposed amendment that aims to exempt the government from having to table before this House any loan agreements which involve a loan to an individual of less than \$500,000. We need more clarity around that, and I hope the minister will provide some of that.

Those are my remarks. Thanks, Madam Speaker.

10:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Hon. minister, go ahead.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you. While I do not profess to be the originator of this bill – and, certainly, I will pass on the questions to them to answer some of those questions in more detail – I did want to specify and clarify that the loans to individuals under \$500,000 is to actually accommodate current practice. We do not disclose to this

House the loans that we make to students on a regular basis as part of student loans. In the way that it's currently written, technically we actually are obligated to do so. In the interests of respecting the privacy of the many individuals that get those loans, that is one of those practices. Another example that would be captured by that is the loan program to seniors for their houses. That would also be captured in that. This is very specific to individuals with very private situations, where it would be completely inappropriate to violate the privacy of Albertans.

The Alberta centennial education savings plan: that was a recognition that the plan did not actually end up supporting those who are less fortunate and need assistance with their education. It actually ended up with people who were quite affluent taking advantage of that opportunity. Recognizing it completely failed to accomplish what it had intended to set out, we will continue to ensure that students have access to quality postsecondary education at a reasonable price and are taking many actions to do that. This was not the best way to go. So we're happy to continue with that process.

I just wanted to answer those two questions for you, and I will pass on your remaining questions.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the question and the comments. Indeed, I can understand why students and seniors and their borrowing from the government isn't appropriate to be made public, but we're talking about \$500,000 as the limit. That seems excessive. We could exempt students and seniors and those particular loan programs from being made public. I don't understand why you would keep from this Assembly, at least, those who are borrowing \$499,000 from this government. For what purposes, and for what benefits?

I mean, that's a huge amount of money to be loaning without any transparency. I guess I would ask for a little clarity on why that limit was made so high. From a political point of view, it just doesn't smell right. I would like to know whether the government is considering changing that. Has that been the case for a number of years? What, if any, concerns have been raised about this, either within government or outside of government? If there's no accountability for loans of up to \$500,000 – and by accountability I mean that we need to know as legislators where that money is going, that public money – then I think we've got a problem.

Thanks, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions or comments?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 10, a bill that certainly will have some significant debate in this Chamber as we proceed, particularly because it sets the province on the most dangerous course we have been on for decades. While the current government might not like the previous government – and, certainly, the previous government did a lot of things very poorly. They started the car on this road to significant debt, the beginnings of changing the rules around legislation that required fiscal responsibility in our province. They were also responsible for laying the foundation that was such an important part of the Alberta advantage, particularly when it came to the retirement of our debt, particularly when it came to legislation that made it illegal for debt financing and also illegal for the financing of operational expenditures.

But over the last number of years, including the end of the 44-year reign of the previous government, there was a slow

deterioration of those laws, where quite regularly the government of the day would come to the House and say: we just need to make a small, little adjustment to these rules and laws; we know we promised that we would never do that and we know that Albertans expect better of us, but we just need to make a slight alteration because of the economic realities. And there we were, heading down that path. Then we changed some additional laws, that ultimately gave the government even more ability to borrow and finance. Now we've seen an absolute acceleration that is beyond the pale. It is really dangerous, dangerous, dangerous territory.

I think that the previous government does carry a lot of burden when it comes to getting us to this spot, but that burden is nothing compared to what this government, Madam Speaker, is preparing to place at the feet of our province, preparing to place at the feet of our children and our grandchildren. It is, if nothing else, reckless. Some would describe it as dangerous. We certainly should all be taking pause as we consider Bill 10.

A very short time ago in this very Chamber the government, this NDP government – and I know they like to blame the former government for a lot – said one thing, and today they are doing another, the exact opposite of what they promised to do. I think that is a significant concern not only with respect to this issue, but it also should be a concern to all of us about: what other issues have they spoken to, promised, yet are not willing to hold up their end of the bargain?

I know that I have been speaking with people in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills since the budget came out, and they've been asking me very similar questions. Oftentimes the language isn't as parliamentary, but that's because they're hurting. They're concerned about the future of our province. Sometimes that manifests itself in a way with words that we wouldn't want to use in this Chamber, but it speaks to the passion of Albertans. It speaks to the passion that the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have for the future of our province. They hope to have a province that is just as great as the province they've experienced, that provides the same sorts of opportunities of hope, of personal freedoms, the opportunity for success, the opportunity for the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish in the province. What Bill 10 does is that it puts our province's future at risk. It puts that spirit of entrepreneurialism, that independent drive of Albertans at risk because of what it can mean in terms of the weight of government coming down on people in the future.

I'd like us to just take a little trip down memory lane. Predominantly in October and November of 2015 members of this Chamber, certainly on that side of the House, rose to speak specifically about debt limits, about the future of our province and how this government was going to ensure that it didn't put our province's financial picture at risk. It promised it wouldn't put our credit rating at risk, and it promised it would manage debt accordingly. I think it's good to be reminded of the exact words that this government spoke. On November 3, 2015, the Minister of Finance: "I believe that this 15 per cent limit will not be breached. In the three-year plan that's before [us] here, I think it takes us up to about 9.5 or 10 per cent of debt to GDP, so there's lots of cushion."

**10:50**

Now, just a few months later, we're in a position where that cushion has been absolutely lambasted. The air is right out of it, and we are charging forward. The challenge, Madam Speaker, as you know – and we'll see that here shortly – is that the Finance minister on those days boasted: don't worry; the 15 per cent debt limit is very reasonable, particularly when you compare it to other jurisdictions. He used all sorts of other ridiculous arguments at the

time, much of which we debated fiercely here. The challenge is that having a debt limit is a very reasonable thing to do. Blasting through that debt limit like you don't care about the law that you just passed is irresponsible, and that is exactly where we are.

I recall rising in this House, speaking specifically about what we see happening in the United States of America, where every couple of years or months they're up against the debt limit, and they just go ahead and raise it and raise it and raise it. Yet they continue to have one, and there has to be debate about it. The fact that they change it is ridiculous, horrible, but the fact that they have the accountability and have to have the discussion is exponentially better than what we're seeing with this government across the aisle.

Putting absolutely no limit on the depths to which we can spend says to the Alberta people that we don't need to be accountable to the Assembly, that we don't need to be accountable to the Chamber, and, as an extension, that we don't need to be accountable to the people of Alberta. What this law does is that it allows the government to spend for eternity without the requirement of real, robust debate, and that debate, Madam Speaker, provides accountability, provides transparency. It provides the people of Alberta with a voice in this place. It is a shame that less than a year after a government that was elected on a campaign of change, on a campaign of doing things differently, they, in fact – and I never thought I would say this in the Chamber – are worse than the previous government when it comes to transparency in this Chamber around debt financing and when it comes to transparency around the finances of our future.

It went on, Madam Speaker, with the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, the Finance minister, when he was addressing concerns in this Chamber about the issues that we were raising around the credit rating. He more than assured us on numerous occasions that this government had been speaking with credit-rating organizations and that everything was going to be okay, that they were relatively okay with the 15 per cent debt to GDP and that those credit-rating agencies at the time had said that the credit rating of Alberta would remain strong.

Now, four days after this bill passed, we received our first credit downgrade. Just prior to that, when speaking about the debt-to-GDP ratio – and I'm quoting from *Hansard* from November 3 as well, the Minister of Finance.

I'm not saying that they look at that overall or in absence of the other criteria, but they do look at that one, so we plan to stay true to the plan that we've identified and manage the growth of the province's programs and services within the budget that we've identified. I'll be meeting with and talking with the rating agency representatives directly and telling them about not only our plan but our desire to stay within . . .

My question to the Finance minister today would be: what exact plan are you taking to the credit-rating organizations, when you so proudly stood in this House and talked about this plan, this plan that barely stood for six months?

What's worse than the initial downgrade – that took four days, I believe it was – is that the most recent downgrade was announced the day after this government introduced a budget that puts us on a very, very dangerous course for the future, with no plan. Zero plan. While we strongly disagreed with the plan that was presented in November, that had a 15 per cent debt-to-GDP limit, we were starting down this road – the exact same things that we said would happen are happening today. While we strongly disagreed with that plan, at least there was a plan.

On October 27 . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was listening with great intent to the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. He was talking about our debt limit and saying that our debt limit is going to be a problem. I will note that his side of the House provides no solution. It's very easy to talk about this. It's very easy to tweet. But it is quite hard to figure out what would be cut from that in order to meet that. What services that Albertans depend on would he or his members cut in order to get there?

Now, it's hard for me, of course, to criticize any one particular thing they would cut because they have put no plan forward. The best I have, Madam Speaker, is that back in December the Official Opposition put out a plan saying that they would keep debt to GDP at 7 per cent. I don't know if that is still their policy because that's the only point they've put forward. I don't know whether they're going to be throwing lifelines to Albertans or throwing anvils.

My question for the hon. member: is he going to be proposing an alternative to the debt-to-GDP limit, or is the 7 per cent the Wildrose presented back in December still their policy?

11:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm glad that the hon. member has realized that governing is hard. You have to make hard choices, and it's something that this side of the House is willing to do to provide leadership to the province. I look forward to being able to do that, to making hard choices.

I find it a little disingenuous to say that the opposition has no plan because just recently we made a number of recommendations to this Chamber with a number of savings. Let me be clear – and you can clap for this when I'm done – that this government is not responsible for the price of oil. But you are responsible for not making the situation worse, and that's exactly what you've been doing.

Let me tell you that while you may be investing in infrastructure – and it's an important thing to do – the challenge is that when we are paying \$2 billion every single year moving forward, Madam Speaker, that is going to put future generations of our province and future jobs of our province at significant risk. There must be a balance, and you, members of the government, have not found that balance.

**Mr. Barnes:** They haven't even looked for it.

**Mr. Cooper:** That's exactly right. They haven't even looked for it.

There are massive amounts of waste inside the bureaucracy of this government, and while I will acknowledge that it is not \$10 billion of waste, there are significant amounts of savings that can be found. This government refuses to acknowledge that that is a possibility. There is a significant amount of savings that can be found with respect to public-sector employees. There is a significant amount of savings that can be found around waste. There is a significant amount of savings that can be found with respect to spending in the province as we compare it to what we spend over the national average per capita.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Gotfried:** On 29(2)(a)?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is finished, hon. member.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Oh. I'm sorry.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Do you wish to speak to the bill?

**Mr. Gotfried:** Yes. I will, then, briefly as well. Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, much has been said today about this bill – and it deeply concerns me – about the level of debt that this government is taking not the province but Albertans into. I think that's something of significance for people across this province and, sadly, for those that aren't even born yet, which is a big concern for me.

I've looked at some of the numbers on this. If we hit somewhere in the neighbourhood of a \$58 billion debt by 2019 as these numbers indicate, that would actually reflect over \$13,000 per man, woman, and child at that date, at a projected population of about 4.4 million people. With the average household size of 2.6 people, that would be \$34,000 per average household in Alberta.

**Mr. Rodney:** How much?

**Mr. Gotfried:** That's \$34,000.

**Mr. Rodney:** Wow. Per household?

**Mr. Gotfried:** For an average-sized household in this province.

Let's put these numbers in perspective here. A household is now going to take on, without their explicit approval, \$34,000 of additional debt when some of them are having trouble servicing their mortgages, making their car payments, putting their kids into hockey, having some money saved for the kids' education, and, God forbid, saving for their own retirements. It's deeply concerning, Madam Speaker.

That's not even taking into account – and this is perhaps another sad thing – that the federal debt is currently at \$36,000 per Canadian, not per household. On the current numbers, again, 2.6 people per household, that's \$93,600 of federal debt. Add that to this provincial debt that we're going to take on, and that is \$127,600 per Alberta household, Madam Speaker. I would suggest that that's more than any responsible individual would take on, and this government is doing it on behalf of those individuals and households.

I've done a little bit of math here as well for interest because sometimes we need to show the numbers to the people that we're taking these actions for.

**Mr. Rodney:** What do the numbers say?

**Mr. Gotfried:** I'll tell you what the numbers are. Let's look at the households first. Maybe that's an easy way to look at it. It's \$34,000 by the end of 2019. Let's take an average interest rate of about 6 per cent just to be fair. It could be lower; it could be higher. Even if we say to Albertans, "You know what; we're not in a hurry here, but we have a plan; we have a plan that we're going to give you 30 years to pay this back because we're going to be fair to you and we're going to let you pay this off; we want to make sure that we have a plan, because it's not our plan; it's actually your plan as Albertans, your plan because we've borrowed irresponsibly on your behalf," that monthly payment for 30 years would be \$203.85. Or if you want to annualize that just to make it even a little bit more impactful for the average household, who is struggling to save for their child's education, their own retirement, and maybe to pay down their own debt, their own mortgage, any other personal debt they may have – and, sadly, during this economy we're going to see more of that and, sadly, more bankruptcies to come – that's \$2,446.20 per year for 30 years.

**Mr. Rodney:** Per family?

**Mr. Gotfried:** Per family.

The total amount we're going to have to pay back on that \$34,000, total payments, is over \$73,000, double what we've borrowed, Madam Speaker. And that's a sad reflection, of course, during this time period of this increased debt. Guess what's going to happen to our credit rating in this province? We've already seen it downgraded. Where are we going to end up? Are we going to end up with a C minus? C minus isn't good enough for this province.

You want to look at some individual numbers? In 2019 some people that aren't even born yet, Madam Speaker – and I'm going to be a little bit more fair here. It's \$13,181 per each one of those 4.4 million Albertans. I'll be generous – I said 6 per cent for the household because that's over a longer period of time – with an interest rate of 5 per cent. Let's hope that we're lucky enough to enjoy such low rates in the years ahead, but I would suggest that in my lifetime the average is probably more around 8 per cent. So \$13,181 at 5 per cent, a 25-year amortization period on that. We'll try and pay it off a little bit faster here. We'll accelerate things. Certainly, we wouldn't want to overburden individual Albertans. Somebody not even born yet, Madam Speaker, after 2019 is going to have a monthly payment of \$77.05. That's great, isn't it?

That could go towards educational savings. Gosh. If it started the day you were born that your parents put away \$77.05 for you, you'd have a lot of money for that education, Madam Speaker. You'd have a lot of money for your retirement way down the road. Nobody is ever thinking about that at the time. They're thinking about their education. They're thinking about the hockey games. They're thinking about the hockey equipment. They're thinking about the dance lessons. They're thinking about living a good life. That's \$924.60 per year per individual.

That's a lot of money, Madam Speaker, and it's irresponsible for us to spend that without their permission. They're not even born yet. Total interest, total payments on that: we're going to pay about \$10,000 interest on that over those 25 years, and total payment on \$13,000 is going to be over \$23,000. I would suggest that these are irresponsible moves for us to take in this Chamber on behalf of Albertans. It's just not good enough.

**11:10**

I agree with what's been said here earlier. There are many arguments for us to invest in infrastructure – we know that – in health, education, creating some jobs in the short term, but not on the backs of the Albertans of not only of today but of the future, who will have no choice and no say in this. Madam Speaker, I'm concerned that those individuals, those new Albertans, those young Albertans, will turn around when most of this House is in retirement and tell us: "I'm sorry. We have no money for you seniors. We have no money for youth, to educate them. We have no money to ensure the health and well-being of Albertans because you spent that on our behalf, without our permission, five years ago, 10 years ago, 20 years ago." It's deeply concerning.

I consider myself a pretty anal Virgo. I had to look at these numbers, Madam Speaker, because to me, these numbers count. These numbers are the future of Albertans, the future debt of Albertans. We're making these moves in this House, I would submit again, irresponsibly on their behalf, without their express permission. I have to believe that these are well intentioned, that the same members on the other side are doing this because they believe it is the right thing to do. But I think they need to look into their hearts and their souls and be honest with Albertans about what these numbers mean for us going into the future and how those children that are not born yet today are going to feel in 25 years when some of the members here, not all, will be approaching retirement age and wonder themselves: "Is this responsible for me to do on their behalf."

What's it going to mean to me in the future when I need the support of future generations?"

Madam Speaker, this bill deeply concerns me. I will not be supporting it, and I am very saddened by the implications of it. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments?

Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd actually like to just comment a bit more on what the hon. member to my left here spoke a little bit about. I think it's important to state. He talked a little bit about the cost to service, basically, this debt that Albertan families are going to have to deal with. I want to kind of add a little bit more to that. First of all, I want to state that a little over 11 months ago this government was actually in a net positive position, which put families in a net positive position of about \$39,000. A net positive position going to a net negative position of about \$55,000 in 11 months kind of shows over a \$100,000 change in net position in 11 months. If that doesn't make Albertans concerned, I don't know what will. As an Albertan it makes me concerned.

Let's take a look at our financial position. The reason why I think it's important to look at this financial position is because we're not on an island. We're part of a country. We're part of a global economy. Unfortunately, what we've seen, even as my colleague to the left of me said, is that we are part of Canada, and Canada's debt has skyrocketed as well. One thing he didn't mention there as a cost that will have to be added to us as Albertans is the cost of unfunded liability, which some have placed at close to \$10 trillion in Canada. This is a cost that at some point we will have to bear.

When we go down the rabbit hole that I see us going down of, as the minister likes to put it, pivoting to do something else, what we're doing is that we're putting ourselves on much shakier ground. Really, what that does, the trickle-down effect, is that it actually disincentivizes business and international businesses from coming here. One of the best ways of being able to diversify an economy, in my opinion, is to be able to make ourselves so competitive comparable to other jurisdictions that other businesses throughout the world want to come here. We were in a position of being able to do that. That's why we saw such explosive growth in Alberta. This is the reason why we were able to see people coming from all over Canada and all over the world to Alberta, because there were jobs and there were opportunities. That is the greatest thing we can offer to Albertans.

Unfortunately, the past government deviated from the plan of an Alberta advantage, and we're seeing this deviation from that Alberta advantage being exacerbated by this government. It is a dangerous precedent. For all the rhetoric and all the talk of wanting to diversify an economy, the best way to diversify an economy is to incentivize businesses to come here and set up shop. The government will have no understanding and no ability to determine what the invisible hand knows. So for them to arrogantly, in my opinion, state that they know how to fix this thing is folly.

The way forward is for us to be able to put ourselves in a position where we do not have to download taxes, download costs onto businesses and individuals and families, so these individuals, families, and businesses can thrive. Any time a government is not able to curtail their spending, they have to increase taxes, and those taxes are downloaded onto the people that make a society thrive. Take a look at any society in the world. Those societies that incentivize small businesses thrive. I don't mean incentivize by saying, "Hey, you can have this tax break, or you can do this or have some kind of a grant," by picking winners and losers. I'm

talking about being able to have a government get out of the way of people doing business. If they do that, those countries are the ones that thrive the best.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Now, I'd like to talk specifically about this bill. It has been mentioned that this is an omnibus bill. Unfortunately, I am only able to talk about one issue, and that is this debt ceiling. This legislation as presented speaks to this government's total predilection for debt and deficits. It speaks to this government's complete inability to manage our province's finances.

Now, this government likes to trumpet that they have a mandate from the people of Alberta for reckless expenditures, but not a single person in Alberta voted for debt and deficits of the magnitude that this government is looking to embrace. I say this because the word "debt" did not once appear in this government's 2015 election platform. The word "deficit" appeared only once, on page 24, where they outlined a plan to return to a surplus in Alberta's finances by 2018, which is completely off the books now. It was under a large bolded headline that read: Balancing the Books. So this government has a mandate from Albertans to balance the books before the next election. When is that going to come back to the dialogue in this House?

They do not have a mandate from Albertans to squander the province's finances. They certainly do not have a mandate from Albertans to put in a sky-high debt ceiling and then blow right through it in the first year and replace it with a licence to spend borrowed money without restraint. Broken promises and perceived dishonesty on fiscal matters do not bode well for provincial governments, as can be evidenced by what happened in Manitoba. They had the NDP there experience a crushing defeat because they didn't learn this one lesson. I guess that means that I can congratulate this government on being the last of the NDP governments in Canada.

Now, I've heard it stated that in comparison to other jurisdictions in Canada, we're doing, actually, pretty well. Mr. Speaker, we compete on a global level for investment money, not just nationally. That's how you diversify an economy. You create an environment that attracts businesses. But we can't just attract businesses from other jurisdictions in Canada; we're attracting businesses from all over the world. So if we make comparisons, we need to be able to do it right. We need to compare it with other jurisdictions throughout the world. Are we competitive in terms of what we add to the cost of doing business in Alberta versus what is added in other jurisdictions? I would have to say that I do not believe we are.

11:20

What we have seen in recent years through successive Premiers and governments is that Alberta has a chronic spending addiction. Removing the debt limit removes the last remaining barrier against that spending addiction. It was only a few months ago that this same government introduced the debt limit they are seeking to get rid of with Bill 10. Now, we have really traversed far down the rabbit hole in this situation. There was a time when it was illegal to deficit spend in Alberta. From that time until now successive governments have dismantled the checks and balances that showed Albertans that we recognize where the tax dollar comes from and that we respect that. We are now in a situation where we have dismantled the deficit spending on capital, that was done back in the Stelmach years, and now we're dismantling the deficit spending on operational.

The Premier stood in this place and defended her government's 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio limit. She said that it was "an exceptionally responsible, careful way forward." Months ago my caucus colleagues warned the government that their increased 15

per cent debt limit was itself too high, that spending needed to be reined in. Today the government is back, admitting that it has indeed lost control and needs to urgently abandon its responsible debt limit. The facts are already troubling. On a per capita basis for operations Alberta already spends at least \$8 billion more on government than British Columbia or Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, it is deeply problematic to take on massive, unlimited amounts of debt to pay for such an inefficient government. It would seem far more prudent to find efficiencies in government rather than just vote away a debt limit and keep going. Fifteen per cent is already too high for a government that had a zero debt-to-GDP ratio only a few years ago. At the existing 15 per cent debt limit this government could get to about \$55 billion. Even at low interest rates it costs \$2,000 each year per family just to cover that payment. That's not enough for this government, is it? Getting rid of that debt limit is just completely irresponsible.

This government had numerous opportunities to show creditors that they were serious about reining in their expenditures. One such opportunity was last week with the budget. By taking some initiative, by looking for efficiencies, this government had an opportunity to show creditors that it had some semblance of responsibility. Instead, this government chose to pursue an unprecedented deficit. Perhaps members on the government benches don't realize this, but a credit downgrade impacts Alberta's ability to borrow money on the markets. The result is that investors see Alberta as a riskier bet and, as in the case with banking on a smaller scale, demand increasingly higher returns to lend money to the government of Alberta.

I'll go back to the beginning comments I made. We went from a net positive position, where the money we had in the bank was actually making this government money and that money was then able to be spent in terms of the programs that Albertans need and want, to a position where instead of actually using that interest money that we were receiving, we now pay interest to the banks. That is dead money to us. That is no longer able to be used to provide help for those people who are in need, for health, for education, for seniors' services, the things that we hold dear in this province.

With each successive credit downgrade investors see more risk, and the government of Alberta is left with fewer options for borrowing. Accordingly, it is in our province's long-term interest that Alberta look to improve its credit rating. As both my colleagues from Strathmore-Brooks and Little Bow pointed out yesterday, this government was warned by a major credit agency, DBRS, just this past January that Alberta's credit rating was at risk of a downgrade at the current rate of fiscal unrestraint. Predictably, the government seemed to ignore this warning. Regrettably, Alberta's credit rating declined as a result.

One of the great failures of this government is that they judge their own legislation and policy solely by stated intention, not by any actual results or the evidence upon which it was planned. To hear those on the government benches say that any disagreement with this high-spending budget plan is akin to deep, lasting cuts to front-line services – that's blatantly false, Mr. Speaker. It's a desperate, straw-man fallacy approach to dodge tough questions about our province's finances, and they know it, tough questions that this government seems so woefully unprepared to answer. A lot of Albertans are struggling to make mortgage payments right now in a failing economy. I don't know if any members on the government benches can adequately explain to them why they are taking the province to over \$50 billion in debt before the next election.

If the government wants to make this a discussion about front-line workers, the \$2 billion in annual interest payments on debt is

\$2 billion that can't be spent on front-line workers, period. The problem with the long-term descent into debt and deficits is that it comes with escalating interest rates and declining credit ratings. This means that year after year there is a growing draw upon our provincial finances, one that takes away the ability to invest in front-line services and other key government expenditures. Furthermore, severe debt and deficits eviscerate the government's ability to provide tax relief to Albertans who need it most. Long-term debt and crippling interest payments deprive a future government of the ability to invest in its postsecondary education obligations or matters of labour retention or labour market programming. The long-term economic impact of eliminating the debt ceiling is consequential, but it is also a deep moral issue.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member: I've enjoyed your discussion here, and I'd like to hear a little bit more, your thoughts about how the debt interest is going to affect Albertans.

**Mr. Hunter:** I'd like to thank the member for the question. You know, obviously, it's been stated that going from a net positive position, where the money we had saved, about \$12 billion, I believe, when this government took over, to a net negative position, where we actually will be spending – well, actually, when we spend up to \$55 billion, it will be \$2 billion of interest. So what happens with any business when you change your net position so drastically is that you have to cut programs that you would normally have offered. It is a foregone conclusion. It is the stark reality of the bottom line of your financial sheet.

If this government really believes what they say, that the social programs, the education programs, and the health care programs that we hold so dear in this province are so important to the members opposite, then I implore you to think about the long-term ramifications of unrestrained debt and deficit spending. I believe that if you really took a look at this, not just looked at the speaking notes, you would see that this puts our front-line workers, our front-line teachers, our front-line health professionals at risk. From my perspective and from my colleagues on this side's perspective, that is folly and something that I do not believe is in the best interests of jobs for our fellow Albertans.

Thank you.

11:30

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'd like to mention to the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner that when it comes to being a good place to invest, there is more to a province when it comes to investment and a place to do good business than just being a low-tax jurisdiction. I would like to point out that Alberta is still the lowest taxed jurisdiction to do business in in all of Canada, and our budget is investing in quality of life and infrastructure to help maintain that.

Now, my question for the member is not about the 12-point plan that your side has. It's about the specific bill we are talking about. When it comes to debt-to-GDP ratio, my question for the member, my only question, is: what is your plan for Alberta's debt-to-GDP ratio? Is it still 7 per cent as per your December 22 credit downgrade action plan, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Hunter:** Well, this is the second time this question was asked. I thought that the first answer given by our colleague was fairly



robust and fairly informative. They might want to listen a little more carefully the next time someone answers their question.

The Member for Calgary-Currie needs to remember that the position from this side of the House is to offer good ideas for the governing side of the House to implement. Like I said earlier today, you know, we offered 12 great ideas about how to be able to curtail spending, how to be able to incentivize business and incentivize job creation, and only one of those – only one of those – ideas was actually implemented. We appreciate that. We applaud the government for doing that, but it's not enough. This is why we gave them 12 good ideas.

This is something that I would adamantly . . .

**The Speaker:** On that note, the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, appreciate the opportunity to rise and talk about Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. A lot of great points, great discussion from the opposition side of the House and the Official Opposition, so much so that in some ways it's a bit hard to add to. One of the things that was running through my mind as it came to the debt ceiling and what 4.1 million Albertans think the debt ceiling should be and the relevance and the importance of yet another law: of course, I remember the previous government's commitment to not run deficits. That law was totally disregarded, totally ripped up.

The relevance I can think of is back to Premier Getty. I believe that when the government under Premier Getty hit \$22 billion, \$23 billion in debt, Albertans said: that's enough. That brought in, of course, the Klein area and significant conservative change, change that some in the province disagreed with, but it is hard to disagree with the years of the Alberta advantage and the years of opportunity that it created for Albertans and Albertan families.

Why were Albertans so upset about, let's say, \$23 billion worth of debt created by the former government? In addition to all of the points that this side of the House has said in the last hour, hour and a half, what I haven't heard is how the borrower loses control over their destiny, loses options. My colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner just mentioned \$2 billion in interest by 2019. How many front-line workers, teachers, doctors, nurses, good service personnel would that be? It would be thousands. How many schools would that be? My calculation is that it would be about 80 schools a year. Two billion dollars? That's a couple of good regional hospitals. Instead, we'll be paying debt to Canadians, pension funds, foreigners, banks. We'll be making rich people and rich corporations even richer.

I was looking at the budget the other day – and parts of this debate have turned into a discussion on the budget, so I hope and think it's relevant – and spending is up \$11 billion in just the last two years. When you go talk to people in Cypress-Medicine Hat who are working fewer hours, who are not working, who are certainly not increasing their spending by 20 per cent over two years, active, hard-working Albertans in the private-sector economy who are the ones that are going to have to pay this back through higher taxes, through more productivity, through longer hours, through fewer options, through spending less time with their family, you know, maybe their options will be, as others have said on this side, withdrawing from the workforce, not investing, not sharing in our broad economy, not giving the NDP government the opportunity to tax them even more.

I think I read somewhere, too, in the budget documents how our net financial position has plummeted. It was in '05 or '06 when we were \$32 billion to the positive – \$32 billion to the positive – far and away the richest jurisdiction in Canada. The number that the

MLA from the third caucus, Calgary-Fish Creek, was just talking about, \$19,000 per family: that wasn't debt. That was in assets; that was in wealth. But that was in 2005 or 2006. It's estimated now that in another year or so it will actually be a complete reversal; our net financial position will be \$32 billion in the hole. Every man, woman, and child and every family in Alberta will feel the burden of that and will feel the loss of options, the loss of control over their destiny.

We look at jurisdictions around us, our neighbours to the east and to the west in Canada who have done so much better, keeping spending in line, keeping deficits as a percentage of GDP or based on per capita, so much more in line that it will give them the opportunity to attract investment and to attract jobs and growth. My colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner was absolutely right that excessive spending, excessive per capita spending, not looking for efficiencies, and running big deficits not only burdens the next generation, but it scares investment in business away. Would you locate a business in Alberta, running a \$10.5 billion deficit, which is obviously seen as just a future tax, when we've seen taxes rise so much, when there are so many other jurisdictions with their spending in line who look for efficiencies and have competitive taxation?

**11:40**

Then, of course, you know, the other thing that hurts business confidence and hurts jobs – and it breaks my heart when I drive through Cypress-Medicine Hat and see all the empty warehouses and the lack of job growth – the other thing that this uncertainty does is that it scares business away because they don't know. In talking to stakeholders up here, they have no idea how the carbon tax is going to be played out, they have no idea how the gas emissions tax is going to be, they have no idea what the long-term corporate taxation will do, and they have no idea what that will do to their ability to attract employees and to return equity to their shareholders.

*Alberta Venture*, a good Alberta publication, had out an article on April 19. Here's the headline: "Alberta Businesses 'Surprised' by Announcement on Investor Tax Credit."

Alberta Chambers of Commerce says it was under the impression it would be consulted before any details of the Investor Tax Credit, including which industries would benefit, were announced.

The April 19 article, by Elizabeth Hames, goes on to say:

That caught Alberta's business community off guard.

Mr. Speaker, clearly another glaring example of where this 11-month government absolutely failed to consult. After 11 months it's clear that they've had the time. It's clear that they're not interested in consulting; it's about ideology.

Albertans spoke to Don Getty's \$23 billion debt ceiling and forced change for, say, fiscal conservative change and an outlook and an approach. The far side, the government side, of the House constantly talks about how it was wrong, how it wasn't rightly handled even though, as I mentioned, I believe it led to years and years of opportunity for Alberta families and Alberta communities. If the government is not going to consult on what their taxation policy should be, what their debt ceiling policy should be, Albertans will tell them. Albertans will tell us loud and clear. Wherever I go in Cypress-Medicine Hat and around Alberta, I hear it. Albertans are scared of what this debt is going to do to their children, to their communities, how the burden of the interest is going to take away their options. It's going to take away their opportunity.

So I would ask the government to look for efficiencies. Make sure that the tax dollars you take from hard-working Albertans are put to maximum use. As many on this side have already talked

about the rules and regulations and the abrupt, fast implementation of things like minimum wage – I think it took 15 years to go from \$5 to \$10, and now it's going to go from \$10 to \$15 in just three – the change that that could have, the unintended consequences that that could have on our good, solid businesses, I would ask the government to consult. I ask the government, I ask that side of the House to consult and ensure that Albertans retain the opportunity to choose their own future, to have opportunities on their own, and to continue to make Alberta the best province in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions for the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat under 29(2)(a)? Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have one question for the hon. member. I asked this of a member from their front bench, a member from their backbench, and now another member from their front bench. Since we're debating debt to GDP, my one question is: since this bill is about the debt-to-GDP ratio, is it your position that this government's debt-to-GDP ratio should be 7 per cent as per your December 22 plan? My question is: yes or no?

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you very much to the member for the question. I appreciate your diligence. I mean, on this side of the House we've talked about several things that your party has continued to label us with in error, and one of them is front-line workers. We have stood up many, many times and every time have talked about our commitment, our desire to protect front-line workers. We don't mean just for a week or a month or a year. We mean so that those services are there for Albertans for many years to come.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, through the chair.

**Mr. Barnes:** Sorry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize.

You know, again, we have a situation where this debt, this interest, this inefficient spending is going to cause debt expenses and a debt ratio that – the hardship for future Albertans and future families will be huge. I think of the service problems that we have now. I think now of the complaints in Cypress-Medicine Hat, when people phone me and say that they can't get to a doctor, that it's three years for a hip, so they've come up with \$25,000 to head to Montana and pay a clinic down there instead. These are the kinds of things that you're taking from Albertans. These are the kinds of things that – as opposed to talking about the number, let's talk about the hardship.

In this House a couple of weeks ago I talked about one of my friends in Cypress-Medicine Hat, Mr. Speaker, who, fortunately, is still working as much as he used to. He's in the oil and gas business. He's a mechanic on compressors. He's taking exactly the same wage that he took two years ago, but because of the increase in taxes provincially and federally, he's now taking home \$800 a month less. What did he used to do with that \$800? He used to run a business on the side. He used to employ people. He used to put money back into the economy. He's decided that because of the shortage, this taking from him, he's no longer in a position to do that. It's too risky. That money is not circulating in the economy anymore. He takes care of his parents. He pays money monthly to take care of his parents. Thank goodness this government and other governments didn't take that opportunity away from him.

Mr. Speaker, I was at the oil field service meeting last night, where I heard that partly because of the change in oil and gas, partly because of the policies from this government, \$50 billion less on an annual basis is being invested in Alberta. That's \$50 billion. So it's back to the policies and the ideas that this side of the House has been talking about to bring some of that job-creating investment

back to Alberta, back to building the types of communities where our children can find private jobs, where our children that can find private jobs can earn money to pay taxes to pay for the public services that we all need and cherish, especially as they relate to the front-line workers.

I would encourage this government, rather than spending blindly and adding \$11 billion in spending over two years, to look for efficiencies wherever we can, whether it's cutting bureaucracy, cutting corporate welfare, looking for more value out of our Alberta infrastructure spending.

11:50

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise here today to discuss Bill 10, a bill that shows us once again that this government doesn't seem to care much about Alberta's economic future. Once again we find ourselves discussing the NDP moving the debt ceiling. Mere months ago the Minister of Finance brought in Bill 4 and a 15 per cent limit on the debt-to-GDP ratio. Now with this bill we'll be seeing a rate of 15.5 per cent before the end of this government's term. We may as well write our debt ceiling laws on glass so they're easier for this Finance minister to break. Let's face it; if there's no plan for a limit, then the plan is to fail. We are well on our way to having a \$58 billion debt in three short years. That's billion.

It's entirely distasteful for this government to smugly proclaim that we can easily afford such a burdening debt-to-GDP ratio because ours is the lowest in Canada. That's akin to being the best swimmer on the *Titanic*. This isn't a race to the bottom. This isn't a race to complete failure. The fact is that chronic deficits and debt are not conducive to a robust economy. We are already struggling with massive job losses and an economic downturn, and now this government wants to saddle future generations with more debt. The more we borrow, the further behind we get. I believe it was a British politician, Daniel Hannan, who stated, "You cannot spend your way out of recession or borrow your way out of debt." This government would be well advised to listen to that sage advice.

A deficit budget, in fact, a budget where we are borrowing billions every year simply to run day-to-day government, means that we are already borrowing more than government is making. When borrowing costs go up, the government has to look at more revenue streams such as taxes or, as they like to refer to them, levies. Borrowing costs are tied to our credit rating, which under this NDP government has been downgraded from its triple-A status. These increased costs have further burdened already hurting Albertans.

Why isn't this government looking for ways to cut costs, find efficiencies, and run a more efficient, more responsive government, you know, besides fudging the wildfires line item? The previous government outspent our neighbours in B.C. and was well above the national average for government spending. Surely there is waste to be found. When did fiscal restraint become a taboo phrase? Why are you downloading your out-of-control spending onto average Albertans?

The MLA for Calgary-Currie says that the government is listening. After all, they did amalgamate or dissolve 36 of the ABCs. He states that it will save \$33 million over three years, or \$11 million a year. While laudable, those numbers pale in comparison to the projected debt of \$58 billion in those same three years. I believe that's one one-thousandth of that debt. Claiming that another careful measure is to freeze wages of those members of government earning six figures will provide cold comfort to those Edmontonians whose EI benefits will run out at the end of the year.

Many of the examples of programs and benefits that the member lauds are simply picking winners and losers. They simply won't benefit the majority of Albertans, who are being hurt by this government's policies. No one is suggesting that this government can control the world oil prices, but its bad decisions, reckless policies, and poor fiscal restraint cause more harm than its well-intentioned but poorly-thought-out programs may help. Helping apprentices finish their training is laudable, but at the end of it they need jobs. What we will have is a highly trained workforce with no place to apply their trade or, worse, a trained workforce that can seek out opportunities in B.C. or Saskatchewan or elsewhere.

While the member made valid critiques of the failed former government for announcing projects such as schools without funding them properly, is it that much different from announcing projects while spending money that we simply don't have?

That member also went on at length about his government's carbon tax and how it doesn't apply to dyed gas or dyed diesel. Well, unfortunately, the truckers and others that ship our agriproducts will be subject to those diesel taxes, and they will pass on those costs to the customer, in this case farmers, by raising the price of the goods they ship.

In another I-told-you-so moment Wildrose warned the government months ago that its numbers were way off and that it was at risk of blowing through that glass debt ceiling. What happened to the government assertion that they wouldn't tip into the overdependence on debt? The minister stated that no one predicted this economic situation, but it was crystal clear to many of us that your spending habits would catch up with you. It was also pretty clear to the numerous credit-rating agencies and financial commentators. DBRS called it when they pointed out the lack of spending restraint of this government.

This government's spending is out of control, and it's passing the buck to the next generation through its bad policies and poor economic choices. That's what this boils down to: choice. This government sees no problem with throwing fiscal restraint out the window. They're choosing to burden others with the consequences of their actions. Interest payments on debt will soon become the government's biggest expense next to the departments of Health and Education and the delivery of social services. That means that there will be less money for seniors' or children's programs just in servicing our debt. The interest will even surpass the amount of money that we spend on transportation. That's unacceptable.

We in the opposition are constantly asking for this government to be responsible with Albertans' money, to show some restraint, and to prioritize spending. However, they choose to misinterpret that as us asking for more money. We don't need to spend more money; we just need to be responsible with the money that is spent.

We believe that raising taxes isn't the solution. We have said that we won't raise them. We ran on that principle. It is possible to

maintain our excellent front-line service delivery and to get on track to balancing the government's books without hiking taxes. High taxes send the wrong message to everyone about Alberta. They mean less money in your pocket every month. And when Albertans are already struggling to make ends meet in this downturn, higher taxes can mean having to make hard choices just to get by. It means that everything costs more: gas, electricity, groceries. It means that practically everything that you purchase today will cost more in the near future as taxes go up once more.

That doesn't even include the government's carbon tax. Let's not fool ourselves. When it touches almost everything that a typical family spends money on, it's not a levy; it's a tax. This tax will cost the typical family nearly \$1,000 a year, and it's coming soon to punish all Alberta families.

The fiscal plan presented to us in last week's budget as a whole is irresponsible, and passing on the kind of debt that this bill allows to our future generations is immoral and absolutely unacceptable. I encourage all members to reflect for a moment on what this bill proposes. It proposes an outrageous retraction of an already irresponsible debt limit four months after putting it in place. In just four months we've already blown through the debt limit that was passed. We can do better, and I encourage everyone here to vote against this bill.

I want to point out a couple of things. Recently – I believe it was on April 18 – the minister of environment used these words. She used the word “wrong.” She used the words “economizing with the truth.” She used the phrase “misrepresenting reality.” She said, “grabbing numbers out of thin air.” She used the words “intellectually lazy.” She even used the word “slovenly,” which isn't used that often, but she did use it. She used the analogy “like throwing spaghetti at the wall.” And she also said, “There's a noun to describe what they are doing; it starts with an L and ends with an E.” Now, Mr. Speaker, to your credit you suggested that this was treading on thin ice, being unparliamentary language, and I agree.

I also want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that on April 12 the Premier used the word “lies” in this House, on the record, in *Hansard*. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Quiet, please.

**Mr. Loewen:** Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to go to the jobs plan. The minister said here that the last government didn't understand this . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I stand to interrupt.

I must advise that our time has lapsed, and we will adjourn until this afternoon at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, April 20, 2016

Day 18

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
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 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
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 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
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 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
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 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
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Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
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# STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

## Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

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Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
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Drever	Swann
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## Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

## Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
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Kleinstauber	

## Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Fildebrandt	Piquette
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## Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Coolahan	McPherson
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## Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Aheer	Kleinstauber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 20, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise here today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the wonderful students, teachers, and parent helpers from the fabulous C.W. Perry school in Airdrie. This is actually the second half of the grade 6 classes; there are almost 200 students in total. I will introduce the teachers and the helpers, who will rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Mr. Rob Saïpe, Ms Tracey Bishop, Mrs. Regina Dollimount, Mrs. Pamela Burke, Ms Donahue, Ms Annette Freeman, Mr. Kyle Kilback, Mrs. Stephanie Viner, Mr. Lance Drozda, Ms Jen Barton, and Mrs. Sandy Schuck. Please rise, students as well, and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 26 guests, some of the brightest young minds in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, from the John D. Bracco school. They are joined today by Ms Dalyce McElhinney, Ms Julie Lawrence, and Mrs. Salam Seifeddine. I will ask our visitors to please rise, and I would ask all members of the Assembly to help welcome them to the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups for introduction today?

Hearing none, the hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you three very distinguished guests from my constituency of Sherwood Park. Roxanne Carr is the mayor of Strathcona county. She was first elected in 2007 as a councillor and is serving her first term as mayor. I would like to add that it was a pleasure for me to be staff at Strathcona county under Mayor Carr's leadership. Mayor Carr is a community leader, a team builder, and she works every day to ensure that Strathcona county is the best place it can be for our constituents. Paul Smith is the deputy mayor of Strathcona county and the councillor for ward 5. Paul is a strong advocate for building community and diversified economic growth, passions our government shares as well. I especially appreciate his support for local agricultural projects. Pam Cholak is the stakeholder relations manager for the Industrial Heartland, which I will be speaking more to in my member's statement today. I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour today to stand and introduce to you and through you to the House

the latest addition to our caucus, Mr. Harmon Moon. Harmon, you can stand up and let people take a good look at you. Harmon is a MacEwan University public relations program student and doing a professional practicum with us. He'll be with us for the summer months. He has a bachelor of arts in history. We're so pleased he can be part of our team. Let's give him a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today, and I'd like to introduce to you and through you Rory Koopmans. Rory was recently featured by the *Stony Plain Reporter* and the *Spruce Grove Examiner* for his noble and loving efforts to have a new school named after his late mother, June Koopmans. June was a public school teacher in Edmonton and rural Alberta. I'd ask that Rory rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

#### Manitoba Provincial Election

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday Manitobans voted for jobs when they voted against the NDP and for our fellow conservatives. This is good news for Alberta. Premier Pallister is a former colleague of our leader and a great friend to our province and our party. His election bodes well for interprovincial trade, the New West Partnership, and unclogging an obstacle to pipeline expansion. He is an ethical and principled conservative who will work hard to undo the damage that the NDP has done to his province.

Indeed, the good people of Manitoba have suffered long enough. Higher taxes, higher debt, higher power bills, and year after year of relying on equalization to make ends meet: this is the familiar NDP story that we've seen play out in every other province that has experimented with the NDP and their naïve ideology. Anyone from B.C., Ontario, Nova Scotia, or Saskatchewan can tell you about life under the NDP. They can tell you about have-not economics. They can tell you about record debt and record deficit. They can tell you about Bingogate and Rae days. This is the story of a party that is unfit to govern a modern economy focused on jobs and growth and prosperity, instead choosing to champion special-interest groups like big union bosses and pampered elites.

Albertans are already itching for their turn to follow our friends to the east and the west and tell the NDP to take a leap. They've already raised taxes, increased spending, and introduced a radical \$3 billion carbon tax that they never campaigned on. The Manitoba NDP's unemployment program has already been busy hiring Greg Selinger's former staff as they scurry off the sinking ship. To quote Brian Pallister last night: the sunset was bright orange. Yesterday our friend Brian Pallister took down the second-last NDP government in Canada, and in 2019 Albertans will finish the job.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

#### Alberta's Industrial Heartland

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to you about the importance of the successful partnership between my constituency of Sherwood Park and Alberta's Industrial Heartland. I am happy to share Alberta's Industrial Heartland with the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, the MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, the MLA for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, and the MLA for Edmonton-Manning.

Alberta's Industrial Heartland is Canada's largest hydrocarbon processing hub for value-added manufacturing. Over 40 companies provide fuels, fertilizers, power, petrochemicals, and more to provincial and global consumers. Thirty billion dollars are currently invested in Industrial Heartland projects ranging from petroleum refining and bitumen upgrading to natural gas fractionation and processing and fertilizer production. A further \$14 billion is being invested in current construction projects, including Redwater's North West refinery, which will be Canada's first bitumen refinery built in the last 30 years. Projects like this contribute to over 25,000 well-paying jobs, either directly in operations or indirectly through construction and servicing. Alberta's Industrial Heartland is critical to building a diversified energy future in our province, and it is critical to keeping my constituents working.

Mr. Speaker, the Industrial Heartland generates \$1.5 billion in local spending. The economic development fuelled in our heartland benefits not only my Sherwood Park constituency, but it's of great benefit to our entire province. I am proud to be a member of a government that recognizes the importance of Alberta's energy advantage while remaining committed to energy diversification through initiatives like the petrochemical diversification program, that will create mortgage-paying jobs for Albertans. The heartland industries also contribute to charitable programs in the community.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

1:40

#### *Alberta Street News*

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak about Alberta Street News. Street papers were a movement that began in the early 1990s. The first paper came to Edmonton as *Spare Change*. Street papers provide an opportunity for income earning by people who for various reasons are not able to sustain more conventional employment and a place where the voices and stories of people from the economic and social margins can be presented. I am sure many of us have purchased a paper at times in our communities from one of these vendors. Over the years scores of women and men have been given the dignity of earning income by their own efforts rather than depending on social services entirely. They have developed supporters and friends in their relationships with customers.

Mr. Speaker, Linda Dumont became involved with street papers in Edmonton, first as a woman living in poverty and raising a family, as a vendor, selling the paper on the street to earn money, and later she began to write. In 2003 she founded *Edmonton Street News*. She has kept the paper going since then, sometimes on a shoestring, covering some of the costs by working as a yoga instructor or personal care provider when necessary. A few years ago the paper expanded to Calgary, and the name changed to *Alberta Street News*.

The basic business model of the paper is that vendors purchase papers for 50 cents each from Linda and then sell them by donation at street locations. Over the years the paper has provided thousands of readers with stories that were not found elsewhere. It has also published the creative work – art and poetry – of many.

With almost no advertising, the paper has always teetered on the edge of survival, and Linda deserves commendation no matter what its fate may be. The Premier has been a supporter of the paper over the years, including spending an afternoon with a vendor, selling the paper in her own constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I think the work of Linda deserves our commendation and a loud accolade today.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### **Nepal Earthquake Anniversary**

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Imagine some of the most beautiful landscapes on the planet, with industrious, creative citizens who have a spotless record of selflessness. Picture these beautiful people being rocked by a devastating catastrophe that killed almost 9,000 men, women, and children and injured more than twice that many, turning entire villages into dust in seconds. That's what happened one year ago, when a horrific earthquake struck the majestic mountain kingdom of Nepal.

Countless huge aftershocks have followed to this day, and hundreds of thousands of people are still living in temporary shelters. An inspirational Albertan volunteering in Nepal, our friend Elsie James, wrote to me a few weeks ago to say that the trauma and damage is still very much in your face and that the reality is as fresh as yesterday. Last Saturday's quake scored much higher on the emotional scale for many and brought back many difficult memories, not to mention the daily power blackouts, border closures, fewer tourists, failed businesses, a lack of essential commodities, and no transit to jobs or schools. Let's pray that political and nonpolitical will work together, putting aside individual wants in their desire for unity, to rebuild. Mr. Speaker, sound advice for us all.

In response to this tragedy, our PC caucus issued a news release. In it I was honoured to offer a perspective of our fallen friend, the hon. Manmeet Bhullar, who stated:

Nepalese workers and their families who came here on work permits have no permanent home to return to . . . Alberta is now the only home they have. Let's give these hard-working families some hope right now by allowing them to stay in Alberta as permanent residents.

Perhaps the government can give us an update on Meeta's suggestion.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, as we together try to build the best Alberta possible, please let's remember to be good Sherpas for our friends and neighbours who are in dire straits around the world.

Namaste, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

#### **Women's Suffrage Centennial**

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was going to make a different statement today, but after participating in yesterday's events on the steps of the Legislature, I wanted to instead expand on comments made by my colleague from Edmonton-Centre.

Yesterday we celebrated an incredibly important event in this province, the 100th anniversary of allowing women the vote. Yet in 1916 this was considered a risky ideological experiment. Women were supposed to stay at home, washing dishes. Women were supposed to stay home and bake pies for their menfolk. Women had no rights unless they were granted those by their husbands or fathers.

But there was a group of women activists who refused to accept this idea. They put forth the risky ideological concept that women were actually persons. In 1913 a group of these idealistic women marched on the Legislature, only to be mocked by the Premier. Their ideas were dismissed as risky ideology that would break up homes and leave children being raised by servants, that allowing women to vote and be elected would damage the economy and kill jobs. Those against suffrage argued that it was dangerous to change a system that already worked very well. Thankfully, there were

those in government in 1916 who were willing to entertain the risky ideology of giving women the vote.

Last May Alberta voters, men and women, voted for a government with a new ideology. They wanted a government that would do things differently. You know, I've heard that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and hoping for a different result. We're not going to do that. We're not going to turn the clock back and repeat past mistakes. We're not going to slash and burn and blow up hospitals. Instead, we're going to invest in the province and its people, rebuild and diversify the economy. We're going to promote social justice and an inclusive environment for all, and we're going to continue to advance equality for women.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is willing to engage in what those in the opposition want to call risky ideological experiments. Progress is impossible without change, and all change involves an element of risk. Unless we're willing to embrace change and do things differently, we will be unable to grow and prosper as a province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Canada's Office of Religious Freedom

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today to speak about an issue that affects our country's ability to be able to protect human rights across the globe. In late March the federal government struck down a motion to continue funding the office of religious freedom. This decision went through despite pleas from religious leaders in Christian, Jewish, Sikh, and Muslim faiths. For those of you that are unfamiliar with the work that's been done by the office of religious freedom, it was tasked with protecting and advocating on behalf of religious minorities, opposing religious hatred and intolerance, and promoting Canadian values of pluralism and tolerance abroad. Now more than ever it is critical for Canada to continue to be a world leader in fighting against religious persecution.

One of the greatest strengths of our province and of our country is our freedom of thought. Unfortunately, there are many places around the world that do not enjoy the liberties that we experience today. I am proud to be from a country that stands up for those who cannot stand up for themselves, and I believe that it is our responsibility to protect marginalized and persecuted people whenever we can. Over the past three years the office of religious freedom did just that. Around the globe this office has created partnerships to protect our planet's most vulnerable. I have written to the Minister of Foreign Affairs asking that his government reverse their misguided decision to close this office. I encourage other members here today to make their voices heard to the federal government in support of religious freedom.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

#### Bill 205

#### Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, I am humbled and honoured to request leave to introduce Bill 205, the Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016.

The bill amends the Pharmacy and Drug Act to regulate pill presses, devices used to illegally manufacture deadly street drugs such as fentanyl. Fentanyl is killing Albertans at an alarming rate,

with 272 Albertans dying last year from an overdose, the highest number of deaths in Canadian provinces. Bill 205 will give police the authority to seize pill presses from manufacturers who are using the machines to produce tens of thousands of deadly tablets. In passing Bill 205, Alberta will become the first Canadian jurisdiction to regulate pill presses. Most importantly, we will save lives by helping police control the manufacture and, inevitably, the distribution of the potent pills. I look forward to a fulsome debate on this crucially important bill.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 205 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, when the Speaker is standing, would you please remain seated until the Speaker is seated. You also left the House and walked in front of me and the speaker. I'd appreciate it if in the future you did not do that.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate my friend and former colleague Mr. Brian Pallister, the new Premier of Manitoba, on his election victory last night. It's a lesson that voters won't tolerate governments that are less than honest about their plans for tax hikes or who hide the full impact of those tax hikes from the electorate. That's what happened in Manitoba. Albertans see this happening right here with the NDP's carbon tax, that they didn't campaign on and that we now have at a cost of a thousand dollars a year. Alberta families won't see rebates for rising consumer costs as a result of the carbon tax. Why won't the Premier just simply be honest with Albertans on the full cost that her tax increases will have?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to the question. As I have said in answer to this question a number of times already, the Official Opposition's numbers with respect to the cost of the carbon levy to average families is incorrect. That's the first thing. So it doesn't help the debate when the opposition chooses to torque it up by doubling their estimates based on no facts. It really doesn't help. This is an important issue that Albertans want to discuss. They want us to make progress on it. They want us to make progress on reducing emissions. They want us to make progress on the diversification that the carbon levy will support and fund . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** The NDP is simply making life more expensive for Albertans. Business taxes are up. Personal taxes are up. So are costs for gas, electricity, and heat. Now, crying into a beer: it would be good, but it won't help because that costs more, too. Don't even think that you can avoid it on the weekend at the museum or camping because, yes, those costs are up as well. Not even a thousand-dollar-a-year carbon tax was enough because the Premier is taking more of your property taxes now. Yes, that's right. It's another surprise tax hike, hitting every single household in Alberta. When confronted with a choice, this government will always raise your taxes. Why won't the Premier just admit . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. leader.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the member opposite began his question by congratulating – I share in that congratulations – the new Premier of Manitoba, but let me just read from that Premier's platform. They plan to “work with the federal government and other jurisdictions” to introduce a climate action plan that introduces “carbon pricing that fosters emissions reduction.” Again, is it a spend day, a cut day, a come day, a go day? I don't know.

**Mr. Jean:** An example of a Conservative government being honest. Amazing.

It's obvious this government is only making things worse. They're not being honest with Albertans. The NDP could have made the choice to reduce spending this year to get our budget back on the path to balance, to save Albertans from tax hikes, and protect services for future generations, but now she's softening the ground for a sales tax, saying: not now, maybe later. Manitobans have seen this script before and have rejected it. This is what happens when governments can't reduce spending. Premier, how can Albertans trust you, because . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said at every opportunity when asked about this issue, our government ran in the last election on the very clear assertion that we would not introduce a sales tax. I said that during the election, I have said it since, and I have committed over and over that that will not happen. I would suggest that the members opposite just simply ought to listen to the truth and accept it when they get something that they like.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

**Mr. Jean:** You simply weren't honest. You didn't campaign on the carbon tax.

### Wildfire Management

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I was the MP for Slave Lake when a disastrous fire almost wiped out that town. Albertans, rightly, take forest fires very seriously. That's why they are absolutely shocked to see that this NDP government is playing chicken with Mother Nature. Despite the very dry winter and the early wildfire season this government chose to make things worse by gutting the budget for fighting fires and limiting contracts of those who do fight fires. This is the only real cut in this budget. Has the Premier found a way to mandate fewer fires, or is this just the government's new policy, to let Alberta burn?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, as the minister explained yesterday, the fact of the matter is that resources that are allocated to firefighting will be maintained, and every single resource that we require to fight fires in this province this summer will be expended. All we are doing is managing and projecting the budget on the same basis, the same assumptions that had been done previously. If the demand is greater, we will meet the demand.

**Mr. Jean:** That's simply not true, Mr. Speaker. This year's wildfire budget of \$86 million is \$400 million lower than last year. Four hundred million dollars. It is \$200 million lower than the average over the last 10 years and \$100 million lower than even the lowest year. Fighting fires seems to be the only line item in this budget to take a hit with the NDP. Albertans want to know: was there a

significant change in fire management policy, or is the Premier simply gambling on a 400 per cent reduction in forest fires?

**Ms Notley:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member opposite look at the difference between the budget projection and the budget actuals and understand the conceptual difference between the two. It is quite true that firefighting expenditures last year were higher. They were also higher than what was originally budgeted for because you budget with a base level, and then you add if necessary. That's exactly what will happen this year if we need to. That's exactly what's happened in the past. It is unfortunate that they're not able to tell the difference between projected and actual.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, they cut the base of funding.

Even though the average wildfire season is 143 days long, this minister told firefighting contractors to set their contract terms at 93 days. As a result, air tankers and other firefighting contractors are leaving the province and won't be here when we need them, and we will. This foolish policy will leave our forests, energy infrastructure, towns, and the very lives of Albertans at risk. If we have a bad fire season like last year, how does the Premier expect to fight these fires when her policies have forced all the necessary people and equipment to leave Alberta?

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, the exaggeration is really hurting their credibility, and I would suggest that they think about that. As of this morning we have ready to fight new wildfires 654 firefighters, 67 helicopters, 85 pieces of heavy equipment, and six air tanker groups. We have contracts in place with those air tankers, and I am sure that we will have contracts in place for as long as we need them. To be clear, every resource will be expended that is needed. That is what we have committed to.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Health Care System Manager Sick Leave

**Mr. Barnes:** When we questioned the Health minister about potential abuses of a very generous sick leave policy for AHS managers, she absurdly claimed that we were forcing sick people to go to work at hospitals. But the data is clear. The longest list of entries is from Calgary's administrative building. The second longest is from Edmonton's downtown office tower, far away from the front lines. Is the minister at all concerned about the hundreds of upper level managers and bureaucrats far exceeding the Alberta average for sick time while earning full pay?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister will, I'm sure, answer the remaining questions, but I really must take this opportunity to say once again that the outrageous statement by the member opposite suggesting that hard-working employees of AHS are somehow engaging in fraudulent behaviour is outrageous.

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**Ms Notley:** It is slanderous, and he should be in this Legislature today apologizing.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, just a year ago AHS believed the excessive sick leave was such a serious problem that they instituted a program to curb it, and it's still a problem. Before getting elected, the NDP opposition was harshly critical of waste and, as the Government House Leader said, the systemic inefficiencies that have plagued AHS from the beginning. Now that the Health



minister has her chance to run the system, is she incapable of admitting that waste exists, or is she just incapable of fixing it?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I was on the radio this morning with the member opposite, certainly, the radio host asked: do you have any evidence to back up your claims that people are being fraudulent? And the member opposite said: anecdotal evidence. That's another word for gossip. If he wants to talk evidence, I've got evidence. The average sick leave for non-union Canadian workers last year in Canada was seven days. In Alberta Health Services it was six and a half. The use of sick days at AHS is lower on average than any other health authority across western Canada, including smaller jurisdictions. I'm sorry. Enough making up facts and accusations. Time for the . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that we're talking about high-level bureaucrats taking weeks of paid sick leave and Albertans work hard to pay for a health system that should be there when they need it, Albertans have told us that they expect their health system to be accountable, efficient, and well run. They are tired of having more of their hard-earned dollars soaked up by a bureaucratic and top-heavy system instead of getting to the front lines. The same old mismanagement has to end. Since the buck stops with the minister, what is she going to do to restore accountability and tackle the widespread inefficiency happening under her watch?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's continue with more truths. AHS workers can be asked for a sick note for missing as little as one single day. The member opposite said it was four months. Not true. The supervisors have discretion to allow for longer periods of time, to a maximum of 10 days. Again, four months: not true. Non-union employees, which are being referred to, include intensive care unit managers, food service supervisors, clinical practice leads, and nurse practitioners. These people work first hand, front lines. The member opposite should apologize. It's clear that he doesn't understand health care.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

### Budget 2016

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2016 remains a disappointment. As another layer is peeled away, taxpayers realize this budget will cost them a lot. Mayors, reeves, and councillors work hard to lessen the impact on their citizens, but they're just finding out that the NDP government budgeted for an increase in the education tax. To the Finance minister: without a carbon tax rebate to help Albertans pay increased property taxes, and higher food, clothing, and consumer goods costs, how can you say that families will be sheltered from your carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, when it comes to the education property tax, we need to be clear. We were clear with all Albertans, including municipalities, that the budget for education and particularly schooling would be increased by 2 per cent plus enrolment. We used the same formula that was introduced by that member's party in 2013, the 32 per cent formula.

The distribution of that tax was done also using the exact same formula. So, yes, that has resulted in changes, but this is all stuff that we were very clear was going to happen, and it was using the formulas that were in place all along.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton are less happy than the Premier.

Alberta's coal industry employs 7,000 people and supports government programs and services through the royalties and taxes it pays. The government would rather lock billions of dollars of value in the ground and lay off industry workers than invest in technology that would provide a future for the industry, using clean technology, like Saskatchewan, and market it globally. To the Minister of Finance: since we know from your budget jobs plan that it subtracts 7,000 coal jobs from Alberta, can you be just as exact in telling us where 7,000 new jobs will be added for these same Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, you know, the hon. member would prefer that we throw good money after bad with more investments in carbon capture and storage. Alberta has done its fair share on carbon capture and storage, and now we're going to actually diversify the economy and invest in renewables. Many of the world's largest financial institutions already know that coal is yesterday's news. The *New York Times*, numerous banks stated that they wanted to transition from dirty coal to clean, renewable energy. This is yesterday's political party peddling for us yesterday's news.

**Mr. McIver:** Speaking of yesterday's political party, as we look across the prairies to Manitoba, we find hope and opportunity. In Alberta we'll have to wait three more years. The next government can quickly eliminate some of the NDP's damaging policies, but the debt Albertans are saddled with won't go away so easily. We know the Finance minister was wrong about Alberta's credit rating. We know Albertans brace for a budget jobs plan that will cost taxpayers money without creating many jobs. To the Minister of Finance: how many years will it take for industry to replace the tens of thousands of jobs your government has chased out of Alberta with your damaging public policies?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The proposition put forward here actually is not close to the truth. We will be building the economy by investing over \$34 billion for capital investments over five years, the biggest capital flow that's going to take place. We're going to diversify the economy, and we're going to see a hundred thousand jobs as a result of the environment that we provide for private-sector employers to bring those jobs back that they did not diversify.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Health Care System Employee Sick Leave

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Alberta Liberals released statistics on sick leave at Alberta Health Services through FOIP which show that the number of United Nurses of Alberta members, AUPE auxiliary, and Health Sciences Association of Alberta members on long-term disability has doubled or more in the last three years, and so have the costs. This is a clear and troubling symptom of serious issues within the

Alberta Health Services culture. Two weeks ago I asked the Minister of Health if she would commit to surveying Alberta Health Services employees to better understand the issues and the culture. To the minister: will you now commit to that survey and make public the result?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** It is a very good question, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to commend the member on his concern for the health and safety of our health care workers. It's a shame we can't say the same about our Official Opposition. We know that the use of sick days by both union and non-union employees at AHS is below the national average and the average for western Canada as well. Certainly, we are in the process of developing an updated survey. This happens usually every two years. The tender is out right now, and I'll be happy to discuss further details in later questions.

**Dr. Swann:** Our rates may be comparable, Mr. Speaker, but they've doubled or tripled in the last three years. I think that bears some serious investigation. Given that information on sick leave, though, is only tracked by union designation, not profession, and these unions represent thousands of employees in many different professions, will Alberta Health Services ensure that data are now collected by profession so we can actually identify what the problems are in each of the professions instead of a whole union reporting its data?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. I do commend the member for acknowledging that employees that have long-term disabilities have legitimate health concerns that have been assessed and identified by physicians. Yes, the number of nurses that have been assessed for long-term disability did grow substantially during the previous government, and that trend did continue for the first year of this government. It's a cause for concern, and it underlines the need for us to provide stability and improve patient care by finding efficiencies. We will certainly have conversations with the staff groups that represent those workers and discuss how best to use the information.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, can the minister comment on how the ballooning numbers of absent staff have affected access and quality of care in our health system?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, when somebody calls in sick, somebody does cover off that shift for the person who's ill. Our number one driver is to make sure that patients are safe and that they are well staffed. Obviously, when somebody is away sick, there is a need for bringing in additional staff to cover off those shifts. In terms of citizens' safety and well-being – the question was around health care outcomes – that is not something that we should have to be overly concerned about. We are always making sure that we have our shifts covered.

## 2:10 Gender Equality Initiatives

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, I continue to hear from constituents who are so glad that we created a stand-alone Ministry of Status of Women. Yet, at the same time, these constituents remind me that Alberta still ranks very low on the gender equity indicators, and we

need to take concrete action to change this. To the Minister of Status of Women: what new investments is the government making in this budget to support women throughout the budget?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Yesterday many of us celebrated the 100th anniversary of the first women in our province getting the right to vote. We know that our government, our economy, and our province are stronger when women are part of the decision-making. A hundred years ago Alberta took a major step toward equality, but as the member mentioned, until women earn the same wages as men for the same work, until women can walk down the street at night without fearing for their safety, we've still got work to do. That's why Status of Women is working to support women in getting good jobs, increase the number of women in leadership positions, and end violence against women and girls.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the representation of women in leadership positions is still severely lacking throughout the province, again to the Minister of Status of Women: what is your ministry doing to ensure a more equal representation of women in senior leadership roles in both the public and private sectors?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's women are smart and hard working, so it just doesn't make sense that there are so few of them represented in leadership roles in our province. We're not interested in perpetuating the old boys' club of a hundred years ago. We want to get the best person for the job every time. We will work to identify, recruit, and train talented women for leadership positions in the civil service. We will be working to make child care more accessible and affordable as our government finances permit, which will make it easier for women to succeed in the workplace.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that women are also underrepresented on our province's agencies, boards, and commissions, again to the same minister: what are you doing to ensure that we are increasing the representation of women on our province's ABCs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an excellent question. When it comes to getting more women in leadership positions, it's up to the government to lead by example. I'm proud to be part of the first gender-balanced cabinet in Canada. We know that when women are at the table, they bring a different perspective. As a result the decisions will be better for all Albertans. In our business plan we are setting targets to increase the percentage of women on Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions to 50 per cent by the end of our mandate. It's time that Alberta's government looked more like the people it represents.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Provincial Fiscal Policies**  
(continued)

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, under the Finance minister's watch we are running a deficit of \$10.4 billion on the operational side and over \$14 billion on a consolidated basis. This is the largest deficit in Alberta's history by far. The minister has repeatedly blamed low oil prices for all of the ills of the government's balance sheet meltdown, but we know that his big-spending predecessors couldn't even balance the budget at \$100 oil. Can the minister tell us at what price oil would need to be before the record-spending budget this year could be balanced?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to take a question from the shadowy Finance critic across here. What I can say is that we've built \$40 into our budget this year, and we have a price cushion in there, taking it down to \$36. In doing that and with the investments we have planned in this province as well as the diversification initiatives that will help create the conditions for 100,000 jobs in this province, we will get to balance in year 2024. That's my goal.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, the minister sat on the budget cushion.

Oil prices would need to exceed \$120 a barrel for the budget to be balanced this year under the NDP's spending plan. The government's excuses just don't hold water. It's obvious that we have a chronic spending problem in this province. Will the minister admit that we should at least be able to balance the budget this year if oil was \$100 a barrel?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. The failed neo-liberal policies put forward by this side of the House all the time got us into this mess. We will balance the budget when the economy improves when we diversify this economy, which wasn't done under previous governments.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Shadowy answers from the minister, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Wildrose repeatedly warned the minister during the last budget debate that his revenue projections were grossly optimistic and that he would hit his debt limit and that this massive debt plan would mean an expensive downgrade to our credit rating and given that the Wildrose was, unfortunately, correct and we are now concerned about the effects that an eventual \$100 billion debt would have, in the hypothetical universe where the minister is still in charge and the budget balances itself in 2024, how much debt could Albertans be looking at in 2024?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. The three-year fiscal plan we talk about has an accumulated debt limit there. We are talking about trying to take measures that will help us in these difficult economic times. We'll invest in jobs, we'll diversify our economy, and we will get back to balance when the economy improves and when we invest in this province.

**The Speaker:** Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Wildfire Management**  
(continued)

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm afraid I've been scooped once again.

Forestry is one of Alberta's top renewable export industries, known for being a reliable and sustainable employer through good times and bad. As oil prices remain low and we lean on forestry and agriculture to further diversify Alberta's economy and create new jobs, we need to support the growth by reducing risk. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: in a year that will continue to see record-breaking drought conditions, why did your government think it was good idea to cut wildfire management funding by \$400 million?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We are tremendously proud of the excellent work of the fire crews who have been assisting with local communities this week. Certainly, we continue to make the commitment. The Premier restated that today, that we absolutely – absolutely – will ensure that the money that needs to be spent to protect the communities and forests will be done. We've continued to commit to baseline funding, but we will add in emergency funds if needed, the exact same funding structure from right across this country with other provinces.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this year will most likely be a bad one for wildfires in Alberta and given that you cut specific funding for wildfire management, to the minister: how will you protect the livelihoods of Alberta's forestry industry producers if you won't fund disaster relief specifically for them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. Certainly, being from Slave Lake, I get it. I get what fires are about. I dealt with it. I watched my community deal with it. I watch them continue to recover. I can say that this government is committed to making sure that that does not happen. We are committed to protecting Albertans. This is about safety, and we will continue to be committed to safety.

**Mr. Speaker:** The second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's air tanker contracts have been reduced from 123 days to 93 days this year and given that these tankers will leave Alberta when they are hired elsewhere with solid budgets for wildfire management, to the minister: who be left to fight Alberta's wildfires this year?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again for the question. The main period for fighting forest fires is mid-May to mid-August, and last year 96 per cent of wildfires were in these three months. We have air tanker contracts in place for this time, but having said that, if we need additional support, we'll extend the contract. We have relationships with other provinces, with other agencies, right across there, and we are fully committed that if Albertans need support in terms of fighting fires across this province, they will have it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members on the government side, during the second response you were hitting the tables, and I couldn't clearly hear the second response that the minister was giving. I want you to be conscious of that in the future.

The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

2:20

### Education Funding Formula

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By law parents are their children's guardians and the decision-makers when it comes to their education. This government tried to pass an amendment to a motion to allow the Minister of Education to deny the parental right to educational choice based on his interpretation of whether or not that choice was available in the public system. To the Minister of Education: will the government admit that this was a poorly thought out amendment, or does it really believe that the minister and the public education system should be the government's twin gatekeepers, chosen to override parental choice in education in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Speaker. Clearly, every child in Alberta deserves a world-class education that enriches their life and prepares them for a career in a diverse economy. Budget 2016 maintains the stable funding for key public services that were introduced in 2015. As you can see from our budget, the current funding formulas are moving forward. That's the funding formula that we're using to fund all schools – including private, charter, and home-schools – moving forward in this year's budget.

**Mr. Smith:** I'm not sure how that answers the question, Mr. Speaker.

Given that some education stakeholders want to defund independent schools and they consider that more than \$155 million in the budget for independent schools is up for grabs and given that a recent report concludes that independent schools saved taxpayers about \$750 million in the past five years and since parental choice is a fundamental component of our education system, will the Minister of Education send a clear message that this funding is not up for grabs and that he will protect parental rights and the public purse?

**Ms Hoffman:** It's just that I'm so good at reading minds, Mr. Speaker, that I answered the question in my first response.

But to say it again, as you can see from the budget, the current funding formulas are in place for the next school year as well. We're moving forward with the exact same funding formulas that we have for public, for Catholic, for francophone, for private, charter, and home-schooling. Our government supports the critical role that parents play in their child's education. The proof is in the budget.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister did not approve the ReThink charter school application because he thinks the Calgary public system already offers a similar alternative and since that decision is consistent with the intent of the amendment to Motion 504, but given that this minister is quoted on the AHEA website as saying that he will withdraw this amendment, will this minister confirm for Albertans that his government will withdraw the amendment, clear up the confusion between his words and his actions, and revisit his decision regarding the ReThink charter school application?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the application was received by the minister's office, and the minister has taken the act and the legislation that governs it very seriously as he moved forward in reviewing that application. I understand that there's a desire that it be reviewed, but at this time the minister's decision clearly stands that he is planning on moving forward. He's made a decision on that. Certainly, what was said by the minister about the amendment stands true.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

### Government Policies

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A... challenge is gasoline price. At any given time we pay on average 20 cents more per litre than the rest of the province. Not only does that impact our personal travel costs, but the increased costs of transporting goods and services is passed on to us in higher prices for everything.

That was the NDP Member for Peace River. With the new carbon tax we know that the NDP will just make everything worse for everyone in northern Alberta. To the Premier: can she please explain to the Member for Peace River and to all northern Albertans why she is raising the price of everything when we already pay so much more?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, you know, of course, our climate leadership plan will help create a modern and diversified economy, protect our environment, and improve access to new markets, which is exactly what we need. Unlike our government, the opposition continues to deny the science of climate change, to ignore the science, and pretend that one of our biggest challenges just doesn't exist.

Mr. Speaker, we have a very robust rebate program for lower and middle-income individuals. We will be making investments in communities, remote communities, municipalities, and others through the climate leadership plan. These are all initiatives that...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Loewen:** It's too bad those rebates won't match how much extra it's going to cost.

Given that late last week I received word from a resident of the Minister of Energy's constituency that he had just closed down his oil field trucking business and laid off 35 people, some of which were owner/operators that won't show up on the unemployment statistics, can the Premier explain how higher taxes and sitting quietly on tanker bans on our west coast will help these Albertans who are now out of work?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the climate leadership plan will ensure that we are diversifying the economy and ensure that we are positioned to compete as a province in the industries of tomorrow with investments in renewables, in energy efficiency, which are good construction jobs. There will be a number of new investments in the economy. They are investments that the Official Opposition rejects. There will be a number of new investments in oil and gas innovation and so on. Those are initiatives that the Official Opposition rejects.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, given that I have asked the Health minister multiple questions on the Grande Prairie regional hospital and seeing as the people in Peace Country deserve a straight answer to their concerns, I will ask this question again: is there any new

information on the completion date and any scope-of-care reductions on the Grande Prairie hospital, and can we get a definitive answer to this question?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As is evidenced from times in the past where I have reached out personally over the phone to give a modified timeline, I certainly did that. If we do have any updates – I'll ask for one today – that are different from the information I've provided to you and the community previously, we'll certainly follow up with you and . . .

**Mr. Loewen:** What about the House? Provide the House.

**Ms Hoffman:** Sure. I can provide the House as well.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you.

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

#### **Legal Aid and Petition on Chestermere City Council**

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, Legal Aid is a critical service to Albertans, and a 16 per cent increase in its budget over the past three years indicates that. But last fall's funding increase also raised lawyer fees to \$92 per hour. To the Justice minister: will this year's \$2.5 million increase provide more service, or will it just give lawyers a raise?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Justice minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, our government is incredibly supportive of Legal Aid, which is why they received increases last year and again this year despite the difficult economic times. You know, the budget last year wasn't actually tied to the interim measures we did with Legal Aid. We worked with them to increase some of the tariff rates, and that was because Legal Aid was unable to retain lawyers to represent clients in those matters, so we needed to do something about that, and we did.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister of Justice announced a comprehensive review of Legal Aid last fall and given that this review includes a governance model that would see the department hire its own legal aid lawyers and given that the current funding of almost \$70 million could fund 200 to 250 in-house lawyers dedicated to legal aid, again to the Justice minister: what has the review recommended regarding hiring lawyers versus contracting them, and will you commit today to make this review public?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, that review of Legal Aid is still underway. As is our policy with most programs, we like to review things as we're going along to make sure that they are meeting the objectives we set out for them to meet. One of the things we're looking at is the governance model. Another thing we're looking at is the delivery model, whether or not it's more effective to use tariff lawyers or to use staff lawyers. You know, I'm not going to make

the decision in advance of having the information, but when we get that information back, then we will make a decision.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Municipal Affairs minister received a petition signed by almost one-third of the electors of the city of Chestermere on March 24 and given that the people of Chestermere who signed the petition are asking for an inquiry into the affairs of their municipality and given that a due process is occurring to verify the petition as per the Municipal Government Act, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: when can the citizens of Chestermere expect to hear that you are calling an inquiry as per their request?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, I have great respect for the autonomy of municipalities, and when the people who elected them are asking me for their assistance in ensuring that they are accountable, I'm happy to help them with that. We are continuing to follow – the processes are in place to review that petition. As you are aware, it does take a while to go through those very many names and to verify them all. However, as soon as that process is complete, I look forward to providing that information to the people who submitted the petition.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would be remiss to not remind you that the supplementary questions should be tied back to the main. In the last instance that was not the case, and I'd ask that you do that in the future.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

2:30

#### **Carbon Levy**

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is taking action on reducing climate change by implementing the climate leadership plan. The opposition has been putting very misleading information on the record and to the public. They have cited non Alberta-specific data from years past when, in fact, the author of the study they cite actually repudiated the use of his work. Can the minister of environment put the real facts on the record with respect to the carbon levy and the climate leadership adjustment rebates?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, today I had the opportunity to visit the home of Ammanuel and Naomi Abera, whose family will be benefiting from the carbon rebate. It was a pleasure to share with them how the rebate will work, and I would like to share the information with the Chamber. The rebates are designed to offset the average cost of a carbon levy for low- and middle-income households and will be dependent on a family's net income. Rebate cheques will be issued beginning January 2017. A couple earning up to \$95,000 per year will receive \$300. Parents will receive an additional \$30 per child up to a maximum of four children. Cheques will be delivered based on the amount of the cheque and on a schedule similar to the GST rebate.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. To the same minister: why is a carbon levy an important component of

the climate leadership plan? Why is it important to take action on climate change now, when Albertans are struggling?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and to underline to this House that climate change is one of the biggest collective threats facing the planet, and it's real. We're taking action so that we can have a resilient economy and a resilient environment. You know, Alberta is on the front lines of severe and catastrophic weather that is only getting worse because of climate change, which is real. The Insurance Bureau of Canada reported that insurers paid out \$3.5 billion in 2013 due to record-breaking catastrophic climate events, \$1.8 billion in Alberta alone. Climate change is real, so we are taking action.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that British Columbia has had a carbon levy in place since 2008 and given that many constituents have asked me if B.C. has seen a reduction in emissions, can the same minister tell me the results of the carbon levy in B.C.?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the member is quite right that there has been carbon pricing since 2008 in British Columbia. As of 2014 fuel use in that province dropped by 16 per cent. Over the same period fuel use rose by 3 per cent in the rest of Canada, and energy-related greenhouse gas emissions in B.C. dropped by 6 per cent overall. Those are the types of results we anticipate we will see here in Alberta. That must be why the Leader of the Official Opposition also supports a price on carbon.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

#### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's \$3 billion carbon tax is going to raise the price on everything for everyone, including our postsecondary institutions. It will cost more to heat and light dorms, teaching areas, and cafeterias. This government's compensation for the tuition freeze fails to fully cover revenues lost, because the carbon tax means operating costs will rise. To the minister: how are postsecondary institutions supposed to cope with a potentially disastrous combination?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we've been very clear that a portion of the levy will be reinvested into the economy, and that is how we are going to ensure we've got a made-in-Alberta solution. We must take action on climate change. There is no solution that would have us do nothing, as the Official Opposition would have us do. That is not an option. We will ensure that our economy is resilient and that we are recycling those revenues back into efficiency throughout the economy.

**Mr. Taylor:** Given that building Alberta's knowledge infrastructure is a key part of maintaining our competitive edge as a province, especially in these difficult economic times, and given that the combination of increasing costs and frozen revenues lands our postsecondary institutions between a rock and a hard place, will the Minister of Education please make it clear to Albertans that he does

not expect and has not heard about any pending layoffs at postsecondary institutions?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting. Apparently, we need to build more knowledge infrastructure so that the member opposite knows the difference between the Minister of Education and the Minister of Advanced Education.

Given that there was some false information, which is not a surprise, of course, given the information that we've had from his questions – the amount that the government is giving to postsecondary education is in fact going up under our government.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, until I call you, okay? Second supplemental.

**Mr. Taylor:** I guess I didn't really get an answer, but given that there will be no layoffs or internal adjustments to compensate for rising costs of the new carbon tax and frozen revenues, there may be a need for the government to provide public postsecondary institutions with extra funds again. Can the minister tell the Assembly where these extra funds will come from, if they'll be offset by savings elsewhere or borrowed or raised through new tax hikes on Edmonton, Calgary, or all Albertans?

**Ms Phillips:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we have already made the commitment. There will be \$2.2 billion of investment in green infrastructure and a further \$45 million in energy efficiency programs. We fully expect that there will be municipalities, hospitals, schools, and others availing themselves of those programs. Of course, the Leader of the Official Opposition is not only offside the largest employers in his own riding on the economy-wide carbon pricing; this Official Opposition also wants to stop us from investing in families, in efficiency, in diversification, renewables, innovation in the oil and gas sector. They'd rather do something else. They haven't said what. They haven't been honest about it.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
I believe we are at Calgary-Lougheed.

#### Indigenous Relations

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans can be proud that the late Premier Don Getty's Metis Settlements Act was three decades ahead of this week's ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada. Now, back in September 2015 a ministerial order was signed involving three Métis settlements in a joint business venture. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: your predecessor was to appoint an inspector to review progress on the order's directions, and the long-awaited inspector was due to be named over a month ago. Can you please assure the three Métis settlements and all Albertans that the inspector is on the job and executing all of their duties?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the hon. member for the question. I'm very happy to report that we have undergone a round of hiring, first an initial round of hiring, in which we were unsatisfied with the results, and a second round of hiring, in which we proactively engaged a number of companies in order to provide bids on the position of inspector. The inspector has indeed been hired and is undertaking the task as we speak.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that the Métis settlements and their communities have indeed waited for six months for an inspector to even start a review and given that it's only fair for every interested community member as well as each of the three Métis settlements to resolve these issues as quickly as possible and given that the issues involved in the business arrangement could provide pivotal future direction for other Métis settlements, to the minister: can you provide a definitive timeline for the inspector to complete the review and report on it publicly?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for the question. Of course, this is a task that I'd say requires an in-depth examination of the history of the joint venture agreement. We have asked the company involved to do so in a very prudent manner, and we expect them to do so. We will expect that result to come out when it is appropriate for it to come out, not on our timeline.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that last October the Premier appointed 10 Albertans to the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy and given that when I asked in this very House why Alberta's indigenous community was not represented on the committee, the Premier agreed that there should be a role for indigenous leaders but wanted an opportunity meet with them "a bit more" first, Premier, have you had enough time to meet with these indigenous leaders to determine the role that they can play on your Advisory Committee on the Economy as well as on other agencies, boards, and commissions?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question because I think it's very timely. One of the pieces of work that I have engaged in since I became Minister of Indigenous Relations is to ask exactly the level of representation that has been on the boards and committees. It turns out that the previous government has failed dismally in every possible way to appoint an appropriate number of people from indigenous communities on the agencies, boards, and committees. We have started an internal mechanism of getting references from all of the indigenous communities and bringing forward people to stand for all of these committees, and we'll do so.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Job Creation and Municipal Funding

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Mr. Speaker, municipalities are satisfied with many aspects of the new budget, the Alberta jobs plan. Given that strengthening local economies is a great way to support job creation, can the Minister of Municipal Affairs explain how municipalities, their economies, and their residents are being supported in the Alberta jobs plan?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. You know, municipalities are so essential to providing support to Albertans, and I'm very proud of the support we've provided to municipalities in order for them to do so. Our government recognizes that it is very important to have core infrastructure for healthy communities, and that is why we're moving forward and supporting the infrastructure that municipalities

need through our \$34 billion capital plan. We're investing more than \$34 billion in necessary roads, schools, transit, and other public infrastructure to provide communities with the facilities they need while helping keep thousands of Albertans . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

First supplemental.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that municipal leaders were frustrated to see that the planned increase of \$50 million in the municipal sustainability initiative was cancelled and given that many municipalities in Alberta have infrastructure deficits, to the same minister: why was the reduction made when municipalities so badly need the money to complete local projects?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. You know, the fact is that that small reduction happened, but we continue to move forward by supporting the infrastructure municipalities need, to build a more resilient and diversified economy for the Alberta families we all serve. Considering the decrease in revenue we had following the collapse in oil prices, we maintained tremendously strong support for municipalities in the Alberta jobs plan. In fact, we continue to be the highest funder of municipalities across all provinces in the country, unlike any other provincial government in Canada.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that both Mayor Nenshi of Calgary and Mayor Iveson of Edmonton along with the AUMA stated last week that they believe MSI needs to be more stable and predictable so they can plan for any increases or decreases, how is the minister working to ensure that municipalities have the stable, long-term, predictable funding that they deserve?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Our government certainly recognizes the importance of stable, long-term, predictable funding for communities right across Alberta. The MSI agreements are actually set to expire in the next 12 months, and we are already talking to our municipal partners about what we can do to renegotiate. Again, no provincial government provides more support to municipalities than this government, and we will continue to work with our partners and continue to provide strong support to our municipal partners.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with the Routine.

**The Speaker:** Members, we had, I believe, two points of order today.

The first one was at approximately 2 o'clock. The Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order

#### Allegations against a Member

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to a point of order under section 23(h) of the standing orders, "makes allegations against another Member," and (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." Shortly after 2 o'clock the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat was on his feet asking a question with respect to sick leave of AHS managers. In the

response to the question the Premier, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, rose and made an accusation that was wildly untrue. What she said was – and, unfortunately, I don't have the Blues in front of me, so I am paraphrasing from memory – that the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat said that members of AHS had acted fraudulently. Never at any point in time, be it inside or outside of this House, did the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat say that employees, managers of AHS had acted fraudulently.

Now, there was a point of order on a very similar question yesterday, where there was discussion around the use of the word “deception,” but that is significantly different than making an accusation that the member had said that AHS employees had acted fraudulently. I think it's reasonable that the member stand and withdraw those comments because certainly those types of comments are not going to create order in this place, and the accusation that she made was not anywhere close to the truth.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the point of order raised by the hon. Official Opposition House Leader, I strongly disagree with his interpretation of the facts. Now, if we actually go back to what the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat said on April 19, it is this:

Clearly, this Health minister is more interested in protecting entitled AHS managers than actually improving our wasteful and ineffective health system. It makes me sick to know that under this government's watch wait times for cancer surgeries are climbing while millions are spent on a system that rewards AHS managers for deception. Again to the Health minister: will you fix the broken system, that rewards waste and abuse at Albertans' expense?

Mr. Speaker, clearly, what the hon. member is saying is that people are abusing the system, that they are deceiving the government and they're deceiving AHS, and that means that they are guilty of fraud. It's very clear – it's very clear – and in my view there's an absolute straight line between the member's statements and an allegation of fraud. If you go back to April 13, the hon. Official Opposition Finance critic stood up and said on another matter but directly related, “There's plenty of evidence of fraud.” So it's been said on the other side more than once.

2:50

It's very clear that the Premier's interpretation is a reasonable conclusion that one could draw. There's no doubt in my mind that the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat was making allegations of fraud in this House, and he has no evidence to prove those allegations in any way. I would respectfully argue that there is, in fact, a difference between members, but there is certainly no point of order.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, what we are discussing here is the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, and the question is: did he accuse Alberta Health Services employees of fraud? That is the question. That is what the hon. Premier said. That's the question that's before us. All this other stuff that's being brought forward by the Government House Leader is irrelevant. I was sitting beside the member, and he did not accuse anybody of fraud. That is what the Premier accused him of doing, which is not true.

**The Speaker:** I note the particular sensitivity of this kind of matter. I was intending in every way that I would make best efforts to in fact give an immediate response to points of order when they were

raised. However, with the nature of this one, I again will exercise my option to report on it tomorrow.

I believe there was a second point of order.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to your ruling.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Cooper:** I rise now under Standing Order 23(j), “uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder,” and in fact we could even use (i) here, “imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member.”

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just reference *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, chapter 13, a very small section here on page 618 on unparliamentary language.

The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly [prohibited]. Personal attacks, insults and obscenities are not in order.

Then on page 619 it speaks specifically to whether there is a catch-all list of parliamentary language.

The codification of unparliamentary language has proven impractical as it is the context in which words or phrases are used that the Chair must consider when deciding whether or not they should be withdrawn.

In this case the Member for Calgary-Fort – some will refer to him as the Minister of Finance – called the Member for Strathmore-Brooks the shadowy Minister of Finance. Whether it was the shadowy Minister of Finance, the shadowy critic, whatever he used, it all remains the same. The word “shadowy” implies many things, which is exactly why it should be considered unparliamentary in this case and why the member should withdraw it. It can be said that it implies criminality, that it raises questions of the member's ethics, that it implies dark places and things that lurk in the night. [interjections] There are a number of implications with the use of the word “shadowy” that do not create order in this House, as we can see from the other side, so I respectfully request that the minister withdraw the comments and refrain from using them in the future.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the point of order made by the hon. Official Opposition House Leader, it does seem that he's sort of arguing a different side of the case than he argued in the last point of order. In other words, in the first case he's arguing that unless you say exactly the word, in that case “fraud,” you can't infer that from the context. Now he's saying that in the context it could be meant to infer that something is criminal or so on. So he's arguing against interpreting words in the first case, and he's arguing for interpreting words in this case.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, in this particular Assembly of ours I've learned that you've got to know when to hold them and you've got to know when to fold them, so on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance I withdraw the words and apologize to the House.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Orders of the Day Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.



### Provincial Fiscal Policies

13. Mr. Ceci moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

[Adjourned debate April 19: Mr. Westhead]

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity today to stand in front of the government and respond to the government's very first – very first – complete budget. It's only taken about 12 months. You'll no doubt be surprised that I don't really believe in the vision that they have put out for the province and, instead, fundamentally believe that the vision of this government is going to create a tremendous amount of hardship for Albertans, for Alberta families. I think it's going to be very difficult, and it, frankly, puts our long-term prosperity at risk. Alberta has had a tremendous history of allowing people to benefit from their hard work and have one of the best qualities of life in the world, and I see that this budget clearly puts us down a road of not being able to enjoy that anymore. That's the situation.

We were hoping, Mr. Speaker – we remain very hopeful – to see a very reasonable path back to balance, back to balanced books, a reasonable path, actually, to set out how they would possibly get back to balance. We were hoping to see our government turn away from an approach on the economy that can only be described as ideological no matter what the situation is, no matter how impractical it appears. For the people that are unemployed in Alberta, for the people that are unemployed in Calgary or Leduc or Nisku, for those people it's completely impractical and impractical, and this ideological bent to do whatever it is to put forward their thoughts is simply not good for Alberta. It simply will, as it goes from legislative to budget, hurt Albertans and hurt Alberta families.

We were hoping for some recognition about debt, and I think most Albertans recognize that debt is not good. Debt can be good and can be necessary, and sometimes it is necessary, but for certain, Mr. Speaker, here we have a situation where the debt levels are rising to such an amount that Albertans will not be able to pay for what they want to pay for, which is ballet lessons or hockey lessons or, frankly, the opportunity to put food on the table or have a new vehicle, as the Premier has suggested that they should do, find a fuel-efficient vehicle. They will have to pay their money towards interest that this government is racking up because they have no control and no interest at all in where they can save money.

We saw today that the only cut they brought forward was to fight forest fires, to play some number games with the budget when they know it's not even a close air of reality to what will be spent on forest fires here in Alberta this year, significantly less in this year, significantly less than any amount needed in the last 10 years. Why would they do that? Because they're hiding all the money they're putting into different ideological programs and ignoring the things that Albertans need: fighting fires. I saw what the Slave Lake fire did to the community of Slave Lake, and I'm shocked that an NDP member from Slave Lake would not voice her opinion to cabinet about this. Seeing what happened as a result of not enough assets to take care of our communities is simply negligence.

3:00

We were also hoping, Mr. Speaker, to see some way that this government was going to move forward and help Alberta families that are sitting around their kitchen tables saying: what in the world is going on with this government? We've had 100,000 job losses. There are over 100,000 people in Alberta that are out of work, and what's the government's answer? A \$5,000 job-subsidy plan that didn't create any jobs whatsoever except the minister's. Of course,

in January they bragged about that program being one of the three great achievements of this NDP government in the eight months previous, and what did they do after that great achievement came out in the news? They cancelled the program because they had nothing to brag about. Nothing. And that's what this job plan that this NDP government has brought in is. It's nothing. Nothing to help Albertans. They call it a jobs plan. I call it a no jobs whatsoever plan. The amount of debt they've racked up, \$58 billion, and the insignificant, paltry sum they've put towards any type of job-creation program should be absolutely embarrassing.

Mr. Speaker, while the members are making fun on the other side, people are losing their jobs, and they don't have enough money, and what happens? They're still laughing. This is a serious issue. People cannot afford – even though you have these plush jobs where you make hundreds of thousands of dollars per year on the backs of taxpayers, people are unemployed in this province. People cannot find jobs. It's embarrassing that you would take that as so trivial as to laugh. Totally embarrassing. In our belief, this budget simply fails Albertans completely, and it racks up more debt than we've ever seen. It has the biggest deficit this province will ever see as long as the NDP leave quickly. This is not helping Alberta families. This is not helping the moms and dads that want a better quality of life for their kids. The future is Alberta.

The future in Canada is Alberta families, and we need to support those families, whether it's when they don't have a job, so we fight with the federal government and make sure that they cover people that can't be covered in the current federal program on EI. They should stand up. I can't even hear them, and I'm sitting across from them. Stand up and talk to the federal government about supporting the jobs in Nisku, about supporting the families in Nisku and Leduc that don't have a job. What about all those families that can't get EI? You ever think about that? There are a lot of people, business owners that have closed their businesses, people that are unemployed because they don't have enough weeks and don't qualify because this federal government is so out of touch with Albertans.

It's time this NDP government woke up and supported the families in Alberta with real job-creation programs, not taxes that, frankly, will have to be paid by Alberta's families, by Alberta's children and moms and dads. They will do without because you have these grandiose schemes of how you're going to fix GHG emissions, although we're less than any state in the United States. It's embarrassing that you would think that we in Alberta can lead the world so significantly that we're going to damage our own economy. Now, I have no problem and I agree with you that we need to do something about climate change. We need to do something lockstep with the rest of the world, certainly with North America, but we need to do it together because what you're doing is that you're wrecking our economy to benefit nobody because we have such an insignificant amount of GHG emissions compared to anywhere else in North America.

Now, I know, Mr. Speaker, that they're not really listening to me except when they laugh, and I find that troubling because I don't think unemployment is a laughing matter for the families that are unemployed.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to start with the numbers. Last week we released a 10-point plan. You know, we were trying to help the government. We've been trying for a year to help this government. They reject our help. But we put forward a 10-point plan of practical recommendations to save Alberta's future, to make sure that we don't have these huge interest payments. Two billion dollars in three years we'll be paying in interest. Two billion dollars.

Now, I've never had a billion dollars. I don't think anybody in this place has had a billion dollars. But we're going to have to pay

back a billion dollars, \$2 billion. By the time this government is done, I would say that it's going to be a lot more, but let's just deal with what we know. Two billion dollars. That's \$58,000 for every household in Alberta. That \$58,000 is what you just put on the mortgages. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't you that did that; it was them that did that. That \$58,000 is added to the mortgage. When you consider how much houses have fallen in value in Alberta, what does this mean, this extra \$58,000? Albertans are taking a big hit from this government to fill their ideological purposes that, frankly, are not supporting Alberta families.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that 10-point plan put forward some practical solutions, and I was really hoping, especially in relation to the WCB holiday, that this government would take us up on it. It was simple: ideas on how to save \$2 billion without losing one job. The WCB surplus right now is far beyond what they're required to hold in their bank account, billions of dollars sitting in a bank account doing nothing, that the government has access to. Yet you ignore our proposal when that \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion could help Alberta families stay employed. It was overtaxation. Businesses in Alberta paid it. I'm suggesting, we're suggesting that when you hire a new employee, you pay \$1 a year for WCB. That's a good idea. I think employers would like that. It's their money anyway. It encourages them to hire people. But not even a whisper of saying: "Yeah. We'll look at that. How about that? That was a good idea." That's \$2 billion of savings and not one penny saved, not one option taken up.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's clear I'm a fiscal conservative. My track record is clear. I believe that we should be better managers for Alberta families because the future is Alberta families and it's their money. It's not yours. It's not mine. It's not anybody's in this House unless we pay taxes. Some of us do, but it's a paltry sum compared to what Alberta families put in. We need to move towards a path of sustainability and balanced books. We need to turn around because we're going the wrong way. It's a road map, and you can see that that way is debt, debt, interest payments, low quality of life, and this way is balanced books instead of interest payments on hospitals, on all this debt we borrow, on all these buildings we do, which are necessary.

Let's just save a little bit, Mr. Speaker, so we don't have debt, so we don't have interest payments, because when we start paying interest, those payments can't be made to schools. They can't hire teachers because there's not an indefinite amount of money.

We saw a credit downgrade. Did anybody notice a credit downgrade in this place, Mr. Speaker? I noticed it. I've never seen a credit downgrade 24 hours after a budget before. That was pretty impressive. I would say that the NDP set a record on that. I've never seen that before. A full point down. A full point. What did it mean to the Minister of Finance? Aha. That doesn't matter. That doesn't matter. It's not going to affect anything.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it does affect things. When you have good credit, you get to borrow at a cheaper rate, which means that interest payments don't go towards those things we want and need. I want nurses. I want more teachers in Alberta. We deserve it. Alberta deserves it because we've worked hard for it. I don't want to pay interest for nothing, to big banks somewhere else. Sometimes I hear: "Oh, it's just interest. It's just interest. It's zero per cent, .5." It's \$2 billion a year, \$58,000 per household, \$2,000 just to pay interest to every household. Every household in Alberta, a million of them – a million of them – has to pay \$2,000 a year starting in three years just to pay for the interest payments at the low interest rates we get. Those payments will go up.

I find it shocking that nobody seems to care over there. Along with the carbon tax that's \$3,000 that you're taking out when Albertans are unemployed, when Albertans are hurting, when they don't even know if they're going to have a job tomorrow, when

they're going to the food bank. The demand for food banks has doubled. These are real issues.

3:10

I've worked soup kitchens. I've worked for nonprofits. Nobody in this place has a monopoly on caring for other people; we just think we get at it a different way. I'm just suggesting that maybe in the future and maybe in the past look at some of our proposals. They're proposals that are good for Alberta. Maybe they're not perfect, but work with us. We're here to help. We're getting very nervous at the direction you're going, and, frankly, Albertans are, and you all know that. I hear it everywhere. I drive this province constantly, and I hear it in Tim Hortons. I hear it everywhere. Albertans are not pleased with the direction you're going.

I'm suggesting this: just consider the opposition proposals, yes, even from the third party and the fourth and the fifth. Consider our ideas. We were elected by Albertans. We represent Albertans, maybe not the same ones as you, but we do, and we're all in this together, and we need to work together to make Alberta better in the future and presently. We can't do that if you stick your head in the sand and don't listen. You put the blinders on, and you think you know everything. You don't. Neither do we, but working together for Albertans we can come up with some good ideas that will save Alberta, the future, which is so important.

One idea, Mr. Speaker, was a hiring freeze. They have 200,000 civil servants. We're not suggesting a hiring freeze for all civil servants, but we have 26,000 bureaucrats that work straight for the government and about 5,000 or 5,500 managers. Now, those aren't essential services. Why don't we just freeze those salaries right now and freeze the hiring right now? Through attrition, which is 8 to 10 per cent in all these departments a year, 8 to 10 per cent of the people turn over. They either retire or they quit and move. Why not just say for, you know, a year or two years: we're not going to hire any more people in those positions, but what we will do is that we'll hire from within. We'll reorganize from within. There'll be a mandate for the departments to reorganize instead of hiring new people, and within two years we're going to be at the same level, in essence, as British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you know this, but can you imagine that Alberta is 20 per cent more expensive than British Columbia? We have relatively the same population. That's on the population base. We spend about \$10,800 per person for government services. It's going up. It's going way up. The Friendly Giant would say: way, way up. B.C. can do it for \$8,800. Now, I wouldn't call B.C., British Columbia, the most capitalistic, free-market place in Canada. In fact, I think most Canadians would agree that it's not that. But how in the world can they have the same constitutional obligations, the same obligations to their people, yet do it 20 per cent less expensively?

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker. It's because we operate the most expensive government in Canada, and these folks over here, the NDP government, are making it much more expensive. They talk about looking at empirical evidence and looking at the facts. Well, the facts clearly indicate that the NDP are going in the wrong direction. The facts clearly indicate that we have the most expensive government in Canada, and it's getting way, way more expensive. Who's paying for it? Alberta's families. They're paying for it through the unemployment line, through the food bank. They're paying for it, and they're going to continue to pay for it.

Four years. Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is going to cost us a lot more than four years. It's going to cost Albertans a lot of quality of life, and the biggest issue is that they're not even considering other options or even taking any input from anybody else in this Chamber. That is shameful, absolutely shameful.

Well, I think those things would be a good first step, just a wage freeze and a hiring freeze. Mr. Speaker, there's no question that we need more nurses, we need more doctors, we need more hospitals, we need better services. I want that. I really want that. I want our government service to be the best in the world, and it's not. I want our government service to be competitive. I don't want it to be the cheapest because I don't think that works well. I want it to give a return on investment to Albertans. I want to be proud of it. I'm proud of our nurses. I'm proud of our teachers. I'm proud that our teachers could operate, frankly, under that government for so long and be effective. I mean, we did go from number one in the world in education to number five or six in Canada, so they didn't do that good a job. In fact – well, I won't get into that right now. I'll wait until after May. But I'm surprised our teachers and nurses did as well as they did under that government's watch. I'm shocked that they feel at all like they want to go into work under this government's watch, truly.

Yes, there would be some tough decisions, Mr. Speaker. There's no question. There always have to be tough decisions when you decide who gets the priority. We also agree that there would be some programs that would have to be reviewed or reformed, but we need to make those decisions today because we're going so far down that way – and we need to go that way – that it's going to take a lot longer to get there.

Now, everybody knows what it's like to get in a car and go on a road trip, and I will assure you, Mr. Speaker, that that road trip we're going on right now is going to cost a lot, billions upon billions upon billions. You know, everybody says "billions" like it doesn't matter. It does matter. Every single penny of that billion dollars has to be made up by somebody, and it's not going to be made up by these folks because, frankly, they don't know what they're doing. It's going to be made up by Alberta families that pay taxes, that work hard, that want a better lifestyle, that want that money to go not towards government bureaucrats and, frankly, this NDP government. They want it to go to the things that their children want and need and that they want and need: a holiday, dance recitals, those things that everyday people want. That's what we're here for.

We're not here for ideological reasons. We're here to serve the people of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I can't say it enough. I'm not here for big banks. Now, I will never be here for big banks. I'm not here for big oil either. I work for Albertans, and I'm proud of it. So when people bring up companies in my riding, I'm okay with that because I don't work for the companies in my riding. I've made it clear every single year, every single day that I've worked for the people of Alberta, and I've done that for more than 10 years now. I don't work for them. I don't work for big oil. I work for the people of Alberta, and I'm proud of it.

What we're seeing from this NDP government is a failure to recognize this fiscal reality. Other jurisdictions have. In fact, Manitoba recognized it last night in a big way. Mr. Speaker, it's so obvious. I said that they don't know what they're doing, but I don't want to criticize, and I don't like throwing insults. I really want to work with them, and I find some of this discussion today not very – I'm not very happy about it. I don't think that's helpful. I think we're here together to serve Albertans, and I think we should do it in a respectful manner.

Just five months ago, Mr. Speaker, this government came in, and they said: "We're going to change the cap, the debt-to-GDP ratio, on borrowing. We're going to change the cap. It's not going to be 3 per cent or whatever the former government did. It's going to be 15 per cent. You know what? We're going to raise it just so we have more borrowing capacity, so we can borrow for important programs." Well, five months later they got rid of the cap. So why was it so important five months ago to set a cap at 15 per cent when

today the cap is unlimited? You won. You have an NDP government. You can borrow all the money you want.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** To infinity and beyond.

**Mr. Jean:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. To infinity and beyond. Frankly, that's scary.

Three hundred billion dollars, Mr. Speaker, \$300 billion. Let me tell you where that number comes from. It comes from the start, the NDP government in Ontario, with the Liberals finishing it off. Today that's what Ontario owes, \$300 billion. That's the path you're going on. Do you know how much money that is per month in interest? One billion dollars. You know, \$1 billion: that's a lot of money. That's \$1,000 for every household in Alberta, if it was in Alberta, \$1,000 for every household in Alberta per month just to go towards interest payments. That's where we're going. I see it. It's right over there. It's not very far away, and truly we need to come closer, over here. We need to start.

The fact that after five months they would change their own law because they don't want to break it after they just made the law clearly indicates that they don't know what they're doing. And now they say: "Let's go to infinity and beyond on borrowing capacity. Let's borrow as much as we need because – you know what? – it's just paperwork." It's not paperwork, Mr. Speaker. First comes higher interest costs, then comes more unemployment. Then guess what businesses do. They move. That's what they do. That's what they're doing in Ontario.

3:20

When you have hydro costs that are outrageous, you have to move because you're not competitive. I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that based upon all of my meetings with every single company in Alberta that deals with electricity: 200, 300 per cent. I'm not fearmongering; I'm telling you what the experts are telling me. Now, if you're manufacturing things in Alberta and your electricity input costs go up 300 per cent when you're already paying thousands of dollars to make these products and sell them in Alberta or elsewhere, guess what you're going to do? You're going to move.

Mr. Speaker, they can say: "Oh, this is just going to be passed on. It's going to be recycled, this carbon tax is going to be recycled in the economy." Yeah. Let's make math really simple. Let's take \$3 billion and divide it by how many households there are in Alberta, 1 million households. Now, I'm no genius at math, but I can tell you that that's \$3,000, right? It's pretty shocking when you think about it.

Now, the target that they released to get our finances back to black – I just wanted to point this out – is, frankly, unrealistic: 2024. It must be nice to be able to make plans that you're not going to participate in enforcing. Does this government really think that based upon the track they're going, because they're way down there, that track is going to bring them back to any kind of power or any kind of election? Do you think they're going to be back here, Mr. Speaker? It's nice to pass on jobs to other people. Well, that's what they're doing because they have no intention of doing anything but putting in their ideological positions – the carbon tax, the levies, the GHG – putting coal out, all these 6,000, 7,000 people out of work. By the way, I don't know if you know it, but I found out that coal workers make about \$92,000 a year. Those are good jobs: 6,000, 7,000 Albertans unemployed with one stroke of the pen from this government. Wow. Talk about heartless.

Now, I'm hoping that after my great speech today and after all the members of the Wildrose caucus have an opportunity to address the NDP government today, they'll listen to us, and they'll say:

"You know what? I'm going to listen from now on. I'm going to listen the next time the Wildrose comes forward with a 12-point job action plan." Yes, that's right, Mr. Speaker. We also did that about a month ago. We came up with 12 great, common-sense ideas to create jobs in Alberta. How many of those ideas were picked up by the government? One.

Now I have to give them a compliment. Here you go; this is it. I do compliment them for reducing the small-business tax from 3 per cent to 2 per cent. See, Mr. Speaker? I can say nice things, too, and I will. When I see some good things from this government, I'm going to say that there are good things. That was a good thing. That creates employment. It's unfortunate, though, that this carbon tax is going to wipe out by at least 10 times anything that that small-business tax cut would have done: \$3 billion compared to, I believe, \$150 million is what one point off will do. There's no comparison. Businesses are going to be paying more. So this small-business tax cut, frankly, is just smoke and mirrors. That's all it is, just trying to change the channel, trying to appear balanced.

They're not balanced. This is an ideological agenda to bring in tax, tax, and more tax. I find that troubling because, ultimately, Albertans pay that. You know, I can understand that when you need to make changes and you need to modify your position on certain things, you have to bring in some taxes. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you know it, but I'm not going to raise your taxes. I don't like taxes because somebody has to pay those taxes, and it's not these folks over here. It's Alberta families. It's moms and dads. The kids will go without.

We are set to be \$58 billion in debt by the time of the next election. A \$2 billion price tag per year just to cover the interest payments: that, to me, is outrageous, especially for a population of 4 million people. Mr. Speaker, just to equate it to what it means – and I'm hoping that all of the NDP government members are listening, no matter where they are – in two years, three years interest payments will be the largest government payment except for health, which is \$20 billion, education, and social services.

What does that mean? Well, it means that more money will go towards interest payments than justice, keeping criminals off the street. More money will go towards interest payments. Now, I would like more money to go to justice in this province to make sure that we keep criminals off our streets, to make sure that – you know what? – Legal Aid has the opportunity to represent those people that deserve to be represented because people deserve a lawyer. People deserve justice, fair treatment, the rule of law, democracy. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I love democracy.

Seniors – you know, Mr. Speaker, seniors brought me here, in part – and agriculture: spending more money on interest payments than we are on seniors and agriculture. That's so shameful, and all we need to do is take a few pennies out of every dollar this government spends, a few pennies. We are spending more money in three years on interest payments than on seniors. Doesn't that make you shocked? It shocked me when I crunched the numbers. Agriculture, our second largest industry: we're going to be paying more on interest payments than we do for all of the agriculture department in Alberta.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Infrastructure department: more money than the Infrastructure department, not more money than they invest but more money than it costs for them to manage that. More money for interest payments than for Transportation, the entire transport department, that deals with every roadway, everything to do with transportation in this province. We're spending more money on interest payments.

All the government has to do is find a couple of cents in every dollar. I think all of us can do that. I'm prepared to do that. Are you?

**Mr. Nixon:** Albertans want us to do it.

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans want us to do that. They need us to do that.

Credit downgrades are coming. Oops. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I missed that by three days. I predicted it three months ago, but more are coming. This is not the end of it, folks. More credit downgrades are coming.

Interest payments will be higher. They have never been lower than they are today. As long as I've been alive – and I remember paying 18 per cent, Mr. Speaker, back in the '80s. I remember what the Trudeau Liberal government did to Alberta. It's doing it again – it's just a different first name – and you guys are going along for the ride. It's time to stand up for Alberta families. It's time to fight for Albertans. I cannot believe that nobody on that side sees interest payments as a challenge. Just when our economy needed a boost, what did we find that the NDP government has done? Raised taxes on everything for everybody.

I'm going to skip ahead, Mr. Speaker. I only plan to talk for 90 minutes today, but I want to talk a little bit about the \$3 billion carbon tax because I keep hearing it and people talk about the \$3 billion carbon tax. They say: 500 bucks; it's just going to cost 500 bucks. Well, I don't think 500 bucks is just. I think 500 bucks is a lot of money. Three billion dollars is a lot of money, but when you divide that \$3 billion, as I said earlier, by a million homes, you come up with \$3,000. Now, that's per year. So that is what the typical family will be paying, less the large emitters, which are about, I think, \$600 to \$750 million of that \$3 billion.

They talk about: you know, you're going to get a full rebate. Well, full, in this case, does not mean the full amount you paid in. What full means, Mr. Speaker, is \$300. Now, that's per individual, but if you're a couple, you can have \$500. If you're roommates, you can get \$600. That's a little bit of a penalty on being married. And, of course, if you have kids, you get about 35 bucks or so up to a maximum.

Mr. Speaker, they haven't costed how much it's going to cost families on average for everything that's transported, for instance, because, you know, when you raise gas taxes – and we're going to see an 11-cent difference from a year ago to today through this government, an 11-cent increase just from this government. When you look at that, Mr. Speaker, and you're a trucking company – and I've talked to some trucking companies – you say: "5 per cent at least. My rates are going up 5 per cent." Why? Because – guess what, folks? – the input cost for fuel is a huge cost for trucking. How many things come to Alberta without using trucks? Oh, you're right: the things that come by plane, which use a lot more fuel and cost a lot more. Everything coming to Alberta will go up 5 per cent or pretty darn close. That's the reality. You didn't consider that.

You didn't consider the cost of food going up, the cost of shelter going up, and now you're adding more taxes. Increased taxes for Calgary. They're not happy. They're not. I'm not talking about the property taxes that you're going to put on the backs of all Calgarians and Edmontonians and everybody that lives in a house. I'm talking about the fuel costs. I heard this morning that fuel costs for a fleet in Calgary could be \$6 million or \$7 million just for your carbon tax to the city of Calgary. Are they getting a rebate? Are they getting any help from this government? No, because this government expects Calgarians to pay for their ideological agenda. That's not right. It's wrong.

3:30

A full rebate, Mr. Speaker, does not come anywhere close to the thousand dollars per family. Actually, basically calculating it grossly, on the big numbers, it comes out to \$3,000 per family, so by saying it's at least a thousand dollars, we are not out to lunch at

all. I don't know where the government thinks the other \$2,500 per family is coming from, because \$3 billion is the number. We know that this is going to cost families a lot of money. For those who make under \$50,000 and qualify, the tax rebate program – it's not a levy; it's a tax, folks – completely ignores the impact of higher power prices, higher power bills and skyrocketing costs to consumer goods.

I'm not fearmongering. Those are the facts. You cannot tax your way into prosperity. You cannot do that. You can't tax your way to a situation where you have better jobs, except for these folks. Mr. Speaker, this tax is not a fair tax because right now it's going far beyond what our obligation is as world citizens, far beyond our obligation as Canadian citizens, as Alberta citizens. It goes too far. Should something be done? Yes. Should this be done? Not now. Don't punish us when we're down on the ground. Don't kick us when we're down. This government seems to think that's the proper motive to do it and the proper thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard time and time again: oh, it's a levy. Well, that's not a levy; that's a tax. You know, you can clearly put lipstick on a pig, but you still have a pig. And you can put lipstick on a carbon tax, but you still have a pig. You can dress this carbon tax up as friendly and as fun as you want, but it's still a tax, and it's not a carbon tax because it's not revenue neutral. I say this: you can put lipstick on a carbon tax, you can dress it up, but all you have is a PST in disguise. That's what this is.

You can come back later, as you have, and say: no, no, wait; we're spending it on infrastructure. Well, you haven't even named what it is. That's not a carbon tax. A carbon tax is revenue neutral. Everybody knows that. It's revenue neutral. You can put lipstick on it, but this carbon tax is not revenue neutral. It's just a tax grab. It's just a cash cow grab. It's just the government looking to make excuses to get more money into their pockets from Alberta families so they can spend it on their pet projects. Shocking. Absolutely shocking. When people are in an unemployment line, when people are in a soup line, when food bank demands have doubled, what do these people say? Oh, green infrastructure. I think people are little bit more concerned about putting food on the table for their kids, being able to afford hockey for their kids, going on that holiday with their family. That's what they care about right now.

We're already the greenest, most environmentally sound province in Canada. We do oil sands and oil and gas extraction better than anybody else in the world. I invite you to my home, like I did the Liberal caucus in Ottawa and the NDP caucus. Guess how many of them came? Zero. You don't want to see the truth. What you want to see is your ideological agenda enforced and executed on the backs of Alberta families because you think you have the answer while people are in unemployment lines and soup lines. You should be ashamed of yourselves, ashamed of yourselves for backing up a cabinet that doesn't understand the realities of what's going on in Alberta right now.

Mr. Speaker, I did go through half my speech by putting the pages forward, and I know you're getting a little tired of me. I can tell. I have been watching you for a while. You're not? Okay. Good. I'll keep going. Do you mind if I flip back a couple of pages?

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that I'm so concerned about is coal. We have 200 years of coal here in Alberta. What does this transition money do for the coal plants that are being shut down, for the communities that are going to be shut down, for the families that are going to be out of work? Seven thousand jobs gone like that. I don't think that's the right way to go. We have told these coal companies to come to Alberta and to set up shop here. We have had Albertans working for those companies and said, "Listen; we're going to close them down gradually; we're going to have some clean-coal technology," which I think is the way to go. New

technology, I think, solves the problem, and I frankly think this government should invest in some of that.

Look at what's happening in Saskatchewan. We have clean-coal technology there that's almost – almost – as close as clean-burning natural gas. The United States: I had an opportunity to talk to somebody from the U.S. the other day, and they told me that they had lots of plants that are very close to natural gas. So why are you closing it down when it's already getting cleaner? It's because you're ideological. It's because you think you have to make yourself feel better or to make those NDP friends of yours from right across this country feel wonderful. It doesn't make Albertans feel wonderful. It doesn't make Albertans feel wonderful. [interjection] I hear from the other side some chirping about evidence. Well, I'm happy to sit down and go through the evidence with any of you. I'm happy to talk to you and talk to the coal companies in Alberta and the families that are going to be out of work. I'm happy to hear that. Happy to do that.

You know what? Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that it is a large amount of money, and you'll notice if you look at the details that most of the money is going to be paid after they're gone, after Albertans have done the big boot. That will happen. That's what happens to all ideological governments. Ask Bob Rae.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Ask Selinger.

**Mr. Jean:** Ask Selinger.

I'm concerned that you don't want to govern, that you just want to impose your ideological agenda. I heard from the third party – and I thought it was very funny; I have to say that – that most of Selinger's NDP workers will probably come to Alberta because there are job openings here. In fact, 247 new civil servants were hired by this government over the last 11 months, just since 60,000, 70,000, 80,000, 90,000, 100,000 Albertans are unemployed. You add more to the public sector? Well, guess what? Guess what, guys, people? Albertans are moving out of Alberta. We have a net migration out of Alberta, and it's not the low oil price, Mr. Speaker, because they're going to Saskatchewan and B.C. to work in the oil sector, where they don't have an NDP government. That's where it is.

I have to say – and I know they're convinced by my arguments; I know they're going to turn around – that \$196 million in transition funding for the coal industry, Mr. Speaker, in those communities doesn't even come close to covering the wages or the social costs, not even close. These people relied on this government, the previous government, and we are obligated to follow through with previous governments, unfortunately, and the contractual obligations you create for us. I think you should have done it differently. I think it's a transitional thing, and we need to do things in step with the rest of Canada, with the rest of North America because we have such an insignificant amount of GHG emissions compared to the rest of North America. It's true.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, Madam Speaker, Wildrose believes in a different vision, a vision that is much bigger and, frankly, longer term, a vision where we see that the heritage fund and the interest from, not to, the heritage fund – payments not to but from – supports those deficits we might need in the future when oil prices go down. I see a vision that is bright and beautiful, where people are employed and they have a selection of jobs they want, where they get training support from the government for new jobs and new opportunities, where the government supports AHS workers so AHS workers want to come to work, where they don't take four months off because they're sick and tired of AHS or the people within it. I know. I sat there for four

months. It was terrible. AHS workers don't like AHS. They're not happy with the status quo and how things are. I'm not either, and I sure hope you aren't, but today I heard the Minister of Health support the status quo at AHS. Well, the Premier, the Minister of Education, and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade for years have all been saying that AHS is broken and we have to fix it. They get into power: "AHS is perfect; we're going to protect it."

That's not what people voted for. You said that they voted for health care and they voted for you. Well, then do something about it. We have some of the longest wait times in Canada, and we spend more money on our health care than anybody else in Canada. Folks, it doesn't match. Something's wrong with AHS when people don't want to come to work. We want public servants to want to work for us, to be proud to work for Albertans because we're proud of them when they give Albertans a good return on investment, when they want to work, when they're willing to work, and when they show up for work.

3:40

Madam Speaker, we're just looking for a few pennies: 3 cents on every dollar, 4 cents on every dollar if we can find it. No job losses. Why can't we see this government even consider that? Ideology. They're too set on their agenda to destroy this province, and I just don't understand.

When I talk to families, when I talk to Albertans, they tell me that they're sitting around their kitchen table and going through their budgets. When dad got laid off, they had to make changes. Mom is still working; she has to get a second job. They have to make changes in their own lives. Why in the world wouldn't we think that we have to make changes in the public service, the 200,000 workers in Alberta that are making on average \$80,000 to \$100,000? The cost is, I think, \$102,000 per public servant. I'm not one hundred per cent sure of that, but I'm pretty positive I read that a few months ago. Why would we not say, "Let's just find some efficiencies"? When people quit or when people move out of the province, let's just not rehire them for now, until our province starts growing again: instead of people moving out, people moving in.

**An Hon. Member:** That'll help morale.

**Mr. Jean:** It would help morale, Madam Speaker. It would.

People that don't know what they're talking about should go check out AHS. I sat there for a long time, Madam Speaker, and watched first-hand. I saw and I had people come to me and tell me that morale is terrible. I mean, I heard that somebody on the other side obviously went for a new job because they weren't happy where they were. It happens, and that's the way it works. Every family in Alberta is forced to make these decisions. Why does this government think they don't have to do it for them? They are here for the people of Alberta, not for themselves. So work for the people of Alberta, not for yourselves.

Well, Madam Speaker, I received a tug on my coattails telling me that it's probably time, and I don't blame you because I'm not going to change my speech much. I do believe that government can do better than what this government is doing. I believe government can do better than what the previous government did. That's why I got involved in politics. [some applause] Thank you for the clap from the NDP. I do believe government can do better, and I don't think we should ever stop doing better. Albertans expect us to do better.

Alberta will get through this, Madam Speaker, but it's going to cost a lot. It's going to hurt a lot, and I don't want to see any more pain out there. I want to support Alberta families. I want to help Albertans. I commit to you today that the Wildrose opposition, our

party, will not stop. We will fight every single day for the priorities of Albertans: to keep their tax bill low, to make sure they get all the services from health care, from education, from social services, from justice, from infrastructure, from transport, from all those things that these people on the other side laugh about and think is a joke, the \$50 billion that they take out of the pockets of taxpayers without any interest in finding efficiencies. I promise Wildrose will stand up and fight for the priorities of Albertans every single day throughout Alberta. We won't stop.

I know you're going to be surprised with this, Madam Speaker, as everybody on the other side is going to be surprised, but I'm not going to support this budget. Wildrose will not support a budget that puts pain on the people of Alberta and keeps them unemployed. We will support programs that keep people working, that invest in the things they need, but this government is not doing that. That's why in three years we will work hard to win the hearts and minds of Albertans so that they will put a real fiscal conservative government in power in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I'd just like to make a brief comment that it is the tradition of budget speeches not to heckle the speaker on strict budget speeches. We afforded the Minister of Finance a room that was silent as a mouse on this side. We never heckled him once. When I spoke, when the Leader of the Opposition spoke, and when the leader of the third party speaks, I expect that we would be accorded the same respect during the tradition of budget addresses.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and talk on Motion 13, regarding the budget of this year. So much to say. So much to say. I guess where I have to start is that Budget '16 continues to be a disappointment to Albertans. It's a budget, unfortunately, focused on optics rather than on the economy. Each day as Albertans learn more about this budget, they find out that their families will pay a lot more and receive a lot less. Why do I say that? Well, there are many reasons.

The government talks about slash-and-burns, but they're the only ones talking about slashing and burning. One would ask themselves: why is that? I think that's because they need to distract from the very unfortunate effect on Albertans that their budget will have. It's going to be harmful to Alberta families. It's going to cost them more money. It's going to make it harder for Alberta families to stay in their homes. It's going to make it harder for seniors to stay in their homes. It's going to be harder for those families with kids to afford sports and music lessons and tutoring and vacations and clothes and running shoes and all those other things that make life work for families with kids. It's going to hurt almost every single thing that this government claims it was going to help. They got it wrong, Madam Speaker. They didn't get it a little bit wrong; they got it really wrong.

Now, we Progressive Conservatives feel like we led the conversation going into this budget in terms of making recommendations to the government. We made recommendations for the government to decrease spending without laying off workers. We tabled the Engage document, that asks some very important questions – open for discussion to government members, other opposition members, all Albertans – on things that we can do better for Alberta. Heck, we even, as part of that, issued the \$4

billion challenge on how the government might be able to reduce some of the borrowing they're going to do this and every year. Think about that.

Right now the government with this budget is going to put Alberta into an almost \$60 billion hole by the time the next election comes around. If the government was to use the Progressive Conservatives' \$4 billion challenge and find at least \$4 billion a year in savings, well, it would still be really bad where we would land, but it would be \$12 billion less; \$45 billion instead of \$57 billion is a lot. While that's still too deep a hole to climb out of, it would be a lot less deep hole, and government only needs to take the advice that we handed to them.

Heck, we even gave them four ideas that could save a billion and a half dollars without cutting front-line services, without laying off a single teacher, a single nurse, a single doctor. The government laughed at it when we talked about it in here. They completely dismissed it.

We also presented to the government an idea, which is really obvious, about dealing with emergency rooms. We know from government documents, from AHS documents, that, according to AHS, 90 per cent of emergency room visits are not emergencies. We also know from AHS that the annual budget for emergency rooms is about \$3.2 billion. If you figure 90 per cent of that is the top end – and I know it's lower than that, but the fact is that 90 per cent of the visits aren't emergencies, so start there at \$2.7 billion, \$2.8 billion. We're not saying that you can save \$2.7 billion. We are saying that the \$2.7 billion currently spent providing the most expensive care possible, which is emergency room care, could be used to provide the care needed in a much more appropriate and a much more cost-effective setting.

3:50

You know, Madam Speaker, we didn't even say to the government that it's easy. We just said that this is such a big win. They need to put their effort into it, set their minds to it, talk to the staff, talk to the doctors, the nurses, the patients, the EMS people that come out of those emergency rooms and say: "How can we make this better? How can we deliver that \$2.8 billion worth of service in a way that you might be able to save another billion and a half?" While we don't think it's automatic and we don't think it's easy, we think it's doable. It just takes a commitment from the government working with others to make it happen.

So far the government has scoffed at it and dismissed it as if it did not matter. That truly is a shame. That is one of the many indicators we have that this government isn't ready for prime time in terms of delivering good value to Albertans, in terms of caring for Albertans, in terms of looking after their health care and looking after their wellness because we gave, respectfully, a \$4 billion challenge, and then we kind of showed them how to win that challenge. We showed them at least \$3 billion out of the \$4 billion that they could save without cutting front-line services.

Then we challenged them to work with the 220,000 Albertans that now get paid out of the public purse through this province directly or indirectly, and we said, "Let's get their advice," because they're experts. The doctors are experts, the teachers are experts, the nurses are experts, the people driving the snowplows on the highways are experts because they know things about their job that the rest of us don't know. The people who keep maintaining the buildings, keeping the furnaces going, keeping the boilers going, the people fixing the broken windows, cutting the grass: each of them know things about their jobs where they could be done more efficiently if we would just take the time to listen to them. That's all we've asked, and so far we haven't heard any positive noise back out of this government.

As long as the government continues to ignore advice, they are back with the two extremes that they always talk about. It's either increase spending or slash and burn. Well, good for the government. They didn't slash and burn, but by gosh they sure are increasing spending, and they are making no efforts whatsoever to contain that. The government needs to actually have thoughts in their head, Madam Speaker, that are not extreme, that actually take the more reasoned middle road, that say that if we work with people, if we put our minds to the task at hand to meet the \$4 billion challenge, who knows? The government may be able to find more than \$4 billion in savings without cutting front-line services. No slashing, no burning, just common sense, just working with people, just listening to government employees, just gathering the knowledge that is already there and employing it in such a way that not only will the taxpayers gain by having to supply the government with less money, but the employees would have greater job satisfaction.

We all go home from our job at the end of the day and say: I did the best I can. The same is true of about 220,000 employees that are paid out of the public purse provincially. Not one of them goes home to their family and says: I did the worst job I could do today; I really messed things up, and I'm proud of it. Nobody says that. Nobody says that. They all go home and say: I did the best I could. Some of them say: "I had a great day. I accomplished this or that. I made things better. I served Albertans. I maybe saved somebody's life. I maybe made the road safer. I maybe made the park safer. I maybe made the campground more fun for Albertans to go to next summer." Or sometimes they say: "You know, the system's getting in my way. The government and the managers won't listen to me. I have some ideas on how to save money. I have ideas on how I could maintain six campgrounds a day instead of four, whatever the number happens to be, because I know my job and I know how to do it better if only someone would listen."

That's what the Progressive Conservative caucus has said to government. Please make that effort. Please listen. Don't leave these things on the table. Don't just not leave the money on the table, but don't leave the job satisfaction for those 220,000 Albertans that toil every day on behalf of the taxpayers – do not leave them hanging.

In fairness to the government, this is a job that'll never be done. There is no finish line. There never has been, and there never will be because in any machine as big as this province, that employs 220,000 people and spends around \$50 billion a year, there's always something changing, always something to be maintained, fixed, improved, always bad habits or waste that creeps in here and there that needs to be looked at and looked for ways to root out. That day will never end. It'll never all be rooted out, and I'm okay with that because things are happening. I'm okay with it as long as we're doing the best we can and making the effort, and that's what our Progressive Conservative caucus has asked this government to do. So far what we've heard is crickets. It's not a good thing.

On budget day the Finance minister said that the province's credit rating would not suffer a downgrade. He said, and I quote: they will see that we are sticking to our plan. Unquote. However, their plan is precisely why Alberta was downgraded. Heck, the people that set credit ratings: they only slept once before they downgraded. Within 24 hours, less than a day, after this government dropped on the table their absolutely disastrous budget, what they call a jobs plan, though I'll come to that later in my comments, the world financial community rejected it soundly and lowered Alberta's credit rating. That is ominous for Alberta because a small increase in borrowing rates right now will make a horrendous difference to this government.

You know, obviously, I don't know exactly what it's going to take, but here's what I do know. Historically credit interest rates are

at if not an all-time low, very close to it. The reason why that is important and why the government should think about that when they're trashing Alberta's credit rating is because right now it will have a bigger effect. There are times in history where the interest rate averages 6 or 8 per cent, and it's just simple math. The fact is that if the interest rate on borrowing goes up by 1 per cent and it starts out at 8, well, that's damaging and hard to take and quite painful. But if the government is borrowing now at 2 or 3 per cent and the interest rate goes up by 1 per cent, that is crushing. That is crushing.

The government's budget documents say that three years from now the government of Alberta will be paying \$2 billion a year in interest rates without even servicing the principal on the loan. If the interest rate is up by 3 to 4 per cent, then all of a sudden that \$2 billion won't do it. It might take two and a half billion dollars. That is a potential negative effect of ruining the province's credit rating, a credit rating that the previous government, the Progressive Conservative government, protected jealously. The previous government, while imperfect, made some mistakes along the way – but I can tell you that for the last 15 years they were governing, they had a triple-A credit rating and during that time did not borrow for operations because we learned and protected the value of that triple-A credit rating.

This government didn't waste any time in having it downgraded twice in the first year of their existence, and Albertans will pay the price, our children and our grandchildren. I'm just making what I think is a pretty safe assumption, that even government members love their children and grandchildren. I'm sure they do. I'm sure they do.

**An Hon. Member:** I don't.

**Mr. McIver:** One said, "I don't," but I think that person was trying to be funny. I don't believe them when they said that.

Madam Speaker, they will be saddled with debt that they will pay the rest of their lives. It's going to be painful, and this government is inflicting that pain, inflicting that debt on their children and grandchildren. If there's one thing that this government should be more ashamed about than anything else in this budget, it is the pain that they are inflicting on kids that aren't born yet that will have to pay this debt that they have no plan whatsoever in their budget to pay for.

4:00

As we peel away the layers of the budget, we can see that it's going to cost people a lot more. Mayors, reeves, and councillors have taken the government to task, starting with the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary. I was at an AUMA breakfast three weeks ago, and what was said was that for the municipalities there, they estimated that the carbon tax was going to cost each of those municipalities on average 3 and a half to 4 per cent on their property tax rate for their municipality. Madam Speaker, that's not revenue neutral. That's revenue negative for Alberta families, revenue negative for Alberta children. That is the legacy of the budget that this NDP government is inflicting upon Albertans.

Now, municipalities have said that this government demonstrated in its budget that it did not deliver stable funding.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes, Madam Speaker. I think that the member needs to continue his dialogue there in regard to negative funding. I'd appreciate it if he'd continue that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. With the time remaining, I'll go as fast as I can to talk about the negative effect. Let's just go to the government's budget documents here. If you look at page 96 in the fiscal plan, under the section entitled Economic Outlook, the government continually talks about how the rebate on their carbon tax is going to be good for Alberta families and how they're going to break even. Balderdash. Nonsense. Not a chance.

But we're going to take the government's word on something. There's the truth, there's the whole truth, and there's nothing but the truth. I'm going to give the government credit for telling the truth, but I'm surely not going to give them credit for telling the whole truth. The truth on page 96 – I'm going to take their word for it – is that the average family uses 4,500 litres of gas in a year and 135 gigajoules of natural gas. When you figure it, on a high point right now gasoline costs a dollar a litre, so it's \$4,500 a year for Alberta families. I don't know about you, but I think my utility bill is \$200 a month. Let's call it \$400 just to be fair. Let's call it another \$4,800 a year, 12 months. So there's about \$10,000 a year of the average Alberta family that's going to get rebated the extra costs on the carbon tax. How many of those families of four live on \$10,000? Not very many. So on all the other expenditures it's not covered. Alberta families are not breaking even. They're getting the heck kicked out of them. They are losing big time. If a family has \$50,000 after taxes to spend and they get rebated back on the first \$10,000, that's \$40,000 more that the carbon tax isn't rebated on. Families are getting it between the teeth.

Now, the Official Opposition is more right than the government because they say that it'll be a thousand dollars a year that it costs families, and the government says that it'll be \$500 because that's what they're rebating. But the fact is, with all due respect to the Official Opposition, that I think they're wrong, too. I think they're low with that number. I think they're low with that number because there's no rebate on what people pay for food, which arrives on a truck; clothing, which arrives on a truck; their electricity bill, which will be taxed. Entertainment, travel, all the other things that people have, will cost more.

This government is killing family budgets, not protecting them. They're saddling us with a \$2 billion budget and a \$2 billion annual interest payment that doesn't even touch the principal three years from now. And, by the way, the Calgary cancer centre is not scheduled to be built till 2024. That \$2 billion could build a cancer centre every year. Every year Albertans will pay for one and not get it after this government is done. That's no good for families. The \$2 billion in interest would pay for 50 to 100 schools, depending upon the size of the school, and they're going to pay for that every year after this NDP government is done, and they're not going to get that either.

To the hon. member, when I talk about it being negative for families, I can't imagine a budget scenario being more net negative for Alberta families than the budget scenario presented by this government in this House in this session, and they should be ashamed. I can tell you that the fact that they're killing Alberta's triple-A credit rating, the fact that they've taken the lid off borrowing – again, I will say that taking the lid off borrowing, even though the government's own said that it doesn't need to be done for three years, means that either they're planning on spending a lot more money than they've admitted or they're planning on the economy getting a lot worse than they admitted in the next three years in shrinking the GDP, which is why they've got to take the lid off.



I think that probably a combination of the two is the way it's going to turn out, Madam Speaker. That's part of the net negative to Alberta families, too: more tax burden, less economy to pay for it with. This government is doing less with more when all of Albertans are doing more with less. They are completely out of sync with Albertans. They're attacking our major industries, our energy industry, through Bill 6 our agriculture industry. They are going to make the tourist industry more expensive with the carbon tax. They're out of touch with Albertans, and they're making it worse instead of better. That is the unfortunate fact of what this particular government has burdened Albertans with, not for a short period of time but for a long period of time.

The next government – and I'm glad to see that yesterday Manitoba replaced an NDP government with a Progressive Conservative government. That was a very good idea.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is done.

I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. Very pleased to speak to Motion 13. All Albertans know that we're facing difficult times, with unemployment rates approaching all-time highs and revenues approaching all-time lows. Many of the factors causing these extremes are beyond our immediate control: price of oil, lack of national infrastructure such as pipelines, and short-sighted policies of the recent Alberta government. The future, though, is firmly in the hands of the NDP government now, at least for the next three years, and the choices it's making.

Tying our economic well-being to one industry over many decades without convincing environmental standards; averaging \$10 billion less in revenue every year, less than the lowest taxing province in the country for the past decade; neglecting the social supports of our most vulnerable people, including First Nations: we have all enjoyed this, quote, Alberta advantage, which, unfortunately, was a delusion. Well described in children's stories as the golden goose or the king with no clothes, we've been living beyond the means of our province and of our planet. The proof is in the pudding.

We now have a naïve government, young and idealistic, who are, for the first time in my memory, making necessary and meaningful change. The past government couldn't make the changes necessary when oil was at \$100 a barrel. They couldn't do it during the recessions of the '80s and '90s, when they followed an austerity plan that we are still recovering from today. So let's work together to make this difficult time as short as possible and stop the partisan blame game, which does not serve the public interest. We cannot continue to increase services and protect the environment and build an economy and not pay more than we've been paying for the last 30 years.

To be fair, I do not envy the ministers and the Premier in these difficult times, steering Alberta through an unprecedented time, in my memory. Nonetheless, leadership and vision are the definitive roles of government, and Albertans deserve the best efforts of this no longer new NDP administration. The release of the 2016 budget leaves me with some serious questions about the vision the NDP has for our province.

This is not to say that I disagree with every element of the budget. There's funding, albeit qualified, for affordable housing, an item sorely neglected by the previous PC administration for at least four years. There is a cut to small-business taxes and an investment tax credit, policies we have very strong support for. There's also commitment to the environment, a new provincial park in southwestern Alberta that will help promote tourism. This place is the destination for recreation and film industry and tourism,

obviously. It will, all of this, along with the carbon tax, help us get off our carbon addiction. There are alternatives. The rest of the world is moving on, and we have to move on, too. These are all issues the Liberals believe in and have pushed government to introduce, so I am thankful that this government is making some of these difficult decisions.

**4:10**

My concern lies not with some of the specifics but with the long-term vision, again, and the necessary leadership, which seems to be lacking in this document. I would start with the most dramatic number, a \$10.4 billion deficit just this year. The number itself should give us serious pause. We must have an adult conversation about how we can and will share fairly in the suffering and the opportunities created in this time with the right combination of borrowing, finding savings – our public services included – and paying for our important goods and services that keep people off the streets, out of depression, out of jail, and out of hospitals. Understandably, given the remarkable drop in provincial revenues and the decision not to drastically cut government services – but this doesn't mean we shouldn't look to reduce public service costs. That is a real, sore bone of contention in the public today, that we are protecting one sector and not another. I'm not saying that we have to be draconian, but we do have to look fairly at incomes and stability across the communities.

What is unacceptable is the lack of any reasonable plan to repay debt or return to balanced spending. The year 2024 has been put forward but without evidence. It's an arbitrary shot in the dark. The government are taking a wait-and-pray position, primarily for oil prices, as past governments have done with Alberta's future. Should the price of oil remain low, we face a staggering potential for over \$50 billion in debt at the end of their term. This budget offers no contingency for prolonged low oil price and very little vision for an Alberta in the grips of a perennially low cost of crude. Virtually every economist and most political commentaries have rightly pointed at the gaping hole in our revenues. Whether or not oil prices rise, we have to start paying our way. We have a structural deficit based on a history of using oil royalties for 20 to 35 per cent of our budget. We must start paying more as a society if we want safe, healthy, generous, peaceful, stable communities where everyone has their basic needs met.

It does appear to me that we along with others in some ways are suggesting a consideration of not only public-sector cuts, a provincial sales tax, evidence-based cuts to various aspects of government services, and a new look at fees and other forms of revenue, including health care premiums – all of these need to be considered – but I would say that all of us, including the elected MLAs, have to look at how we can contribute to reducing our take in this province. We have to build a sense of solidarity, not an us-versus-them culture, and, I would say, a culture that has been aided and abetted by the Official Opposition in these debates. It's not us versus them; it's all of us together finding constructive ways to go forward, not alienate and divide. I find the situation particularly distressing as there are savings to be made in Alberta if we manage our expenses more readily. They're not easy. They require difficult choices and strong leadership, but they're there.

First and foremost, Alberta Health Services: clearly, a lot of money not being well spent. Primary care not serving people as well as it must and cuts to the primary care networks have not served to develop the innovation and adaptations that are needed in primary care services. There's a lack of evaluation to provide check and balance in the health system to improve care. Testings and investigations are significantly overused. Medications are too often used, resulting in the wrong solution; complications, especially in

the elderly; and the potential for problems of dependency and addictions, that we're seeing more and more of. The lack of community care is overwhelming our emergency rooms and hospitals when people are best cared for in the community.

These are millions and millions of dollars of savings that are not and have not yet been addressed. Study after study, not least the recent report of the mental health and addictions committee, have suggested that the money needs to go into early intervention, into high-risk families, and into prevention programs that would prevent so much suffering and a lot of health care costs. The government, in changing from the status quo budgets of the Progressive Conservatives, had an opportunity to support team-based community care, and to be fair, there is some allocated for this but nowhere near the emphasis that's needed.

The budget states that the government is suddenly going to find \$300 million in savings in 2018. This is what they call bending the cost curve. However, there's nothing in the line items to tell us exactly how.

Glad to see capital spending on housing for the at-risk population after four years of no spending. Money designated for affordable housing directed at repair and maintenance: these are essential if we're going to keep people safe and secure.

I'm fully aware that this budget has incredible limitations and there's little fiscal operating room. It would seem, though, that having made the hard choice to not drastically cut government spending, the government has then made no further hard decisions. It's time to look again at government services. The status quo is not going to help Albertans in the long run. We cannot run up debt with no plan to pay it off, and we cannot keep spending on entrenched systems like those of Alberta Health Services in the same manner.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Anyone wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in response to the budget. When I first saw the budget last Thursday, I was literally speechless, and those of you who know me know that that is rare. That's a rare thing. I was a little like Nell, absolutely gobsmacked by the scale and frequency of deficits. I understand we are in a very difficult financial position, but a \$10.4 billion deficit this year, a \$10.1 billion deficit next year, an \$8 billion deficit the year after that, and on and on and on with absolutely no plan beyond crossing your fingers and hoping perhaps oil revenues go up or something magical happens to eventually find our way back to balance. It's beyond troubling.

While some may be angry about this, my instinct was concern, was worry for the future, worry for our viability, worry for what happens if you're wrong. What happens if it gets worse? What happens if we end up just a few years from now with \$50 billion in debt and continued declines in oil prices and continued economic challenges for our province. What then? What happens then?

As I said earlier today, it feels like the person who moves out of the house for the first time and doesn't realize they need to pay back the Visa bill. But the Visa bill always comes due, and interest always accrues. We've got a government that has no ability to manage their debt load, no willingness or ability to manage debt costs. Our credit-rating downgrade was a direct result of the complete lack of a plan to come anywhere close to balance and the abdication of any plan to cap debt costs at a reasonable level.

The plan for the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio lasted less than six months. Now this year we're going to have a debt-to-GDP ratio

in excess of 9 per cent, next year in excess of 13, the year after that in excess of 15. And where does it go from there? Well, we only have three years forecast. I can't even begin to imagine how high that gets. That takes Alberta out of having the best balance sheet in Canada by having the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the country. Our friends in Saskatchewan under Premier Brad Wall have that distinction, and good for them. They are in a far stronger financial position than Alberta finds ourselves in as a direct result of the choices this government makes. Of course, you don't control the price of oil. Of course not. But this government does control your response to that.

Now, there are some things I do like about the budget, and I think they're worth mentioning. It's always nice when you see some of your own ideas and some of your own party's policies implemented in a budget. The small-business tax cut and the investor tax credit are two core Alberta Party policies, so it's good to see those happening. I think they're good for Alberta, and I congratulate the government for putting those in.

The increase to postsecondary education funding I think is a good idea. A nod to mental health funding: although I don't think it is sufficient, it's a start down that path. Funding enrolment growth for K to 12 I think is a good move.

Continued investment for infrastructure: this is where I think responsible borrowing has a part to play. I think it's okay to borrow money for infrastructure because we have an asset at the end of the day, but you need to have a plan to pay it back. If you're borrowing for operations, as this government is doing, and not just a little bit – borrowing just to keep the lights on, borrowing for pens and pencils, for office furniture, just to operate the government – and you're doing that at massive levels with no plan to even not borrow for operations in the foreseeable future, we've put ourselves in a big hole.

4:20

I believe that the funding for affordable housing and seniors' housing is absolutely welcome as well, long overdue and necessary as part of that infrastructure investment.

On the whole I feel this government is on the wrong track, that they're setting Alberta up to fail, setting us up for even more difficult choices in the future, either significant public-sector cuts or big tax increases or potentially both. It's a huge risk. I don't want this government to fail. I do not want the ND government to fail – I really don't – because if this government fails, Alberta fails. That's not good. That's not what I'm here for. That's not what I'm cheering for.

I really worry that if you stay on this path, you will fail, and Alberta is not going to be as well off. And that's all Albertans, including vulnerable Albertans, not only business owners, not only those who have lost their jobs, but vulnerable Albertans. Where does the money come from to pay for important services to support vulnerable Albertans? It's an important question that I really urge this government to ask themselves. Where does the money come from? How does that happen? You keep plucking the golden goose, eventually that's not going to happen. Eventually it's going to be gone.

There are options. There are options and choices between massive cuts and between massive deficits. There is a middle way. There is a better way of doing this, which, my friends, is why we have proposed and presented our second shadow budget, which I'm going to talk about now, the Alberta Party shadow budget. And I would hasten to add that we're the only opposition party in this Assembly to present a shadow budget because I think it's important. I think it's important that those of us on this side remember that our job is not just to oppose the government. Our job is to propose ideas.

Now, our friends in the PC caucus have their Engage document. It's a good document. There are lots of really interesting ideas in there. I don't agree with all of it, but there are a lot of interesting ideas, and they've continued the conversation. That's a good thing.

Our friends in Wildrose have some bullet point, general ideas of kind of vague things they might do, but I would challenge the Official Opposition to put some numbers to that. That's important. That is important. When we're talking about the budget, Albertans need to know how would we on this side of the House, how would we as opposition solve these problems, and they need to know in detail.

That's what the Alberta Party shadow budget does. Our shadow budget balances in four years. We accommodate population growth and preserve front-line services. We use more conservative revenue forecasts than the government, especially on nonrenewable resource revenues. In two years from now this budget, Budget 2016, assumes that oil will be at \$64 a barrel and that the dollar will be at 74 cents. Of course, as we know, the lower the dollar, the more money we return. Ours, on the other hand, assumes that in two years' time oil will only be at \$56 a barrel and that the dollar will be around 78 cents. Again, more conservative revenue forecasts, yet we're still able to balance in four years and accommodate population growth, not decimate front-line services.

We do that by freezing public-sector salaries. That seems only fair. At a time when our neighbours are losing their jobs or they're being asked to take salary rollbacks or reduced work hours, we ask the tremendous public servants in the province of Alberta to get paid the same next year as they got paid last year. I think that's fair. I think that's fair, and it's going to help us get a long way towards some sanity in this budget.

We need to engage public servants in a genuine way, most particularly in the health care system. There are tremendous people in this province, many countless hundreds of whom I've talked with, who have great ideas on how we can manage costs and improve service delivery, truly, truly do more for less, but they're not listened to. There is a toxic culture within Alberta Health Services. It is a huge challenge to be overcome.

This government needs to commit to that, not nibble around the edges but make real, true change, real culture change within the public service and truly, genuinely listen to the great people who provide those services every single day. Yes, that means front-line direct service providers who interact with Albertans, but it also means management. There are a lot of tremendous people in the management layers of Alberta Health Services, in particular, but also all throughout the public service.

We need to empower those people. We need to take smart risks within the public service. We need to create a free market for good ideas within Alberta's public service. Any time we hear, "Well, we don't do it like that around here because we just don't," that's the wrong answer. Why do we do it that way? Can't we do it better? Challenge ourselves, challenge our public servants to continually improve.

That's how we're going to find more for less. That's how we're going to steward Albertans' tax dollars and ensure that Albertans get the services they deserve at a reasonable cost coupled with a priority-based budgeting exercise to ensure highest priority projects are completed first. This is going to result in bringing per capita spending in line with the national average within three years. That's a reasonable target. That's a reasonable plan that will not result in massive public service cuts but will also ensure that we are not burdened with unsustainable levels of debt down the road.

If we make Alberta's carbon tax revenue neutral, ultimately work toward making it revenue neutral by cutting personal tax, by cutting small-business tax, by cutting the large corporate tax rate just 1 per

cent and using the proceeds of the carbon tax, what we do is that we create a frame for innovation. We have a disincentive for what we don't want. We don't want carbon emissions. Let's make it more expensive for people to burn carbon – that's the purpose of a carbon tax – so people burn less of it and people and individuals innovate and find ways of doing less. That's a good idea. That's what a carbon tax should be. But let's reward people for the things we do want. We want an attractive investment climate in this province. We want people to keep more of their hard-earned money, the money they've earned through their honest efforts. So let's cut personal and business taxes and offset that with the carbon tax.

That's not what I've heard from this government, and I have a tremendous problem with that. There are opportunities, there are choices, and there is a middle way and a better way than massive public service cuts, than massive unsustainable debt and deficits. That's what the Alberta Party stands for, and that's why I have a big challenge with this budget.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd be interested to hear, in light of your comments about wage freezes and that sort of thing, if you could touch a little bit more on the reduction of our triple-A credit rating, how you see that as a priority for you and how you see us tackling that problem.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. That's a great question. I think that if we were to go to credit-rating agencies with a credible plan to get back to balance sometime before a vague 2024, that's what they asked for. The debt-to-GDP ratio of 15 per cent is one of many factors that they consider. It's an important one, but it's not the only one. What they see is a government that's profligate, that just seems to think that money is absolutely infinite.

In terms of the impact – you asked about the impact – I've asked repeatedly in this House whether the Minister of Finance has done the calculation for what the impact of a potential credit-rating downgrade is. Now, I suspect that somewhere in Treasury Board and Finance that exists, but the minister, for whatever reason, has chosen not to share that with us. If he hasn't done that work, that's troubling. Even a few basis points, even a few hundredths of a per cent multiplied by tens of billions of dollars is tens or hundreds of millions of dollars. So we're already facing \$2 billion in debt service costs alone two years from now. Where is that going to go beyond the three-year plan? We don't know.

Those numbers start to get very frightening, and that's billions of dollars that are not being spent on programs. That's what credit-rating agencies look at, our capacity to pay back our debt, and that creates a spiral, which could very well be a huge problem for this province. And I repeat that question: what if we're wrong? What if this government is wrong? What if it's even worse? That's frightening. So I really encourage this government to think hard about that and about what the impact of that and implications of that could be, not just for us in this generation but for future generations.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I was also interested in the hon. member talking about the carbon tax and, particularly, the rebates and what improvements he thinks that the government might be able to make to the way that they have determined and decided to lay that plan out for Alberta families.

4:30

**Mr. Clark:** I'm on the record as being in favour of a carbon tax. We've done our own climate plan that includes a consumer-based carbon tax. The objective of a carbon tax is to make carbon more expensive. That should be the objective. It should not be just to simply transfer wealth.

I think that perhaps the lowest income quarter of Albertans should be entitled to a rebate. I think those people genuinely would suffer under the carbon tax. But I think the carbon tax should be paid by more Albertans. That may not be the most popular view, frankly, amongst Albertans. But if the carbon tax is set out to do what the government says it's supposed to do, which is to actually reduce our carbon emissions – and, by the way, we've had absolutely no meaningful estimates of what the carbon emission reduction will actually be, and we haven't seen any plan to tie together a climate strategy with important things like market access for our province – and we haven't seen any progress on that file, then Albertans are rightly wondering: what's the point of a carbon tax? Is it just another cash grab from the government?

I think the carbon tax needs to be very clear. Like our friends in B.C. do, lay out in the budget very specifically the incoming from the carbon tax and the associated cuts and direct investments in innovation that that money's being used for, so it's not just seen as a cash grab by government. That's why Albertans are so concerned, especially at a very difficult time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Any other member wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, you can't adjourn debate as you've already spoken to the motion.

I need someone who hasn't yet spoken. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

**Mr. Connolly:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 9

#### An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences

[Adjourned debate April 19: Dr. Turner]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? I will recognize the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences. The way the law works now is that when a person gets a ticket for something like jaywalking and that person does not pay their ticket, a warrant is issued for their arrest. Not only does this practice contribute to the criminalization of poverty, but it also has serious implications on another specific group of people, victims of domestic violence. For example, let's say that a person who was ticketed for these minor infractions just happens to be someone in a domestic violence situation. The perpetrator of the violence

prevents the victim from appearing in court, and an arrest warrant is issued. Now the problem is twofold. The victim is unable to report the DV situation because they will be arrested, possibly leaving vulnerable children in the custody of the perpetrator. Therefore, the victims do not report the domestic violence. It is a vicious cycle.

Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences, will allow victims of domestic violence the ability to report these issues and escape. I've spoken to many in DV situations who've said that they stay because of the fact that there is a warrant hanging over their heads and they need to protect their children. This will give them the ability to report and flee.

[The Speaker in the chair]

In addition to protecting vulnerable Albertans, these changes will put our government and social agencies in a better position to help them. I believe that this is an innovative and fair way to help address the growing pressures on our justice system while protecting vulnerable Albertans from a cycle of incarceration and poverty. These amendments will end the practice of issuing warrants for people who have not paid their fines for minor infractions, a practice that contributes to criminalizing poverty, and these changes will allow police officers and court staff to focus on more serious offences and offenders.

This is a common-sense bill, and I'd encourage all members in this House to join me in supporting these important legislative changes that will help so many people. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite from Red Deer-South talked about the criminalization of people who are given warrants. I was wondering if she could explain to me the fact of a summary conviction or a Criminal Code offence and the different requirements, therefore, of the issuance of a warrant.

**Ms Miller:** What it does is that it enables the people in domestic violence situations to flee from their perpetrators. The way it is now with any outstanding warrants is that the people are unable because they've got this hanging over their heads. I've spoken to police officers, and I've spoken to people in DV situations. They've been told – they've talked anonymously to police officers – that if they report the situation, they will be arrested. This way they will not be arrested because there will not be a warrant issued for minor infractions. Nothing major: jaywalking, parking tickets, that type of thing.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you. I'd like to say that I appreciated the hon. member's remarks. There's just one element of this that I've thought about for some time. Really, ever since I was chair at the Calgary housing company, when I was on city council, this came to mind.

I have great regard for the idea of not issuing an arrest warrant for people committing minor offences. The only point where that becomes a bit of an issue for me is that for some of those people that repeatedly commit minor offences, there's an underlying issue. If somebody doesn't put their hands on them, not to punish them but, rather, to help them, while they're committing minor offences, it sometimes leaves them on the street long enough that things escalate till they commit major offences or, worse, are victims of

major offences. Assaults, beatings, even murder: these are all things that we would hate to see happen to somebody who has a mental illness problem or an addiction problem.

Have you thought about: if there's no arrest warrant, how does society put their hands on these people, not so much to punish them but, rather, to deliver to them the help that they need before the minor offences escalate into something that's harder to fix? I don't know if you put any thought into that or not.

**Ms Miller:** Okay. When there's no warrant issued, it frees up not only the justice system but the mental health areas because the people aren't – what's the word I'm looking for? – forced to go into programs. They're voluntarily going into programs. I spoke to some people at the mental health office in Red Deer, and people who are forced to attend treatment for different issues are quite often no-shows, whereas if a person is going under voluntary conditions, they are more likely to attend.

**The Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

I would recognize the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

4:40

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak today to Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences. I want to begin by saying that I will be supporting Bill 9 in second reading. As one of the hon. members from the third party explained yesterday, there was a motion that was brought forward in 2012 by a member of the government of the day, but the motion ultimately failed to receive that government's support. I am hopeful that Bill 9 will not succumb to the same fate.

I will be supporting this bill because I believe that this type of legislation is exactly what the government should be trying to pursue, red-tape reduction that saves money in administration and puts more resources into our front-line services. The introduction of both amendments in this bill will increase efficiencies by reducing filing times, eliminating redundant administrative procedures like duplicate data entry, and ultimately decreasing the expenditure of Albertans' tax dollars. By clearing up administrative barriers, law enforcement officers can do what they do best, protect our communities and bring justice to real criminals. Currently the system of issuing warrants for minor offences is chewing through law enforcement resources, and it is time to put an end to the unnecessary expenditure of government money.

Hard-working Albertans are having warrants issued for their arrest. In some cases they are being jailed for a day. As was pointed out previously, this can often just mean that the individual is apprehended, taken to the nearest prison, processed, forced to pay their fine, and then released. This does nothing to make our communities safer. In fact, one could argue that it does the opposite due to the fact that this process takes an officer off the street. It also wastes a significant amount of the police services' time and wastes correction officers' time.

We must also consider that it places otherwise law-abiding citizens in a dangerous situation. Jail is a scary place to go, in part because of that danger. As some of my hon. colleagues have already mentioned, an individual lost their life while in prison for a minor offence. While correction officers work steadfastly to minimize these risks, they are still present, and it is unreasonable to think that someone should be exposed to that environment for the tardy payment of a minor offence.

I want to be clear that minor offences are still offences. We should not be paving the way for scofflaws to take advantage of our system, nor would I argue that police turn a blind eye to what are

considered minor offences. It is necessary for our police officers and municipal bylaw officers to enforce all aspects of the law. However, bringing justice to those who are responsible for causing serious harm should be our focus and our top priority.

I have been hearing from Albertans across the province and in my constituency that they are worried about the increase in criminal activity. Thefts and fraud are on the rise, and we need to take action so that our men and women in uniform are able to address the most serious threats to our communities. Decreasing ticket processing time is a great step toward helping our police officers. It helps our police officers decrease paper-pushing and lets them do their job.

Much can be said about the benefits of the e-ticketing process, but there may still be the need for some smaller communities to take a little bit of time to adopt this new process. I am glad that this bill has the provision for municipalities and police forces to opt in to the e-ticketing program as they best see fit. I imagine that the start-up costs for this program may be a barrier to some police forces immediately adopting the technology and providing training to their officers, so there needs to be an allowance for smaller law enforcement agencies to adjust their budgets and build a plan for the new technology.

Also, I think that, like any new process, it sometimes takes one group to lead on implementation. They then share best practices with other partners in the field. I believe that was the purpose of the pilot programs that the RCMP conducted in some parts of Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick. Now I think that with police forces in Alberta's larger municipalities signalling that they will be the leaders in e-ticketing implementation, there will be some real benefit for other parts of the province that may take a little bit more time to get there. And there is nothing to suggest that the process may not go the other way around, with larger police forces following suit with their smaller counterparts. Either way, Mr. Speaker, empowering local decision-making will lead to better legislation and better results for Albertans.

In closing, I would like to reiterate how important it is for members of this House to be cognizant of the outstanding difficulty, the degree of professionalism that law enforcement officers provide around Alberta. Often they are the unsung heroes that keep our communities safe, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their great work and support any initiatives that make it easier for them to do their jobs and spend less of Alberta taxpayers' hard-earned tax dollars.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other members who would like to speak to Bill 9? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been appreciative of my fellow members' comments here in the House. I think that there are many elements of this bill that will actually be a plus. Surely, any time that we can be more efficient with the way that we handle the justice system and more sensitive to people that have not committed major offences insofar as finding it unnecessary to throw them in jail – of course, as has been recounted before in this House and even referenced here today, there have been examples where people have died in jail by being assaulted there after committing what is otherwise considered a very minor offence, having paid the heaviest of prices as a result because of the violence that can occur in a situation where people are incarcerated.

I thank the government for being thoughtful about raising some of these issues. I will sit down now and look forward to further debate from my colleagues.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)?

My apologies to the previous member. I neglected 29(2)(a).

Anything for Calgary-Hays under 29(2)(a)? Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you. I understood that people want to maybe ask me some questions under 29(2)(a). But you know what? I'd like to transition a bit. I think I've already mentioned that I'm absolutely in support of this bill and, of course, ensuring that we do not have this revolving door . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I just need to clarify. It was just pointed out to me. Were you speaking under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Ellis:** No.

**The Speaker:** You've already spoken. I'm advised that you've already spoken.

**Mr. Ellis:** Oh, that's what I thought. Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, sir, I'll speak to 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** All right.

**Mr. Ellis:** I'm sorry. I've been running around.

I will ask a question to the hon. Member for Calgary . . .

**An Hon. Member:** The one who last spoke.

**Mr. Ellis:** Pardon me? Oh, the one that last spoke.

Well, I'll ask somebody a question. How about that? I just got here.

**Mr. Cooper:** Have you been on the south lawn of the Legislature?

**Mr. Ellis:** No.

I will ask somebody, Mr. Speaker, in regard to this bill. Calgary-Hays. Sir, in your experience in city council, certainly, you had close ties and relationships with the Calgary Police Service at that time. You were certainly aware, sitting on the Calgary Police Commission, of the number of tickets that were issued and, of course, the stats. Can you maybe touch a little bit in regard to the recidivism that was going on and maybe specifically touch in regard to the arrest processing area, that dealt with the amount of flow going through there and, maybe, what positive impact that could have in regard to finances, actually, with a reduction of people going through that system?

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, would you like to answer the question under 29(2)(a)?

4:50

**Mr. McIver:** Yeah. Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will just say that during my time on city council, which actually did include two years on the police commission, I touched on these issues. At that time I can tell you that one of the things that irritated the police service the most was what they used to call the catch-and-release system, where they would arrest people, put them in jail, and they would be out on the street doing the same thing again and then get arrested and be back in jail again. This continual cycle would go over and over and over again. It was expensive. I don't think it served society very well. I don't think it served the police very well or the courts or the justice system, and at the end of the day it didn't

actually serve the people that were the subjects of the arrests very well either.

That's largely because in these cases most often there was an underlying issue of mental health, addiction, some other issue which never got solved, which is why while this legislation is good – and I intend to support it – one thing I think we need to think about as we go forward, too, is a mechanism for people who find themselves in this situation of being arrested over and over and over again or indeed being charged with minor offences repeatedly and repeatedly, even if we're not going to issue warrants for that anymore. I think we haven't really done our job as legislators and representatives of society until we can get better at getting people the help they need once they're in the system.

I say "in the system" in the broadest sense. If they're getting repeated minor offence tickets, if they're repeatedly arrested, if they're repeatedly incarcerated, somehow I can't help but feel that not only would it save money but also serve society a lot better and probably make it safer if we were – and I appreciate that what makes it difficult is people's personal rights, that you can't make people get better if they have an addiction problem. You can't make people, lots of times, accept help if they have a mental illness problem. It's not just a matter of what you can make people do – although to some degree making them get help is a good thing – but, rather, getting better at convincing them to accept help when they touch on the justice system.

While this legislation is good, I think we have to think about a methodology that would be legal and not offend people's human rights and their legal rights so that we could deliver unto them the type of help that they would need to make their lives better and make them less subject to committing offences, being arrested, and all the rest of that. While this legislation is very good – and in my remarks now I would be happy if no one took what I'm saying as criticism of the legislation, because it is not. All I'm saying is that I think that we have some other things to think about, too, beyond what's in the legislation.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members of the House who would like to speak to Bill 9?

**Mr. Westhead:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a second time]

## Bill 10

### Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

[Debate adjourned April 20: Mr. Loewen speaking]

**The Speaker:** I do not have a list of names with respect to speaking to Bill 10.

The Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll get our act together. I rise today to address Bill 10. With this bill the Finance minister has asked this House to relieve this government of its obligation to protect Albertans by managing the province's debt level, a task the NDP apparently deemed too onerous. When will this government stop making things worse? The news that Alberta's credit rating has again been downgraded wasn't enough for the NDP. This NDP government seems determined to show not only that it cannot manage Albertans' tax dollars but that it also has no interest in attempting to manage the province's finances within reasonable limits.

Credit-rating agencies are already taking actions based on their deep concerns for Alberta's financial position. DBRS downgraded Alberta's credit rating last Friday because this government made such irresponsible budget choices. Reputable credit-rating agencies like DBRS are concerned that the elimination of the debt ceiling removes an important self-imposed constraint on the level of Alberta's debt burden. Independent economists have commented that the recent DBRS downgrade is probably the first of more to come after this budget, though it's not the first to come under this government's watch because Standard & Poor's already dropped the triple-A credit rating in December.

What economists have found more alarming than this budget's deficit is the fact that the NDP has no credible plan to get Alberta out of it. Even if one fails to find the current debt level alarming, the true problem is the utter lack of direction and leadership Albertans are seeing from the NDP. This government has no plan to get us out of debt, and it is so far from having a plan that it is asking the members of this House to watch as it throws its weight around and obliterates the only and already generous limitation of how much debt it can rack up.

On the same day of the DBRS downgrade Moody's warned the province's Finance minister again that Alberta's credit rating was under threat due to increasing debt load. Our significant upcoming deficit and rising debt levels are considered credit negative for the province.

Is the government removing the debt ceiling because it knows that the debt level necessary in order to survive the duration of their current term would alarm Albertans? It is unbelievable that the only action this government is willing to take on debt is to remove the ceiling on it. Fifteen per cent is the absolute maximum debt level for a jurisdiction seeking a triple-A credit rating. This is not an allowable limit for an economy that is classified as resource dependent like Alberta's. This limit, just set a few short months ago, was already beyond what the province's debt level should be. Now we have the Finance minister requesting that the limit he himself put in place just a few months ago be removed altogether. Talk about poor planning.

This government has no regard for the obligation that this House has to protect the next generation of Albertans from the financial consequences of living in a debt-strangled province. Make no mistake; what we're debating today is a moral issue. This debt bill will be passed on to the next generation of Albertans. Our children, our grandchildren will be paying for the operating expenses for services that none of them voted for. As this government continues with massive deficit budgeting, the province is falling further and further down into the spiral of dependence on debt financing.

In its defence the NDP came to this office after previous governments had presented about seven straight deficit budgets, but unfortunately they are only stepping up the deficits instead of trying to correct them. We're saddling future generations with an ever-increasing risk that the Alberta they grow up in, the Alberta they try to raise a family in, the Alberta they will one day come to buy a house in is a high-tax jurisdiction that is not attractive to invest in. Their Alberta will have a weakened economic outlook if this House continues to refuse to acknowledge the risks associated with persistent debt spending. If the members of this House make the wrong decision today and support this bill in its current form, they're making a decision to risk a future with higher and higher taxes.

This government has put us on a path that will ensure that the interest rates on the province's debt will not be lower forever. But let me put that in context. Even with a low interest rate, on a big number it's a lot of money. By the next election the government

will be spending \$2 billion a year to bankers just for interest. That's \$2,000 per family that will go to paying the interest alone on the government's debt. This just goes to show how a rise in interest rates and this level of debt will seriously weaken Alberta's financial position. Debt comes with serious liabilities, especially when, as is the case with this government's fiscal plan, there's no plan to pay off the principal.

Many Albertans are already struggling to achieve financial milestones like owning a home, paying off student loans, or finding gainful employment. It was recently reported that one-third of Canadians find themselves \$200 a month away from financial disaster. Higher taxes get in the way of Albertans' aspirations to achieve these financial milestones.

If Alberta doesn't get its debt under control, the calls for increased taxation will surely follow. Right now it's becoming increasingly clear that this government would like little more than to soften the staunch opposition of Albertans to introducing a PST. It seems like lifting the debt ceiling and spending without any restraint may be the NDP's strategy for softening this ground.

Social change is coming. Demographics in Canada are changing. My baby boomer generation is entering into retirement. With this, a massive influx of individuals will be collecting from the system far more than they are contributing to it. They've already made their contributions. This government needs to signal to Albertans that it has its priorities straight. These pending demographic changes will have a significant and long-lasting impact on our society. Alberta needs to be in a strong position to weather these financial changes.

5:00

We hear all the time from the government that it believes it was elected with a mandate that entitles it to take a number of risky actions. We're now finding that the NDP misled Albertans during the May 2015 general election campaign, promising first to eliminate the budget deficit within two years and then three and then, after being elected, within four, and in less than a year admitting that there was no intention of eliminating the deficit within its term or the next one. Maybe by 2024, the Finance minister recently said with a shrug. It's no wonder that Alberta's creditors are so nervous.

This NDP government has demonstrated a history of disregarding the importance of a province's financial responsibilities and breaking the trust with Albertans. The current debt limit is already large. It is an option for the NDP government to propose a simple raise in the debt ceiling, yet it has chosen not to do so. Wildrose shares the concerns of the province's creditors, not exactly knowing what this means for our province. Debt seems to be this government's only solution. It refuses to manage government bloat or say no to the demands of pay raises for its public-sector unions. Now it's refusing to commit itself to any constraints on debt.

Bill 10 is akin to removing the requirement to be honest and transparent with Albertans about the extent of the province's debt. Without a debt ceiling the NDP are hoping to avoid having to raise that ceiling again when in a few months it becomes clear that its hopeful revenue projections and inability to look inward and find efficiencies requires more and more debt. Having to raise the limit would only force the attention back to the government's financial mismanagement, and it is quite clear that they're hoping to avoid having a larger spotlight shed on its absolute incompetence.

Bill 10 gives this government licence to inflict untold levels of debt on our children and our grandchildren. I'll not be supporting this irresponsible piece of legislation. I encourage everyone here to vote against it and commit to working together to make sure that

we stay under our current debt ceiling and avoid hanging a millstone of debt around the necks of future generations.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions for the Member for Highwood under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, what's the wish of the House?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:03 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Nielsen
Babcock	Hoffman	Notley
Bilous	Horne	Payne
Carlier	Jabbour	Phillips
Carson	Kazim	Piquette
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Connolly	Larivee	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	Mason	Sigurdson
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Feehan	McKitrick	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McPherson	Turner
Ganley	Miller	Westhead
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard
Gray		

5:20

Against the motion:

Anderson, W.	Gotfried	Starke
Clark	Jansen	Strankman
Cooper	McIver	Swann
Cyr	Orr	Taylor
Ellis	Schneider	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Smith	Yao
Gill		

Totals: For – 52 Against – 19

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a second time]

### Bill 1

#### Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act

[Adjourned debate April 20: Ms Drever]

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Bow, any wish to speak to Bill 1?

**Ms Drever:** No.

**The Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 1, promoting job creation? Mr. Smith. Oh, I'm sorry. Mr. Clark. It's late. It's been a bad week. The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has been quite a week.

Rising to speak to Bill 1, finally getting the opportunity to do so, and surprisingly so, that it has taken this long for what would presumably be the flagship bill for this government to reach the floor of the Assembly for debate. Finally, it has, and here we are. I was tremendously disappointed when I saw the contents of the bill, or the lack of content for this bill, and how thin it is. It is absolutely remarkable that this is the very best the government can come up with for their flagship bill. It is just enabling legislation, but even if that were all it was, even that wouldn't be enough. It doesn't enable anything that the minister is not already able to do. It's truly odd, actually, why we have a bill here before us in the Assembly that really does so little.

What does this bill do that the minister cannot already do? If I was to look at the bill, it says that the minister can create committees. That's something that you can always do. Increase access to capital: I'm not sure what that means. That's already been done by this government in Budget 2015. Help working people upgrade their skills and secure employment: well, that's actually the role of the Minister of Labour, I would assume. I would hope that's the role of all the government. That's certainly the role of the Minister of Advanced Education. But what does that actually mean? Increase the development and adoption of Alberta innovations: how, exactly? Through what mechanism?

None of these things don't already exist in the Alberta Competitiveness Act, the Access to the Future Act, the Post-secondary Learning Act, the Alberta Enterprise Corporation Act, the Government Organization Act. All of these powers that are reportedly granted by Bill 1 already exist. What's going to change by passing Bill 1, and, conversely, what's going to change by not passing Bill 1? The answer is: nothing at all.

I would describe this bill as singularly unambitious and unimaginative for a Bill 1, the flagship bill. Bill 1 is supposed to be the thing that you should take to the doorsteps of your constituencies and you should use as your cornerstone for your re-election campaign in three years' time. You should be able to go to Albertans and say: we did these things. But this bill does nothing that you can't already do, so it's odd that we are here.

It doesn't enable any tax incentives. I've spoken numerous times about my support for the investor tax credit, but of course that happens through Treasury Board and through the budget, and the annual reporting of the minister is only to Executive Council. I would hope that that happens anyway through cabinet meetings. Curiously, that reporting from the minister is not to the public, so the public has less insight. We have less transparency, less idea of what the minister is up to than we may otherwise have. It was an opportunity, perhaps, to codify the requirement to file some form of meaningful annual report, more than just numbers but activity that the minister is doing.

What I wonder is if this bill really somehow opens up the minister or creates a legislative framework, if it actually does in fact do anything, to enable the minister to pick winners and losers. That's always a huge concern of mine when we have a role, a Minister for Economic Development and Trade. It's always a worry when the government seems hell-bent on economic diversification. I'm sure we would all agree in this House that some more economic activity of any kind in the province would be absolutely welcome, but on what, exactly, the role of government is in achieving that I think there is some debate, some disagreement, and some difference of opinion. I think most of us on this side of the House would agree that that job should fall to entrepreneurs, and Alberta has many still, fortunately, entrepreneurs who can drive economic development of



this province, and ultimately economic development leads to economic diversification.

It makes me wonder if there's another shoe to drop. Is there something else coming? Or is this the bill – as they say, a camel is a horse made by committee. Was there a committee somewhere that had some, perhaps, disagreement about what this bill could or should be? Are there amendments coming at committee from the government that will actually put some powers, will actually put some things in this bill that would allow the minister to do something that he or the other members of the Crown can't already do? It really is confusing. I am really, genuinely confused, and as I'm often not at a loss for words, I'm also not usually confused. Perhaps some of the activity on the south lawn of the Legislature is contributing to my confusion right now, but I don't think so. I was equally confused when I first read the bill.

Given that, I don't think I can support the bill, but frankly if I do or don't, I'm not sure it makes any difference at all because the bill does absolutely nothing. In expressing those concerns here at second reading, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing, perhaps, some amendments from the government at committee that will put some meat on the bones of this bill because right now it is truly the *Seinfeld* bill. It is about nothing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills on 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Cooper:** On 29(2)(a), yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wonder if the hon. member, the independent member for Calgary-Elbow, would offer some comment on what actually is my favourite portion of the bill, section 4, the reports section, where it says, "The Minister must annually, and more frequently if the Premier directs, report to the Executive Council on the Minister's progress in establishing and implementing any programs under section 2." I'm just a little curious to know if you would be willing to elaborate on the extensive reporting program that the Premier may or may not require of cabinet ministers.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. You know, as leader of the Alberta Party opposition, proudly so, this is a topic to which I give a great deal of thought. I do wonder. You know, given the tradition of government in this province and in other provinces and in our country to not only give ministers of the Crown mandate letters but to publish those mandate letters, publicly share those with Albertans so we know what each minister should be working on and we can all hold them to account and also, equally important, that they know what they're working on, I think it is curious that this government has chosen not to do that. Instead, here we have something that sounds remarkably like a bit of a homework assignment and perhaps even a bit of a sword of Damocles hanging over the head of each minister. Annually or more frequently if the Premier directs: I just wonder under what scenario the Premier would direct such a report more frequently.

You know, in all seriousness, do those reports ever see the light of day? Do they ever get tabled in this Assembly for Albertans to review them so that we can judge for ourselves if the minister is meeting his objectives as so very vaguely laid out here in this bill? I think the reporting piece, especially for a new ministry and especially for a ministry that has such a broad and, frankly, vague definition, is important.

5:30

You know, there's one piece I will take an opportunity to talk about here now that I'm talking about this ministry and others reporting. I spent some time with some folks in the economic development community in Calgary earlier this week, and they had

some good things to say about the minister. I think that's important to relate because I think the minister himself has been well received within the economic development community, certainly by folks I talked with in Calgary. That's worth noting.

But I come back to my main point about this bill: what is the point of the bill? It's unclear to me why this bill exists and unclear what will change in the lives of ordinary Albertans once this bill receives royal assent and why the government has chosen their flagship bill to be something that, frankly, does nothing. It's just a fluff piece that I suppose has some marketing content they can spend some of their \$750,000 advertising budget on.

I hope, hon. member, that that answers your question. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any questions to the hon. member under 29(2)(a)?  
Seeing none, the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to be able to stand and address this House and be able to have a little discussion about Bill 1, the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. You know, I can remember – this is a few years ago, I'll grant, and maybe some of you were still a twinkle in your parents' eyes when this was occurring to me – actually being in high school. [interjections] Yeah, a long time ago. [interjections] Okay. A long, long, long time ago. [interjections] Okay. Enough. Enough.

**An Hon. Member:** What were the Beatles like?

**Mr. Smith:** I remember the Beatles.

Now, I can remember sitting in my social studies classroom with my social studies teacher at Jasper Place composite high school, and we were looking at that time at the Russian Revolution, and he was talking about a story that I guess has historical relevance.

There's this old Russian story set in the time of Czar Catherine the Great. The story goes, Mr. Speaker, that a governor of the territory of Crimea, a man by the name of Grigori Potemkin, in order to stay in Catherine the Great's good books and in order to keep his job had to impress the monarch with the prosperity of the region over which he had governorship. So as this monarch went on her royal progress down I believe it's the Dnieper River, he had a series of crew members dress up as peasants and move ahead of the ship as it was going down the river, and they would set up fake buildings along the side of the river to augment the villages that were there. They did this in order to make the villages appear to be prosperous. He had the individuals of his crew dress up in costumes, and they would walk around the villages and would make these villages appear to be bustling havens of industrial and economic activity, all to try to ensure that Catherine the Great would continue to see him in a positive light. These villages along this royal progress would say a lot about what Russia was under her leadership.

Now, these Potemkin villages and this story became famous because it highlighted, Mr. Speaker, what lengths sometimes we as politicians will go to in order to sometimes paint a false picture of what an economy could be like or what certain political events might mean.

I may be stretching it a little bit but, hopefully, not too much. I think that I would make the analogy – and all analogies break down – that this story could highlight perhaps some of the problems that we in the opposition see with this bill. I think that it would appear that Bill 1, as we will find out, was designed to give the appearance that there is progress, that the government was protecting and promoting and encouraging the Alberta economy, without there actually being any real progress.

The author of this Potemkin bill would like Albertans to believe that this government is productive and producing jobs and that the

government is the root of that prosperity, but I think, like many of the members who have already spoken before me, we question just whether this bill actually will result in the things that the minister or this government would claim it will do. This government wants to appear to be busy, this government wants people to believe that progress is being made, but in reality all they seem to be able to do is present a bill that gives power to a minister to do things that the minister already has the power to do. Perhaps in a 20th-century context this bill is all show and no go.

Let's dig into this bill and expose it for what it really is. This bill has a lot of verbiage but not a lot of substance. It does not provide new authority or powers to the minister that the minister does not already possess. Section 8 of the Government Organization Act reads:

8(1) A Minister may establish or operate any programs and services the Minister considers desirable in order to carry out matters under the Minister's administration.

(2) A Minister may institute inquiries into and collect information and statistics relating to any matter under the Minister's administration.

In other words, once becoming a minister, you have the ability to operate and to ensure that your ministry is a productive ministry. You don't have to ask permission to do the things that you would have in the course of being appointed a minister.

In Bill 1 we see Potemkin at work when it wants to create partnerships that support entrepreneurship and have a focus on innovation. It sounds great except that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade already has the power to do this. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade doesn't need Bill 1 in order to support the creation of new businesses or to help companies become innovative. By virtue of the Government Organization Act the minister has all the power that he needs to do this already. Bill 1 is that fake village designed to make it look like the government is working hard.

Bill 1 gives the power to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to increase access to capital, help businesses to grow and succeed, help working people upgrade their skills and secure employment. Once again, it sounds great, but what did you think the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade was going to do? I would hazard a guess that every province in Confederation has its version of a Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. I would also lay money that they all try to increase access to capital, that they all try to help businesses grow and succeed, that they all try to help working people upgrade their skill and secure employment, and I would bet that none of these ministries in the other provinces thought to pass a Bill 1, that a Bill 1 equivalent was necessary in order to do their job. Who would have thought that the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade would have to have a Bill 1 in order to help communities and regions build on their economic strengths and support economic development? No, this is a bill that tries to set up a series of fake villages. It might make the governing party look pretty good, but that's about it.

5:40

If this bill is going to be worthy of support, there needs to be something in it worthy of supporting. Let's start by thinking about section 4 of the bill so that when reports on the success of growing business in Alberta are released publicly, Albertans can know that their tax money and the efforts of this government are being spent wisely and efficiently and are actually resulting from the goals of Bill 1.

Let's take the goals that are stated in this bill, and rather than making them so broad and general as to be meaningless, let's make them a little more specific. Let's place some specific goals and

targets into this bill that would move the economy in a sound and practical job-growing direction by providing businesses with fewer taxes and more capital to invest in business growth. That's not something that is limited to any side of any House. I'm sure that every political party can take a look at those kinds of goals and targets and can put some specific goals and targets there so that they can actually grow the economy.

I guess, then, that at the end of the day I'm going to have a hard time supporting Bill 1. [interjections] I know. Sorry, guys. I guess my social studies teacher in Jasper Place composite high school, a great public school with a great social studies teacher, was able to instill in me that sometimes you have to look below the surface, that you have to look at the content and see if it will actually do what it's supposed to do.

I will be voting against this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, under 29(2)(a) are there any questions to the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon?

Hearing and seeing none, I would recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 1. It's an interesting time that we live in here. I guess I'll start off by saying that I do believe that the minister of economic development is well intentioned. I've seen him. He's worked hard. He's been to China to promote Alberta, and I give him credit for doing that. But the best of intentions don't create jobs; good plans do, and good policy does. I would suggest that a positive business environment achieves those results and more.

The minister has talked about being nimble. We'd like to maybe see nimble and quick, as the saying may go. Being nimble is not good enough, and Albertans need quick as well. If we don't do this in a timely manner, we will not get Albertans back to work, and that concerns me. Now, past governments have been deeply chastised for not diversifying the economy enough, but many Albertans do not realize that if we actually took the 25 per cent of our GDP away which is attributable to the energy sector, the remaining resulting number would be \$271 billion. That number would still rank the nonenergy economy of Alberta as the third-largest GDP in Canada, ahead of British Columbia, who has chastised us for lacking vision and diversification in our own economy.

I think that's a key number. We went from 34 per cent, as mentioned by my esteemed hon. colleague from Calgary-Hays, to 25 per cent, and in doing so, the other 75 per cent still represents the third-largest economy in our country. Can we do better? Absolutely, we can. We hope this government will, and we can promise that future governments will as well.

You know, a bill giving the minister powers he already has is a bit hollow and a bit empty. In the words of our friend George Costanza, this is a bill about nothing. You know, it's been said before that it's a bill about nothing. It's kind of hard to debate it, but we're doing our best here, and we're going to try and put forward some of the reasons why we feel it's a bill about nothing.

In the bill it talks about creating partnerships. Well, we have great partnerships already, the Alberta Enterprise Group and many others. Increasing capital: well, that's already been done as well through ATB, through AIMCo, through AEG and others.

We talk about growing and succeeding. I would suggest that in this market we actually need to first figure out how to survive and retain the jobs that we already have, which this government seems not particularly focused on because we seem to lose jobs every day through the actions and policies of this government by not having a positive business environment that people have confidence and trust in.

We say that we're going to help communities across the province. Well, we already have that in place. We have great economic development groups across this province. I met with them up in Kananaskis just a few weeks ago with the minister, and we have passionate, knowledgeable people in their own backyards who know what's best for them, who know what the opportunities are for them to focus on their assets. The core sectors of agriculture, forestry, tourism: there are many active groups and strong advocacy groups within those that can tell us what they need to do. We need to facilitate them and to provide them with the environment to succeed and to move forward and with some of the tools to do that.

You said that you're going to support export development, but there are no clear plans in place. A trip to China: great. What are we going to do with that trip to China? What actions are we going to take to facilitate that export promotion? What about things like coal, that we are large exporters of? We're just going to shut it down. We're not going to be innovative. We're not going to introduce new technologies. We're not going to take a resource that we have that would be the envy of most of this world and use it to the best advantage and maybe innovate and take some technology with it so that we can actually do more good than shutting down the 18 coal plants here in Alberta. Maybe we can help build 180 and cut back the emissions by 10 per cent – there's your 18 right there – and double that and triple that and quadruple that, and we'll actually have a greater impact on what's happening in terms of climate change in this world.

There are regulations noted in here: “[may] give effect to a program.” Wow. That's a strong plan. I'm really running for that one. That's really something great. Then we're going to hand that to his ministry, and we're going to say: go and execute this great plan. We're going to give it to his hard-working staff, innovative people, hard-working people with lots of experience. Mr. Speaker, it's hard to execute a hollow plan. I've never seen that. I've been in business for many, many years, and the only success I've seen is from good plans, good plans with commitment and foresight and strong ideologies that support them.

We see the investor tax credit. It's already in the budget. A bill about nothing: what are we going to do with that? Scrap the bill. Get on with the investor tax credit. Let's go.

The minister is supposed to report to the Premier and Executive Council. Wow. That's a cozy little group to report to. The minister must report to Albertans. That's who we're here for. That's who we're trying to create jobs for. That's who we're trying to support to build a stronger economy. Ultimately, that's who we should report to. That's not part of this bill. We're going to keep it pretty cozy, behind closed doors with the Premier and the Executive Council.

You talk about committees and panels. Wow. More committees and panels. You know what? Just have a dialogue with business. The minister has said before that he wants to be nimble because he wants to work with industry. Well, get out there, have those conversations, and hear what they have to say. There are groups out there. There's Petroleum Services Association of Canada, there's CAPP, there's the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors, there's the Energy Pipeline Association, there's the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta, there's the Coal Association of Canada, and many, many more. Calgary Economic Development, Economic Development Edmonton, and similar groups across this province, in every municipality and in every county: let's work with them. Let's work strongly with them, and let them tell us what's best for their community and how we can help them to achieve that.

You know, we said in our Engage document: to make Alberta the most business-friendly jurisdiction not just in Canada but in North

America. That is what Alberta was recognized for before this government took over, the Alberta advantage. An advantageous tax system, investment attraction initiatives, entrepreneurial support: that's what we need to make this happen. It's not happening in this bill, Mr. Speaker. To me, it sounds like the Alberta advantage is, sadly, with this government's support becoming something new, a new regime and a new brand. Wow. Rebranding is always a good thing, throwing lots of the babies out with the bathwater. I think we could call that the Alberta disadvantage.

5:50

Mr. Speaker, as we lose jobs, we also lose talented people, we chase away investment, and we handicap, perhaps even decimate, the bright future of not just those people in Alberta today but future generations. Many people have moved to this province not for themselves. In fact, many have sacrificed themselves for future generations because this has been the land of opportunity. I dare say that we seem to be moving away from that.

We've talked about export development, robust market access strategies. That's what we need to follow – agriculture, forestry, tourism, and, obviously, energy – to get to market. Right now we need that diversification in agriculture, forestry, and tourism. Let's get out there and identify those markets, those existing markets. Let's leverage and enhance those markets by supporting them, by getting out there and selling with them to other parts of this world who are demanding our products.

God forbid, let's look for new markets. If we can grow the ones we have and we can find some new ones that are demanding our products, we will be able to expand and add value to those industries. Let's give those people the tools and enhance the skills that they require to achieve growth in those areas and support this economy through its tough times.

Mr. Speaker, where are the plans? More importantly, where are the plans in this bill to allow the minister's very experienced and able staff – and I've had the pleasure of working with many of those staff in my various careers over the past 25 years. They have good staff. They have experienced staff. They have staff around the world knowledgeable about the key markets for us. They're in Canada. They're here working with industry. They're in the overseas offices, that he oversees as well. They're there. They're ready to work for Albertans.

In this bill as well it talks about measuring success. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, but how do you measure success of a bill about nothing? This doesn't serve the best interests of Albertans. I challenge anyone to try and measure something that has no substance to it. This in no way serves the best interests of Albertans. All we're seeing is that Bill 1 so far has been about one job.

By this government's record, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Finance, who's claimed I think a couple of times today or made reference to 100,000 jobs that we're going to create, if he's following his esteemed colleague's record of creating one job for 27,000 jobs promised, we can look forward to the creation of 3.7 jobs.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?  
The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you. I'm just enjoying the debate so much that . . .

**The Speaker:** Are you under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Cooper:** No, no. On the bill.

I'm just enjoying the debate so much that I thought that we could continue. I know that there are a number of folks on this side of the House that are pleased to rise and speak to Bill 1, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to a large number of members on the other side of the House adding important comments to the important piece of legislation that we have before us.

I'd just like to point out a couple of things. While I agree with a lot of the things that the third party is saying here today about just how insignificant this piece of legislation is, I just would like to take a brief moment, just a brief moment, to point out that it's quite possible that members on the Premier's team and in cabinet learned a little about pieces of legislation just like this from the third party because they, too, certainly engaged in such activities, with lofty names and extensive communication efforts to talk about the importance of something that they were doing, but when it came down to the nuts and bolts of delivering upon that, sometimes the results were very similar to the results of Bill 1.

In fact, unfortunately, I don't have the day and the *Hansard* in front of me, but I recall the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, when she was the leader of the then fourth party, speaking in this House about a certain piece of legislation, and she said on that particular day that this legislation was more about an exercise in communications than it was an exercise in legislation. So I'm a bit surprised that while in opposition she was so keen to rally against the very thing that we're seeing here today.

Good evidence of it not being everything that they tried to communicate to the Alberta people is the very fact that this bill was introduced on the very first day of the legislative session, which is over a month ago now in calendar dates, and it's been sitting much on the back burner. My guess is that there are even members on that side of the Chamber that are asking the very question: why is it that we introduced this piece of legislation? My guess is that there are members on that side of the Chamber that aren't very excited about this piece of legislation because they know what we know, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade does not need this piece of legislation to execute the duties that he has been entrusted with.

One of the very, very first observations that I had, Mr. Speaker, about Bill 1 on that first day of session – in fact, in my hands today is the copy that was delivered to my desk, and I kept it because there's something that was unique about it. This particular piece of legislation that was delivered to my desk is a piece of legislation

that at that time had never gone to the print shop. I can assume that because a piece of legislation that has gone to the print shop is significantly smaller in size, it's been hole-punched, and it's stapled appropriately. This particular piece of legislation that was presented before the House on that day has merely been photocopied and stapled together by a few staffers in the Premier's office. One can only speculate that it's been done like that because this bill was put together in such a hasty manner that they didn't even have time to send it to the print shop before it was introduced in this Chamber.

It's disappointing. It's disappointing that they wouldn't have taken the time over what was a significant break between the first session and this one to actually put together a real plan. Just a few short weeks prior to the opening of the session, it's my guess that they realized: "Oh, my goodness, we don't have anything ready. We've got to try to put something together when it comes to job creation and diversifying the economy." So they looked at what the minister's job description was, slapped it down on a piece of paper, printed it through the photocopier, and delivered it on day 1 of the session.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve and expect better. I've got to tell you that when this government was elected, I was hopeful. I was hopeful that they had a desire to do things differently. [interjections] They might think it's funny, but I actually genuinely hoped that this government would do things differently than the previous government. But what we have is a communications exercise introduced on the first day of this session that's very similar to other communication exercises that the previous government did. This is the exact type of legislation that the Premier used to rally against and say that this House's time is more important, that the legislation that we're debating is more important than getting the government's message out. But that's, unfortunately, all that Bill 1 does. It is an effort of the government to get their message out.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

Pursuant to the Budget 2016 main estimates schedule a legislative policy committee will convene tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Agriculture and Forestry in the Grassland Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, April 21, 2016

Day 19

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 21, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us reflect each in our own way. Today, hon. members, the Commonwealth is celebrating the 90th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Let us recognize the Queen's dedication and service to our province and to our country and indeed to the Commonwealth. Her Majesty can be seen as a wise elder of the Commonwealth and an inspiration to all public servants, exemplifying the commitment to the greater good.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 32 students from my constituency – the jewel in the crown on this day of Queen Elizabeth's birthday – of east-central Alberta, and that is from St. Jerome's school in Vermilion. They are here with their leaders Mr. Ted Wheat, who was a former client of my clinic, as well as Brittany Partington and Jocelyn Fillier-Holmes. As an anecdotal note I will also point out to the Education and Infrastructure ministers that St. Jerome's school is one of the ones that is being renovated under the school build, and it's on time and on budget. I see that my guests have stood up, and I'd like all members of the Assembly to join in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really excited today to have a school group from my fabulous constituency of Peace River. They travelled by bus eight hours from La Crête to be here with us, and I'm excited to have them here. There is a group of about 40 students and parent helpers. They're from Ridgeview Central school. The teachers are Karie Becker and Jaclyn Cottrell, with parents helpers Twila Olson, Donna Reissner, Margie Driedger, Karen Wiebe, Eva Wiebe, Billy Martens, Steven Thiessen, and Ray Wiebe. I'd ask that they would all stand now and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to stand before you and introduce to you and through you from the very picturesque constituency of Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills students and parents from Ashmont elementary school with teachers Mrs. Jennine Poirier, Mrs. Carol Kam, Mrs. Sandy Podloski, and Mrs. Andrea Weinmeier. I'd like to congratulate the school on the announcement that they will be getting a new school, and we'll be watching that very closely to see if it comes in on budget and on time. So if they'd all please stand and accept the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to introduce to you and through you four staff people from my constituency office in the fabulous, amazing, wonderful constituency of Edmonton-Strathcona. I have here my official constituency office manager, Rob Pearson, who's been working with the NDP caucus in one fashion or another since long before I was even elected – I'm seeing nine or eight years there, 10 years, a long time anyway – and we owe much to him. Along with him is Kayla Halliday, our placement student from Grant MacEwan; beside her is Jack Garnier, our constituency office comanager, whom I'm very pleased to have had start with us a few months ago; and then my constituency office caseworker, the fabulous Kirsten Goa. I'm hoping that all four of them can rise and that the Assembly can join me in welcoming them.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation, and Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly an old friend of mine. John Geiger was the *Edmonton Journal's* civic affairs columnist when I was first elected to Edmonton city council. He went on to editorial positions with the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail*, and he is now the chief executive officer of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. John is the bestselling author of *Franklin's Lost Ship: The Historic Discovery of H.M.S. Erebus* and six other books of nonfiction. John was a member of the University of Alberta team that discovered the Franklin ship. He is in Alberta bringing awareness to the project to transform the vacant building at 50 Sussex Drive into Canada's centre for geography and exploration. He's in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask John now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very important group of agriculture stakeholders. The United Nations declared 2016 as the International Year of Pulses, which is why it's important that we highlight the work of the Alberta pulse growers. This group of growers are helping feed millions of people around the globe, people who rely on food packed with nutrients, grown in our province. As I say your names, please rise: Allison Ammeter, D'Arcy Hilgartner, Don Shepert, Leanne Fischbuch, Rachel Peterson, Nevin Rosaasen, Jenn Walker, and Jolene Watson. We also have representatives of a few value-added pulse manufacturers here with us today: Caryll and Norm Carruthers, owners of Mountain Meadows Food Processing, NoNuts Peabutter; Maureen Obrigewitch and son Davis from Souptacular; Vivian Johnson, retail account manager for Kinnikinnick Foods. Mr. Speaker, I would now ask my colleagues to give these pulse producers and processors the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this

Assembly a very good friend of mine, Giri Puligandla. He's the kind of friend who has your back when you need it most. Giri is the director of planning and research with Homeward Trust Edmonton. His areas of responsibility include service systems planning, stakeholder engagement, program design and evaluation, data management and analysis, and research. Prior to joining Homeward Trust in 2011, Giri held leadership and executive roles in several Edmonton-based nonprofit organizations, working in the areas of mental health, housing and homelessness, family caregiving, and community development. I'd ask him to rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Alfred Nikolai and Oryssia Lennie from Habitat for Humanity Edmonton. Alfred Nikolai has been president and CEO since 2005, overseeing the growth of the Edmonton affiliate to be the largest in Canada. Oryssia Lennie has been with Habitat for Humanity Edmonton's board of directors since 2012 and is now serving as the chair of the board. I had the pleasure of joining Oryssia and Alfred at the sixth annual Habitat Day luncheon yesterday, celebrating Habitat for Humanity's work in the capital region and its partnership with the home builder community. This year marks the 25th anniversary of Habitat for Humanity Edmonton giving a hand up to hard-working families across northern Alberta. Thank you to the builder community, staff, and volunteers of Habitat for Humanity. Your generosity and dedication make a real difference in the lives of Albertans. I'd ask that Alfred Nikolai and Oryssia Lennie please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a special privilege for me today to introduce to you and through you to all members in the Assembly eight bright, political, dynamic, civic-minded, Liberal women, plus one husband. The group has for years regularly hosted the Liberal women's breakfasts. You can join them to discuss issues of the day just by contacting them. I'm pleased to welcome them on their first visit to the Legislature. If they would please rise when I introduce them: Irene Hunter; Liz Acheson; Rose Marie Tremblay; Joyce Assen; Dixie Mackintosh; Ruth Hunter; Sandi Hollas; Karen Sevcik, current president of the Alberta Liberal Party; and last but not least, John. Where are you, John? Let's give them a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and indeed a great privilege to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a strong supporter and advocate for Edmonton's vulnerable and homeless, Linda Dumont. Linda started *Edmonton Street News*, now *Alberta Street News*, in 2003 but has worked with street papers in Edmonton since 1993, when she began as a vendor and studied journalism as well. *Alberta Street News* provides a way for those unable to hold conventional jobs to make some money selling papers. Today Linda lives with her two

daughters and two grandchildren, volunteers with House of Refuge, and supports herself as a yoga instructor. She is a published poet and talented painter as well as an articulate antipoverty activist. I'd ask her to rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Kurtis Ewanchuk. Kurtis is the head of the Aspen Centre for Integral Living, located in the Sturgeon watershed. He is an incredibly intelligent and passionate person, concerned with a truly staggering variety of subjects relevant to our region. Kurtis has been practising land-based applied ecology since his return to Alberta a decade ago, and he's a master gardener, permaculture designer, yoga teacher, and ISA arborist. The Aspen Centre for Integral Living will be hosting the 2016 Northern Alberta Permaculture Convergence in the fall. If I could ask Mr. Ewanchuk to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of this assembly Nick Dira. Nick was paralyzed last year, and while doctors said that he would never walk again, dedicated and intensive physiotherapy has resulted in his first steps just weeks ago. I ask that all members join me in congratulating him on his progress, his courage, and his strength and welcome him to this House. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

## Point of Order

### Allegations against a Member

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, yesterday during Oral Question Period the Official Opposition House Leader raised a point of order concerning certain comments made by the Premier in response to a question from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Yesterday I heard the arguments from both the Deputy Government House Leader and the Official Opposition House Leader, and I chose to defer my ruling.

During the arguments raised, the Official Opposition House Leader took issue with the Premier's statement that the member had suggested certain activity was fraudulent. I would note that the *Hansard* transcripts from yesterday did not indicate the use of that term by members of the opposition. However, in an unrelated matter to Alberta Health Services it had been used at an earlier event. Although I do not find this to be a point of order but more a difference of opinion, I would ask members to be cautious in the language they use when they are characterizing statements of other members. Moreover, it is a long-standing tradition that statements by members respecting themselves and within their knowledge must be accepted.

Now that we have the explanations and we understand the events that brought us here, I will accept it and expect that members will avoid repeating that kind of language that led to this point of order.

Hon. members, I want to provide my ruling at this point in the proceedings so as to avoid a repeat of the exchange from yesterday and, in fact, the day before and would ask that you all keep it in mind as we proceed in the agenda today.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

### International Year of Pulses

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In November the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization launched the International Year of Pulses 2016. This is significant for our province and for our country because Canada is the world's largest producer and exporter of dry peas and lentils, shipping to more than 150 countries around the world.

Alberta pulse producers are helping feed millions of people around the globe. It is estimated that over 800 million people suffer from acute or chronic undernourishment. Experts say that the rising tide of health problems is linked to poor diet. The International Year of Pulses aims to demonstrate the integral role these nutrient-dense foods have in addressing global food security and malnutrition issues. By observing the International Year of Pulses, we are sharing the good news about pulses with more consumers, and as more consumers eat more pulses, Alberta farmers can reap the reward of increased market access.

Earlier today we had a group of producers and product developers who provided tasty samples in the lower rotunda. I hope you had time to sample and try the snacks that they brought to us and that you will help promote these Alberta-made products.

The Alberta Pulse Growers Commission is marking this important year with exciting activities, including food and product samplings. This commission represents over 5,000 growers of field peas, dry beans, lentils, chickpeas, fava beans, and soybeans in Alberta. The growers group has created an attractive series of activities to tell the stories of pulses. One of these activities is the pulse pledge. To take the pulse pledge one commits to eating pulses once a week for 10 weeks. Just so you know, eating pulses helps reduce your carbon footprint, and they are also great for your health. We should also congratulate the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission for their efforts to shine the light on pulses.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, I would ask unanimous consent for other guests to be introduced.

[Unanimous consent denied]

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Minimum Wage

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans know that this NDP budget is only making things worse, especially when it comes to jobs and the economy. A dramatic increase to the minimum wage and a new carbon tax will hurt young and low-income Albertans and extremely limit businesses' ability to hire. Not-for-profits and charities are worried about their rising overhead costs during a time when over 100,000 Albertans are out of work. Why is the Premier so rigid on a 2018 timeline to implement a 50 per cent increase to minimum wage when it will just make life harder for Alberta families?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Alberta families that I'm thinking of are the ones who work full-time at very difficult jobs and which deserve the respect of everybody in this Assembly, who do that to raise their families and feed their families, and after working 40 or 50 or 60 hours a week still have to stop at the food bank on their way home to feed their families because right now our minimum wage does not come close to providing a living wage. Quite frankly, that's not the Alberta that I want to be a part of.

**Mr. Jean:** I thank the NDP for taking Wildrose's idea for a small-business tax cut, but then the NDP turned around and made things much, much worse with an expensive new carbon tax. The Edmonton and Calgary chambers of commerce are warning that the impact of this minimum wage hike will make it much harder to hire and for workers to join the workforce. Caring for our vulnerable is a core Alberta value, but creating higher unemployment simply doesn't help anybody. Can the Premier tell Albertans about any economic studies that show how a 50 per cent spike to minimum wage will create jobs?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Labour will be engaging in consultations in the weeks to come to talk about this. When they do, there will be additional information that is provided to speak to the very issue of the fact that when you put more money into the pockets of low-income people, it immediately recycles into the economy, and it actually creates jobs. It doesn't detract from them. You know what else doesn't detract from jobs? Getting rid of poverty and allowing people to support their families.

**Mr. Jean:** Since she wasn't prepared to answer, Mr. Speaker, I will answer. The only analysis on this minimum wage hike that we have seen came from this government's own experts, and they say that it will lead to, quote, significant job loss. End quote. That's not a jobs plan; that's making things worse for Alberta families. This hike, combined with the carbon tax and other tax increases, is doing significant damage to Alberta's economy. Over 100,000 Albertans are out of work, and they are tired of this NDP government's experiments. Premier: will you please consider and back down from these rushed and poorly thought out experiments, that will only hurt Alberta families?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would love for us to continue to grow the level of inequality in this province. They would love for us to walk by those people who are unable to feed their families, who are unable to pay their rent, who are unable to secure affordable housing. That's what they would like us to do, and they'd like us to make sure that we do that while we continue to get a D minus rating based on a record that they support, where we take no action to deal with climate change or greenhouse gas emissions. That's not good governance, and that is not what we're going to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member. Second main question.

#### Nonprofit Organizations and the Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans are feeling that the social costs of rising unemployment and plummeting wages are the responsibility of this government. The NDP carbon tax will cost families \$1,000 per year. The cost of everything for everyone in Alberta will be more expensive. While the Premier is offering pennies back to some few

Albertans on every dollar taken, not-for-profits and charities aren't listed as getting any rebates or exemptions. They get no help as they see their overhead costs rise through the roof. Why is this Premier ramming through a carbon tax that hurts charities and not-for-profits when they're already struggling under this government's actions?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's pretty fair to say that the vast majority of charities and nonprofits would struggle if \$8 billion were taken out of our budget this year. That's what we're not going to do. I will not take advice from them about how to support charities and nonprofits.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, charities and nonprofits need fuel and gas to run. They have to pay for expenses like food and shelter. Under the NDP all of this will be much more expensive for them. Here in Edmonton Hope Mission runs a 24/7 rescue van, that runs on fuel, to help those suffering on the streets. STARS and HALO ambulances require aviation fuel to provide crucial life-saving ambulance service to those in Alberta that need it most. This carbon tax looks like a new tax on charities. Why is the Premier punishing the not-for-profit charities, whose work supports vulnerable Albertans every day, when they need it the most, right now?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to supporting vulnerable Albertans every day. We are doing that by providing stability, by supporting public services, by providing those important front-line public services that those folks over there would have us cut by 20 per cent. You know, it's just a little rich coming from those people over there. We are going to move forward on responsible climate action in order to enhance our ability to get our products to market, to support economic diversification, and to do the right thing on the environment.

**Mr. Jean:** Ignoring the facts as usual.

Alberta charities are the people on the front lines assisting those impacted most by this economic crisis that the province is facing and that was brought on by the NDP government. Meals on Wheels provides home-delivered food services to those in need. Those wheels don't run on solar panels; they run on gas. And now those costs are going way up. When winter comes, homeless shelters will face higher heating costs to provide emergency relief to those in Alberta that are most vulnerable. The carbon tax will make life more difficult for these charities trying to help. Did the Premier not even consider how her plan would hurt these charities on the ground?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, to be clear, the economic crisis that this province is facing is caused by the drop in the international price of oil. I appreciate that the folks over there like to sort of fudge things a little bit, but that's what's going on here in Alberta.

Secondly, let's talk a little bit about Meals on Wheels. Meals on Wheels receives funding from FCSS. FCSS got a significant increase in funding as a result of a decision made by this government. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

Third main question, hon. member.

**Mr. Jean:** Members of the government are wasting the only time we have during the day, Mr. Speaker, to hold this government accountable.

## W-18 Use

**Mr. Jean:** Yesterday we found out that almost nine pounds of the lethal compound W-18 were recently seized in the Edmonton area. W-18 is an opiate that is 100 times stronger than fentanyl, the drug that killed one Albertan almost every single day last year. If W-18 goes into circulation among Alberta's addicts, it could result in hundreds and hundreds of deaths. What steps is this government taking to educate young Albertans and make them aware that this is the most deadly drug that they will ever face?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. Official Opposition leader for the question. You know, we've been out on this a couple of times already, speaking about this drug to the public. We're taking steps to immediately address the fact that this drug is coming into our system. One of the things we have done in this budget is to increase funding to ALERT, who actually did that seizure of W-18, to make sure that those front-line workers are in place to take care of these sorts of problems.

Another step we've taken is to ensure that funding is in place for mental health services and for human services to ensure that vulnerable people aren't falling into these situations.

2:00

**Mr. Jean:** W-18 has no actual uses other than killing people. It is currently not illegal, but hopefully the federal government may soon act and make it so. The police stated that it is so deadly that if the bag that were found were to be launched into the middle of this room, all of us would probably die. This could be the most dangerous street drug that will ever hit Alberta. What steps is the government taking to make sure the drug dealers aren't turning this deadly compound into a street drug, and how will the government educate Albertans on this, which is so, so important to our young people?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, W-18 is very lethal; it's very toxic. That's one of the reasons why within just a few hours of finding out that it was actually seized in Alberta, by the federal testing, we sent a letter immediately to the federal Health minister to make sure that this does go on schedule.

I also want to assure everyone that both ministers in my ministry will be out talking to our communities, and I encourage all members during the constituency break to do the same. This is incredibly toxic and deadly, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Jean:** I'm very pleased to hear the government is aware of this.

This past Tuesday health officials wrote to their emergency department leaders saying that, quote: they may be seeing increasing numbers of overdoses and deaths linked to W-18. End quote. We know that the medical examiner's office is going through its files right now to make sure that it didn't miss any W-18 overdose deaths. Our health system is very concerned, though. Wildrose put out a 10-point plan to deal with fentanyl. Honestly, some of those proposals could work in this current situation. When will this government be announcing a detailed plan to prevent a W-18 crisis from developing any further in Alberta?

**Ms Hoffman:** Certainly, we are very concerned about any illicit opioid use. That's one of the reasons why in the mental health review there was a specific opioid reduction strategy that was



already under way. We also have a fentanyl response team that meets regularly with leaders from all across the province, both in health and in law enforcement, as well as community organizations, to make sure that we're getting this information out to our communities.

As well, as I'm sure members are aware, we've increased access to naloxone kits, which is the antidote to both fentanyl and, hopefully, W-18. The amount required might need to be even more significant because, again, this drug is just so toxic and lethal. It can also be cut into any narcotic, so please be careful.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

### Government Policies

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2016 remains a big disappointment, and so are some of the answers given in QP this week. Let's review. Yesterday our Member for Calgary-West asked the Municipal Affairs minister about a petition from the people of Chestermere. The minister said that she respects their autonomy at the municipality and promised to send a note to the petitioners. What they really want to know is: once the petition is verified, will the minister launch an investigation and commit to making the results of that investigation public?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to clarify that what I said was that the process was that after reviewing all the signatures to the petition and determining whether the petition was sufficient or not, I would send a letter in response to the petition to the people who initiated it. At that point if it is indeed sufficient, then we will, you know, proceed with normal process and do the investigation upon request.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister in question period yesterday said in Hansard: "The three-year fiscal plan we talk about has an accumulated debt limit there." The same minister sponsored Bill 10, removing that debt limit. Let's give the minister a second chance to correct the record. Here's a chance to clear it up, Minister. Did you not know your file, or did you just plain give the wrong answer yesterday?

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Finance I can assure the hon. member that our Minister of Finance knows the files. He has produced one of the best budgets in some of the most difficult economic conditions we have ever seen. [interjections] We're very proud of the work that he's doing.

**The Speaker:** I don't know what he said. I couldn't hear it.

**Mr. McIver:** Wrong answer it is.

The environment minister yesterday said that a couple with children earning \$95,000 receives \$420 in carbon tax rebates. Page 95 of the budget says that rebates are only on natural gas and gasoline. Since \$95,000 yields \$50,000 in take-home pay, and gasoline and natural gas can only cost \$10,000 a year, then \$40,000 of that family's take-home pay is not protected by the rebate. Now that we know how little of a family's take-home pay is protected, how can the Premier say that she has anybody's back?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll just go back to basics on this one. I think we might need a little remedial budget time here. Putting a price on carbon pollution rewards Alberta families, businesses, and communities that make choices to reduce their emissions. Six in 10 Alberta households will receive a rebate that covers the average cost of the carbon levy they pay. Low-income consumers, including many seniors, typically use less energy than average, meaning their rebate could more than cover the carbon cost they pay, resulting in more money in their pockets. All Albertans who reduce their emissions will also reduce their actual costs below the average. Add that to the direct savings on . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Calgary-Elbow.

### Postsecondary Board of Governor Appointments

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Advanced Education rose in this House to talk about the appointment of board of governor positions throughout the postsecondary sector. Now, while I agree diversity is very important, I also believe that most current board members are dedicated community servants working for little pay and offer deep experience that is of tremendous benefit to our province. Recently I was told that a letter was sent to the board of the University of Calgary informing them that none of the current board member appointments would be renewed when their terms end. To the minister: is that true?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you to the Member for Calgary-Elbow for the question. It is, of course, true that we are looking at all of our appointments to our boards in postsecondaries across the sector. We have a very open and transparent process for receiving those applications and reviewing the board member applications, and we will make sure that the best people who represent the communities that they serve and have the right skills will be appointed to the board, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Clark:** I'll take that as a yes, Mr. Speaker.

The past government's track record may not have been perfect, but I believe that the vast, vast majority of appointments were merit based. Removing all board members means that Alberta's postsecondary institutions lose valuable institutional knowledge and the expertise and experience required to govern large and complex organizations. Again to the Minister of Advanced Education: if you thought the PCs populated the boards with their friends, by replacing all of those appointments, aren't you just populating the boards with your friends?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, I can assure the member that if I only had my own friends to choose from, there would no board appointments that I'd be able to make.

It strikes me as odd, Mr. Speaker, that we talk about merit-based appointments, yet approximately 80 per cent of our board members on postsecondary education boards are men over the age of 65. It seems to me that if we're going to have people who reflect the communities that they serve, we would have more women and we would have people from ethnic communities. Those people need to be better represented on the boards.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I do absolutely agree that diversity is important.

I want to know if this purge is going on at all institutions or just the University of Calgary. Once more to the minister: have other postsecondary institutions been informed that their board of governors will not be renewed, and if so, which ones?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are working with our boards and our postsecondary institutions across the province to make sure that we have board appointments made in a timely fashion. We are working together with administration in the existing boards to select candidates, and they are helping us out in that process. Our process is open and transparent. Anybody is welcome to apply, and we are reviewing them based on the criteria that are set out in the applications.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

#### Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In our current fiscal times we know that departments within the government have had to make hard decisions. Given that we still need to reduce serious crime in Alberta and given our government's commitment to creating safer communities for all Albertans, to the Minister of Justice: can you talk about the increased funding for the Alberta law enforcement response teams and why our government is investing in this organization?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. Well, this government knows what valuable work ALERT does in ensuring that there's an integrated law enforcement team that can respond to issues in this province. One of the issues has been highlighted today, which is the emerging issue of W-18. Fentanyl is a similar issue, and they are doing fantastic work with that. We think that it's absolutely critical that we be investing in these front-line services. We've been hearing from stakeholders that they feel the same way, so we've made that investment.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've heard from my constituents about how much they value the work that ALERT does and given ALERT's specific integrated approach to serious crime, can the minister explain how ALERT's approach helps law enforcement connect across Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the critical question. Well, of course, we know that crime doesn't stop at the borders of cities, so that's why ALERT doesn't stop at the borders of cities either. It allows services to place members together in one unit so that they can be integrated, so that they can share information, so that we're sure that the intelligence is flowing to the right places so that they can combat and dismantle these complex organized crime institutions, that would otherwise prey on our vulnerable citizens.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that you have transferred 40 sheriffs from the safe communities and neighbourhoods units back under the Justice and Solicitor General department, can you explain the reason for this transfer and how this impacts the work ALERT does?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I want to stress that this will maintain the same number of front-line positions in ALERT, so the safer communities and neighbourhoods, or SCAN, organization and the surveillance sheriffs will continue to do their important work. They'll just do it directly under the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General. The transfer of these positions will allow ALERT to use its budget to focus on its core mandate, which is dismantling organized crime. We think that this will work a little bit better for everyone going forward. I think the critical point here is to ensure that the same number of bodies will be on the front lines.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

#### Tax Policy

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For Calgarians, living under this NDP government is anything but priceless. Thanks to the NDP, the typical Calgary family will be paying an extra \$136 for the increase in property taxes, a thousand for the carbon tax, \$200 for the gas tax. That means that just going about your daily life will cost you \$1,336 plus an extra \$2,000 for debt repayment. When will this government stop hurting Calgary families that are simply trying to deal with being unemployed?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. We need to clarify a couple of things here. First of all, our budget is moving Alberta forward. Our budget is investing in infrastructure, it's investing in families, it's investing in education, it's investing in health care, many of the things that the party over there would not invest in and, in fact, would cut, although we're not quite sure of their numbers yet because I think they're still working on a shadow budget. But one doesn't know.

**Mr. Panda:** Given that this government can't seem to help itself when it comes to throwing new taxes at everyday Albertans and given that the NDP government's budget is centred around making things worse for Alberta families, including Calgarians who are unemployed, I'm sure the NDP government will get tired of overtaxing Albertans with a carbon tax and move on to other sources of revenue on the backs of Calgary taxpayers. Will this government come clean and tell us their timeline for introducing the ND PST?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, we have said it before; we'll say it again for the hon. members opposite. There will be no PST during the term of this government.

You know, you would think that an Official Opposition worth its salt would be able to find some real issues instead of making them up, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Panda:** This NDP government did not campaign on a \$58 billion debt or a \$3 billion carbon tax. Given that the Premier has said that she won't rule out future talks on PST, saying that, quote, in the long term is this a conversation we need to have; I think it is,

how can Albertans trust this Premier? A tax is a tax is a tax. Will the NDP commit to not bringing any other tax, levy, assessment cess, or duty that hurts Albertans?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, this government is doing I think an excellent job with the budget in very, very challenging times. The hon. members opposite know – they know – that the price of oil has resulted in an enormous drop in the revenues of this government. We will not be bringing in a PST. We brought forward the budget. That's the direction we're taking. Had the previous government taken advice and diversified the economy, Alberta would not be in this position.

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

### Job Creation

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has embraced Dr. Dodge's recommendations for economic stimulus. Infrastructure spends can be cost-effective and impactful if effectively implemented during a downturn. However, given the epic failure of the much-touted one-job plan and now the bill about nothing, it would appear this government is relying solely on deficit-funded infrastructure to create unsustainable, short-term employment. To the Minister of Infrastructure: specifically, how many of the 27,000 jobs promised to Albertans will be directly or indirectly created by the infrastructure plan?

**The Speaker:** The Infrastructure minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The current expenditures that are under discussion in the Assembly, relative to an increase of 15 per cent over the previous government's capital spending, will produce at least 10,000 new jobs. It will also preserve many more jobs that might otherwise be lost.

**Mr. Gotfried:** So 16,999 to go.

Mr. Speaker, given that agriculture, forestry, and tourism are key sectors that need your support in order to successfully expand and diversify the economy and given that development and implementation of concrete strategies and tactics are integral to maintaining and growing markets, to the minister of economic development: what specific initiatives, if any, are you currently – and I mean today – already driving forward in order to support and stimulate export growth and market expansion?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the important question. Just this morning I was in Calgary, actually at the Glenmore Fabricators facility, announcing our \$75 million capital investment tax credit, which, quite frankly, is going to result in thousands of jobs. We anticipate about \$700 million worth of investment coming in. This is going to have a significant impact on communities throughout the province, quite frankly. That is one initiative. Earlier this week I announced the investor tax credit. We have the Infrastructure minister with his \$34 billion . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that announcements and action are two separate things with this government.

Given that Alberta's nonenergy GDP, at \$271 billion, still ranks as Canada's third-largest economy and given that this government seems intent on purposefully damaging our key economic engine to

make the nonenergy slices of the pie appear artificially more successful, again to the same minister: what specific initiatives are you driving forward to diversify the economy, what indicators are you measuring, and where can Albertans view the results?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Listen, there's one party in this House that made a whole bunch of announcements that they couldn't back up, and it's quite clear where that came from. Quite frankly, we're not only committing; we have an Alberta jobs plan, and we are acting.

To the member's question, he will be able to look at my ministry's website as far as tracking outcomes, but I can tell the member: not only are we investing in jobs and supporting our job creators here in the province, but we're also working at getting a pipeline both east and west, something that the previous government failed to do.

### Paramedics' Professional Governance

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, the Alberta College of Paramedics is set to be imminently moved from being legislated under the Health Disciplines Act to the Health Professions Act. While this eventual move is appropriate, many paramedics are very worried about the approaching deadline, especially in light of recent issues facing the college. Paramedics have expressed concerns to me over such things as excessive membership fees and the difficulty that those with PTSD have in returning to work, serious issues that are still outstanding today. Has the minister also heard these concerns, and what steps is she taking to address them?

2:20

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much to the member for the important question. We have been working in partnership, since the day I got on the job, to make sure that we're moving forward with updating the Health Professions Act. Certainly, 28 years is far too long in an environment that's so dynamic, like health care, and where new professions are continuing to evolve. There will be changes being brought forward, both through the Assembly and through other means, to address not just paramedics but other health professionals, and certainly I meet regularly with their college as well as with the organizations that represent their members on the labour side as well.

Thank you.

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, given that the role of the regulatory college is to protect safety and the interests of the public and given that the best practice is to keep regulatory functions of a college separate from the functions that are directed at the economic or social well-being of members of the profession, can the minister assure this House that she is committed to keeping the college and professional association clearly separated during their transition to the Health Professions Act?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In Alberta we have a number of different associations where the college and the association are actually in one, and I've learned a lot about that, specifically on the health side. Education has a similar set-up through the ATA as well. Certainly, there's no intention through changes in the HPA for us to be impacting the current model, and if we were ever thinking about making changes to the association

and the college side with any organization, we'd certainly have conversations with them and their members.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that there are still outstanding issues surrounding the Alberta College of Paramedics, including formal complaints that are yet unresolved, and given that many of the college's membership are very, very concerned about the implications of this transition, will the minister consider conducting an independent review to resolve these concerns prior to moving them under the Health Professions Act?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The work that's been happening around the Health Professions Act has been happening for years. Actually, in my very first meeting with the college I said, "Name your top two priorities," and number one was moving forward with changes to the Health Professions Act. I appreciate that there's a desire to resolve concerns around complaints. There's certainly a fair process for doing that. But I think that if we were to extend the time for the transition to the Health Professions Act, it would be disrespectful to both the college as well as to the professionals who want to be seen as part of that organization moving forward. Certainly, due process will be followed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### Education Property Tax in Cold Lake

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wood Buffalo-Cold Lake region has the highest unemployment rate in Alberta, at almost 10 per cent. It also has the highest vacancy rates, at 22.3 per cent. Many families have been worried about making ends meet for months already. Now Cold Lake residents are hearing that the province's part of the property tax will jump up 15 per cent this year. These higher taxes will make a bad situation worse. Cold Lake wants to know: how can the Premier justify hiking taxes on those bearing the brunt of this recession?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that this government is tremendously concerned about the number of Albertans who are struggling due to the drop in the price of oil, and we certainly would not disrespect them by increasing that. Education property taxes have accounted for 32 per cent of education funding. It did in 2013, '14, '15, and will again in 2016. In fact, because Alberta has been growing and property values have gone up, we were actually able to reduce the mill rate for this year.

**Mr. Cyr:** Given that Cold Lake has seen school enrolment increase by only 1.9 per cent this year, not 15 per cent, and given that Cold Lake's mayor, Craig Copeland, and the rest of the city council know that times are tough this year and wanted to hold the line on municipal property taxes, why did the NDP choose to hike taxes and put families at risk of losing their homes instead of finding savings within the bloated government to cover the increase in the Education budget?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's a difficult circumstance in Cold Lake and many other areas in the province, but it's important to understand that, in fact, the rate in regard to education taxes has not changed, nor has it changed from 2013.

We're looking for ways by which we can help people. Certainly, the way that I can in Education is to make sure that we fund our schools properly, not making drastic cuts to teachers and to school boards and so forth. Certainly, school boards around the province have been very appreciative of that, as have parents and families and teachers and students.

**Mr. Cyr:** Given that this government has made zero effort to find efficiencies to avoid overtaxing Albertans and given that in spite of all the layoffs and closures and uncertainty that they're facing, the people in my riding are keeping their heads held up high, and since they all want to stop the increase in taxes, what steps will the government take to lower taxes for Cold Lake, which has seen double-digit increases to the education tax over the last five years?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I want to state that there is no policy change here. There was no increase in this whatsoever. For every thousand dollars of assessed value that an individual has, last year an individual had to pay \$2.50 in education property tax, and this year they will pay \$2.48. We stand strong with the people of Alberta who are struggling. We care for them. We're doing our very best to get jobs to them, to get them back in action, to stimulate this. There's not a policy decision that would not be in their best interests.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

#### Municipal Funding and Tax Collection

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2016 has raised many concerns across this province. One concern that affects all Albertans is this government's decision to cut funding to municipalities while also passing on forced tax increases, which are then passed on to local taxpayers. To the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. The city of Edmonton alone will receive \$20 million less in MSI funding, which they are counting on for neighbourhood renewal. Why did you pull the rug out from underneath our capital city, Minister?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government certainly recognizes the importance of infrastructure to municipalities, which is what MSI is designed for, which is why we're moving forward with a \$34.5 billion capital plan, which Edmonton gets a substantial portion of. We are maintaining strong supports for municipalities despite a 20 per cent drop in the revenues, which we did not pass on to municipalities. We are very proud of the support we provide to our municipal leaders across the province and proud of our investments in Albertans.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has decided to end the practice of charging provincially owned buildings like postsecondary institutions their share of education tax and given that these facilities are located across this province from Olds to Lethbridge to Grande Prairie, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why are you increasing the taxes for business owners in any city with a provincially owned building at a time when they can least afford it?

**The Speaker:** The minister of seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you. Our government is very proud of our relationship with municipalities and of the investments that we've made in their communities. The previous government made the decision to cut these taxes, and we were not able to reverse every cut that's been made previously. Certainly, the opposition, you know, that party, was the one who cut them, and we aren't able to reverse every one.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you for not giving me an answer.

Mr. Speaker, given that municipalities operate buses, police cars, fire trucks, and other work vehicles and given that in the city of Calgary our Mayor Nenshi has stated that the carbon tax will cost the city \$2.7 million next year, then rising to \$6.5 million, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: if Calgary alone will pay this much, how much money will the carbon tax cost other municipalities across this province?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we were very clear in the budget papers that 6 in 10 Albertan households will of course receive a rebate of their carbon levy costs. However, the remainder of those investments will be made in municipalities, will be made in indigenous communities, will be made in small business and other undertakings, ensuring that we have robust investments in energy efficiency plus \$2.2 billion in green infrastructure like public transit.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

2:30

#### Transportation Alternatives

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last weekend I attended a conference on active transportation, and I was reminded of the importance of encouraging more Albertans to cycle, both for the benefits to their physical and mental health and because it can help them save money and achieve the goals of our climate leadership plan. However, if we want to increase the number of cyclists on the road, we need to modernize our policies and regulations related to cycling. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: what is your department doing to increase the availability, accessibility, and safety of alternative transportation methods like cycling?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for the question. My department is in fact preparing a long-term transportation strategy for review. This will cover all forms of transportation, including active transportation modes. We're looking at a number of goals, including reducing emissions, which cycling certainly does, reducing congestion, and ensuring sustainability and affordability. The bicycle is an excellent vehicle to get to all of those goals.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that I was happy to hear that a steering committee has been appointed to help create an Alberta bicycle design guide to offer municipalities guidance and support in developing cycling infrastructure, again to the Minister of Transportation: will the public have an opportunity to provide input on these new policies that may help increase bicycle ridership?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the purpose of the Alberta bicycle facility design guide will be to provide information, guidance, and engineering details to designers and city planners – [interjections] do I really have to be heckled about bicycles? – to promote uniformity in planning, design, and operation of cycling facilities. As the guide is developed, there will be direct consultation with stakeholders, including bicycle associations and municipalities.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that municipalities will be the ones that are tasked with implementing these policies and building local transportation infrastructure such as the bike lanes which will be passing by my office soon, again to the same minister: what supports are available to municipalities to help increase the development of these transportation networks throughout the province?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, support for transportation and transit options for Albertans allows them to choose ways so they can get to work, school, medical appointments, the grocery store, and so on. Our government is engaging with Albertans about future transit investments. We've just opened the third call for applications to GreenTRIP funding in February. There is \$130 million to fulfill the Calgary Regional Partnership's \$800 million allocation and \$285 million for other municipalities outside the capital region.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

#### Seniors and the Carbon Levy

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been fairly clear that the purpose of her \$3 billion carbon tax is to alter the energy consumption behaviours of Albertans that she considers to be incorrect. In Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills we are home to a greater population of older folks than the average. As many of our seniors are on fixed incomes and cannot afford new cars or furnaces and don't want to go into debt to do it, can the minister of seniors please enlighten us with regard to what specific behaviours she considers to be incorrect, and how does she expect seniors to alter those behaviours?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, the climate leadership plan contains within it a rebate to 6 in 10 households, and certainly low-income seniors would fall within that rebate. All Albertans, regardless of where they live, if their net income is below a certain amount, will receive the rebate.

Now, the balance of the revenues will be invested in a whole bunch of undertakings that the Official Opposition opposes; for example, clean tech in oil and gas, new jobs in renewables and in efficiency, Mr. Speaker. Those are the economies of tomorrow that the Official Opposition . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, given that over the past week we've heard a lot about the wonders of the carbon tax rebate program and given that some of the government members would have you believe that this rebate covers 100 per cent of the increased costs – the rebate won't come close – did the minister of seniors conduct a

comprehensive economic analysis to determine the full cost to our seniors?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, you know, the approach that this government took in developing the climate leadership plan was to examine evidence from economists that is real, in addition to climate change being real, Mr. Speaker. You know, that's why we landed the rebates exactly where we did, based on average use, and the balance of the investments will be made in clean tech, in oil and gas, in diversification, and in other initiatives that we know work to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and diversify the economy.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Rocky View handibus is a charity in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that transports seniors to important health care appointments and drives over 550,000 kilometres a year to do that and that this NDP carbon tax will increase the cost to that charity by \$6,000 per year in extra fuel alone, can the minister please update this House: why is she downloading the costs onto seniors and charities?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, first of all, we do have a robust rebate program in place. Certainly, 6 in 10 households will be receiving one regardless of whether one lives in a lodge or a nursing home or in an apartment or a townhouse or a single detached house. In addition, there will be \$645 million invested in various energy efficiency undertakings, not just for individuals but also for organizations, nonprofits, charities, and others. Those are investments that the Official Opposition rejects. Those are investments that would never be made under their sit on their hands and do nothing about climate change policy.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

#### Farm and Ranch Worker Regulation Consultation

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In March I raised a concern that rural Albertans were not being included in the conversation around Bill 6. I asked the agriculture minister why meetings weren't taking place in rural Alberta and why meetings were taking place while seeding and calving were occurring. The minister of agriculture promised me they would be going out and talking to Albertans. Well, we FOIPed the feedback on Bill 6, and it wasn't pretty. To the minister of agriculture: are you now ready to start listening?

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you for the question. I think it was a question. You know, information from the survey – there were a lot of options we looked at. We've landed on the option we think made the most sense, made the most sense for the industry, the most sense for the workers. Going forward, I'm looking forward to the consultation process getting started. We are listening to those producers and the workers, knowing that these are busy times. A lot are finishing up their calving season now, and a lot have already started the season because of the warm spring that we've had. I'm looking forward to the consultation process, making sure that we start them when most are available.

Thank you.

**Ms Jansen:** With respect, your listening skills aren't better here than they are out there.

Given that the concern of the farm and ranch workers is that they haven't been consulted at all by this government and given all their

worries about this legislation and the yet to be seen regulations, which they say will have a significant negative impact on their lives, again to the minister of agriculture, and I hope you're listening: what steps will you be taking to repair the relationship with Alberta farmers, that has been so damaged by this process?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. I would disagree that the relationship has been so damaged. We've had very good conversations with producers. The producers themselves have formed an ag coalition, where I've had very robust conversations with them. I would like to remind the member that this legislation that we're looking forward to, the recommendations from producers, the legislation itself with the recommendations for the regulations, is to help workers. It's important to remember that the legislation is to help the workers and farmers and ranchers in co-operation with the farmers and ranchers themselves that were able to know the industry and able to get that important information.

Thank you.

**Ms Jansen:** Okay. Madam Speaker, given that in March I asked that question about the consultations that you were doing on Bill 6 and you had an opportunity to observe the process and see the farmers' and ranchers' feedback and the concern that rural Alberta has, it seems that your government has turned a deaf ear to their concerns. We have seen this in the FOIP documents. Again to the minister of agriculture: how are you going to incorporate the feedback from these concerned Albertans, and are you listening at all?

2:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm going to assume that she's talking about the occupational health and safety recommendations that we're going to be looking at for the consultations that have yet to take place. I'm really looking forward to that input. We're going to have upwards of 72 different members – interested workers, experts in the industry, farmers and ranchers – on those technical working groups. I'm looking forward to the recommendations, recommendations that we're going to use to shape the actual legislation as we go forward.

Thank you.

#### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

#### Leninade

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last weekend a new candy store opened up in my hometown. As I perused the shelves of colourful goodies, I came across a section of drinks. Instantly I knew exactly what I was going to buy. It was a bottle of Leninade, spelled after comrade Lenin, of course. Now, as I am always one for being cordial, I thought that this might make the perfect gift for our dear Premier. I picked up the bottle and read the front. The Drink for the Masses, it said, and A Taste Worth Standing in Line For. Seriously, how could I not taste-test this drink after such a proletariat description? After all, the members across the aisle have

been drinking a similar orange drink for years, and they're still grinning.

My first sip revealed a smooth, bubbly, effervescent taste, almost saying, "I'm really trying hard to impress you," so I imbibed some more. However, halfway through the bottle I noticed a distinct, unpleasant aftertaste. I turned the bottle around and read, "Our 5-Year Plan: Drink a bottle a day for five years and become a Hero of Socialist Flavour." I thought: oh, I get it. It's an acquired taste. You have to drink the orange brew for a long time before you can actually appreciate the true value. Well, Madam Speaker, I am proud to say that I put that bottle down knowing full well that the second half was going to be about the same as the first, hard to stomach with a bitter aftertaste.

It doesn't take a Russian rocket scientist to realize that this NDP government has embarked on a scheme that is unsustainable and unpalatable, and not surprisingly Albertans are waking up to this realization of what the orange crush really means: high debt, loss of jobs, and loss of hope.

Madam Premier, I'm deeply sorry for drinking your drink, and I promise I'll never do it again. In fact, I plan on telling Albertans to stay away from your special brand of orange drink for the next three years.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

#### Homelessness Initiatives

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Homelessness is a complex social problem that occurs at the intersection of systemic and personal challenges and is compounded by a lack of social supports delivered at the right time in the right place to the right person. I want to take this opportunity to advocate for the continued support of Alberta's 10-year plan to end homelessness. As the hon. Member for Calgary-North West talked about last week, despite what we agree is unfounded criticism of the plan's effectiveness, we know that the 10-year plan is working. Calgary has housed 7,000 people who would otherwise be homeless. Street homelessness in Edmonton has decreased 31 per cent since the start of their 10-year plan. But the plan is not complete, and it needs the support of this government and all members to see it through.

Ending homelessness is not about never ever seeing someone homeless again. Life is not fair. Destabilization due to the death of a loved one, job loss, mental health issues, addiction, or fleeing domestic violence, unfortunately, will happen. The purpose of the 10-year plan is to react quickly to homelessness when it does happen. This means valuing people and building a responsive system that gets people into safe, appropriate, and affordable housing with immediate supports and a secure place from which to start working on issues. This will make the experience of homelessness about days and weeks, not months and years. While I support this government's commitment to invest in housing, I urge the government to include permanent supportive housing as part of that plan.

Another important tool is data. Good data makes for good decisions. One of the biggest challenges facing the 10-year plan is creating a common set of data about who is homeless and what services they are accessing. I'm hoping this government will use their influence as a funder to compel common data collection across agencies serving at-risk populations. Simply put, data sharing should be a condition to receive funding.

A lot of great work is happening in our communities, and there is a tremendous amount of expertise within the organizations that

make up the 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness. I encourage the government to listen closely to them as we work together to end homelessness.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

#### Red Deer-North Constituency Acknowledgement

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Fellow members, today marks day 353 since Albertans made the decision to end a tired, old government of 40-plus years. Collectively we have effected changes demonstrating fiscal responsibility, diversity, sustainability, and leadership that speak to the needs and resilience of Alberta.

Today I wish to speak to how our government has recognized the importance of my constituency of Red Deer-North. In June the Indigenous Relations ministry rekindled hope and connection by participating in Walking with Our Sisters in memory of murdered and missing aboriginal women. In September the Finance ministry consulted Red Deerian stakeholders regarding budget feedback. Doors were opened as well as eyes and ears. Thank you to Municipal Affairs for the funding supports that enhance the capacity of the Red Deer Airport, which is creating jobs and spurring economic development. Thank you to the Health ministry for the obstetrics expansion and the upgraded detox beds and to Advanced Education for a generous investment in Red Deer College. The Infrastructure ministry has made significant GreenTRIP investment, enhancing our transit groundwork and a \$100 million investment through the Alberta jobs plan for our Gaetz Avenue interchange.

Our government spoke to stimulating the economy and creating jobs by expanding infrastructure. I am proud to speak to these commitments kept. As Red Deer prepares to host the Canada Winter Games in 2019, this venture meets the immediate needs of Red Deerians during our challenging economic situation. It sustains future growth while enriching our tourism industry. On day 353 I am delighted by the progress I am able to speak to within Red Deer.

Thank you to the ministries for visiting my community, for acknowledging the opportunity it embodies, and for opening the doors to our needs. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

#### Aspen Centre Permaculture Demonstration Site

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege today to rise and discuss an important and diverse enterprise in my constituency of Stony Plain. Kurtis Ewanchuk, whom I had the pleasure of introducing earlier, is the head of the Aspen Centre for Integral Living. The Aspen Centre for Integral Living is a permaculture demonstration site located in the Sturgeon watershed in the North Saskatchewan basin. The goal of the centre is to "contribute to our community and ecology through resilience building and permaculture education, demonstration and community development." The Aspen centre includes many members and participants from Stony Plain and Parkland county. This is a critical initiative for Albertans.

Permaculture is the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and nonmaterial needs in a sustainable way. This organization makes me very excited and proud about the

future of our ecology and the possibilities this approach offers. As the Aspen centre states, we are “solutions-oriented and [positivistic] about the challenges we are faced with as a society,” and we choose “to take that responsibility for ourselves and the needs of our community without delay.”

For nine years the Aspen Centre for Integral Living has been educating residents about sustainable living, reforestation, watershed preservation and restoration, and sustainable infrastructure in a hands-on, experiential way. In September the Aspen centre will be hosting the 2016 Northern Alberta Permaculture Convergence. This annual gathering provides an opportunity for experiential learning of sustainable living. It is not enough to know our ecology is at risk. We need to grow our knowledge and skills base of how to take care of our land and our people. This offers a path of regenerative ecological design, forward planning, and working with natural patterns instead of against them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

### Airdrie Home & Lifestyle Show

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to talk about the Airdrie Home & Lifestyle Show, happening this weekend. This annual event features over 200 exhibitors aimed at providing unique consumer products which are community, home, and lifestyle focused.

It is the perfect opportunity for families and friends to come together, to shop locally, and to see some of the amazing entrepreneurial ventures taking place in our community. This well-attended community event also features local not-for-profit community groups. It is a perfect occasion for you and your family to find out what programs are available in the Airdrie community for children, youth, families, and seniors and to learn about local volunteer opportunities.

This is not your typical trade show, Madam Speaker. There are so many fantastic events that families can come and enjoy. This year's 2016 Airdrie Home & Lifestyle Show offers science experiments, art exhibits, reptile shows, fashion shows, dance recitals, and a robotics demonstration.

2:50

Madam Speaker, this is an event I have attended almost every year since I was a child, and I encourage everyone who is in the area to come on out. The event is to be held at Genesis Place on East Lake Boulevard. Admission is only five bucks, and kids under 12 get in for free with an adult. You can find a link on my Facebook page with more details.

Madam Speaker, Airdrie is a fantastic place to live and raise a family. I want to thank the Airdrie Chamber of Commerce for what I'm sure will be another successful event. I hope you can make it out.

### Notices of Motions

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) I'm rising to advise the House that on Monday, May 2, written questions 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10 will be accepted, and written questions 1, 4, and 6 will be dealt with.

Also on Monday, May 2, motions for returns 1 to 17 as well as 19, 26, 27, 31, and 33 will be accepted, and motions for returns 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, and 32 will be dealt with.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to table a press release from the city of Cold Lake showing that it's the fifth straight year of double-digit education levies for Cold Lake.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other tablings? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to table the requisite number of copies in response to an earlier question from the Member for Calgary-Elbow regarding the appointment of board members to the University of Calgary. This is a letter dated April 6, 2016, addressed to the chair of the board of governors at the University of Calgary, sent from me, in which I write, "I understand that there are many members seeking reappointment who have made significant contributions in their roles, and I would strongly encourage applicants seeking reappointment to apply."

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Larivee, Minister of Municipal Affairs, pursuant to the Government Organization Act the Alberta Boilers Safety Association annual report 2015.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

**The Clerk:** Government Motion 15.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have, according to my business, Government Motion 14. Can we clarify that, please? I heard 15.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I also heard 15. It's 14?

**Mr. Mason:** It should be 14, yes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is 14, correct?

**The Clerk:** Well, then, Government Motion 14, hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much.

### Amendments to Standing Orders

14. Mr. Mason moved:  
Be it resolved that Standing Order 52.01(1) be amended as follows:
  - a) in clause (a) by striking out "Seniors" and substituting "Seniors and Housing",
  - b) in clause (b) by striking out "Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour" and substituting "Labour", and
  - c) in clause (c) by striking out "Aboriginal Relations" and substituting "Indigenous Relations".

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Speaker, this merely changes the Standing Orders to conform with the current titles of government departments.



**The Deputy Speaker:** This motion is debatable under Standing Order 18(1)(i). Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to this?

[Government Motion 14 carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

#### Meeting During Consideration of Main Estimates

15. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee be authorized to meet during the consideration of the 2016-17 main estimates.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is déjà vu all over again.

This is a very important committee. It wishes to continue its work during the break, and we would like to accommodate that. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the motion?

[Government Motion 15 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

##### Bill 1

#### Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act

[Debate adjourned April 20: Mr. Cooper speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak at second reading of Bill 1, the government's flagship bill of this sitting, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. I'd like to first discuss this bill briefly in terms of what it actually looks like on paper, and then I'll move on to a frank discussion of what this bill truly does.

This is an eight-page bill, of which five pages are either blank or the cover page, so it only contains three pages of any substance. In terms of true content, even these three pages include a formatted title, a definition of what a minister is, and a page of preamble. It is important to note that the preamble is not technically part of the law. It is, quite simply, flowery political verbiage, which fits into the government of the day's ideological rhetoric.

Again, going back to the overview of its contents, the five sections of the job-creation plan all refer to the minister and take no real legislative action. The closest thing that they have to any reasonable measures is contained on page 2, section 2, which reads:

The Minister may establish programs that . . .

- (a) create partnerships that support entrepreneurship and a focus on innovation,
- (b) increase access to capital,
- (c) help businesses to grow and succeed,
- (d) help working people upgrade their skills and secure employment,
- (e) help communities and regions build on their economic strengths,
- (f) increase the development and adoption of Alberta innovations, and
- (g) support export development.

Unfortunately, even these politically charged buzz phrases are not entrenched. Section 2 in full passage states that "the Minister may

establish programs that focus on supporting working people and job creators, attracting investment and diversifying Alberta's economy," and so on and so on.

Madam Speaker, in essence the minister may implement programs that do any of those seven things but, then again, the minister may not. This type of rhetorical language is an extremely disappointing example of poor legislation, unless it is simply a means for the NDP to create legislation to help push their ideological agenda. This leads me to the next part of my discussion, which is the intent of this bill.

Madam Speaker, in essence, what we are debating here is a mandate letter, which does create one job, and that's the minister's. At a time when businesses, entire industries, and families alike are facing economic hardship and are worried about how to make ends meet, this government is focusing on who they think is most important: itself. This bill shows that the government is more interested in making its members feel important than creating real legislation that creates real jobs. If the NDP was really concerned about jobs, then it would not be taking more money from businesses and individuals during a recession to pay for their expensive political promises instead of trying to finance them through savings within a government that's one of the most expensive in this country. This government is continuing down a very risky spending path, one leading to higher taxes, government charges on everything, and a growing deficit. Madam Speaker, soon we'll be spending more than \$2 billion a year on interest payments to the banks instead of on schools, hospitals, and the roads that we need. To quote my hon. colleague from Strathmore-Brooks, "This isn't just bad financial management; this is morally repugnant."

3:00

The Premier claims to repudiate her own party's Communist Manifesto, that will kill jobs in the oil and gas sector during a time of major recession, but then she creates a bill that is aimed at helping Alberta through tough times but that ignores this important job-creating sector. It doesn't create a single job for Albertans who need it most.

Generally, Madam Speaker, past governments have used things such as mandate letters to achieve the exact same ends this bill does. Mandate letters are usually formally published documents from the Premier to the ministers which give them the general direction in which they are to operate. Effectively, this government is using Bill 1 as a mandate letter. This sets a precedent that I'm not sure this government wants to follow. Going forward, maybe the solution is to forward all mandate letters to the Legislature for review. In that way, we can help moderate this government's radical ideological agenda. Maybe this would give us enough opportunity to convince them to focus on bringing back the Alberta advantage instead of their job-killing carbon tax.

Madam Speaker, Albertans and this Official Opposition are deeply concerned by this empty shell of a bill. It does nothing to explain how the NDP will avoid creating another wasteful program like the failed job subsidy program, which they finally cancelled after it created zero jobs. Bill 1 doesn't do anything new or specific. Ministers can already create programs. This bill assigns no powers to the minister that he and other ministers don't already have, and it doesn't allow for much public accountability.

According to section 4 the minister must report on progress at least once a year to the Executive Council but then has no obligation to make those reports public. I will also note that the wording of section 4 puts a substantial obligation on not only the minister but directly ties the Premier to this bill. Section 4 presently reads: "The Minister must annually, and more frequently if the Premier directs, report to the Executive Council on the Minister's progress in

establishing and implementing any programs under section 2.” This places an onus on the Premier directly to ensure that this empty job bill translates into real jobs. A failure in this respect is a direct reflection on not only the minister and cabinet but directly on the Premier. I hope this government recognizes that. Albertans will, and the blame will be directed right to the top, to the Premier.

Albertans are already worried and anxious about the future. There is nothing in this bill to reassure them. Rather, it just underscores the fact that this government doesn’t have a real plan to promote job creation or diversify the economy. Albertans want a government that will fight for them in these difficult economic times, not one that will waste time and taxpayer dollars on this skeleton of a bill. Wildrose has released a 12-point jobs action plan that does propose solutions such as reducing small-business taxes and providing tax relief to families and stability for our energy sector.

Madam Speaker, highlights of the Wildrose jobs action plan include providing a 1 per cent cut to the small-business tax, which we’re glad to see our government take our advice on; reducing WCB premiums by 50 per cent for the first 100 employees in each business and eliminating premiums for new hires until the WCB’s assets are drawn down to 114 per cent of their liabilities; cutting red tape by 20 per cent by 2019 and implementing a one-for-one rule on the introduction of new regulations; cancelling the NDP’s \$3 billion carbon tax until a full economic impact analysis is conducted; and enhancing opportunities for apprentices to work on provincial builds so they can finish their training. If this bill was focused on proper principles, it would have included some of these points. They would have legislated change instead of flowery talking points that are merely insulting to the tens of thousands of Albertans who are out of work.

Madam Speaker, Bill 1, the minister’s mandate letter, represents a missed opportunity to propose constructive solutions. It contains no indication of what the NDP will actually do for Albertans, and for that reason I will not be supporting this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise and address Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. On the surface and by reading the title, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, you might think that this is a bill worthy of consideration. It would make you want to read on and see what this bill contains. It was really quite a short read, and I found this bill really lacks any real content or original ideas. In fact, I’d call it vacuous, and as of yet we haven’t heard the minister provide a compelling reason for it other than as a big talking point on jobs to distract from the government’s bad policies.

Madam Speaker, this bill, in my opinion, is quite unnecessary. Let me show you a few examples from the bill itself. On page 2, if you care to follow along, under the heading Establishment of Programs:

- (a) create partnerships that support entrepreneurship and a focus on innovation.

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade looks after this already, or at least I hope they do.

- (b) increase access to capital.

Again, they already do this. I think they brag about doing it through the ATB, so why the bill?

- (c) help businesses to grow and succeed.

You know, I’m beginning to see a trend here. Guess who is already responsible for helping the businesses grow and succeed? Yes, it’s the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade.

Let me quickly skip to points (e) and (f).

- (e) help communities and regions build on their economic strengths,
- (f) increase the development and adoption of Alberta innovations.

Yes, folks, you guessed it. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade is already empowered to do this on this front, too.

Let’s go back to (d).

- (d) help working people upgrade their skills and secure employment.

Yet again we have ministries that already look after this. In this case it’s looked after by different ministries – the Ministry of Human Services, the Ministry of Labour – so hopefully the sharing of responsibilities with a third ministry as well as the federal government won’t mean that too many cooks are in the kitchen to effectively get anything done.

Finally, we come to the last of the government’s points under Establishment of Programs. That would be

- (g) support export development.

The Premier herself would normally be looking after this as she’s the one who heads up the ministry of international and intergovernmental relations. It would be interesting to hear if international trade has entirely moved from the IIR department or if there’s a hybrid going on.

Madam Speaker, as I read through the document, I wondered if there was anyone consulting appropriate ministers and getting feedback from them on what they were already doing, but what would be even more interesting is if the Minister of Economic Development and Trade could provide some feedback to us on all these jobs that he’s already doing and he’s responsible for.

Let me give this government a little tip. Now that Albertans have had a chance to see how this government works, they’re becoming less and less convinced that this government has the right ideas to govern this province. Twice they tried to win a by-election in Calgary and twice failed. In fact, the vote count is getting worse, not better. Albertans want to see actions that create jobs, real jobs, not bills that really don’t mean anything.

This province is hurting, and Albertans are afraid. This bill, if you want to call it that, does nothing to alleviate their fears. I’ve gone out to my constituents, both at their homes and businesses, whether it be a farm, a tire shop, a restaurant, and so on, and I’ve gone to many of these constituency meetings – you know, they all have elected us – and they’re all very concerned. In fact, they are growing increasingly cynical of any bill that this government wants to put forward, especially a bill regarding jobs, jobs that seem to be bleeding out of this province each and every day. I hear almost every day someone tell me that they are looking at closing up shop and leaving for Saskatchewan or British Columbia. In fact, a fairly large player in the Provost area did just that. He’s had enough. He said – and I quote – that he couldn’t wait out another three years of this NDP government. Those were his words, not mine. He closed up shop and is in the process right now of moving out.

**3:10**

What I don’t think this government understands is that these are high-paying jobs for folks who hire high-paid workers. Now they cannot see any benefit in staying here in Alberta, so none of them will be staying here and paying taxes. Every time this happens, this government loses a portion of not just the tax base but the economic spinoffs of each and every job. These employers helped Alberta generate the highest per capita income and business tax in all of

Canada despite our low tax rates. All the workers that worked under them are now gone. Businesses have lost confidence in this government. Twenty per cent higher corporate taxes, a \$3 billion carbon tax, 50 per cent higher personal income tax: doesn't this government understand that there are consequences to their actions? If you tax people 50 per cent more and they leave, you don't have 50 per cent more; 50 per cent more of nothing is still nothing. So far what I'm seeing is not a job-creation program but a job-killing program.

Please take another look at our 12-point jobs plan and steal from us. I welcome you to do that. It's okay. Alberta needs good ideas, wherever they come from, and, you know, we're here to help.

**An Hon. Member:** Call it a tax.

**Mr. Taylor:** Call it a tax, yeah.

Where's the transparency in this bill; you know, the common-sense public reporting on jobs program? I ask this because if you look at page 3, section 4, reports, states: "The Minister must annually, and more frequently if the Premier directs, report to the Executive Council on the Minister's progress in establishing and implementing any programs under section 2." But where in this section of this bill does it say how this reporting will be done and how Albertans are supposed to find out about the results? There is no requirement for public reporting, and in fact the Executive Council is under no obligation to release these reports. Further to that, reporting, as I read it, could be done verbally to the Executive Council. Albertans don't want voice mode. Again I ask: where's the transparency and detail that Albertans expect?

My other concern is that with the passing of this skeleton of a bill, we'd be responsible for whatever meat the government now throws in with the bones regardless of how rancid it smells. This government has in the past, and very freshly in the minds of Albertans, hammered through bills without engaging Albertans, bills like Bill 6 last year, of course. Bill 6 was rammed through with time allocation, and the government went on to suggest to Albertans to trust them to fill in the details over the next 12 months or so. This bill has similarities in that it has accountability measures in it but to Executive Council and not to the stakeholders, Albertans, and, like with Bill 6, Albertans are expected to trust this government to fill in the details later.

I would strongly suggest that to improve this bill, the government needs to build in transparency. Reports to the Executive Council need to be publicly released and available on a quarterly basis so that Albertans know the status of each strategic area. That would at least put a little piece of significance in this bill. But, regardless, this minister and this government should feel pretty silly for rolling this out as their flagship bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill while the reality is that I cannot support it. I have to ask the question: why do we create legislation in this House? We create legislation to fill the holes in our legal system, which really means to meet the real needs of society. We create legislation, for instance, to regulate aspects of our lives, to give authority to others. We create legislation to prescribe solutions to problems, to provide funds for necessary services. We legislate to sanction, to grant, to declare, to restrict. In these kinds of ways, we create real solutions to real problems.

Now, if we were to take a minute and look back to the very first session of this Legislature, in 1906, we would see 35 bills come

forward that do all of these things. We have laws for coroners, public service, sheriffs, police, clerks, firefighters, doctors, farmers, and the list goes on. These bills filled a hole, a real need. They satisfied that need for a new province. They provided real regulation for real problems. But this bill creates nothing, and it especially doesn't create real jobs.

I commend the first MLAs for the time and the effort they put into ensuring that our province prospered. I commend the first MLAs for ensuring that Albertans, for instance, can do their jobs because the law provides for and supports the basic institution of our province's needs. Many of those first 35 bills legislated departments. Alberta's first MLAs knew that our ministries needed to be well established so that they had the ability to do their jobs. Without those first bills, those ministries would not have been able to function. Those original bills defined the way our service industry works. They defined the respect that workers deserve so that they can have the authority to do their jobs. Just as our service industry was defined by those bills, so our ministries were defined and so were ministers given authority. They were actually groundbreaking rules.

Over one hundred years later the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade puts forward Bill 1, in 2016, and I have to ask: what does this bill do that was missing? What need does it meet? We have piles and piles of legislation that governs all of the ministries and the ministers and the civil servants and even our neighbours. It outlines the responsibilities, their duties, their abilities, their powers. This House is supposed to pass legislation that fills holes where legislation does not exist to meet real needs. This bill doesn't fill any hole. It doesn't meet any real needs. Necessary bills are ones that grant powers or otherwise empower a person or ministers.

Now, the 100-year anniversary of women's suffrage was celebrated this week. It was a celebration of a significant milestone in a long fight for universal suffrage. It was a celebration of respecting women as equals. Albertans' first MLAs passed legislation that commanded the respect of many people and was a historical moment in history. Bill 1 is not going to be remembered as a great moment in history. It will be forgotten immediately.

The governments that have occupied these seats have done great things in our past. They passed historic bills and made major changes. There have been bills that have changed our health care system and our education system and bills that govern our resources and provide for the care of vulnerable people.

What I can't quite understand is how Bill 1 fits into that category. Every other minister is able to do everything listed in this bill already. In fact, section 8(1) of the Government Organization Act reads: "A Minister may establish or operate any programs and services the Minister considers desirable in order to carry out matters under the Minister's administration." So why does the Minister of Economic Development and Trade believe he lacks this very ability, that is clearly given to him right there?

This truly is a verbiage bill, a vacuous verbiage bill. It doesn't meet any needs. It doesn't fill any holes in our system. It does not grant more respect to the minister. Mr. Speaker, I want the minister to know that the moment he was sworn into office, he already had the respect, the powers, the authorities, and the abilities listed in Bill 1. There is no reason for the minister to think that he doesn't have the respect he feels he is lacking in Bill 1. There is no reason for Bill 1. We, quite frankly, don't need it. We don't need legislation to fill holes in our system where holes don't exist. We do need legislation respecting the authority of this House that will further Alberta's proud history, from providing for women's suffrage to protecting the vulnerable to providing life-saving front-

line services. Now it's come to this, a job description in the form of legislation.

3:20

The members opposite have come to present bills that do absolutely nothing beneficial for anyone. This bill doesn't do anything beneficial for the minister, as has been proven by my colleagues. The minister already has every single power listed in this bill. This bill doesn't do anything beneficial for the people of Alberta since no new powers or mandates are granted by this bill. This bill does not show respect for the people that have come before us. A bill that respects the House and that respects Albertans would be one that is needed and that is necessary. This bill is neither. Therefore, it's not in the tradition of the great legislation of this House, and I cannot support it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to get up this afternoon and talk about Bill 1. Good afternoon, everyone. As we sit in here and debate this matter today, I'm often reminded of the nice weather we have outside and sometimes why we sit in this Chamber to do the work that we do. I think this is an occasion when I wonder about that more than the average day on a Thursday afternoon. Bill 1 seems to be one, as some of my colleagues have noted, that is a bit redundant. It's a bit of a duplication of things that seem to be already permitted and already in order. It seems to be something that is totally unnecessary.

I'd just like to say that, you know, I was kind of interested to get a chance to speak about this. I wasn't sure if the government forgot it was still on the Order Paper, actually. It's been delayed for some time. In any case, here we are. Really, with such a bold, exciting name I was hoping to see something more valuable in this. It says: Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. I mean, it seemed like something we could really get our grip on. Unfortunately, after looking at it, it became clear that it was just a bunch of, perhaps, creative writing. It's not a very substantive plan for employment or economic growth or a chance to help our jobs sector.

While the number of Albertans out of work continues to soar, at least the government could claim that this bill did create one job, I suppose, and it was that of my friend the economic development minister, who I've served with now for a few years. But when you get down to the meat of the bill, though, actually, we're talking about a bill that's long on ambition, from what I can see, and short on substance. As thin and vague and meaningless as this bill is when it comes to economic growth and job creation, I would argue that one thing the bill actually does set out to accomplish is that it outlines clearly the roles and duties of my friend of these years, the minister. But it's really completely pointless. I mean, in fact, the power supposedly invested in the minister by this bill already exists, as was clearly pointed out by the previous speakers. This adds nothing new and nothing he didn't already have before.

You know, one of the other speakers mentioned it, and it's already in the Government Organization Act, which reads, "A Minister may establish or operate any programs and services the Minister considers desirable in order to carry out matters under the Minister's administration." That's fairly clear, I think, what he can already do. It also goes on to say, "A Minister may institute inquiries into and collect information and statistics relating to any matter under the Minister's administration." Those are the things that the act already has in place, yet this bill talks about a lot of

things that I think we'll show you in a moment are redundant to what I've just read.

I mean, the first one is (a) in the provisions here: "create partnerships that support entrepreneurship and a focus on innovation." Well, that's already the responsibility of that ministry. "Increase access to capital." Again, it's already the responsibility of that ministry. "Help businesses to grow and succeed." Already, again, a responsibility of that ministry. "Help working people upgrade their skills and secure employment." That's actually already done through the Ministry of Human Services and the Ministry of Labour. "Help communities and regions build on their economic strengths." Again a responsibility of this ministry. "Increase the development and adoption of Alberta innovations." Again, already the same ministry, the same responsibility. "Support export development." Already the responsibility, actually, of the ministry of international and intergovernmental relations. So one has to wonder why this bill has been put into place.

Presumably, if there was something substantive and critically important in this bill, why wouldn't we have discussed it a week ago instead of letting it sit around on the Order Paper? If the minister needed it to authorize his standard work functions, then I'm not entirely sure what he's been doing up until now. I know he's had a wonderful trip overseas and has toured some fabulous countries, but I sincerely hope that the government's idea of job creation isn't that.

It's become clear that this NDP government is more committed to optics, really, than results, from what I've seen so far. It's more important for them to be seen to be acting than it is to actually act and, even more importantly, to achieve success.

The reality is that since this government has taken charge, they've only made a bad situation worse as economic conditions seem to decline. With a host of new tax and spending measures, that we've all been debating about, this decline has only been made more steep, more pronounced, more severe. Government measures have discouraged investments and choked our economic growth. In short, government actions have gone completely against the high-minded rhetoric that this bill seems to present. Perhaps it's for that reason that the government has seemed to decline putting any firm accountability metrics into this legislation. The reporting requirements are flimsy where they exist at all. Results do not have to be reported to the public but only internally. One would think that if this were truly the bill to accomplish all that they've claimed, they'd be very open and transparent with the results and performance measuring.

One might think that this government more than anyone, actually, would be happy to shout their successes from the roof of this building or clap like they did the other day, several times, during their budget process. But as we've seen so far too often, when the results aren't expected, accountability measures seem to get stripped. We've heard scant little about expected economic growth, frankly, Madam Speaker. We've heard nothing about fiscal multipliers and the value these massive new spending measures and subsidies will actually provide. The government won't quantify what they deem to be a success beyond boasts of yet more spending.

What will all this accomplish? A small piece of paper passed in this House is not what Alberta needs and deserves. I remember having that bill. I don't have it with me here today. It's very thin. It only has a few pages. We actually need something more substantive. We need a government to keep its eye on fiscal sustainability and long-term stability. Both of these things have been undermined by misguided taxation policy and an agenda centred around destabilizing deficit and debt. This is not how you create employment and job growth, people. Not even the puffed-up language of Bill 1 can compensate for the very real damage that

massive new taxes, credit downgrades, ballooning interest payments, and economic instability have brought.

Here's the bill someone just passed me, and I note that we have one, two, three, and a blank set of pages in the back. So it's actually only three pages, Madam Speaker. Only three pages. All the things that I've already talked about in my previous conversation with regard to all of these things existing in the ministry make up most of this. There's nothing more.

Anyway, as I said earlier, I congratulate the minister for sitting down and writing himself up a nice set of guidelines and his own mandate, I suppose. Since there's very little substance here, we on this side of the House will be happy to offer up a bit of advice on how you could do it well. Nonetheless, as we've seen what we've seen here today and heard what we've heard from all the other speakers on the duplicity of what's in this document, it's our opinion that this is a total waste of time, a total waste of debate time, a total waste of procedure. It already exists. For that reason, I myself and my caucus will not be supporting this unnecessary bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments?

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

3:30

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to share my concerns on Bill 1 with the Assembly. I think my colleagues have done an excellent job of showcasing how unnecessary this bill is. It seems to me that this Assembly's time could have been put towards purposes that actually help Albertans if the Premier had simply written a mandate letter for this minister. It's quite clear that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade already has the ability to do all the things that are outlined in this bill, not only because it's clearly outlined in the Government Organization Act but because the minister already has dedicated taxpayer dollars to various corporate welfare schemes. We've seen solar subsidies and tech fund investments already, without this bill.

Today I'd like to go a step beyond some of these valid criticisms and talk about the ideas around government-driven economic diversification. It isn't exactly clear that this government actually understands what economic diversification really looks like in the real world beyond its use as a buzzword, Madam Speaker, or a talking point for this government. There have been some interesting numbers released over the past few weeks about the levels of diversity in Alberta's economy, and if any of the hon. members on the other side had taken the opportunity to study these numbers, they may have had cause to do some soul-searching because these numbers show that what the government has been saying about Alberta's economy is simply false.

Now, I know that my colleagues across the aisle would never purposely try to mislead Albertans, so I'd like to take a moment to explain just how successfully our economy has already been able to diversify without government interference. Between 1985, Madam Speaker, and 2014 our beloved province saw significant changes in the distribution of gross domestic product sources. To be clear, this is what measures economic diversity in our province. Let's keep in mind that the energy industry was in a slump in 1985 and had record activity in 2014, so these totals will be even more impressive in 2016.

As Alberta's total GDP grew from \$67.6 billion in 1985 to \$364.5 billion in 2014, there was a shift in the percentages of economic distribution between industries. In 1985 energy accounted for 31.6 per cent of Alberta's GDP, when we were at the lower end, and then by 2014, with oil at \$100 a barrel, it accounted for only 25.5 per

cent of our province's GDP. That's more than a 10 per cent drop in the reliance on our energy industry. Between these years there was significant growth in industries like construction, retail and wholesale, tourism and consumer services, finance and real estate, business and consumer services, and manufacturing.

The increase in economic diversity didn't happen because governments handed out grants and subsidies and chose winners and losers. In fact, many of the former government's attempts to manufacture diversification in the '80s failed. I have in the past walked this House through a series of failed economic diversification projects, but let's have a refresher. Madam Speaker, failed government-driven economic diversification projects from the era include NovAtel, the Swan Hills Treatment Centre, Lloydminster biprovincial upgrader, Millar Western Pulp Ltd., Gainers, magnesium company of Canada, Prince Rupert Grain terminal, Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries, Chembiomed, Canadian Commercial Bank, Northern Lite Canola, and General Systems Research.

The fact is that history shows that diversification happens most effectively when the government stops trying to force it. It was strong, broad-based economic incentives like low taxes, an openness to investors, and a philosophy of self-reliance that made room for the industrious spirit of Albertans to thrive in all sectors. We owe the level of economic diversification and the significant amounts of growth that we've seen in Alberta over the last few decades to the hard-working economic drivers in the private sector. The previous government didn't diversify. They got out of the way, though, so that Albertans could do the business of diversifying.

The problem is that this government can't seem to grasp the fact that diversification can happen without government. The truth is that when the members over there claim that our economy hasn't diversified, do you understand that in recent decades you're more than wrong? You're discrediting every single Albertan who had vision and foresight and the Albertans who took risks in order to help our economy and make significant progress in diversifying. Frankly, I don't think that the Albertans who worked so hard and took such massive risks to get us here deserve this government's disdain.

Now, there's no question that there is more room for more diversity in our economy. The NDP government, however, fails to understand how economic diversity is successfully achieved and what factors must coincide with diversification in order for diversity to actually benefit Albertans. It's not enough to see the economy diversify; we need to see the economy grow as well – right? – like we did in 1985, despite the fact that oil prices were low, and in 2014.

Punishing the oil and gas industry by taxing it, by threatening to hike royalties, then taxing it again, and then increasing the regulatory burden: all of this forces industry to shrink and forces businesses to cut jobs, leaving Albertans out of work. This government's actions are certainly causing the energy industry to shrink relative to the rest of Alberta's economy. On paper the other segments of the economy look relatively large as a result, but it's important to note that attacking one industry, Madam Speaker, does not automatically make other ones stronger. In fact, on the contrary, many other industries are spinoffs of these industries that rely on business from oil and gas and those who work in it. At the end of the day even though other industries look relatively larger, they're operating in weaker economic development.

One of the most important things for the welfare of our society is a strong, growing GDP. The source of the growth is less important than the growth itself. All Albertans are better off when the economy is stronger – I think we can all agree on that – and when economic activity is high.

Recently this government made the catastrophic decision to punish our primary industry, oil and gas, with an unnecessary royalty review, which was followed by the Premier telling reporters that now was not the time to raise royalties. Unfortunately, that kind of open-ended answer is cold comfort to would-be investors in Alberta. That kind of answer signals that changes may still be on the table down the road and that the current regulatory system could really change at any time.

This government also decided to increase the oil and gas industry's regulatory burden and costs with its infamous climate action plan. It made it harder for junior companies to attract capital investment, by raising corporate and personal taxes. That's not how to diversify an economy.

A government can best aid in economic diversification through introducing measures and maintaining systems that allow the economy as a whole to grow in whatever direction the market forces attract investors. If we are truly dedicated to economic diversification, we cannot be punishing some sectors and growing others. Alberta needs broad-based macroeconomic policies that stimulate economy-wide growth. If we provide Albertans with a strong fiscal framework that recognizes that we're not just competing with the rest of Canada but with the world, Alberta entrepreneurs will move forward to diversify the economy as they always have. Unfortunately, the government is mismanaging the economy so badly that private investors are nervous.

There are advantages, from the perspective of a private investor, to Alberta's current market. If it weren't for the risky economic experiments and high-tax agenda, this would actually be a good time to make long-term investments in Alberta. The province's factors of production inputs are more competitive now with the rest of Canada than they've generally been. We have access to capital that has been made easier. Interest rates are low, and they encourage borrowing. Construction costs are lower as the labour market has more hard-working Albertans available. We have an immense amount of technical expertise in this province just waiting. Energy prices are low for now.

3:40

The reason that we're not seeing a significant level of private investment in the province right now is because no producer believes that this government has a plan for stable, long-term economic success. Investors know, Madam Speaker, that the policy that the NDP is now pursuing will result in Alberta being a weaker financial jurisdiction in the long run and that significant tax increases will be required to manage the massive amount of debt that the province is projecting. And to take on this kind of interest – the interest rates are going to rise. They inevitably do. The government is not creating the economic conditions to allow job-creating industries to thrive. These policies aren't just harming private investment; they'll eventually even harm the companies that are now receiving the handouts.

Prices need to fall in a recession so families and businesses are able to maintain their purchasing power. This government's tax increases are keeping the cost of raising a family and of running a business artificially high. Investors are nervous because of policies like the coal phase-out, changes to the SGR, which led to the mass PPA cancellations, and 30 per cent commitment to the renewables that will inevitably drive up the price of power. Why build a factory in a jurisdiction that is moments away from a huge increase in the cost of electricity?

Look at what happened in Ontario after a severely mismanaged green revolution. Industry fled en masse, and the businesses were forced to close because they couldn't afford their power bills. Why would any private investor build in a jurisdiction where that is about

to happen? How is any industry, Madam Speaker, expected to survive this disaster, that will raise costs for absolutely everyone in this province, especially our job-creating industries?

So as we consider Bill 1, which claims to promote job creation and diversification and acts as part of this government's misguided plan to forcibly diversify our economy, I urge my fellow members to keep in mind that the best step forward for this government would be a change in their ideological anti-industry and anti-investment economic policies. Only when the government stops making things worse with forced economic diversification, an empty jobs bill, will things start to get better.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments under 29(2)(a)? Go ahead, hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Madam Speaker, the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View had to know this was coming when she includes the Lloydminster biprovincial upgrader in her list of failed projects or projects that demonstrate that economic diversification that is catalyzed by government is a failure. I guess my question to the hon. member is: could she quote the socioeconomic study or the wraparound fiscal study that indicates that indeed when one considers the entire economic stimulation to Lloydminster and area and all forms of taxation revenue that have been generated by the upgrader – how does she, then, conclude that the Husky upgrader is a failure?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you for the question. As we move forward at this point, if you look at the history of it, Alberta's initial investment in this was \$305 million, which would have come from the Alberta investment division of the heritage fund, which the province would receive at some point 24 per cent in participating interest. Then they spent \$404 million on capital costs and then spent a further \$19.3 million in operating costs, not seeing the losses associated with this. I think eventually they received \$32 million four years later. Saskatchewan sold its shares to Husky for \$310 million, thus recouping the province's investment.

**An Hon. Member:** How much did we collect in taxes when the jobs were created?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Taxes? In jobs that we're creating right now? That's a very good question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, through the chair, please.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Go ahead, Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thanks. Not on 29(2)(a). I'd actually like to speak on this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We still have a few minutes on 29(2)(a), so are there any other questions or comments?

Seeing none, then I will recognize the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Madam Speaker, thank you. I actually hadn't intended on speaking today, and perhaps the members opposite and perhaps some of the members in the Official Opposition will be dismayed to learn that I have decided to speak on this. This is debate that we have here in the Chamber, and I think from time to time it is important that we actually listen to each other and respond to comments that are made by other hon. members.

I do have to respond because I'm going to suggest, with great respect to my honourable colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View, that while she makes commentary about the Lloydminster upgrader and no doubt quotes from Dr. Morton's paper, which is flawed in many ways, the Lloydminster upgrader – and I can say this with a great deal of confidence because I was there. I was on city council in 1988 when Premier Getty and Premier Devine and Bill McKnight and Don Mazankowski and Bob Blair from Husky announced the Lloydminster biprovincial upgrader. And I will tell you that that is a day that transformed the city of Lloydminster.

Prior to 1986 and especially, it was noted, in 1986, Lloydminster was largely dependent on agriculture and oil, but the heavy oil that was being produced in Lloydminster was simply heavy oil and did not get any upgrading whatsoever. It was shipped, or it was transformed into road-building asphalt. We had a very large asphalt plant, and actually Lloydminster asphalt went all over the place, as did shingles. We had a Dominion tar and paper shingle factory in Lloydminster as well, and we produced a lot of shingles.

Now, in 1988, our MPs Bill McKnight and Don Mazankowski as well as the Premiers that I mentioned, Grant Devine and Don Getty, whatever else you may think of the legacy of these four leaders, had the courage to put together a plan and a partnership with Husky to build an upgrader on the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. Actually, technically speaking, it's just on the Saskatchewan side. This upgrader transformed Lloydminster, because what it did is it meant that we were not as susceptible to the boom-and-bust cycles that happened within our society.

I'm not a real big fan necessarily of government involvement in a lot of things, but I will tell you that the upgrader is a good example of places where judicious expenditure and judicious investment by government are the smart things to do. I will tell you, having been in business in Lloydminster since 1983 – and Lloydminster is still my home town – that if you were to ask people on the streets of Lloydminster, "Is the upgrader a good thing for Lloydminster or a bad thing?" resoundingly you will get the answer that the upgrader is a good thing for Lloydminster. Resoundingly.

The hon. member made the comment about what the province of Alberta got when it sold its roughly 25 per cent share in the upgrader compared to the province of Saskatchewan. This will delight my friends on the other side, but I would like to say that that would be an example of what I would call knee-jerk government policy reaction. That was that in the '90s a decision was made that the government should not be in the business of being in business, which I actually agree with, but the decision on when to get out of the business was: immediately. We basically sold our share of the upgrader at a fire-sale price. The province of Saskatchewan hung on for a little while longer, and they got a much better price. So on that part of it – and I'll be fully critical of the government of the time, which was a Progressive Conservative government – we didn't always get it right.

But I will tell you, Madam Speaker, that for all of the criticism – for all of the criticism – of the folks here who would like to know what the burden of governing is like but, hopefully, will never find out, Lloydminster is a very different place because of decisions that were made in 1988.

In 1992 the upgrader was completed. In addition, in 1990, thanks again to a forward-thinking and progressive government, Lakeland College, which had always been centred in the town of Vermilion, opened a second campus in the city of Lloydminster. And as a result of that – and I remember the day of that opening very well because whenever I look over at the Minister of Service Alberta, I think of it. She often brings her young son Patrick into the Chamber, and I had my one-week old son in a Snuggli at the grand opening of

Lakeland College's Lloydminster campus on the 10th of May, 1990. So I don't have any trouble remembering that date.

**An Hon. Member:** Aw.

**Dr. Starke:** Aw. Yeah.

I will tell you, Madam Speaker, that between the upgrader providing stability to our oil economy – and I will tell you that our service sector is taking a dramatic hit, and it's hugely important to Lloydminster, so all I can say is: thank God we've got the upgrader there, and thank God that the stable jobs are there for many citizens of Lloydminster. We've gone from a facility that upgrades heavy oil and 46,000 barrels a day to synthetic crude oil and over 110,000 barrels a day.

**3:50**

The upgrader has been good for Lloydminster. Lakeland College has been very good for Lloydminster. Because of those strategic investments Lloydminster today is so much more than it was in 1983, when I first came there. Lloydminster has more than doubled in size. Lloydminster has a strong and robust economy. Lloydminster has one of the highest per capita and average incomes, one of the highest average education levels. It is regularly in the top-10 list of communities in terms of entrepreneurial activity and in terms of friendliness to new business start-ups. Somewhat curiously and embarrassingly, it was the number two city for Ashley Madison clients, when that was released. I have no idea if there's any correlation there whatsoever, Madam Speaker. Hopefully not.

I will tell you, Madam Speaker, that I am very proud of our city. I consider the upgrader to be an integral cog in that development.

Now, speaking perhaps somewhat more specifically to my hon. friend across the way, to his bill, the flagship bill, as it's stated, I do have to agree with my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View that this is largely a bill that is a job description. It is very disappointing to consider that this is a Bill 1. I mean, I will definitely agree that the Bill 1 flowing out from the last throne speech, the act that changed how we do election financing in this province, was a much more weighty bill and, I think, created a much more profound change in our province. I will tell you that this one doesn't quite measure up to that standard.

I would also point out, because my hon. friend is so fond of saying it so frequently, about the failure to economically diversify our province. The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View did an excellent job of explaining how our GDP has become more diversified. Dr. Trevor Tombe of the University of Calgary has pointed out that in terms of employment and workforce Alberta has the most diversified economy in Canada. There are different measurements that you can use.

We can always tell when the government has run out of things to say – and it happens often – because they immediately resort to: because the previous government failed to diversify the economy. So when you hear that, folks, it means that they can't think of anything else to say and they're falling back on their talking points. It's probably tab one in your minister's binder, and it's probably on the insert as well. When you run out of all other things to say, there may be a teleprompter running it over there.

In point of fact, Madam Speaker, there is one thing that is true, and that is that in terms of diversification we are too dependent on oil and gas, nonrenewable resource revenue – I would agree with that – and we do have to work to develop other streams of revenue for government. That's different from saying that your economy isn't sufficiently diversified. Our economy is diversified.

I definitely agree with the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View when she says – and I've said this to the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade – that it is insulting to Albertans who have worked in the sectors like tourism, like construction, like service sectors that have grown much faster than the oil and gas sector over that period of time. My worry is that his definition of diversification will be that the rest of the pie looks like it's getting bigger. But that's only because the wedge that is oil and gas is in fact getting smaller. Minister, that's not diversification; that is simply redistribution of economic activity within our economy, and that is not what, hopefully, you're trying to accomplish in your ministry.

This bill is largely useless. This bill does not need to even be introduced. The hon. minister can already do pretty much everything that is outlined and mandated in this bill, or we would think so if we actually had mandate letters, which the Premier promised us back last June and we have yet to see. So, Madam Speaker, I'm against Bill 1. I had to set the record straight on my city of Lloydminster.

I thank you for your attention.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), Chestermere Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. I would like to thank the hon. member for standing up. I just wanted to suggest also that the jobs and what's going on in Lloydminster right now – and I'm so grateful that the people of this area, their jobs are secure and that they're doing well. Congratulations on being considered the second-best in the province. That's fantastic.

**Dr. Starke:** Country.

**Mrs. Aheer:** In the country. I'm sorry. I apologize.

What we're wanting to acknowledge here is not so much what's happening now, because we've had private investment come in, and we've had a lot of changes that have happened that have helped to incorporate the situation, to bring it to where you are at this point presently. So it's wonderful to see that the private sector has helped to see this process succeed.

The whole point of bringing up the past was to help this government understand the problems of the past, not to stay there but to understand so that when you're moving forward, you don't fall into similar problems. It's not about blaming what has happened in the past – we've moved beyond that – but if you continue as a government to create and go forward with decisions that are going to create problems similar to what has happened in the past, that's why these things need to be brought up and perhaps reiterated. It brings up a lot of emotion for people that have been here in the past. I understand that.

You're right. I haven't governed before, and I actually do hope that I get the opportunity to do that one day. Having said that, I hope also on behalf of myself and my caucus that we'll actually learn from the past and create better decisions as a result of the mistakes in the past and not redo the things that have been done in the past.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Did you wish to comment, hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster?

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Madam Speaker, just very briefly. I appreciate the hon. member's comments. I think they are certainly well taken. I would agree.

You know, I'll say one thing, and this is perhaps a cautionary tale for all of us. Governments are made of people, and people are human, and humans make mistakes. You can't show me a government anywhere that has been in government for 11 months,

for four years, eight years, 12 years, or 40 years that hasn't made mistakes along the way. You know, I think that one of the things that we should all do as human beings is to acknowledge that we are imperfect and that there are things that we do with the best of intentions that don't work out well. We are not gifted with clairvoyance. We are not gifted with the ability to know what's going to happen in the future. We do things with the best of intentions, and sometimes they don't work out well. Without defending some of the decisions of the past which clearly in hindsight have been shown to be mistakes, I think that what we need to do always is to draw on the lessons of the past – I agree – but always be looking forward and always be looking for what is the potential.

You know, I'll just give you one example. The government in the 1970s made significant investment in developing our oil sands, investment through AOSTRA, investment in developing the technologies that would allow for the extraction of bitumen from our massive oil sands reserves. That was a strategic and costly investment, made at a time where the extraction costs were extremely high and the returns were extremely low. I will suggest – friends may not agree – that without government that doesn't happen. That doesn't happen. If you leave it up strictly to the private sector, it probably doesn't happen.

I know that the laissez-faire, right-wing, hands off everything folks don't want to believe that, but there is a role. It's hard sometimes to judge what that role should be, and that's perhaps where you have the nuanced differences between the different political thoughts and ideologies. But I will say that for myself personally I do believe that there is a role for government to play. Certainly, I think that there is a role for government to play in terms of the delivery of critical, essential services in our society. I've never said otherwise.

I think that, you know, in doing that and going forward, we do acknowledge that we as human beings are imperfect, that we do make mistakes but that overall we try to do the best we can. I think that we try to do the best we can today. I believe that they tried to do the best they could over the last 110 years in this province, and I certainly hope that we try to do the best we can for the years going forward.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** You've got 15 seconds. Go ahead.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you again to the member. I would thank you for calling me the right people. I sure appreciate that. That was very, very kind of you. I would also like to reiterate – and the last time I spoke about this, I actually did speak to the successes as well. You are correct; there have been successes as well. That's not what this is about, and I couldn't agree with you more that this is about moving forward and not laying blame in the past and, hopefully, learning in the future about where dollars need to be spent, how they're to be spent, and about the future of the province and all of the people, including our great-grandchildren one day, who will hopefully benefit from programs and from what we do right now in this space.

4:00

I would like to reiterate from my past speech where I was quite distinctive in also speaking about the successes. This province is all of ours, and there's no way that you can build on anything only ever reiterating the failures.

Thank you so much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I had the hon. Member for Little Bow next.



**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak to the government's Bill 1, the alleged job creation and diversification act. Now, this government professes a concern on Alberta's job situation, and they're right to. When my caucus colleagues and I hear from Albertans about the economy, here's what we hear.

We hear that Albertans are struggling to make ends meet. You know, I'm not just talking about the Albertans that may have lost their jobs in the oil and gas industry, which has seen probably some of the biggest amounts of layoffs in a generation. I'm talking about qualified, well-trained Albertans who for months upon months have been unable to find work. They're concerned about their mortgage payments. They're concerned about their car payments. They're concerned about providing for their families. In the cities there's an increase in office space vacancy and a decrease in jobs available. In rural Alberta jobs are very hard to come by.

I'm not saying that this government has caused the downturn, but the actions they have taken since coming into office are not making things regarding jobs and the creation of jobs any better. And these problems are entirely not helped by this proposed legislation because the legislation, as has been said by most of the members on this side of the House today, does nothing. All it does is reaffirm abilities that the minister already had under the Government Organization Act.

If I were the minister or any member of the government benches, I'd be embarrassed to tell my constituents that this is what their government is doing for job creation. As history has shown us, some governments run away from their record, but I don't think there's a previous precedent for a newly elected government running away from their own Bill 1.

Since introducing this empty shell of a bill, this government has let it sit on the Order Paper and wither. Nine other government bills were introduced after this one. Some of them have already gone through the process and are now a matter of law. But this bill sat at first reading like an abandoned car in a farmer's back 40. Finally, for a brief, rare moment in time, yesterday they opened it up for debate, only to quickly move to adjourn debate and move on to Bill 10.

From the government only the minister of economic development has stood to give a speech on this bill. He said: "Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, will give the government additional tools to carry out its Alberta jobs plan to do just that." Good grief, Madam Speaker. Has the minister read the bill? Since being appointed to this portfolio, has anyone adequately conveyed to him what his existing responsibilities are? That was his one substantive comment referring to the actual contents of the bill, and frankly it wasn't an accurate assessment.

Section 2 of the bill gives him the ability to establish programs. Section 3 of the bill gives him the ability to establish regulations for those programs. Frankly, that's about it. These are existing ministerial powers. It is disingenuous to keep pretending that this bill is helping to create jobs. It is insulting to struggling Albertans to say that this government is taking action.

Imagine the time and the effort that had to be put into this bill. Don't get me wrong; the document doesn't really contain an overabundance of verbiage. It's not a very wordy document. I think we've all heard in speeches given here in this House today about the lack of info in this document. But how many people did it take to actually write this bill? I honestly don't know, but there must have been assistants and deputy ministers of ministries that have to direct staff. Parliamentary Counsel had to have had something to do with it, I'm sure. Just how much money would it take to get this tiny document to this House if we were to follow it from the idea stage to where it is today, all to get a bill here when ministries on the

government side already have a mandate to move forward with its intent?

This bill is positioned as doing something on job creation, but that's all it does, just like the series of job plans that this government has put forward. Regrettably, when you cut down past this government's hollow assurances in question period and their communications exercises, you end up with no action on job creation.

Over the course of one year in office all this government has done for the job situation is to tell Albertans that they should apply for employment insurance. One year in office, and that's all they've really done. Of course, the principal aim of Canada's employment insurance is that it's there for Canadians when they're out of work and when they're looking for work, but that's not a job strategy.

This morning Statistics Canada released new employment insurance numbers for February. In Alberta there were 65,100 employment insurance beneficiaries in February, a 2.4 per cent increase from January. It's the continuation of an upward trend that began in 2014: more EI recipients in Calgary, more employment insurance recipients in Edmonton, more EI recipients across the entire province. In the 12 months leading up to February, the number of Albertans receiving EI benefits increased by nearly 80 per cent. That's an astonishing statistic, Madam Speaker. And all the while it seems that the government is only making it harder for small businesses to create jobs.

The government's new carbon tax makes everything more expensive, including the cost of doing business. The government's continued minimum wage hike, an evidence-free excursion pushed only by ideology and borrowed from the American left, will likely further hurt job creation. In fact, it eliminates training wages and makes it even harder for young Albertans to enter the labour force.

Worse, this government is determined to copy Ontario's knee-jerk shutdown of coal-fired plants, which has led to exorbitant increases in electricity costs for that province. Just last year the Ontario Chamber of Commerce released a devastating report entitled Empowering Ontario, showing that one in 20 Ontario businesses expect to shut their doors by 2020 because of escalating electricity costs while 40 per cent say that they've already delayed or outright cancelled business decisions as the result of electrical costs. In copying that Ontario model, this government is inviting those same negative effects to come on over. You don't ease pain by putting salt in an open wound.

Now, from February to March there was a slight increase in Alberta's employment numbers. A lot of that increase was employment in the wholesale sector, but the wholesale numbers for Alberta, released by StatsCan yesterday, show clouds on the horizon for the area as well. Looking at yesterday's number, ATB economist Nick Ford wrote: "Unfortunately, it's likely that wholesalers in our province could experience another period of decline this year."

**4:10**

The reality is that Bill 1 is only the latest government action that actually does nothing to help businesses create jobs. Some Albertans have been without jobs for several months. The government's inability to move forward on job creation is troubling. They put forward their job-creation plan in the last budget, introduced here just this past autumn. At \$178 million over two years it was the only job-creation measure in the first budget. It seems that the government never bothered to do any proper study as to whether this would actually create jobs. At least, they certainly never released one.

Just recently, after almost a year, they conceded that that jobs plan won't work. For one year they've been leading Albertans on,

and now they've presented a new jobs plan. In one way the new package of items under the new jobs plan is startlingly similar to the last jobs plan. There's no indication or any study showing how this will actually create jobs.

Sadly, these measures don't even start any time soon. One of them, the capital investment tax credit, for which details were announced today, is to come into effect in 2017. Tough luck for someone who's already been unemployed for six months. Same with the Alberta investor tax credit. Applications will begin being accepted in January 2017. If you're already unemployed, that's quite a wait.

Madam Speaker, given the economic uncertainty and given what so many Albertans have been going through for months, this government's inaction could be considered shameful. They're not cutting red tape for business. They're increasing red tape for business. They're not knocking down barriers to job creation. It appears that they're putting them up. Bill 1 – let's be honest – does nothing.

Yesterday, speaking to Bill 1, the minister of economic development said: "Our government's number one priority is to help Alberta get through this downturn and position the province for future prosperity." Well, for one year now words haven't been good enough.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much. I appreciate the member's comments. I think many of them are misinformed. However, I do have a question for the member. He talked about cutting red tape. You know, you talk about buzzwords, and the other side loves to attack us on using buzzwords. However, I'm in favour of streamlining, making doing business easier in Alberta, and helping our companies. So I would love to ask the member if he could name one or two pieces of red tape or regulations that are interfering or affecting businesses or inhibiting them from doing business in our province?

**Mr. Schneider:** How about one? Environmental applications take months and months and . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Waste-water projects.

**Mr. Schneider:** Oh, my goodness, yes. Waste-water projects: there's another good one.

You should reduce this by 20 per cent. I'm just going to read the Wildrose 12 points. I'm not going to read the 12 points. I'm going to read the red-tape one.

Excessive regulation is an obstacle to growth in all industries, and costs small businesses four times more than larger businesses. During an economic downturn, it becomes increasingly important to remove [the] red tape . . .

Is it that hard to believe that that's a fact?

The NDP government is one of the only governments in Canada . . .

Actually, it's the only government in Canada now.

. . . that never mentions red tape as a concern.

Is there no red tape? Like, I need to be informed. If there isn't any, tell me that there isn't.

Its platform and statements only talk about adding new regulations to Alberta businesses. This ideological stance in favour of government having ever more control over business, rather than letting business begin and create more business, has to end.

**An Hon. Member:** Are you going to table that?

**Mr. Schneider:** You bet.

Signaling that Alberta will be a business-friendly place is critical to attracting private sector investment and jobs.

That's the best I can do, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Madam Speaker, I represent a lot of farmers in the Strathmore-Brooks area. A lot of the feedlots, especially in the Strathmore area, have come to me and talked about the implementation of Bill 6 and the mountains of red tape that it is going to mean for farmers and ranchers in my area. Now, I know that the Member for Little Bow is a proud farmer from a next-door, neighbouring constituency. He was even sowing fields during the campaign. I was actually very angry at him for not being out campaigning when he was planting, but he's a proud farmer. I've heard all sorts of complaints about the extreme red tape that is burdening the farmers and ranchers in my constituency around feedlots, around support to agriculture, and around the huge paper burden that's being placed on farmers in my constituency and across rural Alberta. As a proud farmer I'm hoping that maybe the Member for Little Bow can talk about the heavy burdens that farmers and ranchers are facing with red tape in this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the question. There's an organization – and most people on that side won't have ever heard of it – called the NRCB, which is the Natural Resources Conservation Board, that actually steps in when there is any discussion about confined feedlots, feeding of any description. The red tape there is what I would call spectacular. If we were measuring red tape in something that would shoot rockets off, it's spectacular.

I'll give you some more here. We should save government and business time and money by streamlining our business reporting requirements so businesses only have to report changes to government and don't have to process the same thing year after year. We should follow through on good initiatives already begun like extending the one-business, one-number principle government-wide instead of just in Service Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions or comments?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to speak today to Bill 1, the minister's job description. I'm not sure why we have to talk about this bill, an act to give the minister instructions that he had to make public his mandate letter, which the Premier promised to disclose but has thus far failed to do.

It's an interesting bill. Bill 1 is normally symbolic, as the government put it, a flagship bill. You want to really put some meat on the bones. I was proud of Bill 1 in the spring Legislature, where the government, the Official Opposition, the fourth party, and the fifth party all supported banning corporate and union donations in the province. That was a bill with some real meat on the bones. That was a flagship bill that actually meant something. This is a bill that really just gives the minister a job description. You know, it's his one-job plan. It is a minister who's only managed to create a single job, and that is his job, a job lacking security, I might say.

Madam Speaker, I don't know why this is being put forward in the form of legislation. This could come forward in the form of a motion. This really is little more than a motion to do nice things. Everybody likes economic diversification, everybody likes economic development, and that's all this bill is. It's saying that we

like these things, that the minister should do these things. That should come forward in the form of a motion, not a piece of legislation.

You know why? Because I think we have enough laws in this province. Every time we pass a law, we're making our books bigger and bigger and bigger. Sometimes these are good laws, but sometimes we get into a nasty habit in this place, Madam Speaker, when we pass laws just to act like we're doing something but are not actually doing something. You know, it's like when something goes wrong and someone says: there should be a law about this. We would like a more diversified economy; therefore, there should be a law saying that we want a more diversified economy. We get into a lot of trouble when we do this, when we think that we are so all-powerful, that the government is so competent and capable that we can wave our magic wand and just diversify the economy because we passed a bill saying that it shall be so. "On the eighth day he commanded that the economy shall be diversified, and it was so, and voters looked at it and said that this was good." Can I get an amen from the government? [interjections] O mercy, Madam Speaker. O mercy for the poor taxpayers of this province.

4:20

Madam Speaker, I'll say this much. This bill does nothing, which is better than most of the laws we've passed so far. As much of a waste of time as this piece of legislation is, it is possibly one of the least harmful pieces of legislation we've debated, and I thank the hon. members on the government side for making sure that we're not actually making it worse. This is a bill that just discusses nice things, that waves our magic wand and by fiat – by fiat – coaxes economic development out of the sky like manna from the diversification gods. This bill is talking about nice things, but it does nothing, and because it does nothing, it's actually probably one of the better bills that they've put forward.

Let's talk about economic diversification. Everybody wants to diversify the economy. Let's look at the lessons of history, Madam Speaker. In the mid-1980s both Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador were in a relatively similar case. We had economies that were largely reliant upon a single resource industry for our GDP, for our economic development, and both the Alberta government and the government of Newfoundland and Labrador were looking at ways to diversify revenue streams. At that time, the mid-1990s, if I'm not mistaken, it was the Brian Peckford government. I think they were PCs. They came forward with a plan, actually brought to them by a Calgary businessman at the time, to diversify the Newfoundland economy away from the cod fishery, which they were overreliant on. They decided that Newfoundland would diversify their economy. They would become the cucumber capital of Canada. Newfoundland would diversify its economy and its revenue stream, and they would make cucumbers.

There were a few problems with this plan, Madam Speaker. As the Member for Little Bow, who is a farmer, knows, to grow things, you require sunshine and soil. Newfoundland has neither. But only politicians on the eighth day could pronounce: so it shall be so. And that's what the politicians, with good intentions of trying to diversify the economy in Newfoundland, commanded, that it shall be so. They said: we're going to make cucumbers, and we don't care what the circumstances are. So they entered into a giant corporate welfare scheme to build big, monstrous greenhouses across Newfoundland.

Problem one was sunshine; problem two was soil. Through science they thought they could try to get around it with greenhouses. They tried. But it was a government-supported business. The cucumbers came out a little bit sickly, so they had to try again, and they got bailed out with even more taxpayers' money.

They were determined, against the nature of the cucumber, to force it to grow. They would force this cucumber to grow against its will and instincts in Newfoundland. Eventually they overcame nature. They grew cucumbers in Newfoundland.

Then they came to their ultimate problem. People in Newfoundland don't really like to eat cucumbers. But governments that think they know better than the market decided that they could create a market. They would force Newfoundlanders to eat cucumbers. So they had to subsidize them. They had to subsidize them well below market prices, Madam Speaker. They still didn't want to eat them. Newfoundlanders are a rather carnivorous people, if you've ever met one.

They refused to eat these government cucumbers, so the government of Newfoundland started dumping them into other maritime provinces, where cucumbers were more acceptable to the local tastes. What happened? Well, the local cucumber markets . . . [interjections] I'm sure that I'm giving the members of the NDP bad ideas. I'm not sure that I should continue to talk about cucumbers, Madam Speaker. I am terrified that the NDP are now going to start a government cauliflower business, because that's the boom business, isn't it?

Madam Speaker, the government of Newfoundland started dumping these cucumbers into the other maritime provinces, and they got into a cucumber trade war, further devaluing the price of cucumbers on the market. What happened? The government went bust. At the end of the day, all of the cucumbers they produced cost the taxpayers, approximating from memory here, about \$25 million in 1980s dollars, a huge sum for a province with a relatively small population. That worked out to about \$25 to \$28 of taxpayers' dollars per cucumber.

**An Hon. Member:** It was quite a pickle.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I appreciate the contribution from the other side, Madam Speaker. It put taxpayers in quite a pickle.

At the same time as this was going on in Newfoundland, the government of Alberta was similarly engaging in corporate welfare practices, believing that politicians here could engage in economic experiments to force things against market conditions, in mostly slightly less amusing circumstances than forcing cucumbers to grow against their will. So we ended up doing this. We wasted billions of dollars in taxpayer-funded schemes in the economy here at a total loss to the taxpayer.

What did we do? Well, one of Alberta's great Premiers, Ralph Klein, got the government out of the business of business. We sold off our money-losing government enterprises. Instead, what did we do? We created the Alberta advantage in its place. We balanced the budget, we paid off the debt, we cut business taxes, we cut income taxes, and we made Alberta the most diversified economy in Canada. This is what made us the most prosperous place in North America, and that is why I am so proud to be the only party in this House that still defends the Alberta advantage, Madam Speaker.

In 1985 about 35 per cent of our much smaller GDP was based on the oil and gas sector. Around 2014 25 per cent of our economy was reliant on oil and gas, and that was in a massively expanded economy, a much larger economy, a bigger pie, a much bigger pie. Now, when the government talks about diversifying, what they're talking about is having a smaller slice of that pie be oil and gas. Now, if you want to have a smaller slice of it, it's okay if you're growing the overall pie, as long as that slice as an absolute share of GDP is not shrinking. But their actions are trying to diversify the economy by shrinking that slice of the pie, by killing our oil and gas industry with an unnecessary royalty review, with an

unnecessary carbon tax, that has done nothing to advance the oil and gas industry in this province.

As the oil and gas part of this pie gets smaller, other parts are going to get bigger, probably government, with the government directly intervening into the economy to pick winners and losers. Well, we tried that in the 1980s in Alberta, Madam Speaker, and it didn't work very well. Newfoundland and Labrador tried it in the 1980s, and it didn't work very well. I am terrified that the NDP will begin the department of cucumbers and Brussels sprouts soon in this government.

The NDP are very confident in themselves that they have the business acumen to make investments with people's money. Well, I'll tell you this, Madam Speaker: nobody can direct capital more effectively, to its best possible outcome, than the people whose money it actually is. As much as the one-job minister across from me thinks that he has the business acumen, the sheer will to make businesses do things that they do not want to do, against market

conditions, by subsidizing them or coaxing them, as much as he may want to do these things, he can never do them as well as the people who put their money on the line with real skin in the game.

Madam Speaker, we've seen this before. We have lessons that we thought we learned. We thought we learned these lessons from the 1980s. We thought that politicians got the message. There was a point in this province when all the parties in this House agreed that government should not be in the business of business, and one by one . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, as fascinating as the discussion has been, but clearly we need a break. Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned until Monday, May 2.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m. to Monday, May 2, at 1:30 p.m.]

## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to April 21, 2016**

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

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

### **1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 732-36 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.), 685-91 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.), 749-60 (Apr. 21, 2016 aft., adjourned)

### **2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1]

### **3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)

Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2]

### **4\* An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft.), 349-66 (Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 399-409 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.), 378-84 (Apr. 6, 2016 morn.), 415-28 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 450-55 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 428-33 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn.)

### **5 Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading -- 398 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 455-56 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.), 532-38 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed), 491-505 (Apr. 12, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 570-77 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed), 539-56 (Apr. 13, 2016 morn.)

Third Reading -- 577-83 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

### **6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 519-27 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 527-32 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 583-85 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

### **7 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**

First Reading -- 518 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 585-86 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft.), 682-84 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed), 649-51 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.)

### **8 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**

First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 669-71 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 684 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed)

- 9        An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 640-49 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.), 728-30 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed)
- 10       Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 599 (Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 671-82 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 730-32 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division), 691-703 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.)
- 201      Election Recall Act (Smith)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 119-32 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft.), 303-304 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division)
- 202      Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 305-16 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft.), 470-73 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)
- 203      Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**  
First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 481-83 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities), 473-81 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft.)
- 204      Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**  
First Reading -- 468 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 616-30 (Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed)
- 205      Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**  
First Reading -- 707 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.)
- Pr1      Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**  
First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 2, 2016

Day 20

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
Second Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

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Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### **Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee**

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 2, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Let each of us in our own way reflect. Hon. members, I'd like to take this opportunity to reflect upon April 28, which occurred last Thursday and is a day when people across Canada stop to remember those workers who were killed, injured, or disabled in any number of work-related situations, including our emergency services. Life is precious. When it is lost, all of us are impacted. In a moment of silent contemplation may we allow ourselves to remember those taken before their time, those who have suffered and are suffering through tragedies, and to reach out to their families, friends, neighbours, and communities most immediately impacted.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Welcome back, hon. members. It's a beautiful day out there. Please be seated.

**The Clerk:** Introduction of Guests.

**The Speaker:** I think I have a visitor, hon. Clerk.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you. It is my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly 80 students who are here today as participants in Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day program. Offered annually since 2003, this program strives to further develop the interest in and understanding of our parliamentary system among Alberta youth. These high school students arrived on Sunday and since then have been participating in a variety of activities. They've toured the Legislature, attended workshops about parliamentary history and procedure, and they were able to network with Legislative Assembly staff to learn about the work they do in supporting the members of this Assembly. Today they're observing question period, and tomorrow they'll debate a resolution in this very Chamber, which will be presided over by yourself, Mr. Speaker. During this debate the students will be given a unique perspective on the work done by the members of this Assembly, and following the debate the students will visit MLA offices and attend a lunch with MLAs. I would ask that all of our MLA for a Day participants, who are seated in both the members' and public galleries, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. MLA students for a day, I must point out to you – you will learn, as many of my peers are learning – that it wasn't the Clerk who screwed up; it was me.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** I would recognize the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 30 students from the McKernan jazz band, which you heard during the lunch hour here in the Legislature building. The band is comprised of students in grades 8 and 9 who have been playing for two to three years in the school music program. They are here today to celebrate Music Monday, a national event that began in 2005 and has grown to be the world's largest single event dedicated to raising awareness for music education. These students provide evidence that music education is alive and well in Alberta schools, and we believe that it is a valuable component of a well-rounded education. They are accompanied by their teacher, Carol Thurgood, and by parent volunteers. They are seated in the public gallery this afternoon, and I ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Baraza of Kivu Association who are joining us today in the gallery. Gerard Mutabazi Amani, Kamengele Kyalumba Kam, Cloti Katana Nsimire, Amanda Songolo, and Justine Maman Katana work in my riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to help newcomers from Kivutias and across Africa master English while celebrating their Swahili language and culture, set up sport and recreation opportunities, and, most importantly, work with other community organizations to build understanding that leads to co-operation. Their dedication reminds us that no matter who we are or where we are from, in Alberta we can be proud of our roots and give back to our hometowns and cities. I'd ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you an Edmonton preschooler who loves to play with trucks and cars and construction vehicles and may actually have his favourite white truck here with him today. It's not really a surprise that three-year-old Isaac wants to be a doctor when he grows up given the amount of time he has spent in the hospital. Diagnosed with a cow's milk protein allergy, he suffered from gastrointestinal infections, requiring long stays in the hospital and a specialized diet. Isaac is joined by his parents, Lisa and Ira Caskenette, whose tireless efforts advocating for provincial coverage of the medically necessary formula that Isaac required have been heard, and now other children like him who require Neocate will be able to access this formula under provincial coverage. I would ask Isaac and his parents, Lisa and Ira, to please rise and remain standing.

Also joining us today are Natalie Trinh and her six-month-old daughter, Eleanor. Like Isaac, Eleanor has been through a lot in her young life. Despite her health challenges, she is an easygoing,

happy baby who always keeps her older brother and sister entertained. But there were some anxious days and nights when Eleanor was only days old and was in and out of the neonatal intensive care unit, also suffering from an allergy to cow's milk protein. Now, after being put on specialized formula, she is doing much better, and she really is one tough little girl. I ask Natalie Trinh and baby Eleanor to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly an honour to rise today, the day after May Day, to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly several local leaders in the labour movement. First of all, we have Doug O'Halloran, president of my former union, UFCW local 401, whose support, I know, many members in this House are thankful for. Also joining us are Mike Scott, president of CUPE local 30; Ramon Antipan, former president of CUPW; Quinn Benders, VP of NASA; Lindsay Baranowski, treasurer of NASA; Heather Smith, president of UNA; Jane Sustrik, first VP of UNA; Siobhan Vipond, secretary-treasurer of the AFL; Elisabeth Ballermann, president of HSAA; and Mike Parker, VP of HSAA. These folks work hard every day to ensure that all workers in this province have the best possible conditions and representation. I would now ask if it's possible for them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour to rise today and introduce an inspirational Albertan who, I'm very proud to say, happens to be a fine constituent of Calgary-Lougheed. Jill Drader is an entrepreneur who, as a journeyman tile setter and stoneworker, is an incredible role model for women in the trades and for every other Albertan, as a matter of fact. Jill encourages other women to consider careers in the skilled trades through her women in workboots digital research project and her consultancy practice, Steel Toe Stiletto. The entrepreneurial trades program she developed is now a five-credit high school course which gives students business and entrepreneurial training alongside their trades training. Her new venture is recovery transformation, a series of workshops and retreats for women in recovery like Jill herself, who has more than a decade without alcohol in her life. At this time I'll ask Jill to stand to receive the hearty welcome of this Assembly. It's an honour to know you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House a very special guest who is working in my Calgary constituency office for the summer. Josip Tomic is keenly interested in politics, and after working for Elections Canada during the fall election, he reached out to my office, and we are happy to have him onboard. Joe is also a learner at Bow Valley College in the business administration career program. His inclusion in courses and on campus is facilitated by an initiative on campus called inclusive postsecondary education, a partnership between Inclusion Alberta and Bow Valley College. Joe is here today with his parents, Bore and Slavica Tomic, as well as Caitlin Wray, a representative from Inclusion Alberta. My guests

are seated in the public gallery. I ask the parents as well as Caitlin to please stand up. Joe, if you can give a nice warm wave, we'd appreciate that. Joe is up in the corner there. Thank you very much. Can we please give him the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce a small but mighty school group from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. They are from the Shepherd home-school. They are some of the finest constituents in all of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Today we are joined by one of the top teachers in all of the province, Sarah Shepherd, and her children Aravis, Aiyla, Kira, and Graydon. If you'd please rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests for introductions today? Calgary-Hays has a guest.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the president of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, Adriana LaGrange. I would ask all members to join me in giving her the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

## Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

## National Day of Mourning

### North American Occupational Safety and Health Week

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is North American Occupational Safety and Health Week. It is dedicated to promoting awareness of the importance of safe and healthy workplaces. Safety on the job is a crucial issue for this government and for all Albertans. This week is a reminder of that fact, as was last week. Last Thursday we marked the National Day of Mourning, a day to remember workers killed or injured in work-related incidents. Workers' Compensation Board numbers show 125 work-related fatalities in 2015. Many more workers suffered injuries and illnesses. A single workplace death touches so many lives. Families, friends, and co-workers are left heartbroken.

Unfortunately, last week we also received tragic news of two separate workplace fatalities in our province, two more families whose loved ones never came home at the end of the day, more communities struggling to come to terms with loss. In this House – and I consider this House one of my communities – we also experienced a devastating loss. Mr. Speaker, Manmeet Singh Bhullar was 35 years old when he was killed on November 23 of last year. Manmeet was on his way to work when he stopped to help a fellow Albertan in a winter storm. It was an act of kindness that exemplified Manmeet's dedication to Albertans. But beyond the loss that this House felt and that our province felt as well for a well-respected public servant, Manmeet was a husband, a son, a brother, and a friend. Our thoughts are with his family, and our thoughts are with all Albertans affected by workplace deaths and tragedy.

While we remember those we lost, we honour their memory by making an even stronger commitment to safer workplaces. I believe that employers, workers, labour groups, industry organizations, and

government all have a role to play in helping workers get home safely at the end of the day. During North American Occupational Safety and Health Week and all year long I encourage all Albertans to be mindful of workplace safety. Know your rights and responsibilities so that you can keep yourself and those around you safe and healthy. The Alberta government will continue to make sure employers are taking all necessary precautions to keep workers safe. We will work to create safe, fair, and healthy workplaces across this province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to the annual National Day of Mourning, observed this past April 28. This day recognizes the meaningful lives and memories of those who have lost their lives in the course of their work. Last year 125 Albertans never came home from work, their lives cut short far too soon. These are not mere statistics. Each life has an inherent value. Each person had hopes and aspirations. Each of those lives represents someone's parent, child, spouse, sibling, or friend, someone who said goodbye in the morning not knowing that that goodbye would be their last. Today our thoughts and prayers are with the families and loved ones who mourn their loss on a daily basis and whose hearts will never fully be whole again.

Each of us here experienced such a loss when our former colleague Manmeet Singh Bhullar suddenly and tragically died this past November. To this day words do not adequately convey the sadness that I know all members here feel over his loss. We must also be mindful of those Albertans who survived workplace accidents but to this day are suffering the consequence of serious injuries that occurred in their workplace. Twenty-six years ago, one month after I married my beautiful bride, I suffered a workplace accident that almost killed me. Still to this day I suffer from chronic back pain, a constant reminder that it takes only one slip-up to potentially alter one's life.

In recent years many employers and industries have worked in partnership to improve workplace safety and to improve on-site education and workplace practices. They should be commended for these efforts. We know that campaigns for safer workplace practices can achieve meaningful, life-saving results. In the late 1970s nearly every year approximately 10 Albertans died from unsafe excavations and trench work. This was just in one area of work in construction. The result of public outcry and public education campaigns was that these trench and excavation deaths were eliminated by 1985. These workplace education efforts need to be continued.

1:50

Everybody who leaves for work each day should be able to feel that they can return home safely to their loved ones. As we remember the victims of workplace accidents, those who lost their lives and those severely injured, we are reminded of the importance of ensuring that as a province we remain committed to the highest standards when it comes to keeping each of us safe.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I would request unanimous consent from the House to permit a member of the third party as well as the two independents to respond to the ministerial statement.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. member of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every day when Albertans head off to work to earn a living and perform the jobs that keep our province and our economy moving forward, they have the right to expect that they will return home safely. Tragically, last year 125 workers did not make it home to their families, including our own Manmeet Bhullar, who was killed in a motor vehicle incident on the number 2 highway. Manmeet was an advocate, and as an MLA accomplished more in his short years than some of us ever will. We miss him today and always will.

Mr. Speaker, each of the 125 people has their own unique stories and their own distinctive attributes that contribute to a great Alberta. The Progressive Conservative caucus expresses condolences to the families, friends, colleagues, and loved ones of those Alberta workers who did not return safely home from work. I recall when I was Transportation minister how shaken I was when one of our own workers was killed while on duty for Alberta.

Government must listen to all employers – farmers, ranchers, and all others – employees; and those other interested parties to make sure that when we're setting policy that we truly create a safe work environment in Alberta. While some people live to work and others work to live, they all deserve to get home safely, and we all share in that responsibility. Employees, employers, committees, organizations, and also government have a vital role to play. Government must ensure that reasonable regulations are in place to make sure that employees are safe.

The Progressive Conservative caucus today remembers those whose lives were lost or permanently altered as a result of workplace incidents. We will continue to work with our colleagues in government along with all stakeholders, employers, employees, and all Albertans to ensure that Albertans get home safely at the end of their working day.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On this National Day of Mourning we take a moment to remember those who have been injured, disabled, or lost their lives while on the job. Sadly, workplace injuries and deaths continue to affect too many Albertans across the province. As the minister mentioned, in 2015 there were 125 Albertans lost to workplace injury and illness. Virtually every one of these deaths was preventable. They tear away a spouse, a sibling, a parent, and friends. Just last week we learned of two more workers who lost their lives in separate job site incidents. Our thoughts and prayers go out to them and their loved ones. A day of mourning reminds us that Albertans have a right to a safe work environment and that we must continue to strive together to ensure those rights.

Last December Alberta finally passed Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act. This legislation now protects over 10,000 formerly exempt Albertans and provides them with the same security enjoyed by all other occupations in Canada. These rights, granted to agribusiness employees in all other Canadian provinces, have been long overdue. Despite friction in the early stages, I know these changes will create long-term benefit for both employers and employees.

A healthy work environment is not only physically healthy but also mentally healthy. Today marks the beginning of Mental Health Week, and we must remember that the consequences of mental illness and addictions can be every bit as tragic as those of physical illness. So as we remember those workers lost on the job and strive for such tragedies to be eliminated, let us also commit ourselves to creating conditions supportive of mental health in the workplace. Bullying, sexual harassment, gender bias, and stigma must be

stopped. By continuing to improve the health and safety of workers in Alberta, we continue to honour those who lost their lives while on the job.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we mark North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, a week dedicated to promoting awareness of the importance of safe and healthy practices in our workplaces, I reflect on the lives of the 125 Albertans killed on the job last year, their families, and the many more who were hurt on the job. One workplace death is too many, and creating a culture of safety on the job is paramount.

I reflect on my own time working in the oil and gas industry and watching the safety culture evolve and grow in importance. It's not perfect, and there is still work to do, but it's heartening to see safety taken so seriously in one of Alberta's riskiest industries. Alberta occupational health and safety does important work promoting workplace safety, and I'd like to thank each and every worker and student in the field for their contribution to safer workplaces.

On the National Day of Mourning last Thursday I thought about everyone who lost their life on the job, I thought about the families they left behind, and I also reflected on the life of our colleague and friend Manmeet Singh Bhullar, who was killed working and serving Albertans. We often feel safe in this Chamber, far safer than those who are working jobs with high levels of risk every day, and my thoughts remain with Manmeet's family and with all the families and loved ones of those who have suffered workplace injury or death in Alberta. My thoughts are also with those who worry every day about their loved ones on job sites, who fear hearing devastating news each time there's a workplace accident. Many Albertans put themselves in danger each day in order to do their jobs, and we in this House must make a strong commitment to their health, well-being, and safety.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Last Tuesday the Finance minister vowed to win back Alberta's triple-A credit rating. Looks like it didn't turn out so well, though. Here's the Finance minister summing up his trip. Quote: unfortunately, it did not result in a change. End quote. It's hard to believe that \$58 billion in debt didn't convince credit agencies to change their minds about Alberta. The fact is, though, that this government is making families in Alberta poorer through a new carbon tax and dangerous levels of borrowing. Premier, families are being forced to pinch pennies on every single dollar they earn. Why isn't this government doing the same?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that when you have an unprecedented drop in the price of commodities such that you lose billions of dollars in revenue, you can make a choice. You can download that deficit onto the backs of people, or you can move forward in the way we are right now.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has a very selective memory. You know, for 10 years in Ottawa the member opposite voted for a deficit budget in 2009, 2011, 2012, including the biggest deficit budget in the history of the country. So why – why? – was it okay then, but now what he wants to do is to make Albertans . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Of course, while the Premier was travelling to Washington to talk about her brand new carbon tax plan, that's going to punish Albertans, Albertans here are wondering how they're going to afford it. A typical family will be out at least a thousand dollars a year. Charities get zero relief from this tax, a tax that will make it more expensive to take care of our most vulnerable citizens. Schools will see millions of dollars taken out of the classroom to pay for her new NDP tax. To the Premier: why should ordinary Albertans have to be punished with the high cost of this new tax at a time they simply can't afford it?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there is an absolutely growing consensus that the best way to deal with climate change is by putting a price on carbon, first of all. Secondly, it's interesting that the member opposite talks about schools because you know what I always tell the member opposite? Every school I go to, you know who wants us to take action on climate change more than anybody else? The kids. You know why? They are tired of folks like those ones over there engaging in climate change denial and putting their futures at risk. We will not do that.

2:00

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, our children are the same people that won't be able to pay back the debt they're borrowing.

The fact is that Albertans are suffering right now, and the NDP policies are making things way worse. One energy worker feels so alienated by this government that he's marching hundreds of kilometres along the highway from Falher to Edmonton. Jason Dubrule hasn't been called in to work for over two and a half months. That means no EI and not enough money to even pay his mortgage payments. Can the Premier please explain how new taxes and credit downgrades will help any Albertans get their jobs back and earn a decent living?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what I can say very definitely is that firing teachers and nurses and taking billions of dollars out of our economy is not the way to protect people's jobs nor to lay the groundwork for the future. It absolutely isn't. Albertans want a government that's going to invest in them, that's going to invest in job creation and economic stimulation, and that is what we are doing.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition. Second main question.

#### Fentanyl Use Prevention

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans are very worried about the alarming impact of fentanyl in our communities. Families are being torn apart, and this drug is killing people every single day. Too often those who need treatment are not able to access it. B.C. has already declared a public state of emergency, where the death toll is predicted to hit 800 per year, over two per day. Here in Alberta, where deaths far outstripped our neighbours in 2015, public health officials have been blasting this government for failing again to respond to this crisis. These lives lost aren't just statistics. We need a real prevention strategy. When will Albertans see one from this government?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government shares the tremendous concern about the impact of



fentanyl and drugs even more toxic than that on our communities and in particular our young people. It's for that reason that our Health minister has taken a number of steps to move forward on this. We've moved forward in terms of opening clinics that provide addictions treatment. We've moved forward in terms of making the antidote more available. We've moved forward, working with the federal government, to ensure that it doesn't require prescriptions. And then, of course, we've engaged in additional funding to ALERT to ensure . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Concern is great, but action is needed. Moms, dads, grandparents are all watching their families suffer because of this very dangerous drug. They were promised six months ago by this government a draft treatment strategy to handle the crisis. Today: zero. We're still waiting. A state of emergency in B.C. means they are able to collect real-time information so they can be better equipped to help high-risk communities. It's not an answer to the crisis, but it's another tool, and it'll help more than anything that you've done. Can the Premier explain why her government believes a state-of-emergency call would not help those people suffering from this bad, bad drug?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in fact, I think I have to reject the original premise of the member opposite's question. The fact of the matter is that our minister has been taking a great deal of action on this issue. To carry on from where I was before, we've increased funding to ALERT in order to combat the criminal elements that distribute and enhance the presence of this drug in our communities. We are working with indigenous communities, ensuring that opiate-dependency treatment as well as the antidote are more widely available. As I say, we are opening new beds in order to deal with the issue there. We will continue to work hard on it because we know it is . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, this is a crisis. A Calgary mom recently opened up about the shocking impact of this awful drug. Her son has been using fentanyl for four years and is in and out of treatment. She tried to find space in a detox centre in Calgary but found that it was routinely full so spent tens of thousands of dollars in order to get her son treatment. Wildrose has released several recommendations that could help prevent these tragedies and improve mental health care. What can the Premier tell this mom about what they're doing to try to make things better? Simply nothing has been done that's doing anything to help.

**Ms Notley:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, in fact, what we are doing is that we've made a commitment as a government to improve and enhance mental health services and addiction treatment services throughout the province. We've already opened up more beds. To be clear, these are beds that would not have been opened if the billions of dollars of cuts that were proposed by those two opposition parties had gone forward. That's just the reality of it. That being said, we are working on finding more services to deliver to more people because we know it's a growing issue and that we need to do better in terms of providing services to vulnerable communities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

## Openness and Transparency in Government

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the NDP campaigned for office one year ago, they ran on a platform of more openness and transparency and changing the way things are done. However, looking back on the past year, a track record of blurring ethical lines and refusing to disclose key information has formed under the watch of this Premier. How can Albertans trust this government when they tout their ABC sunshine list one day while at the same time they have not updated the sunshine list for government workers?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that that list is typically updated every June, and it will be updated again as it should be. Indeed, the member opposite will be very pleased to see the additional information that is provided in June along with the new legislation that we're bringing in with respect to the compensation levels, that I suspect many people will be calling for once that list is disclosed.

**Mr. Nixon:** This problem goes deeper than refusing to update the government sunshine list since taking office, a list that should be updated every December and June. The NDP government has been on a hiring spree for political staffers. All sorts of NDP politicals have joined the Premier's and ministers' offices, over 20 positions. When will this government show transparency and respect for taxpayer dollars and disclose the contracts of political staffers?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the salaries of people employed in my office as well as all other people that earn over a certain amount are disclosed. That information is disclosed. Now what's happening under our government is that those people who work for the agencies, boards, and commissions, that actually spend over 50 per cent of this government's budget: they, too, will be disclosed. That's something that we ran on, and that's something that we're moving ahead on.

**Mr. Nixon:** No, they have not been, Madam Premier.

When the NDP government hired the supposedly impartial reviewer of Legislature media access as a director of media planning, it raised serious questions. Journalists provided unfiltered commentary to Ms Boyd in confidence and on the understanding that her position was a short-term contract to draft an independent report. While the review was under way, it appears Ms Boyd was interviewing for the media planning job with the NDP. Now that she has been hired by the NDP, will she be using journalists' words against them?

**Ms Notley:** Oh, Mr. Speaker, there's just so much about that question that's wrong. I just don't have enough time in the 45 seconds in terms of the inaccurate facts within it. First of all, the person that the member refers to – I want to say that it's very nice that the member is asking questions on behalf of Mr. Levant. I think it's great that they keep that close relationship.

Also, I'd like to say that the staff person referenced was hired by the public service. It had nothing to do with our office. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? She happens to be a very, very qualified person for the job.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

## Government Policies

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2016 remains a disappointment. Ministers leaving town hasn't made it better. The Premier was in Washington, DC, to promote her carbon tax, which

was curious timing when Washington is preoccupied with presidential elections. In Kananaskis the Premier also struck out. To the Premier: since your trip to DC yielded no results and showed no influence, what can you tell Albertans that you will now do differently to support jobs and the economy?

**Ms Notley:** Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, I really need to take issue again with the premise of that question. Let me begin. In Washington it was really quite exciting to be able to meet with the President's chief adviser on the environment and to have that person come to the meeting fully briefed on our climate change plan and then spend time asking us how exactly we managed to do it and to talk about the elements of it and to find out what parts of it they could learn from. It was extremely rewarding to have them confirm, in fact, that the deal between the Prime Minister and the President was premised in part on the very plan that our government introduced.

2:10

**Mr. McIver:** Well, I didn't hear any results there, Mr. Speaker.

Albertans deserve a government that will respect their hard-earned tax dollars and show leadership by responsibly managing debt. As Albertans tighten their belts during this economic downturn, it's worrisome that our government refuses to do the same. Last week the Finance minister went to meet with Moody's right after Moody's downgraded Alberta's credit rating. Clearly, the minister missed the boat, was too late, wasted his trip, and had no influence. To the Finance minister: since Moody's made up their mind before you got there, why did you go, what have you learned from this obvious mistake, and what will you now do differently?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Finance minister.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's important when you go to meet bond-rating agencies that you explain the Alberta story, that you explain why we're doing what we're doing, what the stimulus will achieve. I explained all of that. I also met with many, many other people outside the bond agency and told them the Alberta story. They're very pleased to know that we're going to stimulate the economy, we're not firing people, and we're going to diversify. That's what they learned.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's story used to include a triple-A credit rating. It now includes a triple downgrading. Quite a hat trick, Minister. The Finance minister said that their fiscal plan would address the risk. The financial agencies blame the risk on this government's refusal to rein in spending and their elimination of the debt ceiling. The PC caucus and Albertans have suggested ways to reduce spending without laying off workers. To the minister: why do you continue to threaten to fire teachers and nurses when there are so many other ways to control spending and debt?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's really quite clear that the opposition leader and his colleague are offside with Albertans. Albertans want a government that will invest in them, that will invest in the economy and will invest in diversification. Folks over there aren't interested in diversification. But I'll tell you what's really interesting is that it now seems they're offside with their supporters because their supporters are really into diversification in terms of parties and leadership.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

## Mental Health Services

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the start of Mental Health Week, and the Premier knew I'd be here to hold her feet to the fire after our report, tabled December 23. In February this year the government released Valuing Mental Health with 32 recommendations on improving addictions and mental health care in Alberta, six of which the province identified. I've heard very little progress on even these six issues, let alone the 26 others recommended. Given that primary care reform was again identified as a long-standing need with an expanded role of the PCN . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I will actually clarify that we've actually opened a number of the beds that were committed in the first six priority recommendations from the mental health review.

I'm also very proud that our government has committed more than \$20 billion to help Albertans get the right care at the right time in the right place with the right provider. We promised Albertans that we would provide stable funding for the services that they depend on, and that will continue to be there for them. We're taking a very close look at the PCN model to see how we can build on the strengths of this model, and we'll have more to share on this very soon.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, given that the number one priority recognized by the report was harmonizing responsibilities between Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services and given that the mental health review was told repeatedly that unclear direction and tensions between Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services have affected timely decisions and quality of care, what assurances can the minister give us that Alberta Health will stick to direction setting and Alberta Health Services will lead the delivery of services?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you. This government is dedicated to ensuring that the mental health review will get the resources and support that it needs to carry out its recommendations, unlike past reports that simply collected dust. Alberta Health has been active in putting together a crossministry team to advise and act on the recommendations of the review. The team also includes many community partners and stakeholders, including representatives from our indigenous communities. Their experience with the mental health system was so valuable in this review. I look forward to meeting with the team in very short order and updating the member on its activities.

**Dr. Swann:** A little shy on details, but in light of the government's own report and also that of the Child and Youth Advocate, can the minister tell us what progress has been made to the promised collaborative addictions and mental health planning with First Nations and Métis communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you. We were very saddened with the report on the tragedies that have occurred in some of our First Nations communities. Suicide prevention is most effective when targeted efforts are combined with broader strategies to tackle the social determinants of health and mental health challenges. This is a principle recognized and emphasized in the mental health review. Through the aboriginal youth and communities empowerment

strategy AHS provides funding to First Nations communities to deliver suicide prevention programs targeted at youth and building resilience. AHS has developed a three-year plan to consolidate suicide prevention efforts across its continuum of care.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for St. Albert.

### Midwifery Services

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard from many of my constituents in St. Albert who are advocating quite frequently for increased accessibility to midwifery services. They've told me that families should have the right to choose their caregivers. We need to ensure that we're supporting families to make those choices. To the Associate Minister of Health: how are we supporting the expansion of cost-effective midwifery services for women in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the work this government has done to support the birth choices of women, including midwifery, and we intend to keep building on that. In Budget 2016 we've committed \$11 million in increased funding over the next three years. Using the current model, that means an additional 400 courses of care this year and each year after that. By 2019 that means almost 4,000 midwife-attended births in our province.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that midwifery services follow a course-of-care model which promotes cost effectiveness, to the same minister: what are the estimated cost savings for women who choose midwifery care?

**The Speaker:** The associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member has indicated, midwives are funded per course of care, which incorporates prenatal care, birth in a hospital, birth centre, or at home, all the way to six weeks post birth. It's difficult to compare the cost for a birth with a midwife versus birth with an obstetrician as risk, delivery, and location all impact costs. Certainly, for low-risk deliveries in comparable settings the savings can be significant. However, we see the greatest impact in the well-being of moms and their babies. We remain committed to the principle that cost should not be a barrier to women's choices around birth.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Second supplemental.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The feedback I've received about Budget 2016 from my constituents and the Alberta Association of Midwives has been very positive. Given the increased calls for midwifery services and the anticipated increase in midwife graduates, what are the strategies in place to ensure that Albertans have access to midwives should they choose to utilize them?

**The Speaker:** The associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very important to this government that all Albertans receive the right care at the right time in the right place from the right provider, and that includes

midwives. We want to ensure that women outside the Edmonton and Calgary areas such as those in St. Albert and more remote communities have access to their chosen care. We are encouraging AHS to work very closely with the Alberta Association of Midwives to ensure that the increased courses of care are allocated to where they are needed in the province when women need them.

### Industrial Property Taxes

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, over the weekend there were a number of articles written discussing potential changes to how linear assessment is distributed amongst both urban and rural municipalities, which have created great concern amongst all of them. At the March AAMD and C convention the minister said: "There will be no redistribution of linear assessment from rural Alberta to Calgary, Edmonton, or any other city. Linear dollars will stay in rural communities serving rural Albertans." Will the minister confirm that her comments to the AAMD and C members at the convention remain accurate today, please?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The short answer is absolutely yes. Without any kind of barrier I will back up that information. I have no control on what speculation certain authors of editorials may choose to do, whatever rabbit hole they want to go down. However, the quotes that I made in that article remain completely consistent with AAMD and C. What he chose to add to that was out of my control.

2:20

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, given that beyond the linear segment machinery and equipment property are also key components within commercial and industrial properties where manufacturing or processing occurs and represents a significant portion of property taxes collected by municipalities, municipalities still deserve to know, though: is the minister also considering changes to how machinery and equipment taxes are distributed to them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I have made it very, very clear to everyone who has asked questions about this that our objective is to keep rural Alberta healthy and strong and to ensure that the services rural Albertans need are both accessible to them and sustainable long term. Nothing within the MGA review will jeopardize that objective. Certainly, the decision and information regarding the actions we will be taking on the MGA review are forthcoming. I look forward to working with . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, given as we can all see here in the House today – and I asked about machinery and equipment tax specifically – that there's still a high level of uncertainty that has been created about potential changes to how linear and machinery and equipment property taxes will be distributed and despite what you've said, is there a plan for how these changes will be put in place, and if so, when can we expect to learn exactly what the plan is?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I look forward so greatly to introducing the legislation following the MGA review very shortly, later this month. I'm also looking forward – you know, again, the fact is that

it will only be in draft form – to working with all Albertans, to engaging with them fully prior to that to ensure, you know, that it'll be a modern piece of legislation and that it will improve things for all Albertans.

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

#### **Petition on Chestermere City Council**

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's now been more than 30 days since residents of Chestermere handed the Minister of Municipal Affairs a petition signed by 5,400 electors asking for an inquiry into the affairs of their municipality. According to the Municipal Government Act a petition signed by 20 per cent of electors is deemed acceptable. The organizers of this petition collected almost 30 per cent of the voters' signatures. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The deadline has come and gone for verifying the petition. When are you going to call the inquiry?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we take the concerns of Chestermere residents seriously and want to ensure that trust and integrity are maintained at the local level. I designated a staff member to verify the sufficiency of the petition and prepare a report. I am currently reviewing the report, and once I've made a decision on the next steps, the municipality and the petition representatives and the public will be notified. I will take the time that's needed to consider all the available options so I can ensure that the residents of Chestermere are served by an orderly and accountable local government.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in politics perception is reality and given that in a case like this one it is clear that a large segment of the population of Chestermere has lost confidence in their municipal government and given that it's only fair to both citizens and council members to clear the air on the many issues of concern in Chestermere, again to the same minister: will you commit to launching an investigation into the affairs of the municipality regardless of the outcome of the verification process, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We want Albertans to have confidence in their municipal governments, that their governments are working with their best interests in mind. That is why the petition process exists, so that residents can ask for an audit or inquiry into their local governments. As I stated, I will take the time that's needed to consider all the available options so I can ensure that the residents of Chestermere are served by an orderly and accountable local government.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. Given that the problems in Chestermere were allowed to brew for so many months that citizens felt the need to take measures into their own hands and force the minister's hand on an inquiry and given that the minister clearly did not understand the magnitude of the problems in Chestermere when she first began hearing about them and given that the minister is still relatively new to this position and no doubt is learning all the time, to the same minister: what lessons have you learned from this situation for dealing with a similar problem in the future?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly have great respect for the tremendous leadership that municipal leaders show across this province, and built into the MGA is also great respect for those leaders. I work within the processes we have to both support those leaders but also show respect to the residents who have concerns, to find the right balance. Again, I'm taking the time I need to go forward with the right action that is the best choice for both the residents and for the leadership.

#### **Farm Inspector Safety Standards**

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, the people are still confused about Bill 6. On March 1 a constituent contacted me about an issue he is having as he attempts in good faith to comply with Bill 6. He was selected for a crop insurance inspection. He requested that the inspector watch a short safety video, have a WCB compliance letter, and wear fall-arrest equipment before climbing up grain bins. The company refused and threatened to deny his insurance coverage for two years. Why are farmers now being punished for following the laws this government created?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the member for the question. I can't speak on a particular policy or review about a private insurance company. I think that would be highly inappropriate. What I know is appropriate is that WCB measures we've taken and placed for farm and ranch workers are working. They're working for the workers; they're working for the ranchers and the farmers to this date. I'm looking forward to have the opportunity to implement the recommendations on the OHS standards themselves.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Orr:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the insurance agency in question is the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, a Crown corporation serving farmers subject to Bill 6, they should be subject to the same rules and regulations and given that I have a letter, which I will table, from AFSC saying that they are exempt from employment standards, do not have to comply, that the legislation applies to farm workers and not them, yet wearing fall-arrest protection is mandated by OH and S, I ask: why is this government agency saying that they do not have to comply with Bill 6 on farms when farmers do?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. You know, I feel that he's talking about a particular incident that I would absolutely like to know more about, and I would more than welcome having a direct conversation with him so that we can find out exactly about the issue.

**Mr. Orr:** Given that I have another letter from AFSC, which I will table, saying that the government's own inspectors are indeed covered by WCB, it seems they are simply refusing to comply with farm safety standards mandated in Bill 6. Clearly, government inspectors do not have to play by the same rules farmers do on the same farm work sites. Since farms face the risk of fines and loss of livelihood, does the minister think this double standard is okay, and what are farmers supposed to do now?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. I can't respond on something that he has in his hand that I have not yet seen but absolutely would commit my office and my ministry to work with the member and with his constituents on this issue. I'd hope to learn more and be able to have a response.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

### **Midwifery Services** (continued)

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've actually got a real question about when this government told Alberta midwives and expectant mothers again and again that there would be good news for them in the budget. The St. Albert Community Midwives centre will still be forced to close because the Health minister's promise of a bold move in support of midwives turned out to be nothing but smoke and mirrors. Why did the Minister of Health choose to break Albertans' trust with their empty budget promises by refusing to eliminate the cap on midwife funding?

**Ms Payne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess that answers my question about whether or not it's a cut day or a spend day for health. We are very pleased with the announcement that we made on budget day. Eleven million dollars over three years is a huge impact for additional funding for midwifery services in our province. We are working with our partners in the Alberta Association of Midwives in ways that we can fast deliver those additional funding dollars to increase the number of courses of care available in that funding envelope.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that this government has failed to address the demand for midwife care and given that the current strategy will force Alberta's midwives to leave the province, making the job situation worse, and given that midwife births save money and could help rein in your spending, how can the minister justify the rhetoric and the lack of real action to allow Alberta midwives to stay here so we can cut costs and give families choice in safe childbirth alternatives?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We were very pleased that the Alberta Association of Midwives joined us here on budget day and spoke in favour of the increased investment that our government is making in midwifery care. Under the current funding model that new investment means almost 4,000 more midwife-attended births in this province over the next three years. Beyond that, we meet with midwives and advocacy groups on a regular basis. We know there is strong interest in improving the funding model here in our province so that this new investment can support as many courses of care as possible.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Considering midwifery is not equally funded compared to other health services in our province and given that choice in childbirth is an issue that should be of paramount importance for a government that claims to care about women, to the Minister of Status of Women: is this the status that women in our province should expect from your government, limited choice and no say?

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government is absolutely committed to women's choice and to providing the services that are needed, including women's health care and choice in childbirth. We're working forward as our finances permit to ensure that women have choice in childbirth, and our partners have been happy with the advances that we've made in our government, advances in choice and funding that our opposition would not have made. Today seems to be cut a blank cheque day, but, sir, we're having to move forward in this economic climate, supporting women's choices, and we're happy with the advancements that we've made.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### **Infrastructure Project Prioritization**

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government promised Albertans an infrastructure sunshine list in the 2015 election as well as in committees and in this Assembly time and again. The Minister of Infrastructure said, "This government certainly wants to let the sunshine in." My question to the minister: when will you publish the full infrastructure sunshine list you promised, not just the school list that our government created in the first place?

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm a little surprised by the question as the list that was published in conjunction with the capital plan includes projects from all areas. These are projects that are supporting the services and the delivery of those services that Albertans need and that have been assessed by departments and found to be desirable projects but for which we currently do not have the funding available. That was the basis on which the projects are there. There is a lot more on that list.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that page 53 of your capital plan states that not all projects will be funded and that "this list is not all-encompassing, there are many worthy projects in Alberta that are not reflected here," to the Minister of Infrastructure: where can Albertans find a full list of all worthy capital projects, and why are there no dollar figures attached to the projects that need funding?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The answer to that question is simply that these are projects that have been evaluated at the departmental level and have met the criteria but for which there is not currently funding available. We will not publish lists of projects, as desirable as they may sound, that we have not done a proper evaluation on nor have we done an evaluation of the potential costs.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Premier has clarified that "when we talked about infrastructure spending and clarity and transparency in the election, we were talking exactly about coming up with clear, accountable criteria that Albertans could evaluate and see and weigh," to the Premier: where are clear, accountability criteria for infrastructure spending that Albertans can see and weigh?

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. Well, I'm beginning to wonder if the hon. member has actually read the section of the capital plan dealing with the unfunded capital projects because it's very clear what the criteria are. They are laid out in that section. I just suggest the hon. member should read it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

### Wildfire Management

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past few weeks we have already seen some pretty threatening wildfires across the province, including in the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry's own constituency. People are concerned because communities in my own constituency as well as others in northern and central Alberta face similar ongoing threats from wildfire. To the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry: what support is the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry providing to communities who face the threat of wildfire?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and Member for the question. Our government and my ministry will always do what we need to do to fight wildfires in this province. My ministry supports rural municipalities like towns, villages, and counties outside the forest protection area upon request by providing resources that help these fires, from trained firefighters to air tankers to heavy equipment. Inside the forest protection area I'm incredibly proud of the hard work that our firefighters are doing as we bring wildfires under control and protect our towns and cities. Agriculture and Forestry has 740 firefighters, 88 helicopters, and 88 pieces of heavy equipment ready to fight new wildfires.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we've had a warm, dry spring and given that wildfires like the one last week present real and frightening threats to Alberta communities, again to the minister of agriculture: what supports will the government have in place should the fire season be extended later into the summer?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that it's scary for families who live close to these fires. We've faced this here in Alberta before. That's why it's so cruel for the opposition to fearmonger by suggesting that we would do anything less than everything necessary to fight these fires. [interjections] We're seeing a trend toward drier, warmer springs, and as such we have front-loaded the fire season to increase preparedness earlier. If we need the tankers longer, we have arrangements and agreements in place to ensure that the resources will be there when we need them. The hon. member very correctly points out how dry and hot the conditions are this time of year and how important it is for people to be very careful.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate that I was unable to hear part of your answer, and, people watching at home, it's because of the opposition. Given that communities can be threatened and damaged by wildfire and given that it can take years

for communities to rebuild from these natural disasters, this time to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what is your ministry doing to ensure that Alberta's forest communities have access to the resources they need should there be damage incurred by wildfire?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that as someone who has lived through a wildfire that tore through my town of Slave Lake, I am confident that we have the resources in place, and I would not state that if I was not absolutely confident that if there's a fire somewhere that is threatening the lives of Albertans, we will have someone there to take care of it. If by chance there is a fire, the municipal wildfire assistance grant is there to help communities with the extraordinary response to a wildfire and to support the FireSmart programs, which help prevent and reduce future wildfires. I will continue to work closely with the minister of . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Elk Population

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's farmers and ranchers have been trying to bring the issue of unsustainable elk populations to the government's attention for years. Two hundred elk were introduced to the Suffield military base in the 1990s with the understanding that the number would not exceed 800. They have since grown to several thousand. Down south we joke that there are more elk than gophers, but the damage they can do is real. What is the Minister of Environment and Parks doing to reduce these elk populations to sustainable levels?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I know it's an important issue for his constituents and throughout southern Alberta. Certainly, we increased last year the number of elk hunting permits, and we are examining how we will do so again this year, increasing those numbers so that we can bring those populations under control. In addition, the areas in which they can be hunted are also being examined. I will have more to say about that in the coming days and weeks.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that the cull numbers are nowhere near the reproduction numbers and given that elk in such massive numbers can destroy crops, break fences, and damage productive lands and seeing as the herds are now moving from more remote areas to the Trans-Canada highway, where the risk to the public safety was witnessed this weekend with a taxicab collision, are the ministers of agriculture and Transportation concerned with these economic damages and safety risks, and are they also pushing for a much quicker resolution to this problem?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. It certainly is an important regional issue, and that's why the Department of Environment and Parks through fish and wildlife is examining the numbers, and we are increasing those numbers. We'll have more to say about that very soon. We understand that it is a pressing issue for landowners and for those travelling on the Trans-Canada highway.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that there could be now more than 12,000 of them and many constructive proposals have come forth from the farming, ranching, and hunting communities as well as concerned local residents and given that such proposals, including a hunt that would thin the number of elk while donating meat to the province's food banks, have not received traction from this government, why has the ministry been so slow to react when affected Albertans have repeatedly asked for a prompt solution, offered their assistance, and require a definitive resolution for the sake of their communities, their families, and their livelihoods?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, we understand the tremendous impact of the elk herds in and around Suffield, who have now begun to move. We know that they are growing, and that is why the Department of Environment and Parks through fish and wildlife is examining the numbers and examining the counts, and we are working with our partners in the fish and wildlife sector and the hunting community, resident hunters as well as others, to ensure that we are taking the appropriate action. We'll have more to say in the coming weeks.

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

### Energy Policies

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The former PC government unequivocally supported Northern Gateway given ongoing confidence in Enbridge's ability to work through hurdles with both B.C. and the respective indigenous communities. During the election the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona stated, and I quote: Gateway is not the right decision; it's not going to go ahead. However, recently and thankfully she conveniently changed her tune. To the Premier: why the irresponsible delay in not standing up for Albertans from the outset by supporting Enbridge and getting products to market, securing much-needed investment, and protecting and creating jobs?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. At the onset, the Premier has not changed her response whatsoever. Our government is committed to working with our partners in both directions to get pipelines built. Quite frankly, when it comes to Northern Gateway, there are a number of issues and considerations that need to be given, so the Premier has said on numerous occasions that it is unlikely that that project will go through because of conditions that have been set by other governments.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, out of respect for the other members who have asked the question, please listen to the responses. I along with several others have indicated today that I cannot hear the answer, so respect your other members, and listen to the answer that's being given.

First supplemental.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess this one wasn't in voice mode. I guess we'll check with *Hansard* and see where they made the error.

Given that the Premier has refused to condemn the inequities of the west coast tanker ban and given that the minister of economic development finally woke up just 10 days ago to seek clarification

from Ottawa on the same tanker ban, to the minister of economic development: why did you wait so long to address this critical issue, and why is your government not defending Alberta's best interests by fiercely condemning this hypocritical ban?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the member's preamble is quite confusing. I'm not sure what the heck he's asking. Quite frankly, our government has had the same position from day one, which is that we support and recognize that we need to get our product to tidewater. Unfortunately, the previous government in 40 years couldn't get it done, and the Leader of the Official Opposition, when he was in Ottawa, couldn't get it done. Our government has chosen to have the most robust climate leadership plan in the country, and quite frankly the President of the United States has acknowledged it. We are working to get pipelines built.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has a history of making rash, irresponsible, negative statements about programs and projects that are in Albertans' best interests and given that the bitumen royalty in kind program and oil royalty rates are two of these examples, to the minister of economic development: if you're wrong about Northern Gateway, BRIK, and oil royalties, how can Albertans have faith in you and your colleagues' ability to make responsible, objective, and balanced policy decisions in representing their best interests?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm a little confused where the member is going with this. I will say that the Minister of Energy, the Premier, and myself have been working collaboratively with our partners and our counterparts both east and west, including the federal government. The Premier has had a number of conversations with the Prime Minister on the importance of getting our product to tidewater. It is absolutely critical, and we will work with our counterparts, unlike other parties, that prefer to pick arguments over social media, or the third party, that failed to get it done in 40 years.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

### May Day

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and recognize an important day in history, and that day is May Day. May Day is a celebration in the labour movement marking May 1, 1886, when more than 300,000 workers in 13,000 businesses across the United States walked off their jobs in the fight to have an eight-hour workday.

Mr. Speaker, since Albertans and Canadians now enjoy the eight-hour workday thanks to the efforts of the labour movement, might I suggest that some of my colleagues across the way be just a little bit more grateful for just a few of the important benefits that many Albertans, including their own constituents, enjoy courtesy of the labour movement, small things like the minimum wage or a 40-hour workweek. How about overtime pay, occupational health and safety, paid vacation as well as maternity leave? What about workers' compensation and retirement savings plans? Let's not forget things like employment insurance, collective bargaining, and

dental plans, and we certainly shouldn't forget the smallest little one that there is, public health care.

So, Mr. Speaker, if you enjoy these types of benefits and want to keep ideological agendas from taking them away, you might want to have a union backing you up. To my sisters and brothers in the labour movement who are here today in the gallery, thank you for the work that you have done for unionized workers and all workers across Alberta and for the work that you will be performing in the future. Happy May Day.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

## 2:50 Government Accountability

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Baseball season is back, and while that's good news for fans of the game, Albertans are getting a little sick and tired of this government trying to slide one past them. The members opposite have been in power now for a year, but the people of our great province are still waiting for the change they promised to deliver. So far NDP change looks a lot like the same unethical behaviour that got the old government thrown out. You'd think that this new government would have learned a thing or two from the mistakes of the past, but so far everything they've done is right out of a recycled playbook.

Let's take a look at the instant replay. They've rewarded their failed candidates with high-profile patronage jobs, they've filled senior ranks of government with friends and party insiders, and they've hauled in a squad of anti-Alberta activists to leech off hard-working Alberta families. If you thought that was strike 3, think again. Now we've learned that this government has failed to update the government sunshine list since coming to office, and they haven't updated the list of political staff salaries for a whole six months – foul ball, Mr. Speaker – all this despite the fact that they've been very busy signing up a long list of players from far left field to long-term, high-paying contracts in government. This isn't a changeup; it's a sinker.

This government deceived the people of our province when they promised to improve accountability and strengthen democracy, and Albertans deserve better. This government has already developed a habit of blurring ethical baselines, and Alberta families can no longer trust them to act in their best interests. Truthfully, it's not the job of Albertans to play umpire. This government has proven it cannot be trusted to manage our province. We've all seen this pitch before, one too many times. Now it's time to sit back, keep our elbow up, and watch the ball because in 2019 this government is going, going, gone.

## Government Policies

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, in talking with Albertans across our province, voters sheepishly admit to supporting this government with hope for positive, responsible change, but now they see damaging dogmatic ideology lurking behind the orange cloak while their hopes have been irrevocably dashed as Alberta heads for even tougher times than global economics alone could have wrought on our great province.

I am proud of our entrepreneurial spirit and pioneering way of life and an innovative, can-do stubbornness and pride with humility that carries our brand across this country and around the world. But this alone will not bring the success we previously enjoyed, and herein lies the renowned prairie work ethic that supports our determination to succeed in a community-driven way that shares wealth and the Alberta advantage with our most vulnerable citizens.

And I'm encouraged by our western heritage, that has built an embracing, inclusive society that takes care of those less fortunate while welcoming and celebrating people, ideas, dreams, hopes, and diversity in all its forms, creating, building, and supporting better communities for all. This is the Alberta I love.

Mr. Speaker, this week I heard schoolchildren asking about the fate of our energy sector with youthful but insightful concerns for the livelihoods of their parents, family, friends, and neighbours, young adults fearing the legacy of fiscal irresponsibility and uncertainty for their own futures, the dampening of the spirit of which I've spoken, and the stark realization of having taken so much for granted in their young lives. Seniors share their concerns for the financial burden that will be borne by their children and grandchildren while lamenting the slow and painful death of the Alberta advantage, that brought so many economic refugees to our province from other NDP provinces.

This is not the Alberta that I know and love. Albertans are saddened by the attack on intangible qualities that have driven such tangible results for us as a strong, proud, resilient, passionate, and dynamic province. Mr. Speaker, let's remember the spirit, the proud history, and hopeful dreams for a bright future that we are responsible for in this Chamber and that each vote we make can support . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

## Kingsland Terrace Continuing Care Centre

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today in this House to talk about the opening of a new continuing care centre, Kingsland Terrace, in the community of Kingsland in my constituency of Calgary-Glenmore. I was very pleased to join the hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing on April 29 for this wonderful inauguration ceremony.

Kingsland Terrace has 24 specialized beds to support young adults suffering from multiple sclerosis and brain injuries. This facility is the end result of the collaboration between the Intercare Group and the government of Alberta. Kingsland is the second facility owned by the Intercare Group, after the Chinook Care Centre in Calgary-Glenmore. Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to see that we now have a new care home available for our citizens in Calgary-Glenmore.

Kingsland Terrace is a unique facility with an innovative living environment that is designed to provide a new style of residential supported living for residents of Calgary. The facility has a wonderful team of qualified care and support services staff, who are always ready to assist by ensuring that residents have all the needed resources and amenities and experience a comfortable and respectful stay.

The Intercare Group has multiple long-term care and supported living homes all over Calgary. Southwood Care Centre and Brentwood Care Centre have been providing excellent support to the community for the past several years. The Intercare Corporate Group is an Alberta-based organization providing health and life enrichment services in continuing care centres since 1992. The group has received full accreditation with exemplary standing by Accreditation Canada.

I commend the excellent work that the Intercare Group is doing in the community by offering choice, supporting growth, and honouring those needing services with dignity. I would like to thank the Intercare Group for making such a big difference in our society



and congratulate them on their further growth through Kingsland Terrace.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 7(7) to extend the Routine past 3 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

### Josephburg Agricultural Society

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to stand today and recognize the efforts of the Josephburg Agricultural Society, located in the beautiful constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, and in particular the efforts of the Josephburg Presents Committee, under the leadership of Diane Smith.

Ag societies address many challenges facing rural Alberta, and one of those is ensuring access to top-notch musical entertainment and culture from across Canada. This committee gathers together every year to procure both new and seasoned talent brought in by the Arts Touring Alliance of Alberta. They curate a sold-out season of music at the Moyer Rec Centre in the small hamlet of Josephburg, but really the people that attend are drawn from the surrounding communities of Strathcona, Lamont, Fort Saskatchewan, and Bruderheim, to name a few.

This past season my husband and I enjoyed some wonderful acts, including the Wardens, who sing about their experiences as real park wardens in Banff national park; Christine Tassan and les Imposteures, a talented francophone artist hailing from Quebec; the Rodeo Riders, a musical comedy trio covering artists such as Roy Rogers, Hank Williams, and even AC/DC; Tim Hus, who brings good old-fashioned country and true Alberta folk storytelling to the stage; and finally, a very familiar name to Canadians, Tom Jackson, who has used his music here and abroad as a vehicle for social change.

Every night there is a small army of volunteers that ensure the night seems effortless. Diane Smith's husband, Ralph, MCs the event and gives us his best jokes; Virginia Differenz and Doug Maschmeyer head up the 50-50 sales; Doug and Joanne Heckbert manage the door and merchandise booths; Chuck and Debbie Gerow manage the bar, so it's good that there are two of them; and, of course, many others, too many to be named, without whom the evening wouldn't be possible.

This next 2016-17 season will mark their 40th year of bringing diverse musical experiences to rural Alberta, and I look forward to hosting a few of you this fall at my table to enjoy dinner and a show.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Urgent Health Care in Sylvan Lake

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Mr. Speaker, the current government has no problem skipping consultation and taking action on policies that hurt Albertans, but when it comes to addressing a community priority and a common-sense cost-saving measure like the Sylvan Lake urgent care centre, all the Minister of Health could say was that she was having, quote, conversations about it.

Well, this weekend Susan Samson, chair of the Sylvan Lake and area urgent care committee, voiced her frustration at this government's refusal to act in a letter to the editor in the *Edmonton Journal*. She said:

Summer is almost here and Sylvan Lake and area is ready to welcome you back to its pristine lake, water recreation pursuits, great dining, shopping and special events.

But please note, in the second largest community in central Alberta, and the second busiest provincial park which sees over 750,000 visitors annually, we have no hospital, urgent care or ambulatory care available for you.

So when you come to see us in Sylvan Lake and you're worried about what you will do if a loved one gets sick or injured while playing with us, bring your own doctor with you. If you are outraged, like we are, write the health minister.

And it gets worse. On June 1 the after-hours physicians-on-call service in Sylvan Lake will cease. After serving as a stopgap measure for Sylvan Lake for many years, the 2,000 to 3,000 patients it served will now have to seek care at the overloaded Red Deer emergency room 30 kilometres away.

Mr. Speaker, this government spent \$2.3 million advertising its last two budgets and its climate plan, yet it won't invest in cost-efficient measures that save lives. I'd like to invite the Health minister to a rally in Sylvan Lake on May 25 to experience for herself the frustration of a community that her department has ignored for years and to hear their response to her childish jingle about the right services in the right place at the right time. The right services are 24/7 urgent care, the right place is Sylvan Lake, and the right time is right now, thank you very much.

3:00

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

#### Bill 11

#### Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016.

The intent is to increase alignment and effectiveness within the innovation system by consolidating the four Alberta Innovates corporations into one because being globally competitive in innovation means being smart about your strengths and pooling your resources, know-how, and expertise together to develop solutions. This integration will better connect Alberta's drivers of economic growth with the advice and expertise they need to move to the next level. The improvements we're proposing reflect the input of several expert reviews and input from stakeholders.

I would encourage all members to support the bill on first reading and look forward to the coming debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first is a letter signed by the manager of on-farm inspections for AFSC stating that they are covered by workers' compensation. It's not a real compliance letter, but anyway.

The second one is from the acting manager of insurance solutions for AFSC in which they state some of what I said earlier, and I present it.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask your permission to read and table a brief . . .

**The Speaker:** Very brief.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** . . . very brief letter from Alberta Prairie Meats. On behalf of my staff and myself, we are honored to contribute these steaks to help you fulfill your commitment to eat beef for a week!

Alberta is home to the greatest beef in the world. When we start with quality animals, we do everything on our part to deliver that quality all the way home to your plate! Our industry achieves this through humane handling and by providing the least amount of stress possible to our livestock. It's not because it's mandated by any special interest group, it's just good business!

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to table five copies of this letter from Alberta Prairie Meats in my constituency, in Duchess.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the required number of copies of an article from the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta. The article is entitled Private Schools Save the Public Purse Millions Each Year.

### Orders of the Day

#### Written Questions

[The Clerk read the following written questions, which had been accepted]

#### Full-day Kindergarten

- Q2. Mr. Smith:  
What is the government's projected estimate of the cost to implement full-day kindergarten in Alberta?

#### Student Learning Assessment Pilot Projects

- Q3. Mr. Smith:  
How much has the government spent on the student learning assessment pilot projects for the fiscal years 2010-11 to 2014-15 and from April 1, 2015, to February 29, 2016, and what are the details of what the money was spent on?

#### Student Information Initiative

- Q5. Mr. Smith:  
For the fiscal years from 2010-11 to 2014-15 and from April 1, 2015, to February 29, 2016, what was the cost to the government to develop and implement the provincial approach to student information initiative?

#### ESL Student Registration

- Q7. Mr. Smith:  
In Alberta how many English as a second language students were registered in the 2014-15 school year, and how many of those students will continue beyond the five years that are totally funded by school boards?

#### School Funding

- Q8. Mr. Smith:  
In the public, separate, and francophone school systems in Alberta what was the total amount of funds collected through

fees, fundraising, donations, and gifts in each of the fiscal years from 2010-11 to 2014-15?

#### Maintenance Enforcement Accounts

- Q9. Mr. Cyr:  
How many maintenance enforcement accounts were in arrears and by how much were they in arrears on February 29, 2016?

#### Whitecourt Healthcare Centre

- Q10. Mr. Schneider:  
For the fiscal years 2013-14, 2014-15, and from April 1, 2015, to February 29, 2016, how much money was spent on the redevelopment of the Whitecourt Healthcare Centre, and what was it spent on?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

#### Adoptions of Children

- Q1. Mr. Cooper asked that the following question be accepted.  
How many adoptions of children up to the age of 18 years were finalized in each year from January 1, 2009, to December 31, 2015, and of those how many were children in permanent care of the government prior to being adopted?

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to discuss this very important question. Just in case there's any concern from the minister, in the spirit of full disclosure I might say that I have a very close personal connection to the importance of adoption here in this province and, certainly, right in my own home. One of the reasons I move the question is that there are so many great things that can be done around this issue of adoption, and it is my pleasure to be able to rise in the House today and speak to exactly that. The government plays a very important role in the adoption process. The government plays a very important role in the success of adoptions.

Mr. Speaker, before we hear from the minister and allow him to propose an amendment – as I understand it, they have some desire to make some changes around this question – let me just very briefly say that I wish we lived in a world where there was no need for adoption. I wish that for every family in Alberta that had children there were never circumstances in their lives that created turmoil or tragedy or disruption inside the family. But, unfortunately, that is not the world that we live in. As legislators we have a very important responsibility, a responsibility to ensure that there are appropriate supports for those who are engaging in growing their families through adoption, that there are the appropriate supports for those who may be choosing to put their children or child up for adoption, and that there are appropriate supports for those in our province who may choose to sign a permanent guardianship order.

**3:10**

With adoption comes great joy and great sadness, so I think it's a very important issue and one that I am pleased to speak about today. We all have a responsibility in this House to the families in this province, to the children of the province, and it's important that we understand whether the number of adoptions is increasing or is decreasing. It's important that we have real firm data for the House to have conversations around these important issues. It's important that we have some points of reference to see if the government is moving in the right direction or in the wrong direction.

It's my hope that the minister will in fact provide the information to this Chamber so that all of us can help to be responsible to all of those who engage in the adoption process. There is nothing more important for the health of children than stable, loving, caring, permanent homes, and I agree with the minister that the best place for that to happen, first, is with biologicals. Unfortunately, it doesn't always end that way, so I hope that the minister can shed some light on how well we're doing as a province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for asking this question and raising this important issue. As the member stated, the best way to raise children is to have them in a safe, stable, and permanent house. In that regard, let me begin by saying that the work that our foster parents and adoptive parents do is incredibly important, and all of them, including my honourable colleague, deserve our thanks and respect for taking on this important role in the lives of the children who need this.

However, I would like to propose that Written Question 1 be amended as follows, and I will explain the reason for this amendment.

How many adoptions of children up to the age of 18 years were finalized in each of the fiscal years from 2008-09 to 2014-15, and from April 1, 2015, to December 31, 2015, and of those, how many were children in permanent care of the government prior to being adopted?

So covering April 1, 2008, to March 31, 2015, and the first three quarters of 2015-16.

The rationale for this request is that the child intervention program areas pull numbers related to private and international adoptions by fiscal year only and cannot retrieve the data by calendar year. The information that our department will be providing will be for a slightly longer period of time in that it will reflect numbers back to April 1, 2008, rather than beginning from January 1, 2009.

If accepted as amended, the materials can be provided within a few days of notice of approval of the amended question. I hope that this amendment is satisfactory to my colleague.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** To speak to the amendment, the Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. minister. I will say that while from time to time question period can be a little raucous in this House, there are lots of times when we can all work well together. I'd like to thank the minister's staff for reaching out to my office on Friday and having a small discussion around this amendment. I appreciate what the minister is doing here in an effort to try and get the best available information on this very important topic.

So I thank you, and I encourage all members of the Assembly to support the amendment.

**The Speaker:** Other members who wish to speak to the proposed amendment? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. I'll be brief, Mr. Speaker, but I did want to rise and get on the record that I am in favour of this. I think this is an important question. I'm glad the hon. member that raised it and the minister are getting along. I think the hon. member that's raising this is to be admired for his role in adoptions. It's something that I think should be encouraged by this House because I think there's a special place in heaven for people that adopt kids.

I'm very happy to stand up and support the amendment, that sounds like it's got the support of the minister and the government. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any other members on the proposed amendment?

[Motion on amendment carried]

**The Speaker:** Are there any other points with respect to the main motion?

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to close.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to close debate.

[Written Question 1 as amended carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### School Funding

Q4. Mr. Smith asked that the following question be accepted.

From April 1, 2012, to March 31, 2015, how much less did the government spend as a result of students being enrolled in private schools instead of public or separate schools?

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the simplest of terms what this question is really all about is the differential between the funding that students receive in independent schools, at either somewhere around 60 or 70 per cent of the instructional grants, in relation to those that are given to public school authorities. I'd like the Ministry of Education and the minister to add up the differentials and to provide the information as a starting point.

But in many ways the question goes much further. If you add in the other funding categories for which independent schools are not eligible, how much are you really saving? Indeed, could the school boards even house the students that are enrolled in independent school programs if those programs were defunded and all students transferred to the public system?

This question cannot really be understood outside of the wider discussion that underlies this issue, Mr. Speaker. That question is: should the government support Albertans having access to a wide range of delivery methods when it comes to education? As it presently stands, we have many models of delivering education in Alberta. We have public systems, separate systems, charter, home-schooling, and independent schools. There seems to be a considerable amount of talk in today's education as to whether we should fund all of the various styles and delivery methods of education. Some of the major stakeholders in the public system of education have stated that they believe that any educational delivery model outside of a system of public and separate education should not receive taxpayers' dollars.

Indeed, we know that even within this government there are many MLAs and members of Executive Council that would support the defunding of all but a system of public and separate education. Reported in the *Calgary Herald* July 31, 2008:

NDP Leader Brian Mason also blasted the funding increase for private schools.

**An Hon. Member:** Name.

**Mr. Smith:** My apology to the hon. member.

He said people who want to opt out of the public system and put their children in private schools should have to pay for them. "We don't think taxpayers' money should be financing private schools. I think it's inappropriate."

3:20

Quoting the Premier from *Hansard* on October 28, 2013:

Our caucus is steadfastly opposed to private schooling and particularly steadfastly opposed to public dollars supporting private schooling. We're happy for people to choose to go to private schools, but if they do so, that should be their financial choice and not that of other taxpayers. That same thing applies generally to the notion of allocating public resources to what is otherwise a private, for-profit effort. . . . That's, of course, an opportunity to increase the proliferation of public funding of private schools, which, I would argue, is a bad thing.

Many that support this position will argue that only public education has to take all students; therefore, only public systems should receive taxpayers' dollars. They say that public education systems take all students, rich and poor, from every culture, language, and religion, and that only public education will provide an education where students can mix and break down artificial barriers. Some will argue that the default educational delivery system must be the public system of education and that if parents want another alternative, then they must pay for it themselves. As a supporter of public education I believe there is some merit to these arguments, but I would also argue that a decision on any issue is always stronger when both sides of the question are explored and when actions are taken that balance the rights of the individuals involved.

I also believe that competition between systems makes each system stronger. Those that disagree with having only a public system of education recognize that decisions about a diversity of educational delivery systems must start with the discussion about the principles and the rights that underlie education and that educational diversity must spring from an understanding of the educational rights that Albertans have. This nation was built, Mr. Speaker, upon a recognition of linguistic and religious diversity, and from the very foundation of our nation we have recognized in law the right to publicly fund educational diversity.

Educational diversity was needed to recognize the reality that French and English populations would need to have that diversity if they were to live together in the same nation. We built this diversity into our system of law, and we've recognized it by making education a provincial issue. We recognize it in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms under section 29. In the 1890s the precedent was set that where numbers warrant would determine what options of educational delivery would be provided for parents by the taxpayers.

In Alberta we've built into law the recognition of parental rights, which will play a huge role in the right to educational choice and public funding of that educational choice. We have the Alberta Bill of Rights which says, "The right of parents to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children." This sentiment is supported in the preamble of the Education Act and is also supported in the School Act.

In Alberta the precedent of where numbers warrant has been guiding the hand behind what educational options would be available to parents. Albertans have seen the wisdom of these guiding principles, and we've understood that together they have allowed one of the most diverse populations in the world the opportunity to educate their students in such a fashion as to provide each student with a world-class education through the many different educational delivery models.

The decision to have a diversity of educational delivery models is not and should not be determined by a dollars-and-cents argument. This is an issue that must be decided by balancing the educational rights of Albertans, and those rights are not up for sale.

All of this is to lay a foundation for why we are discussing the question at hand today. What would the increased operational costs be if every student in Alberta received full funding at the rate

currently set for the public school system? Only public and separate schools in Alberta receive full funding across the board in Alberta. Independent schools do not receive full funding from the government of Alberta. At most, they receive 70 per cent of the per-student instructional grant, but they do not receive targeted funding for provincial initiatives such as small-school-by-necessity funding or transportation or capital or regional collaborative services delivery. The independent schools only receive portions of other funding such as plant operations and maintenance or northern allowance funding. So Albertans actually save money when Alberta students choose an alternative delivery method other than public schools.

Mark Milke reports that independent schools have saved the government \$750 million over the last five years, as referenced in the parents for choice website and the AISCA newsletter from March 2016. This is what private sources have estimated. If we are to put the argument to rest as to whether or not educational diversity saves or costs Albertans, then we need the government to answer this question from their own figures.

Will this minister and this government provide clarity for Albertans by answering this written question? Will you help Albertans to better understand how much it would have cost Albertan taxpayers if all of the students educated in Alberta outside of the public and separate systems received the same level of funding? The answer to this question will help to bring clarity not only to the question at hand but could also help to address the wider issue of whether or not there should be diversity in the model of educational delivery.

From the theoretical, legal underpinnings of our education system to the very practical consideration of accommodating students, Mr. Speaker, this written question needs to be addressed. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for his words. I guess perhaps I should have worked in the spirit of my hon. colleague here and looked for a way to make some alteration in regard to this question, but perhaps the member can ask it again in some slightly different way.

These are some issues that we have from the ministry that make this a little bit too complicated as it is worded. There's no simple method to determine if more or less funding is required by government as a result of students being enrolled in private schools as students are funded differently and depending on a variety of needs. In fact, there are many different sorts of levels of funding of students in private schools. Accredited funded private schools, for example, receive partial provincial funding to meet educational standards. Students at these schools write provincial tests, and they're taught Alberta programs of study by certified Alberta teachers. Some private schools receive 60 per cent base instruction; some private schools receive 70 per cent. Then, Mr. Speaker, you have the early childhood services, ECS programs, that are run by private schools and are funded at 100 per cent of the public school rate. So you can see what sort of a tangle it is in regard to all of these different categories, and there's more.

In addition, private schools do not receive capital funding or funding for each of the differential grants, as the hon. member pointed out, in regard to transportation, class size, small schools by necessity, for example, all of those envelopes. So if the government was not providing funding for students enrolled in private schools, some current private school students might be still enrolled in private schools as well while others might be attending public, separate, or charter schools instead.

About 3 per cent, Mr. Speaker, of the total Education budget goes to support private schools and ECS operators. The total amount of funding provided by Alberta Education to private schools was \$216 million for 2013, \$221 million for '14, and \$240 million for the '14-15 school year.

So perhaps if we had a clarification on this question in some way, I could tackle it better. I can't take it as it was described.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, I need some guidance from the table. At this stage it's a rejection? Yes.

Are there others speakers to the question?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the government won't reject this question. I think it's an important one. While I accept part of the minister's premise that it's not a single calculation in order to come up with a number, it doesn't have to be that many calculations. I think the government could without too much effort actually provide a pretty good estimate, if not an exact number, to answer the question using averages on the information that we know. Of course, if you're going to grind it down to every single student and their individual transportation grant and depending upon whether kids are both in a public school or a private school or a different school, I suppose you could make it sound insurmountable.

Respectfully, Mr. Speaker, it would actually be less work for the government just to answer the question than it would be for them to make it sound insurmountable to answer the question. So I would be hopeful that the government would choose, in the best way they can, to answer the question.

3:30

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on this particular question, a good question. While the minister would like to have us believe that this task is insurmountable, the point is that the minister has all the data. The minister knows how much he pays per student. He knows how many students there are. He knows the difference between all of the formulas. The department is the only one with all the data. Now, my hon. colleague spoke about some private research work that has been done, good research work, but if we want to be certain that the government is making the best possible choice, all they have to do is provide the information, that information that they have.

I have to say that it's a little disappointing that this government is building a track record on saying one thing and doing another. Now here we are again, on another Monday, just seven days removed from the last Monday, when we were talking about choice in education, and it appears that the government is keeping important information out of the public domain. They have the ability to provide us with how much money this delivery model is saving Albertans. What this government seemingly will have everyone believe is that private education, home-school education, independent education is this horrible, oppressive cost to the government, yet the government and the ministry are well positioned to provide the exact number that in fact this choice saves the department.

Mr. Speaker, if this choice was removed, while certainly there would be a number of people who'd continue to educate their children in whatever way they've chosen, some would then be forced to engage in the public system. As a result, if this government thinks that they have a school shortage today, that school shortage would be magnified exponentially if there was a massive influx because of a reduction in funding. In fact, all the good people who choose to use other forms of education for their

children, a very strong case can be made that they are in fact saving the department money. Yet the government likes to say that public education is the – I'll rephrase that. That was unfair of me to say.

The government is saying one thing about how they support choice in education, but it appears that another is true. Trying to prevent real data, the data that they have, from educating Albertans on how much choice in education actually saves Albertans is more than a little disappointing. The minister has been around this place a long time, and he knows – in fact, I have been in the gallery on days that he has debated written questions. Some similar arguments about the government keeping information from Albertans have been used from that side of the House when they were in opposition, and now today it's Chicken Little, the sky is falling, and we're horrible people. That is what we've just heard from the minister. So it's a little bit . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order. Mr. Speaker, the minister in his off-the-record comments here did not refer to the Official Opposition as horrible people. I just wish to set the record straight.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please.

**Mr. Cooper:** In the spirit of co-operation, that has an opportunity this afternoon, I'll happily withdraw my comments around horrible people.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Cooper:** But we have heard the minister making comment about being Chicken Little, and some would imply that, you know, Chicken Little, perhaps a case could be made that he was talking about the sky falling and how horrible things were.

My point remains the same. The minister has the information. They are putting together a nice little track record about saying one thing about supporting choice in education and doing another. They have the information, yet they refuse to provide it to Albertans, and I think that's a shame.

**The Speaker:** Any other members who would like to speak to question 4?

Hearing none, I would call the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon to close debate.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we presented this question to the government and to the minister, we believed that it would bring some clarity to the people of Alberta. We've been having a lot of discussion about the efficacy of diversity of educational delivery models. We've been hearing from some stakeholders that perhaps it would be a good idea to get rid of the public funding of various models of educational delivery.

The Wildrose Party wants to make it clear that we would not support that. We believe that parental choice is an important concept in our system of education, that it's important that those educational models be funded fairly within our system of education in this province. We would suggest that arguments that are used that would suggest that educational diversity and delivery are a burden to the taxpayer would not hold a lot of water, so to speak. We would argue that at the very least what we could do is to go back into the public records, go back into the ministry's records, and to search out just what it costs Albertans to have a diverse system of educational delivery.

**An Hon. Member:** Of choice.

**Mr. Smith:** Of choice.

Now, we know that education is an expensive proposition in this province . . .

**Mr. Cooper:** A worthwhile investment.

**Mr. Smith:** Absolutely, it's a worthwhile investment.

. . . and we know that it's a life-changing investment in the lives of young Albertans. I think that there are enough teachers in this Legislature who have worked with children to see that education can change a life, open doors, allow kids to be able to engage in a society to the maximum of their ability. Not all children are the same, and not all educational delivery models are the same, and they can meet the needs of these children in ways that will absolutely either open or close doors.

We know that – and the minister is absolutely correct – schools will receive different funding, and different models of education will receive different levels of funding. The minister is absolutely correct: it can become a very convoluted and difficult thing to try to figure out exactly how those models of education should and are being funded, with targeted funding and various levels of funding, depending on whether you're a home-educated student or whether we're talking about an independent school or a charter school. But there is one thing that they all have in common if you are an alternative system outside of the public or the separate system, that they do not receive full funding in comparison to the public or the separate systems.

3:40

We know this, at least in broad general terms, that if all of the students that were home educated, educated in independent schools, charter schools, that if all of those students went into a public or a separate system, it would cost significantly more. We know, as I've alluded to already, that there are private studies that seem to say this, that seem to show us clearly that educational diversity of delivery models actually saves the taxpayers money. So it's a little bit of a mystery for people in the opposition and for many Albertans when we hear people say things like: well, taxpayers' money shouldn't be financing private schools.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

[The voice vote indicated that Written Question 4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:42 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Panda
Barnes	Hanson	Pitt
Clark	Hunter	Rodney
Cooper	Loewen	Smith
Cyr	MacIntyre	Starke
Drysdale	McIver	Strankman
Ellis	Orr	Swann

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Payne
Carson	Jabbour	Phillips
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Coolahan	Larivee	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Sabir
Dach	Loyola	Schmidt

Dang	Luff	Schreiner
Eggen	Malkinson	Shepherd
Feehan	Mason	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Sweet
Ganley	McPherson	Westhead
Gray	Miller	Woollard
Hinkley		

Totals:	For – 21	Against – 40
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[Written Question 4 lost]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

4:00

#### Student Information Initiative

Q6. Mr. Smith asked that the following question be accepted. For the fiscal years from 2010-11 to 2014-15 and from April 1, 2015, to February 29, 2016, what was the cost to school boards to develop or to purchase software to implement the provincial approach to student information initiative?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Somehow you switched.

Information management, Madam Speaker, is a fundamental component of the work that we do in government and in all of its facets, especially in education. Indeed, the results-based budgeting final report, released in November 2015, highlighted the importance of those systems that are in place to ensure that the government is able to meet expected outcomes in a timely and an efficient manner. We know that in many ways in this government and for the people that we serve, information and the sharing of information is absolutely critical if we are to function in a timely and efficient manner. One of the key findings of this report reads:

The current decentralized model used for government information technology investments results in duplication, inconsistent investment and asset management and an inability to fully realize benefits of new technologies and future trends.

As I said, the sharing of information is absolutely critical, and it is extremely critical in the idea of education. While this finding relates to government in a large context, it's crossministry information dissemination which has serious implications for the ability to manage in this case student information on the one hand and to ensure that personal information at the same time remains confidential for each of the students.

Now, the recommendation that follows this finding is important for education. It has implications for the provincial approach to student information, or PASI. They suggest to "develop a new corporate applications model and a new investment management approach that incorporates central oversight of funding, prioritization and reporting models." Now, that's couched in all sorts of business model language and -ese, but it really does have some pretty important implications for crossministry initiatives in which the Ministry of Education obviously participates.

For instance, we have something like the regional collaborative service delivery initiative, which is a regional partnership among school authorities, Alberta Health Services, Human Services, and other community stakeholders. The RCSD uses the resources already in place but tries to use them more effectively by having ministry personnel working together. This can include but is not limited to existing mental health supports to speech and language therapy and occupational therapy, all of which are important in education. RCSD partners and collaborates on a regional level to help meet the identified needs of children, youth, and their families. The intention of the RCSD approach is that children, youth, and

families will have access to the existing enhanced supports, but they'll get it at the right time and in their home or in their school or in their community, so it's someplace that's local.

I've heard nothing but positive reports of this service delivery model, but I am wondering about the information management systems that underpin the work of the RCSD. How are these collaborative efforts managed between AHS and Education? How do they keep track of the students who receive services under this model? How do they track the ministry expenses when they participate in this initiative, and how are funding commitments allocated and tracked? Most importantly, I would like to know how they track individual students who receive supports through this initiative and how parents know that their child's needs are being met.

Are students receiving proper screening and assessments? Is there the funding for that? Are they receiving that screening and assessment in time to get the proper supports in place to ensure success? Are they receiving proper interventions? Are the interventions successful? Are teachers, school administrators, specialists able to track the progress as a result of the interventions? Are parents kept appropriately involved in the process? What data is being gathered as a result of the crossministry initiative? What can we learn from that data, and how can we use it to make decisions that will benefit the students' welfare into the future?

More generally, in the report we read that enterprise and ministry support services

provide vital support to the delivery of all government programs and services. This support is provided through internal policy and decision-making capacity, strategic planning, contracted service management and operations in accommodations and facilities, financial services, human resource services, information management, information technology, contact centres and other corporate services . . .

Outcomes for this line of business are to:

- improve stakeholder access to government information, programs and services.

We know that the school boards and the other educational services need to have access to this information.

How well is the money being spent on PASI? Is it allowing them to get that? They need to

- manage and leverage government information as a strategic resource.

They need to be able to ensure accountability. The system has to

- ensure accountability and effective management of resources, investments and risks.

Does it

- enable productivity of government employees; and
- provide effective and easy-to-access processes.

Madam Speaker, the provincial approach to student information, or PASI, took years to develop, and it cost the government a lot of money, but I've never been able to find out a definitive amount. What did it actually cost, and has that money been used effectively and wisely with this system?

It was developed, and then it was turned over to the school boards to implement. Some school boards have developed their own software, and some have purchased software developed by software manufacturers to meet the functionality that is sometimes needed by the government. The entire process and the resulting software applications were not always suitable for some small school jurisdictions. In fact, the system was in some cases too cumbersome and too expensive, and the administrative burden of implementing PASI was beyond the capacity of many independent schools and private ECS operators.

This question is important in light of the results-based budgeting report. How much have school authorities spent on developing and

implementing PASI? Was the result of that investment a platform that allows for information sharing between ministries in a manner that will support both the students and at the same time protect their privacy? Will PASI meet the outcomes of this line of business as outlined in the report, or will school authorities now have to go back to the drawing board to start afresh as the government moves to implement the key recommendations of this report?

The final question, Madam Speaker, is: how much was spent, and were these funds well used? Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for his question. You know, actually, the many questions he asked within his explanation around this question are really good, right? I think that they are things that are worth pursuing in regard to us finding efficiencies around IT systems not just in Education but that crossministry collaboration that we talked about a lot and are working towards implementing throughout Human Services, Health, Advanced Education, and, of course, Education. So within those parameters there are lots of things that are definitely worth pursuing.

So within your own specific question here, though – and again it's something that we could work to probably clarify over time. Our school authorities operate autonomously with respect to the purchase and the use of different information systems.

**4:10**

Vendor systems may include a broad range of functionality, and school authorities select the student information system that best meets their needs. Each school board has tracking of that IT system and the costs associated with that and efficiencies, but it's not brought together through Alberta Education. Many school authorities have agreed to their time with Alberta Ed to support design and testing requirements, to develop the provincial approach to student information, PASI.

Some school authorities have invested time to work directly with their CIS vendor to test pilot PASI-integrated features to ensure that CIS meets their requirements. PASI integration represents only one component of the capabilities of a larger, global student information management system, that you'll see in all of our school boards, charter schools, private schools, and so forth throughout the province. You know, many CIS vendors have successfully enhanced their systems to be PASI integrated so that they can promote and market their software to Alberta school authorities. We're seeing all of these things, but the short version of it, Madam Speaker, is that those decisions, as many decisions are in education, are choices that elected representative school boards make across the province. So that's where that information does lie, right?

Moving forward, you know, I certainly see the utility and certainly school boards would see the utility of us looking for ways to save money because that's what they, of course, are meant to do, provide quality and be careful with the public dollars, but over time that's, of course, what I'm always trying to pursue in my ministry.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to the question? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the question. It sounds like the question is going to be rejected, which is a bit of a shame. I recognize that there are some unique challenges with the autonomy of school boards, but it sounds to me like the problem that we have here this afternoon is twofold. It sounds like my hon. colleague didn't word the question

right, and perhaps we could have had a bit of co-operation to get to the heart of what the member was trying to accomplish. The goal of what the member was trying to do with the question – and I wouldn't speak for him – in conversations and in the debate this afternoon was to try and get more information.

One of the roles as a private member and certainly as a member of the opposition is to try and shed light on issues or expenditures or challenges that the province faces so that we can all have access to more information. The more information that we can all have, the better we all are when it comes to making informed decisions. It's very, very difficult for even the minister's department to judge the success or not of a program without all of the information.

I know, in speaking with a number of school board trustees in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills just recently, that the department has asked for new measures when it comes to reporting their finances through to the minister's office. I know that a lot of school board trustees have raised some significant concerns about the time that it's going to take and a relationship between school boards and the department or the minister's office. Here we had an opportunity where he could have just asked. He has asked for lots of other things but hasn't asked in this case. Our goal and the member's goal is to try and do our best to be able to judge results of programs. This particular question didn't cast judgment on the program but merely endeavored to try and get some standards from which to work. If we don't have both the objectives and the results – and a big portion of that is the costs – it's very difficult to determine whether or not that was a good investment.

Make no mistake. There are a number of different factors at play here when it comes to people who have spent money on this particular initiative. You know, it would have been great if the minister had provided an amendment to speak to the information that he had specifically, particularly around costs that the department incurred, because it at least is a data point on which we could begin to have a more robust discussion around this particular program.

To reject the question out of hand and say, "Well, listen; school boards are autonomous," which we appreciate over here – the minister does have the ability to ask questions. He could have been very co-operative in nature and not directive in nature and said: hey, we're looking to try and get the best idea on how much we spent. Instead, what we have is the minister just making the decision to reject the question, saying that it's a little bit too tricky and not trying to take the next step and provide information on an issue that's important.

We and, I believe, all members of the Assembly have a desire to get the best available information with which to judge programs, to make decisions. Because we are in a time when there are significant pressures in all dollars we spend, we all have a responsibility to ensure that the government is spending those resources as effectively and as appropriately as possible. To just reject this question I don't think speaks to the importance of the resources that have been spent, as I said, even in the form of providing the very hard data that the minister has available to him today in the form of what his department spent on this particular initiative. I hope that it's not a trend that we see moving forward.

I know that my hon. colleague has asked a couple of questions here to the Department of Education. Fortunately, about half of them, I believe, are going to be answered, so I will say thank you to the minister for that because when the government does the right thing and provides the information that the opposition feels is reasonable and appropriate to legislate from, we should be appreciative of that. We're not going to see eye to eye on all things; on few things it is more likely than not. But I do appreciate the fact that the minister has answered a couple of the questions that my

hon. colleague has asked. It is a little disheartening that the last two questions we've debated here are going to be rejected.

I hope that on a go-forward basis we can work a little bit more collaboratively to make sure that we're asking the right questions. I know that members on this side of the Assembly, where possible, are happy to work together to try and get the information that all Albertans may want to have access to.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the question?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon to close.

4:20

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to start by suggesting that when you begin a new job, there are times when you do have to learn, and sometimes you turn to the veterans in that job. You ask for their advice, and you watch how they do their job, and as you begin to progress in your job, hopefully, you learn. This member of the Legislature is trying to do that as we speak.

I know that there are times when I have done a great deal of learning from some of the veterans in my caucus, and I have learned a lot from individuals even to the left of me about how this . . .

**An Hon. Member:** I'm to the right.

**Mr. Smith:** Oh, you're to the right.

I know that as I progress through these ideas of trying to get information that would help education and the students of Alberta, there are times when I've been in my classroom and I have had to say to the kids that the right question is indeed important to ask.

In my defence I would also perhaps suggest that when we asked this question, it was a starting point. It's a starting point to begin to get a better understanding of just how effective the PASI student information initiative has been. Let's start by asking some of the really obvious questions. Let's start by knowing – and I know the minister understands this very clearly – that we are in the information business in this Legislature and in this government and that the sharing of information is critical. If we're going to be able to govern well, we have to get a clear picture of how things come together and why decisions are being made the way they are being made.

In education it's no different. Perhaps we start by first asking what it's costing the school boards to purchase this information system and whether it's a wise use of those funds. I believe that in an economic climate like we're in today, where we've got too few resources and very much need, we have to make some tough choices sometimes. Because we know that we don't want to negatively affect and impact the classroom directly, we have to look in education at other areas, but it's perhaps pretty difficult in education because so much of those resources are poured into teachers and poured into classroom supports.

So where do we look? Well, perhaps PASI is one of them. So we use those resources hopefully wisely, but we have to ask the question: what do they cost? We know that in life we make better judgments when we have better information, so if we're going to find out if this is an appropriate system, it means, then, that we need to make sure that we've got the information, and it starts by asking: what is it costing school boards, and is it a wise use of their funds?

I guess it is a little disappointing. As my colleague has said, to reject this and decide to not walk down this path is disappointing because it could help by ensuring that there are resources being spent in appropriate places in education. We don't know just yet how much money has been poured into this. So how can we start asking the other questions if, first, we don't know what those are?



It would have been nice – I guess maybe I shouldn't prejudge. Maybe the rest of the House here will in fact support this request. I would ask this House and this minister to consider that this is one way that we can pursue, perhaps, some wise stewardship of resources without affecting classroom teachers directly or class counts. It would allow us to be able to at least have the conversation.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Written Question 6 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:25 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Gotfried	Panda
Clark	Hanson	Pitt
Cooper	Hunter	Rodney
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Starke
Ellis	McIver	Strankman

4:40

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Payne
Carlier	Hinkley	Piquette
Carson	Horne	Renaud
Ceci	Kazim	Rosendahl
Connolly	Larivee	Sabir
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Sucha
Dang	Malkinson	Sweet
Eggen	Mason	Turner
Feehan	McLean	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	McPherson	Woollard
Ganley	Miller	

Totals:	For – 18	Against – 38
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[Written Question 6 lost]

### Motions for Returns

[The Clerk read the following motions for returns, which had been accepted]

#### Treasury Board and Finance Ministerial Orders

- M1. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### Energy Ministerial Orders

- M2. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Energy between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### Transportation Ministerial Orders

- M3. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by

the Ministry of Transportation between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### Service Alberta Ministerial Orders

- M4. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Service Alberta between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### Health Ministerial Orders

- M5. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Health between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### Human Services Ministerial Orders

- M6. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Human Services between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### Seniors Ministerial Orders

- M7. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Seniors between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### Justice and Solicitor General Ministerial Orders

- M8. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### Infrastructure Ministerial Orders

- M9. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Infrastructure between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### Municipal Affairs Ministerial Orders

- M10. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### Environment and Parks Ministerial Orders

- M11. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Environment and Parks or its predecessor between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### Advanced Education Ministerial Orders

- M12. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Advanced Education or its predecessor between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### Education Ministerial Orders

- M13. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by

the Ministry of Education between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### **Indigenous Relations Ministerial Orders**

- M14. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Indigenous Relations or its predecessor between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### **Agriculture and Forestry Ministerial Orders**

- M15. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry or its predecessor between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### **Culture and Tourism Ministerial Orders**

- M16. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism or its predecessors between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

#### **Government Retreat at Camp Chief Hector YMCA**

- M17. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of all documents relating to the fall government staff retreat held at the Camp Chief Hector YMCA from September 18 to 20, 2015, including a list of participants, a breakdown of costs, and agendas.

#### **Ministerial Correspondence**

- M19. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of any correspondence – including but not limited to letters, e-mails, or phone messages – sent between the ministries of Infrastructure, Treasury Board and Finance, and Executive Council in preparation for appearing before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on February 3, 2016.

#### **FOIP Annual Report 2013-14**

- M26. Mr. Cyr:  
A return showing a copy of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy annual report 2013-14, prepared by the government of Alberta.

#### **FOIP Annual Report 2014-15**

- M27. Mr. Cyr:  
A return showing a copy of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy annual report 2014-15, prepared by the government of Alberta.

#### **Budget 2015 Online Survey Responses**

- M31. Mr. Fildebrandt:  
A return showing copies of the responses that the government received from Albertans through its online survey on their priorities for Budget 2015.

#### **Government Documents and Briefings**

- M33. Mr. Cooper:  
A return showing copies of documents and briefings, including PowerPoint presentations, outlining the internal

government process for the preparation of government legislation.

4:50

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I would request unanimous consent from the Assembly that in the event of a recorded vote being requested for any of the written questions or motions for returns now standing on the Order Paper, the bells be shortened to one-minute intervals.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

#### **Ministry Legislation Plans**

- M18. Mr. Cooper moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the most recent three-year legislation plan for each ministry.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Approximately one year ago Albertans chose a new direction for the province. This Thursday will be the one-year anniversary of the election of this government. At that time Albertans were hoping for a new, open, transparent form of government. The question that's before the House, in many respects, is going to reveal how much has changed from the previous government to this government. This question, the motion for a return, speaks to the direction and the ongoing direction of the new government and whether or not they're going to do things differently and provide this House and all Albertans a bit of a road map moving forward over the next period of time. In this particular question I had the opportunity to ask for three years of the most recent legislative plan for each ministry. It doesn't mean exactly the pieces of legislation but a plan that each ministry has for potential areas of need inside the department when it comes to legislating, when it comes to the Legislature.

The government has an opportunity to provide a sense to the opposition and to Albertans of exactly what the needs are going to be over the next number of years. That's not to say that those needs won't change. That's not to say that the plan provided, or hopefully provided, today isn't a flexible one, but it will give Albertans a general sense of what the needs of the ministry are and will also provide the opportunity for Albertans to discern the direction that this government is likely to take.

I might just add that should the question be rejected because of the timeline, three years, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that as the mover of this motion for a return I'd be more than happy to accept an amendment around shortening that timeline to 12 months, 24 months, whatever the government might see fit. But it is a bit of a line-in-the-sand day. I know that the previous government, some would say, acted under a lot of secrecy and discussion, with lots of decisions solely around the cabinet table, not opening up all of those things but deciding amongst a small group of people. This is an opportunity for the government to provide a sense.

I also recognize that there may be some of those things that are too sensitive to provide, and I might just add that I would be willing to have some discussion around some of those things that, in fact, might be too sensitive and might prevent the government from wanting to answer this question today.

In light of the time – and I'd love to hear from the government on their plan for this question; I have a sneaking suspicion that they're not very keen to answer it – on behalf of the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and all Albertans, that are really looking for some guidance and direction on where the government is going over a longer period of time than just a legislative session, I sure

hope that they will have the desire to share that information with all of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While I hate to disappoint the hon. Official Opposition House Leader on this point, I know he had a sense that we might be rejecting it. Might I suggest that he probably drafted a question that he knew would be rejected because this speaks to the heart, goes to the heart of cabinet confidentiality. That is, I think, the core of it. These are internal working documents of Executive Council, and as such they are privileged and subject to the protections related to cabinet confidences. Moreover, these plans are very fluid, and they change very often, depending on any number of circumstances, and there is no formal process for their approval. They are often generated at the departmental level, and they may not reflect the priorities of the ministers or of the government, and they do not necessarily reflect decisions made by ministers or the cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, there's another real concern, that releasing this information could certainly jeopardize and prejudice consultations with stakeholders. I think we have learned in the year that we've been the government that it is important to consult with stakeholders, and to publish lists of legislation before that's been done is not fair to them and makes the work of the government that much more difficult. Some departments may not use the same time frame as others. I appreciate that the members opposite would like to seek information about our legislation plans, but there is an outline of the plans of the government that is provided, and that is contained in the Speech from the Throne. Until we have finalized the legislation and approved it to come forward, any lists are potentially more speculative than anything else.

With respect to that, I don't think there's a lot of value in bringing forward these very flexible plans and releasing them, particularly because they contain decisions that have been made in cabinet and, as such, are privileged.

I urge all hon. members to reject the Official Opposition House Leader's motion.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I've had a request for unanimous consent to introduce some guests of one of the members.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests (reversion)

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Assembly for allowing the introduction at this point. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the president of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, Adriana LaGrange, as well as past president Tony Sykora. I would ask them to stand, and I would ask members to join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

5:00

**The Speaker:** I have another request. Is that right?

**Mr. Smith:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly

Mr. John Tomkinson. John is a pilot and an air traffic controller who moved to Wetaskiwin in 2006 with his wife and his young family. Since then he's become involved in many ministries with the Sacred Heart parish. Mr. Tomkinson is the chair of the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic school board and was motivated to seek the position because of his great interest in protecting and advancing the delivery of education centred on the Catholic faith. John is also the vice-president of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, and his volunteer experience includes speaking at community and men's groups' retreats and conferences about God's impact on his life. John is a proud father of eight children. May I ask Mr. Tomkinson to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

I hesitate to interrupt the House, but the time limit for consideration of this item has concluded.

## Motions Other than Government Motions

### Educational Delivery Choices

504. Mr. McIver moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to affirm its commitment to allowing parents the choice of educational delivery for their children, including home, charter, private, francophone, separate, or public education programs.

Ms Luff moved that Motion 504 be amended as follows:

- (a) by striking out "affirm" and substituting "support public education, including francophone and separate schools, while affirming";
- (b) by adding "and" after "charter,";
- (c) by striking out "francophone, separate, or public";
- (d) by adding "in such instances where they offer alternatives not available in the public system" after "programs".

[Debate adjourned on the amendment April 18: Mr. Cooper speaking]

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to request unanimous consent for two motions. The first is to seek unanimous consent such that the amendment to Motion 504, which is currently on the floor, be withdrawn.

I will just also mention the second one because they go together: seeking unanimous consent that the time spent on Motion 504 on April 18 be taken out of debate time and thus not count towards the time limit set out for motions other than government motions under Standing Order 8(3), with the understanding that at 5:55 today the mover be given five minutes to close debate unless the motion is voted on sooner.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm advised by the table that there are two motions contained within that. The first motion is to give unanimous consent for the amendment to be withdrawn.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The second is for a total of 55 minutes of debate. Do I correctly understand that?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, and that is with the understanding that the speaking list would not start over again.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise. It's nice when the House can work together to get out of a bit of a jam that we found ourselves in not 14 days ago. It is an important discussion, and it's one that we've had a little bit of an opportunity to speak about just this afternoon around this very fundamental discussion around choice in education and who is responsible for educating their children and the government reaffirming their long-standing position on choice in education.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a very good history on this particular file of being respectful of the ways that parents might like to engage in the education system. This particular motion affirmed, hopefully with the government's support – and only time will tell. Sometimes the House has a way of taking unique twists and turns. It's my hope that all members of the Assembly will support the motion that the Assembly urge the government to affirm its commitment to allowing parents the choice of education delivery for their children, including home, charter, private, francophone, separate, or public education programs. This is a long-standing tradition inside the Alberta context.

We learned earlier today from my hon. colleague about a number of the good reasons why choice is critically important. First and foremost, as a parent and, I might add, in the name of full disclosure for the hon. Minister of Human Services, I also am an active participant in educating our children. I am so honoured that my wife takes the primary role in educating our children at home no matter where we are in the province. It's something that has been very important to us.

Mr. Speaker, you might have a hard time believing this, but I actually love my wife and children more than I love politics, so in order for us to be able to find a way to spend time together, to be investing in a way that works well for my family, investing into my children's lives on a pretty daily basis, we've made this choice to educate our children at home. For us, we are what's called fully aligned with the provincial curriculum. We teach what is taught in many schools all across this province. We hold our children to those standards, and that is an important choice that we've made in our family.

Now, it's not a choice that everyone should make, does make, but each of us lives in a jurisdiction where we have that opportunity, and it is a very, very important opportunity that we have. Just earlier today I had the opportunity of introducing a number of students from the Shepherd home-school, and I only say that because that is their last name. With the presence of my two children that are home-schooled and the four Shepherd children, a very good case could be made that those two families alone are saving the public education school system tens of thousands of dollars every year. The choice that we've made, in my opinion, is actually helping public education. My children do not require the confines of a school building.

With those seven children that were here, when you count my three and their four, that's almost half of a classroom or at least a third of a classroom in today's time, maybe a quarter, depending on where you live. The point is that the choice that we've made not only is great for our family, but in my opinion it's also great for the province. We all have a role to play in making our province great. The way that parents choose to engage in the education system is part of that. Let me be clear. I believe that the choices in our education system, be they public, private, separate, independent, home, francophone, help strengthen our education system. They help make the whole system stronger and better.

5:10

Our education system is something to be proud of because it fulfills a very, very important role of laying down the path for the

future of our province. Just like we have the pleasure of welcoming school students and other students to our Legislature, they are going to be responsible for the future of our province. Now, it's my hope that we as a Legislature can continue to create an environment that sets them up for the most success, that supports their parents, that supports an environment where children and students have the opportunity to flourish. That's exactly what choice does.

We've seen in many, many situations that choice and competition raise the tide for all boats. Because there are charter schools, because there are independent schools, because there are the separate and Catholic school systems, we have an environment that creates the desire amongst many to be better, to provide the best possible education. I think it's important that we continue to support these choices.

We've seen a number of different schools right across the province, particularly charter schools, that have a significant wait-list. I know that my hon. colleague has been advocating on behalf of choice and advocating on behalf of charter schools and the inclusion of the additional spots that have been legislated for charter schools because these choices are important. It's my hope that today we can see an actual commitment from the government that they, too, support choice.

We've heard the minister on numerous occasions talking about supporting choice, but there are lots of people and, it's my belief, some members of the NDP caucus that are concerned about choice.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I believe your time has expired.

**Mr. Cooper:** My guess is that it hasn't because I'm on the main motion, not the amendment. Am I okay?

Okay. I'm just getting to the best part, about the government having an opportunity to do what's right. Last week we saw the government meddling inside the business of private members and creating uncertainty amongst those that choice is of critical importance. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that members on this side of the House will rise every single day to defend choice, to defend parents, and to defend families right across this province.

For that, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to support this motion, and I encourage all members of the Assembly to do the same.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member who brought forward this Motion 504. I'm very proud to rise today and speak in favour of the motion. I think that, you know, again, I've made it very clear from the beginning, as I assumed the Ministry of Education responsibility, that it's very important for us to provide stability and security amongst our 659,000 students and almost 1,600 schools and 61 school boards and many private schools and charter schools and home-schooling. We have just this whole universe of different ways by which we can access a very high quality of education here in the province of Alberta.

I know that from the beginning it's very important to reassure people that those mechanisms are in place, that we provide a high level of education that is regulated through legislation, through the School Act, through our school boards and so forth. The expectation is always there to deliver something that is the very best for our kids. Of course, what else are we here for other than to make sure that we provide a very secure and high-quality education for our children here in the province of Alberta?

Again, I've always said that you can judge me on my actions and our government's actions in regard to funding education. We had a very difficult budget this last go-round, but at the end of the day in caucus and in cabinet people said to me: you know, what are we really here for in the first place? Albertans look for a way to make

sure that we make an investment in education through thick and through thin. It's been a little bit thin, Mr. Speaker, over these last few months, but I think that we reflected the desires of the vast majority of Albertans, who said: let's make a sacrifice to make sure that we're funding education even during an economic downturn like we're facing here today. I'm very proud of that.

That funding extends to all forms of education, using the envelopes and the mechanisms that we've had in place here in the province of Alberta for a long time. Every step of the way, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's very important for people to know that they can invest in the education system into which they've put their children and have the security to know that it's there for the future as well. I recognize that.

Certainly, I spent the last week travelling around the province just to kind of get a sense of where people are at in regard to education, and the results were very good. People were very happy to see that we made those choices around funding for enrolment, for education regardless of what system their children might be in or even in home-schooling as well. The results and the feedback that I received, Mr. Speaker, were very encouraging, and I learned, certainly, a lot about how people are willing to make that sacrifice.

We know that we need the positions as well. We had an earlier discussion here about different forms of education and trying to quantify the savings that you might make through private education and so forth. The general math around that is clear. I mean, of course, if you're funding at 60 per cent, then you're saving 40 per cent, right? If you're funding at 70 per cent, then you save 30. That is self-evident, certainly.

Many of our private institutions as well provide a very specialized form of education for people with severe special needs, which we will fund 100 per cent – 100 per cent – plus that extra special-needs funding that those students require.

In regard to the charter schools, again, looking to always evaluate every step of the way that there's high-quality education being served, new applications coming in, extensions coming into our department, if anything, Mr. Speaker, over the last year we've endeavoured to try to make that more of an independent process that uses a set criteria that would lessen the likelihood of, you know, people trying to jump the queue or something like that or otherwise making an evaluation on anything but what the independent ministry and the regulations would allow.

Yeah, I'm very proud of the education system that, first of all, produced me, K to 12, and then, you know, educated my own children. I worked as a teacher for 20 years. You know, it's not a question, Mr. Speaker, of trying to just defend education but, rather, to strengthen it in all ways. I think that as we all work together with the best of intentions to do that, we will always be successful in strengthening education. Certainly, I know that it's very difficult to suggest that anybody would have anything but those best intentions in mind as they help us with legislation here.

5:20

I thank the hon. member for his motion. Again, I do recognize that I always have to keep repeating messaging around all of the things that we do. I mean, we can't just say it once – we're going to say it every day – and, you know, I say it very often. Again, the best way to measure a government is to judge them on their actions. My feedback from independent schools associations, charters, and so forth is again, "Thank you for funding," as we have, "our public, separate, and francophone schools for enrolment." It's definitely a big deal out there, and I've given them the reassurance that they can start planning on a longer basis, that we will continue to do that so that they can make long-term plans for their budgets and so forth, which I think is very productive as well.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the education that we provide here in this province. I'm proud of the commitments, even during difficult economic circumstances, that I know most Albertans want, and I look to the Legislature here in all ways to support that endeavour as I would expect them to do so.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I've been really looking forward to making this speech for exactly two weeks, as a matter of fact, as you know. I would really like to start by thanking my hon. member the MLA for Calgary-Hays. I think that the whole province has stood up and taken notice. This is a very insightful motion that he's spearheading. What he's really trying to do, along with so many other students and parents across this province, is simply to reaffirm the government's commitment to one of the most fundamental strengths of Alberta's education system, and that, of course, is the variety of choice that is offered to each and every child and parent in this incredible province of ours.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I won't ever forget many years ago what I read in *Maclean's* magazine. By the way, whether you do or don't like *Maclean's* magazine, whether you do or don't think it's too far to the left, it doesn't matter. They admitted that Alberta had built the best educational system by far in this country precisely because of the choice that other members have already referred to. I can appreciate that, not only as someone who's been through the system – the Education minister had mentioned that he had been through the system as well – not only in my current role as an advocate for advanced education, not only in being a parent of two who are in the school system at the moment but also as a former educator, like some of the other folks in this House. My humble career did span over a decade. I worked in three countries, from kindergarten to university, in many different facets of educational delivery, some of the best years of my life. I will treasure forever the students, the parents, the members of the community that I met, the incredible gains that were had. I never actually referred to myself as a teacher but as a facilitator. I learned incredible amounts.

I got a bit of grief from some of the teachers that I used to teach with a few years ago for, well, a number of things, as you might expect. One of them was for a bumper sticker on my car. It simply stated: don't let school get in the way of your education. They kind of thought that maybe I was taking a swipe at my own public school system. Of course, I wasn't. Incredible things happen within that public school, within the bricks and mortar, but I made a great effort, with a lot of help from parents and some teachers and many students, to take them far beyond the walls of that school to learn in ways that go beyond what we can find in a traditional classroom. I can tell you that the gains were absolutely invaluable, and to this day students tell me how it changed their life and their communities, close and far, around the world.

Maybe that started when I was earning my bachelor of education after degree, when I had a professor who did not put his own kids in the public school system. That's right. He was a professor at an educational institution, a university, the college of education, teaching students how to be teachers, and he was saying that he did not send his own kids to school. You can imagine how unpopular he might be amongst his colleagues. He asked us as students at that time: I'm guessing a whole bunch of you are wondering why you should listen to a word I say, let alone whether or not my kids are social misfits or academic laggards; I dare you to call them. So I did. I was the only one in the whole class. I talked to them, and I could not believe that the list of accomplishments on the social side of

things for each one of the kids that he had was as long as one arm, and what they had done academically and beyond was as long as the other arm.

So the fact is, Mr. Speaker – it's been proven through these examples and so many more right across Alberta – that not all children have the same needs, and that's why it's important to offer these different modes of education. Some choose francophone education because of cultural or identity needs, and our system is set up to protect rights that are enshrined in the Constitution. Some children require different or enhanced educational programs that are more tailored to their and their family's educational goals, and our system does make that happen. We've got 13 operational charter schools across the province, as an example, including in my home constituency of Calgary-Lougheed. I am absolutely blown away every time I meet those students, whether it's in the school or beyond, by what they've done in the school and beyond.

Now, some children achieve their best choice in educational environments through home or even blended options. Our system has that ability for parents to assume direct responsibility for the education of their children and their work as partners within school boards. You know, if you don't want to take my word for it, please take the word as written by Mahala. She wrote in to me after she saw what happened here two weeks ago. She writes:

I am a grade 12 . . . student who would like to speak to supporting this choice in education. Even though I am graduating this year, your decision . . . will have an effect on so many children's intellectual, creative, and emotional well-being. I care about that.

I was in a public school setting until the second half of Grade 5, when my family and I made the decision to homeschool. I will be honest with you and say that by October of my grade 5 year, I was suddenly struggling to learn math, failing to comprehend science, and losing my love of learning. My family and I looked at all of the options available in Alberta, and decided to try . . . the Alberta curriculum through . . . [a] homeschooling centre, which also allowed us the opportunity to travel and later learn online. You guessed it . . . I started homeschooling and my grades skyrocketed. In this method of schooling I was able to learn in my own style and understand my own habits. If I had a passion for something, I could explore it fully. If I didn't understand something, I could look [into and] research it, find mentors, and learn.

It may be hard for you to understand my personal journey, Mr. Speaker, but let me give you some highlighted examples of what I have accomplished, thanks to homeschooling in Alberta. I created my own clean water filtration system, volunteered at a Calgary clean water organization, created my own student group to create awareness on water issues, won the University of Calgary's faculty women's club award for outstanding science fair achievement, and competed in a National level science fair, all before the age of 14. Last year, I was named one of Alberta's Top 30 under 30 by the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation for my continued work in water sanitation and awareness. This year alone, I have been named class valedictorian, and I was asked to guest speak at The Centre for Global Education's event.

She hasn't even finished grade 12 yet, Mr. Speaker.

She goes on:

I relayed my experiences and advice to over 1 000 motivated students via a continent-wide interactive webinar. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that there is very little opportunity in a school setting for kids to work on special projects and express ideas beyond the curriculum?

I now know that had I been within the bricks and mortar school setting, most of my ideas and interests would have been assimilated into the conformities of a unified learning style. It is important for everyone to recognize that not every child or adult learns in the same way. We are all different individuals. What I love about Alberta is that we accept and encourage diversity. The

idea of tearing away a learning opportunity to express one's interests and ideals goes against the values of Albertans. Collectivizing the school system would only create a weaker province.

She goes on, Mr. Speaker:

I was looking up examples of learning conformity on a global scale when I realized that this has actually happened before . . . in Canada. Decades ago, government tried to create a uniform schooling system. This resulted in the assimilation and near eradication of a culture. This is an issue we are still having to address and reconcile today, and, in this age of diversity and acceptance, I find it hard to believe that government would make the same mistake. I am, of course, referencing the residential schools. We are taught in the Alberta curriculum how horrible this conformity was, and how our government is now taking steps forward to encourage diversity. Let this government not make the same mistakes and assume that every child is the same, nor learns the same. My 18 years of life has taught me to learn from my mistakes, adapt to change, and embrace new forms of learning. It is my hope that the Alberta government does the same and chooses to take steps forward in educational opportunities, rather than backward.

5:30

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that Mahala is being, actually, extremely shy and humble. She's done far more things on the world stage than what she listed, both as a person learning and as an educator, before even achieving the age of majority. She would claim, and her parents would, too, that it's precisely because she is home-schooled.

Mr. Speaker, I truly wish that we were allotted much more time. I've had many dozens of letters along these lines. I have one, two, three, four, five pages I'd like to read to you, but I have 20 seconds left, so I will end with this. We have one of the most globally renowned K to 12 systems. Motion 504 will tell Albertans that this government is serious about upholding the system we have and is serious about providing diversity in the delivery of education.

I urge all members to support this motion and the strong, diverse, innovative system upon which Alberta's education is built. [A timer sounded] There's my time, and I thank you for it, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak on this motion. I'd like to start off by saying that I am proud of our government for making education a priority even in these difficult economic times. We are committed to providing students with a quality education that enriches their lives and prepares them for a career in a diversified economy. Our government supports the rights of parents when it comes to making choices about their child's education.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I will note, Madam Speaker, that one of the first actions our government took was to reverse the cuts to education made by the previous government and to restore essential funding in order to ensure that our students and teachers continue to learn and work in a world-class system. I will note that there was an investment of \$103 million that went directly to support teachers and students, directly to the classroom. This led to the hiring of 740 additional teachers. We are continuing this support in Budget 2016.

I will also note, Madam Speaker, that the government paid \$151 million to support 94 private schools and \$83 million to 13 charter schools during the 2015-16 fiscal year, and I will note that private schools that teach the Alberta curriculum receive at least 60 per cent

of the amount of funding that the public schools receive for each student.

Since we are talking about choice, I thought I'd take a moment to chat about some of the choice in education that's available in my riding of Calgary-Currie. I had a chance recently to tour the Westbrook outreach school in Calgary-Currie, which is a school run by the CBE for students who can't attend regular school during regular hours for a variety of reasons. I met students there who were going to this school because they were working full-time to support a parent in need. I met students who were working because they were supporting a child, as these students are teenage parents, and many other students who are in this program for multiple other reasons. This is a program that combines distance and in-person learning. When I was there, I had a chance to meet a variety of bright, engaged students who care about their community. This is just an example of an innovative program that the public system can deliver and shows that they can, too, be innovative.

Now, Madam Speaker, also in my riding is a charter school, the Calgary Arts Academy. The Calgary Arts Academy emphasizes creativity and collaboration in their program, which, I will note, is the basis of entrepreneurship. I also had a chance to debate in that school during the election as it was one of the schools that hosted an all-candidates' debate during the previous election. It was great to be able to engage with such a diverse and engaged set of students. It's part of what makes Calgary-Currie a great community.

I also note that there is a private school in my riding known as Quest School. Now, Quest School is a very unique institution as it specializes in services for students who need assistance. These are students who are disabled in one way or another and have special educational needs. It brings teachers and instructional assistants and therapists and parents together in one location to create a unique educational plan for each of these high-needs students.

I also have many Catholic schools in my riding, including Holy Name, which is a French immersion school. It's part of the Catholic school district. I will note that both of my CA's young children go to this school, and I hear great things about it and hope to be able to visit it soon.

Now, I note that this motion is about choice. I also note that it speaks a lot about parental choice. I'm going to take a moment to talk to those parents in my riding. I want to say to them that I am proud that our government is making education a priority. I have met with parents who have kids in private, public, charter schools and even parents that home-school their kids in my riding. All of them, Madam Speaker, know that stability in education is key, and the funding that we have provided allows us to protect the services that Albertans rely on. What we won't do is propose massive cuts to education that would mean firing hundreds of teachers and crowding students into classrooms.

I know the opposition says that they've never quite said exactly that, but that is a matter for debate as often the things that they would propose in their reductions and spending would have to result in that, and that is not a road this government will go down.

Now, speaking to parents, I know that some parents in my riding were disappointed that the Westgate charter school was not approved by our government. It has been said on many occasions that the minister is forced to implement the regulations established by the previous government. Those regulations state that a charter school application could only be approved in an instance where proposed programs are not available in the public school system as well as a variety of other regulations. Our minister has been clear that he felt that that particular school did not meet the standards of the regulations.

I know, Madam Speaker, that those parents were disappointed. To those parents let it be known that I and this government will

always stand up in support of parents working to have the best possible education for their children. That is why we are fully funding school enrolment, which the past government did not. That is why we have put actual money into building actual new schools, which the mover of this motion and the previous government did not. That is why we walk the walk on education, and all the former government has to show for itself is this motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the time to speak to this motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm a big believer in public education. My children are in public education. In fact, I've just recently been texting briefly with my daughter in grade 3. Today in school she built a 60-centimetre-tall building out of papier mâché in science class. She's very proud of that, and I'm also very proud of her. I don't know what it says about today when the most meaningful conversations we have are via text. I worry a little bit about that.

I also am a product of public education. Say what you will about that. Public education is not perfect, nor should it be the absolute only choice. Although I am very much a believer in the public education system in this province – and I think it is a fine system and deserves strong support and deserves investment and that it is the solution for the vast majority of students in this province – it is not and should not be the only choice for parents.

In particular, I want to spend some time talking about charter schools. There are a couple of charter schools in Calgary-Elbow. What I really like about them is the nature of them being public schools. They're accessible, they come without tuition, they are nondiscriminatory, and they address specific educational needs. They allow for innovation within our framework of public education. I think it's interesting to note how students have thrived in charter schools but also how many, many of the charter school programs that we see have been emulated in the public system. I think that's exactly the kind of innovation that charter schools were meant to bring about.

5:40

Now, it's not been perfect. I will acknowledge that the relationship between the public system and the charter system has been perhaps strained, but I look at that as an opportunity for charter schools and public schools to find ways of working together and truly sharing that innovation that was intended at the outset.

On the private school side I think this is an issue that requires some nuance. As the Minister of Education alluded to earlier, certain private schools are funded up to 100 per cent per-student funding, especially when we're dealing with students with special needs, whereas the majority will receive 70 per cent of the per-student funding envelope. But not all private schools are created equal, and I would encourage the government to look at the B.C. model, which has some more nuance and distinction within and between different private schools. Those that do provide services for students with special needs, I think, should be considered in all cases for 100 per cent funding. There are others that truly represent educational choice, but that is a choice that parents are making that perhaps should not be funded quite to the full 70 per cent range.

So it's something that as we consider this motion, I absolutely support parental choice in education, but I think perhaps we need to consider the level of funding for private schools in certain cases and look at some of the criteria for private schools.

I will absolutely be voting in favour of Motion 504. I think parents and students deserve that choice in education, and I think

it's very important to say that choice in education does not need to diminish the availability or the quality of Alberta's public education system. I think it can be additive when we have choices and can allow students and parents to choose the educational option that makes the most sense for them and also, in the best case, can encourage the public system to continue innovating and continue to meet the needs of students.

I've spent a lot of time in public schools in constituency weeks and beyond where there are amazing programs – culinary programs, science-based programs, all-girls or all-boys programs, traditional programs – within the public system. I think the choice that we're talking about here absolutely must include the choices that are available within the public system. I think that's a very positive thing.

I'll conclude just by saying that our system certainly isn't perfect, but it would be diminished for not having educational choice, so I will support this motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to the motion, which I likewise will be supporting. We've had long discussions over the years with our members, and it's been a resolution back and forth on the floor in some of our party gatherings. It's certainly a contentious issue.

I share the views, to a large extent, of the Member for Calgary-Elbow that we desperately need choice and we desperately need innovation. These are hotbeds of innovation and experimentation. There are also critical areas of unmet need. I'm thinking of the autism area, I'm thinking of First Nations, and I'm thinking of some of the schools that specialize in helping families and students with special needs – the Calgary Academy comes to mind – and learning disabilities that are uniquely placed to provide supports and success for some of these young people, the Alternative high in Calgary. Those are the ones I know to some extent. The fact that they are receiving 3 per cent of the budget for education is a significant acknowledgement that it's not a huge part of our public system.

At the same time, if there are, I guess, what I would call exclusive criteria, if there are elite opportunities that are only afforded to those with substantial income and special interests, I think they do merit looking at from the point of view of whether public funding should be enhancing those elite activities. And I'm thinking of athletics and art in some cases.

The position of our caucus and our party has been that, ultimately, we want to move innovation and the essential supports for all young people and their families into the public system, incorporating the best of what's there and ensuring that all students have access to at least the fundamentals, whether they're disabled or whether they have specific learning problems, that those be part and parcel of our public system and that over time integrating back into the public system would allow them to have full public funding. That would be the incentive for them to return or, actually, not to return but, in some cases, to come into the public system. There would be a greater accessibility for some of these areas, there would be innovation, and it would be a win-win for both the public system and the choices issue, which I think we all value.

With that in mind, I guess, I'm kind of indicating that while there are indications for funding for special schools, especially where there are unique needs, then I can see that we need to provide support for that to ensure that especially those who are marginalized get the support they need. On the other hand, where we have made innovation in some of the charter schools and, we understand, some

new opportunities, we want them to be included into the public system. We can consider full public funding for those subject to some years of transitioning back into the public system and meeting the inclusion criteria, the issues around normalizing some of their programming, and with the incentive that they would be fully funded by following the full school curriculum and standards, that make them more accessible in the public system.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize Drayton Valley-Devon, followed by Sherwood Park if there's time.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I realize the time is fast approaching, so I'll try and make my remarks maybe a little more abbreviated than I would have liked to. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Lougheed for sharing that letter with us from that young lady. Impressive.

I guess what I would argue and suggest today, Madam Speaker, is that whatever education system we have in place, it needs to be one that is flexible enough to be able to meet the needs of Alberta students. I would argue that that means we need to embrace the educational principles and values that we have got in this province, that are enshrined in law, and that we need to recognize the diversity that is in this province when it comes to the people of this province and, therefore, the need for educational diversity within this province.

We spent quite a bit of time talking about the amendment, and with that opportunity we talked a little bit about the large numbers of immigrants that were coming into Alberta and the need for diversity in our education because of that. Other colleagues in this House have spoken to the needs of a diverse population and autism and other educational needs that are going to need diversity in education.

5:50

I believe that we do need to get down to some basic principles, though, what we believe we want our society to be like. One of the things that I think is one of our huge strengths in Alberta is that we're not divided by race or language or religion. We don't identify through those things solely; rather, we have a civic sense of nationalism. That civic sense of nationalism has brought us to combine and to unite around a set of values and principles, and one of those is the value of freedom, the freedom to choose how we're going to raise our kids, the value of freedom of religion, how we're going to raise our families in the faith values that we choose to have. I believe that whatever education system we have, it needs to be surrounded and encompassed by a mature understanding of freedom, a freedom that allows us to be able to speak our conscience, to raise our family, to pursue our faith, but to do so within the context of a community.

Now, I guess that's one of the things that I would – and I think maybe it's quibbling here a little bit with your motion there, but you say: "allowing" parents. It's "allowing parents the choice of educational delivery for their children." I'm not sure that I would use that word only because I believe that it's the parents' choice, that it comes from the parents first and not from the state. But maybe that's just quibbling.

The Wildrose Party and this member are going to be very glad to support this motion and to support it because we believe in that vision of Alberta and that vision of education, a vision that will allow for public schools and Catholic schools, a vision that will allow for home education and charter schools and alternative programs and independent schools all in order to meet the educational needs of our children. You know, these are important



values, so I was very pleased to hear members from the government side and the hon. Minister of Education stand up today and support this vision of education and of diversity and the funding for that.

Now, in all of those things – don't get me wrong. As a former public school teacher I see the value in a public system of education, and Alberta has an amazing public system that challenges and engages students. I've seen the excellence that public education can provide for students as they engage in their learning, but I also want to recognize that the other streams of education, the diversity of education that we have, also can produce excellence. While I'm proud of the great work that we've done in a public system of education, whether that's separate or whether that's public, I absolutely recognize and believe that we should continue to fund the excellence that occurs in all of our educational delivery models. One size does not fit all, it's been said, and I believe that in Alberta we have an educational delivery system that's very diverse, and it's one of our strengths.

So as we pursue a vision of education, I guess I would just leave with these comments. I would urge all of us in this House to support Motion 504 because we should not be unnecessarily restricting Albertans' educational options. Rather, where parents and students want an educational option, where there's enough demand for that educational option, where constitutionally we are directed to provide that educational option, where the educational option can be delivered in a manner where learning occurs in a safe and caring environment, then the government, I believe, has an obligation to both pay for and to allow and provide for that educational option.

This motion calls us to stay committed to these objectives and to these values. It will receive my support today. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Cooper:** Madam Speaker, I like to request unanimous consent of the House to go to one-minute bells if I may.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to rise to support the motion. Our government supports the rights of parents when it comes to making choices about their child's education. As a former school trustee it's always a pleasure for me to meet trustees, educators, teachers, and parents involved in education. This week is Education Week, and I feel fortunate to be able to celebrate the week with a few schools in my constituency. I think it's very fitting that MLA for a Day is during this week.

In my constituency parents have a large number of choices for their children. We have schools such as Woodbridge school, that is part of the Elk Island public board; St. Theresa, which is in Elk Island Catholic board; New Horizons, which is a charter school for gifted children. This fall they will be joined by the Sherwood Park École francophone, who will share space with New Horizons charter school. Francophone parents who live in the Fort Saskatchewan and Strathcona county areas now have the possibility of sending their children to a school where they will be taught in French. The school will be named after Senator Claudette Tardif and her husband, Denis. Both have contributed greatly to the support for francophone school boards in Alberta. There is also a large number of parents who home-school their children and who belong to a number of different home-school boards.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to the unanimous consent granted earlier this afternoon, I will now turn to the Member for Calgary-Hays to close debate.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just to review here, we are debating Motion 504, which I first moved two weeks ago, and I'd like to read it again into the record.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to affirm its commitment to allowing parents the choice of educational delivery for their children, including home, charter, private, francophone, separate, or public education programs.

Madam Speaker, it's consistent with the United Nations charter, article 26, section (3), that reads: "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."

The purpose of the motion is to have the government confirm what they're already doing. I'm asking the government to give parents the assurance that choice will remain in education, assurance that education will not go backwards in Alberta and that students can continue to benefit from the many options of educational delivery currently available. Alberta has one of the best education systems in the world, and the PC caucus encourages this government to keep it that way.

Choice in education, including home, charter, private, francophone, separate, or public education programs, is about meeting the needs and interests of children, the most important people that we're talking about here, so that they can reach their full potential. Everybody should have equality of opportunity. They don't always have equality of results, but education fit to each child is going to give each child as close as you can get to that equality of opportunity. All children deserve that, Madam Speaker. The choice for parents is to decide which school is best for them. I have to say that I have experience in my life in most of these choices: in private schools, charter schools, separate schools, and public schools. They all have their place. They all belong. They all look after children. This motion encourages the government to ensure stable and permanent access to that choice in education.

I thank the government for withdrawing their amendment. I think that is a victory today for Alberta children and parents. Sometimes, Madam Speaker, some of these people need to fight for what is right. I think this is a case where that happened. My grandchildren will benefit. I believe everybody's children and grandchildren will benefit not only now but in generations to come. Parents and only parents are best to decide for their children. Of course, when their children are looked after by someone else, the one that tucks them into bed at night is probably the one that loves them the most and is most suited to make these decisions about how they're educated.

I have to say that there's been an outpouring of support from parents across Alberta on this particular motion. There are lessons to be learned about this whole process, and this will be talked about for a long time, but that does not diminish the importance of what we're going to do today. The minister said that he's proud of the education system. I agree with the minister. This is important because kids matter.

Albertans have created a system that is largely better than other provinces' in Canada because Albertans told their government that sometimes their kids need better choices. Sometimes their kids need extra services. The hon. Liberal member talked about special-needs kids or kids that might have autism. Sometimes they need special care. Sometimes kids are actually smarter than other kids, and they need special care for that so that they can reach their highest potential. That is what choice does. It provides kids with a good experience. It provides them with the best chance to reach their full potential as human beings.

6:00

Now, I am glad the government has decided to support parental choice, or at least that's my understanding, and I thank them for that. Madam Speaker, this is something so fundamental – so very

fundamental – to the future of Alberta. Of course, it can't be forgotten that it's essential that all Alberta schools regardless of the type are safe, caring, welcoming places for all students regardless of who those students are: race, creed, colour, religion, sexual orientation, whatever.

Madam Speaker, I would encourage all members of the House to support this motion, and should you do so, you'll have my heartfelt thanks and, more importantly, those of the parents.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 504 carried unanimously]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6:01 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Ganley	Payne
Anderson, S.	Gotfried	Piquette
Anderson, W.	Gray	Pitt
Barnes	Hanson	Renaud
Carlier	Hinkley	Rodney
Carson	Horne	Rosendahl
Ceci	Hunter	Sabir
Clark	Kazim	Schneider
Connolly	Larivee	Schreiner

Coolahan	Littlewood	Smith
Cooper	Loewen	Starke
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Stier
Cyr	MacIntyre	Strankman
Dach	Malkinson	Sucha
Dang	Mason	Swann
Drysdale	McIver	Sweet
Eggen	McKittrick	Taylor
Ellis	McLean	Turner
Feehan	McPherson	Westhead
Fildebrandt	Miller	Woollard
Fitzpatrick	Panda	

Totals:	For – 62	Against – 0
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 504 carried unanimously]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to the Budget 2016 main estimates schedule the Assembly now stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

The legislative policy committees will convene this evening at 7 p.m. for consideration of the main estimates. Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Labour in the Grassland Room. Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Justice and Solicitor General in the Foothills Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:06 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 3, 2016

Day 21

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
 Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
 Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
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 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
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 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
 Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
 Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
 Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
 Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
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 Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
 Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
 Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
 Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
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 Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
 Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
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 Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
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Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
 Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
 MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
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 Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
 Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
 Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
 Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
 Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
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David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
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Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
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Gotfried	

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Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
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Loyola	

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McPherson	Yao
Orr	

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### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 3, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let us reflect. Let's reflect on the power of knowledge and the impact we have on each other. Let us encourage one another to not be afraid to make mistakes. Let us also commend one another for their opinions, their ideas, and their thoughts, for as a community we are stronger when we work together. Let us remember that what we can achieve together far exceeds what we might do as individuals.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would just take this opportunity to ask the members to particularly be conscious of the amount of time during introductions, and I would appreciate that members abide by that.

The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly Chief Tony Alexis, the grand chief of Treaty 6, seated in the Speaker's gallery. When he was just 25 years of age, Chief Tony Alexis was first elected to the council for his nation, and he was elected chief of the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation in 2013 and appointed grand chief in 2015 of the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations. Grand Chief Alexis has recently returned from Rome, where he met with Pope Francis. Grand Chief Alexis practises a traditional way of life, taught by his father, which motivates the people he represents, advocates and promotes indigenous heritage and ongoing treaty dialogue with all governments. Grand Chief Alexis enjoys serving his people and community, specializing in business and policy development. With Grand Chief Alexis today we have Beatrice Carpentier, the CEO for Treaty 6, and Jerry Saddleback, grand chief liaison. If you could all stand and enjoy the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House 36 very bright and energetic students from one of the best schools in the great riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. This is the Monsignor William Irwin school, that I've had the pleasure to visit several times. We have 36 students, and they're joined by their teacher, Mr. Nick Freeman. I would ask them to rise and please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Alberta and Africa's Great Lakes Foundation who are joining us today in the gallery: Francky

BigomoKerolli Katana, Sara Raguz, Clotilde Nsimine, Justine Maman Katana, Sophie Uzoma, and Rosalie Rosie. Together they work in my riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to help newcomers from across Africa do several things: master English while celebrating their mother languages and cultures, learn how to use public transportation, access immigration services, and find libraries, schools, and other services. But, most importantly, they help them get good jobs to earn a good living for themselves and their families. I'd ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, it is my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the president and CEO of the Alberta Forest Products Association. Last Sunday my beautiful wife, Michèle, and I planted trees at Hawrelak park in Edmonton as we highlight Alberta Forest Week. Today the AFPA and its partners have distributed seedlings to each and every Member of this Legislative Assembly, inviting all of us to be part of the important work of forest stewardship. I would like to ask Paul Whittaker to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly several guests representing 20 Vic Management Incorporated, or the administration team of Londonderry Mall, located in my constituency of Edmonton-Decore. Londonderry has long been the shopping destination for the surrounding area since opening in 1972 and recently embarked on a striking \$130 million renovation, which includes full renovation of all common areas and the addition of exciting new retailers and full-service dining experiences, all of which will help to continue creating economic growth and diversification in northeast Edmonton. Joining us today are Nancy Jarnevic, Jordon Adams, and Olga McGonigal. If I could have you please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests? The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly Councillor Fabian North Peigan from the Piikani band in the southern parts of the province, who is here today with his council and Chief Stanley Grier. If Fabian could please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

#### Chartier Restaurant in Beaumont

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and speak about a unique and beautiful local restaurant, Chartier, which is a true jewel in the heart of the town of Beaumont. Chartier brings to Beaumont a rustic, warm feeling through its delicious French-Canadian cuisine. Its interior is uniquely decorated. You'll find a blend of eclectic flea market fare, mismatched chairs, plates, cutlery, beer mugs from me, reclaimed barn wood, and warm Edison light bulbs hanging from a ceiling and

wrapped around large beams, that creates a warm, inviting, homey atmosphere which draws you in as you walk down Main Street Beaumont.

On entering, you are either greeted by the fantastic and friendly restaurant staff or by the pleasant and welcoming owners, Darren and Sylvia Cheverie. It feels like being invited into a family member's home. Once you are in, you are immersed in delicious smells that will delight your senses. Some of their bestselling, in-demand dishes are pork jowl cakes, Montreal smoked meat carpaccio, and flank steak, all brought to you by the fantastic chef, Steve Brochu.

Mr. Speaker, what makes this restaurant even more unique is that the owners, a couple, raised \$107,975 for this dream project through crowdfunding, a mercurial form of fundraising typically used for projects like start-ups in tech or other types of unique entrepreneurship ideas. Chartier is here today partly due to the 550 people who graciously donated to the compelling Kickstarter campaign. But I think it was Darren and Sylvia's passion for wanting to bring a truly special food experience to their hometown that made Chartier a reality.

Darren and Sylvia have shown once more that Albertans are enterprising entrepreneurs. They are the heart and soul of this new jewel in Beaumont, and we are truly better off for having them and Chartier warming the centre of our beautiful little town. I want to wish them continued success and all the best in the future and welcome everyone to come and visit this fantastic place. Bring your family and have nice French cuisine.

Thank you.

### Charities

**Mrs. Pitt:** I beam with pride when I say that I'm an Albertan. Albertans are generous in spirit, independent, and always willing to help a neighbour. In my own community of Airdrie I know the deep and meaningful impact that volunteer organizations and charities have. When an individual faces adversity, there are a tremendous number of organizations in Alberta to lend a helping hand.

Charities like the Mustard Seed, Calgary Dream Centre, Inn from the Cold, and the Zebra centre rely on donations to run their invaluable services. Of course, with the economic downturn, many Albertans won't have as much money left in their pockets at the end of the month to donate. Starting in early 2017, Albertans will have even less, with the typical family expected to be an additional \$1,000 out of pocket each year because of the NDP government's risky carbon tax. When you consider that Albertans donate a median of \$420, charitable donations are sure to decrease because of the carbon tax and NDP ideology.

1:40

To make matters even worse, the NDP government has also turned its back on the hard-working charities in communities across Alberta and has decided that they will be subject to the carbon tax, too. Many of these charities are on fixed budgets, with little overhead or room to spare at the end of the year. These well-meaning charities will now have to choose between providing meals to the homeless and keeping the building warm enough during an Alberta winter. Organizations that deliver meals to vulnerable individuals will see a sharp spike in the cost of gas for their volunteers. Through no fault of their own, charities will be paying the price for NDP ideology.

The NDP government needs to commit that nonprofit organizations that work tirelessly each and every day to help Albertans when they are down will be exempt from the risky and ideological carbon tax, plain and simple.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### Alberta Beef

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise in this Assembly and stand up for Alberta beef. Alberta and Canadian beef ranks among the best in the world. I can attest to that first-hand because I raised cattle most of my life.

Beef producers adhere to strict antibiotic guidelines as set out by Health Canada. In Canada no cattle may be slaughtered for processing until a specified, standardized amount of time has passed since the animal has finished a course of antibiotics, which means that no cattle are processed that contain antibiotic residue. Antibiotic treatment of sick cows limits the extent of their sickness and suffering. Let's be clear. It is the humane thing to do to treat a sick cow so they can get better instead of letting the animal suffer.

The Canadian beef industry uses a comprehensive traceability system. We are able to trace an animal throughout its life cycle, which is essential for tracing animal health emergencies that may arise.

The hormone and steroid levels of beef from cattle raised with hormone implants are less than one nanogram, different than cattle raised without hormone implants, and there are thousands of times more steroids in the bun than in the beef. Also, Canada beef is regularly tested for BSE, and we continue to increase sample testing size every year.

Our producers take tremendous pride in their product. Cattle are grain fed and given space and freedom to roam, which is why Alberta beef is the best tasting. Canadian law ensures that cattle are handled and slaughtered humanely. If beef producers weren't raising their cattle with the care and attention that they are, Alberta beef would not be top rank in the world for flavour. It's because of that care and attention that our beef tastes so amazing. Alberta beef has the highest certification, and I proudly choose Alberta beef every time.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Sexually Transmitted Infections

**Mr. Connolly:** Mr. Speaker, last week I took the opportunity to do what many young people need to do more often: yes, I got an STI test. Getting tested for STIs, also known as sexually transmitted infections, is an important part of comprehensive health care. In Alberta some of the highest rates and increases in STIs are in young people aged 15 to 24. According to information from Alberta Health Services the number of cases of gonorrhea in 2015 is up 80 per cent from 2014, and cases of infectious syphilis in 2015 doubled from 2014. Syphilis rates have risen most notably in MSM, or men who have sex with men, and gonorrhea rates have increased in young indigenous females.

It's important that we break the stigma associated with getting tested for STIs. Health care professionals don't perform STI tests to judge you; they are there to make sure that you are the healthiest you can be.

But it's not just youth who are at risk, Mr. Speaker. Any Albertan who is sexually active is at risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection. The good news is that many STIs can be treated and cured but only if you are aware that you are infected. If you are having sex, thinking about having sex, single, partnered, married, straight, gay, bisexual, pansexual, cisgendered, transgendered, or gender queer, you need to know how to avoid contracting an STI and what to do if you have one. It's important to take a holistic approach to

health. Albertans should know how to avoid contracting an STI and what to do if they have one. Fortunately, there are plenty of clinics across the province where Albertans of all ages, Mr. Speaker, can get an STI test for free. There are also community organizations doing great work to help fight stigma, raise awareness, and even offer free testing such as the Calgary Sexual Health Centre and the Pride Centre of Edmonton.

I would strongly encourage every sexually active Albertan and member of this Chamber to get tested. If anyone would like any more information about STIs or STI testing, I would invite them to visit Alberta Health Services' new website [sexgerms.com](http://sexgerms.com).

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Bow.

### Constituency Week in Calgary-Bow

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Returning to my riding of Calgary-Bow last week reminded me of the dynamic role that we as MLAs have been asked to fulfill by the people.

Over the course of the constituency week I met with stakeholders big and small, constituents, and neighbours in boardrooms and living rooms, from the small group of roommates who have made it their goal to have a place at their table for whoever may need to share a meal, like the House of Commons in Bowness, or Marilyn Gunn and the countless volunteers of the Community Kitchen program, which aims to feed with dignity and provides a connection for those who may be isolated, like seniors or new Canadians. This program serves a number of seniors in my constituency, and it was very nice to meet the people behind it.

I met the folks of the southern Rockies Alberta Environment and Parks office, where they work 24 hours a day to keep our forests healthy, available, and safe for the many Albertans who enjoy them. I also met with teachers from a number of schools to hear directly from them about their concerns and their hopes for the future. It was easy to see the commitment and genuine love these teachers have for their students and the role that they play in so many of their lives.

Constituency week is a reminder to me of the countless hours of time and effort that people pour into our communities. While the work that they do may differ from group to group, the intention is always the same: to give back, to lift up, and to nurture our communities with support.

I am truly inspired by the people I get to meet every day, and I would like to say thank you to every constituent in Calgary-Bow for the opportunity to be here on your behalf. As we approach the end of year 1 and the beginning of the next year, I recommit my promise to listen, to learn, and to work hard on your behalf.

Thank you so much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Red Tape

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like a snare, red tape is a trap to the good citizens and businesses of Red Deer and area. It's an offence under the Wildlife Act to use snares in Red Deer and Alberta, and it should also be an offence to use red tap to entangle Alberta's good citizens. Indeed, this has some of them seeing red. Red tape has trapped our good citizens. But the government, like every poacher caught red-handed, claims no knowledge of red-tape entrapment, so let me present some evidence.

Bill 6 is a shining example of creating more red tape for farmers and ranchers. Without our help, small family farms would have been tangled in this trap forever.

School boards were caught on April 4. They used to produce quarterly and annual audited reports to Education. Now, suddenly, the minister has the boards in a stranglehold of red tape and requires monthly statements. Boards have to hire new employees to untangle themselves from this red-ink snare.

Lacombe county recently sent a letter to the government, crying out to be released from red tape. Road project approvals for simple routine maintenance take months and months to get approved.

A business in my riding of Lacombe-Ponoka had to request help regarding costly delays to a major project due to waterway assessments becoming entangled in more red-tape delays.

Meanwhile guide outfitters tell me that they are subject to three different interpretations for permits to ship trophy hunters' trophies for tourist expeditions.

We should save government and business time and money by reducing the amount of red tape that is hurting Alberta's businesses and families. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business recently gave Alberta a D on our red-tape report card. Unacceptable. This government could help Albertans by reducing the amount of red tape. Instead, they are intent on making everything worse, strangling the advantages that make us the greatest place in the world to live, work, and raise a family to the point of extinction.

Thank you.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Jean:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, our thoughts and prayers go out to the families affected by forest fires across the province.

### Government Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, at the Ritchie Brothers auction last week a record was set for energy companies selling off their machinery. Almost 60 per cent of all purchases went outside of Alberta. It's just the latest sign that things aren't working in Alberta like they should and like they did. Getting Alberta working again requires a plan to attract investment and create jobs. Instead, the Premier has talked Alberta down, brought in a carbon tax, and raised taxes on just about everything else for all Albertans. When can Albertans expect a real job-creation plan instead of . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you know, our government is very concerned about job loss, and we're very concerned about doing whatever we can to stimulate the economy in this province during this very, very difficult economic shock. That's why our budget invests in infrastructure, something that very clearly will create and preserve jobs and something which is in direct opposition to what the folks over there would do. That's why our government invested in a 1 per cent small-business tax cut in order to support small business and innovators. That's why our government has put forward significant amounts of financing authority for innovators and new and emerging businesses in order to give them the support they need, both . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP are moving ahead with a budget that takes money away from Albertans at a time when they just can't afford it.

In Calgary Enmax is renewing a grant program to social agencies to help at-risk families cover their utility bills as a result of this government. Distress Centre Calgary has had demand increase 59 per cent in 2015 over the previous year. This carbon tax will only make things much worse, making utilities and everything else more expensive. How will taxing families and taxing charities make things any better for Alberta's most vulnerable citizens?

**Ms Notley:** Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to Alberta's most vulnerable citizens and most vulnerable groups, the rebate that is planned through our carbon levy program within the climate leadership plan will result in more money being in the pockets of low-income Albertans because they actually use less greenhouse gas emissions than wealthy ones. In fact, it will support those very families that the member opposite claims to be so concerned about.

**Mr. Jean:** The family rebate, Mr. Speaker, is far less than the family will be taxed. The Premier knows that, and she should be honest with Albertans.

The fact is that the NDP did not do their homework on this carbon tax. Charities that help Albertans recover from addiction or other family tragedies spend a lot of their resources on shelter, on gas, on heating. Those undergoing rehabilitation need a warm bed, but this carbon tax would mean less resources to spend on those things at a time when charities need them the most. How can the Premier stand behind this tax, a tax that makes life much more difficult for all Alberta charities and Alberta's most vulnerable?

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. The minister of environment just finished three hours of estimates. It would have been very helpful if the members opposite might have actually asked her questions about the climate leadership plan, at which point they might have received some facts in response, which might have ensured that the questions asked were not so hyperbolic and so engaged in fearmongering and so unaware of what our program actually is going to achieve.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker. We will support Albertans, we will support charities, we will invest in energy efficiency, we will diversify the economy, and we will do that by acknowledging the need to act on climate change.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP is punishing charities and Alberta's most vulnerable.

### Fentanyl Use

**Mr. Jean:** Fentanyl abuse touches every type of family and impacts communities in every corner of our great province. The deadly drug wraps individuals up in addiction, tearing apart families, ruining careers, and almost 500 times since 2012 has resulted in overdoses and deaths of Albertans. This morning I met with staff at the Boyle Street community centre and Streetworks to discuss ways to combat the fentanyl crisis and to learn more about their efforts to improve safety. Will the Premier now declare, today, a public health emergency to better equip the government and social agencies across this province . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, we do believe that the members opposite are sincere in their desire to help with the challenge of opiate addiction and the fentanyl crisis, but I believe that they could contribute more if they did a bit more research. The fact of the

matter is that the powers to declare a provincial emergency in B.C. are different and used for different things than they would be under our legislation here in Alberta. In B.C. they need it in order to co-ordinate communication between a number of different regional health authorities, which isn't a problem here. Well, you know what it does here? It gives the medical health officer the power to quarantine people, seize private property, enter into private homes, and conscript Albertans. That's not what we need . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** News flash, Mr. Speaker: legislation is controlled by this NDP government, and they can change it.

In March of this year Health Canada changed the status of naloxone to a nonprescription drug to save more lives. Social agencies that distribute the drug would benefit greatly from removal of the requirement for a prescription on this drug. Yesterday the Premier said that her government is working with the federal government to ensure naloxone doesn't require prescriptions, but the ball is in her court. She has control. Will the Premier today set a firm timeline of when naloxone will be available without a prescription, which will save many Alberta lives?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again I thank the member opposite for his concern around this issue. We are working diligently to get this matter in front of cabinet so that we can move on our piece of this issue along with the federal government to make sure that naloxone is more available. In the meantime we have distributed more than 9,000 naloxone kits throughout 600 locations in the province. We've expanded access to dependency treatment and detox. We take this issue very seriously. The fact of the matter is that we've actually acted on almost every item in their plan except the ones that don't make sense.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, the cabinet is here today. The Premier can make that decision today. We need it today.

Two-thirds of fentanyl overdoses in Calgary occur in suburban communities, meaning that this is not a problem that only affects vulnerable people in the inner city. Fentanyl is sold as OxyContin, heroin, Xanax, and is a lace in cocaine and is getting into the hands of many who don't simply fit the typical profile of an addict. It's affecting all Albertans. When two grains of sand worth of fentanyl is lethal, we must educate on how deadly this drug is. We need more than stories or news or bus buys. How will the Premier improve her government's awareness campaign and save the lives of Albertans?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, just recently our government approved a further expenditure for public education on the dangers of fentanyl because we know that that's an important part of any kind of public education plan. In addition, we've increased funding to ALERT. We have also increased, as I said, treatment. We've increased access to naloxone. We've increased distribution centres around the province. And we will continue to do this work. We're all very concerned about this issue, and our government is taking action.

**The Speaker:** Third main question.

### Wildfire Management

**Mr. Jean:** In Fort McMurray neighbours, friends, and oil sands workers have either had to leave their homes or watch as fires burn very closely to them on the border of our city. Albertans are worried



that the NDP doesn't know what a serious threat these wildfires are. We are down from 22 tankers in 2014 to only 16 today. Cutting back contracts from 123 days to 93 days is scaring bidders and Albertans away and could shrink our tanker fleet even further. It means that all of these contracts will expire by early August with less resources. How can the Premier possibly defend these types of decisions, putting our communities in Alberta at risk?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't have to defend those types of decisions because we didn't make those types of decisions. The member opposite once again has his facts wrong. We have the resources that we need. They are in place in Fort McMurray. I get briefed at least twice a day. We are very concerned about this issue, and every single resource that is needed to fight that fire will be dedicated, no holds barred.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, they cut the budget for fighting forest fires. They did it. Nobody else did it. They need to take responsibility.

This is serious. It's only May, and we can't just hope for wet weather to come around and to help. We need to get these decisions right. In February a tender was issued for a water-skimming air tanker group. On April 29 this government cancelled the tender. All water-skimming aircraft currently contracted are from Abbotsford, B.C., based Conair. Can the Premier please explain right now to Albertans why this contract was scrapped and why we are settling for slower, short-range, smaller, and less capacity water tanker aircraft?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated to the member opposite a number of different times, the overall number of resources that will be dedicated to fighting fires is exactly the same as they were before, and in fact they could go up if the need goes up. The fact of the matter is that this is about budgeting, how we profile the budget. But we've made it very clear and all the contractors know full well that when we need them, they need to be there. They are there. They are being hired. Every resource that is required is being dedicated to this fire, and the members opposite should stop the fearmongering.

2:00

**Mr. Jean:** This is not fearmongering, Mr. Speaker. You can't cut \$400 million from wildfire management and say that you're serious about fighting these fires. As a Member of Parliament I saw the Slave Lake fire and the result of it first-hand on the ground. Today Fort McMurray has seen these same types of fires on our borders. We have fewer tankers today than two years ago. Bids for new water-skimming air tankers are being scrapped by this government. It's clear that this government has made many mistakes, some even regarding fighting fires and leading up to this wildfire season. Will the Premier today reverse these terrible decisions so we can make sure that our communities and Albertans are safe?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I will simply say that the member opposite is wrong in almost everything in that previous question. We did not cut \$400 million from the firefighting budget. I urge them to learn how to read a budget because, really, it would be very helpful. We have the same number of tankers, and we have access to the same number of tankers and all the same amount of equipment that we had before, and we will use that and more, if necessary, because we are concerned about getting the job done in

Fort McMurray. We are not interested in engaging in political grandstanding and fearmongering.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

### Budget 2016

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2016 continues to be a disappointment. This NDP government has a track record of ignoring Albertans while pretending they listen. Ipsos-Reid, who does listen and reports on Albertans' opinions, this morning released a poll severely critical of this government. When asked if the NDP is presenting the best plan for long-term prosperity, 67 per cent of Albertans disagreed and 42 per cent strongly disagreed. To the Premier: in the face of this overwhelming rejection will you now admit that you have never listened to Albertans in the first place?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are listening to Albertans, and we know that this economy is what they are most concerned about. What we are doing will diversify the economy. It'll invest in the economy when private investment is pulled back. We will build this economy and protect the services that this opposition would cut and this one would cut more.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the segue. Ipsos-Reid this morning also reported that the majority of Albertans do not believe that the NDP plan will diversify the economy. Given that the majority of Albertans do not believe your plan will diversify the economy and you now know they have no faith in the budget you put forward, will you now go back to the drawing board and create a plan that actually works for Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, what Albertans will start to receive soon is the Alberta child benefit. That will lift children out of poverty. They believe in doing the best for our province and the children that are in poverty. We are diversifying the economy. There will be investments across the economy. That is what Albertans believe. They also believe in infrastructure development, which this government will be doing.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what Albertans will start to receive soon is a carbon tax bill.

Before this NDP government there was hope, and now there is none. The Ipsos-Reid poll also indicates that 65 per cent of Albertans say that the NDP economic plan will cripple future generations with debt. NDP policies have already hurt the present, so it's time to protect the future. To the Premier: for the sake of our children and grandchildren and knowing that Albertans are not only not with you but want something different, will you please listen now and restore the hope that your policies have destroyed up to this point?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. You know, there's a growing consensus that the best way to deal with climate change is to put a price on carbon. People that the Leader of the Opposition knows well – Brian Pallister, Patrick Brown, Christy Clark, Preston Manning, and even Brad Wall – say that the carbon price is worth considering. That's what we're going to do. People believe that it's the best way to fight climate change. We're doing that, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

### **Employment Insurance Program Changes**

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am deeply concerned about people in my constituency who have lost their jobs because of the drop in the price of oil and are still in need of an income to care for their families. The federal government's changes earlier this year to employment insurance were definitely welcome, but they didn't go far enough for my constituents, and they still do not include the Edmonton region. I'd like to ask the Minister of Labour what she and our government are doing to convince the federal government that it needs to do the right thing and include the Edmonton area in these EI changes.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, we were pleased that Ottawa listened to our call to make changes to the employment insurance program. However, we were very disappointed that the Edmonton region was not included. So as well as speaking out publicly about that, I have written to the minister of employment, workforce, and labour, and in that letter I asked her to revisit the government's decision. I know that our Premier also made the case very strongly when she met with the federal cabinet last week. This is a very important issue to us because it affects families who are facing real hardship through no fault of their own.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many residents of the Edmonton region are feeling real hardship and given that they have paid into EI and should be able to get benefits when they need them and just want a hand up, again to the same minister: are there any signs that the federal government may change its policy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I made the case to the minister of employment, workforce, and labour that changes should come immediately, I also asked her to make sure that any changes associated with unemployment statistics be made in real time. Last week the federal minister indicated to media that Edmonton is one of several regions that could see changes depending on changes in workforce reports, labour force reports. While I would like to see the changes made right away, I see this as encouraging news for Edmonton families.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the most up-to-date data can help businesses and other agencies in my constituency plan ahead, I would like to then ask the minister: when will the next labour force report be released?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The next labour market report will be released this Friday, and we will be looking for any changes in numbers that would make the case that the Edmonton region should be included and that workers who have been laid off during this downturn should be included in the enhanced employment insurance changes.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### **Carbon Levy and Education Costs**

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. School boards have begun estimating how much the punishing carbon tax will cost them. CBE estimates \$1 million; Calgary Catholic, \$350,000; Edmonton public, \$1.8 million; Black Gold, \$131,000. These school boards alone are facing millions in extra costs, and they don't know who's going to pay. To the minister: when you thought about who would pick up the carbon tax tab, did you envision punishing parents with extra fees, leaving students with fewer teachers and aides, or downloading the cost onto taxpayers by reversing your stance on exempting school boards?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. In fact, when we looked at the climate leadership plan, the very first place we looked was with our children to make sure that they see the vision, the education for us to move forward on a coherent plan for the future. The children are watching us now, and we want to make sure that they know that we are doing something about the carbon future and reducing our pollution.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the minister's budget doesn't account for the carbon tax, school boards, which have only so many options to deal with such a huge drain on their limited resources, face a big problem. Given that the full cost of the carbon tax on individual school boards will become evident when they submit their budgets in June, does the minister plan to help school boards with borrowed taxpayer money or supplementary supply funds, or will he simply leave school boards and parents on the hook for his government's bad planning?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, as we discussed in budget estimates this morning, this province will be making a substantial number of investments in energy efficiency, and that will come about as a result of our co-operative consultation with schools, municipalities, with indigenous communities, with hospitals, the postsecondary sector, and the charitable sector. We are finally undertaking an energy efficiency strategy in this province as a result of the carbon levy, something that the other two parties reject.

2:10

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I heard a single idea about how schools with be helped.

Given that this carbon tax is a tax on everything and everyone and given that it will go far beyond transportation costs and will also affect power bills and heating costs for school boards like the CBE, which is now trying to figure out whether to increase fees, cut services, or face millions in budget deficits, has the minister done any studies or consultations that could let school boards, taxpayers, parents, and kids know how much this worrisome carbon tax will cost in dollars, in quality of education, and in reduced extra-curricular activities?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, in addition to energy efficiency investments, in the budget estimates, which the hon. member will know because he has reviewed them, I'm sure, in great detail, there will be \$2.2 billion in new green infrastructure investments so that we can ensure that we are making our economy carbon resilient, including schools. We will undertake a detailed consultation with many different sectors over the next few months as we design our efficiency and other infrastructure investment programs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

### Alberta Beef

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week Albertans witnessed a different brand of cattle stampede. Debate surrounded the decision of a major restaurant chain to source its beef from a Kansas supplier rather than its current Alberta supplier. Clearly, businesses are free to procure from any source that reflects their marketing strategy, but Alberta beef producers were dismayed by the silence from the agriculture minister during the debate. To the minister: what measures are you taking to demonstrate your confidence in the humane rearing, safety, and wholesomeness of Alberta beef?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Nobody produces better beef in this world than Alberta producers. We know, everyone in this House knows, and Albertans know. I think eventually Earls will know as well that the best beef they can find is going to be in Alberta. Going forward, we are going to be able to work with producers, ranchers, and everyone else to find those little niche markets that are out there that we can take advantage of, that producers can take advantage of to grow their industry across the province, across the nation, and across the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, I have to describe that as rare support where it should be well done.

He wants to consign Alberta producers to niche markets, yet Alberta beef is one of our proudest items for export. Having any question on our beef market could jeopardize our share of the world trade. What is the minister doing to combat the unfounded concerns and misconceptions about the wholesomeness and safety of beef products? Why are you not effectively combatting them, and what are you doing to ensure that our foreign beef customers are getting factual, science-based information to substantiate the quality of Alberta beef?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Quite frankly, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and myself are championing Alberta beef; we have and will continue to. Recently I was in Asia, where I was promoting Alberta beef to not just a number of different food chains but looking at opportunities to increase the amount of beef we export to Asia. There is significant room to increase our capacity, and we are using our international offices to ensure that they get the message that Alberta beef is not just the safest and the highest quality but that it's also the best-tasting beef in the world.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, the verisimilitude of both of these ministers is staggering.

The entire Earls decision hinged on a certification program that calls for practices that are already widely followed by Alberta beef producers. Given that consumer demand for verification of production practices is likely to continue to increase, what action is the minister of agriculture taking, working with Alberta producers, to establish a made-in-Canada certification program to address consumer concerns and reinforce confidence in Alberta beef?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We help fund the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, an ongoing project that all of us should be proud of; we have called for a swift certification process for beef so that those consumers choosing our beef know that in Alberta they've got the best product possible. I think that Canadians right across, from coast to coast to coast, know that Alberta products are the best and will continue to be so while maintaining our certification around the globe, which is bigger.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### Carbon Levy and Seniors

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most seniors live on fixed incomes. They budget carefully to make sure that their limited savings and pensions can cover the cost of food, basic living, and transportation. Seniors will be one of the hardest hit demographics when the NDP's massive carbon tax raises the price of everything. The government's cost estimates don't take into account or blatantly ignore that food will cost more and power bills will go up. Seniors are worried about these extra costs. Will the Minister of Finance come clean with seniors about how much this carbon tax will cost them?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. You know, we have had information available on carbon pricing. The Minister of Energy and the minister of environment have both had serious discussions with people all across the province about how much it will cost. We know that 60 per cent of Albertans will be rebated. Seniors will be amongst those that receive the full rebate for the carbon pricing.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the maximum rebate on the carbon tax isn't even enough to cover the government's own lowball estimate of what the carbon tax will cost and given the fact that increased costs won't be offset by an increase to the federal pensions or to the Alberta seniors' benefit, how does this government expect low-income and fixed-income seniors to afford to maintain their quality of life while paying for this punishing carbon tax?

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you for the question. Of course, the direct cost for the average family, including heating, gasoline, will be \$340 in 2017 and \$500 in 2018. That's for a family of four. Certainly, the rebates will be given for folks who are earning less than \$106,000 per year as a net family income. The fact of the matter is that low-income seniors will receive the same rebate, based on average use, as anyone else regardless of where they live. Many low-income seniors will in fact come out ahead as a result of this. In addition to that, they will be able to avail themselves . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government seems to think a lot of their rebate program even though they'll be taking more money out of seniors' pockets than they will get back and given that these inadequate rebates will only be paid out once, twice, or four times per year depending on income levels, how does the minister expect our fixed- and low-income seniors to wait months for this government to return their own money, which they would otherwise have had to pay for their prescriptions, food, and rent?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition is wrong in almost everything they say. First of all, the first cheques will appear in January, even before folks start to pay the carbon levy, because we wanted to make sure that no one would be unduly affected by this. In addition, two-thirds of Albertans will receive that rebate, and that is based on average use. Many, many seniors are far below the average, so they will end up with a little extra money in their pockets. At the end of the day, we are very confident that these efficiency programs . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, I'll just begin by saying that the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert looks very good in a Brooks Bandits jersey today.

#### Emergency Management Funding

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Every year in Alberta somewhere there is a natural disaster, whether it is wildfires, tornadoes, flood, hail, or drought, but rather than budget and plan for this, the government always seems to need to come back for an emergency spending bill every single year. The wildfire budget is \$200 million lower this year than the average actually spent over the last decade and \$100 million lower than the lowest of those years. Why is the minister not budgeting for spending that we know will take place?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The minister of forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The member might recall that last year the budget came out – we had a late budget because of the election – on October 27. You might notice it in there. You know, it's something they haven't caught yet, but they haven't perhaps read the estimates. It took me a couple of minutes to understand it as well. That \$200 million that was allocated for emergency funding in the budget last year was because of a late budget. This year is a normal cycle. Much like all the other provinces, like Alberta has done for 10 years, the emergency funding will be there to fight the fires, to fight drought when we need it.

Thank you.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** It's very clear that the minister still doesn't understand it, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the province always ends up spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year on emergencies without actually budgeting for them, it's an old trick to be able to blame the deficit on disasters at year-end even though we know that the money will be spent. This is not optional or discretionary spending, so we may as well just budget for it. The annual ritual of supplementary supply

for emergency spending is like asking for a payday loan to cover off your overdraft. If the government is so confident that they have budgeted responsibly for disasters, will they commit to not bringing forward a supplementary supply bill later this year?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of utmost importance, obviously, is to keep Albertans and their communities safe. We're committed to doing that. Emergency funding will be there when and if we need it. Funding like this has been done in Alberta for the past 10 years. It's done in most provinces this way. It's proven effective, and we'll continue to do so, making sure that the number one priority is protecting Albertans when and if they need it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The minister thanks me for the question; I would like to thank him for an answer.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that the Flat Top Complex response to the Slave Lake fire was estimated to cost about \$500 million and that when the former government accepted the recommendations but only allocated \$18 million, the now Premier said in the *Edmonton Sun* on September 26, 2013, "That's not accepting the recommendations, that's paying lip service," will the Premier now admit that she, too, is paying lip service to the Flat Top Complex and the rest of the disaster response budget by hiding the true cost and not properly budgeting for anticipated disasters?

**The Speaker:** The minister of forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The Flat Top Complex recommendations were made from the Slave Lake fires. Since then there have been 250 more firefighters hired every year from that, so in those short few years we're up to over 700 firefighters. Those men and women: their boots are laced; they're ready to fight. We also will have 80 more trained by Sunday. We're going to have 22 air tankers. We have 88 helicopters and 126 lookouts operational. We also have 88 pieces of heavy equipment. To think otherwise, I think, is irresponsible. Our firefighters are out there. Our resources in humans and equipment are there, ready to fight.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### Indigenous Relations

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 18, 2015, I asked the Premier about her government's professed commitment to implementing the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. Both of these initiatives by their very nature involve co-ordination of many provincial ministries. The Premier agreed that this poses serious challenges, but way back then she assured this House that her government would move forward on both of these in the next few months. To the Premier: now that it's been almost a year, can you please tell us what the strategy is exactly for implementing both of these pivotal sets of recommendations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of indigenous affairs.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for the question. We are very proud of the fact that we

started this government by saying that we were going to define a new relationship with the indigenous people in this province, and indeed we have. I have lots of important things to report. We adopted the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, and we asked all of the treaty organizations, all of the Métis organizations, and the Women's Institutes to contribute to a discussion, first by starting with an internal review and then by bringing all that together. That has arrived, and we have put that into a full package, which is now distributed back.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that the Premier directed her ministers to start co-ordinating a crossministerial plan to implement UNDRIP and that in a letter she told her ministers to have the results of this comprehensive strategy ready for implementation by February 1 and given that we've all seen that so far it's been photo ops and agreements for future agreements and given that in the past few months you've changed the timeline eight times regarding balancing the budget, to the Premier: you're not going to do the same thing with UNDRIP and TRC, are you? In other words, what's your government's newest timeline for implementing these crucial recommendations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I love the question because it betrays the fact that they clearly don't understand the process of consultation with indigenous communities. The very point of having a consultation with indigenous communities is to sit down at the table with them and talk to them until they themselves have decided that they have been consulted with. The opposition, when they were in the government, continually found themselves in the place of making a decision ahead of time, shipping it out to the community, and saying: this is what you're doing. We're not doing that because we truly want to consult.

**Mr. Rodney:** On this very day check out Ipsos-Reid. The majority of Albertans definitely disagree with you, sir.

Given that the critical aspect of any government's plan for addressing recommendations of historic documents like UNDRIP and the TRC report involves setting benchmarks and given that if there's going to be any real action or accountability, this government has to provide mechanisms for monitoring progress on each goal, to the minister: what specific timelines and performance measures are available that will allow Albertans to hold this government accountable for its promises to its indigenous peoples?

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much for the question. I'd like to point out the fact that we are working with the indigenous community, and our promises to the indigenous community are to consult with the indigenous community, and we are indeed doing so. I am very proud of the fact that the Minister of Education and I signed the Kitaskinaw agreement earlier this year. I'm very proud of the fact that we have involved every indigenous community in the UNDRIP program. I'm very proud of the fact that we have a consultation agreement with the settlement Métis, which that government never did. I'm also proud of the fact that we have consultation agreements going on with the nonsettlement Métis. We have a number of...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In an open letter to the cabinet on July 7, 2015, the Premier asked ministers to conduct a review, including budget implications, of the government's policies, programs, and legislation that may require changes based on the principles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. So for a second time you can explain to the opposition: what is the status of this work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the very timely question. I'm very proud of the fact that we've been in the consultation process with the indigenous community, and one of the things that we have done in this consultation process is that we have ensured that not only the outcomes of the consultation process but the process itself are actually consultation. Sometimes it is hard for people to understand that actually sitting down with the community and asking them the question "How do you want to go about the consultation process?" needs to be done before you actually engage in the consultation process. Understanding that kind of process is our forte.

**The Speaker:** Thank you again, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the update. I am glad to hear that the internal review is complete.

Again to the same minister: given that respect and consultation with indigenous peoples on decisions that impact them are key parts of renewing relationships, how are you engaging indigenous peoples on the implementation of the UN declaration?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We are very happy to be able to say that over the last year we've engaged in a number of activities with the indigenous community, including, of course, my participation with the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women conference in Manitoba, where Alberta has taken the lead in the socioeconomic forum to work with the community to actually change circumstances for the women in the community. We're also proud of the fact that we've signed the Kitaskinaw agreement with the tribal councils, and we also have completed the Métis settlement consultation agreement.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to hear that the government intends to engage fully with the indigenous leaders, and welcome to the leaders that are here already.

To the same minister. It has almost been a year since the government committed to the implementation of the UN declaration. Is there anything concrete you can share with us to demonstrate progress in this commitment?

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I am very happy to stand today to talk about the fact that we have recently signed the protocol agreement for the Treaty 8 indigenous communities, which constitute 24 of the 48 indigenous communities in the province, because in that protocol we have set up a series of tables so that the members of the community can meet with all of the ministers that you see here.

They will be sitting at the table, meeting face to face with chiefs, again something that never happened with the previous government. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** It seems, hon. members, that spring has sprung.  
The hon. Member for Highwood.

### Clinical Information Systems

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's change gears here a little bit. Alberta's clinical information system is badly in need of updating. The current system is over 30 years old and lacks the ability to share information across various platforms. Patients are often left having to explain their health stories to different professionals over and over again. This can lead to mistakes and needless duplication. Wildrose has called for upgrades to the clinical information system for years. You know what? It's refreshing to hear that I think this government is finally taking our advice and bringing our health care system into the 21st century. Will the minister confirm that this upgrade is in fact taking place, and if so, when?

2:30

**Ms Payne:** Thank you to the member for the question. We haven't yet had a chance to talk about our Health estimates, so I guess we'll talk a little bit more about that there. We are indeed committing funding in Budget 2016 for the implementation and upgrade of the CIS. Actually, it's an ongoing process, and the work is beginning immediately.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Well, thank you. Given that this particular upgrade has been long promised by successive governments but has always been scrapped, the government can forgive Albertans if they're not willing to take their word at this time.

Was an RFP issued and/or awarded for this project? If so, when? When can we expect the initial introduction of the system?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As I noted, the upgrades for CIS are included in Budget 2016. As soon as we get that budget through the House, we can begin spending that money.

I would also like to note that, unlike previous governments, we make a decision, and we commit to it. We put the money in, and we move forward.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there's no denying that our health care system is in dire need of an upgrade, at a price tag of \$400 million you owe it to Albertans to ensure that this upgrade is done right. Will the minister confirm that a detailed cost-benefit analysis was completed and a market assessment was undertaken, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. A detailed market analysis, the tender process as well as a number of cost-containing measures are all part of the bid process that we will be undertaking as part of this implementation.

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

### Carbon Levy

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary school board is deeply concerned about the effects the NDP's carbon tax is going to have on them and the families they serve. The cost of operating schools is going up. It's going way up, and they're worried that they're going to bear the brunt of the increase and that this supposedly revenue-neutral tax is being passed down to families. To the Minister of Education. These folks are worried. Are you willing to sit down with them and have a conversation about how to get through this?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks very much for the question. Certainly, it's very important that we work together with all of our school boards to ensure that the impacts of our climate leadership plan are dealt with in a reasonable and equitable sort of manner. We know as well, of course, as I mentioned before, that it's very important for us to use this as a teaching moment. We know that parents and teachers and school boards want to work through this in a mechanism by which we can increase energy efficiency and, of course, to teach kids about that responsibility.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, given that nonprofits like the YWCA, with whom I also spoke, are facing astronomical new bills for heating and running their facilities – they've got 19 of them in Calgary – to the Minister of Finance: are you willing to sit down with them and try to figure out a solution to their pain?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, Mr. Speaker, the climate leadership plan that we have put forward is far-reaching. It will improve Alberta. It'll give us social licence. We want all of those charities, nonprofits, and organizations such as schools to know that their new energy-efficiency program will have \$645 million in it and that they can access that as long as we reduce the use of carbon going forward.

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, these folks have to pay their bills now. They need answers now. You're talking about things that are happening in the future. To the minister of environment: are you willing to sit down with these stakeholders and help them through their pain?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks and climate change.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My office has been in communication with charity organizations about the climate leadership plan. As we design our energy-efficiency programming, there will be a number of targeted stakeholder engagements, in particular with school boards, not-for-profits, housing authorities, and municipalities, to ensure that we are directing those energy efficiency efforts in the right place. There will be a number, hundreds of millions, in fact, of investments in energy efficiency. As we invest in efficiency, we bring down our emissions and, therefore, our costs.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

### Seniors' Lodges

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More than 9,000 Albertans are living in seniors' lodges. Although these lodges provide needed services to low- and moderate-income seniors, the state of some of these lodges is not the best, so despite the hard work of the dedicated staff that work there, seniors are not always living in the best conditions. Many of the lodges are old, the rooms are small, and many seniors, including those with mobility challenges, are sometimes forced to shower or bathe in communal washrooms. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what strategies are in place to improve the conditions in seniors' lodges?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We know that seniors' lodges are the cornerstones of many of Alberta's rural communities. Ensuring that these lodges are not only preserved but also improved means Alberta seniors can stay in home communities near their loved ones. I'm pleased to say that this government is investing more than \$196 million in seniors' housing through Budget 2016. The lodges will be built to upgrade them to modern standards that include larger rooms, full in-suite washrooms, and modern fire suppression and safety systems. This funding is in addition to the nearly \$400 million already committed to 38 lodge projects throughout Alberta.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I am pleased to hear about the seniors' lodge upgrades and renewal, can the minister explain why the majority of Alberta's lodge projects are in rural communities given that urban centres have larger populations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Approximately 70 per cent of the lodge units are in smaller centres – that is correct – not in the larger centres. Rural lodges are vital to small communities. They provide homes to older residents who want to stay in their towns and villages where they live and are close to their loved ones and their community. By investing in rural lodges, we are giving seniors the chance to age in the community, in their home communities, where they're supported by friends and family. There are seniors' lodges in 115 communities across Alberta, and that includes some of the bigger centres also: Edmonton, Red Deer, Lloydminster, and Calgary.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister as well. Given that many of these lodges are more than 40 years old and given that this can put elderly residents, especially those with mobility issues, at risk, what is the ministry doing to reduce this risk?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member points out, many of the lodges were built long before 1990, when the sprinklers became mandatory under the Alberta building codes. We've allocated \$60 million through Budget 2016 to complete the fire and safety system upgrades in 6,600 seniors' lodges and continuing care units across Alberta. We plan to invest \$30 million this year, which will accelerate the timelines, and we are making good progress. I

am confident that we will reach our goal of making more than 100 facilities safer for our seniors by 2018.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Springbank Reservoir Flood Mitigation Project

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Residents of Springbank are worried about the government's plans to go full steam ahead with flood mitigation plans that would have disastrous effects on their community. By diverting the Elbow River to the reservoir at Springbank, the government would flood an area where people live, work, and have a history. There's no question that flood mitigation is of utmost importance, but can the environment minister please explain her plan for consulting affected landowners and ensuring that she's not protecting some Albertans at the expense of others?

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to tell the hon. member and the House that there has been extensive consultation. Thirty or more meetings have been held, going back to 2014. They are ongoing. A number of stakeholder meetings are planned going forward. We've consulted, and the previous government, when it made plans, also did some consultation. I'll give them credit for that. To claim that there's been a lack of consultation just flies in the face of the facts.

**Mrs. Aheer:** I think the people of Springbank would disagree with you.

Given that the government seems to have retained the same company to do the environmental impact assessment and the design and engineering of the project and assuming that this company will have a strong incentive to return favourable impact assessment because otherwise they'll miss out on millions of dollars for this engineering and design, how can the residents of Springbank trust that this government will manage that apparent conflict of interest and consult with them in good faith?

2:40

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is just casting aspersions not only on the good name and reputation of the firm that's been engaged but on the entire process. There is extensive consultation. Of course, we're hiring a company and we're going to pay them for doing the work, but they're going to provide us with the accurate and up-to-date information that is needed in order to ensure that this project is environmentally sound as well as protecting – and the member should remember this – hundreds of thousands of people downstream, including in the city of Calgary. Those people need protection, and the hon. member is forgetting that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, everyone needs protection. Let's be clear about that.

Given that some of my constituents have lived on the land of Springbank for generations and given that the ranch and farm there is part of Alberta's natural heritage and would be washed away if or when a flood event happened and the Springbank plans go through, what does the environment minister have to say to the families in my riding who will lose their homes as a result of her government's plan?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member and her constituents that we are negotiating on a very fair basis, and we'll

continue to do that with all of the landowners to acquire the land for this project, which is needed in order to protect hundreds of thousands of Calgarians and other Albertans downstream of the Elbow River. If the hon. member would like to see a repetition of the flood that took place in Calgary a few years ago, she should just stand up and say so.

### **Introduction of Bills**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

#### **Bill 12**

#### **Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act**

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave today to introduce a bill, being the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act.

Developed and passed by the previous government, Bill 22 intended to establish a levy on industry as a way to increase funding available to First Nations and potentially other indigenous communities to engage in consultation activities. Many First Nations felt they were not adequately consulted on the development or passing of the bill and were vocal in the opposition toward it. One of our government's platform commitments, the repeal of Bill 22 is an important step in renewing the consultation process to make sure it responds to the evolving needs of First Nations, industry, and other stakeholders.

As you know, our government committed to a renewed partnership with indigenous people, and we intend to follow through on that commitment. We have heard loud and clear from First Nations that the current consultation policy does not meet the needs of their communities or respect First Nations constitutionally protected treaty rights, which is why my ministry is reaching out to First Nations in conducting a comprehensive review with the aim of reviewing Alberta's consultation policy.

Budget 2016 includes \$750,000 to engage meaningfully with First Nations and Métis to enhance the consultation process. Part of that funding will support the renewal of the First Nations consultation policy. We look forward to working together with indigenous peoples and industry. We will help to shape the future direction of consultation in this province.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it appears that the daily Routine is now concluded. A legislative policy committee will convene this afternoon for consideration of the main estimates. Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Education in the Grassland Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:45 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b)]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 4, 2016

Day 22

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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 Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
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 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
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 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
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 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
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 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
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Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
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Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

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Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
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### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Fildebrandt	Piquette
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### Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
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### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Coolahan	McPherson
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### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Barnes	Luff
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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 4, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Please bow your heads.

Let us reflect, each in our own way. As we sit in this Chamber today, we know that our fellow Albertans from Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo are victims of one of the most devastating natural disasters in our history. We know that their lives will remain ever changed as a result of this disaster. Two of our own fellow members are victims of this event, one of whom has lost his home and a lifetime of memories with it. Let each of us demonstrate through our words and actions that compassion is the critical element of leadership. Let us also remind ourselves that this Earth we live upon is more powerful than we are.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three special grade 6 classes from the constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. The three classes are from River Valley elementary school in Sundre. That actually is the school that my children attend, both the ones that have graduated and the ones that are still in school, so I'm excited to welcome them to the Assembly today. I would ask that Mr. Walton's, Ms Tarnoczi's, and Ms Cheung's classes all stand in the Assembly. They have a list of a lot of chaperones that are with them today. I know I will not try your patience by trying to name all of them; it is quite a list. Many of them are friends and neighbours. Instead, I will just ask that all of my colleagues give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school groups today for introductions?

Hearing none, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Learning Centre Literacy Association, who are joining us today in the members' gallery. Jawda Tobak, Pat Sharun, Angeliki Gkournelou, Alyssa McPhail, Denis Lapierre, Sarah Robinson, and Nikolaos Lazos work at the Abbottsfield mall offering free programs for adults in Edmonton who want to improve their reading, writing, math, and computer skills. Together they remind us that in Alberta we want everyone to reach their full potential and have opportunities to give back to their neighbourhoods and hometowns. I'd ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests for introduction today? The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you an old friend, Dr. Thomas Marois, who is now

a senior lecturer in development studies at the University of London. However, his BA and his MA were earned at the University of Alberta, and certainly his undergraduate years were spent hanging around with the minister of environment, drinking beer at the Power Plant. I ask him, my old friend of 20 years, to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to seek unanimous consent from the Assembly that following the responses to ministerial statements the House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

### Fort McMurray Wildfire

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members, I rise today with a heavy heart to provide this House with an update on the wildfire that has devastated the community of Fort McMurray. To all the residents of Fort McMurray: I want to say clearly that all Albertans are behind you, I believe all Canadians are behind you, and certainly this government is behind you.

As a colleague and fellow Albertan I think I can speak for all of us in this House when I say that our thoughts and hearts are with the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and, of course, the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin. As someone who, unfortunately, knows firsthand how hard and scary it is to leave behind your home and your community, my heart rests so deeply with all of those from Fort McMurray in these early days and will continue to do so in the many days, weeks, months, and years to come.

Please know that we continue to do absolutely everything we can to keep Albertans safe and to stop this fire. I want to thank the incredibly dedicated front-line emergency responders, who are working under tremendously difficult circumstances to ensure everybody's safety and to suppress the fire. I want to thank Albertans for the tremendous outpouring of support, including the continued donations to the Canadian Red Cross, the sharing of firefighting resources from across the province, and our industry partners who are both sharing firefighting resources and also providing places for many of the evacuees to stay.

With that said, I will now provide an update on the current status of the situation in Fort McMurray. Our focus at this time remains centred on ensuring the safety of people, that the residents of Fort McMurray have safely evacuated the area and are able to find secure lodging with friends or family at one of the reception centres or in the home of one of the many individual Albertans who have opened their doors at this time of crisis. Also, we are focused on ensuring the safety of the first responders who have made that choice and commitment to stay there and to deal with the difficulty that they are enduring.

All of the urban Fort McMurray area continues to be under a mandatory evacuation. Upwards of 80,000 people are affected. Reception centres have been set up at Noralta Lodge, Anzac Recreation Centre, Lac La Biche, Fort MacKay, and Northlands recreation centre. As I rise in this House, thousands of evacuees are heading to Edmonton, where we are working with partners to

establish reception centres in the city. I implore all Albertans who are displaced by the fire to register with evacuation centres so local authorities can ensure that everyone is accounted for and safe. Evacuees can call 1.888.350.6070 to register.

I am tremendously thankful that there have been no casualties and only a few minor injuries reported so far.

Mr. Speaker, emergencies of this magnitude require co-ordination between many levels of government and community partnerships. The response has been what we expect from Albertans, wholehearted and strong. But we are still in the throes of an intense crisis, and our fire crews are working around the clock to reduce the threat of fire to people, homes, and infrastructure.

The fire conditions today, unfortunately, remain extremely challenging. Our government is working closely with the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo to ensure the evacuation of homes and neighbourhoods is orderly and safe. The fire is actively burning in residential areas in Fort McMurray, with significant structural loss. At this time we estimate that around 1,600 homes have been lost. I know that the Leader of the Opposition is one of those affected, and my thoughts are with him and his family, as they are with every person who has been evacuated.

**1:40**

As devastating as this fire has been already, we must prepare ourselves for more bad news in the hours and days ahead. This fire is unrelenting, and firefighters are facing extreme fire conditions and rapidly changing fire behaviour this afternoon. The fire situation remains dynamic and current temperatures and wind present extreme conditions. Since the fire began, every single resource that needed to be at this fire has been there and will continue to be there. With 88 firefighters from regions around the province joining the fight overnight, there are approximately 250 firefighters currently battling this fire. We also have 12 pieces of heavy equipment and 12 helicopters engaging in suppression efforts at the Fort McMurray fire. There are currently two air tanker groups and nine air tankers in the air, although this number changes hourly as our firefighters adjust to conditions. We are currently utilizing as many aircraft as is logistically possible and safe to fight this fire.

Crossgovernment efforts are being closely co-ordinated out of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency Provincial Operations Centre, and ministries are supporting emergency response efforts and addressing the needs of evacuated residents in a number of ways. Alberta Agriculture and Forestry is supporting ongoing fire-suppression efforts. Alberta Environment and Parks is providing support to evacuees that have gone to provincial campgrounds, and they are waiving the fees for them. Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services are providing medical support to evacuees who are presenting to reception centres. All patients at the Northern Lights regional health centre were safely evacuated and are being transferred to appropriate health care facilities. All evacuated acute-care patients and continuing care clients will be flown to health care facilities in the Edmonton zone, where they will receive the care that they need. Alberta Human Services emergency social services are co-ordinating support to respond to the needs of evacuees and are resourcing the staff for reception centres. Alberta Transportation is monitoring road and visibility conditions and supporting traffic management where required.

Mr. Speaker, our government has also called in the support of our federal government through the Department of National Defence, and they stand at the ready to offer any logistical support we need. They have already dispatched helicopters to provide logistical support in the region.

As well, multiple communities across northern and central Alberta are dispatching structural firefighting equipment and assets

to the region, including, I'm proud to say, a sprinkler trailer from Slave Lake. Industry partners have offered the use of work camps to house evacuees, and Fort McMurray First Nation, Gregoire First Nation, and Fort McKay First Nation have all opened their doors to evacuees.

I'm also pleased to confirm that our government has already approved emergency funding of \$2 million to the Red Cross to provide direct support to the evacuees. It is very important that evacuees sign into a reception centre or call the Red Cross to register. Doing so will greatly assist our ongoing efforts to account for evacuees and help ensure we are able to provide proper supports for evacuees going forward. Albertans want to help; that is our nature. We're encouraging anyone who wants to donate to the evacuation and relief efforts to please contact the Red Cross.

Please know that without doubt this government is fully committed to supporting the people and community of Fort McMurray now and in the months and years to come to respond to this threat today and in the days to come and to assist you to recover once it is safe again to return home.

As someone who has been through this, I want the people of Fort McMurray to know that I will be there with you, Albertans will be there with you, and we will all pull together in this time of need. All Albertans are behind you now when you are displaced from your homes, all Albertans will be there to help you rebuild, and as Albertans we will come together and see your recovery through.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans can be assured that we are all working together and we will do what it takes today, tomorrow, and in the weeks to come to rebuild and to persevere. That is the Alberta way.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon, all. Today I first want to thank the minister and the Premier for their work to keep all Albertans informed on the terrible fires that have struck Fort McMurray. I want to pass on my thanks from the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin, and the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo for the full co-operation from the government as they continue their work in Fort McMurray to help residents.

Our entire caucus remains dedicated to monitoring the situation and helping in any way that we can. I would like to echo comments made already today to all Albertans. The very best way to offer assistance at this time is through cash donations to the Red Cross. Mr. Speaker, words cannot express our feelings of total devastation. Like all Albertans, we watched horrified as the fires crossed into the city borders yesterday afternoon. This fire has torn up tens of thousands of families from their homes. The weight of the challenges ahead is extraordinary. I ask for all Albertans' thoughts and prayers to be with those whose lives have been forever changed. We ask for all Albertans to pass their thoughts and prayers on for the safety of all responders. We urge anyone still in the city to evacuate but stay safe.

Today's pain is a pain Albertans have too often experienced over the past several years. It was just three years ago when the banks of the rivers in southern Alberta burst, forcing many to evacuate their homes as they saw everything they owned submerge under the angry waters. Like many others in this House, I saw the anxiety, worry, and sadness this put on all those impacted. It's the same challenges we saw after the fires in Slave Lake in 2011.

But during these times of tremendous difficulties we also saw the spark of the character of Alberta. Alberta did not become the great province it is today without facing adversity. Our people are resilient, compassionate, and caring. Albertans have already shown this character in spades. Energy companies have opened their camps.

Homes from Lac La Biche to Bonnyville to here in Edmonton are already opening their doors. The people of Fort McMurray are a strong people. We know Albertans will band together. We know we will rebuild. It is that spirit that made our province the best place in the world.

As cowgirl poet Doris Daley once put it: “We knew drought and [we knew] fire and heartache, we knew fat and we knew bone. But we were silver lining people and we never rode alone.”

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would seek the unanimous consent of the House to allow a representative of the third party as well as the two independent members to respond to the ministerial statement.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The member for the third party, Calgary-Hays.

1:50

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour on behalf of our Progressive Conservative caucus to reply to the minister's address. Interestingly and perhaps fittingly, today is International Firefighters' Day. It is times like this that even in this competitive place we must put our differences aside and work together to make sure that government is doing all it can to help the victims of the fire.

The town of Slave Lake has literally risen from the ashes of a huge fire in 2011, the source of our Municipal Affairs minister. Municipalities across Alberta are largely but not completely recovered from the massive flooding in 2013. What is common through all of this, Mr. Speaker, is the Alberta can-do spirit of getting things done, working together, and helping one another in a time of great need.

In the last 24 hours we've heard devastating stories of the destruction caused by this fire. Thousands of people are affected by this disaster, including some hon. members of this Assembly who are personally impacted. On behalf of our caucus, our thoughts, prayers, and best wishes are with those members.

The brave residents of Fort McMurray, who on a moment's notice had to flee their homes, now have time to count not only their losses but the blessings of having no deaths reported so far from this tragic event. First responders are working around the clock to keep people safe from danger. Firefighters and rescue workers have left their own cities and communities, in many cases, to come and help the citizens of Fort McMurray and area. Albertans across the province right now are opening their homes and businesses to help evacuees. Residents have provided jerry cans of gasoline to help people stranded. Others are delivering water and food for people and for their pets. There are offers to keep livestock safe and to transport them to where they can be cared for until their farm and ranch homes are back online. In the days and weeks ahead there may be more challenges, but there will no doubt be more stories like these, highlighting the caring and generous nature of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, we must also care for the unseen damage done. Some victims of the fire will bear invisible scars in the form of PTSD or mental stress. We must provide help for those losses as well.

Our thoughts and prayers are with everyone affected by the fires. We are deeply concerned with the well-being of those displaced from their homes, and we are proud and supportive of the great work done by everyone helping right now.

Mr. Speaker, several members of our caucus team have experience with previous Alberta major events, and we offer that experience should the government require it. Today all of us in this Legislature are on one team. Our PC caucus wishes the government only good results in caring for the people of Fort McMurray and surrounding area.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, on behalf of the Liberal caucus I want to thank the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs for their words and their commitment to this great tragedy. Today all Albertans, all Canadians stand together with the people of Fort McMurray, including the many brave emergency workers who continue to labour on. The events unfolding in Fort McMurray are a profound tragedy, and it would seem that the only ray of sunshine through the smoke is that through these extraordinary efforts of the emergency management teams and EMS workers and the people of Fort McMurray, no one to date has had any fatalities.

My thoughts and prayers go out to all those who've lost so much and had to leave their homes behind with no certainty that there will be a home to return to. I'm certain that once the fire is out and the process of rebuilding begins, there will be much discussion about costs and what can be learned from this, our third major disaster in Alberta in five years.

Along with the physical and financial loss is unmeasurable emotional trauma, often more difficult and more lasting than the physical and financial recovery. I'm aware, too, that there's counselling available in the emergency reception centres, which I applaud. I know that the Health minister and the Premier are both committed to all the support that will be needed both now, when people are in shock and mourning, and a year from now, when the trauma and memories can still be overwhelming. I know I speak for all the members here when I say that the rebuilding of healthy lives is every bit as important as the rebuilding of homes and roads and schools.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I had a difficult time writing this today. As we learn more about the tragic events unfolding in Fort McMurray, I've had a hard time keeping my focus, as I imagine all of us have. I'm especially thankful that so far no one has lost their life in this tragic event. I'm also thankful for the bravery – the tremendous bravery – of first responders as they run toward danger while others seek safety. And I'm thankful for but I'm not surprised by the outpouring of support from Albertans because that's who we are; that is who we are as Albertans.

Of course, it saddens me deeply to see the loss of so much property, so many memories, and so much of the city of Fort McMurray. I worry that the worst may in fact be yet to come. I hope everyone remains safe, in particular first responders from around Alberta and around the country.

Watching those shocking images of people fleeing the fires, having spent a lot of time working in Fort McMurray, I, of course, was struck by the devastation, watching family homes burn, watching familiar landmarks go up in smoke. I think of the Leader of the Official Opposition and his family, who lost their home, and I want him and all of his colleagues in the Wildrose caucus to know that my thoughts are with the Leader of the Official Opposition and his family. I offer my unconditional support to you, to him, to his

family, and to the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo as well.

I offer that same support to the government. I commend you for your swift response to the crisis and also your very good work keeping Albertans safe and keeping them informed.

Today our entire province in addition, of course, to this House stands united in support of our friends in and around Fort McMurray. Albertans are strong, but never are we stronger than in the face of a crisis. In times of crisis we put our differences aside here. I echo the sentiments of all of my colleagues. I offer my thoughts to the people in Fort McMurray and the hopes that everyone continues to be safe.

Now, I, too, have lived through a natural disaster. My most vivid memories are not of what was lost in the flood but of the tremendous outpouring of support from Albertans. I will never forget the images of hundreds of Edmonton police and firefighters streaming down highway 2, coming to help. I'll never forget the day

complete strangers showed up by the thousands to help. And I'll never forget the support of neighbours who abandoned their own homes to help others who they thought were worse off. That's who we are as Albertans. That's what we do in this province.

I want the people of Fort McMurray to know that we're there for you. We're there for you today, we'll be there for you tomorrow, and we will be there for you as long as you need us to be until the city of Fort McMurray is rebuilt. We are Albertans. Even in the face of overwhelming devastation, we are strong, and we are united.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the daily Routine is now concluded.

A legislative policy committee will convene this afternoon for consideration of the main estimates. Families and Communities will consider the estimates of Service Alberta in the Grassland Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 1:59 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b)]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 5, 2016

Day 23

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
Second Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Government House Leader  
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinstauber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinstauber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinstauber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 5, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Let each of us reflect in our own way. Today we reflect upon Holocaust Remembrance Day, or Yom ha-Shoah. Today we commemorate the victims of genocide by honouring those lost lives. Let us reflect on the importance of tolerance, respect, and appreciation for all faiths and cultures so there will never be a time in our province that any person does not feel safe to practise their religious beliefs.

I would ask that you join me in a moment of silence to remember all those whose lives were taken unfairly and unjustly.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the students and teachers of l'école Citadelle in Legal, Alberta. One of 19 schools of the north central francophone school division, l'école Citadelle is a K to 9 school. Today's grade 6 class is accompanied by their teacher, Chris Page, and parent chaperones Joanne Pelletier, Dawn de Champlain, Danielle Tardif-Cyr, and Marie-Josée Trudel. I would ask that the class please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 32 students from Viking school, appropriately located in the town of Viking, which is, by Odin's beard, the hammer of Thor of all communities in the constituency of Vermilion-Lloydminster. These students are here with their teachers: Mrs. Sandra Carter, Mrs. Dianne Kolybaba, and Mrs. Trudy Josephson. We had a wonderful discussion as we were having pictures taken. They're very keenly interested in the ongoing saga, if you like, of what happens here in the Legislature, and they're particularly keenly interested in watching the NDP members who sit on this side of the House, which we have dubbed the Valhalla section. I'd now ask all of my colleagues here in the Legislature to rise and give them the warm traditional welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who have school groups to introduce?

Then the Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you the 25 representatives of the child well-being initiative. They are women of the United Church of Canada who have been relentlessly working to raise awareness about child poverty in Alberta. Today every MLA has the opportunity to receive a poverty doll, hand made, with prayers for kids. They ask that you please keep your doll in your office to remind you of the basic needs of Alberta's young citizens and that that must be a priority for this government. Today marks the fourth time they have travelled from throughout the province to the Legislature to share their message

with all of us. I ask this incredible group to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some very special people I met about a year and a half ago at the beginning of my journey here to this Legislature. This group of dedicated volunteers ran my campaign, co-ordinated volunteers, door-knocked, helped with organizing, and provided much-needed emotional support. I didn't write those last words. I have these amazing volunteers to thank for where I am sitting today, and to be honest, I'm forever grateful for their support. Joining us today are Gary and Lars Hansen, Ben McDonald, Rhonda Whitten, Johanna Flipsen, Kim Slomnicki, and Colleen Copley. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Frances Amery, a teacher at Campus Pre-school, a co-operative preschool in my constituency of Calgary-Klein that is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, which I'll be talking more about in my member's statement today. I ask that Frances now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Lillian Stewart, Sandra Burgess, and David Jensen from the child well-being initiative in Calgary. About 10 years ago Lillian saw a woman with a baby on the street on a cold winter night in downtown Calgary. After she saw them, she vowed to do something about it, and the initiative to fight against child poverty was born with the collaboration of Sharon Prenevost and some other women. I would like to thank Lillian, Sandra, and David for their hard work towards eradicating child poverty. I'm very pleased that they are here today with us and would request all three individuals to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly Lynne Fair from my constituency of Strathmore-Brooks. Lynne is also involved with the child well-being initiative. I ask that you and all members of the Assembly give her the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a King's University student, Erin Vandenberg. Erin is committed to social justice and public service, and I feel very fortunate that Erin has chosen to work for me during the summer. Erin, would you please rise to receive the customary welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests today?

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly four amazing women from my constituency. Apart from being part of the child well-being initiative group that is here today, I have worked with these women on a number of other volunteer issues in my community via the Canadian Federation of University Women and through our shared place of worship with the justice, peace, and social action committee. They are Sharon Prenevost, Mary Shillington, Debora Lebeau, and Sheila Braund. I am honoured to work with them and call them friends. I ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

#### Wildfire Update

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take an opportunity to share some new information on the wildfires that are currently burning in our province. As you know, fire conditions continue to be extreme across much of the province, with rapidly changing fire behaviour. A fire weather advisory is in effect for the northern regions of the province. Overnight we had 18 new starts, with seven of the fires deemed out of control, including new starts near Slave Lake and High Level. We expect that the fire in Fort McMurray will continue to grow today due to these weather conditions.

At this point, based on the fire activity, our primary goal is to keep the wildfire out of homes and to protect the infrastructure, such as hospitals, key transportation routes, and other critical infrastructure, that'll make it easier for people to return to their community. In the meantime the fire will burn in the forested areas, thankfully away from the community. To be clear, at this time no amount of air support or wildfire fighter support will stop this fire right now because of the extreme fire conditions. At this point it will continue to burn until we see some significant rain. In the meantime, again, we are focused on safety and protecting that core infrastructure.

Weather continues to be a major factor. Cooler temperatures are forecast for today, with lower humidity of 25 to 35 per cent. However, we still expect significant fire behaviour due to increased winds, forecasted to be between 30 to 50 kilometres per hour.

Province-wide there are currently more than 1,300 firefighters on the front lines being aided by 145 helicopters, 138 pieces of heavy equipment, and 22 air tankers. There are currently more than a hundred additional firefighters heading to our province to assist with our efforts. The firefighting efforts are currently focused, again, on protecting the critical infrastructure and residences within Fort McMurray.

The Canadian military is ready to help as well and has sent in helicopters and a C-130 Hercules aircraft. We have additional equipment coming from out of the province, including four air tankers from Quebec that are scheduled to arrive on scene today.

The Canada Task Force 2 military emergency support arrived in Fort McMurray yesterday at 10 p.m. This includes 20 command staff and 20 support staff, providing much-needed support to the emergency staff, who have been working tremendously hard, out of Wood Buffalo.

We are co-ordinating closely with industry to begin moving evacuees from the camps north of Fort McMurray by air. Ultimately, we would like to move people out by way of ground

transportation, although safety remains the first priority, and we will not do that until it is safe to do so.

Three emergency fuel stations are operating in safety rest areas on highway 63, located approximately 60 kilometres south of Fort McMurray, 100 kilometres south at Mariana Lake, and approximately 165 kilometres south of Fort McMurray. Quantities of fuel are limited and will be restricted to motorists who need fuel to get them to the nearest fuel centre.

The reception centre at the Anzac Recreation Centre was vacated due to a mandatory evacuation order. The registered evacuees there have self-evacuated or have been moved by bus to the Northlands centre here in Edmonton. The regional operations centre located in Anzac has been moved back up to its former location near the Fort McMurray airport, which we consider great news at this time.

We continue our efforts to ensure that Albertans are evacuated safely from all areas with mandatory evacuation orders. We are responding in a co-ordinated manner with emergency response workers to ensure we get people out quickly and safely. Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, our priority is ensuring Albertans are safe, including our first responders, as fire conditions remain extreme.

Yesterday our Premier visited the Fort McMurray region to view the fire and the devastation. She also visited the emergency operation centre and met with local officials there. The Premier also took time to meet volunteers and evacuees at evacuation centres in Anzac and heard from all of them about the particular challenges that they're facing at this time.

We have enacted a provincial state of emergency within the municipality of Wood Buffalo and continue to work with municipalities, organizations, and businesses to support evacuated residents. The powers granted under the state of emergency allow us to put the necessary actions into place. It also allows the province to evacuate people from the affected areas. It allows us to restore essential facilities and the distribution of essential supplies like food, clothing, fuel, equipment, and medical supplies. The state of emergency allows the province to control or prohibit travel to and from the area and to co-ordinate emergency medical and social services and put our own provincial emergency plan into action.

States of local emergency continue to be in effect for the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo and the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation.

The focus of the Provincial Operations Centre is the stabilization of the Fort McMurray situation and the planning for eventual re-entry into the community. Albertans affected by wildfires should follow the instructions of emergency officials and stay tuned to local media for information and updates as they develop. I encourage all Albertans to follow Alberta emergency alert online or to download the smart phone app to stay informed on emergencies in their areas. Albertans can find the most up-to-date information about this situation at [alberta.ca](http://alberta.ca).

Once again we stress that at this time the mandatory evacuation remains in place, and residents of Fort McMurray are not to return to their homes at this time.

Anyone who wants to contribute to assist the displaced residents is encouraged to donate to the Canadian Red Cross at [redcross.ca](http://redcross.ca) or 1.800.418.1111. Our government has provided \$2 million to the Red Cross so that their efforts can begin immediately, and we have also committed to matching donations from individual Albertans, who have been so tremendously generous already.

Evacuees are encouraged to contact Red Cross themselves at 1.888.350.6070 to register their location. This will ensure that officials know how to reach evacuees to verify that they got out safely, to help with family reunification, and to make sure they have the supports that they need at this time. Evacuees should also

register at a reception centre even if they are not planning to stay there. This will help ensure that our government can get them the supports they need going forward.

For those evacuees with pets I can tell you that many of the reception centres are accepting evacuees and their pets if their pets are in a crate and have food. A number of organizations are providing assistance with food, crates, as well as kennel space.

I would also like to add that mental health support is available by calling Alberta's 24-hour mental health helpline at 1.877.303.2642. Mental health staff are either in place or in transit to a variety of the reception centres right across this province to provide that necessary support.

For those needing to travel highway 63, the highway is open to southbound traffic only. Northbound traffic is restricted to emergency vehicles and other essential travel at the junction of highway 881. There are traffic controls in place at both highway 63 and highway 881, with priority being given to emergency responders. More information and regular updates are available from Alberta's 511 service.

Those Albertans with questions or in need of information can call the government of Alberta's emergency information line at 310.4455. This line is open seven days a week, from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.

Our government is grateful for the responsive support offered and provided by the federal government as well. I'm very thankful for the commitment Minister Ralph Goodale made today to work with us in terms of supporting people with income support, with rebuilding businesses within the region, and, in general, restoring Fort McMurray to functionality and helping them to rebuild. I thank the federal government very much for their commitment to working hard with us on that. All Canadians are standing with Alberta today.

**1:50**

Our government is also grateful to the energy industry, who have supported this region and this province and its people in good times and now in this crisis. I'm thankful to all of the other Alberta companies who have been tremendously generous in terms of donations to provide supports to the evacuees.

And I'm so very thankful to Albertans. I mean, Alberta's true advantage always has been and always will be our people, and we're seeing that displayed time and time again throughout this crisis. Albertans have stepped up to provide money, to provide time and have opened their own doors to these people in times of need.

Lastly, I cannot thank enough the first responders who are in Fort McMurray and responding to all of the other fires right across this province, who continue to do the opposite of what many of us would do and march right into those fires, right into those disasters, ready to take on those challenges in order to protect the things that matter to us. Thank you so much to all of the first responders. We are there with you. We are behind you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with a heavy heart today that I rise. Our entire caucus has been touched by the goodwill and generosity shown toward our colleagues the Leader of the Opposition and the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and, more importantly, to their constituents, whose lives have been thrown into an unimaginable sense of chaos. For other at-risk areas of the province, including High Level and Slave Lake, I want to extend our thoughts and prayers to all those who are impacted.

It is when Albertans are challenged that Albertans show their true spirit, their compassion, their good sense, their industriousness.

This evacuation has been a testament to all of those qualities, and I'm sure that every member of this place will salute the individuals, the volunteers, and the uncountable acts of kindness and generosity that helped 80,000 people get out of harm's way.

It's times like today that it's easy to be lost in a sense of despair that is associated with such tragedies. And while all we can do is hope and pray for the wet weather to arrive, the warm temperatures remain. While this senseless fire remains heavy on our hearts, it's hard not to be inspired by the miraculous evacuation of this beautiful city on the banks of the Athabasca and the work of first responders.

Police officers and EMS workers oversaw the biggest evacuation of a wildfire in our province's history. To date they remain working around the clock as they continued to oversee expanded evacuations even as late as last night. Firefighters in Fort McMurray for days have been heroically battling this blaze, doing all that they can to hold it at bay. Over a thousand firefighters are currently fighting this blaze, and it is with a deep sense of pride to have seen firefighters gather all across our province to come together to help our brothers and sisters in need. If I can, Mr. Speaker, just for a moment, give a very special thank you to the firefighters from the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills responding to this situation in Fort McMurray, helping to contain the spread of this fire.

I have no doubt that in a few weeks, when the scars and burns begin to heal, we will hear the truly inspiring stories that many of these men and women have experienced. We will hear how they put their lives on the line to the best of their ability to keep people safe and try to protect our region. As the long days and sleepless nights persist, I ask that all Albertans and members of this Assembly continue to pray for the safety of all involved and our first responders.

Today will be a sombre day not fit for bluster. Our caucus will ask the Premier and her ministers for an update on the fire situation in Alberta. These questions that we will ask have been sent to the government earlier today, and we hope it will give Albertans the opportunity to get answers to the questions that they are all asking us.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Wildfire Update

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, today is a somber day not fit for politics or bluster. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected. I'm going to ask the Premier for an update on the fire situation in Alberta. So that everyone is aware, in the spirit of collaboration these questions were provided to the government earlier today so that we may provide complete answers to the people of Alberta. Can the Premier update the Assembly on the state of the wildfire situation in Fort McMurray and throughout Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I previously stated, public safety remains the key priority as wildfires continue to burn in several areas of the province. The situation in the Fort McMurray area is, obviously, of primary concern. A provincially declared state of emergency is in effect for the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo. With residents safely evacuated, provincial fire crews continue their efforts to reduce the threat to property and

infrastructure. Fire conditions remain extreme, with 18 new fire starts yesterday, a total of 49 wildfires burning, with seven considered out of control, 12 being held, 23 under control, and seven turned over to the responsible municipal parties to manage.

**Mr. Barnes:** The incredible first responders, who have without hesitation gone towards the emergency, have the full support of all members of this House. I know that the first responders are doing their utmost to control this wildfire and the other fires in our province. News that both B.C. and Manitoba only have enough resources to work in their own provinces has raised questions from Albertans, however. Can the government confirm that our province has adequate resources should other wildfires start spreading our resources thin?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we have a wide variety of support, and we have access to a number of resources from right across the country and, in fact, beyond. We actually have more air support than we could use in Fort McMurray at this point in time and are using that across the province for other wildfires. We also have an abundance of wildfire fighters available in order to do that. Without doubt, we have more than enough resources to deal with the fire, but should we need any more, we have the relationships built in to access as many as we need in the future.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Barnes:** All Albertans and I feel confident in saying that all Canadians are rallying behind the individuals and families who have been devastated by these wildfires. The regional municipality of Wood Buffalo must be commended for their professionalism in evacuating residents and keeping order. However, Albertans are concerned about their neighbours and have asked us why the decision was made by the government to wait until 3 p.m. yesterday to declare a state of emergency. Can the government provide the reasons behind this decision?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was absolutely a local state of emergency in place, which gave the municipalities the powers they needed to address that situation. What our provincial state of emergency did was to give the province the ability to take responsibility for the co-ordination of that event. Of course, we've been working with them continuously from the beginning, but with a variety of other fires coming across and with the majority of Fort McMurray's residents dispersed throughout the province and with concerns that the support in Fort McMurray was becoming exhausted, we decided it was the appropriate time to step in to help, and they agreed with us.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon. Today my questions will all be for the Minister of Municipal Affairs, again, in her capacity as the minister in charge of emergencies. Minister, yesterday the government declared a provincial state of emergency in Fort McMurray. Will you kindly highlight the differences, the key ones, and tell Albertans what additional resources, tools, and powers come with this provincial state of emergency and how they will help fight the fires there and deal with this situation?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We've enacted a provincial state of emergency in the regional municipality, which is in effect for 28 days unless renewed by this House. Examples of the power this gives include putting an emergency plan into operation; evacuating people from the affected areas; controlling or prohibiting travel to or from the area; restoring essential facilities and distributing essential supplies like food, clothing, fuel, equipment, medical supplies; and co-ordinating emergency medical, welfare, and other essential services. The most important fact is that this allows us to step in and control it on a provincial basis to co-ordinate resources across the province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, again, Mr. Speaker. In many parts of Alberta residents are justifiably afraid of fire conditions. They are worried about their homes, their jobs, their livelihoods, and their livestock, of course. The trepidation is real, Minister, and felt widely across this province, and we're only into the fifth day of May in a fire season that probably could go into September. What can the minister tell Albertans about added precautions this government is taking throughout the province to reassure them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost, our priority is ensuring that Albertans are safe as fire conditions remain extreme. We've brought in resources from out of province, and people are working 24/7 on emergency response and supporting Albertans who have been evacuated from their homes. We're working with partners, including municipalities, organizations like the Red Cross, and businesses, to support evacuated residents and fight these devastating fires. We're doing everything we can while we continue to monitor. We can't control the weather or the dry conditions, but we can do what it takes to keep Albertans safe. I will continue to hold daily briefings as required so Albertans are aware of the situation.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Well, Alberta is tinder dry right now across the province. Almost the entire north half is listed as extreme on the fire danger scale, and the rest of the province isn't much better, yet no overall fire ban on the entire province has been announced. Minister, what directives are being communicated to local municipalities throughout Alberta in terms of a heightened state of alert requirement or a complete province-wide fire ban? Has the government considered any action along those lines?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, there are fire restrictions right across the fire protection areas in this province. It is incredibly tinder dry, and we are all working together and proud of the relationships we have with emergency workers from right across this province, working together to ensure that we're prepared for any state that might continue. I urge all Albertans to ensure that they take no action that



potentially could start a fire at a time when fires can get out of control so very quickly.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

#### Health Services for Fort McMurray Residents

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, at a time of such devastation and sadness I was encouraged to hear that all patients and long-term care residents of the Northern Lights hospital have been evacuated. This is testament to the great efforts of the dedicated staff working on the ground to get the job done safely, and we owe them our deepest gratitude. Can the minister inform this House of the status of these evacuated patients, particularly to which facilities they have been moved and the steps being taken to ensure the capacity exists to accommodate them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for this question. In addition to the work of the AHS staff in Fort McMurray, this operation required a great deal of co-ordination with several other facilities, including the Alex, Grey Nuns, Leduc community hospital, Sturgeon, University of Alberta, the Misericordia, Edmonton General continuing care, Jubilee Lodge Nursing Home, Salem Manor Nursing Home, Extensicare Leduc, CapitalCare Lynnwood, and Hardisty Care Centre. I would like to acknowledge that every patient was safely transported from the fire zone to safety and is currently receiving the care they need, and I would thank every person who contributed to that effort.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that a number of companies operating locally have stepped up to offer assistance for those with medical needs. The story of WestJet planes using Suncor's airstrip to evacuate patients, including Fort McMurray's newborns, is truly inspiring. With the immediate safety of lives in hospitals and seniors' facilities secured, Albertans' attention turns to the state of local health and seniors' infrastructure. Could the minister please update Albertans on the condition of health and seniors' facilities, especially the Northern Lights hospital?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The best information that we have at this time is that the Northern Lights regional health centre has not sustained any structural damage so far, but the effects of the smoke are not known at this time. We unfortunately do not have detailed information on other specific structures, and the situation within Fort McMurray remains very changeable. I share the member's concern for residents' homes, including seniors' homes. We know that firefighters and crews are working around the clock to protect the city.

**Mr. Barnes:** This fire has taken an incredible toll on the residents of Fort McMurray and their families. Often that toll is not outwardly visible but manifests itself through mental anguish and stress. Evacuees and their loved ones have suffered loss, uncertainty, and tremendous emotional strain, and let us not forget the first responders, who subject themselves to immense pressures. Please, could the minister let all know what mental health supports are available at this time and how to best gain access to them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for his very important question. Everyone who has been in and around

the Fort McMurray area is under tremendous strain. Absolutely these events have an impact on staff and front-line responders, and there are supports available around the clock. Any person can access the mental health therapists at the reception areas throughout the province. Front-line staff can also contact the AHS emergency and family assistance program or the critical incident stress management and peer support program. Many municipal fire departments also operate their own critical incident management programs. I would encourage any Albertan to reach out to the mental health helpline at any time.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

#### Support for Wildfire Evacuees and First Responders

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While Fort McMurray is still under siege, the bravery and compassion demonstrated daily by Albertans is a source of inspiration for all of us. The PC caucus is committed to working with government and all parties in the House to ensure that Albertans get the information they need. Today is Children's Mental Health Day, and we recognize that there are frightened kids currently at reception centres. To the Health minister: while food, shelter, and water are clearly provided at the centres, are other necessities such as crisis counselling, mental health support, and emotional trauma care also available for those kids?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the very important question. We know that the people that are in reception areas or those that are staying with family and friends are under incredible stress right now, and their mental health is a priority. We have mental health professionals on scene at each of the reception areas, both in the north and in the Edmonton area, and we are ramping up the number of counsellors available. As the Assembly can well imagine, there are tens of thousands of Albertans who have escaped a truly terrifying event, and not everyone will ask for help immediately. Their needs will continue to present over the coming days, weeks, and months. Again, I encourage anyone to contact the mental health line.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, we know that with the fire coming, family and friends often had to evacuate their homes on short notice and leave their communities without being fully prepared and head for the several reception centres that were prepared. We also know that these centres are located quite far apart in many cases, meaning that friends and family may not be together after getting to those centres. To the Municipal Affairs minister: what measures are in place to help connect family members and friends that could be safe but separated in very distant reception centres?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for a very important question. It is certainly an important priority for our government to get families reunified as quickly as it is safe to do so. Each reception area has a registration desk where evacuees can register their name and location with staff. Alberta Red Cross is also helping to co-ordinate family reunification by urging people to phone the toll-free number to register: 1.888.350.6070. It's

important that all evacuees phone this number to register, whether they're staying at reception centres, with family or friends, in campgrounds or hotels, to ensure that officials know how to reach people and can verify that everyone got out safely. Facebook also has activated its Facebook safety check page, where people can sign in.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are extremely proud of our firefighters, our first responders, and the many workers at emergency operations centres. All of these people have stepped up from across the province and in many cases have driven towards the fire to help, and some of these people may have lost their homes themselves. To the Health minister: where can our firefighters, first responders, and members working in the EOCs go to ensure that they receive the mental health care supports they might need and the emotional support they might need after working long hours on the job protecting other Albertans?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. Absolutely these events have a huge impact, and we are so grateful for the work that our first responders are doing. I would encourage all first responders to contact the AHS emergency family assistance program or the critical incident stress management and peer support program as well as any other supports available through their local municipality. Again, any Albertan is urged to contact the mental health helpline, which is 1.877.303.2642.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Fort McMurray Wildfire Recovery

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My thoughts again go out to the people in Fort McMurray, and my thanks to the first responders, many of whom have lost their own homes but continue to work around the clock to protect their neighbours. Thank you also to firefighters from around the country, including Canada's military, and to our friends from around the world, including Mexico, who have sent resources to Alberta.

My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I recognize that the crisis is not yet over, but when it is, what steps have been taken to ensure that the right resources will be available for the people of Fort McMurray to help them with their recovery?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, Alberta is here. It's a key priority for us to support one another, to work with one another, which is why we have the disaster recovery program within our government, which will assist the municipality to restore function to some of the key issues to deal with the response costs but also to help the Fort McMurray residents with any noninsurable costs associated with restoring basic functioning to their community and themselves.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. There have been challenges with the disaster

recovery program in the past. Can you assure the people of Fort McMurray that the DRP will be there for them when they need it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Improving the DRP program has been one of my key priorities since becoming Minister of Municipal Affairs. I'm proud of the work we've done. We've greatly improved the process by having a one-on-one caseworker for people. With the Chestermere process we've heard nothing but great things about how the new program is working for them, and I assure the people of Fort McMurray that we will ensure that they have a positive experience through the DRP program.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the minister. Now, both individuals and businesses have rallied to support the people of Fort McMurray. Most importantly, Red Cross Alberta is accepting cash donations, which our provincial and federal governments have generously matched. In addition, there are many, many businesses and organizations who stepped up, and I'll name just a very few: the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, the Edmonton Humane Society, Guru Nanak Sikh society, the Al-Rashid mosque, Earls, Insurance Brokers Association of Alberta, Edmonton's Food Bank, Children's Autism Services of Edmonton, U-Haul, ATB, Telus, Rogers, and many, many more. Airbnb has waived fees so residences available to evacuees can post their listings for free. What other service providers is the government aware of, and are you able to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, the end of the question was kind of cut off, so I didn't quite get it. However, I certainly recognize the incredible generosity of individual Albertans but also of our business community. As I spoke to in my statement, there are a number of businesses and organizations right across the province who have, you know, stepped up with their hearts wide open and offered tremendous generosity to the evacuees. For that I'm tremendously grateful. I look forward to continuing to work with them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

### Fort McMurray Disaster Relief and Recovery

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to ask about the devastating fires that have ravaged Fort McMurray. Given that this situation remains critical and thousands of Albertans have been displaced from their homes, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what co-ordinated effort is the government of Alberta undertaking to ensure temporary shelter and assistance for those Albertans who have been forced from their homes?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a significant natural disaster that has displaced tens of thousands of Albertans. A provincial state of emergency has been declared, and all areas of government have been mobilized and are actively providing supports to displaced Albertans in a number of ways. From AHS to Environment and Parks to Human Services to the Ministry of Finance efforts are being co-ordinated to ensure that evacuated

Albertans get the support they need at this critical time. We will continue to work across government and with municipalities, organizations, businesses, and all levels of government to support evacuated Albertans.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When a disaster like this strikes, Albertans and Canadians come together to help the community in need. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what types of supports are other municipalities, provinces, and the government of Canada offering, and how can individual Albertans help Fort McMurrans affected by the fire?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans from across the province are coming together because that is what we do. We support each other in times of need. Alberta's municipalities are providing shelter and tending to evacuated Albertans as well as providing firefighting resources to help us fight this fire and keep people safe. The federal government has committed to working with us to deal with issues such as income supports for those who've lost their livelihood, business recovery in the area, infrastructure requirements, housing and health issues, and disaster financial assistance. In a recent announcement this morning they would also fast-track employment insurance benefits for all workers affected by the fire.

Individual Albertans are encouraged to donate to the Alberta Red Cross, where our government is . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Piquette:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that combatting disasters is not only about response but is also about recovery, to the same minister: what can the minister share with the House today regarding supports for the long-term recovery of Fort McMurray?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can speak to that at two levels. The first is that our priority right now is ensuring that Albertans are safe, but we are there for you now, and we will be there to help you rebuild, and we will be there to see the recovery through. On the other hand, I speak as someone who has been there and through that in Slave Lake: you can do it. Your community will be rebuilt. Alberta will rally around and be behind you. You know, in the end your community will be strengthened by the way you have worked together in this experience.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

#### **Fort McMurray Energy Industries**

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fort McMurray is the beating heart of our energy sector. Our people are strong, resilient, innovative, and compassionate towards their neighbours. We know that many energy companies that run projects in and around Fort McMurray have opened up their work camps for those evacuating the horror of this terrible fire. The safety measures and fast reaction of industry helped the mass exodus from Fort McMurray. Can the Energy minister please share with Albertans how many evacuees are currently being housed in these work camps and how long they're expected to stay there?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. First of all, I want to thank our energy people for housing not just themselves but the others. While I don't know the exact numbers, we do know that thousands of people were evacuated to the north of Fort McMurray, and we are grateful, again, for them housing these folks. We are working, you know, as part of the overall group moving these individuals, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs said, to move some of these folks south when it's safe. Again I have to commend all our industry people for . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Well, we know there is no shortage of energy-related projects, obviously, around Fort McMurray. With the safety of all people in mind, will the Energy minister please share with Albertans the current projects that may be at risk or if there is any damage to any of the existing projects?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. We know there are devastating losses in the Fort McMurray area, and there is much work to be done in the coming months to rebuild. The priority now for all our energy folks is to make sure that their families and their workers are safe and evacuated. They're working with minimum staff right now in many of the areas. Right now it's inappropriate for me – honestly, I can't speculate on the existing damage. But to date I have not heard of any damage.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seeing as many of these energy companies are a key part of the efforts being made to care for the evacuees and given that many of the facilities have obviously either had to slow or shut down production, is the minister able to share with Albertans any idea of the economic impact of this fire for our energy sector in terms of production and wage losses?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. At this point I really can't, and it's inappropriate to speculate on the costs. As I say, currently they're working very hard to make sure that their families are safe, their workers are safe, and they're working hard to house others at this time. What I can say is that they've adjusted their production as much as they can and are working with minimum staff so other workers can be evacuated safely. We're grateful for those tremendous efforts that they're putting in right now.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### **2:20 Health Services for Wildfire Evacuees**

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are intended to help provide important information for the betterment of evacuees who are suffering from acute and chronic health ailments. Obviously, evacuees from Fort McMurray would require health care services in new and different ways. To the Associate Minister of Health: how can individuals in northern and remote evacuation

camps access primary and acute health care services in a manner that best meets their needs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you. We know that these events can have profound and long-lasting consequences for people's physical and mental health. Currently AHS has teams at reception areas in Fort MacKay, Lac La Biche, Noralta Lodge, Firebag, and at Northlands in Edmonton. EMS staff are working around the clock on these teams, supported by nurses, two physicians, and mental health professionals. We're also grateful for the support and assistance provided by the Treaty 8 command centre and reception area in Edmonton. There are four AHS staff on-site there today. At Northlands we have specialized nurses, mental health therapists, a respiratory therapist, a home OT living occupational therapist, and two pharmacists.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you. Minister, given that the treatment of chronic conditions typically relies on prescription medications and given that many residents may not have their medications with them due to the urgency of the evacuation, can you please tell us what's being done to ensure that these individuals can quickly secure access to the drugs that they need, that are vital for their well-being, in fact, without increasing out-of-pocket expenditures at this time?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his question. Certainly, many Albertans who evacuated will not have their prescription medications with them, or they may be running short. We're also aware that some people may not have identification or any means to pay. AHS is triaging needs at the northern reception areas and shipping pharmacy out of Edmonton. Medical staff at these sites are assessing patients and administering medication. Where community pharmacies are available, AHS pharmacists are providing bridging prescriptions, and we have two pharmacists on-site at Northlands. Any evacuee accessing an AHS pharmacy will not face out-of-pocket expenses for required medications.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that the demand for health care services could easily increase with the influx of evacuees in various parts of the province, can you please tell us what's being done to ensure that all health care facilities are prepared to meet the increasing demand for surgeries, ER beds, dialysis procedures, MRIs, and medical equipment such as insulin pumps and blood glucose monitors that evacuees may not be able to secure before they fled their homes?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you. There's no doubt that losing access to a regional hospital and displacing tens of thousands of people is a challenging situation. Every single acute care and continuing care patient from Fort McMurray is in an appropriate facility in the Edmonton zone. Northern Alberta renal services has identified 11 dialysis patients from the area, and 10 of them have checked in and been connected with services, and they are following up with family members to connect the remaining patient. We are very fortunate that we are not currently facing a situation with a large number of injuries; however, as more people arrive in the Edmonton zone, the demand for health care services will also rise. The rescheduling of surgeries is an example of how all of our facilities will work to meet the demand.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

#### **School Accommodation of Wildfire-affected Students**

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are about 12,000 evacuees signed in at the Bold Center in Lac La Biche, and many of these people will be accommodated at local hotels and private homes in nearby communities, including St. Paul, Bonnyville, and Athabasca. Among the evacuees are many students, who may need to be accommodated in local schools to ensure that they are able to finish the year on time. To the Minister of Education: who should parents contact if they have questions about registering their students in local schools?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you. Thanks so much for the question as well. Indeed, we know that we probably have more than 12,000 students that have been displaced from the Fort McMurray area and are moving to many different places across the province. To those families, to those students: everyone should know that they are free to register and attend school at any of the school boards in which they have been located. This is an important thing, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that parents know that they can have that continuity, wherever they happen to have moved to, to attend a school. School boards will be happy to accommodate for that, and those are the people that they should be in . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the number of students that need to be accommodated as a result of the fire and given that many classrooms across the province already are at capacity and since no one wants to see students from Fort McMurray lose any time in school, will the minister describe any specific supports that have been or will be made available to school boards and schools to ensure that there are enough teachers to work with students, resources for the students, and room to accommodate them in schools?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is very important. Each of our school boards now has a difficult circumstance that we will support through the Ministry of Education. This is a chance for all of us to step up to make sure that kids get to finish their school year. We will have to employ some extraordinary measures to make sure that there are school spaces available for all of the displaced students, but I think that at the end of the day, that's what we will end up doing, raising the bar to ensure that we get this job done.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the provincial achievement tests and the diploma exams will be starting very shortly and given that exams are administered by individual school boards and since there are provisions to accommodate students if they are unable to write the exams due to unique circumstances, will the minister tell us what alternative arrangements are being made to ensure that students will be able to write these exams under the authority of different school boards?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again a very important question. Certainly, for the students from the affected areas in grade 6 and grade 9 the provincial achievement exams will be cancelled unless they would choose to write the provincial achievement exams in the new schools, if they've chosen to attend those schools.

In regard to the diplomas I'm just working through a process to ensure that we employ the best practices that might have occurred in the past so that students might have a choice to write those diplomas, or we'll have alternative writing dates for the students from those affected areas.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

### **Support for Wildfire-affected Vulnerable Albertans**

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My thoughts are with those that are displaced in Fort McMurray right now from the wildfires. As families, friends, and neighbours band together to offer their support, we must also remember the vulnerable members of our community. Children and youth in government care will be wondering what comes next for them. Can the Minister of Human Services explain what is being done to support kids in care right now, where they will go next, and how other at-risk youth can access help and services if they need them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member, for the question. Our Human Services staff in the northeast region have shown tremendous dedication and strength in continuing to care for and support their clients, both children and families, while also trying to manage their personal lives. We are drawing on our regional resources and workers across the province to support children and youth. Our children and youth in care have been accounted for and relocated to appropriate settings to meet their needs.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that youth are not the only ones that rely on assistance for their well-being and given that many persons with developmental disabilities may be in need of extra support now as they are removed from existing networks and accommodations, can the minister please tell this Assembly what supports are in place for these vulnerable Albertans as the situation evolves, what supports they can expect as they face challenges in the weeks and months to come, and how they can access them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member, again. All disability clients and their caregivers have been accounted for, and caseworkers continue to be in contact as they relocate them from where they are. We also continue to reach out to families with FSCD supports to know where they are and what additional support they might need. If persons with developmental disabilities, their families, and advocates need any support, I encourage them to contact or visit any PDD branch or disability service at Human Services.

2:30

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the update. Given that seniors may be among those with reduced mobility and specialized needs during their displacement, can the

minister please tell this Assembly how Fort McMurray seniors were evacuated, what their situation is now, and what her plan is to ensure that their supports are in place in the mid-term if they need to be resettled?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. There is one seniors' lodge in Fort McMurray. Some of the seniors at that lodge met with family members on the day of the evacuation and went with those family members, with their support. Thirty seniors were evacuated by bus to Lac La Biche, where 13 of them were reunited with family members there and are now with family members. The remaining 17 will be in the Eagle Hill Lodge and the Eagle View Lodge, where the foundation has graciously offered to house these seniors for as long as is needed. We continue to monitor the situation and want to, certainly, thank the foundation for their help in this.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

### **Fort McMurray Oil Sands Industry Wildfire Recovery**

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, Fort McMurray is the oil capital not only of Alberta but of Canada. The operations in and around this area are integral economic drivers for this province. Unfortunately, companies which operate in the area have been negatively affected by low oil prices, and the wildfire which has devastated Fort McMurray could degrade the situation. To the hon. Minister of Energy: is there any indication of the extent to which this devastating fire will impact oil sands operations in the Fort McMurray area?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As I mentioned previously, it's a little bit premature to speculate right now. I can tell you, though, that the AER has activated their emergency response centre and is conducting assessments with each of the facilities. As you may be aware, each facility has an emergency management plan that they have done. Right now that's where they're at. They're working with the AER and making sure that their workers and their workers' families are taken care of. Perhaps next week we'll know more.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, hon. minister. Given that our oil sands operators employ thousands of Albertans and given that in our time of need they opened their camps to residents of the Wood Buffalo region displaced by the fire, these companies can be called true corporate citizens. To the hon. Minister of Energy: how will the government be working with these companies to resume their activities and get the affected Albertans back to work once the fire has been effectively contained?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that important question. Again, I want to personally thank the companies, who have just been stellar at stepping up to help not just themselves but the residents. It's been very heartwarming as an Albertan. I know my sense of gratitude is shared by everyone here in the House. I understand that the industry operators are currently developing plans to address such questions. Everything is so fluid

right now; it's hour by hour. As I mentioned, the camps where some of the citizens are: there will be an effort to move them south when it's safe. They've been very clear to me that the priority is safety right now.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, hon. minister. Given that the companies which operate in this area have contributed a significant amount of money to the provincial treasury through direct taxation and oil royalties and given that, more than that, they are committed community partners who give back to Alberta at every turn in an effort to make our province better, again to the hon. Minister of Energy: with how much these companies have contributed to Alberta, will you extend an olive branch and offer your support and resources in any way deemed appropriate?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. In fact, I've been in contact daily with many of the CEOs and presidents of the companies. They've been very good at updating me on where they're at. Right now, again, their focus is on the safety of their staff and safety of their property. My office is continuing to be an open link for conversation with them. I've asked them, if there are any sticking points along the way, to please contact me.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

#### Northern Lights Regional Health Centre Evacuation

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Among the Albertans in harm's way in Fort McMurray this week were 105 patients at the Northern Lights regional health centre. Can the Associate Minister of Health tell the Assembly about the success of all of the evacuation efforts?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you. I want to acknowledge the skill, professionalism, and courage of the AHS employees at the Northern Lights health centre. When ordered to evacuate, they transported 73 acute-care patients and 32 continuing care patients to safety in less than two hours' time, including nine newborn babies and their moms. These health care workers did their jobs under extraordinary pressure while their own families and homes were under evacuation order. We're also grateful to WestJet for providing an aircraft that was able to meet these patients, family members, and staff and bring them safely to health care facilities in the Edmonton zone.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can you tell the Assembly where these patients with very diverse needs were taken to?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. In addition to the work of the AHS staff in Fort McMurray, there was a great deal of co-operation and co-ordination with several other facilities. Patients have been transported to hospitals such as the Alex, Grey Nuns, the Leduc community hospital, Sturgeon, University of Alberta, and the list goes on and

on, including the Jubilee Lodge Nursing Home and Extendicare Leduc. Again I would like to acknowledge that every patient was safely transported from the fire zone to safety and is currently receiving the exact level of care that they need.

I'd also like to update the House that we continue to have information that the centre has not suffered structural damage.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Second supplemental.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the associate minister for the update. I understand that the Fort McMurray treatment centre was also required to evacuate. To the same minister: was this evacuation as successful as the Northern Lights regional health centre's?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the treatment centre was evacuated as early as Sunday. All 12 clients were initially relocated into the downtown core of Fort McMurray, and when that area, too, came under mandatory evacuation order, those clients were transported to the Edmonton area and are all safe and continuing to receive the treatment that they need.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

#### Oil Sands Industry Wildfire Response and Recovery

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a former manager in the energy sector I spent many years on projects and living in camps in Fort McMurray. Fort McMurray is the economic engine not only for our province but for our country, and my heart aches for my friends and former colleagues who have had to evacuate the region. I know that energy workers are critical to the success of the energy sector and the overall economy. Can the minister in charge update this House on the status of energy workers who have been evacuated from Fort McMurray?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Certainly, nonessential workers have been evacuated with their families to various parts of the province. Some have gone home, you know, if they live south. There's minimal staff in some facilities keeping the facilities open, and I have to reiterate that these are people who are doing this even though they've lost their own homes, potentially, or are separated from their families. Many of our industry workers are trained in emergency preparedness, and they're doing just exactly that. And I have to say that a lot of the companies are working with each other as well. I'm very proud of them all.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the energy industry for putting people before profits and opening up their camps to the evacuees. Given that, hopefully, many people will eventually be able to go back to their homes in Fort McMurray, when they're back and resume their jobs to start production again, will the minister give examples as to how they will remove red tape and help the energy industry ramp up production to the previous levels?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. As I mentioned, we're working with all of the industry. The AER has launched their emergency centre, and they work with each industry on their plan. We will continue in the days – as I mentioned, I have staff up there working, staff with the emergency centre. This is a long-term thing for us to do, to work with them. And I have assured all of the presidents and CEOs: if they run into any needless red tape, please contact me.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, many new Canadians call Fort McMurray home because of the prosperous job opportunities. Given that they are facing immense challenges and barriers right now, because for them losing their home is losing a life and their memories, what is the government doing to help new immigrants overcome these difficulties and get them back on their feet in this time of crisis?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question. We are working with all evacuees who need our support for basic needs right now, providing mental health supports, shelter supports, anything that they need. I'm very proud that our Premier and some of our emergency people were there yesterday talking to people who have been evacuated, finding out exactly what they need. Again, I'm very proud of our industry, who are taking care of their workers plus other people in the community. They're doing a stellar job.

#### Wildfire-affected Animals

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans were saddened by the deaths of two Fort McMurray evacuees yesterday, but considering the ferocity of the fires and the scope of the evacuation, it is an incredible testament to our emergency workers that more lives were not lost. In the urgent rush to flee the rapidly advancing wall of flames, many residents were forced to abandon their homes, leaving treasured possessions and, tragically, beloved family pets behind. It is unknown how many domestic animals may have perished. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: I know that you covered this in the ministerial statement, but could you reiterate what arrangements are being made to provide emergency shelter for family pets who were among the evacuees?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We all know how pets can be a source of comfort in these very difficult times, and we understand the challenge it is for families to lose their pets, who many consider family members. I can tell this House that reception centres are accepting evacuees and their pets if the pets are in a crate and have food. A number of organizations are providing assistance with food and crates as well as kennel space. The Alberta Veterinary Medical Association has offered medical care, and most clinics are offering boarding for evacuated animals in Boyle, Lac La Biche, Slave Lake, Athabasca, Westlock, Morinville, and throughout the Edmonton area. Albertans can find more information on the government . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in addition to household pets, cattle, horses, and other farm animals also had to be evacuated from the wildfire areas. Given that it will be several days or even weeks before these animals can return home and given the logistical

difficulties of housing these animals at evacuation centres designed for humans and not for animals, can the minister of agriculture advise Albertans what options are available to farmers and ranchers to find temporary lodging for their animals?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, first and foremost, what people instinctively do is to get their animals to safety, and then the larger challenge is to find a facility that will provide appropriate shelter, food, and water. We are hearing of many generous farmers and facilities like Lakeland College that are willing to take horses and other livestock. Also, the Alberta Equestrian Federation Society is taking names from people who are willing to host horses. Agriculture and Forestry will continue to monitor the impact of the current wildfires on farms and livestock and will continue to work with industry associations and municipalities to take the further actions needed to protect our producers and their animals.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The devastating wildfires also have a significant impact on nondomestic animals. Now, given that the large-scale fires caused devastating habitat destruction and widespread displacement of a variety of species whose forest home has now been destroyed, to the Minister of Environment and Parks: what measures are being undertaken to monitor the impact of these fires on the wild animal populations in the Fort McMurray region?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, as the member opposite mentioned, we recognize the importance of our wildlife population to the biodiversity of our province and understand that fires have various impacts on wildlife and, of course, on the exercise of traditional land use by indigenous peoples in this province. The situation in Fort McMurray is changing very, very quickly, but there are a few actions we have planned for. We will be working with the local government to ensure garbage and food are properly disposed of so we can minimize human-wildlife conflict, and second, we will conduct a wildlife survey to monitor wildlife and take the necessary management actions to preserve habitat going forward. We will start conducting this work only when it is safe to do so.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

#### Fort McMurray and Area Justice System Supports

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Justice. All of our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Fort McMurray, including our front-line personnel, who are dealing with the devastating circumstances of the wildfires. How is your ministry helping with the current crisis?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Of course, all Albertans are standing with the people of Fort McMurray right now, and my ministry and myself are in constant contact with the RCMP to ensure that they have everything they need to do their important jobs there. We're very thankful and proud of the hundreds of emergency personnel,

including RCMP, who have helped with the evacuation and those who continue to put their lives on the line while patrolling the Fort McMurray area.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how is the government ensuring appropriate policing resources are available to assist with the Fort McMurray situation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. As I've mentioned, we have been in contact with the deputy commissioner for the RCMP. I've also given the RCMP additional authority to deploy personnel and resources from all parts of Alberta and from neighbouring provinces and territories as necessary to help ensure the emergency in Fort McMurray is taken care of. In addition, we've ensured that Alberta peace officers have the necessary tools to help the RCMP in the evolving situation, and we've heard from the deputy commissioner that these sheriffs have been very helpful in their operations.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Justice: since you've been in contact with the RCMP, what is their message to residents of Fort McMurray at this time?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the critical question. Right now it's vital to follow the directions of police and emergency services personnel. This is for the safety of all Albertans. This includes both evacuating when told to do so and not returning to your home until you are told it's safe to do so. Again, we're extremely grateful to all of our front-line officers, and we thank them for their work. We know this is a stressful time for everyone in the province and particularly for those residents who have been evacuated, but we ask them to continue to follow the directions of the emergency personnel for everyone's safety.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 15 seconds we will proceed to Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

#### Emergency Preparedness Week

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in recognition of Emergency Preparedness Week, an event that takes place in communities across Canada every year to remind us of the importance of planning and preparation. There has been no greater reminder of the need to be prepared than the devastation that has affected the province this week.

I live 700 kilometres away from Fort McMurray in Hinton, and my heart is torn. I think all those who live in West Yellowhead feel similar pain and empathy for our fellow Albertans. I believe all Albertans, whether you live in Hinton, Camrose, Drumheller, or wherever, now will pull together to help our neighbours in need.

It is not remiss of me that this is Alberta's third large-scale disaster in less than five years. We had the Slave Lake fire in 2011, the devastating floods in 2013, and now the unforgiving inferno in

2016. We sometimes believe that because we are a landlocked province away from fault lines and other geographical hazards, we are protected from natural disasters, when in fact Alberta has the misfortune of being one of the most prone regions to natural disasters.

**2:50**

We must be prepared. Emergency preparedness is a shared responsibility for all of us and is essential for strong and resilient communities. Planning ahead can significantly reduce the impact of an emergency or disaster. At the provincial level we are taking action, Mr. Speaker, to ensure Albertans are informed when a disaster strikes. I encourage all Albertans to download the Alberta emergency alert smart phone app to receive alerts so they have the information in real time about pending emergencies or disasters.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

#### Mental Health Services in Northern Alberta

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you. This week is Mental Health Week, and May 7 is Child and Youth Mental Health Day. Mr. Speaker, 1 in 5 Canadians will suffer from mental illness. Look around you. That means that within this room about 20 of us will have this struggle. That's a sobering fact. With the downturn in the economy, the stress on Albertans has never been higher. What makes this all the more troubling is the lack of structure and information on local resources that provide help to those who so desperately need it. I speak to this as someone with personal experience as I sought help for years for a family member. Everyone tried their best to help us, but no one knew all the different avenues available.

Mr. Speaker, in Grande Prairie the regional hospital is currently under construction. It will have its mental health wing remain closed until an unknown date. This is unfortunate because there are considerably fewer mental health care services in the Peace Country than in other parts of Alberta. In schools, for instance, the mental health capacity building in schools initiative seems to be nonexistent in Grande Prairie or Valleyview. Grande Prairie is the largest city in northwest Alberta and doesn't have this initiative, leaving a huge hole in the south Peace Country. Many families simply cannot take on the additional financial, emotional, and geographical burden of travelling to the capital region for help, as my family has done.

Mental health issues need resources to help the families that are suffering as well. Mental health issues come with an enormous price tag. These issues are compounded when not dealt with in a timely manner. The price tag is both financial and societal. A key recommendation from our mental health review calls for a consolidation of community mental health services and addictions services. It seems as though it would be simple to even just organize the existing programs, but it isn't happening.

Mr. Speaker, I urge everyone to recognize that it isn't a weakness to ask for help. It doesn't make you any less of a person.

Thank you.

#### Women's Empowerment

**Mr. Malkinson:** Mr. Speaker, when I look at the front bench of this caucus, I look around me in all directions, and I see strong, inspirational women. It is a phenomenal achievement that we have near gender parity in this government caucus, and I am proud to be part of a government that looks like the Albertans we represent.



But how did we get here? Why is it that in 2016 this parity is an outlier? Why is it that having women occupy senior positions is so exceptional? Mr. Speaker, the talent and skills demonstrated by the women I am privileged to call colleagues are indeed remarkable. However, they did not appear overnight. The reason why we have these remarkable women in government today is because they knew it could be done.

But they deserve allies. We have a responsibility to encourage, to empower, and to embolden the young women and girls in our lives. There are too many women in my life who, when asked if they want to step up to leadership positions, respond that they feel unqualified or that they don't know how. Mr. Speaker, it is not okay that half of our population gets paid less for the same work. It is not okay that they are systematically cut out of positions of power, led by the momentum of generations of gender inequality. Women shouldn't be the only ones fighting for equality because equality benefits all of us. We all have young women and girls in our lives, and they can be or do anything they want with their lives if we take an interest in achieving and in seeing women succeed.

Mr. Speaker, it is time we quit believing women only belong in stereotypical roles. It is time we end the grip on power we men have taken for granted, and it is time that we place more value on the content of character than on the biology we were born with. It is possible. This government is living proof of it. We can be better. It is my commitment – and I encourage all of my colleagues in this House to join me in doing the same – to continue to support our women and girls.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month**

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, a month that celebrates and brings recognition to motorcycle riders. As a rider – and I know there are many members on both sides of this House who ride – we know first-hand how important it is to be diligent about safety at all times on the road. A motorcyclist is estimated to be at a higher risk of injury and fatal accidents than any other motor vehicle operator.

So, drivers, please take care of the following to ensure that you and others can share the road in a safe manner. Don't engage in distracted driving. It's illegal, and it can result in tragic consequences for all users. Share the roads, because a motorcycle has the exact same right as any other motorist. Vehicle size doesn't matter. And be cautious while following a motorcycle. Riders can stop and start very quickly. Riders can also take care of themselves by obeying all traffic laws, wearing a DOT-compliant helmet, and making sure they're not riding distracted or impaired, because we know that as many as a third of all motorcycle accidents occur while under the impairment of alcohol. Make sure you turn on your signals, use lane positioning, and take a motorcycle safety course.

Take care of yourself, riders, because we know that whether it's May or in all months, drivers want to share the road safely with motorcycles and that we want to be able to enjoy those roads together so that we can cruise and feel the wind in our hair, Mr. Speaker. Riders, be mindful of the hazards. Cautious driving will allow us to enjoy these roads for a long, long time to come. Please, be safe this month; be safe all months.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

#### **Campus Pre-school 50th Anniversary**

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm thrilled to rise today to speak about the 50th anniversary of Campus Pre-school, located right in Calgary's greatest constituency, Calgary-Klein. Campus co-operative preschool was established in 1965 by mothers from the Faculty Women's Club at the University of Calgary who wished to "continue studies . . . and at the same time provide their children with opportunities for creative and intellectual development in a group situation."

Today Campus Pre-school, as it's known, is currently Calgary's longest running parent co-operative preschool and has moved from the U of C to Capitol Hill community centre. Campus Pre-school is run today much like it was 50 years ago, with a focus on assisting in the total development of each child in a stimulating and play-based environment. Additionally, the co-operative aspect remains intact, with parents rotating as volunteers every six weeks to help keep costs down while at the same time being involved integrally with their child's education.

With the school's growth, gradually full-time teachers were hired. The school now has four outstanding full-time teachers, including Frances Amery, Mary Aubie, Heidi Dick, and Rebecca Gerritsen.

Mr. Speaker, Campus Pre-school has become such an institution that there are students attending today who have parents who were alumni of the preschool. It has become a preschool for the generations. As such, the school has received many parents' choice awards over the years and is a pillar of the local community. And I can attest to the fact that the school has been a wonderful part of my daughter Mehna's development.

Happy 50th anniversary to Campus Pre-school. I look forward to attending the 50th anniversary afternoon tea and social on May 14 at Capitol Hill community centre.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just asking for unanimous consent of the House to continue the daily Routine past 3 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

#### **United Church Women's Child Well-being Initiative**

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to rise today and share with you and the Assembly a little more information about the child well-being initiative, which is led by a group of United Church women working to eradicate child poverty in our province. These remarkable women believe that our children are our future and that we as adults in this province have a responsibility to ensure that children do not live in poverty.

Since too many Albertan children come from food-insecure households, this group advocates for a universal program to feed schoolchildren.

Some of the things that the child well-being initiative identifies as necessary for children to not just survive but to thrive are three meals a day based on the Canada food guide; safe, accessible water; adequate, affordable, safe housing; enough clothes for the different seasons; preventative and curative physical and mental health services, including child mental health professionals, annual medical checkups, dental and vision care and required prescriptions, adequate rest and play.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, as you heard during the introduction of this incredible group this afternoon, they have brought for each of us a doll to keep in our office to remind us that the children of Alberta should be kept at the forefront of our minds when we consider the legislation we put forward. My sincerest thank you to the women of the child well-being initiative for reminding us of our responsibility.

Thank you.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much for that, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) I'm rising to advise the House that on Monday, May 9, written questions 12, 13, and 14 will be accepted and written question 11 will be dealt with.

Also on Monday, May 9, motions for returns 34 and 35 will be dealt with.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On April 14 I tabled this spring's estimates calendar. Today I am tabling a revised spring 2016 main budget estimates schedule based on a request from Municipal Affairs officials that they have additional time to prepare because of their extremely busy workload at the moment due to their preoccupation with the wildfire situation. I have five copies.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I rise today pursuant to section 28(1) of the Conflicts of Interest Act to table five copies of the Ethics Commissioner's report dated May 4, 2016, regarding allegations involving a former member.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 7

#### Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill? The Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is my honour to rise to speak about the amendments to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. The proposed amendments in Bill 7 would authorize the early appointment of an Electoral Boundaries Commission, on or before October 31, 2016, which is earlier than currently allowed by the act, and clarify the commission's authority to consider recent information respecting population that is not collected on a province-wide basis such as municipal population

information. This information would be used along with the federal decennial census of population or a more recent province-wide census.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, I ask for your support of these important amendments.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time I would like to move an amendment to Bill 7, and I have the requisite number of copies for the pages to distribute in the House.

**The Deputy Chair:** We'll just wait a few minutes while they're handed out.

**Dr. Starke:** Madam Chair, before speaking directly to the amendment, I'll just preface with my comments on the overall bill in general. I would concur with the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose in his comments with regard to the need to make adjustments to the time frame for the appointment of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, and I actually would like to commend the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General for appointing the Electoral Boundaries Commission and moving ahead with this process.

As we know, electoral law requires that all constituencies become reorganized when new electoral boundaries are set. In the interest of democracy and in the interest of moving forward, it is very helpful, especially to constituencies that experience significant changes in the electoral boundaries, to have those boundaries set far enough in advance of a provincial election so that the adjustments and the necessary reorganization of constituency associations may go ahead in a way that is well organized and with plenty of opportunity before the election.

My amendment – I hope that by now most members have seen a copy of it – deals specifically with the area that the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose mentioned, and that was the use of additional census information that is perhaps more recent than the federal decennial census information or a province-wide census. I'll just read it into the record. I move that Bill 7, Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 3 in the proposed section 12 as follows: by striking out subsections (4) and (5) and substituting subsection (4) in subsection (3) and by striking out subsection (5).

Specifically, Madam Chair, what I am proposing to change is the elimination of the use of the additional census information, and the reasoning for this is very fundamental in terms of how electoral boundaries and how census information is collected. A census is essentially a snapshot in time. Truthfully, the information in a census becomes dated the day after the census is taken, and we realize this. It is a snapshot in time of the province's population, and the methodology for collecting the information is standardized across the province. It is, in fact, the same for all parts of the province, right across from one end of the province to the other. That, to me, makes it fundamentally fair to have the entire province considered in the same way.

Now, I realize that the intent of subsection (5) in the act that is being proposed is to allow the Electoral Boundaries Commission the leeway to use more recent census data; for example, census data that is compiled by municipalities. That's, to me, a fundamental issue because we know and I know from my experience in municipal government that municipalities quite often conduct at their own expense additional census operations in order to have the most up-to-date census numbers possible, especially if those municipalities are growing rapidly.

3:10

The rationale behind this is really quite simple. Many of the grants that municipalities receive, either from the provincial or the federal government, are done on a per capita basis. These municipalities know very well exactly what the number is that the population has to grow to cover the cost of doing the census. If the amount that they stand to gain from an additional number of residents is greater than the cost of doing the census, then it makes good sense for them to do that. I don't have any problem with municipalities choosing to do that. Clearly, the municipalities that are most apt to do that are ones that are growing rapidly and ones that, you know, for example, are larger because they have more to gain by doing this. My issue, though, Madam Chair, is that doing this provides a more recent snapshot of certain parts of the province than of others.

The other thing that cannot be standardized is the methodology. Many of the municipal censuses use different methodology, whether it's through different types of enumeration or different types of data collection; therefore, the type of data collection that is done in a municipal census is not always necessarily consistent with the data collection that is done in a federal or a provincial census that is province-wide. I think it is extremely important that a standard methodology and a standard set of data is applied across the province, is fairly applied to all areas of the province so the electoral boundaries can be drawn up on that basis.

I understand the desire of the Electoral Boundaries Commission or, for example, the Chief Electoral Officer to have more recent data. You know, in some ways I applaud them for their diligence and their desire to have the most up-to-date data they possibly can have, but my problem is that if that up-to-date data is only available for some parts of the province and is not available across the province, for all areas of the province, then, to me, that constitutes an unfairness to those parts of the province that do not have the financial resources to update their census on an annual or every-other-year basis. It, in fact, puts at a disadvantage those parts of the province where there simply isn't the degree of population growth to mandate having another census.

I will tell you, Madam Chair, that I have had some conversations, once again, with rural municipal leaders. They are concerned about this particular clause because they personally feel that this puts rural Alberta at a disadvantage. I don't think I need to remind this government that they already have a significant image problem in rural Alberta. The fact is that there are more and more things that are being done by this government that pile onto that image. When I told some of the municipal leaders that I deal with on a regular basis that this is being proposed within this bill, they said: there's another; there they go again. They're saying that each of these measures, straw after straw after straw that is put on the camel's back, is going to damage rural Alberta.

In the interest of fairness and the interest of the integrity of the data that is collected by a census in order to provide information to the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the purpose of drawing up electoral boundaries, I respectfully submit, Madam Chair, that that data should always be the most recent data that has been consistently gathered on a province-wide basis, whether that be through the federal or through the provincial census, and that we should not have a patchwork quilt of census information that may well have been collected at different times by different methodologies and therefore puts at a disadvantage those areas of the province that are unable to conduct a census on a more frequent basis.

That is the reason for my amendment. I would ask all members of the House to consider it and to vote in favour. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.  
The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to the amendment. I appreciate the sentiment behind the amendment as proposed by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. I also would like to thank him for providing that amendment. I think we saw it a couple of hours ago, so we had some time to consider it, which is very much appreciated. I do, however, have to disagree with his analysis.

I think, by way of history, it's important to clarify a couple of things. First off, this amendment is what's called a clarifying amendment. Currently it's the case that the act indicates that the commission can use other, more recent data. It's just not very specific about what it is, so this amendment would simply clarify the ability of the commission to use this information. In fact, in the 2009-10 redrawing of the boundaries this information was used by the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

I think another thing that's really critical to note is that Alberta as a jurisdiction has one of the largest variances. We allow a 25 per cent variance in our margins. What this does is that it tends to allow wider variances between jurisdictions, so it tends to mean that in certain areas, usually rural areas, there are fewer people voting for each elected member. Again, in Alberta this is bigger than in other places, and that has been left the same. That was the case previously, and that will be the case after this passes.

The difficulty with using the decennial census information is that it has a disproportionate impact with respect to different regions in Alberta. It creates sort of a deep unfairness with respect to certain areas. Particularly, they tend to be areas that are rapidly growing. Just by way of example, since the last federal census was conducted, in 2011, Edmonton has increased by 12.4 per cent, or about 105,000 people, and Calgary has increased by 13.3 per cent, or about 150,000 people. That's a significant increase in that time period, those estimates.

The result of this is that, you know, even though we're expecting federal census data to start rolling out in about a year, this won't be soon enough to allow the commission to consider it. This would create sort of a deep unfairness to places that are rapidly growing because having old information considered in their case has a disproportionate effect relative to places that are not growing as rapidly. This, combined with the fact that we have the sort of higher allowable variance, would create some, I think, unintended consequences.

Some other things I think are worth noting. I had the opportunity, fortunately, to speak with the Chief Electoral Officer on this matter. He is supportive of the inclusion of municipal census data, of allowing the commission to consider municipal census data. He also indicated a couple of important things, I think, to note about the process. One of them is that for municipalities without current data, they're asked to give input to the commission. So if municipalities have grown and they're not taking census data, that input can be considered in other ways by the commission. In addition, municipalities also have a tendency to update mapping, so they can submit mapping that shows new subdivisions. That material is taken into account also.

This is simply to say that the Electoral Boundaries Commission considers more than just the numbers. Municipalities who don't have those numbers are still able to give input. In addition, a significant number of municipalities actually do do this work. Thirty-seven municipalities completed censuses in 2014, and 42 municipalities completed censuses in 2015, so it isn't just the large cities.

Overall, I think there are a number of reasons to see that this census information will actually create greater fairness. You know, input is allowed from all areas, so if there are concerns about certain municipalities and their methodology, there's no reason why that input couldn't be received by the commission. Really, what they're asking is just for express statutory authority to consider that information which they have already been considering in the past and information which is more up to date, which creates greater fairness for faster growing parts of the province.

As a result of that and as a result of the support of the Chief Electoral Officer, who, I believe, Madam Chair, in this instance would be considered the expert on what data is relevant and what data is best considered by the commission, I would urge all members to vote against the amendment. Thank you.

3:20

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other speakers on amendment A1? The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's great to rise today and speak to the amendment. I will be speaking in favour of the amendment. I think that the amendment provides some clarity when it comes to what data should and shouldn't be used. In fact, by the comments from the Solicitor General, perhaps we need to have an even more robust conversation around what should and should not be used. She'd mentioned that it is a clarifying amendment and a little bit more prescriptive in nature when it comes to what data they could or could not use. But for the purposes of debate today, I think that I'll stick to the discussion around the municipal census and some of the challenges that it faces.

Just mere moments ago we heard that last year there were 30 communities that provided a municipal census. Well, if I'm not mistaken, there are close to 200 municipalities inside this great province of ours. I know for certain that there are 107 towns. So to say that many communities do it, it's certainly a low percentage of communities that provide a municipal census.

The other information that I think is important is that if we look at communities like my home community of Carstairs, Carstairs has grown significantly over the past number of years, but through my experience on municipal council I know that they don't consistently or, in fact, at all do a municipal census. So the real risk here is that smaller communities, that don't have the additional resources to do municipal censuses, are, in fact, at a disadvantage. This particular amendment would provide some certainty and fairness across all of Alberta when it comes to the data that is available. Now, while I recognize that there are certainly some fast-growing areas of the province and that there are some unique circumstances that we need to take in, both growing and shrinking remain a challenge.

The other sort of interesting thought or question that I have is that it's my understanding that the federal census would be available in the early part of next year, in February, as I understand it to be true. Now, the larger census data will take quite some time to be released, but it's my understanding that just the actual numbers in terms of population will be out as early as the first part of next year. In fact, given the comments that the hon. member has made about it not being just the census data that they consider, perhaps the commission could go about considering other data until the first part of next year, when they have the actual census data, the most up-to-date information, which would be a true snapshot of our entire province.

My other slight concern about using the municipal census data is that I believe it's possible – and I don't have a specific example – that each municipality's process is slightly different. So it's

possible that some municipalities would count nonvoters in their numbers, and others would only count those who are eligible to vote in a municipal or a provincial election. As a result it can skew the accuracy of that information. It's one of the reasons why I think it's important that we have a national standard, a province-wide standard, that levels the playing field for all Albertans and all Albertan communities and to make sure that we strike the right balance and that the commission has all of the information – the best information, the most reliable, the most consistent information – to make the best available decisions for all parts of the province, be it cities, towns, or rural municipalities.

It's for those reasons that I stand today to speak in favour of the amendment, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Any additional speakers?

**Ms McKittrick:** Madam Chair, I've listened to the arguments pro and in favour of this amendment. I find that what the legislation proposes is to give the commissioner access to a number of different tools. Some are censuses from municipalities or other tools that he might find appropriate to get the most accurate number of persons who live in each riding across Alberta. As we stated previously, what is really important about this bill is that we are seeking ways to make sure that everyone, every Albertan, has a fair chance to exercise their democratic right and that their vote counts.

I would like to urge all members to vote against this amendment and to continue to allow the commissioner to use census data as he or she feels appropriate, as stated in this bill.

I would like to call for the vote on this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I do want to exercise the opportunity to respond to a few of the points that have been made in the course of debate, so with the forbearance of the House, I would like to just say a few words. The minister is absolutely correct in stating that this is a clarifying amendment to clarify something that was done previously, the last time the Electoral Boundaries Commission was struck. You know, I'll be very honest with you. Just because it was there before doesn't mean it was necessarily good. I would suggest that that side of the House would be very familiar with that argument. I looked at this, and quite frankly I do have an issue with it.

I appreciate that the minister went and obtained commentary and input from the Chief Electoral Officer. As I was saying, actually, to the minister before the House convened this afternoon, I have tremendous respect for the Chief Electoral Officer. Many members of this Assembly will not know that the Chief Electoral Officer is actually relatively newly appointed to his position – last year's election was the first election that he presided over – but prior to serving as our Chief Electoral Officer, he served in the Ethics Commissioner's office. I will tell you that in his service as Ethics Commissioner I found him to be extremely conscientious and fastidious. He absolutely followed, you know, things to a T and was very good to work with. I found him extremely helpful, and I also found that he had an extremely high level of pride in the work that was done in the Ethics Commissioner's office.

I came to know the Chief Electoral Officer a little bit more during the brief time that I served on the Legislative Offices Committee when he made his presentation to our committee with regard to his annual budget. You know, I found that his presentation was very well put together, and it certainly reflected, at least to me, the interest of the Chief Electoral Officer in getting data that was the

most recent possible. While I respect that and I understand his desire to have that, there's a fundamental problem with that, and the fundamental problem is that it's unfair. The fundamental problem is that we've got data coming in at different times and we've got data coming in that is taken with different methodologies, and that is fundamentally unfair. The data has to be collected at a time and in a way that is consistent province-wide. That is the only way to be fair.

Not wishing to cast aspersions on any municipality, but we know that one of the reasons municipalities conduct censuses on a more frequent basis is specifically in order to access a higher level of funding on per capita grants. Now, I don't blame municipalities for doing that. I think, you know, quite frankly, that's a good strategy. But part of what they also do is that they advertise heavily to encourage every single member of the municipality to make sure that they are counted. They say very specifically – they certainly don't try to hide it – that the reason they want everybody to sign up is because it means that they will maximize their per capita grants.

3:30

I don't blame them for doing that. You know, I don't say that there's anything negative about doing that, but the problem is that you've got, then, on the one hand, this census that has collected data in a different way, using a different process, in fact under the premise of maximizing the numbers for the purpose of the grants, and then you have the provincial or the federal decennial censuses, which are to provide an accurate snapshot of the community, and that is always the incentive to citizens to co-operate with the process. So I have a fundamental problem when we are using data that is collected at a different time and – make no mistake – is collected in a different way for different reasons when we should be using the same criteria province-wide for the establishment of electoral boundaries.

Now, as an aside, I will say that with the minister's comments with regard to the plus or minus 25 per cent variance, I am very glad to see that there is no consideration in changing that. I think, quite frankly, that's very important. I think, as we have all experienced in the Legislature, different members in different parts of the province have very differing types of responsibilities that they have to take care of.

You know, I'll give you an example. I'm into what I now call graduation season. In my constituency of Vermilion-Lloydminster in the next two months I will attend nine high school graduations and two university convocations. A lot of my rural colleagues will tell you that they even have more than that. I speak with some of my urban colleagues, and they say: I don't have one high school in my constituency. Not to mention the fact – and we've talked about this before – that in terms of the sheer size of the jurisdictions, I consider myself lucky that I can drive right across my constituency in the rather short time of two and a half hours. I know, for example, that the hon. Member for Peace River is fortunate that High Level is her hometown, but the former Member for Peace River could drive from his home in Peace River to the Legislature in less time than it took him to drive from the farthest outposts of his own constituency. That may just boggle people's minds, but that's the truth. From Peace River to some of the communities in his own constituency was a longer distance than to drive from Peace River to Edmonton. I think these are the kinds of things that are important in consideration.

In specific regard to this amendment, I think it is critically important that we use data that is consistent. I think it's also critically important that that data be province-wide. I think it's also critically important that that data be collected at the same time.

Specifically with regard to the upcoming Electoral Boundaries Commission, they are going to be able to work with the federal census that is being taken right now. As my colleague the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills mentioned, that data will be available early in 2017, and it is certainly my hope that it is the main consideration or that it forms the main body of data that is used for the drawing of the new electoral boundaries. But I am deeply concerned about the electoral boundaries if they consider more recent municipal censuses that are specifically taken with the specific and express purpose of maximizing the population of rapidly growing jurisdictions. I think that that, quite frankly, Madam Chair, is fundamentally unfair, it's fundamentally wrong, and it certainly doesn't pass any kind of a scientific or statistical analysis.

You know, notwithstanding that I greatly respect the comments of the Chief Electoral Officer and his desire for the utmost accuracy, sometimes the fundamental principle has to be fairness, and in this situation I think that fundamentally that means we should use a province-wide census that applies the same methodology at the same time right across the province.

Thank you.

**Mr. Mason:** Where you stand may determine where you – no. I've got that wrong. Where you live may determine where you stand, I think, in this case.

Madam Chair, I've had the opportunity on several occasions as the former leader of the Alberta New Democrats to appear before the Electoral Boundaries Commission, twice before the provincial Electoral Boundaries Commission and once before the federal Electoral Boundaries Commission. At all times they were very interested in the most up-to-date census information that they could obtain – and that was regardless of whether or not it was province-wide census data or municipal census data – because they want to make sure that they have the best information possible by which to apportion the boundaries of the various constituencies.

Now, the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has said that it's important that we collect the data. The problem, as he partly defined it, is that we're collecting data at different times – and I'll deal with that because I think that's his main point – but also that there's a problem if you collect the data in a different way. But all censuses, Madam Chair, whether they're a municipal census or a provincial census or a federal census, have to follow the determination of population regulation and the census manual, so it's not correct to say that municipal censuses collect the data in a fundamentally different way. They actually follow the same methodology for counting people.

Then I want to deal with his main point, which is that all of the data that's used has to be collected at the same time or it's not fair. That's an a priori assumption that the hon. member is making, but there are other factors. And you can see the point to it. You can see why it might produce unfairness. But he ignores at the same time the argument that information collected at the same time that is seriously out of date is also fundamentally unfair, and this is, in fact, the case, I think, that has been made by the hon. Justice minister when she talked about the very rapid growth that's taken place since the last federal censuses, which are 10 years apart, in Edmonton and Calgary. The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has admitted that it is primarily those municipalities that are growing the fastest that have an incentive to do their own census.

I think that if you reduce the argument, you'll find that, in fact, if we use data that's 10 years old, which can occur if this amendment is passed, then you're very likely going to disadvantage rapidly growing parts of the province and provide a relative advantage to those areas that are growing more slowly. Now, in general but not

entirely, the most rapid growth is taking place in the large cities, and the least rapid growth or, in fact, potential reductions in population may be occurring in rural areas. So if you reduce the argument, it's really an argument about providing advantage for rural areas by using, in some cases, outdated data, and that's not fair. That's not the balance that we seek to achieve.

We want to make sure that the census data is the very best and latest data, and in my view that will provide far greater fairness than the simple conclusion that all data must be collected at the same time or it's not fair. I don't believe that that stands, Madam Chair, and I believe that we should defeat this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak on the amendment?

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** Back to Bill 7. Are there any members wishing to speak on the bill?

Are you ready for the question on Bill 7?

3:40

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 7 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

## Bill 8

### Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. A pleasure to be able to rise again and show my support for Bill 8, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016. I think our discussions so far have been very, very positive across the board. There's certainly, I think, a consensus from all the speakers that we move forward to ensure that consumers can count on the government to make sure that there is a very high level of protection when consumers are looking at making major purchases and, of course, that whenever there are any outside agencies that are operating on behalf of the government, those agencies are held to the highest levels and are also accountable to government at the same time.

I think any of the proposed changes that are being made right now in Bill 8 will ensure that this is the case, that these agencies will be accountable to the government. When we're talking about delegated regulatory organizations, or DROs, what we found is that in every other piece of legislation that we have, there is that certain level of accountability to government that they have. Currently under the Fair Trading Act the one DRO that we have doesn't quite have that language there, so this will strengthen that and ensure that they have that high level of accountability to us.

I think, going forward, again, the discussion that's occurred in the House so far has been very, very positive, and I think we should be able to move on with this. I certainly encourage all of my colleagues across the House to support this, and I look forward to any other comments that we might have on this.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 8, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016. Once passed, Bill 8 will allow the minister to oversee and review delegated authority, issue orders related to such a review, dismiss board members or employees if an order is not complied with, and appoint a representative of the minister to oversee the management of the organization and/or its compensation fund.

Wildrose has long had concerns with the operation of AMVIC, and it's now our hope that following the passage of this bill, the minister will act quickly to conduct a review of the Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council. We do hope this measure allows AMVIC to function more effectively for the consumers it was created to protect.

Many of our concerns stem from a 2014 operational review conducted by Service Alberta. In mid-July 2014 the Minister of Service Alberta directed the department to conduct an operational review related to AMVIC's handling of complaint and investigation resolution practices. The operational review was conducted by the department beginning in August and through to October. I don't have time to go over all the details, but I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight a couple of findings that I think emphasize the higher level issues facing AMVIC.

The investigation found that AMVIC management had been operating in contravention of the Peace Officer Act for in excess of a year. Management had failed to properly notify Justice and Solicitor General that four of the peace officers listed as employed by AMVIC no longer worked there, which they were required to do within 30 days of termination of employment. Service Alberta found that AMVIC's memorandum of understanding with the Edmonton Police Service had expired 17 months earlier and had never been updated, nor had Edmonton police ever been contacted regarding the expiration of the MOU.

The potential consequences of this significant oversight were that the Edmonton police were no longer under the obligation to provide critical police-related services to AMVIC peace officers, which include prisoner acceptance and housing, conducting judicial interim release hearings on behalf of AMVIC, provisions of the Identification of Criminals Act, processing for Criminal Code charges laid by AMVIC peace officers, and entering the arrest warrants into the CPIC database. As you can see, this wasn't a small oversight.

However, I believe that the most damning revelations of the report relate to the relationship between AMVIC management and staff. If the public is to have any confidence in an organization, be it government, private business, or in this case a delegated regulatory authority, the organization must display that it has confidence in itself and the members that make up that organization. One of the biggest indicators of an organization experiencing low internal confidence is the voluntary staff turnover rate. This is where an employee voluntarily leaves their organization and is not terminated or laid off.

According to the Conference Board of Canada:

The average voluntary turnover rate over the past three documented years [2010 to '13] is 7.13% and based upon the relative stability of the Canadian workforce during that period, the 2013-2014 statistical rate is quite likely similar to the three year average.

Let's compare that to the number of voluntary staff turnover at AMVIC. According to the operational review conducted in the fall of 2014, the voluntary staff turnover rate at AMVIC in the prior two

years was 55.2 per cent, and if you include AMVIC staff that disclosed during their interview that they were, “actively involved in seeking other employment,” that rate jumps to 76.3 per cent. This would place AMVIC’s voluntary staff turnover rate at seven and a half to 10 times more than the national average.

The operational review states:

Based upon the staff comments received during the interview process and the atypical voluntary staff turnover rate, it is evident that the majority of AMVIC staff have exhausted their faith, trust and confidence relating to the management aptitudes of the AMVIC Executive Director. No organization can grow or advance itself during extended periods of high employee turnover.

If the employees of AMVIC no longer have any confidence in the ability of the organization to fulfill its regulatory mandate and to protect consumers, how can the general public have faith in the organization? It is imperative that consumers have confidence in the system that oversees and regulates what is likely the second-largest purchase an individual will ever make, and that’s the purchase of a vehicle.

So I’m happy to stand with both the members in government and my opposition colleagues in full support of this bill. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Minister of Service Alberta and of Status of Women.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is a pleasure to rise today and add to the debate at Committee of the Whole on Bill 8, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016. As I’ve mentioned before, the Fair Trading Act is Alberta’s key piece of consumer protection legislation. The proposed amendments will provide government with the appropriate tools to ensure organizations that government delegates to regulate an industry are doing their job by protecting consumers. At the end of the day when Albertans make a purchase like buying a car, they need to know that their rights as consumers are protected.

To assist in this debate I would like to provide specific detail on each of the amendments outlined in the bill. These amendments create powers that are similar to those under other legislation such as the Real Estate Act and the Municipal Government Act.

The bill begins by granting the minister broad powers to review the conduct and operation of a delegated regulatory organization or any fund administered by that organization. This authority includes the ability to compel the attendance of witnesses and production of documents similar to a commissioner under the Public Inquiries Act.

Once a written report is produced, the minister will be able to direct a delegated regulatory organization to take appropriate remedial action and to set a procedure for doing so. If this order is not followed in a timely fashion, the minister may then make further orders to terminate, suspend, or replace individuals in the organization and, if appropriate, appoint a person to take over the functions and duties of the organization. If these actions were to be taken, affected parties will be given at least 20 days’ notice and a fair opportunity to raise concerns in writing.

3:50

With that said, the bill also recognizes that in some circumstances immediate ministerial action is necessary to protect consumers. In those circumstances the minister will have the authority to take any of the actions that were just discussed without first ordering a review or providing notice to affected parties. However, even if these kinds of expedited actions are taken, an affected board or individual is not deprived of their right to be heard. Indeed, the bill

contemplates that those affected by an order are authorized to request that the minister vary that order.

The bill ends by clarifying that delegated regulatory organizations will be responsible for the costs and expenses arising from participating in the review or complying with an order unless the minister directs otherwise.

I look forward to any additional debate on this bill, and I’ll be prepared to answer any further questions. However, I am and have been and continue to be encouraged by the debate on this bill and extend thanks to all members of this House for their comments and their support at Committee of the Whole.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 8 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 7 and Bill 8. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in this report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 1

#### Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act

[Debate adjourned April 21: Mr. Fildebrandt speaking]

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak on Bill 1?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a second time]

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Speaker, in view of the excellent progress that we’ve made today, for which I thank all members on all sides of the

House, I believe that we should call it 4:30 and adjourn until 1:30 on Monday. [Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:56 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to May 05, 2016**

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

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

### **1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 732-36 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.), 685-91 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.), 749-60 (Apr. 21, 2016 aft.), 825 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)

### **2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1]

### **3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)

Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2]

### **4\* An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft.), 349-66 (Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 399-409 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.), 378-84 (Apr. 6, 2016 morn.), 415-28 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 450-55 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 428-33 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn.)

### **5 Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading -- 398 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 455-56 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.), 532-38 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed), 491-505 (Apr. 12, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 570-77 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed), 539-56 (Apr. 13, 2016 morn.)

Third Reading -- 577-83 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

### **6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 519-27 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 527-32 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 583-85 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

### **7 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**

First Reading -- 518 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 585-86 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft.), 682-84 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed), 649-51 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 820-24 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)

- 8 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 669-71 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 684 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 824-25 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)
- 9 An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 640-49 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.), 728-30 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed)
- 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 599 (Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 671-82 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 730-32 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division), 691-703 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.)
- 11 Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016 (Bilous)**  
First Reading -- 773 (May 2, 2016 aft., passed)
- 12 Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Feehan)**  
First Reading -- 802 (May 3, 2016 aft., passed)
- 201 Election Recall Act (Smith)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 119-32 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft.), 303-304 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division)
- 202 Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 305-16 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft.), 470-73 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)
- 203 Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**  
First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 481-83 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities), 473-81 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft.)
- 204 Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**  
First Reading -- 468 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 616-30 (Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed)
- 205 Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**  
First Reading -- 707 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.)
- Pr1 Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**  
First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 9, 2016

Day 24

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Government House Leader  
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 9, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us reflect each in our own way. If you would bow your heads. The events in our province these past several days serve to remind us of both our weaknesses and our strengths. In spite of our technology and our wealth we recognize that sometimes we are vulnerable to the power of nature. The events also serve as a reminder of the strength our fellow Canadians show and give us through their compassion, their caring, and their support. It is our strength gained by our collective action as Canadians that will ultimately guide us through this very difficult time in our province.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark, and I invite all participants to sing in the language of their choice.

**Hon. Members:**

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour for me today to welcome one of the first classes that I've had the pleasure of introducing in this House in my 12 years in the Legislature, the most politically active class I've ever known. It happens to have two of my grandsons in it. I don't know why they're so interested in politics. I hasten to add that this group has also raised \$5,000 in the last week for Fort McMurray. I'd like to introduce my two grandsons Koen Archuleta and Kace Archuleta. Please stand and be recognized. They're already famous. In the case of Koen it's for his style and his dancing. Kace is famous for his competitive sports.

I'd also like to introduce teachers and support staff: the principal, Sandra Trumper; the educational assistant, Mavis Clark; their teacher, Anne MacQuarrie; and parents and helpers Katharina Doyle, Susan Cress, Megan Stoddart, and Robyn Wanner. All the students of the grade 6 class from Sunnyside school please stand up.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

If the House would indulge me, the \$5,000 was only achieved by means of a co-operative venture. I'd also like to particularly introduce my daughter Robyn and my grandson Xavier, who is in the same class.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you a grade 6 class from John Barnett school in the Edmonton-Manning constituency. With them today is Ms Peggy

Wright, one of our dear friends and also a social justice advocate within our community, as well as parents Christine Waggoner, Brittney Rosborough, Pattie Sidlick. If I could ask all the students to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the staff, the parents, and the students of the grade 6 class at Blessed Sacrament school in my hometown of Wainwright. You know, the reason I'm really pleased and excited to introduce them is that this school was one of the schools that I taught in way back when, when I used to teach, back in 1994, in fact. So I hold this school close and dear to my heart. Would the people rise as I call out their names: Mr. Martel, Mrs. Degenhardt, Mrs. Laferriere, Mr. Morris, and the grade 6 class, please. Would the Assembly help me in welcoming them with the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to introduce to you and through you the NDP caucus director of outreach, Garrett Spelliscy. Garrett brought his mom, Nancy Spelliscy, with him today in honour of Mother's Day. I would ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce a home-school group from the awesome constituency of Airdrie. The only thing that would make them more awesome is if they were, of course, from the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. They are some very good friends of ours, and they are seated in the gallery: Julia Schoenroth, Cara Schoenroth, Everett Schoenroth, Allayna Schoenroth, and Saydee Schoenroth. They are fabulous community members. In fact, Julia is the lead organizer of a home-school group, that meets every Wednesday morning at the Crossfield Baptist church, called Classical Conversations, where 11 home-schooling families with 66 children come together and join in fellowship. I invite you to welcome them here to the Assembly today.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other guests for today? The Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a couple of special people with the John Barnett school group. Most may know her as the nice lunch lady, but I know her as my beautiful sister Christine Renaud Waggoner and her daughter Beth Waggoner. If they could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

1:40

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

### Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire Update

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide an update on the wildfire situation in northeastern Alberta.

Our hearts go out to the residents evacuated by the wildfires. Fort McMurray, Anzac, Gregoire Lake Estates, and Fort McMurray First Nation remain under mandatory evacuation orders. Our focus remains centred on ensuring the safety of people, that they're safely evacuated, and that they receive the services that they need.

There is some welcome news today, Mr. Speaker. There was no significant growth of the fire overnight. It currently stands at 162,000 hectares. Fire conditions remain extreme, although the weather is beginning to give us a reprieve. The current forecast indicates a high of 11 degrees Celsius today, 40 per cent humidity. Winds will remain a factor at 20 kilometres per hour toward the northwest, gusting up to 40 kilometres per hour. Heavy smoke remains a concern, and we are monitoring air quality closely to ensure our first responders are safe. There are more than 500 firefighters bravely battling the blaze along with 20 helicopters, 15 air tankers, and many pieces of heavy equipment.

All evacuees are urged to register with the Red Cross no matter where you are. Please visit [redcross.ca](http://redcross.ca) to register if you haven't already. As of this morning approximately 40,000 households have registered with the Red Cross. This will ensure that evacuees have access to the assistance that they need. There are currently 12 reception centres open within Alberta. As always, the best place to go for the most up-to-date information is [emergency.alberta.ca](http://emergency.alberta.ca).

As you know, the Premier, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and Mayor Melissa Blake are in Fort McMurray today to inspect the damage and to meet with the emergency management experts on the ground. Some media will also have access, supported by emergency services. Please note that it is still unsafe for anyone who is not a first responder to be inside the barricades. There will be some dramatic damage coming up this afternoon, and mental health supports are available for anyone who needs them. Co-ordinated damage assessments are happening today, and we are ensuring that vital emergency services and utilities are back online and operating safely as soon as possible.

It's important to note that there is no date yet when residents can return, but it will not be in the coming days. There will be a great deal of work to be done to make sure that our city is safe, for the health of the people, to live in again. Emergency services are working around the clock to begin the work needed to make this city safe again, but it will take time. I understand that this is difficult to hear, but the safety of Fort McMurray residents must remain our top priority.

The response to this massive wildfire from Albertans and Canadians has been incredible. The generosity continues to pour into the Red Cross, with donations of \$54 million so far. The Premier will meet with industry leaders tomorrow, and we are in daily communication with industry throughout the Provincial Operations Centre. They have played an integral role in our emergency response efforts so far, especially with their assistance in housing and evacuating thousands of people who fled to the north of Fort McMurray. We've already begun operations about what will be required to revamp their operations and get them back up.

Government of Alberta ministries are supporting emergency response efforts to address the needs of evacuated residents in a number of ways. Cabinet has authorized \$200 million in immediate disaster recovery program funding, and we will revise this number as needed. Our government will provide emergency financial assistance for evacuees in the form of preloaded debit cards. Adults will receive \$1,250 and another \$500 for every dependant. We are working hard to begin distributing the assistance, hopefully, by mid this week. Due to the scale and the logistics of this issue we will be asking people who are not in immediate need, who do not need to claim these funds right away, to please hold off. This will allow us to ensure that those who need it most can have it first. We will be

releasing further details on how these cards will be distributed when that becomes available.

We will be hosting several town hall teleconference meetings over the next week to answer questions directly from the affected residents. These town hall events will be an opportunity to discuss the challenges facing our province and specifically the residents of Fort McMurray. We will be reaching out to evacuees to participate, and invitees will have a chance to ask questions throughout the calls. There will be several town hall teleconference events, and I encourage every Fort McMurray resident to take advantage of the opportunities to listen and to participate. These calls will happen tonight, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings of this week. Evacuees should register with the Red Cross to ensure that they receive the details of these calls.

If evacuees left behind documents such as drivers' licences or ID cards, new cards can be issued free of charge at a registry agent.

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry continues to work closely with the RCMP and the SPCA to address reports from evacuees asking for help with the pets that they had to leave behind when they fled so quickly. The SPCA has begun transporting pets to Edmonton, with about 200 arriving late yesterday. They will contact pet owners who have registered with them in the coming days. Alberta Health Services has mental health support staff at the evacuation reception centres in Lac La Biche, here at Northlands, SAIT, University of Calgary, Ambrose University in Calgary, St. Paul, and the Suncor Firebag site north of Fort McMurray. A government-wide wildfire recovery task force has been established to help with the recovery from this devastating wildfire.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this is a very difficult time for many Albertans, especially given that there are so many unknowns. I want to thank all of the first responders, everyone who has donated, and everyone who has offered to help the evacuees. We will continue to support you now and in the weeks and months ahead, and I know that the Premier will have further updates from the ground in Fort McMurray later this afternoon.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

### Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire Relief

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in this House to recognize all the amazing people from across this province – those from Fort McMurray, first of all; those in Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, which I have the great privilege to represent; our friends, families, and neighbours in Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills – and, indeed, all of those across the country who have stood up in a time of desperate urgency to do what needs to be done without a thought to cost or inconvenience. In the midst of tragedy they have shown just what Albertans are made of, and it is hard stuff indeed, save for one part, their hearts.

I think it's impossible to overstate the contribution of first responders who have overseen the largest fire evacuation in Alberta's history under incredibly difficult conditions. It is the amazing work and expertise of first responders, their planning, and the swift and competent action of emergency services that made this possible.

I would like to thank all the unsung heroes in this emergency as well. It is amazing and inspiring how people can be when they see a clear and urgent need and they have the means to help. Without the selfless actions of so many who stood up without waiting to be

asked, I have no doubt that things would have turned out much, much worse. During this time I've had the privilege of meeting and speaking with hundreds of evacuees, and for the vast majority of them I think the most apt description would be grace under pressure.

I know I can safely speak for all the volunteers along the way when I say that our doing our own bit to help is no burden at all but an honour that we will treasure for the rest of our lives. I'm honoured beyond words to represent such incredible people as those you will find in all the communities along the way that saw the need to help and did so without question. To all of the individuals and organizations supporting your fellow Albertans through this tragedy: thank you; you make us all proud.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

### **Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire Relief**

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The resiliency of our province in facing fires over the past week has had me more proud to be an Albertan than I was before. Families, communities, charities, and businesses from across the province have opened their arms, looking for ways to help those who have been touched by this crisis. The influx of donations is truly heartening. I was proud to be a part of a fundraiser last Friday that raised \$15,000 for the Red Cross. This story isn't unique. All across our great province and across Canada the people are doing the same.

First responders continue to work tirelessly to protect communities and restrain this wildfire. When tens of thousands are fleeing Fort McMurray, these brave men and women ran towards the disaster. Without their help, expertise, and calm resolve I can't imagine where we would be today, and my thoughts and prayers and profound thanks go out to them. I was particularly touched this weekend to see the first responders taking time to brighten the days of mothers yesterday by handing out flowers. Stories like these show that in our times of greatest need Albertans are at their best.

**1:50**

I continue to be inspired by all those who are offering a hug, encouraging words, and a shoulder to cry on during this crisis, including the two Wildrose MLAs from Fort McMurray. Their leadership is exemplary.

Tens of thousands have lost so much but continue to be a source of strength, resilience, and pride. No one is alone as we go through this journey together. So many of my former colleagues in the energy sector do not know what tomorrow will bring, but we'll face it together head-on. We will rebuild, and we'll continue to provide a helping hand to those who need it most.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### **Oral Question Period**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### **Fort McMurray Home Reconstruction**

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the last number of days sympathies have rolled in for the people of Fort McMurray from across Alberta, Canada, and indeed the world. For tens of thousands of men, women, and children who were forced to flee their homes, these words have provided peace during some of their darkest days. But with true Alberta spirit these families are eager to get back and rebuild their homes and live bigger, better, and stronger. To the Premier: what will the process be to inspect and assess homes in

Fort McMurray for possible rehabilitation, and what is your anticipated timeline for this to happen, please?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our priority is, of course, ensuring that all Albertans are safe. Our fire crews have been working hard to save the downtown and as much as possible of the residential neighbourhoods. I'm so proud of the firefighters and the first responders for their excellent work in battling this fire; we all are. We know that they are doing everything they can to ensure that they have the necessary resources to address this effort.

In terms of giving a timeline, it really is going to be an evidence-based decision. I'm not going to stand in this House and give a deadline. Unfortunately, it won't be in the immediate, short-term, coming days. We need to make sure that the air is safe, the water is safe, the power is on, and the buildings are safe.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

First supplemental.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I know it's early, but residents want to start planning for the future now. Following the 2013 flooding that devastated parts of southern Alberta, the government issued sole-source contracts to accelerate the inspection and demolition of homes that were beyond repair. It's important for this government to procure resources now to begin reconstruction efforts given the long road to recovery ahead for these families. To the Premier again: has this government begun the process of awarding inspection and/or demolition contracts, and if so, what procurement methods are being used to do this, please?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We know that evacuees want to go home, and we want that for them, too, but we will not put them at risk in the short term. Right now the city is not safe for people. The water is not drinkable. There are limited supplies, and much of the city is without power. These things need to be addressed and dealt with before we can move forward with other steps around remediation. But I want to be very clear that it will not be safe in the coming days. When it is safe, we will make sure that we let everyone know. But please know that it is important that the mandatory evacuation is still in place, and that's because it's not safe.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. This government should be doing everything it can to expedite the return of affected Albertans to their homes. Insurance companies are already encouraging fire victims to begin the claims process as soon as they are able. Residents are eager to put on their tool belts and rebuild their communities. Following the 2013 floods, again, permits were required for any repairs but only after approvals were given by inspectors. Despite what was just said by the minister, can the Premier or the minister please provide details as to, firstly, how property owners should proceed to apply to begin the inspection and approval process, and ...

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that people want to get home; we want them to be able to go home, too. At this point it's premature to be able to draw those steps. We still need to make sure that emergency housing is in place. We need to

move forward with short-term housing. It will take time. This is a disaster of extensive magnitude, and it is absolutely not safe to begin planning those steps for individuals at this point. Government is doing everything to get the right resources lined up, including getting emergency relief funds into the hands of the families to address their short-term needs. I know we want to think long-term, but at this point we aren't able to share those messages publicly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier.  
The Member for Airdrie.

#### Emergency Funding for Wildfire Evacuees

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, the amount of time that the people of Fort McMurray had to flee their homes was as little as 30 seconds. During this time many were unable to gather up precious mementos, let alone their wallets. Now, six days after the mandatory evacuation was issued, many continue to not have identification, cash, credit or debit cards. With over \$55 million being donated to the Red Cross by generous Canadians who want to help, people are concerned about the delay in getting the funds to the evacuees and want to know how this money is being used. How can we ensure that this money is getting to where it is needed most?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. The generosity of Albertans, of Canadians, of people from around the world in going to redcross.ca and making contributions is something we are all incredibly proud of. In terms of getting those resources into the hands of those who need them most, certainly, the evacuation centres have been one of the central hubs. As well we are encouraging people to register on redcross.ca so that we know that they are safe and so we can get those transitional funds into their hands. We are hopeful that we will be able to begin doing that mid-week, so in the next couple of days. Certainly, this is something that we should be proud of, our generosity, and making sure that we get . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.

**Mrs. Pitt:** As Albertans, unfortunately, know, this is not the first natural disaster that our province has had to face. During the 2013 floods in southern Alberta it took five days for the previous government to begin to issue emergency funding debit cards. By this time Wednesday, when the week rolls around and details of the plan are announced, a full eight days will have passed since the people of Fort McMurray were forced to flee their homes. This discrepancy is leading to questions of why the NDP government is taking longer to allocate these much-needed funds. To the minister: why the delay for these crucial cards?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We have certainly been working very quickly. Our public service has worked around the clock, and we are very grateful for their dedication. We know that the number of evacuees in this situation is extreme; 80,000 individuals is a very large number. We want to make sure that it's rolled out in a way that provides accountability and also easy access for those who most need the funds. We're hopeful that the money will be able to make its way into their hands in the coming days.

Again, the donations of clothes, of other necessities have been very much appreciated.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's most vulnerable are who I am particularly worried about during this crisis. Even if they were able to bring along their wallets when fleeing their houses, it doesn't mean that there is money in the bank account or that they had insurance for where they lived. As you can imagine, these individuals are being forced to make heart-wrenching decisions about how to carry on while faced with this hardship. Will the minister accelerate the process for the provision of emergency funds to not leave these vulnerable Albertans in the lurch?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, everyone is working as quickly as is physically possible to get these resources into the hands of those who most need them. In terms of addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, as I mentioned in my introductory update, if you do not need the resources immediately, please wait so those who are most in need have access to the funds as quickly as possible. Addressing the needs of everyone is certainly a priority for us. Again, register with redcross.ca so we can assess needs and help to address them in a timely fashion.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

#### Fort McMurray Energy Industry Wildfire Recovery

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These fires are having a real human impact for the people of Fort McMurray and right across the province. It's a reminder of how grateful we are to Fort McMurray and our energy sector for the prosperity provided not just to Alberta but to all of Canada. People know production has been cut by a million barrels a day, and people want to rebuild their neighbourhoods and their town as the economic engine of Canada. What timelines can the Premier give for when these people can get back home, back to work, and what resources will be there for them?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we know, Fort McMurray was already facing a once-in-a-generation economic slump due to the decline in the price of oil. Of course, this fire is compounding the pain faced by Alberta families and businesses, especially those in Fort McMurray. The challenges that we face are significant, but the people of Fort McMurray are tough and resilient, and Albertans are behind them. We will stand with them every step of the way as they continue to rebuild. Tomorrow the Minister of Energy and the Premier will be meeting with industry to discuss next steps.

**Mrs. Aheer:** We know the economic impact of these fires is already being felt far and wide here in Alberta and across Canada. This fire has meant for the people of Fort McMurray and across Alberta even worse news. We're already hearing stories of workers and contractors in all parts of the province losing work connected to the production losses in the oil sands. Albertans expect their government to have a plan to aggressively attract investment back to Alberta once Fort McMurray is back up and running. Does the government have a plan, and if so, when can Albertans expect that announcement?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Certainly, ensuring safety, as I've mentioned earlier, is the top priority for those who live in the community and those who work there as well. Initial reports about the damage to oil sands facilities have actually been quite encouraging – it has been very minimal – but we want to hear from the experts about the impact of the fire as well.

We have a cabinet task force that's already at work to determine how we can get the community rebuilt, to recover and emerge stronger than ever, Mr. Speaker. We will learn from the work that has happened in recent recovery efforts both in Slave Lake and for the Calgary flood, but we're certainly working with families, with individuals, and with industry to try to get things back up as quickly as possible.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Postmedia today tells a story of Tenille Tellman, a self-employed contractor who did not pay employment insurance and doesn't qualify for benefits. Right now she's with a family in Medicine Hat. We want to make sure that people like Tenille not only can survive but are provided assurances that Fort McMurray will be stronger than ever once the fires stop. What is the province doing to make sure that people like Tenille are taken care of and that Fort McMurray will get the full support from all levels of government to bounce back?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, you've heard a great deal from the provincial and federal governments, but also I need to commend our municipalities from across Alberta for really stepping up to help during this difficult time of transition. It's truly exceptional and a heartwarming example of the good citizenship that our municipalities show to one another. We have a great sense of gratitude, as do all members of this Assembly. Of course, the priority is to ensure safety but also to get people back up and working as quickly as possible. We will continue to convey what the infrastructure needs are to our federal partners as well.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

### Minimum Wage

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week in estimates the Labour minister agreed that she knew that there are about equal numbers of research studies that don't support an increased minimum wage and of those studies that do. Of course, a minimum wage policy with a 50-50 chance of destroying jobs for up to 300,000 Albertans, including many in the Fort McMurray area, is something that Albertans would be concerned about. To the Labour minister: why did you choose to pay attention to the evidence saying that a \$15 minimum wage was good and ignore the evidence saying that it's not good, particularly at this time, when all of Alberta . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has been clear in supporting a phase-in of a \$15 minimum wage. The opposition does like to speculate about some of the data around minimum wage, but here in Alberta nearly 1 in 3 who access the food bank are working people according to those who run the food banks in Canada. Why are they going to the food bank? Because they're using their income to pay rent, telephone, transportation, and other essentials of living, and this is wrong. We believe that all Albertans

should be able to support their families without having to go to the food bank.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has already agreed that a minimum wage won't keep people out of the food bank. Those are not living-wage jobs. That's a different thing.

In estimates the minister also could not tell us how the government is planning on addressing the brain drain of qualified workers leaving Alberta. Of course, a big part of that brain drain is people from the Fort McMurray area that work in technical fields, Mr. Speaker. To the Labour minister again: in case and when the day comes when Albertans are able to create jobs, what will the minister do to stop the brain drain and keep those people here, again including Fort McMurray, so that they can fill the jobs when they open up again?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are very aware of the challenging times that we are facing here in Alberta right now given the low global price of oil. We are supporting our workers by providing training opportunities as well as engagements to allow them to upgrade their skills so that they will be able to stay here in Alberta and contribute productively to our economy.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also in estimates last week the Labour minister, when asked about costs, said, and I quote: it is the Finance and Health ministers' goal to spend less, potentially. So in this time, again, when the economy is bad and people in Fort McMurray are feeling it more than anything else, I have to ask the Finance minister: what are your government's plans to spend less on labour? Which people will you not employ? Which ones will you pay less and in which departments?

**Mr. Ceci:** I think that I've stood up in this House before and I've talked about the different initiatives that are turning down the tap on expenditures for wages. All members of the Legislature have taken a freeze on their salaries; political staff have as well. Management has taken a two-year freeze and a grid movement freeze. We're also looking at – there'll be a bill coming in later that looks at the agencies, boards, and commissions and asks them to look at the compensations. We have negotiations that'll be taking place at the negotiation table with all of our unionized people, and we're looking for improvements there, recognizing the environment.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Mental Health Services for Wildfire Evacuees and First Responders

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. All of us in this House are acutely aware of the skill, compassion, and courage of our emergency responders and of all the people in Fort McMurray throughout the hot, raging inferno. Also inspiring are the thousands of ordinary Albertans who've given time and money to support their neighbours. But mental health and supports for mental health are an ongoing concern. To the minister: how in a mental health system unable now to meet the needs of the population is the province planning to see the needs of these people . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, I appreciate his dedication and commitment to the mental health and wellness both of the evacuees as well as the first responders. Certainly, when I was at the Western Premiers' Conference just late last week, everyone wants to help us, not just the western Premiers, but Canadians want to help us. Finding ways that they might be able to provide some support in the days, weeks, and months ahead is certainly something that they're interested in supporting us with. It will be about triaging and making sure that we get the resources where they most need to be. Again, please register at [redcross.ca](http://redcross.ca).

**Dr. Swann:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about resources that are already insufficient. Where are we going to get new resources, and are we committed to new resources? Given that first responders in Fort McMurray have unique trauma associated with some of them leaving their families at the very time when their families need them the most, what new resources, including qualified trauma specialists, will be available?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there have been discussions with Alberta Health Services about the resources that are available currently, what the response was in some of the other natural disasters that we've dealt with recently, how those might be able to apply as well as ways that we might be able to collaborate with the federal government as well to release some resources. For example, the trauma that some of our first responders are dealing with is unique in this situation, but it happens on a regular basis as well with the armed forces, so we're certainly in conversation about ways that we might be able to use their expertise as we move forward.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the concerns about the lack of trained trauma counsellors in the province for PTSD, including our WCB, the Workers' Compensation Board, and its capacity to deal with increased numbers of first responders, can the minister tell this House what new staff and resources will be provided for this extensive population of traumatized people?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, the chief medical officer of health is an instrumental part of making sure that we move forward with evidence-based decisions, looking at what the needs are here in Alberta and also the best practices in other jurisdictions. I appreciate the suggestions that have been offered by the member opposite, and I'll certainly have an open line of communication, but clearly we will be caring for the heroes who are caring for us today in the days ahead as well.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

#### School Accommodation of Wildfire-affected Students

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fires in Fort McMurray have impacted thousands of students, including those nearing graduation from high school. These students were getting ready to

move on to postsecondary institutions to further their studies or to begin their careers in the Alberta workforce. To the Minister of Education: what is being done to accommodate our grade 12 students specifically?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the member for the question. These students and all other grades, for that matter, are now able to register with school boards in the area where they've relocated. We've also seen many students registering in classes in Edmonton, Calgary, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, and many other school boards across the province. For grade 12 we will be working with our school boards and postsecondary partners to ensure that they can finish up their classes, and we'll make provisions around grade 12 diplomas to make sure that they are accommodated as well.

Thank you.

2:10

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you. To the same minister. You just mentioned the diploma exams. What are the specific arrangements that are being made when it comes to those tests?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are about 900 grade 11 and grade 12 students in the Fort McMurray area that signed up to write diploma exams. All of these students displaced by fire will be granted an exception to diploma exams if they choose to do so. Displaced students wishing to write the diplomas have the opportunity to do so at the school where they register or at testing centres in Calgary or Edmonton. Alberta Education will be there to administer as well tests outside the major centres. We will support our students and find solutions that will work for all of them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you. To the same minister: given the need to ensure stability for our high school students, will being exempted from the diploma exams have an impact on these students' applications to postsecondary?

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you once again for the question. Students who opt to not write the diploma exams will take their grade awarded in the classroom and can use that to apply to postsecondary institutions. This makes sense for what has happened, Mr. Speaker. I'm communicating our plans to forward diploma exams to all our school boards and postsecondary partners today, and we will work in collaboration with them to ensure that our students are supported during this difficult time.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### Support for Wildfire-affected Albertans

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Alberta Works locations were already overwhelmed in the recent months by Albertans seeking assistance due to the economic downturn. In recent months there have already been media reports of long lineups and overwhelmed staff needing to turn Albertans away. What is the current government doing to make sure that Alberta Works

locations are prepared to handle the influx of displaced Albertans that may be seeking assistance as a result of this wildfire?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member, for the question. At Alberta Works centres we are trying our best to make sure that Albertans are supported in this time of need. Five Alberta Works sites in the north-central region were open on Saturday, May 7, to accommodate the influx of Albertans. We are increasing our capacity by adding more staff and by extending the hours to make sure that Albertans have the supports they need.

Thank you.

**Mr. Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, given that one of the responsibilities of Alberta Works is to provide front-line employment services and career resources to unemployed Albertans and given that many Albertans in Fort McMurray have lost long-time places of employment in addition to their homes, between Alberta Labour and Human Services what is the current government doing to increase the availability of employment services and career resources for those who have been displaced by this wildfire?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member, for the question. At this time the government's priority remains the safety of Albertans and their immediate needs. Starting on Wednesday, hopefully, we will be providing \$1,250 per head and \$500 per dependant child for their immediate needs. And once circumstances get better, we will work with the evacuees to make sure that their other needs, their employment needs and their long-term needs, are met as well.

Thank you.

**Mr. Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, given that another responsibility of Alberta Works is to help Albertans with low incomes cover basic living costs and given that many low-income and elderly Albertans are entirely displaced from their homes as a result of this devastating wildfire, can the current government update the House on how they will be helping low-income Albertans from Fort McMurray that have been evacuated and what resources are being made available at this time?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, we are addressing the needs. One of the difficulties in being able to give a concrete response to the question is that still not everyone is registered. So we are encouraging everyone every day, no matter where you're living or what your needs are, to register so that we know that you're safe, so we can assess what your needs are today but also for the shorter term and longer term planning for the individual families, for the workers, and for the community so that it can continue to move forward in a way – we have Albertans' backs, and we will continue to do so as we move forward.

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

#### **Public Safety in Fort McMurray**

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The disaster in Fort McMurray involves many moving parts, and a critical one relates to public safety and security. The police and other first responders performed a superb evacuation under some of the most challenging

circumstances in the history of our nation. However, the tens of thousands of Fort McMurray residents now hundreds of kilometres away from their homes are naturally apprehensive about the security of their property, especially when they hear rumours of looting. To the Solicitor General: has there been any looting in Fort McMurray, and what measures are being taken to ensure it will not occur?

**Ms Hoffman:** The first thing I want to say is how important it is that people do honour the mandatory evacuation notice so that the first responders on the ground can focus on the duties that they need to do the most. Obviously, they don't want to have to turn people away, so if you stay where you're safe, the first responders on the ground can focus on keeping your belongings safe. Certainly, we'll continue to move forward, and I'm sure the Solicitor General will address other details around rumours around that situation. But please honour the mandatory evacuation order.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the city is deemed secure right now due to the limited number of people gaining access to it because of the hazardous situation and given that as the evacuation is lifted and thousands of residents flow home, others, including voyeurs and criminals of opportunity, may travel to Fort McMurray, again to the Solicitor General: how will police provide for a quick and orderly return for anxious Fort McMurray residents while also ensuring criminals of opportunity do not have free rein to roam in a partially empty city?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the critical question. We know the residents of Fort McMurray are under an enormous amount of stress right now. They're worried about their homes and what's going to be there when they go back. Currently it's the case that the entire city is under a mandatory evacuation, and we have to ask that people respect that. The RCMP are doing some fantastic work in ensuring that they keep that city safe. They're keeping things patrolled and looking for pets and ensuring that people aren't in there when they shouldn't be. As time moves forward, they will be working on an orderly return plan, but I think the most important thing is to ask people to make sure that they're not going back prior to when they're asked to.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the RCMP have informed us that some residents did not leave the city and that this kind of behaviour can pose unnecessary risks to first responders and given that it also is understandable why some residents may choose not to flee their homes in a public emergency, especially if they do not truly understand the severity of the danger, and given that a crisis provides an opportunity to learn, again to the same minister: what are your plans for reviewing the evacuation to potentially improve response in a future crisis?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Well, of course, the RCMP and all of us here in the province are always in the process of ensuring that we review an incident. We're not really at that stage yet. We're still at the stage where the fire is actively burning, but we certainly have learned a lot of lessons from things that have occurred in the past. I

want to assure people, you know, that the RCMP continue to be within the city, and they continue to patrol the city to keep everything safe. We again would like to ask people to ensure, even though we know they're stressed and even though we know they want to go home, they wait until the first responders are telling them that it's safe to go back.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### **Wildfire Prevention and Control**

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Decades ago, before fire suppression practices were followed, only a small percentage of our forests were older than 75 years because wildfire was common and widespread. The boreal forest is now older and consequently much drier as it ages and is not replaced. This is what firefighters are dealing with in northern Alberta. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: is there or will there be an updated strategy to the province's wildfire management practices to account for this new reality?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The member might recall the Flat Top Complex, the Slave Lake fire in 2011. There was a large review done of that. I ordered and am accepting a report on a review of the fire season we had last year, which was a very large, bad season. We're expecting as well from this disaster an opportunity to do a review and, hopefully, learn something from it so we can prevent any such tragedy in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that in many instances these older and drier forests grow up and around many isolated urban centres and given that in the FireSmart strategy there are policies on the wildfire-urban interface that recommend such practices as construction of fuel- or firebreaks and the removal of volatile trees and the replanting of more fire-resistant species, again to the minister: are these recommendations and strategies being implemented in a timely fashion, and by whom?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. There were a lot of recommendations coming from various reviews, including the Flat Top Complex, that have been implemented over the years. We've had the opportunity over the past five years to implement many of them, to a cost of a hundred million dollars to implement a lot of those. It's important to note that Fort McMurray, even though they've gone through quite a disaster, had implemented a lot of that strategy from the FireSmart program. You know, it's too early to tell, but perhaps one of the reasons all people were able to evacuate was because of the FireSmart programs that were implemented. Again, we're looking forward to seeing what we can learn from this tragedy going forward.

**Mr. Strankman:** Given that on February 2 this government issued a tender for multiple aircraft, a water-skimming air tanker group, and on April 29 this government cancelled that same tender, will the hon. minister please provide an explanation and the supporting

documents to Albertans why this tender, opened February 2 of this year, was cancelled less than three months later?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. It's really important to note that we have a full complement of firefighters, air tankers, equipment on the wildfire fight that's happening in Fort McMurray as well as other places across the province. First and foremost, our number one, most important concern, of course, is the safety of Albertans and also the safety of their communities. Rest assured that we'll continue to do so whatever this season might have for us.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

### **Calgary Ring Road Completion**

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Calgarians, especially in the constituency of Calgary-West, are getting anxious that recent comments from the Minister of Transportation stopping just short of a P3 moratorium may derail the southwest Calgary ring road. With three international consortiums having bid on the work, can the minister assure Calgary-West that the southwest ring road P3 is still a go, and please tell the House: when will the contract be awarded?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. I announced very early on that we would be proceeding with the southwest Calgary ring road in the form that was established, and we're expecting the bids from the consortium. It will be conducted as a P3. I should remind members that there is a seven-year time frame in which we have to complete that road, or the land reverts to the Tsuu T'ina Nation as per the agreement, so it's important that we waste no time whatsoever to make sure that that road is completed on . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, given that some NDP-supporting Calgary city councillors, not from Calgary-West, oppose the southwest Calgary ring road and given that some of these councillors have been vocal about redirecting the southwest Calgary ring road money to some other pet projects, can the minister assure the House that there was never ever a serious consideration that the funds for the southwest Calgary ring road be diverted?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, given the minister's comments regarding P3s and whereas the west Calgary ring road has still not been put out to tender, P3 or otherwise, can Alberta's construction industry anticipate that the west Calgary ring road will be delivered by the traditional design/bid/build procurement method, and when does the minister anticipate the first of those tenders to hit the market?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure the hon. member that I have made no decision with respect to the form of the contracts that will be let with respect to the west ring



road. I advise him to look in the capital plan because he will see that the west ring road is in the capital plan.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

### Job Creation

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Creating the environment for private investment and, hence, jobs is an integral part of good policy. The minister has confirmed that the private sector, not government, creates jobs. However, it is understood you can't instantly create 100,000 jobs. This happens one job at a time, as will undoubtedly be the case in Fort McMurray as well. To the minister of economic development: as no clear answers were received during estimates, could you outline for the House one specific initiative from your ministry that will help to create just 100 jobs, 1.1 per cent of your government's ambitious new jobs plan, as we diversify our economy?

**Mr. Ceci:** As the hon. member knows, our budget this year is focused on supporting families and communities. We're investing in infrastructure. That will create hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of jobs, obviously. We're diversifying the energy industry through the petrochemical diversification program. Again, once the tax credits start rolling there, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of jobs will be created, and we're supporting Alberta businesses by reducing their taxes in January 2017, so they will have more money to be able to create more jobs.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, if I can't get a hundred, I'm not sure I'm going to get a thousand more of those.

Given that jobs are created one initiative, one partnership, and one project at a time and given that all of these need to be initiated in a timely manner, built upon, and replicated to create results, to the Minister of Infrastructure: can you give us just one specific infrastructure project now being built anywhere in Alberta under the jobs plan, when it will be completed, and, more specifically, how many jobs it will create?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, the southwest Calgary ring road is a project. We are now clearing the land. We have employed companies that are operated by the Tsuu T'ina Nation on some of that work. There is ordinance clearing. There is clearing of all the undergrowth and so on. I can assure the hon. member that hundreds of construction jobs are going to be created by that project in his own city.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for an initiative that was initiated by the Member for Calgary-Hays.

Given that increased export promotion and export growth are a clear path to job creation and given that trade and investment attraction is one of the few flat areas in the budget over the next three years despite an almost guaranteed return on investment for agriculture, forestry, and tourism, to the minister of economic development: how will you continue to compete in an ever-changing, highly competitive global marketplace without adequate financial resources allocated to export growth?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you. I don't agree with: not adequate monies for export growth. Our government is committed to responsibly enhancing trade across provincial and national borders. We know

that trade of our world-class products and services means good mortgage-paying jobs in every corner of our province, and we'll always support trade that serves the interests of all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

### Culture and Tourism Support for Wildfire Evacuees

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week has been very difficult for Albertans, especially for Fort McMurray families who have evacuated their homes with little to no belongings. Albertans have rallied together to support the affected communities. Given that additional supports are required, can the Minister of Culture and Tourism explain what the ministry is doing to help Fort McMurray families who were forced to flee their homes because of the devastating wildfires?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism is doing our part by waiving fees to provincial historic sites and museums for those displaced by the wildfires, effective immediately. I'd also like to say that ministry staff have been part of the emergency task force and that approximately 80 of them have now come forward to volunteer on the recovery task force. Alberta Sport Connection has also loaned about 2,000 cots to the Northlands evacuation centre for use at the reception centre. I want to thank all the staff of the ministry who have come forward and helped.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the update. We know that this is a tough time for Fort McMurray residents staying at evacuation centres, including families with children. To the same minister: why is it so important to waive these fees?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We know that this is a very stressful time that these families are facing right now. We wanted to provide the opportunity for them to have a bit of a distraction and to be able to leave the evacuation centres. We felt it was very important to do that at this time, and I am pleased to inform the House that since we made that announcement, we've had reports of families visiting the Royal Tyrrell, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, the Reynolds-Alberta Museum, the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre. I would encourage all of the families right now in the evacuation centres to take the opportunity to visit these places as it will be . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister responsible for Northlands can you give this House an update on the work that they are doing to support the evacuees?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

2:30

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I can tell you that I'm very proud of the work that Northlands is doing. Like other evacuee centres, Northlands is

providing emergency lodging, food, clothing, entertainment, access to medical supplies, health services, access to insurance companies, and other services. The outpouring of support from Albertans has been tremendous. I want to personally thank all the front-line staff and the volunteers working at Northlands right now and at the evacuee centres across the province for stepping up and providing these very much needed services to Albertans who are hurting right now.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

#### **School Construction in Irma**

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The highest priority for the Battle River school division is the school in Irma. Built in the 1950s and last upgraded in the '80s, the heating and other systems are vintage at best. The ministry staff have said that the school is at end of life and is on the unfunded capital project list. I understand that funding is available for certain projects on that list for planning. Can the Minister of Infrastructure explain the criteria for having an unfunded project receive funds this year?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the school at Irma I'm going to have to look into that specific project and get back to the hon. member, but I want to assure him that we take into account the priorities that are set by school districts and the Department of Education in compiling the capital plan for schools.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Taylor:** Well, thank you. Given that the school board has a template design for this school similar to the previous build that was done in this district and given that the village of Irma has raised funds to enhance the project to meet local needs – this school would be streamlined and efficient – to the same minister: is there a process whereby a shovel-ready project could be moved to the capital plan?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, a shovel-ready project is one of the criteria that we base the capital plan on, but we also have to take in many other factors, including the competing demands on the Infrastructure money. I point out to the House that when we expanded the capital plan and put out a call for projects of about 4 and a half billion dollars, we received over \$15 billion in requests. There are many, many important requests, more than we have cash for, so we have to set priorities. Sometimes communities . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Taylor:** You have put it into priority because it's on your unfunded list.

Given the level of collaboration between the school board, the MD, and the village of Irma and given that they have raised over a million dollars to enhance the build to include a community centre and a gym for the village as part of the school design and since there is a time constraint for having the community centre built, would the minister meet with the partners to discuss possible strategies for moving forward on the school build?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would be happy to do so.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-North West.

#### **Homelessness Initiatives**

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to sit on the Calgary homeless council along with my colleague the Member for Calgary-Elbow. I was pleased to see our Minister of Human Services join us last week for the 7 Cities conference on homelessness, but I continue to be dismayed that the government doesn't consider this council important enough to warrant a government member taking part. To the Minister of Human Services: given that the Fort McMurray fires leave a significant number of Albertans in a very vulnerable place, are you willing to listen to the concerns of this council?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. In relation to the people displaced from Fort McMurray, we will be working with our regional partners to track the number of people, and we will work with the partners to make sure that they have a place to call home.

Thank you.

**Ms Jansen:** Well, that didn't actually touch on my question at all.

Anyway, given that the homeless experts tell us that while we have many shovel-ready projects, they aren't a hundred per cent sure that these are shovel-worthy projects, is the minister confident that everything that they are slated to invest in is in the best interests of vulnerable Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As I mentioned in that conference and I'm saying here as well, we have allocated money, \$1.1 billion, through the Ministry of Seniors and Housing. That money is geared towards building more affordable housing, which will have an impact on the homelessness situation. While we build those houses, we still continue to work with those seven cities' CBOs to make sure that people have temporary places to go to and survive. Meanwhile we are . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Ms Jansen:** All right. Again, Mr. Speaker, that was a totally different answer than the question I asked. Let's try another one.

Given that one of the most important areas for improvement on the issue of homelessness is the sharing of information that enables service providers to get a very full picture of homelessness in the province, is the minister willing to look into our council and the information we are gathering?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Certainly, I was willing to look into your council. That's why I was present there. I'm committed to working with the council and all partners across the province to make sure that we can reduce and eliminate homelessness.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

### Emergency Management in Indigenous Communities

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the midst of an emergency the scale of which we saw in Fort McMurray, it is of the utmost importance to remember the many communities nearby that can also be affected. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what has the government done to ensure that the needs of First Nations and Métis communities in Alberta are considered and addressed in an emergency such as this?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. My ministry does have a seat at the Provincial Operations Centre, which works with ministries and federal partners to co-ordinate the initial response in any kind of disaster. This ensures that my ministry is closely involved in the wildfire response and relaying information as needed to co-ordinate. There is a dedicated unit co-ordinating First Nations and Métis communities' needs, which is comprised of four field officers and one manager. These officers work closely with indigenous communities, providing supports to ensure that all evacuees are accounted for . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the update. I'm glad to hear there is a system in place to help co-ordinate this response.

The generosity of all Albertans has been moving to see. In particular, many First Nations and Métis communities that I've talked to have opened their homes and hearts to evacuees in need. Again to the minister. Many of these communities are remote and limited in terms of resources. What is the ministry doing to ensure that they have the supplies they need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I, too, was very touched by the generosity and professionalism of the First Nations and Métis communities who opened their homes to the evacuees in need and continue to be an important part of the firefighting and the safety provided to members from Fort McMurray. The First Nations field officers are in constant contact with the community and working together with them. Over the weekend we were able to ensure that there were shipments arranged to bring food, baby supplies, and other necessities to Fort McKay and to Fort Chip. We continue to monitor the situation and would like to thank the First Nations for their contributions.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like the field officers and the Provincial Operations Centre are working effectively with indigenous communities.

Again to the minister: can you tell me what you have done personally to assist in this emergency?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government is working very closely with indigenous communities. I and the Premier have both been

deeply involved in this over the last week. You may know that the Premier is in Fort McMurray today with Grand Chief Courtoreille of Treaty 8 looking over the situation and working towards solutions for the future. I, of course, have personally been involved with the grand chief of Treaty 8 as well as the president of the Métis national association, the regional chief of the Assembly of First Nations, the chiefs of four, five, six – I'm just counting as I look down . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Again I'll remind the member: no preambles on supplementaries.  
The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago I brought up concerns regarding the biosecurity of farms. Another ongoing problem is the federal government's enforcement of a ruling stating that Canadian livestock trailers returning from shipping hogs to the U.S. must now use possibly contaminated washing facilities in the U.S., thus risking the transfer of porcine epidemic virus, known as PED. To the minister of agriculture: what has your government done to alleviate concerns of pork producers worried about the spread of the PED virus?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. To this point there have been no cases of PED in Alberta, and it's important for all of us, producers and governments, right across Alberta to ensure that it doesn't happen, you know, working with entire organizations, the processors, the producers, to ensure that our biosecurity maintains importance in Alberta, maintaining how crucial it really is and working also with the CFIA to ensure that their standards are as high as possible and that they meet those high standards.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Strankman:** Mr. Speaker, given that this virus is also prevalent in eastern Canada and that the four western provincial chief veterinarians and pork boards are concerned about the transfer of this virus to Alberta farms, to the minister: have you and your western colleagues developed any strategy to combat the spread of this disease not only from the U.S. but from eastern Canada as well?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As the member has suggested, the main risk for the spread of this disease is trailers that are not washed. You know, currently we're relying on the producers to do so. They know how important it is. I think it's important that I do work with colleagues right across the country. This summer we will have the opportunity as the federal-provincial-territorial meetings for agriculture ministers, including the federal minister, are going to be in Alberta. It only happens once every 13 years, so I'm absolutely looking forward to the discussions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these producers have their livelihoods and their way of life heavily

invested in these hog operations and given that measures to stop the transfer of this disease include the washing of any trailers returning from the U.S. and indeed from other provinces so as to prevent the spread of this virus, will the minister lobby the federal government to reinstate the temporary amendment to the regulation that allowed trailers to return to certified wash facilities in Canada to ensure our industry's biosecurity?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. You know, I share his concerns. I think PED and other biosecurity risks right across for our producers, whether it's in beef or in pork, are important. It's important to maintain those standards whether or not we have cases in Alberta, actually, to maintain our high level of product that we can market right across Canada and right across the world. It's important. I'm looking forward to working with producers, processors, and other levels of government to ensure what more we can do to ensure that we keep those risks at the minimum.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

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

#### Bill 205

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As elected officials we want to make positive changes for Albertans. Bill 205, the Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016, will not just improve lives; it will save them. This bill regulates the possession of pill presses, which criminals use to produce homemade concoctions that kill such as fentanyl and W-18. As legislators Bill 205 provides us with a rare opportunity to directly save lives.

Why is this bill so critical right now? Well, it's because 272 Albertans died last year from overdosing on fentanyl. They popped a \$20 pill expecting a recreational high, but they quickly spiralled into the biggest downer of their lives, and then they were gone. Bill 205 gives police a powerful tool to reduce deaths and save families and friends of victims from terrible, lifelong anguish. Restricting pill presses places Alberta at the forefront of the fight against fentanyl in Canada and may lead the federal government to take action nationally.

This bill amends the Pharmacy and Drug Act to license pill presses, used in the illegal manufacture of drugs. It gives police the ability to seize presses, which can generate thousands of the deadly tablets in an hour. Fines can reach up to \$375,000 or jail time. The penalties sound high, but make no mistake. Criminals manufacturing this powerful drug make millions of dollars.

When this bill comes before the House, I encourage all of you to participate in the debates. What better way to use our special position as Members of the Legislative Assembly than by working together towards halting the production of deadly drugs and actually saving lives. While Bill 205 carries my name as its sponsor today, should it become law, it will be the 29th Legislature that will have passed it.

Let's do this. Let's save lives, let's do it together, and let's do it today.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

#### Parkland School Division

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My thoughts and prayers go out to all of the families affected by the wildfires in this past week.

I have the distinct privilege of working with Parkland school division in the riding of Stony Plain. Parkland school division is one of the largest employers in my area, with around 1,000 employees, and encompassing 22 schools with a number of alternative sites as well. The vision of Parkland is to be a place where exploration, creativity, and imagination make learning exciting and where all learners aspire to reach their dreams. There is a caring, inclusive, healthy environment at all levels. I am lucky enough to have a child in elementary school, one in junior high, and one heading to the local high school in the fall. The programming is astounding, the options and possibilities endless. This attitude of acceptance and striving towards excellence starts with the local school board.

Mr. Speaker, the administration team is incredibly hard working, attempting to make sure each child and their family is on the road to success, and this is apparent at each school site I have seen. And of course these teachers and administrators work so diligently; they work with our children in mind. This was brought to the forefront of my mind because Parkland school division was one of the first organizations I heard from last week in the days during the evacuation of Fort McMurray. As I discussed with Superintendent Tim Monds, Board Chair Eric Cameron, and Vice-chair Kathleen Linder, there will be families coming, children who need support to finish this school year, grade 12s that need to write diploma exams, and they are welcome. We will take them. We will arrange for free transportation for all of these students wherever they need to be picked up and returned because documentation cannot be a hurdle right now. We will help them finish the year the best that we can.

This is the community where I live, a community I am proud to be a part of, a place of generosity and giving, which is always apparent but never more so than now, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

#### Buffalo Rubbing Stone School

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've all had a really bad itch from time to time. I mean one so bad that you had to reach for a backscratcher, some hydrocortisone cream, or maybe a helpful friend with some fingernails. Fortunately, in the northern hills of Calgary we have just the solution you're looking for. There is an ancient giant stone on a hillside left behind from the last ice age. Although a geologist might refer to the stone as a glacial erratic, a bison or buffalo would have referred to it as the kind of relief you just can't find in a drugstore.

These lone boulders are scattered all over the prairies and continue to stand as a memorial to the vast herds of buffaloes that once roamed the open grasslands and foothills and within the present-day riding boundary of Calgary-Northern Hills. Over many generations millions of buffaloes, some of whom you might refer to as my former constituents, rubbed against the rocks to remove their winter coats and to alleviate the itch of insect bites. These boulders often have polished surfaces and are marked with a deep rut around the base of the stone where countless generations of buffalo have left their marks. In the modern day this buffalo rubbing stone sits in a small park in the quiet neighbourhood of Panorama Hills.

Recently the Calgary board of education selected the name for a new public school that is being built in the Panorama Hills

community. It will be called Buffalo Rubbing Stone School. The CBE chose the name to honour the significance of the buffalo in the lives of the indigenous peoples in the regions. When completed in September 2016, Buffalo Rubbing Stone School will serve students from kindergarten to grade 4, with an expected capacity of 600 students. I think it's wonderful that the school's name represents a historically significant landmark which the children and families can connect with in their own neighbourhood.

So if you're itching to come to Calgary-Northern Hills this summer, be sure to stop by and see our buffalo rubbing stone. It might provide the relief you're looking for.

### Education System

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, over the last month or so I've had many constituents contact my office to express their support of Alberta's education system and the fact that the parents and students in our province have a large diversity of choices in the education of our youth. In my own riding of Little Bow there are four public school boards and at least four independent private schools. There is a range of classrooms from the traditional classroom to classrooms that are more self-directed, schools that offer online courses to schools that support home-schooling in various forms. There are schools that provide faith-based education as well as schools that have an emphasis on sports.

2:50

This diversity has allowed students to thrive in the program that they and their parents have chosen. They are able to obtain an education that is far more than just adequate, and they are able to do it in ways that support their own circumstances so that they can improve their lives.

Diversity and innovation have also allowed schools to stay sustainable and to keep their schools in their community. They do this by adjusting to their new realities and taking advantage of new ideas, new technology, or a new focus. The Palliser alternative secondary school runs online courses that students can access from their classroom in Coaldale, from their campus in Calgary, or from their home. This school runs all year long, so students don't need to be limited by course availability.

I've talked about Hope Christian School in this House before. They operate a school that has a self-directed on-site classroom as well as online courses and home-schooling. They also operate some consolidated sites for home-schooling for the Low German speaking Mennonite population in southern Alberta.

Faith-based schools in Little Bow provide blended programs which are based on the values of their faith. That's important to them. Regardless of the school system the student is able to further their education in the best way possible for them. This in itself will provide a richer generation of students to help grow Alberta at all levels.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On April 14 I tabled this spring's estimates calendar. Today I am tabling a revised spring 2016 budget main estimates schedule based on a request from Municipal Affairs officials, so that they have additional time to prepare due their current preoccupation with the wildfire situation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table two documents today. Both were referred to in question period. One is with respect to the cancelling of an air tanker contract.

The other is called Air Tanker Group Set Up 2016.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a letter referenced and circulated at the Treasury Board and Finance estimates debate on May 4, 2016, where I questioned the financial position of ATB Financial. Alberta Treasury Board and Finance responded with the following information with respect to the letter. ATB has informed us that they are introducing new fees in July for cash and coin services that could impact high-volume cash customers, that all of ATB's competitors, except for Servus and some credit unions, charge such fees and that ATB's will be the lowest and exempt more customers than others. The change in the fee structure has nothing to do with ATB's financial position according to ATB's response.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I am tabling five copies of a report from the Chief Electoral Officer, that is submitted pursuant to section 44(1) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, listing those candidates and their chief financial officers who failed to eliminate their campaign deficit by the prescribed deadline.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table a letter from Nick Dira. The House may recall that two or three weeks ago I introduced Nick. He was a gentleman in a wheelchair who, amazingly enough, within a year had recovered some of his ability to walk and is working hard to recover. Unfortunately, Nick has now run into some of the rationing and lack of oversight in our health care system. One of the sentences in the letter: "I am unable to access the health services and care that I am assessed as requiring because of the new policy limiting Glenrose patients to [only] 90 days of therapy." The letter is sad. It's amazing that this is happening in our province, and I would ask each and every member to read it.

### Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise at this time to request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 8 in order that the Assembly may proceed immediately to the consideration of second reading of Bill 205.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 205

#### Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour for me to rise and begin debate on Bill 205, the Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016. Bill 205 will place Alberta at the forefront of a national fight against

fentanyl and W-18 by regulating the possession of pill presses. The bill amends the Pharmacy and Drug Act by requiring Albertans to obtain a licence to possess a pill or tablet press, and it lays out sturdy fines for those who have them illegally. Pharmacies are exempted from having to obtain a licence. Other details such as further exemptions will be determined in the regulations after additional consultation has occurred.

The concern with pill presses is that drug dealers use various recipes to manufacture these highly hazardous opioids as well as other deadly compounds such as counterfeit OxyContin and heroin. It should come as no surprise to anyone that criminals mixing these drug concoctions are not known for their quality control. That is why 272 Albertans died last year after ingesting fentanyl, more than double the 120 citizens who died in 2014.

When these criminals mix their fentanyl recipe, two extra micrograms of the drug, the equivalent of two grains of salt, added into the cutting agent turns fentanyl into a killer. Fentanyl is coming into our province in a powder form. To press it into a pill, tablet, or capsule, criminals need a press. I found one on eBay for \$750 USD. It manufactures 3,000 pills in just one hour. Commercial pharmaceutical tableting machines sell for less than \$10,000 and can produce 10,000 to 18,000 tablets per hour. That, Mr. Speaker, is the reason we need to regulate the presses.

Two weeks ago we learned that a massive amount of W-18 had entered Alberta. ALERT, the Alberta law enforcement response teams, managed to seize it before criminals pressed it into pills. If they had not done so, untold deaths may have occurred.

ALERT is Alberta's front line of defence against serious crime, which includes drug trafficking, gang activity, and child sexual exploitation. The highly trained officers recruited to join ALERT are particularly important for rural detachments, which don't have the expertise to deal with many of these crimes. Rural Alberta has suffered equally with our cities when it comes to deaths from fentanyl. That's why I fought so hard to ensure that this government provided full funding to fully staffed ALERT teams.

The arrival in Alberta of W-18 on top of the 272 citizens tragically killed last year by fentanyl underlines the ability that we have to save lives by regulating the devices that produce the pills for distribution on our streets. Bill 205 is designed to give police a powerful proactive tool in their fight against fentanyl and W-18. Officers will have the ability to seize these machines and to fine criminals who have them in their possession. The bill can potentially take tens of thousands of pills off Alberta streets, that tens of thousands of pills of which any one can kill a person. As I've said before, it's like playing Russian roulette with your life.

3:00

The fines in Bill 205 are unapologetically high: up to \$50,000 for a first offence, \$250,000 for a second offence, and \$375,000 for a third offence or imprisonment of up to six months. There is no reason for alarm at the size of the fines; the criminal can pay them.

Let's look at their business model. A drug dealer can spend five hours manufacturing pills on that \$750 manual pill press. That's 15,000 pills ready for the street. Multiply that by \$20 to \$40, given the street value, and we're talking about \$300,000 to \$600,000 from just five hours of work. If a few people die along the way, well, why would they care? These pills travel all over Alberta for distribution. They don't know their victims and they never will. It is simple cost versus reward. No drug dealer really wants to kill their client, but when the reward is so great, it is a risk that they are willing to take, and that risk is, sadly, the life of the victim. On a larger magnitude scale one kilogram of fentanyl costs \$12,000. A clandestine drug lab with a commercial pill press will compress that powder into one

million pills. At \$20 to \$40 each, given the street value, we're talking about \$20 million to \$40 million.

In developing Bill 205, I wanted to make sure that in seeking to penalize illegal drug labs and the people who run them, we are not causing problems, of course, for those who legitimately use pill presses. That is why my consultation has been very extensive and, I am pleased to say, collaborative. I consulted with the RCMP and the Alberta law enforcement response team as well as Calgary and Edmonton police services. Police made excellent recommendations, which are reflected in the bill that you see before you. I also sought my own legal counsel, which helped direct me to considering amending the Pharmacy and Drug Act rather than drafting a new specific act.

Because of this direction it was incumbent upon me to consult with pharmacists. I turned to the Alberta College of Pharmacists and the Alberta Pharmacists' Association. Both professional bodies provided excellent suggestions, which are also reflected in Bill 205. I sought further feedback from the natural practitioners of Canada as I was not sure if their members used tablet presses. I was informed that they had no concerns. Finally, I consulted with the medical profession as well. In all instances I received strong support as well as feedback that strengthened the bill.

As a former sergeant with the Calgary Police Service I know that regulating pill presses will not mean the end of hazardous drugs in Alberta. We still need education to help Albertans make good choices, we still need prevention in the form of good laws and strong law enforcement, and we still need intervention in the form of addiction counselling and long-term beds for treatment as well as a ready supply of naloxone, a reactionary antidote that has saved lives. Bill 205, however, lets police seize the readily available machines criminals are using to make money and callously kill people.

The penalties included in Bill 205 will provide a deterrent to those attracted to easy money. I'm pleased to note that the fines will go to helping those who have suffered. The victims of crime fund is one such example.

Finally, there is an aspect of the bill that is truly Albertan because Bill 205 seeks to provide a solution to a problem. It does not wait for anyone else to do it; it simply leads the way. Today pill presses are regulated in the U.S. by the drug enforcement agency. They are not, however, regulated in Canada or any other province. Bill 205 puts Alberta at the forefront of the fentanyl fight in our nation. It may empower other provinces to introduce their own laws and it may convince the federal government to take this measure as well as others such as controlling the analogues and precursors for making fentanyl and W-18, but we do not have to wait for anyone. We can't wait. Bill 205 is what it actually means to be an Albertan. We innovate, we problem solve, and we adapt. We cannot wait for someone else to find the answer. We do not look to other jurisdictions for answers. We are Albertans. That means that we are leaders.

A few weeks ago we were all aghast to learn of the arrival of W-18 in Alberta. It is hard to imagine a street drug a hundred times more powerful than fentanyl, but it exists and it is here.

Mr. Speaker, when I was first elected in this House a year and a half ago, I didn't know that this would be the first private member's bill I would be bringing forward. But as soon as I began hearing about the deaths from fentanyl overdoses, I started investigating the kinds of proactive measures that we could take to stop them. Now I appeal to all of you as fellow legislators to consider the important role that you play in this process. By voting in favour of this bill, this is your chance to show true leadership while saving lives. This is your moment to proudly stand up and put aside all political

alliances and say: I have had enough, and I will support this bill because I do not want to see any more Albertans die.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to everyone's comments on this very critical bill. Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-West for introducing this bill. His commitment to helping the fight against fentanyl is admirable.

I understand that the Minister of Justice has raised the need for the federal government to regulate pill presses multiple times, so this bill follows up on the member's work. It's worth noting that the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police passed a resolution in the fall seeking federal government, not provincial government, regulation of pill presses that are fentanyl precursors. It appears that the federal government has the best tools available to combat the use of pill presses in assembling counterfeit narcotics.

While this bill introduces a potential penalty of \$50,000 for a first offence, the federal government has much stronger powers to deal with issues like these. For instance, under section 462(2) of the Criminal Code anyone who manufactures, sells, promotes, or exports instruments for illicit drug use is subject to a \$100,000 fine and up to six months in jail for the first offence. The federal government could institute even more significant penalties for pill press possession given the impact of the current fentanyl crisis. As provincial governments do not have jurisdiction over criminal law, we are left with regulatory measures such as the lower fines found in this bill, and these may not be a sufficient deterrent to reduce pill press use.

Additionally, the regulation of pill presses really needs to occur at a national level. Under this bill an individual could still just drive over the provincial border to B.C. or Saskatchewan and legally purchase a pill press in that jurisdiction. So given these individuals are involved in the illegal manufacture of illicit drugs, typically with a value reaching well into the millions, it is unlikely that the measures in this bill will provide a substantial deterrent. Federal government regulation would allow the government to stop pill presses at the border and a much more thorough measure of regulating access.

I would urge the member bringing forward this bill to join us in our call for the federal government to take up the regulation of pill presses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to speak on Bill 205, the Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016. This bill is a step in the right direction in looking at trying to bring illegal drugs in the pill form off of streets. I have to commend the member for his passion in this area. I myself have addressed this with my colleagues as well, bringing up our fentanyl 10-point plan.

We all can agree that illegal or illicit drugs – like ecstasy, W-18, fentanyl, and MDMA – are hurting Albertans. They're hurting everybody that they touch. It is encouraging to see that we are finally seeing that members in this House are looking to do something that will actually change how we are trying to move law forward to discourage these kinds of drugs. We're trying to hamper the production of these drugs, which will make our communities safer. I know that every member in here wants their community to be safer.

3:10

We've heard from other members of the House. On fentanyl, specifically, I want to reiterate that we are all, I'm sure, concerned. This isn't just a scare tactic or an overdramatization; this is an actual danger that we need to be looking forward to moving something, some solution, forward.

Now, I do see that the government is getting naloxone kits into our first responders' hands, and they are moving in directions of helping people that have overdosed, but I do understand what the Member for Calgary-West is trying to emphasize here: we wouldn't have to go to those drastic measures if the drug just wasn't out there. I understand, and he's brought forward that it is important that we are trying to find ways in all different directions to reduce this on the streets, but, in the end, when we're looking at moving forward, prevention seems to be the better route than reaction.

These drugs are affecting all walks of life. Last year alone we saw that over 270 people died as a result of fentanyl. This is a staggering number. I can't think of any other type of substance that has had such a wide-ranging and deep impact in such a short time. These drugs are putting people's lives in imminent danger, and no one, no matter what community you are part of, would disagree with that. Specifically, young people are at an incredible risk with this because, in the end, grams make a difference with this drug. As we've heard from the Member for Calgary-West, two grains of salt can mean life or death. That seems specifically incredible that we would have something so powerful out there that is being put into a pill form. The thought alone is scary, what it could do to my own family should it get to my own daughter when she gets old enough that this is actually going to be a concern. Fortunately, my daughter is 10 and less likely to be exposed to something like this, but teenagers, who regularly go out, are the focus of a lot of these drugs. Parents losing their children is tragic.

Now, W-18 and fentanyl take it to a completely different level when we look at the long-term neurological effects that these opiates can have on people. Even if drugs don't kill the user the first time, they can create significant brain damage. This is a concern for all Albertans because, in the end, we have youth right now that do not understand that these are not Aspirin and Tylenol. If they take two, they might die. High school students have taken a pill that someone has given them one evening when they were at a friend's house. The next morning they were either gone or their future was taken away from them. These were kids that could have gone on to do amazing things, kids from good families – like mine, like yours, like everybody's in this House – who had their entire lives in front of them, but they were robbed. That's the future by making a mistake with a drug that needs to be eliminated. We need to take action now. Well, we really should have taken action last year, when Wildrose produced its 10-point fentanyl harm reduction plan with my colleague the shadow Health minister.

Now, hopefully, it's not too late to get in front of this issue and start cracking down on the organized crime syndicates that are responsible for the manufacturing, proliferation, and distribution of these terrible drugs. It is my hope that the police will be able to obtain a warrant for organized criminals with greater ease and be able to hold the criminals to account when they are caught with these drugs and these drug labs. The men and women in Alberta enforcement do a tremendous job each and every day. I hope that this bill will put one more tool in their hands to fix Alberta's drug crisis.

I will be supporting Bill 205 at second reading, and I am curious to learn more details about this bill when Committee of the Whole comes forward, when we all have the opportunity to add what we feel will grow this bill into something that protects Albertans. I hope

that the government, across the aisle, instead of just voting down this bill, brings forward amendments that they feel will strengthen this bill instead of just saying to the federal government: please, protect us. If we do come forward and we want to move this bill in a positive direction, I believe that as an Assembly we are able to work together and able to actually make a difference against fentanyl.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and speak about Bill 205 and the important issue that this bill takes aim at, which is illicit fentanyl. Fentanyl is an opioid, or painkiller, that can be used safely when it is prescribed by a health professional and taken as directed. It is also made and sold illegally in our province and across Canada. Fentanyl is very toxic. Just a small amount, the size of two grains of salt, can be deadly. Fentanyl is made and sold in many different forms and can be hiding in other drugs.

Alberta has the highest per capita legitimate opioid consumption in Canada. There is no question that there needs to be a multifaceted approach to addressing both legitimate and illegitimate use of opioids here in our province. Bill 205 can serve to support a broader strategy to mitigate the impact of illicit drugs and stem opioid misuse and abuse. In short, it is one more tool in our toolbox to help stem the tragic tide of deaths in our province caused by fentanyl.

We will continue to address this issue through a variety of actions. This government is exploring as many avenues as possible in response to this issue, including advocating for stronger measures around pill presses and precursor drugs with the federal government; co-ordinating efforts through the fentanyl action response team, which is poised to become a contributor to the overall implementation of the mental health review recommendations; working with the health colleges on the triplicate prescription form drug program; working with the federal-provincial-territorial working group on prescription drug abuse; improving data reporting; and ensuring appropriate information and education materials are available to both the public and to medical professionals.

We also continue to be committed to harm reduction strategy, ensuring that people will have access to naloxone, the drug that can help reverse opioid overdoses and save lives. The Minister of Health has signed ministerial orders that directly allow EMTs and EMRs to administer naloxone, RNs to prescribe naloxone, and paramedics, EMTs, and EMRs to dispense the drug. As well, the Minister of Health has signed a further ministerial order that authorizes Alberta Health to pay the dispensing fee charge for naloxone prescriptions. We know that people are using naloxone kits, and we know that they are saving lives.

As well, we want to ensure that people have access to the supports they need for detox and recovery when they are prepared to enter into them. For example, Alberta Health is currently working closely with the community of Cardston to establish a Suboxone clinic so that recovering opiate addicts will have the medical monitoring and support for opioid replacement therapies.

I want to thank the Member for Calgary-West for stepping up to the plate with this bill, and I look forward to discussing the bill in greater detail in third reading. Thank you.

3:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to speak to second reading of Bill 205, Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016. I can say from experience in this House that it's very rare indeed to see overwhelming support from every corner of this room, at least when it comes to debating the emergency of this bill. I can appreciate that from that perspective the government was not playing political games on such a critical concept which will, without a doubt, save countless lives.

Now, to the hon. Member for Calgary-West, the mover of this bill, I truly appreciate your sponsorship of this legislation. Perhaps it's worthy of note that it does indeed come with the inspiration of our former MLA for Calgary-Greenway.

Colleagues, we've all seen the horrendous news stories about how fentanyl and the emerging, extremely dangerous W-18 compound are killing Alberta's children. Let this be completely clear. Fentanyl killed 272 Albertans in 2015, and to me that's exactly 272 too many. The proposed legislation will make a quantifiable and real difference. It'll make it more difficult for drug makers and drug middle-men and drug dealers, for those people to get those drugs into the hands of Albertans.

Again, I know from personal experience during my time as chair of AADAC and associate minister of wellness that these folks are often obviously suffering from addictions of other kinds. They're dealing with unemployment and other unfortunate circumstances, and it comes from an extremely long list. This bill will make it more challenging for Albertans who are simply seeking a recreational high to achieve that increasingly deadly goal.

The measures this bill is proposing will make Alberta a national leader. Indeed, as has been said, that's the Alberta way. We will combat these types of drugs. That's what it's going to take. We'll also make those people who are considering breaking the law and placing deadly cocktails of ingredients into the palms of Albertans think much more seriously about what they're doing and, hopefully, change their minds.

The hon. member has used the penalties from within the existing Pharmacy and Drug Act as a guideline for establishing penalties that match the seriousness of the crime of making fentanyl into something that can be ingested readily and easily. This is critical because some of the main driving factors behind systemic drug abuse are visual stimulation and ease with which a high can be achieved. Now fentanyl pills are breaking these particular barriers with ferocity.

Again, Mr. Speaker, sometimes I wish I didn't know as much as I've learned about this, but during my time with the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission and in my time in wellness, sadly, I heard so many stories, so many horror stories, that I've actually lost count hearing of untimely deaths of children and parents and, yes, even seniors. I will never forget these people. It's with them in mind that I stand here today to speak to this bill.

Now, today as the Progressive Conservative advocate for indigenous relations I want to discuss the positive effect this legislation will have on our First Nations across Alberta. Now, earlier this year the province more than doubled its purchase of the life-saving naloxone kits and has made them freely available in more than 300 pharmacies since February 17. We asked for this move, and we applaud it. However, only four of these kits are known to be located on reserves. The chances of an indigenous youth being killed by fentanyl are significantly higher because they simply don't have the proximity to life-saving support systems if something goes terribly wrong.

We know this is a huge issue. Just as one example, the Blood Tribe declared a state of emergency over a year ago after officials within the community noticed a significant spike in the use of



fentanyl and the subsequent deaths that were mounting. Health Canada has been working with the Blood Tribe as well as 17 of the 45 First Nations to develop a plan to combat fentanyl and educate our youth about the dangers that this drug possesses. Additionally, we know that the province is working hard to open a Suboxone clinic in Cardston in response to the crisis. Doctors, nurses, and addiction counsellors would be located under one roof and provide many of the services needed to help fight the battle against fentanyl.

However, my friends, we can and we must do more. We can do our best to cut off the supply of street-grade fentanyl and other dangerous drugs like W-18, which is marketed as counterfeit OxyContin or counterfeit heroin, that ends up in the hands of indigenous youth and other vulnerable people clear across the province. Regulating pill presses, as proposed in this bill, will mean that there will be decreased opportunities for local illegal drug makers to get their hands on the smaller, cheaper pill presses. It will also mean that the larger scale illegal drug manufacturers in Alberta will not be able to illegally acquire the industrial tablet pressers that are able to compound, as we've heard, over 10,000 pills an hour. This will reduce drugs on our streets. It will save lives.

Hon. members, the magnitude of the crisis on some First Nations is best put according to Tyler White, head of health services for Siksika Nation. "A failure to deal with the prescription opioid crisis of the past two decades has resulted in our present situation where, in some demographics, opioids are more pervasive than marijuana and alcohol." More pervasive than marijuana and alcohol. Hon. members, fentanyl and other pills are more widely used than alcohol in many circumstances, and if that's not disturbing to you, I don't know what is. This is a challenge. This is the challenge that we're dealing with, that we're up against right now and can do something about, so I encourage all members of this House to support Bill 205 to help end fentanyl and opioid abuse in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude my remarks, I have to say that I am aghast that one of the previous speakers to this bill seems to be passing this incredible responsibility, may I say opportunity, on to the federal government, who may one day do something about this. Or that day may never come. Let me remind all members, with great respect, that they're talking about the same government who is right now in the very middle of decriminalizing marijuana.

Mr. Speaker, during my time in this House I've been honoured to sponsor many government bills and private bills and private members' bills, and I've been told that the reason that they successfully passed was that a whole lot of research was done before coming to this House. I'll tell you that I take it as a humble source of pride that I championed many causes that went way beyond politics. Friends, I commend the hon. Member for Calgary-West for doing exactly that in this circumstance, and I trust that every member of this House will see this for what it is. Please, in the name of the hundreds of Albertans who have been killed by this curse and all of those family and community members who mourn their deaths and in the name of all future possible victims, I implore you: drop the party colours, do the right thing, and pass this bill quickly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to speak to Bill 205, the Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016. In 2011 our province saw six fentanyl-related deaths. In 2012 that number rose to 29 fentanyl-related deaths, in 2013 to 66 deaths, in 2014 to 120, and in 2015 272 Albertans died a fentanyl-related death. Those numbers total 493 citizens who died a fentanyl-related death.

3:30

Naloxone, when given in time, could and is saving lives from drug overdoses. Supplies for 7,000 naloxone kits have been funded, 4,000 kits have been distributed or are available for distribution through Alberta Health Services, and 3,000 naloxone kits have been distributed or are available for distribution by seven harm reduction agencies in eight Alberta communities.

Mr. Speaker, since July 7, 2015, in my constituency of Red Deer-North Turning Point distributed 379 naloxone kits, which saved the lives of 98 individuals. Recently Alberta Health provided a further \$300,000 grant to Alberta Health Services to purchase additional naloxone kits as well as further supporting public education and awareness. As of March 17, 2016, 613 locations across the province registered to distribute the Alberta Health Services supply of 4,000 naloxone kits, including 102 nonpharmacy sites, 50 of which accept walk-in clients, and 511 community pharmacies. As of March 17, 2016, seven harm reduction agencies across our province are distributing or have distributed 3,000 naloxone kits in eight communities.

Mr. Speaker, more than 1,200 Alberta Health Services staff and 200 external health professionals have now completed the Alberta Health Services take-home naloxone e-learning module, and 80 per cent of emergency medical technicians have completed the training. These are a few steps that our government has recently taken to address the fentanyl crisis in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, our government has taken the issue of fentanyl and W-18 abuse very seriously. Our government continues to be committed to harm reduction strategies, ensuring that Albertans have access to naloxone, and we know that individuals are using the kits and that the kits are saving lives. Our government is continuing outreach and education as well as working to address the root causes of drug addiction. As well, our government is working to ensure that individuals will have access to the supports they need to detox and recover when they are prepared to enter into them. I am happy to report that in my constituency of Red Deer-North 20 beds have been upgraded to provide medical detoxification services at Safe Harbour.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 205 is another step forward in the fight against devastating drugs such as fentanyl and W-18. This bill will make it illegal for anyone to own a pill press or machine, a tablet presser machine, a capsule-filling machine, or a pharmaceutical-grade mixer unless they are licensed to own one. This means that pharmacies or people specifically licensed to manufacture drugs and those specifically designated in the regulations will be able to own the machines.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all in the House today to support Bill 205, and I thank the member for bringing it forward. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 205, the Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016. I just want to say right off the bat that I do support Bill 205 and will be happily voting for it. I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-West for bringing it forward.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West and I used to work in similar neighbourhoods, he, of course, as a police officer and me in my work with the homeless, but we would interact with many of the same clients and had a great relationship with the Calgary Police Service. I think his passion for this issue comes from the same area as my passion for this issue, and that is that he has seen the tremendous amount of damage that drugs can do to individuals and their families. Mr. Speaker, they take our best young minds and they

set them on a path that they are all too often not lucky enough to get out of, the path of poverty, homelessness, and often death.

Over the past year our province has been thrust into a crisis. We have seen the rise of fentanyl and the even deadlier opiate W-18. We know that these drugs are incredibly toxic. Fentanyl is 100 times more toxic than oxycodone, and W-18 is 100 times more toxic than that. Now, for me, that is extremely alarming because it makes me think of the first time that a person in my work at the Mustard Seed died on one of my shifts. Before that, I had seen addicts and other homeless people that I had worked with pass away when I was not at work, but that was the first time where somebody died in our shelter and I was on shift.

It was an individual who had come to Calgary and who was not typical of what we would see in the street scene. This individual had been severely sexually abused in Vancouver and had somehow suppressed that for many, many years. All of a sudden he just snapped and got on a bus and ended up in Calgary, living on the streets. One night he decided that he wanted to numb and self-medicate what he was going through. Somebody within the shelter system gave him heroin, and he, unfortunately, overdosed and died on the floor because of heroin.

That really stuck with me because this was not an individual that even did drugs. He was not an individual that probably would even have become addicted to drugs. He just decided at that time that things were hurting so bad that he was going to make a decision to numb it, and somebody gave him that. That is alarming to me because heroin is bad enough; this makes heroin look like a joke, Mr. Speaker.

We often think of drug addicts and the people that are doing drugs, you know, as the people that we would see on the streets, that are already homeless and suffering, et cetera, but often it's our kids. When this stuff makes it into schools and a young person decides that they're going to experiment with a drug that could kill them in one dose, that's scary. That's really scary to me, and that's why it stands out for me.

Last year, as has been mentioned, Mr. Speaker, 270 Albertans lost their lives due to fentanyl. Now the medical community is bracing themselves for an even harder year. These drugs are chemically engineered to be powerful numbing agents that can be added into a wide variety of drugs, meaning that we are now fighting a battle on many fronts. Fentanyl and W-18 alone can be consumed through injection, by way of a patch, and most frequently by pills. Drugs like ecstasy are also commonly manufactured into pills, and our province already knows all too well the deadly potential of that narcotic. As a province we have to do better to protect our communities. More and more we are seeing these drugs manufactured as pills. We need to make it harder for criminals to produce these drugs, and at the same time we need to make it easier for law enforcement to enforce the law.

Mr. Speaker, I am hopeful that Bill 205 will be a step in the right direction of making it harder for drug dealers to put this poison into our communities and to give this poison to our kids. The reality is that organized criminals are not going to stop making fentanyl or W-18 just because we pass this legislation – we know that – but what Bill 205 will do is put one more tool into the hands of law enforcement to bring these criminals to justice. If a dealer gets busted, they will face an additional charge in their hearing. More importantly, this law will help officers prove probable cause, making it easier for them to get a search warrant and crack down on organized crime.

Mr. Speaker, every little bit helps in the fight against drugs. I'm glad to see that the hon. member has brought forward part of the Wildrose plan, that we outlined in December. Point 9 in the Wildrose 10-point fentanyl harm reduction plan was to encourage

the enactment of "regulations regarding the import, export, sale, and possession of commercial pill presses." Bill 205 is a step in the right direction; let me make that perfectly clear.

Mr. Speaker, we still have a long way to go in combatting this crisis. The best place to start is by getting the rest of our 10-point harm reduction plan approved. This plan will help law enforcement bring down organized crime while at the same time providing much-needed help to those who are at risk of long-term damage from the misuse of fentanyl. This government has recently begun to show some willingness to listen to common-sense solutions on this issue. Our plan suggested increasing access to fentanyl's antidote, and the government has somewhat listened. Our plan called for the restoring of previous funding to the Alberta law enforcement response team, and the government has recently done that as well.

Mr. Speaker, I think that adopting three of the 10 ideas is a great start, but we still have a long way to go. Whether it be implementing a patch-for-patch system, increasing education about the dangers and risk of drug use, or improving collaboration between other provincial governments and the federal government, much still needs to be done to eliminate the threat of synthetic opiates.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I will be supporting this bill at second reading, and I encourage other members of this House to do so as well. I also encourage this government to think about what else could be done to help those most in need.

Thank you very much.

3:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the bill brought forward by the Member for Calgary-West. I certainly want to commend him for his dedication to making sure that we continue to find ways to make our communities safe. I will expand on that in a few moments, but I do personally feel like I need to address some of the comments raised by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Certainly, assuming that somebody's remarks around federal responsibility imply that they are going to vote against a provincial bill is, I think, short sighted and wrong headed. I think that saying that there are party colours that are driving this decision and, again, assuming that there is a decision being made to oppose a bill that I think has some merit is, again, very short sighted and disrespectful to the members of this House.

I want to say that I agree with comments that I think almost everyone has made around this being one tool. One tool is better than no tools. Obviously, we've been working on this file for almost a year, since we took office, and I'm sure that the previous government was doing work on this file as well. Obviously, a fine may not be as strong a deterrent as a criminal charge, but it is better than no charge. Certainly, I personally have conveyed my feedback to the Member for Calgary-West, who is bringing this bill forward, around my support for finding something that we can do that's within our own controls. I know that his desire might be to go further – mine is, too – but obviously we have to look at what our own parameters are, take those tools within our own abilities but continue to work in partnership with the federal government.

Again, I know that there were comments made around decisions being made in an election platform, in a campaign around marijuana legalization. I have to say that the efforts that have been made by the federal government to date on moving forward with addressing the fentanyl crisis have been quite responsive. I think that there are continued efforts that we can make moving forward, but I certainly wouldn't say that their election campaign, which Canadians did

vote for, which included the piece around the decriminalization and legalization of marijuana, should in any way lead anyone to believe that the federal government doesn't take the situation around fentanyl across Canada, not only in Alberta, very seriously. They're trying to work with us on finding solutions to help address this incredible crisis.

That being said about the comments being raised, I do want to touch base again on a few of the positive outcomes that have been achieved. It was also mentioned that there were only four kits on a reserve. I just want to clarify that there are four pharmacies on-reserve that are distributing kits, those being the Blood Tribe, Tsuu T'ina, Siksika, and Eden Valley, through the pharmacies and other distributors on-reserve, but there are actually 17 health centres staffed by the First Nations/Inuit health branch that have kits available and RNs on staff who are prescribing. Certainly, it's greater access than what was conveyed in a previous comment.

I want to provide that assurance as well as the fact that I know that the day that ARCHES, which is an organization out of Lethbridge, came on to the Blood Tribe and did a harm reduction workshop, that day two kits were used to save lives. That day. That is something we should all be very proud of. Yes, this isn't just about harm reduction. It's also about reducing access to illicit, illegal drugs on the street, and I want to commend the member for trying to come up with one strategy to help address pill presses.

I am thinking about some of the similarities between this and other areas where it would be nice if there was federal leadership. For example, our province and some other jurisdictions have taken leadership around reducing access to menthol cigarettes. That doesn't mean you can't drive over the border and buy menthol cigarettes. [interjection] Thank you very much. But the research shows that if youth, to a large extent, were smoking menthol, we had to take action on that. Just like the member is proposing here, if we have the ability to impose a fine provincially – and we do – we make the efforts to try to create some deterrence. Again, we'd like stronger deterrence at the federal level, but I'd rather have some power in our control of local law enforcement than none whatsoever. I'm sure that my colleagues agree, and to again assume otherwise I think would be short sighted.

Certainly, we will continue to work with our federal partners. We will continue to make efforts within our own ability to address pill presses, as this bill is proposing, to increase access to the antidote naloxone, which has saved lives significantly across this province and can continue to do so, as well as treatment for opioid dependency.

I also wanted to touch on another piece around opioid treatment, and it's about a conversation I had with a First Nations health leader around doing work – because we're talking about manufacturing illegal opioids. There's also opioid use that's prescribed by a medical professional that is being used illicitly in an unsafe way. I've talked to some First Nations leaders who have said that they looked at the rate of prescriptions in their communities, and they had to have some very serious conversations with their members and also with the physicians who were prescribing at increased rates and make serious adjustments to make sure that only those who needed opioids had access to them. Of course, while this is about the manufacturing of the illicit substance, there are also prescriptions out there that are manufactured very legally, but that doesn't make their use any safer.

Certainly, this is a lot about increasing awareness and trying to give at least one more tool to local law enforcement. I want to commend that as well as just touch base on some of the work that AHS has been doing in the area of fentanyl as well. The communications department has launched an awareness campaign that has had some impressions. I guess the visual impressions or

pop-ups through social media and otherwise: over 17 million, and that's driven over 109,000 clicks to the government-sponsored website to help individuals, families, and communities increase awareness about ways that they can address this.

There have certainly been campaigns around posters. When we were at the launch of the mental health report, I remember walking into the washroom and there was information about if you witness somebody overdosing, these are the symptoms that you can look for and these are the next steps you can take to help save their life.

I want to honour the work that's happening in our ministries, honour the drive from the Member for Calgary-West to try to add yet one more tool to law enforcement's capable hands, and continue to say to our federal counterparts that we need to continue to collaborate, we need to move this further because, as has been mentioned by all parties represented in this House, the more than 200 lives that were lost last year were tragic and they are preventable. We need to work together as a community to find ways to reduce access, to provide the harm reduction strategies through the antidote naloxone, and to address transitioning off addictions in a safe and respectful way.

Certainly, today's discussion and, I'm sure, when we have opportunities in committee to consider further amendments that might be considered by this Assembly to try to give us, again, even more tools than we have today and to continue even passing this, should we do so – I'm assuming we probably will – will not be the end. This will not mean that we say no to the federal responsibilities and moving forward and providing greater safety across the country. This gives us a tool. Is it the right tool? Well, it's better than no tools. We want to go further, and we need collaboration with our federal counterparts to make sure that we take this most seriously and move forward in a way that will continue to save lives across our province. Everyone deserves to have a chance, and this is literally life or death, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks again to the Member for Calgary-West for bringing this bill forward for our consideration today.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise to offer my very strong support for Bill 205 and thank the Member for Calgary-West for his diligent work in bringing this forward. I think it's very important that we in this House not only seek out the advice of experts in the field but actually listen to that advice. The Member for Calgary-West has direct, relevant experience in the field, but today's law enforcement officers, as they deal with the rise of the crisis of fentanyl, see the devastating effects of this drug, of W-18, of others.

**3:50**

The fentanyl crisis, my friends, is not a new trend. It happens to be fentanyl this time. It happens to be W-18 coming down the pike. We've seen these things before. Anything that we can do in this House to slow the spread of that drug and the scourge that is fentanyl on the streets is worth doing. It's absolutely worth doing and doing enthusiastically. Restricting access to pill presses will help now, and it will help in future crises as well. It is just one more tool in the tool box.

I'm very pleased to hear the Minister of Health lend her support and the Associate Minister of Health also lend her support. Just to circle back again to this question of: is it a provincial or a federal responsibility? Frankly, we have no control over what our friends in the federal government do. We only have control over what we in this House do. If we are able to do anything at all to stop it or

even just to slow the spread, we have to do that. We're never going to stop speeding cars in neighbourhoods, but you know what we do? We put down speed bumps. This is at the very least a speed bump to stop those drug dealers and criminals from hurting people. Anything that we can do to help is worth doing.

Now, I know we've talked a lot in this House about what fentanyl actually is. We've talked about its potency. When we think in terms of drugs that we may take in a legitimate sense, of ibuprofen or Aspirin, we think of those in doses of milligrams, right? What is a legitimate clinical dose of fentanyl, which by the way is a synthetic opioid that is used regularly to deal with breakthrough pain, extreme pain in cases of legitimate postsurgical or people who are dealing with cancer or any other number of very, very, very serious illnesses? Fentanyl is administered in doses of 25 to 100 micrograms. What is a microgram? A microgram is one-thousandth of a milligram. It is a tiny, tiny, tiny amount that is used in legitimate clinical practice. The drug dealers that are lacing other drugs with this stuff or even just selling it legitimately are selling it in far greater quantities.

How do you die when you take fentanyl? What does it do? It stops your breathing. It slowly stops your breathing. You suffocate from fentanyl. It is an absolutely horrific way to die. Anything we can do in this House to stop that from happening to any more Albertans – to think that this happens in this province almost on a daily basis is frightening, shocking in the extreme. This drug, like all drugs, knows no boundaries of gender, race, socioeconomic class. Anyone and everyone is at risk from this drug, so anything that we can do in this House to address the fentanyl crisis is absolutely worth doing.

I'll say again just a thanks to the member for the work that he has done not just in talking with law enforcement but in his work talking with members of the medical profession, the pharmaceutical college, other practitioners who may legitimately use pill presses in their practice. I think that was one of the questions that I had originally for my staff: well, is this going to, one, help? And I think that's a pretty clear yes. But are there other unintended consequences? Very clearly, you've done your work in asking others. It's very encouraging to know that other professions have said: sure, it may be another step in our process, but we're very happy to do that to ensure that only legitimate uses of pill presses, either manual or automatic, are used.

If it's one more tool for law enforcement to prevent the scourge of fentanyl on our streets, I'm absolutely enthusiastically supportive. So, of course, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this bill.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of Bill 205, the Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016. I actually take some umbrage at the comments from the Member for Calgary-Lougheed. There is no colour in this Chamber. There is only sense, common sense, and I think that this bill really is common sense.

Bill 205 supports a broader strategy to mitigate the impact of illicit drugs and stem opioid abuse. It's only one element of a very broad strategy, and we've heard a fair bit of discussion in this House already about it. The bill, I think, may be of some real use to our law enforcement officials. But let me be clear. Our government takes very seriously the issue of fentanyl abuse, and I again take some umbrage at the suggestion that we would try to put this aside just on a partisan basis. We know people across the province are facing life-and-death situations, and we're moving forward aggressively to curb the impact of fentanyl here in Alberta.

I want to speak about one other thing about this. It's been mentioned here already, and as a physician I know this very, very well. Alberta has the highest per capita consumption of opioids in the nation. That cuts across all socioeconomic strata, whether it's First Nations or immigrants or people that have lived all their lives here. We physicians – and I'm still a practising physician – may be part of the cause of this in that we haven't been as careful as we might have been to make sure, as the Minister of Health was alluding to, that the prescriptions were appropriate.

But there have been lots of efforts done. The triplicate drug plan is unique to Alberta, actually. It gives the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta some control on the overprescription of opioids by physicians. There has been this FPT working group on prescription drug abuse. We're trying to get better data, and there are monitoring programs beyond the triplicate drug program.

I'm fully supportive of what is being suggested, and I think it's a very important bill. I thank the Member for Calgary-West for putting it forward. But it is only one part of a very broad strategy that we need to be considering, and I think we need to be approaching our federal counterparts and suggesting that they take this issue seriously.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It's a great pleasure for me to speak today on Bill 205. First of all, I'd like to thank my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-West for introducing this and for all of the work that he's done on this bill. As was correctly pointed out by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, he has truly done his homework, as is his professional tendency, to investigate an issue very thoroughly and to talk to the people necessarily involved.

I do want to take a minute because I think the one part of this debate that perhaps has caused a little bit of, let's just say, rancour within the House was arising from some comments made, I think, quite frankly, with the best of intentions by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. I have to confess that when I first heard what the member said, I was a little bit puzzled because it certainly appeared like there was not necessarily support for the bill, but I do think he does support the bill. The member – and I'm going to be very cautious here because he's cautioned me before with regard to paraphrasing his comments – did make reference to the importance of a federal strategy on this and the challenges of having a restriction in one jurisdiction but not having comparable restrictions in neighbouring jurisdictions.

Trust me, living in Lloydminster, I know all about the challenges that get involved with that, especially when we have the legal drinking age of 18 on one side of the border and 19 on the other side. You can imagine what side of the border the bars do better on. But I will tell you, sir, that – and, certainly, I actually think that the ban on flavoured tobacco and extending that ban to menthol is a very good example of this – the passing of provincial legislation in one jurisdiction often spurs neighbouring jurisdictions to do the same. So from that standpoint I do think it is a very positive thing. I don't think it should ever be something that makes us less apt to go ahead with the passing of specific pieces of legislation that apply only within our own borders.

As far as that goes, you know, I would hope that he would probably agree with that principle. So some of the umbrage that has been taken on either side of the House, either by the Minister of Health or my colleague or the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud – I think we can agree that the member's intentions were positive. I do agree with him that we do need to lobby the federal government to bring the full weight of federal jurisdiction and all of the tools

that the federal government can bring to bear on this issue, that they should do that as well, including criminal charges if necessary. Now, that's not within the purview of this bill, as was clearly found by the investigation in doing the preparation for this by my colleague, so I'm glad that that's what he has done.

4:00

Along with my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and, no doubt, my colleague the Member for Calgary-Mountain View I stand in this House as probably one of three individuals that actually has the right to prescribe and use fentanyl legally. We also have members of the nursing profession here that, no doubt, have also used fentanyl as a drug, and they will know that fentanyl is an extremely potent, extremely useful, and extremely helpful drug in the right circumstances.

I'm glad that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud mentioned the use of triplicate prescription forms because that's something that we in the veterinary profession also use in order to try to reduce, shall we say, the iatrogenic abuse of opiates in this province. It's something that was recognized by the College of Physicians & Surgeons. They approached the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, recognizing that veterinarians also prescribe opiates.

In fact, because of the relatively large size of many of our patients we use opiates that are particularly concentrated. Fentanyl, as has been pointed out, is some 100 times more potent than morphine, but in fact veterinarians, especially those working in wildlife and zoological practice, use compounds that are even more potent than fentanyl. The compound etorphine, better known as M99, is used by zoological veterinarians, for example, and it is 10,000 times more potent than morphine. In fact, one drop is enough to kill a human being. Because of that it has to be handled with extreme care. When we were taught how to use this product in veterinary college, we were always taught to draw the antidote naltrexone first into the syringe and to have it prepared in case you accidentally needle-pricked yourself with M99. And when you consider that these products are used, for example, in wildlife medicine in places like Africa for darting individuals like rhinoceros and hippopotamus, you get the idea of just how potent these products can be.

One of the statements that's been made during the course of debate on this is how this cuts across all socioeconomic strata in this province.

The other thing I also want to talk a little bit about, to the importance of doing something about fentanyl in our province, is that it cuts across all regions. It is a mistake to assume that the problem with fentanyl is a problem that is restricted to Alberta's urban areas. In point of fact, fentanyl knows no boundaries. Fentanyl does not respect any division between rural and urban, and in fact rural Alberta has seen many, many cases of fentanyl abuse; tragically, fentanyl deaths; and, sadly, also fentanyl production and trafficking. In the 2014-15 ASIRT annual report there were reports of fentanyl and the use of fentanyl in Drayton Valley, in Hinton, in Wembley near Grande Prairie, in Taber, Cold Lake, Olds, and Brooks. So you can see that this is not necessarily something that is confined to our large urban centres. In that regard the hon. member's bill is something that will affect Albertans across the province, whether they live in large urban centres or in smaller rural communities.

I know from my own conversations with emergency personnel in the Lloydminster hospital that they estimate that typically they will see one fentanyl overdose case daily. Now, fortunately, they have had very few fatalities. They've been very successful in terms of using naloxone as the antidote. But the Member for Calgary-Elbow was quite correct: an overdose of opiates causes death by respiratory arrest. It is respiratory depression initially and then

respiratory arrest. It is a horrific thing to see. You know, the one thing that we do fortunately have going for us is that naloxone is an extremely potent and effective antidote, but it also is important that it be used correctly. I do applaud the government in its efforts to make naloxone more available.

The problem with fentanyl and what is apt or likely to become fentanyl's successor, W-18, is all related to, again, as the Member for Calgary-Elbow said: if it's not one drug, it's the next drug, and if it's not that drug, it's the next drug after that. It's because there's a shift, and there's always – we have to recognize that the illegal element within our society, the bad guys, as my colleague often calls them, is always looking for a new way to exploit the vulnerable within our society. The beauty of this bill is that whether it's OxyContin, as it was until 2012, or fentanyl, as it is now, or W-18 or whatever the next opiate is that is on the market, banning pill presses and making the possession of pill presses by those individuals who are not supposed to be in possession of them an expensive undertaking will at least be a tool, as has been said before, that can be used by our law enforcement officials across the board.

I'm very pleased to see the support for this. I would also like to say and I'd be remiss in not saying that I appreciate members of all parties agreeing to unanimous consent to move ahead with this piece of legislation this afternoon. I can think of very few issues that we're dealing with that are more pressing than the current situation that we're dealing with in Alberta with fentanyl. Just because of the timelines that are required for the passage of private members' bills and the fact that, even though it may not feel like it, we don't have a lot more Mondays to debate private members' business and we have to get through second reading, Committee of the Whole, and third reading, we'd really, really like to see that happen before we reach the end of this spring session. I do thank all members on all sides of the House for providing that unanimous consent.

Bill 205 is an effort on behalf of my colleague the Member for Calgary-West to do something very positive for Albertans. We all have slightly different takes on how it goes, and I bring again my own experience as a veterinarian, having actually used fentanyl on a lot of patients. As the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud correctly pointed out, it is a very effective painkiller.

I urge members to join me in supporting Bill 205.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 205, recognizing the tremendous damage that this drug has done already in our culture. It doesn't look like there's any containment happening soon. It's a legal drug. That's part of the challenge, of course. It's not only available; it's easily manufactured with ingredients that are available online.

When we talk about preventing use, of course, we talk about at least two levels. One would be education and prevention, and that is ongoing. I mean, that is part of the everyday challenge of parents, of communities, of schools, of people who care about the well-being of young people and others. It's also about harm reduction and intervening in the lives of people that are already in trouble with drugs and addictions and mental illness. It's also about restricting access: restricting sales, restricting who can get access to it, restricting or attempting to restrict, in this case, production. We know that there are alternatives that we can be invoking, and this is one of them. This is one means of trying to reduce the local access to illegal sources.

It's perhaps informative to know that there are six other formulations of this besides pills. You can spray it. You can snort it. You can inject it in your veins. You can put a patch on your skin. You can actually have it in lozenge form as a lollipop, sugar-coated, and you can inhale it in a spray format. Unfortunately, there are already a number of different options for using for those who want to use it, but pills are certainly one of the most common vehicles and one that we could add value to restricting.

I'm pleased with the Member for Calgary-West's initiative here and, certainly, his consultation and the support from both pharmacists and physicians around it and the police service, who know so much about trying to restrict access to it. Obviously, it will be a limited impact that one can have in one province, on one formulation out of seven formulations that one could, if one was really keen to get the stuff, give to oneself, but it's a step. It's a step in the right direction, and it sends a message that we will use any means that are feasible, practical, affordable. I don't think this is going to add significantly to the budget for either the police service or the court system. It is actually, in the end, going to save costs, of course, and lives, so I, certainly, for one would see benefit from this and would be supporting this.

Those are my comments, Mr. Speaker.

4:10

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill, and I thank the member opposite from Calgary-West for his sponsorship of this bill. As the members in the House may or may not know, my previous career of 30-plus years was with the Correctional Service of Canada. I have over and over again worked with offenders dealing with addictions, so my perspective is a little bit different from the perspective that's been shared this afternoon. Their lives are well on the way to destruction. That destruction is not confined to just themselves but includes their immediate families, their friends, neighbours, and all of us in our communities because we all pay the price.

I also know how difficult the struggle is for them to scratch their way out from under their life's destruction through addictions. I believe that no one wanted to be an addict. I have seen addicts working so hard, fighting and fighting that addiction, and then somebody puts something else in front of them, and they're right back to where they were before. It is so sad that it happens. When presses are used and pills are being made and so easily accessible, it certainly makes it harder for somebody who's already addicted to stay away from those drugs. A drug like fentanyl is a drug that will drag them back into addiction and probably kill them. Their ability to say no is much more difficult than someone who is not addicted. But theirs is a life still worth saving.

Perhaps your daughter, son, or grandchild is out with friends, and someone slips something into a lemonade – it doesn't have to be a beer or a drink – and your child or your grandchild could be right back into that position. To the hon. member across who mentioned that he felt he was safe because his daughter is 10: no, you're not. You have to keep an eye on your children, and that's another part of this whole puzzle to stop addictions.

We must take steps to stop pills being made and addictions being spread among our youth and among other people in our society. This is a step, a very good step, but certainly, as others have said, we need a much greater strategy if we're going to stop addictions in this country, if we're going to stop those Albertans who die because they happen to get one of those pills, whether they do it knowingly or not. If they're doing it knowingly, obviously there's another step that needs to be taken. But I stand here, and I absolutely

support this bill because it is our opportunity to do our part to stop it. We've got lots more to do, but this is a good step.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to take this opportunity to speak to Bill 205. As many members in this House are in very similar circumstances to mine – you know, any time we talk about drug use or access to drugs, especially chemical drugs, I worry about my children receiving or getting access to these drugs. As the Member for Lethbridge-East echoed, it doesn't really matter what age they're at. You know, when I was in elementary school, I knew individuals who had access to drugs before they even got to junior high. It's a reality that we face, and it's a reality, unfortunately, that we're going to continue to face. We need to make sure that we provide as many tools as we can to really try to fight these issues.

We need to make sure that we work collaboratively, and I'm sure I'll echo that a few times when I speak. It doesn't solely lie with the provincial government. All three levels of government and the indigenous people of Alberta need to work collaboratively to really try to fight this because it's going to be a battle that we will continue to fight. When we move past this legislation, there will likely be another chemical drug that will hit the market, and we'll have to work together to fight that. It's a reality that we're always going to face as legislators. It's really sad to hear that 272 people passed away last year because of an overdose of fentanyl.

Ultimately, you know, it reminds me of a time when I was working in the restaurant industry. Being in the service industry, you deal with a lot of people who sometimes are going into their first job or are very young or sometimes may have been marginalized. It was not uncommon for me to hire someone who a year ago was homeless. The challenge is that you deal with people who've had substance abuse, who have fallen off the wagon multiple times, and sometimes they fall off the wagon again. You see them one day, and sometimes you never see them again. You hope that they're okay, but in some cases they're not.

I remember an instance once during my restaurant time. It was a Sunday. Usually on Saturdays people are out partying and having a good time, and kids are being kids. One time one of my members went a little bit too far. I was talking to one of my colleagues. He called me when I was at home, and he told me that he had had an overdose in the prep hall. They had to perform first aid, and they had to call paramedics. Very fortunately, he was all right. He was very fortunate that he was at work that day and he wasn't at home because I don't know what would have happened to him. Very fortunately, the place that I worked at had a lot of supports, so we could provide intervention and help this individual with some rehab therapy. From what I've heard, he's doing well now, but it was a very scary time for not only myself but for my colleagues as well.

I think it's important that we look for all the tools and we ensure that we advocate for all Albertans to make sure that we're doing the right things here. Our government has done a lot of good steps to move forward. Recently we put an additional \$2.6 million into the funding for ALERT, which is going to help combat a lot of the organized crime that we see from this. We've opened up 31 new treatment beds, including 16 in Medicine Hat, and there are additional beds in Hull Services, which is near my constituency as well.

Today I actually had an opportunity to attend the 50th anniversary of FCSS in Calgary. They were doing their annual report, and it was really exciting because for the first time in 10

years they're receiving additional funding. They handle a lot of preventative issues. The number one thing that they think about is prevention. When we move forward with this, we also have to look at how we can prevent people from utilizing this awful drug and other drugs as well. Our government has already committed \$300,000 for fentanyl prevention methods as well, so that's one of the steps along with other organizations like the FCSS programs that we have throughout Alberta.

You know, it's funny. Talking about prevention has been around for 50 years. Fifty years ago Ernest Manning was in this Legislature, and he was talking about prevention. I think it's important that we continue to have these comments and talk about preventative measures, which I've heard from many members around the floor here as well.

As I've said many times, I see this bill as one of the many steps that we as legislative members are going to take to really work towards keeping these drugs out of the hands of vulnerable and young and even well-educated Albertans. That's why I'm going to stand in support of this bill.

Thank you.

4:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 205. In fact, I wish that the need to speak to this bill didn't exist as greatly as it does, but unfortunately that is where we're at. I would just like to take a moment to thank the House. It's not every day that we have the opportunity to work collaboratively and find an issue of pressing importance that we all can have some agreement on. On behalf of myself and my colleagues I just wanted to say thank you so much to the House for providing unanimous consent to hear second reading today as it is of pressing importance.

Mr. Speaker, this is, unfortunately, a crisis that is affecting every corner of the province. Oftentimes there is this belief that rural Alberta isn't affected by some of the negative impacts of drugs and crime that affect a lot of the larger cities, but in this case inside the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills we have lost a number of young people. I don't know the exact number, but I know personally at least five young people who have lost their lives to this horrible, horrible drug. The town of Irricana and the village of Beiseker are just two of the places where people have suffered a great loss. It has such a profound impact on a small community when virtually every person in town knows the individual who has overdosed and died. Some of the challenges and the connotations that come with that event and some of the challenges that their family will face because of it – not all of those kids were bad kids. In fact, all of those kids were good kids who made a few bad decisions. Unfortunately, they made a decision that they can never take back.

I think it's our duty, our responsibility to do the things that we can do as legislators to help prevent these horrific, horrific acts. While, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe for a moment that Bill 205 would have likely stopped the deaths of those individuals, it is certainly one tool that we can provide that might just curb the ability for one young person to have access to this horrific drug. If, in fact, we are successful in that, just one, the time we've spent here in this Legislature discussing this important piece of legislation will be more than worth the time because the lives of those affected and the lives of those who are addicted matter. They matter to me, they matter to this side of the House, and I know that they matter to the other side of the House.

We have this duty to legislate where we can. We all have a duty to educate where we are able. I am thankful for the government's efforts in this area. I'm thankful that they have taken some of the recommendations that this side of the House has made and put politics aside to put the needs of the people first. That's why we're working on this issue together. Now, we have a long way to go. We have a giant hill to climb. As we've heard from the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, there are, unfortunately, many ways to access this horrific drug, but the thing we can do to limit the most widespread use is definitely a step in the right direction. So, Mr. Speaker, it's with pride that I stand today to be part of one step in a solution, the step that will allow our law enforcement professionals one more arrow in their quiver, one more tool in their tool belt to do the important work that they do.

It's my hope that there will be many individuals that won't have access to fentanyl because of this legislation. As the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster mentioned, there is a great opportunity to reduce access in the future to drugs that come in pill form. I appreciate some of the checks and balances in this piece of legislation with respect to pharmacies and other individuals who may need to have access to a pill press. I'm pleased that we've worked collaboratively and the hon. Member for Calgary-West has worked collaboratively with physicians, first responders, and pharmacists to try to do what we can to ensure that this crisis is managed to the best of our ability.

I thank the member for bringing the bill forward, and I thank the members of the Assembly for debating it today. I look forward to an expedited process that can see this piece of legislation pass prior to the rising of the House this spring.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would wish to speak to Bill 205? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the chance to rise and add my voice to the discussion on Bill 205. I think there is certainly a desire for everyone in this House to move this forward. I'll keep my comments brief. We do have a crisis on our hands. We have an uncontrolled product, and if I can build on the comments from the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, I think that as long as these products are uncontrolled and within the borders of Alberta, all Albertans are at risk. We need to be able to take action on that.

I certainly commend the Member for Calgary-West for bringing this bill forward and bringing this bill forward in the best way that he could. I don't think there's any expectation of anyone with regard to whether the federal government should have moved first on this. I think they should have moved first on this, but they didn't, so it's up to us right here right now to move on it. I think this bill will at least get us started, and it's my hope that maybe this will serve as the template that other jurisdictions can duplicate and adopt so that we get a little bit more control of this. I mean, it's like they said. This stuff is nasty, it's killing people, and we need to do what we can to stop it.

Certainly, I want to see this moved quickly into Committee of the Whole, where I would entertain some amendments to maybe see some more teeth brought to this. If I may use your words, the bad guys are in this business to make money, and they seem to be making a lot of it. You know what? Maybe we should consider taking them out of business by giving this a few more teeth to work with.

I would certainly urge all of my colleagues right across the House to support this. Let's make sure that we move as quickly as possible to ensure that no other Albertans lose their lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:30

**The Speaker:** Any other members on Bill 205?

I would ask the hon. Member for Calgary-West: do you wish to close debate?

**Mr. Ellis:** Yes. Thank you. You know, as with many things since the beginning of my political career, I am humbled. I think this is another day in which I am truly humbled. This is a bill, honestly, with the pure intent to save lives. We as Albertans were faced with a crisis, we had to come up with a solution, we consulted with stakeholders, and here we are working together, working collaboratively to come up with a solution. Certainly, I welcome anything, as the member opposite has stated, that could create even further teeth, but I'm happy to know that there is support for the bill. As I think some of the other members have mentioned, if we can save even one life, then we will have done our job.

As I've stated before, Mr. Speaker, this is not the be-all and end-all; this is purely a tool. I've stated that we have educational opportunities for the people in our society to help them. We have preventative measures to help them. The government is doing things regarding naloxone, and they need to be applauded for that. But it is truly that collaborative effort that will allow us to go forward in the best interest of those who have addictions, those who are victims to ensure that we are truly putting our stamp on the province as the 29th Legislature of Alberta in saying that we've identified a crisis, we've had enough, and we will do something effectively to make a change.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. I look forward to further debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 205 read a second time]

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I think that if you seek it, you will find it, unanimous consent to go to Motion 505 given that there are estimates this evening and the opportunity, then, for us to rise at approximately 5:30 and prepare for estimates if we were to call the clock now 5 o'clock and begin Motions Other than Government Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

#### Minimum Wage Increases

505. Mr. Taylor moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to postpone further implementation of its planned \$15 per hour minimum wage target until a comprehensive study on the effects that these increases would have on employment rates and on the prices of goods and services has been completed by the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table this motion today. The NDP government needs to slow down on its minimum wage hikes and ensure it fully understands the impact of this policy before it makes another poor decision based on ideology rather than sound fiscal planning. In these difficult economic times the stakes are too high to rush a policy that has only been shown to have negative effects on low-income earners. Ensuring that any action with respect to the minimum wage is based on clear evidence

is one of the most important things we can do for workers here in Alberta. Albertans are already worried and anxious in this economy, and they deserve to know if this policy would help create jobs or if it would kill jobs. We as legislators need to ensure that we are acting in the best interests of all Albertans. We can do that by listening to the evidence and to our job creators, who would be covering the cost of a higher wage.

You know, I've had the pleasure of speaking to business owners across my riding over the last year, and this issue is often the first concern they come up with. It seems to me that one of four things are likely to happen when wages are increased from \$10.20 an hour to \$15 per hour in three short years: one, employers paying minimum wage or close to it will have to lay off workers or avoid new hires in order to constrain costs so they can keep their prices down and stay competitive; two, businesses will do their best to automate services in an effort to keep their competitive edge through low prices which will kill jobs; three, prices for goods and services will go up across the board as wages, minimum and otherwise, face upwards pressure; finally, four, businesses that don't have a wide enough profit margin to cover the increased costs will sadly have to close their doors.

Mr. Speaker, the businesses in my riding are not alone in fearing this minimum wage increase. Across the province businesses are already struggling, and according to data from industry Canada personal businesses and business insolvencies have increased by over 30 per cent in Alberta between 2014 and 2015. Even without the minimum wage hikes, the Calgary Chamber of commerce pointed out that in June 2015 Alberta had the second-highest take-home minimum wage in Canada at \$10.20 an hour. A minimum wage earner actually took home nine of those dollars. That's an after-tax minimum wage second only to Ontario's. This massive 47 per cent increase to the minimum wage would kill anywhere between 50,000 to over 180,000 jobs in Alberta through direct cuts or jobs that will never be offered to workers because the minimum wage is too high. That's according to an analysis by the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses.

Wildrose has heard from businesses across the province that want to be consulted. The NDP needs to listen to our province's job creators, who have told us that they're hurting and have to cut jobs or close doors in the event of a \$15 minimum wage. The NDP government also needs to listen to the facts about who a higher minimum wage would actually help. The truth is that the government's own minimum wage profile shows us that the largest percentage of minimum wage earners are between the ages of 15 and 19, and research compiled by the CFIB shows that most minimum wage earners are not only young but live with family members who are not part of a low-income household. Because so many minimum wage earners are young people, the CFIB predicted that a \$15 minimum wage would trigger between a 14 and a 28 per cent decrease in youth employment. Those are their words, not mine.

Even more troubling are studies like those from *Labour Economics*, a peer-reviewed journal that researched teen employment, poverty, and the minimum wage in Canada. The study showed that "a higher minimum wage may paradoxically result in a significant negative shock to household income among low-income families." When the *Journal of Labor Research* studied the impact of the minimum wage, it found that "job losses are disproportionately concentrated on the poor," and also that "political rhetoric notwithstanding, minimum wages are poorly targeted as an anti-poverty device."

It's independent evidence like this that makes me worry that this policy will hurt the very people the Premier claims to want to help. That's even before we look at the unintended consequences for low-



income earners, like the rising cost of consumer goods and child care. Will low-income families have to pay even more for child care as child care providers implement a wage hike for their workers?

4:40

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are all looking for hope in these difficult times, real hope, not the false hope of a job-killing \$15 minimum wage. The evidence is already there in other jurisdictions. Higher minimum wage hurts low-income families. If the NDP truly wants to help these families, it should work to grow the economy so that those earning the minimum wage can move on to better earning opportunities. The fact is that the government already received and ignored an internal assessment that significant job loss is a realistic consequence of a \$15 minimum wage and that major research would be needed to grasp the full implications. All I ask is that the government allow this Assembly to take the time to conduct the research.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the members of this Assembly to vote in favour of this motion and to ensure that we set policy based on evidence, not blind ideology. Thank you. I'll sit down now and let the discussion happen.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really feel the need for the opportunity to rise and speak to Motion 505 as the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future and also a former job creator, a restaurant manager. The first comment I have to say when I heard the opening remarks and that I'm a bit concerned about is: there are child care workers making \$11.25 an hour? That's a bit worrisome for me. To be fair, I want to make sure that if someone is looking after my children, they are receiving a fair, living wage.

Now, in the most recent estimates that we had with the Minister of Labour, she indicated that she was going to be spending some time consulting with the business community over the summer, discussing the next steps with the implementation and the phase-in of the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. What I worry about with this motion and us moving forward with these steps is that we're just basically going to be duplicating work, and that's not fair to taxpayers. We have a lot of things under consideration with the committee right now. We've had to be fighting for time because of two budget estimates, and we also have to make sure that we review PIPA, which is coming up, as it's important legislation that does need to be reviewed considering the times that are occurring right now, not to mention that if any other bills were to be referred to this committee, it'd be important for us to make sure that we have the time allotted for that. I'm also concerned that if this was referred to the committee, we wouldn't have enough thorough time to look through this.

Further to the point is that when we're interacting with businesses, we need to make sure that we're providing them with certainty. If we're going to be sitting on this for two years, it's not fair to the business community, and a lot of small businesses in the service industry are businesses that are paying people minimum wage. They are responsible for heavy finances. They need to make sure that they're reporting their finances and they're projecting adequately. Therefore, we need to make sure that while we do consult with them and we work with them, we provide them with answers in a timely fashion because they are responsible to their owners, to their stakeholders, and to the corporations that they may fall under as well.

Now, I want to kind of go through some statistics and just talk about the overarching things. In the last little while we've talked

about how one-quarter to a half of homeless are the working homeless. It depends on which region you go to, whether it's a large municipality or a smaller municipality. That is a bit troublesome because even in these times where the rental market is starting to open up and we're seeing decreases in rent, they're still having trouble finding a place to live, let alone feed their kids. We hear a lot about people who are earning minimum wage also being heavy recipients of the food bank as well. This is a time where the food banks are really pinched heavily and are heavily depended on by a lot of people who may be out of work because of the low price of oil.

Three hundred thousand people in Alberta earn minimum wage: 60 per cent of those are women, and 35 per cent of those are parents. That's 100,000 parents that are earning minimum wage right now.

You know, it's been discussed many times that the states of California and Seattle are implementing minimum wage. Now, I want to do a little bit of compare and contrast. They have a \$15 minimum wage, but as we are aware, the Canadian dollar has dropped. Therefore, they actually have a higher minimum wage than Alberta does, and they seem to be doing fine. When I looked this up – granted, it was Friday, so the numbers may have changed but not heavily because I haven't heard anything on the news – \$15 in Canadian dollars is \$11.55 U.S. That means that the minimum wage we're looking at is \$11.55 U.S. I must remind all hon. members that last May, May 2015, when we were elected on our mandate, \$15 in Canadian dollars was \$12.45 U.S. That means that it has dropped by a dollar U.S.

Now, as many of us talk about, the business communities have to deal with the implications of the U.S. dollar because of import goods, but so do the consumers. While things may get a bit more expensive for businesses, especially when we're looking at imports like fruits and vegetables, they are going way up for those who are earning minimum wage. We need to be cognizant of that. Looking at heavy delays in this could be creating huge barriers for families who are simply trying to make sure that their kids have a nutritious meal to eat.

With that being said, I must remind all members that sometimes we look at it in this overarching – that it's going to hurt one business. We're all in this together. Every business is going to be implementing this together. It's not like we're in this business of picking winners or losers. We want to make sure that Albertans are earning a fair, living wage, especially when we're facing Albertans who, because of the low price of oil, have to take a job in the service industry to make sure that they have food for their family and that they can pay their bills.

Mr. Speaker, for that reason and as our government continues to consult with businesses and will continue to look into this and study the implications that come as we phase in the minimum wage, I cannot support this motion.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak following the Member for Calgary-Shaw. I'm just checking some data here, which I will use in my points in this debate. I want to make a few essential points about minimum wage and, really, I would hope, all decisions that get made in this Chamber. One, good data makes for good decisions. Two, I think every single person in this Chamber wants to help Albertans. I don't think anybody here saw an election thinking: aha, I can finally put one over on people. I want to be very clear, as I make my points here, on what I believe, certainly speaking for myself and my

mighty caucus, but I also think that most members on this side genuinely and truly want to help Albertans.

I've been very clear that I have a lot of questions about the \$15 an hour minimum wage. Is it going to actually help more than it's going to hurt? To be clear, in case you hadn't guessed it already, I am absolutely and enthusiastically speaking in support of this motion. I think that we need to really take a moment – well, more than just a moment. We need to study and examine the impact of a \$15 minimum wage in Alberta in this very challenging economic time.

Now, I believe the other side when they say that they want to help people. I know you do. I believe that's in your absolute heart of hearts. What I would love is for every single person in this province to have a living wage, to not have to live in poverty, to not have to be a working parent, to not have to scrape and go to the food bank, to not have to face unemployment or reduced work hours. That's what I want. I think that's what every single one of us wants. But if a \$15 minimum wage puts small businesses out of business, if it results in people finding that they have fewer hours at \$15 an hour than they did previously at \$11.20 or another minimum wage, then have we actually solved a problem? Have we actually helped anyone? In fact, we may find that there are unintended consequences of this effort to help, where, in fact, the government has ended up hurting the people they tried to help. That, I think, is what the evidence is starting to show in the U.S.

#### 4:50

I want to speak briefly to the points the Member for Calgary-Shaw made about the \$15 minimum wage and how it compares to Canadian dollars. That's not the way economics works. With great respect, the Fight for \$15, while a lovely slogan and very easy to type into a campaign brochure, is totally different in a Canadian context. What is the United States? The United States does not have public health care. The United States has very little in the way of a social safety net. The United States barely has public education. We have all of those things in this province and in this country. A \$15 minimum wage in the U.S. is totally out of the context of what a Canadian social safety net would support. Now, what we have in this province, what we have in this country is not perfect. We certainly need to work on those things. But there is a real need to look deeper into what the impact of a \$15 minimum wage would be.

There was mention earlier from an hon. member on the other side that the government is going to consult, and the Minister of Labour has talked about consulting business about the raise to \$15 minimum wage. But the Premier has been very, very clear about doubling down: absolutely, we have made a platform commitment; a \$15 minimum wage is on its way. What in the world is the minister consulting about, then, if, on one hand, you know you're going to \$15 minimum wage and, on the other hand, you're consulting? On what? That's not a consultation. [interjections] So the phase-in, the timing? You're saying: the phase-in. You've also said, as I understand it – it's been very, very clear that this is coming in the term of this government, by 2018. That's coming. So does that mean that we stay low and then jump up a dollar and a half, two dollars at the end? I don't know. But you've said that it's \$15. There's no wiggle room on that. What are we consulting about? That, frankly, is disingenuous.

Let's just talk about the minimum wage increases that we've had in this province over the last number of years, dating back to 2012. In 2012 minimum wage went up from \$9.40 to \$9.75; in 2013 it went up to \$9.95; in 2014 to \$10.20; and now it's at \$11.20. So the cumulative impact of that – that's an 8.5 per cent increase up to \$10.20, and then jumping from \$10.20 to \$11.20 is a 16 and two-

thirds per cent increase. Those are substantial increases. That puts Alberta at the same rate as the next highest province, essentially. Ontario is at \$11.25. We're now at \$11.20. The Northwest Territories is at \$12.50, if I'm not mistaken, but their cost of living is substantially higher. What I'm saying is that Alberta is not out of step with the rest of the country.

Let's look at other data. There's a very clear study in the province of Quebec that shows that once the minimum wage exceeds 42 per cent of the average weekly wage, job losses start. So minimum wage can be up to about that level. Now, the average weekly wage is in the \$28, \$29 range, and that would mean, the average weekly wage being at that rate, that 42 per cent of that puts it at about \$11.50, \$12, something like that. Based on that data, that evidence, that peer-reviewed study, it would show that we're about right, where we are now. Maybe we can deal with a little more.

Let's come back to this. This is not about being punitive. This is not about saying that people shouldn't earn a fair wage. Of course, they should. Of course, people should be able to do that. But if the end result of implementing a \$15 minimum wage is hurting people so they lose their jobs or they earn less money because they get fewer hours, have we actually solved the problem, or have we gone about making something worse? As a government, wouldn't you want to know that? That's what this motion is about. That's what this is talking about. That's really important. I would sincerely hope the government would want to support that.

My final point. A minimum wage was never meant to be a living wage. Those are different things. Those are very different things. Where, my friends, is the overall poverty reduction strategy? What I want to know is: where is the poverty reduction strategy? Poverty reduction is about housing. Poverty reduction is about access to resources. Poverty reduction is about education. Poverty reduction is about early childhood learning. That's poverty reduction. That's what's really important. If we end up with the unintended consequence of putting people out of work, of disincanting small businesses or even large businesses to hire more people, that is going to make what is already a dire economic situation in this province even worse. I know that's not what you want to do. It's really easy to just say: "\$15 dollars an hour: that's going to save the world. That's going to make things all better." No, it's not. There's a big risk that it makes it a lot worse. I want it to be better. I know you want it to be better. I do. I really have talked to many members on that side.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, your comments through the chair. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the reminder.

This is obviously something that we're all trying to tackle here, this challenging economy, but we need to take a step back on this particular issue. Now, I'm certainly not supportive of sending absolutely everything to committee because I think this House has a lot of work to do directly and not everything should be referred to committee. This is one of those cases where I think it really is important that this government take its time to get it right. This motion is an opportunity to do that, and I would really encourage the government to rethink and support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, yesterday was Mother's Day, and you're probably wondering: why is he talking about Mother's Day? Well, my mother, when we first came to Canada, used to work really hard. She was making the minimum wage that was offered at that time. I can't even remember what it

was. She used to work at the Army & Navy. My mother was the kind of mother that'd go without to make sure that her children would have plenty to eat. I'm sure that there are lots of Albertans out there right now that would probably do the same thing for their children. So it was a pleasure for me to honour my mother yesterday on Mother's Day because she was the kind of woman that taught me that we need to fight as hard as we possibly can to make sure that life is fair for all Albertans.

Now, I respect the intention of this motion: to look into matters, to consult. But I would ask all the members in this House to go and consult with those mothers or those parents that are out there right now making minimum wage, trying to meet the budget. Now, I know that there are members who are saying, "Well, if you increase the minimum wage to \$15, it's going to take away," but that's not what we're seeing in other jurisdictions in North America. We're seeing that it is possible to meet that \$15 minimum wage.

To suggest that because here we have a higher social safety net, to me, is not a good argument at all. Yes, we're going to provide health care. Yes, we're going to make sure that people have access to education. That's what's going to help them get a better job in the long run. But in the meantime you have to make sure that you have a living wage so that you don't have families having to go to the food bank. That's a shame. That's an incredible shame, that we have families in this province that are making a minimum wage and still can't make sure to put enough food on the table, that they have to go to the food bank on top of that. No one who works a full-time job in Alberta should have to go to the food bank to feed themselves. You know, many of the roughly 300,000 Albertans who earn less than \$15 per hour are forced to do just that, to go to the food bank, and this denies them the economic security that their employment should provide and the basic human dignity that many of us take for granted.

5:00

When was the last time that you earned minimum wage? I remember earning minimum wage. I also remember being unemployed and having to do everything I could possibly do in order to put food on the table for my family. Luckily, I'm in a privileged position right now, and we as privileged Albertans who sit in this House cannot forget those Albertans who are struggling to make ends meet at the end of the month.

We know that around 55 per cent of those 300,000 people are one of the heads of their household and that their families count on that income to make ends meet. We know that over 60 per cent of those 300,000 people are women like my mother, and we know that over 35 per cent of those 300,000 people have children. That means over a hundred thousand working parents are trying to raise children on an extremely fixed budget. Alberta can do better for Albertans, and we have to make sure that we stick to our plan.

Our government promised to make work fairer by improving the income of those who work for minimum wage, and work should pay enough so that people can take care of their families. Our government ran on the promise to raise Alberta's minimum wage to \$15 per hour. We have not strayed from that target. However, we fully recognize the current economic realities, as we all do, in taking a gradual approach in order to allow for economic recovery and to carefully consider all input regarding the process of achieving that goal.

Now, our government has committed to consulting with all stakeholders to gain a wide range of perspectives as we continue to monitor business confidence and overall economic conditions. After consulting and after considering, after the Minister of Labour considers and consults, we'll be communicating more about the

plan, about going forward and how we will be engaging with Albertans on the best way to reach a \$15 per hour minimum wage.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I respect where the member is coming from. But I believe that we've waited far too long in order to make sure that work is fair here in Alberta and to make sure that people are earning a fair wage for the hours that they put in.

You know, yesterday being Mother's Day, again I want to honour my mother and all the hard-working mothers out there that do so much for their children. The parents: I'd say that the majority of them are mothers, single moms. Yes, there are also single dads, but the majority are and the tendency is that they're single moms. They work so hard. Some of them even work two, some of them even work three jobs. In my own constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie I've spoken to these people. You wonder why I'm so passionate about that. It's because I've actually looked in their eyes. And when they say to me, "Yeah; I don't earn enough," then something has to be done about that.

I'm proud that this government ran on a platform that included a \$15 minimum wage and that they're still going to work hard to implement that. At the same time that we're going to implement it, we're still consulting Albertans that are providing jobs for other Albertans. I know that we can reach this target, but it's going to take co-operation. It's going to take a willingness on behalf of everybody to make sure that we make Alberta the best place to live for all Albertans, including those people who are on a minimum wage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity to speak on my colleague's Motion 505. You know, we've actually talked about this, and being the shadow minister of Labour, I have thought a lot about this issue. The concern that I have is that the idea of bringing this minimum wage to \$15, as noble as it is in broad strokes – really, the evidence shows that it will hurt the people that they are trying to help.

Now, I have heard many times from the members opposite: show us the evidence. There's a plethora of evidence out there to show us that this idea of bringing it to \$15 is not the silver bullet for poverty reduction. It just is not. Instead, what it is is a blunt instrument at best, and more importantly what we see is that people who are young are hurt most by this.

I think about the intentions of raising to a \$15 minimum wage. I was thinking: you know, you go to a mechanic, and he does some work on your engine, but he forgets to put the oil in the engine, and then when you try to drive away, it seizes the engine. You know what? I'm sure he had the best of intentions, but you don't judge him on his intentions; you judge him on the outcome.

This is why when we make legislation, when we go down a certain path, we do an economic impact study. When we want to know what the outcome is going to be, we take a look at past precedents, or we take a look at other jurisdictions that have done the same thing. Then we find out what the outcome has been, not the intentions, because I do believe that the intentions are good. But if you take a look at the outcome, there has been no example where the outcome has been acceptable.

I've heard lots of numbers here about how many people are on minimum wage. It's interesting that when they use these numbers, they spin the numbers because in reality what they're doing is they're saying that the 300,000 people who earn minimum wage – that's actually if you take into consideration how many people are under \$15. We're not at \$15 right now. We're at \$11.20, so the reality is: how many people are really single parents that need to

have, as they like to call it, a living wage? About 579 people. There might be a better program than this blunt instrument to be able to help 570 people who really need it.

The other people who have dual incomes, the other people who are younger people that are living at home, that do not have to have this, that are using this as a training wage, these people do not need to have the increase in these wages. What they actually do need is to have training because no one wants to stay at a \$15 minimum wage, Mr. Speaker. No one wants to stay at a \$10 minimum wage. No one wants to stay at an \$18 minimum wage.

Whatever you put it at, it's still going to be something that people say: I don't want to stay there. What these guys are doing is they're saying: let's make sure that people have a living wage there so they want to stay there. We don't want people to stay there. We want them to be able to rise up from that point and be able to have the dignity that they deserve, the dignity of being able to provide for their children and for their families.

Now, this is the sort of thing that these economic impact studies would study. These are the sorts of things that scientists would study. When they do these studies, they take the empirical evidence. They do study what happened in Seattle, they do study what happened in California because we have precedents now. Now that we have the precedents, we can say: "Have we actually lost jobs? Have there been any sectors, have there been any demographic groups that have actually lost their jobs?" What we find is that the evidence is that these groups, especially the young people aged 18 to 24, are adversely affected by a substantial increase in minimum wage.

5:10

I am concerned about the single mom with three young children, absolutely. We should be in this House concerned about the single mom with three young children. She's got a hard go to be able to make it work here. We have increases in costs that she has to deal with. These things are something that we should be compassionate about. These are things that we should really say: "You know what? How can we help?" But remember this: the difference between a tax and charity is that the tax is mandated; charity is freely given.

So when I hear the argument saying, "You know what? We should do more," guess what? In reality, when they came to this great country, people came here not for a guarantee. They came for an opportunity. They did not ask for a guarantee. In communist countries they got a guarantee. That is not what we offer in Canada. What we offer here is an opportunity. If you come here and you work hard, you study, you develop your skills, you have the ability to grow and prosper and provide for your family, whatever the sky offers. This is what we offer here in Alberta. This is what we offer here in Canada.

This is the reason why statistics show that Alberta had the fewest number per capita of minimum wage earners. Now, what did we do right here? Obviously, we must have done something right, better than other provinces. The one thing we did right is that we had a robust economy. We created a juggernaut of an economy – a juggernaut of an economy – that actually allowed us to be able to provide that dignity, provide that opportunity for our parents to be able to provide for their families, not just the needs. The needs are very important, obviously, but what about some of the wants? This is the thing that we can offer in a robust economy. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Hunter:** Now, Mr. Speaker, I just want to establish once again, really, you know, the truism that the only guarantees in life are death and taxes. Every time I have heard in this House a member

from the opposite side say, "Everyone deserves" – no. That's an entitled mentality, an absolutely entitled mentality that is causing us throughout . . . [interjections]

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order, sir.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

#### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to rise briefly given the volume in the House from the other side. I'm rising on Standing Order 23(h), (i), (j), language to create disorder, et cetera, et cetera. While I can appreciate that the other side doesn't agree with the hon. member's position, I think we found that, generally speaking, outside of question period the decorum in the House is often much more respectful. From time to time in question period the volume in the House does get quite loud, but certainly during routine debate it's not the norm of this House. I would just respectfully comment that the behaviour from the other side is not behaviour that is likely to create order.

**The Speaker:** Any other comments with respect to the point of order?

I think the volume clearly is not of the same degree that I've heard in the past in question period. To the government side, I appreciate the fact that there is a certain norm that is more acceptable in this, that is to deal with a quieter tone of reaction. However, I would also note that the member needs to be cautious about the words that may have caused that reaction to take place. I think it goes both ways, but I would ask the government to please contain your volume of comments and be respectful.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments that you made. It is not my intention to inflame. It is not my intention.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Hunter:** This is actually a place where we can debate issues. This is actually a place where we have an open conversation to find out what is the best legislation for the people of Alberta. I actually want the members opposite to know that this weekend I was speaking with a group of legionnaires. I said to them: you know, the members opposite, the NDP, and I disagree most ardently most of the time, but that is one of the rights we have here. One of the opportunities that we have is to be able to have that argument. There are some countries where you can't have that argument. You go to jail if you disagree with the government. But it's great that we have an opportunity in this place to be able to have these kinds of debates.

Mr. Speaker, the argument or the discussion that we're having here today is about a motion that was brought forward that I felt in my heart was a good motion, was a prudent motion, was one that offered the government an opportunity to be able to prove whether or not their \$15 minimum wage idea met the litmus test. If it does meet the litmus test, if an economic impact study is done and it shows empirical evidence that in reality this will help those people who we're trying to help and that they're trying to help, then by all means we'd support it. By all means we'd support it.

This is not about us versus them. It really is not. This is about us being concerned about the single mom with three young children. This is about making sure that we have a process or a program that specifically helps them.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak against Motion 505, and the reason why I do that is because of some small math. Twenty-one thousand, two hundred, and sixteen dollars: that is the total annual wage of a person that would be making \$10.20 an hour working a full-time . . .

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

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I know we've only got – probably this is the last speaker. A member from our party may not get a chance to even address this item. I just thought that you should be aware of that, sir.

**The Speaker:** And I am aware of that, sir.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you. A person making \$10.20 an hour would make \$21,216 a year. Now, I know that we are a smart group of people and that that is a really low number if we're expecting people to be able to pay for the basic necessities of life. Really, when we're talking about the wage differential for liquor servers, that's even lower. It was \$19,136. So what I am doing is that I'm rising to speak in support of a phased-in approach to \$15 an hour. Of course, that is a promise that we made during the election last year. It's a commitment, accompanied with consultation with employees and employers, that would be phased in with a goal to reach \$15 by 2018.

I rise because I want to talk about the people that we are really talking about. On average we are talking about a woman, and she is 20 years of age or older. She works full time. She has a high school education or greater, and her job is permanent, not seasonal, not temporary. She's the head of a household, and it is her only job. There are people that work more than one job to make ends meet, but is that what we want? Is that what we want, to have the head of household away from their children more than they should be?

And why is it important? You know, we need to ask ourselves in this House, in this position: do we want Albertans to be able to engage meaningfully in their communities? Do we want that person to be living paycheque to paycheque? Is that something that we really want to be ingraining in people, that they can't make plans for the future?

Living paycheque to paycheque does not allow you to do the simple things that we all take for granted. We do these things in this job all of the time, and we take them for granted. We have the opportunity to go to the movies. We have the opportunity to visit art galleries. We have the opportunity to drive to the mountains. People making now \$11.20 an hour can't do that, you know, simple things for people's families. Purchasing a winter coat is a luxury that we take for granted.

5:20

You know, \$15 an hour after working 40 hours a week for a year is only \$31,200. We're not talking about people that can set aside money for retirement. We're not talking about people that travel outside of the city even. We're talking about people that are just making ends meet.

There are other ways to assist that the government is doing. We are, you know, being a part of investing in the STEP program, to assist students in gaining valuable work experience. The government is investing in the Alberta child benefit tax program, which will benefit 340,000 children. We've committed to investing stable funding in hospitals, in schools, in FCSS. But we all have a role in addressing inequality in Alberta. We have that role as business owners and, you know, as people that make those other decisions.

My dad owned his own painting business, and he started people at \$15 an hour. It was a small business. It was a meagre business. It's not like we ever made a lot of money. He knew that if you had the ability to hire someone, if you had the privilege to hire someone, then you had the privilege to pay them and you had the privilege to pay them what they deserved. You know, it was always part of his business plan. He would draw up a contract that would include estimates of time and materials, and businesses do this all of the time on an ongoing basis.

They do have to plan, and costs do go up, and everyone here understands that. But it concerns me when I meet with stakeholder groups, and they tell me that you can't control food and you can't control transportation costs and you can't control fuel costs or energy costs but you can control labour costs. That gives me great, great concern because what that tells a person is that: I give you what I think you deserve, not what I think you need to survive in this world or to thrive in this world.

Working as a nursing attendant, after three years I was making \$12.50 an hour. I couldn't stay at that job, taking care of people not unlike your parents and your grandparents, making \$12.50 an hour. I went from that job to working somewhere as a supervisor because, thankfully, I did have other experience at that time. But I couldn't do things like own a car. I couldn't do things like take a trip with friends. You can't do things like buy Christmas presents for your family.

It's just, quite simply, not possible. To try and believe otherwise is to be disingenuous. We know what the simple math is, and we don't want to come down to simple numbers when we're talking about people, but those are the simple, at the end of the day, numbers that people are counting on us to think about when we think about how it is that they take care of themselves and take care of their families.

The Member for Battle River-Wainwright was talking about job mobility. Of course, you know, the idea that he is putting across is that you enter at minimum wage and then you use that as your starting point to move up the ladder. Well, when I was working in long-term care, that wasn't a ladder to ascend. That was my job. That was my career. My career was to be a nursing attendant, that after three years paid \$12.50 an hour. That was the post that I chose. So the idea that that job is only worth \$12.50 an hour is appalling to me, and I have to look around this room and expect that it's appalling to everyone else.

Only making minimum wage does not give you job mobility. It does not give you the ability to save for upgrading your education. It does not give you the ability to save for postsecondary. It does not give you the ability to own a car. You know, with public transportation, being privileged to live growing up in an urban centre, you can take the bus, and that is great. But when you live out in rural areas of Alberta, not having access to public transportation limits your mobility as to what you can do, where you can go, what careers you can fulfill. So that's a very basic need that lots of Albertans have that we take for granted all the time.

I want to tell you some of the things that happen when you make minimum wage, you know, just things that we need to keep in our minds when we think about these issues. When I grew up, neither

of my parents could afford a winter coat. We're talking about Alberta winters. So when we're talking about single moms or single dads or even people that between the two of them can't afford a winter coat, it's something that – when I finally had the opportunity, making a little bit more than \$15 an hour and being able to donate to the United Way, one of the things that you could pick was buying four winter coats for a family, and it gave me great, great honour to be able to provide that for a family. Being so privileged to be here and be able to think about those people that are not only in my constituency but in the rest of Alberta, that I can play my part in helping take care of those people, is incredibly rewarding to me. And I'm so proud to do it, to stand up and to stand up for them.

In closing I would just like to say . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've listened carefully to this. This is an important issue, and I believe that everybody wants to do what's right for Albertans, but the fact is that I've heard some interesting things here.

Listen, the fact is that the government has said that they would raise the minimum wage to \$15. The Premier doubled down on it at the Leap Manifesto meeting, at the NDP meeting here a few weeks ago, and she made it very clear in that public pronouncement that she would do it on schedule. So when the Premier publicly says that she's going to do it without changing the schedule, and the government says that they're going to consult with business, it seems completely inconsistent when they've already made up their mind. And they've made it clear publicly very recently that they have made up their mind.

I've heard arguments about minimum wage in Canada versus the U.S. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that if we had the same tax rate as the U.S., that money, that hourly wage, would buy a lot more, which is an important point, too, which wasn't mentioned by the member.

Mr. Speaker, minimum wage is not the same as a living wage. I know that there are members on the other side that would like it to be, but their \$15 doesn't get them there either. I tabled a report last session in the House, I believe, from the poverty coalition of Edmonton that says that the wage in Edmonton is north of \$17 an hour, so, please, the government shouldn't pretend that this is in some way a living wage. It's not. This is the minimum wage. The minimum wage is the first rung on the economic ladder, the one from which people can reach up and get to the next rung.

You know what? We need to look after people working without a high income, but the answer is not to artificially raise their income to the fact where they don't get a job at all. What I don't want to see is those single mothers being told when they come to work after it gets to \$15: "Sorry, I've got no more work for you. I can only hire 12 people instead of 15. You didn't make the cut." That's going to be way worse. The answer might be for the government to think about their income support programs. I agree with the hon. member who said that people working full-time shouldn't have to go to the food bank – I couldn't agree more – but the minimum wage isn't going to get it done. A proper income support program for people working that makes sure that their basic needs can be met, now there's a good idea. Artificially raising the minimum wage is a bad idea.

In fact, there have been many studies. The Labour minister in estimates said the other day that there are as many studies that say that this is a bad idea as say that it's a good one. Check *Hansard*. Any of the government members that want the page, I'll send it to you. I'll be happy to.

5:30

Mr. Speaker, a report out of San Francisco, what's considered one of the most major ones, says that every 10 per cent increase in minimum wage takes away 1 to 3 per cent of the total jobs paying minimum wage. Simple. If you want to help people, don't take away their jobs. It's the worst thing you can do. Listen. I know the government members want to help people. I recognize that. They just need to recognize the truth of how the world works.

I've heard in the past government members say: well, people will pay the least they can, and they'll make more money if the minimum wage goes to \$15. Well, Mr. Speaker, the same people have said: people that run businesses are greedy; they don't want to pay more. Well, the things don't jibe. If businesspeople were truly greedy and paying more money made them more money, well, the greed would drive them to pay more money, and they would make more money, but the fact is that it doesn't always work like that. I'm sure they can find one or two examples where it has worked like that, but I've talked to lots of people from small businesses – I'm sure government members have, too – that said: "I can only afford to hire fewer people if you make the minimum wage \$15," or "I might not be in business and all of the jobs go away," or "I need to automate and have fewer people."

I know that there was a debate a while ago about McDonald's and their machines. I know they have fewer people because they have those machines there, but they did it so they could stay in business. Thankfully, they changed other things in their business model, where they actually hired more than they did need. They're now taking food to the tables. They're providing additional service. They actually are hiring more people than they used to but not because of the minimum wage, Mr. Speaker, and not because of the machines. The machines made them profitable enough to stay in business, to hire other people, but not every business is set up so that it will work like that.

Mr. Speaker, the research does not support the government's proposition that this will cause more jobs and a better style of life for people with low income. The Labour minister herself said that there's as much research one way as there is another. I don't want to see those single mothers with two or three kids be told after the minimum wage goes to \$15: sorry; I no longer have room for you because I have to employ fewer people than I used to employ. That would be terrible. Nobody in this House wants to see that – the government members don't want to see it; the opposition members don't want to see it – so what we're really talking about is the best way to accomplish that not happening.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot to talk about. There are a lot of studies. Some say that it's a good idea; some say that it's a bad idea. The hon. member that moved this says: let's talk about it a little bit more in committee before the government does something they don't want to do, and that's to hurt people of low income. The government doesn't want to do that – I don't believe that for a second – but that's where they're going. If it was ever true that the road to hell is paved with good intentions, it's with the government's promise to raise the minimum wage in a short period in the order of up to \$15, by 20 or 30 per cent from where it started, and, by the San Francisco study, taking away 3 to 10 per cent of all the minimum wage jobs that are there now. I don't want to see it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, under Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright to close debate on Motion 505.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Wildrose has been hearing from Albertans about their concerns about the rapidly deteriorating economy. Many say that their concerns are made worse by the haste with which this government is pushing legislation through without proper consultation, without regard for current research, and without due consideration of the cumulative impact of risky economic experiments. Albertans heard last year that the government's own advisers warned that significant job loss is a realistic possibility if the minimum wage is set at \$15 per hour.

With many families now struggling to make ends meet and many young people looking for work, the stakes are high. The NDP has an opportunity to avoid making yet another policy mistake by taking the time to conduct a full study of the impact of the \$15 minimum wage before implementing it. So I'm tabling this motion with the hope that the NDP government will slow down, listen to Albertans, listen to its own advisers, consider existing analyses of the impact of increasing the minimum wage, and stop the fast-tracking of ideological experiments on Albertan families, because this is really about, you know, requesting a study.

You know, I heard the opposite side say that they are spending time over the summer reviewing the minimum wage. That's a good start, but why are they consulting when they're going to double down on it anyways and just make sure that it goes through? They said that they were concerned that we won't have time to review. Well, we've got two years to review before this comes in, so we have lots of time for this review to happen.

You know, the minimum wage is not intended to be a living wage, and it never was. I heard that from several members as well.

Members are very passionate about what evidence there is to show if this will work. But the \$15 minimum wage at best is a blunt instrument, I heard. You look at the outcome. There's no example that it actually worked. The ability to rise up is stifled. I heard from the opposite side, too, that they were concerned for a mom with three children. People came to Canada for an opportunity, not a guarantee. That's why they came to Canada, for an opportunity. That's what Canada provides people. If the \$15 minimum wage increase passes the litmus test, it would be supported. If after all the studies are done – the Wildrose would support a minimum wage increase to \$15 if it passed that study that we talked about.

There are other ways to assist children, and this is what I've heard from the members opposite, too. There are other ways to assist, with the child tax credit, and they're putting in the STEP program.

The member opposite was at \$12.50 an hour, but I noticed that she chose to move on to another job. She had the ability to do that. We need to do what's right for Alberta; that's what I heard from another member. Minimum wage is not the same as a living wage. There are no jobs at all if the minimum wage is too high. What good is having a minimum wage that's high?

Albertans are looking for real hope – that's what I'm getting out of this – and evidence, evidence that our economy will turn around before the standard of living is ground into dust. We do not need to forge ahead with an ideological, job-killing \$15 minimum wage, that all research suggests will further destroy our economy and hurt

low-income families. We need leadership that will take a well-founded, evidence-based stand for Albertans. We need to make sure that there's a study that's done, a proper study.

I urge all members of this Assembly to bring their combined voices to bear and vote in favour of this motion. Thank you.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, if we could just sneak it in, I'd love to request unanimous consent of the House to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent denied]

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 505 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:39 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Ellis	McIver
Barnes	Gill	Panda
Clark	Hunter	Pitt
Cooper	Loewen	Taylor
Cyr	MacIntyre	van Dijken

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Phillips
Babcock	Hoffman	Piquette
Carlier	Jabbour	Renaud
Carson	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Littlewood	Sabir
Connolly	Loyola	Schmidt
Coolahan	Luff	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Drever	McKitrick	Sucha
Feehan	McLean	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Goehring	Nielsen	Westhead
Gray	Payne	Woollard

Totals:	For – 15	Against – 39
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 505 lost]

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to the Budget 2016 main estimates schedule the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

The legislative policy committees will convene this evening at 7 for consideration of the main estimates. Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Energy in the Foothills Room, and Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Infrastructure in the Grassland Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 10, 2016

Day 25

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
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Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
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Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
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McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
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Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
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David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

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Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
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### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
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Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

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Orr	

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Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

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Cooper	Nielsen
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Kazim	

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### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 10, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let's bow our heads, and let us reflect, each in our own way. Let each of us be thankful for this privileged opportunity to serve. Let us accept those events which we cannot control, the courage to lead the change that is necessary, and the wisdom to understand the difference.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly His Excellency Tariq Azim Khan, high commissioner for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. His Excellency is on an official visit to Alberta and is accompanied by Dr. Muhammad Tariq, consul general for Pakistan in Vancouver. I'm pleased to say that Alberta and Pakistan enjoy a strong relationship, and there is great potential to build more partnerships across energy, innovation, and advanced education. During His Excellency's visit we have had crucial conversations regarding collaboration between Alberta and Pakistan in areas such as renewable energy and clean technology as well as sharing knowledge and expertise about the oil and gas sector. And while we move to explore new and exciting possibilities to collaborate, we will continue to build on and strengthen our established ties.

Our esteemed guests are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I would now ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you a group from George P. Nicholson school from the greatest constituency. The 25 students today are accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Marele Syme, and hard-working parent Mrs. Victoria Twanow. If they'd please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really pleased today to rise and introduce to you and through you the students, parents, and teacher from the Irma school. You know, I had the really distinct pleasure this afternoon to be able to go and meet with them. I talked with the students and the parents and the teacher as well. I found them to be most polite. They were very well-behaved children and had some really good questions. Part of what we got to discuss was that yesterday in question period, when I was able to ask the minister about their school, the upcoming school, he promised to have a meeting sometime in the near future about the possibility of building a new school in Irma. Also, I'd like to say that when I did my practicums for teaching, the first practicum I did happened to be in Irma. So I'm very pleased to be able to, like I said, rise and

introduce this school. Would the teacher and parents please rise as I call your names: teacher Mrs. Tara Gwinn and parent helpers Mrs. Tammy Pauls, Mrs. Kathryn Ward, Mr. Robert Ward, and Mrs. Jackie MacKay. And the students: please rise. Can the members please join me in welcoming them with our traditional warm welcome to this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great privilege today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the House two classes of grade 6 students from Namao school. I think they're behind me. They're accompanied by their teachers, Ms Barbara Kleespies and Mr. Mike Paustian, as well as parent supervisors Mrs. Jenn Winder, Mr. Keeling Hedstrom, Mrs. Tanja Crozier, Mrs. Kmita-Aumais, Mr. Jason Van Koughnett, and Mrs. Jamie Hildebrandt. Any mispronunciations are purely my responsibility. Could students, parent supervisors, and teachers please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school guests? The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some of our province's exceptional students from the Bow Island area. These students hail from Sun Country Christian School, and while the name may reflect the beautiful local weather – and yes, we do lead the nation in days of sunshine – these students outshine even the brightest day. Sun Country reflects the unique diversity and strengths of educational choice in Alberta, offering faith-based learning in a small, local setting. I ask that the students of Sun Country Christian School as well as teacher Craig Toews and parents Brian and Lora Thiessen, Weldon and Brenda Reimer, and Wendy Reimer, who all made this long trip possible, please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school groups today?

Seeing none, the Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. On your behalf I rise to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly three constituents from Edmonton-Manning. Master Corporal Don Fraser works with the Canadian Heroes Foundation. The Canadian Heroes Foundation is a registered nonprofit organization that is about creating awareness and support for our front-line responders, our fallen heroes, and their families. It is also a tribute to those who have served in the past, the present, and the future. He is accompanied today by his wife, Cindy Fraser, as well as his son Brice Fraser. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

Mr. Speaker, it is also my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Edmonton Eskimo Women's Dinner Committee, which I will speak more about in my statement later today. Joining us today in the gallery are Carol Bentley, the chair of the Eskimo Women's Dinner Committee; Joyce LaBriola, marketing and event planner; Cathy Presniak, finance; Suzanne Sparrow, sponsorship and acquisitions; Michelle Pollard-Bruce, sponsorship and acquisitions; and Nicole Moquin, ticket sales. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mrs. Cindy Gracher and her son Stefan. They are Edmonton-Gold Bar constituents that home-school, and Stefan is currently studying the grade 6 curriculum unit on politics and government. Two weeks ago I had the opportunity to meet them at my constituency office, and Stefan had a number of great questions for me on topics like carbon pricing, emission reductions, and choice in education. He also shared with me that he loves science and classical music, particularly Elvis Presley. Stefan also figure skates and plays the guitar and is able to do all of these things thanks to the support, training, and education that his mom, Cindy, provides. I'd ask them now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

I hope that you did not tell him that he had to take accordion lessons from you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you. I rise today to introduce to you and through you an old friend of mine, who hopefully you'll recognize, seated in the members' gallery today, my good friend Matt Owens. Matt is currently attending the University of Western Ontario, pursuing a dual degree in integrated engineering and his HBA from the Ivey Business School. He's also someone I'm proud to call my brother as he is the vice-president academic excellence of the undergraduate chapter of Delta Upsilon there at Western. Mr. Speaker, you should also recognize Matt today as he was a page in this Assembly from 2012 to 2015, serving as your page as recently as last year. You'll note that, much to his chagrin, this actually means that he served me as a page and my hon. colleagues here in the Chamber as well. Would he please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly Sukh Ghuman, Sam Jhaggi, and Raja Nagpal. Sukh Ghuman is a very popular Punjabi music artist, who is visiting from Punjab. She was here performing a concert in Edmonton this past weekend. Sam and Raja are representing Royal Star Entertainment, who both organized and promoted her recent concert. From what I've heard, it was very well attended. I'd ask my guests to please rise now and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute honour and pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you two outstanding Albertans and two absolute pillars of strength for the Leader of the Official Opposition and, in fact, all of our caucus. Seated in the gallery today are Mrs. Frances Jean and Ms Kim Michelutti, respectfully the mother and the fiancée of the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin. Mrs. Jean was one of those brave Fort McMurrans who made the trek to Edmonton to escape the wildfire that threatened her city and her very large family, who

are now dealing with the destruction of six separate family homes. She has been a pillar of strength in the community through periods of boom and bust and, no doubt, will be active in helping to rebuild the city. I would just like to personally thank both of these ladies for their patience and strength as the Leader of the Official Opposition has travelled around the hard-hit areas of Wood Buffalo. I invite them now to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Red Deer-South.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Vern and Laurie Lafortune. Vern and Laurie are joining us from Red Deer today. They both worked tirelessly on my election campaign, and I was very grateful for their support. Their son Brad is also the chief of staff for the Minister of Labour. I'd like to ask them both to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome from the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, or the ABVMA, and the Alberta Association of Animal Health Technologists, the AAAHT. First, I'd like to give our kudos and our thanks to the ABVMA for assisting with rescued pets affected by the Fort McMurray wildfire, along with our other partners. Many Albertans consider their pets as part of their families, so we thank you for your care and attention during this disaster. These professionals play an important role in ensuring that our animals are healthy and receive the best care possible. I'm pleased that they're here today as our government will be introducing Bill 13, the Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016. Joining us today are Dr. Darrell Dalton, Dr. Kevin MacAulay, Dr. Margitta Dziwenka, Dr. Louis Kwantes, Ms Linda Glasier, Mrs. Vanessa George, Ms Nicole Olivier, and Mrs. Erin Young. I would like to ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Jon Tupper. Mr. Tupper is the business development officer for the Canadian Cancer Society in Fort McMurray. Jon and his wife, Sandy, and daughter have called Fort McMurray their home for more than a decade. Jon, of course, like the other 88,000 McMurrayites, is anxiously awaiting their return home to begin the rebuild of their community. Jon is especially interested in the rebuild of the social infrastructure of Wood Buffalo, which is as resilient as the people of Wood Buffalo. With that, I would ask Mr. Tupper to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

### Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire Update

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I would like to welcome back to this Assembly the Leader of the Official Opposition as well as the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. [applause] Yeah. Our hearts continue to go out to both of you and to all of the people evacuated by the wildfires and displaced from the comforts of home.

Fort McMurray, Anzac, Gregoire Lake Estates, and Fort McMurray First Nation remain under mandatory evacuation orders. We continue to focus on those who are evacuated to ensure they remain safe and have access to the services that they need.

We have some welcome news today, Mr. Speaker, that the fire weather is moderate across northern Alberta due to the temperature and wind being reduced and increasing humidity. Although fire conditions, however, are no longer extreme, the fire potential remains high. The wildfire in the Fort McMurray area remains out of control, and as two fires have now merged into one, the size is currently estimated at 230,000 hectares. I am told that the fire continues to move towards Saskatchewan, slowly to the south-southeast.

The current forecast indicates a high of 11 degrees Celsius today, 40 per cent humidity, and winds will remain a factor at 20 kilometres per hour towards the north. Last night we had wind gusts at 28 kilometres per hour, which thankfully is the lowest we've seen in a while. Widespread smoke remains a concern, and we are monitoring air quality closely to ensure our first responders are safe. In Fort McMurray there are more than 700 firefighters bravely battling the blaze along with 20 helicopters, 27 air tankers, and many pieces of heavy equipment.

Mr. Speaker, I continue to urge those evacuees who have not already registered with the Red Cross to do so. People can do this by visiting [redcross.ca](http://redcross.ca) to register their name and their whereabouts. For those who have already registered but have changed locations since registering, I'd ask that they please call again to ensure that we are updated about their current location. As of this morning approximately 45,000 households have registered with the Red Cross, for which I am very thankful. This registration process is so important to ensuring that we can provide those who are displaced with access to the assistance and services they need. There are currently 12 reception centres open within Alberta. As always, the best place to go for the most up-to-date information is [emergency.alberta.ca](http://emergency.alberta.ca), and Albertans can call 310.4455 for information or to have their questions answered as well.

As Minister Hoffman updated yesterday, cabinet authorized \$200 million in immediate disaster recovery program funding, and we will revise this number as needed. Our government is providing emergency financial assistance for evacuees in the form of preloaded debit cards. Adults will receive \$1,250 and another \$500 for every dependant. We are continuing to work hard to begin the distribution of that financial assistance. That assistance will be available to those who have registered with the Red Cross. We'll have more details on how that money will be distributed in the coming days.

One of our main priorities continues to be to provide evacuees with information as it becomes available. Last night we held our first town hall meeting over a conference call. These calls allow evacuees to hear the latest information on the fire and the services available to them. Participants were able to ask questions of the Premier, myself, and several other experts, to ask them directly. Dr. Karen Grimsrud, Alberta's chief medical officer of health, and Bill Adams with the Insurance Bureau of Canada were also available along with the government of Alberta representatives from the ministries of Human Services, Education, and the Alberta Emergency

Management Agency. We had more than 15,000 people, Mr. Speaker, who participated in the call, and many good questions and information were provided. We'll hold another call tonight and again on Wednesday and Thursday and hope to resolve some of the issues around questions and concerns and what is unknown for those evacuees. Evacuees should be registered with the Red Cross to ensure that they receive the details of these calls.

1:50

I want to remind evacuees as well that if they left behind documents such as Alberta drivers' licences or ID cards, new cards can be issued free of charge at a registry agent. As well, Alberta personal health cards can be ordered by calling 310.0000 to get a replacement card.

Canada Post is helping reconnect displaced residents with the postal system by registering with their mail-forwarding system. By registering, Canada Post will be able to ship mail and parcels to different addresses as well as reprocess and ship existing mail and parcels. I encourage residents to check online or call Canada Post for more details.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier, myself, and Mayor Melissa Blake were on the ground in Fort McMurray. While there, we were escorted by emergency management experts along with media to inspect the damage first-hand. We saw devastating images that came out of that visit. We've lost about 2,400 structures, but almost 25,000 are intact, for which we are so greatly thankful.

However, I know that some evacuees will be getting the news that the places they called home are now gone. The emotions that come with that, Mr. Speaker, are tremendously deep and challenging. With that, I want to remind everyone that mental health supports are available to anyone who needs them.

Mr. Speaker, another important update for displaced residents with school-aged children is information about diploma exams. All students who are registered with the Fort McMurray public school district; Fort McMurray Roman Catholic school district; l'école Boreal, within the greater northern central francophone education region; and Bill Woodward school in Anzac, within the Northland school division and are registered in a diploma course and are scheduled to write diploma exams in June 2016 will receive an automatic exemption from the diploma exams. Students may still decide to write their diploma exams if they choose, and, where possible, schools will be expected to accommodate those requests.

Starting immediately as well, all student loan payments or Alberta repayment assistance plan payments will be automatically deferred for six months interest free for students displaced and affected by the wildfires.

Mr. Speaker, I know how hard it is to not know when people want to get home, and they desperately want to get home. While we do not have a confirmed date for when that can happen, we will have re-entry times available within the next two weeks.

There's a lot of work to be done before Fort McMurray is safe for people to live in again. Damage assessment and the re-establishment of essential services is under way. Emergency services are working tremendously hard around the clock to ensure that the wildfire is no longer a threat, repairing critical infrastructure to a basic level, and securing hazard areas. The re-establishment of local government is also a critical piece of re-entry. I understand that it is so difficult to hear that it could be some time before you can return home, but the safety of residents remains our top priority. Our government-wide wildfire recovery task force has been established to help with recovery, and this team is working diligently to make the re-entry happen safely and efficiently and as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this is a very difficult time for many Albertans, especially given that there are so many unknowns. I want to thank all of the first responders, everyone who has donated time, money, and a variety of services and supplies, and everyone who has offered to help the evacuees. We are here to support you through these difficult times.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Welcome back, hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. [Standing ovation]

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you. I take that for the people of Fort McMurray.

Before I begin, I want to personally thank all of the RCMP, emergency officials, and the first responders who have made the people of Fort McMurray and Alberta so, so proud with their actions. I also want to extend our gratitude to all of the families, all of the towns, all of the municipalities, villages, neighbourhoods, and faith communities all across Alberta that are housing the evacuees.

### Oral Question Period

#### Fort McMurray Residents' Housing Concerns

**Mr. Jean:** My questions today are a simple extension of what the people of Fort McMurray have been asking me to ask all across this province. Premier, with 85 to 90 per cent of Fort McMurray still standing, why do our residents have to wait two more weeks before even hearing about a timeline for when they can return to their homes?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, our thoughts are with you, your family, and all families that have been impacted by the fire.

Certainly, our top priority is to ensure that when people do return, it is safe for them to do so. This means that we need to make sure that we have safe water to drink and essential services like electricity and heat available in the community. We have people on the ground as we speak conducting damage assessments, and the focus needs to be on critical infrastructure as well. We are actively working to assess the repairs required for the power grid, gas lines, and water-treatment facilities. AHS has deployed a team to assess the hospital and establish an urgent-care centre.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, 2,400 buildings have been lost. We've heard of people trying to see if the power is still on or if their Internet connection is still live. Many other families are poring through videos online or photos in the paper, desperately, desperately trying to see if their house has survived. We know that emergency officials are going through the city. Premier, is there a list being compiled of houses that are still standing, and is it possible for residents to have that information shared with them immediately as they wait weeks to learn when they can go home?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fire does continue to burn in the surrounding area. We have worked with a contracted imagery company to begin assembling images to help people identify their homes and if they're still intact. This involves co-ordinating over the flight path to ensure that photos can be taken and assembling the satellite information. The first priority continues to be the safety in fighting the fires. Of course, air space is limited, but at any time when there is air space available, the company is

working to make sure that we can gather that information so it can be shared with residents, who, we know, want to get home very soon.

**Mr. Jean:** They sure do.

Many have heard that first responders and other officials have gone door to door to check on the status of each and every house in Fort McMurray. When I've met people from Fort McMurray, whether they're in Boyle or Athabasca, Lac La Biche, Edmonton, or even Calgary, they all want reassurance that their property is being taken care of. Can the Premier tell evacuees that are out of their homes what the reasons would possibly be for entering their properties and what is being searched for?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the important question. There are only two reasons why RCMP would be entering a facility. One is because they are approaching the door, hear somebody in distress, and they need to make sure that that individual, who may not have been able to leave at an earlier time, is safe. So if they hear somebody who is in distress, they will enter and save that individual. The second is if you've registered with the SPCA that you have a pet in the facility, they will happily enter the facility, the home, retrieve the pet, and work to reunite pets and their owners. Those are the only two reasons.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

#### Support for Wildfire Evacuees and Fort McMurray Economic Recovery

**Mr. Jean:** We heard time and time again from Fort McMurray residents worried as they see their own personal resources drop. I've heard it clearly. Many of them left their houses without ID, debit cards, or even cash. They are in good spirits, but it's the little things that they can't get at the evacuation centres that could make a real difference in their lives right now. Can the Premier please explain what work has been done to get financial assistance out the door and how residents can actually get this assistance as soon as possible?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We recognize the importance of getting that financial assistance to evacuated Albertans as soon as possible, so we are providing that assistance to 80,000 people. We are asking for patience as we set up the necessary staff and equipment to support this work and ensure that evacuees receive the support they need in an orderly and timely fashion. We will make that happen as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, it's already been a week. Many of these residents don't want to rely on financial assistance for long. They do want it, but they don't want to rely on it. They want to get back to work, they want to rebuild their lives, and they want to get home as soon as they possibly can.

Right now the lost oil sands production is costing the people of Alberta \$70 million per day. Seventy million dollars per day. My question is simple: for residents who are ready to go back to work right now at the mines and at the work sites all across northern

Alberta, under what timeline can they expect to get the call to be able to restart their lives?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that Albertans want to get back to work as soon as possible and that industry wants to resume operations, too, and we are fully committed to assisting them with that, which is why this afternoon the Premier and the Minister of Energy are meeting with oil and gas companies who operate in Fort McMurray to assess the impact of the wildfire and discuss next steps. We are tremendously happy to report there was no major damage to facilities and that no workers were injured, and we continue to work with the industry to make it happen as soon as possible.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, we know the people of Fort McMurray are incredibly resourceful, hard-working, determined. With their own hands they built a beautiful city, I would say a world-class city comparable to none other. We are engineers, tradespeople, pipefitters, construction managers, plumbers, and electricians. These are the people we need to rely on to make our city even better than it was before, and we will. Can the Premier today commit to not letting unnecessary delays or red tape get in the way of these workers, who are so important and who will need to start new construction as soon as possible so we can get back to our lives?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the Premier and the Minister of Energy are meeting with industry in terms of the necessary steps going forward. We've heard from industry that safety of workers and evacuees is paramount to them. Once we can guarantee the safety, we will work with industry to resume production as quickly as possible, and we will ensure that appropriate safety and environmental protections are in place. We will continue working with our partners in industry as we rebuild from this devastation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

#### **Fort McMurray Wildfire First Responders**

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, I've known for years what a strong group of men and women my brothers and sisters at the Fort McMurray Fire Department are. I still consider them family, and in the past week my family has been tested more than ever before. I stand here today beaming with pride that those selfless men and women rose to the challenge and stood tall fighting back that beast of a fire that threatened to take our city. To the government: what immediate supports are being put in place for the firefighters and other emergency responders, who until this point have been supported by volunteers, as they work around the clock to protect our city?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We also cannot express the depth of our gratitude to those firefighters, who are working so hard. With that, the regional emergency operations centre in Fort McMurray, in particular the Canada Task Force 2, who is leading the logistics there, consider providing the necessary support to our firefighters a key priority. We're ensuring they have access to food, shelter, and water, including the mental health supports, to ensure that they are taken care of and that we respect the commitment that they have to the people of Fort McMurray.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, in meeting with my brothers and sisters on the front lines, I know that they're resilient and that they will do anything for their city. In the days, weeks, and months to come, however, the reality will set in, and the totality of this fire that they fought will become apparent. Just as our first responders have had our back in the past week – an army of Davids taking on Goliath – we need to have their backs. Posttraumatic stress disorder is real, and it is something that many will face. What specific supports will the Premier put in place to ensure that none of them go on this journey alone?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the first responders and second responders working on the front lines are our heroes, and we will continue to support them. Everyone who's been touched by this disaster is under incredible stress, and of course we're going to prioritize their supports in mental health, so we have mental health therapists in each reception centre. We'll make sure that the first responders also have access to ongoing supports, not just today but for weeks and months to come. We're also having discussions with other jurisdictions around how we can bring in these specifically trained experts, who will be needed now more than ever.

Thank you.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, I need to remind this House yet again that we are only in May of what is sure to be a very long and arduous fire season. This is a subject I have studied in past years, and I know that conditions are ripe this year for many more fires to take place because of current forestry practices. The boreal forest doesn't stop at the Alberta border, and other jurisdictions are going to face the same wildfire conditions. Fire, forestry, and logging practices need to be re-evaluated. Will the Premier commit to working with other provinces and the federal government to ensure that best practices are in place?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Actually, just late last week, Thursday and Friday, I was at the Western Premiers' Conference in Vancouver. I had an opportunity to meet with Premiers north of our border as well as east and west. They all shared their great support and sympathies as they continue to address their own needs in their own communities, so certainly patrolling borders, making sure that we're sharing best practices and that we continue to have each other's back, as Albertans have shown to Fort McMurray and as Fort McMurray has shown to many communities in the past. We need the support from our partners on all borders as we move forward.

Thank you for the question.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

#### **Support for Wildfire Evacuees and Fort McMurray Economic Recovery (continued)**

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta health professionals are doing a great job assisting Albertans affected by the wildfires, and there are some reports that they're overwhelmed. Fort McMurray evacuees staying at the Expo Centre, I understand, are experiencing symptoms of gastroenteritis. I understand that these people are getting special care in a separate living area. Thank you.

To the Minister of Health: have you learned anything from this that will prevent a similar outbreak when future events occur?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, it is never fun to have gastroenteritis, especially when you're in a time of chaos, and obviously it has been a very chaotic last week for the individuals who are living at the facility. Unfortunately, it's not uncommon, when people are living in close quarters, for a spread of something like this to take place. I'm happy to report that the numbers are down today from where they were yesterday. Part of that is because of very stringent cleaning practices in the facilities there, making sure that individuals who were impacted were moved to a different area, providing increased bottles of hand sanitizer, and encouraging people who are coming to visit not to if they're sick.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the government is helping Fort McMurray evacuees, and to fight the fire they've sent a large number of people and equipment, and I thank the government for doing that. The province's strong financial position is one of the things that makes all of this possible. To the Finance minister: are you confident that the government will be just as able to help should an emergency crop up once the government is carrying \$60 billion in debt?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. Yes, I want to assure the hon. member that the government will do everything possible to make sure that we address emergencies like wildfires and droughts as soon as they become known to us. We'll do everything we can to address them.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to know that the Premier and some of the ministers toured the Fort McMurray area yesterday and got some reports out to people, at least, on the condition of what's there. I heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about people wanting to get home and back to work. To the Infrastructure minister: are there any roads, bridges, other pieces of infrastructure that have been compromised that will prevent people from Fort McMurray and area from getting back to both home and work?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While I think it would be better directed to the Minister of Transportation, I just want to indicate to the hon. member that we're doing ongoing evaluations of all the critical infrastructure in Fort McMurray. The bridge across the Athabasca River was inspected under very difficult conditions and found to be in good shape. We understand that the main roadways through Fort McMurray, highway 63 and so on, are in suitable shape. In fact, we conducted a very extensive evacuation of people who had fled to the north in the last several days, so I can assure the member that critical . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will add my voice to the praise for first responders and for the strength and bravery of the people of Fort McMurray. Welcome back to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

## 2:10 Electricity Power Purchase Agreements

**Mr. Clark:** Today I am going to move on to a different matter of government business. Last night in estimates I asked the Minister of Energy about the impact of the termination of power purchase agreements. She admitted a remarkable thing, that after PPAs were returned to the Balancing Pool, the province of Alberta is now the largest dispatcher of coal-fired electricity and will be the biggest payer of Alberta's new carbon tax. To the minister of environment: did you know this was a risk before you developed Alberta's climate plan?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for the question. In fact, at estimates debate last night the record was corrected. The carbon price applies to generators of electricity. For coal-fired emitters what will be happening is a transition from the specified gas emitters regulation to an output-based allocation performance standard. That is the way that this system will work for our electricity generators.

**Mr. Clark:** But one way or the other the bills are going to have to be paid.

Now, I want to add and make sure that the House is very clear that I do support action on climate change, but it's important to know not just the benefits of a policy but the potential costs as well before implementing that policy. Now, today the Balancing Pool issued their 2015 annual report and said that the return of PPAs "will result in future charges to electricity consumers." So now we know. To the Minister of Energy: have you calculated the cost to consumers from the return of PPAs, and if so, what will that cost be?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. On the issue of PPAs the government will be initiating an appropriate proceeding shortly, and all the facts will be before the public as issues are adjudicated.

Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** I don't know how the other five PPAs are any different than the one that's already been accepted, so there is substantial risk.

Maybe I can help with the calculation of what this will actually cost Albertans. The cost to consumers, based on the return of all the PPAs, will be more than \$1.5 billion, which works out to nearly \$100 per consumer per year. It's Albertans, Mr. Speaker, who pay these bills. Again to the Minister of Energy: can you confirm that Alberta consumers will go from having a credit to a rate rider cost on their power bills as soon as this year?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I am not in a position to confirm any of the back-of-the-envelope calculations conducted by the hon. member. What we are in a position to confirm is that the government will be initiating an appropriate proceeding shortly on the matter of PPAs. In addition, of course, the AESO is ensuring an orderly phase-in of renewables as coal-

fired units are taken offline in accordance with the federal regulations.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

#### **Health Services for Wildfire-affected Albertans**

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While wildfires continue to rage across the north of this province, it's certain that the condition of the people forced to flee their homes remains at the forefront of every Albertan's mind. It is a remarkable achievement that almost 90,000 people have been relocated as well as they have been, but I understand that some evacuees in the reception centres are unwell. To the Associate Minister of Health: what is the source of this illness, and what's being done to combat it?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are very proud that, thanks to a well co-ordinated effort and co-operation from all evacuees, everyone has made it safely out of the danger zone. Now ongoing health and support is our major concern. According to recent numbers we've got about 105 cases of gastrointestinal illness at Edmonton Northlands and another six at Conklin Lodge. AHS infection prevention and control and environmental public health staff are on-site at Northlands managing the outbreak. Where necessary, patients have been transported to hospital while others are resting in isolation. Based on the advice of a CDC expert, AHS operations have been reorganized at Northlands to ensure best care.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the associate minister for the update. Given that the mental health of evacuees as well as others involved in responding to the crisis is a concern and one that will be felt for many weeks and months to come, to the same associate minister: what mental health supports are immediately available for the fire evacuees?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We recognize that supporting the mental health of evacuees and responders will be a fundamental part of the recovery process. Mental health workers are working in each of the reception centres, and anyone in Alberta can call the mental health support line at any time at 1.877.303.2642.

We've also added an addictions and mental health night shift at the Lac La Biche centre, and AHS mental health support will be located at each of the four debit card disbursement sites in Edmonton, Calgary, St. Paul, and Lac La Biche.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the safety and health of all those evacuated from the fire zone is largely secure and given that our minds must also turn to the first responders who are continuing to fight the blazes, to the same associate minister: how are the health needs of firefighters and other first responders being met?

**The Speaker:** The associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the recognition given to our first responders, who have been working around the clock without reservation. Several first responders have also

reported GI illness, and they have been treated on the spot. A Fort McMurray field medical clinic has been established, and a team of four first responders will be flying to Fort McMurray tomorrow.

With respect to mental health, starting today there is a telehealth line dedicated to first responders, which is separate from the mental health line I mentioned earlier. There is also an AHS critical incident team offering support by phone 24 hours a day exclusively to first responders, and we will also be deploying on-site resources.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

#### **Fort McMurray Energy Industry Recovery**

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Our province is a place where people start anew and come to make a name for themselves, and we've been blessed with abundant natural resources, which has had a profound impact on the success of the people in our province. A key piece of our story is the success of our energy sector and the companies that do more than make a dollar. They care deeply about their community, as we saw during the worst wildfire when these companies opened their doors to evacuees. To the minister. Now that everyone has thankfully been able to travel south on highway 63, my question is: how long will it be before these facilities are running again, particularly when there continues to be an evacuation order for Fort McMurray?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, this afternoon the Premier and the Minister of Energy are meeting with oil and gas companies who operate in Fort McMurray, and they will be assessing the impacts of the wildfire and discussing next steps. We thank them for their partnership with us and for all of the assistance that they have provided so far.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Given that the longer these facilities are down as a result of the wildfires, there's a profound impact on the country's and the province's financial well-being and given that these closures are also seriously impacting not just the oil workers but all of the secondary and tertiary industries that rely on the success of the energy industry to keep their businesses afloat, what assistance is the government providing to ensure that the lifeblood of Alberta's economy gets back on its feet in a safe and timely manner?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are moving forward in partnership with the companies who are operating north of Fort McMurray. They have all been excellent partners to our government in assisting us with evacuation and other pieces in support for evacuees. It is too early to speculate on any re-entry at this point because the focus has got to be safety and security for the folks in Fort McMurray.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that while these energy companies opened their doors to evacuees, they were also forced to shut down their major operations due to safety concerns and given that the wildfire has no regard for these multimillion-dollar facilities and the key infrastructure that surrounds them, what discussions have been held with the energy companies to survey the damaged infrastructure, including pipelines, and what will be done to get them operating at full capacity?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are happy to report that there was no major damage to facilities and that no workers were injured, in part because of the excellent safety response of the oil sands operators north of Fort McMurray. You know, industry has stood with Albertans during their time of need. We'll stand with industry as we rebuild from this disaster. First and foremost in terms of working in Fort McMurray, we need to make sure that the townsite is safe, the critical infrastructure is safe, including clean water and all of the other services that need to be in place.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Calgary-Lougheed.

## 2:20 Wildfire Control and Support for Recovery

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Fort McMurray fire is creating catastrophic effects for thousands of residents in many ways, including fire protection, addictions, and advanced education. The beast, as it is known, has spiralled into a vortex that demands vast firefighting resources. To the minister responsible: with more than 10 other wildfires burning in the province, including another dangerous one northeast of Cadotte Lake, can you assure indigenous peoples and all Albertans that the province has enough resources to respond to any fire that may suddenly threaten any Alberta community?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. You know, we have resources right across the province. He's absolutely right. The concentration has been in Fort McMurray, but there are dry, tinderlike conditions right across the province. We've seen a little bit of relief these past few days, but he can rest assured that our resources are in place where they're needed, when they're needed right across the province.

**Mr. Rodney:** During my time as chair of AADAC and associate minister of wellness I visited the addictions facilities in Fort McMurray, and I witnessed first-hand the unique needs of clients there. Given that highly stressful crises dramatically intensify the need for support, to the Minister of Health: with these critical treatment centres shut down, where can citizens seek assistance, including specifically those congregating right now at the Northlands evacuation centre?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We are happy to report that all of the people who were at the treatment facility in Fort McMurray have been relocated and are receiving the treatment that they require at appropriate facilities in the Edmonton zone.

We are working very diligently to address the mental health needs of our population immediately and in the near future. As I mentioned earlier, we have added an addictions and mental health night shift to the Lac La Biche centre and are continuing to work with AHS to assess the needs of evacuees and ensure that the appropriate supports are in place.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Associate Minister. That's good news.

Given that Keyano College has been fortunate not to have sustained damage but that its programs and services have been postponed indefinitely and given that Keyano will have to regroup

when its business operations resume and that students have to obviously consider their options depending on how the delay fits into their plans, to the Minister of Advanced Education: what kind of support will you provide to Keyano College students and staff to ensure that it can resume operations in the most efficient manner when it is indeed safe to do so?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you to the member for the question. I had the opportunity to attend a makeshift convocation ceremony that Keyano College students put on for themselves, hosted at Grant MacEwan campus. It was a rather touching moment to see people make their own diplomas and celebrate what was otherwise denied to them.

Our department is working hard with our postsecondary institutions to make sure that business at Keyano College continues as well as it can. I'm particularly thankful to our partners at NAIT, who are providing payroll services to staff at Keyano College. We'll make sure that the students and staff and administration can get back to school within . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

## Wildfire Emergency Funding Eligibility

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many First Nations people who live in and around Fort McMurray also lost everything. Like so many others, First Nations people have been evacuated from the area and now find themselves struggling. My question to the Minister of Human Services: in the face of this terrible tragedy and since First Nations are the responsibility of both federal and provincial governments, will First Nations and Métis people qualify for the \$1,250 payment being given to adults and the \$500 payment being given to dependants, or has the federal government made other commitments?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're working very closely with indigenous communities during this provincial state of emergency to reassure them that regardless of where you live in Alberta or what your status may be, all Albertans who were forced from their home or are unable to return for an extended period of time will receive a variety of supports from us, including the income supports. Certainly, Indigenous Relations is sitting in on the Provincial Operations Centre, as is First Nations indigenous health branch, as is Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. We also have indigenous field officers who are working very closely . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Hanson:** Mr. Speaker, since I can't help but think about what happened on March 12 in Lac La Biche when a fire ripped through an apartment building and the foreign workers who lived there lost everything and given that Alberta Human Services did not help those fire victims with their costs, will the minister be helping the many foreign workers who were displaced from Fort McMurray with financial assistance measures, and are they at risk of being sent home because their jobs are now on hold?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the great question. Certainly, we recognize that all of those who were forced to evacuate the Fort McMurray area and are unable to return to their homes are experiencing substantial and tremendous distress, so



we've opened those supports to all of those who were evacuated regardless, again, of their status, and we will work with them. We certainly recognize the issue, with them being tied to the community in terms of being here, and we will work diligently to try to address that in order to ensure that they can stay here and find work elsewhere.

**Mr. Hanson:** Mr. Speaker, given that this government has shown a pattern of behaviour that suggests that it simply does not understand the costs and challenges of running a small business, how is the minister planning on helping small-business owners and their family member employees from Fort McMurray who do not qualify for EI but will still have to take care of their families and pay their bills while they try to rebuild their lives?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We certainly recognize that small businesses are the heart of communities and that they are absolutely essential to maintaining healthy communities. We're committed to working with the small-business community in Fort McMurray to provide the resources they need to become re-established. In the meantime, of course, we will continue to provide every single adult \$1,250 for intermediate costs. We're ensuring they have access to their basic needs and also providing support for their dependants as well.

Red Cross also has coverage for those who have immediate financial needs, and they can have that conversation.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, the current government's carbon tax will make life more expensive for all Albertans and raise costs on businesses in our province. Yesterday, while discussing the main estimates for Infrastructure, the minister admitted that there was no finished assessment on how the carbon tax will impact costs for the construction industry. While there's no formal assessment, has the current government asked Alberta's construction industry, to see how the increase in gas and diesel prices will impact them?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I had a further opportunity to discuss this matter with my officials in the department, and it is extremely difficult to calculate these things. We will undoubtedly see some incremental effect with respect to that, but that will have to be tested when we see tenders in. We are still expecting the tenders to come in at lower prices because of the downturn in the economy. This is a great time to be investing in the infrastructure that Albertans need. We can get very good deals at low interest rates. This is the right thing to do for the people of Alberta.

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, given that the carbon tax has impact to individual Albertans and will certainly be a burden and given that those charged with constructing the buildings required in our province will see no relief from this new tax and given that buildings like schools need to be heated once they're open and that thousands of students require busing transportation, has the current government done any assessment on how taxpayer dollars allocated to education will get less bang for their buck as a result of this carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the piece that the opposition leaves out consistently is the reinvestment in energy efficiency programs. Those are designed to reduce emissions

and therefore costs. That is a piece that I am aware the previous government didn't understand given that they left us as being one of the only places in North America without an energy efficiency strategy. Also, the Official Opposition has no concept of how this basic energy efficiency calculation works.

**Mr. Schneider:** It's easier to attack the opposition than to answer the question, Mr. Speaker.

Given that there are numerous hospital projects on the go in the current government's proposed capital plan and given that many types of surgeries that have been booked by doctors must go forward and given that hospital facilities need constant, around-the-clock electricity and heat in order to function, has the current government done any assessment about their ideological carbon tax, that will affect health care costs in our province?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, you know, our carbon levy will be reinvested right here in Alberta in a number of different initiatives, not the least of which is public infrastructure, in order to reduce our emissions. That is the point because greenhouse gas emissions cause climate change, which is real. So what we are trying to do here is to price those emissions as per many, many economists' advice, including Preston Manning's. We will reduce those emissions, and organizations will reduce their costs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

2:30

### Resource Industry Policies

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recent wildfires have caused direct damage estimated to be in the billions of dollars, and any disruption to the oil sands' production will hamper Alberta's economic sustainability. As other areas of Alberta are also susceptible to wildfires, it is assumed that much of Alberta's economic activity will appropriately be shifted to disaster recovery. To the Minister of Energy: what has been done in the last week to reassure and counsel general investors and others that Alberta will continue to be open for business?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We fully recognize the importance of the energy industry to this province and not only to the province but to the whole, entire country that we live in. That's why we're committed to working with our industry partners. In fact, the Premier and Minister of Energy are meeting with key representatives today to have the conversations about how to restore that industry as quickly as possible in a safe, efficient, and orderly fashion.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's forested areas are key aspects of the carbon cycle in Alberta by storing carbon as they grow and releasing it as plant material is used or burned and given that many Alberta jobs depend directly on the forest through harvesting timber and touring guests into or through forested areas and given that these industries are now being rendered inoperable, to the minister of forestry: what supports will be made available to the companies and individuals operating in this sector as they look to return to work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. It's important to note that the vast majority of

the forested area, the green area in Alberta, has been allocated to a forestry company under a forest management agreement. The forestry industry, you know, I'm pleased to say, has been doing very well and will continue to do very well with some challenges on the horizon. But I see no reason to think that the forestry industry is going to see a large hit from this disaster or otherwise going forward, knowing that there are some challenges.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the recent wildfires showed the value of roads for Alberta's remote communities and given that highway 63, which is a key lifeline for industry, became a lifeline for evacuation and supplies and given that many other remote communities are difficult to access and expensive to supply in normal circumstances, never mind in an emergency, to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: are you considering any partnerships with private builders to stimulate the economy and improve access to rural communities?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the very good question. We're doing a great deal of work both in Transportation and in Infrastructure to reach out to our stakeholders to develop and strengthen the partnerships that we have. We restored funding to the STIP program, which the previous government had allowed to lapse, which will improve rural transportation and provide options for rural municipalities to assist in economic development. So, yes, in response to his question, we are doing a great deal to work with our partners in rural Alberta and in the private sector in order to improve the rural economy and the transportation of goods and people.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Sherwood Park.

#### **Fort McMurray and Area Environmental Monitoring Province-wide Fire Bans**

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week we have heard stories of Fort McMurrans losing their homes and belongings as they evacuated the area. This is devastating. Albertans have acted generously to show support for affected Albertans. My constituents are also concerned about the support our government is providing for less visible consequences such as the impact and hazards that the fires will have on the environment. Fort McMurrans need to be able to safely return home. Could the Minister of Environment and Parks provide an update on the work the department is doing to monitor air quality . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you for the question. I'm pleased to update the House on the matter of air quality in the Wood Buffalo region. There have been severe air quality warnings in the Fort McMurray region due to the ongoing fires. There are five mobile air quality monitoring units that have been installed in addition to the stationary monitoring units that are already in the area. AEMERA, under the guidance of Environment and Parks and in partnership with Canadian Forces, has installed three mobile units. The Wood Buffalo Environmental Association has provided an additional two mobile units. Additional air monitoring needs will be evaluated and assessed to determine priority resources. We'll begin the soil monitoring in the region once it is safe to have staff do so.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the information. Could the minister provide an update on any additional monitoring or support for the region?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to update the House on the other matters that we are working on. We're working with the Fort McMurray First Nation to install an air monitoring unit. We're working with the Public Health Agency of Canada for additional support related to indoor air quality. We're continuing to provide support for water and waste-water treatment facilities and the managing of solid waste, and we're providing assistance and support for waste management issues in camps north of Fort McMurray.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this weekend we saw brush fires in Edmonton and that now there are many other fires burning around the province, to the same minister: what is the importance of the fire bans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, no one wants to be that person who is responsible, however inadvertently or accidentally, for another fire that might divert resources away from the priority areas in our province. I would like to reiterate that the ban applies to all open fires in Alberta's forest protection areas, counties, MDs, and special areas such as provincial parks and recreation areas; that is to say, Crown land. The cities of Calgary and Edmonton, among many others across the province, also have their own municipal fire bans in effect. It is really crucial at this point that all Albertans respect those fire bans so that we can protect the safety of our communities.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

#### **Business Regulations**

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, a nonprofit organization in my riding was required to bring potable water into their RV park as a requirement for getting their operating licence this year. The initial quote was for \$4,000, but what began as a simple request by one department turned into a multidepartmental fiasco with a price tag of \$20,000 to \$80,000. Bureaucratic red tape hurts businesses, plain and simple. Every province except Alberta has a red tape reduction strategy. Will the government commit to a red tape strategy, yes or no?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Of course, one of the reasons why we have regulations is to protect each other and to make sure that citizens can be safe. Some things that might be referred to as red tape are simply security measures to make sure that individuals don't speed on highways, don't sell alcohol to minors. These are things that we certainly are proud of. If there are specific instances that the member would like to raise, we certainly would be willing to have those conversations.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, probably the first problem is to learn what red tape is.

A few points to ponder, Mr. Speaker. Given that the CFIB has given the Alberta government a D grade for its red tape report card for several years and given that they estimate that red tape costs Alberta businesses over \$4 billion a year, will the current government at least recognize here and now that bureaucratic red tape is a massive hidden tax on businesses and all Albertans and that they need to address this?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there are reasons why we need to protect citizens and protect businesses. Again, if there are specific instances that the member wants to bring up rather than spouting grandiose ideas that are created off the back of a napkin, I'd certainly be happy to discuss specific instances that he's referring to. But there are reasons why we have regulations and protections for citizens: to make sure that they're protected and so are the businesses.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, we see again that it's easier to attack the opposition than to answer the question.

Given that provinces like British Columbia get an A rating from CFIB on red tape reduction because they keep track of the regulatory burden and given that even other provinces, like Ontario, that share a high-spending agenda still manage to have a red tape reduction framework, will the current government here at least commit to quarterly reports on red tape reduction or a one-for-one rule on introducing new regulations?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, certainly, I think it's fair to ask why we have regulations, and one of the reasons why we have regulations is to protect citizens. When it comes to: will you guarantee that you'll get rid of a regulation if you add a regulation? Not if the regulations are there to protect citizens. Certainly, we take our responsibility in that matter very seriously.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

2:40

### Seniors' Housing

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Albertans we care greatly about our senior population, especially all those who are currently displaced. For all seniors across the province we want to ensure that they have housing available to them so that they can age as comfortably and carefree as possible. We need to take measures today to ensure that the infrastructure we need in 20 years is available because we have done the planning now. To the minister of seniors: what studies are you conducting to ensure that infrastructure is planned and developed for current and upcoming senior populations?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. I'll just address some of the concerns regarding Fort McMurray currently. I've met with Cynthia Woodford, who is the vice-president of property services at Wood Buffalo Housing & Development Corporation. I want to commend them on their efforts in the evacuation and in the face of adversity, and I'm really pleased with the work they've done. We know that the Rotary House Lodge was not destroyed. Of course, we have to make sure that all the other infrastructure needs are in place, so we're working very closely with the authority right now to make sure that seniors in Fort McMurray are protected.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that you have announced capital dollars but have not announced any process for accessing the funding and given that partnering with private and nonprofit sectors is likely the most effective method to build and renovate seniors' facilities in Alberta, to the minister: when will an application process be in place so that private industry can apply to create this much-needed infrastructure?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. Of course, we do have a \$1.2 billion investment in our five-year capital plan, and unlike the previous government, we are addressing the concerns about \$1 billion in deferred maintenance that we inherited from that government. We're investing \$582 million to support major replacement and renewal of existing social housing and seniors' lodges. We've put money into rental assistance: \$1.3 million will be provided for immediate support for approximately 260 families to . . .

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that as the population shifts over the upcoming years, the use of specific facilities will inevitably change – and the needs of seniors using them will – and given that we want to make best possible use of the infrastructure that we build, to the minister: what is your plan for ensuring that both private and public facilities built for seniors' housing can be repurposed in the future if or when they no longer serve the need so that we make sure that we do not waste taxpayers' dollars?

**Ms Sigurdson:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the seniors' facilities, many of them, you know, are 30, 40 years old. There has to be some redevelopment of them, and actually some of them are no longer functional. Of course, they have to be brought up to modern standards. That's why we're investing \$30 million this year into bringing seniors' lodges up to code to make sure that by 2018 a hundred facilities will have sprinkler systems and all the fire safety that they need. Other work that we're doing is making lodges have their own in-suite . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-Currie.

### Women's Economic Equality

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I look back at my childhood, I remember the hours my mother put in at home in the morning getting me ready for school and in the evenings ensuring that I was well fed and cared for while at the same time holding down a job for which she was being paid 30 per cent less than her male counterparts. This problem of the wage gap is still with us today. To the Minister of Status of Women: what steps are being taken by this government to address the gender pay gap in this province?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Status of Women.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to member for the timely question as we go into Status of Women estimates this afternoon. Alberta's women are strong and capable. That's why it makes no sense that we have one of the largest pay gaps in the country. We know that 62 per cent of minimum wage earners in Alberta are

women, and our plan to responsibly phase in a \$15 minimum wage is real progress in closing that wage gap.

Mr. Speaker, we're actually taking women's economic security seriously by creating Alberta's first-ever ministry dedicated to advancing women's equality.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given this economic environment that we're in now, child care is at the forefront of many people's minds, and given that child care spaces are still at a premium, the prices seem to go up during the good times but never come down in the bad. To the same minister: what are you doing to increase the availability and affordability of child care spaces throughout the province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Raising kids is expensive. Our government knows that and is committed to helping Alberta families with the costs of child care. We're expanding benefits to 380,000 Alberta kids. This is so that, for example, a single mom with two kids who qualifies will get more than \$3,000 in her pocket each year. We're also investing \$10 million to pilot child care programs so that when finances improve, we will be in a position to move towards \$25-a-day child care for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that an increase in the availability of child care spaces is just one way that we can help increase the ability of women to participate in the workforce, again to the Minister of Status of Women: what are you doing to ensure that women in our province are able to fully participate in the economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Women's economic security is one of the three key areas of Status of Women's mandate. A big part of getting better paying jobs is training and education. We are moving Alberta forward with our jobs plan. In our budget there's \$10 million for training opportunities for women and indigenous people, who are underrepresented in the economy. I'm proud to be a member of a government that is taking real action to help Alberta's strong and resilient women succeed in this economy.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

#### Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire Relief

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week has been very difficult for residents of Fort McMurray and the entire province as we battled with the single biggest fire in our history. Without a doubt we are going through a stressful and trying time.

I am humbled and touched by the resilient spirit of my fellow Albertans who have stepped in to support with whatever they can. From complete strangers bringing flowers to brighten up Mother's Day for moms staying in reception centres to schoolteachers driving students to safety through the heart of the blaze, from hundreds of firefighters battling the blaze around the clock to peace officers directing traffic in thick smoke and staff from the SPCA working to remove all the animals abandoned during the city-wide exodus, everyone is working as quickly as possible with all they can give to

get resources and services where they are needed. In my own constituency of Wetaskiwin-Camrose people have donated generously to relief efforts and held the people of Fort McMurray in their thoughts.

This is a disaster of extreme magnitude, and I am proud that our government is doing the right thing, showing clear leadership, and ensuring we meet the needs that people have. People's safety comes first, and that's what we have prioritized.

When tens of thousands were being forced from their homes as firefighters battled the wildfire, two beautiful babies were born in an evacuation camp. At just a week old today, Mr. Speaker, they are at least two rays of sunshine amid the smoky devastation.

Fort McMurray, please know that we have your back and we will get through this difficult time together. Like the phoenix, we will rise from the ashes. Thank you to all ordinary Albertans for performing extraordinary acts of compassion.

Thank you.

#### 2:50 Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire Relief

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, history has been punctuated with moments of greatness performed by regular people. The spark of heroism lies dormant in all of us until that urgent whisper calls us to step up, suppress our fears and our own self-interest, and do something significant and meaningful. Pictures of caring Albertans coming to the rescue of fleeing motorists stranded on the highway remind us of the hero lying dormant in each of us, waiting for that quiet moment when we see a need and instinctively reach out with a helping hand and a caring heart. Pictures of brave firefighters trying to recover from exhaustion, lying on the lawn bone weary from battling insurmountable odds, fighting to save homes and possessions. These images will be indelibly etched in our memories for years and years to come.

They came from far and wide, not because they were paid to or required to but because they saw the Goliath for what it was, an inferno whose sole purpose was to wreak carnage and destruction wherever it went. What do heroes do when they are confronted with the Goliaths of the world, Mr. Speaker? They steel their nerves, they take a deep breath, and they plant their feet to stand bravely in defiance.

Many of Fort McMurray's homes and businesses now stand safe from the fiery tendrils due to the gutsy and courageous efforts of those unsung and unheralded heroes. To all of you first responders that ran towards the fire when everyone else was running away from it, to all of you angels in pickups that brought gas cans and food and water to the stranded on highway 63, to all of you volunteers and givers of charity, to all of you who offered heartfelt prayers for the safety of the displaced: from the bottom of our hearts we say thank you. You answered the quiet call of heroism that moved you to action in this great time of need. Goliath reared its ugly head, but you brave souls were courageously there to stop it.

Mr. Speaker, I am proudest to report to you that in Alberta heroism and leadership are still very much alive and well.

#### Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire Relief

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, over the past week Albertans watched in horror as the raging wildfire forced more than 80,000 Fort McMurray and area residents from their homes, leaving unimaginable destruction in its wake. In the face of this danger it would have been easy to panic, yet so many brave Albertans swallowed their fear and evacuated their city without incident. In the hours and days that followed, it has been remarkable to witness the strength, kindness, and generosity of Albertans as they rush to help evacuees.

Whether it was patrolling highway 63 with fuel, food, and water for those stranded or opening their homes without hesitation to welcome the weary or quickly organizing fundraisers to support the amazing work of the Canadian Red Cross, Albertans have been a source of inspiration across the country.

Time and time again our resiliency has been tested, and Albertans have answered the call. I think about the wonderful couple from Fort Mac that I met this weekend in Calgary, so overwhelmed and in shock but who were treated so kindly at a local Best Buy, whose staff replaced their electronics at little or no cost, or the group of young people from Fort McMurray who came to North Star Ford in Calgary to say thank you to volunteers, who then furnished them with food and supplies for their pets.

Unfortunately, we cannot say that no lives were lost. Our hearts break for the families of two young people who lost their lives in a vehicle collision fleeing Fort McMurray. This is an unimaginable loss, and our prayers are with their families.

Alberta is no stranger to hard times, but as the people of this great province have demonstrated so many times in the past, we are stronger than tornadoes, floods, and wildfires.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

#### Peace River Constituency Events

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I went home early to High Level this past weekend due to wildfire evacuations and a local state of emergency. Thankfully, fires are currently under control and people are safe, but my visit really highlighted the incredible, resilient northern spirit.

Friday morning I had the honour of speaking at the Northern HEAT conference in Peace River, where firefighters from across northwest Alberta improve their skills and efficiency through live fire training and sessions on engine company operations and leadership. When you stand in front of a roomful of such brave men and women, knowing each and every one is ready and willing to face wildfire and risk their own lives to keep the rest of us safe, there isn't a lot you can say except: thank you for always being there when we need you.

A key conference session was on posttraumatic stress disorder, something that affects both the victims of wildfire and first responders. By taking early steps to address mental health concerns among those impacted by the fires in northern Alberta, we can hopefully lessen the severity of posttraumatic effects.

Saturday brought a lesson in how to stay mentally healthy in the face of trauma at the Northern Alberta Fiddling and Jigging Championship in Fort Vermilion. We had a sold-out crowd, with participants from across northern Alberta. First up was Marvin, a fiddler from Fort McMurray. Marvin stood on stage, and he spoke about losing everything in the fire, including all his fiddles and guitars. Then he picked up a borrowed fiddle and lifted the hearts of everyone in the room with his music, celebrating life through music and dance and healing our soul and spirit.

I saw incredible generosity. Although the economic downturn has hit Peace River hard, within 48 hours residents had filled a huge box truck with emergency relief supplies. The mayor of High Level has reached out to the province to offer accommodation for evacuees, stating: we have 1,000 rooms and big arms to support.

In the days ahead we'll have much work to do in northern Alberta as we begin our journey of rebuilding, but with the strength and bravery of our first responders, the generosity of people across the province and country, our focus on maintaining mental wellness, and our incredibly resilient northern spirit, we will succeed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

#### Edmonton Eskimos' Community Activities

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise and speak about an amazing group of women and our city's favourite team, the Edmonton Eskimos.

Recently it was my pleasure to spend the evening at the Edmonton Eskimos dinner, which raises money for the Lois Hole hospital and ovarian cancer research. This event is hosted every year in memory of long-time Eskimo friend and employee Pam Monastyrskyj. Pam was an integral member of the Green and Gold for more than two decades. In 2005 she lost her long, hard-fought battle with ovarian cancer. Two years later the Edmonton Eskimos Women's Dinner was created in her memory to provide funding for research at the Lois Hole hospital for women. This dinner has raised \$392,000 to date, including over \$59,000 in 2015 alone. This is one of the many things that the Edmonton Eskimos do to give back to the community.

As many of you know, Fort McMurray has a special place in the Green and Gold's hearts. Last summer the oil sands capital hosted the Northern Kickoff between the Saskatchewan Roughriders and the Edmonton Eskimos in a preseason match. This game was a huge success and developed an everlasting relationship between the CFL and Fort McMurray, so much so that the players, the Eskimos Cheer Team, and the mascots all visited the evacuees currently housed at the Northlands Expo Centre this past Saturday.

This team has also participated in a \$50,000 donation made by all nine teams of the CFL and the league office to the Red Cross and has also donated to the Edmonton Humane Society's disaster fund to support affected animals. The Edmonton Eskimos and their volunteers continue to make significant contributions not only in support of great initiatives like the women's dinner but also through their ongoing support of the evacuees of Fort McMurray.

In closing, I will quote the commissioner of the CFL. "They have been our gracious hosts. They are our friends. And most importantly, they are our fellow Canadians. All of our teams, and I know all of our fans, wish them safe passage and in time a full recovery from this crisis."

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that we accept unanimous consent in order to extend the Routine until its completion. It's my expectation that that will only take a few additional minutes. Of course, there are some bills that need to be introduced, so I would respectfully request the House's support for that.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

#### Energy Industry Response to Fort McMurray Wildfire

**Mr. Strankman:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Albertans never cease to amaze me. We are currently in the middle of battling one of the most devastating natural disasters in our history as the fire near Fort McMurray is still going strong. Thankfully, the courage of Fort McMurray's residents, emergency personnel, and helpful Albertans ensured a successful evacuation when the city was threatened. I want to talk today about some of those helpful Albertans, especially members of our energy sector.

Now, the energy sector in our province is often demonized by those with an agenda. In this emergency oil field companies and their employees are acting selflessly to provide emergency lodging, food, and, in many cases, transportation for displaced residents. For example, at the height of the mass exodus from Fort McMurray men such as Kurt Scharr and his friends, self-named the Power Strokes, loaded their trailer with Tidy Tanks and jerry cans of fuel and drove towards the fire when everyone else was evacuating. Likewise, Shawn McDonald and his company, Black Scorpion, ran up and down highway 881 and highway 63 providing fuel not only to stranded motorists but even sometimes to emergency responder vehicles. They did so for days, paying for the fuel out of pocket and through donations. Only Albertans would run with gasoline and diesel towards a fire. These folks knew that many people leaving in a hurry likely didn't have a chance to fill their tanks, so they loaded up of their own accord and began helping stranded Albertans get out of harm's way.

3:00

These are just a few of many stories of our friends and neighbours stepping up and pitching in because it was the right thing to do, with no agenda beyond helping others. Mr. Speaker, I would like to think that these responses are typical of how Albertans act in a crisis. It takes a special kind of person to knowingly place themselves in a dangerous situation. These men and women and others like them exemplify what it means to be Alberta strong.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) that at the appropriate time I will be rising on a point of privilege regarding the obstruction of the government in preventing members of the Assembly, in particular the Official Opposition, including myself, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, and the MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon, from carrying out their parliamentary duties. I have the appropriate number of copies of the letter that was provided to your office at the required time this morning. Subsequently, I understand that there may be a response from the government, at which point I may be happy to withdraw this point of privilege.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

#### Bill 13

#### Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and introduce Bill 13, Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016.

These proposed changes will allow veterinary technologists to be given representation on the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association's governing council and practice review board with full voting rights. This is important because the association is responsible for setting and enforcing the rules around the practice of veterinary medicine in Alberta. The amendments introduced today in Bill 13 were initiated by the ABVMA with member support, and I'd like to thank them for being here in the gallery today. The amendments will not change the scope of practice for veterinary medicine or the qualifications required to be a technologist. By enhancing accountability for all technologists,

Albertans can be confident their animals are receiving the best care possible.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

#### Bill 14

#### Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this House to introduce first reading of Bill 14, Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016.

It's first reading, and it's also my first bill, so this is pretty exciting. Thank you.

The Health Professions Act delegates professional self-governance and regulatory colleges and establishes standard processes for registration, continuing competency, complaints, and discipline. The proposed amendments reflect Alberta's changing and evolving health workforce and health system. The amendments will ensure that Albertans continue to receive safe, high-quality care from regulated, accountable professionals. The amendments will also ensure that this care is delivered in facilities that meet consistent, rigorous standards, part of our right care, right place, right time, right professional.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to table 10 copies of a response to a written request from the fall session respecting government spending in regard to student learning assessment pilot projects. I'd also like to take a moment to apologize to the member for the delay in providing my ministry's response. I understand that the member has asked a similar question in the spring session, and I would assure him that we will table that response and all of his other requests in a more timely manner.

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table 10 copies of the responses prepared by Alberta Health to written questions and motions for returns submitted last session, and I, too, would like to apologize for the delay in providing these to the House.

Thank you.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Mason, Minister of Infrastructure, return to order of the Assembly Motion for a Return 9, asked for by Mr. Cooper on May 2, 2016, copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Infrastructure between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe there was a point of privilege that was raised by the Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today on the point of privilege that I had mentioned earlier in question period. I'd just like to extend my acceptance of the apology

from both ministers. I appreciate the fact that they have tabled the required information and apologized. I am more than happy at this time to withdraw my point of privilege. However, I'd just make a brief comment to make sure that the government is aware that their actions, or inaction, affect other members of this Assembly, and it's important for all of us to ensure that the rules of the Assembly as well as the standing of the Assembly are respected, and I appreciate that they have done that now today.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, the daily Routine has now concluded.

A legislative policy committee will convene this afternoon for consideration of the main estimates. Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Status of Women in the Grassland Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 3:09 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b)]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 11, 2016

Day 26

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
Second Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
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Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 11, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

If you would bow your heads. Let us reflect, each in our own way. Let us reflect on the power of community and the power of collaborative work and the impact it can have on our province. Through a co-operative effort we will be able to preserve our communities and our province through the tough times that they may face. Let us as Albertans remember that we are here for one another and that no one should feel alone during these difficult times.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests sitting in your gallery. Former MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo Mike Allen is also the owner of Campbell's Music, which just happens to be celebrating a 40th anniversary this week. Mike is also a two-term municipal councillor and past president of the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce. I had the pleasure of working with Mike Allen on highway 63, which is now 99 per cent complete. Thank you, government, for finishing it. I expect that the evacuation efforts would have been severely worse if highway 63 remained a single-lane highway.

Attending with Mike today is Denise Wilkinson, who is a restaurant manager and the vice-president of membership for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo PC Association and Mike's partner. I would ask Mike and Denise now to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House students, staff, and parents from Webber Academy in my constituency of Calgary-West. For the teachers: Mrs. Kari Labelle, Ms Barbara Webber, Mrs. Valerie Ellaid, Ms Jennifer Harriman, and Ms Carol Webber. The academy is one of the top private schools in western Canada. It's recognized for its high educational standards and renowned for preparing students for university and their broader citizenship in society. The school's founder, Dr. Neil Webber, is well known to this House as he is a former cabinet minister, as is his son Len, now an MP for Calgary Confederation. I'm proud that Webber Academy is in Calgary-West. It is located in a truly beautiful venue overlooking the foothills and the mountains. Almost 100 students from Webber Academy are here today. Can we please welcome them and give them the traditional warm welcome of this House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school groups today, hon. members?

Hearing none, the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two women who are on the forefront of co-ordinating local relief efforts for evacuees from Fort McMurray. Kathy Prudhon and Cindi Haché are respectively the founder and executive director of the Edmonton Emergency Relief Services Society. With the support of the city of Edmonton and the government of Alberta and many community partners, Cindi and Kathy lead the EERSS in co-ordinating local partners and volunteers to deliver direct material assistance to victims of disaster. I look forward to speaking more about their work in my member's statement today. For now I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly Matthew Lillico. Matthew is a Wildrose member who is working to build our organization up here in Alberta's capital. I'd ask that he stand and receive the tradition warm greetings of the House.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two staff members from my constituency office in Edmonton-Mill Woods and one staff member from the Labour ministry. I have my constituency office manager here, Marta Azocar, who has been with me since July and does a fabulous job of keeping things running in Edmonton-Mill Woods, as well as our part-time constituency assistant, Dylan Sloan, who started in March. As well, from my ministry staff I'd really like to introduce Karen Ramkhelawan, my scheduling assistant. I do not know how she does it, but thank you, Karen. I'd like to ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't see my guests, but I'll introduce them here. They might be on this side.

It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Jagvir Brar and Zora Singh Brar. Jagvir has become a good friend of mine over the last year, and I was honoured to have him as a volunteer on my last election campaign. He's an extremely dedicated volunteer and participates in all outreach events organized by the constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie. Zora Singh Brar is Jagvir's father-in-law and is visiting Edmonton from Punjab and is looking forward to a tour of the Legislature later this afternoon. I'd ask both my guests to rise if they are here and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Your guests may not be here yet, hon. member.

### Ministerial Statements

#### Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire Update

**Ms Larivee:** Mr. Speaker, the situation in the Fort McMurray area and the well-being of those who were evacuated continue to dominate our thoughts and our actions. There are thousands still under mandatory evacuation orders for Fort McMurray, Anzac, Gregoire Lake Estates, and the Fort McMurray First Nation. I know first-hand how hard it is to be away from your community, and my

heart goes out to all those people who are displaced from the comforts of home. We continue to focus on those evacuated residents to ensure that they remain safe and have access to the support and services they need.

This morning our Premier announced the details on the emergency financial assistance available to evacuees. This afternoon our government will start issuing preloaded debit cards to those who have registered with the Red Cross to help them through this tremendously challenging time. Adults will receive \$1,250 and \$500 for every dependant. This one-time emergency payment will help evacuees meet their immediate short-term needs.

I know this has been a stressful time, and I would like to make an appeal to allow individuals and families with the most need to come forward first. Those families who are not in dire need of funds, who perhaps still have at least a few dollars left to use, are being asked to please wait a few days. These funds will be available for some time, and no eligible evacuee will be left out. There are debit card distribution centres in Edmonton at the Butterdome, in Calgary at McMahon Stadium and the BMO Centre, and at Lac La Biche in the indoor soccer centre adjacent to the Bold Center.

Evacuees will need to bring with them their Red Cross registration number, photo identification, identification for their partner or spouse and dependants if they are claiming relief for them, and proof of residence or presence in the community. For those who left behind identification documents such as drivers' licences, new Alberta ID cards will be issued free of charge at a registry agent. Those who have questions about this program or questions about any of the efforts under way should contact 310.4455 or, again, check the [emergency.alberta.ca](http://emergency.alberta.ca) website.

**1:40**

Our government also remains committed to providing evacuees with as much information as possible as it becomes available. We held our second telephone town hall last night, and it was very well received by residents. We had several experts available to answer questions of evacuees on topics ranging from house insurance to health care, education, the current state of the wildfires, and plans for re-entry. We had good participation on last night's call, with more than 13,000 evacuees who participated. There are plans for at least two more town halls, one tonight and one on Thursday. Again, evacuees should register with the Red Cross to ensure that they receive the details of these calls.

Mr. Speaker, an important step in the recovery will be to get the major industry in Fort McMurray back up and running. Yesterday our Premier met with leaders from the oil industry to discuss the state of the oil sands facilities in the region and plans to return to full operations. We expect that many companies will resume operations in the coming days, which is good news for their employees and for our economy. We are committed to working closely with them on the plan for a safe and timely recovery. The Alberta Energy Regulator has created a recovery team to assist with planning for the safe and environmentally responsible resumption of operations. The regulator is working with each affected company on a start-up plan. This work will include appropriate authorizations, inspections, monitoring, and logistical support to get sites operational.

On that note, yesterday highway 63 was reopened for industry goods to move through. That includes the transportation of oil sands supplies and equipment. The RCMP is managing a staging area south of Fort McMurray to allow for free-flowing travel that's intended for industry use. This is good news, Mr. Speaker, to get our industry working again.

While industry begins its return, I want to say that we are working as quickly as possible to make Fort McMurray safe for residents to

return to. As we speak, we have many people on the ground in Fort McMurray, those conducting damage assessments and beginning repairs on critical infrastructure such as the power grid, gas lines, and water treatment facilities. A team of inspectors is on the ground to conduct structural assessments, first on critical infrastructure and then on businesses and residences. Alberta Health Services will be assessing the city's hospital and begin establishing an urgent care centre. In fact, there are already health care services available for the first responders there. And planning is under way to develop interim housing solutions for those who lost their homes.

Mr. Speaker, we have hundreds of people on the ground right now working as quickly as they can to make the city safe and habitable, but there is significant work to be done. I understand the difficulties faced by those who have lost so much. I want everyone to know that everything that can be done is being done around the clock to get you home.

Although the fire has moved away from Fort McMurray, the fire potential remains high. The fire in northeastern Alberta is out of control, and the size is currently estimated at 230,000 hectares. The current forecast indicates a high of 12 degrees Celsius today, 30 per cent humidity. Winds will remain a factor at 25 kilometres per hour from the northeast. Widespread smoke remains a concern, and we are monitoring air quality closely to ensure that our first responders are safe. In Fort McMurray there are more than 700 firefighters bravely battling the blaze along with 20 helicopters, 13 air tankers, and many pieces of heavy equipment.

This battle has physical and emotional impacts on our first responders. To provide the support these brave women and men may need, three mental health therapists trained in psychological first aid arrived yesterday in Fort McMurray to provide support. In addition, Alberta Health Services is deploying a critical incident stress management support team. The team will include one mental health trauma specialist, three emergency medical services peer support members, and one EMS chaplain to provide psychological health help to all interested emergency responders.

Mr. Speaker, I continue to urge those evacuees who haven't already registered with the Red Cross to do so. People can do this by visiting [redcross.ca](http://redcross.ca) to register their name and whereabouts. As of this morning more than 47,000 households have registered with the Red Cross. There are 13 reception centres open in the province. As always, the best place to go for the most up-to-date information is [emergency.alberta.ca](http://emergency.alberta.ca).

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire Relief

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week has shown the steel and resolve of our province. It begins with a story of those who, without being asked, found their way to drive up highway 63 and to evacuation centres to provide free gas and free meals. For over a week these individuals have done this tireless work without ever being asked.

The acts of service did not stop there. Many businesses and individuals immediately brought their equipment, both big and small, to provide immediate relief and assistance to those in need. In cities, towns, and villages across Alberta families have opened up their homes to strangers, to pets on a moment's notice. In fact, barely an hour after a mandatory evacuation was in effect, folks were already signing up to help.

In our cities we've seen incredible leadership from our municipal officials. I want to first thank the mayor of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, who was asked to oversee the largest evacuation in our province's history. I'm thinking of towns like Lac La Biche, which, despite a population of only 3,000, has warmly welcomed 4,000 evacuees to the Bold Center on the southeastern edge of town.

It should come as no surprise that the City of Champions, too, stepped forward to lend a hand. The Edmonton Expo Centre received a call for help at 9 p.m. By 11 p.m. their doors were open and ready to welcome nearly 20,000 evacuees. Edmontonians have been tirelessly assisting evacuees to find accommodation, stocking up on things like clothes, pet food, baby diapers, and other important items.

Not to be outdone, Calgary, too, has opened its doors, providing lodging for nearly 2,000 evacuees. Calgary facilities like the Calgary Zoo, the Telus Spark centre, and leisure centres are all offering Fort McMurray residents an opportunity to spend even a couple of hours having fun, getting their minds off all this worry.

Once again Albertans have shown their true character in the face of a crisis. The coming days, weeks, and months are certain to be difficult, but I know we will emerge from this tragedy stronger than ever before.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

#### **Acts of Kindness to Wildfire-affected Albertans**

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the news we are hearing about the big players in the evacuation of Fort McMurray. There is no doubt how important their work is and the lives that have been saved because of it. But thousands of smaller acts of kindness are taking place, and I want to honour these today.

There are the children setting up lemonade stands; groups hosting barbecues and pancake breakfasts, with the proceeds going to the Red Cross; the family whose child's specialized walker had to be left behind, and someone in Edmonton stepped up and gave them their daughter's spare one. Local bands are coming together for concerts to raise funds and to raise spirits. There's the Hutterite colony that showed up at a reception centre to feed the people a home-cooked chicken dinner; the Syrian refugees in Calgary, who have so little, that gave what they could to purchase much-needed supplies; the people of Fort St. John, who sent a large horse trailer of supplies because Fort McMurrans needed it more. People are opening their homes to complete strangers. One farmer and his wife not only gave someone gas, but fed him, cleaned and fixed a tear in his clothes, and sent him on his way. When he stopped to get coffee, he reached in his pocket and found a \$100 bill.

I could list these incidents all afternoon and not be finished. These are all small acts in the big scheme of things, but added together, they are huge, and they speak to the remarkable character of Albertans.

I am so proud to be an Albertan, and I want to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone for these acts of kindness.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

#### **Fort McMurray Wildfire Pet Evacuation**

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been eight days since the wildfire forced the residents of Fort McMurray to evacuate, leaving unimaginable destruction in its wake. We've seen the chilling photos and videos that some have taken as they fled, showing just how little time people had to escape, and we've heard from many of the evacuees who were forced to leave beloved pets behind. I can

only imagine how difficult that was and how anxious these pet owners have been waiting for news.

**1:50**

Well, late last week animal control, SPCA, and Humane Society officials began going door to door. They have already rescued hundreds of pets of all shapes, sizes, and species. These pets are being cared for in a facility here in Edmonton until they are well enough to be reunited with their owners. Yesterday morning I had the honour of spending a few hours conducting health assessments and treating these frightened and bewildered animals. I can't tell you how rewarding it was to play a small part to reunite these animals with their families, families that I know will benefit tremendously from the comfort of their beloved pets during these difficult times. I was struck, but not surprised, by the selfless dedication of my Alberta Veterinary Medical Association colleagues, veterinarians and animal health technologists, some who have been there on duty for days with only a few hours' sleep.

Pets enrich our lives in immeasurable ways: they have become integral parts of our families; they give unconditional love; and they bring us joy, laughter, companionship, and comfort day in and day out. We know that in the days since the evacuation these four-legged companions have been greatly missed. We also know that in the difficult days ahead, they will play a vital role in the healing process.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans have contributed their unique skills and expertise in countless ways to help the people of Fort McMurray. I've always been proud to be a veterinarian but never more so than yesterday. I'm thankful that I can put my skills to use and be of assistance during this crisis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Oral Question Period**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

#### **Fort McMurray Residents' Housing Concerns**

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take a moment to commend the strength once again and the courage of the Fort McMurray evacuees. We know that for many of these evacuees, there is a good chance their home survived the blaze. Understandably, however, these men and women want to see the damage with their own eyes. The other day I asked about timelines for these Albertans to return home. The government had no answers for me then and would only defer to work being done on the ground by officials. To the minister: what specific infrastructure criteria must be met before the evacuees are allowed to return home to Fort McMurray?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Certainly, we fully recognize how desperately people want to get back home, and we're working around the clock to make that happen. A big piece of that is actually the assessment of the work that needs to be done. We continue to work on things such as water, power, electricity, waste management, and we'll transition slowly to ensure necessary services such as the grocery store being prepared and the hospital being prepared and all of those pieces. We look forward to providing that information, with a clear representation of the plan, to residents as soon as possible.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that safety is paramount, but there are things this government could do to ease the burden on evacuees while they wait. On June 20, 2013, flooding devastated parts of southern Alberta. Eight days later there were bus tours arranged so that residents could assess the damage for themselves. Similarly, seven days after the Slave Lake wildfire officials organized bus tours there, too, so residents could have a first-hand look at the wreckage. Is the government arranging bus or video tours so that Fort McMurray evacuees can see their homes with their own eyes?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that important question. There's no question that officials have been discussing that very issue. The mechanics and the logistics of having 80,000 people return to a town that is a four- or five-hour drive away for bus tours are not the same as the examples that were given previously.

However, there is work being done on the issue of a video tour. Our officials are working with Google Maps to look at whether that kind of work can be done because we understand that people want to see things as soon as they can.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has said that a schedule for return won't be provided to evacuees for another 14 days, on top of the painstaking seven days that they've already been waiting. These men and women need to get back to their homes or, at the very least, to have a solid timeline for a return. The 2011 fire victims were back in their homes in 13 days; the 2013 flood victims were back in their homes in nine. Can the government provide a full list of reasons why Fort McMurray evacuees will have to wait 22 whole days before they even get a timeline for a return?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that it is absolutely the first thing on the minds of the evacuees from Fort McMurray, that they want to go back. We absolutely understand that. Particularly, you know, the first responders that the member opposite referred to in his member's statement have had tremendous success in getting people out of Fort McMurray safely, so we don't want to undo that record by letting them go back prematurely. We also don't want to set a date which then has to be missed because of a gas line or an electric line or lack of a water supply because, quite frankly, the emotional task of building towards a specific day and then having that day removed is even more . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### **Fort McMurray Wildfire Recovery Contracts**

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been talking with many of my constituents over the past week, and I've heard many stories of compassion, generosity, and pride for our Fort McMurray community. However, many of my residents are skilled labourers and trained professionals, and they are eager to lend their expertise to rebuild their home, but they've been prevented by this government from doing so. As the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo this is of great concern as in the days and weeks and months and years to come we will need all the help we can get in rebuilding.

My question to the Premier is this. Will you ensure that Fort McMurrayites with the will and resources are given the opportunity to rebuild their city?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It's certainly a very good question. That issue actually comes up as part of the larger consideration of: how do we help small-business owners and business owners who've been negatively impacted by the fire in Fort McMurray? As we move from the emergency response phase, which, quite frankly, really just ended about Sunday, Monday, into the transition phase, that exact work is being done. The whole evaluation of the services that are required and where we can get them and how we can certainly be sure that those from Fort McMurray are able to participate as much as possible is being worked out right now. We'll have more to say . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, I have specific examples of Alberta businesses and individuals who are from Fort McMurray and have the infrastructure and capacity to help during this crisis. They are companies with machines on the ground, who want to help. Take, for instance, a local excavation and demolition company that has machines sitting at the waste-water treatment plant in Fort McMurray. They're ready to help with the fire abatement and cleanup, but instead of using these ready-to-go machines on the ground, the government has already said, "No, thanks" and are instead bringing up machines and contractors from Calgary. To the Premier: why are you ignoring this made-in-Fort McMurray assistance being offered?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's not a question of ignoring; it's a question of assessing the resources on an urgent basis, on an emergent basis. There's no question that this issue is being addressed and being examined by the transition team, by the emergency management people who are planning the transition. So it will form part of the plan going forward. The decision is not done. We've only just begun the work of securing the city, and there will be a great deal of work going forward. I ask the member to give us specific examples, as I indicated to his leader yesterday, and we'll be happy to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Yao:** I do have a specific example.

Examples of local solutions are being ignored. The Wildrose has heard stories of water trucks being available in Janvier, which is just 120 kilometres from Fort McMurray. When the offer was made to supply these 20 water trucks, the forestry department said: no, thanks. A rebuild of Fort McMurray without utilizing the tools available in the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo does not make sense. Will the Premier work with her officials to rectify this situation?

**Ms Notley:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I think I've kind of already answered that question exactly. We've asked our officials to look at that issue and to look at a planned-out process to ensure that those who want to help, who are capable of helping will be offered the opportunity to help. As I've said, there is a tremendous amount of work going forward. In the meantime specific examples, with names and people and contacts and that information, will help us as

we work with our officials to work through this together, collaboratively, to ensure that everybody can contribute and the most support can be given to business owners in Fort McMurray.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### Job Creation

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government has failed to support job creation in Alberta, and Albertans are suffering for it. Last week the Labour minister admitted that they are failing on contractual obligations to promote the Canada job grant, which trains Albertans for better jobs. Big-union AFL-CIO has called the Canada job grant the kind of action Canadians should expect from government at all levels. Will the Premier commit to unemployed Albertans that her government will fulfill skills training obligations?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that question. Through the Canada-Alberta job grant we provide skills training to Albertans who need it, and the program is incredibly well adopted. Through a provincial election and a federal election some of the announcements have not been happening as per the contract. However, rather than announcing our skills training, we are delivering the skills training. We will work with our partners to make sure that we fill those contractual obligations and do those announcements going forward. In the meantime providing the skills training is our priority.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, six major announcements have to be announced every year to be able to fulfill that obligation. That has not been done. Albertans send away an extra \$15 billion a year to Ottawa, and our government is not even fully utilizing what little money gets transferred back. Alberta receives over \$100 million annually under the labour market development agreement to help with skills training. What we are not sure of is if these dollars are being used to provide useful training to Albertans who are out of work and worried about making next month's mortgage payment. Will the Premier commit to releasing details on which specific organizations are receiving these funds?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the work that our government is doing on jobs and skills training. I've provided the member opposite with significant information and details about the program and the nearly 2,000 companies that have taken advantage of Canada-Alberta job grants as well as the 14,000 workers who have enjoyed that. I'd be happy to work with him if he thinks more details are necessary on this particular issue, but the Canada-Alberta job grant is very well utilized in this province, and we can be quite proud of the work that's happening there.

**Mr. Hunter:** There's no doubt that challenges from outside and inside our borders are having an impact on everyday Albertans, but the government has to take ownership of their poorly thought out policies negatively affecting and impacting the economy. It's been one year since the election, but any policies designed to give businesses a sliver of hope won't even kick in until next year. With increased costs to businesses like dramatic minimum wage hikes and a new carbon tax, what is this government doing to help support job growth now instead of sending jobs away?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Our government has been very active since last fall's budget, where we increased ATB's capacity to lend to small and medium-sized businesses by \$1.5 billion. In the fourth quarter they kicked out \$338 million. There is also the STEP program, that the previous government cancelled, that our government has brought back and increased its capacity. That's going to employ about 3,000 folks this summer. There are a number of initiatives that our government has taken that are going to get Albertans back to work and get our economy moving.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

### Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire Information

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our hearts go out to the people displaced by the Alberta wildfires. The impact of fleeing on a moment's notice and leaving your life behind is something that I cannot comprehend. I am surprised to hear that anyone seeking to enter Fort McMurray is required to sign a nondisclosure agreement, including the media, required to have photos and videos vetted by the government before they can be released. Can this be true, and if so, why is it necessary to control the information coming out of Fort McMurray?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. All I can say, very definitively, to the member opposite, in answer to your question, is: no, it cannot be true. It is not true. That is not happening. Sometimes information gets out there, and it spreads a little bit too quickly. To be very clear, that is absolutely not something that's happening in Fort McMurray.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear that, but on Global News there was a report today, and it talked about how even first responders, who have risked life and limb to fight against the disaster, are required to sign a nondisclosure. Again I will ask the Premier or anybody else over there: is this the case, and if so, what possible reason could there be for it?

**Ms Notley:** We've been advised by officials that on one or two occasions private contractors may have introduced this particular practice – for whatever reason we're not entirely sure – to some people. But let me be perfectly clear. None of the public officials that are managing the disaster response in Fort McMurray are asking for anybody to sign this kind of document. It's just not happening, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, people out of their homes are worried about their pets, their neighbourhoods, their belongings. They're anxious, they're scared, and they need information not two weeks from now but right away. Everybody understands the concerns around safety, and we all respect that, but since the Premier has admitted just now that some people have to sign nondisclosures before sharing information, can I ask the Premier to disclose who does? Give us the list of who does have to sign a nondisclosure so that that'll also tell us who doesn't.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, what I am saying is that there have been some second-hand reports that maybe some private contractors may have done that, but I wouldn't know because I'm not in charge of them. To be clear, the public officials who are

managing this disaster are not asking anybody to sign nondisclosure agreements. So in answer to the question: it's not happening.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Wildfire Evacuee Emergency Debit Cards

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today displaced residents of Fort McMurray will begin to receive emergency financial assistance in the form of preloaded debit cards. This is a much-needed support, and I'm glad that the government has moved so quickly to get this help to residents. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. When and where can evacuees receive this money, and what ID is required to receive this assistance?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Evacuees can start receiving their emergency assistance cards this afternoon, beginning at 2 p.m., at four reception centres: the Butterdome in Edmonton, McMahon Stadium, the BMO Centre in Calgary, and the Bold Center in Lac La Biche. They will be open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day, and more centres will open tomorrow, and we'll continue to add more locations in the coming days.

Registration with the Red Cross is required along with identification and social insurance number to receive the cash card. Family members may pick up the debit cards for the entire family but must bring the identification of their spouse and dependants. Any evacuees without ID can receive the cards by making a statutory declaration or can be reissued Alberta ID . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many Albertans have evacuated out of province to stay with family and given that many evacuated Albertans may be far away or simply cannot get to a distribution centre, what is the plan to ensure that these Albertans get the emergency assistance?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will ensure every Albertan evacuated from the Fort McMurray area will receive emergency assistance whether they are out of province or cannot access a distribution centre. Seniors, those with mobility issues, those with special needs, and others who are in Alberta but unable to apply in person can contact 310.4455 to make arrangements to receive emergency financial support from the government of Alberta. We are also working with the Red Cross to provide that assistance from the government of Alberta in addition to the funding provided by the Red Cross for those who have left Alberta. Details on how this will happen should be coming in the days to come.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Loyola:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Many evacuees live and work in Fort McMurray. However, their identification lists their residence as somewhere else. To the same minister: how will the government ensure these evacuees will receive emergency assistance?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard from many evacuees about this concern through the telephone town halls I've

been hosting and various messages we've been receiving. As stated, our government will do what it takes to make sure all evacuees receive the emergency assistance cards. Evacuees in this situation may present documentation such as pay stubs or utility bills to prove residence or presence in the community to receive the cards. Additionally, any evacuee lacking identification or documentation can still receive the cards by making a statutory declaration or can be reissued ID at any registry office. We continue to make every effort to ensure evacuated Albertans receive the assistance cards and the support they need in this difficult time.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

### Seniors' Advocate

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in the estimates for Seniors and Housing the minister clarified that the position of the Seniors' Advocate, which was created to help vulnerable seniors navigate government bureaucracy and to help stop elder abuse, is currently only being filled on an interim basis, which wasn't exactly clear when she said on April 7, "Certainly, we do have a Seniors' Advocate." To the Minister of Seniors: how can you claim that protecting vulnerable seniors is a priority for your government when you haven't even appointed a permanent Seniors' Advocate?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Currently the seniors' and health advocate is responding to all the concerns that are coming forward for seniors. There's staff available to help them, and certainly that's going ahead. It's very important for us to be responding to any concerns that seniors are presenting, and their concerns are being taken care of.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that the minister resorted to pointing fingers on April 7 and saying, "This is an area that has been neglected by the previous government" and given that yesterday she admitted that there hasn't been a permanent Seniors' Advocate since January 1, 2015, which means that her government was at the helm for 12 of the 17 months of the interim period to date, to the minister: when will your government actually take some ownership and do the right thing for vulnerable seniors by appointing a permanent and independent Seniors' Advocate?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. All of the concerns of seniors in this province are being taken care of by the seniors' and health advocate, that's currently in place. Any concern that comes through to our government is being addressed immediately by that person. Right now we're going through an open recruitment process for the Seniors' Advocate, but right now there is the seniors' and health advocate, who's looking after them, so those concerns are being taken care of.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that when the government's in-house position is finally permanently filled, the Seniors' Advocate will still be under the government's authority and only have limited powers and given that the Seniors' Advocate is a vital component to seniors' support services and should be empowered to act independently on seniors' behalf, when will this minister do her job,

stop playing politics, and prioritize an independent Seniors' Advocate?

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. What the opposition is proposing would cost 10 times what the current arrangement costs. It seems this is another example of the opposition wanting to make deep cuts while also asking to spend more. Our Seniors' Advocate is very effective in the responses to all the seniors, and we're very pleased with the work they do.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-North West.

### PDD Service Delivery

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When asked during the recent review of the Human Services budget estimates, the minister stated that there are currently 413 people waiting to access PDD services. This number is shocking and has been growing at a rate of approximately 100 per year since 2012. These are people and families potentially in crisis waiting for PDD housing and supports. To the Minister of Human Services: what supports are the people on the wait-list getting, or are they just being left to fend for themselves?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Human Services' mandate is to assist Albertans in creating conditions for safe and supportive environments so they can realize their full potential. There are, yes, 413 people on the wait-list. These are people who are in the process of planning for services, who are waiting for appropriate service providers, and whose service request exceeds available funding. We are working with those people to make sure they get the services they need.

**Ms Jansen:** Well, they need more than just excuses.

Given that the previous government recognized PDD as a fully distinct program branch with an associate minister, this has been lost under our current government, and since you no longer recognize disability services as distinct and unique, the stakeholders are distressed and they are confused. To the Premier: will you take the big step towards restoring trust with the disability community by reinstating an associate minister of PDD?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that this is a little rich coming from the members of the third party because, you know, I was there when they tried to cut \$40 million from the PDD program, and we had to fight very hard to get that money put back. We talk about the wait-list, which, absolutely, we need to focus on, but the members opposite might want to think about the fact that that wait-list was developed primarily under their tenure. We can't fix everything right away, but we're working on it.

**Ms Jansen:** Well, apparently, Premier, you can't fix anything on this file.

Is the Minister of Human Services prepared to commit to answering stakeholder calls on this issue and instituting a collaborative review of not just part of the PDD system but all of it, including SIS and your PDD transformation plan? The stakeholders want to know.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ever since I've been the minister, I've been working with the stakeholders and I've been

fixing the issues that they have created, such as standard 8 for the safety of individuals. I have been fixing the issues that they created with contracts, contract alignments. These are the problems of the past government. We are working with our stakeholders, representative organizations to get this right.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

### Fort McMurray Energy Industry and Contract Workers

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fort McMurray's oil and gas companies first opened their doors to evacuees and then moved them to safe locations. But those employees who are not working and not collecting benefits such as employment insurance will not be safe financially. What is being done to ensure that those who are not covered by EI, such as PSAs, personal service agreement contractors, are still being looked after in their time of need?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we're very concerned about all the residents of Fort McMurray that have had all the various impacts that they have had regardless of where they came from in the area. We're working very hard to ensure that we provide supports to them. That, certainly, is the reason that we're providing the short-term emergency aid, that starts as of today, the \$1,250 per adult, the \$500 per dependant, to provide them that additional support to help with their short-term needs at this time, when they're away from both their homes and potentially their employment.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I asked about PSAs, and it was not answered.

Anyway, given that economists predict that Alberta's unemployment rate could hit 15 per cent because of the disruption from the fire and given that Fort McMurray's oil field companies employ tens of thousands of people from across Canada and that these people, my former colleagues, Mr. Speaker, are eager to return to work and are crucial to resuming oil sands production, can the minister tell us what's being done to expedite the process of getting people back to work?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The Premier and I met yesterday with the oil industry folks, oil sands CEOs, and there's in fact a lot of hope coming in the next while. Most, if not all, of the north facilities were not damaged, so there's a plan in place. Shell is already ramping up; Suncor is. We believe that the facilities in the south were also not damaged, but we need to ensure that once the hot spots are taken care of.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Minister. Given that for every day that production is kept offline because of the wildfire it provides an opportunity for foreign oil companies to fill the supply gap, taking money out of Canada, and given that any sustained pattern of this supply gap taking place could result in a significant loss of wages for Alberta's oil workers, what will be done in the coming weeks and months to ensure that our market share is protected and expanded so that Albertans continue to have employment opportunities at home?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, when we met with our industry partners yesterday – they have a plan to get production back in as quickly as possible. We were fortunate that much of the infrastructure was not hurt. The pipelines are just being inspected to make sure that there are no ruptures anywhere. Once most of that work has gone on, the AER is working with each individual company to get them online in an organized fashion. Some will be on in the next few days; many will be on in the next few weeks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

## 2:20 Springbank Reservoir Flood Mitigation Project

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the government held an open house in Calgary to discuss the details of the Springbank off-stream reservoir project, called SR1, with the public. My constituents and I were hoping that the government would provide some important details and updates to show that it was taking the concerns of the Springbank residents seriously, but once again we were disappointed. The government had no updated details or cost information to share. I'd like to ask the minister: now what is the current total estimated project cost, and when will you release those numbers? I'm not sure who to direct that to.

**Mr. Mason:** The Springbank diversion project is absolutely critical to protect people downstream and many hundreds of people in the city of Calgary as well, so it's a critical project and very important that we move forward with it. Mr. Speaker, we're currently in the process of talking to the landowners about acquiring their land, and I don't wish to prejudice those negotiations by throwing out any numbers.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** I'm interested in the negotiations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given that SR1 could require the expropriation of private lands, which merits an extensive impact assessment and consultation with landowners, whereas McLean Creek would require little to no private land expropriations and given that the amount of land required for SR1 is continually and rapidly increased while the government's projected land costs have remained unchanged, will the minister commit to listening to Springbank landowners in this process, and can the minister tell them when they will be releasing accurate land cost estimates for SR1?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, it's unfortunate the hon. member wants to jeopardize the negotiations by asking us to tell the price before the negotiations are even concluded. It's important that this project proceed in order to protect people, and it's our job to make sure that it's done in a sustainable way and at the best possible price for the citizens.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we might have a different definition of negotiations.

Given that a key component in the decision to choose SR1 was a shorter timeline required to complete the project and given that the project did not take into account the time necessary for the regulatory process or, more significantly, the time needed to procure the required land, how can this government be so confident that SR1 will protect

vulnerable communities faster than the proposed alternative of McLean Creek?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that we did very much take into account the time necessary to acquire the land. We've completed successful negotiations with landowners to provide access to officials in order to conduct a four-season environmental impact assessment, and that is on schedule. The work has begun.

## Ethics and Accountability Committee

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, shortly after being elected, the government appointed a Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee. There were high hopes and expectations for a collaborative, nonpartisan review of four critical pieces of legislation that govern our democratic institutions, but this committee has only met seven times in eight months and has yet to begin substantive discussions on even one of the four acts. Last night the Member for Calgary-Elbow proposed extending the committee's arbitrary and artificial deadline, which was defeated. To the committee chair: how many hours of meetings do you anticipate being required to complete the committee's mandate?

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I will respond by way of saying that it is not in order for a member to ask . . .

## Speaker's Ruling

### Questions about Legislative Committee Proceedings

**The Speaker:** As I heard the question, it was with respect to the schedule and time. Is that correct? I think the question is in order. I would rule that it is.

Minister, please.

**Mr. Mason:** I'll be happy to answer. It is very unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition members who walked out on that committee . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, I'm advised that you cannot answer. The member who is chair of the committee, I'm advised, is . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Any member can answer a question, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Could I have counsel with the table, please.

I had already recognized the chair of the committee. I must caution that the issue is exclusive with respect to schedule and time as I've understood the question that was asked by the hon. member, so would the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville please answer the question.

## Ethics and Accountability Committee

(continued)

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand and answer my first question in this House. You know, democratic reform is a priority for this government, and that's why the government launched an all-party committee, something that has never happened in this province, to be able to provide recommendations. So being that the opposition members, instead of rolling up their sleeves and getting to the work at hand last night, chose to walk out of yesterday's meeting, through the committee clerk . . .



**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you may not have heard my comment. Please limit it to time and schedule. You were continuing to give far more than what was necessary. I think the question has been answered. When is your meeting scheduled?

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you. Through the committee clerk I have requested future meeting dates and am waiting for some of those members to respond in order to work on the task at hand and schedule the next meeting.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, given that even Senior Parliamentary Counsel last night described the scope of the committee's work as unprecedented and given that the federal electoral reform committee is planning eight months to review only one act and given that the committee needs additional time to thoroughly study, discuss, and debate some hundreds of changes that have been proposed, to the committee chair. In eight months we have actually debated zero changes to zero acts. Given this committee's past productivity, how much time are you allowing for each of the hundreds of proposed changes to all four acts?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I certainly would, if need be, consult, but I think your question has gone beyond the answer that was provided.

**Dr. Starke:** Schedule and agenda, Mr. Speaker. In order.

**The Speaker:** I don't believe that to be the case, hon. member. Is there another question you'd like to ask?

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, there is. Given that the government has now used its majority on the committee on more than one occasion to vote down reasonable proposals by opposition members and given that we are yet to enter into substantive discussions that will fundamentally change the way whistle-blower legislation . . .

**The Speaker:** I must rule that question out of order as well.

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

**The Speaker:** Noted again.

#### Point of Clarification

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, under 13(2) I think members have the right to ask the Speaker to explain a decision, and under that section I'm rising and making the request.

**The Speaker:** I believe I've explained my reasoning, that it was related to the schedule and timing of meetings, and I have made my ruling, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-South. [interjections] Quiet, please.

#### 2:30 Fort McMurray Energy Industry Recovery

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our industry partners have been essential in the work that is being done to support the people of Fort McMurray during this time of crisis, yet we know that the fire has also had significant impact on the energy industry as a whole. Yesterday the Premier and the Minister of Energy met with many top executives from the oil and gas sector to discuss the current state of operations and the plan for going forward. To the Minister of Energy: can the minister update the House on how this

meeting went and how the minister is working with our industry partners to support them in this current time?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. First, I want to continue to extend my sincere thanks to the energy companies and their staff for their tremendous efforts in our time of crisis. Their role was not only to evacuate themselves and their employees; they shut down their facilities in a safe manner, took care of others that showed up at their sites, and made sure there was a safe evacuation. Yesterday the Premier and I met with our industry partners and we discussed the safe . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the destruction we've seen from this fire has been devastating in many parts of Fort McMurray and given that the many from Fort McMurray who work in the oil sands are worried about the impact it will have on their jobs, again to the Minister of Energy: what is the current status of the oil sands sites in the Fort McMurray area, and how have they been affected by the fire damage to the region?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Yesterday at our meeting the oil sands CEOs that we met with were able to report that all facilities north of Fort McMurray appear to be undamaged. There is some work being done to secure some of the electrical lines that were overground. The underground pipes appear to be fine; there are a couple valves to be fixed. The south of Fort McMurray also seems to be fine, but they have to do a little bit more work once the hot spots have cooled down.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the longer our industry partners are either offline or operating at reduced levels of production, the greater the possible impact on our province and the people that work in the area may be, again back to the same minister: can the minister update the House on the progress that has been made so far in getting industry back online and returning to normal production?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. At our meeting yesterday government and industry officials discussed the requirements that were needed for a normal return to production. Our Alberta Energy Regulator is working with each company on their recovery plans and making sure that things are safe and environmentally responsible in the resumption of their operations. This will include appropriate authorizations, inspections, monitoring, and logistical support for them to return to operation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### Ethics and Accountability Committee (continued)

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night the NDP members voted down a motion to extend the deadline for the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee. The committee is tasked

with reviewing four significant pieces of legislation over the course of a year, but now we're over seven months into the mandate, and we haven't reviewed a single act. To the minister responsible for democratic renewal: why isn't the government taking the task of improving our democracy seriously?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Democratic renewal is a top priority for this government as evidenced by the creation of an all-party committee, something unprecedentedly done. Let me be clear. The committee has been busy working, and our members have been busy preparing, doing foundational study, knowledge. If the members opposite have not been using this time, that is to their detriment, and last night, rather than get to work, the members opposite chose to walk out.

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

**Ms Gray:** I realize that the Wildrose do not appreciate mornings, but now they don't like summers?

**Mr. Cyr:** The democratic processes have needed to be . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member.  
Please proceed.

**Mr. Cyr:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Democratic processes have needed to be reviewed in Alberta for a long time. Last May Albertans were promised more accountability and transparency when the government changed hands. Since then things have barely changed. When will the NDP government stop limiting democratic engagement and involvement?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've had some big changes since the last government. We no longer allow corporate and union donations in our democratic system, something that has had a large impact already. The discussions that have already begun at this committee are meaningful. I would like to take a moment to thank the member of the Liberal Party for staying, and I would like to urge all members of the committee to stay at the table and help us work through these issues.

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

**Mr. Cyr:** The scope of the work for this committee is what Parliamentary Counsel has dubbed unprecedented, yet this committee has only met seven times. Given that members leading this committee can't seem to get their act together, to the minister responsible for democratic renewal: when will this government admit they have dropped the ball and extend the timeline so the committee can conduct the proper reviews?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The deadline for this committee of one year and the large task set out for us was known to all members from the beginning. I personally called and spoke with members of the opposite party to talk about how we could deal with such a large task. All members assured me that they were interested in working with us, and then last night they left the table.

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Fort McMurray Wildfire Recovery

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo's economic development organization operates under the mantra of BIG, or Bold Innovative Growth. I'm confident that the agency will hold to this ambitious strategy when working to rebuild Fort McMurray area businesses and the regional economy. To the minister of economic development: what supports will your ministry provide directly to regional economic development agencies as they seek to recover from the devastation of their economy and business infrastructure?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for his very pertinent question. Everyone's first focus, of course, is safety and support for Fort McMurray evacuees. You know, as the fire danger decreases and we work toward recovery and rebuilding, we know that there are going to be serious and immediate challenges for many small-business owners and employees. Providing support for small businesses is essential to help our local economy. I can tell you and the hon. member that I'm committed to working with that body along with small businesses in order to get . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Fort McMurray and the oil sands are internationally known and given that the regional municipality has been extremely successful at leveraging other natural attractions in support of a vibrant tourism and recreation sector, I'm concerned with the impact the devastating fires will have on visitor attraction and the economic benefits derived from them. To the minister of tourism: as we rebuild, what short- and long-term impacts do you expect on tourism-related businesses, and how do you plan to mitigate these challenges?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the very important question. Right now, as we know, we are talking about securing and making sure that everything is safe. Going forward I have had the opportunity to speak to the staff in my ministry to see where we can actually go in and help and provide the support that we have available to them. We have, for example, provided accommodation for Fort McMurray Tourism CEO Frank Creasey within the division offices here in Edmonton while he's working.

The whole point, Mr. Speaker, is . . .

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that housing is a critical concern and top of mind for residents displaced by the fire and given that the Wood Buffalo Housing & Development Corporation has been on the cutting edge of affordable housing innovation and would be a natural partner for this government in rebuilding efforts, to the minister of housing: could you outline for this House how your ministry is planning to work with and support Wood Buffalo housing as they seek to provide appropriate and affordable homes for affected residents?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I've met with Cynthia Woodford, the vice-president of the property services at Wood Buffalo housing corporation, and I certainly want to commend them on their tremendous efforts in the face of adversity during the evacuation. The seniors' facility there, the Rotary House Lodge, was not destroyed, and there'll still be a lot of work to do to ensure that structure is safe. We are continuing to work with the housing management body regarding the affordable housing units and taking stock of that, and we're very pleased to do that with them, and they're a very strong organization.

Thank you.

#### **Fort McMurray Disaster Relief and Recovery**

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, to say that the fire in Fort McMurray has been tragic is an understatement. While the efforts of first responders and fire crews that continue to protect the people in this city have been heroic, I've heard from many people who are anxious about the future and who are unsure if they have a home or a job to return to and are looking for an update on the current state of their homes. To the Deputy Premier: can you update the House on the work that is being done and what still needs to be done before people may return home?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, we have a number of individuals working on the ground and in the air as we speak. Our first focus, of course, is critical infrastructure, so we're actively working to assess and repair the power grid, gas lines, and water treatment facilities and making sure that there's somewhere for refuse to be disposed of. We are sending teams of inspectors in to conduct structural assessments. Of course, once critical infrastructure is addressed, then we'll be able to move forward to businesses and residences.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it may take a considerable amount of time before evacuees are able to return home for good and given that I've heard from many people who are concerned about making ends meet in the meantime, again to the same minister: what is the minister responsible doing to ensure supports are available to the people in the long term?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, ensuring that we get the preloaded debit cards that we've announced into the hands of those who need them most and to everyone as quickly as possible is a high priority. That has begun already, about 45 minutes ago, in Edmonton, Calgary, and Lac La Biche. We're continuing to work with the Red Cross to bring in additional supports to residents who may not be in those municipalities but in other parts of our province and even our country, and we continue to work with our partners on the ground in Fort McMurray as well as in the receiving centres to make sure that individuals get the supports they need.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that some people who call Fort McMurray home have left the province to find temporary housing with friends or family, again to the Deputy Premier: what supports are available to those people who are waiting to come back home?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, if anyone requires special assistance, joining in the town hall conversations that are happening tonight and tomorrow night and raising your questions would be useful as well as calling 310.4455 if you have any questions that require immediate support. We also want to ensure that everyone who needs the resources the most in terms of those preloaded cards gets them as quickly as possible. We're working with industry so that workers who are returning in short order get the supports they need, both in Fort McMurray and their families, if they're not able to return, in the other communities throughout Alberta and Canada.

Thank you for the question.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

#### **Members' Statements**

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

#### **Edmonton Emergency Relief Services Society**

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to recognize the incredible work being done by the Edmonton Emergency Relief Services Society. For 30 years the EERSS has been assisting the victims of fires and other disasters by providing them with basic supplies, household necessities, furniture, and support. The organization is small but mighty. They took the lead on provincial relief efforts after the 2011 fires in Slave Lake, helping to collect and deliver an airplane hangar full and two warehouses full of relief goods, and supported victims of the 2013 Calgary floods with two full semi-trucks of goods and supplies. They've supported hundreds of victims of local fires, were there for those impacted by the Black Friday tornado in 1987, and even reached across provincial lines to support Manitobans caught in the 1997 Red River floods.

Now they're using their expertise and their experience to lead the charge to collect and distribute essential goods for evacuees from Fort McMurray. In less than a week they have set up two additional donation centres, converted a former department store into a distribution and assistance centre for evacuees, and have taken on the task of organizing hundreds of volunteers to co-ordinate it all.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have the words to convey the importance of the work that the EERSS does. They're the embodiment of the spirit of generosity, compassion, and goodwill that we've seen well up in Albertans in response to this recent disaster. It's my honour to represent the EERSS, and on behalf of this House I would like to extend to them our most profound thanks and appreciation for their commitment to supporting Albertans in need.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

#### **CC4MS Centre for Male Survivors of Sexual Violence**

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured and privileged to rise in this House and speak about the Calgary-based not-for-

profit Canadian centre for male survivors of sexual violence, also known as CC4MS. This centre is one of three organizations in Canada that specifically offer supports for male survivors of sexual abuse. CC4MS focuses on the healing of adult male survivors, building advocacy, and educating others about this situation in their community.

Last summer I had the opportunity to learn about CC4MS. I was honoured to meet with their hard-working staff and to know about the valuable services they provide to our community. Their mission is to improve the lives of adult male survivors of childhood sexual abuse through treatment, education, advocacy, and research and has helped survivors heal with hope.

Mr. Speaker, CC4MS estimates that about 1 in 6 adult males has been sexually abused by someone they trust. This issue has gained much-needed public attention through advocates such as Sheldon Kennedy. But, unfortunately, we have a long way to go. Adult male survivors are made to face stigma and go through emotional difficulties and traumatic experiences. Often survivors prefer to remain silent. Their silence can lead to substance abuse, disconnect from one's family and one's loved ones, depression, and possibly suicide.

While meeting with CC4MS, I was touched to learn about the services they provide. They shared a moving story of an adult male survivor disconnected from his own family due to the fears of triggering a painful childhood memory.

I want to thank CEO Frances Wright and all the employees and volunteers who help break the silence and provide support to men in need.

Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate to have CC4MS in Calgary. They are an integral part of our community and an asset to us all.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

#### Fort McMurray Wildfire First Responders

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What can we say to our first responders and emergency workers who rushed into the inferno in and around Fort McMurray, the very same men and women who continue to provide us with selfless acts of bravery? When others flee for safety, they run towards danger, focusing on the job they were both called to and trained to do, working long, exhausting hours in conditions that at times seemed like hell, as we saw in Fort McMurray, taking rest when they can on lawns.

Emergency call-out, shift work, time away from their families, and the inevitable danger that comes with this way of life are all accepted norms for our first responders. Again I ask: what can we say to our first responders? We can say thank you. To the over 700 men and women who've fought these infernos in northern Alberta: you have our support and deepest gratitude. First responders are living, practical examples of the following text: greater love has no one than to lay down his life for his friends. That is from John 15:13.

I'll close with the Firefighter's Prayer:

When I am called to duty, God,  
wherever flames may rage,  
give me strength to save a life,  
whatever be its age.  
Help me embrace a little child  
before it is too late,  
or save an older person from  
the horror of that fate.  
Enable me to be alert,  
and hear the weakest shout,  
quickly and efficiently  
to put the fire out.  
I want to fill my calling,

to give the best in me,  
to guard my neighbour,  
and protect his property.  
And if according to Your will  
I have to lose my life,  
please bless with Your protecting hand  
my children and my wife.

Thank you to all our first responders.

2:50

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a news article from CBC dated March 17, 2016, referencing McDonald's decision to use self-serve kiosks in their restaurants, entitled McDonald's Plans to Add 1,900 Jobs in Alberta with Revamped Service Model. On Monday during debate over Motion 505 the Member for Calgary-Hays made a reference that some individuals would infer that McDonald's...

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker. This sounds like debate, not a tabling.

**The Speaker:** Yes. I agree, hon. member. Table the report, please.

**Mr. Sucha:** Okay.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other tablings?

I believe we may have some points of order. Leader of the third party, I believe you had a point of order? Is that correct?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, I just had the one point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'm in error, hon. member.

I believe that the Government House Leader was first on his point of order.

#### Point of Order

#### Questions to Committee Chairs

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe that you dealt with this, although I wasn't able to get it all out, but it basically has to do with the requirement that members are only allowed to ask the chair of a committee with respect to the agenda of the committee, and I believe that you've already covered that today.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as long as the hon. Government House Leader has opened that door of debate, let's walk through it. In point of fact, for someone who is such a learned and long-standing member of the Chamber, he should know the rules best. In fact, on page 506 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* it very clearly indicates that "Questions seeking information about the schedule and agenda of committees may be directed to Chairs of committees."

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm advised that this relates to a ruling which I have already made and provided an explanation to the House for.

**Dr. Starke:** So why is he making it, then?

**The Speaker:** He just said that he withdrew the point of order.

Where are we in terms of other points of order? I think it was the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Cooper:** Did he have one first?

**The Speaker:** Is there another point of order that you have? Is it related to the ruling that I made earlier?

**Mr. McIver:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Then I believe I've made a ruling. The order stands.

Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, I believe you had a point of order. Is that correct?

**Mr. Cooper:** I think the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has one on referring to the presence or not of a member, and he would be next.

**The Speaker:** To the point raised by the Opposition House Leader, I assumed that the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster was speaking to the first decision, that I've already made. My error.

Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, please proceed.

### Point of Order

#### Referring to the Absence of Members

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we can perhaps expedite the process because I have three points of order but they're all really the same. There was one earlier, and then there were two more later on.

In the response of, initially, the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, followed by two responses from the Minister of Labour, the members made reference to members of both the third-party caucus as well as the Official Opposition caucus leaving yesterday's committee meeting. That is clearly and has traditionally been out of order.

I'll refer you to page 213 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, in which attendance is dealt with at some length. I'll just simply read the last sentence in the first paragraph, which says:

The Speaker has traditionally discouraged Members from signalling the absence of another Member from the House because "there are many places that Members have to be in order to carry out all of the obligations that go with their office."

Mr. Speaker, this is a long-standing tradition of this House, and it, in fact, is in place so that members cannot be unduly called out or embarrassed because at times they are unable to be here, whether it's here in the Chamber or, indeed, in committee meetings.

Mr. Speaker, this was further substantiated on April 3, 1987, in a ruling by Speaker Jerome on a point of privilege that was raised by the Member for Windsor West, Mr. Gray, on the absence of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister from the House of Commons during question period. He raised it on a point of privilege, but in that ruling Speaker Jerome reiterated and reinforced the long-standing practice within the House that the absence of members is not to be referred to, nor is the fact of whether members leave or come to a committee meeting to be referred to.

I have to say that it is more than a little bit rich that at last night's meeting we were treated to the members of the committee lecturing members of the opposition on their work ethic, and now we have them breaking the rules. [interjection] I'm getting to it, Mr. Speaker. Now we hear them breaking the rules not once, not twice, but three times in succession.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I heard the reference with respect to page 213. Is that correct?

**Dr. Starke:** That's correct.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Government House Leader, do you have something with respect to the point of order?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to quote the section which says, "Allusions to the presence or absence of a Member or Minister in the Chamber are unacceptable." That is true, but I don't wish to deal with this just as a technicality because I think there is something much more serious about this and something that I think needs to be addressed in this point of order. And that is to say that the third-party House leader is attempting to use a rule that is intended to protect members who may have other duties from being, I guess, exposed as being absent when, in fact, they have other things to do. That's what it rules on, that there are many places members have to be in order to carry out all of the obligations that go with their office.

What we saw last night, Mr. Speaker, was a shameful walkout of opposition members from the Wildrose Party, the Progressive Conservative Party, and the Alberta Party from the committee because they did not get their way in the committee.

**The Speaker:** Are we speaking to this particular point of order? Is there additional, new information?

**Mr. Mason:** I'm not finished, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Is there new information?

**Mr. Mason:** Am I allowed to make my response to the point of order, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** I would ask, hon. Government House Leader: is there new information? You seem to be referring to the opposition.

**Mr. Mason:** I'm responding to the point of order made by the third party's House leader, and normally the Speaker would permit me to conclude my remarks.

**The Speaker:** I would ask you to conclude your remarks. However, is there new information that you are introducing that is related to the point of order?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** And what would that be?

**Mr. Mason:** It has to do, Mr. Speaker, with the attempt to use a point of order in a way that does not apply. The fact is that opposition members in an apparently premeditated walkout from the committee to make a political point is not the same as a member being absent while they're pursuing other duties. For them to try and use a point of order to hide their irresponsible behaviour is beyond rich. [interjections] Beyond rich. [interjections]

3:00

**The Speaker:** Government House Leader, I would ask that in the future you stick to the point. The last concluding adjectives were not necessary.

I think I will recognize the leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will say that the repeating of the offence by the Government House Leader is not in itself a defence.

I'll cite 23(h), "makes allegations against another Member," and (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." While I don't have the benefit of the Blues in front of me – and if I turn out to not be a hundred per cent correct on this, I'm happy to be corrected – without that, it seems to me that when the member

who is the subject of the point of order was on her feet, she made reference to people not wanting to do their jobs, which is again making allegations against other members and imputing false and unavowed motives to other members.

**The Speaker:** Opposition House Leader, were you speaking to this point of order?

**Mr. Cooper:** I was intending on speaking to the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster's point of order. I'm not sure if we're currently on a new point of order.

**The Speaker:** No, we are not. We are on the point of order of the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. You have additional points to make?

**Mr. Cooper:** I have additional points to make that are new information.

**The Speaker:** All right.

**Mr. Cooper:** And I would like to rise on the leader of the third party's point of order in a moment's time.

I would just like to add that the hon. Government House Leader had made comments with respect to page 216 in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, specifically referring to the Chamber. I might just add that in our standing orders, the ones that the Assembly follows significantly, is Standing Order 1: "The proceedings in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and in all committees of the Assembly shall be conducted according to the following Standing Orders." So if, in fact, a ruling will be made on a reference to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, particularly 216, then it should not only refer to the Chamber but to committee.

Furthermore, I encourage you to review in your decision chapter 20 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on committees, page 1051, when it speaks about committees not being able to adopt their own rules. In my opinion, it speaks specifically to the rules applying in the Chamber also applying to committee. As such, the Government House Leader's comments with respect to it only applying to the Chamber, I would say, certainly is not the case and referring to the absence of a member both here or in committee is equally as inappropriate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in past decisions in this House it's been suggested that I maybe should have taken more time to contemplate decisions and consider all of the aspects and not make one too quickly, so I have taken the liberty of taking more time to consider the various arguments that have been put forward. I have looked at – I hear the arguments that are put forward.

I think what has happened, notwithstanding the point that the Opposition House Leader has suggested, is that it seems to me that the balance of the standing orders – well, that may be an umbrella. They are the more specific details, within our standing orders.

I believe what is taking place here is that both sides have used this as an opportunity to talk about their opinions and views of activities that might have taken place within committee. As I understand and interpret both the earlier decisions of this House as

well as in Ottawa, committee work stays within the committee until they report back to this House. I think there's been undue exercise of getting that debate in, and that's on both sides, Government House Leader. In fact, we ought to leave that within committee.

I ruled the member out who was answering the question. I accepted the first question from Vermilion-Lloydminster. Hon. member, I determined that the answer you were giving went far beyond schedule and dates and times, so it would be my ruling on this matter that with the decisions I have made thus far, the point of order raised by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster is, in fact, out of order, and I've made a decision.

There are other points of order, I believe. The leader of the third party.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did raise the point of order against a member, and I'll repeat that. While I don't have the benefit of the Blues in front of me, it occurs to me that if I had the Blues, I might find phrases about how the opposition doesn't want to do their job, which under 23(h), (i), and (j) qualifies as imputing motives to another member or making allegations against another member. Without the benefit of the Blues – and there was a lot of noise, but it occurs to me that I heard the member say something to that effect.

3:10

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have taken the opportunity to ask the hon. member what it was indeed that she said, and she has sent me a note with the words that she used or recollects using. What she said was that instead of rolling up their sleeves and getting to the work at hand, they chose to walk out. In my view, that is the opinion of the hon. member, and she is entitled in this place to express that opinion. I happen to agree with it.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, I think, Mr. Speaker, the very best argument I could make . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I think you've made your point.

**Mr. McIver:** I think the Government House Leader made it for me.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please. On this particular issue, hon. member, I do not have access to the Blues, either. So on this particular point of order I am going to look at the Blues and, in fact, confirm if that's the case. However, I would defer that decision.

I think that the daily Routine is concluded if I am correct.

A legislative policy committee will convene this afternoon for consideration of the main estimates. Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Culture and Tourism in the Grassland Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 3:11 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b)]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 12, 2016

Day 27

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
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 Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
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 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
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 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
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 Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
 Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
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 Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
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Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

# STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

## Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

## Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

## Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

## Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

## Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

## Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

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Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

## Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

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Babcock	McKittrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

## Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

## Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

## Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 12, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us bow our heads and reflect, each in our own way. As we conclude our work for this week and return to our constituencies, let each of us individually reflect on the privilege and the responsibility we have to serve Albertans.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly four students from Northern Lakes College, Athabasca campus, as well as their group leader. I'm so happy that they came up, made the trip to see us at work here in the Legislature, and I kind of hope that we actually give a good impression today. Could Nancy Giese as well as the students – unfortunately, I don't have their names – please rise and receive the customary warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is my distinct pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, from the constituency of Grande Prairie-Smoky and from the communities of Crooked Creek and Ridgevalley, the Rosedale Christian School. Please rise when I say your names. These fine students are accompanied by their teacher, Stephanie Thiessen, and joined by chaperones Arlin and Gloria Loewen – now, you might notice that name, Loewen; Arlin is my cousin, accompanied by his lovely wife, Gloria – and also by some other spectacular people from the community, Eldon and Heather Thiessen and Frank and Debbie Thiessen. I ask that the students please rise also and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my absolute pleasure today to rise and introduce some fabulous constituents from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. There are 15 students and a number of teachers and parent helpers. They are accompanied by their teacher, Miss Terri Miller. I might just add that they are from the Kneehill Christian School, which is based in the Linden area of the constituency, where you'll find the finest people and the greatest food. I invite them all to rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Seeing none, the hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly two family members of one of our current pages, Rowan Ley. Joining us today

in the Speaker's gallery are Rowan's grandmother, Beverly Cairns, and his mother, Eva Cairns. Beverly is visiting from Elora, Ontario, and Eva is a constituent of mine from Edmonton-Strathcona and is the managing producer of Catalyst Theatre. They are both here to observe Rowan in his role as page here in the Assembly. I would ask them to please rise, which they've already done, and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Mr. Dave Beninger. Dave is a former senator of the University of Calgary, where he recently completed a degree in political science. He is also a former board member of the Chestermere public library and a dedicated community volunteer. I would ask David to please stand up and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two guests. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you Courtney Hare, the public policy manager at Momentum. Courtney researches and supports the development of policy that fosters economic inclusion and reduces poverty. Momentum is an award-winning community economic development organization that works with over 4,000 Albertans each year who are living on a low income. Momentum supports participants in getting a good job through trades training, creating their own job through an entrepreneurship program, and managing to save their own money through financial literacy programs. Momentum has worked diligently to address the needs of Albertans who use payday loans. I'm pleased to have Courtney here today when our government introduces legislation to regulate payday lending. I ask that Courtney rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it is also an honour to introduce to you and through you Danielle Klooster, a community mobilizer with the Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance, known as CAPRA. CAPRA is a group of people and organizations working to make a real difference on poverty. Organizations such as United Way, Safe Harbour Society, city of Red Deer, Alberta Health Services, Catholic Social Services, Hope Mission, and many, many others work to spark community action on poverty and advocate for systemic change. Since its inception in 2010 CAPRA has been advocating for food security, support for early childhood development, equal access to services, and restrictions on predatory lending services. I am so glad that she could be here today when our government introduces legislation to regulate payday lending. I ask that Danielle rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you Mr. Aja Loudon. Aja is a muralist, designer, and educator who believes strongly in the values of education and community building. In 2011 Aja created a program called the aerosol academy in order to share his passion for the arts. In addition to volunteering on several other forward-thinking projects, his work can be found here in his home city of Edmonton as well as in Berlin, Barcelona, Prague, and the U.K. I'm happy to also share that some of his recent work, which reflects the history and diversity of Edmonton-Ellerslie, can now also be found on a

wall in my constituency office. I'd ask Aja to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you. It's my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Ms Lisa Mason and Mrs. Angie Schickerowski. They hail from the extraordinary constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, from the Benalto area of my constituency. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you've ever had the pleasure of going to Benalto, but I can tell you that it has some of the most exceptional people this province has to offer. Both of these ladies have been working very hard to advocate for Benalto's school in their community, and I thank them for that. I ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of guests to introduce to you today if you'll indulge me. First, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House guests who are joining us here for the introduction of Bill 206 later today: Colonel Stephen Lacroix, base commander, Edmonton, who has witnessed first-hand the effects of posttraumatic stress disorder on our Canadian soldiers and veterans; Deputy Fire Chief Keven Lefebvre, representing Edmonton fire rescue services; Helena Gillespie and Jerris Popik from the iSTEP program of the Edmonton MFRC, along with their mother, Lois Hawryluk; Julian Daly, the executive director of Boyle Street co-op services; Magda Guevara, intake co-ordinator at Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op; and Elisha Astles, an advocate for mental health and addiction supports for individuals and their families, and her husband, Darren Astles, a Canadian Forces military veteran. I'd ask all my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Go ahead.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my wonderful constituency staff. Kahye Dubow is a current practicum student from NorQuest College, the social work program. He has been amazing at learning quickly how a constituency office works and brings laughter to our office. Cassidy Green is my summer part-time employee, and she was my previous practicum student from MacEwan University's social work program. We are thrilled that she remains with us as she is an exceptional asset to our office. Heather Belanger is my full-time constituency manager. She has been keeping our office running and has been a valuable member of our team Edmonton-Castle Downs since August of last year. I'd ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three individuals from my amazing constituency of Sherwood Park: Chris and Dick Swaren and Shirley Mireau. Today is International Awareness Day for Chronic Immunological and Neurological Diseases, which include chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia. Chris has been living with fibromyalgia for many years and is the current president of the Fibromyalgia Society of Edmonton and

area. Dick is a past board member, and Shirley is a current board member. I would like to ask Chris, Dick, and Shirley to please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome from the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Alison Azer. With Alison are her sister Elizabeth van Egteren and her brother Alan Jeffrey. Alison grew up in the great riding of St. Albert, and I had the pleasure of meeting with her earlier today. Alison is the mother of four young Canadian children, aged 11, nine, seven, and three, all of whom have deep roots in Alberta and were abducted by their father in August of 2015. The children are now believed to be in Iran. I ask my fellow members of the Legislature to support Ms Azer by spreading the word of her plight and that we stand in support of her tireless efforts to ensure the safe return of her children to Canada. I'd ask all three to please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is National Nursing Week all across our country, and I'm honoured to have a number of individuals to introduce today. We are joined by Heather Smith, the president of the United Nurses of Alberta, as well as Jane Sustrik, Daphne Wallace, and Karen Craik. Also with us is Cathy Giblin with the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, also known as CARNA. I'd ask that those individuals please rise. I just also want to acknowledge a number of other nurses who show that everyday nurses show unwavering determination. These four nurses work in Fort McMurray, and I am honoured to introduce them. They are Naomi Broderick, Michelle Warren, JoAnn Cluney, and Heather Young. I ask that you please stand as our House shows our appreciation for your work and especially your determination over the last week.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly several guests who are joining us today to remember Robinson Koilpillai, whose life I'll be speaking to more in my member's statement later. There's a sizable contingency of guests, so unfortunately I won't have time to name them all. I will note, however, for the interests of this Chamber that among our guests today are Ardis Kamra, the granddaughter of former Premier Charles Stewart, and also Allan Sheppard, who authored a biography of Robinson Koilpillai a few years ago. I'd ask all my guests now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests today? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly Mr. Cole Hogan. I had the honour this morning of meeting with Cole and discussing, among other things, advanced education, which is under my portfolio. Cole is the advocacy co-ordinator – he's held this position for two weeks now – for the

Alberta Students' Executive Council, or ASEC, and works with trades and technical institutions' students' associations. Cole, would you now please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Ministerial Statements

#### Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire Update

**Ms Larivee:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to provide an update on the wildfire situation in Fort McMurray and the supports we are providing to evacuees. Last week we requested federal assistance in the form of support from the Canadian armed forces. That support was readily provided. Armed forces personnel helped in the evacuation of threatened communities. They provided supplies to isolated First Nations communities, and they assisted in the transportation of essential firefighting equipment and personnel. But now that we are moving out of the emergency phase and into the recovery phase, our Provincial Operations Centre in collaboration with the regional emergency operations centre has determined that armed forces assistance is not required at this time. I would like to personally thank all the armed forces members who have supported Alberta during this very difficult time. They were here when we needed them most, and we all say thank you.

Mr. Speaker, our government's focus continues to be on meeting the needs of evacuees. Yesterday we began the distribution of debit cards for those evacuees. As of noon today we have provided more than \$12 million in assistance to approximately 11,000 people. As expected, there were significant lineups at the four distribution centres, and today we have added a second location at NAIT for evacuees to pick up their debit cards.

Now I wish to address a question that I know is top of many people's minds, and that is: when can people go home? I know how stressful it is to leave everything behind and to be away from your home for a prolonged period of time. It was five years ago this Sunday that I was forced to flee my home in Slave Lake, and I know how stressful that time is and how hard it is to be away. But, Mr. Speaker, safety is our first priority, and right now Fort McMurray is not yet safe. Until it is, people cannot go home.

There are a number of things we are working diligently to make happen to make the community safe. We are working for the complete restoration of essential services like natural gas, water, and sewer and ensuring that there is a clean, working hospital with functioning equipment and staff. I know this is not the news that Fort McMurray and area residents would like hear today, but this is what we need to do to ensure their safety.

The good news is that there are a lot of people already working in the community to make it safe. Power and data services have been restored to the downtown area, and we have damage assessment teams on-site. They inspected 520 structures yesterday from the outside, not entering residences, so we are beginning to develop a clearer picture of exactly what we're dealing with in terms of damage. Insurance assessors are going in today, and they, too, will be assessing from the outside, without entering people's homes.

1:50

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the firefighters and other emergency personnel who continue to battle the wildfires. I thank those who have gone into the community of Fort McMurray to begin the hard work of making the community safe for re-entry. And I want to thank the residents of Fort McMurray, Anzac, Gregoire Lake Estates, and the Fort McMurray First Nation for their

patience. I know it's been a difficult time and that it's hard to wait, but they have been patient. We need to ask them to be patient a little while longer while we make things safe for them to return home. It is a big job, but there are a lot of people working hard, and we will get the job done as quickly as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, would you please stop the clock.

There was a point of order raised yesterday that was deferred, and I would like to deliver my ruling with respect to that point of order.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with respect to the point of order raised yesterday by the hon. leader of the third party, I've now had the opportunity to review the *Alberta Hansard* and to conduct some research on the matter. At page 888 of yesterday's *Alberta Hansard* the leader of the third party made the argument that comments made by the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville constituted allegations and imputed false and unavowed motives against another member under Standing Order 23(h) and (i).

Neither the leader of the third party nor I had access to the Blues at the time, but on review of the *Hansard* at page 882, it appears that the relevant comments made by the member were that "the opposition members, instead of rolling up their sleeves and getting to the work at hand last night, chose to walk out of yesterday's meeting." The remarks made by the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville referred to actions taken by certain members of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee during its meeting on May 10, 2016. This seems to be more of a dispute as to the facts or a difference of opinion but not a point of order.

I also note that footnote 148 on page 614 of the second edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* provides that Speakers have declined to extend the prohibition to references to the absence of Members from the Assembly to absences of members from committee meetings.

The more important point is to the exchange that took place. It was not in order in the first place as the exchange involved a committee proceeding. During the exchange I cautioned both the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster and the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville to adhere to the rule of this Assembly that questions may be put to the chairs of committees but that such questions may only deal with the timetable or the schedule of a committee or a committee's agenda and nothing further.

As indicated in the House of Commons Procedure and Practice at page 506:

Questions seeking information about the schedule and agenda of committees may be directed to Chairs of committees. Questions to the Ministry or to a committee Chair concerning the proceedings or work of a committee, including its order of reference, may not be raised.

Furthermore, Speaker Kowalski on May 1, 1997, on the matter of asking questions to private members, as noted on pages 319 and 320 of *Alberta Hansard* from that day, said that "questions may be asked directly of members who chair committees of the Assembly, but this would be a narrow range as these committees are not part of government."

Although there is no point of order here, I want to remind all hon. members that the purpose of question period is to seek information about government policy and not to debate what has transpired before a committee of the Assembly. I will be more vigilant in enforcing this rule in the days to come.

## Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

### Wildfire Evacuees in Smaller Municipalities

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The cost in human impact of wildfires in Fort McMurray has been overwhelming. The stress and anxiety of the evacuation is being felt by many. The population of Lac La Biche doubled as they welcomed evacuees with open arms. While news of financial assistance arrived yesterday, several of these small towns and communities will quickly be drained of basic commodities like food, clothing, and water. What is the Premier doing to make sure that the Provincial Operations Centre is delivering these services and supporting these towns housing evacuees?

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much for that question. Let me begin by thanking the people of Lac La Biche for the incredible generosity that they have shown to the evacuees of Fort McMurray. They have reached out, as the member has rightly pointed out, to a level that is well beyond their per capita expectation. They have welcomed people in a way that's been extremely helpful.

We were pleased to be advised yesterday that the financial assistance cards were pretty much completely distributed through the reception centre at Lac La Biche yesterday. I'll have more to say . . .

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Hanson:** Communities like Boyle, Athabasca, Bonnyville, Wandering River are all struggling to keep up with supplies. If there's no food or clothes to buy, debit cards just don't help. They are trying their best to co-ordinate between each other and keep their spirits high, but many are frustrated that they are not seeing clear communication from the POC. Volunteers have done amazing work, but they need direction and help. Will the Premier commit to working with these communities to ensure that Albertans are kept aware of the needs of these evacuees?

**Ms Notley:** Again, thank you very much for that question. As well, let me please extend my thanks to the additional communities that were mentioned by the member opposite. They, too, have been reaching out to their neighbours to the north and supporting them. I know that it's been a lot of work.

I'm advised this morning by officials that additional communication is going on from the Provincial Operations Centre with officials and leaders and representatives from those communities to find ways to support their specific needs going forward. We're aware that they are being stressed because of their size, and we're looking at a number of different options to perhaps facilitate movement but also to provide . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night through efforts of the opposition we found that the POC is now making daily deliveries to Boyle. It's nice to know that the members opposite have their finger on the pulse of the situation.

Evacuees are spread as far and wide as Grande Prairie to Medicine Hat, and many of their situations remain just as desperate. We know the Red Cross is able to provide immediate e-transfers to

all evacuees registered. Can the Premier explain why the government isn't able to also do e-transfers to evacuees in more remote areas of the province, who aren't able to access or can't stand in long lines?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It's a good question. We deliberated on whether that was a process that we thought would work for the delivery of our funds to people. At the time we determined that it was a very large transfer that the Red Cross was doing. It was the first time that they had done one anywhere close to that magnitude, so the certainty of it was not entirely clear.

As well, we have obligations with respect to accountability to the people of Alberta and the Auditor General in terms of how we assure that we can track who got what. That being said, we are working directly now with the Red Cross to find ways in which we can work with them to help people who are . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

2:00

### Opioid Use Prevention

**Mr. Barnes:** The fentanyl crisis deserves the full attention of this government, and those on the front line need access to as many resources as possible. In British Columbia a public health emergency allows first responders, emergency room staff, and the coroner's office to provide the time and place of overdose, which drug was used, how it was taken, and details about the patient. Getting this information into the hands of public health authorities and to the public in Alberta would save lives. To the Premier: will you commit to putting a public health emergency into place to allow for this crucial sharing of information?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The Alberta act and the B.C. act are radically different. Our department has looked into whether or not a public health emergency would accomplish the goal of giving us additional tools with which to deal with this crisis, and it has been determined that it does not. What a public health emergency would do is allow us to quarantine people against their wishes, seize private property, and enter into private homes without a warrant, which, frankly, won't help with an addiction problem.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, it isn't just fentanyl that is killing Albertans. There's an opioid crisis. To get an understanding of what needs to be done, we need to know how many overdoses there have been from heroin, from morphine, from hydromorphone, from oxycodone, and even from W-18. Only then will we get a clear picture of the crisis and how to combat it, including partnering with Health and law enforcement. Will the Premier commit to releasing these statistics on a continual basis so resources can be best allocated?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our department is working very closely with our partners in Justice and with the medical examiner to ensure that we have timely and up-to-date statistics. We are also recognizing that this goes beyond just fentanyl, that we do indeed have an opioid crisis in our province, which is why our government is also moving



forward on opioid replacement therapy treatment options as well as support for detox beds throughout our province.

**Mr. Barnes:** Hearing the Associate Minister of Health say only yesterday that for the first three months of this year numbers seem to have stabilized was concerning. I'd say that this crisis is anything but stable. It's growing. Here are the numbers to date even though medical professionals tell me they are low. Sixty-nine deaths in the first three months of 2016 mean we are on track for 276 deaths this year. That's higher than in 2015, Mr. Speaker, when the crisis was first addressed. This government needs a wake-up call. What concrete steps, not just vague promises of a fentanyl strategy . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you hon. member.  
The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Indeed, any death due to an overdose is a tragedy, and our hearts go out to all the families and loved ones who are affected by this crisis. Our government is moving forward on the opioid dependency treatment that I outlined. We're going to be opening a clinic within Cardston very shortly and are working with partners across the province to ensure that we are able to offer those treatments around our province. Additionally, I was pleased to announce yesterday that Albertans can now access take-home naloxone kits without a prescription and that we've worked with our partners and pharmacies to ensure that family members can pick up those kits for their loved ones.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Third main question.

#### Carbon Levy and Health Care Costs

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, today we woke up to more bad news on the NDP carbon tax. Whether it's driving your car, heating your home, or buying groceries, we know this carbon tax will hit our families hard, but now we know that it will be sucking dollars out of the health care system, away from patients. The carbon tax will impact the delivery of health care in our province, and the ones paying the price will be everyday Albertans. Why does the NDP insist on taxing hospitals and patients with their new carbon tax?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, leaving aside whether this is, in fact, a supplemental, I will provide the hon. member with the following information. Of course, the future carbon levy is a price on emissions. That's why we'll be investing in initiatives to improve efficiency, and an energy efficiency agency will be designed to be accessible to all Albertans and all sectors. That's because climate change is real, Mr. Speaker, and we are taking actions to address it.

**The Speaker:** Just for the record that was a main question.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The increased carbon tax will mean less: less for surgeries and less for front-line workers. The spike in heating costs alone is the same as taking away 240 hip surgeries or 60 nurses. That doesn't even include the added costs for our emergency vehicles, increased food costs for patients, and sterilizing gowns and linens. Will the Premier commit to completing an economic impact assessment for how damaging the carbon tax will be on health care before plunging ahead with her plan?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, the future carbon levy is a price on emissions. That's why we'll be investing in initiatives to improve efficiency, which will then reduce carbon use and therefore emissions costs. It's very basic. It's both basic economics and science. It is an initiative that will encourage economic diversification and address climate change. We know that neither thing is being taken seriously by the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, I've outlined direct costs on the health care system that will increase because of the carbon tax, but there will also be ripple effects across the whole industry and the whole province. The price of fuel for life-saving services like STARS and HALO, that depend on donations, will rise at a time when their donors also have less money. Lodges and seniors' facilities that run on a nonprofit basis will also be paying the price under this carbon tax. Can the Premier at least provide exemptions for these charities and nonprofits in the health care industry who will be so negatively impacted by her carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, this province will be investing \$645 million in energy efficiency efforts over the next five years. That efficiency programming will be designed to be accessible for all Albertans in all sectors. Every single dollar from the future price on carbon will be put to work right here in Alberta creating jobs, reducing pollution, promoting greater energy efficiency, and diversifying our economy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

#### Government Spending

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the oil sands are trying to return to normal, so must we in the House. A budget is on the table. In question period the seniors minister complained that the previous government left a billion dollars in deferred maintenance behind. Meanwhile on page 89 of the current government's business plan it states the NDP will make zero improvements on the percentage of government-owned buildings in good or poor condition as far out as 2019. To the Premier: was your minister's complaint insincere, or is she that unaware of her own files?

**Mr. Mason:** This government has invested significant new money in repairs and capital maintenance of our infrastructure. There was a vast deficit left. Frankly, despite the increase, Mr. Speaker, we're barely at the point where we're not seeing further deterioration in our extensive holdings of infrastructure, both in Transportation and other areas. We were left with a very big problem by the previous government, and we're fixing it.

**Mr. McIver:** An admission by the government that they're spending a lot more and getting no results actually doesn't help.

In Labour estimates the minister said that the Health and Finance ministers would be saving money on labour. In question period the Finance minister confirmed this, saying, "We have negotiations that'll be taking place . . . with all of our unionized people, and we're looking for improvements there." To the Finance minister. Alberta's unionized, publicly paid employees deserve to know your government's intentions before they go to the bargaining table. Are you planning on saving the money you talked about by offering less pay, fewer people, or just cutting benefits?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's concern about this, and of course we are going to take our obligations to negotiate on behalf of Albertans and Alberta taxpayers very seriously. But we are also going to respect the negotiation process, and we are going to negotiate at the table with the people on the other side, not in the media and not in the House.

2:10

**Mr. McIver:** Well, that's funny, Mr. Speaker, when the minister is constantly saying in the House that they're going to save money on it.

Unlike the NDP government, ATB customers have to pay back the money they borrow. In Finance estimates the minister would not admit how much more interest ATB will pay to get the money that they lend out to Albertans due to the lost triple-A credit rating. To the minister: due to your lack of spending control, your \$60 billion debt with no repayment plan, and not having their backs, shouldn't you tell Albertans how much more ATB will be forced to charge, or will they just earn less money as a result of these failed policies?

**Mr. Mason:** This government is investing in jobs. It's investing in diversifying our economy, getting people back to work, Mr. Speaker. We don't make any apology for doing that. We have serious investments in job creation. We have tax credits. We are moving forward to build the infrastructure this province needs, which the previous government ignored.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

#### **Mental Health Services for Wildfire Evacuees and First Responders**

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, on Monday I asked the Health minister what her plans were for increasing the capacity of Alberta's mental health services in light of this serious recession and a massive increase in need due to Fort McMurray fires. She indicated that she was in consultation with various experts and groups, so today I'd like to know the plan. To the minister: can the minister tell us, based on past disasters, what increase is expected in needs for mental health services?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I want to reiterate my previous statement on this issue. Supporting the mental health of evacuees and first responders is a fundamental piece of our recovery process. We are committed to ensuring that there are appropriate resources in place that meet the needs of each of these populations. At this point it is difficult to speculate on a percentage increase, but I want to assure the member opposite that we will be making sure that the necessary resources are available, and we are continuing to work with our partners to ensure those are in place.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, it doesn't sound like we have very many facts based on past disasters, Mr. Speaker.

Could the minister tell the House what specific plans she has for providing expanded mental health services?

**Ms Payne:** Thank you to the member for the question. In terms of specific plans, in the immediate term we have added an addictions and mental health night shift at the Lac La Biche Bold Center. AHS mental health support is also located at each of the debit card disbursement sites in Edmonton, Calgary, and Lac La Biche. Mental health workers continue to work at each of the reception centres,

providing support to evacuees. A reminder yet again: anyone can call the mental health support line at any time at 1.877.303.2642.

**Dr. Swann:** Let's try another tack, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister tell us how she plans on tracking and evaluating the services to prepare for the next disaster?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, we've evaluated the things that have happened in previous disasters, and we are keeping close track of the things that we are doing now to see what's working and where there's room for improvement. Alberta Health Services is working closely with the emergency response team to ensure that all supports are available, especially for first responders. I want to take this opportunity to again thank all those Albertans who have responded on the front lines and in their communities to cope with this very difficult situation.

#### **Fort McMurray Wildfire Impact on Justice Services**

**Ms Woollard:** Mr. Speaker, the wildfire in Fort McMurray has impacted so many Albertans in so many different ways, including justice services. To the Minister of Justice: how are court services being impacted?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Justice minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Well, of course, when we had the evacuation in Fort McMurray, court personnel were taken out as well. We've had a number of personnel affected, and those people are being paid in the interim while they are evacuated away from the courthouse. Currently it's the case that we have some video appearances occurring for people who are in secure custody. People who are not in secure custody are having their matters set over till later.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the update. We are extremely happy to hear that everyone was able to evacuate safely. Given that firefighters continue their battle and that damage assessment is ongoing, to the same minister: what is happening with cases that were scheduled to be heard at the Fort McMurray courthouse?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that people who have been forced to evacuate Fort McMurray are very stressed out about their current lives, and having a court case doesn't make that any easier. It's currently the case that people who are in secure custody are having their matters heard via CCTV from other locations. They were initially in Fort Chipewyan, but I believe they have moved to Edmonton subsequently. In addition, there are a number of people who have out-of-custody matters. Those matters are being rescheduled by the court, and people are best to contact the Court of Queen's Bench or the Alberta Provincial Court, depending on where their matter was scheduled.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we've heard that critical pieces of infrastructure such as the hospital are still intact, can the Minister of Justice update the House on the current state of Fort McMurray's courthouse?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It's my understanding, at last update, that the courthouse has not been affected. Of course, as further inspection occurs within Fort McMurray, more information may become known, and I will commit to get back to the House with that information.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

### Minimum Wage

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday I presented a motion in this House asking the government to postpone further implementation of their \$15 minimum wage until it can be determined what effect it would have on employment rates and the price of goods and services. Even though their own advisers told them last year that further study was needed, the government rejected this motion. To the Minister of Labour: why won't the government commit to a review of the evidence surrounding the minimum wage hikes?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is reviewing the current impacts of the minimum wage hikes and is beginning to engage in a consultation plan. It is important to remember that 37,000 Albertans who are 55 years old or older are earning \$15 or less when they go to work. This is not an issue about teenagers and children; this is real Albertans with real families, and that is why we are moving forward with our consultation plan and our plan to implement \$15 an hour minimum wage.

**Mr. Taylor:** I'm not sure how it's a review if they're going to ensure that it's going to be \$15.

Given that existing research shows that raising the minimum wage would kill jobs, which will put more people in line at the food bank and hurt low-income families, and given that the *Journal of Labor Research* says, "minimum wages are poorly targeted as an anti-poverty device," why does the government insist on clinging blindly to ideology when their risky economic experiments will hurt low-income earners and families?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that research shows it does not impact jobs, our consultations will help to determine the size and pace of future increases as well as discuss with impacted stakeholders the possible strategies [interjections] . . .

**The Speaker:** Are we at second supplemental?

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, I was still responding if I may.

**The Speaker:** I thought your time had elapsed. No. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Possible strategies to mitigate the impact are one of the things we will be discussing during our consultations. IMF director Christine Lagarde has said that a

minimum wage increase would be very useful to kick-start growth in our economy. This is an expert, and we are listening.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you. Will you table that research?

Given that Alberta has the second-highest take-home minimum wage in Canada before the current government started hiking taxes and the minimum wage and considering those earning a \$15-an-hour wage will pay more taxes on top of being hit with extra costs for food, shelter, transportation under the carbon tax, will a minimum wage actually mean more money in people's pockets under the NDP's high tax regime, and will you table your results?

2:20

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, increasing the wage that people make at their daily job will put more money in their pockets. Currently in Alberta nearly 1 in 3 people who use the food bank are working for a living. Alberta has the highest percentage of working people who have to use the food bank. These are very real statistics that are important to discuss, and we look forward to discussing them with Albertans during our consultation process.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

### Fort McMurray Disaster Relief and Recovery

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The outpouring of generosity by Albertans continues to showcase what makes Alberta great. Every little bit counts. With the \$10 here, \$20 there mentality, donations to the Red Cross have exceeded \$67 million. That's \$761 per person displaced due to the Fort McMurray fire. To the Finance minister: what specific levers in addition to prepaid cards is the government providing to nonprofits to expedite all physical and monetary donations?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, there has been a tremendous outpouring of support and donations to the Red Cross from right across this country. We're tremendously thankful to Albertans and all Canadians for that generosity. The Red Cross has a long history of supporting other nonprofits in terms of the work that they do in the communities. We continue to expect that the Red Cross will share that generosity with other nonprofits in the Fort McMurray area to ensure support for those organizations and the people in those communities.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Charity Intelligence Canada has said that the front-line services will require significant support as we move into recovery and rehabilitation into the coming weeks and months and given that the logistical challenges may be complicated by unplanned ventures and bottlenecks of Fort McMurray's transportation infrastructure on re-entering, to the Transportation minister: what plan is being developed to ensure that transportation routes, scheduling of returns, and the thousands of individual humanitarian missions can all be accommodated in a safe manner?

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure the House and the hon. member that the Transportation department in conjunction with all other ministries and other agencies is working to ensure a

safe return for the people of Fort McMurray. The first key thing to do is to make sure that structures are safe, roads are safe. Under very difficult conditions during the fire we were able to check, for example, the bridge across the Athabasca River to ensure that it could accommodate the subsequent evacuation of up to 25,000 people who had fled north. That was accomplished, and we are going to also work carefully to make sure that the return is safe.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this outpouring of support and generosity is not limited to this province or indeed within the borders of our country and given that international sources are coming forward by offering financial support to assist in the relief and humanitarian efforts, to the trade minister: how, specifically, are you co-ordinating donations that come from foreign countries, both enterprises and government, and where will this assistance have the greatest impact?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. He's quite right to point out that the outpouring of generosity has occurred not just from all corners of our province and from all corners of our country but, quite frankly, we've had a number of offers for support from our international partners. I've spoken with some of the representatives myself. My ministry is co-ordinating the donations that are being offered through our ministry to help the residents of Fort McMurray. On behalf of the government of Alberta we thank all of our international friends, whether they've donated firefighter support, like from the country of Mexico, to other countries who have offered their support.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

### Motor Vehicle User Charges

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wildrose has asked the NDP about the use of tolls on provincial highways, and the Minister of Transportation has taken tolls off the table for now. That being said, the city of Edmonton is openly musing about bringing in toll roads, and the mayor of Edmonton is recently quoted as saying: we don't have the means to charge road tolls at this point. Although tolls may be off the agenda for the Minister of Transportation, is the Minister of Municipal Affairs preparing to grant highway toll powers to the municipalities under the MGA?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was incredibly tremendous consultation done on the MGA right across this province with so many stakeholders. As a result of that, there was the what-we-heard document online that covered the key topics we were going to be speaking about. Based on what was heard from that time, we came up with some direction in terms of that, and I look forward to introducing the bill and having conversation about that at that time.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, given that two weeks ago at the Alberta Motor Transport Association's annual convention one of Alberta Transportation's senior assistant deputy ministers mused about bringing in a vehicle kilometre travel tax, a per-kilometre charge to motorists based on the distances they travel, to the

Minister of Transportation: is your department serious about a per-kilometre charge for the trucks and vehicles ordinary Albertans drive every day just to live their lives, and will the minister refute his ADM?

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member and the House that there is no consideration being given to the use of the types of taxes and so on that he's proposing. I think if the assistant deputy minister was blue skying it and talking about different possibilities, it's a good thing because we need to look at all the ideas, but that's not an idea that we are going to be pursuing.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans are worried. Given that the NDP increased fuel tax from 9 cents a litre to 13 cents and now their carbon tax will increase the tax on fuel to as much as 21 cents a litre in less than two years, with all these potential new costs from tolls and a vehicle kilometre travel tax on top of existing fuel taxes and a carbon tax, does the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance believe the only way to balance the NDP budget is by taxing Albertans more and more?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the hon. member ought not to ask for whom the bell tolls because it tolls for him. We have no intention of introducing tolls or per-kilometre charges or any of those other things. With respect to the price of fuel . . . [interjection] Thank you. If I could have my time. With respect to the price of fuel, I'll remind all hon. members that the price of gasoline a couple of years ago was about \$1.20. It's now about 90 cents.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Building Codes and Standards

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs. My constituents have raised the growing issue of imported steel-frame buildings that do not comply with CSA certification standard A660. The concern is that substandard buildings may collapse under stress, risking occupants. This issue has been brought to the attention of many officials, yet it seems that nothing has been done either to prevent uncertified buildings from being constructed in Alberta or to enforce a 13-year-old building code. Due to the confusion and complicated multijurisdictional nature of this issue, will the minister take the lead to correct this deficiency?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we're tremendously committed to the safety of Albertans. That's certainly one of the primary goals of this government in terms of moving forward. At the time that I became minister and, in fact, at the time we were elected, many of the codes were incredibly delayed in terms of adopting. We've moved forward with updating and adopting many of the safety codes. One of the things we continue to work with is being responsive to the current changes in terms of what is out there, and we continue to work to ensure the safety of Albertans and update those codes to reflect the current situation of the day.

2:30

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you to the minister. Given that Alberta businesses manufacture steel frame structures in compliance with building codes but find that imported products have different rules and the lack of enforcement is hurting our already struggling economy and given that purchasers of these structures lose their investment when the product fails and are not able to claim insurance for structures

not certified by Canadian engineering standards, what is this government going to do to protect Alberta businesses and consumers?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think in the question there the member is asking for more regulations, which seems to be counter to what the Official Opposition asked for. I guess this is kind of a tax or spend day. We're not quite sure. Quite frankly, number one, Alberta is bound by our trade regulations that are negotiated through the federal government, so we have to work within those parameters. We want to ensure, obviously, that buildings are made with the highest quality of materials and adhere to existing regulations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not more regulation. It's just enforcing what's already there.

Given that in the recent Municipal Affairs business plan outcome 2 is for stronger systems of standards ensuring Albertans are safe and that 2.2 calls for effective municipal enforcement of safety codes and building codes and given that on January 8 the Minister of Municipal Affairs affirmed that a safety bulletin would be issued but it has not yet been given, will this government follow through with their promise and issue a bulletin to the municipalities and the inspection agencies to ensure that buildings must have the proper A660 certification?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, in terms of enforcement, in terms of municipal authorities enforcing that, there's actually been somewhat of a challenge across the province. Some areas have it; some areas don't. So I was proud to bring forward the Alberta safety codes authority to help with enforcement right across the province, and I continue to work with the Safety Codes Council here in this province to ensure that we roll out safety standards in a timely fashion and we work together to enforce them right across the province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### Capital Infrastructure Planning

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know first-hand that developing an effective transportation strategy needs input from both department and industry. You said yesterday that you're consulting with all representative stakeholders that help create an effective transportation strategy. To the Minister of Transportation: what kinds of advice have you received from industry and Albertans, and when will you table this information that you have collected?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It is true that we're doing extensive consultation with stakeholders, with municipalities in particular, municipal organizations, and organizations involved in transportation on a wide range of subjects, from urban transportation, from LRT. We are talking to people who are in the motor transport business, people that build and maintain roads and other important transportation infrastructure, and we're going to use all of that information to inform the development of a long-range transportation plan, which should be ready within . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that you say that you've consulted with municipal leaders from all over Alberta and given that you still have not committed one way or another on continuing with P3s, to the minister: what did these Albertans say about public-private partnerships?

**Mr. Mason:** Well, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, with some certainty that certain school boards were very dissatisfied with the operation of P3 schools under the previous government. We know that these projects are very expensive. We know that we undertake very lucrative long-term contracts for the maintenance and the operation of our infrastructure, and that has to be carefully evaluated to make sure that we're getting the best value for money.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that you say that one of your goals is to integrate innovation in your transportation strategy and given that entrepreneurs have created billions of dollars in opportunities for Albertans through access to jobs in Fort McMurray, to the Minister of Infrastructure: will you allow industry and partners in Fort McMurray the opportunity to rebuild their infrastructure?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, we're working with all stakeholders and people from the Fort McMurray area. We want to make sure that we do the job as quickly as possible, that we do it right, and if it's possible and the conditions are appropriate, we certainly want to engage local business first.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

### Fort McMurray Health and Environmental Issues

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our hearts continue to go out to the people of Fort McMurray. In addition to the stress of being asked to leave their homes at a moment's notice, their minds are now turning to what work will be needed to get them back. We know that the fire has had an impact on key infrastructure such as electricity delivery, and of course we need this to operate large household appliances. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what is being done to help get those necessities that are needed to run a healthy household, like fridges and freezers, back online?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an important question, and it underscores the importance of securing critical infrastructure before people can return home. There are teams on the ground in Fort McMurray working on these problems as we speak. When people do get back to their homes – you know, most homeowners' and renters' insurance policies cover fridges and freezers, so most people will not need to clean out their fridge and freezer but can keep them closed and remove them although I would encourage people to confirm with their insurers in advance, of course.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning the smoke from Fort McMurray actually just found its way to Fort Saskatchewan. Given that air quality is critical to the health and

safety of the residents of Fort McMurray and given that smoke from the Fort McMurray wildfire has a significant impact on air quality, can the Minister of Municipal Affairs update the House on this important health issue?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our first priority is the health and safety of evacuees and of the first responders on the scene there. There have been severe air quality warnings in the Fort McMurray region due to the ongoing fires. Currently four mobile air quality monitoring units have been installed. The Wood Buffalo Environmental Association has also provided an additional two mobile units. This is in addition to the existing air monitoring network. Additional air monitoring needs will be evaluated and assessed to determine priority resources. In the meantime we take the steps needed to keep our first responders safe.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we should do everything we can to fight this wildfire and given that the opposition has suggested that there is a more affordable option for fire retardant than what is currently being used, could the minister report to the House on efforts officials have made to explore that option?

**Ms Larivee:** Mr. Speaker, all the resources available are being deployed in and around Fort McMurray to fight this wildfire. We tender contracts for the fire retardant chemicals we use. We only use qualified products approved for use in Canada and certified by the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service's qualified products list. In the future there may be additional products approved for use from different vendors, and we will evaluate them. I want to assure Albertans that we get the best possible fire suppression products to fight this and all other wildfires. We currently have long-term contracts in place for long-term fire retardant and class A foam.

### Energy Policies

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Mr. Speaker, solar power producers would have to sell power to the Alberta power pool at \$90 a megawatt hour, wind would have to sell their power to the power pool at \$65 per megawatt hour, and in stark contrast natural gas and coal generators are bidding their power into the pool at zero, taking whatever price they can get in our competitive power market. In estimates we asked the Energy minister how Albertans would continue to have affordable power given these market realities, and she had no answers. You've had several days, Minister. Do you have an answer now?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. We have tasked, of course, the Alberta Electric Systems Operator to consult with industry experts to recommend a program that will bring on renewable generation, keep costs low, and ensure the reliability of electricity. That program will be developed throughout 2016 and for the first RFP by the end of 2016. Of course, the stakeholder consultation has now wrapped up, and stakeholder feedback is on the AESO website.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Again no answer.

Given that having Albertan hockey moms trade in their minivans for \$150,000 Teslas does not result in overall cost savings and given that a self-employed journeyman isn't about to trade in his pickup

for a Smart car that will never pull his tool trailer and since travelling long distances is an Albertan reality and not a discretionary choice, what behaviour exactly does this government think is available for modification under this punitive carbon tax?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government is committed to ensuring that efficiency programming will be designed to be accessible for all Albertans and all sectors. In addition, we are moving forward with voluntary partnerships with the Alberta Motor Association, for example, to ensure that we can take action on air quality as well as reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental, please.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you. Well, that was swing two, strike two.

Given that this government has yet to provide any monetary assessment for any cost increases on the average Albertan family outside of fuel costs for the vehicle and given the numerous media reports of increased costs for bussing children to school, heating classrooms, hospitals, businesses, and administrative buildings, can this government table one – even one – impact study that they've conducted assessing the economic consequences of a carbon tax on Albertan families? Even one? Just one?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I have tabled the Choose Wisely report, which is the latest report of the Ecofiscal Commission, in which there is an analysis of various carbon pricing schemes and their effects on the various provinces, including an assessment of what has happened since 2008 in British Columbia. Of course, we have chosen to invest the carbon levy into the economy, creating jobs, ensuring diversification, and reducing emissions, therefore reducing overall costs.

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

### Support for Wildfire-affected Vulnerable Albertans

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo rapidly evacuated its 80,000 residents from Fort McMurray, many vulnerable people were part of that number. Seniors, for instance, are a group that we are particularly concerned about, and that includes those who reside in the local lodge as well as seniors who are able to live independently with assistance from the community and home care. To the seniors minister: how are you monitoring the vulnerable seniors who had to flee and are now dispersed around Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I met with Cynthia Woodford, the vice-president of property services with the Wood Buffalo Housing and Development Corporation, and I can assure you that they did an excellent job evacuating and supporting the seniors. There were 67 seniors living in four Fort McMurray and Anzac facilities, and they were evacuated with family and with our staff. Most are now with friends and family. The Eagle Hill foundation and the Sturgeon Foundation have graciously offered to house some seniors in their facilities, so seniors are being well taken care of.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. Given that seniors with challenges may not be able to wait for hours in lineups for the financial assistance that the government finally began offering yesterday and given that people with physical challenges and parents with children may also have trouble waiting for hours in lineups for this assistance, to whoever the minister responsible for this is: what arrangements have you made for everyone with unique circumstances for obtaining assistance without a long wait?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the important question. We have made arrangements so that vulnerable people such as seniors and those people with mobility challenges do not have to wait in the line. Our staff is working with them to make sure that the support is provided to them where they are and they don't have to stand in the lines.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the existence of the Centre of Hope, which supports the homeless people of Fort McMurray, indicates that there are high-risk residents in Alberta's northern city and given that homeless residents would also have fled during the evacuation but these people do not have the same level of support as other evacuated citizens, many of whom have the option of staying with family and friends, to the Minister of Human Services: how is your ministry monitoring these vulnerable residents to ensure they have support wherever they are?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Human Services is taking part in this response in four ways. One, it's managing those financial benefits. Second, it's providing supports along with provincial operation centres. Third, it is providing provincial emergency social services. Fourth, it is focusing on continuing the business as usual. With a combination of all of these, we are working with all of the population that deserves and needs government support to make sure that their needs are met.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

### Public Transit

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Alberta strives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Ministry of Transportation plays a significant role in providing Albertans with choices of alternate modes of transportation. Can the minister indicate what is being done to make public transit more accessible and attractive as a means of transportation for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, and I thank the hon. member for that important question. As our economy and population grow, public transit provides a safe, accessible, and environmentally sustainable means of transportation to connect Albertans to work, to services, to families, and to every other activity. On March 1 of this year we launched the first-ever provincial transit engagement

with municipal, regional, rural, industry, and indigenous stakeholders. We also approached the general public to talk about transit and rural bus service, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton have both stated that increasing public transit is one of the biggest priorities for their cities, again to the same minister: what is this government doing to support public transportation in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Budget 2016 invests a total of \$1.3 billion for . . . [interjections] Sorry. I think this is an important question.

Of this \$1.3 billion, \$914 million is the green transit incentives program. There is still \$415 million in uncommitted funding. The Capital Region Board has received its full amount. Calgary and the rest of the province have \$415 million between them, so that's \$130 million and \$285 million. We're committed to building transit.

**The Speaker:** Do you have a second supplemental? Please proceed.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our government is committed to tackling the causes and effects of climate change, again to the Minister of Transportation: how does public transportation support Alberta's climate change plan?

**Mr. Mason:** What a good question, Mr. Speaker. Public transit activities result in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Personal vehicles as a whole emit significantly greater quantities of greenhouse gasses per passenger transported. It also reduces vehicle emissions through increasing efficiency of existing fleets and reducing the number of less-efficient cars and trucks on our roads. For every bus on the road 40 other exhaust pipes are potentially removed from our roads.

**The Speaker:** Members, you have 30 seconds to leave this Chamber.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

#### Robinson Koilpillai

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to pay tribute to a great Albertan and a great Canadian, Robinson Koilpillai. Robinson passed away on April 27. There are very few individuals who've had such a significant impact on education and human rights as Robinson Koilpillai. Born in India, Robinson came to Athabasca, Alberta, to teach in 1960 with his beloved wife, Helen, and three children: Susan, Michael, and Chris. Around that time I understand that he was the favourite teacher of our Minister of Energy, and the results show.

2:50

It was later in Edmonton that his career in education blossomed. He became a principal and a social studies curriculum co-ordinator with Edmonton public schools. Mr. Speaker, back then Alberta was not as diverse as we see it today. You can imagine how Robinson made an important contribution to the multicultural and intercultural education in Alberta and attracted attention to human rights issues across Canada. As the president of the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation and through his association

with a multitude of nonprofits and civic society organizations, including the Alberta heritage council and the Canadian Human Rights Commission, Robinson became a popular community volunteer. His charitable work included fundraising for women and children here and in India, Nepal, and South Africa.

He became a member of the Order of Canada 20 years ago and received many local and national accolades, including a 2008 lifetime achievement RISE award from the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers.

Robinson was a visionary dedicated to education, peace, and international co-operation. His genuine concern for all peoples was inspirational, as is the title of his biography, *Among Friends: Robinson Koilpillai: Teacher, Citizen of Canada, Advocate for Common Humanity*, authored by Allan Sheppard in 2009.

Robinson was a believer in family values.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

### Highway Cleanup Campaign

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is an annual rite of spring in this province that helps improve the natural beauty of Alberta, helps protect the environment, and provides financial support to community groups. I'm speaking about the annual Highway Cleanup Campaign.

Motorists need to be reminded over and over again that litter and garbage should not be tossed from the windows of moving cars and trucks. Not only does this pollute the environment; it makes Alberta look trashy and unkempt. We all need to be good stewards of the environment, and this is one of the easiest things to do. Save your garbage for the next stop with a garbage can.

First impressions from the tourists coming to Alberta get developed along those highways from our border crossings, near our airports, and around our major cities. We want to attract investment and more tourists here. Garbage-strewn ditches contribute to driving people away.

Last year 16,245 volunteers representing 650 volunteer organizations from 4-H clubs; sea, army, and air cadets; Scouts; Girl Guides; Rotary alliance clubs; and various other nonprofit groups helped clean up more than 11,400 kilometres. These organizations earned over \$1 million for their cleanup efforts and used these funds to support education, community works, supports for the disadvantaged, and developing that sense of place and community.

These volunteers don orange safety vests and attend safety training before going out between the hours of 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. and can range in age from nine to 90. Motorists are asked to slow down, obey signs, and be cautious when passing cleanup crews.

With the cleanup getting under way this weekend, groups looking to do their part to help their province can call 310.0000 to sign up. I look forward to seeing many groups doing their part on the sides of our highways this weekend. Remember: please slow down to make this highway cleanup safer.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Calgary-Mountain View.

### Mental Health Services for Wildfire Evacuees and First Responders

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is facing an unprecedented crisis in mental health amidst a serious recession and over 80,000 people being forced to flee a devastated community. If only a fraction of these individuals require help, our already strained

mental health system will fail many Albertans. In the coming months most of us will remember this fire as a terrible event and will move on with our lives. For the residents of Fort McMurray and first responders, however, moving on will be a painful process fraught with recurring challenges over many years.

Recovery from major emotional loss and trauma is a difficult and delicate process, with no two people having the same experience. What is certain, though, is that left alone, this type of trauma can cause severe suffering, whether it be overt such as alcohol abuse or family violence or covert such as anger and depression. To avert a domino effect and further crisis in the health system, the government must increase funding and activities.

The first activity is increased public education. There is still a stigma associated with mental health problems, and many of those in Fort McMurray won't realize or won't want to admit they need help. The consequences of ignoring the effects of trauma will harm not only the sufferer but their family, friends, and community.

The second is early access to new funds, immediately, for funded psychologists, experienced trauma professionals, and navigators so that they can avoid unaffordable fees. They can offer screening, triage, and timely referral, reducing wait times and freeing up psychiatrists for more critical patients who may need medications.

The third is the navigator or the primary care home to ensure that various financial, medical, and psychological supports communicate with each other and work together through an integrated care plan over the coming year.

I am fully aware that these recommendations require substantial new money from a budget already strained, but the money must be found either in our own budget or through federal assistance. To do nothing is to take half measures, merely moving the problem forward in time and exponentially increasing both cost and human suffering.

Thank you.

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 7(7) in order to extend the afternoon Routine so we may complete it.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

### Fort McMurray Teachers and School Administrators

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank an amazing group of folks who I don't know but who are near to my heart, the teachers and school administrators of Fort McMurray.

May 2 would have been a day like any other in classrooms all over Fort Mac, teachers and principals working to help children learn in all of the usual ways. May is starting to edge toward the end of the year, and with the warm weather no doubt the students were starting to feel summer coming.

However, as the day wore on, it would have been obvious that that day was different. The city was being evacuated. Parents were starting to come and pick up children early. As teachers we practise fire drills, lockdowns, and other emergency situations so that we know what to do when the time comes. I wasn't there, but I know that the teachers on that day did everything they could to keep their students calm. They followed procedure, and they got those kids safely to their parents, some of them doing it while they didn't know if their own home was on fire or not. I know that all parents in Fort McMurray and parents all across Alberta are grateful.



Many of us have heard the incredible story of Lisa Hilsenteger, who fled Father Turcotte elementary school with a bus full of children. She kept trying to reach the parents and assured kids that they would be reunited. This is just one incredible story, but I know that it's not the only one. I know the teachers and principals across Fort Mac stepped up to the pressure and ensured that all schools were evacuated safely. This is no small task, and I thank you.

I thank you for continuing to do your work, to share your marks with students' new schools, to hug your students at evacuation centres. I have no doubt that some of you are still doing marking.

The ATA is hosting a barbecue just for you in Edmonton this afternoon, starting at 5:30, at Barnett House, and I hope that many of you can make it out to support each other and share your amazing stories during this difficult time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### School Psychology

**Ms Woollard:** Mr. Speaker, when I began teaching, my focus was on teaching the students in my class what was appropriate for the grade level. I had some knowledge of child development, but my common sense led me to believe that most challenges that students experienced were quite straightforward. A student goofing around in class is not likely to learn well or at all. However, teaching and watching in the classroom suggested there was more to this problem than met the eye.

I started to notice students who were not misbehaving or not paying attention but were still failing to learn well. Teachers sometimes apply the common labels: needs to try harder, needs to work more carefully, needs to pay attention. But while these descriptors are accurate for some children, they don't tell how to help children learn more effectively. My search to find out why some students struggle to learn while other students learn easily led me to find out about learning differences and learning difficulties. I attended workshops, professional development activities, and completed a graduate diploma in special-needs education. It was helpful but only part of the solution.

Psychologists do assessments which investigate how children's behaviour, attention, memory, and other abilities affect how they learn and remember. I decided to become a psychologist. I learned how to administer psychoeducational and behavioural tests to students struggling in school. Now, once an assessment is complete, the results are shared with the student's parent or guardian and teacher, and then plans are made for how to modify or adapt the program and support the students.

Psychoeducational assessments provide information that enables our great Alberta education system to work for each student. This individualization and support helps students be successful in school.

### 3:00 Volunteer Support for Wildfire-affected Albertans

**Mr. Yao:** Volunteerism is an activity where individuals or groups provide a service for no financial gain. It promotes goodness, with the endeavour of improving human quality of life. This incident that occurred in my region drew volunteers from so many places who provided services in so many ways and who helped so many people. I drew strength from these volunteers and was humbled by them as they selflessly helped those who were vulnerable. I wish to use this opportunity to thank all of those volunteers.

There were, of course, the volunteer fire departments that sent fire trucks and tankers, who came without a request from the municipality of Wood Buffalo. Fire departments came from Olds,

Athabasca, Slave Lake, Smoky Lake, Lac La Biche, and so many other communities.

There was a crew of civilians from Grande Prairie who brought in their own food and cooking supplies and stationed themselves on MacDonald Island, the recreation centre where all the emergency services were staged and housed. They cooked food and provided hot coffee until they ran out.

There was a team from Sylvan Lake and another from the Edmonton area who had their own Tidy Tanks and stacks of jerry cans with fuel that they had purchased themselves to provide to anyone – no questions asked, and no money asked for; when offered, they outright refused it – so that people could escape the fire.

There were the various groups and municipal governments providing and manning reception centres, whether it was in Lac La Biche, Boyle, or Edmonton, to name a few, who selflessly provided food, water, and shelter complete with beds to evacuees.

There were the people who went in to rescue our pets. Our familiars were saved by volunteers who were willing to go into a danger zone and rescue our furry best friends and by professional veterinarians, including the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, who volunteered that medical expertise to our animals.

It's interesting to note that of the over 80,000 people that were evacuated from Fort McMurray, only a small percentage actually relied on the evacuation centres for shelter. Most could rely on family and friends. Yet, more so, there were so many who voluntarily opened their homes to shelter strangers. The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View opened her home to our constituency staffer and his friends.

I feel it unjust to mention but a few of the volunteers and communities who gave so much to those in need in these tragic times. So many volunteers and so little time. With so little to give, they gave so much. To all those: I thank you, and God bless.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women.

#### Bill 15

#### An Act to End Predatory Lending

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending.

As the throne speech made clear, our government is committed to protecting vulnerable Albertans from predatory lending practices. Currently lenders are able to charge very high interest rates to Albertans who are the least able to afford it. This bill will reduce the high cost of borrowing for payday loans and help ensure that alternative financial assistance and short-term credit options are available to all Albertans. It will also strengthen consumer protection for borrowers of payday loans by introducing mandatory instalment repayment plans, requiring payday lenders to provide financial literacy information to borrowers, and imposing stricter controls on the activities of payday lenders. Through this legislation our government is building pathways out of poverty by helping Albertans who find themselves in difficult financial circumstances to escape the cycle of debt caused by short-term, high-cost credit.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a first time]

**Bill 206  
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)  
Awareness Day Act**

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, I request leave today to introduce a bill, that bill being Bill 206, the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act.

Through my consultation with stakeholders I have constantly heard how important increased awareness of the effects and triggers of PTSD is, and this bill will hopefully help continue an important conversation here in Alberta. Especially given the current situation, a dedicated day will also help educate the public about the long-term effects and triggers of PTSD, the importance of accurate and early diagnosis as well as help to combat the stigma and silence we often see around mental health issues.

I'd ask all members for their support. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a first time]

**Tabling Returns and Reports**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I made reference to a document the other day, an Ipsos-Reid poll that talks about how 65 per cent of Albertans think the NDP is crippling future generations. I have the requisite number of copies here.

**Orders of the Day  
Government Bills and Orders  
Third Reading  
Bill 7  
Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Amendment Act, 2016**

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move third reading of Bill 7, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016.

The proposed amendments in Bill 7 would authorize the early appointment of an Electoral Boundaries Commission on or before October 31, 2016, which is earlier than currently allowed under the act, and clarify a commission's authority to consider recent information respecting population that is not collected on a province-wide basis such as municipal population information. This information would be used along with the federal decennial census of population or a more recent province-wide census.

As mentioned, the first proposed amendment would allow the early appointment of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. The act's timeline for the appointment of a commission is based on the assumption that general elections are held about once every four years. Unfortunately, due to the previous government's early election call, this timeline has been somewhat thrown off because the election occurred a year earlier than anticipated.

The current wording of the act provides that a commission is to be appointed during the First Session of the Legislature following every second general election after the appointment of the last commission. However, if fewer than eight years have passed since the appointment of the last commission, the following commission is to be appointed no sooner than eight years after that.

3:10

A commission was last appointed in July 2009, and there have been two general elections since then. However, the earliest a commission can be appointed is eight years after that date. As such, under the current wording of the act a commission cannot be appointed earlier than July 2017. A commission needs to be appointed before July 2017 so that there's sufficient time for the commission to complete its work.

The early appointment, Mr. Speaker, will also ensure that there is sufficient time for election preparations such as preparing lists of electors under the new electoral boundaries and providing these lists to registered political parties for their use during the election campaign. It's anticipated that the next general election will be held between March 1 and May 31, 2019, as per the fixed election period set out in the Election Act. The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that the commission be appointed in the fall of 2016.

I will now explain why it's important to proceed with authorizing the early appointment of the commission from a legal perspective. The Charter of Rights includes a guarantee of effective representation. Alberta currently has 87 electoral districts. The act says that the population of a proposed electoral division should be no more than 25 per cent above or below the average population in the proposed electoral district. There is an exception for four special electoral divisions, which can have a population of up to 50 per cent below the average population of all proposed electoral divisions if they meet certain criteria.

The 25 per cent deviation from the average population is intended to be rare and not the norm. The early appointment of a commission will give it time to consider the population of the electoral divisions and to protect that right. Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to make clear that this is simply a procedural change necessitated by the early election call.

The second proposed amendment would clarify a current section in the act dealing with the information that the commission must and may use when determining the population of Alberta. The act says that the commission must use population information from the federal census carried out every 10 years. However, if there is a more recent province-wide census, the commission may use that population information. The act also currently allows the commission to use other more recent population information in conjunction with the federal decennial census of population or a more recent province-wide census.

The proposed amendment clarifies the authority to use data collected municipally, but this does not represent a change in policy, Mr. Speaker. The last Electoral Boundaries Commission used municipal census data and found it very helpful in their determination.

Finally, there was one amendment proposed regarding this aspect of Bill 7 during Committee of the Whole. That amendment was defeated. The defeating of that amendment, Mr. Speaker, was with the support of the Chief Electoral Officer. The amendment would disproportionately prejudice the representational rights of Albertans in rapidly growing areas of the province by not including population increases in this area that have occurred since 2011.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is important in protecting Albertans' rights to effective representation, and I ask for the support of all members for these important amendments. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any members who would like to speak? The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about Bill 7, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016. This legislation is significant to all Albertans because it does a lot more than draw lines on a map. Electoral boundaries reflect the interests of people in Alberta's communities, neighbourhoods, counties, regions, towns, and cities. These boundaries show Albertans how the provincial government understands their community, and these boundaries help establish the foundation of the relationship between these representatives and their constituents.

In Committee of the Whole we spent time discussing the data that the commission will be using in its deliberations. It's important to discuss the other factors that will be going into the commissioner's decision. In the past these boundaries haven't been influenced by population alone. The law mandates that the Electoral Boundaries Commission take into account population density, community interest, community boundaries, municipal boundaries, geographical features, distance, area, and even local issues.

When we begin to untangle all the considerations that the Electoral Boundaries Commission has to make, we can see that its mandate is confronted with an incredibly complex task. This important and challenging duty falls on five people, five people to review the interests and the unique features of a province with over 4 million people and 660,000 square kilometres. It's not exactly an enviable position to be in. Balancing all of these factors and interests doesn't have a set formula. There's no textbook to look to for answers. The only guidelines are the parameters of the legislation and the work done by previous commissions. That is why public consultation will be critical and crucial to guide these five people in gaining an understanding of Alberta's intricacies.

Mr. Speaker, in looking back to the 2009 Electoral Boundaries Commission, we can see how much public consultation an Electoral Boundaries Commission must conduct to even begin to understand our province. I believe that the last time a commission was organized was in 2009. There were a total of 14 public consultations in the first round of meetings and nine public consultations in the second round. Between these two rounds and 23 consultations there were over 200 presentations made to the public and approximately 500 submissions put in to that commission.

This type of engagement is exactly what this commission has to do. It has to get out in front of people and listen to what communities all over our province have to say. I know how much of a task that is for one MLA to do in one riding. Going to all the corners of the constituency and listening to as many people as possible isn't easy, so imagine what the entire province must look like. Challenging but necessary.

The concept of getting out to as many people as possible and seeking meaningful engagement and consultation brings me to my next point on the work of this commission. How these boundaries are drawn will lay the foundation for relationships between the people of Alberta and their representatives. For representatives – yes, us – the commission tells us who our bosses will be. It tells us who we are directly accountable to. How these lines are drawn will be fundamentally affecting people and how they will engage with these representatives. The essence of this relationship is effective representation no matter the size, location, population density, community interest, community boundaries, municipal boundaries, geographical features, distance, area, local issues. This commission must maintain effective representation for every boundary that is drawn.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a little quiet, please.

**Mr. Cyr:** The riding I represent is largely rural. I love that about where I'm from. I love being in Alberta's beautiful nature, and a connection to the land is part of my area's culture. To keep a strong connection to my constituents means a lot of driving, something I love to do, especially since Bonnyville-Cold Lake is in what I would describe as one of the most beautiful parts of Alberta and possibly the world.

3:20

While I love living in and representing a rural riding, there are challenges in maintaining a close relationship with the constituents based on travel time between all the different places that I need to be on any given day. This challenge isn't unique to me by any stretch. I believe that it is challenging for all MLAs but particularly the ones that have large rural components to their ridings.

Maintaining effective representation must contain relative parity of voting power, but exact parity is impossible. What I hope this year's Electoral Boundaries Commission will keep top of mind are concepts laid out in the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling in 1991 regarding the Saskatchewan reference. In the court's decision they point to the problem with ridings that are too sparsely populated and difficulties associated with communication. I believe that even with the rise of information technology like the Internet and cellphones, there is still a barrier to proper communication if constituents are unable to contact their MLA in a way that best fits them. I deal with a lot of seniors in my riding. Many of them are tech savvy but not all of them. A visit to my office is commonplace for people in my riding, and I encourage all of my constituents to drop by my office any time they feel the need. My door is always open.

If the boundaries are redrawn in rural areas to the extent that people are not able to come into their MLA's office because the journey is too expensive or time consuming, there is a real risk of deteriorating an important element of our democracy, accessibility to their MLA. Accessibility to our MLAs is crucial for a free and fair democracy.

I also want to conclude by discussing the importance of respecting community, municipality, and geographical boundaries. Albertans are an incredibly proud group of people. They work hard to make their communities great. They feel a bond with their neighbour, whether that neighbour is right next door to them or kilometres down the road.

I urge the commission to really work hard to learn the different facets of our communities and not divide them for partisan or political reasons. Honouring these unique features across the province and maintaining effective representation will ensure that Albertans have a free and fair democracy for generations to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a third time]

## Bill 8

### Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move Bill 8, Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016, on behalf of the Minister of Service Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Are there any members who would like to speak to Bill 8? The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just rise to offer my enthusiastic support for Bill 8, and I want to say that the minister deserves thanks for bringing this forward. Now that she will have certain powers under this act, I would strongly encourage her to use them.

As has been discussed in this House already, there have been some serious concerns specifically with the Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council and its ability or willingness, perhaps, to protect auto buyers. Bill 8 is going to give the minister the powers to ensure that people who have been taken in scams like the Treadz Auto scam, in fact, receive appropriate compensation.

There is \$4.5 million in the AMVIC compensation fund. They have arbitrarily capped compensation for this particular case at \$300,000, which left upwards of 120 people out nearly a million dollars who have been scammed by a disreputable company. AMVIC's job is to protect those people. If they are not doing that, this bill will give the minister the ability to do that. Again, I strongly encourage her to do that.

I have some constituents in Calgary-Elbow who have been taken by this scam, and it's been very, very difficult for them and for many others. Again, I welcome the powers that the minister has been given, in particular the authorization to appoint a representative to oversee management of the organization. Again, this bill gives her very broad powers, and I certainly encourage her, please, to use them, especially as it relates to the compensation fund and perhaps even management of the organization. There's been a report by MNP that's made several recommendations, and I know that some of those have been addressed or at least claim to have been addressed.

Now that these powers are in place for the minister, I really do encourage her to use them. It's very important that the people who have been taken by the Treadz Auto scam, in particular, and any other consumers who may be victimized by disreputable auto dealers have the assurance that they will be protected by the industry council, whose job it is, in fact, to protect them.

With that, Mr. Speaker, again, my praise to the minister for taking such strong action, and I enthusiastically support this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's certainly been some great conversation around Bill 8, and I was certainly happy to cosponsor that bill. For all the speakers that stood up and supported this, I certainly thank them for that. I think this bill will add the oversight that the DRO doesn't currently have under this act, that all the others enjoy in every other piece of legislation.

With that said, I think there's consensus within the House, and we can move on.

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, I move that we finish up third reading and take the vote.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 12 Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very honoured to be a cosponsor of this particular bill. I guess I officially have to move it for second reading on behalf of the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

It might seem like it's a very small act, it might seem that it's not really all that important, but it's actually an incredibly, incredibly important piece of legislation. Consultation is something that I've

heard plenty about in my constituency from my First Nations and my Métis settlements communities. They've talked about how the previous government might have thought they were consulting, but they never did consult. That did not just apply to this act but in so many ways. The government would come. They'd sit down and have dinner. They'd exchange gifts. They'd do a photo op. Then they would tell the First Nations and the Métis communities: "This is what we're going to do. This is what we're going to do for you." They never actually asked: "What would you like us to do? How do you feel about this legislation? Can you give us some feedback? Can you help us? Can you work collaboratively with us as we do this process?"

3:30

My First Nations communities have told me how they really felt almost disrespected, demeaned in this process because they were not treated as equals in a nation-to-nation kind of relationship. Rather, they were treated in a very paternalistic way. In trying to forge a better and a new relationship, our government is trying to do things very differently.

Actually, I was in the House when this act received its readings back in 2013, in May. I sat over there with *Hansard*, and I listened to the arguments. There were some very passionate arguments by the opposition from all sides. We had the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, and the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. They all argued very passionately against this bill.

There were some key issues with Bill 22. Among them, of course, primarily, was that they had not adequately consulted with the First Nations when they were trying to bring this act in. The act was actually intended, ironically, to effect a consultation levy. The irony was remarked upon over and over that night.

A couple of more concerning issues were that it seemed to interfere with the treaty process, that the government was seeking far greater control of negotiations between industry and the First Nations. First Nations were even being forced to openly declare all of the negotiations that they would have had with industry partners in the process, something that no other Albertans needed to do. They really had issues with this. The minister would even have the right to decide which groups were considered First Nations for the purpose of this process. So there were some real concerns that were brought up by the opposition.

It was quite interesting to me to go through *Hansard* and read some of these comments, but they also brought up better reasons and better ways of consulting and how you do have to consult in a very respectful way.

That evening we also had sitting in the gallery – and I believe it was across there – a very large contingent of First Nations chiefs and representatives. Among them was Chief Cameron Alexis, who at that time was the Assembly of First Nations' regional chief. Now, Cameron is somebody who I'm now honoured to call a friend and a colleague because he's the CEO of the North Peace Tribal Council up in High Level, where I live. He and I have been working very closely on trying to advance the interests of our aboriginal communities up there. I asked him for his thoughts on this bill. He immediately came back and reiterated all of the concerns. Primarily he said that they didn't feel that they had been consulted in a way that was meaningful to those First Nations and that that needed to be really recognized. He also brought out to me that we still have to go forward on these kinds of legislation, but he said that what's really important is that we do take into account the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples in everything we do when we're developing this legislation.

I think that's something that our government is doing, and that's why I'm really pleased that we brought forth this repeal act because it's going to be a first step forward in restarting the negotiation process and actually engaging with our aboriginal peoples in meaningful consultation going forward.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who wish to speak to second reading of Bill 12? The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand today and speak to Bill 12, the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act. If there's one thing I've learned throughout my career, it's that the more people work together toward a common goal, the better the final product will be. Whether we're in manufacturing, agriculture, the oil and gas industry, education, health, or any other activity you can think of, strategies and common solutions developed in consultation are often more solid and find support through implementation. This consultation process takes a lot longer than simply handing down a decision and expecting that everybody involved will do their best to make it work.

In the end that time taken during the planning phase will lead to a higher level of buy-in from all concerned and a greater sense of ownership and pride in the work that follows. I have used a consultative process in virtually all of the work I have done. From the oil field to farm work to my family, I've recognized that decisions that are developed together are much more likely to be honoured, and the end result is a stronger relationship built on a knowledge and certainty that everybody impacted has been heard and their concerns respected.

What does this have to do with Bill 12? Very simply, Mr. Speaker, the bill is about consultation. Proper and full consultation with First Nations will benefit not only the First Nations but all Albertans. For far too long economic development initiatives and infrastructure upgrades such as bridges and roads have built up due to uncertainty about how the First Nations in the area will be impacted and how they need to be included meaningfully. We have had decades of one-off approaches to development on First Nations land that have led to a divide-and-conquer sort of mentality, working with select First Nations while excluding others.

The lack of consultation was a major stumbling block with Bill 22. None of the groups that are impacted by the bill were in favour of it. It did not meet the needs of the First Nations communities and was never proclaimed. The bill imposes levies on industry to provide funding to First Nations and Métis settlements to support their participation and consultation over resource development in their areas. The irony is that none of the treaty organizations, First Nations communities, or Métis settlements councils were consulted as the bill was being drafted, and step by step that bill made it more difficult for industry and First Nations to come together to find mutually acceptable ways of making best use of local resource development.

This bill is a first step toward changing that pattern. Firstly, it stops the piecemeal approach to fixing the previous bill. It recognizes that Bill 22 was flawed both in the content of the bill as well as the process by which it was drafted and presented to Albertans. By repealing Bill 22, this government is recognizing that the fundamental relationship between government and indigenous Albertans needs to be formalized in a way that recognizes and honours the autonomy and authority of both parties. It also recognizes that that relationship must withstand scrutiny by being transparent and open.

I hope this bill will set the stage for a better framework for First Nations and Métis communities as well as for government. If so, it should support all Albertans with certainty and a map for the best approach to resource development. The whole intention of Bill 22 was to provide funds to allow First Nations to participate in consultations with industry about resource development. We know that the bill did not meet the expectations of First Nations and that they were against the bill, but so, too, were the representatives from the energy industry who would have been impacted by that bill. Our representatives suggested that Bill 22 actually would have gotten in the way of consultations between First Nations and industry. They're looking forward to a new framework for consultation that is supportive of and supported by First Nations and Métis communities. The uncertainty surrounding Bill 22 was very difficult, and investors do not like uncertainty.

Since this government was elected, the Wildrose caucus has been urging the government to slow down with the proposed legislation to make sure that they get it right. So far our caution has not been well received. Instead, we have seen government push through legislation that has caused huge concern. For instance, how many thousands of people rallied here at the Legislature over Bill 6? How many gathered in towns across the province to get their voices heard in opposition to the lack of consultation and the haste with which the government addressed the bill that had the potential to fundamentally alter the fabric of rural Alberta?

Mr. Speaker, we saw the same thing with Bill 8, the Public Education Collective Bargaining Act. Wildrose fielded an enormous outcry over the process by which the government introduced the bill and then rushed it through, with a promise to hold consultations afterwards.

In order to build trust, this government needs to take time to work with stakeholders to ensure that the legislation they table has the support of the people it will impact. This is particularly true when considering issues that impact First Nations and Métis peoples and communities as the relationships are extremely complex and involve other governments. Of course, in the area of resource development the parties involved, including indigenous communities, local municipalities, towns, industry, and the provincial government, all need to have a voice in how the process will unfold and how their concerns will be considered.

The continued support of First Nations through the First Nations consultation capacity investment program will continue to support negotiations while government engages with First Nations on a new structure and process. This is good news for all of Alberta. Wildrose hopes that the new commitment to Métis through the Métis settlements consultation policy will also be in the works and will ensure that this government maintains its firm commitment to indigenous peoples. However, this bill could potentially cause more red tape as the government implements a new approach to consultation. It could also incur higher costs for governments of all levels as they work through the bill to determine the implementation process.

3:40

I support this bill, and I hope this repeal will bring a new level of expectation for consultation that this government will apply to all further proposed legislation as well instead of racing ahead to pass legislation without due consideration for the impact on the stakeholders in the province. I hope this bill becomes a standard by which legislation is researched before being tabled and pushed through without due consideration.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When this bill first came across my desk, I was reflecting back on a powwow I went to on the Alexander First Nation in my constituency. The first thing that struck me was the amount of co-operation between the industry representatives who were present, many of them oil and gas representatives, and the Alexander First Nation. The second thing that struck me was that both groups expressed concerns about Bill 22. Both of them identified this bill as a roadblock to working together to address both of their concerns.

This is definitely a big step towards the reconciliation that we have all agreed is important as a Legislature, as a government, really, as a people. Both Alberta and Canada have begun these steps towards reconciliation. Further, I believe that this bill will help to give industry and Alberta the tools that we really need when we're moving forward on diversification as industry and First Nations will have an easier time, a more streamlined time consulting and getting towards the projects that we really need to build a resilient economy moving forward.

I had more to say, but it's not coming, so thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or observations under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to stand today in the House and speak to Bill 12, the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act. As has been expressed multiple times – but I believe it deserves repeating – First Nations communities felt that they weren't properly consulted on this. I think it's very important in light of that now we are so compelled to implement the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and, not only that, also, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action that we re-establish our relationship with First Nations. I'm so grateful that our government is doing exactly that and that it's such an important priority for our new Minister of Indigenous Relations.

I've had the opportunity to build relationships with many First Nations people here in our province, and I just want to stress how important that word "relationship" is. For many First Nations as well as Métis communities being able to sit down in the circle to discuss, to build the relationship first, to build that trust with one another and, especially with First Nations, to engage in the process, the protocol, perhaps better stated, of ceremony, of actually being able to sit down and share medicine, smoke pipe, lay down tobacco: all these things are important to First Nations people, that their protocols be followed. We must never forget that this is part of respecting First Nations constitutionally protected treaty rights. We can never forget that we are signatories to treaties 6, 7, and 8 here in this province.

As we move forward, it's important that we sit down and we have more productive discussions and that First Nations feel that their participation is a genuine participation in a process of consultation and that industry and stakeholders would also be respected in that process as we all sit down at the table together to discuss these matters.

It gives me great honour to share the words of Grand Chief Tony Alexis of Treaty 6. I really hope that all of the members of this House take these words to heart. Regarding Bill 22 he said: it was the same mindset as residential schools; we know what's best for you, and we will look after you, so don't worry about a thing; our first stance is to protect the land, and if government is going to put

together a bill, we have to be involved in that bill so we know that those interests will be heard.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, again, it gives me great pleasure to speak to Bill 12, and I highly recommend that everyone in this House please vote in favour of Bill 12. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions or comments to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie?

Are there any individuals who would like to speak to Bill 12? Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise to speak in favour of this bill. I think this is something that, from my own experience in dealing with indigenous communities, is very appropriate. I mean, I'd like to just sort of echo what the Member for Peace River stated in her comments. That's how previously this consultation seemed to have been carried out, you know, by people working for companies. The kinds of stories that I would hear in some of the communities would be that they would drop by a band office, maybe drop off some cigarettes for the elders, chat with a few people, then maybe a week or two later they'd send out a facsimile with a bunch of technical information that the band wouldn't really have any ability to respond to in a practical manner.

I think that taking a look at this again and making sure that consultation really does mean consultation – it's not just fulfilling our constitutional obligation. It's basic decency that if you're going to be having conversations with people, those are conversations that you're really trying to find out what people want and not trying to massage the situation to just get what you want out of the situation.

Once again, I'm in favour of this bill, and I really appreciate our minister bringing this forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a) are there any questions or observations to the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater?

Hearing none, I would call upon the Minister of Indigenous Relations to close debate.

3:50

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to stand here today to close debate on second reading of this bill because it is a fundamental reflection of our commitment in this government to forge a new relationship with the indigenous community in this province. I arrived just moments ago because I was on the phone with the federal minister of indigenous relations co-ordinating our efforts regarding the fires in Fort McMurray. We had a very clear conversation about the United Nations declaration, as the federal government has just adopted the same practice that we have. They're joining us, and she commended Alberta on being the front of the pack on that.

It feels the same to me as the repeal of Bill 22. It's time to get in front of a problem that we have allowed to languish for far too long. Bill 22 was intended to establish a levy on industry as a way to increase funding to First Nations for consultation around activities on traditional lands. Unfortunately, as we have heard from many of the speakers today, the consultation itself provided no consultation with the indigenous community in terms of the construction of the bill and the application of the bill. The irony has been noted but cannot be left out of any speech because it just is so glaring.

We had the opportunity to speak with indigenous people around the province, and they consistently have told us that this was wrong. They appreciate the fact that indeed both sides of the House are behind the repeal of this legislation and that we are committed as a

full government, and I think both sides of the House are committed to truly changing how we do things with the indigenous community.

One of the things that you're going to hear me say a lot more in the future is that not only are we getting rid of this very flawed act, which was apparently on consultation, but also I want us to begin to be aware of the language we're using and understand that what we want in this government is not simply an issue of consultation with indigenous people, but we want to have true engagement with indigenous people. It's not simply a matter of asking them to reflect on decisions we've already made. We want them to be party to making the decision in the first place.

Our government is committed to that through the First Nations consultation capacity investment program, often referred to as FNCCIP. We will be making sure that in the future we are providing the monies that are necessary for First Nations to truly consult on this bill and other bills. To support the capacity for First Nations, we're providing money through FNCCIP in a range between \$80,000 to \$135,000 for every community from the budget of Indigenous Relations right now until we get the new act put in place. We look forward to doing that. Under the FNCCIP \$5.9 million was provided to First Nations in 2014 and '15 and \$6.3 million was allocated to First Nations in 2015 and '16.

Treaty organizations will be at the table for our discussions. They will be prepared. They will have had the adequacy of having the resources to speak to experts who can assist them and speak to us about what their needs truly are. Together we will construct a bill, and we will be coming back into this House as soon as we can to move forward in our new engagement relationship with the First Nations of Alberta.

I respectfully urge all of my colleagues at this time to support this bill. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a second time]

### **Bill 11 Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and move second reading of Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016.

Mr. Speaker, research and innovation are the key to creating a more diverse and resilient economy. While we lead the country in investing in this field, we know that we must continue to be proactive. We must innovate, create, and work together. We must build on our strengths while positioning us solidly for success in the 21st century, and that is what we're doing through this legislation.

The intent of this legislation is to strengthen one of the main drivers of Alberta's research and innovation system, the Alberta Innovates corporations. Right now we have four Alberta Innovates corporations divided up by sectors: Bio Solutions, Health Solutions, Energy and Environment Solutions, and Technology Futures. This legislation consolidates the strengths from each of the corporations through the creation of a single Alberta Innovates corporation.

By combining the four Alberta Innovates corporations into one, we are simplifying the system for researchers, helping leverage additional outside funding, aligning with government-funded priorities, and making government more accountable. The new corporation will drive research and help turn great ideas into innovations that improve lives and our economy. One corporation

will make it easier for Alberta researchers, entrepreneurs, and companies to access the programs and supports available to them. This integration will better connect Alberta's drivers of economic growth with the academic and technical expertise required to move to the next level. Whether it's exploratory research that may identify future economic opportunities or the expertise to solve immediate industry challenges, by simplifying the system, the drivers of our economic growth will also have more time and energy for their research.

In short, we are making it easier for Alberta's researchers and businesses to navigate the province's innovation system. The amendments I'm proposing help make that happen. For example, we're streamlining the legislation by repealing section 5, which established a committee for the four board chairs of the research and innovation corporation. With one corporation a committee of the four corporation board chairs would no longer be relevant.

The amendments also reflect what has happened since the act was introduced in 2010. This includes changing the name of the Alberta Research and Innovation Authority, otherwise known as ARIA, to the Alberta research and innovation advisory committee. This was in response to ARIA members telling us that they've operated more as a committee than an authority and recommended the change. Going forward, I see the Alberta research and innovation advisory committee continuing to play an important role in providing strategic advice to government and Alberta Innovates. This shows our government's desire to learn from others and leverage new opportunities.

I see great opportunities to link the new Alberta Innovates even further with the work of our Campus Alberta institutions from a research perspective. By bringing these minds together, we will achieve more sooner. As I said earlier, that's what we're aiming to achieve through these amendments.

The proposed changes are based on best practices from other jurisdictions. They're also based on expert panel reviews and feedback from stakeholders. We listened carefully and examined what they had to say. Now we're taking action on this through legislation so that our research and innovation system is better positioned to support innovative bioenergy plants, develop new therapies and procedures for patients, minimize our footprint on the environment, and help small and medium-sized companies commercialize some very innovative technologies.

While this act is under the responsibility of my ministry, we have been and will continue to take a collaborative approach. We are working closely with a number of other ministries that see research as an important component of achieving their objectives. This includes the Ministry of Health because health research in the new corporation will help transform the health care system and accelerate access to health innovations. We will continue to work closely with the new Alberta Innovates board and senior management to ensure a smooth transition.

Mr. Speaker, our government has long established our support for research and innovation. In last November's state of the province speech the Premier made it clear that our government will help drive innovation. We want Alberta to be a great place to turn an idea into a product and a product into a prosperous enterprise.

4:00

In the Alberta jobs plan we identified research and innovation as a key to improving the Alberta economy, industry, workforce, and well-being of our citizens. The amendments we're proposing strengthen Alberta's research and innovation system so that the province is positioned to seize on the opportunities that will

diversify our economy and create jobs. As such, I encourage all members to support Bill 11.

At this, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Seeing as we've made some great progress today and this week in our Legislature, I move that we adjourn the House until Monday, May 16, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:01 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to May 12, 2016**

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

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

### **1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 732-36 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.), 685-91 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.), 749-60 (Apr. 21, 2016 aft.), 825 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)

### **2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1]

### **3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)

Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2]

### **4\* An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft.), 349-66 (Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 399-409 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.), 378-84 (Apr. 6, 2016 morn.), 415-28 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 450-55 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 428-33 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn.)

### **5 Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading -- 398 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 455-56 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.), 532-38 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed), 491-505 (Apr. 12, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 570-77 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed), 539-56 (Apr. 13, 2016 morn.)

Third Reading -- 577-83 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

### **6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 519-27 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 527-32 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 583-85 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

### **7 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**

First Reading -- 518 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 585-86 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft.), 682-84 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed), 649-51 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 820-24 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 902-903 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)

- 8 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 669-71 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 684 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 824-25 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 903-904 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)
- 9 An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 640-49 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.), 728-30 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed)
- 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 599 (Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 671-82 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 730-32 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division), 691-703 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.)
- 11 Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016 (Bilous)**  
First Reading -- 773 (May 2, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 907-908 (May 12, 2016 aft., adjourned)
- 12 Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Feehan)**  
First Reading -- 802 (May 3, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 904-907 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)
- 13 Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016 (Gray)**  
First Reading -- 872 (May 10, 2016 aft., passed)
- 14 Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**  
First Reading -- 872 (May 10, 2016 aft., passed)
- 15 An Act to End Predatory Lending (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 901 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)
- 201 Election Recall Act (Smith)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 119-32 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft.), 303-304 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division)
- 202 Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 305-16 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft.), 470-73 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)
- 203 Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**  
First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 481-83 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities), 473-81 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft.)
- 204 Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**  
First Reading -- 468 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 616-30 (Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed)
- 205 Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**  
First Reading -- 707 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.)  
Second Reading -- 839-50 (May 9, 2016 aft., passed)
- 206 Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (Goehring)**  
First Reading -- 902 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)
- Pr1 Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**  
First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 16, 2016

Day 28

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
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 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
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 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
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 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
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 Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
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 Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
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 Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
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 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
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 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
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Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
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Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

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### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Kazim	

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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 16, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us reflect. As we begin our work for the week, let us do so with a positive and hopeful spirit, always focusing on the incredible work Albertans across this province have been doing to support each other during these challenging times.

Thank you.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark. I'd invite all to participate in the language of your choice.

**Hon. Members:**

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Deputy Speaker:** I understand we have some school groups. The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly teachers and students from Home School Christian Fellowship in my riding. They didn't want me to play any favourites, so they only gave me one name, but it's always a great pleasure to see young people come down and see us at work. Once again, I hope we satisfy. All right. If you would like to rise – I know there are three maybe on the other side there – and please receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** And St. Paul. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to stand and introduce to you and through you 52 students, teachers, assistants, and parents from the newly renovated l'école Racette school in St. Paul: teachers Paula Fejzullai and Cheryl Smereka, assistants Connie Bigam and Andrew Harvey, and parents Aline Brousseau and Teresa Pruden. If I could get the students, teachers, assistants, and parents to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It was particularly important that I didn't leave St. Paul out of that constituency name. I apologize.

The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 24 students from the grade 6 class of l'école Greenfield school,

accompanied by their teacher Mr. Sharplin and parent volunteers Brett Kowalchuk, Kim Christopher-Norton, Heather Close, and Christine McVige. Greenfield is a wonderful English and French immersion school in my community, where diversity is respected and celebrated in the work that these dedicated educators do every day. I would now ask you to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other school groups to introduce?

Then I'll call on the hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly Dr. Cindy Blackstock. I have had the great pleasure of getting to know Dr. Blackstock over the past year as we work towards our shared goal of protecting the rights of indigenous children. Cindy Blackstock is a member of Gitksan First Nation, a social worker with 25 years of experience in working to improve the lives of children, and the director of the First Nations children's action research and education service. I was proud to bring greetings this morning to the YESS allies and youth conference in Edmonton at which Dr. Blackstock was the keynote speaker. I'm always moved when I hear about the work she is doing. Dr. Blackstock is a furious and tireless advocate for youth, who sometimes believe our society isn't there for them. As we continue to work through the heartbreaking stories of indigenous youth in crisis, I am so thankful that those often without hope otherwise have Cindy Blackstock on their side.

The recent landmark Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling on the case brought forward by Dr. Blackstock after nine years of fighting and speaking for those who cannot for themselves is just one example of the tremendous difference she is making in the lives of these children across Canada. As this case demonstrates, there is much work to be done both within and across government to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of indigenous children. I look forward to continuing this important work with our colleagues in other orders of government, our indigenous partners, and, of course, with Dr. Blackstock, who is a leader and an inspiration to all those who seek to make a difference in the lives of indigenous children. I ask Dr. Blackstock to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Merci, Mme la Présidente. C'est avec plaisir que je présente aujourd'hui à vous et à tous les membres de l'Assemblée Mme Julie Fafard du Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Ms Julie Fafard from the Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta, the CDÉA. She has been a wonderful partner in promoting tourism opportunities in the French language in Alberta, and I would ask her to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Do you have another guest?

**Miranda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I also have the pleasure of introducing to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two remarkable Albertans, Matt McMillan and Josh Eberley. Matt is a lieutenant with the Canadian armed forces and cadet training instructor with the 22nd Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps, where he mentors the new recruits who have stepped forward to serve our nation. Josh has now written his final exams and later this month

will receive his bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Calgary. Both of these young men work with me in the constituency office, serving the good people of Calgary-Cross. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly my guests and long-time friends Margaret Keown, Claire Keown, Barbara Medioli, and Shawn Keown. Margaret is a four-year-old who can talk your ear right off, and I think she just may be a future politician. Claire is a considerate eight-year-old who loves reading mysteries. Barbara is a geologist with Natural Resources Canada. Shawn is a stay-at-home dad challenged to keep up with both Margaret and Claire and shares a long history with the TUXIS Parliament of Alberta with both myself and with the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. I ask my friends to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

1:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and introduce to you and to the whole Assembly three of my friends: Mr. Liam Sparks-O'Neill, accompanied by Roxanne Hughes and Myles Usher. They are all students at the University of Alberta, and I know that our province is lucky to have minds as bright as those and lucky enough to have universities of the calibre of the University of Alberta to train them. I'd ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you several members of the Specialty Vehicle Association of Alberta. Colleagues may have heard from some of their members in their constituencies as they're currently working on a campaign to get a classic car day designated here in Alberta. Would you please rise as I say your name. Joining us in the gallery are James Herbert, president; Dave Scragg, vice-president, north; Earl Clements, director; Del Morrison, director and member of the Vegreville Iron Runners Auto Club in my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville; and Malcom Fischer, director. I'd please request that my colleagues join me in extending the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three guests of mine that have joined us here today: Laurel McCalla with Ubuntu, Julian Daly with the Boyle Street co-op, and Gary Kearns, who is a manager at the northeast office in Edmonton for child and family services. These three individuals work tirelessly with a variety of populations that are in need of supports, whether it's new Canadians or those settling into our communities, and I just want to recognize the hard work that they do and ask all colleagues to join me in giving them a warm welcome to the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my parents, Deborah Dean and Don Sucha. Both are former alumni and retired faculty of the University of Calgary. My mother, Debbie, served as librarian at the law library while some talented cabinet ministers were studying there. She was also an AUPE negotiator and senator for the university as well. My father worked nearly 30 years at the Nickle arts museum on campus. He was recognized for his service when he became part of the Order of the University of Calgary in 2007. He currently volunteers at the Stampede school and is active in the archives at the Military Museums of Calgary. I would ask that they both please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce three people to the Assembly today. The first two come from the constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. The first is His Worship Rick Pankiw, who has the honour of being the mayor of the town of Rimbey, as well as Shawn Hatala, who is a leader within our community in Rimbey and a good friend to many of us in that town. Along with them today is James Maloney, or, to his friends, Jim, who has ties to us in Rimbey but is actually from Fort McMurray and has come to spend some time with us in Rimbey while waiting to be able to go home. I think I can speak for everybody in the Assembly to say that we wish you a speedy trip home. With that said, I'd like all three to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Council of Edmonton Filipino Associations, which I'll be speaking more about in my member's statement later today. Joining us in the gallery are Mandy Servito, president; Marjorie Newman, vice-president; Rosauro Gilera, business manager; Maria Edna Gilera, executive director, Pinoy City Market; Aurelio Sumalinog, co-ordinator, Edmonton Couples for Christ migrant worker program; and Virginia Sumalinog, president, Vismin association. I'd like all my guests now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Rob Laird, a well-known advocate and champion for those who are struggling with addiction, homelessness, and other social issues. Rob is the director of fund development for Recovery Acres, 1835 House, a society in Calgary, and he's here today to hopefully listen to the debate on Bill 205. He is seated in the public gallery. I ask him to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

## Ministerial Statements

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

### Wildfire Update

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know all members of the House join me in thanking every one of the thousands of men and women who are working around the clock to protect Alberta from wildfires. Today there are 15 wildfires burning in Alberta: three out of control, one being held, eight under control, and three that have been turned over to local authorities. We currently have 1,919 firefighters on the ground supported by 161 helicopters, 377 pieces of heavy equipment, and 29 air tankers. Conditions today will make for another extremely challenging day for our firefighters and emergency responders. Fire risks remain extreme across much of northern Alberta.

Yesterday a mandatory evacuation order and a state of local emergency were declared for the hamlet of Little Smoky in the MD of Greenview. A fire that was approximately five hectares at 1 p.m. yesterday is now approximately 800 hectares. Ten families and their pets were safely evacuated. The Fox Creek fire department is arranging for livestock to be evacuated to the Valleyview agricultural society grounds. That fire is being fought by 38 firefighters, eight helicopters, and 15 air tankers.

Madam Speaker, inside Fort McMurray firefighters continue to work on dozens of hot spots and uncapped gas lines. Outside the city the wildfire is now more than 251,000 hectares and remains out of control. The fire is threatening key energy and transportation infrastructure, and some facilities self-evacuated yesterday. Protecting these assets is our priority. There are 869 firefighters on scene with 46 helicopters, including five heavy units, and 13 air tankers. Smoke and extremely poor air quality are a very significant concern at this time. This is impacting all our operations: fire-fighting, air operations, our re-entry preparation work, including actions to begin restoration of essential businesses. The air conditions underscore the fact that Fort McMurray is not yet safe to return to.

However, work is continuing toward making the city safe. Assessment teams have inspected almost 20,000 buildings, and close to 90 per cent of those are structurally sound. Substantial progress has been made to restore electricity and the gas supply; however, the water supply is not yet safe to drink. At the hospital general cleaning in the emergency room has been completed, and detailed cleaning of equipment and the HVAC system is under way. There are 400 people working around the clock in two shifts to restore the hospital.

We continue to support Albertans who were forced to flee from their homes in the meantime. As of yesterday afternoon the government of Alberta has issued more than 27,000 cheques or debit cards to support more than 58,000 people, totalling \$60,536,900 in emergency financial assistance.

We are working to help owners retrieve abandoned vehicles. This does not apply to all vehicles, but vehicles that were abandoned on highway 63, highway 881, or a major street in Fort McMurray are being towed to secure lots, and owners can make arrangements to retrieve them by calling 310.4455. Air quality conditions are disrupting our effort to retrieve abandoned vehicles, but we will continue this work along with all of our other work as soon as it is safe to do so.

1:50

On Saturday we e-mailed evacuees a link to satellite imagery that provides some information about damage to neighbourhoods. Later this week we will be providing phase 2 images from aerial photography that will include a broader geographic area. These will give residents a clearer picture of the current state of their homes. Madam Speaker, these will be very difficult images for some people

to see, and AHS has increased staffing at the mental health helpline as a result. I want to stress that no one has to go through this alone, and there are mental health therapists available through the helpline, online, or at any of the 16 reception centres across Alberta.

In all our actions, Madam Speaker, our first priority is always the safety of Albertans, and again I extend this government's sincere thanks to every person working in extremely difficult conditions to get Albertans safely back to their homes.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does anyone wish to respond?

### Oral Question Period

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Justice System Delays

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. When our justice system is broken, it means that victims are actually the ones that end up being punished. We saw this in Airdrie in 2012, when a sexual assault case was thrown out because of a lack of resources from this government. For this victim this was a horror story that should never have happened. Today we are now hearing of cases of sexual assault trials again being delayed because of both a lack of judges and a lack of resources. Premier, what is this government doing to ensure that we have enough resources in our courts so sexual assault victims don't have to live with months and months of uncertainty?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Of course, we're very concerned about this news. It is very troubling. It is directly related to the fact that over the period of the past 20 years Alberta has received one new QB judge position. At the same time our population has grown, and the fact of the matter is that it's putting tremendous pressure on our court system. So our Minister of Justice has met with her colleague and is pushing very hard for additional QB judges to be appointed and new positions to be created here in Alberta so that we can deal with these kinds of delays.

**Mr. Jean:** Ninety-one per cent of sexual assault crimes are never reported to the police. The anguish, pain, and bravery for a victim to even get to court here in Alberta are immense. Any further delays or any risks of trials being thrown out are just further victimization. Alberta has six vacant positions on the Court of Queen's Bench. Only one of the two new positions announced in 2014 has even been appointed yet. It's been six months since the new federal government was elected. Why hasn't the Premier secured firm timelines from this government to have these positions filled?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Madam Speaker, in fact, our Minister of Justice has worked very hard with the federal government to move ahead on this. But to be clear, the very government that the member opposite sat in for the last six years stood by and did not fill these positions. So, you know, I think that we all need to take some shared responsibility on this. That being said, we're moving as quickly as we can to get these new judges appointed because we know that these matters need to be heard in a full court situation. They can't be delayed, and they need to move forward.

**Mr. Jean:** Madam Speaker, blaming lack of leadership on that side for the vacuum that currently exists is not going to help. We need

to move forward, and we know that the province could take steps to help limit delays. A report filed in 2013, after the Airdrie case was thrown out, showed that 98 per cent of all delays are because of the Crown or the system this government manages. This is unacceptable. To date there remain fears that there are too few courtrooms, too few prosecutors, and not enough resources to ensure justice for victims of crime. The report laid out 17 recommendations in 2013 to free up court time for serious cases going to trial. Can the Premier please tell Albertans how many of these recommendations have been fully implemented by this government?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. Before I can commit, I'd want to actually see the report to which the member is referring, but if it's the report to which I believe he is referring, we have been working very hard within all matters in the system. We have implemented a court case management program to ensure that things get to trial in a timely manner. We've been working with the Provincial Court as well as with the Court of Queen's Bench to ensure that things get moved forward in a timely manner. We have seen some reductions in lead times to trial on a number of issues as a result of those actions.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. Second main question.

### Energy Policies

**Mr. Jean:** A few months back our Premier praised the Ontario Liberals for their emission plan. Now a leaked report shows what this plan means for an already hurting Alberta energy industry. The Ontario Liberals will require all gasoline sold in Ontario to have a lifetime carbon reduction of 5 per cent. To put it plainly, gasoline refined from our oil sands and sold in Ontario will be even less competitive than it will be under this carbon tax from this government. This will further hurt all Albertans who work in the energy industry. Is the Premier still endorsing this plan and this Premier, or will she tell Ontario that they've simply gone far too far?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Let me begin by saying that we're not going to develop our interprovincial policy on the basis of leaked cabinet documents around decisions that haven't been made yet. That's the first thing.

That being said, we are as a government working with the industry to reduce the emissions associated with the production of oil and gas here in Alberta. We're working with forward-thinking, forward-looking industry partners. I'm very, very proud of that because I know that it's that kind of action that's going to increase market access for our product, not decrease it in the way it would have done under the plan put forward by those folks.

**Mr. Jean:** That kind of action leads to unemployed Albertans.

This report not only takes a direct shot at oil sands; it takes aim at cheap low-carbon fuels like natural gas, our solution. With Alberta producing 67 per cent of Canada's natural gas, this will be a hit to an Alberta industry that should be part of the solution to reduce global emissions instead of being a target. Here in Alberta the NDP disruptions to our power grid are already putting natural

gas projects at great risk. When will the Premier start defending our natural gas industry instead of making it far worse for all Albertans?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In fact, we're working very closely with the natural gas industry. They will play a critical role in the transition off coal-fired generation, and we're very pleased to have that important, important resource here in Alberta. Just as we work very hard to increase market access for our oil and gas, we will do the same with respect to natural gas. We understand that that's an important industry that we have in this province. It is a cleaner burning fuel and presents tremendous opportunities for Albertans.

**Mr. Jean:** A new report from FirstEnergy highlights the chaos NDP policies are having on our power grid here in Alberta, and it will be Albertans who ultimately pay the price. The cost to replace coal generation will be \$16 billion without even pricing in any new growth or additional facilities. That means either even higher taxes, massive subsidies, or big price increases on all Albertans' power bills. Right now consumers and businesses cannot afford these changes, and investors are spooked to invest in Alberta. Will the Premier back down from her plans before any more damage is done by these NDP policies?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Madam Speaker, it doesn't surprise me to hear folks on the other side embrace, with no critical analysis, the absolute first bargaining position of somebody trying to get money from taxpayers. That being said, we are actually going to move forward on a responsible transition off coal-fired power generation because it's good for the health of Albertans, good for our ability to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and ultimately will ensure that we have a more renewable, more sustainable electricity production grid in this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. Third main question.

### Wildfire Control and Recovery

**Mr. Jean:** It's only mid-May, but we continue to hear of more evacuations because of wildfires growing out of control. A mandatory evacuation for residents within the municipal district of Greenview was ordered last night as the fire burned just 10 kilometres north of the community. Evacuees have been forced to leave their homes, are very worried about if there will be enough resources to keep the community safe and if their homes will be all right and when they can return. Can the Premier please assure these residents that everything will be done to keep these communities safe?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the member for that question. It's a very good question. Indeed, those are the questions that we ask every morning in our briefings with officials because we share those same sentiments as the member opposite. Absolutely everything is being done that needs to be done to fight these fires. We have over 1,900 firefighters in Alberta right now. We have a growing number of resources. We've established working relationships with other provinces, and we have the number that we need right now, but we are also engaging in additional conversations with international resource

providers, and we will ensure that everything that has to be done will be done to fight these fires.

2:00

**Mr. Jean:** The most recent update from the Premier has the people of Fort McMurray receiving a timeline within the next 10 days for when they can actually return to their homes. Last week at this time the Premier said that residents would know within two weeks when they could return. We understand the need to get all services back online and, of course, for the community to stay safe, but residents are feeling increasingly anxious. The longer they're out of their homes, the more distressed they become. Can the Premier assure the people of Fort McMurray the 10-day timeline won't be delayed further by this government?

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and again thank you to the member for that question. I absolutely agree completely with everything that he says, that this issue of not knowing the plan going forward is very stressful and very anxiety provoking. We hear that, and we understand that. So we can absolutely commit that a schedule and a timeline going forward will be communicated to the evacuees of Fort McMurray within the 10 days that remain within the deadline that we set.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the Premier reassuring us.

A sense of panic among Fort McMurray business owners seems to be growing, however. Many lost their homes, and now they're worried they'll lose their businesses. They're unable to work in Fort McMurray, obviously, but because their equipment is stranded there, they can't go to work anywhere else in the province either. Meanwhile their bills continue to pile up, and business owners fear they may go under even before work in Fort McMurray is available again. It is concerning. What assurances can the Premier give to business owners in Fort McMurray who've lost their homes and now worry about losing their very livelihood?

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We understand that that is a challenge for everybody in Fort McMurray, and indeed most Fort McMurrans have experienced income disruption and are struggling with that. We're working as quickly as we can to ensure that we can assist them any way that we can. Just yesterday – maybe it was even Saturday – we started contacting some small-business owners to invite them back up to Fort McMurray to start setting up so that they were ready for when people came back and, unfortunately, had to postpone that because of the air quality concerns that we have today. So safety continues to be the priority in terms of how we get people into the community and have them, you know, either collecting their stuff or staying . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
The hon. leader of the third party.

### Carbon Levy and Vulnerable Albertans

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The NDP carbon tax is an attack on Albertans. In 2017 all Albertans will pay more for nearly everything they use, including necessities such as food, electricity, heat, and transportation. Seniors, single parents, income support recipients, and persons with developmental disabilities will all pay more, making life difficult for some of Alberta's most vulnerable citizens. To the environment minister: why are you

financing your government's operations on the backs of Albertans living on a fixed income?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, this government will be investing \$645 million over the next five years into energy efficiency. I just note that in a report, which I'll table later today, by the Canada West Foundation, Alberta was left by the previous government as the only jurisdiction in North America without any kind of energy efficiency strategy. That is an embarrassing record left by the previous government that we are correcting.

**Mr. McIver:** So the minister is leaving vulnerable Albertans under the bus. Albertans now know the carbon tax rebate will cover less than half of the extra costs of the carbon tax, yet the NDP government has the impudence to state that "putting a price on carbon will reward Alberta families." Given that your rebates will not compensate Albertans' extra costs and it certainly won't reward them, what measures will you take, Premier, for those Albertans who do not have enough money for food and won't be able to pay the increased costs to heat their homes?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. First of all, let me just correct one of the premises of the previous question. Not a cent of the carbon levy is going towards running government operations. That's something that we've been very clear about all along, so I think that needs to be reinforced. In terms of the rebate, there's no question that the rebate – those lower income families that the member talks about will receive a rebate. In fact, it will be more than what they will likely end up having to pay in terms of the carbon tax, so it is not an issue. Moreover, there's additional investment that will go into energy efficiency . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Madam Speaker, low-income Albertans will not get enough to cover what they pay, and the Premier is not giving the straight goods on that. Albertans deserve a government that will respect their hard-earned tax dollars and show leadership by responsibly managing debt. Rather than financing your government's operations on the backs of Albertans, particularly those with low incomes, through your carbon tax, to the Finance minister: why don't you empower Alberta's public servants to reduce public spending without impacting the front lines, as we have suggested?

**Mr. Ceci:** Madam Speaker, I think the answer was just given by the Premier. None of the monies will make their way into general revenues. We are putting them back into the economy. We are putting them back into people's pockets directly, and we are creating energy efficiencies throughout the province. That's what we're doing with the levy.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Investor Tax Credit

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, the investor tax credit, long supported by the Alberta Party, is a good first step in rebuilding Alberta's economy. It will give investors new incentive to remain in and grow their business in Alberta, but the plan is still very vague. This ambiguity has left me and, I'm sure, Alberta's business community with a lot of questions. To the

Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what criteria will you use to determine which industries will be eligible for the new investor tax credit?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question, a very good question. Part of what we're doing over the summer and into the fall is consulting, and I can let this House know that we've already begun conversations with small-business owners, with associations throughout the province looking at – we want to ensure that we get the right parameters and that the investor tax credit does what it is supposed to do, which is to incent investment in Alberta-based companies. I can assure the member that we will be working with different sectors, different businesses to ensure that when we roll this out, we get it right.

**The Deputy Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, in the past the minister has said that the credit will only support a small subset of industries: IT, clean tech, video games. Now, these industries are certainly important to our provincial economy, but by no means do they encompass all of the possible economic activity in Alberta. In fact, there's a big risk that the narrow focus will mean that bureaucrats will decide which businesses are worthy of investment and which are not. To the same minister: why do you think you know better than the business community when it comes to investment decisions, and will you make the only restriction for investment be that companies are not already receiving government assistance?

**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that our government works with business and industry and has from the day that we formed government and especially since this ministry was created. I was very clear at the announcement of the investor tax credit that we are looking at areas of focus. The intention is to stimulate investment in areas that fall outside of our traditional area of strength. However, I did make it clear that if in consultation with business and industry it is determined that this tool can be used by and is critical to our oil and gas sector, we are open to that conversation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. Now, I remind the minister, Madam Speaker, that B.C. made the mistake of having their tax credit too narrow and have since broadened their program, so let's get specific here. Will the investor tax credit apply to an energy company that develops a carbon reduction technology, a software developer whose current product line is used by the energy industry but could be used by others, or a welding shop that wants to expand from a focus on oil and gas to infrastructure projects? These are just three of countless examples where your government is going to have to decide who's worthy and who's not. Will you do the right thing, Mr. Minister, and broaden the program?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Once again, this is part of the reason that our government is consulting with business and industry throughout the province throughout summer and fall, to ensure that we get it right. I acknowledge the three examples that the member gave are great examples. Again, we are open to the parameters of this, and I'll reinforce the fact that in British Columbia there was some critique,

and still is, of their investor tax credit on a number of fronts, which is why we are consulting with business and industry to ensure that the tool is the right tool for the job.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just a reminder to all members that from now on there will be no preambles to supplementals on the next set of questions.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

## 2:10 Fort McMurray Wildfire Recovery Contracts

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of first responders, 85 per cent of structures in Fort McMurray were saved. Unfortunately, that was not the case for all of the town. But Albertans are resilient, and similar to Slave Lake in 2011 and Calgary in 2013, we will rebuild. Much of the work that needs to be done revolves around cleanup, rebuilding, and long-term recovery. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Have provincial contracts been awarded yet for the cleanup, rebuild, and recovery efforts in Fort McMurray?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Our government is absolutely committed to ensuring that the residents of Fort McMurray have every resource they need for recovery. The work on cleanup and rebuilding has not started yet, and no provincial contracts have been awarded for disaster recovery efforts. We are committed to using local contractors, and as we shift our priorities towards Fort McMurray's long-term recovery, we are amassing a database of local contractors with whom to partner.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you to the Minister.

Madam Speaker, given that as of late I have heard that there has been an increase in heavy equipment being shipped towards Fort McMurray through highway 881, could the minister elaborate on what kinds of equipment are travelling up highway 881 and what the purpose is?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Our priority right now is ensuring safety and essential service restoration such as electricity and gas by ATCO. The heavy equipment going up highways 63 and 881 is related to these essential services and operations for the oil sands. Oil sands operations play a vital part in our provincial and federal economies, and we are focused on ensuring that our energy industry has the tools it needs to return to full capacity. Much of the heavy equipment going up the highway is related to those efforts along with utility restoration by ATCO to prepare for the re-entry of Fort McMurray residents.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that it would be beneficial to work with local contractors who are familiar with the region, when choosing contractors for the cleanup, rebuild, and recovery, how will you ensure that local contractors will be prioritized when issuing provincial contracts?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to reassure all local contractors in the region that they have not missed out on anything. There will be local contractors working on rebuilding Fort McMurray, but as of today no provincial contracts have been awarded for recovery. To ensure that local businesses have the

opportunity for work in helping with rebuilding the city, an inventory of available local services has been compiled. Those who are interested can still get on that list by calling 310.4455. Since the beginning of this crisis local businesses have been stepping up to offer their help. All of those offers have been compiled for the regional operations centre, and the Provincial Operations Centre has been contacting every vendor who offered support.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Home-schooling

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Many parents in home-school programs are telling me that they're shocked to hear that their home-school has to claw back funds that traditionally have been paid. What were once routine program reimbursements are no longer being approved. To quote one stakeholder: auditors seem to be making de facto policy that seems to be arbitrary and very inconsistent. End quote. Parents want to know: who in the department is responsible for funding changes, and is the minister aware of the inconsistent audits that reimburse some parents for specific expenses while denying others reimbursement for the same expenses?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you Madam Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Certainly, it's important to understand from the beginning that in regard to home-schooling, charter schools, private schools, and our public and separate schools we restored funding for all of those areas. We moved it for enrolment as well. That being said, as well, it's very important for us to keep track of public monies as it moves to each of those areas. I know that there have been some difficulties in regard to home-schooling and some of the receipts that they have to present. Certainly, I'm happy to take a look to resolve that issue.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member. First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that a stakeholder has written, "We are deeply, deeply concerned over the NDP government's disregard for choice in education" and since this Albertan says, "Home education is a viable option, and clawing back on the significantly lower amount of funding that is provided per student compared to public school children is affecting that option" and given that this is only one e-mail among many voicing the urgent concerns about the impact of these clawbacks, what will the minister do to fix this inequity?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I just finished saying, we have maintained the funding, in fact, growth for enrolment in all of the different areas of funding for the province. So if someone is choosing to suggest that that's not the case, which is simply not true, if the member opposite is fanning those flames, then he'd better go back and do his job properly and make sure that he doesn't spread disinformation to the public in Alberta.

**Mr. Smith:** Madam Speaker, given that the current government has already given the opposition cause to speak in this House several times in defence of parental choice in education and since these inconsistent audit processes have left many home education parents and administrators worried that this government's hidden agenda is to shut down home education programs administered by independent

schools, will the minister provide certainty that these threats to parental choice are not something that he, his government, nor his ministry personnel condone?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, once again, Madam Speaker, I'm not going to somehow justify those very, very poor-quality statements by even suggesting that there's anything to it. You know, fearmongering is not the way to run a school, and that's what this gentleman is doing here, and quite frankly it's inappropriate. School choice is there, parental choice is there, and anything else is just subterfuge by the Wildrose.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

### Tourism Strategy

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Last week in budgetary estimates for Culture and Tourism I pressed the minister for the new plan for Alberta's tourism levy. The levy was introduced to provide sustainable funding for Alberta's \$8 billion tourism industry, and when invested in tourism, every levy dollar returns \$20 to our provincial treasury. Now, the minister told us that the \$30 million generated from the levy would be redirected into general revenue. To the minister. Had that \$30 million been invested in tourism, it would have generated as much as \$600 million in tax revenue. Why is he shortchanging Albertans?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The minister of culture.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. As I stated during estimates last week, our government is still committed to tourism by investing \$49.5 million to promote this province through marketing initiatives. We're also investing \$11.5 million with the tourism division in support of the tourism industry. We are going to continue doing that as well as protecting the services that Albertans care about such as health care and education.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. That \$49 million is a \$5 million cut to Travel Alberta.

Given that last fiscal year this government took 23 per cent of the tourism levy and siphoned it into general revenue and given that this year's budget increased that number from 23 per cent to 33 per cent siphoned into general revenue, to the minister: this is an alarming trend. Is there a limit to this, or is it like the Finance minister's debt ceiling, that has no limit?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. I want to be clear that it was, in fact, the previous Conservative government that started the practice of putting the tourism levy into general revenues. Let's just make that clear to begin with. This government is committed to tourism as a tool to diversify our economy, and my ministry will continue working with everyone in the industry to complete our vision of growing this industry to a \$10 billion industry by the year 2020.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Dr. Starke:** Madam Speaker, with everybody but the 17 people on the Alberta Strategic Tourism Council.

Given that that council was dissolved by this government because the minister believes that the new Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy would better integrate tourism into the government's overall strategy and given that the minister did not meet with the council and indicated that their work would be counterproductive and given that the Premier's advisory committee does not have a single tourism expert on it, to the minister: you just fired over 500 collective years of tourism industry experience . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Do you have a question, hon. member?

**Dr. Starke:** Where is that input going to come from?

2:20

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Quite frankly, our government and our Premier through the creation of my ministry have signalled to all of our sectors that economic development and recovery is a priority for our government. I can assure members of this House that I work very closely with the ministers of Culture and Tourism, Energy, and Agriculture and Forestry and that the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy is a sample of some of our sectors. It is not inclusive of all, and that's because there are many round-tables that exist throughout the various ministries where we are constantly in consultation with our stakeholders, looking for opportunities to build on our strengths.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### Minimum Wage

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last week the NDP opposition in Nova Scotia introduced a motion to raise Nova Scotia's minimum wage to \$15 per hour. No surprise there. However, unlike the NDP government here, they want to specifically exempt small businesses and family businesses, recognizing that they can't afford increased labour costs. Is it the position of this government that their NDP allies in Nova Scotia are wrong to do this exemption, or is our current government proceeding with wage increases that they recognize will hurt small businesses?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister of jobs, skills, and labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to hear that our cohorts in Nova Scotia are looking at raising it to a \$15 per hour minimum wage because, of course, we know that raising that minimum wage is going to support real families, families that are currently having to go to the food bank to support themselves. We are looking forward to consulting with Albertans and with local businesses to hear more about how our phase-in of the \$15 minimum wage can support Alberta families.

**Mr. Hunter:** I'm sorry. I didn't actually hear the answer about how it was going to help small businesses.

Madam Speaker, given that personal and business insolvencies in Alberta have increased by a devastating 47 per cent over last year and given that an internal assessment had warned that a higher minimum wage could result in significant job losses and given that the current government seems unwilling to accept the advice of their own officials, can the government table definitive evidence showing that their wage increase won't have a negative impact on the most vulnerable Albertans?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We've been keeping well abreast of the research regarding minimum wage and the impact of it. We are also submitting our updated minimum wage profiles, reviewing Stats Canada information, and consulting with Albertans about this crucial issue. We know that raising the minimum wage will increase the spending power of Albertans and will help to stimulate the economy by providing more money for things like clothes, food, school supplies, and these types of things. It's unfortunate that the opposition does not see the value in paying people a decent wage.

**Mr. Hunter:** Madam Speaker, given that under the current government's watch the percentage and number of Albertans earning the minimum wage has actually increased and given that figures released last week show that in Calgary's job market wages offered for available jobs are declining below the national average and given that this government's alleged job-creation measures tend to get cancelled, is this government actually doing anything to support job creators now, or is it telling Albertans to just go apply for EI?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the first statement: as we increase the minimum wage, more people will be making it because, of course, we are raising that ceiling. This is what's happening with our minimum wage increase. Supporting small business is a top priority for this government. In fact, we have cut small-business taxes from 3 per cent down to 2 per cent, a 33 per cent cut. We will be consulting, we are looking at the numbers, and we are committed to making sure that this phase-in goes well here in Alberta.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

### Energy Policies (continued)

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Under the NDP the going rate for the social licence to get pipelines built is a \$3 billion carbon tax on everyone and everything. This social licence isn't working and is only going to hurt everyday Albertans. This weekend we saw friends of the NDP setting up shop on the B.C. coast to break free from the fossil fuels. Even with the typical Alberta family paying an extra thousand a year, nothing will ever be good enough for the NDP hacktivists. Will the NDP cancel this risky and damaging carbon tax?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, our climate leadership plan does exactly what the Canada West Foundation, for example, encourages western provinces to do, which is to create their own climate plans. If the opposition had their way, they would sit on their hands and have a solution imposed upon us. I commend Canada West Foundation's report to the opposition. It will make for better reading than some of the climate denial that, for example, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat retweets on Twitter.

**Mr. Panda:** The ignorance of those protestors is astounding. While they protested oil, they sat in kayaks made from petroleum products.

Given that the deadline for the NDP's final recommendation on Trans Mountain to the federal government is this Friday and given that the shovel-ready pipeline projects are a surefire way to support



our economy, will the NDP commit to voicing strong support for the Trans Mountain expansion and the great benefits it would bring to our province?

**Ms Phillips:** Madam Speaker, of course, when we released our climate leadership plan along with Suncor, Shell, Cenovus, and CNRL, who are, of course, shippers on Trans Mountain, we enjoyed their support and that of others because of the fact that the climate leadership plan reduces any doubt about Alberta's environmental record. This is, of course, not an approach that either of the conservative parties is interested in. They would rather hold us back. This province's climate leadership plan is moving us forward.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that the NDP ranks are full of experienced hacktivists, usually against the oil sands, and that now is the time for them to rally around the pipelines and given that the best thing the NDP could do would be to follow the Wildrose lead and support the Energy East, Trans Mountain, and Northern Gateway pipelines, will the NDP government direct their hacktivists to help, not hurt, our economy and have them join Albertans in supporting these crucial pipeline projects?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Madam Speaker, I'm always very pleased when we take the trip down memory lane with members of the Official Opposition given, of course, that we've got half a dozen folks across the way who ran on a climate denial platform. We don't even have to look too far in the rear-view mirror to find more climate denial. Our approach is opening up markets and refurbishing our reputation. I will remind the members opposite that if it's a trip down memory lane that they would like, it leads to a lake of fire.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### Opoid Use in Indigenous Communities

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last week AHS released the first-quarter number of fentanyl-related deaths of 2016. It's extremely distressing that we have to track this figure in the first place, let alone the alarming fact that fentanyl killed 69 Albertans in the first three months of this year, which puts us on track for the same number of fatalities as in 2015. Sadly, there's been no change in the prevalence of deaths. To the Health minister: how many of the 274 Albertans who died after ingesting fentanyl in 2015 were indigenous Albertans?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. Absolutely, we are saddened by any of the losses of life through fentanyl overdoses, which is why our government has been working very diligently with our partners both in law enforcement as well as with the federal and other provincial governments as well as indigenous communities to ensure that we're able to expand access to the potentially life-saving antidote, naloxone. We are very pleased that we were able to announce last week that as of this past Friday Albertans are able to access naloxone in a pharmacy without a prescription and that loved ones are able to pick up that prescription for families that they're concerned about.

**Mr. Rodney:** With great respect, Madam Speaker, I believe Albertans deserve an answer to the previous question. Perhaps we'll get it in the next one. No new information, unfortunately.

Given that the number of fentanyl-related fatalities is not decreasing despite the government's self-applauded efforts to alert

Albertans about this deadly opoid and given that the Health ministry just mentioned that they've recently made naloxone available without a prescription in an effort to make it more widely available across the province – but there are a limited number of pharmacies serving Alberta's indigenous people living on-reserve, and this group is particularly at risk – to the Health minister: how are you ensuring all of Alberta's indigenous peoples have access to naloxone?

2:30

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. Currently the system is that pharmacies sign up to be able to distribute the naloxone kit. We have tripled the supply of our province's naloxone kits, from 3,000 to 9,000, and we will make more available as demand increases. We also have a number of the kits available on-reserve for any of the reserves that do not have access to pharmacies, and we are working very closely with our partners in Indigenous Relations to ensure that we are able to get those naloxone kits into the hands of the people who need them.

**Mr. Rodney:** The question was: how can she assure Albertans that all indigenous peoples have access?

We'll try this question, please. Given that on March 9 the minister indicated that an opoid addictions plan for indigenous peoples was an immediate priority and given that she asked me to check with her in two months about the establishment of the indigenous advisory committee to help her ministry address the opoid addiction problem and that now it's over two months later, to the Health minister: what's the status not only of the advisory committee but also the recommendation of the Mental Health Review Committee to develop an opoid addictions plan?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. We've been working very closely with our partners in Indigenous Relations, and we've also reached out to chiefs across the province to ensure that we're able to get naloxone kits available as well through the health centres on-reserve. Through our mental health and addictions implementation team stemming from the Valuing Mental Health report, we are continuing to work very closely with the communities to ensure that the services that are required are available.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow. Once again, I'll remind you about the preambles, please.

#### Wildfire-affected Postsecondary Institutions and Students

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Over the last two weeks Fort McMurray residents have shown tremendous strength and resolve. Now they wait to return to their community. Many people are looking at the costs ahead. This includes people who have had their source of income disrupted paying off student loans. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what is being done to ease the burden on these residents paying their student loans?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I'm pleased to say that we announced last week that all student loan payments will be automatically deferred for six months interest free for affected students, which mirrors a similar commitment that the federal government has made, and I ask that all students who have been affected by the

wildfires please reach out to Student Aid Alberta to make sure that they can get their student loan payments deferred. When people have been displaced from their homes and their jobs, the last thing that they should have to do is worry about costs like student loans, and I'm proud that our government is dedicating the necessary resources to meeting the needs of those affected by the wildfires.

**The Deputy Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In these difficult times we have seen Alberta step up and demonstrate the strength and resolve that gets us through events like this wildfire together. Will the Minister of Advanced Education tell us how postsecondary institutions are playing a part in this?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm proud of the actions that the postsecondary institutions have taken to step up and pull together to support the Keyano College students who have been affected by this. Roughly 2,000 evacuees have been accommodated on postsecondary campuses all across the province, and we've also had all of our institutions reach out to say that they have spaces available if they're needed. They're doing their part, and I'm very proud of the support that these institutions have provided to people in need.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that we now know that both Keyano College campuses in Fort McMurray remain intact, can the minister tell this Assembly what his department is doing to help Keyano students impacted by this fire? [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I've heard some cries from the opposition that we're shutting universities down. They must be confusing our platform with their platform.

I've had the chance to talk to staff, students, and faculty at Keyano College, and we're working with technical training institutes across the province to support students registered at Keyano to continue their studies. Again, I'll urge any affected apprentices to reach out to Advanced Education as soon as they're able so that we can ensure that they get the training that they need. I want students, staff, the Fort McMurray community, and all Albertans . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

### Wildfire Prevention and Control

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Another Alberta community has declared a local state of emergency due to wildfire yesterday. This time it's in the riding I serve, Grande Prairie-Smoky, where some residents of the MD of Greenview are currently under a mandatory evacuation order, and the fire season has just barely begun. This government is trying hard to calm Albertans' fears, saying that it will fund wildfire management as necessary despite having budgeted only \$86 million, probably one-third of the average. To the Premier: will you abandon the accounting sleight of hand and actually budget according to the realistic historical figures for managing wildfires?

**Ms Hoffman:** I have to say that if the opposition is saying that the budget forecast caused these devastating fires, I think that's a contemptible accusation and not befitting of being an MLA, Madam Speaker. This year we budgeted more than \$280 million, which is slightly more than the average expenditures for the last five years, but rest assured, Albertans, that we are investing every dollar necessary to make sure that we move forward and address these fires. To accuse otherwise is simply disrespectful and dishonest.

**Mr. Loewen:** Well, I guess the minister maybe needs to look at their own paperwork.

Given that the FireSmart program has been helping communities in numerous northern energy projects mitigate the risk of wildfires for decades and that while these practices don't prevent forest fires, they certainly lessen their impact on communities and given that FireSmart has helped reduce forest fire impact throughout the world and that the Flat Top Complex report recommended adopting its practices, to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. Your government has chosen to reduce the Flat Top Complex's budget by \$4.25 million. Does this cut affect grants . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Do you have a question, hon. member?  
Go ahead, Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Certainly, we have 49 per cent more seasonal fires this year than is typical, 9 per cent more contract firefighters than we had five years ago, and the same number of air tankers we had last year available at the same time. Fearmongering when so many people are living through the worst disaster that we've experienced in many years is irresponsible and disrespects all Albertans who have stepped up to help each other during this very difficult time.

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Point of order noted.

You can proceed with your second supplemental, but I don't want to hear another preamble.

**Mr. Loewen:** Okay. I'll show you the notes on the preamble, and the minister can look at the notes there, too.

Given that the FireSmart best practices recommended by the Flat Top Complex report help to slow the progression of wildfires in communities and given that while implementing FireSmart principles is costly for communities, it pales in comparison to the cost of rebuilding, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: will your ministry look into sharing the cost of implementing these FireSmart practices with municipalities in order to make Alberta communities safer places to live and raise a family for years to come?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm not sure why he directed to me a question that clearly resides with Agriculture and Forestry. However, as a member of Slave Lake I certainly am very thankful for the work that FireSmart has done in my community, and we continue to support the rollout of the FireSmart program. It's distributed in the fall and winter. Obviously, it had nothing to do with this fire whatsoever. We'll continue to look at the pacing of the Flat Top recommendations, but we've accepted all of them, are rolling them out, and continue to support the FireSmart program.

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

### Electricity Power Purchase Agreements

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As Albertans look with dread at their electricity bills after January 2017, a modest but meaningful credit will disappear seemingly into thin air. As Alberta's Balancing Pool absorbs negative contracts due to cancelled PPAs, what has to date benefited Albertans will disappear and likely become an ongoing cost to electricity consumers. To the Minister of Energy: in being accountable to Albertans as promised, has your government calculated what the total annual cost will be to taxpayers and consumers as the Balancing Pool continues to absorb these contracts?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the question. First of all, we need to step back a little bit for context. We need to be clear. These PPAs are not being handed back because of the increase to SGER. These PPAs are already unprofitable, and the issue here is what the power companies believe the previous government agreed to. This is no small issue, so we are being very deliberate about how we proceed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** First supplemental.

2:40

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll answer the question. It will be roughly a billion dollars.

Given that government has continuously deflected blame for the cancellation of PPA contracts and given this government's refusal to acknowledge legally binding principles, which hints at litigation, and given that many of these same companies are, surprisingly, the largest investors in renewables in Alberta, again to the minister: did you not consider the implications of fighting with the very companies that you're asking to make risky investments in your climate leadership plan?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question again. Again, these companies believe they signed contracts that send profits in their direction and losses to the public. We're being very deliberate – and, again, this is no small issue – about how we proceed. The government has been very clear that we're going to take all necessary steps to protect ratepayers.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's interesting; I see that Enbridge just invested, because of PPAs, over in France.

Given that the accelerated phase-out of coal will give us an excess of thermal coal and given that the environment minister has repeatedly implicated coal as detrimental to the health of both the planet and its people and the Energy minister confirmed in estimates that thermal coal may still be exported to other jurisdictions before and after the phase-out, again to the minister of . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, do you have a question? Please get to the question.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Of course.

Again to the Minister of Energy: does coal magically conform to your standards and do emissions mysteriously disappear when it is burned on the other side of the world?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. I want to confirm that you're incorrect on the thermal coal. During my estimates I said that we would export metallurgical coal, not thermal coal.

### Members' Statements

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

#### Red Deer and Area Economic Opportunities

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and speak today about the tremendous economic opportunities presented by Red Deer and surrounding area. I am honoured to represent Red Deer-North. My pride in Red Deer is always inspired by investing time and thought into the issues that my 50,000-plus constituents engage with on a daily basis.

During our current economic challenges the development and diversification of our local economy are top of mind. I am delighted to speak at any opportunity of the great people and businesses I represent. For example, Red Deer-North is home to one of Olymel's largest and most modern food-processing locations. Employing over 1,300 people, the Red Deer-North location serves several large export markets in addition to supplying the market in western Canada.

Located moments outside my electoral district is NOVA Chemicals. The Joffre mother ship is the largest ethylene and polyethylene plant in North America and amongst the top five largest in the world. It employs over 700 individuals plus contractors. Having just completed the polyethylene expansion phase 1 project, NOVA's legacy community nature trail is both a celebration of this milestone and a demonstration of their commitment to the Red Deer community and the preservation of its wetlands.

With a steady 3 per cent population growth per year my central Alberta gem can be recognized as a viable and optimal location for investment. The recent government investment in Red Deer's infrastructure provides strong opportunities for local businesses to continue supporting Red Deerians, Albertans, Canadians, and global citizens now and in the future.

Madam Speaker, the third-largest city in Alberta is now home to over 100,000 people, and I am dedicated to advocating for and seeking out opportunities that support their momentum.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

#### Volunteer Support for Wildfire-affected Albertans

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. There are certain things in life that happen that are so meaningful that it's hard to put words to the experience, and I can honestly say that for me having my children, holding my grandmother in my arms as she passed away, and celebrating my 20th wedding anniversary are at the top of my list of moments that I will not only treasure but that keep me grounded every day, especially after having the great privilege of being elected to this Legislature.

My family and I are avid volunteers, and we are always humbled that people give of their time and their busy schedules to help with a cause or to fund raise for local programs. This past weekend in the beautiful and diverse constituency of Chestermere-Rocky View 1,200 people came together to fund raise for their northern neighbours in Fort McMurray and other surrounding areas affected by wildfires. We've all watched the footage and seen the pictures, lived every moment of this fire through the media and through the

eyes of our leader, the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin, and the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. They received a hero's welcome in our little city, and I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt, Fort Mac, that Chestermere-Rocky View has your back.

Here are some of the community members that came together to bring this fundraiser to life in five days: my husband, Malkeet Aheer, who led the charge, gathering 50 volunteers; Alex Halat of the Chestermere-Langdon Oilmen's Association, who contributes to our community through fundraisers like the longest hockey game, where he raises money for the Children's hospital; Jed Snatic, a local entrepreneur and community leader; Patrick Watson of the Knights of Columbus; the Chestermere recreation centre; and Synergy, led by Patricia Sproule, who has said so perfectly that there was an unprecedented response to the call for volunteers.

This is how Albertans get things done. We are resilient, thoughtful, and generous. People who donated on May 13 are having a hard time making ends meet and have lost their jobs, and they are hurting. Yet with a few calls in a few days the city of Chestermere and Langdon and the surrounding communities could not wait to help.

We are proud Albertans, and we are proud because we take care of our neighbours without prompting. I'm so proud to call this province my home and my fellow Albertans my family.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

#### **Progressive Conservative Opposition**

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been a full year now since last May 5. Our PC caucus has willingly embraced the job given us by the voters of Alberta. In this House PC caucus attacks policies and not people. PC caucus pushed back on Bill 6, which disrespects farmers and ranchers. We led the charge against the long-term damage that a \$60 billion debt will do not only today but to Alberta's children and grandchildren. We debunked the false premise of the \$15 minimum wage. Albertans now know the carbon tax is really a carbon attack on Alberta, taking away jobs and investment in the short term and causing almost everything Albertans buy to cost more for all time until the policy is corrected. Through our efforts Alberta also knows this carbon attack will do little for the environment.

On the positive side we have convinced government to miraculously convert from pipeline deniers to advocates as the best way to keep jobs here and pay for infrastructure and social programs. We have gotten the government to reduce small-business tax by a third and got the government to commit to maintain parental choice in education, though it took a big battle to make that happen. Not bad for a team new at opposition, with an interim leader and not a lot of money to spend.

Recently in Red Deer a thousand members at their own expense attended our annual general meeting. They left energized by our absolute commitment to serve under Albertans while other parties yearn to rule over this great province. We remain the only party with a solid fiscal policy and a caring social policy. We know there is a long way to go. We need infrastructure to drive quality of life as well as the economy. We know that looking after those who need it is the same as looking after ourselves as we may all need help one day as circumstances arise. We are the only party in this House that fully grasps these realities.

Through Engage and other efforts we need to get this message to all Albertans. Then and only then might Alberta voters consider making a positive choice three years from now by choosing

Progressive Conservatives, not for our sake but, if we do our jobs well, for Alberta's sake.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

#### **Filipino Wildfire Evacuees**

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to bring attention to the 5,000 evacuees from the Fort McMurray wildfires who come from the Filipino community. They are Canadian citizens, landed immigrants, and temporary foreign workers who call Fort McMurray home. Currently these men and women and children are housed temporarily at the Northlands expo centre and Lister hall at the University of Alberta while some are hosted by Filipino families.

On Saturday evening I was honoured to attend a fundraising event organized through the offices of the Council of Edmonton Filipino Associations to help raise funds to support Filipino evacuees. Community businesses and individuals organized very quickly to supply Filipino comfort foods, including pancit bread, to evacuees who have been longing for their traditional dishes. Numerous local singers, dancers, and musicians performed for the appreciative audience. Spiritual guidance was offered by Alberta area 1 pastor Reverend Leopoldo Narido of the Jesus Is Lord Church while Edmonton Honorary Consul General Esmeralda P. Agbulos, who is known as the Mother General to all Alberta Filipinos, provided her eternal message of strength and perseverance in the face of adversity to the Filipino community.

Madam Speaker, the Filipino community, some 120,000 strong, is a rapidly growing segment of our population and represents the best that Albertans are known to stand for: strength in family and dedication to community, that is demonstrated best in times of need.

I would also like to highlight an upcoming Filipino cultural celebration, the Edmonton Filipino Fiesta and parade, taking place in Churchill Square June 11 and 12. I would encourage everyone to attend this exciting event celebrating the food and artistic traditions of the Philippines.

Madam Speaker, I was honoured to participate with the Filipino community in support of the displaced kababayan, or countrymen, who along with over 80,000 evacuees from Fort McMurray will need our ongoing help and compassion for many months to come.

I know that all Albertans are up to the task. We will be there for the people of Fort McMurray. We will rebuild this vital energy city.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadow-lark.

#### **2:50 Edmontonian Support for Wildfire Evacuees**

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to recognize the many people across this province who have opened their arms, their homes, and their pocketbooks in support of wildfire evacuees.

We've seen the footage of the harrowing journey that so many of our fellow Albertans made down highway 63, and we've seen the stress and confusion our neighbours have experienced trying to reconnect with friends, family, and animals that have been displaced. But I've also seen something else, Madam Speaker, something that has made me even more proud of this beautiful province. I've seen the people of Alberta rally together to do everything they can from the very beginning. As thousands of Albertans rushed from their homes with little more than the clothes on their back, it was ordinary people who packed up their vehicles with thousands of litres of gas, food, and water and headed toward the fire to help evacuees stuck on the highway. It was ordinary

people who opened their homes and businesses to do everything in their power to show that evacuees were not in this alone, and it is ordinary people who continue to support those efforts weeks after these devastating events took place.

Madam Speaker, we continue to hear stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things, and though we are still in the early stages of dealing with the aftermath, I am confident that our neighbours to the north and this province as a whole will grow stronger because of the efforts of regular Albertans. Volunteers in my constituency have been tirelessly gathering and disbursing items for evacuees out of the west Edmonton Days Inn & Suites, who have been kind enough to offer space. Just yesterday a young girl from the town of Millet, after raising nearly \$1,000 from her lemonade stand, bought hundreds of toys and brought them to Edmonton for young evacuees. Newcap Radio in West Edmonton Mall hosted a toy drive and gathered thousands of items to give out to evacuee children as well.

Madam Speaker, I could go on about the incredible initiatives and stories that pour in from around the province, but I would just like to say that despite what you may have heard, the Alberta advantage is still strong and well in this province. To every person who has helped with relief efforts, from the first responders to the evacuee centres and everyone in between: thank you so much for what you've done for this province.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

#### Carbon Levy and Health Care Costs

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Over the past several months it has become abundantly clear that the NDP simply does not understand the full impacts of their punishing and regressive carbon tax. One might think that a government would consider all potential consequences before charging ahead with a policy, but we all know that unawareness of the subject matter has never stopped the NDP in the past.

In the off chance that they're listening, I'd like to offer yet another thing they have failed to properly take into account, the impact of a carbon tax on health and seniors' organizations. Consider how much electricity a hospital requires to power complex medical equipment. Consider how much fuel is required by an ambulance during the course of a shift or an aircraft responding to an emergency in a very remote location. Consider the natural gas usage of a seniors' lodge or supportive living facility as they keep residents comfortable over the winter months.

In response to this, all the government can offer are vague assurances of a pie-in-the-sky efficiency program while telling Albertans that they're just going to have to make do with less and start changing their behaviour. Air ambulance organizations like STARS, HALO, and Phoenix are organizations funded largely by donations and municipal grants. How are they going to change their behaviour? Are they going to be forced to cover less area, or has the NDP brain trust sketched out plans for solar-powered, electric medevac helicopters? How will seniors' facilities absorb the tens of thousands of dollars in increased costs on everything from heat to food to transportation? The proposed rebate won't even begin to cover the added expense for residents or for facility operators, but perhaps they can just follow the NDP's advice and turn the thermostat down a few degrees in January.

For the sake of our health and seniors' services the NDP must back down now from this most regressive and poorly targeted tax.

#### Introduction of Bills

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

#### Bill 16

#### Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce Bill 16, an act to amend the Traffic Safety Act. We have talked to stakeholders and traffic safety partners, and the changes that we're proposing reflect current and future traffic safety issues. There are four main legislative amendments that we are making in the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016.

Currently the legislation is vague about drivers producing out-of-date proof of insurance, known as pink cards, that some officers have ticketed them for even though they may have a current pink card as well. The first amendment would prevent drivers from receiving a ticket if they can produce a valid pink card.

First-time offenders whose blood-alcohol concentration is less than .16, or double the legal limit, currently can apply for an exemption to the ignition interlock program. An amendment will strengthen impaired driving legislation by removing that application for first-time offenders.

The six general housekeeping amendments aim to clarify intent, to correct errors in drafting instruction, to remove obsolete provisions, and to achieve legislative consistency.

The last amendment, Madam Speaker, will allow the government to regulate transportation network companies such as Uber as outlined by the government on February 29, 2016.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to discussing Bill 16 with all members of the House. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a first time]

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm rising to table the requisite number of copies of written responses to questions about the Ministry of Energy estimates from committee last week. There were seven questions where a written response was requested, and the Ministry of Energy has provided those responses. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister of seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to table the responses to estimates questions that due to time I was unable to answer. Copies are being sent to members who asked the questions and to the leader of each party. I have five copies of these documents for tabling.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of the Canada West climate change report to support what the minister was speaking about in question period. Our climate leadership plan does exactly what the Can West encourages western provinces to do, which is to create their own

climate plans. If the opposition had their way, they would sit on their hands and have a solution imposed on us. The report states . . .

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**Mr. Dang:** . . . that Saskatchewan should consider pricing carbon as British Columbia and Alberta have.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Proceed with the tabling, hon. member, please. Thank you.

Point of order acknowledged.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm rising on a point of order under 23(h), allegations against another member. It's been a long-standing tradition of this House that during tablings we stick to the business at hand, which is a tabling, not making wild allegations . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, if I could just interrupt you. Given that we're still in part of the Routine, we will defer the discussion on this point of order until afterwards. Thank you.

Do we have any further tablings?

All right. I guess we have no more tablings. We'll now consider points of order.

#### **Point of Order Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on the point of order from earlier in question period. I want to make two very distinct references to the standing orders based upon the egregious comments that were made by the Minister of Health, first and foremost, under 23(h), "makes allegations against another Member."

3:00

For the benefit of the House the allegation that was made by the Health minister was that the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky was fearmongering. I'd just like to take about 35 seconds to provide to the House exactly what the member said. The Minister of Health said that the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky had implied, or fearmongered, that the budget cut caused the fire or was part of the reason for the fire. So for clarity's sake:

Another Albertan community has declared a local state of emergency due to wildfire yesterday. This time it's in the riding I serve, Grande Prairie-Smoky, where some residents of the MD of Greenview are currently under mandatory evacuation order, and the fire season has barely begun. This government is trying hard to calm Albertans' fears, saying that it will fund wildfire management as necessary despite having budgeted only \$86 million . . . To the Premier: will you abandon the accounting sleight of hand and actually budget according to the realistic historical figures for wildfire management?

Madam Speaker, at no point in time did the hon. member make any reference to the budget causing fires; in fact, didn't even go close to that. The challenge is that every single time this government has to answer a hard question, whether it be on budgets and wildfire budgets or be it on another topic that they don't like to speak about, the only answer that ever comes is: you are fearmongering. This is an accusation that is totally unacceptable, particularly given recent events.

So let me continue with my point of order to (j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." Madam Speaker, unparliamentary language is more about the context in which it is used and less about the word that is used.

I would like to make a case that the word "fearmongering" be considered to be unparliamentary in this Assembly, and let me tell

you why. The last time this government used the word "fearmongering," the Leader of the Opposition's house was burning down, and it is disgusting. It is more than a little disappointing, Madam Speaker, to hear the hon. member ask a question about wildfire management and be accused of fearmongering at a time when we saw some of the most horrific events of two weeks ago. No one at that time or this time made any statement like: you cut the budget, and now the province is burning down. No one made any statements like that. They were legitimate questions.

So, Madam Speaker, I ask certainly in this context, and I believe that the speaker should consider the use of language because I can assure you it is likely to create disorder if the government continues to use it.

I would ask that the member do the right thing and withdraw the comments so that we can all move on.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister to respond.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and respond to this point of order. I think the hon. member and I agree on one thing, if not much else, and that is that words need to be considered in the context in which they are used. In this particular instance, the words were used in the context of questions surrounding wildfire. Now, the member has just read out for the benefit of the House what exactly was said, and it is our view that this is not, in fact, a point of order. It's simply a dispute as to the facts.

The member has asked that the term "fearmongering" not be allowed in the House, and I think that – you know, he's referenced several other uses, which, of course, we don't have in front of us at this moment. We have only this one particular instance, but the words that he read out certainly imply that there should be fear. He asked that people have their fears calmed – so we're trying hard to calm the fears of the individuals – and then implied that those fears arose because of the way wildfire budgeting is done. It has always been the case, Madam Speaker, that a base budget exists to fund the operations throughout the year and that emergency funds are advanced as needed. That has been the case for years, and the opposition well knows it. They nonetheless choose to draw attention to this fact and imply that in some way the response to the disaster was inadequate because we budgeted in the normal course as is done in every other year. I would certainly call that fearmongering.

If they choose to become disorderly when they make statements which make implications to the general public which are prone to incite unnecessary fear or do not represent the state of facts as they actually exist, it is, I think, a responsibility of the government to set the record straight and to ensure that members of the public are aware that those statements are inaccurate. There were multiple statements made today in question period that are inaccurate. That elevated the temperature in the House, certainly, to the point at which we found ourselves, but it's not the case that using the term "fearmongering" to describe those actions would be inaccurate. This is a dispute as to the facts.

You know, the hon. member stood up and referenced another event which apparently used the term "fearmongering." I can't refer to that event because I don't have the Blues in front of me. I have no way to verify whether those facts are in fact accurate. Calling it accounting sleight of hand to budget in the normal course is not appropriate. To imply that somehow the response was inadequate because we budgeted in the normal course is not appropriate. This is a dispute about whether or not that had an impact, and it is our view that it didn't.

You know, Madam Speaker, it's challenging that they would raise this particular point and imply that the term "fearmongering" should never be used again in this House. First, because terms should be read in their context. Secondly, I think to say that spewing out a series of false and faulty premises and then, when someone comes up and calls them on it, the calling them on it is the thing that's likely to create disorder is somewhat absurd.

It's not appropriate in this place, where we know that the public is watching, where we know that people are stressed out and have significant concerns, to make statements that one knows rely on faulty premises. It's not appropriate, and I think as the government we have a responsibility to disseminate the appropriate information to the public and to call what the opposition is doing what it is, which is fearmongering.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, on the point of order.

**Dr. Starke:** I didn't hear any of that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** You don't wish to speak?

**Dr. Starke:** I would like to speak, if possible.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes. Go ahead on the point of order.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I apologize. I didn't hear your remarks when you were standing.

Madam Speaker, I've listened to the discussion on this point of order, and I'd like to just offer a few comments. I guess I'd like to start by saying that I find it absolutely incredible that the hon. minister is defending her colleague's remarks. Unbelievable.

3:10

Madam Speaker, we know that we are dealing right now with a situation where tensions are particularly high. You yourself in your home community had a portion of your community evacuated. We now have another evacuation in the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky's constituency. The inference that somehow the members of the Official Opposition are suggesting that the change in the methodology or the change in the amount for budgeting is somehow responsible for the cause of the fire, that inference, that came from the government side, is so far off base and is, in fact, what caused the outburst in the benches here.

You know, the use of the term "fearmongering," quite frankly, goes on regularly, and I can tell you that it is something that has gone on a long time. That, in fact, is not what triggered that exchange. What triggered the exchange was the budgetary change – let's just call it that – that members of the Official Opposition were suggesting that that was the cause. That's not at all what was being suggested. But that certainly does cause disruption within the Chamber, and this minister knows it and members of the government know it, and they know that they should stop short of choosing those comments to make.

So the simple way to extricate ourselves from this situation would be for the minister to withdraw the remarks and to apologize so that we can move on to substantive debate on other matters.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any others wishing to speak to the point of order?

I believe we have a case here where once again there is a difference on how we interpret words. You're quite right that context is everything. I'm hearing that one side of the House interpreted the situation differently than the other side of the House.

I think you have made a very valid point, that right now people are very sensitive, and it's very easy to incite fear, rightly or wrongly, in people just because of the situation. So I think we want to caution all members to be careful in the words that we use, that we aren't making a bad situation more difficult for the people we serve in any of the words that we speak here in this House.

That said, I really hesitate to rule the word "fearmongering" as unparliamentary because, as the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has noted, it has been used quite regularly on occasions, and there may be times where it's quite appropriate to use it. So I don't think we can rule it a blanket out of order. But I would caution members on both sides to think about the words that you use and be respectful of the people we serve in everything that we say.

I will rule that there is no point of order.

Second point of order.

## Point of Order

### Statements during Tablings

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just wrapping my head around the ruling.

Earlier, during daily Routine, an hon. member rose during tablings and made accusations against the opposition. Traditionally speaking, in this Chamber Standing Order 37 lays out the procedures for tabling documents. It doesn't speak to making accusations about what the opposition would or wouldn't do. More so, the tradition of the Assembly has been to table the document, speak to what the document is but not the politics around the document.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Did you wish to respond?

**Mr. Dang:** I'd like to withdraw my comments.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West has withdrawn his comments, and I trust that that's satisfactory.

But I would like to just comment, related to the first point of order as well, that I don't have the benefit of the Blues, so I don't know if what you read from was the main question or supplementary. I think as a general rule that's why preambles are not appropriate, and that's, again, the reason why we don't add them when we're doing tablings. We just have to be cautious of the words because they do incite tempers and they do create more disorder in the House.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 8 at this time to allow the Assembly to proceed immediately to consideration of Bill 205 in Committee of the Whole.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Orders of the Day

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Good afternoon. I would like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 205**  
**Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical**  
**Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill? The Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Once again it is truly an honour for me to rise and open our deliberations on Bill 205, the Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016, at this stage of the legislative process. You know, I've been extremely humbled and encouraged by the response from all sides of this House, and I believe that we now collectively have the opportunity to make this bill even stronger.

First and foremost, I want to remind the House of the importance of this legislation. I know that nobody needs reminding at this point, but at least we've learned that the total deaths from fentanyl in 2015 were 274. This year we have already lost 69 people because of this dangerous and deadly opioid. We do not know how many people have been killed as a result of the W-18 compound. It is very difficult to trace because of its incredible potency.

I want to take a minute to address a couple of points that were made in second reading. Yes, I agree that this should be in the Criminal Code of Canada, and, yes, I believe that the federal government should show leadership in this fight. Absolutely. However, we don't have time to wait. What we can do is pass this bill now here in Alberta. Frankly, if we save even one life, then it will all have been worth it.

In my consultation with the constitutional lawyer I was directed to section 92(16) of the Constitution Act of 1982. It provides provincial legislators the ability to regulate "Matters of a merely local or private Nature." I'm not suggesting that we are alone in our country with the opioid abuse that we have here, but we certainly have the ability to deal with it in the most aggressive way possible in order to save the lives of vulnerable people. This bill won't stop people from driving to other jurisdictions and purchasing these devices. If they are motivated, which they are, by money, these types of criminals will always find a way. But this bill will mean that if any device is brought back to our province, it is automatically illegal without a licence.

Sections 92(9) and (13) of the Constitution Act, 1982, also create the provincial power of regulation through licences. Hon. members, legislating to suppress conditions that are likely to favour the commission of crime is well within the provincial legislative competence. There will even be a cross-benefit outcome for society.

Madam Chair, at this point I would like to move a series of amendments. I have the requisite number of copies, and I will read them into the record once you and the table, of course, have a copy.

3:20

**The Deputy Chair:** We'll just pause for a minute while they're dispersed. This amendment will be A1.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 205, the Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016, be amended as follows.

A. Section 2 is amended (a) in the proposed section 18.8 by striking out "or pharmaceutical mixer" and substituting ", pharmaceutical mixer or tablet punch or die"; (b) by striking out the proposed section 18.81 and substituting the following:

Pharmaceutical equipment

18.81(1) No person shall own, operate or possess designated equipment unless that person holds a licence or is a proprietor or is exempt under subsection (2).

(2) The following are exempt from subsection (1):

- (a) an institution pharmacy;
- (b) a person authorized to compound or manufacture drugs under an Act or regulation of Alberta or Canada;
- (c) any other person designated in the regulations as being exempt.

(c) in the proposed section 18.82, (i) in clause (a) by striking out "under" and substituting "for the purposes of"; (ii) by adding the following after clause (a):

- (a.1) defining terms for the purposes of section 18.8;
- (a.2) respecting the granting, cancellation and suspension of permits for any activity under this Part;
- (a.3) respecting the charging of fees for any permit issued under this Part;

(iii) in clause (b) by striking out "that are exempt from section 18.81" and substituting "as being exempt from section 18.81(1)"; and (iv) in clause (c) by striking out "and return" and substituting ", return, sale and destruction."

B. Section 3 is amended by striking out "18.81" and substituting "18.81(1)."

C. Section 4 is amended by striking out "18.81" and substituting "18.81(1)."

D. Section 5 is amended in the proposed section 39.1 (a) by renumbering it as section 39.1(1); (b) in subsection (1) by striking out "18.81" and substituting "18.81(1)"; (c) by adding the following after subsection (1):

- (2) A prosecution under this section may be commenced within 2 years after the commission of the alleged offence, but not afterwards.

Madam Chair, as you can see, more lawyers have gotten involved. Hon. members, the majority of these amendments are technical in nature and are here as a result of the goodwill that has been shown by both sides of this House, and I want to personally thank the government members and opposition members for their collaboration and their input. The amendments have been worked on in consultation with the department and the Health minister's office, so I'm sure that the minister will be able to supplement my comments.

These amendments refer to some language that needs to be consistent with the Pharmacy and Drug Act such as incorporating the term "proprietor" into section 18.81. This removes a bureaucratic hurdle for proprietors, individuals who own, manage, or direct the operation of a facility in which a licensed pharmacy is located. While the proprietor may have a degree of control over the management and conduct of the licensed pharmacy, designated equipment will be licensed because of the pharmacy operation, and ownership of designated equipment would not be under the name of the proprietor. Quite simply, for people like me to understand it, this measure just avoids double permitting.

Other changes specifically allude to a permitting process in the proposed section 18.82 and related issues regarding granting, cancellation, and suspension of permits; the fees for permits; and the sale and destruction of designated equipment. If a piece of high-tech equipment can be used legally by a research laboratory, for example, the government will have the ability to cede it to them. If it is a cheaper, cruder piece of equipment, then of course the government has the option to destroy that piece of equipment.

This amendment also includes a clause to allow for the prosecution to be commenced within two years. This is included in order to mirror section 39 of the act. Essentially, members, this is a reasonable statute of limitations.

Finally, the very first amendment includes another piece of designated equipment. Hon. members, it was clear in second reading and discussions with folks on both sides of the House that the Assembly would like to see more teeth in this bill. Fentanyl



patches were raised as per the, quote, one-for-one, unquote, system that was introduced in an Ontario private member's bill. We also talked about other ways in which illicit fentanyl can be ingested. Unfortunately, these do not fall within the scope of this bill, but – trust me – I considered all of these eventualities when I developed this bill.

However, we are dealing with designated equipment relevant to pill and tablet presses, so I wanted to include tablet punches and dies. The device leaves an imprinted stamp on a pill or tablet. Now, there are very few companies in Alberta that require this type of equipment; therefore, the impact on businesses will be very minimal. Now, many of you have seen pictures of a green pill with the letters “CDN” on one side and “80” on the other side. Hon. members, this is simply the drug dealer trying to fool the victim into believing that they have purchased OxyContin, but instead the victim has purchased fentanyl. You may ask: why? It's because people know that fentanyl can kill them, so victims are trying to stay away from fentanyl.

Certainly, kudos to people on the government side and our side as well. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise on this important piece of legislation and just object to one particular statement that the member made, that many of you have seen these pills. I have never seen any drug, so if it's not a Tylenol, I likely haven't seen it.

**Mr. Connolly:** T-3s?

**Mr. Cooper:** Or those, even.

Anyways, the long and the short of it, Madam Chair, is that this is a very, very important piece of legislation, and the Member for Calgary-West has done some very good work on this legislation, so on behalf of the folks of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills I'd just like to say thank you to him for that. As I mentioned in my comments last week, anything that we can do to try and ensure that fentanyl or other opiates get into fewer hands, things that can curb some usage, proactive steps that we can take to ensure that law enforcement officials have the tools that they need – as mentioned prior, this is just one step in what needs to be a much larger plan.

3:30

So I rise to support the amendment. You know, as he mentioned, the lawyers have been involved, so there are some significant changes that make the legislation much more technical. But, more importantly than those things, I appreciate it when the House can work well together. The hon. member reached out, I know, to this side of the House and gave us a bit of a briefing on the plan forward today.

I know that my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake does have some additional amendments that will come in the form of subamendments to this piece of legislation. You know, while it's critically important that we expedite the process on this, I think it's very important that we do take the time to make sure that we get it right. It's not just about rushing through legislation. We've seen what happens when we do that. It's also about ensuring that we get it right on the first pass because sometimes it takes many, many years for legislation to come back. We want to do what we can to get it done, and it's my hope that we can get it done in the next two weeks as we head towards the close of session. So I'd like to thank the hon. member.

With that in mind and the fact that there are a number of other amendments, I'll keep my comments brief as we move through the process today and try to ensure that we do wind up with a piece of legislation that meets the needs of stakeholders, that meets the needs of young people as we try to do what we can to slow down this horrible, horrible crisis.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

The hon Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I will be brief. I'm just rising to support this amendment. You know, what is really encouraging is that all sides have worked together, took what was a very good idea from a member of the opposition side. I give the government a lot of credit for giving this idea due consideration, taking what is a good idea and recognizing that good ideas can in fact come from all sides of the House.

As the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills has indicated, there will be further subamendments. Of course, we do want to make sure that we take our time to get it right. It is an important bill because it does at least put some speed bumps in place that would help address not just this crisis – fentanyl is really just the latest in a series of crises – but, hopefully, it will have a long-term and lasting impact. It's not going to solve it all by itself but will have, I hope, a positive impact.

Thanks again. Let's hope we can use this as a good example of how to get things done in this House in the future. I look forward to hearing further debate.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will also be brief. Our government is indeed committed to reducing the harms caused by illicit fentanyl. We've been taking a multipronged approach to this issue. Bill 205 is a great bill that gives us another tool in our tool box.

I want to thank the Member for Calgary-West for working with my office and my department to ensure that Bill 205 is as comprehensive as possible. I also want to thank the staff at Alberta Health for their input in this process. Together these amendments will strengthen the bill by including proprietors as persons who are permitted to own the equipment in question; by ensuring that the correct types of legislation are identified as authorizing individuals to compound or manufacture drugs; and by adding regulation-making authority related to the sale and destruction of designated equipment, the granting, cancelling, or suspending of permits for the equipment in question, and the charging of fees for permits.

Under section 18.81 proprietors have been added alongside licence holders as persons exempt from the offence. This is necessary because in the Pharmacy and Drug Act the licence holder for a pharmacy must be a pharmacist, but not all pharmacy proprietors are pharmacists. Therefore, to ensure that proprietors continue to be able to own pharmaceutical equipment, they have been included as individuals exempted from the offence.

Under subsection (2)(b) a reference to regulation has been added because the authority to compound or manufacture drugs may be found in regulations in addition to acts. For example, the authority for pharmacists to compound drugs is located in the pharmacists and pharmacy technicians profession regulation. This amendment ensures that the language of the subsection references the correct types of legislation. This section has also been separated into two subsections for clarity.

Under section 18.82 regulation-making authority has been added so that regulations could potentially be put into place for granting, cancelling, and suspending permits for designated equipment and for charging fees for these permits. Further, sale and destruction have been added so that regulations may address a broader range of options regarding the disposition of seized equipment.

The other changes are for housekeeping purposes. Under the penalties a two-year time frame for prosecution after the commission of an alleged offence has been added, and this time frame is consistent with the period set out for other offences under the act.

We are very confident that these amendments support the intent of and strengthen this bill. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think my colleague spoke to most of the things with respect to the amendment. I would like to thank the Member for Calgary-West for the bill and for working together with the government on these amendments. I think that this will give us one additional tool.

I did just want to speak very briefly to something that the Member for Calgary-West mentioned in his speaking, that this was within provincial competence. I think that that is absolutely correct. It's absolutely the case that this is within provincial competence. I think that what the member was referring to was a suggestion that this was best addressed by the federal government. It's not that the province can't act here, but it's our view – and it was the view, I understand, of the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police when they came forward and asked us to work with the federal government to have them restrict pill presses – that it's better addressed by the federal government. The reason it's better addressed by the federal government is because they have a stronger deterrent effect. I think that given that there has not yet been movement, although we are still hopeful that there will be movement on that front, this additional tool is very useful.

I hope that this will have the impact of deterring people, but if there are individuals out there listening to this today: don't stop working on your federal Member of Parliament. Continue to do that. It is still important that the federal government make those changes, both with respect to pill presses and with respect to precursors. I hope that we can move forward on that.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There are a couple of points in this amendment that I'd like to speak in support of. The fact is that this is a great bill. I know that I have to commend the Member for Calgary-West for his commitment to limiting the number of fentanyl pills. This is also a commitment made by the Wildrose Party, which was brought out by myself and the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat in points in our fentanyl reduction plan.

Specifically, the fact is that this amendment deals with adding another tool to this great bill. To be specific, the bill wants to restrict or license pill or tablet presses, tablet machines, capsule filling machines, or pharmaceutical mixers. This is where this amendment really speaks. It wants to add a punch or die.

The fact is that we've got very devious criminals out there right now that are really going out and making pills to look like either competition pills or, actually, pills that look harmless like Aspirin or Tylenol. The fact is that when you think you're taking one thing and you're actually taking something else, for one, it's hard if you do overdose to actually work out what it is that you took. The second problem here, when you're looking at reducing the amount

of pills that are illegally made on the streets, is that we are assuming one thing, that we're taking an Aspirin, but we're receiving something totally different. It could be that you just think that you're having a reaction to the pill or something you ate. You might not even know that you're at risk.

3:40

Now, the hon. member mentioned that dies can be used to make counterfeit tablets by stamping them. This absolutely is a reality these days. We have people out there that are just outright, I guess, putting the lives of Albertans at risk, to be exact. Cracking down on this equipment will make it harder on the criminals. The fact is that this gets this equipment off of the streets, gets it out of the households. It doesn't mean that we will be eliminating W-18 or fentanyl through the reduction of these, but it will reduce them hitting the streets, and every tool that we have is best for all of us.

We also need to be looking at some of the other things that this amendment is doing. It's trying to make sure that the owners of the property that have these criminals in them don't have their property, I guess, seized or be held responsible for the equipment on the premises. The fact is that that's very admirable. You know, it's great to see that we've got the government and opposition and even – as mentioned by the Member for Calgary-West, we actually have people writing in and saying: have you considered this, and have you considered that? That is the power that we have when it comes to working together, working with stakeholders, working with all of those that are going to be affected, people actually wanting to make a difference.

The fact is that last year we had more than 270 deaths because of fentanyl alone. When we look at these deaths, we have to look at: how can we prevent them; how can we be proactive in this? The question here comes down to: where do we go from there? It comes down to really spending some time and thinking about it.

I do believe that in the end what we've got is that the hon. Member for Calgary-West has put a lot of thought in this, and that's good. I'm glad to see that he's worked forward with this. I do think, though, that this bill may overreach a little, and this is where I would like to bring forward a subamendment to A1.

**The Deputy Chair:** If you could just wait, Member, until I receive a copy, please.

This subamendment will be referred to as SA1.

Please go ahead, Member.

**Mr. Cyr:** All right. I'd like to read the subamendment. I would move that amendment A1 to Bill 205, Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in part A by striking out section 2(a) and substituting the following:

- (a) in the proposed section 18.8
  - (i) by striking out "or pharmaceutical mixer" and substituting ", pharmaceutical mixer or tablet punch or die", and
  - (ii) by striking out ", and any other equipment prescribed by the regulations".

This subamendment that I have proposed makes two changes. I am striking out the questionable clause in Bill 205, that will remain focused on punishing unauthorized users of commercial pharmaceutical equipment. The fact is that when we read specifically – I've got a lot of amendments here – "and any other equipment prescribed by regulations," the spirit of the bill is good, but we also need to be looking at what exactly it is we're restricting. I believe that in the end what we're looking at is moving forward. Where is it that we actually describe what it is going to be in the

regulations? This is my concern here. We're not specific. Amendment A1 is a good example of the fact that we need to be specific when we start to move forward with restricting and licensing different pharmaceuticals and mixing and creation items.

Now, really, what is other equipment prescribed by the regulations? I don't think it's unreasonable to say that that seems to be a little general. I would like to strike that out and be very, very specific in what exactly it is we're trying to accomplish so that, in the end, we don't hit innocent Albertans with an unintended consequence. Now, the vague language opens the door to legislation being overreaching, which I've said already. By far what we're trying to do is reduce fentanyl. We're trying to reduce fentanyl. We're trying to reduce these drugs, but with good intentions we also need to be clear that being vague is never good for Alberta; being vague is never good for what we're trying to accomplish.

For this I would like to move forward, and I encourage everybody in this Assembly to vote for my subamendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Would anybody like to speak to subamendment SA1? The Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Chair. I certainly would like to thank the hon. member for this amendment. I know he and I have had discussions, again in the spirit of collaboration, with all parties. It's certainly something that we have discussed.

I'm afraid I cannot support this subamendment, and I certainly would like to give my explanation as to why. For me it's the understanding of the justice system but also the understanding of the drug dealers themselves. The drug dealer is always ever-evolving. The drug dealer is always trying to be one step ahead of us. If we limit ourselves to literally the content that we have in the act itself, then what we're doing is that we're really putting handcuffs on the government to evolve with the drug dealers as they come up with new ways to press these pills. Believe me, you know, I racked my brain, and I consulted and consulted and consulted, and we came up with everything that we can think of. However, as we have seen with the history of the drug dealer, he will always find a way to come up with a new way. We have to give our Justice department the ability to be ahead of the drug dealer by making sure that we put the necessary legislation in place as it evolves.

You know, that goes back to what I was talking about before with the drug dealer. We're succeeding in that we're getting the message out that fentanyl is killing people, so the drug dealer must always evolve himself. What does he do? He pretends that the pill that he is selling is Oxy, and that is then fooling the victim into thinking that. I know that, again going back to the equipment itself, the drug dealer will always be evolving, trying to come up with new innovations, and we have to be able to react to whatever he is coming up with. That's why this is an ever-evolving process that involves each and every one of you in this Legislature.

For that reason – and again I do appreciate the spirit and the argument that he gave – I'm afraid that I cannot support this amendment. Thank you.

3:50

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Echoing the comments of my colleague from Calgary-West, the concern with this amendment is that the purpose of including other equipment as prescribed by regulations is to allow government the flexibility to adapt to the changing illicit drug market in order to enable us to have all of the tools potentially available to us as quickly as possible. By keeping

this definition within regulation and allowing for that flexibility, we're going to be able to address these emerging concerns as they come up. I think we've seen in this House – and we've certainly discussed it many times in this House – that one of the best tools that we have at our disposal when dealing with an illicit drug crisis is the ability to move quickly to address the actual concerns and the actual problems. So I am speaking against this amendment.

I would also like to add that if in the future we find that "pharmaceutical mixer" does not in and of itself capture the types of equipment that are being used to manufacture illicit drugs that we're targeting with this bill, by leaving the regulation allowance within the bill, that allows us to amend the regulations as quickly as possible to ensure that the appropriate equipment is being identified.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just very briefly, I appreciate the comments from the Member for Calgary-West and the Associate Minister of Health about the need to be able to move quickly, particularly in crisis-type situations. We know that drug dealers don't respect any law that we write, anyway.

Now having said that, I am speaking in favour of the amendment, and here's why. We do run a risk when we write into legislation sweeping powers for regulations. Not that the two things are the same, but we've seen, as an example, just for this Legislature, in Bill 6 significant amounts of widespread opportunity in regulation, and it often can create uncertainty and frustration. The challenge with regulation is obviously not the ability to move quickly to catch drug dealers. The challenge with sweeping powers in regulations in the minister's office is the unintended consequences that can come from them. There are lots of examples throughout history of that.

While it sounds like this particular amendment isn't going to pass, I think that it's important that we speak about the role of legislators and the role of regulators, and those are two very separate things. To give wider power around regulation just creates some pause and concern for us and for me, not that it would stop me from supporting the legislation should this amendment fail, but I think that it is worth while putting on the record.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to SA1, the subamendment? I recognize the leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I would say that on this I'm going to take the side of my colleague from Calgary-West, but that's not in any way to criticize the amendment. I know it's well intended. This is one of those areas where I also appreciate the House leader from the Official Opposition because we do need to be a little bit careful about what we put in regulation and what we put in legislation.

At the end of the day, I think this is one of those cases where we need the government of the day having maximum flexibility to make changes. Of course, the government could always come back and change the legislation, but I don't think we can always count on the fact that when the government does that, we can always be holding hands and singing *Kumbaya* as we seem to be on this piece of legislation, which is kind of nice. As much fun as it is to fight with the government and sometimes the opposition, it's also nice when we can come together on something of common interest that matters to Albertans and work together as, it appears, we're doing today. That may not always be the case if the government needs to make some slight adjustment to the regulations. If it's in

regulations, the government can do it more quickly than if they have to bring it back into the House.

While I won't support the amendment, I would not want the mover of the subamendment in any way to think that I'm criticizing it. I'm only concerned about the government's ability to be nimble because when the folks on the other side of the law don't have to obey any rules, they can always be nimble. We, on the other hand, cannot always be that way. So I'll be voting against the subamendment.

Thanks.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any additional speakers on the subamendment?

[Motion on subamendment SA1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We will return to amendment A1. Anyone wishing to speak? The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Sorry. This is for A1?

**The Deputy Chair:** Speaking to the original amendment?

**Mr. Cyr:** Yes. I have another amendment I'd like to put forward.

**The Deputy Chair:** Member, please continue.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that amendment A1 to Bill 205, Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by striking out part D and substituting the following. Section 5 is amended in the proposed section 39.1: (a) by renumbering it as section "39.1(1)," (b) in subsection (1) by striking out "18.81" and substituting "18.81(1)," (c) in subsection (1)(b) by adding "or to imprisonment for a term of not more than 6 months or to both fine and imprisonment" after "\$125,000," (d) in subsection (1)(c) by striking out "6 months" and substituting "1 year," and (e) by adding the following after subsection (1):

(2) A prosecution under this section may be commenced within 2 years after the commission of the alleged offence, but not afterwards.

(3) A member of the Executive Council shall, within 6 months of the coming into force of this section, beg leave of the Assembly to introduce a Bill to amend the Victims of Crime Act to provide for the funds collected from any fines imposed under this section to be deposited in the Victims of Crime Fund established under the Victims of Crime Act.

That was a little longer.

All right. This subamendment aims to make two changes. The first is to the ability of law enforcement to be tough on crime and to ensure punishment that reflects the severity of the crime. I believe that people that are making pills illegally should be thrown in jail; that's where they belong. The fact is that we need to be stronger when it comes to commitment to keeping these men and women off the street. The fact is that they're killing people.

The second part of this is to amend A1 to ensure that funds go towards the victims of crime. When we see these people making these illegal drugs through these pill presses and the different tools that they're using, it's appropriate that this money end up with the people that they're actually impacting, the actual fentanyl users. The fact is that they're hurting people, and through the victims of crime fund we can actually start addressing some of the crimes that they're committing to get these drugs.

4:00

The criminals that are targeted by this bill should be facing strict punishment, which helps enforcement to do their job in protecting

the public. Under this amendment an individual who is charged for a second time will face the punishment of a fine to a maximum amount of \$125,000 or imprisonment for a term of not more than six months. This amendment is a minor change to the legislation. It simply accelerates the punishment for a third offence to being the punishment for a second offence. The punishment should be firm but fair, and jail time for a second breach of this legislation would be a serious punishment to match a serious threat to public safety.

As the Auditor General pointed out in his February report, the victims of crime fund is far from being well managed. It needs to develop and accept a business plan to administer the surplus funds that have been accumulating in this fund's account. When it operates properly, the victims of crime fund is meant to fulfill an important function by helping to rehabilitate those who have fallen victim to criminal acts. This amendment calls for the government to amend the Victims of Crime Act so that funds collected from the individuals convicted under Bill 205 will be directed to the victims of crime fund. Rather than putting the money collected under this bill's provision into general revenue or a government slush fund, I believe that any funds collected under this act would be best used helping those who have suffered at the hands of the criminals who create fentanyl or any of the different opiates that they're sending out to Albertans.

Now, what we're actually looking at when it comes to this amendment is that we need to be ensuring that Albertans are safe. We need to be ensuring that in the end, those who are abusing these pharmaceutical machines are being held to account. We also need to make sure that the victims of these criminals are helped through the transition, I guess, so that they're able to move from being a victim to being a rehabilitated Albertan and are actually helped by these criminals' paying a fine.

In the end, I encourage everybody to vote for this amendment, vote for harder penalties. Let's actually get some funds to where the people actually need them.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Just to clarify, the subamendment will be referred to as SA2.

The Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be brief. Of course, upon initially reviewing this, I am absolutely, you know, in favour of harsher penalties against violators of this act. My only concern – actually, before I get to my concern, let me just say that I remember that in my opening remarks I had mentioned that my hope was to have monies going to the victims of crime and make sure that, you know, people who are truly victims of crime get this money. However, when I look at subsection (3) – and this will ultimately be up to the government to take a look at, and I know that the hon. Minister of Justice is going to speak here momentarily – my question, of course, is: is subsection (3) even possible? If it is, I certainly would support it, but I will allow the minister to speak on this.

Thank you very much, Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise also to speak to the amendment and to echo the comments of the Member for Calgary-West. We are absolutely supportive of the increased penalties found in here and of most of the amendment. The challenge, of course, that we are having – and this is a challenge that often comes with subamendments that come in rather late – is

that we are not confident as to how exactly one would execute subsection (3), which has to do with the victims of crime fund.

The challenge is that that would require impacts on ministries of my colleagues, and as of right now we're not confident that we can execute those things. You know, I think it's very important for everyone here in this House and certainly everyone in the government to ensure, if we're going to commit to doing a thing, that in fact we are able to do that thing. The challenge we are having currently is that we are not confident that subsection (3) is something that we are able to do, and without the assistance of some of my colleagues from Treasury Board and Finance it's difficult for us to determine if that is something that we can manage in that particular way.

That being said, we're certainly supportive of the early parts of the bill. I mean, certainly, the more force we can put behind this, the better and the greater the deterrent effect on those who are out there. This drug is very challenging and is very dangerous for individuals, so we think that greater punishments are certainly warranted. We would like to support those portions of the amendment, but it can be a little bit challenging to do this.

With respect to the rest of it, though, we are quite pleased. We think that the stiffer penalties, sort of advancing the penalties, particularly when we're talking about people who have been caught, you know, a second or third time – it's really critical that we be deterring those people in the appropriate way and that we send the appropriate message. That is our concern.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you so much, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to subamendment SA2. I appreciate the comments from my colleague for Calgary-West and the minister, particularly around their desire to ensure that portions of the amendment could be passed with respect to ensuring that we're actually tough on these individuals who are out there selling this horrific drug. At the end of the day, those people have been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Albertans, so we ought not to take this lightly.

I thank my colleague for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for bringing forward this amendment, which strengthens this piece of legislation, increases the fines, increases the opportunity for drug dealers to reflect on their actions should they be caught on subsequent offences and, as a result, spend some time in jail. It sounds to me like the government members have some significant challenges in supporting the entire amendment, and the big challenge is found in subsection (3). "A member of the Executive Council shall, within 6 months of the coming into force of this section, beg leave of the Assembly to introduce a Bill."

Now, because this is a subamendment, we are in some unique parliamentary territory when it comes to being able to deliver on changing any amendments before the Assembly. The Assembly, when provided with unanimous consent, can move forward in a number of positive manners because in some respects the Assembly can set the rules that are best for the Assembly. If unanimous consent could be granted for the withdrawal of subsection (3), which, at the end of the day, would strike that section from the subamendment, one could assume that unanimous consent would be a reasonable tool with which to do that.

4:10

This is a very important piece of legislation, and we definitely want to make sure that we get it correct because what it means for all Albertans is that there will be the appropriate fines and jail

sentences. Because I know that members on this side of the Chamber would prefer to not see all of the good work in the front half of the amendment lost to a vote, I think it seems reasonable that we ask for unanimous consent of the House to withdraw subsection (c) of the subamendment presented.

**The Deputy Chair:** Subsection (3)?

**Mr. Cooper:** Subsection (3). Sometimes C and 3 sound similar. Just for clarity purposes, subsection (3).

What I would propose is that we ask for unanimous consent of the House to withdraw or scratch or delete subsection (3) of the subamendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Just to clarify, Member, you're referring to subsection (3)?

**Mr. Cooper:** That's correct, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you for clarifying that.

Hearing the motion to remove subsection (3) in clause (e) of SA2, is anyone opposed?

Hearing no objection to the request, the original copy of the subamendment will be amended in clause (e) by striking out the proposed subsection (3).

Returning now to subamendment SA2, are there any additional speakers?

[Motion on subamendment SA2 carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** Now we'll be returning to the original amendment, amendment A1. Are there any additional speakers?

Hearing none, are you ready for the question on amendment A1?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the main bill, Bill 205. Are there any members wishing to speak to the now amended main bill?

**Mr. Cyr:** I'm pleased to stand to speak on Bill 205, put forward by the Member for Calgary-West, because there are some aspects of this bill that directly align with what the Wildrose has put forward. As members may be aware, in December Wildrose issued a report addressing the fentanyl crisis with the following recommendation: "Urge the federal government to enact federal laws or regulations regarding the import, export, sale, and possession of commercial pill presses in Canada."

Fentanyl has been a deadly problem across the country, most especially in Alberta. Last year 270 Albertans died from fentanyl overdoses, which was more than double the number in 2014. The problem doesn't end with fentanyl, however. As deadly as fentanyl has proven to be, the sad reality is that prior to fentanyl there were other drugs that surged in popularity, that became drugs of choice, so the strong likelihood is that once we effectively combat and limit the effects of fentanyl, we will be faced with a new drug. In fact, we're already seeing W-18.

Madam Chair, Wildrose is committed to keeping Albertans safe on the streets and in their communities, and we're pleased to see that members on both sides of the House are supportive of this bill. While naloxone may be made more readily available in Alberta, that measure only addresses the issue after the fact, once a user is already in danger. Wildrose has been advocating that the House do more on this issue, and this bill certainly paves the way forward for taking further action against drug makers, suppliers, and pushers.

Listening to people's stories about lives being cut short due to the awful influence of drugs is both sobering and heartbreaking. Family

members and friends remember marking the change in character and behaviour once drugs have taken hold. Even more, there is an ongoing litany of phrases dreaming of what could have been, statements that begin with, "He would have just graduated university now" or "She had such a promising career ahead of her, and we'll never know what she could have accomplished." Albertans are crying out for help because they recognize that this war on drugs is proving too costly in terms of human life, relationships, and potential.

Because of this, it's important that we look at ways to combat the fentanyl crisis and the war on drugs right from the start. We cannot afford to sit back while hundreds of Albertans are dying and many more are beginning to experiment with drugs and growing more and more addicted. Even one life lost to drugs is too many; 270 is unacceptable. I tried to think how high that number really could climb to. Because of that, Wildrose supports this bill. I support this bill because it will clamp down on the ease with which people can fabricate drugs and push them out onto the streets and into the hands of Albertans from every walk of life. Madam Chair, drugs, specifically fentanyl and W-18, are not problems just for vulnerable Albertans. Drugs infest the living rooms of Albertans on all ends of the social spectrum and in all corners of the province. Furthermore, drugs taint school classrooms and boardrooms and businesses in all sectors. It is truly a crisis that requires our attention.

We need to equip our law enforcement agents and agencies with tools and skills that are needed to combat the rampant use and abuse of drugs within Alberta. We need to take steps to ensure that we keep our communities safe. To put a different spin on it, Madam Chair, we need to make sure our neighbourhoods are safe and cared for. Police officers invest their lives doing what they can to ensure the safety of all of us. We need to support them in the endeavour. The stakes are too high to just let things slip past us simply because we don't have the resources or tools or the training to stop them right in their tracks. The work that is being done by police officers and law enforcement agencies is absolutely critical, and we need to provide them the tools that they need to carry out their work.

Madam Chair, now is the time for that action. Now is the time for all members of the House to stand up and say: this has gone too far. Let's make sure it doesn't go any farther. We have slid down the slippery slope too far already, and we need to put on the brakes. We cannot afford to wait. Families are begging us not to wait. They're watching their children and siblings, parents and friends fall farther under the grip of drugs, and they're asking us not to stand by idly. When we have the ability to make changes that will truly help and have a positive effect on Albertans from all walks of life, from all communities, we need to take advantage of it.

There is simply no more time to waste, Madam Chair, and that's why I'm happy to see this proactive bill from Calgary-West move forward. The fact is that I believe that we need to support this unanimously.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Are there any additional members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you. Bill 205, the Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016, is a good start. It's a good start because we don't just need a punishment for wrongdoers; we need a way for it to help people that are stuck in these circles and these cycles. We need a holistic wraparound strategy for opioid use. We need this strategy to prevent overdose and abuse within our system. Bill 205 can be part of this strategy, which may assist law enforcement to get drugs such as fentanyl off the streets. It's a tool in the tool kit, and that tool kit must also

include data reporting, prescription monitoring, triplicate drug prescription programs, education for the public and professionals, and advocating for stronger measures across Canada as well as continuing to support harm reduction strategies with access to naloxone, which can help reverse opioid overdoses. It saves lives.

**4:20**

To see patients come into hospitals suffering from opioid overdose is heartbreaking. Fentanyl does not just affect any one demographic; it affects all Albertans because it's hidden. Naloxone can save lives, but there are much longer term effects once a naloxone kit is used. We see patients suffering from psychological trauma and guilt when they're conscious. For addicts we see severe instances of delirium tremens, also known as the DTs, and long, long recoveries. I've had to tie people to their beds. I've had to drug people so that they aren't conscious. That's part of what happens when somebody is an addict. Many times this leads to a relapse. Many of our patients that we see have compromised mental health, and many times this is the first opportunity or the best opportunity for mental health intervention.

With an overdose treatment must be holistic, and the problem is that many times these treatments can be refused, which is why we need to work on our education and our outreach activities by making it illegal to own a pill or tablet press or capsule-filling machine unless licensed, with consequences increasing as these things happen. Bill 205 is a good start to help our populations at risk of an overdose, as is Alberta Justice making proceeds of crime grants available to police and community partners to fund awareness and prevention.

It's estimated that 1 in 10 Albertans over the age of 15 will battle drug or alcohol dependency at some time in their lives, and over half of those are between the ages of 20 and 39. We see them in the emergency departments. We see them in our urgent care centres. Being able to access naloxone easier is a great thing, and not having to deal with this hidden danger is even more of a great thing.

Most of our teens – I have two, and I know that many people have or have had them – don't think about the long-term consequences of their actions. They're looking for a fun night, and they don't know that fentanyl is in those drugs. I want to protect our teens, and I want to protect our young people, and I want to protect these 20- to 39-year-olds, who have so much promise. I don't want to see these kids, these young people become addicts in our society and be punished just because they've made a bad decision.

This devastating effect on our communities is why our government takes the essential issue of fentanyl and opioid abuse very seriously, and I think that we need to support a bill like this. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on the original bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 205, Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016? All agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Agreed. Thank you.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 205 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Madam Chair, I rise to request the unanimous consent of this Assembly to waive Standing Order 8 to allow the Assembly to proceed immediately to third reading of Bill 205.

**The Deputy Chair:** Member, sorry to interrupt. We have to rise and report first, and then we can move forward.

**Mr. Cooper:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report Bill 205.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 205. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Member.  
Does the Assembly concur with the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed? It shall be so ordered.  
The Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to request the unanimous consent of this Assembly to waive Standing Order 8 to allow for the Assembly to proceed immediately to third reading of Bill 205.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 205

#### Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Madam Speaker, thank you so much. I guess I first want to take a moment here and thank the government members as well as all members of the opposition, from over to my right and over to my left, including my own colleagues in the PC caucus. I think this is truly an example of what Albertans have been looking for in identifying an issue, having a collaborative approach, and actually coming up with a solution.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I'd like to touch on a couple of things here. You know, as I have stated, as members of the opposition have stated and government members have stated, this is a multipronged approach. This is but one tool – one tool – that law enforcement can use in their battle, their fight against a deadly disease and against some really, really unscrupulous people.

We must also understand the addiction itself and make sure that we have all the appropriate mechanisms and measures that are available for the addiction itself. That's why I support long-term care beds. I support funding for the long-term care beds. I certainly

applaud the government in their approach to naloxone, as well, certainly. Again, one more tool. The only thing I would like to say is that people who may be watching this need to understand that naloxone is not a cure. All it really is – it just stops somebody from dying. We must, again, focus on the actual addiction itself.

In conclusion, I would like to thank everyone from all parties in this Assembly for this. We will continue this fight as a team together for Albertans. We will continue to support the government in their request of the federal government, of course, to get this as something that is in the Criminal Code.

Thank you very much, and thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any others who wish to speak to Bill 205 in third reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today in support of Bill 205, and I want to take this opportunity to commend the Member for Calgary-West. Our government takes the issue of fentanyl abuse very seriously. We know people all across the province are facing life-and-death situations and are moving forward aggressively to curb the impact of fentanyl here in Alberta. As we all know, so far this year we have already lost 69 people here in Alberta to fentanyl. Madam Speaker, I know this all too well as I just lost a close friend of mine very recently to this very dangerous and awful drug. These deaths need to stop, period.

4:30

Since I was elected back in May, I've been very active with an organization in my riding of Calgary-Bow. Simon House is one of the highest performing addiction treatment programs in North America. On the last Wednesday of every month the clients have a celebration of their sobriety, which I or my staff attend on a very regular basis. I've spoken with the president and CEO of this organization, Trevor Loria, at length about our shared concerns surrounding this drug. I'd like to quote Mr. Loria as saying in support of this bill:

I believe that this Bill is a necessary, appropriate, and ultra-important step in addressing the opiate crisis in Alberta.

Simon House clients who have used non-prescription pills & tablets purchased on the street are playing "Russian Roulette" with their lives, as the chemical make-up of these pills and tablets is unknown, even to the people producing them via the currently unregulated machines.

Simon House supports this Bill, and the rationale behind it in bringing it to the house.

I am pleased to be able to bring the voices of this stakeholder group to the debate on this bill today and share support of Bill 205. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to rise in support of the bill and first of all thank my hon. colleague from Calgary-West for bringing this forward. Certainly, with his experience as a police officer and, as such, an expert in public safety this is – I know that it's been a passion of his. He's spoken of the fentanyl crisis many times in this House. I also want to thank the other opposition parties for their support, and I want to thank the government for their support of this. This is one of those cases where I think that when we're doing our jobs well, we can rally around an issue that matters to Albertans, put our heads together, even work together on some amendments, and improve what started out as a very good piece of work but, in a collaborative way, make it so that it will better serve Albertans.

I know that there are probably members in this House that haven't laid eyes on a fentanyl pill – and I may be one of those –

but there are other people in Alberta that are addicted or other citizens of Alberta, as has been talked about in the debate here, that may think they're buying something that, maybe even while they don't think it's legal, is a lot less dangerous than what they actually get. That's why they call them drug dealers. They don't follow anybody's rules. They don't follow even the most basic codes of decency and conduct and care about their fellow human beings. They'll sell somebody something, simply to make money, that will kill them and turn around and not even think about them again. This ought to make the business a little bit harder for those people to do.

I think that there's some leadership here, basically, in terms of doing that. I also believe that while other provinces haven't done this yet, I wouldn't be surprised to see some follow. This is a great place for us to lead. I will be supporting this, and I thank all members of the House that have spoken their support for what I think is an important bill and one that, for certain, will save lives in Alberta once we get this business done.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I rise to speak in favour of Bill 205, the pharmacy and drug amendment act. The intent of this bill is to regulate the possession of pill presses, which criminals use to produce and create homemade illicit drugs such as fentanyl and the new W-18. These drugs are no joke, and we certainly need to take action now, which I think is something we all agree on in this Assembly today. Wonderful news.

Madam Speaker, last year we had 272 Albertans die from fentanyl overdoses, which is more than double the 2014 death toll. According to AHS this represents a 126 per cent increase in fentanyl-related overdoses in a time span of just one year. Fentanyl is an opiate up to 100 times more powerful than morphine, and now an even more lethal drug is about to hit our streets, W-18, which is a synthetic opioid with no known clinical use at all. It'll mean an even greater risk of overdose given that this is 10,000 times more powerful than morphine and 100 times more powerful than fentanyl. According to the AHS website fentanyl and W-18 are often sold on the streets as green beans, beans, green apples, apples, shady eighties, eighties, greenies, or fake OxyContin. They receive these names because of the way dangerous drugs are manufactured and presented.

You can never be sure what will be in any drug you purchase off the streets. Please, I'd like to make that very clear: you can never be certain of what is in the drug that you purchase off the streets. Criminals are using these pill presses to deceive vulnerable Albertans into consuming an even more lethal drug. It's a deadly bait and switch for these criminals. It's shameful. Drug use is something that has permeated through cultures, and while there is not an ultimate solution, we need to take every real step we possibly can to protect people from these deadly drugs. This bill is something that I certainly support as it takes another tool out of the hands of criminals.

This is why the Wildrose Party actually released its Safer Communities, Saving Lives: Combatting the Fentanyl Crisis plan in December of 2015. In this document our shadow critic for Justice outlined 10 key recommendations for this government to follow to save lives. This is just something – I think everybody here is just trying to do their part to help. Point 9 of the Wildrose's fentanyl plan states that we “urge the federal government to enact . . . laws or regulations regarding the import, export, sale, and possession of commercial pill presses in Canada.” Certainly, I will take the recommendations as well from our hon. Justice minister and urge my MP to do the same. Madam Speaker, this is because we view

this problem as one that transcends all legal borders of our province. A complete, Canada-wide strategy must be implemented. This government should be raising this point at a national level when the Council of the Federation's health ministers meet again, which, I have no doubt, this government will do.

This bill is an important first step in leading the Canada-wide crackdown on pill presses and introduces real measures to hold those drug dealers responsible for the thousands of senseless overdoses and deaths in our province. Now more than ever Albertans are looking for hope and for strong leadership, Madam Speaker. With threats like fentanyl and W-18 seeping into our communities and even into our schools, now is the time for action. As a mother of two young children there is nothing more important in my mind than keeping Alberta's streets safe. We need to ensure that our law enforcement teams like ALERT are equipped with the mandate to crack down on crime. Mass-producing illicit and lethal drugs is not a victimless crime at all, and the consequences are documented and absolutely tragic.

I support this bill, Madam Speaker, and will support any other real measures to stop the W-18 and fentanyl crises in our province and take the criminals off our streets. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to third reading? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Madam Speaker, thank you very much. I, too, rise in support of Bill 205 on third reading. I'd like to very much commend our Member for Calgary-West for bringing this forward and for his words and his diligence. Of course, he has my full support.

I'd like to take a second and offer my condolences to the Member for Calgary-Bow. My goodness, I can only imagine losing one of your friends. My sincere sympathy.

4:40

You know, it's refreshing to see the House work together, 87 of us, starting from the seriousness, the absolute crisis of what fentanyl and now W-18 and other opiates have done in our society to our people – the first responders, the police, how difficult their jobs have been at different times – respecting, of course, the civil liberties that are crucial and important to us all but ensuring that those that have such little respect for our society and for others in it have the opportunity to be brought to full justice. I absolutely believe that Bill 205 will help do that. Again, I commend the Member for Calgary-West for doing that.

Of course, our critic for Justice, from Bonnyville-Cold Lake, and I worked on the 10-point plans in November, and I'm glad to see that the government has picked up some of those and is working on others. The naloxone thing is absolutely a critical step. I absolutely commend the government for making these kits widely available at no charge to those that need them, want them, and can help. ALERT, of course, the extra concentration and help to ALERT and the good work that first responders and police do: that's another good thing. Detox beds: my goodness, a brand new detox centre just opened up in Medicine Hat, and it is well done. It is staffed by excellent, excellent people. So the addition of these types of resources around our province will go a long, long way to ensure that, you know, this fentanyl crisis – and as others have mentioned, W-18, methadone, oxycodone, all these other names and the potential that's there are alarming and are going to continue to take a consistent effort.

I would ask that this House not forget to continue to support our good first-line responders, our good medical people. We had some talk about the patch, how in Ontario there is a system where you cannot get a new patch unless you turn in your old one. Unfortunately,



a policeman in my constituency told me that our last two overdoses were directly related to used patches. I would ask the government to please keep that high on their radar.

Education and information: it's a hard world in which to get information out there now, with all the fragmented media and all the different things that people support, but again that's maybe one of the bigger steps. I would strongly, strongly encourage the government to do that. B.C. has had some success in treating their crisis as well by gathering some information and doing things with that information. Perhaps there's something the government can look at there to make it as effective as possible.

When the Wildrose released our report in November, on Twitter a couple of people messaged me with the concern: jeez, we need to look at how come Alberta is such a leader in opioids being prescribed in the first place. I understand that we're the highest per capita. That's maybe something that has to be part of this equation as well. Yes, this is a good step, but as the hon. Member for Calgary-West said, it's not the only tool in the tool kit. I would strongly, strongly encourage the government to keep fighting it with all of our great people and all of our resources.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of this bill. Also, many thanks to the Member for Calgary-West for his initiative here and, as importantly, as mentioned by my colleagues earlier, for the support and co-operation of the House in addressing this very important initiative, one step forward, I think, in hoping to reach some resolution in terms of some of the addiction issues that we have.

There are many challenges we face, I think, as a society, and unfortunately addiction is one of those that does not discriminate. Unfortunately, on top of that, while it doesn't discriminate, it does show itself on an overrepresented basis within our indigenous populations, and I think that's a further challenge we have within those communities, certainly, to ensure that this is one step in solving that. The root causes, I think, are there. We need to invest more in preventative and supportive programs.

I had the honour and privilege of attending about a three-hour session at AARC, the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre, in Calgary a few months back. I was honoured to be there, but I was shocked, of course, at the level of addiction of some of these young people, some as young as 13 years old, and, luckily, some of the graduates that survived. They'd had a number of people that they'd lost through that program, who had passed away during treatment and had not quite made it across the line. Many of their peer counsellors there are graduates of the program. To hear their stories and about that, unfortunately, slippery slope that they still live on, about the commitment that they've made to themselves and to their families, was very touching. It was heart-wrenching, but it was touching, the commitment that we have in the community.

I know the people from AARC have been up to the Legislature just over the last few weeks to visit the government. At this point in time they do not have any government funding and are seeking that. I encourage all members if they're in Calgary – and I'm sure that there are similar organizations not just in Calgary but in Edmonton and across this province. I think it's very important that we address that.

You know, I think that in looking at the numbers here, the deaths last year, they represent about three individuals in each one of our 87 constituencies, to put it into perspective. That's frightening for us to see. Those are mostly young people and those that are facing

challenges within their lives. We hope to get them through that to lead the fruitful and full lives ahead of them.

This is a great step forward, again one of the many tools that we need to keep bringing forward. Of course, the addictions and alcoholism and many of these issues are ones that we need to face. I think, of course, we've had discussions. I know that with the federal changes in marijuana laws coming forward, we need to make sure, even with those, that as we move forward with the issues around that in terms of distribution and how we're going to tax and distribute that, we also take into account that any type of drug, whether it's alcohol, marijuana, or other opioids of different sorts, can be abused at different levels and can ruin lives. We need to be cognizant of that.

I'm proud of my colleague for his hard work. I'm proud to be able to support this and very proud that we've been able to work together in the Legislature. I hope that this is a sign of some of the work we can do in the future together to not only table legislation but to improve it and to bring it forward for the betterment of all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak? I'll recognize Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to begin by thanking my colleague from Calgary-West for his passion with respect to Bill 205. As you know, during second reading of this bill I used my full 10 minutes to speak on this, including experience as chair of AADAC and as minister of wellness. At the end of my speech I offered a rather impassioned plea to ensure that this issue would not be politicized. I know that at the time more than one government member seemed offended by this, but thankfully very shortly thereafter members from all corners of the House determined that I was simply trying to point out that this is an issue that transcends all party colours.

It reminds me of a number of private members' bills that I've been honoured to spearhead in this Chamber, each of which required consultation and homework and co-operation from everyone in the Legislature. I'm thrilled that on this occasion all-party co-operation is indeed alive and well.

Colleagues, you've heard me speak on this topic many times very passionately, including with our indigenous Albertans, even today in question period. In the name of passing this bill expeditiously, I will conclude my comments today this way, by thanking you sincerely in advance for your invaluable part in passing this legislation, which will indeed save Albertan lives and communities. Long live Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Member for Calgary-West to close debate.

4:50

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess just a few points. I will really, truly be brief here. Members of this House, I think it's important for everyone to know that this was Manmeet Bhullar's bill draw. Sadly, as we know, he's not here, but I will speak and say that I know that he would be proud not only of the co-operation by this Assembly but of the fact that this is a bill that will go to saving lives. That is something that Manmeet was always all about.

I would also like to add a couple more points. About a year ago I put on the six-inch pumps and did the Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event. I did it with two other individuals. One of those individuals,

who was an acquaintance of mine by the name of Joel Dixon, passed away from a fentanyl overdose. I certainly didn't know the man very well, and I was absolutely shocked to find out that he had passed away, but again this is a drug like any sort of narcotic; it does not discriminate. It touches everyone from any and every socioeconomic class.

Thirdly, I would like to just say again in support of addiction treatment centres – and I know that my good friend Rob Laird is here today from 1835 recovery house – that the support for addiction treatment is absolutely paramount in getting to the root causes of these problems.

In conclusion, I want to thank everyone for their support. I know that we will all do the right thing here and support this bill.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 205 read a third time]

### Written Questions

[The Clerk read the following written questions, which had been accepted]

#### North West Redwater Partnership

Q12. Mr. Clark:

What is the status as of March 15, 2016, of the approval process for phase 2 of construction for the North West Redwater Partnership upgrader?

#### Ministerial Trip to Washington

Q13. Mr. Clark:

What are the deliverables of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade's recent trip to Washington, DC, from February 3 to 5, 2016?

#### Adult Learning Review Program

Q14. Mr. Clark:

What is the status as of March 15, 2016, of the adult learning review program proposed in the New Democratic Party election platform during the May 2015 Alberta provincial general election?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

#### Disaster Recovery Program Claims

Q11. Mr. Clark asked that the following question be accepted.

How many disaster recovery program claims arising from the 2013 flood event that were previously approved have since been deemed ineligible?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think this is a timely question as we move, I hope swiftly, into recovery mode in Fort McMurray and a significant number of people in Fort McMurray will unfortunately have to make claims in the disaster recovery program. I look forward to having a fulsome discussion about that tonight in Municipal Affairs estimates.

The reason I want to know this is that I've had a number of constituents that were previously approved, initially approved, for disaster recovery that now have been told they're either no longer eligible or an argument has been made through the appeal process by the government that they are no longer eligible. I think this is relevant at any time because it's an important question of public policy when you have Albertans being told one thing at one point in a process and then something entirely different, perhaps being

disentitled to compensation under disaster recovery, at some later time in the process.

I'm very curious, and I think Albertans are owed an explanation as to the scale of this particular issue. How many claims were approved initially and were then denied at a later time? I understand the government may in fact be bringing in an amendment to this question, but I will stand by my original question, that I think is a very important one, the point being that if the government is interested in answering only how many at any point have been deemed ineligible, including those that were deemed ineligible at the very beginning of the process because that sort of claim was not eligible within the DRP, that is not something that we don't already know. We know that from the government website, and should it become necessary, I'd be more than happy to share those statistics.

In fact, we know that 2,647 were deemed ineligible for a number of reasons because, of course, not everyone who applies for the disaster recovery program is, in fact, eligible. The government did their work right up front and deemed that number ineligible, but of the 2,647, which were originally deemed eligible? I think that's a very important question, especially as we, unfortunately, move into a new phase of having to rely on the disaster recovery program. I think it is an urgent matter for this government to answer, and I would certainly hope that they provide that answer in due course.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice on behalf of the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs to respond.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move an amendment to Written Question 11. I am proposing that Written Question 11 be accepted as amended. The question is currently written: "How many disaster recovery program claims arising from the 2013 flood event that were previously approved have since been deemed ineligible?" I propose to accept the question amended as follows: "How many disaster recovery program claims from the 2013 flood event have been deemed ineligible, and why were they deemed ineligible?"

Amending the question will allow for a better response to the question as it more appropriately reflects the two-stage process that all DRP files go through. As the member will be aware, the first stage of the process determines whether an application can be accepted under the established program criteria. Program criteria include things like whether the losses occurred during the prescribed timeline of the event, whether the applicant owns the property in question, and if the losses were uninsurable in nature.

The second stage in the process determines whether the items being claimed are eligible for reimbursement under the disaster assistance guidelines. Claims can include lost or damaged items, cleanup hours and expenses, and the repair and replacement of structural damage. Additionally, it's important to remember that funding under the disaster recovery program cannot be provided if other sources of funding are available to the applicant. For example, the program is not designed to duplicate other means of financial assistance that may be provided through insurance or charitable donations. The disaster recovery program does not apply to cover second residences, pre-existing damage from before the disaster, lost income or profits for business, or losses that insurance also covers.

For the 2013 program we received more than 10,600 private-sector applications. This was, by far, the largest disaster recovery program not only in Albertan history but in Canadian history. Madam Speaker, we've provided more than \$144 million to individual Albertans to help them recover from this unprecedented disaster. I want to assure you that all applications were considered

carefully and fairly to ensure that Albertans received all the assistance that they were eligible for while spending taxpayers' dollars appropriately.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers who wish to respond? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** May I speak on the amendment?

**The Deputy Speaker:** You may speak.

5:00

**Mr. Clark:** Yes. Thank you. I will speak very briefly. We know the answer to the first half of the proposed amendment, how many DRP claims. I've already talked about that being 2,647. Why they were deemed ineligible: I think the minister listed off many good reasons why a claim may be deemed ineligible. Given that there were more than 10,000 claims, of which roughly a quarter were deemed ineligible – that, of course, I think is a normal course of this program.

The heart of my question is: how many that were previously approved were subsequently deemed ineligible? That is a vital question to answer because this was a terribly poorly administered program from the very, very start. I think that that would be my point, that it does fundamentally change what I'm driving at and I don't think answers the important question that Albertans ought to have an answer to. I can tell you that so many people had difficult times with DRP. This is an important question to answer.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, but I guess the time now has arrived to move on to the next order of business.

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

#### Crude Oil Tanker Traffic and Pipelines

506. Mr. Loewen moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to request that the federal government not implement the moratorium on crude oil tanker traffic along British Columbia's north coast and that it swiftly approve pipelines such as the Energy East, Trans Mountain, and Northern Gateway in order to increase employment in Alberta's energy sector.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on my proposed Motion 506. Wildrose has always been committed to responsible energy projects such as these. Alberta needs all members of the Assembly to voice their support and send a clear message to the federal government that our energy sector is important not just to us but to all of Canada. Wildrose knows that when Alberta prospers, Canada prospers.

The economic benefits of these three pipeline projects are enormous. I would like to share some numbers with all members in the House. First of all, the Trans Mountain expansion. This Kinder Morgan project would twin a pipeline from Strathcona county to Burnaby, B.C., almost tripling the capacity of the existing system. The most significant benefit of this pipeline would be in getting our landlocked oil to overseas markets, which is crucial to the health of our economy. The economic benefits are significant, specifically for Alberta. The benefits of project development, operations, and net-backs will be as much as \$19.4 billion.

At the municipal level Kinder Morgan expects property tax revenue to jump by \$530 million. That's half a billion dollars going to local governments along the pipeline right-of-way in Alberta and B.C. over 20 years. Beyond property tax, other existing and new municipal and regional tax payments would exceed \$1 billion over 20 years.

Madam Speaker, it's clear that this pipeline would reap significant benefits for Alberta, from the provincial government down to regular Albertans, because like the other pipeline projects, it will also create much-needed jobs: 16,000 construction jobs and 37,000 direct, indirect, and induced jobs per year of operations.

Now, as far as Energy East, the Energy East pipeline for its part would create almost 2,000 of those jobs right here in Alberta. Those are good-quality, well-paying jobs, Madam Speaker, that would give a fresh start to thousands of Albertans who are out of work right now. But this pipeline, which would get 1.1 million barrels of western oil to eastern refineries and then to tidewater every day, is currently stuck in the seemingly endless delays in its approval process. Despite the fact that it would address the fact that eastern Canada imports 86 per cent of its oil from outside Canada instead of using good Alberta oil, this project languishes in red tape.

The Northern Gateway pipeline, one that has already been approved with conditions by the National Energy Board, is arguably one of the most important energy infrastructure projects for putting a stop to Canadian oil being sold at a discount because it would allow Canadian companies to sell their products globally and, in particular, directly across the Pacific to the growing Asian markets. This access would also help to reduce supply bottlenecks that result in the discounts on Canadian heavy oil, which trades for about \$14 U.S. a barrel lower than the North America benchmark, west Texas intermediate, costing the Alberta government and companies billions of dollars each year.

Now, this pipeline, that the Premier last year called, quote, not the right decision, end quote, though she has now apparently come around to cautiously supporting it – while Wildrose is pleased to see a glimmer of common sense in the current government, we also know that it will take more than a few words to convince us and all Albertans and the energy sector itself that this government really means business. What better way to do that than by supporting this motion and producing results on pipeline approvals?

Albertans need more than a government that can't seem to make up its mind on pipelines, one that supports its antipipeline friends in Ontario one day and then the next day spouts pro-energy, pro-pipeline talking points. We need leadership that will consistently support Northern Gateway, a project that would trigger a \$312 billion increase in our national GDP over 30 years, that would create \$50 billion in provincial revenues over the same time period, and that would help 1,100 people get to work during construction and then create 260 permanent jobs during its operation. Crucially, though, we need leadership that will consistently support and produce results on getting our landlocked Alberta oil to market, which this pipeline would do.

The thing is that claiming to come around in support of Northern Gateway isn't actually enough to support it. If the tanker ban proposed by the federal Liberals is put in place, it will spell the end of the Northern Gateway project and any other pipeline to the west coast with a terminus north of Vancouver, which means that the Premier must come out against this proposed ban. For context, the current Prime Minister has directed his Transport minister to formalize a moratorium on crude oil tanker traffic on British Columbia's north coast. While it doesn't explicitly define what the north coast is, most assumptions place it north of Vancouver Island, in the area that covers Dixon Entrance, Hecate Strait, and the Queen Charlotte Sound. It is commonly understood that this tanker ban

would kill Northern Gateway and any similar project that terminates in that area.

Wildrose is standing up for Alberta and for our energy sector and the jobs it creates. Our leader, Brian Jean, personally wrote to the Prime Minister asking him to abandon this tanker ban and effectively to allow Alberta's oil to get to market without going through a glutted American market. In contrast, the Premier so far said nothing, this despite the fact that a moratorium on the north coast could open a Pandora's box of issues, primarily regarding the United States. Issues that could arise include a potential violation of freedom of navigation rights such as the right of innocent passage, which allows vessels from other countries to pass through Canada's territorial waters. The U.S. may also see this as a pointed bilateral legal and security issue and act accordingly.

Furthermore, the reality is that Alberta itself could conceivably launch legal action due to the federal government's disruption of co-operative federalism principles, resulting in interference with Alberta's jurisdiction over our ability in development and global sales of our natural resources. Yet we have heard nothing from the current provincial government about standing up for Alberta's rights.

While many within this government seem to have changed their stance on some pipeline projects, the fact remains that many actively protested and spoke out against these energy products and anything that supports our oil sands. It was such a perception issue that in B.C. the NDP acknowledged that resource development equals jobs, and if the NDP say no to a project, they are against job creation. They didn't manage to dispel that notion during their election. As one of our colleagues across the floor stated, that argument is a trap, and the NDP need to rewrite that narrative.

5:10

Albertans can rest assured that the Wildrose will always be consistent in lending our voices in support of our energy sector. The members opposite seem to have a revisionist approach to their pipeline stance, and their tepid approach is simply not good enough if we truly want to convince Albertans and the federal government that they're serious about supporting our energy sector. Comments such as our energy sector being the embarrassing cousin do little to change the perception that the NDP just aren't up to the task of protecting Albertans' interests.

Madam Speaker, Albertans need to be assured that this government truly has Alberta's best interests at heart. Supporting this motion would send a message to not only our energy sector but to all of Canada that this government is committed to energy projects such as these. We need access to the global market, and this is our best opportunity to get this accomplished.

Again, Motion 506, "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to request that the federal government . . ." [Mr. Loewen's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just a reminder, hon. member, that we don't refer to other members by their names in the House.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you. I rise in response to the motion before the House, Madam Speaker. Opening up new markets for Alberta's oil is a high priority for this government, and we are working diligently and with purpose to achieve that goal. The reason is clear. We need access to tidewater to diversify our energy markets. It's just that simple. However, getting the job done is much more complex. Former governments in Alberta and Ottawa took the approach that has set us back. I will leave those details to historians,

but let me just say that those governments offered everyone a lesson on how not to get a pipeline built.

So here we are confronting an oil price collapse without the access to tidewater we need to get full value for our energy. Things might be different were it not for years of inaction, denial, and political game playing. But we can no more turn back the clock to avoid the mistakes of the past than we can control the world price of oil. We must confront the situation we face today head on with a plan to move our province forward.

Madam Speaker, let me take a moment to lay out the argument for building a pipeline to tidewater. Owing to the inaction and failed policies of former governments, Alberta must sell its oil with North America at discounted prices. That puts us at a competitive disadvantage. First, we need to build a pipeline to tidewater to diversify our energy markets so that we can get the best price for our product. It's important to the future of our economy and to the well-being of every Albertan.

Second, it is also important to note that pipelines are the safest and most environmentally responsible way to transport our products. In Canada we have the expertise, the knowledge, and the technology to build a modern, safe, and well-regulated pipeline.

Third, our energy industry needs access to the Canadian market itself. In a country as rich in energy resources as ours, it makes no sense to import almost a million barrels of oil from other countries. That needs to change.

Madam Speaker, the case for a pipeline is clear. Pipelines are the safest, most environmentally responsible way to diversify our energy markets, to get the best price for our products, and to ensure that Canadians benefit from our country's energy resources. Faced with this reality, we have a choice to make in how we achieve this goal. As I said earlier, former governments failed miserably. Instead of bluster and political game playing that got Alberta nowhere, this government is taking a better approach. We are engaged in a drama-free discussion with industry, with the environmental community, with governments across Canada, and with indigenous peoples about judging individual pipeline proposals on their own merits.

The principles underlying this discussion are very clear. To move forward, pipelines must be judged independently with a fair and balanced framework, and they must meet the highest possible standards for environmental safety and community consultation. These principles apply to every aspect of a pipeline proposal, from construction through to transport and distribution.

Madam Speaker, we are making good progress. The Canadian energy strategy adopted last July provides Canada with a framework to protect the environment and develop our energy industry. Every government in the country understands that these issues must be dealt with. The work continues, the hard work of government.

The motion brought forward today does little new to advance this effort. Quite frankly, it repeats the kind of political gamesmanship that former governments pursued so relentlessly and with so little effect. Sound and fury signifying nothing: that's the opposition's prerogative. They failed in the past, and they are not accountable for their actions today, Madam Speaker.

We are not going to play that game. Grandstanding is no substitute for a strategy that is focused on results, a strategy that can bring people together, that addresses real and legitimate concerns about the environment. That is why our government brought forward a climate leadership plan, the single most important step any government has taken in Canada to address climate change, because climate change is real, Madam Speaker, and we must take action to deal with it. That is why our government continues to pursue a thoughtful and constructive approach to achieving market access, an approach that sets aside the divisive battles of the past

and focuses on what really matters, getting the best possible world price for our energy exports, that are permitted under our climate leadership plan. What matters to Albertans and what matters to this government is that we make meaningful progress towards our shared goal.

When members across the aisle were in government, they did not do this work. Now they have brought forward a motion whose aim is clear: to turn back the clock to the failed policies of the past. Madam Speaker, the reality is that a tanker ban on the north coast of B.C. may or may not be a problem for Alberta, depending on its terms and on the progress being made on one or more of the projects currently before us. The members opposite want to play political games with these critical strategic issues.

We won't play those games. We won't give the quick political win they are looking for. We are working to achieve practical results. We'll stick with our plan and work in close partnership with other government stakeholders until the work is done, because on this side of the House we are focused on what matters, moving Alberta forward with a plan that builds a more diversified and a more resilient economy, that protects our environment and addresses climate change, that effectively advocates to new markets with a safe, environmentally responsible pipeline, and that ensures that we get the best price for our energy products. Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, that is what matters to Albertans, and that is how this government will continue to proceed.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, followed by Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, I rise to speak in favour of this motion. What I hope is that we may be able to carry on in this House in the collegial attitude that we had earlier on today, and I hope that perhaps we can still find a way to get to that place where we can have the government supporting this important motion.

I would sincerely hope that the government of Alberta would be advocating for an end to the tanker ban on the north coast of B.C. because it is in Alberta's interest to do so. I would sincerely hope that that is part of the conversation that's going on between this minister and her government and the federal government.

I'll say that it is good to see that this government seems to be coming around on Northern Gateway. I'm a supporter of pipelines in all directions. I think we'd all agree in this House – it sounds like we do – that pipelines are, in fact, clearly the safest way to ship Alberta's energy or any oil of any kind around the world.

One thing that I guess I want to pick up on in the previous comments from the minister is that I find it really unhelpful to continue blaming the previous government and the previous federal government for their approach when it's been a year that this government has been in power. I think it's now time where this government can take accountability and should take accountability for their own actions in driving this conversation forward.

I would certainly hope that you're advocating for this tanker ban, because it's the kind of thing that came up as a result of the now federal government's fairly vague campaign promise, that was made at a time when they didn't think that they were really, perhaps, actually going to be government. The polls certainly didn't have them in that position. That is something that I'm sure this government understands full well: making campaign promises at a time when perhaps you don't expect to be government and finding yourself in the position to have to actually implement those things. I would think that this would be something, I hope, where our provincial government can use fact-based arguments – and I'm fine

with it being drama-free or however you want to put it – but it is important that this government advocate strongly for the best interests of our province.

5:20

I'm also very curious why this tanker ban applies only to northern British Columbia but not to the supertankers off the east coast, who also have to dodge islands. The supertankers bring tankfuls of Saudi crude to Canadian refineries, something that – we would be far better served by a pipeline, Energy East in particular, taking Alberta crude to the east coast and supporting domestic Canadian production.

The same thing applies to Northern Gateway. Northern Gateway is equally safe, perhaps even more so, than Energy East. Energy East is a very safe pipeline, given the rigour that has gone into supporting and designing Northern Gateway and given some of the terrain that it goes through. Very clearly, a tanker ban is yet another part of the proxy fight against Alberta's oil sands, restricting pipeline development in any possible way they can, facts be damned.

They are going to have a big impact not only on Alberta's economy, not only on the economy of our country but on our social well-being, because while Alberta has a strong social safety net – and so does the rest of our country – it's important to ask: where does the money come from for those social programs? We can have strong social programs, a strong economy, and strong environmental regulation, all at the same time. That's one of the tremendous benefits of being Canadian and being Albertan. In fact, it's something we do better, I think, than anywhere else in the entire world.

It's time for this government to stand up and say proudly that Alberta does have strong environmental regulations, that Alberta does have a strong track record on the environment, that that track record is only getting stronger and only getting better, that Alberta innovation will help the world address climate change in a way that means that we can continue to succeed with the oil sands but also address carbon emissions not only in this province or in this country but around the world. Those are the sorts of things that I'd like to hear from our government as they advocate passionately for Alberta's interests. Advocating against the tanker ban is one of the things I would hope this government would do.

I sincerely hope that all sides of the House will be supporting this motion. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, followed by Edmonton-Centre, followed by a member of the third party.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak in support of Motion 506 because pandas, just like tigers, can't change their stripes. I will always be in support of pipelines. I will always be in support of increased market access for Alberta's resource sector. I will not flip-flop and one day stand in protest, opposing Alberta's oil sector. I will not write an introduction and support a book that encourages the protest of market access and pipelines and details how to go about opposing what makes Alberta great. I will not sign a manifesto that encourages people to oppose the livelihoods of thousands and thousands of people here in Alberta. I will not change my stripes, and I do not take a position that opposes Albertan values and Alberta's oil sands. I am proud to be consistent in what I believe.

I was elected because people met me while I was door-knocking and promoting a party that backs Alberta's oil sands. I was not elected because people saw me at antipipeline protests. Now that I'm in the House, I have not changed my values. I still support our oil industry, and my actions prove my support. I have questioned

this government time and again as to what they're going to do to support market access. I have stood up with the members of my caucus and put forward a jobs action plan that supported pipelines and was swiftly mocked by the members opposite. My values do not change, and that's why I ran and was elected with the party that supports pipelines.

I have asked the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what is being done to approve oil and gas pipelines? He told me that his government has, quote, made more progress in the last eight months than the previous government had in decades. Yet not a single ounce of oil has been transported in a new pipeline for the last year, since this government has been elected.

Under the previous provincial and federal governments we saw the conditional approval of Northern Gateway and the pursuit of Trans Mountain expansion and Energy East. Just as a reminder, the Wildrose leader was part of the government that not only oversaw the conditional approval of Gateway but the line 9 reversal and many other pipelines across the country. Could they have done better? Absolutely. There's always scope for improvement. This party has members who have done more and had more success getting pipelines approved than the NDP government.

But they still have time to show results, and this motion will help them to get a commitment to get pipelines approved. The government does not need help on this anti-oil image they have created. Its sudden transformation into a pipeline-friendly group isn't enough to convince Albertans. This government is closely related to the federal NDP Party, who backs manifestos that oppose the production of fossil fuels here. This government says that they have changed their stripes, and they say that they support market access. Yet other than taxing charities, seniors, families, and hospitals with a carbon tax, what actions has this government done to support the pipelines? Have they spoken out against the protest that took place against Alberta's pipelines, that they say they support? Did the Premier speak to the Prime Minister about reversing his stance on a tanker ban?

There were thousands and thousands of dollars allocated to advertise the carbon tax, but not a single dollar, Madam Speaker – not a single dollar – was allocated to educate their former pipeline protest friends that pipelines are safe and that increasing our market access is the right and proper thing to do for Alberta. The NDP is set on spending taxpayers' dollars on advertising their poorly-thought-out attempt to create some sort of elusive social licence instead of using the simple truth about pipeline safety to reduce opposition to pipelines.

What actions has this government truly taken to get a single pipeline approved so far? What actions has this government taken to assist oil and gas companies to expedite their approval process? What actions has this government taken to reduce the regulatory burden for pipeline approvals? What actions has this government taken to oppose a proposed tanker ban that would make a pipeline to the west coast useless?

Madam Speaker, we are here to help. The Official Opposition is here to help. We are here to help rid this government of their risky ideological policies. This motion is just another action we're taking to help this government do what is right for Alberta. This motion would help Albertans and support the oil and gas industry. This motion requests action that this government should not have to be encouraged to take, action that should have been taken when the issue first surfaced. The opposition party should not have to encourage the government to act on behalf of one of Alberta's largest job creators, yet here we are. We have to encourage this government to act because they refuse to do anything except tax Albertans.

This government needs to act and to produce meaningful results. They need to publicly and definitively request that the federal government not implement a crude-oil tanker ban. If this government is not willing to oppose this tanker ban, then we will know that that tiger cannot change its stripes.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise in response to this motion before the Assembly. I'd like to thank the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky for bringing it forward and providing us with the opportunity to affirm the hard work and advocacy of the Premier and our ministers over the past year. Since our election they've been in continuous consultation with stakeholders in the energy industry. They've been building relationships, hearing their concerns and recommendations, and our government has clearly heard their biggest concern, the need for a pipeline to tidewater.

5:30

Madam Speaker, as others have already referenced, previous governments, both federal and provincial, have failed to meet this need. They've skirted around the need to truly address the issue of climate change, made empty promises, implemented cosmetic policies, and their failure to truly engage with the concerns of those we needed to partner with has ensured that our largest export commodity remains landlocked and unable to access global markets. As a result our province loses millions of dollars a year due to being restricted to a single customer and a single price, and with the rise of production in the U.S., that's projected to get even worse by early next year.

With this in mind, our government has chosen a different path. This past November, in consultation and partnership with the energy industry, with indigenous leaders, and with environmental groups, we introduced our climate leadership plan. This is a bold commitment to real, concrete action on climate change, a commitment built on consensus and partnership that moves Alberta from the back to the front of the pack, and this climate leadership plan will make our province one of the most environmentally responsible energy producers in the world.

Madam Speaker, this plan has not gone unnoticed. The Prime Minister referred to the plan as a historic moment and a positive step, a strong positive step, in the right direction. Our federal minister of the environment stated: we are very proud of the government of Alberta; I think they have shown real leadership. This bold action to improve our environmental standards, to reduce emissions of carbon and methane, and reinvest every dollar collected through the carbon levy back into our economy has begun to open doors where previous governments proved unable.

Recently the Premier was given the opportunity to present our case for pipelines directly to the Prime Minister and his cabinet, clearly outlining Alberta's contributions to Canada's economy, GDP, and revenue base and noting that pipelines from Alberta to tidewater will create increased employment and prosperity across Canada. Now, this is something our government has been consistently vocal and clear about, that, as stated by the Minister of Finance, we cannot continue to help Canada if Canada will not help Alberta.

Madam Speaker, that message is being heard. Following the Premier's meeting with the federal cabinet, federal Natural Resources minister Jim Carr stated that she was very effective at making her case. He stated that she has an argument and a story to tell, and ministers were very keen to hear it.

The Prime Minister has openly acknowledged that one of the fundamental responsibilities of any Canadian Prime Minister is to get Canadian resources to international markets, and in order to get our resources to market in the 21st century, we have to be responsible around the environment.

Mr. Mark Salkeld, CEO of the Petroleum Services Association of Canada, also acknowledged the ground that we've gained, stating that the federal government is stepping up to the plate and creating conversations that we weren't having before. This, Madam Speaker, is as a result of the bold steps we have taken in the government of Alberta.

Even David Manning, the former Alberta representative to Washington, has praise for our approach, declaring that the Premier is a great messenger for the idea of reconciling environmental action with a vibrant resource economy, an important step, as was noted by the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Madam Speaker, because of the work of our government we are closer than ever to ensuring that we have access to the safest infrastructure available to get our product to tidewater, that being a pipeline, and we are there because we have worked collaboratively and built partnerships through responsible action and diplomacy instead of falling back on belligerence and petty politicking.

While this motion does little to help advance the case for pipelines or add to the ongoing conversation with our provincial and federal colleagues, I will support it as a reflection of the work our government is already doing and the considerable ground we've gained in this last year.

I should note that I'm also proud of the work that's going to continue, that I support the work being done through the Canadian energy strategy, which was adopted last July, which provides the framework to ensure that we protect the environment and develop our energy industry. We understand that every government in this country understands that these issues need to be dealt with. It's going to take focus and determination, collaboration with our partners in industry, the environmental community, with governments across Canada, and, of course, the important consultation with indigenous peoples.

I look forward to the continued work of our government, the implementation of our climate leadership plan, and the eventual success of securing Alberta a pipeline to tidewater. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party, followed by Edmonton-Manning, followed by Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand and speak to this motion requesting that our government ask the federal government to not have a tanker ban in place in northern British Columbia. Let me say this. This should be easy for every member of this House to support if indeed we care about the economy of Alberta.

You can imagine that I was just a little disappointed to hear the Energy minister talking at length, when I think she used the word "gamesmanship" 30 times. If it was 20, then I stand corrected. The gamesmanship happens when the minister, frankly, talks about how we shouldn't be importing energy into Canada when Alberta can supply it. This is the minister from the same government that is going to squeeze off Alberta's electricity supply that we can provide here so much that they're making a deal to bring in more electricity out of British Columbia.

That's gamesmanship, when you talk out of one side of your mouth about it being bad to import energy and out of the other side of your mouth you're actually forcing energy to be imported into one of the most energy-rich jurisdictions in the world by your failed policies, particularly when the government ought to know that

when you look at the coal-fired plants right now, the best one in Alberta – and we know that they're not all up to this standard – produces electricity from coal with emissions very similar to burning natural gas. That this government would lock all those billions of dollars in the ground when the technology is almost equal to what they're going to shift to: now, that's gamesmanship.

This is about clearing the path in hopes that we can negotiate a pipeline. This is clearing a path, for the next three years at least, for this current government to try to negotiate a pipeline, and every member of this House would like to see them succeed. But the gamesmanship comes in when they stand up and pretend that no one tried up till now or that no one cared. What I've heard members from the opposite side say here in the last few minutes is that we're going to bring Alberta up to some world standard for how we produce energy. Well, folks, we've been the world leaders for decades.

The previous pipeline deniers on the other side, at least up until recently, are the ones that were on the record calling Alberta embarrassing cousins. Meanwhile the people in our industry, named by the Energy minister, have been at the forefront of making sure that we live up to those standards that were in place by the previous government. Yes, we haven't got a pipeline now, but you know what? Talking down about the standards that the men and women that work in our industry live up to every single day and have lived up to for years isn't going to get it done.

Now, I appreciate it. Thank you. Welcome to the party, government. I'm glad you're now on the pipeline bandwagon. Thank you. That's the right place for you to be. But for them to pretend that no one was trying to get this done before when they've got people on the front bench that have written forewords for books designed to actually shut down the oil sands . . .

**An Hon. Member:** *An Action a Day.*

**Mr. McIver:** Yeah. *An Action a Day.* These are the *An Action a Day* people, that will keep the oil sands away.

Now they're done being pipeline deniers, and that's a good thing. But the fact that they're trying to pretend that no one else has tried anything: now, there's the gamesmanship. That's what's really sad. That's not collaboration, Madam Speaker. That's actually counter-productive to Alberta's best interests, to say that we are going to somehow now magically become better, particularly with what the government calls their climate change strategy, which will do next to nothing about climate change. What it will do is transfer a lot of money from people that use energy to buy votes from 60 per cent of Albertans.

**5:40**

We also know that even those people receiving the rebates are going to pay more because of the carbon tax, a lot more than the rebate that they get back is going to be worth. We know that. It's in the government's own documents, Madam Speaker, where they say that people will be rebated. If the government is right – and that's quite a stretch, but we'll give them the benefit of the doubt for a minute here – they'll be rebated for the amount of gasoline they use and the amount of natural gas they use to heat their homes.

Let's just say that the government is right about that – congratulations – but what the government ignores is the extra cost people will pay for the electricity they buy, for the clothing they buy, for the food they buy, for the furniture they buy or anything else they buy that rides on a truck or a train. The fuel that those trucks or trains use will be taxed, and as things go through the distribution chain – although the government might not understand it, you can't run a business without making a profit – the fuel tax

will be paid at the manufacturing stage, at the distribution stage, and even to heat or cool the stores where the retailing is done. So there will be three or four times, potentially, the cost of the carbon tax, the carbon attack, as I prefer to call it, because that's what it is. It's a carbon attack on Albertans. The carbon attack will make everything that Albertans buy cost more.

The government says that they're rebating two pieces of it. Well, okay, but even the government's own documents – the government members talked about that the average family of four makes \$90,000 a year. Well, that family isn't going to spend more than \$5,000 or \$10,000 a year, probably, on gasoline and to heat their home. So with the other \$80,000, \$60,000 if you will – it doesn't matter – the vast majority of what they spend, everything will cost more, and they're doing nothing for that. The government really knows that the poorest of Albertans – and not everybody that is getting the rebate is the poorest, but the poorest are included in that – will be paying more as a result of this government's carbon tax than they're getting back.

The fact is that if you want to talk about gamesmanship, the Energy minister hasn't really thought it through. Now, getting a pipeline: the government ought to support this. I think one of the government members said that you can't tell for sure whether this will make a difference to the Northern Gateway pipeline. Okay. I'll even buy that from them just for a second though I'm not convinced. Let's give them the benefit of the doubt for argument right now. The fact that it might means that the government should be all standing up, every single one of them, and supporting this motion because all it says is that we're going to encourage the federal government not to have a tanker ban on one of the lifelines to get our product to market on the world market and get full price for it, which is very important. Then they'll have more money to spend. Lord knows what they'll spend it on. Maybe they'll even make a payment on the debt.

Madam Speaker, the fact is that the government's arguments are disingenuous. They have been harmful to the energy industry before they ever so recently stopped being pipeline deniers. This is one more chance for the government to have a modicum of credibility on this file by saying: we are in favour of one of the many roadblocks being taken out of the way to a pipeline. If they want to be believed by anyone, then they ought to all stand up and vote yes for this at the end of this debate, as I shall, because I care and the members of our party care about the jobs that Albertans have, the men and women that work in that industry. We also care about the environment, which is why the standards are so high in this province. We also care about the things that the royalties will pay for: roads, schools, hospitals, seniors' homes, social services. These are the things that the money will pay for if we can get it to market at full price.

When the government wants to spend so much money on these things – and I have to say that there are a lot of things that they want to spend money on that are good ideas although they still don't seem to have any sense of when it's too much and when they should stop borrowing – the fact is that if you want to spend money as bad as this government does, you would think they would get obstacles out of the way of the money going into the cash register. Today the government has an opportunity to do just that by voting for this motion.

Madam Speaker, that's what I think. I believe this is such an easy thing to do. Nobody is asking them to pick a fight. They are asking them to say that we will encourage the Prime Minister and the current federal government to take a roadblock out of the way of Alberta's economy.

I strongly, strongly recommend to the government that they vote yes as a sign that they care about Alberta men and women who have

lost jobs and need jobs because up till now they're falling pretty darn short of making their case. This is a chance for them to provide a little bit of evidence to the public that they might care.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I rise in response to Motion 506. As many of you know, I was raised on Vancouver Island until I was 16, a beautiful little town dependent on forestry, fishing, and the tourism industry. During my time growing up I had the unique opportunity of being able to go camping not on land but on water. Our family would take our family boat out and go and anchor at night in a harbour or at a local dock. Due to this, I was able to see killer whales scratching their backs on the bluffs, porpoises racing the boats, and sea lions and otters playing in the water. So I have an understanding of the concerns for the residents of the west coast and the tanker ban. I understand that our ecoclimate on the island and along the coast is vulnerable and fragile and that it can be impacted by increased freight traffic.

However, I also recognize the fragility of our Alberta and Canadian economies. We are an energy country, Madam Speaker, and Alberta is the economic driver of our country. We currently depend on the oil and gas industry to support the financial stability not only of Alberta but of many other provinces. However, this is currently at risk. With the competition from the United States and our lack of access to tidewater we have a limited ability to get our product to market.

This must change, Madam Speaker, if we as a province and as a nation want to continue to be economic leaders across the globe. To succeed in this important goal, we must work with our neighbours thoughtfully, constructively, and respectfully to achieve this important market access. We need to move past the divisive battles of the past and focus on what matters, getting the best possible price for our energy exports. That's what my constituents in Edmonton-Manning elected me to do.

Madam Speaker, every day I see my constituents working together to solve problems in their community. In reality, the tanker ban on the north coast of B.C. may or may not be a problem for Alberta depending on its terms and on the progress of more of the projects that we currently have before us. We'll stick with our plan. We will work together with the governments and the stakeholders to get the work done of getting our pipelines approved. That's what Albertans expect from us, and that's how this government will proceed.

This can be done, Madam Speaker, in a way that not only supports the concerns of the environment but also the economic development opportunities. Our government recognizes that we need to address climate change. This is why we have introduced our climate change strategy, a plan that will create new jobs by diversifying our economy as well as ensuring the environmental safety of our oil and gas industry. This is the right thing to do. It will ensure that we have a sustainable economy for generations to come. It will support Albertans in their jobs, and it will take care of them, as we said we would.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. I rise today to speak to the important motion put forward by my colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky, Motion 506, regarding pipeline access and regarding the proposed moratorium on the tankers. It should go without saying that



Northern Gateway is one of the most important infrastructure projects for Canada.

Our province has long suffered the discount of petroleum products, and it is commonly stated that our province is blessed by geology and cursed by geography. As a landlocked province we are reliant on our neighbouring territories to obtain access for a project, and this may come as a surprise to members across the way, but we've actually worked together in the past for our economic interests by permitting our beautiful province access to the ports we need.

Just in the last 10 years, while my esteemed colleague from Fort McMurray-Conklin, now the Leader of the Official Opposition, was in federal politics, supporting common-sense infrastructure projects like pipelines – and I'll reiterate this again, just in case – four major pipeline projects were approved. Projects ranged from major repairs to expanding Alberta's existing access to tidewater, line reversals, expanding the province's access to domestic, international ports.

5:50

In June 2010 Keystone phase 1 between Hardisty, Alberta, and Roxana, Illinois, spanning 3,456 kilometres, was completed. The Alberta Clipper, or Enbridge main line 67, was completed in April of 2010. This pipeline is part of Enbridge's extensive pipeline system, with this particular pipeline running from Hardisty, Alberta, to Superior, Wisconsin. Then in 2008 a major pipeline expansion project was completed on Kinder Morgan's anchor loop, expanding the already existing Trans Mountain pipeline. As everyone in this House should already know, the Trans Mountain project provides Alberta access to tidewater through British Columbia. In 2012 Enbridge completed its reversal of line 9. These are just recent examples of expansions that brought significant changes to massive pipeline infrastructure. However, the access is insufficient.

Perhaps what is more problematic is that this infrastructure is largely designed to service a market that is no longer reliant on significant volumes of Canadian crude. The shale oil and gas revolution has significantly reduced American reliance on Canadian crude, and significant technologies accounted for under this revolution have meant that the American market is now oversaturated. So our neighbours to the south went from being a country so traumatized by the oil price shock of the '80s that both their foreign and domestic policy was largely guided by the goal of ensuring the security of their country's energy supply to a country that is now nearly self-sufficient in energy.

Much of our infrastructure was built around supplying American markets. To repeat what the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky has said, this oversaturation in the market has meant pipelines are overcapacity, so we are bottlenecking at this point. Canadian producers are so desperate to move their product out of province that they're selling it at a discount. To reiterate again, that is billions less in royalties and taxes for this province.

Western Canadian select trades at \$14 a barrel lower than North American benchmark west Texas intermediate. When you are a province producing millions of barrels a day, that discount hurts. Our oil and gas industry needs to access new markets, particularly economically booming Asian markets, and this access will come from this project of Trans Mountain and Northern Gateway. The moratorium on tanker traffic would be unequivocally detrimental to Alberta's energy industry and, consequently, to the Albertans who rely on this.

Long before I was elected to represent the constituency of Chestermere-Rocky View, while the Leader of the Official Opposition held a seat in the federal office, our then Conservative

federal government showed explicit support for the arm's-length agencies which are charged with pipeline regulations and approvals, the National Energy Board. Arm's-length bodies made sound recommendations to our federal cabinet, and in turn the cabinet generally – and this was true for decades, in fact – trusted the strict standards of these agencies and followed their recommendations. It was a time of quiet recognition and rigorous requirements mandated by the NEB in order for a company to gain a licence to build a pipeline, rigorous regulatory requirements that meant Canada had and still does have the highest for pipeline approvals in the world, just to be clear.

During this same time period – this government was newly elected and had antipipeline protesters, and then the federal government was also elected with anti Northern Gateway activism – the Member for Calgary-East was one of the members opposite who was protesting Keystone; our current Premier was attending anti, quote, unquote, tar sands rallies; while the Member for Edmonton-Calder, our new Education minister, was riling up the crowd, not to be outdone by the Member for Lethbridge-West, our environment minister. The actions taken by members of the NDP and their fellow travellers have had a profound impact on pipeline approvals.

Members of this government are personally responsible for pushing pipeline approval, a process once handled by an apolitical, arm's-length body, a process that until recently saw pipelines regularly gain approval and construction, into an issue of partisanship. The members of this government contributed to the politicization of a process of pipeline approval to the detriment of these common-sense infrastructure projects. Because of the actions taken and written about by members of this government, pipeline approval is no longer apolitical, and it's those members of the NDP and the groups this government is usually happy to work with that have caused the massive delays in pipeline construction that we are now facing.

Now that this government is done changing the pipeline approvals process to the detriment of the people they've been elected to represent, it is time for this government to apologize for their past indiscretions, follow Wildrose leadership, and actually support pipelines. The members of this government have created a climate in which quiet support for this process is no longer sufficient. Now it is time for the government to provide active vocal support for these projects, not the hollow, qualified support that we've seen so far. Albertans deserve far more than reserved support from this Premier on a project with economic benefits ranging in the billions. It's time for our Premier to stop recommending that Trans Mountain alter the proposed project instead of actually supporting . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but under Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky to close debate.

I will first recognize the hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent of the House to go to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I want to say thanks for the support expressed today, but I do have to clarify a few points. I want to point out that the NDP government did campaign against Northern Gateway, and they did bring in anti-oil

activists from across Canada to work in their upper staff. So if Albertans are a little suspicious of this government and their support for pipelines, they have good reason to be. How can you convince Albertans that you truly changed a lifetime of work against the energy industry? Well, one way would be to support this motion but follow that with action.

**Mr. Panda:** Concrete action.

**Mr. Loewen:** Concrete action.

Now, think about Northern Gateway. Some say that it's looking like it's a little closer to happening. Finally, the Premier has kind of come onboard and said that she might support Northern Gateway, but of course we've never seen any of that support until the last few weeks.

The support for pipelines isn't just about taxing Albertans out of business; it's about actual support to get Albertans working and get Albertans back into business.

Now, this isn't an exhaustive list of pipelines. We picked three good pipelines to put in this motion. These pipelines: we just need to get them approved and get them going. That doesn't take any government money, doesn't take anything. Business wants to do this, and we need it.

I do want to point out a few comments from the Energy minister. She says that other governments failed to get pipelines built. Well, I can't see how you can suggest that the other governments failed when the very people that support this government, that actually sit in the benches across, actively campaigned, put up roadblocks and obstructions against these pipelines. If we want to talk about drama-free action for pipelines, all the drama was against pipelines before, Madam Speaker.

We've spent \$6 billion on carbon capture and now \$3 billion more on a carbon tax. We've increased the carbon emission tax. We're spending billions of dollars here. Finally, maybe we're starting to see a little bit of light, but I don't think it should cost Albertans billions of dollars to get their energy to tidewater.

As far as political games, this isn't a political game; this is about supporting Albertans and supporting jobs. It's our job to do that. That's not a game.

Now, the Member for Edmonton-Centre said that this government has been working hard for a year to get pipelines. Well, sorry. When it comes to Northern Gateway, it might be two weeks of humming and hawing, but it isn't hard work. He also mentioned about making Canada the most environmentally responsible oil

producer. We always have been. We are. He also talks about the carbon tax, reinvesting it. I'm not sure where else tax dollars would go but to be reinvested in Alberta. It's like it's some sort of new idea that you've never heard of before. He said that the federal government was keen to hear the Premier. Well, what about the proposed tanker ban? There hasn't been a lot of talk from the government side on the proposed tanker ban.

Anyway, I want to end with thanks for the support. We may have differences in our view of the facts that got us to this point, but we really need to work together to get fair dollar for our resources and put Albertans back to work again.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 506 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Goehring	Miranda
Babcock	Hanson	Nielsen
Bilous	Hinkley	Orr
Carson	Horne	Panda
Clark	Hunter	Piquette
Connolly	Jean	Pitt
Coolahan	Kazim	Rodney
Cooper	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Sabir
Cyr	Loewen	Schneider
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sweet
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Taylor
Feehan	McIver	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	van Dijken
Ganley	Miller	Woollard
Gill		

Totals:	For – 49	Against – 0
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 506 carried unanimously]

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:05 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, May 17, 2016

Day 29

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Government House Leader  
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, May 17, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect. In our service to the people of this great province let us work together to seek out new solutions, new opportunities, and new ideas. As leaders may we by our actions inspire others to achieve their goals and dreams and to never give up.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day Committee of Supply

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

Prior to beginning, I will outline the process for this morning. The Committee of Supply will first call on the chairs of the legislative policy committees to report on their meetings with the various ministries under their mandate. No vote is required when these reports are presented according to Standing Order 59.01(10). Members are reminded that there were amendments introduced during the legislative policy committee meetings, so the committee will vote on all proposed amendments.

The committee will then proceed to the vote on the estimates of the Legislative Assembly as approved by the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services. The vote on main estimates will then take place.

Finally, the chair would like to remind all hon. members of Standing Order 32(3.1), which provides that "after the first division is called in Committee of Supply during the vote on the main estimates . . . the interval between division bells shall be reduced to one minute for any subsequent division."

### Committee Reports

**The Chair:** I will now invite the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future to present the committee's report.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2016-17 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Advanced Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Ministry of Executive Council, Ministry of Infrastructure, and Ministry of Labour.

I would also like to table amendments to the following ministries, that were introduced during our meetings, for the Committee of Supply's consideration: Ministry of Advanced Education, one amendment; Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, one amendment; Ministry of Culture and Tourism, one amendment; Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, one amendment; Ministry of Executive Council, one amendment; Ministry of Infrastructure, one amendment; and Ministry of Labour, one amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I would now call on the chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities to present the committee's report.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I'm pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2016-17 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Human Services, Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, Ministry of Seniors and Housing, Ministry of Service Alberta, and Ministry of Status of Women.

I would also like to table amendments to the following ministries, that were introduced during our meetings, for the Committee of Supply's consideration: Ministry of Education, one amendment; Ministry of Health, one amendment; and Ministry of Service Alberta, one amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now I'll call on the chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2016-2017 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Environment and Parks, Ministry of Indigenous Relations, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Ministry of Transportation, and Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance.

I would also like to table amendments to the following ministries, that were introduced during our meetings, for the Committee of Supply's consideration: Ministry of Energy, one amendment; Ministry of Environment and Parks, one amendment; Ministry of Transportation, one amendment; and Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance, also one amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

### Vote on Main Estimates 2016-17

**The Chair:** The next item of business is the vote on the amendments introduced during the legislative policy committee meetings. There are a total of 14 amendments, and they will be identified as amendments A1 through A14. Members have copies of all amendments on their desks. We will begin with A1 and carry on in sequence.

- A1. Mr. Taylor moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Advanced Education be reduced
- (a) for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 20 by \$39,000
  - (b) for the deputy minister's office under reference 1.2 at page 20 by \$32,000
  - (c) for communications under reference 1.3 at page 20 by \$145,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 19 for expense is \$2,730,214,000.

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

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

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rodney
Cooper	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Starke
Ellis	McIver	Stier
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Strankman
Fraser	Orr	Taylor
Gill	Panda	van Dijken
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Payne
Babcock	Horne	Phillips
Bilous	Jansen	Piquette
Carlier	Kazim	Renaud
Carson	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Loyola	Sabir
Connolly	Luff	Schmidt
Coolahan	Malkinson	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Shepherd
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Dang	McKitrick	Sucha
Drever	McLean	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard
Gray	Nielsen	

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, did you vote?

**Dr. Swann:** I did not, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** You will need to vote on way or another.

**Dr. Swann:** I'm still learning about the vote we're taking here. Excuse me.

**The Chair:** Okay. Hon. member, you can't withdraw. You do have to vote one way or another. For or against?

**Dr. Swann:** I'll vote against.

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 45
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

- A2. Mr. Taylor moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry be reduced
- (a) for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 34 by \$37,000
  - (b) for the deputy minister's office under reference 1.2 at page 34 by \$39,000
  - (c) for corporate services under reference 1.4 at page 34 by \$670,000
  - (d) for communications under reference 1.5 at page 34 by \$206,000
  - (e) for human resources under reference 1.6 at page 34 by \$153,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 33 for expense is \$715,708,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:24 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rodney
Cooper	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Starke
Ellis	McIver	Stier
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Strankman
Fraser	Orr	Taylor
Gill	Panda	van Dijken
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Payne
Babcock	Horne	Phillips
Bilous	Jansen	Piquette
Carlier	Kazim	Renaud
Carson	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Loyola	Sabir
Connolly	Luff	Schmidt
Coolahan	Malkinson	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Shepherd
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Dang	McKitrick	Sucha
Drever	McLean	Swann
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Sweet
Goehring	Miranda	Turner
Gray	Nielsen	Woollard

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 45
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

- A3. Mr. Taylor moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism be reduced
- (a) for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 50 by \$14,000
  - (b) for the deputy minister's office under reference 1.2 at page 50 by \$16,000
  - (c) for human resources under reference 1.3 at page 50 by \$212,000
  - (d) for communications under reference 1.4 at page 50 by \$42,000
  - (e) for corporate services under reference 1.5 at page 50 by \$56,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 49 for expense is \$316,436,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:29 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Schneider
Cooper	Hunter	Smith
Cyr	Loewen	Starke
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Stier
Ellis	McIver	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Taylor
Fraser	Orr	van Dijken
Gill	Pitt	Yao
Gotfried	Rodney	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Payne
Babcock	Horne	Piquette
Bilous	Jansen	Renaud
Carlier	Kazim	Rosendahl
Carson	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Ceci	Loyola	Schmidt
Connolly	Luff	Schreiner
Coolahan	Malkinson	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Sigurdson
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Dang	McKitrick	Swann
Drever	McLean	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard
Gray	Nielsen	
Totals:	For – 26	Against – 44

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

- A4. Mr. Panda moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade be reduced
- (a) for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 68 by \$398,000
  - (b) for the deputy minister's office under reference 1.3 at page 68 by \$40,000
  - (c) for communications under reference 1.4 at page 68 by \$251,000
  - (d) for strategic policy and corporate services under reference 1.5 at page 68 by \$2,603,000
  - (e) for secretariat support under reference 1.6 at page 68 by \$54,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 67 for expense is \$396,577,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:34 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Starke
Ellis	McIver	Stier
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Strankman
Fraser	Orr	Taylor
Gill	Pitt	van Dijken
Gotfried	Rodney	Yao
Hanson		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Payne
Babcock	Horne	Piquette
Bilous	Jansen	Renaud
Carlier	Kazim	Rosendahl
Carson	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Ceci	Loyola	Schmidt
Connolly	Luff	Schreiner
Coolahan	Malkinson	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Sigurdson
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha

Dang	McKitrick	Swann
Drever	McLean	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard
Gray	Nielsen	
Totals:	For – 25	Against – 44

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

- A5. Mr. Smith moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Education be reduced
- (a) for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 80 by \$25,000
  - (b) for the deputy minister's office under reference 1.2 at page 80 by \$21,000
  - (c) for corporate services under reference 1.3 at page 80 by \$226,000
  - (d) for information and program services under reference 1.4 at page 80 by \$378,000
  - (e) for communications under reference 1.5 at page 80 by \$41,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 79 for expense is \$4,400,190,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:39 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Cooper	Loewen	Smith
Cyr	MacIntyre	Starke
Drysdale	McIver	Stier
Ellis	Nixon	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Orr	Taylor
Gill	Pitt	van Dijken
Gotfried	Rodney	Yao
Hanson		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Nielsen
Babcock	Hoffman	Payne
Bilous	Horne	Piquette
Carlier	Jansen	Renaud
Carson	Kazim	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Connolly	Loyola	Schmidt
Coolahan	Luff	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dach	Mason	Sigurdson
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Drever	McKitrick	Swann
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Sweet
Fraser	Miller	Turner
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard
Totals:	For – 25	Against – 45

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

- A6. Mrs. Aheer moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Energy be reduced

- (a) for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 94 by \$35,000
  - (b) for the deputy minister's office under reference 1.2 at page 94 by \$24,000
  - (c) for corporate services under reference 1.4 at page 94 by \$138,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 93 for expense is \$247,732,000.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:44 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rodney
Cooper	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Jansen	Smith
Drysdale	Loewen	Starke
Ellis	MacIntyre	Stier
Fildebrandt	McIver	Strankman
Fraser	Nixon	Taylor
Gill	Orr	van Dijken
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Payne
Babcock	Horne	Piquette
Bilous	Kazim	Renaud
Carlier	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Carson	Loyola	Sabir
Ceci	Luff	Schmidt
Connolly	Malkinson	Schreiner
Coolahan	Mason	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Dach	McKitrick	Sucha
Dang	McLean	Swann
Drever	Miller	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Turner
Goehring	Nielsen	Woollard
Gray		

Totals: For – 27 Against – 43

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

A7. Mr. MacIntyre moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Environment and Parks be reduced

- (a) for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 106 by \$34,000
  - (b) for the deputy minister's office under reference 1.2 at page 106 by \$31,000
  - (c) for communications under reference 1.3 at page 106 by \$148,000
  - (d) for legal services under reference 1.5 at page 106 by \$16,000
  - (e) for corporate services under reference 1.6 at page 106 by \$1,470,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 105 for expense is \$513,910,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A7 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:48 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:

Aheer	Hanson	Schneider
Cooper	Hunter	Smith
Cyr	Loewen	Starke
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Stier
Ellis	McIver	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Taylor
Fraser	Orr	van Dijken
Gill	Pitt	Yao
Gotfried	Rodney	

Against:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Nielsen
Babcock	Horne	Payne
Bilous	Jansen	Piquette
Carlier	Kazim	Renaud
Carson	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Loyola	Sabir
Connolly	Luff	Schreiner
Coolahan	Malkinson	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Sigurdson
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Dang	McKitrick	Swann
Drever	McLean	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard
Gray		

Totals: For – 26 Against – 43

[Motion on amendment A7 lost]

A8. Mr. Taylor moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Executive Council be reduced

- (a) for office of the Premier/Executive Council under reference 1.1 at page 22 by \$409,000
  - (b) for corporate services under reference 1.3 at page 122 by \$97,000
  - (c) for public affairs under reference 3 at page 122 by \$461,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 121 for expense is \$25,840,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A8 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:53 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Schneider
Cooper	Hunter	Smith
Cyr	Jansen	Starke
Drysdale	Loewen	Stier
Ellis	MacIntyre	Strankman
Fildebrandt	McIver	Taylor
Fraser	Orr	van Dijken

Gill	Pitt	Yao
Gotfried	Rodney	
Against the motion:		
Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Payne
Babcock	Horne	Piquette
Bilous	Kazim	Renaud
Carlier	Kleinsteinuber	Rosendahl
Carson	Loyola	Sabir
Ceci	Luff	Schmidt
Connolly	Malkinson	Schreiner
Coolahan	Mason	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Dach	McKitrick	Sucha
Dang	McLean	Swann
Drever	Miller	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Turner
Goehring	Nielsen	Woollard
Gray		
Totals:	For – 26	Against – 43

[Motion on amendment A8 lost]

- A9. Mr. Barnes moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Health be reduced
- (a) for communications under reference 1.4 at page 128 by \$314,000
  - (b) for strategic corporate support under reference 1.5 at page 128 by \$3,331,000
  - (c) for policy development and strategic support under reference 1.6 at page 128 by \$1,619,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 127 for expense is \$19,311,610,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A9 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:57 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rodney
Cooper	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Starke
Ellis	McIver	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Taylor
Gill	Orr	van Dijken
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao

**11:00**

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Payne
Babcock	Horne	Piquette
Bilous	Jansen	Renaud
Carlier	Kazim	Rosendahl
Carson	Kleinsteinuber	Sabir
Ceci	Loyola	Schmidt
Connolly	Luff	Schreiner
Coolahan	Malkinson	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Sigurdson
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Dang	McKitrick	Swann

Drever	McLean	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard
Gray	Nielsen	

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Calgary-South East, are you voting for or against?

**Mr. Fraser:** Against.

Totals: For – 24 Against – 45

[Motion on amendment A9 lost]

A10. Mr. Schneider moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Infrastructure be reduced

- (a) for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 162 by \$80,000
  - (b) for the deputy minister's office under reference 1.2 at page 162 by \$45,000
  - (c) for communications under reference 1.3 at page 162 by \$100,000
  - (d) for human resources under reference 1.4 at page 162 by \$74,000
  - (e) for corporate strategies and services under reference 1.5 at page 162 by \$1,555,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 161 for expense is \$557,811,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A10 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:03 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rodney
Cooper	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Starke
Ellis	McIver	Stier
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Strankman
Fraser	Orr	Taylor
Gill	Panda	van Dijken
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Payne
Babcock	Jansen	Piquette
Bilous	Kazim	Renaud
Carson	Kleinsteinuber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Loyola	Sabir
Connolly	Luff	Schmidt
Coolahan	Malkinson	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Shepherd
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Dang	McKitrick	Sucha
Drever	McLean	Swann
Feehan	Miller	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Turner
Goehring	Nielsen	Woollard
Gray		

Totals: For – 27 Against – 43

[Motion on amendment A10 lost]

A11. Mr. Hunter moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Labour be reduced

- (a) for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 186 by \$17,000
  - (b) for the deputy minister's office under reference 1.2 at page 186 by \$17,000
  - (c) for human resources under reference 1.3 at page 186 by \$19,000
  - (d) for corporate services under reference 1.4 at page 186 by \$85,000
  - (e) for communications and services under reference 1.5 at page 186 by \$31,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 185 for expense is \$212,182,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A11 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:07 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Starke
Ellis	McIver	Stier
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Strankman
Fraser	Orr	Taylor
Gill	Panda	van Dijken
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao
Hanson	Rodney	

**11:10**

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Piquette
Babcock	Kazim	Renaud
Bilous	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Carson	Loyola	Sabir
Ceci	Luff	Schmidt
Connolly	Malkinson	Schreiner
Coolahan	Mason	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Dach	McKitrick	Sucha
Dang	McLean	Swann
Drever	Miller	Sweet
Feehan	Miranda	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Woollard
Goehring	Payne	

Totals: For – 26 Against – 41

[Motion on amendment A11 lost]

A12. Mrs. Pitt moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Service Alberta be reduced

- (a) for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 218 by \$39,000
  - (b) for the deputy minister's office under reference 1.3 at page 218 by \$41,000
  - (c) for corporate services under reference 1.4 at page 218 by \$967,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 217 for expense is \$314,922,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A12 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:12 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rodney
Cooper	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Starke
Ellis	McIver	Stier
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Strankman
Fraser	Orr	Taylor
Gill	Panda	van Dijken
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Piquette
Babcock	Kazim	Renaud
Bilous	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Carson	Loyola	Sabir
Ceci	Luff	Schmidt
Connolly	Malkinson	Schreiner
Coolahan	Mason	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Dach	McKitrick	Sucha
Dang	McLean	Swann
Drever	Miller	Sweet
Feehan	Miranda	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Woollard
Goehring	Payne	

Totals: For – 27 Against – 41

[Motion on amendment A12 lost]

A13. Mrs. Aheer moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Transportation be reduced

- (a) for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 234 by \$11,000
  - (b) for the deputy minister's office under reference 1.2 at page 234 by \$39,000
  - (c) for communications under reference 1.3 at page 234 by \$62,000
  - (d) for strategic services under reference 1.4 at page 234 by \$891,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 233 for expense is \$828,130,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A13 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:17 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Cooper	Loewen	Smith
Cyr	MacIntyre	Starke
Drysdale	McIver	Stier
Ellis	Nixon	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Orr	Taylor

Gill	Panda	van Dijken
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao
Hanson	Rodney	

**11:20**

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Payne
Babcock	Jansen	Piquette
Bilous	Kazim	Renaud
Carson	Kleinsteinuber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Loyola	Sabir
Connolly	Luff	Schmidt
Coolahan	Malkinson	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Shepherd
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Dang	McKitrick	Sucha
Drever	McLean	Swann
Feehan	Miller	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Turner
Goehring	Nielsen	Woollard
Totals:	For – 26	Against – 42

[Motion on amendment A13 lost]

A14. Mrs. Aheer moved that the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance be reduced

- (a) for the deputy minister's office under reference 1.2 at page 248 by \$23,000
  - (b) for strategic and business services under reference 1.3 at page 248 by \$732,000
  - (c) for communications under reference 1.4 at page 248 by \$43,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 247 for expense is \$150,161,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A14 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:21 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rodney
Cooper	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Starke
Ellis	McIver	Stier
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Strankman
Fraser	Orr	Taylor
Gill	Panda	van Dijken
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Payne
Babcock	Jansen	Piquette
Bilous	Kazim	Renaud
Carson	Kleinsteinuber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Loyola	Sabir
Connolly	Luff	Schmidt
Coolahan	Malkinson	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Shepherd
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Dang	McKitrick	Sucha

Drever	McLean	Swann
Feehan	Miller	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Turner
Goehring	Nielsen	Woollard

Totals: For – 27 Against – 42

[Motion on amendment A14 lost]

**The Chair:** We shall now proceed to the vote on the estimates of the Legislative Assembly as approved by the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(5), which requires that the estimates of the offices of the Legislative Assembly be decided without debate or amendment prior to the vote on the main estimates, I must now put the following question on all matters relating to the 2016-17 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

Agreed to:  
Offices of the Legislative Assembly \$126,107,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?**Hon. Members:** Agreed.**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

We shall now proceed to the final vote on the main estimates and all matters related to the 2016-17 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

[The voice vote did not indicate agreement]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:27 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Payne
Babcock	Horne	Piquette
Bilous	Kazim	Renaud
Carson	Kleinsteinuber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Loyola	Sabir
Connolly	Luff	Schmidt
Coolahan	Malkinson	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Shepherd
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Dang	McKitrick	Sucha
Drever	Miller	Sweet
Feehan	Miranda	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Woollard

**11:30**

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Cooper	Jansen	Smith
Cyr	Loewen	Starke
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Stier
Ellis	McIver	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Swann
Fraser	Orr	Taylor
Gill	Panda	van Dijken
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao
Hanson	Rodney	

Totals: For – 39 Against – 29

[The estimates of the general revenue fund and lottery fund were carried]

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

I will now invite the hon. Government House Leader to move that the committee rise and report.

**Mr. Mason:** I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions related to the 2016-2017 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the 2016-2017 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

The following resolutions for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, have been approved.

Offices of the Legislative Assembly.

Support to the Legislative Assembly, \$67,897,000; office of the Auditor General, \$26,754,000; office of the Ombudsman, \$3,328,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$5,668,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, \$1,130,000; office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$6,857,000; office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$13,242,000; office of the Public Interest Commissioner, \$1,231,000.

Government main estimates.

Advanced Education: expense, \$2,730,430,000; capital investment, \$438,588,000; financial transactions, \$579,000,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$716,813,000; capital investment, \$15,491,000; financial transactions, \$1,310,000.

Culture and Tourism: expense, \$316,776,000; capital investment, \$2,041,000; financial transactions, \$852,000.

Economic Development and Trade: expense, \$399,923,000; capital investment, \$3,025,000.

Education: expense, \$4,400,881,000; capital investment, \$1,802,059,000; financial transactions, \$13,692,000.

Energy: expense, \$247,929,000; capital investment, \$5,399,000.

Environment and Parks: expense, \$515,609,000; capital investment, \$148,673,000; financial transactions, \$100,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$26,807,000.

Health: expense, \$19,316,874,000; capital investment, \$72,757,000; financial transactions, \$63,000,000.

Human Services: expense, \$4,263,075,000; capital investment, \$5,162,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$192,275,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$54,412,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$559,665,000; capital investment, \$943,691,000; financial transactions, \$49,666,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$1,277,002,000; capital investment, \$38,982,000.

Labour: expense, \$212,351,000; capital investment, \$900,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$1,741,138,000; capital investment, \$3,017,000; financial transactions, \$367,472,000.

Seniors and Housing: expense, \$726,741,000; financial transactions, \$12,850,000.

Service Alberta: expense, \$315,969,000; capital investment, \$99,767,000; financial transactions, \$7,650,000.

Status of Women: expense, \$7,530,000; capital investment, \$50,000.

Transportation: expense, \$829,133,000; capital investment, \$1,269,804,000; financial transactions, \$86,949,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$150,959,000; capital investment, \$2,478,000; financial transactions, \$8,648,000; transfer from the lottery fund, \$1,451,069,000.

Madam Speaker, that concludes my report.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

11:40

## Introduction of Bills

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

### Bill 17 Appropriation Act, 2016

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 17, the Appropriation Act, 2016. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a first time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

### Bill 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 10 today, a bill that drastically and dramatically changes the future of our province, a bill that is not laying out a course to fiscal responsibility. It is a bill that lays out a path to reckless spending, higher taxes, incredible amounts of debt, and at the end of the day it will mean significant challenges for our province's future and, in particular, to the future of our children with respect to the full weight of government coming to bear on those future generations.

While the government, Madam Chair, might like to talk about this plan being a good one, it was only approximately four months ago – I think it's just over a hundred days now – that the hon. Finance minister stood in this place and made it clear to all of the Assembly that 15 per cent of debt to GDP would give the current government lots of room, and he assured us on a number of occasions – and my colleague from Strathmore-Brooks asked a significant amount of questions both during debate and during question period about raising the debt limit.

One of the concerns that we highlighted at the time, Madam Chair, was the creep that begins to happen when the debt limit is raised. We saw in October, I believe it was, this move to move to



15 per cent. We suggested that south of the border they have this problem as well, where they continually come up against the debt ceiling, come back to Congress, in the example that I'm using in the States, and say: we just need to raise it this one more time. But what we've seen from this NDP government is something even worse than what they propose in the States. Every time they raise the debt limit in the States, they put a new one on.

What Bill 10 does is remove any sort of accountability to the Legislature, an institution that I and this side of the House hold near and dear. To remove the accountability to the Assembly and the requirement for the government to have to come back and ask the people of Alberta whether or not increasing the debt limit is okay with them: the fact that the government has chosen to do that is more than a bit disappointing. In fact, I am convinced that this is not the type of governance or the type of change that Albertans were hoping for a little over a year ago, when this new government was elected.

What they were hoping for was a government that would be accountable to the people of Alberta. What they were hoping for was a government that would improve transparency, would increase debate, increase accountability, which, I am sorry to say, the previous government had gotten away from a great deal, but what they've gotten is not that at all. The new government hasn't lived up to their promises to be accountable, to be transparent, to be open. This is a perfect example of that. This government is taking steps to remove transparency and accountability, and that is not the kind of change that Albertans were hoping for.

Over the last number of years the province of Alberta has prided itself on being debt free, and then over the last eight years or so we moved in the opposite direction and began this desire of governments of the day to change legislation, to go back upon things that they once held dear and start to work on softening legislation. Today we are at the point where they're removing legislation, and this is not helpful.

Politicians from time to time have a hard time with accountability. Certainly, what we see here is a removal of accountability and an opportunity for the government to spend past 15 per cent of debt to GDP, past 20, past 30, all the way to the sky being the limit. This is not helpful because what it does do is put the financial stability of our future at risk.

Even at this time, by the end of this government the debt interest payments will be close to \$2 billion per year, Madam Chair, \$2 billion every single year moving forward, and that's if we don't go into debt even further. One thing this government hasn't done is propose any sort of plan on how this will be repaid. The plan that they spoke about just months ago was a 15 per cent debt to GDP, which was concerning to the opposition and many members of this Assembly, but now they're doing away with that and have zero plan. Two billion dollars is a lot of hospitals, schools, teachers, nurses. As we continue down this reckless path, we run the risk of putting those institutions and individuals in jeopardy in the future because of the negligence of today's government.

11:50

When we throw away the future because of the immediate concerns, it presents a real challenge. As legislators we need to make sure that we have a forward vision for the province, one that is looking long past just the challenges of today and considering the well-being of the future of our province.

I am certain that I and colleagues on this side of the Chamber will have a significant amount to say around this bill, but for the time being I will allow some of my colleagues, who, I know, have some concerns, to share some of those with the Chamber.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to address some of the concerns brought up by the Opposition House Leader. You know, budgets are always about choices, Madam Chair. The opposition and their choices are pretty clear to me and members on this side. They would cut billions out of this budget. They would cut the services that Alberta families count on like health care and education. They would balance a budget on the backs of Albertans. They want us to return to the mistakes of previous governments that in the past cut recklessly or proposed to cut recklessly things like health care and education. That would be on top of the previous \$9 billion cut to investments on schools, hospitals, roads, and bridges.

It's clear, Madam Chair, that they want to tear down Alberta while we choose to build Alberta at this time, when there is ready capital, when there is ready machinery standing idle, when there are people needing to be employed, when there is opportunity in this province. We want to build; they want to push it down the road like a previous government did with the lack of infrastructure spending that they caused in this province. It left a legacy of infrastructure decline.

The 15 per cent debt-to-GDP limit set in the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act is being removed at this time so that we can provide the flexibility required to deal with the current economic situation, which is dire. There are no two ways about it. We're taking this measure during the difficult economic times to invest in jobs and protect public services. That's something that won't happen on that side of the House.

Our balance sheet in this province remains the envy of the nation. Our borrowing costs remain among the lowest of all the provinces. This fiscal year we expect to spend 2.4 per cent of our budget revenue on debt servicing. Only 2.4 per cent. By comparison, in B.C. they will spend 5.5 per cent of their budget revenue on debt servicing. In B.C. they will spend more than twice what we're spending. In Ontario they're expecting to spend 9 per cent of their budget revenue on debt servicing, almost four times higher than Alberta.

We have on page 9 of the fiscal plan identified at this point in time by the most recent numbers, 2014-15, 3.4 per cent debt to GDP. If members look at the following page, at the end of this fiscal plan the target is for that to be 15.5 per cent, which would put us at odds with the law that we put in place. So we will be changing that. Back to page 9, when you look at the debt-to-GDP ratios of all the provinces by comparison and the federal government, you see that Alberta's position is enviable still.

**The Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. minister, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 10.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. With an eye on the clock I will move that we call it 12 o'clock and adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:57 a.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 17, 2016

Day 29

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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 Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
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 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
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 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
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Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
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Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
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Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
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### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

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Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
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### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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### Standing Committee on Private Bills

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### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Clark	Malkinson
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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 17, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 50 of the brightest grade 6 students, from Northmount elementary school, located in the incredible constituency of Edmonton-Decore. They are accompanied today by two of their teachers, Nicole Christian and Diana Coumantarakis. I'd ask that they all please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly the students and teacher of Eleanor Hall school from Clyde, Alberta. They are here conducting the week-long School at the Legislature. Their teacher is Mr. Albert Perreault, and the parent helpers are Ms Julie MacLean, Mr. Jim Laughy, Mr. Ian Despina, and Mrs. Linda McCoy. I'd would ask that the teachers, parents, and students rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take great pride today to introduce to you a class from Rutherford constituency, l'école Greenfield school, with their teacher Caitlin Hudon and parent helpers Susan Woepel and Jessica Doody. If they could please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly an organizer and supporter of the group Oil People Helping Oil People, Mr. Orion Fike. Based in Brooks, Oil People Helping Oil People stepped up to help our laid-off oil and gas workers in the Newell region and have been successful in raising funds to provide food, gas, and medication and accessing community supports to our laid-off oil and gas workers. I'd ask that Orion please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

**Mr. Connolly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly several guests joining us from the Imperial Sovereign Court of the Wild Rose. I ask that they rise while I call their titles: Lj Steele, Emperor XXXV; Trey LePark Trash, Imperial Grand Duke XL; Davvid Drag On, Imperial Crown Prince XL; Carrie Du'Way, Imperial Crown Princess XL; Yeust Bobb, Emperor Elect

XL; and Myra Maines, Empress Elect XL. I'd be remiss if I didn't add that Myra Maines' nondrag name is also Michael Connolly, spelled exactly the same way as mine. As you can imagine, there have been some mix-ups in the past year as we seem to run in similar circles. I now ask that the Assembly affords them the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce you to a wonderful family, the Elkuraji family, consisting of Yasir, Safiya, Ahmat, and Ramadan with their volunteers Merna Schmidt, Julie Kamel, Badi Jabbour, Ahmed Najar, Elise Campbell, Carol Vogler, Alice Sears, and Phyllis Ramsden. Would you all please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three people that volunteer in Strathcona-Sherwood Park: Jim Johannsson, Shelley Johannsson, and Cam Robinson. All three of them are essential to the day-to-day ongoing operations of the Cooking Lake Airport, which I'll be speaking more about later on today. Their hard work is exemplary of the volunteer spirit alive and well in my constituency. I'd ask all three of them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests? The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure and honour to introduce to you and through you a group from Fort McMurray who played an instrumental role in ensuring the safe and timely evacuation of a few hundred pets from our community. It was comforting to know that the SPCA was there when the community needed them the most. As I state your name, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly: George Rowe, the SPCA president of Fort McMurray; Gilles Huizinga, the treasurer; Tara Clarke, the executive director; Sara Gaertner, the operations manager; Misha Gaertner, the kennel manager; and Andryia Browne, public relations. Please rise and accept this warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Thank you.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

### Wildfire Update

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have several important updates for the Assembly on the wildfire situation, but first I must again express our gratitude to the people working on the ground in difficult and dangerous conditions to protect Albertans.

Today there are 17 wildfires burning in our province, including five new starts. Four are out of control, one is being held, 11 are under control, and one has been turned over to local authorities. We have over 1,950 firefighters and support staff on the ground today, supported by 208 helicopters, 412 pieces of heavy equipment, and 29 air tankers. Fire risk remains extreme across much of Alberta.

The fire in the MD of Greenview has grown a small amount, from 800 to 900 hectares, which is substantially less growth than expected,

which is great news. The mandatory evacuation order was lifted from the hamlet of Little Smoky although residents remain under evacuation notice. We have 75 firefighters and three helicopters fighting that fire.

The Fort McMurray fire is now close to 355,000 hectares and is still out of control. Conditions remain extreme, and we expect another very challenging day for firefighters and emergency responders. Yesterday the fire rapidly burned north, prompting mandatory and precautionary evacuations for more than a dozen energy camps and facilities. Approximately 8,000 people were safely evacuated. These camps and facilities are at risk; however, no assets have been damaged. Highway 63 has been restricted north of Fort McMurray as the fire advances eastward.

Within the city structural firefighters responded to a fire in the Thickwood neighbourhood and to an explosion in Dickinsfield. The causes of both are still under investigation. Both incidents damaged several homes, but those fires were quickly put out thanks to the structural firefighters ready and on the scene.

Much of the re-entry work has also been delayed due to the continued threat of the fires as well as the extreme air quality conditions. Fort McMurray is not yet safe to return to, but we continue to make every possible effort to keep Albertans safe, to protect their homes and businesses, and to bring them back to their communities as soon as it is safely possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## Members' Statements

### Depression and Suicide

**Mr. Connolly:** Just over a year ago we were all elected to this Chamber, and we all have different stories as to how we got here. In March of 2015 I had to leave Ottawa, the place I had called home for three years, because I knew that if I was to stay in the situation I was in I would be dead before the end of the semester. I was in a relationship that had become unhealthy, and I felt that my options were either suicide or to come back to Calgary, where I knew I would have the supports that I needed to get through this incredibly tough time. I therefore returned home that same week.

**1:40**

I tried to get my mind off things by involving myself more heavily in the upcoming election and offered to be the NDP candidate for Calgary-Hawkwood. But failing to deal with my mental health problems sooner, I continued to fall into depressive states during and after the election. I didn't make time for myself, and I simply tried to ignore my issues until they couldn't be ignored. I eventually did get help and have been seeing a psychologist ever since. However, this is only because I'm privileged to have the resources that I have.

According to a 2013 national college health assessment survey of 30,000 students 1 out of every 10 postsecondary students in Canada has seriously considered attempting suicide. In that year 390 admitted to unsuccessfully attempting suicide.

Mr. Speaker, a couple weeks ago a friend showed me the spot where they had once intended to hang themselves. While I was in university, I had many friends who were in continuous battles with suicide and depression. In high school I drove a friend to the hospital when they believed they could no longer carry on.

Reaching out for help can be extremely difficult for someone who is suffering from depression and/or suicidal thoughts. Oftentimes those who are suffering feel that even if they do reach out, no one will care. I would like to sincerely tell all those who may be suffering from depression or suicidal thoughts that people are here

to help you, you are loved, and our world is better because you're in it.

Thank you.

### Sexual Assault Victims

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, one of the main reasons that I stand in this Chamber today is because of the duty and responsibility I feel to make Alberta a better place for the next generation. I also think of the responsibility I have to teach my children right from wrong and how to be decent and moral upstanding citizens.

We can and we must do better to change parts of our society that are marginalizing women and allowing for sexual assault and harassment to exist. As I stand here today, there's absolutely no reason for sexual violence to have a place in our society, but the fact is that it persists. As long as sexual assault and harassment continue to be a problem in our society, every woman deserves to know that should they become a victim of sexual assault, they will be believed.

The fact is that only 10 per cent of sexual assaults are reported to police, and that means that there are women that all of us know who carry the burden of having been violated in silence. Those women will never have their day in court, will never see justice for what was done to them. But for the 10 per cent that come forward, I say this: I believe you, and I want to thank you for your bravery.

That is why it is so devastating to learn that these brave people who came forward to police, who are prepared to have their lives scrutinized by the courts, aren't getting to see their day in court because of the lack of justices. These women do not deserve to be further traumatized because the justice system has failed them. The Justice minister needs to be doing everything she can, not just urging the federal government to appoint more justices but also working to remove roadblocks to prioritize these cases, to ensure that the victims of sexual assault have their voices and cases heard.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a government with a Premier who has effectively developed a policy which is both socially progressive and fiscally conservative. That Premier won an election when no one thought she could win. Sorry, Premier; I'm not talking about you. I was instead speaking of Premier Christy Clark.

It would seem that our current Premier is a great admirer of Premier Clark as well. One of their flagship pieces of legislation was almost a direct copy of a program which has been in place in British Columbia for years. When I say "almost a direct copy," I mean that B.C. does it better.

Normally when drafting a government policy, you look into similar jurisdictions who have policies you're considering, and you build upon those successes while avoiding the pitfalls. Yet somehow this government has taken effective policy from our western neighbours and made it worse. When B.C. introduced the carbon tax in 2008, they made the tax truly revenue neutral instead of trying to redefine the term. In rolling out the revenue neutral tax, the B.C. government also accounted for a potential unfair impact on low-income British Columbians by introducing a tax credit designed to offset the carbon tax created by these individuals.

The NDP tries to justify their lack of revenue neutrality by repeatedly touting their plan to invest in energy efficiencies. Well, Mr. Speaker, B.C. did that, too. However, instead of taking money away from their constituents to fund their own pet projects, they

introduced a grant which gives local governments and school districts four years to become carbon neutral. If successful, the grant offsets the carbon tax these entities pay, a win-win for everybody.

When the government reviewed the tax, they considered the impact it had on B.C. businesses. Instead, the NDP decided that they needed to be a shining beacon to this world, the success of our backbone of industry be damned.

One of my favourite ads is the famous Gatorade commercial Be Like Mike. Well, Premier, maybe be like Christy. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

### Cooking Lake Airport

**Cortes-Vargas:** Mr. Speaker, it's an exciting time for the Cooking Lake Airport in Strathcona county. On June 11 of this year they are celebrating 90 years of service, making it Canada's oldest publicly operated airport.

I wanted to take the opportunity to share a bit about the story of the Cooking Lake Airport. The airport was established by early aviation pioneers in 1926. In the 90 years since its inception the airport has been the site of many interesting firsts in our province: in 1932 the first recorded medevac flight from Fort McMurray; in 1953 the delivery of the first single-engine Otter aircraft to Wardair. In 1959 the airport hosted the first full-length Hollywood picture filmed entirely in Alberta. During World War II the airport served as a temporary U.S. Army air base and contributed to the construction of the Alaska highway and Canol pipeline. It has been the training site for four generations of pilots, longer than any other airport in Canada.

They continuously contribute to our province, and recently, like many of the constituents in Strathcona-Sherwood Park, they looked for ways to utilize their unique skills and assets to respond to the needs of the wildfire evacuees. A student in the aviation services collected donations of basic necessities and then flew them up to Lac La Biche to drop them off.

Today the airport continues to serve Albertans as our sixth-busiest community airport and our newest international airport.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the dedicated volunteers who keep the Cooking Lake Airport in operation. I'm extremely proud to have a piece of aviation history in my constituency.

Thank you.

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

### Syrian Refugees in St. Albert

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Who doesn't remember the haunting image of the Syrian child washed up on a Turkish shore? I think we were all horrified and felt compelled to help. The UN estimates that 4 million Syrians are now refugees. Since the conflict began, four years ago, 250,000 children, women, and men have been killed. Since January 2016 2,000 Syrian refugees have arrived in Alberta.

A couple of months ago a group of volunteers in St. Albert chose to join the Edmonton refugee volunteers to help as many government-supported families as possible. The St. Albert group is now connected with 10 families, and one of those is the Elkuraji family. During the first year of the civil war the Elkuraji family lost an 18-year-old son, a brother, a mother, and an infant in two separate bombings. Young Ahmat lost a leg and the use of an arm in the third attack just within hours. The Elkuraji family was able to get to a refugee camp in Turkey, where they stayed until coming

to Canada. Although those three years were difficult, love did bloom, and they now have a stepmother.

The Elkuraji family is a government-assisted refugee family, with supports coming from a federally funded resettlement organization. There are very big differences between private and government sponsorship. When the St. Albert volunteers got involved, the young children in the family had not been enrolled in school nor had Ahmat been assessed for mobility aids. Within a couple of weeks the volunteers got together, fund raised, and he now has a scooter. I think that he's scaring pedestrians all over the place. As of today the family continues to live in housing that is not wheelchair accessible, but I know that surrounded by the love and support of their volunteers and their translators and their new friends doors will open for them all over Alberta and Edmonton.

Thank you very much, and thank you to the Elkuraji family for coming.

1:50

### Oil People Helping Oil People

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, layoffs in the oil and gas sector have hit close to home in rural communities across Alberta. Many oil and gas workers and their families in Strathmore-Brooks have lost their jobs and sometimes even their homes, so members of the oil and gas community have banded together to help each other out.

Oil People Helping Oil People is a grassroots organization that started in Brooks and has stepped up to help oil and gas families get through this crisis. OPHOP is helping those in need with some of the most basic necessities such as food cards for the grocery store, fuel cards for the gas station, and assistance with medications for those who have lost their medical coverage. OPHOP is even providing professional guidance on managing paperwork, finances, and taxes and guidance on community services.

Support from sponsors and donors has been exceptional. Businesses like the Dent Clinic, CSC Workwear, the Longhorn Ad Board Company, *Brooks Bulletin*, League Pipeline Services, Mark's Market, the Red Basket, Paramount Mechanical, and so many others have stepped up to the plate to help. These are small, community-based businesses stepping up to look after one another and families in need. To date OPHOP has been able to help 14 families with supports in the Newell region, including the city of Brooks, the town of Bassano, and the villages of Duchess and Rosemary. This is the spirit of rural Alberta, communities and neighbours pulling together in a crisis to help one another out.

Just this past weekend in Strathmore-Brooks events were held to raise funds for other oil people in Fort McMurray. We managed to get 55 six-foot-tall pallets of requested supplies collected, loaded, and trucked to relief agencies in northern Alberta. In just one weekend we raised \$75,000 in cash donations for the people of Fort McMurray. That's Alberta strong, Mr. Speaker. That's oil people helping oil people.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Rules and Practices of the Assembly

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if the Clerk would just hold the clock for a moment, I would like to take this opportunity to just remind all of the members of the House that when the Speaker is standing, other members should be sitting at all times. If they are coming in, please remain stationary while the Speaker is standing.

I also would urge the members again and remind you that the volume and substance of the comments need to be respectful of this Chamber and of each other, and I would ask that you pay particular

attention to those two attributes as we go into the several weeks that we still have ahead.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Fort McMurray and Area Firefighting Resources

**Mr. Jean:** Last night was another bad day and night for Fort McMurray. Fire consumed multiple structures, and two separate explosions levelled nearby homes. Further north fire destroyed the Blacksand lodge. Eight thousand people who just got back to work at multiple oil sands plants were again ordered out and rejoined thousands of others as evacuees right across this province. This comes a week after international offers of assistance to fight the fire were rejected. Many Albertans are struggling to understand this. They are asking why more hands wouldn't help to fight this fire. Can the Premier please explain why extra help has been turned away?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. First of all, just to clarify with respect to yesterday, there was one explosion and one other fire, that was caused by other causes. Both are under investigation.

In terms of the issue of firefighting resources we can only rely on the advice of the firefighting experts who are working so hard each and every day to control the wildfires throughout the province and especially in Fort McMurray. What they tell us is that at certain points they become limited by the amount of airspace they have and that at certain points the amount of work in advance that can be done in front of the fires also limits what they can do and . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** As the size of this fire grows, so, too, does the anxiety felt by my friends, my family, and the residents of Fort McMurray. Two weeks – two weeks – after residents fled a burning city, homes and businesses are still being burned by a fire that rages on. On top of the personal losses, we're told that at least \$1 billion of oil sands production has been lost just from these fires. It means increased uncertainty for evacuees and for our economy, for our jobs. Albertans want to know if more can be done to stop this fire. Can the Premier please explain how she can consider the current level of firefighting resources to be sufficient as Fort McMurray continues to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Notley:** Well, to be clear, Mr. Speaker, Fort McMurray itself is not continuing to burn, and no businesses were impacted by what happened last night.

That being said, we have over 1,900 firefighters at work on firefighting in Alberta. We have interprovincial agreements and have the ability to get more firefighters across the country and additional agreements with international firefighters. The requests for new firefighters come on the basis of what those experts say that we need, and they tell us that we have what we need. We can't change the fact that for five years there's been no rain. We can't change the fact that there's a huge amount of very dry fuel. We can't change when the wind comes up. But we can do what we're doing . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, every single business and person from Fort McMurray is being affected by this fire continuing. There are dozens of people whose feelings of relief a week ago upon learning that their homes were untouched by the initial fire now are feeling horror as they learn that fires and explosions last night consumed their homes. It's difficult to provide certainty in disaster situations – we understand that – but residents and business owners of Fort McMurray at least deserve to have the assurance that absolutely everything possible is being done to fight this fire and protect our city and property. Can the Premier please provide even just that small amount of certainty to those . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, the question for the Premier, please.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I absolutely understand the level of anxiety that Fort McMurray residents are feeling around this, including the member opposite. Indeed, we were meeting with the members of the Wood Buffalo council when news of the change in the weather and the growth in the fire pattern came to all of us, and it was very clear to see the impact that it had, the personal impact that it had on residents of Fort McMurray.

There is absolutely nothing that should be done that is not being done. There is no resource that is not being dedicated to this. There is no ask that is not being made that will contribute to fighting this fire. Everything possible is being done, Mr. Speaker, and I would like the people of Fort McMurray . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

#### Fort McMurray Wildfire Damage Control and Recovery

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With explosions going off in Fort McMurray, Albertans are worried about the safety of all first responders working to get Fort McMurray back online. We've seen the photos of firefighters sleeping on lawns, trying to recover from their work. We know that trades are working around the clock to get services back online. If explosions are going off in Fort McMurray, what precautions are being taken to keep trades and first responders safe?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for that question. We value intensely the work that is being done by the first responders, not only the original first responders, who were heroic in their efforts to save the city, but those who have been rotated through ever since. We are working with them to ensure that what they do is well supported. They have accommodations. They have food. Their health is being monitored. We have a health care facility up there that's dealing with them, and all the personal protective equipment that they need is there. When the conditions get too intense, we pull them back so they're not at risk. Safety is always number one as they do their work.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, emergency officials at this morning's briefing described the situation in Fort McMurray as, quote, very volatile. We know that embers blowing into the city remain a threat, but currently most of the city remains safe from any direct threats from the fire. With gas restored to 60 per cent of the homes in the city, will the Premier tell Albertans: what exactly are the conditions that are leading to this volatility that might be leading to these explosions?

**Ms Notley:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, just to clarify, we're talking about one explosion, not two. As I said previously, this is under investigation, as it should be, because we're not exactly sure what led particularly to the one explosion and the two fires.

The fact of the matter, as members opposite would know, is that there was significant disruption to the services of the city. Ten per cent of the structures were lost. Electricity stopped, water supply stopped, gas supply stopped, and now we're in the process of trying to get it back online while we still have these issues around air quality. That's why we have the level of volatility that officials are describing.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, we know that several businesses in Fort McMurray are being hit hard. Workers are displaced not just across Alberta but all of Canada. Oil sands production has taken a major hit. Those who depend on a vibrant Fort McMurray for their livelihoods need to see local businesses supported. The Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce has recently made a request for emergency bridge financing so that local businesses can survive. Is the Premier considering this request, and if so, when can Fort McMurray expect an announcement?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I mean, we are working on all fronts with respect to this fire. Yesterday we sort of took a step backwards and got back to the whole emergency response phase of things. But in the meantime I've asked the minister of economic development to work closely with our recovery team, that is giving advice to the wildfire task force in cabinet, to look at exactly these issues in terms of what can be done to support small-business and other business owners, quite frankly, in the area, to link up between what they have in insurance and what else they still need and what additional programs we can look at either through our government, the federal government, or through the Red Cross.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
Third main question.

## 2:00 Justice Services for Sexual Assault Victims

**Mr. Jean:** No victim of sexual assault should have to feel that the justice system is working against them, but that's what we have here today, a court system where people who bravely came forward to tell their stories of abuse are now unsure if they'll even get a chance to see some justice. It's a pain they shouldn't be suffering, and it runs the risk of seriously allowing criminals who should be put behind bars to walk on the streets free. Yesterday the Justice minister said that she hasn't received a timeline from Ottawa for appointing any new judges. Will the minister please pick up the phone and tell Ottawa that this is simply not acceptable?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, we're incredibly troubled to hear that these cases are not proceeding forward. These incredibly brave women who have come forward to tell their stories are not getting their day in court, and we're very troubled by that. I have been in contact with the federal government over this, and in fact my office was in contact with them yesterday, was in contact with them multiple times before that, and will be in contact with them again today. Hopefully, we will be provided with a timeline today.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jean:** Still no answer, Mr. Speaker.

Albertans aren't looking for excuses or for politicians to play the blame game. They want answers and solutions, and we want an answer for Albertans. By failing to protect the victims of sexual assault and other serious crimes from being revictimized by a failing system, the government risks creating a chill on other victims coming forward to tell their stories. The federal government is dragging its feet. It's no excuse for the provincial government to do the same, not just in appointing judges but also on the overall review of the system for judicial appointments. Does the minister worry that delaying justice will discourage other victims of sexual assault from coming forward, and what ...

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for something that may have had a question in there somewhere. You know, obviously, we're deeply concerned about this, and we've taken a number of steps. We've been working with the Crown prosecutors' office to ensure that court case management is proceeding forward, which has done some decreasing of lead times in terms of provincial judges. For provincial judges, that we have the constitutional ability to appoint, we are making those appointments as quickly as possible. In terms of the federal minister I understand that she will be making those appointments in advance of completing her review of the system, and if that is the case, which, hopefully, I may find out later today, then I would thank her for that.

**Mr. Jean:** Yesterday I mentioned a report from Alberta Justice after a sexual assault victim in Airdrie saw her case tossed out. I hope the minister has had a chance to refresh herself on that. It's called Injecting a Sense of Urgency, and it was released in 2013. Outside of recommendations to provide better resources in our courts, it carves out several steps the province can take to ensure that our justice system is putting the interests of victims of violent crimes first. I will ask the Justice minister again: how many of these recommendations have been fully implemented by this NDP government?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We are familiar with the report he has referred to. It was prepared under the previous government. You know, we have moved forward on a number of those steps. As I've mentioned, we have in fact been working with the Crown prosecution service in terms of court case management. Additionally, we have been looking at the traffic court system, which is primarily what was criticized in that report. I'm not totally sure that all of those criticisms were absolutely accurate, but we're certainly looking at fixing what we can in the interim.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

## Coal Strategy

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in QP the Energy minister claimed that "we would export metallurgic coal, not thermal coal." What the minister actually said – she was correcting a previous statement – was that what happens to those coal mines and coal exports really is up to the market forces, not government. To the minister: since your incorrect correction of your previously corrected statement now needs another correction, will you just

now answer the question instead? Does coal magically conform to your standards and the emissions magically disappear when it is burned on the other side of the world in a plant with lower emission standards?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** What our plan is going to do is to tackle the emissions from coal. We care not what the source is but what the emissions are, and Minister Phillips' climate change plan will be addressing that.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, clearly, the minister doesn't care what the emissions are because she's going to let the emissions happen on the other side of the world. Apparently, that doesn't count.

To the Energy minister. Your ministry opposes innovation that would lower emissions at Calgary coal plants even though those coal plants create jobs, and instead you favour higher emissions that cannot be controlled while it's burned in other countries. When we share the air all over the Earth, how does shifting high emissions to a lower standard jurisdiction benefit the environment?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, Old King Cole may have been a merry old soul, but he was rather less jolly when he presented in an emergency room with acute asthma, which is why we are addressing the health effects of burning coal for electricity. In this province we are phasing them out such that by 2030 we will be avoiding a number of health impacts, including, according to Environment Canada, \$2.7 billion in avoided health care costs.

**Mr. McIver:** In the spirit of nursery rhymes, the emperor minister's answer has no clothes, Mr. Speaker.

Now, the Member for Calgary-South East asked the Energy minister in estimates about coal-fired electricity and said: if we were world leading in emission reduction, could there be a future for this sector in Alberta? To that, the minister answered, "If there is a commercially viable means of making coal zero-emissions, then I don't see why [not]." To the Premier: do you agree with your Energy minister, who says that clean-coal technology is a good idea, or with your environment minister, who won't listen to anybody under any circumstances?

**Ms Notley:** I believe the question was to me. Let me just say that what I agree with . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Quiet.

**Ms Notley:** . . . is the climate leadership plan, that our whole caucus supports. It is a great plan. It is a leading plan in Canada. It is a plan that will reduce and eliminate coal emissions in Alberta, which is the kind of thing that should have happened under the previous government decades ago. But I'm very proud on behalf of Albertans that we are moving forward on this issue.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Electricity Prices

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In order to implement their climate leadership plan, the government has announced phase-out of coal-fired generation of electricity. However, wholesale electricity prices have declined steadily over the past several years, and the cost of new generation is substantially higher than what pool prices have been able to produce since 2014. At current and projected price levels the market may not be sustainable, particularly in terms of building new capacity. Higher cost generating plants may not be economically viable, and

substantial subsidies may be required. To the Minister of Energy: how much more will Albertans have to pay for electricity in order to build out this new infrastructure?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, we are phasing out coal-fired electricity, in the first instance according to the federal regulations established by the Stephen Harper government and after 2030 according to a schedule for those plants that is currently under discussion by the coal negotiator. In the first instance what is guiding our deliberations on this as well, when we designed the renewable energy competitive procurement, is stability for ratepayers, no unnecessary . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Time.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Excuse me, hon. members. I will take care of the time.

**Dr. Swann:** Given that under the current system the government cannot guarantee power pricing and given that almost all experts, including the government's own experts, believe that the cost of power is going to go up, can we ask the Minister of Economic Development and Trade how he expects industry, particularly heavy industry like manufacturing, to invest in Alberta given the uncertainty around one of their primary expenses?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you for the question. You know, this is part of the climate leadership plan, that indeed we are phasing out the post-2030 plants, and we are in the midst of a negotiated process for that. We are equally in the midst of designing the renewable energy procurement policies that will phase in renewable energy as coal phases out. Of course, we are in the midst of that via the Electric System Operator. In addition, there have been some budgetary pieces for community energy systems and other investments in renewables.

2:10

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister. Well, given that Alberta has an energy-only market where prices are determined in real time and given that in an energy-only market potential investors need to see high prices for sustained periods before investing hundreds of millions of dollars and given the uncertainty of energy prices in energy-only markets, is the government considering alternatives: long-term, fixed-price contracts or re-regulating the market?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, as we negotiate the post-2030 phase-out, we are also designing the renewable energy procurement process, and within that there are many different competitive options for how we might phase in those renewables, which are under active consideration by the Electric System Operator. I do note that there were about 120, 130 submissions, many, many investors very interested in the new markets. There's a tremendous amount of positive energy around Alberta's renewable energy procurement, and we're very pleased.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

#### **Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped**

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents in Edmonton-Ellerslie know our government's budget invests in stabilizing and maintaining the services Albertans depend on rather than making reckless cuts that will only make things worse for Alberta's most vulnerable. Given our government's commitment to supporting the safety, dignity, and well-being of persons with disabilities, to the Minister of Human Services: how has our government invested in the assured income for the severely handicapped program in Budget 2016?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government believes that all Albertans should be able to live in a stable home and be able to put food on the table. That's why, despite challenging economic times, Budget 2016 maintains AISH benefit levels, with a targeted funding increase of \$28.3 million. Families receiving AISH may also be eligible for the Alberta child benefit, for which a single parent of two children can receive a maximum of \$1,650.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that I've had several constituents who are AISH recipients connect with me about the program and given that I've heard concerns from some of them about the ability of AISH workers to manage growing caseloads, again to the Minister of Human Services: what is our government doing in order to make caseworkers more accessible to those that depend on AISH?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. In tough economic times like these even more people need supports. That's why we have increased the funding to AISH to accommodate increased demand. The AISH caseload increase is upwards of 1,500 clients per year, and our government has invested an additional \$28.3 million to address the growing caseload and increase in cost per case.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Given that AISH recipients depend on this funding to pay for their housing, food, and other basic needs, what is being done to better streamline services so AISH recipients receive the supports they need when they need them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Overall, there are 54,000 adults with disabilities receiving supports from the AISH program, and our government is committed to ensuring that these Albertans receive the support they need. AISH application wait times have been reduced through improved and centralized processes in the AISH program. In addition, AISH applicants can seek short-term assistance through Alberta Works income support programs. I will continue to work with my officials to find ways to further reduce the wait times for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

#### **Farm and Ranch Worker Regulation Consultation**

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've had several serious inquiries concerning the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act and those round-tables. In estimates on April 21 we were informed that the announcement of the specific membership of the tables would be a few weeks away due to the volume of applicants. To the minister. We are now nearly a month away from those estimates. Can you please tell us when you're releasing this important information to the stakeholders?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. You know, we're still working with groups, including the ag coalition, making the opportunity to make sure we have the best possible people to populate these techno working groups. It's important for our producers, important for Albertans, important for the workers. To answer the member's question, we're very close, and I'd ask him to stay tuned.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that this process has been anything but open and transparent and given that the farmers and ranchers continue to feel excluded from the process, can the minister at least tell us how many actual farmer and rancher positions, labour groups, and individual producers are included in the 72 available seats?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It's important that all groups are represented in this. Farmers, ranchers, workers, health and safety, labour experts are all well represented. I'm quite happy with the work that we've done to this point to make sure that they are represented, and I'm looking forward to getting onward with the process and starting this process.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that this legislation has been surrounded by secrecy from the start and given that there is still plenty of suspicion, confusion, and anger around this government's intentions for family farms and ranches, will the minister take this opportunity to be forthright, honest, and guarantee that the round-table makeup will be announced before the end of this session?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Good question. You know, we're so close. We're really close – right? – to be able to get this together. We have the representative. We know that going forward these recommendations will help government shape the policies and shape the regulations, looking for the input from all of these groups, knowing that it will be a benefit not only for workers but for the farmers and ranchers themselves.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### PDD Service Wait Times

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the Minister of Human Services there are 413 people currently on the PDD service wait-list. We have however heard from the government's own individual supports program who tracks the population on the wait list that this number isn't entirely accurate and that the actual size of the wait-list in Calgary alone is over 500. To the Minister of Human Services: where did your numbers come from, and what is the actual total number of people on the wait-list for PDD services in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For these numbers and advice I do rely on my officials, and I will stand by my statement that according to my officials the wait-list is 413 people. That's the correct number.

**Ms Jansen:** Well, I guess the people who actually do the work must be wrong.

Given that last week I asked the Minister of Human Services what supports were available to the individuals in the families on these wait-lists and given that the minister's answer provided no clarity and no reassurance to the families who were waiting for services, again to the Minister of Human Services. People are stressed and worried and they're waiting for answers. What is the plan to reduce the size of the wait-lists that you presented to Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. A couple of questions. One: what supports are available? People who are waiting for services can access income support programs. Second thing, we have centralized that process, and we are working with our officials. We've added more funds, reversed the cuts from the previous government to create capacity to deal with these issues. So we are working with our partners. We are working with our officials to make sure that Albertans who need the support get it in a timely manner.

Thank you.

2:20

**Ms Jansen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we're certainly hearing from PDD families that things were better under the previous government, so nice try.

Given that the minister promised a one-stop integrated service delivery approach for Human Services and given in the same estimates the minister stated that there were no measurable outcomes, deliverables, or even a commitment that this plan would appear in the next business plan, to the Minister of Human Services. No plan, no outcomes, no commitment to even act. How does this minister actually plan to improve service delivery for PDD in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As a government we are committed to making sure that Albertans get the support they need in an appropriate and timely manner. Integrating services towards a more centralized, integrated model is a work-in-progress. Once it's completed, Albertans will have access to services like one-stop shop services

through Alberta Supports centre and other avenues. We are working on it, and we will report on the progress.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Pipeline Development

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The rhetoric of the NDP government regarding pipelines is becoming very tired. Let there be no doubt that principled conservatives in this country have long been in favour of pipelines in every direction. This is in sharp contrast to the conflicting views of the Leapers and the sitting MLAs in the NDP caucus who have in fact protested against pipelines. Keystone phase 1, Alberta Clipper, Kinder Morgan anchor loop, and Enbridge's line 9 reversal were all completed under the previous federal government. Will the Minister of Energy acknowledge that her partisan and out-of-touch talking points on this issue are just plain wrong?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, I think. Our government weekly and daily is committed to pipelines. We work with energy companies. We work with the builders. We work with the shippers. Our commitment has been to be collaborative partners in making sure that the process is respected and that we can do it all in a timely fashion.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Perhaps it's time for a little bit of self-reflection. Given that the Member for Calgary-East was busy protesting less than five years ago against Keystone XL, holding a sign saying "no more dirty oil" and given that the minister of environment put her wordsmithing to use by cowriting a handbook entitled *An Action a Day: Keeps Global Capitalism Away* and given that when the going got tough, the current economic downturn, the jobs minister took a trip to B.C. to campaign for an environmental extremist NDP candidate, which of these actions would the NDP government like to choose to demonstrate their stellar track record on pipelines?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you. Again, we work constantly with our industry partners. They are very happy with our approach. They recognize that the approach of previous governments did not work. They like being partners with us. And they agree totally with the way we are managing this project to get a pipeline to tidewater in a timely fashion.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that I along with my caucus was pleasantly surprised to see that the NDP members of this Chamber voted in support yesterday of the Wildrose motion which voices support for urging the federal government to remove a proposed tanker ban on B.C.'s north coast. Up until last night the NDP government has been mum on this issue, refusing to publicly voice opposition to proposed tanker bans by the Trudeau government. So I will keep this simple. Will the Energy minister publicly state right here right now that the federal government must not place a tanker ban on the B.C. coast since it would kill the Northern Gateway pipeline?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.



**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will publicly state is that the energy companies I work with like our plan. They are frankly confused about why you don't like pipelines and why you want to see us fail. They want you to be . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please try to keep down the volume of hitting the desks. I've asked before about that. I'd ask you to do it again.

I think it's the Member for Airdrie.

#### **Airdrie's Sierra Springs Commercial Area Access**

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is the member for Airdrie.

Last month Airdrie city council approved a recommendation from ISL engineering, an independent consulting firm, to pursue a left-hand turn lane for the Yankee Valley Boulevard and Sierra Springs corner, the Boston Pizza corner. This has been a high-risk intersection for years, and ISL has now provided independent confirmation that this left-turn lane is the best way to improve traffic safety and flow. To the Minister of Transportation. Your department has been against this proposal in the past. Where do you stand on this matter now?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the hon. member to provide me with that report. I will review it and give her an answer.

**Mrs. Pitt:** I have, but I will again.

Mr. Speaker, given that this is a matter of transportation safety and that the consultation firm stated on the record that, quote, improvements at Sierra Springs would provide the best overall benefit for the city of Airdrie – end quote – and given that these recommendations have been unanimously accepted by the local city council as being the best way to mitigate risk and keep Airdrie residents safe, will you commit to working with your department, when I provide the report again, to respect the safety of Albertans and the autonomy of our local government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. I remind the hon. member that it is also a provincial highway, so the provincial government and the Department of Transportation also have a say. Having said that, I respect the work that's been done by the local council, and I will be happy to review this matter again and get back to the member.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this simple change is something that has long been needed in our community – it's truly an annoying corner – that would improve traffic flows as well as the safety of Airdrie residents and given that costs would be covered by the city, please, please, please, Mr. Minister, can you give us a timeline for this?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, the timeline is this: when I review the report, talk to my department, and make some sort of decision about what the timeline is, then I'll provide the timeline to the member.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

#### **Emergency Management Planning**

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Environmental issues are front and centre with many governments and their citizens all over the world. Even in this House we have members who want to implement environmental policy at all costs, any cost, even if it hurts Albertans. On the other hand, we have members in this House who believe that we as humans have no impact at all when it comes to the environment. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: how, specifically, is your government preparing for future disasters in Alberta given the increase in extreme weather conditions we have seen over the past few years?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Certainly, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency works closely with the municipal emergency management experts to ensure that they have plans in place to give them the support they need to have those plans in place in terms of responding to a disaster. We also continue to work with the federal government in terms of talking about how we can all respond together as a country in terms of how we deal with the continued increase in challenges we're faced with. I look forward to ongoing communications with them and coming up with some solutions in co-operation with one another.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given that during the 2013 floods in southern Alberta many people experienced tremendous losses: loss of life, precious personal items, and vital documents – as the associate minister in High River I saw first-hand this crisis Albertans were faced with, and it was heartbreaking – to the same minister: is there any work being done on my recommendation in developing a system where Albertans, especially those living in disaster-prone areas, have the ability to preregister for the disaster recovery program?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I'm not familiar with that recommendation. One of the things that we are doing is looking at across the province where there are areas of high risk and how we can work together to reduce that risk. Some of that work is being done in terms of the mitigation work that my colleague in Infrastructure is leading, working together with Environment and Parks. Certainly, we're happy to work with Albertans to reduce their risk if we are faced with a disaster in the future.

2:30

**Mr. Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I want to be clear. Our caucus fully stands with this minister, the Premier, and their government to support all of the efforts in Fort McMurray. But, Minister, tell this House, tell Albertans that you have read the recommendations from the most recent disasters and that you are giving the latitude to the Alberta Emergency Management Agency to act on those recommendations.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I think the Alberta Emergency Management Agency team that I have is incredibly amazing, and I have great faith in them to continue to move forward in terms of ensuring the prevention but also the response to disasters as they happen. You know, I will continue to support them and encourage them and ensure that they have the

support they need to be able to do that work freely and without my micromanaging that experience.

### Short-term Personal Loans

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Mr. Speaker, I have heard from constituents who shared with me stories of taking out a payday loan to help cover their family in an emergency only to have to go back and take out another loan just to pay back their first. This creates a further crisis for these folks. People who are living in poverty want to get out, but it can be difficult. To the Minister of Service Alberta: what is the minister doing to ensure that people who may need temporary financial assistance are not being unfairly punished?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We heard loud and clear from Albertans last fall to take action on exploitive payday loans. They asked us to bring in fair rules so that vulnerable Albertans don't get trapped in vicious cycles of debt. We took action last week by bringing forward legislation that brings in the lowest cost of borrowing in the country, requiring instalment payments and longer payback periods as well as financial literacy. Alberta municipalities, local business revitalization zones, and community and poverty-reduction groups all support these changes, and Alberta's credit unions have committed to launching alternative products.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of these same people have told me that they only turned to payday lenders because they had no alternative, again to the same minister: is the minister going to be working with stakeholders to ensure that Albertans have access to the socially responsible loan products that they may need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Albertans do need access to short-term, small-dollar loans that won't exploit or gouge them when they have unexpected expenses. We've been working with Alberta's credit unions, ATB, community groups, and others to put in strong and fair alternatives. First Calgary Financial and Momentum are leading with their cash crunch loan, which is a microloan product, and it's exciting that Servus Credit Union will offer short-term loans at significantly lower rates than traditional payday lenders. Our government is committed to promoting these and other alternatives that are fair and sustainable.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, given that we all know the importance of accurate and up-to-date data if we want to develop the best possible additional strategies to educate and protect Albertans from financial crisis, again to the Minister of Service Alberta: what is the minister doing to ensure that the ministry and stakeholders have access to the information that they need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Accurate data is critical, as mentioned, so that we can make decisions based upon evidence. That's why part of this legislation, An Act to End Predatory Lending, will require companies to report data on loans, which will provide us with a clear state of the market. Based upon that, if we need to go even further to protect Albertans, we will act. We want Albertans to have access to fair, short-term loans when they need them.

### Government Policies

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP's hard-line agenda has made an already bad situation worse for our small and mid-sized oil companies. One of the job-killing policies is the looming carbon tax, which will drive taxes on gas and diesel from 13 cents a litre to 21 cents a litre in less than two years. The NDP did a special side deal for certain big energy companies but showed no such consultation and concern for the small and mid-sized companies like those in Strathmore-Brooks. Will the Minister of Energy show fairness and help our small oil companies by exempting them from their punishing carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the climate leadership plan that we released in November of 2015 outlined a number of different ways in which our energy-intensive and trade-exposed industries will be kept competitive going forward; for example, the on-site natural gas exemption until 2023 and a series of performance standards which will be phased in to phase out the existing specified gas emitters regulation.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Bluster and BS from the government, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The NDP finally did right on pipelines but only after they were put in a corner and shamed by the Official Opposition. The Wildrose Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky's motion yesterday calling for a stop to the proposed tanker ban on the B.C. coast was passed unanimously in this House but only after the opposition once again shamed the government into going on the record with a vote. They cringed while doing it. Will the Minister of Energy come out and enthusiastically endorse no tanker bans on the B.C. coast and fight the federal NDP's attack on Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the question. I'm in touch biweekly with my federal minister, asking for clarity on the tanker ban. There is no tanker ban yet. It is a moratorium, and we are constantly trying to seek clarity on that.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Do your job.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Excuse me. I'm doing it right now.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

Could I warn the hon. Member for Airdrie. I requested volume control at the beginning of the session. I would ask that you remind yourself of that.

Could you finish the answer, please?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Yeah. It's become apparent recently that the opposition cares more about seeing us fail than actually getting pipelines to tidewater. [interjections]

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I would request the same level of order when members of the opposition speak, Mr. Speaker.

Laid off oil and gas workers . . .

**The Speaker:** Pardon me? I didn't hear your point. Could you please be seated? The point you made was – what? I didn't hear it.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I would request that order be restored equally when members of the opposition speak as when the government, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Well, the tone of your voice makes me concerned that you are raising the fairness of the Speaker into question, and I would ask that you contain your comments with respect to that. Do you hear me?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that laid-off oil and gas workers are suffering, that the federal employment insurance program is designed to support other parts of the country and is ill-fitted for the workers of Alberta and that for many EI is about to run out even though most Albertans pay far more into the system than they will ever take out, groups like Oil People Helping Oil People in Brooks are stepping up to help, but they can't do it alone. One-off EI tinkering to the status quo will not do the trick. Will the Premier stand up for Alberta and demand an EI program that will work for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The deputy House leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, our Premier has been very effective in communicating with the Prime Minister to ensure that Alberta and Edmonton get the same benefits that are extended across the country. To the member's point, our budget is the Alberta jobs plan, which is investing millions of dollars in Alberta companies, in small businesses, in much-needed infrastructure. Quite frankly, that party over there would cut billions of dollars out of much-needed infrastructure, which would cause an exacerbation of layoffs of nurses, teachers, and you name it. That is not the solution. Our government is moving forward with a robust jobs plan.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### Beef Marketing

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we saw recently, there's an appetite for certification of beef raised and processed in Alberta to clearly define that it is humanely treated at all stages of life. While I know that it's being done here in Alberta, we need to make it known to the whole world that Alberta beef is not only the best but it abides by the highest standards of humane treatment of livestock. To the minister of ag: what is your government doing to introduce a certification program that will be recognized in all markets?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Nobody produces better beef than Alberta. Alberta beef has a well-deserved reputation. It's delicious, healthy, and is sourced from second-to-none ranchers and producers. Our beef industry has already taken the lead in helping set benchmarks for sustainable beef, which include animal health and welfare. For example, McDonald's Restaurants has worked with Alberta to determine and establish sustainable protocols for beef. Their verified sustainable beef pilot project, on which a report will be due this June – I'm looking forward to finding out . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the term "certified humane" is a registered trademark created in the United States for marketing purposes and given that Alberta could create and uphold a certification which more accurately reflects the quality of meat for consumers since the meat is not only tested for antibiotics, hormones, BSE but also has traceability throughout its life cycle, which is not the case in the U.S., to the minister: what areas of standardization can we expect to see in an Alberta certification program?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We support and fund the Canadian round-table for sustainable beef with our industry partners. It's an industry-led initiative to determine best practices and supply-chain reporting. This is second to none. It has allowed the industry to market right around the world. Both myself and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade are expanding those markets right around the world. We all know, everyone in this Chamber and in Alberta, that Alberta producers have the best beef. We need to have that message go out loud and clear.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta beef producers' livelihoods depend on Alberta beef being marketable as certified and given that these producers are the experts in defining what is needed to certify the most humane and best-tasting beef, to the minister: how are you working with the beef industry to decide what this certification will include and what the timeline will be for this to be introduced?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Canadians know that when they eat Alberta beef, they're getting the absolute best. We as a government and myself as the minister will continue to partner with industry, continue to work with industry to maintain those high standards. Going forward, it is about marketing. It's about maintaining those markets right around the world, and we're doing our best, working with industry as they are the leaders, and will continue to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

### Indigenous Peoples' Economic Development

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our collective future is brighter when all Albertans are able to participate and help grow Alberta's economy. However, many indigenous people face barriers

which prevent them from participating in the labour force. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what is the minister doing to address and improve the economic participation of indigenous people?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. My ministry collaborates with indigenous communities, industry, other Alberta ministries, and the government of Canada to provide funding for community-driven indigenous projects that improve economic participation. In 2015-16 we provided approximately 100 grants through the aboriginal economic partnership program, the employment partnership program, and the aboriginal business investment fund. These services help to create and enhance opportunities for indigenous people to participate in the Alberta economy. They enhance economic development within communities, support job training, and employ . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to hear about the supports available for indigenous people. I'm also interested in what the ministry is specifically doing at the community level for First Nations. Given the economic challenges faced by many First Nations communities, to the same minister: what are you doing to support and enhance the economic development of First Nations communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The aboriginal business investment fund is the only provincial funded capital investment fund in Canada specifically meant for indigenous community business owners. The whole community benefits when these businesses have the capital and the opportunity to flourish. The aboriginal business investment fund helped support several notable projects this year; for example, a \$750,000 grant for the O'Chiese First Nations market, which placed an 11,000-square-foot grocery store in the community. We also had a \$250,000 grant to Bigstone Cree to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the update. It is encouraging to hear more about this fund and some of the great projects where our government is supporting our First Nations.

Again to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what kind of collaboration is occurring between your ministry, other Alberta ministries, and the federal government to co-ordinate grant delivery and enhancement of economic developments?

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. There are a significant number of grants and services provided by the Alberta government. My ministry works with other government of Alberta departments to share information and best practices and to increase awareness of supports for economic development. We link indigenous communities to other departments like Culture and Tourism and Economic Development and Trade. My government is also collaborating with Canada's lands and economic development advisory committee to explore opportunities to strengthen relationships between government levels

and to improve the training and capacity of First Nations economic development officers. Providing new training opportunities for their officers will equip nations with . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, unanimous consent has been requested to introduce some visitors who have arrived late.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests (continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members of the House for the indulgence. It is definitely my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 40 students from the ESL Dickinsfield Amity House, located in the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Decore. They're joined here today by their very proud instructors, Louisa Bruinsma and Frieda Maaskant. These are the students behind a unique book project, *And War Shall Be No More*, which is a collection of stories about their experiences with war in their home countries, that I had the pleasure of speaking about in this House last month. I'd now like to ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, in 15 seconds I will recognize the minister.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

#### Bill 18 An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and request leave to introduce Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring.

In April I announced a plan to put in place a stronger, more accountable environmental monitoring system that will ensure rigorous scientific oversight and will regularly report to Albertans on the condition of their environment. This plan also ensures that environmental monitoring is brought back into the department as a core function of government as it relates to the health and safety of Albertans. Bill 18 is an important step in that plan.

The bill will establish a system that will ensure the scientific integrity of the province's monitoring data. It does this by outlining specific legislative duties of the chief scientist and by establishing a science advisory panel to provide advice as well as assessment of the scientific integrity of the overall environmental program.

It also mandates the minister to establish another panel to advise the chief scientist on how to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into the environmental science program. This will be the indigenous wisdom advisory panel.

Bill 18 also includes a number of transitional provisions that are necessary to move the front-line staff from the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Agency back to government as soon as possible and with as little disruption as possible.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, Bill 18 will ensure that we quickly move forward on the return of the core government responsibility of environmental monitoring so that we can ensure that we are building a focused, efficient system that is fully accountable to Albertans.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** I understand you might have a tabling, Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and table the requisite number of copies of written responses to questions from my Health estimates just late last week.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite copies of pages 244 and 245 of the transcript from the Resource Stewardship Committee, which are from the Energy estimates which took place on May 9, 2016. On page 244 the Minister of Energy initially states that Alberta will only be exporting metallurgical coal. On page 245 she corrects herself and states:

Sorry. Before you ask a question, there is one correction I need to make regarding the coal. The climate plan is about ending coal emissions by 2030, but what happens to those coal mines and the coal exports really is . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you're tabling the document. Is that right?

**Mr. Gotfried:** Yes. That's correct, sir.

I'm also tabling the requisite copies of page 919 from *Alberta Hansard* from question period yesterday, where the minister stated: "I want to confirm that you're incorrect on the thermal coal. During my estimates I said that we would export metallurgic coal, not thermal coal." This is a direct contradiction to what the minister actually said, and perhaps she would like to . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, table the report.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Acting Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Schmidt, Minister of Advanced Education, response to a question raised on May 11, 2016, Ministry of Advanced Education 2016-17 main estimates debate.

On behalf of the hon. Ms Sigurdson, Minister of Seniors and Housing, responses to questions raised by Mr. Gotfried, hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, and Mrs. Pitt, hon. Member for Airdrie, on May 10, 2016, Ministry of Seniors and Housing 2016-17 main estimates debate.

On behalf of the hon. Minister Miranda, Minister of Culture and Tourism, responses to questions raised on May 11, 2016, Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2016-17 main estimates debate.

**The Speaker:** On a point of order, the Deputy Government House Leader.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j): (h) is "makes allegations against another Member"; (i) is "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member"; and (j) is "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder."

Mr. Speaker, in very short order I believe you will see that in his first supplemental the Member for Strathmore-Brooks in his preamble, when engaging with the Minister of Energy, actually stated that her response was, and I quote, BS.

I will quote from numerous rulings in the past, Mr. Speaker, that this has been ruled unparliamentary language. Rulings on December 11, 1990, Acting Deputy Speaker Jonson; on June 5, 1990, Deputy Speaker Schumacher; May 22, 1987, Deputy Speaker Gogo; and on May 21, 1987, Deputy Speaker Gogo had ruled that completely unparliamentary. I'll also draw your attention to *Beauchesne's* parliamentary practice. On page 149 "B.S." in *Debates* from 1978-79 was ruled as unparliamentary language.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just unparliamentary. That kind of language in this Chamber is offensive, is disrespectful, is unbecoming of a member of this Assembly representing the over 4 million Albertans that reside in our province. The member should be ashamed to be using that type of language, which is offensive. I will remind the House that there are many school groups that are often in this Chamber witnessing question period and others that are watching this live streamed. It not only is offensive to members in this Chamber but to Albertans and, quite frankly, is unbecoming of a member of this House.

So I would ask that the Opposition House Leader and the member apologize to the minister for using that language against her, to yourself, Mr. Speaker, and to the House and withdraw his comments.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the point of order today. From time to time members inside the Chamber say things that they ought not to. I think we saw an example of that yesterday when there were accusations made towards this side of the House.

Typically speaking, the most appropriate path forward when that happens is for the member to rise, apologize for their comments, and withdraw them, and I am more than pleased to do that on behalf of the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. I hope that in the future the Minister of Justice will also be happy to withdraw statements that ought not to be made.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 13 Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very honoured to rise and speak to Bill 13, the Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016.

My ministry is responsible for legislation that governs the practice of various professions through their respective professional regulatory organizations. The government grants authority to these

organizations to regulate their professions and ensure that their members carry out their practice according to professional standards in order to protect the public interest. The Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, or ABVMA, governs both veterinarians and veterinary technologists in accordance with the Veterinary Profession Act.

If passed, this bill will enable veterinary technologists in Alberta to be represented in ABVMA's governance. These changes mean that technologists can participate and vote in the association's governing council, practice review board, and disciplinary committees, and as full voting members they will have a voice in governance decisions which may affect them professionally. This is important because ABVMA is responsible for setting and enforcing the rules around the practice of veterinary medicine in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed changes will provide greater public protection by ensuring that the highest professional standards are followed by all technologists. There are approximately 1,500 practising veterinarians in Alberta and the same number of practising veterinary technologists.

One other point I'd like to make about this legislation. If this bill is passed, it also has the potential to increase the number of women sitting on ABVMA's governing boards and committees. Since 98 per cent of veterinary technologists in Alberta are female, this change could mean that more women are given a voice in the governance and practice of this profession.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that Bill 13 will not change the scope of practice for veterinary medicine nor the qualifications required to be a technologist. The purpose of this bill is to allow veterinary technologists to participate in the governance of the ABVMA with full voting rights. By enhancing accountability for technologists, Albertans can be confident that their animals are receiving the best care possible.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues in the Legislature to support this bill. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, are you moving second reading?

**Ms Gray:** Yes. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak? The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 13, the Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016. I don't think there's a single member here who doesn't recognize and appreciate the importance of the veterinary profession. Albertans across the province look to veterinarians for the health and well-being of their animals. In many cases that involves looking after the health and well-being of household pets, but in other cases, including in large parts of my constituency, Albertans work with and depend on animals for their livelihoods. For them, good veterinarians and veterinarian technologists are a must-have.

3:00

Now, veterinarians and veterinarian technologists are both under the jurisdiction of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, but I think we can all agree that giving adequate representation to both on the ABVMA body makes sense. We owe a lot to those who work in the veterinary field. If we are going to insist that their profession be one of those where governance comes back to Alberta Labour, we should ensure they're treated fairly.

I appreciate what the bill seeks to do, which is to ensure adequate representation of veterinary technologists on professional boards, and I was glad to hear that this provides more opportunity for females to be able to be represented on this board as well. If veterinary technologists are to be governed by the same act and the

same professional organizational body as veterinarians, it only makes sense that the act is applied properly to them. I appreciate that the Minister of Labour is seeking to achieve this here.

That said, my caucus colleagues and I are reaching out to stakeholders in the veterinary profession for feedback to better inform our opinion here. We want to make sure that there aren't adverse regulatory problems being created or problems that aren't being addressed in this act. There is, rather regrettably, a certain skepticism that accompanies the current government's legislative initiatives.

My colleagues and I over the past year have seen this government put forward bills that are done with little to no consultation. For instance, look at Bill 6 and the massive oversight that occurred in consulting Alberta's farming and ranching community.

We saw this with Bill 1. To this day I don't know what the government hoped to achieve with it given that barely anyone has stood up to defend it thus far, and I don't think the government knows either. To this day it languishes on the Order Paper. To this day the current government has failed to make the case as to why that legislation is needed at all. Not a single policy expert or business group or anyone, really, has stepped forward to say that Bill 1 as proposed fills some sort of gap. Its necessity is still in question.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you're dealing with a different bill in Bill 1. Please get to the subject matter.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I will. I'll tell you why I'm saying that . . .

**The Speaker:** I know. I heard it. That's why I'm saying: get to the bill.

**Mr. Hunter:** Then there's Bill 4. Despite being delivered under the guise of implementing a Supreme Court decision, that line itself went above and beyond that. It is for reasons like these that there is a certain skepticism about other legislative initiatives taken up by this government.

We wouldn't be an effective opposition if we took things at face value, of course. But with this government – and this is certainly not the sole fault of this minister, in particular – we do have to be particularly attentive to the details. My colleagues and I are reaching out to veterinarians and veterinary technicians in our constituencies. To date there aren't any really significant concerns, but we do want to do our due diligence on this file given the importance of what veterinarians do. As the Official Opposition we at least owe this much to Albertans.

The government's own figures show some 1,500 veterinarians in the province and approximately 1,500 veterinarian technicians. That's not an insignificant number who will be impacted by this legislation. Under this legislation veterinarian technologists not following the instructions of the registered veterinarian supervising them or practising veterinary medicine that the technologist is not authorized to practise are deemed: "conduct that harms the integrity of the profession." That seems like a common-sense, straightforward measure, Mr. Speaker.

Furthermore, technologists cannot imply that they are veterinarians. After all, the Veterinary Profession Act already does not allow anyone except a registered veterinarian or permit holder to imply that they are veterinarians. It also does not allow a registered veterinarian or permit holder to imply that they are a specialist without actually being approved as a specialist in the field of veterinary medicine. So extending the spirit and letter of the law to technologists is a common-sense measure. In many ways it's also a consumer protection measure for those who rely on the services of those in the veterinary profession.

Given that the aim of this prospective legislation is to bring veterinarian technologists into the fold of the same professional governance as veterinarians, all of what's included here involves technical updates. Where the governance body already could make decisions on the registration of students and required qualifications for veterinarians, they can now do so for technologists as well. Just as they could revoke licences of veterinarians, they can now do so for technologists as well. These seem to be professional house-keeping measures, and I support that, Mr. Speaker.

Under the existing law, as it stands on the books today, the council of the self-governing professional body consists of a minimum of seven veterinarians elected by registered veterinarians for a length of time as determined according to their bylaws. Under the proposed legislation that number is moved down to six, and two technologists are added. That is not unreasonable.

Under the proposed legislation both veterinarians and technologists can now be appointed to both hearing tribunals and complaint review committees. This is a fair measure given that these are the tribunals and committees now responsible for veterinarian technologists as well.

There are also some changes to the membership of the practice review board, which makes determination of one's academic qualifications and experiential qualifications and makes decisions on whether they should be allowed to practise veterinary medicine. If they are able to make such consequential decisions about veterinarian technologists, it only makes sense that veterinarian technologists are represented. These are issues of professional representation. These are issues that seem to be addressed directly in this legislation without any apparent intent to move outside of those boundaries.

We support the intent of this bill. Frankly, in many regards it does seem like a rather straightforward piece of legislation, one that addresses a professional matter at the technical level, but we are going to continue our outreach to stakeholders on this file and reserve final judgment until we do so. We want to ensure that the government has done their due diligence and that there are no unintended consequences of this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to rise in support of this bill today, and I urge all members to support this bill as well. This bill at its core allows veterinary technicians to be represented by the Veterinary Medical Association. In particular, it gives them representation on their governance council, the practice review boards, and their disciplinary committees, rulings all of which could impact the work of a veterinary technician. No major changes in the scope of practice or the qualifications of either veterinarians or veterinary technologists – I have a feeling I'm going to get tongue tied more than once – are a result of this bill.

Now, one thing I am very proud that this bill has the potential to do is to increase the representation of women in governance. That's because 98 per cent of technologists are female. As a result of that, there is the strong potential for more women to serve on these boards, on the governance council, the practice review boards, et cetera. At present I note that only 14.5 per cent of board members in Alberta are women, and that is a statistic that I believe all members and indeed all Albertans should be striving very hard to improve.

Now, I also note that this bill is supported by both the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association and the Alberta Association of Animal Health Technologists. Indeed, I am informed that this bill

was spearheaded by the ABVMA with member support, an indication that all members should get behind this bill.

Finally, I am excited to note that this bill should improve accountability and consumer protection for all Albertans. I was talking to somebody about this bill earlier, and the first place their mind went to was their family dog and the care that they receive, but I note that both vets and veterinary technicians are also heavily involved in the livestock industry. This is certainly something that all parties in this House have expressed strong support for, especially in light of a certain company's recent decisions. I strongly believe that accountability for this industry is something that we should all support as well.

I urge all members to support this bill. Thank you.

3:10

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions of the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to question the member. I believe that he made some comment in regard to the potential input from technicians in this bill. That's a concern that I have because they are not members of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association. Even though they will be and could be included in this legislation, I was wondering how he feels they would then be represented. Even though the legislation encompasses them, they are not allowed to be on the Veterinary Medical Association board, so I was wondering how they would have a representative voice on that board.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is certainly an important concern. I do note once again that the Alberta Association of Animal Health Technologists supports this bill. Further, there is certainly room for a change to the veterinary act to expand on that. However, I believe that with their support, we can certainly move towards a more inclusive set of boards and councils in this regard.

**The Speaker:** Other questions under 29(2)(a)?

I recognize the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As members of the Assembly might suspect, I have an interest in this particular bill. I'd like to thank the Minister of Labour for bringing this forward, and I am rising in wholehearted support of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am still a somewhat delinquent member in my attendance of the Border City Rotary Club. One of the principles of Rotary Club is that we have representation from a wide range of professions through which the members in our club get to know about professions. When issues arise, quite often we turn to those professionals and ask them for some insight into this. I'll give an example. A few years ago there was an issue where a chiropractic adjustment had resulted in a patient suffering a very serious complication, so we turned to the chiropractors within our club to get some further information about that specific incident. In some ways I feel that today we're doing something a little bit similar, or at least I would ask the hon. members, my colleagues here in the Assembly, to allow me to provide some insight and some context into this piece of legislation from the point of view of a veterinarian.

I'm very proud to be a veterinarian – I said that last week – and I continue to be very proud to be a veterinarian. Our profession is one that, somewhat paradoxically, is one of the most respected professions in survey after survey after survey. Becoming a politician was a real adjustment for me because in those same

surveys politicians do not fare nearly as well. But I will say, Mr. Speaker, that I remain very proud to be a veterinarian, and as a politician I do endeavour wherever possible to not besmirch my profession in my conduct here in the House.

Animal health technologists. Please do not call these folks technicians. They're technologists. There is a very significant difference. If they're called technicians, as I have occasionally made the same error myself, you can sometimes expect a very well-deserved retort. Animal health technologists are professionals in every sense of the word.

I have had the privilege of working alongside animal health technologists throughout most of my career, although I will confess that when I first graduated, in 1983, the practice I worked with did not have the fortunate nature of having an animal health technologist in its employ. We had a nurse who had been trained in human medicine but also had a lot of experience working around horses, and she adapted a lot of her training to what we were doing. But over time and thanks in no small part to the excellent training programs that we have at a number of colleges here in Alberta – at Olds College, at NAIT, at Lakeland College, and also at Fairview College – we have some of the top programs in the country for training animal health technologists. It's a two-year program, it's a very rigorous program, and it also involves a practicum period of a minimum of four weeks working in a veterinary hospital. I have had literally dozens of these students come through my hospital. It is always fun to have them. I always really enjoy it.

These technologists go on to work in practices but not just in veterinary practices. They work in a number of other applications. They sometimes work in research facilities. They sometimes work in animal production facilities. Animal health technologists are also at times employed in places like feedlots and hog production. Now, in that context they're not under the direct supervision of a veterinarian and therefore are somewhat more limited in their activities, but I can tell you that the animal health technologists that I had the privilege of working with were better at starting catheters, were better at getting blood samples, were better at taking X-rays, and could do a lot of the work in practice that is so important. Again, I cannot speak highly enough of them.

Now, there have been some concerns that have been expressed by some members. The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner expressed some skepticism, and I always wonder where that skepticism starts. Does it indeed start with a stakeholder group, or are there just questions in the stakeholder group that are then fanned by the Official Opposition? That's a question that I sometimes have to ask myself.

I will tell you that veterinarians have been working with the AAAHT, the Alberta Association of Animal Health Technologists, for the last decade to bring a greater sense of unity between these two professional groups, and in fact in 2011, five years ago, at our annual general meeting of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association a motion was passed to bring AHTs into our profession as full members and also to have them sit on the ABVMA council as full council members. So this has the support of veterinarians.

Now, I would say that you could probably find a veterinarian or two out there that probably don't think it's a good idea, but I think that, like any professional organization, at some point decisions have to be made. In our profession those are made at annual general meetings. At the annual general meeting in 2011 it was duly voted on to proceed, and in fact the activity of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association along with the AAAHT working with the government, working with the past government, to bring this about has been ongoing since that time. So it has the support of veterinarians. This measure would bring technologists into the fold.

You know, the animal health technology field is one that has developed a great deal in the last 35 years. The AAAHT was formed in Alberta in 1977, but the profession of animal health technology dates back well before then. In fact, if you were in the U.K., these individuals are known in the U.K. as veterinary nurses, and they work very much in the same capacity as AHTs do here. They are known around the world, and there's even now specialization in a wide variety of specialized disciplines for animal health technologists, including small animal clinical practice, neurology, dentistry, orthopaedics, and a wide variety of other fields.

I do wish to take, though, Mr. Speaker, some issue with a point that was raised by the Minister of Labour and reiterated by the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert. It has to do with the potential for this bringing more women onto the board of the ABVMA. Veterinary medicine is already a profession that has undergone a significant transition in the last 30 years, and there is no need to worry about adequate representation of women either in our profession or on our board. In fact, when I graduated in 1983, our class had an equal number of men and women. We had already achieved gender parity back in 1983.

3:20

There has not been a class graduated from the University of Saskatchewan since that time that has had more males than females, and in fact there have been a couple of classes at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatoon that have had 100 per cent females in the class. Now, this has been achieved without quotas, and this has been achieved without any specific artificial means to increase the participation of women in the profession. It is simply because women have qualified on their merits and been chosen by one of the most competitive colleges to get into, more competitive than medicine, more competitive than dentistry.

It is harder to get into vet school than just about any other faculty. There are usually six or seven qualified applicants for every seat in most veterinary colleges, and that situation hasn't really changed much since the opening of the University of Calgary school of veterinary medicine, the dean of which, I'm proud to say, up until just very recently was a classmate of mine.

Mr. Speaker, the suggestion of bringing animal health technology onto council: yes, 98 per cent of animal health technologists are in fact women, but right now our ABVMA board, with its 12 members, has five women and seven men. We have had many, many, many female presidents of the ABVMA, and I'm actually very proud to say that this is a profession where women and men have enjoyed, I think, equality for a number of years. I say that with a certain amount of pride because my wife is also a veterinarian, and we met at vet school. That maybe had something to do with the equal numbers of men and women.

**Mr. Rodney:** And some horsing around.

**Dr. Starke:** No, there was no horsing around, but thanks to the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that while we can talk about a lot of things in this debate, I would really urge members to not say that they like this bill because it will increase the number of women on our council. That gives the impression that our council is a number of old guys like me who are sitting in darkened rooms smoking and playing poker at night.

**An Hon. Member:** Like your caucus.

**Dr. Starke:** No. That wouldn't be accurate either.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that that is a relic from the past and that while veterinary meetings in the '60s and '70s occasionally may



have looked like that, I can tell you we have moved a long way forward since then. I would ask both the Minister of Labour and others who speak to this to recognize the fact that our profession has already moved forward a long, long way, and to put a fine point on it, we didn't need the government's help with that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support this. I am proud to bring animal health technologists directly into our profession. I, quite frankly, think that this is a potential model for other professions. Having worked somewhat in the health care field, I sometimes note with a certain amount of sadness that there is a certain amount of tension between different professional qualifications within the health care field. I don't think that serves us well in human health care. That separation, that tension does not exist in veterinary medicine. In veterinary medicine we enjoy a level of respect and co-operation. Our practices function as teams. From the veterinarians to the animal health technologists to everyone else working in these practices, we all have the concern for the comfort of the patient first and foremost, ahead of all other considerations, and I know that that is something that we strive for in human medicine as well.

This is a good bill. This is a bill where I would never say, "Let's get this done quickly" because I don't necessarily cater to the idea that we have to rush any piece of legislation through. But if you want the opinion of a former practising veterinarian who is a member among you, who can provide some context to what this bill would mean to our profession, I will tell you without hesitation or reservation that this would be a good thing for our profession, it would be a good thing for not only the veterinarians but also the animal health technologists in our province, and because it is our sworn duty to promote and preserve animal health in our province and, through that, also preserve and promote the health of the entire society, I think that members should all consider supporting Bill 13 and moving ahead.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a fondness for experiences working with veterinarians, and I can fully relate to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster in what I believe and what I believe a lot of could I call them agriculturalists believe is a high moral ground in working with animals and relieving any sort of distress that they may be in.

To the Member for Spruce-Grove-St. Albert: when I questioned him earlier, I wanted to make him aware that even though these people are being brought forward on these situations, this is legislation, and I will be supporting it.

I also wanted to ask the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster if he also believes that maybe the profession that we have chosen relating to animals is something that relates to what some people in the rural and agricultural communities may believe to be a higher moral ground.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a difficult question. I guess I have a certain degree of discomfort in replying or responding to it because I've never considered, certainly, myself or members of my profession to stand on any kind of higher moral ground. We do the job that we've been asked to do by our clients, we do the job that we've been trained to do, and we do the job, indeed, that we love to do because that's what we do. You know, I know that I run into lots and lots of people who say, "I always wanted to be a vet," and for some reason or another that was something that didn't come out in

their life's journey. I didn't always want to be a vet. I wanted to be an accountant, but a series of incidents in my youth changed that path, and I'm grateful for them, and I'm grateful for the fact that, quite frankly, it was animals that changed that path for me.

But with regard, specifically, to the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, I am very proud of the contribution that veterinarians make in communities, large and small, across our province. I'm proud that I was just joined recently by another veterinarian in a provincial Legislature. There was an election of a veterinarian in Manitoba just a few weeks ago. He joins myself as well as a veterinarian in the B.C. Legislature, who also happens to be the Minister of Health in British Columbia. There is, in fact, a long tradition of veterinarians that have served as elected officials.

Now, again, I referenced earlier that given the relative esteem that veterinarians are held in and the relative esteem that politicians are held in, that may not necessarily reflect the higher moral ground, but it is nonetheless certainly a profession that I'm proud to be part of, and I'm proud of the contribution of my colleagues to their communities throughout the province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. member, I did want to become a veterinarian, but I didn't make it.

I'll go to the Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** On the bill, please, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Not under 29(2)(a)?

Any other questions under 29(2)(a) to the member?  
Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Yes. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, everyone. First of all, I'd just like to start out with a little bit of a statement here if I could. I have the deepest respect for this profession. As a boy and all the way through to my mid-30s I experienced many, many occasions where we had qualified professional veterinarians out to our operation, and it was always something that I was thoroughly, thoroughly fascinated about.

I'd also like to take a moment to say that I have the deepest amount of respect for the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster and for this profession that he is in. I think he speaks eloquently on this subject, and I, too, would like to echo a lot of his thoughts. I, too, am in support of this bill.

We have accumulated a bit of information that we'd like to present about this today, Mr. Speaker, and a bit of background has been prepared. I'd just like to go through it a bit. There are a few points that we have found that we'd like to bring up for perhaps a little bit of discussion, for further clarification, a bit later on in my presentation here.

3:30

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster started out talking about, I believe, animals and a lot of things to do about animals. You know, almost as long as there have been humans, there have been domesticated animals. Whether for food or companionship, animals have been with us every step as we've wandered through our history. While the ability to aid and heal animals has been a focus of humans for centuries, veterinarian medicine as we know it today apparently was not formalized until the late 18th century – I'm reading here right now – when the first schools were established in France. It would take over a hundred years before a school – I believe that in Canada the Ontario Veterinary College was the first one to be established. Since that was established, veterinarian medicine has apparently quickly grown and expanded both in terms of medical advancements but also in governance and structure.

By 1874 the association there had been established, and over the course of the next six decades provincial associations popped up across the country, including the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, founded in 1906, I understand, a year after this province was established. According to their website:

The Alberta Veterinary Medical Association (ABVMA) is the professional regulatory organization governing the practice of veterinary medicine in Alberta under the authority of the Veterinary Profession Act. As a self-governing profession, [it's] required to perform its regulatory and professional functions in accordance with the law and in a manner responsible to the public of Alberta through the government of Alberta.

Almost as long as there has been formal veterinary medicine, there has been a need for educated veterinary assistants to support them, and, as the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster said, they are now called veterinary technologists. In 1908 the Canine Nurses Institute was established, in fact, in England in an effort to meet this demand. While there had been trained veterinary assistants prior to that, now called technologists, since the turn of the 20th century, there wasn't an established association in North America to support them, really, until 1960.

It would be a further 18 years before Alberta finally would see the creation of its own provincial association, apparently in 1978, when the Alberta association of technologists was established. As per their website it was created to provide continued education for veterinary technologists in Alberta and to serve, support, and register those technologists.

As veterinary medicine has evolved in sophistication and quality, so has the need for evolved leadership and oversight of the industry. Bill 13 proposes to be the next step in that development. The proposed changes, from what we can see, include having veterinary technologists subject to similar professional obligations of actual veterinarians and expanding the regulatory scope of the council of the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association to include veterinary technologists. With the expanded authority to regulate technologists, Bill 13 will mandate two members of the council to be veterinarian technologists as elected by the ABVMA.

It also proposes to change the definition of a member to include both veterinarians and veterinary technologists and to change the composition of the practice review board, which is the body that makes determinations of an individual's academic and experiential qualifications and makes decisions on whether they should be allowed to practise veterinary medicine in Alberta.

Of course, with any change we must be cognizant, I think, Mr. Speaker, of unintended consequences, and this case is no different. I mean, with all of the kinds of legislation that we deal with from time to time, we can run into unintended consequences. I'm sure that all of us in the House today recognize that. Over the course of the coming days we'll be taking the opportunity to speak with more veterinarians and more veterinary technologists to get their feelings and thoughts on these proposed changes.

One issue that I've heard about already – in fact, it's actually from an acquaintance of mine – is with regard to the membership fees. While both veterinarians and veterinary technologists are vitally important to maintaining the health of Alberta's animal population, we must understand that the responsibilities and, thus, the compensation of both of these professions, of course, are not the same.

Labour market information shows the median wage in Alberta for technologists to be only \$21 per hour before taxes, in fact. The cost of a full-year membership fee, though, for technologists is almost \$350, with an initial application fee of \$122. Compare that with the veterinarians, for which labour market information shows the median wage in Alberta to be \$45 per hour. The current full-

year membership fees for veterinarians total in excess of \$1,600 per year. I'm wondering: will the changes currently proposed in Bill 13 result possibly in increased fees? Will this have a consequential impact, potentially discouraging others, perhaps, from joining this wonderful profession? These are the sorts of questions my colleagues and I hope the minister can speak to as we continue to debate this bill.

There are many reasons why we must be skeptical of claims that this government consulted extensively. I need only mention the complete lack of consultation this government did with regard to their insistence to forge blindly ahead with increased minimum wage. I don't even need to mention Bill 6 as a catastrophe in the fall in that regard. Follow that with the introduction of Bill 1, and there's a clear pattern this government has established with regard to its desire not to consult widely with stakeholders beyond those that already agree with it.

As my hon. colleague mentioned earlier, we in the Official Opposition will continue to reach out to stakeholders for their input and will watch this government closely to ensure that they keep their word. While I still have some concerns with the bill with regard to consultation and unintended consequences, as I just said, I intend to support the intent of this bill, as I said in my earlier remarks, and the effort it makes to modernize the legislation covering the veterinary medicine industry. For this reason I will be fully supporting this, Mr. Speaker, at second reading, and I encourage all other members to do the same.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the member?

Seeing and hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to support Bill 13, Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016. I'm very pleased to stand up to support the professional assistance to veterinarians that we have today. I really appreciate the background and overview provided by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. I learned a lot about the profession in detail. From what I've understood so far and based on my knowledge, I am in full support of this profession, considering the fact that they provide great assistance to the vets. Animal care is something very important for us because we have got animals in the form of pets, wildlife, on farms, and in many cases they are considered as being part of the family as well.

In terms of providing excellent care to animals, it's very important that the profession is under the umbrella of a regulated body. That will add more credibility and put a standard on it so that people have no question about the technologists and their services. Although they do provide excellent services, it will just add more credibility and put them under the umbrella of being professionals, just like many other professions, and give them more respect and dignity in our province. This will be great way to do that.

I can speak to the importance of having a profession under a regulatory board with confidence because I myself am an engineer in training under APEGA, and I see the importance of how once a profession is affiliated with a regulatory body, how much of a difference it makes. I have a lot of appreciation for that, and I believe that having this profession under that professional umbrella will also help people who are working as veterinary technologists. As their scope of work is broad as they take care of animal clinical pathology, radiology, anaesthesia, surgical, assisting necropsy, office, hospital management – the list goes on – we can see the important role they play, and having the opportunity for them to

participate, actually, in the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association governance board will also allow them to be more actively involved with other veterinarians and to have that opportunity to progress in their careers as well.

3:40

I was also going to mention the part about how 98 per cent of technologists who are working are women; however, gender parity was already elaborated about, so I'm glad to know about that. I feel that this bill is an excellent opportunity to create an excellent pathway for technologists to further succeed and to have that respect, that credibility and standard in the province of Alberta.

This concludes my remarks. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions for the hon. member under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, the minister to close debate.

**Ms Gray:** I'd just like to thank all members for their comments.

To the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster: you asked if we wanted your opinion in this, and we did, so thank you very much for your support of this bill and your opinion and your vast history and experience as a veterinarian. We appreciate that insight being brought here to this debate.

With that, I would like to close debate.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:42 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Goehring	Panda
Anderson, S.	Gray	Payne
Babcock	Hanson	Phillips
Carlier	Hinkley	Rodney
Carson	Hoffman	Rosendahl
Connolly	Horne	Sabir
Coolahan	Jabour	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Schneider
Cyr	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Starke
Dang	Luff	Stier
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Drysdale	Mason	Sweet
Eggen	McLean	Taylor
Feehan	Miller	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Westhead
Ganley	Nixon	Woollard
Gill	Orr	

Totals: For – 53 Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 13 read a second time]

4:00

### Bill 11 Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016

[Adjourned debate May 12: Mr. Bilous]

**The Speaker:** Anyone wish to speak to this? The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak on Bill 11. The Innovates groups have been brought under one ministry, that being the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. As the shadow minister for this ministry these four corporations have been on my radar since this ministry was created.

I have had the chance to meet with the CEO and soon to be previous CEO of Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions, Mr. Steve Price. This meeting was back in February of this year, and he was already aware that the Innovates departments were amalgamating. He was able to provide some of the details such as on the merger of the boards and the separation of Innovates: Tech Futures into a separate subsidiary.

During that meeting I was able to learn a lot about the organization itself. I learned that they examine research proposals and fund those they deem worthy. With more funding from private investors they have been able to help take research projects to the market. I learned that due to Alberta's large agricultural sector and forests many companies come to Alberta for the vast biomass available. Alberta is also one of the leaders in nanotechnology for agriculture and cellulose nanocrystals, otherwise known as wood pulp. It was a very informative meeting, and I was grateful to Mr. Price for taking time out of his busy schedule to educate me on what this arm of the Innovates corporations does. It is always great to know that many of our brilliant Albertan minds are creating new and exciting products, whether through government or private institutions.

I was also privy to a tour of Alberta Innovates: Tech Futures by the CEO, Mr. Stephen Loughheed, back in April. He was also aware of the merger of the Innovates corporations at that time. I was able to see the prototypes of new technology that may one day help my former petrochemical colleagues in the future. I was able to see their very large facility, with very few people working in such a large complex. It was interesting to see why many people wanted to ensure that the funding arm of Innovates stays separate from the spending arm. There are many things that past governments did with tax dollars that may have been questionable. Innovates has done some great things in the past like create many of the technologies used today by our oil field workers.

At the beginning of February I had a very productive meeting with the CEO of Alberta Innovates: Energy and Environment Solutions, Mr. Eddy Isaacs. He told me that he was going to retire once the merger happened. He enjoyed his time as the CEO and was able to do many great things with this arm of Innovates.

Four months back, in February, I had a meeting with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. He was also able to give me some minor details on this merger. He said that Innovates asked to be merged so that people would not be confused as to which Innovates corporation they should be approaching with the research proposals. The meeting did not revolve around that issue, but it was brought up as a concern from myself. It was very interesting to hear about this bill from multiple different sources months and months before any public announcement. The very earliest public hint I could find that this merger was happening was in March, when an article came out talking about laying off senior educators in advance of a restructuring for Alberta Innovates.

Information gained and compiled from multiple sources leaves me with concerns. I do not have all the information; otherwise, I would not have concerns. Obviously, nothing happens overnight, and there was a lot of work put behind this bill and this merger. Whoever has held a corporate job would understand this aspect. I have, and I understand that there are many working parts that need to continue to operate for a corporation as large as Alberta Innovates to work properly. I understand that many things had to happen before this bill came to the floor. I'm not questioning that many of

those things may have had to happen before this bill was presented to the House. For things to run smoothly, I understand that people need to be informed and put in place to ensure a smooth transition.

What I'm questioning is the transparency of the entire operation. This government ran on a platform of transparency. Did the government do everything in its power to ensure that this whole process was as transparent as possible? Was it possible for the government to be more transparent on this process? Was it possible for this government to release their intentions back when the cabinet agreed to merge the Innovates corporations?

When I first heard about this back in January, there was not a speck of information available on this. There was no way to verify if my source was telling the truth. I was happy that the minister did not hide his intentions, and I appreciate his honesty. I'm just curious why this information was not made more readily available to the public sooner. If the minister could answer these questions next time he speaks on this bill, it would be greatly appreciated.

I would also like to get clarification on something that was mentioned in one of the meetings. I was told that 50 per cent of the executive positions for the new Innovates corporation would be filled prior to the CEO being selected. Would the minister be able to answer for me if this is true or not? If it is true, why were those positions filled before the CEO was selected? Should the CEO not have the authority to fill those positions? Will those positions be replaceable? Who is deciding who will fill those positions? Is the minister or his ministry choosing those positions? If so, are those positions going to be patronage positions like the previous government was accused of doing?

For the record I'm not accusing this government of doing any of these things. I sincerely do not know the answers to these questions, and that is the purpose of this time. Any and all information would be greatly appreciated.

The minister has mentioned the \$5 million being given to Alberta Innovates, which should eat up the \$2 million in savings from this merger, so this leads me to questions relating to the savings. We have not received any information as to how this money is being saved. Back in August the Minister of Economic Development and Trade was looking into managers being paid more than triple the salary of the Premier. Now, if that position was removed, that would be a little over one-quarter of the savings. Is the minister saving \$2 million by removing four executives? Or five? We don't know. Mr. Speaker, I want to know where this \$2 million worth of savings is coming from and why the savings are not higher.

4:10

Cutting three-quarters of the boards should save more than \$2 million. Can the minister table for the House where the savings are coming from? Can the minister also detail how many board members have been removed and what their costs were so we can do the math ourselves? I believe that if we added those numbers, it would equate to more than \$2 million.

I know this government likes to jump up and down about being transparent. Hopefully, I'm helping them by showing where their transparency is lacking. I do not mind being proven wrong. What I do mind is not having all the information to make an informed decision on a bill. I appreciate that this government is finally making some effort to find efficiencies. Don't get me wrong. That's a great first baby step on the journey to getting us back to a balanced budget.

If the government can find 5,000 more \$2 million efficiencies, we can eliminate the \$10 billion deficit we are looking at and avoid the \$58 billion debt this government will have in 2019. A debt of \$58 billion is a huge amount. I don't think this government realizes how long it will take to pay that debt off or the toll it will take on

Albertans, who will have to pay an extra \$2,000 a year just to service that much debt. That's why I want to ensure that this merger of Alberta Innovates is as fiscally effective as possible, and from the minimal information that has been released on this merger, I do not believe this is the case. I do not believe that this merger is being done in a way that is as fiscally effective as possible.

These are the unanswered questions, Mr. Speaker, that have been brought to my attention. I really hope that this government can answer my questions and provide clarity and more transparency on this merger.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise to support the bill, Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. Research and innovation are fundamentally important for diversification of our economy as well as giving us a competitive edge in many areas that eventually will help boost our economy. Combining public research, innovation, and commercialization systems will strengthen our research department because it will open doors to utilize expertise from all over the world.

The consolidated and leaner innovation system will allow innovators, researchers, and industry to work in collaboration to create more opportunities for Albertans. Intellectual growth, progress, advancement, and success we can all envision once we have all the expertise from all over the world from different areas of innovation, creativity, industry, and research brought together at the same table.

The current system for the past many years has not been strong enough due to the lack of focus and leadership, the sustained low price of oil, and the current economic situation of the province. We can see that if we can bring in more innovation and diversify our economy – and diversification comes through research and innovation – then in that case we don't necessarily have to rely on one resource to strengthen our economy for the long term.

Basically, when we look at sustainability, sustainability is a triangle of social well-being, economy, and environment. In order to find that balance of making sure that we are trying to be sustainable in these three areas, we want to ensure that we are continuously trying new things and moving forward with bringing in expertise in different areas from all over the world and trying to do new experiments and bringing in new things to make sure that in the long term we are sustainable as a society.

This investment of consolidation will help build the world-class reputation of Alberta world-wide in the field of research and innovation. It will allow educational institutions higher rankings world-wide, opening doors to a bright future for our students and researchers. Having the higher ranking of educational institutions particularly is very crucial for the well-being of any society. First of all, they're providing excellent education, and once a society has quality education available, then it means that they have better chances for being successful.

Having that world-class reputation, once that reputation is acquired, will then encourage people, students, researchers, and other communities from different parts of the world to specifically come to Alberta and learn about Alberta's economy, Alberta's culture, at the same time bringing value and adding value to our education system through their wealth of knowledge and information and expertise. So this plays an important role in boosting the economy because it will allow more international students or more foreigners to come to our institutions as well as to come to Alberta. That will allow Alberta's economy to do well.

At the same time, research and innovation plays an important role in many areas of our lives. For example, when it comes even to

health care or patient care, we can provide quality health care to our citizens. As well, we can advance in energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, and all that will help us to advance ourselves from technology borrowers to, basically, technology providers.

In fact, recently we can see that. As we know, Harvard University is one of the top universities in the world, and they actually have some programs when it comes to decarbonization and the environment. This year they are offering fellowships to people from all over the world to look into policies in China as well as Europe when it comes to decarbonization and reducing carbon emissions in the environment. They're opening this opportunity to people from all over the world. As we can see, this is a step towards globalization through having an institute or having that excellence in academia that is allowing or promoting globalization and collaboration amongst people from all over the world towards sustainability.

I can speak to that with great confidence myself as well because I have five years of research experience. Before getting into the oil and gas industry, I was working as a research assistant and did my thesis specifically on carbon dioxide sequestration, and then I did research in different areas as well. I did research for the dentistry department of my school in nanotechnology, where I was working basically on creating artificial teeth for the replacement of teeth operations. That was something that I gained as an experience. At the same time I worked on a research project related to fluidized beds that was totally traditional chemical engineering based research, and then I did research on algae cultivation. That was more related to environmental engineering. At the same time I was taking workshops to understand how there is a relationship between social issues and economics involved when it comes to sustainability and how society, the economy, and the environment are all connected.

Having that research experience in different areas and different departments, I gained the experience that through the research, basically, we are looking 20 years ahead of time. Basically, we're planning our future. If we do research today, we are securing our future for the next 20 years or so, and if we excel in that department, then basically it means that we are providing security for our future generations.

4:20

I'm very happy to see that the ministry is taking the step by having this bill because through this bill they are bringing academia, small businesses as well as industry all together on one platform, basically. That is very important because, as I mentioned, when I was working in different research departments, as well I worked as a student with other students on a research project that was sponsored by industry, and it was called Capstone, in Sarnia, Ontario. My project was basically with other group members of mine on varieties of production. We had the opportunity to present that project because we had collaboration with the industry.

If all these three bodies – industry, businesses, and academia – are all connected, that is when we are able to bring it to the next level. Otherwise, it's really hard to connect all three bodies together. If you work in silos, then basically we are not creating that flow of information that is needed or not creating those channels, that are important, to send that information across and to achieve the goals that we are trying to achieve. This creates synergy, having all three bodies together, and once there is synergy, then there's more energy to move forward, and once we have more energy to move forward, then we are more able to get closer to what we are envisioning.

I would like to basically congratulate the ministry for coming up with this bill. I was very delighted to see that, and I'm very happy to stand up for this bill because I'm speaking on behalf of the students here, on behalf of residents of Alberta as well as the MLA

for my community. I'm also applying all my background experience from the past, from all perspectives. In the way a jeweller will examine a diamond, if I do that examination, I don't see any flaw in this bill. I would like to encourage and urge all the members of this Assembly to support this bill, and then we can all plan more security and more sustainability for our province.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I would recognize the Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. On the surface of the bill I see the potential for what the government is attempting to achieve. They're trying to create a leaner system, with less CEOs and board members, that apparently has the ability to save taxpayers \$2 million per year. Having one ministry with four boards consolidated into one board would seem to make sense. This could result in less confusion for the public if handled properly and provide a more effective way of using public funds.

Wildrose is certainly in favour of reducing government budgets, but today I was a little bit confused because they were talking about reducing government budgets with this one, and we had brought forth a lot of amendments to the main estimates, but none of them – none of them – were actually accepted. I thought they were great amendments.

**An Hon. Member:** Well, at least someone did.

**Mr. Taylor:** Yes, somebody did.

I guess we need to take baby steps when trying to get the government to reduce their budgets and reduce costs. This is a first, and that's a good thing.

On first glance at this bill I was quite hopeful that we finally were starting to see some constraint on the government to reduce costs and streamline operations. That was a good thing. However, when I look at what happened with the same plan that formed Alberta Health Services, I'm left with some doubts. I am not confident in this government's ability to consolidate programs into one massive organization and maintain or improve services for Alberta. We haven't seen that at AHS, and I'm concerned that we may see challenges at a megasized Alberta Innovates with a smaller accountability structure.

In addition to my general unease with the format of the new corporation, I also have concerns regarding some specific provisions. Now, when I was reading over the bill, I looked at section 7. It's one of the areas that caused me to think that we have some real issues involved in this bill if implemented. It's not perfect like a diamond, like the member opposite was saying it was, not just exactly the way it should be. Section 7(a) – this is where I had my confusion – says:

in subsection (1) by striking out “up to 4 research and innovation corporations” and substituting “one or more research and innovation corporations, in addition to the corporation established under section 6.1(3).”

What does it mean? Well, at this point it's unclear, but it would seem to me that the government is leaving the door open for more research and innovation corporations in the future, Mr. Speaker. When the government says that there will be one or more, how many does the government intend to form? Why go to all the trouble to table this amendment bill only to leave the door open to create one or more research and innovation corporations, which would put us back right in the same situation, with multiple corporations? This clause could leave Albertans with many more corporations in the

future than they have now, with little or no involvement in that decision-making process. Who would decide that more corporations are needed? What criteria would be used to make that decision? What are the potential costs and benefits of having an unspecified number of corporations where the current bill limits the government to four?

This is simply too open-ended and too vague, Mr. Speaker, and too prone to uncertainty for me to be comfortable with it. Through this Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016, we should be saving taxpayer money from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, which I have to applaud. That's a good thing if this government actually does find those savings, and I mean: if. But another risk is that the savings may be found in places other than management levels. Albertans would like to know where the government is going to find these efficiencies.

When I was in business, you know, I had to track all the costs that were associated with my business. That's what I did. I tracked all the costs for advertising, for how much my salesmen were costing me at that time, and for my administration, the cost for the copiers, the costs for all the mail-outs that we did. There was a ton of different costs, but in the end I was able to see where my money was going and the return for my dollar spent. From that information I found efficiencies, and I grew my business and got a solid return on the investment. This is a very simple business practice, and it's used right across Canada.

I simply come back to the question: what is the government doing to track the money spent on grants? They can find efficiencies beyond the consolidation of research and innovation corporations, those four corporations that we've talked about. When it comes to both jobs and grants, Albertans expect transparency so they can readily see what programs and jobs are being created with their money and what the overall impact is going to be on the economy in Alberta. How do we find this transparency within this new legislation? Where exactly will Albertans see the supposed savings of \$2 million, Mr. Speaker? Even if we find \$2 million in the short term, how long will Albertans see those savings with the open-ended clause that I see, that was mentioned, section 7? That section 7 leaves no accountability for the eventual number of corporations that could possibly be established under this bill.

The sunshine list disclosure of all the salaries and bonuses paid to Alberta Innovates: will they disclose all those? How will Albertans know if they are receiving good value for the wages and the benefits paid to those employees in the corporation? I am hopeful that some of those savings, those \$2 million in savings, will come from the reduction in the outrageously high wages being paid to the top management positions as opposed to coming from front-line staff. Again, I and all Albertans indeed want to see how this government transitions to this plan.

4:30

I am concerned about the effectiveness of the new corporation as it consolidates the research areas of four corporations into one. How will the highly technical and specialized areas of research be assigned? What priorities will be assigned to those research areas? How will stakeholder input be gathered and used to ensure that the priorities of Albertans are reflected in the new corporation?

You know, while I am concerned about this bill – it leaves doors open to the growth of these corporations in the future, that will lead us to a perhaps more costly and less efficient scenario than we have now – I believe that it's a step in the right direction, and it shows that the government is finally beginning to look at ways to cut the outrageous spending spree that they've been on since forming government.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, while I have some very real concerns – and section 7 is my biggest concern with this, the open-endedness of that one part of the bill – I can support this bill. I believe that we need to support the government in finding efficiencies in how they manage the province and Alberta Innovates, and this is a good starting point.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Battle River-Wainwright?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of this bill, and I do so for a number of reasons. But, first of all, I want to thank my colleague for her wonderful analysis of what this bill will do.

My first reason is that I think that Albertans deserve to be represented in the most effective manner possible to diversify and grow our economy. This is an innovation system that builds on our strengths, and it creates a more diversified economy, and it delivers value for money.

Now I'm going to kind of sidestep a little bit. This past weekend I was very pleased to be at the University of Lethbridge when we provided a cheque to a group called MindFuel. It went to a group of students from one of the high schools in Lethbridge. They were there for the weekend at a workshop, and what they were developing was nanotechnology to develop a biological way to coagulate blood quickly in case of an accident or for a haemophiliac or in any number of cases.

The other thing that I've seen in Lethbridge was – I met with a group of scientists and professors at the university, and I've heard many, many incredible ideas. A group of scientists got together at the university – there are probably 25 in the group – and they looked at so many different things that could be done in Lethbridge in terms of renewable energy. In my opinion, this bill is supporting those kinds of things where we can move our economy forward in a very diversified manner. This bill really supports that happening, having one corporation that's going to deal with that and work with those people to do those things. Here we have a group of students, and we have a group of professors. We can get together. We can develop all kinds of things.

To me, this bill is a necessity, in terms of going forward, if we want to do this – and we must do this – in our economy, and this is the time for us to do it. The decision to refocus our public research, innovation, and commercialization system through consolidation reflects the advice from stakeholders and best practices from around the world. That's what I see happening in Lethbridge right now. The bill will support this new approach and enable much-needed subsequent changes to Alberta's research and innovation system.

The investment helps to diversify the economy by creating a knowledge-based economy and enhances Alberta's reputation as a world-class research and innovation jurisdiction. Co-ordinating and leveraging the research and innovation system will help to drive research and its applications, will increase business start-ups and the commercialization of Alberta ideas, and provide access to services.

A more effective and efficient system will spur innovation and allow for the development of new companies and industries. By increasing the pace of technological innovation, we can add value to our resources such as by improving patient care, advancing energy efficiency, and reducing carbon emissions. Alberta's innovation system has realized practical applications and numerous

benefits from scientific innovation and research, including creating thousands of new jobs as a result of technological advances such as the investment in oil sands development, up-to-date health care services resulting from Alberta's medical research facilities, and diversifying Alberta's economy.

Again, I'll look back to Lethbridge. We have two research centres apart from the university and the college. All kinds of research is being done for agriculture in my community, research that has shown itself to increase our agricultural output. The fact that we have irrigation in southern Alberta in a drought area: those kinds of things are all part and parcel of this.

I absolutely support this bill, and I urge everybody in this House to do so. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any questions for the Member for Lethbridge-East under 29(2)(a)?

I recognize the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. Unchecked, Alberta Innovates has ballooned inefficiencies at the board level. Wildrose has long advocated for the government to find those inefficiencies within the numerous organizations and the departments that it funds.

It's my belief that this move to consolidate Alberta Innovates, if done right, will result in a superior outcome for all Albertans. Technological investment is especially important. To echo the Member for Calgary-Glenmore, one of the most important things we can do is to bring those ideas together.

Technological investment is especially important at a time of deep economic recession, and now is the time for Alberta's considerable labour and capital resources to be directed towards initiatives that foster innovation and technological growth. The reality of the recession is seen every day as Albertans struggle to make ends meet, to put food on the table, to pay for hockey skates and music lessons. However, there is an economic opportunity for our resilient Albertans. The weakened economy, with its depressed prices, facilitates an opportunity to restructure and retrain and reinvent. I believe that it is our job as government to help steward Albertans with efficiently operated programs that assist them in finding opportunities to grow.

For a number of Albertans, Alberta Innovates is that opportunity. Consolidation of this organization, to the extent that it results in streamlined services, is the common-sense solution for an organization that risks becoming an unnecessarily cumbersome entity. Unmanaged redundancies such as duplication at the board management level risk slowing down the innovation that this organization is actually designed to facilitate. This is a time when finding simple, low-consequence cost savings could not be more important. As Alberta's tax base shrinks with unchecked unemployment, every dollar spent needs to reach further.

4:40

As we continue on with second reading, there are still, however, you know, a number of questions about this bill that remain unanswered. Albertans are owed the highest degree of transparency – and that's something all of us campaigned on – especially with regard to the consequences and the extent of the consolidation. It's important that any changes to this organization are not coming at the expense of quality investment decisions.

My constituents have told me that they're eager for clarity on how exactly this consolidation will save the government \$2 million. I along with, I'm sure, my caucus mates and Albertans are eager to hear from this government more details on their findings with

regard to that. We're a little disappointed that we're still waiting for transparency from the minister on where the \$2 million efficiency is coming from. It's concerning to Alberta that this organization may have been running for years with \$2 million in inefficiencies. I think the faster that we can get to understand where this money is being taken from, the better.

In conversations with my constituents some have expressed their concern that the money may have been wasted by Alberta Innovates and are uncertain about how now, suddenly this is becoming a problem when issues like this tend to be systemic or structural. It's my hope that this government could provide the good, innovative, entrepreneurial people of Chestermere-Rocky View and Alberta with some more answers with regard to this.

The government should be looking into finding further efficiencies within its own departments as well. Albertans are, however, concerned that the government is only interested in finding efficiencies within the arm's-length organizations. While this is important, we would really appreciate seeing the government look at all options in all areas of government.

Albertans want to know how the cuts will be made to this organization. Will it be through reductions in employment levels? As you're likely aware – you've heard this before – the CBC received news of layoffs in a leaked e-mail, that was sent around to employees of Alberta Innovates: Technology Futures by the organization's chief executive officer, Stephen Lougheed. We feel that the minister needs to confirm that the approach that this government will be taking – is this the approach that we're going to be taking to find efficiencies?

Perhaps more importantly, to what extent will the government find its efficiencies? Is it through a reduction in the labour force? Alberta Innovates is our province's mechanism for funding Alberta health researchers and getting the ideas of Albertan entrepreneurs to market. Technical expertise is clearly an important factor in making appropriate investments with the money of Albertan taxpayers. If positions are being eliminated, which positions are those, and are those high-ranking positions? In addition to the alleged layoffs, is the government considering reductions in salaries similar to the reductions we've seen at a number of private companies in what they're doing?

Our province faces turbulent economic circumstances, and we have clearly, most recently through our jobs action plan, recognized the importance of building our knowledge capital, especially in this beautiful province. There is a lot here.

Wildrose believes that this move by our party and the government will increase the speed at which the applicants are able to move through the program and receive funding, but what we are asking for is just assurance that this is, in fact, a mechanism for reducing onerous systemized redundancies along with all of the other important things that will happen by consolidating. Wildrose is eager to see the evidence and will appreciate seeing that this move to consolidate produces better results for Albertans.

Albertans are interested to learn more about the minister's conversations with the stakeholders as well, Mr. Speaker, that requested this move by the government, again transparency being the most important aspect of that. The investments that come out of Alberta Innovates are a complex thing. There are, obviously, competing interests at play, and Albertans need more information, and Albertans should be told where the efficiencies would be gained. Albertans deserve to know how the organization will be structured after the changes are made, and I would ask that the minister give some clarity on how the existing research areas will be organized and prioritized under the new system. Alberta Innovates is an organization that needs to have an investment edge

over its competitors as they're not only using private capital. Much of their funding comes at the expense of Alberta taxpayers.

In addition, some stakeholders are concerned about energy research and how that will continue. Reducing the level of specialization on Alberta Innovates boards should not come at the expense of investments in energy-related research. Obviously, Alberta has a competitive advantage in energy and energy research, and we want to see that this advantage is utilized through the proper facilitations. However, we are still waiting to see a plan from the government to ensure that energy research maintains its position as a top priority area for the research.

I'm hopeful that as debate continues, the questions of my constituents and fellow Albertans will receive more answers. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions for the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today it's my pleasure to rise and speak on Bill 11, Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. I would say first that this is a good start, but in facing a \$58 billion deficit in a few years, we've got a very, very long way to go.

I have to say that this amalgamation of the four Alberta Innovates into one entity with one subsidiary corporation was one that my colleagues and I were pleased to see. We are pleased about the cost-saving measures, and we can only hope that wisdom was used when they decided where the cuts would be made because this government isn't great about being transparent. Efficiencies in government and all entities is a huge priority for Wildrose. I have to say that I was a little taken aback when I realized that this spendthrift government was going to take some cost-saving measures to begin the work of efficiency, especially since we had no effect with our amendments on any of the budget estimates.

Anyway, Albertans have been frustrated with the government's and the previous government's efficiency when it comes to creating high-earning positions. We are hoping that this amalgamation will help relieve those frustrations. Because of the growing frustration and apprehension, I do have some questions when it comes to issues of transparency and accountability, so I'm going to take a little bit of time to go over those.

The public has asked for this merger to simplify the organization and, hopefully, reduce costs. The government says that this consolidation will save \$2 million a year. Alberta Innovates has received \$170 million in grants, and I'd like to know where the \$2 million will be saved. Not only do we want to simplify things, but we would also like to ensure that this creates a leaner system. It would be a missed opportunity if we were not able to see some additional cost savings. My colleagues and I would like this government to please share with us and all Albertans how it is that they will be reducing Alberta Innovates' costs by \$2 million a year. Where does it come from?

It's not like we're asking for too much here. We're only asking for transparency and for this government to be more accountable to all Albertans. I believe my colleague alluded to the fact that we all ran, both sides of the House, on a more transparent government. Albertans want a government they can trust, and they want to trust this government. They want to trust that this government knows what it is doing. When you hide details, it only makes confidence in government worse.

Please keep in mind that I was delighted to hear that these amendments were being made and that a possible restructuring

could take place and efficiencies be established, but we need more information. Albertans deserve to hear how the former corporations' research areas will be assigned priority after the changes are made. Will it be savings through employee reduction or by not replacing employees after retirement or resignation, through attrition? These are questions that Albertans would like answered. It's not like this government has given any reason for Albertans to trust it based on its assurances. The government has gone back on its promises on many occasions, so the people really need explanations.

There really are so many questions here about what the government's plans are with this amalgamation. I have heard that Albertans are anxious, frustrated, and worried that the government will break their trust. Why not come out and show Albertans what plan you have in place, something substantial, something transparent, something that we can agree or disagree on but a plan? The consolidation of Alberta Innovates is a common-sense approach and a cost-saving measure. However, we need this NDP government to be more honest and open with Albertans by explaining these cost-saving measures and exactly how they came up with \$2 million.

4:50

We are worried, Mr. Speaker. We are worried when we see how reckless this government has become with budgetary issues. Trust: well, that's another subject. Albertans have said that they have lost trust. How can we begin to trust when the government only doles out small amounts of information on huge decision items such as this one? What is the intent behind this legislation, and how will this legislation create real results for Albertans? So many questions but, again, not many answers.

However, once again I would like to say that I'm very pleased to see some cost-cutting measures being implemented in such a fragile economy. I just wish that we could go further. I guess my hope is that this government might get it right for once by implementing cost-saving measures and making sure that these measures and decisions are open and transparent for all Albertans so that answers are given to many of our questions.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any questions for the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to speak at second reading of Bill 11, Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. It's a really interesting and important time in our history to be trying to balance innovation, technology, new breakthroughs in health care and the environment and biosciences and engineering. What a dilemma this government faces in trying to stimulate a new economy, get off our singular dependence on oil and gas, and foster new business and a new economy given the many challenges that we face today, recognizing that oil and gas may never be the same in Alberta, that we actually are going to need some dramatic shifts in this province, and that this is, in fact, the time to invest in research and new technology, energy being one of them and, certainly, biosciences and biotechnology.

What I'm hearing in the health sciences is precision medicine, where we're looking at the genome of people and defining whether people need a certain diet to prevent disease, whether they can predict that certain exercise programs will have a significant effect on their blood pressure or not. The genetic field has opened up massive new opportunities in health care. Of course, health system



research can help us make more efficient use of the professionals that we have and the buildings that we have and the technologies that we use for testing people. All of that opens up tremendous opportunities not only for more efficient use of our current resources, which is widely recognized to be inefficient in Alberta, but also to improve the quality of life for people who need and expect the kinds of technologies that improve their arthritic conditions, their blood pressure conditions, their diabetic conditions, whatever they happen to be. There are tremendous breakthroughs happening in terms of prevention and early intervention.

Health, in particular, I guess I'm starting to get to. The roll-up of Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions into this large amalgam called Alberta Innovates is a problem. It is going to reduce our visibility on the national stage. It is going to reduce our credibility across the world as a leader in medical research. It is going to diminish our capacity, actually, to improve the very system that is costing us so much. It is going to be rolled up into one ball under this plan, in which there will be a board, as I've seen it developed. I know that there are lots of reasons for trying to bring this all together and manage it more efficiently, but I think that there are some real downsides to lumping environmental technology and energy solutions with the major spender in Alberta, which is health care.

We have to focus, I think, in a special way on health care because of both the budgetary demands that health care presents and the tremendous leadership that Alberta has had for 40 years in health care. If the world sees that we are pulling back on this primary investment, then we are going to get fewer people coming here; we're going to have less investment coming to this province. We're going to have, I think, a real loss of both good people and confidence in the people in the profession. I'm not just talking about physicians. I'm talking about PhDs. I'm talking about nurses. I'm talking about lab people who are innovating new laboratory tests. I'm talking about imaging people who are doing exciting things in imaging. I'm talking about geneticists who are looking, again, at the genome and identifying tremendous opportunities for more targeted intervention for people of high risk, starting in childhood, starting in prenatal life, that can actually make a massive improvement in both their opportunities but also in the costs that they're going to engender in the health care system over time.

While I respect the decision to try to economize, that's the dilemma you're faced with, for one, and I hope it's not just because I have a background in medicine but because I see the tremendous economic as well as the health benefits of having a strong research agenda driven by those who are connected with the health system, not diluted by a bunch of people around the table competing for resources for their pet project but deliberately focused and separate at some level from the larger board that's overseeing innovation in Alberta.

As indicated, Budget 2016 will reduce by \$33 million the overall funding for Alberta Innovates corporation. The government's press release states that "we are committed to making it easier for Alberta's researchers and businesses to navigate the . . . innovation system." In some ways it may be nice to talk about a single shop for innovation, but that's not the way research works, Mr. Speaker. These are very separate areas of research that can communicate with one another, but if there is no storefront that says that health research is here in Alberta, if it just says Alberta Innovates, the rest of the world is going to say: okay; we've stopped that world-breaking record in medical research that we've had here for 40 years, since Peter Loughheed first initiated the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research.

I think that one has to look very carefully at that particular issue. I'm willing to hear arguments in the other areas, but I don't think

they're quite as persuasive because of the tremendous investment we're making in health already and the opportunity for more efficient use of our health services as well as improving people's health in Alberta and reducing their costs as well through improved management of people with medical problems.

Previously health research received the lion's share of funding under the Alberta Innovates initiative. With the cuts now health will lose its status as a research focal point. While the proposed merger will undoubtedly result in some cost savings, there's still a very real question as to how health research fits with the other three entities and whether we will indeed not only lose in terms of efficiencies in our health system because we don't have the health system connected to the research arm and working together to improve outcomes; we also lose, obviously, the marketing or the business opportunities that come out of some of this fantastic research. For example, our dean of medicine here has discovered some tremendous new approaches to hepatitis C, and this, of course, is improving the quality of life and the length of life and the productivity of people. We've been leaders on a number of fronts: transplants and health promotion and prevention leadership as well.

I will be in committee suggesting that we try to find a way to amend the bill, not that we haven't made some good decisions here in terms of cost cutting, in terms of amalgamating, in terms of reducing redundancy in the management. By all means, nobody has any problems with that as long as it doesn't cause the unexpected or undesirable side effects of cuts to international funding for all these areas, loss of business opportunities that we're obviously going to be faced with. If we don't do the research, we can't develop the technologies and market them around the world. It's a very double-edged sword, the direction we're taking now.

5:00

Certainly, in the area of health innovation I think we should seriously look at how we can include that, especially since it received an \$80 million annual endowment back in the day that, through the interest on that fund, has continued to fund tremendous research. In some ways it would be disingenuous, at least, if not a misappropriation, to take that endowment, which was dedicated to medical research by past governments and indeed by philanthropists who have donated to that endowment. It would be to some extent unacceptable to pull that money out of health research and put it into other areas just because you want to.

Some people have made serious commitments in their lives to research and have come here – some of them have been here 20 years working on and improving our systems of care and our base laboratory technology, lab studies. I think we are going to have to look at that carefully and debate it, and I would hope that the government could see a way to include under the larger innovation corporation a separate branch of health innovates.

While I applaud the government's attempt to streamline, to manage more efficiently, and to ensure that we continue the strong legacy of research and knowledge translation and new technologies, which we desperately need in this province if we're going to get off the one-trick pony, let us not throw out the baby with the bathwater here, and let's make sure that we protect what has really been a tremendous asset to Alberta both as a technical profession and as a marketing and business opportunity around the world.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would call upon the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the interest of time I think I'll pass.

**The Speaker:** Okay. The Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** I'll take a short stab at it, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 11. This is a bill that I'll be able to support, I believe. Of course, it's long been the position of my caucus colleagues and I that there are efficiencies that can be found in government and government corporations, including those impacted here. I believe everyone in the House is aware that the Official Opposition suggested amendments to the office of every ministry while we were going through estimates. Of course, we dealt with that this morning, and we all know the outcome.

To that end, if done right, Mr. Speaker, consolidating Alberta Innovates is a common-sense measure. It's my sincere hope that what this bill seeks to achieve with the consolidation of the Alberta Innovates boards will be an effective solution to some of the frustrating inefficiencies that emerged as a result of having several boards. And by frustrating inefficiencies, I mean that we should at the end of the day at least see a much leaner system. Frankly, there will be fewer CEOs to deal with and pay and fewer board members, of course. I think it's likely that a single board in this case will be much more accountable than four boards. That all does tend to make some sense. Pooling resources may have the ability to be an attractive alternative.

That being said, I do have a few questions and concerns that I hope the minister responsible for this bill or, candidly, just anyone on the government bench will be able to speak to. There are some consolidations that have created issues that weren't foreseen. I'm thinking, of course, of the creation of the single health superboard, which was justified in terms and phrases much like some of the justification that was used in the consolidation we're debating here today. It doesn't work ideally in every instance. Best-laid intentions don't remove the fact that consolidation doesn't have an inherent tendency to save costs. It's not a guarantee, especially where government is concerned, and not just this government, any government. Even though we may believe that costs may be reduced and efficiencies will be found, consolidation, if not organized properly, can lead to long-term negative consequences.

Rural Alberta, for instance, would be hard-pressed to suggest that one of the largest bureaucracies in Alberta, the health superboard in AHS, has created a better system than the personal, local health boards that it replaced. That ship has sailed, though, so debate is over in that instance.

We should always be looking to create something better when we amalgamate, something that's more well organized or effective, not less. I know that creating something less effective would never be the intent here, but it bears attention. I know that this is the intent with the reorganization, so we encourage the government to be honest and transparent with Albertans by explaining exactly how this consolidation will save taxpayer dollars and create the desired efficiencies that are sought. That is important to Albertans.

I want to note that there was a media article on March 18 of this year with the following headline: *Alberta Innovates Begins Laying Off Senior Executives in Advance of Restructuring*. That was nearly two months ago, before this debate began. March 18 was also nearly one month before the current government rolled out its latest budget, which, if I recall correctly, first committed to these changes. Now, that could be considered somewhat presumptive. Establishing laws that can affect and impact the lives of everyday Albertans is a responsibility that we share within these walls, and compared to other levels of government we do so with what is, arguably, minimal scrutiny. There is no upper Chamber that gives consideration to the

same items we do. Proposed legislation is rarely sent to standing committees. Very little stands in the way of any governing caucus to fire through legislation as they see fit.

Look, I'm not suggesting that the current government is the only government in Alberta that has pushed legislation through this House. Certainly, it's happened before, and I expect it'll happen again. But for this government to start laying off people because they know that legislation that they will eventually introduce to this House will eventually require it regardless of the debate that takes place, regardless of the public response, regardless of any amendments that any of the opposition parties may propose all seems a little bit presumptive, Mr. Speaker. It may be fair to suggest that a certain complacency may be presumed in the work that is done from time to time in this House. Given that the work we do in this House is the work that is done on behalf of Albertans clear across this province, I wonder: would they consider that presumptive action respectful?

Given what was in the media report about the layoff of workers several months ago now, my colleagues and I would be interested to hear someone on the government benches give a little bit more detail on precisely how much consolidation has already happened under the expectation that this proposed legislation will pass with the government's majority. And not only the government's majority; it seems like a lot of parties in the House are speaking in favour of supporting it.

That being said, beyond the procedural concerns I have a few concerns that I hope the minister will be able to help us out with. Consolidating Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions, Energy and Environment Solutions, Technology Futures, and Health Solutions into one corporation has raised some anxieties. Once again, from media reports regarding Alberta Innovates, health researchers have expressed concern that a merger, quote, would reduce money available for medical research in Alberta, potentially affecting access to cutting-edge treatments for patients. Unquote. I sincerely hope that the current government can address that claim by either confirming it or proving it not credible before this legislation is passed in this House.

Our offices have heard from economic development and business groups that have expressed confidence in Edmonton as a centre for health research. They obviously see a potential for health care in Edmonton. They see a potential for growth. A key component of that is medical research.

Speaking only of statistics, the economy in Edmonton is doing marginally better than many other parts of the great province that we live in amidst the downturn because there are some growing industries in the city that aren't as negatively impacted by the downturn, which I'm sure is common knowledge for the current government. In the year and 12 days, I believe, since the election, speeches from the government side of the House have used the phrase "economic diversification" a number of times. I can only hope that those sentiments are indeed sincere.

Health care innovation is an opportunity for our province. There is interest here. There's a clear possibility for growth. But, as stated earlier, the current government must take care to ensure that their decisions are not negatively impacting that potential. To be clear, I'm not suggesting that this consolidation of four Alberta Innovates corporations will necessarily make things worse on this front. But professionals in the field have raised a concern; thus, I hope that the government can speak to whether or not that concern is valid. That would go a long way to alleviating the concerns mentioned.

**5:10**

My caucus colleagues have heard from industry that the existing system was ineffective. It was also frustrating, we've heard, and this

sort of consolidation can indeed make things more effective. We are of course pleased to see that the current government is taking action on that criticism, but please regard this critique as well. The current government in the course of, well, one year and 12 days, I believe, since the election has demonstrated a bit of an aversion to doing consultation. We saw that with Bill 6 last year. There was almost an unwillingness to listen to concerned farmers and ranchers. I know that I'll hear from members on the opposite side that there were consultations going on. The problem was that the consultations weren't going on with grassroots farmers and ranchers. That probably could have seen a very different reaction to that imposing bill.

You know, we have also seen that this government is unwilling to pause in order to carefully consider evidence, in order to conduct economic impact assessments to ensure that there aren't negative consequences to the policies put forward. I don't know how many times the opposition has suggested that certain bills be sent to committee for study. This can only be considered good for the folks that send us here. In fact, we saw earlier this week that the opposition outlined an array of studies concluding that this government's minimum wage hike will hurt job creation and have negative consequences for low-income Albertans. My colleague from Battle River-Wainwright had a motion that simply asked that this government pause their plan in order to conduct an impact assessment first, but those that have the power determined that such a suggestion wasn't warranted. That seeming aversion to evidence-based policy has left many Albertans questioning this government's sincerity. That diminished credibility casts a long shadow over other initiatives like this bill that we debate here today.

While I'm on this subject, I do hope that the minister will be able to elaborate on which stakeholders have asked him to consolidate these boards. Albertans need some assurances. They just want to know that consultation regarding the collaboration, as it were, has taken place. It is not an unreasonable request. Certainly, I don't believe it is. Frankly, it should be standard practice.

I stand to be corrected, but I don't think that I've heard a clear explanation of how the Alberta Innovates corporations research areas will be assigned priority under the new consolidated system. Seriously, I'm not trying to be terribly critical, but shouldn't that information be something that we have all heard so that we can all, including Albertans, understand how and what priorities are dealt with in which order?

I wonder what the new funding allocation model looks like. I wonder what the newly consolidated organization chart will look like. We know that there will be layoffs. There have already been layoffs, but what does the new Alberta Innovates look like as far as staff are concerned? With the consolidation of support staff for the four boards, were there any job redundancies identified right away, any attrition possibilities? Questions like this are important. I certainly hope we can hear some clear answers before the final vote is counted.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, consolidation is a good idea. The reality is that our province is facing a massive debt and deficit, one that wasn't expected, certainly not campaigned on. The fact is that we do have a large debt looming as well as a large deficit. One way to slow its growth, minute as it may be, is to find efficiencies in existing operations. I certainly hope that care will be taken with this consolidation in order that it can meet that criteria. Consolidating Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions, Energy and Environment Solutions, Technology Futures, and Health Solutions has its merits, but there are valid concerns as well, and they, too, need to be addressed. I do hope that the government is able to give this piece of legislation the due attention that it deserves as restructuring occurs.

I will be supporting this bill and encourage the rest of the House to do the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Little Bow?

Are there any other members who wish to speak to Bill 11, Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016?

Is there a wish to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 9 An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences, here in Committee of the Whole. I'd like to thank my colleagues on both sides of the House for a good debate on and their support of this valuable legislation. I want to thank my colleagues for acknowledging their commitment to this bill and identifying concerns, which I'm happy to address. During debate at second reading there were some questions asked about the legislation. I'm pleased to respond to those questions to further the dialogue about this bill and what we're doing with it.

As I mentioned previously, the purpose of the bill is to make amendments to improve enforcement of provincial laws and municipal bylaws by making it more effective, efficient, and proportionate while better assisting vulnerable Albertans. In addition, the bill will also allow the processing of e-tickets. It's clear from the comments made during second reading debate that the current system of using warrants to enforce tickets for minor infractions is not effective and has not been so for a number of years. Many of my colleagues express their sentiments that these amendments will clearly help focus law enforcement and court resources where they should be, on more serious crimes.

The Official Opposition had some concerns about how enforcement will work after changes are made, and I'll be happy to address these. If passed, the legislation will expand the registrar of motor vehicle services' authority to restrict services to include unpaid fines for non motor vehicle infractions. Firstly, I want to emphasize that civil enforcement measures, including this restriction on motor vehicle registry services, will be more effective than warrants at holding offenders to account. Almost 97 per cent of Albertans of age 16 or older use motor vehicle registry services, and for those who don't, other enforcement mechanisms such as filing writs against property and garnishing bank accounts, wages, income tax refunds, and GST rebates will be available.

Secondly, I want to make it clear this legislation will only impact motor vehicle registry services. Other services, including health care services and the issuance of health care cards, will not be affected.

I realize this doesn't address the most vulnerable populations, and the Official Opposition had some concerns about how repeat

offenders would be held to account, so it's important to take a look first at who those repeat offenders tend to be. One category is homeless individuals or individuals with mental health conditions or living with addictions and youth at risk of entering the cycle of poverty. This is one category of people who typically wouldn't have a motor vehicle registered or may not have any property to enforce against. These people are the province's most vulnerable, and they need support services from the province. Those services are not necessarily best provided in a jail setting.

Based on experience in working with our law enforcement and social services partners, we know that vulnerable people often end up in jail because they can't pay these fines. These vulnerable people aren't being sent to jail because it's an appropriate penalty for their infraction or because they pose a danger but rather because they can't afford to pay a fine, so landing in jail further perpetuates a cycle of incarceration, poverty, and homelessness, which does not create safer communities or help vulnerable Albertans. If we can stop this revolving door of poverty and incarceration, we know the lives of vulnerable Albertans will improve.

These amendments will put our government and social agencies in a better position to help these vulnerable Albertans. I will add, though, that these amendments do not affect tools available to law enforcement officers to deal with other chronic offenders and with disturbances. Officers will still be able to remove individuals from premises, arrest when necessary, and, where appropriate, issue a mandatory court appearance ticket that can be enforced by way of a warrant.

5:20

Madam Chair, we have received a wide range of support for this legislation because if passed, it will result in significant benefits. In addition to protecting Albertans, the province will save money on the costs associated with incarcerating these individuals, which will help to offset some of the pressures that we experience as a result of increasing incarcerated populations. It will also help to create some efficiencies. Additionally, the province will benefit from more effective collection of fines and penalties payable to the province.

The greatest benefit, ultimately, will fall to the social realm, which is to say that people who are otherwise marginalized will not be falling into this cycle of incarceration and poverty. We recognize that with respect to certain individuals who are very, very vulnerable, who have mental health challenges, we won't be putting them in jail, and perhaps we won't be able to enforce against their motor vehicles because they don't have any. But with respect to those people it's our view, ultimately, that they are in need of services and not in need of jail. As I've mentioned, with respect to those other individuals, the powers that police had to force an appearance will still exist but can only be exercised in the public interest. I have great confidence in our law enforcement officers and their ability to make those discriminations.

The other piece of the legislation, obviously, deals with e-tickets. This will just be streamlining of the ticketing process, allowing police to file tickets electronically with the courts and improve service, create efficiencies, and reduce errors.

I will conclude my comments with that, as I don't understand additional questions were asked. I welcome the comments of my colleagues.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak about Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences, in

Committee of the Whole. As we've heard in second reading and as we're hearing again today, there is real promise for Bill 9 to reduce administrative burdens that are currently weighing down the justice system.

The two amendments in this bill represent a twofold reduction in red tape, the first of which seeks to end the issuance of warrants for those who have violated provincial offences by not paying their fines. This has been explained to the Assembly as a way to reduce the workload on court clerks, which we just heard again from the hon. minister. I believe the number that has been used several times is a yearly reduction of 9,000 hours of court clerk time. That's great. This would mean that court clerks would be able to spend 9,000 hours more every year working on issues that present a real risk to the public.

My only question at this point would be: why are there no savings in the Justice department as a result of these 9,000 reduced hours? Now, we need to look at efficiencies within the system, and I understand that there's going to be a transition time. But in the end, when we are reducing workloads, are we also creating efficiency with that as well? I believe that the hon. minister has said that they're moving the resources to other areas. In the end, I do believe that when you reduce the volume, you also increase the efficiency, and we should be able to see some reduced cost in that.

Another administrative burden that Bill 9 stands to eliminate is the waste of tax dollars that are currently being spent on arresting, processing, and jailing offenders who have not paid their tickets.

There have also been some discussions earlier about cost savings that would come from no longer needing to pay officers to transport and process the people and savings that will come from the corrections facilities that will no longer have to house and feed nondangerous offenders.

Another step to remove administration burden or red tape has to do with the second amendment that is proposed in Bill 9, and that is introducing e-ticketing. This removes the burden on police officers to swear a summons ticket to a commissioner for oaths. Our law enforcement officials will simply be able to enter their ticket into the computer, which I imagine will be in their police vehicles, print the ticket, and be back on their way, monitoring Alberta's communities and making it safer for all of us.

Madam Chair, the removal of administrative burdens needs to be a priority for not only the Justice department, but it needs to be incorporated as a philosophical approach to governance across Alberta. In my opinion it is something that has been lacking from this government, and I'm glad to see that they are at least recognizing one way to tackle some unnecessary spending. I believe that removing administration burdens should be a priority for all governments. It saves taxpayers' hard-earned money and allows for front-line services to be administered more efficiently. In this bill the institution of e-ticketing would be saving police officers time in the field. They would spend less time writing and processing tickets and more time – more time – protecting our communities. This is great.

The same can be said about no longer forcing police officers to arrest and jail people who are tardy on paying fines for minor offences. The time that officers are spending to take individuals to jail is time that is taken away from patrolling a neighbourhood or responding to an emergency. There's also an administration and onerous cost to those who are being arrested. If someone has a loitering ticket and is pulled over for speeding, they could be imprisoned. This could impose an economic burden on the person as well as on the facilities themselves. If the individual is on their way to work, they could lose their job because of the fact that they are caught in this cycle. Once they are in this cycle, they may not be able to get out of the cycle because it is a perpetuating cycle. I

believe that enforcing a payment mechanism that is similar to overdue traffic tickets is an appropriate means for collection rather than arresting and jailing.

On that same note, much has been said on Bill 9 and the ending of what some refer to as debtors' prison. Essentially this means that when marginalized people like the homeless commit a provincial offence, they often do not have the means to pay their tickets. As a result they are being picked up on the streets, put through the process to make sure that they don't have any tickets outstanding, and then sent to prison. It seems a little counterintuitive to me.

This bill ends that cycle. It no longer puts homeless people in jail simply for being homeless, which is something that I commend. However, I think that if this bill is to pass, then we also must have a greater explanation from the minister on what this government's plan is to deal with the marginalized people that are no longer in the corrections system. Has the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General worked in concert with Human Services or perhaps the Department of Health to make a plan to tackle mental illness? As I understand it, mental illness is a significant challenge that confronts the homeless population, and I think this Assembly could use a little more clarification on what the plan is to address the issues that affect homeless people other than just no longer ticketing them and throwing them in jail.

5:30

Madam Chair, I look forward to having some of my thoughts on the points that I have raised today being answered by the minister. I will say again that I support Bill 9, and I would hope that everybody in this Assembly would support it with me.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other speakers with questions or comments on this bill?

Then we'll have the question.

[The clauses of Bill 9 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, I would move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Woollard:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 9.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much. I would like to thank all hon. members for a very productive debate this afternoon on a number of important pieces of legislation. As we have accomplished our goals for the afternoon, Madam Speaker, I will move that we call it 6 o'clock and reconvene tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:33 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, May 18, 2016

Day 30

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, May 18, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect, each in our own way. Many cultures have traditional ceremonies intended to bring rain. Perhaps if we direct our united thoughts and energies together, Mother Nature will co-operate and some much-needed rain will bring relief to our neighbours up north and first responders, who are working so tirelessly to keep our communities safe.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 14

##### Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Ms Woollard:** Madam Speaker, thank you. I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 14, the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016.

The Health Professions Act has an important role in Alberta's health care system. It is central to ensuring that our province's health system remains second to none. It ensures the system and health providers working within the system maintain a commitment to excellence and to providing unparalleled care. It is one of the cornerstones upon which our foundation of quality health care is based.

How does the legislation achieve these aims? The act is a legislative framework through which regulatory colleges partner with government to create accountability mechanisms in our health system. Through this system nearly 100,000 regulated health professionals are held accountable for their practice. These accountability mechanisms are in place to protect Albertans. These mechanisms ensure that Albertans are provided with the best possible health care services, delivered in a safe manner by highly qualified health professionals.

Through the act processes are put in place to assure Albertans that health providers have the required knowledge and skills to capably provide care, complete ongoing education and training to maintain these skills to stay current, and to follow best practices and adhere to standards of practice and a code of ethics, which ensures that health professionals provide highly professional, competent care in a responsible, respectful way.

If a health provider does not provide care that meets quality and safety standards, Albertans have a means of recourse. They may choose to file a complaint with the appropriate regulatory college. Regulatory colleges, in turn, have systems of investigation and discipline in place should they be required. Public members serve on the councils of these regulatory colleges so that the views of Albertans are represented and reflected in decisions made by the health professionals.

However, the Health Professions Act has not been amended in eight years. During that time Alberta's health system and health workforce have continued to evolve. Patient expectations have

changed, and professional roles have changed. Gaps, deficiencies, or better ways to deliver care have been identified and the need for improvements brought forward.

To ensure that the act remains current and continues to protect Albertans, amendments are required. These amendments involve adding two new professions so these health providers can be regulated under the act and be accountable for the care they provide; giving the Minister of Health the authority to determine a body to accredit medical facilities so that consistent, rigorous standards can be applied; allowing for new care models by removing ownership restrictions; providing for name changes that more clearly delineate roles; protecting more professional titles so Albertans can be assured that only qualified individuals are permitted to use these titles and provide the corresponding services; and, finally, updating a profession's description of its roles and responsibilities in order to reflect expanding scopes of practice.

I'd like to take a moment to address the amendment that proposes adding two professions to the act; specifically, physician assistants and diagnostic medical sonographers. The position of physician assistant is relatively new to Alberta. These professionals have only been working in the province since 2013. There are currently 30 physician assistants on the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta's voluntary register, and 12 work for Alberta Health Services. They independently assess and treat patients, and their responsibilities under physician supervision may range from conducting patient interviews and physical examinations to diagnosing and treating illnesses and providing selected diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. In this role they increase access to health care by giving physicians time for more complex patients.

With regard to diagnostic medical sonographers, there are about 800 working in Alberta at this time. Diagnostic medical sonographers perform sonographic examinations, or ultrasounds. In 2013 approximately 270,000 ultrasound exams were performed at AHS facilities, and more than 900,000 were performed in community clinics across Alberta. Adding these professions to the act means they will be regulated and accountable for the care they provide.

By making these changes, regulatory colleges and their members will be better served by this legislation. That, in turn, means Albertans will be better served by their health providers. We must ensure this act captures what our health professions need in order to do their work effectively. At the same time, we need to ensure that Albertans continue to be protected when they seek health services in our province. Regulating health professionals means they are obligated to maintain high standards of competency, safety, and ethics and provide Albertans with high-quality care. It also means health professionals are accountable for the care they provide and that members of the public are protected. For health professionals the act provides them opportunities to work to their full scope of practice and for their skills to be fully utilized in the health system. The proposed amendments will update the act and at the same time reinforce the important safeguards this legislation provides.

I ask all members to support this bill and move it to the next stage. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity to speak to Bill 14, the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016, and the many changes it introduces. This is a bill I will be supporting. Of course, I will be speaking to some of the more prominent

amendments to the Health Professions Act, but I'd like to start by addressing the importance of this act in more general terms.

Bill 14 is quite heavy with changes across a number of different health professions and schedules within the HPA, and much of it is a matter of legislative housekeeping, but many of these schedule amendments are a matter of bringing the standards of practice, titles, and categories of members up to date, which, of course, is an important part of any housekeeping.

Medical fields are constantly evolving and changing with the times, and it's important that our legislation governing these professions keeps current with today's and best practices. It is my understanding that the Health Professions Act has not undergone a major update since 2008, so it's time for a welcome facelift. The Health Professions Act has been, I think, largely successful in its intended purpose of providing the legislative framework for self-regulation of our health professionals in Alberta. If I'm not mistaken, we have 28 distinct regulatory colleges that are governed under this act, with still three governed under the Health Disciplines Act but outlined in the Health Professions Act as well.

#### 9:10

I've heard it said that one of the strengths of our system is that a large number of the health professions we have working here are self-regulated under this legislation. I would suggest that self-regulation provides a number of successes in our province, and ultimately that is really the benefit to Albertans.

That brings me to the central, key point in this discussion. These colleges exist for Albertans. They exist to govern the best interests of the public, providing Albertans with the necessary protections and accountability mechanisms. Regulatory colleges in their service to the public provide standards of practice, codes of ethics, standards for registration of members, continuing competence, and mechanisms for holding members to account if discipline becomes necessary. These are functions which are well provided under our and under a self-regulatory framework. When the self-regulatory framework is doing what it should, we can all have confidence in the quality of the health services Albertans receive. While this bill is quite dense and thorough, it is very critical to how our health system actually works at the ground level.

One of the most significant changes that we find here is the regulation of physician assistants under the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta. My understanding is that these physician assistants, who do work under the supervision of a physician, are not particularly numerous in our health system, maybe a few dozen or so. I believe that you'll see them more commonly in military settings, and I think we have some of them practising here who were foreign trained as well. I've actually had the pleasure to meet with a few since taking on my Health critic role, and they definitely do play an important, crucial part in our system. From what I can tell and from what I've heard from Albertans, it's a good move to formally pull them under the membership of the college. Doing so should provide some opportunities for further integration into the system and really work toward involving them in being able to utilize the full scope of their practice and of their capability.

It's important that any health professional be maximized to their full potential, but again the entirety of the Health Professions Act is about serving, serving the best interests of the public, and that's the core goal of any legislative change that we discuss today and most days. By all means, this change does serve the public well.

On the topic of the College of Physicians & Surgeons I also note the change to schedule 21 in section 8.1(2). This is noted on page 16 of the bill, whereby the minister – the minister – is granted the discretion to direct the college to be the accreditation for certain health facilities. Madam Speaker, my understanding is that the way

things are currently written in the act, government facilities are exempted from requiring this accreditation. While they often do seek and get accredited anyway, this change here in Bill 14 gives the minister the authority to make that happen as the minister deems necessary.

If I were to use the example of a diagnostic lab, every nongovernment lab requires this accreditation from the College of Physicians & Surgeons. It's not hard to see why. Doctors rely heavily on lab services to do their jobs, and both the doctor and the public must have the utmost trust in the accuracy and safety of these services. So if this change gives an added tool to the minister to direct government facilities to have and meet the same standard, Madam Speaker, that's a welcome development. Albertans must have absolute confidence in all the systems and facilities working for us.

Moving on to the Alberta College of Medical Diagnostic and Therapeutic Technologists, we see sonographers, or ultrasound technicians as we might more commonly know them, being added under schedule 12 of the Health Professions Act. Again, Madam Speaker, this is a good move for the sake of the profession but, more importantly, a move that will serve the public well. As a bit of an aside, if you find me coming back to this issue of how to best serve the interests of the public again and again, of course, it's for good reason. The entire theme of the Health Professions Act revolves around this core principle. In any case, adding stenographers under the umbrella of the diagnostic profession is another move that may just seem simple on its face, but it's important. It's important to good self-regulation of our health professions.

Under schedule 20 we find a number of changes regarding physiotherapy. The most notable is the removal of the restriction around physical therapy corporations. Bill 14 does away with the requirement that 75 per cent of shareholders of a physical therapy corporation be regulated members of the college of physiotherapists. Madam Speaker, this is an appropriate change when we consider the purpose and scope of the Health Professions Act. The Health Professions Act is not a business organization act. From what I understand, this is a holdover from many years ago and no longer needs to be in the Health Professions Act. Frankly, it's not appropriate to have it in there in any case. As the framework that protects the public, it's not necessary or helpful for the Health Professions Act to regulate ownership shares here. By all accounts, easing this restriction should make it easier for physiotherapists to work in joint practices with other health professionals.

I'd like to conclude by speaking a little bit about the topic that we've discussed in the past in the context of other issues, and that is the appropriateness of joint associations and colleges. I think it's a worthwhile conversation to have as there are two bodies that will undergo a formal name change to encompass both the college and association title. Those are, of course, the Alberta college and association of opticians and the Physiotherapy Alberta College and Association. Now, I certainly don't mean to single out any organizations or imply any misconduct or impropriety. It's just that these legislative changes here before us provide a jumping-off point where we can have a bit of a broader philosophical discussion about the nature – Madam Speaker, about the nature – of a professional association versus a regulatory college.

To beat a dead horse one more time here, these self-regulating colleges exist to protect and serve the public interest. Self-regulating colleges exist to protect and serve the public interest, whereas a professional association exists to serve the profession and its members. A professional association exists in a voluntary capacity. Members join specifically because they derive benefits. Don't get me wrong, Madam Speaker. Both functions and organizations are absolutely important for the overall health of a

profession. However, it seems to me that these functions are better served when they are entirely separate. Inevitably, the mixing of lobbying and regulating can pose challenges or at the very least pose a problem with public perception. While a college regulates its members for the sake of the public, the public trust must also exist. The public needs the assurance that their interests will not be muddled or forgotten or prioritized any lower.

9:20

Again, it needs to be said that this principle of not mixing the two functions is not a slight toward either of the organizations under our consideration today. In fact, I'm assured that the lines are clearly drawn and that the financial interests of members and discussions around fees are not – are not, Madam Speaker – the concern of these two colleges. Given the largely out-of-pocket nature of the payment model for physiotherapy and optician services, the negotiation of fees may not be a significant factor in the first place. The addition of association services fills more of a role for professional education and development in the aforementioned colleges, which are things that may not be fulfilled otherwise if there were an absence of a professional association. Obviously, there may be some extenuating circumstances here, and I'm sure they do a fine, excellent job regulating their respective professions, but it's still beneficial. It's still good to debate the broader principle in this House.

There is also an opportunity here to bring evidence and case studies and have a little crossjurisdictional review to help us consider best practice and apply it to Alberta. I want to bring up the case of British Columbia and the way that they have structured their own Health Professions Act and colleges. Madam Speaker, in 2001 the Health Professions Council was tasked with making recommendations to the B.C. Health minister about the regulation of health professions and produced a report. The report was called *Safe Choices: A New Model for Regulating Health Professions in British Columbia*, 645 pages. I won't table the whole thing here today, perhaps just a relevant part of the relationship between regulatory bodies and professional associations. The report drew on both the earlier Foulkes report and the Seaton Commission.

I'll quote the Seaton Commission, which recommended that two separate bodies be created for all regulated or licensed professions so that there is a clear separation of membership promotion functions and licensing and discipline functions.

Madam Speaker, now from the Foulkes report.

It is only reasonable to recognize that professions, like other groups and individuals in society, may well be expected to have certain private self-interests of their own which are not coincident with the public interest . . . This important distinction between the public function of the licensing body and the private function of the voluntary association is now widely recognized in Canada. From the standpoint of both the professions and the public, it is desirable that the separation of the two functions be kept sharp and distinct.

The council went on to say that it agreed with these statements about the clear separation.

In another section about mandatory membership, Madam Speaker, the council concluded that

it is not in the public interest for members of a regulated health profession to be required to belong, or to pay dues, for that matter, to a professional association.

Interestingly, you'll find that in B.C. today health regulatory colleges do not include any professional association overlap. They do not include any professional association overlap. The two bodies are kept distinct in all cases.

Also of note is that similar recommendations have been made here in Alberta. The 2004 Health Professions Act Employer's

Handbook notes the following recommendation of the Health Workforce Rebalancing Committee.

Enhanced mechanisms to avoid conflicts of interest, including the separation of "college" and "association" functions.

Despite this, Madam Speaker, we still don't see the total separation here in Alberta as they do in B.C.

Madam Speaker and members of the House, I hope I've been able to provide some evidence and reasoning on this topic. I think it's well worth discussing as we move forward with this bill on updates.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek to close debate.

**Ms Woollard:** Madam Speaker, I think we are all agreed that the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016, is an action that it's time for, it needs taking. It will help to clarify and better organize and update the Health Professions Act.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 12

#### Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a few quick points. I believe that it is indeed worth noting for members of this Chamber and those beyond these walls that the previous Progressive Conservative government introduced Bill 22 with the goal of increasing the effectiveness of public consultation with our indigenous communities. We recognize that there were some issues with the legislation. The then PC cabinet actually approved the steps to repeal the bill, which, I might point out, was never proclaimed in the first place. The NDP are simply following through on this commitment, which will benefit all Albertans, and we support their efforts in this respect.

Over the years previous governments have made tremendous progress when it comes to building relationships with Alberta's indigenous communities. In fact, Alberta was one of the first jurisdictions to recognize Métis rights, way back in the 1980s, and to fund basic services on reserves regardless of jurisdiction, including education and disaster assistance. Many people recall the floods of just a few years ago as a great example of that.

Now, that said, we recognize that there is always room for improvement, and the repeal of Bill 22 would be a step in the right direction. I say this with respect: given the government's difficulty with the adequate consultation processes they've engaged upon in the last year or so, we really urge the Premier and the Minister of Indigenous Relations to work closely with our FNMI communities and individuals clear across Alberta so that they can indeed develop an effective consultation framework.

Thank you. I just thought it was worth pointing out those points of information and clarification, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm thankful to get the opportunity to stand and talk about Bill 12, the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act, today in the House. I have a lot to say in regard to this bill but first want to express that I am completely in support of repealing the former government's Bill 22, the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Act.

Unfortunately, Bill 22 was introduced by the minister without enough consultation from either indigenous groups or industry, and it brought further problems to the table, so to speak. Wildrose voted against Bill 22 originally because after listening to indigenous groups and industry proponents, we recognized that the former government was not listening to stakeholders and to all Albertans. It was faulty from the start, and too many hours were spent on the bill that was misguided. Treaties 6 and 8 leaders felt that the bill was discriminatory and that nonaboriginal people did not have to disclose any of their agreements with proponents. They also felt that the government was overstepping its constitutional authority.

Even though I am glad that the previous government's work will be repealed and that the government has promised that it will work to develop a new consultation process, I do have some concerns with how this government may or may not hold those consultations. I truly hope that the government will acknowledge the lessons this failed legislation has to teach us. My worry is that once this legislation is out of the way and new consultation policies are brought forth, the government will not take the time to get it right. My fear is that they will not make sure that it is in the best interest of all of those affected.

9:30

**An Hon. Member:** Fearmongering.

**Mr. Hanson:** Excuse me?

Government has a responsibility to consult with all First Nations, and in dealing with this particular policy area, they also need to collaborate with representatives of industry at the table with First Nations representatives.

This NDP government is in the habit of breaking trust with Albertans. In order to build trust, one must encourage a relationship with all partners. This government needs to engage with all indigenous groups and proponents and really delve into matters that concern both and continue to work until both are satisfied.

We also know that the government has signed a new protocol agreement with Treaty 8 and that the government has planned to do the same with Treaty 6 and Treaty 7. However, the process was not really open and transparent. Much can be left to the imagination for all other stakeholders, and they have felt out of the loop. While I believe that it's important to have certain expectations in place and have good, solid consultation policies in place, I also think that it is just as vitally important to have action in critical areas and certainty for communities. After reading the new protocol agreement between the government and Treaty 8 and seeing the many tables dealing with different matters of concern, it was interesting to see and I look forward to hearing the results of these negotiations.

I understand that the First Nations consultation capacity investment program is there and in place to help provide consultation funding to First Nations when they need it, but we would like to know: when will the minister be announcing his plans for a new consultation policy, and will you give indigenous groups and industry the time they need to do the necessary research and planning that will need to be done on their end in order to collaborate effectively?

We are most certain that many groups that were involved were not happy with the way legislation went down last time, and I don't think I need to tell you that communication is key. The aboriginal consultation levy was intended to create a fund that would support consultation between First Nations in Alberta and industry proponents, to try to make sure that all parties were well prepared and equipped for negotiations so that energy projects could proceed in a way that benefited everyone. An excellent goal but one that has not yet been achieved.

Right now the last thing Alberta needs is for this government to further destabilize our economy by upsetting the business environment. Madam Chair, the minister needs to get this right this time. The government has made enough mistakes that have hurt Albertans and their pocketbooks with their high-risk ideological practices. This government needs to get this right, and if the legislation isn't beneficial or useful, then this government should be prepared to act swiftly instead of allowing it to sit on the books indefinitely.

The indigenous annual report from 2014-15 indicated that the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Act would not be implemented since it did not meet the needs of the communities. We all know for a fact that both indigenous people and industry were not happy with Bill 22, and since we are aware that this government has committed to a new consultation policy, we need to make sure they completely understand that not getting this right in this go-round will not be acceptable. Hurting Albertans further when they're already down would not be good practice.

Another area that I would like to address is the announcement of the Métis settlements consultation policy. I would think that any stakeholder that might be involved with that work should be properly prepared and given ample time to reflect on anything this minister brings to the table. It is vital not only for this minister's relationship with all stakeholders but for industry and indigenous groups to have meaningful discussions on the future of all Albertans. Relationships need to be based on trust in order to be meaningful. We know that a lot of Albertans are feeling the effects of broken promises and risky ideologies that have been implemented by and through this NDP government.

Madam Chair, these relationships need to be restored in order for this vital work to be done. My hope is that the government will not repeat the same mistakes that were made in Bill 22. Let's not have any group feel that they were discriminated against or left out of the process. I do worry that the next consultation policy will only reflect this government's agenda, so I ask that it please acknowledge the previous failures and work to make sure that industry proponents and all Albertans are included and that the mistakes of Bill 22 do not happen again.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you. It's a pleasure to rise in this House today to talk about Bill 12, the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act. Alberta has a duty to consult First Nations when government decisions may adversely affect their constitutionally protected treaty rights. We are committed to enhancing the capacity of First Nations to meaningfully participate in the consultation process, and it's important that we do that. The repeal of the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Act will remove a significant barrier, renew the relationships with First Nations, and help to lay the groundwork for more productive discussions with First Nations, which is very important that we do. In addition, repealing Bill 22 allows government to have respectful and reciprocal engagement with First Nations.



During our first year in government we have remained committed to engaging with First Nations in an effort to renew and forge stronger relationships. In West Yellowhead I've continued to do that. The issue up in Grande Cache is long, and the First Nations peoples there are disgruntled and very unhappy. At first they wouldn't even meet with us because of the previous failings in what had gone on, failings in consultation.

Consultation involves the part of listening, and they haven't been listened to. This is the problem. We have to change our attitude, the way in which we listen to these people because their governance and the way they conduct themselves are different from ours; so I found out. It's taken a considerable amount of time in meeting with them to gain their respect so that we can truly consult with them. The main issue here is us not telling them what we want to hear. It's us having the respect to listen to what they have to say and taking that information to determine what is in the best interest that they have, and we haven't done that. We have failed them in Grande Cache.

The previous government created a committee that supposedly would look after all the interests of the First Nations in the Grande Cache area, and they failed to do that. The committee decided that they would have representation from everybody there, but it wasn't truly representation, so many groups up there weren't represented at all. This is a problem. It's taken a considerable amount of time to meet with them and understand what it is that they want. Like I said at the start, they didn't even want to meet with us.

Part of the barrier, too, was that some of the elders up there only speak Cree. They only understand Cree, not English or anything else, and that creates a barrier. But when I sat down with one of the elders, through an interpreter I created an area of respect, and through that respect I got a good understanding of what the problem is. That's why I'm saying that we have to respect the way in which they communicate to us, and that is the true meaning of consultation. That is what we need to do, listen and understand.

Repealing Bill 22 establishes the guideline and the start so that we can do that in a respectful manner. I urge everybody in this House to support Bill 12, and I close with that. Thank you.

9:40

**The Chair:** Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, we will call the vote.

[The clauses of Bill 12 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

### Bill 1

#### Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak on Bill 1, the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. However, over here we kind of know it as the minister of economic development's job description act. The bill, frankly, is a farce. The minister already has all of the powers that are mapped out in this bill. It is rather disappointing to see Bill 1 so vacuous when

typically Bill 1 is used as a flagship piece of legislation by a government. What is truly alarming is the NDP's approach to economic development. It harkens back to a time known as the 1970s. Maybe too many of the members here don't remember back that far.

But I remember a story. I'm going to relate it to you because history tends to repeat itself. This story has to do with what happened in New Brunswick. They had a Premier known as Disco Dick.

**An Hon. Member:** What?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yeah. Disco Dick Hatfield. He would take the government plane on weekends to Montreal and New York City in the name of economic development – he really did – and there he would dance it up in places like Studio 54, surrounded by celebrities like Mick Jagger, Margaret Trudeau, Truman Capote, Diana Ross, Elton John, and Donna Summer.

At one of these swinging business trips the Premier met an entrepreneur by the name of Malcolm Bricklin. Hatfield lured Malcolm to New Brunswick in 1974, offering easy economic development money. New Brunswickers were going to start making sports cars in Saint John and Minto. The Bricklin SV-1 sports car was believed to be the only vehicle in automotive history at that time to have factory-powered gull-wing doors that opened and closed at a touch of a button as standard equipment. Not even the DeLorean was that advanced. The car came with a built-in roll cage, a fibreglass body with bonded acrylic – this was all brand new in those days in the '70s – and in five glorious safety colours: white, red, orange, suntan, and green, probably olive green to match the bathrooms of the day. The Reynolds-Alberta Museum in Wetaskiwin actually has one of these cars in storage. I recommend that you all go see it.

But problems arose in the production process and the poor management, as you might guess. Some say that the plant could not produce vehicles fast enough to make a profit, and there were rumours that Bricklin was extracting money and funnelling it into his other business operations to keep them afloat. At the end of the day, the company went into receivership, owing the New Brunswick government \$21 million, which in our dollars today would be \$88 million. Only 2,800 cars were ever built. The moral of that economic development story is: don't be a Richard Hatfield. Do not give corporate welfare to private businesses. Do not be picking winners and losers in our economy.

To contrast that story, I want to tell you a story about something we all know as the Alberta advantage. Even in those periods of time we did have some examples of corporate welfare stricken businesses in this province, some of them right here in Edmonton. Madam Chair, the notion of state funding into private business, a simple handout, a grant, a loan, or using the power of a triple-A credit rating – but we don't even have that anymore; we have a double-A credit rating – to provide a loan guarantee is not the role of the state. It is not safe. So please hear me. If the banks, the financial institutions, venture capitalists, wealth funds under management, the people in the money business themselves, even the *Dragons' Den* or the *Shark Tank* will not risk the venture for investment, why should the government risk taxpayers' money?

It is the government's role to create the level playing field environment for entrepreneurs. It is the government's role to provide public infrastructure and a business-friendly regulatory climate that will create jobs and create wealth. That's the role of government. Government should not be in the business of business, and that's what we had when we had the Alberta advantage.

In my estimation, the Alberta advantage had seven pillars that made it successful. The first was honest and straightforward financial accounting, that the government's books be presented in a way that Albertans could make sense of and hold their government to account for. The second pillar was a reasonable, affordable, and sustainable level of government spending. The third was our low debt and our triple-A credit rating. The fourth pillar was our low-tax regime and a business-friendly regulatory environment. The fifth was affordable energy to produce competitively priced goods. The sixth was taking pride in our resource sector rather than seeing it as an embarrassment. The seventh pillar was taking pride in our farmers and ranchers and trusting their stewardship rather than seeing them as some kind of overbearing, endangering slave-drivers in need of a smack down.

The Alberta advantage results? Well, in 1985 Alberta's GDP was \$66.8 billion. Energy made up 36 per cent of that total. Fast-forward 28 years, and our GDP was \$332 billion in 2013, and energy only made up 25 per cent of the economy. That was the result of the Alberta advantage compared to what happened in New Brunswick.

Now, I want to have just one more look at a case study, this one from Nova Scotia. I think this one is very fitting given the way Nova Scotia wanted to travel. Back in 2010 Nova Scotia's government wanted in on the green revolution. They wanted in on the green economy, so they bought a 49 per cent stake in a joint venture with Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering. The plan was to establish a wind turbine tower and blade manufacturing facility at the former Trenton Works steelworks site. To quote the Premier of the day, he said:

Today is an exciting day because this partnership will help create the secure jobs our economy needs, employing up to 500 Nova Scotians within three years. This new facility will also showcase and develop Nova Scotia's leadership in renewable energy and the green economy.

Well, they even had a secured customer. Nova Scotia Power guaranteed them orders for wind turbines to help meet Nova Scotia's green power initiative.

Six years later the whole thing fell apart. No 500 jobs were ever created, the province's 49 per cent stake in the company was worthless, and there were 19 people working there, another fine example of why government should never be in the business of business.

Now we come to Bill 1. Frankly, given the performance record of the minister, who has been pulling down a minister's salary and perks for months now, who has had a \$178 million budget, the performance to date is not one job, but the reward – well, now that minister is getting an even bigger pile of taxpayers' money.

9:50

This government has been in power for one year. They entered the scene just as Alberta was staring down the barrel of the worst job crisis in our history, and the first thought they had to help the situation was to launch a series of frontal attacks on the cost of power in Alberta, copying the destructive electricity policies of Ontario, which have been the single largest factor in driving job-creating industries out of that province. Then to help matters further, they introduced tax after tax after tax during an economic depression, I'll call it. Name me one industry that doesn't have electricity and/or natural gas as an input item into the cost of goods and services. This government, frankly, doesn't know the first thing about creating a job-friendly economic environment, and this piece of legislation is a waste of paper.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was eagerly waiting for this debate. This government doesn't look like they're going to withdraw or amend this bill into something useful. This Bill 1 as it stands is a bill of sarcasm. Therefore, if they need some help in creating more useless bills, I can help you out with that. [interjections] Hang on.

I figure this government can create 20 new bills just like this bill, for each of the other ministries. These bills can be just like Bill 1 except we get a little bit more specific for each ministry. The Minister of Finance's bill would ensure that he has to publish a budget every single year. In that budget it would require the publication of the government's revenue and expenses. Additionally, the bill would require him to spend far past inflation and population growth. In that way, when he racks up \$58 billion of debt in just three years, he can just point to his bill and blame bad, risky, ideological policies. Of course, since balancing the chequebook is an optional requirement for his ministry, it should be legislated in this bill.

For the Minister of Health we can include a line which says that she has to do all the duties of the CEO for Alberta Health Services and that sometimes she can act as CEO in voice mode. There will be an exemption, of course. She doesn't have to do any of the duties that she doesn't want to, especially any that attract unwanted attention. This should include a line that would allow the minister to give health care services to the people of Alberta.

I'm sure we could spend hours and hours of our civil servants' time crafting these very unnecessary bills. We may even create jobs through this process of writing out the job descriptions.

**An Hon. Member:** Pardon?

**Mr. Panda:** Yes, really. That's how we can create jobs.

They will get all the details organized and correct, and maybe they could just rewrite the Government Organization Act and put it in there. I'm sure there are lots of ideas in that act, but of course we don't want to provide any existing examples and, instead, build these job descriptions from the ground up.

It could be part of the NDP job-creation plan since they would have to hire more government bureaucrats to find a hole in the legislation that doesn't exist and then fill it up with the exact same dirt that was there before. I know the bureaucracy is already bloated, but this government seems to like to fatten up the bureaucracy and their union friends.

On a side note, and just for *Hansard*, I want people to know that I'm being a hundred per cent sarcastic. I know that members across the aisle probably think I'm serious, and I just wanted to make it known for the people who are reading this after the fact.

I asked the minister on the 3rd of March in question period whether he knew he had these powers listed in the bill, and he said he did. That's the reason these other bills are along the exact same lines as Bill 1, the other bills I am proposing.

For the minister of agriculture, we would allow him to implement safety measures without consulting. The minister can already do whatever he wants without consulting, but by putting it in the bill, Albertans would not be able to protest. They would not be able to protest because the minister could point to his bill and show Albertans that they have no power here. It will also help the NDP carbon tax because there will be fewer people driving to protest and using gas. The icing on the cake is that the rebate will actually cover their expenses if they just stay home and don't use any gasoline.

The minister of environment's bill would have a line that says that every time someone says "economics," she will automatically think that the person said "science." It will just be as if the word "economics" doesn't exist. It might require some brainwashing to

ensure that she never hears the word “economics” and only ever hears the word “science,” but those are minor details, and that can be worked out later, Madam Chair. Her bill would allow her to coauthor books that go against the industry she represents. Additionally, she will be able to legislate that fish do not have to pay any carbon tax because when the fish die, they are completely biodegradable and will give off zero emissions as they rot and have zero effect on the ecosystem if they all die.

On a similar note, we want to legislate that the Minister of Labour doesn't have to table any studies, including minimum wage studies and its economic impacts. This bill will protect the government from facts, criticism, and evidence. Her bill should also state that everyone shall have a job and that to do this, she has to raise the minimum wage by 50 per cent every single year. That way, eventually everyone will be a millionaire on top of having a job.

I know that the details I listed for these bills are a little more in depth than Bill 1. They don't have to have that much detail if you want to keep it along the lines of Bill 1. They're very bad suggestions, but they're suggestions that are in line with Bill 1.

The Minister of Justice would be required to bring justice to the guilty. She would have the freedom to bring justice through the courts or through a league. This would be solely dependent on whether or not there are enough superheroes to create a Justice League. Additionally, her bill should allow her to remove minimum wait times for the court dates to ensure that nothing is done quickly or efficiently. She would also legislate to ensure that Alberta continues to have the lowest judges per capita in Canada.

The minister of seniors' bill would tell her that her stakeholders are not getting any younger. That way, by the time she has read her talking points on what she cannot do, she knows there will be one fewer stakeholder to help. Through her legislated ignorance she would not have to appoint a Seniors' Advocate to help them navigate the bureaucracy.

Now, I know these are a lot of bills to digest. Luckily, the job descriptions in these bills would be filled with items already practised by the ministers. Therefore, the bills would not change anything, and it should be relatively simple to work our way through these bills. Additionally, they would give the government a chance to talk about how great they are at their job descriptions, how they can do the things listed in the bill. They can talk about how they have had so much practice at the items in these bills since being elected.

I know that the minister responsible for Bill 1 likes to jump up and down and tell us how great he is at something that apparently he needs legislation to do, which is very confusing for me, that he would need legislation to do something he has been able to do for ages, but I digress.

Let me get to the point. This bill is useless. It is silly. It is a waste of our time. It's an affront to this House. I do not support useless bills; therefore, I do not support Bill 1.

Thank you.

10:00

**The Chair:** Any other speakers? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak on Bill 1, the government's flagship bill, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. Albertans and this Official Opposition have considerable concerns regarding this empty husk of a bill. It does nothing to explain how the NDP will actually create jobs, just like their failed jobs subsidy scheme, which they basically cancelled after it created zero jobs. This bill does nothing new. Section 2 of the act basically allows the minister to establish programs pertaining to job creation, increasing access to capital, supporting

innovation and export development. It is a mandate letter disguised as a bill, which is odd because the Premier no longer issues mandate letters, yet here we are with a job description for the minister with responsibilities he already had before.

Madam Chair, it's easy to measure a jobs bill's effectiveness. Does it create jobs and increase employment? That's a measure everyone can understand. This bill has been dying on the vine. Vague promises of, “You'll have to wait for the budget,” have come and gone, and it's still a really vague piece of legislation. One of my colleagues referred to this bill as vacuous. What a perfect word to describe a bill that is broad in promise but short on details. It's a form of hyperbole that our government seems to embrace. It's the fallback position of talking points.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade loves to get up and proclaim how members on the opposite side of him believe a solution to this economic crisis will turn back the clock, that we propose reckless and extreme cuts that will only make things worse, that the bogeyman opposition will cut teachers and nurses and front-line workers, abandon seniors, and steal candy from babies. It's rhetoric, Madam Chair, a battered shield that this government can trot out when they are notoriously short on substance.

The reality is that the current government has failed to provide a single economic impact study or a single reason to justify why this bill is needed. I have not seen a single credible stakeholder or policy expert quoted on the record anywhere saying that this bill will accomplish something that can't already be accomplished. They claim that it will create jobs but are not demonstrating how. They're creating false hope. They're simply peddling the illusion of doing something for the job situation in our province.

The hon. member talks about setting a strong Alberta jobs plan that will support families and communities and diversify our energy industry. Now, that sounds great on paper, but so did the member's prior dismal failure of a jobs plan. That jobs plan was also rolled out without any credible assessment that it would actually create jobs, and for months the current government doubled down, saying that it would work. The previous Labour minister and the Finance minister were adamant that the failed jobs plan would be good for business.

Folks can't pay their bills and feed their families on ideology, Madam Chair. They need something more tangible than an eight-page document that contains fewer words than this speech does. We need a government that actually creates conditions that benefit Albertans, conditions that create growth and investment, something that this bill sorely lacks. Investment is fleeing the province. Spending is out of hand so much that we have experienced three credit downgrades while this government has been in power. Alberta needs stability and fiscal responsibility. We have seen neither beyond a misguided tax policy and a radical agenda based on debt and deficit.

Wildrose, on the other hand, released a 12-point jobs action plan that does propose solutions such as reducing small-business taxes, providing tax relief for families and stability for our energy sector. There is nothing in this current government's Bill 1 that even provides this much detail. If this bill had any semblance of focus, it would have included some of these points or made some valid ones of its own. It could have legislated change. Instead, we get vague talking points. This is cold comfort to the thousands of Albertans who are out of work.

They could do so much to empower Albertans, help them be part of the solution, help them use their entrepreneurship and creativity to diversify our economy, help reduce red tape, as we suggested. Let Albertans do what they have done since they settled and formed our province. Give them the tools, then get out of the way. Create the right economic conditions, break down barriers, and let

competition thrive. That's how a dynamic economy can be achieved.

Nobody in this House disputes how hard working Albertans are, but taxation and restrictions are not levelling the playing field. You need to ensure a fair regulatory environment, respect property rights, and provide stability for our energy sector. Lay a solid foundation for business, and the people will thrive. Stop hampering them with taxes on everything, restrictive and punitive ideologies, and simply help them help themselves. We have provided a framework within our jobs action plan that can be used to do just that, and we encourage this government to look beyond their ideologies and rhetoric and get Alberta back on track.

Alberta has long been referred to as the economic engine of Canada. This is absolutely nothing to be ashamed of, and in fact it should be shouted from the rooftops and celebrated. We need to enact policies that reflect this rather than stifling opportunity with massive taxes and restricting growth. This government is acting like a brake on this engine rather than the gas pedal.

You can't just create diversification and jobs on a piece of paper with less substance than a menu. You need sound economic principles and a regulatory environment that encourages innovation in all sectors. Lasting economic growth must have a sound foundation and be self-sustaining. It can't be created by a vague, feel-good mandate letter. The superficial wording of this legislation pretty much just positions the NDP government for talking points that could be used to portray opposition parties as opposing or blocking a program designed to create jobs. It's a vain exercise that attempts to shelter the government from critics pointing out that the bill really does nothing.

The last time we convened here to speak to this bill, in second reading, there was absolute silence on the government benches in speaking to the merits of the bill. To be fair to the government benches, I'd have a hard time defending this, too. Albertans are already worried and anxious about the future. There is nothing in this bill to reassure them. Rather, it just underscores the fact that the NDP don't have a real plan to promote job creation or diversify the economy despite the jobs title.

This bill is window dressing, an attempt to appear to the public that the government is doing something bold and creative. They are not. It's simply economic sleight of hand, and it wouldn't pass scrutiny at a carnival. Bill 1 doesn't do anything new or specific. Ministers can already create programs. This bill assigns no powers to the minister that he and other ministers don't already have, and it doesn't allow for much in the way of public accountability. Last month my colleague from Calgary-Foothills asked the minister some very pointed questions. He went line by line and asked the minister if he had the ability to create partnerships that support entrepreneurship and help businesses to grow and succeed. He went on to ask the minister if the minister had the power to help working people upgrade their skills and secure employment and increase the development and production of Alberta innovations. The answer to all these questions was, and I quote the minister: absolutely. End quote. That just proves how vacuous this legislation is, Madam Chair, a vacuous piece of legislation, indeed.

Now, according to section 4 of this act the minister must report on progress at least once a year to the Executive Council but then has no obligation to make those reports public. That's hardly the open and transparent government promised during the election, a flaw the NDP pointed out the former government continually lacked. Unfortunately for transparency, the Executive Council is under no real obligation to release these reports. Even the reporting is unqualified. It could simply be a verbal update to the Executive Council from a minister or a delegated official.

10:10

**Mr. Rodney:** You mean voice mode?

**Mr. Loewen:** Simple voice mode, as it were.

The reporting requirements are flimsy, at best; nonexistent would be more accurate.

Madam Chair, Bill 1, the minister's mandate letter, represents another miss by this government. It's delusion of action on jobs, another failure to propose some real solutions. It provides no relief to families, small business, or our hurting energy sector. It contains no indication of what the NDP will actually do for Albertans, and for that reason I will not be supporting this bill.

Now, when the minister brought this bill forward, he said: "That's why our government's number one priority is to help Alberta get through this downturn." This bill was introduced, I believe, on March 8, and today is May 18. My question is: if this is this government's number one priority and if this bill has any hope of doing anything, why are we sitting here on May 18, almost two and a half months later, waiting for this bill to be passed? Is it that important?

He went on to say: "Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, will give the government additional tools to carry out its Alberta jobs plan to do just that." Again, the question is: what additional tools? All the same tools the minister had in the first place. I guess it's understandable why the minister hasn't created one job. It's because he's still waiting to start work, and Albertans are waiting for him to start work, too.

Now, of course, he went on to say, in his rhetoric:

They propose reckless and extreme cuts that will make a bad situation worse, billions of dollars in cuts to front-line services; firing thousands of teachers and nurses; cutting supports for seniors; and abandoning the most vulnerable; no new schools, hospitals, or roads; and no plan to open new markets.

Well, the Premier has used some choice words in the past, that I won't reiterate here because of unparliamentary language. What I will say is that those comments from the minister are unsubstantiated, and they're not true. The facts are, Madam Chair, that the Wildrose have always stated that the reductions plans will not result in any loss of front-line staff. That is fact. That is in print, and the minister has absolutely no basis to make the claims that he made.

It was interesting in estimates to hear the Energy minister get up and say that she cut 2 per cent from her budget and did not lose one front-line staff. So my question is: how can a minister cut 2 per cent from her budget and not lose one front-line staff, but if the Wildrose was to suggest a 2 per cent cut, automatically it would be that thousands of teachers and doctors and nurses would be fired? I would find that amusing if it wasn't so absolutely wrong.

This is a quote again from the minister.

Alberta is known for its healthy small-business landscape and entrepreneurial spirit; 95 per cent of all businesses in the province are small businesses. Together they are responsible for 28 per cent of Alberta's GDP as well as 35 per cent of all private-sector employment in the province.

With this importance of small business, which, of course, we on this side of the House recognize, how can this government come up with this small-business tax reduction of 1 per cent in its budget when they flatly turned it down as one of our amendments last year? In fact, not only did they turn down the Wildrose suggestion of the exact same thing last year, but then we came and said: how about a .1 per cent reduction in small-business tax, just a token to small business in Alberta to show that government cares? And what did they do? They voted that down, too. Now, of course, they come up

and say: oh, the 1 per cent here is a great idea now. But when Wildrose proposed it last year: absolutely not, not even .1 per cent.

We've heard this government say that the opposition wants them to fail. That is simply not true. That's why we tell this government when they're off track. We come up with amendments. We come up with suggestions. We come up with plans. We make these well-intentioned amendments to their bills to help out, to help Albertans because we know that when this government fails, they fail Albertans, and that hurts Albertans. So to suggest that we want this is reprehensible.

Far too often, though, we have to tell this government: I told you so. Nobody wants to hear it, and we don't want to say it, but unfortunately we have to do that once in a while because this government fails to get things right the first time. They're constantly going on their ideological bent, that detracts from the opportunities that Albertans expect.

Again, Bill 1: I won't be supporting it. It's a vacuous bill. That's a great way to put it. It does nothing for Albertans; therefore, I can't support it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Madam Chair, I have some amendments, and I have the requisite copies.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Panda to move that Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, be amended in section 2 by renumbering it as section 2(1) and by adding the following after subsection (1):

(2) Prior to the establishment of any program under subsection (1), the Minister shall ensure that a member of the Executive Council introduces into the Legislative Assembly a motion that would require a committee of the Assembly to review the program and report back to the Assembly.

(3) The Minister shall not take any steps to implement a new program, including the signing of any agreements respecting that program, until the committee has submitted its report to the Assembly under subsection (2).

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to the amendment?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This government has a track record of creating programs that fail, cause protests, and are just completely useless. Therefore, we have created an amendment that will help this government create valuable programs for Albertans. This amendment will provide the government with a place to revise their programs before wasting valuable taxpayers' money on implementing programs that are doomed to fail. The committee will be struck to go over the programs in detail, and each member would have the opportunity to give their input and point out potential problems of the program.

Additionally, this committee could consult on these programs before – the key word is “before” – the program is implemented. We could contact experts on the program and get their input on how to make it better. There would be no more protests happening due to lack of consultation. After the committee has consulted and crafted the program into something valuable for Albertans, then the program could be implemented. This is just one extra step to ensure that Albertans get the best value for their taxes.

I encourage every member here to vote for this amendment to ensure that every program the minister would like to create with this bill is valuable for Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

10:20

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. When we're looking at creating amendments to any act, we need to be looking at how to make it better, and the fact is that when we're looking at this bill, really, we need to be asking the question: is there accountability? Now, we've got a job description here but no accountability.

This bill actually doesn't just affect itself; it actually affects multiple ministries. If we look at the bill itself, the establishment of programs, section 2(d), “Help working people upgrade their skills and secure employment,” that tells me that we need the minister to be working with the Minister of Labour, and we also need the minister to be working with the minister of postsecondaries. Now, what's important here is that in the end what we're seeing is the minister actually working with all ministries, in the end needing to make sure that not only these ministries are consulted but also the stakeholders of all of these ministries as well.

Now, how do we do that? Well, we can't do that with a lack of transparency. We can't do that with a lack of accountability. What we need to be looking at is, really: how exactly can we facilitate this? This is where this amendment comes in. “The Minister shall ensure that a member of the Executive Council introduces into the Legislative Assembly a motion that would require a committee of the Assembly to review the program and report back to the Assembly.” That means that we're actually involving MLAs in this as well. That means that we're involving everybody in this Chamber in the direction of where our province is going.

Now, we've already seen a failed program put out, the job creation program, and we've heard over and over again that it didn't create any jobs. That I would agree with.

The fact is that we're also bringing out new tax credits. Now, these tax credits are brought out by the ministry, and we have no foundation to work with. It's just: we're going to bring out \$250 million of corporate welfare, possibly, and we don't even know how or what entities are going to be involved in this. It's bringing out a plan with no plan. Now, that is why we need to make sure that the minister thinks this stuff out before he just goes and launches something that may in some cases put taxpayers' money at risk.

We are stewards of Alberta, and the fact that we're bringing out three different programs, I believe, through the economic development ministry, with a more complex set of rules and with no description of how they will be implemented, distresses me no end. The fact is that this program is not only going to affect our businesses today, because this program is a tax credit. Now, what's going to happen is that businesses can apply for this credit after their year-end has been done. So we're looking a full year, maybe a year and a half, two years down the road before we can even see any of the money, that \$250 million that's being put out, saving the Alberta economy. This is a ludicrous move.

We need jobs in my riding. Already we're seeing rates of almost 10 per cent unemployment in my riding, and the minister is putting this ministry forward to say: we're going to create jobs. Does the minister not have faith in the Minister of Labour? Does the minister not have faith in the postsecondary minister? We need to ask these questions because in the end what we need to be looking at is: what is this minister going to do? Why are we waiting for Bill 1 before he starts his job? Why are we not moving forward and actually

creating employment for Albertans, especially in the northern communities where we need it the most?

This is sad. This truly is sad, that we have a whole ministry that is moving forward in no direction. No direction. Creating Bill 1, three pages saying, “This is what I’m going to do,” is not the right direction. It’s amazing that a ministry has focused their whole attention on this waste-of-time bill when we need jobs in my riding. We need jobs across Alberta. We need to help Albertans through this economic downturn, and we’re not seeing it – we’re not seeing it – from this government. We need to move forward. It is legislation like this that is holding up the Legislature on things that are important, and we need to be moving this whole process forward to actually make an impact for Albertans.

Now, we have seen some legislation come through from the government that I agree with, and that legislation, being put through by some of the other ministers, is commendable. Why is Economic Development and Trade not taking the route that his fellow ministers are moving in? Not all of the legislation we’ve seen put forward is a waste of time. Actually, a lot of it is moving Alberta forward. We may not agree with all of the legislation that the government is bringing forth, but you will find that there are a lot of times where the opposition is trying to help the government move forward with its bills to try and make a better Alberta – a better Alberta – and this is not what this is doing.

This is creating a whole lot more – what? – amendments that are going to come later on, when the minister realizes that this didn’t cover, actually, what he needs to do? Does this mean that we’re actually going to create other legislation to add to this? Has this started a process of actually describing what all of the ministers are going to need to do? Are we going to be going through Bill 1 for every ministry? These ministers already can do these jobs. They know what they can do. Why the government hasn’t just gotten rid of this legislation is beyond me.

Now, let’s go to the point of talking about the fact that we have a ministry that is spending millions and millions of dollars and consulting afterwards. Now, I will say that we’re looking at creating an amendment that will actually change how the government is going to deal with the spending by this ministry. We need to have some accountability, and that’s through MLAs on the committee being able to facilitate decisions on where this government is going, and the only way we can do that is by voting for this amendment. This amendment actually will bring accountability. We need to bring accountability because we’ve seen what happened in the past when there was no accountability.

In closing, I encourage all of my colleagues to vote for this amendment because in the end we need to make sure that Albertans see that we are an accountable, transparent government.

Thank you very much.

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

Seeing none, I’ll call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:30 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Fildebrandt	Loewen
Barnes	Gill	MacIntyre

Cooper	Hanson	Panda
Cyr	Hunter	Pitt
Against the motion:		
Anderson, S.	Fraser	Phillips
Babcock	Goehring	Piquette
Bilous	Hinkley	Renaud
Ceci	Hoffman	Rodney
Connolly	Horne	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kazim	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Shepherd
Dach	Loyola	Sigurdson
Dang	Malkinson	Starke
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Drysdale	McKittrick	Sweet
Eggen	Miller	Turner
Feehan	Miranda	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Payne	Woollard
Totals:	For – 12	Against – 42

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** Back on the main bill. The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The title of this bill, Bill 1, is the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. My clever colleague the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster calls it the *Seinfeld* bill because, of course, like the TV show, it’s a bill about . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Nothing.

**Mr. Rodney:** . . . nothing. Thank you very much.

Similarly, with sincere apologies to William Shakespeare, I’ve come to think about it as *Much Ado About . . .*

**Some Hon. Members:** *Nothing.*

**Mr. Rodney:** This was not prerehearsed, Madam Chair. It just emanates from the Chamber.

In fact, in reading this bill, which does not take long at all, it is almost as humorous as the Bard’s classic farce. Let’s explore why. To begin with, when choosing to make Bill 1 the flagship legislation of this Second Session of the 29th Legislature, this government has told every Albertan that Bill 1 represents one of its key objectives. Job creation certainly sounds noble, doesn’t it? Well, it is noble, and it’s keenly, keenly necessary. Except this piece of legislation contains – wait for it . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Nothing.

**Mr. Rodney:** . . . nothing, and the government’s job-creation plan so far has come to nothing. There’s that word again.

Budget 2015, unveiled last fall, introduced a job-creation tax credit that was going to create – do you remember the number? – 27,000 jobs. Wouldn’t that have been fantastic? Except the job-creation tax credit created how many jobs?

**Some Hon. Members:** One.

**Mr. Rodney:** Some would say one. Not one single Albertan was put to work because of this tax credit, which business could not use, except for the one ministerial appointment.

Within a few months the government abandoned its only job-creation plan. But Albertans are telling us loudly and clearly that

they want to see a government that supports job creation. What should a government without ideas do? Well, how about creating a flagship piece of legislation that has “job creation” in its title? It’s a great idea, except Bill 1 is empty.

Just as a point of information and clarification, a flagship is the vessel in a fleet that carries the admiral. This flagship does have an admiral in the form of a minister of the Crown, but the admiral is alone on the deck of a ship without any cargo. I could push this analogy a whole lot further – and it would be a whole lot more fun – but it would not be flattering, so I will restrain myself here today.

10:50

Madam Chair, the preamble to Bill 1 is a fascinating read. We apparently need new legislation to tell us that “all areas of Alberta, from rural communities and indigenous communities to the largest cities, will benefit from a stronger and more diversified economy.” Well, thank you very much, Bill 1, but I am really quite sure that Albertans clear across the province already knew that, I’m afraid, a little bit too well, especially these days.

What Bill 1 fails to mention is the rural economic development plan, which was created through thorough consultation with rural residents and communities in the last year of our previous government’s mandate. The whole premise of the plan was to build upon the successful economic diversification that was already going on. People weren’t just surviving; they were thriving. Perhaps the minister of economic development would do well to maybe glance at that report as it might help him to do his job as laid out in this mandate letter. Sorry. I meant legislation. Right.

Sticking with the preamble, we see a lot of talk about finding new markets for Alberta. Again nothing new here, sadly and inexcusably. Alberta has long been known for working hard to open markets and to keep them open and growing. A good example of that, Madam Chair, is the Ports-to-Plains trade corridor. I haven’t heard much about that lately. Not too long ago Alberta was a valued, significant part of this corridor, which went from Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. Part of the support for Ports-to-Plains included the Keystone XL pipeline. Remember that one, Minister? That’s the pipeline that your government decided to abandon.

If we turn to page 2 of the bill, we come to the substance of the legislation, except there is . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** None.

**Mr. Rodney:** . . . none. Right.

The bill simply tells us what the minister may do, which previous ministers have been doing for years and decades already. If the minister is dependent on this bill to give him ideas for economic development, well, what about that minister’s colleagues? Do they, too, need legislated mandate letters to tell them how they might handle their portfolios? If we’re all going to receive legislated mandate letters, the House won’t have any time at all to deal with the real business that Albertans expect of us, and, Madam Chair, that’s ridiculous. It’s just untenable.

If we turn to section 3(2), here’s where we learn that should the minister want to do something of substance, he must introduce a bill in the Assembly. I don’t think people need to be policy wonks to understand that this is just extremely time-consuming. Would it ever reveal any real results? There’s just no proof that it ever could or would.

This so-called enabling legislation does not enable the minister to do anything. In fact, some have told me that it actually disables the minister, and therein lies the farce of Bill 1. It clearly pays lip service to job creation and nothing more.

But we are not done exploring Bill 1. There is still an entire half page more. Half a page. In section 5 we learn that the minister may establish panels or committees to provide advice to him. Again, anyone in cabinet knows that that’s been happening ever since we’ve had a parliamentary system.

I do have one question for the minister. If he can establish panels and committees, can he not also appoint them? I’ve asked the Premier about representation on the Premier’s Advisory Committee on the Economy in the past, including all Albertans but especially our indigenous Albertans. Can the minister perhaps now make an appointment? There might be something positive that could come out of Bill 1.

Finally, I suppose a person could congratulate the government for its flagship bill for one important reason. As our hon. colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays likes to remind the minister, whenever the term “Bill 1” arises in this House, he says that it has been indeed successful in creating one job, and that would be the minister’s. At least that’s one more job created in Alberta, one more than the government’s last job-creation initiative.

With that, I thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. Madam Chair, I have another amendment to present, and I have the requisite copies.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Panda:** I move that Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, be amended by striking out section 4 and substituting the following:

Reports

4(1) The Minister must, at least annually, and more frequently if the Premier directs, prepare a report outlining:

- (a) the Minister’s progress in establishing and implementing any programs under section 2, and
  - (b) the number of jobs created by all programs established under section 2.
- (2) When prepared, a report under subsection (1) must
- (a) be laid before the Legislative Assembly by the Minister if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting, and
  - (b) be posted on a public website of the ministry of the Minister, regardless of whether it has first been laid before the Assembly under clause (a).

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Did you wish to continue speaking on the amendment?

**Mr. Panda:** Sure. I’d like to.

**The Chair:** Continue.

**Mr. Panda:** Madam Chair, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed mentioned the parliamentary system. I’m still learning. This is my first time proposing amendments to a bill in the hope that, you know, people are consistent in their voting patterns and all that in the House. But I’m a little bit confused because when the Member for West Yellowhead brought his motion, Motion 502, it asked the government to consult energy workers when they bring in new bills. We all supported it. With my previous amendment, all we are trying to do is make the bill better.

We all agree in the House, including the members opposite, that Bill 1 lacks details. Bill 1 is not required. The minister already has the powers he needs. If they really believe that Bill 1 has all that

usefulness and utility, probably the members from my neighbouring ridings, Calgary-Hawkwood or Calgary-Klein, would have stood up in the House and spoken in support of it. The fact that no member from the government bench has spoken in support of Bill 1 itself tells us that there is something wrong with the bill. That's what I thought, actually, when I proposed the first amendment, although in my initial speech I said that I won't support Bill 1 because there is nothing good in the bill. But then I changed my mind, and I brought in an amendment to make it better because that's what we are paid to do, to make it work. That's why we are here, to help the minister make it work so that he can actually create jobs. He can take credit for it.

Anyway, Madam Chair, this second amendment, section 4(1), that I propose, gives some much-needed meat to this bill. As the bill sits at the moment, the ministry is required to report to Executive Council once a year. It gives zero details of what that report should entail. For all we know, it could be the minister saying that his programs are going great. Not only that, but the House and the public will never find out the details of the report.

11:00

Thus, this amendment is twofold. The first part outlines what the report should entail. It should entail the progress in establishing and implementing any programs under section 2 of this bill. Since the title of this bill has "job creation" in it, this amendment also states that the minister must detail how many jobs have been created through the programs under section 2. With these two additions, the minister will be held to account in detail, in an open and transparent way.

The second part of this amendment is to publish this report to the House instead of the Executive Council. That way, this report, that details what the minister is actually doing, will be public knowledge. There is no reason to do things in secret, like other governments did before. Albertans do not want a government who prepares and delivers reports in secret. This is the government's flagship bill, and the results of this bill, if any, need to be made public. Combined, the two parts of this amendment will provide the minister with some accountability to the public. It changes nothing else about the bill other than the reporting aspect. If this is voted down, then the public should consider whether or not this government actually intends to follow through with their plans or if this is actually a useless bill, as we have been saying for weeks.

I hope the members opposite and the third-party members will support this amendment for the reasons I gave. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? Are you wishing to speak to the amendment, hon. minister?

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes, please. I'll be very brief, Madam Chair. I want to thank the member for bringing forward this amendment. Although I do respect and agree with the spirit of this amendment, I can assure this House that reporting on progress will be an ongoing matter not only with the Assembly, quite frankly, but with all Albertans as they're very interested. I mean, the economy is their number one priority; it's the number one priority of our government.

Working with the private sector, the job creators, government can only set the right conditions and support our business and industry throughout the province in all sectors. It is the private sector that creates jobs. I can assure this House that we will be continuing with ongoing dialogue with Albertans to know exactly what our government is doing and reporting progress on that on an ongoing basis.

Therefore, this amendment is not necessary, and I will not be supporting it. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Just briefly, Madam Chair. Obviously, this amendment is needed. This legislation is fairly empty, yet it seemed like the hon. minister needed a piece of legislation to outline specifically what his job was going to do. Now he's telling us that, no, it is government's job to report all the time. Well, frankly, if that's the case, why isn't this already in this legislation? There's no compulsion on the minister's part to respond to anybody but the Executive Council in this legislation. We need this amendment because, obviously, this minister needs that much micromanagement.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A2? I see none.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:05 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Fraser	MacIntyre
Barnes	Gill	Panda
Cooper	Hanson	Pitt
Cyr	Hunter	Rodney
Drysdale	Loewen	Starke
Fildebrandt		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Fitzpatrick	Piquette
Babcock	Goehring	Renaud
Bilous	Hinkley	Rosendahl
Carson	Horne	Schreiner
Ceci	Kazim	Shepherd
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Sigurdson
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Sucha
Dach	Malkinson	Sweet
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Drever	McKittrick	Westhead
Eggen	Miller	Woollard
Feehan	Payne	

Totals:	For – 16	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** Back on the main bill. Are there any further comments with respect to the bill? The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report progress on Bill 1 and that we rise and report Bill 12.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

11:10

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 12. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 1. I wish to table copies of all



amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

**Government Bills and Orders**  
**Second Reading**  
*(continued)*

**Bill 17**  
**Appropriation Act, 2016**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 17, the Appropriation Act, 2016.

This act will provide funding authority to the offices of the Legislative Assembly and the government for the 2016-17 fiscal year. The schedule to the act provides amounts that were presented in greater detail by the 2016-17 government and Legislative Assembly estimates tabled on April 14, 2016. These estimates were subsequently debated by standing committees and voted on in Committee of Supply.

This Appropriation Act will enable the implementation of the Alberta jobs plan, the government's response to the most challenging economic downturn in a generation. The plan has four key pillars: supporting families, investing in infrastructure, diversifying our energy industry and markets, and supporting Alberta businesses.

Madam Speaker, the Alberta jobs plan introduces more supports for businesses with a two-year, \$250 million package of initiatives, including the creation of two important new tax credits to promote early-stage capital investment. The new Alberta investor tax credit provides a credit for those investing in eligible small and medium-sized enterprises, and the capital investment tax credit provides credits for the first-time acquisition of new or used property or spending in value-added agriculture, tourism infrastructure, culture, manufacturing, and processing industries. The new tax credits are estimated at \$165 million over two years.

The Alberta jobs plan also reflects our belief that business leaders and financial experts know best how to support business. We are investing in the entrepreneurship incubator program to help small and medium-sized businesses bring their ideas to market; we are providing \$10 million in new funding to Innovate Calgary, TEC Edmonton, and regional commercialization organizations to support innovation and job creation; and we have committed \$10 million to expand the agrivalue processing incubator program. This will support further success in creating new companies in Alberta's food industry.

Other supports for business include an investment of \$5 million to help Alberta attract investments and new headquarters to our province and \$10 million for the regional economic development program, which supports community and business leaders to collaborate on business strategies to promote a wide range of industries across the province, from tourism to value-added processing.

In addition, our government announced in February the petrochemical diversification program. This will encourage companies to invest in development of new petrochemical facilities. The goal of this program is to attract investment, create jobs, and

provide long-term benefits to Albertans. We expect the new petrochemical facilities to generate about 3,000 construction jobs and more than a thousand permanent direct and indirect jobs. These job-creation initiatives reflect our government's central commitment to Albertans. It says: we have your back during these challenging economic times.

Madam Speaker, the Alberta jobs plan also makes a historic investment in our infrastructure, the lifeblood of the modern, 21st-century economy. We're investing in a five-year, \$34.8 billion capital plan that will build and upgrade roads, transit, schools, and hospitals right across the province. Our funding commitments over the next five years include \$9 billion in municipal infrastructure support over five years, as I said, including \$6.1 billion under the municipal sustainability initiative; \$6.2 billion for capital maintenance and renewal; \$4.6 billion for roads and bridges, including Calgary and Edmonton's ring roads; \$3.5 billion for health facilities and equipment, including \$1.2 billion for the new Calgary cancer centre and \$365 million to improve access to long-term care facility housing right across the province; \$3.5 billion for schools, including \$2.9 billion to complete the 200 new and modernization projects previously announced, with \$500 million for future projects; and \$900 million for affordable housing.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, all members of this Chamber know well that our province has enjoyed prosperity when oil prices have been high, but we've also felt the pain when oil prices have plummeted. Every Albertan is feeling the pain right now. We all see it every day. That is why our government has vowed to get off the royalties rollercoaster. Therefore, a key pillar of the Alberta jobs plan is to diversify our energy industry and open up new markets.

In addition to the measures I've already discussed, Budget 2016 takes a historic step to implement the climate leadership plan. This plan is an important step to achieve our energy goals. It will phase out our coal emissions and develop more renewable energies. It will implement a new carbon price on greenhouse gas emissions, and it will legislate an oil sands emissions limit and employ a new methane emissions reduction plan for the oil and gas sector. Mr. Speaker, to be clear now, the carbon levy is a key component of the climate strategy, and every single penny of the levy raised will be rebated back to Albertans or recycled back into the economy. That's the levy. The climate leadership plan demonstrates that Albertans are committed to being one of the most environmentally responsible, progressive energy producers in the world, and this plan will also help us open up new markets for our energy products and will ensure that Albertans get full value from the energy we sell.

Mr. Speaker, our government is also determined to help families get back on their feet during these tough economic times. Supporting Alberta's families is a key pillar of our jobs plan, that takes steps to ensure families who are affected by the downturn are supported. This summer we are implementing the Alberta child benefit and enhancing the Alberta family employment tax credit. Together these will support about 380,000 children, and those benefits will start to flow in July.

We're fully funding enrolment growth in our public schools and increasing operating grants in all of our universities, colleges, and postsecondary institutions. The Alberta jobs plan also invests \$15 million in new funding to help apprentices complete their training and work experience requirements and \$10 million for the training for work program. This program will help unemployed or marginally employed Albertans, including women, indigenous people, and newcomers, secure and maintain employment in high-demand jobs.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude, let me be clear that Budget 2016 also contains important initiatives to control spending. For example, some of the cost-saving initiatives include amalgamating or dissolving 26 agencies, boards, and commissions; freezing management salaries at government agencies, boards, and commissions; freezing salaries for cabinet, MLAs, and political staff for the entire term of this Legislature; freezing senior public servant salaries for two years; and reducing budgets for salaries and supplies in government departments by nearly 2 per cent this year. As this fiscal year continues, perhaps as early as this afternoon I'll have more to say on measures that our government will be taking to find cost efficiencies across government.

11:20

In closing, Mr. Speaker, let me be clear that Budget 2016 maintains the key advantages that make Alberta a great place to live, work, and to start a business. We continue to have the lowest overall tax regime in Canada, no provincial sales tax, no payroll tax, and no health care premiums. And as members of this Chamber know well, we are supporting Alberta's small businesses with a one-third cut to the small-business tax rate, from 3 per cent to 2 per cent.

In summary, the Appropriation Act before you enables us to implement the Alberta jobs plan and support Albertans during these tough times. This act will create the conditions for 100,000 new jobs and will support Albertans when they need our help most. I ask all members of this Chamber to support this bill, support jobs, and support Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other members who would like to speak to Bill 17?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise today and speak to Bill 17, the Appropriation Act, 2016, the next stage of our budget debate here. I certainly welcome the Minister of Finance to be here for the full debate and to engage back and forth so that he can answer questions from the Official Opposition.

This budget is the latest reckless budget in a very long series of reckless budgets in this province. This is the ninth consecutive consolidated deficit in this province. On a consolidated basis we have run deficits every single year since 2008. We have seen our net financial assets in this province decline by almost \$65 billion. We used to have zero debt and \$17 billion in the rainy-day sustainability fund. We had zero debt and 17 billion bucks in the bank. Today we have about zero bucks left in the rainy-day fund and have a debt that will soon exceed \$58 billion, before the next election.

This is grossly irresponsible. This is intergenerational theft, Mr. Speaker. This is taking from future generations to pay for today. To take money that doesn't belong to you is not right. To take from future generations, to tax future generations before they have had any chance to even vote for the politicians making the decisions that we're making today, is intergenerational theft. Today's deficits are tomorrow's taxes.

We've got a bunch of chirping MLAs over there who have no interest in making responsible decisions. They have an interest in only spending as much as they can to try and buy off the electorate to try and get re-elected. But some of us in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, take a longer term view of things. I believe that we should hold our finances as a trust, the way we should view the environment. Just as we inherit an environment today, we are expected to pass on an environment to our children and our grandchildren that is, at the very least, no worse – no worse – than

the environment we inherited. We should always try to pass on an environment that is better to future generations and certainly not any worse.

We should take the same view of our finances, Mr. Speaker. We should take an intergenerational, big-picture view of things, not just short-term decisions to try and get us re-elected in three years. That's irresponsible. We should be responsible with our finances across the generations. Instead, we are seeing a \$60 billion decline in our net financial assets over the last decade. We are seeing a debt that will exceed \$50 billion in just a few short years, and it's not enough.

Just four and a half months ago the Minister of Finance had the gall to sit right across from me in this Chamber and introduce a bill that he said would provide a reasonable cap on our debt, at 15 per cent of debt to GDP. That was a significant increase to the debt ceiling in this province, and he repeated until he was blue in the face, Mr. Speaker, that 15 per cent was the absolute highest we would ever, ever go. Famous last words from the last session.

Just four and a half months later the Minister of Finance, accompanying this budget, has to bring forward another bill to repeal his own debt ceiling. I would be embarrassed if I was the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker. I hope that he will be able to stand up in this Chamber and defend his decisions on repealing his own debt ceiling just a few short months after he touted it as a measure of fiscal responsibility. We said it then, that it was not going to hold water, that we would be like the U.S. Congress, where every nine months we come back to the Legislature and state that we need to increase the debt ceiling just a little bit more and then nine months later do it again, and again, and again.

I said this years ago, when the former government repealed Ralph Klein's strict laws against debt and borrowing in this province. We were boiling the frog very slowly in this province, going from a debt-free status with money in the bank to spending the sustainability fund to going back into debt only for capital to going into debt for capital and operations but limited to 15 per cent and now no limit whatsoever. This is grossly irresponsible, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Alberta has a very serious spending problem. We spent more than two and a half thousand dollars more per capita on program spending in this province than British Columbia. Now, British Columbia is not some right-wing, conservative dystopia without roads, police, firefighters, nurses, and teachers. British Columbia is governed by Liberals, probably the least offensive brand of Liberalism in the country, but it is governed by a Liberal government that is providing a high quality of public services, yet they manage to spend two and a half thousand dollars less per capita.

Compared to Ontario, a socialist basket case, we are spending three and a half thousand dollars more per capita. An absolute basket case of a province, facing insolvency, with the largest subnational sovereign debt in the world is spending three and a half thousand dollars less per capita than Alberta on programs, and these members over here have the guts to say that cutting a single dollar of spending out of this government will result in mass layoffs of nurses, doctors, and teachers. If that's not untruthful, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what is.

Now, what's their plan moving forward? What's the plan moving forward? They have no plan. They have said that they're going to control costs, but there's no evidence of it in their budget. They continue to increase spending in every single year of their plan. There is little assurance in the way of details in their budget that would give us any confidence that they will even be able to hold to it.

They have gone out and hired big union bosses from the AUPE to go from one side of the table to sit on the other side of the table, so we're going to have AUPE-friendly governments negotiating with AUPE negotiators with AUPE, who happened to staff their elections. That's a conflict of interest, Mr. Speaker. Taxpayers are not going to be represented at that table. All you're going to see is big government unions negotiating with big government unions for the benefit of a government-first government.

Now, this government has taken very little in the way of any spending restraint, but they've shown no restraint whatsoever when it comes to taxes. Now, they like to pat themselves on the back for the small-business tax cut proposed by the Official Opposition. When the Official Opposition proposed the exact same tax cut – the exact same tax cut – in the spring session of 2015, they did not have the guts to vote for it then.

11:30

I know that when the four veteran members of that caucus sat in the back corner as the fourth party just over a year ago, they would say constantly to the former government: why would you not accept our amendments just because they're from the opposition? Good ideas come from all parties. No party has a monopoly on good ideas, as much as we all tend to think that our own parties do. No party has a monopoly on good ideas. But when the Official Opposition put forward an amendment to their own bill to reduce the small business tax rate from 3 per cent to 2 per cent, they said that it would be reckless and that they couldn't possibly vote for it. They voted against it even though every single party in the Legislature other than the government supported it. Then just a year later they turn around and say: it's our idea, and no one else had anything to do with it.

Absolute power corrupts absolutely, Mr. Speaker. The democratic principles that the four veteran members on the government side used to hold when they were in opposition seem to have really gone by the wayside. I know that the minister of economic development would not agree with himself if he was debating himself from opposition. He would stand up in this Legislature and say that no party has a monopoly on good ideas and that if the government hears a good idea, they should accept it. That is the one bright spot, though, in this budget, that the government has accepted the Official Opposition's idea to cut the small business tax rate. Now, that's the only good piece.

In the small spring session of 2015 the government brought in a rash of new taxes. They kept in place several of the proposed taxes from the outgoing government in the budget that was not passed. In addition, they raised business taxes in this province by 20 per cent, and they finally abolished the once-proud flat-tax system in this province, the flat-tax system in this province that made us the shining example in this country of fiscal rectitude, of fiscal conservatism. That was the very foundation of the Alberta advantage, Mr. Speaker.

I am proud to stand for real fiscally conservative policies like the idea that if you are willing to work hard, if you are willing to take risks and start a small business, if you're willing to bust your back, the government should not penalize you for earning more. That is real equality, Mr. Speaker. That is the Alberta advantage that this party stands for and that I wish this government would stand for. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, keep it down.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** If 10 per cent is good enough for God, it should be good enough for the government. Some of us believe in God; some of us believe in government. Mr. Speaker, I can tell that you agree.

In the fall budget they went further, implementing new taxes on things like gasoline and diesel, and now with this . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Hallelujah.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I'm getting more amens from the speakers over there. I would remind them that we're no longer on Bill 1, as enjoyable as that debate was.

This budget is now bringing forward a massive new carbon tax, a \$3 billion carbon tax that is going to penalize businesses, families, and individuals in this province. It is going to hammer our number one key industry at a time when it's already on its knees. When the price of oil has plummeted, when we are experiencing an already natural economic slowdown, this government is going to kick the knees from under our oil and gas industry.

I represent Strathmore-Brooks, towns with very serious junior oil and gas servicing and drilling industries and many other ancillary industries, and they are getting hammered. The government may have consulted with big oil, to their credit, but they didn't talk to small oil. They didn't talk to medium oil. They didn't talk to the small drilling and service companies in places like Brooks that are getting hammered, that are closing their doors. Some of them are barely keeping their doors open to keep alive, but they're laying off employees, just waiting for this to pass while others are shutting down outright. They're going to kneecap them, and they're going to hammer families with a backdoor PST, the equivalent of a 3 to 4 per cent PST on Alberta families, when they promised that they would never do it. That's shameful, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I know that the Minister of Finance and members on the government side love to call it a levy. Well, Mr. Speaker, if it quacks like a tax, if it sounds like a tax, if it hurts your wallet like a tax, what is it?

**Some Hon. Members:** A tax.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, I know that even the government would agree with me.

Now, I would encourage all members of the House who have the fiscal plan handy to open to page 22. There is a table here that I find very interesting. It lists the government's different taxes: personal income tax, corporate tax, education property tax, other taxes, and then it says something called "carbon levy." Then if you read the title of this table on page 22 – I would invite members to do that; I would invite the Minister of Finance to stand up and read the title of it – it reads, "Tax Revenue". You can call it whatever you want, Mr. Speaker. You could call it an environmental levy. You could call it anything you want, but at the end of the day it's a tax, and it's going to hit Albertans hard like a tax.

Now, they're saying that they're going to do this for social licence. Well, what are their lefty friends in Ontario doing right now? They are proposing a ban on natural gas. It's *Flintstones* policy, Mr. Speaker. They are proposing to ban natural gas. It is absolute insanity. Ideologically the closest aligned government to the NDP in Canada is probably the Ontario Liberals – the Ontario Liberals – and they're proposing to ban natural gas in Ontario. It is absolute insanity. So what kind of social licence success is this? What kind of social licence is this? It's not succeeding.

Now, we want this government to succeed. I want pipelines built. I want market access. I know that members of the Official Opposition and, I would dare say, even the other opposition parties all want what is best for Alberta here, and that is to get pipeline access and market access to international markets here, but buying people off with this promise of a carbon tax, which will do nothing to lower global emissions, is a fraud. This is promising people that

it's going to get pipelines built and market access before any are built.

So let's just try this on for size. If the government is saying that it's going to bring in a carbon tax, shouldn't we at least make it conditional first on there being pipelines built to the east, west, and south before we start hammering Albertan families?

So I'll summarize where we are at, Mr. Speaker. This government's plan to move forward is to pray. They are praying for a rise in oil prices. They are praying that the traditional roller coaster of oil and gas prices, that they promised to get off of, is going to go back up. Oil would need to be over a hundred dollars a barrel for this government to balance the budget. Over a hundred dollars a barrel. They blame the entire deficit on the price of oil, but no matter what the price of oil will be, pretty much, we're going to still be running a deficit. So this government's plan is to pray for high oil prices. It is to pray that their corporate welfare spending program is going to somehow pay off, that in three years they're going to be able to wave their magic wand, and through government state intervention into the economy they'll be able to forcibly diversify it to replace our entire oil and gas sector. They're living on a prayer.

Most importantly, they are praying that Albertans won't pay attention. They are praying that Albertans won't know how to read the balance sheets that see a meltdown of \$60 billion in our net financial assets. They are praying that Albertans won't read this budget and see \$50 billion of debt before the next election. They are praying that Albertans won't read this budget and see an ND PST carbon tax that is going to punish families and businesses in this province without any hope for market access or social licence in advance. They are praying that Albertans are not paying attention. But the Official Opposition is paying attention to it, and we are going to make them pay for it every step of the way.

11:40

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I'm just asking for the unanimous consent of the Chamber, if they might, to revert to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three grade 6 classes, which are behind me in the gallery right now. They are coming from the constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, particularly from Rimbey elementary school: kids from Rimbey, of course, as well as the county of Ponoka, and communities such as Bluffton. A few weeks ago I had the pleasure of joining all three of these grade 6 classes for one social class at their school, and I can tell you that they've learned their curriculum this year very, very well, and they had very, very good questions and even answers, something that we don't see too often in this Chamber. With that said, I would ask that they would all rise with their chaperones and with their teachers and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. member, I had the privilege of meeting them before I came into the Assembly, and they said that you are a very nice MLA.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 17

#### Appropriation Act, 2016

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I'm pleased today to rise and talk on the bill at second reading. To start, I guess I want to focus on the consequences of this government's budget, this government's legislation, the huge increase in spending, the continuation of the high per capita spending. It's very, very fitting that we've just introduced three grade 6 classes, who, unfortunately, are going to be paying back these billions and billions of dollars of debt, never mind the \$2 billion in annual interest in a short time. The consequences, of course, of the interest: we've seen in other provinces how interest has become the second- or the third-biggest line item, crowding out money that's needed for the very schools that hon. members are heckling me about; \$2 billion a year in interest just three short years from now. I dare say that that's 80 brand new schools a year, never mind how many teachers, how many nurses, how many doctors, how many mental health workers, how many things we could do with that money instead, rather than paying banks, rather than paying affluent people more interest.

So what it's going to take away from the quality of Albertans' lives needs to be addressed. What we also need to know – it's also fitting that we started this morning talking about Bill 1, the government's on-paper-only attempt to diversify the income and add jobs. Surely, by now our friends across the floor must realize from all the businesspeople, from all the editorials we've seen written how all these new taxes, how these new regulations, how this uncertainty is either scaring business away or causing it to halt.

I read a few minutes ago that the new buyer of Sanjel in Calgary has closed the office. Let's add that to the hundred thousand jobs that have been lost since May 5 of last year. Let's add that to the, I think, somewhere around \$50 billion that's not being invested in our province, money that adds jobs, money that we can tax and create services with, you know, a province that was home to the Alberta advantage, home to Albertans taking care of Albertans, families taking care of friends and each other and the landscape that we're at now. That's the second part of the consequences that greatly concern me.

Then there's the consequences of your budget and the extra spending and the extra taxing. I mean, the carbon tax clearly – clearly – is going to be a huge tax on Alberta families and communities. We've thrown numbers back and forth here on this side. We think it's at least a thousand dollars per Alberta family. Never mind that you guys from the Alberta government side are doubling gas tax. My goodness; Alberta families and consumers finally get a break on the price of gas, and you jump in to take it away from them. You know, it's amazing.

To me, one of the revealing things in the House three or four weeks ago was that I think the minister of environment said that lower income Albertans would be given a rebate equal to the GST rebate. I hope I heard that wrong because if that's right, that suggests to me that your government – your government – thinks it's a 5 per cent tax. As the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks said: a tax is a tax. It comes out of Albertans' pockets. It comes out of Alberta families' budgets. It comes out of our communities.

There's a huge rumour going around Medicine Hat now about some businesses about to close. Mr. Speaker, as you well know, we've lost lots. It would be unfortunate to lose more.

Yeah, the economy has changed, but the amount of money that Albertans have has changed dramatically. I spoke in this House about a month ago about a friend of mine who, fortunately, is still working the same job that he had a year and a half ago, taking the same money out of his corporation that he did a year and a half ago. Mr. Speaker, the net to himself is \$800 a month less – \$800 a month less – that he's not spending in men's clothing stores, that he's not spending in restaurants. He had a small business on the side, but without this \$800, he decided it wasn't worth his effort, worth the risk to continue, so a couple of layoffs for a couple of employees. This friend takes care of his parents. Thank goodness he hasn't quit that yet.

You know, I also want to go on and talk a little bit about how we got here. The last speaker spoke about our high per capita spending. The last government, the Progressive Conservatives, had spending levels 20 per cent more on a per capita basis than the Canadian average, and what it led to was inflation and waste. Unfortunately, under this new government, when you had the opportunity to make changes, we have seen our scores in health care continue to slip. Alberta is not a leader in spite of spending the most money.

That brings me to my next point. This government has some rhetoric around bringing costs in line. As Health shadow minister I can't help but smile when the Minister of Health stands up and says that she's going to bend the cost curve. Instead of increasing it 6 per cent, as the last government used to, she's only going to increase it 3 per cent. Then I look at \$240 million over budget last year. Mr. Speaker, at \$20 million or \$25 million a school how many schools could that \$240 million have built? How many nurses, doctors, teachers, mental health workers would that have been?

**11:50**

Mr. Speaker, I guess my point here: it's a lot easier to say than it is to do. Like Bill 1, we have seen so little, almost no action when it comes to getting more value for the Alberta taxpayer out of this government. Yeah, we have rhetoric and talk. We run around and make these promises, but at the end of the day we have a government that's borrowing to buy the groceries, a government that's borrowing to keep the lights on, a government where three years from now every family in Alberta will be spending \$2,000 per year just to pay the interest at the same time, with our high per capita spending, at the same time as our programs, especially in health care, are slipping. What have we seen this government do?

**Mr. Nixon:** Not much.

**Mr. Barnes:** Not much but hurt equity and fairness.

Alberta's unemployment rate will be 8 per cent in 2016, 7.5 per cent in 2017, above the national average by almost a full point. Mr. Speaker, when have we seen that? I absolutely know that a large part of that increase in unemployment is because of this government's ideology, this government's spending. The uncertainty they have caused has driven \$50 billion of private investment out of the province.

I find it so disingenuous when this government stands up and says that we can afford to go into debt because we have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio, and then inside of four months what was a debt ceiling is completely disregarded. Well, Mr. Speaker, we all know that Albertans will decide three years from now what the appropriate level of debt is. Can we afford to go into debt?

Yeah, you know, it's going to lower our credit rating. Albertans know that when your credit rating is lower, you pay a higher interest rate. Albertans know that when you have a lower credit rating, it's harder to borrow. There are more acquisition costs in bureaucracy to do the borrowing that has to be done. Albertans know that when

their government is borrowing billions and billions of dollars, it makes it harder for private industry to compete, to borrow the same money, to actually create efficiency and jobs and investment and a long-term, innovative strategy that is based on finding new technologies, finding innovation, and finding ways to truly diversify the economy.

You know, the Finance minister stood up and said: the four pillars of the budget. I absolutely believe that he and the government have failed on all four, taking thousands of dollars out of families' pockets, taking thousands of dollars out of communities, so businesses will have more trouble attracting scarcer dollars, so families will have more trouble paying for their decisions, services they may want, holidays they may want, whatever they may want.

Infrastructure was the second pillar. We've seen very little on that other than an attempt to create a list, but, again, huge billions of dollars of unallocated amounts. Under the previous government the Wildrose opposition clearly showed how on a per capita basis we were spending double – double – what other provinces were spending and not receiving the extra value for the infrastructure. I don't know why the new government has stayed quiet on trying to get the taxpayer more value out of infrastructure.

The third pillar was diversification. Pick up any newspaper. Look on any blog. The uncertainty of the continuation of your high per capita spending, the uncertainty of your new taxes: the uncertainty that you cause has done more to hurt diversification by a long shot than it has to help.

The last pillar was to help small businesses. Well, you increased the tax, and then you put the tax back to where it was. I understand that you're some side of \$700 million less in tax revenues than a year ago. Businesses are paying less tax there but, obviously, making way less money. Way to go there, too, guys. Good job.

You have failed on every single pillar, and you're spending \$50 billion, the highest spending in Alberta's history. You've continued the last government's inefficient per capita spending. You have put Alberta families, Alberta job providers, job creators further in debt, further behind the eight ball.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will state that I will be happy to vote against this bill at every step. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Is it with respect to 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Cooper:** I'm okay.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions for the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat under 29(2)(a)?

The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 17, the Appropriation Act, 2016. I wish I was rising to speak to a significantly different budget, one that didn't put the future of our province at risk, one that took a much longer term vision of the province, because there's one thing that I'm certain of, and it's that this NDP budget is making things worse. It's punishing families and businesses with risky, ideological policies. There are a number of different points in this budget that cause significant concern, particularly for families and the costs that are associated with raising a family in the Alberta of tomorrow because of this NDP government.

When we look at just the carbon tax alone, the carbon tax will punish everyday families and businesses and make life significantly more expensive. Everything from heating your house to the groceries you buy, Mr. Speaker, to driving your grandkids around to hockey practice will be more expensive thanks to this budget and to the NDP's carbon tax.

While the government would have you believe that every low-income Albertan will be fully compensated in the form of a rebate because of the program that they've initiated, nothing could be further from the truth. When you start to add up all of the costs that are associated with this tax, it is going to be significantly – significantly – higher than the \$400 that their rebate provides at the full rebate. What that does is that it causes a significant amount of stress on families. It makes everything more expensive. We're going to see a significant increase in the cost of fuel, a significant increase in the cost of heating your home in the form of natural gas, and the big challenge here, Mr. Speaker, is how this tax will make everything more expensive.

**12:00**

I was speaking to the owner of a transportation company in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills just a number of weeks ago, and he fully intends to add into the cost of trucking a line item that says "carbon tax" because the costs are going to be passed along.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt; however, under Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:01 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 18, 2016

Day 30

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
Second Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
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van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
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Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 18, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my mother, Barb Phillips, and her partner, Mike McCague, seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They are visiting here from Lethbridge, and I ask all members of the Assembly to give them the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Olde Towne Beverly Historical Society in my riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. The Olde Towne Beverly Historical Society builds community spirit by collecting, sharing, and celebrating the stories of Beverly and its residents. The society preserves the community's historical documents, artifacts, and significant landmarks and also does an incredible job working with our schools to educate our young people on the history of Beverly. It's quite remarkable. Today we are joined by Dan Vriend, Alene Carter, Bill Pisarchuk, Bertha Pisarchuk, Harold Schlodder, Darlene Schlodder, Lee Speed, and Amanda Harriman-Gojtan. I'll ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Pembina Hills public school board's board of trustees. I would ask that they please rise as I call their names: Jennifer Tuininga, board chair and trustee for Barrhead north; Sheri Watson, vice-chair and trustee for the town of Swan Hills; Annette Bokenfohr, trustee for Westlock south; Jackie Comeau, trustee, Westlock north; Jan Hoffart, trustee, town of Westlock; Judy Lefebvre, trustee for the town of Barrhead; Kim Webster, trustee for Barrhead south; and Colleen Symyrozum-Watt, superintendent. I would ask them to please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Taylor Stiles, Ryan O'Neill, and Ruth Plitt. Taylor, Ryan, and Ruth are members of the organizing committee for the 2016 Alberta Summer Games, taking place in the wonderful constituency of Leduc-Beaumont this summer, which I'll be speaking more about a little later today in my member's statement. Their hard work is essential to ensuring not only that the games will be a success but that Leduc-Beaumont will be ready to shine on the

world stage as well. I would like them to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all of the members of the Assembly a group of people with a strong desire to step up and help their province by getting involved in the democratic process. All members know that we're able to stand in this place because of the incredible efforts of volunteers to organize and run constituency associations in all corners of the province. To that end, I would ask the following members of the Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville Wildrose Constituency Association to stand up and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Jerry and Melanie Semen, Ed Clarke, and Matt Kastendieck.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests, hon. members? The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you two members of our Health team who I convinced to sneak in and watch question period today, and those are Tracy Kully and Lisa-Marie Gaucher. Both have been fantastic additions to our office. They've worked in this building for many years serving many ministers, and I am very proud to have them on our team in Health. Thank you very much. Please rise, and we can give them a welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### Bonnyville-Cold Lake Response to Wildfire

**Mr. Cyr:** Excellent, Mr. Speaker. Today I couldn't be more proud of my home, the province of Alberta. I know that when the troubled times are behind us, Alberta will still be in Canada's future, and Fort McMurray will still be in an integral role. Fort McMurray is now heavy in our hearts, and we need to remember those evacuees who've lost their homes and livelihoods and who are in a state of confusion right now. Their grief can be felt across Alberta, and that includes my riding, Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

It fills my heart with pride to say that during the initial stages of the evacuations I immediately received calls from across the riding from people looking to help. Whether it was the reeve, mayors, councillors, residents, businesses, or local societies, everybody was ready and willing to help. Cold Lake and Bonnyville were named reception centres, and later Bonnyville was upgraded to an evacuation centre. It's the hard work and long hours that volunteers and workers across the constituency put in that I will always remember. Alberta Works, the local FCSS, food banks, city and town staff, and many, many more: these people are on the front lines, and we need to recognize that they have contributed significantly. Their contributions added to getting the evacuees food, water, shelter, information, and comfort.

This is also the time when we need to remember the local first responders, who ran towards the fire to lend a hand in saving one of our greatest cities in Alberta, Fort McMurray. These men and women took the ultimate risk to secure the safety of evacuees and

their homes. I would also like to take this time to extend my most sincere thanks to everyone who is still fighting the fires in northern Alberta. All of Alberta is truly with you. Although this fire continues to burn, it is no match for the strength of our people when we come together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

### Islamic Month of Sha'ban

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and recognize the month of Sha'ban according to the Islamic calendar. The word "Sha'ban" in Arabic is the combination of five words which translate as nobility, sublimity, piety, harmonious intimacy, and radiant light. Sha'ban precedes the month of Ramadan and is the eighth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is observed by Muslims as one of the blessed months, that hold mercy, compassion, and kindness of Allah.

This year May 8 was the first day of the month of Sha'ban. It is a month of celebration, catching up with friends, and practising compassion. The first celebrative occasion of this glorious month is on the third of Sha'ban, when the grandson and third descendant of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, Husayn ibn Ali, was born. To mark this special date, Muslims gather together in their homes and mosques to share food, recite poems, and share thoughts and wisdom.

Next comes the 14th night of Sha'ban, a very blessed night, Mr. Speaker. In Persian it is called Laylatul-Bara'ah, and in Urdu, my mother tongue, it is called Shab-e-Baraat, meaning the night of salvation. On this night Muslims seek protection from calamities, acceptance of their repentance, and pledge to abstain from committing sins. All night long we recite prayers, keep fasts, and visit cemeteries to pray for the deceased. It is also said that on this night the departed souls of ancestors visit the houses of their friends and relatives.

**1:40**

The final Sha'ban celebration takes place on the 15th night. Shias celebrate the birthday of Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Mahdi as he was born on the 15th of Sha'ban. The birth of Mehdi is a grand celebration in the form of alms and prayers for his return; thus, Sha'ban is also known as the month of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish all Muslims Sha'ban Mubarak. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I've been requested to seek unanimous consent to introduce some guests that have just arrived.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you some of the finest councillors from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo as well as our assistant from our office up in Fort McMurray. If you could all please stand as I call your names: first off, Councillor Tyran Ault, Councillor Phil Meagher, Councillor Jane Stroud, Councillor Julia Cardinal, Councillor Claris Voyageur, and, of course, our assistant, Vaughn Jessome. If you could give them the warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to introduce two outstanding Albertans, Mr. David Yurdiga, the MP for Fort McMurray-Cold Lake, and his executive assistant, Angela Betts. I ask them to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome from both sides of the House.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### Buller Mountain Summit Climb 2016

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the past it's been an honour to be involved with expeditions which have raised awareness of those struggling with respiratory diseases and diabetes as well as those who are disabled here at home and students throughout the developing world through our Top of the World Society for Children.

Today I have a formal invitation for all Albertans to be part of an exciting event for an incredible cause right here in the Canadian Rockies, along with Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Foundation and the Calgary Health Trust, who are Reaching the Summit for Mental Health and Wellness to heighten awareness and raise funds for veterans and their families who are suffering from the devastating consequences of depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and other forms of mental illness.

On June 25, 25 climbers, including members of the military, will seek the summit of Mount Buller, and 50 hikers will scramble to the pass to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Cecil Buller, who was killed in action leading the PPCLI. One group will be led by Laurie Skreslet, the first Canadian to climb Mount Everest, and it is my great honour to lead the other climbing team. To register or donate, please visit [calgaryhealthtrust.ca](http://calgaryhealthtrust.ca) and follow the links.

Mr. Speaker, alpine experiences may culminate in standing on top of the world, but they can also include risking your life to save another, treating horrendous injuries, getting there too late and carrying down the body of your mate, and dealing with the bottomless demands of a society that simply cannot relate to what you've gone through.

But that cannot compare, Mr. Speaker, with the experience of Corporal Ryan Forest, who writes:

When I returned [from Afghanistan], I came back a different man. I was withdrawn, paranoid, not sleeping, jumpy, depressed and the list [goes on]. It took a panic attack that seemed to last an entire night that led me to get help . . . [that] literally saved my life.

I encourage all Albertans to join us as we thank the men and women who literally put the lives . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

### Alberta Summer Games 2016

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a fantastic event soon to take place in my beautiful constituency of Leduc-Beaumont. For four days in July, from the 14th to the 17th, over 3,000 athletes, coaches, and officials from across Alberta will visit Leduc to compete, learn, and share experiences of a lifetime at the 2016 Alberta Summer Games. Young athletes representing 14

different sports will meet teammates and competitors from eight regional zones. Over 2,000 volunteers and 100-plus sponsors will pull together to make the 2016 Alberta Summer Games in Leduc the best-ever Alberta games.

Mr. Speaker, once upon a time I competed in discus and shot put in the BC Summer Games. It was an incredible experience that I still cherish to this day. I'm very much looking forward to these games as I know they will be a positive, life-changing event for many people.

I also have the pleasure of being the honorary board chair of the sustainability committee of these games. For these games in Leduc we are hoping to achieve 80 per cent waste diversion at the Leduc Recreation Centre, power the Leduc Recreation Centre with a hundred per cent clean energy, host a disposable water bottle free event – and I'll be donating water bottles to these games to help out – and educate thousands of visitors and residents about sustainability at the games.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, events like these don't happen overnight, so I would like to thank the volunteers and the board of directors, who have been working tirelessly to get us ready: John Bole, Dennis Nosyk, Darrell Huber, Fern Richardson, Darrell Melvie, Lynne Chalmers, Gary Kwasnecha, Megan Madden, Donna Tona, Doug Dungavell, Darren Demone, Bill Casey, Myron Keehn, Eugene Miller, and, of course, my guests that are here with me today.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage everyone to come visit Leduc, not only for the Summer Games but at any point and especially this July, and catch part of these best-ever games.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

#### St. Clement School Human Rights Event

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an exciting time for the students in the International Baccalaureate world school program at St. Clement school in my beautiful constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie. Later tonight students are hosting Inquiry into Human Rights on their school campus. This event will engage peers and parents to know more about social justice and human rights issues. This year's central idea is Choices and Decision, the two most important pillars that affect people's access to opportunities. The students will share their understanding of commonalities that connect humans around the world, people's perspectives on the rights and responsibilities of others, the way in which people respond to opportunities, and individual responsibilities to create peaceful action.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great joy that students and teachers at St. Clement school are undertaking this process and are encouraged to look deeper into human rights and how as individuals and through their community they may take action. It fills me with pride and honour to see these students working so hard to promote awareness of human rights issues. It is by building awareness of freedoms as well as political and social rights defined in the United Nations declaration of human rights that we all will build a stronger province for all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

#### Minimum Wage

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today this government announced that they are doing alleged consultations on their ill-advised minimum wage hike. They're a little slow on the uptake, but better late than never. Now, as to the announcement, there was

no mention of how anyone can join these consultations, where they would take place, or even when they will take place. Under this current government's watch the number and percentage of Albertans earning the minimum wage has increased. When I put that question to this government earlier this week, the Minister of Labour dismissed it, saying that it is the natural result of an increased minimum wage. Minister, please stop reading from your speaking notes and think about the issue.

Mr. Speaker, let me give you the CliffsNotes of the argument presented by the minister. The NDP first raised the minimum wage in order to supposedly help the single moms with three young children, which at \$10.20 per hour was about 600 people in the province of Alberta. Then after raising the minimum wage a dollar, they said that more people are on minimum wage; therefore, more people need the minimum wage increase. That makes about as much sense as the Abbott and Costello skit Who's On First. If you haven't seen it, I recommend that you watch it. You will notice an unsettling comparison to the way this government has been performing.

Mr. Speaker, what the government should have announced today was that they are sorry that they have caused such undue uncertainty in the job market and that they are now willing to pivot, as the economic development minister likes to say, to a plan that actually helps Albertans, not causes more harm.

1:50

#### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader.

#### Fort McMurray Recovery

**Mr. Cooper:** Everyone knows of the importance of the oil sands to Fort McMurray. It's the beating heart of our economy. There's no doubt that the \$1 billion in lost production is having a financial impact. Like any town, Fort McMurray relies on its small businesses and entrepreneurs: the bankers, the butchers, and the mechanics. They all need capital to survive. To date the province has not announced any strategy to support local Fort McMurray businesses. When can we expect this announcement?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Certainly, with this situation in Fort McMurray, everyone's hearts go out to the families and to the local business owners who are impacted. This is something that has been quite devastating. We're working collaboratively with the local businesses as well as with the municipality to make sure that we can return people safely and that they do get the supports they need. We'll have more to say in coming days about this specific matter.

**Mr. Cooper:** The fact is that the fire has kept businesses, both big and small, out of the city for over two weeks, with the timeline to return uncertain. The fire has removed any opportunity for income to be earned in the immediate or near future. The Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce is warning that by the time the rebuild begins, it may be too late for many businesses to survive. They have asked for access to emergency bridge financing and access to government-backed loans. Will the Premier say yes or no to this request?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much to the member for the question and, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address it. Of course, our

first priority must be ensuring the safety of all the people of Fort McMurray, and we will continue to ensure that this principle is first and foremost as we develop plans for re-entry. We are working with local businesses as well to ensure that they are there to support people when they do return home and that they themselves are supported. Right now our crews are hard at work assessing damage and repairing critical infrastructure, and that needs to be in place before people can return and before we can be able to move forward on additional remediation.

**Mr. Cooper:** After the Slave Lake fires one of the primary complaints from residents upon returning was not having an opportunity to be on their property and recover any personal items before any lots were bulldozed. For evacuees, families, and businesses looking to rebuild and restart their lives, there's nothing more important than proper closure and ensuring nothing more is lost. What guarantees can the government give evacuees that they will be able to be on their properties before the lots are torn down or cleaned up?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We did hear this as feedback from the remediation efforts that were done in Slave Lake, and we have made a commitment to ensure that when people do return, they have the ability to be there. They will be supported and escorted because, of course, these situations are not safe for people to be entering into unaccompanied, but we do understand that they want to be able to see their business, see their home, and if there is anything salvageable, have supports in making that possible, so we commit to that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

#### FireSmart Program

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Adopting practices under the FireSmart program was one of the key recommendations coming from the Slave Lake fire. These practices don't stop wildfires, but they go a long way to protect communities. If money isn't going out the door, the system is broken. But the forestry minister said yesterday that it's just a problem of encouragement and a lack of an education model. Millions of dollars available for grants sitting on the table shows a chronic problem throughout the system. Albertans want more than encouragement. They want this fixed. What will the minister do about it?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, we know it's important to move forward on FireSmart. Although this isn't a new program – it's been in place since 1997 – it has been ramped up in response to what happened five years ago in Slave Lake. While there are some applicants that didn't meet the criteria, we're certainly interested in working to make sure that people are applying for it, that the criteria are being met, and we'll be supporting communities in partnering with us to address as much in terms of prevention as possible.

**Mr. Yao:** Albertans want to make sure we're doing all we can to prevent and contain future fires. A new report today shows that since 2014 the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta, or FRIAA, the group that administers provincial grants for the FireSmart program, has left \$12.4 million unspent. These dollars need to be flowing to communities and our neighbourhoods. The

program is either not working or needs a complete overhaul. This NDP government inherited a heavy bureaucracy and an inefficient system from the previous government. Will this government consider changes to this program, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While grants for 2016 are still forthcoming, we will be working with communities to help them with making sure that they can do vegetation management and educational programming, and we've allocated more than a million dollars to the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta. Certainly, we want to make sure that people are accessing the funds that are available, and part of making that possible is ensuring that the public service, sometimes referred to as bureaucracy, can support applicants in doing that.

**Mr. Yao:** For firefighters, the National Fire Protection Association 1620 is a standard criteria to develop pre-incident plans and identify risks to help responders manage and alleviate these concerns. The support for fire departments in Alberta is the fire commissioner's office. When they have a bureaucratic grant program that leaves millions of dollars unspent, would the government consider replacing this broken FRIAA model by allowing the fire commissioner's office, the real fire experts, to manage this money?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, the Flat Top recommendations, including investment in FireSmart, are 20-year recommendations, and we will continue to invest in FireSmart to make communities safer. Right now, as I'm sure is everyone's priority, we need to make sure that we're addressing the wildfires that are burning today, and we'll continue to reflect on and consider ways that we can improve our programs moving forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

#### Medical Laboratory Services

**Mr. Barnes:** The Health minister's insistence on blindly pursuing an ideological agenda is putting lab services at risk. The need for action on the lab situation has been well known for years. We know we need a new, state-of-the-art lab in Edmonton, we know the current situation is untenable, and we know from AHS's own analysis that the most effective and efficient way to go forward is with a public-private partnership, with the risks and best path forward clearly identified. Why has the minister sent us back to the drawing board?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish I could say thank you for the question, but certainly it seems to be couched in a number of things that aren't true. What the Health Quality Council report indicated is that there wasn't consideration of all three models, including containing the current mix of public and private delivery, expanding private delivery, or expanding public delivery. There was a clear ideological drive that led to the outcome that was determined previously. The Health Quality Council has determined that the best way to move forward is collaboration with a working group, and that's what we're doing.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, that Health Quality Council report has been sitting in the minister's office for nearly half a year.



Furthermore, the report does nothing to justify why the chosen RFP model was worth throwing out. It's clear that the Health minister had her mind made up first, then went searching for evidence to fit her agenda. Despite the urgency and importance of the situation and her mind being made up for months, the minister still hasn't figured out costs, a budget, or even a plan. Is the minister delaying because she's backed herself into an impossible choice?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm incredibly proud of the thoughtful work that happened in the department, in the Health Quality Council, and that continues to happen as we move forward to ensure that everybody in Alberta – we're also looking at the Edmonton and north zones in particular – have the resources and the right lab services that they need moving forward. That's one of the reasons why, after being elected in May, I took the time to ask for the evidence to show that the model that was being proposed was exactly what was best needed for Albertans. When that evidence did not come forward, I put a halt to the project, and we asked that we reinvestigate this situation, how to best move forward. This is something that's going to be evidence based and that's going to be consistent for Alberta.

**Mr. Barnes:** The NDP insists on pursuing plans with no consideration to economic or practical realities as long as it fits their ideological agenda. Alberta Health Services documents even show it can't do the job, but this minister has also chosen to ignore health professionals, including the Edmonton Zone Medical Administrative Committee, who insist that there are significant gains to be had in access to capital, expertise, efficiency, and service by using a public-private model. Mr. Speaker, what does this minister have to say to Albertans, who just want health services done right?

**Ms Hoffman:** The first thing I need to say to Albertans is that when assertions are made by members opposite, be very careful about what they're asserting, and make sure you're actually looking at evidence. We are proud to be building a long-term public platform for lab services that will afford Albertans consistency and that it will be predictable moving forward. This is not to say that there won't be a role within the public platform for specific pieces to be delivered within the private sector. That's exactly why we struck a team of professionals to guide this work through firm footing and hard evidence. Be very cautious about what the members opposite are saying and whether or not you trust it.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

2:00

### Coal Strategy

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, we know that the Environment and Energy ministers don't agree when it comes to emissions on coal-fired electricity. Yesterday the Energy minister said, "We care not what the source is but what the emissions are." Meanwhile the environment minister is committed to proceeding and refuses to be influenced by even science-based facts. To the Premier: who's got the power? Your Energy minister, who will consider updated, innovated technology, or the environment minister, who refuses to acknowledge any new information?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As was said yesterday by the Premier and that I'll say again today, our cabinet is committed, and we are united. Our caucus is united on the climate leadership

plan as we move forward. While the member opposite might be trying to find divisions, we are clearly united. We've put it in writing, and we've sent it out to the public. We're proud, and we're moving forward.

**Mr. McIver:** Decision made. Sorry, Energy minister; you're on the outside.

It's clear that this government's plan to phase out coal has more to do with environmentalist dogma than it does with actual emissions. The environment minister often quotes a 2012 federal government report regarding health care costs associated with coal, but the minister fails to admit that the calculations are based on all forms of air pollution, not just coal. To the environment minister: do you think it's wise to take away thousands of Alberta jobs based on statistics that you have selectively manipulated?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what we think is wise is to move forward with a plan that will diversify our economy and create jobs, that will invest in our economy, and that will ensure that we have new markets for our product and that we will have cleaner air and water, that we are doing the right thing, and that we are not, as the previous government was, stuck in the past.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you. The environment minister continues to ignore evidence.

Mr. Speaker, let's try the Energy minister though she's on the outside. This government has chosen natural gas as the fuel for the future, claiming it burns cleaner than coal. It may be true today, but as we know, industry is making advancements all the time. In situ oil sands technology proves that it's possible that the coal industry could find ways to reduce emissions to those lower than natural gas. To the Energy minister: will you keep fighting to work with evidence so that the coal industry has a chance to incorporate their research into the government's future plans?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, the fact of the matter is that the province is going to be phasing out plants that would have gone past 2030. This is consistent with what is happening throughout North America and indeed throughout the industrialized world. We are ensuring that we are cleaning up our air. We are ensuring that we are open to new investment, which the previous government was not, with respect to renewables. We're ensuring that we're diversifying the economy and creating jobs.

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

### Opioid Use Prevention

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that illicit fentanyl is being used by Albertans of all different ages and from all walks of life. From our inner cities to our suburban communities it does not discriminate. In the first three months of 2016 there have been 69 deaths due to fentanyl overdose. To the Associate Minister of Health: what is being done to protect Albertans from the dangers of this highly toxic drug?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, the abuse of illicit fentanyl is putting Albertans in life-and-death situations, and because of that, we want to make it as easy as possible for at-risk Albertans to get access to take-home naloxone kits. As a result our government has tripled the province's supply of kits, from 3,000 to 9,000, and has made take-

home kits available without a prescription at over 650 pharmacies across Alberta. By working with our partners in the College of Pharmacists, we are able to add more pharmacies each week.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many users of drugs in Alberta may be afraid to discuss their use or identify as a user of illicit drugs and are therefore forgoing accessing those take-home naloxone kits, to the same minister: how is this government ensuring that family members and friends can actually protect their loved ones from the dangers of fentanyl?

**The Speaker:** The associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. We certainly understand that there can be a stigma behind drug use that can be a concern for users, which is a big part of why we worked so hard to get naloxone available without a prescription. And thanks to our co-operation with the College of Pharmacists we were able to make it so that not only at-risk individuals can access those take-home naloxone kits, but kits can also be picked up without prescription by Albertans who have a family member or a loved one who they are concerned about.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many at-risk Albertans are put in life-and-death situations due to opioid dependency and given that there has been a surge of fentanyl abuse since 2014, to the same minister: will the minister commit to a plan that assists at-risk individuals by providing funding to increase treatment spaces for Albertans seeking opioid addiction treatment?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, our government recognizes the need to increase treatment spaces for individuals struggling with addiction. We are opening nearly 50 detox beds for adults in Lethbridge, Red Deer, and Medicine Hat, and three new beds for youth in Calgary opened last month. More than 240 Albertans will have access to methadone and suboxone treatments over the coming year because of our government's \$3 million grant to AHS to expand access to these treatments. This will include a new suboxone clinic in Cardston to help address the high need in that area.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Oil and Gas Transportation

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The National Energy Board, an independent arm's-length body, has been reviewing the Trans Mountain expansion for nearly three years. Now, with the recommendations set to come out tomorrow, the federal government has added an extra layer of bureaucratic roadblocks. These seem to be following the motto of Why Use One Review When You Can Have Two or Three or More. To the minister: will the NDP government stand up for Albertan interests and vocally reject the federal government's unnecessary additional review when we need this pipeline built now?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. As I've said many times, we support the process of the

National Energy Board plus our province in making sure that we support the companies and making sure that communities are consulted with and that pipelines that are built are environmentally responsible as we get our product to market.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Well, forgive me if I have a hard time believing that the NDP government has suddenly changed the song card that they're singing from on pipelines. Given that saying something and doing so are two very different things and the NDP rhetoric of supporting pipelines is getting a little tiresome without any real action and given that the Energy minister voted in favour of the Wildrose motion urging the federal government to lift its B.C. north coast proposed tanker ban but seems embarrassed to acknowledge so, will the Energy minister do her job in support of the motion and commit to writing to the federal Transport minister, laying out plainly that Alberta opposes this proposed tanker ban?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Energy minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. We continue to do things in a new way because we know that the last way did not work. If you don't believe us, listen to what Murray Edwards and Brian Ferguson from the *Globe and Mail* said:

It's time for a new conversation about building pipelines in this country... about how Canada can get full value for its oil production while also addressing environmental concerns, including climate change. This dialogue needs to take place with the type of constructive, interest-based, problem-solving approach that Canadians expect.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. This conversation is only new to you. The insinuation by the Energy minister that Wildrose wants to see pipelines fail...

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, no preamble. Remember: we're past question 5.

**Mrs. Aheer:** ... is, frankly, ridiculous. Given that the Wildrose has been consistent in our support for pipeline projects, unlike the members across the aisle, who have transitioned from radical anti-oil activists to government, and given that the Energy East, Trans Mountain, and Northern Gateway are still on the table and all still need vocal support, not failed soft diplomacy of this government, will the Energy minister acknowledge that they need to change their tack, or is she just in over her head?

2:10

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. As I said yesterday, I find it odd that an opposition who claims they like pipelines and want to work with us spend hours trying to see us fail in order to address their political ambitions.

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

### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government made a good hire in selecting Terry Boston to guide them through what might become an ill-fated accelerated phase-out of coal. We know that he will be negotiating compensation for stranded electricity generation capital, likely to cost Albertans billions of dollars in freshly minted debt. However, the full scope of his work will not be

known until this cabinet receives a report later this year. To the Minister of Energy: will Mr. Boston be involved with the strategy or process around negotiating with municipalities and local businesses on their stranded physical and human capital?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. You know, first and foremost, we went and found the best in the business, Terry Boston, who has transitioned over 26,000 megawatts of coal-fired electricity in the United States. We have the best in the business. We have Alberta's back. We are also working with communities that are affected throughout the province. That is one of my priorities. We've told communities and workers and their families that we will engage with them and that we will work with them, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Minister, given that the communities of Hanna, Hinton, and Forestburg rely on coal mining as a major source of employment and given that the accelerated phase-out of coal jeopardizes the very sustainability of these communities, to the minister of economic development: can you outline for the House an economic transition plan for just one of these communities, perhaps by giving an example of how you might support the creation of even 100 jobs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take a moment to remind the House that federal regulations are causing 12 of our 18 coal-fired facilities to close early. Our government, through our climate leadership, is working with the six that our leadership plan will have phased out by 2030. We're doing this because it's the right thing to do. We know the negative effects that coal has on our health, especially on children and the vulnerable in our communities. I can assure the member that we are working with all of the communities, and we'll be going out and consulting with them to look at supports that we can lend to help workers transition.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like One Job might become a fitting middle name.

Given that the communities I mentioned will likely be driven into the ground by this government's policy decisions and given that the minister of tourism fired a council of experts because he feels he knows better, to the minister of tourism: is your new tourism initiative based on creating a new tourist attraction, the ghost towns of Alberta, by driving coal communities into extinction?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Culture and tourism in this province is one of the bright spots in the economy these days. This government is going to continue supporting the tourism industry. We're going to continue supporting attractions throughout the province, and we're going to be supporting education and health care in this province as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## Job Creation

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, 100,000 jobs have been lost in the energy sector since this government came to power. The NDP said that it plans on creating 100,000 jobs in this year's budget, but Albertans are wondering. Is the minister planning on recovering the 100,000 jobs that have already been lost under the weight of low oil prices and this government's risky policies, or is the minister planning on creating 100,000 new jobs – that means 200,000 jobs in total – using the divine powers he granted himself through Bill 1?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, point of order.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the Official Opposition for finally recognizing . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, is there a point of order?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, there is.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin from the top here. I'll begin by thanking the member for finally acknowledging that it is the international price of oil that is having a massive impact on Alberta families, on workers, on our budget. But, unlike the opposition, our government isn't about to make matters worse. Our Alberta jobs budget is investing in Albertans. We're investing in small and medium-sized businesses. We've made monies available. We have two tax credits, that we're rolling out, and a series of initiatives.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I have been trying to get answers for Albertans about when and where exactly these 100,000 jobs will be created. Given that the Labour minister told us to ask the Infrastructure minister, who told us to ask the Finance minister, who, like the trade minister, doesn't have any real answers for me, to the Premier. The buck stops with you. When and where will these 100,000 jobs be created? Albertans want to know the specific details.

**The Speaker:** The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to outline it yet again for the hon. member. First of all, we have the 100,000 jobs over three years. We're investing \$34 billion in infrastructure over five years. We have the \$500 million petrochemicals diversification program. We have \$10 million to restore the STEP program, that the former government cut. We have \$165 million in an investor tax credit and a capital investment tax credit. We have \$25 million in new funding for the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, that's going to be investing in Alberta-based companies. We have \$35 million to attract and support new businesses through regional economic development models and a series of . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I didn't get the answer, but here is a common-sense plan that doesn't cost any public dollars. There are three shovel-ready pipeline projects ready to go that would create tens of thousands of jobs for Albertans. The NDP has finally started to support the Wildrose position on pipelines in every direction, but talk is cheap, and actions speak louder than words. What has the

government specifically done to get the construction of these pipeline projects under way and get the people back to work?

**The Speaker:** The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the Official Opposition talks, our government is doing. I can tell you that through our robust climate leadership plan we have already been making headway as far as getting pipeline approvals. I will remind the House that the Premier and the Minister of Energy have been champions of getting pipelines both east and west. As opposed to jumping up and down and trying to play politics between the government of Alberta and the government of Canada, we choose to work collaboratively with them. I can tell you that we've already made more progress than the previous government did in 40 years in getting a pipeline to tidewater.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2013 Alberta Energy started . . .

**The Speaker:** My apologies, hon. member. I jumped ahead.  
The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### Minimum Wage

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the NDP government announced plans "to consult on the minimum wage." For businesses, youth, and families worried about what a 50 per cent increase to the minimum wage would mean for their jobs, these meetings will be nothing but come-and-be-told meetings. As stated by their own members: we will consult when, not if. In fact, the government's own studies show that this minimum wage hike could lead to, quote, a significant job loss. End quote. If the minister is serious about consulting, why won't she scrap this plan until a full economic impact study is completed?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has promised to make work more fair by improving the income of those who make a minimum wage. As part of that we are initiating the consultations with some of the key stakeholders, including the employers who employ low-income Albertans, including low-income Albertans themselves, from whom I really want to hear the impact that the increase to the minimum wage had on their lives, and social services agencies. We'll be sitting down to talk to them about the size and pace of the next increase so that we can move to the \$15 per hour minimum wage.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, you heard it. She said that she wanted to make sure she got to \$15. That's not consultation. Albertans just can't afford experiments that will put the health of our economy any more at risk.

Given that every chamber of commerce across the province has warned about the dangers of a minimum wage hike to jobs and given that every small-business group I have talked to has warned about the damage a 50 per cent hike in the minimum wage will have on jobs, what, pray tell, does the minister expect to hear from our job creator experts on her come-and-be-told tour?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have also been speaking with some of the chambers. We've heard some of those concerns. At this consultation we are also going to be hearing from low-income

Albertans – 300,000 Albertans who currently earn \$15 or less, 33,000 single parents who earn \$15 or less – and hearing about potential mitigation strategies as well as the best size and pace to implement our \$15 per hour minimum wage.

**Mr. Hunter:** Every time you raise the minimum wage, that number is going to go up. It's circular reasoning.

Given that the minister's claims aren't grounded in fact because the evidence shows that a minimum wage hurts the economy and kills jobs for those who need them the most and given that an analysis from CFIB shows that this wage increase will result in a minimum of 50,000 lost jobs and given that the *Journal of Labor Research* concluded that "job losses are disproportionately concentrated on the poor," why is the current government willfully ignoring the evidence in favour of ill-conceived campaign promises?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to talk about the facts and the evidence: 1 in 3 food bank users is someone who works for a living; 300,000 people make \$15 per hour or less; 33,000 of them are single parents, 100,000 are parents, and 60 per cent are women; 194,000 women make under \$15 per hour. These are facts and evidence from Statistics Canada, that I'm happy to talk about.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

### Value-added Energy Industries

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2013 Alberta Energy started developing a program that looked to increase and strengthen the value chain and production of methane and propane products in Alberta to continue diversifying our economy. This is known to all members in this House as the petrochemicals diversification program, and I'm appreciative that this government has continued the good work of the previous Progressive Conservative administration. To the Energy minister. In estimates we pointed out that the application date closed two months and four days after it opened in early February. Can you confirm why that application period was so short for such a vital program?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, that deadline was actually extended a couple of weeks due to some circumstances with some of the applicants. We did intend last week to do an announcement of the number of applicants and progress on that, but because of the Fort McMurray fires that has been delayed. There will be an announcement coming out shortly.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given that during Energy estimates the minister was unable to provide the committee with the names of any applicants because of legal commitments – and I appreciate that – can the minister instead provide the members of this House with the number of applications she's received and if she's deemed the application period long enough to see a wide range of business models? Can the minister also confirm that there's enough demand for these products to support healthy business models?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thanks for the question. As I mentioned, we will be having an announcement come out, I believe, sometime next week where we will have more details about all the things that the hon. member is asking right now.

**Mr. Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, given that the devastating fires are still burning in northern parts of our province, causing some uncertainty regarding the feedstock supply of our province's upgraders and refineries – Minister, I do recognize that some of our transportation

fuels are imported from other jurisdictions east and south of here – can you assure Albertans that our upgraders and refineries have sufficient supplies of incoming feedstock so Albertans will not begin to see a shortage of refined products such as diesel and gasoline in these coming weeks and months, especially in our agricultural communities?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for that very important question. Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that we are monitoring that issue daily, our Energy department, in conjunction with all the businesses. That is being monitored, and we will address things as they change.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

### Royalty Framework

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The massive drop in the global price of oil has not only been hard on Albertans, but it's been hard on our energy industry as a whole. Many of my constituents rely on the oil and gas sector for their livelihoods, and while they were happy with the royalty review, they want to ensure that the implementation of those changes works to the benefit of everyone in the industry. To the Minister of Energy: how will the government's new cost formulas promote investment and create jobs?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question and the opportunity to update where we're at. As I've said before, the former system was outdated due to technology and just different ways of doing things. It was out of date, it was a bit rigid, it was risky, it lacked incentives for diversification, and it also lacked transparency. The new one will provide some greater certainty, encourage all companies to keep their costs down, remain adaptable to the changing energy issues, support the environment, and provide greater returns to Albertans without increasing rates.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, given that our energy industry is one of the biggest parts of our economy and given that any changes need to ensure that our industry remains competitive, again to the same minister: what is industry's response to these changes?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for that question. Mr. Speaker, rather than taking the opposition's advice to do nothing and wait it out during the thing, we chose to do the royalty review and make it more competitive. Response from industry has been very positive. One response from Tim McMillan of CAPP:

I commend the Alberta government for its timely approach to create a more modern royalty system through a constructive process. This has led to a royalty system that is true to the principles of the royalty advisory report. The new royalty system helps provide . . . clarity that investors need to plan for the future.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Mr. Speaker, given that both industry and Albertans are now looking to the future and making plans for going forward, again to the Energy minister: what are the next steps in implementing our new royalty framework?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, there is still some important work to do in order to fulfill the recommendations. We're working through some details related to strategic programs that will help to ensure a tailored approach to some plays that are unique. The Department of Energy is also working on transparency measures so Albertans will see the performance measures and the overall measures of the royalty

system. Additionally, the department is working with industry on the technical and computer system changes needed to implement the new framework and continue the same . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Rural Ambulance Dispatch Service

**Mr. Nixon:** Borderless EMS dispatch in central Alberta is intended to allow EMS resources to help neighbouring communities when required, but when rural ambulances are used to transport patients between care facilities, which usually takes them far away from their base communities, borderless dispatch calls often keep them away for extended periods of time, depriving their own communities of their service. To the Health minister: what is this government's plan to protect rural communities and families from the risks that come with a lack of ambulance coverage?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Albertans have a right to expect that when they dial 911 to ask for emergency medical care, it will arrive promptly. We are very proud and grateful of the hard work and difficult work that emergency responders do on a daily basis. Paramedics, EMTs, and EMRs respond to nearly half a million calls every year across our province. The best way to organize first responders may vary from community to community, from rural areas to urban centres, and we recognize that.

2:30

**Mr. Nixon:** Given that in communities like Rimbey volunteer firefighters play an integral role in emergency response and given that a lack of ambulance coverage often means that local volunteer firefighters are the first to arrive at the emergency scene, does this government plan to empower volunteer firefighters, who are often off-duty paramedics and EMTs, to fully utilize their specialized skill sets to provide emergency and medical assistance when they are first on the scene to save rural Albertans' lives?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We absolutely want to ensure that Albertans are receiving the best medical care possible whenever they are calling for help and as required. We are continuing to work with our partners in the paramedic field and across health practitioners to ensure that Albertans have the care that they need at the right time and in the right place.

**Mr. Nixon:** Ambulance coverage is a matter of life and death in ridings like mine. Since interfacility transfers have become so problematic for rural communities that they are buying nonemergency vehicles for patient transport and given that AHS routinely refuses to allow communities to use these nonemergency vehicles, again to the minister: why won't this government accept local solutions to the lack of ambulance coverage and allow rural areas to utilize nonemergency vehicles for patient transport to save rural Albertans' lives?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We have regulations and legislation in place to ensure that Albertans are getting the highest quality care that they can and that ambulance services that arrive to greet a patient are conforming to

safety standards that are set out by regulation. The safety of patients is the most important piece for our government, and we will continue to work with our partners across the health care system to deliver safe and efficient health care.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

### Provincial Fiscal Deficit

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Minister of Finance has repeatedly blamed the price of oil for the massive deficit his government is running and will run in the coming years. He pines for the days of higher oil prices while he attempts to justify deficits of \$10 billion this year, \$10 billion next year, and \$8 billion the following year. To the hon. minister, I have a simple question. If oil was \$100 a barrel today, would we have a deficit, a balanced budget, or both?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'd probably have less of a deficit. We are doing our utmost to control the things we can, and those things are that we're turning the tap down on operational spending. Later today I will be presenting a bill that looks at doing that even more. The challenge in Alberta is that oil prices have fallen off the table and have left us with a huge hole in our revenues, and we can't change that. What we can change, we are.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the answer is no balanced budget.

Given that when our credit was downgraded, the minister chastised the international lender by stating that they didn't understand his plan and given that Moody's and IMF are predicting that oil prices will be about \$15 per barrel lower than his projection for the '18 and '19 fiscal years, again to the hon. minister: how high will the deficit be in the '18-19 fiscal year if oil is \$49 per barrel instead of the \$64 per barrel you're predicting?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, in the last fiscal year we achieved a better outcome than private estimates around the barrel of oil. We had \$50 in our estimates, and \$48.20 was achieved. That was four dollars better than private estimates, so we're on track. We've got a price shock insulator in this budget, so we're even going to be better on track.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government is still projecting an \$8 billion deficit in the '18-19 fiscal year and given that this occurs in a year where they predict bitumen royalties to be four and a half times higher than the bitumen royalty estimate for the '16-17 fiscal year, again to the minister: when you said you were getting us off the oil roller coaster, did you mean you were getting on the oil merry-go-round?

**Mr. Ceci:** It's somewhat droll, but it's funny, too.

You know, what we have in this province is no provincial sales tax. We have no health care premiums. We have a competitive personal income tax system. Many of those things are because we brought them in. Previous governments left us on that oil and gas roller coaster or merry-go-round or slide. Call it whatever you want. You did it; we didn't.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-East.

### Indigenous Education and Curriculum Content

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that it's critical that our government supports and builds greater understanding of our indigenous communities and their culture. Teachers and indigenous constituents that I speak to are eager to see new curriculum in this area. To the Minister of Education: what is being done to enhance our curriculum to reflect our indigenous heritage?

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the member that we need to strengthen our curriculum to reflect our indigenous heritage. To that end we are enhancing curriculum so that all kindergarten to grade 12 students and teachers learn about residential schools, treaties, as well as the history perspectives and contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in this province.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's excellent to hear.

Given that we know that our indigenous students generally have lower attendance rates and are less likely to graduate from high school, to the same minister: what is being done to close the education gap for our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Budget 2016, a difficult budget, we still managed to commit \$28 million to close the achievement gap between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and all other students and in addition to the existing \$48 million for FNMI grants. Also, we made an agreement in February with the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council, which means that 950 First Nations students will have improved access to programs, services, and learning opportunities to give them the skills and knowledge that they need.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my constituents want to ensure that our government is backing up its words with actions, again to the same minister: what resources have been dedicated within Alberta Education to support and promote the work that the minister is doing?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you to the member. In addition to the Alberta Education establishment of a First Nations, Métis, and Inuit dedicated division, we have also established crossministry committees with Advanced Education, Health, Human Services, Indigenous Relations to improve governance of the Northland school division and student achievements. As partners in First Nations education we continue to work collaboratively with the federal government to close the education achievement gap, and we're working very hard to do that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

### Marijuana Use and Traffic Safety

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The results of a survey about driving and marijuana released recently are deeply troubling. Despite the fact that marijuana slows reaction time, almost half of pot-smoking Canadians surveyed, who said they drive while high,

were convinced it didn't impair their driving abilities. Worse, 20 per cent said that there's nothing that would deter them from driving while high. The Trudeau government has indicated they intend to legalize marijuana in the spring of 2017. Can the Minister of Justice please reassure Albertans that she has a plan to keep Alberta's roads safe?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure the House and all Albertans that we're taking this seriously, and we're planning for this eventual development. Right now one of the difficulties is that there's not a good test, especially one that can be administered roadside or easily, to determine levels of impairment, so there's a lot of work to do in terms of determining what levels of impairment are serious.

Also, we need to change culture around the use of marijuana. There are many social norms about the use of alcohol, for example, that may or may not exist for the use of a recreational drug like marijuana.

2:40

**Mr. Cooper:** Given that many Albertans are concerned about traffic safety and worried about the impact of legalizing marijuana and given that all Albertans deserve to be able to drive on safe roads, regardless of what shape the federal government's law takes, can the minister please tell us if the kind of administrative penalties put in place to protect Albertans from drunk drivers will be in place to protect Albertans from high drivers?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we are very concerned about the impact on traffic safety of people using marijuana or other drugs. It can become a greater concern if the use of the drug increases, as expected, upon its legalization. I want the hon. member to be assured that we are taking this matter very seriously. We're going to continue to make sure that appropriate penalties are in place around this. That is part of the work that is ongoing.

**Mr. Cooper:** Given that not everyone exhibits typical physical signs of being high and given that it is also important to protect those that may be suspected of being high but who are in fact not under the influence of marijuana, can the minister please describe for us what training Alberta sheriffs or other police currently receive to detect high drivers and whether a roadside test will be available before marijuana is made legal?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government's first priority in terms of addressing this issue is ensuring that our children and that our roads remain safe. Currently it's the case that there are provisions under the Criminal Code that allow for specific tests and for the allowance of drug recognition experts amongst police, and we have several of those who are trained. The training is extensive, so I won't go into it right now. In addition, officials in my department have been looking at other jurisdictions where legalization has already occurred for lessons that we can learn from those jurisdictions, and our colleagues in the Ministry of Transportation have been working with some groups on tests for this.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, we'll give you 30 seconds, and then we will continue with the items.

## Introduction of Bills

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

### Bill 19

#### Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce Bill 19, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act.

The purpose of this legislation is to address consistency and fairness in executive compensation levels for the public agencies, boards, and commissions that are subject to the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act. This legislation also follows through on the government's commitment that we laid out in the Speech from the Throne.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I now move first reading of Bill 19, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act.

Thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a first time]

## Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table five copies of a document titled NDP Handling of Fire Wins Praise, Even from Danielle Smith. In it author Don Braid states: "Smith says today's fire communication is 'brilliant' by comparison" to the previous PC government. "She praises the detailed public briefings and releases, the extended telephone town halls with evacuated . . ."

**The Speaker:** I think you've had adequate time to outline the matter. I'm wondering if you could table it, please.

**Ms Babcock:** Absolutely.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a statement from Neil Shelly, the executive director of Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association. It's in response to Alberta Budget 2016, expressing their appreciation of our work in helping to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I think we have adequate information.

The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table this document and the requisite number of copies in support of private member's Bill 201, the Election Recall Act.

## Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Hoffman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, pursuant to the Public Health Act the Public Health Appeal Board 2015 annual report; pursuant to the Health Professions Act the

Alberta College of Medical Diagnostic and Therapeutic Technologists annual report 2015.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe we had a point of order earlier.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

### Point of Order Anticipation

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Government House Leader on a point of order under Standing Order 23(e), that a member is called to order if he or she “anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day.” I believe it was the Member for Calgary-Foothills that was asking a question directed at myself in relation to Bill 1. I’ll draw your attention to the Order Paper, where, clearly, we will be continuing debate on Bill 1 today, this afternoon, and we debated it this morning.

I just want to recognize, in case my colleague opposite decides to look in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, that on page 496 there was a ruling that members in the House of Commons would be ruled out of order if they anticipated Orders of the Day. I recognize that that has changed with our colleagues down in Ottawa. However, I will draw your attention again to the fact that in Alberta in our standing orders – and I’m citing the standing orders from January 1, 2016 – that has not been changed or amended. Therefore, a member asking questions about legislation or anticipating matters that are already on the Order Paper is, in fact, a point of order.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Opposition House Leader.

2:50

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise and speak to the point of order today. While the hon. member may have mentioned something that is to be debated, the question of the hon. member – and, unfortunately, I don’t have the benefit of the Blues – was not specifically about Bill 1. It was about jobs that have been or may have been or, more appropriately, may not have been created by this government. Clearly, this is not a point of order because the question was not specifically about Bill 1. If the question had been specifically about Bill 1 and a matter of debate around Bill 1, not around the jobs that Bill 1 isn’t going to create, I would suggest that it would be a point of order. Unfortunately, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader is mistaken in the direction of the question, so as a result of his error, this is a matter of debate.

**The Speaker:** Any other perspectives to be offered?

I believe that the statement that may have been referenced in the point of order is: “Is the minister planning on recovering the 100,000 jobs that have already been lost under the weight of low oil prices?” Hon. members, in this particular instance I see no point of order.

### Orders of the Day Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 11

#### Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill? The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have been looking forward to rising and speaking in support of Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. Simply put, Albertans deserve and have been asking for an innovation system that builds on a well-educated workforce that creates a more diversified economy and that delivers value for money. This act proposes a new model that consolidates four agencies into one Alberta Innovates board, and it will provide the focus and leadership required to drive success.

Research and innovation is something very dear to me. To give you some context, when my older brother and I were a mere three to four years old, which, I’ll admit, wasn’t too long ago, my grandmother was babysitting us, and after having observed both of us one evening, she turned to my mother and said: you know, one of them is going to become a scientist and the other the next president of Colombia. Well, she wasn’t too far off. While I’m no president, I am humbled to be the MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and my brother is most definitely a scientist. Specifically, he’s a nanophysicist engineer. Until very recently he conducted and published his theoretical research right here in Alberta.

An interesting fact, Madam Chair, is that my brother’s colleagues were also raised in Strathcona county, and knowing the demographics of my constituents, I can confidently say that I’m not the only one that grew up alongside academics.

What we are doing here today is very relevant to a lot of my constituents, Madam Chair, because it talks to both the researchers and the innovators. My brother and a few of his colleagues had to look internationally when their studies moved from theoretical to experimental, which brings us to the importance of the investments that we’re making, that help diversify by building the supports that a knowledge-based economy requires and enhance Alberta’s reputation as a world-class research and innovation jurisdiction.

This bill coincided with his short return home from his studies in the States, where he is working on increasing the efficiencies of solar cells. What he told me, Madam Chair, was that it would be ideal from his researcher’s perspective if Alberta could learn from the systems that have been in place in Europe. I was able to explain that the evolution of the Alberta Innovates corporation is based on the best practices of other jurisdictions, including Innovate U.K., Germany, and Ontario, and has drawn on these to develop a made-in-Alberta solution to address the challenges of the 21st century.

As part of this transition a performance measure framework will be developed that gauges the progress toward achievement of the corporation’s mandates and outcomes and reports on the corporation’s progresses and finances in a consistent manner year after year. You see, Albertans elected a government committed to accountability and transparency. From my understanding, Madam Chair, the government is inviting the Auditor General to assess the intended outcomes of the performance measure framework and to examine whether the necessary processes are in place to achieve the desired results. A more effective and efficient system will spur innovation and allow for development of new companies and industries. Co-ordinating and leveraging the research and innovation system will help drive research, its application, and increase



business start-ups and its commercialization of Alberta ideas by providing access to services.

I've spoken in this House before about the many examples of innovative technologies that are being developed in my constituency, from portable water treatment systems to Nutraponics. Many of my constituents are innovators and entrepreneurs and have reached out to me to ask how our government is looking to support diversification in our economy. By increasing the pace of technological innovation, we can add value to our resources, improve patient care, advance energy efficiency, and reduce carbon emissions.

As has been mentioned, Alberta is a leader in health research, and our government understands that support for strong health research and innovation means better health and well-being for Albertans and a more diversified economy. That's why we continue to lead the country in our per capita funding for research and innovation. If we choose the opposition's path during these difficult times, we would be slashing funding for research and postsecondary education, but Albertans deserve a research and innovation system that is nimble and helps provide a more diversified economy and ensures that every dollar of research is spent wisely.

There is strong support for our plan to consolidate the four agencies into Alberta Innovates. I am proud to be a cosponsor to this bill, and I look forward to continued debate.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Any additional members wishing to speak? The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. It is very encouraging to see the NDP make a move to save money in an area where there is some fat to trim. Mind you, it is only about \$2 million, but I assume some high-paid positions are being retired here instead of front-line research and development that is to be done. One of those high-paid positions was making \$670,000, more than triple the Premier's salary. We also know that there was mention of some disciplinary action taking place in the corporation, but the minister would not necessarily go into any specifics there.

The budget estimates show that the Alberta Innovates corporation will see a reduction of over \$45 million from 2014 to this year. The changes Bill 11 will usher in will provide a leaner system, fewer executives, international governance practice, and the flexibility to direct funds for research and development.

I find it interesting that the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park's brother was working with solar cells in nanophysics. My son was also working on that at the U of A in the last few years. It's important that we see this research and development continue on.

The board will also now be included in the sunshine list, which I believe is a positive move.

The work of the Alberta Innovates corporation is of great value to all Albertans. Discoveries here will be used to develop the jobs of the future. The streamlined approach will eliminate duplication of efforts and be able to link industry to research and development early on. I know that stakeholders were asking for this, and I look forward to that improvement.

I look forward to reading the annual reports to see the new products and innovations created and brought to market by the Alberta Innovates corporation. It will be through commercialization of this technology that we recover the investment and reinvest to create even more jobs.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

3:00

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to recommend an amendment to Bill 11, that I spoke about in second. I have copies of the amendment and will circulate them and speak to it as you wish.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member. If we can just get a copy to the table, and then you can go ahead. The amendment will be referred to as A1.

Please go ahead.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you. This amendment states that Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 6, in the proposed section 6.1(1), by striking out clause (b).

This, I believe, will recognize the critical contribution of medical health research in this province for the last 20 years and the way that that recognized entity under the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research and then Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions has brought internationally renowned researchers and huge investment to Alberta and a recognition that we have a separate identity in research within the medical and health area that has brought more innovation dollars than any other and needs to be protected. If it's hidden under a single entity called Alberta Innovates, there's a real danger that there will be a loss not only of recognition of this as a research centre but, indeed, a loss in terms of the connection between health research and the health system.

Currently under Alberta Health, Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions is carrying out relevant research to the health system, improving efficiencies, improving connections, and making sure that the research that's being done can be translated into concrete improvements in our health care system, can translate into improved management processes various aspects of health research that have really not only improved health in Alberta but have improved health delivery in Alberta, have not only saved lives in terms of new technologies and new drugs and new opportunities for Alberta and the world but also contributed to market and business opportunities around the world. So it has been a generator of tremendous growth, new medical breakthroughs, and businesses in Alberta, to put it in a nutshell.

There is real concern in the research community that since it was removed and put under the Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions, it lost some degree of integrity, some degree of credibility. Certainly, if this continues a trend toward uncertainty about our commitment to health research and medical research, this sends an unfortunate message across the world, if it's hidden under a general rubric of Alberta Innovates and doesn't have its own clear identity.

I would argue that if we're going to continue to be a source of attracting the best medical and health researchers on the planet, if we're going to continue to have the kind of reputation and investment opportunities from outside of the province, which we've enjoyed for many years – and it's my understanding that it's about a 2 to 1 investment. Alberta invests a dollar and other provinces and other funding bodies invest \$2 in Alberta medical research because of the very reputation and quality and outputs that we've had here over the last 25 years.

I heard from both deans Fedorak and Meddings – that is, the deans of the universities of Alberta and Calgary – about the tremendous concern that this second level of change is having on the medical community. They are already concerned in these medical centres that top-notch students are not coming here, that dollars have started to go elsewhere in terms of investments in new

research, and that teaching programs are losing momentum in some areas. So I think we have to think very carefully about whether health and medical research should continue to have some autonomy outside of the Alberta Innovates organization.

I would argue that that's very much the case. The new strategic clinical networks, for example, in the health system that have identified maternity care have a separate research arm that's looking at child and maternal care and how that could be improved; the areas of prevention and public health as a separate entity and the research needed in that to try and improve prevention programs, health promotion programs in the community. It's by no means certain that a single research body would be able to identify the priorities and allocate the funds in a way that would maintain the kind of momentum and credibility and international visibility that the name Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions could or some other name, whatever it be.

I'm arguing that we need to pluck out from this bill Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions and find a place for it, I would argue, under Health but anywhere, including as a subset of Alberta Innovates. But it needs to have its own name. If the international community sees that Alberta no longer has a health and a medical research name and that all their resources are going into something called Alberta Innovates, there will be a tremendous loss of momentum in terms of our health and medical research.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I do want to begin by thanking the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View for this amendment. I recognize that we've spoken a couple of times about the intention and spirit of this amendment. I want to assure the hon. member and all members of the House and all Albertans that, one, our health system is second to none and that, two, research and innovation regarding health is absolutely a priority of the Premier, of myself, and of this government and will be a top priority even within the new Alberta Innovates corporation.

You know, Madam Chair, we recognize that Albertans deserve a research and innovation system that is nimble, that helps build a more diversified economy, and ensures that every research dollar is wisely invested. There is strong support for our plan to consolidate the four agencies into Alberta Innovates. The member's amendment, unfortunately, would erode the intent of our plan and this bill. Now, I know the member opposite cares deeply about medical research, so his intent is honourable, and it's why I can tell the House that I considered it very carefully. But I'm worried that the intent that he has will have unintended consequences.

First, Madam Chair, this bill does nothing to change the mandate of the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research endowment fund. There still will be strong support for medical research in this province, and support provided by Albertans will continue to be the envy of every other jurisdiction in this country. It is already firmly established in section 11 of the Alberta Research and Innovation Act. The Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research endowment fund was established to support a balanced approach for health research and innovation and will continue to support health research and innovation, including "the discovery of new knowledge and the application of that knowledge to improve health and the quality of health services in Alberta." I would make a note that part of that wording actually comes directly from section 11 of the Alberta Research and Innovation Act.

3:10

However, the amount devoted to medical research, quite frankly, should not be decided by members of this House. It should be merit based, and it should be directed by experts for the benefit of Albertans. We've recently heard some exciting ideas promoted about health research, including in the state of the city address when the mayor of Edmonton, Mayor Iveson, spoke about his intention regarding health research and innovation within the province and the importance it has for the mayor and for the city of Edmonton.

I believe the best days for medical research in this province are still yet to come, but we want to give the experts the tools they need to get the job done in health research and in every other research discipline, which is exactly what this bill does. Therefore, again I want to thank the member for his amendment, but for those reasons I've just outlined, I will not be supporting the amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, are you speaking to the amendment?

**Mr. Clark:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I won't repeat the examples that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View used, but I did want to rise in support of the amendment because I have heard very similar concerns as those raised by my hon. colleague here.

You know, I think that while I support the idea of streamlining the administrative side – and perhaps there's even some opportunity within Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions to move to more of a shared services model – continuing to keep Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions carved out is one of the true strategic advantages that our province has. There's a great deal of concern within the research community about a lack of continuity, of continued change, and I think there's some change fatigue within that community as well. Perhaps one of the reasons the government may not have heard a tremendous amount of push-back is because of that change fatigue and, perhaps, a fear that this is not a time to be rocking the boat.

One of the great advantages that Alberta has in the endowment that is the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research and just the heritage fund itself is that annuity type of funding. It's not subject to the whims of a given government in a given budget cycle, related to the price of oil or anything else, and that's a tremendous advantage we have in this province. It allows us to invest in medical research and in other areas but especially in medical research, which can be very long term to get to success. If there's anything that's going to hinder that goal in terms of attracting top-notch, truly world-class researchers to our province, then I have a concern, and I worry that by consolidating all of this into one, that's precisely what's going to happen.

You know, there's already worry that we're starting to lose some of these researchers or perhaps not bringing them to Alberta in the first place, and that's a real concern. That's something, I think, that although this bill may appear just like an administrative efficiency move – we're saving, as I understand it, about \$2 million a year in administrative savings. That's not trivial and not to be sneezed at, but at what cost? At what cost are we going to save that money?

I think that sometimes when we're looking at these things, we have to be careful about unintended consequences and we have to be worried about the global reputation of our province. I think those who don't have a fully formed idea of Alberta will look at the price of oil and say: gosh; things in Alberta must be really terrible. And now that they've had to consolidate these four into one, there's a risk that the global community will say: gosh; I'm not sure Alberta is somewhere I want to be. I think the signal we should be sending

is that this is a time for us to have stability, to double down on the investment in especially health research but all forms of research, and I worry that this particular move works against that objective, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

The leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Imagine my surprise, not expecting when I woke up this morning that I'd be standing here on my feet, standing behind and supporting the amendment from the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. But you know what? When the hon. member's right, the hon. member's right, and this is one of those cases.

I would ask the government side to consider how much money they are saving with their Bill 11. Consolidating administration, being more efficient, delivering services in a more organized, concise way are all laudable goals, so I have no criticism. Whether I support the larger bill or not, even if I think it's a bad idea, I'm not going to criticize it because any time this government tries to get more efficient, that's a good thing.

However, the hon. member, with this amendment, makes a very good point. If you're talking about advancements and innovation in the field of health and biotechnology, that, members, in my view, is one of those places where Alberta can expand and diversify its economy. That, hon. members, is a place where we can actually do research.

There have been great examples. I know that at the University of Alberta what they call the Edmonton protocol for I think it's diabetes treatment is something that is world renowned. Some of my colleagues and I were able to recently have a look at the Li Ka Shing centre at the University of Alberta, where they have new cancer research innovation. It's on the seventh floor for those that want to see it. It is amazing. We talked to a number of researchers there that said: if this investment was not here, we would not be in Alberta doing cancer research. That's what they said, and I believe them.

What we know is that when you get the right researchers in the right fields, a single person – here's one for the minister of jobs – can create an industry. The right researcher, Minister, can create a whole industry. If there's anything in Bill 11 that by taking away this reference to this particular title will stop Alberta from being able to attract those top researchers and developing those jobs with them if we do it right – again, I hope that same minister is thinking about exploiting those inventions, exploiting those discoveries, exploiting those new technologies here in Alberta. Now you're talking about the opportunity to employ potentially thousands of people, for many millions of dollars in financial activity, and to enhance Alberta's reputation in other fields, too, as a place where innovation can happen. I think on all sides of the House the one thing that we agree on is that innovation is the road to the future.

I'm going to support this amendment. I think it's a good one. I hope that the government, when they're thinking about not only this amendment but the rest of Bill 11, thinks about – again, I say this advisedly. It's why I'm trying to be gentle with the government. Any attempt to actually reduce expenses and consolidate things and bring them together is, generally speaking, a good idea, but the potential is there to cut off the very innovation that could well become key to the successful future of this province. If it's in any way threatened, then I think all of us should think again.

My compliments to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I think that his head is on straight on this. I think that his explanation for it was excellent. I think that his reasoning is laudable, and I compliment the hon. member for really bringing something

forward to this House that could well benefit Alberta not only now but far into the future.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on amendment A1? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'll rise just to address a couple of points that the last two members raised. Again, first and foremost, research and development or research and innovation within our health system is a priority of our government. It has been and will continue to be.

Part of the challenge that I've found with keeping the Health Solutions innovation corporation is that, number one, it's not best practice when we look at jurisdictions within Canada and internationally. Best practice is having one entity that is able to not only process applications but to look at ensuring that the Alberta Innovates corporation is moving consistently in the same direction. Health is extremely important to us, but there are members from Energy and Environment Solutions, from AITF, from Bio Solutions that would argue: well, then why don't you keep us carved out, and why don't we actually create even more Innovates corporations to cover off every single sector in the province? That, unfortunately, defeats the purpose of consolidating the Alberta Innovates corporation.

3:20

One of the reasons why there was a little confusion is that we had three different Alberta Innovates corporations – Health Solutions, Bio Solutions, and EES – and then we had AITF, Technology Futures, which really focused on the commercialization of technology. Well, if you were, let's say, a person within the health space who created a great new widget, you had to then work with AIHS for the actual technology, but on the commercialization side you had to liaise with AITF. That's who is doling out the grants as far as helping to commercialize the widget.

Feedback that we received is that there was some confusion. The process was complicated. We feel that within one Innovates corporation we can continue to protect and invest in research, especially in research around the health sector, while at the same time ensuring that we are supporting the commercialization of those ideas and helping support innovation throughout the province and, quite frankly, across all sectors.

I do want to make note of the fact that Alberta invests more dollars than every other province and territory in the country when it comes to Innovates. That hasn't changed. I can tell you that innovation will continue to remain a priority for our government. The one point that I agree with from the Member for Calgary-Hays is that innovation is a cornerstone of diversification. I agree with that a hundred per cent. I can assure members of this House that we will continue to attract and retain some of the best and brightest minds, whether it's in health or in other sectors. Having one innovation corporation does not limit us or will not lead to a brain drain because we have one Innovates corporation.

We've been very clear in our communications. Our interim CEO, in fact, is the CEO from the Health Solutions, a woman named Pam Valentine. We have a number of board members – and I'll encourage all members of the House to look at their biographies – a very strong new board, with some consistency, a couple of members from previous boards so that we have that knowledge continuity. But at the same time we also have a number of board members who come from and have a health background. I can assure members of this House and all Albertans that that still remains a priority.

Alberta is a leader when it comes to health research and innovation, and I am certain that we will continue to remain a leader moving forward. The consolidation of these four entities into one will actually lead to a more simplified system, a more integrated system, and one where we will continue to be a leader in the country and around the world.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I appreciate the minister's considerations. I do have to say two things about it. Number one, there's a global perception that when you eliminate a body called AHFMR, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, you have changed the agenda and you have lost a commitment to health and medical research. The second is that Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions was closely connected to Alberta Health, the ministry. If we lose that, then we lose a sense of connection between what is happening on the ground and what the research agenda should be.

Those are two critical pieces. Number one, in terms of national or international terms, if you've reduced your commitment to medical and health research by dropping the name, you've lost significant connection. Secondly, if you lose connection to the very health system that should be a guide for what's relevant and what's important both in terms of commercialization and in terms of new health innovation, you've lost something.

I'm deeply concerned, as many in the research area are. This may be a simpler way of managing. It may save money, and I don't think there's any problem with saving money, but we need a designated body called health or medical research or we're going to lose very substantially in international competition for research dollars in health and medical research.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question on amendment A1.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We will now return to the original bill, Bill 11. Any members wishing to speak to the original bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to rise to speak to Bill 11, Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. I'm sad to see that this amendment was defeated, but I think the intent – we have to give, again, credit where credit is due. To save dollars with respect to the administration of possible innovation opportunities is always important to us.

I think the ecosystem of innovation is what really is at stake here, and what we have to hope is that it's something that we'll move forward on. We have the likes of TEC Edmonton, Innovate Calgary, Calgary Economic Development, and Edmonton Economic Development, who are hard workers in this ecosystem of innovation. Obviously, Alberta Innovates, in its previous form, has done so as well and been leaders in that. It's been an opportunity, I think, for many organizations to get involved, and I think we have to move forward.

As mentioned by the Member for Calgary-Hays, we had an opportunity to stop in to the University of Alberta. Our universities and postsecondary institutions are very key to innovation within our province, and I'm hoping that the new organization will work very

hard with the savings that they make to partner with these postsecondary institutions.

Another key, I think, to innovation is celebrating our successes in innovation and making sure that we take those people who work hard and have success in innovating and lift them up so that there's an opportunity for people to see what success looks like within the sector. We see that from the likes of Campus Alberta, from the Alberta distinguished innovators awards, from distinguished business awards, from some of our publications like *Alberta Venture* or *Business in Calgary*, and also from the Manning innovation awards, all celebrating innovators across our province. I think we need to do more of that in this province to encourage it.

You know, I see that we tend to focus on innovation in the technology sector, energy sector, agriculture, forestry, tourism, housing, biomedical areas as well, but I think we also have to think of innovation in different terms, in social services and indeed in government. I think it's something that we've asked for in our Engage initiative and Engage document, which is to look for innovation in government to provide savings and value for taxpayers. It's something that we've hinted at and will move further in describing with our \$4 billion challenge to the government of Alberta in the future, which is to find innovation, again, not where we traditionally try to find it, which is where we see it in Alberta Innovates, but in all sectors. Housing, certainly, is one industry that I've been deeply involved with, and we've seen great innovation from the nonprofit sector and the private sector in terms of looking at innovations not only in mainstream and affordable housing but in seniors' housing, and I think that we need to continue with that innovation.

I'd just like to speak out in support of this bill. Again, I think the intent is strong. Again, \$2 million in savings is noteworthy. I hope that we not only save \$2 million but that we enhance the value received by millions and maybe even hundreds of millions of dollars in the future, that we continue to invest.

I think it was pointed out by the Member for Calgary-Hays that the facility that we were able to visit was – you know, many people say: whatever happened to the Alberta heritage savings trust fund? Well, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research has invested over \$850 million since the formation of that organization by the previous government in 1980. Currently there are over 230 senior researchers that are supported by that medical research foundation.

Indeed, the facility that we visited just yesterday not only is, I think, a beacon of hope in terms of innovation, but the Alberta Cell Therapy Manufacturing centre, which is part of the Diabetes Institute, as mentioned, is working on cancer cell therapy. They talked to us about surgery. They talked to us about chemotherapy. They talked to us about radiation therapy. What is the real innovation that is being done right here in Alberta through investments and the passion of many people and the support they get from our innovation ecosystem is actually cancer cell therapy, and there's some incredible work being done there that we need to be proud of in this province.

3:30

It allows us to retain talent that otherwise would go elsewhere, not necessarily even in Canada but around the world, and we would lose that innovation. We saw some young researchers there that said they had been supported through their education to do that. There was also in their model a chance for third-party revenue. I think we need to make sure that we don't lose sight of the fact that when we innovate, there is also an opportunity to commercialize some of that capacity that we develop.

Again, I wanted to speak in favour of this bill. As we often say, the devil is in the details. I think that we are going to support this. I'm personally going to support this and going to hope that the commitment from the ministry is there to ensure that it doesn't narrow the opportunities, that it in fact creates a one-stop shop for innovators in this province to move forward, that we will see that innovation internally in the management of that organization, that we will see the retention of the people who have the best experience and the best knowledge of how to make it work better for us here in Alberta, that we do get that return on investment even with the savings there.

I'm proud to stand up and support this and to give this government kudos for an opportunity like this. It's a rare opportunity, but I'm glad to take this one to do it

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. In 2010 the Alberta Research and Innovation Act created the four corporations – Bio Solutions, Energy and Environment Solutions, Health Solutions, and Technology Futures – and each of these had a focus in the economy and built the relationships with local communities to be able to research and integrate and support emerging technologies that would be coming into the Alberta economy.

Through Bill 11 we see that these four corporations are going to be merged. They are going to be integrated into one that we're going to be calling Alberta Innovates. Alberta Innovates will be a new, wholly-owned subsidiary corporation which will fund and drive the innovations and which will be responsible for delivering on research and innovation priorities for the province. My understanding is that it will focus on the agriculture, energy, environment, forestry, and health sectors. Alberta Innovates is intended to be a catalyst for change for the benefit of the full economic base of the province.

On a personal note, I just returned from Europe, and I saw in the Netherlands something related to this, where they've created and funded a place called Brainport, designed to do exactly this, to go into the research and development of new technologies. It was exciting to see how they have been working in the research and development of things like biomass digesters and looking at new technologies with regard to hydroponic greenhouses and using different wavelengths of light to increase production within those greenhouses.

It's an interesting idea, that we can use a corporation to try and advance the technologies within our province. I think that we've seen it done successfully elsewhere in the world, and there's no reason why we can't do it here in Alberta.

As I understand it, this change is being brought about partly because the stakeholders within Alberta and within this system have actually asked for feedback, and we've asked for feedback, and they've identified that the previous model of four separate streams of research was becoming unmanageable and inefficient and that streamlining the research and the innovation system would make it easier for researchers and for companies and small businesses to access and to navigate the opportunities for supports available to them through the various programs in Alberta Innovates. That's a laudable goal.

Again, having come back from Europe, I saw how they've done that successfully in the Netherlands and how they have moved

forward in some of these technologies and have provided world-leading research and development. We need to continue to make sure that as a province Alberta has the right tools and the right systems to be able to push forward this kind of research. If this amendment actually works, if it does what it's intended to do – I believe the government is sincerely trying to provide a solid benefit for Albertans, trying to navigate through the programs and the services that would allow for this kind of research to develop.

Now, Alberta Innovates and the ministry will have to be vigilant. They're going to have to ensure that this transition does not lead to a reduction in its reputation for research and innovation. I believe our hon. colleagues this afternoon have brought this to our attention in the area of medicine and that it is a concern. We are going to have to ensure that we continue the good work that has been done and actually improve on it. So we have to ask some questions like: who's going to decide on the research and the funding priorities under this new system? What happens as the innovations are introduced? Will one corporation have the capacity to adapt and to adjust to the emerging technologies in a timely and effective way, or will we see a deterioration, as is feared, that may reduce the capacity of the organization to move and adapt and to quickly see any change in circumstances or see a reduction in the focus in a particular field like medicine?

We read from the current fiscal plan that the government will save somewhere around \$45 million by realigning their priorities at the Alberta Innovates corporation, and that's a good thing in light of all the things that we've got to do. You know, we've got to make sure that these savings are truly put together.

Now, for all of that, the money that we're going to be saving is supposed to support start-up tech companies in an effort to diversify the Alberta economy. We just hope that as we do that, we don't see some of the concerns that have been brought up, where sometimes the monies from this corporation go towards increasing the compensation to the executives that sit on the corporation. We know that the CEOs of Alberta Innovates, the four branches, recently received significant increases in their salaries. We're a little bit concerned about that, but as we go through that, we also know that these compensation packages should be a part of the sunshine list, so we believe that that should be able to take care of some of the problem.

I guess one of the big issues that we do have is under section 7, where it does say:

by striking out "up to 4 research and innovation corporations" and substituting "one or more research and innovation corporations, in addition to the corporation established under section 6.1(3)."

In other words, it leaves some wiggle room here. If the idea is to streamline and to bring down some of the costs and make it a little easier to navigate, we're worried that "one or more" will allow for this corporation to continue to divide and to add as it goes through. We are going to look forward to listening to the government and to seeing how they're going to address this particular issue, Madam Chair, that we want to see put before the House. I mean, if the purpose is to reduce and to streamline and to become more efficient, we wouldn't want to have this continue to expand. We want to ensure that this is going to be a corporation that is able to innovate and not just place money into a larger and larger bureaucracy.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to spend a couple of brief moments. My hon. colleague has made a lot of very

reasonable comments about some of the strengths of the bill, and I just wanted to make sure that we had highlighted one of his concerns because it's a concern shared by a number of my colleagues on this side of the Chamber.

3:40

He mentioned section 7(a): "in subsection (1) by striking out 'up to 4 research and innovation corporations' and substituting 'one or more'." It's really the "or more" that is a concern. This "or more" allows, potentially, the new organization to create the exact challenge that we're in today, where there are four separate, and the creep that can sometimes happen in government organizations and government generally. I know that some of my colleagues here had spoken about the possibility of doing an amendment around limiting the "or more." So I'd be curious and we'd be curious to hear if the government has any comments around this particular section in the legislation as it is certainly one of our large concerns when it comes to going forward on this bill.

There are many, many good things here in this piece of legislation, but certainly a significant concern for this side of the House is around times where government bodies give themselves sweeping powers to expand without the accountability to the Assembly. So I hope that the hon. minister will be able to provide some clarification there.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The deputy House leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the last two speakers and some of the comments they made, which I'd like to address. First of all, this consolidation of Alberta Innovates will result in only a \$2 million yearly savings. The reason that the number is not significantly higher is because the intention is to bring them into one innovation corporation, not to cut and gut a whole bunch of the arms of the existing bodies. Again, it's meant as a way to provide efficiencies, but at the same time we still want to be having our program supports for the different areas, and now this one entity also is not restricted to what the three previously were.

Again, if we're looking at exploring – the member cited looking on his recent mission at some other systems like the Netherlands', some of the things that they're investing in in their innovation system — our new Alberta Innovates will have that ability to continue the great research that is ongoing and support of commercialization in our existing sectors but will also be able to explore new sectors.

I just want to clarify again that the savings is only \$2 million, and the Alberta Innovates board are all volunteers. They are not paid a salary. They do receive the traditional government honorarium for the days they meet, but the board themselves are volunteers. One of the things that the new board will be doing is working with our interim CEO, and their first task will be to find a permanent CEO.

I think there were members that spoke earlier about: why a board first and not a permanent CEO first? It's because the board of directors are the ones who hire the CEO and make that decision and are the ones that supervise the CEO. If we hire the CEO, we're going in reverse. So the board will determine which CEO. We've engaged with a professional agency to do an executive search. This is not something the government of Alberta is doing, and I can assure all members of the House that we are casting our net not just nationally but internationally as well, looking for the best person for the job.

The other point. To the deputy House leader: I appreciate his comments. When we're looking at section 7(a) – and I'll just read this into *Hansard*.

- (a) in subsection (1) by striking out "up to 4 research and innovation corporations" and substituting "one or more research and innovation corporations, in addition to the corporation established under section 6.1(3)."

What that's referring to is not that the board or the government will have the ability to create a second Alberta Innovates corporation. This is referring to that subsidiary corporation that, again, came to us in the way of wanting to ensure that there is no conflict of interest, that the body that decides which areas of research to prioritize is not the same body that's then deciding who gets funding. It's separating those two. That's the purpose of the subsidiary corporation.

What this section in the bill does, Madam Chair, is that should the board determine that a second subsidiary corporation is needed – the example that I gave to the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills was that should the board determine, for example, in the realm of health that a second subsidiary should be created in order to ensure that we are getting funding protected for health solutions and innovation dollars in health, the board has that ability. I can assure the House that the board will not be creating a whole host of subsidiary corporations. This just gives them the tool to do that but not to create a second Alberta Innovates corporation, because, quite frankly – and I appreciate the comments from the Official Opposition on this – that defeats the purpose of the bill, which is to consolidate the four into one.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 11?

**Mr. Cooper:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report.

**The Deputy Chair:** Official Opposition House Leader, progress?

**Mr. Cooper:** Oh, yes.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 11. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Member.

On progress of the bill, all in favour, say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed? So it will be recorded.

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole (continued)

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 1**  
**Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment to Bill 1, and I have the requisite copies for everyone.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. If you could just wait one minute until I see the original at the table, and then you can proceed.

**Mr. Panda:** Sure.

**The Deputy Chair:** Go ahead.

3:50

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak about Bill 1 one more time. The theme of the budget is jobs. I mean, the budget itself is called Jobs Plan. The government also said that they're going to create hundreds of thousands of jobs. I have been asking since then about the details of that. But there is one way we can actually help industry to create the jobs, and that's why I'm bringing in this amendment, and with your permission I'm reading this. I move that Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, be amended in section 2 by adding the following after clause (a):

(a.1) measure the current regulatory burden on businesses, set targets for red tape reduction across Government, and report the results in an annual report published on a public website of the ministry of the Minister.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The amendment will be referred to as A3. Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This amendment that I want to speak to, from my hon. colleague here, deals with the issue of red tape and the burden that red tape gives to businesses. To give us all in this House a little idea of just how burdensome red tape can be, I was reading a report from the U.K., and as you all know, there is a big issue in the U.K. right now as to whether they should continue to belong to the European Union or not. They did an estimation that the cost of red tape to the U.K. of belonging to the EU is £33 billion.

**An Hon. Member:** Say that again.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thirty-three billion.

**Mr. Panda:** Million or billion?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Billion, with a "b."

That was the U.K. government's own estimate of the cost of red tape in just belonging to this other body, belonging to the EU. Red tape is one of those insidious, seemingly little things that can cost all of us a great deal of money.

Recently – I think it was last year, 2015 – the Canadian Federation of Independent Business gave the golden scissors award, which is a red tape reduction award, to a federal cabinet minister, the minister of the Canada Revenue Agency, for cutting red tape. A really simple little thing that she did was to no longer require businesses to have to report payroll taxes weekly but to spread it out. You could choose to do it monthly. Just that one little thing

saves businesses across our country hundreds and hundreds of thousands of man-hours in redundancy, and the government still gets the information that they need to get. Those are just a couple of things about red tape.

I have in *Hansard* a number of statements that have been made by the Premier and the Deputy Premier about red tape that I'm going to take a moment just to correct. I'm going to read to you a little bit here from *Hansard*, March 15, 2016, from the hon. Premier. "When we talk about red tape and regulations, let's be clear what some of those are: minimum wage, environmental protection, health and safety, speed limits." That was the Premier's own definition of red tape.

Now I'm going to read to you the definition of red tape from the dictionary. Red tape is an idiom that refers to excessive regulation or rigid conformity to formal rules that are considered redundant or bureaucratic and hinder or prevent action or decision-making. One definition is, quote, the collection or sequence of forms and procedures required to gain bureaucratic approval for something, especially when oppressively complex and time consuming. Another definition from the dictionary: the bureaucratic practice of hairsplitting and foot-dragging. End quote. Red tape generally includes endless filling out of paperwork and having multiple people or committees approve a decision and various low-level rules that make conducting one's affairs slower, more difficult, or both. In the EU in 2008 they launched a campaign actually giving awards, the best idea for red tape reduction award, and many nations and departments within the EU work really hard at coming up with red tape reduction measures to get this award. Those are some of the definitions of red tape.

I'm going to reread to you the Premier's definition of red tape. "When we talk about red tape and regulations, let's be clear what some of those are: minimum wage, environmental protection, health and safety, speed limits." Madam Chair, that is not red tape. That is not red tape. That was from *Hansard*, the 15th of March, 2016. So now we know why it is that this government is not at all concerned about cutting red tape; it's simply because they haven't got a clue what the definition of red tape is.

Again, the Deputy Premier, in *Hansard* of May 10, 2016, on the same subject of red tape: "Some things that might be referred to as red tape are simply security measures to make sure that individuals don't speed on highways, don't sell alcohol to minors." Just a profound lack of understanding of what red tape is.

Do I support this amendment? You bet I do. Should we have a red tape reduction strategy? Yes, we should, once we have a proper definition of red tape. I think every member in this place can agree that red tape is a problem. It's expensive. It's costing our people money. It hinders decisions being made in a timely fashion. It slows down everything within government and everything within our province and ultimately costs our people millions and millions of dollars.

I would ask this government to seriously consider a very widespread red tape reduction strategy, and I would support my hon. colleague's amendment wholeheartedly. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

My apologies to the Member for Calgary-Foothills. I didn't let you speak to your own amendment. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think everyone in the House agrees that with Bill 1 the intentions may be great, but the operating part of that is not clear. On behalf of the Official Opposition we are trying to make this bill work for the government, for the people it intends to help. That's why I brought in this third

amendment. Here is the opportunity for all members of this House to make this bill a better one.

Also, the Finance minister said that they want to find savings in the budget. The theme of the budget is, again, a jobs plan, and the Energy minister spoke about how to help people get back to work. Everyone's intentions seem to be helping people to create jobs.

I just want to give my personal experience from when I worked in the oil patch for 28 years. For most of the projects, you know, many times it took three to five years, whether it was a SAGD project or a mining project or any other pipeline project, just to get the approvals. From the initial application to the time they got the approval, it took many times five years. In the meantime the world market is not waiting for us. Most of the time the steel price had gone up so much, and then some of these projects became actually unviable. There were cost overruns. There were schedule overruns. So from someone who experienced that, I just wanted to share my experience with the members opposite so they can make an informed decision.

4:00

If you guys really want to make this bill at least look better than what it is and if you guys want to really believe in your budget theme of creating jobs, the best thing you can do is to vote in favour of this amendment, red tape reduction. That would show your seriousness in terms of helping Albertans by creating jobs and also, you know, to find savings in the budget without cutting front-line services.

That's why in our 12-point jobs action plan, from which you accepted recommendations 1 and 12 – and red tape is in between. That's another recommendation we made in our jobs action plan, that every time you introduce any bureaucratic process or regulation that adds to the approval process or adds to the cost of the project or anything, you need to take out another regulation that is adding layers of bureaucracy in this approval process.

Madam Chair, we can all agree that supporting entrepreneurship is important. We can all agree that supporting businesses is important. But we have to put our words into action. We need to agree on a way to support businesses and entrepreneurs.

The previous government did many studies on the excessive red tape in our province, and we have urged the government to take a look at those reports and do something about them. We don't have to duplicate the work. The previous government has already done those studies, and we can make use of some of that.

This amendment is to encourage the government to help Albertans by reducing the red tape that entangles businesses and entrepreneurs. Red tape takes up valuable time for Albertans, and time is money. As someone who worked in downtown Calgary, I can tell you: time is money. When you work on billions of dollars of projects, cost overruns sometimes could be billions of dollars. This red tape is a serious cancer. It could spread like wildfire. So all of us here have a responsibility to look at that and contain that. That would save Albertans money while simultaneously encouraging new start-ups because of reduced red tape.

The minister talked about Bill 11 a little while ago. We talked about innovation, how innovation is important for creating new businesses, which will, in turn, create jobs and wealth for the province. So if you are serious about that, please work on this red tape.

I encourage the members to vote for this amendment and support businesses and entrepreneurs. This is the last chance for the minister to make this bill better, so let of all us in the House help him. I mean, he worked really hard to earn the middle name One Job. I'm here to help him so he can take credit for creating jobs. If he's

serious about really helping businesses and entrepreneurs, here is your chance to vote in favour of this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Red tape is a problem; we need to acknowledge that. There are a lot of things that we need to solve in government. Wildrose has been very clear. We even created a red tape reduction shadow minister. This is something that we need to put on the forefront of where we're going as a province because it actually impedes what we're trying to achieve, which is trying to make sure that our tax dollars are spent effectively, with transparency and accountability.

Now, we need to be clear. When we're looking at red tape, it's everybody's responsibility in this Chamber – it's all of our responsibility – to make sure that when we run across red tape, we address it and move forward because in the end red tape costs jobs. It's a terrible burden on any province or country in the world, and we need to address that.

I do have a couple of important quotes that I'd like to read out. From November 18, 2015, in *Hansard*:

I can tell you that this is one of the priorities of our government in looking at ways to increase value-added. We are not about to charge out in isolation, on a decision that we make on our own, without working with the private sector to look at ways the government can support. Nowhere and never have we stated that the government of Alberta creates jobs. We do not. The private sector creates jobs. We have a role to play in, you know, increasing efficiencies, reducing red tape, looking at supporting private industry in their creation of jobs. From our point of view, if there are opportunities that the private sector has to increase value-added, both downstream and upstream, then we will look at ways of supporting them.

This is from our hon. minister of economic development.

This is something that we need to be very clear on. It's ironic that we've got a bill that is meant to create jobs even though we've got a quote stating that this isn't in the government's capacity. Our hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills has brought forward concerns that the government continues to say that it is out to make 100,000 jobs, and we haven't seen that. We have no way of being able to work out exactly how they came up with these job numbers.

This is where we come up with saying that this is a way to help create those 100,000 jobs, by reducing red tape. You need to be making sure somebody in government is being held to account to say that this is a priority, that this needs to be addressed. It doesn't appear that anybody is taking that leadership role. The fact is that this is foresight, that my fellow caucus member has brought this amendment forward, saying: let's actually do something with Bill 1; let's actually create something that this department will move forward and be accountable and transparent to Albertans on; let's bring a function that we can actually use.

Now, this brings me to the second quote that I've got.

Our government has been working quite closely with not only chambers of commerce but small businesses and entrepreneurs across this province, looking at ways that we can help. Part of the reason my ministry was created was, quite frankly, so that businesses have a one-stop shop. They have one place to go to access government. Whether it's an entrepreneur who's come up with a great new idea related to the agriculture sector, the forestry sector, a new clean-tech idea, they have a one-stop shop through my ministry.

Again this is the Minister of Economic Development and Trade in *Hansard*, March 9, 2016.



## 4:10

Now, the ministry itself acknowledges that we need to make sure that we encourage business. So far the government appears to be working counterintuitively to that. We're seeing increased taxes. We're seeing increased bureaucracy, which will increase red tape. The fact is that as we grow bigger with government, we become less efficient, and we need to be looking at efficiencies. We need to be making sure that every dollar that the taxpayer contributes to Alberta is utilized in a responsible manner. That's why these two quotes are so important. The minister acknowledges that red tape is a problem. The minister acknowledges that a one-stop shop is important. It would be unbelievable if the government votes against trying to reduce red tape.

Now, let's look exactly at what my hon. colleague is trying to do. He's trying to measure the current regulatory burden on businesses, set targets for red tape reduction across the government, and report the results in an annual report published on the public website of the ministry of the minister. That seems very reasonable. So how is it that when we're looking at Economic Development and Trade, this minister is only looking towards Alberta but should be looking towards and improving all of our relations with the other provinces? It shouldn't be just limited to Alberta.

But let's stay with this amendment. Let's just stay with this amendment and say: let's focus right now on Alberta. My colleague from Calgary-Foothills has been very clear that the businesses that he has worked with are hampered by red tape. It is costing hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars to our economy. My colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has also stated that this is not just an Alberta problem; this is a global problem, costing billions and billions and billions of dollars that are not going to health care, that are not going to our education system, are not going to any of our front-line employees.

If we focus on red tape, we will create jobs. That is just a fact. Minimum wage increases won't. Corporate tax increases won't. Personal taxes increased won't. We have a lot of things that definitely don't increase jobs, but this is something that will actually create jobs in Alberta, and voting down red tape reduction is incredibly distressing for me, distressing for my colleagues, and it will be distressing for Albertans. You need to stand up. You need to do the right thing. You need to vote for reducing red tape.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

We will now have the leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Reading the amendment: "measure the current regulatory burden on businesses, set targets for red tape reduction across Government, and report the results in an annual report published on a public website of the ministry of the Minister." With all due respect to the mover of the motion, there is some benefit to the motion, but I have a big problem with it. Everything in the motion seems like a good idea, I have to say. I'll compliment the mover on that. My number one reason for wondering whether I'm going to support it or not is that this will add the very first piece of substance to the original bill, and then I'll be conflicted on whether I support that or not.

The bill itself, as it's commonly referred to around here, is the bill about nothing because it gives the minister authority to do what he already has authority to do and ought to already be doing. So whether Bill 1 passes or not without this is inconsequential. My concern with the amendment is that it may require me to vote for the rest of the bill, which is inconsequential, in order to get this, and

that leaves me with a dilemma because it actually puts a little bit of meat on the bones where there is none right now.

So I will sit down and contemplate this legislative dilemma which the mover of this amendment has burdened me with.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on amendment A3? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much to the mover of the amendment. You know, I'm listening to the interesting comments on the other side and the perceptions that they have of red tape. I think it's been clear, though, that we are looking at ways to reduce red tape and that not just the Minister of Economic Development and Trade but all of our government is willing to work together to find these things.

What I didn't hear in a lot of the comments were specific examples of red tape, because what was provided and at once referred to was taxes. The quote that was provided actually quoted the Premier explaining something about what the opposition was saying was red tape. Again, it's not clear exactly what they mean. I would assume that if they have a shadow minister of red tape, they would have some examples. Nonetheless, I do want to say – I mean, I even remember it previously in this House. The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner criticized officials for requiring clean water in RVs and that being an example of red tape.

If that's what you're talking about, I think we also have to evaluate that we are stewards of Alberta, and we have responsibilities and we have processes that are there for a reason. It's not just about making sure that we have the openness to receive feedback to make sure that – absolutely, we started by creating a ministry for people to have a one-stop shop. As was said on the opposite side, it's a good start, and it provides us with the ability to also have those conversations with people.

In fact, we don't need an annual report if we're continuously working on this issue. I would hope that as the shadow minister, you would be continuously showing actual things that are prohibiting or not allowing businesses to succeed in the best way, because at the end of the day those are the outcomes that our government is working towards. We're continuously meeting with business stakeholders and chambers of commerce in order to do so. I don't see the reason to add this because it's absolutely a priority for our government.

I believe that it's also not best done in silos. I think that throughout ministries everyone needs to work on this and that you continuously need to be open to having these conversations, to hearing that feedback, to hearing what the experiences are on the other side from the people e-mailing you and going through those processes. That's part of just basic governance and reviewing your processes. That's why we ask a lot of questions.

I'm actually not going to support this amendment for those reasons. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** The hon. member that just spoke: is it permitted for me to ask her a question?

**Mr. Cooper:** You can say whatever you want. If she answers . . .

**Mr. MacIntyre:** If she answers? She doesn't have to?

I would like to have the hon. member's definition of red tape, please. She did refer to statements made over here as being too vague, so I am asking for clarification.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, you can make a statement or ask a question. However, it's up to the member to respond if they choose to.

If not, we will move on to Drayton Valley-Devon.

4:20

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I've appreciated listening to the members here, especially the comments over here about putting some meat on the bones. That would be an interesting dilemma to actually be in at some point in time.

You know, governments can help or they can hinder business. I would, I guess, refer to some of the comments by the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. We do understand that governments do have to have regulations and that those regulations are there to protect the citizens and they're there to protect and ensure that government is accountable and that business is – it's public safety. Governments can and do set those regulations to try and help businesses and society.

At the same time I think that a fair look at this issue would also show us that there are times when governments, through their regulations, can become burdensome. There's always a balance that we're trying to find here. You know, there are times when our governments can be excessively bureaucratic, where they can place rules that are a burden on the taxpayers and on the businesses in this province. And, as you suggested, there are times when we do have to start asking questions and we do have to start looking at the unintended consequences – we throw that term around a lot – of the regulations and the bureaucracy that sometimes accompany government.

I think that this member's amendment, that I would speak in favour of, is suggesting that there are times when we can use good judgment and look at these things to see if there are ways that we can make government more efficient and make business more efficient and be able to navigate the rules and the regulations of government so that they are allowed to be more efficient.

You know, as I was preparing for this, I found a couple of articles that I found kind of interesting. One was by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, that has started a Red Tape Awareness Week. They've suggested that there are places and there are times when you could take a look at the research that's been done on red tape and see just what kind of a burden it has placed on the ability for business to do business and to create jobs.

You were asking for some examples, so here are some examples. It is referring to Canada and the United States, and in this study they're comparing red tape in the United States and Canada.

In both countries, regulation is a highly regressive hidden tax with the smallest businesses paying the highest per-employee costs. Canadian businesses of every size, except those with over 100 employees, pay more per-employee than their American counterparts.

Immediately, that means that Canadian businesses are behind the eight ball when comparing themselves to American companies in their ability to be efficient and to be able to compete with American companies.

For the majority of business, the gap is significant. Businesses with fewer than five employees in Canada pay forty-five per cent more per employee in Canada (\$5,942) to comply with regulation than their U.S. counterparts (\$4,084). In total, Canada's businesses pay \$31 billion a year to comply with regulation.

[Now] how much of these regulatory costs are red tape?

It goes on to say.

Businesses owners in both countries report that about one-third of the cost of regulation could be reduced without affecting the legitimate health and safety objectives of regulation. In other

words, eliminating red tape would be the equivalent of a \$9 billion annual stimulus package in Canada.

Significant by anybody's thinking.

Now, when we take a look at some of the examples that I'm going to suggest here, you know, in my own constituency I was talking with one gentleman that owns a drilling company. He has suggested that in this past year the application process for being able to drill – that it's taken so long for the government to approve that application that he's missed the window of opportunity to drill. Therefore, jobs and the ability to make a profit for that company have been set in jeopardy by the bureaucracy of the government in trying to apply the regulatory process for drilling.

You know, here's another one. I was at the ASBA zone 4 meeting, and I was talking with one of the school boards. They were saying that the government has implemented a new policy whereby they now have to put forth their budgets monthly to the Ministry of Education and that in order to do that, that has considerably increased the costs to the school board without, again, any additional revenue being given to the school board in order to be able to do that.

Now, we understand that school boards have to be accountable, and we would all support that, but asking ourselves whether we need to do it, as previously, quarterly or now monthly: what are the benefits of actually going from a quarterly system of reporting to a monthly system of reporting? They're suggesting that, really, there is no additional benefit to the government, there is no additional benefit to the taxpayer, and that this is a considerable issue within our system. This would be an example of red tape which the government should be able to look at. So you've asked for some suggestions, you've asked for some examples, and I think I've provided you with some.

I would ask that this government would consider and that the people of this Legislature would consider this amendment. It is asking for us to consider this whole issue of red tape, and there's a benefit to it, I believe. So I will be supporting this amendment.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

If I could just gently remind all members to speak through the Chair, please, when you're delivering your message. Thank you.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I'll thank the previous speaker for his comments. I do appreciate that and will comment on a couple of his comments.

And I will thank the member for moving this amendment. Again, I appreciate the spirit of this amendment and what it's intending to do. But I can assure the House that I meet regularly with business leaders, entrepreneurs, industry leaders in all sectors in all corners of this province and will ask them for examples or ways that government can support business and industry, whether that's to gather ideas, you know, outside of monetary ways of supporting our business and entrepreneurial sector – although we did listen to the business community, which is why our government dropped the small-business tax rate by a third.

To this point that the member was speaking of, we are looking not just to finding efficiencies but to making Alberta an even more competitive place to do business in. That is something that happens on an ongoing basis, that we are listening and consulting with our stakeholders to remove barriers and that if there are barriers, to decrease speed bumps when there are.

You know, I appreciate the member's example about a driller and the regulatory burden that he faced. I do need to comment that there are processes in place that ensure that before projects begin, they've

gone through the proper environmental processes, that they've gone through a series of processes. I appreciate the opposition may refer to that as red tape, but they are processes that are in place to ensure that we are protecting the well-being not only of Albertans and our citizens but also of our planet. We are stewards of the environment, and we have a responsibility to act in the best interests of all Albertans.

Although I do appreciate that at times that may be burdensome for some businesses, we do also look – and, again, when I sit down with these business leaders, we'll ask them for specifics. I appreciate the member mentioning that one as a specific. Again, previous comments talked about things like taxes. Taxes are not red tape. You know, other comments in previous conversations looked at, again, providing public safety, which I don't think is red tape. It may be burdensome at times, and companies may wish for a speedy process, but there are processes in place.

4:30

Now, are we and can we always look for ways to simplify or expedite in a way that still guards the public interest yet doesn't unnecessarily drag things out? Absolutely. You know, the Premier has spoken on numerous occasions about pipelines, whether it be Energy East or the Trans Mountain pipeline, that, yes, there is a regulatory process that they go through with the NEB, but she has urged the federal government not to lengthen or make it overly burdensome because we recognize and our government knows that we need market access for our product. There is a process in place, but dragging one's feet is not going to help anyone.

I just wanted to stand and clarify that and to thank the member for his amendment. I will make it easy for the leader of the third party in his previous comments in the sense that I will not be supporting this amendment, and I encourage members of the House to do the same.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Cooper:** I was doing everything I could to stay in my seat, but I just couldn't stop myself. [interjections] I know that may disappoint some members in the Chamber.

You know, the Deputy Government House Leader was thankful for some examples of red tape. I think that they are numerous, and I'd just like to provide another one for him. There's a particular community in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that has a very strong belief that the provincial government is one of the most significant obstacles that they currently face to economic development. There's a particular quarter – that's a quarter of land, for some city folks if you might not know – within the boundaries of this particular municipality. While the economy was charging, a certain company did a significant number of studies that included environmental studies, transportation impact assessments, and some other land-use studies. Now, on this particular quarter the economy slowed, and as a result the developer chose not to proceed with the development, but now this particular community, fortunately, is having some real success during this downturn and would like to now proceed with the development of this quarter.

Now, unfortunately, a period of time – and I believe in this case that it's 18 months – has elapsed, and as opposed to the government working closely with the developer, the developer has been required to go back to square one, and all of the studies and hoops that they had to jump through in order to develop the land are now back at square one. Environment has informed them that even though it's the exact same study, the exact same piece of land, the

exact same bureaucrats in Edmonton, in order to get approvals, it will be over 12 months – 12 months – to approve something that's already been approved. Transportation has given some indication that it will take close to 10 months to approve something that was already approved by the same bureaucrats and the same ivory tower elites in Edmonton. There is no greater example of red tape. All of the checks and balances have been gone through. All of the i's had been dotted. All of the t's had been crossed.

Now, instead of expediting the process, an organization who wants to create jobs, who wants to move a community forward, who wants to provide economic development and growth is being held up by this government. Yet they say: oh, well, give a real example of red tape. They are in all sorts of places, and this is a perfect example of one. It's an exact reason why we should have a report card on red tape, so that we can be identifying things just like this and ensuring they don't happen in the future, things that prevent jobs, prevent economic development. I would think the minister would be keen, given that he's having a hard time creating any jobs, to identify issues just like this and move forward.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's indeed a pleasure to rise and speak today. I thought I might bring a little levity to the comments this afternoon because some of the members opposite aren't necessarily as familiar with some of the rural acronyms and some of the rural things that happen. To some members of the government side who represent primarily rural ridings, I'd like to relate a story that happened to myself and a good friend of mine when we travelled to Broken Bow, Valentine, and I believe it was Glendive. Glendive is in Montana, but Broken Bow and Valentine are in Nebraska.

We were talking specifically there about red tape and how government affects Canadian agriculture production. A very good friend of mine actually got up and talked about police and how bureaucracy and such is policed in Canada differently than it is in the U.S. My good friend Jim got up, and he started talking about that in Canada we have chicken police. If you have too many chickens in a commercial operation, an organization will come out and make sure that you don't have too many chickens, the chicken police.

That same agency also has egg police. We have supply-managed egg production in Canada, which they do not in the U.S. We also have milk police so that under supply management you cannot produce under commercial operations more milk than the quota size that you're allowed.

Madam Chair, we also have had wheat police. Some of you may know that I've been in direct incursion with the wheat police. A former government of the country actually changed that regulation so that we don't now have wheat police in western Canada and such that the farmers can sell their wheat to whomever they want. They don't have to go through a government agency to decide to whom and where and when they can sell their wheat.

In the constituency of Drumheller-Stettler we have a government agency known as the special areas, and they have grass police. The man comes out and actually assesses the grass production on your property and decides when, where, and how you can graze your cattle.

Certain regulations related to the milk industry also incur cheese police. You may laugh, but this is serious business to those people who are importing cheese into this country because it has a monstrous tariff on it. It's insanity. If you think that this does not

affect commercial operations, you need to reassess your evaluation of it. It's a serious situation.

My friend Jim, when he rattled through this whole list of chicken police, egg police, milk police, wheat police, grass police, cheese police in an auction mart in Valentine, Nebraska, the whole atmosphere broke out in open laughter because they could not believe the government red tape and how that would affect the agricultural industries that they're involved in.

4:40

I know there are some members from international heritage backgrounds, as am I, that need to realize that sometimes government regulation actually can negatively affect commerce. That's what this amendment is trying to do. Maybe you have cousins who are involved in the police industry. I don't know. Maybe you have cousins that are involved in the ag police part or with traffic police. We limit commerce traffic by weights and restrictions and speeds, and we all agree on that, and there are penalties for that. But the cheese police, for example, travel around and talk to people who import cheese at the borders. Now, does that sound like a sane thing for business?

We need to re-evaluate, and we need to re-evaluate the member's intention to the amendment here. I'd ask that you give it serious consideration and support the amendment that's before you.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak on amendment A3?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:42 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Gotfried	Smith
Cooper	MacIntyre	Strankman
Cyr	McIver	van Dijken
Ellis	Panda	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd
Babcock	Ganley	McKittrick
Bilous	Goehring	McLean
Carlier	Gray	Miranda
Carson	Hinkley	Nielsen
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Clark	Jansen	Renaud
Coolahan	Kazim	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dang	Loyola	Schreiner
Drever	Luff	Sigurdson
Eggen	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	Mason	Swann

Totals: For – 12 Against – 42

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We will now return to the original bill, Bill 1.

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

5:00

## Bill 11

### Alberta Research and Innovation

### Amendment Act, 2016

(continued)

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 11, Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 11 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

## Bill 13

### Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to talk today about the veterinary amendment act. I don't think I'll be quite as informative as I was earlier about the police and their involvement in this organization although there is some consternation among some veterinarians and the self-policing that this professional organization does do, but that's not really our point today. Our point is betterment of the industry and betterment of the service that it provides to agriculture, to cattle producers, to animals.

Before I forget, I want to mention to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster – I talked to him yesterday about what I believed was higher moral ground in working with the animal profession, and I may have chosen the wrong words. It is an honourable profession to be working with and caring for animals, especially animals who are in distress. I've seen it, personal experience where some animal is in distress. We had a dog who had a bunch of quills come to us after the dog had had an altercation with a porcupine, and the animal – even though they can't speak, they know that they are in distress and come to a care provider, whether that be a veterinarian or anyone, to try and alleviate their problem.

This bill is trying to streamline regulation, and unlike some of the previous legislation, which may have been stabilizing red tape and not necessarily decreasing it, as the Member for Calgary-Foothills would like to have had brought forward, it is an interesting change in direction by the government to take a step in the direction, in this case, of what some of us would believe to be reducing red tape.

Wildrose knows that adequate professional representation for veterinary technologists is important, and we will continue to engage

stakeholders to ensure that this legislation will not trigger any unforeseen consequences. Madam Chair, that's a fear that needs to be exercised vehemently in this Chamber, that legislation that we bring forward and legislation that's passed is brought and done so in a fashion that does not create unintended consequences, just like I talked about previously with the wheat police, the chicken police, the egg police, the milk police. Some would say that it could turn into a cheesy situation.

Madam Chair, protecting Alberta consumers is a Wildrose priority, and it's important that this housekeeping legislation does not facilitate government overreach. As we deliberate here on this legislation, it's important that we are cognizant and serious in recognizing that we have a duty and responsibility to Albertans, to Albertan taxpayers, and in this case to the animals and the husbandry that's affected. To date stakeholders have told us that this bill is harmless housekeeping legislation, and that's part of the reason why I'm supporting it and why, I believe, the rest of the Wildrose caucus will. Given the importance of the veterinary profession, we will be paying close attention to the accompanying regulation to ensure that it does not effectively limit the operating potential of veterinary technologists.

Yesterday, Madam Chair, I brought it up to the member from Spruce Grove, I believe it was, that veterinary technologists do not necessarily have a chance to vote under the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association body. Even though they may be included in this, I have a concern that there may down the road be an unforeseen consequence, but at this point in time it seems to meet with approval of the stakeholders that we've spoken to. Reducing red tape saves time and money for professionals as well as the government, and by bringing veterinary technologists under the same regulatory framework as veterinarians, this bill would simplify their professional obligations. Albertans deserve to know that they are receiving the best services from the people that they are qualified to approach for this matter.

Madam Chair, the veterinary technicians, who are not necessarily gender specific, as the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster talked to us about yesterday, provide a valuable service, and they do that with heartfelt feeling. I've seen them at our farm and in the facilities operated by veterinarians at odd and unusual hours. The clock on the wall or the clock on their wrist does not necessarily signify the end of the working day. They do that out of compassion for the animals and to, effectively and hopefully, make a better environment.

Madam Chair, this bill appears to be a rare example of the current government resisting the temptation to make things worse for Albertans.

I want to relate a story about the idea of taxation and how regulation can sometimes create a problem for regulations going forward and how this would actually create problems. A situation that occurs in the cattle industry: we use a product called ivermectin, which is a licensed product, to relieve a parasite in the cattle, and these parasites are both internal and external. They can cause harm to the animal. They can cause degradation of the hide as they go forward, and they can cause degradation internally to the performance of the animal as it's brought to its performance of raising another calf or in some cases slaughter. This product is, in my estimation, an effective product. Actually, what it does is that it kills a parasite.

In some cases people could relate regulation or, as my Member for Calgary-Foothills talks about, undue regulation coming forward as a parasite or a taxation base that is unnecessary. This chemical called ivermectin is administered topically upon the animals, and it kills the parasite. That's something that's needed in this industry and needed in an economic area to reduce the parasite of taxation in government and allow people to have the freedom to spend their

own money wisely with less taxation, less interference by government, or less interference, as in the example I gave, by police.

5:10

Madam Chair, there are analogies that we can use, going forward, between various parts of industry, various parts of the economy to bring some of these issues forward. I want to say that I believe that the supporting of this legislation is important. If there's some way that there are unforeseen consequences, hopefully and possibly the government, down the road, would find a better way to bring this legislation forward and that this legislation could effectively be changed should it need to be.

Madam Chair, I'm going to be voting in favour of this amendment, and I think I would endorse others to do the same. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on Bill 13?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 13, Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

[The clauses of Bill 13 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report bills 11, 1, and 13.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 1, Bill 11, Bill 13. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur with the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 17 Appropriation Act, 2016

[Debate adjourned May 18: Mr. Cooper speaking]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the House and speak to Bill 17, the Appropriation Act, 2016. I had the pleasure of adjourning debate earlier today and look forward to hearing some important discussion around a piece of legislation that, certainly in my opinion and in the opinion of many on this side of the House – and I can assure you that many of the

outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have some grave concerns about this particular piece of legislation – is a piece of legislation that is going to see an unprecedented amount of debt, a path of reckless spending and high taxes, a path where we'll see a carbon tax implemented on every single Albertan, a tax that is going to make every single thing more expensive.

As I was mentioning earlier today – and I didn't have the opportunity to finish – a constituent in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills runs a transportation company, Madam Speaker, and one of the things that he has spoken to me about is the fact that on every single invoice that he writes following the implementation of the carbon tax, he is going to include a separate line item for the increased costs to his business from that carbon tax. He transports a wide range of products.

The fact of the matter is that this carbon tax is going to be downloaded and placed at the feet of Albertans and, in many respects, at the feet of families right across this great province of ours. It's a concern because the government wants you to believe, Madam Speaker, that the increased cost for families is only going to be about \$400 a year. They have made this claim, that for low-income Albertans they're going to provide a rebate of \$400 a year and that that's going to cover all of the costs, but what the government has failed to do is to table any piece of economic impact study on the true costs to Albertans. An example like I used just moments ago, a transportation company in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, is just one example of how the carbon tax is going to be passed along to Albertans.

The wild thing about the carbon tax is that it's going to be paid at so many different levels. It's going to be paid multiple times by every consumer that touches a product. It's going to be paid at the transportation level. It's going to be paid at the manufacturing level. It's going to be paid at the distribution level. It's going to be paid at the retail level. So what we have is a tax on a tax on a tax on a tax on everything.

It should be a concern because we are going to continue to lose the competitive advantage that has made Alberta great. We see a path forward that's being proposed by the government that, I can tell you, the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills certainly don't support. They have one concern on the tax side. They also have concerns on the debt side, that this government is borrowing more than any government in the province's history, and at the end of this government's short mandate there are going to be more than \$2 billion in debt payments on interest alone.

**An Hon. Member:** How much?

**Mr. Cooper:** Two billion, with a "b." Sometimes people in this place get a million and a billion mixed up, but in this case we're talking about \$2 billion. That is a lot of schools, hospitals, roads, teachers, nurses, and on and on it goes.

The challenge is that this government is not only making everything more expensive for average Albertan families; they're also increasing the debt and the burden of government on future generations in this province, and we all should be very, very concerned.

5:20

You know, this government had initially spoken about their jobs plan, and now they have this nice shiny name for this budget, calling it the jobs plan. The last jobs plan they introduced was a subsidy plan with a price tag of \$178 million for two years, and it did absolutely nothing, so little that, to their credit, they listened to some stakeholders and cancelled this project. My concern is that

their track record on laying out plans in stage 1 of their jobs plan is going to be very similar to their track record on this new jobs plan.

There is significant risk to all of Alberta because of this so-called jobs plan. Madam Speaker, not only is it going to have an impact on families; it's also going to have an impact on communities. Right across this province we see communities from all corners hurting, and much of that pain is because of this government. We see that this budget makes everything more expensive at a time when Albertans are losing their jobs, at a time where they are feeling the pains and the realities of joblessness. This government wants to make everything more expensive, and as a result it's going to hurt communities.

To add insult to injury, through the carbon tax and the impacts of that carbon tax and their desire to accelerate the phase-out of coal, they're going to cost thousands of jobs right across this province in communities like Hanna and Foremost and Grande Cache. I received an e-mail just this past week from an individual in Grande Cache desperate for this government to stop their attack on those communities, desperate for their livelihood to be able to remain. Unfortunately, I don't have the e-mail with me today, but I would love to be able to table that e-mail and read it into the record so that government members can have a real sense of the impact that they have. This budget has real consequences. This carbon tax will have real consequences on real communities and on real people.

I think of other consequences that this budget has for our province, including our credit being downgraded. Madam Speaker, you know that as individual credit ratings become worse, the individual's ability to borrow money at reasonable rates is decreased. That's exactly what we will continue to see in our province. Not only do we have \$2 billion in debt payments on the interest alone; that number doesn't even include the increases from the downgrades of our credit. So there are real consequences, and there are real costs to families, to communities, to the treasury. Every day we come to this place we hear the government talking about leadership. The people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills don't believe that this is the type of leadership that the province needs right now.

Madam Speaker, there are so many significant challenges and concerns with this budget that I could stay and stand and chat all day, but I know that time is short in the Assembly today. I'd like to provide the opportunity for some of my hon. colleagues from other parts of this great province of ours to share some of the things that they're hearing from their constituents because I think that it's important that the government understand that the decisions they're making, the path that they're taking have real consequences. If there's one thing that I'm hearing from the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, it's that this NDP government is making worse – much worse – the unfortunate situation, the bad situation that our province is currently in in terms of the economic realities that we're all facing.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to say that this is unfortunate, the way the government has brought forward Bill 17, the appropriations bill. Unfortunately, there are no sunny ways in this particular bill.

**An Hon. Member:** No sunny ways in Ottawa.

**Mr. McIver:** There are no sunny ways in Ottawa, and there are none in Edmonton, Madam Speaker.

Unfortunately, this actually sets Alberta back in a number of very unfortunate ways. It erases a good part of the Alberta advantage. It puts our province, unfortunately, in a spiral where the government borrows money uncontrollably, with no plan to pay it back at least till 2024. We don't know how much the debt load will be by then, but we do know that what the government will have in hand as a result of this bill and other ones to come is nearly \$60 billion in debt before the next election.

Assuming that a lot of Albertans haven't left by then because of this government's policies – assume that the population is about the same, or just assume that the population is what it is in the government's budget documents – children born in 2019, the year of the next election, will come into this province owing on behalf of their province about \$13,000 on day one. Happy birthday. Happy birthday to all those new Albertans. The same could be said to those that move to Alberta that year from other jurisdictions: "Welcome to Alberta. You owe us \$13,000. If you stick around, if this government is here, it will be a lot more really soon."

It's going to hurt Alberta families, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, in more ways, starting with the fact that this government has only taken less than a year to throw Alberta's triple-A credit rating overboard. I know the government will complain that they're not responsible for low oil prices despite the fact that I think the Finance minister accidentally said today in question period that he was. I don't think he actually believes that. The fact is that the triple-A credit rating will make it more expensive for this government to do business.

**An Hon. Member:** Didn't you leave them with that?

**Mr. McIver:** Actually, in fact, a member of the Official Opposition is chirping here, so I'll remind him that I think we left the government with a \$7 billion fund and a billion-dollar surplus. Thank you, sir.

We also had a plan to pay back money that was borrowed, which is very important because that is an important fiscally conservative policy. I know there are people in here that believe that no debt is the right policy, but that's not actually a fiscally conservative policy, Madam Speaker. A fiscally conservative policy is using debt responsibly as a tool to furnish infrastructure. To use it responsibly requires a plan to pay it back in a reasonable amount of time, a plan that's credible and actually leads to the people paying for the infrastructure actually being able to use it.

5:30

What we have, on the other hand, from the government is, unfortunately, a plan to borrow money and never pay it back. I would say that the loss of the triple-A credit rating is going to hurt in ways that we don't know yet. The Finance minister, certainly in estimates, refused to put a number on it, but we know that it's going to cost the government more to borrow money, 1 to 1 and a quarter per cent more, we think.

What we did get out of the Finance minister is that even for the Alberta Treasury Branches, a tremendous Alberta institution, that does a great job on behalf of Albertans – we were told that they don't borrow money; the government borrows it for them. So if it costs the government more to borrow money for the ATB, then clearly it's either going to cost the ATB more or the government is going to eat the difference. But either way the taxpayers are on the hook at the end of the day for that difference, that the government has brought on to Albertans.

What you have, then, is a spiralling effect, a very negative spiralling effect based on what's before us in this bill, Madam Speaker, and it's really due to the government's absolute refusal to

put in place any cost control. I know that they say: well, what would you not spend? We've even had government members say: you know, we're going to build all this infrastructure, and it's a great thing. I agree. Building infrastructure is a great thing. The problem is that when you don't have a plan to pay off your debt, which there isn't in this plan, and we have \$2 billion of not even servicing costs, just interest costs that don't actually service the principal at all, that is \$2 billion of infrastructure every year that could have been built, which could be one and a half cancer centres, which could be 50 or 100 schools, depending on the size of the schools, that Albertans will not get every year for the rest of their lives or at least for the rest of their lives with an NDP government, because they'll just be paying the interest on what happened in the past.

Lots of other things. We spend all this money, and we learned in estimates that the government has chosen to cut crack filling on the roads and to let the average condition of the roads deteriorate over the next three years. They've also committed to letting the average condition of health care facilities deteriorate over the next three years. They've also promised to let the condition of every building that the government of Alberta owns deteriorate over the next three years. Madam Speaker, I want you to know that these are not editorial comments on my part; these are numbers directly lifted out of the government's business plan.

In fact, the only infrastructure that the government says they're going to slightly increase the average condition of is schools, which is, I would submit to you, probably as a result of the ambitious program to build new schools started by the previous government. I'm glad this government saw the value in that and has decided to carry on. What that amounts to is that the average age of schools, based on how many new ones there are, is going to improve, but I didn't see anything in the plan where it says that they're actually going to do catch-up on repairs to the old ones.

A government comes in, complains about what they call a backlog of deferred maintenance, and their result is to spend way more money and let the deferred maintenance grow. They're spending more money but getting less benefit for Albertans. I think that's pretty much exactly the opposite of what they promised before they came here. When you think of that, it really makes this difficult to support.

Let's talk about the hon. House leader from the Official Opposition. I agree with him on this. There are towns in this province that produce coal. The government has promised to put them out of business. I know they can keep that promise because through this budget and through these appropriations what they can guarantee is how many jobs they will cause to go away from Alberta. What they're unable to promise is how many jobs will come to Alberta.

Just today in question period the jobs minister was asked: "You know, you're putting thousands of people out of business, potentially turning several Alberta towns into ghost towns. Can you tell us how you're going to create at least a hundred jobs there to replace the several thousand that you're eliminating?" The minister did not have an answer.

**Ms Renaud:** That's not true.

**Mr. McIver:** It actually is true. The minister didn't give an answer. He actually had an opportunity to give an answer, and he did not provide where he was going to provide jobs in those towns.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, it's a comedy of errors that just gets worse the further you read into the appropriations and the budget that they're attached to. We talked about the additional borrowing costs. You know what? The government can't actually claim the low oil and gas prices and the triple-A credit rating

because the previous government over 15 years had several rounds of low oil and gas prices and maintained that triple-A credit rating. But I'll tell you that what they did not do was to borrow without a plan to pay it back. They didn't. They always had a plan to pay it back. They always managed to have net assets, where this government is going to have net negative assets in a very short period of time.

Again, Madam Speaker, those listening at home and those in the House don't have to take my word for it. These are things that the bond-rating agencies have said about this government and their fiscal policies, their severely damaged, negative, hard-on-Alberta, bad-for-the-future fiscal policies. I don't have to create words around this. The world's lenders, the credit-rating agencies that every government depends upon are saying it for me, are saying it for us. The only problem is: are the members on the government side listening? So far there has been no evidence whatsoever that they are, no evidence whatsoever that they will be willing to in the future.

Between that and the fact that – if it wasn't bad enough that the government is driving investment and jobs out with their plan, they've added a carbon attack, which they call a carbon tax, on Albertans, which is going to take money out of every families' pockets in Alberta. In fact, the Premier yesterday in question period said that people that are rebated will get as much out of the carbon tax as it costs them. Well, I think that the Premier might not have thought it through because, actually, her own government's budget documents don't say that; they say something quite different. If the government is right, people will get back what they pay extra for gas in their car in carbon tax, and they'll get back what they pay for heat in their house in carbon tax – and that's only assuming that the government is right – and that's where the rebates stop.

Unfortunately, that's not where the carbon attack stops on the average family. The food that they buy in the grocery store rides on a truck: extra costs. The clothing they put on themselves and their kids arrives on a truck: extra costs. The furniture that they buy, the electronics they buy, every other thing that they buy that rides on a truck will cost more because of the carbon attack on families.

On top of that, municipalities are not being rebated. They're all angry about this thing. I mean, if you listen to them, you couldn't possibly support this. They're all going to have to either cut expenditures or raise their property taxes in order to pay the way for this government's carbon attack on Albertans. We know that.

This is a tax on kids playing hockey and swimming and figure skating and all activities where you've either got to heat the water or cool down the water to make ice or a warm place to swim, which takes energy. The carbon attack is an attack on kids' activities as well, and that is what we're considering here.

Madam Speaker, it doesn't add up very well for Alberta. It doesn't add up very well for families. It doesn't add up very well for – even the most vulnerable of Albertans are being attacked by the carbon attack. Like other families, whether those Albertans are on AISH or seniors on fixed incomes and or any type of other supports, the people that you least want to hurt will be hurt by the carbon attack. Yes, they will be rebated. [interjections] No, the government members never think that's funny, that people on AISH and seniors will be hurt by this.

Again, not unlike other Alberta families, when a senior on a fixed income gets their rebate cheque, assuming that the government is right – and we'll try to give them the benefit of the doubt at least on this – they'll get rebated for the gas they put in their car and the heat in their house. But they, too, will pay extra for their food: not rebated. They, too, will pay extra for their clothing: not rebated. They, too, will pay extra for everything else that they bring into their homes: not rebated.

5:40

It's so damaging. Really, you would think, Madam Speaker, that I would be making this up, but the crazy thing about this is that there's nothing to make up. The government actually put something as bad as all of this in black and white and published it for all Albertans to read. You don't need to embellish this. You don't need to exaggerate. A friend of mine in the media says oftentimes one of his sayings: you can't write this stuff; it writes itself. The government has written it for all of us. We don't have to write it; they've written it for us.

I know that the government members are not enjoying me talking about this, but really they need to remember that what I'm doing is recounting what they have put in black and white and presented to the public. Some of them are squirming in their seats – and I don't blame them – but they should remember that they actually had the authority to make a different choice. They actually had the ability to make a choice that would support Alberta jobs, support Alberta families, support Alberta people on fixed incomes, and they chose instead to go down this path, the path of Bob Rae, that Ontario still has not recovered from decades after the fact. Decades after the fact. He spent the province into oblivion with no plan to pay any of it back.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. When I saw this budget, I was literally speechless, and that takes a lot of doing. That takes a lot of doing. I couldn't believe – I couldn't believe – that the government actually had not only a \$10 billion deficit in this budget but a \$10 billion deficit next year and an \$8 billion deficit the year after that. It is beyond irresponsible; it's negligent. It really is. There are choices that this government can make that avoid massive front-line cuts but allow Alberta to maintain a strong financial footing in difficult times.

The big question I have for this government is: what if you're wrong? What if these forecasts are wrong? What if it's even worse than this? We could be in serious, serious trouble because what you're doing is setting us up for massive cutbacks in the future or massive tax increases or both. That's a huge risk in this budget. This government had other choices, and they unfortunately didn't have the bravery to make those choices.

It's like someone who moves out of the house for the first time, racks up a huge bill on the Visa, and doesn't realize that you've got to pay it back at some point. Those debt service charges, those interest charges will ultimately add up and add up very, very quickly. We are looking at \$2 billion in debt service costs by 2018. That's a 159 per cent increase in two years – 159 per cent – and there's no plan to balance the budget anywhere in sight. The Minister of Finance has said: well, maybe at some point in the next five to 10 years, maybe eight years. Why eight? Where does that number come from? Where is the plan? There's absolutely no plan that sees us move anywhere close to balance.

In difficult financial times running a reasonable deficit: that's okay. Borrowing money to build infrastructure projects: that's okay. In fact, it's a desirable thing. So I'll give this government credit for doing that. That makes a lot of sense in a difficult economic time. But what doesn't make a lot of sense is borrowing money for operations, day-to-day operations: keeping the lights on in this very building, paying salaries, buying pens and pencils and office furniture. That doesn't make sense because it is not sustainable. It is the difference between buying a house and taking



a mortgage and having good debt, and borrowing money and just making the minimum payment on your credit card, bad debt. That's the difference. It's not a small amount of bad debt on the operating side; it's substantial, multibillion-dollar, year-after-year borrowing for operations.

Now that the credit rating of Alberta has been downgraded yet again and yet again, this budget and future budgets, if you stay on the same path, will see the province of Alberta downgraded yet again. That means that our debt service costs will continue to grow, that more and more money will be spent on debt servicing rather than on important front-line programs. That is a huge concern.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, but in accordance with Standing Order 64(3) the chair is required to put the question to the House on the appropriation bill on the Order Paper for second reading.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:45 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	McKittrick
Babcock	Goehring	McLean

Bilous	Gray	Miranda
Carson	Hinkley	Nielsen
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Dach	Littlewood	Sabir
Dang	Loyola	Schmidt
Drever	Luff	Schreiner
Eggen	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Fitzpatrick		

Against the motion:

Anderson, W.	Fraser	Smith
Clark	Gotfried	Strankman
Cooper	Jansen	Swann
Cyr	MacIntyre	van Dijken
Ellis	McIver	Yao

Totals:	For – 37	Against – 15
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[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a second time]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Seeing the time and the progress that we made today, I move that we adjourn till 9 tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 6:03 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, May 19, 2016

Day 31

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
 Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
 Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
 Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
 Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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 Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
 Government Whip  
 Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
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 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
 Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
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 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
 Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
 Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
 Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
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 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
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 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
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Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, May 19, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Let us reflect. As we conclude our time in the Assembly for this week and prepare to return to our constituencies and homes, let us continue to find ways to work collaboratively in our efforts to help our fellow Albertans as they overcome the many challenges that we face and will continue to face in the days ahead. Thank you.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 17 Appropriation Act, 2016

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill. I guess the main thing that I want to say is that the reality is that this budget is not making things better for the province of Alberta; it's making things worse. It's punishing families, it's punishing business with risky ideological policies that in reality are going to make our province a weaker place. It's going to make it much harder for us to survive as a province.

The carbon tax, for instance, is going to punish everyday families and businesses and will make life significantly more expensive in Alberta. Everything from heating your house to buying your groceries to driving your kids to hockey practice will be more expensive thanks to the NDP carbon tax, and a lot more things could be added to that list. Any good that would have been done with the small-business tax reduction that was called for in the Wildrose jobs action plan is negated by the \$3 billion carbon tax. The typical family will see a thousand dollars a year in additional expenses thanks to the carbon tax. On top of the pricey and ill-advised carbon tax the typical family will now be paying probably up to \$2,000 a year more just to pay the interest on the NDP government's ballooning debt payments. That's like taking out a credit card in every Alberta family's name and expecting them to pay it off.

Let's break down the budget just a little bit with regard to the impact on families. The cost of living in Alberta, as I have said, is going to climb thanks to the policies of the NDP government. Everything from driving your car to buying groceries will be more expensive, and 40 per cent of Albertans will see no sort of offset to these damaging policies. The NDP government campaigned on asking the top 1 per cent to pay a little bit more. Instead, we've seen a reliance on personal taxes climb while the amount of revenue from corporate taxes actually shrinks. The reality is that the policies being put forward have created that scenario, created that reality.

The impact on businesses. The NDP cancelled their ill-advised jobs subsidy plan, with a price tag of \$178 million for two years.

Now, instead, they're forging ahead with an even more costly \$250 million for a two-year scheme, with no actual plan, no economic analysis or any idea of the number of jobs that will actually be created. It's good that they took our proposal to drop the small-business tax rate by 1 per cent, but any benefit is clearly going to be completely negated by the NDP's ideological \$3 billion carbon tax and their other policies that make our economy generally much worse and much weaker.

A couple of key facts. Seventeen thousand people are leaving the province this year in a net outflow of interprovincial migrants. Alberta's unemployment rate will be 8 per cent in 2016 and 7 and a half per cent in 2017 above the national average. Despite the struggles in every other sector and our exploding debt, government spending will go up 13 per cent by the next election. Everybody else in the province is having to tighten their belt, reduce their expenses, cut back on their income, but government just gets to keep expanding their little world endlessly. Well, it's not so little, actually.

What about the impact on communities? Alberta is seeing oil and gas investment at a point lower than during the major recession of 2008, which is hurting communities all across our province. Alberta is seeing approximately \$700 million less collected in corporate taxes, showing how badly this economic downturn is hitting businesses in every corner of our province. While the NDP wants to blame the price of oil as the entire and only cause for this, the reality is that everywhere else in the world is experiencing the same low oil prices but not the same massive economic collapse that we're experiencing.

In exchange for killing entire communities with an accelerated phase-out of coal, the NDP government has deemed it appropriate to allocate just a part of \$195 million for, and I quote, coal community transition. Apparently it costs less than the cost of an average overpass to kill a community. This fund will not even cover the average cost of an annual wage of the workers in those communities.

Then there's the impact of the carbon tax directly. The typical Alberta family will face an extra \$1,000 a year in taxes and other costs thanks to the NDP carbon tax. Families will see a 50 per cent increase in Alberta taxes on gasoline thanks to the carbon tax. Albertans can expect Vancouver-level gas prices thanks to the NDP government. At least in B.C. they were smart enough to get rid of that.

The credits being offered by the government to 60 per cent of Albertans don't take into consideration power bills, the increased costs of consumer goods, or the realities of busy families in the suburbs. The NDP government is punishing hard-working, everyday Alberta families, who work hard to make a decent income. There's even a marriage penalty in the rebates, with a married couple not receiving the same credit as two roommates living together.

A couple of other key facts. An individual family making \$51,000 a year net won't receive any sort of rebate. Families making over \$100,000 a year won't receive any sort of rebate.

The impact of ballooning debt and deficit. The NDP have taken less than half a year to break their own law that states there should be a 15 per cent cap on the debt-to-GDP ratio. This out-of-control spending is just plain irresponsible and puts Alberta on a path away from fiscal sustainability.

**An Hon. Member:** How long did they go?

**Mr. Orr:** Not very long. Less than half a year.

Wildrose came out with a solid, realistic plan to reduce the deficit by \$2 billion. Instead, the NDP plunged ahead with spending increases for a more than \$10.4 billion deficit. Alberta debt will be \$58 billion by the next election, a situation that is passing down irresponsible governance and poor decision-making to future generations of Albertans.

Then on the lack of a hiring freeze or restraint by the NDP government. While over 100,000 Albertans have lost their jobs, the NDP government has deemed it important to hire 250 new non front-line bureaucrats, people who don't actually serve on the front lines at all.

On infrastructure we will have to take a wait-and-see approach with this infrastructure spending until June to see what has lapsed. We are pleased to see that some form of an infrastructure sunshine list has finally been introduced. Sunshine is a good disinfectant. Some of it needs to be disinfected. Some key facts as well with regard to the infrastructure list. The Grande Prairie hospital is still at least four years out on that list. The new prioritized projects for this year – Peace River bridge; Gaetz Avenue, Red Deer; Grande Prairie bypass – are good projects. And \$2.2 billion has been allocated for green infrastructure, but it's unclear what that will actually mean, whether it will result in any return to Albertans or whether it will just be, really, a taxpayer hit.

**9:10**

I'd like to speak a little bit to the specifics of some of the Culture and Tourism aspects of the budget. The biggest source of new revenue, supposedly, in the Culture and Tourism area – and Culture and Tourism is an area that is often said to be actually doing well in this recession, although I am cautious about that because the truth is that the data is two years old. We don't have any current data on it, and there are indications from the hospitality sector and others that, in fact, there are steep declines there as well. The only real source of new revenue that can be identified besides Albertans spending money on themselves would come from the adoption of new flight arrangements from Alberta directly to China.

The reason this is actually going to be successful is because private businesses, the airlines specifically and the airport hubs, saw an opportunity and knew that they could actually make some money on it. This wasn't even a government decision. It's not even part of the budget although they want to claim it. Private industry actually is the only money-making source we have in this province. All government industry is basically taxing individuals. It's private industry that creates wealth in any society. Private industry should be making some of these financial decisions and being listened to, not just government forging ahead with their spending as they want to. This is a good example of what the government should be doing, which means staying out of the way and doing as little as possible to interrupt the ability of the industry to create wealth and vitality in our province.

The carbon tax is going to affect the tourism industry negatively, and I fear that this is going to be a huge drain on our tourism value. It's going to affect the price of gas for travelling. Everything in this province is spread out. I had Japanese friends who came from Japan a few years ago. They landed in Calgary, and as we were driving them home, they were just in utter awe. They were stunned to realize – the comment was: everything is so big. Well, that's true. Everything in Alberta is big, and it's spread out, and people can't travel far without their cars and their vehicles. The price of gasoline to get to any of these tourist attractions is going to increase, which is going to decrease the appeal of Alberta tourism. It's going to affect the price of airline tickets, aviation fuel, the costs of airport hubs to be able to operate. Ticket prices are going to increase, and pretty soon we put ourselves in an international market where we're no longer competitive and foreign tourists choose to go elsewhere.

The entire cost of the hospitality industry is going to go up because of the carbon tax, hospitality in the sense of accommodation and of food. The carbon tax will affect the suppliers of restaurants. It will affect the cost of hotels and lodges. Producers have to pay for fuel to produce food. That's going to push

the price up. Food may grow on trees, but it doesn't transport itself to your table, and neither is it served in buildings that aren't taxed by carbon.

The minimum wage is going to affect the price of tourism. Many tourist destinations are actually not-for-profit organizations. Museums and many others are not all greedy, grubbing capitalists trying to take money out of people's pockets. They're actually attempting to provide cultural and historical benefit to our tourists. They're on tight budgets. They have no room to give raises, yet they're going to be forced to the point of increasing their wages. It will cost more, quite frankly, to operate these tourist sites because the wages are higher, because the fuel to heat the buildings is higher, and many of them will find their attraction being much less attractive because of the increased costs. Same thing with the hospitality issues for that: less service.

In estimates the Minister of Culture and Tourism essentially said that if he had more money, he would spend more money. When asked about tax credits for film instead of grants, the answer was that it would cost us a whole lot more money, which, depending on how you allocate, may or may not be true. He said, "I would hope that one day, when we have that kind of money in the budget, we could seriously consider that." Well, the challenge there is that with that sort of way of looking at it, there's no hope that we'll ever save. There is no hope the government will ever stop spending. There is no hope that we will ever see a balanced budget by a government with socialist ideologies driving them and behind them.

The reality is that they always talk about social licence. Here's a challenge on social licence. You want to spend money now, according to your budget documents and statements here in the House, because the economy is down and you're going to supposedly stimulate the economy, and Keynesian economics says that you're supposed to do that. The fact is that that has never worked in history. When, finally, if we get a return to economy, the budgets go up, then tell me what kind of social licence you're going to have to not spend money. Tell me what kind of social licence you're going to have when everybody knows you've got money coming in, but now you're not going to spend it on them. You're going to tell them: oh, now we have to pay off the debt. There isn't a possibility in all the world that you'll have the ability – emotionally, psychologically, or socially – to actually restrain spending when money starts to come in.

The truth is that we will never ever save under this government. We will never ever stop spending. We will never ever see a balanced budget because it's not within the realm of possibility for a socialist mindset. I'm sorry, but that's the reality.

Madam Chair, I am entirely opposed to this budget, and I will vote against it. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? I will recognize the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Madam Chair, I was enjoying the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka's speech about the absolute inability of a socialist to ever grasp the concept of balanced budgets. I was hoping that he would care to elaborate on why that is.

**Mr. Orr:** Well, I think we really do have to think about the aspect of social licence. Governments respond to the will of the people, and in reality in a day and an age when we don't have money, the argument is: well, we'll spend money to supposedly stimulate the economy. But later, when there's supposedly an increase of taxes coming in, there are going to be all kinds of people standing in line – partners and friends of a socialist mindset, unions – who will be asking for more money, who will say: well, we took our no raise

period already; now you owe us; now you have to give us more money. So they'll be standing in line, demanding it of their friends, and there will not be the ability to actually restrain spending either if there's money coming in or if there's not money coming in. The reality is that we still have that situation where there's no hope we will ever save, there is no hope we will ever stop spending, and there is no hope we will ever see a balanced budget.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I will recognize the hon. Member for Little Bow next.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Chair. [interjection] No, not 29(2)(a).

**The Chair:** We don't have 29(2)(a) in committee.

**Mr. Schneider:** Of course. That's a good point. You'd think the whip would know that, wouldn't you?

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 17. The minister and his government have attempted to present a budget as a jobs plan that will help families in tough economic times, a clever marketing exercise, to be sure. But for all of the current government's grandstanding and boasting about this being a jobs budget, I would have to say that it is not. This is no credible jobs plan. Most of the plans laid out in the proposed budget don't start till next year. The labelling of this budget as a jobs plan just distracts from the massive debt that we see starting to pile up, a debt that endangers our province, to be sure.

As my colleague from Strathmore-Brooks pointed out yesterday, this is Alberta's ninth consecutive consolidated deficit, deficits every single year since 2008. This is deeply consequential for Alberta's future. It will make things worse. It can't help but make things worse. The carbon tax in this budget will hurt businesses, it will hurt jobs. Once again, the carbon tax introduced in the budget is accompanied by no economic impact assessment. The absence of that is now a common trait, it seems, as this government moves forward.

9:20

There are consequences to debt. Today's massive overspending is just an invitation for tax hikes or service cuts in the future. This government likes to espouse a Keynesian view of the debt, but they've somehow managed to contort even that economic theory. The flip side to that economic theory is that you curb spending when you're not in a recession; you don't just keep spending. This government seems to have missed that part of the equation. It's a problem that began in the twilight years of the previous government, to be honest, but the current government here today seems to have pushed their heel into that pedal a little more.

Debt is not an isolated matter. When debt grows, so do interest payments. That's why the cost of servicing the debt grows over time, and this is particularly consequential as time passes. It can't help but increase because there are only so many taxpayers, and with interest payments on multibillion-dollar spending, spiralling debt will continue to rise. This means that an increasing share of government expenditures over time will not go to services but more to servicing the debt that is acquired. Of course, that means there is less money to spend, less money for schools or teachers, less money for front-line staff. That's a problem.

Albertans pay taxes in exchange for government services. Taxes are compulsory contributions to the state – these are facts; they're not ideological statements – but Albertans pay taxes to all three levels of government expecting that there will be a certain quality to their services. Sure, they make a compulsory contribution deducted from income, but in exchange there are hospitals and

roads and law enforcement and so on. When debt is racked up, those payments get fewer results because an increasing number of tax dollars are used to service debt. Worse yet, this government has taken barely six months to break their own debt ceiling law, which stated that there should be a 15 per cent cap on debt-to-GDP ratio. Not only is this escalating spending entirely irresponsible; it directs our province away from fiscal sustainability.

Now, as my colleague from Lacombe-Ponoka stated in his speech, our caucus came out with a solid, realistic plan to reduce annual spending by \$2 billion. There are ways to achieve it. That's only 2 cents per dollar. There are realistic ways to achieve modest spending reductions, Madam Chair. But the sad reality is that Alberta's debt, a debt that will haunt future generations at this rate, will be \$58 billion by the time we get to the next election. This government is simply passing down its governance and poor decision-making to future generations of Albertans.

This budget, we're told, is a jobs plan – the Minister of Finance's speech here yesterday emphasized their focus on jobs – but it's entirely difficult to believe that this government will actually deliver on the jobs plan. Just yesterday we gathered here to speak to Bill 1, which is the flagship bill to implement the government's jobs agenda, but hardly anyone from the government side actually stood up to speak to it. Only the minister responsible stood up from time to time to explain why his government would be defeating amendments to a piece of legislation that nobody seems to want to defend.

To this day the current government has failed to properly and fully account for the alleged 100,000 jobs that will be created by this budget. We've all seen the Member for Calgary-Foothills go on and on. Also, in estimates he did ask several ministers the same question. The last budget was to allegedly create over 20,000 jobs at a cost of \$178 million to taxpayers for two years. To this day we don't know how they arrived at that figure, but they claimed it was an accomplishment and stood their ground until they conceded that they needed to rethink it. Now we are told that this budget, as the result of this appropriation bill we are considering today, will create 100,000 jobs.

Just over two weeks ago in the main estimates consideration for the Labour budget the minister was asked to give an accounting for the 100,000 jobs created. She chose instead to refer to the Minister of Infrastructure. I thought it was somewhat peculiar, but when we did the Infrastructure estimates, I did question the minister, the following week, in the consideration of those estimates, and he indicated that they expected infrastructure investments to create approximately 10,000 jobs. Beyond that, he referred us to the Minister of Finance. It seems like it's quite a circle, Madam Chair, and it reveals a certain uncertainty about this government's projected job numbers.

Writing in the *Financial Post* about a month ago, Trevor Tombe, an assistant professor in economics at the University of Calgary, wrote:

The budget forecasts employment growth of 112,000 jobs between now and 2019. That's a sensible estimate, but due more to a normal and gradual economic recovery than any specific budget measure. Mere population growth accounts for roughly one-quarter of that increase.

If the jobs that are to be created by this jobs plan are the result of normal and gradual economic recovery, then why on earth is this government embarking on such a devastating road to long-term debt? It's just not clear, but it does make life more expensive.

There are further hidden costs. Many of my colleagues have spoken about the impact of the carbon tax, an ill-advised excursion that will make life more expensive for all Albertans, but it will also adversely affect other areas of life as well. The proposed carbon tax

in this budget is just another massive overhead fee for actual job creators. With increased overhead fees, the amount they will be able to set aside for labour will become less and less.

Now, this government prides itself on infrastructure investments. But as we've seen in the preceding two weeks, the government has made no final assessment of how much the carbon tax will impact the construction industry, and thus, by extension, how much they're going to diminish the results that can be achieved with this much infrastructure spending. When you get down to it, it becomes clear that you get a lot less out of this budget than you are paying for.

I remember asking the minister what the increase would be in relation to the carbon tax and the building of infrastructure. I'm not arguing that we're going to do some infrastructure building and that it may be a good idea. We certainly are going to see some one way or the other. The carbon tax will increase the price of fuel, certainly, and the people that have to build the infrastructure for Alberta will have more costs, so increasing those costs will now mean that it costs more for infrastructure itself. I think the question that I asked was actually a transportation question, and the minister's response was that, well, gas right now is 98 cents a litre, and several months ago it was \$1.28. So what's the difference? Nobody will know the difference as the increase goes on.

Madam Chair, the facts speak for themselves. This budget proposes a significant uptake in debt for Alberta. Debts and deficits like those proposed here will result in incredibly difficult decisions in the future. For all the problems that will be caused by this head-first dive into debt, perhaps one of the most significant problems is that the government will actually have little to show for it when it comes to results.

With that, I thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers, questions, comments, amendments? I will recognize the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod. Oh, sorry. Battle River-Wainwright. I was looking at my list and not at who was standing. My apologies.

**Mr. Taylor:** I was willing to sit down, you know, in case the Livingstone-Macleod gentleman was up there before me, but thank you, Madam Chair.

Today I rise to speak on Bill 17, the Appropriation Act, 2016. In short, I'll be speaking on the budget because that's really what it is. That's what the average person understands. If you say "appropriation act" out on the street, they look at you with a blank stare and say: what are you talking about? But if you say that we're talking about the budget, they understand that. So, in short, that's what I'll be speaking on, how we'll be making things worse and punishing families, hurting job creators in my riding with their irresponsible actions, and also portfolios like mine, Advanced Education. Those are the things that I'd like to touch on.

This government's budget, Madam Chair, is raising taxes on everything and making everything more expensive in the end. I know you've heard it before, and we'll continue to let the members opposite know that that's what's going to happen. Unfortunately, when I look at this budget, there seems to be no plan, just money being thrown, like a dartboard. You know, you take a dartboard and you put a blindfold on and see what's going on, hoping to hit the right spot. But this budget does not seem to hit the right spots of the target that Albertans need.

9:30

This government wants to raise money for its risky, ideological agenda, and that's why, in part, we don't have a balanced budget. Too much money seems to be going into too many places that at this present time make absolutely no sense, that it shouldn't be

going to. Let's take, for example, one of the means to raise taxes on every Albertan. That's where you're getting some of your sources for the budget from, the carbon tax. The carbon tax, you know, will punish families, businesses, charities, postsecondary institutions, schools, K to 12, and the list goes on. Life will be more expensive for everyone. It's going to be even more expensive for my neighbour here who had to run with the ambulance services. It's going to cost more to run those ambulances up and down the road here. You know, these things are all going up in price because the carbon tax is making it more expensive.

Take your own home, for example. The cost of heat will go up. The cost of power will go up. Driving to and from work will go up. If you want to take your kids to some kind of sporting event – whether it be hockey, ballet, whatever it is – it's going to cost more just because the cost for those things is going up. The cost of groceries is going to be going up. The groceries don't just magically appear here in this province. They have to be driven into this province, and when the trucks fill up their tanks with fuel, they have to pay the carbon tax, so the cost of food is going up.

Compare this to institutions that Alberta depends on day in and day out, like our hospitals and postsecondary institutions. These buildings literally – and I mean literally – have millions of square feet of space that they need to heat and light, and they need to be able to run the computers. Well, that takes electricity. They have labs that they have to have in their buildings, so they have to have those things and have the right conditions. They also provide food, and the cost of food that's in there will go up. Everything is going up that they supply. Everything goes up as a result of the carbon tax, as will the cost of maintenance, so when they run their trucks back and forth. The cost of transportation: whether it is to get the students to the schools or whether it is transportation for having the students going from the campus to the field to do their work at the universities, they have to get there, so students frequently go from the Edmonton university, the U of A, and they'll go somewhere out in the field to discover whatever that project is. At the U of C and the U of A they have people that work with paleontology, I believe, but they have to go over to the Brooks or Drumheller area to dig the bones. There are fuel costs. Everything goes up.

The typical family will see a thousand-dollar increase per year, every year, due to this carbon tax. Unbelievable.

**Mr. Yao:** How much?

**Mr. Taylor:** A thousand dollars per year, every year, as a result of this carbon tax. It's a shame. It truly is a shame. For the reasons I just mentioned as well as others, there is virtually nothing that is not increased by this tax. I would really love it if the government would table it and show us the things that won't be increased by this tax because I believe everything has an impact on this tax.

The increased cost to postsecondary institutions will literally be in the millions of dollars as a result of this carbon tax. Our poor students. These costs, of course, will be passed on to students in one form or another. It is simply going to cost more to get training or education past grade 12. Obviously, this will make those options less attractive to the potential students, and we will probably see a decrease in enrolment as a result of the tax hikes once they're truly felt. Is that what this government wants to see, the costs go up in postsecondary institutions and the enrolment go down? I think that should be the opposite of what their objective is, but there is a potential unintended consequence of that happening.

You know, an interesting note – I think it's a very interesting note – on the timing of the implementation of the carbon tax is that it coincides quite closely with the lifting of the tuition freeze. At least, that's when the government says that they're going to extend them

to. That's 2017. The carbon tax will be implemented in 2017, and that's when they're going to start to hurt Albertans. Coincidentally, 2017 is also the time that the tuition freeze on what universities can charge students will be lifted. That seems like a funny coincidence there. Perhaps that was part of the plan. I don't know. I believe tuition fees have been artificially held down, and with the implementation of carbon taxes postsecondary institutions will become more expensive and perhaps a whole lot more expensive.

If you look at simply the support for adult learning expenses in the current budget for Advanced Education, we see that \$2.3 billion will be spent just to keep the institutions running. That's \$2.3 billion to keep the institutions running, but this number does not include the cost of the carbon tax.

Next year we'll see the next budget. We will see not only the 2.9 per cent increase, but the government will also have to include increases to that amount to cover the cost of the carbon tax. Alternatively, the universities will have to impose a huge increase in tuition fees to cover those costs. Either way, increasing costs will put the cost of postsecondary institutions beyond the reach of many Albertans. That's what I fear, and that's what the numbers are starting to look like.

Things are getting worse by the minute, literally. Every minute. If you look at the debt clock – and the Member for Strathmore-Brooks went around the province with a debt clock, and he was showing how fast that debt was rising. That is where we met, in Wainwright, and we were looking at the debt clock. Every minute we go into debt more, and it's spiralling faster and faster and faster into a larger number as a result of this government's budget. That debt, like I say, keeps going up, and we have to pay it back, and we'll have to pay interest on this. The more we have to pay, the more we'll see credit downgrades. That's another one of those unintended consequences but inevitable facts about what's going to happen. In fact, Albertans will shortly be paying interest on the NDP's debt to the tune of \$2 billion per year.

**Mr. Yao:** How much?

**Mr. Taylor:** Two billion dollars per year.

**An Hon. Member:** How much?

**Mr. Taylor:** I said \$2 billion a year. Can I have an amen?

That's \$2,000 per family for every year. That's what it's going to cost them, \$2,000 a year to pay for that debt. That's irresponsible. That's, frankly, very expensive. This will take \$2,000 out of the pockets of families that want to send their children to postsecondary schools – institutions, schools, whatever – making it that much harder to do so. You combine that with the carbon tax, and that's another thousand dollars that comes out of every family. So \$2,000 to pay for the debt, a thousand bucks to pay for the carbon tax, and once the tuition freeze is lifted, there's going to be an additional cost associated with that. We're looking at quite a bit of money that's going to be going to pay for this for the students. It's going to have to come out of their pockets.

Albertans didn't want this. They want and expect a responsible, predictable, sustainable budget, not one that keeps going up wildly by the minute. Wildrose has a plan for Alberta, not one that focuses on risky, ideological social experiments that this NDP government is giving us. Albertans can't afford this.

9:40

Why should Albertans care about how much money this government is spending? Albertans have to pay not only for it now but in the future, when they're old and grey if they're not there now,

or their children, their grandchildren will be paying for these risky economic policies. Money will be taken from these young children now. It's irresponsible because they don't have a chance. They don't have a vote. They don't have a say in what's going to happen with it for the rest of their lives. Right now we're spending money from children that are just being born and ones that are eight, 10, 12 years old. We're spending their money, and that's just irresponsible, saying that we know better for them. Well, when they have their chance to have it, I think they would want to have a balanced budget, one that's predictable and sustainable, and not one they have to pay high taxes on. For the sake of Albertans and for the sake of our children, fellow members, budgets need to be balanced and responsible.

We can't afford the price of everything going up. What's going to happen with this budget? It looks like in the future here they're looking at getting rid of coal-fired plants. That's going to kill towns like Forestburg and Hanna. It's also going to affect the people that are in the towns right close to it. We've got Donalda, we have Killam, and we've got Bashaw. These ones are right next to them. It's hurting these towns.

The debt is not a laughing matter. It's something we need to be serious about. We have to be serious about the debt. We need to balance budgets. We need to be able to look at these budgets and be able to predict how much we can spend as how much we have coming in here. We need to have a responsible budget, not one that's going to be taking us up more and more into debt.

With those points, Madam Chair, I cannot support this budget. I truly hope that the members opposite will agree with me and not support this budget.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd actually like to just add a few comments to my previous comments. This is a budget that is truly going to destroy Alberta. I have young couples, young families in my riding who have literally chosen to make an appointment at my office, and the one thing they want to say is: "I don't want to live with a lifetime of debt. Why are we doing this?" Young families do not want to live with a lifetime of debt, and that's what this government is creating.

I am troubled by a Minister of Finance who will stand up in the House and brag that we have a perfectly healthy debt-to-GDP ratio, who will brag about the fact that our credit rating is healthy. "The ship of state is safe. What are you worried about?" It's a bit premature to claim that all is well while you're selling the family farm. To say that the ship of Alberta is safe all the while drilling holes in the hull is, I think, a bit hypocritical. It's like a healthy person standing up and saying: "I can feed my addiction. I'm healthy. What's the problem? I feed my addiction all I want." It is financial hypocrisy to claim strength and all the while to be destroying the foundations of financial strength in our province.

Now, I know that if I say that the government of Newfoundland is making the right choices – they have the same loss of oil revenue – that all the lefties will stand up and cry, "Oh, there's such suffering about it," and they try to rein the government in on this, all those with their hands out for more money. But why does Newfoundland make this choice, the opposite of what Alberta does? Let me give you a little bit of history. Why did Newfoundland even come into Canadian Confederation? Why? Because they were bankrupt, and the federal government bailed them out of their bankruptcy and paid off their debt for them. Is that the next step for this NDP government, to ask the federal government to bail you out

of your bankrupt state? That's why Newfoundland is wise enough to make the choices that they're making today.

I call this – if I might use a bit of an illustration from our friend the vet – a dog chasing its own tail budget. That's what this budget is. Let me explain what I mean. The government wants to hand out candy in the form of benefits to everyone, but candy costs money, and where do they get their money to give to all the children of Alberta? They get it by stealing from the kids' piggy banks. That's where they get it from. They steal it from the kids so they can give it back to the kids, which is a dog chasing its own tail.

We talk about infrastructure spending as if it's investment in our province, and in some ways it benefits us socially, but this investment, let's remember, requires money to be made, and where do they get the money from? They get it through the extortion of taxes. Raise the taxes endlessly: personal taxes, income taxes, not just the big, evil corporations. They raise it from their own people.

Maybe a sports illustration would be helpful. Every coach in the country challenges his players, every coach in the country challenges his team to be the best and to do the best. No coach that I can imagine would be encouraging his team to become like the Edmonton Oilers, the very bottom of the rankings, the very worst in the league, yet we're constantly told: oh, well, Ontario does it. The very worst player in the provincial league, and we want to compare ourselves to them? We brag about the fact that Alberta is the best place to live, but it's a self-delusion. We're financing it with a reverse mortgage on this province. Reverse mortgages actually bleed seniors of their assets. They leave seniors with nothing, and I have no desire to be part of a government that's going to leave the people of this province with nothing, and neither should all of you.

This is not a budget to be approved. This is a budget that everybody in this province should oppose entirely. The spending profligacy of the last government got them thrown out, and so it will do to any future government that continues to spend without restraint and without regard. If you can't pay for it, you can't have it is how I live my life. I believe in living with true simplicity. Smaller is actually better in many cases.

I cannot and I will not vote for this budget at any time. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Taylor:** Okay. Thank you. I just want to make a few more points that came up as a result of our last member's passionate speech. You know, I've been on the phone daily, it seems like, either that or e-mail. People are leaving this province. They're telling me that they have to leave this province because they can't afford what's happening here. They're leaving in droves. They're either going to Saskatchewan or British Columbia. That's where they're looking at as the best options. Businesses, large businesses in my riding have left as a result of this. Many are ready to close their doors as a result of this. They told me that they can't afford it, so they're going to go. They said that they can't afford not only the next three years – that's when this government is here for, another three years – but they said that they can't afford this socialist government. That's what they said, that they can't afford this socialist government.

They're saying that the problem, too, is not just the next three years. They said that it's going to take years and years. Once we get ourselves into \$40 billion, \$60 billion in debt – we're not sure – it's going to take how many years to get us back to having ourselves paid in full?

I would just challenge this government to answer that question. You're spending like this right now. How quickly do you think you

can have this paid in full? That's what I would love to see tabled, an answer to that question, because that's a question that I get handed. It seems like every time I go back to my constituency office, I'm having people come to my office and ask me those questions. That's one of the very first ones that comes out of their mouths. They cannot believe what's going on, and it's just a sad thing.

We had the Alberta advantage – the Alberta advantage – where it was paid in full. Ralph Klein held up the sign in 2004: paid in full.

**9:50**

**An Hon. Member:** We have a socialist disadvantage.

**Mr. Taylor:** Now we have, yeah, the socialist disadvantage.

I don't know how they want to spin this one, but that's what's happening. It's going downhill. We're paying more. We're paying so much in debt. Just to pay the deficit is killing this province. Once the oil recovers, we won't see a full recovery because we will have that much more that we will be having to pay. I can't see any places in Canada that these social experiments, where they tried to spend themselves into prosperity, have worked. Again, please try to give me an example of where they spent themselves to success, to a balanced budget, or to excess in a budget. It has not happened.

For those reasons, Madam Chair, I cannot support this budget. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Madam Chair, thank you for the opportunity to rise today and speak to Bill 17. You know, I'm very interested in the way debate is proceeding in this House. Members of the Official Opposition during debate have pointed out that the socialist members opposite get very upset when they get called socialists. When they call me a conservative, I don't wince. When they say, "Derek, you're a limited-government conservative," I don't say, "Ah, don't call a conservative a conservative." But when you call a socialist a socialist, oh, they squirm in their seats almighty, don't they? They get pretty squirmy.

You know, I really wish we would have more participation in this debate from the members opposite. It's their bill. They should stand up and defend it. Unless I'm mistaken, I haven't heard a single member from the government opposite stand up and defend their own budget yet today. That's shameful, Madam Chair. We're talking about the big ideas of this budget, the big ideas that are informed by our values, in this case the socialist values of the members opposite, and it does seem to be heavily informed by that set of values.

You know, we've got clear, self-avowed socialists on the government side like the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, who vigorously defends the hard-line Marxist regime in Venezuela, a country that has run out of medical supplies, that has almost run out of food, a country that produces oil but doesn't even have gasoline anymore, a country that can't even produce toilet paper for its citizens. There's an apt metaphor about cleaning up socialism in there somewhere, Madam Chair. We've got the Member for Calgary-East, who protested against pipelines, who protested against the very viability of our energy industry in this province, who has now been shamed into slightly more common-sense policies by the Official Opposition.

You know, we have these members opposite here that positively hated the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky's motion about ending the tanker ban on the west coast. They absolutely hated it, but they were shamed into voting for it only when the Official Opposition called for a recorded vote. Madam Chair, it looked like a child squirming as you fed him some pretty bad medicine, but it was good

medicine that was very good for this government. Now we've asked that the Minister of Energy go out there and carry out the wishes passed by this House to the federal government to advocate for an end to the proposed tanker ban on the west coast, something very critical to our economy. What does the Minister of Energy have to say? Shrugs her shoulders because they actually disagree with the motion that they voted for. They only voted for it because Albertans would have seen them for what they are.

This is very serious, Madam Chair. This goes to the very heart, the spirit behind this bill. This is a bill informed by a hard-line socialist ideology with members that have no idea of how a responsible government should act. That is why they are proposing to remove their own 15 per cent debt-to-GDP limit.

Now, let's remember. We have had a long, steady decline in the fiscal position of this province. You know, after the fiscally reckless years of the Getty government Ralph Klein balanced the budget. Ralph Klein paid off the debt. To ensure that that wouldn't happen again, the Klein government, which I was very proud to support, banned deficit spending in the future so that politicians like this couldn't come around and put their hands in the cookie jar again. And piece by piece successive governments have dismantled the laws that we put in place to protect taxpayers.

Piece by piece some reasonable measures were taken to allow for things like P3s and limited financing for capital projects under the Stelmach government. But it was the thin edge of the wedge. They did this with the best of intentions, I believe, but it was the thin edge of the wedge and eventually led to significant liabilities for P3s, led to growing liabilities for capital projects. It saw us draw down our \$17 billion sustainability fund in consecutive deficits.

Then under the Redford government we saw a total abolition of the remaining Klein legislation, the Fiscal Responsibility Act. The repeal of those bills led to a massive influx of debt financing in the province, that has left us in a very poor fiscal position, with virtually no savings left in the bank and a significant debt that will reach over \$60 billion in just a few short years.

But this government came in. Now, they got their math wrong during the election. They said that they would balance the budget by 2018. It turns out they forgot to carry a few numbers. Then they said that they would have to balance it by the end of 2019. Then within the first month of being in government, they said, "Well, that was wrong, too, so we're going to have to kick it back to 2020." But then they said: "You know what? Don't worry about this. We're going to get rid of even the remaining small restrictions that we have left on debt financing and deficit financing in this province." And they allowed now borrowing for the operations of the government. Absolutely disgraceful and irresponsible, Madam Chair. "But don't worry. We're going to put a cap of 15 per cent of debt-to-GDP on our financing. Don't worry. Anything beyond there would be reckless, and we won't be reckless." Just four and a half months later they come crawling into this Chamber and present us with a bill to repeal their own debt ceiling limit. It's shameful and embarrassing.

You know, I like to tell the Minister of Finance that it's my job to hold him accountable and to take his job in three years. If I have his job in three years, Madam Chair, and I pass a bill, I swear by the gods that I hope I never have to go through the disgrace of having to repeal my own legislation a few months after I pass it. I would be embarrassed. Either he didn't think it through then, or they had no intention of following through with it in the first place.

We warned the government repeatedly – repeatedly – that their revenue projections were ridiculous, and they called us fearmongers. They said: "Aw, you don't know what you're doing. Just trust us." Well, as Ronald Reagan used to say about the Soviet Union: trust but verify. We verified their numbers, and they turned

out to be bollocks. They turned out to be absolutely worthless, Madam Chair. They turned out to not be worth the paper they were written on. They have not even come close to hitting their revenue projections. First, during the campaign they moved their balanced budget date from 2018 to 2019. Within a month of getting elected, they moved it from 2019 to 2020. And then they moved it in the fall budget from 2020 to 2021. Now they're saying: best-case scenario, shot in the dark, maybe 2024. But that's not even a firm commitment.

Has anyone ever tried to drive a car on a dark road without headlights, Madam Chair? That's pretty much what this budget is akin to. They think vaguely they're heading west, but they're really just driving down a road with no headlights on. They have no idea where they're going. They have no idea where they're going.

**An Hon. Member:** They're leaping into the dark.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** They are leaping into the dark, Madam Chair.

You know, it really is sad to see a government that is supposed to represent Alberta, to have the best interests of Albertans at stake be unable to formally and equivocally divorce themselves from their federal organization, which is vehemently anti-Alberta, that has passed a Leap Manifesto that would crush the economy and send us back into the pre-industrial ages. I tell you that if there was such a thing as a Wildrose Party of Canada, however oxymoronic that term would be, if there was a federal Wildrose Party that passed policies that would crush the Alberta economy, the Wildrose Party would divorce itself from it unequivocally, and it's shameful that the members over here refuse to do the same with the Leap Manifesto.

**10:00**

During the main estimates we had the pleasure of having the Minister of Finance in. I really like it because when we're having a debate about the budget, he actually has to be there and answer questions, unlike other forms of debate that may or may not be taking place in the Chamber. When we sat down for debate on the estimates, we went through the absolute inability of the government to meet its revenue targets and how that's going to mean perpetual deficits for the foreseeable future. I asked a question of the Minister of Finance. I said: do you have any intention of bringing forward a provincial sales tax or harmonized provincial sales tax if not during this term of the government then in the future? Because they have no plan whatsoever to even get close to a balanced budget, I said: do you have any intention of bringing forward a PST in the next term?

**Mr. Nixon:** What did he say?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Well, the chair of the committee that I was at, the Resource Stewardship Committee, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, tried to block the question. He tried to protect the minister. He tried to protect the minister from even being asked the question. He said that that is not relevant to a budget debate. Madam Chair, the NDP tried to shut down questions during estimates, saying that it is not pertinent to the budget to ask the Minister of Finance if he has any intention of bringing forward a PST. That's like asking the Minister of Health if there's a plan to keep a hospital open.

They're afraid of Albertans knowing what they're up to. They're afraid that Albertans will see their hidden agenda for what it is. Now, we know the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is a hard-line socialist and a big fan of Hugo Chavez and had even said prayers to his name when Hugo Chavez passed away, but he abused his position as the chair of the committee to shut down questions about a provincial sales tax, arguing that a provincial sales tax had nothing

to do with the budget. How ridiculous is that? How ridiculous is that? That is because the NDP has no intention of having a legitimate budget debate. The Member for Calgary-Elbow and I had to put the chair back in his place – and he was pretty quiet after that – but he tried to shut down legitimate questions until we bit back, and he had to shut his mouth pretty quickly.

Madam Chair, the NDP want to shut down legitimate budget debate and not answer the questions. That is why I'm shocked to see that the Minister of Finance has not risen once in the House today to defend his own budget. We can't even get a single backbench member of the government to stand up and defend their budget.

Maybe the Member for Calgary-Currie will. I know we always have enjoyable interactions in the House. Perhaps the Member for Calgary-Currie will stand up and defend the budget, or perhaps my friends from Calgary-Northern Hills or Leduc-Beaumont, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, Banff-Cochrane. The people of Banff-Cochrane: I know a lot of folks in Banff-Cochrane who are very unhappy with the representation they're getting in this government right now. I'm working very hard with the Wildrose organizers on the ground, Madam Chair. They are quite upset with the way it's going. So perhaps the Member for Banff-Cochrane would like to stand up and defend his budget. I haven't seen him stand up for a very, very long time in this House. I'm not sure if it's because he doesn't actually agree with this budget or if his party whip isn't letting him stand up and defend it. Perhaps the party whip just isn't letting him stand up and defend it. Maybe the Member for Calgary Shaw. I have certainly met with a lot of his constituents, and they're very unhappy with the representation they're getting here. The Member for Calgary-Shaw should stand up and defend the budget.

Madam Chair, it is a basic principle, I believe, in this House that if you are going to vote for a budget, you should stand up and defend it for at least 30 seconds in this House. The Official Opposition is going to continue to press for answers from this government, and I would really hope that at least one member on that side of the House will stand up and answer questions to defend their budget before we vote on it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would hope that in this House we have robust debate about ideas, about policies, about bills under consideration. I don't think it's tremendously helpful to call out individual members and put them on the spot. I think that we've heard a lot of name-calling. I've heard the word "socialist" more times in the last 20 minutes than I've heard since my time as an undergrad at the noteworthy left-wing University of Victoria.

You know, I want to say a few things about this budget, about Bill 17. Some debt is okay. Sometimes some debt is okay. I think there's a clear argument to be made. The member previous, from Strathmore-Brooks, referenced the Ralph Klein era. That massive cutback in the '90s led to a substantial underinvestment in infrastructure in this province. That's a platform we ran on, to borrow responsibly to rebuild infrastructure in this province for the benefits that we will reap from having that infrastructure. There's a real need to rebuild hospitals and rebuild schools and build new schools and build new health facilities.

You know, it's like a mortgage. I bet you that almost everyone in this House, if not themselves personally then their families, has taken a mortgage at some point, and that is responsible borrowing. It's backed by an asset. That's okay. I have a real worry that our friends in the Wildrose, should the day come – and I hope it doesn't

– where they actually form government, will never borrow another penny ever again. [interjection] We now have confirmation from Strathmore-Brooks that they would never borrow a penny ever again. That is a recipe for massive cutbacks to front-line services. There's no other way to do it in a real challenging economic time. I don't know what our friends in the Wildrose would do.

At the very least, we have a budget here, which we're going to debate. Now, lest my friends on the other side get too excited, I'm not a big fan of this budget, because there is a middle way, a better way of dealing with the financial crisis that our province faces right now. Responsible borrowing for capital? That's okay. Borrowing for operations? That's not okay. It is the difference between mortgage debt and credit card debt. Credit card debt racks up over time, and it gets to be out of control. We've already heard that \$2 billion a year, in a couple of years, will be our debt-service cost alone. That's a 159 per cent increase. The debt ceiling being eliminated, which is a bill before this House later this morning, is a huge concern. That lasted less than six months.

I ask the question again: what if the forecasts are wrong? What if there's a further crisis? What will the terrible forest fires in Fort McMurray and area do to Alberta's budget? We don't know yet. We're still in crisis mode, and I sincerely hope that we move very quickly into recovery mode. I sincerely hope that the good people of Fort McMurray can find their way back as soon as possible, but that's going to have a substantial impact on the bottom line of the budget of this government. There's virtually no way, I think, at this point that we can even expect to hit the deficit number that we're facing. One of the reasons that you want to have a strong balance sheet and one of the reasons that you want to make sure that you have some flexibility in your budget is for unforeseen things like the terrible, terrible situation in Fort McMurray.

Now, what's happened there to date is not the fault of this government in the slightest. In fact, I think this government deserves a lot of praise for the way that they have responded to the forest fires. It is remarkable. I said this in estimates, and I'll say it again here for the House. I think the emergency response that's happened from this government and from the tremendous people in the Alberta Emergency Management Agency and in Transportation, in Energy, in Health, in Human Services, in Education, in every single department of this government that has anything to do with Fort McMurray, is nothing short of remarkable. It is tremendous, what has happened, I think something that we should be proud of as Albertans. We should be very proud of that, but the challenge that we face when we have a \$10 billion deficit is that when unforeseen things like a forest fire happen, we have no fiscal flexibility to deal with that. That puts us even further behind, and that is a real, real concern.

**10:10**

Not only is there no plan to get to balance, but there's no plan to get to surplus, because once the money is borrowed, well, it has to be paid back. We have this vague idea that perhaps, maybe in eight years, the budget maybe will balance itself magically, but there's no plan then to get to surplus. There's no plan to actually pay back the money that's been borrowed, and that's a real concern. So there are choices. There are choices this government can make.

I'm going to talk about some of those choices. I'm going to talk specifically about what we in the Alberta Party would do to address Alberta's fiscal crisis, and I would challenge every other opposition party to put forward their plans. This is something that I think is very important on the opposition side. It's, frankly, very easy to poke holes in what the government does. The government has no choice but to put forward legislation, put forward policy. That's your job, and our job on the opposition side is two things. We



oppose; we poke holes and identify areas where you might want to improve or things that we don't like. But there's a second half to that job, which I think is more important, and that's proposing ideas of what we would do differently. That's our job, equally and maybe even more so than simply tearing down what the government does.

In fact, I think it's far more consistent with Alberta values because in this province we are builders. We are doers in this province. We talk about what we would do. The Alberta Party's shadow budget: what would we do? We would balance the budget in four years. How would we do that? We would accommodate for population growth, and we would freeze but not roll back public-sector salaries. I think that's a fair request at a time when the great public servants – and I've talked about the work that's gone on in Fort McMurray. I think that's a really good indication of the quality of people that we have in this province working in Alberta's public service. I have a tremendous respect for those people. But when your neighbours are losing their jobs, when your neighbours are being asked to take a four-day work week and therefore a 20 per cent pay cut, I think it's fair that we ask public-sector workers to get paid the same next year as they got paid last year. I think that's fair because they have a stable, steady job. That is how we're going to bring costs in line in this province and get Alberta's spending back to at least the national average.

I think that's fair. We do that. It doesn't result in massive public-sector layoffs, it doesn't result in big front-line cuts, but with that wage freeze I think it's a fair request of our public service. So that does gradually bring our per capita spending back in line with the national average.

Now, the other thing we can do is engage in a genuine way with our public servants and ask them how they think we should find cost savings. There is scarcity in Alberta's economy right now. There is massive job loss; we have high unemployment. For the first time in three decades our unemployment is higher than the national average. There's scarcity out there that's being created by these market forces that are imposing on Alberta. We need to engage people in the public service to find ways of doing more with less. That's what every other company, every household is doing around this province, finding ways of getting more out of what they already have.

The only area where I don't see that happening in any meaningful way is the Alberta government. There is a way to engage those great people in the public service and ask them to do more with less, to think of innovative ways of streamlining processes. It's not just about moving a piece of paper from point A to point B. It's about an outcome for Albertans; it's about good service for Albertans. There are great people in there. What we need is real leadership from our provincial government to make that happen.

We agree with the small-business tax cut of 2 per cent. We agree with the idea of an investor tax credit, but it needs to be a broad-based investor tax credit. I asked earlier this week exactly how that investor tax credit will be rolled out. I can tell you there's a lot of concern that the tax credit is going to be over narrow, that it will result in the government picking winners and losers. It's very important, and I really do encourage the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to consult widely and to listen to those business owners and to really allow that to be as broad a tax credit as possible. Don't make the mistake that others have made previously. Ensure that we don't borrow for operational spending. Make that our hard-and-fast limit. If you want to legislate something, legislate that.

The carbon tax. I'm in favour of a carbon tax. Done properly, I think a carbon tax can help Alberta not only reduce our emissions but create a frame where in this province we can innovate. Alberta companies, Alberta entrepreneurs will develop technologies that we

can sell to the rest of the world. That will not only reduce Alberta's carbon emissions and find that elusive social licence we talk so much about in this House, but the world will see that Alberta is, in fact, a very responsible energy producer already and that we're only getting better by reducing carbon per barrel. We'll create technologies the world wants. That will help diversify our economy by pivoting off what we already do very well in this province.

If the carbon tax is done right, then we will achieve that goal, but if we have massive rebates to almost two-thirds of the province, I'm not sure that, in fact, that's done properly. So that remains to be seen. I imagine we will be debating that carbon tax even further in this House, so we'll see exactly how it's done. The principle of a carbon tax I support. The implementation and the way it works is an open question.

This budget makes me worried for the future of our province, not worried for the future of our province in terms of the total viability. I'm pretty sure that the sun is going to come up tomorrow once this budget is passed. But it puts us on the wrong path, and we need to find a middle way, a better way, a better way than massive front-line service cuts and a better way than massive, unsustainable deficits. There is a middle ground. Unfortunately, I haven't heard, aside from this end of the House, any of that tone in this debate.

With that, Madam Chair, I thank you very much for the time.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to this bill? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This comes from Wikipedia, the new, modern *Webster's* dictionary:

Financial literacy is the ability to understand how money works in the world: how someone manages to earn or make it, how that person manages it, how he/she invests it . . .

Investing, by the way, is how you turn that money into more money, a foreign concept to many across the way.

. . . and how that person donates it to help others. More specifically, it refers to the set of skills and knowledge that allows an individual to make informed and effective decisions with all of their financial resources.

Financial literacy is something that this NDP government just does not understand. They don't even pretend to. The \$2 billion in annual debt repayments that this government is going to impose on future generations is simply irresponsible. It truly is. It's easy for this government to boast about how much they're investing in the future, how you're investing in the children when you're spending someone else's money. It's a spend day every day. This government will spend, knowing full well that they won't be the ones who will have to deal with this debt. Now, ironically, it will be those very children that this government claims to be trying to help who will have to pay for this debt.

Now, if I might focus a little bit more on some specifics with the seniors budget. We found in the estimates process that this government has not prioritized elder abuse. The seniors minister stated that they spend less than \$1 million of a \$756 million budget protecting our seniors. This is a concern. The minister has also stated that the creation of an independent Seniors' Advocate would have cost \$10 million. Even though they have literally increased spending in every area of this government, protecting our seniors is not on their radar. It's too much money. It's about priorities. But I want the seniors out there to know that they do have an advocate. It is me, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. I will be their voice.

You know, this comes at a time when our most vulnerable are at risk. They don't have an appropriate venue to truly express their concerns. We found out in question period that the Seniors' Advocate has been vacant for almost 18 months. That is shameful.

Now, we understand that you put it all under Health. I find that even more interesting. At the same time that you took the Seniors' Advocate and put them under Health, your Health minister recognized that there was too much work involved and separated Seniors and Housing away from Health. So it's good for one, but it's not good for the other, and that is disappointing.

You know, the government just has not addressed the real-life implications of this carbon tax on everything, including housing-management bodies, who provide that social housing. They don't explain how these costs will be passed on to the vulnerable Albertans who rely on social housing. Their gas is going to go up. Their power is going to go up. Any repairs on their houses are going to go up. These are people, seniors who rely on social housing, that are on fixed incomes. This government hasn't performed a market assessment of how the carbon tax will affect everything. There is no due diligence here.

**10:20**

This government has stated that they're going to create 2,000 long-term care spaces over the next four but have yet to provide any details. They bragged about these 2,000 beds in the fall. They bragged about these 2,000 beds in the spring. Each time I asked for a plan. They have yet to provide a plan. Once again in estimates last week they bragged about building 2,000 long-term care beds: still no plan. That's a shame.

The creation of the SHARP program: it doesn't adequately address aging-in-place mechanisms. Instead, it gets this government into providing high-risk loans and placing caveats on seniors' homes. The grant portion for vulnerable Albertans is significantly lower than the loans, which is a signal that this government is not focusing on the needs of the most vulnerable. This experimental program is untested in Canada, but most of its details will come through regulatory changes. We are eagerly watching to see what will happen in the coming months. I understand that you're not going to use the Alberta Treasury Branches, which is the financial arm of this government. Instead, you're going to manage it yourselves. You're going to do the work of a bank through your bureaucracy. I'd certainly like to see what the staffing concerns are with that in your ministries.

The obligations on contractors to inform and educate and even show these people how to fill out the forms are concerning. You're asking independent contractors to do your work for you. The total liability that's based on eligibility is exponentially higher. I mean, this is really an irresponsible program, which I truly question, and I hope that not too many seniors will consider this. They do have other venues, and, quite frankly, many of them are independent enough to have those supports.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, I ask that this government truly reconsider their entire budget and study financial literacy and recognize what \$2 billion in debt repayments annually are going to do for future generations.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Bill 17, the Appropriation Act. Like many who have spoken today, there's no question in my mind that Alberta is at a crossroads. It's at a crisis point. Economics and crises that are going on in our far north raise some serious questions about how we're going to maintain a stable, dependable set of government services, the supports that people need for both expanding or maintaining the infrastructure that they live and work in, how we're going to maintain the services that Albertans have come to expect and, in many cases, have lowered

their expectations around. I'm thinking more particularly about the health system today.

This budget attempts to maintain stability, maintain support for the foundations of a healthy society, and I respect that. I guess that like some others who have raised questions about the current debt load that we're taking on and the clear indication that we're not planning to live within any constraints around taking on debt, I have real concerns about that. Indeed, it builds, I would say, on 20 years of living beyond our means, of passing on to future generations financial liabilities and other liabilities that have not been in the best interests of our children and our grandchildren. We need to be paying more of the standard at which we're wanting to live.

I'm not as concerned about the level of the debt that we're taking on. I am concerned about the lack of planning around reducing expenses where we can in the public sector. I'm pleased that we're at least freezing salaries, that we are looking at agencies, boards, and commissions and reviewing very critically the amount that we're spending there. Looking at efficiencies has to be number one.

We need infrastructure. We need this time of investment and maintaining jobs and growth and the maintenance of our capital infrastructure. But I guess I'm one who needs to see more indication that we have a vision, that we know where we're going in terms of savings, in terms of new sources of energy, new sources of economy, finances, and that we have a sense that as a society we are going to pay more of our share as opposed to passing it down the line to future generations.

That is a trend that was of course started by the PC government in the last 20 to 25 years and has left us in a tremendous vulnerability at this stage, but I don't see the solution in the current budget. I don't see a recognition that salaries have to be reviewed, public services have to be reviewed, user fees have to be looked at, new forms of revenue generation. Quite apart from hoping and praying that the oil and gas prices will improve, we have to look at some new sources of revenue. Current generations, especially my generation, have to start paying more.

We've talked about, I guess, royalties: no shift there. It's hard to talk about those things at a time when the oil industry is on its knees, but we have not been getting our fair share for the last 30 years. It means that now we're laden with massive, massive debts to continue the services that most other Canadians expect and Albertans certainly expect.

The dreaded provincial sales tax, that we don't seem to be willing to talk about, would actually generate, even at 2 per cent, the same taxes we were paying for many years before the Harper Tories cut it back to 5 per cent. So 2 per cent in Alberta and 5 per cent federally would bring us back up to what we were paying before and would bring in an extra, perhaps, \$2 billion a year and start to get a handle on the tremendous and growing debt that we're going to be again passing on.

I have no problem with capital borrowing. This is an investment in our future. It's an investment in more stable infrastructure. But we do need to start paying our way, and we do need to have a clearer plan to pull down that debt before we leave office. I don't see that here, so it makes me nervous in terms of what we're leaving to future generations.

I know that there are tremendous savings to be found in Health, which is about 42 per cent of our budget. Much frustration at the front lines of health that we're not using common sense in terms of purchasing, in terms of efficient use of resources, in terms of streamlining patient flow and getting at some of the earlier stages in the community, where we could be dealing with problems in doctors' offices, using fully the skills of nurses and nurse practitioners, expanding the scope of some of our primary care networks, where they could be doing so much more in terms of

mental health and addictions issues, which are now ending up in emergencies and beds inappropriately being used in long-term care. We calculated that something like \$50 million was spent last year just keeping people in hospitals, people that really were not helped in hospitals, were not healthy being in hospitals, needed to be out where there's more connection with the community and more opportunity for the kind of quality-of-life activities that actually bring back health. So we know that in health care, for example, there are tremendous opportunities for savings.

I talked yesterday, of course, about the importance of research in diversifying the economy and getting clear about the fact that medical research in this province has been nothing short of stunning globally. We are a world leader in research, have been up until the last 10 years, when we've seen that funding and the confidence eroded and the loss of over a hundred top researchers in the last year because of the lack of clarity about our commitment to health and medical research. There's a win-win there, both in drawing other resources into this province from across the country and across the world and also the opportunity for innovation and new technologies and some real business opportunities, which are so much of what we need to get off this single-industry roller coaster that we've been on.

10:30

Also, the concern about removing the debt cap – I called it a death cap, but it's a debt cap – and the many concerns about why we wouldn't want to constrain ourselves within some kind of limit and have changed so dramatically since the last commitment by the government to limit it to 15 per cent of GDP. Without a debt cap, how can we have any confidence that we know where we're going and how we're going to manage our financial future? If low oil prices are the new norm, there's a huge gap, then, in funding that we can be expected to receive over the next few years.

Not only does the bill contain nothing in the way of a debt cap; it offers nothing in terms of a debt repayment program. I think all of us need to be more forthright, I guess, especially the government of the day, in how we intend to bring that down to a manageable level.

I'm also concerned about the proposed amendment to the Financial Administration Act that aims to exempt the government from having to table before the House any loan agreement which involves a loan to an individual of less than \$500,000. It's not clear to me what the rationale there would be. Although the government has talked a lot about increasing openness and transparency, particularly since the former PC administrations were so challenged in that respect, I'd be curious to know: what is the government thinking in not making loans up to \$500,000 public? That's inordinate as far as most of us are concerned.

Madam Chair, I can't support the overall budget without a stronger indication that these folks know where they're going, how they're going to get there, how we're going to leave our future in better financial shape, how we're going to pay more of our share in these years, currently, and how we're going to manage, I guess, what's become a much more affluent culture and the high expectations that have come out of that and the need to start reining in some of the expectations across the board in our public sector. That includes physicians, but it doesn't preclude all of the other high earners in our society. That should be reviewed as well. I think that in some ways the medical profession is being held up as a scapegoat in some of the spending.

I think we need to look at all aspects of our public spending and recognize that all of it needs to be reviewed. We need to get more real about paying our way, whether it's in the public sector or the private sector or in government services generally.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any further comments with respect to the bill? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that debate be adjourned on Bill 17 at this time and that when the committee next rises and reports, it reports progress.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 10

### Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is a challenging bill. In many ways this is a more terrifying and dangerous bill than the budget itself. This is a bill that raises the debt ceiling.

During the summer I spent a lot of time visiting some amazing people in my riding. I was able to converse with families that live in the cities and in the towns and in the countryside. I talked with business owners and farmers and teachers and nurses, and the list goes on. Not a single one of them suggested to me that the government should take on unlimited debt. I can say with a hundred per cent certainty that no one said that I should suggest to the government to remove the debt cap. Nobody said that or mentioned it or even referred to that in a joke, so to speak. Madam Chair, it is not a joking matter.

Bill 10 came up after the budget, and not a single person was laughing, well, except the Finance minister and possibly the Premier, as they announced a budget with a \$58 billion debt for Albertans. They knew they needed to have some way to permit that. That picture of them laughing actually went viral.

Now constituents are talking about unlimited debt, except they aren't laughing yet. Some are laughing, thinking it's a prank, thinking that it's Facebook information that doesn't have the facts straight, but when I assure them that this government is truly going to eliminate any limit on debt, they stop laughing, and they ask: what can you do to stop this? I tell them: we'll try and talk sense into them, but they rarely listen and never listen on spending issues. There's no laughter from them after that. When we're done talking about the massive amounts of debt planned to be accumulated by this government, they give a sad look at their children, knowing that they are the ones that will have to pay this debt back.

Our generation and even our children's generation won't have to pay this debt back. It'll be their generation, the kids that are in grades 1, 2, and 3, our grandchildren, that will be paying back this debt. I've even had people say to me: "I don't want their stupid family benefit, but I have to pay taxes in order to create it. They've forced me. I have no choice but to pay taxes on it, and I get less back from it." People today will enjoy the benefits of a government who is willing to spend and spend and spend. People today will enjoy the millions of dollars being spent on this program and that program, but eventually the money runs out. Eventually our credit rating is so poor that we cannot borrow anymore. Of course, this government will be long gone and won't have to deal with it, but eventually we have to pay the money back, and our kids and our grandkids will have to pay the money that was spent on their parents.

You know, it's been said that there is a terrible bias in NDP policy. It's been called the grey bias. It's the bias that favours the baby boom generation. It's a bias against the younger generation. There is very little benefit in this budget, or in this allowance of spending money endlessly, for the younger generation. It's all aimed at the current baby boom generation.

Instead, we should talk about reductions in spending somehow. This government could just save pennies in each area, and it would make a difference. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade says that Bill 11 will save us \$2 million a year, pennies on the dollar, really. And Bill 11 didn't cut front-line workers. It is actually entirely possible to make small savings in many places and to make small efficiencies in many departments without cutting front-line workers. You can die from a million cuts, but it isn't necessary. I know this government knows it is possible to do so. We need to always be finding ways to reduce our spending, and we do not need to always be increasing spending.

I was reading the comments in a newspaper article not long ago that announced the removal of the debt limit. One person was arguing that they set a limit on how much they spend for their family and that it's completely reasonable that the government should set a limit. The rebuttal was quite entertaining. The rebuttal was that the government has so many more levers to pull to deal with their debt and that it doesn't matter how much debt we have. Really? Well, in a way they're right. Government does have lots of levers they can pull with regard to debt, yet every lever that the government can pull affects Albertans in one way or another. Take taxes out of this tap and taxes of that tap and taxes out of the next tap: taxes are all paid by Albertans. It's not some lever the government can pull at will. Taxes are people's hard-earned incomes and their lives, and the government needs to respect that income and their realities.

Government cannot just take that income for granted, thinking that money grows on trees, because one day the fire will come. We're very aware of that these days. Forests need the pruning of a regular fire. Experts in forestry know that. Without it, we end up with massive destructive wildfires that come through. It's the same in government spending. Without a bit of regular cutting back, we get stuck with out-of-control burns.

This government likes to blame Ralph Klein for cutting back excessively. Well, you know, the reality is that if that happens in the future, it will be this government's fault because they will not allow for any cuts or restraints. They will put us in a place where there is no option and no choice, and we'll have that kind of experience.

10:40

Governments can finance their debt differently than a household – it's another lever that can be pulled – but as we are seeing already, this process becomes more and more expensive as the debt increases. Our debt rating is already falling and will continue to fall as our debt increases. We will not get a better interest rate because we are a repeat customer. That's not how this works. Every time we borrow a few billion more, the interest rate increases. Those interest payments are completely wasted money. Those interest payments could be spent on front-line workers: more nurses or teachers or firefighters. Instead, we'll be paying the bank back for decades to come if this government continues on the course it has set.

Madam Chair, this is not a good idea, this bill. This is a slippery slope that does not lead to greener pastures. I do not know what has to be done to convince the members opposite that this needs to stop. I don't know how long it will take to pay back \$58 billion. I do know, though, that it will not be paid back in the same amount of time that it was racked up. It's easy to spend lots of money, but it's not easy to pay it back. This government is stuck with the revenue it has now. This government needs to make a serious effort to restrain spending and to get back on track towards balanced budgets.

There's a reason that most debt financing is financed by the largest money market in the world, the largest finance market in the world, which is the bond market. The reason they call it bonds is

because it immediately puts you into bonds. It restricts and it restrains.

I'd like to make a reference also to Bill 15, which this government has put forward, as an example, a bill to limit predatory lending, which we all agree is shameful. Predatory lending is shameful, and this government has introduced a bill to curb predatory lending. Yet this government needs to be protected from itself. It needs to be protected from its own dangerous, compulsive going to lenders and becoming a compulsive borrower. The predatory lending bill requires that financial literacy be taught to borrowers, yet this government in its own borrowing is not paying attention to financial literacy. The bill on predatory lending requires signs and declarations and a complete disclosure of all the terms and conditions and costs and interest rates, yet none of this has been declared to the people of this province as we enter into this experience as a province. The costs have not been fully declared. There's an inconsistency here, Madam Chair.

The bill on predatory lending prohibits rolling loans into new loans and refinancing them, yet that's what governments do over and over and over again continually. The bill on predatory lending seeks to stop the vicious payday loan cycle, yet here we are as a province plunging ourselves into a vicious loan cycle. I don't see how these two things can come from the same people.

A recent government survey with regard to predatory lending found that 3 out of 4 Albertans agree that Alberta should limit the amount of money that can be borrowed at a predatory loan office. So 3 out of 4 Albertans agree that predatory lending should be limited, yet here we are as a province removing the limits, completely opening the door to expose ourselves to every possible amount of predatory lending you can possibly imagine. It is completely contradictory, completely ludicrous for our province to be doing this.

I ask the members of this House to please vote against this bill. Keep your promise to stick to a debt limit, please. I ask you on behalf of common sense and on behalf of future generations to defeat this crazy bill.

**The Chair:** I'll recognize the hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm happy to stand up and speak to Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, which, in my mind, I've been thinking about as the motherhood, apple pie, and monsters bill because there are a couple of things in there that are a little bit like motherhood and apple pie, that are hard to argue with. The bill co-ordinates some of the standards with the federal government. It seems like a nice, common-sense thing to do. It makes sense. The problem is that the bill includes the monster, and the monster is taking the cap off the debt ceiling.

Now, before this government was elected and came to what they call power and what I call the responsibility to look after Albertans – as much as I don't really care for the debt-to-GDP ratio, the previous government expressed it in different terms – the debt-to-GDP ratio was about 4 per cent, by far the lowest in the country. There was a buffer there in the financial position so that the province, faced with tough times, would be able to react accordingly. If people didn't think that that was a reasonable level then, I think many of them surely do now, faced with what we're faced with today.

Where we are now is that we've gone to a place where the government has gone from roughly a 4 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio and in the last budget raised it to 15 per cent, almost four times the amount of debt that the previous government had allowed itself. It was, like, four and a half months ago, five months ago tops, that the government said, "Fifteen per cent debt-to-GDP is responsible. We won't go above that. It's a place where we think it's better than most

provinces,” which might be true, but I’m not sure that the province of Alberta should be reaching for the bottom. I think we should be reaching for the top. So as much as the government has a point, that it’s better than some of the other provinces, the fact that it’s going completely the wrong way and reaching for the bottom should give all Albertans concern. You know, that step alone would see Alberta increase its debt to nearly \$60 billion in this budget.

Now, here’s the crazy thing. Here’s the monster. The fact is that the government wants to take the limit completely off, saying that it’s not enough that in 2019 every person coming to Alberta and every child born in Alberta will owe the provincial government \$13,000 on day one: welcome to Alberta; you now owe \$13,000 to your province. They’re saying that that’s not enough. I’m not sure, Madam Chair, what the government anticipates, whether they anticipate that they are going to borrow even more than their budget says that they’re going to borrow or whether they think that their policies are going to cause the province’s economy to shrink so much that that’s going to put them offside. Perhaps it’s both. In fact, I’m a little afraid that it’s both.

In order to get us past this, because this is clearly bad policy – this is clearly irresponsible; this is clearly a sign that things are out of control – I would like to, with your permission, Madam Chair, move an amendment that I think will improve the bill. I have the requisite number of copies prepared and signed off by the lawyers around here if that’s okay. Now, the amendment is a short one. Everybody is going to get a copy, with your permission.

**The Chair:** Just give me a moment till I see the amendment.

**Mr. McIver:** No. I understand. You’re the boss here as far as this stuff goes, so I’ll be happy to wait.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. I move that Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by striking out section 5. Of course, section 5 is where the debt limit, the cap on the debt, is removed. The government shouldn’t be all that negative about this because what we’re saying is – and listen. I didn’t love or support the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio that the government put on a mere five months ago, but I’m saying: let’s not make it higher than what the government told us ever so recently was okay. This amendment is designed to protect Albertans and keep in place the debt ceiling that was instituted by this government so recently.

**10:50**

You know, the government just over a year ago took control of a government with a \$7 billion fiscal sustainability fund. They were coming off a budget with a billion dollar surplus and a debt-to-GDP ratio of about 4 per cent max. Since that time, since this budget has come out, we know now that the \$7 billion fund will be gone. The billion dollar surplus will be replaced with a \$10.4 billion deficit, and the government is now, on top of that, wanting to increase the amount they can borrow above the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio, that they told us ever so recently was all that they would need and was responsible and that they could stick to.

When you think about it, Madam Chair, this isn’t a big adjustment for government. This is just a chance for the government, if they support this, to say: “Yeah. You’re right. You’re right. The promise we made to Albertans ever so recently, less than half a year ago, is one that we’ve decided to keep to be responsible and put a limit on how much we borrow, as Albertans have to do.” Albertans have a limited amount of revenue that they can grab. Albertans know that after all the money is gone, you have to stop spending one way or another.

In fact, when you’re borrowing money, once you get to the end of your credit limit, you certainly have to stop borrowing because at some point they will make you stop borrowing. The government has received some pretty clear signs from some pretty responsible bodies that we’re getting near there. You know, three different credit-rating agencies have lowered Alberta’s triple-A credit rating. I would say that this is a chance for the government to say: “We are heeding the warning signs. We see the red lights flashing on the dash, and we’re going to pull over before the engine blows up because that’s the responsible thing to do.”

With that, Madam Chair, thank you. I would move that amendment and will listen to the debate, and I will hope for the support of the Legislative Assembly.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I’m pleased to stand in support of this amendment. I was eagerly awaiting a chance to put forward an identically worded amendment myself. I think, instead, we’ll move to support the amendment put forward by the hon. leader of the third party.

Bill 10 has been given a rather innocuous name. This government has a funny habit with bills. It gives bills with no substance, that do nothing at all, these big, interesting names. Bill 1, if I recall, is the economic diversification bill. It’s a big bill with a grand name about economic diversification and development, that does absolutely nothing. It gives the minister a job description. It does nothing, but it has a big name. On the contrary, Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, is about the most boring name I can think of for a bill, but it is very substantive. This bill seeks to completely remove any limits whatsoever on the ability of the government to borrow. It seeks to remove any restraint on government whatsoever and its ability to borrow from future generations.

We did not get here overnight. We’ve been running nine consecutive deficits in a row. We’ve been running deficits since 2008. Now, in 2008 it was reasonable for the province, perhaps, to go into a brief and temporary deficit. We had \$17 billion in the sustainability fund. That money was set aside for a rainy day, but unfortunately we never stopped using the sustainability fund.

I have to call out the member, the leader of the third party, when he says that this government inherited a surplus. It did not. According to page 110 of the fiscal plan – you can look at the change in net financial assets, which is effectively the way we used to record the deficit in this province until Alison Redford shamefully tore up the most accountable budgetary accounting system in this province when they divided the budget into three different pots to try to deceive Albertans about how big the deficit really was.

Our net financial assets are the financial value of the government in a year. Those net financial assets declined by \$9 billion last year. You cannot take a \$9 billion hit to your bottom line and claim that you’re running a surplus, Madam Chair. That is ridiculous. That is trying to deceive Albertans.

**Mr. McIver:** The Auditor General disagrees.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Now, I know that the leader of the third party has to try and defend an old record. I’m not interested in rehashing it, but I’m just going to point out, Madam Chair, that I’m not going to stand here and let people claim that this government inherited a good fiscal situation when they inherited eight consecutive deficits before them. This government has made a bad situation worse, but let’s not pretend that they inherited a good situation to begin with. They inherited eight years of fiscal irresponsibility: massive spending increases, massive debt, tearing up all of our fiscal

accountability laws. Bill 10 is in a long tradition of watering down our financial accountability legislation in this province.

When I was the Alberta director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, I got into pretty big fights with the then Minister of Finance as he repealed Jim Dinning's extremely effective financial accountability legislation, legislation that – Jim Dinning said that if any politicians after us try to repeal it, they would, quote, have to look Albertans in the whites of their eyes and ask them why they are willing to accept subpar government. That is a quote from Jim Dinning. There is only one party in this Legislature right now that represents the values of Jim Dinning and Ralph Klein in this House, and that is the Wildrose, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, it is a bit rich to come in here and act like this government inherited a pristine fiscal situation and then squandered it. They inherited a big deficit and made it worse. In the last year of the former government our government ran a \$9 billion consolidated deficit. They can try and call it a surplus. Alison Redford tried it, too, and Albertans saw through it because it was bunk. This government has taken a \$9 billion deficit and turned it into a \$14 billion consolidated deficit. A \$14 billion consolidated deficit. Let me put it in terms that I think everybody can understand. If you are spending more than you are bringing in, you're running a deficit. I don't care what accounting tricks you've got to try to cover it up. Now, that's enough of correcting the record there.

Let's talk about the substance of this bill. I do not support legislation that gives government a free hand to do things without any accountability. I was elected to come here and stand up for taxpayers and stand up for accountability, accountability and limited government, restraint on the power of the state. When politicians vote themselves new power, when politicians vote to remove any restraint on their ability to act with other people's money, I will oppose it. The Wildrose will oppose it every time we see it, too, Madam Chair. What we're seeing here is an attempt by the government to remove the very last vestiges of restraint on the ability of the government to borrow.

It has already led to crippling multiple downgrades of our credit rating. We have seen every credit-rating agency in Canada downgrade this government's credit rating. Now, they like to pretend that it's the price of oil, but if it was the price of oil, would we have received a credit downgrading one day, less than 24 hours, after the budget was introduced? If this was about the price of oil, they would have just downgraded our credit rating when the price of oil went down, but the credit-rating agencies downgraded our credit rating when the budget came out. It is the budget that is responsible for our credit downgrading. It is the NDP that is responsible for the credit downgrading, not the price of oil in this province, Madam Chair.

**11:00**

The reason they are downgrading our credit rating constantly – and we face future downgrades beyond this, very likely, Madam Chair – is because this government does not have an ability to cut a penny out of the government. They fearmonger and say that cutting a single penny out of this government's operating expenses will result in mass layoffs of thousands of nurses, doctors, and teachers. They say that if you were to spend even close to the national average, if we were to spend per capita anywhere even close to British Columbia, we would have no nurses, doctors, or teachers. Well, British Columbia spends two and a half thousand dollars less per capita on operations in government. Two and half thousand dollars less per capita. They've still got roads, bridges, nurses, doctors, teachers. They've got, actually, a pretty big government and welfare state, Madam Chair, yet somehow they manage to do it at two and half thousand dollars less. But the members opposite

claim that getting even anywhere close to going in that direction will result in mass layoffs in the government and absolute government shutdown. It is fearmongering, and Albertans know better.

They don't have an ability to cut anything in the budget except for one thing, Madam Chair, and that's the emergency budget. The emergency budget. On average, this province spends half a billion dollars every single year on emergencies. We've done it for a decade. Every single year we spend between \$400 million and \$600 million on disasters and emergencies in the province. It is the oldest trick in the book. We've been doing it for a very long time in the province, and the new government is continuing on with it. That is that the government consistently will underbudget at the beginning of the fiscal year for emergencies to make their deficit look smaller, knowing absolutely that they will spend more on emergencies at the end of the day to make their deficit look smaller at the beginning of the year. So at the end of the year, if they have a deficit, which they most certainly will, they can say: "Oh, how did we know that there'd be an emergency somewhere in this province? How did we know that there'd be a fire or a flood or a tornado or a windstorm? We had no idea that these things would happen because none of us can predict the weather."

But we do know that there will be disasters every single year, and we should budget accordingly for it. Instead, we see these games with the budget, where they underbudget on emergencies to make the deficit look smaller at the beginning of the year, and then when they inevitably have a significant amount of disaster spending at the end of the year, they get to blame the deficit on it and shirk all responsibility. It is a proud and long tradition of budget manipulation in this province, and I'm very ashamed to see that the NDP have continued to do it. They have found one area where they are willing to cut out of the budget, and it was the one area where the Wildrose says that we need to increase spending, and that is emergency and disaster spending in this province, Madam Chair.

Now, there was a great video going around on YouTube a few weeks ago. It was: this guy goes into the banker's office, and he's requesting a higher debt limit. He's saying: "I want to go on vacation. Going down to Australia, leaving tomorrow. I need some more money." And his banker says to him: "You're not making enough money. You're spending far more. You've got a huge debt already. You don't have any ability to pay this off." And the guy says: "Well, I cut my expenses. I stopped going out for an expensive lunch once a week." And it was obviously a drop in the bucket. The banker says: "I'm sorry; that's just not going to cut it. I can't authorize to give you more credit. We can't raise your debt limit. We can't give you more credit." And just as he's about to give up hope on getting more money out of the bank, it occurs to him that he can sign his child up for a line of credit. He brings his kid in, and his kid signs on the dotted line, and he gets to enjoy the money and leave the bill for his kid. That is what Bill 10 is doing right now, Madam Chair. That's what Bill 10 is doing.

Right around the time that this budget was introduced, I had a new niece born, Lucy Graham. She was born just within a few days of this budget coming out. By the time the next election comes, she will have over \$5,000 of debt to her name. She'll be just about three years old with \$5,000 of debt to her name. By the time she can vote, by the time she can vote for politicians to undo the damage being done right now and done over the last decade, she will have more debt to her name, to her provincial government alone, than could put her through university. My niece Lucy will have as much debt to her name that would be able to put her through an undergraduate program at the University of Calgary as it will take to pay off the provincial debt alone. That is absolutely shameful, Madam Chair. It is unethical. This is not just a fiscal and budgetary issue now. This

is now an issue of the moral fitness of what we are doing. It is immoral to vote to put this kind of debt on future generations without them having any say over it whatsoever. It is taxation without representation.

The amendment put forward by the Member for Calgary-Hays is identical to the amendment that was going to be put forward by myself at this time. It is a prudent amendment to strike out the worst part of Bill 10, and I think all members of the House should be strongly encouraged to support it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert on amendment A1.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise on this amendment. It's a very interesting amendment. I'm sure it will come as a shock to the opposition members that I will not be supporting this amendment. When I was a child and in school in the years of Premier Klein, who hon. members across the aisle like to talk up a lot – I will be excited to see if the hon. member continues applauding for Premier Klein later – I recall that every single year on the first day of school we were told that there simply was not enough space in the school for students. We had to close down our peripheral spaces. We needed to pull in more portables, and that school still hasn't seen a renovation. In my constituency we have schools that were promised a renovation under Premier Getty, and they are just now seeing that renovation.

That infrastructure debt is not something to be proud of. That is something to be ashamed of. I am proud that this government is investing in infrastructure, investing in our families and communities, and I will strongly urge all members to vote down this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to rise to support this amendment. It's really, I think, a strong reflection of where we're at. We've had the likes of Moody's, Dominion Bond Rating Service, Standard & Poor's all take this province down a notch in terms of our credit reliability and our credit rating and our credit costs as we go forward. We're looking at \$57.6 billion accumulated debt by 2019, but that's with highly optimistic views on the price of oil. I think – we had some calculations in this House the other day – that we might be off by \$2 billion or \$3 billion if the energy prices do not rebound and do not reflect the projections that this government has put in place on those as well. We have a possibility of stranded capital compensation for shutting down coal by 2030, and those are estimated at between \$3 billion and \$16 billion on top of that. We have other possible costs and expenses, unbudgeted expenses, sadly, things like the Fort McMurray fire, which could cost us a half a billion dollars or more once compensated.

Madam Chair, that takes us up to close to \$70 billion by the end of 2019, and I've done some quick calculations. That works out to roughly \$16,000 per man, woman, and child. The average size of a household in Alberta is 2.6 people, so that works out to about \$41,600 per household in Alberta that this province is going to face because of this irresponsible borrowing and no plan to pay it back.

11:10

Madam Chair, this is the problem here. The last time I checked, households in Alberta, when they go out to borrow – again, fiscal responsibility is not about not borrowing. It's about borrowing responsibly. When a household goes out, number one, hopefully

they're looking at what they can truly afford, and modesty guidelines are something they take into account, whether it's a principal residence to borrow for so that they can provide appropriate and affordable housing for themselves, transportation, those sorts of things.

Madam Chair, when they do that, when do the payments start? They go to the bank, they take out a loan, they buy that dream home, and that dream home could be a starter home, it could be a mobile home, it could be a move-up home for them. But when do they start paying the interest on that? Right away. The next month, that payment comes out of their bank account, and they need to know that they can pay that yet still put food on the table, still put fuel in their cars. That's another issue because it's going to be more expensive for them as we go forward, thanks to this government. They've got to pay their heating, electrical bills. They want to save for their children's education. They want to save for their own retirement.

Madam Chair, this is responsibility. This is planning to invest in infrastructure, planning to invest in things, not operations. They're not going to go and buy their groceries on that debt. Hopefully, they're not going to take their mortgage and go and take on a second mortgage to pay for their groceries.

Madam Chair, this debt that we're looking at, \$41,600 per household, works out to \$243 a month. Now, I was looking at some numbers here, and I think that not only are we paying a huge amount of interest on that, increased because of our downgraded credit ratings, but on top of that take a look at the opportunity that is lost to Albertans: the ability to save for their children's educations, their retirement, to pay down their mortgages faster so that they can put more money in the bank for themselves in case of an emergency like a downturn in the economy, so that they have savings that they can draw upon in tough times. That \$243 a month could calculate into a hundred thousand or, if they're lucky with their investments, a few hundred thousand dollars towards their retirement or towards the reduction of other personal debt.

Madam Chair, that's where the irresponsibility of this borrowing is, and this amendment recognizes the fact that this is an irresponsible, ideologically driven move to continue down a path that Albertans cannot afford.

This is not government money. This is Albertans' money, and the sooner we all recognize that in this House, that there is no such thing as government money – there are taxpayers' hard-earned dollars, and those hard-earned dollars typically, when they have to spend it across their own threshold, are after-tax dollars already. They've paid their fair share, and what we're doing is that we're taking that money they give us and we're spending more and we're borrowing against that even further so that they will have somewhere between \$13,000 and \$16,000 per person debt – man, woman, child, and unborn baby – in 2019, and that is shameful for us here in this House, Madam Chair. We need to be more responsible with the taxpayers' hard-earned dollars. This is not government money. This is not ours to take lightly when we are but frugal and humble stewards of those dollars, but we are also here to be very cautious when we borrow on their behalf, and I do not see that in this bill.

Madam Chair, I could go on and on with this because – you know what? – it makes my blood boil when I look at what this does to future Albertans, to the next generation, to new immigrants we're trying to attract, to new workers we're trying to attract to this province so that we can welcome them with an invoice.

You know, Madam Chair, this irresponsibility is something that we – this is man, woman, and child. These are low-income men, women, and children. This is senior citizens, men and women. This is their children and their grandchildren. This is not some magical number. These are not people that we can reach into their wallets

deeper. This is every man, woman, and child in Alberta, unborn, on the day they're born in 2019. That, Madam Chair, is irresponsible, and that's why I will be supporting this amendment to remove that increased lending, which is irresponsible on the backs of Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just want to briefly respond to the hon. member and just pose some questions. When his party was the government, over the last 10 or 15 years the money flowed like honey, especially during the period in the early part of the 2000s, when the price of natural gas was sky-high, and the revenues poured in at that time. In fact, just natural gas royalty revenue alone in a couple of those years approached \$8 billion, a windfall that the government had. Now, despite that, people were warning the government that it was important to diversify the sources of income of the government as well as to diversify the economy.

In fact, in 2007 the Emerson report, appointed by then Premier Ed Stelmach, made that recommendation very clearly, one of its top recommendations in 2007, and warned about that, but the government didn't listen. The question I have is about all the billions of dollars from royalty resources that that government had. Where are they? Where did they go? And why didn't that government diversify the economy and diversify the sources of revenue of this province?

What they did instead, when they were floating on that sea of natural gas royalty money, was to cut taxes for their friends. So when they brought in the flat tax, Madam Chair, it actually increased the tax burden on middle-class Albertans, and it cut the taxes of the super wealthy by a massive amount. By a massive amount. That's what they did. They used the money to help their rich friends, to cut corporate taxes in this province from, well, it was at that time about 15 and a half per cent down to 10, and according to Steve West they were headed all the way to 8 per cent.

The Wildrose cheers and claps, but they have no way of substituting the revenue to prevent the cuts. They'd like to pretend that they're not going to cut massively in this economy, that they're not going to cut government expenditures. They like to pretend that they can cut billions of dollars from capital spending, billions of dollars from operational spending and not affect anything. Madam Chair, it strains credulity. Nobody believes that. Nobody believes that they're going to be able to cut billions of dollars from the expenditures of the government without seriously affecting people, laying off people.

Now, they get all mad when we say, "You're going to lay off teachers and nurses," but they try to pretend, Madam Chair, that they're doing this somehow by magic. By magic they're going to retain all of the front-line services in the province. They're not going to borrow a dime, and they're not going to increase taxes. In fact, they were applauding taking corporate taxes down another couple of per cent. They seem to think that they can square this circle, that they can make all of these things happen simultaneously. Well, when you're in government, you have certain choices, and the choices available to you in difficult economic circumstances are to cut spending, which is what they want to do, or to increase revenues or to borrow. Those are the only three tools that you have.

Madam Chair, one of the things that we've been through before – and I think this is why the public is so strongly in support of retaining the services that we have in this province. It's because they saw that movie before. They saw what Ralph Klein did when he was the Premier. He cut to the bone, you know, our health care

system, and it's never fully recovered. The people of Alberta know what that looks like. That's not what they want.

Now, you know, it's an important, I think, fact . . . [interjections] I'll just wait to see if they want to settle down on the other side, Madam Chairman. Probably not. Probably not.

11:20

**The Chair:** Hon. members, the hon. member has the floor, please.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, there's no difference – it's like night and day with the lack of manners on the part of the opposition side when government MLAs are speaking, as we see now. As we can see now, the government sits and listens to some of the twaddle from the other side . . . [interjections]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, please.

**Mr. Mason:** . . . with great forbearance and patience most of the time.

I just want to conclude by getting back to the PCs. I mean, obviously, the Wildrose would take us from the PC frying pan into the Wildrose fire. The PC government had every opportunity to diversify the sources of income of this province. They had billions upon billions of windfall royalty dollars to manage that process.

Instead, Madam Chairman, they squandered the money. There's no money left. They've left us in this vulnerable position and left us to try and clean up the mess that they made, and they stand there on their side and point the finger at this government for trying to do the right thing under very difficult circumstances, which are entirely of that former government's making. So we make no apology for the direction that we're going forward in. This is what the people of Alberta need, and we will fix the PCs' mess.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** We've just had a request to do an introduction.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah, Madam Chair. I think that if you seek it, we would be able to get unanimous consent to quickly revert to introductions for the school group that's here, if that's possible.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly members of the grades 5 and 6 class of a small town by the name of Champion in my riding. If I could ask a couple of well-respected people from the riding, Todd Thompson and Amanda Ellis, to please rise with the rest of the grades 5 and 6 class of the Champion school so they could receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Bill 10

#### Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (continued)

**The Chair:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow. Proceed, hon. member.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's wonderful to see the students from Champion school here to see us as we debate important bits of legislation and to take part in the democratic process. So nice to see you here.



I always find it edifying and educational when I hear from the Government House Leader, with his many, many, many years of experience in this House. Just two? Not a third “many”? No. But I think you have something to teach us.

Back on Bill 10, let’s talk about exactly what this amendment does. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment because I think it’s important. One of the most important things government can do is to impose some constraints on public spending, some parameters. I think of it as sort of two telephone poles on the prairie. They’re not telling us exactly where to get to, just somewhere in there. Unfortunately, what section 5 of Bill 10 does is that it removes any possible constraint on government spending. In the private sector, in the market we have these natural forces of the market which will tell you what you can spend, what your expenditures can be, what your costs are, how much you can charge your customers.

That isn’t the case in government. We don’t have, necessarily, the same constraints in the same way, so it’s the job of government to put some parameters in, to put some guidelines in. That’s exactly what that 15 per cent debt-to-GDP cap did. You know, I think that it’s important for us to understand, when we talk about Alberta’s debt-to-GDP ratio, the importance that credit-rating agencies place on the debt-to-GDP ratio. It is not the only measure that they use to determine what Alberta’s credit rating will be, but it’s a very important measure. More important, though, than the specific number itself is that it sends a signal to the market that Alberta is a responsible fiscal operator, that it has a plan to constrain debt, that therefore any money that is lent to Alberta is in safe hands, and that those who are lending that money will have a reasonable expectation of getting paid back.

Now, let’s have a bit of a lesson here in how credit-rating agencies work. They look at risk: what is the risk of default on a particular loan? Now, as a result of Alberta’s relatively strong balance sheet and relatively low risk, to date we have very low interest rates. That’s a good thing.

The Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert talked about a school facility that was old and constrained and that there was never enough classroom space. That is exactly the problem that we need to solve in this province, absolutely. It’s a very real problem, not just in Spruce Grove-St. Albert but all around this province. We do need to build more schools, we do need to update the schools that we have, and in doing that, we stimulate the economy and create jobs. Keynesian economics: it makes all the sense in the world when we’re borrowing for capital because there’s an asset behind it, and to do so in an economic downturn makes sense. We don’t want to do it all the time.

But borrowing for operations, which is what exceeding the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP cap allows this government to do, puts really no constraint on spending, and that’s a big problem. So that’s why I think it’s so important that we vote in favour of this amendment.

There’s just one final point I want to make. This government in their original plan in the election said that they were going to balance the budget by 2017. Clearly, there was a bit of a math error, and that turned into 2018. So that’s two plans. Then they got into government, and they said: well, actually, it’s going to have to be 2019. That’s three plans. And the fourth plan? What’s the fourth plan? The fourth plan is no plan at all. There’s absolutely no plan or interest in balancing the budget. That’s why it’s important to have some caps. You can work with the public service and you can work with Albertans and say: “Look. Here’s the level of service we’re able to provide. Here’s how much we’re able to spend on it because there’s a limit.”

What removing this cap does is that it makes that borrowing unlimited. It makes the easy choice the only choice. They’ve tried everything except actually constraining spending in any sort of

meaningful way, which is why I’m enthusiastically supportive of this amendment, and I would sincerely hope all members of the House would vote in favour.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I’ll be voting in favour of this amendment because I’ve worked very hard all my life to provide for my family and make sure that my kids were well equipped for the future so that they would have a better chance of succeeding. My wife and I worked very hard to make sure that we’ve provided an inheritance that will be passed down from one generation to another so that future generations in our family will have a better chance of succeeding as well. Families have been doing this for many, many generations throughout Canada, Europe, all over the world. It’s nothing really new.

The unfortunate part is that all of my and my wife’s hard work could be negated by legislation like Bill 10 and the budget that’s about to be passed. Passing on uncontrollable debt to our future generations in this province I find very, very distasteful, so anything that I can do as a member here to slow that process down, I will do to my utmost. If that makes me a conservative, I guess that’s a good thing. Madam Chair, I cannot and will not support this bill or any other legislation that puts my family’s or Albertans’ future in jeopardy, and I can’t understand how anyone in this Chamber can justify doing so. For those reasons, I’ll be supporting this amendment and voting against this bill.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A1? The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Okay. Thanks, Madam Chair. I’m happy to stand and close on this, correct the record on a few things, and provide some information.

It was interesting. We heard about the economy not being diversified, but in fact I know that I tabled a document in this House a few months ago that I would recommend to the reading of the House leader of the government, a document that shows that the Alberta economy in 1984 was the size of about \$64 billion, and at that time 36 per cent of that economy was the oil and gas sector. The same document shows that the gross domestic product, the economy in Alberta, 30 years later, in 2014, was over \$600 billion. It grew by almost six times.

Even though there was that much growth, the oil and gas sector actually shrunk to 25 per cent. If that isn’t diversification – I hate to confuse the hon. Government House Leader with facts, but those are the facts, sir. So the economy has constantly been diversified in Alberta. There’s still more work to do, in fairness, but to say that it hasn’t been diversified is just flat out not true.

**11:30**

I’m also happy that the hon. Government House Leader as well as members of the other party asked about the heritage savings trust fund. Well, I would recommend to all of these people that – every year that the heritage trust fund has been in existence, there’s been an audited set of statements there, and I would recommend the reading. Having done some research, I’ll read some highlights of where some of the money went: southern Alberta children’s hospital; Alberta Health Services; Walter C. Mackenzie; southern Alberta cancer centre; the clinical research building; cancer research; heart disease research; irrigation rehabilitation and expansion; Alberta reforestry nursery; conventional oil enhanced

recovery program; maintaining our forests; Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority; Fish Creek park, one of the largest provincial parks in Canada; new rail hopper cars, helping to get our agricultural products to market; Kananaskis Country recreation development; municipal recreation/tourism; airport terminal buildings; Alberta heritage learning resources – there's so much, so many things that Albertans value to this day – helping the grain terminals in Prince Rupert, that have allowed Alberta farmers to get their grains to international markets. [interjections] Even the opposition is banging for this because they know that the heritage trust fund has done some great things.

You know what? Was it perfect? Of course not. But there was a lot of good. I'm not sure if I can get it done today, but if not, then next week I will table a report, because while I've got a lot of things here, they're not all attributed to the source. We'll do that extra work, and I'll table it in the House for the hon. members that want to know where the money went. It was all audited. It was all reported. It's all there for Albertans to enjoy in the hospitals that they go to and the seniors' homes that are available to them when they get older and the seventh floor at the Li Ka Shing centre at the University of Alberta, that they are very proud of, that's opening up soon, that'll have world-class cancer research, some of which will only be available here in Edmonton.

The heritage savings trust fund is working for Albertans as it ought to. There's some of the answer to your question, hon. Government House Leader. Ring roads, highway 63. Believe me, there's so much. The fact is that this happens because of a government with a strong fiscal position. And I know there are people here trying to say negative things, but the fact is that before this government, despite what all the political people say, the government had a triple-A credit rating. Oil prices were high. Oil prices were low. Since 2001 it has had a triple-A credit rating, until the current gang arrived and destroyed all of that. That's the fact.

We're saying to them now: "Now that you've driven the car into the ditch, there's still time to repair it and get it back on the road. Don't drive it right over the cliff. Put a limit on the borrowing. There is time to recover the strong financial position that Alberta had and to bring it back."

Madam Chair, I know another hon. member talked about whether we had a surplus two years ago. Well, I stand with the Auditor of Alberta, that says that in the last budget we had, or at the end of the time that our party was in government, there was a billion dollar surplus. Now, there are members in the House that don't stand with the Provincial Auditor, but I do because I think the Auditor has more credibility, frankly, than my esteemed colleague in the House because he's the Auditor for the province. That's just how it is. You know what? The Auditor sometimes says bad things about government and things that happen. You know what? That's the Auditor's job, and I stand with the Auditor because that's an important piece of accountability for our government.

I also take advice from the world-wide experts in finance that say that the government's triple-A credit rating is gone because of the unrestrained borrowing, because of the complete lack of cost control, because of zero plan to pay any of it back. To my government colleagues: this is a chance to put the car back on the road, to start the repair process. You've gone pretty far in the last year, but you could actually if not stop the damage, slow it down. It's pretty important. Our children and our grandchildren will depend upon it. They already depend upon it, which is why I'm proud to have moved the amendment to remove section 5, which would reinstate a debt cap.

I still think the debt cap is too high, so I'm not actually asking the government to – they can save face because all they would do if they supported this is to go to the debt cap that they themselves put

on six months ago. I would like to see the debt cap a lot lower, but I don't like the chances of the government accepting that. I think it's something where they can save face and say, "Yeah, you know, we were right six months ago, and we're going to stand by what we said six months ago," instead of saying: "The promise we made six months ago, we're going to completely ignore, throw it out the window, and plan on our debt becoming way bigger or plan on our government's policies making Alberta's economy way smaller." We're going to take a more optimistic view. We're going to show we care about Alberta's children and Alberta's grandchildren.

This is a chance, folks, to redeem yourselves. This is a chance to do the right thing. This is a chance to acknowledge that Albertans do not have an unlimited capacity to shovel money into this government. They'll leave. If they don't leave, the jobs will leave.

You know, the hon. Government House Leader talked about low tax rates. Low tax rates, actually, are what caused a lot of jobs to happen. Companies chose to come here instead of other places. Companies chose to invest here instead of other places. When they do that, they hire people, and those people pay taxes and fill the provincial government's coffers. I know this because when we were in government, when there was almost full employment here, the coffers were full all the time, which is what enabled a lot of those things to be purchased, the support for the cancer centres and the universities and the ring roads and made things like that happen.

Lower taxes, the right competitive tax regime, actually bring in more taxes because people and companies want to come here and pay taxes, because while they don't like paying taxes anywhere, they will often choose to pay taxes where they have a better tax rate. That used to be Alberta. It could be Alberta again. This government has it within their authority. They have it within their ability. I just hope they have it within their hearts to care for the Albertans who have lost their jobs, to limit the amount of debt that we take on, to say to them: "We actually are putting up a stop sign. This is enough. This is where we draw the line. This is where we're going to say that we're not going to borrow anymore. This is where enough is enough. This is where we're going to start caring about Albertans and making sure that we can still keep building that infrastructure five and 10 and 20 years from now because we can do that if the banks haven't said that, no, you can't borrow any more money."

That's, unfortunately, where this government is headed. They're headed for a place within a few years where the banks will say, "You can't afford to borrow anymore," or where the cost of borrowing will become so prohibitive that it will not be a competitive place to live and work and raise your family and have a great quality of life in Alberta, as Albertans up to a year ago used to take for granted, used to expect, used to have great confidence that when they raised their children here, they could educate them well and that their children could reach their full potential and, if they chose to, have a good job here and stay in Alberta. That's hope. That's called hope. Let's maintain some of that hope. I'm asking the government and my colleagues in opposition to support this amendment, to retain some of the hope that Albertans used to take so much for granted only a year ago.

Unlimited debt, unlimited borrowing with no plan to pay it back is a hope destroyer. It's an economy destroyer. It's a job destroyer. We know that. You know what? People a lot smarter than me say that. I know it doesn't take much to be smarter than me. I agree with that. [interjections] See? Everybody agrees with that.

But the people that lowered Alberta's credit rating are saying that that's destroying the economy and jobs. They are. The chambers of commerce say that. The people that vote with their dollars, that moved the jobs and the investment out of here – and since this government, there has been \$20 billion, \$30 billion, based on this government's policies, that has left Alberta, that may come back or

may never come back. It certainly won't come back until the policies change. Give hope that some of that investment could come back and provide jobs for our children and our grandchildren. Give hope that those jobs could come back into the tax base to pay for us in our old age, for the support that we and all Albertans in their senior years are going to need. Give hope that there will be choices for our children, good choices, good jobs, where they can put their educations to use and create a better Alberta for their children.

11:40

We're really at a crossroads here. We're at a crossroads here where the government needs to make a decision. Are we going to throw out all of the hope, all of the optimism for the future, or are we going to make a stand and say that enough is enough? Believe me, even the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP is too high but is a sign that the government has a limit, that the government actually will recognize a stop sign, recognize that when the engine light is flashing, if they won't stop immediately, they'll at least stop at the next gas station and get it checked before the engine blows up in Alberta's economy, before the hope goes away, before the optimism is gone.

This is a chance for the government to say: "We believe in hope. We believe in optimism. We believe in the future of Alberta. We care for our children. We want to have the resources to look after our seniors and those that need support most in the future." This is a chance for the government to say yes to all of that by saying yes to this amendment. I heartily hope that they choose to do so.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Are we not allowed to speak after? Is there a formal closing in committee?

**The Chair:** No, no. There's no closing debate in committee. You're allowed to speak to the amendment if you wish.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** All I will say is that I very much agree with the Member for Calgary-Hays; however, I just can't help but point out what a famous former Premier said: debt is hope.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A1?  
Seeing none, we'll call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:42 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Clark	Hanson	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Stier
Ellis	McIver	Swann
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Taylor
Gotfried	Orr	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Payne
Bilous	Horne	Piquette
Carson	Kazim	Renaud
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	Luff	Sucha
Dang	Malkinson	Sweet
Drever	Mason	Turner
Feehan	McKittrick	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Woollard

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 36
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** Pursuant to Standing 4(3) the committee shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 17 and Bill 10. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you. I could just talk for one minute and we would adjourn automatically, but I'll move that we call it 12 o'clock.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:59 a.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 19, 2016

Day 31

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
 Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
 Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
 Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
 Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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 Government Whip  
 Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
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 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
 Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
 Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
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 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
 Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
 Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
 Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
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 Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
 Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
 Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
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 Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
 Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
 Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
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 Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
 Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
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Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

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Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

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Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
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Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
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Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 19, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a remarkable group of grade 11 school students from Calvin Christian School in Coalhurst from the marvellously outstanding constituency of Little Bow. I had the privilege of meeting with this impressive group of students and some of the parents earlier as we got a picture taken down here on the steps leading into the Chamber. I shook every one of their hands and heard every one of their names. I can't repeat them all, but as I say your name, please stand: parent Adrian Moens; one of the parents, Jenn Moens; teacher Fred Neels – please stay standing – parent Marian Neels; parent Mr. Leen Van Esch; a teacher, Mrs. Geraldine Van Esch; one of the parents, Mr. Bruce Coates; another parent, Mrs. Geraldine Vanden Hoek; and the last parent was Miss Lelaina VanDenHazel. Was I close? I hope so. I ask that the rest of the class please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I would like to introduce on behalf of MLA Schreiner the Glendale sciences and technology school. I lived in Glendale, so I feel privileged to be able to introduce to you teachers Mr. Adam Lionheart, Mr. Larry Hartel, Joyce Tang, Miss Katie Bruinsma, Miss Amanda Mercia; parents Ria Cole and Kim Witwer. Would all the students and those I identified please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce the staff and students of the Edmonton Academy, a private special-education school for children diagnosed with a learning disability. The Edmonton Academy provides specialized teaching to meet students' needs and is found in the wonderful constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. They recognize that a valuable education will provide more than an academic grounding but social and emotional tools as well. The 19 students and the teachers Mrs. Ashley MacGregor and Mrs. Christa Farmer-Shave will be present in the House between 2 and 2:30.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other school groups for introductions today?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For several years the Legislative Assembly has supported the Edmonton Regional Heritage Fair, which provides an opportunity for students in surrounding areas to research and present projects celebrating Canada's heritage. The Legislative Assembly Office recognizes one participant for an

outstanding presentation which relates specifically to Alberta history, politics, or governance.

It is my great pleasure to introduce this year's award winner, Britlyn Hammer, a grade 6 student at Elmer S. Gish school in St. Albert. Her presentation, entitled Canadian Oil Industry, was well researched and engaging and speaks to an important and relevant contemporary topic. Accompanying Britlyn today are her mother, Megan Phan, and her teacher Brayden Guy. They are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my mom, Sylvia Hoffman. She is seated in your gallery. She is a dedicated schoolteacher, now retired, and community volunteer and, I say, the nicest person I know. Also with her is her newly wed husband, David Gordon. My mom and David met through a government-supported grief support group at the Cross Cancer Institute for spouses who had lost their partners to cancer. David is also a dedicated volunteer at the Marian Centre. With them is my great-aunt Alma Ostapek, the only surviving sister of my baba Anne Krupa, who people thought would be the first to go in our family when she was diagnosed with TB as a young teenager. She is strong, fierce, and managed to have a wonderful life with three children and a loving husband. Please join me in welcoming them.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 11 staff members from my Ministry of Infrastructure: Carla Down is with project services; Cindy Kuchka and Anar Fazal are with government facilities; Lynne Cunningham and Samantha Routhier, from health facilities; Eveline Audy, Patricia Gillard, and Cecily Gauvreau, from technical services; Alyssa Boisvert, Sarah Bonnah-Vink, and Gail Baron Simpson, from the assistant deputy minister's office. These wonderful employees support the work of almost every branch of government to ensure that Albertans have access to good facilities, whether they're attending in a hospital, a school, a museum, or any other public provincial facility in our province. I ask these guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I had the honour to congratulate the first graduating class of the Women Building Futures and Alberta Ironworkers' apprenticeship and training plan program. Women Building Futures is Alberta's premier trades training organization for women and is represented today by JudyLynn Archer, president and CEO, together with the North West Redwater Partnership, represented today by Ian MacGregor, president and chairman of North West refining, and the Alberta Ironworkers' apprenticeship and training plan, local 720, represented by Scott Papineau. This group launched a new training program for these women and today are celebrating the success of the very first class of all-female ironworker graduates, now entering Alberta's workforce at the Sturgeon refinery. These 11 amazing women are also indentured ironworker apprentices, and they join us here today along with their fantastic group of partners. These women

are mothers, daughters, sisters, and I know they will make some of the toughest, most driven ironworkers Alberta has ever seen. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of students from the Leduc ESL program. This program has been running for over 20 years and serves students of all ages, nationalities, cultures, genders, and education levels, combining community inclusion and education to connect new community members in the region. I'll do my best to say their names properly, and if you would rise when I say your name. Today we have Anvar Abdoullaev, Marina Abdoullaeva, Jane Kim, Jasmin Jeong, Thomas Lee, Seohyun Lee, Mike Kachuk, Maria Kachuk, and, last but not least, an outstanding individual in our area, Eugene Miller, who not only wears this hat as a director and teacher but also heads up the volunteers for the Summer Games coming up. Thank you very much for being here. I would wish the warm welcome of the Assembly for them.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two separate introductions today. First, it is my distinct pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two long-term residents of Fort McMurray. As I call your name, I ask that you please rise: Lana Maloney and Natasha Maloney. Both women are dedicated members of our community and anxiously await the safe return of all their friends and family to home.

My second introduction is two good friends of mine from the beautiful country of Poland, who have made Fort McMurray their home. Kasia Odrzygozdz is a financial analyst for the Fort McMurray fire department, and Pawel Odrzygozdz was the co-ordinator of the IT team for the regional emergency operations centre that manages this crisis in Fort McMurray. These tireless professionals stayed behind in support of emergency operations.

I ask this House to please give all my good friends the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Melissa Nelson, program operations manager of the Calgary Keys to Recovery Society, an organization I'll be speaking more about in my member's statement. I ask Melissa to rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

#### Wildfire Update

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the latest updates for the Assembly on the wildfire situation in Alberta. Today there are 15 wildfires burning in our province. Two are out of control, one is being held, two are under control, and two have been turned over to local authorities. We have approximately 2,400 firefighters on the

ground today, supported by 189 helicopters, 439 pieces of heavy equipment, and 29 air tankers.

Fire risk remains extreme across most of northeast Alberta, but we're pleased that the risk has lessened across much of the west.

The fire in the MD of Greenview continues to burn 10 kilometres north of Fox Creek and 25 kilometres southeast of Little Smoky. It is being held at 660 hectares and is being managed by local authorities. The two-hour evacuation notice for residents of Little Smoky has been lifted.

We continue to fight a fire in the Peace Country. It remains at approximately 20,000 hectares. That fight, obviously, is conducted in collaboration with our counterpart in British Columbia.

In the Fort McMurray area, Mr. Speaker, the fire is more than half a million hectares and is still out of control. Lower temperatures and higher humidity will provide slightly more favourable conditions for our firefighters than in the previous days. Our focus on the ground and in the air today is protection of key infrastructure to the west of the city.

In the city our re-entry plans have been affected by smoke and extreme air conditions. The air quality index has improved but continues to fluctuate.

Structural firefighters responded to a fire in south Thickwood. The cause of the fire is not yet known, but it's worth noting that gas was not activated for these residences.

As the House knows, yesterday the Premier announced a conditional timeline for residents to begin to return to Fort McMurray starting June 1 on a phased and voluntary basis, but we continue to stress that this timeline is conditional on the five basic safety needs being met. There is a great deal of work ahead, but we are committed to supporting the people of Fort McMurray and to protecting homes, businesses, and industry from fire right across Alberta.

As always, Mr. Speaker, we want to express our thanks to all of the people working to protect Albertans and bring them safely back to their homes as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

#### Calgary Keys to Recovery Addiction Services

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to recognize an organization dedicated to reducing homelessness in Calgary, the Calgary Keys to Recovery Society. Keys to Recovery was developed in 2010 in response to a gap in services addressing homelessness in Calgary, led by Karen Crowther, executive director, and Melissa Nelson, program operations manager.

With other types of services chronically homeless men and women with addictions who had made a decision to reclaim their lives and voluntarily attend treatment centres often ended up back on the street once their treatment was completed. Keys' programs recognize that homelessness is often the result of a number of complicating factors. They provide intensive, collaborative case management services in conjunction with permanent, affordable housing. The program combines both harm reduction and abstinence strategies and includes providing access to elders, monthly sweats, and a biweekly healing circle in addition to addictions, housing, vocational, and mental health services.

By equipping the formerly homeless with the resources they need to achieve independence, the program reduces costs for the health, justice, and emergency shelter systems. Their approach provides the basic needs as well as the nonthreatening and supportive atmosphere that is necessary for the individuals to regain their independence and

maintain their sobriety. Clients are referred by treatment centres, mental health agencies, corrections services, homeless shelters, and other housing providers. I personally toured one of the fully Keys-occupied buildings in my riding, and I met a woman named Lynn, a 57-year-old participant who told me that she would not have survived if it were not for the Keys to Recovery program.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Keys to Recovery for the vital work that they do in our community and for making Calgary and our province a better place.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's been one year that this NDP government has been in power, one year of many mistakes and a total disregard for many struggling Alberta families. The many flip-flops and indecisions I witnessed are a constant reminder that this government really doesn't know what it's doing, and it's making Albertans nervous.

In November 2015 Bill 4 increased the debt ceiling from 7 per cent to 15 per cent. Less than four months later, the ink barely dry on Bill 4, the government voted unanimously to repeal a section, effectively removing the 15 per cent debt ceiling, again against objections from the opposition. Last September during the Legislative Offices Committee government members voted for a 7.25 per cent increase to senior officials and to send three MLAs to Boston, again against the recommendation of opposition members. Less than one week later a flip-flop due to pressure. Now wages are frozen and no trip to Boston.

On June 24, 2015, the opposition attempted to amend Bill 2, asking for a 1 per cent decrease to small-business tax. Government MLAs voted unanimously against this amendment and the subsequent amendment to reduce small business tax by a mere .1 per cent. Now in the jobs action plan they brag about reducing the small-business tax by 1 per cent because it is the right thing to do. We agree. It was the right thing to do. It should have been done last year.

One year ago most government MLAs were against development in the oil industry, anti pipeline construction, and some had actively protested against pipelines. However, the government now appears to support pipelines and will likely try to claim any new development as their own. Careful getting on and off the bandwagon.

Now, thankfully, it appears that they're about to flip-flop on their ill-conceived minimum wage nonplan. Indecisions like this cause concern and confusion in the investment community and concern Albertans. It would appear that the only things not flip-flopping in this province are the tens of thousands of fish asphyxiated under this government's control.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

### Pipeliners' Daughter

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My thoughts and prayers are with the evacuees of Fort McMurray. Seeing them, once again I remember that I am the proud daughter of an Alberta pipeliner and boilermaker. I have been to and I have lived in almost every corner of our great province and indeed western Canada as we followed the work. We followed the TransCanada pipeline to Ontario. We learned about shutdowns at Sheerness, Genesee, and Fort McMurray. We watched pipelines being built, wrapped, and put in the ground as far north as Fort St. John, B.C.

I learned at an early age to never look at the arc and to appreciate the smell of burnt metal because it meant my dad was finally home. My mother was a wife in the oil patch. She went to concerts, games, and almost every one of her children's activities by herself and then wrote weekly letters to my dad about them. That takes an enormous amount of strength of character and determination.

We were raised to recognize the value of the times when our family could be together but to also fear them. We feared them because that meant there was no paycheque. Spring always meant that as the grass was growing, so was the stockpile of bread and bags of milk in our freezer. We had a 20-cubic-foot freezer to accommodate spring breakup and the shelves of goods my mom had preserved to get us through those lean times.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, I also remember the recession in the '80s and again in the '90s. The boom-and-bust oil economy affected every Albertan and none more so than the families dependent on that industry: long wait times when I broke my arm, large class sizes, and incredible stresses on our families. My father lost his job, like so many others, last year in the downturn. Seeing my fellow Albertans from Fort McMurray today, I recall my days as the daughter of a pipeliner. We all stand in solidarity with those from Fort McMurray, and we hope for them a speedy recovery.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Tax Policies

**Mr. Jean:** This morning Albertans in need of work woke up with more bad news. Across the province engineers, mechanics, electricians, IT workers, and many, many others are finding their wages dropping or are looking for work. Since last March the number of Albertans forced onto employment insurance has jumped a whopping 68 per cent. These are men and women looking to get back to work, but all they're getting is a new carbon tax, punishing families, charities, and health care. Premier, how will new higher taxes do anything to help Albertans hurting right now?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that Alberta families are struggling as a result of the drop in the price of oil, and we certainly are working to diversify our economy. We put that in our platform, and we were elected to do so, so we've come forward with the Alberta jobs plan. It's creating the conditions to support the creation of a hundred thousand jobs. Our investment includes more than \$34 billion in infrastructure, a cut to small-business tax from 3 per cent to 2 per cent, and the creation of 3,000 youth jobs through the STEP program. We're proud of the jobs plan, and all Albertans should be as well.

**Mr. Jean:** Under the NDP gas taxes will have gone up by 11 cents per litre by 2018. For Alberta families that drive to school, that drive to work, that drive to dance recitals and hockey practices, this is just making things for them much, much worse. It means that they will be paying nearly \$900 per year more and be \$900 a year poorer because of the NDP government. Families already pinching every penny around their kitchen table just can't trade in their minivans for a Prius. It's not realistic. So why is the Premier bringing in new taxes, higher taxes that will hurt Albertans even more at a time when they simply cannot afford it?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Once again the opposition's math is fatally flawed. Study after study demonstrates that the carbon price makes economic sense. Last month the Ecofiscal Commission report stated that carbon pricing makes economic sense for Canadian provinces, and Steve Williams of Suncor, a major employer in the Official Opposition Leader's riding, acknowledged the science of climate change and said: we think climate change is happening; we think a broad-based carbon price is the right answer. And so do we.

**Mr. Jean:** An attempt to deflect.

Under this carbon tax charities will see their costs absolutely skyrocket. There will be less money to spend to hire teachers, to hire doctors and nurses in our health care and education systems. It's a fact. If you need to take a flight in Alberta, even more surcharges and taxes and fees will be passed on to consumers by this NDP government, all at a time when employment insurance is on the rise and Albertans are simply struggling right across the province to make ends meet. The Premier has failed to produce any number of analyses of the wide-ranging cost to families, businesses, and our charities. When will they release these numbers? We need to see them. Albertans . . .

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know the Official Opposition has no intention to diversify the economy. They've said so. It was not in their platform. We're actually putting our platform into action, which is moving forward with a price on carbon and reinvesting every dollar from that carbon price back into Alberta families, including 60 per cent of households receiving a direct supplement. That is a very positive step.

In terms of other research, the Mining Association of Canada said that MAC's support of the carbon price is guided by the principles of climate change policy design. Bob Dudley, CEO of British Petroleum, said that a global carbon price would help unleash market forces that provide the right incentives for everyone to do . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.  
The Opposition House Leader.

### Opioid Use Prevention

**Mr. Cooper:** Albertans continue to be worried about the impact that fentanyl and opioids are having on communities and neighbourhoods. These drugs split families apart, and they put lives at risk. Alberta is on track to see over 276 fentanyl-related deaths this year alone. It's now been seven months since a full strategy to battle fentanyl was promised. This emergency is too important for more lengthy delays. Premier, when can Albertans expect to see a plan that might actually save some lives?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the situation with fentanyl is something that we are dealing with in Alberta very seriously. We've been doing so for many months. That's one of the reasons why we came out with take-home naloxone kits, why just two weeks ago we announced the expansion so that you no longer require a prescription. You can go directly to a pharmacy. You can call 811 if you want to know which pharmacies have them available, but it's over 500. We're working to make sure that these

get into the hands of people to help them address harm reduction strategies as well as building beds and supporting others in prevention.

**Mr. Cooper:** Fentanyl is just one part of the opioid crisis our province is facing. Heroin, morphine, Oxy are also contributing to a growing number of overdoses across the province. We can't afford delays before the multiyear strategy is released. We need to make sure that all resources are available to battle this crisis, to help victims of these addictions. Premier, will you commit to providing whatever front-line resources are required to tackle this crisis?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We are constantly working on ways that we can improve access. Harm reduction is one of those strategies. We've also done a mental health report that seriously looked at addictions and mental health in relation, and recommendations and that were around expanding access to detox and treatment beds. We've moved forward on a number of those recommendations and will continue to do so. It's the right thing. We've certainly increased funding in the budget in these line items and in other areas as well that will help families and keep people alive. We're proud of our budget, and this is helping to deliver on that.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, last week the government admitted that it isn't fully capable of tracking opioid deaths in the province. One front-line physician and expert on this crisis has pointed the finger at the government, saying: we just don't have any idea what is happening with other opioid-related deaths since 2013. If we aren't able to track the information, it makes it much more difficult to battle a crisis that is infecting our province and harming families. Will the Premier today commit to getting a handle on tracking these deaths and start reporting them to Albertans?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we take any death seriously, especially a premature death, in this province. We have been working with the medical examiners' office to continue to have the most up-to-date information. It's certainly available by each of our zones and hospitals. We also are working on the prevention side and making sure that we're working with communities, working with leaders in local communities across Alberta, and making sure that we get information into the hands of individuals, their parents. Harm reduction kits: this is a big piece in helping us save lives. Lives have been saved in communities all across our province with the use of these kits.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### Fort McMurray Wildfire Economic Recovery

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the large rebuild we have ahead of us in Fort McMurray, it appears that an Ottawa firm, the Advantage Group, has been awarded the contract and has recently been advertising for positions to clean up Fort McMurray. The problem? Social media posts state that these positions are advertised for Ottawa-area residents only. It's baffling that in a time of great need and when many people from Fort McMurray are looking for work, these jobs would be outsourced. Will the Premier confirm whether this information is true, and if so,



will she work to rectify the situation and ensure that jobs and contracts aren't being outsourced?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for an opportunity to dispel this rumour. That's all it is, a rumour. We've granted no, you know, substantial contracts at this time. In fact, the work of cleaning up and rebuilding Fort McMurray will be managed locally, within the regional municipality. We're gathering information on local contractors who are interested in helping with that rebuild and providing all that information to the regional municipality so they can proceed and support local businesses.

**Mr. Yao:** All those in this Chamber are aware of how important the trades are to Fort McMurray. Many of these companies rely on their tools and their materials to do their work. While these trade workers have been evacuated from their city, with their tools hundreds of kilometres away, they have seen out-of-town vehicles and contractors entering the community to begin repair work. To the Premier: now that a plan has been proposed for the re-entry of its citizens, has any timetable been established to allow tradespeople to get back up there and assist in the rebuild?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, there has been equipment heading north. That is specifically for industry and for the camps that are north of Fort McMurray. At this point, again, we've awarded no substantial contracts. In terms of the cleanup and the rebuilding, the work will definitely prioritize local contractors.

In terms of returning, Fort McMurray is just not safe. We announced that June 1 will be the beginning of the re-entry, and I'm tremendously excited that, you know, if all the criteria are met at that point, which we expect they will be, we can allow people to return and start resuming their lives.

**Mr. Yao:** It's not just the big businesses and tradespeople we need to be thinking about when it comes to a rebuild. It's also those support and soft services that make a city tick. I know that the Premier has said that re-entry to the city will be triaged, but I would like to ask on behalf of my small business owners, that are my constituents: what sort of timeline will there be for the butchers, the bakers, and the barbers to get back to Fort McMurray?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I stated, right now Fort McMurray just is not safe. In particular, the air quality continues to be an issue, so we're allowing a very restricted number of people in a controlled situation to ensure that essential services such as grocery stores and pharmacies are open and available at the time that those people return to Fort McMurray. As soon as the area and the community in which a small business is located is opened up for the re-entry, I look forward to supporting those businesses extensively to help them with their recovery after the evacuation.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

### Coal Strategy

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Over the last few days we've learned a few things. The Premier and deputy say that cabinet is united on their plan to eradicate Alberta's coal industry, the

Environment minister will not listen to evidence regarding clean coal because of her tunnel vision, and the Energy minister is in the penalty box because she showed common sense around market-driven factors during estimates. So let's try this again. To the Energy minister: why rush to eliminate Alberta's coal industry and the thousands of jobs attached to it when these facilities have committed to generating electricity as clean as natural gas can?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Study after study demonstrates that a price on carbon makes economic sense. That's why we are phasing out coal. We've developed a climate leadership plan that is going to take care of emissions because health is important, economic diversity is important, and we are going to continue to work with our industry and our communities to do this.

**Mr. McIver:** Sounds like the penalty box has eliminated that common sense.

Given that coal-fired electricity has moved forward by leaps and bounds, controlling and reducing NOx and SOx emissions from flue gas desulphurizers to selective catalytic and noncatalytic reduction systems, to the Energy minister: is this government really encouraging the coal industry to improve emissions intensity when the industry knows full well that the government is putting them out of business as soon as they can?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** You know, this plan to phase out coal was established a few years ago by the federal government. We are going to work with our industry, with our coal facilitator, and our communities to continue this work. We're going to work at diversifying our economy. We're going to work with the AESO and renewables and develop a plan that is going to keep prices reasonable, keep our lights on.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, when a government minister denies their own job-killing coal plan, you know it's a bad one.

Given that new technologies are able to reduce NOx emissions by 98.6 per cent and SOx emissions by up to 99.9 per cent and given that these technologies are able to prevent 75.5 per cent of all emissions from entering our atmosphere, to the Energy minister one last time: why can't coal-fired electricity be part of our electricity future after 2030 if they reach these incredibly high clean standards?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we have developed our climate leadership plan to move forward in phasing out coal and diversifying our economy because we know that the emissions are harmful to our health and our children and our most vulnerable Albertans. We have tasked the AESO to consult with industry experts. We're pleased that over 130 industry experts were consulted with this. Our first RFP for renewables will be this fall.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Provincial Credit Rating

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today Alberta suffered yet another credit-rating downgrade. Standard & Poor's said that the downgrade comes partly from depressed oil revenues but very worryingly said: "The province's fiscal response . . . so far has not meaningfully counterbalanced this external shock." Now, this is after the Minister of Finance travelled to New York to try to convince these very agencies of Alberta's creditworthiness. It sounds like that was a big waste of time and money. To the Minister of Finance: how much will this credit-rating downgrade cost Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the Minister of Finance will be happy to answer all the remaining ones, but I want to acknowledge a little bit of history here. Members opposite are asking us to turn back the clock and respond to the downturn by firing teachers and nurses and cutting back on investments. This is not going to support diversification. Let's also remember what happened back in time – 1986, 1990, 1992, all of those years – under Conservative reign. Unfortunately, we had a downgrade. Why? Because the price of oil went down.

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, Wildrose is over there. I am over here, so the canned response to that question . . . [interjections] This irresponsible budget . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. Now, there is a middle way. Because your budget accumulates such astonishing levels of debt so quickly, you have virtually guaranteed future front-line service cuts or future tax increases or both. Quoting again from Standard & Poor's, the downgrade reflects "Alberta's very weak budgetary performance and high, increasing debt burden." The words of Standard & Poor's. In short, the NDP are risking the future of the province so that they don't have to make tough choices today. To the same minister: have you calculated the projected . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Which minister? The Minister of Finance?

**Mr. Clark:** Yes.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the borrowing costs we know that they have increased relative to the two large provinces that have lower borrowing costs. Over the last two years, not the last year but the last two years, those borrowing costs have increased, and that aligns with a dramatic drop in the price of oil. Our borrowing costs, the amount of the budget we put into debt servicing, are still far below B.C.'s, far below Ontario's. As a percentage, we're doing quite well.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, we won't be for long, and if we're comparing ourselves to Ontario, that's not a good thing.

I'm going to ask a very simple question of the Minister of Finance. Standard & Poor's says that it is time for a sales tax in Alberta or the province will face future downgrades. To the Minister of Finance: do you agree with Standard & Poor's? Will you bring in a sales tax at any point in this term of government or next?

**Mr. Ceci:** What I'll agree with is that I'll stand with Albertans. We will bring forward the work of the Alberta jobs plan. We'll invest in this province. We'll diversify this province, and we will create a better economy going forward than that party did and that party wants to wreck.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

## 2:10 Fort McMurray Resident Re-entry Plan

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been over two weeks now since the people of Fort McMurray have had to flee their homes and escape the fire that still threatens part of northern Alberta. I've talked to many people who are anxious to return home but know that there is still a lot of work to do. To the Minister of Municipal

Affairs: when can the people of Fort McMurray expect to return home, and will they be able to stay for good once they get back?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday our government announced plans for a conditional, phased re-entry on a voluntary basis for the safe return of Fort McMurray residents to begin June 1. I wish to make it clear that re-entry is voluntary, and re-entry will only proceed when key safety conditions that ensure the safety and security of residents are met. We're going to start with the least damaged neighbourhoods. People should understand that if they return in the first weeks of June, they will be returning to a community with very basic services. We strongly urge people with specialized health care needs to delay their return until June 15, when the hospital will be fully restored.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many people may still be unsure whether or not they have a home or business to return to, again to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: how can people find out about the current state of their homes and neighbourhoods?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, working with our government, released an update to the online mapping application. The app now includes high-resolution images from multiple angles to give residents a clearer idea of which homes have been lost and damaged. The high-resolution imagery, that includes new and expanding neighbourhoods, will provide additional detail to assist property owners with insurance claims, eligibility funding, and other recovery actions for both damaged and lost properties. This information is invaluable. However, I've seen the devastating effects a fire can have on a community, and I know how difficult it is to view these images. I urge those affected residents to seek out the emotional and mental health supports . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we need to ensure that Fort McMurray is a safe place before people can return, again to the same minister: can the minister update the House on the current state of essential services in the city?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to work with the regional emergency operations centre and other partners to restore services to Fort McMurray. Hospital restoration has been stalled temporarily with the poor air quality, but the mobile urgent care centre is still operational. Electricity service has been restored to more than 90 per cent of customers and natural gas to 75 per cent of customers. The water treatment plant passed inspection on May 17, and we continue to make steady progress to secure the safety of water. However, returning residents will be subject to a boil-water advisory upon re-entry. We expect that will be in effect for at least a few weeks.

### Emergency Medical Services

**Mr. Nixon:** Yesterday I asked the Associate Minister of Health how this government plans to solve the disparity in rural ambulance coverage that has been created by the centralization of EMS dispatch. All I received was a non answer: “The best way to organize first responders may vary from community to community.” Ambulance coverage is a serious problem from community to community, and it needs this government’s attention. Again to the Associate Minister of Health. Please, a real answer today: what is your government’s plan to solve the disparity in rural ambulance coverage and save rural Albertans’ lives?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, Albertans have a right to expect that when they dial 911 for emergency medical care, it will arrive promptly. This question has many parts, including shift rotations, dispatch, and time spent at hospitals. We are working with our partners in AHS to ensure that all of those criteria are met and that we are able to have Albertans receive the safest ambulance service possible.

**Mr. Nixon:** Wildrose understands that our first responders are doing their absolute best to provide world-class medical care. Given that Alberta has the best EMTs, EMRs, and paramedics in the country and given that their valuable time is best used to provide care in the golden hour of an emergency, can the Associate Minister of Health please explain why our fully certified EMTs and paramedics are being used to transfer patients for nonemergency, scheduled appointments instead of using their skills where they are needed the most, on emergency calls saving Albertans’ lives?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Alberta Health Services is also expanding its use of nonemergency vehicles to transport patients between facilities. We know that paramedics, EMTs, and EMRs respond to nearly half a million calls every year, and we’re very proud of the work that they do. We remain committed to working closely with our partners at AHS and with community leaders to give Albertans the right care at the right time by the right professional.

**Mr. Nixon:** Municipalities have been bearing the brunt of the lack of ambulance coverage. Given that in an effort to keep ambulances in their communities, municipalities have been purchasing non-emergency vehicles for patient transport and since the Health department clearly doesn’t have an answer, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: can you explain why Alberta’s municipalities are being forced to pay for what should be the Minister of Health’s responsibility?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, I’ve had the honour of meeting with a number of different local governments. We share their commitment to making sure that everyone gets a timely response, and we have worked with them on the process to receive a contract through the government, which is with Alberta Health Services as the operator. Certainly, there are conditions that need to be met with that contract, but there are a number of local regions that do have contracts with Alberta Health Services. The reason why we have a contract is to ensure safety and fair practices for employees and for

the patients, who need to have the utmost confidence in the support of their communities.

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

### Trade with the United States

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta generates more than \$26 billion in trade annually with the 10 states in the Ports-to-Plains trade corridor, which runs through the Great Plains to the Gulf of Mexico. The Ports-to-Plains Alliance is a coalition of governments, communities, and regions advocating for the economic interests of North America’s energy and agricultural heartland. Alberta has a proud history of active and effective membership and political representation in the alliance. To the Premier: which hon. member did you appoint to represent Alberta to the alliance, and when was the last time they attended an alliance meeting?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’ll thank the member for the question. Trade is absolutely critical to our government and to the province of Alberta. I can tell you that we work very closely with our partners. We recognize that the United States is our largest trading partner.

To the member’s point: I will get back to him as to when the last meeting of the Ports-to-Plains took place, but I can assure this House that Alberta is at the table. We are advocating for market access, and that’s a priority for our government.

**Mr. Ellis:** We’re talking about political representation at the table, Minister.

Given that one key focus of Alberta’s involvement in the Ports-to-Plains Alliance has been its interest in developing and promoting the eastern Alberta trade corridor, which runs alongside the Saskatchewan border up to Fort McMurray, and given that developing the eastern corridor can provide an alternative route for moving Alberta’s more than \$75 billion of products to key American and other international markets, again to the Premier: why is Alberta abandoning its political – and I mean political – prominence in the Ports-to-Plains Alliance when so much is at stake?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ll refute the premise that Alberta is abandoning its position at the table. Quite frankly, our government is working through a number of different initiatives for market access. We understand that there are many different opportunities, both within our province and within North America, to get our product to market. That is absolutely a priority of this government. We will continue to look at all possible different trade routes to ensure that we’re getting our product to market in a timely, efficient, and safe manner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Ports-to-Plains Alliance works with Alberta to advocate for policies and investments that will promote trade and commerce and given that areas of advocacy interest include border crossings and trade issues and that Alberta, unlike almost all other provinces, has only one 24-hour border crossing, to the minister responsible for intergovernmental relations: what efforts are you making today to convince the federal

government to expand the Wild Horse border crossing to provide 24-hour commercial service?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for that question. That is a very timely question. Quite frankly, I've had numerous conversations with REDAs down in southern Alberta as well as with our municipalities, who have raised that point. That is something that I'm in dialogue and conversations with my federal counterpart, looking at opportunities to expand trade. I recognize and agree with the hon. member that the crossing that he is speaking of right now is a 12-hour crossing. We're working with the federal government, looking at opportunities to expand that.

Thank you.

2:20

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, this province has suffered four credit downgrades already in just the past few months. This is because of the government's reckless debt and spending plan. The day after they introduced their budget, Moody's downgraded the credit rating of this province as a direct result. As we are debating Bill 10 right now, S&P has just given us yet another credit downgrade. Will the Minister of Finance withdraw Bill 10?

**Mr. Ceci:** Oil-producing jurisdictions around the world, in Canada, in North America have received downgrades of late: Newfoundland, Saudi Arabia, Alaska, North Dakota. No.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The opposition isn't going to stand for non answers like that right now, Mr. Speaker. It's too important.

He is gambling with Alberta's future. We have had a balance sheet meltdown in this province over the last decade of almost \$60 billion. Mr. Speaker, given that the price of oil has not significantly changed since our last credit downgrade, the only thing that has been downgraded is the minister's credibility. Will he take responsibility for this?

**Mr. Ceci:** What I won't take responsibility for is a PST. That's what they want. We won't do it. Albertans don't want it. [interjections] We're not doing it.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, even you're laughing at this one. I have no idea what the Minister of Finance is smoking today.

The NDP has already brought in a PST in the form of their ND PST carbon tax. Today the Minister of Finance himself said that we need to, quote, look at all fiscal tools. By that, does he mean even more borrowing, even more spending, or another PST?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, if the hon. member wants to quote me, perhaps he should listen to the whole statement that I made. Diversification is what I was talking about. We need to have more revenue coming from a wider variety of economic drivers in this province. Oil and gas are too narrow a focus. We need to have more economy going on, and we're doing it with our diversification plan.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

### Highway Maintenance

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Transportation cut \$33 million over two years to highway maintenance, and 50 per cent, or \$30 million, was cut from highway preservation. Dangerous

cracks, potholes, and missing shoulders in our area can easily pull a vehicle travelling at highway speeds off the road. Why is the Minister of Transportation putting Albertans at risk by making dangerous cuts to core public safety functions like road maintenance? Surely there are other places in the budget to trim.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for the question. This is a question from the Official Opposition that I responded to in the estimates, but I don't mind doing it again. We've all been asked to find savings within our budgets because we're serious about curbing the growth in expenditures of government programs. There are only so many places that you can go. This is not an ideal choice, and I am hopeful in the future that as the financial position of the province improves, we will be able to restore this funding. In the meantime we've made a very large . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in Alberta there are upwards of 14,000 large-animal collisions per year on our highways and given that these accidents result in huge costs, injuries, and, all too often, fatalities, why is the Transportation minister reducing highway maintenance, which includes cutting down grass and brush along our Alberta highways? Why is the minister putting Alberta drivers at increased risk?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I don't accept the premise of the hon. member's question. Again, the reduction in cutting along the medians and so on of our highways is a necessary cost-reduction measure. It's not ideal, and we hope in the future to be able to restore the funding for that program to the previous level.

**Mr. Hanson:** Given that Albertans are worried about this budget, which seems to only have cuts to essential road maintenance and to the wildfire budget, to the minister: are there no efficiencies to be found in his department, no areas that could have been reduced without having to make cuts that increase the risk to Albertans' lives and property?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, a number of reductions have been made throughout the department. Efficiencies are constantly being found. It's important to note that there was a significant reduction in the overall budget. We are working towards finding those efficiencies, and that's an ongoing piece of work that we do. We want to avoid layoffs, we want to avoid reducing essential services, we want to maintain safety on our highways, and we're doing so.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

### Electric Power Plant Capacity

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Post-2030 the government endeavours to have a baseload, or firm electrical generation mix, that will look very different than it does today. For the record, I'm fully aware of the federal coal phase-out regulations and what they mean for Alberta. However, the increased scope of their rapid, early phase-out scheme is causing great concern. Investors crucial to cleaner electricity generation are stepping away from this government's new policies. Minister of Energy, what specific measures have you taken to ensure that Albertans won't be short on

firm and dispatchable electricity if your policies continue to scare investors away?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for that question. Certainly, we are working with the AESO and consulting with industry experts for them to recommend a program that will bring on more renewable generation based on two principles: keeping costs reasonable and making sure that we protect the reliability of the system. We are going to have a fully phased, reasonable, solid, prudent plan.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given that in 2015 the Department of Energy called for 6,000 megawatts of additional generation over the coming years – the system is now going to need an additional 2,300 megawatts above the original 6,000 because of the NDP's early coal phase-out – and with natural gas investors stepping away and the early phase-out of coal generators, Minister, can you assure Albertans that they will not face brownouts stopping them from accessing reliable electricity for their homes and businesses?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, that is why we are working with the AESO to consult with industry experts and develop a plan so we will have reliability. We will have reasonable costs, and we will still have a mix of natural gas and renewables as we move forward.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, be cautious about the use of preambles in the supplementals.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the NDP strategy leaves a gap in electricity generation for Albertans and given that you've been suggesting an electricity-for-pipelines deal with British Columbia, Minister, are you about to tell Albertans that you're not only killing the coal industry and the livelihoods that go with it, but you're about to tell natural gas generators that there's no place for them either, leaving Alberta short of electricity, jobs, and royalties for future generations?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Well, thank you for the question. You know, we consult with our provincial partners on a number of matters. The consultation on electricity for pipelines is in a what-if stage, but as I've made clear before, we won't need extra electricity if we don't get a pipeline.

### Minimum Wage

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Labour announced consultation on the minimum wage. We've heard a lot of heated rhetoric in this House on the minimum wage, but I've heard a lot from constituents, who've shared with me stories of how this has already helped their families. To the Minister of Labour: why does the minister think that a phased-in approach to the minimum wage is good for Alberta?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. No Albertan who works all day should have to go to the food bank to feed themselves and their family, but the people who run food banks in Canada say that 1 in 3 in Alberta do just that. That is wrong. It should not be acceptable to any member of this House. On this side of the House we believe in income security and basic human dignity. That is why we believe that implementing a phased-in \$15 per hour minimum wage is right for Alberta.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: could the minister please update the House on some facts

on this important issue given that there is a lot of misinformation about who is paid the minimum wage in Alberta?

2:30

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite like to pretend that the minimum wage is just a training wage paid to a few kids. They're wrong, and they should be doing their homework. Over 33,000 Albertans that earn less than \$15 per hour are single earners with children; 194,000 women in Alberta earn \$15 per hour or less; and over 37,000 Albertans earning \$15 per hour or less are 55 or older. These are the people who are low-income earners here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Labour: can the minister please inform this House about who will be consulted in the weeks ahead and when we can expect a decision since many Albertans may be interested in participating in this consultation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we committed to previously, we will be listening to employers and employees on how to move forward with the changes to minimum wage. Focused consultations will be held over the next month with key stakeholders, including employers, social services agencies, and the low-income earners themselves. Topic discussions will include future increases, meal and lodging deductions, and the phase-out of the differential liquor server rate. We want to take the time to listen to the people directly involved while making sure that we are taking care of Alberta families.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

### Wainwright Health Care Facilities

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Sunday a broken waterline at the Wainwright hospital drove 27 elderly residents out of their beds, forcing many to be transported to other facilities, and this is just the latest in a list of problems that reach back years. About six months ago a different waterline failed, causing flooding as well. The hospital serves as a hub for the community of Wainwright and for the military base, and it's literally falling apart. To the minister: when can my constituents expect to see the hospital they desperately need and were promised?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The safety of the residents and staff of the hospital is our first priority, and AHS is working with residents and their family members to ensure that everyone is getting the care they need. Over 20 rooms were affected by the water main break. This means that some residents will need to be temporarily relocated to a different wing of the facility or to facilities in nearby communities. Repair and restoration work to the damaged areas is already under way, and it is anticipated that it could take up to six weeks.

**Mr. Taylor:** When are we going to get a new hospital? Given that in 2010 the Wainwright hospital was Alberta Health Service's number two priority and a community care project and then dropped to seventh in 2012 and that in November 2015 the Minister of Infrastructure stated that it's "in a list of 24 high-priority projects," will the Minister of Infrastructure tell the people served by the

hospital where it is on the priority list now and when this critical, life-saving infrastructure will be built in the community?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, unlike those on the other side who claim that they want large cuts to the Infrastructure budget, we're actually trying to step up and provide for the needs of the people of this province throughout the province, without regard to what political party represents them. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I've passed a couple of notes requesting that the volume of the voices decline. I expect it to happen now, please.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that very much. It's important that the infrastructure needs are met throughout the province. We assess everything carefully and objectively, and I can assure the hon. member that the project in his community . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Taylor:** We need to have it on the priority list, and that's really what we're asking for.

Given that both the mayor of Wainwright and I have contacted the Minister of Health requesting to meet and discuss the state of the hospital and have questioned the Minister of Infrastructure about the timing of the promised build and given that the hospital is falling apart around the patients and staff and residents, when will the ministers of Health and Infrastructure come to Wainwright and see for themselves the building that passes for a hospital for the citizens and soldiers who seek care in the hub of Wainwright?

**Ms Hoffman:** Once before in the House the member opposite talked about dirty water. I think he actually used the phrase "raw sewage." It was clean water. Now he's saying that a hospital is falling down around patients. I need to stress how important it is for us to talk about facts. We are taking patient safety very seriously. That's why we made sure that patients were moved to an area of the hospital and to other facilities, where they could be treated safely, Mr. Speaker. The tone and the misinformation that's being shared on the other side . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Would you finish your statement, Madam Minister?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The tone and the misinformation is certainly not conducive to a good dialogue.

I have met with the mayor and will continue to have ongoing conversations about this. As I have demonstrated, I am very keen to see the hospitals throughout the province. I think there are two ridings that I haven't been to.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

### Support for Agriculture and Forestry Industries

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While this government plays cat and mouse with Alberta's energy sector, putting current investments at risk and future economic expansion in serious doubt, the agriculture and forestry sectors continue to generate good news. Winnipeg-based Paterson Grain recently announced plans to invest some \$25 million to build an export terminal near Bowden. It will have 55,000 tonnes of capacity and a high-speed unloading system that could empty 150 rail cars in seven hours. To the agriculture minister: since being elected over one year ago, what specific initiatives has this government taken to improve our capacity to move grain by rail?

**The Speaker:** The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. That was very good news. Quite frankly, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has not only been engaging with stakeholders across this province but also has been advocating for increasing our trade opportunities with our trading partners internationally. Again, Alberta is an export-based province, and it's absolutely critical not only for our grain sector but also for our beef producers, our pork producers, and other producers to get their products to market.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this is not the only major agricultural project that has been unveiled in recent months, with GrainsConnect Canada proposing to build a 35,000 tonne capacity handling facility outside of Innisfail, and given that further economic diversification in this province will be dependent on innovative, community-based economic development initiatives, to the minister: what specific initiatives has this government taken to maximize opportunities throughout rural Alberta and to expand the value chain for Alberta-made and Alberta-produced goods?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. I think it's important to note that we do have some healthy sectors. Unlike the Official Opposition, that seems to only condemn one – quite frankly, there are a number of initiatives that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and I are working on, again looking at working with not just our producers but also with our different sectors. In the budget that we tabled we have \$10 million going toward regional economic development. There are a number of projects that we are working on with the different REDAs throughout the province.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the still burning fires in northern Alberta are affecting forestry operations and threatening sawmills and given that significant stands of white spruce have been lost to the inferno and that some operations may be forced to downsize, to the minister: what specific assistance is this government providing forest producers, and how is this government protecting forestry transportation infrastructure so that the forestry industry can continue to be a multibillion-dollar contributor to Alberta economic history?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member again for his question. You know, first and foremost, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs has pointed out, all hands are on deck as far as trying to protect our infrastructure assets up in northern Alberta, and that includes our sawmills and our assets in the forestry sector. We do recognize that because of the size of the fire quite a large amount of our fibre has burned up. I know that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is working with our partners in the forestry sector to look at ways that our government can provide assistance to them.

Thank you.

2:40

### Support for Business

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, we know that during tough economic times large-scale capital investments are important. They spur job

creation and create spinoff economic benefits throughout our province. But tough economic times also mean businesses have challenges attracting private investment, capital investment. These businesses need support as they get Albertans back to work. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: how is our government encouraging investment in and by Alberta-based businesses?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for that question. Our government is taking action to attract capital investment that will support job creation and economic diversification across the province. Introducing a capital investment tax credit at a time when businesses are struggling with tight margins will help to boost investor confidence and encourage timely investment decisions when Albertans need it the most. In fact, once in place, we expect this program will support over \$700 million worth of investment and thousands of direct and indirect full-time jobs.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that other provinces may also offer incentives to businesses and given that we need to be promoting Alberta as an exceptional place to do business, again to the same minister: how is our government supporting and attracting new businesses in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. We know Alberta needs to level the playing field with other jurisdictions. British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, and a number of U.S. states have an investor tax credit. As part of the Alberta jobs plan the Alberta investor tax credit is a \$90 million tax credit over two years that will support small and medium-sized businesses. The tax credit will also encourage venture capitalists and business angels to invest in homegrown businesses, boosting access to capital when it is most needed.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that as we work to stabilize our economy and get off the resource royalty roller coaster, we will need to ensure that we are supporting emerging and growing industries and given that often small businesses are creating new jobs, again to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what is the minister doing to encourage more development and diversification opportunities for small and medium-sized businesses?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. Our government made a commitment to support greater economic growth. Unlike the Official Opposition, our government believes in diversification. We announced the petrochemicals diversification program, which is just one example of the many ways that we're acting on that commitment. The new petrochemicals diversification program will help our province compete for new investment and job opportunities by turning our raw resources into the building blocks for plastics and other goods. We expect the program to attract two to three new petrochemical facilities to Alberta through financial incentives in the form of royalty credits.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, I've had a request for unanimous consent to introduce some guests who arrived late. Is there agreement?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce a classroom from Forest Lawn high school, grades 10 to 12. They're joined by Ms Tina Merali, Ms Nijenhuis, Ms Laura Duker, Mr. Thanh Ly, Mrs. Michelle Wagler, and Mr. Rob Gossen. It's my privilege to introduce the 50 students who are here. They've had a tour of the Legislature, and they watched this rather interesting question period. I'd like to thank everyone for coming and have them stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

### Wild Mountain Music Festival

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about a very popular music festival happening in my neck of the woods, in Hinton, this July. You guessed it right; it's the Wild Mountain Music Festival, one of the province's biggest music festivals, at the original crossroads at the historic Entrance Ranch, just off highway 40.

First Nations peoples from all over visited this area, which is the traditional home of the mountain Métis, because this was a place for powerful medicine, summer celebrations, and feasting.

This year's lineup includes an impressive array of Juno award winners, nominees, and popular local artists from Alberta and across Canada. Serena Ryder, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Dan Mangan, and the Rural Alberta Advantage will join local talent like Laura Vinson and Free Spirit.

Wild Mountain has the best beer tent ever, with a great view of both performance stages. Free camping is included with the price of entry, but the field is rustic, so bring everything you need.

Every year the Wild Mountain Music Festival attracts approximately 6,000 people to the area, making it a major contributor to the local economy. The festival started in 2007 and is a 100 per cent community-owned and volunteer-run initiative supported by many sponsors. I would like to recognize some of them: Jules Oilfield, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Travel Alberta, CKUA, SunDog tours, Eagle radio, rock FM 96.7 The Rig, Wild Orchid Liquor Co., town of Hinton, Titan Specialized Hauling Ltd., the *Hinton Voice*, Morad Communications, Yellowhead county, Servus Credit Union, and the Dunn family.

Come visit and take in breathtaking mountain vistas while grooving to the music of some of Alberta's and Canada's most talented artists July 15, 16, and 17.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

To let the members who need to leave, have commitments, we'll just take a few seconds here.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

### The Emeralds Show and Dance Band

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of music, last fall, as you may recall, I asked Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to sign a letter of support to nominate the Emeralds to Canada's Walk of Fame. To refresh our memories, the Emeralds Show and Dance Band are an internationally acclaimed Edmonton-based group best known for their hit *The Bird Dance*.

Well, what a tremendous response we received. Over 50 MLAs on both sides of the House sent letters of support to my office, but it didn't stop there. Numerous people contacted my office to see if they could provide letters of support and if they could help in any way. The Emeralds also received numerous letters from all over the province, all over the country, and down in the U.S. fans signed support letters at their concerts as well. Some Edmonton city councillors have also sent letters of support to my constituency.

Right now there are hundreds of letters of support in my office waiting to be sent to Canada's Walk of Fame. On May 27 at 10 a.m. the Emeralds and I will mail the first box of letters to Canada's Walk of Fame at the Londonderry Mall post office located in Shoppers Drug Mart, and you are more than welcome to join us.

Thank you to each and every one of you that have provided your support for this nomination. Together we can make history by helping the Emeralds get the recognition they so rightly deserve.

### Wildrose Conservative Coalition Initiative

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** One year of NDP government has made many Albertans clamour for a united conservative choice in the next election. Unfortunately, the PCs have rejected that option and chosen to continue in isolation. [interjections] Many of us in the Wildrose were once proud PCs and recognize that for many years...

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we've had this discussion before. During Members' Statements there's respect for a tradition that the member has an opportunity to speak without being interrupted. I'd appreciate it if you would allow him to do that.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Reset the time? Reset?

**The Speaker:** I think we stopped the clock.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** If we could reset the clock, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** How about – it took 10 seconds, so keep going after that.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Many of us in the Wildrose were once PCs and recognize that for many years they provided Alberta with good government, before they strayed from common-sense conservative principles. Indeed, any unified conservative party should embrace the best elements of the Lougheed and Klein legacies while rejecting the liberal drift and questionable ethics that caused Wildrose conservatives to leave in the first place.

2:50

But sitting across the aisle from an NDP government has made us reassess our prejudices. I believe that it is time for all conservatives to do likewise. Since the PC establishment shut the door to co-operation at their AGM, there is no point in pursuing that path any further. Instead, the Wildrose will rise to the occasion and move to invite and unite conservative Albertans with more than a greeting.

The current incarnation of the Wildrose can and should become a bigger and broader coalition of conservatives. We will begin a

process whereby all conservatives can come together and be welcomed as equals and not as winners and losers. Let's start with a shared vision, a conservative party dedicated to the principles of individual freedom, fiscal responsibility, religious liberty, equality of opportunity, and the greatness of Alberta, welcoming to Albertans of all backgrounds, unafraid of taking principled stands even when they may be unpopular, and uncompromising in its commitment to accountable and ethical government.

This summer our party will bring people together to solicit support for changes to bring conservatives together. Together we will put our children's Alberta before...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation. The Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation. Possibly for a third time...

**Mr. Mason:** Oh, I'm sorry. He was signalling to me, Mr. Speaker, and I couldn't understand him, but he was trying to tell me that you were trying to get my attention.

I have a notice of motion that I'd like to read, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) I'm rising to advise the House that on Monday, May 30, written questions 15 and 16 will be accepted.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of the S&P Global Ratings credit-rating downgrade, where it notes that Alberta has been "downgraded to 'AA' from 'AA+' on very weak budgetary performance."

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I table a copy of something we discussed this morning, just basically page 4 of the government of Alberta's annual report showing a billion dollar plus surplus from 2014-2015.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Sabir, Minister of Human Services, responses to questions raised from the May 5, 2016, Ministry of Human Services 2016-17 main estimates debate.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 15

#### An Act to End Predatory Lending

**The Speaker:** I'll recognize the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to section 2(2) of the Conflicts of Interest Act I must at this time rise and recuse myself from the Chamber owing to a potential perceived conflict of



interest. As has been previously disclosed to the Ethics Commissioner, I have a family member who sits on the board of directors of one of Alberta's credit unions. This creates a possible perception that I would be in conflict if I were to participate in the debate on this particular matter, and therefore I would ask that I be able to recuse myself from debate today and that that be recorded in the *Journals*.

**The Speaker:** So noted.

The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and move Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending.

In the Speech from the Throne on March 8 this government committed to stand up for Albertans when they are most vulnerable. We committed to introduce legislation this session to end the practice of exploitive interest rates that are currently permitted in Alberta for payday loans. An Act to End Predatory Lending puts an end to practices that harm Albertans. Let me be clear. Interest rates that reach 600 per cent are predatory; 600 per cent interest that prevents Alberta families from being able to meet their needs are predatory. Loans that require you to take out loans to pay back loans are predatory. We are ending it, and we are protecting Albertans. Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending, protects Albertans by tightening the regulatory framework around payday lenders.

Right now Albertans have to pay \$23 per \$100 for a 10-day loan. Here's an example of where this leads. Let's say an unexpected expense comes up and it leaves you \$500 short on your food budget in the month of May. To cover the shortfall, you head to a payday loan store and take out a \$500 loan at the current maximum cost of borrowing of \$23 per \$100 borrowed. Although you can now pay for your groceries in May, you'll have to pay back \$615 to the payday lender and still buy your groceries for June, so this totals \$1,115. If that repayment or the \$115 in fees leaves you unable to cover other expenses, you might then feel that you need to take out another payday loan, which will result in more fees in the next month. The longer this cycle of taking out payday loans continues, the more money the borrower pays in fees and the harder it becomes to catch up.

Albertans told us that they want us to end this cycle and reduce the cost of borrowing. We have significantly reduced the cost of borrowing to \$15 for every \$100 borrowed. This is the lowest in the country, Mr. Speaker.

Albertans also told us that they want longer payback periods. We are ensuring that repayment options help Albertans stay on their feet and have a chance to repay debt rather than being overwhelmed by it. These changes specifically make cycles of debt and rollover loans less likely by introducing mandatory instalment payments. This means that Albertans will have a minimum of 42 days to pay back an initial loan.

We've heard widespread support for this initiative, Mr. Speaker. We will ensure that this change is carefully implemented with payday lenders so that practices are standardized and compliance is high. The executive director of Momentum said that by moving to instalment payments, it makes it so that people have more of a chance to get out of a debt trap.

The executive director of International Avenue, Calgary's BRZ, or business revitalization zone, said:

This is ground-breaking legislation. It ensures vulnerable borrowers are protected, particularly now when budgets are tight. These changes will positively impact our community's revitalization efforts, and [actually] help attract new businesses to our neighbourhood.

We are so proud to support communities and Albertans with these proposed changes, and we are increasing other protections for Albertans who may not be directed to all the fine print at the payday lender counters. We will require that information be clearly communicated to people borrowing money. Fifteen dollars per \$100 will be an all-in rate, Mr. Speaker. No more hidden fees or insurance premiums.

We are also adding a prohibition on lenders providing other forms of credit to borrowers who have already taken out payday loans. Again, this will help stop cycles of debt and will support Alberta families and help them ensure they can make ends meet. Together these changes will dramatically reduce the annual interest rates for payday loans.

Just as significantly, the legislation commits payday lenders, by law, to provide information on financial literacy. We need financial literacy to reach Albertans wherever they are.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, I have been inspired by GameSense. This is an initiative that operates on-site at Alberta gaming establishments. GameSense is a dynamic initiative and has had a real impact in casinos. We will work with community groups and lenders to promote similar models to provide Albertans the tools and resources they need to build financial stability.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, An Act to End Predatory Lending commits government to promote real and accessible credit alternatives. We are working with our community partners like Momentum in Calgary, with credit unions and others so that these alternatives meet the needs of Albertans. Once we get there, once uptake is strong, we will bring down the annual interest rate even further. I am confident in this approach, and I am excited to report that credit unions across the province have already made strong commitments to expand and launch alternatives, microloans and cash crunch loans. First Calgary, Servus, and Connect First together with groups like Momentum are showing community leadership, and we can all be proud of these Albertans.

In short, An Act to End Predatory Lending will promote fair and responsible lending. Albertans asked us to do this. When we consulted with more than 1,400 stakeholders last year, Albertans told us that payday borrowing costs are too high. One participant called them exorbitant. Another participant told us that after taking out a payday loan in an emergency, it soon became a cycle, needing a loan to cover the void left from paying back the first one. We heard last week that Google is banning payday loan ads for exactly these reasons.

Our leadership and these changes are making a difference. We are helping to end cycles of debt and making the time between paycheques a little easier for Alberta's families.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Anyone wishing to speak to Bill 15? I would recognize the Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** I decline right now, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to speak to the bill before us here. This bill is very well intentioned. I believe it is crafted with the intention of ensuring that some of our most vulnerable citizens do not fall into extreme poverty as a result of the very high rates of interest faced at payday loan stores. No Albertan ever wants to find themselves in a payday loan store. The rates of interest charged there are far higher than

rates of interest, I'm sure, that any member of this Legislature faces if we go to the bank looking for a loan.

It is well intended, but this bill has unintended consequences. Interest represents risk, risk to the person lending the money, and the individuals who go to payday loan stores are going to payday loan stores and not banks because they are, overwhelmingly, high-risk borrowers. For a variety of reasons their creditworthiness is going to be rather low. It might be that they're between jobs. It could be issues of addictions. It could be any host of very serious issues that keep this individual from attaining a reasonable credit score. But for one reason or another these individuals have low credit scores, and they are therefore high-risk borrowers. As a result most banks will not provide them with the loans that they might need.

Now, these loans are very specific kinds of loans. These are not like when we put something on a credit card, or they're not like a line of credit. These are traditionally short-term loans for a span of a single week, essentially before payday; hence, the term "payday loan." These loans are of a very short-term nature, but they're also at very high interest because the borrower in these cases has a high risk of defaulting, of not being able to pay back the lender. As a result the interest rates can take on extremely high levels, and if someone is not able to pay those loans back on time, the penalties can be quite severe, and it can trap someone in a cycle of poverty.

That being said, I do not believe that it is the answer to merely ban high interest rates. To legislate away a rate of interest might sound nice. It might sound like we're trying to help this person because we are saying, "We don't want you trapped in this cycle of poverty," and a big part of that will be these exorbitant, in many cases, interest rates. But what's going to happen if we legislate away some of these interest rates without addressing some of the deeper, core issues?

My fear is that we may drive some of this high-risk lending underground. In other jurisdictions, in other areas where these kinds of loans are not available, we often see the prevalence of organized crime being involved, where an individual is badly in need of a loan and they're willing to pay almost anything to get it. They might be in very desperate circumstances. Maybe they can't pay their heating bill, or they can't pay their kid's tuition. They could be in very desperate circumstances, and when that money is not available, people will sometimes turn to unsavoury methods of borrowing money. If these kinds of financial products are not available, my sincere concern is that some folks might turn towards illegal means of obtaining those loans.

This is a serious potential unintended consequence. It is a very well-intended bill. It is trying to do a very positive thing for lower income people who need availability of credit, but my concern is that we're going to have significant unintended consequences. One will be that we could be driving these people underground in search of available credit. The other is that there might just not be anything available and the extreme problems that can come from that. They might end up borrowing from family, or they might not have anything available at all. Instead of legislating an artificial rate of interest that we believe is reasonable – these interest rates are quite extreme – instead of legislating arbitrarily a rate of interest that we think is more fair, I think that we would be better served to provide services to these people.

Now, I'm pleased to hear that the minister is working with our credit unions. I think that's positive. If we can get our credit unions to provide financial products to these high-risk borrowers, then I think that is an extremely positive move, but I'm not convinced that merely legislating away high interest rates is going to fix that. The way we need to fix it is through financial literacy, helping people understand their household finances. We need people to understand

the extreme cycle of debt they could potentially be getting themselves into. In many cases people take out a payday loan, and they don't know the kind of financial hole they could potentially be getting into as interest rates compound on them. That being said, some people do use these kinds of financial products responsibly, but some people do fall into a very unfortunate trap of poverty.

We should be working with our credit unions, and I credit the minister for doing that. That is a positive step forward, but I'm not convinced that this will necessarily fix the problem. As I said, interest represents the availability of money and risk, and if these borrowers are extremely high-risk borrowers, you're not going to be able to lend them that money without a high rate of interest because that rate of interest represents the high risk that they present to the person or institution lending the money. It's basic creditworthiness, Mr. Speaker.

3:10

Even if credit unions are making a conscious attempt to make credit available to high-risk borrowers, if those borrowers are finding themselves still not credit worthy, then a lower rate of interest will simply not be available to those people. They could potentially find themselves without any financial product available. It is very well intentioned on the minister's part, and I truly hope that the credit unions will be able to fill that gap, but I'm not convinced that that will necessarily be so. I genuinely hope that I am wrong about that.

There are significant unintended consequences here. I believe that we would be better intentioned to provide programs to high-risk borrowers in this province to educate them about financial literacy, to help them understand the real dangers of getting into these financial products if you do not use them very sparingly and responsibly. I think we would be much better serving the people we are trying to help here, Mr. Speaker, if we focused on education and programs to help these people rather than on an arbitrary limit to interest rates.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**The Speaker:** You're not under 29(2)(a). I believe that was the second speaker; 29(2)(a) does not apply.

Is there another member who would like to speak? The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will open my comments on Bill 15 by saying this. If Bill 15 makes it more difficult for payday lenders to stay in business, if it means that payday lending companies go out of business, good. I think the minister deserves a lot of credit for bringing this bill forward, for listening to stakeholders like Momentum in Calgary and many others.

The title of the bill, I think, says it all. We have a problem in this province with predatory lenders. When people are being charged, in any context, 600 per cent interest, it's not just, it is not right, it is not fair, and it is our job as legislators to stamp that out. It is far past time for that to happen, and I'm pleased and thrilled that that is happening here in this House and to even be a small part of supporting something like this. I am enthusiastically supportive of the work the government is doing here.

I want to pick up on an argument, the unintended consequences comment, from my hon. friend from Strathmore-Brooks, the idea that it may create demand for shady activity. You know, poverty does not equal criminality. For people who are low income, who

have a difficult time, who are living paycheck to paycheck – and there are hundreds of thousands of people like that in this province – that doesn't mean that they know criminals and know people who would give them some back-alley loan and crack kneecaps if it's not repaid.

What it will do is that it creates something called a market demand. Demand for a product will be satisfied through things like credit unions or even chartered banks. I see section 2 of this bill references exactly that work that the minister will do, working with credit unions in this province to provide alternative products. I'm also thrilled to know that organizations like Momentum have already started a microloans program as an alternative to payday lending. The way the market works is that where there's a demand for something, supply rises to meet it – basic economics – and that's what I sincerely hope and fully expect will happen in this case. The government has a role to play to ensure that that happens.

You know, I think credit unions can make this a profitable venture over time even if they do it simply from a position of social good and do it only to break even. I expect that that's exactly what they would do. Credit unions in this province have a strong track record of standing up for our province. I would even encourage the government, of course, to use our very own credit union, Alberta Treasury Branches, as perhaps one of the vehicles where we can provide a microloan program to people.

But none of this replaces the need for a proper province-wide and comprehensive poverty-reduction strategy. We have to ask ourselves: why are people finding themselves in this position? Financial literacy absolutely is a big part of it. People shouldn't live beyond their means, but when their means only allow them to buy food for two-thirds of the month, what do we do to help those people and ensure that we can alleviate poverty in a more systematic way?

Income security certainly is part of that. Early childhood education is a huge part of eliminating poverty. Breaking the cycles of violence, breaking the cycles of addiction, ensuring adequate housing, ensuring great education systems, ensuring adequate health care: all of those pieces fit into a poverty reduction strategy, which will reduce the demand for microloans or what are currently called payday loans.

I also very much like the transparency aspects of this bill, requiring payday loan companies to calculate all fees in the borrowing process and make that very transparent right up front. Repayable loans in installments I think makes a lot of sense as well.

Again, I've talked about financial literacy.

You know, I do wonder if these payday loan shops have sprung up like weeds in low-income neighbourhoods because the profit margins are just so remarkable and outrageous that perhaps they're going to be able to make a go of it at much lower rates. Do you remember the terrible ad from it's got to be 20 years ago now, when the payday loans first came around? It's like, "Three bucks on a hun," right? That's \$3. That's 3 per cent on \$100 borrowed. Well, we're taking it to \$15, which is a drop from \$23. Twenty-three dollars to borrow \$100: that is unbelievable in terms of the rate of interest. It's usury. It's remarkable to me that it was legal in the first place. This government deserves a lot of praise for no longer allowing that.

I think there's absolutely more than enough room here for payday lending companies to continue to operate if, in fact, there is a demand for it. But putting together all of the different aspects, I think that we will do some real good in this province if we can finally do away with the outrageous levels of interest and also think beyond just this, think beyond payday lending, and think about an overall poverty reduction strategy, which I certainly hope this government is working on, and I look forward to hearing exactly what you come up with there.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Mason:** No. We alternate, don't we?

**The Speaker:** My apologies to the members. I understood it was only 29(2)(a) you wished to speak to.

You'd like to speak to the matter?

**Mr. Mason:** I would, please, yes.

**The Speaker:** Proceed.

**Mr. Mason:** Very briefly, Mr. Speaker. I cannot let the comments of the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks pass without some comment. You know, I found them breathtaking in their failure to grasp what we're dealing with. We have these payday loan companies, and the hon. member is trying to justify the existence of these predatory loans by claiming that it's just a relationship with the risk of the person who's borrowing the money and that that justifies the interest rates that are being charged. That's absolutely far from the actual facts.

At 23 per cent over a 10-day period, if you calculate that out, Mr. Speaker, over a year, the interest rates are 600 per cent over a year, and that is far beyond any compensation that might be required for the loss of loans. In fact, it is these loans themselves that are creating the extra risk. Because these interest rates are so high, the risk of default is much higher because of the interest rates and the way in which it is calculated. It is not the borrower that is the primary source of risk. It is the lender that is the primary source of risk because of the types of loans that they are providing to people who have very little choice. It may well be that these people have low incomes, maybe bad credit ratings, maybe they are a high risk, but to attempt to say that this is merely the market at work is to misstate it.

In fact, I want to read from some people. First Calgary Financial says: I don't see payday loans as high-risk loans; we're putting skin in the game; we believe this is a social issue; we believe we can make a positive impact. Mr. Speaker, the president of First Calgary Financial has said that this is a social issue, and perhaps that's where we lost the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. We know that social issues are not in his top 100 priorities, so he doesn't appreciate or understand the importance of this as a social issue.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, this is how poverty is perpetuated. This is how you keep people down. This is how you take advantage of people and you keep them poor and you make them poorer. I think that what we're doing makes tremendous social sense but also good economic sense. It's a good policy, a good economic policy, to help reduce poverty, to help people and families out of poverty and get them on their feet. These payday loans keep people in poverty. It's like quicksand; the more they struggle, the harder they are stuck.

I just want to say that I can't let Strathmore-Brooks' comments go without being responded to because I think that they really do not appreciate the dignity of the people who are caught in these traps, and it is unworthy of him and of the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the hon. Government House Leader?

Calgary-North West.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to rise and address some of the thoughts I've heard in the Chamber so far. One of them is, of course – and I'll echo some of the comments of my colleague across the aisle – when the Member for Strathmore-Brooks talked

about the unintended consequence of this bill and about high-risk borrowers. That's an interesting conversation to have, high-risk borrowers. I like the concept of discussing high-risk borrowers because they include a lot of people that I am very familiar with: single moms, vulnerable people. My colleague from Calgary-Elbow and I sit on the Calgary Homeless Foundation, and we discuss the issues relating to vulnerable people at every meeting that we attend. When we talk about a predatory lending bill, the key term here is "predatory." What do predators do? They prey on the vulnerable.

In discussions about the province's most vulnerable, certainly the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood hit the nail on the head when he said that some of our colleagues in the House have a difficult time talking about social issues. They are uncomfortable with them. They're bootstraps people; they think everybody should be able to pick themselves up and that we don't actually have to have a social safety net because everybody has the ability to go out and get a job and take care of themselves. Well, that doesn't always happen. You know, if there's anyone shocked at the idea that our two parties might not be simpatico, well, here's a perfect example of where we differ in how we feel about vulnerable people in this province.

Frankly – and I've said this to the minister responsible for Status of Women – the work she's doing right now is fantastic. I praise her for that. I think she has been inclusive. We've had a chance to sit down in a nonpartisan way to talk about issues that are extremely important, and I think this is one of those issues.

While I say that, I would hope that when we look at the idea of people who will go out and get a \$500 payday loan and, through a series of circumstances, by the end of the year owe \$6,000, \$8,000, \$9,000 and are mired in such a desperate place that they don't know what to do next – that is a terrible place to be. The kinds of people who are left in those circumstances are people who feel powerless. I certainly feel very good about the idea that there are tools that may be offered to those people so that they never end up in those situations, so that they can begin to have, first of all, a discussion about getting themselves to a place where they don't have to take advantage of those kinds of companies, where there is an opportunity to access microloans, where there is an opportunity to have a discussion about financial literacy in the sense that they can develop the tools so that they will never have to access those companies again.

But I think it's not an either/or situation. I don't think that we should just, as some of my colleagues feel, let these groups continue to operate because the alternative is that people who are desperate and go looking for these loans will then resort to criminal activity, which is such a terrible stereotype but not surprising.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** You're lying. You're lying.

**Ms Jansen:** Did you just say that I'm lying? [interjections] Yeah, you did.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a point of order.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The point of order being . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks just repeatedly told the hon. member who is speaking that she was lying. That is not acceptable in this House, as that member knows, and then he misstated the facts when she asked him about it.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, I did say that the Member for Calgary-North West was lying. She was saying things that clearly

misrepresented what I was saying, but the term "lying" is unparliamentary. I withdraw the comment and apologize.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to wrap up by saying that certainly for those of us in the Progressive Conservative Party we do feel a commitment to the most vulnerable people in this province. We do appreciate that social issues have to be dealt with, and we don't believe that if you come from a lower income level, you're going to resort to crime in order to figure your way out of a problem. I think that those kinds of stereotypes, frankly, are tired and in the past, and we don't actually have to succumb to that kind of behaviour and that kind of thinking anymore.

I would just like to say that I thoroughly support Bill 15, its intent, and I look forward to seeing the results of it and the fact that in the future we will have many more families who can take advantage of . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I understood that you were rising under 29(2)(a). Did I misunderstand that? You were speaking to the main point? Is that correct?

**Ms Jansen:** I was.

**The Speaker:** You still have 10 minutes left.

**Ms Jansen:** Well, then, maybe I could go on and say that in discussing the whole concept of looking at the predatory lending piece, I like the idea that not only are we calling attention to it – there are probably lots of people who have no concept that this sort of thing goes on. If you live in a community where you don't have one of these companies on the corner, you probably have no idea about the pitfalls. If you watch a commercial and it's a peppy little commercial that talks about – actually, Member for Calgary-Elbow, what was the term?

**Mr. Clark:** "Three bucks on a hun."

**Ms Jansen:** "Three bucks on a hun." You know, it sounds so convenient, and if you don't make that payment, then you think: oh, well, I'm sure the consequences aren't that terrible. I think a lot of people get drawn into that. There is a reason those commercials make it look so easy. There is a reason those companies are in economically challenged areas. There is a reason that you don't see a company like that in an economically advantaged area.

I think we can draw attention to exactly what predatory lending means for the folks who don't know and talk about the kinds of tools that we should be able to provide to the individuals and families who would resort to using these companies. If they know that they have a whole tool chest available to them that includes microloans, that gives them an opportunity to know where it is they can go in order to access short-term help if they need that short-term help and then, if they access that short-term help more than one or two times a year, they should be able to talk to someone who says: "You know what? Here's an idea. Why don't we sit down and talk about how in the longer term you can manage your money better?" Now, aren't those great skills to be able to impart upon people who don't have them currently? Aren't those the kinds of conversations we have in a civilized society, where we want everyone to have the opportunity to get ahead? If you are in a situation where you access payday loans, you are not in that group of people. You are not getting ahead. Most of the people who access those loans do it more than once, and they are in a terrible cycle.

3:30

I'm not going to use all the rest of my time. I will only say that I think that when it comes to strong social policy, we all have to stand up, and we all have a responsibility to help it, to support it, and to ensure that it goes ahead for the vulnerable people in this province. I would also say that the PC Party is always behind good social policy for vulnerable people, and that's why the two of us will never meet.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions to the Member for Calgary-North West under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am excited to rise today to speak in support of Bill 15. Now, my hon. colleague, presenting a few minutes ago, may be confused by that, but that's because my party has free votes, something that her party did not have when she was in power, that may be why they are not in power anymore.

Having said that, I rise in support of Bill 15 because, for me, the interest rates of about 600 per cent on these types of loans are exactly that; they are predatory. Now, I will take my record on social issues and the work that I have done with people in poverty in this province and put it up against anybody's in this House at any time. I resent and will not accept any remark that I do not or that all of my party do not support or have something against people in poverty because that is not true. In fact, that is why I will speak in favour of this bill.

I do want to address the issue of loan sharks and the implication that the previous two members brought up, that by bringing up concerns about how the poor could be taken advantage of, a member bringing up those concerns is saying that that means that all the poor are criminals. That is not true. Again, I have worked with homeless people my entire life, and they are not criminals. They are often taken advantage of by criminals, which is exactly why this government says they're bringing forward this bill and is exactly why I support this bill. They are taking advantage of low-income people, taking advantage of people in a tough situation. For a member to bring up the fact that other people can do that is exactly what the government is saying.

There's nothing wrong with pointing out that, yes, this bill is good. I'm going to support this bill, and I encourage my colleagues to vote with me in support of this bill, but we have to make sure that when we go through this legislation, go through the stages here, we make sure that we're not leaving open other areas where people can take advantage of the poor or the very people that we're helping. That is what the hon. member was discussing, and I don't appreciate the comments from the other two members who don't seem to understand that.

With that said, I want to be clear that I support this bill. Many of my colleagues support this bill because the interest rates and the payment rules put to extreme disadvantage the people that are already in a tough situation, and that's totally unacceptable.

I remember often seeing within our shelter system people that we call the working poor. A lot of people don't understand that people who live inside our shelters in Calgary and Edmonton and throughout the province work. In fact, a large majority of people who live in our shelters work, and we call them the working poor. They work, but they often have to take these type of loans in order to be able to make ends meet or to do certain things throughout the month and would get stuck in a vicious cycle, and then they were taken advantage of. I agree a hundred per cent on that, and that's why I'm going to vote for this bill.

But let's not be silly and say that other people can't take advantage of the poor in our province. Let's make sure that as we go through this legislation, go through the next stages of it, we get it right, that what we're trying to accomplish is actually accomplished.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre?

Are there any other members who would like to speak to Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending?

Hon. minister, any closing remarks?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a second time]

## Bill 16

### Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Do you require me to move that Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016, be now read a second time? Is that what you want?

**The Speaker:** Yeah.

**Mr. Mason:** Then I just did.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, in second reading. Most sections of the Traffic Safety Act came into force in 2003. That was 13 years ago. It was a year before Facebook came along, three years before Twitter, and six years before the creation of Uber. The rapid advance of technology and social media has changed the way we do things in the world. For example, people hardly ever use their phones only for phone calls anymore. I recently have learned how to take a photograph with my phone. Apparently, we can now download entire seasons of TV shows and watch them at our convenience. I've no idea why you'd want to watch it on a screen three inches across, but apparently some people do that. If we need a ride somewhere, we have the option of tapping an app instead of phoning a cab company to speak to a real live dispatcher.

We are living in a world where things are getting more convenient, yet at the same time these conveniences are causing new complexities; for example, distracted driving. Keeping up with changing times means adapting to changing technologies and addressing the complexities that come with them. As government our job is to regularly revisit and update legislation to ensure that it meets the evolving needs of our changing society, and that includes the Traffic Safety Act, legislation that has an impact on some 3 million licensed Alberta drivers. The proposed amendments I will speak about today reflect the changing needs of drivers while ensuring the safety of everyone who uses our roads and highways.

A serious issue that continues to have an impact on drivers, passengers, and their loved ones is impaired driving. Between 2010 and 2014, Mr. Speaker, 400 people were killed and more than 6,000 people were injured in alcohol-related collisions in Alberta. Bill 16 proposes to strengthen the impaired-driving legislation through changes to laws that apply to the ignition interlock program. This is a mandatory program for all individuals who have been convicted of an impaired-driving offence in Alberta. Participants have an alcohol-sensing device attached to their vehicle ignition system. Basically, it's just a plastic tube that a driver must blow into in order to be able to start their vehicle, and if the device detects a certain

level of alcohol, the person won't be able to start or drive the vehicle.

This program has proven effective at reducing drinking and driving. It separates the act of drinking from driving, and it changes behaviour. But under current legislation first-time offenders with under .16 blood-alcohol content can apply for an exemption to the program. That .16 is double the legal limit. So anyone under double the legal limit is currently able to apply for an exemption. Albertans have told us that this isn't good enough. The amendment will remove that exemption and will help us in our battle to keep more drunk drivers off Alberta roads.

Another proposed amendment will clarify the law regarding proof of insurance. The current legislation is vague, to put it mildly, so anyone who's ever received a ticket for producing an out-of-date insurance card, known as a pink card, even while they have a current pink card in their possession will attest to this. This amendment would make the law clearer to police officers and to drivers. If drivers can produce a current pink card, they would not receive a ticket regardless of whether or not they also produced their outdated pink card. If people are like me, when you get your pink card, you take it out to your car, and you just add it to the ones that are already there in your little plastic folder on your dashboard. That, apparently, is currently an offence, and we're fixing that.

3:40

Bill 16 also includes amendments that would address the relatively new influx of transportation network companies, or TNCs, that are operating in our province. The issue of private vehicle-for-hire operations is becoming an emergent issue around the world with the introduction of TNCs such as Uber. TNCs electronically connect private drivers with passengers seeking rides through a smart phone app. It's a new transportation business model, and our current provincial regulation does not fully address it. As a result, requirements for TNCs and their drivers are unclear.

We want to bring some clarity, and we want to ensure that TNCs operate safely, reliably, and fairly in our province. To that end, Bill 16 seeks to establish an appropriate regulatory framework for rides for hire. The impetus for regulation changes began at the end of February, when I announced basic safety requirements for TNC operation. These include requiring every TNC driver to have appropriate insurance coverage, driver's licence, and a police information check. At the same time I made a commitment to update our regulations. Our government's priority is public safety for passengers, drivers, and other users of our roads.

Over the past few months the government has been speaking with stakeholders, including Uber and other transportation network companies, the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, and the taxi industry. The amendments I am proposing today were informed by those conversations and will establish a reasonable framework for ride-for-hire companies. One of the main changes is to amend the Traffic Safety Act so that we may make regulations regulating these companies. TNC operations do not currently fall under the act.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we want to amend the act so legislation could apply to the companies themselves rather than to individual drivers. As it stands now, the legislation applies just to the drivers. We want to place the onus on the TNCs because it is the TNCs that control who drives for them, and they establish their own driver policies. This regulatory framework ensures that TNCs are responsible for knowing who their drivers are and that all drivers meet safety requirements before they provide rides for hire through a TNC. It also allows us to speak with the TNC directly rather than trying to identify hundreds or thousands of individual drivers. While I know that TNCs are typically doing these checks already, this amendment gives the province a practical enforcement tool.

Mr. Speaker, while it's important that we create regulations that enhance the safety of Albertans, we won't get anywhere if we can't enforce them. To that end, the amendments would also add a provision under which the registrar of motor vehicles may levy administrative penalties of up to \$50,000 against a transportation network company if the company allows drivers to drive with less than a class 4 driver's licence, if the company fails to ensure that its drivers have adequate insurance, or if the company fails to produce a record of criminal background checks for its drivers. These penalties are significant enough to encourage compliance in an industry like this, which has the potential of growing much larger in scope and size.

We're also proposing an appeals provisions so that any transportation company that is affected by an administrative penalty has a recourse and can appeal to the Alberta Transportation Safety Board.

Finally, Bill 16 proposes a provision for the registrar to apply for an injunction against a transportation network company if necessary.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the regulations that Bill 16 proposes have been developed in part to keep our province moving forward and up to speed with changing needs of Albertans, changing times, and changing technologies. Many amendments in this bill intend to bring more clarity to an industry that is practically brand new and create regulations that will work for all parties, but this bill, first and foremost, is about safety on our roads and safety for Alberta's drivers, passengers, and all users of our province's roads and highways.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the debate, and I encourage members to support Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act.

I will now move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 11 Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move third reading of Bill 11 on behalf of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

We Albertans need an innovation system to strengthen and diversify our economy. This bill is a step forward towards innovation to secure the future of Alberta and drive the current economy of the province. By bringing the research sector and innovation as well as industry, small businesses, entrepreneurs, and academia all together, we are going to develop a strong system that will help us to diversify our economy and get the value for money that we Albertans always enjoyed. We are positive that we will have a bright future for our future generations.

Therefore, I would like to continue with the third reading of Bill 11. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Any other members? The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak on Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. This bill stands to eliminate the inefficiency of having separate boards of directors for Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions, Alberta Innovates: Energy and Environment Solutions, and Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions. It does seem particular to have four boards working side

by side to accomplish similar goals. The notion of streamlining leadership is appealing on the surface level. I certainly hope that efficiencies are found, that top-heavy bureaucracy becomes leaner.

I think that it is important that we make clear that governments rarely actually reduce spending, especially this particular government. One of the problems that I see far too often with governments is that there is rarely a meaningful scaling back of expenditure. There seems to be a culture of a lot of shuffling around of line items and responsibilities, all in the name of efficiency, but when it comes down to brass tacks, there is little that is actually saved or reduced. I certainly hope that this bill doesn't fall victim to the pattern I just described.

I think that we have a real chance to streamline some of the administrative components of the Alberta Innovates corporations, especially when we begin to look at some of the cost savings that can come from eliminating redundant positions at the board level. These salaries are large, plain and simple. These people get paid a lot, plain and simple. I read a media report that states that there are over \$8 million worth of salaries among 30 employees. This is a result of instituting private practices in a public service. Anyone with any type of business experience understands that in order to attract talent, you have to be competitive, with competitive job postings that include a competitive salary. Albertans understand this.

On the other side of the same coin, there is a need to eliminate waste and reduce, to operate a more lean and agile organization. The people of Alberta expect that our government operate in a responsive and a responsible manner, especially when it comes to spending their hard-earned tax dollars.

Those are the points I'd like to make. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to Bill 11, Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016?

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a third time]

### Bill 12

#### Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today and am pleased to move third reading of Bill 12 on behalf of the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Peace River.

3:50

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really honoured to speak once again to this bill in third reading on behalf of the Minister of Indigenous Relations. As mentioned before, it's a small bill but an incredibly important one. It fulfills one of our campaign promises, one that I know our government takes very seriously and that I personally take very seriously, and that's to reinforce our commitment to Alberta's indigenous people, to our First Nations and Métis communities, that we will always consult in a meaningful way, one that is open and transparent and that we always consult respectfully and as equals because we are all treaty people. With this bill we reinforce that any decisions that we make and any legislation that we develop that relates to our indigenous peoples will always be informed and grounded in the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

With that, I would ask that all in the House continue to support this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who'd like to speak to Bill 12, Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act? Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the opposition shadow minister for aboriginal relations I'm very proud to stand up and speak in support of the recall of Bill 22. It's long overdue, and I believe it's the right step. First Nations, Métis, and industry have all agreed that Bill 22 did nothing to help the negotiations.

What I would like to say is that I'd implore the government to make certain that any new legislation is not put forward until all parties have had a chance to properly consult, preferably in a round-table discussion with all stakeholders present. Only when we have a real dialogue with all parties present can we come to an agreement that will be equitable and honoured in the future. I'd also appreciate it if all parties in this Chamber would also be included in the discussion and formation of any new legislation prior to it hitting the Order Paper. This issue has gone on for far too long, and it is too important for us not to get everything right. We need to make this right.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any members who would like to address a question to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing no one, are there other members who would like to speak to Bill 12, Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act?

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a third time]

### Bill 13

#### Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move third reading of Bill 13, the Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016, which I am pleased to note has the support of this Assembly, on behalf of the Minister of Labour.

These proposed changes will allow veterinary technologists to become full voting members in the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association's governance. This bill will enable veterinary technologists to have a voice in the governance decisions that affect their profession. It will also ensure that veterinarians and technologists comply with the highest professional standards, which will provide greater consumer protection. As we have all heard, veterinary technologists are crucial to veterinary practice and are depended on by Albertans in the care of their animals. These amendments will not change the scope of practice of veterinary medicine or the qualifications required to be a technologist. I want to be clear on one point that came up in debate. There is no part of this legislation that changes or impacts membership fees.

The ABVMA membership is supportive of these proposed changes. By enhancing accountability for all technologists, Albertans can be confident that their animals are receiving the best care possible.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other members who would like to speak to Bill 13, Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016?

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a third time]

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I think that if you seek it, you will see unanimous consent to shrink the bells in Committee of the Whole,

which, it is my understanding, we have to do before we go into Committee of the Whole.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### **Bill 17 Appropriation Act, 2016**

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

**Mr. Stier:** I have a few minutes to spare to give a little wisdom on that.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise this afternoon to speak a little bit on Bill 17, the Appropriation Act, 2016. I'd like to touch on a couple of themes that were raised during the Municipal Affairs estimates in relation to this act, actually.

I'll start with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, which co-ordinates the government's resources in response to disasters and emergencies. In the Municipal Affairs business plan on page 110 under outcome 3 it states: "Albertans have an enhanced ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters." In response to the 2011 Slave Lake fire the government at the time commissioned the Flat Top Complex report, which studied the government's preparedness and response to the disaster and in the end provided 20 recommendations for how the government could improve if not prevent a wildfire and mitigate the damage to people's homes and livelihood.

While firefighting and wildfire mitigation are largely under the authority of Agriculture and Forestry, the Flat Top Complex report provides a number of recommendations that do fall under the auspices of Municipal Affairs. The recommendations specifically dealing with improving communications, both internal and external communications, are incredibly important to conducting a thorough and successful disaster response. Unfortunately, when asked about Municipal Affairs and whether the department had accepted and implemented any of the recommendations, the minister questioned the relevancy and passed off the report as "100 per cent embedded in the Forestry budget." I'm certainly not saying that Municipal Affairs or the government as a whole failed to prevent the wildfire currently raging in northern Alberta, but I guess I question the minister's dismissive tone in relation to what I believe Albertans see as legitimate questions around the role Municipal Affairs plays in response to wildfire disasters.

One of the main sources that the provincial government uses to fund municipalities, though, is the municipal sustainability initiative, or MSI, which helps support local infrastructure priorities and to build strong, safe, and resilient communities. While the government has committed to providing long-term, stable, predictable funding, this program has almost since day one been underfunded. It was originally promised that the MSI would deliver \$11.3 billion over 10 years to municipalities. As the minister admitted during estimates, the program is set to expire next year and as of today has delivered only 7 and a half billion dollars in funds. Even when next year's projected MSI funds are included, the program is yet \$2.56 billion underfunded. When I asked the minister if there was a new funding

agreement being discussed, her response wasn't clear on what the plan was or even if there was a plan, and that was really disappointing.

**4:00**

A significant issue for many municipalities, especially rural municipalities, is the lack of commercial tax opportunities. In addition, they face significant land issues, and their transportation infrastructure has experienced accelerated deterioration due to industrial installations and maintenance of things like pipelines. Rural municipalities depend on revenue associated with linear taxes to assist with covering these costs. In addition, rural municipalities have always shared these tax revenues regionally to fund projects of regional importance such as recreation centres, libraries, and community arenas.

Unfortunately, there has been a lot of mixed messaging about linear taxation recently. When pressed about whether there will be changes to linear tax assessment, collection, allocation, and/or distribution, the minister stated that there would be no redistribution of linear taxes to cities but, regrettably, wouldn't rule out other changes, and that was very disappointing to hear.

I hope the minister and this government will begin to be clearer on these issues moving forward. I was disappointed by the lack of clear answers to many of the legitimate questions raised by myself and others during the estimates committee meeting, and given the tough economic times Albertans deserve clear answers. Madam Chairman, until this government starts being up front on these issues, it will remain difficult to take what they say seriously.

Thank you very much. That's all I have to say to this.

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

[The clauses of Bill 17 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 17.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all the hon. members for their comments, contribution, and particularly their efficiency on this Thursday afternoon. I'll move that we call it 4:30 and adjourn until 10 o'clock Tuesday morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:04 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to May 19, 2016**

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

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

### **1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 732-36 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.), 685-91 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.), 749-60 (Apr. 21, 2016 aft.), 825 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 1019-24 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed), 987-95 (May 18, 2016 morn., adjourned)

### **2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1]

### **3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)

Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2]

### **4\* An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft.), 349-66 (Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 399-409 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.), 378-84 (Apr. 6, 2016 morn.), 415-28 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 450-55 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 428-33 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn.)

### **5 Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading -- 398 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 455-56 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.), 532-38 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed), 491-505 (Apr. 12, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 570-77 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed), 539-56 (Apr. 13, 2016 morn.)

Third Reading -- 577-83 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

### **6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 519-27 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 527-32 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 583-85 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

### **7 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**

First Reading -- 518 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 585-86 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft.), 682-84 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed), 649-51 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 820-24 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 902-903 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)

- 8 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 669-71 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 684 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 824-25 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 903-904 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)
- 9 An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 640-49 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.), 728-30 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 979-81 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)
- 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 599 (Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 671-82 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 730-32 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division), 691-703 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 950-51 (May 17, 2016 morn.), 1041-49 (May 19, 2016 morn., adjourned)
- 11 Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016 (Bilous)**  
First Reading -- 773 (May 2, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 907-908 (May 12, 2016 aft.), 971-79 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1012-18 (May 18, 2016 aft.), 1024 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1068-69 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)
- 12 Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Feehan)**  
First Reading -- 802 (May 3, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 904-907 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 985-87 (May 18, 2016 morn., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1069 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)
- 13 Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016 (Gray)**  
First Reading -- 872 (May 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 965-71 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed on division)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1024-25 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1069 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)
- 14 Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**  
First Reading -- 872 (May 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 983-85 (May 18, 2016 morn., passed)
- 15 An Act to End Predatory Lending (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 901 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1062-67 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)
- 16 Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**  
First Reading -- 921 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1067-68 (May 19, 2016 aft., adjourned)
- 17 Appropriation Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 950 (May 17, 2016 morn., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1025-29 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed), 995-1000 (May 18, 2016 morn., adjourned)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1070 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed), 1031-41 (May 19, 2016 morn.)
- 18 An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring (Phillips)**  
First Reading -- 964-65 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)
- 19 Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 1011 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)
- 201 Election Recall Act (Smith)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 119-32 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft.), 303-304 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division)

- 202      Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 305-16 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft.), 470-73 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)
- 203      Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**  
First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 481-83 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities), 473-81 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft.)
- 204      Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**  
First Reading -- 468 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 616-30 (Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed)
- 205\*      Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**  
First Reading -- 707 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.)  
Second Reading -- 839-50 (May 9, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 924-31 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed with amendments)  
Third Reading -- 931-34 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed)
- 206      Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (Goehring)**  
First Reading -- 902 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)
- Pr1      Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**  
First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed)







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, May 24, 2016

Day 32

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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 Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
 Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
 Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
 Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
 Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
 Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
 MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
 Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
 Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
 Government House Leader  
 McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
 Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
 McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
 Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
 McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
 McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
 McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
 Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
 Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
 Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
 Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
 Official Opposition Whip  
 Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
 Premier  
 Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
 Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
 Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
 Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
 Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
 Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
 Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKittrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
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Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, May 24, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us bow our heads and each in our own way reflect upon the profound strength our province and our nation has because of our cultural diversity. It is the diversity in our colour, faith, traditions, and languages that binds us together.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

##### Evening Sittings

16. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1), commencing May 24, 2016, the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business for the duration of the Second Session of the 29th Legislature 2016 spring sitting unless the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting that day by providing notice under Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or at any time prior to 6 p.m.

[Government Motion 16 carried]

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Second Reading

##### Bill 16

##### Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016

[Adjourned debate May 19: Mr. Mason]

**The Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak? The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to speak to this bill this morning. For the most part our caucus will be supportive of this bill. I mean, there's some good work in there, frankly, some of the stuff I started a few years ago – and I'm glad to see it getting finished now – mostly some pretty common-sense stuff, you know. It's good to see that the minister has taken a start at trying to address the Uber question and everything else.

So I'll encourage our members to vote in favour of this bill. Thanks for the time.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016. It is always good to see Alberta Transportation take the initiative and do some housekeeping of their laws. While there is much housekeeping here, there is also something new, the legal framework to draft regulations for transportation network companies. I can understand the government wanting to make sure that proper insurance is in place for TNCs. If there is an accident, everyone wants to make sure that they are covered. Yet not every TNC driver is driving for the TNC one hundred per cent of the time.

I am pleased that new insurance products are being made available by industry and being approved by the superintendent of insurance, but I question the superintendent's decision to delay the approval of one TNC's insurance product until July 1, 2016. While one TNC had to stop operations, a new taxi service based on a TNC had their ducks in a row and launched, scooping up market share. It gives Albertans the perception, rightfully or wrongfully, that there was some jiggery-pokery going on.

I can also understand the requirement to go do a police information check. This is a more rigorous screening than a simple criminal records check, but it's a little harder to get. I'm not against that, but I'll note that there are a lot of criminal offences, and there is no clarity about what kinds of crimes and how recent they should be to disqualify people from driving others around. Still, we don't want criminals and those known to police as criminal elements driving the general public around.

The issue that bugs most Albertans, or many Albertans, about the TNC rules is the requirement for a class 1, 2, or 4 licence. Most Albertans have a class 5. Most Albertans don't want to be bothered and don't understand what all is involved with obtaining a class 4 licence. With additional training, licensing fees, road tests for an uncertain benefit, Mr. Speaker, this is what many of my colleagues call red tape. Many Albertans figure that if you have a class 5 and can drive a car or a pickup truck, you should be good to go whether or not someone else is in the car with you. Given that most TNC drivers are driving their own cars and are not doing it full-time, why bother with this red-tape barrier?

These minor points of law go completely against the sharing economy that has emerged thanks to social media technology. I would expect many backbench NDP members would also share these concerns. This is cutting-edge technology that needs to be embraced.

I wonder if some folks across the aisle have thought about who might be discriminated against with a class 4 requirement; in particular, women and rural Albertans. You may ask: why women? Well, today in Alberta only 12 per cent of the class 1, 2, and 4 licences are held by women, but they hold 51 per cent of the class 5 licences. Of course, they could get a class 4 licence, but when you are talking about a part-time way to make some extra cash with your own car, this barrier falls disproportionately on women.

You might also ask: why rural Albertans? Well, from here in the Legislature there are a number of places that I could go to get a class 4 test done, but accessing testing locations isn't nearly as convenient in rural Alberta. There is also a special need for part-time TNC drivers in rural Alberta because full-time taxi operations are hard to find, especially on a Friday or Saturday night, when the public safety value of them is at a premium.

I'll note, Mr. Speaker, that these points about insurance policies, information checks, and licence class are not written into this bill. They will not be statute. They will be written into the regulations. I suspect the regulations are drafted but cannot yet go to cabinet for approval. In Ottawa draft regulations get published and circulated for comment in the *Canada Gazette*, but does this happen with the *Alberta Gazette*?

I am also concerned that this TNC legislation will impact carpooling applications and parcel delivery. I don't want to regulate how people use technology to do something they already do without technology, nor do I want to regulate people picking up and dropping off things, a practice that people already do without technology but could easily be made more efficient by driving apps.

Many times in rural Alberta we need to get a parcel from the country to maybe a family member that's living several hundred kilometres away. With a car-sharing app, where we can look at finding someone that's already going to be going in that direction,

they can deliver a parcel for us. Need a parcel, a package, or something else dropped off? There's surely someone going where you want to get it, but you need the technology to match you up. Wouldn't everyone here rather an existing drive happen than a special courier or a hotshot? Without seeing the regulation, I don't know what the minister has up his sleeve, but the legislative framework is there.

**10:10**

There are some other provisions in this legislation that are good. If police pull you over and you produce your valid insurance pink card but the old expired insurance card is still in the folder, you will no longer be fined. That's just common sense.

Then we have some changes to the ignition interlock program and impaired driving laws. First-time offenders whose blood alcohol concentration is less than .160 currently can apply for an exemption to the ignition interlock program. First-time offenders won't get this exemption anymore with Bill 16. That is good.

Street racing causing bodily harm or death will now have a five-year licence disqualification, consistent with other Criminal Code provisions for driving causing bodily harm or death.

A loophole allowing a charged impaired driver to avoid escalating penalties if they appear in court on all charges at once is eliminated.

Novice drivers will now legally be able to be taken back to the police station and be administered the real breathalyzer, not just the roadside approved screening device.

A person in year 4 of 5 of a driving suspension who wants to start driving again under the ignition interlock program can now do so for the one year, not having to go through the full five-year program on top of the driving suspension.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to make Bill 16 better by adding some definitions to the law, definitions like what a transportation network company is. Unfortunately, one area that we cannot amend is the definition allowing a tow truck with lights flashing to be designated as an emergency vehicle. We cannot amend these sections of legislation at this time because those parts of the law did not come open. We hope the minister and his department will take these recommendations under advisement and bring them forward for round 3 of the update to the Traffic Safety Act.

I thank the minister for bringing this law forward, and I look forward to a productive debate on the bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or observations under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock?

Seeing none, are there any other individuals who would like to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly an honour to talk about this Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016. In rural areas the ability to drive and be mobile in areas that require a mechanical means of transportation to be timely and efficient is important, but moreover, on that, the safety of those modes of transportation is also important. In the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler, where we have expansive areas and where with modern transportation it requires upwards of almost three hours to get from one diagonal to the other in the constituency, it's important to be able to be mobile and have effective and safe transportation to do that.

On the surface this appears to be nothing more than housekeeping on the part of the government, and there are some elements of that within this proposed act. I was speaking to the members from Calgary-Shaw and Leduc-Beaumont prior to the beginning of this session, and we were talking about the housekeeping portion

regarding the spelling of the word "motorcycle." I know there's serious and onerous work to be done in this Chamber, but I guess we're relegated to that today on this fine day in Alberta, and I'm proud and happy to be here to do that. Wordsmithing, as you know, Mr. Speaker and members opposite and members on all sides, is important, and spelling within this legislation is a perfectly reasonable housekeeping item.

I'm pleased that some common-sense items such as the requirement to produce your pink slip for law officers have been included here. In a personal incident of yours truly, with some of the diverse locations of our farm vehicles, that situation has happened to me, and through the affableness of the police officer at the time in the rural areas there was not a penalty enforced. But he and I both knew that the proper effect of the law, the law in the province, is to produce a properly dated proof of insurance. There are some vehicles now inoperable on the farm that I know that have a series of those expired proofs of insurance in them because that was the easier way to do that. Mr. Speaker and members of the Chamber, this change to the act is common sense. In this day and age it seems that common sense is not common, but this is long overdue.

The government has also taken the time to fix a few items that fall into the realm of, should I call it, or could we call it, law and order. This is a particularly serious issue or portion of the discussion. Alcoholic drinking and driving is something that I doubt anyone here doesn't believe needs to be eliminated from our roads. Now, with the potential changes regarding other forms of impediments, I guess I could call it, to our mental capacities, whether they be some sorts of drugs, there are going to be different challenges to our legal system going forward. In the case of alcohol, drinking, the inducement of drugs, despite strides in the right direction in Alberta, the problem still persists.

The government has proposed several fixes to some sections of this act that needed clarity and fixing, and part of that clarity and fixing was a result of legal actions brought forward by, should I call it, finely perceptive lawyers in the court system. The major one I see is to finally close a loophole that allowed accused drunk drivers to appear in court on multiple charges. Mr. Speaker, in the rural area that I know of, there are cases like this, and it has occurred. The constabulary, the Queen's Cowboys, as some people know them, the RCMP in the rural areas, is very frustrated by this. Some of those people that are challenging the system do this to avoid escalating penalties. Getting off lightly simply by bundling your charges is something you do with phone, cable, or Internet services. It is not something that should be used to avoid stiffer penalties for something as serious as impaired driving.

To our Solicitor General from this province: possibly the imposition of stricter consecutive penalties could be a differentiation rather than simply trying to bring forward legislation. It's been effected in the federal arena, where times before probation and continuation of sentences are of greater effectiveness than simply effecting penalties. Mr. Speaker, I believe this will make our roads safer and, hopefully, keep habitual offenders off the streets and roads and highways of the great province of Alberta.

As I stated earlier, impaired driving is a very serious problem, and any common-sense steps designed to curb it are a good idea, in my opinion. I note that the change to the ignition interlock program is one of those changes. Impaired driving is a serious topic, and we should do whatever we can to change the public's view of it. Chances are that if you are pulled over for the first time, as a first-time offender it wasn't truly your first time driving while impaired; you just happened to finally get caught at it. As I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker and members of the Chamber, driving in Alberta and

driving in the rural constituencies is a privilege. The first-time convicted offender should want to regain this privilege when having to abide by the ignition interlock program. This is not an unreasonable request. If it helps to break established patterns of drinking and driving and saves lives in the process, to me it is a positive step forward.

10:20

Any loophole that we can close to keep impaired drivers off the streets and highways is a worthwhile endeavour. Technicalities such as the one eliminated in section 90(2) to ensure that a novice driver can now be asked to produce a breath sample at either or both the roadside and at the station are a welcome fix as well.

Although I've seen boots on the ground a lot longer than some of my colleagues across the aisle, street racing has been around since before my early days. As soon as someone developed a means to propel a tire, racing has existed. From James Dean to *The Fast and the Furious*, racing has been glamourized by Hollywood and in books. Sadly, it has also had tragic consequences, as both James Dean and Paul Walker found out with their violent deaths. In fact, Mr. Speaker, as recently as last night on my entry into the city I saw a police officer on the Anthony Henday off the highway 14 exchange that had two vehicles pulled over at once. I could only believe that that's what was going on, that there was some sort of a multiple vehicle occurrence there.

It is only just that street racers who cause bodily harm or death be punished with the same severity as other dangerous drivers under the Traffic Safety Act. Currently under the Traffic Safety Act such a conviction carries a five-year disqualification from driving. Street racing causing bodily harm or death, however, only carried in the past a one-year disqualification. This was a joke, and I'm pleased to see it being addressed.

Now, before the members opposite get complacent about my positive and sometimes witty, supposedly, in my view, prose – others would disagree – I must point out that this proposed legislation is far from perfect. The hon. Minister of Transportation missed a golden opportunity, in my view, while opening up this act, to address some concerns that were brought up not only in this House in my questions to him but in my personal meetings with him.

I speak of an issue that I first raised on November 2, 2015, and again in question period on November 16. The issue was concerning tow truck operation and the fact that they are not considered emergency vehicles under the Traffic Safety Act. Mr. Speaker, these drivers are at serious risk while recovering vehicles on busy roads and highways. It is not uncommon for the drivers to be the last ones at an accident or a recovery scene, long after the police and other emergency personnel have departed. I'm sure that many members opposite and on this side of the Chamber will understand that while the police are at the location recovering vehicles involved in an accident of any kind or simply distressed on the side of the road, people are respectful of the lighting and displays that the police provide. But they are only there for the immediate information gathering at the incident, and after they leave, the tow truck operators are generally left to fend for themselves.

In a personal situation, Mr. Speaker, again on highway 14, near the divided highway section, the tow truck operator came out to service a flat tire. They will not approach those situations without the gravity of two tow trucks for the simple physics that many people will pass them at high rates of speed while they're providing service at the side of the road and do not slow down. The 60 to 80 operators killed on North American roads every year are almost as likely to be killed on the job as law enforcement officers. This gives the industry one of the highest occupational death rates per capita.

My disappointment that the minister did not open this or have this be involved in this legislation stems from the minister's quote.

Safety is the first priority of our department. Far too many people are killed on our roads in a variety of ways. The hon. member has quite rightly brought forward some serious aspects to that, that deserve careful attention, and I want to assure the hon. member that it will get the attention that it deserves.

We want to make sure that our roads are as safe as possible.

The people that work on the roads, whether they're first responders or people operating tow trucks... or driving their family for a long weekend, deserve to have safe roads.

Now, I believe – and I've known the minister for some time in the Chamber and outside of the Chamber – that the minister was sincere when he spoke those words, and I am hopeful that he will go the extra mile to ensure that this oversight is dealt with in a reasonable and timely manner.

No one should lose their life while doing their job when a mechanism exists to prevent it. This government, Mr. Speaker, is very adamant that farm workers should have legislation that protects them. I have had direct conversations with members opposite, with the minister on this subject, as I've stated here, and his response is proof of that. Why are we not exhibiting that? What is the slippage? Why is there impropriety here?

Sometimes regulatory change can be a great benefit, but sometimes it can also be overreaching as well. In this case, I refer to the meat, if you will – no pun intended – of these amendments, the changes to the transportation network companies, or TNCs, if you will. While this bill does not give details concerning the regulations around these transportation network companies, or TNCs, again, it does give the government the power to make whatever rules they want and define TNCs however they wish. Mr. Speaker, that is troubling.

Given this government's track record dealing with transparency and consultation – again, I can go back to the consultation that was done on the steps of this Legislature regarding Bill 6. It seems that that was the only consultation this government heard, and now we're proceeding with a series, some sort of reduced input from the agricultural organizations to come forward with regulatory restrictions and input on Bill 6.

The government's delay and lack of any temporary solutions cost thousands of Albertans that were employed with ride-share companies such as Uber a way to supplement their income.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Nixon:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I was very interested in what the member was saying, and I'm hoping that he could finish his comments, please.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I seem to be in an illustrious mode here today. I want to continue on speaking about the TNCs. Companies like Uber were designed to be a part of ride sharing, and they're not taxis. Taxis involve a class 4 licence for professional drivers who drive company vehicles as a full-time job. The ride-share apps are designed for part-time and casual peak-time work. It's not exactly comparing apples to apples.

Mr. Speaker, there are many people – again I revert to rural areas now – who drive large, commercial-sized vehicles who have class

1 licences such as the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. We have large farm machinery. It's almost industrial sized, and the requirement for a slight improvement to the qualifications of these drivers is an important thing because people are invoking a method of trade. The idea that having a slightly higher level of qualifications for the operation of a vehicle is reasonable.

A quick anecdote: I'd like to recall a story from, I think, Toronto, where a large taxi drivers' protest regarding Uber was going on, and an interested bystander opened his Uber app to find that hundreds of available Uber rides were in the same group as the taxi drivers.

**10:30**

So it's a coincidence, Mr. Speaker, that although there may be concerns by some commercial operations that there are not options available to people – as long as there is a level of safety imposed, I think it's acceptable. Safety is always an important fact. Assuming that somehow a class 5 licence is more dangerous than a class 4 is serious business. Millions of class 5 drivers are on the road at any given time, many with passengers, but the addition of being able to use an app to get a ride and pay for it does not diminish people's ability to drive safely. It's the education that they have to achieve their different qualifications. Companies like Uber have rating systems that give real-time feedback to users to help ensure the highest of standards.

Given the distances we travel throughout Alberta, ride-sharing companies are a useful tool in rural Alberta. As I was preparing for this dissertation, Mr. Speaker, I gave great thought to the rural area that we live in, where my wife's retired uncle travels back and forth to a relatively urban, or larger, centre on a regular basis. Giving instructions to return home by way of a fertilizer dealer or a business that supplies agricultural parts or equipment would be a marvellous way to save time and create safety because there would be fewer people on the roads, but it would also be, at the behest of this government, environmentally friendly because there would be fewer vehicles on the road. Providing a service that did not necessarily exist in the rural areas, partially because there simply isn't the volume to set up a taxi in a rural environment, certainly not enough of a market for those taxis to meet the needs on a Friday night, the TNCs can fill the gap but won't if there are too many barriers.

It also gives both men and women an equal opportunity to participate in this casual employment. Roughly half of class 5 drivers in Alberta are women, 51 per cent actually, whereas with a professional designation, class 1, 2, or 4, only 12 per cent are women.

It makes little sense that many of us have no issue in letting our friends and neighbours drive us and our families around with nary a thought, but somehow when payment is an issue, then problems arise. I do relate it to the aviation industry, Mr. Speaker, that I also have some acquaintance with. In private industry . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016? The leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise to speak on Bill 16. A lot of the ground that I'd like to cover has been covered, but I think it's worthy of talking about. There are a few things that I think the government seems to have gotten right on this.

Certainly, the one change, to the in-car breathalyzer system, is a positive one. Here's the interesting thing. During my time when I was Transportation minister, I once asked the question: what's our rate of graduating people from the system? Like, how long do they

have to be on it, how does that work, and how do we make sure that they're going to drive without drinking and all of that? I was very surprised to learn that one of the biggest impediments to people graduating from the interlock system is that they don't want to. That sounded crazy to me, so I'll explain that because it's bound to sound crazy to other members of the House, too.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the people currently on the interlock system want to stay on it because they have and they know they have an alcohol problem. What they tell people in Alberta Transportation, as was explained to me, is: "Please don't make me give up the interlock – I'll pay you the monthly fee – because if you do, then I will drive impaired, and I will lose my licence for two or three years or whatever the judge decides when I get in front of the judge. Then I won't be able to keep my job, I won't be able to look after my family, and I won't be able to pay my own bills because I know that I'm a slave to alcohol." While it's not everybody, there are a surprising number of Albertans that actually, in a really odd sort of way are responsible enough to recognize their own weakness and guard against it using the interlock system as a crutch.

First of all, none of us should have any tolerance for impaired driving, but besides that, I'm going to say that this change in the legislation is one where, in my view, the government got it right. Of course, I wouldn't want to characterize everybody on that system as being in this set of circumstances, Mr. Speaker. I just thought it was interesting to note that there are a surprising number of Albertans that actually choose to stay on it so they don't drive impaired. That, interestingly enough, is a pretty good safeguard.

The increased penalties for street racing are something that is important. People really do get killed street racing. It's something that the police across this province fight on a regular basis. I know that during the couple of years I had on the police commission for the Calgary Police Service, it was a constant concern. In fact, it's one of the reasons that that police service was very much in favour of keeping a racing track around, largely because when that was around, they actually – and the police took part in it – got people to what they called Friday night secret street. On Friday night they would have young people get together, bring their cars to the track, and under supervised conditions and with some safety equipment and people there and with a separated track and, of course, completely separated from public traffic, which is kind of important, they would be able to see whose car could go the fastest in a quarter of a mile.

For me, it's one of those things that's fun to watch, but as not a really big car guy the chances of you seeing me there are kind of low unless I'm sitting in the stands watching. Nonetheless, there are people interested in doing that. I think that it's important to have places for people to try to get their thrills experienced in a safe way, but when they don't, that is in no way ever an excuse for street racing. To actually have the penalty increased to more fully recognize the extent of the damage that people can do when they're street racing is a very good idea and one that I support.

Now, the area of ride sharing in the legislation is one that probably I'll have more to say about in Committee of the Whole, but for now I will say that I've had some discussions with members of the taxi industry, that are looking for a level playing field. That's all they're looking for, which is, I think, reasonable. They're interested in making sure that people with ride sharing have adequate insurance, have adequate security checks, have adequate mechanical inspections. Now, when I asked the Transportation minister in estimates about those things, he said: yeah; we will do 2 out of 3 of those things with the legislation. He indicated to me that they were going to leave vehicle inspections to the local municipality.



I will part company a little bit with my colleague from the Official Opposition in that, while he's right that many of us don't think twice about taking a ride with a friend or a family member, when you take a ride with somebody for compensation, while the personal trust level may be the same, it becomes a business relationship rather than a personal relationship even if the person you're paying in the ride share happens to be a friend or a family member. While the member opposite may see it as the same – and I certainly recognize why he says that – I'm pretty sure that my insurance company doesn't see it as the same thing, and I'm pretty sure that the hon. member's insurance company doesn't see it as the same thing. That's, I think, where we have to be careful to make sure that people that pay for a ride are protected as well as the driver.

Of course, there's an uninsured drivers' fund, but if we do anything legislative that has us dipping into that fund on purpose, then we really should think again about what we're doing here. That is meant as a last resort, when someone is driving against the law either by themselves or for compensation without adequate insurance.

10:40

I intend to talk some more with people currently in the delivery system, people that deliver people from point A to point B for compensation. I will say that while there are some things to like in the legislation, unfortunately one of the usual shortfalls is the lack of consultation, and I say that because members of the taxi industry have told me that just in the last few days they've been asked to give their comments on the legislation whereas probably they should have been asked for their comments long before the legislation was printed or presented to this House. You know, once again, with all due respect, the government is chasing their tail a little bit when it comes to public consultation. I think they're kind of behind the eight ball, and they need to catch up. It's kind of unfortunate that we're going to have to try to do some of the catch-up while the legislation is before the House, but, Mr. Speaker, here we are. That's where the government has left it.

I intend to do some more consultation with some of my colleagues, with members that are in the transportation business right now, and we may – “may” is the operative word because, of course, we're going to try to do the consultation for the government in the absence of the government doing that, a good consultation, before delivering the legislation to the House. Admittedly, we're flying by the seat of our pants because the government essentially hasn't really left any choice by the fact that they didn't do full consultation before they brought the legislation in. We will try to do the government's work for them, Mr. Speaker, and thereafter we may have some suggestions for some improvements to the legislation.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any questions to the Member for Calgary-Hays under section 29(2)(a)? The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I guess that, first off, I'd like to address the comments with regard to the consultation process. You know, I have to disagree with the hon. member. There was certainly consultation that went on. I know that I did it myself. I have been speaking with the taxi folks for as long as or before the election even occurred, so I was bringing those comments forward during the entire time. I've spoken with them since the election. We've had the representatives of the taxi group come to see us to talk about their concerns and more things moving forward as well as consulted with all of the stakeholders, the TNCs, traffic safety partners, and whatnot. So, again, I do have to completely disagree.

We have done some very thorough consultation, which was what guided the creation of some of this.

I guess the other thing to quickly address, Mr. Speaker, is with regard to the carpooling. None of this really affects the carpooling. That will continue on as it has, and I understand that some of the TNCs may in the future be bringing forward a section of their app, I guess, that will deal with carpooling. So that will simply move forward.

I guess that during this discussion – and I call it a discussion, Mr. Speaker, because I'm sensing consensus right across here – the biggest thing that everybody is concerned with is with regard to safety. We want to make sure that drivers are safe, passengers are safe, pedestrians are safe, that everybody that's using the roads is safe. When we had initially touched on – I'll have to apologize; I can't remember which member it was that brought up the fact that Uber had ceased operations over the insurance issue. Quite honestly, that was a choice. TappCar decided to use the type of commercial insurance that was available at the time, and they began to operate. Uber made the choice not to do that. That's not to say that that was a wrong choice or a bad choice. It was just simply a choice that, you know, was available to them at that time.

When we start talking about the class 4 licence, again, this is with regard to safety. I mean, it doesn't matter, if you're a commercial operator, whether you're working full-time or part-time. If you drive a large semi part-time, you're still driving a large semi, and it requires you to have a class 1 licence. With class 4 there is the extra training. There's training on customer service. You know, as a class 5 driver, when I go to get my insurance, my company always asks me: do you drive to work or don't you? When I say that I drive to work and ask why the price goes up, that's because, as they say, risk increases because I'm on the road more often. When you're a ride-for-hire driver, you're performing a service for a fee. Your risk increases because you're on the road more often. We want these folks to have the proper training and be capable to deal with all of those situations.

In terms of maybe why this was taking a little bit longer, certainly we wanted to make sure that all of the basic regulations were in place before we started trying to develop an insurance policy. That is in front of the experts now and should be ready to go on July 1 of this year. As we create the regulations surrounding TNCs – the reason they're not in the legislation is because the industry, quite honestly, is evolving very, very quickly. I mean, we've already started talking about a carpooling service within the TNCs. If we start creating regulations in the legislation right now, these companies won't be able to offer their carpooling until we come back and change those to allow them. With the regulations being left up to the ministry, those regulations can be changed to adapt quickly for those businesses that want to make those changes and those improvements and offer a larger service for their customers.

At this point I hope I've addressed some of the concerns from the other side. Like I said, I think there's very large consensus across the House that this is about safety, making our streets as safe as possible. I don't need to delve into all the other points because, like I said, I think we have consensus there, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to further discussions about this in Committee of the Whole and third reading as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments for the Member for Edmonton-Decore under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, are there other members who would like to speak to Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016?

**An Hon. Member:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a second time]

**10:50 Government Bills and Orders  
Committee of the Whole**

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 14  
Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016**

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 14, the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016. The Health Professions Amendment Act is a legislative framework through which regulatory colleges partner with government to create accountability mechanisms in our health system. I won't spend a lot of time talking about the importance of the act; instead, I'd like to jump to why these amendments are needed.

Amendments to the Health Professions Act are required to ensure that it continues to reflect Alberta's constantly evolving health workforce and health system. The last significant amendments to the act occurred in 2008. The amendments in 2008 addressed the governance of pharmacy technicians, podiatrists, and inspections by regulatory colleges.

Recently Alberta Health, in collaboration with the Alberta Federation of Regulated Health Professions, reviewed the act and identified necessary revisions. These changes are needed to better enable the colleges to regulate the professions and protect the public while maintaining accountability. The federation is made up of the registrars or chief executive officers of 29 regulatory colleges who are governed under the Health Professions Act. Amendments were also identified by Alberta Health Services and by individual colleges. These amendments are necessary to ensure that the act is responsive to health professions and the changing health care system.

The proposed amendments include adding two professions, namely physician assistant and diagnostic medical sonographer, and giving the minister authority to direct the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta to accredit Alberta Health Services facilities in which physicians provide services by removing restrictions on the ownership of physical therapy practices and by updating practice statements, protecting additional titles, and changing the names of three colleges and renaming schedule 20.

I am sure that many members have questions and comments to make on these changes, so I will just stop there. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any further questions, comments, or amendments? The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm happy to rise and speak to Bill 14, the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016. This bill provides a number of quality amendments and good housekeeping items that I'm happy to support.

Bringing physician assistants under the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta as regulated members is a good decision. Physician assistants are common in the military, and if this decision helps the men and women of our armed forces transition to life after service, I think it's a positive step. While there are only about 30 physician assistants in Alberta presently, if this provides some incentive to physician assistants to come to Alberta, then again it's a step in the right direction.

Under the current Health Professions Act government health facilities are exempt from the requirement to be accredited by the

College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta. Compare this with private and not-for-profit facilities, that are required to be accredited by the college. Bill 14 will grant the Health minister the ability to direct the college to accredit government health facilities. In order for our health system to work properly, it needs to maintain the confidence and trust of Albertans, the ones that ultimately pay for and access the system. By providing the Health minister with the ability to require government health facilities to be accredited by the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, we can be confident that the facilities they access for their health care needs are operating properly and meeting the same standards as private and not-for-profit facilities. This change levels the playing field and provides Albertans confidence that the system is working in their best interests.

I do have some concerns with the proposed changes that would see the creation of joint college and associations. The College of Opticians becomes the college and association of opticians, and the College of Physical Therapists becomes the physiotherapy college and association. A regulatory college such as those prescribed under the Health Professions Act exists for the benefit of all Albertans. It exists to regulate and ensure that its members are acting in the best interest of Albertans and conducting themselves accordingly. The purpose of an association is to promote and advocate in the best interests of their members. When you combine the two organizations, it can lead to potential conflict and conflict of interest. Best practice is to have the two separate. It would be of great benefit to see this trend continue.

That being said, the issue of having a combined association and college is outweighed by the many benefits of good governance and the provisions of this bill. For that reason I support Bill 14, the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016, and I encourage all my fellow members to do the same.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report.

**The Chair:** The intention is to call for the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the clauses of Bill 14 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:56 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:

Anderson, S.	Hanson	Piquette
Anderson, W.	Hoffman	Pitt
Babcock	Horne	Renaud
Bilous	Kazim	Rosendahl
Carson	Kleinsteuber	Schmidt
Ceci	Littlewood	Schreiner
Connolly	Loewen	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Smith
Dach	Luff	Starke
Dang	Malkinson	Strankman
Drysdale	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Eggen	McIver	Sweet
Feehan	McKittrick	Turner
Fildebrandt	Miller	van Dijken

Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Westhead
Ganley	Nielsen	Woollard
Goehring	Nixon	Yao
Gotfried		
Totals:	For – 52	Against – 0

[The clauses of Bill 14 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

**Ms Ganley:** This time I really move that the committee rise and report.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Sweet:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 14.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Third Reading

##### Bill 14

#### Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016

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

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to move third reading of Bill 14, the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016.

Alberta's health system and health workforce are changing and evolving, and public and professional expectations are shifting. The act needs to be responsive to these developments. The act needs to reflect advancements in health professions and a new way of thinking and working that impacts how care is provided to Albertans. At the same time the act must provide for the wants and needs of Albertans. It must support government's vision of providing the right care at the right time in the right place and from the right provider with the correct information. While we recognize that adapting to change is important, one constant must remain, protecting the public. The act needs to ensure that the public continues to receive safe, high-quality care and that health providers remain accountable while providing for these new developments.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The proposed amendments to the Health Professions Act balance these needs. The amendments enable the health system and health providers working within it to move forward while maintaining a strong foundation of safety and accountability. The proposed amendments will regulate two additional professions to ensure

these health providers are accountable for the care they provide and adhere to the highest professional standards of practice.

The amendments also provide for ensuring that all facilities are accredited using the same rigorous standards and that patient safety is improved. They allow for new, innovative models of offering care from the same qualified health professionals. Practice statements are updated to reflect the full scope to which professionals practise. Additional professional titles are protected, so Albertans can be assured that only qualified individuals are providing care and that no one can misrepresent their services. Name changes more clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities when an organization serves both as a regulatory college and association.

The act was last amended eight years ago. These updates are needed to support and enable the work of health professionals and their regulatory colleges. Supporting them, in turn, enables safer, better care for Albertans.

I ask all members to support Bill 14, the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016, and the health care improvements that will result from these proposed amendments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, do I understand you to mean that you're making that motion on behalf of the Health minister? Is that correct?

**Ms Renaud:** Yes, that's correct.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Anyone else wish to speak to the motion?

Would you like to close debate, hon. member?

**Ms Renaud:** Yes, I would. I close debate on Bill 14.

**The Clerk:** Bill 14, the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016...

**The Speaker:** Hold it, hon. Clerk. I believe we have three members who are asking for a division.

**The Clerk:** It's too late. I just started reading.

**The Speaker:** Keep going.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a third time]

**The Speaker:** I think a division had been called, is that right?

Hon. members, I've been advised that since the Clerk was reading third reading, a division does not apply, so the motion passes as carried.

### 11:20 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole (continued)

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I will call the committee to order.

### Bill 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**The Chair:** Any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm rising to speak to Bill 10, the Unlimited Debt and Fiscal Irresponsibility Act. Let's

just get back right into fun debate in this House. I think we've been quiet long enough in here.

Madam Chair, this is perhaps one of the most irresponsible pieces of legislation that this Legislature has dealt with in the year since the last election. The Minister of Finance had the gall to introduce a bill just last fall that significantly increased the legal capacity of the government to borrow in this province. It abolished any restrictions whatsoever on the ability of the government to borrow for operational deficits, and it significantly increased the overall ceiling for the debt capacity of the government for both capital and operations up to 15 per cent.

I remember very vividly the Minister of Finance standing in this House and stating that 15 per cent was a very prudent debt ceiling to be setting, that going beyond 15 per cent would be irresponsible, but we could trust this government to be responsible because it would only be 15 per cent. "We're from the government. Trust us. We're going to do things right."

Now, at the time the Official Opposition stood up and continually warned the government that we were at significant risk of starting to act like the U.S. Congress, where about every nine to 10 months the U.S. Congress approves an increase to its debt ceiling. It's a joke. It's a debt elevator, where every year the U.S. Congress takes their debt up one more floor.

You know, we talked about the history of what's happened in this province. Ralph Klein and Jim Dinning put in place very strict restrictions against borrowing and deficit financing in this province, and that was watered down over time, originally, I think, for relatively decent reasons, to allow for P3s and limited borrowing for certain projects that had an actual financial value as an asset, that could actually be liquidated as a proper capital asset should be able to be if it's going to be borrowed for, that you can liquidate that asset at an actual cash value.

Those laws were repeatedly watered down, we saw, by the Redford government. We saw them watered down again by the NDP just last fall. We warned that this continued watering down of the restrictions against borrowing and deficit financing in this province would lead us into a debt crisis, that the government would let go of all restrictions whatsoever on deficit financing.

The minister had said that our concerns were not well founded. He said that they were not well founded when we warned about what would happen last fall. He said that there was no chance that we would ever go above 15 per cent debt to GDP. We were very clear. We provided very clear evidence that the Minister of Finance's revenue projections were grossly optimistic, that they would not meet their revenue targets, and that if they continued on their spending plan with unrealistic revenue projections, we would be into deficits in perpetuity.

We've seen this government revise its balanced budget date far too many times for comfort, so discomfoting that we have now suffered five credit downgrades in the short history of this government. During the election they promised to balance the budget by 2018 and then a week into the campaign had to move it to 2019. Then within about a month or two of being elected, they moved it from 2019 to 2020. Now they say: maybe, sort of, if we get lucky, 2024, 2025. They won't have to worry about it, Madam Chair. It's going to be the Wildrose who balances the budget by 2024.

That is their plan. Their plan is for somebody else to fix their problems. We've seen other governments across the country do this in the past, where governments sort of throw a dart at the board and say, "We're going to get to balance there," and every year they kick it one year down the road. We've been running deficits – this is our ninth consecutive consolidated deficit in this province, and every single year the government of the past said, "We're going to balance

the budget probably two years down the road," and every year they would move that target out one more year.

It was one thing for us to do that while we still had a lot of money left in the sustainability fund. It was one thing to do that when we were still coming from a position where we had no debt, when we were debt free and paid in full in this province. Now, though, we have a significant debt load, exceeding \$20 billion right now, and we have no money left in the sustainability fund. The result has been not just the downgrade in the province's credit rating but a downgrade in this government's credibility that they will ever balance the budget.

Just last Thursday, while we were debating Bill 10, the minister stood here and said that we were creditworthy, that this government had a plan, and we should just trust them. The minister had the guts to say that we were fearmongering, and just later in that afternoon, Thursday afternoon, Alberta received another credit downgrade, our second, so far, from Standard & Poor's. That is shameful, Madam Chair.

When the budget was introduced, we had a credit downgrade. I believe it was DBRS. DBRS downgraded the credit rating of this province less than 24 hours after they introduced their budget. Now, that's not coincidental timing, Madam Chair. It had nothing to do with the price of oil. If it had to do with the price of oil, they would have downgraded it when the price of oil went down. But, instead, they downgraded the credit rating of this province within hours of them introducing a budget. It's no coincidence, further, that Standard & Poor's gave us our second downgrading from that one agency. I believe, if I'm not mistaken, we're into the double A's now, perhaps even double-A minus. They downgraded our credit rating while we are debating Bill 10 to repeal any debt ceiling and restrictions on borrowing whatsoever.

The creditors have looked at this government's fiscal plan and decided, quite rightfully, that it's not credible, that they have no plan to pay it back. When the government borrows money and they are borrowing money to refinance existing debt, we have a very big problem. We have a very big problem. In our private lives if you have to take out a line of credit to pay your credit card, you've got a debt problem, and that is what our government is doing here. They are taking out a line of credit to pay the credit card debt now. It is extremely dangerous and reckless. They are now trying to change the rules to take away any restrictions on borrowing whatsoever.

In response to the Official Opposition's concerns about a credit downgrade directly related to Bill 10, the Minister of Finance, blustering, responded that the Official Opposition just wanted a PST. I don't know what the minister was smoking that day, but it must have been something very potent, Madam Chair. It must have been very potent for the Minister of Finance to believe that it is the responsibility of the Official Opposition, somehow, that this province had a credit downgrade and that the Official Opposition, the only party in this House that ran on no new taxes – you may have heard that before – wanted a massive tax increase akin to the carbon tax that the government is expected to impose on Albertans later today, that we wanted a PST, somehow.

That is the response we're getting from this government, not substantive responses to real, serious questions. Albertans have real, serious questions about this because when our credit is downgraded, it costs more to borrow. Every single dollar that we are paying on interest to the banks is a dollar that does not go to build schools, to build roads, to build hospitals, or to hire teachers or nurses. At the end of the day the biggest enemy of social programs is social democrats who can't get their spending under control. They are going to spend this province broke to the point where we are spending billions of dollars a year on interest payments rather than putting that money where it should be going,

directly to building important capital projects and providing government services. So what do they have to show for it? Bluster.

11:30

We ask about the serious consequences, if the government will take responsibility for the credit downgrade. We ask real questions, and all we get – I'm not even sure it was a talking point; it must have just spilled out of their heads to think that somehow we want a PST in response to their government's plan getting us a credit downgrade. Well, Madam Chair, there are few issues that I am more passionate about than defending the fiscal position of this province. I was elected by the people of Strathmore-Brooks to come here and defend the Alberta advantage, that made modern Alberta great, that made Alberta the economic powerhouse of North America, that made us at one point paid in full, with no debt and money in the bank, that gave us the flat tax, that gave us the lowest business tax in Canada, a real Alberta advantage that supercharged our economy and made us an absolute magnet for investment, investment that this government is driving out of this province as fast as they possibly can.

That's why, Madam Chair, I'm pleased to introduce an amendment to Bill 10. Can I read . . .

**The Chair:** We're waiting for the original copy, hon. member.

This will be known as amendment A2.

Continue, hon. member.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I move that Bill 10, Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 5 by striking out subsection (2) and substituting the following:

(2) Section 3 is amended by adding the following after subsection (2):

(3) If a report made pursuant to section 6(1) indicates that Crown debt will exceed 15% of GDP for Alberta for a fiscal year, notwithstanding section 43(1)(a) of the Legislative Assembly Act, no member of the Executive Council shall receive any salary prescribed under that section until a subsequent report made pursuant to section 6(1) indicates Crown debt will be 15% of GDP for Alberta or less.

Now, Madam Chair, Albertans who don't have government jobs like us in this House are expected to perform well to get paid. Being a minister of the Crown entitles you to significantly higher remuneration than most Members of this Legislative Assembly. Most Members of the Legislative Assembly are paid a salary, and if you have special duties like being a minister or the Speaker, you get a significant increase in your pay. Now, if you are a minister of the Crown here, you have a basic fiduciary obligation to responsibly manage the finances of this province. I believe that if you cannot keep your debt under 15 per cent of GDP, when we were once paid in full in this province with money in the bank, then you're not doing your job, and you should not get a bonus for it.

That is what this amendment does. If ministers of the Crown, in particular the Minister of Finance but all ministers of the Crown, cannot keep the debt under 15 per cent of GDP, then they don't deserve the significant increase in pay that comes with their position. This would be considered performance pay in the private sector. Even in the public sector here we have something called pay at risk: you're guaranteed a certain salary, but if you don't meet your performance measures, your salary falls back to a lower level. We have the bill regarding agencies, boards, and commissions here. It seeks to standardize some of those pay-at-risk structures in the government. It's not a bad idea that you have two kinds of salaries, your minimum salary for just having the job and then a maximum salary if you're doing your job properly.

I believe that if the government cannot balance the budget after nine consecutive consolidated deficits, they're not doing their job. If they have to repeal a piece of legislation that they passed just four and a half months ago, then they're not doing their job. If they cannot keep the debt of this province under 15 per cent of GDP, then they're not doing their job, and they shouldn't get paid extra for it anyway.

That is why I'm pleased to move this amendment to ensure that ministers have at least some financial incentive to behave responsibly if their own sense of duty can't do it for them. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise in support of this amendment. This government just seven months ago argued forcefully for the increase of the debt ceiling to 15 per cent. It is difficult to see how this government has any credibility left for their ability to handle spending.

Albertans are hurting. Over 100,000 Albertans are out of work. Unemployment in Alberta is higher than the national average, and this government refuses to even consider holding the debt to less than 20 per cent of GDP. A 15 per cent debt ceiling is over \$50 billion; at 20 per cent it's \$75 billion. Considering that a few years ago we were debt free, that is an absolutely stunning amount of debt to be passing on.

What's worse is that this government cannot even meet their own spending limits after just six months. A government breaking its own legislation only six months after creating it is not the kind of thing you want to see in mature democracies. I suspect it is an Alberta record, but unlike setting a record for the hundred-metre dash, this is not something to be proud of. In fact, this is an embarrassment of historic proportions. This government has one thing in common with Usain Bolt, however. Our children will be talking about both of them long into the future, with this debt load.

With the elimination of the debt ceiling we see this government endorsing generalization debt. This government has no plan to get their spending under control. They have no ideas how to eliminate the debt they are saddling our children with. This government has singlehandedly ruined our province's pristine credit rating. In the course of 12 months they have seen our credit rating downgraded four times. This is a record. In response to the government sending the Finance minister to talk some sense to the credit agencies, all we see is that the result was another downgrade. With our debt getting past \$50 billion, we will owe the banks \$2 billion each year just in interest payments. That's \$2 billion without a penny going to principal because there's no plan to repay the principal.

The question Albertans are asking is: where is the money going to come from? This government has made it abundantly clear that it will not cut spending. If the government is not going to cut spending, then it has to raise taxes. If this government is considering a PST, well, shame. They're already introducing an ND PST carbon tax. Even with the \$3 billion they're planning on collecting from hard-working Albertans, they would barely cover the interest payments on the new debt they raised. None of it is going to that, of course. Most of it will go to a green slush fund for the NDP to splash around. This government continues to talk about how they refuse to consider cuts to government spending. What they refuse to consider is that every day they don't tackle their ever-increasing debt is another day that a future government will have to take stronger actions to get this province's fiscal house in order.

This House has a bill in front of them that tackles the cycle of debt created by payday loans. I support that bill, and it's unfortunate

that this government refuses to take its own advice and apply it to its own spending practices. This government has no plan to reduce spending and tackle the debt that they and the previous government created. This amendment would at least signal to our creditors that we take their concerns seriously, that we have some idea of a plan on how to tackle the debt and bring back the Alberta advantage.

For that reason, I strongly support this amendment, and I call on my hon. colleagues to do so as well. Let's begin to make hard decisions today so our children aren't forced to make painful decisions tomorrow.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I won't be supporting the amendment. It doesn't look like there's a plan there at all, actually. I will say that we are not in a debt crisis. I will say that if you look at page 9 of the fiscal plan, it talks about debt-to-GDP ratio, and it shows all the other provinces. We know that the federal government is at 31 per cent debt to GDP. Even if you look at the three years of the fiscal plan, both the estimate target and the second target, it does go into 15.5 per cent at the end of three years. If you look on page 9, that is nowhere close to Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, P.E.I., or Newfoundland. The kind of exaggerations being made by the member opposite are just that. They're exaggerations.

11:40

With regard to the credit downgrades I do want to say that Alberta, like every other oil-producing jurisdiction, not only jurisdiction but company, is experiencing the same rash of downgrades from their bond-rating agencies that do that.

With regard to the statement I made last week, I think it lacked the context. The context was that I stood up and said: you know, if you seriously want to reduce the deficit, then you need to bring in something like a PST. I only said the PST part, but I think Standard & Poor's are saying that the deficit, that they're critical of, they want reduced. They say that you can do a number of things to reduce it.

So you could do a number of things to reduce the deficit. You could invest less in capital across this province, and we know that that'll have a negative effect on putting Albertans back to work. You could reduce program spending, but at this point in time Albertans are looking for the supports that they need to get through this downturn, so that would be a problem. You could do fewer diversification initiatives across the province. We know that the oil and gas roller coaster is one of the prime reasons we're in this challenge. Our energy sector is the prime mover for so much of our revenues, and it has dropped off the map: \$9 billion collected for royalties in 2014-15 and going down to a projection of about \$1.4 billion this year. You can almost say that the deficit that we're experiencing is a direct result of the drop in oil royalties to this province, so we need to diversify.

You could get the deficit down with something like a PST. If the opposition is saying that the deficit needs to be smaller right away, then that's how you get the deficit down, but we're not going to do that. We're going to carry Albertans with a shock absorber budget for a period of time so that we can get through this downturn to a better place.

While the opposition member says that I must be smoking something, I will tell you something, Madam Chair. I sometimes am warm in this House, I sometimes am hot in this House, I'm sometimes smoking hot in this House, but I never just smoke in this House.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It doesn't surprise me to see the minister stand here and argue against cutting his own salary because he can't do his job. You know, it is something. If he had any confidence in his own legislation from five months ago, he would have no problem voting for this amendment. Actually, we had put forward an amendment to the original 15 per cent debt ceiling bill from five months ago, a very similar amendment that would have imposed financial penalties on cabinet if they exceeded the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP limit that they have here, and they voted against it then. They obviously had no confidence in their own legislation, and that's why they're voting against it now. I'd be pretty embarrassed if I introduced legislation five months ago and after just five months I had to repeal my own legislation. I would be pretty embarrassed by that.

Now, the Minister of Finance seems to think that going to talk to creditors is going to restore our credit rating. I believe that real, serious, concrete action is what's going to restore the credit rating of this province, but the minister seems to think that travelling to New York and Toronto to talk to the creditors is what's going to solve things. What happened when he did it? While he was talking to them, they immediately reduced our credit rating. His very presence in the room with these guys hurt the credibility of this government. The creditworthiness of the government was hurt by the minister going in to talk to them. It was bad enough when they saw the budget, but when they actually talked to the minister and saw how loopy their plan was to get our debt under control, they said: "Oh, goodness. It's worse than we thought after we actually met the guy."

I respectfully ask that the Minister of Finance refrain from talking to the creditors for the next three years. Not only will it save some money on travel, but I think it will save a heck of a lot of money because every time the Minister of Finance has appeared before the creditors, we've gotten a credit downgrade. I mean, it's like if I had my own personal creditworthiness hurt because I wasn't paying my credit card bills on time, and then I went to meet with, say, representatives of the TD Bank, and I was shifty, and my plans were not very solid, and then they downgraded my own creditworthiness again. Well, that's pretty much what happened. The Minister of Finance walked into the creditors' offices and said: I'm good for it.

You know, a lot of us will remember *The Simpsons* episode where Lisa Simpson was President, succeeding, bizarrely enough, a President Donald Trump. I don't know how they saw that coming. But Lisa Simpson was President, and she had serious trouble with the debt load left to her government by President Donald Trump, and she hired her brother, Bart Simpson, to go and deal with the creditors. She hired Bart Simpson to deal with China and all of the other countries who had been lending money to the United States, and Bart's plan was essentially just to go and lay out their concerns and be a cool guy. Well, it didn't really work in *The Simpsons*, and it didn't work here. When the Minister of Finance went and spoke with the credit-rating agencies, we got a credit downgrade just from his very presence.

Now, the Minister of Finance has blamed everything on the price of oil here. Well, if our credit rating was downgraded only on the price of oil, why did we not get our credit downgraded a few days before the budget was introduced rather than less than 24 hours after the budget was introduced? Why did we not have our credit – the price of oil has not significantly changed. In between the time of our last downgrade and our current downgrade there has been no significant change in the price of oil. In fact, oil may have actually come up a little bit.

There has not been a significant change in the price of oil since we last had our credit rating downgraded and the credit-rating downgrade of last Thursday, so obviously oil is not the reason for that. The price of oil hasn't changed in that time. All that has changed is that this government, after introducing a grossly irresponsible budget, has now got a piece of legislation before us, that we're debating right now, that repeals any limit whatsoever on the ability of the government to borrow. That is why we've had a credit downgrade.

And he has presented to us this bizarre false dichotomy, that we have only two options: massive deficits or a PST. It doesn't even cross their minds that we could cut spending in this province. It doesn't even cross their minds that the most bloated government in the country, that spends two and a half thousand dollars more per capita on programs than British Columbia, can't cut a dime out of its budget, that the only two options before us are massive deficits in perpetuity or a provincial sales tax, which would probably still come with additional deficits. Madam Chair, the Official Opposition believes that there is another way, a way that has worked for Alberta before, and that is to get our spending under control and balance the budget without raising taxes.

The Minister of Finance has talked about the oil and gas roller coaster. Well, I know the Member for Calgary-Greenway put it very well when he said that the minister is not even on a roller coaster anymore; he's on a merry-go-round. They're just going in circles on this. This government is just as dependent on the price of oil right now for its revenue projections as any government that has preceded it. Now, any government who promises you that they can do away with the price of oil and gas as a factor in our budget is not being honest with Albertans. No government can do it. You can maybe lessen it a little bit – you can cut spending, or you can raise taxes – but the fact is that any politician who tells you that they can get us completely off the oil and gas roller coaster is not being honest with Albertans.

11:50

This government – this government – is just as very dependent on the price of oil and gas as the last government and the government before that. They are being disingenuous with Albertans when they say that they're just going to wave their magic wand and get us off this through something they call diversification, which is really just a rehashed corporate welfare program, one that we saw in the 1980s, that left Albertans holding the bag for billions of dollars in misplaced adventures in the private sector by the government, when the government decides that it knows best, when the government can pick the winners and losers in the private sector and say that this sector is important and this one is not, so this sector is going to pay taxes to support another sector or another specific business. That's what they're doing.

If they believe that that is going to somehow wean us off oil and gas revenues in the next three years – they don't believe it, Madam Chair. They don't believe it's possible because it's not. It's been tried before, and it cost taxpayers billions of dollars. They should do what's right and put their own money where their mouth is and vote for this amendment. If they cannot balance the budget, if they cannot keep the debt under 15 per cent of GDP, then they do not deserve to have the big pay increase that comes with being a minister.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak on behalf of this amendment today. You know, it's very concerning. I believe as

a member that's been elected to this Legislature that we show some fiscal responsibility when it comes to the planning and the expenditures of the money that we have in this government. We are talking about a debt ceiling only because we have gone from a place of having a surplus to where we are now, in debt. Any time you start to consider debt, it's a very serious thing, whether it's personal or whether it's on behalf of the citizens of this province, within the government.

Debt ceilings, unfortunately, have had to be considered when governments have too often had a problem with spending and incurring debt and seemingly no ability to control that. Madam Chair, a debt ceiling, then, is when the government sets out for itself a legal limit, a legal limit on the amount that it can actually borrow. We are now having to have that conversation, and for many Albertans we're sort of looking at each other and wondering why we are having this conversation when just so recently we had a positive bank balance, so to speak.

You know, this amendment speaks to accountability. It speaks to the fact that the Executive Council is called to be accountable for the decisions that it makes, for the bills that it passes, for the bills that it brings before this Legislature. It's accountable for how it runs the various ministries of this government. When it does a good job, it deserves the credit that comes from doing a job and having done it well and spending the taxpayers' money wisely. When it does not, it should be accountable for those decisions as well. Now, a very famous President of the United States, when talking about accountability, said that the buck stopped with him. I think that's what this amendment is trying to get at, Madam Chair. It's trying to speak to this whole issue of accountability and how the executive is accountable for the decisions that they make.

You know, there's a maxim in society that says that the higher the level of responsibility you have, the higher the level of accountability. We see that in the working world. We see that in government, or at least we should see it in government. When you take on a higher level of responsibility, you're expected to take your experience and your judgment and apply it in a wise way to whatever the decision is that needs to be made. In this case, we're asking in this amendment that . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee must now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 10. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed, say no. So ordered.  
The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the time and the progress we have made this morning, I move that we rise and reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:57 a.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 24, 2016

Day 32

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 24, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute to members and former members of the Assembly who have passed away since we last met.

### Mr. Malcolm Glen Clegg October 2, 1933, to May 20, 2016

**The Speaker:** A lifelong resident of Fairview, Alberta, and former Member of the Legislative Assembly, Malcolm Glen Clegg passed away, surrounded by his family, at his home in Fairview on May 20 at the age of 82. Glen Clegg was first elected to the Legislative Assembly on May 8, 1986, serving as the Member for Dunvegan. He was subsequently re-elected in 1989, 1993, and 1997. During his 14 years of service as a member of this Assembly he served on many committees and served as Deputy Chair of Committees from 1993 to 1997 and deputy government whip from 1999 to 2001.

Mr. Clegg also served in local government, serving in Fairview first as a councillor from 1967 to 1971 and then as reeve from 1971 to 1983. He continued his community service with his ongoing support of the Rotary Club and his two terms on the board of governors of NAIT from 2004 to 2010.

In a moment of silent reflection I ask you to remember Mr. Clegg as you may have known him.

If you would please rise, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark. I would invite all participants to sing in the language of their choice.

#### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

#### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with our admiration and respect and years of gratitude to members of the families who have shared the burdens of public office and who serve today, I would like to welcome members of the Clegg family who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your names and remain standing until you have all been introduced: Mr. Greg Clegg, son of Mr. Glen Clegg; Janis Clegg, daughter of Mr. Clegg; Connor Clegg, grandson of Mr. Clegg; Garrett Clegg, grandson of Mr. Clegg; Megan Carlton, granddaughter of Mr. Clegg; and Dr. David McNeil, a close friend of Mr. Clegg. If we would honour our guests today.

#### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** We have some guests. The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 29 fine people from the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler. To introduce the members and the parents and the students of the Lakeview Christian School in this facility is an honour for me. Would they please rise and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure – c'est mon plaisir – to introduce to you today two classes, grades 6 and 7, from the beautiful constituency of Leduc-Beaumont. They are from Saint-André academy, and they are accompanied by – and if you would please stand as I say your names – parent helpers Ms Laurie Widmark, Mrs. Lori Pumphrey, Mr. Ronald Engen; their teachers, Mrs. Angela Rastovski and Miss Katelyn Williamson; and the rest of the classes. Would you stand, please, and could we give them the warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly four guests from my constituency. Located in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, Africa, It's Time, creates a partnership between Africa and Canada. The organization brings awareness among African diaspora in Edmonton to use their skills and resources to make a difference. I'd ask them to rise as I say their names to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. Shuni Masikini, Justine Maman Katana, Clotilde Nsimine, and Joe Littlejohn. I ask you to please welcome my guests here today.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you today to all members of the Legislature an inspiring group of students from my constituency and their social studies teacher, Dan Scratch. I'm proud to have Inner City high school here today. They count among their students some of the most hard-working, intelligent, and inspiring youth not just in Edmonton but the entire province. They are here at the Legislature today. They came by to visit my office. I invite everyone to give them the warm welcome of the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour today to rise and introduce to you and through you a multitude of stakeholders representing industry, nonprofits, other associations, and workers who join us for this afternoon's introduction of Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. To our guests in the gallery, please rise when your name is called: Jamie Bonham, NEI Investments; Mike McSweeney and Justin Arnott from the Cement Association of Canada; Mark Ramsankar and Jonathan Teghtmeyer, Alberta Teachers' Association; Franco Savoia, Vibrant Communities Calgary; Alan Myles, the Co-operators insurance; Kevin Lecht, insulators local 110; Steve Clayman, Thermal Insulation Association of Canada; Ed Whittingham and Sara Hastings-Simon, Pembina Institute; Dr. Joe Vipond, Canadian

Association of Physicians for the Environment; and Sean Collins, Jocelyn Kowalski, Nicholas Kwan-Wong, Edwin Edou, and Nakita Rubuliak from Student Energy.

We are proud to have these guests here today. I invite all members to extend to them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**1:40**

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Ms Livia Kummer. Livia is from Zurich, Switzerland. She is here as an exchange student through Rotary International. Livia is living with Amanda Porter, one of our pages, and is currently attending Sturgeon composite high school for her grade 11 year. Livia is attending session today as she is very interested in representative democracy. I would ask the Assembly to please extend the traditional warm welcome to Livia.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of hard-working and dedicated NDP volunteers from the Fort McMurray-Conklin and Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo EDAs. They, like thousands of others, are all in Edmonton as evacuees from the fire, but I am glad that they've taken the time to be with us here today in the gallery. I would ask our guests to rise as I say their names: Stephen Drover, former candidate, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo; Sheldon Dahl, VP, Fort McMurray-Conklin; Brian Sulz, secretary, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo; James Hayward, treasurer, Fort McMurray-Conklin; Peter Fortna, president, Fort McMurray-Conklin; Liam O'Keefe, youth director for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo; and Sara Florez, member at large for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. I'd ask all members to give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you four wonderful people from the YMCA: Nick Parkinson, Karen Neff, Tim Haak, and Kyle Dias. Nick is the president and CEO of the YMCA northern Alberta and has over 29 years of experience and involvement. Karen is the manager of the Castle Downs Family YMCA. She has been fantastic in the community and plays an integral role in developing our community in Castle Downs. Tim is a board member and has been involved with the YMCA for 43 years. He's married to Janice, who has been involved for even longer. Kyle is the youth adviser for the leaders in training program. You'll be hearing more about their work in my member's statement later today, but for now I'd ask that we give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two individuals who do great work in the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods. First, I have Mr. Duncan McColl, the principal of Hillview school. Over the past five years Mr. McColl

has worked hard to secure grants to have solar panels put onto the roof of the school, to have an endoscope energy usage monitor installed, and to set up community gardens outside the front of the school. I'd like to thank Mr. McColl for all the hard work and for being an astounding leader for the students that he oversees and teaching them to take better care of the environment.

I also have here Mrs. Deanna Norton, who is the president of the Hillview parent council and who is also part of the Woodvale Community League. Deanna spends countless volunteer hours making our community a better place and has been involved in many initiatives benefiting Woodvale and Hillview. Deanna, your passion and drive are truly appreciated by all your neighbours, including myself.

Please let's give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly my wife, Lisa Smith. Lisa and I have been married going on close to 31 years now, and I can tell this Assembly that she is an amazing woman. I first met Lisa in church when she was in junior high, and we started seeing each other while we attended university. She is a graduate of the University of Alberta, an author, the national president of LifeCanada, and the amazing mother of our three children, but most importantly she's the love of my life. Would Lisa please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

## Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

## Wildfire Update

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Much of Alberta experienced a cold, wet long weekend, but unfortunately this did not extend to the Fort McMurray area. The southern edge of the fire received between three and five millimetres of precipitation this weekend. The northern edge of the fire, where it is burning most actively, received none. There is also no significant precipitation in the forecast for the next couple of days.

Mr. Speaker, there were 40 new wildfire starts yesterday. What's concerning is that most of these were due to campfires that were abandoned. There are 17 active wildfires burning in Alberta right now: one out of control, that being the Fort McMurray fire; one being held, the Peace River-Clear Hills fire; 14 under control, including the Lac La Biche fire; and one turned over to the local authorities.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, right now we have more resources working on the Fort McMurray fire, which continues to burn out of control, and fewer in other parts of the province, where the risk has gone down. With the cooler weather and as firefighters contain more perimeter of the Fort McMurray fire, we can now safely deploy more firefighters on the ground, which is beginning to happen. Now that it is safe, around a thousand more firefighters should be on the ground in the next two weeks from across Canada, the U.S., and South Africa, and we welcome these well-trained firefighters coming to our aid.

While fire risk has fallen in most parts of the province, it remains high to extreme in Fort McMurray. Suppression efforts will be a challenge today. Air quality also remains a concern in the region. As of 11 o'clock this morning air quality was 5. The fire has experienced some growth since we were last together, primarily

along the northern perimeter. It is now approximately 522,892 hectares. Mandatory evacuations continue to be in place for Fort McMurray, Anzac, Fort MacKay, Fort McMurray First Nation, and Gregoire Lake Estates.

The regional municipality of Wood Buffalo has allowed a phased re-entry to all oil sands sites subject to environment and public health inspections. Re-entry of workers to these sites is subject to similar criteria as for residents of Fort McMurray. One is that wildfire is no longer an imminent threat and that air quality is within reasonable levels. The industrial sites have their own rigorous guidelines according to approved occupational health and safety for their sites. Currently they are assessing conditions and working with the province and the regional municipality to prepare for the re-entry of workers once their own re-entry conditions are met.

Efforts to support the re-entry of residents beginning June 1 continue. Restoration of the hospital and cleanup resumed on Sunday, and the mobile urgent care centre now has an operating room, an anaesthesiologist, an obstetrician capable of surgery, and a general surgeon. The centre is available to anyone in the Fort McMurray region, including first responders, restoration workers, and, when the time comes, Mr. Speaker, to returning evacuees while the hospital restoration work continues.

Progress is being made on safe drinking water, but a boil-water advisory remains in effect until the lines can be flushed, reservoirs are cleaned, and sampling confirms water quality. Water quality sampling equipment is being installed in the Athabasca and Clearwater rivers. Electricity service has been restored to more than 90 per cent of the community, including outlying areas like Anzac and Fort McMurray First Nation. Natural gas has been restored to more than 99 per cent of homes outside Abasand, Waterways, and Beacon Hill.

A re-entry information booklet has been posted on the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo website. It contains valuable information and tip sheets on things to bring with you when returning to Fort McMurray, safety precautions, how to safely clean up after a wildfire, and how to prevent mould. We are still on track for a voluntary phased re-entry beginning June 1, but I remind all Wood Buffalo residents that all services will not be fully operational by then. Some people, as a result, may choose to wait. Others may want to come back just to collect belongings, survey the damage, and seek some closure if they've lost their homes before returning to their temporary accommodations. For those who have an existing health condition, particularly a respiratory condition, or are pregnant, they should wait to return until medical professionals advise it is safe to do so.

**1:50**

While recovery work is proceeding, we continue to support the evacuees. Mr. Speaker, as of today, the debit card distribution moves to Alberta Works offices in 13 communities. There's the Grande Prairie office, the Lac La Biche office, four offices in Edmonton, one in Red Deer, four in Calgary, and also the Alberta Works offices in Medicine Hat and Lethbridge. As always, anyone with questions, especially those outside of those communities, can call 310.4455 for more information. As of last night, 35,797 debit cards were distributed to 73,395 people, for a total distribution of \$76.4 million.

We continue to receive questions about how evacuees who have left Alberta can get their debit cards. We need to do so in a secure fashion so that the right funds are provided to the people who need it. At the distribution centres and, as of today, at select Alberta Works offices evacuees present proper identification in person, which makes verification easier and efficient. We are looking at options to ensure a similar level of verification for out-of-province

evacuees and hope to have something in place soon. Please keep in mind that there is no cut-off date for evacuees to get their debit cards in person. If you qualify, you will get it, and debit cards will be available when evacuees return to Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we are also continuing our outreach efforts to ensure evacuees have the information they need. The telephone town halls we've held to date have attracted around 10,000 participants or more each night, so we will continue to hold them while the demand is there. This week they will be tonight and Wednesday and Thursday nights. I look forward to answering the questions of the evacuees all three of those nights.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** Here is the state of Alberta's economy: Albertans are carrying record levels of consumer debt, our economy has shrunk by 4 per cent just over the last year, housing prices dropped by 3.5 per cent in Calgary last month, and the number of Albertans on EI has gone up almost 70 per cent. Times are tough. People are looking for relief, but the NDP's only response is to bring in a tax that hurts and punishes families, businesses, hospitals, schools, and charities right across Alberta. With Albertans already hurting, how can the Premier possibly justify bringing in a carbon tax that makes every single Alberta family poorer?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, our government is proud of our climate leadership plan. We are proud that we are taking steps to finally establish Alberta not only as a participant but as a world leader on environmentally responsible energy development. Our plan has been praised by industry leaders and by environmentalists alike, and we will carry on with it notwithstanding the fact that the folks over there would just stick their head in the ground and do nothing. That is not the way we are going to go ahead with it.

**Mr. Jean:** During an economic downturn it's often the social services sector that is asked to do almost all of the heavy lifting. Food bank use goes way up, the demand for housing increases, and those seeking addiction services usually increase a lot. But under the carbon tax the cost of heating buildings and driving cars, essential for providing these services to these people, will only increase dramatically. That means less money for those in need. How can the Premier possibly justify a new tax on charities and the most vulnerable in Alberta at a time when they are already spread so thin?

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. In fact, when one looks globally at the issue of climate change, the people who are most vulnerable to its effects are the very poor, the very hungry, the very vulnerable, that the member opposite claims to be concerned about. We are concerned about those people. We're concerned about those people across this planet. We're concerned about those people here in Alberta, and our climate leadership plan will ensure that when it comes to the levy, they are properly rebated. We'll achieve climate leadership as well as fairness.

**Mr. Jean:** This NDP carbon tax also means we will have less money to build hospitals, less money to build schools and hire teachers and nurses. Alberta Health Services pegs heating costs from the carbon tax alone to go up by \$6 million this year. That's 60 fewer nurses, 240 fewer hip surgeries for Alberta patients. Elk

Island public schools alone is pegging costs rising by \$260,000 per year. That's fewer teachers and fewer teachers' assistants in the classrooms. Can the Premier explain why resources should be taken out of classrooms and hospitals to pay for her new NDP carbon tax?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, together Albertans are going to work on the project of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions because it is the right thing to do. Schools will do it; teachers will do it. And you know who's going to love to do it the most? The students in those schools. I can't tell you how many times I have met with students who are so glad that we are finally taking action on this and that they are not living in a province where their political leaders try to pretend that there is no problem.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

**Mr. Jean:** We were absolutely thrilled to see the National Energy Board, Canada's world-class independent energy regulator, give approval to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. It was good news. It's proof that our pipeline review process is the best in the world in analyzing the environmental and economic impact of new pipeline projects. But not once in the 553-page detailed report was Alberta's new carbon tax mentioned as any possible solution or reason for approval. Can the Premier please explain why it wasn't mentioned in this report?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I didn't write the report, so I'm not going to talk about that. What I will say is that as I spoke to people who are still unsure about whether they support Kinder Morgan, particularly people in B.C., they are exceptionally interested to learn about our climate leadership plan, they are very excited to hear about our cap on oil sands emissions, and they are much more likely to consider supporting that application when the decision comes to the federal government in a few months to come.

**Mr. Jean:** It seems the economic and environmental merits of the new pipelines do not rely on Alberta having a carbon tax according to the National Energy Board, nor does it seem like an important point for mayors in the lower mainland, for instance, in British Columbia, who continue to make anti-energy statements in an attempt to undermine the independent work of our national energy regulator, that does a good job. How can the Premier possibly justify asking Albertans to pay billions in new taxes when it's had zero impact in the actual pipeline approval process?

**Ms Notley:** Well, let me just begin, Mr. Speaker, by once again reminding the member opposite of the many, many years he sat in government federally in charge of making decisions and by reminding him just how many pipelines got built. I think zero. Zero would be the number.

Our government is committed to having a reasonable, balanced approach to energy development and a reasonable, balanced conversation with people on both sides of the issue because we understand that you can protect the environment and you can grow our energy sector responsibly. The two don't have to be pitted against each other the way those folks like to do.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, we should maybe ask the more than 100,000 Albertans that are out of work whether we're pitting them against one another.

If the Premier is going to bring in a carbon tax that makes life more expensive for families in Alberta and more difficult for our economy to compete, the government just can't ignore the fact that the National Energy Board along with several environmental activists she shared the stage with last fall have failed to

acknowledge that the carbon tax is playing any meaningful role in getting pipelines approved. Why, then, does the Premier continue to insist the carbon tax is bringing us closer to a pipeline when the only thing it's doing is making Alberta's families much, much poorer?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, the carbon levy will not make Alberta's families much, much poorer, but it will ensure that they live in a cleaner, greener province with a much brighter future. That it will do for sure. In addition, it will bring us closer to a pipeline. That's all I have to say.

**The Speaker:** Third main question.

### Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation Consultation

**Mr. Jean:** Well, Mr. Speaker, more bungle. Bill 6 has alienated farmers across Alberta from the very start of it being introduced. This is no surprise given the refusal of this government to consult on such an important piece of legislation to Albertans. Now, after months of delay, the Bill 6 working groups have finally been announced – tah-dah – but only 29 per cent is represented by ag coalition, a group that actually represents 97 per cent of the ag sector. Meanwhile a former NDP caucus employee and a failed NDP candidate both managed to crack this important list. Can the Premier explain . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. The MLA for Strathmore-Brooks disagrees that people should have labour rights. In fact, I think he disagrees with the Supreme Court of Canada and, as an extension, therefore must also disagree with their view of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The fact of the matter is that we are consulting with workers and employers, both of them, and that's something that we have to do as we work to bring people together on this important piece of legislation that will keep farm workers safe.

**Mr. Jean:** Frustration with this government's inability to properly consult with Alberta farmers and ranchers began to pour in as soon as these panels were named. The Western Canadian Wheat Growers have rightly stated that this NDP government "yet again, kicks sand in the faces of the tens of thousands of hard-working [families,] farmers and ranchers in our great province." I couldn't agree more. Can the Premier please explain how they failed once again to properly work with farm communities in this Bill 6 working group?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to clear the air and to get the facts out, because sometimes that's a convenient way to have a debate, farm owners and farm managers – there are 35 of them on these, and there are 27 farm workers. So, to be clear, if there is a concern about balance, it's not about workers being overrepresented. On the contrary, though, what this is about is bringing people together to have reasonable conversations in mediated settings so that we can find common cause and move forward in protecting the health and safety of those people who work on our farms.

**Mr. Jean:** With this government's mismanagement of Bill 6, it's no surprise that even with these panels, there's no timeline for when these working groups will report back or if their recommendations will even be binding. The result is farmers and ranchers feeling frustrated, with no trust in this NDP government's plan. This uncertainty is only causing more stress to Albertans. Will the Premier please establish firm timelines and guarantee Alberta's farmers and ranchers that they won't be changing the rules on the fly?

**Ms Notley:** Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, and almost on the contrary, our minister of agriculture has made it very, very clear that here's how it's going to work: we're going to keep working until we find the solutions that work for everybody. If it's done in two months, that's great, but if it takes us into 2017, we'll do that, too, because we're going to listen to people and we're going to hear them and we're going to let them talk amongst themselves to make sure that we have all the information necessary to make the best possible decision. We're not going to put an arbitrary end to it. We're going to make sure that everyone has the time to be heard because that's what we committed that we would do.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

#### Government Communication and Consultation

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government continues to botch public consultation almost every time they attempt it. We have reports of the Municipal Affairs minister saying one thing on linear assessment to rural communities and almost a completely opposite thing in front of urban communities and something else in this House. To the Premier: can Alberta municipalities believe what the rurals were told by the minister, what the urbans were told by the minister, or is there some other plan that's actually going to happen with linear assessment?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that we're going to put in place a regime which allows and welcomes people to come to the table to negotiate better solutions. Ultimately, there will be a mediated process where they come up with a negotiated solution that depends on their unique circumstances, their income levels, their industry profile, all that kind of stuff. That's the way it's going to work. We need to fix the problem. We need to do it fairly, understanding the unique nature of each community, and that's what the minister is committed to doing.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, now we have a fourth answer to add to the first three.

Last week government announced a consultation on minimum wage. It seems a little late and rather disingenuous when they've already made it clear they're committed to the \$15 and the Premier doubled down on the timeline at the Leap Manifesto meeting. To the Labour minister: since you've stated that there are as many reports that do not support minimum wage as ones that do, will you now hold back on the increase and listen to what Alberta businesses are telling you, that the \$15 means fewer people hired, fewer jobs, fewer opportunities on the economic ladder for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite seem to not value the people who are getting paid minimum wage or the work

that they do. We know that at the level of \$15 per hour or less there are 300,000 Albertans that are making those wages. We know that 33,000 of those Albertans are single parents with children. We are committed to respecting equality, respecting income security, and respecting human dignity by moving forward with our consultations on increasing the minimum wage to \$15.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, with this, Minister, those single parents won't have any jobs at all.

We've also heard the government is reviewing the Workers' Compensation Board, Mr. Speaker. We heard this last year, when the Premier was reviewing it, she said, and then we heard that the Labour minister is reviewing it. To the Labour minister or the Premier: will Albertans see the result of the Labour minister's review? Will you actually table the results in this House, or will that information be kept from Albertans, as was the case with the review that the Premier claims she did last December?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely critical that Albertans feel confident that the Workers' Compensation Board provides fair compensation and meaningful rehabilitation. As part of our overall strategy to review agencies, boards, and commissions, I have asked for a very in-depth review to begin. The work is currently happening. I would encourage all Albertans to review what is being posted on that review's website. We are going to be asking for public input. I will be receiving an interim report this fall, with a final report coming next year. Based on the work of this report and the panel, we will then look at what we need to do to change WCB.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

#### Public Service Compensation

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As Alberta faces a severe economic downturn and tragedy in Fort McMurray, I see people coming together, being creative, and stepping up to help their neighbours. The people of Alberta are doing more with less, and I see this everywhere, everywhere, that is, except the provincial government. The Premier said that she will honour public-sector contracts, but the situation has drastically changed. The province is not in the same position as when these contracts were negotiated, and Alberta's tremendous public servants understand that when 100,000 of their neighbours are out of work, it's only fair to earn the same next year as you earned this year. To the Premier: are you open to renegotiating public-sector agreements to bring in a wage freeze?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've answered this question a number of times, but I'm happy to answer it again. Under the laws of our country as well as our province, labour relations collective agreements are a matter of law, and it's not my view that we break those agreements once we've made them.

Now, we will certainly engage in future negotiations in a very careful way, understanding that our obligation is to the people of Alberta, to ensure that we get good deals on new contracts. But we will not be breaching the determinations of the Supreme Court of Canada on this matter and breaching already . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, that's very curious, Mr. Speaker, because clearly one group of public servants is being treated differently than the rest. During estimates the Minister of Health confirmed that the budget includes savings from reductions to physician compensation. Now, I think the Alberta Medical Association deserves praise for agreeing to come to the table in difficult times, especially in light of yet another credit-rating downgrade. Now, to the Premier: have you approached other public-sector unions with the same request, that they come to the table to help find savings in an economic crisis?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what we have done is to go to those groups who are not unionized, and we have said: we want to look at freezing your salaries. For instance, we have done that with senior managers in the government of Alberta and also at agencies, boards, and commissions. The AMA is not a union, and doctors are not union. So, yes, we have approached them as well, and we will continue to do that because we have an obligation on the part of Albertans to try to avoid the 6-ish per cent a year increases that are coming from that particular sector right now.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, the Premier and others have said in the past that you can't discuss your plans in order to preserve the bargaining process. Yet the Minister of Health has said that she expects physicians to go along with her assumptions on cost savings, which were laid out in the budget before contract negotiations even began. Again to the Premier: which is it? Are you honouring the bargaining process and existing contracts, or are you prejudging the outcome of negotiations before even sitting down to bargain?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we're talking about two different types of conversations. But, to be clear, you can talk about generalized assumptions with respect to cost without that necessarily being negotiations on particular issues. One does not negate the other. So the minister is having respectful conversations right now, and I believe she will continue to do so.

2:10

#### Tourism Promotion

**Mr. Westhead:** Mr. Speaker, the low Canadian dollar has increased tourism to Alberta, especially in tourism towns like Jasper, Banff, and Canmore. Given the tough economic times this is good news for these towns. To the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what is being done to capitalize on the effect that the low dollar is having to boost the tourism industry and to support related jobs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. We know that the low dollar is attracting many visitors from around the world to this province. We're working with Economic Development and Trade on job-creation programs. We have worked on capital investment tax credit programs, which will increase Alberta's supply of new tourism products and facilities. This past weekend, for example, I was able to announce the expansion of the Royal Tyrrell Museum. As well, there were previous announcements of expansions of the Calgary Zoo and Fort

Edmonton Park. We're investing in world-class tourism infrastructure, which will attract more people to this province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the tourism industry is poised for further growth from both international and domestic markets, to the same minister: what strategies are being implemented to help cities and towns like Bragg Creek become as successful as their more established counterparts?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. My ministry continues to fund major events that attract visitors, that help build tourism in local communities such as Open Farm Days, Western Canada Summer Games, Alberta Culture Days. We're providing and will continue to provide support for growing rural tourism in this province at a conference that provides workshops and working opportunities. We're going to continue providing that support. We're very proud of the work we're doing so far.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct my second supplemental to the Minister of Seniors and Housing. Given that tourism-based communities are facing a severe shortage of affordable housing spaces to accommodate the hard-working staff that cater to tourists, what is being done to address this affordable housing crisis?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to say that more Albertans will be housed in safe and affordable homes because of the significant capital investment our government is making through Budget 2016. Nearly \$1.2 billion will be spent over the next five years to build new homes and to renew existing housing. Using evidence-based analysis, new housing will be built in areas of need, and we're looking at all areas of the province, including tourist communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

#### Provincial Achievement Tests

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Provincial achievement tests are administered to improve student learning, inform Albertans about our education system, assist educators in planning for instruction, and hold the government accountable. The Fraser Institute's report on Alberta's elementary schools for 2016 shows that the number of students in grade 6 that are failing to meet the acceptable standards on provincial tests has risen from 14.1 per cent to 15.9 per cent. That's almost a 2 per cent decrease in achievement. To the Minister of Education: what are you doing to reverse this troubling trend and improve the results for all Alberta students?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks very much for the question. Certainly, it's very important to deal with these issues around the provincial achievement tests. We want to make sure that

literacy and numeracy are focused, and we need a long-term plan. The best thing is to make sure that you have teachers in front of those kids. To that effect, I have 1,100 new teachers from this budget by restoring funding to education.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that one of the vulnerability measures included in the analysis is the gender gap in student achievement and the widening gap between girls and boys in language arts and since boys are falling behind girls by almost 6 per cent in grade 6 and this gap has been a growing concern for years among teachers, to the Minister of Education: how will your government close this gap and even out student achievement levels?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this gap is significant, and certainly we are looking at these results with a critical eye to make sure that we have the resources in place to make sure our students get the education that they need to focus in on literacy and reading and so forth. For young boys it's very important. One of the best ways to do that is that we managed to save about 1,200 support staff jobs in schools because of the restoration of funding to K to 12 education.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a number of stakeholders have criticized the provincial achievement tests and have called for an end to them in grades 6 and 9 and since according to grade 3 teachers surveyed by the ATA, the grade 3 learning assessment pilots have failed and given that there is no alternative that would provide Alberta students, parents, administrators, and teachers with objective information about Alberta's education system, will the Minister of Education commit to maintaining the PATs in grades 6 and 9?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks very much for the question. Certainly, it's important for us to keep a finger on the pulse of where our students are at any given point and to make that demonstrably possible. It's also important to make sure that you work together equally with your partners – parents, teachers, students, the support staff, and so forth – that you're creating the best assessment possible so that you're not just trying a reductive way of doing this but are also, perhaps, providing a diagnostic tool by which teachers and parents can see where their kids are and where they can have that room for improvement.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### Carbon Levy and Postsecondary Education Costs

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In budget estimates recently I inquired about Advanced Education, the carbon tax, and unintended costs. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar stated, "I wasn't involved with any of the consultations with respect to the climate leadership plan." To the environment minister, therefore. If your ministerial colleague did not consult with postsecondary institutions, surely you must have, so please tell us: which postsecondary institutions did you consult with, and will the carbon tax be downloaded onto students?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, through the fall, through the climate leadership plan consultations undertaken by the Leach panel, we did a number of technical engagement sessions with a number of institutional players. Certainly, I examined in great detail efficiency investments that we could make with respect to buildings, codes, retrofits, and so on. That is why we have put aside \$45 million for an energy efficiency agency that will be working with various stakeholders, including institutional stakeholders like postsecondaries, hospitals, and schools, to ensure that we've got the . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Rodney:** Since we didn't hear any specific answers, we'll try this another way. Given that the minister in charge stated, "We expect administration at universities to manage their budgets accordingly so that . . . when they're subjected to the carbon levy, the financial administration is dealt with accordingly," to the environment minister again: how do you expect postsecondary institutions to manage their budgets if they have no indication from you specifically what the costs of the carbon tax will be for them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is why we are undertaking a great deal of work around energy efficiency so that individuals, small businesses, and institutional players like postsecondaries, schools, hospitals, and others can reduce their costs and also, at the same time, reduce their emissions. That's why we are putting a price on carbon. That's why across the spectrum that approach is favoured as a market-based approach that gets to reducing pollution and ensuring that we are preparing Alberta for the economy of tomorrow.

**Mr. Rodney:** By decreasing, I think she means increasing.

In any case, given that the adult learning review was announced a full year ago and that when I asked in this House on April 7 when it would finally begin, you stated, "in the fullness of time" and given that in Advanced Education estimates the minister indicated that this review will be instrumental in determining how students and institutions will deal with the carbon tax, to the minister: is this now the fullness of time, and will you launch this review before most students resume their classes in September?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, we are still in the fullness of time. Once we reach the appropriate time to launch the adult learning review, we will do that. I did inform the member in estimates that the adult learning review will now be conducted in phases, one of which will be a funding and tuition review, that we plan to undertake in the near future. I will keep the member updated as well as all of the other members of the House when we begin those undertakings.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

### 2:20 Carbon Levy and Charitable Organizations

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From January 2015 to January 2016 the number of Albertans on employment insurance skyrocketed by over 90 per cent. These challenging times increase pressures on charities like the Red Deer Food Bank, whose usage is up 60 per cent, and distress line calls are spiking. Albertans are looking for hope, but this government's job-killing policies and its

rushed, ideological phase-out of coal are just making things worse. To the Minister of Human Services: what are you doing to mitigate the increased demands placed on charities as a result of your ideological, job-killing plans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Budget 2016 restores funding to the program, and there is an increase in the line item for employment-related funding. We will be there for Albertans when and where they need the supports from government. We will make sure that we provide the necessary supports.

**Mrs. Pitt:** I should ask the same question because I didn't get an answer, but we'll do a different one. Given that charities are already facing a double-edged sword, with donations decreasing and demands for their goods and services increasing, and given that the current government has chosen this time to implement an ideological carbon tax on everything, which will increase operating costs for every single charity in this province, why is this government sharpening the blades of an already difficult situation by taking aim at the hard-working charities that Albertans rely on?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. You know, we are working throughout the nonprofit sector, with charities and others, to ensure that we've got efficiency programming that fits their sector because, of course, one size does not fit all. I will just read a quote from Vibrant Communities Calgary.

We applaud the government as it tables the legislation to mitigate the impact of climate change. We especially appreciate the rebate of the carbon tax for the working poor in our province. Coupled with other key initiatives ... it will help to reduce poverty in Alberta.

This is certainly an item that we will consult on carefully ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, why does nobody care about the charities from the government side?

Given that some of the United Way's largest and most generous donations come from the natural resource sector and given the current government's ideological manifesto that seems custom made to kill jobs, hurt industry, and punish Albertans, to the Minister of Human Services: what's your plan to deal with the financial burdens your risky, ideological agenda is forcing Alberta charities to carry?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, the only ideologues in this Chamber are across the way, who would deny the science of climate change and have us do nothing. Meanwhile, on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we are pricing carbon so that we can reinvest it in the economy, so that we can invest in energy efficiency across the economy, so that we can make our economy resilient, and so that we can ensure that we understand that the science of climate change is real, and inaction is not an option.

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Point of order?

### Landowner and Leaseholder Rights

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, residents of Cypress-Medicine Hat elected me to this House to stand up for their property rights. While in opposition the NDP spoke out about how wrong Bill 36 was in stripping landowners of their rights. Now in government for 12 months we have seen no action to reverse this damaging bill. When will this NDP government stand up for landowners and repeal Bill 36?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, here I was hoping that the Official Opposition critic for Health would ask a health question, but I'm happy to enter into this dialogue as well.

We certainly have taken this into consideration and will continue to, and we will be happy to discuss it with all members of this House moving forward.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that this NDP government is perfectly content with damaging policies that hurt everyday Albertans, like the carbon tax, it's no surprise that they are backing down from their previous stand against Bill 36. Will this government commit to my constituents that property rights are an issue that they will respect? I can guarantee you that you will hear from Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we have nothing to apologize to that side for on the question of property rights. We were in this House standing up for the rights of property owners in the face of a number of pieces of legislation – Bill 36, by the way, was never proclaimed – and we were standing here talking about due compensation, due process, and all of those things when the Wildrose Party was just a gleam in Preston Manning's eye.\*

**The Speaker:** I believe it's the second supplemental.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that that member and that government have had a year already and given that property owners, including ranchers in my riding of Cypress-Medicine Hat, some for four or five generations, have worked or lived off the land and given that resource stewardship should be top of mind for all Albertans, will this government at least recognize that ranchers are protecting the land and ensuring the continuing prosperity of our province?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, our grazing leaseholders and ranchers are an integral part of the economy in southern Alberta, which I also represent. I have had many occasions to meet with them. I am pleased that we're moving forward on the Auditor General's recommendations and, in addition, having really great, productive conversations with farmers and ranchers on how to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and continue their excellent practices, that already occur around a high-quality stewardship of the land.

Thank you.

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

\*See page 1151, right column, paragraph 4



### Renewable Energy Strategy

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our Premier seems to have a keen admiration for Premier Kathleen Wynne and her antihydrocarbon policies. She often identifies the current Ontario government as a key partner for Alberta, with the belief that our interests are aligned. Both Premiers believe that demon coal must be eradicated from the Earth. One of them, for now, has publicly admitted to a profound distaste for clean-burning natural gas. To the minister of environment: as Alberta is already following Ontario's misguided and costly direction on coal, is natural gas next?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our climate leadership plan ensures an orderly phase-out of our coal facilities and our coal emissions and a phase-in of renewables and natural gas. This has been well laid out in the climate leadership plan. Of course, legislation that we will introduce this afternoon gives practical effect to many of these undertakings. This is a made-in-Alberta climate leadership plan. It establishes us as leaders on the continent and, indeed, as leaders among the world's energy producers.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Made in Alberta, copied from Ontario.

Given that this government seems intent on following Ontario's lead and given that Ontario's massive public and consumer burden and escalating electricity costs provide a textbook case of the pitfalls of an irresponsible accelerated transition away from coal-fired electricity, again to the minister: can you outline for this House the missteps Ontario made in their costly subsidization of renewables and how Alberta will avoid the taxpayer and consumer burden associated with such policies?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the hon. member's assertion that we are following anyone in this matter is ridiculous because Alberta is leading in a number of different ways. Our economy-wide price differs markedly from the cap-and-trade approach that has been undertaken by the government of Ontario. Certainly, our coal-fired phase-out is following a different timeline, the federal timeline, that's already established, with the accelerated retirement of six remaining units. Of course, there are many different things about Alberta, which is why we have designed the carbon price as we have, to ensure that we have competitiveness retained for our energy-intensive . . .

2:30

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Leading in job losses and taxes, indeed.

Given that Premier Wynne will be welcomed this week at the Calgary Chamber and given that Premier Wynne's approach to natural gas, bitumen, and the National Energy Board process are all extremely detrimental to Alberta's interests, again to the minister: what is on your and our Premier's agenda? Do you plan to meet with Premier Wynne, and how will you ensure Alberta's best interests are at the forefront of your discussions?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, what's on our agenda is a respectful engagement with other provinces on matters related to environment and climate change and not engaging in Twitter-style hissy fits at every available opportunity. What is on our agenda is to lead this country in pricing carbon, to lead this country in investments in energy efficiency, and to lead this country in terms of our investments in innovation and technology to make our energy industry competitive for the future.

### Registry Service Renewal Reminders

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, when this government announced that it was no longer going to issue registration and licence renewal reminders through the mail, the minister assured us that the transition would be, quote, quite smooth. But we are now hearing of thousands of individuals just in Calgary alone, several of whom have been seniors, who have been ticketed for expired licences because they did not receive any renewal notice, either electronically or by mail. Is this what the minister meant by smooth?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We brought in online renewal reminders in order to find efficiencies in government. We have saved over \$3 million this year, and we will continue to save funds going forward. This is about moving Alberta into the 21st century when it comes to renewal reminders. As we move into the future, we're going to need to ensure that we're meeting Albertans where they're at. There will be, as we've seen, some discomfort with change – there always is – but we, going forward, are doing our utmost to ensure that there is as little complication with this transition as possible.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government clearly has no plan for rolling out electronic renewals smoothly – advertising was limited – and, of course, without consultation and given that Albertans shouldn't have to pay more because of this government's inability to manage this issue, will the government consider waiving the fines for individuals until the system has been corrected and is actually running smoothly?

**Ms McLean:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, as mentioned by the member opposite, we did roll out notifications for Albertans through radio and print media, largely, in order to ensure that Albertans know that this change is occurring. Additionally, media have done us a great service in letting Albertans know about this, and registries in particular have also helped Albertans out by ensuring that they're getting their renewal reminders online. Going forward, we're continuing to encourage Albertans to sign up for renewal reminders online in order to save the economy . . .

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, given that the ticket for failing to renew your licence is a hefty \$230 and given that this is starting to look a lot like another hidden tax grab on hard-working Alberta families, will this government waive the fines or reinstate mailed renewal reminders, or will it just admit that this is yet another tax grab on hard-working Alberta families?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Working together with our partners in Justice, we have worked with the city police as well as the RCMP to let them know

about these reminders coming online and to let them know that discretion in these circumstances may be warranted, depending on the particular circumstance of the individual. However, going forward, it's important that all members of this House take the opportunity to inform their constituents that we are going online with renewal reminders. This is the way of the future, and we are headed into the future instead of being still in the past, as the opposition would have . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### Softwood Lumber Agreement with United States

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that not all provinces in Canada are on the same page when it comes to the new softwood lumber agreement. The last time this happened, softwood lumber companies moved their investments abroad, which harmed Alberta jobs and communities. I asked about where we were at on this issue last fall, and I ask again. To the minister: what have you done to get all Canadian provinces to agree on a new softwood lumber agreement?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member, for the question. It is a very important question for our industry. Going forward, I'm a little concerned that the Americans are more concerned about what's happening with their presidential election than about softwood lumber. I was somewhat heartened some weeks ago when President Obama himself had mentioned softwood lumber publicly. It was broadcast on CBC Radio. Knowing that we have an opportunity here in a couple of weeks to talk to federal ministers right across the province that are involved with forestry, up in the Yukon, to be able to address this issue head-on, hopefully, going forward, we'll get an agreement on the softwood lumber agreement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the forest industry does not all agree on what the parameters of a new softwood lumber agreement should be and given that only British Columbia and Quebec are being vocal about what they think a new softwood lumber agreement might look like, to the minister: how are you speaking up for Alberta to a national audience and ensuring that Alberta's forest industry is heard?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I have been speaking up on the issue, most certainly. We've had the opportunity to correspond with several federal ministers, both myself and, actually, the Premier as well, knowing that it is most important to our industry, and make sure that our federal counterparts know it as well. Those conversations continue, and they will continue, making sure that we get the best deal possible.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta forest industry stakeholders are eager for a new agreement and that they are preparing for an expensive four-year court battle if a new softwood lumber agreement is not reached, to the minister: despite

your best efforts with the federal government and other provinces, if you are not successful soon, how many Alberta jobs will be lost while we wait for you to defend one of Alberta's largest renewable industries?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the member for the question. The Canada-U.S. softwood lumber agreement expired October 12 last year. We have until October 12 this year to write that new agreement, but I do share some of the member's concerns that the Americans do not seem to be, at this point anyway, willing to come to the table with anything fruitful. I'm willing and able and pushing the federal government, as it's a federal agreement, to push our American partners as much as possible to make sure we can get this deal.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

### Agricultural Policies

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year Alberta has the privilege of hosting the federal-provincial-territorial meetings of agricultural ministers from across the country. The partnership between the two levels of government is vital for the success and prosperity of Alberta's ag sector as well as income stability and many of the supports for our province's hard-working farmers and ranchers. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: how will you use this year's FPT forum on agriculture to ensure that Alberta's farm families and rural communities are well supported?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the member for the question. I'm very much looking forward to hosting colleagues of mine from across the country in late July to talk about some of the pressing issues facing Alberta producers. I'm pleased to inform the House that the hosting and logistical planning aspects of the 2016 conference are on track. I already had the opportunity to cohost conference calls with all provincial ministers and the federal minister to discuss emerging issues facing producers across the country and right here in Alberta. I've already spoken about the need for a good deal for producers in business risk management programs and advances on rail transportation for our agricultural commodities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has shown great willingness to work on environmental issues and given that the current federal-provincial agreement Growing Forward 2 funds innovative stewardship plans for our agricultural producers, again to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: will you be pushing for a renewed federal-provincial agreement at this year's FPT to help Alberta farmers become even more efficient and environmentally sustainable than they already are?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member correctly pointed out the good work that our current Growing Forward agreement allows farmers and ranchers in our province to do on environmental issues. Just last year this agreement allowed us to earmark about \$10 million for programs to improve the

environmental impacts of ag operations, from on-farm solar to watershed enhancement to irrigation efficiency. GF2 concludes in 2018, however. Our government is committed to working with the federal government and other jurisdictions to ensure that the next policy framework negotiation on program development is completed as scheduled to ensure continuing programming between the frameworks.

2:40

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many issues in the agricultural sector such as trade, food inspection, and intellectual property are within federal jurisdiction and given that Alberta producers need the support of federal programs to remain competitive, are there any specific issues that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry will bring forward to his federal colleagues to help support Alberta producers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there is a wide range of issues that need strong leadership from Alberta, from adjusting to our carbon-constrained future to making sure that we have a regulatory environment that promotes and sustains value-added agriculture processing. Alberta's voice in the national conversation on agriculture is more important than ever. Personally, I'm looking forward to continuing conversations with my counterparts across the country on how the federal government plans to build research capacity that is complimentary to the groundbreaking work being done here in Alberta so that our province and our country can remain at the forefront of innovation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline Project

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After three years of careful study the National Energy Board, Canada's world-class energy regulator, has come to the conclusion that the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline is in the overall public good of our country, but now the Prime Minister is holding this project hostage, with more bureaucracy and time-wasting political panels. This kind of interference amounts to more delays on a project that we need now. Does the Premier trust our independent, world-class regulator to get it right, and if so, will she tell the Prime Minister to stop the games and get out of the way of this important project?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, first of all, we're not going to take advice from the opposition who thinks that things are roadblocks. I question what kind of red tape or roadblocks you're thinking the Prime Minister is creating.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Well, to answer the minister, there is no red tape. They are roadblocks, and there is a huge difference, just to be clear.

The NEB is an arm's-length, evidence-driven body that uses science, economics, and consultation to make pipeline recommendations. Given that the Official Opposition leader wrote the Prime Minister asking him to quit undermining our world-class energy regulator, quit standing in the way of pipelines, and quit emboldening the naysayers, will the Premier now show some leadership, stop sitting on the fence, and tell the Prime Minister that all of Alberta is unified and wants him to stop interfering in pipelines that have been independently approved by the NEB?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Well, thank you again for the question. Our province continues to work with the NEB on the process. The first step has been achieved in that it goes to the next step. Again, there are three different processes that have to go to the cabinet, and we're going to support those processes all along the way, and we're going to support Kinder Morgan in that process.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** No preamble.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Mr. Speaker, anti-Alberta activists are trying to undermine the integrity of the NEB . . .

**The Speaker:** Get to the question.

**Mrs. Aheer:** . . . for political reasons. Given that the mayor of Vancouver just called the NEB process, I quote, a sham and vowed to block the project at all costs and given that the Premier's own Calgary outreach manager organized this mayor's campaign against the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain expansion, will the Premier or her staff be doing anything to counter this mayor's dangerous and misleading claims, that are a direct attempt to damage the reputation of our independent, world-class energy regulator?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If you want to talk about somebody attempting to damage reputations, it's the Official Opposition. I am very proud of the fact that we have been working in a collaborative, respectful fashion with elected officials from across Canada. If you want to get something moving forward, certainly, treating each other with respect and not undermining and spreading misinformation are the best ways to do that. We're very proud of our government. We've been consistent. We're proud of the fact that we made good progress last Thursday, and we'll continue to work collaboratively with elected officials and Kinder Morgan to move forward.

**The Speaker:** I've a request to have unanimous consent for introduction of some guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the indulgence of the House to rise to introduce to you and through you a very distinguished Albertan. Dr. Andrew Leach, who chaired the climate leadership panel, has joined us in the gallery today. Dr. Andrew Leach is a professor at the University of Alberta School of Business. He very ably made the recommendations that we are going to be putting into the act today in Bill 20. If the Legislature would give him the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

### Castle Downs Family YMCA

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about a fantastic organization, the Castle Downs YMCA in the glorious constituency of Edmonton-Castle Downs. The Castle Downs Family YMCA opened in 1998 in north-central Edmonton. Eighteen years on, today it is not only a recreation centre but a centre of the community in north Edmonton, serving over 15,000 participants every year through a range of programs. Thanks to the YMCA's opportunity program, everyone can access its services. Affordability is not an issue. It has helped 28 per cent of the centre's total access financial support via the YMCA Strong Kids fundraising campaign.

Since 2008 YMCAs across the country host Health Kids Day. Mr. Speaker, it's a free community event to celebrate what the YMCA does best, creating life-enhancing opportunities to help grow people's minds and bodies. At our Castle Downs centre over 3,000 people attended.

On January 22, 2016, the NBA All-star Kidsfest was hosted here as well. About 1,300 community members joined this free event. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that this turnout was three times more than any other YMCA across Canada.

The centre recognized several years ago that the north side of the city has a large and growing Muslim population and therefore decided to have a few programs to suit the diverse needs, especially for the Muslim women. Now they have women's-only fitness classes. The centre also celebrates Eid with a big bash. Last year their Eid celebration was a huge success and provided the whole community an opportunity to learn about each other's cultural experiences. I invite all members of the House to join me in attending this year's celebration on July 10 and see the fabulous work all staff and community volunteers do to put on such a successful cultural event.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Oil Field Waste Liability Program

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, the oil field waste liability program, or OWL, performs an important function. If a licensee becomes defunct, OWL prevents the public from having to bear the cost to suspend, abandon, or remediate and reclaim an oil field waste management facility. I think we can agree that this is a good program we can all support. In a time of great economic uncertainty, with a record number of oil and gas companies becoming insolvent, there is a need for this program to ensure that oil and gas companies are paying their fair share. However, the Alberta Energy Regulator requires an outlay of cash to meet the terms of the OWL directive. Depending on the size and scope of the company's operation, getting coverage under OWL can require a hefty financial contribution, sometimes in the millions of dollars.

For an example, one local company in my constituency has been told its OWL fee will exceed over \$2 million from its operating capital. Now, the Alberta Energy Regulator does allow companies to offset the required deposit by performing a facility netback calculation, or FNC, which requires them to disclose their assets, holdings, and/or provide profitability performance estimates for each of their sites. When an FNC was conducted on the company in question, it did in fact have ample assets to offset the required security deposits. However, because the company is a limited partnership, its assets are held by the partnership and not the licensee holder. On those grounds its FNC was rejected by the

Alberta Energy Regulator. The issue is not that the funds or assets were not available, no. The partnership has the assets and is happy to post the security deposit. However, the fact remains that on the basis of a technicality and a rejected FNC, this job-creating project has been stopped in its tracks, more red tape consequences.

I urge the government to reconsider its stance on oil field waste liability fees paid by limited partnerships so this project can get moving forward. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

2:50

### Leadership

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was born and raised in Alberta, and for that I'm thankful. I often think of my childhood and how my father raised me and my siblings. My mother left when I was seven, and I had a lot of questions. I was angry, sad, and frustrated. We didn't have as much as other families, and in my mind we weren't whole. Some might have described us as poor, a broken family. As a child I looked for someone to blame, and I can't even imagine how my dad felt.

He could have blamed my mother. He could have blamed customers. For that matter, he could have blamed anything. But this was not the case, Mr. Speaker. I never, not once, heard my father blame my mom for leaving or blame people who couldn't pay their invoices, that left our family short. My father, even though he didn't have to, took the brunt of everything, accepting and owning his role as the leader of our family. He looked forward instead of backwards. He was hopeful instead of dreadful. He led his family into a better place. He created leaders instead of doubters, including me, even when it seemed unlikely.

Mr. Speaker, I often think of leadership and how to be better. I think of former leaders and the challenges they were faced with. One in particular is John F. Kennedy in the Cuban Missile Crisis. As I look back, I try to imagine the enormity of that crisis and what the President and his advisers were faced with. I imagine the strength, courage, and ownership it must have taken to lead in that moment, not just for the American people but for the whole planet. I also imagine: what if JFK was more accusatory than conciliatory? What if he spent his time blaming and looking backwards at former administrators rather than the task at hand? The outcome could have been disastrous.

For each one of us in this Chamber, we play a role in the future and history in Alberta. It's up to us how we want to be characterized in our roles. Will we blame others for our challenges and stand and be counted only when there's success, or will we stand with it all, good or bad? Hon. members, it's up to you how you'll be defined in the history books. Will you be collaborators of ideas and have the courage and character to own your place in history? For myself and our caucus, we accept our responsibility for the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

### Minimum Wage

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government committed to moving towards a minimum wage that will support hard-working Albertans, a minimum wage that would mean fewer Albertans working full-time jobs having to go to the food bank in order to feed themselves and their families.

Unfortunately, the opposition isn't on the side of these hard-working Albertan families. On May 9 the Member for Cardston-

Taber-Warner made a claim that a decent minimum wage is an entitlement, that Albertans don't deserve to earn a wage that helps them put food on the table and live with dignity.

Mr. Speaker, my fellow New Democrats and I fundamentally reject that risky ideology. In fact, it leads me to wonder what the minimum wage would be if the member had his way: \$5 an hour, \$2 an hour, or maybe he would just scrap it altogether. Just because someone makes minimum wage doesn't mean that they're not working hard. The only entitled mentality that exists in this debate is the one the opposition is arguing, the one that says Alberta businesses can't succeed if they pay their employees a fair and decent wage that pays the bills.

These workers are our family, our friends, our neighbours. Of those Albertans making less than \$15 per hour, over 33,000 of them are single-income families supporting children, thousands of single parents that can't afford to buy their children a winter coat, never mind themselves, and who still have to choose between their groceries and their medication. I know the struggle. I grew up in a family where my dad was part of the working poor, where a winter coat was a luxury. This is unacceptable, this is un-Albertan, and this needs to change.

We are working with businesses, with social advocacy organizations, with nonprofits, and with those very Albertans who are struggling to make ends meet. Mr. Speaker, I would strongly encourage the opposition to get on the right side of history here. There is no dignity in advocating for working Albertans to remain in poverty.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

### Social Licence

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll start with apologies to Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham*. Social licence is what I hear from the NDPers year by year. It makes me wonder where we buy this social licence we want to try. I do not see them where I buy my fishing licence to catch a fry. I do not see them when I look for my driver's licence in any book. My fishing licence cost 28 bucks. It costs 84 to drive my truck. I buy them at my local vendor, but social licence, I have to wonder where to purchase this right to plunder.

There are folks, it seems, who have to talk, who string us along and balk, balk, balk: Justin Trudeau, of whom I'm no fan because of his crazy tanker ban. Energy East, Coderre's not for it, but the river he fills with Montreal's – it doesn't make much sense, I say, but dump it in he does anyway. For driving and fishing there are regulations, but a social licence, it seems speculation.

When you buy one, where is it for, just the province or the world and more? Will it get us just one pipeline, or will it do for more than a few? Do we renew it every year? I would hope not cos I hope it's good until we rot. Can I buy one for just six billion? Carbon capture has left us reeling. What if we add three billion more of taxpayers' money to lay that bore to the coast to export more, more, more.

But who is dealing for this licence? I hope the deal is close to sealing. Will we get a solid contract, or will we have to search for facts? Now, pipeline approval, it's up to NEB, but the Premier will claim credit, just you wait and see. The lines we are awaiting were approved before, with the list of conditions getting more and more. I think the questions most want answered, not vague responses but right on *Hansard*, are what will it cost and when will it happen? Are we on a path, or are we just flappin'? We need to get our oil to tide to stop our province's downhill slide, so stop the chat and get right at it.

Though presented in prose, this in no way should distract from the seriousness of the questions and concerns brought up. I want to urge the members opposite . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

#### Bill 20

#### Climate Leadership Implementation Act

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to introduce a bill, being the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the climate is changing; there is no denying this fact. Doing nothing is not an option. We must take strong and decisive action. Those actions were announced last November as part of our climate leadership plan, a plan that is the right thing to do today and for future generations.

The climate leadership plan will diversify our economy, create new jobs, improve the health of Albertans, and erase any doubt about our environmental record. It will also open up new markets for our products. Mr. Speaker, Bill 20 ensures that Alberta has the legislative authority needed to realize the bold and ambitious actions laid out in our plan.

Thank you to all guests joining us today for the introduction of this important bill.

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

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During second reading of Bill 14, the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016, I spoke at length about the province of British Columbia and how they've gone some distance to study and actually enforce keeping professional associations separate from the public regulatory boards. I would like to table the requisite five copies of the report, and if members are interested, it's got some very good information.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I rise today to table two documents. The first is five copies of a motion passed by the National Assembly of Quebec on May 10, 2016, which states:

that the National Assembly offer Albertans its support in the fight against the forest fires that are ravaging the Fort McMurray area; that it salute Albertans' courage; that it highlight [a society for protection of forests'] contribution and that of Quebec firefighters who have left to help their colleagues.

The second is five copies of a motion passed by the National Assembly of Quebec on May 12, 2016, concerning the creation of a single securities commission.

3:00

Hon. members, I believe we had some points of order today. The Government House Leader.

## Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. At approximately 2:20 today the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo called the Minister of Environment and Parks a hack, not once but twice. This violates Standing Order 23(j), someone who “uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.” Mr. Speaker, that’s completely offensive. It’s often very difficult to hear, with the zoo-like sounds that come from the Opposition, when ministers are answering questions, but I did hear the hon. member say that twice.

This is not the first time that I have risen on a point of order in connection with that particular member. The lack of respect shown on the other side for ministers who are trying to answer the questions that they put to us, Mr. Speaker, is continuing to be a real problem in this Legislature. If they think that sounding like that and making that racket when ministers are trying to answer questions is helpful to this place, I think they’re sorely mistaken.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the point of order today. I think there are a couple of key points to discuss. I think what we have here are some comments that may or may not have been made off of the record. I think that there’s been a long-standing tradition of comments that the Speaker may or may not have heard, and I think you can find some points of order from April 7, 2014, as well as March 19, 2012, with respect to comments that were made off the record and not in *Hansard*. Having said that, if in fact the member did say that, I would be happy to withdraw and apologize, but it isn’t traditionally the function of the Speaker to rule what has been said off the record or on the record.

Furthermore, during that particular exchange, Mr. Speaker, the minister used language that makes accusations about this side of the House, that we have risen on numerous occasions to highlight as a concern, in the form of that member making accusations about this side of the House being climate change deniers. This type of language is not helpful when it comes to maintaining order inside the Chamber. I could understand how members of this side of the House would have temperatures rising when the hon. member is making a very serious allegation about members on this side of the House.

Furthermore, I find it rather disappointing that in his point of order the Government House Leader would make an accusation utilizing language that is likely to create disorder in calling us animals by implying that it is a zoo.

**The Speaker:** To be clear, to the Government House Leader, I think your comment with respect to the sounds of a zoo was unnecessary. To the Opposition House Leader, he did not call you animals. He said that it sounds like a zoo. So, please, it seems to me that both of you might want to withdraw your comments.

Now, with respect to the original point of order I did not hear the comment being made. I accept what the Opposition House Leader said, that if it was made, it was unintended. I would accept it as that and make that decision, with respect, but I did not hear the comment.

I believe there was a second point of order raised by the leader of the third party. Is that correct?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I didn’t actually catch you recognizing me for that, and it’s kind of pointless now to deal with it because the minister that was introducing the bill treated it as debate rather than introducing the bill. Since you didn’t recognize me, it’s kind of pointless, so I’ll just withdraw that.

## Orders of the Day Government Bills and Orders Third Reading Bill 17 Appropriation Act, 2016

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my privilege to rise and move third reading of Bill 17, the Appropriation Act, 2016.

The Appropriation Act will allow our government to implement the Alberta jobs plan. In doing so, we will be supporting families, investing in infrastructure in Alberta, diversifying our energy markets, and supporting Alberta’s businesses.

Mr. Speaker, now is the time to act on economic diversification, job creation, and to get Albertans working again. I ask all members of the House to support this bill.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 17? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m rising to speak to Bill 17, the Appropriation Act, 2016. We’ve got a number of bills before the House right now dealing with overall budgetary matters. Just introduced a few minutes earlier, we’ve got Bill 20, the carbon tax bill, which will bring forward billions of dollars in new spending. We’ve got Bill 10, that will repeal any limits whatsoever on the capacity of the provincial government to borrow and to run deficits.

So Bill 17 is before us now, the Appropriation Act. Unfortunately, the government has rejected every single one – every single one – of the dozens of amendments that the Official Opposition has put forward.

You know, earlier in debate today on a separate bill the Minister of Finance presented Albertans with two choices and only two choices. One would be massive deficits, and the second would be a PST. Well, I believe there is a third way, Mr. Speaker, and it’s not to borrow from our children, and it’s not to massively increase yet another round of taxes; it’s to get our spending under control.

Right now this province is spending two and a half thousand dollars more for every man, woman, and child on the operations of government than British Columbia does. Let’s put that into context. If Alberta spent as much per capita as British Columbia, we would have virtually no operational deficit. We would still have an overall consolidated deficit, but on the operational side we would be balanced, and it would be a massive, massive step forward to getting our finances back under control.

Now, the government, because they’re a new government, likes to talk as if this deficit is taken in isolation, but the fact is that there has been a long road behind us of overspending and overborrowing. Many of us can recall the pride we had when Ralph Klein held a sign over his head saying “paid in full” and we had no debt on the books anymore. We had paid our debt in full, and we had built up to \$17 billion in the sustainability fund, a fund intended to get us through one to two or at most three years of deficits as a rainy-day fund.

3:10

Rather than control spending, the government increased spending. We went through a period of massive, massive spending increases, and as a result the sustainability fund was drawn down.

The rainy-day fund was spent in a rainy day, but then it continued to be spent even as we entered another serious economic boom. You know, with oil at \$100 a barrel we were still drawing down the sustainability fund.

What happens when you spend your rainy-day fund on sunny days? Well, when the storm comes again, there's not going to be a lot of sympathy left for you when you've already spent your rainy-day fund. That's the position that the province finds itself in right now. We've spent our entire sustainability fund. We've taken on billions and billions of dollars of debt, and now the government, in Bill 10, is proposing to repeal any limits whatsoever – period – on the ability of the government to borrow; hence, the Appropriation Act in front of us today, Bill 17.

Bill 17 is going to continue to increase spending at a massive rate every year of the projected fiscal plan. It can't cut spending in a single year, and even where the Official Opposition has proposed very minor, sometimes even symbolic, cuts to things like the communications budgets in ministers' offices, the government has seen fit to vote those amendments down. They are not accepting a single amendment.

They have stated that they're opposed to cutting even a penny of government except – except – for the emergency budget. The emergency budget is the only part of the budget where this government, at least on paper, is going to cut spending, and it's an old trick.

**An Hon. Member:** Tourism. They're cutting tourism.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Well, perhaps they're cutting tourism as well.

They are cutting the emergency budget, and it's an old, old trick, where they try to make the deficit appear to be smaller at the beginning of the fiscal year by saying that they will spend less, and then at the end of the fiscal year they say: well, who could have predicted that there'd be a disaster somewhere, that there'd be a flood or a fire or a tornado or a windstorm? These things are going to happen, and we're going to have to spend the money on them regardless. When there's a disaster that happens, it doesn't matter who is in power, the money is going to get spent to fix the problem. Instead, what this is is an old accounting trick where they get to blame it politically at the end of the year and say: "Aw. The deficit isn't our fault. An emergency happened."

Well, Canadians, Albertans plan for this in their private lives. Businesses plan for this. Households plan for this. We know that there's always going to be a difficult time ahead. We build rainy-day funds into our household finances, into small business finances. We purchase insurance in the expectation that we could face disasters in our own lives. You know, your home could be damaged in a flood. It could be damaged in a fire. You get household insurance because you know something is going to happen. The equivalent of that for government is the emergency and disaster spending fund, and the government has said: "No. We're not expecting there to be a significant amount of money that's going to need to be spent this year."

I guarantee you, Mr. Speaker. I'll put a hundred bucks down to the Minister of Finance, if he'll take it, that they will spend probably twice as much, at least, on emergency and disaster spending as he is projecting to spend in this budget. The amount of money that they are appropriating right now – perhaps, actually, the Member for Calgary-Currie would take me up on this wager. I know he's done so before.

**Mr. Nixon:** He keeps losing.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** He keeps losing, the poor guy. The poor Member for Calgary-Currie keeps believing the Minister of Finance's numbers will work out as so, and it doesn't end up as such.

I'm offering either the Member for Calgary-Currie or the Minister of Finance or anybody on the government side – I will bet them \$100 that the government will spend probably twice as much on emergencies and disasters as they're actually budgeting to do in the Appropriation Act here, in the budget. [interjection] I don't see any confidence on that side. Could I get a show of hands of a single member willing to take me up on the bet? It's pretty good odds that you will spend twice as much, at least, on emergencies and disasters at the end of the fiscal year as you're projecting to do right now. Can I get a single member on the government side to take me up on this?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, through the chair, please. Let's move on.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Sorry. Mr. Speaker, the wager stands to you as well. My apologies. If you wish to take me up on the offer, I would certainly welcome it.

We're going to be spending twice as much, at least, on emergencies and disasters as they're saying that they're going to here. I guarantee you that this government is going to bring forward a supplementary supply bill not more than eight to nine months from now, possibly even sooner, to make up that funding gap. They're going to blame it on everything else even though we are here right now saying that your budget does not appropriately account for how much you're guaranteed to spend on emergencies and disasters. We actually already might be there because of the events of the past few weeks. So there we've got a significant deviation already from what we know will be the year-end results in the budget, from what they're actually projecting in the fiscal plan. The year-end results will almost surely be significantly different.

Now, the hon. Government House Leader just likes to repeat like pulling the string on the back of a doll: oil prices, oil prices, oil prices. Well, when they had a budget here in the fall, we warned them that their oil price projections were ridiculous. We warned that they weren't going to be anywhere close to reality, and they said: "Oh, you're fearmongering. You're trying to hurt confidence in Alberta's finances." Well, we were trying to restore confidence in the finances by putting forward amendments to this bill, to the budget, which would properly reflect the price of oil. They projected a massive recovery in the price of oil that every member of the opposition, I would dare say – I believe that even all the other opposition parties as well said that their price-of-oil projections were ridiculous and they would not recover as they were saying.

In fact, they even provided years 4 and 5 of a fiscal plan without any numbers whatsoever attached to it. They didn't even provide numbers in years 4 and 5 of the fiscal plan to say how much they would bring in from income tax and corporate income tax and oil and gas royalties. All they said was: we're going to bring in a lot of money, and it's going to be really awesome. That's all they said, and we called them out on it, and they said: just trust us. Well, we didn't trust them, but they passed the bill anyway, and what did they do? They didn't come anywhere close to the revenue projections in the very first year – in the very first year – and I guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, that they're probably not going to hit it again.

Indeed, we should open to page 22 of the fiscal plan. I would invite the Minister of Finance to open to page 22 of the fiscal plan right now. This is one of my favourite moments from estimates, and I think it needs to be seen here as well. I encourage all members of this House to open up their fiscal plans right now like this was class

time. Please open up your books to page 22, and look at the chart. There is a table on page 22 that lists a few things. It says: income tax revenue, corporate tax revenue, other taxes, then carbon levy.

I was wondering if the Minister of Finance could read the title of that table for me. He seemed to have some difficulty doing that during estimates. He was unable to read the title, and I spelt it out for him. Math might be hard, but English should be pretty easy for members of the House here. The title of that table was Tax Revenue, and the minister was unable to read it because what they're doing here is bringing forward, as a part of the budget, a massive new tax on Albertans, a massive carbon tax, that is actually closer to \$6 billion a year, depending on how you factor in the rebate system, but popularly reported in the media as \$3 billion a year, in addition to the massive tax increases they've already levied on Albertans.

In the spring session of last year they brought forward a 20 per cent increase in the business tax. They brought forward an up to 50 per cent increase in our personal income taxes, finally doing away with the flat-tax system that, I believe, was a very big contributor to making Alberta the most competitive place to invest, raise a family, and do business in North America. That was in the spring session, and then in the fall session – in addition to that, they kept a bunch of the other smaller tax increases proposed by the previous government – they brought forward a host of new tax increases. Now Albertans are paying far more for things like gasoline and diesel and heating their homes, transporting goods on railways, things like this, that are hurting the competitiveness of Alberta.

3:20

What do they think Alberta needs now? A carbon tax. More taxes. What does the Minister of Finance have to respond to the legitimate concerns of the Official Opposition about what their fiscal policies are doing to Alberta? He bizarrely accuses the Official Opposition of wanting a provincial sales tax. Mr. Speaker, the government has jumped the shark at this point. The NDP has jumped the shark. They don't have any idea what they're doing.

They've stopped even trying to answer questions. They've stopped trying to answer questions. I mean, just during question period we asked questions about Bill 36 and property rights. We couldn't find a single member on that side who even knew what we were talking about. Property rights are a foreign concept to the government across. They've jumped the shark, and they're not even attempting to answer real and legitimate questions anymore. It's because they're embarrassed about what they're doing – they are embarrassed – and if I introduced a 15 per cent cap on the debt-to-GDP of this province just five months ago and five months later I was sitting here trying to repeal it, I'd be pretty embarrassed, too. I'd be pretty embarrassed, too.

This is a budget that is a shot in the dark. They have no idea when they even attempt to maybe get back to a balanced budget. I'll at least give them credit now for being honest and saying that they have no idea. It'll maybe be 2024 but sort of, if things work out really well. This is opposed to the practice of other governments and their own government last year. Just promise to balance the budget at some future date, and every year move it back one more. This is not just an issue that's plagued the NDP. Governments of all partisan stripes in multiple jurisdictions across Canada have done it. Many people can remember, you know, the federal governments in the 1980s under Trudeau and Mulroney. They would promise a balanced budget four years out, and every year they would move their projection one more year down the road. We saw it from the Getty government. We saw it and we see it now from this government.

This is a very dangerous path to get onto because we are now running our ninth consecutive consolidated deficit, Mr. Speaker.

We have seen a decline in the net financial assets of this province of approximately \$60 billion – \$60 billion – over the last decade. From 2008 to 2018 projected, we will have had a decline in our net financial assets of almost \$60 billion. It's an absolute meltdown in the balance sheet of this government – it's an absolute meltdown – and they have no intention of fixing it. I don't blame this government for inheriting a deficit. I don't blame this government for inheriting a significant debt load and a sustainability fund which has almost run out. I don't blame them for that, but I do blame this government for not caring one iota about actually fixing it. They have no intention of righting the ship.

I think at this point, Mr. Speaker, that they have made a political calculation that their electoral coalition doesn't care about fiscal responsibility. They've made a political choice, a very political choice not based on sound economics, not based on sound finances. They've made a political choice, a political decision. They're hoping that the group of voters that they need to convince to vote NDP in the next election doesn't care about balanced budgets, that they don't care about ending the practice of borrowing in this province, and that they will instead be able to replace the concerns that some Albertans have about deficits with unlimited borrowing so that they can spend, so they can buy Albertans off with their own money.

But the problem with socialism, Mr. Speaker, is that eventually you run out of other people's money, and that is where they are headed. That is why we have had five credit downgrades in this province, why we have had a credit downgrade the very day after they introduced their budget. If it was about the price of oil, we would have had a downgrade as the price of oil went down; instead, one day after they introduced their budget, less than 24 hours, this province received a credit downgrade.

Then the Minister of Finance said: I'm going to make it better and go talk to the creditors, and I'll convince them that I'm good for the money. What happened as soon as he talked to them? They gave us another downgrade. It was the worst thing that he could have possibly done. I ask that the Minister of Finance please refrain from speaking to the creditors of this province in the future. It's very bad for the fiscal reputation of this province. And when did we get another credit downgrade? Just on Thursday, while we were debating Bill 10 to eliminate the debt ceiling whatsoever in this province. That sent a very strong signal to creditors in this province that we're not good for the money, that we weren't even going to promise, however lightly, that we were going to have any limit on borrowing in this province whatsoever.

Instead, we are going to wave some magical diversification wand where the Minister of Finance would so brilliantly direct capital investment in the private economy away from oil and gas and into other sectors, that it would replace the revenue from the oil and gas royalties, that that would somehow convince our creditors that it's sound. But his attempt to convince them led to another downgrade because nobody believes that that's actually a sound plan.

**An Hon. Member:** There's no plan.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** It's not a plan. NDP stands for No Darn Plan, Mr. Speaker, No Darn Plan.

Mr. Speaker, just the other day, as we're debating Bill 10 to eliminate the debt ceiling, in the morning we were talking about this. The Minister of Finance said: "Don't worry yourselves. Just trust me. It's good. This is necessary. I'll just diversify the economy by waving my magic wand, and the creditors will all think we're good for the money." Well, what happened? Just later in that afternoon we received another credit downgrade, our second – our second – from S&P. How many more are there going to be before



this government gets serious? Does DBRS have to downgrade us again? Does S&P have to do it yet again? How many times are the creditors going to come knocking on the door of this government and tell us to get our actions together before we actually do something about it?

This is irresponsible, Mr. Speaker. I've spoken about my niece Lucy. She was born right around the same time that the budget was introduced. Lucy is going to have as much debt to her name by the time she is old enough to vote in this province as it would take to put her through SAIT.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**The Speaker:** No. I believe that 29(2)(a) does not apply in this situation.

The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 17, the Appropriation Act, 2016, the government's request from the taxpayers for about \$50 billion to pay for things that haven't been fully disclosed yet. Now, I appreciate that the government has introduced a budget where they've talked about a lot of the things they want to spend money on, but the government itself has admitted that a lot of things are in there that they haven't actually fully disclosed, including a large part of the capital budget. The projects haven't been fully announced yet. I know that the minister in charge of that won't even argue with me there because he understands that.

Mr. Speaker, here's the problem. The government is asking the taxpayers to back them on a whole bunch of money, which is what governments do, and that's fine. But what the government doesn't really have a good answer for is: what's the public getting out of it that's in their favour in the long term in particular? In the short term the government talks about some of the nice things they're going to buy for people, and some of those are good things. They're building away on a school program that the previous government wisely announced and began work on, and the government has wisely decided that that was a good idea and to continue with that.

But, Mr. Speaker, they're falling short in a number of areas. I know that when the government was first announced, they took great glee in repeating over and over and over and over again complaints, for example, about maintenance, deferred maintenance. They went on at great length, talking about billions of dollars in deferred maintenance and the previous government, what terrible people they were because they had this deferred maintenance. And the government said repeatedly – the minister has a smile on his face when he's arguing with me because he knows that they said this. And they actually had the courage to come in this House and say: we're going to spend a lot more on deferred maintenance because we care. Well, that sounds pretty good except that when you read the government's business plans, all that caring doesn't really get much improvement in the condition of the infrastructure with the deferred maintenance.

3:30

In fact, in the government's own business plan it shows that between now and the end of the capital planning period in those business plans, though they spent lots more money, lots more money, as they promised – that's a promise they kept, Mr. Speaker.

They're spending a lot more money. Now, here's the promise they're not keeping. The average condition of the roads and the other infrastructure: actually there's going to be a higher percentage in poor condition and a lower percentage in good condition after spending all that money. Wow. It's kind of making the previous government look pretty good at this point.

But let's move on, Mr. Speaker. There must be a bright spot here, so let's go to the health facilities that the government repeatedly talked about deferred maintenance on and how they were going to spend a lot more money and make it a lot better. In their own business plan, at the end, it shows that they are spending a lot more money, but it shows the percentage of infrastructure in poor condition increases and the percentage of infrastructure in good condition decreases. So they spent a lot more money, and did they go forwards? No. They're promising to go backwards.

Well, there's a promise that the public should be more aware of, which is why I'm talking about it right now, and a promise that the public would have pause about giving them all of this money if they're going to do as they say and spend a lot more money and get less results. It doesn't really add up, Mr. Speaker. It just doesn't add up. What's really crazy about this is that I don't have to embellish this because it's in black and white in the government's own documents. There's nothing I've said here that is in the least bit embellished because they have put it in black and white in their own documents.

Let's move on to government-owned buildings and facilities, where they're spending more money and have promised to slay the dragon of deferred maintenance. Well, once again they've kept that promise of spending more money. But wait, Mr. Speaker. In the business plan the percentages of buildings in better condition, in good condition: whoops, that goes down. The number is smaller.

**Dr. Starke:** The dragon is healthy.

**Mr. McIver:** The dragon is healthy.

On the line where it talks about the buildings in poor condition, it's either the same or higher. Mr. Speaker, the promised improvements are not there.

But wait. It gets worse than that, Mr. Speaker, because the government is going to be \$10.4 billion in deficit this year, leading to \$57.6 billion and \$2 billion a year in interest payments without touching the principal. That is if the government's revenue projections come true. Now, I know that they are hoping to have a pipeline bail them out. I would like to think every member in this House is hoping for a pipeline to come. The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that it may not actually bail them out. It will help. It will help a lot. But if you look at the government's projections on revenue, where we asked about it in budget in treasury and finance, the numbers on the revenue from oil and gas royalties actually require the province to sell more oil and gas than we can physically ship from the province today.

They've already budgeted in a pipeline that doesn't exist, and they're not sure it's going to exist. No. In fairness, maybe it's more rail. We'll be shipping more rail, and we don't know whether the railcars will magically appear or not. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that they have actually budgeted to sell more oil and gas – this is the government, by the way, getting us off the oil and gas resource roller coaster – in future years than the province has the physical capacity to take away today. They haven't got an explanation about how they intend to have it taken away.

All of these really ugly numbers that I've laid out from the government's plan – and, again, I haven't even had to embellish them, they're so bad. Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the revenue numbers they're projecting may not come in because (a) they don't

have the physical capacity to take away what they say that they're going to take away, and (b) the prices that they have projected for the oil and gas are actually higher than the industry experts say are going to happen. They're in a whole heap of trouble, even much more than they admit to in their black-and-white numbers, which is why all Albertans should pause very, very long and hard before they think that they ought to trust this government with this much money when they are clearly – clearly – without any plan to be responsible with it.

Now, we tried to help. The Progressive Conservative caucus, Mr. Speaker, gave the government the \$4 billion challenge, where if they saved \$4 billion a year in operating over two years, they would have to borrow a lot less. It wouldn't get them out of all the trouble that they're in, but it would help. Of course it's on the operating side, so, you know, \$4 billion a year is \$4 billion a year forever, so over five years there's \$20 billion fewer that could be spent. You would think the government would be pretty darned interested in that, but what did they do? They scoffed. They laughed. They said: forget it; it can't be done. We even kind of showed them how to get three-quarters of the way there. We showed them several examples of where they could find those efficiencies without cutting front-line services, without laying off doctors, nurses, teachers, those things that people love. Yet the government scoffed at it.

They even scoffed at our suggestion based on fact out of Alberta Health Services' own notes, that say that \$3.2 billion a year is roughly the cost of emergency room visits. Of course, the same document says that about 90 per cent of those aren't emergencies. Now, we're not foolish enough to tell the government they could save 90 per cent out of that \$3.2 billion. But if you take the 90 per cent and you go down to 90 per cent of \$2.7 billion, \$2.8 billion, that's the number that you're looking to reduce. That's not how much you could save. Let's just say that the government could cut that in half by delivering those nonemergency services in a nonemergency room. That's actually worth considering the possibility of. There could be a billion dollars and a half a year savings, a billion and a half a year forever, right there, the one piece. That's a pretty big piece of the \$4 billion challenge. We handed it to them, Mr. Speaker, on a silver platter, and they kind of scoffed at us. They laughed at us. They made fun of us. They said: why would we do that?

I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker. While they're not willing to find any efficiencies, they sure have lots of suggestions for other people to find efficiencies. The environment minister, when asked in this House, "How are schools going to pay for the carbon tax?" said, "They'll find efficiencies." When the environment minister said, "How are charities are going to pay for this tax?" they said, "They'll find efficiencies." When the environment minister was asked how municipalities would pay for this tax, she said – you got it – "They'll find efficiencies." The same goes for not-for-profits, for hospitals, for businesses, for families. The government wants the whole rest of the world to find efficiencies. The first efficiencies they say that they can find themselves and the only efficiencies they say, their words: we'll have to lay off nurses and teachers. Yet, Mr. Speaker, they think the whole rest of the world can find efficiencies where they don't have to stop delivering the services that they do to their families and their businesses and their nonprofits. This government isn't willing to find a single blessed efficiency, yet they pile taxes on, and they expect everybody else to recover from those taxes by finding efficiencies when the government, even when led – led – to water won't drink. They will not drink when led to water.

I have a friend from Mauritius. I don't fully understand the translation, but it's something similar to that, where he says that a horse won't eat Jell-O, but a donkey will. The reference is that somebody that's really, really stubborn won't do that, but the horse

will. It is the same as: we tried to lead the government horse to water, and they would not drink. You know what, Mr. Speaker? That would be okay if it was for their own sake, but it's really for the sake of Albertans that they've chosen not to make the effort. Even when the answer has been to a great extent handed to them on a silver platter, they have chosen not to do so.

Now, we heard today in the introduction – I haven't really had time to get into the Bill 20, but of course some of the money we're talking about here is for that, so I feel comfortable addressing it at least in broad terms, Mr. Speaker. But we did find out in estimates that there is no plan in the budget to spend money on green line LRT. That's what we were told there. You know, one of the things about using less carbon is more public transit, so I don't know where that's going to come from, but we were told in estimates that that is not happening.

Then, Mr. Speaker, as if that wasn't bad enough, that the government won't listen to local advice from farmers or businesses or families or charities or schools or hospitals, they won't listen to international advice either by the people that control the purse strings: by Moody's, who lowered Alberta's credit rating; by DBRS, who has lowered Alberta's credit rating; by Standard & Poor's, who has lowered Alberta's credit rating.

Mr. Speaker, part of the revenue the government is depending upon so that they can still take us into \$57.6 billion in debt is, obviously, from ATB. Well, I don't know how much ATB is going to be damaged. I don't. It's a sad thing because ATB is very dear to a lot of Albertans. A lot of Albertans depend upon ATB for their car loans, mortgages, other things. For example, if it does cost them 1 per cent to 1 and a quarter per cent more to borrow because of the reduced credit rating – and we did hear in estimates, too, that ATB doesn't borrow; the government borrows for them – I think it's a pretty short leap that I'm going to make right now that if it costs the government more to borrow, either it's going to cost the ATB more to borrow or the government is going to eat the difference for them. So you've got ATB in a position now where either they're going to have to make a lot less money or the government is going to need to have a bunch less money for them or they're not going to be competitive in the marketplace.

3:40

It's a pretty competitive marketplace. You can get a mortgage right now for like 2 or 1.9 per cent, so if you add a percentage on to that, that's pretty uncompetitive, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, if ATB has to eat that 1 per cent, I think they'd lose all their mortgage business. I'm guessing, I'm hoping that the government is smart enough not to make them do that, but at some point that 1 per cent or so, whatever it costs more to borrow, is going to cost the taxpayers either through lower profits coming back to the taxpayers through ATB or higher payments on the debt through the government.

Either way, who pays? Taxpayers, the same ones that are expected to find efficiencies at their charities, families, businesses, not-for-profits, municipalities, schools, and hospitals when the government causing all of this can't find a single efficiency anywhere. These are the same people expected to take all the heat to pay more for a carbon tax than they're going to get back. The government hasn't said that, but it's obvious that that's true because what they have said is that they will get the carbon tax back for the gas that they put in their car. They'll get carbon tax for the heat they put in their house. From then on they don't get any more back, but that's not where the expenses end for the households, Mr. Speaker. They'll pay more for anything that rides on a truck because the truck will burn gas, and it'll cost more. Anything they buy in a grocery store, which has a lot of heat and refrigeration, will cost more.

Mr. Speaker, the government hasn't got their act together for this Appropriation Act to ask for this money because they can't explain. They can't make a good case that they're actually going to get the revenue that they say they will. They haven't actually disclosed where they're going to spend all the money. Their plan is to borrow us into oblivion and almost \$60 billion without making a single payment against it, and they won't accept help when it's handed to them on a silver platter. When you add all of that up, they have not even come close to making their case to have the taxpayers, through this Legislative Assembly, furnish them with about \$50 billion to spend on all the things they want to spend on. They ought to be embarrassed for asking, having not done their homework, which is why I won't be supporting this, and I recommend that other members of this House do not either.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments to the Member for Calgary-Hays under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

What other members would wish to speak to Bill 17? The Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to get up and speak in support of Bill 17. I have been listening intently to the debate through the various stages of this bill going through the House, and I just wanted to take a little bit of time to, you know, bring my thoughts forward on some of the stuff that's been spoken about in this House.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays had, you know, talked about how his party had started some good ideas such as building schools. I know that during the election, at the all-candidates' debate, one of the things that came up is that for those schools the only thing that was built or planned for was the sign saying: new school here. That was about as close as those schools got. I note that there were multiple incidents where some of those schools, in fact, didn't even have land ready for them. It's easy to promise something without money being there to do it. So I'm very proud of our government, that we are actually putting money in this bill to build or modernize 200 new schools because that was an election promise that we made, and we are actually following through on it, which is something that I am very, very proud of.

Now, another thing that was talked about in this House is that certain members of the House do not want to go into debt. The solutions that are brought forward for that are ones that are good catchphrases – "It's the \$4 billion challenge" – which, if you look at it, has a lot of what-if scenarios that have no numbers attached to them. You know, I, too, can say: what if we can save a magically high pile of money? That's easy. I mean, it makes for good talking points whereas we in our budget have actually gone through and found reductions and savings.

We have taken things like – we have bent the cost curve down on health care, which was going up at 6 per cent a year, which was unsustainable. We have taken our government spending, and we are holding it at 2 per cent per year, which is a much more reasonable rate of growth relative to population and inflation growth. That is something that we can be proud of because we found those savings without hurting the front-line workers that we rely on for schools, for health care, for road maintenance, and so on.

Going back to debt, the opposition likes to talk a lot about that, and especially the Official Opposition likes to talk about: we should always have balanced budgets; debt is bad. I'd like to point out that we have had an unprecedented drop in the price of oil, a 90 per cent drop in our oil royalty revenues. To that party: I'm wondering which solutions have been provided. Well, as I mentioned, I haven't seen any. I've seen talking points. I have seen reductions in capital spending, mysterious reductions that, not going into details or

whether or not I think they would actually be effective, don't actually add up to a balanced budget either. What you get when you have a party that is so ideologically opposed to debt is that you just get these talking points: we've got to have no debt, absolutely no debt. Well, I wonder: what would you give up?

I will take no lessons from that party when it comes to deficits. I will note that the Leader of the Official Opposition, while in government – if he was so ideologically opposed to debt, I don't remember him standing up against the Prime Minister at the time, who ran five consecutive deficits. I don't remember him in a scrum standing up against the Prime Minister and saying: no, we can't have deficits. I don't recall him calling out the Finance minister of the day about those deficits. Do you know why I don't think he was doing that? He realized that in a downturn it was the right thing to do because it's what kept Canadians working at the time. Here in Alberta, it will keep Albertans working. It will lessen the pain as much as humanly possible.

When you are ideologically opposed to deficits, I guess you are ideologically opposed to the schools and hospitals that go with them. That is why, I would think, the opposition has kept their shadow budget in the shadows. I'm proud of our plan. I'm proud of the schools that it will build. I am proud of the roads that it will build all across Alberta, including the ring road which is very close to my heart, in my constituency of Calgary-Currie. I am very proud of the Calgary cancer centre that will also be built as well as the hospitals and fully funding teachers in our schools. While the opposition likes to talk a lot of stuff when it comes to deficit, it's nothing but partisanship.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to be voting in support of this bill, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of quick questions for the Member for Calgary-Currie in one of our always invigorating interactions. I hope that he'll write them down and actually respond to them point by point.

One, if he could table the requisite five copies of any shadow budget ever produced in the history of the NDP.

Is he now a supporter of Stephen Harper's budgets?

He blames everything on the price of oil. Could he explain at what price oil would need to be for the budget to be balanced under this budget?

He has said that they are holding spending to 2 per cent growth. Does that include spending from the revenue generated by the carbon tax?

He says that they have not cut spending. Could he please refer to line items under the emergency and disaster budget? Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll take a moment to go through a couple of these. The 2 per cent growth in spending, as the hon. minister of environment has mentioned, in fact, will not go into general revenue. It will be invested back into the Albertan economy or rebated to individual Albertans.

When it comes to Stephen Harper's budgets, as you can imagine, there were a lot of things that Stephen Harper did that I did not agree with. However, he did realize that when there was a massive downturn in the economy – after much persuading, I believe, by the Official Opposition, which was an NDP Official Opposition at the

time, he decided to come around – helping Canadians in a downturn was, in fact, a good thing.

There was such a long list.

3:50

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Table your shadow budgets.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Tabling the shadow budgets. Well, I would have to say that, of course, the Official Opposition – I believe that the quote I heard earlier was that, in fact, it is not their job to come up with shadow budgets, so I will have to defer to *Hansard* for the ones you're talking about.

I will leave it at that. Indeed, I am proud of our jobs plan, which is this budget, and I will be supporting it. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. I'd just ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie if he was familiar with the Auditor's report on the building of schools. Particularly, I would refer him to page 5. There's a chart on page 5 with a timeline of the progress made with the schools. Of course, the top box on page 5 shows the progress made on the schools announced when the previous government, the Progressive Conservative government, was in place, when the vast majority of schools announced were actually on track to be built on time.

Then I would refer the hon. member to the box right below that, which is the first box on the timeline responsibilities of the current government, where it shows nothing being done, basically, in the next six months and way more projects being behind schedule than that last one. Had he seen that, how could he possibly talk about performing on those schools when the previous government didn't, when in fact the Auditor's report, produced and printed under this government's time in office, actually shows the opposite of what the hon. member actually said in the House?

Before he goes there, I would also ask him if he's familiar with the top of page 20 of the same report, where despite the fact that government members from the other side say that money was not in the budget to build those schools, the Auditor actually makes it clear that the government obviously had plans to put the money in place as it was needed to build those schools. I'd just ask the hon. member: did he actually read the report, and what does he have to say to those pages that show his government performing way more poorly, way less well than the previous government did in terms of the timelines for building the schools that he talked about when he was on his feet ever so recently?

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will note, of course, that in the last budget that was produced by the member of the third party, they had actually reduced the per head funding for schools by capping it, and that was something that as soon as we became government, we restored. I will note that, of course, the hon. Minister of Education will have to follow up . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members that would like to speak to Bill 17, Appropriation Act? The Member for Calgary-Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** That's close enough, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 17, the Appropriation Act. This is a bill that I won't be able to support. Bill 17 is going to create substantial financial hardships for the people of the province of Alberta. There is a tremendous amount of spending to take place, and there is a tremendous amount of money

that has to be borrowed in order to see that spending. What the Appropriation Act defines is a \$10.4 billion deficit for the fiscal year 2016-17.

Debts and deficits become somewhat confusing to the average Albertan, that doesn't sit in this House or doesn't sit around discussing the budget at length. They're so unlucky to be unable to do that. To help those folks that listen sometimes and some that watch now on occasion, a deficit is defined as "an excess of expenditure or liabilities over income or assets in a given period." Debt is something different. Benjamin Franklin said that "when you run in debt; you give to another power over your liberty." *Webster's* says that debt is simply defined as "a state of owing" money.

Well, we will certainly owe money as a province, Mr. Speaker, more money than ever before. As a matter of fact, we'll be borrowing to keep the operations of the government in a state of continuance; in other words, borrowing to keep the lights on. Borrowing money for operations and capital expenditures is one thing; removing the self-imposed debt ceiling so that unrestrained borrowing is available to those that make those decisions is something else entirely. The government intends to borrow billions of dollars which will be used to fund its operations and will exceed its own legislated debt ceiling in just three years. Total debt is projected to hit a very large number, a number never seen in Alberta, \$57.6 billion by 2019. Also, the government is completely drawing down the contingency account and borrowing \$5.4 billion to cover operating costs this year. The government last borrowed to finance daily operations in 1994.

The deficit, meanwhile, is forecast as a rather large number as well within this budget. Remember that a deficit is an excess of expenditure over income. In this fiscal year of 2016-17 there will be a record deficit of \$10.4 billion. Those are staggering numbers.

We've seen, within this short amount of time since the newest NDP budget has been presented, several bond-rating agencies downgrade Alberta's credit rating. Now, this is not good. Alberta's Finance minister flew to Toronto and New York to sell the so-called job-creation budget in an effort to have bond-rating agencies quit lowering our credit rating. But those agencies, to be perfectly honest, Mr. Speaker, are not interested in whether or not this budget protects Alberta's core services or creates jobs. What bond-rating agencies like DBRS or Moody's or Standard & Poor's are interested in is whether or not Alberta's finances are creditworthy, whether or not this government has the intention to show the ability that the province has to pay back the money that it borrows.

There is increased risk for bond agencies to lend money to this province. The projected profound deficits are one part of the risk: \$10.6 billion, as stated before, in this year; \$10.1 billion in 2017-2018; and \$8.4 billion in the '18-19 fiscal year. The amount of debt, another \$57.6 billion within the next three years, and the rather prolonged amount of time between now and when the budget will supposedly be balanced, in 2024, all of these things reflect the downgrades that we've seen so far, the latest just five days ago. The fact that the province of Alberta has given no indication of how or when it will start to pay back the debt that it has accumulated or will have accumulated is another reason that bond-rating agencies get spooked.

Until we are shown or until debt-rating agencies are shown a plan to tackle the principal, Alberta is going to pay a higher rate of interest on the money borrowed. The cost to pay just the interest will be upwards of \$2 billion per year. That's just the interest, not the principal. The largest expense in government after health, education, and social services will be the money that Alberta is going to have to pay just in interest on the money borrowed: less

money for schools, less money for teachers, less money for front-line staff.

The Wildrose caucus did come out with a solid, realistic plan to reduce annual spending by \$2 billion. That information is all very public, Mr. Speaker. There are always ways to achieve modest spending reductions in this budget, but it means making a choice.

In the Appropriation Act, 2016, Albertans will be taxed like they've never been taxed before. Many of my colleagues have spoken about the impact of the newly proposed carbon tax. When it is implemented, starting in January 1, 2017, we'll see the tax Albertans have to pay along with an increase in that tax on January 1, 2018.

Now, I will give one shot in the arm to the government, that came up with the newest budget. Hey, I'm going to say that I think every opposition party in the House probably will claim that lowering the small-business tax was their idea. I don't know anything about what the other opposition parties did or didn't say about the small-business tax, but I do know for a fact that the Wildrose did suggest that lowering that particular tax was important. We're glad to see that the NDP got that job done, lowering the small-business tax from 3 per cent to 2 per cent.

4:00

Back to the carbon tax. This proposed tax is just another massive overhead fee for actual job creators. With increased overhead fees the amount that businesses will be able to set aside for labour will become less and less. The price of fuel, whether fuel for heating buildings or fuel for delivering goods, will increase the cost of those goods to all Albertans, and every Albertan in their own circumstance will see the same additional costs as a result of the carbon tax.

In Alberta we have winter. Now, you can wear three sets of long underwear and three sweaters for five months of the year if you like, but you still have to keep your home warm enough to function while you're in it. This tax means that keeping your home at a reasonable temperature while you're in it is going to cost more. Now, you could turn down the temperature in your house while you take your kids to the rink for hockey practice, but – just a minute – the price of fuel for your car is going to cost more: 4 and a half cents per litre at the pump for gasoline and 5.4 cents at the pump for diesel. Those prices will go up by 50 per cent more on January 1, 2018. This tax will touch just about everything that an Albertan has to use his after-tax dollars to purchase.

What about the costs to the companies that build the infrastructure in Alberta, the companies that build our schools and our hospitals and improve our roads? There has been no exemption for those folks. The increased costs of operation for construction companies will have to be passed on to the government and, in turn, will be passed on to each of us. What about the cost of keeping the lights on in a hospital or heating that hospital or the cost of running an ambulance? These are not hypothetical scenarios. There are actually real numbers attached here. I want to quote from a recent article from *Metro News* of May 11, which reads:

If the government's carbon tax was in place, Alberta Health Services . . . would've spent about 38 per cent more on natural gas to power its facilities during the 2015-16 fiscal year.

It goes on to say:

AHS said it spent more than \$17.7 million on natural gas – with more than 4,372,264 gigajoules consumed by all of its facilities – during its 2015-16 fiscal year.

The government's carbon tax will charge an extra [a little more than a \$1.51, just about \$1.52] per gigajoule, meaning AHS would've spent more than \$24.3 million on natural gas, a spike of about \$6 million.

The cost of heating schools and government buildings, the increased costs of busing children back and forth to school, the increased costs of public transit that Albertans who use it will be forced to pay for: those costs will all be passed on to Albertans. According to Edmonton public schools heating public schools will cost an estimated \$630,000 more for the eight months that the carbon tax would apply. Now, unless they plan on exempting school boards, that's money allegedly earmarked for education that is being diverted back to the government as a carbon tax. When you get down to it, it becomes clear that you get a lot less out of this budget than you're paying for.

Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. This budget proposes a significant uptake in debt for Alberta. Debts and deficits like those proposed here will result in incredibly difficult decisions in the future. And for all the problems that'll be caused by this headfirst dive into debt, perhaps one of the most significant problems is that the government will have so little to show for it when it comes to results. Albertans will pay the price for decisions made in this provincial budget for years, perhaps generations, to come.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I don't intend to support this bill. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

**The Speaker:** Questions for the Member for Little Bow under 29(2)(a)?

The deputy House leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**The Chair:** We are on amendment A2. Are there any further speakers to this amendment?

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much. I'd like to understand a little bit more about why the government does not feel the need to adhere to the same rules that the average Albertan has to follow with regard to debt. For example, I wonder if there's an Albertan in these terrible financial times in the private sector who is in financial difficulty that has been given the freedom to just change the rules when they're not able to follow through with their financial responsibilities. No; they renegotiate instead of going into bankruptcy. This is one option that they have given the severe circumstances. If they can't pay their loans, are they given a break or told that they can walk away?

The government consistently brings up the \$15 per hour minimum wage and how that will help Albertans and that it's about integrity and that small businesses need to dig in and find a way to pay that minimum wage, not realizing that the cost of doing business will always fall on all consumers no matter what they're earning. The government talks about minimum wage and speaks about hard-working Albertans yet is willing to pull the rug out from under Albertans when it comes to the government's own

accountability and Albertans' tax dollars. There are consequences for not paying your loans for regular, everyday Albertans, and in this particular part of our lives right now, where we're at, for some people that is going to mean potentially losing their houses, their cars, and their businesses. We're talking about people putting food on their tables and all these other things that we talk about, yet the government is willing to not take the same consequences in their own house that they expect everybody else in their houses to incur.

The well-being of Albertans is tied to the value of their input into the world. We are creators and innovators, oil men, artists, parents, among many other descriptions, and we expect the government to lead by example. We expect them to impose the consequences on themselves, to hold themselves accountable to the Albertans that they represent, yet this government seems to be content to see Albertans struggle as we lose jobs and along with those jobs our dignity as well. There is no minimum wage in the world that can help that scenario.

The government is changing its own laws. Is that change going to be available to anybody who is in difficulty? I'm just curious because if we're going to lead by example, that means that what we are doing here should also be allowed out in the real world.

Just to give an example, we've talked a great deal about how much extra per man, woman, and child we are paying out in this government, which is \$2,000-plus per man, woman, and child. I mean, without going into extreme detail, that's about \$8 billion. To me, that's the deficit right there. How is it that we can have that much more per man, woman, and child and still be going into a deficit? I don't understand how those numbers add up.

Along with that you're changing the laws without a thought to what that means to the future of the province, and that is our children, all of our grandchildren, and the future of this province. With the increased debt ceiling you can borrow more, but you're increasing your interest. Understand that this is what you're imposing on Albertans. This actually is not about us at all; it's about Albertans and Alberta tax dollars. You can blame past governments all you want. You can keep pointing fingers. You can keep justifying, but the break of the debt ceiling at this point falls on your shoulders, and by 2018-2019, when people understand what that means and what that looks like, that will fall squarely on your shoulders and will be the legacy of this government.

**4:10**

I realize that there is a humongous amount of good intention, and nobody's taking away from that good intention, but understand that there's no amount of good intention that is going to take away that debt. Absolutely nothing. That will be your legacy. There have been many people in this House on this side that have tried to explain what that's going to look like and what that means for you and to try to help with that situation.

The \$2 billion in debt repayment, as you understand by now, I'm sure, isn't even the principal. If you think that you have it bad now, imagine what you're leaving for future governments when they have to take on the debt that you've incurred. I'll bring this up again. Your legacy will not be all of the good things that you've tried to accomplish. It will be what you leave for the future. It will be in the fact that the programs and things that you have promised to people you will not be able to follow through on.

I cannot support this bill at this point. Thank you so much for letting me speak.

**The Chair:** Any further speakers to amendment A2? Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was just reading this over, that

no member of the Executive Council shall receive any salary prescribed under that section until a subsequent report made pursuant to section 6(1) indicates Crown debt will be 15% of GDP for Alberta or less.

We're talking about a legacy. You know, this is what you're leaving, but there are consequences for your actions, and the consequence for the actions in this case is not being rewarded for having a crummy performance, having a poor performance.

Madam Chair, this is really what this is about. We need to make sure that when people are doing things in government, they have accountability. If you look at local governance, in my town they can't run deficits. They have to stay within a budget, and they have to work towards that. The towns take it very seriously, and I think the government needs to as well, and if they're not able to stay within that budget, there needs to be a consequence. The consequence is that they don't receive that stipend, that extra monies for this.

This legacy that the last member talked about: is that what the government really wants to have as a legacy, a legacy of having a debt of something close to \$60 billion, a legacy where we're paying \$2 billion just to service that debt? Two billion dollars can go so far. You can buy so much with that amount of money, and that takes away so many jobs that could have been hired. If you took jobs that were paid at \$70,000 a job and you divide that by \$2 billion, you're looking at over 28,000 jobs that could be hired with that \$2 billion. That's the number it comes out to.

Two billion dollars in debt repayment is what they're at right now, but what happens if oil stays low? They've projected oil to go up, but what happens if the oil prices don't go up to where they want? Now all of the sudden we have a debt that's \$3 billion; \$3 billion is a huge amount of money as opposed to \$2 billion.

I wanted to make a comment for the Member for Calgary-Currie. The Member for Calgary-Currie said that they had budgeted for a modest 2 per cent increase in the budget. Ten billion dollars is not a modest 2 per cent increase in the budget; 2 per cent of that would be somewhere a little less than a billion dollars. So 2 per cent is nowhere near that price. We're talking about something that's 10 times over that modest 2 per cent he talked about. We're talking about numbers that are far more substantial than what the government is trying to portray themselves as having said to have done.

You know, up to this time this bill, to me, ranks as probably the worst, the most dangerous bill that we've got out there, that Alberta's ever seen, period. We're talking about taking the debt ceiling and just removing it. They had 15 per cent, which was a very high debt ceiling, because that allowed them to have around \$48 billion, but now we're looking at something with the debt ceiling being removed. That's so dangerous. Where are we going to be in 10 years' time? If a future government chooses to go down the same path that this government has, what is to stop this government from staying at the \$57 billion, \$58 billion that they're projecting they're going to be at? There seems to be nothing in there to stop that. Does this government have any intention to pay this money back? I don't see anywhere that they have any intention ever. If the government did, you would see a balanced budget, but nowhere in there is there a balanced budget.

You know, in visiting constituents in my beautiful riding of Battle River-Wainwright, I had a lot of conversations, and as we were going through the time when we were talking to them, just as we were going for the election, we talked about the debt and we talked about deficits, and at that point in time the projected number was going to be around \$12 billion. They thought that was crazy.

Well, we're now at a place where we're looking at something close to \$60 billion. That's absolutely ludicrous. What contingency plan does this government have if oil, like I say, does not go to the price that they projected? How much will we be in debt? Will the government please give us an answer on that one?

My next question is: why is oil tied so closely with this NDP government? Why do you tie your budget so close to oil? They want to diversify it, but they still tie their budget closely to oil, so I'm not quite sure. I keep hearing from the members across that they want to diversify into tourism. Why isn't it tied into tourism as opposed to oil? Is tourism your shiny pony? I don't know.

I have a lot of issues with this, and again we need accountability. There's no accountability in this budget, so I can't support this budget as it's going.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A2? Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't think it's unreasonable to ask the Executive Council to accept some responsibility in this matter. It's simply a performance measure. We ask for it in budget estimates. It's in the business plan in each separate portfolio. In the private sector with any major projects, basically, a lot of the time 50 per cent of your wages is based on a performance bonus. A lot of the banks do the same thing. You know, that being said, I would suggest that a lot of members present might actually be in agreement to give a bonus to the Executive Council if they were to shave a couple of points off the 15 per cent because it would be a benefit to all Albertans if we were to do so.

With that, on amendment A2 I will be voting in favour, and I believe most of my colleagues will as well. I would ask the members opposite to really consider putting some kind of a ceiling on borrowing in this province and on this debt, especially as during these lean times it's very important, and to give some incentive to the Executive Council to try and stick to those numbers that they have put forward. We have to remember that this 15 per cent was voted on unanimously by the other side, to have a debt ceiling of 15 per cent. We're now being asked to exceed this, with no further ceiling to it.

I would ask everyone to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you.

4:20

**The Chair:** Any other members to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to speak in support of the amendment. I think it's an important amendment. I think it raises some good points. The reality is that government raises taxes on the backs of the people or, as some famous others have said in the past, at the barrel of a gun. That's the only way government raises taxes.

Recently I was doing some reading and thinking back on the period between 1780 and 1820. It's the period of the Industrial Revolution. It's the time of the making of the English working class. It's the time of the rise of nascent unions, the time of guild social programs as they first began to be discovered. Part of the challenge of that era, part of the thing that drove the people to those necessities was, in fact, the burden of excessive taxes by the British government upon them, partly as a result of the wars they'd been fighting with France and for other reasons. The taxes were extreme, they were excessive, they were heavy, and the people themselves were forced into all of these kinds of social groupings and social responses because of the excessive burden of taxes.

I find it extremely ironic that we should now have a government that claims that it wants to be the social conscience of the nation turning around and, in fact, doing exactly the things that the British government did then, piling the burden of taxes upon people. They claim a social licence. Is it a licence to tax, to appropriate the wealth of the people and to leave them poorer? In every nation in the world where taxes are excessive, the people become poorer and impoverished and left with very little. Here we have a government that states in its own fiscal plan that now its greatest source of funding is actually the taxing of the people, riding on the backs of the people.

If this government really cared for the people, they would choose to be accountable to the people. They would put limits upon themselves. They would put their money where their mouth is. The reality is that I think they want their salary on the backs of the people, so they're willing to increase taxes to make taxes the single largest source of revenue. If they really believe in equality for the people, they would remember the lessons from 1780 to 1820 and make sure that they weren't raising taxes on the people and forcing all kinds of suffering and pain upon them.

Every single member across the way here voted for a 15 per cent limit on debt to GDP just a while ago. Now they have the crass freedom to just turn around and say: oh, we don't care about that anymore. How quickly power corrupts, and they claim absolute power, and it corrupts absolutely. They don't have the social licence to tax and appropriate the wealth of the people, and therefore I am going to vote in favour of this amendment. I think it's only reasonable that they should as well, and I think the people of Alberta are going to see it the same way come the next election.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment? Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. I rose earlier in the House and was cut off by time . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Aw. Too bad.

**Mr. Smith:** That felt good to you, did it? There are a few students in my social studies class that would have liked to have had the bell ring a little earlier in some of my classes, too, I'm sure.

I wanted to rise just to finish off a couple of points here. We were talking about being responsible and having responsibility. I guess we have to ask the question, Madam Chair, as we speak to this amendment: why do we have a debt ceiling? Why even bother putting it on? Governments usually place a debt ceiling on themselves to try to bring some limit to their spending, to limit the debt that they're willing to accrue, to start to control their spending. I mean, that's the purpose of a debt ceiling, and it's the reason why you set up a debt-to-GDP ratio. That's why, I would hazard a guess, from what we heard earlier in the year, I would imagine, the NDP government placed a 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio on itself. It's why breaking that debt-to-GDP ratio so soon after it was set is so very disturbing. The reasons, the rationale that you gave for it, that you were willing to go into debt but that you weren't willing to exceed a certain level of debt, are disturbing when you see it broken so quickly.

I guess it's why, Madam Chair, this amendment is necessary. The 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio was an attempt at accountability. It was supported by the NDP, so we would suggest that perhaps the NDP would be willing to support this other accountability measure, that would hold the executive to account for how it spends the taxpayers' money.

You know, the United States is a good example of a country that we could learn from when it comes to this. There are times when a growing debt-to-GDP ratio might be acceptable. For instance, I use the example of former President Harry Truman. In his leadership he said, "The buck stops here," that the accountability stops with the President. It was also under his leadership that the United States achieved its highest debt-to-GDP ratio in the history of the United States of America. Now, why? Well, the United States was involved in perhaps, some would argue, the most cataclysmic war the world has ever faced, fighting the greatest evil that this world perhaps has ever faced. In attempting to confront that evil and in attempting to defend democracy, they were willing to go into and achieve significant amounts of debt, but always there was an understanding that that debt would have to be paid off.

Indeed, if we take a look at the history of the United States, it was soon after World War II that the public debt in the United States began to fall. It reached a low under the presidency of Richard Nixon in the 1970s. So if you're going to set a debt-to-GDP ratio and if you're going to accumulate debt, you need to have accountability. You need to have the ability as a government to be able to pull back from that debt and to lower that debt-to-GDP ratio.

Now, since the 1970s we've seen the United States again begin to accumulate debt, and we've seen the growth of that debt-to-GDP ratio. Indeed, since the year 2000 the debt ceiling in the United States has been raised more than 12 times, which is an indicator of a government that, I would argue, is out of control. Its spending is out of control. Indeed, the debt in the United States continues to rise, and today it stands somewhere around \$18.8 trillion. Each time the government needs to borrow more money to perform the functions that they choose to spend that money on, it raises the debt-to-GDP ratio. It continues to borrow, and when it hits that ceiling, it simply raises the ceiling. It's become pretty obvious that they have an addiction to spending and to borrowing and to not knowing how they're going to pay it off.

Governments may borrow in times of war. They may borrow in times of recession. They may borrow when they want to spend but not raise taxes. All of those at times perhaps could be reasonable reasons for borrowing and raising the debt ceiling. However, always, if you're going to do that, the precondition is that you have to have some plan for being able to know how you're going to pay that off, how you're going to pay back that money that you've borrowed, and that is the sign of being a responsible government. I guess that's what we're asking from this government today. What is going to be the sign that you're going to give us that you're accountable for the decisions that you're making? I guess that's perhaps the most dangerous issue that we face and why this amendment, Madam Chair, is actually so very, very necessary.

4:30

This government, this executive, if it wants the responsibility of governing Alberta, must also be willing to be held accountable for its decisions. If setting a debt-to-GDP ratio is unable to hold the government responsible and accountable for its spending and if it's not going to ensure that it comes out with budgets that are fiscally responsible, then we have to look at other ways of trying to make sure that this government is accountable, that the buck actually stops with them and that they are accountable for the decisions that they're making with regard to the public purse.

My argument would be that this amendment actually speaks to that system of accountability, speaks to that idea of responsibility, speaks to that issue of stewardship of the finances that we have given to us by the taxpayers of Alberta. Therefore, I would argue that these ministers, who are responsible for government policy, should pay attention to the fiscal realities that we all face. If they

can't, then this amendment would hold them responsible at least in some form of a monetary fashion.

So I would speak in favour of this amendment. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for recognizing me and allowing me the opportunity to participate in the debate on this amendment. I will say from the outset that I rise in opposition to the amendment, and the reason for that is fairly straightforward. It relates back to some of the discussion that we had back when we were debating Bill 201, and that is that I have a fundamental disagreement with members of government, Executive Council or otherwise, being able to make decisions that will directly influence their salary or their remuneration.

I think there is a fundamental flaw with this amendment in that decisions could be made by Executive Council for reasons other than the greater good of the province. Those decisions could be made to benefit themselves financially in one way or the other. While it is popular, perhaps, in some circles to suggest that checks and balances are put in place by having members of Executive Council, members of cabinet, forfeit a portion of their salary if they don't meet certain objectives, certain targets, this is the same sort of short-sighted, lurching kind of incentivization of behaviour that has landed many, many of the corporate CEOs into so much difficulty, not so much the CEOs but indeed the organizations for whom they are responsible.

You know, we can think, really, of the Executive Council, our cabinet, as being the board of directors of this government. As such, they are charged with the greater good of the entire province from a larger, from a writ large standpoint. They should not be making decisions based on whether it's good for their personal financial bottom line or not. They have a much larger responsibility. Those decisions should be made with great clarity as to the responsibility they hold on a larger scope, not on a scope that is confined to the benefits of their own financial well-being. So I have a great deal of difficulty when certain performance measures are tied to that.

It's been demonstrated in the corporate world, for example, with many CEOs being forced now with the pay-on-performance or the pay-at-risk model that was discussed a little bit earlier in the debate, that many CEOs in fact paid so much attention to the next quarterly result and the next quarterly result that they could do a lot of things to manipulate those quarterly results to pretty up the numbers so that they could maximize their own pay-at-risk bonuses. That has resulted in a major, major destruction of the corporate culture of some of North America's at one time best performing companies. You know, the failure to look at the long-term good, the failure to consider in a greater context the benefits to the organization as a whole because of those decisions, I think, is something that we have to guard against in every way possible.

Now, I want to be very clear. I do not support in any way, shape, or form elimination of the 15 per cent debt ceiling. I do not. It's a mistake. It is troubling to me that five short months after we were told that the 15 per cent debt ceiling was miles beyond what we would ever require, we are now in fact being told that it is very likely that in the third year of this government's mandate they will exceed 15 per cent. You know, I am very concerned that that is the direction we are headed, and I am very concerned with the amount of debt that this government is prepared to take on. It is a mistake. It is a significant financial and fiscal mistake.

But to try to eliminate that behaviour by making it tied to personal remuneration, to me, is a bigger mistake. It's interesting that it comes from members of the Official Opposition, who, you know,



in the last Legislature spoke out against pay at risk or any kind of executive bonuses for anyone in the senior civil service of government. In fact, bonuses to senior government managers were eliminated.

The other areas that, you know, they were dead set against were any sort of pay-at-risk schemes in any way, shape, or form in government in general. So it seems odd that they would favour it in this particular circumstance but not favour it in the others. I mean, you can't have it both ways. You can't say that pay at risk is good in one area and pay at risk is not good in other areas. In this particular situation to suggest that the additional stipend that is payable to Executive Council should somehow be forfeited on this specific and, granted, very important measurement, to me, does not make sense. It is not good policy.

One wonders if the next thing we're going to see is some other performance measure that's going to be introduced. Pretty soon we'll have, maybe, five or 10 or 15 different performance measures for members of cabinet, that if they check those six boxes, they get X number of dollars, and if they don't check those six boxes or eight boxes or 10 boxes – you know, that's not the way these things work. To me, the suggestion that personal salary, personal remuneration can be influenced by decisions that are made is something that is fundamentally wrong and should be fundamentally rejected.

I will therefore be voting against this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster for his comments. There are certainly a few peculiar historical oversights in the comments. The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster spoke about the opposition of certain former members of the Wildrose caucus to the concept of pay at risk. I would remind the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster that they're all members of his party right now, that certainly the members he's referring to do not represent the Wildrose and never will again.

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has talked about corporate CEOs who might want to manipulate quarterly results to make themselves look good. I would remind him of former Minister of Finance Doug Horner, who every single quarter that he was Finance minister manipulated the government's quarterly results to make it look like they were running a surplus.

Now, I remember. I stood in this building downstairs, just outside the press theatre, when the former Minister of Finance introduced, I think, the first or the second quarterly update. It was in September 2012, and it was a brochure. They provided no details whatsoever on the government's financial position. They didn't provide a balance sheet. They didn't provide a breakdown of expenditures. They didn't provide a breakdown of revenues. The government manipulated its quarterly results to make itself look good so that they wouldn't have to report a deficit to Albertans. So while I'm sure you can find examples in the private sector of a CEO or some kind of business executive who might manipulate a quarterly result to make themselves look good because of performance at risk, there are abundant examples from right here in recent history in Alberta where politicians without pay at risk have done the exact same thing.

4:40

Now, I do believe that performance pay or pay at risk is actually a positive model. This has been used in other jurisdictions to incentivize efficiencies. There is a huge incentive within government to build your kingdom, to empire build. Bureaucrats

right now have an incentive to have more employees working for them, to have a bigger budget. It's quite the opposite of the private sector, where if you own a business, you have an incentive to maximize profit and minimize costs, that your costs will be justified and result in a maximum possible output of profit. In the public sector, by contrast, both ministers and bureaucrats have a built-in incentive to have a bigger empire, to have more people working for them, to have a bigger budget.

There is no incentive whatsoever right now in government to cut costs except, I might say, within our agencies, boards, and commissions. Under the model that exists currently within many of our agencies, boards, and commissions, supported by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, there is a huge incentive for many of them to meet certain criteria. It's pay at risk, that they are provided with a certain salary that is maxed out if they meet their objectives and is minimized if they do not meet their objectives. We already have pay at risk outside of the core GOA in this province within our agencies, boards, and commissions. We already have pay at risk, and I certainly cannot recall – you can correct me if I'm wrong – a single instance of the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster standing up before the election last year and condemning pay at risk while he was in government.

This is something that we've had for a very long time in Alberta. We can quibble about the right examples and the wrong examples. There are definitely examples in this province where we've had pay at risk that has not been deserved, where people have essentially gotten these bonuses or the maximum salary allottable when they've not been meeting proper goals. For example, Alberta Health Services executives were being given a significant pay-at-risk bonus while wait times were going up, while the cost of health care was going up at the same time as wait times were going up. Clearly, they're not doing their job when that's actually happening. That is a very good example – or I should say that it's a bad example of how pay at risk should be done. But when you have proper accountability measures in place, it is an important way to incentivize good behaviour.

Now, we do this in British Columbia. In British Columbia ministers of the Crown take a pay cut if they're not balancing the budget. Now, it shouldn't surprise a lot of people that British Columbia, when a lot of provinces went into deficit, ran smaller deficits and for a shorter period of time than other provinces. Right now there is no incentive whatsoever for many politicians to act responsibly. In fact, there is an incentive right now to act irresponsibly. There is an incentive to merely borrow and expect a future government to deal with the problem at a later time and enjoy the glory that comes with being able to cut cheques to everybody and buy off the electorate. We already have incentives built into this system, and right now the incentives are to borrow and buy people off with their own money.

Frédéric Bastiat said that government is the great illusion whereby everybody tries to live at everybody else's expense. That incentive is always going to be there regardless of who is in power, but we would expect that people would as much as possible attempt to minimize that temptation within power, within government, to simply play the game, to live at everybody else's expense.

We have already built in negative incentives, and I believe it is a positive move to try and right these incentives that we provide. Instead of an incentive to borrow and to spend money without any consequence, the instant gratification of financial incentives in this province right now, I think we should change the incentive structure so that politicians have an incentive to take a larger view of things.

If we can't trust the government to do what's right for Alberta, perhaps we have a better chance of trusting them to do what's right when it actually hits them in their own pocketbooks. Right now it's

hitting Albertans in their pocketbooks. Albertans are paying the cost of what they're doing. Albertans are getting hosed by this government's actions. The more they borrow, the more they have to tax. The more they tax, the more they hurt the economy and the more they borrow to justify their corporate welfare plans. It is hurting Albertans.

It actually costs Albertans money, what this government is doing, so I believe that we should change the current incentive structure to incentivize good behaviour from governments. I think that if you cannot balance the budget in this province, if you cannot keep your debt to GDP under 15 per cent when we used to be paid in full and with money in the bank, then you're not doing your job. If you're not doing your job, you shouldn't get a bonus for it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A2?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:45 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rodney
Ellis	McIver	Stier
Fildebrandt	Orr	Taylor
Gill		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Carlier	Gray	Piquette
Carson	Hinkley	Rosendahl
Ceci	Horne	Sabir
Clark	Kazim	Schmidt
Connolly	Kleinsteinuber	Schreiner
Coolahan	Littlewood	Sigurdson
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Starke
Dach	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Eggen	McLean	Turner
Feehan	Miller	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Woollard
Ganley		

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 40
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment that I'd like to put forward with your permission, of course. I'll speak to it when you say that I can if that's okay.

**The Chair:** Just give me a moment to get the original.

Go ahead, hon. member. This will be amendment A3.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. I move that Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 5 by striking out subsection (2) and substituting the following:

(2) Section 3(2)(a) is amended by repealing subclause (i).

What that is intended to do, Madam Chair, is to make it more difficult for the government to borrow for operating. The previous amendment that I moved was to keep the debt cap on, and while this isn't nearly as good as the first one, I think this still improves the bill. It just doesn't improve it as much as what I had previously asked for. It's intended, as I say, to make it harder to borrow for operating expenditures.

I hope members of the House see the wisdom in supporting this. I will sit and listen to the debate.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to support this amendment. As I've said in this House many times, I think that when done properly, borrowing for capital expenditures is appropriate. It allows us to build infrastructure, to catch up on that badly needed infrastructure build in this province, but it also leaves us with an asset at the end of the day and, of course, creates jobs along the way.

When 100,000 or more Albertans are out of work, I think it is appropriate to borrow for capital expenditure, but I do think that putting a floor on that borrowing or, I suppose, a ceiling is important. If this government is not going to stick with its 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ceiling, which was its previous plan – I thought that was, although perhaps a little high, at least something – I think we should have a ceiling in place where operational borrowing is not acceptable. That will require the government to live within its means and to make some of those challenging and difficult choices that not only governments but Albertans have to make. Albertan businesses, Albertan households have had to make some very difficult choices in the last number of months, more than a year in many cases, as our economy has taken a very sharp downturn.

While I think it is appropriate to borrow for capital to create jobs and to build infrastructure and to leave us an asset at the end of the day, I do think that it is absolutely appropriate to bar any borrowing for operations, which is why I will support this amendment and encourage other members of the House to do the same.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise in support of the amendment put forward by the Member for Calgary-Hays and leader of the third party. I think I would agree with the sentiment from the leader of the third party that this amendment would still leave the legislation worse off than we currently are, because the legislation proposes to remove the cap of 15 per cent debt to GDP, but it would make the legislation less odious, less bad by banning operational deficits.

You know, there are two kinds of deficits here. There are capital deficits and operational deficits. It's important to acknowledge that both are deficits. One is worse than the other; however, both at the end of the day will lead to an unsustainable level of debt if not managed properly. Operational debt is borrowing for the groceries, to keep the lights on. There's no justification for it whatsoever outside of major wars and extreme, extreme disasters. There is no circumstance right now that would justify an operational deficit.

We have squandered the sustainability fund, a rainy-day fund in this province. We've taken on billions of dollars of debt. We've been running operational deficits, actually, most years for the last nine years as well. The difference has been that we were drawing down the sustainability fund, renamed the contingency account, to fund operational deficits as opposed to borrowing for them. That's

really the big distinction here. One is worse than the other. Borrowing for operations is worse than drawing down your savings for operations. However, both are generally ill advised when the economy is humming.

We were drawing down the sustainability fund for the operations of the government even when oil was \$100 a barrel, so we've got a very systemic and well-entrenched problem with our fiscal framework in this province right now. We can certainly disagree about whether that is a spending problem or a revenue problem. The Official Opposition has a very clear position on that, and I know that the government has a clear position about where they stand, that they think they need more money no matter what whereas this side of the House generally agrees that we should get our expenditures under control.

Borrowing in general has to be very well thought out before you do it. You know, some folks like to compare borrowing for capital to a mortgage, but they're not the same because when you take on a mortgage, Madam Chair, you purchase an asset that you can liquidate, that you can get money back for at the end of the day, and you pay down the liability on that asset. When you buy a house – let's say that it's \$400,000 – you own that, and you can sell it at any time to create liquid financial assets. You pay it down every year. You don't refinance your mortgage every single year so that your mortgage grows every year. Responsible people normally want to pay down their mortgages in most circumstances.

5:10

By contrast, the vast majority of government assets cannot be liquidated as a financial asset. They're not like the sustainability fund's investments, especially the heritage fund investments. They can be liquidated if necessary. Those are legitimate financial assets.

By contrast, if we build a fire station, you might need a fire station for a community, but if we sold that fire station, we'd probably not get back anywhere close to the value or the cost that it took to purchase the land, build it, and fill it full of the equipment that's necessary. If the government bought a fire truck, they would indeed have an asset, but as fun as it might be for one of us to privately own a fire truck, most of us . . .

**Mr. Nixon:** I own one.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre says that he actually owns a fire truck. If you know him, that's actually plausible. Most of us would not find any reasonable use for a privately owned fire truck, although some people on farms do pick them up second-hand.

You know, when you have a government asset, the vast majority of government-owned assets cannot be liquidated into cash anywhere close to the value that the government books them at. The government books the value of these assets at the cost it took the government to purchase them. Let's take, for example, a fire station. The government has to purchase a piece of land, it has to pay to have the building designed, it has to pay to have it built, and it has to pay to have it filled with the various pieces of equipment, the furnishings required. And the government books the value of that at what it cost to purchase it. However, if the government tried to sell that fire station the very day after they built it, they would probably get nowhere close to the actual value of it because private citizens don't have a use for that kind of government asset.

By contract, in the private sector when companies purchase capital assets to help them make money, that asset actually earns a cash return.

Government assets are absolutely necessary. No one is saying that the physical government asset is not necessary. I mean, we

might need that fire station, but that fire station is not the same as a capital asset in the private sector, that actually earns a cash return.

The government likes to classify everything as an investment as if it was an equivalent investment in the private sector. But in the private sector you might buy a building to have a store, and that store will earn you a cash return. The government will purchase a piece of property, but it doesn't earn a cash return in the vast majority of circumstances. A toll road would be an exception to that, but we can book that as a private-public partnership. You know, those are examples of government assets that can earn a cash return, but they are few and far between and constitute an extremely small minority of the liabilities on the government's balance sheet right now.

The vast majority of the liabilities on the government's balance sheet are direct borrowing, and they are for assets that do not earn cash returns back as a private-sector investment would, and they are liabilities that cannot be liquidated at a cash value equivalent to what the government actually books the value at.

Borrowing for capital assets might be appropriate in cases where it earns a cash return back, or it might be that you could consider it appropriate, at least justifiable, if they were booking it at the actual value that it could be liquidated at if they put it on the open market. If they tried to sell that government asset on the open market, what could it actually be sold for? Governments do not account right now for what that asset could actually be sold for. As a result, it provides a misleading view to many people about the health of our balance sheets, which are already unhealthy but are significantly less healthy if you look at the actual cash value of these assets.

You know, we can have this debate about the appropriateness of borrowing for capital assets or how that should be done. I think that's more where the crux of the argument really goes: how should we account for the borrowing for capital assets, and what is an appropriate capital asset to borrow for? There will be a range of views here, but I think that, at the very least, we can agree that borrowing for the operations of government has got no excuse. Unless we are faced with a major war or extreme disaster, that completely debilitates the government, there is no reason to borrow for the operations of the government. That is like putting your groceries on the credit card when you've already maxed out your line of credit. At that point it's time to cut expenditures.

If you can't balance at least the operational expenditures of the government, you've got no business calling yourself a responsible government, Madam Chair. That's why I'm pleased to support the amendment put forward by the leader of the third party.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. I won't be supporting this amendment. I do believe it's necessary. It's, obviously, in our fiscal plan. Borrowing for the fiscal plan is necessary at this time. It's a requirement to continue to act as a shock absorber in terms of the provision of programs and services to Albertans that they require.

To not borrow for the fiscal plan at this time would mean to cut billions of dollars from the budget. Potentially, you could find those savings by eliminating one of the more significant ministries, perhaps, like Education. Then \$5 billion or so would be cut out of the budget, and you could save the borrowing for this fiscal year – you wouldn't have to borrow for this fiscal year – by about that much. But obviously you can't do that. To continue the programs and services, to continue to provide the same high-quality level of programs and services to Albertans at this time, the necessary borrowing is in place to make that happen.

That won't always be the case. The plan we have, that's identified in the Alberta jobs plan, is to invest across the economy through capital infrastructure development and to put Albertans back to work.

The second part of the plan is to ensure that diversification takes place across the economy so that there's less reliance on the unstable platform of revenues that oil and gas has given us in this downturn.

Lastly, the third part of the plan is to ensure that the programs and services we all rely on, we all attend to, we all believe give us the advantage over other provinces in this country stay whole and strong.

That's what this direct borrowing for the fiscal plan does. It's a situation that has repeated in many provinces. A significant number of provinces borrow to supplement their fiscal plans. We haven't done that in the recent past, but we are doing it at this time. It's not something we will rely on forever, but it is something that we believe is necessary so that Albertans can rely on their government and the services it provides.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Madam Chair, I just have a quick question for the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance has said that they won't borrow forever. I'm wondering if he can give a specific date in which he intends to balance the budget by, then.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, we'll call the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:19 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Starke
Clark	Nixon	Stier
Ellis	Orr	Taylor
Fildebrandt	Rodney	van Dijken
Hanson	Schneider	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Bilous	Gray	Piquette
Carson	Hinkley	Rosendahl
Ceci	Horne	Sabir
Connolly	Kazim	Schreiner
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Sigurdson
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Sucha
Dach	Luff	Sweet
Drever	Malkinson	Turner
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Feehan	McLean	Woollard
Fitzpatrick	Miller	

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Chair:** Back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment to put forward if the pages would come collect it.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A4.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 10, Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 5 by striking out subsection (2) and substituting the following:

(2) Section 3(1) is amended by striking out "15%" and substituting "18%".

Now, off the top, let me state very clearly that the Official Opposition does not support an 18 per cent debt ceiling, nor does the Official Opposition support a 15 per cent debt ceiling. The Official Opposition believes that we should be paid in full again, and after the next election it is my intention that we will put Alberta back on a course to make us paid in full once more, Madam Chair. But in the meantime it is our job to as much as possible ensure that this government does as little damage as possible.

Now, just five months ago, four and a half from when they introduced the bill, this government brought forward a bill that limited the borrowing in this province to 15 per cent of GDP. I remember very distinctly the Minister of Finance standing here and stating emphatically that they would never exceed 15 per cent of debt to GDP. So far his arguments as to why they will exceed 15 per cent of debt to GDP have been laughable, Madam Chair.

We were very clear. When we looked at their numbers from the fall budget, it was very clear that their revenue projections were bunk. It was very clear that their spending projections would take them to borrow enough money to exceed 15 per cent of debt to GDP in relatively short order, and they said: absolutely not; there's no way that this will happen.

The minister has not yet taken the time to stand up and admit that he was wrong. All he has stood up and said is to make his baseless accusations about the Official Opposition, which ran on no new taxes, having some secret agenda to impose a PST, when there is only one party in this Legislature that stands for a PST, and they introduced it today in the form of Bill 20, Madam Chair. There is only one party here that wants to put a tax on everything and everyone, and that is the government side of this Legislature.

Now, we were very clear that this government's borrowing plan would exceed 15 per cent of debt to GDP, but the minister was crystal clear that under no circumstances will they exceed 15 per cent of debt to GDP. I understand why he's embarrassed. He stood here. He's in *Hansard*. I've read the *Hansard*, and he is quite emphatic that we will never exceed 15 per cent of debt to GDP and that to do so would be irresponsible. But the minister is responsible. He is responsible, so he wouldn't do something like that. He wouldn't do something like that because to exceed 15 per cent of debt to GDP would be embarrassing.

I understand why he would be perhaps even more embarrassed to just raise the debt ceiling, to keep some limit on the debt, however meaningless it might be because the government can change it in legislation. I understand why they would be embarrassed to just raise the debt ceiling, which is why they decided just to get rid of it.

Now, let's quickly recap. In the early to mid-1990s the Klein government passed a law to ban deficits in the province, and once the entire debt was paid off, they passed laws to ban government debt in this province. Now, there were minor changes after that during the Stelmach government, which were actually quite reasonable, to allow for limited public-private partnerships and borrowing for capital assets as long as they were valued correctly and they could actually be liquidated as assets. These were very

reasonable, modest changes. In hindsight, they may have been the thin edge of the wedge, but they were quite reasonable, and there'd be no reason for us to oppose that.

But after that came the total repeal of the Government Accountability Act and the fiscal transparency act. That happened in early 2013, and that opened the door massively to borrowing on the capital side and to allowing government to value its capital assets in a manner not consistent with how it's done in the private sector, that you would be able to value capital assets as though they could be liquidated at that value. I've spoken to that during the last amendment, so I won't belabour the point, but it certainly opened up the door very significantly to borrowing. But operational debt was banned. Operational deficit was allowed as long as it was drawing down the sustainability fund, which was renamed the contingency account. That was really when the floodgates were opened up.

This government, when they were campaigning in the last election, swore up and down Alberta from High Level to Coutts – they promised everybody – that they would never borrow for operations. They promised everybody that they would balance the budget by 2019. They promised everybody that they would eventually get back to balance, just one year later than the Official Opposition and third party were promising to do, but they would get back to balance. They promised they would never ever – ever – borrow for operations. They promised it in every corner of this province.

Then as soon as they got into power, they threw open the floodgates even further. They brought in a bill to allow for operational borrowing. Now the government could borrow for both capital and operations and run massive consolidated deficits, that would exceed \$9 billion in their last budget and \$14 billion on a consolidated basis in this budget. But in that last budget, where they allowed for capital borrowing for operations, they said: don't worry, guys; we're good for the money, and we will never exceed 15 per cent of debt to GDP; that is our new debt ceiling. That, I think, is the third or fourth debt ceiling that's been raised in this province in the last decade. Well, just five months later they are here to repeal their own debt ceiling.

5:30

Now, it would have still been an irresponsible thing to do, but a less irresponsible action would have been for them to increase their debt ceiling. We would have certainly opposed that. I believe that 15 per cent is already far too high a debt ceiling, and I believe that 18 per cent is also far too high, but like we voted for in the last motion, which would outlaw operational borrowing even though we believe the government needs to balance its budget overall, this amendment is seeking to make the legislation less bad. We are trying to minimize the damage that the NDP are doing to Alberta.

They've made a determination that their electoral coalition doesn't care about borrowing and that their electoral coalition will be more happy with all that borrowed money being thrown at them to buy them off. Now, that's how they're going to try and get re-elected. I think that's shameful, Madam Chair, to take such a short-sighted view, to depend on the instant gratification that comes with borrowed money. We'd all love to borrow money and spend it right away; that feels good. We all love to have money and spend it in Vegas, but the responsible thing to do is to work hard and save and control your expenditures, make smart investments, and not gamble other people's money away willy-nilly.

So 18 per cent of debt to GDP is, I believe, far too high, but we're giving the government an escape clause here, because 18 per cent of debt to GDP they will not exceed before the next election. Even if they don't meet their current revenue projections, they'll

probably hit 16 per cent or 16 and a half per cent. I would personally be surprised if they exceeded 18 per cent of debt to GDP before the next election. What we're doing here is that we are offering the government an escape clause, a get out of jail – well, not quite free – card. It's a very expensive card, but it will allow them to get out of jail here. You know what? It will do more to help the credit rating of this province than the Minister of Finance meeting with our creditors again, certainly. What we're doing here is that we're proposing to make the legislation less bad.

I ask that all members of this House consider voting for this as a small, small token of credibility to our creditors in this province, that we can at least try to prevent yet another credit downgrade. I don't believe that voting for this is going to restore our credit rating. Only one thing will restore our credit rating, and that is getting back to a balanced budget, but we can at least try to take some small, small steps like passing this amendment, which may reduce the likelihood of another credit downgrade. I ask that all members of this House support the amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm sure it will come as no surprise to anybody in this House that I cannot support the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks' amendment here. To be completely honest, I'm a bit concerned about the Official Opposition stance. It was just six months ago that they were proposing 7 per cent, and then they were fighting so hard to keep it at 15, and now they're saying 18. They seem to be little more than shots in the dark as we continue forward.

Even more concerning about this is the fact that they themselves cannot propose any numbers on what they would do if they were on this side of the House. As an Albertan I am quite concerned about that.

Further, I have nothing but confidence that this government will continue with the 15.5 per cent that we are proposing in the next three years according to our fiscal plan. I am proud that we are continuing to invest in our infrastructure, to protect our front-line services, that Albertans depend on, those services that the Official Opposition will not provide numbers on as to how it will impact them.

Thank you.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Oh, the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert has sure asked for it here, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, you know, as I think we've discussed today, I like to have a few friendly bets. I've made two bets with members of the government side so far. One was with the Member for Calgary-Currie. I bet him that the government would miss its revenue projections, and three days after he signed the written agreement of the bet, he had to pony up a hundred bucks. The other wager I made was with the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert, who's actually sitting very close to the Member for Calgary-Currie right now. He made an even less wise bet when he bet that Spruce Grove's team would beat the Brooks Bandits, and of course we know how that went. So far we've got a pretty good track record of betting members on the government side.

Now, he said that this is a shot in the dark. He said that this is a shot in the dark. [interjections] Jeez. We hear a lot from the crying side over there.

Madam Chair, the member has said that this is a shot in the dark. You know what a shot in the dark is? Saying that you're going to balance the budget by 2018 and then 2019, 2020, and then 2024. If that's not a shot in the dark, I don't know what is.

You know, perhaps they're firing a shotgun at their balanced budget date. Perhaps they're throwing a grenade right into the credibility of this government. You know, our creditors have no confidence whatsoever in the ability of this government to get back to balance. When the Minister of Finance travelled to Toronto to meet with the creditors, we immediately got a credit downgrade. It was perhaps the worst thing that he could do for the confidence of our creditors in this province, to actually meet with the people lending the money. They met with this guy and said: jeez; they have no plan whatsoever. He said that his plan was to explain their diversification plan. He said that their plan was to read their diversification plan to them. Obviously, anybody with any understanding of economics or fiscal policy would look at that and say that nothing is going to come from that that's going to generate the revenue or the savings that would be necessary to get back to balance. It is a fairy-tale budget, and that is why we had another credit downgrade.

The Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert is saying: I can't vote for this because it's just a shot in the dark. Well, a shot in the dark is having four different balanced budget dates coming from this government in the last year, Madam Chair. Now, 18 per cent of debt to GDP: that's a heck of a lot of money. I think we're talking about \$75 billion. I'm going to chance about \$75 billion. I'm pretty confident that even they couldn't get there if they went to Vegas. If the whole NDP caucus packed up and got on a Sunwing plane and went down to Vegas and decided that they're going to bet the heritage fund, I'm pretty sure they still couldn't take our debt to GDP up to 18 per cent before the next election. After the next election I'm pretty confident that they'll get there. But they won't get there because I'm confident that Albertans are going to see this for what it is. [interjections]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, please.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Albertans are going to see this for what it is, and they're not going to have the chance to take us up to 18 per cent of debt to GDP, because the Wildrose is going to do what it takes to balance the budget and make this province paid in full again, Madam Chair.

I don't know what they should be so worried about; 18 per cent of debt to GDP would be the largest increase proportionately of debt by any province in this country in recent historical memory. There is almost no way that they can hit 18 per cent of debt to GDP. There is almost no way. They couldn't do it. But this would at least send a signal to creditors that, well, at least in theory they believe there is a limit at which we should probably not borrow any further, that there is a theoretical limit at which we should not borrow further. I don't think anybody would think that it has very much credibility, considering that they're repealing their 15 per cent limit just four and a half months after they introduced it, but an 18 per cent limit would at least be a token nod that they believe that they should not borrow infinitely.

Now, we have not heard many members on the government side stand up and actually debate the merits of this. We haven't heard many of the members. To the credit of the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert, who may regret interjecting in this debate, at least he has spoken up. But I see all kinds of members here who have not stood up and spoken for their constituents. I know that the people of Alberta do not approve of unlimited borrowing in this province. Where are they standing up for their constituents? They're standing up for the party line, Madam Chair. They're standing up for the party line, and they're listening to their party whip. They're not listening to what their constituents have to say. Albertans are clear that you should not borrow for the operations of government, that

you should pay your bills, and that if you're going to take on debt, even if you think you should take on debt, there needs to be a limit at which we cap it. Instead, we hear nothing. All we hear is at least one backbencher stand up and say: I don't like limiting it to 18 per cent because my party whip said so.

I would invite members opposite to stand up and be counted. I know that the good people of Banff-Cochrane do not approve of unlimited borrowing. I know that the good people of Calgary-Shaw do not approve of unlimited borrowing.

5:40

**Ms McLean:** Are you going to come to me next?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The good people of Calgary-East certainly do not approve of unlimited borrowing. [interjections] Oh, Calgary-Varsity. I'm sorry. I was picking on Calgary-East. But I do know that the people of Calgary-East support Energy East, and I do know that the people of Calgary-Varsity do not approve of unlimited borrowing as well.

I encourage all members to defy the party whip and vote for this amendment.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, I'll be very brief. I know we've got a vote coming up. You know, the Provincial Treasurer has been very clear in the government's fiscal plan that the amount of borrowing to GDP will not exceed 15 and a half per cent, and here we have the Wildrose proposing to take it up to 18. Who's fiscally irresponsible now? You know, it's pretty clear that the Provincial Treasurer has set this out, and it's not at all clear, as the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks says, that everybody agrees with him. He's just assuming that, Madam Chair. He's just assuming that.

What the people of Alberta have clearly said and what they clearly said in the election is that they want basic services to be maintained. These people on the other side want their health care there when they need it, they want to have good schooling for their kids, and they want to make sure that they have good roads to drive on, Madam Chair. This opposition likes to try and confuse people by talking about: oh, we could cut billions of dollars out of the budget, but it won't affect services. But when we actually try to find savings, as we heard yesterday in question period, in terms of actually having to find things that you're going to reduce, the crack sealing and the mowing alongside the highways is a place where we made a reduction. But they stand up and they complain about it. They say that you shouldn't be doing that because it has this impact and that impact. What they don't understand and what they'll never understand is that when you actually make changes to the budget, it actually has an effect on services that are delivered. They like to pretend that they can find efficiencies.

I just want to sit down because I know an hon. member has to say a few words, but clearly the Provincial Treasurer, the Finance minister, is saying that debt will not exceed 15 and a half per cent, and they're proposing 18. That's billions of dollars of extra debt that the Wildrose would like to see this government undertake, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Hanson:** Madam Chair, I'm going to read to you from page 5 of Bill 10. It says, "Section 3 is repealed." Section 3 is that "Crown debt shall not exceed 15% of GDP for Alberta." All we're asking for is to put some number to it. Put some number to it. Put 15 and a half to it, but stick to it. Stick to it.

Last fall during debates on increasing the debt ceiling, we warned the government that it was beyond their capabilities, that raising the debt limit was a bad idea. We proposed some decent amendments, that were all voted down by you guys. I'm going to remind you of what the Finance minister said last fall. He said that "this act will

limit Alberta government borrowing to 15 per cent of GDP . . . That will provide enough room to allow our government to play its economic role without tipping into overdependence on debt.” Those are quotations.

Again, from October 29, another quotation: “The bottom line . . . is that a 15 per cent debt to GDP is a prudent benchmark for limiting government debt. With this cap in place, Albertans can be assured that the government’s borrowing will not get out of hand.” That’s a direct quotation from you, Minister, directly from you.

We are not promoting an 18 per cent cap. We just want to see some sort of number that stops you from ruining this province in the three years that you have left.

Thank you.

**Mr. Mason:** I move that we rise and report progress on this, please.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 10. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed, say no. So ordered.

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 17 Appropriation Act, 2016 (continued)

[Adjourned debate May 24: Mr. Carlier]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak to the bill?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate?

Then I’ll call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:47 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Miller
Bilous	Gray	Nielsen
Carson	Hinkley	Notley
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kleinsteinuber	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Schreiner
Dach	Littlewood	Sigurdson
Drever	Luff	Sucha
Eggen	Malkinson	Sweet
Feehan	Mason	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Ganley	McLean	Woollard

Against the motion:

Aheer	Jean	Smith
Clark	Loewen	Starke
Cooper	Nixon	Stier
Ellis	Orr	Taylor
Fildebrandt	Rodney	van Dijken
Hanson	Schneider	Yao

Totals:	For – 39	Against – 18
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[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a third time]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, the House now stands adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:05 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, May 24, 2016

Day 32

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
 Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
 Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
 Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
 Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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 Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
 Government Whip  
 Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
 Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
 Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
 Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
 Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
 Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
 Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
 Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
 Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
 Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
 Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
 Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
 Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
 Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
 Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
 Leader of the Official Opposition  
 Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
 Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
 Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
 Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
 Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
 Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
 MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
 Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
 Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
 Government House Leader  
 McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
 Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
 McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
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 McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
 McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
 McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
 Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
 Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
 Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
 Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
 Official Opposition Whip  
 Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
 Premier  
 Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
 Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
 Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
 Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
 Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
 Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
 Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKittrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 24, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**The Chair:** We are considering amendment A4. Are there any speakers to this amendment? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate that. I'm rising today to speak in favour of the amendment. Now, I do want to start off by pointing out that I do disagree personally with raising the limit to 18 per cent. I think that's too much, and if I had my way, we would not have to do that. But the reality is that the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks is trying to bring forward some sort of limitation. What the government is bringing forward right now is nothing, so they will eliminate the limit altogether and have zero limits, and the sky is the limit.

While I think 18 per cent is too much, at least there is some sort of a limit with the amendment that the hon. member is bringing forward. Now, you don't have to know the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks for too long to know that he would agree with me that he would like to see no limit at all, but for the same reasons I suspect that he is trying to bring forward this amendment.

Now, for me, Madam Chair, it brings to mind an example in my personal life that I think is applicable, and that is an example that I'm sure the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster will concur with as a veterinarian. Many a country pet dog has passed away prematurely waiting for the kids to return home from school on the school bus. Now, it's romantic for people who grew up in the city and didn't have a chance to be able to go down their own driveway and wait for the school bus to come or to watch your kids do it. It's really nice. It's a really cool experience. And dogs love to wait at the edge of the driveway for the kids to return home from school. Seriously. I mean, many a dog has unfortunately been hit by the school bus because of it.

Now, in my life we had two dogs in my family, two English mastiffs. Look at me, Madam Chair. I don't have small dogs because I would look a little weird if I was walking a chihuahua, but I have two English mastiffs, Nikita and Yukon. Both are pushing 270, 280 pounds, and I love them very much. They're really special dogs, and they're members of the family, as I know many members on all sides of the aisle will consider their dogs. They love to wait for my twins, Austin and Chyanne, to return from school on the bus. They will go there, so we've had to train them how far they can go to wait for our children to return on the bus. We've had to set limits on how far they go because we don't want them to get hit by a bus.

Now, my wife and I disagree on how far they should go. My wife is scared. We live in a place just outside of Sundre where we regularly see grizzly bears and we regularly see mountain lions on our property. Every year we'll have a couple come through, so my

wife, Tiffany, is understandably concerned about those animals and our kids at the bus stop. That's part of our dogs' job. That's why we own such big dogs, because they're able to protect our children outside when they're walking, sometimes in the dark, from the school bus. She tries to extend the limit to the fence. That's her rule. She says that the dogs can't go past the fence, past the cattle guard, and then they can wait for the kids. I think it's too close because they get excited, they try to run out, and I don't want my dogs to get hit. I like them at our garbage can. We have a big dumpster on our farm that's a little ways away from there, and I've set that as the limit. But I lost, Madam Chair.

My wife has been able to set the final limit for the dogs, but she still set a limit. She still set a limit. While I disagree that the limit should be as far as the fence, I had to compromise to be able to still set a limit. Otherwise, the sky is the limit, and the dogs are going to end up on the street, and just like many of our neighbours, we're going to lose our dogs.

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, by bringing this forward, is not saying that the debt ceiling should be 18 per cent. He's saying that if the government insists on making it unlimited, a government who, by the way, Madam Chair, just recently said that 15 per cent was going to be enough when they raised it and are already back here less than half a year later having to raise it again, if that government is going to ask for the sky as the limit, with no limits at all, then the hon. member is going to attempt to bring forward something that at least puts in a limit. Similar to my dogs, at least there's a limit at the fence, and they're not out on the street.

The second thing that I want to talk about – and I think that this is what people that I talk to in my constituency find most offensive about this type of situation – is that the government sets a law, and then they break the law, and then they set a law again, and then they break the law. Then here they are again. They're just going to eliminate the law. It's too much work to break it and have to come back and hear a guy like me talk about this, Madam Chair, about how they broke the law. So that's what they're going to do, but people in Alberta, I can tell you, are offended by that.

Now, the third party – and I think they'll agree with me on this because they brought it up before. There was a similar law on elections that was set in this province, and there was a loophole and an ability for the previous Premier to be able to call an earlier election. In hindsight I think the third party would agree that that was a mistake, and it's part of the reason why we're all sitting here with you guys in government right now. [interjections] You might think it was a great idea, but many people that I talk to in my constituency don't think it was a good idea. In fact, they were deeply offended by the idea that the government could break their own law even if there was a loophole constitutionwise and they could do it. Even if they could, you know, not follow their own law, people where I come from were very, very disappointed in that, and I'm sure all members heard that a lot during the election.

With that said, just because you can break your own law, that doesn't mean that you should. If that is the path this government wants to continue down, setting no limits – “The sky is the limit; we can do whatever we want; we're annoyed and don't want to have to come back to the Legislature and keep asking for an increase in the debt ceiling; get rid of those annoying opposition guys; we'll just do whatever we want” – well, you should ask the third party, because Albertans don't like that. It smells wrong to them, and they will remember in 2019 that you were doing the exact same thing that the previous government did with the election law. They'll be very disappointed, and I suspect you're going to have to answer for that.

In closing, Madam Chair, it's important that we still set limits. Sometimes we're going to have to compromise because the limit

will be farther than we like, but to have no limit at all is dangerous, and somebody might get hit by a bus. Not following a law just because you can find a loophole or a way out and go to Albertans with "Oh, we've got a loophole; we're the government; we can change the law; we don't want to follow the law": they're not going to accept that. They're going to be extremely disappointed, and I think the government should be ashamed of themselves and consider at least setting a limit.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. What I thought was interesting when the 18 per cent was brought forward was how the eyes in here got big, thinking: "Wow, that's a lot. It could be \$3 billion in debt repayment at 18 per cent." It's huge, isn't it? Well, we felt the same way at 15 per cent, so 18 per cent is a random number to help with setting some sort of limitations to the ceiling that we are talking about.

Just to clarify, our caucus doesn't agree to 18 per cent. We just want some sort of limitation. I don't think that that's too much for Albertans to ask, and since the government seems to have no idea on how to get its spending under control, where do we go from here? Well, obviously, a 15 per cent debt ceiling was not enough, we will see. I think what's most frustrating for me and my fellow caucus mates is that we felt, when you set and when you voted for that 15 per cent, that it would be broken and that it was already rubber-stamped anyway and that you knew that the government had no intention of staying within that debt ceiling. That's extremely frustrating to those of us who could see that. We felt it, we knew it, and we knew that that was going to happen, and to be setting it with an unlimited ceiling at this point completely lacks in accountability to Albertans, that you serve.

There's no ceiling for this government now, so how are Albertans supposed to trust you? This is a question you should be asking yourself as you go forward with this because it will be one that you'll be answering in your constituencies once you surpass the 15 per cent. The 15 per cent was already really, really difficult for people to understand at the beginning.

This amendment is an attempt to help you understand the privilege you have in holding the trust of Albertans' money in your hands. I'd like to know and pose a question as to when the accountability of the government changed. When did you find that it was okay to do this? You've seen it in the past. I'm sure that many of you have probably been frustrated by past mistakes and have probably even stood up to previous governments about these same situations, and now you stand here defending a choice that is actually going to cost your constituents, our constituents, more money than any of us ever expected.

7:40

Just to give it a little bit of perspective, if you look at it from the point of view – and I mentioned this in my last talk – that in this province we pay right now per capita \$2,000-plus more per man, woman, and child, I've already stated that already with just that, that's \$8 billion a year we have extra per capita. Then if you add in the \$2 billion in repayment, which is \$2,000 per family per year, that is your deficit right there, just those two numbers added together.

I don't understand how it is that you go into your constituencies and explain this to the people that you represent. How is it that you're going to explain to them, going to the bankers, that you're not putting money into schools, that you're not going to be able to

put it into hospitals, that you will not be able to put it into programs, and that you will not be putting it into infrastructure? You're going to be paying back a debt that you're saddling my grandchildren and yours with. This needs to be explained. I don't understand this kind of management. You're repealing it after only six months. This is an addiction to borrowing, and it's out of control.

You need to send a message to Albertans that you are responsible and that you have a plan to control your debt levels, hence the reason that there needs to be some sort of ceiling. Like I said, the 18 per cent was just a random number because anything at this point would be better than having no debt ceiling whatsoever. You are using people's needs against them to justify your lack of management. What is going to happen when you don't follow through? Albertans are wanting to know how high you're actually willing to go, and we are challenging you there. That's what that is. It's a question to find out how high you're willing to go, because if you're not willing to set a ceiling, the sky is the limit, as has been mentioned before me.

I literally begrudgingly support this amendment and only because there needs to be some sort of limitation to what is capable by the government. Honestly, the amendment as it is: I support it because we need a limitation. That's the reason why I'm supporting the amendment. Please consider, as you go forward, putting some limitations on yourselves and showing Albertans that you have the accountability that you promised when you were elected.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that if you were going to put a name to this amendment, it would be called Manage the Damage because that's what we're trying to do. What we're trying to say here is that we want to limit the damage. I want to support the bill in the sense that we want to limit how much can be borrowed, how much this government can actually go into debt. We want to manage the damage on this one.

You know, when I had my kids, for, I think, everybody that's in here who has kids, if you didn't tell the kids that they had a bedtime, they'd stay up till 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock in the morning. Then they wouldn't get up in time for school. So you have to put limitations on them. Same thing with speed limits. We have speed limits there for a purpose. If a person is doing 200 kilometres per hour or 250 kilometres an hour in a 50-kilometre zone, pretty soon you're going to have an accident, and it's going to be a fatal accident.

That's what I'm afraid is going to happen with this Bill 10. We're not managing it if we just leave it open, so I'm for the amendment to have limitations put onto it. For me, I would like the limitations to be even lower, but we need to be pragmatic at this point in time because we're already at a place where we're going to be looking at 15 per cent. We're trying to give the government an out, somewhere to go to so that we can move on and give confidence to Standard & Poor's, to all these credit agencies, so it can help our economy in this province. That's a really important thing.

You know, when we looked at this – the Member for Calgary-Elbow was talking a little bit earlier, a couple of days ago, about a mortgage on a house and that this was about a mortgage. He said that the budget is like a mortgage, that going into debt and having these things is like a mortgage, and he said that some debt is good. If you look at Alberta, in 2004 this house that we have, Alberta, was paid in full. We were debt free. We didn't owe anybody anything. At that point in time going forward, we would be able to budget for what those things are. If you want to use the analogy of a house, you know that with a house you'll need shingles in five years, say, so over five years you would budget for that.

That's the same thing that the government should be doing, budgeting for these inevitable things that are coming up. You have to have a plan, a wise and prudent plan that goes forward, and that's with the government as well. We have to have something that would look at it. We had a rainy-day fund in place in case some catastrophe happened. We had a rainy-day fund to look after that. That's what a wise and prudent person would do, Madam Chair, the same thing as what the government should do. They have a budget. Our house was paid in full, and we had a rainy-day fund. We had something to look after these things.

Now we're removing all the debt ceiling; we have an unlimited debt ceiling. I don't find that wise. For that reason I'm going to say I support having the debt limit on this one and not having an unlimited debt ceiling. We just need to manage the damage.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is another amendment being put forward by the Wildrose that is showing our contempt for what is happening with Bill 10. The fact is that the 15 per cent limit to fund our operational spending is really an insult to Albertans. The fact that it's being removed is beyond contempt. The fact that we have to reinstate it with even a higher number is even beyond comprehension. Now, you're saying: "Why is this such a tragedy? Why exactly do you feel, Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, that this one bill will hamper future generations for many, many years to come?"

Let's look at exactly what 18 per cent is. That's almost \$66 billion, \$66 billion that we are limiting Alberta to in its borrowing. Now, let's look at this number. It's a stunning number. The fact is that it's so large that we can't comprehend this number. It is so large that we can't even comprehend it. Let's break this down into something that we can comprehend, something that an average Albertan will understand. What we're looking at is that the government was projecting somewhere around \$50 billion in debt. They had given themselves 15 per cent to GDP, which was about \$50 billion, somewhere in there. Now, we said: what if your plan doesn't work? What if you guys eventually realize that you can't actually do what you're saying? That means that you're going to have to come back to us and raise the limit. In less than a year, less than six months you're back here again saying: "We need to raise the limit." No. Actually, why raise it? Why even put a limit in there when we can just obliterate it, get rid of it?

7:50

Now, let's bring this back down to what an Albertan can really move forward with as an example, something that we can actually work through here. Let's equate this to what it really is. It's a credit card. It's our line of credit to be able to pay to keep the lights on. Let's bring this from the limit of \$50 billion down to \$50,000, still a stunning number for any Albertan household – a stunning number – but we'll throw that out there: \$50,000 for a normal Albertan household.

Let's say that you get into trouble and you need to bail yourself out for a few months. You know what? I can tell you that families in my riding right now are feeling this because they're out of work, and we understand that. We understand that right now a lot of people are probably using lines of credit and credit cards to get by. Is that the solution to their problem? Maybe short-term to help get them out of this no-work stretch that they're in, but I will tell you that it is not working as a long-term solution because in the end they know that they have to pay off that credit card. Now, \$50,000, \$80,000, \$66,000, whatever the number is, they are limited to that

number. They can't go beyond it because – you know what? – the banks don't let them go past what they can afford.

That's the nature of debt, but somehow this government has worked out that it doesn't have any cap. It doesn't need one because it feels that it's going to do better and be able to pay this off some day in the future, but they won't tell us when, and they won't tell us how. This is a mistake. Not having a cap is a mistake. We need to make sure that we go back to Albertans every time we need to raise our debt limit and say: do we have a plan to pay that money back?

Let's get back to my example of \$50,000 for a normal person with a credit card just so we can understand this number. Now, let's say that on average it takes a family about \$1,000 a month. That's five years to pay off that credit card. But you know what? It's not at zero interest. Credit cards go at 18 per cent, so we're looking at a perpetual circle that they can't get out of. Right now I hear this all over: "Well, it's low. Interest rates are low. Why not take advantage of these low interest rates? We'll pay it back later." You know what? All those credit cards do the same thing. They start off with 5 per cent, and they go after a year to 18 per cent because the intent is always to pay it off in that year. Always. So what happens is that that family is stuck with that \$50,000 credit card.

Now, let's look at the options that family has. The option the family has is to take that debt and roll it into something they own, an asset, and finance that asset which has value. This is the route that a lot of families go, this temporary solution: get it into a mortgage that's held against an asset. We hear consistently from the government: we're going to borrow like it's a mortgage. The problem is that the mortgage doesn't have an asset attached to it. It has no house; it has no car; it has no boat. It has nothing attached to that asset. When we are looking at where we're going, we actually need to sell stuff to pay for this loan. Guess what? Unless we're going to start selling bridges and interchanges and schools and hospitals, that's just not possible. The fact is that we know that when we do sell this stuff, we never get the value we put into it. We sell it for a fraction. It is not a house.

When people get into debt with credit cards, they have an out. Now, what happens when you don't have that asset-backed liability is that you go bankrupt. That's the next step. When you can't get out of the cycle, you don't make enough money, you can't save enough, you go bankrupt. This is the direction that we see provinces and countries across the world going in. Is this a direction that Alberta should be going? No. The answer is no. The fact is that when we're looking for a direction for Alberta, it should never be: let's spend money and put it on credit and hope our children will pay it off. That is wrong.

The fact is that when we look at paying this off – we're looking at \$60 billion, \$70 billion, \$80 billion, \$100 billion – who is going to pay that off, especially when we can't sell the resources? That is an actual concern someday in the future. We're not going to have the ability to pay off those debts that we accumulate right now. That money isn't going to be there.

The fact is that we need to live within our means. If we can't live within our means, we're ensuring that our children someday will have to look at bankruptcy as an option. That means that someday when we start looking at what we're handing down to our children, what legacy we're handing down to our children, we're looking at debt. That's the legacy we're handing down. We're handing down credit card debt. What happens is that if you can't pay it off, it goes into something like a junk bond: 8, 10, 12 per cent interest, which is something that we're actually seeing in European countries right now. Somehow we think we can avoid this bullet, this magic bullet, because we think we're better.

Where is this magic income going to come from? Is it going to come from resources? Are resources always going to be there? I would say probably not. So where do we need to go with this? The fact is that we need to reduce our spending. If we are looking at the future, we need to set ourselves limitations, and that is where credit cards come in. They set limitations for us based on our earnings, based on what we own, based on the ability to pay that money back. Right now we're taking it and throwing it away. We are literally going in a direction that has no limitations on borrowing, and that is frightening. We're looking at massive junk bond status with our debt someday in the future, which takes money out of our social programs, takes money out of our schools, and it takes money out of our hospitals.

This is not a direction that I want to send my children. Our children deserve better. They deserve to be respected, and they need to know that we were good stewards with their money. That is not what we are doing right now. We are not good stewards. We need to be better. Now, we can point fingers at who we think is to blame, but in the end this government needs to make sure that it's accountable for the decisions it's making, and it is making a very poor decision right now.

Let's get back to credit cards. Credit cards: \$50,000, \$80,000, no matter what number you pick, in the end it needs to be paid back. We don't have the assets backed; we don't have the revenue coming in. We need to set limits on ourselves because we're the only ones that can do it. Nobody else can set these limits except for us here over this next little while. These limits are important because we need to be making sure that Alberta knows where it's going with its financial position, and we are not going in the right direction when we remove a debt limit.

It is like a bank saying: "You know what? We trust you. We're not going to set a limit. Why bother? We know that you're good for the money. You don't have the income, but someday maybe. Hey, you know what? Your house has no equity left because you took it all out, but we think it's going to grow. You know what? We think that maybe that time-share probably has a value someday. Even though – well, hey, you know what? – all of the time-shares in that condo unit have gone broke, we'll give you the credit. We're going to give you credit based on nothing." That is what you are asking for when you get rid of the debt limit.

8:00

We need a responsible government to move forward. That means debt limits. Now, whether it is 10 per cent, 15 per cent, or 18 per cent, we need to put something in place to ensure that Albertans know that we're at least holding some accountability. But all we hear is: "This is a mortgage. Albertans can sell stuff off someday to pay it, like what Greece is doing right now." That's sad.

It's truly sad that we are moving our children toward a decision on: how exactly are we going to educate our children, how are we going to have health care for our children, and how are we going to keep care of us when we become senior citizens because we've squandered the money? I do not want to put my little girls, Amelia and Charlotte, in the position that they feel they have to somehow have less of a lifestyle because we couldn't be responsible enough to move Alberta forward in the right direction. Yes, oil is low. Nobody will disagree with that, but the fact is that this isn't the only contributing factor when it comes to debt in this province. We need to be making sure that Alberta has the means to be able to pay this money back. When we actually have more debt than we can stomach, isn't it the time to change direction? It's already too late.

What I am asking is that we actually challenge the government. When are you going to balance the budget? How are you going to

balance the budget? What time frame are you going to pay this money back on the debt that you've accumulated? I'm going to guess that the answer is: "We don't know. We don't know, Scott. We don't know." That is sad. Why is it that this government can plan on moving forward an incredible new spending spree yet can't come up with how it's going to pay back this debt that it's accumulating?

Now, when we start looking towards the future, I don't want to be the one sitting down with my daughters and explaining to them what bankruptcy means. Yes, there are countries across the world that have gone down this direction. But where exactly is it that we think that we're better than everybody else when we make decisions that have no actual business plan? We need to be looking forward to the future. We need to be setting goals. We need to be doing this stuff, yet we have a government right now that ignores what exactly we're trying to achieve here: responsible government. When we have interest outpacing our education spending, when we have interest outpacing our hospital system, where should those funds have been funnelled towards? Not interest.

In years to come we're going to have infrastructure that we can't maintain. We're going to have nurses that we can't pay. We're going to have union employees without pensions. This is what happens when bankruptcy happens. This is where we are going towards without any debt limits. This is why we have had four downgrades of our credit rating, because of irresponsibility. It is something that we need to change course. I am hoping that the government is actually listening to where we are trying to change the directions towards.

When we start looking at exactly what the goal here is, it comes down to tax, more tax, more tax, more tax. Eventually you have nobody to tax, and that is sad. That is the direction that we are headed because in the end we think that we can actually tax ourselves to prosperity. You know what the answer is? You can't. We've been through this enough times in other countries that we understand that in the end, when it comes to taxes, you can actually tax people out of your country. You actually can do damage to the base that you hold so dearly, to make sure they support the services that we have, to be able to provide for our most vulnerable, to be able to provide for our education system, to be able to provide for our hospital care. Why can't we see this now? There is a real opportunity that sees that we need to change direction. How many more warnings do we need before we actually take a step back and say that maybe this isn't the direction we're going in?

When it comes to borrowing, we're hoping that some day royalties are going to bail us out, but it appears that in every direction we're going, that's not going to happen in the near future. The only place next is to start taxing, taxing, and more taxing until . . .

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yeah. Madam Chair, I was really enjoying the member's speech. I was wondering if he would care to elaborate further.

**The Chair:** Just a reminder that there is no 29(2)(a) in committee, so . . .

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** That was just a speech.

**The Chair:** . . . he can continue speaking. No problem. Go ahead.

**An Hon. Member:** I think he left off at taxes.

**Mr. Cyr:** It's funny. I thank you. I have a reminder from the government that I left off at taxes.

In the end, it is a good point that the government has brought up, that we are actually trying to help. We don't want to see Alberta go down the wrong road. We don't want to see Alberta repeating the mistakes of prior governments. What we do want this government to do is to start using restraint. Start using restraint.

Now, we hear all the time that there is nowhere to cut. There is no room for spending less than \$50 billion even though we're bringing in only \$40 billion. There's no room. We've got to fire everybody. That isn't true. Wildrose has brought forward that we can surely find one cent for every dollar, two cents for every dollar of cuts. There have got to be places that we can start bringing some real change to Alberta. When we start looking at protecting Alberta, we need to start looking at how we can reduce our spending and bring it in line with what Albertans expect us to do.

Let's go back to the credit card. I'm sure everybody is thrilled to hear about the credit card. In the end, let's bring it down to something that I myself can quantify, because \$50 billion, \$100 billion, \$300 billion like Ontario, are just huge numbers that we can't actually put any real number to that we can understand. It's just too big of a number. So let's go with \$50,000. Let's say Alberta did, for instance, decide that it wants to sell off its assets. Let's use that. Let's use bridges. Let's use hospitals. Let's start using that. Now, the question is: what do we sell? What goes first? Well, the easy stuff, right? Greece is seeing that. They get rid of the historical sites, right? That seems to be the first place to go. The next one is toll roads. Why not go there, sell off those?

**8:10**

You know what? That's not even paying the principal. You're just doing it to pay off the interest, like what's happening with Greece right now. Greece is going down a spiral that we can't even imagine. They have incredible, huge unemployment with their youth, and we've got incredible expectations when it comes to the standard of living, and the two just don't go hand in hand.

With this credit card, even if I sold my car, sold my house that's fully leveraged, sold my boat, now I'm still on the street with no money to be able to support myself. I have no ability to be able to move forward to make sure that my children will be taken care of. I have no ability to be able to go any further. This is actually something that I am seeing in my riding. People, actually, right now are living in our shelters, they are living in people's basements, and because it's summer right now, they're living in their – well, I would like to say cars, but they don't have those either yet, so what do they have? Tents. Backyards.

These are very unfortunate times. These are circumstances that these men and women got into that are very unfortunate. What as a government are we doing to help? The fact is that when I continue to go to the ministers and say, "What are you doing to reduce the 10 per cent unemployment rate in my riding?" the answer is: a tax credit, a jobs program that failed. That doesn't help them pay off their credit cards. That doesn't help them get into a new place when they do finally find a job because in the end they can't get out of debt.

Now, here's the thing: this is summer. They're living in that tent. Lots of people are living in that tent, so what is the next thing they're going to do when winter comes?

**Mr. Connolly:** Winter is coming.

**Mr. Cyr:** Winter is coming. Thank you very much. Yeah. It's sad.

The fact is that they are able to get by in the summer, but when winter comes, what are they going to do to actually find a place to live? These places just aren't available.

Where are we going to find jobs? Right now the prospect of finding a job is nonexistent. They go to Alberta Works and spend three or four hours every day making up resumés, sending out e-mails, and getting out the message that they want a job. They send it to a hundred companies in the area, and you know what their response is: "There are no jobs. As matter of fact, not only are we not hiring right now, we are letting people go." That's sad. It's sad for these single mothers, these single fathers, for these people that are out of work, these families. They're coming to me, and they're saying: what can I do, Scott? My answer is: Alberta Works. That's unfortunate.

You know what? We've got the government right now saying: we extended your unemployment benefits by five weeks. Five weeks. Problem solved. That's no solution. When we're looking at moving forward and we're looking at our neighbours, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, why are they still growing and we're shrinking at a rapid pace? [interjections] Well, thank you very much. We do have a wonderful carbon tax, which I'm sure is going to help them.

Let's look at the neighbours. This is actually reality in my riding. People right now can't sell their homes because there's nobody to buy them, and you know what? These families are leaving an empty house in my riding and moving to Saskatchewan, moving to B.C. This is a tragedy because these are highly skilled people. These are people that are moving out of our province, and they can't buy houses in the provinces that they're moving to because they are stuck, anchored to a house that they can't get out of. This is a reality across northern Alberta. Maybe you haven't felt it in your ridings, but I know I have. This is a real tragedy, that we are losing – we are losing – Albertans at an alarming pace, and we're ending up with incredibly high vacancy rates.

What are we doing? We're creating instability. You want to know what's unstable when it comes to bills like this? It throws a question into what our government is doing. When you have bills like Bill 10 brought forward – let's just get rid of the debt limit – who's going to invest money in an unstable province? We are seeing that repeatedly. We are looking forward, and we're saying to the government, "Please, bring stability back," and you're doing anything but. We're looking at carbon taxes, we're looking at personal taxes, we're looking at minimum wage increases, and we're looking at wonderful taxes in every direction we're going.

What company is going to want to invest in Alberta right now? I can tell you that they are announcing projects in 2019, and you know why? Because they're hoping that there's a change in government. That, I can tell you, is the direction you guys are going towards.

Getting rid of a debt limit is only showing how irresponsible you are. We need to look both to the east and to the west and see that – you know what? – they have an incredible amount of money coming in from resource revenues, and guess what? Guess what? They still are growing. The only place we're growing is civil servants.

**Mr. Hanson:** And debt.

**Mr. Cyr:** And debt.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** And taxes.

**Mr. Cyr:** And taxes.

**An Hon. Member:** And shame.

**Mr. Cyr:** And shame. I have a lot of people contributing here. This is great. A whole lot of sharing happening.

When we start looking towards – ultimately, what we're looking to do is trying to create an ability for people to get back to work that's through creating stable legislation. This Bill 10 is creating nothing but instability within Alberta. Let's bring a debt cap in. You're not happy with 15 per cent. What number are you happy with? Eighteen doesn't seem to be that number. We're not happy with either number, but you know what? There's at least some accountability that we can use. This is something that will bring stability back to Alberta.

I guess the question that you need to ask is: after we vote down this amendment, that you are planning on voting down, and once you vote in Bill 10 to remove – remove – the debt limit, are we going to see another credit . . .

**Mr. Taylor:** Downgrade.

**Mr. Cyr:** . . . downgrade? Thank you.

Are we going to see more interest paid, less ability for us to pay that money back, greater likelihood that we become junk bonds?

What are the east and west doing that we're not doing? They're bringing stable governments. I'll reiterate that. We need stable governments. We need to make sure that companies feel that they can actually feel safe with the money, prosper, make profits, pay taxes, pay their fair share, whatever you want to say. In the end people working is what we need in Alberta, which is what we need in my riding, and this is something that this amendment helps.

8:20

Does it make me sad that I would be voting for this amendment? Absolutely. Does it make me sad that my colleague, the shadow minister of Finance, had to actually bring this forward? Absolutely. The fact is that he was willing to say that we need some limitation. We need to make sure that there's something, some way of actually paying for our credit card debt. We need to have a payment plan. We need to move forward. We need to actually show that we are a responsible government.

We need stability. We need stability so that I can have jobs being created in my riding again. This is something that is fully within the government's control, yet it continues to let us down. This is something that you actually can move forward. Is there any reason – I know that there are northern riding and Calgary MLAs from across the aisle that are voting to ensure that this instability continues. That means no jobs – no jobs – and more debt because what happens is that this is a spiral out of control that you are creating, and you need to stop the spiral. You need to come up with a plan. You need to set limits for yourself. That's what a responsible government does. That's what a responsible family does.

We need to make sure that in the end, when we accumulate debt, we pay it back because what happens is that – this is a failure that we cannot accept because I want to actually know that I handed this province off to my daughters, Amelia and Charlotte, knowing that I actually gave it in a better situation than I received it, and right now I can't say that. I can say that my oldest daughter is 10 years old and is sad to see where our province has gone in the last 10 years.

We had rainy-day funds. We had contingency funds. We had all this money. We had the Alberta heritage trust fund. We had this money saved. Now, what happened to it? What happened to it? We can look at irresponsible government, and we can look at where you're going, which is the same direction. The same direction.

**Some Hon. Members:** Worse.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you. Worse direction. I have been corrected.

They are going in a worse direction because in the end socialism doesn't work. We need to have fiscal accountability, and what we need to be making sure is that – in the end a responsible, stable government is what we need to bring forward.

We have one of the biggest governments per capita in Canada. There's got to be a way that we can bring it down. There's got to be a way that as Albertans we can move forward and get through these tough times together. How can we do that when we've got no reason to because we can just get rid of the debt cap altogether?

In the end I am sad that either my children's children or their children's children are still going to be paying off what we've accumulated in this three-year period. That means that right now we are at the peak of Alberta's future. These next three years are at the peak of Alberta's future, and at some point once you hit the peak, you've got to come back down that mountain. That is where we're headed towards. We're headed towards less health care for everybody. We're headed for less education for everybody. We're headed towards a worse Alberta than I grew up in. This is unacceptable. This is something that – we actually have an ability to change direction.

I encourage everybody in this room to vote for this amendment. They need to be responsible. You are going to regret not voting for this amendment three years from now. I can tell you that three years from now today's recorded vote on this amendment will be held against everybody in this Chamber that didn't vote to make sure that we had an actual credit limit in place because in the end people will say: "Why? Why is it that you didn't have foresight. Why is it that you didn't actually speak a little louder in your caucus? Why are you not moving and doing anything that actually will move Alberta forward?"

How are we going to move? What direction are we going to move? I can tell you that the direction we're moving is more debt and instability. That means that not only is it sitting at 10 per cent unemployment in my riding, I can only expect that it's going to grow. There's no plan. There's no plan. You have no plan. How is it possible that we have, as a government that has got \$40 billion a year coming in, no plan for that money? We absolutely have got a plan to spend more than we make. That isn't a plan. That is a route to failure, and that is the direction we're going. You will be held accountable for that decision that you are making today. You need to stop.

In the end you are going to find over this next three years that not only are you unable to meet the targets you're setting for taxes and continuing to raise the taxes, but you're going to find that you are making less and less taxes, which – guess what? – we saw. Now, everybody says: low oil, low oil. What if this cost for oil stays at \$45 or \$50 for the next 10 years? What's your solution? Fifteen per cent PST?

**The Chair:** Any other hon. member wishing to speak to the amendment? Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much. I'll keep mine short, Madam Chair. Basically, it comes down to, you know, 7 per cent, 15 per cent, 18 per cent: whatever number you pick, it doesn't really matter. The real question is: how can Albertans trust this government to do what's right for Alberta? They won't even abide by their own legislation. They set the debt limit last fall at 15 per cent through legislation. They all voted for it unanimously. We sat here and watched it. How do they expect us to sit here representing Albertans and allow them to change this law and take away any accountability? Simply repealing section 3 without any maximum is irresponsible, and it's shameful. It is not what Albertans voted for last May. I would challenge all of you to go actually talk to

Albertans and see what they really think of your limitless debt ceiling. I challenge you to do that.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to this amendment? Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Yeah. You got it. That's right. Thank you, Madam Chair. I have to support this amendment but not because I agree with the number. The reality is that what's been proven here tonight is that it doesn't matter what the number is to the members opposite. Any number would always be unacceptable. My colleague from Bonnyville has challenged us a lot on the need to set a limit. My question is: what limit will you accept? There is no limit that seems to be acceptable.

I believe there's a reason for that. I believe that it's because the members opposite are afraid to set a limit. I understand that you're new to government. I understand that you're extremely inexperienced, that you have no knowledge of how to do these kinds of things. I also understand that none of you have ever come close to managing a \$50 billion business, not to mention a \$5 million business or even a \$5,000 one. [interjections] Yeah. I doubt that.

8:30

Any limit is better than no limit. You cannot just appropriate to yourself any amount of money that you want to take. We said six months ago that 15 per cent was dangerous because it would not last, and obviously it hasn't lasted. It didn't last six months. We said that as soon as you had 15 per cent, you'd change it to 18 per cent. Lo and behold, here we are. Next time it'll be 20 except you skipped that. Now all of a sudden you went immediately to any limit. The sky is the limit. How prophetic was that? You didn't even need a crystal ball. The reality is that the members opposite have no understanding of how to create wealth, only how to spend it. They're like those who have won the lottery except that soon it's all gone.

I remember a story in the paper a few years ago of a glamour marriage from Hollywood ending up in divorce with a \$20 million settlement offered, and within five years the \$20 million was gone and they were filing for bankruptcy. That's exactly where you're taking our province. Those who have a DNA of dependency can't possibly be expected to manage the people's money well, who have a politic that the government owes me and all of us and that any amount will do forever and ever and ever.

There is this idea out there that the government has a limitless amount of money and they never have to pay it back. There are even theories out there that try and promote that. Well, I guess if you're a sovereign government and you actually have the ability to create money and print it with paper presses, you can try and delude yourself with that story, but subsovereign governments like provinces don't have that option.

What are the people of the province supposed to do when politicians break their own promises, when politicians say things and then completely do the exact opposite of that? The only thing the people can do is require laws to constrain them because the politicians won't constrain themselves.

Unfortunately, horses are like that. If you give horses the opportunity to eat too much rich food, endless amounts of grain, they'll stand there and they'll eat and they'll eat and they'll eat until they kill themselves, literally. They will eat grain until it founders them, and it is fatal. You have found yourselves a great bin of grain, and you think that you can just consume of it endlessly and there are no consequences, there are no results. There are consequences. There are results. There needs to be some sort of a limit to your

spending or you're going to destroy yourselves and our province. So we must set some sort of a restraint on people who cannot restrain themselves.

I will vote in favour of this amendment.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be short as I speak to this amendment. This bill is a dangerous precedent. The government put legislation in place a few months ago that would not allow them to borrow more money for this province than an amount that was equal to 15 per cent of the gross domestic product. That's called a cap. That's a cap, a cap that gives Albertans some kind of idea that their government can't and won't abuse their power and borrow more money than the math works out to in the formula that was presented.

However, Madam Chair, this government, before they rolled out their latest budget, came forward with newer legislation called Bill 10, which was presented and all of a sudden took away the cap, the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP formula. It took away the cap that Albertans had come to realize was their government's legislation to not borrow more money than 15 per cent of the GDP. All of a sudden the government decided that it was going to remove that cap and put no debt ceiling on their borrowing.

At this moment, of course, that means that the Alberta government can borrow any amount that it sees fit to run the government of Alberta, no restraint required. Alberta's debt will be about \$58 billion by the next election. That's bad enough, Madam Chair, but borrowing for the operations of government is downright scary. The day-to-day operations of Alberta's government are now beholden to those that have lent money to this province.

You know, we used to have a phrase around here that Albertans were proud to use, that little buzzword, the Alberta advantage. For years Alberta had a favourable investment climate that helped make it an economic powerhouse. It became a place where investment dollars flowed because the possibility of return was expected. The policy choices that this government has made have made Alberta a less desirable place for investment, perhaps at one of the worst times possible. So long, Alberta advantage.

Large-scale debt is problematic for future generations of Albertans. Frankly, doing this to the next generation is simply immoral. By designating the next generation as the one responsible for paying off the debt, the government is willingly depriving them of those advantages that I spoke of a moment ago.

And now Alberta's credit rating is being downgraded, a development that has troubling consequences as well. But the credit downgrades of late are no surprise. We were warned early in January that a high borrowing agenda would lead to trouble. Our caucus pressed this government to try and rein in spending, and repeatedly we were basically laughed at. A moderate budget was an option that the government could have tried. They could have protected front-line workers while reining in spending to show creditors that there is some semblance of fiscal competence.

Now, I believe I have several caucus members that may want to speak yet today, so I'll take my seat, Madam Chair. But before I do, I must say that I have every intention of supporting this amendment and not because I believe that the government of Alberta should put forward a number of 18 per cent of gross domestic product as a limit for borrowing. I'm certainly not interested in suggesting that the government should impose that number.

I support this amendment because it suggests a debt ceiling. Bill 10 right now has no debt ceiling. The government turned down 15 per cent. What is the magic number? Is 15.5 per cent the number?

If it is, why not add it to the bill? If it isn't 18 per cent, please give us an indication of what the number is that would satisfy the government. That is what is behind this amendment, an outrageous number. If the government won't support that number, please tell us what that number is.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I have listened closely and with rapt attention, as I always do when I'm in the august presence of all of my fellow MLA colleagues. I hope to bring a little bit of perspective to this because, I have to say, I get frustrated listening to debate like this in this Assembly.

We have what seem to be two pretty polarized views of the world. On one hand, we have the Official Opposition, who believes that the government probably wants to destroy Alberta, that this is really some global socialist plot to ensure that our province finds its way to bankruptcy, and that probably it's the ghost of Che Guevara who's pulling the strings behind the scenes somewhere. But, you know, on the other hand, of course, we have the government, who's brought forward Bill 10. It's removed the debt cap that they put on themselves barely four and a half months ago. That shows, I think generously, a lack of experience and, perhaps less so, an inability to get a real handle on the spending of this government.

So I'm torn. I'm torn as to whether or not I want to actually support this amendment. While I believe that there should be some sort of cap, I find it interesting that our friends in Wildrose will rise and say: "We're proposing this amendment. We don't really like the number, but we're still proposing this amendment because it's better than nothing." I mean, I don't know if 16 is a better number than 18.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Clark:** Yes, it is. Of course, it's a better number; it's less. Of course, that's wonderful.

But it's a bit of an odd debate, I have to say. It seems like it's a good opportunity, I suppose, to just stand up and continue to hammer on the government on the things they don't like.

I would love, actually, to hear from the government in greater detail why, in fact, they think that they can't find their way to meet their 15 per cent debt-to-GDP cap when they've only said that they're going to get to 15.5 at worst case. That's not a huge amount, actually, and I really don't think that that's too much to ask, for the government to constrain spending just that much.

**8:40**

It doesn't need to be incredibly painful. It doesn't need to mean massive front-line service cuts. You know, the Member for Calgary-North West and I were just having a bit of a conversation here about some of the small ways that this government can find efficiencies. Really, it comes down to looking after the pennies so that the dollars ultimately look after themselves.

I mean, something I'll put to the Minister of Health: one of your objectives is a youth mental health website. That's a great idea. We should do that. But you know what? Our friends in B.C. have already done it. The AnxietyBC website for youth and teens is a fantastic resource. Have we looked at licensing that instead of building our own?

I bet you there are countless examples like that all throughout government where we could simply reuse something that someone else has done. As a result, we could save at least tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars all throughout government. Just because it's not invented here in Alberta doesn't

necessarily mean that we don't need to find ways of doing things more efficiently and more effectively. I really think that that's something this government hasn't done well enough, challenging the public service to find ways of doing more with less.

I think that these debates are sometimes enlightening, often entertaining. But I think that at the end of the day I would like to see some sort of debt cap reinstated. Whether 18 per cent is an appropriate number or not remains to be seen.

Those are my comments, Madam Chair. I'll sit back and listen to the rest. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Looking at this amendment, I have to say that I'm torn and for obvious reasons. I think even the mover of the amendment has already agreed with me on this, so I feel fairly confident in what I'm saying. I don't like the number at 18 per cent.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I'd like it zero.

**Mr. McIver:** Unlike the member that moved this, zero is the wrong number because debt is a tool that needs to be used judiciously in order to build infrastructure, but it also always has to come with a plan to pay it back that's credible.

Unfortunately, the current government has been using debt as something that's out of control, like a child whose parent pays their credit card every month and they never have to see the bill because somebody else pays it. In this case the government is actually responsible to that parent because that parent is the taxpayers and citizens of Alberta, and that's a terrible way to treat them, to take a cap off the debt. It's a terrible way to treat them. [interjection]

And right away the Health minister chirps in with the only solution the Health minister has, to lay off teachers and nurses, which actually speaks volumes about the imagination of this government. They only have one lever. They only have one lever. Every problem looks like a nail, and they only have one tool. It's a hammer, and the hammer is that either they're going to spend their brains out or they're going to lay off teachers and nurses. They have no other solutions. Yet they think that they are qualified to govern this province although the Deputy Premier has only one solution to every problem, to lay off teachers and nurses. Bad solution, Deputy Premier. Terrible solution, Madam Chair. That's what I'm saying.

Back to this. The government thinks that they should take all restraint off of borrowing. That is a terrible decision, and one that they've chosen to make. Incredibly irresponsible, incredibly disrespectful to Albertans, and really incredibly disrespectful to every child and grandchild in Alberta that's going to depend upon the government to deliver services to them in future years. While spending your brains out right now may buy lots of gifts for Albertans, Albertans are going to be sadly missing those gifts in a few years when the debt has to be paid back. They're going to need schools then, too. They're going to need hospitals then, too. They're going to need seniors' homes then, too. They're going to need roads then, too. The government of the day is going to be severely handicapped in their ability to provide those things because of the irresponsible financial behaviour of the current government.

There is one argument that says that any cap is better than no cap at all. I think I heard the mover say this, so I'm guessing the mover won't be offended by my saying that as well. On the other hand, we need to learn the lessons of history, Madam Chair, and one of the lessons of history, in my opinion, is to vote for what you want. Don't vote for what you don't want, because when you see something you don't want and you want to change it, so you choose to vote for something you don't want . . .



**Mr. Mason:** It could be a mistake.

**Mr. McIver:** You're right.

... it could be a mistake, Government House Leader. That's how we got an NDP government, people voting for what they don't want. Thank you. You finished my thought for me.

Madam Chair, the Government House Leader actually made my argument for me before I could even make it. The point that I was coming around to is that a year ago people were angry at the PC government – and I get that – and a lot of them didn't want to vote for us because of that. The problem was that they didn't like the other choices on the menu either, so what they did was vote for something they didn't like, and now they have what they have.

Madam Chair, I am left right now with a similar decision: vote for something you don't like or for something else that you don't like. I have to say that I don't like 15 per cent, and I don't like 18 per cent, and I don't like no limit at all. So rather than voting for something I don't want and repeating what the public did a year ago, on May 5, when they elected the current government, I think I am actually, with all due respect to the mover of the motion, going to be forced to vote against it.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** But you'd said that you'd vote to make it less bad.

**Mr. McIver:** But it doesn't make it less bad. It's 20 per cent more.

Madam Chair, the Government House Leader actually has the courage at this point to wag his finger and say that it's reckless. His government is the epitome of reckless. If you actually open the dictionary and look under the word "reckless," you will see a picture of that Government House Leader or that Premier or surely some subset, if not the entire government, because that is the epitome of reckless.

What we have here, unfortunately, is also reckless. With all due apologies to the mover of the amendment, this is how we got an NDP government, folks. It's people voting for something they don't like. Today I choose not to vote for something I don't like, which is an 18 per cent debt limit. I don't like no debt limit either, but that's not on the menu. If it was, I surely wouldn't vote for it. This is a problem. The 15 per cent is a problem, and 20 per cent worse than the 15 per cent, which is the 18 per cent, is a bigger problem. It's reckless. It's harmful to Alberta. It will take us further down the debt rabbit hole, when we know we have a government with no intention of paying it back.

While I'm sure the mover's intentions are good, the last thing – the last thing – I want to do is to give this particular government any sort of licence to increase their borrowing by another 20 per cent, particularly when they've made it abundantly clear that they have absolutely no plan now or ever to pay penny one of it back. So out of respect for Alberta's seniors, that are going to need care in the future, out of respect for Alberta's children and grandchildren, that are going to need everything in the future from education to health care to roads to seniors' homes to social services, I cannot in good conscience vote for something I don't like because, as I'll repeat one last time, (a) I like saying it and (b) because I love how much the government dislikes hearing it, that would be the same as voting for the NDP, and I can't possibly do it.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think we've hit that time of night where things start to get pretty loopy in here, which is when they tend to also get a bit more exciting. I'm very pleased to see that the Wildrose is starting to rub off on the leader of the third party. His aversion to giving the NDP an inch on debt certainly

warms my heart. I really do appreciate seeing him take a stand against debt here. It might not be as hard as the stance of the Wildrose, but it is certainly a move in the right direction.

**8:50**

Now, there are two options in front of us right here. There are two options. One is to have a debt cap of 18 per cent, and the other is a debt cap of infinity. Those are the options that we have in front of us. It's not 15 or 18. If this was 15 or 18, the choice would be very clear to me. I think a 15 per cent debt cap is far too high. That's why every member of the Wildrose voted against the legislation which enabled the 15 per cent debt cap in the first place. We didn't believe in raising it to 15 per cent. We didn't believe in legalizing borrowing for the operations of government. We believe that you should balance the budget and not just the operational budget; the consolidated budget needs to be balanced.

But there are two options in front of us. One is an infinite level of debt with no restrictions on borrowing whatsoever, and the other is an 18 per cent limit on debt. Now, 18 per cent is about 18 per cent too high. I believe that we need to balance our budget and pay down the debt and be paid in full once again, but in the meantime it is the job of the opposition not just to criticize the government but to propose helpful solutions. It's to propose helpful solutions, and in the absence of any limit to borrowing whatsoever for the government, I believe that an 18 per cent limit is better than an infinite limit, Madam Chair. It's the job of the Official Opposition to ensure that the legislation is less bad than it would otherwise be. That is why the Official Opposition will vote for this amendment.

But regardless of what the government does, we'll be voting against this bill. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Chair:** Moving on to the bill, are there any further amendments, questions, or comments with respect to Bill 10?

Then I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 10 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 10. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?  
Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

**Government Bills and Orders  
Third Reading**

**Bill 10  
Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and move third reading of Bill 10, Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016.

The act will allow our government to implement the Alberta jobs plan, creating the conditions to employ 100,000 people right across our province. By implementing this act and the Alberta jobs plan, we'll be supporting families, investing in infrastructure, diversifying our energy industry and markets, and supporting Alberta business.

Now is the time to act. Let's get Albertans working again. I ask all members of this House to support this bill.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank all hon. members for a very enjoyable, edifying, and entertaining evening.

I will move that we adjourn the House until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 8:56 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, May 25, 2016

Day 33

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, May 25, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us each reflect in our own way. Today is the 30th anniversary of Canada's participation in International Missing Children's Day. Let us each reflect on our responsibilities to our children and ensure that child protection remains a high priority across our province and our nation. Let us pay respect and honour to those children who have been taken from their families and from their homes and send our thoughts to those families who are struggling with the loss that each of us can feel about the loss of a child.

Thank you. Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Second Reading

##### Bill 18

##### An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise today for second reading of Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring.

The bill will put in place the mechanisms required to ensure an environmental science program that benefits from rigorous scientific oversight and keeps Albertans and the world informed about the condition of our province's environment. Mr. Speaker, as one of the world's major energy producers we have a responsibility to monitor the impact of our activity on our land, air, water, and biodiversity.

In the past our province's approach to monitoring was sometimes questioned, so the previous government created an arm's-length agency, the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Agency, also known as AEMERA, with the aim of providing transparency and credibility to this important work. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the previous government had decent intentions, but the governance model they chose, which effectively outsourced the core government responsibility and work of environmental monitoring, which is important to public health or public safety, was inherently problematic. Indeed, monitoring involves both public health and public safety. It is a core government responsibility.

Last fall, as part of the government review of agencies, boards, and commissions, I asked for an independent review of AEMERA. The review was conducted by Dr. Paul Boothe, former Deputy Minister of Environment with the federal government and an expert in public administration. The review identified several concerns, including the fragmentation of scientific capacity within government, the diversion of dollars away from front-line monitoring and science to administration. In addition, there were rocky relationships with First Nations and with other levels of government. The review concluded that despite best efforts, AEMERA was a failed experiment in outsourcing a core responsibility of government to an arm's-length body and that

Alberta should consolidate its environmental monitoring capacity within the Department of Environment and Parks.

The government has accepted the report's recommendations, and in April I announced the decision to return the responsibility of environmental monitoring back to government as a core function of government like public health and public safety. The environmental science program in this legislation will make government directly accountable for environmental monitoring. That is as it should be. It will ensure government can quickly address issues or gaps in monitoring and direct resources appropriately. These actions will also eliminate fragmentation of scarce scientific capacity and reduce costly administrative duplication.

Mr. Speaker, through this legislation we are taking the best elements of AEMERA, that supported independent scientific monitoring, and improving upon them. The act does this in several ways. For example, it outlines the duties of the chief scientist, a position in the Alberta public service that will have several key responsibilities to ensure our environmental science program is transparent, scientifically credible, accessible to the public. We've clearly written into the legislation the mandate that the chief scientist must make the scientific data public, must establish a schedule for public reporting, and must report according to that schedule on the condition of the environment. The chief scientist will have a legislated duty to ensure information is scientifically credible, and the chief scientist will have the power under the act to determine where peer review might be necessary.

The legislation also establishes a science advisory panel to provide independent advice to the chief scientist, periodically review the scientific quality of the research programs, and assess the scientific integrity of the overall program. I do note here, Mr. Speaker, that we have retained the science advisory panel as it was in the previous government's approach to environmental monitoring. We have retained the best aspects of the previous government's approach while eliminating the more costly aspects of governance and duplication. The panel will review the environmental science program to ensure it is scientifically credible and sound. I will also add that the individuals on the science advisory panel are remaining in their role.

The science advisory panel can also request to review a specific program or report, or the chief scientist can ask for their review and advice. The panel is empowered to publicly comment on matters of environmental science. This is an improvement over the previous act. The inclusion of this clause provides a guarantee for scientists that they can speak out on matters of public interest because that, too, is critical to ensuring credible and transparent scientific monitoring.

One more point, Mr. Speaker, is the composition of the science advisory panel. Members must be recognized experts in their field as evidenced by publications in peer-reviewed journals and by the record of scientific advice that they have provided. An important addition to the act, that we have included, is that future appointments will come from a list of qualified candidates provided by the science advisory panel. That way we are ensuring that the best minds are guiding us as we build up our knowledge and capacity to move forward.

Bill 18 also specifically mandates the minister to establish another panel to advise the chief scientist and the minister on how to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into the environmental science program. We are taking the name for this program, the indigenous wisdom advisory panel, from the existing traditional ecological panel. This was their recommendation, and we took it. The indigenous wisdom panel will provide strategic advice and recommendations to the chief scientist and to the minister. That advice will have regard to meaningful incorporation

of traditional ecological knowledge and inclusion of indigenous peoples within the monitoring, evaluation, and reporting system.

The indigenous wisdom panel will also provide advice on methodologies, cultural issues, and approaches. The panel will provide advice not only about traditional ecological knowledge and how to integrate it with western science programs but will also advise on how to best engage indigenous communities. This part is key. The relationship with the minister that the legislation establishes ensures that there is a nation-to-nation conversation and relationship around matters of environmental monitoring and reporting. This piece became difficult with a nation-to-agency relationship, Mr. Speaker, and this act seeks to address that.

9:10

Bill 18 also includes a number of transitional provisions that will help transition the dedicated agency staff back to government as well as move the property, assets, rights, obligations, liabilities, powers, duties, and functions to the Crown.

As I have mentioned previously, monitoring the environmental impacts of industry is a core government function. This vital work is to be the responsibility of the province directly. Bill 18 moves us closer to this goal by putting the right governance model in place and by maintaining the best aspects of the previous government's approach.

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude by indicating that this approach is supported by First Nations and by scientists because it maintains all aspects of scientific credibility and independence. For industry's part they wanted certainty and good governance. That is what this change affords them as well. Communities, particularly in the lower Athabasca, that I've had the privilege of touring since being sworn into cabinet last year, have told me over and over again that what they want is evidence-based decision-making. They want good analysis and good reporting to the public. They want an analysis of cumulative effects. They want to have input. They want to have a say. They want established, clear expectations of industry with thresholds and triggers, which is what the regional plan, in addition to our monitoring work, will undertake. First Nations over and over again have told us that they would like a new relationship with the province of Alberta, and that is what we are moving forward with.

This change, Mr. Speaker, is part of our overall approach to move forward on oil sands development in a thoughtful, more coordinated, more accountable way. It will ensure that Alberta's development is environmentally responsible, that it is credible, that it is backed by the best evidence and the best science. At the end of the day, this act will also ensure that we are accountable to the people of Alberta, to our trading partners, and to the rest of Canada.

Thank you. That concludes my remarks on Bill 18.

**The Speaker:** To confirm, hon. minister, you're moving second reading. Is that correct?

**Ms Phillips:** Yes, that's right.

**The Speaker:** Anyone wishing to speak? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk on Bill 18, an Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. I'm quite confident that all present today believe that Albertans deserve a system of monitoring that not only provides world-class environmental monitoring but protects the independence and integrity of those involved. Ensuring this is a priority of the Wildrose Party, and to that end, there are aspects of this bill that deserve some questions being raised.

When it was announced last month that the Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Agency, or AEMERA, was going to be disbanded under the ABC review, questions arose. What would replace it? It turns out that the body's main responsibilities would be brought back into the ministry and that many of the former agency's duplications of operations would be eliminated.

This bill will also establish the position and role of the chief scientist and goes further to establish a scientific advisory panel that would provide advice to the chief scientist. Of concern would be the autonomy of these members and the chief scientist. While the chief scientist has the autonomy to speak out in a public fashion, it is always a concern whether true independence while within a ministry is actually achieved.

The basis of this bill is a report by Paul M. Boothe, PhD, who was formerly Deputy Minister of Environment Canada. His report had three basic findings: AEMERA strained the province's limited scientific knowledge capital; two, bad relationships with the ministry in Environment Canada limited any scientific co-operation; and, three, high operating costs within AEMERA.

In his report Boothe pointed out that the former government failed to consider the limited capacity of the province's scientific community. The process of transferring the limited available scientific capacity from AEP to AEMERA became an arduous and stressful task. Furthermore, the report recognized that the scientific needs of Alberta Environment and Parks was not given due consideration, which considerably strained already poor relationships between the two.

Mr. Speaker, AEMERA was not, despite the findings of the Boothe report, a three-year failed experiment. In fact, numerous scientists throughout Canada opined that that was not the case. Many concerns of note include the fact that AEMERA had received the transfer of assets only in May of 2015, and this review began a scant three months later. This raises the question of whether other options existed. Could AEMERA's mandate have been better clarified, and would that have helped alleviate some of the friction between AEMERA, Alberta Environment and Parks as well as Environment Canada? Perhaps this clarification would have permitted the much-needed multijurisdictional co-operation, thus ending the turf war between agency, ministry, and federal government.

It is important to note that much of what the Boothe report cited as the high cost of AEMERA was derived from sole-sourced Alberta Environment and Parks contracts prior to AEMERA being established. Critics also point out the irony that this decision appears to be solely based on Boothe's report rather than making an independent scientific and financial peer-reviewed study.

While consideration of the government's position has merit, concerns do remain. AEMERA was initiated as an arm's-length organization for the government to refute accusations that the data that was being collected and the direction on environmental monitoring was somehow being influenced by politics. Of course, for the same reasons there are justifiable concerns with this government and the opportunity to taint the process with politics. Several times the members opposite have stated that one of AEMERA's flaws was that it was another example of the PC government taking core government and shipping it out to agencies with highly paid executives. As stated previously, consolidating power in the government's hands could be troubling, especially given some of the more radical views of this government's caucus and staff. It needs to be ensured that this body has absolute autonomy to present its position in a public manner.

Given Dr. Wrona's reputation we are happy to see that he will continue to lead the monitoring, and we hope that he and his panel

will be given every opportunity to operate independently. With the monitoring taken within the ministry, it is now more important than ever that we ensure that these scientists are given free rein to operate independently. Without it, our energy sector's reputation may be at risk. This must not be allowed to happen. I will reiterate this point over and over. It is essential that we ensure the credibility and reputation of our environmental monitoring. Without it, we hamper our oil industry's vested interest in seeing that we have a world-class monitoring system. It's in these industries' best interests to track their environmental impact and mitigate it as much as possible. Hopefully, this will be achieved through this bill.

Another important facet of the Boothe report was the acrimony between the various groups. It's believed that much of the friction between upper management at Alberta Environment and Parks and AEMERA was due in no small part to uncertainty around accountability and roles between the two bodies. This exacerbated an already tense situation stemming from the poaching of scientific experts from the Alberta Environment and Parks ministry.

These poor working relations also factored into a much larger issue with Environment Canada. The report found that there was a distinct lack of collaboration between AEMERA and Environment Canada. It further found suggestions that there was a reluctance or unwillingness on the part of AEMERA to acknowledge that environmental monitoring is of a shared nature of jurisdiction. This lack of co-operation may have impacted the quality of monitoring as the exceptional resources and monitoring capability of Environment Canada were underutilized. This resulted in possibly inferior monitoring.

9:20

The last major point from this report was the concern of higher operation costs associated with AEMERA. While articles such as the April 7 one titled *In Defense of AEMERA*, written by half a dozen of Canada's scientists, dispute the high salaries that the Boothe report alleges, much of the high cost is due to sole-sourced Alberta Environment and Parks contracts before the formation of AEMERA. The report also found that AEMERA was duplicating government and administrative structures, most of which already existed in the public sector at a lower cost. As a result, Boothe recommended that the functions of AEMERA be brought into the Ministry of Environment and Parks, the result of which is Bill 18.

Criticisms aside, it does need to be acknowledged that within this bill's framework the minister does not have the ability to appoint board members directly, and that does further this panel's independence, in my opinion. As long as the board avoids the inclination of nominating too many insiders and strives for a broad selection of members, Albertans should have confidence in this panel. We need to also note that given this government's record on consultation, it was refreshing to see that there would be the establishment of an indigenous wisdom advisory panel to make sure that the perspective and concerns of the indigenous population are heard. While questions on who will populate this panel and what expertise they will bring remain unanswered, inclusion in the process is vital.

It is hoped that this bill will improve relations with Environment Canada partners, consolidate the scarce scientific expertise in one location in Alberta, provide the least costly solutions in that the bill would eliminate duplications and use public-sector salary comparators, ensure regular public reporting, ensure that the chief scientist can speak publicly without approval from the minister, and ensure no ministerial or government interference in the panel process or its functions. The goal in all of this is credible environmental monitoring that has integrity.

We have always had world-class environmental monitoring, and we want to continue to lead the world. That is what we need to do. No one should be allowed to say that we have nothing but the best environmental standards in the world. We can always do better, and we in the opposition will endeavour to ensure we do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to address Bill 18, *An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring*. As the title suggests, independent environmental monitoring is something we need some assurances about. Man-made and cyclical climate change are realities, and we need to understand the true extent of these realities. Therefore, there is nothing more important to Albertans and to the oil sands industry than the quality of environmental monitoring that occurs in our beautiful province. Alberta's oil sands industry is acutely aware that monitoring and mitigating their environmental footprint in Alberta's north is key to their continued operation in this province.

Mr. Speaker, at this stage I do plan to support this bill. However, I would like to take this opportunity to air some of my concerns and the concerns that have been expressed to me by the people in the magnificent riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. Environment is very important to the magnificent riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, especially Sylvan Lake, I might add. The constituents I've spoken to agree that environmental monitoring is a government responsibility every bit as important as public safety. Wildrose, furthermore, recognizes that splitting Alberta's scarce environmental capacities in a manner that impedes Alberta Environment and Parks' ability to fulfill their mandate undermines key provincial obligations to a problematic extent.

However, we understand that this Boothe report appears to be the foundation for the creation of this legislation, and I want to just address a little bit about Boothe's report. It identified a number of issues with the agency AEMERA. When it did that, the Canadian scientific community quickly made it clear that a number of accusations made within the report were questionable. For example, the wages of AEMERA's staff have been identified as actually being on par with the public sector's.

The claim that this agency is a three-year failed experiment drew heavy criticism from the scientific community as the finances for the organization had not been in place for those three years. Consequently, if you think about it, many of the agency's mismanaged expenses were, in fact, expenses of Alberta Environment and Parks, not the agency itself. It had not yet received its financing. These expenses, furthermore, were often a consequence of sole-sourced contracting rather than competitive bidding processes. We cannot blame the market for not working when you do not allow it to operate in the first place.

To anyone reading the Boothe report, it easily becomes apparent that any failing that AEMERA experienced operationally was really a failing of the government in control of it. They had the purse strings. The reality is that the mandate of the organization lacked clarity. It is furthermore evident that the broader organizational structure of the organization should have clarified the role that AEMERA was to play in its relationship with Environment Canada and Alberta Environment and Parks. In addition to that, data-sharing and monitoring capacities between the agencies of AEMERA, Alberta Environment and Parks, and Environment Canada could have easily been clarified within the mandates of these organizations, yet the previous government as well as this government did not do that.

Further irony is found as a consequence of this government's odd choice to support a sole-authored, bureaucratic report that was never peer reviewed in their evidence-based decision-making rather than having an independent financial and scientific review of AEMERA. Mr. Speaker, the evidence laid out in the Boothe report at times fails to be sufficiently compelling. I believe that it is in the Legislature's and Albertans' best interests if the government provides Albertans with an honest, independent assessment of why it is not only important but also possible to bring the activities of AEMERA in-house.

There are a handful of issues I must ask my colleagues to consider before casting their vote this morning. Question 1: can we in fact reconcile the consequences of dividing Alberta's environmental capacities to a point where Alberta Environment and Parks is impeded in their ability to accomplish the tasks required of them by Albertans? I believe that the answer to that question is no, not really. I furthermore believe that this House would be mistaken to downplay the importance of that factor in making their decision today.

Another question: can the independence of environmental monitoring be accomplished by a government, and if so, does this bill actually accomplish that task? There are scientists that are worried that the task of environmental monitoring is one that will be impacted by the ideology of whichever party governs. One of the biggest issues before the House today is the relationship between government, science, and perceptions of partiality. Not to be picky, but we do have a minister on this file that has been clear in the past about her radical anti-oil agenda. [interjections] She has been.

**An Hon. Member:** It is written.

9:30

**Mr. MacIntyre:** It is written.

While most Albertans support a position that recognizes the economic importance of our oil industry and mitigates common environmental concerns by supporting requirements to closely monitor oil extraction and transportation activities while mitigating the impact of these activities where possible, the book in question offers ideas to protesters looking to shut pipeline operations down. That's a reality. Albertans need assurances that any minister's – any minister's – personal disdain for the province's number one job-creating industry does not supersede common sense. Albertans want to know that this minister or any minister will not be interfering with the scientific process, silencing results that that minister might personally not agree with.

The minister has never recanted her past actions, and I'd invite her to do so. We all grow, we change, we mature, and the beliefs that we once so adamantly held in our youth are often changed when we come face to face with the hard realities. I would invite the hon. minister to give Albertans the assurances they need by acknowledging a change of heart in the ideology she has expressed in the past regarding her anti-oil stance. It would foster trust. It would provide assurances that Albertans need. I don't think it's an unreasonable request to ask of a minister of the Crown of a province whose number one industry is resource based.

I believe that we have some of those assurances in the bill that's before the House today. I look forward to further debate on the possibility of strengthening those assurances because they are very important to have. This bill's title really says it all: to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. There is a perception amongst Albertans that that is not possible for a government to do.

There are scientists on the other extreme that see the writing on the wall for the Alberta NDP and wonder and worry that even if it

is in capable hands now, these hands are likely to change. Letters on the matter of bringing AEMERA in-house have spelled out concerns that it's possible a pro-business government might not maintain sufficient environmental monitoring of oil sands activities, and I believe those were similar to statements made by some government members when they were in opposition. There were questions about the independence of monitoring. I want to take this opportunity to reassure those scientists that even pro-business politicians are entirely aware that environmental monitoring is the industry's biggest priority and must be.

Being pro-business is a position the politicians take because it is the clear path to help Albertans find the employment they need to meet and maintain their social and economic needs. Wildrose supports businesses because businesses support Albertans. Our support for these businesses is contingent upon them operating in the best interest of Albertans. Any industry that is harming Albertan waterways, soil, or air quality without any attempt to mitigate their impact is failing to act in the best interest of Albertans. Our oil industry knows this. Our oil industry understands that tolerance for their activities comes from their commitments to stewardship of Albertans' lands. Our oil industry knows that they need to be accountable, to monitor and take every available action to mitigate their environmental impact. Being pro-business does not make you anti-environment, nor does it make you anti-Albertan.

A sophisticated political party will not lose sight of the people whose interests must come first, Albertans. I do believe that this is the right move for Alberta's overall environmental reputation. I will be supporting the bill at this stage of its reading. I am hopeful, given the questions that I've raised, that the House will recognize this bill needs to go to committee. It desperately needs to be sent to committee so the scientific community has access to the lawmakers in our province, to bring their concerns before the committee so that this bill can be improved upon.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions to the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake under 29(2)(a)?

The leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy this morning to rise to speak on Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. My concerns with the bill start with the very title of it. What the bill does, interestingly enough, is exactly the opposite of what the title advertises. It says, "to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring," and then the actual action of the bill is to take away whatever independent environmental monitoring is occurring right now and put it under the direct control of a minister, thereby making it dependent upon government and not independent, as the title of the bill falsely advertises. You can only imagine that from there there's not anywhere to go but downhill.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this bill is a bit of a window into the mind of the current NDP government. It's a three-step process, it's cute, and it gets what they want. It just doesn't stand up to public scrutiny. The three-step process, as I see it happening over and over again by this government, is that, one, they decide what they want to do; two, they find any report anywhere or some part of some report somewhere that supports what they want to do; and then they latch onto that and call that the final word and do what they wanted to do in the first place.

We've seen it so many times. The most glaring example recently, as a comparator, is on the minimum wage policy, where the minister has actually said in *Hansard* that there are as many reports against that policy as there are for it, yet this government chooses the one

report that is in support of what they wanted to do in the first place based on their ideology. They glom onto that, and they say: this is our excuse for following our ideology against all other reason and all other common sense. Unfortunately, this is another example of that.

The Boothe report actually isn't a bad report. It's been pointed out here that it hasn't been peer-reviewed and that only one person did it, but that by itself does not necessarily make it a bad report. The Boothe report gives several choices – several choices – that don't include bringing it under the direct control of a minister. You know what? It's just as bad to bring it under the direct control of a minister who is a pipeline denier and a minister who has written the preface for a book about shutting down the oil sands completely, that an action a day keeps the oil sands away or something of that nature.

I know the government side tends to think that's funny, and that actually is making my point. The fact that the government thinks it's funny that the person that's going to be in charge of monitoring actually wrote the foreword to a book about shutting down the oil sands completely actually absolutely kills any perception the public or the industry might have that the monitoring will be done in an impartial, balanced, unbiased way. [interjections] You can tell that the government side, Mr. Speaker, is trying to yell over me because they don't like hearing the truth. I know the truth hurts when it's against you, but I'm going to keep telling it. I'm going to keep telling it.

What we have here is a report to put the environmental monitoring under the direct control of a minister and a government that up until ever so recently were confirmed pipeline deniers. Now, they claim that they have seen the light and that they're going the other way, and that's a good thing until it isn't. It wouldn't be quite so bad if the minister in charge of this was the only one on the government side with a well-documented history of attacking pipelines and attacking the energy industry, but the fact is that the government benches are rife with, full of people that have protested against the energy industry. I see one of them shaking their head over there because they remember it.

The perception by the public of putting the environmental monitoring agency under the direct control of a government chock full of people that have fought against, protested against, written forewords to books against the energy industry really will do nothing but kill public confidence not only in Alberta but around the world, because around the world you cannot possibly take seriously the monitoring being under the thumb of someone who has a history of attacking the industry that the monitor is in charge of looking after. So it's the most irresponsible way in which you could possibly do this, yet the government has chosen this path above all the other choices available to them.

9:40

I could talk more, but I think that that is as big an indictment of this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker – what's really interesting, once again, is that you don't have to make any of this stuff up. This stuff has already written itself. The members of the government side have already been to the protests, they've already written the forewords to the books, they've already attacked the oil and gas industry, and you don't have to look any further than *Hansard* to find a lot of it. If you look at that and you look at just common sense and credibility and compare it to the title of the bill, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring, and you see how completely divorced the subject matter of the bill is from the title of the bill, that tells you all you need to know.

I won't be supporting this. I understand there might be some amendments coming forward. I'll look at those, but they're going

to have to be pretty special and pretty spectacular before they'll make this bill supportable because, Mr. Speaker, this goes in exactly the opposite direction that it should go.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions of the hon. member under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have some questions about this bill and some concerns. My concerns really revolve around the need to future-proof environmental monitoring. My real concerns on this bill are on the appointment process for the chief scientist. You know, it's a bit ironic that the title of the bill – and personally I am not a fan of the trend towards very political titles of bills – is An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring, which implies that somehow this was not independent.

I know that later today we're going to be talking about Bill 1, which is, I think, the mother of all political spin on bill titles. But, you know, regardless, I think that, unfortunately, what it does is that it ramps up the rhetoric. We do love rhetoric in this place, but I think it does take away from fulsome and meaningful debate.

Without question, the Alberta Party are strong, strong supporters of environmental monitoring, of responsible development of all kinds in the energy industry, in the forestry industry, in manufacturing and agriculture, in anything and everything we do. Of course we are, because that's who Albertans are. Albertans believe those things, and that's our job in this place, to reflect that.

If I possibly can, I'm going to try my best to ramp down the rhetoric and really stick to the evidence. That's something the minister has said that she is trying to achieve here, a function that will be an evidence-based agency or department, a function within government, that not only will be independent but will be seen to be independent by Albertans. I think that is really, really important. If that is true and if she is striving and if the government is striving for an evidence-based approach, then why is it that the minister holds in her hands alone the ability to appoint the chief scientist? Now, she's given us assurances: "Well, there will be an open process. It will be fully transparent. We'll transition the group from before." My question is: how do we know? She's simply saying: "Trust me. Take me at my word. It will be fine."

I would ask all the members on the government side of the House . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Trust, but verify.

**Mr. Clark:** Exactly. My friend from Calgary-Hays said, "Trust, but verify." Absolutely. I think that's exactly the model that we need.

Let's put the shoe on the other foot. If you folks on the backbenches – I see that all of you folks on the backbenches are the only ones here at the moment – were in opposition . . . [interjections] Apologies, Mr. Speaker. I apologize. A slip of the tongue there. My apologies.

But let's put the shoe on the other foot here. Let's say that Bill 18 was proposed by a government, heaven forbid, that's run by our friends in the Official Opposition. Imagine that. Okay? Imagine that you're looking at this bill. But you're not on the government side; you're on the opposition side, and someone else is government. Would you be happy with this bill? Would you go: "Yeah. You know what? I trust that the minister of environment from that honourable party across the way is going to do the right thing. This is a bill I can enthusiastically support?"

When my constituents come to me and say, "Wait a minute; I'm not convinced that this is, in fact, independent; what I see is a minister who can appoint a chief scientist based on undefined criteria," you'll say: "No, no. You have it wrong. We trust this

government. We trust this minister. It's okay." Would you really do that? I think that's the question that we need to ask ourselves about this because environmental monitoring, frankly, is far too important to simply leave up to trust. As my friend from Calgary-Hays said, let's trust, but verify.

What I would like to see is a panel that is a crossfunctional group – stakeholders from the environmental side, from government, from industry, from citizens at large – that perhaps vets candidates, presents a list of options to the minister, and she may choose from that vetted, independent, qualified list. Let's make this truly independent, and let's make that process open.

I have no concern calling this a core role of government – I really don't – whether it's an independent agency or it's the core role of government. I do think that AEMERA has done some good work with industry although the Boothe report does talk about potential cost savings and duplication and overlap. As I hope you know, I'm always on the lookout for those sorts of things. But I think that if it's going to be within government, the independence, the true independence, is absolutely critical.

Now, on the good side of the bill, I really do like the indigenous wisdom advisory panel. It certainly is an excellent idea and I think one that's time has come and an area that I will give the government praise for, engaging with indigenous peoples in a meaningful way. I think they have advanced that discussion quite effectively not just in this area but in others, and I certainly think they deserve some praise for that.

Again, the cost savings piece from the administrative side. I think there's a possibility that if we do the appointment process properly, it will promote the scientific integrity of environmental monitoring in Alberta, but that irony of the bill title being Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring and then asking simply to trust the minister – "It's okay; trust me" – is a real concern.

I will be looking forward to seeing what amendments perhaps come out. We may consider some ourselves.

**Mr. Cooper:** Ourselves?

**Mr. Clark:** Yes, ourselves. My crack team of researchers are very capable of coming up with some really good stuff.

You know, I reiterate that concern around the true independence given what the stated objectives are of the government. I really do want to express that concern and look forward to hearing other debate, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a) are there any questions to the Member for Calgary-Elbow?

Seeing none, I would call upon the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. It is always an occasion when a minister decides to rearrange the deck chairs within their portfolio, but it is a particularly poignant occasion when the minister needs legislation to move those deck chairs around.

Mr. Speaker, public servants are averse to these government reorganizations. It takes time for the new structure to take hold and for individuals to get used to the new reporting hierarchy. Whether or not an independent agency working at arm's length to government is any better than having those public servants employed as line employees of the department is always a good debate for the experts and academics of public administration. One can only hope that whatever conditions existed and necessitated the need to create the independent agency, those conditions have

passed and that adequate regulatory enforcement will continue when brought back into the line department.

**9:50**

One difference between being arm's length and being back in the line department is ministerial authority. The minister can tell those public servants to do something, and essentially they have to do it. If they were at arm's length, there is a barrier in the way preventing ministerial interference. The question for Albertans becomes: can you trust the minister of environment to do the right thing? With this government's history of environmental radicalism such as the minister's foreword to *An Action a Day: Keeps Global Capitalism Away*, we are concerned about ministerial interference, but the opposite was the concern when you had political parties tied to big corporate donations. Thankfully, the NDP and Wildrose shared a common cause and eliminated corporate and union donations to lessen that possibility of interference.

If the public servants are spared interference, we trust Alberta's scientists will deliver the world-class environmental monitoring we rely on. It is vital to ensure that the scientists are given the freedom to operate independently in the public service environment. What I mean is: follow that rabbit down the rabbit hole. You never know where it might take you. Write those papers, get published, but also summarize and brief the minister on those papers. Without world-class monitoring the reputation of our energy sector is at risk. It is crucial that we defend the integrity and credibility of our environmental monitoring.

Co-operation between federal and provincial monitoring bodies is important to ensure we maintain world-class standards in Alberta. Early on it is going to be critical that federal and provincial scientists get on the same page and are able to share information back and forth without repercussions but also to stick to their constitutional roles and responsibilities when it comes to the environment.

I am pleased to see that a highly reputable scientist, Dr. Wrona, will continue to lead the environmental monitoring. We appreciate that the minister cannot appoint monitoring board members directly. That being said, it makes me wonder. Rather than pals of the minister being chosen, if the board is selecting nominees, it might become too much of an insiders' clique. Don't get me wrong; I've heard nothing to put into question any of these people's objectivity. But no one wants this group of scientists to be an offshoot of the Pembina Institute or the Sierra Club or Greenpeace or only hiring out of one university. We need a diversity of scientists from all backgrounds and walks of life with credible, scientifically peer-reviewed published papers, who work for Albertans. It is this credibility that ensures Alberta's world-class monitoring secures the longevity and reputation of Alberta's energy sector.

The oil industry is fully invested in seeing Alberta have world-class environmental monitoring. They know tracking industry's impact is a priority because for them mitigating their impact is a priority. The landscape that is already certified reclaimed and the grasslands populated by wood bison are such an example of industry mitigating their impact.

Mr. Speaker, Wildrose will be watching the government closely to ensure that political interference does not damage the quality or credibility of our monitoring. Wildrose will sound the alarm if government goes too far off track.

In the meantime I am prepared to support this piece of legislation.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock?

Are there any other members who wish to speak? The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. I know that it has been mentioned in the House already this morning, the unique title. When it comes to moving environmental monitoring from an independent, arm's-length body of government into what essentially is the minister's office—I know you'll be surprised, Mr. Speaker, but from time to time in this Chamber politics break out—the independence of the minister's office could potentially be called into question. [interjections] I know. It's a shock. To move monitoring from an independent, arm's-length body into the minister's office, it may be a bit of a stretch to call the piece of legislation that does that An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring.

Before I continue, let me be clear that as a province we need to ensure that we continue to have independent environmental monitoring because the future of our province will be determined by how we go about engaging with our environment and with industry. It's important for all of us to ensure that we are using science to monitor our environment. It's important to all of us that we are conserving our environment while we engage with industry.

Alberta has been a world leader in finding that balance. I know that my hon. colleague from Calgary-Foothills is more than pleased to stand in this place and talk about that relationship that industry has had. Over a very short period of time industry has made incredible steps forward on this file, and we should all be proud of that. We should be proud that we lead North America on our environmental record, and we should be proud of the relationship that we have.

Let me be clear that as a conservative I believe we ought to conserve things, and that includes being responsible with our environment. Many Albertans who are conservative are some of the best environmentalists when it comes to conserving ranchlands and much of the grasslands that are in your constituency, Mr. Speaker, as well as the foothills and the forests. We all have a desire to ensure that we are acting appropriately.

I appreciate the comments from the independent member from Calgary-Elbow when he spoke about what the NDP opposition would say to a piece of legislation just like this, when the government is saying: "Trust us. We're bringing it into the minister's office, but we promise not to make it political. We promise not to make the appointments political. We promise to allow the independence to be a priority." This might come as a surprise to you, Mr. Speaker, but the NDP government of today will not be the government forever in our province. [interjections] I know. It's hard to believe. It's possible that future governments won't treat the independence of the chief scientist as this minister claims she will keep the independence. It's concerning when we move in this direction.

**10:00**

Now, having said all that, that's not to say that AEMERA was perfect. The Boothe report was released and identified a number of significant challenges around AEMERA, and my hon. colleague outlined a number of those in terms of the amount of resources that are available and the interaction between the ministry and AEMERA. It's not perfect, but to say that the only solution is to bring all of the monitoring into the minister's office is a little disingenuous. In fact, to say that, to bring all of the monitoring, and that you're going to make it more independent is certainly not a good reflection of the facts. So we have some significant challenges with that.

We've heard in the House this morning about some of the government's history around these types of issues and around potentials with ministerial interference, and we've certainly seen

over the last year a consolidation of powers into the minister's office. I remember times when the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona would rise in this House and speak of draconian legislation that consolidates power.

Now we're really starting to get a bit of a track record that this government actually knows better than anybody else. They're making significant changes around the powers that ministers have or don't have, and it's a concern. It is a concern to all Albertans around the powers that ministers should or shouldn't have, around what I consider to be a step in the wrong direction when it comes to allowing the House to debate issues and not just consolidate powers into the minister's office. This is another step in that direction.

It is critically important—critically important—that should this bill pass, the independence of the chief scientist and all of the other panel members and folks who are going to populate the indigenous wisdom advisory panel have the ability to speak out because without that independence it puts significant risk to both, in fact, the environment and industry, which is not a step in the right direction. It's critical that we defend the integrity and the credibility of our environmental monitoring, and this step certainly can put that into question.

Now, I am interested in the debate because AEMERA wasn't perfect. We needed to take steps to rectify some of the challenges there, so I'm sympathetic to this piece of legislation at second reading while we move forward. I'm not sure if at the end of the day I'm able to support it, particularly because we've seen very good independent, science-based agencies and bodies, many of which this government supports, reportedly.

Just yesterday in the House the Energy minister spoke about the NEB and the approval process for pipelines, how it should be less political and removed from political decisions using independent, science-based monitoring bodies like the NEB, that has made some positive recommendations over the past few days. The government has said that that is appropriate, but now we see something that could put that sort of independence into question.

Perhaps more importantly than all of that, Mr. Speaker, while I think many of those points ought to be considered, one of the challenges that we have with this government's we-know-best approach is their seeming refusal to consult or to get dissenting opinions on this. While the Boothe report certainly is one of those reports and there are certainly some strengths there, there are a number of other voices in the public domain that aren't comfortable with the direction that this government is taking, this consolidation of power around the minister's office.

One thing that I am very committed to and passionate about is the use of committees in this House so that all members can have access to appropriate information and we can make the best decision for the whole province, not just for the minister's office or not just for an ideological bent of the government but to allow that discussion to happen. So I'm happy to move an amendment today, Mr. Speaker, that I would love to pass along, and this particular amendment will be an amendment that you are becoming quite familiar with.

If you don't mind, I'll just proceed with the amendment, if you're okay with that, or would you prefer to wait until it's distributed?

**The Speaker:** Just give them a minute to get it distributed.

**Mr. Cooper:** I see, Mr. Speaker, that the table has a copy now. Would you be okay if I proceed?

**The Speaker:** Sure.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, it's a notice of amendment on Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. I move

that the motion for second reading of Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Mr. Speaker, there is a wide range of opinions on this piece of legislation, and what this Assembly should be able to do is to have those voices come to a table where we can all speak and all hear, quite likely, from both Dr. Boothe and I believe it's Dr. Wrona, from some of the other organizations that have been involved in the creation of AEMERA, from some of the folks who would like to speak specifically to the importance of the independence of monitoring, from some of the individuals in the environmental community that think this is a step in the right direction, from some folks in industry that think this is a step in the right direction as well as from those same folks who work in the environmental monitoring movement that really appreciate and are concerned about moving this inside the department. Having appropriate information is critically important to the decision-making process.

Now, I know that government members are going to stand up in their place and say, “Oh, Mr. Speaker, we don't have time” and, quite likely, “We've already announced that we're cancelling AEMERA.” But in this Chamber we must – we must – take a long view on decisions that we make, and if that means we need to pause so that we get the right decision this time, not just for this government but for the next government and the government after that and the government that some day I hope my children will be involved in, if that means we need to pause for three weeks, I'd say that it's worth it.

10:10

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

We will refer to this amendment as REF1.

Are there any questions of the hon. member under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm so pleased that in this House we are spending so much time talking about the environment. I know it's something that maybe the House has not seen before. So through this bill that was introduced, Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring, I am finding out that we all in this House are committed to environmental stewardship.

First of all, I wanted to speak and thank the members opposite who have spoken and agree that it is important for government to take environmental stewardship very, very seriously, and I thank you for your concern for the environment.

Because we have spent so much time talking about the need to ensure that we monitor the environment and the consequences of industry, I would respectfully suggest that we should not be supporting the amendment as proposed by the MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I personally do not think that we have the time to refer this to a committee because we need to make sure that we continue to monitor the environment and then to set in place the systems to do so. Now, I do appreciate the intent of the amendment. That demonstrates, really, the commitment of the members opposite to making sure that as a government and as Albertans we do watch over the environment and that we carefully monitor the impact of our industry and actions on the environment.

Mr. Speaker, over 40 years ago, this is when I started wondering about the environment. Many of us do remember the famous book by Rachel Carson that warned all of us about the impact of what we

were doing to our environment. So since we have been concerned about environmental awareness and environmental monitoring for over 40 years, maybe 50 years – I can't remember exactly when the book was published – I think it's important that we in this House vote down this amendment and that we continue the process to make sure that Bill 18 is enacted as an act of this House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party. Not under 29(2)(a)? Is it a main question?

**Mr. McIver:** I was going to speak but not under 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** Proceed.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. House leader from the opposition for the amendment on An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. Of course, the amendment is a good one because the bill in its current form really goes in the opposite direction from where the title advertises that it goes. This will actually give all members of all sides of this House an opportunity to get together, hear expert evidence and testimony from Albertans who are well suited, well able, well educated, well experienced to give us advice on getting this right.

The environment is something that we all share. It needs to be monitored, it needs to be enforced, and it needs to be done fairly. It needs to be done in such a fashion that the future is protected for our children and grandchildren. It also needs to be done fairly and in such a fashion that when it's done well, those companies and those seeking to operate their companies, extract resources and undergo activities of that nature, that have committed to doing it right, doing it properly, doing it in a way that stands up to environmental scrutiny, will be allowed to do so. Anything else is not suitable. Anything else is not good enough for Alberta.

This amendment will actually give us a chance to get advice from people that will put us, I think, in a better position to have an environmental monitoring effort and organization and agency that can accomplish that, Mr. Speaker, and I would implore all members of the House to vote for this amendment. It can only make the legislation better.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Hays? West Yellowhead, under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Yeah. Well, I find this very interesting, in fact, that the third-party member talks about environmental issues. I've been involved in environmental issues for many years, hon. member, and I'll tell you that your record on the environment was probably down around in the category of an F, okay? That's where it sat. Whether you were talking forestry issues, whether you were talking air and water issues, they were all down there, right? They were there. I've argued with environment ministers over the years on these things, so I would like to know . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, the comment, then.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I would like to know exactly what his comments on that are.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the protest continues. Actually, the hon. member just made all my arguments from the first time I was on my feet. He actually gave them a resounding approval stating – in fact, even in his remarks here he talked about how he argued with environment ministers. Did you hear what he said? He argued with many environment ministers. Yet the same member is



happy to put the whole environmental monitoring thing under the control of every environment minister from now on. You see how that just doesn't match up? Do you just see how exactly opposite of what is right the hon. member just demonstrated for this entire House?

There's a bill here that says to put the environmental monitoring agency under the direct control not only of this environment minister, which I or the House may or may not agree with – there are different opinions, I'm sure, in the House about how much we agree with this environment minister – but this bill doesn't just say to put it in control of this environment minister; it says: put it in control of every environment minister forever until the legislation changes. The government side member just stood up and said that there was a whole string of environment ministers that he fought with because he couldn't trust that they would independently do the right thing.

Then he asked me my opinion. Well, you know what? When I get served up a softball that slow and that easy, what could I do but hit it over the fence? He just made the argument. He just absolutely made the argument that this should go to committee to be improved. He just made the argument that the legislation in its current form is absolutely a disaster. I couldn't possibly give better evidence against this legislation than the hon. member on the government side just delivered.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a hard act to follow.

Mr. Speaker, I think this amendment in sending this bill to committee is absolutely important. The hon. member from I believe it's Sherwood Park made the statement that she wasn't supporting the amendment because of the issue of time, that it would take too long. Well, the government has been in the saddle for a whole year, and they have rushed legislation after legislation through this House and then had to back up. Let's remember Bill 6. Let's remember what happened with Bill 6. It initially came out, and the government members over there applauded how great Bill 6 was and then ended up having to issue six pages of amendments to a bill they initially said was just fine. That's the problem with rushing legislation.

**10:20**

This legislation, Mr. Speaker, needs to go to committee so that the scientific community, the experts, which this government is not, can come and give their sound wisdom to the merits of this bill and the suggestions for change that they think, being the experts, this bill should have within it. It's called consultation. It is the Achilles heel of this government. In three years that one thing is going to bring this government down, their consistent lack of consultation with the people of Alberta, with the experts within our ranks in this province. This bill must go to committee. It is vitally important. Besides which, it will give the backbenchers on the other side something to do, and they need something to do.

I really support this thing going to committee. I would hope all members will. We need to hear from Albertans on this issue.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake?

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just very briefly I want to speak in favour of this amendment. I've actually just been sitting

here going back and forth with one of our researchers on perhaps how we may be able to cook up our own amendment here when we get to committee. But, you know, I just want to pick up on what the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake said. I think he made a really important point, that we're blasting through bills here. We're going a hundred miles an hour, and there's a real risk when we go this quickly through bills that there are unintended consequences, that mistakes get made.

There are 22 bills on the Order Paper. Fully 12 of them have been put on the Order Paper since May 2, in the last three weeks. While I have no trouble working hard – I'm willing on behalf of Albertans to work morning, noon, and night to do the important work of this Assembly – it is very challenging for any of us to actually give thorough review to important pieces of legislation that have wide-reaching consequences. I do have tremendous researchers on my team – I really do – and they do incredible work. They work long, long, long hours to help and provide me with the information I need, but frankly, my friends, it's risky, and I don't think Albertans want to see us blast through legislation as quickly as we're about to do here in the next perhaps as little as five or six days. There's a lot of risk in that, so I enthusiastically support this amendment and would encourage the government to do the same.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who wish to speak to the amendment? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak in support of this amendment. Let's face it; committee is the best place to gather information. We can have a myriad of different people come in with all the expertise they have and share information that can help us make decisions. Of course, that's what we're here to do. We're here to make informed decisions, and I don't believe we can make properly informed decisions without having all the information that's available to us. Obviously, committee is the place to get that. We don't know about all the different options. We don't know about all the different avenues that could be used to get us to where we want to be with environmental monitoring.

Now, there were some problems with AEMERA, but this is very important. This is very important to Albertans. It's very important to the world to show that we are world class at monitoring, so we need to have credible, transparent, world-class monitoring with integrity. By going to committee, we can gather the information we need to make informed decisions on the future of AEMERA and, of course, our environmental process here in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky?

Are there any other members who would like to speak to the amendment known as REF1?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:25 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Hanson	Panda
Clark	Hunter	Pitt
Cooper	Loewen	Rodney

Cyr Gill	MacIntyre McIver	Swann van Dijken
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Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miranda
Babcock	Horne	Nielsen
Bilous	Jabbour	Piquette
Carlier	Kazim	Renaud
Carson	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Connolly	Larivee	Schmidt
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	Malkinson	Sucha
Dang	Mason	Sweet
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Westhead
Ganley	McLean	Woollard
Goehring	Miller	

Totals:	For – 15	Against – 41
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[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Speaker:** We will now revert to discussion on the main bill. Are there any other members who wish to speak to Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring? The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With some caution because I can't remember whether I spoke to this before – I'm assuming that the table will tell me if I did – I would certainly like to raise the opportunity for this government to look at this again. It reminds me a lot of George Bush's clear skies bill and some of the decisions that he made around forestry, talking about a protective forestry act down there.

It's actually the opposite of what is being suggested in the name of the bill, ensuring an independent monitoring agency. In fact, we're taking away an independent monitoring agency and putting it into the government again, which it was in the past. It flies in the face of, I guess, what many of us in this House over the last 20 years were calling for at Environment, independent monitoring of the oil sands. People like Dr. David Schindler had to come up and somehow find the resources and do some independent monitoring and assessment of some of the impacts on the Athabasca River associated with oil sands activity. I'll reiterate what has been known for years about some of the groundwater leakage from some of these tailings ponds and the substantial changes that occurred in fish health as well as the potential for human health risk.

It may well be the case that this government will monitor in a more fastidious and evidence-based way. What many of us in Alberta have come to realize is that without some independence, without perhaps some federal involvement, which was initiated – in fact, the previous government were forced to set up an independent monitoring agency by the federal government and get independent scientists from across the country. Yes, you have to pay more for that, but there is a new sense of, I guess, credibility, not only locally but internationally, when you set up that kind of a monitoring agency.

It's unfortunate that we don't have the resources to do better than to bring it in-house again because a tremendous amount of thought and effort and investment went into AEMERA. It needed some stronger oversight. It needed more strict control in terms of its interference in some cases, as I've heard, with Alberta Environment and its attempt to actually control the agenda of Alberta Environment. Its specific role should have been defined very

clearly on the oil sands and other aspects of environmental assessment – air quality, river flows, toxic emission measurements – that are properly the purview of the Alberta government but could have been maintained there. To abandon it wholesale and to have the temerity, I guess, to say that we're now going to ensure independence when the very act of creating AEMERA was an attempt to create some independence raises questions about the kind of communications we're dealing with here: very ambiguous and, in fact, misleading, I would argue.

While the decision has been made and it's clear that at least with this government this is the way it's going to go, to be fair, I see no reason why with a stronger environmental agenda in this government we're going to see better monitoring than we've seen in the past. It still begs the question: why destroy a body that has the credibility of the scientific community, who have protested loudly this change of direction? It also begs the question: if a future government comes in, would they be prepared to monitor it in an honest and evidence-based way and ensure independent reporting to the Legislature?

Again, an amendment that would be favourable, from my point of view, would be to have this body report independently to the Legislature. As long as a body is reporting to the minister, we know what happens over time. The minister does not like to be embarrassed. The minister does not like to see bad news. Reports get amended. Reports get polished, you might say, and we all begin to doubt the credibility of the findings.

I mean, on the face of it this suggests, again, that while one could couch this in terms of financial savings, one is doing a serious disservice to the whole scientific community, the aspect of independence, the recognition that this was progress three years or so ago when the federal government, provincial government, and industry came together to say: we will independently fund a body that will be directing the indicators, monitoring the impacts, and reporting independently to Albertans and to the world what's improving, what's not improving, and what changes need to be made to ensure that water and air quality in the area is second to none or at least not being adversely affected by the activities in the oil sands.

It's difficult to support this, given that it's reversing decisions that this Legislature made under national duress. This is a government that wants new pipelines built based on environmental credibility, yet they're dissolving an organization that a lot of preparation and investment went into. [some applause]

That's all I needed to say. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I got the clapping I needed.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments for the Member for Calgary-Mountain View under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Yes, please. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. member, we've been in the Chamber a very similar amount of time. It's been close to a dozen years now. I've not had the opportunity to have you answer a question that I've asked, and unfortunately you haven't served in government yet.

**10:50**

I wonder if you're aware of a certain quotation from a debate exactly like this. It's a short quotation, and I'd be happy to read it to you and then get your reaction. It goes like this.

First of all, we've been calling for an independent body, a body that's arm's length from the government, to be able to make decisions that are completely free from political interference or any kind of interference. The challenge with this bill at the moment, with the way it's written, is that it's not going to be an

independent, arm's-length body making these decisions. We're relying on the minister to appoint people to this process or to this agency who will then select the scientists to participate. The secondary challenge with that is: based on which credentials are these scientists going to be selected? How can Albertans be certain that they are independent, free thinking, and not influenced whatsoever by the very board that selected them?

This speaks to the problem of appointments, to begin with, in any capacity. When you don't have an independent arm's length, a distance between government and a body that they're selecting, questions arise, [and] questions [begin] about judgment.

Hon. member, you might recall this. You and I and just a few others were in the House on Halloween 2013, when the current minister of economic development said this. This is directly from *Hansard* on page 2661.

I wonder, Member: what word would you apply to the fact that on Halloween 2013 the minister was pronouncing this, which is the exact opposite of the bill that he is promoting and supporting at this time? Is it hypocritical? What word would you use?

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you for the question. One might call that a leading question. What word you use, I guess, is your call. I know that it's always different when one challenges from the opposite side of the floor and you're in government. We've heard that from the PCs for years as well, that it's always different: "You guys don't really know what it's like in government. You have to make tough decisions. There are finances. There are politics." I don't mean politics in the generic sense. I mean adverse influences.

Having said that, this is clearly calling for the need, at the very least, of an independent appointments commission, a commission that is based, perhaps, on some retired judges who've never had any particular party affiliation. If need be, if you can't find anybody who hasn't had any party affiliation, at least have a mix of party affiliations on this body, some thoughtful, senior, somewhat independent people who would make to the best of their ability independent appointments, whether it's to this Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Agency or to the new energy efficiency agency that's now coming up. We would all feel better, I think.

Even the government would feel better if they had an independent agency such as they do in Ontario, where all appointments to agencies, boards, and commissions have to go through this body. This body weighs the evidence, weighs the CVs, weighs the partisanship of various applicants, and tries as best as possible to put together a merit-based appointment system so that all of us feel confident, whether it's the health board and we have some experienced health people or it's the energy efficiency board and we have people who have some strong engineering background and a recognition of the importance of energy efficiency and where the latest evidence is pointing, or in terms of the environmental experts, are at least recognized for their independence, that they're affiliated with a university, not in any way tied to government funding, and have not been shown to favour one party or another.

This is an opportunity, I guess, to take the next step, which this government has long called for when it was in opposition: an independent appointments commission. I think we would all recognize the value of that. The credibility of the government would be enhanced. Yes, you'd get some appointments that you didn't necessarily like, but on balance we would all end up with higher quality, more independent people who would enhance the reputation of Alberta in terms of its science-based, evidence-based decision-making. It would speak well of a government that is actually walking the talk, not just speaking about what a better system is but delivering on it.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

I'd just like to use this moment to caution against the use of unparliamentary terms in the House. Be cautious when you are making comments.

Anyone else speaking to Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:56 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Miranda
Babcock	Hanson	Nielsen
Barnes	Hinkley	Panda
Bilous	Horne	Piquette
Carlier	Hunter	Pitt
Carson	Jabbour	Renaud
Connolly	Kazim	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Schreiner
Cooper	Littlewood	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	Loewen	Sucha
Cyr	Loyola	Sweet
Dach	MacIntyre	Turner
Dang	Malkinson	van Dijken
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Woollard
Ganley	Miller	

Against the motion:

Clark	McIver	Swann
Gill	Rodney	

Totals:	For – 47	Against – 5
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[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a second time]

## Bill 19

### Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to move second reading of Bill 19, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act.

The purpose of this proposed legislation is to address consistency and fairness in executive compensation levels for the public agencies, boards, and commissions, also known as ABCs, that are subject to the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act. Alberta's public agencies play an important role adjudicating, managing, and delivering innovative programs and services on behalf of government. As such, they form a significant part of Alberta's public sector. However, these same agencies also count for a substantial portion of government spending on salaries, and compensation arrangements that are funded by public dollars need to be in line with the broader Alberta public sector and comparable jurisdictions. That's why our government is taking action. We are focused, and we are determined to increase both the transparency and consistency of how executives of provincial agencies are compensated.

Mr. Speaker, the 2016 Speech from the Throne signalled this government's intent to introduce enabling legislation to address the growing divergence in compensation practices between some public agencies and the core public service. The legislation before the House today is therefore a key deliverable in our government's commitment to Albertans. This legislation is meant to address the wide variance in the compensation philosophies, levels, and practices that currently exist in our ABCs.

With the divergence between some agencies and the broader public sector having grown over a considerable period of time, the time for action is now. Now is the time to begin the hard work of creating a consistent framework for executive compensation across our ABCs. Doing so is consistent with similar actions taken by other jurisdictions, including British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia, and it is consistent with the recommendations of previous Auditor General reports that government provide direction on executive compensation practices for senior executives in our ABCs.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. This legislation will accomplish a number of items. First, it authorizes the establishment of compensation frameworks for designated public agencies and designated executives governed by the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act, or APAGA. If this proposed legislation is passed, over the course of the summer the government will be contracting a professional benchmarking compensation firm to provide guidance on a rigorous and transparent set of frameworks for executive compensation. The government will also be reaching out to ABCs and the general public for feedback on the compensation philosophy that will guide these frameworks. I urge all Albertans and all members of this House to share your thoughts with the government through the online portal.

Second, this legislation will enable the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to issue directives requiring agencies to provide compensation information, including employment agreements and compensation policies, plans, programs, and studies.

Third, this legislation will provide notice to executives and agencies affected by compensation frameworks. By adopting this approach, we are ensuring that we respect current contracts to the extent possible while also ensuring that public dollars are used responsibly.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear that this legislation will enable the government to set, limit, or otherwise govern the compensation of designated executives or designated members through the establishment of compensation frameworks. This could include setting limits on variable pay or severance entitlements. This is a reasonable, responsible, and proactive approach by the government to deliver fairness and transparency for the people of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of members present I should add that this legislation will apply to APAGA agencies whose chief executive officers or equivalents have current base salaries over \$200,000 per year, excluding postsecondary institutions. This approach to addressing executive compensation in ABCs is aligned with the broader review of agencies, boards, and commissions. As members will recall, the government is nearing completion of phase 1 of the review, which applies to APAGA agencies, again excluding postsecondary institutions. As we announced in Budget 2016, phase 1 of the review will lead to the amalgamation or dissolution of 26 agencies, boards, and commissions, saving \$33 million over three years.

Mr. Speaker, I want to re-emphasize that rather than implementing the frameworks immediately, there will be an interval between passing the legislation and introducing regulations to allow ministers accountable for the designated agencies to

introduce the new approach and to have conversations with the boards and agencies that will be affected by the new compensation framework. This interval will also include an opportunity for Albertans to review our compensation philosophy and provide further comments through the government of Alberta website, and this interval will allow us time to consult with benchmarking professionals to ensure that we get this right.

11:20

Mr. Speaker, by moving forward with this legislation in the current session, we will have an aggressive but reasonable timeline for bringing consistency and fairness to executive compensation at public agencies. This is a priority for this government and for all Albertans. This is the right thing to do and the right time to do it. I ask this House for its support in moving this legislation forward, and I look forward to our discussion on this important bill.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually like the title of this bill, reform of agencies, boards and commissions. It seems that the intentions are good here. I'm always surprised when this government does something that saves money but not in the way you probably might think. I'm not surprised that they're cutting expensive salaries for patronage appointments, and I'm not surprised that they finally found a few pieces of low-hanging fruit to cut spending.

What I am surprised at are the hidden gems in their announcement. When the wage freeze was announced in March for agencies, boards, and commissions, ABCs, the most entertaining exemption was added in. Let me read this section from the announcement: the government in March announced this salary freeze for ABC managers and non-unionized staff. That announcement had a nice hidden gem inside it. There was a salary freeze and now a cut for the executives. There was a salary freeze for staff except the unionized ones. Yes, just as everyone expected, the NDP has given preferential treatment to their union friends.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** They're collective bargaining agreements. You can't break the agreements.

**Mr. Panda:** You broke many other things.

I wonder what would happen if all the executives decided to unionize. Would they be exempt from this salary cut if they were part of a union? The problem is not just the salaries of the executives at the top; the problem is the raises they're giving out to the tens of thousands in the entire public sector.

**An Hon. Member:** If they were unionized now, we'd be able to work through the contract.

**Mr. Panda:** Yes.

Congratulations. The salary cut for the executives will save taxpayers' money, but do not stop there. Do not stop on first base. Go for home. Score some real points, and save some real money. Use attrition to reduce the number of middle managers. Mr. Speaker, we are not asking them to fire anybody. We're asking them to just use attrition to reduce the number of middle managers.

Renegotiate the public-sector union contracts. If the government can hold the line for the top, they can hold the line for the middle. I haven't been at this job for very long, but I already know how easy it is to add fat in the middle, if you know what I mean. It needs to be slimmed down just as much as the bloated middle managers need to be slimmed down. A precedent is being set with this bill, a

precedent that contractual wages can be altered. Union contracts are no different. They may represent more people, but the precedent will exist after this bill is passed. Union contracts need to be part of the wage freeze. Union contracts need to stop getting special treatment just because the unions hold huge voting powers within the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, over 100,000 people have lost their jobs. More are losing their jobs as we speak. The unemployment rate is in the double digits in some of my colleagues' ridings, like Bonnyville-Cold Lake. We cannot give special treatment to government workers. This special treatment costs Albertans in the form of higher taxes, which this government insists on spending instead of saving. We cannot give special treatment to unions because the NDP allows unions to have so much influence over them. The money being spent on these contracts and these unnecessary salaries is causing Albertans to cough up more and more taxes.

I'm glad that this government found some relief for taxpayers with this bill. I'm glad that they found a way to cut 0.00018 per cent or so. I think this cut will cover the cost to bring pandas, well, more pandas to Calgary, so that's great. That's the way of this government. They find a tiny, tiny amount of money to save and maybe turn it into a bill to get maximum mileage, but at the same time they're increasing overall spending 3 per cent.

Targeting the executives or the, quote, 1 per cent seems to be the mantra of the NDP when it comes to policy creation. I can't help noticing that when it comes to going after the big oil companies – not those four, but they go selectively – or the executives at the top, the NDP are loud and clear. But when it comes to giving charities exemptions from their carbon tax, they're silent, just like now. When it comes to reducing emergency wait times for Albertans, people are waiting to hear if anything will be done. When it comes to reducing school fees, like they promised, they will need to put that off. When it comes to raising taxes on the wealthiest, the NDP passed legislation in the blink of an eye. But when it comes to giving tax breaks to small businesses . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Panda:** But when it comes to giving tax breaks to small businesses, Mr. Speaker, they vote it down repeatedly before finally deciding that maybe it will deflect attention from the way this carbon tax will hammer small businesses.

This government needs to look at the bigger picture. The previous government protected the salaries that this bill is aimed at. Now the NDP is protecting the unions, a group that costs far more than the fraction of a fraction of a per cent of our budget that this bill will save. I grew up before some of the members opposite were even born. There was a band during my college years called The Who. They had a great line that I would like to quote: "Meet the new boss, same as the old boss."

The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner gave a great speech on that same subject during the Bill 6 debate. He quoted a famous author, George Orwell, who wrote *Animal Farm*. For a change, you should read that book. [interjections] I'm not talking about the book.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, let's keep going on the topic. Speak to the Speaker, please.

**Mr. Panda:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that the members opposite go back and give that book a read and that speech a read, though. Nothing has changed. NDP may be preventing the previous government's friends from becoming fat, but they just have a new crop of friends, that are more equal than others.

This government needs to be honest with Albertans and address bigger issues of financial prudence. This government needs to address the excessive spending, that it insists on perpetuating, of the previous government. There are many ways that this could be addressed along the exact same vein as this bill, yet this bill stops short. This bill does not go the distance. This government has at least set a precedent for what needs to be done in the future. I'm glad that this government is addressing some of the excessive spending that the previous government allowed to happen. I just hope that the NDP does not replace one set of excessive expenditures with another.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

11:30

**The Speaker:** Are there other members that would like to speak to Bill 19, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act? Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief. I think the government deserves a lot of credit for this bill. It's long overdue. It's been decades that these boards, commissions, agencies have been packed by PC insiders and big donors to the PC Party. We've long been calling for this, and I think they finally have taken a hold on it and are really looking at it very seriously and trying to do it in a measured way and a sequenced way so that we're not actually damaging the quality of work that is going on in many of these agencies, boards, and commissions and not going to be sued for breaking contracts or agreements with people.

It's a thoughtful approach. It's going to give the government authority to standardize the compensation framework for the ABCs and compel them to disclose salary information. The pay grades will be determined over the coming months with the help of an independent consultant and will vary depending on the complexity of positions and the size of the organization. Very reasonable. Specifically, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act would apply initially to agencies whose executives have base salaries over \$200,000 a year, excluding postsecondary institutions, and one can understand that this is going to take a little longer to review. Under the current system CEOs and executives of ABCs have the authority to set their own salaries, bonuses, and severances, with no government regulation or oversight. How did this happen?

Jurisdictions such as Ontario, B.C., Nova Scotia have already produced these kinds of changes. So it's very reasonable, very appropriate. I fully support this attempt to both rein in costs and provide some credibility to these organizations with standard compensation practices as much as possible. It will include organizations like AIMCo, Petroleum Marketing Commission, Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, Alberta Energy Regulator, Alberta Health Services. These are over 50 per cent of the spending in this province, and it's long overdue that we have a better handle and better control over these organizations.

To their credit again, this year the decisions that were made by this government saved \$33 million. It brought some savings already by reducing the number of agencies and redundancies in agencies, boards, and commissions. So I give full credit for that. One example that was reported by CBC: Alberta Innovates' board salaries ranged from \$338,000 to \$479,000 a year. It's just incredible, Mr. Speaker, especially given the kind of challenges in this province today.

So I just wanted to applaud them. I wanted to say that I fully support this initiative, and my only caveat is kind of a broken-wheel comment. I hope you'll establish an independent appointments commission so that you won't be accused of the same thing in four years, that the agencies, boards, and commissions were stocked by

party insiders or party donors, and you can look us all in the face and say: "We have an independent commission; there's no question about the appointments based on merit here," and we can all be satisfied that our money is being well spent in these critical agencies, boards, and commissions. I'll be fully supportive.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a) are there any questions for the Member for Calgary-Mountain View?

The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise and speak on Bill 19, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act. I'm only a little pressed to take a position on this because there's more unsaid in this bill than there is said. Certainly, taking a look at the compensation of the agencies, boards, and commissions isn't necessarily a bad thing, but some of the code words that the government member that introduced this today used leave me with a little bit of concern, talking about consistency and what sounds to me like making sure that everybody's paid the same.

When you look at the agencies, boards, and commissions listed in the legislation – and it includes Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, Alberta Pensions Services, Alberta finance services corporation, AIMCo, Alberta Treasury Branches, Alberta Health Services – there's a wide range of expertise on these boards. They, because of the marketplace, Mr. Speaker, have different values, and I sincerely hope that the government isn't going to treat them all the same. I hear a lot of people talking about how they would like to have Cuba's weather in Canada, but most people don't want to bring Cuba to Canada, where, of course, everybody makes the same no matter what job you do. I think it's \$29 a month.

While I'm not saying that that's here, what I'm not hearing is if there's going to be any relationship between what the agency, board, and commission members are being compensated, if there's going to be some type of relationship between the skill sets, the education, the experience that are required. I hope so. What concerns me is that it doesn't say it in writing in the bill, in the introduction by the government-side member of the House that introduced it. It doesn't give me any comfort. So I'm hoping that at some point before we get to the end of this, the government side will clarify their intentions there because I think it's pretty fair to say that different jobs have different values in the workplace even in this House, Mr. Speaker, where you and the Premier and the ministers make more than the rest of us do and it's considered that the work they do has more value because they have more responsibility. I think that flows up and down the marketplace in Alberta in every line of work.

So I'll be looking for some comfort from the government side before we get to the end of this discussion, and I hope that somebody will clarify what method they're going to use or whether they are going to, as was – it wasn't explicitly stated, but there was talk about consistency. If somebody from the government side would clarify what level of consistency they're going to bring to this and, hopefully, some recognition of the skills.

The other part about this, too, Mr. Speaker, is that in a lot of these agencies, boards, and commissions traditionally, I think, we've had some pretty smart, pretty accomplished, pretty successful Albertans that have stepped forward to serve on these boards, that have actually given more of their own talents, skills, and abilities than they have received back in compensation. Probably you could find some cases where it could be considered that they were overpaid as well, which is why I don't mind that the government is reviewing this. I really don't. I'm just hoping, again, to hear some comforting words from the government, a little more description about how this

review is going to happen and the payment of the people that serve on these boards.

None of us on any side of the House should have any doubt that these agencies, boards, and commissions serve a valuable purpose. They provide expertise that government needs, that serves Albertans. They provide arm's-length bodies within which to deliberate outside of the direct shadow of this House. They can actually put policies and decisions in place at these very important bodies, that actually handle a lot of Albertans' serious issues. I mean, if you talk about Alberta Health Services, every Albertan's health, I don't know what can be more important than that. If you talk about AIMCo and the Alberta Treasury Branches and Alberta finance services corporation, that's all the municipalities; that's hundreds of thousands if not millions of mortgages and personal loans. They're making policy decisions that are going to affect Albertans.

I am going to sit down and hope that someone from the government side is going to stand up and actually put a little more meat on the bones of this legislation because – I will finish my debate the way I started it – the most disturbing thing about this bill is that there's more unsaid about what it's going to do than there is said.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) of the Member for Calgary-Hays?

I recognize the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

11:40

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity to speak on Bill 19, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act. With the current state of our finances, it's nice to see some attempt to rein in out-of-control spending. It would be nice to see the same prudent and shrewd attitude reflected in the appropriation and budget bill as well, but I suppose that would be just a bridge too far for this government.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, we're here to discuss Bill 19, an act that would provide the framework for tightening the public purse when it comes to the salaries of executives at our agencies, boards, and commissions, a welcome step in the right direction although it's a limited and small step but a step nonetheless. Albertans have known for years that the massive expansion of executive positions in our many ABCs, quite often beyond the reaches of public oversight and scrutiny, is hitting Albertans in their wallets. The Wildrose has spoken about the need for restraint at the upper levels at length. In the last election Albertans spoke as well.

Now, how far does this act go towards showing that restraint? Well, I suppose, it nibbles around the edges. It sort of picks around the margins to find some savings. In fact, it needs to be pointed out that this bill does not come with any built-in savings. It merely grants the government the authority to create the framework to review and standardize these salaries. So, Mr. Speaker, no. It's safe to say that the bill is not going to be the silver bullet that knocks out our massive deficit and gets a hold of our ballooning debt, but I would like to see some government analysis of what they expect to save.

Every time we spend taxpayers' money, I'd also like to see some consideration of value and firm expectations. In this House I've spoken at length about those two topics, and I'd like to bring them up yet again. I do this because it's critically important that value and accountability measures are considered. Value is, in short, what benefit we derive from a certain government action. It is the expected gain that we hope to achieve from a given expenditure of effort, time, or taxpayers' money. To that point, we must have some way of measuring the expected value, setting goals, and then going

back and comparing the actual to those goals. Mr. Speaker, this is where accountability measures come in, and once again I don't see any of those here. I see a framework. I see a broad outline, but I do not see clear expectations.

What I do see when I look at this government's fiscal plan is a massive amount of debt and interest. We're looking at an incredible amount of debt, debt that by the end of this government's term will carry an estimated \$2 billion annually in interest load. So where are we not getting value for this money? Is it exclusively in the executives and the executive salaries at ABCs? That's obviously a reductive and limited way to look at our problem.

I, too, am going to draw on the single largest example here, and that is Alberta Health Services, the largest single line item in Alberta's entire budget. In fact, Mr. Speaker, as a line item it is bigger than any other ministry. Now, we know from the latest annual report that there are approximately 15 full-time equivalencies – 15 full-time equivalencies – at the executive level. With total compensation, the salaries work out to \$6.4 million.

We also know from a recent written question that there are 182 employees at Alberta Health Services making \$200,000 or more, which, of course, was the threshold for that piece of legislation. Now, we don't know how much these 182 employees make in total compensation, but even assuming the bare minimum of \$200,000, that's over \$36 million. The actual number is obviously higher, probably by quite a bit. This 182 does not include a breakdown of jobs though we can assume that Alberta Health Services executives and many upper-level managers fall within it. I can't help but be reminded wherever I go in Alberta and in Cypress-Medicine Hat that good front-line health workers talk about five levels of bureaucracy to try to get an answer that usually doesn't come.

The point of this is to provide a sense of scale. When I talk about picking around the margins of the spending problem, it's important to put executive positions in perspective. Furthermore, under the executive level we see in the Alberta Health Services 2014-15 annual report that yet another 56 full-time equivalents in management directly report to the CEO. This level is significant because when the former government was called out for having so many AHS executives, several were just shifted down into another category. It wasn't saving anything. It wasn't saving a cent. It was merely a shell game. Under that, Mr. Speaker, we have 3,300 more in the other-management category. All told, that's over \$500 million in various levels of management.

As a proportion of total management, focusing on just the executives at Alberta Health Services is, again, just a small fraction of the larger issue, showing how enormous this public spending problem is. Of course, AHS as a whole had expenses of \$13.8 billion in the fiscal year 2014-15, and this government just passed a budget that allocates nearly \$400 million more to the organization from the public treasury. Since its inception, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health Services' spending has grown by leaps and bounds. We have averaged approximately 6 per cent annual growth year over year since it was created and in spite of many promises of efficiencies. Over 6 per cent annually compounded.

Mr. Speaker, that brings us back to the question of value. There's a great deal of bloat and waste and bureaucracy in government, wastefulness that has been cultivated through many years of never having to worry about it, but now we don't have the luxury of carelessness. We must be wiser with our taxpayer dollars. We need to see value at all levels and seriously examine all options for getting our spending back in line. On an age-adjusted, per capita basis we spend far more than any other province. We exceed the national average by 39 per cent. We exceed the average of comparable provinces like Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and

B.C. by even more than that 39 per cent. We must start to find value at all levels.

The AHS promises of efficiency and savings have not materialized. Picking around the edges is not going to be enough to pull us off the chart and put spending back into some semblance of reasonableness. We need to see action on public-sector contracts as well. We need to be getting all Albertans a better deal for their hard-earned dollars. Mr. Speaker, we need to find efficiencies throughout agencies, boards, and commissions. It appears to be just talk, though. Oddly enough, in the latest fiscal plan as part of the 2016 budget on page 41 AHS is "exempt from the cost saving measures related to supplies and services implemented in Budget 2016." I end that quote with astonishment. Why is Alberta Health Services exempt?

11:50

Mr. Speaker, getting value is not limited to executive compensation, and the government needs to get serious about that and about value for all of our hard-earned tax dollars. For the sake of the future and the ongoing sustainability of our services we need to get spending in line within a reasonable level. Yes, it's true that some of the runaway growth was due to a lack of transparency and accountability of these ABCs. That's why, ultimately, I will be supporting this legislation as one small step towards sustainability.

In closing, I want to caution the government: do not declare this as mission accomplished. Mr. Speaker, I absolutely believe that getting Alberta's per capita spending in line with other provinces is the first step to restoring investor confidence, that we need to rebuild our opportunities and our job market. It's created a level of unfairness between those that work hard in the private sector compared to those that work hard and are compensated in the public sector. This high per capita spending has been inflationary, and again, in closing, it has scared away investment and jobs.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, under 29(2)(a), any questions or comments for the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat?

I'll call upon the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will just offer, as we close out the morning here, perhaps a few brief comments. I certainly do support Bill 19. I think it is a bill that is welcome. I do have some questions that I hope perhaps the government can help address at some point through debate.

Perhaps I'll start with what I like about the bill. I like the idea of the guidelines for public-sector compensation, bringing those in line with comparable positions in the private sector. I think that makes sense. I also think that as we transition, there's some logic, of course, in grandfathering those positions. I do have some questions about that, which I'll raise momentarily, and, you know, about ensuring that there's compliance as well.

It's important, if we're going to put rules in place, that people – in this case agencies, boards, and commissions – follow those rules and that if they don't, there are some consequences for not doing that. Other bills that this government has brought forward perhaps could benefit from some consequence to breaking the rules or changing laws – but that's a different story – and even some flexibility, allowing for that defence of due diligence if it can be proven that, in fact, due diligence was done yet compensation was still out of line.

You do wonder, of course, how much overhead this is going to present for ABCs, but in the grand scheme of things I do think it will save Albertans money, and I like the fact that it standardizes things.

One of the concerns I have, which is a concern in general with agencies, boards, and commissions, is a perception, I suppose perhaps not totally incorrect, that agencies, boards, and commissions are, as a comment from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View said, stacked with PC cronies. I think that there's some truth to that. I think that has been a problem in the past in this province. However, I don't think that every single person on every agency, board, or commission is there because of political ties. In fact, I think the vast majority of those people are dedicated public servants who are contributing to their community.

I think we have to be very careful, and one caution I would give to this government is that if you go into this process of refreshing and updating agencies, boards, and commissions assuming that your job as government is to simply put your people in place of their people, then I think we're just going to exacerbate a problem, maybe even make it worse. I think merit has always got to be the guiding consideration. These are institutions that do important work on behalf of Albertans, so competence and merit are very important, and please don't ever forget that.

Now, equally important, another consideration, of course, always must be diversity, and reflecting the wonderful diversity of this province in everything we do is important and should always be a consideration. But, you know, in considering those things, please don't just put your friends in place of what you think to be their friends. I don't think that's going to serve Albertans.

Just a couple of concerns. Section 14: there's no appeal process in that overpayment section. For ABCs, if there is a dispute around whether or not there's been an overpayment, is there any recourse for them to appeal?

I do wonder, you know, as we move towards the pay band in section 6 and the grandfathering in sections 7 and 8, is there a risk that we're going to be driving talented people out of ABCs? Is some of that compensation, in fact, appropriate for people to make sure that we've attracted the right talent to run what can be very complex organizations? Is two years of grandfathering enough under section 7 for executives?

Then I do have a real question under section 8 on grandfathering of members. That is to be determined by the minister. I'm always concerned and worried when a bill says: we'll figure it out later through regulation. That's, obviously, not the most transparent process. I'm a big believer that if you give people a heads-up and say, "You are grandfathered for two years," that makes sense. Why is it that executives are being treated differently than members of the boards?

I also have a concern with section 4(4), that private and confidential information may be disclosed by the minister at the

minister's discretion. That's a concern. I think individuals who entered these roles, especially those who are there currently, did so on the understanding that that information would be kept private, and I would imagine, rightly, that people in those positions would be wondering what the difference is between section 4(3), which says that the minister must keep information confidential, and 4(4), saying that they may disclose. What is that personal and confidential private information that will be disclosed, and when will it be disclosed? I think those are open and important questions that need to be answered.

You know, I guess carving out agencies that require and would certainly need people with very, very specialized skills – ATB, AIMCo, the teachers' pension fund – I think, of course, makes a lot of sense. Those are people who earn very high salaries but have very, very unique skill sets and therefore should command those salaries, and I think it's right to have carved it out.

I do want to echo some of the comments from the Official Opposition that this certainly takes a step towards addressing compensation levels within the provincial government. We're edging ever closer to pay freezes for excluded and managerial staff, pay freezes for members of this Chamber, but we seem to be unwilling, this government, to tackle the elephant in the room, where most of the salaries are. It doesn't need to be done punitively, it doesn't need to be done in an unfair way, and it doesn't need to be done unilaterally. Negotiation and compromise and conversation are always going to get you better results than the stick. The carrot, I find, is always better than the stick.

The approach the Health minister has taken with the Alberta Medical Association and doctors' compensation I think is not a bad idea. In fact, it's a very good idea, done in a way of openly approaching doctors and saying: look, we need to have a conversation about how much it costs to provide your services. So far as I can tell, that's been an amicable process. The government could follow the same process with unionized workers throughout this province. Level with them about the exact fiscal situation of Alberta and that we need to get our costs under control without greatly impacting front-line services.

With that, Mr. Speaker, and looking at the time, I will return to my seat. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this bill.

**The Speaker:** Under Standing Order 4(2.1) the House stands adjourned until 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 25, 2016

Day 33

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 25, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the students, teachers, and staff from Calgary Jewish Academy. I'm very pleased that the students from the school are here today with us to learn about politics by actually experiencing it. I would like to request the students, teachers, and staff from Calgary Jewish Academy to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, we have some visitors that arrived. With your permission I would now ask for the House's indulgence.

Government House Leader, I believe you have a guest today.

### Introduction of Visitors

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a distinguished guest, Ian Waddell. Mr. Waddell served 14 years as a Member of Parliament for Vancouver Kingsway. He was later elected to the British Columbia Legislature, where he held three significant cabinet posts. He was Minister of Small Business, Tourism and Culture. He was Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. As minister Mr. Waddell was instrumental in securing the 2010 Winter Olympics, and he championed indigenous participation, environmental sustainability, and athlete involvement in the early planning stages. Under his ministerial guidance the B.C. film industry grew into a billion dollar industry. He is a published author, a documentary filmmaker, and a TV and radio commentator. I would ask Mr. Waddell to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House a former colleague and Member of this Legislative Assembly for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. Hopefully he's less trouble in your gallery today than he was in the House. Mr. Luke Ouellette, please stand and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome to both our visitors.

Back to Introduction of Guests. The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you all of my students from the Kehewin community education centre. I would specifically like to mention their teachers Mr. Baptiste and Mr. McMaster. If they could rise,

and all of the students as well, I would appreciate it if we could give them a warm welcome from everybody in the Chamber for them coming and visiting us today.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school guests, hon. members?

Seeing none, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 11 interns who started their work in ministerial offices yesterday: Mayda Ali, Bashir Mohamed, Jacob Schweda, Dylan Williams, Katie Choi, Amelia Van Hoffen, Montana Cardinal, Karima Abubakar, Aydan Anderson, Chris Edwards, and Azra Samji. These interns will be busy supporting the work of various ministers until August 26. When they return to their respective and diverse university programs, they will take with them a better understanding of the work of government as it serves the people of Alberta. I would ask these guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got two introductions today, and I'll go through them in alphabetical order so that they know that there's no preference, I guess, to my guests. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to the Assembly a group from the Edmonton Dream Centre. The Dream Centre is a residential, faith-based addiction recovery centre for women located in my constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar that has helped more than 500 women and their families. On June 17 the Dream Centre holds its annual Leap of Faith, a skydiving fundraiser. That's right: skydiving. Now, I won't be partaking in this particular fundraiser because I am a coward. However, there are a lot of members in this Assembly that I would pay money to have them go take a leap. If you're interested in that, please come and approach me after the session. I'd ask them to rise as I say their names so that they can be recognized. Today we have with us Mark Evans, Connie Spooner, Colleen Foley, Charles Evans, Mike Ferber, Dawn Himer, Dorine Kielly, Vivian Dersch, Marleen Gray, Jennifer Den Ouden, Sara Himer, and Greg Assaly. I ask that our fellow members please give this team a warm welcome to this Assembly.

Second introduction, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to introduce to you and to this Assembly a group from the Alberta and Northwest Territories chapter of the MS Society of Canada. If they could please rise when I say their names. We have today with us Garry Wheeler; Julia Nimilowich; Julie Kelndorfer; a former member of this Assembly, Mrs. Judy Gordon, who represented the constituency of Lacombe-Stettler for a long time; Luwam Kiflemariam; and Amanda Cundliffe. Their office is located in my constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I've had the opportunity to meet the wonderful staff and participate in their events. Today marks World MS Day, and our province has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis in the world. I personally have two aunts who have bravely lived with MS. I encourage my colleagues to participate or donate to the MS walk happening this Sunday because I know that every step and every donation matters. I ask my fellow members to please give this group a warm welcome to this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you two leaders with Alberta Blue Cross. Those are President Ray Pisani and vice-president, government, Dianne Balon. If they could both stand. As one of our partner organizations in health care, Alberta Blue Cross is to be commended for the innovative approach it takes to supporting wellness of Albertans. While perhaps best known as a benefits provider, Alberta Blue Cross also takes a leading role in programs aimed at fostering an active lifestyle and promoting wellness amongst postsecondary students as well. This collaborative work by Alberta Blue Cross provides tremendous value in primary health care delivery in the province of Alberta. I'd ask that our guests now receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Bo Zhang and Savana Brown. Please stand. Bo is one of my constituency assistants. He is currently finishing up his bachelor of arts in political science and sociology at the University of Alberta. Prior to working in my office, he worked for the Ministry of Infrastructure and the University of Alberta Students' Union. We are thankful to have his support in our office. Savana is a social work student at NorQuest College, pursuing her diploma. She is in her final year and is doing her field placement at our constituency office. Savana is fortunate to have the opportunity for professional development working alongside the excellent support of my constituency staff. Bo and Savana are seated in the members' gallery, and I ask that you join me in giving them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Jim and Pat Bower from Red Deer. Jim and Pat are the parents of Joe Bower, who left us all far too soon. I'll be paying tribute to Joe this afternoon as a friend to me, a friend to the Alberta Party, and a friend to our province. Jim and Pat have very deep roots in Alberta. Jim is a fourth-generation farmer. Those of you who know Red Deer will be familiar with the name Bower. He's not just a farmer; he's an entrepreneur. Jim and Pat are a true embodiment of the Alberta spirit. I'd ask Pat and Jim, please, to stand now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Professor Annalise Acorn, who is a professor of law at the University of Alberta. Her mother, June Acorn, was ably assisted by her – June was unable to join us here today – in assembling a document endorsed by over 5,200 like-minded people. The document encourages the Alberta government to save and repurpose the old Royal Alberta Museum. I'd ask Professor Acorn to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly four guests representing Vivo for Healthier Generations. Please rise as I say your names: Cynthia Watson, who recently became CEO, or chief evolution officer, at Vivo; Amtul Siddiqui, board member of Vivo – she works with the Red Cross, and her last few weeks have been spent working on the fire recovery effort in Fort McMurray – Nicole Dawe, manager of philanthropy with Vivo; and Sue Scott, the founding CEO of Vivo. We'll hear more about Sue and her contributions in my member's statement a little bit later. I now ask my colleagues to extend the fine, traditional warm welcome of this Legislature to our guests.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you Vanessa Foran, president and CEO of the Asthma Society of Canada, who was honoured this morning to receive the 2016 Asthma Society of Canada's award for leadership and public policy for our government's climate leadership plan. I invite Ms Foran to rise and to be extended the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mayda Ali, who worked as a volunteer research assistant in my constituency office of Calgary-Glenmore. Mayda Ali is currently an Alberta student ministerial intern in the Premier's stakeholder relations office, and she is in her final year of international studies at the University of Calgary. She was introduced to the group earlier, but I'm very pleased that she is here with us today. I would like to request Mayda Ali to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

## Members' Statements

### Carbon Levy

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans all across our province woke up this morning to news that life will be even more expensive for them because of the NDP government. Though no fault of their own, hundreds of thousands of Alberta families are finding out that the cost of living in our province will be more expensive because of a risky and ideological carbon tax. Let me be absolutely clear. This tax was not campaigned on, and it wasn't asked for, and I think that the NDP know it, too. Just like when my kids know they've done something really bad and have a million explanations for why they should get off the hook, the NDP have tried to show how great their carbon tax is by providing a list as long as a phone book of people giving lukewarm supportive quotes.

I love this province, and I will continue to teach my children how to be responsible stewards of this earth. I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are many things, but naive is not one of them. They will see clearly what this climate plan is: an excuse to tax everyday Albertans and make life more expensive.

The money that will be going towards the carbon tax will force families to make very difficult decisions about where to cut back.

It's all well and good for the NDP government to be pie in the sky, parading around with self-validation on how great the carbon tax is, but I know what the real cost will be for Alberta families. Families will have to cut back on their groceries and maybe go for fewer fresh fruits and vegetables. Families will have to have the difficult conversation with their kids to say that this year they can't afford the registration fees for their hockey or ballet. In total, the typical family will be paying at least an extra thousand dollars out of pocket because of this tax.

The facts are clear. This carbon tax will also disproportionately hurt the hard-working moms and dads who are on carpool duty, driving to soccer tournaments, or on snack duty for their playgroup. This carbon tax has been put together with no regard for these hard-working Albertans, and it must be repealed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

#### Joe Bower

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to pay tribute to a man who dedicated his too-short life to education, to his family, and to his community. Red Deer teacher Joe Bower passed away unexpectedly from a heart attack earlier this year, leaving his wife, Tamara, and two young children, Kayley and Sawyer. We're joined today in the gallery by Joe's parents, Jim and Pat Bower.

Joe was more than your ordinary teacher. He taught for 15 years, including time teaching kids on a psychiatric assessment unit. He became known around the world for his education blog, *For the Love of Learning*, which influenced countless teachers and is still widely referenced today. He pushed the boundaries of his profession as an educator, advocating for an end to the traditional marking system, and preferred a more personalized, experiential, and holistic approach to learning. Now, this didn't always go well with the powers that be, but Joe stuck to his guns because he felt passionately that he was doing the right thing for kids. His writing brought widespread acclaim, and he was invited to speak at conferences all over the world.

After news of his death at just 37 years old, tributes poured in from around the world. On this past weekend Joe's colleagues remembered him as he was given a posthumous lifetime membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Joe lived each day to the fullest and contributed tremendously to his home community in and around Red Deer. A fifth-generation Albertan, Joe, like the entire Bower family, knew the value of hard work on the farm and beyond, but he also knew how to have fun. An avid sportsman, he was a keen baseball player and a go-to goalie in pond hockey.

Joe will be missed by all of us but most of all by his family. To Tamara; Pat and Jim; Joe's brother and sister, Jeff and Jenn; and all of Joe's cousins and extended family but especially to Kayley and Sawyer: I want you to know that your dad was a very special man. He made a big difference in our world, and the world needs more Joe Bowers, more people willing to stand up for what they believe in, to stand up for what they think is right even if it's not popular. It's up to all of us to carry on his legacy. Rest in peace.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

#### Energy Policies

**Mr. Gottfried:** Mr. Speaker, today I was close to focusing my member's statement on soft, soulful discourse around the incredible importance of seniors enriching our society. I then realized my obligation was not to blow smoke but to honour those same seniors

by standing up, passionately and fiercely if necessary, for a better Alberta, and that is what I plan to do.

Members, today we face a new, daunting, and inescapable challenge in the face of what I have come to think of as an anti-Alberta, job-killing, investment-repelling climate leadership manifesto. I am saddened to see our province facing the real life- and livelihood-altering challenges of unbalanced, irresponsible, dogmatic, and ideological policies of this NDP government. I admit that Albertans were seeking change – responsive government, accountability, humility, and ethical behaviour – and so was I. My party had been hijacked, and I wanted it back, so I fought to represent the people of Calgary-Fish Creek, not in spite of what my party had become but because of it.

Today I fear that the will of Albertans has been forgotten, the steady hand of pioneers dismissed, the entrepreneurial spirit and work ethic diluted. To dismiss as an embarrassing scourge the rich and enviable natural resources that support our prosperity and that we all work hard to responsibly develop is just plain wrong, and I submit that Albertans will fiercely defend their development as key to the Alberta advantage, which has given so many great hope for a better life for them and future generations.

**1:50**

We are innovators, risk takers, problem solvers. We love the land and take care of those less fortunate. We are people of the soil, staunchly proud of our western heritage, our cowboy ethics, and of our passion for family, friends, and neighbours. We are comfortable with our simple, local way of life. We are also confident though not arrogant yet infinitely adaptable on the world stage. We carry pride in our counties, hamlets, villages, towns, and cities, but we are proud Albertans, patriotic Canadians, and citizens of the world. Mr. Speaker, this is who we are. Let's not screw it up.

#### Statement by the Speaker

##### Decorum

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we begin, I'd just like to respectfully request that you contain the volume in terms of hitting the desks as well as your verbal feedback to each other. I would just like to encourage each of you to take individual ownership for that, and we will have a much better time together today.

#### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

##### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Panda:** Calgary's downtown office vacancy rate has almost doubled in one year, and our unemployment rate is climbing towards 9 per cent. When families are anxiously crunching budgets around their kitchen tables, the last thing they want is the added cost of this NDP carbon tax. The full price tag just keeps on growing after the minister finally admitted the carbon tax will raise the price of everything else, but they refuse to release the full study. Will the Premier release the full impact study so it can be debated by all Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, what the opposition is actually saying, both in their questions as well as in their members' statements, is that we shouldn't take action on climate change. That's not what our government is going to do. The opposition is more concerned about scaring Albertans with half-truths and bad information than they are about taking real action. Our government

is going to invest in the very programs that will reduce costs for Albertans in the long term through energy efficiency, through reducing their heating costs over the long term, and through ensuring that our energy industry is able to compete internationally because our reputation has been redeemed.

**Mr. Panda:** Either there was no study, or they're hiding something.

Albertans will realize the full cost of the NDP's carbon tax when it hits their families. With hundreds of dollars out of pocket, that's the difference between hockey registration or dance classes. While everyone is suffering from a hurting economy, our charitable sector will be punished with higher costs to take care of our most vulnerable. Will the Premier release the full costs of the carbon tax on our charitable sector?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the opposition really is playing fast and loose with the facts here. Their goal is to scare Albertans, not to have a reasonable conversation about climate change and our actions to remediate it. Their claims about the indirect costs of our program are simply not true, and we know that they misuse the numbers because the author of the study that they rely on has gone public to say that they've been misusing the numbers. It would be very helpful for us to have a reasonable conversation, to begin by talking about the real facts.

**Mr. Panda:** Well, we are asking them to present the facts, real facts.

Albertans know this tax will not only have an impact on their pocketbooks but also on the charities they support. Numbers are rolling in from school boards across the province, and the carbon tax will mean millions of dollars out of the classroom. In our health care system it will be millions of dollars wasted that should go to our front-line workers. Has the government done any studies to find out how many millions will be taken away from health care, seniors, and education and . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Well, one thing I'll say, Mr. Speaker, is that one study that's been out there as a result of the physicians against coal-fired electricity is that we will save roughly \$200 million in our health care system as a result of not treating people for respiratory problems associated with coal. So there are some numbers, and I'm happy to give more as we engage in this conversation over the course of the next two weeks.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

### Landowner Property Rights Legislation

**Mr. Cooper:** Both the Premier and the Government House Leader once fought against heavy-handed bills from the PC government that were a massive overreach and violation of property and privacy rights. The NDP House leader rallied against Bill 36 and its provisions, which centralized excessive powers into the hands of cabinet. Today the worst part of Bill 36 remains intact, with no suggestion from the government about amendments. Does the Premier still believe that it's wrong to give cabinet heavy-handed powers that trample the property and privacy rights of Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, we recently had a conversation in this House about fearmongering. The opposition is taking language that has appeared in government legislation provincially and federally for years, and they are suggesting that we

invented it to create a new right that, quite honestly, doesn't exist. If that's not fearmongering, I really don't know what is.

**Mr. Cooper:** We know that the NDP once launched petitions promising the full repeal of offensive laws like the old bills 19 and 24, that go too far in infringing on the rights of Albertans, but it seems that their principles have changed since they've taken power. Their commitment to property rights is wavering as they fail to put in any plan or vision to strengthen landowner rights for Albertans. Surely, the Premier would agree that any legislation that gives the government the right to enter virtually any property without a warrant is a step too far for any government.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, interesting that the member opposite talks about "any government." This type of clause exists in revenue legislation throughout the country, provincially and federally. Indeed, it exists in the very revenue-collecting legislation that the government, which the member opposite's leader was a part of, amended in 2006. Yet when the federal Conservative government amended that piece of legislation, that had exactly the same kinds of clauses in it, they never touched it, not a peep, not a change, because this is standard in revenue-collecting legislation across the country. So if it was okay for the Conservative government, why is it not okay here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Cooper:** This is the exact type of clause that you used to rally against.

The fact is that the NDP have introduced legislation that makes significant infringements on privacy and property rights of Albertans. The language the government is putting forward is something that no Albertan should support. They will want changes to any law that allows the government to go onto their land or check their computer without the protection of the courts. The expense of the carbon tax was bad enough. Will the Premier admit this type of overreach and scrap any provision in any law, including the one she mentioned, that . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's really clear that the members opposite need to do better research. I would suggest that Google is helpful. I might refer the member to the Wildlife Act in Saskatchewan, where it also grants the government the right to enter land, and interestingly Saskatchewan is also not known as a police-friendly state. This kind of clause exists in revenue enforcement legislation across the country, and these guys are fearmongering over something that nobody else would believe is a concern.

**Mr. Mason:** A point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order noted by the Government House Leader.

I would remind you again, please, members, to keep the volume down.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Drug Abuse

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, last Friday the Chief Medical Examiner confirmed that a man who overdosed earlier this year had heroin, fentanyl, and W-18 in his system. This is the first overdose linked to the extremely toxic W-18 here in Alberta. These powerful

opioids of all types are streaming into our province and taking more lives every day while the NDP government struggles to even identify, measure, and track the problem. Why can't the minister provide a clear picture of deaths by opioid type, including oxycodone, hydrocodone, and heroin?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, our hearts go out to any families or individuals who are impacted by death in a drug addiction or an overdose. Certainly, it's very heartbreaking. I do want to clarify that W-18 was present; it wasn't necessarily the cause. There was some overstepping initially on the assumptions there. When there are a number of different substances, opioids or otherwise, in somebody's system, there are great complexities. Certainly, I think it's important for us to identify what substances were present, but to be able to draw a conclusion between using one substance when many were used . . .

2:00

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you. Last year the government boasted that it created a fentanyl response team to address this growing crisis. Since then the overdose rate has continued unchecked. The fentanyl response team meets just once a month and has no dedicated resources. The response team is now being lumped in with other groups implementing the mental health review recommendations. The opioid problem gripping Alberta needs a dedicated and highly prioritized response. How long will it take for your government to respond with the full commitment and urgency that this crisis demands?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we do take these deaths very seriously. That's one of the reasons why we worked immediately to create the fentanyl response team and to launch a mental health and addictions review. We're proud of the work that happened there, and certainly we'll continue to work with the chief medical officer in ensuring our surveillance of drug-related deaths and that we continue to have increased oversight so that we can as Albertans work collaboratively to make sure that we address this. I am proud of the work that's happening across departments, across Alberta Health Services as well as with law enforcement.

**Mr. Barnes:** Opioids are a serious and pressing problem, but I have to wonder what else is falling through the cracks as the NDP still tries to get their feet underneath them. Last week it was reported in Medicine Hat that meth accounts for roughly half of all drug seizures, spiking from just 10 per cent a year ago. Given the province's slow and ineffective response to opioids it concerns me that we could be losing control of other street drugs as well. When will we see a co-ordinated, credible, and effective response to drug abuse in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, we know that different drugs can be challenges at different times and in different locations. That's why we work so closely with our partners in Health to ensure that we're increasing resources for drug addiction treatment across the board and to ensure that we're providing additional resources to ALERT. We just increased their funding so that they can follow

crime where it goes and they can follow the drugs where they are a problem in different areas of the province. We're very proud of the work that we're doing, and it's really important to keep the commitment to front-line services that this government has demonstrated.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
The leader of the third party.

### Education Achievement Testing

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, reports by the Calgary board of education on grade 6 math provincial achievement tests show that 90 per cent of CBE schools in one quadrant of Calgary, for example, are below the provincial average. To the Education minister: are you aware of these results, and what are you doing to support teachers and students to address this alarming trend in many areas of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the ministry and the minister do monitor provincial achievement test results very closely. The number one thing that happened with this government when we were elected to make sure that we were supporting teachers and students was that we actually funded the growth in enrolment across Alberta. That resulted in 1,100 teachers in classrooms as well as 800 educational assistants, who were likely to lose their jobs, being maintained and about 260 more being hired. Certainly, having the right resources in the classroom is going to help.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you for that.

Last September the Education minister, Mr. Speaker, publicly acknowledged the concerns about low math scores when the issue was raised by the Calgary Association of Parents and School Councils, CAPSC. The minister agreed that dollars reaching the classroom was an issue that the minister would address. With a whole school year behind us since that happened, to the minister: what have you done to get a higher percentage of the approved education dollars into the classroom?

**Ms Hoffman:** Unlike the plan that was put forward by the previous government, anticipated by the Official Opposition, our government is providing stable funding for education to keep our commitment to fully fund education enrolment. Certainly, that is a very big part of what we're doing, working to have appropriate oversight in collaboration with school boards – they are orders of government, Mr. Speaker – and making sure that they continue to find ways to put those resources in the classroom. There's also a curriculum department that is working on reviewing curriculum continuously, including the math curriculum.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, here I am talking about kids, and the minister is just throwing stones.

Mr. Speaker, parents through CAPSC have expressed concern that they have no method of knowing if their individual child is at grade level. CAPSC has suggested to the minister a set of 40 math questions, for example, for each grade that a child could answer for their parent so the parent could see if they're at grade level. Just one example. To the minister: when will you provide for parents a method that they could use at home to make sure that their own children are at grade level since parents are the primary caregivers and educators?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we want every child to get the supports that they need to be successful in life. That's one of the reasons why we put in place teacher supports and resources; we've clarified expectations for basic numeracy; we're working with postsecondary institutions to improve training for new teachers; and why it's so important for parents and schools to have an ongoing collaboration, including school conferences that are set up. But I have to reinforce how important it is to actually have teachers in the classroom, and that's why, instead of moving forward with rash cuts that were proposed by that very party, we reinvested in education, put money in the schools so that adults can be working with the kids to help them and their families.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Climate Leadership Plan

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The climate change leadership plan has introduced another Alberta agency, this one with a laudable purpose: energy efficiency, demand reduction. This agency with undetermined staff or budget is at the sole discretion of the minister of environment. The environment ministry has now consolidated measurement, monitoring, enforcement, new program development, and significant financial resources under one ministry. To the Premier: can the Premier explain why she will not require that appointments to this new energy efficiency agency be merit based and an independent panel?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have every intention of ensuring that the people that are appointed to the energy efficiency board are absolutely appointed on the basis of merit. You know, they'll be the kind of people who, for instance, believe that climate change is real. They will also be very committed to improving energy efficiency, taking Alberta from being the last province in the country without an energy efficiency program to being a leader in the country with the energy efficiency program. So I look forward to it. I'm very excited about the many opportunities and the growth opportunities that we will enjoy as a result of that.

**Dr. Swann:** To the environment minister, then: what performance indicators will her ministry be monitoring? That is, how will the ministry know if we're conserving energy?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a good question. Thank you to the hon. member for that thoughtful question. You know, I think there will be a number of different metrics: in particular, uptake from individuals; the kinds of programming; the kind of emission reductions that we see from individuals, from small businesses, from institutions like schools, hospitals, and others. Certainly, the emission reduction and cost reduction will be some of our metrics that we will be using, and we'll make sure that we're making the right evidence-based decisions on what kinds of programming are available to homeowners and to others.

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, again to the minister: on what basis did the ministry decide to give rebates to middle-income earners, who earn up to a hundred thousand dollars a year?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, you know, we received some advice from the climate leadership plan, from Dr. Leach's panel last fall that indicated that approximately two-thirds of Albertans – that would be a good benchmark in terms of insulating folks from the extra costs and ensuring that they are rebated back the average amount so that if and when they do reduce their emissions through availing themselves of the programming that will be available through the energy efficiency agency, programming that, of course, our friends in the Official Opposition would cancel and cut. Once they can do that, then more of that cash will be kept in their pocket. We think we've achieved the right balance there in terms of protecting families and also ensuring that we're reducing emissions.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

### Employment Skills Training

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The steep drop in the world price of oil has caused tough economic times in Alberta. This downturn is not only hurting families and employers in my constituency but, broadly speaking, Alberta's labour force as well. Under Alberta's jobs plan funding for skills training through the Canada-Alberta job grant has increased this fiscal year. To the Minister of Labour: why is the federal government important, and how will this funding be used to help Albertans get through these tough times?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Skills training is one of the best investments we can make to ensure we have a strong and diversified economy. The Canada-Alberta job grant helps employers to train current or potential employees so that Albertans are equipped with the skills that they need to participate in the workforce. Employers use this funding to hire third-party training providers, which lowers their training costs during these tough times, while workers benefit from programs that boost their skills and abilities in their current or future workplace.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Mr. Speaker, given that skills training is a priority in this downturn and given that our government is delivering this funding, again to the same minister: what qualifications do employers need to meet in order to access this funding?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This program is available to private and not-for-profit sector employees of all different sizes across the province and, for the first time, First Nations and Métis settlements as well. Crown corporations will also be eligible for the grant if they are an employer in a community with a population of 100,000 or less. Minimum requirements for training to be eligible include: is the training 21 hours or over in length; is it delivered by a third-party training provider; does it result in a credential such as a record of completion, certificate, grade, et cetera; and is it completed within a year?

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that some members of this Legislature were clearly far more interested in announcing skills funding than delivering it, again to the Minister of Labour: can the minister clarify our responsibilities to the federal government on announcing the Canada-Alberta job grant funding?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The announcement guidelines in the agreement show that we will work towards six joint announcements with the federal government. Our government has been in contact with the federal government, and all parties are in agreement that the first priority is delivering this funding to the Alberta employers and workers who need it. I want to be clear. We will live up to this agreement, and I certainly encourage all members of the House to stay tuned as we highlight this funding with multiple announcements throughout the summer.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would remind you again about preambles on supplementaries.

### **Machinery, Equipment, and Linear Property Taxes**

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we received new information on linear taxation. The Premier said that the government would be putting in place a new regime to oversee the distribution of linear assessment, which would lead to better solutions. This would appear to seriously contradict the Minister of Municipal Affairs' responses over the past several months. She has said that, quote, linear dollars will be staying in rural Alberta, unquote. To the Premier: will you set the record straight? What is your clear and exact plan for linear taxation?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the opportunity to clarify that in no way did the conversation that was engaged with the Premier yesterday contradict anything that I have ever said. Linear taxation will continue to remain in rural Alberta. There will be no change in that. There will be no collection of linear taxes from rural Alberta going to the cities. I've said that before. I will say it again. It's absolutely on the record. It's not being pooled. It's not being delivered to the cities. Once again can I say that it's not going to the cities.

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's exactly what was asked, nor was it asked of that individual.

Given that on linear assessment municipalities have heard nothing but unsubstantiated platitudes and innuendo from the minister in charge and given that at the AUMA and the AAMD and C conventions in the fall the minister said that there will be no redistribution of linear assessment from rural Alberta to the city of Calgary or the city of Edmonton or any other city, Minister, once again: will there or will there not be any changes to the assessment, collection, allocation and/or distribution . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that what the member is attempting to do is to have me reveal to the Legislature what the outcome is of the Municipal Government Act review and what the legislation is going to be. I look forward to providing those details to you very soon, and we can at that time have those conversations. However, I will continue to state for the record that any changes that may be coming to linear assessment will be about

maintaining the health and well-being of communities outside the cities within this province.

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, more platitudes, more innuendo.

Given that the Premier and her ministers have been saying one thing in the Legislature and another thing at the municipal conventions, let's clear up confusion on another important issue for rural municipalities, that being machinery and equipment taxes. Minister, will you give us a clear and honest answer at this time? What is the government's official position on the assessment, collection, allocation, and distribution of machinery and equipment taxes, please?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I will say that what I say to my stakeholders and what I say in the House all come from the very same place of honesty and integrity in terms of my respect for my municipal partners. I will continue to stand by that, that the outcome of the MGA review and what we present here will in no way contradict the work that I have been engaging in with my stakeholders. I look forward to those conversations with them, as I always do with my stakeholders, that I respect very much.

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

### **Opioid Use**

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When Alberta Health Services announced that 69 Albertans had died from fentanyl in the first three months of this year, it became crystal clear that this crisis is not subsiding. Five weeks ago B.C. declared a public health emergency because its opioid-related deaths are escalating, yet Alberta has refused to take the same measure. To the Health minister. Your government has taken my advice about funding ALERT, making naloxone more widely available, and regulating pill presses. Will you now accept more of my advice and declare this a public health crisis?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. To echo the statements from the Minister of Health, our hearts really do go out to the families and communities dealing with the heartbreak and tragedy of drug addiction. We have been listening to our health officials, and they are saying that we do not need to take the step of a public health emergency. They have access to all of the resources and the tools that they need to address this concern. Other provinces have different legislation and need to declare a public health emergency simply to give their public health officers the tools that our officers already have today.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta's internal data collection is likely different from B.C.'s and that declaring a public health crisis might make no difference on a strictly administrative level but given that there are other reasons for declaring a public health crisis such as raising more public awareness about the serious hazard, again to the Health minister: how can creating more awareness about a crisis ever be considered unnecessary?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our team is working very hard around the awareness issue with a number of public information campaigns, including the drugsfool.ca campaign as well as others that we're developing in

partnership with our partners in law enforcement. To be clear, in Alberta under Alberta's Public Health Act a public health emergency grants the Minister of Health and chief medical officer extraordinary powers designed to specifically stop a major outbreak of a communicable disease, including quarantining people against their wishes, seizing private property, entering into private homes without a warrant, and even conscription of Albertans into service. We do not believe that that is an appropriate . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Yeah. We're not talking about incarcerating people; we're just trying to make them more aware.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government acknowledges the seriousness of fentanyl and W-18 as a problem and given that the public wants certainty that its government will create a comprehensive strategy for dealing with this crisis and given the effectiveness of the Mental Health Review Committee, which was created to offer advice to the Health minister, to the same minister: will you establish a similar opioid abuse advisory committee to deal with this health crisis?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As the member mentioned, the mental health review panel did examine this problem of addictions and made a number of recommendations specifically related to opioid addiction. In addition to the work that we've done out of that, we're also working very closely with our indigenous partners to create an opioid strategy, particularly for our First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities. All of the recommendations are in the mental health review, and we have teams responsible for implementing six priority recommendations of the review. I look forward to continuing to work with the member opposite as we take real action on this issue.

2:20

### **Carbon Levy** (continued)

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, last week marked Gas Tax Honesty Day in Alberta. Since the election of the NDP gas taxes at the pump have gone from 9 cents per litre to 13 cents. Now the ND PST carbon tax will compound this to 17 cents a litre. Come January 2018, those taxes will equal 19 cents a litre on gasoline alone, costing the average family of four \$888 a year on gas taxes annually, double the years before. Does the Minister of Finance believe his promised carbon tax rebate will come anywhere close to compensating families for this tax grab?

**Ms Phillips:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker, middle- and low-income Albertans will receive a rebate of their average use, which, of course, was a calculation arrived at from Statistics Canada and other sources. You know, the fact of the matter here is that we will be using these revenues to reinvest fully in the Alberta economy and move Alberta forward. That is why the climate leadership plan is so broadly supported. It leaves Alberta as the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada, but what it also does is that it ensures new markets for our products. It cleans up our air and water. It ensures that we're doing the right thing.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The carbon tax is highway robbery that'll fund only corporate welfare, Mr. Speaker.

Given that truckers are now paying 13 cents per litre for diesel and will be paying 21 cents come 2018 and that most of our imports are distributed by trucks, that will pass these costs on to consumers, causing groceries and other sundry goods to rise, and given that the margins made by owner-operator truckers are slim and getting slimmer, putting truckers out of work – there is no rebate whatsoever for our truckers – how can the Minister of Finance claim that his ND PST carbon tax is revenue neutral for our truckers?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the opposition's approach is to not tell the truth about the carbon levy and the cost to both consumers and others. It is a fact that the indirect costs of which they speak are wildly inflated and are simply misrepresenting reality. That is why our approach is to reinvest in the economy, reinvest in efficiency, and have an honest conversation about climate change.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The truth hurts, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the NDP keeps calling its carbon tax a levy for some reason – on page 22 of the budget there is a table that shows the revenue coming into the provincial government from personal income tax, corporate income tax, education property tax, other taxes, and something called a carbon levy – and given, Mr. Speaker, that the title of this table, for the benefit of the minister, reads Tax Revenue, can the Minister of Finance confirm that I am reading the title of the table correctly?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, we have done great work through the presentation of the budget, and we'll continue to do great work on behalf of Albertans. We have many things in that budget, many things that are identified. We will correctly label everything that we need to label. There are no errata coming. We have done the best job for Albertans, which that party and that party wouldn't have done.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### **Seniors' Issues**

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government is leaving municipalities in the lurch as they look for predictable and sustainable funding for affordable housing. As budgets tighten for our municipalities, they're looking to the provincial government to lead on how to best address this affordable housing crisis crunch. Given that Edmonton is considering slashing its affordable housing budget in half by 2018 and that according to the mayor, quote, council shouldn't renew that funding until it knows how much the provincial and federal governments will contribute, end quote, to the Minister of Seniors and Housing. Cities and municipalities desire a long-term plan for funding. Will you provide them with one?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Unlike previous governments, our government is investing \$1.2 billion over five years in seniors' lodges and housing. We're investing \$582 million to support major replacement and renewal of existing social housing and seniors' housing. We're very proud. Our



government is stepping up and doing things, and we're working with municipalities to make that happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Yao:** Given that municipalities are looking for innovative ways to develop affordable housing, including that Edmonton is considering building seniors' affordable housing on top of new schools, recreation centres, or other city buildings, and given that these changes would require input from Alberta Education as well as legislative changes, what is this government's position on these proposed innovative social housing models?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. We're working with municipalities and housing management bodies, and we're focusing right now on shovel-ready projects. There are lots of innovative projects that already have been presented to government, and these investments will move Alberta forward and create jobs locally. Unlike the opposition, who wants to turn back the clock, calling for reckless cuts, we're very proud of stepping up and working with our municipal partners.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, I've talked to a lot of seniors, gotten a lot of feedback about how important paper documents are to them. Given that moving to online registration and driver's licence renewals has been thrust upon those very same seniors and given that there can be stiff fines and penalties for those who don't have access to or are unsure how to use this technology, will this NDP government exempt seniors from the online registry system, or will this government simply tell seniors to get with the times?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker, although I'm not sure why the member opposite thinks that that is supplemental to the other questions he's asked. Nevertheless, I'm happy to inform the member opposite in this House again that seniors over 70 will be receiving their renewal reminder one last time to let them know on that reminder that they need to sign up online. I'm happy to inform the House as many times as the member needs me to do so. Again, please sign up online, please go to Service Alberta, get your renewal reminder online.

Thank you.

#### Premier's Office Issues Management Unit

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, this government has a zest for issues management, so much so that they spent a cool million bucks staffing an issues management team even though they already have press secretaries to do that very job in each ministry. Now, I have spent many years listening to the folks across the aisle criticizing our government for having layers of bureaucracy and political staff, and now they're doing the same thing themselves. Can the Premier tell me why she hired press secretaries that she has so little trust in then needed to spend an extra million bucks to get the job done?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm a little surprised that the question is coming from a member who's been part of government. Premiers' offices do have issues management regularly. This is not atypical. The number of political staff in the Premier's office is on par with the number of staff in the Premier's office under the last party, just before the last election. It's that we've aligned them in certain ways to make sure that we have

seamless integration. For example, some of our issues managers are supporting the response to the Fort McMurray wildfires to make sure that there is seamless multiministry integration.

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, given that most of the hires to this million-dollar team are former NDP staffers from British Columbia and Manitoba, it must have seemed like the Oprah show over there at the Legislature: you get a job, you get a job. Everyone gets a job except if you're an Alberta communications professional. Then you don't. Again to the Premier: when you said that you had a jobs plan, you didn't tell us that it was a Manitoba jobs plan.

2:30

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, let's remember what that party was saying right before the last election: you're going to get fired, public servant; you're going to get fired, public servant. Are you kidding me? You were going to cut a billion dollars from health care, multiple millions of dollars from Human Services, Education. Give me a break. News flash: when New Democrats hire, they want to hire people who understand New Democrat world views to help manage the government. [interjections] We had excellent people from all across the country, including Albertans, hired into that area. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

Second supplemental question.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now we know that we're on track with the Manitoba jobs plan.

Given that I earned my master's only a few years ago specializing in issues management, I know a lot of folks in this province who would have been delighted and eminently qualified to do this work. In fact, I have binders of communications professionals . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, get to the question.

**Ms Jansen:** . . . binders of them, that would have loved this job. Why doesn't the Premier want Albertans to have these jobs?

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm very proud that we have hired the best people in the country, including many Albertans, to be a part of this area as well as other areas within government. What's unusual is that the previous government also had issues management, but it was housed in the public service. Mr. Speaker, that to me is not clear, transparent, or respectful. Our staff structure may be different, but the number of political staff is comparable to what was under Prentice, and it's less than previous PC governments. Our structure is the same as one that existed under Prime Minister Harper as well as one that exists in other Conservative governments right now and, I believe, under Premier Pallister as well. We're very proud of the team we have. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Quiet, please.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

#### Indigenous Relations

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's indigenous people bring a long history of cultural practices, traditions, and health methods that differ greatly from nonindigenous Albertans. I'm grateful that our government supports traditional indigenous culture. Given the unique issues faced by indigenous people in Alberta, to the Minister of Health: what is this government doing to support the health of indigenous people?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. Certainly, when you look at the health outcomes for indigenous and nonindigenous Albertans, it is an area where we as Albertans have a great deal of work to do to close that gap. In keeping with our government's commitment to strengthen relationships with indigenous people, we're partnering with First Nations communities, with their elected officials as well as those who are off-reserve, living in urban centres, to ensure that the range of health care services, including mental health supports, supporting addictions treatment and diabetes care, are well funded moving forward and well supported. Our goal is to reduce the disparity in health outcomes of...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indigenous culture in Alberta is unique and includes the use of traditional healing methods. However, given that these unique programs are often costly and therefore limited and inaccessible for those struggling with addictions, to the Minister of Health: what is this government doing to support people seeking traditional healing methods to manage mental health and serious addictions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, our government respects the traditions of indigenous cultural practices, and Alberta Health Services' aboriginal health program develops, supports, and delivers culturally sensitive programming and services to aboriginal people. There certainly is more work that needs to be done in this area, and one way we can do it is by partnering with organizations that are working on the ground such as the Poundmaker's Lodge, that has a very strong reputation and is in the member's home riding. Additionally, indigenous leaders have provided direct input on the Valuing Mental Health report and the Fentanyl Response Team, and they are now providing guidance into the work we're doing around the implementation of those pieces as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct my second supplemental to the Minister of Indigenous Relations. Given this government's commitment to addressing the recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at a provincial level, what is this government doing to support these recommendations in real time?

**The Speaker:** The Justice minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the past year our government has apologized for not taking a stand against the residential school system, has joined the call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and has begun work on the implementation of the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. In addition, the current minister and I have worked very hard at building a new relationship with the indigenous people in our province and in the member's very own riding. I'd like to applaud St. Albert for its recent announcement of a new healing garden in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

### Springbank Reservoir Flood Mitigation Project

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 11, 2016, in question period, when being questioned about the Springbank off-stream dry reservoir, the Minister of Transportation stated, "We're currently in the process of talking to the landowners about acquiring their land." Yet the minister also referenced the ongoing four-season environmental impact assessment. One of the government's arguments in favour of choosing Springbank over McLean Creek was the claim that Springbank would have less environmental impact. Can the minister tell us how the government knows that there will be a lower environmental impact if the study hasn't been completed yet?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A study was done before the selection of the Springbank site, and the study found that spawning would have been disrupted in McLean Creek for the bull trout, that it was a migration area for grizzly bears, that there were a number of other species that were potentially seriously impacted by McLean Creek. Compared to the Springbank site, it had a far greater environmental impact, particularly on various wildlife species.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Given that the Springbank off-stream reservoir is not designed to protect the communities of Bragg Creek and Redwood Meadows in case of a flood and given that both the Wildrose and the NDP supported the McLean Creek site during the election but the NDP has since broken their campaign promise – something has changed the government's mind even before the environmental assessment on Springbank is completed – to the Minister of Transportation: what is the government not telling us, and will these other communities be protected?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. Well, you know, if the hon. member would just check the capital plan, he would find out that there was significant – I think it's \$30 million for flood protection for Bragg Creek, an additional \$6 million to \$8 million for protection of Redwood Meadows. It's in the budget, Mr. Speaker. We just passed it.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, given that it's possible the government will not be able to negotiate agreements with certain Springbank landowners and will have to invoke the Expropriation Act and given that the Minister of Transportation indicated in a Global television interview that the government is looking to get the best possible deal and given that just yesterday the minister stood and defended due process and compensation, will the minister commit that if land is expropriated, property rights will be fully protected and full, fair value for the lands will be given as compensation?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Expropriation Act provides completely fair and adequate recourse for landowners to ensure that they get fair market value for their land. We're prepared to pay that but no more.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

### Health Services for Immigrants and Their Children

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Any and all individuals in Alberta should have access to the highest level of publicly funded medical care. You would think that anyone born in Alberta would automatically receive this option. However, if a child is born in Alberta to parents who do not have resident status and are awaiting paperwork, that child is not entitled to Alberta health care. To the Minister of Health: this issue was raised within my constituency, and I'm wondering what we can do to fix this unfortunate and unfair loophole.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Certainly, according to our governing bodies, including the legislation that we pass here in the House, all Canadians have access to Canadian health care, so if there's a specific instance, that member could follow up with my office. If the child is a Canadian, certainly we'd be happy to follow up on that and make sure that they get the right health care services that they need.

Thank you.

2:40

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that individuals immigrate to Alberta from all over the world and given that when they do so, they often bring with them cultural differences and language concerns and given that in health care the relationship and understanding between a doctor and their patient is paramount to successful diagnosis and treatment, again to the minister: can you please outline for the House the steps that are being taken to improve cultural understanding and competencies within Alberta health care?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. We'd be happy to arrange some follow-up opportunities to do some work if individuals in your office who are supporting your constituents on casework would like more information. Certainly, we have a translational phone line. We have work that's happening in Alberta Health Services both around newcomers as well as indigenous Albertans. There is much more work that needs to be done, but certainly being able to communicate in your first language and making sure that you're able to articulate what you're experiencing is number one as well as offering respect to anyone who walks through those doors.

Thank you for the question.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that mental health issues are serious concerns for all Albertans and given that some immigrants who arrive in Alberta bring with them from their home countries mental health concerns for various reasons and given that stigmas still exist about mental health awareness in some cultures and countries, again to the minister: can you outline for the House specific programs in place which seek to increase the uptake of recent immigrants exploring and utilizing all mental health supports available to them?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker and to the member for asking it. Certainly, this is an area of priority for our government and something that we're very proud to be moving forward on. In terms of specific pieces I'd be happy to table something in the House that gets to the level of detail that I think the member is asking for so that all members might be able to have access to some outlines and be able to share it with their constituents.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, as requested, there's a supplemental answer by the Government House Leader from yesterday, I believe.

### Landowner and Leaseholder Rights

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I was asked a question by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat in connection to Bill 36, and I said at that time that Bill 36 had not been proclaimed.\* That is incorrect. Bill 36 has been proclaimed. It has, however, been amended in many of its most egregious features by Bill 10 in 2011.

**The Speaker:** A response?

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for taking the time and the effort to clarify that. I greatly appreciate it.

I can't help but bring my thoughts back to when we shared opposition together in 2012, and we both spoke so strongly against Bill 36 and what the previous government had done to cause thousands and thousands of landowners, people who had been on their land for four and five generations, to actually rally and express such great concerns. I'm hoping that you thought it hadn't been proclaimed because deep down your government still intends to actually strike Bill 36 and ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Do you have another response?

**Mr. Mason:** Yeah. Thanks very much, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we did take a strong stand in connection to some of the legislation of the previous government, including Bill 36. I believe that this is really an issue about surface rights access. Mr. Speaker, we've always stood for the rights of landowners. We believe in due process, proper notification, and fair compensation if, in fact, land is required for legitimate public services. We're currently reviewing how the government approaches surface rights and the liabilities that flow from oil and gas development. It's important we have a process for dealing with compensation and disputes ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

In 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

### Vivo Recreation Complex and Sue Scott

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Calgary-Northern Hills there is a nontraditional recreational organization that has helped shape the personality of a community. This organization evolved while a young, newly built community expanded. Together, both have defined Calgary's northern edge.

\*See page 1090, right column, paragraph 7

In late 1996 the Nose Creek Sports and Recreation Association was formed as a not-for-profit organization to spearhead the development of a community-oriented recreation complex. Community leaders and volunteers came together with the city to discuss the diverse social needs of the residents of north-central Calgary. They envisioned a multipurpose recreational centre that would provide opportunities for recreation, leisure, active wellness, and positive social interaction for every generation in the community.

Well in advance of the facility's grand opening they were seeking a general manager, and Sue Scott was an ideal fit. Sue had been involved with recreation for most of her life, beginning in her early days as a day camp leader. She earned a BA in recreation administration at the U of A in 1981 and later worked at the Lindsay Park Sports centre.

Cardel place opened in 2004, and from day one the facility had a strong social impact and has been financially self-sustainable. Sue has described the experience as opening, launching, and learning. Five years later the board of directors explored how the organization would evolve, and Sue was there to guide the why in that evolution.

In 2015 Cardel place was renamed Vivo for Healthier Generations. Vivo comes from Latin, meaning to live, and it reflects the new philosophy of the organization. The new name embodies the charity's mission and its commitment to helping individuals live their best life.

As of February 1, having led Vivo for nearly 14 years of growth and success, Sue Scott retired from her position as CEO, or more accurately worded, she has graduated to a life of play. In fact, she has already been appointed the CPO, which is the chief play officer, by her colleagues.

I wish Sue well in the future. In the words of its guiding principles: Vivo is a positive, encouraging, all-inclusive and inspiring place.

Thank you, Sue Scott . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Multiple Sclerosis

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is World Multiple Sclerosis Day, also known as MS day. The hon. Minister of Advanced Education talked about this while introducing six distinguished guests from the local MS Society.

Mr. Speaker, for the past few years I have cycled for the MS Society with some 2,000 supporters, braving weather, wind, fatigue, sore muscles, from Leduc to Camrose and back, all to raise funds for the MS Society through the Johnson MS Bike Tour. These cyclists come from different backgrounds, including many living with MS and their friends and families. These people are my heroes. MS affects your balance, your vision, your mobility, and your strength. On the second day, as the wind gets stronger and the path goes uphill, the journey gets tougher. It is a tough ride, especially for people with MS. Crossing the finish line is not only a fundraising success but, also, a victory of the spirit of perseverance.

Mr. Speaker, this year's MS day theme is to explore how people diagnosed with MS can explore independence. This can be a challenging step. As the MLA for Sherwood Park I have worked with a number of families whose adult daughter or son suffers from MS. These parents face the dilemma and challenges of allowing independence while also supporting and advocating for their children's MS-related needs. I am thankful to the MS Society for the support that they provide to people living with MS and to their relatives.

Mr. Speaker, our country has one of the highest MS rates. Our chance of being diagnosed with MS is 13 times more than the French and 278 times more than the Pakistanis.

Mr. Speaker, this Sunday is the Jayman Built MS Walk in Edmonton through which the MS Society hopes to raise funds to continue their much-needed research for advocacy and to deliver crucial programs and services.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

2:50

### Pipeline Approval

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans have finally received long-overdue recognition of something that Wildrose has continuously highlighted over the last several months. The Alberta NDP took a \$3 billion carbon tax gamble, and they are losing. This government has asked Alberta's taxpayers to buy a multibillion-dollar international oil and gas industry its social licence, that the NDP have arbitrarily deemed the missing ingredient in pipeline approval, that it needs to gain access to tidewater.

As Albertans ready themselves to start paying this tax, the antipipeline, anti-Alberta lobby groups have only ramped up efforts to see Alberta fail to obtain desperately needed market access. In scathing breakdowns a former Alberta minister and the media have detailed the actions taken to prevent Alberta from obtaining new export pipelines in spite of our new, costly carbon tax. The Council of Canadians, Greenpeace Canada, and 60 other environmental groups called on the NEB to suspend the Energy East application process, calling it "a complete fiasco."

Just months after these ill-informed groups rejected the NEB's processes, which, by the way, have resulted in the highest regulatory standards in the world for pipelines, 70 environmental NGOs announced their opposition to any new pipelines. Later that week Montreal's mayor and 30 other municipal officials professed their opposition to Energy East. B.C.'s Premier has declared her continued opposition to Kinder Morgan, and Ontario's Premier recently rejected Alberta natural gas. Then the NDP's own national party members, of course, have voted in favour of the Leap Manifesto right in our own backyard. So where exactly is this social licence?

This government has placed the burden of buying social licence on the backs of Alberta taxpayers. This is clearly not the answer, and neither is it working. The answer is to support the findings of the NEB on key infrastructure projects. If the government is serious about market access . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 4(5) of the Election Act I would like to table five copies of the following: the report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the September 3, 2015, by-election in Calgary-Foothills and the March 22, 2016, by-election in Calgary-Greenway. Copies of this report will be provided to all members.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of an online campaign started by a

constituent of mine in Edmonton-McClung, June Acorn, asking Alberta Infrastructure to save the Alberta museum building in old Glenora. As of printing, the site had attracted 5,244 digital signatures from around the world.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe there was a point of order that was raised earlier. The Government House Leader.

#### Point of Order Anticipation

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rose on a point of order. There were a number of questions from members opposite in connection with Bill 20, and I rose in order to just draw to the Speaker's attention Standing Order 23(e).

- 23 A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that Member
- (e) anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day.

I would note that Bill 20 is indeed on the Order Paper for today, and many questions from the opposite side were directly related to the contents of that bill.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to the point of order today. I think that often in this place when politics breaks out, there is a bit of a track record of there being two different versions of the facts, one that the Government House Leader believes to be true and one that I actually know is true. Perhaps that was a bit unfair.

I do have just a couple of quick comments with respect to anticipation. The question that was asked by the Official Opposition House Leader spoke to government policy around legislation that included things like Bill 36, that the Government House Leader rose to speak to, and included things like bills 19 and 24. The question specifically related to the Premier and if the Premier would admit this is an overreach and scrap any provision in any law which tramples property and privacy rights. While the question may have been regarding government policy, it certainly wasn't specific to a clause in any bill.

I think there are a number of rulings on anticipation, including one on November 19, when you, sir, said:

I also would point out that the questions posed were not dealing with the specific clauses of the bill, and the practice in this Assembly is that the rule against anticipation is not violated by a question about government policy in relation to a bill that is up for consideration that day.

I recall you saying wise words at that time. I would again comment on the wise words of yourself, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the rule of anticipation.

These questions were clearly not out of order. It's my guesstimate that the Government House Leader's efforts are to rule all of the tough questions out of order that they wouldn't like to answer during question period as anticipation. In fact, if we look at the lengthy list of bills that are still on the Order Paper, it would be hard to find a question that we might be able to ask.

In this case, because it was not on a specific clause of the bill, I would suggest that you will find in your research that, in fact, this was not out of order and was not anticipation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, it's my belief that clause 23(e), that the Government House Leader correctly read out, on anticipation – I've always believed that the intention of that was for items before they're introduced in the House, when they're on the Order Paper.

At any rate, what the Official Opposition House Leader said remains true. The question actually didn't refer to a specific bill. It asked in generic terms about government positions that would take a specific viewpoint. I don't remember the hon. member mentioning that particular one that's on the Order Paper today in any event.

**The Speaker:** Any other members?

I think I'd like to defer on this item.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 19 Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act

[Debate adjourned May 25]

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone wishing to speak to this?  
Is there a member who would like to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a second time]

#### 3:00 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 15 An Act to End Predatory Lending

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As cosponsor of Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending, it is a vital step to strengthening consumer protection within the payday loans industry. Currently payday lenders in Alberta rank amongst the second-highest rates in the country. Our ministry resolves to protect vulnerable Albertans from the exploitive rates on payday loans, contributing to the cycle of poverty. We recognize the trials that Albertans are currently experiencing, and Bill 15 will regulate the resources that they need without having to experience outrageous interest rates.

Madam Chair, our first step to understanding the vicious cycle that predatory lending can initiate was to engage stakeholder consultation. From October to December 2015 the government of Alberta reached out to Albertans to actively listen to their voices regarding payday lending regulations. The announcement regarding more responsible regulation was received very positively. We recognize the importance of this service and are moving to provide a more fiscally responsible resolution.

Her Honour Lieutenant Governor Lois Mitchell spoke of pursuing "a coherent and effective economic development strategy" in her Speech from the Throne on March 8, 2016. The current practice of payday lending percentage rates does not resonate as responsible, and we have the opportunity to bridge the gaps for those Albertans who are desperately in need of help. In her throne

speech Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor spoke of the fact that Albertans need a government that will stand up for them when they are vulnerable.

To end these abuses, my government has introduced An Act to End Predatory Lending. As stated, Albertan payday lenders are charging the second-highest rates, and that translates into percentages as high as an annual percentage rate of 600. For repeat users, this exploitive rate encourages poverty, and we are committed to creating pathways out of poverty for those trapped in the vicious cycle of debt.

Madam Chair, we listened to over 1,400 Albertans, and this government is serious about protecting our consumers. We believe that well-informed consumers are in a far better position to make well-informed decisions that benefit them and their families. Some Albertans are trapped in the cycle of debt because they may not understand the complexities of payday loans. Some Albertans underestimate the impact of this high-cost borrowing approach, or they do not realize that there may be better alternatives available. Bill 15 addresses these concerns specifically.

Madam Chair, our government has listened to Albertans' concerns, and we recognize the need for short-term financial resolutions for those in need. We are reaching out to the lenders within federal governance to support viable answers. I am proud that both First Calgary Financial and Servus Credit Union have made a commitment to provide these short-term resources and make them available this year.

The impact of these predatory rates has been responded to with consultation amongst Albertan stakeholders, to work together to find the answers that our most vulnerable need. The introduction of Bill 15 could not respond more sensibly right now. With the precarious economy and in light of the recent wildfires, Albertans need a government that is going to provide options they can work with.

In 2009, when Alberta introduced its payday lending regulations, it lacked the conscience required to protect those using the services. It legislated the cost of borrowing per \$100 at \$23. Short-term loans are not expressed as an annual percentage rate due to their duration. When they are, Madam Chair, they translate to 600 per cent. The very nature of predatory lending makes our vulnerable the prey of circumstances.

I ask: how can we provide better options for better decisions for our Albertans at such a critical time? I am so very pleased that collectively we have drafted sound changes to provide Albertans with help rather than hinder their current economic challenges. Our draft proposals include items that maintain the accessibility of short-term loans. By reducing the fee per \$100 borrowed from \$23 to \$15, we alleviate a substantial burden to borrowers, with a significant reduction in the APR. This will bring us from the second-highest rate in Canada to par with the lowest, and that, Madam Chair, is fiscal responsibility.

By mandating instalments, we can reduce the rollover loan occurrence. This will give people the opportunity to pay off smaller amounts so that the constraint they feel from rapid repayment is also drastically diminished. Rollover occurs when repayment in full hampers an individual's ability to maintain their current expenses with the reduction in expendable income. When we bring these measures together with the commitment from First Calgary Financial and Servus Credit Union to establish short-term credit options and financial literacy information requirements from our payday lenders, we balance the need for short-term loans with strong advocacy.

Madam Chair, I want to thank the Service Alberta ministry for opening their ears to the dialogue Albertans shared regarding

predatory lending. The current practice provides the opportunity to bridge the gaps for those Albertans who are desperately in need of help.

Our proposed Bill 15 needs to validate two measures in order to suffice the best interests of our Alberta. Firstly, our changes need to meet the test to protect the vulnerable and reduce inequality in Alberta. Secondly, it needs to fit with the goals of reducing the incidence of poverty. I am confident that together with the input of Albertans we can construct a framework that speaks to a strong social policy framework and meets the needs of our Albertans.

I encourage all in the House to support Bill 15 to put an end to predatory lending. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, amendments? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending. I'm pleased to rise and speak in favour of Bill 15.

This is a very well-intentioned bill that makes a number of very positive steps forward when it comes to assisting Albertans. Certainly, we've seen in this industry a cycle that individuals can fall into and become entrapped in the cycle of payday loans. Perhaps "entrapped" is a bit strong. The challenge is that when they get started, they may not realize the full consequences of the transaction. For the Legislature to be taking some steps on this is, I think, a net positive.

3:10

There are many things in the bill that are moving in the right direction. I think that issues around improving financial literacy are critical to ending the cycle of poverty, and there are certain organizations that are looking to fill a gap of small loans to high-risk borrowers. I think that's a positive step in the right direction. Well, if they are going to do that, perhaps the need for legislation wasn't in place. Typically I like to err on the side of educate, don't legislate, but I think Bill 15 is needed because there are certainly some organizations that wind up taking advantage of people, and it presents a real challenge.

I think that one of the things this bill does is, again, provides the opportunity for financial literacy. Requiring payday lenders to provide financial literacy information I think is a very positive step. However, there is no guarantee that borrowers will take advantage of this information. I think we all have a role to play in the financial literacy of Albertans. The government has a role to play in developing financial literacy programs, tools, publications that promote Albertans' financial literacy or at least provide a vehicle for those that would like to get that information.

Wildrose has long called for an increased focus on financial literacy in Alberta's K to 12 curriculum. I think it is an incredible opportunity that we have for those who have engaged in the school system, be it public or private or separate, a real opportunity to lay in a good foundation, to have students understand the risks and pitfalls that are out there, and it gives students a strong foundation on which to build their future life. So if we can do those things through the vehicles that are available, I think that is positive. Financial literacy around payday loans and other credit, both the benefits of credit and the risk of credit, I think is critically important. I think the opportunity to train and teach around core entrepreneurial principles is also a great opportunity that we have and should make better use of so that at the end of the day we aren't necessarily relying on payday lenders to provide that financial

literacy information. While they also have a part to play, I think we all could do more around this issue.

There are certainly some potential risks with the legislation in limiting avenues by which someone may be able to have access to short-term loans. That does present some potential risks that we should all be aware of. That's not to say that we shouldn't move forward on a piece of legislation like this, but, you know, all pieces of legislation have both intended and unintended consequences, so there are some potential risks around here. I think that the benefits of supporting those who are taken advantage of and get into this very vicious cycle certainly outweigh some of the other unintended consequences, but I think that it's important that it is on our radar and on the government's radar, that we are watching for some of the other potential pitfalls that may exist because of the legislation. Certainly, no one in the House would say that 600 per cent interest is reasonable. This is a real barrier to individuals breaking the cycle of poverty.

I think that we ought to move forward on this piece of legislation. I think that there are a number of positive steps in the right direction. I look forward to seeing how the government is able to engage some other private lenders to ensure that some of the unintended consequences that I spoke about don't become a real, prevalent problem for folks that would have traditionally found themselves inside a store for a payday loan.

I think I'll keep my comments brief today and move forward. This is a positive step in the right direction. There are a few things we need to keep our eyes on as legislators. Certainly, the Minister of Justice may like to do some work around enforcement of some of the unintended consequences. I think that at end of the day this bill is certainly going to do a lot more good than harm, and that's why I'm pleased to support it.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to this bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am glad to be able to speak to Bill 15 this day. I know that when this bill was brought to our caucus and I had to sit down and look at it, I saw much to recommend to the people of Alberta in this bill. There are a few things that maybe cause some concern, but I rise today to speak in favour of Bill 15.

I realize that I've lived an incredibly privileged life. I had a mother and a father that loved me a great deal and still do, hopefully.

**Mr. Mason:** I'm sure they're not New Democrats.

**Mr. Smith:** Oh, if you only knew my father.

I knew as I was growing up that my parents worked very hard. They took care of me, and they taught me how to work hard. I've been privileged to grow up in a time in Alberta where I've never lacked a job, where I had the skills and the ability to find a job and to keep a job, but that's not the case for all people.

When I look at this bill, I think that we could all say that we have to step outside of ourselves and try to put ourselves in the position of somebody that is maybe less fortunate than ourselves. Poverty is a grinding thing. It's never easy, and it can overwhelm a person. When you're in a downward cycle, when you're struggling with that poverty, with trying to find a job, with trying to figure out where your next meal is going to come from or where you're going to stay for that night, in many ways it's almost overwhelming to the point of hopelessness.

3:20

The other day I was driving away from my office. I usually park in the back, and as I'm going down the alley, I see a pile of stuff and a young lady sitting beside this pile of stuff. I'm busy, and I figure I'll just drive by. I got two-thirds of my vehicle past this young lady, and I stopped. It was cold. I backed up, I rolled down my window, and I said: what's the problem? She said: well, I had a fight with my sister, and she's kicked me out. I said: is this your stuff here? She said: yeah. I said: "Have you got a place to go? Are you waiting for somebody to pick you up? Is there someplace for you to go?" "No. No, I don't know where I'm going to go." I said: "Well, listen; I'm not saying that I can solve all your problems, but I'm the MLA, and my office is two doors down that way. I want you to stop in, and I want you to talk to my assistant, Wendy. I have to go right now, but I want you to stop in and see what we can do. At the end of the day if there's nothing that we can do, I want you to phone my wife, and you can stay with us for the night if that's what needs to happen."

We don't all have the same advantages in life. We understand that. There are times when we can be in a situation where we just don't know how we're going to handle life. As a teacher I always had a huge amount of empathy for the kids in my classroom that came from broken families or came from families that were dysfunctional. I can remember going with my church to the Mustard Seed church in Edmonton and volunteering to serve several meals. I don't know if I've told the House this, but every time that I've gone to serve at the Mustard Seed, I've seen students of mine, at least former students, walk through the line. So you stopped your serving, and you took them aside, and you sat down with them and had a cup of coffee or hot chocolate or whatever, and you'd just say: "How's life going? What are you doing here? Is there anything that I can do to help?" You know, in each case that it's happened – and it's sad. You can't save people from themselves sometimes. You can't save students from themselves sometimes. We all make bad choices sometimes. Whether it was drugs or whether it was a dysfunctional family or they'd moved to Edmonton and things had fallen apart, every time you had to stop and you had to ask them: "Is there anything that I can do? Would a few bucks help? Would you like to come back to Drayton? How is your life going? Is there anything that I can do?" You see, that's what you do when you live in a community.

To a degree I look at this bill, and I see it as part of becoming a community that cares. I look at this bill, and I see that it wants to reduce the borrowing fees. I can see where in a worst-case scenario they can be exorbitant, but I also understand that these payday lenders exist for a reason. Sometimes when you don't have a steady job, when you don't have a steady address, when you don't know how you're going to handle life, when you're suffering from illness, perhaps mental illness, the banks aren't necessarily going to lend you the money that you think you need. Payday lenders meet a need. What we're trying to do here is just ensure that the need of these people isn't taken advantage of.

Payday loan companies can sometimes find themselves in situations where, because of the decisions of the people, they do have to charge them exorbitant rates of interest. In making sure that we take care of that situation, we don't want to put these companies out of business either. They do serve a need, and we want to make sure that one of the consequences of this legislation isn't lowering the interest rates or lowering the rates that payday loan companies can charge so low that we reduce their ability to take on any risk. So we need to find a balance here. I don't know if we've found that balance completely, but I believe that overall this bill tries to find the balance and maybe moves us a little closer to that.

I was reading an article the other day in the newspaper that was saying that even people that are middle income, higher, upper-class income have taken on mortgage debt that is so high that they often will have problems meeting the financial expectations of the month and that this is becoming a concern for the financial institutions, that Canadian debt is becoming too high. While I have concerns about that, I also understand that these people have jobs, that in many cases they have resources that allow them to be able to meet those odd occasions when they have less money at the end of the month than they have bills, that there are times when they can access more income. These people generally have the facility to be able to make wise choices when it comes to their debt load.

The thing that I like about this bill is that it requires lenders to refer borrowers to financial literacy resources. I know that my kids, when they went to university, came to me and said, "Dad, we're going to go get a student loan." I said, "Ah, jeez, guys, do you really need to do that?" "Yeah, Dad, we need to have more money; we need that student loan." "Well, you know, you're 20 years old; you're going to make your own choices in life. But let me tell you that it's certainly a lot harder to pay it off than it is to borrow it." So we had those conversations. You see, at least before they made that decision to go get that student loan, my kids sat down, and we had that conversation.

I'm not sure that sometimes the people that are living in poverty, even if they had that conversation, have the ability to make any other choices. They're desperate. I think it's important that we take the time, that we make sure that they have had the ability to ensure that the choices that they're making are wise choices, that they can try to handle them, that they can see how they can pay those loans off that they make, and that usually it should be, especially for payday loans, a short span before they have to repay that loan.

Overall, while I have some concerns with this bill, I believe that it's going to do the job, that it's going to make some changes that are going to be positive in the lives of Albertans. So I am pleased to be able to say that I speak in favour and that I will support Bill 15.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the bill and continue the debate on Bill 15. I appreciate the words from the gentleman across the aisle and everyone who has spoken so far today. You know, it really is my firm belief that one of the key roles of government is to look out for the most vulnerable and, when necessary, protect them from systems that, whether by design or circumstance, can serve to entrench poverty and vulnerability and that rather than simply tossing them a pair of bootstraps and abandoning them to what can often be the less than tender mercies of the invisible hand, we at times, when it is appropriate, take steps to regulate markets and ensure that individuals are protected. That's why I'm very happy to see this legislation coming forward. I'm very appreciative of the work that's been done by the minister and her staff on this, the consultation that they've had, and what appears to me to be a very thorough plan to address the issue and the challenges surrounding payday loans.

3:30

As has been noted by many who have spoken today, we know that individuals borrowing under payday loan agreements are often subject to very high levels of interest. This bill helps control that. But it also goes beyond just protecting consumers in the immediate

future; it lays the groundwork for more significant changes and protections in the future.

Now, I appreciate the concerns that were raised by the members across the aisle that it's important that we include education; that we consider all of the aspects that are involved with this; that we ensure that when we are making changes to protect individuals and put in place appropriate regulations, we don't have too many unintended consequences; and that we keep a close eye on the effects that this has on the market. That's why I'm very happy to see that in this bill it does require the minister to collect key information from lenders and to report on the status of the payday lending industry and the development of alternative options as this goes forward, and that information will be shared with all members of this House. This is an excellent opportunity, I think, for all of us to be able to keep a close eye on how these pieces come into play, how they affect things, and to be able to make smart and wise decisions on how we move forward. That annual report is going to continue as we move forward.

The act really sets out a clear goal, and that is to create an environment where the cost of borrowing and repayment options help to alleviate some of the struggles that Albertans face. We have some excellent partners in this. Of course, when we go out to do this work as a government, it's extremely important, I think, that we work with both business and community groups to find the solutions that are needed. I'm very pleased to see that this bill is committed to working with credit unions and community groups to develop alternative options. I recently was at an event where I had the opportunity to chat with one of the leaders of Servus Credit Union, who shared with me their excitement to work with our government to create new lower interest options for those in need of short-term loans. As was noted by my colleague from Red Deer-North, First Calgary Financial has also stepped up to provide a short-term microloan program, which they are currently piloting in the city of Calgary.

It's great to see that we have all of these people who are coming together to ensure that we have other options and other opportunities. I think these will go some way towards addressing some of the possible concerns that were raised by some of the members that spoke today to ensure that individuals will still have access to short-term credit when it is needed, when they're in that position, but that it will be available at a significantly less barrier and be far less likely to cause a continued cycle of poverty that could continue to bring people down.

I appreciate the thoughts that were shared by the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon about this bill being part of a community that cares, and I truly believe that's what this is. Albertans are rallying around this legislation and showing their support. It has received high praise from community groups and individuals across the spectrum. It's something that I truly believe all Albertans support and believe that we can find better ways to provide those in need with the supports they need at far less burden and cost to themselves. I agree with the member, of course, that we want to ensure that people's needs are met without them being taken advantage of. That's really what it comes down to. When people are at their most vulnerable, we want to ensure that we provide them with tools and supports that are going to move them forward and not drag them further down into debt.

I'm pleased to see in this legislation that payday lenders will now be prohibited from offering different forms of credit to borrowers that still have payday loans outstanding. It's incredibly important, I think, that we ensure that people are not simply driven further into debt and not taken advantage of when they're in that vulnerable position.



Payday lenders will be specifically prohibited from attempting to process payments before their due dates. Having been in positions before where money has been very tight and I was at near poverty levels, I know what it's like when you get hit with that unexpected NSF charge or some of the other banking things that can happen. This provides further protection to ensure that people who are already short on money aren't losing even more due to unscrupulous practices.

It will also restrict payday lenders from actively soliciting individuals by directly contacting them through mail, phone, over the Internet, or through social media. Again, it's important that we provide the services that people need to help them through these difficult times. At the same time we want to ensure that we're not doing it in a way that pulls people into cycles of debt that they're not prepared for or that they don't fully understand.

I agree with the members that spoke today who noted as well the importance of the bits on financial literacy. Incredibly important. That was a lesson I had to learn myself, too, as a young man. Certainly, growing up, I had to learn how to handle my money, I had to learn how to deal with a credit card, and I had to learn how to look out for myself. You know, I had student loans. I had other things that I had to learn to deal with. It's incredibly important, I agree, that we try to incorporate that as much as possible in our schools but also in these situations where people are in that vulnerable place, that when they go looking for help, they're provided with full and transparent information both about the loans that are available, what effect those can have on them, their full options as part of the spectrum, and also further information about financial literacy to help them best navigate and get themselves into a situation where they don't need to rely on these sorts of supports in the future.

Again, I'd like to thank the minister for bringing this forward. I'd like to thank all the members who have expressed their support. I look forward to voting in favour of Bill 15.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to take a brief moment to really express my support for this piece of legislation. This is something that affects my constituency of Calgary-East a lot. I live in an area of the city where payday lenders have a tendency to cluster, lower income areas. There are maps that show that in my constituency. In the heart of my constituency, 17th Avenue S.E., we have 11 payday lenders on that one street alone, and there are other areas in my riding where they also concentrate. This is something that the 17th Avenue BRZ has been working on for a really long time. They've been working on trying to work with city council to put moratoriums on the number of payday lenders that can exist. I find it hard to believe that payday lenders are not making a lot of money when they have a tendency to proliferate so much.

I just wanted to take this opportunity to express sincere gratitude on my behalf and on behalf of the folks who live in my community who are going to benefit hugely from this piece of legislation, who are going to benefit from additional transparency and additional consumer protection, who are going to be able to access those financial literacy pieces.

We have great organizations. We have spoken about Momentum. Momentum is an organization in my riding that offers microlending programs. Also, Sunrise Community Link is another one that has taken the model from Momentum and uses it to help single women in my riding who are, you know, coming out of homelessness for the first time, helps them to save money and helps them be

financially literate. There are so many groups doing great work, and this is a piece of legislation that will help those groups continue to do great work, continue to provide options for people so that they're not going to get stuck in a cycle of debt, they're not going to get stuck in a cycle of poverty. It's going to benefit folks who live in my community.

I just wanted to take a very brief moment to express my support for this legislation. Calgary-East is thankful for this legislation. I would hope that everyone in this House would vote in favour of this legislation.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 15 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

3:40

## Bill 16

### Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016. There are a lot of good things in this act. I'm not going to dwell on those. Instead, I want to talk about what is missing here.

One thing I do notice is that we are missing definitions, specifically a definition for transportation network companies. I had a meeting with the taxi industry, and they, too, noted the lack of a definition for transportation network companies in Bill 16. The taxi industry is leery that so much will get shoved into the regulations when it belongs in the legislation. Come to think of it, Madam Chair, the Traffic Safety Act doesn't even have a definition for taxi in the main part. Here Alberta Transportation has set up a potential conflict between TNCs, the transportation network companies, and taxis by not having a definition in the legislation. While a TNC cannot be a taxi, a taxi can be a TNC. Again, it comes down to definitions.

If the definitions had been opened, Wildrose would likely have had amended the definitions to include tow trucks as emergency vehicles. The tow truck industry would very much like this designation to help protect them as they do their dangerous work on the highways. But, alas, we are left hoping that the minister will take this feedback to his department for round 3 of amendments to the Traffic Safety Act on behalf of the tow truck industry.

That being said, the taxi industry is very interested in having a level playing field for TNCs and taxis. The taxi industry is of the opinion that nothing has changed, only the manner of dispatch. TNCs argue, on the other hand, that taxis are different. Taxis get a municipal licence, they are often part of a fleet, their cars are marked so they can pick up strangers on the road, their drivers drive as a career, et cetera.

Wildrose, of course, is cognizant of the need for a level playing field, but we are also cognizant of the need to reduce red tape. When you think about the reality of ride sharing, the ride-sharing technology and that sharing culture, it seems that a lot of these long-

standing rules might be outdated, a lot of the red tape might be outdated and only put into place as a result of lobbying by insiders or political considerations and not genuinely because of safety.

We're all familiar with some of the ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft, but a new development is taking ride sharing to the next level by having carpooling apps. In these cases the driver isn't being paid to drive someone around; the person is just carpooling with the driver. They help to share the costs of a shared trip, not paying for the time of the driver. The driver just happens to be going in the same direction as the passenger, and they are able to come together with this technology to work on that carpooling aspect of it.

This is very obviously not a taxi, but will it get caught up in the same regulations? This is a concern that I would have. The technology continues to evolve over time. I do not believe that we want to have overbearing regulations and government red tape that would get in the way of improving carpooling and of getting fewer vehicles on the road, to start removing some of those vehicles and having the ability for people to carpool in a more efficient manner.

The legislation enables a regulatory framework, and we do need one, however onerous or light it might be. But the bill could be improved by treating TNCs in a separate bill or at least by excluding package delivery, parcel delivery, or carpooling. So I have some amendments to propose along those lines. I have my first amendment here. I should keep one, I guess. Would you like me to wait?

**The Chair:** Just till I see the original.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Okay.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment moves that Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by striking out sections 3, 9, and 13. Essentially, these are the sections that would be speaking to the transportation network companies. The title of the bill, Traffic Safety Amendment Act – all the other sections in here are essentially amending, repealing, or substituting sections of the existing act. What this amendment would seek to do is to take a look at the sections that are being added to the Traffic Safety Act with regard to transportation network companies. We are adding these sections to the act; we're not amending or repealing or substituting. So section 3 is: "Appeals re administrative penalties re transportation companies." Then section 9 is: "The following is added after section 129" with regard to transportation network companies.

Like I've said before, Madam Chair, the very fact that there is no definition of a transportation network company – this definition isn't in the legislation, nor is the definition of a taxi, so in order to recognize and clarify the distinction between the two, I do believe that, possibly, it would be better that we introduce transportation network company legislation in a separate bill. I believe there are too many loose ends here that will be covered off in regulations. That's left a lot of uncertainty within industry, within the taxi industry and what would be referred to as the ride-sharing industry, as to how far reaching these regulations will be.

This amendment will send the government, essentially, back to do their homework, possibly send it to committee, and ensure that there's more accountability here.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm a little bit surprised by this amendment from the hon. member. It essentially removes any reference to transportation network companies, ride-sharing companies like Uber and so on, from the act. That is certainly not acceptable to me. This has been a considerable amount of work, with discussions with the industry on all sides, to come forward with a workable regulatory framework for this new technology.

The objective, Madam Chair, always has been twofold; first of all, and most importantly, to provide for the safety of the public who are accessing ride-sharing companies. That is fundamental, I think. When you use your app on your phone to contact a ride-sharing company and a driver who you do not know and have never met shows up at your door to take you somewhere and you are going to get into that person's car, you need to know certain things. First of all, you know that it's a legitimate person that's actually working for the ride-sharing company, who has the proper licence so that you can be reasonably assured that the driver is a relatively safe driver; secondly, that the person has no recorded criminal activity, whether it's a record or current charges, that that person is going to be safe for you personally; and, finally, that if you do get into an accident, you're adequately covered by insurance.

3:50

We've not tried to be overly prescriptive. We've not tried to pick winners and losers. We've tried to put in place a level playing field – and that's the second objective, Madam Chair – that allows the market to work, allows for the development of new technology.

What the hon. member is proposing is, essentially, to take out any ability for the government to regulate these ride-sharing companies. Essentially, one of the key functions of this bill is being entirely gutted and removed. So on that basis, Madam Chair, in my view, it's very contrary to the intent of our department, the work that's been done, and of the legislation itself, and I urge all hon. members to defeat this amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just for clarification, the amendment is coming forward in good spirit and for the fact that we are looking at a completely new way of doing ride sharing and rides for hire. There are a lot of loose ends that come forward in Bill 16, so what the amendment is intended to do is to essentially say: we need a little more detail here. Whether it goes to committee or whatever order it needs to do that, we need to have the taxi industry and the ride-sharing industry have the ability to come before a committee or before government to be sure that all interests are being protected and that we're coming up with sound legislation before regulation is necessary. We don't want to get into a situation where at the decision of Executive Council, the industry is concerned about what direction it goes.

The very fact that we don't even have the definition of what truly is a transportation network company: do we have the fact that the taxis will be included as part of that definition? That's unsure in this legislation.

It's not meant to take the safety aspect or the efforts of the government into question. All it is essentially saying is that possibly there needs to be more work done here.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Well, that's all well and good. What the amendment actually does, if you look at it, is that it removes the reference to transportation network companies under section 9. In 129.1, that would be added, it

removes the words: “A transportation network company may only operate in accordance with the regulations under this Part.” Section 129.2(1) provides for administrative penalties to enforce the rules that we put in place. Section 129.3 gives the government the power to apply, through the registrar of motor vehicles, for an injunction against a ride-sharing company or a TNC that is in ongoing violation of the regulations. So this takes away any power to enforce the standards that we want to place on them. It actually gives a completely free ride to the TNC because it removes any ability to impose a penalty.

Section 3 would be removed as well. That deals with the right of transportation network companies that are subject to sanctions under the act to appeal to the board. That’s very important. If you impose these penalties, administrative penalties and so on, the people who are penalized have in natural justice a right of appeal. That’s why that’s there.

To take this out removes any ability to enforce anything. I don’t know if that’s the hon. member’s intention, but it can only be of tremendous benefit to a transportation network company like Uber because it allows them to completely ignore any attempts to provide regulations for the public’s safety. I don’t know if that’s the intention of the hon. member, but that is, in fact, the effect.

I will just add that the reason that the definition of TNCs is in the regulations is because the technology is very fast developing, and it is very difficult to put in legislation something that within a couple of years may in fact be inadequate or incomplete. That’s why it’s in regulation.

This is an act or an amendment to an act to allow the regulation of an industry in our province, a transportation industry, to protect public safety. That regulation of industries is not done through legislation. It’s done through administrative processes that are allowed and limited by legislation, and that’s what this is. So to suggest that we regulate through legislation would simply tie this place up in knots. It would be like every time you wanted to change a speed limit on a highway having to come back and get an amendment to the legislation. That’s not how government works, Madam Chair. It just doesn’t work that way.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Just briefly in response to the minister, to imply that having a definition of what a transportation network company might look like is like changing a speed limit is perhaps a bit of a stretch in terms of what regulations should apply and shouldn’t apply.

Now, while the member may disagree with the amendment – that’s totally fine – I think that the intention was that portions of the legislation haven’t hit the mark. I might just say that I appreciate the work that’s been done, and I would suggest, just as many of my colleagues did at second reading when supporting the legislation, that it’s likely that we will continue to support the legislation.

One of the challenges or things that we are working to highlight is that there are some significant gaps, so the member is essentially making a recommendation that would require its own piece of legislation around transportation network companies. By removing that, we would then have that requirement moving forward.

Now, I can appreciate the position of the minister, that he feels that they’ve done enough inside this piece of legislation as it is presented to move forward, but I think highlighting a number of these potential risks and challenges can be very positive and helpful to the overall process.

I accept and recognize that the government and many of their members will choose not to support the amendment, but I think that

some of the intentions of the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock are to try and highlight that we haven’t quite got there yet.

I think, with that, I’ll be pleased to support the amendment, and we can move forward through a couple of other amendments that I think are also important with respect to the overall direction of the legislation.

4:00

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, we’ll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I’d like to move an amendment.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Yes. Madam Chair, I move that Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 9 in the proposed section 129.4 (a) by renumbering it as section 129.4(1); (b) by adding the following after subsection (1):

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), any regulations made under this Part concerning drivers who operate motor vehicles in connection with a transportation network company and the transportation that those drivers provide, shall be applicable only in circumstances where those drivers are accompanied by a passenger using a service offered by the transportation network company.

Essentially, the intent of the amendment is to look towards when the transportation network company is not necessarily transporting a passenger but, rather, a parcel.

The technology, as the minister has said, over time is evolving and improving, and we don’t want to necessarily get in the way of overzealous government regulation prohibiting individuals from being able to transfer and get their parcels from one point to the other. If I’m going from Westlock to Edmonton and can take a parcel that someone was going to have to make a special trip for, having this ability – and some of the apps available now have this ability where they can arrange to have someone take their parcel for them, again taking a vehicle off the road. Using somebody’s technology to effect that action I don’t necessarily believe needs to be regulated.

The technology is giving us the ability to connect and to become more efficient and more effective in the way we run our everyday lives. I do not believe that if I’m going to be transporting a parcel for someone from Westlock to Edmonton, I would necessarily need to have, then, the class 4 licence, a class 5 licence. To drive my pickup truck or my car to Edmonton to deliver a parcel to someone’s granddaughter or the like should not necessarily fall under this legislation. Without a true definition of the transportation network companies there is a possibility that the regulations would potentially prohibit and get in the way of individuals being able to find those efficiencies in how to run their everyday lives.

That’s the intent of the amendment, and I look forward to hearing discussion as to what the government feels is their direction on these types of apps.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, I'd just like to get a clarification from the hon. member about the intent. Is it the intent of this particular amendment to exclude transportation network companies that carry packages instead of people from any sort of regulation?

**Mr. van Dijken:** Yes. That would be correct. Essentially, a transportation network company – because we don't have the definition in the legislation, if they're transporting or helping to move parcels rather than people, are they going to fall under this legislation and then fall under the regulations that will be developed? I would suggest that that would be probably far reaching and overreaching the intent of this bill.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, that's what I thought, and I suggest that it's not advisable. It's true that certain regulations that could be made under the act might apply to people carrying persons but aren't necessarily applicable to vehicles on a commercial basis carrying packages or other cargo. But that does not mean that we should not have the authority to regulate those types of companies. There may be other factors that need to be taken into account. For example, insurance might apply in the case of cargo. I'll call it cargo rather than packages. We just don't know what those situations are.

That doesn't mean that we'll have exactly the same regulations for those kinds of operations as we do for operations that carry members of the public. But to exclude it entirely from the possibility of regulation, I think, is particularly risky because we don't know what those consequences are, so I would advise members of the House to vote against this amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to provide a little clarification for the minister, again, while he may not support the amendment, the amendment doesn't provide the opportunity for no regulation. It only speaks specifically to "regulations made under this part concerning drivers who operate motor vehicles in connection . . ." So the regulation would be around the driver. For example, a class 4 licence: if you weren't transporting a passenger, which is the requirement in the legislation as it currently reads, that you have to have a class 4 licence, this specific amendment speaks to the regulation of the driver. The licence would be an example of that. Again I say that while he may not support the amendment, to say that it would prevent any regulation is probably a bit of an overstep because that is not what the amendment says. It speaks specifically to the requirements of the driver.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers wishing to comment on amendment A2?

Seeing none, we'll call the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:09 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Hunter	van Dijken
Cooper	Smith	Yao
Cyr	Strankman	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gotfried	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Payne

Carson	Horne	Phillips
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Drever	Malkinson	Swann
Drysdale	Mason	Sweet
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Gill	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	Miller	Woollard
Totals:	For – 8	Against – 39

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** Before we continue, I've had a request for unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Guests. Is anyone opposed to that request?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests (reversion)

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Chamber the grade 6 group from Taber Christian school, home to the world's best corn. We have with us Mr. Angermeier and Ms Friesen as the teachers, and we have as parent helpers Dan Peters, Shelley Kooiker, Anna Fehr, Pete Boes, and Corny Peters. Would the teachers, the parents, and the students please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Bill 16 Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016 (continued)

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment with regard to Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A3.  
Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Amendment A3 will read: moved that Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 9 in the proposed section 129.1 by renumbering it as section 129.1(1) and by adding the following after subsection (1):

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), any regulation under this Part shall include an exclusion from any applicable provision for transportation provided through a transportation network company where a driver will travel to the same destination regardless of whether the driver is accompanied by a passenger using a service offered by a transportation network company on that trip.

Madam Chair, the intent of this amendment is essentially to recognize that carpooling is a way to reduce the number of vehicles on the road and that the technology that is available to us today is very effective in bringing people together and allowing them to recognize, "Is someone going in the same direction to the same

destination that I am?" and possibly putting the people together in the same vehicle as opposed to having to take a separate vehicle.

**4:30**

Carpooling itself is not a career; it's not even a part-time job. It's just about efficiencies and gaining those efficiencies through carpooling and enabling people to get that done through the technology that is available in today's apps for smart phones. We see in many jurisdictions in the United States, for example, where these technologies are becoming very effective in helping to reduce gridlock, helping to remove vehicles from the road. I look at it from the standpoint of rural Alberta, where we don't necessarily have the ability to have in place the public transportation systems that are available in the urban areas. This is a way where these applications help individuals find a way to get to certain destinations without causing a lot of safety issues.

They don't necessarily pay the driver for the services. They are sharing the cost of a trip. Under these carpool apps people will identify: is anybody going to Edmonton, and can I jump in and help share the costs? Through that, they don't necessarily transfer money by cash, but they are able to pay that through the application.

Carpooling, like I said, is taking cars off the road and helping to reduce gridlock. Carpooling saves the environment and lowers the air pollution. Carpooling, I think everyone in this House can agree, is something we want to encourage and not discourage. The legislation as it's being proposed is possibly forcing commuters to meet taxi standards. Possibly, that will be inhibiting, meaning less uptake and more cars unnecessarily on the road.

My concern with this legislation is that we are moving in a direction that will get in the way of the evolution of these carpooling apps from becoming standard in our everyday life. These carpooling apps that are available can definitely help us to reduce the number of vehicles on the road and even the need for people to have a vehicle if we continue to evolve this industry.

Thank you for that, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this amendment. We had kind of discussed the concept of carpooling earlier in the discussions on this bill. Of course, we had pointed out with regard to carpooling that if there's a website or an app or simply your neighbour saying that he knows somebody that's going in the same direction, "Yeah, we can all go together in one car, and here's \$5 out of my pocket to help you pay for gas," that this does not address that type of thing. Whether you and your neighbour want to take the same car to go to work because you happen to be close, that's all fine.

What we are talking about, though, is transportation network companies. These are companies that provide a service for a fee. Now, if later on in their evolution they decide to add a carpooling section to their app, there is still be going to be a fee for that service that they're providing. I guess if folks want to choose to pay that same fee because that ride for hire happens to be going roughly in the same direction, that would certainly be up to the customer whether they're using that service. By taking this out, when that service does become available, if it becomes available, we risk not being able to regulate that part of the industry. Therefore, I can't support this amendment.

Like I said, that doesn't necessarily discourage you and your neighbour from carpooling together to go to work just simply because you happen to live and work close by to each other. If you

want to help your neighbour out with \$5 for gas, that's certainly up to you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in relation to the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Decore, I guess that speaks to the nub of the issue here. It's my understanding that this legislation doesn't necessarily do a very good job of defining what is a TNC and what isn't. We need to perhaps clarify with this amendment what we're excluding and what we're not excluding.

You know, my kids would laugh at me here. We have some visitors in the gallery that maybe could understand that some of this grey hair in this beard of mine does represent age, and when it comes to technology, I will be the first to admit that, like maybe some of the others in this House, Moses and I were probably on a first-name basis when we chiselled the Ten Commandments.

**An Hon. Member:** And parted the sea.

**Mr. Smith:** And parted the Red Sea, yes.

We have a little age on us. I'm not sure how I would even put an app on my phone to be able to access this kind of a service. I do have to speak perhaps for the younger generation and perhaps for my kids. I have a son right now in this city, in Edmonton, and when I sat down with him on Monday for some lunch and had a chance to see him for the first time in three weeks, all of a sudden my son had some explaining to do because he had this ring in his nose for the first time.

**Mr. Cooper:** Tattoos are next, and then that'll lead to dancing.

**Mr. Smith:** Yeah, then dancing. You can understand that for a Baptist like me that's really getting out there, okay?

When I start to talk about technology and my kids, this is the young son that is trying to work his way through university and so has decided to forgo the responsibilities and the cash that is necessary to have a vehicle. That means he's getting up at a quarter after 5 in the morning so that he can take Edmonton's finest public transportation to get to his job. He works for Edmonton parks and rec and makes enough money to, hopefully, by the end of the summer be able to afford to go back to school. Well, this is a young son that would absolutely partake of this service, Madam Chair, if he had that app on his phone and could find three or four other people to share the cost of that ride across the city. Being the good, conservative lad that he is, maybe not socially but fiscally, he is more than able to find a way of saving a buck or two, so this is absolutely a service that I know he would partake in.

I guess if we could clear up some of the confusion in this legislation by ensuring that people understand that this carpooling app, the ability to access this and to carpool and to make it convenient to do that, would be accessible to young people like my son or my daughter, then I would speak in favour of this amendment. I would suggest to all of the younger Members of this Legislative Assembly, who tend to populate the government benches, that this argument and this position that I'm taking here should have appealed to you and should be able to persuade you to the point of view that perhaps this amendment would be, if not in my son's best interests, maybe in all of our best interests for the younger generation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**4:40**

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I'm certainly not going to discourage your son from trying to save a few bucks, and I certainly hope he finds a great carpool to go with. Again, he can pass them five bucks, seven bucks, two bucks, whatever helps the driver accomplish that. Terrific.

For now, like you said, we're looking at the transportation network companies that do provide a service for a fee. I suppose we have talked a little bit – you want to see some clarity in the legislation, but the bit of the hang-up with that is that because these companies are so fluid and are constantly changing, if we put some of that stuff in here right now, for all I know, next week they could change something that now gets excluded. Do we now have to tell that company: "Sorry. You can't provide that service because it's not in the legislation, but we'll be back in the House next fall, and maybe we'll have time to talk about it"? By having that ability to make changes rapidly within the regulations, we will be able to help those companies to bring those services forward at a much faster rate but, at the same time, not prevent your son from hooking up with a couple of buddies and getting to work.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I'd just like to elaborate momentarily on some of the concerns of the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock around the definition of a transportation network company. If, in fact, the definition had been included in the legislation, then situations like this may not arise so readily. When we see the potential of a carpooling app or carpooling technology, that is not something that we currently see with ride sharing, which certainly functions more along the lines of what sounds like what a transportation network company is. In fact, a carpooling app is genuinely connecting two people going in the same direction. The lack of a definition prevents clarity and, in turn, potential challenges for people who just want to get to the same location or close to each other.

I know that members on the other side of the House may be surprised that people on this side of the House actually want to get vehicles off the road and actually want to provide methods so that we can have these sort of carpooling activities going on. What it sounds like to me, Madam Chair, is people taking care of people and not government taking care of people, and that is the key difference between a conservative and the other side of the House. We believe that people ought to best be able to take care of people, and many on that side of the House believe that the government is in the best position to take care of people, so there's this chasm between us. But I digress to something not necessarily specific to carpooling.

I am pleased to support this amendment. I encourage all carpooling members of the Chamber to also support this amendment so that we can ensure that people who are just wanting to carpool aren't caught up in the regulations of this bill.

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 16? The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Yes. I would like to make an amendment, Madam Chair, to Bill 16.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A4.

Go ahead, hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 9 in the proposed section 129.4 by adding the following after clause (g):

- (g.1) respecting protection for individuals using the services of a transportation network company in the event of an absence of or inadequate insurance coverage;
- (g.2) concerning drivers operating vehicles for transportation network companies who fail to adequately disclose the circumstances of the provision of such services to the insurer of a vehicle and any recourse against such drivers by the insurer.

Madam Chair, first of all, I support Bill 16. We were going over the bill, and we thought that it needs to be made a little bit stronger, you know, for users' safety, Albertans' safety, or for whoever uses these services: ride sharing or TNCs and stuff like that. What it does is that it makes sure that the TNC drivers or the passengers or bystanders are covered by the proper insurance.

What we have right now in Ontario: one, the insurance is 10 hours, and then the second one is, like, 20 hours. If the TNC driver does not report properly to Uber or whoever their service provider is, their insurance is null and void. However, the passenger doesn't know whether the car is insured or not. So this amendment makes sure, gives the TNCs the authority to cancel the Uber driver's licence with their organization, and they have proper insurance all the time. That's the first part.

The second one is for public safety. They can monitor the hours and stuff like that, so every time they go from 20 hours to 20.1 hours, at any given time the drivers and the users are insured, all the time. That's basically what it is.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I do wish the hon. member had shared his amendment with me in advance so that I would have had an opportunity to do my homework with respect to the department officials to ensure that there's not any unanticipated problem with it. I can't personally see any difficulty with what he's proposing. It adds areas that the act can regulate to protect people who may have been misled by a driver or who may be in a vehicle where there's inadequate insurance. It puts me in a difficult spot because I'm not in a position to be sure that there's not some unanticipated consequence of his amendment. Otherwise, I would be very pleased to consider that.

I wonder, not wanting to throw away what might be a good amendment, if we could adjourn debate and come back to this tomorrow. Is that something that would be acceptable? I really do wish, hon. member, that you had brought this to me in advance because I probably could have just said yes.

4:50

**Mr. Gill:** You know, hon. minister, actually, I did call your office, but we couldn't...

**Mr. Mason:** Okay.

**Mr. Gill:** But we're okay for tomorrow. Thank you.

**Mr. Mason:** I don't know if there's any more discussion.

**The Chair:** You could just move to adjourn.

**Mr. Mason:** I have to adjourn debate on the whole thing, right?

**The Chair:** Yeah. We'd rise and report progress.

**Mr. Mason:** Therefore, Madam Chair, I will move that we adjourn debate on Bill 16.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Mason:** I move that the committee rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Sweet:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 15. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 16. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? Say no. So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading (continued)

#### Bill 20

#### Climate Leadership Implementation Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, for second reading.

Last fall our government took Alberta into a new era of responsibility and commitment to addressing climate change. The climate leadership plan makes Alberta part of the solution. It will prepare Alberta for the economy of the future while ensuring we build on our traditional strengths as an energy economy. The world took notice and is watching. The act I table for second reading today will put Alberta's climate leadership plan into action.

There are three parts to Bill 20. The first is schedule 1, which introduces the Climate Leadership Act. The act will implement the carbon levy. The second schedule of the bill creates energy efficiency Alberta, which is a new energy efficiency and community energy system agency. The third schedule amends existing legislation, including the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act and the personal and corporate income tax acts. The amendments ensure that the funds in the climate change and emissions management fund align with the direction of the climate leadership plan. Amendments to the personal and corporate income tax acts will provide the rebates to low- and middle-income Albertans and reduce the small-business corporate income tax rate by 1 percentage point.

I'll now take a closer look at each of these. The first and perhaps the most discussed part of this bill is the Climate Leadership Act, which will implement the carbon levy. The carbon levy does two things. It is an incentive for energy consumers to reduce their own emissions, and it provides the funding that will support Albertans in investing in opportunities to lower their energy costs, develop more diversified energy supplies, and further reduce their emissions. Section 3 of the proposed act specifically sets out that

the carbon levy revenue can only be used to support initiatives or adjustments related to climate change.

Effective January 1, 2017, the carbon levy will apply to all fossil fuels used to produce heat or energy in Alberta that produce carbon emissions. As approved by cabinet, the format and structure for collecting the carbon levy under the Climate Leadership Act is based on Alberta's Fuel Tax Act. Consistent with that act, the carbon levy is generally imposed as high in the fuel distribution or supply chain as is administratively feasible. For example, a refinery will remit the levy to government on fuel sales and then recover the levy from retail gas stations, who recover it from customers. The end result is that the levy will be introduced in the price paid by consumers. For natural gas, natural gas distributors such as ATCO or AltaGas will remit to government and recover it from retail dealers, who will recover it from customers. Fuel distributors that are unable to recover the levy from their customers can receive a refund from the Crown for the carbon levy related to bad debt.

Sections 4 to 13 impose the carbon levy on fuel such as gasoline, diesel, natural gas, locomotive diesel, aviation fuel, natural gas liquids, and coal. The schedule to the act provides the specific rates that apply to each fuel.

Special rules are put in place for interjurisdictional carriers such as railways, commercial trucking companies, and buses. They will pay the levy on how much they use in Alberta instead of on how much was purchased in Alberta, which is consistent with how they are treated under the Fuel Tax Act. Airlines will only be subject to the carbon levy on flights that begin and end in Alberta. Interjurisdictional flights taken for commercial purposes will be exempt from the carbon levy.

Exemptions and the structure to administer those exemptions are outlined in sections 15 and 16. For example, farmers will not pay the levy on marked – dyed or purple – fuel used for farming operations. Other exemptions include fuel used on-site subject to the specified gas emitters regulation to ensure that users are not charged twice for the same emissions, fuel produced and consumed on-site by conventional oil and gas producers until 2023, fuel that is exported from Alberta, and fuel that is used in industrial processes where it is not combusted.

While the act sets out the broad authority for the exemptions, further details on exemptions will be provided for in the regulations. Consistent with the Fuel Tax Act, the regulations will provide the details for the exemption for on-reserve purchases by First Nations. Also, to minimize the amount of carbon levy payments and rebates to the extent possible, transactions where the fuel will not be consumed in Alberta or is primarily sold to exempt users will be exempt at the time the fuel is moved or purchased.

Other sections of the Climate Leadership Act provide authority to issue rebates as identified in the regulation or outline credits for the use of biomethane, prohibitions on the sale or use of fuel and on the possession of marked fuel.

The carbon levy's administrative provisions generally replicate those of the Fuel Tax Act but are updated for references, ministerial powers, and regulation-making authorities.

The second part of the Climate Leadership Implementation Act establishes a public agency to promote, design, and deliver programs for energy efficiency and conservation. It will also focus on the development of micro- and community-scale energy systems. The new agency, called energy efficiency Alberta, will raise awareness through education and outreach. It will promote an energy efficiency industry through energy audits, incentives, and financing programs, and it will support energy system development.

Under our proposed legislation the agency will develop programs to help Albertans reduce their energy costs and emissions by entering into and carrying out agreements with other agencies or

governments, collaborating with public and private partners, working with enterprises and institutions to deliver and promote efficiency training programs, and designing and delivering financial incentive programs to support the adoption of energy efficiency, microgeneration, and community energy systems in Alberta.

The government will continue to provide leadership by setting the policy direction and establishing regulations, codes, and standards. The minister will direct the agency on specific items such as performance metrics. Government will also retain accountability for the agency by setting targets and reporting progress. The agency will operate in accordance with the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act and the guidelines and directions of the public agency secretariat.

5:00

Undeniably, Energy Efficiency Alberta will follow the outcomes of our review of the province's agencies, boards, and commissions. Additionally, every year the agency will submit a business plan for the minister's review and input, and the minister will review the agency's annual reports and audited financial statements as will the public.

As I previously indicated, the third schedule amends existing legislation, including the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act, the Alberta Corporate Tax Act, and the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act. While the carbon levy is one of the most efficient ways to achieve Alberta's reductions in emissions, we understand that there are some impacts to businesses and households, and that is why we are taking steps to protect lower and middle-income Albertans and help small businesses adjust to the carbon price.

The Climate Leadership Implementation Act also amends the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act to enact the climate leadership rebate. The rebate will help offset the higher costs for lower and middle-income Albertans as 60 per cent of Alberta households will receive the adjustment rebate, and another 6 per cent will receive a partial rebate. The rebates will begin in 2017 and will be worth up to \$200 for an adult, \$100 for a spouse, and \$30 for each child, to a maximum of four. Single parents will be able to claim the spousal amount for one child and the child amount for up to four additional children.

In 2018, when the carbon price rises to \$30 per tonne, the rebate amounts will also rise to \$300 for one adult, \$150 for a spouse, and \$45 for each child. The rebate will begin to be phased out at \$47,500 in net income for singles and \$95,000 in family net income for couples and families.

The legislation also amends the Alberta Corporate Tax Act to implement the reduction to the small-business corporate income tax rate from 3 per cent to 2 per cent on January 1, 2017.

Also in schedule 3 are some proposed amendments to the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act. Right now the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act is basically the province's only tool to address climate change. It establishes the administrative framework and authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions in the province.

CCEMA, the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act, established the climate change and emissions management fund. The fund, established some years ago by the previous government, receives compliance payments from our large industrial emitters under the specified gas emitters regulation. It also stipulates that the fund only be invested in purposes related to reduction or climate change adaption but in a narrower manner than what is before the House today.

Our climate leadership plan makes significant advances to Alberta's existing climate policy framework. That means the fund

needs more flexibility in how and where the revenue can be invested. One tool in our approach to reducing emissions and adapting to climate change is to provide Albertans with climate-specific information. In this way they will be better equipped to make decisions about where their energy comes from and how they use it. Under our proposed changes the fund will allow investments in outreach, education, and partnerships such as with the Alberta Energy Regulator. As well, the fund will be able to be used to implement the climate leadership plan.

The amendments under our new legislation maintain the fund's existing purposes for spending and add authority to fund expenses and other entities tasked with supporting the implementation of the climate leadership plan. This will allow funds to be used for the Alberta climate change office and for other departments and agencies, and funds can be used to support Alberta government partnerships with other governments, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector.

Madam Speaker, Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, sets a new bar for environmental responsibility in Alberta. The act is about our future. It is about the quality of the air we breathe, the climate that supports our economy and our quality of life, the innovation and results and jobs that will drive our prosperity. It's about ensuring our economy is resilient for a carbon-constrained future.

Madam Speaker, a word, I think, here in second reading and upon consideration of this bill on the divisive language and rancour that appears to have seized the political right on this continent and in this province in particular on the matter of this bill. I have heard this bill described as an assault on Albertans, as an anti-Albertan plan, as we heard this afternoon. Just today the climate leadership plan, a document authored by Dr. Andrew Leach, a distinguished economist and leading academic at the University of Alberta, was described as anti-Albertan by one of the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus.

Madam Speaker, here is a list of other supporters of the climate leadership plan, that folks believe is anti-Albertan: Canadian Natural Resources, Devon Energy, ConocoPhillips, Suncor, Cenovus Energy, ARC Financial, AltaLink, Total, Statoil, the Cement Association of Canada, BluEarth Renewables, the Mining Association of Canada, Co-operators insurance, GE Canada, ATCO, the thermal association of Canada, working people representing heat and frost insulators, the mayor of Edmonton, the mayors of Banff and Canmore, the grand chief of Treaty 6. Are all of these supporters of the climate leadership plan anti-Albertan? We do not believe so, and it is, in fact, a great vituperation and a great injustice to describe all of these groups as anti-Albertan, as if we do not all, everyone in this House, care about the future of this province.

I would submit to you, Madam Speaker, that we should not let the rancour that appears to have seized south of the border take hold here in Alberta as we debate these important matters of how we ensure that an energy economy like Alberta's is prepared for the economy of the future. Because these objections, rooted as they are in divisive rhetoric, that serves no one, really have in their root an assumption that we ought to do nothing on climate change.

What does that confine us to? It confines this province to a boom-and-bust economy, with no plan to diversify. With the climate leadership plan we are diversifying our economy and creating jobs. It confines us to not telling the truth about climate change or about the specific effects of the carbon levy. Instead, what we could do is to take that levy and all of that work and invest it back into our economy and ensure that we are putting Albertans to work.

Madam Speaker, doing nothing ensures that we are landlocked forever. What this plan will do is to ensure new markets for our



product. Doing nothing on climate change means more dangerous pollution, but this plan will ensure for our children that we have cleaner air and water. Doing nothing on climate change means that we don't care and that we are in denial about what the future holds for this planet and for this province.

Madam Speaker, this government and this side of the House are doing the right thing.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 20, the carbon tax on everything. This carbon tax is something that comes with very poor timing as the world's and the Albertan economies suffer, especially within the energy industry.

To give this House a quick refresher on the economic outlook, I'd like to provide you a lengthy summary from your own fiscal plan. On page 61, titled *Low Oil Prices Prolong Downturn*, your document states:

The Alberta economy is experiencing a severe oil price shock. Oil prices have fallen more than 70% since June 2014, one of the largest declines on record. As a result, the downturn will be deeper and longer than previously expected. After contracting in 2015, real GDP is forecast to decline again in 2016 by 1.4%. Nominal GDP, a broad income measure, is forecast to fall by \$57 billion between 2014 and 2016 and not return to pre-recession levels until 2019. The large income shock and softening outlook for oil prices mean that the recovery is forecast to be weak compared to past downturns . . .

Business investment is expected to decline again this year. Weakness in the energy sector is feeding through the economy, causing activity to slow in many other sectors, including construction and manufacturing. As companies reduce costs, the labour market is expected to deteriorate further, leading to a decline in migration. Households are responding by cutting back on spending.

5:10

In every single ministry – Tourism, Seniors, Human Services, Service Alberta, et cetera, et cetera – they list the low price of oil and the current economy as the strategic risk, yet now, when it comes to implementing its risky and ideological agenda, the economy and the fact that everyday Albertans are making less money or have lost their jobs is irrelevant.

Madam Speaker, families will see a 50 per cent increase, on the Alberta side, of taxes on gasoline. As many of my colleagues have stated, this is inevitably going to affect the bottom line of Alberta families. On average it is estimated that the typical family will be paying about \$1,000 more a year. The government claims that this will be fully offset with a tax credit of \$400. One only needs to do the math to figure out that this is going to cost everyone more. They claim the scheme they have concocted will address the problem they're creating, but the truth is that they seem to not have an understanding of the economy or how much they care about it. They don't seem to be able to make the painfully obvious connections that this will affect the cost of transportation, which is passed on to the grocery stores and every other type of goods that we buy. Albertans will bear the costs on almost every commodity, good, or service.

This cute language of a "carbon levy" isn't fooling anyone because, as everyone knows, this is a tax. It is important that this government use this terminology openly and honestly when talking with Albertans because we're talking about transparency and accountability. However, Madam Speaker, this government has a history of not being very good at talking or consultation. No. This

NDP government operates on its own manifesto, regardless or sometimes in spite of facts or reason.

In my portfolio of Seniors and Housing my stakeholders are turning to me to get answers on what the government's plans are to address the rising costs associated with providing social housing. Transportation, heat, electricity are some of the costs. When Wildrose questioned the minister in estimates on whether or not they had a plan, you can guess the answer: spin, rhetoric, and no answers. They either don't know the answers or they're too embarrassed to admit that their plans will actually negatively impact seniors and social housing facilities.

Many people are wondering how the NDP can force a program on Albertans without having any real research on the effects that this will have more broadly. Any good government would want to ensure their policies and legislation are going to have the outcome they intend. However, no such assessments or precautions have been taken by this government, most likely because they are counter to their agenda. Why has this government not conducted any market assessment? If it has, why has it not provided it to us in this Assembly in order to ensure a proper, thoughtful debate? I suspect, Madam Speaker, it's because any report conducted or any study produced will tell them exactly what their own fiscal plan is telling them: now is not the time to implement their risky and ideological carbon tax on everything.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak on this government's Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. This bill is commonly referred to by many as the carbon tax, and let's be perfectly clear that it is a tax. In fact, the definition of the word "tax" in the *Oxford* dictionary is as follows. As a noun: "a compulsory contribution to state revenue, levied" – interesting word – "by the government on workers' income and business profits, or added to the cost of some goods, services, and transactions." Synonyms include duty, tariff, excise, dues, levy, toll, tithe, or fee.

This government insists on calling it a carbon levy, which, as the definition previous shows, is a synonym for tax. Let's just say, for the sake of argument, that it is a levy, the definition of which is, as a verb, to impose a tax, fee, or fine or, as a noun, an act of levying a tax, fee, or fine. They're simply wordsmithing to make a burdensome tax sound like it isn't a tax. At the end of the day, all costs ultimately are borne by us, the taxpayer. Calling it a levy is devious at best, but what can we expect from a government who states that this carbon tax is revenue neutral?

The Premier in her speech announcing the tax said:

We will put every penny raised through the carbon price to work here in Alberta – building our economy, creating jobs, and doubling down on efforts to reduce pollution and promote greater efficiency.

The Alberta carbon price will therefore be revenue-neutral, fully recycled back into the Alberta economy.

To that end, revenue will be reinvested directly into measures to reduce pollution – including clean research and technology; green infrastructure like public transit; to help finance the transition to renewable energy; and efficiency programs to help people reduce their energy use.

However, as economist Trevor Tombe noted in an article he wrote in November for *Maclean's*:

If by revenue-neutral she means they aren't going to toss the carbon tax revenue into the ocean but are instead going to spend the money on stuff, then okay. But the phrase "revenue neutral"

rightly means total government revenue will be unchanged. (How could it mean otherwise?) That is, a carbon tax is revenue neutral if what's levied by the government is fully offset by reductions in other taxes elsewhere. This is basically what B.C. did with their carbon tax. They report annually in their budget how much came in from the carbon tax and how much went out through lower taxes, so it's all above-board.

He went on to say:

The Alberta carbon tax plan is not revenue neutral – not at all. Nothing in the report today suggests any existing tax will be lowered. Of course, that's a valid position to take, but the government shouldn't try to mislead people by misusing the phrase "revenue neutral" – it should advocate clearly for the policies it prefers, and let people decide.

If we want to see an example of a revenue neutral carbon tax, we have only to look to B.C., where their carbon tax now funds more than a billion dollars a year in other tax cuts, resulting in one of Canada's lowest corporate tax rates. As an aside, in B.C. by law the Finance minister is required to take a 15 per cent pay cut if the tax isn't revenue neutral for the government. Isn't it a shame we couldn't use that particular law to keep our Finance minister from breaking the debt ceiling law? Oh, that's right. I guess the minister doesn't even want a debt ceiling, so I guess that wouldn't apply.

Now, on April 19 the Member for Calgary-Currie said this in talking about the carbon tax:

Part of that is our carbon levy. What that levy does is that it allows every cent of it to be reinvested in the form of a rebate back to lower income Albertans . . .

Now, did you hear that? Every penny will be reinvested in the form of a rebate to lower income Albertans. Now, we could take that on its face value, but he goes on to say:

. . . and it also involves us to help diversify our economy by investing in energy efficiency programs, investing in alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, geothermal, and possibly other energy sources that we have yet to think of.

Just think of it. They haven't even thought of all the different things that they can do.

Now, herein lies the problem with NDP budgeting, I believe. You see, he said that every penny goes to rebates to low-income Albertans and also that money goes to help diversify the economy, investing in alternative energy sources. Madam Speaker, that's the problem with NDP finances. It's no wonder they can't get Alberta's finances in order and have to remove the debt ceiling, run massive deficits, bring burdensome debt and damaging interest payments. It appears that they are spending the same money two or three times over. Of course, that leads to some serious problems, to say the least.

5:20

Now that we have established what this bill is and what it is not despite the government's spin, let's get to the nuts and bolts of this. We are in an economic downturn bordering on a recession. Hundreds of thousands of Albertans are unemployed. Costs are increasing while real estate prices and economic growth decrease. This tax will hurt Albertans at a time when they can least afford it. Albertans have already been burdened with increases to business and personal taxes. Now this carbon tax is going to hit them with increases to the price of gasoline, diesel, and the cost of living.

This government's carbon tax will punish everyday families and businesses and will make life in Alberta significantly more expensive. Everything from driving your car to buying groceries to heating your home and shop will be more expensive, and 40 per cent of Albertans will see no sort of offset to these costs. The rebate was originally designed to cover increases in natural gas rates,

gasoline, and diesel but ignored the fact that this tax will have a domino effect, hiking prices on everything from electricity to groceries, rent, and any good or service. And these extra costs will be absorbed by the taxpayer, the end user.

Despite the assurances by the minister of environment the other day that rebates are a little higher to help low-income Albertans deal with the cost passed on to them by businesses for goods and services, the government failed to bring up these extra costs before Wildrose started pointing them out. It's almost as if they hadn't considered it. Of course, had a proper economic impact assessment been done, perhaps Albertans could have been given a true idea of how much this tax will really cost. The government maintains that lower income folks use less energy and that they would actually come out ahead. Madam Speaker, that's hard to quantify without a proper economic assessment.

If costs go up, there are only a few ways in which to pay the piper; either increase prices, or increase fees. Rebate amounts are based only on the direct costs of heat and fuel, not all the other costs. The NDP's rebate scheme was only designed to cover increased natural gas and fuel costs. It ignores the fact that the carbon tax will hike costs on everything. Even families that get the maximum rebate will be on the hook for up to \$400 a year in additional carbon tax costs. Furthermore, I remain deeply skeptical of the NDP's rebate scheme. We were told that these rebate amounts were calculated based only on direct costs of heat and fuel, not all the other costs. They ignore the fact that the carbon tax will hike costs on everything.

The *Canadian Tax Journal* did some analysis about the carbon tax. If it was national, it estimated that a \$30-per-tonne carbon tax would send consumer costs for electricity up 7.5 per cent, costs for food up 2 per cent, and costs for shelter up 1.9 per cent. If you apply these increases to household expenditures from 2014, it becomes clear that families will be facing hundreds of dollars more in indirect costs than the government would like to admit.

Remember that this government's fiscal management has recently caused another credit downgrade, that will cost Albertans more as borrowing rates increase. These credit downgrades show that the financial marketplace has no confidence in this government's fiscal plan. This government likes to put the blame on the price of oil. Unfortunately, the facts don't support that. You see, the price of oil has been steadily increasing since the middle of January. Since mid-January the price of oil has increased about 50 per cent. Since then, the Alberta government has received more downgrades.

These indirect costs will come from many quarters, Madam Speaker. Municipalities, school boards, health centres will all need to find ways to offset the unanticipated costs of this carbon tax. One would think that the taxicabs and transit, which lower income people rely heavily upon, would have to increase prices to compensate. People are starting to realize how much this is going to impact them. One local municipality has estimated that gasoline will increase by \$25,000 in 2017, diesel by \$50,000, and natural gas by \$120,000. It gets even worse in 2018, with those costs jumping to \$35,000 for gasoline, \$75,000 for diesel, and natural gas a whopping \$185,000. This is close to an increase of a third between 2017 and 2018.

This is all consistent with what Mayor Nenshi stated in an April 16 article from the Calgary *Metro*. He states that a carbon tax isn't going to fly.

The City of Calgary fills many, many, many tanks of gas every single day. Our best estimate is that not being rebated the carbon tax on all those tanks . . . that we fill every day, the first year in 2017 will be about \$2.6 or \$2.7 million, rising to \$6.5 million . . .

To put that in context, that's a half point increase on the property tax – only for paying another order of government its taxes.

Nenshi went on to say:

Unlike the provincial government, the city does not, cannot and will not run a deficit . . . Our goal would be to shave that amount somewhere else, but that's hard to do on fuel. Police cars, fire trucks, garbage trucks and buses have to be out there, so as a result the only thing to do is go to the taxpayer for it.

Yes, it seems that this government's solution to their inability to cut waste and bloat is to constantly tax Albertans. Wildrose have always maintained that we will not raise your taxes. The same has never been true of this government. This carbon tax will just be a further economic drain upon Albertans. A typical family will find itself out a thousand dollars every year once this punitive tax is levied. Based on the analysis from the *Canadian Tax Journal* that I mentioned earlier, it is realistic to estimate that a typical family will find itself out at least a thousand dollars every year once it's up and running.

Madam Speaker, this carbon tax is as flawed as any bill this government has put forth. It was not well thought out. The government failed to provide any economic impact assessment, and despite assertions by the government, it is in no way revenue neutral. This policy leaves the Alberta energy sector with a distinct disadvantage in competitiveness on the world market. It's simply another burden on the back of taxpayers at a time they can ill afford it. I cannot and will not support this tax that punishes Albertans for simply going about their daily lives.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) applies. Do you wish to ask a question of the hon. member?

**Mr. Cyr:** I do.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the member. I enjoyed your speech. I'd like to hear a little bit more about the fact that this bill just received first reading yesterday and we're already into second reading on this. How much time have you spent reviewing this bill, and how are you going to prepare going forward? Now, the reason I'm asking this question to the member, who is the shadow minister of environment, is that we're looking at about \$3 billion – \$3 billion – worth of money being brought in by this bill, which is a staggering amount of money coming in. Now, with the normal estimates, or the normal time when we go through budgets, we actually go through a time frame where we're able to look at a business plan, look at financial statements, and question the minister on exactly where that minister is going to take that money and utilize it for Albertans, how we are going to be responsible for that money.

To the member: is it possible with what we've been given, with just – what? – 30 pages, 50 pages, whatever it is . . .

**Mr. Loewen:** Ninety-five pages.

**Mr. Cyr:** Ninety-five pages. As the shadow minister of environment is it possible to take that information this quick and actually, I guess, be able to have a direction for all Albertans to see that we're going in the right or the wrong direction? From what I've heard from you, with the limited amount of time that you've had with that bill, you're already seeing that there are problems with this legislation. Do you feel that it is appropriate to be in second reading in just over 24 hours with this bill?

5:30

**Mr. Loewen:** Well, thank you to the member for the question. Of course, it is a little disconcerting to think that the government gave us this bill yesterday, and we're in second reading. I was actually up till 1 o'clock in the morning, and I was back up at 5 again this morning working on this. And, yes, this government seems to want to pound things through. Of course, anything that doesn't fit this government's ideology, well, they study it. They take time, they send it to committee, they do all sorts of things, Madam Speaker. But anything that fits their ideology, they pound it through as fast as they can. They don't consult. They don't ask anything. They just pound it through. It was a lot of information to have to go through.

Like I say, this shouldn't be the way business is done. This government committed to doing things differently than the previous government when it came to pushing things through like this, but, no, they've fallen into the same trap. I guess when you become government, maybe you become a little bit arrogant or something, and you think that you should be able to just do whatever you want to do at your schedule and to heck with everybody else, but that's not right, Madam Speaker.

There are a lot of problems with this bill. The problem that I'm seeing is that this affects every part of Albertans' lives, not just the families. It affects the schools, it affects the hospitals, and it affects the cities and the counties. Everything in our world requires fuel to produce or to transport. Of course, you're well aware, Madam Speaker, of the distances we drive in the north and the costs that this will increase. This government since it came into power has implemented two sets of gas tax increases and now this carbon tax on top of it all. That's a very big burden for Albertan families. Of course, like you're aware, in the north we travel greater distances. We have to. That's just part of living in the north. But there's no way that we should be punished for that.

Now, of course, a lot of people think that we live in this oil-rich environment, so why do we have to pay so much for the gasoline? Well, of course, the oil sells at the world market price. There's not much we can do about that. The only thing we can do for our people here in Alberta is to reduce the taxes on the fuel so that we actually have an advantage to living right on this resource here. But what does this government do? It increases the taxes higher and higher, and that's just not right, Madam Speaker. We have other ways to collect revenue. This government has no problem collecting taxes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to address Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I want to start by saying that I think we're going to have to forgive Albertans for their shock and their discomfort when it comes to this bill.

It's my belief, Madam Speaker, that the results of the last election had less to do with the platforms of the individual parties, mine included, than with being a statement on the governance and the attitude of the Progressive Conservative Party after 44 years of rule. I believe that Albertans were speaking clearly that it was time for a change, and in many cases they were looking for the individual that could most likely replace the Progressive Conservative candidate.

The argument that has been proffered by the government at times in this House, that they were elected on their platform policies, has a modicum of truth to it, but only a modicum. The greater truth, I believe, lies in the fact that the people, the people of Alberta, were looking for an alternative to a Progressive Conservative Party that had betrayed the trust of the people. They were looking to see who had the best opportunity or chance of defeating the Progressive Conservative candidate in that particular riding, and whoever

managed to convey that was the individual that was elected. I believe that was the case in my riding, and I believe that it is also the best explanation for the vast majority of the people that have a seat in this Legislature today.

Too often the NDP government tries to sell the idea that they were elected on their platform and their policies and that therefore there is a legitimacy to the bills they have brought forward into this Legislature. But even if you buy that argument, it doesn't explain and it doesn't justify the actions of this government when they have placed before this House Bill 20. This government never campaigned on a climate leadership plan. Never, Madam Speaker, in the last election did the people of Alberta have the opportunity to judge this party and to decide whether the people of Alberta would be willing to cast their votes for the NDP candidate that was running in their constituency based on their desire to see the implementation of a carbon tax or a climate leadership plan.

I suppose it would be one thing if this government could actually look the people of Alberta in the eye and say: "We campaigned on this. We placed this before the people. We offered you this option. You knew what you were buying." But they didn't. So the people of Alberta are just now beginning to wake up to the fact that this economic time bomb that Bill 20 is going to turn out to be is going to have serious ramifications for their personal lifestyles. It's going to have serious ramifications for the viability of many of their jobs. It's going to negatively impact the ability of many families to take care of their loved ones.

During trying economic times this NDP government has made decision after decision that has hurt the economy of Alberta. There is hardly an industry that has not lost jobs or been economically imperilled by the increased taxes, the dangerous borrowing, and the out-of-control spending of this government.

This bill is not some minor piece of legislation that will hardly impact the people of Alberta. If that was the case, I wouldn't be bringing this argument before this Legislature. Instead, it has been trumpeted by the government as a major piece of legislation. By your own actions and by your own words you understood just how important an impact this legislation will have on the province of Alberta.

**5:40**

Now, Albertans understand, and my argument would be, that not every piece of legislation that is passed in a Legislature, in a democracy is necessarily campaigned on. We understand that, you understand that, Albertans understand that, and the people that are sitting in this Legislature understand that. But when legislation, Madam Speaker, is considered in the House that is going to have a major impact on the lives of the people of this province, when it is brought before this House, in a democracy the bill must have some legitimacy behind it. The idea is that legislation should have had the ability to be vetted by the people during the general election period. That's one of the purposes of a general election. It's for the political parties to place before the people the ideas and the policies that they will pursue should they be elected. This is something that you did not do, and it affects the very legitimacy of this bill.

We have many examples, Madam Speaker, of governments that have understood this democratic maxim; for instance, the free trade debate between the Conservatives and the Liberals in this country. It's a great example of this political maxim. The free trade debate between the Conservatives and the Liberals was actually a debate for the hearts and minds of the Canadian people. During that federal election Canadians had the opportunity to listen to the arguments, to contrast those arguments, and to compare the visions of the two parties on this crucial issue. In the process of casting their vote, the Canadian people were providing legitimacy for that government to

act on their vision and on their policies. They were providing the Conservative government led by Brian Mulroney with the legitimacy that was needed to enter into negotiations with the United States and to eventually pass the free trade act between our two great nations.

I believe that we need to start this debate by clearly stating that while this government has the power to bring forth this piece of legislation, I believe that it lacks the legitimacy to do so. Albertans understand this. We are a politically astute people. We are politically astute enough to know when to punish a government that is misusing its power and abusing that fine line of legitimacy and when it is not. When governments cross that line, as, ironically, the Mulroney government did later when it passed the GST, then the people respond with their votes. It's then that the people, when they speak, have a habit of letting governments understand that they've gone too far, and those governments have a habit of losing power in the next general election.

So I place before this government that you are walking a very fine line on Bill 20 and that it may turn out that Bill 20 is another example of a government that engages in the practice of campaigning on one set of policies and then passing legislation that does not have the support of the people, and therefore the bill lacks legitimacy. Regardless of the fact that the representatives in the government may have a majority and may be able to pass this bill, it will lack legitimacy because you did not campaign on this major piece of legislation.

Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, is actually, as the minister said, two acts. Okay; three, but two major ones. The first, the Climate Leadership Act, gives the government the authority to enact a carbon tax on Albertans and then to decide that some Albertans will be more equal than others and to decide who will receive consumer rebates on some of the various carbon taxes that will be placed upon the people of Alberta.

The second act is the Energy Efficiency Alberta Act. It establishes an agency to oversee the implementation of some of the various carbon programs and taxes that will make every Albertan in this province poor. Specifically, the legislation is called upon to raise awareness regarding energy use and the associated economic and environmental consequences. It's called upon to promote, design, and deliver programs related to energy efficiency, conservation and the development of microgeneration and small-scale energy use, and to promote an energy efficiency services industry.

I would place before this House and before the minister that not all of those things are bad, that the adoption of some of these things may even make our province a better province, but this agency, which is to administer somewhere around \$170 million annually in loans and grants to support the purposes as already stated . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Cyr:** I would like to ask my fellow member – I don't know if we've heard it, but I don't believe the NDP campaigned on the carbon tax. Now, had they campaigned on the carbon tax, do you think that Albertans would have been okay with the Alberta government taking money away from school systems? As the shadow Education minister, do you think that if they had platformed on taking funds away from students, that would have gone very far with Albertans, and would they be in government today?

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you to the member for the question. You know, I think that when we look at the whole issue of legitimacy, a democracy is built on transparency and on the people understanding

the platforms of the political parties and the views of each of the individuals and having an opportunity to choose between those political parties and the visions that they represent. I believe that with a piece of legislation that is as significant as this piece of legislation and that will literally have life-changing consequences for the people of Alberta, to have campaigned on it would have been within the expectations of a democratic population and a democratic system of government. A government is always better having campaigned and having placed the vision that they have before the people when it wants to then go before the Legislature, go before the people's representatives, and pass legislation.

5:50

We would not be able to bring, perhaps, some of our concerns about this legislation with as much vigour and with as much justification before this Assembly if you had campaigned on this in the general election. You would have been able to come back and clearly say to us: "We campaigned on this. The people of Alberta heard about this. They knew that we would be raising the taxes on your gas by 4.5 cents," come this January, I believe, "and they understood that we would be phasing out coal early, that we would be starting to increase the costs of transporting every good that comes by rail."

You see, when the people are given the opportunity to understand what the platform is and then to make clear choices and decisions about those platforms, then the people have given their consent to that vision. The people of Alberta expect a democratic form of government to function in such a way that it respects the will of the people. It doesn't really matter whether you have a majority government or not. It doesn't really matter that the election is three years down the road. Just because we have a seat in this House doesn't mean that we have the right to ignore the wishes of the people.

That's one of the reasons why, as we go through this debate, I would hope that the members of this Legislature are actually listening to what the people are saying and what their constituents are telling them. I know that it is easy to be political. It's not always easy to be democratic. There's a difference. Each of us in this House needs to understand that difference, and when we forget what that difference is, then we end up like some other political parties, out of office. So let us all . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Speaking on the bill, I'll recognize the hon. minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Is it under 29(2)(a)?

**The Deputy Speaker:** No. Standing Order 29(2)(a) is done.

**Ms Phillips:** Sorry. I thought I was under 29(2)(a).

**The Deputy Speaker:** Oh. You can't speak on the bill. That's right. You have spoken. My apologies.

Go ahead, hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The NDP is introducing another bill that appears to be purely ideological. The fact is that this is not the first time we've seen this. This is actually the second time that we've seen something that wasn't on their platform being moved forward by this government, with a massive lack of consultation. Now, if we hadn't already been through this with Bill 6, I could see that we probably would have a good reason to be going down this road again with this new government, but we're seeing the same mistakes made over and over again. The fact is that

we saw massive outrage, and we're still seeing that outrage coming from our farmers and ranchers, our rural, our urban. Everybody was very unhappy with the lack of consultation done by this government, and we're seeing it now with this carbon tax.

The fact is that when we look at where the carbon tax is going, something that is so important, we put the carbon tax bill – we rushed this bill through. The fact is that this is something that needed some more time to be reviewed and debated, but we're not going to see that because we are putting up this bill right at the end of session. Now, we're looking at a bill that was in first reading yesterday, second reading today, 95 pages, going through something that we actually need to put some real thought into to make sure that our most vulnerable aren't impacted negatively.

Now, saying, "Let's just give them 500 bucks, and it's going to solve all our problems" – suddenly what we're looking at is a systemic problem of a government that isn't listening. The fact is that with Bill 6 we saw Facebook pages of 50,000 people putting their names forward to say: you didn't listen. We want to actually contribute to this law, but we can't do that because – guess what? – you're pushing through legislation too fast again. Why? Why does it have to be this fast? Why can't we at least look at bringing something like this, that is so important, obviously, to this government, to a standing committee? This is something that needs to be moved forward so that we can discuss it more thoroughly. Bring it to stakeholders. But you know what? We didn't do that with the farming bill. We're not going to do that with this bill because in the end – and again this goes back to my original point – ideology is what runs this government.

I do believe that there are good intentions with these bills. I don't believe that you're out to harm Alberta, but I do believe that the lack of consultation has effects that are very, very, very unintentional, yet we see that people are being affected by it. The fact is that through the carbon tax this will be levying, or taxing, depending on the point of view, more costs on families, charities, schools, hospitals. This is actually being levied on Albertans right now.

Now, we've heard already that this is only going to cost around \$500. Now we're hearing: "Well, jeez, you know what? It's going to be an extra hundred dollars because of indirect costs." We've asked repeatedly, "Show us how you came up with the numbers," and all we get is nothing. There are no answers because you have no answers. How can you not see the fact that in the end we are going down a path where we don't know how it's going to affect our most vulnerable? Are we going to see seniors on the streets? Are we going to see children and single mothers put on the streets because of the fact that the unintended consequences of this carbon tax could really impede Albertans' way of life?

Again, when we look at ideology, this is not a good road for Alberta to go down. This is not what Albertans voted for. We have seen repeatedly the fact that when we put legislation through too fast, governments will eventually answer for it. The question is: are we going to end up with massive groups of people on our front doorstep again saying that we're going in the wrong direction? Again, sneaking in through the side door so you don't have to deal with them is not the answer. Not answering your phones at your constituency offices: not the answer. Getting rid of your e-mail: not the answer. That is a problem.

Now, let's look at the stakeholders here. If you had gone out to the stakeholders and said, "What do you think about this," they would have come back and said, "Could you bring us at least a framework of what you're looking to do?"

In the end what we are looking at is a bill that I believe was done on Friday of last week, introduced to us this week, yesterday, and

today we're actually debating the second reading. This is ludicrous. Now, had they actually consulted, they'd have been aware that their ill-advised carbon levy or tax, whatever it is that we want to look at going towards . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but the Assembly stands adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, May 25, 2016

Day 33

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
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 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 25, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Private Bills Second Reading

#### Bill Pr. 1

#### Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act

**Mr. Westhead:** Madam Speaker, I'd like to move second reading of Bill Pr. 1, Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act.

Madam Speaker, as we turn a page on this incredibly valuable aspect of the community in the Bow valley, I'd like to reflect for members of this Assembly the excellent work that the Bow Valley Community Foundation did and the positive impact that it had.

The foundation was established in 2005 by a dedicated group of community leaders along with the support of the town of Canmore. A volunteer board along with representatives from various community organizations provided oversight and management of the roughly \$450,000 in total assets, which generated grants of over \$15,000 per year while the foundation operated. A short list of the many deserving organizations that have benefited from the Bow Valley Community Foundation includes the Canadian Association for Disabled Skiing for the Rocky Mountain Adaptive Sports Centre; local cycling, hockey, swim, climbing, and soccer clubs; and the Canmore Illusions gymnastics team, whose new foam pit I had the pleasure of jumping in only a few months ago.

Madam Speaker, as we say a farewell thank you to those who worked so hard to make the Bow Valley Community Foundation a tremendous success, we also start a new chapter on community fundraising in the Bow valley. I'm pleased to tell this Assembly that members of the foundation being dissolved by the bill that we have before us will be joining forces with the existing Banff community foundation to create the Banff Canmore Community Foundation.

Approximately two years ago the two separate organizations starting having conversations about how they might begin to collaborate and work together. August 2015 marked the official opening of the new home base for the expanded organization, where Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, the Hon. Lois Mitchell, presided over the ribbon cutting. Mayor Borrowman of Canmore and Mayor Sorensen of Banff held hands as they approached the podium to deliver a message: together we are really stronger; two towns, one heart. The mission statement of the Banff Canmore Community Foundation is: "Engaging hearts and minds to build a stronger community." They certainly do that, Madam Speaker.

In closing, I'd like to thank the hard-working volunteers and board members of the Bow Valley Community Foundation for the hard work that they did supporting many worthy causes. I wish every success in the future and give my sincere gratitude to the equally hard-working folks at the Banff Canmore Community Foundation. I look forward to the incredible projects and dreams that they will make possible.

On that note, I encourage all members of this Assembly to support this bill. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 1 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 19 Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act

**The Chair:** Are there any questions or amendments with respect to this act? The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you. It's my pleasure to rise and to just say a few words this evening about Bill 19, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act. As members will recall, Madam Chair, from the discussion earlier this morning, this legislation is designed to address the wide variance in compensation philosophies, levels, and practices that currently exist in our ABCs. This legislation arises out of the first phases of our government's review of agencies, boards, and commissions and facilitates the creation of rational and consistent frameworks for executive compensation across the ABCs. I think that all members of this House will agree that this is a reasonable objective for the government, and many members of this Chamber expressed that sentiment similarly earlier today.

During the second reading debate a number of members raised issues, questions, and other things with regard to the legislation. I just want to take a few moments to address a few of those items.

First, a member raised some concerns that our government's objective is to create a consistent framework for compensation and, by way of implication, seemed concerned that we would create a single, unitary pay rate for CEOs of all ABCs. Let me be clear, Madam Chair, that we know that there are different ABCs of different sizes and complexity, so our intent in this legislation is not to ensure one single rate of pay for CEOs of ABCs but, rather, to create a framework with many pay bands that will include in the same pay band the same kind of size of ABC or scope or responsibility or complexity. The CEO will be slotted in that pay band, and there'll be a number of pay bands.

We are contracting the work of a professional benchmarking compensation firm to aid us in the creation of these compensation frameworks, and we're also seeking input from Albertans. This is the work we're going to be engaging in as part of this bill. We believe that the legislation is in the best interests of moving forward and creating some harmony across these CEOs' compensations. It will take some time to put in effect after we pass the legislation, but we're committed to moving forward, and as we gain the experience from this initiative with the 27 CEOs initially, we will be looking at others to engage in this.

As members of this House might know, we've completed phase 1 of the ABCs review. We are starting soon phase 2 of the ABCs review, and that will provide us more grist to look at the CEOs in those areas. Then we will be moving on to phase 3, which is the postsecondary institutions, and we will be undertaking that work in the fall.

That's just some of the background with regard to all of this. I'm sorry if it's repetitious, but it is certainly important work. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 19 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

7:40

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 19.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 15

#### An Act to End Predatory Lending

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of Minister McLean to rise this evening and move third reading of Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending.

You know, it's been quite heartening today to see the positive reception for this bill both in Alberta's communities and, as I said here today, in this Assembly. In particular, it was encouraging to hear from the members across the floor, many of whom spoke very thoughtfully on this bill. Madam Speaker, we've heard from Albertans from so many walks of life that this is change that they've called for and that they support. It's useful to remind ourselves that the consultation around this bill was robust. Almost 1,500 Albertans, including stakeholders, community leaders, and members of the industry, provided input. I'd like to thank the dedicated staff at Service Alberta for achieving such breadth and depth in their consultations.

Madam Speaker, I'd also like to just quickly draw attention — there was a poll of Albertans that was conducted in late 2015 by Abacus research as these consultations concluded, and when asked whether new regulations should be introduced to better protect Albertans, 83 per cent of Albertans agreed.

During tough times Albertans come together, and we support each other. The intent of this bill follows on that, to protect Albertans, to support their families, and help to ensure that all can be resilient and strong. As such, I'm pleased to move third reading and support this bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just to clarify, hon. member, you're moving it on behalf of the Minister of Service Alberta?

**Mr. Shepherd:** That's correct.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

Any other speakers wishing to speak to this bill in third reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to rise briefly and offer my unequivocal and enthusiastic support for Bill 15. You know, as I said in my earlier remarks in second reading, if this bill results in payday lending companies being less viable and therefore less populous, there just simply being less of them, that's a good thing. That means that fewer and fewer Albertans will be finding themselves in an unsustainable debt spiral and will hopefully be on a path to being more financially sound.

You know, we heard in debate about many different institutions and organizations, credit unions like Servus Credit Union, First Calgary Financial, stepping up and creating microloan programs. That's exactly what I think the intent of this bill is, to create alternatives, lower interest alternatives for short-term lending, microloans. Momentum and others throughout the province have done tremendous, tremendous work.

The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon's sharing his story, I thought, was worth mentioning, and I think that he deserves a lot of praise for his work in the community and for, you know, doing what I think many Albertans will do, and that's to reach out to help their neighbour. You don't need to be the MLA to do that, but that's who we are as Albertans, and I think that says a lot about the character of the individual, but I think it also says a lot about the character of Albertans. We want to do the right thing because it's the right thing to do. Very clearly, Bill 15 is the right thing to do, so praise to the government for doing that, to the minister, and to all.

I'm pleased that this sounds like it's going to be a unanimous vote in favour. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Payday lending, like any industry, needs to be responsibly and properly regulated. Without the changes in this bill, the costs associated with borrowing payday loans will stay at their current high levels. These costs are simply outrageous. It's no surprise that these levels of interest can force Albertans into a cycle of debt and push them towards poverty. The individuals taking out payday loans are often financially vulnerable. This government is committed to promoting more responsible lending and to protecting Albertans who can least afford the high costs of these loans.

For these reasons, this bill has my full support. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) comes into effect if anybody has questions or comments at this point.

Are there any other speakers to the bill?

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a third time]

## Bill 1

### Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act

**Ms Ganley:** Sorry, Madam Speaker. I was going to move that we go to third reading on Bill 19 if I have unanimous consent of the House.

**Mr. Cooper:** You can just adjourn Bill 1. Just ask to adjourn Bill 1.

**Ms Ganley:** We'll adjourn debate on Bill 1, then, and move to Bill 19 if we have unanimous consent on that.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Bill 19**  
**Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions**  
**Compensation Act**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to move third reading.

Again, we need this bill so that we can get better information and get a handle on executive compensation in public agencies. It'll authorize me to be able to do that as well as to set up a system of compensation frameworks. All of that will create greater transparency in our agencies, boards, and commissions, and it will address an issue of increasing costs in ABC compensation. I hope that all members of the House can support that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, before we can proceed with third reading on Bill 19, we do need unanimous consent because it passed committee just a little while ago and second reading, so to go to the next stage, we need to have unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers to the bill?  
Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate?

**Mr. Ceci:** It's closed. Thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a third time]

**Government Bills and Orders**  
**Second Reading**

**Bill 20**  
**Climate Leadership Implementation Act**

[Debate adjourned May 25: Mr. Cyr speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake was speaking. You still have some time. Go ahead.

**Mr. Cyr:** Can we move to adjourn debate?

**The Deputy Speaker:** No. The clock ran out, and you still had some of your time left, and that should have been acknowledged at the beginning or dismissed. Go ahead. You still have I'm not sure how many minutes, about 10.

**An Hon. Member:** Start from the beginning.

**Mr. Cyr:** Start from the beginning. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Eight minutes left.

7:50

**Mr. Cyr:** All right. I left off with the ill-advised carbon tax, or levy, as the government is putting it forward. That is where we left off.

Madam Speaker, the NDP love to talk about how they are world champions of health care and that they would never hurt health care in any shape or form. Well, that's really interesting because the last time I checked, ambulances use diesel, and this raises the costs on

all fuels. We see that this actually is a tax that attacks every part of Alberta and all of our civil services. How is it that we've seen such, I guess, incredible disinterest by the government in studying the actual results of implementing this tax?

Now, the NDP has been clear that there are no rebates for the health care centres, for the hospitals, for the schools, for the charities. These are functions that are integral to Alberta. How is it that when we are bringing in a tax that is going to actually make our civil services worse, they have been forgotten about when it comes down to making sure that this is tax neutral? The big thing here is that they keep talking about tax neutral, but the fact is that they don't understand what tax neutral is. Spending taxes doesn't mean tax neutral. It just means taxes are being spent. Tax neutral actually means that you put the money back towards the places that you're trying to incentivize, which in this case is green.

Now, when we're looking at this, have we actually talked with health care providers? Have we talked with the hospitals? Have we talked with the schools? Have we talked with the trustees? Have we talked with the different boards in Alberta? That answer is no. We all knew that it was coming, but we don't know what the effects are, and that is because of the fact that this government hasn't done its due diligence to ensure that the impacts are being identified so that we can actually make sure that it doesn't affect our front-line workers, which this bill, clearly, is going to affect. We're going to have to ensure that somehow these shortfalls that are being created right now are covered.

Now, Madam Speaker, I've talked about how it's going to impact our local hospitals and our local educators, our local seniors' homes – I talked about those – but let's talk about actual Albertans right now who are hurting. Let's go with the example of long-haul truckers. The fact is that when you look at long-haul truckers, there are some very tight margins right now, and these guys, because we have slowed down with our economy, are no longer working as much or at the same rates as they were before. So now is not the time to be raising the fuel costs for these long-haul truckers because, in the end, we're going to see that they're going to start failing. That means that in order to be able to make up that shortfall of long-haul truckers, we're actually going to have to see price increases.

Now, when we start looking at what this government has done, we're seeing massive increases in the fuel tax. How can we say that that is going to positively affect our most vulnerable? The fact is that it's not.

Now, there are things that are a real concern, and one of the ones that's really popping out for me is that we are imposing a diesel carbon tax. What will the effect on the truck stops selling the diesel be? This is an interesting, I guess, concern that I've got. To be honest with you, I used to do accounting for some of these bulk dealerships. [interjection] I know. They would actually tell me that the higher the cost of the fuel, the less fuel they sell. I know it's stunning to hear that.

**An Hon. Member:** Stunning.

**Mr. Cyr:** Stunning to hear that. That's because we're putting businesses out of business. That is what's happening.

Again, we start looking at this. I agree that we are going to see less fuel sold, but we're also going to see businesses fail as well. We're going to see businesses' costs to continue operating go up, so our burgers are going to go up, and our groceries are going to go up, the parts for our vehicles. The fact is that when we start looking at everything that's going to be going up, we are going to be actually making less from this fuel tax because we're selling less fuel. It's just like when we look at the corporate taxes, personal taxes, and minimum wages that are being brought in. The more tax you do,

the less incentive there is to make profits and to hire people. That's what this carbon tax is going to do for fuel consumption in the area.

I agree that Alberta can reduce its carbon footprint by everybody moving out of Alberta. That seems to be a very counterproductive way of dealing with our carbon. A good example is that we are seeing astounding vacancy rates in my riding right now. That is because people cannot move forward without any work in my riding, with the wonderful 10 per cent unemployment rate that we've got right now. They are actually saying: we want to see stability. I brought this up last night when I was talking about Bill 10. I won't go down that road, but I will say that it is unstable government that brings forward the fact that I will continue to see no employment in my riding.

A good example that we need to be looking at, Madam Speaker, is what the actual impacts are. I keep bringing this up because it is astounding. We are studying an incredible number of different things like legal aid. We're putting reviews out consistently across this government . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to briefly comment on the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake's stirring remarks. I just have a couple of quick questions, and then I'll pass it to him.

I'm just wondering if he would be able to elaborate on some of the impacts with respect to jobs in the constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake as I know that it's something he is passionate about in terms of employment numbers in the region. Then if he wouldn't mind just spending a couple of brief moments speaking about if he has heard from constituents in Bonnyville-Cold Lake that are comfortable with the direction that the government is going on this particular tax given the fact that it wasn't something that the NDP campaigned on, that it wasn't something that was part of the agenda that was laid out for all Albertans during the May 5 election.

8:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll start with the first part of my hon. colleague's question here. When we're looking at jobs, going back to that specifically, I am seeing with a lot of the businesses anywhere between 25 and 40 per cent of their staff being laid off right now. This is an astounding number, but you know what? We have an incredible constituency. They want to get through this. They know that they can get through this. Why would we add more burden? That is what we are doing.

Already the businesses are having a hard time making ends meet. They're already keeping more staff because they know that these are mothers, fathers, single mothers, incredible people that they're trying to keep working. But you know what? They're not going to be working because in the end raising their cost to do business is going to mean that they're going to have to not make more jobs but actually lay people off.

I don't see how taxing \$3 billion out of Alberta's economy right now is going to create any jobs. We've heard consistently that when you tax, tax, and tax — why is it that somehow people think that they can make more money out of that? What ends up happening is that you end up eroding your tax base.

Now, let's look at the fact that when we're looking at where our most vulnerable are, depending on the riding, right now they're going to see a wonderful \$500 tax credit from this government. The fact is that the government right now is saying that it's only going

to cost them an extra \$500 or \$600, but that's not reality for northern ridings. People know that it is more expensive to actually live in northern ridings. How is adding more burden to the northern ridings, to my hometown going to help anybody? It's not. The fact is that we're downloading an incredible burden on northern Alberta, on Calgary, and we're not going to see any results, in my opinion, of actually moving Alberta forward, which is something that right now we need to do.

We need to get investment back. That is what we should be focusing on. We should be focusing on, well, getting economic development, which has failed horribly, to actually start generating some interest in investing back in Alberta. We're not seeing any of this stuff moving forward. What we're seeing are steps backwards. We're seeing projects put on hold. We're seeing plants sitting on plant sites. In the end, what we're seeing is that they're just not willing to take a chance because with that money they put into it, they don't know if they're going to get that money back out.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any others wishing to speak to this bill?

**Mr. Dang:** Madam Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 20 at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 1

### Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (continued)

[Adjourned debate May 25: Ms Ganley]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise on third reading here of Bill 1. I'll keep my comments fairly brief. I just want to highlight the fact that numerous members throughout the debate on Bill 1 commented on Bill 1 being a flagship bill, and I want to reiterate the fact that for our government the priority is the economy. The priority is getting Albertans back to work. Through Bill 1 that's one tool that our government will have to be able to respond quite quickly and nimbly to the current economic situation that Alberta is facing and to ensure that we have the tools to adapt and respond not only to the economic climate and conditions but, quite frankly, the economy, promoting diversification, looking for opportunities to leverage our strengths, and for Alberta to continue to be the best place to start and grow a business. It will continue to be one of our strengths, quite frankly.

I will say that I was a little disappointed that all parties in this House did not support the bill, and that makes me question whether the economy and diversification and promoting jobs within our province is a priority of all members within this Assembly. If it is, then I would have expected unanimous support of a bill of this stature and of this significance.

Quite frankly, as well, Madam Speaker, this is a priority of this government as seen through our budget, which we entitled the Alberta jobs budget, again, a significant number of tools that are going to set the right conditions for business and industry to continue to invest in our province, to provide supports to entrepreneurs and small-business owners so that we remain the best province in the country to invest in, to start and grow a business in.



I think it's worth mentioning, Madam Speaker, that Alberta continues to be the lowest taxed jurisdiction in the country. There are a number of factors which set Alberta far apart from every other province, including the fact that we've got the youngest population, one of the most educated populations. We have some of the most affordable real estate in the country when you look at comparisons to some of the other major cities across the country. We also have an incredible quality of life here in Alberta, from the mountains to the rolling hills up in Peace River. Alberta is the most beautiful province in the country.

I am quite proud to be an Albertan, Madam Speaker, quite proud of the work that our government is doing, and I will encourage all members of the Assembly to support third reading of Bill 1. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This Bill 1 was introduced on the 8th of March as a flagship bill. Instead of being a flagship bill, it ended up as a job description for the minister.

I appreciate the minister asking for unanimous support for the bill. In this House probably we debated a lot on this bill, and we were all eagerly waiting to hear from the minister what those tools are that he's looking for from this bill that will help him create jobs. We didn't hear any specific examples. When we looked at the Government Organization Act, it already provided him all the tools he has. We talked about that back and forth so many times. We haven't heard, even today, what those specific tools are that weren't there in the organization act but that he's looking for through Bill 1. So that's why I'm disappointed. He's just asking for unanimous support but not giving us the information on what new powers he will get. He already has the powers, and instead of using them, he just wants to relist them as a new bill in Bill 1.

Madam Speaker, we also talked a lot about the job situation here. A hundred thousand jobs were lost in Alberta. In Calgary-Foothills I got so many phone calls, e-mails, and I've been door-knocking, and I'm hearing from people that their priority is also the economy and jobs. They want to get back to work. I've been asking this minister to tell us how he's going to create those hundred thousand jobs. To create those hundred thousand jobs in three years: he should be in a real hurry to do something about that if Bill 1 is really that important.

**8:10**

I mean, it was gathering dust for almost three months now. We are at Bill 22 now on the Order Paper, and we're still talking about Bill 1. Hopefully, today we'll get through this. If that's how the government wants to represent it, if just to get this bill approved reflects how long it takes to create jobs, if the government takes so long and still can't figure out what additional powers the minister is going to get after implementing this bill, you know, Albertans really can't wait. They really want this minister to succeed and help create the jobs. We want him to be successful. Irrespective of what they say, that we don't want them to succeed, it's not true. We all have an interest, like my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake. He said that the unemployment rate in his riding is more than 10 per cent now. There are so many Albertans looking for help, and we'll be happy if this government succeeds in creating a hundred thousand jobs in three years. That helps my neighbours, my friends, my colleagues, but even today we haven't heard it from the minister.

As a critic my job is to hold the government to account and also, you know, to help them, whichever way I could, by pointing out the

pros and cons of this bill. That's why we wanted to make this bill better. Because there is nothing in that bill, we proposed amendments to make it better. Those amendments are very reasonable. Had they voted for those amendments, that would have helped to debate on programs by a committee of the Assembly, and that would have helped the minister to report the progress on the number of jobs he created, and that reporting would have been public instead of reporting in secret as per the bill. Most importantly, it would have cut red tape, which would have helped small businesses and big businesses, who would have created the many jobs that the minister wanted to create.

Madam Speaker, that red tape is one subject, you know, that I'm really interested in debating in the House in the future, too. When I worked in oil and gas, I experienced it first-hand. These work processes and all that take so long here to get anything approved. It's a waste of resources, a waste of time. You know, we could have approved that amendment so that this bill would have been better. We're all talking about creating jobs, but had we approved that red tape reduction, many companies would have actually advanced the construction of many projects. When we say to reduce red tape, we're not telling the government to ignore the safety issues or anything. We're talking about removing the roadblocks. Some of the government members made fun of that as if we don't care about safety or anything. We're not talking about that. We're talking about procedural delays and roadblocks which could delay the projects.

Anyway, all our amendments were shut down. Had they approved them, that would have really made this bill something worth while. Although it's not a flagship, it would have been something better than what it is now. That flagship we're talking about: the way it is now, it can be manned by only one person, by one person only. That will send false hope. If the minister is trying to send his resumé and expecting them to hire him as the saviour of the ship, it's not going to happen. This is just like a rubber dinghy that the government insists on describing as a battleship. It deserves to be sunk. Unless they think we are one-eyed pirates that can't see the uselessness of this flagship bill, this bill deserves to walk the plank and swim with the fishes, actually.

None of the arguments presented in defence of the need for this bill hold any water. All those guys heckling today: I didn't see any of them standing in this House and speaking in favour of this bill. I didn't. Today they had the opportunity, if they can, to convince all of us here to support that, which the minister couldn't do. If any of those members heckling can convince us, I look forward to that debate.

If we put this bill in a bottle and sent it out to sea, the message wouldn't make one single difference to whatever poor lost soul found it. There isn't even enough paper in the bill to try and eat it. If this bill was a treasure map, it would lead to the garbage can, where it belongs, and at the bottom of the garbage can you would find the failed jobs plan, which, coincidentally, is now under the same minister. This flagship should be sailed into the Bermuda Triangle and lost forever if it can't sail that well.

For the reasons I explained, Madam Speaker, I can't support this, and I don't want to waste our time and effort on useless legislation like this. Let's put it to bed and move on to focus on finding solutions for real problems and issues. I would prefer to be proven wrong by the hon. minister. I wish that after passing this bill, the minister will be really able to create jobs, real jobs, that are tangible and measurable. I hope he can update the Assembly each quarter on how many jobs he creates after being enabled by this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is in effect if you have a question. Were you going to speak under 29(2)(a), hon. member?

**Mr. Gill:** Since the flagship bill is about nothing and it's going to create no jobs, I guess I have nothing to say about it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Yes. I really appreciated some of the analogy that you were making here. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Through the chair.

**Mr. Smith:** Through the chair. I'm sorry. Thank you. I always forget that.

I was just wondering if the member could expound a little bit further on how this flagship bill is really running at half mast.

**Mr. Panda:** Well, we actually asked the hon. minister to withdraw the bill – that was the honourable thing he could have done – but he refused to do that. In our own interest, we tried to make it better. That's why we proposed those amendments, but they were all shot down. I don't know if there is anything we could do better. [interjection] Flagship, yes. Sinking ship. I encourage you guys to jump out of that sinking ship and find a safe haven soon.

We were all elected here to this House to bring bills that actually make sense, that actually help Albertans, that actually create jobs. This Bill 1: just show us, tell us, you know, which way it's going to help the minister. How is that going to help your neighbours, my neighbours, people in your riding, in my riding? How can they get back to work? Tell us one example. You all know. You guys are all smart. You know the math. To create a hundred thousand jobs in three years, that means he has to create 33,000 jobs each year. So 33,000 jobs divided by 12 months – you know the math. You figure it out.

8:20

Let's put this bill to bed today and enable the minister – with these new powers that he's going to get with Bill 1, let's wish him the best so that he can create the jobs, every month 500, 600, 800 jobs – so that he can come back and report to us by department: the Department of Finance, Energy, and all those ministries. He's going to report to us saying: this month in the Ministry of Energy we created 200 jobs; in Infrastructure we created 400 jobs. If he can show us that, we're willing to support the bill, but we haven't heard that. We haven't heard how many jobs he's going to create in Banff-Cochrane or Calgary-Hawthwood. We haven't heard that. If you are interested, you should be asking the minister: by month in each of the ridings how many jobs are going to be created? If he has answers, we'll be happy to support the bill. If not, let's not waste time and energy on this useless bill.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to Bill 1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think it's remarkable that this is the best the government could come up with for their flagship bill, Bill 1. There are a lot of things that we need to deal with in this province, and, you know, to waste a flagship opportunity, really, on a bill that does nothing, that gives the minister no powers that he doesn't already have, that gives Executive Council no powers that they don't already have – it is singularly unambitious, and it really is a bill about nothing. It is the *Seinfeld* bill. I've been

frantically trying to come up with a joke about Newman or George or Kramer. I'm afraid that I'm just not creative enough at this point in session to come up with anything quite so good, not nearly as creative as my friend from Calgary-Foothills.

I mean, in all sincerity, we have in this province right now an economic crisis. We have a hundred thousand or more Albertans who are out of work. Many of those people have tremendous skills. They're highly skilled engineers, technical professionals, oil field workers, and many of them have very limited job prospects. That's very serious. That is very serious business.

I think it's worth noting that I have a tremendous amount of respect for the minister, and I know that he's well regarded in the province in the economic development community and amongst chambers of commerce. I know that because I've talked with them, and they do speak highly of the minister. I think that's worth noting. I think it would be better, frankly, if the minister would get on with doing the job rather than passing legislation that does nothing that he can't already do.

It makes me wonder: what else did the government have lined up as Bill 1? When we got this bill, it was printed on eight and a half by 11 paper. It wasn't even a proper bill. Given that it was early on in a session that the government set themselves, surely it wasn't a surprise that you had to come up with a Bill 1? You had time to actually get to Queen's Printer and physically print the bill. I do wonder if at some point there's another shoe to drop here, if there's some other grand idea that this government is going to come up with.

You know, there are problems with the bill itself. The reporting is only from the minister to Executive Council, not to the public, not to the Assembly, not to Albertans, so that reduces transparency. Another thing I have a real concern about with this entire role and the bill is that it creates a risk that the government may get directly involved with investments in business, be that through Crown corporations or direct investment. That may happen not just with this bill. It may happen as a result of the climate bill. It may happen as a result of some other economic diversification strategy. You know, that introduces an entirely new level of risk. We've been down this road before, Madam Speaker. It was in the '80s, when the government of the day decided that that was a great idea, and it ended up costing Albertans hundreds of millions of dollars.

I'm not sure if this word is unparliamentary, but I'm going to give it a go. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. If that is unparliamentary, I will withdraw the term. We're familiar with it. [interjection] I've been informed by my hon. colleague that I'm not allowed to use the words "good intentions" when referring to the government of the day. [interjections] Perfect. I've been beaten to my *Seinfeld* joke.

You know, it's a great concern. Unfortunately, no, I can't support this bill either because I worry: are there other shoes to drop? Is there more to come here? Is this government going to enter into direct investment with Alberta taxpayers' dollars in private business, risking Alberta tax dollars? That's not what government should do. You know, government should create the environment where private business can thrive, where Alberta's entrepreneurial spirit can really, truly thrive. There was tremendous opportunity here. We could have done some great things. Sadly, this government and this bill just don't meet the mark, so I cannot support it, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any further speakers to Bill 1? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak one final time on this great accomplishment, this

significant piece of legislation, not one final time in the House forever, much to the chagrin of many folks on that side of the House and fewer people on this side of the House but not all of them.

You know, Madam Speaker, we have seen many, many Bill 1s come and go, and as my hon. colleague from Calgary-Foothills mentioned, Bill 1 is, generally speaking, a flagship... [interjections] Danger, Will Robinson.

It's generally a flagship piece of legislation that the whole government can be proud of. Generally speaking, in fact almost exclusively, Bill 1s have been sponsored by the Premier of the day, and this particular piece of legislation, with all due respect to my hon. colleague for Economic Development and Trade and responsible for the MGA and a bunch of other things in there, former Minister of Municipal Affairs and former Minister of Service Alberta, not to mention all the other wonderful accomplishments he's had on this side of the House – while it's wonderful that he had the opportunity to sponsor such a bill, generally speaking, a government is so proud of the first piece of legislation that they put the Premier's name on that bill. This is the first time since Premier Lougheed that the government has made a decision to not put the Premier's name on Bill 1. I think it speaks to the quality of the legislation because this piece of legislation is not what Albertans were hoping for.

8:30

Now, while they're hoping that positive things can happen inside our economy, while they're hoping that the government will do its best job to get out of the way of job creators, while they're hoping that the government will play a key partnership role in the future of our province, they aren't just waiting for a piece of legislation that accomplishes nothing. In fact, at no point have I knocked on the door of the good people in the constituency, in the outstanding constituency I might add, of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills when they've said: you know, what I'm hoping for is Bill 1, a bill that allows the minister to do his job. What they are hoping for is a government that truly understands the position that we're in, that truly understands the role of government in not making things worse, and we've seen time in and time out this NDP government making ideological decisions that at the end of the day aren't making things better. I think Bill 1 is a perfect example of it, and I, quite frankly, am glad that this evening is likely to be the last time that we have to talk about Bill 1.

I think it's unfortunate that there isn't more accountability to the Legislature in Bill 1 like this side of the House proposed in committee, a number of amendments that would have actually made the bill less bad. One of the things that those amendments had the opportunity to do was to ensure that this minister was held to account for this piece of legislation both in the form of programs that had to be initiated, that would have had some accountability through the legislative process, and also a requirement of the minister to report back to this Chamber on progress that's being made. While I know the minister has stood in his place on a number of occasions and said, "Trust me; I'll be reporting back; I will be reporting to this House on a regular basis," we have a little bit of a desire for those sorts of statements to be put in legislation so that we can ensure that they will happen because the government has been laying a track record of not being as accountable to the Assembly as they ought to be.

I think a perfect example of that is the lack of desire to have legislation reviewed at committee, the lack of desire to have the appropriate study of legislation. A perfect example of that is the introduction of Bill 20 on one day, a hundred pages of a bill, and expecting the opposition to debate it the following day. This is the sort of rushing through of legislation, the sort of lack of

accountability that this government is building a track record for. Bill 1 is a perfect example of not being accountable to this Chamber and only being accountable to cabinet and to the Premier. That, Madam Speaker, is not the kind of change that Albertans were hoping for.

I hope that we have an opportunity to finally get this bill passed so that the minister can get on with doing his job and can be reporting back to the House, as he has assured us he will do on numerous occasions, even though the legislation says that he only has to report back once to Executive Council. I'll take him at his word that he will be reporting to the House regularly and that we will be able to see some wonderful results from this legislation although I'm highly speculative in this case.

So I certainly won't be supporting the bill – I know it comes as a surprise – but I do look forward to moving forward and seeing the results that may or may not come from it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers wishing to speak to Bill 1? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 1. This bill does make me nervous. We lived through many decades of governments trying to pick winners and losers within industry and trying to create jobs, losing focus on the real job of government, which is essentially to create an environment for investment in private industry to create those real jobs. Bill 1 has been called lots of things over these last few debates. Most of all Bill 1 reminds a number of us of economic development policies and experiments that have gone awry. Tales of good money chasing after bad, decades come to mind. We don't want to repeat that. We have heard some pretty fascinating stories, stories about magnesium plants in High River and meat-packing businesses in Edmonton.

I have another tale to share. This tale comes from the shores of Nova Scotia. It involves something almost mystical, almost fantastical. This is the tale of heavy water. This is an instance where I did not know much about heavy water, so I went to others to give me an explanation about heavy water. For those who don't know, water is a molecule made from three atoms: one atom of oxygen, two atoms of hydrogen. Hence, you get H<sub>2</sub>O or dihydrogen monoxide. A hydrogen atom is made up of one proton, one electron. But sometimes that atom gets an interloper, a third particle called a neutron. A hydrogen atom made up of a proton, a neutron, and an electron is known as deuterium. One in every 6,000 hydrogen atoms is like this. Place deuterium in a water molecule, and suddenly you no longer have H<sub>2</sub>O; you have D<sub>2</sub>O, better known as heavy water.

By the early '60s Canada had decided that our nuclear reactors would be the CANDU variety, CANada Deuterium Uranium. This meant as uranium would react to produce the heat energy in nuclear reactors, the deuterium of heavy water would be used as the moderator to ensure the reactor wouldn't run out of control and explode. This is quite unlike the Soviet reactors, like those involved at Chernobyl, where flammable graphite was used as the moderator.

If Canada was to have CANDU reactors, Canada was going to need heavy water. Scientist Jerome Spevack arrived in Nova Scotia in 1963 and within six weeks had hammered out a deal with the government. His company, Deuterium of Canada Limited, had to pony up \$18 million and the province's development arm, Industrial Estates Limited, offered up \$12 million to have the \$30 million for the plant in Cape Breton ready to employ out-of-work coal miners in thousands of construction jobs and 200 operating jobs. A make-work project. Sounds good.

But federal politics for the CANDU reactors demanded that in order for the company to get the CANDU contract, it had to be a

Canadian company. DCL was American owned. It did not take long for the Nova Scotia government to make a decision to take on a majority ownership stake in DCL in order to get the jobs and the contract. Mysteriously, the requirement for DCL to raise \$18 million disappeared. Coincidentally, scientist Jerome Spevack was given a 20-year management contract, a scientist given a management contract, but was not a good manager and had to be bought out when construction fell behind schedule and was plagued by cost overruns.

8:40

Bad weather; 24 strikes; late, faulty, and wrong-sized equipment arriving on site plagued construction. Two years after construction was started, the plant was \$16 million over budget. The province's development arm, Industrial Estates Limited, tried to unload the plant to various buyers. When Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, the federal, taxpayer-funded Crown corporation, asked to double the order and thus double the plant size, Industrial Estates Limited foolishly agreed. Bad decision after bad decision after bad decision.

Then something disastrous happened. Someone tried to save \$2 million by pumping salt water into the stainless-steel pipes to make the heavy water. The result: dangerous hydrogen sulphide, H<sub>2</sub>S, gas and a rusted-out plant. No one claims responsibility, but it doesn't take a scientist to make the connection between this disaster and government intervention in economic diversification, government intervention of the kind this government wishes to emulate and advocates in Bill 1.

By 1968 130 million taxpayer dollars had been spent on the heavy-water plant. It was costing the government \$179,000 per employee per year. Job creation. The plant was turned over to Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, who spent more federal taxpayer dollars, to the tune of \$95 million, to fix the plant and make it run properly. The plant was closed in 1985, and it cost Atomic Energy of Canada another 2 and a half million dollars to clean up the site. To conclude, \$228 million of federal and provincial taxpayers' money was spent on this one industry in Nova Scotia, and they have nothing to show for it.

Nova Scotia had another industry they sunk money into in the name of economic development, Sydney Steel. For close to 35 years Nova Scotia poured \$3.2 billion – yes, \$3.2 billion – into that money-losing Sydney Steel Corporation. I praise former Nova Scotia Premier John Hamm for making the bold promise to sell it or close it, and he did just that. No more bad money after good. He closed it. Madam Speaker, \$3.2 billion over 35 years and nothing to show for it is an incredible waste of taxpayers' dollars. That doesn't count the cleanup costs associated with the site as the place is adjacent to the notorious PCB-laden Sydney tar ponds, that are now covered over as a park.

Now, these stories have a lesson to teach us. Bill 1 raises the spectre of these examples of throwing good money after bad, this time to create jobs in Alberta. Using taxpayers' money for business and job creation is not the role of government, I would suggest. That is the role of private dollars and the private sector. The economic development paradigm as represented by the current NDP government drives much fear and concern among Albertans that the NDP will make similar economic development decisions: taxpayer-owned industry, taxpayer-subsidized business, majority equity stakes in business, unproven technology, bad project management and cost controls. Those who pay no attention to history are doomed to repeat it. The NDP government needs to please pay attention to these tales and not repeat them. To repeat them will be to place a new financial burden on our children, gambling with our children's future and their children's at the expense of creating jobs in the future in Alberta.

For that reason, I cannot support Bill 1, which is little more than the government trying to give itself a mandate to pick winners and losers in our economy and possibly to repeat the economic development mistakes of the past. I believe this government needs to regain its focus on creating an environment to allow business to have the opportunity to move forward with investment and confidence in an environment of business-friendly politics here in Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any further speakers to Bill 1? We'll call on the hon. – the Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** I'm not honourable yet, but maybe. You never know.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Connolly:** You're honourable when you're in the House.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Pardon me?

**Mr. Connolly:** You're honourable when you're in the House.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Yeah. Thank you.

I rise today to speak against Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. I am unaware of any piece of legislation that contains so little substance. It totals three pages, and the only job it has created thus far is that of the minister. Since the bill was introduced over two months ago, I've had plenty of time to ponder the contents of the bill, and what I'm left with is how utterly lacking in substance this proposed legislation is.

This bill reminds me a lot of an airbag. According to [madehow.com](http://madehow.com) an airbag is, quote, an inflatable cushion designed to protect automobile occupants from serious injury in the case of a collision. The airbag is part of an inflatable restraint system, also known as an air cushion restraint system, or an airbag supplemental restraint system. End quote.

Madehow.com goes on to explain – and I'm paraphrasing – that an airbag is primarily comprised of a fabric bag, usually made of nylon, which is housed in a compartment in the steering wheel, dashboard, or door. In the case of an accident the airbag sensor is tripped, which then sets in motion a chemical reaction that results in sodium acetate and potassium nitrate, which produce nitrogen gas, inflating the airbag. In addition to the sodium acetate and potassium nitrate, the airbag also contains a powdery substance, usually cornstarch or talcum powder, which acts as a lubricant while the airbag is deployed in the vehicle.

According to [howstuffworks.com](http://howstuffworks.com) the entire process from the airbag sensor being tripped to the airbag being deployed takes about one twenty-fifth of a second, or about the same amount of time it takes to read Bill 1.

Unfortunately, that is where the comparisons end. While airbags have a long and documented history of saving lives, the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act has yet to produce any quantifiable or measurable uptake in any job creation in Alberta, well, besides the job of the minister.

I would suggest that we dive right into the bill, but it's simply a little too dangerous to dive into something so shallow. Let's not dive into it. I will propose that we wade into the bill instead. Let's jump right to section 2, establishment of programs. This is a very important section since it clearly establishes that the minister could establish all of the different types of programs that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade could already establish without

this ridiculous bill being enacted, things like creating partnerships that support entrepreneurship and focus on innovation or programs that increase access to capital or programs that help businesses grow and succeed. That is an interesting one right there, creating a program that helps businesses grow and succeed, because I've never heard of a small-business tax cut referred to as a program before. I guess, you know, each to their own.

Section 3 establishes that even if the minister really, really wants to establish an investor tax credit program or a capital investment tax program, he must still introduce a bill in the Assembly. I think we can all thank the government for their quick thinking on including this caveat. We wouldn't want the minister going rogue on establishing tax credits outside of this Assembly.

Alberta is facing the worst economic downturn in a generation. Unemployment is higher than it's been in decades. There are over 100,000 Albertans that have lost their jobs. This government could have done so many better things to provide a calming effect on a skittish and anxious economy. Is that the best that they could come up with, Bill 1? This just goes to show how out of touch this government is with the economic reality facing Albertans today.

For these reasons I cannot support this bill, and I expect my colleagues to do the same. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments?

Seeing none, any further speakers to Bill 1? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo?

**Mr. Yao:** No. I'm fine, actually. Sorry.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to Bill 1?

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade to close debate.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and close debate on Bill 1. I have a few comments which may address some of the comments that the Official Opposition made. First, I found that the debate was very interesting. We learned all about airbags and water molecules and different topics, nuclear facilities as well, which are not related so much to the bill.

8:50

I just wanted to clarify for hon. members that when we talk about diversification, I appreciate the fact that the opposition has examples, as have we, of the previous government's failed attempts at diversification by throwing a whole bunch of money at a sector which doesn't exist. This bill does not do that. That is not our definition of diversification, as most members in this House will know. I've spoken on it numerous times.

We're looking at building on our strengths within our sectors, within oil and gas, both value-added but also in other sectors that are very strong in the province of Alberta: our agricultural sector, our forestry sector, our tourism sector. Madam Speaker, I know that the Official Opposition doesn't believe in diversification, but the rest of us do, and quite frankly the rest of the world does.

This piece of legislation is an enabling piece of legislation. I do find some of the hon. members' comments interesting as far as what the bill will do. It gives the government tools, again, to respond.

The one point that I did want to respond to in closing, Madam Speaker, is that, really, to ask how many jobs will be created from a piece of legislation shows that members are naive in how the economy actually works in that a piece of legislation does not produce X number of jobs. The role of the government is to provide and set the right conditions to encourage the private sector, who are the job creators, to invest and grow their businesses or to start a

business here in the province. That is exactly the approach that our government is taking. That's the approach that we've been doing.

The Minister of Finance's budget back in October 2015 had a number of tools, including increasing access to capital through ATB, looking at providing additional funding to the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, which invests in Alberta-based companies through venture capital. It's an equity stake, quite an incredible model, Madam Speaker. Again, asking questions about how many jobs a bill creates in one sector or in one city, to me, unfortunately, shows a little bit of naïveté as far as how setting the right conditions works and the role of the government. I am happy to clarify that for all members.

I do just want to mention, Madam Speaker, that, quite frankly, our government has taken this economic downturn very seriously, not only over the past 12 to 14 months. We recognize the hardship that many Alberta families and workers and communities have faced. That's why our government has taken action both through our budget and through legislation, looking at providing opportunities to get Albertans back to work, to get them working, and, again, looking at leveraging sectors that we are already strong in.

I'm quite proud of the work that the Premier and the government have done, and this bill will continue to build on our strengths and look at providing new opportunities for Albertans and providing the supports for our existing sectors. With that, I encourage all members of the Assembly to support this bill.

Madam Speaker, as Deputy Government House Leader I will request unanimous consent of the House for one-minute bells.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There's a request for reducing the bells to one minute. Is there anyone opposed?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:54 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Miller
Babcock	Gray	Phillips
Bilous	Hinkley	Piquette
Carlier	Horne	Renaud
Carson	Kazim	Schreiner
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Shepherd
Connolly	Littlewood	Sigurdson
Coolahan	Loyola	Sucha
Dach	Luff	Sweet
Dang	Malkinson	Turner
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Woollard
Ganley		

Against the motion:

Anderson, W.	Ellis	Smith
Clark	Gill	Strankman
Cooper	Panda	van Dijken
Cyr	Rodney	Yao
Totals:	For – 37	Against – 12

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a third time]

**Bill 9**  
**An Act to Modernize Enforcement**  
**of Provincial Offences**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and move third reading of Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences.

I would once again like to thank my colleagues on both sides of the House for a good discussion and for their support of this valuable legislation. We've had the opportunity to thoroughly discuss this legislation in the House, and it's clear from comments made during Committee of the Whole that members of the House are in agreement with the intent of this bill, including the modernization of key pieces of the justice system. The amendment, the proposed civil enforcement measures to enforce tickets for minor infractions and to enable e-ticketing, will do just that. The current system of using warrants to enforce tickets for minor infractions is not effective and hasn't been so for a number of years.

**9:00**

I'm pleased that many of my colleagues have expressed their shared views that these amendments will help focus law enforcement and court resources where they should be, on more serious crimes. I'm also happy to hear the members opposite support the intent of this bill.

Madam Speaker, almost 97 per cent of Albertans over the age of 16 use motor vehicle registry services, and for those who don't, other enforcement mechanisms will be available such as the filing of writs against property and garnishing of bank accounts, wages, and tax refunds. This will address enforcement in a much more effective way.

The EndPovertyEdmonton task force recently released a poverty reduction strategy that includes a priority aimed at decriminalizing poverty. This priority looks at how the justice system can work against the poor as they're often trapped in a perpetuating cycle. It indicates that fines for minor violations turn into arrest warrants, and there's no means of repayment, so these warrants turn into jail time, that can further dim these individuals' chances of acquiring the necessary resources to bring themselves out of poverty. The proposed amendments will ensure that this government and social agencies are in a better position to work with individuals who are coping with poverty.

Alberta Justice and Solicitor General cannot work in isolation to address social issues in our communities. People who are dealing with mental health issues need a wide range of supports. This is why I'm working closely with my colleagues in Alberta Health, Human Services, and other ministries to build on recommendations in the Valuing Mental Health report.

In February of this year this government released a report that includes 32 recommendations aimed at supporting mental health by strengthening service delivery for Albertans with mental illness and addictions. The Alberta government took quick steps to accept the report and begin addressing six recommendations that were identified as priorities. The recommendations in this report are guiding our government and our partners as we work to build a better system for addictions and mental health. We are continuing to evaluate the remaining recommendations and have been talking to our partners and Albertans who may be affected by them. The legislative amendments we were discussing today are one piece of the puzzle to help people who are in vulnerable positions due to homelessness or mental illness. I'm looking forward to the

implementation of Bill 9 to better meet the needs of Albertans and to support forward thinking and modernization in this province.

Madam Speaker, I'm very excited today to be able to pass this particular bill. It's one step in a number of steps that my ministry is considering to assist in decriminalizing poverty so that individuals who are suffering from mental health challenges and who have fallen into poverty for whatever reason can be supported not just by social services agencies but also by the government. It's critical that we work with our partners going forward on this. I was incredibly pleased to stand up on the day this bill was first introduced with support from both the Edmonton Police Service and from the John Howard Society as we introduced this bill. I think that all Albertans can agree that this reflects our shared values that we should not be criminalizing poverty, and I'm glad to have had the opportunity to take this step.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. When we look at this bill, it's about outstanding fines for minor offences, for penalties under \$1,000. We'd no longer be having warrants issued, but we'd be compelled to get payment when it's registry time.

Now, this is something that has been brought to my attention as a shadow minister for Justice. It's good to see that not only was I getting it but that the Minister of Justice was getting that as well. To credit the minister, she moved forward with this, and it's good to see that we're actually putting some legislation through that will actually move Alberta forward in its ability to be able to deal with our homeless and Albertans without health. Giving credit where credit is due I think is important, and good legislation being moved forward is something that we need to acknowledge.

The fact is that I did bring up in Committee of the Whole that I had concerns that we may not be doing enough for those with mental health issues that are being missed now, but the speech by the Minister of Justice saying that she is collaborating with the Minister of Health is good to hear, and it's good to see that, in the end, we're all moving together to make sure that Alberta is helping people that need help.

A good example is that a friend of mine was saying that he got a jaywalking ticket in his early 20s and ended up at the wonderful Edmonton Remand Centre. That was a terrifying experience for my friend, and he said: it's all for a 10-dollar ticket. Now, unfortunately, he didn't have \$10. This could have been easily reconciled, but in the end he needed to call for his family's help. There's always the question that they don't get there in time and that we have somebody that's stuck in a facility that probably shouldn't have been there in the first place because, in the end, we've got a system that was identifying people as criminals, and it maybe should have been using a little bit of foresight.

We needed to end the cycle for those who couldn't afford their tickets or who possibly may not have given the severity of the ticket the consideration it needed to make sure that that ticket was paid. Now, I do like the fact that we are still dealing with tickets because, in the end, there should be some accountability for somebody that has a ticket written for them. So I'm not saying: "Let's just let them all go. Forget about anything under \$1,000." What I am saying is that we need to be moving Alberta forward and making sure that we actually put behind bars the people that belong behind bars.

This is where I believe – and I can support this bill – that this minister has done a very excellent job of answering our questions. I believe that, in the end, we've worked as a group and have been able to move this forward. I believe that the minister has listened to

our concerns. She has done an excellent job, and she just needs to be commended on it.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak to third reading of Bill 9. You know, in my constituency of Edmonton-Centre there are a significant number of residents who for a variety of reasons have limited income. Some of these individuals are homeless, others are precariously housed, and for all of them every dollar counts, so when they lose even just a small amount of their income, that can sometimes mean the difference between feeding themselves and their family. It can mean the difference between having a roof over their head or them being out in the street. As we've discussed, when these individuals receive a fine, often due to circumstances that are directly related to their poverty or due to struggles with mental or physical health or addictions, it can begin a cycle of harm that can be very difficult to break.

Along those lines, I'd like to share a story that was shared with me through my municipal counterpart, Councillor Scott McKeen. He received an e-mail from a young indigenous man who works for a local organization that supports high-risk, marginalized youth. The young man had at some point in time received a transit fine. He wasn't able to both pay the fine and make his rent, so he decided to turn himself in. He didn't know where he was supposed to go or who he was supposed to deal with, so he turned up at the provincial courthouse, where the ticket indicated that the fine could be paid. He waited in line to see an officer. When he got to the officer, he was told: well, no, you're in the wrong place. He was told that he had to go over to another office in another building. So he went to that office in the other building, and then he was told there that that was also the wrong place, and he was redirected to yet another building.

9:10

After being redirected twice, he was questioning whether he really even wanted to go through with this, but he went anyway. When he got there, he found out that, yes, this was, in fact, the right place. He was processed, put in handcuffs, taken into a holding room, and then eventually escorted along with some other people by remand officers to another room to wait to be processed. He described the handling of himself and other individuals as being not the kindest. They were then escorted into another room. They were forced to strip naked in front of remand officers, who according to the young man offered critiques and their opinions of both his body parts and those of the person in front of him. He was then given a blue jumpsuit, placed in a cold room with others who had been through the same process. There they waited for several hours, were given a cold meal. He noted that at no time were they provided with an explanation of the process, what they could expect, or when they would be released. He was then put through the release process, allowed to dress in his own clothes, put in another room to wait, and then was finally released.

In summary, in his own words the young man stated, "My experience dealing with a [traffic] ticket was very degrading and dehumanizing." He also notes that at the organization he works at, he hears of similar encounters and experiences from youth even younger than he was at the time that this occurred. He concludes by stating that there must be a better way, a better process than what he endured for handling a simple transit fine.

Shortly after receiving that e-mail, I had the opportunity to meet with the Minister of Justice, and I appreciated that she took the time to listen and consider the situation. I was very pleased at that time when she told me that we would be introducing this bill.

You know, the process that that young man went through didn't have any benefit for anybody. There was no recompense to the transit service for the original infraction. There was no benefit to the police officers who were forced to spend their time processing, incarcerating, and then releasing these young men instead of being able to address more serious offences. There was no benefit to the public, to whom the young man presented no danger and who paid far more to incarcerate him for the day than the value of the fine that he wasn't able to afford to pay. These kinds of experiences, which, as he described, were degrading and dehumanizing, only serve to further alienate the men and women who experience them from the society that they struggle with. This increases their social isolation and the likelihood that they're going to continue to be trapped in these cycles of negative behaviour and the chances that they're again going to get caught up in the criminal justice system.

Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to see this bill come forward and the support that it's gained in this House. It's a practical, pragmatic, and, most importantly, humane step in moving us forward in how we handle minor crimes. Thank you again to the minister for bringing this forward. Thank you to all the members who have spoken in favour and who are going to support this bill. I look forward to passing it tonight in this House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other speakers to Bill 9?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will be brief. Just by way of closing comments, I'd like to thank everyone again, on both sides of the House, for the support of this bill, members of the public who have sent in supportive e-mails and other comments, the police services for being willing to work with us on this, and all justice system participants. I'm very excited we're able to move forward with this legislation. I think it will assist a lot of people, not the least of which are people who are victims of crime who are unable to come forward or unwilling to come forward to report the crimes that they have been a victim of because they are concerned that they have these outstanding warrants and don't want to present themselves before police.

I think that everyone is very excited to pass this bill. With that, I will just thank everyone for their support.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 20 Climate Leadership Implementation Act (continued)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, because I think it's something that all of us in this House recognize is very important, that all of us in this House recognize is something groundbreaking. It's something that we are going to be able to be proud of. When I talk to my grandchildren – and, if you look at me, that's going to be quite a ways away, I hope – I'm going to be able to tell them that rather than being stuck in the past and in denial,

like members of the opposition were, I made a difference. I did the right thing. We did the right thing. We as Albertans, we as MLAs voted to help the world, to take action today, and to make a difference.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to boil down the climate change plan to three really main themes for us today, three things that I find very important in the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, the first theme being diversifying our economy and how we're supporting Albertan jobs, the second theme being laying the groundwork for our future, and the third theme, finally, being protecting our children.

Let's get right into that first one, which is diversifying our economy and diversifying our job markets, because it's something that the opposition can't seem to wrap their heads around. It's something that they can't seem to understand. By using our Climate Leadership Implementation Act, we're going to be able to invest in programs like the climate change and emissions management fund, and we're going to be able to invest in programs like Energy Efficiency Alberta. What this is going to be able to do is to deliver efficiency programs to homes across the province. It's going to raise awareness about consumption and different ways we can find personal efficiency across the province, Madam Speaker. It's going to develop Alberta's energy efficiency industry.

The climate change report suggests that we will be able to support over 3,000 jobs, Madam Speaker, with these programs, that these investments will support 3,000 good-paying jobs for hard-working Albertans. And when the opposition speaks about picking winners and losers, I want the opposition to look those 3,000 people who have jobs in the eyes and tell them which one of their jobs is a loser, tell them which one of them is a loser for having that job. Those are things that we can do to help our communities. Those are things that we can do to help our economy and our environment today.

We can invest that money, we can use that money, and we can support our economy. Madam Speaker, by reinvesting these funds in renewables, in innovation, we're helping industry get the carbon out of the oil, get the carbon out of the barrel, and we are helping our industry move forward to an energy future that we can be proud of and that we can utilize as a province.

Really, that rolls right into that second theme, Madam Speaker, which is laying the groundwork for our future. I want to use this opportunity to talk about how this plan really is laying the groundwork for Alberta's future, because an Abacus Data poll regarding pipelines and politics in 2016 was released this morning, and over two-thirds of Canadians agree that new pipeline capacity should be built, with a renewables strategy and with a climate change plan attached to them. That's right. If we want to get market access for our pipelines, if we want to get our pipelines to tidewater, we absolutely need a renewables strategy, we absolutely need a climate change strategy, and that's what this government is absolutely presenting.

Madam Speaker, this nation-leading, world-class climate strategy, that has a methane implementation project being copied by the Americans, is now being looked at by the federal government as an implementation plan. These things are how we know that this plan will move Alberta forward, will lay that groundwork for us to be able to get our product to market, to be able to get our product to tidewater because we are laying these steps out today. We are doing the hard work that needs to be done in this House because we recognize that climate change is real and that if we are to remain viable in the future, we must act now as Albertans, as legislators, and as people who simply care about our world.

This is all very important to me because, as I spoke about at the beginning, I can look at my grandchildren years from now –

hopefully, years and years from now I'll be looking at my grandchildren. That's the third theme, protecting our children and protecting our future. This morning the minister of environment received the 2016 leadership in public policy award for work towards air quality. That's right, Madam Speaker. This government received a leadership award because of the health benefits that this climate leadership plan will bring.

9:20

Madam Speaker, not a lot of people know this, but I have asthma, both when I was a child and as I do today because it's a chronic disease. Asthma is one of those things that when you go outside and you try to play in the field and you just want to play soccer with your friends, well, you have to stop. You have to stop and say: "I need to go take my puffer. I'm having a hard time breathing. Things aren't going well." That takes you out of that moment. It takes you away from your friends. It takes you away from your family.

Madam Speaker, what I want to do is to say to my grandchildren – when they ask me however many years from now, I want to be able to tell them: I made a difference in making sure that you would be able to play outside, that you would be able to play with your friends, that you would be able to do all the things you want to do without being inhibited by your health because we took action on something that works. We took action on something that we know is absolutely real. There are adverse health effects to not acting now. We absolutely will be harming our future. We'll be harming our children and our children's children and generations to come if we do not take action now.

Ensuring that this happens, ensuring that we take action on all these three themes – diversifying our economy, making sure that we have good-paying, hard work for Albertans today; laying the groundwork for our future, ensuring that we have an energy market to look forward to, an emissions reduction strategy to look forward to in the future; protecting our children and their health in the future – is something, Madam Speaker, that I must fight for in this House so that I can have a province that I can be proud of. When my grandchildren ask me, "Thomas, what did you do for the province? What did you do in your tenure as an MLA?" I'll have at least one thing I can point to. I can say: "The Climate Leadership Implementation Act made a difference. It helped Albertans. It helped Alberta."

The Climate Leadership Implementation Act does all these things. It diversifies the economy, it lays that groundwork, and it protects our children. I urge all members of this House to support this bill because it absolutely is something that when you are asked about it by your children, when you are asked about it by your grandchildren or your great-grandchildren, you will want to look them in the eye and tell them that you helped and that you made the right choice.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Rodney:** This may be a question for you, Madam Speaker, or perhaps for the member. As you can tell by my tone, I am being collegial. The fact of the matter is that there were a number of rather inflammatory comments in the beginning, and aspersions were cast, not on our third party or those to my geographical left but on the Official Opposition. I think the question is simply this: is it fair to attack people or policies? Which one?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are you raising a point of order, hon. member?



**Mr. Rodney:** As you noticed, I didn't want to waste the time of the House by doing that. It's simply a question of respect. I think it's fair that when we disagree, we use diplomacy, and we use information and fact. But to cast aspersions on people rather than saying, "I disagree with your policy," well, I have a big problem with that. I just want the member to know that I appreciate the passion. That's important. We need to balance the heart, though, with the head. Just as a reminder for all of us in this House, we would serve our constituents well if we would just temper some of the passion and use a little bit more compassion once in a while. That's all.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments?

Do you wish to respond, hon. member?

Any others under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member was quite passionate in showing his passion for this groundbreaking bill. It really is putting Alberta at the forefront not only of Canada, but quite frankly this has really had an impact and will have an impact worldwide. I can tell you for a fact that our Prime Minister was meeting with the President of the United States and referenced Alberta and Alberta's climate leadership plan as a model and as something that has captured the attention of the world stage and that, quite frankly, was also something that was talked about in Paris.

You know, I appreciate the fact that the Member for Edmonton-South West is quite passionate about his remarks. I think that in his speech he was being respectful, not talking about any individual member, just talking about maybe some comments that have come from different sides of the House as far as trying to argue the impacts of carbon or of burning coal or of climate change. Quite frankly, I think it's a fair comment, and I just was curious if the member had any more comments to add on that topic.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really do appreciate the comments from all members in the House today. I think it is really important to recognize that as we move forward and we are talking about the policy here – and the policy of this government is to absolutely take action on climate change – when the policy of opposition parties is to try to prevent that action on climate change or to not take action on climate change and to wait for it to go away or to sit on your hands and hope that everything is going to be okay, we simply know that doesn't work. We simply know that's not how it's going to happen. We simply know that the Climate Leadership Implementation Act is the best legislation that we have on the table today to move forward on these issues that matter to Albertans everywhere, these issues that matter to Canadians everywhere, these issues that we will need to be able to talk about in this House in a respectful manner going forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Madam Speaker, I'm wondering if the hon. member would like to talk a little bit about the consultation that went into this process and the climate leadership plan, which I know he has read. This has been a months-long conversation, of course, on behalf of this government, and I'm wondering if the hon. member would like to share his thoughts on how that process has unfolded.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the minister for her comments. I think it's very important to recognize

that there was quite a comprehensive consultation program and quite a comprehensive panel that was assembled, that created a very lengthy report – I will note that it was very lengthy; I read the thing multiple times – and that in it we saw some citations from people like Cenovus, Suncor, CNRL.

We saw people supporting the climate change plan that you wouldn't necessarily call socialists or that you wouldn't necessarily call people who would traditionally side with this government. Madam Speaker, what we found was that people from across the aisle, people from nonpartisan sectors, people from partisan sectors, people from everywhere were supporting this plan because this plan is one that everybody could get behind, that everybody could be proud of.

Maybe I'll just read a couple of them for you, Madam Speaker. I'll look at this one here, which says:

Smart carbon policy means pricing carbon broadly, and this is exactly what Alberta's new carbon levy does. Carbon pricing is the most . . . effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and Alberta's strengthened policy will help the province support a strong economy and environment into the future.

This was said by Professor Bev Dahlby, distinguished fellow in tax and economic growth at the School of Public Policy and professor of economics at the University of Calgary.

We see other people such as Rob Harlan, the executive director of the Solar Energy Society of Alberta, saying, "The new carbon marketplace will automatically start to move Alberta toward a more sustainable, clean energy economy."

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to Bill 20? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will have less entertainment value than the previous speaker, but hopefully some level of reality might come into it. You know, we talk about our grandchildren, and the hon. member hopes to someday have grandchildren. The grandchildren, with regard to possibly another policy that's being put forward and plans that this government is doing, might ask Grandpa: "Why did you just sit on your hands and wait for your problems to go away? Why did you continue to just spend money, spend money, and leave us with all this debt that we have to pay?" I think that might be a question that their grandchildren will be asking them also. It's a completely different angle, but the grandchildren do have the right to ask that question also.

9:30

I rise today to speak on Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, which, if passed, will impose a carbon tax on Albertans. Madam Speaker, I understand the logic behind this bill, and like many bills that this government has put forward, it comes from a place of good intention. Climate change is an important issue and should no doubt be addressed. Unfortunately, like many bills that have been put forward by the government, legislation that is aimed at addressing an issue has become skewed by an ideological agenda that is placed above the needs of everyday Albertans, that we represent in this House, everyday Albertans that are struggling to make ends meet at this time.

Is climate change an important issue? Yes. Does it need to be addressed? Yes. Should it be addressed in the manner and format that Bill 20 proposes? Absolutely not.

Alberta is struggling. The days of \$100-a-barrel oil seem to be a distant memory. For us, as we have seen, our once strong economy is now limping along. In the last year we have lost thousands of jobs, not just 3,000 but 100,000. We've lost jobs across the entire province, throughout the private sector employment insurance rates

have skyrocketed, and social service and food bank use is at an all-time high. This is a reality of today. Alberta is facing its greatest challenge as a province in over 30 years.

What has this government done to help return the Alberta advantage? They have raised taxes, driving investment away, crippling businesses; they have moved to expand and then completely erased our province's debt ceiling; they have led us to have our credit downgraded by almost every major credit lender in the country; and now they are seeking to impose a carbon tax, a carbon tax that preys on the limited income that Albertan families are already struggling to get by on.

To date the NDP have not even been able to provide this House with a detailed economic impact study, a detailed study that would show us some of the impacts that are expected from this carbon tax. Yet again we see this government rushing ahead with ideological, untested legislation without any regard for the impact that it will have on Albertans today.

Rather than doing the responsible thing and waiting until our struggling economy has a chance to get back on its feet, the NDP have decided to kick Albertans while they are already down. This carbon tax targets the most vulnerable sectors of our economy, Madam Speaker, at a time when they are already barely scraping by. Families, charities, schools, hospitals will all struggle to offset the costs of this carbon tax.

Let's say, for the sake of argument, that I accept the NDP's math. They are estimating that the direct cost, the gasoline and heating costs, of this carbon tax for a family with two adults and two children is approximately \$388 per year. The government will send those who qualify for the rebate a cheque for \$366, which will mean they will be subsidizing some of the indirect costs of the carbon tax by \$22.

But does this government really believe that in a full year of buying groceries, clothing their children, having them bused to school, paying municipal taxes, paying for after school activities – the list goes on and on, Madam Speaker – the average Albertan family will only spend an extra \$22 because of this carbon tax? That is ludicrous and naive. This carbon tax will raise the cost of almost every single good and service made and sold in Alberta. Those costs will be downloaded onto Alberta consumers, that are already having to stretch their budgets to compensate for the lagging economy and limited employment opportunities.

Our caucus has done its own math, and the government's estimations are incredibly low. We estimate that the carbon tax, once implemented, will cost the average Albertan family an extra thousand dollars per year. It won't be the large chain stores and producers that pay the price for this carbon tax. It will be the people, the consumers, that will be paying this tax.

It will be people like Brenda from my constituency that will be paying this carbon tax. Brenda has three little boys that love to play hockey. Like many Albertans, Brenda spends several evenings a week in the car shuttling her kids to and from extracurricular activities. This carbon tax will now mean that the cost of these evenings in the car, driving, will increase substantially. It will mean that the cost of enrolling her kids in hockey will go up to compensate for the arena having to raise its ice rental prices to offset the cost of its heat and power bills and the money it will now take to run the Zamboni to clear the ice. It will mean that the snacks and the Gatorade that she buys her boys in between games to keep them fuelled will be more expensive, and that means Brenda may not have the money to be able to enrol all three boys in hockey next year. This is one of the countless examples of the real-world implications of Bill 20.

Charities are another sector that will suffer as a result of the carbon tax. Charitable organizations play a critical role in our society, Madam Speaker. They support the basic needs of our most vulnerable and are currently swamped trying to attend to the needs of the thousands of Albertans that have lost their jobs in the last year and need some extra help.

These essential services will now face even tighter budgets as they are not exempt from this aggressive tax. Facilities that provide housing for those looking to find a warm bed off the streets will now be paying more to heat their buildings. Charities that engage in community outreach will pay more to run their vehicles to deliver much-needed food and supplies to those that aren't able to be mobile. Facilities that provide meals will now spend more on groceries as the cost of delivery trucks increases and has to be offset by consumers on top of the fact that people who were previously in a position of having disposable income to donate to these charitable organizations will now have much less disposable income to donate or perhaps will not be able to donate at all. How can this government justify increasing the costs to charities when our province needs them now more than ever before?

This is an incredibly long piece of legislation, Madam Speaker, and given the immense impact it will have on all Albertans, I strongly encourage my fellow members of this Assembly to send this bill to committee for further review and debate. What we do know about the implications of this bill is already very concerning, and no substantial economic impact study has been done. I have serious reservations about debating this bill further without adequate time being granted to thoroughly comb through the intricacies of its 100 pages.

I think that in being given time to properly reach out to my school boards, businesses, the constituents in my riding, they could provide some essential insight into the needs of the people who will be living with the repercussions of this legislation. Consultation and outreach are critical components of our democratic system, and while I can respect that the minister has engaged in some consultations, I would request the right to do the same with the citizens of my riding to garner more feedback on the intricacies of this critical bill.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate that this government would like to have Alberta be a leader in the fight against climate change, and there are absolutely opportunities for us to be more environmentally conscious and make changes that will lead to a better, greener future for our children. No one is denying that. I do, however, feel that given the circumstances that we find ourselves in, with our economy in such a delicate state, now is not the time to be leading the charge when we are doing so alone and at the expense of our Alberta families.

**9:40**

Everything from driving kids to hockey practice to buying groceries to building a home will become more expensive as transportation costs are downloaded onto Alberta consumers. In the end, the carbon tax leaves less money in the pockets of families, schools, hospitals, and charities. It means fewer nurses, bus routes, extracurriculars offered in school, and opportunities for enrichment. It means that families already worried by the current economic climate and how they are going to pay their bills will now be spending more sleepless nights sitting at their kitchen table and wondering how they are going to stretch their funds even further.

I am hearing from constituents that feel like they cannot take much more, Madam Speaker. Albertans are the most hard-working, resilient people that I have ever met, but as of right now many of them are discouraged and disillusioned. Let's take the proper time to do our due diligence on this legislation and ensure that it is truly

in the best interests of Albertans. After the struggles that they have faced in the last year, we owe them that at least.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister of environment under 29(2)(a).

**Ms Phillips:** Certainly, Madam Speaker. I'm curious about a number of things. We've heard this afternoon, this evening that this legislation will, quote, kick Albertans when they're down, close hospitals, that it's an ideological agenda, that it will put seniors in the streets, I believe. I guess my question is whether Alberta's largest employers are being accused by the Official Opposition of putting seniors in the streets, having an ideological agenda leading to more unemployment, and so on. These are companies, certainly oil sands operators and others, that form the backbone of our economy.

Certainly, the downturn in the price of oil has been something that has affected them very much, yet many of them have supported the climate leadership plan. We have Cenovus, Suncor, Total, Statoil, CNRL, Shell, and many others. Are they being accused of having an ideological agenda by the Official Opposition? In fact, they are the largest employers in the Leader of the Official Opposition's riding. Is the Official Opposition actually picking a fight with these corporate leaders and with these job creators in Alberta? I suppose that's my first question.

My second question, Madam Speaker, is: are the authors of the climate leadership plan similarly being accused of proposing policies that will lead to more unemployment, having an ideological agenda, putting seniors in the street, closing hospitals? Of course, the Albertans behind the climate leadership plan – the author, of course, is the distinguished economist Dr. Andrew Leach. Is he being accused of having an ideological agenda, of preying on people with a limited income, of kicking Albertans when they're down? Or perhaps Gord Lambert, who also served on the panel, a former VP of TransAlta and of Suncor? Or a current VP of Enbridge, Linda Coady? Is she being accused of this kind of activity? I guess I have those questions.

In addition, I do have questions around consultations. The hon. member and others have asked: where were the consultations? I'm just wondering if the hon. members could maybe remind us of what they did in their ridings around July, when we released the discussion paper, which, in fact, discussed different ways to price carbon and so on. It was a very thoughtful, very lengthy document. I'm interested in the hon. member's reactions to that document at the time when, of course, he read it.

I am interested also in the lengthy submissions that the Official Opposition made to the climate leadership plan when they had the opportunity to do so because I did not find any, and I read them all. I'm interested in that, Madam Speaker.

I'm interested in whether they at all, you know, took that discussion document to their ridings and held any kind of events. Certainly, we held events, which a thousand Albertans attended. I'm curious as to whether any of the Wildrose opposition reviewed the commentary on those public consultations. I am equally interested in their analysis of the 500 public submissions, including from every aspect of Alberta's industrial endeavour – cement, mining, fertilizer, and so on – and what they think of all of those submissions, which, in fact, supported most of the elements of the climate leadership plan. I am very interested in that.

I am equally interested, Madam Speaker, in consultations, how much they thought about, you know, speaking to all of the groups that participated in the technical engagement sessions – petrochemical companies, cement companies, oil sands companies, small oil and gas, fertilizer companies, innovation and technology

companies, new renewable energy companies – how much they participated in those conversations with all of those groups that engaged thoughtfully and in an evidence-based way with this government on the development of the climate leadership plan. I'm interested in their thoughts.

Finally, I'm interested in the Official Opposition's thoughts on what it means to be middle-of-the-road in the acceptance of or one's understanding of the science of climate change, Madam Speaker. I'm very interested in the hon. members' views on the scientific consensus regarding climate change. There seems to be a bit of a nonconsensus happening here. Perhaps the right is not so united after all. Perhaps this is not an item in which 90 per cent agreement prevails over on that side of the House, because we do have a Progressive Conservative caucus that mostly accepts the science of climate change, but we seem to have rather a patchwork of views prevailing, so I'm interested.

**The Deputy Speaker:** You won't have an opportunity to respond as 29(2)(a) is done.

Do I have any other speakers to the bill?

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, Madam Speaker, if there's one thing I'm not going to win tonight it is the words per minute count because we have seen a couple of speakers from that side of the House who have certainly upped the words-per-minute ratio of debate, anyway. I'm not sure if the level of debate has been increased, but the number of words that have been used in a short period of time certainly have been. I had hoped that the government would have additional speakers this evening as we could learn more about this great plan that they have for the province. Unfortunately, there was no one around.

Anyway, I'm happy to rise and speak on a number of issues with respect to the bill. In fact, I'm just doing some math with some of the costs. [interjections] Well, you might think it's funny. I was speaking to a business owner in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills yesterday after this bill was introduced. We were speaking about the cost to this particular individual's business, and certainly he expressed some significant concern.

This particular individual is a small-business owner. He runs a transportation company. I think that the legislation defines his company as an interjurisdictional carrier. He contracts with a number of owner-operators, Madam Speaker, and then he also employs three additional drivers. All total, their small company runs sometimes seven trucks a year, sometimes six trucks a year, depending on what the economy is doing, and they have a number of significant clients in the constituency. They also have a number of smaller clients but predominantly just a couple of larger clients.

9:50

I sent him some information after the bill was released specifically around interjurisdictional carriers as well as the cost of the carbon tax to his organization, and he informed me that last year, Madam Speaker, his small trucking company utilized close to 600,000 litres of diesel fuel. This carbon tax is going to cost him almost \$70,000 a year. I can tell you that \$70,000 a year in a small trucking company makes a big, big, big difference.

I heard the hon. Finance minister yesterday say – and I'm paraphrasing here – with all due respect to the Finance minister: don't worry; businesses will essentially absorb most of the costs. Maybe I took some liberties with some of his comments. But I can tell you that a small business of just six trucks and the owner-operator can't just absorb close to \$70,000 a year, so the business has some decisions to make. Do they employ fewer people? Do they pass the costs on to the consumer? What is the path forward?

I can tell you that he is struggling with what the future holds with respect to the carbon tax because the challenge with this carbon tax is that there is a real, significant pressure on many areas of the costs that get passed down to the end-user, and the end-user, Madam Speaker, is families. It's moms and dads. It's grandmas and grandpas all across the province. When we look at just this one business that has near \$70,000 a year of additional costs that have to be passed on to somebody, that's going to make all of the goods that he ships more expensive. A lot of those goods are things that you and I and other members of this Chamber use. Not only is there the tax while he moves it. He's not the only individual who transports that particular good. There is additional cost from the wholesaler to him and then on to the retailer, and at every stage the cost of the good is increased.

While I've heard the hon. minister of the environment, who's responsible for climate change, or however that goes, say that the indirect costs are only \$70 per year, nothing could be further from the truth because at every turn the costs of things are increasing. We heard the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock speak about the costs to municipalities in terms of firing the ice plant that cools the slab at the arena. That makes hockey more expensive.

I spoke not that long ago in this place about charities in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills in the form of the Rocky View handibus. The Rocky View handibus: the costs are likely to increase in the neighbourhood of \$6,000 to \$8,000 a year, and all of those costs are absorbed by those individuals who utilize that service. The individuals who utilize that service are predominantly seniors, individuals from the PDD community, low-income individuals, and others who don't have their own form of transportation. So the cost of that service is going to be increased, and while I appreciate the fact that members on the other side have said, "Don't worry; the rebate is going to cover all those costs," at every single turn, Madam Speaker, the costs are increasing. It is putting a significant amount of pressure onto Albertans and particularly on Albertans that live in rural areas that don't have some of the benefits of access to public transportation, that wind up driving extensively around rural Alberta just to provide for their family.

I think of someone like yourself, Madam Speaker, who lives in the north, and in fact in this very Chamber you spoke about the additional costs that are associated with living in the north and travelling around the north. Thinking nothing of driving three or four hours to go to a music concert was, I think, the example that you used. All of those things are now more expensive to the people of the Peace Country because of this carbon tax.

Now, make no mistake, Madam Speaker. It is important that we act on the environment. This file ought not just be pushed aside. This file ought not be abandoned with blinders on our eyes. The environment is of critical importance and should be of critical importance to all Albertans. I can tell you that the people that live in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills care deeply about the environment, but one thing I can assure you is that those good folks in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are convinced that this carbon tax, the results of this legislation, is not the way forward. I have heard already – and the bill was only introduced yesterday – from many of the people in that constituency about their concerns.

I should just pause momentarily to express one of my concerns. Yesterday in this Chamber Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, was introduced. Madam Speaker, it is 95 pages long, comes with a royal recommendation, and as a result is a money bill that takes a significant amount of time to digest, and what does this government do? It introduces a bill one day and requires individuals in this Chamber to debate it the next.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** It's your job.

**Mr. Cooper:** You know what our job is? To cause careful consideration of legislation. I'm reminded on numerous occasions of when the Minister of Economic Development and Trade would rise in this House and express significant displeasure with the then PC government about introducing a bill one day and expecting what he often referred to as a small but mighty caucus to debate that legislation the very next day. What we all should be doing is reaching out to Albertans to thoughtfully consider this piece of legislation, and to expect reasonable debate the following day is not what creates good governance in this province. What creates good governance, Madam Speaker, is thorough review of legislation, not passing it in days but thorough review, which is why I'm pleased to propose an amendment that would allow for that thorough review.

**10:00**

Shall I continue, or would you like me to wait until the table has the documents?

Madam Speaker, I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2 and that the committee report back to the Assembly no later than October 31, 2016, if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Madam Speaker, we have seen a troubling trend from a government that wants to push through legislation. While I appreciate that the minister of environment spoke specifically about the consultations that the government has done, what hasn't taken place is an opportunity for members or individuals like Dr. Leach to come to a committee of all members of the Assembly. It's not just the government that's important to this province. It is the Assembly that's important.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment?

**Mr. Smith:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Oh, 29(2)(a) does apply, so go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Smith:** You know, I think that the hon. member that was just speaking was just starting to wind up, and I was quite interested in what he had to say, so I wonder if he could continue to let us understand why this amendment is an important piece of legislation to discuss.

Thank you.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you to my hon. colleague. I wasn't just winding up. I was just winding down, actually, and concluding my comments around why this is important. It is critically important.

One of the things that a committee would allow us to do is to provide a thorough review of the legislation. It would allow a venue for the government to table the vast amounts of economic research that they have done, the economic impact studies that they've done, and that committee could fulsomely debate those studies, that they, I'm sure, would be happy to bring to the committee and have a discussion around. It would allow the committee the opportunity to receive from government officials, from experts in the field the information around the indirect costs that the government now refers to, and it would allow the committee to have a much better

grasp of the true costs. The government could come and defend their numbers, and expert witnesses could come and provide testimony on all sides of this. We could have a full and robust discussion.

I remember when the Premier first started speaking about this carbon tax as a carbon tax that would be revenue neutral. Now we understand that nothing could be further from the truth, but that's where they began. It would be a good opportunity for the committee to have a discussion around the merits of a revenue-neutral carbon tax.

Because the conversation has taken place from individuals to the government, it doesn't mean that the conversation has taken place from either individuals or experts to the entire Assembly. This amendment is just as much about respecting all members of the Assembly as it is about the government getting information from individuals. I know that the government believes it's not possible for them to be wrong. I think that an amendment like this is a great opportunity for them to bring the results of that conversation to that committee and have a discussion around those. An amendment like this can provide a vehicle for the best possible solution for all Albertans because so rarely in this Chamber does the best idea actually win. Almost exclusively in this Chamber the government's ideas win.

At committee we have seen a significantly higher level of co-operation, a real opportunity for all members of the Assembly to hear from individuals and provide the information first-hand so that all members of the Assembly can make the best possible decision. The vast majority of decisions that we make here in this Chamber are not just about today but are also about tomorrow. I recognize that the government's desire here in Bill 20 is a decision about tomorrow.

Now, there is a wide variety of opinions on whether it's the best way to get to that decision.

**The Deputy Speaker:** On the amendment the hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to rise this evening and speak to this amendment. Now, I think it will not surprise this House that I'll be speaking against this motion at this time. The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills knows that I enjoy committees nearly as much as he does. I think we get a lot of productive work done there.

However, to say that this is a bill that requires more time and more consideration at this juncture, I think, is perhaps inappropriate. The minister outlined earlier some of the engagement and consultation that have happened already with regard to this bill. The climate leadership report to the minister was released last November, and folks in the House have had plenty of time to look at it, to see what was in it, to think about it. Much of what is going on in this bill is actually in the budget, which has been out for two months now, and folks have had time to look at it, to go over it, and to see what it involves.

You know, just for the sake of reiteration, the public engagement and consultation that happened on this bill and on this plan were open to all members of the public, and the members of the Official Opposition were certainly welcome to participate. If you look at it, the climate change panel had over 25,000 responses collected on an online survey. In addition, we had public open houses, which nearly a thousand people attended. It received 535 online submissions. The panel held additional sessions, with 350 different stakeholders representing diverse perspectives. There was aboriginal engagement, with 47 participants representing 30 aboriginal

communities and organizations. There was a lot of consultation that went into this and a lot of thought and a lot of time.

Quite frankly, to say that more discussion is going to lead to a better case at this point is unnecessary. I have been waiting for this bill and I have been waiting for this legislation my whole life. This is something that we need; it's something that we need for our children.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

10:10

**An Hon. Member:** That's unfortunate. Why didn't you run on it in your election platform, then?

**Ms Luff:** Well, you know, if we're talking about that, I believe what we said in the election platform was that we will take leadership on the issue of climate change and make sure that Alberta is part of crafting solutions with stakeholders, other provinces, and the federal government, and that's exactly what we're doing.

I would like to just say that I don't think that this is an amendment that is necessary at this time. There will be plenty of time for the Official Opposition to speak to this bill. We are only in second reading. We still have Committee of the Whole; we still have third reading. There will be plenty of time to read in full the 95 pages of the document although since you've been asking us questions about it since last November, I feel like you're all probably pretty familiar with the subject matter by now.

I'd just like to say that I don't want to wait any longer. My kids don't want to wait any longer. Most Albertans don't want to wait any longer. I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to not support this amendment at this time.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, this is another example of the government ramming legislation through as fast as it possibly can. You know, I truly believe that this government finished this bill on Friday and released it yesterday. The fact is that it was still working on consultation, that it says was out there being done by the thousands of hours, but in the end it was all in its budget. That's unbelievable. I really believe that this government is putting forward legislation at the last minute, hoping that we suck it back and don't complain about it or actually try to make it better.

Let's go back to this. The member brought up the wonderful budget and talked about how it was all explained there, so let's take a step back and actually address the fact that in the budget it is under taxes. It is not under levies; it is under taxes. This is clearly a tax, and if you look on page 22, for those that actually want to see it for themselves, instead of being very clear exactly what Bill 20 is going to be – the fact is that they don't even know. They didn't know then. How could we speculate on what Bill 20 was going to be until yesterday, which is when we got it, the whole 95 pages, speed-read it, and be able to come up with a wonderful solution that says: gee, we need to just trust the government because Bill 6 worked out so well for it.

You know, taxes have a horrible habit of being easy to impose and very difficult to remove. The fact is that if this doesn't work out and doesn't go in the direction that the government is hoping – and we've got examples across the world where the wonderful expectations don't meet what the actual results are.

We've got a government right now that's saying: "Well, we're going to give a little bit to these people, and we're going to give a little bit of money to these people, but we're going to take more, so in the end we're going to come out ahead. You know what? Why bother studying it? Why bother moving this forward? Why bother actually talking with actual Albertans? We'll talk to a few of our friends and actually do no real consultation." That is exactly what we are seeing here. We put out a couple of online things, and suddenly we say: "Hey, you know what? We've gone to Albertans. We've gone and consulted with everybody." But that just isn't the truth in all of this. What we need to be looking at is: how do we move forward? How can we make this bill better?

The fact is that we're rushing through it too fast, and it's \$3 billion worth of income. You have demonstrated in the past that you have a record of ramming things through. Why can't you learn from that and take your time? The fact is that we need to go and actually study something this large. We need to bring it to a committee. We need to actually study what the effects are, actually do some real consultation, which, by the way, I don't actually believe that you have completed in its fullest amount. We need to be able to show Albertans that we actually are doing good for Alberta and not harm.

I will wrap this up just by saying that this is a responsible amendment. It is saying: you've waited your whole life, apparently, for this one bill; what are a few more months just so that we can go out to Albertans? I know that it's earth-shattering, that we can't wait a few more months for this just to make sure that we get it right, but – you know what? – in the end Albertans are expecting us to get it right, and I don't believe we're doing it right now.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Member.

Anyone wishing to speak on 29(2)(a)? Okay. The hon. member.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just have a quick question for the member. He was talking a lot about an apparent lack of consultation. Maybe it was just because I happened to be sitting beside the Member for Calgary-East, who, just before you spoke, actually outlined what, to me, seemed like an extensive consultation with aboriginal groups and getting input from Albertans and from industry. To me, that sounded a lot like consultation that was brought together for that report. I was wondering. If that is apparently not consultation with all Albertans from all industry sectors, then perhaps he could explain what consultation would then look like.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Consultation actually doesn't look like Bill 6 – that is a fact – and that is exactly where you're going with this bill. You need to make sure that when you bring a bill forward, you do the proper consultation. The fact is that when we don't actually have the bill in front of us, how can we consult with the people that it's going to affect?

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you. Under 29(2)(a). This is the 10-year anniversary of *An Inconvenient Truth*, which won Senator Gore a Nobel prize and is, I think, a landmark. I'm bringing this up because I sense a lack of urgency on the part of the opposition. They don't seem to understand that there is a crisis coming.

Just today in *Scientific American* they published sort of a memorial of these 10 years since *An Inconvenient Truth's*

presentation. They actually are talking about the crisis that's going to happen by 2100 if we don't bend the curve on the emission of CO<sub>2</sub>. At the present time the United States has about 404 parts per million of CO<sub>2</sub> in the air, and that will actually cause an environmental catastrophe by the year 2100 if we don't get it under control. It's also interesting that the United States has recognized this along with China, India, and all of the industrialized countries in the world, who have signed on to a protocol to make sure that we're limiting this.

**10:20**

Alberta is leading Canada's response to this environmental crisis, and I would ask the member who just spoke what the plan would be from his party to make sure that this environmental crisis is averted. We have to be doing something.

We are going to reduce the amount of particulate damage coming from coal plants. This is going to have a remarkable effect on the health of Albertans. It's actually going to save, it's estimated, \$200 million in health care costs in this province, and this will improve the health and the quality of life of all Albertans. It's going to improve the quality of life in my riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. We live under the plume of a coal-fired electricity plant in this city. My colleagues to the south of me have the same problem.

I'm actually, like my colleague from Calgary-East, very proud to have campaigned on a climate change platform, and I'm very proud to be part of a government that is doing it. I would ask the member opposite what his plan would be to bend that CO<sub>2</sub> emission curve.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** No. Sorry. Not under (29)(2)(a). To the referral. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Okay. Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

**Mr. Rodney:** I'd like to speak.

**The Acting Speaker:** To the amendment?

**Mr. Rodney:** Yes. I'd like to have a short speech on the amendment.

**The Acting Speaker:** Please go ahead, Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you.

Having gotten limited briefing on this, we are still working on what the ultimate outcomes could be with respect to this. However, there is no question that there are a number of very, very important issues at play here that are very, very important to Albertans. What is most important to Albertans, of course, is transparently ensuring the best maximization of our resources to the best interests of all Albertans and ensuring that we develop this resource effectively. Therefore, we need to know that there is more opportunity.

As a result, I'll be making a motion that . . . the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2. If these comments sound at all confusing, let me just say that they are from *Hansard*, November 19, 2013, pages 2920 to 2921, by the current Premier.

Another quotation. I think it's very important that all members hear this.

I think that we should refer it to the standing committee, and I further think that it would be great if this bill could be subject to public input. Now, we haven't really mastered that in this Legislature since I've been here. Edmonton city council, if I can refer to another order of government, and, I know, other city and town councils make better use of their committees in terms of canvassing public opinion and allowing the public to speak and have input on decisions that are important to them . . .

Mr. Speaker, that's really the gist of my comments, my reasons for wanting to have this matter referred to the committee.

Who said that? The current House leader. That's from *Hansard*, November 19, 2013.

From May 8, 2013:

I do believe that it represents a good conciliatory opportunity for us to address in a more fulsome way a number of the very significant policy elements that appear in this legislation, and it gives us an opportunity to understand their consequences and to ensure that we don't go bowling forward simply because the Premier wants to have some deliverable that she can talk about on a campaign trail this summer.

You guessed it. That is from the current Premier.

I certainly concur with my colleague . . .

Again, it's this question of conferring with stakeholders that I would like to go back to.

From the current Minister of Education.

Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak in favour of this motion for referral. I'll get into some specifics.

I think, you know, part of the issue and why this motion is very, very appropriate is because our democratic process is really contingent upon ensuring that voices are represented, that opinions are expressed, and that we debate and look at all different sides of an issue . . .

You know, I'd like to remind the Assembly that this bill is no small bill. There are quite a number of changes being proposed. This was only given to the opposition 24 hours ago or in that area, so it's challenging. All members, I believe, of the Legislative Assembly, both on the government side and the opposition side, want to ensure that they're doing their job to the best of their abilities and have the resources and tools available at their disposal to ensure that they can work to the best of their abilities and serve Albertans in the capacity that we were all put here to do.

It's very challenging to first of all go through a piece of hefty legislation in a very short period of time and to do it justice . . .

We need to ensure . . . that we give opposition parties and all MLAs an adequate amount of time to engage with Albertans to get their feedback and their ideas and their comments on legislation before it passes.

The current minister of economic development.

This is a motion to refer Bill 9 to the Standing Committee . . . [It's] very appropriate because this is, in fact, a question of hundreds of thousands of Albertans' economic future. It's important for them and their families and for their own piece of mind, but it's also a significant impact on the economy.

*Hansard*, April 23, 2014, the current Government House Leader.

You may be disappointed, but this is the last one. It's quite a doozy.

The purpose of this amendment, of course, is to begin by allowing for that actual consultation and negotiation and consideration of this issue that Albertans need to have. I know that a select group there in cabinet have convinced themselves that this is all okely-dokely . . .

That's what it says here. That is right here from *Hansard*, April 23, 2014. It goes on to state:

The fact of the matter is that most of the people who are impacted by this piece of legislation have not had an opportunity to really

fully consider the implications of the changes, nor have they been given the opportunity to really fully communicate to this government, which is accountable to them by way of that trite, old, little institution we call democracy, to listen to what they have to say about this.

Because this has such an incredibly far-reaching set of consequences to the lives of so many Albertans, I would suggest that this not be a bill that we ram through . . . as this government is scrambling to get out of the Legislature so they can run off and slap a whole bunch of ineffective bandages over their broken political vehicle.

That indeed is a direct quotation from the current Premier.

With great respect I have two honest, humble questions. Number one: is it more important to rush this through using a majority, or is it more important to get it right? And the second question, simply: will the government members listen to the words of their own Premier and ministers and take your own advice to utilize the committee? Committees were created for experiences and situations exactly like this. We've learned a lot of things on this side of the House, sometimes the hard way. Just a couple of friendly suggestions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Anyone wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)? The Deputy Government House Leader.

10:30

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that little trip down memory lane that the hon. member took us through. You know, what's interesting, though, is that we need to contextualize some of the comments. Sure, there were bills that the previous government did try to ram through. I would hardly call second reading ramming a bill through when the government has not invoked closure. We have not rushed this through. We have all the hours in the world. In fact, our government is quite prepared to sit in this Chamber until the Calgary Stampede if need be if that would satisfy the opposition.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I do, though, also find it a little rich coming from the third party, Madam Speaker, as far as talking about rushing bills through. I recall as a member of the fourth party, when there would be six or seven or maybe more pieces of legislation on the Order Paper, being given very short notice, where as a very small party there were challenges to working through a bill. We are and will be providing ample time for debate.

I do want to come back to a comment from some other members that spoke to this amendment as far as referring it to committee. First of all, in my time in this House in three years as opposition I don't recall . . .

**Mr. Rodney:** Madam Speaker, that's not on 29(2)(a). He's referring to other . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** I'm speaking to his comments. Under 29(2)(a) I can make comments about his speech, or I could ask a question. I may be coming to a question, but at the moment I'm addressing comments that were made by the hon. member.

Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, you know, our climate leadership plan was announced last fall. A number of months have passed. There have been hundreds of submissions to the minister of environment where Albertans, stakeholders, community groups, and, in fact, even opposition MLAs have had the opportunity to provide feedback. There have been technical engagements, and there have been public consultations.

To the member's comments as far as motions that our caucus put forward in the past: quite frankly, it was around a failure to adequately consult the public on a bill which was then being pushed through the Legislature at breakneck speeds. I would argue that we are hardly doing that. We are happy to take the time in this Assembly and debate this bill to the fullest, as long as opposition parties choose. Again, we have consulted. There are a number of groups that have weighed in on our climate leadership plan. This is now the product of many, many months of work and consultation.

My question to the member is that if six months is not long enough for consultation and talking to the public to get feedback from Albertans, then I'd like to know: what is the magic number?

**Mr. Rodney:** Thanks for the question. There is no magic number, of course.

Let's face it. You said that they had six months. This was received on these tables yesterday. So that's a nonstarter, sir. It's nice that you're happy to be here till the Calgary Stampede. A lot of people think that part of our job is to be here, and that indeed is true. It's also to be in our constituencies as well, talking to people about bills such as this.

Now, we could debate this all day, all night, until the Calgary Stampede. That still would not allow Albertans the opportunity to give all of us the feedback that every one of us needs to have a truly informed conscience.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** What's the magic number?

**Mr. Rodney:** I said that there was no magic number, Member, and I'll be happy to address the chair.

The magic number that a lot of people are talking about, though, is \$6 billion. That's been an estimated cost by the admission of this government itself. That was a \$6 billion question that was not even asked during the election. Albertans have been telling me that that is completely unfair, and then the language gets a little bit personal. I don't like to go there, but it happens every day when people say to me that this is really just a wealth transfer, that it's not about the climate and it's not about helping the environment at all.

This is their concern. If you think they're wrong, take the time to talk to them. Take the time to allow them to come to committee to present as organizations and individuals, not just invited guests but all Albertans so that everyone can have a say on a \$6 billion . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to the amendment?

**Mr. Bilous:** You know what, Madam Speaker, as much as I'm enjoying this debate – and I am enjoying this debate this evening – I think we've made very good progress, so I would move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the time and, again, the progress that we've made, I would move that we adjourn until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:35 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, May 26, 2016

Day 34

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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## Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

## Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, May 26, 2016

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Acting Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect. As we conclude this week our work in this Assembly and head back to our constituencies, let us remind ourselves of our responsibilities to the people and the community we represent. Let's continue to focus on bettering our province through hard work, understanding, dedication, and commitment.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 18

##### An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We believe that Albertans deserve a system of monitoring that not only provides world-class environmental monitoring but protects the independence and integrity of those involved. Ensuring this is a priority of the Wildrose Party, and to that end there are aspects of this bill that deserve some questions being raised. Of concern would be the autonomy of these members and the chief scientist. While the chief scientist has the autonomy to speak out in a public fashion, it is always a concern that true independence while within a ministry be actually achieved.

AEMERA was not, despite the Boothe report, a three-year failed experiment. Numerous scientists throughout Canada gave their opinion on this, stating that that was not the case. AEMERA had only received the transfer of assets in May 2015, and this review began approximately three months later, hardly giving it time to really get established. Could AEMERA's mandate have been better clarified? Yes, it could have been. Could they have taken steps to alleviate some of the friction between AEMERA, Alberta Environment and Parks as well as Environment Canada? Yes. We could have had clarification that would have fixed some of the turf wars between agencies. We could have had better monitoring coordination between Environment Canada and AEMERA. The Boothe report found that there was a distinct lack of collaboration between AEMERA and Environment Canada, but that could have been fixed and still can be.

Now, AEMERA was initiated as an arm's-length organization for the government to rebuff accusations that the data that was being collected and the direction on environmental monitoring were somehow being influenced by politics. Justifiably, concerns with this government and the opportunity to taint the process with politics is just as much a concern as it was before. Consolidating power in the government's hands could be troubling, especially

given some of the more radical views of this government's caucus and staff. It's more important than ever that we ensure that these scientists are given free rein to operate independently. It is essential that we ensure the credibility and reputation of our environmental monitoring.

Many of the high costs that were brought up in the Boothe report were due to sole-sourced Alberta Environment and Parks contracts that took place even before the formation of AEMERA. Could that be fixed? Of course it could.

We need to also take note that given this government's record on consultation, transparency, and openness we definitely have some concerns with having this brought into government.

Now, Wildrose has been trying, as always, to come up with common-sense solutions to make a better Alberta. We're taking a pragmatic approach. AEMERA can be better. Really, the question is how? Is it in government? Is that the best place to make AEMERA better? Maybe with proper control and consulting. Now, if this would have gone to committee, then people like Boothe and some of the other scientists could come and present, and the members in committee could have listened to many different views on how to make environmental monitoring better in Alberta.

Having a more independent view of this and having the government take control of this and having it being viewed as unaltered or uncontrolled by government seems especially unlikely after hearing the Deputy Premier get up yesterday and say that they had to shop across Canada to find people with NDP world views. I think that's alarming, to think that they couldn't have found Albertans with their same views. So I guess that says something about this NDP government. I guess it's apparent that there are not too many Albertans with their world views, which just shows how out of touch the NDP is with Albertans.

Right from the start we've said that if it's broken, it needs to be fixed. It's critically important to have credible, transparent, world-class monitoring with integrity. The world needs to be able to look at it and say: it's good. There's no room for ideology. There's no room for a turf war, protecting the past. That's why right from the start our minds were open to whatever is best. In fact, that's our default position all the time: be open minded to listen to the ideas of others, listen to our constituents, give our constituents the information we have and have them make informed decisions.

Now, we know that there were issues with the PCs stacking agencies with cronies, and we thought that this was worth hearing out in Committee of the Whole. We've decided that internal reforms are better than disbanding, so I will be voting against Bill 18 in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, as per my comments in second reading I have some concerns about the independence of AEMERA as it's brought into a ministry department. Again, the irony, given the title of the bill. You know, one of the things that I'm most concerned about is that despite assurances that the independence of those would be upheld, the legislation doesn't really address this. There is still an awful lot of power in the minister's hands, and there don't seem to be appropriate checks and balances to ensure independence and transparency, especially around the hiring and appointment of the chief scientist.

9:10

The minister has said that she will follow a robust hiring process. In fact, she and I had a brief conversation in the hallway yesterday

about that. Frankly, I don't have any particular concerns that this minister necessarily would do anything other than that, but I do think that it's important to future-proof this bill. Future ministers may not take such an approach. The legislation simply says that the minister has the power to appoint positions, and that includes the chief scientist.

With that, I would like to propose an amendment to Bill 18 if I may. I have the requisite number of copies. I'll wait till the table gets its copy, and then I will read it out.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Hon. member, please proceed. This amendment will be referred to as A1.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring, be amended in section 2(2) in the proposed section 15.1 as follows:

(a) by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) For subsequent vacancies in the position of Chief Scientist, the Minister shall appoint a person from a list of qualified candidates provided by the panel established under subsection (3).

(b) by adding the following after subsection (2):

(3) The Minister shall establish an independent appointment advisory panel to provide a list of qualified candidates to the Minister for subsequent appointments to the position of Chief Scientist and such panel shall consist of not fewer than 5 members with at least one representative from each of the following:

- (a) industry associations,
- (b) indigenous communities,
- (c) academia,
- (d) environmental organizations,
- (e) regulatory experts.

The rationale here is that although the minister would be asked to appoint such a panel, it adds one more layer of transparency. It adds a layer of rigour around the appointment of the chief scientist, and it provides transparency for Albertans around that process. Further, the panel would be asked to provide a list of candidates to the minister to avoid simply selecting a single person, so the minister may have some choice in terms of who would be selected as chief scientist.

Again, if this agency is going to be brought under the umbrella of the minister, I do think it's very important for a function such as this to have proper transparency, not just in fact but in perception, for Albertans. I think that by creating a panel of experts to choose the chief scientist – it would obviously be an ad hoc panel, struck as necessary. The position of chief scientist, we hope, would not be something that would turn over on a regular basis, which would therefore keep the cost of such a panel reasonable. I think it would add very much to the transparency and, therefore, the faith that Albertans and the world have in the quality of the work done by the agency, which would now be run internally by the minister, and greatly reduces, if not eliminates, the likelihood of political interference or the perception of the same.

With that, Madam Chair, I look forward very much to the debate. I would hope all members of the House would consider and support this amendment.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Is there anyone wishing to speak to amendment A1? The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the hon. member's intervention in this matter and his interest in ensuring that we have a good, solid environmental monitoring program in place in this province. Given that I know that he shares our government's view that high-quality environmental monitoring is an important part of public safety, public health, I'm also appreciative of the hon. member's, I guess, appreciation that the previous model was perhaps not the most efficient way to govern an environmental monitoring system.

You know, the role and responsibilities of the chief scientist are enshrined into law in this piece of legislation. The science advisory panel also has a number of different elements that ensure independence already, Madam Chair. The role of the chief scientist really is similar to the chief medical officer of Health, the chief provincial veterinarian, for example, the provincial apiculturist under section 2 of the Bee Act, the director of surveys under section 4 of the Surveys Act. These are all examples of where a professional expert recruited by the civil service in accordance with the merit-based recruitment process of the Alberta public service reports to the deputy minister for employee performance and is an appointment based on, in the first instance, merit and expertise. That is the appropriate role of the chief scientist, and it's the appropriate reporting function, to the deputy minister, in a merit-based civil service, which is, in fact, one of the underpinnings of a functioning democracy.

You know, the chief scientist also has the role of chief monitor, Madam Chair. As a result, the chief monitor is a position that not only ensures rigorous environmental reporting and monitoring but also ensures co-ordination with other government departments and so on. So that is the role of the chief scientist. It is someone who is very much within the Alberta public service, and we would not want other human resources processes interfering with what is already a highly professionalized public service. [interjection] I don't think that's a joke at all. I think it's not funny to deride the Alberta public service. We've had some wonderful examples in the last couple of weeks of the high level of professionalism exhibited by the Alberta public service, not the least of which are the folks in environmental monitoring who have worked day and night to ensure that it safe for the workers up in the Fort McMurray wildfire region. So to laugh at or to deride their professionalism is a very serious charge indeed, and it's certainly not one that the folks in this government caucus engage in at all.

Now, the other piece that's problematic about this amendment – so there are the HR pieces and the pieces on the proper functioning of the Alberta public service, Madam Chair, without interference from outside entities. I think that's really important. It's really something that I've taken very seriously as a minister and that I think all ministers take seriously and that I actually believe the previous government also took seriously. I have had very rare occasion to believe that anything other than the highest levels of professionalism under the previous government also prevailed with respect to the relationships with the public service.

However, this amendment also, in some ways, misunderstands the role of the science advisory panel. These are scientific experts in their fields. Some of them are here in Alberta, and some of them have had academic careers outside of Alberta. They are experts in monitoring. They are not experts in intergovernmental or interdepartmental, within government, co-ordination. The science advisory panel is not necessarily an expert in human resources matters, in reporting structures. [interjection] Is there something you'd like to share with the class?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I think she's giving up her speaking time, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay, Member.

9:20

**Ms Phillips:** I will go on, Madam Chair.

So the science advisory panel has that role – and that role is protected within the legislation – to speak to the public on matters related to science. However, we do not expect them to provide advice on matters related to recruitment and retention of highly qualified Alberta public service professions.

For that reason, I recognize, Madam Chair, the intent behind the amendment. I believe that the hon. member shares our intent for high-quality environmental monitoring and shares a level of seriousness about the environment and about orderly development in the oil sands, about the partnerships we have with industry, with indigenous peoples, with communities in the lower Athabasca. I know that the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow also shares our government's view that we must refurbish and repair our environmental reputation, and a world-class monitoring system will help us to do that and to have those respectful and thoughtful conversations with our trading partners. I am aware that that is the intent of the hon. member, and I commend him for it. It is certainly not shared by all members of the House.

Madam Chair, while I recognize the merit of the amendment, I believe that we cannot support it at this time.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that was a bit of a leap now, wasn't it?

Now, the Official Opposition began the debate on Bill 18 with an open mind. In fact, the Official Opposition voted for second reading of this bill in the hopes that we can improve the independence of environmental monitoring in this province. Unfortunately, we've been given no assurances whatsoever from the minister of environment and the government caucus that this is anything but an attempt to limit the independence of environmental monitoring in this province. This is an Orwellian-named bill, Madam Chair. We have serious concerns about the independence of environmental monitoring in this province. Now, there certainly were problems with AEMERA before, but the way to solve it isn't to make it even less independent than it was before.

We do not support this bill, but I will always support amendments that make bad legislation less bad, and that is why I'm pleased to stand up in support of the amendment put forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow. I still don't think we can support this bill at the end of the day, even if the amendment is passed, but the amendment, if passed, would make this bill less bad than it is in its current form.

Now, this isn't that we don't trust public servants; this is that we don't trust the minister of environment to make the right decisions. I do not trust the minister of environment to appoint independent and objective people to these important positions when she wrote the foreword to a radical eco-extreme leaper manifesto, *An Action a Day: Keeps Global Capitalism Away*. We are trying to give the minister the power here to appoint the fox to guard the henhouse without any oversight whatsoever.

Now, we've seen problems with giving the ministers powers here to appoint important public servants without any oversight. The last one I can recall is when they appointed AUPE's senior negotiator, Kevin Davediuk, to go to the other side of the bargaining table and negotiate with AUPE, his own union buddies, for the government side. That is not a professional public service, Madam Chair. That is not independent. That does not give the Official Opposition and

Albertans any confidence whatsoever that this government has the best interests of Alberta at heart with some of these positions. These are important positions. We have thousands of professional and independent public servants in this province, but some of the senior positions that this government has been appointing have been clearly political.

The chief scientist of Alberta is a critical position. Regardless of where you stand on the debate around how to properly regulate the oil sands and our oil and gas industry, everybody agrees, industry and environmental groups, that that position should be truly independent, independent from industry and independent from the radicals whose book the minister wrote the foreword to. It should be independent from all sides, and that means proper oversight and monitoring. I think that this amendment will go at least some way – some way – to ensuring this. It's important that we have checks and balances on the power of the minister here to make these important appointments.

So I'm pleased to stand up and support this amendment. I'm very disappointed – however, I'm not shocked – to see that the minister does not have any interest in limiting her powers to appoint her friends.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on the amendment? The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just wanted to address a couple of the points raised by the Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office. You used a few examples: the medical officer of health, the chief veterinarian, those sorts of things. You know, I would just remind the minister that in the past, with the previous government, some of those positions have in fact succumbed to political pressure. In fact, I think that's probably one of the big reasons that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View is here, some of those sorts of challenges in the past.

You know, my concern – and this is a bigger discussion than just this single chief scientist position and something that perhaps the House may want to contemplate in the future in terms of how we address appointments to key positions generally. As I've said before, I think it's very important that at the very least we manage the perception risk around these sorts of appointments if not, in fact, the actual risk that appointments are political rather than merit based, if not in the present then at the very least in the future.

You know, the minister also referenced that perhaps this panel could be perceived as interference in the process. I think, in fact, it's entirely the opposite. It is to manage the risk that there would be undue interference in the appointment of such an important position to a role that is vital to the future of the province both for the environment and environmental monitoring but also for the perception and the overall economic well-being of our province. If the world perceives that Alberta's environmental monitoring is world class, and if, in fact, it is world class, that will only help, I think, ensure that we continue to develop the oil sands responsibly and reap the financial and social benefits from so doing.

The minister mentioned that this panel would not necessarily be qualified to perform a human resources role or do recruitment, you know, the mechanics of how the candidates are actually identified before the panel. I would envision them working with the public service, not purely in isolation, and plugging into those existing public service processes. It does add a layer of another check and balance and a layer of transparency. The goal here is to address that perception risk, and I would obviously hope and encourage the minister to reconsider.

I appreciate the Official Opposition's support for this amendment, and I would encourage all members, please, to support it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on the amendment? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I'd like to speak in support of this amendment. Now, this amendment doesn't take a lot of power away from the ministry. If we look at this, it says, "For subsequent vacancies in the position of Chief Scientist." So the minister will still be able to appoint the first one, but subsequent vacancies – and correct me if I'm wrong, hon. member – for that position would be chosen from a list of qualified candidates provided by the panel. Again, right off the start the minister gets to appoint the first chief scientist, and then down the road there would be an independent appointment advisory panel to provide a list of qualified candidates. This group would provide a list of candidates for the minister to choose from. That still gives a lot of power to the minister.

9:30

Now, this group of five members will have at least one representative from each of the following: industry associations, indigenous communities, academia, environmental organizations, and regulatory experts. This is a pretty well-rounded group of individuals to be providing a list of qualified candidates for the minister to choose a chief scientist from. Again, this provides just a little bit more independency – just a little bit more – and, of course, that little bit more provides a little bit more transparency to this whole process.

For those reasons, I would like to support this amendment. Again, just like the previous member noted, it will make, you know, a bad bill just a little less bad. Obviously, I think Albertans are the same as us in the opposition in that we have a hard time putting our full trust in the minister based on her history of anti-oil activism.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak on the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:31 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Schneider
Clark	Loewen	Stier
Ellis	Nixon	Swann
Fildebrandt	Orr	Taylor
Fraser		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Nielsen
Babcock	Horne	Phillips
Bilous	Kazim	Piquette
Carson	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Connolly	Littlewood	Schmidt
Coolahan	Loyola	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Shepherd

Dach	Malkinson	Sucha
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Drever	McKittrick	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Woollard
Ganley	Miranda	

Totals:	For – 13	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We will return to Bill 18. Are there any members wishing to speak on the original bill? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to talk again on Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. Bill 18 returns the core function of environmental monitoring to the government. Under Bill 18 AEMERA will report to the Deputy Minister of Alberta Environment and Parks through a responsible assistant deputy minister. If passed, this legislation will outline the role and establish the position of chief scientist.

The bill requires that the minister establish a science advisory panel, intended to provide advice to the chief scientist. This panel will also be charged with conducting independent assessments and evaluations on the performance of the overall program. This legislation will require regular public reporting from the environmental monitoring agency. The chief scientist will be responsible for determining the necessity of peer review and has autonomy to speak publicly without permission from the minister. The bill will additionally establish an indigenous wisdom advisory panel to integrate the indigenous perspective.

9:50

Now, there are some good parts to this bill, things that it could do if it's allowed to, being under the purview of the ministry. It could improve relations with the Environment Canada partners. It could consolidate scarce scientific expertise in one location in Alberta. It could find least costly solutions, and it could possibly eliminate some duplications and use public-sector salary comparators. Hopefully, we would have regular public reporting, and hopefully the chief scientist can speak publicly without approval from the minister. The minister must choose the science panel members from a list by the panel.

Now, of course, there are some points about this bill that have us more than a little uncomfortable. We've tried to pass a couple of amendments to this bill that we feel would have made it a little bit more accountable, a little bit more transparent. We asked that it be sent to committee so that we could have this bill looked at and we could get information from a variety of sources. That's the great thing about committees. It opens up an opportunity to listen to more than just the government speak about the benefits of this bill. We could hear the other side of the story, too, from other scientists that have a different opinion on what AEMERA has done and what it can do.

Now, given that the NDP, including the minister, through their association with environmental radicals – it's a little concerning to have more authority for the minister. Again, there have been numerous members of the scientific community that heavily criticized the Boothe study, upon which this government has based its decision to bring the environmental monitoring back in-house, back into the government. While the Boothe review claims that the agency has been a three-year failed experiment, the transfer of resources establishing the agency occurred in May 2015, and the Boothe review was launched shortly thereafter. So this agency, AEMERA, never really had a chance to get going.

Of course, when you start up anything, there are always some growing pains. These growing pains could have been addressed. We've tried to address some of them here, and we'd like to have had an opportunity to hear about some of these things in committee and hear different ideas on how these concerns could have been addressed. Now, there were some accusations of relatively high salary levels within AEMERA – and there's been some disputing of that, too – but that's something that could have been taken care of relatively easily.

Now, much of what the Boothe report identified as the high cost of AEMERA was based on sole-sourced Alberta Environment and Parks contracts before the formation of AEMERA. These were contracts from Alberta Environment and Parks. So now, in order to solve this issue, the government's response is to bring AEMERA back into the government, the same government that sole-sourced these contracts that are an issue. That, you know, brings more uncertainty to this whole issue.

**An Hon. Member:** Perplexing.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes, it's very perplexing.

Now, clarifying the mandate of AEMERA still remains an option, and doing so would improve relations between AEMERA and Environment Canada and Alberta Environment and Parks. That's something that could still be done without bringing it into government. Bringing the cost of AEMERA in line with the public sector still remains an option, too. That's something, again, that could be done without bringing this into government.

Clarifying AEMERA's mandate would permit increased multijurisdictional co-operation. Now, that's something that's pretty basic, having a clear mandate. Of course, mandates can be adjusted. If there's some portion of the mandate they had that wasn't working, then that could be corrected. It's not that hard. Critics of the decision find it ironic that rather than making this decision using results of independent financial and scientific reviews, the minister based this decision on a sole-authored bureaucratic report that wasn't peer reviewed.

I think there are several things here that could be done without bringing this into government. I think the most important thing is that Albertans are assured of world-class monitoring. We need monitoring that has integrity. We need monitoring that has credibility. We need world-class monitoring because it's fundamental to the reputation of our energy sector and in the eyes of our customers. They need to be able to see this, and that's justified. We need to have this kind of credibility and integrity in our environmental monitoring that will allow our customers to look at us and our energy products and know that we have world-class monitoring.

Our monitoring has always been better than our competitors', but we need to be telling the world that, not telling the world that we're embarrassing cousins. We need to be telling the world about our world-class environmental monitoring. The energy that we produce here is far better than what the competitors bring to the table. You know, the original intent of AEMERA was to create an arm's-length body to conduct environmental monitoring, which is sensible, particularly if the government is lacking in credibility. We see we have this same problem here now. The government is lacking in credibility. There are ways to solve these problems without bringing it into government. We need to have that credibility in the world's eyes.

Just in conclusion, I won't be supporting Bill 18 in Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on the bill?

**Ms McKittrick:** Madam Chair, I rise as a cosponsor of Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. About 47 years ago I graduated from one of the most prestigious universities in Canada, McGill University, with a degree in ecology. I am proud to have been a part of one of the first bachelor of science degrees awarded in ecology. We have come a long way since my graduation in understanding the impact that we have on the environment through our industries and the way we live. We have legislation at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels that ensures that we safeguard our air, water, land, and natural resources. We work hard on mitigating the impact of our dependency on cars; recycle cans, bottles, plastics, and paper; and ensure that we preserve spaces where animals have a place to roam and live. There is no longer a possibility to deny that climate change has impacted our planet and that we need to ensure proper monitoring of the environment and our impact on the Earth.

For my friends opposite who, like me, come from a faith background, I have been delighted to see faith-based groups such as Citizens for Public Justice and A Rocha remind us all of God's love for creation.

The vocation of being a "protector" . . . means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world . . . It means respecting each of God's creatures and respecting the environment in which we live . . . In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God's gifts!

This is from Pope Francis.

**10:00**

As the Minister of Environment and Parks explained in this bill, it establishes the roles and responsibilities of the chief scientist, including developing and implementing an environmental science program to monitor, evaluate, and report on the condition of the environment. It outlines in law that the minister must establish a science advisory panel to provide independent advice to the chief scientist and the minister. I want to point out that this panel can speak publicly when it considers it necessary.

This bill establishes an indigenous wisdom panel to provide advice to the chief scientist and the minister on how to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into the environmental science program, and this is so important at the moment.

In addition, there are some transitional provisions to ensure a smooth transition of monitoring functions and AEMERA back into the department. Madam Chair, I believe that our government has taken a thoughtful and measured approach in accepting the recommendations from the Boothe report to bring these core functions of government back into the Department of Environment and Parks.

The new model is the best option moving forward because it ensures that the government is directly accountable for environmental monitoring and that issues or gaps in monitoring are responded to immediately. The new model also eliminates fragmentation of scarce scientific capacity and will eliminate costly administrative duplication. Those two things were identified in the Boothe report as issues to be solved.

As a government we have a responsibility to the public to ensure that we are providing the best possible monitoring and reporting system and that this information is shared with the public regularly. It is for this reason that I support the specific duties of the chief scientist to establish and make public a schedule for reporting on the state of the environment in our province and to report on it.

I also believe, as does my caucus, that the indigenous wisdom panel has an extremely valuable role to play in ensuring that traditional ecological knowledge is included in environmental

monitoring, and I'm so delighted that we take this seriously now. Maintaining this panel, now the indigenous wisdom panel, recognizes that our indigenous peoples have lived in harmony with the land for thousands of years and that we have an opportunity to learn from their wisdom in matters of the environment.

A key focus of the indigenous wisdom panel will be to identify significant outstanding gaps in cumulative effects management and guide the work of the chief scientist to ensure that appropriate prioritization and focus is placed by the government and the division to support increased monitoring science and the public reporting of cumulative effects. This panel will provide advice not only about traditional ecological knowledge and how to integrate it with western science programs but also will advise on how best to engage indigenous communities.

Now, Madam Chair, I want to talk about this whole issue of peer review for the Boothe report. I have had papers that have been peer reviewed, and they're usually papers of primary research, therefore journals, or maybe you can be peer reviewed because you're going to be presenting a report at a conference. The Boothe report has nothing to do with an academic report that needs to be peer reviewed. I have gone through the experience of a peer review, and I'm wondering how many of the members opposite understand the concept of a peer review for an academic journal versus a report that has been written for a specific purpose such as providing advice to government.

Madam Chair, the Boothe report was very clear in its recommendations to bring environmental monitoring back into the department. Page 12 of the report states:

Like many complex system failures, the failure of this experiment had several causes. The first was the erroneous belief that the lack of public credibility attached to environmental monitoring in Alberta at this time (in particular, for the oil sands) was related to its close link with government rather than the weakness of its scientific underpinnings. The second was an inability to clearly articulate the relationship between AEMERA and AEP and to recognize the role of the department in coordinating portfolio activities on behalf of the Minister. The third was a failure to appreciate the public sector management impacts of stripping AEP of the scientific capacity it needs to fulfill its mandate of environmental stewardship.

We believe that the measures we're taking will not only improve front-line delivery of monitoring in Alberta but will ensure that scientific independence is maintained and even improved. Madam Chair, I support Bill 18 because I believe that it will provide the foundation for the most transparent, accountable, and scientifically sound environmental monitoring system.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's always an honour to rise and speak in this House to the hon. members. You know, I was just thinking that there was a film, I believe in 1986, a movie called *A Time to Kill*. It's about this southern girl – she's an African-American girl – who gets brutally raped. She's raped by these white what they would call, I guess, country boys. As the movie goes on, it is a commentary on race relations in the United States and obviously very contentious.

One of the pieces that was moving in that film, if you've seen it, was towards the end, when Matthew McConaughey, playing the lawyer for the father who goes out and avenges his daughter's rape, is articulating what happened. He asks the jury to close their eyes, and as he articulates what happened on that day, towards the end he

says: now, I want you to imagine that this happened to a white girl. For me in that moment it said something: imagine that.

On this particular piece of the bill – and I see the chair thinking: where are you going with this? – imagine if it was our government who was now pulling AEMERA back into the ministry. Imagine the protest from what would have been the fourth party back then and the outcry that now it's coming into the minister's control.

Now, I'm not going to ask you to close your eyes, but let's start a little bit with the narrative. In the beginning the minister wouldn't meet with AEMERA's leadership, to start, and then starts to make decisions without doing that. Then as the minister's office and the ministry are doing that, there's an outcry from chief scientists right across the country in disagreement. Now, imagine all of that going on, and it was our government. There would have been this huge outcry based on perception.

Originally when we did it, when we moved and created the world-class environmental monitoring in 2013, it was because there was this perception that the governing party of the day was perhaps too close to the oil and gas industry, so we put it at arm's length to remove some of that conspiracy, to remove some of that perception. Now here we are in a new day, and the government of the day is doing something that they would have vehemently opposed if it were us.

The minister has an opportunity here to do some things. One of those things would be to send this bill to committee – right? – to have more dialogue on this, on exactly how it's going to work.

**An Hon. Member:** Why did you mention rape? It's not really appropriate.

**Mr. Fraser:** Then you weren't listening. However, it was perception. And I have the floor, hon. member.

**An Hon. Member:** What's your point?

**10:10**

**Mr. Fraser:** The point is that it's perception, and the point is that if the shoe was on the other foot, there would have been this huge outcry.

Members, we can't support this simply because there is a perception. It's already out there, and the minister now has the task of separating that out. We already have a challenge in the world today of making sure that we're doing everything we can on a social licence basis, but to pull the monitoring agency back into the minister's office is creating some concern for industry. We're hearing it from scientists. That's why I won't be supporting this bill. I think the minister has an opportunity to maybe refer this bill to committee to do some extra work on it. That's an opportunity. That's my suggestion.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?  
Seeing none, I'll call the question on Bill 18.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 18 agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** On the title and preamble, are you agreed?

[The voice vote indicated that the title and preamble were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:11 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	Miller
Babcock	Hinkley	Nielsen
Bilous	Horne	Phillips
Carson	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinsteinuber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	Luff	Sigurdson
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Turner
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Woollard

Against:

Aheer	Jansen	Schneider
Clark	Loewen	Stier
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Swann
Fraser	Orr	Taylor
Hanson		

Totals: For – 36 Against – 13

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

### Bill 16

#### Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

We have amendment A4, that was adjourned yesterday. Is there anyone wishing to speak to amendment A4? The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. Speaking as Minister of Transportation, I'm not sure what to do right now, Madam Chair. The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway had submitted to my office three amendments, which included the one that's before us now. While I'm not prepared to accept the one before us now, I am prepared to accept two other amendments that he provided to my office. Unfortunately, I don't think we're in a position to deal with this right now. I don't know whether we should just put this back, adjourn again, and hopefully we can come back to it later today.

I'll move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Private Bills

#### Committee of the Whole

#### Bill Pr. 1

#### Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

**Mr. Westhead:** Madam Chair, I'd like to advise the House that this bill was reviewed by the Standing Committee on Private Bills and that the committee has recommended that the bill proceed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other comments, questions, or amendments on Bill Pr. 1?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill Pr. 1?

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Government House Leader, would you like to rise and report?

10:20

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report Bill 18 and Bill Pr. 1 and report progress on Bill 16.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**Ms Woollard:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 18, Bill Pr. 1. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 16. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in this report? Agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Third Reading

#### Bill 10

#### Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

[Adjourned debate May 24: Mr. Mason]

**The Acting Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak to Bill 10? The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We're still debating Bill 10 in the House right now because we have not seen any reasonable justification from this government for the legislation before us here. We have not yet seen the Minister of Finance stand up in this House and explain why it is that he needs to repeal the debt ceiling that he imposed in legislation just four and a half months before introducing this. We have not yet seen any good reason provided by the government for why it is that they believe they will exceed 15 per cent of debt to GDP in just a few short years.

We've yet to hear a reasonable case put forward by the minister as to why the taxpayers of Alberta should believe anything he has to say about their plan to get us back to balanced budgets. We have yet to hear anything from the Minister of Finance or the Premier that would give an iota of comfort to our lenders, the people lending money to this province, to ensure that we are sufficiently credit worthy.

The last time that the Minister of Finance attempted to reassure the creditors of this province and our credit-rating agencies, he flew out east to meet with some of the credit-rating agencies. What did they do after seeing the minister? They downgraded the credit rating

of the province. They had such little faith in the ability of the minister to put this province back on a path to balanced budgets that they figured, after a conversation with him, that the province clearly had no plan, that we are no longer worthy of our triple-A plus credit rating.

Literally less than one day, less than 24 hours, after the government introduced its budget, the credit rating of this province was downgraded, and that had nothing to do whatsoever with the price of oil. All they can do is blame the price of oil. But if it had to do with the price of oil, our credit would have been downgraded on the day of or a few days after a significant drop in the price of oil. Instead, they waited to see this government's budget. They brought down a budget, and it was so clear that they had no plan whatsoever to address the significant shortfall between revenues and expenditures here that they downgraded the credit rating of this province.

There was no significant change in the price of oil between the time of our last downgrade and the downgrade that happened the day after the budget. There was no significant change in the price of oil. In fact, during a lot of that period the price of oil actually went up. The price of oil is the only excuse that this government can banter about, hoping that Albertans actually aren't paying attention. But Albertans who are paying attention to this know that their excuse just doesn't hold water. They've blamed the price of oil for everything here.

Then they bring forward Bill 10, a bill that is extraordinarily reckless and irresponsible. While we were debating Bill 10, a bill that would remove any limit whatsoever to the ability of this government to borrow, while we were debating that very bill last Thursday, we got another credit downgrade by Standard & Poor's. Standard & Poor's downgraded the credit of this province while we were debating a bill that removes any limits whatsoever on the government to borrow. They didn't downgrade the credit of this province with a drop in the oil price. In fact, oil has had a significant recovery since Bill 10 was introduced.

Now, knock on wood, Madam Speaker, I'm not relying on that to bail the province out. Governments for a long time have relied upon the price of oil to bail us out of our problems, and we shouldn't rely upon that. The price of oil has actually gone up significantly since Bill 10 was introduced in this House, but the credit rating of the province has been downgraded significantly since Bill 10 was introduced in this House. Do you see the cognitive dissidence of this government? They will speak out of one side of their mouth and tell us that oil is the only reason for the fiscal problems of this government – the only reason – while oil prices are actually increasing and our credit rating is going down.

Our credit rating is going down for one reason, Madam Speaker. It's that the government has no darn plan, NDP. They have no plan whatsoever to get us back to balance. They have no plan to close the gap between expenditures and revenues in this province. Now, there are two ways to do that. They can increase taxes even more, or they can reduce spending. Albertans have had enough tax increases in this province. They have increased personal income taxes by up to 50 per cent for some earners. They've increased business taxes by 20 per cent. They've increased gasoline taxes, diesel taxes, home heating taxes.

They've introduced a massive ND PST carbon tax that is going to slam families and small oil drilling companies in this province with \$3 billion of new taxes without coming anywhere close to compensating taxpayers for the cost of this. Their rebate is an absolute sham. It doesn't come anywhere close to rebating middle-class families for the actual cost of this carbon tax. The carbon tax has nothing to do with their stated goals around the environment. It is a tax grab, pure and simple. If it wasn't a tax grab, it wouldn't

appear on page 22 of the fiscal plan under the table titled Tax Revenue. If it wasn't a tax grab, they wouldn't be spending it. They wouldn't be spending this money on new corporate welfare programs.

You know who is going to be here later today, Madam Speaker? The illustrious Premier of Ontario, who has bankrupted that province with these same kinds of so-called green energy subsidy programs, building a windmill on every corner, cancelling gas plants. They're now actually even talking about banning natural gas for home heating in Ontario. Period. The Premier of Ontario is going to be here today, and I'm sure she's going to impart her wisdom about fiscal responsibility and good spending programs on the environmental side.

I am terrified that some of this is going to rub off although we shouldn't be because the real crusaders for this are already here. We have an environment minister who helped write the foreword for a book, *An Action a Day: Keeps Global Capitalism Away*, radical environmentalists here who are bent upon imposing a huge green subsidy program in this province, paid for by taxpayers.

If this had anything to do with the environment and it wasn't just a big tax grab, they would have made the carbon tax revenue neutral. They would have cut business taxes. They would have cut personal income taxes the way British Columbia did. It would have been revenue neutral, and it wouldn't have brought the government one new penny to spend on subsidy programs like Kathleen Wynne is conducting in Ontario. But it's not, so they brought in a massive tax grab so they could increase spending even more on some of their pet projects.

10:30

It has done nothing to actually close the gap between expenditures and revenues in the province because all of the new taxes, the \$3 billion of new taxes that this government is going to capture from Albertans in that carbon tax, all \$3 billion there is going to be spent. They're not even going to take the revenue from this towards the deficit, nor should they because we should be cutting expenditures in this province.

Our creditors are looking at this province and saying that there is no realistic plan whatsoever to get back to balance, and that is why we have suffered our fifth credit downgrade. It's our fifth credit downgrade.

You know, a lot of us have seen a great video that was posted on YouTube about this guy who went to his bank. He's pretty broke. He makes about \$30,000 a year, and he spends about \$45,000 a year, roughly the size of the deficit, proportionately, that the Alberta government is running. He has no concern. All he does is to go to the bank, and he asks for an increase in his line of credit. The banker says: "We can't give you this money. You're no longer good for it. You're not good for this money. You're earning \$30,000. You're spending \$45,000. You already owe \$30,000 on top of that. You already owe a lot of money, and you've got no plan to either bring in more money or to reduce your expenditures." The guy is dumbfounded: "Well, what do you mean? I need these things. These are great things. I like to do fun things with this money." The banker says: "Well, at the end of the day, we're not going to lend you money if you're not creditworthy for it." So what does he do? He carts in his kid and makes his kid sign a loan.

That's what we're doing here. We are making our children sign the loan for us. That is the advantage that government has over individuals when it comes to borrowing. I can't borrow more than I'm worthy for on my credit rating because at the end of the day I'm responsible for my own debts. We are not responsible personally for the reckless actions that we are taking here. Madam Speaker, if the politicians in this Chamber had to personally be responsible for



the debts we are taking on, I guarantee you that we would never see Bill 10 before this House. We would never bring something as reckless and shameful as Bill 10, to eliminate any debt ceiling whatsoever, before this House if we actually had to put our own money on the line.

Instead, we're here for a good time, not a long time, aren't we? We're here for four years. Hopefully, you don't stretch it to five. We are here for four years. The worst thing that could possibly happen to the government is that they lose an election and have to get a job in the private sector. That's the worst possible thing that could happen to a politician. You lose your seat, and you move on with life. But you're not responsible afterwards for the decisions that you've made here. This is a short-term contract that we are on. We're on a four-year contract, and we don't have to live with the consequences of our actions, but the rest of Alberta does. Future generations have to live with the consequences of our actions.

We can do anything we want here. We can be as reckless with people's money as we like because at the end of the day not a single one of the 87 members of this House is going to be held personally responsible for those actions. I know – I know – for a fact that if at the end of this legislative term, if in the spring of 2019 all of us when we leave here had to take a share of the debt that we've taken on, I guarantee that they would never do anything like this. They would never do anything like this, but they're happy to kick the can down the road and let somebody else pay for it.

As I said, at an earlier stage of debate here I quoted Frédéric Bastiat, who said that government is the great illusion in which everyone tries to live at everyone else's expense. Well, that doesn't just go between regions of a country or regions of a province. It doesn't just go between classes of wealth or position in a society. It also goes between generations. What we're doing here, Madam Speaker, is that we are trying to live at the expense of future generations. We are trying to accumulate wealth for ourselves right now, paid for by our children and our children's children.

Of course, in the 1980s, when the Alberta government was on its last big borrowing binge, the government of the day said: "We owe this to ourselves. We need to borrow this money to diversify the economy and spend it on all these programs that we like." They weren't willing to pay the piper for what they were spending that day. They weren't willing to either raise the taxes or cut spending and actually balance their books. They were living at the expense of the next generation, and that's what we are doing here today. We are trying to live at the expense of our children and our grandchildren. It is irresponsible, and it is morally repugnant, Madam Speaker, and that is why the Official Opposition will vote against this bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Anyone wishing to speak to the bill?

The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you. I'm standing to adjourn debate on Bill 10.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### **Bill 18 An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring**

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 18? The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course, I rise to move third reading of Bill 18, which is an Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring.

You know, the reason for that, Madam Speaker, is that environmental monitoring really must be the core business of government, just like public health and public safety. We have always said that we need to do a better job of monitoring the environmental impacts of resource development because Albertans demand it. The communities demand it. Certainly, our trading partners demand it as well, and industry demands it of themselves. That is why we accepted the recommendations conducted under the agencies, boards, and commissions review, the expert analysis provided to us by Dr. Paul Boothe to bring front-line monitoring functions back into the department and introduce this bill.

Of course, this bill enshrines a number of things into law that were not previously there, including the role and responsibilities of the chief scientist. The science advisory panel was there previously, but not the indigenous wisdom panel, and it enshrines in law that the science advisory panel can speak publicly when it's deemed necessary. These were really thoughtful and measured inclusions, Madam Speaker, that ensure the independence of the scientific data while being accountable to Albertans with respect to the analysis and reporting of data.

Madam Speaker, I believe, having been minister of environment now for about a year, that, you know, the previous government recognized that they had a problem with environmental monitoring. There were so many criticisms being levelled at their approach, and that was why they constituted AEMERA. I believe that the intentions were good, and I believe that they were trying to get it right and had come around to this idea that they had to get it right, that our international and national reputations depended on it. However, I believe that the governance model was a bridge too far. It was unnecessary, and it was administration duplication.

**10:40**

It pains me that some members of this House don't want to see this province efficiently expend environmental resources and scientific resources. In my mind, you know, our focus needs to be on those front-line monitoring services. So that's unfortunate, Madam Speaker. But what we've done with this, I would argue, is to keep the good start within the previous government's approach, with the science advisory panel and the appointment of the chief scientist and ensuring more regularized reporting. We've taken out the pieces that got in the way of achieving those objectives.

There were pieces of the agency that got in the way of an ongoing nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples, for example. It's so crucial in the oil sands region in particular that we maintain and foster those relationships with the indigenous peoples for their traditional land use and the cumulative effects and so on. So the agency, despite, I think, very good intentions, quite frankly, had trouble navigating that relationship because it wasn't government to nation; it was agency to nation. It was awkward. It was tough to get off the ground.

But the traditional ecological knowledge panel was finally sort of lifted off the ground eventually under AEMERA. What we've done here is to not make it discretionary, whether that panel exists, but we've enshrined it into law. The minister shall ensure that those voices are heard, and that's really important.

You know, having spent quite a bit of time up there discussing development in the oil sands region, I think that there is a real desire for that nation-to-nation relationship and that really careful cultivation of an actual relationship and communication and to go beyond just ticking the box of consultation, that is required. So I think that through the establishment of the indigenous wisdom panel within this legislation, that requires this government and subsequent governments to engage in that respectful way – and that is a change, Madam Speaker. I think it's unfortunate that that piece

and that respectful relationship will be opposed by some members of this House.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I think that some of the pieces that were contained within the Boothe report really speak to our government's desire to make sure that we are investing in front-line services, whether those services are to protect our public health through our public health care system or public security through, for example, emergency management response, which, of course, we have seen the results of very recently. Thank goodness, particularly in the lower Athabasca, we have all those folks working in environmental monitoring and all the folks working in the environment department in particular, that I know I can speak to, and their high level of professionalism and so on. Thank goodness those folks were not cut in Budget 2015 last fall or in this one so that we had the capacity to respond. It's so important that we be able to shore that up and that every extra dollar that we have within environmental monitoring is going towards just that. That's what this legislation does.

To conclude moving third reading, Madam Speaker, I do want to underline that there were some good parts of the previous government's approach around AEMERA. However, what it did was that it established a governance model that we don't see in other jurisdictions. It just didn't really stack up to an evidence-based approach to the matter, with an appropriate interjurisdictional comparison, with an actual careful eye to how we govern environmental monitoring and how we speak to the public about it. That's another really big piece. We need to make sure that that reporting is timely, that it contains an appropriate analysis. It is no good to just dump a whole bunch of data on the public and just say: here; look at these spreadsheets. There must be analysis. What are we looking at? What are the trends? Are we measuring the appropriate things?

The chief scientist will have to give those reports to the public, Madam Speaker. In addition, the science advisory panel is able to say to the public and to the chief scientist, you know, "Look, you need to examine this part" or "There is this monitoring for this particular emission that needs to be done now that we now have the technology to do," and so on. The science advisory panel can undertake that and can speak to the public about it. I think it's unfortunate that some members in the House would oppose such an approach and would oppose such an open conversation about science with the public. This is about ensuring that we have a robust, public approach to public science. Certainly, Environment Canada has quite a few boots on the ground, and they now are able to speak to the public, scientists as well, which is fantastic. We have allowed that same freedom through this legislation.

As I move third reading, I just want to underline for the House that, you know, when we were sworn in a year ago, we took a very methodical approach to some of these questions of governance. After 40 years, for better or for worse, for good intentions or for maybe not-so-good intentions, you end up with some frayed edges around governance, Madam Speaker. That's what we're looking to clean up here.

We're just really looking to make sure that when we go and speak to the public and we speak to our trading partners and we speak to those who have questions about orderly development in the oil sands, we have real answers, that we have evidence-based answers, that we don't have answers that are simply based on rhetoric or on thumping one's chest or on stomping one's feet or whatever other toddlerlike behaviour we think might get us to acceptance of our heavy oil products on world markets, that we are taking a substantive approach, a careful and thoughtful approach to the development of our energy resources, Madam Speaker.

With that I move third reading.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Any other members wishing to speak? I will recognize the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka first and then the Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. The challenge here, of course, is multipronged. Part of the issue why this bill is not acceptable is because it just continues to add to the problem of big government in our province. In many cases big government is not the solution and, in fact, is the problem. It just adds to spiralling budgets and to continually making a bigger and bigger and bigger bureaucracy that just interrupts what the people in our province need to do.

The other problem is, of course, that independent boards are independent for a reason. Independent boards need to have some independence. Of course, when the employees have to answer to the boss, they're no longer completely independent. The way it's being set up now – while there were problems before, this isn't the right solution. Big government, loss of independence is not a solution.

What we've got now is setting up a situation, a particular strategy of operation whereby the likelihood of manipulation and influence and control is extremely strong. In short, this is a conflict of interest. Now, I realize this government doesn't seem to understand the nature or the concept of a conflict of interest, but most of the independent boards and agencies and commissions in this province were set up with only three requirements to the government. The first was, of course, that they would receive their mandate from the government. The second is that they would receive a budget from the government. The third is that they would make an annual report to the government. Beyond that they were to operate with independent boards and independent decision-making and freedom from political influence and manipulation in the process.

**10:50**

I think this leads to secrecy. I think it leads to reports being vetted, a loss of transparency. The issue isn't the science. It's the fact that the science is being paid for by the government. It's the issue that science is being muzzled by the boss. Whistle-blowing will be squelched. I just think that in the end the reality is that the environment will suffer. This isn't about protecting the environment; it's about destroying the independence and the freedom of an independent monitor. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The minister makes a very interesting case, which I can agree with, that the environment is no different than any other front-line service like health care, like policing. But when we look at public safety – and we can use the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, that's arm's-length, to make decisions that are made by professionals. Police departments – city of Calgary police, city of Edmonton police department, RCMP and the detachments around the province – are funded by governments in some form but are independent to make decisions in the best interests of their citizens that don't necessarily have that political pressure or political oversight, that may be real or even perceived manipulation.

I guess the question for the minister as we move forward is – and I would agree that not everything in AEMERA was perfect; however, there were good things. I would also say that a good thing about the particular bill is the indigenous advisory council. I mean, I do believe that kings should be speaking to kings and queens speaking to queens, using that reference.

So there are some good parts of this, but, I think, going back to what I was saying before, it is the perception that now it's in the minister's office, particularly trying to initiate things like the carbon tax. You can see the perception from people that maybe the science can be manipulated by the minister's office. That's the problem. Again, it's not that there's any malintent; however, it's the perception. Now the minister's office is going to be tasked with that. You know, how often will the minister and this particular part of her ministry be in front of committee so that all members of this House, again, can see what's going on and fight for their constituents?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak on the bill? The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today as I'm a cosponsor of Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. I'd like to provide the House with some context of how we arrived here today, debating a bill that will bring environmental monitoring back into government. As you know, our government committed to reviewing all agencies, boards, and commissions that fall under our purview. We undertook these reviews to improve services and ensure value for taxpayers. We also undertook these reviews to consider the role, mandate, board members, and governance structures of ABCs and to identify areas of duplication and potential savings.

As part of this process AEMERA was reviewed by Dr. Paul Boothe, who's a former Environment Canada deputy minister and currently the director of the Lawrence National Centre for Policy and Management at Western University's Ivey Business School. Dr. Boothe's report clearly identified some key issues, including that the private model diverted overhead costs away from monitoring, led to confusion around roles and responsibilities, and limited resources. The report stated:

Considering the body of information gathered through interviews and a review of key documents, it is hard to escape the conclusion that AEMERA is a failed experiment in outsourcing a core responsibility of government to an arm's-length body.

That's on page 12.

AEMERA's operational model is also more costly than public-sector models. I would think that that should appeal to those across the aisle, that we want to use governmental resources very efficiently. In part the high costs come because its governance and administrative structures duplicate structures that already exist at a lower cost in the public sector. In addition, costs are high because AEMERA has chosen private- rather than public-sector salary and benefit comparators despite the fact that many staff were previously performing similar functions at lower costs when employed by AEPEA.

Madam Speaker, the Boothe report recommended to transition monitoring back into the department under the guidance of a chief scientist. Our government has accepted these recommendations, and Bill 18 puts the recommendations into action. I urge all members to support it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on Bill 18? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. Ensuring that Alberta has world-class environmental monitoring is a Wildrose

priority. Upholding the integrity of Alberta's monitoring systems is vital not only for our environment but for our industry. World-class monitoring secures the longevity and reputation of Alberta's energy sector. This is critically important. So we'll be watching what the government does to ensure that political interference does not damage the quality or credibility of our monitoring.

Now, this move will reconsolidate Alberta's scientific knowledge base, thus allowing Alberta Environment and Parks to better fulfill its monitoring mandate. So there are some good things about this. But we are wary of consolidating the power in the hands of government. Now, this government's history of environmental radicalism concerns us. We're most concerned about ministerial interference. If they are spared interference, we trust Alberta scientists will deliver the world-class environmental monitoring that we rely on and that our energy sector relies on. Dr. Wrona is a highly reputable scientist, and we were pleased to see that he will continue to lead this monitoring.

Now, even with operations taken in-house, it is vital to ensure that the scientists are given freedom to operate independently. Without world-class monitoring the reputation of our energy sector is at risk, and we can't afford to lose that. The oil industry is fully invested in seeing that Alberta has world-class environmental monitoring. They know tracking their impact is a priority because, for them, mitigating their impact is a priority.

It is crucial that we defend the integrity and credibility of our environmental monitoring. We appreciate that the minister cannot appoint board members directly but wonder if the board selecting nominees will make it too much of an insiders' clique. Co-operation between federal and provincial monitoring bodies is important to ensure we maintain world-class standards in Alberta. The Wildrose is committed to that.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 18? The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. I'm sure that many in this House are aware that I worked for seven years as a groundwater specialist at Alberta environment, so I have first-hand knowledge of the process that the department went through in setting up the Alberta monitoring agency that we're now dismantling.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, that a number of our staff were concerned with the process. A number of environment staff were of course concerned with the quality, the integrity, the independence of the monitoring that our department was doing back when this was a function carried out by Alberta environment, and certainly many of us in the civil service were quite relieved when Dr. David Schindler pointed out some of the holes that existed in the monitoring program at that time and, of course, prompted the government of the day to undertake a review of how monitoring in the oil sands area, in particular, was undertaken and suggested some changes.

I think many in the civil service, it's fair to say, thought that perhaps the government of the day went a step too far, that rather than ensuring taking measures to just reform the way Alberta environment was set up to ensure the independent monitoring that we're trying to establish, they resorted to an old trick, let's say, of setting up an arm's-length agency because that seemed to be the solution to any problem that government faced at the time, that if you had a problem with something that was going on with government, you'd take that function out of government and you'd

set up an independent agency, and magically the problem would be fixed. Of course, we see now, after three years of this experiment, that that didn't actually fix the problem, that the work that needs to be done wasn't actually getting done because there were so many problems with setting up the agency.

**11:00**

Madam Speaker, I saw first-hand the trouble that people had deciding whether or not they should work for Alberta Environment anymore or work for AEMERA because they weren't sure where their job naturally fit, right? I worked side by side with hydrologists, with limnologists who loved their job passionately and wanted to continue on doing the job in the organization that was going to continue doing that kind of work, but they were never sure whether that work was going to be continued under Alberta Environment or the monitoring agency. As a result, some of our monitoring staff were moved over to the monitoring agency; some of the monitoring staff stayed at Alberta Environment. They were often working on the same projects, just across different agencies, and it took a toll on the quality of the work that was undertaken by those two agencies as well as on staff morale.

The staff who did move over to AEMERA were never really sure how long they were going to be there. The budgetary questions that were asked about the certainty, the predictability, the sustainability of the funding of the agency had never been answered satisfactorily, so my friends who went to work for the agency were never really sure whether or not their next paycheck was going to come from AEMERA or from Alberta Environment or whether their jobs were going to be cut altogether.

Madam Speaker, I'm quite relieved that our government is taking action to establish the certainty in the role of Alberta Environment in carrying out this monitoring work. You know, the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka talked about big government, and if he gave this any more than just a passing thought, he'd realize that we're actually shrinking government because we're taking the work that's being done by two agencies now and shrinking it into one agency. That only makes sense. That's what the civil servants that I worked with wanted from day one. We warned our political masters of the day that by establishing this agency, we would be duplicating functions, that we would be delegating responsibility so that we weren't sure who was responsible for what. When you have those kinds of situations, it turns out that nobody is responsible for anything, and no work gets done.

I'm glad that we're proceeding with dismantling AEMERA and rolling those functions back into the environment department because now we know who's responsible for environmental monitoring all across the province. It's the government of Alberta, and our civil servants will know who they're working with, who they're working for, what their job is. I'm certain that as a result the work that will be done will be better than it has been over the past two or three years, when civil servants have been trying to do their job in spite of the chaos that's been happening at the management level.

I want to address a couple of points that have been raised by our friends from across the aisle here in this debate. You know, they have concerns about political interference, Madam Speaker, and I have to say that when AEMERA was set up, we had concerns about political interference. Of course, we know that Dr. Lorne Taylor was the chair of AEMERA, and we also know that Dr. Lorne Taylor is a confirmed climate change denier – right? – much like many of our friends from across the way. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View, in fact, lost his job because he had the courage to stand up and say that climate change is a real problem, that it's caused by human activity, and that the government needed to do

something to fix it. [interjections] Thank you, Calgary-Mountain View. And the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is causing me to doubt myself. I don't do that very often.

When you set up a confirmed climate change denier in charge of the agency that's tasked with monitoring the environment, of course you're going to have concerns, right? In fact, there will always be concerns around the political leadership and their ability to undertake scientific endeavours in the province, whoever the leader is, Madam Speaker. I think that the advantage of this bill is that we have one agency responsible for carrying out the monitoring.

I also want to address some comments made by our friends in the Wildrose Party about the fact that they don't trust the minister. I think that it's a convenient talking point for them, and they want to deflect from the reality, Madam Speaker, that they don't trust government at all to do anything. You know, in his response to a maiden speech in the last session of the Legislature the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock actually said that government was a negative force – I'm paraphrasing – that government was by its nature a destructive force. Of course, that reflects the Wildrose's view of government, that there is nothing that the government can do well because the government isn't supposed to do anything.

They like to say that they don't trust the minister, but what's at the heart of their argument, Madam Speaker, is that they don't actually trust government to do anything, and of course this is one of the many reasons why that party is not fit to run this province. We are certain that the people of Alberta see that, especially when it comes to the issue of environmental monitoring. There are no people in this country who are more concerned about the environment than the people of Alberta, and they don't want a bunch of people who don't understand science and don't believe that government has a role in protecting the environment running this province.

I want to touch on another subject that the members opposite have raised a number of times in this debate, Madam Speaker, and that is the fact that they are afraid that the minister will somehow politically interfere in the science that's involved, as if the minister herself is going to run around the Athabasca River and collect samples and then throw the ones that disagree with her preconceived notions out of the boat so that only the ones that support her hypothesis are the ones that are run in the lab, which is ridiculous.

Of course, if these people had any idea how government functions, which they don't – right? – they would know that our environment department is staffed from top to bottom with professional scientists, who abide by a code of ethics and will not let their work be meddled with by any political masters, Madam Speaker. One of the reasons that we have one of the best public services in the whole country is because we are staffed top to bottom with professionals who carry out their work without respect to what the desires of their political masters are.

On the issue of trusting science, Madam Speaker, of course, we know that there are a number of people in the Wildrose Party who frequently tweet about whether or not climate change is real, so of course they don't believe in evidence even when it's been presented by thousands of scientists who have been working on this for years and years.

Also, Madam Speaker, I recall a particular incident last summer, when Alberta Environment released air quality reports focused on Red Deer, on air quality issues in Red Deer. Of course, this was work that was undertaken by professional scientists, professional air quality monitoring, who have worked in the department for a number of years. The samples, I believe, were collected between the years 2011 and 2013, long before this minister was even present in this Chamber. The air quality results were quite concerning.

There were levels of PAHs, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons for people who probably don't know what PAH stands for, that were concerning. These are air quality concerns that, if they continued on, would have legitimate health impacts. The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky's response to the release: oh, this is political interference from a minister who's committed to phasing out coal. What was the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View's response? The same thing, that we can't trust the minister to present science.

11:10

Of course, what they don't say, Madam Speaker, is that they don't understand the science that was presented to them. It is human nature to fear what you don't understand, so out of fear they automatically attack the minister of the environment as somehow politically interfering with the independent work that's being undertaken by our air quality monitoring in the department. It's absolutely ridiculous that these people are even in this Chamber to talk about the quality of . . . [interjections]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members.

I'd just like to caution the members in the House about the language that we use when we're speaking of members.

Would you like to continue? Okay.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I would just like to sum up, Madam Speaker, by saying that this bill improves the efficiency of government, it ensures clear lines of responsibility, and it enhances the work that our civil servants will do. This will significantly improve the quality of the work that the Alberta government will be able to do in the area of environmental monitoring.

I encourage all of our members to ignore what the other side is saying. They've demonstrated clearly that they don't trust government, that they don't understand science time and time again, and that they don't really know what they're talking about when they're debating this bill.

I look forward to this House passing this bill and our environment department getting to the work of protecting the environment for our future generations. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Is there any member wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think the member has a lot of unique experience and knowledge that he has shared with our Chamber today. I just wonder if he had anything more that he wanted to add to edify us here today.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, no. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the Member for Banff-Cochrane asking me the question. I believe that the lecture has ended for today. But I would offer my services as a professional scientist to any member opposite who would like to understand what science is about. I will provide them remedial tutoring so that they actually have the base level required to participate in these kinds of debates.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Under 29(2)(a), the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

**Mr. Connolly:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you very much, Minister. I really appreciated your lesson. I'm sure it was very helpful to many people in this Chamber on both sides of the House. We don't often get a scientist talking to members of the Official Opposition about exactly what climate change is. As some of them have said, science is really middle of the road or somewhere in the middle of the road. They're not really sure if it's real or not.

Could you kind of expand on maybe a couple of the things that members opposite have expressed recently about whether or not they might believe in climate change?

Thank you.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you to the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood for that question. I believe that this is perhaps not the right forum for debating those things. I am sure that when the debate on Bill 20 progresses, the members opposite will have plenty of opportunities to shoot themselves in the foot, Madam Speaker. I believe that that will be the appropriate time to hold them to task, to illustrate to the people of Alberta how they fundamentally fail to understand the science of climate change, so I will refrain from making any of those remarks right now.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, would you like to speak under 29(2)(a)? No? Okay.

**Mr. Nixon:** I would like to move to adjourn debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** Well, are we finished with 29(2)(a) first? Are there any more speakers under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, there is a motion to adjourn debate on Bill 18.

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Unfortunately, the question has been called, so I'll put the vote forward first.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:16 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Schneider
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Stier
Hanson	Orr	Taylor
Jansen	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Phillips
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Drever	Malkinson	Swann
Drysdale	Mason	Turner
Ellis	McKittrick	Westhead
Feehan	Miller	Woollard
Fitzpatrick		

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 37
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[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

**The Acting Speaker:** We are back on the main bill.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Speaker, I have a point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

#### Point of Order

#### Admissibility of Motion

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Speaker, I'm looking at *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, pages 454 and 455. You know, I think the tactic that we just saw employed was new to me and, no doubt, to the chair as well. I just want to bring this forward so perhaps it can be ruled on tomorrow. It says under Guidelines:

The Chair has consistently ruled that the Government House Leader should be the one to introduce any motion pertaining to the arrangement of House business, and that the motion may be considered under "Motions" or under Government Orders, depending on where the Minister giving notice has decided to place it. The Chair has also ruled that while the rubric "Motions" usually encompasses matters related to the management of the business of the House and its committees, it is not the exclusive purview of the government, despite the government's unquestioned prerogative to determine the agenda of business before the House. Accordingly, the Speaker accepts certain motions put on notice by private Members for consideration under the heading "Motions", such as motions of instruction to committees and for concurrence in . . . reports. When private Members give written notice of other substantive matters, these motions are placed under Private Members' Business on the Order Paper.

Madam Speaker, I would ask that you take this under consideration, and hopefully we can have a ruling sometime early next week with respect to the use of this particular tactic by the opposition.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Government House Leader. I will take it under consideration.

The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I can only assume that we're referring to the opposition whip calling for an adjournment. It's happened many times in the House before where members other than the Government House Leader have called for adjournment, so I don't see this as a point of order.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's not the exclusive purview of the government to call those motions. It's also in the Government House Leader's agreement that it says that, so I don't think that there's a point of order here. Maybe some confusion but not a point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. Thank you, Government House Leader.

However, at this time I will not be deferring the motion as an adjournment is always in order, so at this time there is no point of order.

#### Debate Continued

**The Acting Speaker:** We will return to Bill 18 for debate. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will be brief. I think I've come some distance on this bill since listening to the discussion, very healthy, robust debate, I must say. A little historical perspective might be helpful. When I started in this Legislature 12 years ago, it was, in fact, as a result of one environment minister, Lorne Taylor, who ensured that I got fired back in 2002 for the temerity to speak out on the importance of climate change to health, not only in violation of free speech, I guess I would say, but also disrespectful of a professional acting in a professional capacity on behalf of all the medical officers in the province, let me say, at a resolution of our association.

My only problem with this bill is the name. Clearly, like with George Bush's clean air policy back a decade ago and his momentum to bring coal higher and higher on the energy scene and call it clean coal, I see this kind of Orwellian disconnect between the name and the purpose of the bill. I can get over that given that for over at least 15 years I've watched the creation of an environment department get diminished in terms of its scope, its authority, its funding, and its stability from Ralph Klein, who was the first environment minister, through Lorne Taylor, through Rob Renner, Diana McQueen, Robin Campbell, who is now head of the coal lobbying group in Canada.

There was obviously clear conflict of interest in the kind of mandate that they were given. In fact, when I asked Rob Renner, then environment minister, what he thought his role was, he said: "It's not to protect the environment. It's to develop with a minimal environmental impact." I said: Oh. Okay. Well, who is acting for the environment, then?" "Well, it's up to the public." I think that was his comment. Well, frankly, it's government's responsibility to act on behalf of the public. I don't think any of us want big government or small government. We want the right size of government to do the job for Albertans for the long-term public interest.

The conflicting mandates that have come through this government, the neglect of the environment for at least a decade, very much a second-class order in terms of funding, the separation of sustainable resource development and forestry initially – and then, to their credit, they moved it back under environment and sustainable resource development, one of the last iterations before the change of government. I was, frankly, disappointed to see forestry taken out of environment again and put in agriculture. Be that as it may, environment needs a strong, clear, cohesive mandate and funding. I know that the organization internally has been struggling with the varying demands on it, the lack of resources, this new AEMERA, that's now sharing environmental responsibilities not only with environment but with the Alberta Energy Regulator. This cannot be sustained in terms of efficient and effective environmental monitoring and enforcement.

I've come full circle and will be supporting this bill. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

11:40

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, would any members like to speak to Bill 18?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office to close debate.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise, of course, to close debate on Bill 18. This has been a very good debate, and I think we've been able to hear some very thoughtful interventions, certainly from this side of the House and also on the other side of the House. I think we all, you know, through this debate can recommit ourselves to understanding the science that goes into

monitoring and the conversation with the public that has to happen with robust monitoring. Data is one thing, but understanding that data and how it relates to our daily lives, to the cumulative effects on the landscape, and ensuring the best possible protections for our air, land, and water really must be a shared goal of this House.

What this act will do is ensure that all of the monitoring capabilities within Environment and Parks are properly aligned, that there is no overlap or crosstalk between an agency with a governance model that is not necessary and monitoring efforts that are overlapping efforts already happening in the department. We've eliminated some of those duplications, Madam Speaker. I'm very proud of that.

With that, I will move the bill for third reading.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:43 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	Nielsen
Babcock	Horne	Phillips

Carson	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Turner
Feehan	McKittrick	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Woollard

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Pitt
Drysdale	Loewen	Schneider
Ellis	Nixon	Stier
Fildebrandt	Orr	Taylor
Totals:	For – 33	Against – 12

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a third time]

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. Seeing that it is now 12 o'clock, we will be adjourning until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 26, 2016

Day 34

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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 Deputy Government Whip  
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 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
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Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
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Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
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Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

## Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

## Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

## Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKittrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

## Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

## Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

## Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 26, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the Premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne. I am delighted that the Premier is in Alberta today. As I said this morning, Premier Wynne follows in a long line of Ontario Premiers interested in nation building through national leadership, working with Premiers across Canada in our country's national interest. Alberta and Ontario share extremely strong partnerships; for example, more than a thousand Ontario companies supply our energy industry, a relationship that is expected to be worth hundreds of billions of dollars in the coming years. We share common goals for growing our economy, protecting our environment, and addressing climate change.

Premier Wynne and I had a very constructive meeting this morning where we talked about issues of joint concern to our two provinces, including the need to promote jobs, prosperity, and responsible climate change policy, Mr. Speaker. We agree that economic growth and strong environmental policies go hand in hand and that through our transition to a low-carbon future our provinces can lead the way, securing jobs and prosperity for future generations. We were very pleased to announce an exciting collaboration between our two provinces that keeps us heading in that direction through the memorandum of understanding that will build on our history with respect to the Alberta Climate Change and Emissions Management Corporation and the Ontario Centres of Excellence. It's an excellent example of how we can work together to deliver innovation.

I also took the opportunity today – and I certainly hope that our colleagues here will join me – to personally thank the Premier and all citizens of Ontario for their support of our province and Fort McMurray in the face of the devastating wildfires. As fellow Canadians we share deep bonds of citizenship that entail responsibilities to each other in times of crisis, and Ontarians have shown tremendous generosity and support to the people of Alberta.

Thank you, Premier, for coming to Alberta today, thank you for your leadership that you have shown on issues that our two provinces share an interest in, and thank you to all the people of Ontario for stepping up when it counted.

I would ask the Premier of Ontario to rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Welcome, hon. Premier. Thank you to your people for their support.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a great pleasure to introduce to you and through you today students, teachers, and parents from Worsley central school in my constituency of Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley. This school as well as the community of Worsley are very near and dear to my

heart as it was the last school I was principal of, for two years, before I retired. The students today were my preschool and kindergarten students at the time, and they are the grades 6 and 7 classes that are visiting us today.

Worsley central school is a small K to 12 school where students not only learn the basics, but they learn about the importance of community, and that goes through into the community of Worsley itself. Everyone at school looks after everyone else, and this is very true of the community of Worsley. The people at the school and the community of Worsley are some of the most genuine and good people you will ever meet, and I'm proud that they're not only my constituents, but many of them are my friends.

I would ask Ms Rowe and the parents and students of Worsley central school to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly an honour today to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly a parent, a teacher, and students, of course, from Forestburg school. Earlier this month I had the opportunity and privilege to meet with them and discuss what happens in the Legislature and what goes on. The students here are also very interested in what goes on because their town, Forestburg, is a coal-mining town, and it's going to be impacted by things that we do. They have clean technology out there. They want to know what's going on and learn more about the whole process. Please rise as I say your names: Mrs. Laura Pfeffer and Tracy Dietrich and the students of Forestburg school. Would my colleagues please extend the traditional warm welcome as we welcome them to the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very excited to be able to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a wonderful, intelligent, bright, enthusiastic group of students who I had the pleasure of speaking with earlier today. They're here from my magnificent and diverse constituency of Calgary-East. They are students of the Calgary Islamic school, and they were fortunate enough to be able to win a contest hosted by CTV. They made a video, and they won a week of Legislature school. I'm so thrilled that they are here with us today. They are here with their teacher, Mrs. Noreen Bashir; their principal, Mrs. Raiha Ali; and another teacher, Mr. Hassan Khalil. I would invite them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. Assalamu Alaikum.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Seeing none, the Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly Dr. Carl Nohr, president of the Alberta Medical Association. You will know him yourself, Mr. Speaker, as a resident of Medicine Hat, surgeon, clinical teacher, and administrative leader. Before being elected as the Alberta Medical Association's president, Dr. Nohr was speaker of the AMA representative forum, so I'm sure that he's been to debates that rivalled that which we will have in the House today. I

ask that Dr. Nohr please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great privilege to rise in the House today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly five exceptional individuals from my riding. I'd ask that my guests rise when I call their names. Albert and Pirkko Karvonen are renowned naturalists and documentary filmmakers who have produced over 80 nature documentaries over the past 30 years and are the recipients of multiple awards. Dr. Martin Connors is a professor at Athabasca University's Faculty of Science and Technology and is the former Canada research chair in space science instrumentation and networking. Juanita Marois is a contract researcher currently with Athabasca University and one of the founders and co-chairs of the Long and Narrow lakes stewardship society. Koal Giberson is a grade 4 student at Landing Trail intermediate school in Athabasca and is the youth representative for the society. I would like my colleagues to please extend the traditional warm greetings of the House to my guests.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you a group of health care workers who often are the first on the scene of emergencies, performing life-saving procedures. This week we are paying tribute to Alberta's 10,000 registered paramedics during Paramedic Services Week. We are joined by Amy Benson with Edmonton's intercity paramedic response unit; Keith Makarowski, a paramedic from AHS, central zone; Heather Dutchak, a Calgary metro paramedic; and Nick Smiley, emergency communications officer with AHS EMS dispatch. Also joining us today is the director of operations for Associated Ambulance in Fort McMurray, Paul Kennedy, who was instrumental in assisting in the evacuation of the Northern Lights regional health centre.

1:40

Our paramedics are courageous, dedicated, and compassionate health care providers whose careers involve challenging hours and difficult circumstances. I believe I speak for all of us in expressing our gratitude to you all. I ask our paramedics here today to stay standing and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Welcome and thank you.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two distinct introductions if you'll oblige me. First, it's my pleasure to introduce three long-time residents of Fort McMurray. This is their first time visiting the Legislature, and they've come to watch the proceedings of the House. They'd like to extend their appreciation to all members of this Assembly for the abundance of support and for all your thoughts and prayers during these stressful times. They are seated in the visitors' gallery. As I call your names, I ask that you please rise: Cora Johnston, Larry Johnston, and Merna Thompson. Hon. members, please join me in providing the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is also my honour to introduce to you and through you volunteer members of the Tzu Chi foundation. These volunteers are here all the way from Vancouver to assist in the relief efforts for the citizens of Fort McMurray. The Tzu Chi foundation, under the leadership of Master Cheng Yen, offers compassionate relief to those in need. I ask that the following volunteers please rise as I call their names: Mac Miao, vice-CEO; Michael Chuang, also vice-CEO; Sophia Liao; Herbert Cheng; Snow Liu; and Lyndon Yu. I ask that this House please join me in providing my guests with the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House guests from War Amps of Canada. I ask them to stand as I mention their names. David Saunders is the chief operating officer of War Amps. Joining Mr. Saunders is a constituent of Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Shannon Krasowski, who is a regional representative for War Amps of Canada. Also here today are three young War Amps champs whose lives have been enhanced by this organization's services. They are Nathan Graham, Natalee Pon, and Marcus Ohle, who is here with his mother, Karen. My guests are seated in the members' gallery, and I ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Jim Vavra, a long-time constituent of Calgary's greatest constituency, Calgary-Klein, but for some reason he is on the constituency board of Calgary-Varsity. However, he did play a pivotal role in the election of the Member for Calgary-Varsity, so I guess we can forgive him. I ask Jim to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

## Members' Statements

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

## Service Dogs

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's funny in this job how you end up meeting people, the impact they have on you. Les Landry is one of those connections, and he continues to teach me the importance of service dogs.

Years ago Mr. Landry had minor surgery which resulted in life-changing complications, leaving him with extreme sustained elevated blood pressure, three strokes, and the development of epilepsy. His journey to get better made him learn about service dogs and how they are used to help lower blood pressure and detect seizures.

Miss Annie, the puppy, as she is lovingly called, first met Les when she was three months old, and they began their journey of learning and training. Within two months Annie, while she was still in training, helped lower his blood pressure and detect her first seizure.

Mr. Landry is also a survivor of PTSD. That, combined with epilepsy and the effects of strokes – he's one of the thousands of

Albertans living with invisible disabilities who undergo a daily struggle to manage housing, transportation, and employment.

Annie, a service dog, is not from an ADI-accredited kennel as specified in the Service Dogs Act of Alberta, yet Annie makes life manageable. Mr. Landry knows he would not be alive without her and certainly reminds me of that every single time I communicate with him. People who need dogs like Annie often wait for many, many years, waiting for a life-saving dog.

Mr. Landry is the founder and president of Respect the Service Dog. This organization raises awareness of the value of service dogs and the integral role they play in the lives of people with disabilities, particularly those with disabilities we cannot see. There are only about 80 to 100 accredited service dogs in Alberta, but the demand is so much higher. Mr. Landry encourages all of us to advocate for people with disabilities who could live a better life with service dogs. I'm hoping one day access will be similar to access for other life-saving equipment such as wheelchairs.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to address this important issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Stephen Harper

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to thank Prime Minister Stephen Harper for his leadership and service to our country. Principled leadership is far too rare in politics, and the Conservative Party of Canada has been lucky to have one of the most capable and principled leaders in Canadian history in Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

A statesman through and through, during his nearly 10 years as Prime Minister Stephen Harper championed policies to leave more money in the pockets of hard-working Canadians while being a responsible economic steward, creating an island of economic stability during the great recession, all the while cutting the GST and lowering taxes on Canadian families. Stephen Harper was able to move tax freedom day back by almost three weeks during his time as Prime Minister. He did that without cutting the services that Canadians need.

When the great recession happened, Stephen Harper introduced stimulus measures, he took Canada into deficit, and then he brought Canada back to surplus. He will go down in history as the only Prime Minister who actually had temporary deficits to deal with a faltering economy.

His government's fair but firm regulatory framework fostered a lasting legacy of pipelines that have been built during and after his tenure.

Internationally Prime Minister Harper elevated Canada's position as a protector of global security, anchored by the principles of freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and as a champion of free trade, opening new markets and creating jobs in Canada.

More than the successes that made up Mr. Harper's time as Prime Minister – and there were many – Stephen Harper is a man of integrity, and history will remember that. I am proud that Wildrose was Alberta's only conservative party to give its full support to Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party of Canada last federal election. Prime Minister Harper has dedicated his life to serving Canadians. As a card-carrying federal Conservative, as a Wildrose MLA, as an Albertan, and as a Canadian I humbly thank Prime Minister Harper for his service to this great country.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

### Land Conservation in Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Joni Mitchell famously sang, "Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got till it's gone." Luckily, that isn't always true. There are very few places in the world that are easily accessible, have world-class IT infrastructure, yet are pristine enough for the most delicate of optical and magnetic observations. The Long and Narrow lakes area in Athabasca county is such a place.

This is where you'll find the Athabasca University geophysical laboratory, where Dr. Martin Connors in co-operation with scholars from around the world does vitally important research on the aurora borealis and magnetic fields. It shows just how important locating research universities such as AU in rural areas can be and also how unique this place really is.

Dr. Connors is well aware of this fact, which is why he has joined others in the community to form the Long and Narrow lakes stewardship society, who are advocating for strong ecological protections for the area. This area features two of the most pristine lakes you will find in our province, and this group intends to keep it that way now and for future generations.

1:50

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize my dear friends Albert and Pirkko Karvonen, renowned documentary makers, ecologists, and naturalists. They're working tirelessly to protect the irreplaceable natural area around Amisk Lake, near Boyle. The Karvonens have generously set up a conservation easement on their land and are working with Alberta environment to have the adjacent Crown land protected for its vital wildlife corridor. It is my great honour to work with such responsible and visionary people, people who know what we've got and want to ensure that future generations will have the chance to know that, too. Alberta is in your debt.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Would you please stop the clock, Mr. Clerk?

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Dress Code in the Chamber

**The Speaker:** First of all, I want to remind the members that if certain apparel is worn with slogans on it and you come into the House – and I note that there may be some here today – I would draw your attention to page 612 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, that you seek the permission of the Speaker before doing that. I would suggest that all of the members of the House remind themselves of that practice.

### Point of Order Anticipation

**The Speaker:** In addition, Members, I would like to now rule on a point of order from Oral Question Period yesterday, raised by the Government House Leader, concerning anticipation. This was raised in response to a set of questions that were posed by the Official Opposition House Leader. I deferred my ruling until today in order to review the exchange, which can be found on page 1144 of *Hansard*, May 25, 2016. The Government House Leader indicated that the questions were in connection with Bill 20, which was on the Order Paper for consideration yesterday and was therefore in violation, he argued, of Standing Order 23(e). That Standing Order reads as follows:

23 A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that Member

- (e) anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day.

Hon. members should be aware that the rule against anticipation has been interpreted to apply when questions pertain to the specific content of a bill that is up for consideration later that same day. This rule is not violated when there is a question about government policy in relation to the bill.

I have ruled a number of times on this subject, and I would refer any members to my rulings of May 18, 2016, page 1012 of *Hansard*; November 19, 2015, page 539 of *Hansard*; and June 17, 2015, pages 49 and 50 of *Hansard*. I've reviewed the exchange, and it is clear that the questions posed were not dealing with the specific actions of a particular bill. In fact, as I read *Hansard*, there is no mention of Bill 20. Accordingly, there is no point of order here.

However, I want to remind all members to be more aware of the rule against anticipation and to exercise due care when they are crafting their questions so as to not violate this rule as we move forward in this spring sitting.

With that, start the clock, Mr. Clerk.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Carbon Levy and Energy Costs

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no doubt that the NDP carbon tax will put added costs on our natural gas industry here at home. By 2018 this government, actually, is pegging natural gas rates at \$3 per gigajoule, and the carbon tax will add another buck-fifty per gigajoule. That's a lot of money. That's a 50 per cent increase for families, charities, hospitals, schools, businesses. Anyone in Alberta who relies on natural gas for heating or power will see their prices go way up. How does adding these extra costs help Alberta families or the Albertans who work in our natural gas industry at all?

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, last week our government proudly announced the expansion of the Royal Tyrrell Museum, and it looks, quite frankly, like the Official Opposition needs its own wing.

The debate on whether climate change is real just rages on in the ranks of the Official Opposition. Just this week the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo retweeted that climate change was a hoax. When asked about it, he could only say that he was pretty much in the middle of the road, somewhere between the science and the deniers. Our government is not in the middle of the road. We are with the scientists, and we will take action on climate change.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Tens of thousands of Albertans out of work as a result of this government, and that's the answer.

With the NDP's risky accelerated coal shutdown, we will need to be able to attract investment into our natural gas industry – and fast – if we are to help supply the lost power to our electricity grid that Albertans depend on. But the problem is that every time this government raises taxes, it puts Alberta at a greater competitive disadvantage with other natural gas producing jurisdictions in Canada and around the world. If there's no harmonization of carbon prices across North America, then it only hurts Alberta and Albertans. Why doesn't the Premier understand this?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, if we continue the 10-year-long, failed policies of the past and refuse to deal with climate change in a responsible way, that, too, will hurt Albertans, and we are not going to go down that road. We are going to work with industry to work through the various elements of the coal phase-out. We will consult with them, and we will make sure it is done in a way that respects their interests and ensures that our industry and our electricity grid remain affordable for consumers.

**Mr. Jean:** When it comes to our power grid, the NDP is embarking down a risky path, and to blame the PC's terrible fiscal management in the past is not helpful. A report from FirstEnergy is pegging the cost to replace coal generation at around \$16 billion without pricing growth or the addition of new facilities into the equation. In the meantime the NDP are making natural gas far more expensive. Altogether, it means either skyrocketing power prices or massive government subsidies. Either way, it's Albertans that will pay the bill. Will the Premier admit to the alarming amount of uncertainty in costs that this government's policies are having on our electricity grid?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, by introducing a plan to phase out coal by 2030 – that is not alarming. That's not reactive. That's not happening tomorrow. We are working with industry thoughtfully, collaboratively, in a well-informed, evidence-based way. We are making a change because it is a change that is long overdue. We are the province that needs to act on coal, and we will.

#### Carbon Levy Cost to Albertans

**Mr. Jean:** The Premier knows that her carbon tax will make life much more expensive for Alberta families. Her environment minister stated that it would add another hundred dollars of indirect costs to families each and every year without any paperwork to back up these numbers whatsoever, I might add. The Premier refused to give any answers to these simple questions from the Member for Calgary-Foothills just yesterday. Alberta families deserve to know this information before the carbon tax is fully implemented. Will the Premier release her full impact study of the carbon tax, the financial information, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in fact, our climate change leadership plan is based on an exceptionally well-documented, well-researched plan by Dr. Andrew Leach, and it is within that document that the vast majority of the projections are included. They're available. I would suggest that the members opposite read them. That is the way we are going to go forward, and we're going to work with stakeholders throughout our province to ensure that this matter moves forward in a way that ensures affordability for low- and middle-income Albertans at the same time.

**Mr. Jean:** Clearly, Mr. Speaker, Albertans have every reason to be suspicious of this NDP carbon tax when the Premier refuses to release the full information to Albertans regarding the costs that this tax will have on families, businesses, charities, and all of our front-line services in Alberta. It's a big cost, and they deserve to know. Quite frankly, it's irresponsible. We know that the carbon tax means much higher prices for consumer goods, but it also will trickle down in higher costs to pay for municipal services and even

education for our children. Did the Premier's analysis of costs of the carbon tax include higher property taxes, higher school and bus fees for children?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What is irresponsible is the members opposite walking around and throwing out numbers like a thousand dollars a year based on studies where the very authors of those studies have discredited the conclusions reached by the members opposite, telling them that they are purposely misinterpreting and miscommunicating the elements of the studies. It's that kind of fearmongering that just ruins the debate and makes it very difficult for Albertans to figure out why they should believe the opposition on anything.

**Mr. Jean:** Hiding information from Albertans is not helpful. This isn't difficult. The Premier says that the cost of the carbon tax will be well over \$600 for the average family, but she is either failing to be up front with Albertans about all the new costs this carbon tax will have across our economy or she just never did the research. Which is it? This government should table their numbers and show Albertans their math so families can understand the full costs of this carbon tax. I will ask again: will the Premier release the full impact study of the carbon tax on Alberta families and the added cost to charities, businesses, and all of our front-line services?

**Ms Notley:** You know, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I've never actually used that number. Once again the member opposite is using incorrect numbers. That being said, what I would suggest is that members opposite, who are so fundamentally opposed to our plan on climate change, should tell Albertans what they would do differently because all we hear is: no, no, no; let's dig our heads further into the sand and pretend there is no problem. As the Official Opposition they have an obligation to tell people what they would do instead. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Quiet, hon. government members.  
The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

### Government Policies

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, today Alberta welcomed Ontario's Liberal Premier, Kathleen Wynne, to the Legislative Assembly. While I'm sure their talk session was valuable, we aren't sure what benefit Albertans can get from Ontario's emissions plan. For power consumers it's meant skyrocketing power bills, massive subsidies to unprofitable initiatives, and Auditor General reports into billions of wasted tax dollars. A few months ago our Premier praised the Ontario plan. Is the Premier still endorsing this plan, and if so, what part does she think will benefit Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest on the first point that the level of diplomacy that's being demonstrated by the members opposite demonstrates exactly why we've made no progress across this country over the last 10 years.

What I will say is that I endorse the leadership of any leader in this country who understands the need to take action on climate change and to move forward to protect the health of Canadians for future generations.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Well, let's talk about diplomacy with other Premiers. We can't help but notice that the Premier to date has not

held a single meeting with one of our key allies, Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall. Saskatchewan is not only a close neighbour and friend to Alberta but has very similar interests in promoting both our energy and agriculture sectors. They unequivocally support pipelines, free trade, reforming equalization, and advocating for all of our export industries. To date the Premier has only taken shots at Premier Wall. Will the Premier build a united front on these issues and invite the Premier of Saskatchewan here the way she is . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, once again the members opposite are simply incorrect. I've met with the Premier that they are referring to on a number of occasions. We've had conversations about Energy East; we've had conversations about carbon pricing; we've had conversations about disaster recovery efforts. We've done that, so quite frankly they should do their homework.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The Premier has never invited Mr. Wall here, Mr. Speaker.

Currently Ontario has the largest subnational sovereign debt on the planet. They're now even receiving equalization payments. It's an example of what happens when a government fails to get its spending under control. It means higher taxes, but it also means less services for those in need. This week the NDP is scrapping our already high legislative debt ceiling, and Alberta has suffered four credit downgrades in just five months. Will the Premier stop following the example set by the Ontario Liberals, put a cap on borrowing, and get control of our out-of-control spending?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I . . .

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order is noted.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, in the past when Alberta has actually been able to play a leadership role in the country, they have done so by being grown-ups, by having conversations with their colleagues across the country, by being respectful, and by finding the kinds of things in common that they can work together on. Just today we have had demonstrated to all Albertans very clearly why these folks over there are simply not ready to govern. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, would you please keep the volume of your responses down.

The Member for Calgary-North West.

### Premier's Office Communications Staff

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the government about the million-dollar political team they have assembled to deal with issues in the Premier's office. I asked why all these highly paid communication folks came from outside the province at a time when jobs are desperately needed inside the province, and the response was: well, when New Democrats get elected, they want to hire people who share their world view. To the Premier: why does the NDP world view have to be trotted out by out-of-work NDP staffers from Manitoba and not Alberta?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, I do realize that there are many members of the third party who wish that their friends could have kept their political jobs, but when you hire staff who are definitively working in political positions, it's important to hire staff that come with experience, experience governing and experience dealing with issues across the

country, as well as people who can give you political advice. We hire people on that basis, which is exactly what the previous government did, which is exactly what the Harper government did, which is exactly what happens . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
First supplemental.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the Doing Things Differently Gang.

Given that this government claimed to be streamlining its Public Affairs Bureau yet added a number of new people whose sole task seems to be grinding out press releases, it appears to be sharing the NDP world view in a very pricey endeavour. Along with their million-dollar issues management team, how much of a bill are taxpayers sucking up so NDP spin doctors can preach your world view?

**Ms Notley:** To be perfectly clear, Mr. Speaker, the people in my office, who I believe is what the member is referring to, operate within a budget which is effectively the same as the budget that existed under the previous Premier and is extensively lower than the budget that existed under the Premier prior to that, a good friend of the member opposite, I believe. In fact, I believe that we're doing our job in a cautious and financially responsible way, and we will certainly continue to do so.

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, given that we've endured so many lectures from the Doing Things Differently Gang about how they're bringing fairness and perspective back to Alberta for Albertans, it's startling to hear that they needed to go outside Alberta for the team to message that out. Again to the Premier: now that you've hung an Albertans Need Not Apply sign on your comms shop, what actions do you recommend for unemployed Alberta comms professionals other than to apply for EI?

**Ms Notley:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the joy of exaggeration. You know, I probably did a little bit of it in my career in the opposition as well; there's no question. But suffice to say that there are many, many long-term, dedicated Albertans who are working in my office, and I very much appreciate the support that they give to our government each and every day.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Currie.

## 2:10 Publicly Funded Health Care

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Copeman Healthcare Centre operates three private clinics in Alberta that charge membership fees for health services. Serious allegations are being made about this private medical facility's billing practices. To the Minister of Health: how is the minister ensuring that Albertans are not on the hook for any inappropriate billing?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. The allegations being made are very serious, and the business is currently being audited by Alberta Health. If there are any findings that show that the company breached the Canada Health Act, we will act. In light of any of these new allegations of fraud, I've directed my ministry to take a more rigorous approach, and there is going to be an investigation. I want to be clear that we will not allow excessive billing practices that undermine Albertans' access to universal public health care.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the allegations include preferential treatment and inappropriate fees that appear to go against the spirit of the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act, which prohibits physicians from charging patients for insured health services also billed to the province, again to the same minister: what assurance can the minister provide that our public health care system is being protected?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am incredibly proud to be a part of a government that believes public health care is a fundamental right that we must protect. I understand that we have a responsibility to safeguard our public health system from actions that undermine it, and the government takes the Canada Health Act seriously. We will investigate any alleged breaches to that act. You have my word.

**The Speaker:** The second supplemental.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our health care costs continue to rise and given the economic reality that we are currently experiencing, again to the Minister of Health: how is the minister ensuring that public resources are being used prudently?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will not allow excessive billing practices that undermine Albertans' access to universal public health care. This problem has persisted in Alberta for years thanks to the former government's inaction. We know that it can't continue, and that's why we are taking action.

Not only does the Official Opposition want to cut billions from health care, Mr. Speaker, but they'd love the idea of Albertans having to pay for it.

## PDD Service Eligibility

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, today I spoke on the phone with Rebecca Neel. She is a bright young woman who has been self-advocating for help. Rebecca is a dedicated student who is always studying hard, but due to her quadriplegic cerebral palsy she requires extra help with daily activities. She wrote to the minister's office for help and urged for severe cerebral palsy to be covered for services under persons with developmental disabilities, or PDD. She got a generic response back from your office, but she wants to know today, to the minister: will you commit to a firm timeline to give Rebecca a clear answer?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I will not speak to the specifics of this particular case, but when we get e-mails, we do provide a generic response, which is followed by a more detailed response. I may have acknowledged that I have received that e-mail, but usually a detailed response and follow-up is provided by the staff, and that will be the case in this particular instance as well.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, Rebecca hasn't received any further response from the minister.

According to the Cerebral Palsy Association in Alberta website this disability can be as mild as just a weakness in one hand ranging

to an almost complete lack of movement. Given that for someone with this condition daily living activities wouldn't be possible without a caregiver or financial help and given that changes could be made to allow case-by-case consideration of who would be eligible for PDD services, will the minister commit to re-evaluating the current blanket ban for services if an individual has an IQ over 70?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the member that our government is committed to providing needed and necessary services to those Albertans who need those services. That's why for PDD we have increased funding, and we are stabilizing the services instead of what the opposition would do: cut those services.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, it's completely unacceptable that this government thinks a Wildrose government would treat the vulnerable like this.

I have a real solution here today for the minister and cabinet. Given that this solution would ensure that people like Rebecca can live their lives independently and get assistance without constantly . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, could I ask you to eliminate the preamble. You're past the group of five. What's your question?

**Mrs. Pitt:** Given that under 1(1)(c)(ii) of the persons with developmental disabilities act the cabinet has the authority under regulation to define eligibility, to the minister: when can Rebecca and other Albertans affected with developmental disabilities expect an answer?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I said that I will look into this particular matter, but I will not speak to the specifics.

This program was there before us. We have done two things to this program. Whatever cuts were proposed by the previous government, we have reversed that and added funding to that program. The second thing: instead of imposing a solution on that sector, we have started consulting with them. I will work with the sector, work with the individuals, and work with the advocates to make sure that Albertans get the supports they need.

Thank you.

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

### **Motor Vehicle Registration and Key Tag Services**

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the Service Alberta estimates the minister indicated that work has finally commenced to update the Alberta motor vehicle system, or MOVES. Last year's budget did not include any capital dollars for updating this old and archaic system, but this year we are told that \$4 million has been allocated to capital planning and that the department has already spent an additional \$250,000 to get the ball rolling. To the Minister of Service Alberta: what progress has been made to facilitate planning to improve our motor vehicle system?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much for the question. On behalf of the hon. minister I will take that question under advisement. I want to assure the member in the House, though, that the government is committed to making sure that we have the most effective system in all respects for motor vehicles.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I recently raised important concerns regarding challenges that are faced by the War Amps key tag program as it relates to MOVES and given that during estimates the minister stated that "we're in some initial considerations of how we can find other creative solutions to this issue," again to the Minister of Service Alberta: can you outline what creative solutions you are looking at to improve the key tag program?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. As the Minister of Service Alberta indicated in estimates, there are a number of different options that her ministry is currently exploring. Before those options are presented, she's working with different stakeholders, including the Ministry of Transportation, to look at options to be able to provide to Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the key tag program is not only part of a charitable organization promoting health and wellness in support of Albertans who face special challenges as well as children and seniors and veterans and that it also provides a vital service to Albertans, to the same minister: will you commit today, please, to personally meeting with the War Amps organization?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Obviously, War Amps is a very important stakeholder as are a number of other organizations throughout the province. Our government is committed to especially working with our vulnerable populations to ensure that they have the same access as every Albertan throughout the province. So the minister will be engaging with a variety of stakeholders.

Thank you.

### **Blood Plasma Supply**

**Mr. Barnes:** When a Canadian organization expressed interest in expanding into Alberta to offer paid blood plasma collection services, the Health minister immediately decided to get in the way. This is despite the fact that 75 per cent of our blood plasma is purchased from paid donors in the United States. When we asked in estimates why our blood collection budget has grown by nearly \$30 million over the past two years, she blamed most of it on the exchange rate. Isn't it hypocritical and wasteful to choose expensive American products over plasma sourced here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to help educate the member opposite about the way the blood system works here in Canada. There was a tainted-blood scandal many years ago, in the 1980s, and a number of people contracted illnesses. As a response Canada worked to create Canadian Blood Services, and it's worked on a voluntary basis for many years very successfully.

There are plasma products that are purchased around the world from various organizations, and medications are added to that plasma. Even next door, where they are moving forward with paid

plasma, there is no ability to use the systems that are required to be able to make them into the medicines. They will still be shipping them over the border and having to buy them back, Mr. Speaker.

2:20

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, the minister likes to boast that she relies on evidence, but given that Canadian Blood Services has declared that paid plasma is every bit as safe and since they and Health Canada know that paid plasma is absolutely essential to ensuring adequate supply and protecting lives and given that the evidence has shown that paid and voluntary donation services can safely coexist, will the minister turn out her ideological buddies and start making sound decisions in the best interest of all Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do use evidence, and the evidence is very clear that we have a system here in Canada that's focused on a voluntary basis. Yes, all blood products are absolutely safe, blood products that are bought from across the border or blood products that are within Canada. We have a voluntary system, and I am absolutely excited about working with partners, just as they've done in Ontario and Quebec, to try to bolster that voluntary system in any way we can. But we will continue to buy plasma products should we require them because it's important that Albertans have access to the products that they need to be safe and healthy.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, the facts are that blood plasma donors are compensated in other Canadian provinces. Given that this is done safely and it ensures a sufficient supply of life-saving blood products and since we have heard that this safe, common, widely endorsed, and crucially essential practice makes the minister, and I quote, quite nervous, I have to ask: is it a feature of the NDP world view to deliberately cost Albertans tens of millions of dollars in the blind pursuit of ideology, or is it just an unfortunate side effect?

**Ms Hoffman:** Just to be clear, yet again what's being asserted by the member opposite is not founded in good research. Let me explain that next door, in the one province that is moving forward at this point with paid plasma products, they are not able to fractionate them on this side of the border. That product will still have to go south of the border to be fractionated and bought back, Mr. Speaker, so exchange rates would still play a role.

Let's remember that during the election the Wildrose said that they would ship people south of the border to get services. I'm sorry. If we have to buy blood products, so be it. We believe in a public health care system, and I'm proud to stand up for it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

### **Carbon Levy and Postsecondary Education Costs**

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Feedback from postsecondary institutions indicates that they are having to cut back programs, services, and positions just to stay open. This is even before the carbon tax will be implemented. The carbon tax will increase costs for heating, electricity, transportation, and the list goes on. Institutions are concerned. To the minister: why are you imposing this devastating new carbon tax on postsecondary institutions at a time when they are already struggling?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, this government restored funding to postsecondary institutions and froze tuition, making good on our promises. I know that this is a wildly innovative thing to do according to the Official Opposition; that is, to keep the pledges one makes during an election campaign. However, it has been done, and we have moved forward.

In addition, of course, we are going to be making a great deal of investment in energy efficiency so that all institutions, whether they're health care or postsecondary, can reduce their emissions and therefore their costs, which is exactly the point of pricing carbon.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Taylor:** As I said, they are having cutbacks at this present time.

Given that tuition fees will be lifted next year at roughly the same time that the carbon tax will be increasing costs at postsecondary institutions and given that the combined impact of these two realities means that there will be a large increase in costs for these institutions, how can the minister guarantee that the cost increases caused by this government's risky carbon tax won't be just passed down to students, or does it even care?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our budget contains within it a significant amount of investment in energy efficiency and also in renewables. We will have more to say about our plans for the energy efficiency agency going forward.

You know, what Albertans have asked us to do is to diversify the economy, use the carbon levy to reinvest in the economy to create good jobs and to make our economy resilient for the carbon-constrained future. Underlying all of that, Mr. Speaker, is that Albertans understand that climate change is real, which is not something that the Official Opposition has embraced at all. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Let us remember, Members, about saying things that might extend the volume in this room with the other side.

**Mr. Taylor:** You know, I asked about the costs that are increased for students.

Given that the Wildrose believes in protecting students from the rising cost of education by tying tuition increases to inflation and given that this government has already shown that their ideology-based budgeting process is leaving postsecondary institutions at risk, will the minister adopt a common-sense approach to tuition and stop exposing students and postsecondary institutions to the government's risky economic experiments?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it interesting that the Member for Battle River-Wainwright is talking about how he's interested in protecting students when, in fact, in estimates in November 2015 he was waxing on about how raising tuition would allow for a better quality of education here in Alberta. He obviously either doesn't remember what he was saying in November or he's flip-flopped on his policy. Regardless, nobody trusts the Wildrose to protect postsecondary education in this province.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.



### Oil Sands Secondary Organic Aerosol Emissions

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A Canadian study published in this week's edition of the prestigious scientific journal *Nature* has raised serious concerns. It indicates that the oil sands are a major source of secondary organic aerosols, or SOAs. Production rates of some 45 to 84 tonnes per day make the oil sands one of the largest anthropogenic sources of SOAs in North America. To the environment minister: what current methods are being used to measure and monitor the levels of SOAs in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Indeed, Alberta environment officials worked with the committee that published this study because we thought the findings would be valuable to how our province approaches air monitoring. The findings from this study will help us better understand potential environmental and health impacts of the oil sands. We're currently reviewing the report.

Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, given that the environment minister has previously told this Assembly as well as members of the AAMD and C that beyond carbon dioxide, all coal plant emissions, including NOx, SOx, and particulate matter, must be considered and given that these emissions were given as one of the reasons for the accelerated phase-out of coal-fired generation, to the minister: applying the same criteria, if SOAs from the oil sands are determined to be similarly deleterious to the environment, will you shut down the oil sands like you are shutting down coal?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our energy industry continues to power the Alberta economy, and we know that industry wants to work with us to ensure that those resources are developed as responsibly as possible. That is why this government, for example, is moving forward with the joint oil sands monitoring agreement with the federal government, and it is why we passed new legislation just this morning to ensure that we have the most robust monitoring and that we have the most resources going to where they ought to go.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it appears that there's a double standard here. Given that the environment minister was recently given an award for promoting the health of Alberta – and I congratulate her for that – through the phase-out of coal and given that long-term exposure to SOAs can also result in significant health risks not unlike those attributed to coal, to the Health minister: you have said that the phase-out of coal was done in the interests of the respiratory health of Albertans. Does it fit with the NDP world view to use the same rationale to eliminate oil sands production?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, we are very proud of the fact that we have a climate leadership strategy. Our intentions are mapped out in that climate leadership strategy. As you'll see, we had support from oil sands producers. They stood on a stage with us. They believe that our vision for moving forward with a responsible climate leadership strategy is going to be good for Alberta, good for their companies, and that means it's going to be good for the oil sands.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

2:30

### Pipeline Approval

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the drop in the global price of oil we know now more than ever how important it is that we diversify our markets for our energy products. I've heard from constituents and industry alike who've told me that if we want to increase our market access going forward, we need to ensure that these new markets see Alberta as one of the most environmentally responsible energy producers in the world. To the Minister of Energy: how is the climate leadership plan influencing the national conversation on pipelines?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Certainly, our climate leadership plan places us in good stead going forward in the conversation. The week after it was announced, I had comments from a national group that said that it had already turned the conversation around on pipelines. We're balancing the need for stronger action on climate change with sustainably developing our resources. Just recently an Abacus poll showed that two-thirds of Canadians support pipelines as well as a renewable energy strategy.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Minister. Given that the previous approach to pipelines and market access has not been working and given that we need to ensure that we are working in a collaborative way if we want to continue to move forward, again to the Minister of Energy: how has industry responded to our approach?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Industry absolutely understands that we need to work thoroughly and collaboratively as partners to get pipelines built to tidewater. That's why recently Murray Edwards of CNRL and Brian Ferguson of Cenovus published an op-ed on behalf of many companies. [interjections] They said:

It's time for a new conversation about building pipelines in this country . . . about how Canada can get full value for its oil production while also addressing environmental concerns, including climate change. This dialogue needs to take place . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

I want to remind members again. Keep the volume down, please. Hon. members, I'm looking at you.

Second supplemental.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that increased market access is not only good for Alberta but good for all of Canada and given that we've seen some hesitancy from parts of the country in getting onboard, to the same minister: are we getting through to our provincial counterparts?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you again for the question. Mr. Speaker, just this morning I was pleased to hear Premier Wynne say that she supports our approach. She said: it is very important to me that within the context of the Canadian energy strategy we find a way to support the environmentally responsible transportation of fuel. We will continue to have respectful and thoughtful conversations with both our federal and provincial counterparts as we move forward with this important project.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Farm and Ranch Worker Regulation Working Groups

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday this government finally announced the membership of the farm and ranch worker round-tables. Inevitably, there have already been complaints from producer groups and the public about the makeup. It is vital that farmers and ranchers and especially members of the round-tables have faith in this process. They must be assured there will be no political interference. To the minister: if your government disagrees with the input from these round-tables, will the government ignore those recommendations and arbitrarily decide the legislation?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm quite proud of the makeup of these tables. We've had a real good balance from various groups, including farmers and ranchers. With that balance, I'm looking forward to the recommendations they're going to make over the year. We need those recommendations. As I'm sure the member knows, agriculture is very diverse in this province. We need those recommendations going forward so government can write those regulations, and I'm really looking forward to that process.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that this legislative process has been flawed from the very beginning with the lack of consultation before legislation and given that we have seen very little openness and transparency from this government, to the minister: is there a framework or working documents of any sort that your mediators and round-table members will start with, and will you table them in the House?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. There are going to be six technical working groups, made up, again, like I said earlier, from various interests right across the province, very balanced interests. I'm looking forward to the recommendations. It's going to give them the opportunity to have an open voice in any of these technical working groups going forward so that they have their input. I'm looking forward to the recommendations. As I'm sure the member might realize, these are recommendations, but it is the government's role to write regulations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that nobody cares more about the safety of farms and ranches than those men and women that own them and given that a vast number of those already have private insurance equal to or superior to WCB levels, to the minister: if the round-tables come back to the government and the recommendations are that equivalent private insurance would suffice, would you act upon it, or has this possibility been completely negated from the start?

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I might remind the member that the WCB, Workers' Compensation Board, is in effect as of January 1 of this year.

**Mr. Nixon:** It's ineffective. Yes. We know.

**Mr. Carlier:** It's been very effective. Thank you. It's been very effective. A lot of farmers and ranchers right across the province have signed up for it knowing the value to it, knowing that it protects their workers and themselves as well, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, the vast majority have signed up for it, and so far it's been a very good process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### Indigenous Postsecondary Student Supports

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The U of A has proposed several self-funded, shovel-ready projects such as the Maskwa house of learning which could provide great benefits to students within one year of construction starting. Alberta's indigenous population is young. It's growing at two and a half times the rate of Canada's general population and experiences lower educational and career attainment. To the Minister of Advanced Education: when will you commit to evaluating whether Maskwa house will be deemed worthy enough to be included in the capital plan?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you to the member for the question. I appreciate his interest, that is shared by many in this Legislature, about improving indigenous participation rates at our postsecondaries across Alberta. This is something that our government takes very seriously, and I'm personally committed to making sure that indigenous members of our province start participating in postsecondary education at rates equivalent to other Albertans. To that end, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking at Maskwa house with great interest as well as a number of other initiatives that postsecondaries are taking to improve indigenous participation. We will make a decision on going forward with those things . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you for the answer, but the question was: when?

Given that the Advanced Education minister predicts postsecondary enrolment for 2016-2017 at more than 263,000 students and given that Maskwa house would be an incredible asset for both indigenous and nonindigenous postsecondary students, to the same minister: how much longer will all Alberta students be denied this visionary resource which would increase their access to invaluable cultural learning and economic opportunities across this province?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there are a number of interesting initiatives happening with indigenous education all across the province. The University of Lethbridge has been doing great work with the First Nations colleges in the southern part of the province to increase indigenous participation. Northern Lakes College in the Minister of Municipal Affairs' riding is also doing fantastic work increasing indigenous participation in postsecondary institutions. We're looking at all of the things that postsecondary institutions are doing across the province to increase indigenous participation, and we will implement the best practices so that we can encourage further indigenous participation in postsecondary education.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that 10 other projects are proceeding in the adult education capital plan and given that an increase in enrolment

is expected for indigenous Albertans and given the importance of ensuring that Alberta's indigenous students have equal access to developing the skills required to more fully participate in the opportunities available in our province, to the minister: it's one thing to talk about it, but specifically can you tell us exactly how you will support initiatives such as those at not only the U of A but at other postsecondary institutions across Alberta and when?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, what we won't do is cut \$4 billion from our provincial budget, which would necessarily impact the ability of postsecondary education all across the province to attract and teach students. Furthermore, like I said in my previous answer, we are working with our postsecondary partners all across the province to look at the best practices for increasing indigenous participation, and we are committed to furthering that work as we go along.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

## 2:40 Affordable Housing and Supportive Living

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In speaking with communities, municipal leaders, and social agencies, I've heard that finding safe and affordable housing is becoming more difficult as the economic downturn continues to affect families and individuals across this province. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: how is the ministry addressing the long wait-lists faced by Albertans who are in need of affordable housing?

**The Speaker:** The minister of housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to say that Budget 2016 includes nearly \$1.2 billion in capital investment for Alberta's affordable and social housing portfolio. This significant investment will build more affordable housing and renew existing housing, meaning more people will be moved off waiting lists and into safe and affordable homes. Over the next five years we're investing more than \$147 million into projects for new housing in communities of greatest need, more than \$581 million for major replacements and renewal, and \$120 million in new housing for indigenous people off-reserve.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans are aware that new housing units are needed across Alberta and given that we also have older social housing facilities that were left to deteriorate, to the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what is being done to protect these housing assets and bring them back into the system to add to the much-needed housing supply?

**Ms Sigurdson:** Mr. Speaker, the member has touched on a key challenge we face. Most of the government-owned or -supported housing stock is more than 30 years old and in need of significant maintenance and repairs. These units must be renewed and preserved so they can contribute to the system in the future. I'm proud to say that Budget 2016 invests more than \$238 million to help maintain and preserve these existing social housing facilities and, as mentioned previously, more than \$581 million for major replacements and renewal. These investments will create safe, affordable homes for Albertans who need them.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister for that answer. Given that evidence indicates that when Albertans have a safe place to call home, their quality of life improves dramatically and their economic security increases and given that some Albertans are facing adversity that requires more than just a home, to the same minister: how is our government addressing housing for individuals who require wraparound support?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to tell the member that my ministry is working with the Human Services ministry to develop new housing programs to support Albertans who are facing homelessness or have specialized needs. Budget 2016 earmarks \$13 million in capital investment from the Ministry of Seniors and Housing towards this work. Projects will address the needs of individuals who require wraparound or comprehensive support, including Albertans with developmental disabilities or mobility challenges. Projects will also address the need for permanent supportive housing for homeless Albertans. I look forward to providing more details about these projects in the very near future.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Livingstone-MacLeod.

## Special Areas

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike most rural municipalities, Alberta's special areas were created in 1938, under the authority of the Special Areas Act, as a result of hardship brought upon southeastern Alberta during the drought of the '30s. Given that the minister is about to undertake a summerlong tour around the province, including a stop in Hanna, which is the administration centre for the remaining special areas, in an effort to consult and to gather feedback before passing the MGA bill this fall, to the Premier: will the MGA consultations consider changes to the administration and structure of special areas?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for that question. The Minister of Municipal Affairs will be travelling around Alberta throughout the month of June, doing extensive consultations on the existing MGA. I can assure the member that the issue that he's speaking of, the special areas, is a topic that, actually, I've spoken about with their hon. member who represents the area. We're wanting to work collaboratively with the existing board that's there to look at solutions for the long term.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that response. Given that the government is conducting a comprehensive review of the act, as we've just discussed, and given that the government's 1961 Hanson commission recommended a return to locally elected municipal government, to the minister, then: what has been the justification for maintaining this agency known as the special areas for this long?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. It's unfortunate that the third party can't respond because, quite frankly, "Why has it remained special areas since 1961?" is a fantastic question for the former government. I

mean, the original reason that that area was designated special areas is because it's a huge amount of land, very sparsely populated, and there were challenges with that being represented as a traditional MD or county.

Again, the Minister of Municipal Affairs is open to looking at conversations as far as transitioning to a locally elected board.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that in the Municipal Affairs business plan one of the key strategies is to "modernize the Municipal Government Act . . . to support Alberta's municipalities in governing in an accountable, collaborative, sustainable, inclusive and effective manner," to the minister: can you say today if the updated MGA will include any changes to the Special Areas Act?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. The member will know that we can't speak to legislation that hasn't been tabled in this House. But I will say, regarding the member's question, that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is open and has been open to municipalities in her consultations and is looking for solutions that not only our local officials want, but we're committed to working in partnership with our municipalities in furthering the best interests of all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** In 30 seconds we will start Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements (continued)

#### Climate Change Initiatives in Banff-Cochrane

**Mr. Westhead:** Just like our government, municipalities in the constituency of Banff-Cochrane are also taking their commitment to the environment seriously. I'm proud that the mayors of Banff and Canmore added their voices in support of our climate leadership plan. Banff Mayor Karen Sorensen said, "We applaud the direction toward climate leadership taken by the Province, which will help us sustain our tourism economy and provide a better future for all Albertans." Similarly, Canmore Mayor John Borrowman said: "The plan resonates well with the Town of Canmore . . . I am proud to see Alberta taking on this environmental leadership role nationally and internationally."

Facing the reality of a changing climate, we all have to do our part. Towards this end, Banff and Canmore have achieved a high degree of success with their Roam regional transit system, supported by provincial GreenTRIP funding. These two municipalities have also created solar incentive programs and have implemented anti-idling policies. Banff recently adopted a policy to reduce emissions from their vehicle fleet. The town of Cochrane is also taking a leadership role with its renewable energy framework, a commitment to significantly reduce per capita energy consumption, and a plan to divert 80 per cent of waste from landfills.

Another fine example is the municipal district of Bighorn, a founding and active member of the Southern Alberta Energy from Waste Association and the Calgary region airshed zone. These are groups dedicated to improving management of waste streams and air quality monitoring respectively.

Taken together, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that municipalities in Banff-Cochrane have taken a leadership role on the issues of climate change and environmental stewardship. They are valued partners in our government's provincial climate leadership plan as we position Alberta as the most responsible energy producing jurisdiction in the world.

Thank you.

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

#### 2:50 University of Alberta Science Hardware Hackerspace

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I was fortunate enough to be able to tour the Science Hardware Hackerspace, located at the University of Alberta. Lovingly called the Shack by its staff and students, it was established in 2015 by the department of physics as a space for undergraduate students to gain hands-on experience in their relevant fields. The Shack allows students to become familiar with tools such as 3-D printers, scanners, CNC mills, and other state-of-the-art electronics. A central focus of the Shack is peer-based learning, where students can learn new skills and pass those skills on to their peers as well.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for students to gain access to the types of technologies they will use in their professional careers, whether it's in research or in industry. We need to ensure that our students and researchers have access to spaces that allow them to experiment, that allow them to invent, and that allow them to explore new ideas, Mr. Speaker. As someone who has worked in research for start-ups, oil, and technology companies in the past, I understand the absolute value of having such a space for these students. These facilities are becoming more and more affordable, more and more accessible every day, providing great opportunities for students to become better creators.

Mr. Speaker, this is why I'm proud of this government for following through on commitments to fund and improve funding for postsecondary education. Well-funded education creates world-class graduates who live and work in Alberta, building on our economy and our innovation sectors.

I want to thank the staff at the Shack for giving me a great opportunity to come and learn about their space. I'm excited to see what's going to come out of their work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

#### Everest Climb to Challenge Family Violence

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How does one step up in their own way to challenge domestic violence? I've said many times that the community in which I live and the people in my community are incredible and worth me bragging about them.

Lethbridge is the home of yet another wonderful person, a person who as a child lived and grew up in an abusive home dominated by domestic violence. As a young boy he witnessed so much violence that he was terrified. It ended only when he got away. He has become an incredible advocate for an end to domestic violence as an adult and is doing so in his own way. Now at 45 years of age he has committed to raising money for the Lethbridge YWCA, with an eventual goal of \$250,000. Doing one of the things he now loves to do, he has so far raised \$27,000, approximately 10 per cent of his goal.

Mr. Speaker, he is Trevor Stuart. Trevor is a local realtor and has overcome one of his greatest fears, the fear of heights. He is

bringing attention to domestic violence by climbing some of the world's highest mountains. Trevor is currently on an expedition to Mount Everest. He reached the summit last Sunday. I was very nervous when I heard about the tragedy on Sunday where four lives were lost and one was in serious condition. Lethbridgeans were praying and hoping that Trevor was safe, and I was incredibly relieved yesterday when I learned that he reached the summit and safely returned to a base camp in China and is now on his way down the rest of the mountain.

Trevor is a brave soul and a really fine man. He pays all . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Your time has passed.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** I would remind members on the introduction of bills to be brief with your introductory comments.

The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

#### Bill 22

##### An Act to Provide for the Repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Ceremonial Objects

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave today to introduce Bill 22, An Act to Provide for the Repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Ceremonial Objects.

In bringing this bill forward, we are signalling our commitment to engage First Nations and Métis leaders as partners to secure critical input and advice on this piece of legislation. The legislation is intended to remedy the issues created by the failure to proclaim section 2 of the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act, otherwise known as FNSCORA. Bill 22 will build upon the intent of FNSCORA to provide a mechanism to facilitate repatriation of sacred ceremonial objects currently held in provincial museum collections to more indigenous communities in the province. We are making this bill available for consideration . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies to table of a letter from the hon. Minister of Human Services for constituent Rebecca Neel, a general form letter sending her elsewhere for services.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies of a report by Dutch consulting firm Deltares comparing Springbank to McLean Creek across 10 criteria. Five were in favour of Springbank, five were the same in both, and zero were in favour of McLean Creek.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a document showing the Wildrose MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo reposting an advertising

video reporting climate change to be a hoax, as referred to by the Premier in question period today.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there was a point of order today, but I've been advised by the Opposition House Leader that it's been withdrawn.

### Orders of the Day

#### Private Bills

##### Third Reading

##### Bill Pr. 1

##### Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move third reading of Bill Pr. 1, the Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act.

**The Speaker:** Are there any members who would like to speak to the motion?

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 1 read a third time]

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

3:00

#### Bill 16

##### Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Chair:** On amendment A4, are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered? The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. We're considering amendment A4, which was introduced yesterday, and I indicated to the House that I wished to study this amendment prior to expressing an opinion on whether it was acceptable or not. Subsequently the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway has submitted to my office two other amendments, which I have also considered. I understand that they've been consolidated into an amendment that will be made directly following the disposition of this one.

However, Madam Chair, I am going to speak against this particular amendment. The way Bill 16 is written allows for flexibility in developing regulations to ensure that concerns like the one which formed the basis of the member's suggested amendment can be addressed. Under section 129.4

the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations respecting any matter concerning the operation of a transportation network company, including, without limitation, regulations . . .

(h) providing for any other matter that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers advisable for carrying out the [purposes].

Madam Chair, once the insurance framework is ready, our government would be happy to address the concerns raised by the member opposite in putting forward this amendment, but in the meantime I'd advise the members of the House to defeat this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I will put the question.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We'll return to the original bill, Bill 16. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move an amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, can you please provide the amendment first, and if I could just review it before you continue.

Hon. member, please go ahead.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 9 in the proposed section 129.4 by adding the following after clause (b):

(b.1) respecting requirements to be met by the owners of vehicles used to perform services for transportation network companies;

(b.2) respecting requirements to be met by drivers performing services for transportation network companies.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5?

**Mr. Mason:** I don't know if the hon. member wants to speak to his amendment or not.

**The Deputy Chair:** Oh, sorry. My apologies, Member.

**Mr. Gill:** Madam Chair, this amendment seeks to clarify that the drivers and the owners of vehicles operating within TNCs are being clearly defined within the legislation. By adding both drivers and owners, we're covering the various forms of business models found in this industry. This will result in increased safety precautions being implemented for TNC drivers and operators. These individual regulations would be up to the individual municipalities in which these companies operate. We're simply seeking to ensure protections for passengers and drivers in the event of an accident and just want to make sure that at the end of the day, you know, everybody is protected: the drivers, the passengers, whoever uses these services.

I really hope that we can get support from all parties on this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Well, I'd like to indicate to the House that I have accepted this amendment and will encourage members to support it. What this does is that it extends the capacity for regulation beyond the regulation of the TNC itself, which was the focus of the bill that was brought forward, to include owners of the vehicles used to perform services for TNCs and also drivers performing services for TNCs.

Now, I should indicate that it is somewhat at odds with the original philosophy of the amendments that I have brought forward to the Traffic Safety Act, which focused very much on holding the company accountable. The measures contained in the original bill before you focus very much on making the company accountable for ensuring that proper insurance is in place, that proper drivers' licences are being used, and that proper criminal information checks are conducted and for keeping those things on file, subject

to audit by Transportation. That, in my view, is the best way to proceed because it puts the onus on the TNC and saves the government considerably in terms of resources to try and enforce this, and that is how we'll proceed in developing the regulations.

However, this gives additional tools to provide regulations for the owners of vehicles that do not necessarily belong to the company or the person driving – that's certainly a distinct possibility – and to provide regulation with respect to the drivers. If those things were needed, then these tools are here. It is not my anticipation that we will immediately draft regulations under these two sections, but it does provide flexibility in the future, if that is needed, to regulate in those areas.

That's why I have accepted this amendment, which has been consolidated from two amendments previously submitted to my office by the member. I would think that it strengthens the bill, strengthens the ability to ensure that the public remains safe, and that has been our entire focus. The focus on insurance, adequate drivers' licences, and criminal activity checks conducted by the police are all there to make sure that people have as safe a ride as possible, not to pick winners and losers in the industry but to provide a level playing field that ensures public safety as the highest principle.

With that, Madam Chair, I will encourage members of the Assembly to support this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on amendment A5?

Seeing none, I will put the question.

[Motion on amendment A5 carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back now on the original bill, Bill 16. Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

3:10

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak on Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016. After reviewing this legislation, members of the Assembly can see that this bill seeks to accomplish a number of changes to the Traffic Safety Act. Some are straightforward while others are more convoluted and concentrate power into the hands of government, the executive, which means that important issues facing Albertans will be dealt with behind closed doors and away from Albertans. Other ideas work towards improving public safety and removing unnecessary penalties for people in our province.

I believe that the elimination of penalties for those who hold outdated insurance cards, or pink cards, is a step in the right direction. I know that there are a lot of people around Alberta who do hold these cards in their cars. They pay their insurance, get these pink cards, and then throw them right into the glovebox. Although the government would have us believe that it is sinister to drive a truck or car that isn't a Smart car, there isn't anything clandestine about putting your new pink card into your vehicle's glovebox and then driving that vehicle for work or pleasure.

As I look around the House today, I'm sure that I can see a few people who have done the exact same thing with no bad intent. In fact, I am sure that there are a lot of people in this Assembly and throughout Alberta that try to get their pink card into the glovebox as fast as they can before they lose it. Changing a law that is punishing people who are simply putting their pink cards into the glovebox before cleaning out last year's pink card is just an easy decision. It's about time that this law was corrected. It's simple, straightforward, and it's about to be rectified.

We can also find some positives in this legislation when we look at how the bill tackles a loophole that currently protects impaired drivers. As I understand it, the way the law is currently written allows for a loophole to exist which gives an individual who is accused of multiple charges of impaired driving a way to avoid escalating penalties that would typically apply to repeat offenders. Again, Madam Chair – and please correct me if I'm wrong – the loophole exists if someone appears before the court on several unrelated charges on one day. They can avoid those escalating charges because their trials are on one day but would not be able to skirt around those penalties if they had different charges being tried on different days because their mounting convictions would continue to push them further along the repeat offender list, which has increasing penalties.

This seems like a ludicrous loophole, and repeat offenders of such dangerous criminal acts should not be able to fall through these cracks. I don't have the number in front of me of how frequently this happens, but in my opinion once is too often. This is not justice for the families who experience heartache every day over the loss of a loved one who has been taken by the hand of a drunk driver. Organizations like MADD, or Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and countless other public awareness campaigns go through great effort to explain the risks and damages that are caused by impaired drivers. Their selfish actions put our communities in harm's way and create irreparable damage to the lives of thousands of Albertans. There's absolutely no reason why people who are accused and convicted of these reckless acts on numerous counts should not be facing the strictest penalties possible.

The same can be said about another proposed change to the Traffic Safety Act, and that is concerning the punishment for first-time impaired drivers so that their punishment reflects the same reprisals faced by repeat offenders. Of course, we cannot change the Criminal Code in this Assembly, but what we can do is enforce the participation in the ignition interlock program. This program makes it so that when someone is charged and convicted of their first drunk-driving charge, they have to install what I'm informed is essentially a built-in breathalyzer before they are able to drive again. The vehicle's ignition does not fire up until the device checks the blood alcohol level of the driver. I believe that this is a needed addition to the legislation.

As mentioned moments ago, the past couple of decades have seen a rise in public awareness campaigns and a greater public understanding of the adverse effects of impaired driving. People know the dangers of drinking and driving. People know that they are putting themselves and the entire public at risk when they consume alcohol over the legal limit and get behind the wheel. It's time that the punishment fits the crime. It's not just about the punishment; it's about creating a way to encourage healthy habits for first-time offenders. I believe that we must create a system of laws to discourage repeat offenders as a part of helping offenders learn sober habits when they are allowed to drive again. This bill would encourage these habits and improve the safety of our communities.

The same can be said for the provision in this legislation regarding illegal street racing. Drag racing, drifting, street car racing, whatever you want to call it, can cause serious harm to those who are participating in it and to the public at large. My brother had a long street in front of the beach, and we had youth abusing that long stretch. There were children in front of the beach at all times. This is looking for a tragedy, looking to actually creating a situation that puts our children and adults at risk. It's good to see that we are actually looking at reducing the number of street racing offences that happen. Street racing often causes bodily harm or death, and the perpetrator should be punished accordingly, plain and simple.

There are benefits to this legislation, as I have laid out, but there's also a serious problem in Bill 16. This bill writes the government a blank cheque to regulate transport network companies, an area of the industry that is becoming more predominant in Alberta. This is a policy area that should include public consultation and should be governed with the utmost transparency, not regulated behind closed doors. This is something that the government knows. But to protect itself from public scrutiny, they have decided to bury this amendment to the act, that we have not passed at this last one, that I've already spoken to a while ago. The government has consolidated power away from this Assembly, leaving everything to be decided by regulations, which is something that we have seen in Bill 6 and we are going to probably see with Bill 20 that comes through.

Madam Chair, this government hasn't provided any clarity whatsoever on what the regulations of transport network companies will look like. They haven't even defined what a transport network company is under the act. A simple definition will go a long way. In the end we have not even been provided with that, a simple thing as saying what a wonderful transport network company is.

We know and Albertans know that this is the government's back door to regulate certain ride-sharing companies out of the market. If it isn't, then why won't the government level the playing field? They are going to regulate ride sharing behind closed doors at a provincial level while leaving taxis to be regulated by municipalities. Can the Minister of Transportation explain why there is a double standard for companies that are seeking to provide the same service? Albertans expect that their government doesn't make it harder for people with good ideas to enter the marketplace. They expect a fair handshake or a fair share. Now, we expect the government to get out of the way when they're trying to build a future for themselves and their families.

3:20

As some of my colleagues in this House have already mentioned, how will the impending regulations affect carpooling? This is something that we brought up with an amendment. Madam Chair, I am certain that this government will come back and say: of course we're not going to regulate against carpooling. I'm sure of this because I'm certain that they already know what they plan to put into the regulations on this bill. That's why it really erodes the accountability of this act. It's unfortunate that the government, who continually touts itself as the leadership, doesn't have the political wherewithal to have an open and transparent debate as to what the future of ride sharing will look like in Alberta. Instead, they would rather ignore the rallies and protests that have been happening in front of the Edmonton and Calgary city halls. They would rather kill off the ride sharing in other regulations. This bill may pass, but I can guarantee that as the Official Opposition we are going to be holding our feet to the fire to stand up for Albertans that are trying to carve out a living for their families by making a little bit of extra money on the side.

I call on this government to make the process surrounding ride sharing more transparent. I see that I am running against the clock, Madam Chair, and I will stop there.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Well, you know, there's a lot in that last speech to respond to, I think.

First I want to congratulate the Member for Calgary-Greenway. I was in opposition for 15 long years, and I only ever got one amendment accepted by the government. I think it took me about eight years, and this is only his first session, Madam Chair, so congratulations to him. That was, I think, a very positively directed set of amendments.

I want to respond to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I do reject his assertion that we're trying to kill TNCs and that we have some secret plan and regulation to do that. That's completely unfounded, and I don't know why he would stand and say that with absolutely no evidence. I've said all along that the focus of the regulation will be on three things. It will be on ensuring that there's proper insurance, that there is a criminal check done by the police, and that the drivers will have adequate licences to operate commercial vehicles. I've said that those are the three things that we're going to regulate, and that's what we're going to do, so for him to say that, you know, we haven't said what we're going to do is just not right.

To the fact that he makes statements about how we're doing this in regulation and taking it away from the House, you know, the hon. member should realize that there are actually hundreds and hundreds of regulations that already exist, and you don't do regulation by legislation. In most cases you do regulation in regulation, and that's why they call them regulations and not laws. The laws provide for regulatory authority, and regulations are made under the legislation. There are hundreds and hundreds of sets of regulations in this province, other provinces, and federally that regulate all sorts of activities: hunting and fishing, agriculture, motor vehicles. The list goes on and on. The hon. member should probably avail himself of the MLA library and have a look at the regulations that are there.

I want to, you know, indicate that we have not defined – and I mentioned this yesterday – the TNC in the legislation because TNCs are constantly evolving. We know that Uber is coming forward with its carpooling ride-sharing app, which was, I think, the reason why we saw the amendment that we did yesterday from the Official Opposition. They've just announced today their food pickup service. There may never be a reason to regulate some of these things, but the fact of the matter is that this is rapidly evolving technology, and we don't really know what it's going to look like in the future. We can't keep coming back to the Legislature every three months or every six months in order to change the legislation to deal with those technological developments.

The hon. member did say one thing that kind of revealed his hand a little bit at the end, that they would stand up to protect TNCs, people trying to earn a living by earning a little money on the side. That's an interesting way to talk about earning a living: a little money on the side. I couldn't live with a little money on the side, Madam Chair. I don't think he could. I don't think anyone can earn a living by earning a little money on the side.

It really references one of the problems, the social conflicts that have been unleashed by this technology, and that is that there are groups of drivers who have been operating on a full-time basis and have made a living out of it, and these technological changes change the equation. We've resisted the temptation to wade in here and say that we're going to protect the traditional taxi industry because the technology does change, and we do have to adapt to it. We respect people's right to earn a living.

So it's important not that we pick winners and losers but that we protect everyone from being undercut by a complete lack of regulation that jeopardizes public safety. Companies are operating, then, you know, so far inside the margins of anything that could support an income. It comes at the expense of the public safety. There is a role for regulation, there's a role for government, and I

think we've chosen exactly the right path. We've picked safety as the focus to make sure that some people are not undercutting others by sacrificing the safety of the public, and I think that's a legitimate role. That is the focus of this legislation. It always has been, Madam Chair. We're not trying to pick winners and losers in this approach. I think that we've hit the right note, and I urge all hon. members to support the bill.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. Government House Leader.

Anybody else wishing to speak to Bill 16? The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I've appreciated listening to the comments of the people back and forth on both sides of the House on this issue, and I will confess that there are times when I think that my age sometimes catches up with me. I guess, maybe I look at some of the . . .

**Mr. Mason:** I resemble that remark.

**Mr. Smith:** You resemble that remark.

I can honestly say this. There are many things that, as we've had them discussed and as we've done some reading and reflecting, I can appreciate about Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016. I, too, would echo the comments of some of the members here when they say that we are sometimes very human people and that we can be fallible and we can have pink slips in there that can be sometimes years old, quite a collection. For some of us in this Legislature maybe we've just received our driver's licence, but for most of us we've had them for many, many years, and there can be piles of that. So I appreciate a law that actually addresses in a reasonable fashion an issue that could have been cause for losing, once again, a little bit more money to the Traffic Safety Act.

3:30

As far as the TNCs, I will plead a great deal of ignorance when it comes to these, coming from a rural community where we don't have any of these Uber or Tapp or any of those kinds of operations. Much of my knowledge comes from simply listening in this House and having discussions with my own family and friends that actually live in the city. You know, I think that in many ways the discussion with regard to safety is an important one to have, and I think that moving to put some regulation on these TNCs, as they're called, these transportation network companies, seems to be a reasonable thing.

I guess the conservative in me, though, also realizes that we do need to have a balance. We can often use safety to overregulate. I would hate to see us regulate to the point where some of these individuals who are choosing to use and to be a part of this service would no longer be able to do that. I applaud the safety concerns but would want to make sure that we have found the right balance. While I still need a lot of educating on this issue, I think we can move forward, and we can address any issues in the future if we need to.

Again I'll plead some ignorance here. I've lived a life of 56 years as of May 11 of this year and had made the decision early in my life that I would not partake in alcohol and have never personally regretted that decision after having seen family members who have struggled with that all of their lives. So when it comes to a discussion on impaired driving, it's not something that I'm overly familiar with, but it is one where I believe the safety issues that have been brought up by some people are of valid concern.

I believe that we as a society do need to ensure that people that struggle with alcohol in their lives are held to account but held to account in reasonable ways. I look at the amendments that will strip



the exceptions for first-time offenders and ensure that they are participating in the ignition interlock program, and it seems like a reasonable step from this perspective. However, having never had to think in those terms before in my own personal life, these things do seem reasonable, I would suggest. I never really realized before looking at this that you could avoid escalating penalties by showing up for all of it on the same day.

**Mr. Mason:** Smart lawyer.

**Mr. Smith:** Well, I guess.

To me, again, it just seems reasonable that you would face each of these charges and be responsible and accountable for them.

I look at these things in this bill, and I see some things worthy of support here. So I guess I would thank the House for the opportunity to become educated and to learn a little bit more about some of the rules and regulations that are a part of the Traffic Safety Amendment Act.

I will be voting in support of this bill.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 16, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 16 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 16. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 16

#### Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016. [interjections]

I'll move third reading. Sorry.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. minister, I believe you need to.

**Mr. Mason:** Okay. I was just trying to delegate. That's all.

Madam Speaker, it's my honour to move third reading of Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to this? Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Talking to Bill 16, take 2.

I rise here today to speak to Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016. This bill proposes amendments that will reflect current and future traffic safety issues and objectives. In total nine amendments are included in Bill 16, and they are part of the government's ongoing efforts to update the Traffic Safety Act and to make sure these updates align with other legislation.

One of the most significant changes will affect private vehicle-for-hire operations, or ride-sharing companies, and will define how these transportation network companies, or TNCs, will operate in Alberta. Some of the current well-known TNCs are Uber, TappCar, Cowboy Taxi, and Lyft, spelled L-y-f-t, to name a few. This bill will give the Transportation minister the authority to define TNCs through regulation. This definition will be shaped through consultation with stakeholders. This is a rapidly evolving industry, and this provides flexibility to tailor regulations to best suit the safety needs of Albertans on our province's roads and highways.

There are three public safety concerns related to transportation network companies that this bill addresses. The first is that drivers should have an appropriate driver's licence. Whether full-time or part-time, commercial drivers have a responsibility for their passengers, which requires greater skill and road knowledge than other drivers. Those people that would like to drive for a TNC would need to upgrade their licence to a class 1, class 2, or, at a minimum, a class 4.

Two, drivers would need the appropriate insurance. This will have the effect of not only protecting the passenger but the driver as well. We expect that the superintendent of insurance will have an appropriate insurance product ready for the market in July.

The third concern relates to a police information check. This must be conducted by law enforcement agencies and will help ensure the safety of the TNC passengers. As the Transportation minister said last week: when you call with your app for a stranger to come pick you up, you need to know that that person has not got a criminal record and that they are capable of driving you safely and that if you do get into an accident, you're going to be protected with the requisite insurance.

3:40

Madam Speaker, under these rules a TNC must not allow any of its drivers to operate under the company unless the driver has the appropriate insurance coverage, driver's licence, and a police information check. The TNC must make these records available to peace officers and/or government of Alberta staff for review upon demand. Any violators would be fined a maximum of \$50,000 per offence per day. There is also a provision in the bill to allow TNCs to appeal penalties to the Transportation Safety Board.

Madam Speaker, the government has received many comments from Albertans on this topic. This input has informed the common-sense framework being brought forward.

Another significant amendment included in this bill will strengthen impaired driving legislation. This will be done by removing the ability for first-time offenders to apply for an exemption from the ignition interlock program. To be more specific, in the ignition interlock program the driver must blow into

a breathalyzer device before their car will start. As the legislation currently stands, first-time offenders can apply to be exempt from this successful program. The proposed amendment will remove this exemption except for individuals with a specific medical condition that would prevent them from blowing. Research has clearly proven that the alcohol interlock program reduces recidivism among first-time offenders.

The issue of impaired driving continues to have heartbreaking impacts on drivers, passengers, and their loved ones. As a society we must continue to work to prevent this from happening, and this is the intent of this amendment.

Madam Speaker, the current legislation has a technical loophole which allows drivers to avoid lengthier suspensions by appearing in court on the same day for multiple impaired or drunk-driving charges. This loophole is unfair and is clearly not in the best interest of Albertans. It defeats the intent of the law to apply stiffer penalties for repeat offences. An amendment included in this bill's legislation will close that loophole.

Other amendments are strictly administrative. For example, the bill will change the spelling of "motor cycle," making it one word, to align with the federal legislation and to ensure it's consistent throughout the legislation.

In total nine amendments, as outlined in this bill, are expected to clarify regulations in the Traffic Safety Act. It will also clarify the framework under which the transportation network companies operate.

Madam Speaker, I personally believe the initiatives in this bill will help make Alberta roads significantly safer. I'll be supporting this bill at third reading, and I encourage other members in this Legislature to do the same.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the minister for the good work that's been done.

**Mr. Connolly:** Do you want two words for motorcycle?

**Mr. van Dijken:** Radical changes. Anarchy in the language.

It's good work that's being done here. I think the minister has brought some very common-sense solutions and common-sense amendments into the Traffic Safety Act, and I wanted to thank him for that. We have several amendments here, even down to consistent spelling throughout the act, some very common-sense housekeeping things done.

We also do see the addition of the transportation network companies. I would be remiss to not speak to that and the fact that we in opposition are putting great faith in the minister and in Executive Council to come up with the definition that is going to be able to carry us forward in a way that we are intending with regard to these new technologies that have been coming forward.

As the minister has stated, these are continually evolving technologies. I do believe that we are going to see more and more functions with regard to these technologies, and I think they have a lot of potential for improving day-to-day life for Albertans and improving the way we can get things done more efficiently in our transportation networks and more effectively to make life just a little bit easier for all Albertans.

Of course, public safety is first and foremost. The hon. minister has brought that forward as the criteria for bringing public transportation, these transportation network companies, into the legislation. The focus is on public safety, yes, but I will have to put

faith in the minister and Executive Council to bring forth a definition that is not going to stand in the way of the ability for this technology to evolve and provide further services in Alberta.

We talked a little bit yesterday with regard to parcel deliveries, with regard to the simple activities of carpooling. That is going to be a difficult definition to get an understanding of in situations where the ride sharing is not necessarily a ride for hire but a ride for the sharing of costs and just carpooling. How can we move forward on that? As the minister stated even today, we see that we have food delivery coming forward in these transportation network systems.

We largely are focused here on, of course, passengers. I know the taxi industry. In our consultations with the industry, both transportation network companies such as Uber and Lyft and TappCar but also with the taxi industry, the taxi industry has assured us that if they are treated in a way that is fair and amiable and on a level playing field, they will be able to adjust and compete. There is a balancing act there.

Again, I will encourage all members of this Legislature to support this bill as I will be voting in favour of Bill 16.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak on the bill?

Seeing none, I will ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation to close debate.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all members for the excellent contribution to the discussion on this bill. I appreciate all discussion, even that with which I disagreed. I think it brought forward important perspectives.

I think this bill is about balance. It's about making sure that we improve safety on our roads, that we close loopholes that could be used potentially by impaired drivers, that we tighten up our enforcement in that area. I think that's something that all members agree to.

There are some minor housekeeping pieces there, that have been pointed out, like the spelling of motorcycle. I don't know if the hon. member knows that there were actually three different spellings. There was motorcycle as one word, which is the correct spelling now; there's two words; and then there's a hyphen . . .

**Mr. Cooper:** By whose definition?

3:50

**Mr. Mason:** We are legislating in the English language, I'll have you know, hon. member. [interjections] We need to be consistent in our own spelling. You may spell it however you wish. You may even use a hyphen, hon. member, but we're not going to.

There are very serious things in this bill as well, and I appreciate that people have made comments with respect to that.

I think I neglected to respond to one point made earlier, during committee, by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, and that was that we were treating the taxi companies and the TNCs differently, leaving all regulation of taxis to municipalities. That's not entirely correct. We regulate for taxis in the area of what licences drivers must have and in the insurance coverage that they must have. We are doing it a little bit differently with respect to the – I think the part that's a little bit different is the police record check, but we are making sure that there's some consistency there as well. That's something that's currently done by municipalities and will now be a provincial requirement. We're leaving that piece, in the case of taxis, to municipalities. So there is a slight difference there. But fundamentally on the major points we're treating the taxi industry and the TNCs the same. We already regulate taxis in 2 out of the 3

areas at the provincial level. That's not currently being done by municipalities.

In closing, I want to thank all members for this. There is going to be another round. This is the second of three rounds of changes to the Traffic Safety Act as we get into strengthening the coverage that we have to make our roads safe. This is actually the highest priority of the Transportation department, safety on our roads. We've set the goal. It's been a little bit controversial in terms of our internal discussion about: do we go with a goal of zero fatalities on Alberta roads? And we've decided that that is the goal that we're going to aim for. We may not ever quite get there, but that is the focus and the goal that is driving much of the department's work. It is something that I think all Albertans support.

There are many interesting things coming in transportation, I want to say. It's a very interesting field. I guess I will leave people with the thought that the rate of technological change in transportation is accelerating almost exponentially, and I don't believe that people will recognize our roads in 10 or 15 years from now. It's coming much faster than I think most people believe. Electric cars are already here, autonomous vehicles are right around the corner, and we don't know what's going to happen after that. All of that is very interesting.

I know the joke has been made that some members may have thought that *The Flintstones* was a documentary, but I actually admit that I thought that *The Jetsons* was a documentary. I think we can all look forward to lots of change. The one thing that's going to stay the same is that the rate of change is going to continue.

I thank all members for their support for this bill. Madam Speaker, if we could now go to the vote, I'd be happy.

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

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a third time]

### Bill 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

[Adjourned debate May 26: Cortes-Vargas]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** No, thank you. I'll cede my time.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I wish to put forward an amendment to Bill 10.

**The Acting Speaker:** Please go ahead.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 10, Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 10, Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, be not now read a third time because this Assembly has not received satisfactory evidence or assurances that the government is prepared to take the necessary measures to see Alberta's triple-A credit rating restored by the credit-rating agencies.

**The Acting Speaker:** The amendment will be referred to as RA1.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm just waiting on a copy of the amendment, but I firmly believe that the hon. member is mistaken in saying that there is not sufficient evidence in that this government is completely and totally committed to building the infrastructure we will need to grow our economy moving forward. We are committed to investing in our education for our students, which will lead to the economic growth and prosperity that Albertans deserve and expect. This budget is about choice. We have made that choice.

Quite frankly, I find it a little concerning that the opposition is so committed to cutting the services that Albertans expect while we are investing in the public services, in the infrastructure that Albertans deserve and expect.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise, particularly following whatever just happened here. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this reasoned amendment, that I know members in this House will be surprised to hear that I think is quite reasonable. We have seen over the past number of days and weeks a consistent downward spiral in the credit rating of this great province of ours. What this amendment actually does has nothing to do with the choices that the government is claiming they've made in their budget and has everything to do with the credit rating of this province and the negative impacts that this government is having on that credit rating.

Let's be clear. This isn't about spending choices; it is specifically about the credit rating here in the province. What the amendment does is that it provides very sound reasoning as to why the bill should not be read a third time. That reason is that the Assembly has not received satisfactory evidence or assurances that the government is prepared to take necessary measures to see Alberta's triple-A credit rating restored. This reasoned amendment is about the evidence and assurances that the government hasn't provided the Assembly.

4:00

But, Madam Speaker, what is equally as important as providing assurances to this Assembly that the government is serious about protecting our credit rating is that the government is serious about communicating to the credit-rating agencies about what the plan is here in Alberta. What they have done is the exact opposite of that. In fact, on the day after the budget was introduced, which included some significant challenges in the path forward for our province, our credit rating was downgraded, and the government did nothing to reassure Albertans, this Assembly, or the credit-rating agencies that they had a clear plan that took the financial future of our province as a key priority for the future of our province.

Then we moved along with the introduction of this bill, Bill 10, that puts the debt limit of our province on the path of infinity and beyond, with not just a 10 per cent debt limit, not just a 15 per cent debt limit, that the hon. Minister of Finance said just last fall gave us plenty of room, but no debt limit. What happened was that the hon. Minister of Finance reassured this House: don't worry; I'm going to be talking to the credit-rating agencies about our plan. So he went ahead and met with a number of those agencies, and only hours after that meeting – I'm not entirely sure what took place – our credit rating was downgraded again.

One of the significant reasons that those credit-rating agencies referred to, Madam Speaker, was this Bill 10 and removing all of the debt ceiling that was in place here in the province. One of the

key issues that they pointed to was removing all accountability when it comes to spending and debt to GDP in the province of Alberta.

What we're suggesting here today, in order to provide assurances to the Assembly and, equally as important, to Albertans and to the credit-rating agencies, is that this bill, which played a significant role in additional downgrades, be not read, that we ought not proceed down a path that we know is creating pain and uncertainty amongst the investment community, amongst the credit-rating community, and, in turn, creating uncertainty for Albertans, creating uncertainty for Albertan families when it comes to not having a clear understanding of what the financial future and the financial viability of our government looks like because of the significant amounts of debt that this piece of legislation, Bill 10, allows the government to take onboard.

I encourage all members of this Chamber that are serious about protecting the financial future of our province to support this reasoned amendment. What this reasoned amendment has the potential to do is to send a message to those folks who go ahead and provide the credit ratings for our province, a message that the government, that the government members, that the front bench is serious about the credit rating in our province, not because it's great for us to go around and say, "Hey, we've got a triple-A credit rating; we're a pretty big deal" but because that triple-A credit rating means a significant amount of savings for our province.

That triple-A credit rating means that when we need to borrow money – and we all have our opinions on how much money we should or shouldn't be borrowing – when there is a need, we then can borrow at the best available rate, and that triple-A credit rating saves money for our province, saves taxpayers' money. Every downgrade that we receive costs the taxpayer of Alberta. That means that every downgrade costs the moms and the dads, the truck drivers, the plumbers, the butchers, the bakers, the candlestick makers, and the mechanics. Let's not forget the mechanics.

**Ms Renaud:** Don't forget the bakers.

**Mr. Cooper:** I already got the bakers. And I even have the Joneses.

Madam Speaker, the downgrading of our credit is a significant risk to all Albertans and to a number of those I have pointed out already this afternoon. Unfortunately, we don't have enough time to read into the record all of the types of folks that this has a negative impact on. And while from time to time here in the Chamber we can enjoy some humour amongst peers and colleagues and foes – I think that's important – that doesn't mean that what we are dealing with isn't a very serious issue, because it really is.

This is a serious issue that has a significant impact on the direction of our province. It has a significant impact on our ability to compete across this country and on the world stage. Not only does it cost taxpayers money with increased borrowing costs, but it also costs municipalities a significant amount of money. One of the reasons is that municipalities engage with the provincial government to borrow and utilize that tradition of the strongest possible credit rating to receive wonderful rates to borrow for very important projects that happen, the very projects that the government is supporting, whether it's roads or schools, all of those things, the important key infrastructure projects. Particularly in the case of municipalities, when they borrow to do other projects that are the municipal responsibility, be it reservoirs or waste water, they have the benefit of borrowing through the provincial government to receive those triple-A credit ratings.

For some of those small municipalities – I think of the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and communities like Cremona, that are just a couple of hundred

people, communities like Beiseker, that are just under a thousand – without the benefit of the provincial government being able to provide financing to them, on their own they would pay a significantly higher credit rate.

**4:10**

The challenge is that when the provincial government doesn't take care of its responsibilities and the areas of jurisdiction which it presides over, it has a negative impact down the line to our municipal partners because the cost of borrowing is going to go up for our municipal partners. Whether it's a recreation facility or a road in their community that they bear responsibility for or a sidewalk or a seniors' facility, all of those are going to cost more because this government hasn't laid out a clear plan that allows credit-rating agencies and Albertans to have faith in the long-term financial viability of our province.

I would strongly support this Assembly to send the right message to those agencies, to Albertans, that we take seriously our credit rating, that we are willing to do what it takes to lay out a plan, and to not create something so ambiguous as no debt ceiling. We even proposed that a debt ceiling is better than no debt ceiling, and the credit-rating agencies have said that that would be a step in the right direction.

I know that the government doesn't love to take tips or pointers from the Official Opposition – and I don't begrudge them that, although I think they would be a lot better off if they did take a few more of our ideas – but they should at least listen to the credit-rating agencies and the investment community, that say that the direction of Bill 10 is not the right direction for this province. That's exactly why all members of this Assembly should send that message by supporting this amendment, and I encourage everyone to do so.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. It's always interesting what you can throw into your argument.

The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak in the House against the amendment being proposed. Throughout the last few months I've spoken to many of my constituents, and the constant topic of conversation is: how are we going to respond to our economic circumstances? Strathcona-Sherwood Park makes up a large section of the Industrial Heartland, an area that contributes to Alberta's overall GDP, with operating investments of \$3 billion, and a lot of my constituents are employed in the heartland businesses and are experiencing these setbacks from the oil prices.

I mention this because we have a choice in this House, and the members opposite are proposing, without a shadow budget, in explaining where they would cut, to cut drastically, to do the things that have been done in the past and have drastic social effects. The members on this side of the House are looking for a choice. They're looking for a plan, investment, and the Alberta jobs plan provides just that.

Not only that, but I've been continuously talking to the Industrial Heartland as they contribute to a lot of the work, and I tabled a few weeks ago a quote of their response to our budget. I'm just going to read it out here for the record. This is from Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association. It starts:

Job creation and economic diversification remain a key focus for the Alberta Government as indicated in the release of Budget 2016, The Alberta Jobs Plan. Most notably, the Petrochemical Diversification Program will stimulate investment and employment in Alberta's value added sector, helping to diversify and strengthen the province's economy.

See, we have a plan. We have a plan to respond to what's happening. It is not to cut and slash budgets, which is the only thing that the members on the other side are proposing, and they don't have even a shadow budget to explain where they would take this from. So until they are able to produce those kinds of details, we will continue to say that that will come out of front-line services, that that will come out of teachers, that that will come out of educational assistants, and that is what the voters of Alberta rejected in the last election.

We have a choice. Right now we're facing a drastic drop in the price of oil, and it affects how much revenue is gained in Alberta revenues. We have to make sure that we make a choice to reinvest in our economy, to reinvest in jobs, make sure that we are able to address the issues that are facing everyday Albertans. That is why I reject this. In order to do that, we need to put these tools in place, put these actions in place in order to make sure that we are able to address the immediate issues that Albertans are facing.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to speak against the amendment and to strongly recommend that members in this House reject the amendment.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll call the question – oh, on the amendment. Sorry. Please go ahead, Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. When I stand up here, I want to stand up to support this amendment. I want to stand up to support this amendment because I have a feeling that we must be living in two different Albertas. I say that in all seriousness because while I do not doubt the previous member's rendition of the quote from the Industrial Heartland group, if that's what its full name was, I can tell this House that in Drayton Valley they have measured this budget, they have measured this government, and they have found it very wanting.

When I talk to the people that have lost their jobs and lost their businesses, it's not solely because of a drop in the price of oil. There are many things that this government has done that have sent economic signals across this country and literally across the world and have scared capital and businesses out of this province.

Madam Speaker, this amendment is suggesting that until this Legislative Assembly and until the people of Alberta can be given some assurances, some plan, something that can show us that this government has some recognition that debt can cripple a province, that debt will and always has crippled economies, then business and financial institutions will indeed refuse to invest in this province.

I don't know what you're hearing, but I know that I have had many, many local and international businesses come into my office that are shaken to the core by the actions of this government. I have had vice-presidents of international corporations in my office. I will not name them, but they exist nonetheless. They have talked about risk profiles. When they go to the heads of their companies, when they go to their boards, when they make financial plans, they must provide a risk profile for any economic venture that they choose to try and bring into this province, and when they have to talk about the actions of this government, the risk profile gets longer and longer and longer and longer, to the point . . . [interjection] I'm not lying. They're telling me this.

4:20

I have no investments in these companies. I have no dealings with these companies. I've never worked for these companies, but these

companies employ my citizens, my constituents. These companies pay the taxes in my community. These companies make investments in the future and the lives of the kids with their donations. They're telling me that they will not invest their capital. They can invest it anywhere they want in the world, and they will not invest it in this province. You can shake your heads, and you can roll your eyes, but it's a fact.

There are companies started by entrepreneurs in my town that have been successful for 30 years. They have worked in and around Alberta, in western Canada. They've invested in other countries. Now they're shut down. Now they no longer employ anybody. That's not simply, solely because of the price of oil. It's because of the economic decisions of this government, and we see that happening and affecting our credit rating. Debt has consequences.

If you wonder why I get a little frustrated and upset sometimes, it's because I do care about those people that are in poverty. I do care about our education system. I do care, like all the members in this House, for our seniors. I do want to see social housing and the social licence being extended to the people of Alberta, and I know that that can only occur when we take care of the finances of this province.

I met the other day with the ATA local down in Wetaskiwin, and they said: well, what would you do? And I said to them: I'm not suggesting that this is an easy answer. There's a reality that we all face. Whether it's personal, whether it's a corporation, or whether it's this province, when you accumulate significant debt, many of the answers are no longer available to you. The options that you face are very limited, and often the options that you have to pursue are going to hurt and hurt very badly. If you really want to have small class sizes and you really want to have teachers and you really want to have aides in the classrooms, then control your debt. If you want to see cutbacks, don't control your debt. There will come a time – and it will not be too long from now – when financial institutions will simply start forcing you to make decisions that you don't want to make.

We are in serious financial trouble when we have a government that does not seem to understand how they are going to control the debt. That's what this triple-A credit rating being downgraded time and time and time again is doing. It's telling our financial institutions that we've got a problem. It's telling our corporations, it's telling our businesses that we have a problem. This is why I would speak to this amendment. Until this government comes out and is able to explain how it is going to cut back its spending, how it is going to start to pay back its debt, we are going to be in trouble.

Nobody wants to see front-line workers cut. Nobody wants to see nurses cut. As much as you want to say that that's what we want to do, it is not the truth. We did not campaign on that. We did not campaign on that. I think we know what we campaigned on. [interjections] I'll let you explain what you think you campaigned on. Allow me the same ability to be able to explain what we campaigned on.

We know that if we continue to go on down the path of unending spending and borrowing, our interest payments will soon be the third-largest expenditure of the government. That is a wise use of taxpayers' money?

While I understand that there may be, Madam Speaker, some people in this Legislature that don't want to support this amendment, this amendment has a great deal of validity because it has allowed this House to have a conversation about what is important when it comes to our financial situation. I would argue that those people that want to see a reasoned, rational discussion about how we can control our spending while minimizing the social impact to the best of our ability – that is in the best interest of the

people of Alberta, and this amendment has allowed us to be able to pursue that direction.

Downgrading a triple-A credit rating, once you've achieved it, is never a very good idea because the benefits that come from that triple-A credit rating, Madam Speaker, are immense. It means that we do have the ability to pursue a modicum of debt, pay a modest rate of interest, that allows us to be able to get the best bang for our dollar. But it's always wise, when you're borrowing, to have a path forward to paying that debt off. We would love to be able to hear from this government how they are going to do that. What kind of measures are they going to take to see a renewal of that triple-A credit rating, which is so beneficial to Albertans? You cannot continue to borrow and spend forever – you can't – so how are you going to get off that track? What are you going to do? I think it's a reasonable thing.

Albertans, financial institutions, the other members of this Assembly, all would love to be able to see a clear plan for getting control of our spending and for stopping the accumulation of our

debt. I think, Madam Speaker, that we have an opportunity, by voting for this amendment, to pause, to consider how we can set a debt limit and make it an effective one. We've tried before. It wasn't an effective way of doing it. Obviously, this government underestimated its need for only – only – a 15 per cent debt limit. So let's take the time. Let's vote for this amendment. Let's make sure that we've received satisfactory evidence, satisfactory assurances on how we're going to move forward. Let's take that time, by supporting this amendment, so that the people of Alberta will be the winners as we move forward in this province.

I think that I've probably pursued this to the extent that maybe I've changed minds, perhaps? Hope springs eternal in the breast of this . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Sorry. I hesitate to interrupt you, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly will stand adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m.]

## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to May 26, 2016**

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

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

### **1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 732-36 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.), 685-91 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.), 749-60 (Apr. 21, 2016 aft.), 825 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 1019-24 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed), 987-95 (May 18, 2016 morn.)

Third Reading -- 1172 (May 25, 2016 eve.), 1174-79 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed on division)

### **2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1]

### **3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)

Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2]

### **4\* An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft.), 349-66 (Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 399-409 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.), 378-84 (Apr. 6, 2016 morn.), 415-28 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 450-55 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 428-33 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn.)

### **5 Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading -- 398 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 455-56 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.), 532-38 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed), 491-505 (Apr. 12, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 570-77 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed), 539-56 (Apr. 13, 2016 morn.)

Third Reading -- 577-83 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

### **6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 519-27 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 527-32 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 583-85 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

### **7 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**

First Reading -- 518 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 585-86 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft.), 682-84 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed), 649-51 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 820-24 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 902-903 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)

- 8 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 669-71 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 684 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 824-25 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 903-904 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)
- 9 An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 640-49 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.), 728-30 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 979-81 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1180-81 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)
- 10\* Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 599 (Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 671-82 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 730-32 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division), 691-703 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 950-51 (May 17, 2016 morn.), 1041-49 (May 19, 2016 morn.), 1103-13 (May 24, 2016 aft.), 1115-23 (May 24, 2016 eve., passed), 1077-81 (May 24, 2016 morn.)  
Third Reading -- 1124 (May 24, 2016 eve.), 1197-99 (May 26, 2016 morn., adjourned)
- 11 Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016 (Bilous)**  
First Reading -- 773 (May 2, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 907-908 (May 12, 2016 aft.), 971-79 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1012-18 (May 18, 2016 aft.), 1024 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1068-69 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)
- 12 Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Feehan)**  
First Reading -- 802 (May 3, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 904-907 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 985-87 (May 18, 2016 morn., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1069 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)
- 13 Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016 (Gray)**  
First Reading -- 872 (May 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 965-71 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed on division)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1024-25 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1069 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)
- 14 Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**  
First Reading -- 872 (May 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 983-85 (May 18, 2016 morn., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1076-77 (May 24, 2016 morn., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1077 (May 24, 2016 morn., passed)
- 15 An Act to End Predatory Lending (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 901 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1062-67 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1153-57 (May 25, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1172 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)
- 16\* Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**  
First Reading -- 921 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1067-68 (May 19, 2016 aft.), 1071-75 (May 24, 2016 morn., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1157-63 (May 25, 2016 aft.), 1219-23 (May 26, 2016 aft., passed with amendments), 1197 (May 26, 2016 morn., adjourned)  
Third Reading -- 1223-25 (May 26, 2016 aft., passed)
- 17 Appropriation Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 950 (May 17, 2016 morn., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1025-29 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed), 995-1000 (May 18, 2016 morn., adjourned)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1070 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed), 1031-41 (May 19, 2016 morn.)  
Third Reading -- 1096-1103 (May 24, 2016 aft.), 1113 (May 24, 2016 aft., passed on division)



- 18      An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring (Phillips)**  
First Reading -- 964-65 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1125-35 (May 25, 2016 morn., passed on division)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1191-97 (May 26, 2016 morn., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1199-1205 (May 26, 2016 morn., passed on division)
- 19      Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 1011 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1153 (May 25, 2016 aft., passed), 1135-40 (May 25, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1171-72 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1173 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)
- 20      Climate Leadership Implementation Act (\$) (Phillips)**  
First Reading -- 1095 (May 24, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1163-70 (May 25, 2016 aft.), 1173-74 (May 25, 2016 eve.), 1181-90 (May 25, 2016 eve., adjourned (on amendment))
- 22      An Act to Provide for the Repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Ceremonial Objects (Miranda)**  
First Reading -- 1219 (May 26, 2016 aft., passed)
- 201      Election Recall Act (Smith)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 119-32 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft.), 303-304 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division)
- 202      Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 305-16 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft.), 470-73 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)
- 203      Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**  
First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 481-83 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities), 473-81 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft.)
- 204      Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**  
First Reading -- 468 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 616-30 (Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed)
- 205\*      Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**  
First Reading -- 707 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.)  
Second Reading -- 839-50 (May 9, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 924-31 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed with amendments)  
Third Reading -- 931-34 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed)
- 206      Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (Goehring)**  
First Reading -- 902 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)
- Pr1      Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**  
First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1171 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1197 (May 26, 2016 morn., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1219 (May 26, 2016 aft., passed)



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 30, 2016

Day 35

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
 Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
 Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
 Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
 Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
 Official Opposition House Leader  
 Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
 Government Whip  
 Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
 Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
 Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
 Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
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 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
 Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
 Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
 Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
 Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
 Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
 Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
 Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
 Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
 Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
 Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
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 Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
 Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
 Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
 Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
 Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
 Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
 MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
 Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
 Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
 Government House Leader  
 McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
 Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
 McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
 Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
 McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
 McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
 McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
 Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
 Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
 Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
 Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
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 Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
 Premier  
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 Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
 Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
 Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
 Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
 Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
 Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKittrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 30, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let's bow our heads and reflect, each in our own way. We often find ourselves trying to be understood when we should firstly try to understand. We sometimes act when we should listen. We sometimes listen when we should act. Finding the balance can be difficult at times.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark. I would invite all of you to sing in the language of your choice.

**Hon. Members:**

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'll just remind: given the scarcity of time, keep the introductions as brief as possible.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature 37 special guests from my riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. These are students from the French immersion class at l'école Monsignor William Irwin Catholic elementary school. They are accompanied by Mme Carol Dyck, a teacher, and Mme Carrie Lefrancois. I would ask them to rise and receive the usual warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 32 people from l'école Father Jan in St. Albert. If I could get them to please rise when I say their names: Mme Natalie Jurick, Mme Lise Dunn, Mlle Ann Heggart, Mlle Annette Perreux, and all the students. Please welcome them.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 28 grade 6 French immersion students from Landing Trail intermediate school in beautiful Athabasca. They are accompanied today by their teacher, Jennifer Jones, and a parent volunteer, Melanie Giroux. If the class and teacher could please rise and receive the customary warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Hearing none, the Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really delighted today to introduce to you and through you some of my former colleagues and friends from Iomer Internet Solutions. Prior to the election I worked at Iomer for seven years. They are a locally owned and operated information technology consulting company. They are located only two blocks away, but I have to say that it has felt like worlds apart since I became elected. They provide emerging technology solutions for business and government and help customers to realize their goals and expectations, and they're definitely known for innovative solutions. I would ask my guests to rise as I say their names: my former colleagues Joanne Knox, Kerry Wiebe, Jeff Mah, Kael Nicholson, Kaleb Dell, Scott Johnston, and Caitlin Smart. Thank you for joining us here today. I'd ask all members to give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you the executive board of the Sindhi Association of North America southern Alberta division. This organization dedicates itself to fostering friendship and understanding between the Sindhis and other nationalities and educates people about Sindhi culture, philosophy, language, and heritage. In Calgary they have created a place for the Sindhi diaspora to celebrate and gather together as a community. Joining us in the gallery – and I'd ask you to rise as I say your names – are Mashhood Qazi, president and head of the delegation; Max Memon; Fayyaz Gajani; Jameel Ahmed; Ms Najma Fayyaz; Zulfiqar Ali; and Shahzad Qazi. I would ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly today some constituents from my fantastic region of Leduc-Beaumont. Today I have with me four people. If you would stand when I say your name: John Slomnicki, a proud IBEW electrician; Kim Slomnicki, his wife, who is one of my CAs; her daughter Amber; and Kim's mom, Barbara Toews, who's joined us today to have a tour of the Legislature. I would appreciate it if all of you would give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests, hon. members? The Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

**Mr. Connolly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my mother, Linda Davies, and my sister Chantal Connolly. My mother has been a teacher with the CBE and an ATA member for 29 years now, and my sister will graduate from the education program at the U of C next week. I'd now ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Now Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise in the Assembly today and introduce to you and through you a fine school group from the Premier's riding of Edmonton-Strathcona. There are 24 visitors altogether: Karri McKinnon, teacher; Jennifer Soon, educational assistant; as well as parent Renata Brunner Jass. I would ask the teachers and parent as well as the students to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.  
The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to introduce to you and through you a very faithful member of the Wildrose team who supports one of the biggest players on this side of the House – she recently was travelling around the southern United States and has just returned home to Canada to make sure that he's at work – Mrs. Tiffany Nixon, wife of my good friend and colleague the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, from the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler, Mr. Cody Borek. Mr. Borek, if you'd stand, please, and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

1:40

## Members' Statements

### Rural Health Service Providers

**Mr. Hinkley:** Mr. Speaker, today I have the privilege to read a précis of a letter thanking St. Mary's hospital of Camrose and, in particular, the early discharge stroke team as well as other rural health service providers. St. Mary's has been earning a fabulous reputation among Alberta Health Services for its excellent patient care.

This letter comes from the Hoffmans of Viking. Mr. Hinkley:

My husband suffered a severe stroke . . . He was very well cared for . . . at the Camrose Hospital. The staff . . . were very efficient. They did their work well but they also were good at an important part of recovery – they really cared . . .

Every one of the [early stroke discharge] team members were enthusiastic, kind and respectful. They were never hurried or impatient. They kept in contact by phone whenever we had questions . . .

The team members are very capable in their professions . . . Don was impressed by the variety of therapies they introduced. The teleconferencing with the Glenrose . . . was very successful.

We believe that without this program Don would have found coping with his limitations very difficult. The team introduced to him many techniques to help himself, they gave him hope . . . They also helped us with other medical contacts and equipment. I know that both Don and myself as a caregiver would have been floundering in all the details that come with coping at home if we hadn't had this help.

An important part of Don's care was the emergency service we received . . . We are so thankful that we have competent emergency care in Viking.

In closing I have to say that we are very thankful for the care received through the long 6 months of recovery. From the ambulance to the care at Camrose, to the physiotherapy at SAGE, to the Early Stroke discharge team, to access to neurologists and the Glenrose . . . we have been blessed.

Mr. Speaker, this letter provides one more reason why investments in health care are more important than making drastic cuts to balance our budget or gain a credit rating.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Canadian Hockey League Memorial Cup 2016

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hockey is the best sport in the world. It brings Canadians together. It brings out the best in us Canucks. All over the world we're known for saying, "I'm sorry," and for being great at hockey.

This weekend central Alberta was proud to host the Memorial Cup, at which the London Knights took home the coveted trophy. They fought hard. They won it in four straight. In every game their game finesse impressed me and amazed the crowds.

The crowd was treated not just to a great hockey series but to the famous hospitality that central Alberta is known for. Along with the arenas set up for the main events, there were additional arenas set up for family games and kids' games. Everybody got to participate in the festivities as the greatest game on Earth was played by people of all ages and skills. And true to our country roots there was live country music.

On top of everyone having a blast and enjoying themselves, the people were also contributing to the economic well-being of the central Alberta region. People from all over Canada travelled to participate in the festivities. They ate at the restaurants, stayed at the hotels, visited local vendors, and explored the greatness of central Alberta.

I'm looking forward to the next games, when, hopefully, an Alberta team can actually take home the cup. I'm also looking forward to the other major tourism events that are coming to central Alberta. This summer the Tour of Alberta and then in 2019, specifically, the Canadian Winter Games will be economic and festive boons for the region.

It is events such as these that bring Albertans together in celebration and bring out our competitive spirit, but hockey does score high above all the rest in bringing out the best in Canadians. Some days I think that hockey might be the answer to all our problems. Life seems so much simpler when you're with friends enjoying an ice-cold drink and watching hockey.

I would like to thank the sponsors, the planning team, everybody who hosted the Memorial Cup, all the volunteers, and everybody who participated. Everyone who was at the Memorial Cup had the best weekend possible. I tip my hat to the great people of central Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

### Office of the Premier

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A veteran recently said to me: in my time in service I met some generals that I would not cross the street to say hello to, but I will salute every one of them out of respect for the rank they hold. Every party in this House would like their party leader to occupy the office of the Premier. Because of this, we must remember to respect the office even if we disagree with the party in government.

In this Legislative Assembly, where we are all equals, the Premier is the head of the House. When the head of any household invites a guest, common decency and good manners dictate that all members of the House greet invited guests with at least a minimum

level of courtesy and decorum and do so in a dignified fashion. The Premier's job is to build bridges with other jurisdictions, some of whom we may even disagree with. We hobble the Premier's ability to build those bridges when a simple, positive introduction cannot be achieved. Last week, when the Premier had a guest come in from another province, that guest and the office that guest holds were not given the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly by some members. The Premier of Ontario was greeted by bad manners by some members of this House. Bad manners can reflect on the entire province and the office of Premier.

It is about respect for the democratic process. We don't have to like the politics of every guest that comes into this House, but we have to give the Premier a chance to work with them for the betterment of Alberta. We routinely greet each other's partisan guests warmly. We didn't pick the Premier's party; the voters did. That is part of the democratic process, and if we can't have the core amount of respect for the democratic process, for what brings all of us here, maybe some of us should think about who we work for.

The Leader of the Official Opposition and some other members did not stand for the Premier of Ontario. The hon. members who cannot bring themselves to live up to the most minimum levels of respect and courtesy for democracy maybe – just maybe – ought to consider if this is really where they want to work.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

#### Public Transit

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to share with you and this Assembly the joys of my daily transit ride from my constituency, beautiful Spruce Grove-St. Albert. As many of you are aware, I often take rush-hour transit with many of my constituents. Commuting by bus is a fun commute and gives me an opportunity to interact with my constituents. It's a great way to avoid dealing with the rush hour traffic, and I can get some reading done or respond to some e-mails while en route to and from the Legislature. Commuting by bus has also proven a great opportunity to connect with my constituents. As an added bonus, busing reduces my carbon footprint and eases congestion on the road.

My community is serviced by St. Albert Transit, a well-established system, and the city of Spruce Grove, which is currently serviced by Edmonton Transit, is moving forward with establishing their own network with the help of GreenTRIP funding.

Mr. Speaker, public transportation is an investment in our future. As green infrastructure, public transit creates permanent jobs in our communities. It reduces carbon emissions and makes our communities more accessible to Albertans.

Often the challenge in sprawling cities such as the Edmonton region is to find an affordable solution. I am glad that our government has taken steps to address this crucial issue in Edmonton. As part of their joint efforts to reduce and prevent poverty, the city and province are developing a cost-shared, low-income transit pass to increase access to public transit and connect families to community supports and resources. Eligibility for Edmonton's pass will be based on 100 per cent of the low-income cut-off. The city of Edmonton estimates that 20,000 people each month will be eligible for this pass and will make use of a low-income transit pass program. Mr. Speaker, this is good news for families and individuals who would like to use transit but simply cannot afford to buy a monthly pass.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

#### Curtis Marshall Memorial Skate Park

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Suicide: it's difficult to talk about and often kept hidden. When someone has died by suicide, we speak of it in hushed, almost embarrassed tones. The notion of young people so filled with hopelessness that they see no option but suicide is profoundly disturbing. In my constituency suicide is far too prevalent.

But I'd like to share one particular suicide story. Curtis Marshall was a talented young man from Peace River. Friendly, outgoing, and kind, with a great sense of humour, Curtis cared about people. He was an avid reader and loved writing. Everyone thought he'd become a social worker or a journalist. But Curtis also suffered from depression. Although he managed to hide the pain of his illness for a long time, it eventually took his life.

Curtis's story, however, has become a positive and hopeful one. Wanting to honour his memory and find ways to heal, his family and friends embarked on a special project. Curtis loved skateboarding. He was good at it. Not only was it an active, creative sport; for Curtis, it was a way to belong to the community. His dream was to have a place in Peace River where young people could gather and share his passion for skateboarding. That dream is now reality. Through the generosity of people and businesses in the community along with contributions from local and provincial government, work on the foundation is scheduled to begin this summer.

1:50

Initially, some were reluctant to support the project, feeling it would glorify or idealize suicide. This is wrong. The Curtis Marshall memorial skateboard park will allow us to speak Curtis's name aloud and recognize that depression is an illness that is sometimes fatal. Perhaps most importantly, the park will help the community have open, honest conversations about suicide, about how we can encourage mental wellness in our youth and ensure that adequate mental health treatment is available when needed. The Curtis Marshall memorial skate park will be a social meeting place in Peace River where young people and families can exercise, enjoy the outdoors, and hone their skateboard skills, a place where the community can heal and grow together.

To Curtis's mom, Elaine, to Kris, and to all those who have worked so hard on the project: thank you. I'm proud to have the Curtis Marshall memorial skate park in my constituency, and I'm looking forward to taking my grandchildren to skate there this summer.

Thank you.

#### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Restaurant Industry Support

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One hundred and fifty thousand Albertans are directly employed in the restaurant industry. These are the entrepreneurs, the business owners, the cooks, the butchers, the bakers, the baristas, the servers who now more than ever need a job. What they don't need are new experiments that put their livelihoods at risk, but that's exactly what this NDP government is doing. With higher beer taxes, a massive minimum wage increase, and a new carbon tax, our restaurant industry is being hit hard. Why isn't the Premier at all concerned about the livelihoods her policies are putting at risk here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As was mentioned in the member's statement earlier by the leader of the third party, the people of Alberta had a choice. They had a choice between a number of different leaders, and they chose a party that had an increase in the minimum wage so that people who are working full-time can afford to live, you know, and do not have to stop at the food bank on their way home from work. Certainly, they gave us direction on where they want to see us moving forward. They want to make sure that people can afford to work full-time and buy food and pay the rent. That's what we're going to be consulting with Albertans on the specifics of how to get there in the weeks and months ahead.

**Mr. Jean:** Quote: there are many restaurants who are really surviving on a knife-edge right now. End quote. That's from Mark von Schellwitz, the VP of western Canada for Restaurants Canada. He's speaking on behalf of men and women who invest their lives into their small businesses and local restaurants. A bad exchange rate, a slumping economy, and bad NDP policies are making things much worse for Alberta businesses. How can the Premier stand there knowing that her policies are directly hurting those families who rely on a successful restaurant industry?

**Ms Hoffman:** Like, I'm sure, many members of this House, hopefully all members of this House, I have been engaging with business owners in our area. When I say, you know, "What could help your business?", they say, "If people had more money in their pockets and if they could be out spending it." That's why they want to make sure that we work to diversify our economy. That's why they want us to get a pipeline to tidewater, so that we have people working diligently on that pipeline, we're getting the best price for our product, and Albertans themselves can have a good revenue, good money in their pockets and be spending it in local business, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue working on all of those areas to move forward and strengthen our economy.

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans aren't going to have it in their pockets if you keep taxing them and taking it out.

The fact is that this government is experimenting with people's lives. While they get to sit in their nice, comfy chairs for the next three years, there are actually people in this province very much hurting; 75 per cent of restaurant owners expect their sales to drop even further than they have over the next six months. But all this government has to offer them is a new carbon tax and a drastic hike to the minimum wage, that will punish them. At a time when unemployment is at its highest in nearly two decades, how can the Premier possibly stand beside and behind these reckless and harmful policies, that really hurt Albertans?

**Ms Hoffman:** The fact is that we are dealing with a once-in-a-lifetime drop in the price of oil, Mr. Speaker, and that's impacting all of us in Alberta in a significant way. We have been working with our partners, including small business, by cutting their taxes by one-third this year. We're very proud of that. We're going to continue to work with Albertans to make sure that those who are working full-time can afford to spend that money in the local economy. Study after study shows that when low-income citizens have money in their pockets, it typically gets spent in the local economy as opposed to purchasing online or out of province. So we're really proud, and we're going to be moving forward with business and with workers.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier.  
Second main question.

### Carbon Levy and Energy Costs

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite natural gas being a clean, low-carbon fuel that will be essential in efforts to reduce global emissions, the NDP government is increasing the price of natural gas by 50 per cent under the carbon tax. It's hard to imagine how jacking up added costs on this industry will help any Albertans whatsoever. It makes heating houses in the winter more expensive. It hurts job creators across the province and the economy and risks putting even more pressure on our electricity grid, which is already out of control under this government's policies. Why doesn't the Premier understand that this action, these extra costs on families, businesses, and our natural gas industry are damaging? They're just hurting us.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In terms of moving forward, we're really committed to our climate change leadership strategy. We've had validators from all sorts of different industries stand up with us on that, and they are saying that it's positive to move forward with one-third of coal generation being replaced by natural gas to keep prices stable. The report, the FirstEnergy report that I believe is being referred to, also talked about how Albertans will be paying \$28 less per megawatt than they did in 2013.

**Mr. Jean:** Shirley's Greenhouse in Didsbury grows local produce like lettuce, bell peppers, and tomatoes. They sell in farmers' markets right across southern Alberta, including in Calgary. They told CTV news that they will see their natural gas bills climb an extra \$30,000 per year. For families it's hundreds of dollars gone. Businesses will see their costs certainly escalate, and for our industry it's even more uncertainty. How can the Premier stand behind this tax on a clean, low-carbon fuel when Albertans simply can't afford to pay the price?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, certainly, for people who are nervous about what's happening moving forward: it's no wonder, with some of the misinformation that's being spread by the members across the aisle.

To go back to the facts, performance standards are being drafted for natural gas power plants to ensure that prices remain competitive for consumers. The report itself, again, predicts that when a carbon price is fully implemented, Albertans will still be paying \$28 less per megawatt than they did in 2013, Mr. Speaker. This is good news for consumers, it's good news for the environment, and it's good news for Alberta.

**Mr. Jean:** Across all industries and sectors this hike on natural gas is going to hurt Albertans a lot. Charities will see natural gas costs skyrocket, especially those who provide shelter for our most vulnerable citizens. As schools and hospitals see their natural gas costs climb, it will mean less money going towards classrooms and emergency rooms – it will – and for businesses across the province it will mean less money to hire and to invest in Albertans. With this in mind, how can the Premier possibly justify this massive tax increase on every Alberta family?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, we've been connecting with lots of stakeholders, and they have said

that they're really grateful to have a government that's committed to stable, predictable funding, as opposed to what's being proposed opposite, which is the cutting of billions of dollars from public spending. With that stable, predictable funding they will find ways to do their part in terms of reducing emissions. Everyone wants to except the members opposite, who want to pretend that climate change isn't actually a problem, or maybe they're middle of the road, or maybe they're on the far extreme of denial. We're not really sure. But do you know who is? The mayor of Calgary. He says: it was interesting to hear someone say that things are going to help Canadians' investment and moving forward with the fact that Canada is making real steps in pricing carbon.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.  
The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### Essential Services Commissioner

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Essential Services Commissioner wields significant power over Alberta's labour agreements. It's imperative that they be fair-minded and independent because they make final, binding decisions that impact public-sector employers and employees. But this government has hired a long-time NDP supporter who has personally donated to the NDP over a dozen times, giving that party over \$20,000. How can Albertans be sure that the Essential Services Commissioner hired is going to represent Albertans' best interests and not just be the latest supporter getting a return on their investment?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, I think our track record on making sure that we're pulling in the best experts from across the country is proven: for example, former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge, who advised us on our \$34 billion infrastructure plan; Joseph Doucet, University of Alberta School of Business dean, chair of the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy. The list goes on, and I'm very proud of our latest appointment. She certainly brings forward great expertise, both from Saskatchewan and Alberta, in terms of labour relations and will be a tremendous asset in this role.

2:00

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, she forgot to mention Manitoba in there. This same government gave a sole-source contract for a staggering \$25,000 of taxpayer money to a former NDP MLA to share lived experience. Not sure what that means. This same government demonstrated blindness to conflict of interest in their hiring of a top labour negotiator. This same government couldn't even commission a simple report on media accreditation without a conflict of interest. Will the Premier make public why other applicants for this position were turned down and who made the final call for hiring?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The applicant was chosen by a search committee which conducted a thorough talent search for the best possible person for the job. For example, Andy Sims, who's been commended in this House as being of excellent character and understanding this file very carefully, said that he knows the woman, he knows that she has personal integrity, and she is a first-rate person. We certainly stand behind the process that was put in place to select the best person for this panel moving forward.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, it's integral that the Essential Services Commissioner be fair minded. The new Essential Services Commissioner personally donated \$5,000 to this Premier's leadership campaign. That same Premier's government represents the employer's side in any dispute brought before the Essential Services Commissioner, and the same government had a say in the hiring of that commissioner. When the NDP were elected, was this the change the Premier championed?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans certainly elected us to put forward the best work possible, and Gwen Gray and her experience and expertise as an Alberta labour lawyer will serve us well as the Essential Services Commissioner. Commissioner Gray has more than a decade of experience, again, in Alberta labour, employment, human rights, and law. In addition, she also previously served as chair of the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board. Of course, again, as I've said, we've appointed people from all sorts of different backgrounds, including ATB president Dave Mowat, who we chose to conduct our royalty review. We're bringing the best people forward to help do this work, and Ms Gray is certainly one of those.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

### Job Creation

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier and cabinet talk a lot about job-creation programs, yet when you ask them for specifics, they never have any. Nearly every week this government issues a news release about creating jobs, yet Albertans are not finding new jobs. In fact, Alberta government stats indicate increasing unemployment and falling job vacancies. Alberta lost 20,800 jobs in April alone. To the Premier: other than giving jobs to one minister and some out-of-province, NDP-world-view hacks, how many new jobs for Albertans has your government actually created?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to this question. There are two approaches to dealing with economic shock caused by the drop of price in oil as well as natural disasters, including the wildfires. The opposition would have us turn back the clock. Actually, they spoke philosophically about how great it was, the 1990s, when they fired thousands of teachers, nurses, and public servants. Instead, we're using a very balanced, reasoned approach, moving forward with a number of different economic stimulation plans. We'll continue to support public service.

**The Speaker:** So far so good, but I remind you again: keep the volume down, please.

**Mr. McIver:** That would be one job less tens of thousands of energy jobs.

The economic development minister has said that 80 per cent of contracts for the Fort McMurray rebuild have gone to Fort McMurray businesses, yet I've heard the number is false. The Fort McMurray Construction Association has said that workers from the community are being overlooked for jobs. Since the minister said that there's information out there, I'm going to give the minister a chance to clear that up. To the minister: will you commit to tabling

a list of the 532 contracts signed, who they were awarded to, and where those employers will get their workers from?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. Being a former municipal leader, the member should actually know that the bulk of these contracts – in fact, the government of Alberta has only issued five contracts. The over 500 contracts the member is speaking of were issued by the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo. It is up to them to decide if they would like to disclose the list, but I can tell you that 80 per cent, or 4 out of 5 contracts, of the 500 that the regional municipality has issued have been to Fort McMurray workers and owners.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A vibrant and viable Fort McMurray is critical to the successful rebuilding of the economic structure of the region. We know that the province has already contracted an Ontario company to map the fire damage using unmanned aerial vehicles. Can the minister explain why the contract was outsourced away from the province without hiring somebody from Fort McMurray or even Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as the member will know, under extraneous circumstances there are times that governments use sole-source contracts. In the example of the Fort McMurray fire the five contracts that have been issued were a combination of the fact that they needed to be done in a very critical, timely manner. As well, our government will only look outside of Fort McMurray and outside of Alberta when there are contracts that cannot be filled by Alberta-based companies. But I can tell you that we are working with the regional municipality to ensure . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Renewable Energy Strategy

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, this government has made it clear that it's phasing out coal-fired electricity, and I believe this is the right thing to do. Less clear is how quickly coal electricity is going to phase out and what mix of natural gas and renewables will replace coal and the impact of that on the public. We're already seeing a massive public debt burden and an oversupply of electricity in this province, so this energy shift will not come cheap. Can the government provide Albertans and the House with a cost-benefit analysis for the optimal balance of renewables and natural gas replacing coal?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Our government is pursuing the long-term phase-out of coal-fired plants in the best interests of Albertans, including the health and economic impacts. We're building on robust climate leadership panel recommendations, and we have tasked the AESO to consult with energy industry experts to recommend the program to bring on more renewables. The AESO has already consulted with

hundreds of companies, experts, and citizens on how we can keep costs low while bringing on renewables. We expect this report to be here soon, and we will make the . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It would be nice to know what the cost-benefit analysis was before we make the decisions about the pace of phase-out.

What impact will the decisions have on consumer prices?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Well, unlike our former government, we are putting the protection of ratepayers first. A key part of the AESO's analysis is to achieve this important transition away from coal at the lowest possible cost to consumers. We look forward to their recommendations. For the first time ever we will be investing in programs through Energy Efficiency Alberta that will help Albertans reduce their electricity consumption and reduce their bills.

**Dr. Swann:** I guess that's why they call this question period, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the cost of implementing renewables is likely to be high but potentially able to earn attractive and stable long-term returns, has the government considered creating a publicly held corporation similar to the Alberta Energy Company under Premier Lougheed, allowing individual Albertans to invest in their renewable energy future? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.  
Quiet, please.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time our focus is to carry out our first renewable energy auction within the context of Alberta's unique electricity market. We have had significant interest from renewable energy companies around the world, who are looking to invest billions of dollars in Alberta. That's the work that is under way right now. It's on time, and we are on course to hold our first renewables auction this year. Our intention is transitioning our electricity system away from coal towards a cleaner, healthier, and more stable mix of renewable power and natural gas. We will continue to listen to the advice of . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

### Forest Industry Issues

**Mr. Westhead:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's forestry industry is the third-largest industry in our province. Forestry supports good jobs and is a renewable resource. But concerns have been raised about the impacts of clear-cutting on the landscape. Can the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry explain what his department is doing to address these concerns?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. Our government is committed to the protection of the land, water, and environmentally sustainable industry practices. We'll continue to monitor harvest operations to ensure companies maintain high standards. In cases where communities have raised concerns over operations in their areas, my department officials have worked closely with concerned citizens and the industry to modify operations to increase buffers for habitat, watersheds, and other

valuable parts of the landscape. We're also looking at changing the directive on structural retention in harvest areas. This will clarify what portion of trees and large stands are expected to be left in a cutblock. This directive remains under consultation with stakeholders.

2:10

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a significant amount of timber harvesting in our province occurs in the traditional territories of indigenous Albertans, to the same minister: can you tell the House how our government is partnering with indigenous groups to ensure their valid issues are addressed?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, our government made the bold decision to implement the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. As part of this government's commitment to renew and improve its relationship with indigenous peoples, we are examining ways in which we might find a common and practical understanding of how to implement those principles. That work is ongoing. This will be an evolving conversation with our indigenous partners. The department has also awarded timber quotas to a number of indigenous communities. I am heartened to hear of new partnerships being formed between forest companies and indigenous communities.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the softwood lumber agreement expired last October and given that this is a very sensitive issue and many in the industry are relying on Alberta's leadership on this file, can the minister tell the House what his department is doing to ensure Alberta's interest is looked after?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber agreement expired on October 12, 2015. Discussions have begun between Canada and the U.S. to negotiate a new agreement. Canada's forest industry relies significantly on exports. It is very important for our province that Alberta's companies have secure markets for their lumber. Alberta would support an extension of the recently expired agreement. There is currently a one-year standstill agreement where we can negotiate the softwood lumber agreement. We'll continue to work with the federal government, our lumber industry, and other provinces. We want to see a long-term solution. It is in the best interests of all parties and of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

#### Carbon Levy and Education Costs

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The carbon tax is going to have severe implications on costs for school boards as well as for families. This government knew that they wanted to pass a carbon tax that would impact transportation and heating costs for school boards, yet the Education budget has minimal increases for heating costs and only minimal increases for transportation funding. Why did the Minister of Education not do an economic assessment of the carbon tax regarding education and build in the costs of the carbon tax into his recently passed Education budget?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, our climate leadership plan has an

integral connection with our schools. We know that education, teachers, and students are very interested in reducing our carbon footprint, and what greater place to start than schools across the province. Now, we are working very closely with all of our school boards to make sure that that analysis is done and that we are taking our carbon tax money – yes – and we will invest it back into the school boards so that they can have projects that will reduce their carbon footprints.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An impact assessment might have solved the problems this next question is going to bring up.

Given that we are hearing from school boards that they are preparing to lay off aides and other front-line staff to reduce costs and given that school boards are facing hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional costs to their budgets due to the carbon tax, is this minister content with laying off front-line workers in order for school boards to be able to afford this government's downloading of the carbon tax onto schools?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we are working very closely with all of our school boards to make sure that the cost of the carbon levy is affordable and that they can work through it in the most expeditious way possible. Certainly, this notion that they are going to actually be laying off any workers is absurd.

**Mr. Smith:** The minister needs to talk to his school boards.

Given that school boards are able to raise funds only through school fees and other fundraising opportunities and given that the carbon tax is going to have a major impact on school board funding and given that school boards like Rocky View school division are increasing their transportation fees and since the Minister of Education seems to be stalled in giving school boards direction regarding school fees, is this minister supportive of passing on the carbon tax to parents through increases in school fees?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, on this side of the House we embrace the science of climate change. We accept it as a fact, unlike the other side of the House, where we have many, many different examples of folks who deny the science of climate change outright. They call it a hoax. On the other hand, we have 500 schools that have signed up to be powered by wind, 25 school boards that have signed 25-year contracts with Calgary-based BluEarth Renewables, and here's what the teachers had to say: instead of just talking about how green energy can be, we can actually do it right here. That's because they understand climate change.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

#### Carbon Levy and Agriculture Costs

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard concerns from Alberta's ag producers about what the carbon tax will cost them. Unlike this government's record on consulting with ag producers, I hope that there's a plan for consultation with farmers about the new carbon tax. To the minister of ag: I know it's been said before, but will you clearly state today that marked fuel for farmers will be exempt from the carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I'm happy to reiterate what we said on November 22, 2015, when we indicated that marked fuel would be exempt. It is also contained within Bill 20. In addition, we've had a number of conversations already with the agricultural sector, through last fall, the technical engagement and consultations we did, and since then the minister and I have met with a number of different groups and interests, including the irrigation districts and others. We're happy to work with them going forward to reduce their costs and therefore their emissions.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are a lot of input costs for ag producers on farms that will be affected by your government's carbon tax and given that the carbon tax will not only impact the cost of fuel to transport fertilizer but also impact how much fertilizer will cost to produce since fertilizer production uses large amounts of natural gas, to the minister: have you calculated how much more fertilizer will cost farmers because of your carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, last fall's consultation included technical engagements with the fertilizer sector in order to move forward on a series of performance standards for the fertilizer sector as we move them from the specified gas emitters regulation to the performance standard system, which, of course, will phase in in 2018. We're going to make sure that we design those policies in consultation with them so that we do not adversely affect our energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries, of which fertilizer is one.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It may not affect the fertilizer industry because they just pass it on to the farmer.

Given that there are not just input costs but also output costs that affect Alberta farmers, that they'll have to absorb, and given that when farmers sell their products, they'll have to pay higher transportation costs, which means farmers get it both ways, coming and going, to the minister: how much more will farmers have to pay to export their products because of your government's carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there are a number of different inputs as well as outputs in agricultural production. We are working with the sector to ensure that we've got the right set of policies for farmers, ranchers, and others to ensure that we can move forward on bioenergy and other innovative solutions and work with the agricultural sector. This has formed a large part of our consultations to date and will continue to do so.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Tourism Industry Support

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP carbon tax on everything will systematically hurt each and every industry in our province, including tourism. Plain and simple, this tax will make things worse going forward. Albertans understand that international

flights are the gateway to tourism in Alberta, and now on Thursday we heard that international flights are being permanently cancelled. The carbon tax will apply to all flights in and out of Alberta. It'll be another blow to the industry. Why is this NDP government damaging our province's tourism potential by taxing Albertans and the aviation industry?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Interjurisdictional flights are not subject to the carbon levy. They're exempt.

**Mr. Orr:** Just fuel.

Building a tax bubble is not going to help tourism. Given that tourism is a significant economic driver for our province, particularly during this economic downturn, and given that the NDP government on the one hand talks about diversifying the economy but on the other hand is taxing everyday Albertans, hotel owners, tour outfitters, visitors even, will this government acknowledge that you can't have it both ways, that you can't tax the people out of business that you are relying on to grow the economy?

2:20

**Miranda:** Thank you to the member for the question. I'm happy to report to the House the positive growth in tourism, both in spending and visitation, in 2014, with 900,000 visitors actually travelling to Alberta, which is up 17 per cent from the year before. We have seen an increase in tourism. We will continue to support the industry. We're very excited about what we've seen so far.

Thank you.

**Mr. Orr:** Given that this NDP government is going to make hotel owners and operators feel a double whammy of both a carbon tax and a mandatory increase to the minimum wage, those in the tourism industry are rightly worried. Now we actually begin to see signs that it is not growing as supposed. These risky policies will have a profound impact on communities and tourism across the province. Will the NDP government commit to cancelling both the carbon tax and the minimum wage increase since to date they have refused to provide any form of an economic impact assessment?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the hon. member is incorrect. Interjurisdictional flights are not covered by the levy. Now, additionally, on these matters of economic impact, this is why we have reduced the small-business rate by one percentage point. It's a one-third reduction in the small-business tax rate, and we're very proud of that. In addition, because we accept the science of climate change and we do believe it is real, we will have a series of energy efficiency programs that will be available to small business and to medium-sized business as well. We, unlike the Official Opposition, do not deny the science of climate change.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Little Bow.

### Educational Delivery Choices

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents are concerned about continued parental choice in education. I was pleased to see unanimous consent supporting the original wording of Motion 504 earlier, but there are ongoing concerns in the home education community about financial clawbacks. Many families make major sacrifices in order to home-school their children. Can



the minister clarify this and reaffirm that funding for home education isn't being clawed back?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, it's important that we look carefully at the funds that we put to education in all forms. Certainly, it's true that we have not clawed back home-school funding. In fact, we increased funding for enrolment right across the board in all forms of education here in the province of Alberta, so the ongoing rumours about clawing back the home-schooling money are simply not true.

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, given that this Assembly has recognized the right of parents to make decisions on educational delivery for their children and given that there are lengthy waiting lists for some charter schools in our province and given that some hostile special-interest groups are publicly calling charter schools an outdated idea that should be rolled into the public system, can the minister reaffirm that the current government will not cut funding for these educational institutions in this or any future term?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, our side of the House is very happy to know that he recognizes there'll be many terms of this current government here to serve. Certainly, I have made a very solid commitment to each of the forms of education delivery that we have. I was just at the Westmount charter high school graduation last week, where they were very happy to know that I had extended their charter for another 15 years. They are certainly doing a great job, and I think that our caucus here is doing a great job affirming education.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a recent report showed that independent schools saved taxpayers \$750 million over five years, between 2010 and 2014, and given that the cost to taxpayers in private schools is less than half the public school cost, can the minister reaffirm that private schools save public money and that the current government will not cut funding or change this model in this or any future term?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, certainly, as the minister now for just over a year, I've seen lots of really good work in all forms of education delivery that we have here in the province of Alberta. Certainly, independent schools exemplify a lot of good work as well. Certainly, the 70 per cent funding, in fact, that we do give to independent schools has remained with the increase in enrolment right across the province. I think that the organization that represents that has affirmed to me that they're very grateful for that, and they recognize the good work that we're doing to make sure that education is properly funded in this province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

#### **Fort McMurray Wildfire Economic Recovery**

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our caucus is glad to see the rebuilding efforts begin in Fort McMurray. Local businesses are ready and willing to help, which is why I was concerned when the Fort McMurray Construction Association stated that they were told

by this government that the contractors would need to have a previous contract with the province to be included in the rebuild effort. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: will contractors looking to assist with the rebuilding efforts need to have a previous GOA contract to be considered?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. There are no prerequisites as far as contracts for companies bidding in Fort McMurray. In fact, we have been working with the regional municipality, the economic development committee, a number of organizations up in Fort McMurray, including the chamber, and encouraging all companies from Fort McMurray and Alberta-wide, if they are interested in contracts, to register at the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo website, [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca), and they will be eligible companies.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister of economic development stated that external companies would only be used in complicated, specific projects where no local expertise was available and given that the complicated nature of these projects may require subcontracting, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what mechanism has your government put in place to match up out-of-work contractors with external companies who may need extra labour for their projects?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question, a very good question, but it goes back to the same answer. First of all, the government of Alberta is working with the regional municipality. In fact, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and I had a very productive meeting with a number of local businesses, local business organizations just last week to look at ways the government of Alberta can support the rebuild effort. We've committed to using local companies wherever possible – I know that's the will of the mayor of Fort McMurray as well – so I would encourage any interested company to go to [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca) and register.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these projects will be going on for some time and given that local contractors will be looking to help rebuild their community until the job is done and given that the government has committed to providing support to an on-the-ground small-business support centre, again to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what is the dollar amount allocated to this support centre, what types of staff will be assisting small-business owners, and when will the facility be operational?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question and for drawing attention to the fact that our government has committed \$750,000, \$500,000 of that to go to an on-the-ground support centre that will provide supports for businesses, including a space for them to get access to information, a workspace. We're doing that working in partnership with the municipality of Wood Buffalo's economic development organization in addition to the chamber of commerce, the Canadian Red Cross,

the Athabasca Tribal Council, the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### Support for Low-income Albertans

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Edmonton-Centre we're certainly well aware of the challenges that are faced by lower income Albertans, and my office often works to help provide supports to individuals, students, families who are struggling to get by, so I'm proud of the work that our government has been doing in freezing tuition, increasing the minimum wage, investing in affordable housing, and protecting Albertans from predatory lending. Still, there are many who need help in accessing the supports and services that they need in their communities, often because their monthly budget leaves little room for transportation. To the Minister of Human Services: how are you taking action to ensure that lower income Albertans can access . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I was pleased to announce last week that as part of our effort to reduce and prevent poverty, our government and the city of Edmonton are developing a new low-income transit pass to make public transit more affordable for families. We are also cost sharing half of the existing program with the city of Calgary. The government will provide Calgary with \$13.5 million and Edmonton with \$12.4 million over a three-year period. This project and this new investment will make sure . . .

2:30

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm proud to hear that we're making it easier and more affordable for lower income families to get around the city.

To the same minister: could you give us a sense, then, of what kind of impact this initiative will have on the lives of these families?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you again to the member for the really important question. Low-income transit passes make it easier for families to get around the city to access jobs, education, their appointments, health care, community resources, and government services. The city of Edmonton estimates that the fully implemented program will benefit 20,000 lower income people in Edmonton. The Calgary program provides services to 25,000 Calgarians.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An excellent reminder that even seemingly small supports like access to transit can have large impacts on reducing poverty.

To the same minister: what other such initiatives has your ministry put in place to help improve the lives of lower income Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member. Our government wants everyone to have the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from their communities. The low-income transit passes in Edmonton and Calgary are just two pieces of our ongoing work and commitment to helping Albertans. Other notable initiatives include the Alberta child tax benefit, which will begin this summer. Under this program a single parent who makes \$25,000 a year with two children will get \$1,650 this year. Our government is committed to supporting . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unemployment in my riding of Drayton Valley-Devon has hit an all-time high. Coal-powered plants like Genesee 3 will close early under this government's early phase-out of coal, causing hundreds more people to lose their jobs, despite the fact that in my constituency overall air quality is the best it has been in 30 years and all measured concentrations were below Alberta ambient air quality objectives. Can the minister of environment explain to my constituents why she's pushing her party's risky economic manifesto and killing jobs by closing plants even when air quality . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
I believe the question was to the minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, it is true that post-2030, 14 years from now, some plants will close early, and that will be over and above the current federal schedule that begins in 2019. Of course, it is well known – the science is well established – that pollution from coal-burning power plants is harmful to our health, is costing Albertans hundreds of millions in additional health care costs and lost productivity. We understand that on this side of the House because we understand that climate science is real . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Genesee 3 plant in my riding is on the cutting edge of clean-coal technology and that it received a special exemption from the federal government to operate beyond 2050 for this reason and since retraining and unemployment insurance are feeble replacements for good jobs with stable wages, can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade please explain what industry he intends to replace the coal industry with that will provide an equivalent standard of living and quality of life for the people in my riding?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government has made a commitment to investing in training and other opportunities in coal-fired electricity affected communities, including out by Genesee, Wabamun, and elsewhere. That is because we know that phasing out coal is the right thing to do. We know that across the industrialized world this is occurring in order to avoid both greenhouse gas emissions and harmful effects from coal pollution. We understand this because we understand the science, and we accept the science, unlike the . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that new major economic projects in our province are required to conduct environmental assessments to measure their impact and given that these assessments are a crucial step in the process and are a way to ensure legitimacy and stability in Alberta's energy sector, when the future of so many Albertans, including my constituents', is at stake, why is this government still refusing to conduct an economic impact assessment on the early phase-out of coal?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's very clear that the world's global financial markets, big banks and others, have moved away from the financing of coal-fired electricity. One only needs to read the *New York Times* to know this.

Every 150 megawatts of wind energy capacity represents \$316 million in new investment. Every solar project of that scale creates 2,000 full-time construction jobs. We accept the science of climate change, and that's why we are moving this province forward. The Official Opposition would have us stuck in the past.

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

### Bail Process Review

**Mr. Ellis:** Great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago the province finally released its review into Alberta's bail hearings system. The majority of the recommendations will make our streets safer by ensuring that thorough reviews of bail applications take place to safeguard against another tragedy occurring like the murder of Constable Wynn in St. Albert. However, during budget estimates I was surprised when the minister said that her department does not have a time frame for implementing the potentially life-saving recommendations. To the Justice minister: can you now please give us an idea of a timeline for acting on these recommendations?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Well, of course, we know that this report is critical, which is why our government moved forward with it in an expeditious way. This is a report which balances the rights of the individual when they come into conflict with the justice system along with the safety of the public in general. We need to consult with a number of our partners because, obviously, police will be significantly impacted by this. Once we have had those consultations with our partners and once we understand our responsibility, we will move forward with a plan. You know, the Official Opposition really needs to understand that consultation is a thing . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. member.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that during my time as a bail hearing officer with the Calgary Police Service I took pride in ensuring that public safety was of utmost priority and given that I received push-back from some elements within the bail process about the increased use of section 524 of the Criminal Code, which can ensure that repeat offenders are held to account, and given that section 524 is a critical tool for keeping repeat offenders off our streets and maintaining public safety, to the minister: how will you promote and facilitate the use of section 524 in order to save lives and protect the public?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, one of the recommendations that came out of the report was to ensure that all presenters, whether they be Crown presenters or whether they be police presenters, are given the appropriate education. We have moved forward already on taking steps to ensure that there is education around section 524 of the Criminal Code, which, as the member noted, is a really important provision when considering judicial interim release. Those education programs are already under way; they're starting to move out. We will be working with our partners going forward to make sure that that education is ongoing.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, this is not rocket science; it's a two-minute refresher course at best. Thank you.

Recommendations 1 and 3 of the bail review report recommended using prosecutors for all bail hearings, and the federal Crown has already acted on these recommendations by ensuring that its prosecutors are available for all bail hearings. To the Justice minister: what are you doing provincially to address this critical recommendation? To my knowledge nothing has occurred, so what are you waiting for?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, I think I'd like to first point out, in refuting the premise, that section 524 of the Criminal Code is actually a fairly legally complex mechanism, and that's why it's important that we ensure ongoing training for our Crown prosecutors. I think that the bail review report made that pretty clear, and the hon. member ought to go ahead and read it.

In terms of moving forward with Crown prosecutors, we are consulting . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, your voice is too loud. I didn't hear that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

2:40

### Tourism Promotion

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we work to get Alberta off the resource royalty roller coaster and its constant boom-and-bust economic cycle, the government has made its commitment to diversifying the economy a top priority. Given that we all know that in this current economic climate the tourism industry has a critical role to play in our future and our economic diversification, we need to ensure that we're strengthening this industry. To the Minister of Culture and Tourism: can the minister please update the House on the growth of the tourism sector in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The minister of tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Of course, tourism is an important tool to both economic diversification and the development of jobs in our province. I'm delighted to report that both tourism spending and visitation from 2014 has increased to almost 900,000 visitors from overseas travelling to Alberta, representing about a 17 per cent increase from the year before. Visitation from the U.S. has increased to more than 770,000 people, with \$34.7 million being added to the economy. I think that's pretty exciting.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is encouraging news for our province.

Given the combination of Alberta's diverse landscape offering various tourism opportunities and the low Canadian dollar making our province an attractive tourism destination, can the minister please inform the House on the economic contributions this increase in tourists has had on Alberta's economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. As I mentioned, there's been a billion dollars to the province, an increase of 22 per cent from the previous year. There was a 12 per cent increase as well in tourism spending from U.S. visitors from 2013 and \$8.3 billion in 2014. This is very great news for our province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Canadians are currently enjoying national Tourism Week and given that similar partnerships are needed in Alberta to both maximize tourism opportunities and bring in tourist dollars, can the minister please provide some examples of Alberta's new initiatives when it comes to tourism development and promotion?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. We're working very closely with airports, destination marketing organizations, and industry associations to deliver tools to the new direct flights between Calgary and Beijing. We're also as a ministry leading the development of the Castle region tourism strategy. In addition, we are assisting in the development of tools to assist both municipalities and operators to develop and enhance tourism in the province by the tourism entrepreneurship program, which is an initiative that will provide tools and services to help entrepreneurs start new tourism businesses and help existing tourism entrepreneurs innovate . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Members' Statements (continued)

#### Firefighter Service Award

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, the events that have transpired over the last several weeks have reinforced how important firefighters are. While the rest of us are running from the flames, they're running towards the flames. Firefighters are running towards the inferno that threatens to engulf our cities, our homes, and our lives. They train to fight a force of nature that cannot always be contained.

This weekend I had the honour to be present at the ceremony celebrating those firefighters with exemplary fire service. The Lieutenant Governor of Alberta and the Alberta Minister of Justice gave awards to those who have gone above and beyond in their duty to protect Albertans. Considering what these men and women do on a regular basis, I do not know how they choose who goes above and beyond. To me, they all deserve to be honoured.

I was not able to greet him in person at the event, but I would like to congratulate the constituent from my Calgary-Foothills riding who received an award, Mr. Bruce Barrs. Thank you for everything you do for the people of my riding.

I would like to congratulate every single firefighter who received an award. It is a job that we're not all cut out for. It requires nerves of steel, that I do not have. It requires a calm focus and trust in their team while in the midst of a burning building. It requires an aspect of humanity that very few have. It requires the willingness to risk your life for another. For that and for so much more I would like to thank every single firefighter for everything they do for Albertans. My special thanks goes out to the firefighters who have travelled all the way from South Africa and other countries and other provinces of Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give oral notice of a motion for tomorrow's Order Paper, that motion being as follows:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to implement measures to regulate medical assistance in dying consistent with the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *Carter versus Canada* (Attorney General) and any legislative measures approved by the Parliament of Canada to ensure that Albertans can benefit from the orderly implementation of this court decision so that (a) Albertans may exercise their rights to access medical assistance in dying; (b) appropriate safeguards be put in place to protect vulnerable Albertans; (c) conscience rights are respected while ensuring the rights of patients to access this service; and (d) the practice of medical assistance in dying is closely monitored and measures regulating medical assistance in dying are reviewed within one year.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs I would like to give oral notice of a motion for tomorrow's Order Paper, that motion being as follows:

Be it resolved that pursuant to section 18(4) of the Emergency Management Act the Legislative Assembly continue the state of emergency declared in the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo on May 4, 2016, Order in Council 107/2016, up to and including June 30, 2016.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a May 26, 2016, UNESCO report entitled *World Heritage and Tourism in a Changing Climate*, which states that important UNESCO World Heritage Sites like the Statue of Liberty and Old Town Lunenburg are being threatened by climate change.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to table the requisite number of copies of various documents showing Conservative MP and leadership candidate Michael Chong; B.C. Premier Christy Clark; the Ontario PC leader, Patrick Brown; the Newfoundland and Labrador PC leader, Paul Davis; and Manitoba PC Minister of Sustainable Development Cathy Cox endorsing carbon pricing to combat man-made climate change.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of two documents to which I referred in question period today: one indicating that wind power will now supply 500 schools, 25 school boards; and another indicating that Alberta can forge its own energy future, including with agriculture, wind, and solar.

2:50

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Hoffman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions annual report 2014-15; College of Midwives of Alberta annual report for the year ended December 31, 2015; pursuant to the Health Professions Act the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta annual report 2014-2015; College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta 2015 annual report; College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Alberta 2015 annual report; Alberta College of Combined Laboratory and X-Ray Technologists 2015 annual report.

On behalf of the hon. Ms Ganley, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, response to Written Question 9, asked for by Mr. Cyr on May 2, 2016: "How many maintenance enforcement accounts were in arrears, and by how much were they in arrears on February 29, 2016?"

### Orders of the Day

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order to proceed immediately to debate on Bill 206, the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 206 Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start by saying thank you to all the members in the House today.

It is my absolute privilege to rise today and move second reading of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share with you a little bit about why this bill is so important. As a social worker that has practised in a variety of roles for 20 years, I have seen first-hand the impact of trauma on individuals. Children, youth, adults, and seniors can all be affected. I have worked with both the individual that has been directly impacted by trauma and then those family members, support people, caregivers, and professionals that are in their lives.

As a front-line worker, Mr. Speaker, I experienced direct trauma along with some of my co social workers. Initially, although upset, we minimized the situation and talked about this being part of the job. Our manager and supervisors were aware of the situation and within a few days brought in trauma support workers to do a debrief

with our team and any other staff that were indirectly impacted. I remember being so thankful to have the opportunity it gave us to talk about this experience.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't enough for me. After a few weeks I still wasn't feeling myself. I cried uncontrollably. I couldn't sleep, and every time I closed my eyes, the situation was on a reel. I continued to come to work and gave the usual expected response with my peers when asked how I was doing. It wasn't until a friend and co-worker intervened and suggested that I might benefit from seeing a professional and my doctor – I didn't see the symptoms in myself and was so grateful for her help – that I was able to get treatment and was supported by my workplace to take care of myself. Because of this early intervention, I was able to get to a place where I was no longer suffering from the symptoms that were making everyday life absolutely unbearable.

Mr. Speaker, most of us have heard the term posttraumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD. It's a disorder caused by a traumatic event that is outside the normal realm of human experience. With PTSD symptoms continue for more than one month and may include flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety as well as uncontrollable thoughts such as reliving the event. PTSD causes significant distress, which can result in impairment of the individual's social interactions, decrease in the capacity to work, or impairment of other important areas of functioning. Some jobs and occupations place people in situations of higher occupational stress. Military personnel, first responders, doctors, nurses, and other front-line workers experience higher rates of PTSD than other professions.

Repeated abuse and trauma such as that experienced in domestic violence and war can also result in PTSD. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association posttraumatic stress disorder is a mental illness involving exposure to trauma, including death or the threat of death; serious injury; sexual violence such as rape, assault, torture, being kidnapped or held captive; military combat; severe car accidents; and natural or man-made disasters.

The Canadian Forces mental health survey for 2013 says that PTSD symptoms include repeated reliving of the event, disturbance of day-to-day activity, avoidance of stimuli associated with the event, irritability, outbursts of anger, or sleeping difficulty. Veterans, front-line workers, emergency personnel, rescue workers, and first responders are some of the Albertans who are vulnerable to developing PTSD. The Canadian Forces mental health survey for 2013 says that within Canadian Forces personnel the rate of PTSD doubled between 2002 and 2012, with about 5.3 per cent of military personnel being affected. As well, according to the Canadian Mental Health Association PTSD also affects women almost twice as much as it does men. Refugees are more prone to PTSD, and aboriginal people who attended residential schools have higher chances of suffering from PTSD.

Mr. Speaker, when I decided to bring forward this legislation several months ago, I started consulting with groups and individuals who have worked with PTSD issues directly, individuals with PTSD as well as family members whose loved ones have PTSD. I feel truly honoured to have had the incredible opportunity to hear from so many Albertans who in some way have been impacted by posttraumatic stress disorder. The courage and the trust that it takes to share their story is something that I really admire, knowing that telling their story is part of breaking the stigma that for too long has been associated with PTSD.

In the last two months I have reached out to over 40 stakeholder groups comprised of front-line workers, including corrections officers, social workers, workers with child and family services; Alberta Health Services emergency; RCMP; Edmonton fire

services; the Edmonton Police Service; people from the Canadian Forces health services; Veterans Affairs Canada, the Canadian military; military families resource centre; a spouse who has run peer support groups; the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine; indigenous community representatives; members of the LGBTQ-plus community; unions; settlement and immigration agencies serving refugees and newcomers; journalists; emergency roadside assistance workers; as well as physicians and psychologists.

The list is endless, Mr. Speaker, and the powerful truth is that anyone can be impacted. PTSD can affect our parents, our siblings, our children, our grandchildren, our co-workers, and our neighbours. I have heard that individuals affected by PTSD will struggle to identify that they are suffering and often blame themselves or see this as a weakness when really, as Brigadier General Eyre articulated so well in his statements to me, this is a normal reaction for many when facing abnormal circumstances.

These stakeholders from diverse backgrounds have all indicated one common understanding, and that is that we need better awareness and advocacy for PTSD. Mr. Speaker, that is what this bill intends to do. By dedicating a day, June 27, as PTSD awareness day in our province, we will raise awareness and educate the general public about PTSD, its causes, symptoms, who is most affected, and how to find supports in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, a lack of awareness is increasing the stigma associated with PTSD and putting people's lives at risk. Through this piece of unique legislation we will create a day to raise awareness and educate the general public about PTSD, its causes, symptoms, who is affected, and how to find supports. The day would highlight those most affected, such as veterans, front-line workers, emergency personnel, rescue workers, and first responders as well as those who have experienced trauma, such as survivors of residential schools and refugees who have escaped war. It would educate the public about the long-term effects and triggers and recognize the importance of accurate and early diagnosis.

Given the shame that still exists for those suffering PTSD, the day would serve to raise awareness and aim to reduce the stigma amongst those with PTSD and their friends and families and within Albertan communities. June 27 is national PTSD day in the United States. In Canada we do not have a PTSD awareness day act yet. We might be leading the way here in Alberta.

3:00

The fire in Fort McMurray is still prominent in all of our minds. The fast action, dedication, and hard work of the first responders has saved 90 per cent of the structures in the city of Fort McMurray. Mr. Speaker, while PTSD has a relatively high profile, it is only one of several possible operational stress injuries, OSI. The government of Alberta is addressing OSI among its workforce and first responders through a crossgovernmental OSI working group. This group is led by the fire commissioner's office, Municipal Affairs, and includes Labour.

The bill will create a bigger picture in constructing awareness and a support mechanism. Now is the time to legislate a day dedicated to PTSD awareness. It's the right thing to do. I encourage all members of the Assembly to unanimously support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for bringing this bill forward. Thanks to all for the opportunity to speak on Bill 206, the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act. It, of course, is very, very timely in the wake of all that has happened in our northern communities to

be discussing PTSD and the various ways in which it impacts the lives of Albertans. There were a great deal of people in these cities and towns who had to evacuate at a moment's notice and endure some incredibly harrowing and stressful circumstances to be able to escape with their lives. There were also many dedicated first responders who stayed to fight the fires that were sweeping across and to maintain order amongst the chaos. Their courageous actions are to be commended and remembered.

However, I do think we have a tendency to gloss over the tremendous emotional impact that these stressful and dangerous situations have on these brave men and women. Perhaps it's because we see them as heroes and we forget they are also people with very human needs. Who helps a person who helps the rest of us? Like many of us here, I was struck by the photos of firefighters in Fort McMurray lying on the grass, exhausted from many continuous hours of strenuous work saving a city and preserving Albertans' lives. I was struck by the image of such sheer physical exhaustion and commitment, literally going until the body could not go any farther. But behind the obvious physical exhaustion, the signs of which were clearly evident, what is the emotional and mental toll, which is less obvious, in the minds of those who serve us so well?

Mr. Speaker, PTSD has a long history but with not such a great understanding of it as we have today. In the First World War it was commonly referred to as shell shock, which gave way to battle fatigue and other related terms. Today we call it PTSD, but the nature of the affliction is the same. Severe psychological shock or injury can cause persistent mental and emotional strain. This can in turn manifest itself as physical symptoms such as insomnia, anxiety, or loss of concentration. The condition is often treated more successfully with early intervention. Finding an exact number of sufferers is a little difficult because studies of other North American populations peg the lifetime prevalence at approximately 8 per cent and the 12 month prevalence at 3 and a half per cent. I think it's safe to say that a high number of these are people who respond to emergencies as a career.

I do know people who have difficulty returning to work after a PTSD diagnosis, and these personal experiences form part of the Wildrose mental health recommendations, which included improved access to mental health supports for PTSD sufferers and increased awareness of their plight. I'm also happy that in Alberta front-line workers who receive a PTSD diagnosis from a physician or psychologist are presumed to have suffered it on the job and, unless proven otherwise, automatically qualify for workers' compensation benefits. I was pleased to vote with my Wildrose colleagues in support of that approximately three years ago, and I'm especially glad that we do take this seriously as a workplace injury.

Now, my understanding is that this bill would have Alberta's PTSD awareness day coincide with the American version of the same name introduced by the U.S. Senate several years ago. Mr. Speaker, I think this is a common-sense move that we're all behind.

In closing, I will be voting in favour of this bill, as I'm sure all of my Wildrose colleagues will be as well. Thank you.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to speak in support of Bill 206, the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act. I want to thank the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs for initiating this bill. Posttraumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD, is a disorder caused by a traumatic event that is outside the normal realm of human experience. These symptoms continue for more than a month and may include flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety as well as uncontrollable thoughts such as reliving the event. It causes significant distress, which can result in the impairment of the individual's social interactions, a decrease in

capacity to work, or impairment of other important areas of functioning.

I would have really liked to have known about PTSD when I worked with refugees in the early '90s fleeing the war in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia because if I had known about it, then I would have understood why the people I worked with were acting the way that they were, especially their inability to move forward and to think of their future and what they could be doing rather than remaining in refugee camps.

Some jobs, occupations place people in situations of higher operational stress. Military personnel, first responders, doctors, and nurses experience a much higher rate of PTSD. Veterans, front-line workers, emergency personnel, rescue workers, first responders, and families of victims are some of the Albertans who are also vulnerable to developing PTSD. Repeated abuse and trauma such as experiences with domestic violence and war can also result in PTSD.

Mr. Speaker, while we in Canada have been fortunate not to have experienced war, bombing, or armed conflict on our soil, many Canadians have, either through their service in our military, RCMP, or as peacekeepers with United Nations operations. Others in our midst have experienced armed conflict, bombing, war, killing, rape, starvation, terror, and torture. They have come to our country as refugees and immigrants. Many find it very, very hard to speak about their experiences, about their loss of friends, family, possessions, careers, and hope for the future and about the sheer terror that they have faced.

Mr. Speaker, I've only had one moment of terror in my life, the day that I was shot at while on an international election observer mission in Bosnia. I still remember lying on the floor of the van, wondering what would happen if the shooters would hit the tires of the van I was in, immobilize the van, and capture us. Would they kidnap us, rape us, or kill us? I will forever be grateful for the UN peacekeeper base that was not too far away, where we were able to safely flee to. My one and only moment of terror reminds me daily of the reality of many in our communities who have had many, many moments of terror in their lives, that they cannot forget, that prevent them from sleeping, loving their families, thinking of the future, not feeling guilty about the actions that they committed or the actions committed against them. This haunts them hourly. Victims of torture find it particularly challenging to move on from their experiences. They need qualified and fully accessible support and counselling. We need to be sensitive to crosscultural issues in counselling and family dynamics as we support these Canadians who have come to our country from places that have seen so much destruction and horror.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, I have seen the impact on the lives of many and on their families. PTSD can impact a person in many different ways, and many different things can trigger an episode. It can prevent a person from working, going to school, being a parent, and it does not go away. Given that shame still exists for those suffering with PTSD, the day that is proposed in this bill would serve to raise awareness and aim to reduce the stigma among many in our communities that suffer from PTSD. Too many in our communities have been impacted by PTSD, either directly as sufferers or indirectly as their friends and families.

I would therefore urge all members to support this bill that would raise the awareness and educate the general public about PTSD, its causes, symptoms, who is the most affected, and especially how to find support in Alberta. No one should be alone suffering from PTSD.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I continue to be amazed and feel privileged to hear stories every day in this House that I have not heard before.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to endorse this important initiative. Mental health is clearly an issue that affects every one of us, our families, our friends, our co-workers.

Trauma is something that comes in many forms, from childhood through to senior citizens in their final days. I guess one of the things that has become very clear to those who research mental illness and addictions is that if we don't identify it, if we don't help people to come to terms with it, talk about it, and find solutions to the disability that comes out of trauma, to the disease that comes out of trauma – indeed, some people with PTSD coming out of the armed forces say that this should not be called a disorder; it should be called a disease. It's a lifetime disease according to some of the veterans.

Some of them have found tremendous help, for example, with companion dogs. They've talked to me about just how profoundly dogs have influenced their ability to be present, find some kind of sense of control, which is part and parcel of the healing process, getting back control over your own life and feelings and the thoughts that keep creating tumult. Many different approaches have been tried over the years, and indeed a research-oriented program has come up with some evidence-based approaches that have made a huge difference in some of the most seriously affected people. The key is to get in early. If one doesn't identify it early, if one doesn't recognize it, if the family doesn't bring that person forward, if the person is isolated, it only gets worse and it becomes intractable, in fact, and impossible to treat if it goes on for years and years. Maybe not impossible – maybe that's the wrong word – but extremely difficult to treat.

If drugs are used inappropriately, they become more of a problem than a solution because they fail to address some of the cognitive and reactionary issues, even biochemical changes that have occurred in the brain. I'm afraid some therapists go through repetitive exposures to the trauma as an attempt to try to desensitize persons to the trauma. It may actually aggravate the problem in some situations. The evidence suggests that a combination of cognitive behavioural therapy and a recognition of not only the seminal event, the trauma, but previous events and how they have built a capacity or an incapacity to address some of these emotional and physical changes that occur either on re-exposure or memories coming back, the sleep disturbance that occurs, and the cycle then of stress and distress – on and on it goes.

I guess my point is that one of the major reasons we don't identify it early, one of the major reasons we don't treat it is that people are shy to bring it forward. This identification of a day for PTSD hopefully will increase people's level of understanding, acceptance, willingness to reach out to someone who has clearly been in a traumatic experience, willingness to facilitate some kind of therapy, whether it's financial help or transportation in the case of some people who don't have transportation, or whatever it happens to be.

The key barrier, it seems, is still stigma: I can't admit I have a serious problem, I can't admit that I am incapable at certain times in the day or certain times in my life, and I can't admit that I have a problem that's interfering with my life, my relationships, my work, my self-esteem, my capacity to be a full human being. Anything we can do to help both – well, since it's so widespread and all of us have experienced traumatic events in our lives, I think we can recognize that at some level that has to be dealt with, and if it isn't, it continues to impress itself and interfere with day-to-day

life. I see the importance of this day in helping educate everyone that it's okay to have this condition, that it's okay to survive a trauma, that it's okay to talk about that. Indeed, it's important that one reaches out for the kind of help that one should be able to receive under these circumstances.

Stigma is alive and well. I know health professionals who've been through traumatic events, EMS workers who have seen decapitations and dismemberments of people in motor vehicle accidents who somehow feel they have to carry on and not seek or be provided with the supports they need to deal with their continued nightmares or the inability to be present to their family, the inability to be actually present and find any kind of inner peace themselves.

I really congratulate the government on bringing this forward, especially at this time, obviously, with the fires, with some of the recognition that's come forward through the mental health review, the recognition that we don't have the supports we need, necessarily, either the number of professionals or the competence of the professionals, to deal with what's called trauma-informed therapy. It's now got its own name.

Trauma-informed therapy is a special branch of mental health that has prepared people, based on the evidence, to be able to provide the kind of mental and at times spiritual supports as well as a recognition that physical symptoms are part of it and that they have to be properly assessed in a holistic way. A physician often needs to be involved to make sure there aren't any other physical problems. There may well need to be a counsellor; almost certainly there would need to be a counsellor. There may need to be peer support, with peers in that particular profession who understand what the individual has gone through and can be there over the days and weeks and months and years that it may well involve, with the families engaged, and perhaps if this person is involved with a church, the spiritual leader of that church would be involved.

There is a tremendous need for, I guess, widespread recognition that this is very much a whole-person experience, and it needs to be dealt with in a whole-person way, not simply with a prescription and then "Come back in six weeks, and we'll see how you're doing," that sort of thing. No, this has to be a very planned, comprehensive approach, and the first step, as I say, is in engaging the public and the community in recognizing that it's a real issue. It has to be identified, and people have to be encouraged and supported in that experience.

I'm fully supportive of this initiative and will be voting so. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour and pleasure to rise and speak to this bill, in favour of this bill. I thank the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for bringing this very important piece of legislation forward.

As I've talked in this House in the past, I've talked about my experience in this country as a refugee. Although the questions have been asked, I haven't really before talked about that part of my life. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it was not a very pleasant one, and I distinctly remember the sound of gunfire. I think that the smell of war is one that no one ever forgets. It's something where, as I remember, the sound of airplanes overhead meant the real possibility that a bomb could drop on our house, and in several locations bombs did drop very close to our house. Unfortunately, one person that was living with us during the worst part of the war was killed, and unfortunately we could not take her body outside. It was not a very pleasant experience, needless to say.

I remember also leaving our home and getting to the border between Guatemala and Honduras, and I very clearly remember my

mother holding my hand, pointing to the river, and saying to me, "Grab your sister, and if they won't let us through, run across because we need to get to the other side in order for us to not be deported back to Nicaragua." All those things: they stay with you for many, many years.

3:20

I was very lucky when I came to Canada. I found the help of somebody who was keenly aware of the effects that those kinds of things had on me as a child, on the family. Dr. Christine Grabenstetter, our family doctor, often told me many years after how she agonized over the fact that at the age of 12 she had to put me on antidepressants because she did not think that it would be wise for me not to be on them. With her help and the care and support that she and many other people from the health professions provided me, I eventually stopped being afraid of the sound of cars coming behind me. I stopped being afraid of the sound of fireworks during the Stampede. The first few years were not pleasant ones for me because the sounds, you know, triggered memories that were not very pleasant. Now I can tell you that I do enjoy it, but it took a while for me to get over those. As I said, it was an extremely paralyzing fear of sounds, and sometimes those kinds of things prevent you from growing as a person, but as I mentioned, I was very lucky.

Not too long ago I had the chance to speak to a Syrian family that moved about two blocks away from where my constituency office is now. In speaking to this family – I spoke to the mother – and sharing my experience and my story with her, she showed me the scar on her son's neck, where a bullet had grazed him and nearly took his life. I remember having this conversation with her and telling her how important it is to get the support. It is only at that point, when you feel safe, that you have the opportunity to deal with all the emotions and all the things that come out as a result of being in such horrible experiences, especially as a child. I do believe that she understood what I was trying to say. I do have the opportunity to go back and see how I can be of assistance. I guess that by sharing that experience, I gave her an understanding of the resources that are available to her and her family to bring people out of the sheer horror that you have to share when you live through that experience.

Like I said, I'm very supportive of this bill. It's one that recognizes not just the shared experience that we have and the lived experience that we have, but it is a lifelong experience as well. Like I've mentioned, it's something that comes up every so often when we see things and we experience things.

In my previous life I was a union organizer, and I had the opportunity to organize several EMS units in Alberta. When I had the opportunity to talk to them and hear about their stories, I definitely heard familiar experiences, saw emotions on their faces that were very familiar to me, and I understood that we shared a common experience, that of trauma, and how you deal with it.

Again, these are the people that run to danger when most of us are very much in survival mode and needing to get out of the way. But I'd like to say that these people have often shown the best side of them, and I think it is up to us to ensure that when the danger is gone and the emotions come in, we provide the support and that we recognize how this is a lifelong issue and illness that you need to deal with, and it's something that takes a long time to process. It's not something that you're, I think, ever able to get over.

Having said all that, I thank the member once again for bringing this very important piece of legislation forward. I will be supporting it, and I would encourage all members to do so as well.

Thank you.

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



**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise today to speak about Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act, and thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for bringing this bill forward. You know, a lot of the conversation here has of course been around the first responders and those brave people that step up, as the previous speaker reflected on, and who run towards danger instead of running away from danger. There are members of the public, obviously, who have had to run from danger here recently, and we see that, whether it's floods and fires and other things like that, both natural disasters and man-made disasters but also, of course, vehicular crime and things like that.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak and just recount some of my own personal experiences, never really having addressed, maybe, some of the impact of some of those things that may affect all of us, but most certainly we see it most prominently in our military and our first responders. You know, when I was very young, in growing up, I spent five years in Lagos, Nigeria, during the Biafran war and was subjected to a lot of what was going on at that point in time. In October 1968, towards the end of the war, a last-ditch attempt was made by the Biafran air force to bomb Lagos harbour. That plane blew up over our house, essentially at very low altitude, and shattered all the roofs and all the windows and bent metal-frame French doors as if they were made out of plastic. We were lucky, but the occupants of the plane did not survive, and pieces of the plane, from the cockpit, which was four houses away from me between two houses, to pieces of the wing to the shrapnel rain, rained down upon us for what seemed like a matter of minutes. It was an experience, at the ripe age of nine years old, that I'll never forget.

Having lived through that, I think that at the time it seemed like it was a very curious thing and something that maybe a nine-year-old got a little bit excited about because there were pieces of airplane, which we then gathered up and which were seized by the Nigerian army later. It seemed just like an experience to have a bit of an impact. Maybe you don't realize, when you think through things like that, how unusual those might be, but you take it onboard and turn it into a great story, and you move on with it. But you don't know at the time that there are some of those things that the first responders and those other people address. You do what we do sometimes in our society, which is not a good thing, which is that you suck it up, and you turn it into a story and move on with it, not recognizing that there may be PTSD, post-traumatic stress, associated with that, as I think the previous member mentioned, that you don't even know is affecting you until that is brought forward.

Some may say that I might be a little bit accident or disaster prone, but in 1999 I happened to be on a cruise ship that caught fire and sank, and we had to abandon ship in the middle of the Strait of Malacca just as the sun was setting. We ended up in some rather dilapidated lifeboats bobbing around in the Strait of Malacca, which I later found out were shark-infested waters, for about nine hours and finally were rescued by a Russian freighter and made it to shore another seven hours later. Abandoning that ship was another interesting experience and, again, has given rise to comments by many of my friends that they don't really want to take holidays with me.

But all joking aside, four years after that, I also happened to have the interesting timing of being in Phuket, Thailand, on Boxing Day 2004. We were, luckily, not on the beach when the first wave hit in Phuket but were looking for two missing friends and travel mates at the time. When the second wave hit, which was about 12 feet higher than the first one, I managed to make it up a set of stairs with my three children, who were 11 and eight and five at the time, with my wife just behind me, about 30 seconds before the wave hit. We

all know what happened, a quarter million people lost, yet we came home, and we were safe.

A small group of us came back and saw the devastation. We were safe and, I think, took that mentality of: we were safe, and we were okay. In hindsight, there was a group of us, and we kind of brushed it off, and we probably should have gone for some counselling at the time to find out about post-traumatic stress. I've since found out, on the anniversary of that occasion, which we recognized every year as a family, really, just to say on Boxing Day of every year how lucky we were. It's interesting that these things tend to fade and disappear. It was the 10th anniversary, of course, two years ago of that particular event, which was one of the largest losses of life in recent history. Again, when I reflect on that, I can feel it physically. I can know that there is trauma there from having experienced those things.

3:30

I think this is an opportunity for us to not only recognize it but to raise awareness and to reduce the stigma, as was mentioned by the hon. member from the Alberta Liberal Party. We need to raise the awareness, and we need to remove the stigma so that people can address these issues, whatever they may be. It may be something that somebody doesn't think is a particularly pronounced trauma, or it may be something that is extremely traumatic. I think we need to do that.

I'm encouraged to see that there are things like EMDR, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, going on. There are many unusual treatments that may not be what we would think of as traditional treatments, but I'm glad to see that that's happening. I think this day will give us an opportunity to increase the focus, increase the awareness, and perhaps increase the research and funding around such issues.

Mr. Speaker, because of that, I will be pleased to support this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 206, establishing a posttraumatic stress disorder awareness day, put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. I commend the member for bringing this forward. Posttraumatic stress disorder is an issue that should concern all of us. As conservatives we believe in the dignity and value of human life. That someone should have to deal with PTSD alone and with inadequate support is an affront to those values.

Ensuring adequate access to mental health supports is an issue that greatly concerns my colleagues and I in the Official Opposition caucus. Earlier this year our caucus released a report detailing 10 common-sense recommendations that the government should take into account as part of their mental health strategy. One of those recommendations was to improve mental health services available for front-line workers. The report reads:

The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2012, was an important first step in removing the burden of proof from first responders afflicted with PTSD because of their job and streamlining the claims process for them. Reducing the stigma, and making debriefings standard practice following a critical call, is the next important step to take. Increasing awareness of available supports through an education campaign will ensure that no one feels that they are alone in their battle with PTSD.

Now, the establishment of an awareness day doesn't solve the availability-of-services issue that we identified. However, having an awareness day does at least provide an opportunity for us all to look at what issues still exist and ask if adequate services are being provided to those affected by PTSD.

For us here, the PTSD awareness day that this act seeks to establish should be an opportunity to look back on what progress has been made on this issue and whether or not Albertans are being provided with adequate supports for PTSD. This legislation should be an invitation for action, not passive showmanship. It would be profoundly disappointing if all this act did was to ensure that we have a new ribbon to wear on our lapels for this cause on a particular day without any actual examination of whether we are ensuring that services are there for those Albertans who need it the most.

As the Official Opposition critic for jobs and labour I am particularly concerned about PTSD that arises as a result of workplace trauma. Figures from WCB show that last year alone WCB accepted 79 claims for PTSD. Understandably, these claims came predominantly from front-line professionals. Paramedic occupations accounted for 31 claims, Mr. Speaker, followed by firefighters, and then followed by police officers. These are professions that are generally under the category of essential services because we recognize that these professions are integral as a safety net to our day-to-day existence.

About eight years ago, in 2008, researchers at McMaster University released the results of a national survey they had conducted. Their results appeared in academic journal *CNS Neuroscience & Therapeutics*. Their survey looked at responses from almost 3,000 Canadians, so the results can't be dismissed as results from an inadequate sample. Those results found that approximately 1 in 10 Canadians say that they have suffered PTSD at some point in their life.

The survey found that 76 per cent of Canadians agreed that one single traumatic event was sufficient to cause PTSD. This shouldn't be a surprise to anyone, though, if you consider the types of horrific events that can cause PTSD: the death of a loved one, witnessing serious injury, witnessing murder, sexual assault. The list goes on. It's no surprise that these sorts of events would seriously impact and affect someone. Developing PTSD comes from a variety of factors. How severe was the trauma? What social supports are available after the trauma? Did the trauma occur during childhood? Were there other traumatic events in the person's life? The availability of supports for those suffering from PTSD is something we should be mindful of, and when PTSD awareness day comes each year, we should be able to assess what progress has been made.

I support what the member is trying to achieve with this bill. It has long been our caucus's position that mental health services for front-line workers need to be improved. We recognize that PTSD has significant implications not only for those who have experienced trauma but for their communities as well. Establishing a particular day to raise awareness is an important step. It's certainly not a solution in and of itself, but it's an important opportunity to raise awareness about an important issue in our community.

I commend the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for putting this legislation forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I applaud all the things that my colleagues on this side and the other side of the House have said about this bill. I think it's very timely and important.

There are just a few things that I have to add to the conversation. When I was very young – and I was born just after the end of World War II – I used to wonder. It seemed like a strange thing, but my father would have nightmares, and everybody in the house would be woken up. Our house was very small. We didn't think too much about it; we certainly didn't question it. It was just one of the things that happened, and I knew that there were other fathers who had the same experience. Of course, that went on for quite a long time

because nobody knew what it was, and nobody knew what should be done to help the person with it. Clearly, it was PTSD or shell shock, whatever you call it. I think back as an adult on what these people suffered. You know, these were our parents, and they were only young adults at the time, but they were going through this day after day, night after night while fulfilling the requirements for having a home and family.

If we can do anything to help people who have had similar experiences, witnessed or were part of a horrendous experience that caused them to have PTSD, the more we can do to help them get back to normal functioning, the sooner the better.

Just a couple of things that I've been reading about. One is that if the event is a human-intentioned event, a person is much more likely to get PTSD. Natural disasters, just for interest's sake, are less likely to cause it because you know that it's not a person wishing you harm. So bombs being dropped on your house are much more likely to cause PTSD than a flood. It may be horrendous, but that could be a helpful factor in helping people through the aftereffects of the Fort McMurray fire. This is, hopefully, not linked to human action, although there may be a link back there.

The other thing that is really important to be aware of, that we should know about, is that children show the effects of PTSD differently than adults. We know it with depression. I remember first learning about how children suffering from depression are more likely to display anger and irritability; they're not going to show signs of sadness so much. The same with PTSD. You get a child who's witnessing horrendous things – we may not even think that they're noticing, but if they're witnessing harsh actions of, you know, traumatic events, and we see this kind of irritability, touchiness, being very easily annoyed afterwards, it could very easily be a symptom of PTSD.

3:40

Even with adults one of the indicators and one of the symptoms can be that hyperawareness that people get when they're not very secure. That hyperarousal, being very worried about things, being anxious, having difficulty falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep, and being annoyed and irritable are all part of the PTSD disorder, and it kind of sometimes may help people to identify what it is. Instead of somebody, a family member or a friend, just being easily annoyed and touchy, they may really have something going on, and it would help to steer them toward some professional help.

On a better side, on a more positive side, the more we decrease the stigma and shame, the more we encourage people to speak out and to go and access some help for the disorder, the likelihood is, the prognosis, that with appropriate help – and it's usually psychotherapy and medication because there tends to be depression in an awful lot of the cases of PTSD – people have their symptoms reduced to the point where they're functioning pretty effectively within a couple of months. About half of the people who have PTSD and do get help are quite improved within a few months. That's the good news.

Sometimes one of the problems is that some people who do witness or are subjected to some brand of shock don't even show symptoms for months, so they don't relate the symptoms that they're displaying with the action that happened, but they could be just delayed in showing it. Basically, every individual who sees an event or is part of an event or is the subject of an attack, a victim of a crime, is likely going to show it differently. By keeping it out in the open and making people feel comfortable, being aware of it and being aware that people we know well may have it, we can be helpful and we can be supportive and we can help people get through this.

I think it's a tremendous act, and I will support it completely. I hope every one else will. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to offer my sincere thanks to the member for bringing forward this bill. I really want to thank all of the members who have shared their personal stories with the House and with Albertans here today. I think that that act alone helps end the stigma, helps deal with the stigma of posttraumatic stress and, I would hope, by extension, of mental health in general.

Without question, I support this bill, and I hope that not only does this end the stigma around posttraumatic stress but that it starts a catalyst for a conversation to increase the support for people suffering from not just posttraumatic stress disorder but from all mental health challenges. You know, when I think of posttraumatic stress, I think of many of the first responders who have to deal with the tremendous danger in their line of work, and in that first-responder group are all medical professionals, social workers, people who deal with traumatic child welfare cases. There is any number of front-line personnel who deal with very challenging situations as part of their profession and have to deal with the fallout from that, which in cases can be posttraumatic stress.

Many members of this House have shared their personal stories. I think of the first responders, the people who work in the Legislative Assembly Office, many of whom are former police officers, military personnel who have made tremendous contribution to our cities, our province, our country and perhaps come home to their homes with the scars from that. We as legislators on behalf of Albertans have an obligation to support the people who have stood up for us and to do so through their lifetimes over the long term. This bill, I would hope, is one of many steps that we can take to do exactly that, certainly not the only thing but one of the many things we can do.

I'm reminded of a conversation I had with the Member for Calgary-West about how the city of Calgary police handle traumatic situations and how that's changed over his career. Quite recently there was a very challenging situation where an officer had come back from a very difficult case and was told by the supervisor: "Now that we've gone through the details, how are you? Here's how you access psychological services." My questions to him were: "Is that common? Is that what happens in police forces?" He said no, that that was something that Chief Rick Hanson brought in, who was very strong in his leadership in changing the culture within the Calgary Police Service.

Those psychological services: perhaps there is still some stigma – I can't speak to the specifics of exactly how the culture works – but the stigma is in the process of being removed, and that is very encouraging. I think that's a model that I would hope can be followed in other police forces around the country, around the province, in Canada's military. The fact that we're standing here talking about it is a positive step. The fact that these things are starting to change also is a positive step.

What can we do, beyond that, as legislators? Well, in our everyday lives we can identify and learn to identify what posttraumatic stress looks like. We can ask ourselves: have we gone through a traumatic situation? Trauma is whatever we define it as. Trauma is whatever is traumatic to us. There is no limit to what trauma is. If it leaves you with feelings of depression, if it leaves you with a sense of reliving an event, whatever that happens to be, if it's flashbacks, if it's a difficulty forming long-term relationships, if it's insomnia, a sense of hopelessness or depression, lashing out at others, avoidance of a certain situation or of even a certain

memory, including avoidance through substance abuse, all of these things can be signs of posttraumatic stress. It's important that we're aware of our own mindset and things that we have all gone through and that we're also on the lookout for those sorts of signs in others and that we do our best to help them get support.

For people we know who have PTSD, be supportive of those people in your life, whether they're family members, whether they're friends, whether they're neighbours. Do what you can to be empathetic and supportive in making sure that they're getting the help that they need and that they're getting the help they need not necessarily always just from someone else but that you're offering that help to them as well. That's something that they will likely need through their entire lifetime. That will vary. Sometimes you may need more help than others. Sometimes there are good days, and sometimes there are bad.

I think, of course, about the people from Fort McMurray, who had to flee through the flames. You know, I think of parents who are there being strong for their kids, making sure that their kids are feeling safe, and that's absolutely what every parent, I think, will do as an instinct. I would encourage anyone who's gone through that to look out for yourself as well, to be on the lookout for how that trauma has impacted you, and to not be afraid of what that means.

I can tell you that it's now going on almost three years after the flood, and I'm still trying to unpack what all that means, you know, whether some of the feelings I have are, in fact, posttraumatic stress, whether they're just day-to-day things we deal with in our life. But I know that that's had a real impact on my neighbours, on family members, on my constituents, on the community as a whole, and that's not something that goes away quickly. I can tell you that every year about this time the stress level really ramps up. I've been trying to be self-reflective on what that means for us, trying to keep an eye on how our daughters are faring, and in our own case I think that it's mostly so far so good.

I think that's something that we need to be very aware of, especially for all of our friends in Fort McMurray. This is not something that is healed right away. This is a challenge that the folks who have gone through that traumatic experience are going to have to deal with not just starting Wednesday of this week, as people start to go home, but over the coming months and the coming years. I would sincerely hope that the resources are available for people who are experiencing that. What's encouraging is that I think that, by and large, they have been. Those resources have been available for folks in the short term.

I really hope that that continues to be the case going forward and that we use opportunities like this bill, which I enthusiastically support, to continue this conversation, that we're gentle with one another, that we're compassionate with one another, and that we're very aware of what the trauma that people have gone through means to those people and how it will manifest.

Again, thank you very much, hon. member, for bringing this forward. It really is, I think, a positive step forward, and I hope that this does mark true change.

Thank you very much.

3:50

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill. I would like to start by commending the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for spearheading what is truly a crucial bill. I do support it completely, and I do encourage unanimous support for this private member's

bill because – let's face it, colleagues – this is one of those issues that transcends any party line. Sadly, it also transcends all boundaries. PTSD can affect anyone anywhere at virtually any time, as the name, posttraumatic stress, indicates.

For the moment, though, I would like to concentrate on our military who are affected by PTSD. I'd like to quote a soldier that I have a great deal of respect for. He shared with me in the past that in many cases PTSD actually takes many, many years to manifest itself, and many soldiers don't even realize that they have it. It's tough for them to come to terms with, and there's still this ethos of soldiering: we can tough out anything. That, again, is why we need an awareness day like this.

He points out that the Canadian armed forces have made great progress in removing that stigma of PTSD and mental health in general, and many soldiers do benefit from peer support programs and other great initiatives that have been introduced in recent years, so here, again, a great initiative that I believe we should all support not just within this Chamber but beyond these walls to all corners of our province.

The last point he makes is that these are examples and models that other emergency professionals, including paramedics and police, could look to to inspire their own programs. I'm sure the hon. member would say that this goes to social workers and all sorts of other professionals and the people that they serve as well.

I also have a fine constituent by the name of Barry Ashton. I've talked about him before in the House, and I'll talk about him again. It was in reference to Reaching the Summit for Mental Health and Wellness, this Mount Buller climb that we're doing for PTSD for those affected in the military. For the moment I'll just concentrate on the fact that Barry e-mailed me a couple of articles earlier today that give full support to this sort of thing, at least indirectly.

The first one is from Michael Wilson, and I'm guessing that you've heard of him, a PC member of the federal cabinet and a Canadian diplomat. Again, this transcends all party lines. I've met with him on a number of occasions, including when he and I delivered speeches at the Canadian embassy in Washington, DC. If you noticed, in the *Globe and Mail*, Alberta edition, there was an article on Wednesday, February 24, of this year on public health. It was entitled Aid for Suicide Prevention Must Be Part of Federal Budget. Again, the hon. member has pointed to the fact that down south they recognize it nationally; it isn't being recognized nationally here at this point. But good on you for leadership here in Alberta.

Michael writes:

We can no longer ignore the alarming evidence: Every day, at least 10 Canadians die by suicide. Do we have the courage to face down stigma and get help into the hands of those who need it?

As a former finance minister, I understand the tough challenges Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Finance Minister Bill Morneau face in preparing the 2016 budget and allocating spending.

If you're wondering how this is related, the Mental Health Commission of Canada, MHCC – by the way, I reported to them when I was the chair of AADAC and was proud to do so – are asking the government to commit funds for a far-reaching national suicide prevention project, based on a plan that accounts for fiscal reality and maximizes the use of existing community resources to help those at risk of suicide.

As a father . . .

And it gets personal here, sir.

. . . the rate of suicide in Canada isn't just an alarming statistic, it's a deeply personal matter. We lost our son, Cameron, to suicide in 1995. I know the devastation it leaves in its wake.

The article goes on, Mr. Speaker, but it concludes this way:

Too often, suicide is the tragic end in the fight against . . . [PTSD]. More than half of military veterans and first responders who seek help for mental illness from a primary-care provider leave without effective solutions. That is why, alongside our partner Mood Disorders Society of Canada, we are asking for modest funds to give primary-care providers and gatekeepers the information they need to recognize PTSD and help people sooner.

Again, how does this relate? This day will draw people's awareness to this to make the services more widely available, Mr. Speaker, better funded, better accessed, with better treatment.

It goes on:

The Ontario government . . . recently announced a plan to help first responders – such as police officers, firefighters, and ambulance attendants – deal with PTSD as a result of employment. But before workplace claims are initiated, PTSD needs to be recognized and diagnosed.

High rates of mental illness and suicide are also found in indigenous communities . . . We will invite and partner with indigenous communities and work with them to develop a culturally safe and respectful approach to reduce suicide rates.

As advocate for indigenous relations for the PC caucus, obviously I support this as well.

The funding we seek pales in comparison with the \$50-billion that mental illness costs the Canadian economy each year in health care and lost productivity. As priorities are weighed for this year's budget, we can no longer ignore the alarming evidence that we need stronger [investigation and] investment in suicide prevention. And we need to use the critical resources already place to effectively diagnose and treat PTSD.

You may have noticed, Mr. Speaker, that the beginning of the article deals with the very personal side of things, the middle is about the professional aspect of it, and at the end, yes, there is the political or economic, but it's in that order for a reason. There is a number attached to this, but that is, by far, not the most important thing.

The last words:

We must knit together as communities so that when people are at risk, help is within their grasp. Addressing suicide is no small task. Each one of us can and must help because, truly, it takes a village.

Perhaps the member would actually agree that in this case it takes a province. Now, I do know that hon. Mr. Wilson would be fully supportive with respect to this private member's bill.

Now, Barry Ashton also sent me something from *Legion Magazine*, back in the March and April 2013 edition, entitled PTSD: We've Got to Do More, and this is from the editors themselves. They state:

The extent of the problem is overwhelming. It is estimated that over the next five years approximately 30,000 personnel will leave the Canadian Forces, and about one third of these men and women will have mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, addictions, and sleep disorders. Of those, nearly 3,000 will have . . . [PTSD]. Often these problems do not show themselves until many years after the incident or incidents which caused them.

While the Canadian Forces has – in the last decade – made great strides in improving the diagnosis and treatment of PTSD and [other] operational stress injuries (OSIs), it must continue to move forward and not lose any of the ground it has gained, for there is a real fear – that through budget slashing – crucial gains can be lost. National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman Pierre Daigle points to this fear in his recent report on Canada's military health-care system, titled *Fortitude Under Fatigue*.

I really do encourage members to read the rest of this because they really bring it home in not just political or professional but very personal ways.

Speaking of that, we use the term, hopefully more than once a year – in fact, I wish we'd use it every day – “lest we forget.” That's the title of an article in which a number of our veterans are quoted – the subtitle is *The Shocking Crisis Facing Our Wounded [Soldiers]* – just to let you know, again, some of the personal sides of this. Andrew's last name has been withheld to protect his identity – remember, Mr. Speaker, that this was a few years ago, when there was still a great stigma attached to this – but still the content of this excerpt is entirely intact.

He writes:

I thought it was normal to be angry all the time, going through life basically holding it in to the point after so long where I would explode ... I would have given my life for my country ... and I would rather have done that than have experienced this.

That's how serious it was for him. He's lived half of his life with PTSD, starting with his first tour at the tender age of 19, when he was in Bosnia in 1993.

He and a buddy were injured by what they then called a booby trap and what we now today would refer to as an improvised explosive device (IED). The other soldier had serious shrapnel wounds and was airlifted to hospital, then back to Canada. Andrew was around the corner of a building, protected from shrapnel but not the blast wave, which knocked him unconscious. He awoke with a terrible concussion headache, ringing in his ears and blurry vision. They wanted to send Andrew home, too. “But being 19, I fought tooth and nail,” he said. He was a small-town boy with big dreams. [He was] proud of his uniform. After a few days his vision cleared, and the headache disappeared.

[A timer sounded] I'll quote more later.

4:00

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who would like to speak to Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act? Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just very briefly I wanted to add and reinforce that I'm glad that we're talking about this issue and looking at ways to encourage the dialogue and raise awareness. When I was working in mental health as a therapist up in High Level, I learned that with the First Nations communities up there PTSD is huge, and a lot of it is related to the high rates of sexual abuse that occur within the communities. A lot of people have come to equate PTSD with first responders and those kinds of trauma, but we're starting to really learn that any kind of trauma you experience, particularly when you experience it as a child, has a dramatic effect on you as you get older. I'm glad that this bill helps open up those dialogues so we can start to understand why people are behaving the way they're behaving. It's often because they're being triggered by some horrific event that happened to them when they were a child.

That's all I wanted to say. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any members who would like to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I would call upon the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs to close debate.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say thank you to all members for sharing their very valuable input and for sharing their personal stories. It really is important.

That's all. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a second time]

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order to proceed immediately to Committee of the Whole for consideration of Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 206 Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act. You know, it's always great to be in the Assembly on days when we can find common cause for the betterment of many, and today seems to be one of those days. I would like to just briefly thank the member for bringing this bill forward. The very fact that we're speaking to the bill is already doing some of what the bill is intended to do. It's unlikely that without this bill we would have been able to hear from the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross and the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, I think, on so many of their personal stories.

It always amazes me how the Assembly is often a reflection of the province, and it should be a reflection of the province. While the government and I will disagree on whether some of their policies reflect what the people of Alberta want, my point is that the people inside the Chamber often are a reflection of the province, from so many diverse backgrounds. We had the pleasure of having the good doctor from Calgary-Mountain View preside this afternoon and speak specifically about some of the challenges around this issue. We just see these unique perspectives on both sides of the aisle, and all of the histories and the stories and the experiences that make up individual members of this place really reflect a strength.

While we disagree a lot of the time, sometimes I feel on days like today – I think it's the Road Runner cartoon. They punch the clock at the beginning of the day, and they chase each other around and fight and scrap and try to get the better of each other. Then at the end of the day we punch the clock and we walk down the stairs together and say: “Have a good day. We'll see you guys tomorrow.” On days like today we have this opportunity to reveal little bits of the story that has brought us here. Because I'm such a strong believer in the strength of democracy and the strength and the merits of the Assembly, it's great to be able to hear those things here in the Chamber, the things that have brought us here and the things that strengthen the Chamber.

This bill has shed a new light on those things. It's shedding a new light on the issues surrounding PTSD and the mental health issues that come along with that. There are so many things about the mental health system in our province and across this great land of ours that need both awareness and repair. I think of the impact that people like Clara Hughes and Rod Black have had in the form of the Bell Let's Talk Day. Who would have thought just a few years

ago – and I don't actually even know the dates – the impact the Bell Let's Talk Day would have in terms of discussion around mental health? It's this sort of thing, a bill like this, that has the potential of doing that same thing.

4:10

Of course, with a piece of legislation like this there's always the risk that we put a mark on the wall and say, "Oh, look. We've done so many wonderful things to bring awareness to PTSD," but it stops there. There's always this risk that we can go home at the end of the day and feel really good about ourselves because we've done something positive but not go the extra mile to make sure that those who are suffering, those who are in pain, those for whom every day can be a struggle because of the horrific events that have happened to them, be it internal, external, as a child, whatever those things are, not provide the supports that go the extra mile. Now, I know that's not the intention of this bill. The very fact that we are raising awareness is a critical step in the process, but we need to ensure that we look at root causes, that we look at the way the health system and the mental health system are engaging with those on a go-forward basis.

I'm pleased to support Bill 206. Most days I feel honoured to be here. Today is certainly one of those days where we can reach across, reach beside, and move things forward in a manner that ultimately, at the end of the day, will help Alberta and help individuals suffering and raise awareness of a very, very important cause.

Before I close, let me just say a very heartfelt thank you to our men and women who serve around the world, many of which experienced things that no one should have to, the service that they provide for our country, a true public service, a commitment that they make that often puts the needs of their nation ahead of their own personal safety. Many of them know that they may in fact get into situations that are likely to cause significant stresses and damages that will affect them for a lifetime. Certainly, on behalf of myself personally and the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills I just want to say a very special thank you to those men and women who serve our country and make it great.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To start, I would like to actually draw off what the member opposite, the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, was just saying. The MLA who previously represented that constituency actually spoke in favour of including corrections officers with presumptive PTSD coverage about four years ago. Some of those reasons are why I want to speak about it today. I have a lot of corrections officers that work in Fort Saskatchewan. They are a group of people that get overlooked quite often. They work day in, day out. I've gotten to know a couple of them and am proud to call them my friends. I'm proud to actually look up to them.

I would just like to share something from a letter that one of them shared with me.

To start, I would like to thank you for taking the time to discuss this issue with myself and others that have been affected by this. I thank you for taking it forward and attempting to fix a situation that needed to be fixed with the old government.

I was a correctional peace officer for 13 years before I had to retire. I was 33 years old at this time. I enjoyed my employment at the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre for the first couple of years until my life changed. In 2007 I attempted suicide by attempting to slit my throat. I was lucky and did not fully cut deep enough, and I woke up on my kitchen floor.

At this time I made a decision to seek help. I was wrongfully diagnosed at that time with bipolar and was treated as such. For three or four years I accepted this diagnosis and used the medication I was prescribed. They had little or no effect on me, and I still to this date suffer from side effects from them.

I have since been reassessed and have been diagnosed with PTSD due to the years I have worked as a correctional peace officer.

There are a few things in here that I would like to highlight from what he shared with me.

One of them is that often people go misdiagnosed. I think that it's a laudable thing in this bill being put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs to raise awareness of what the symptoms are. I know that often what we talk about is that we are our own best advocates for our health. Knowing what those indicators are so that we can identify them or a family can identify them or friends can identify them can help prevent people from getting lost in a health system, where ultimately they end up falling through the cracks.

Something that I take from this also is humility. He goes on to talk about how what he did in the normal course of a day was no different than another correctional peace officer that he worked with. These are not things that we normally see as human beings. They are murder, suicide, brutal self-harm, hostage-takings, people being shot at, people seeing physical and sexual abuse of one another, riots. These correctional peace officers put themselves in harm's way to enforce the laws that we put in place, ultimately, that put people behind bars. When I think of us as a society and I think about being a legislator, I know that I am responsible for the laws that I help create and that I vote on, and if it means that I'm asking someone to help enforce those on the other end, then I need to ensure that I am giving them the proper tools, the proper resources necessary to address those mental health issues that they unfortunately end up incurring.

Deanna Lennox, who is a former RCMP officer, is someone who has been tireless in advocating for front-line workers to be able to have good access, access they know where to find. She helped start a group called Help through the Front Door. You know, often what we struggle with in society is the stigma. It doesn't matter how many resources you put in front of a person until you start as a community, as a whole to address those issues that create the stigma, that prevents people from going through that front door and asking for help. That's what we really, really need to address.

The members from the Official Opposition spoke, you know, very eloquently, very passionately along with the current Premier of Alberta and the Minister of Education. They both spoke about how correctional peace officers are in a closed environment with people that can seek to do them harm all of the time. It really strains a person's mental well-being, and we need to make sure that we are finding ways – and this is a fantastic first step. I know that there are members in the House that would like to perhaps do a redo of Bill 1, which extended presumptive coverage for PTSD to people, including correctional peace officers, would like social workers to be included along with our firefighters, our police officers, our sheriffs, and our ...

**Mr. Shepherd:** Paramedics.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Paramedics. Thank you.

We have people that are constantly in harm's way that we need to make sure that we're taking care of, because there are people that put themselves in harm's way all of the time, and then they don't feel supported at the end of the day when they go to access help. One of the phrases that I hear over and over again when I talk to corrections officers is that they feel like they are thrown away like garbage. They do it because they feel that they are called to do it,

and we need to make sure that these people are still able to provide for their families, that they don't have to retire early from careers that they have chosen because they have a passion for doing that job.

That is why I'm happy and proud to stand in support of this bill. I think it's an important first step, but I do hope, along with the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, that we work forward on putting more supports in place that make sure that these individuals can have easier access to the supports that they need so that they can ultimately get the help that they are seeking for jobs that we ask them to go to. It's my pleasure to stand in support of this bill, and I encourage all members to do the same.

Thank you.

4:20

**The Chair:** Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise here today and speak to this very important bill. I'd like to thank my colleague from Edmonton-Castle Downs for putting forward this very important bill.

Many of my colleagues here today know that my background is as a registered nurse. You know, I just wanted to share some of my experiences as well. I found it very moving to hear all of the different stories that have already been shared here today by my colleagues, and it just goes to show how prevalent posttraumatic stress disorder or those types of experiences can be. Just in a small room here with only 87 or so people we have a lot of members who have gone through these types of experiences.

I wanted to talk about the experience I had in nursing. Within the first year of becoming a nurse, I had a patient who passed away. I was working – it's called a neuro step-down unit – at the Toronto western hospital. It's kind of like an ICU but with not quite as critical patients there.

Of course, things can change very quickly. It was late at night. You know, working on the night shift is always kind of an interesting dynamic. You're up in the middle of the night, when most of the rest of the city is sleeping, and you're there safeguarding these patients. One of the routine tasks that we would do at night was to give patients their baths. It was a good way to sort of settle them down for the night and make them feel a little more comfortable. This particular patient had been there for quite some time. In the step-down unit the patients wear monitors all the time, so we've got the ECG heart monitors, the blood pressure monitors, and those kinds of things. When those things stay on a patient for a long time, they feel really yucky. They get sicker, and goo is all over them, so I wanted to give this patient a really good bath that night.

Just as I was finishing the bath – I had been chatting with him and settling him down for the night – I was about to put the ECG stickers back on. Sometimes neurosurgical patients can be confused, and he started saying, "Oh, my chest, my chest." And I said, "Oh, what's the matter?", and he just said, "My chest, my chest." So I, you know, put the stickers right back on him and called for help. We had to call a code blue just like that. It happened immediately. It turned out that the patient actually suffered from a thoracic aortic aneurysm. One of the major blood vessels in the chest just basically tore apart instantly, and he died right in front of our eyes.

You know, being a fairly new nurse and having this experience, it stayed with me all the time. I don't think about it constantly, but it's something I'll never forget. I always wonder: should I have taken those ECG leads off the patient? I was trying to give him

some comfort and make him feel a little better. Knowing what I know about the condition that he passed away from, I know that having those ECG leads on wouldn't have made a difference in that case, but it's still something that stays with me. Maybe I should have left them on.

Another thing that I wanted to share was that when I was a student nurse, one of my first experiences was on a plastic surgery unit. This was probably the first patient I'd ever seen in a hospital. I walked into a room, and a woman had had plastic surgery on her face. I think it was for some kind of mandibular cancer. She had been fixed up, but of course plastic surgery isn't perfect, and the woman was quite disfigured. She had, you know, large scars on her face. Being the first time I'd ever seen a real patient – and there she was with a disfigured face – I had an immediate body language reaction. I knew that was wrong because I knew that the patient was watching me. The patients watch what their care providers are doing because they want to see: "What's it going to be like when I get out of the hospital? If the nurses react like that, how are regular people going to react?"

I felt horrible about that, but it also really made me conscious of the fact that as a health care provider I had to take care of my emotions and have full control of my emotions at all times. It's a very difficult thing to consider because of the range of situations that we find ourselves in, but patients and families look to us to be the ones that are solid as a rock. When things are going badly, the health care providers can't say: "No. I can't deal with this right now. I'm going home."

Our job is to take care of that patient no matter what the circumstances are, and I know that that's the case in all different sorts of occupations. You know, in one instance we can be discharging a patient. He or she has had a long course in the hospital, and they've gotten better. They've made progress, and they're about to go home. Having a multiple patient assignment, you might then go to the next room, and that patient is about to die. You've got to go and change your emotions all of a sudden, from one patient having a great news story – they're going home; they've gotten better: "Good for you, Mr. Jones" – and then a minute later having to shift your emotions to match the mood in the room of the next patient. Controlling a person's emotions like that can take a toll on a person.

I'd also like to talk a little bit about how, you know, we often think of front-line workers as suffering from this the most – and it certainly is the most common – but there are other health care providers that aren't necessarily thought of as front-line workers that also can suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder. After having worked in the operating room, I think of a lot of the housekeepers. In the operating room we start with a nice, clean, sterile room, and at the end of a surgery, depending on what it is, there can be blood everywhere: blood on the ceilings, blood on the floor, blood all over the bed, like, you name it. Some surgeons will joke: if you don't get blood on the ceiling, you're not doing it right. It's kind of morbid, but sometimes that's how we have to deal with those scenarios. The people that have to mop the blood off the ceiling can also suffer from these types of disorders, so I want to acknowledge those people.

The people that do the laundry get laundry soaked in blood, and they have to think about the story that may have resulted in that situation occurring. I think there are a lot of unsung heroes that we have in our public services that are put at risk of these kind of emotional experiences that we also need to make sure that we acknowledge.

I just want to use the last few minutes of my time here to talk about, as the Member for Calgary-Elbow had mentioned earlier, the impact of the 2013 flood on constituents. Certainly, the

constituency of Banff-Cochrane was widely hit by the 2013 floods. Bragg Creek, Lac des Arcs, Exshaw, Harvie Heights, Canmore, Benchlands: almost all of the communities in Banff-Cochrane were affected to some degree. Still to this day when it starts to rain at this time of year, people get nervous. I know I was at the post office the other day saying: isn't it good that it's rained in order to sort of combat the risk of forest fires? That was something that was top of my mind. The person behind the desk at the post office, of course, reminded me that, you know, rain also makes people nervous, so there's a balance between events, and people perceive them in very different ways.

4:30

I know that people are getting to the point where it's close to three years after the fact, but some people have just finished fixing their homes, and now they're at the stage where they say: I've fixed my home, but now I've got to deal with the emotional stress of what I've just been through. They've been so busy fixing up their homes or repairing their businesses and dealing with those kinds of things that they're just now realizing what they've been through. You know, the effects on people that have been through the flood are so far ranging, and we need to acknowledge and support the experiences that people have been through and ensure that supports are available for them on an ongoing basis.

Just in closing, again I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for bringing this very important bill forward. I'd also like to thank all members of this Assembly for granting unanimous consent to allow this bill to move forward in such an expeditious manner.

Thank you very much.

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

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of this bill. I really want to echo the comments made by the Member for Banff-Cochrane. I truly appreciate the spirit of co-operation that exists in the House today. I know that all of us have the same goal in mind, and that is to basically change the world's view of this very important illness.

Like the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, I was born shortly after the Second World War. My father was a veteran, and he came back from the war without any symptoms of what at that time was called shell shock. But I do remember that there was a stigma that he unwittingly associated with his comrades who did suffer from what was called shell shock. I actually feel very badly for my father. I'm sure he didn't mean to do this, but it was a societal thing at the time that this was seen to be a form of weakness.

In fact, it was only in 1915 that the term "shell shock" was first used, apparently. In the First World War the British Expeditionary Force executed several dozen soldiers for running away from battle or for failure to follow orders or for basically becoming withdrawn. There was, obviously, little understanding at that time. They thought that it was due to some effect of shells exploding. In fact, if a person exhibited the symptoms – and they called it neurasthenia – after a shell explosion, the British Expeditionary Force actually awarded the equivalent of a Purple Heart, what's called a wound stripe. But if the soldier hadn't been exposed to an explosion, it was considered to be some failure of his resolve. They actually took the pension away from those individuals, and they probably discharged them dishonourably.

I can say that in 1950, which is about as far back as I can remember, that sort of attitude still persisted. I think what the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is doing today and all of us

in supporting it are doing is trying to change that historical stigma that has come about. It is not weakness. It is not shirking of duty. It is not cowardice. This is a mental health issue, and it's time that we recognize that it is something that needs to be known about. We need to publicize what the symptoms of this condition are. We need to increase awareness, which is, I think, the prime purpose of this bill. We need to basically advertise this. We need to join with our American colleagues in having a day that recognizes or increases awareness of posttraumatic stress disorder.

I want to actually turn to my own personal situation. I can say that I'm actually, in an ironic way, envious of many of the people that have spoken today. I don't have any of these kinds of great stories to tell about surviving some horrific disaster. I've led a charmed life. I'll cross my fingers that nothing comes down the road any time soon. I really do admire the pluck and the courage and the resolve that my MLA colleagues have shown in their lives.

I am a physician, and I do have stories like the MLA for Banff-Cochrane has just relayed, and I want to tell a few stories of that. Like the MLA for Banff-Cochrane, I am actually more concerned about my support colleagues: the nurses and the cleaners and the lab techs and the psychologists and all of the people that support us physicians in the work that we do. We get the glory for treating patients, and these other people are left dealing with the aftermaths very often.

One of my clearest memories on this, that I still think about, is that back in my first year in medical school I was on a surgical rotation, and there was an amputation. Somebody had diabetes and needed to have their leg amputated above the knee. It's a fairly straightforward surgery. It maybe took half an hour for the surgery to be done, and I was enjoying myself because I was getting to watch this very good surgeon in action. It wasn't until after the surgery that I realized that the operating room nurse was desperately wanting me to help her basically unwrap this devitalized leg so that the specimen could be sent to the lab. This operating nurse, who was a superb individual, always in control, always very professional in her actions, was obviously devastated by having to deal with this rather unsightly and smelly specimen. To this day I feel badly that I didn't have the sense to step in and do it because it wasn't bothering me; it really was easy. But that's the sort of thing that goes on.

Now, in our health care professions, whether it's nursing, I think one of the things that we have to realize is that posttraumatic stress disorder must be a lot more prevalent than is recognized. It is a fact – and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View can back me up on this – that suicide is much more prevalent among physicians. It's also prevalent among nurses and EMS folks, other folks like this. It isn't just suicide that's more prevalent; it's marriage breakdown, use of illicit drugs, a whole series of things that belie chronic depression and probably some aspects of posttraumatic stress disorder.

Now, I'm making some loose connections here that haven't been proven scientifically, but it is certainly my impression that health care delivery in particular is very prone to posttraumatic stress disorder. I think that having a special event that basically validates the experience of some of these individuals, allows them to seek the appropriate help – and, hopefully, we can also bring in some measures that will help the mental health of these folks in general, you know. I think this is of real benefit for this disorder.

4:40

I also want to turn back to the history a little bit. I mentioned that I've been in medicine for 40 years, and I can tell you that 40 years ago it was still called shell shock or, you know, that basically it was considered to be a form of a reaction. "Conversion disorder" was



one of the terms that it was called. The patients were marked by things like not being able to speak, mutism, or they were bothered by loud noises, or they had ringing in their ears all the time, or they basically withdrew from social interactions. There was very little we could do for those patients. In medical school the treatment that was most often given – I went to McGill University. The psychiatry department there favoured the use of electroconvulsive therapies and . . . [Dr. Turner's speaking time expired] I'll end it there.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak in support of Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act. First of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs for bringing forward this important bill. Also, I would like to acknowledge and congratulate all of my colleagues from all sides of the House who participated in this debate.

While I was sitting listening, I think it was an opportunity for me to reflect on my past, on my present, and on what I'm dealing with today. If I speak to my past, I was raised in Kashmir, which is a disputed, divided territory between India and Pakistan. From a very young age we heard that it's a flashpoint for nuclear war, which hasn't happened yet, fortunately. That was the constant fear we had to live with. Every once in a while troops would mobilize close to borders. While I didn't live very far from the border, 20 to 25 kilometres, you could hear the emanations, those rounds of shots, and planes moving here and there. All I want to say is that was the constant fear we had to live with.

To this day, even living in Calgary, whenever those fighter jets pass through Calgary, that will still give me flashbacks, remembering those planes passing over the airspace in my area. As the Member for Calgary-Elbow said, that is something that I am still unwinding, trying to understand what my life would have been like had I not been through that stress, had I not lived under that constant fear of war, that someday there was going to be a war between Pakistan and India on this Kashmir issue. That's one thing that's still, I guess, left with me to date. I'm pretty sure there is some stress that's attached to my upbringing, living with that fear of war.

The second thing is that my area is also prone to natural disasters. In 2005 there was a huge earthquake. Many people died. Many people suffered through that, and my family suffered as well. My sister was injured in that earthquake. After that, I visited Kashmir a couple of times. My home is such that where I live, that side usually stays closed by a main gate, especially towards where my room was. Just remembering the devastation of that earthquake and not knowing about my sister for three or four days during that earthquake never, I guess, went away. When I went there, I was not able to sleep in my home, having that door closed. What if there is an earthquake? There are studies out there that they are on an active fault line and that there is a bigger earthquake that's expected to happen.

All I want to say is that those are the things, I guess, that need to be dealt with, that need to be talked about, and there need to be better supports and treatments available. That bill certainly puts those issues at the forefront of the discussion, and that certainly will lead to better supports and the discussion of better supports.

The second thing is that as the Minister of Human Services for the most part my ministry deals with vulnerable Albertans. All those files are very important ones, but I want to mention just one file, and that is the child intervention file. As the minister I do receive alerts of serious injuries, deaths, and I think that's something that has an impact on myself as well, that I have to deal

with on a daily basis. When I think of that, I do think of my front-line staff who are on the ground to deal with that. I think it's important for them to know that these events can have traumatic impacts, and this bill will help us bring those discussions to the forefront and make supports available to them.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order that such debate on Bill 206 continue past 5 o'clock and furthermore to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order to proceed – no. I'll do that one later.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, to seek unanimous consent on that kind of a motion, we have to be in Assembly. We can't do it in Committee of the Whole. So we have the option that the committee can rise and report progress.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, we've got a few minutes. Let's see how we do.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to move an amendment this afternoon. I do have the requisite copies, and I have the original for you.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A1.  
Go ahead.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you. Do you want me to just read it?

I move that Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act, be amended in section 1 by striking out "2017" and substituting "2016".

When the original bill was presented, we weren't anticipating that we would have unanimous consent and be able to move so quickly through this. Due to the importance of this day, we're requesting that we celebrate this day and acknowledge it this year, in 2016. I would ask for unanimous consent for this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to this amendment?  
Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Chair:** We're back on Bill 206. Are there any further speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Member. The reason I'm getting up and speaking in committee is because it's in reference to a motion that I will ask the member if she'd be open to. But I promised that I would finish the story of Andrew and just two other excerpts from soldiers. Again, I have full support, so there is no question about this. I am still seeking unanimous support for the passing of this bill not only in committee but in third today, to get this done. It's that important.

4:50

I ended last in second reading with the fact that they wanted to send Andrew home, too – and this is a continuation of the quotation – but being 19, he fought tooth and nail.

He was a small-town boy with big dreams, proud of his uniform. After a few days his vision cleared and the headache disappeared. Then the nightmares started.

It's a long story, but I'll just end with this part about Andrew.

Little was known then about the damage a blast wave can do to the human brain, or that it increases [the] risk of PTSD. The nightmares accumulated, got progressively worse. Andrew was serving in the Medak Pocket during the bloodiest period of the civil war in Bosnia.

The second excerpt that I wanted to read:

A veteran in Calgary said it doesn't matter where he is or what he's doing, he spends part of every day back in Afghanistan. It's as if they're PTSD prisoners of war, denied the luxury of ever coming home completely. It's not just that they've been changed by the experience; some describe it as losing a piece of themselves. The public is used to seeing military amputees with prosthetic legs and arms – but who can fashion a prosthetic for a missing piece of self?

The last example, again concentrating at this point on the military:

Second World War veteran Stewart MacDonald has soldiered on alone with PTSD for more than six decades.

Many details I'll skip past but add this:

As for most combat soldiers, death was ever close. Machine-gun fire stitched through the backpack worn snugly against his spine, a soldier walking near him stepped on a landmine, a shell pulverized men in the next room of a sheltering house. He was given the job of searching through basements, to roust out enemy troops. He found none, but he did find . . .

And it gets graphic, but this is what we're talking about.

. . . bodies of mothers, their arms in futile protective embraces around their dead children. He saw more dead mothers and children along roadsides, in fields. He saw Germans, young men his own age, shot as they tried to surrender. All this before he turned 20.

MacDonald returned to Canada and peacetime, but the war never left him. "I had bad dreams for years and years," he said. "The nightmares were horrible. Bombings. Shootings . . . I'd be fighting with myself. I was afraid to stay in boarding houses or hotels. It went on even after I was married. My wife, she had to put up with a lot." A teetotaler all during the war, he climbed into the bottle when he got home. "I don't want to talk about them days. They were my worst, worst, worst days ever." He didn't know where to go for help, so like thousands of others, he went to the beer parlours and Royal Canadian Legion halls to share his stories and ask buddies what they were doing about the nightmares. He was advised [simply] to put a bible under his pillow.

That was a long time ago, Madam Chair. We've come a long way, and this is a great initiative to take us further down that road.

Now, earlier today I spoke with the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs about a friendly amendment. I had concerns about the dates. At the very end of June, of course, students are either gone from or leaving school. A lot of folks that work aren't at work. They might be thinking more about vacation. So a weekend day, a Saturday, might be a lot better in terms of actually getting people to attend events. I thought we had an agreement to move it to the last Saturday.

There's always the argument – and it's fair – that it could be next to Canada Day, but that's once every seven years. I would argue that that actually makes this a lot stronger, that coupling with Canada Day to raise the awareness. The fact of the matter is that there are all sorts of great activities already going on. I'll refer to one.

I'll just ask the member, and you can give me a nod if you want. I was going to move that the PTSD awareness day act be amended in section 1 – very, very short – moving it from "the 27th day of June" each year and substituting "the last Saturday of June." So I'll ask the member: is this something that you'd be open to? No?

That's unfortunate. Again, how about the 3rd or the 2nd? Just not moving it at all? Okay. Well, that was in the spirit of all-party co-operation. That's a little unfortunate because, again, we just want as many people participating in this as possible.

You know, folks, I'm looking at the clock. I want this to pass . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 8(6) the committee will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 206. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 such that debate on Bill 206 continues past 5 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

#### Bill 206 Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (continued)

**The Chair:** Are there any other further speakers, comments, questions, amendments with respect to the bill?

Seeing none, I gather you're ready for the question, then.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 206 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 206.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Having heard the report, does the Assembly concur? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? Say no. So ordered.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Speaker, I would rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order to proceed immediately to third reading of Bill 206, the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**5:00           Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Third Reading  
Bill 206  
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)  
Awareness Day Act**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all of my colleagues in this Assembly for their valuable contributions in this discussion and for their unanimous support of this bill. It's encouraging to see co-operation and agreement from all members that raising awareness around posttraumatic stress disorder in our province is critically important. By recognizing June 27 as posttraumatic stress disorder, PTSD, awareness day in Alberta, this bill will raise awareness and help educate the public about PTSD, its causes, symptoms, and where to find support.

Bill 206 is important to me on a personal level. I spoke previously of my background in front-line social work and, through it, my exposure to trauma and its profound effects on families. My current role as liaison to the Canadian Forces and MLA in a constituency with a high concentration of military families has heightened my awareness of the effects of PTSD on our veterans, their families, and their communities.

Consultation on this bill drove home that PTSD affects all segments of society. Posttraumatic stress disorder awareness day will recognize the lived experience of those suffering from PTSD, including refugees, survivors of residential schools, victims of crime, veterans, front-line workers, emergency personnel, first responders, and corrections officers.

Madam Speaker, this bill supports Albertans suffering from PTSD to access the support and treatments that they need. That is why I'm proud to move Bill 206 and receive the unanimous support of this Assembly.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, followed by Calgary-Bow.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and again thank you to the member. Just for the knowledge of the House, I was actually happy to pull the amendment that I wanted to make in the spirit of all-party co-operation – this bill is too important to stand on any kind of political pulpit – even though I really believe that a Saturday would make for better attendance at events. I don't think we need to piggyback on what America is doing – no offence to them – and there's nothing particular about the date June 27. It happens to be

my birthday, so I'd have a different reason to celebrate, to be honest with you. It is a celebration of how far we've come.

I know that in a couple of my prior careers, sadly, I've had the situation of dealing with picking up dead bodies and what's left of bodies as well. I will restrain from sharing part of that – it's very personal – but this issue has touched me very deeply personally and professionally, let alone politically. Thankfully, I guess I've been in the right place to be a Sherpa for my Sherpa friends and carried them on my shoulders to rescue them, and I know that they would have saved my life if that was required as well.

But, again, this is never about me; it's about the people that we represent. That's why I was bringing forward the recommendations of others that really wanted to celebrate this day in the biggest way possible. For the sake of time, I thought: let's pull this. It was right before 5 o'clock. We're not going to talk to an amendment; we're not going to bicker about a date. We could make arguments all the time, colleagues and friends, about how there's always a good reason to say no to something. I mean, we talked about this, hon. member, you and I, that there is always going to be a conflict. We're living in an age when we recognize all sorts of causes. There's the day of this, the week of that, and the month of these things. It happens all of the time.

I've always thought that there's never a bad time for a good idea. Whether it's June 27, one of the Saturdays in June, or any other day, the idea is to bring awareness and action to PTSD no matter what the root cause is because we're not talking about money and staying at home because of mental illness or wellness; we're talking about people's lives, their very existence. I want to thank all the hon. members for sharing personal stories and stories from their own profession as well.

I will take what time is left for me, Madam Speaker, just to make a point of one of the activities that's already going on. We know that there are a lot of great initiatives going on for awareness already. I've mentioned this, and I'll just read a couple of paragraphs. Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, or, as many of us know it, the PPCLI, the foundation, and Calgary Health Trust are pleased to collaborate on Reaching the Summit for Mental Health and Wellness. It's an initiative aimed at heightening awareness and raising funds for veterans and their families suffering from the devastating consequences of depression, PTSD, and other forms of mental illness.

As you know, 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of the death of Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Cecil Buller, DSO, who was killed in action leading the PPCLI at the Battle of Mount Sorrel in Flanders, Belgium, on the 2nd of June 1916, so in just a few days. In 1922 Mount Buller and several other nearby features were named to honour the memory of Lieutenant Colonel Buller. To honour the memory of Colonel Buller and commemorate the 100th anniversary of his death, 25 climbers, including a small team of military climbers, will climb to the summit – a return journey, by the way, of 12 kilometres, let alone the vertical up and down – and 50 hikers will reach the summit of Buller Pass, and that's a journey of almost 16, a little bit less, vertical kilometres. Two of the climbing teams will be led by a dear friend, Laurie Skreslet, the first Canadian to climb Mount Everest. It's my great honour to lead the other team of military climbers, although climbing up and down the Leg. steps isn't much exercise for climbing a mountain. It's been a little while, and I'm afraid that the soldiers might have to short rope me to the top. I don't think I'll be leading them in this circumstance, but we are in this together.

I do want to make this point – and this is what it's leading up to – that all the proceeds will be used to support mental health and wellness for military veterans and their families. For further information or if people want to join as a climber or a hiker or

perhaps contribute to the cause, if you just go to calgaryhealthtrust.ca and follow the links, you can get there. Hopefully, we'll see some of you on this day. They are hoping to make it an annual event, and that's part of the reason why I think they were also suggesting that perhaps we could move it to a Saturday in June. But that's water under the bridge. Again, any day is a good day for a good idea.

I think we can leave it at that, from my perspective, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate the foresight of the hon. member and government members. I do believe we're heading towards unanimous support, and I think we all want to get this done before this House rises, whenever that will be. I would not necessarily ask for the question, but let's find out if any other members have anything to add. Let's get this voted on, and let's congratulate this private member on the passing of her first bill. Cheers.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act. I would like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for bringing this bill forward in the House.

Many members have already touched on various facts about PTSD, but I would like to expand on some of them. Posttraumatic stress disorder is caused by a traumatic event such as witnessing a violent death, being a victim of torture, sexual assault, domestic violence, anything that falls outside the range, the normal realm of human experience. The extent of PTSD varies from person to person. It can last for a short time, or it can remain for years. With PTSD, it's very different for each individual. Some of the symptoms with it are flashbacks, dreams, nightmares, sleep disturbances, numbness and emotional blunting, detachment from other people, unresponsiveness to surroundings, emotional numbing, acute bursts of fear or panic, depression, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts. These are only a few. Having said that, some people may not experience some of these. Like I said, everyone reacts differently.

Looking back to when I was doing my private member's bill, Bill 204, I did a lot of consultation with individuals who experienced domestic violence. Many of them shared with me their stories. I remember them talking to me about some of the symptoms that I mentioned earlier.

5:10

I just want to take this opportunity to share some of the research that was done on PTSD and domestic violence. As some of the members have talked about already, it's about getting rid of the stigma around PTSD. It's about spreading the discourse and reaching out to individuals who possibly need help. This is why we're standing here today and talking about these things.

Having said that, I want to talk about domestic violence right now. According to the report *Women, Domestic Violence, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)* by Margaret J. Hughes and Loring Jones the severity of the violence, the duration of exposure, early-age onset, and the victim's cognitive assessment of the violence intensify the symptoms. This report also found that women who resort to taking refuge in shelters as a result of domestic violence are at higher risk for PTSD than other victimized women. In any given shelter they found that 40 to 84 per cent of the residents are victims of domestic violence or survivors of domestic violence.

Domestic abuse is more prevalent than injuries sustained in accidents. Domestic violence tends to be repetitive and endurance based. The physical effects of this type of trauma on its victims are often obvious and acute – lacerations, bruises, broken bones, head

injuries, internal bleeding, chronic pelvic pain, abdominal pain, frequent vaginal and urinary tract infections, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV – but it also can manifest through long-term and chronic physical problems like arthritis, hypertension, and heart issues. Existing medical conditions can simply be aggravated by sustained physical abuse, and often it's the emotional component of domestic violence that leads to a chronic state of PTSD. Depression is, by far, the most common symptom of domestic violence, and it's also one of the chronic effects of PTSD caused by abuse. The feeling of helplessness and hopelessness that many victims – sorry; I don't mean to say "victims;" I want to say "survivors" – fall prey to has a profoundly undermining effect on their mental and emotional well-being.

It is often extremely challenging for survivors of domestic violence to escape the cycle of abuse. Even those who have managed to move on from crippling, abusive relationships can suffer the aftershocks of abuse.

Having said all that, Madam Speaker, this bill will create a bigger picture in constructing awareness and support mechanisms. Now is the time to legislate this important piece of legislation. I support it, and from what I can see, I think everyone else in this House supports it, too.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) comes into effect. [interjection] Oh, sorry. It's private members' day. My apologies.

Go ahead, hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House and speak about Bill 206, the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act, as put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. As the discussions here today have already shown, there is agreement among us here in this place that PTSD is an issue in our communities, in Alberta, and in Canada.

From the fact that PTSD is an issue that we need to raise awareness of and that the support needs to be made better available to those who face PTSD, my caucus colleagues and I are pleased to support this bill, but if we do pass this bill, we owe it to Albertans that it's not merely the designation of a day. PTSD changes lives, not only those who suffer from it but their loved ones as well. It would be hypocritical and an inadequate statement if the day created by the act passed without any genuine action to increase the availability of support.

As I noted earlier, my caucus colleagues put forward mental health recommendations to this government. I do want to commend my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat, in particular, for his work on that report. One of the recommendations was to increase the availability of support for front-line workers suffering from PTSD. As I noted earlier, it's front-line workers like paramedics, firefighters, police officers who make up the vast majority of PTSD claims to the WCB. I'm hopeful that before this debate is over, someone in this government can update us on the steps that have been taken by this government on PTSD.

The reality is that health care costs in this province have been soaring, but the quality of services available remains questionable. When it's not concern about the faltering economy, my constituency office hears from those concerned about health care, concerned about long waits, concerned about availability of services. It would be helpful to know if and how access to PTSD has improved under this government. Further, it would be helpful to know, in particular, what vision the member responsible for this bill had for PTSD awareness day and whether there were any discussions with the government on what that could look like.

The issue of those affected by PTSD, of course, is not a partisan matter. There have been many good steps taken on this matter. The U.S. Senate designated June 27 as PTSD awareness day. This legislation would recognize the same here in Alberta. Thankfully, Alberta is one of the few jurisdictions where PTSD was diagnosed by physicians and psychologists and is presumed to be a workplace injury for emergency front-line workers like firefighters, police, and EMTs. The previous government here deserves praise for their action. Removing the burden of proof for those afflicted with the aftermath of a major trauma is just good, common sense. Of course, it's extremely difficult to track down many Albertans who are actually affected by PTSD. There are numerous issues in tracking given that some of those facing trauma are often hesitant to speak about what happened to them.

I do want to read out something I came across recently in a Statistics Canada report on anxiety disorders. This is a long quote. Bear with me. I will have to say that it may not be as long as Calgary-Lougheed's. But I did enjoy his articles that he read to us. It's a very good job there.

Lifetime prevalence of PTSD... is approximately 8% in the population, 12-month prevalence in the U.S. is 3.5%. Women are more likely to develop the disorder than men. PTSD... can occur at any age, and can be a chronic condition. Immediately following the traumatic event, the individual becomes estranged or oddly unaffected because they are generally in shock. Soon thereafter, the individual experiences recurrent images or thoughts of the traumatic event through nightmares or flashbacks. These may be triggered by a simple ordinary occurrence such as a car backfiring (resembling the sound of gunfire), and tend to be so realistic that the individual believes they are reliving in the situation. Symptoms typically begin within three months of the traumatic event, and last at least one month.

This is to say that those affected by PTSD are affected greatly. This is not a short-term affliction.

Establishing PTSD awareness day, as the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs seeks to establish, is an opportunity to educate Albertans on this matter, but it also is an opportunity to evaluate what steps the government is taking to ensure that the adequate supports are being taken for those who are afflicted.

In conclusion, as we have established today again, adequate support for those afflicted with PTSD is an integral matter. Establishing a PTSD awareness day isn't a be-all and end-all solution, but it's an important opportunity to raise awareness and look at whether adequate supports are in place. My caucus colleagues and I support this legislation. Again I commend the member for putting it forward.

Thank you.

5:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers to this bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** I wasn't going to stand and speak to this because I knew lots of people were, but I spent an hour on the phone this morning with a woman who is a victim of domestic violence, and 18 years later she's still in hiding. I looked at some stats. There were 7,600 complaints of domestic violence last year. Only 2,600 were prosecuted. I'm going to speak to this because it's one thing for us to support a day that acknowledges PTSD – and I think that's fantastic, and I thank the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for putting it forward – but I think with that we also have to look at our actions abiding by that.

I say that because after I gave my statement in November, a day after, I was at a meeting. I was sitting in that meeting, and

something happened and triggered my own PTSD. I was sick, had nightmares that night, and the following day I confronted the person who made that PTSD come to the surface. When I was told that they were sorry for my feelings, I felt that, obviously, that person did not have any real understanding of what PTSD was or what domestic violence was. I just want to say that along with this bill our actions need to show that we also support what's going on.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill in third reading?

Seeing none, I will call on Edmonton-Castle Downs to close debate.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to close debate on Bill 206.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a third time]

[Standing ovation]

## Motions Other than Government Motions

### Cyberbullying Awareness

507. Mr. Dang moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take steps to increase awareness in Alberta's schools of the effects of cyberbullying.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour today to bring this important motion to the floor for debate because bullying has real and serious impacts not just for our students but for many Albertans across the province. Bullying can lead to anxiety and depression. Studies have shown again and again that bullying negatively affects student achievement in schools. We've seen that over the last few years the nature of bullying has changed and is ever evolving. Cyberbullying is now becoming more common every day with today's technology.

In preparing for this motion I consulted extensively with students, teachers, principals, and schools in my constituency. They shared over and over again with me that everyone needs more tools and that we absolutely need to be having a larger conversation about the effects of cyberbullying in our schools.

According to a 2009 Statistics Canada survey, approximately 40 per cent of adults and 50 per cent of youth have experienced cyberbullying. The most common form of cyberbullying against children is receiving threatening or aggressive e-mail or instant messages, at a staggering 74 per cent, followed by hate comments, at 72 per cent, and 16 per cent of the youths surveyed reported that they had experienced someone using a child's identity to send threatening messages.

Madam Speaker, most children are bullied by someone they know, usually a classmate, a friend, or an acquaintance, and among cases of child luring as many as 60 per cent are by a stranger. One of the most important statistics of this entire conversation that stood out to me was that only 14 per cent of all child cyberbullying or child luring cases known to adults were reported to police. This chronic underreporting is why we need to be working to increase awareness about the prevalence and to increase the awareness of the effects of cyberbullying.

Madam Speaker, promoting relationships and eliminating violence network, or PREVNet, Canada's leading researchers on

preventing bullying behaviors, reports that 1 in 5 youth have experienced cyberbullying and 1 in 3 have seen it taking place. Nearly half of Canadian youth in distress report involvement in traditional bullying or cyberbullying, and half of Canadian students believe that bullying is a problem in their high schools.

Madam Speaker, bullying can now follow a student wherever they go, whether they're at home, in class, or hiding in a washroom. Whatever it is, it is now as easy to pull out your cellphone as it is to bully somebody and make fun of them in their privacy.

This constant bullying can have serious consequences for our young people, Madam Speaker. We have all seen the stories, the news of students or young people taking their own lives as a result of cyberbullying. This needs to change. We have a responsibility to promote healthy relationships and prevent bullying in our schools, our workplaces, our homes, and communities. Promoting inclusion and ensuring welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe environments are priorities for Alberta, and they should be for this government.

As part of this goal we need to ensure that we are working on preventative measures that will change the conversation we're currently having around bullying in schools. As part of this conversation we need to ensure that programming is developed to target specific students at all grade levels, and we must remember that what we say to a student at grade 1 is different than what we say at grade 3, is different than what we say at grade 6, is different than what we say in high school. All these students have different access and relationships with technology.

We must work on creating positive relationships between our students and the technology that they use if we want to curb the prevalence of cyberbullying in our communities. In my consultations, Madam Speaker, I heard again and again that good digital citizenship is an ongoing relationship and conversation between students, teachers, parents, and administrators. We need to ensure that we're using positive messaging on how to be a good digital citizen rather than the negative or prohibition-style antibullying messaging that we've resorted to in the past.

Madam Speaker, it's because of this that I'm happy to note that the previously amended School Act does include a greater emphasis on bullying in general and bullying prevention with the inclusion of a bullying prevention week, and it includes requirements for students, parents, and school boards to create welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning spaces, where diversity is respected and a sense of belonging and a positive sense of self is nurtured. There are also some specific protections for our students that are being bullied that are currently in place in legislation as well. The School Act also requires that school boards address bullying when it occurs within the school building or during the school day. This, however, only works if the bullying is reported to the school, which is one of the reasons that we need to be increasing awareness of cyberbullying and the supports that are available to our young people.

The government is committed to promoting welcoming, caring, respectful spaces that respect diversity and nurture a positive self-image, Madam Speaker. That's why the government has taken a multipronged approach to combating bullying in Alberta. Through Human Services, Education, Indigenous Relations, Health, Culture and Tourism, Labour, Advanced Education, Justice and Sol Gen, Seniors and Housing, and corporate human resources the government has been working to prevent bullying and promote healthy relationships in Alberta's schools, communities, and workplaces. Through the ministries the government is working to raise awareness regarding cyberbullying and do things like increase mental health supports for individuals affected by bullying.

Madam Speaker, for this to work, I'm also happy to see that Budget 2016 included \$1.9 million in bullying prevention in schools and in our communities. I hope that this motion will support this work and be an extra tool for the government to continue to create healthy, supportive, and inclusive environments for our youth. The government provides specific supports for those dealing with bullying such as the 24-hour bullying helpline, which is available in over 170 languages. There is a chat line available, which is available from noon until 8 p.m., and the government of Alberta's website provides online resources available for children, youth, parents, and other caregivers. I'd like to say to anyone who's listening at home today or is reading this in the future and is ever in need of assistance or is feeling overwhelmed due to bullying that the helpline can be accessed by calling 1.888.456.2323 or by visiting [alberta.ca/bullying](http://alberta.ca/bullying).

5:30

Madam Speaker, I've heard from students and young people in my office and people who've reached out to me directly with stories of their experiences of cyberbullying. Some of these stories are harrowing, which is why I've brought forward this motion today. We must do everything that we possibly can do to increase the awareness of the effects of cyberbullying, and we need to ensure that Alberta students know that their government supports them and that we will continue to work every day to ensure that their schools are welcoming, supportive, and inclusive spaces.

There are examples of schools in my riding which are taking a leadership role in this fight against cyberbullying. Monsignor Fee Otterson, for example, has had great success in providing educational programming for parents around cyberbullying.

I've heard from students and parents who've told me that often parents simply don't know or don't understand what cyberbullying is or that it is going on at all. Many of them are completely unaware of what technologies are being used and how these technologies can be used in a negative manner, Madam Speaker. That is why it is essential that we do our work here in the Legislature to ensure that there is an increased awareness among all parents, among all educators, whether that's teachers that we're teaching today or teachers that have been teaching for many years, and that these cyberbullying incidents are caught and handled. We need to equip our educators and our parents with the tools that they need so that they can help to foster safe learning environments for our students.

Madam Speaker, I personally am committed to preventing and ending bullying across this province. I believe that I can speak for all members of this House when I say that this Assembly should be committed to ending bullying as well. I look forward to the conversation on this motion this afternoon because I know that every person understands that we must have the best possible learning environment for our students and that cyberbullying can end with us.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Motion 507 and thank the member for bringing it forward. I think it's an important motion. It builds on a lot of the work that I was doing as associate minister of family and community safety and the first minister that had bullying and cyberbullying in a portfolio. Certainly, I learned a lot from the work we did in that area about bullying and cyberbullying. We felt that it was an important issue in our government and an issue that we wanted to devote time and resources to.

I was very happy in our ministry to be the first minister tasked with that responsibility to not only tackle bullying and cyberbullying but violence against women and sexual exploitation. In that role, I introduced the first homophobic and transphobic bullying fact sheets as well as tips for students who wanted to start GSAs. We know that GSAs have an enormous impact in cutting down on incidents of bullying in schools, and that's why we think they are so important. When I was associate minister, we launched three bullying prevention websites, including the 24-hour helpline that the member talked about, as he said, available in 170 languages. We invested \$72 million in the area of prevention of family violence and bullying.

Now, I would add to that as well that I am the parent of a 16-year-old, and what I see in terms of social media from her is a teenager that like most of her friends, if not all, is glued to their phone almost 24 hours a day. They'd probably look at it in their sleep if they had the ability to. One of the concerning things – I found this when I did the ministry work, and I see this now, watching her – is that these sites where bullying can occur crop up so frequently and some of them are so new that just as soon as you get a handle on one of them, another one comes up.

For instance, I just found out a couple of months ago that a lot of the high schools in Calgary – there is a site called Whisper, where the kids from the school can go and they get a nonstop array of rumours put out by other kids, which the kids can pile onto one individual. When I heard about this, I was shocked. Some of the things they put. They can put absolutely anything on there. They can be rumours about perceived sexual activity. They can be rumours about people's behaviour, about how they're perceived by other people, I mean, incredibly damaging, harmful things to kids, and they're being floated out on a website like this.

Whisper is only one of a number of opportunities that kids have to go online anonymously and talk about other kids and God knows what else. It's the Internet. We don't even know that these are all kids. We have no idea who's on these websites. So when I see this happening and I see these teenagers trying to negotiate their teen years and then having to do that with the added spectre of having absolutely anything floated out about them, whether it's a scurrilous rumour or anything else, and having absolutely no power over it, it's alarming to see and incredibly discouraging.

You know, one of the things that we found when we talked to people about legislation – and we looked at legislation crossjurisdictionally. We looked at all sorts of different places where people have brought in antibullying legislation. And it just doesn't work because you're not trying to get rid of the bully; you're trying to get rid of the bullying behaviour. The only way to do that properly is to take a look at the people who are doing this and to try and find them help so that they don't do it anymore. When the member who brought this forward talks about education, I think that is the most important part to me. It's having that conversation. It's getting to the root of the problem.

You know, we had a statistic that we talked about when we went out to talk to different schools about this. When you step in and stop bullying when it first happens, the incident can be over in as little as 10 seconds, and kids move on. They move on to something else, and it's forgotten. If you don't step in, that bullying can take years and years, can erode a child's confidence over the course of a lifetime. That's what happens when someone steps in. So in the area of education we have to empower bystanders to get involved because when they do step in, they create enormous differences both in the life of the child who's being bullied and in the school or the environment in which they all exist, and that's an important thing, too.

I think that when we have this conversation ongoing – and I hope we do because for all of us with teenagers who are on social media, I think we know that every day that our kids are exposed to damaging things like this is a day too many. You know, when we talk about building partnerships with schools, I think that's a hugely important thing.

We also have to talk about building partnerships with law enforcement, who have fantastic programs. I was talking with a law enforcement official about one particular program where they went into a school where they had a child who was in grade 3. He had been bullying for three years, just on an incredibly massive scale, and at a certain point he was incredibly difficult to manage in the school. His younger brother started kindergarten and was starting to model the same kind of behaviours. The police went into the home with a social worker, and they discovered that the children had a mom who was raising them on her own, who suffered from severe depression, who couldn't get out of bed – there was no food in the house; the kids were existing on Ensure diet drinks – and these kids were in a terrible place.

So the police got involved within the program they were running as did the social worker. They got involved with the family. Within six months this grade 3 boy had not only stopped the bullying behaviours, but he was getting straight As in school, and his younger brother was modelling the same behaviours. They got them hockey equipment, and the kids were involved in sports. All of a sudden you had not only erased the behaviour; you had given these kids – these kids had been flagged. They had been helped. They moved on to actually start enjoying the process of school. But it wasn't just them. It was every child down the road that they would have bullied if no one had stepped in to help. That is an incredibly powerful thing.

5:40

There are so many great programs that we could look at supporting out there in the communities, not just in the schools but in conjunction with the schools, that I think we have to make sure that we keep them top of mind. The folks who are doing this good work: we want to make sure that they can continue to do this work.

I also want to mention Kids Help Phone because I think they're absolutely fantastic. I wish – and I'll give them a plug – that they could get more funding. One of the things that I hear from a lot of LGBTQ youth is that the first time they ever come out, oftentimes they will come out to someone on a help phone because sometimes that is the only way they can find someone they can actually feel comfortable enough having that conversation with, especially in Alberta, you know, that has so many rural areas. Oftentimes kids in small communities have nothing in the way of resources in their schools that they can rely on, so the help phone concept is a hugely important concept.

I know that Kids Help Phone has LGBTQ-trained counsellors. I couldn't believe how many people I spoke to out in the community who actually talked to me about Kids Help Phone and said that 10 years ago or so they actually came out on Kids Help Phone with a counsellor and were able, then, to move forward with a little bit of perspective on what they were going through and some help and some people who were there to listen to them. You know, I can't say enough about Kids Help Phone and the kinds of things they've done.

I want to finish by saying that, you know, I think that when we look at these issues and we look at the fact that the cyberworld is changing every day, our ability to stay on top of some of these websites like some of the ones that we've seen – I've had many conversations with someone who is a dear friend of mine, Carol Todd, whose daughter was Amanda Todd. Unfortunately, I think

everybody knows the Amanda Todd story now. Carol and I became friends when I was working on these issues. We spent many nights talking about what she had gone through with Amanda, and . . . [Ms Jansen's speaking time expired] Okay. Sorry.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to be able to rise on this critical issue. I would like to thank our member for proposing this motion. I'm very impressed with the comments that the member across the floor has stated. I think that's excellent information. She was talking about, you know, that she hoped this conversation would continue. Well, I mean, we're having that conversation right now, and I think that was the intent of the motion, to get this going. I think that it's already working. I mean, this is something that, I think, can't be stressed often enough, so I would like to speak strongly in favour of the motion.

Now, studies have shown that bullying in general affects student achievement in school. That's been shown to also apply to cyberbullying. We are talking about real and serious impacts. As other members have mentioned, this can include anxiety and depression, but unfortunately sometimes these types of impacts can be things that you can't recover from. I mean, we have had suicides as a consequence of this. It's an incredible tragedy when a young person has their entire life ahead of them and reaches that type of a state where they think it's not worth going ahead with. Sadly, I mean, this is a situation that occurred in my own riding not very long ago. We had a young lady who, unfortunately, took her own life, and cyberbullying was a factor in it. Unfortunately, this is something that seems to be becoming more common and easy with today's technology.

You know, there's a bit of a sad irony in how school administrators and educators kind of approached this originally. Until about 2011 I actually used to teach ethics and law for beginning students in Education at the University of Alberta. We did do a section on social media, but at that time – and that's not very long ago at all – the main concern that we had was actually the teacher's reputation. The concern was that, well, what if the teacher put something on social media that's not appropriate, and what type of harm can that do to the teacher's reputation? We didn't really imagine that, although this is an issue, this was, you know, really the main issue at all. That issue was really what, you know, youth would do to each other through these new means. Obviously, that understanding is something that does need to change.

Now, however, of course, it's not as if bullying at school, in and of itself, is a new issue. It certainly is not. Schools have long been actually legally liable if they fail to take reasonable steps to prevent bullying and to deal with it when it does occur, so some of these things had already been in step.

What makes cyberbullying any different from conventional bullying? This is something as well that both the mover of the motion and, you know, the member across the floor has pointed out. The biggest issue, I think, with it is that it follows young people wherever they go, and there really is no safe space.

Now, even speaking from my own long-distance experience as a precocious child – I was the shortest in my class and had all kinds of odd manners when I was young – this is something that I had to experience. However, I could leave school, and I could get home, and then I had a supportive family. I had friends. I had a, you know, different place to escape to. I just can't imagine what these young people must go through when the place that they would normally

escape to is also poisoned – right? – and that there are some places that they can't escape.

I also like that the member from Calgary there brought up the particular issue with rural children. I mean, this is something for rural kids who might have difficulty fitting in, where something like social media could be a place for them to be able to express themselves freely. It's really, you know, kind of tragic that they find themselves in situations where what should be an ally for them is something that is the absolute opposite. This is something that intrudes everywhere, so how can they escape?

Now, the School Act does require the school boards to address bullying, whether it occurs within the school building during the school day or whether it occurs by electronic means. However, this is something that schools certainly cannot do on their own. I mean, we all have responsibility to promote healthy relationships and to prevent bullying, whether the traditional type or cyberbullying in our schools, workplaces, homes, and communities.

I think another kind of a side issue here is that, unfortunately, in the adult world cyberbullying is something that is accepted or people look the other way far too often. I think that this is something, you know – if we want our young people not to be engaging in this type of behaviour, I think that we need to help set the example. I'm afraid that, unfortunately, I don't think that we've necessarily been the best example. I'm speaking specifically of us in our role as political leaders in this province. I mean, we all have a part to play in making sure that people understand that this is not something that is acceptable. Promoting inclusion and ensuring that welcoming, caring, and respectful environments are available for our schoolchildren, should be, for all of us, our priorities for Albertans and especially for our government.

I really thank the member for bringing this up. I think this is, you know, a valuable thing to keep talking about and to take the broad view of what it means to educate people. I also agree with the member across the floor in the sense that I don't think that the punitive measures are necessarily always the best. Sometimes we need to start with what is happening in the young person's life where they feel they need to bully another child, whether through cyber means or through traditional ones.

I'd like to speak in favour of supporting this motion and thank the member for bringing it to the House's attention. Thank you.

5:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Over my years as a teacher I've had my share of students in crisis, so I am very pleased to rise and speak in favour of Motion 507. Often the students that I taught who found themselves in this kind of a position didn't always come with nice, clean lives and situations. Often there was chaos, and their lives could get a little messy. As a teacher I always did my best to try and help them find in my classroom or on my basketball team a place of safety and of security. In many cases I was successful, but in some I was unable to break through the chaos and the pain in these kids' lives. For one or two of these students the consequences were quite serious in the extreme. They left myself and the school and my colleagues and their friends and their loved ones looking for answers as to how we could have reached across the gap of their pain to try to bring hope and to try to answer their questions.

Perhaps one of the most heartbreaking and, if it's appropriate to say so, crushing situations that some of my students faced were when they were bullied. I think over an extended career any teacher would be able to remember a student or two or three that faced



extreme hardships as a result of that bullying. I can remember one student who was subjected to physical violence when he was beaten up by three students, who then denied that they were involved until suitable camera evidence was forthcoming.

Bullying has, to some degree, changed over the course of my tenure as a teacher. Bullying has always, though, entailed intimidation, whether it was physical or verbal or emotional. Cyberbullying was not even a consideration when I started teaching, but it was definitely a part of the educational equation by the end of my teaching career. Cyberbullying, I believe, has become a serious problem for some students within our school system. By the end of my career so many of the students – indeed, I would argue that the vast majority of the students that I taught in my classes all had cellphones, and there's absolutely no doubt in my mind that the readily available access to this kind of technology has helped to create this problem of cyberbullying.

It was because of this that I know that educators and my staff and I'm sure staff in educational institutions across the province met. We talked. We discussed. We looked at the evidence and the suggestions for how to deal with cyberbullying, and then we would take that to our kids. We would take them to our classrooms. We would take it in to the students just to remind them that an inappropriate use of this technology could hurt, it could hurt the kids that are in their school, that it wasn't just playing around, it wasn't just joking, that the pictures that they took and posted from the party on the weekend or the student that vented about the character of another student wasn't just joking around, that it could have very serious consequences. We would have to remind them that not only would it have serious ramifications in the life of the student, but it could also have legal consequences for the person that was involved in the cyberbullying.

Now, I've been witness to the often traumatic events that have accompanied an act of cyberbullying. Relationships between friends become strained or even break out into open hostility. Students begin to take sides. Classroom environments, which should be safe and caring, can quickly become places of stress and strain. As a teacher you're caught in the middle of all of this, trying to figure out how you can repair relationships, how you can keep students safe, how you can teach and encourage learning and engage your students when this is occurring.

Students become wounded. Some will lash out in anger, and others – well, they'll retreat into a world of loneliness, and they'll try to find some place in the school where they can just hide.

Parents, upon finding out that their children are bullied or cyberbullied, in trying to protect their child, will often, in turn, become the focus of attention as they confront the bullies. The circle gets wider, and the school and the students and the community become enmeshed in an ugly situation where the power to get your way is often more important than the lives of the students that are involved.

Alberta Education and organizations like the society for safe and caring schools have a wide variety of resources that can be used to address bullying, but often these resources may not focus on cyberbullying. You've got events like Pink Shirt Day, a national antibullying campaign. Last year, I believe, we saw 6.4 million Canadians take part in a bully-free lifestyle, and if you log on to the antibullying website online, you can find resources on cyberbullying.

Madam Speaker, it's been my experience, in the time that as a teacher I've had to be a part of these kinds of events and these situations, that the best prevention against bullying is relationships. Positive, loving connections that build trust are the best way of ensuring that bullying doesn't take place. As a teacher, an educator, I always believed that it was one of my jobs to try to create those kinds of relationships not only between myself and the students but between the students themselves.

This motion raises awareness regarding cyberbullying, that will set a positive example for parents and for schools to continue developing targeted and preventative measures against cyberbullying. There is much to support in this motion, and I would thank the member across for bringing it forward.

As I've said, while you can have all sorts of programs, I really think the best thing that we can do is to encourage within our education system and within our communities the willingness to make positive relationships and to look beyond the individual student.

You know, I can think of one individual in our school who could have been bullied, a prime candidate. He had a disability that, in many cases, could have kept him from establishing positive relationships. Yet we invited this individual onto our basketball team. Over a three-year period of time that individual became a part of our team and became a part of the lives of the kids on my basketball team. That's the best way to stop bullying.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, it's now 6 p.m. The House stands adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, May 30, 2016

Day 35

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
 Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
 Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
 Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
 Official Opposition House Leader  
 Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
 Government Whip  
 Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
 Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
 Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
 Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
 Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
 Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
 Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
 Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
 Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
 Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
 Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
 Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
 Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
 Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
 Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
 Leader of the Official Opposition  
 Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
 Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
 Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
 Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
 Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
 Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
 MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
 Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
 Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
 Government House Leader  
 McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
 Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
 McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
 Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
 McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
 McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
 McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
 Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
 Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
 Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
 Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
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 Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
 Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
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### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
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Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Hinkley	Rodney
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### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinstauber
Babcock	McKittrick
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### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
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Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
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Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
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### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinstauber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, May 30, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Third Reading

##### Bill 10

##### Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

Mr. Hanson moved that Bill 10 be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 10, Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, be not now read a third time because this Assembly has not received satisfactory evidence or assurances that the government is prepared to take the necessary measures to see Alberta’s triple-A credit rating restored by the credit-rating agencies.

[Debate adjourned on amendment May 26: Mr. Smith speaking]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon is not present yet.

Are there any other members that would like to speak to Bill 10, amendment RA1, I believe? Is that correct? The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak about the amendment to the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, and I would like to talk about the issue here, which is that this government’s fiscal record is in free fall. We have a situation where investor confidence, business confidence is at an all-time low. We’ve had four credit downgrades in a year, and the reality is that these downgrades don’t come just because of the price of oil, as the opposite side likes to say, but they come because there is no foreseeable plan to stop this spending spree. There is no plan from this government set forward to be able to fix the financial straits that this province is in. In reality, we have a spending problem in this government, and it is a chronic problem that needs to be addressed. Until this problem is addressed, I believe that these credit ratings will continue to be downgraded. This is disconcerting, to say the least.

Just to look back at what we’ve seen in the last year, it wasn’t long ago that this government touted their 15 per cent debt limit, that it was the right limit, that it was what was sustainable, and that it would be palatable to the credit agencies. Now we’re in a situation where we’re not talking about 16 per cent, 17 per cent, or 20 per cent. We’ve removed the limit. Again, even at 15 per cent, which they said was acceptable to all the pundits – now we’re in a situation where they seem to have complete disregard to our financial situation, complete disregard to the fact that these credit agencies will not continue to put up with it and that we are losing businesses right, left, and centre.

You know, being in the position I’m in, the critic for jobs and labour, I get up-to-the-date information about the businesses that are not investing, up-to-the-date information on the businesses that are leaving, that are going to Saskatchewan, that are leaving the province, the place that they’ve called home for decades. This is concerning and should be concerning to this government. It should be concerning to the government because these are the people and the jobs that they supposedly are championing. I don’t understand – and I have tried to understand over the last year – how this government plans on creating all of these jobs when all we see is a continual loss of jobs.

Now, the reason why I am in favour of this amendment is because we need to get back to listening to the professionals and back to the people who understand how to be able to create jobs and create opportunities in this province. This government needs to start listening. If we can get the professionals and the people who have done this for a living for decades and we can get the collective group together that has the best practices and understands how economies work, we might be able to figure out some ideas about how to bring back the Alberta advantage again.

Now, I know that you call it the Alberta way, but there was a time in Alberta, called the Alberta advantage, that really was a prosperous time for Albertans. You know, we made mistakes. We had issues in Alberta. It’s true we made mistakes and we had issues, but it was a place where people still had jobs. It was a place where we had excellent growth. We competed with juggernaut states like Texas in terms of growth rates. Now we need to get back to that, Mr. Speaker. The only way that we’re going to be able to do that is if we put a plan together. Right now this government has no plan in order to be able to pay off debt. Racking up debt without a plan is foolhardy. It is not something that Albertans voted this government in to do.

Now, they’ve talked about an infrastructure deficit. I agree. There’s an infrastructure deficit in Alberta. This is something that we need to address. In order to be able to address this problem responsibly, we need to be able to say to Albertans that if we invest this way, this will be the return on your investment, this is what will be able to help the society we live in, but we’re going to tell you how we’re going to pay it off.

We have asked questions in this House numerous times, Mr. Speaker, about what the plan is to pay off the debt. What is the plan to be able to get your financial house in order so that you can say that we don’t have a deficit this year? This is something that this government and, quite frankly, the last four sessions of the previous government were not able to do. That’s something that Albertans are saying: look, it’s expected of us in our own homes; it’s expected of the government.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 10 is one of many bad policies that this government has brought in that has shaken consumer and investor confidence. We have to get back to allowing these investors and consumers the confidence that they need in order to be able to provide these jobs that we need.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think that it is completely reasonable to send this to committee, to send this bill to a body of individuals, of business owners, of economists that can be able to put together, restructure, or, as the minister of economic diversification and whatever that is likes to say, pivot from a system that didn’t work to a system that will work. You know, we’ve seen the government do this in the past. I’m glad that they recognized the fault in their first jobs plan and have pivoted to another jobs plan, which I don’t really buy into. But wouldn’t it be a good idea now, at this point, for the government to say that we need to pivot to a plan that will provide investor confidence and consumer confidence, which is at an all-time low?

7:40

I think that’s a prudent approach. I think it’s something that would instill, maybe, some confidence in this government, which seems to also have gone down in the confidence polls amongst Albertans because they’re also looking, Mr. Speaker, for a government that will be careful with their money, that will not spend their children’s and grandchildren’s future into the poorhouse. This is something that I’m concerned about as a grandparent and as a father, what we’re giving to our children and grandchildren. We all need to be concerned about that.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to just reiterate that I am in favour of this amendment because this amendment provides us with an opportunity to reflect, an opportunity to step back from the edge of the cliff, an opportunity to provide businesses and economists and professionals and the gurus of our society to be able to step up and help us to be able to mitigate the problem that we're in right now. This is where this gives this government the opportunity to do that, and that is why I will support this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner?

The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to stand up and speak in favour of this amendment. I'm very, very concerned about what the added interest and the added debt is going to do to our position for the services we depend on, for the jobs and the industry we need to attract. Why I think this is very reasonable, to go to committee and slow things down just slightly, is the opportunity to be more open and be more transparent for Albertans.

You know, I almost hate talking about bond ratings and whether we're double-A or double-A plus or triple-A minus, you know? What the heck does all this mean? I'm just sitting here trying to get my calculations as to how much extra interest it could be. If we lose .0015 of a percentage, if we have to pay that much extra interest on a \$60 billion debt, that's \$90 million. What does \$90 million mean to the average Albertan? Well, it's some side of 750 or 900 teachers, nurses. My goodness, we all stand up in here and talk about the mental health workers we need, the home-care professionals we need. You know – and I've said it in this House before – this money is just going to end up going to rich people, rich corporations, rich pensions instead of to the people that need the services. If the government will listen and take this reasoned amendment and give us some more time, we can certainly get Albertans more engaged as to where their hard-earned tax dollars are going to go.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner talked about it initially, I think, you know, very succinctly and very accurately. So much of what I've read starts with Alberta's problem being the high per capita spending. We have the youngest population, should need the health care services the least, but some side of 20 per cent, some side of \$2,000 per year per person, we spend more than other growing provinces – B.C. and Ontario also have growing populations – so you wonder why.

I've had many people say to me when I've said this to them – they realize that we don't get extra value for this money being spent. You know, as health care critic I recall from a month ago we discovered that – my goodness – we'd slipped to ninth or 10th on organ transplants from fifth or sixth even though we're spending the most. We all don't have to sit in our constituency offices very long to see the litany of things that are broken: people that can't access mental health facilities or a mental health person for their loved one, detox, health care. You know, again, yeah, it's important to spend the money on it. It's important to keep the money on front-line services, but it's also important to get it right.

A lot of people suggested to me, too, that this high per capita spending is only inflationary. It puts a burden on the private industry, the private market, making it harder for them to compete for materials, for subtrades, for the things that they need. Again, I agree with my colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner that it starts with getting our per capita spending in line.

When we're accumulating all this debt – it's been said by many, many people that debt and high per capita spending are just a future tax waiting to happen. Smart businesspeople are aware of this, so it

drives them out of your jurisdiction. What are we losing? I've read a number of articles that suggest that we are losing at least \$50 billion a year in annual investment because of this new taxation, because of this continued high spending, you know, because of the interest that is going to occur, and because of the future tax. I'm hearing about individuals who have switched jurisdictions, who are in low-tax jurisdictions and who will be saving tens of millions of dollars. Well, maybe that's un-Albertan, but it's their option. In a free society it is certainly their option.

I've said it before, and I just can't help but say it again. I, too, want to take one more swipe at the previous 44-year government, just one more. It's back, hon. minister, to the fact that they didn't save any of those \$250 billion in royalties that went through their fingers. It's back to the fact that they couldn't say no and spent all of the accumulated interest that could have compounded. Even that original \$17 billion that they started with in 1976 could have compounded and accumulated to over \$200 billion. My understanding today is that with that fund AIMCo makes us about 7 to 7 and a quarter per cent a year. Oil and gas royalties on a good year are somewhere around \$9 billion or \$10 billion. If they had just let it compound to \$120 billion, \$140 billion, that money, hon. Finance minister, would replace your royalties. We wouldn't miss a beat.

**An Hon. Member:** We've been saying all along that it's their fault.

**Mr. Barnes:** I'm not disagreeing, hon. minister, that up until May 5 a year ago it was their fault. [interjection] It does now. It does now, sir, and please get the per capita spending in line and get taxpayers value for their money.

I've seen some provinces, hon. member, where the interest expense . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, stay on topic here, okay?

**Mr. Barnes:** I've seen some provinces now where interest expense is the third most expensive line item . . . [interjections] I should be quiet so I can hear better. I missed that.

Once we're \$60 billion in the hole . . .

**Mr. Mason:** He's running for Finance critic.

**Mr. Barnes:** Oh, is that available?

Three years from now when we are \$60 billion in the hole, at 3 or 3 and a half per cent interest that's \$2 billion a year that could be spent on front-line services that instead is just going to make the rich richer, that is going to drive away investment, which drives away jobs. To the government: please consider this amendment to get this in a situation where all Albertans will have a further chance to talk about the mistakes of the past and the mistakes of the present.

Thank you.

7:50

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions of the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, are there any other questions or comments with respect to amendment RA1? The Member for Sylvan Lake . . .

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Almost.

**The Speaker:** Close.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Don't forget Innisfail.

**The Speaker:** Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** You'll be getting letters.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak today to this amendment, that

Bill 10, Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, be not now read a third time because this Assembly has not received satisfactory evidence or assurances that the government is prepared to take the necessary measures to see Alberta's triple-A credit rating restored by the credit-rating agencies.

The Minister of Finance has repeatedly blamed low oil prices for the credit downgrades, but frankly this is simply not the case. The credit-rating agencies in their reports all say similar things. They look for a debt repayment plan, which isn't there. They look for controlled or constrained spending. That isn't there. They're looking for, in short, financial discipline, which isn't there, and this is the reason, they are telling us, that they are downgrading Alberta's credit score. In other words, the province of Alberta, the government of Alberta, is becoming more of a financial risk simply because the government has not demonstrated financial discipline, that we would expect of anybody, really. This is the fourth downgrade. We lack a repayment plan, which is, frankly, just irresponsible.

Now, this minister assured this House and Albertans that a 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio was plenty good enough. Over and over again we in the Official Opposition questioned the Minister of Finance on this issue, and he over and over again assured us all: "No, no. Fifteen per cent is plenty good enough. That gives us lots and lots of room." Here we are four months later – just four months later – and we're taking the lid off now. Not only is 15 per cent not good enough, but there is no constraint whatsoever.

The credit-rating agencies are not done with us yet. In another four months or five months when this government starts reporting on revenue shortfalls – which are going to happen; mark my words – the credit-rating agencies are going to come after us again. We're going to experience another downgrade. Those downgrades will continue to happen quarterly, biannually until such time as this government starts demonstrating some financial discipline. Investor confidence has been shaken in this province.

Now, I pointed out before that using even a 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio as some kind of acceptable limit, comparing Alberta to Ontario, is rather deceptive because on a per capita basis if you compare debt to GDP per capita, that 15 per cent here in Alberta, because our population is so small, looks like about 30 per cent in comparison. That is simply unacceptable, totally unacceptable. This government has got to start reining in.

It was interesting to note that upon coming to power, this government immediately started increasing taxes and spent no effort whatsoever looking for efficiencies within government, within the bureaucracy, none whatsoever, as if to say that the bureaucracy of the province of Alberta is running like a well-oiled machine and there just is no place for improvement, no place for cost saving, no place at all. Then budget after budget after budget we see increased taxation, increased spending without constraint. This credit rating is vitally important to our province, to our municipalities. It will ultimately cost Alberta's taxpayers more in debt-servicing costs, and this government is not listening to the requests or the demands of the bond-rating community, of the bond-issuing community, of the financial experts that are out there, who are all saying the same thing: get your house in order. This government is not listening. Instead they're blaming the low price of oil. Well, guess what? That just doesn't wash with anybody.

This minister has travelled down east to talk to these bond-rating agencies. Every time he goes portraying his plan and telling us how great his plan is and how he's going to convince those bond-rating agencies and that he's going to come back with a better rating – what happens? – they downgrade us again. My advice is: Minister,

stop travelling down east because every time you come back, we take another hit. We take another hit.

In short, I support this amendment. I think that this amendment is prudent. I think it is timely, it is necessary, and I believe that unless this government can provide the kind of assurances that this amendment is asking for, then this government needs to – well, frankly, they just need to accept this amendment and start demonstrating some financial discipline. [interjections] To keep him here? Maybe we should have an amendment that the Minister of Finance cannot leave the province of Alberta to go talk to bond-rating agencies because every time he does, we take another hit. I think that might be a good amendment. I don't know what legal counsel would say to that one, whether we can constrain him, but I did like the amendment the other day where he would lose his ministerial stipend if he couldn't rein in his spending.

**Mr. Mason:** Go out and get your Finance critic.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Don't be talking about members that are not in the House here, Government House Leader.

In short, if I may wrap up, Mr. Speaker, this is a wonderfully good amendment. It brings some discipline to this government, which they obviously need, and I support it wholeheartedly.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the front row on this side seems to be very robust.

Are there any questions of the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Connolly:** Would you like to be Finance critic?

**The Speaker:** Would the member mind putting his comments through the chair? Thank you.

Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any members who would like to speak to amendment RA1? The member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak in favour of this amendment. There's a saying that says: no plan is a plan to fail. I think that's very relevant here today when we're talking about removing the ceiling on our debt. Now, the problem we have here in Alberta is a spending problem. If we look back to the previous government, where we went through \$100-barrels of oil, that government spent more than it took in through that period of time. Since 2008 I believe every year we've spent more in Alberta than we've taken in.

**8:00**

This government here, of course, is even spending more. If they choose to spend more than the previous government, that spent more than we took in at \$100-a-barrel oil, the question that begs to be asked is: how much does oil have to be in order for this government to balance its budget? It's obviously very high. We haven't been able to get an answer from them. They should actually figure it out so they can be straight up with Albertans.

Now, we warned this government about their spending problems and about how they're managing the debt. They, of course, said: "Alberta can afford debt. That's no problem. Alberta can afford it." But, obviously, the creditors don't agree with them. The creditors are obviously concerned because they keep repeating doing downgrades to Alberta's credit rating.

Now, of course, we've heard that the Finance minister went to talk to these creditors. I'm not sure what he expected to do. This is how these guys make their living. This is what they do for business.

I'm sure they know about credit ratings because that's what they do. Obviously, when the minister came back, we got another downgrade, so that was a very inefficient use of taxpayer dollars, running down there to talk to them. I think it would have been better spent just coming up with a better fiscal plan.

Now, we keep hearing about the price of oil and that that's the cause of all the government's woes. Well, since the middle of January the price of oil has been steadily increasing. And what's been happening since the middle of January? Consistent downgrades in the credit rating. So that does not hold water. That is not the truth. The truth is that the people that do the credit ratings are concerned with debt repayment. They're concerned with the spending of this government. They're concerned with fiscal mismanagement. Now, these downgrades in the credit rating will cost Albertans, will cost all of us. We're on a program here, a fiscal program to be up to \$60 billion in debt and have annual interest payments of \$2 billion a year. That's not a great plan, Mr. Speaker.

This government has a huge spending problem. They raised the debt ceiling last fall to 15 per cent, with all sorts of assurances that this was great, that this was prudent, that this will show that we're serious about government finances. We received all the assurances over and over and over again that the 15 per cent debt ceiling was very sufficient, that it was wise, it was prudent, all these different things. But, Mr. Speaker, here we are, not six months later, and we're removing the debt ceiling now. We're not just raising it; we're removing it, so there's no plan. This approach to debt is irresponsible because it burdens future generations with the debt that this government is going to dump on them. That's not right.

Now, Alberta already spends more per capita on government operations than B.C. or even Ontario. This government did inherit from the 40-plus-year government, that was already spending far above the national average – we recognize that – but that doesn't mean that you can continue the same mistakes, that in fact you accelerate those mistakes. It seems inconceivable that the new government couldn't find some ways to cut some waste.

Now, we've heard from the Energy minister that she cut 2 per cent out of her budget somewhere and didn't lose one front-line staff. Of course, when we in the Wildrose talk about a 2 per cent reduction, all we hear are the wails and cries that we're going to have to lay off all the teachers and doctors and nurses and everything, and that's not true. How could it be true for a member of the NDP cabinet and not be true for us? If it can be done, it can be done.

It isn't that we've just had one credit-rating downgrade; we've had multiple credit-rating downgrades. We know what happens when the credit rating drops. Interest rates rise, and that costs us even more dollars. This government has yet to tell us exactly how much the rating decrease is going to cost Albertans. It should be able to figure that out for Albertans and tell them. Just be honest. Tell us what the cost is going to be.

Again, we keep hearing about the price of oil. I want to reiterate that the price of oil is rising, but the credit rating is going down. There are two different angles to that graph, the price of oil going up and the credit rating going down, completely different.

The Premier said that she knew that Alberta's credit rating would get downgraded after the budget was released, so why didn't they table a budget that at least gave some semblance of fiscal restraint and possibly stave off another credit downgrade? She called their first budget careful, moderate, and conservative. She called it fabulous. She said that credit downgrades were unlikely and then went on to claim that it's not the role of the government to drive into the ditch to try to find a different path forward. Instead, Mr. Speaker, we're looking at driving off an economic cliff. Why would we want to do this to ourselves? Why would we want to do this to

Albertans? That's not what we were elected here to do. We were not elected here to cause suffering for Albertans down the road to pay for mismanagement today.

This isn't exactly a record to be proud of: the credit downgrades, the debt, the record deficits, job losses like we've never seen before. The more money Albertans pay in taxes and the more money we have to pay in interest, the less we have to help the economy. Families have less money to do the things that they need to do.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that the problem is fiscal mismanagement. There has to be a way that this government can come up with a better plan, and removing the debt ceiling, again, is not a plan. It's a plan to fail.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions to the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other parties who would speak to amendment RA1? The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't sure if I spoke on this one. Tuesday night I went a little long, and I wasn't sure if this was part of it. [interjection] Quite a bit of time.

I talked about credit cards, and I talked about irresponsible government, unstable government, to be clear. The fact is that I went on at length on why exactly getting rid of a debt limit is bad for Alberta. The government won't listen to me, but maybe they'll listen to some of their own members. I have two quotes that I would like to read out and see if at the end of the quote this wonderful House can actually guess which member said it.

**8:10**

I would like to quote that member at length. If that same member was here or not here today, would he vote with his party on this? Let's start the quote.

One of the things I'd like to talk about is that when we're talking about this 15 per cent threshold, to me, that threshold is reasonable. I mean, even at 15 per cent Alberta's government's debt-to-GDP ratio would be half the weighted average of the other provinces combined, which to me seems reasonable. Also, the 15 per cent ratio . . . is the ratio that's regarded as a reasonable and manageable limit by our credit-rating agencies.

Mr. Speaker, that member continues on with the following:

I believe that the 15 per cent number is reasonable.

This is a very strong, very directed quote. This isn't something where maybe the member went one way or maybe the member could have meant something else. It was very clear. The member was very clear that 15 per cent was the number that the government would live by.

Now, the member has very high praises to sing about the 15 per cent cap on our debt to GDP. The 15 per cent cap was labelled to be reasonable over and over by this person. This member was quoted that the 15 per cent cap on our debt-to-GDP ratio was something that the Alberta government needed and would stick by.

When we start looking around, why would this member suddenly be so adamantly against 15 per cent? And for those that are wondering still, that member is Calgary-Currie. I know that this is surprising. I don't know why this MLA hasn't spoken up against Bill 10. What happened to the Member for Calgary-Currie when we started this debate and we've gone through this debate? Is he not allowed to speak? Is he being whipped into voting with his party?

You know, this contradicts what all of the government is saying right now. We need to be very clear that when it comes to government members, this is a member from the government being muzzled. That is just the truth. He thought a 15 per cent cap was appropriate six months ago but not now. Not now.

Now, I would love to hear from this member again as to whether he thinks that lifting the cap, that he repeatedly called reasonable, is the right thing to do or not. Did this member change his mind over the course of four months? I find it very difficult to believe that his mind could have been changed so quickly. Apparently, this is a difficult decision when it comes to moving the government towards stable government. This is an important thing, that I'll go back to.

I keep saying that in my riding of Bonnyville-Cold Lake stable government means jobs. Right now I've got a 10 per cent unemployment rate. That is unacceptable, but it is what it is. Now, the more unstable we are, the less likely we're going to have jobs, and that is a fact. Businesses and corporations, individuals, societies: why would they invest in an unstable – unstable – economy?

Now, every single member from the Wildrose: we haven't changed our minds in the last four months. You can expect the Member for Calgary-Currie to change his mind every four months? You know, the fact is that when we start looking at where the government is going, it keeps changing directions. Again, this brings instability. Bill 6 is another good example of instability. Now, what changed the heart of the Member for Calgary-Currie, a fundamental change? Will we expect him to change his mind again and again, and will be he certain of what he truly wants? Did the constituents of Calgary-Currie change their minds in the last four months? Is that why the MLA changed his mind? Did he actually go to his constituents and say: is it good for us to be without a cap? I am certain that if he goes to his constituents now and says . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Point of order.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is not addressing the issue before us. He is focusing his attention on one member, who is perfectly capable of standing for himself. The hon. member is abusing his time in order to target a particular MLA, and if it's this one this evening, it might be another one another evening. It's important that members, when they rise in their places, speak to the matter at hand, and that is the amendment that the Wildrose caucus has put forward to not now read the bill a third time, and I wish the hon. member would focus on that.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the point of order. I think we'll find that Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j) makes allegations against another member, imputes false motives of another member, or uses abusive or insulting language likely to create disorder. I've been listening intently, and while I don't have the benefit of the Blues, my hon. colleague in fact isn't making allegations, only speaking specifically to words that the member himself has used in this very Chamber. There certainly has been no abusive or insulting language used by my hon. colleague. What we have here is clearly a matter of debate because the hon. colleague is utilizing information that has been said before here in this House. He's speaking to the importance of this particular amendment in terms of the challenges that removing the debt cap has, and in my opinion there is no point of order.

**The Speaker:** Government House Leader, what was the subsection of 23 that you cited?

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in actual fact I think the most relevant one is to impute false or unavowed motives to another member. He's talking about the hon. member's motives for voting the way he did or speaking the way he did in the past, and I think that's perhaps the most on point. But (h) also. He's also making allegations against the member. By the way, he's also violating, in my view, 23(c), persisting in needless repetition.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm not sure there's a point of order. Nonetheless, to the speaker: could you please get focused on the amendment and proceed. Stay on the topic. Stay on the amendment.

**Mr. Cyr:** I apologize if I've offended.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Cyr:** I will say that I was getting to a point, the fact that when we start looking at where the government was going with the 15 per cent cap, this was reasonable four months ago but unreasonable now. This is where our reasoned amendment comes forward, saying that it is still something that we need to continue as at least maintaining some sort of accountability for Albertans.

8:20

Now, voting in favour of this bill would be wrong. As a fiscally responsible conservative I feel that we are responsible for taxpayers' money, and that includes money that we are spending that isn't collected yet. That means debt. We're responsible for debt. Now, when we start seeing instability or flip-flopping, we need to ask ourselves: what direction are we actually going in? How can this be the right direction?

Now, I have another quote, and I will let you again decide on which person in here or which member said it.

We have a prudent plan to look at bending the curve on expenditures and spending. We have a plan to invest in capital development throughout this province to stimulate our economy. We are going to stick to 15 per cent of GDP. That is sound. That is the lowest in the country. That is a debt cap that is calculated to help us get to where we need to go.

This member is Calgary-Fort. The 15 per cent cap has been recorded as being sound, yet for some reason now we are looking at just getting rid of the cap.

Now, it's this comparison of the different ways of looking at this wonderful 15 per cent cap – it's not night or day. It's not black or white. There is a lot of contrast here. The fact is that when we start looking at what direction this government is going in, it is clear that it's going in the wrong direction. It's a swap that we need to make sure that we are continuing in a forward direction, but it appears that we continue to move backwards. That is something that is unacceptable.

Now, when the member that made this statement is taking us so deep into the red and was convinced four months ago that this was the right direction, this actually is offensive. I want to know where the members who voted in favour of the 15 per cent debt cap went because it appears that they're no longer in the House. I want to know where the members who argued in favour of this cap disappeared. I was not aware of any by-election that replaced representatives for either of the two members that I quoted. I'm not sure that they are physically or mentally the same people that they were five months ago. I really hope that these people come back and vote the way they did before and that what we start looking at is supporting this reasoned amendment.

We need to actually look at the debt cap and the debt limit, find out what is appropriate for Alberta. Getting rid of it just seems to be unreasonable. In fact, I hope that everyone in this House votes

in favour of this, for a fiscally responsible Alberta. By voting for this amendment, you're voting for that.

Now, if this amendment gets voted down, then we need to vote against Bill 10 because it is irresponsible. I hope that the members continue to see where they are going towards, because in the end each and every one of my colleagues at this point has pointed out that we are headed down the wrong road.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any questions for the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other individuals that would like to speak to the amendment RA1?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:26 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Cyr	Panda
Barnes	Loewen	Taylor
Cooper	MacIntyre	van Dijken

Against the motion:

Babcock	Ganley	Nielsen
Bilous	Gray	Notley
Carlier	Hinkley	Phillips
Carson	Hoffman	Piquette
Ceci	Horne	Renaud
Clark	Jabbour	Rodney
Connolly	Jansen	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kazim	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Schreiner
Dang	Littlewood	Shepherd
Drever	Loyola	Starke
Eggen	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	Mason	Swann
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fraser	McKittrick	Woollard
Totals:	For – 9	Against – 45

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

**The Speaker:** We are back to the main motion.

Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and talk on the main motion and speak against Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. Of course, we've been discussing at length the long-term ramifications of debt, the impact it will have on the sustainability of our services that are delivered in the province. I prefer to call it the consequences, the consequences of billions and billions of dollars in debt. Of course, those consequences will be fewer front-line workers, less infrastructure, less opportunity to leave money in people's pockets so they can take care of their family members, take care of their communities, and do what they wish with their hard-earned tax dollars. I would like to reiterate to the government caucus that unlimited debt is not a reasonable way to govern. You simply cannot borrow your way to prosperity.

You know, 15 per cent of GDP is, again, a formula that – oh, I think GDP has been around for a while, but I wonder how many Albertans would really understand the significance of 15 per cent

of GDP, so I just took a quick look as to what GDP is comprised of. It's comprised of four things: consumer spending, investment, government spending, and then net exports.

When I look at the consumer spending drop, the unemployment rate in Cypress-Medicine Hat is an incredible 9.7 per cent. Thank goodness a lot of good employers and wonderful employees have worked out job-sharing arrangements and ways to make things as fair as possible for as many Albertans as possible, but obviously it takes disposable income out of the economy. Obviously, the NDP government's and the federal Liberal government's tax increases take disposable income out of the economy, so one of the four components of GDP is dropping.

Investment, the second component. Whether the number is the \$50 billion that I spoke of in the amendment that is being invested less in our industries because of high per capita spending, because of debt, because of higher taxation, it's less. The number is going down.

Government spending, of course, although the cost curve is being bent, is the one that is constant, but that's the one that's being borrowed. That's the one that has to be paid on the backs of the productive side of our society or the next generation.

Net exports, again, as the economy and the price of oil has dropped – thank goodness for our good agriculture industry. It's uncertain, but the cumulative effect – Alberta had been a leader in Canada with GDP increasing 3.2 per cent a year. That alone would have given your 15 per cent more room to grow. Now I'll say to the hon. Finance minister that I understand Alberta's GDP is actually shrinking by 1.1 per cent this year, the combination of consumer spending, investment, net exports, and the government borrowing more money to spend more. It's still shrinking, not sustainable.

The consequences of eliminating the 15 per cent gross debt-to-GDP ratio are going to be severe. What does the average Albertan think about this? I guess I said it earlier in here two or three weeks ago. My point in saying this is that I remember when Premier Getty was forced out of the leadership of the Progressive Conservatives for \$22 billion in debt. Three years from now I wonder what Albertans will think of \$60 billion in debt. I look forward to that debate. Mr. Speaker, kicking the can down the road is not leadership, and it will not provide better lives for future Albertans.

Government spending problems. As much as this government likes ideology, I again want to remind this government of the current bad spending habits before we go to a final vote on this bill. We don't have a revenue problem even with the drop in royalties. We spend currently \$10 billion more on government than B.C. or Ontario on a per capita basis, and one of the reasons I like to see those two provinces continually quoted is that they have growing populations. It could be said that people that move to B.C. or Ontario don't bring their roads or their schools with them either.

8:50

What does this number really mean when we look at how the province is administering its public services? When we break this number down, Mr. Speaker, we see that Alberta is spending almost \$2,400 more per person than neighbouring B.C. Again, I'll remind the House, I'll remind the government that we have a younger population. Our demands on health care, our demands on seniors' services, our demands on certain government services should be a lot less because our age per capita is lower.

Instead of finding ways to rein in spending and find efficiencies that would lead to more support for our front-line staff, this government's solution is simply writing itself a blank cheque on the backs of Albertans. Alberta has a chronic spending addiction, and

removing the debt limit is the ultimate enabler. Again, that reminds me of Premier Getty when he hit the \$22 billion mark, and Albertans said: that's enough.

This is not responsible or sustainable governance, and Albertans deserve a government that can get to work and find solutions for this out-of-control spending. We've talked about how just three years from now we'll be at \$2 billion in interest from our \$60 billion debt. I think now we're just under \$1 billion in interest. I wonder if the government fully appreciates the consequences of this long-term debt. Debt is a cycle. It removes our options. It's a chain around our economy. I've seen stuff that talks about how interest and debt are actually an abrasive drag on the economy's efficiency. The more you borrow, of course, the longer it will take to pay back. If it leads to more credit-rating downgrades – and I've heard this government time and time again say, "Oh, we can afford to go into debt because we have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in Canada," like it's okay to run up debt and interest as much as you want as long as you can find somebody else that's slightly worse.

Let's be leaders, government. Let's not look at the bottom. Let's look at the best. That will be a serious drain on our economy's efficiency. That will be a serious drain on our government's ability to earn taxes and to provide services.

Of course, we all remember that less than 24 hours after the NDP budget – not your jobs plan, but the budget – we were downgraded. DBRS downgraded Alberta from a triple-A to a double-A rating, which is going to cost millions of dollars in extra interest. I prefer to say that in the millions of dollars that's fewer mental health workers, fewer home-care workers, fewer nurses, that's fewer teachers, fewer doctors, fewer schools, fewer hospitals, less money for people to take care of their families if we just left it with them.

You know, Albertans are entrepreneurs. They understand that at times it's necessary to borrow money to invest, but again that's not what this government is doing. You are spending to the hilt, you are maxing out the credit card to do it, and you are not looking for the efficiencies that hard-working taxpayers deserve. You have no plan to reduce the spending, no plan to right the ship, no plan to restore Alberta to where we have the opportunity to provide jobs, to pay taxes, and to have strong communities, urban and rural. You're content to increase our taxes, put our province at record debt levels, and turn around and blame it all on the slump in oil prices.

**Mr. Cooper:** Or the previous government.

**Mr. Barnes:** Or the previous government. Not that we would do that.

The amount of debt being taken on by this government is astounding, and this bill indicates that you have absolutely no intention of slowing down. I obviously hope that we don't get our credit rating downgraded. I obviously hope that the price of oil can return. I obviously hope that we can get our per capita spending in line. Albertans and future generations deserve every opportunity.

We suggested some amendments. We tried to put a cap on your spending habits, but again we'll remind you that you charged ahead with your insistence and zero restraint. I hear it in the coffee shops in Cypress-Medicine Hat. People are fearful of what we're leaving for the next generation. People are fearful of the debt that they have to manage through their government. At the same time for many in the private sector it's been very, very difficult times.

This NDP government's financial mismanagement, Mr. Speaker, has the potential to saddle future generations with debt in the billions. Ultimately, it is the Alberta taxpayer who will have to pay

for this government's bad debt. Fifteen per cent debt to GDP is roughly \$50 billion of government debt, and as I initially pointed out, the GDP, other than government borrowing, is decreasing. The limit is increasing, so interest and the drag on the economy is going to get worse.

How does this government plan on paying for this debt? The only plan I've seen is more taxes on everyday Albertans, more fees. That will make it harder to start a business. That will make it harder for parents to save for their children's education. It will make it harder for families to provide the necessities for their families. I've said it before, one of my favourite stories is my friend who makes the same as he made a year ago, but because of the increase in taxes provincially and federally he now takes home \$800 a month less. This is a person who shut down his business down, which employed two people, because he was fearful of the drag. Thank goodness, he still pays to take care of his parents. If the tax burden gets any worse, I would absolutely hate to see that quit.

Instead of hiking taxes across the board, this government should be looking at what could be done to spend taxpayers' money more efficiently. In the Wildrose we've talked many, many times about eliminating corporate welfare. We've talked many, many times about eliminating not front-line workers but high-level bureaucracy. In Cypress-Medicine Hat as the health care shadow minister . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Critic.

**Mr. Barnes:** I'm sorry. Critic. Thank you.

**Mr. Barnes:** . . . I hear about five layers of bureaucracy between the front-line worker and getting an answer, an answer that generally doesn't come back. How inefficient. What a waste. What a hardship on Alberta's families and workers.

When will this government draw a line in the sand and tell Albertans when enough is enough? I ask the government: what is too much debt?

**An Hon. Member:** The sky is the limit.

**Mr. Barnes:** The sky's the limit. I don't doubt it. But there will be limits enforced by the voters in the next election and not too harmful on the next generation.

Why is it so hard for this NDP government to get its act together and actually build a plan to get our province back on track? To the hon. Finance minister: that plan starts with getting our per capita spending in line. That plan starts with showing when we'll be back in balance.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sad to say that Bill 10 is nothing more than this government removing all accountability from budgeting, from planning by writing itself a blank cheque. Removing limitations on debt levels will undoubtedly lead to more provincial debt, which will undoubtedly lead to fewer services and increased taxes.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any questions of the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I do have a couple of quick questions. He spoke specifically of the people of Cypress-Medicine Hat, and I know that my hon. colleague is a very good representative of the good people of Cypress-Medicine Hat. I know that he spends a lot of time all across what is a very vast and diverse constituency. I'm just a little bit curious to know. A good portion of your constituency includes a section of the city of Medicine Hat and then a good section includes parts of rural southeast Alberta, so

I'm just wondering if there's much of a variance from the people in the rural portions of the constituency to the more urban portions of the constituency about some of their concerns around this reckless spending that is the NDP government.

9:00

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you to the hon. member for the question. I appreciate it. Yeah. I'm very, very grateful to represent Cypress-Medicine Hat. Of course, I share Medicine Hat with the hon. Speaker.

I would have to say that in the rural part of my constituency, which is Cypress county and Forty Mile county, which is probably 200 kilometres by 200 kilometres, there's a great deal of concern for what the carbon tax is going to add to their transportation costs, for the fact that they have seen their level of services downgraded over the last few years and at the same time have seen debt and taxes increase. What is very, very true about the people in Medicine Hat and the people in Cypress, Forty Mile county, Foremost, Bow Island, and Redcliff is that they are all very, very concerned about what kind of shape we're going to leave this province in for our kids and our grandkids.

When you see that the cost of interest goes up, when you see that, unfortunately, our credit gets downgraded – and they know that that means fewer services – they're concerned about what their kids are going to have to do to dig their way out of this. You know, family values are very, very strong in all of Alberta, and that is true in Cypress-Medicine Hat. They want their kids to have opportunities. They want their children to be able to stay in Alberta and flourish and have opportunity. They know their kids will be happier if they have more control over their lives, and that means opportunity.

You know, I guess, hon. member, I hear time and time again that people call and say for the 10th time that there's still this problem with trying to park at the hospital because Alberta Health Services hasn't done it right, and we're handling it for the 10th or 15th time and are going through that level of bureaucracy, and they hear that there are two good front-line professionals at the hospital that can't get an answer because it goes up the chain to Edmonton and the answer never comes back. They're crying out for local decision-making. They know that these debt levels and this interest will make it all the harder for that to happen.

When the previous government in 2008-2009 enacted the royalty review, they saw the effects of what bad governance can do to an economy when we lost many jobs and we lost investment. You know, as the debt, with the interest, gets bigger and bigger, they're concerned that they are going to lose more opportunities for their kids and their grandkids.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

Anyone prepared to speak to the major point? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. There is no way that I can support this bill. I don't believe Albertans as a whole could ever support this bill either. I've talked to many of my constituents, and they're frankly appalled by this bill when I explain what the bill intends to do, or not do, depending on how you look at it.

What this bill intends to do is to allow the NDP government to run operational deficits, something which, I believe, if the government had run as one of their platforms during the election campaign, they would never have been elected, not to have this kind of money thrown to the wind. This bill intends to allow this

government to borrow somewhere north of \$60 billion or more. We don't know because there's no cap or ceiling. It's just open now, so there is nothing there.

It was only in November, Mr. Speaker, that this government gave themselves the ability to borrow up to 15 per cent of GDP. They were asking for around \$48 billion, and less than half a year later they've increased this by another \$12 billion. I have no faith that we'll see restraint at the \$60 billion range, and neither does this government. Otherwise, they would have put a cap on how much they could borrow. Instead, they want to remove the cap, that they themselves voted in, and shoot to the sky when it comes to borrowing, that is.

I am so unimpressed with this bill. I have to ask our NDP counterparts: what about the children? What about the grandchildren? Seriously. They're the ones that are going to have to pay for this in the long run. [interjections] This is not funny. I don't mean, "What about the children?" in a slight way. I'm serious when I talk about that because they are the ones that are going to be paying off this debt. Money that we are spending right now: they will have to pay that off. Our children, our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren, perhaps, will have to pay that off. This is an astounding amount of money that we're talking about.

The Wildrose Party has tried all year long to help this government find ways to find savings. You know, frankly, we've given common-sense solutions to save money. We last provided this government with suggestions just about a week or two weeks ago here when we asked for cost-cutting savings through amendments during the estimates. In fact, I put forward four different amendments, so I had my part in trying to ask the government to curtail some of this spending. We want to see if this government can find ways to save money.

Two billion dollars of interest payments: that's what we're going to be looking at. I think that we all need to stop and think about how big \$2 billion really is because, frankly, it's huge. If you look at \$2 billion, what does that really mean? How many schools does that mean? You know, if you look at the government of Alberta site, which I did, I saw that you had put up something where you were talking about 19 schools being built, and these 19 schools being built were – I forget exactly the number – 500 and some-odd million dollars, roughly \$530 million dollars. If you extrapolate that and put that over \$2 billion, which is just going to interest, you're looking at 68 schools that could have been built just on the interest alone but won't be built because we're just paying interest. To me, it's a huge amount of money. When you look at it, \$2 billion is, well, \$2,000 million. That's just a huge amount of money.

This unlimited debt ceiling that this government is proposing: the payments come with it each and every year, and they have implications across the board, like I was saying with the schools, so from K to 12 education because of the loss of potential to pay for additional teachers or to build new schools.

You know, I went to [payscale.com](http://payscale.com). This is another interesting one that I looked up. I looked up [payscale.com](http://payscale.com), and I asked: what is the average wage of a teacher in Alberta? The average wage of a teacher in Alberta according to [payscale.com](http://payscale.com) is \$70,000. Well, it's actually just short of \$70,000. It was 69,800 and some dollars, but I'm just going to call it \$70,000. Well, if you divide that number, \$2 billion, by \$70,000, you're looking at over 28,000 teachers that could have been hired. That's each and every year. We're talking about teachers. These are really effective jobs that should be out there in the system, but we've lost them.

9:10

The health care system. We look at the health care system, and we talk about nurses. How many nurses could you hire with that?



Now, I couldn't find a wage comparison for nurses, so what if you just said \$100,000 for each nurse? That's a nice high number, and that's probably going to be adequate. You're looking at 20,000 nurses that could be hired at \$100,000. It's just an astounding number of jobs and the potential lost. So that, frankly, just scares me.

We're looking at hospitals in my constituency. A hospital for Wainwright is around \$240 million, but let's round it up to \$250 million. We'll give ourselves bells and whistles that we shouldn't have and make it \$250 million. How many hospitals would that be? Well, Mr. Speaker, that's eight hospitals that you could be building across this province each and every year. But, no. We are going to be paying \$2 billion in interest. It's just an astounding amount of money.

Roads and bridges are going to be lost, roads and bridges that could have been done. You know, it costs about a million dollars a mile to do a road. I'm using miles, yes. I'm using the old system, not metric.

**An Hon. Member:** Shame.

**Mr. Taylor:** I know. It's shameful not to use metric, but a lot of people my age understand miles quite well, so it's okay.

If you wanted to find out how far, well, I looked it up. I said: how far is it from Alberta to Mexico? Well, it is only 1,371 miles, that distance, so even if you're looking at it from Edmonton all the way to Mexico, we're still not at that 2,000 miles of road that you could build, based on it being a flat road. But on that theory, we could build a road all the way to somewhere in Mexico with this. It's just an astounding amount of money, that we're simply paying in interest.

With that in mind, it's not just what we can't buy now; we have an additional \$2 billion in interest payments. After the dust settles and the NDP government has gone through roughly \$60 billion, the very same \$60 billion that has put us in a position of giving banks \$2 billion — that's banks that we're giving \$2 billion in payments to, to show for this. I'm going to have to ask the question: who are you friends with? [interjections] Do you have a social conscience where you're hiring more teachers? No. You're going to be losing teachers and nurses based on this plan, or you're losing hospitals or schools . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, through the chair.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you.

You know, we're losing all that potential out there, and frankly I'm afraid of what's going to be happening with that. The question needs to be asked. Can the government answer: what exactly do we have for that \$60 billion? In the end what do we have, Mr. Speaker? I would like to know. What is the end game? Are we going to have those eight new hospitals this year? I don't think so. Are we going to have an extra 28,000 teachers, 20,000 nurses? Do you want to pick one of those things where you could say that? That's what I would love to see.

How much savings is there in the rainy-day fund that you have right now? What do we have to show for that? What are we going to show for that \$60 billion that we're borrowing? What is the legacy that this government is leaving Albertans with other than debt piled upon debt, that we have to pay back?

Not only will this hurt generations to have to pay this back but, again, also our children and our grandchildren. I have to go back to that because one of the main reasons I got into politics is because I care about my children and the direction the government was going. At the time I was concerned about what the government, now the third party, was doing, and now I'm very concerned about what this government is doing. At that time we were looking at \$12 billion

that we were going to be in debt, and now we're going to be looking upwards of, at the end of this period, \$60 billion. Programs can't help but be affected. Either programs that are currently free will be cut or will have to be charged for, or the programs that are being charged for right now will have to face steep increases.

Which infrastructure projects will be left in the dust as a result of this? What money is there going to be to pay for them? In the end, when we're paying this \$2 billion, how much deferred maintenance will we see in the future because we're paying interest rather than fixing our schools and roads and postsecondary institutions? Frankly, I've been talking to people that are in the schools, you know, and they're concerned. They're concerned about how much or how little has been able to get done in postsecondary institutions, in the public school systems. I've been talking to superintendents and such. They're, like I say, frankly, very concerned about what's happening and what's going to go on with them.

What this bill doesn't intend to do is have any fiscal restraint, any concern for future generations. We're opening the gate to spending, and there's nothing in this bill to stop the spending. That's why you're removing this lid on it, and it goes into infinity and beyond, as you've heard a couple of times, I'm sure. I believe that reasonable amendments to this bill could make this bill better. Unfortunately, this government voted down these amendments. Credit downgrades, as we've all seen, are a direct consequence of not having a ceiling on the amount of money you can borrow, which is what this bill will do. There is nothing in this bill that states that they can curtail spending. Consequently, credit agencies like Standard & Poor's look at the potential to borrow and the amount borrowed and the amount projected through their budgets that they will borrow, and they give us more credit downgrades. I believe that if they pass this bill, we'll be shortly looking at another credit downgrade because it'll be passed and the potential to borrow is unlimited.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we continue to see credit downgrades. This government borrows more without a clear plan to pay back money other than to tax more. Increased taxes make provinces and jurisdictions less desirable to live in, and consequently more people leave the province, which as a consequence leaves us with, you know, fewer taxes that you can draw on: fewer people, fewer taxes they can levy on people, if you will, and the province ends up in worse shape as a result. The province would go into a downward spiral as a result. It's obvious how this spiral works, and Alberta can make a difference and take out one of the factors that leads to this downgrade spiral.

We should not, by any means, pass this Bill 10. Governments need to have a budget constraint to work with in order to keep the economy healthy, and Bill 10 just does the opposite of this. You know, if you look at towns like the MD of Wainwright, they are by law restricted to running a balanced budget. This government just doesn't see the need for that. Frankly, the towns are able to make do with their budgets when they have to run a balanced budget. They can't spend more than what they have.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Opposition House Leader under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you. Under 29(2)(a), Mr. Speaker, I just have a quick question for the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright. He was speaking about municipalities and their guidelines around running balanced budgets and not being able to carry year-over-year deficits and a number of other guidelines that they meet under conditions laid out by the government.

**9:20**

I'm just a little bit curious to know if he has any comments with respect to: if the government thinks it's reasonable for municipalities

to function under a set of parameters that include, essentially, debt limits, would it be reasonable for the province to also have some parameters set out for themselves with respect to debt limits? Are there any other comments he might like to add to what was a very stirring and convincing speech?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. You know, I believe that governments at all levels need to have a restraint, something they can't go past. In the past it's been a practice, it seems like, for Alberta to have a restraint on how much it could spend. This is the first time that they've been able to borrow an infinite amount of money. Could it be a hundred billion dollars? It could be. We don't know because there is no cap on how much that is.

In my riding I have six counties and MDs, and they're all restricted by, you know, that limit. They have to run to a budget. They have to be very fiscally responsible, Mr. Speaker. I have roughly 25 towns. Actually, two of them ceded their governance just recently. They became too small and weren't able to continue with it. But they had to balance budgets. They had to live within that budget restraint.

This government is no different. If the Wildrose was the governing party, we would like to see restraints on this so that we could see in the future that there would be no more borrowing to infinity and beyond. This has been a good practice in any level of government. I don't want to see Alberta go down the path of Greece because Greece is in trouble, and it could go belly up. It's causing such a strain on Europe, right across all of the European nations. It's a terrible thing to see, and it's just because we don't have fiscal responsibility to put in a cap, to put in a limit, to stop the borrowing, to stop the bleeding. The more we borrow, the more debt we incur and – the problem – the fewer services we can actually offer as a result of it, so fewer doctors and nurses and teachers because you'll be spending money on just servicing that debt.

Going back to what I was talking about before, that \$2 billion is 28,000-plus teachers. But what if it becomes \$3 billion? Or what if our interest rates increase and interest rates just go up 1 per cent more? It's going to cause a huge problem for what this government has budgeted going forward. I don't know if you've looked at that unintended consequence. That's an unintended consequence of what's been happening with this. We've got to look at all the different avenues. I don't see anything good coming out of this.

I would implore the government to restrict how much they can borrow and to get rid of this Bill 10. Bill 10 is, frankly, not good for Albertans. It's not good for the shining beacon that this province once was. We had the Alberta advantage. We were paid in full. We had no debt. Now, by the end of this mandate we're looking at \$60 billion. You can't tell me that there were \$60 billion worth of infrastructure needs that had to be met. There were not \$60 billion worth of infrastructure needs that had to be met.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. A more apt name for Bill 10 would be the Debt Ceiling Removal Act, but given that there are scatterings of other things in here, that might be a little unkind. Ineptitude is defined as the lack of a skill or ability, and "inept" is precisely the word needed to describe Alberta's NDP government. Last fall the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board brought in a debt ceiling at 15 per cent of GDP, and here we are, six months later, repealing it. That is inept, a complete lack of foresight, an inability to plan properly. This inability creates an environment that leads to instability, lost confidence, and credit

downgrades. Removing the debt ceiling is also incredibly irresponsible and, I would suggest, immoral.

The bank is not going to invest in or provide credit to my business, my farm, if I show no discipline in my borrowing and spending practices. The bank actually has ratios in place to curtail that problem, and they're there for a good reason. They're there to keep the business sustainable, to keep the business viable so that it can actually succeed.

If I'm looking to partner with someone to grow my business, if I went to them with this lack of debt discipline, I believe that would definitely kill the deal. I believe the credit agencies are sending that message at this time, that this is a lack of planning and a lack of discipline that most investors would shy away from. This is the kind of management that drives investment away.

This government continues to blame low oil prices for their inability to rein in this growing debt mountain. This government has given no indication they are willing to rein in their spending problem. Without any goodwill or discipline in this government's spending habit, their irresponsible and reckless behaviour is driving investors away. The very partners they need to drive the economy are partnering with other jurisdictions that understand the need for a stable partner. These individuals are quickly losing confidence in a government with no real plan. The NDP gamble is a path to unmanageable debt.

It's also increased our personal taxes, our corporate taxes, carbon tax. Debt-servicing costs will go up. We're gambling with the accelerated phase-out of coal. It is irresponsible, immoral, reckless, all without doing actual economic analysis.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I would prefer that you not use the word "immoral."

**Mr. van Dijken:** Okay. I'm fine with that.

Purely ideological choices with no understanding or concern for damaging consequences: this is akin to Premier Mom and Finance minister Dad whipping out their credit cards, racking them up, only to have to cut the children's allowance to pay the bill when it comes due. It is irresponsible to allow this intergenerational transfer of money from Alberta's children to the current government. Today's spending debt is tomorrow's taxes.

This compulsive reliance on credit cards and racking up the bills has been recognized as an addiction. A spending addict needs intervention in order to break the cycle. The first step is stopping the denial of that addiction, and the NDP are very much in denial. The NDP claim to be ready to invest. But how? With someone else's money, taxpayers' money. So, of course, this NDP government believes the debt ceiling has to be removed.

Instituting a licence for unlimited, reckless spending is not the same thing as having a real financial investment plan. A licence to spend is exactly what eliminating the debt ceiling means. The government is floundering along, blaming the low price of oil for their bad financial management and hoping someone or something is going to come and rescue them. Without admitting to their spending problem, they are risking the future of all Albertans in much the same way a chronically addicted gambler puts his or her family at risk by blowing all the money on the slots or the horses or playing poker. The NDP are not investing; they are gambling. They are gambling with Alberta's future. We are headed toward \$58 billion in debt, and it is not acceptable to be giving that to our children and their children.

**9:30**

The truth of the matter is that the NDP is putting the heavy burden of debt on all Albertans. Mr. Speaker, that is no way to live. All of this debt needs to be repaid, and that will mean that when a hospital

needs to expand, the interest payments on the debt will prevent the nurses from being hired or that piece of highway that needs to be six lanes won't happen because of the weight of debt and the interest payments it requires. This unlimited borrow-and-spend agenda means that soon enough government won't be able to provide services for Albertans because government and Alberta taxpayers will be so chained to servicing the debt.

A debt ceiling forces some measure of discipline on a government, and it seems to me that the current government definitely could have benefited from following their own law here instead of introducing this bill to render the debt ceiling null and void. We have an inept, irresponsible, and reckless government stuck in denial of an acute spending addiction without a real plan, hoping for a miracle but in the meantime gambling Albertans' money away.

We can and we must do better, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any questions under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I was very interested in the word that our hon. member used. He did use a word that you had asked him not to use, "immoral." There are some synonyms of that word. I'd like to ask him what part of this plan that they have is more like these synonyms: unethical, bad, wrongful, wicked, unprincipled . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I think you're pushing the envelope a little bit.

**Mr. Hunter:** Sorry. I can't hear you.

**The Speaker:** I think you're pushing the envelope a little bit in terms of the use of the word. What specifically would you like the member to comment on?

**Mr. Hunter:** I'm actually asking him which one of these synonyms would best describe this bill.

**The Speaker:** Why do you feel the need to have synonyms on the question of "immoral," which I've already asked that we not use?

**Mr. Hunter:** You know what? Because I think that he needs to describe it, and I think that it's important to make sure that people understand the description of this bill.

**The Speaker:** And that's your question?

**Mr. Hunter:** My question is: which one of these synonyms best describes this bill? Corrupt . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Hunter:** . . . disreputable, nefarious . . .

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been noted.

#### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Bilous:** Clearly, Mr. Speaker, I rise under 23(j): "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." I believe that word is actually unparliamentary, quite frankly. I could dig up the list, but I'm sure you'll have it at your fingertips.

Clearly, the member is not trying to ask a question or comment on the contents of the bill. He's clearly, first of all, ignoring your requests to move past a word that the previous member used and instead is wasting the House's time trying to incite disorder as

opposed to speaking to the merits of this bill. Again, the term "corrupt," I believe, is unparliamentary. I would love the Opposition House Leader to try to speak to this.

Apparently, a new source just came in. It's on page 149 of *Beauchesne's* parliamentary procedures and practice. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the word "corrupt" from *Debates*, 1980-83, was ruled in the past as unparliamentary.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the point of order just on one very brief point. I think that the hon. member will be able to speak for himself, but I might just add that during the point of order the Deputy Government House Leader made some accusations about the member and what his intentions were. I just might add a bit of caution to my colleague on the point of order. It is not an ideal scenario when during a point of order we make accusations about what his intentions were or weren't, the reasons why he was using those types of words or why he wasn't. I'm certain that the hon. member will be able to speak for himself with respect to those exact comments.

**The Speaker:** Any other comments?

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to withdraw that statement.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

#### Debate Continued

**The Speaker:** Are there any other questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock?

Hearing none, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak in third on Bill 10, Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. You know, it's so interesting to hear one side talk about ideology and another side talk about ideology. They're both ideological. They both have fixed beliefs about how to manage a declining economy. One says that austerity doesn't work. The other says that austerity works.

Well, why don't we ask a few experts like Nobel prize winner in economics Paul Krugman? He talks about the delusion of austerity and, when an economy goes south, how much damage it does to children, to the vulnerable, to families, to health care. In fact, from 2009 to '13 he compares various countries in the OECD that approach a declining economy with strict fiscal constraint and those that actually borrow and invest. He shows in graphic form how they have debunked the whole notion of cyclical spending, and now most of the world has embraced countercyclical spending. You borrow at the time when the economy goes down because interest rates are low, people need support, infrastructure is needed, maintenance hasn't been maintained, low prices for labour, low prices for infrastructure building.

You guys are way out of date in your reading. I don't think you've read any of the economists because you continue to harp on the same notion, that austerity at a time of suffering will somehow improve the economy and build a new economy. Well, clearly, that has been shown repeatedly to be wrong. Countercyclical spending is the norm of the new economies of the world.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** With a plan to pay it back.

**Dr. Swann:** Yeah, with a plan to pay it back. That's the missing ingredient, a plan to pay it back. I agree with that, but stop pushing austerity.

**The Speaker:** Through the chair, please, hon. member.

**Dr. Swann:** I got a bit animated there, Mr. Speaker. I apologize.

Debt is a serious liability. There's no question. Capital is an investment. Operating costs must be questioned. Capital investment is a good investment. I don't mind seeing debt around new infrastructure. Maintenance of falling infrastructure: excellent; we need that. Ongoing operating costs: we have to find another way, and we need to find that through a plan.

It would be very helpful for all of us here, I think, to hear some options about what this government is thinking about beyond an alternate economy that we're trying to build. I think we need to talk about other sources of revenue: user fees, all kinds of new creative investments on roads, and making sure that we are all paying our way because, truly, we are passing on this massive debt to the future.

Having said that, you put in an artificial debt cap, which was well, well below the rest of the country. For whatever reason you now have to rescind it. I don't hold you too much at fault for that. You were trying to demonstrate to the world that you recognize the problem of debt. Well, clearly, with the rest of the country in the 30 and 40 percentiles for a debt-to-GDP ratio, you're a long way from that, but obviously we would like to see you put in some limit. I mean, not just lift the cap. What is it you're actually going to try and target? It would give us all some confidence.

9:40

I've talked about Paul Krugman and his countercyclical spending. A Nobel prize winner, he received that because of his excellent research around austerity and the damage it has done around the world. Spending during surplus aggravates labour costs, building costs, and, in fact, creates the boom-and-bust economy that we have been struggling with all these years. You guys – I'm talking about the ND government – have indeed inherited a massive infrastructure deficit. You've inherited a maintenance deficit. You've inherited an economic decline unprecedented in at least the last 20 years.

You have made a new commitment to addressing climate change, which is laudable, but that means necessarily challenging your budget. You've made a commitment to shift to a new economy and made a serious commitment in terms of looking at ways to stimulate new energy and new businesses in general. To your credit, I guess, you embraced the notion that small business needs a break, that capital investment tax deductions are probably a good other way to invest in new business. So you're learning. I appreciate that. What I would like to see and that I think many people would like to see: if not another cap to replace this one, at least a plan to repay. That's been missing.

Having said those things, I have come around to actually moderate my opinion of this lifting of the debt cap. I can live with this because of what you've inherited and because of the countercyclical spending, that is not ideological but is based on evidence from around the world that you spend during a decline in the economy and that you take care of people and that you invest in new infrastructure, especially with low interest rates. This is the time when we might get a real stimulus for a very broken economy.

I will be supporting this bill although initially I was planning to vote this down. I look at the history of this debt cap. You're the first ones that put a debt cap on. It's a third of what most of the rest of the country has for a debt-to-GDP ratio. According to the Fraser Institute the only province spending a little less than us in the next four years is Saskatchewan in terms of program expenses per GDP and general expenses per GDP. Let me say that most of the eastern

provinces are up to four times higher in debt to GDP. So it's not like we're way out of line with the rest of the country.

No, we don't want big debt, but let's look at it relative to the country. Let's look at it in the context of an economy that has really gone south and recognize that in 2018 the Fraser Institute predicted that only B.C. and Saskatchewan would have slightly less debt to GDP than Alberta. We're still ahead of the rest of the country based on our projected budget for 2018 according to the Fraser Institute. I mean, let's get serious and get on with the business here.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Horne:** Yes, 29(2)(a). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very interested in the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View's comments on Bill 10. In particular, I was encouraged by his interest in infrastructure spending. I've been thinking about this a lot lately, and the best way I can characterize what I have learned through my political science studies about the position we were left with, coming out of former Premier Klein's days, was that we may have paid off the mortgage and championed the paid in full and had the mortgage-burning party and everything that went with that, but the roof was falling down, the door was off the hinges, and we had a kid on the way.

**An Hon. Member:** And no food in the house.

**Mr. Horne:** And no food in the house.

So I was very encouraged by that.

Another point that the hon. member made that I was particularly interested in was in talking about some of the prominent economists who are currently taking a slightly different position than the Official Opposition. Earlier today I saw a report from the IMF, the International Monetary Fund, which is noted for historically pushing austerity, especially in Africa and developing countries, although earlier they came out and said that austerity isn't working and that we need to start looking at different options.

I was wondering if the hon. member would like to expand on those thoughts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you very much. I think that it's a relevant comment. The IMF has for a long time championed structural adjustment, which means bringing budgets into line with western countries, meaning that when you get into a debt problem, you cut services. Indeed, what they have come to is that they cause much more damage and increase the debt load, in fact, because people were no longer able to work, didn't have the supports they needed, were dying at a higher rate, infant mortality. Indeed, injury standards in the workplace fell with the very cuts that were supposed to improve a budget. But, in fact, it was a just a number on a page while people and systems suffered drastically.

I think the evidence is in. If people will look at the evidence on a global level and look at the way that cyclical spending has caused damage to societies, countercyclical spending has stimulated growth and sustainable growth in many cases. They're even looking at this in Greece. They're looking at it in Spain and finding ways that they can both restrain inappropriate spending and corruption, for sure, but ensure that the dollars go into the purposes for which

they're intended, will actually stimulate jobs, the economy, provide stability in the social services, and actually provide a basis for renewal and stability.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Foothills under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I heard the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View talking about the plans to repay the debt. Many of his Liberal colleagues like Hon. Paul Martin also had the same views. Their view was, you know, that we had to maintain the deficits to a reasonable extent and that we should have a good debt repayment plan so those interest monies are not wasted.

The hon. member is a good doctor. We also heard from people here that spending is an addiction; if there is no control, you know, it could go out of control. As a doctor what would he prescribe for the addictive spending by this government? I would like to ask him.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, I don't know that addiction can be associated with borrowing any more than austerity. I think what the member is talking about is dogmatism. It's dogmatic in your particular brand of conservatism that you cut services and you cut spending during a time of austerity.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members that wish to speak to Bill 10? The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the magnificent riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. Cooper:** The incredible riding.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Incredible? Yes.

**An Hon. Member:** Outstanding.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Outstanding.

To address Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, the intent of this bill is somewhat troubling. The elimination of Alberta's debt ceiling will reduce government accountability. This piece of legislation is an attempt by this government to avoid the scrutiny that will come from Albertans when the NDP outspend the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio that they themselves amended just a few short months ago. In just three short years this government is projected to outspend its own legislated debt ceiling.

9:50

Just a few short years ago Alberta was a debt-free province, and now we have a government that without regard for the fiscal health of our province wants access to unrestrained borrowing. This is, quite simply, intergenerational theft if you think about it. It is burdensome upon people who are not yet even born. The generations who are not yet born in this province are going to bear this debt. That is unfair to them. If one of the foundations, one of the pillars of democracy, is no taxation without representation, in a way we are taxing future generations who aren't even here yet. They're not being represented properly.

Our province's once pristine triple-A credit rating has already been downgraded by Moody's, DBRS, Standard & Poor's. If we look closely at this government's and the previous government's management of Alberta's assets, there is no reason left to wonder why numerous credit agencies have used their credit ratings to express their concern about this government's plan to spend Alberta off the debt cliff. The ability for our province and this government

to enter into unconstrained debt is worrying to our creditors, and justifiably so.

A little over a year ago the NDP was promising Albertans that they would be tabling balanced budgets three years into their term. Do you remember that? Just three years into their term they promised balanced budgets. Now the NDP are projecting they would not be able to balance the budget until well after they are out of office, in 2024. This government did not take the extent of Alberta's troubled financial position seriously when they ran to run this province in the election. The previous budget maintained fantasy projections which have done little more than showcase to worried creditors and Albertans that there is no real plan except to spend and tax, spend and tax.

Just six months ago, in October 2015, the Minister of Finance had us all in the House debating raising the debt ceiling to 15 per cent debt to GDP. Now here we are today, just a few months later, and the government now realizes that raising the debt limit isn't enough, and they need to remove it entirely. The quotes from those debates are telling. A few short months ago, on October 29, 2015, the Finance minister told this House:

Our government takes seriously our role as stewards of Alberta's treasury. That means managing debt in a prudent manner. To that end, Bill 4 proposes a legislative debt cap based on a nominal debt-to-GDP ratio of 15 per cent.

He said, "Our government takes seriously our role as stewards of Alberta's treasury." He said, "That means managing debt in a prudent manner."

It's obvious to all Albertans now just how little those promises meant. There is no lingering intention on behalf of this government to show fiscal restraint or prudence for the serious role of stewarding Alberta's financial position. Instead of prudent fiscal management, the minister now wants the members assembled in this House to make the irresponsible and rash decision to abandon their commitments to leaving the next generation of Albertans in a strong financial position.

In addition to a manageable debt-to-GDP ratio, our creditors require assurances that borrowing will not get out of hand. Our own Finance minister told Albertans that raising the debt cap to 15 per cent was the way to do so. Just a few short months ago the minister told the Speaker:

The bottom line, Madam Speaker, is that a 15 per cent debt to GDP is a prudent benchmark for limiting government debt. With this cap in place, Albertans can be assured that the government's borrowing will not get out of hand.

The Finance minister has himself stated that a limit on our debt is a way to ensure that his own government is not borrowing in an unrestrained fashion. The minister himself spells out the case against the bill before this House today in his own words. The government, a government that has already committed itself to not balancing the books during their elected term, is removing the legislative entities he praised as protecting Albertan interests.

Again, October 29, 2015, the Finance minister told the members:

The debt cap provides sufficient flexibility to the government as it implements its financial plan while maintaining a manageable limit on the amount of debt government can take on. Comparatively speaking, the proposed limit of 15 per cent is one half of the average debt-to-GDP levels weighted by each province's nominal GDP. For your information, Madam Speaker, two out of three credit rating agencies that rate the province report net debt to GDP as a measure of their credit reports. Dominion Bond Rating Service states that a triple-A rated province should have debt-to-GDP ratio of less than 15 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance was told by the credit-rating agencies, by Dominion Bond Rating Service, that "a triple-A rated province should have debt-to-GDP ratio of less than 15 per cent."

The Minister of Finance himself has admitted that he knows full well that to exceed a 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio endangers our credit rating, yet he insists on doing it anyway, in spite of the warnings of the credit-rating agencies. Mr. Speaker, I submit to this House that that is irresponsible. Credit agencies have been clear about their expectations of a resource-dependent economy. Ours is not a unique economy, but in a global sense it is. A debt-to-GDP ratio of 15 per cent is, in and of itself, too high for a resource-dependent economy like Alberta's seeking to maintain a triple-A credit rating. That was clearly expressed by the bond-rating agencies. Again, this minister disregarded those warnings and forged on ahead, now taking the cap off.

The province's recent downgrades are not because we have exceeded the 15 per cent nominal debt-to-GDP ratio. We are actually three years away from that. It is in part because there are higher expectations on an economy that is blessed with resource wealth. If you read the parameters that the bond-rating agencies publish, the metrics that they are looking for when they grade jurisdictions are really very clear. I mean, they're very transparent about the metrics that they use to grade every jurisdiction. Whether it be a city, a state, a province, a nation, there are those metrics. Any Finance minister, any business manager, any provincial government person can go and read those metrics, can say: "Aha. Okay. This is what the bond-rating agencies judge us by. Let's make sure we don't exceed those." Yet it would appear that this government has completely disregarded those metrics time after time after time. We just experienced our fourth downgrade. That is irresponsible management, Mr. Speaker. Irresponsible.

The commodities market is volatile, and the debt and revenue of an economy such as Alberta's requires prudent management just by virtue of the volatility of resource commodities. This is not new news. Alberta has gone through boom-and-bust, boom-and-bust, boom-and-bust ever since Leduc No. 1 came in. This is not new news. Governments have a responsibility to think ahead, to forward plan, and to plan for the unexpected, and this government is not doing that. Their answer to problems that arise fiscally is: well, we're going to spend anyway, and we'll just tax to make up for it. Well, news flash: when the economy is going down, down, down, there's less tax revenue coming in to this government. You're going to have businesses that will not be paying tax because they are not making any profit. You're going to have restaurants not paying any tax because they don't have customers coming in to buy those meals anymore. People are out of work.

It is not just the Finance minister that has failed to be transparent with Albertans about what creditors expect of Alberta. The Member for Calgary-Hays took the Finance minister's lack of transparency even a step further. In spite of numerous early warnings from our creditors that Alberta was on the wrong trajectory financially – and let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. We were warned in advance by those credit agencies. They issued warnings. The member, in my opinion, made questionable statements to constituents just a few short months ago while we were debating the NDP measures last fall to implement a debt ceiling. Let me quote that.

The 15 per cent ratio... is the ratio that's regarded as a reasonable and manageable limit by our credit-rating agencies. During other debates in the House that comes up rather often, and we still have a triple-A credit rating, and there's been no indication that this 15 per cent plan would do anything to harm that.

Yet we were warned by the credit-rating agencies that we were at risk of experiencing a downgrade.

10:00

What is so troubling to Albertans is that this government has consistently demonstrated its refusal to heed warnings when they are given to them. Shortly after these remarks Alberta lost its triple-A credit rating. The near \$58 billion of debt that the NDP government has committed the province to by 2019 will now cost Albertans even more. Losing our credit rating and allowing unchecked debt to rack up has serious consequences for Albertans. Our ability to provide services to the next generation is being compromised. For any person in this House, Mr. Speaker, myself and yourself included, when we have bank charges or debt-servicing charges, that's money we can't spend on things for our family. You and I both know that. The same is true for governments.

This government has Alberta on a trajectory to hit \$58 billion of debt by 2019. Interest payments, as we've heard time and again, will be over \$2 billion, and that's at today's credit rating and today's interest rate. If we get into an inflationary cycle or, rather, an interest-increase cycle – Mr. Speaker, you and I are old enough to remember 1981, 1982. Those interest rates were killing jobs, killing companies. People were losing their houses just because the interest rate went up a point or two. If that starts happening, that \$2 billion will seem like pittance compared to what the interest rates will be. That's a lot of schools. That's a lot of medical centres. That's a lot of teachers, nurses, and other things that we need in this province. That's a lot of infrastructure maintenance.

This year alone this government has already chosen to completely draw down our contingency account and add \$5.4 billion in new borrowing just to cover ballooning operating costs. That means borrowing to pay for the day-to-day operations of government. Operating costs are not a good or a service that Albertans will be passing along to the next generation. Unborn Albertans themselves will not derive any benefit for operations that precede their birth, yet we are callously saddling that generation with this generation's debt.

Back in November my colleagues warned that a piece of paper that tells the government that they cannot exceed a 15 per cent of GDP debt level is, frankly, not worth the paper it's written on. Exactly what Wildrose and Albertans feared would happen is now happening.

We have an onus, a solemn onus, to our children and our grandchildren to pay for the services that our generation consumes as we consume them and to not put that on their backs. Spending away their future is repugnant. It is the wrong choice. Alberta needs to get back on the right track and commit to maintaining a manageable deficit during times of great financial pressure. Albertans don't need this NDP plan to throw budgetary caution to the wind.

A number of years ago I saw a bumper sticker. Mr. Speaker, you've probably seen the same one. It said something like: I'm spending my grandchildren's inheritance. That's...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Foothills. On 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Panda:** On 29(2)(a). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was quite impressed with the way the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake was trying to educate us on the downside of continuous borrowing and paying higher interest rates. He was also trying to explain that this credit downgrade will, you know, limit our ability to borrow in the future and will also cause us to pay higher interest. I just want to ask the member: what are your thoughts to get our credit rating back to the previous level, and what should we be doing different than what the government is doing now?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, hon. member, for the question. I think it is crystal clear. The metrics that I was talking about, that the credit-rating agencies have, are very clear. They're very concise. They make it known world-wide what they expect. And let's understand why the credit-rating agencies have these metrics in place. You know, some of the largest investors in the world are not rich people that jump into a pile of dollar bills at the end of every day. Some of the largest investment groups in the world are union pension funds. Union pension funds. They are some of the single largest investment groups in the world, and those people are relying on those investment managers to make sound investment decisions so that when those union workers retire, they have something to retire on. Those fund managers are expected to make those funds grow year by year.

So in the world of investment those investment managers have metrics that they're looking for, and they do a risk analysis on every investment that they make. One of the metrics in the risk analysis that fund managers look at is the stability of what they're investing in, whatever that may be. It could be a bond for a province, like this province is going to be doing. They look at the stability, the safety because all investors are what's known as risk averse. They're all risk averse. They want safety, safety, safety because they are managing other people's money, and it is so important, then, for them to trust in the safety of the investment that they're making. If they distrust the safety of the investment, they require a higher rate of return.

When Standard & Poor's and these other rating agencies are looking at a particular jurisdiction like Alberta, the investment community is looking at the rating agencies and saying: "How do you rate them? Is this a safe investment for our union pension fund, our union retirement fund?" And the rating agencies are going to come back and say: "Well, actually, you know, Alberta is not looking too good because they are not doing anything to rein in their spending. In fact, they've taken the limit off spending." This is a danger signal to fund managers, and they have a solemn responsibility to those investors, which are future retirees, to protect that investment. This government is disregarding those metrics, basic financial metrics that every jurisdiction has to abide by.

In the end, Mr. Speaker, when this Legislature passes this bill, I'm expecting another downgrade. I think it's inevitable, and that is sad and very unnecessary. All this government has to do is to get their spending – their spending – in order. Really.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

Are there other members wishing to speak to the bill? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. Really, what this bill is about is accountability. That's what a debt ceiling does: it makes the government accountable. But, of course, having no debt ceiling removes that accountability, so there's nothing to keep the government in line, nothing to keep them from going even further in debt. It's about taking responsibility for your actions, taking responsibility for your fiscal plan.

Be assured that this will cost Albertans money. This will cost in increased taxes, and of course it'll cost us in the credit-rating downgrades that we've already had. And we're likely to have more. It's all about credibility. These agencies that rate the credit of Alberta want to see some credibility to Alberta's finances. They want to make sure that there is a plan in place. But, again, there's no plan here; therefore, this is a plan to fail.

10:10

Now, one of the previous speakers talked about spending money in bad times. That was a good plan, he figured. Well, an even better plan would be to save money in good times, and then when you do have bad times, you have some money. But that money is all gone, Mr. Speaker. It's all been spent, and there's no plan for anything, with this government, as far as fiscal management other than to spend more and tax more.

Now, it seems like Alberta has a spending addiction, and removing the debt limit just enables it to continue. We're not even at six months after the 15 per cent debt limit was put in place, and already we're removing it. The government's projection was 15.5 per cent. Why couldn't they at least have put the limit there, at 15.5 per cent? Instead, they take away the limit altogether. Of course, that takes away credibility. That's something that these debt-rating agencies worry about. That's what their job is, to rate governments on their financial worthiness.

Basically, the government has lost control. They don't appear to have any interest in trying to regain it. Alberta spends \$10 billion more on government than B.C. or Ontario on a per capita basis for operations. It's not right to just keep borrowing and borrowing for day-to-day operations.

Now, government debt has consequences for Alberta families and for the government's ability to deliver the services they rely on. With a 15 per cent debt limit, which is going to put us into debt \$58 billion to \$60 billion by 2019, that will be \$2,000 a year per family just to cover interest payments. There's no way we can support a bill that opens the door to increasing that number to that degree. This government's approach to debt and deficits is not responsible. It's wrong. It's passing the buck not only to Albertans now but to their children and grandchildren. They'll be expecting them to carry the tax burden of this government's choices, and that's not right.

First, the government says that we can afford to go in debt because we have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in Canada, and they talk about the weighted average and all those sorts of things. But the fact is that deficits and debt are like a ball and chain tied to our economy. They don't help our economy; they hurt our economy. The more we borrow, the longer it'll take to pay it back. And the more we have to put our credit rating at risk of being downgraded, the more interest we have to pay.

Now, less than 24 hours after the budget was released, we'd already been downgraded from triple-A to double-A. That was less than 24 hours. We can't blame that on the price of oil, Mr. Speaker. That's clearly as a result of the budget. Clearly, that's exactly what they said. They didn't say: oh, the price of oil is low; therefore, we had to downgrade your credit. They used examples from the budget and said: these are things that need to be done. These are things that worry the credit-rating agencies. They actually warned that the budget will exert growing pressure on Alberta's credit rating, and that will cost us. That's exactly what they said, "will exert growing pressure" on our credit rating.

Now, anybody who's ever had a mortgage or has financed a car knows that a lower credit rating means higher interest rates because there's more risk for the lender. The higher the risk, the higher the interest rates. We've talked about the predatory lending bill here. The higher the risk, the higher the interest rates. So why do we want to put ourselves into that position? I don't know.

A deficit budget means that the government is borrowing more than it's making. It's simple math that way. If you spend more than you take in, that's a deficit. When borrowing costs go up, the government, with no plan to rein in spending, will have to seek out further revenue sources. When royalty revenues are low, finding revenue sources, of course, means hiking taxes on Albertans. Here

we're talking about a carbon tax, so it's already happening. And it's not just the \$3 billion carbon tax. This government has hiked personal, corporate, and other taxes in the last year. They've hiked more fees. It's just a continuous cycle of tax and spend.

Now, I wish the government could at least tell Albertans how much more they'll have to pay in interest once Alberta is fully downgraded. Even at this point can they tell us how much more we'll have to pay in interest? The Premier had said that she knew Alberta's credit rating would be downgraded after the budget, so why did she not choose to present a budget that showed at least some restraint so creditors might have a little more faith in Alberta? Why not have a debt ceiling limit?

The NDP government inherited a 44-year-old, dynasty-run government that was spending far above the national average and far above our neighbours, as in British Columbia. Are Albertans really to believe that there wasn't considerable waste to be found?

Now, when the government says that it refuses to exercise fiscal restraint for the sake of helping Albertans and then has to turn around and tax Albertans to cover the cost of its short-sighted borrowing habits, it's hurting the very people it claims to want to help, and that's just not right. That's misleading Albertans, and it's something that we won't tolerate here in the Wildrose. The Wildrose savings suggestions actually protect teachers and nurses not only by strategically hiring more of them but by keeping the cost of government sustainable so deeper cuts later are not needed.

Ultimately, Albertans will pay for the government's debt, and the cost will be more than just financial. Now, one of the members on this side went through some figures as far as what we could do with the \$2 billion a year in interest that we're going to be paying: how many hospitals we could build, how many teachers and nurses we could hire. But that money is going to be gone. It's not going to go to Albertans; it's going to go to interest. It's going to be gone. Now, the more taxes Albertan families have to pay, the less money there is for after school activities for the kids, less money to save for college or university or to save for the future of a child with developmental disabilities. These are the costs of debt and irresponsible spending. It's wrong to pull Albertans into a debt spiral.

Now, interest payments on debt will soon be one of the biggest government expenses after health, education, and social services. Can you imagine? We'll most likely be spending more on debt than we will on transportation. That says something, I think. That's huge. They'll be spending more on debt servicing than protecting our environment or keeping our streets safe.

The bottom line is that in the long run unlimited debt hurts those it pretends to help because it not only drains money from Albertans' pockets, but the interest payments suck government resources away from important services that Albertans need and expect. Higher taxes don't just mean less money in your pocket at the end of the month. They don't just mean less money to put your kids in soccer, dance, gymnastics or less money to save for their education either. They mean higher prices for everything because businesses will be forced to pass higher costs on to Albertans. Everything from gas to groceries to school supplies and sports equipment will cost more if taxes go up. It will reduce our competitiveness. It will reduce tourism. As people come to this province, they'll have to pay more, and that's on top of the increases that will come from the NDP's massive carbon tax, which will cost a typical family an extra thousand dollars a year already.

10:20

Now, if this bill is passed, our debt could be even higher than the \$58 billion that it's projected to hit before the next election. There won't be any limit, so they'll have no encouragement to keep it

below. Reckless debt accumulation does not bring you back to balance. We have to attack wasteful spending while protecting front-line services, and it can be done, Mr. Speaker. Wildrose laid out its plan to save \$2 billion a year in its budget savings recommendations without losing any front-line staff.

Let's be clear. This bill is about enabling higher taxes and more debt because this government refuses to reduce our bloated spending. Eliminating the high debt we had in 1992 was part of the Alberta advantage. It allowed for lower taxes. More debt means more debt-servicing costs.

I just want to mention something. We talk a lot about the infrastructure deficit. The government is always talking about that. Well, the other day here in the Legislature one of the members on this side asked the Transportation minister about his cuts to highway maintenance. He talked about

dangerous cracks, potholes, and missing shoulders . . . [that] can easily pull a vehicle travelling at highway speeds off the road. Why is the Minister of Transportation putting Albertans at risk by making dangerous cuts to core public safety functions like road maintenance?

Now, the Minister of Transportation says, "This is not an ideal choice, and I am hopeful in the future that as the financial position of the province improves, we will be able to restore this funding." So even with this massive amount of spending, we can't even take care of our infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. How much money do we have to spend to be able to help take care of our roads, too?

Obviously, there's a problem with spending. If we're spending all this, \$14 billion more this year than we're going to take in – \$14 billion in one year more than we're going to take in – and we can't fix potholes and cracks in the highway that will help reduce our infrastructure falling apart down the road, that doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't make sense at all.

I'll get back to debt-servicing costs. Debt-servicing costs could be spent on schools, hospitals, roads. That's where the money could be spent. Debt servicing is just throwing away money on interest payments caused by bad economic policies. The debt interest payments will soon be \$2 billion a year and threaten to erode our services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Cooper:** Yeah, under 29(2)(a). Our colleague was speaking about debt-servicing costs. I'm just curious to know if he's given any consideration to the impact that those will have down the road with respect to monies that we might not be able to spend on hospitals or schools or nurses or doctors or teachers and, additionally, if he would like to provide any other comments on the impacts that he might be concerned about in having no restriction on the amount of debt that this government can carry to his grandkids. I know he is a good, good grandfather and is concerned about the future of our province, so I wondered if he might be able to provide some comment on that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you for the question. Yes, it's hard to sit here in this House and listen to the fiscal plan, which is basically a plan to fail because there isn't a plan, and think about our children and our grandchildren. What are they going to do? We sit here and think about the \$2 billion and what could be done with this. How many



more things could be bought with it or paid for with it than just giving it away in interest?

Again, we have a government here that seems to talk the talk about spending money on infrastructure and taking care of this infrastructure debt that they were left with, but they can't even fix the potholes in the road. They can't even fix the cracks in the road. They're cutting that. If that's what \$58 billion worth of debt – and of course that's projected debt. Just a few months ago what was the projection then? It wasn't \$58 billion; it was substantially less. It just keeps going up. Every time they come up with a new budget, the number is higher and higher. Obviously, why they don't want to put a debt ceiling on is because they don't have any confidence they could keep within it anyway.

Interest can work for you, or it can work against you. When you have money in the bank, when you've saved in the good times, then interest can work for you. You can do things with that interest. You could leave it in the bank and let it compound. That would be a good thing because then you would have money when you need it.

The government back in the day created the rainy-day fund, the sustainability fund. At one time it was \$17 billion, \$18 billion. Well, it appears that in Alberta it's been raining for eight years. That doesn't make sense. How does it make sense that for the last eight years every year we've spent more than we've taken in? It doesn't make sense. We've had \$100-a-barrel-plus oil through that time period, and we still spent more than we took in. We've blown our rainy-day fund. It's been raining for eight years in Alberta according to this government and the past government.

Let's be clear: a \$14 billion consolidated deficit. In the next year \$14 billion more will be spent than is taken in. Just that one year would have wiped out that whole sustainability fund if it wasn't gone already, but unfortunately it's gone, and now we're going to be sitting here with \$58 billion of debt. Our financial position from when we had \$17 billion in the bank in the sustainability fund to what it'll be in three years, in 2019, is probably \$70 billion or more. That's the difference between what we had and how far into debt we're going to be. That's enormous, and it's not necessary.

This government needs to take this seriously. The bond-rating agencies have spelled out the facts, they've spelled out what this government needs to do for them to have some confidence in their fiscal responsibility, but this government hasn't taken any of that advice. They haven't taken any advice from the Wildrose either. We've tried to make amendments.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there members that wish to speak to Bill 10? The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in this House to speak to Bill 10. [interjection] Pardon me? Sorry. Did I miss something important?

May I continue?

**The Speaker:** Please.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It will remove Alberta's recently raised debt ceiling. I know we've been talking about this a lot. Just to bring to light some of the things that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View had said earlier about deficits and about helping the vulnerable, about making sure that we're able to protect people and that we have the money to do that – I don't think anybody in here would dispute that.

10:30

I think the consideration that we have to think about, too, is not just right now but the longevity of those plans as well, right? I know

you're laughing when we talk about our grandchildren. It's not a particularly funny aspect to me. I'd really like to be able to leave them something and know that we were part of a legacy of something that we're building.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the reminder.

I would just like to mention that I don't dispute that anybody in this House has any ulterior motives with regard to that, but the overspending is an issue, and that's the direction that this discussion needs to go. Anybody who can't see that is not understanding the mismanagement that has happened in the past, that we can't learn from our mistakes, taking that forward and making changes as a result of past mistakes. I say that lightly because I'm new to this, and this is relatively new information for me as to how to move forward, and I'm not the government. I don't cast any aspersions as to the things I don't know, but what I do know is that there are things that are happening with this government that are showing absolutely no changes and no thought process to things that have happened in the past, and that's not acceptable.

We keep speaking about how Alberta spends \$10 billion more on government operations than B.C. or Ontario. Ontario does have some economies of scale, but there are 13 years of big-spending Liberal governments in the Toronto region, and the Toronto region is hardly cheap to operate in. B.C.'s population is only a little larger than ours. The province is bigger, the roads have to be built through mountains, and Vancouver is very expensive to operate in as well. So one might think that Alberta's government would be able to spend less than our neighbouring provinces on political operations, not more. One would think that our per capita expenditures should be lower than British Columbia, yet we spend \$2,400 per capita more.

Why is it that the government refuses to consider why this might be? We're asking legitimate questions of why. It can't just be oil. It's not possible. There are mismanagement issues here, plain and simple. The refusal to consider the why is so strong that the government would rather permanently remove a cap that actually holds you to account. The very things that you campaigned on, something that you can be proud of, where you say something and you stick to it and you work within that premise that you started with: that's accountability. It takes thoughtfulness and management and forward thinking to understand how you can work within something that you have already made a decision about how you are going to go forward. That's accountability.

A \$10 billion difference, Mr. Speaker, is a significant amount. I think what's worse is that we are not receiving any answers as to why it costs so much more to build roads in Alberta, to build schools in Alberta, and to build hospitals in Alberta. British Columbia has mountains to contend with. It has oceans. That means for many residents in the mainland that B.C. is only accessible through bridges or ferries from its islands. There are clear infrastructure challenges due to B.C.'s innate remoteness that come as a consequence of their mountainous terrain, and B.C. still manages to provide its residents with world-class services in spite of its vast isolation created by mountain ranges, oceans, and islands. There are communities in northern British Columbia where road access is so limited that you can only fly or ship products there, and these challenges seem to be managed and mitigated. It's just something to look at, an opportunity to see what is being done differently. The challenges are managed, and adequate services are provided, and they're paying much less per capita to do so.

On the other hand, I would assume that we have a far less challenging terrain – and please correct me if I'm wrong – yet we can't manage our infrastructure spending. I don't understand. The mismanagement can only be attributed to a misunderstanding of

how to spend money appropriately. It's been called an addiction. It's been called lots of other things. Call it what you will, at the end of the day that falls on your shoulders, your legacy.

We spent during the boom times way beyond our means, and we've spent during bust times way beyond our means, and Alberta taxpayers feel betrayed. They feel betrayed by entitlement and the fact that a government can think that it can recklessly spend taxpayer dollars. It is not our money. Every time that we step into the ring to decide where that money is going to be spent, the priority has to be that this is not our money. They are not our dollars. We have a responsibility to spend taxpayer dollars in a way that is going to benefit Albertans not just today but in the future as well. Albertans see that this new government is doing nothing different and has not learned anything from the past. We're asking you to take a look inward and try things a little differently. Massive overspending is alive and well.

Balanced budgets aren't ideological. Every government should be trying to do this. It's the right thing to do regardless of party politics. Again, we're talking about our kids and the future and our grandchildren. I just can't imagine how anybody in this House could not see that as being the imperative directive of how we move forward, forward thinking, because it takes us out of the mix. It's about the future.

With the debt today, that we're talking about, there's a social responsibility that comes along with being that arbiter of those hard-earned tax dollars, especially right now. All of us know how our constituents are suffering right now. All of us know. We have such a tremendous responsibility to be so careful with those tax dollars that are coming in. We have people that are earning a third less than what they were earning a year ago. That's a tremendous difference in the tax dollars that are going to be coming in for this government to spend. That's an important – important – responsibility to consider when you are having the responsibility of spending those dollars on behalf of Albertans.

Albertans are asking for answers, and instead the government looks to be reducing their accountability. The government is making it such that you don't even want to face the questions from the Legislature as you spend us off the debt cliff. My colleagues and I have stood in this House emphatically and detailed for the government what the consequences of this bill look like, I would wager to say, over and over and over again. The Wildrose has said that releasing this government from its obligations to manage debt is a course that will lead all of us into a situation that I don't think any of us quite understand.

Fifty-six billion dollars: after you say it enough times, it doesn't resonate. You just get used to the number. You get used to that horribly humongous number, and then it becomes a justification. The number has to mean something. That huge number, \$56 billion, needs to mean something. It needs to mean something to every person in this House as you go forward and spend those dollars and have to justify to Albertans where that money is being spent.

This shows Albertans and our creditors that the government has lost control and has no plan and no direction. For Albertans this bill unleashes the NDP from the burden of sensible financial management, Mr. Speaker. The government will be permitted to spend Alberta off this fiscal cliff, increasing the debt burden for every single Albertan without a single clearly laid out intention of how to manage the debt.

The government holds responsibility to more than just the Albertans of today; the government has a responsibility to the Albertans of tomorrow. The government's commitment to stable funding is nonsense if the government can't figure out a way to sustain the levels of funding it seeks to provide. It seems like a common-sense mentality. How are you going to provide these

programs that are so important without understanding how you're going to sustain them? On the backs of whom? I'd like to know.

**10:40**

The longevity of services and programs is paramount to the success and happiness of Albertans and of their communities. Communities and citizens come to depend on these programs. What's going to happen when you're promising programs and the government will not be able to sustain those? People will be depending on programs that this government cannot provide. It's the government's job to make sure that the level of service being provided is sustainable and fluid and that the services that are being provided are quality services and that it doesn't ebb and flow with the amount of cash flow that's coming through the government.

It can't fluctuate with economic times. You can't all of a sudden have a service that depletes as a result of economic times. Are you going to justify that because the economics are low? That means you have to have a sustainable plan in order to make sure that that program is sustainable. The only way to make sure that the levels of service are maintained through this time is to work at providing them efficiently. That's what Albertans are asking for. They want to know, Mr. Speaker, how that money is going to be spent, how those services are going to be provided, and how Albertans, that we take these taxes from, are going to pay for this. The bill provides little more than a licence to spend without constraint. The government refuses to look inward and find inefficiencies within the bloated bureaucracy.

Most provinces in Canada are paying significant sums in debt servicing. Debt servicing comes from all of the costs of providing new schools and new hospitals for their citizens, and we do not want to see Alberta follow along in this path. Confidence in Alberta's ability to manage this government's budgetary commitments is failing and falling. Since the government has taken power, numerous credit agencies – and I will repeat it again; I'm not sure how many times we've all said this, but I'll say it one more time, though – have downgraded the rating. This will make Alberta's high debt load even more expensive in the future. That's where we need this plan. We need to understand how that's going to get paid back.

**Loyola:** Look up the definition of triple A and double A and see what the difference is.

**Mrs. Aheer:** If it's not a significant difference to you, therein lies the problem. If a downgrade is not a significant enough difference, Mr. Speaker, for that to be a reasonable reason to look at the debt, therein lies the problem. That's the problem right there.

The NDP government, just like any other NDP government that has ever governed, is embarking on a course that will leave future generations of Alberta grappling with disastrous and unconstrained debt. This is the wrong course. As a mother and, hopefully, future grandmother I worry about the future of Albertans. In fact, my worry based on this bill is that my sons and their generations to come will live in an Alberta that is burdened with debt, Mr. Speaker, to the extent that taxes must be raised and the quality of services will diminish. The current generation of Albertans needs to do a better job internalizing the consequences of financial mismanagement today. This does not set Alberta on the right track.

I cannot support this bill, and I implore my fellow members of this Assembly to do the same. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View?

Are there any other members who would like to speak? The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 10, a bill that makes significant changes to the path forward for our great province, a bill that reverses a lot of sacrifice and hard work that was done not only by previous governments but by Albertans right across this province that recognized we needed a competitive advantage, that recognized we needed to be able to attract the best and the brightest, that recognized fiscal accountability, stability, and a world-class environment for business to grow and excel, work that was done by many Albertans to see that come to reality. As such, it saw hundreds and thousands of Albertans here grow and flourish with an entrepreneurial spirit that was the envy of many around the world and also saw hundreds and thousands of people move to our great province and make their own contribution to the future of our province.

Now, what we see in Bill 10 is a real unwinding of a lot of that very good work. What we see this government doing is putting us on a path that's reckless, that's dangerous, that's ideological, one that they promised not to put us on, which I think is the most concerning. This government promised just a couple of months ago that 15 per cent debt to GDP would be more than enough. I think my hon. colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake did a very good job of discussing and exposing some of the comments made in this House by a number of members on the other side about just how reasonable 15 per cent debt to GDP was.

They made a promise, they made a commitment, and Albertans expect people to keep those. But that's not what's happened. That's not what this NDP government has chosen to do. They've chosen to go in an entirely new direction, in an entirely different direction. The one that I think Albertans are most concerned about and certainly disappointed about, as I travel around the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, is this decision that the government has made to not be accountable at all. It's possible although unlikely – there is the potential – that Albertans could have accepted some other form of debt limit, although I don't think that would be the case.

Here's what I know for certain. Albertans demand a level of accountability, a level of transparency from their government. The truth of the matter is that one of the reasons why this NDP government is in the seat of government is because the now third party had lost track of some of those core things. The challenge here is that Albertans wanted a government that was going to be more accountable. They wanted a government that was going to chart a new course when it came to levels of accountability. In fact, Mr. Speaker, that's what this government ran on. They ran on being more accountable, more transparent, respectful of the voters of Alberta. What voters got was a government that, certainly in this case, hasn't come anywhere close to keeping its word, and because they're having a problem keeping their word, they have decided to not even set the parameters that would require them to keep their word.

**10:50**

We've seen this in other areas, certainly through the estimates process, where there's been a history of not including comprehensive performance measures. One thing that a government will do is to remove performance measures or loosen performance measures so that it's much more difficult to measure, and that's exactly what this does. It removes all levels of accountability. It removes any transparency when it comes to the debt limit and the amount of spending that Albertans think is reasonable or acceptable, and I don't think that's the kind of change that Albertans were hoping for on the 5th of May last year. What we see here is an incredible amount of opportunity for the

government to drive up spending, to drive up debt, and to increase the weight of government on future Albertans.

I know that when I chat with my kids, I talk about the direction this government is going, because that's what all dads do with their nine-year-olds, and we play games like Monopoly so that they can understand . . .

**Dr. Starke:** Stock Ticker.

**Mr. Cooper:** . . . and Mastermind, and the nine-year-old beats me.

I talk to my kids about the future of our province, and they certainly have concerns, particularly because together with our children my wife and I are saving for our children's future, and with the work that our children do to earn, a portion of that is being saved so that from an early age they can understand this concept of the importance of how we manage our resources. The same should be said here, but we see the government giving themselves a blank cheque to spend significant amounts of money, so much so that the weight of government is going to be a true burden on our children, because the government isn't taking steps to manage today's realities, on the back of tomorrow's future. I think that is more than a little disappointing.

There's been a lot said in this Chamber with respect to the challenges around our credit ratings, the very real costs that are associated with credit downgrades, and the very fact that the presence of this bill is one of the reasons that our credit has been downgraded. I think that that is more than a little disappointing because if the government was just willing to put in some parameters around this piece of legislation, if the government was willing to get serious about the path back to balance, we could stabilize what is one of the aspects of the Alberta advantage, and that has been a triple-A credit rating over so long.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I have absolutely no challenge when it comes to voting against this bill because this bill does not move Alberta closer to what I believe Albertans are hoping for. This bill doesn't move Alberta closer to accountability, this bill doesn't move Alberta closer to transparency, and it certainly doesn't do anything to preserve what so many in this province have worked hard for in the form of our credit rating. I will vote against this bill every time that this sort of reckless legislation comes before the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Opposition House Leader?

Are there any other members that wish to speak? The Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are you under 29(2)(a)?

**Mrs. Pitt:** No. I'd like to speak to the bill.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak to Bill 10. I have some personal experience that I'd actually like to offer to this debate. When I was 18 years old, I got my very first credit card. It was exciting. I'm pretty sure I had a co-signer on this thing. It was a very exciting moment, a thousand dollars in my hand. My boyfriend at the time, who is now my husband, and I went: "Oh, this is amazing. We've got to go put something on this credit card. We've got to use it because we're going to build credit. That's a good thing, right? You know, we've got some money. We don't really have to take it out of our bank account right now. We're going to worry about that later." We went out for dinner that night, and I think we spent, like, \$50. It was a high-spending evening for us, and it was such a nice evening that we had. A couple of months later we

did pay that off, I think, in very small increments, maybe \$10 at a time. It took a while, and, you know, I paid a little bit more than I should have because the interest kicked in. That wasn't pleasant.

We got engaged a couple of years after that.

**An Hon. Member:** Congratulations.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you very much. It was a wonderful engagement at the top of the ski hill at Sunshine. It was a beautiful moment. You know, I was so scared I was going to lose my ring in the snow as I went down, and that was when I was a good snowboarder. That's probably not the case anymore.

However, Mr. Speaker, my fiancé at that time and I were at Liquidation World, and they had this beautiful kitchen set. You know, that was when the high stuff was really at the peak of being popular, and it was a beautiful, beautiful wood finish. It was just absolutely wonderful. We thought: "Oh, my gosh. This thing is on sale. Oh, my goodness, only, like, \$800. This is on sale." This was, like, the newest, coolest table you could buy. We had one, I think, probably from around the garbage dump behind our building because it was free, and that's sort of what you get. "Ah, this is awesome. Our first brand new piece of furniture. We're getting married. We've got to get this."

That was my first real big piece of debt. That was the beginning of what I would call a very slippery slope. To this day this is still the kitchen set that we have. It is rickety. It is falling apart. I've been married for 10 years this summer. I hate this table. I just hate this table. It is not only a reminder of the beginning of what was a very horrible, terrible path of debt for me and my husband, but now it's falling apart, and for the life of me I can't justify buying a new one. I just can't do it.

When I say that was sort of the very slippery slope of the debt game path that we went down, shortly after that, we sort of teetered around the limit of this credit card, this thousand-dollar credit card. Lo and behold, they kept upping my limit. I couldn't believe it. This was fantastic. I had even more money that I could access without really having to pay it back. You know, there weren't any major purchases after that, but there were little ones. It was a little bit more. I hit that \$2,000 mark, and this is before the legislation changed.

**Mr. Panda:** You had a triple-A rating?

**Mrs. Pitt:** I had a triple-A rating.

I said: man, this credit card company just loves me, right? "We're just going to give her a little bit more because, you know, she makes her payments on time. She pays it back. We're just going to give her a little bit more." You know what? Before we knew it, Mr. Speaker, this credit card was at \$12,000.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Double wowzers. They loved you a lot.

11:00

**Mrs. Pitt:** They loved me a lot. We made the minimum payments, and the debt kept climbing.

Mr. Speaker, I am a fiscal conservative because I learned some lessons along the way. We had to go to the bank and say: "Help. We can't get out of this situation. We just absolutely cannot get out of this situation." We kept making more money – we did – and our income had increased, but so had the payment levels. It was a situation where there was just no way out of paying off this credit card. It was to the point where we thought: if we put 50 bucks on this credit card, we can use 50 bucks in three weeks. It made no rational sense, but we just kept doing it, and there was just that point

where we couldn't get out of this. It's horrible when you have to go to your bank and say: "Please help me. I'm in big trouble. My credit is going to take a hit. I get that, but I really need help." You know, we didn't file for bankruptcy or anything like that. We were able to sort of ask for help at the right time. But you know what? That really sucks.

What a small scale that is compared to the situation we're in right now, but it's absolutely relevant. As the stewards of taxpayer dollars in this province it's irresponsible for us to be borrowing like an 18-year-old with a first credit card. It's absolutely irresponsible. These aren't just numbers on paper; these are portions of people's paycheques. These are single mothers who are putting their tax dollars in our hands to be responsible with, to make sure that, you know, when they have a horrible, horrible accident and can no longer work, AISH is available to them. These are really important things that people rely on, and we need to be responsible with the money that's been entrusted to us.

I think we all have really big hearts in this House, Mr. Speaker, and we want to take care of everybody. We really, truly do. There is a path for that. I just really, really don't think that this is the way – I really don't – until we're able to look at the health care system and say: "What is your job? What do you do? How can we make this more efficient? How can we make sure that you are making a fair wage, that your work environment is conducive to productive behaviour that takes care of the patient?" I think we can all agree that that's really not happening right now because there's so much inefficiency within the system.

If our last-ditch effort is to borrow money on an emergency basis and that's all we have left, this is a very different conversation. Right now we are only throwing money at the problem without trying to figure out how to solve the problem. There is a way to do it. There is a way to encourage the private sector to create more jobs and not always rely on the taxpayer jobs. The taxpayer jobs are so extremely important.

I am so grateful that I have access to a doctor. I am grateful for that, but it is not prudent of us to be looking for more money while putting so many other things at risk. We've already seen this with – what? – four or five credit downgrades. That's what happens when you don't pay your credit card and the bank has got you at \$10,000 and you're not paying it anymore. Your interest rate was 9 per cent, and now it's 12 per cent, 18 per cent. Actually, back when I was 18, I think that interest rates were much higher. Those are extremely dangerous situations.

You know what? We talk about the payday loans, right? We talk about the traps that people get into when they're borrowing money, predatory lender or not. These are the traps that people get into, and this is the trap that we're in right now. We need to be very, very prudent about that.

You know, this is not what we should be teaching our children. This is not responsible behaviour. There is a way to take care of the people that we need to be taking care of but to also be very responsible with the money, the hard-earned dollars that we're entrusted with.

I really think that we need to take a step back. You know, this is now the second time we've asked to borrow more money. That's scary. We're only a year into this thing. We've seen unprecedented natural disasters that need our immediate attention, and these do require dollars. Is there going to be a point where we're not going to be lent any more money? Then what? Then you're really scrambling. Is that when we're going to find efficiencies? We need to really take care of this situation right now.

It's really frustrating, I think. Prior to being in this job, I found it really frustrating when we saw government waste, heard the scandal stories: the \$8 orange juice, you know, the exorbitant car

wash charges and car detailing, \$300 car detailing. I get that these are allowed under the rules – I get that – but it's really frustrating as a taxpayer when I'm going to work for 40, 50, 60 hours a week and I pay my taxes, like I'm sure everybody here does. I contribute to the pool because I do like health care, I do like education, and I do like the social safety net, but I get really frustrated when it's not spent appropriately.

For us to go back to the taxpayer and say, "Hey, we have another situation," where we're asking for more from the taxpayers, and then to say, "We don't really care about what you do; the taxpayer dollars that you bring in don't really matter because we're not going to be responsible with them; we're really not" – we've gotten to a spending situation that's going to be very hard to get out of, and it's going to be embarrassing. I don't think anybody here wants that. I believe that everybody here wants to do the best thing for Alberta. There is a way back. There is absolutely a way back. It's going to take a group effort. It's going to take us all together to figure this thing out. We've got to really, really sort this out.

Is it one side versus the other, or is it: we are here to represent our constituents and all of the people of Alberta? We want to do the best job that we can do. One of the biggest things that we're entrusted with is their tax dollars. I know for a fact that Albertans are very concerned about what this government does with their dollars. I know that people in Airdrie are very concerned about all the tax dollars that they contribute, yet they cannot get access to a doctor in our area after 10 p.m. It's absolutely unacceptable. It's so heartbreaking to see that there are almost favourites. That's an issue for another day.

The issue here is really, truly being responsible stewards of the taxpayer dollar. We are the examples for future generations. When you get into a situation that is out of control, it is a boulder rolling downhill, picking up steam. The path back is a very dark one, and I don't think anybody wants to go there. But at some point you have to address your debt. At some point you have to really, really consider what the consequences are.

**11:10**

We've been punished already. We've been punished with credit downgrades. You know, the number of dollars that we no longer have access to because we're paying just the interest is appalling.

I had a visit with AARC – it's an adolescent addictions recovery centre – and they need some help with the demand. Of course, donations are down, and they're looking for some help from the government for the wonderful program that they run there. They're asking for \$500,000. Wouldn't it be fantastic if we could support youth?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any questions for the Member for Airdrie under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** I'd just request unanimous consent for one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 10. I am very interested in . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, have you not spoken to this bill?

**Mr. Hunter:** No. I spoke to the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** We have a record that, in fact, you may have spoken twice, once at 9:14. I'll take it on good faith, hon. member, that you have not spoken. Please proceed.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important for the people of Cardston-Taber-Warner that I rise to speak on this issue of Bill 10. I just wanted to point out really quickly that I don't think the Wildrose would be upset if the government was spending, as they say, to decrease the capital project deficit in this province. If that was really what they were doing here, then we would probably say: "You know what? We have a capital project deficit in this province that we need to address." Maybe we wouldn't say to do it all in one year, but we would say that that needs to be addressed.

The real problem, Mr. Speaker, that I face and that I've talked about with the constituents in my riding is this. The government is spending far too much on operational deficit. They continue to neglect the fact that we spend \$2,000 more per person in our province than the province next to us does. What they're saying is that this operational deficit, this operational spending that this government is doing, is unacceptable.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there was a comment made by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, a concept about Keynesian economics. You know, I find it interesting that a well-versed man and a doctor, no less, would say something like that. There is mounting evidence to show that this is a failed economic experiment. The reality is that with Keynesian economics, what happens is that you spend when you are in the lows in order to make it less of a low and then you save when you have peaks. The problem is – and the evidence shows it – that very few governments actually curtail spending when that peak comes. The reason why that is is because government's main role is to be able to earn the votes of the people. So rather than actually curtailing that spending, they ramp it up. That economic experiment of Keynesianism is actually very suspect. I find it surprising that the whole premise behind this concept that you can spend without any kind of curtailing, that this government talks about, is completely erroneous. It's absolutely erroneous.

I just wanted to point out, Mr. Speaker, that, look, we are trying to make reasonable arguments here so that this government realizes that we are very interested in building up Alberta and building up a strong, vibrant Alberta. This is something that we believe in very strongly on this side of the House, and I believe that that side of the House believes it as well. The problem is that they are protecting their union buddies. [interjections] Absolutely. That's what's happening. This is what concerns us. There cannot be a duplicity in this province. I hear it everywhere I go. [interjections] We have a situation . . .

**The Speaker:** Remember that the hour is getting late. Hon member, be conscious of the hour and the time. Please proceed.

**Mr. Hunter:** I will.

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation in this province where there are private-sector workers who feel that there is a double standard in this province. It's unacceptable. This province needs to be fair to all, to everyone in this province, union and non-union, and this is the problem. This is the reason why we can't get our spending under control.

Mr. Speaker, the reason that I am speaking not in favour of this bill is because it is flawed at its core. The concept that you can continue to spend and have no kind of spending restraints at all: there is no place in the world that can do that unless you have a tree that you can grow money on, and there's no such thing. How can we allow the government to continue to kick the can down the road and say – you know, now it's going to be 2024 or something. Well, it's great to make those promises, but the promise was also made at the last election that they were going to balance the budget in this term. Now, unfortunately, because they don't recognize the value

of the money and recognize that they need to be careful with the money, we're in a situation where we don't have a debt ceiling anymore. We're destroying it.

Mr. Speaker, I am adamantly opposed to Bill 10, and the people in my riding wanted me to say that. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner?

The hon. Minister of Finance to close debate.

**Mr. Ceci:** Yes. Thank you very much. Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, is in service of our three-year fiscal plan, the Alberta jobs plan, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta jobs plan carefully manages spending. The Alberta jobs plan will invest in Alberta now through capital projects across this province, and it will diversify the economy, and it will support Alberta businesses.

I was heartened by the words of Calgary-Mountain View as a representative a little while ago because he clearly understood where this budget is at. Our fiscal plan, our budget, published and passed last week, is available for all Albertans to see and to judge. We are proud of this budget. It is what Albertans voted for on May 5 when they looked at the various platforms. They did not support the platform of that party over there.

11:20

The opposition wants to balance the budget. They want to do it. There's an approximately \$8 billion drop, we know, from the resource royalty revenues from about two years ago to this year. That's approximately 80 per cent of this deficit this year. To balance the budget, the opposition would have to make extreme cuts to the public service. They would have to fire teachers and nurses, they would have to cut supports for seniors, and they would have to abandon the most vulnerable in this province.

That is not what the Alberta jobs plan will do, Mr. Speaker. We will stand by Albertans. We will support families and communities. We will invest in this province and its infrastructure. We will diversify our energy industry in the market. And we will support Alberta businesses. Our government will balance the budget but not on the backs of Alberta families like they will. The opposition wants to return to the mistakes of the past with reckless and extreme cuts to health care and education. We're not going to do that. We are going to invest. We want to build Alberta. They want to tear it down.

We heard lots of talk about restraining spending. Well, let me just tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in the short time we've been here, we have carried on the restraint in hiring that the previous government instituted in late 2014. We've carried that on. It means that all approvals for new hiring have to go through the DM's level and through CHR, the corporate human resources department.

We have instituted an ABC review, agencies, boards, and commissions. We are in the first phase of that. The first phase has either reduced or amalgamated or eliminated 26 boards and agencies, for a savings over three years of \$35 million. That's the first phase of the review. We have two more phases to go, and we're involved in those at this point in time.

With regard to a wage spending restraint let me just tell you something that we've done that they wouldn't have done because they don't even – that they wouldn't have done. Addressing operational spending, we looked at wage reviews of politicians' salaries. We froze them for the length of this term. Political staff are frozen. Managers and opted-out people are frozen, and their salary grids are frozen as well. The CEOs of 27 ABCs are in the first group that we're looking at, to assure ourselves that those people are getting the right wages, and we're going to track those along the lines of the public service managers. We are doing significant work.

You know, we're going to be doing more – more – restraint work as we go forward. That doesn't seem to fix on the radar of the opposition at all, but we will be doing that work.

On the topic of credit ratings or credit downgrades or adjustments just let me tell you that Alberta is not unique in that. What I mean by that, on that point, is that you only have to look at the newspaper, Mr. Speaker – you only have to look at the newspaper – on any day, and you'll see that credit reviews are happening everywhere. They're happening everywhere in every energy-producing company, many of them in this province. They are all getting reviewed by credit-rating agencies. Other provinces, states, and territories: the same thing. Sovereign states and countries: the same thing. Yet this opposition looks at us and says: wait; Alberta is something different and unique from the rest of the world. Well, I can tell them that that's not accurate. What is accurate is that every energy-producing company, state, and country is being downgraded because of the price of oil. The price of oil.

One of the things that the bond-rating agencies identified in their report was that, you know, if you look at – Alberta, you have the ability because you can take some steps on the fiscal measures side, so if you want to address this more rapidly and not get downgraded, you can do that. I said to them that that would put rather severe restraints on our public services. Those rather severe restraints on our public services would mean that those same children that they're talking about and future children would not have the high-quality program supports that Alberta has been known for and continues to have, and that's not what Albertans voted for.

If the opposition is saying that we can address the deficit more rapidly, then they're saying one thing, and they're not saying anything that Albertans want. They're saying that we can bring in a PST. That is not something we are going to do. We are only going to address this in a reasonable way. We are not going to address it on the backs of Albertans, with a PST, because taking any more money out of the economy is not what Albertans need at this time.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I will say again that this government has a responsible plan in front of Albertans. They can read the plan. We are doing the work that Albertans need at this time, and that is to have a shock-absorber budget so that they don't suffer the effects of that party over there. This party will stand with Albertans.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, you're moving third reading. Is that correct?

**Mr. Ceci:** That's right.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:27 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Babcock	Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd
Bilous	Gray	McKittrick
Carlier	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Hoffman	Notley
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Connolly	Jabbour	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kazim	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinsteuber	Schreiner
Dang	Littlewood	Shepherd
Drever	Loyola	Sucha
Eggen	Malkinson	Turner

Feehan  
Fitzpatrick

Mason

Woollard

Totals:

For – 37

Against – 13

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a third time]

**11:30**

Against the motion:

Aheer

Hunter

Panda

Barnes

Jansen

Pitt

Clark

Loewen

Rodney

Cooper

MacIntyre

Starke

Cyr

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seeing the progress that we made this evening and looking at the clock, I move that we adjourn until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:32 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, May 31, 2016

Day 36

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
 Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
 Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
 Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
 Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
 Official Opposition House Leader  
 Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
 Government Whip  
 Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
 Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
 Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
 Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
 Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
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 Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
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 Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
 Leader of the Official Opposition  
 Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
 Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
 Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
 Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
 Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
 Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
 MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
 Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
 Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
 Government House Leader  
 McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
 Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
 McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
 Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
 McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
 McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
 McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
 Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
 Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
 Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
 Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
 Official Opposition Whip  
 Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
 Premier  
 Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
 Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
 Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
 Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
 Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
 Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
 Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinstauber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinstauber
Babcock	McKittrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinstauber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, May 31, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect. Let us reach into our creative minds and think outside the box in looking for new and innovative solutions that'll lead us to new opportunities, ideas, and thoughts. May we continue to work collaboratively in this Chamber, always remembering that we're working towards making Alberta a better place for future generations.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day Government Motions

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

#### State of Emergency

18. Ms Larivee moved:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to section 18(4) of the Emergency Management Act the Legislative Assembly continue the state of emergency declared in the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo on May 4, 2016, OC 107/2016, up to and including June 30, 2016.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This extraordinary emergency requires co-ordination well beyond the boundaries of Wood Buffalo. This can be best accomplished under a state of provincial emergency. Evacuees are currently spread throughout the province and, in fact, throughout Canada. The careful, orderly return of 80,000-plus people to Fort McMurray has to be a responsibility taken on by the province. Extending the state of emergency will allow the province to provide a greater level of co-ordination and support to evacuees and the municipality and bring provincial assets and resources that are needed throughout the initial re-entry phase.

The council has been consulted and supports extending the state of provincial emergency. As soon as this re-entry phase is complete and the municipality feels that it has the capacity and ability to take on the responsibilities, we will transition authority for this work back to the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, with the full knowledge that provincial resources and support will still be available and provided where and when they are needed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Two Hills – Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I feel like I may have been discounted a hill there. It's not a significant challenge. The good people of Three Hills will be happy to have an extra hill. You should come sometime. It's lovely there. You can see all three of them.

In all seriousness, it's my pleasure to rise to speak in favour of the motion that the hon. minister has brought forward. I'd just like to take a couple of moments to thank so many in the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, to thank so many of the first responders, firefighters, individuals who've been literally working

around the clock to prepare for tomorrow's events and the staged re-entry.

There have just been so many heartwarming stories. I think of the story and the video footage, that's been making the rounds, of the 300 South African firefighters who are coming to the aid of our province. There really has been much about a horrific situation that has brought out the best in people.

I appreciate the government's decision to not enter into this motion lightly. I appreciate that they reached out to the council. I think that given the circumstances that surround this and the significant number of logistics that still remain, particularly in light of getting folks of Fort McMurray back home from all around our province and our country as we continue to serve those folks who have been evacuated to evacuation centres and as we move to see a number of those close as well, this is a reasonable motion.

Obviously, any time the province declares a state of emergency, it should be done with the fulsome thought and discussion of the severity of that. In this case members on this side of the aisle also agree that it is a step that needs to be taken, so we'll be happy to support this motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. For the record I've spent time in Two Hills, in Hairy Hill, in Blue Hill, but I've never visited Three Hills, so I look forward to that opportunity soon.

Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to take a brief moment to thank the minister and all of the staff within Municipal Affairs, within Transportation, within Environment, all of the emergency responders, first responders for the remarkable work that's gone on. It's been amazing watching the outpouring of support from Albertans, from around the country, and from around the world for what is, you know, the single greatest natural disaster in our province's history, I'm sure, and perhaps even our country's history. The scale of what has gone on is truly remarkable.

So, of course, I support the extension of the state of emergency. It's not something, I think, to be taken lightly when we're establishing a provincial state of emergency, and I know it's something the minister and her team have thought very hard about. When we have a situation where we're working in consultation with the municipality and they've made that request, for the provincial government to then respond to that request, especially as we move through this very important milestone of moving back into the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, getting people back into their homes in a safe, controlled manner, I think the state of emergency will give us the tools that are needed.

But I do want to take this opportunity just to express again to the people of Fort McMurray that we in this Assembly and Albertans and, I know, Canadians are with them through this challenging time. It's going to be a long road; there's no question. It's going to be a long road, but it's an important milestone tomorrow as we finally start to see people back in their homes. That will be an important day.

You certainly have my commitment to provide whatever support we can over the months and years as people resettle and rebuild. Fort Mac will fight back. We've got your back Fort McMurray.

Thank you very much to the minister, and thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) comes into effect should any hon. members wish to take advantage.

Seeing none, the hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to rise in favour of the motion that the Municipal Affairs minister is leading on and just say that I understand that it's going to take a little bit longer and that to give the province the authority to do what they have to do right now seems like a completely reasonable thing. My only encouragement would be for them to be careful and to use that power for good wherever they can.

I had the opportunity to spend some time with some of the folks from the Fort McMurray Construction Association last evening, and they remain concerned that too much of the work to restore the municipality and the region is going to people outside of the municipality and the region. When the government says that they're trying to include people from the municipality and the region, I'm not doubting that, but I would ask the government to use these extra powers, amongst other things, to look to see if you can have the work to restore the community done by people that live and work in the community because what will actually put the community back to work is putting the community back to work.

10:10

I would respectfully ask the government to be very careful and to make efforts in that direction when and wherever they can and to carefully consider definitions that might be in use right now for what is a Fort McMurray company. As I understand, the common belief is that the definition is that if they have one employee from Fort McMurray, that's a Fort McMurray company, which could explain, if that is indeed the case, why some people from Fort McMurray feel like there are a lot more people from outside doing the restoration work than from inside. Again I will respectfully ask the government to consider these things carefully.

With that, I shall sit down and prepare to support the motion before us.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Any members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Government Motion 18 carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I apologize, hon. minister. I didn't ask you to close debate. It's early in the morning.

**Ms Larivee:** I'm okay with that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All right.

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 20 Climate Leadership Implementation Act

Mr. Cooper moved that Bill 20 be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2 and that the committee report back to the Assembly no later than October 31, 2016, if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

[Adjourned debate on amendment May 25: Mr. Bilous]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** This is speaking to the referral motion?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you. I want to stand and just reiterate our position on bills like Bill 20, that are very, very important, that have far-reaching consequences for all Albertans. The importance of referring this to committee is so that people will have a chance to stand up and speak and have their input on it.

I was at a meeting last night. We spoke to a gas distribution company, one of the major ones here in the province. They're very concerned as a distributor and a consumer because of the staff that they're going to have to hire just to implement this program, that is going to be onerous.

I've talked to a municipal leader. You know, with the removal of the grants in lieu of taxes and some of the MSI funding that they've lost and now this carbon tax on top of that and the fact that they've had no input into it, they're very concerned and haven't been properly informed on where the government is going with this and how it's going to affect these companies. They only have one other source of income, and that is to pass any of their costs on to the ratepayers in their communities. There's a very big concern about that from my communities.

Albertans are very concerned about the priorities and the time that was given to a bill of this magnitude and why it has been slid into the back end of this session. You know, we've gone through 19 bills prior to this one, and some of them have been referred to as *Seinfeld* bills, which are bills about nothing, such as Bill 1, which has been on the books and off the books and carried all the way through session. Our feeling is that Bill 20 should have been brought in much, much earlier in the process here in the spring session and a lot more time given for debate. We would like to see it put to committee so that we can have some input from Albertans and have a chance for Albertans to better understand it.

I really do feel that we have another Bill 6 on our hands going forward. I'm starting to hear the rumblings. More people are getting concerned. More people are contacting my office. More people are calling me and sending me e-mails. Facebook is starting to rev up again just like it did with Bill 6. I really, really, you know, would recommend to the government that we not read this a second time or put it to third reading but that we send it to committee and have it properly studied and allow Albertans a chance to have some input into this before we commit them to a \$3-billion-a-year carbon tax.

Again, I find it kind of surprising that the government wants to go down this road again after what happened with Bill 6. It all came down to not talking to communities, not talking to people, not letting stakeholders have their input into the process. I really think it's a mistake for this government to push this bill through, to force it through at the end of the spring session without allowing us adequate time to debate it and allowing us the chance to go and talk to our communities before we have to make a decision on this.

So that's my position. I think we should refer this to committee and carry on with that. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to stand and speak in second reading of Bill 20, which is titled the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. We've heard from a number of members already that there are significant flaws in the bill, and indeed on this side of the Assembly we still wouldn't mind seeing it sent to committee. We think that would be a better outcome to deal with the multitude of flaws in the bill.

The starting place is probably with the title of the bill because this particular bill doesn't really do anything for climate change. We know for sure that it's a wealth transfer program that will tax every member of society. [interjection] Of course, the government has said that themselves, so it's kind of funny to hear a government member laughing at a provision that her own government put in the bill. It's a wealth transfer process, where 60 per cent of Albertans will, in the government's words, get the money back.

Now, the government's words there aren't accurate either because they'll get some of the money back, not nearly as much as they'll pay. While the government hasn't admitted this, which is kind of weird because it seems as obvious as the nose on any of our faces, they won't get it all back. The government's own policy says that people will get back the amount they spend on gasoline in their vehicle and that they'll get back roughly the amount that they spend to heat their home. The assumption that the government seems to be making is that nothing else will be affected by this, that nothing else they buy will be more expensive. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth since almost everything else they buy arrives at some point on a truck or a train.

Consequently, essentially every family in Alberta will be poorer because of this bill. Sixty per cent of Albertans will get some relief from the additional taxes that the government is heaping upon them but surely not full relief, and consequently most families will be short somewhere between \$1,000 and \$2,000. It depends upon how much their family budget is, but it'll surely be light a bunch of money at the end of each and every year for whatever period of time Bill 20 is in effect, should the government still decide to forge ahead with this and not take a more reasonable approach and look for a climate change bill that actually does something for the environment. This one, clearly, is heavy on wealth transfer and light on the environment, and these are issues that certainly our caucus is concerned with.

Now, the government, unfortunately, in their debate has tried to make this, "You're either with us, or you're against the planet," which, of course, is a ridiculous argument. I think we've all accepted that climate change is a real concern. This bill, that headlines itself as doing something for the planet, actually doesn't, and that's one of the biggest concerns. There is very little of anything in this bill that actually does anything for the environment.

On the tax operations, if we look at section 4(2)(c), the part that deals with the carbon levy on certain fuels, that part doesn't address if the tax will apply to transformation of fuels into other substances. For example, if somebody transforms methane into synthesis gas and then into methanol and other fuels, how is that taxed? It isn't completely clear. While it looks like it is partially covered under 1(1)(hh), the definition of "rebrand," there remains an open question about carbon-emitting substances that can be used as fuel but which aren't generated or consumed using the processes set out in the schedule beginning on page 74 and following. Governments around the world, Madam Speaker, have learned the hard way with drug laws that careful attention to chemistry and processes is crucial in preventing criminals from getting around the law through technical modifications. This bill seems to fall short in protecting against those concerns.

#### 10:20

Also important, there's no solid definition of a fuel system. We can hope that the regulations will define a fuel system, but the question remains if a fuel system can be decoupled or otherwise circumvented to avoid being captured by this provision. What about other systems where the fuel is not intended to produce heat or energy such as vehicles that carry refrigerated goods where the

intent is to provide cooling and where any heat produced is a by-product? It's not clear how that's treated.

Section 26(2): this part deals with recovery, refunds, and credits. It's not clear if Albertans will be taxed on fuels that leak during transport or transfer. It's probably a small amount of fuel overall and should be addressed proactively, but it's in Albertans' best interest to be open to the possibility of disruptive and expensive assessments and court proceedings under part 2 for reporting errors due to leaks. Let's find a way to make this clear while we choose to aggressively tax fuel whether it's leaky or not. This is one of the many things where the legislation falls short of being complete or being clear or being in Albertans' best interest.

In the legislation itself in section 34(1) the clause makes outstanding carbon levy payments the most senior class of debt in a bankruptcy, which is pretty interesting. Banks and other lenders that provide business financing capital would be lower on the list of creditors, potentially increasing their risk as lenders. Once again, the government is being insensitive to business, making it harder for business to get the investment they need to create jobs. They called their whole budget the jobs-creating plan though it doesn't create a single job that we can see, surely not as many as it kills, that's for sure. This is just one more example of another piece of this government's legislation that's hard on business, making it that little bit tougher for businesses to get loans from the banks by reducing the banks' interests below that of the carbon levy tax in a bankruptcy situation.

Similarly, it's not clear where Alberta's municipalities are on the list for outstanding property taxes, et cetera, nor where the Canada Revenue Agency would fit in on unpaid taxes, EI, GST, et cetera. It's kind of interesting that the province has put themselves above the federal government – it certainly appears that, anyway – on the recovery of their carbon tax, potentially before the federal government does. I'm not sure whether this is begging for a lawsuit or whether there is some precedent that sorts this out or not, but I haven't heard any explanation from government ministers or members to see where this all lands. This section needs to provide better clarity about where other creditors fit in during bankruptcy so that the government doesn't unwittingly do harm and jeopardize the interests of investors or other tiers of government even.

Section 43(1) deals with a notice of objection. This part does not outline how the grievance process will be administered; what type of administrative body, if any, will be needed to create and deal with these types of concerns; and at what cost. How much of the carbon tax is going – again, we haven't really found anything that is going to help the environment. How much of it will be soaked up in administration to deal with these newly formed processes that the government is creating through the potential passing of this legislation?

What kind of consideration did the government give to implementing the carbon tax within an existing tax system rather than building what appears to be a parallel tax system as envisioned in this bill? The government is acting as if this is the first day the world existed instead of trying to fit the legislation into the world as it has existed, as it does exist, and with the history that's here. Madam Speaker, it really shows, frankly, the immaturity of thought in creating this bill, very dogmatic and not at all pragmatic.

Madam Speaker, we cannot support the bill in its current form. Over time we will be bringing forward amendments that attempt to address some of the issues that I've raised just now and other things that we find in the bill as we go on. Clearly, Bill 20, the climate change leadership plan, isn't leadership, it doesn't address climate change, and it surely isn't a plan because it hasn't been thought through. So the government has really gotten this wrong on almost every count.

It's really unfortunate that in Alberta, a place where the citizens care about the environment and care about the economy, there's a bill brought forward that isn't going to do anything for the environment, it is going to significantly damage the economy, and the government sponsoring it doesn't seem to be able to explain it in any reasonable way at all. In fact, even in this House they're ignoring the most obvious, glaring inconsistencies and things that are wrong in the bill.

I'll go back to something I said earlier. It's so obvious, when a household is only going to get rebated for the gas in their car and the heat in their home and everything else they buy has a tax to it, that they haven't put a lick of thought into how much it's going to cost families outside of that. If they have, they surely haven't admitted it in this House, Madam Speaker.

When you think about it, this bill is not ready for the Legislative Assembly. It's probably worthy of the status of a discussion document, of something that could be worked on and that perhaps someday, with a major rewrite and major reconstruction, has the potential to do something for the environment, maybe even do something that the government says all the time but actually never puts any action into. It could actually be something to help spur more diversification of the economy. Instead, what it's going to do is kill the economy. I think what most Albertans know, although the government seems oblivious to it, is that it's a lot easier to diversify the economy when there's money in the economy, moving around through jobs and businesses and investment and things like that.

Bill 20 will actually decrease jobs and businesses and investment and at the end of the day will be a huge hindrance to the diversification of the economy because it will weaken the economy. A strong economy actually helps bring in the brain power, the people with specific training and skills that would be more able to be part of Alberta diversifying the economy. Unfortunately, under Bill 20 and the consequences, both intended and unintended, it already has started, just the threat of it, to drive people out, drive the skill sets out that we need to diversify the economy. We believe it will continue to do that, and we believe that if the government is misguided enough to put this bill into legislation, it will have long-lasting negative effects on Alberta's economy, little to no positive effect on Alberta's environment, and will be a hindrance to the quality of life for Albertans for a long time to come.

For that reason, I will sit down now, and we will look forward, later on in the proceedings, to where our party will bring forward some amendments to try to improve what is, sadly, a very damaged, ill-conceived, really not ready for prime time piece of legislation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions? Go ahead.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know that the leader of the third party has served in public life for quite some time, a number of years here in this Chamber and then has a very well-established record as a leader in the city of Calgary. Over that time, I just wonder if he might be able to provide the House with some comment on the types of good work that can take place at committee. This motion intends to send this piece of legislation to committee for a ton of great reasons, including Albertans being able to provide testimony. I just know that he has experienced some successful process at committee. I'm just curious to know if he might be willing to share with the House why that might be a reasonable thing to do with this piece of legislation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the House leader from the Official Opposition for the question. He'll

be happy to know that I can report that there can be a lot of good work done at committee. In this House right now, as it should be, there are the 87 of us here, and we are all here to discuss and debate issues. But let's face it. We are politicians, and, yes, each of us has individual skill sets and experiences from our life previous to politics. But at the end of the day, our job is really not to be experts at anything except understanding what's good for Albertans, combining that with what the professionals in the public service bring forward for recommendations, and applying the public interest to either accept those recommendations if they're good for the public or reject those recommendations if they're bad for the public. And there's nothing wrong with that. That's a good process.

10:30

But one of the things that can make the process stronger is being in a committee setting, where you can actually have professionals with high levels of expertise, where all sides of the House would have respect for their experience, their expertise, and their background and be able to ask them questions together. It goes a long way towards depoliticizing the process when we can have a known expert ask and answer questions and give testimony and give advice to members from all sides of the House in a less formal, more free-flowing committee structure and can actually help to bring consensus to all sides of the House in the decision-making process. I've seen that over the years. Certainly, on city council it happened over and over and over again and even here at the Legislature.

I haven't done a lot of committee time. But, interestingly enough, during the one committee that the House leader for the Official Opposition and I sit on with members of the government and others, the family-friendly committee, I think we have – you know, at the last meeting, just as an example, we had in the meeting with us by telephone the Speaker of the House of British Columbia, who talked about some of the things that they're doing there to create a family-friendly atmosphere while controlling costs and actually making it work for members of the Assembly there that have young children. That was one of those areas where I think it really brought us all together, gave us a common understanding of the issue.

I dare say – I'm always open to being corrected, but I think I'm pretty safe on this one – that when the committee meeting ended, as a result of that truly external expert advice and information given, we left there with a common understanding and a common purpose and will at some point be ready to come back to this House with a recommendation that I'll be surprised if not all members of that committee support and probably, by extension, all parties in the House support.

That's one example. I've got a limited amount of time. Lord knows, you're all well aware that I can go on for a long time when required to. But the hon. member, Madam Speaker, asked me for an example of when committee work could actually improve the process. I've tried to provide that, and I hope that's helpful for the hon. member and all of the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There are still a couple of seconds under 29(2)(a).

Any further speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to the referral motion on Bill 20. Just some reflections on the previous member talking about the good work that committees can get accomplished and depoliticizing it: I would also agree. My experience on the Ethics and Accountability Committee, that has been struck to try and improve some of the processes within our

democracy here in Alberta – I believe that last week we had a very constructive meeting, with members from both sides of the House being able to have good discussions about how to best move forward in the interests of all Albertans. I thought I should highlight that as another example of where committee work can have a great impact on the confidence that all Albertans will have in the work that's being done in this Legislative Assembly.

I do believe that legislation as substantial as this legislation – some 95 pages long, I might add – needs to go through due process, needs to be sent to committee for study, to call in the expert witnesses, that all members of this Assembly can be exposed to and ask the necessary questions of so we can get both pros and cons with regard to moving forward in a direction such as this. I think it helps to alleviate the fears and to create possible amendments to improve legislation. By improving the legislation, we make it better for all Albertans, and we can build in Alberta a sense of moving forward together.

Wildrose has had a proud history of offering up solutions to environmental problems and to greening the economy. Wildrose members believe in responsible, fact-based stewardship of the environment, so much so that it is part of our member-driven and member-adopted policies. Taking Bill 20 to committee ensures that this is a fact-based exercise, not just some ideology-driven agenda. I refer back to the very fact that we can as Members of this Legislative Assembly take the information from all sides and from many stakeholders and as individuals and as members representing diverse constituencies throughout Alberta discuss the pros and cons of the directions that are being taken and bring forward legislation that possibly is more robust and that addresses some of the concerns that we would have on this side of the House with regard to the legislation that has been put before us at this time.

Some facts, like Genesee 3, a clean-coal technology, electrical generating station: it is a model of technology that needs to be exported. This type of technology needs to be exported to other jurisdictions – China, Japan, Germany – in order to lower their greenhouse gas emissions, clean up the NO<sub>x</sub> and the SO<sub>x</sub> and particulate matter emissions. I believe that this is one area where Alberta leads in many different aspects of this type of technology, an area where we can export that good knowledge and that good experience to many other jurisdictions throughout the world, that possibly could have a bigger effect on total global greenhouse gas emissions, maybe more so, probably more so, than this taxation policy that this government is proposing to move forward on. China needs technology like Genesee 3 to help clean up their local air quality. Japan and Germany need Genesee 3 technology in order to replace the baseload of electricity being lost as nuclear reactors are shut down.

Natural gas in these countries has to be imported either as LNG, liquefied natural gas, or by pipeline – they can get it by pipeline from less friendly regimes – or a combination of both, but this leaves them in a situation where they are relying on other jurisdictions to fulfill their electricity needs and to make sure that they are in a stable position to move forward with fulfilling the needs that their citizens are looking for.

Madam Speaker, we know that the sun does not always shine and the wind does not always blow. Battery technology is not there yet, and there needs to be a baseload available. Wildrose members want to make sure that an internationally competitive regulatory and fiscal regime that attracts and retains both upstream and downstream investment exists in Alberta. Not only this, but Wildrose members want to ensure that Alberta's standards for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and pollutants fall in line with national and international standards. Again, Wildrose policy: there we are again, Wildrose members thinking outside the box and knowing that we have to get

along with our neighbours in Confederation, with other countries to make a difference in the environment.

10:40

This is a big question of the carbon tax and of Bill 20. Are we going to be in line with national and international standards, and if so, will we be able to attract the investment in both upstream and downstream oil and gas development? We do have to recognize the need to be globally competitive, the need to not put our jurisdiction at risk in the ability to compete in the global trading that we are in at this time. We need to be able to have those discussions in an open and transparent way in committee and to be sure that we are not only going down a route that allows us to address greenhouse gas emissions and that type of thing but that we are also addressing the impacts of the taxation that's being proposed and how that possibly will impact our competitiveness, especially if it's not being embraced throughout the world, where our competitors are also producing.

Are we going to be in line with those national and international standards? I would suggest that going to committee will allow us to get the experts in to answer these questions for us, to help us develop legislation so that we'll be sure that we are able to hold the standards on both sides of the equation, that we continue to be competitive and that we continue to address greenhouse gas emissions globally.

There are parts of Bill 20 that play into Wildrose's policy to examine ways to move electricity generation closer to the end user so as not only to improve efficiency and reduce total demand but also to promote and encourage microgeneration of electricity by all parties. This would include industry, microgeneration within industry, individuals that might see an opportunity to have this to help support their electrical needs but then also to sell back into the electrical grid if that can be made possible, and to possibly – I have a long history of involvement in different co-operative movements. Co-ops are a very effective way as a community to come together and to recognize the need for some of this and to embrace these opportunities and to be able to recognize that it's an opportunity that can benefit a whole community.

I think that by referring this to committee, we allow that we can examine some of these Wildrose policies also and see where they can help achieve good results through Bill 20. For these reasons and many others I will be supporting this referral motion and would like to see more committee work being done, where we can, as the Member for Calgary-Hays stated, depoliticize many of these decisions going forward and come to an environment where we can feel that there's been good, wholesome discussion and input from all sides of the House before the legislation comes to this floor and that we have a good understanding of it before we see it come to us as a bill 95 pages long, and we have a week to digest it.

I guess there are a lot of dynamics within the bill with regard to how it affects the day-to-day administration of this taxation and how we do the nitty-gritty, I'm going to say, of the bill. Can we do it in a way that is going to benefit all Albertans? Are we going to be able to benefit the competitive side of individuals in industry as well as do our part to address the greenhouse gas emissions globally?

This is a discussion that needs to be done around the table and as we develop legislation, not after legislation has been developed. I think that all of Alberta is best suited and best served when we are able to do that in a very transparent and open manner in committee, relying on experts and relying on witnesses. Stakeholders will be affected and will have consequences that they will need to try and address in their day-to-day lives.

Thank you for that, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise. I'd like to thank the hon. member for his support of this motion to refer to committee. I know, because he's a good colleague of mine, the importance and the value that the member puts on the feedback of his constituents.

I also appreciate a lot of the work in terms of outreach that the government did prior to writing the bill. They went out and spoke to a lot of Albertans. But there is a significant difference between speaking to Albertans to get their feedback before a piece of legislation is written and then going back out to Albertans and asking: "Is this a reflection? Is this what you were looking for when we came and asked for your feedback? Did we get it right?" The actual feedback from constituents on what is before the Assembly is of critical importance, and I know that the hon. member values that input from his constituents.

This particular piece of legislation, as he mentioned, is some 95 pages, around 100 pages, comes with a royal recommendation, and it was introduced exactly one week ago, on Tuesday, the 24th of May. The government required debate on the bill the day after, so on the 25th and the 26th the bill was debated. Then on the 27th, being Friday, many of us were back in our constituencies. Again, I can only imagine that the hon. member was in his constituency over the weekend.

I just wonder if he would like to provide some comment on whether that's really a sufficient amount of time to discuss a piece of legislation that has major, major, major ramifications for the future of our province in terms of the direct and indirect costs both to families and industry. I wonder if he might provide some comment on whether or not that seems to be a reasonable amount of time or whether sending this bill to committee would then extend that time and allow his constituents to have feedback not only directly to the committee but also directly to him on some of the discussion and debate that might take place at committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you. I want to thank the member for the questions and the opportunity to reflect a little bit on the constituents that have approached me, some of the constituents. They're very involved in the agriculture industry. I myself am a farmer. Many of my neighbours have approached me and others throughout my constituency have approached me with concerns about how the carbon tax is going to affect the inputs that they are faced with in their businesses and how that's going to affect the food production costs in Alberta, whether that be, you know, in the livestock industry, the grain industry, the greenhouse industry.

All farmers, all agriculture rely on energy to actually get their products produced. We have a marked fuel exemption. This is diesel fuel. Gasoline is a very small part of the costs of energy within the agricultural community compared to some of the other inputs that we're going to see rise significantly, I believe, based on this carbon tax. One of the biggest costs in the manufacturing of nitrogen fertilizer is natural gas. When we see that we have natural gas pricing at \$2 a gigajoule and that we're going to bring that up by another \$1, \$1.50, this will have a significant impact on the costs of that nitrogen fertilizer, the production of that nitrogen fertilizer. The fertilizer industry, as they produce this, is also trying to export it onto the world market.

10:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow on the amendment.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to support the motion on the floor, but before I go any further, I want to be really clear with the House, with Albertans that I support action on climate change, significant action on climate change. I believe there's absolutely no question that it is a fact that climate change is real; it is a fact that it is human caused, human exacerbated. I support and I'm on the record as supporting a carbon tax. I'm not sure, however, that I can support this carbon tax. There are far too many questions.

You know, it is interesting. There are two sides of this discussion. We've before us a bill that's 95 pages long, that, as the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills mentioned, was introduced in this House barely a week ago, but ironically there's actually very little detail in this bill. There's very little information that I feel we don't already know or details we didn't already have laid out in the budget of April 14. We knew there was going to be an energy efficiency agency. We knew there were going to be rebates. We knew there was going to be a carbon tax. We knew what level it was going to be introduced at. We knew when it was going to be introduced and how it was going to be phased in. We knew what was going to be happening with the Climate Change and Emissions Management Corporation. We knew there would be some sort of energy efficiency plan.

But there are no details in this bill, ironically enough. What this bill really does is it gives some legal weight to all of the things we knew were already happening, but there are some very significant gaps in this bill. I'm going to talk through many of those, and I'm going to talk through many of the questions that I have, that my constituents have asked me, that various stakeholders have put out as public feedback. These are questions, I think, that we need to study in more detail in committee or that, at the very least, this government needs to answer in great detail before I can get to a point of feeling like I can support this bill, because the gaps are significant. We're essentially in many ways being asked to sign a blank cheque here, and I'm very uncomfortable with that.

I want to reiterate that the Alberta Party caucus and the Alberta Party have a strong belief that we must address climate change. We are the only party in the Assembly on the opposition side to have proposed our own climate change plan. It's a comprehensive, thorough plan. You can find it on our website. I happen to have several copies here if anyone on either the opposition or the government side... [interjection] I'll ensure that the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays is given a copy. I have many here and am happy to hand them out to anyone.

In all seriousness, we do take this issue very seriously. I believe that addressing climate change is not only a moral imperative for us in the province but, in fact, if done right, is a significant economic opportunity because if there's anything that Alberta does very well, it's innovate. We have remarkable engineers, we have remarkable technical people, we have remarkable finance people, and we have an entrepreneurial culture. All of those things should allow us in this province to prosper greatly by helping the world address climate change and, in so doing, to continue to support our traditional industry in oil and gas. That's the vision. That's what possible from action on climate change, but we need to have the right mechanisms to do that.

There might be some of the right mechanisms in this bill. I don't know because all of the detail is going to be ironed out in regulation. So I have questions. What are the hard targets for carbon emissions? There's been some talk of peaking at a certain point and then starting to reduce over time. What happens if we find that we're not on track with those targets? What happens if we find that we're under those targets? Do we say: well, that's okay; we can approve more projects and increase our emissions? Do we take that as an

opportunity? What about the fact that we've had an economic downturn? How does that factor into our carbon calculations? And what's our path to get there? What specifically is going to happen along the way to ensure that we actually reduce those carbon emissions?

What is the dollar value of the new companies and the new jobs that are purportedly going to be created as part of this climate plan? There's a lot of talk, a lot of hand-waving from the government: we're going to create jobs; this is opportunity. How many jobs? What specific areas are those jobs going to be in? What skills are the people who take those jobs going to require? How are we going to ensure that Albertans have the skills to occupy those jobs and that we're not simply importing people from somewhere else? Are those jobs going to be high-paying jobs? Are they going to be low-paying jobs? Are they going to be construction jobs? Are they going to be operational jobs? Are they going to be office jobs? What are they? I've absolutely no idea. There's a vague, general sense that somehow this is going to create jobs, and I don't doubt that action on climate change can create economic opportunity. I need to know: what are those details?

How are we going to pivot our action on climate change and environmental stewardship into market access for pipelines, market access for Alberta's products via pipeline to tidewater? There's talk that this government wants to do that, and that's a great idea. I absolutely and enthusiastically support that. How do we know that this plan has a straight line towards ensuring that we get pipelines built, and what happens if we don't?

You know, we have to do our part in this province. In fact, I'm enthusiastic about the opportunity that action on climate change brings, and I like the idea that there's mention of trade-exposed industries in the Leach report and that this government seems aware that that is a risk. We have to be very careful not to be too far ahead of the rest of the country or the rest of the world. We have to be careful that we don't just displace emissions from Alberta to other jurisdictions, therefore not addressing climate change and having an adverse impact on our provincial economy.

The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce has contemplated this issue, and I will quote from a paper they released on April 5, 2016, entitled *Reducing the Burden of the Carbon Tax on Small and Medium-sized Businesses*. They say:

If the carbon tax makes Alberta-based businesses un-competitive, those businesses will either lose customers to companies that aren't covered by a carbon tax, or they will relocate to another province or country where there is no carbon tax. This is commonly known as "carbon leakage", and does nothing to help the global fight against climate change.

Now, they propose a solution to this. They propose to provide relief to small and medium enterprises while still incentivizing a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions using an output-based rebate system. That's an interesting idea. Perhaps the mechanism they suggest would be to use an average carbon tax for a particular process. Those companies whose processes would generate a higher level of carbon tax pay over and above the average rate. Those whose processes generate a lower level of carbon tax actually get a rebate. They actually make money from the carbon tax. Now, there are some pros and some cons. There are some consequences of this, both intended and unintended. This is precisely the sort of thing that we can discuss in committee. We can ask stakeholders to come in, we can ask for their input, and we can decide whether or not this actually makes some sense.

They also talk about revenue neutrality. That's something that in the Alberta Party's climate change plan, called *Alberta's Contribution*, we talk extensively about, the fact that although we support a carbon tax, we believe that it must be revenue neutral,

truly revenue neutral. I've never heard the term "revenue recycling" before. That's new. By that definition, revenue recycling would mean that every dollar that's collected via income tax is, quote, unquote, recycled into the economy and is not, in fact, government revenue, that income tax is revenue neutral.

Well, that's silly. Of course, it's not. It's a source of revenue to the government in the same sense that a carbon tax that collects more than it spends is not revenue neutral. That's exactly what this is. So I think it's important that this government be honest with Albertans about what this is. If you feel that you need to collect revenue for certain purposes, be it innovation, be it rebates to Albertans, that's fine. Just be honest with Albertans that that's exactly what you're doing and that's exactly what this is.

The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce talks about revenue neutrality, seeing every dollar collected from small and medium enterprises go back to small and medium enterprises in that industry. They talk about creating carrots and sticks for business.

The most efficient producers would receive more in rebates than they paid in carbon tax, seeing a net benefit . . . The least efficient producers would receive less in rebates than they pay into the tax, realizing a net loss. This creates a strong incentive to produce their goods more efficiently.

Again, there are some consequences of that, I'm sure, both intended and perhaps unintended, but that's absolutely worthy of discussion and further consideration.

#### 11:00

Really, what this government is saying is: "Through Bill 20 we're going to do a bunch of stuff through regulation in these general areas. Trust me. Trust me. It's going to be fine. Wait until you see the regulations. It will be wonderful." I am not comfortable, Madam Speaker, in signing a blank cheque for any government, this government or any other. That's what this Assembly is for. It is for us to consider these ideas.

I want to talk more about revenue neutrality and what it actually means. Kenneth McKenzie, at the University of Calgary School of Public Policy, in April 2016 talked about making the Alberta carbon levy revenue neutral, the basic idea of a price on carbon emissions, which at least partly reflects the social cost of emissions. What I like about a carbon tax – call it a tax or call it a levy, but let's not get stuck on the language – is that we are putting a price on something we don't want. We don't want carbon emissions; therefore, we're going to price that externality. That means that people and businesses will choose to emit less, but it also creates a frame for innovation. If we do that properly, Alberta can lead that innovation, create companies and technologies that we can sell to the rest of the world, therefore diversifying our economy and creating economic activity in Alberta. That's the principle of a carbon tax.

I like that idea in general terms if, in fact, it is revenue neutral. If it is simply a tax grab from the government, then we don't achieve that objective. What we've done is that we've created another revenue line item for the government.

The price on carbon emissions reflecting that social cost in emissions incents firms and individuals to change their behaviour, just like I said, moving towards less-carbon-intensive activities. That's the first view, and that's the view that I'm certainly very supportive of.

[The Speaker in the chair]

There's a second view of a carbon tax, which is that a carbon tax is a broad revenue generation tool just like I said. Professor McKenzie said that this

is not a very good, or efficient, way of generating revenue . . . [and that] the basic idea is that the carbon tax is applied to a [far]

narrower base than broader-based taxes. Broad based taxes generally impose lower costs on the economy than narrow based taxes [like carbon tax]. Moreover, and I think as important if not more, carbon taxes interact with other taxes in the economy, exacerbating the economic costs associated with those taxes. Those taxes can be quite high, and this is the important and essential point of why revenue neutrality is so, so important. The total cost to the economy of raising an additional \$1 in revenue through the corporate income tax ... is \$3.79. Raising an additional dollar through personal income tax is \$1.71. Professor McKenzie says:

These taxes therefore impose higher costs on the economy than they raise in revenue. Swapping revenue from the carbon levy for these taxes in a revenue neutral [way] would lower these costs, generating a substantial return to the provincial economy relative to other uses.

Now, that's a lot of economics. The bottom line is that corporate income tax is bad. It costs money. If you take the carbon levy, the carbon tax, and use that to offset personal and corporate income tax, that means to reduce personal and corporate income tax.

The other thing that does is that it creates a frame for investment because now Alberta is an even more attractive place to invest. Investors realize that they will pay fewer taxes and therefore realize greater return, therefore invest more money, therefore create more jobs, therefore create more economic activity. That's a good thing. Albertans benefit from their honest effort in the jobs that they take. They receive and get to keep more of their money, and less of it is taxed away, but there's no net revenue loss to the provincial government. That's a good thing.

But that's not what this government has done. Instead, you've chosen to rebate two-thirds. Two-thirds of Albertans, based purely on income, will receive a rebate. It also reduces their incentive to reduce their carbon footprint. That seems to be a bit of an odd trade-off there. If the idea behind a carbon tax is that it costs too much and therefore you make alternative choices, yet on the other hand you're getting a rebate and it therefore doesn't cost you more, will you still make those choices? Now, my economist friends will tell me that those are separate things in theory, and I do understand that. But I can't help but think that if at the end of the day your bank account is no different and you still have not reduced your carbon footprint, have we actually achieved the objective that we set out to achieve?

I have many more questions. I'm going to just keep going here until my time runs out. What is the total cost and benefit? That's not just the total cost but the benefit. I think this government should share with us detailed economic models of not just the cost but the benefits.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Drumheller-Stettler under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My comments are related to the Member for Calgary-Elbow, who makes some very good points. This past winter I spoke at a rural convention for farmers, and what they wanted me to speak to them about was due diligence. The title was due diligence in legislation. When I sat down to make my comments or think about what I was going to present, it struck me that maybe I could change the whole tone or the whole implication of my presentation by changing one word, so from due diligence "in" legislation to due diligence "for" legislation. Just one word, two to three letters, changes the whole implication.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow talked about revenue-neutral tax and also unintended consequences. I was wondering if he could expound as to what he feels are some of the potential unintended consequences of simple, small nuances or words that he has read in this legislation in that regard. It's very important because in this Chamber the actions that we take do have consequences, whether or not they're unintended. So I was wondering if he could expound on some of his perceptions regarding the revenue-neutral tax, as he describes it, and also the potential for unintended consequences.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Member. Well, I'll try my best to answer that question. I actually think that you've hit on an essential point as to why I think it's important that we go to committee. I think we do need to have some more thought about exactly what the consequences of this legislation will be: intended, unintended, positive, and negative. You know, one of the biggest risks here, of course, is that any time we're adding costs either to a household or to a business, the point of doing that is to change behaviour. Well, sorry. Let me flip that around. Perhaps the point of doing that may be to raise revenue, or it may be to reduce carbon emissions. Those are, on the face of it, what we're trying to do.

The unintended consequences may be people or businesses saying: "Well, I'm not going to be in this jurisdiction anymore. I'm going to file my taxes elsewhere." So now you have tax leakage, which is a risk of raising the tax rate. You may have heard of the Laffer curve, which says that if you have a zero per cent tax rate, you're going to collect zero dollars, and if you have a 100 per cent tax rate, you're going to collect zero dollars because there will be no economic activity. Then the bell curve is in the middle and everywhere in between. So on the face of it, maybe, we are trying to reduce carbon emissions: (a) the government is trying to do that, and (b) they're trying to generate some revenue, but (c) the consequence may be that businesses and Albertans choose to operate somewhere else.

Now, the flip side of that is that the outcome may actually be desirable. Alberta never ceases to amaze me in our ability to innovate and adapt. So it is very clear that we should not do nothing. This is absolutely in no way a do-nothing argument. But I believe it's important that this government not see this as an opportunity to grab revenue to put into infrastructure projects that they ought to be putting money into anyway, specifically transit projects, as one example, or things like climate change adaptation type projects, firebreaks, flood mitigation. Those are things the government ought to do. If all you're doing is finding a rather sneaky source of revenue, being a carbon tax, to offset or displace what should be funded as a fundamental core government service, then it's just another tax, and you're not actually achieving what you're trying to achieve.

I do think there's some opportunity here and, in fact, a need to do something. I'm not convinced, but I remain open to being convinced, and I would love to hear from the government side. I am willing to be convinced. I would like to know. Perhaps at second reading or another opportunity – I have many questions here which I will read into the record. I'm happy to talk with any members offline as well about my specific questions.

I encourage everyone to read Alberta's Contribution: The Alberta Party Climate Change Plan because there's some very interesting information in there. Some of it is absolutely consistent with what this government is trying to do; some of it is not. I come back to that essential point that any carbon tax in Alberta must be revenue neutral, and it must be very clearly delineated to Albertans how that is achieved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.



11:10

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other individuals who would like to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll pick up my piece of paper first. I am pleased to rise today to address the referral amendment to Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I believe that we need to take some time to consider the parts of this bill. As previous members have stated, it's 95 pages long, there's a great deal in it, and we need to perhaps take the time to pick this apart a little bit, to digest it. Maybe one of the best ways of doing that is to send it to committee, where that committee can do its job, which is to reconsider the parts of this bill and perhaps suggest and make some revisions to parts of this bill that will make it better.

As you go in life, sometimes if you want to understand things, using analogies is good. I would almost take Bill 20 and use an analogy that it's played out in three scenes. In this thing we call life, as actors in this play called life, we have in this bill three scenes. Perhaps we could call this play or the company that we're a part of the theatre of the absurd. This play that we're looking at is dealing with some issues that make you scratch your head and wonder if you really understand what's going on with this bill.

We understand that this bill in the first scene rolls out and tries to enact a carbon tax. Many have spoken eloquently in this House about the impact that this carbon tax will have on the lives of Albertans and on the tax-paying citizens and the businesses of this province. This first scene sets out who will receive consumer rebates and who will not, who will be the winners and who will be the losers in this NDP carbon tax roulette that we see happening in this play, in this scene. I would suggest that perhaps a legislative committee would do a good job of reviewing who those winners and who those losers should be, if any.

You know, one of the concerns that I think we really should have – I believe it's part 1, section 6 – is with the locomotive carbon levy, or tax. This tax, by any other name, is going to be applied to locomotive diesel. I don't think it takes many of us very long to realize that the locomotives and the rail industry in this province are essential for the transportation of all goods from food to parts to technology of all sorts. We depend on our rail to deliver large amounts of goods cheaply to consumers. How can you expect to place a carbon tax on locomotive diesel without, Mr. Speaker, seeing everything that we purchase go up in price? I would suggest that perhaps a committee could review the wisdom of just that one example of a carbon tax that we find in this piece of legislation.

In this play of life that we are established in, there's a second scene. In this second scene of this Bill 20 we see that it's called the Energy Efficiency Alberta Act and that it's going to create this agency. This agency has great intentions. You know, as we begin to build the tension in our play, as we begin to look at the conflicts that are in this scene, we see that this agency is almost like the character that wears the white hat and is going to come to the rescue. It's there to raise awareness regarding energy use. It's going to look at the environmental consequences of the climate leadership plan and the economy in this province. It's there to design and deliver programs related to energy efficiency, conservation, develop microgeneration and small-scale energy use. It's there to promote energy efficiency. These are all, in many ways, very good things.

This corporation is going to be able, like so many of the good guys in the films that we watch, to do this with very few resources. They'll MacGyver it to be able to come up with the final great solution. Well, I look forward to seeing how this corporation with a \$170 million budget in annual loans and grants will be able to

support the energy efficiencies and the microgeneration and the conservation and the ability to overcome the incredible costs that the first scene in our play has created through its carbon tax. I would look forward to seeing how this agency will have the ability to find the billions of dollars in efficiencies and in savings that will supposedly make this carbon tax revenue neutral or allow businesses not to be negatively affected or consumers not to be negatively affected by the costs of these taxes that they are placing on all Albertans.

I would suggest that it might be worthy of sending this bill to committee to research and to consult and to create a clear picture of how this agency is going to move forward. Just how is it going to be able to find the energy efficiencies and the cost savings that these characters in our play are going to need to be able to find if they are indeed going to be the good guys?

Scene 3 rounds out this amateur production by altering the mandate of the Climate Change and Emissions Management Corporation from using industry-accepted, rigorous standards of research and development to replacing that with feel-good education initiatives and outreach initiatives. We are just a little concerned. Perhaps a committee would be capable of laying some of those concerns aside.

To say that Albertans are concerned about this carbon bill is an understatement. I've heard many people refer to this as the most ill-conceived bill that this government has yet put before the House. It follows, in their minds, the same pattern of a lack of consultation with Albertans. There's been a lack of time for proper debate in this House, and it justifies Albertans' concerns that this government is – how do we say it? – not sticking to the script that Albertans would like to see followed and not even sticking to the script that this government campaigned on.

I spoke earlier to this House about the problem, I believe, from the get-go that this government has with this bill. Because it did not campaign on it, it lacks the legitimacy. It does not lack the power. It has a majority. It has the power to pass this bill, but does it really have the legitimacy to take something as important as this bill and bring it before this House when it hasn't campaigned on it?

11:20

We've heard that people are concerned. It would be my suggestion to this Legislature that if there is a concern with legitimacy – and I believe that there is – by sending this to committee, by bringing Albertans to talk to this bill to provide consultation and review of the 95 pages of the portions of this bill, this committee would actually allow the government to be able to come back to this House and say: "You know what? We've talked to Albertans now, we've brought them into this committee, we've exhaustively looked at the parts of this bill, and now we can legitimately have the right to be able to introduce this to the House with the expectation that Albertans have had a say."

You know, the minister has proclaimed in question period time and again that the economy-destroying taxes that are outlined in scene 1 will be offset by the efficiencies, the energy efficiencies, the green efficiencies, that will be found and that will be fostered by the new agency in scene 2, that the seniors and the hospitals and the health care system and the schools and the school boards, the students won't be negatively affected by the increased costs that will inevitably be placed on them by this bill, that they will be able to find efficiencies that will offset those burdens. I've listened to the Minister of Education; I've listened to the minister of environment. Both with great sincerity tell me that the expenses for heating will be offset by the efficiencies that will be built into schools.

I'd like to see the studies. I believe a committee would be the appropriate place to place those studies, allow the members of this Legislative Assembly to review that information. I could be wrong. I don't want my wife to hear that, but I could be wrong. Maybe there are those kinds of efficiencies out there, but the point is that this government has not done its job in showing us that there are or that there is a reasonable chance of there being those kinds of efficiencies.

I have a very serious concern. I'm very skeptical, I guess I should say, that \$170 million in annual grants and subsidies is going to be able to offset the billions of dollars of increased costs that these taxes will bring to hospitals and schools boards and seniors and to all Albertans as they struggle through an economy that is stretching all of us. I think that until you can show me differently, this is simply a monumental tax grab, a PST by any other name, that is not revenue neutral but is designed to try to manipulate businesses and Albertans into a view that many of them would not support.

You know, stage makeup can only go so far, Mr. Speaker. It can only do so much. Dye can only take this old, grey beard and make it black for so long, can only cover up the bald spots that are coming on the top of my head.

**Mr. Eggen:** You can get a hat.

**Mr. Smith:** You can get a hat. You know, you can only do so much to make this persona look any better than it already does. You know, you've got what you've got, and you've got what God gives you, okay?

Stage makeup can only go so far in covering up the basic flaws that we all have. In this bill so much bafflelegab can only go so far to try to cover up the basic flaws and the miscalculations and the outrageous assumptions that undermine this bill. I think as a Legislature we await further details on the forecast costs of this agency.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a), the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I enjoyed that speech, and I have to say that I'm encouraged to see that the member is concerned about where Alberta is going and that we are actually seeing that the government is bringing forward taxes that are not revenue neutral and that these taxes are going to be weighing down our entire public service. Now, the right answer would be to hear from that public service, from the school boards. I would like to hear the member's thoughts on bringing this to committee and bringing forward a collection of school boards to discuss how this will impact them. Their input would be important in this.

Thank you.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you to the member for his question. I was half expecting a question that would ask me how I can do such a good job of making this visage a little bit more presentable to the public, but I would be glad to address the member's question with regard to the impact of these taxes on schools, school boards, all of Albertans for that matter. There is absolutely no doubt that this carbon tax is going to be making absolutely everything that we purchase across this province by all strata of the population more expensive.

The goal may be a laudable goal, and I don't argue the goal at all, to reduce, to cut 20 megatonnes of emissions by 2020 and 50 megatonnes of emissions by 2030, a laudable goal. I don't argue that at all. I support it. Most Albertans, I think, are asking: but is this the plan that will do that and do that efficiently and effectively

in a way that doesn't hurt them so badly that they can't afford this new tax even though the goal is laudable?

You know, beginning in 2017, Albertans will pay an additional 4.5 cents per litre of gasoline, and on top of that there'll be another 2.5 cents per litre tax in 2018. Now, I realize that not everybody is where my family is at right now, but I've got three university-aged kids: one that can't afford to have a car and uses public transportation to get around, one that hasn't been able to afford to buy a car and has to depend on friends, and a third that has a rundown, old beater that he's not going to know how he's going to put the gas in the tank when these new taxes come to play. It's maybe not a serious problem for the members that sit here, where we get paid really well. We'll all be able to afford to put gas in. As a matter of fact, we can even use a government credit card to put that gas in the tanks. But for a kid like my son: how is he going to be able to afford that?

Similarly, natural gas will increase by a dollar per gigajoule and by another 51 cents per gigajoule the year after that. Diesel is going to increase 5 cents per litre in January and then 8 cents per litre the following year. How is this going to impact businesses? That's what a committee could do. It could start to visit and revisit the consequences that these taxes are going to have to this economy.

**11:30**

One of the members stood up and talked about the bureaucracy of having to collect all these taxes, that the costs for that are nowhere outlined in this bill. Nowhere do we know what the consequences to the size of government are going to be or the increased taxes that we're going to have to pay in order to pay for those bureaucrats. Perhaps a committee could look into that concern and come back to us.

You know, one of the concerns that I have . . . [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other individuals wishing to speak to amendment REF1? The Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the referral motion. You know, the other day I was listening with interest to the Minister of Environment and Parks when she commented when she introduced Bill 20 for second reading. I found the comments fascinating, particularly her explanation of how the carbon tax, or the levy, would be imposed. I think I'll quote it. "As high in the fuel distribution or supply chain as is administratively feasible." Okay. She went on to explain that "a refinery will remit the levy to [the] government on fuel sales and then recover the levy from retail gas stations, who recover it from consumers."

That's interesting, Mr. Speaker. I find it interesting because this government has been very, very skittish about using the nomenclature that gives the slightest impression that the Climate Leadership Implementation Act introduces a new tax on Albertan families. For some reason or another, I fathom – and it must be at least something to do with the fact that all the folks they hired from out of the province have been advising the members opposite: don't call it a tax – instead, they continue to refer to it as a carbon levy. Okay. Well, I took the liberty of looking up the word "levy" in the dictionary. Lo and behold, what it says is that, quote: a levy is the imposing or collecting of a tax by authority or force or the conscription of troops. End of quote. That was interesting. While I've read the bill front to back at least twice, I can't find a single reference to the conscription of any troops. So I think I'm safe in

assuming that the government is using the term “levy” to refer to, and I quote: imposing or collecting of a tax. End quote.

Now, I don’t think the members opposite believe that Albertans are dim witted. I certainly don’t believe that, and I know that my Official Opposition colleagues don’t believe that. As I said, I don’t think the members opposite believe that either, so let’s stop trying to be cute, and let’s call it what it is. It’s a tax. Plain and simple.

Those following along at home can probably see why I found it so interesting that the minister was so open – or should I say cavalier? – when discussing how the carbon tax would be applied and who would ultimately bear the responsibility when it comes to paying this new tax. As I mentioned earlier, the minister during her introduction of the bill said, “The end result is that the levy will be introduced in the price paid by consumers.” For whatever reason, the members opposite refuse to call it a tax. I have no issue admitting, proudly, I might add, that it’ll be paid for by consumers through higher prices for everything they consume.

“Consumers.” That’s an interesting word chosen by the minister. The dictionary defines it as, quote: a person or thing that uses a commodity or service. End of quote. I think it is natural for us to initially see consumers solely as individuals within the economy making purchases and being impacted by the increase in prices. We forget that “consumers” can also refer to an organization such as a restaurant, a convenience store, or even a homeless shelter or a charity. Unfortunately, the proposed carbon tax doesn’t differentiate between either.

When it comes to individual consumers and the yearly cost of their fuel and their vehicles, according to Transport Canada the average Albertan pays \$1,629 per year for gasoline. With the carbon tax the average Albertan can expect to pay \$1,704 in 2017 and \$1,741 in 2018.

According to Alberta Energy the average Alberta household uses 120 gigajoules of natural gas every year. The average Alberta household can expect to see their yearly natural gas increase \$121 by 2017 and \$182 by 2018.

The cost of driving the kids to hockey practice, Girl Guides, karate, or any other lessons has gotten more expensive because of this government’s carbon tax. The cost of heating your home has gotten more expensive because of this government’s carbon tax.

Now, when you consider the organizational consumers, the cost of heating a restaurant, a convenience store, shelters, or anything else is going to increase substantially. In the case of a convenience store or restaurant they have some level of choice in how they want to pay for their increased heating. They can pass the cost on to their consumers, or they can cut their services. Maybe they can cut their hours of operation, or they can lay off staff. When it comes to the homeless shelter, they don’t have much choice. They don’t have a paying customer, and at the end of the line they provide a free service. Their only option in this case is to cut services. Either they lay off staff or they reduce the number of beds or whatever the case may be.

At the end of the day, this government is increasing the cost of everything for everyone. The minister made that point crystal clear. This carbon tax is set to increase the cost of heating and powering our children’s schools. As a consumer of energy what are the schools going to do in order to offset these costs? The government talks about its commitment to cutting school fees out of one side of their mouth while introducing a new carbon tax on schools that will ultimately result in increased school fees for parents.

This government assures Albertans that as long as they make less than \$47,500 per year, they’ll get a rebate to offset the increase in their costs due to the carbon tax. What the government fails to mention is that the credits are offset to direct costs of the carbon tax, that being the increase in natural gas and gasoline taxes. They

fail to include the indirect costs, where the majority of consumers will see most of their costs increase. This bill is ill conceived and further exacerbates the hit that Albertans are facing in a slowed economy.

Sending this bill back to committee can have a lot of value. What I mean by that is that you can bring in levels of expertise to go over the details and the specifics. None of this has been quantified or qualified. In the private sector if you want people to invest in you, you have to ask for people to invest in you and you have to be able to provide specific returns on their investment. Nowhere have I seen any cost-benefit analysis done on this bill.

Nowhere is there any example of any success in any other jurisdiction in Canada nor in North America, where this bill is going to take effect. They talk about the carbon footprint being reduced by 20 to 30 megatonnes, in reality no carbon-neutral tax but 20 to 30 megatonnes in three to five years in Alberta. Yet in British Columbia, where this revenue-neutral tax has been implemented, they’ve only reduced their carbon footprint by two to three megatonnes. What makes this bill so special? Ten times the reduction in carbon footprint: how do you qualify that? Where are the specifics?

If we send this bill back to committee, it gives us an opportunity to bring in levels of expertise. We can look over the specifics and look at a true cost-benefit analysis for all Albertans. What’s in it for them if they invest in this? What’s in it for them? They don’t know what the true cost is to taxpayers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any questions for the Member for Highwood under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to ask the member what his views are with regard to, possibly, the increased cost to our food production in Alberta and how that might impact our ability to compete globally, if the cost benefit will be able to be recouped by these food producers.

I know I talked earlier with regard to nitrogen fertilizers and natural gas being the largest component of producing nitrogen fertilizer. When we see that we’re going to add a dollar per gigajoule to natural gas on January 1, 2017, and then \$1.50 in 2018, these are very large increases when we consider that the price of natural gas today is around \$2 a gigajoule.

We’re also going to see that where we use natural gas to dry our crops, whether that’s the forage industry – I have an alfalfa plant in my constituency. They’re very concerned about this. They harvest the alfalfa and put it through large dryers in order to be able to make a product that they can export and sell to the Asian market primarily. This is going to have a serious impact on their operations, possibly serious enough that it could shut that plant down. I use natural gas for drying my crops through grain drying, and this extra tax is going to affect the ability to have my products put into storage in a way that they will continue to stay and be able to store them until such time that they’re being sold.

**11:40**

The concern is that we are adding costs into food production that is sold not only within Alberta. We have to compete throughout the world. We have greenhouses that use a lot of natural gas, and we have greenhouses that are shutting down based on the fact that they are being taxed higher on their input costs. If the member could reflect a little bit on when he talks about net return, what’s in it for those greenhouses, for those agricultural producers.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. member.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. What's interesting is that he mentions greenhouses. In my own constituency once this carbon tax comes into effect, several greenhouses are now considering shutting down their facilities and moving outside the province. It's sad to see that happen. These are great constituents and hard-working individuals. They've hired several people, and now those individuals potentially could be out of work.

Moreover, several transportation industries are located in my constituency as well. What I've noticed in talking to several of the executives there is that they realize the cost of diesel tax for them is going to be horrendous, and they're planning on laying off more people now as a result of this. It's just not something that I think anybody has thought out.

When I talk about return on investment, what I mean is that, you know, in a cost-benefit analysis if you go out into the investment community and you request capital for any sort of expansion, as I've done in my past business, they expect you to come up with physical assets to offset that debt load but, moreover, a forecast of what the true return on investment is. Fortunately, I had a chance to take one of my companies public at one time, and when I did, I had to go through a lot of scrutiny regarding the physical assets in the corporation, projected sales, long-term contracts, and the development of my expansion strategy into the U.S. market.

When I received my capital and took out my first IPO, it was quite a challenge because at that time another company called Bre-X was on the market, and Bre-X was offering a 25 per cent return on investment based on some spectacular gold investment in the Philippines. My return on investment was around 6 to 8 per cent, very conservatively, of course, and we developed that strategy and we moved forward. We had several investors say: we're not going to invest with you; we're going to invest with Bre-X because it's such a wonderful opportunity. And I said: well, consider the source of the information. They had a science-based, fact-based organization that said that there was so much . . . [The time limit for questions and comments expired] I apologize.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who wish to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I'm advised, hon. member, that you've already spoken.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment REF1?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:44 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	McIver	Smith
Cyr	Orr	Strankman
Drysdale	Panda	van Dijken
Hanson	Schneider	

**12:00**

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Babcock	Gray	Payne
Bilous	Hinkley	Renaud
Carlier	Hoffman	Rosendahl
Carson	Kleinsteinuber	Sabir
Ceci	Littlewood	Schmidt
Coolahan	Loyola	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Shepherd
Dach	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Turner
Eggen	McKittrick	Westhead
Feehan	McLean	Woollard
Fitzpatrick	Miller	

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 38
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[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I will move that we call it 12 o'clock and adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 12:02 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 31, 2016

Day 36

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
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 Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
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 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
 Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
 Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
 Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
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 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
 Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
 Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
 Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
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 Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
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 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
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 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKittrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

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Carson	Jansen
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Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
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Gotfried	

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Anderson, W.	Nielsen
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Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

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Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
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Orr	

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Kleinstauber	

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Fildebrandt	Piquette
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Babcock	MacIntyre
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Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 31, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. It's a beautiful, sunny day out there. I know we would all prefer to be out there in the sun, but since the sun is out there, I'm sure that all of you will help make this a sunny place together.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, I'm thrilled to have visitors from my amazing, wonderful, fabulous constituency of Peace River. Today I have a school group from Good Shepherd school. There are 37 in all, led by – I'm going to say the names, and I'll ask them all to stand – teacher Mr. Terry Hogan and parent helpers Mrs. Christine Bowman, Mrs. Tamara Belzile, Mr. Jason Penner, Mr. John Kuran, and Mrs. Courtney Brown. Would the class please all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 75 grade 6 students from Monterey Park school in Calgary-Greenway. They are joined by their teachers, Mrs. Heather Kis, Mr. David Ellen, Mrs. Laura Tennesco, and Miss Rita Kohli, and parent volunteers. These teachers and parent volunteers do great and amazing work at the elementary school. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?  
Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour for me today to be able to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the grandparents of two of our current pages, Azan and Samir Esmail. Joining us today in the Speaker's gallery are Khatoon and Haider Esmail and Shelly and Firoz Charania as well as our pages' mother, Yasmina Esmail. All of them came to Canada as refugees from Uganda in 1972. Khatoon and Haider moved to Edmonton from Winnipeg in 1994 and currently reside in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. Shelly and Firoz have lived in Edmonton-Castle Downs since their arrival in Edmonton in 1977. They are here today to observe Azan and Samir in their roles as pages in the Assembly. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. As a grandparent I can feel the pride that you feel for these children.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly two very important teams from my department as well as one of my very valued stakeholders. They are the MGA review team, the legislative projects team as well as the president of AAMD and C. Since 2013

the MGA review team has worked tirelessly to consult with Albertans on the Municipal Government Act. They conducted numerous consultation sessions across the province and gathered feedback from approximately 1,500 people at 77 community meetings. The legislative projects team worked with the incredibly dedicated group at the Legislative Counsel office to turn the policies we talked about during the MGA review into the act that will be introduced today. They've worked tremendously hard to develop this legislation and made sacrifices along the way to meet goals and timelines.

Mr. Speaker, I've been continuously impressed by the work that these two groups along with the entire Municipal Affairs staff have done on the MGA. As well, I want to thank Al Kemmere from the AAMD and C for all his hard work on the MGA review. We wouldn't be moving forward today without the valued contributions of both the AAMD and C as well as AUMA, who couldn't be here today. I would ask that Al along with Karen Pottruff, Jeremy Schiff, Katie Nault, Linda Lewis, Angela Markel, if she managed to make it; Laura Klassen Bullock; Abdel Ahmed; Ida Dei; Men Yi Leong; Alex Nnamonu – and if I really did not get your name right, my apologies – Erin Foster-O'Riordan; Michelle Freethy, if she managed to come; Melinda Steenbergen, who's my ministerial adviser, along with little Mr. Jasper, who came with her; and Brandy Cox from cabinet co-ordination receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Sandy Simmie. Sandy is from Stony Plain. She is a keen organizer for the Alberta Party in Stony Plain, in Edmonton, and, in fact, for the entire province. Sandy was instrumental in helping us at our recent policy convention this past weekend. If I can ask Sandy to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Bill Almdal and Fangfang. Bill is a true community leader in Stony Plain. He is the president of Almdal Consultants, a Rotary member, involved with NeighbourLink, and incredibly gracious. Fangfang is on the Rotary youth exchange from Thailand this year and is attending Memorial composite high school in Stony Plain, and I hear she is very beloved by the other students. I'm pleased that they're here to join us today, and I would ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly the Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan committee, whose hard work I'll be speaking about more in my member's statement later this afternoon. Joining us in the public gallery above me are Pal Singh Purewal, chairman of the committee; Sakattar Singh Sandhu; Baldev Singh Sandhu; Davinder Singh Bains; Mehar Singh Gill; Gurcharan Singh Sangha; Harpreet Singh Gill; Charanjit Singh Dakha; Bahadur Singh Bahra; Harkamalpreet Singh Panesar; Inderjeet Singh Viridi; Parminder Singh Viridi; Sohan Singh Grewal;

and Nirpal Singh Sall. I'd ask all my guests to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you Ako Ngu. Ako is a student in the NorQuest social work diploma program who is completing her practicum at the Edmonton-Rutherford constituency office. She's been a valuable member of our team, and in her time with us has put emphasis on ensuring that our services are easily accessible to constituents whose first language is not English. She is excited to learn about the strong link between social work and politics, and we welcome her. Accompanying Ako today is Vicki Anderson, who was previously introduced to the House as a caseworker for the Edmonton-Rutherford constituency. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a distinguished guest from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Consul General Mr. Pham Manh Hai. He is accompanied today by his colleague Mr. Nguyen Manh Hung, head of consular section, consulate general of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in Vancouver. Mr. Hai is visiting Alberta to build on the growing relationship between Alberta and Vietnam, which spans trade and investment to strong cultural ties.

**1:40**

Mr. Speaker, approximately 32,000 Albertans are of Vietnamese descent. Their heritage adds to the dynamic and diverse culture we enjoy here in the province. Beyond those close community ties, Vietnam is also a growing trade partner. We have exported significant agriculture and agrifood products and are well positioned to provide significant energy services and equipment to this emerging energy producer. We are honoured to have Mr. Hai, an accomplished career diplomat, as consul general. I would ask him and Mr. Manh Hung to rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the organizers of the recent Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan, a procession held annually in south Edmonton in the constituencies of Edmonton-Mill Woods and Edmonton-Ellerslie. I'd also like to thank the broader Sikh community of Alberta who host the Nagar Kirtan not only in Edmonton but also in Calgary every year. The Nagar Kirtan is an important tradition commemorating special occasions in the Sikh calendar.

Traditionally the procession is led by the saffron-robed Panj Pyare, who are the spiritual and temporal embodiment of the collective Sikh community. They are followed by the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture, which is placed on a float. Commonly members of the procession are unshod in deference to the displayed

scripture. Bystanders bow their heads to the holy scripture as it passes. They also receive food and candied sweets from the floats. The procession concludes at the gurdwara with prayers.

I'm always encouraged when hearing the three pillars of the Sikh faith: to constantly remember the oneness that unites us all, to work with integrity while earning an honest living, and to share our wealth with all those in the broader community. Mr. Speaker, it is the sharing of our cultures that makes Alberta a great place to call home. As a Canadian not born in Canada I give thanks that we have a culture of respect and understanding.

Mr. Speaker, as we walked in the procession wearing orange head scarves with the rain pouring down from the sky, I thought of the cultural diversity that we all share here. If we dig deeper into the cultural identity of all who call Alberta home, we discover that we have much more in common than we have in difference. The diversity of perspectives helps us to strengthen the values we hold in common, values such as dedication to one's family, profession, and community, while at the same time being compassionate to those in need. We are stronger when we are united.

I thank the organizers of the Nagar Kirtan for sharing their values with us, values that we hold in common as we continue to build Alberta together.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Hand Hills Lake Stampede Centennial

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to be a farmer. The second Friday in June used to be a designated holiday recognizing Farmer's Day. Agriculture is the second-largest industry in Alberta, and it's the lifeblood of many Albertan communities. Producers know how to work, but they know how to have fun, too, when the time comes. For many Albertans there's nothing more fun than the sport of rodeo.

This weekend, on June 3, 4, and 5, the Hand Hills Lake Stampede will be holding their 100th anniversary annual rodeo. Located in the picturesque Hand Hills, the community comes together, as they have for a century now, to celebrate one of Alberta's signature rodeo events. In 1917 Jack J. Miller organized the inaugural rodeo as a fundraiser for the Red Cross to aid in their effort during World War I. Since that time Mr. Miller's fundraiser has become a legacy that is still growing strong an amazing 100 years later.

This event is only made possible thanks to volunteers, spectators, and participants, who step up year after year to make this event possible. Alberta is all about the families and friends who work together to keep a legacy from the past alive for the future.

Like so many of the small community events across the province, the Hand Hills Lake Stampede has become an important part of Delia in Alberta's history. As we all know, it's our unique western culture and heritage that draws people from around the world to Alberta and further enriches our lives with this important connection to our history and roots. It will be my great honour to participate in their parade taking place this weekend.

Please join me in wishing the organizers, competitors, and spectators all the best as we continue to celebrate the legacy started by Jack J. Miller a century ago.

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

### Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks ago our Progressive Conservative caucus toured the Li Ka Shing centre for health research, a world-class facility, where renowned cancer

researchers are refining life-saving cell transplant surgery. We were proud to learn about the state-of-the-art centre and the globe-leading professionals it has attracted to our province. When one of the scientists told us that the heritage fund is the reason for the centre's existence, I felt a surge of pride for a government that had the vision to create this kind of fund. Then I grew concerned because I'm all too aware that many people have misrepresented the heritage fund. So let me offer some facts to clear up the record.

Alberta's heritage fund was always used to invest in Alberta for Albertans. Revenues earned by the fund were invested in many ways, including to develop projects like the Li Ka Shing centre for health research innovation, the University hospital, the Tom Baker cancer centre, and Kananaskis Country, and the list goes on and on and on. Today these quality-of-life investments that exist all around us continue to provide value and have helped keep Alberta's taxes low. And there's more, including millions of dollars in endowment funds to support medical research, educational scholarships, addiction programs, energy research, and much, much, much more.

It is provincial lore that Premier Lougheed had the vision to establish our fund and set Alberta on a course that has earned envy around the world. This is not a myth; this is the truth. As a member of the heritage trust fund committee I will guard against misrepresentations that can be used to change the fund's course. Mr. Speaker, the \$18 billion in this fund today belongs to Albertans. They need to know that its true worth over the decades has been much, much more, and they need to value it accordingly. I hope to help them do that.

Thank you, sir.

### Climate Change

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, our Official Opposition has a difficult relationship with the truth about climate change. Their leader would have Albertans believe that their party has finally accepted that the planet is warming and that just maybe humans have something to do with it, or at least that's what gets said on camera. But outside this House members opposite continue to peddle conspiracy theories claiming that climate change is a hoax.

Recently the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo retweeted a video claiming the multitrillion-dollar global climate change scam. When questioned on this, he stated that he's simply in the middle of the road on the issue. Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps it's time he crossed over because 95 per cent of scientists are on the other side.

It seems that our opposition wants to have it both ways. It seems that despite what they've been told to say, in their heart of hearts many of the members opposite still don't believe climate change is real, and that just gets the better of them sometimes, like the members for Cypress-Medicine Hat, Airdrie, and Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, who've happily retweeted the so-called Friends of Science, an organization that supported a declaration saying that there's no convincing evidence that the CO<sub>2</sub> from modern industrial activity has or will cause climate change and, instead, places blame for climate change on the sun. On the sun, Mr. Speaker. With friends like those, who needs enemies?

Meanwhile the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake has posted articles arguing that global temperatures are cooling and ice caps growing while the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner has posted articles disputing the reality of man-made climate change. Perhaps he feels that polar bears are too entitled.

Mr. Speaker, man-made climate change is real. As the opposition leader has stated, it "is, indeed, one of the biggest threats to our environment, to our people and to the future of our earth." I hope he shares the concerns of myself and many Albertans that members

of his caucus continue to use their positions to promote conspiracy theorists and climate change deniers, behaviour which will only ensure that Alberta is mocked and vilified while facing more roadblocks to diversifying and supporting our energy industry.

Our government stands with science. Our climate leadership plan will reduce emissions and protect Albertans' health. We're moving Alberta forward. Let's hope the opposition stops holding us back.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

### Canadian Hockey League Memorial Cup

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many of my colleagues in this House know, last week the Memorial Cup championship was held for the first time in Red Deer. It was last held in Alberta 42 years ago. This was an amazing event which would not have been the huge success it was without Red Deer's amazing volunteers. Over this last week I fielded many questions from people wanting to know: why was the military present at every game, and why did the cup get flown in on military helicopters? So I'm going to give you all a little history lesson on the Memorial Cup.

1:50

The Memorial Cup is the junior hockey trophy awarded by the Canadian Hockey League following a four-team round robin tournament between the host team and the winners of the WHL, the OHL, and the QMJHL. Next year the cup will be held in Windsor, Ontario, and hosted by the Windsor Spitfires.

Donated by the Ontario Hockey Association in 1919, the trophy was originally known as the OHA Memorial Cup. The Memorial Cup was proposed by Captain James T. Sutherland, the president of the OHA, who was serving overseas in France. He submitted the idea to present a trophy to honour two of Kingston's greatest hockey stars, who died in World War I – Alan Scotty Davidson, lost in battle in 1915, and Captain George T. Richardson, killed in action in 1916 – and all the other Canadian hockey players who died in battle.

The trophy was designed and then dedicated to honour all the soldiers who died fighting for Canada in the war. During the 2010 tournament it was rededicated to honour all soldiers who died fighting for Canada in any conflict. For almost 100 years the military have been acknowledged for their sacrifices with this trophy.

Through the generosity of some very special organizations in Red Deer I was able to spend . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Carbon Levy

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know the NDP carbon tax is going to take a heavy toll on core services Albertans rely on, all so the government can fill its carbon tax slush fund. It's been well documented that many things, including heat and transportation, will cost our health care facilities millions more after this new tax comes into effect, costs that would otherwise go into hiring front-line workers or delivering critical patient health care. Why is this government putting millions of dollars away from critical health care services under the guise of the new NDP carbon tax?

**Ms Hoffman:** Honestly, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We are the government that actually campaigned on protecting public health care, on protecting education and funding it accordingly while other parties were proposing massive cuts. We also said that we take climate change seriously. We know that members opposite continue to perpetuate misinformation about climate change not being man-made. It is man-made. We respect the scientists and the children of this province, and that's why we're moving forward on making sure that we can be proud and that our world can be here for future generations.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Future generations are exactly what we're concerned about on this side of the House.

This government said that it would stand up for education, but this new carbon tax only hurts schools and students. Like in Health, this carbon tax will cost our school boards millions of dollars just in heating and transportation costs alone, costs that will either be passed along to parents in the form of new fees or taken from students in the form of cuts to services like arts and lunch programs. Why is this government putting this carbon tax above the needs of students and parents?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have an Official Opposition that is constantly advocating for significant cuts, cuts that would actually negatively impact the children and the very schools that we're standing up for. Albertans will benefit from the climate leadership plan through programs like energy efficiency, and we want Albertans to know that they can be a part of the solution and that that's how they can also lower their carbon prices. Certainly, we're proud of the possibilities that we have moving forward and of the investments that we will be making to support the very schools that the members claim to care about.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Only a small portion of this tax is going to end up in the hands of Albertans, and meanwhile this new \$3 billion tax will put millions of dollars away from services that actually help Albertans on a daily basis, services like PDD care, policing, road maintenance, just to name a few. Funds directed to these important public services will actually be funnelled back into this government's carbon tax slush fund. How can the Premier justify compromising the quality of core services by sending precious dollars from the front line into the climate fund?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, just another math lesson. Two-thirds of Alberta families are going to benefit from a direct rebate. That is a significant number of Alberta families that will be benefiting. The opposition likes to pretend that they're arguing about these little things when the truth is that we all know that they are continuing to question the science. They want to bury their head in the sand and pretend that they can continue with the ways of the past. Our children, our scientists, our families expect more from their government. They expect leadership, and that's what they've got.

**The Speaker:** I want to urge the House again to control the volume. The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

#### Public Service Size

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, these NDP risky economic policies are compounding the effects of low oil prices, and businesses and workers are paying the price. Everywhere you look, businesses are

cutting back their hours, laying off their staff, or finding new ways to reduce their costs. Meanwhile in government times have never been better. In fact, this government added over 1,413 jobs since being elected. Albertans understand that times are tough, and they're making the hard choices to get by. Why isn't this government doing the same?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, I think Alberta families are very proud of the fact that we've hired teachers, educational assistants, health care staff. That's what Albertans voted for, and that's what they're getting. There have been 257 full-time equivalents added across government, very different from the number mentioned by the member opposite. That's because we're investing in an office for Status of Women and a climate change office, facts that we know are very important to moving our society forward, and I will not apologize for that.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Stier:** Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you. The Premier was already running the most expensive government in all of Canada. Now she's making the same government even bigger and more expensive by hiring 3,260 more full-time equivalents in the '16-17 calendar year. Last year the Alberta economy shrank by 4 per cent, and a hundred thousand taxpaying Albertans lost work in the private sector, all while yet more manager positions were added to the government payroll. Will the Premier commit to putting an end to bloated ranks of managers and only hire when it's necessary for front-line workers?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, 3,013 front-line workers for universities, colleges, school boards, and AHS were hired because this government was elected and the cuts being proposed by the members opposite did not go ahead. We also have invested in economic development and economic diversification, the status of women, and climate change, three priorities we know that the Official Opposition is not keen on because what they want to do is to sit on their hands and pretend that the ways of the past are somehow going to bring us forward. Albertans voted for change, and this is exactly how we're delivering.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, Mr. Speaker, people are losing work. When they look to this government for support, they're told to go somewhere else, to apply for EI, or to wait for one of their many failed job-subsidy programs to stick, unless, that is, they possess the NDP world view. Then there's a cushy job waiting for them in the government. In reality, Albertans are bracing for yet another year of economic contraction. To the Premier: will your government face the facts and realize that fiscal restraint and managerial hiring freezes are absolutely necessary when Albertans are losing work and businesses are suffering?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated fiscal restraint. Hiring positions needs to be approved by the deputy minister. We are certainly making sure that we are operating a lean, efficient public service, but that doesn't mean that we have to turn back the clock, like members opposite have advocated for, to the positions of the 1990s, when teachers were laid off, educational assistants were laid off, nurses were fired, and the public service was shrunk to a deficit so significant that we have hospitals and schools across this province that have been ignored for far too long. I hear the members opposite saying that they want new schools and new hospitals. We need people in the public service to help us deliver.



**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans know that we are in the depths of an economic recession, and new numbers released this month back that up. Alberta is feeling the pain of this downturn, and the NDP government's policies are making things worse. In 2015 Alberta had the most contraction, with the GDP shrinking the largest amount in Canada, by 4 per cent. With the state that our economy is in, why does the NDP government continue ahead with policies like the carbon tax, that will only make things worse?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, the reason why we're moving forward with a price on carbon is because of organizations and people who are going to benefit from it. For example, the director of Vibrant Communities Calgary, a community member from the city the hon. member is an MLA within, said:

We applaud the government as it tables the legislation to mitigate the impact of climate change. We especially appreciate the rebate of the carbon tax for the working poor in our province. Coupled with other key initiatives such as the Alberta Child Benefit, it will help to reduce poverty in Alberta.

We're very proud of that.

2:00

**Mr. Panda:** When you look at our neighbours in B.C. and Saskatchewan, they're not in the same boat as we are. While the NDP government has been removing reasons for businesses to invest in Alberta through their higher taxes, raising the minimum wage, and the \$3 billion carbon tax, B.C. and Saskatchewan have opened their doors to investment. Will the Premier acknowledge that the Alberta advantage is flatlining and economic impact studies must be completed before plunging ahead with these policies?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Economists from a variety of different areas across the country have made it really clear that the best way to actually have the free market play a role in addressing climate change is to make sure that there's actually a price on carbon. There are incentives for businesses and individuals to take personal responsibility, something I know the members opposite often tout. There are conservative governments, more conservative, certainly, some would argue, than the alternatives, like B.C., that's had a carbon tax for many years, and there are other provinces across Canada that are doing the same. Actually, many conservative leaders have said that this is the right way . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Panda:** Well, Mr. Speaker, everyone does a cost-benefit analysis before they bring any risky policies. GDP data released today for 2016 doesn't reflect the impact that the Fort McMurray wildfire will have. The fire, on top of the economic downturn, means that we need reasons for businesses to invest in Alberta more than ever. Aside from a failed jobs plan the NDP are dropping the ball on ways to create jobs and growth. Wildrose developed a common-sense, 12-point jobs action plan to get Albertans back to work . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister for Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. As opposed to the opposition, that is just talking, our government is taking action. We've issued a number of initiatives, including the largest infrastructure spend the province has seen, over \$34 billion over five years. As well, our government has introduced two different tax credits, which are incentives that the business and industry communities province-wide have been asking for, an investor tax credit that's going to help spur investment in Alberta businesses right here at home. We also dropped the small-business tax by one-third. Our government is committed to working with businesses province-wide.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The member of the third party.

### Springbank Reservoir Flood Mitigation Project

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been several questions asked in this House about the Springbank flood control project and, in my view, not enough information provided so far. I'd like to give the Infrastructure minister an opportunity to provide answers and clear up whatever misunderstanding might be there. To the Infrastructure minister. I believe your ministry is building the project. Have you consulted with all of the landowners, all of the municipalities, and all of the First Nations adjacent to the river, and are they fully informed about your ministry's plans?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House that we've held over 40 meetings already, many of them under the jurisdiction of the previous government, and 15 meetings are yet to be scheduled. We've had six open houses. We've had with the Tsuu T'ina two formal letters, three phone calls, three meetings, including one with myself, and 28 e-mails. The Tsuu T'ina has met with the Minister of Environment and Parks and had a technical briefing with administration staff. The Stoney Nation has had three formal letters, 20 e-mails, and three meetings, including one with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure on the phone. Rocky View county has had four meetings . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's June tomorrow, so the construction season has begun. In my view, the government ought to know how they will proceed with the Springbank dam project, the project of a dam. To the Infrastructure minister: are you planning on taking away land from people through expropriation or some other legal process, or are you going to make arrangements where they can keep the land, with the government then able to use it for flood control only when the situations arise, where that's necessary?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On the contrary, I think it's a fine project.

I've asked the question that the hon. member has just asked. We are intending to acquire the land in order to build the project. There are a number of issues, including liability issues and so on, that I think would make what the hon. member is suggesting an imprudent move.

**Mr. McIver:** Okay. Well, Mr. Speaker, not only the local residents but all Albertans are curious, I believe, about the costs for the Springbank dam project. By now, again, the government ought to

know the cost for the land compensation, construction, operation expenses, and other things. So to the Finance minister or Infrastructure minister or whoever can answer questions about money because I'm hoping for an answer with a number in it: what is the current cost estimate for the Springbank dam project? Please give an answer in the form of a number. What is the overall project budget?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member, having been a Minister of Transportation and of Infrastructure, knows that if you give out prices in advance, that's what your contracts will come in at, and if you try to predict the price of land, that's probably what you're going to pay. These are matters of open tenders and a fair, negotiated process, and it's too early to say what the cost will be.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Renewable Energy Strategy

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend the Alberta Party held our policy convention, and members voted in favour of a price on carbon as part of our overall electricity and climate strategy. The Alberta Party knows that climate change is real and human caused, and we know that Alberta should take action, but the more we learn about this government's carbon tax, the more questions we have. To the Premier: are you committed to a 30 per cent renewable generation rate even if a different mix of gas and renewables would achieve similar carbon reductions at much lower cost to Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Certainly, we have set the 30 per cent target because we believe that it is achievable. It's a good mix between natural gas and various renewables that we know are very cost competitive, both wind and utility-scale solar. We are in the process of designing those programs right now and that competitive procurement process. We believe it's a good target because it plays on Alberta's strengths and ensures that we are open to all of that new renewable investment that is waiting to make those investments here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, as I've said, the Alberta Party believes in a carbon tax, but we're not sure that we can support this carbon tax without more detail. The role of Energy Efficiency Alberta is unknown even though the budget allocates \$645 million to this agency over five years. Again to the Premier: what specific programs will be delivered to recycle revenue? Can Albertans expect a home renovation tax credit, low-emission vehicle rebates, incentives for geothermal energy, something else, or nothing at all? When will we learn the details of this so-called revenue recycling?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a good question because it comes from an area of the House where there's an appreciation for diversification and also the science of climate change. We will have more to say about the various programs that will be delivered through the energy efficiency agency very soon.

We're going to ensure that we conduct the right amount of consultation on this matter and the right level of conversation with Albertans of all kinds: individual homeowners but also small businesses, municipalities, indigenous communities, and others.

**Mr. Clark:** In other words: trust me; we'll let you know later.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that the Alberta Party believes in a carbon tax, but we're not sure that we can support this carbon tax without more detail. I'll try one more time. Investors are ready to commit now to renewable energy projects, but they're frustrated that the government's plans to date have been so short on details. There are literally billions of dollars on the sidelines waiting to be invested. To the Premier: when will investors know the details of your renewable energy plan so that they can build the capacity we need and get people back to work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a good question. It's a thoughtful question. We have said that the AESO is conducting its consultations on the large-scale renewable competitive procurement process. Those details will be available by fall. As we move forward on the energy efficiency and the community energy systems piece, that part will be consulted on over this summer and fall period, and those programs will be available by January 1, 2017.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

2:10

### Domestic Violence

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. New statistics show a concerning rise in the number of domestic violence incidents in Calgary. To the Minister of Justice: what kind of investments is this government making to ensure that survivors have the support they need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the absolutely critical question. This government knows that no one should have to feel unsafe in their own home. Our government recognizes that we as the government have a role to play in ensuring that survivors of domestic violence are able to feel safe. In the fall we increased funding to women's shelters by \$15 million to create protective spaces for women and children affected by family violence. We've also committed an additional \$3.5 million to the family violence framework to support programs that protect women and girls.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that police officers are dealing with more domestic calls this year compared to last year, to the same minister: what supports are in place to ensure that officers have the tools they need to respond to these calls?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government recognizes that police have a critical role to play in supporting victims of domestic violence. That's why, in addition to creating guidelines which govern the way that domestic violence survivors are handled amongst the police services, my ministry also provides

training, which is offered four to five times a year to front-line officers as well as supervisors. In addition, there's mandatory training for Crown counsel to ensure that they're able to support the victims throughout the system.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the volume of these calls has increased, again to the same minister: what other provincial agencies are able to assist municipal police forces when it comes to domestic violence cases?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the critical question. We're very proud in this government to have invested additional funds to make up a shortfall experienced by ALERT. One of the programs that falls under that ALERT umbrella is the Integrated Threat and Risk Assessment Centre, or I-TRAC. I-TRAC helps to develop assessment of risks to domestic violence victims as well as developing risk-reduction plans to ensure that everyone can feel safe in their own home.

Thank you.

#### Alberta Health Services Decision-making

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, the use of nonambulance transport for low-risk facility transfers can save money and save lives by freeing up vital ambulance resources. Unfortunately, while a wise idea in theory, we have obtained data showing system resources still being managed by the NDP. In all Alberta Health Services zones ambulances are overwhelmingly used to do the most routine patient transfers, transfers that could often be done by nonemergency vehicles. Why is the Health minister so slow to implement something we know can alleviate pressure on an overstretched EMS system?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Absolutely, when there are opportunities to do a transfer and it can be done safely without a functioning ambulance but still with proper medical oversight, that is the right direction to move in. I actually tabled some documents in the House, I believe just two weeks ago, in response to questions from estimates that talked about an increase of five vehicles in the central zone alone, and we continue to find ways to move forward on that. Absolutely, this is an area where we can continue to improve, and I expect so from AHS.

**Mr. Barnes:** AHS has talked about this for years but only moves at the speed of bureaucracy. Given that advanced life-support ambulances are in short supply in our towns and smaller cities and given that these advanced units are crucial for complex emergencies and saving lives and seeing as there are AHS zones where our most highly equipped and advanced ambulances are doing the majority of the lowest risk facility transfers, why has a centralized approach to EMS failed to allocate resources more efficiently, as you promised Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Obviously, there is nothing more important than knowing

that when you do call 911, help is on its way and you'll get the right supports. The best way to organize first responders, we know, varies from community to community, so assertions that it's all being done from one central place isn't actually the truth. From rural areas to urban centres there are different nuances. That's why we have five different zones, and they do work with their local leaders to make sure that they find ways to operate efficiently. There still are areas for improvement, and we're continuing to make those stronger.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, while I hope that the NDP finally takes this important issue seriously, I couldn't help but notice that they have just hired a new AHS CEO, Dr. Verna Yiu. Given that we wish her great success implementing some common-sense changes to AHS's broken centralized management and while, you know, they do say that the eighth time is the charm, I have to ask the minister at the head of AHS: how many applications did you receive for such a highly coveted role?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member should know, AHS is run by a board. We named that board several months ago, and I'm very proud of the work that they're doing. The board itself oversaw the search and recruit process, and they certainly did have a number of well-qualified applicants. I couldn't be more excited about working with Dr. Yiu for many years to come. She has proven herself to be a leader both at the university as a children's pediatrician as well as at AHS as a fantastic interim CEO, and I wish her the most success possible.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

#### Affordable Housing

**Mr. Gottfried:** Mr. Speaker, it's a stone cold fact that the carbon tax will increase the cost of building, operating, and maintaining seniors' and affordable housing units in Alberta. In estimates this government publicly stated a preference to build and operate such facilities themselves, with increased costs then being borne by taxpayers, delivering fewer beds from debt-funded coffers. To the minister of seniors: how much is the carbon tax going to increase the average capital cost of delivering affordable and seniors' housing on a per-unit basis?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the carbon levy will be reinvested and recycled back into a number of different programs, including energy efficiency retrofits and other initiatives, to make sure that we've got our affordable housing stock up to snuff with respect to efficiencies. That's why we are investing \$45 million this year and \$645 million in the next five years on efficiency programming. That is something that the previous government failed to do, leaving us as the only jurisdiction in North America without an efficiency program.

**Mr. Gottfried:** A simple calculation not yet done.

Mr. Speaker, given that the downturn, job losses, and demographics will see growing demand for low-income and seniors' housing and given that the carbon tax will increase capital and operating costs on the shoulders of either taxpayers or renters, again to the minister: what new projects, over and above the 2,000

re-announced from the PC ASLI program, have you put on the books since October 2015, and when will we get a fresh list of publicly owned and operated housing planned by this government? When?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. This government is very proud of their \$1.2 billion commitment in our capital plan. We're working with housing management bodies across the province, working with seniors' lodges. We've also committed \$60 million to, you know, put fire suppression systems in. We have a billion dollars in deferred maintenance that we're also investing in, which we inherited from the previous government. We are committed to working on affordable housing and supporting seniors in this province.

**Mr. Gotfried:** One wonders what will happen when your inheritance is spent.

Mr. Speaker, given that this government's carbon tax will increase the cost of building both affordable and seniors' housing and given that private and nonprofit organizations are efficient, innovative, and bring capital to the table, keeping unit costs down and accelerating use of green technology, again to the minister: why, then, did you publicly state a preference to move away from working with experienced, proven, and community-spirited builders and operators, and are such partnerships in the crosshairs of the NDP world view?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're working with housing management bodies and municipalities to determine the needs of the communities in Alberta. The priority for capital funding will be direct investments in government-owned and -supported housing units rather than capital grants to others. I've said that the private sector will benefit from this significant investment because, of course, we'll need planners, architects, builders, so everyone is working together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow.

#### Carbon Levy and AISH Recipients

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have received a number of concerned calls from my constituents who rely on the income supplements from the assured income for the severely handicapped, or AISH, program. Now, they're not only concerned that the carbon tax will raise the price of consumer goods but also that the rebate might actually work against them by increasing their nonexempt income, disqualifying them from receiving the full benefit. To the Minister of Human Services: what are you doing to ensure that this benefit will not be calculated against AISH payments, which support our most vulnerable?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

2:20

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Requirements of the AISH program still remain the same as they were before, but we have increased funding to the AISH program so that we can manage the per-case growth, the cost

of the case, and more people coming on to that program. We will make sure that in the new program they have benefits available throughout.

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, given that the carbon tax will mean that many people have to spend more on basic shelter and food needs and given that Alberta's most vulnerable, especially those who have to live on fixed incomes, will be hit hard by this ideological tax, again to the Minister of Human Services: have you actually conducted any analysis at all on how this punishing carbon tax will affect those receiving AISH?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, indeed, Mr. Speaker, the climate leadership plan that was released in November discussed this matter of rebates, ensuring that there's adjustment for low- and middle-income Albertans, which is precisely why 60 per cent of Albertans will receive the full rebate and 66 per cent a partial rebate. In fact, many people who have the lowest income will come out just a little bit ahead because we know higher income people use more emissions. That is a well-documented fact, that is in the climate leadership plan.

In addition, we have had these conversations with community groups and others all through last fall. It was this Official Opposition that took a pass on those conversations because they don't...

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, thank you.

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, given that under the AISH program policy there is currently no fully exempted income provision for money received as a carbon tax rebate and given that this government, clearly, did not think of the most vulnerable when they crafted their poorly timed and punitive carbon tax, will the minister commit to adding funds received from the carbon tax rebate into the fully exempted income list in the AISH policy manual?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, the adjustment rebates are in fact not subject to a clawback of any kind. Any suggestion otherwise is simply trying to misinform the public and foment fear among people given that it is a policy that will move us forward, accepts the science of climate change, and wants to diversify the economy, which are all goals that the Official Opposition does not share.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

#### Grande Prairie Regional College

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In many aspects of life succession planning is just a smart idea. It's a concept not just limited to business. The Grande Prairie Regional College is trying to do just that. Unfortunately, with the recent ABC review their board lost three members last year, who are yet to be replaced, and will likely lose three more this year as terms expire. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what are you doing to ensure that this board has the members in place to properly ensure the smooth transition of the board?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I'm proud to say that our government is committed to an open and transparent process for recruiting and appointing public members to boards. I'm aware, of course, of the three vacancies that the Grande Prairie Regional College currently

has. Applications for the recruitment for those positions closed April 26. My office is currently working with the board to shortlist and interview candidates, and I'm looking forward to working with the board and the community to find the right people to serve in these critical roles.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you. Given that the Grande Prairie Regional College has recently submitted a proposal seeking polytechnic university status in response to a demand for trades training and degree completion, again to the minister: can you help facilitate these growing demands for trades training and degree completion at the Grande Prairie Regional College?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. Of course, our government is well aware of Grande Prairie Regional College's aspiration to gain a polytechnic university designation. The proposal that they have put forward will be considered in the broader context of the postsecondary system in the province. There are many factors, of course, including ongoing funding pressures, that would need to be examined in detail before we make any decisions on this proposal, but we'll continue to meet with the Grande Prairie Regional College to discuss the implications of their proposal and make sure that the needs of the students at the Grande Prairie Regional College are met.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you again. Given our economic uncertainty GPRC was forced to reduce its transitional vocational program. This program offers adults with special needs a bridge between living at home and living and working in the community. Given that this program focuses on the key areas of employment training, independent living skills, work placement, and graduate follow-up, again to the minister: will your department work with related ministries to find a way to restore this incredibly worthwhile program so that all Albertans have an equal chance to succeed?

**The Speaker:** The Advanced Education minister.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I had a meeting with the Grande Prairie Regional College president and board, and they brought this issue to my attention, as the member has done today. I understand how important the program is to the community of Fairview and to all of northwestern Alberta. We've asked Grande Prairie Regional College to submit a proposal regarding the transitional vocational program to identify a sustainable budget plan, and we continue to work with the college to make sure that the supports for students will be in place where they're needed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

#### Tick-borne Diseases

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government prides itself on acknowledging the science of climate change and responding. It also prides itself in saying that its decisions are thoughtful and science based. So let's look at some science. Several studies have shown that climate change is causing an increase in the

incidence of vector-borne diseases. A study published in the journal *EcoHealth* predicted that the geographic range for the principal vector for tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease would significantly increase in Canada because of climate change. To the Health minister: what adjustments has Alberta Health made to improve the monitoring and diagnosis of tick-borne infestations?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, those who have contracted Lyme disease: this is very difficult for them and their families. We know that there are ticks in Alberta that have been confirmed to have Lyme – that's very troubling – or to have the same components. We want to encourage everyone to take preventative measures and make sure that when you're walking off path, you're wearing long sleeves, long pants, and protecting yourselves. I'd be happy to hear advice from the hon. member around further monitoring as we move forward.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's on the way. First of all, tell your chief officer of health that the disease exists in Alberta.

Given that many Albertans have experienced needless suffering because of delays in the diagnosis of Lyme disease and given that Alberta Health continues to maintain an attitude that it is nearly impossible to contract Lyme disease in Alberta and given that diagnostic delays caused by this attitude of denial cause both untold expense and needless suffering, to the minister: why won't you direct Alberta Health to adopt broader diagnostic criteria needed for the early diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. I wonder if the same question was asked by the previous government, that was certainly dealing with this issue for many years. Certainly, we are continuing to move forward. I think I was very clear that there are ticks that we suspect could have Lyme in Alberta. We want people to take precautionary measures to protect themselves. Certainly, the diagnosis piece is very complicated. The pieces that are happening south of the border are different than north of the border. We certainly take leadership from Health Canada as we continue to move forward in finding the best way to diagnosis, treat, and remediate.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, climate change has increased the range, so given that Alberta Health's attitude that it can't happen here coupled with an inadequate diagnostic protocol is causing Albertans suffering from Lyme disease to seek treatment out of province and given that the exportation of patients to other jurisdictions in order to obtain medical care not available in Alberta is surely not part of the NDP world view, to the minister: will you commit today to the development of a comprehensive provincial strategy for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of Lyme disease?

**Ms Hoffman:** I believe in the last question I just talked about the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Certainly, we are going to work with Health Canada to make sure that across Canada we have the very best up-to-date measures to make sure that we're protecting citizens. Once again I want to remind all Albertans that if you're spending time in a situation where you could be encountering ticks,

please take preventative measures. Obviously, an ounce of prevention is worth far more than a pound of cure. We want to make sure that we are keeping ourselves and each other as healthy as possible, so remember to wear those long sleeves and long pants, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

### 2:30 High School Completion

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Graduation season is in the air as we have seen thousands of students flock to the grounds of this Legislature to revel with their peers. Given that this is also a time to celebrate the quality education this province provides to students and the commitments our government has made to future generations, to the Minister of Education: what part have you had in helping our students mark their graduation?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. High school completion is a very important part of our K to 12 schools here in the province of Alberta. I've had an opportunity to go to a number of graduations. I certainly recommend that all members get a little glimpse of a much more hopeful and optimistic future by attending graduations in their own constituencies. I went to one, for example, for Anzac, which is about 45 kilometres south of Fort McMurray, that had to be here in Edmonton, to see the nine graduates there. They were full of that fervour and sense of hope and vigour for the future which we all need at this time.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we know that high school is imperative to supporting students' future goals, to the same minister: are more students completing high school, and what are the reasons for this?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thank you for the question. Certainly, we've seen high school completion and graduation rates going up over these last five years. I learned quite an interesting point from a number of schools that I've been at recently, which is that the dual credit career and technology programs are aiding with both retaining high school students to complete within three years and also graduation rates and the choice to move to postsecondary. Mr. Speaker, I think these are programs that we all need to get behind in order to see our graduates succeed.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we must improve high school completion rates among our First Nations students, whose rates fall below the provincial average, to the same minister: what are you doing to support those students?

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you very much, Member, for the question. Budget 2016 sets very ambitious targets to eliminate the education achievement gap. To that end, we've committed \$28 million to close the gap between indigenous students and other students, adding to an existing grant of \$48 million. As partners in First Nations education we will continue to work collaboratively with the federal government and First Nations across this province to close

the gap between First Nations students and all other students here in the province. We're making progress, but we have a lot of hard work to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

### Crime Prevention in Rural Communities

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month I asked the Justice minister about addressing rural crime. She spoke about getting supports in place to discourage potential criminals. Well, last week the crime wave continued: armed robberies in Holden and Amisk in broad daylight. My constituents want to feel safe in their communities, but in Amisk the armed robbery happened right across from a school, and families are worried. They want to know: what is the Justice minister actually doing to keep our communities safe right now?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, all Albertans deserve to live in safe and resilient communities, which is one of the primary functions of my ministry. That's why I'm very proud to say that this province invests over half a billion dollars a year in policing, which is more generous than any of the provinces around us, to ensure that we have the right on-the-ground supports for municipalities going forward. Our police partners work very hard and do an excellent job in preventing crimes.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I think that whether the member recognizes it or not, it's really critical to address those underlying drivers of crime like poverty, that lead people into these sorts of lifestyles, and that's what our government . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Taylor:** Given that the people who robbed these banks had the same MO and were clearly committing premeditated crimes, weighing their prison times against RCMP response times in rural communities since our hard-working police officers are often spread very thin, and given that criminals convicted of armed robberies often have their prison sentences reduced, is the Justice minister willing to advocate for stiffer penalties for armed robbery as a way to keep our communities safe?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I certainly know it's the case that, you know, ensuring that we invest in front-line services, which this side of the House is committed to doing, is the first critical step in ensuring that police are available to respond to these incidents.

In terms of the sentence in this particular matter, Mr. Speaker, obviously, it's inappropriate for me to comment on any particular case. But as the hon. member should presumably be aware, the federal government does have jurisdiction over the Criminal Code, so if those are the updates you're looking for, I would suggest that you speak to your MP.

**Mr. Taylor:** I was asking you if you were willing to advocate for these people.

Given that our communities need real solutions and that immediate action should be part of a larger strategy to address the rising crime rates and given that initiatives such as crime watch programs and video surveillance can serve as effective deterrent measures in small towns, would the minister consider supporting

the expansion of rural crime watch programs into vulnerable communities to protect Alberta's families and to crack down on crime?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, as I've said, we are very proud that this province invests more in front-line policing per capita than the provinces around us. We invest over half a billion dollars a year in ensuring that front-line services are available, and we didn't cut back on those funds as the members opposite would have advocated.

I think that in terms of, you know, moving forward, certainly, we are doing a review of the victims of crime program, and we have a number of grant programs available. We do work quite closely with community crime prevention programs. In fact, we fund them, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

### Economic Competitiveness

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta receives only the Canada health transfer and the Canada social transfer, of Canada's five transfer funds. Unlike earmarked health and social transfers, provinces can spend equalization funds however they choose, and they are subsidizing industry and businesses. We've heard a lot about diversifying the economy, and here in Alberta steel fabricators and industries are competing with companies from Ontario and Quebec. We add the carbon tax, unclear climate change regulations, and increased minimum wage, and industry becomes less competitive. To the economic development minister: what are you doing to help these companies become more competitive?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. There are a number of initiatives that our government has embarked on to support our small to medium-sized businesses here in the province. In addition to two different tax credits that we've recently announced, which have worked in other jurisdictions and will now make Alberta even more competitive, I do want to point out the fact that Alberta continues to be the lowest taxed jurisdiction in the country, with no PST, no payroll tax, and no health care premiums.

Thank you.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given the fact that we've heard that the Ontario government may not see natural gas as a part of their future power generation and given that this government is implementing a carbon tax, which affects the transport and cost of equipment such as solar panels and wind turbines, which are not yet produced in Alberta, to the Energy minister: are you concerned that there will be a rush of investment in renewables in Ontario rather than in Alberta based on those factors, which would leave our energy grid short?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our phase-in of renewables will be commensurate with the phase-out of coal-fired electricity. The AESO is right now examining how that competitive procurement process will proceed. However, I want to caution the member on this sort of negative, doom-and-gloom outlook. There

is so much investment just waiting to invest in Alberta in energy efficiency, in microgeneration, in medium-sized enterprises of all kinds, in innovation and technology. This is a good time to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Fraser:** Minister, I'm glad to hear that. I mean, that's hope.

Given that we've actually heard from investors who are not opting out but are also not opting in to your renewables plan, there seem to be more questions than answers. I know it's easy to blame the Official Opposition for the doom and gloom and fearmongering, but, Minister, these are your policies creating part of the problem. Will your government adapt to the economic circumstances, address the fear and uncertainty that is clearly being stated by investors in natural gas and renewables, or will you stick by your plan, that could ultimately hurt Albertans not just today but for many generations to come? My hope is that there is room for movement here as you guys move forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this question of natural gas, of course, we have said that it will be 30 per cent renewables in terms of our energy grid over time, and it'll be 70 per cent natural gas. That's a good mix. It puts us in the middle of the pack with respect to what's happening in the rest of North America. All of this plan is very carefully thought out. It's been laid out since November for everyone to see. It is the product of very robust consultations, consultations that the Official Opposition did not participate in. But the rest of Albertans were only too happy to help us move this economy forward, diversify our economy, and create jobs.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

2:40

### Indigenous Relations

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have heard from many First Nations citizens that they're dissatisfied with the consultation process historically in Alberta. Given that many First Nations feel that the current consultation policy does not meet the needs of their communities or respect First Nations' constitutionally protected treaty rights, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what action is this government taking to improve First Nations consultation in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Well, last week, we're very happy to say, royal assent was given to Bill 12, which repealed the previous government's Aboriginal Consultation Levy Act. One of the big problems, of course, with the previous bill, Bill 22, was that First Nations weren't adequately consulted at all, the irony of which has been remarked on many times in this House: a consultation without consultation. We look forward to working with the First Nations community to restore respect to the process.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to hear about the government's plans to revisit consultation. To the same

minister: what is this government doing to ensure the participation of First Nations in this important review?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Our approach will welcome and encourage the full participation of First Nations as well as the participation of industry and other stakeholders. I have of course met with First Nations all across the province and with industry stakeholders both here and in Calgary, representing Fort McMurray as well. We believe that that consultation will lead to something meaningful, which did not happen in the past. The budget in 2016 includes \$750,000 for enhanced consultation. We look forward to working with the First Nations communities in the future.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that respectful dialogue is a central pillar of proper consultation and that this was clearly lacking in the previous legislation, what steps is our government taking to ensure that we avoid the problems created by Bill 22?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We have already initiated a process where I have had an opportunity to meet with the grand chiefs of treaties 6, 7, and 8 and engage in the process of moving forward. We're taking to heart the words of Senator Murray Sinclair, who called the old bill a charade. As Senator Sinclair said, if consultation is to have meaning, it has to have consequence. That is what we are seeking to achieve. We're committed to the new legislation. We're committed to aligning it with the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. I look forward to updating the Assembly on progress in the future.

**The Speaker:** In 30 seconds we'll continue with Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements (continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow.

#### Feedlot Alley

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak of a very interesting area within the Little Bow riding known as Feedlot Alley. It is the nickname of an area that covers about 500 square kilometres and resides to the northeast of the city of Lethbridge. This area is known globally for its world-class livestock operations. The climate and topography of the region are conducive to intensive value-added feeding operations. The area is home to over 2.3 million cattle and 180,000 hogs. Over 60 per cent of all Canadian beef is produced in Feedlot Alley. Animals are fed here at home and processed here at home.

The advent of irrigation and the formation of the various irrigation districts combined with the construction of the Oldman River dam, which was completed in 1991, have helped to diversify agricultural operations in southern Alberta. Much of the grain and hay that feeds the beef in this region is raised under irrigation pivots close to the feedlots.

This small portion of the province is a haven to free enterprise. Every day of the week, 52 weeks a year there is a requirement for feed products. Producers of those feed products have a nearby market that is guaranteed. Because of the volume of barley that is required to feed such an enormous number of cattle, the cash price for barley in southern Alberta is set FOB Lethbridge, and barley markets that expand out from this area are all worked back to the Lethbridge price less freight. The highways in my riding have become the avenue of transportation for animals and feed to different feeding operations in the area as well as to the different livestock processing facilities.

Within this famous area has grown a respect for the environment and a commitment to food safety, animal care, and production of a quality product. Alberta beef is known throughout the civilized world, and I am proud as the Member of the Legislative Assembly that represents this area to give a feather in the cap to those that work year-round to raise this superior and unique product, that helps put Alberta on the map.

### Introduction of Bills

#### Bill 21

#### Modernized Municipal Government Act

**Ms Larivee:** Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act.

The Municipal Government Act, or MGA, creates the framework in which municipalities operate. It touches the lives of every single Albertan by setting a foundation for how the municipalities they live in are governed, funded, and developed.

Mr. Speaker, I am tabling this bill today so that hon. members and all Albertans have time to review the changes, ask questions, and provide their feedback on our proposed amendments. Municipal Affairs will be seeking input from Albertans over the next few months, during a tour of 20 communities across the province as well as through web-based consultation. We will then return to the Legislature with any amendments necessary to reflect the feedback we hear and for a fulsome debate in this Assembly.

I'm proud on behalf of all of Municipal Affairs to table Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling today the requisite number of copies of a fact sheet from the International Monetary Fund, which argues that "broad-based charges on greenhouse gases, such as a carbon tax, are the most effective instruments for encouraging cleaner fuels and less energy use." I encourage all members to read it.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Gray, Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal, responses to questions raised by Mr. Hunter, Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner; Mr. McIver, Member for Calgary-Hays; and Dr. Swann, Member for Calgary-Mountain



View, in the May 2, 2016, Ministry of Labour 2016-17 main estimates debate.

2:50

**Orders of the Day**  
**Government Bills and Orders**  
**Second Reading**  
**Bill 20**  
**Climate Leadership Implementation Act**

[Debate adjourned May 31]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak against Bill 20 and the implementation of this terribly misguided carbon tax. There are a host of reasons to oppose such a bill, many of which have been well argued and discussed on this side of the House, but I'd like to focus my attention on three of the most flawed, faulty, and foul elements of this proposed legislation. Firstly, this tax is horribly regressive and punitive. Secondly, it chokes out economic growth at a time, particularly in southeastern Alberta, when we are already struggling. Thirdly, it catches a number of organizations in its sprawling web, organizations which this province depends on.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 20's taxation powers and targets are so misguided and repellent that the government cannot even bring itself to use the word "tax." I suspect they avoid it because they know how punishing this will be on Alberta families and communities. But let's call it what it is. Let's talk about the regressive nature of this tax. Let's talk about how badly this tax will hit people who cannot – who cannot – avoid it. The most obvious place to start is with this massive hike on natural gas. This is overwhelmingly the number one source of residential heating in Alberta, and in fact it is one of the cleanest, most efficient forms of doing so.

To establish some context, I'm going to provide some statistical figures. The average household, Mr. Speaker, according to the government's estimates, uses about a 120 gigajoules of natural gas per year. The current market price is right around \$1 per gigajoule. The projected natural gas price for 2018, two winters from now, is approximately \$2.50. Here's the kicker. The carbon tax begins at \$1.01 per gigajoule, rising to \$1.52 in 2018. Unfortunately, it is so. At current market prices we're talking about a 100 per cent increase in the cost of natural gas across all Alberta households. Even if natural gas prices recover somewhat as predicted by analysts, by the time that happens, the carbon tax will still represent a 60 per cent increase. Not 2 or 3 per cent but 60 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, let's go back to the average household using 120 gigajoules. They will be hit with \$184 in new costs for gas usage alone when this tax comes into its full effect, not to mention that because natural gas is so efficient and so clean, many people have switched other appliances to it. Gas heat is very popular for cooking, especially in Cypress-Medicine Hat, in Medicine Hat. I understand that gas clothing dryers are becoming more popular, too. Paying more tax. In any case, here we have Alberta families that made smart choices, have tried to be economical and efficient for the betterment of their households, and what does the government do? It steps in to heavily tax it.

I spoke to one of my constituents this past weekend, who informed me that they had purchased and installed a high-efficiency furnace just a year or two ago. The old one had started to fail; there was no choice. The constituent is now asking me what he is

supposed to do to avoid the tax. He has invested a very large amount of money into a clean, efficient, new technology, but alas, Mr. Speaker, he'll be hit all the same by the NDP's new tax. His gas use falls right into the 120-gigajoule-per-month range. He'll pay the \$184 dollars per year no matter what he does. Or I guess he could turn off the furnace. How feasible is that in Alberta over the winter? It doesn't take much imagination to know that's not an alternative. This is why this tax is so regressive. It is planted firmly on people who cannot avoid it, on essential goods and services they cannot change. Heating your house in Alberta in December and January is not optional.

Perhaps one could argue that this should encourage my constituents, as the Premier said, to change their behaviour and invest in further efficiency upgrades, but the reality is that upgrades like windows and new insulation are massive one-time investments that result in marginal gains at best, that takes years to pay for themselves, if ever, massive one-time investments. After investing in something like a new hot water system or a furnace, not many people, Mr. Speaker, have tens of thousands of dollars more in liquid assets sitting around to put into their home.

I could go on more about the regressive and harshly punitive nature of this tax, whether from increased utilities or increased food costs or increased transportation costs, but I would like to move on to my second major objection; that is, that a tax of this scope and this breadth will absolutely suppress economic growth, opportunity, and prosperity at a time when things need a shot in the arm.

Mr. Speaker, I know there's a lot of glowing reference to the work of J.M. Keynes on the other side of the House, but taxing in the middle of a recession is downright anti-Keynesian. Even he agreed that taxation suppresses growth. As job losses mount and as we continue to see home values and average wages fall, this tax is likely throwing an anchor to somebody desperately treading water. The NDP government is taking a bad situation and making it much, much worse.

Already I'm starting to hear the projected impacts of the carbon tax on local businesses. We have asked the government many times to produce an economic impact assessment across all sectors, but the reality on the ground is that businesses are doing it themselves, and the news that I have heard is bleak indeed. Whether a big or small business, this tax will put a large burden on local companies in Cypress-Medicine Hat. Some of our good fertilizer and value-added companies have mentioned higher input costs, anticompetitive, that other jurisdictions don't have to pay, so they've looked at relocating, looked at producing less. They've looked at the production of these things going to more competitive, higher carbon jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, we have a great greenhouse and packaging and value-added food business in Cypress-Medicine Hat in Redcliff. The cost of transportation – you know, in the southeast corner there are not many of us down there. We need access to bigger markets. The cost of transporting these foods has to be borne by the consumer or in job losses. Way to go.

Finally, I have serious concerns about the impact that this will have on organizations, governmental and nongovernmental alike, that contribute greatly to our local communities. Mr. Speaker, I absolutely believe that it's volunteers that built our communities, that built our province. I absolutely believe that we need to encourage our volunteer community to be stronger or as strong as possible. This carbon tax is a step in the opposite direction.

Most obvious in a vast riding like mine is the issue of school boards and transportation costs, though. I've mentioned natural gas, and that will certainly play a huge part in costs to school boards, but

I think mostly of busing when I consider the impacts in Cypress-Medicine Hat. Many students in southeastern Alberta live on farms or ranches 10 to 20 miles away from schools and cities, and transportation forms a huge part of the expense for school boards.

3:00

I've had it estimated by my local rural school board that they are facing \$275,000 in added costs through the NDP carbon tax just on gas, and of course I don't think this factors in all the hidden secondary costs on all the other products and services. Mr. Speaker, \$275,000 in added costs right up front is staggering. How many teachers is that? Three? Four? How many teaching assistants? Four? Five? Good front-line workers are desperately needed and add value. Instead, we're paying tax. These are real social and human costs of this tax.

Furthermore, we have groups operating in my constituency that offer great benefit to the community, charities and nonprofits of all stripes. They will be taking a severe hit on their operating costs, and we all know that they're already operating on the razor's edge. Again, I love the not-for-profit sector, the volunteer sector. Sometimes I feel guilty. They're so efficient, they're so good that I think that as a society we take advantage of them, and now we're going to be punishing them. These organizations are as lean and streamlined as they could possibly be, especially, as they are today, operating on declining donations.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in Medicine Hat and Bow Island and Redcliff I bump into people with Meals on Wheels, people helping people get to the hospital to visit, and the United Way doing all their tremendous work. Of course, we just had the CFL alumni tournament in town again this last weekend. It's going to be harder and harder for these volunteers to be able to afford to do what needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, due to the regressive, economically crippling, and overly broad nature of this carbon tax I will stand opposed, and I encourage every member of the House to listen to the people of Alberta, that will be paying this tax, and to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka. Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Orr:** No.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions for the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill. The question is: how is the tax going to be administered and collected and used? Clearly, this tax is going to make everything more expensive for everyday Albertans. That's what my concern is. I'm aware of this fact. My constituents are very aware of this fact. Every newspaper seems to be aware of this fact. The only people who don't seem to be aware of this fact are the members opposite. They're insistent that their rebate will cover the costs for Albertans, yet it seems they're missing something again. Just like when they were a few billion dollars off in their budget, it required them to push back their balanced budget to 2018. Then they thought they could run right up to the 15 per cent debt limit without going over, but now they've realized that with their free-spending ways they can't do that either.

Let's just go over some of the numbers. The *Edmonton Journal* on May 25 published an article titled *Alberta Families Will Pay More under Climate Change Bill's Carbon Tax*. In that article the *Journal* quoted the NDP press release.

A typical Alberta family will pay between \$70 and \$105 extra per year for consumer goods and services as a result of the province's new carbon tax, the NDP government said Tuesday in introducing its new climate legislation.

It's the first time the government has put a figure on such "indirect" costs of the new levy, which will increase the price of transportation and heating fuel for most Albertans starting in January.

I'm only going to use three items – there are many more but just these three – that the NDP say will affect Albertans: heating, fuel, and the government's vague lowball estimate of indirect costs. I will show how far off their expectations are by examining the typical Albertan. I will not cover the multitude of other costs that will affect Albertans, which would put costs soaring to close to a thousand dollars or maybe more. Instead, I'm just going to use the typical cost to the typical Albertan to heat their home and fuel their car. I'll also use the lowball indirect cost that the NDP provided. Since it's difficult and controversial to debate indirect costs and since they haven't shown us how they got them, for this speech we'll just give them the benefit of the doubt on that and go with the numbers they provided.

I want to examine that \$75 to \$105 in indirect costs by adding it to the cost of, first of all, just transportation alone and see if we can stay under the rebates for a single or a couple. I will exclude heating for now, but don't worry; we'll come back to it.

The lease on a car is usually for 24,000 kilometres a year. Car companies choose that amount because they know it's the average kilometres that the average person drives. They also use that number of kilometres to estimate the value of the car at the end of the lease and, hopefully, still make some money when the lease expires. Now, the average vehicle in the last several years gets a fuel consumption pretty close to 10 litres per 100 kilometres. This is a combination of city and highway driving, an average for vehicles. The average for Alberta would be a little higher since we have a higher population of trucks and mid-size SUVs, but for calculations we'll stay with 10 litres per 100 kilometres. That'll do.

To do 100 kilometres with 10 litres means that one litre will go for 10 kilometres. If we take the typical distance travelled per vehicle at 24,000 kilometres a year, we come out to a vehicle that will be using 2,400 litres of fuel a year. Now, the gas price according to the carbon tax is going to increase 4 and a half cents per litre, so if we take the average amount of gas used by the average Albertan, the 2,400 kilometres, and multiply that by the 4.5 cents, it comes out to \$108. Wow. We're over already. That's the amount of extra money it will cost to operate one vehicle that drives a typical lease allowance distance.

Now, referring back to the *Edmonton Journal* article, it says that the NDP quoted that the average household will incur \$70 to \$105 in indirect costs. If we take an average between the two, we get an average or midpoint or median of \$87. If we take \$87 and add that to the \$108 we just calculated for fuel costs, we're already at \$195. The rebate for a single person is only \$200, which barely covers these costs.

We haven't even talked about heating costs for their house yet. Not only that, but before we get to the heating, let's finish with the fuel costs. That \$108 is for one vehicle. But, honestly, how many Albertan families do you know that have only one car? Most people have two cars. The wife has a car. The husband has a car. In many cases kids have their own cars. The average family house in Alberta has a two-car garage. I wonder why. Why do houses come with

two-car garages instead of a one-car garage? Well, it's because the typical family in Alberta actually has two cars. That means we need to double our math. That means that two-car families driving a lease allotment are covering 48,000 kilometres. That means we're using 4,800 litres of fuel. That means that due to this carbon tax the typical family will spend an additional \$216 on fuel a year. Add that to the average of \$87 that was given, and you're up to \$303. That's higher than the NDP estimate for a couple, and we have only accounted for fuel and lowballed indirect costs and no heat.

For those who say that they should only drive one car, the average Canadian family today, the Albertan family, is a two-wage family, a two-income-earning family. I'm sure I didn't hear from across the hall that they want the wives to stay home and not work anymore, so I don't know how they're supposed to get there if they're not allowed to have a car.

Of course, not everyone drives the average. Some people drive a lot more than the average. We live in Alberta, where everything is very spread apart. My riding is extremely spread out. There are people who live outside the city and drive in to work every single day. Even here in the city some people drive to and from St. Albert or from Leduc every day to work in Edmonton. There are trades workers who have to drive between each job and put hundreds of kilometres on their car every single day to get to work, unless they're not supposed to go to work.

3:10

There are countless people who live in my riding that can't just start walking down the country roads to the grocery store or taking their kids to the bus stop, which maybe, actually, is several miles away, or to any kind of social event or anything. They can't take nonexistent public transit from their acreage to get into the city. There are people who will be far above this \$216 for gasoline who are actually quite average, everyday Albertans.

When these issues have been brought to the attention of the government, the answer was to buy a more fuel-efficient vehicle. Well, do you think my constituents are going to trade in their farm truck for a Prius? Do you think a Prius can tow a horse trailer? How many farm animals do you think you can fit in the back of a Prius? Not anywhere near enough to replace a work truck, I know that.

To recap, so far we are above the rebate amount for a family that doesn't even have any children, doesn't drive more than the average, doesn't heat their house. I took a look at some of the energy bills for houses around the 700-square-foot range, and their heating costs were fairly close to the estimates on page 96 of the budget. If the average family lives in a 700-square-foot house, we can use the \$124 amount quoted in the budget. If we take the \$1-per-gigajoule increase and add it to our \$303 cost, we come out to — whoops — \$427.

But let's not use the underestimated NDP numbers for heat. Let's get some average numbers since it's the average Albertan who is going to have to pay all this and who we're talking about. A CBC article published last year, in April, said that the average home price in Canada was \$440,000. In Edmonton that gives you a 1,600-square-foot home with an attached garage. In Calgary you'd get a 1,321-square-foot condo with two bedrooms. The realty executives website says that the average square footage of a house in Sherwood Park is 1,688 square feet. The average square footage of a house in Red Deer is 1,100 square feet. See, we live more modestly in central Alberta according to Red Deer real estate professionals.

All the numbers point out that 700 square feet is not the average size for a house in Alberta. In fact, the numbers point out that the average is 50 to 100 per cent larger than that amount. In other words, I'd estimate that a typical family can expect about 50 per cent more to the cost of heating their house. That means that instead

of \$124 extra to heat the average Albertan house, we're looking at \$186 extra.

If we add that \$186 to our average fuel cost and our lowball indirect cost of \$303, we come out at \$489 extra that families will have to pay in 2017 as we phase in the carbon tax, not even the \$338. Even taking their lowball indirect cost estimate, which they won't show us the math for, we're looking at 40 per cent more than the amount the NDP says this carbon tax will cost the average family.

That \$489 does not include all the other extra costs that Albertans will face. Are property tax increases included? We've already heard from municipalities that they're going to have to just add it onto their taxes in order to pay their portion of the carbon tax. Are school bus fees included? School boards have already said that school buses are one of their biggest expenses. They're going to have to add that into their tax fee in order to pay the carbon tax. So now we're in a situation where people have to pay taxes for their own carbon footprint but are also going to have to pay it for the municipal government's footprint. They're also going to have to pay it for school fees. We've got taxes on top of taxes here.

There is just so much uncertainty around this for Albertans that I can't believe the government are just ramming it down our throats through the whole economy at a time when our economy is struggling. This carbon tax will hurt families when they're down and when they need help. Albertan families do not need the government dipping their hands into their pockets to fund their risky ideological spending sprees. This government needs to rein in spending instead of raising taxes on the backs of families.

Now, the reality is that this carbon tax is supposed to be a bill to change behaviour. That I accept and understand. My question is: how many of you have actually changed any behaviour yet? That I have yet to see any example of or any word of.

Let's talk about natural gas. What kind of behaviour changes are we expected to produce here? What kind of behaviour change is it that we want? Natural gas is what heats your house, so the only way that you can change your behaviour on that would be to turn down the thermostat. How far do we turn the thermostat down? What kind of an impact is that going to have on seniors, people with disabilities, families with small children? In fact, for people who are unemployed or people who are in serious economic straits, will they turn their furnace down so much that it becomes an issue of health impacts that will end up costing the health system? Has the government calculated that in? Oh, I know. They won't think there's anything to that.

Actually, I was doing a lot of research on it. It's interesting that the World Health Organization has done a number of significant studies over the years on the health impacts of low indoor temperatures. I have a copy of one here from the Europe office of the World Health Organization in Copenhagen. They've done a significant amount of study on the health impacts and the complications of lowering or having low temperatures in indoor living environments. It relates to acute respiratory diseases, that are among the leading causes of death in Europe. The fact is that these respiratory infections do actually take the lead among all communicable diseases in Europe.

There are significant environmental risk factors related to poor indoor climate. The improvement of the indoor climate of dwellings is recognized as an efficient means of secondary prevention of acute respiratory infection, especially in risk groups such as preschool children and the elderly. So here now we're supposed to change the behaviour of folks. We're taxing their natural gas, which is the essential service by which they're to heat their home, and now

we're going to be pushing them to turn their thermostats down to the point where we may be actually causing health impacts. It is considered useful to review the health impact of low indoor temperature and to recommend some lower limits to protect human health, especially of the very young and the elderly.

Here we have a very ideological approach to climate change, which in fact is going to hurt mostly the people who are most vulnerable and who are most at risk. This was an unplanned, unthought through, and foolish . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions of the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on 29(2)(a) to briefly make some comments and get to a question for the hon. member across the way there. The hon. member spoke quite heavily about some of the health impacts that he perceived there may be or some of the health impacts he was worried about. Frankly, I think some of these concerns may be unfounded or, at the very least, absurd in some ways. I do want to comment that there are significant health impacts that we are going to see from the climate leadership strategy, and those are the health impacts we are going to see in the air and breathe in the air every day with the coal phase-out program so that we can have Albertans be healthy.

I would ask the hon. member what he thinks about those children who will have to live with asthma if we do not move with this program, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the hon. member what he would say to those families that have to live with the adverse effects of these lung and cardiovascular diseases for the duration of their entire lives.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member also spoke quite a bit about how we were balancing the budget and doing climate implementation on the backs of families. I do want to re-emphasize that absolutely there is going to be a rebate that two-thirds of Albertans will see, and two-thirds is a majority of Albertans. I would like to ask the hon. member about these programs. Some of the funding that's not being used for these rebates is going to be used on things like \$6.2 billion invested directly into the economy; \$3.4 billion for large-scale renewable energy and bioenergy tech; \$2.2 billion for green infrastructure, like transit; and \$645 million for Energy Efficiency Alberta.

I'd like to ask the hon. member: which of these programs is not important? Which of these programs, like the Energy Efficiency corp. or the large-scale renewables programs that we are rolling out, and green infrastructure, like the transit that the hon. member was saying was insufficient, should we not fund? Which of these programs does he not want in his own constituency for his constituents? Mr. Speaker, I think some of these questions are very important around health and the economy and these infrastructure priorities and the spending priorities, that we do find that we need to be looking at in a very tangible way. I want the hon. member to maybe answer and see where we're going with this.

3:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, why don't you give him a chance to answer?

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you to the hon. member. Yeah. I don't argue that there are health impacts to our climate around us. The point of the matter is that the way this particular carbon tax and attempt is put together creates just as many problems as it attempts to solve. I would like to continue with an answer exactly to that issue.

This isn't my fancy dreaming this up. This is from the World Health Organization. "The effect on health of low indoor temperatures, especially in dwellings occupied by the elderly, the sick, the disabled and preschool children" is a risk. There are problems here when people are going to be forced to change their behaviour – and this is a bill meant to change behaviour – that is going to put people in situations where they will make risky choices that are in fact going to put them back in just as much a health risk as what they came out of. I mean, if the health risk is outdoors and you just push it indoors, what have you gained?

This was put together by a group of 10 specialists and public health environmental scientists. They have significant concerns with this. I'm not going to go into all of the inner details of it because it's extensive, but I will go to some of the conclusions. They say that, clearly, for certain groups, such as the sick, the handicapped, the very old, and the very young, a minimum air temperature of 20 degrees is recommended. So now if we create a carbon tax that in fact says to people, "You need to change your behaviour and use less of the very thing that heats your home," the only behaviour choice possible is to lower the temperature of your house, and the World Health Organization says that that is dangerous.

I'll read the next one for you. "Ambient air temperatures below 12° C are a health risk for groups such as the elderly, the sick, the handicapped and preschool children." Does this government not realize that they are targeting the most vulnerable people in our society by creating a regulatory regime that is going to push them to lower the temperature in their house as the only way to deal with creating a behavioural change, which is the whole point of all of this if we're going to change behaviour?

I'd like to read the next one.

At air temperatures below 16° C, relative humidities above 65% impose additional hazards, particularly from respiratory and arthritic diseases and allergic reactions [exactly your issues] to moulds, fungi, house dust mites and allergens . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise and speak to the second reading on Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. Again this reminds me of a time during the Cuban Missile Crisis. There was a particular general, General LeMay, who was advising President Kennedy at the time. As they were discussing and deliberating on the issue at hand, General LeMay said to the President: you're in quite a fix, aren't you, Mr. President? The President turned around, and he said: pardon me? He goes: you're in quite a fix, aren't you, Mr. President? And the President said: well, if you hadn't noticed, you're in it with me. I think it's very timely. For us in the Progressive Conservative caucus we absolutely do believe that climate change is real. We believe that humans definitely have an impact on that.

Now, most definitely we have to reconcile what normally would happen in climate change and the science of the impact of humans and what humans have on the climate. Without a doubt, I think any kind of logical thinking would say that for humans we can definitely improve our usage of fossil fuels and other combustibles, how we interact with the environment in terms of bettering the environment and trying to leave it somewhat better than when we found it, which likely won't be the case. At least we can reduce as much harm as, you know, we may cause to it, Mr. Speaker.

However, that being said, a number of the strategies under this plan as a whole are not necessarily reflected in the bill before us. The bill doesn't specifically outline how the 100-megatonne

emission cap on oil sand activity will work in practice. The bill doesn't necessarily touch on the methane reduction strategy. It doesn't cover all the aspects of the government's climate leadership plan, and it brings me back to the whole message of what I was talking about before. The environment: we are all part of that, we are in it together, and we have to figure out a path together.

I would go back. I should rephrase that. I guess we all should rephrase this. While the government may be implementing this plan, this is Albertans' climate leadership plan that they will be affected by, and we're seeing that in business and in industry, Mr. Speaker. It's important because we still need to feed families. We still need to grow business, and we still need to have a role not just in Canada but around the world. One way to do that is to have a strong economic foundation to stand on and, of course, along with that, a healthy record on the environment. I would remind the House that it was the governments of the past that actually introduced the price on carbon for industry a number of years ago. So there was a plan.

Let's take a look at the bill. The first part, the Climate Leadership Act – sorry, Mr. Speaker. Let me back up a little bit. One of the things, as we think about that, I talked about was the environment, and I talked about the economy. I believe and our caucus believes that you don't need to sacrifice one to have the other. I think that it would be important to be able to look at this bill in greater detail to understand the total effects of that on the economy, on industry, and what that looks like. I don't think that anybody here in this House can necessarily predict the future, but we can certainly try to create an algorithm of what we think it might be and be able to create an algorithm that: if this particular part of the plan is not working, what do we move to next?

The parts of the bill are the Climate Leadership Act, which basically enables the carbon tax. The second part of the bill is the Energy Efficiency Alberta Act, which creates another organization at an arm's length for energy-efficient programs and a few other things. The third is the amendments to the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act, my guess is so that it's more aligned with the government's climate leadership plan. So as we move off kind of on the first part of that plan, I guess, again, because we're all in this together, including Alberta families and municipalities, what is the impact this tax really will have for families and communities? We shouldn't assume that one-third of Albertans can afford it in the sense of, yes, maybe that's what is coming in, but we don't know what's going out in terms of supporting their elderly parents or helping kids they have in their families with disabilities and those sort of things, to make that assumption and to assume that for all municipalities this may not affect it. That's why I say that it's important to maybe have an algorithm and to take a look at: maybe now is not the time to institute a tax in its current form.

I do believe that having, you know, a revenue-neutral tax can work. I think we've seen it work in B.C. We know that there has been roughly a 19 per cent reduction, albeit a 19 per cent reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, albeit in heavy industry, but I think there are some merits. I do believe there are merits to this plan. But, again, is now the time to be taxing Alberta families when we're hurting so bad and when we need investment to stay? I'll talk about that in a little bit.

3:30

Then the second is that we talk about the energy efficiency strategy. Again, I think it is a good initiative, but we as members in this House collectively need to form an algorithm. I think that far too often – and many people in this House would recognize that – when we look at sectors of our government, ABCs as we would call

them, perhaps they're not necessarily reaching the outcomes that we've asked them to reach. I think part of that is because perhaps we haven't determined or said to them that this is the outcome that we want to see, that this is the outcome that Albertans want to see, a timeline to meet those deadlines and to come back with sound information, particularly when something like this is so important. We're taxing Albertans, we're taxing industry, and as much as the government would say what they think it may be in terms of what they think it's going to cost, they can't promise that for every family. They can't promise that for every industry and every business. There will be an impact. For every action there will be a reaction. So we need to define those targets and those outcomes.

Third, we talked about changes to the climate change and emissions management fund. Will these changes prevent things like research and development from happening, the changes to this particular part, or will that help improve CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>x</sub> emissions? In fact, Mr. Speaker, just recently the federal energy minister has said that carbon capture is viable and a good plan to help reduce carbon emissions from coal-fired generation.

Mr. Speaker, I think it would definitely be important for the government to take a look at what's happening around the world. We are seeing in all jurisdictions the development of more coal-fired generation plants. I'm not talking about India, and I'm not talking about China. We're talking about Denmark, Germany, European countries that have already beat us to the punch on renewables, and some places – I believe it's Holland – are maybe stepping away from more of their wind generation.

Now, it's always interesting to me, Mr. Speaker. I've been a part of that, and I haven't always been not culpable. Let me put it that way. Being in government and now not being in government, I recognize sometimes where I probably should have been listening a little closer to certain things, and I'm happy, like I said before in previous members' statements, to stand on the ground that when I learn a lesson, I'm happy to own the lesson. But over here, when we talk about some of these things, that perhaps the decisions that this government is making today – I'm not here to blame the government. I'm not here to stop you from what you're doing, but perhaps we can encourage the government to look at other options.

Of all things, perhaps on this particular bill the government will look at amendments that are reasonable amendments, that don't change the plan's direction but, hopefully, improve it, and I hope that there is a robust debate on that and why and not just political speech one way or the other because this is what we believe to be the case. Now, I guess the other government members – and everybody is nose deep in reading and everything else. Fair enough. I've done that myself. But I guess the question is: what if we get it wrong? We're in a global economy now, an economy that's super competitive, and everybody wants to be the new Alberta, as it were.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing what some of the coming amendments might be from other members of the House. I thank you for your attention today and the House's attention. I think that there are many areas where we can improve, a collaboration, and nothing would please me more than to see the government get this right versus wrong, but of course they have to be open to the idea of improvements from this side of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Dang:** Under 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-South West, please proceed.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again under 29(2)(a) to make some brief comments and remarks on what the hon. member across the way said and maybe to ask some questions as well. I noticed he focused really heavily on three pieces, and one of the big pieces he said was: what if we get it wrong? What if we get it wrong? He started that off with some things about the economy-wide price on carbon, that it is not the right time right now, that right now is not good for that.

Mr. Speaker, I have to question: if not now, when? We know now because right now is the best opportunity for Alberta to be able to make those investments in renewable energy, investments in Energy Efficiency Alberta, and investments in different areas. I ask the hon. member across the way: if not now, when?

When we are looking at these things, we have to look at them and say that we've done a very exhaustive consultation on this with the climate leadership implementation plan. We've done a very exhaustive panel that has gone out and spoken to industry, spoken to communities, spoken to Albertans and, really, come back and compiled a very comprehensive list of people they've talked to and made very tangible recommendations that say that now absolutely is the right time to be phasing in an economy-wide price on carbon. We know that as a result of man-made climate change we need to use that as a tangible way to decrease those emissions that we are creating as people and as Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I have to ask the hon. member across the way: when would be the time if not now? The very comprehensive panel has determined that now is the right time; the very comprehensive review has determined that now is the right time.

He also spoke quite extensively about the energy efficiency corp. and how the energy efficiency corp. wasn't going to accomplish anything or didn't have any tangible goals, Mr. Speaker. I challenge that. I challenge that and say that the energy efficiency corp. – if I can find my note on it here – absolutely is going to make a difference. We are the last province in the country, I believe, to not have an energy efficiency agency, and I think that is something that we need to shed as quickly as possible. I think that the hon. member would be remiss if he didn't support the creation of this organization because I think it is very important that we establish a program that delivers energy efficiency programming, raises awareness among Albertans about their energy consumption, and helps develop Alberta's energy efficiency services industry.

I think the hon. member might have some comments to make. I'd like to ask him: what would he like the structure of that to be, and what types of programming should we be seeing? We do know that Albertans of every stripe in the province do need to reduce their consumption. Perhaps the hon. member might have some insight into how we can do that or moving forward what might be . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member. Well, it's true. I mean, in the beginning I did say that we're all in this together, and I do believe that there needs to be an economy-wide price on carbon. I did not say that we didn't. I just asked if now would be the right time. I'm not saying that you can't start now, but I'm saying that perhaps there is a scale. The way I say scale is that we can start now based on the way the economy is performing, and over time you can see increases, and that could be set by the expert panel based on the economy.

Again, we don't have to sacrifice the economy for the environment, or vice versa, but I think that there can be reasonable amendments and reasonable approaches to how we tackle that. We

can all come up with that in this House. We all represent Albertans. We were all elected here, and that's such an honourable thing. You know, everybody here is proud to do that. We want to see good work on this. We want to see good work on the environment. We want to see good work on the economy.

Perhaps it's a scale of tax, right? Perhaps it's reducing some of the additional taxes even for those folks who have extra income to spend, because, you know, we want to drive the economy by spending. Those folks that can spend: we don't want to deter them. My guess is that the very folks that the NDP and this government champion – we seem to hear: teachers, nurses, and doctors. Well, guess what? Those folks are going to be paying additional carbon tax because they're going to be above that income. That's good, but we don't necessarily want it to be a penalty. Again, maybe it's a phase thing. So that's one of the things.

On the energy efficiency I'm not saying to not have the arm's-length body, but what I'm saying, based on past experience, is that sometimes in these agencies, because we are not clear on the outcomes or the targets we want set, again, which can happen here in this House, determined by all members – so we can all see this progress.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

3:40

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and speak to second reading of Bill 20. You know, I want to acknowledge the previous member and some of the comments he made. First of all, I appreciate the fact that he and his party recognize climate change is real. I also want to recognize that the member had some thoughtful comments to make on this bill, and I appreciate his interest in wanting to move on climate change. I appreciate that he has some concerns, so hopefully in the course of what I'm about to share, I can dispel some of his concerns.

I want to start off, Mr. Speaker, by saying first of all how proud I am of the work that the environment minister and the Premier have done on this historic bill. Quite frankly, I'll share with you a vision or an image that will stay in my mind for the rest of my life. That was last November, when our Premier and our Minister of Environment and Parks were on the stage to make the announcement of our historic climate leadership plan, joined by members of industry, CEOs of CNRL, of Shell, of Suncor, joined by indigenous leaders, who were also joined by representatives from world-leading environmental NGOs. It was historic in the sense that all of them shared a stage and had the same message, which is that this is absolutely the right way to move forward, that this is action that Alberta has been in need of for decades, and that this was really going to help jump Alberta to the front of the pack.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I have a few anecdotal stories to share with the House. In my travels and in my time as Economic Development and Trade minister the international attention that this piece of legislation and our government's historic climate leadership plan have brought to Alberta shouldn't be overlooked.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, in my recent trade mission to China I can tell you that at every meeting with every official – and I met with both provincial and state officials – one of the top three issues that they are interested in and that China wants to take action on is climate and the environment. They were keenly interested to learn what we are doing here in Alberta. I can tell you, you know, that despite the fact that China is struggling still with emissions, from coal-fired electricity to heating and cooking with coal to other forms

of energy, they are starting to pivot and move toward a greener environment. Frankly, that's a trend that we are seeing world-wide.

As I mentioned, I think, once in this House, I think it was also an incredible moment when our Prime Minister was speaking with the President of the United States, who directly referenced our Premier and Alberta and Alberta's climate leadership plan as being a robust plan that makes Alberta a leader internationally when it comes to action on our climate. It shows that our government not only has a vision for where we want to go but is acting on it.

I find it interesting, you know, when some members and some folks try to pit the economy versus the environment. Frankly, Mr. Speaker – and for years I've been saying this, even when I was an opposition member sitting in the corner of the House – the environment and the economy are two sides of the same coin. They are not opposites of one another. They do and can work quite well together. With my ministry and with my lens of job creation and economic diversification, one of the things that excites me the most about this bill is the fact that we are investing in not only energy efficiency, which is going to create jobs, but we're also investing in innovation and in clean technology, which, quite frankly, is something that internationally countries and different jurisdictions are investing significantly in. I do think that Alberta has been a leader when it comes to some of the innovation around our oil and gas sector.

I think that this bill will give the right incentives for companies to reduce their emissions and, quite frankly, to reduce them through innovative technologies, through best practices. And they will be rewarded in the sense that when they drive down their emissions, they can in fact earn credits that they can then turn and sell. What it does is that it incents our industry to do better, but it also rewards those that are leaders. Those that decide that they want to drag their feet and do little to address it, whether it's greenhouse gases or methane emissions, well, they're going to have to pay for it because, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, we all pay for it. We pay for it through the air that we breathe, through the water that we drink, and through our environmental costs. This bill and this climate leadership plan does in fact incent those companies.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the environment minister has talked about a number of jurisdictions world-wide that are turning to a price on carbon because that is one of the ways that we are going to get meaningful action. I appreciate the previous speaker's comments about not now, but the challenge is: then when? You know, it makes me think of any new habit or new event that we want to do in our lives. It's very easy to put off, to put off, to put off for a better day. Well, you know what? There's no better day than today. Again, moving forward with this, I'm excited about the opportunities that we're going to have throughout our province.

I know some of the members opposite spoke about seniors and our most vulnerable and low-income Albertans. The environment minister has been very clear, but I'm happy to reiterate that two-thirds of Albertans will be receiving a rebate. So to talk about low-income seniors and how this is going to hurt their pockets: they are going to be rebated. This is not going to hurt their pockets. Outside of the rebate, again, we will be investing and reinvesting every dollar that's collected through this levy, whether it's into renewables, energy efficiency. There will be programs and opportunities for every Albertan to participate in should they so choose.

Again, you know, we are going to be driving the clean tech and innovations piece. I do want you to know, Mr. Speaker, that my counterpart the federal minister of innovation and science has through their budget signalled that innovation and investing in clean

tech is a priority of our federal government. Now is absolutely the time to be investing in our province, and I can tell you that I will be working with my counterpart in Ottawa and the minister of environment to ensure that we are leveraging federal dollars for all of our initiatives around innovation and clean tech.

The other day our Premier signed a memorandum of understanding with the Premier of Ontario, looking for opportunities to collaborate on energy efficiency programs, on investing in clean tech and innovation. Mr. Speaker, that is how we are going to continue to not only move Alberta forward but how we're going to move Canada forward. It's become clear to me that investing in technologies and in people is absolutely critical.

You know, it's sad when members on the opposite side of the House want to do nothing and will reluctantly admit that there is an issue here that we need to address. What's frustrating is that when we look at, you know, our future generations and we look at our schools – and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, being a teacher, that one of the number one issues that students bring up, that is near and dear to their hearts, is the environment and what we are doing to protect our environment, to ensure that when we pass it on to our kids and our grandkids, it is just as pristine as the way we found it. I can tell you that there are many, many school groups and many students across this province who are proud of the fact that their government is taking action, taking meaningful action, that is going to result in a far better and cleaner province for future generations.

3:50

If you would just indulge me for a second, Mr. Speaker. I'm just trying to find – here we go – a couple of other points that I wanted to make. Again, there were lots of concerns coming from the other side of the House as far as farmers, you know, getting their product to market. I recognize that market access is a challenge within our province. That's why I'm working diligently with the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and the Minister of Transportation to come up with some solutions to help ensure that we are getting our product to market. But I do want to clarify for our farmers and ranchers that the minister of environment has been very clear that there will be purple gas, that they will not be paying the carbon levy on, to ensure that we are not unnecessarily burdening our agricultural sector and our farmers.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker – and I think this is maybe one of the reasons the Minister of Energy is so excited about this climate leadership plan – is that inaction for many, many years has resulted in zero pipelines to tidewater. Alberta is landlocked. We need to get our product to tidewater. At the moment we have one buyer who sets the price. We have a significant differential where we're losing about \$15 per barrel on oil we're selling to the United States. If we want to reduce that differential, if we want to open up new markets, we need to get pipelines both east and west. I can tell you that this is climate leadership plan, despite what the opposition says, that the rest of the world has taken notice of and is interested not only in investing in Alberta but is interested in working with Alberta.

Again, our Premier had some very positive conversations with the Premier of Ontario, and they are interested in moving our products. They recognize that, you know, a pipeline like Energy East does not just benefit Alberta; it benefits Ontarians, it benefits Quebecers, it benefits those in the Maritimes, the prairies, and because of the tens of thousands of jobs that would be created from that project, the billions of dollars in GDP, it will benefit all Canadians. I can tell you that the Minister of Energy and myself and the Premier, at every opportunity we have in speaking with our federal counterparts and our provincial counterparts both east and west, talk about market access and that Alberta is doing its part. We

need to co-operate with the rest of our country, so they see that we are taking meaningful action.

You know, I can't tell you, Mr. Speaker, how many times I stood in this House as a member of the fourth party, in opposition, frustrated to hear of the number of trips that the previous government took down to the States to try to promote pipelines, yet they refused to do anything about changing our reputation and the perception of Alberta. The rest of the world has been waiting for action. Well, they need not wait any longer because our government is taking meaningful action through this bill.

Mr. Speaker, as you probably well know, I could talk about this all day and all evening because it excites me quite a lot. But I just want to say that this bill is the right thing to do. It's the right thing not only for today and for tomorrow, but it's the right thing for our future generations. I am proud to support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the hon. minister mentioned all of the representatives from big industry that stood with the Premier and the minister of environment on the stage when they made the announcement. I'm just wondering if they were all so happy to do that because of clause 3(2)(a). I'll just read it quickly here for you.

3(1) The purpose of this Act is to provide for a carbon levy on consumers of fuel to be effected through a series of payment and remittance obligations that apply to persons throughout the fuel supply chains.

(2) The revenue from the carbon levy may only be used . . .

And I'll just read you the first one.

(a) for initiatives related to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases or supporting Alberta's ability to adapt to climate change.

I'm just wondering if this means that the carbon tax paid by average Albertans will be paying to subsidize big industry in their research and development to implement initiatives to reduce emissions and if any of this money from this carbon tax will be going to big oil companies like Canadian Natural Resources, Shell, et cetera.

Also, if we're going to be supporting big industry and the implementation of initiatives to reduce emissions, if the coal industry reduces their emissions to the point where they're at acceptable levels like natural gas, will they back down on the job-killing plan to shut down all of our coal industry in the province?

Thanks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't think it's beneficial to the debate that the member is trying to clearly drive a wedge between some of our largest employers in the energy sector and Albertans. Quite frankly, this price on carbon is economy-wide. We've been clear on this. It is not just industries or the producers that are going to be paying this price on carbon. It is absolutely everyone who is contributing to polluting our environment. In fact, again, that is, quite frankly, the most equitable way to price carbon, where you're not penalizing one industry. I mean, I can tell you that I would imagine that had we chosen to only put a price on the producers, the opposition would jump up and down and talk about how we are anti-oil and -gas. Well, you know what? We believe everyone has a part to play, everyone shares in the responsibility, and therefore everyone will pay for their carbon footprint.

Again, there are numerous examples that the minister of environment has shared as far as whether it's economists or

environmentalists world-wide who have talked about how pricing carbon is one of the most effective ways to drive innovation and efficiency. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I've spoken with a number of economists who have said that that part is fantastic. We also need to ensure that we're investing not only in energy efficiency but in innovation, which is exactly what our government is doing. I'm quite proud of the fact that innovation fits under my ministry, but I'll be working very closely with the minister of environment and CCEMC and all of the organizations that are working toward that.

Toward the tail end there the member talked about coal. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have talked at length about phasing out coal-fired electricity because of its detrimental effects on our health. Again, I'll reiterate the fact that out of our 18 coal-producing facilities, 12 of which, due to federal regulations, are set to close pre-2030, starting in 2019 – we made a commitment, and I made a commitment both to this House and outside of this House that I will be working with all affected communities throughout the province of Alberta. We want to work with those communities, especially those that, because of our actions, are phasing out before their end-of-life date.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that there are many opportunities for Albertans, whether it's through retraining, whether it's through opportunities for facilities to possibly repurpose to natural gas, or looking at other opportunities for workers within this province.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that what we're not going to do is to continue to do nothing. Quite frankly, this is one of those issues that is not just going to go away. Through our actions not only are we developing a social licence, but we are opening up new opportunities. We are transitioning to 30 per cent renewables, which – I can tell you that there are many that are quite exciting.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really excited to get to stand and speak to Bill 20 today. I feel like I'm going to probably echo a lot of what the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has said, but I am just thrilled about this bill. It's a bill that firmly establishes Alberta as a leader in climate environmental policy. It's a bill that will develop our economy, and it will create jobs. It's a bill that will protect my children and all Alberta children from the negative health impacts of low air quality, a bill that will allow Alberta to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, which is the right thing to do because they cause climate change, because it is real.

A lack of action by the previous government on climate change is actually one of the main reasons I got involved in politics in the first place. Had the previous government chosen to take firmer action on climate change, had the federal government chosen to take more action on climate change, I might not have felt the need to run for politics and I might not have ended up here in this House. I got involved as a millennial, as a person with a science degree, and as an educator. I was tired of living with governments at both the provincial and federal level who just didn't care. They did the minimum amount required. They regularly received the fossil of the year award at international climate change meetings, meetings that have been happening more or less on an annual basis since the early 1990s.

4:00

I had said earlier in this House that I had been waiting my whole life for this legislation. I may have been exaggerating. I think that, more accurately, my desire for governments to act on ensuring that



we have a clean environment started in about the fifth grade, when I first learned about the greenhouse effect and the depletion of the ozone layer. This, remarkably, is an area that we can draw on as a success story. The global scientific community noticed a problem in the '90s with the depletion of the ozone layer. The international political community acted, and we were able to reduce CFCs and subsequently slow the thinning of the ozone layer. The world did not stand idle on this. They did not allow things to continue as per the status quo.

Now, this is what the Official Opposition would have us do on the issue of climate change. They would have us do nothing. They spend a lot of time talking about increased costs, additional taxes, and that these are bad things because, seemingly, this is all that they know to talk about. It prevents them from having to talk about the real issue here, the issue that is climate change. The real issue is ensuring that our children – mine, yours, the world's children – have a planet to live on in the future.

I spent seven years of my life teaching, and if there's one thing that I know to be true, it's that kids know what's important. When I talk to kids, they ask me what we're doing to combat climate change. They recognize that climate change is the defining issue of our time and that if we don't do something about it, they're going to be in trouble when they grow up. I don't want to have my kids ask me when I get older: "Mom, why didn't you do anything? You were in a position where you could have done something, and you chose not to."

The longer we bury our heads in the sand and the longer we ignore the reality of stronger storms, more extreme temperature swings, acidifying oceans, melting glaciers, limited freshwater supply – I could go on – the harder it will be for our children to fix if they can fix it at all. We're not waiting. This government refuses to wait and see on the fundamental issue of our time. This government is moving Alberta forward.

This bill does several important things. It implements the carbon levy, which will provide incentives for people to reduce their emissions. My colleagues have tabled multiple articles that state that an economy-wide carbon price is well noted as the best way to reduce emissions.

It also puts rebates in place for two-thirds of Albertans that will help to offset costs. I'd just like to note that approximately 80 per cent of folks in my riding, Calgary-East, will receive this rebate. I have a lot of low-income seniors. I have a lot of folks who take public transit, who live in smaller homes, and these are people who are most likely going to have extra money in their pockets because of this rebate. They're going to be able to spend that money in the local economy: at our local co-op, cafes, restaurants.

Thirdly, what this bill does is that it creates Energy Efficiency Alberta, which will mean that we're no longer the last jurisdiction in North America to have an energy efficiency strategy.

I talk to people every day who are thrilled that we are moving forward with this policy. I was at a conference in Calgary recently on community solar development, and I spoke with people who had moved back to Alberta from Vancouver specifically because of our policies, specifically because they saw an opportunity here in Alberta that didn't exist elsewhere. They were going to be able to start a new business because of our government's climate change policy. They have hope for the first time for an industry here to grow that's outside of our traditional area of strength. I spoke to engineers who are starting residential solar companies, and lots of folks are interested in community solar development and, you know, residential solar development. They're excited that the

possibility exists to be able to do something about having a cleaner future.

The Official Opposition continues to talk about companies running away because of this policy, but I'm going to have to disagree with them. This plan will help to create a modern and diversified economy. It's going to reinvest \$6.2 billion directly right here in Alberta: \$3.4 billion for large-scale renewable energy, bioenergy, and technology; \$2.2 billion for green infrastructure, more transit; and \$645 million for Energy Efficiency Alberta, which will deliver a variety of energy efficiency and microgeneration plans. I mean, together this is expected to create at least 3,000 new jobs. To deny that this plan will have any positive impact on the economy is its own kind of risky ideology.

You know, I have a friend who runs a company called urban green energy. He grew up with me, graduated high school, and he saw the opportunity in renewables and was able to start a company that makes little wind generators. They've installed them all over the world. They've installed them on the Eiffel Tower, football stadiums, Whole Foods in Brooklyn. By all accounts he's been very successful in renewables.

I've also heard the other side talk about a social licence as being a thing that we've created, that doesn't actually exist, but there are various occasions when I've heard positive results on this climate change policy from folks you might not expect. I sat next to the former Leader of the Official Opposition at an event not long ago, and she told me that the response she has received from business leaders and folks across Canada has been very positive, that they feel that this policy will help in getting our product to tidewater.

I've spoken with legislators from the United States, with Congressman Jeff Morris from Washington, who's done some amazing work on solar in his state, and Senator Arnie Roblan from Oregon. These are two gentlemen who represent a large swath of the west coast, which is an area that's very susceptible to climate change, and they're acutely aware of the need to act on it. They also both have pipelines that end in their ridings, pipelines that come from Alberta and end in Washington and in Oregon, and they're aware of the economic benefits they bring, the jobs that these pipelines provide. So they're very pragmatic on the need to balance economic benefits of fossil fuels with the needs of the environment, and they were both very positive and very excited to talk to us about our climate leadership plan.

The Leach report notes that "Alberta's fossil fuel resources will have lower value if we cannot develop them with lower emissions impact," that we need to develop processes which allow for value-added conversion to noncombustion products, which is something that we're doing through our petrochemical diversification program. For too long in this province and in this country we have put the environment at odds with the economy. I've heard the other parties state that this isn't something that we have to do, but when they were presented with the option to grow the economy and to help the environment, they didn't do it. They didn't recognize that the economy and the environment are fundamentally intertwined and that a global movement is in place to move to a carbon-constrained future. It's vital that we have a plan to move Alberta into that future, and this is that plan. I am so proud to support it, and I would urge all other members in the House to do so as well.

I've enjoyed listening to the debate so far. I believe that we have made good progress on Bill 20, so I would move to adjourn debate at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-East?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise in support of Bill 20, a bill that I believe marks a historic step forward for our province. Now, we've heard a lot of criticisms since the introduction of our climate leadership plan. I'd just like to make one thing clear. A carbon levy is good public policy.

As noted by Dr. Andrew Leach, who chaired our Climate Change Advisory Panel, a wide consensus of economists around the world supports implementing a price on carbon. In the words of Canada's Ecofiscal Commission, a nonpartisan commission of economists whose advisory board includes such radical socialists as Preston Manning, former Alberta Finance minister Jim Dinning, economist Jack Mintz, who members opposite have called on for his nonpartisan expertise – they're all part of this group, and they state:

Carbon pricing makes economic sense for Canadian provinces. It reduces [greenhouse gas] emissions at the lowest possible cost... help[s] position Canada to better compete in carbon-constrained international markets by sparking low-carbon innovation [and] by representing a transparent and credible climate policy, and one known to be effective, [that] may help to secure... market access for our abundant and valuable natural resources.

There is no argument. All experts agree that placing a price on carbon is the best way to reduce emissions.

4:10

Now, it's important to note that in doing so, it is not the imposition of a new cost; it's the removal of a subsidy. For years economies around the world have failed to take into account the environmental and health impacts of business operations. The costs generated by these activities have instead been borne by all orders of government, who have simply absorbed the direct and indirect costs generated by the burning of fossil fuels. The costs realized through a price on carbon are not new ones that are being imposed from outside the economic system. They're costs that have always been there. The price on carbon simply makes them explicit and transparent as part of the cost of consumption. This provides an economic incentive to reduce those same costs by reducing the amount of carbon produced.

I apologize for the basic carbon tax 101, Mr. Speaker, but it seems to be something that's needed for some members of this House.

Currently there are about 40 countries and over 20 states, cities, and regions that have all stepped up to put a price on carbon, and now with this bill Alberta will lead Canada in joining this forward-thinking coalition. Our climate leadership plan was put together based on the advice provided by Dr. Andrew Leach and our Climate Change Advisory Panel. It has the support of industry, environmental advocates, municipal and federal partners, economists, health professionals, and investors. As recommended by economists, every dollar that is raised through this levy will be fully recycled.

Now, I was surprised earlier today to hear the Member for Calgary-Elbow state that he had never heard the term "revenue recycling." A quick Google search shows that this is, in fact, the common term that's used when discussing how government should make use of the funds raised through carbon pricing. Canada's Ecofiscal Commission released a report specifically on this issue

entitled *Choose Wisely: Options and Trade-offs in Recycling Carbon Pricing Revenues*.

They make four recommendations on how governments should recycle carbon revenues. First, they suggest that governments should use revenue recycling to address fairness and competitiveness concerns surrounding carbon pricing. Second, they suggest that governments should clearly define their objectives for revenue recycling. What is it that they intend to do? What purposes do they intend to achieve? Third, they recommend that governments should use a range of approaches when recycling revenue. They feel that it's important that we have a variety of options and utilize many different levers to address the various issues that surround the issue of both climate change and the effects of putting a price on carbon. They note that each approach comes with particular strengths and weaknesses and that no one approach on its own can meet or address all of the important factors involved, which include things like maintaining household fairness, supporting business competitiveness, and also improving economic and environmental performance.

In this they note that governments have six main options for how they recycle carbon revenues: first, direct rebates to households and consumers; second, reductions in personal and corporate income tax; third, investments in low-carbon technology; fourth, investments in infrastructure; fifth, reduction of public debt; and then lastly, transitional support to industry. Now, interestingly, in this report they actually go through and look at various provinces across Canada, and they make some recommendations on how those different options should be prioritized. In the province of Alberta they placed a high priority on household transfers, on investments in low-carbon technology, and on transitional support to industry. They placed a low priority on cuts to personal and corporate income tax, perhaps recognizing that Alberta, of course, still remains the lowest tax jurisdiction in Canada.

**An Hon. Member:** You're welcome.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you. A tradition we're proud to continue.

They also place a low priority on reduction of public debt. They place a moderate priority on investments in infrastructure. Lastly, then, they recommend that all revenue recycling priorities should be monitored and adjusted over time.

Mr. Speaker, our plan meets all of these criteria. It calls for us to recycle \$6.2 billion in revenues directly back into the economy through several channels and clearly outlines our objectives in doing so. Our plan calls for us to recycle \$6.2 billion back into the economy. We're investing \$3.4 billion in large-scale renewable energy, bioenergy, and technology. This, as has been noted by my colleagues ahead of me, will help to create jobs in the province of Alberta while moving us to a more secure energy system that will cause fewer problems and difficulties in terms of health. We're investing \$2.2 billion in green infrastructure like transit, and we're investing an additional \$645 million in Energy Efficiency Alberta.

At long last, Mr. Speaker, as has been noted by some of the members ahead of me, we are finally bringing an energy efficiency program to the province of Alberta. On that point, I'd like to note that I hear members opposite that are expressing all kinds of concerns about the effects this may have on businesses, the effects it may have on nonprofit groups and communities, on our schools, our hospitals. We're taking bold action. Alberta is a province that's known for bold action. We are a province of innovators. We are a province of people who step up and face a challenge. Through Energy Efficiency Alberta we will be standing alongside all of our

community partners. We're not abandoning them. We are going to work with them to help them find the efficiencies that members of the opposition seem to believe are everywhere to be found except when it comes to climate change or in trying to reduce the use of carbon.

We will work with our partners in communities. We will work with them. We will help them. We will provide programs that support them to help achieve the energy efficiency that we need and that will assist them ultimately, Mr. Speaker, to reduce their costs and to pay less than they currently pay.

With that, I think we're going to have more opportunity to further this debate. I'd like at this point, then, to make a motion to adjourn debate.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:18 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Piquette
Bilous	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Kazim	Rodney
Clark	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Connolly	Loyola	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schreiner
Dach	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Drever	McKittrick	Starke
Eggen	Miller	Swann
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Turner
Fraser	Nielsen	Westhead
Ganley	Payne	Woollard
Goehring	Phillips	

Against the motion:

Drysdale	Hanson	Orr
Ellis	Loewen	Stier
Gotfried		

Totals: For – 41 Against – 7

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask for unanimous consent to revert to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to my colleagues for this opportunity. Given that we have two guests in the audience that I've worked with over a number of years, I thought I'd take the time to introduce them. They're above the opposition members, facing the government side, and they are Mary Martin and Dave Coburn. Mary is the chair of the Calgary Catholic

school board. Dave was the chair of the Edmonton public school board when I first became a trustee. They're both strong advocates for children and comprehensive school health. Please rise. Please join me in welcoming them.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Government Motions

#### Medical Assistance in Dying

17. Ms Payne moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to implement measures to regulate medical assistance in dying consistent with the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *Carter versus Canada* (Attorney General) and any legislative measures approved by the Parliament of Canada to ensure that Albertans can benefit from the orderly implementation of this court decision so that:

- Albertans may exercise their rights to access medical assistance in dying;
- appropriate safeguards be put in place to protect vulnerable Albertans;
- conscience rights are respected while ensuring the right of patients to access this service;
- the practice of medical assistance in dying is closely monitored and measures regulating medical assistance in dying are reviewed within one year.

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Supreme Court of Canada has decided that existing federal criminal law violated the rights of Canadians to avail themselves of medical assistance in dying. This coming Monday that ruling comes into effect. For that reason, it is important that we move forward with our regulations. The federal government has the primary responsibility for legislation in this area, and we intend for our regulations to fit within their legislative framework, which isn't yet set and actually may be subject to court challenges.

In the meantime Alberta needs to be prepared. Today I am rising to introduce a motion that outlines the principles that will guide our government as we move forward on providing medical assistance in dying. Our government will seek to ensure that Albertans may exercise their rights to access medical assistance in dying, that appropriate safeguards are put in place to protect vulnerable Albertans, that conscience rights are respected while ensuring the rights of patients to access medical assistance in dying, that the practice of medical assistance in dying is closely monitored, and that measures regulating medical assistance in dying are reviewed.

There has been much debate at the federal level on this important and deeply emotional topic. Our government has undertaken significant consultation with the public to get their feedback related to medical assistance in dying. We are ahead of other jurisdictions in terms of the consultations we've undertaken. Through these consultations Albertans clearly told us that they generally support medical assistance in dying but expect strong safeguards to protect the vulnerable and ensure the safety of patients and health care providers.

We heard from more than 15,000 Albertans, and they told us that just slightly more than half supports eligibility for those under 18 as long as they are mature and competent enough to understand the request. All agreed that for a request to be valid, the person must have made the application while still cognitively competent enough

to make the request. All submissions agreed that special cautions are needed for those with mental health and addictions issues. These are just a few examples of what we heard about this complex issue when we talked with Albertans.

Our government also completed extensive consultation with the medical community and other key stakeholders. Further, Alberta is the only province outside Quebec where our Legislature will have the opportunity to provide feedback on this deeply personal and difficult issue. That's what we're doing by putting forward this motion in the House to outline the principles that are framing our regulations. We will also be making the draft regulations public so that the opposition can provide input in this House on those regulations if they wish to do so. Our draft regulations are in line with the Carter decision. We look forward to a respectful debate with our colleagues on an issue of such importance to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, we know that medical assistance in dying will be a practice and a process that will evolve over time. Our responsibility in this matter is actually quite small and specifically relates to the framework for medical providers and patients. We are committed to supporting the rights of patients who wish to use their right to access medical assistance in dying as laid out in the Carter decision.

At the same time we are interested in enabling this in the way that is the least polarizing and intrusive. We are not taking a heavy hand in enforcement. We do reserve the right to change our approach if it becomes unmanageable and patients wishing to access this right cannot do so, but we are moving forward in a way that is as respectful as it can be to all people in Alberta. This framework will allow enough flexibility to adapt to issues as they arise and to ensure a seamless transition once the federal legislation is passed. It will ensure that Alberta takes a responsible approach to providing access to those who qualify in this new area of law and medicine while protecting health care workers, patients, and vulnerable Albertans.

I invite my colleagues to begin this important conversation today and to work with us to make sure that the framework is in place to support Albertans who make this choice starting June 6. I look forward to tabling the draft regulations in the House.

Thank you.

4:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very, very much. I guess I want to start by saying that I heard the associate minister talk about the opportunity to have Albertans fully, fully involved in this, the most important of areas: end of life, family, you know, areas that are crucial and sometimes very hard to talk about. So I hope that the NDP government means what they say when they talk about listening to Albertans, when they talk about allowing the opposition to do our outreach to all Albertans as well and to ensure that everyone, all faiths, all ideas, good front-line health workers, family, and community builders, all legitimately get heard.

Yeah. I heard that a few minutes ago from the associate minister, and I'm grateful. I heard that at 10 after 3 in our prebriefing upstairs, and I'm grateful that that was said. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned, and I want Albertans to know that, you know, like, yeah, we knew that June 6 was set by the federal government a long time ago. Of course, we don't know what the framework is. This has started off in a way, though, that hasn't made it easy for the opposition to be involved, and that is this government's fault. We were given the first draft on Friday. That was changed yesterday, and at 3 o'clock today I was told about a meeting at 3 o'clock. So I hurriedly went to it, and, yeah, the information and what was shared were a start, but by a quarter to 4 a different NDP minister was

knocking on the door, wanting the room. The meeting was over, with so many questions unanswered. Okay.

Associate Minister, this is a start. This is a framework for all Albertans – all Albertans – from all communities, all faiths, all ideas to be heard. Mr. Speaker, we haven't started that way, so I hope that we finish that way. I hope that we truly, truly mean that this is going to be, you know, one of the key areas that we can get Albertans involved in. In my four years as an MLA very fortunate and grateful to represent Cypress-Medicine Hat, about assisted dying – it's called other things – I have had countless people e-mail me and call me. Albertans want to be involved in this because we have ideas, because we're loving and caring, because it's one of the most important parts of life, and it's one of most unknown. It comes down to protecting the vulnerable. It comes down to protecting the conscience rights of top-notch front-line health workers. My assistant said it to me this way: the closer you get to this, the harder this is.

Let's make sure that everyone has a chance to be heard. Let's make sure that everyone has a chance to be respected. Mr. Speaker, I think we're off to a bad start, though. You know, here we are talking about regulations as opposed to legislation. Would Albertans be better serviced, would the voice of Albertans be heard better if we, the 87 of us in this House, the 87 representatives of 4.3 million Albertans, had the opportunity, in a full and fulsome and respectful way, to debate all the things, the assisted dying legislation and the regulations that the province is going to put in, and what all that is about? I think yes. I appreciate that it was a very short, quick meeting that had to end, but there were some things that weren't in the regulations that the government released to Albertans at 4 o'clock and to me at 10 after 3 that greatly concern me. The words "mental health" weren't in there. Yeah, there's maybe a mechanism through a committee of doctors in a referral motion but maybe not.

Oh, my goodness, a cooling-off period. Once people are in that terrible, terrible situation where they think that this is the best option for them, I guess – we've talked to many experts and stakeholders that we've reached out to that talk about a 14-day or longer waiting period. I don't see that anywhere in here.

Back to my opening remarks, it's incumbent on you across the floor to make sure that these ideas are heard and listened to and are actually – actually – done in a way that protects Albertans. It's not in here. Again, that argues to me that we need legislation, where we can all stand up in second reading, Committee of the Whole, and third reading and give it a full, robust discussion.

I didn't see the word "terminal" before one can go through the process and the mechanisms, and I was told that that was because of the Carter court case and some of the implications around that. I think the word, instead, was "irremediable." I don't know, guys. Colleagues, I think Albertans need a chance to understand what all this means. I think we need a chance to ensure that people are protected.

You know, it's difficult to speak on behalf of my constituents as well, the people who elected me to the House to represent them and their concerns, when I've only just been provided the relevant materials mere minutes ago.

I want to talk about protecting the vulnerable, and I'll be frank. That concerns me greatly, but I have no idea. You know, as a four-year MLA, before that as a businessperson, a rancher, a real estate person, and, most importantly, as a father, as a husband, I don't even know what the word "vulnerable" really means when it comes to something this important and who qualifies and who doesn't, but I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that 4.3 million Albertans do. Many, many experts out there will be able to help us frame that in a way

that I think only legislation can do, only the opportunity to have this on the floor of the Legislature for a considerable period of time.

Mr. Speaker, we have to have a full and robust and understanding talk about conscience rights. As I said, my assistant talks about how the closer you get to this, the harder it is, and he's absolutely right. What do conscience rights mean? Does it mean that if you don't want to be involved in the process, you only have to refer? Should a person not have the right or the obligation to refer even if it's just to a committee or a provider of assisted death, euthanasia, assisted suicide. My God, what is the right thing to call it?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Medical assistance in dying.

**Mr. Barnes:** Medical assistance in dying. Okay. Thank you.

Let's see what 4.3 million Albertans think the obligation should be on good health care providers. I personally think that they should have the right and the opportunity for full and complete conscience rights. I'm only one of 4.3 million Albertans. Let's take the time to hear from them. Let's take the time to do it right.

4:50

In closing, you know, our time in here: a lot of it is about respect. It's respect for Albertans. It's respect for getting these laws as good as we can. I mean, I think the first thing to realize about being in here is all the unintended consequences, how often our good intentions go south. That's why it's important, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that our conscience rights are protected, that all vulnerabilities of people and aspects are protected, that all options are protected. I think the best way to do that is a full legislative process, not a regulation process as undertaken by well-meaning, qualified bureaucrats. This may be the most important thing even with the overriding court jurisdiction and the overriding federal legislation. Getting this right for the day-to-day Albertan, for the health care professional, for our communities and our families may be the most important thing that we do here.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I'm about to say comes with the greatest of respect personally, professionally, and politically. I trust that it will be taken in the way in which it is given. That said, I must say that I believe it is shocking that with fewer than 72 hours left in the spring session as scheduled, the NDP has tabled crucial documents directly related to the life and death of Albertans and dedicated a mere six hours to the most important decision of any person's life.

However, with humility, it may be said that in certain ways I've been preparing this speech for a long, long time in that my introduction to public speaking was in grade 7, when I was asked to deliver a speech to 555 junior high school classmates at a joint public and Catholic high school, and the topic was nothing less than the importance of the Hippocratic oath, for the medical profession to do good and do no harm.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read the entire oath into the record, but since the government is granting limited time to this debate, I will refer to two excerpts only. The first:

I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but never with a view to injury and wrong-doing. Neither will I administer a poison to anybody when asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a course.

Secondly:

Into whatsoever houses I enter, I will enter to help the sick, and I will abstain from all intentional wrong-doing and harm, especially from abusing the bodies of man or woman.

Mr. Speaker, quoting the Hippocratic oath in that public-speaking experience led to a couple of related degrees and a master's as well as a few decades in the school of hard knocks, which leads us to this day. When I couple experiences like these with reliable and trusted research, I'm actually quite calm and confident with what I am about to share with you here and now.

I'll start with this: Alberta's Overdue Assisted Dying Debate Is Too Little, Too Late. Not my words, Mr. Speaker. This is the dramatic headline from an article by Paula Simons in today's *Edmonton Journal* on the website. She uses phrases like "jaw-dropping" in reference to answers recently provided by the Health minister with respect to assisted dying.

She goes on:

It's a telling comment, not just because of its seeming insensitivity, but because it underlines just how ill-prepared Alberta is . . .

We are about to embark on a social, scientific and ethical experiment that redefines power relations between patients, doctors and the law. It's a tectonic cultural shift that may change, forever, the way we define self-determination, personal liberty and quality of life. Yet legally and politically, we're just not ready for this transition . . .

But this debate? This is too little, too late . . .

[The government] had a chance to show real moral and political leadership . . .

Instead, we're getting some vague, rushed symbolic debate of "high-level" principles, principles that will allegedly guide regulations that have already been drafted.

After that . . . it may take . . . another two to three weeks to get those regulations to the cabinet table, to be debated and passed by order-in-council. Assuming C-14, which doesn't even conform with the Carter rule, fails to get through the Senate before then, we'll be left in regulatory limbo.

Again, not my words. This is from the article in the *Edmonton Journal*.

Mr. Speaker, if that does not give members pause, perhaps this headline will: Experts Warn against Rushing Assisted Dying Bill through Parliament, by Colette Derworiz of the *Calgary Herald* from just yesterday.

Experts gathered at the University of Calgary for Congress 2016 . . . suggested the law shouldn't be rushed, during a panel called The future of end-of-life decision making in Canada.

Their words:

"It's unconscionable that the federal government is looking to put in a bill that will have to be challenged," said Jocelyn Downie . . . a professor of health-care ethics and law at the University of Dalhousie.

Mr. Speaker, the same applies to this provincial motion. It fails the fine people of our province, and I understand why Albertans will be outraged. It is unacceptable that the NDP is just now contemplating its plan for creating critically important parameters around medically assisted dying. This government has known for a year that creating parameters around assisted dying ultimately would fall to it, yet here we are, mere days before the Supreme Court deadline and at the very end of our spring session, cobbling together regulations for this most serious of acts. It's shocking. I dare say that if our former government tried to do something like this, the current government, perhaps the Official Opposition, other parties, and all Albertans would be screaming about this from the rooftops.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker, if I haven't been already. Whether or not the Supreme Court's decision takes effect after June 6 is a question that has already been answered. I am not debating that whatsoever. Instead, the issue at hand is whether or not the appropriate safeguards are in place to protect vulnerable Albertans;

to ensure that health professionals who have a conscientious objection to participating in any way with assisted death are respected and protected; to respect faith-based care facilities, which may have concerns with the practice; and to respect indigenous communities, which may need special assistance in dealing with spiritual concerns. Obviously, that's a partial list. Albertans may have many more concerns. Those are just some of the issues that Alberta needs to grapple with as it develops measures for implementing medical assistance in dying.

What about mental health support for families who will go through this extremely highly emotional and potentially psychologically damaging experience with their loved ones? What about ensuring that similar supports are available for doctors, nurse practitioners as well as nurses, pharmacists, and professional caregivers? There are many other outstanding issues such as: without national legislation in place, will Alberta's regulations more closely align with the federal government's plan for a more restricted and conservative approach, which offers greater protection to vulnerable Albertans? The federal legislation also proposes to restrict assistance in dying to those for whom death is reasonably foreseeable.

5:00

On the other hand, Alberta's regulations could run closer to the Supreme Court's liberal approach, which opens up assisted dying to mature minors, people whose mental illness causes them extreme anguish, and other Canadians who live with severe discomfort from a physical condition. The discrepancy is extremely troubling.

We cannot take these questions lightly, and we must take the time to answer these questions. A rushed debate in this House with the end result giving cabinet permission to make the final decision behind closed doors and then releasing it to Albertans as a fait accompli is unconscionable.

There are more hard questions, and I say this with respect, but it's true. This new cabinet does not have a great deal of experience. It's simply a matter of time. Other questions they will have to ask and answer include: what about whether patients can administer lethal drugs themselves or whether a physician has to perform this procedure? What about access to medically assisted dying outside of our large cities? The rural dynamic is completely different. A patient may have trouble finding two doctors in a small community to approve a request. Does this set up a double standard within the province of Alberta?

What about doctors who would prefer to see palliative care improved for their patients rather than having to offer them this choice? If their patient seeks a referral to a doctor who will perform the procedure, will they have to provide that referral? My heart is troubled when I think about this next question: does that make them complicit in their final act, and is this fair to them? These are extremely important questions, that Albertans are just starting to think about. So, colleagues, please: why shut this conversation down so quickly? Why limit it to just us, here and now, in this House?

Mr. Speaker, this government has already drafted these regulations. There is no way it could have started from scratch a year after it received notice that it was going to have to develop them let alone days before they are to be approved. So today this may be the most important question: why did the government choose to release the draft regulations for all Albertans to see and ponder and discuss only this afternoon? There can be no reason not to have made them public and to seek input on what was tabled today before today.

Yes, there was a panel. They didn't present these. We're not talking about a proposed text for a directive, a ministerial order, an order in council. We're talking about people's lives. We're talking about the loved ones of those Albertans facing an emotionally difficult experience. We're talking about professionals entering a new world of health care, if you want to call it that.

As legislators we understand the task at hand. It relates to determining the parameters of delivering this service to Albertans. What we in the Progressive Conservative caucus cannot accept is that this government left it so late that we are now pressured to offer cabinet carte blanche to ensure that they are done right and on time. Again, with great respect, Mr. Speaker, for many, many reasons, that I've been hearing about for a year, I do not think that Albertans – I'm going to phrase this very kindly – have had the time to build the trust in this government to make decisions like this for them at this time. I trust I'm being fair in that comment. So I ask again with great respect: will you please let all Albertans have some time to digest this? It's only fair.

Isn't it true, colleagues, that a short time ago no one referred to this as assisted dying? It was euthanasia or mercy killing. At the very least, our society needs some time to figure this out. To emphasize a reason for this, I quote a surprising source from a recent article in the *Ottawa Citizen*. The quote begins:

While the Liberal government says time is of the essence in passing its assisted-dying legislation, former prime minister Paul Martin says what Canada needs is "a good bill," and that debate on the proposed law should not be "bound by arbitrary timelines."

"I am like a lot of Canadians," Martin said.

That was on Thursday.

"I think it's a very, very difficult subject. And if I just look at myself, I'm still just thinking it through. I think it's important we get it right, and that we don't be bound by arbitrary timelines."

That's the former Liberal Prime Minister of this country.

This goes far beyond any party lines, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, this is good advice for the federal Liberals, the provincial NDP, all Canadians, and all Albertans. I acknowledge that Alberta is legally required to develop regulations surrounding medical assistance in dying; however, I completely disagree with giving cabinet sole authority to develop the final regulations in secret and without fulsome debate in our province and in our Assembly.

As such, I cannot support the motion. Getting this wrong can be catastrophic for our society. I implore all members of our House: do the right thing and vote with . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a), the Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to engage through 29(2)(a) and to ask questions and also respond to some of the questions that were asked. First, I want to say that while the member complains about the debate starting today, I share his frustration that we are at the point where we're starting within the House today the discussions around this. Part of my frustration is caused by some of what's happened through the federal government in terms of delays. They themselves are debating their legislation this afternoon, but certainly their Senate process hasn't unfolded yet.

It certainly was my plan A that we take the time following Carter, which was decided under the previous government, actually. There was a timeline set by the Supreme Court on that, and then the extension, and then the federal legislation for ours to flow. Because the "what" is not to be debated in this House. The "what" has been decided by the Supreme Court, and most of the questionable points that have been raised already so far are, again, federal jurisdiction

around the “what,” around criminal charges and so forth. The “how” is the provision of the health care service.

Certainly, there have been many discussions. I’m very pleased that the associate minister along with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View were part of a committee that gathered feedback and met with many stakeholders throughout Alberta. There were over 15,000 Albertans who shared their feedback and did engage in a dialogue and discussion around this. As a response to those 15,000 submissions as well as the targeted stakeholder meetings there was a report created that was released publicly last week. It’s the What We Heard report. It is 100 per cent sure that this is a very personal and very difficult discussion and decision, but the Supreme Court has made it very clear that the decision rests with the individual.

In terms of my questions, I guess, one of the questions that I would like to ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed is: did he engage in the last nearly 18 months since the Supreme Court decision with some of his stakeholders, constituents, and so forth either when he was on the government side or the opposition side to gather their feedback? Has he had a chance to review the What We Heard report, which I think is a very thoughtful synopsis of where Albertans stand on these issues today?

Clearly, we wanted to make sure that we had opportunity for debate. Yes, I wish we were in a position where the federal legislation had passed two months ago and we had two months in this House, if we needed it, to have that discussion. But the federal legislation is only being considered, finally, this afternoon. The Senate still has to do its process.

Certainly, I’m proud of the fact that we are having a public debate. Quebec and Alberta are the only two jurisdictions to actually have had a public debate before the June 6 scheduled deadline. I think we should be proud of that.

5:10

I think we should take this opportunity to talk about how the provision of the health care service is best to be delivered in Alberta, honouring that this is a very personal issue. We need to protect the vulnerable. We need to protect conscience rights, which means that nobody will be required to provide this service, only those that put their hands up. But I’m very proud that we have over 80 physicians included in every single zone across this province who have put their hands up saying that they are absolutely willing to be partners in supporting the individuals who do make this choice. They are not pushing this choice. Certainly, in terms of palliative care and home care that was in our platform, and those are areas that we intend to move forward on as well, Mr. Speaker.

I’m happy to hear the remarks from the Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** And I’m so happy to respond. Sadly, time dictates that I have 70 seconds to answer these questions on life-and-death issues.

The “what” I’m not debating for a second. I made that clear in my remarks. The “how” is what I have a problem with. Yes, there were 15,000 people that responded to an online survey. With great respect, Madam Minister, they did not have hard copies of this. If they did, we would have a completely different conversation.

Yes, I have engaged many constituents not just over the past year but over my lifetime. I can say that honestly. Again, though, we didn’t have these. This is the issue.

Have I had a chance to review the What We Heard report? Yes. It was tabled a short time ago. Again, that is based on what we see here. We need to move forward on this, and the fact is that there has

not been time for this Assembly to even read these documents let alone for the public in Alberta to.

I have great sympathy for the fact that you’re in this situation, but I believe that you have put yourself in this situation. If these had been drafted a long, long time ago, as you could have – you knew that this day was coming – then we would have a different conversation here. I honestly, with great respect, wish that we did have that time.

With that, I believe that we’re out of time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, a very critical piece of legislation, in this case in the form of a motion, which was a surprise. But given the realities that we’ve faced in the last couple of years, in fact, I would echo some of what the minister has said. The previous government knew that this was coming three years ago. I raised it with a couple of former ministers of Health. They didn’t want to touch it. They wanted to wait. The Supreme Court made a decision 18 months ago. Still no sign of action from the government of the day. What we’re left with is a federal government that has not done its job in terms of making a timely decision and a provincial government that is also late in making the decision.

The reality is that Monday Alberta is going to change with the rest of Canada, and we’re all going to be – as the minister says, the “what” is clear, that doctor-assisted dying will be a reality. The question is: are we going to have enough guidelines and regulations in place that both the physicians and the patients and their families can be confident that they know what to do, who to contact, how to go through the process and have confidence that if something goes wrong, there will be a process for accountability for the something that might go wrong?

What doctors have been doing for all of history is making decisions with their patients about whether assisting them with medical interventions is improving their dying or enhancing their living. That is a decision that every doctor has been making for eons. Do we intervene? In what way do we intervene? That is a discussion with every patient that is coming to those difficult, difficult end-of-life times. So this is really a question of prolonging living or prolonging the dying process and adding to the suffering of a person that has actually made a conscientious decision to stop the suffering or to stop living, in fact.

I was pleased to see these guidelines today, the regulations. That’s the part that I think has created a lot of consternation. I, too, would love to have seen these last week or last month. We got them today.

Let me just say that the proposal that will amend the College of Physicians & Surgeons’ standard of practice looks comprehensive in many respects. It deals with the essentials of who can give permission, who can give consent, what qualifications the physician must have. Again, it doesn’t indicate a nurse practitioner, and there was a national discussion that nurse practitioners could also be involved with this. That’s something we’ll have to address at some point in the future. But the essence of these guidelines will require a physician – two physicians, in fact – to certify that the person is of sound mind and making a decision conscientiously.

The period of time for reflection isn’t indicated here, but I can tell you that any physician that I’ve talked to wants to have a period of time when everything can be reviewed so the family and the individual and the appropriate health professionals can assure themselves that this is not something that is being made lightly and

that there are proper opportunities for the person to reverse their decision.

Issues like a medical examiner being involved in these unnatural deaths – any unnatural deaths are supposed to be referred to the medical examiner to make sure that it wasn't murder. Those are part and parcel of the regulations.

An annual review is identified in the regulations, which, again, gives me some assurance that the review committee after a year will look at the process and receive complaints from family members who say that it went poorly or that it went well but it could be improved. As in all cases of legislation and policy all of us want to see improvements over time.

What we know is that the majority of Canadians and Albertans want this support, and they want to have a clear path to get to the destination, which in rare cases will be physician-assisted dying. It may or may not be necessary in this document to specify whether the doctor has to be present at the time of death or whether just the family can be present and the medication self-administered. I don't see anything here to say whether the doctor's presence is required.

The other area that is so critical – I think others have brought this up – is protecting the vulnerable. Who are the vulnerable? They're people who could be coerced, that could be undermined by those in family or in close association who are after their money or after their estate or want to be relieved of the burden of caring for them. There has to be some real, rigorous attempts by the health care team to assess whether there's any degree of coercion on this individual to make a decision that they don't really want, that they're not really wanting doctor-assisted dying. That has to be properly reviewed and assessed.

From everything I've read, you know, people in palliative care – most of us will end up in palliative care in the last weeks or months of life. It's a very small proportion, perhaps 4 per cent, of those who are suffering and in the process of dying that actually avail themselves in the areas where they can in the world. Only about 4 per cent of those in terminal stages want assistance in dying. So this is not going to be, I would venture, a very common event, but it's something that we have to accommodate not only because of the Supreme Court but because, I think, the majority of Albertans and Canadians have said: we want more control over the nature and the timing of our death.

The final thing I want to say, I guess – and I will be supporting this motion, recognizing that there may be some gaps, there may be some improvements we can make, and that this will be an ongoing process of review. The final thing I want to say is that this can never be an excuse for weak palliative care. We have pockets in this province where there is almost no access to palliative care. We have an unequal system around the province and around the country. I think it's fair to say that there will be unequal access to palliative care and there will be unequal access to physician-assisted dying. We have to make this as equitable as we can.

In the first instance we have to have top-of-the-line palliative care, which will prevent many requests for doctor-assisted dying. There's no question that if people are suffering mentally or physically or massive indignities because they can't get the proper nursing support for their bodily functions or they become so dependent and are not getting the supports that they need, then they will be more likely to ask for a quick death.

5:20

Having said that, there are clearly ways that we can support excellent palliative care. There are dedicated professionals whom I know are in palliative care and will not be involved in physician-assisted dying. Their role, their training, their focus is entirely on

relieving suffering and helping people to die with dignity as much as possible but with all the supports that are possible now through the medical system. It is in fact rare that people would suffer in pain given the current drug regimes that we have. It's rare that people would not have the basic technical and material supports that they need, but it still happens.

I guess I would welcome the palliative care society, palliative care physicians and nurses, to weigh in on this and make sure that we as legislators, the Health minister particularly, know where the problems are in palliative care and that we do everything possible to ensure that people are not making this choice because it's a default from inadequate palliative care.

**Dr. Starke:** Experienced everywhere else.

**Dr. Swann:** Yeah. Exactly. It is an experience that all of Canada and all of the world struggles with.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and look forward to hearing other perspectives on this.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions of the hon. member under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to ask the hon. member: as the longest serving member here this evening in the Chamber how often has he seen the government give opposition members a technical briefing and a copy of draft regulations on a government motion in his experience?

**Dr. Swann:** This is unusual. Along with many of my colleagues we appreciate the fact that we can see some of these regulations and start to iron out some of the differences and have some debate, inadequate debate as it is. Possibly it will be inadequate no matter how long we spend at it. But to be fair, I guess we can debate this just as long as we choose.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** I'm speaking to the motion, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Yes.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you very much. The Supreme Court of Canada has decided that existing criminal law violates the right of Canadians to avail themselves of medical assistance in dying. By this coming Monday that ruling comes into effect. For that reason, it's very important that we move forward with our regulations now.

In its February 6, 2015, ruling, *Carter versus Canada*, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously declared unconstitutional the Criminal Code prohibitions on physician-assisted dying as violating the individual's right to life, liberty, and security of person. We are committed to supporting the rights of patients who wish to use their right to access medical assistance in dying, as laid out in the *Carter* decision, while at the same time we're interested in enabling this in the way that is least polarizing and least intrusive. We're not taking a heavy hand to enforcement, and we must protect the vulnerable populations. This motion supports physicians who will be providing this service and supports patients who wish to exercise their right to medical assistance in dying. This is a deeply personal decision, and we will ensure that patients and their families are supported in getting the information they need.

In an effort to design a regulatory framework that meets the needs of Albertans and health care professionals, our government created



an MLA consultation panel to gather input from Albertans. I was on that as well as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and the Associate Minister of Health. We collected feedback through online surveys, written submissions, and meetings with stakeholders while recognizing that medical assistance in dying is an important, sensitive, and very emotional issue for Albertans. As was said, the consultation included an online survey with over 15,000 responses and a request for submissions from stakeholder groups and community advocates, some of whom also met with the committee. Consultation varied across the spectrum of stakeholders, including medical professionals, religious groups, First Nations, legal professionals, and the general public.

The work was completed over the past year, and it was done so that Albertans had options and directions regardless of the outcome of the federal bill. Consequently, in creating Alberta's regulatory framework, our government will also collaborate with other provinces, territories, and the federal government. The public and organizational feedback and submissions will be considered, and we'll be engaging with Alberta Health Services, the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, and others to develop the standards, measures, policies, and practices that meet the needs of Albertans and Albertan health care professionals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any questions for the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud under 29(2)(a)?

**Dr. Swann:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the hon. member could clarify for me one of the elements of the proposed standards, which I had hoped to raise and forgot. Subsection (4) under point 3 in the proposed text for order in council suggests that

a regulated member [a physician] who receives an oral or written request from a patient for medical assistance in dying and who declines for reasons of conscience or religion to provide or to aid in providing medical assistance in dying must ensure that reasonable access to the Alberta Health Services care coordination service is provided to the patient without delay.

What is the care co-ordination service referred to here? Are you aware if there is an existing care co-ordination service, or is it just the 811 number that people dial to find a doctor who will participate? Are you aware of a care co-ordination service?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. This is not the 811 Health Link number. This is, to my understanding, something that Alberta Health Services is developing to ensure that all Albertans have – in whatever part of the province that they live, whatever circumstances they are in, in whatever form of institution or in their home – access to this service when it becomes appropriate under regulation.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

**Dr. Swann:** One of the issues that we must discuss at some point, I guess – the conscience rights of physicians is clear. If a physician is not prepared on the basis of conscience to participate, they should not be forced to. However, all publicly funded institutions, it seems to me, should be providing the service that the government of Alberta has provided on the basis of equality across the province. Can the member make some statement himself about how he feels about that issue and how we might have that discussion here and give some direction to the minister about how we as a Legislature feel publicly funded institutions should address the question of participation in physician-assisted dying?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I'm really not prepared to talk about the substance of your question. I would actually refer you to the standards of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, which deals with this situation quite clearly.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East. I have your name here.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour, once again, to rise and speak to this. You know, it's oftentimes that we see in this House the best things of your elected officials. We can refer to things like the fire, and we can refer to things like the flood, where people come together because people's lives are immediately put at risk. We care deeply about our constituents most of all and this province and the reputation of the democratic process in choosing your elected official to speak on your behalf on the matters that are near and dear to your heart. You saw some of the emotion, my colleague from Calgary-Lougheed, and I think anybody in this House who doesn't think that this is an emotional debate – it would be interesting to hear why you would think it's not an emotional debate. Now, I hope, with the new minister that was named in terms of democratic renewal, that this is not the democratic renewal that you'll be imposing on this province for years to come, when we receive something like this, in a matter of hours to debate some crucial elements to these regulations.

5:30

I can speak as a front-line advanced care paramedic working in different regions of this province where we see the effects of mental health and how they play out. We can speak to it and, Mr. Speaker, I can say this: we can go back and blame everybody along the way, but this is your time. This is your watch. We watch it with you, but ultimately you'll make the decision. Now, there are front-line care providers out there that make the decision every day with do-not-resuscitate orders. Imagine a do-not-resuscitate order when you're there with that family – and some of my colleagues across the way in here have seen that – if you don't think that that has an impact on your mental health and the mental health of families and that it doesn't matter and if you think that those types of regulations and rules don't matter to families to make sure that they're properly implemented.

We are talking about now, in this era, something that you have done some good work on with other colleagues from across the aisle, like the hon. colleague from Calgary-Mountain View, on mental health. I can't imagine that we would live in a province where we would say and are saying that mental health is an incurable disease. Would we say that? I can tell you and based on personal experience that there are people out there today who want to end their suffering and their pain. What do we want to do, especially if they are our loved ones? We want to reach out and do everything we possibly can to help them, and this motion and these regulations play a big role in that. But now we are limited in that debate. It is not a matter of who is to blame; the time is now. These regulations will go on forever.

I'm discouraged by that, Mr. Speaker. I just can't imagine. But, yes, at the same time, I've been there and have watched the person pass away in front of my eyes with the loved ones around them, and it is not easy. It is not something easy to watch. It is not easy to watch somebody who is suffering in pain because of an illness that can't be cured, to watch them take the last breath of their life, to watch the light of their spirit pass away.

Here we are, and again I don't know if it's lack of experience. You know, I spoke to a group earlier today about kind of what we do in government and how the challenge of a leader is to understand, and it starts with knowledge. With knowledge, hopefully, you gain some wisdom, and with wisdom, hopefully, you have understanding. But we are bypassing some of those things to ultimately understand every aspect of how this will affect Albertans' lives and future generations to come.

Again, we need to make sure that we're doing everything we can before we get to that point. This, in my mind, limits that ability. We can change that. You can change that. Just like we've seen in the floods and previous disasters and times of crisis, we can come together. We can make it better, but we have to have an understanding of how you feel, how I feel, how families feel. Our constituents expect us to fight for these very things. Quite frankly, the federal government can do what the federal government will do, but I'll stand up for Albertans. I'll stand up for my constituents even in the face of federal law because we need to make it right for Alberta, for my children, for your children. This is important, and it reaches beyond regulations. It reaches into people's faith and their spirit and their soul. Six hours of debate on this issue: I think we can do better. I think we should do better.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any questions under 29(2)(a)? Member for Calgary-Lougheed, under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Rodney:** Yes. It is under 29(2)(a). I want to thank my hon. colleague for his service not only in this Chamber but out there in the real world as an incredible leader and as a first responder. I don't know if in his time – part of this will be a comment, hon. member. I remember as a kid reading the book *Death Be Not Proud*. If you've read the book, you know it's about a young man, a very young man, in fact a boy, who had inoperable cancer. Everyone around that young boy was lamenting, moaning, sobbing. It was the worst thing ever. They wondered if the right answer was to ease his pain by taking it away. That little boy actually wrote what became a book about the incredible things that he learned through the experience of pain and suffering. He taught the people around him invaluable lessons that they will never ever forget.

A short time ago, this month as a matter of fact, a dear friend was in a terrible accident and was paralyzed from the waist down. The first days were very, very difficult. I think many people would not have blamed him if he had asked for this in those first few days. We've had incredible conversations in the last number of weeks now, and we've talked about people like Rick Hansen. We could talk about a gentleman that occupied that chair right there, the Hon. Kent Hehr. We all have dozens of examples of people who have done amazing things after getting through that time of incredible mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, cultural pain. Do we end things early, or do we allow the opportunity for people to deal with this? Do we get better as a society in assisting people through this time rather than ending this time?

The hon. member has been in the right place at the right time to save countless lives. In a couple of my professions I've had that opportunity as well, something I'll never ever stop thanking God for. I've also been there too late and picked up dead bodies and pieces of bodies. These are crucial realities that we face. Is there enough experience in this room to deal with issues like these without going to Albertans to consult with them?

The hon. Ed Stelmach introduced something called constituency week. The reason for that was so that people could get out from under the dome. The hon. Ralph Klein referred to it as dome

disease. So deal with the policy as we must when trusted to do that, when it's incumbent upon us, but take what is an idea and deal directly with Albertans to find out if they think that we're on the right track or not, to be held accountable. I guess a question I'd have for the hon. member is: do we rush this through with less than 72 hours left in the spring session? What is the path forward in the time that we have left? I ask the hon. member with respect.

5:40

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you for the question. You know, I looked at some of the people who were consulted on this very issue, and I notice the College of Physicians & Surgeons, the college of registered nurses, and the College of Pharmacists. One of the people left out, Mr. Speaker, was the College of Paramedics. We do know that there are general practitioners out there. We're called to those offices all the time when something goes wrong. There's nothing to that. In terms of that, we see that this process is flawed just in that very piece, particularly when you think about rural Alberta because if something goes wrong in a rural physician's office on this issue, who is going to get called? Paramedics. So they need to be consulted.

Further to that, we know that the government has been doing some good work on the Health Professions Act regarding paramedics. That would also be an important thing to pass along with these regulations to ensure that that regulatory body can deal with it because ultimately, like the member said . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I want to speak about the seriousness and just how incredibly important this debate ahead of us is. I want to just take a moment to reiterate some comments around the Legislature that we've heard already today about how disappointing it is, about how we got here. It seems that there's been one misstep after another, and while the government may have been trying to do the right thing, it appears, or I get inside of me a real concern, that this issue isn't getting the respect that it deserved.

You know, we have members from the government asking about technical briefings and how often it ever happened in the Legislature in the past. We're talking about a technical briefing that happened less than 30 minutes prior to the start of the debate, a briefing that the minister had to leave so she could go do a press conference on the regulations. So while I hope to take the government at their word that they are trying to reach out, all of their actions are not communicating respect. They're communicating rushed, poorly thought out lack of respect on such an important issue that is so personal to so many in the Assembly. I have to be honest. I didn't think that I would be rising to speak about this issue in this way.

Listen, I have heard a lot on this issue from constituents of the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, who elected me here – and I take pride and am humbled by that – to represent their concerns. I have chatted with them about the issue, but they don't know any of the parameters of the debate that's currently before us. That's because the information wasn't made available. The very first we had heard about this particular motion was in the middle of last week. Then we had the opportunity to see a draft of the motion on Friday, and then that motion changed over the weekend. This is a significant issue, and how we respond to some of the Supreme Court ruling and the federal legislation is of critical importance to so many who will be potentially accessing this service. The opinions are wide on how that should or should

not happen. But there are so many important things that we ought to consider that we shouldn't enter into this hastily, and we should enter into it respectfully.

This is an issue of magnitude, and the fact is that we've only just received this information on the specific regulations and the ministerial directives. I haven't had any chance to speak to constituents or stakeholders about some of the potential challenges. I want to try and do my best to share with the House some of the personal experiences and perspectives that some of those people have shared with me. I'm glad to at least have the opportunity, so I will thank the government. As mentioned, not every jurisdiction debated the issue at all, so I am thankful for that, and I'm humbled because the issue is of such significance for what's ahead. It's an issue that affects all Albertans. It affects all families and indeed society as a whole.

Since the debate began to unfold in the public sphere, I've heard from countless people expressing powerful and heartfelt opinions about this very issue and the impact that it will have. One thing that's become more clear to me as I've encountered so many personal stories and opinions about this topic is that it evokes personal convictions and deeply held beliefs. There are so many complexities and nuances to this decision that each deserves to be heard and explored. The gravity, the scope of the changes coming from the Supreme Court and the federal Parliament: it is essential that as legislators we do our best to get this right and represent all Albertans.

I think it's also important to note that every member of this House has likely agonized over the weight of what we have here to decide because even if an individual is speaking in favour of such an important motion, they also know full well that there are wide swaths of opinion inside their own constituency. Such open and free debate is perhaps the most important thing we can offer Albertans on this topic. We owe the province a transparent conversation that fully explores all facets of the issue because this is a matter of personal conviction and conscience.

I'd like to express my personal desire to see those conscience rights protected for health care professionals. I've spoken to so many physicians and health practitioners with moral and ethical objections, and certainly those need to be respected. I understand that there was recently a poll commissioned by the Canadian Medical Association that showed 63 per cent would personally refuse to perform the procedures themselves, and even more recently 29 per cent of those doctors surveyed by the CMA said that they also don't believe in referring. What we saw literally at 3 o'clock today is significant confusion inside the regulations about whether or not there is a requirement to refer. If in fact there is, are the conscience rights of that individual being compromised?

There are so many challenges around the administration of this choice that Albertans can make. I had the opportunity just recently to speak to a doctor who is a chronic pain specialist, and he spoke specifically about how there's no spot in any textbook that teaches you how to perform this act as part of care. So the question surrounds: are we, through the administration of this legislation, going to be creating new sets of standards for our health care providers, those that choose to engage in this? What are we doing to assist those that choose to provide the service, and how are we ensuring that it is done in the most appropriate ways possible? There are certainly going to be a lot more questions than answers, particularly given the parameters of how this debate has been set out.

5:50

We cannot ignore the input from our quality front-line practitioners, who work in the medical field day in and day out and

see things with their very own eyes. I have to say on a personal note that I have spoken with doctors and health professionals who have told me that they cannot in any good conscience be part of any of this process.

I also had the opportunity just recently to speak to some professionals and community leaders in the area of palliative care. They are good, honest, hard-working health care workers who are anxious and worried and fearful about how they may or may not have to be involved in the process. When it comes to this process of palliative care, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View spoke about the challenges that we face in palliative care around this province. I can tell you that in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills there are, fortunately, groups of volunteers and individuals who are working in this field and taking on some of the burden of palliative care from the province. That's because they believe in that.

We need to ensure that those who are facing such an important decision also have the other options available to them so that this doesn't appear to be or doesn't become the only choice or feel like the only choice that Albertans have. Access to good palliative care and doctors and nurses who have good palliative care training as well as providing the tools that are necessary to our chronic pain doctors: sometimes in rural Alberta there isn't that opportunity, so it seems that assisted death is their only option. That is deeply, deeply concerning.

There are so many challenges, Mr. Speaker, and we've already come to the total amount of time that I will personally have to represent the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. The amount of time that any member of this Assembly can speak to a government motion is 15 minutes. We are nearing the end of that time, and I didn't even have the opportunity to speak more in depth about the palliative care aspect and the grief counselling that goes along with that. Palliative care workers have spoken to me about the fact that people that have lost loved ones say that they just wish they had one more day. How does that interface with a family member's choice and the rights of all involved in the process?

Unfortunately, we've seen the government make some decisions around this motion, which isn't a piece of legislation. If it was legislation, the debate would have been able to be much more robust and fulsome. I get that there are timelines and issues that are imposed by other jurisdictions, but June 6 comes on June 6 every single year. To try to rush this into just a few hours – you know, those palliative care individuals and doctors weren't even able to see the wording of the motion prior to providing comment to myself and to many of our colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, you need to know that this is an important issue that, it appears, is not going to get the respect that Albertans deserve on the issue. I believe that the government was trying to do the right thing by bringing it here in front of the Legislature, but all of the process other than that commitment has been flawed. I have to say that it's disappointing because there's a great group of constituents inside the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that are passionate about this issue on both sides of the debate. I haven't even had the opportunity to speak to some of those folks. I personally might not share their opinions, but I would love to be able to bring their opinions here to the Chamber on their behalf. But there isn't the amount of time that there ought to be.

I look forward to hearing my colleagues and members from the government speak about this issue, to seeing if there's a way that it can be unwound so that it can be treated in a way that puts the needs of Albertans ahead of the needs of the government.

**The Speaker:** Questions under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Rodney:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the hon. House leader of the Official Opposition may have been in here at 3 o'clock, when the briefing occurred. I know that his colleague rushed in just after it started because he had just found out about the briefing, which had been on and off and back on again. I wonder if this hon. colleague knows that at that time we were presented with three documents: proposed text – again, it was stressed that this was proposed – for a ministerial order on a medical assistance in dying regulatory review committee; a second document, proposed text for a directive on medical assistance in dying care co-ordination service, June 2016; and proposed text for an order in council to amend the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta standards of practice on medical assistance in dying.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you're aware of this or not, but only one of my colleagues has received these documents. I ask this hon. member: did you receive these documents tabled here today? Did all of your colleagues? It is this that we're actually referring to, that Albertans wouldn't even have seen. That's question one. Have you received the documents that have been supposedly tabled today?

Secondly, you asked for – well, there is a need for more time to discuss palliative care and grief counselling. With great respect I'd ask: what are your thoughts on those three topics – the documents, palliative care, grief counselling – and whatever else you'd like to cover, hon. member?

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for the question. You know, I haven't seen those documents at all. I personally haven't. With respect, I know that my

colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat has received those documents. I do know that those documents were not tabled in the Chamber during the daily Routine today. I do find it a bit surprising, certainly, that that took place.

I know that the discussion around regulations and their presence here today will be a robust one because, you know, in the government it is rare for them to provide regulations. It's possible – and I'll take the government at their word on this one as well – that they say "draft" because there is the opportunity for feedback here in this place and then an opportunity to have those regulations changed.

Having said those fair statements, I think it is also fair and true that if that was the intention of the government, then there's no reason why we needed to do this on this timeline. So that is a significant concern, and again it runs the risk of this lack of respect for an issue that is so critically important, an issue that really reaches into the hearts and minds and souls of Albertans. In fact, I didn't even realize that there were three documents. I thought that there was only one document. To be in a situation where we're speaking on behalf of our constituents on information that's been shared inside the Chamber – how can we possibly debate this type of motion when there are lots of details around this issue?

When it comes to palliative care . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but it is 6 p.m.

The House will stand adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, May 31, 2016

Day 36

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

## Second Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

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New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 31, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Motions

#### Medical Assistance in Dying

17. Ms Payne moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to implement measures to regulate medical assistance in dying consistent with the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *Carter versus Canada* (Attorney General) and any legislative measures approved by the Parliament of Canada to ensure that Albertans can benefit from the orderly implementation of this court decision so that:

- (a) Albertans may exercise their rights to access medical assistance in dying;
- (b) appropriate safeguards be put in place to protect vulnerable Albertans;
- (c) conscience rights are respected while ensuring the right of patients to access this service;
- (d) the practice of medical assistance in dying is closely monitored and measures regulating medical assistance in dying are reviewed within one year.

[Debate adjourned May 31]

**The Speaker:** Anyone else wishing to speak to Motion 17? The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak on this very important motion. I want to thank the government for the opportunity to debate. I hope that perhaps with the opportunity here to speak first this evening, I can set perhaps a little bit of a different tone than the tone we had earlier this afternoon. You know, unfortunately, I think it got a little political this afternoon. So I'm going to spend just a minute or two sharing my thoughts on whether or not I feel like we've been given enough time here to debate and discuss what is a matter of great importance and interest to Albertans.

I have to say that I have some sympathy for the perspective that perhaps this has been rushed and that perhaps it would have been nice to see these regulations sooner, but I have to say that this is an issue that is evolving on a not even daily basis but perhaps on an even more often than daily basis here as we get towards the deadline on Monday. The federal government has yet to pass their legislation. It made it through the House of Commons today but has yet to make it through the Senate. As a result my sense is that this government is working up its regulations as it goes, as it responds to the changing landscape, Bill C-14, that's coming from the federal government, and as a result it has had a challenging time getting much more information to us ahead of time.

This is the first time in my relatively young political career here in the Legislative Assembly that I've actually seen a regulation, an order in council, before it's passed. I think it's important that we recognize that the government, I believe, has the best of intentions in sharing this information with us ahead of time. I think that represents some new ground for a governing party, at least in recent memory, so I think they deserve some credit for doing that. The one suggestion perhaps, if we were to go back a few months in time –

I'm sure we all wish we could do that at times – would have been to spend some time a few months ago having this debate in a more general sense.

What I can say, though, is that when I found out from the Opposition House Leader that we would be having this debate this week, when I found that out last week, I went and started talking with stakeholders in my constituency. I started talking with stakeholders in the palliative care world, and I did my own research, and I did some thinking about this issue. I would hope that in that time, between about a week ago and now, other members would have done the same thing. We were given the draft motion on Friday, so that gave us a sense of the frame under which we would be talking about this issue today. You know, on balance, frankly, I think we have had enough time to review this.

It is an issue where we're up against the clock. Whether we like that fact or not, that's the situation we're in. This law will change on Monday of next week, so we have a need and a requirement to have these discussions.

Let's, then, talk about medical assistance in dying. That's the issue before us. As I said previously in my member's statement of March 17 of this year, we know medical assistance in dying will now be legal. I am philosophically supportive of the idea that people have control over their own medical decisions all the way through life, up to and including death. But now that it is legal, I believe we need to emphasize the fact that medical assistance in dying ought to be rare, exceedingly rare. When I hear people ask for medical assistance in dying, what I believe many of them are really saying is that they want to be comfortable. They want to know that they remain in control. They want to know that their families will not suffer or worry unduly. That is what palliative care offers to Albertans. That is the purpose of palliative care.

We, I think, should use this debate as an opportunity to have a discussion about how we maximize the availability of palliative care for Albertans everywhere in this province, that we talk about alternatives to medical assistance in dying, prevention, reduction, the request for medical assistance in dying. It will become legal on Monday, and my personal opinion is that it should be legal. The Supreme Court of Canada has told us that it will be.

It's important, then, to know that Alberta Health Services has developed a provincial palliative care and end-of-life framework. That framework exists and has been in place since I believe 2014, but that framework has not been properly and fully funded. What that framework talks about is improving access for patients and their families to palliative home care, and it talks about the need for early access to palliative care. The objective is to achieve a quality of living, to reduce the desperation that people feel that leads to that sense that the only way out, to relieve that suffering, would be medical assistance in dying. There are other alternatives where you can maintain control, where you can choose, where you can maintain quality of life to the end of life. I would encourage this government, please, to consider the importance of expanding palliative care throughout the province and ensuring that all Albertans have that choice.

As I look at the specific regulations, there are a few things, I think, that it covers that I am supportive of. I do have some questions around exactly how that mental capacity will be determined. It sounds like physicians and psychologists will be involved in that. I'm glad to see that mental illness is excluded.

The question that was raised earlier this afternoon is the question of the time delay. In talking with people in the palliative care world, who work in palliative medicine, they say that there are cases where someone may be in great distress on a given day and feel like it's time to end it all and want to make that choice but where, given 24 hours and some pain relief, they're sitting up, drinking a cup of tea,

talking with their family the very next day. I think we need to ensure – and I would encourage the Associate Minister of Health and the minister and all members of the House, anyone who may be involved in this process, to please consider working in some sort of even brief delay from the time the request is made to the time that medical assistance in dying actually happens.

I recognize that there is an opportunity all throughout the process for the patient to change their mind, right up until the very last minute, right up until the drugs are administered, and I appreciate that fact. But I would suggest that we perhaps look at building in some sort of formal delay mechanism. It doesn't need to be a matter of weeks but perhaps a matter of 48 or 72 hours. It doesn't need to be, necessarily, a long time, but I think it's important that a decision such as this, an irrevocable decision such as this, is taken with real caution.

7:40

The rules in place talk about the safeguards that would be in place. I just want to read some of those into the record to make sure it's understood what those safeguards will be. The College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta have included several safeguards: the patient must be made aware of all of their medical options beyond medical assistance in dying but including that as well; two separate doctors must meet the criteria as set out by the Supreme Court; any questions about mental state raised at any time must be referred to a psychologist or a psychiatrist; two people must witness the patient's request but may not be related to them, may not be their physician or the owner or operator or an employee of a health facility where the patient is receiving treatment, to ensure appropriate independence; and, as I've said before, the patient must be advised at each step that they may change their mind, including immediately before the procedure.

Now, we had a good discussion earlier this afternoon about the text of the proposed order in council, about that perhaps those same conditions would be included in provision (2.2) of the order in council, which allows for another person to sign and date the request should the person requesting medical assistance in dying not be physically able, not mentally incapable but not physically able, to sign. Someone over 18 years of age may sign on that patient's behalf, but I would suggest that perhaps with the safeguards that I have just discussed, we may want to consider putting those in place as well for anyone who may sign such an order on behalf of the patient.

I want to talk momentarily about the protection for vulnerable people. That is something that I think is, without question, vital to this discussion and one that I think we must not take lightly. It is something that in the regulations and in the standards of practice as put forward by the College of Physicians & Surgeons, I know, has been given a lot of consideration, and I think it will be covered, I would hope, by both the professional ethics of the physician and other medical professionals who would be involved in the process around medical assistance in dying. The specific service, the medical assistance in dying care co-ordination service, I know will consider that as an important part of what they do as well. But that is something that must absolutely not be taken lightly because there's always a concern that that risk could be raised.

The words that are often used are "conscientious objection." I actually take a bit of issue with the term "conscientious objection." It somehow implies or can, I suppose, in some interpretations imply that there's an objection to something that is broadly seen as a good thing, so that language I struggle with. That language doesn't appear everywhere, but I've seen it in a few different places. I prefer a discussion about adherence to moral commitments. I would say that all people on the medical side who

have anything to do with medical assistance in dying be a participant in the medical assistance in dying care co-ordination service that Alberta Health Services is putting together. A physician or other medical professional who chooses not to be a part of this: they're adhering to their moral commitments as they understand them. It is not up to us to judge that person or their motivations, but it's important we honour and enshrine their ability to act in a manner consistent with their moral commitments as they interpret them in their role.

Fortunately, the College of Physicians & Surgeons has considered exactly that in their standard of practice on moral or religious beliefs affecting medical care. They've laid that out, I think, very clearly and succinctly, and it is following, I think, an established practice that already exists within the medical profession for areas that extend beyond medical assistance in dying.

I'm going to take my last 90 seconds here, Mr. Speaker, to just talk one more time about the importance of having conversations with your family, with your loved ones, with your care providers all the way along the process and to have those conversations now, while you are fit and healthy, about what quality of life means to you. When decisions need to be made, perhaps you will be able to speak for yourself, but perhaps you will not be able to speak for yourself. I encourage you once again to visit the AHS website [conversationsmatter.ca](http://conversationsmatter.ca). These are very difficult discussions to have, but they're very important discussions so that, in particular, your family and your loved ones and your care providers know what quality of life means to you. There are a series of templates and documents and conversation guides that you can use on that website to help you work through these challenging but very important conversations. That advanced care plan is a very important gift that you can give to your family.

I'll end by saying that death is a natural part of life. Living a good life involves having a good death. Palliative care, advanced care planning can ensure that your choices and your loved ones' are respected. As I say, advanced care planning truly is a gift to your family.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions or comments to the Member for Calgary-Elbow under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none wishing to speak, the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to just take this opportunity to say thank you for having this discussion. It's a difficult and very complex subject, and I think it takes a tremendous amount of courage to even have the discussion. I wanted to thank other hon. members for their incredible and insightful discussions about this to help everybody understand. I truly believe that this is a situation – it's a thumbprint, and every single situation is going to be unique and different.

I know, for myself, I've had that privilege of being there at that time. I don't know why that happened. I don't know why I had the privilege of being there at those times when I've had friends and family pass away. We never know for sure when that's going to happen, but when you have that privilege of being there, it changes you forever. I think that maybe it will become more apparent how important this is to me personally, based on my personal experiences, but also to explain to the government about why we're a little dismayed by the speed at which this is happening.

If you were able to describe to your family and to the people that you love what you would foresee as your own death and how you would like to leave this world – none of us really have that choice.

To be able to have the decision at this point and to talk about what the opportunities are, to actually have a say, potentially, over how you die, is such an important discussion that really, really, really deserves the respect and the time necessary in order to describe and understand how that would happen for a person who has the choice to have that happen.

As for me and my personal experiences, recently, last year, I lost a very, very good friend to pancreatic cancer. We watched him for 18 months fight this unbelievable fight. Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that even just watching him go through that with his young daughter and his young wife, that experience, and seeing his strength and the valuable time that he spent with his family – he was suffering in a way that I will never understand, at least not at this point. Like I said, none of us know how our lives are going to proceed or where we're going to end up. But I saw him. I saw what he went through. I saw how his life changed in front of our eyes. Obviously, his daughter and his wife were important to him before he was diagnosed, but after he was diagnosed and we knew what he was going through, you could see the alteration in this person and what he was able to contribute to his young daughter's life before we lost him, what he contributed to my life and the people around him.

Truly, with all my heart, the aspects have changed me forever, and this is just one of a couple of experiences. Like I said, I don't know how I got this privilege to be there when a person leaves this Earth. To actually physically be there and watch that happen is one of the most tremendous privileges I've ever been part of, let alone seeing babies come into the world. It has an equal effect on your person.

7:50

My point is that as we saw him go through this process, there were many, many times when he was in such extreme pain and extreme suffering. What his wife and his child went through was extreme, the amount of stress and duress. They had us, and they had their family and everyone around them to help them get through that process. The question of medically assisted dying never came up, obviously. I don't know if it ever crossed his mind. It was never a discussion that we ever had.

One thing I want to bring forward – and this is to the discussions of palliative care – is my understanding, like I said, my personal perspective of what palliative care means to me and my family personally. In this particular experience, we were in the palliative care centre at the top of the Tom Baker. The room was small. All the family was around him. The experience was so emotional. But I have to say that I think what resonates the most with me, what I remember the most, if I was to pick one particular idea from that night, is that the ER nurses and doctors and palliative doctors and care workers that were around him sat with him, right here, like this close to his face, when he was in his last breath and asked him what he wanted right then and there. They were right in his face. They said to him: you know, we can intubate you and keep you alive for a little bit longer if you want, but you won't be able to tell your wife you love her, and you will not be able to hold your child, but you'll be here on this Earth presently for a little while longer. Then they said: "Or what we can do is make you comfortable. You can tell your wife you love her. You can hold her hand. You can be together with your family in your room." That's what he decided at that time. It wasn't an easy decision.

I remember standing there watching this conversation. You know how sometimes you're in a conversation and you feel so privileged to be there because it's like a personal moment, and you almost feel uncomfortable for being there, but you know you're supposed to be there. I stood there watching this interaction happen between

husband and wife, making that final decision as to what he was going to do right then and there. It still makes my hair stand up to think about it.

My husband was at the end of the bed, and he was rubbing his feet. We were just talking to him. And then he piped up at the last minute – my friend forgets codes and everything a lot; she's a lot like me, actually – and all of a sudden spouted out the code for the computer and their security deposit box number. This is in the last throes of this beautiful man's life, you know, remembering all of these little bits and pieces that all of a sudden he thought she should know and where he had put the key for this. It was one of those crazy, surreal moments that I'll never forget as long as I live. Anyway, they were going through that, and then it was like he was given permission to finally let go. We were all there. We only had him for another four hours. We didn't know. We didn't know how long we'd have him. We thought we might have him for a day or a month. We certainly didn't know.

I can honestly say that those palliative nurses and doctors and care workers are heroes. To look at it from the point of view that – and again this is not in any way to say which way is right here. This isn't a decision of yes or no. I don't think any of us are supposed to make that decision.

I suppose where I'm going with this is that that option – when you're in that traumatic space, I don't know if any of us are anything less than vulnerable. I know how vulnerable I felt. He was my friend. It wasn't even my husband. If it was my husband or my child, I don't know what I'd do. Even thinking about it throws me into a space of absolute disbelief. Watching her go through this with the grace and compassion that she had at that moment, what she was able to bring to my life – and I know that sounds ridiculously selfish, but it's the honest truth: how much it altered me as a human being at that moment.

I don't ever, ever, ever want anybody in a House like this, where we have the opportunity to make these laws and rules and regulations and everything that comes along with it, to be the purveyor of a decision that somebody might regret one day. Can you imagine if we're a part of that and you have to sit in this chair one day knowing that a law and something that you brought here took somebody's life before they were ready? I don't think any of us could survive the mental impact that would have on any of us. That's what needs to be considered.

It's not a yes or no. It's not "I agree" or "I disagree." I truly believe that there are probably people out there that deserve the right to have that. If I was to look at myself in the mirror, I can honestly tell you that from day to day that could change. One moment I'd be, like: "Yes, I'm one of those Type A personalities. I'm going to plan it. I'm going to be ready to go." This is what my situation would be for me to have to make that decision. But if I had to make that decision with my great-grandchildren sitting around me, knowing that I could have one more day, I might flip-flop at that last minute. I think it's my prerogative and my right to do so.

But if there's pressure or undue stress from family or any other things that are going on or your desire as an elder person or a sick person to not put a burden on your family, those are the kinds of things we actually have to consider in this type of legislation. I know that for my friend who lost her husband last year, never once did the idea of burden ever come forward. Not once. We watched this woman. We watched everything she did. She tried everything. I mean, if she could have physically kept him alive herself, she would have. It was beautiful. It was beautiful to watch this happen. I know that's not everybody's experience, but that was mine.

On the flip side, when my own grandmother passed away, I was with her. I held her. If I hadn't been given that opportunity because

my grandmother decided at that moment that because she was so sick – I have to tell you that my grandmother always slept on her side and on one particular side of the bed. She was getting close. She'd asked to not be resuscitated. She was in her bed and all of those things had been done for her so that she could pass on her own, but she was really uncomfortable, and you could tell. I was in university at that time, and I said to the nurse that day: you need to turn her over onto her side because she always sleeps this way. Well, I swear to God, we flipped her over onto her side, and within hours of her being comfortable and in her space and in that comfortable zone, she quietly – I use the term loosely. If anybody has been there at end of life, every single person I've ever had the privilege of being with, they fight for that last breath every single time. She turned over, and she was in that space, and again it was like this permission to go was there.

I would never want to take that away from anybody because they were under stress or pain. As we go through this process, as hard as it is to go through that process, I hope that everybody will have the opportunity to be with somebody when they choose to leave this Earth, if it is your privilege to be there when somebody you love is in that situation, because it is a humongous privilege. I would not want to ever take away that journey from somebody. As difficult as it is, it gives you the empathy and the understanding with which to come forward and look at legislation and regulations like this with a very open mind and a sense of humility and lack of judgment, which I think is very important.

I really, really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this, and thank you so much to everybody for their stories in here. I've been very impacted by everybody's stories.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions or observations under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View? Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Medically assisted dying, of course, is complex. It is a particularly difficult subject to discuss because of the sensitivities and emotions that are involved. The Supreme Court's decision to allow assisted dying in Canada has changed our society, and as Alberta prepares to make it permissible, these changes will filter down to our province. I certainly respect and appreciate the government for putting forward this motion, however. That is why the regulations that Alberta establishes to outline the processes for medically assisted dying are so important. That is why I am very appalled that this government is allowing just six hours to discuss these draft regulations. Then, on top of that, it seeks consent from us to approve the final form of these regulations behind closed doors.

8:00

Mr. Speaker, that this motion has come before the House so that members can make a few speeches is not the kind of consultation required for an issue of this magnitude. That the public consultation that has occurred simply involved an online survey, especially when a component of the population particularly affected by this process is seniors, is typical of this government's lack of ability to actually consult with the people of this province. That is what is greatly disappointing to me. Only 15,000 Albertans participated in the survey, and 15,000 out of 4 million represents .38 per cent of the provincial population.

Mr. Speaker, as Members of the Legislative Assembly we need to see the proposed regulations and take them to our constituents for feedback. That is part of our job. Instead, this government's plan is to talk in the House for six hours. But even if we debated for 60

hours, it's only the 87 of us talking to each other. The rest of Alberta is not part of this discussion. This is a profound, life-changing issue, and you're only asking 87 people in Alberta to talk about it.

This government did not even table the documents under discussion so that they could be handed out in the House for each one of us to read. You act like you're doing us a favour by inviting us to speak about them, and we only found out about them a few hours ago.

Mr. Speaker, by telling us that these regulations must be in place by Monday and that we have to provide cabinet with permission to do it behind closed doors, this government is hobbling us from doing our job as MLAs. It is making us neglectful of our constituents. What do I say to my constituents when they hear about the regulations – and I stress “the regulations” – and ask me why I did not communicate with them about this issue? I can only tell them that the government had a year to draft the regulations, which it could have made public to gain more feedback, but it instead chose to take this route. It preferred to wait until the last minute and then pressure the Members of the Legislative Assembly to allow cabinet to make the decision itself.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Alberta have not been served by this government because they have been blocked from playing a part in this process. For that reason alone – for that reason alone – I will not be supporting this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any questions under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Calgary-West?

Seeing and hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion. In some ways it strikes me as being a bit of an earthquake motion. The social terra firma of western society, which has been stable for centuries, all of a sudden, well, on Thursday, without warning, gave a little bit of a rumble and today, without warning, split wide open.

Now, it is an issue that is hugely significant to the people of our province and to individuals and families. While I fully agree that changes in medical technology over the last decades have really changed the landscape and that there is room for some discussion here, people are suffering and are near death, and when they're in that state, they should be allowed to die a natural, non interfered with death.

Medical practice has become so advanced and so technological that it literally is possible to keep people alive with chemicals and machines and extraordinary means for long, long periods of time, that really is wrong and really does prolong the experience of death in, probably, negative ways. My concern is, though, that while I think there needs to be some adequate response to that reality, I think that you don't correct that problem by authorizing medics to become doctors of death.

So I have to speak to this from what I understand my constituents would feel about it, although I am deeply troubled that we've had no opportunity whatsoever to actually discuss it with them. People do want some control over their life. They want to be able to limit dragging out death in medically induced kinds of ways, but when it becomes an act of an aggressive killing, society will in fact grieve. People will grieve deeply.

What I would really like to speak to is the process by which we find ourselves here. I guess I truly have to ask the question as I think Albertans are going to ask the question: why the rush? We have known about this for quite a time, and one could say that it was accidentally left to the end. Some people are going to think it was deliberately left to the end. I don't know what the answer is there,



and I don't even care to speculate. I have no idea. I recognize that the government feels some sort of obligation to govern, but the reality is that measured and considered progress is most important in social conversations and especially with issues of conscience, that are deeply personal to individuals.

The truth is that we can really only speak to the actual motion itself. The other stuff was thrown out there late this afternoon, 30 minutes before we started to debate this. I still don't have a copy of it personally. The reality is that those aren't even up for debate. There is something that cabinet has shown us. I'm not sure why. We have no influence or say on it. Maybe that's their way of gaining social licence on this. I don't know. But the truth is that we don't even know yet what the federal legislation will look like in the end or if there will actually even be any yet because, quite frankly, the Senate may just reject it and send it back.

Then the difficulty is that the local provincial court decision may have impact on it. We may find the whole thing back in the courts again. So we have no idea where this is going, and I don't understand the rush to try and create guesstimate motions that authorize this cabinet to make decisions when we really don't even know what it is that we need to respond to. This is a motion that essentially takes the decision-making out of this House and empowers and validates an NDP cabinet to decide at their will, at their whim, whatever they want to do, and they want us on behalf of the people of Alberta to give them carte blanche so that they can do whatever they think seems right to them.

Now, I'm not sure that they're not necessarily going to try to do what seems right to them, but that may not be right to other people in Alberta. So for them to think that they can have complete authorization, empowerment, freedom from the people to just go behind closed doors, without public debate, and create what they think will be right: quite frankly, I'm not sure this caucus has yet earned the trust or the respect of the people of Alberta to give them that kind of huge trust and freedom on such an important motion as this, especially, for instance, when there are no safeguards listed in this motion. There is lip service to the idea of safeguards. There is a little bit of nice talk about the importance of safeguards. But what safeguards? There is no definition in the motion of anything to do with safeguards. So we are supposed to trust them to make it up, that it will be the safeguards that the people of Alberta want.

**8:10**

I don't understand the rush at all on this, because a doctor that I spoke to recently pointed out that from his point of view – and he's an Alberta doctor, in Calgary, who specializes in chronic pain management. He expressed the opinion that there is enough regulation with the medical association and others that we could take the time to get this right and the world would not end. Things would carry on. We'd be fine. So what is the rush towards suicide, whether it's assisted or not?

It puzzles me that on the one hand we grieve those who lose hope, who lose their way, who want to give up on life. We grieve the youth on reservations that commit suicide. We grieve youth in all of Alberta who get lost, who get caught in the trap of drugs and in that difficult state or who are struggling with mental health and want to commit suicide. Siblings grieve their brothers and sisters who go ahead and commit suicide, and now we want to encourage them to do it. Spouses feel abandoned by a spouse who commits suicide, and now we want to validate him or her to go ahead and do that. Parents grieve the loss of their children, children grieve the loss of their parents, yet we want to empower them to go ahead and commit suicide.

If you take this to where it goes, why should anyone who wants it not be helped? The reality is that if we're going to just let cabinet

decide, it becomes a completely subjective decision. Who's to say that my right to choose suicide is less than the rights of somebody else? A subjective decision. Who's to say that the rights of an older person are more important than the rights of a mother with children or the rights of a 16-year-old or whatever? What basis do we have to say that one person's suffering is more real – therefore, it's more justifiable – than another person's suffering? How in the world can you decide those kinds of things except for purely subjective feelings?

Many Albertans will view these things from different perspectives. I suspect many in this House will view them from different perspectives. There is absolutely no ground – there is no intellectual framework, there is no moral foundation, and there is no social licence at all granted here – by which people can decide whose suffering validates the right to suicide and whose doesn't. But the truth is that it's my right if we go this way, and everyone has the right.

How do you pick the age of 18 years old? On what grounds is it besides the subjective: well, that maybe is a nice number? I mean, what's wrong with 21 or 16 or 12 or, in fact, six? Why should a child of six years of age have fewer rights? If it boils down to my rights and my experience of my suffering and my experience of my pain, who can tell me that I don't have the right to that?

The whole thing becomes an utterly and totally subjective, groundless, unfounded piece of personal preference, and now we want Albertans to let a cabinet that they're not sure they trust express their personal preference for all of them. Do we now have a death wish, where we don't actually wish to help people through their struggles, through their mental illness issues, through all of the different things that disturb them? How is a parent to feel whose child in puberty – and many young people go through issues of self-identity and self-rejection and struggling. How are they to feel if that child decides that their pain and their suffering, because of what's happened to them at school or whatever, is great enough and strong enough that they should have a right to suicide if they choose to end their life? Because my suffering and my pain is too great, and nobody can say that my suffering is less than your suffering. It's utterly subjective.

I can't help but think also that if this is just entrusted to the decision of cabinet without any legislation, without any fulsome discussion, is it possible that another cabinet down the road would decide that a best practices situation would be that if a student from school speaks to a teacher about the wish to kill themselves, the teacher would have to refer them to a medical professional and would be forbidden to talk to the parent? The next thing you know, the child – it's their right; their suffering is undeniable; their pain is incontestable – would commit suicide without the parents ever knowing. There are no grounds, there is no foundation, there are no limits on any of this. It's entirely subjective.

Has our society – and I just ask this as a question; I realize it's not just here, but I think we have to ask ourselves this – become so confused, so nihilistic that now we want to die in a twisted psychosis of self-cutting and harm and the sleep of death? We rush headlong towards suicide. Why? In this bill there is no motion, no money to address chronic pain, to provide better mental health care. There's no motion, there's no money for better health care. There's no motion, there's no money for palliative care. Do we actually care about people, or do we want to just let them go? It's their wish. It's their will. That's what they feel today. It's their right. You cannot challenge their suffering. Who says that their suffering is worse or less than others'? Are we in such a rush to a society of nihilism and a culture of death and necropolitics that this is where we end up? I think these are questions that many people in Alberta are going to ask.

Cabinet wants the power to decide or maybe to tell all without consulting or wanting to even hear. They want to do it themselves. This is a terrible, terrible process. This is not democratic participation. For those reasons, I absolutely cannot stand before my constituents if I vote for this motion, and I will not.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka?

Hearing none, the Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** It's not under 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** Yes. Proceed.

**Mr. Taylor:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to voice my opinion on Government Motion 17, Medical Assistance in Dying. You know, this is such an important topic. I can't express how important this is, and I can't do it in just a few words about the opinions that I've heard over the past week or 10 days.

I've really been trying to determine what people think about this. You know, frankly, the response has been varied from the people that I've talked to. Some people have been in support of this and the idea of assisted dying in this province. Many told me that they're opposed to assisted dying in any way, shape, or form.

You know, there's a third camp. They sit on the fence. They're not sure what decision to make. They're waiting to see what comes out of the discussion. They want to hear more. They want to hear something from us, from their doctors, from people that actually know what's going on.

The conversation is now just beginning. It would be a shame if we only spent six hours talking about this and these voices that people have, these opinions that people have are, frankly, muted. Like I said, this is way too important a subject.

You know, personally, I struggle with this one myself. I've listened to both sides of this argument, and it's not clear in my head which way I'd go necessarily. I am still rolling this around. I myself still want to be able to have more discussion. I've heard great arguments from different members in this House. Again, I would love to be able to hear more arguments and more discussion and more opinion from, frankly, more people right across this province, whether it be on one side or the other side.

8:20

I've talked to friends, doctors, associates, and they've all had mixed feelings on this. You know what? They've told me, Mr. Speaker, that in the end we need to take time. That's what I've heard, that we need to take time to make sure that we get this right. I can't agree more, that we need to take that time.

Each member, as it stands, has got 15 minutes to be able to speak on this, plus whatever time if there's a 29(2)(a) on it, but really is that enough time when you're talking about something of this magnitude? I don't believe it is. You know, if you exercise your right to speak honestly and consider all the questions that arise out of this, this is, frankly, not enough time.

You know, I only saw these amendments – I was looking at the clock, and it was about 4:45 – at a quarter to 5, something like that, when I saw these regulations come over here. That's not enough time to read them and digest them and to understand what's in there and what the implications are. Then we have three hours tomorrow. That's, frankly, just not enough time. This is truly life and death that we're addressing. We've got to take it that seriously. It's life and death.

You know, on the whole, the language that was put into this motion seemed fairly cautious, so I was very optimistic about that. But I have some concerns, and I want to spell them out for you. The motion speaks of ways "to implement measures to regulate medical

assistance in dying." To regulate, Mr. Speaker: that means this important document will be taken out of the hands of legislators and Albertans and not be given to a panel to represent the views of all Albertans, right across all sections. It needs to be. That concerns me greatly. This topic of assisted dying needs to be brought back here, into this House, and to have a debate, an opportunity to talk to stakeholders, your fellow Albertans, your fellow constituents, who can represent their views, not just giving six hours to review and discuss it.

At the very least, Mr. Speaker, if we go the route of regulation, it should not be until we have federal legislation that's actually on this matter. Then we can actually see exactly what that says. It's not being settled until June 6. Why are we rushing ahead of this? At that time we'd know exactly what we're up against with the federal legislation. Then we could make more of an informed decision.

I have a concern that I've heard from doctors, so I want to speak on behalf of the doctors that I've talked to. It has to do with conscience rights. You know, you take a look at this material we were provided, an order in council to amend the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta standard of practice, medical assistance in dying. I go to section (4) here:

A regulated member who receives an oral or written request from a patient for medical assistance in dying and who declines for reasons of conscience or religion to provide or aid in providing medical assistance in dying must ensure that reasonable access to the Alberta Health Services care coordination service is provided to the patient without delay.

For the doctors I've talked to, that would be raising red flags. I obviously haven't had a chance to talk to them specifically about that one. I know from the conversations I've had that that would bring them up, so I want to express some of their feelings.

Their conscience tells them they cannot assist in ending someone's life in any way, shape, or form. That's what they told me. Even though they might not act or assist the patient to, you know, end their life, they must ensure the rights of the patients, so it would be referring them to a doctor who will. They have to refer them to a doctor that will provide them with this.

Passing this responsibility to a doctor who they know will consent, from what I've heard, is the same as assisting them themselves because they know what the outcome will be. In listening to what they have to say, they want the ability for doctors – they need to have the right to say no, period. They don't want to have to refer that person on because that, to them, is part of their conscience rights. They don't want to have any part of that. They don't want to be terminating that life. That's not what they got into medical practice for.

That leaves us with the situation where only doctors who feel okay with this are the ones who sign off or give consent to this. If all we're left with are doctors that are doing this, are we now in a position where we'll hear these doctors say yes in most cases instead of having a pragmatic approach, a balanced approach? That's a direct concern for me.

There are many conflicting views that truly need to be discussed more thoroughly with all Albertans to ensure the rights of patients and physicians are truly respected and that the patient's view does not supersede that of their doctor's conscience. Doctors are in much of a patient's life. In the case of my family doctor – well, I guess I know pretty much every doctor in our town – he's brought my children into the world, and now my oldest is 26. They've helped them control pain when they've had injuries, and they've looked after injuries for all these patients right across. Doctors get this way, very personal with their patients, and they see them through difficult times. They never became a doctor to terminate life, and now, as a consequence, this is just what they're being asked to do.

This brings me to another point: “The practice of medical assistance in dying is closely monitored and measures regulating medical assistance in dying are reviewed within one year.” In one year it’s going to be reviewed, this medical assistance. That’s point (d) on the original motion that we had. If we look at it after one year’s time, who’s going to look at it in one year’s time? What will it look like in one year’s time? Will they be able to make all these changes, so it doesn’t look like it’s nice and tight, and be considerate, for the most part, of both parties and not weigh heavily to one side? Again, I ask that we as legislators have the opportunity to look at this, and we should be looking at this as legislation rather than just regulation. Instead of just giving it these six hours, we need to give it a fulsome discussion so that people can actually have a chance to review it and talk about it.

You know, I only heard about this motion yesterday and saw the regulation three or four hours ago, I guess, and frankly I don’t believe that this is enough time. The federal government has had more time. They, frankly, have had 18 months to look at this and have discussions about it and ruminate and talk about it and decide what’s going on. There’s been a lot of heated debate on this subject, and now we’ve got these two three-hour portions on these two days to be able to talk about that. It’s just not enough time when you consider the enormity of this topic.

This topic is so important for everyone here, for everyone in my constituency, for all Albertans. We have this moment in time – this moment in time – and we need to get it right. As it stands, I can’t support this motion. There are simply too many questions and concerns and just not enough time to consider the implications of this motion.

Finally, I’ll say in conclusion: will you please give all Albertans more time to look at this and engage all Albertans in this process? Thank you.

8:30

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Battle River-Wainwright?

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a tough motion to rise to speak to. I think for any member in the House this is a tough topic. Just part of being human is death, and it’s something that, I think, most of us sometimes would like to forget, that all of us will face that one day.

I think that, for myself, my experience on this has primarily been around watching and going through journeys with loved ones who have had to face terminal illnesses, going on that journey with them through their treatments and through their time as they leave the earth, as I know many members on all sides of the House will have experienced with loved ones, and watching them go through pain, the fear, and those things that are associated with death and sharing that pain with them. That’s a hard thing to watch.

By no means am I an expert on what legislation you would need, what regulations you would need, what safeguards need to be put in place, what types of things we need to do something like this. I can recognize the need or the concerns and why there would be discussions on why there may have to be bills like this. But at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, MLAs are not supposed to be experts at everything. We’re supposed to be advocates. We’re supposed to advocate for our constituents. We’re supposed to try to bring their views to this place and advocate for them as best we can. That’s not an easy thing when you have as many constituents as most of us do back there, but that is our job.

Now, inside this Assembly we have many experts in many things. I see that inside this Assembly we have doctors, who may

understand some of this stuff a lot better than some of the other members in this House. I know that my experience in life has been primarily around working with homeless people, as people know, as well as some time as a CFO. So while I could talk to you about accounting or how to work with a methamphetamine addict, I don’t, you know, have a lot of information about this, and it would take time for me to understand.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it’s our job to go to our constituents and to the people that can help us understand this and then be able to come back and advocate for what’s best. By bringing forward a motion, as some of my colleagues have already brought forward, and then limiting the debate before MLAs can speak to the people that they represent that know about this, can figure out what the views of their constituents are to be able to come and articulate it right, to help get it right – this is serious stuff. This is serious stuff. We are talking about something that is very serious and certainly has the potential for abuse if we do not get it right. I think every member on every side of the House will want to make sure that we can protect anybody vulnerable from being abused in a situation such as legislation or regulations like this – it’s serious.

Now, one of the things that I find appalling – and I don’t think most of the public knows it, Mr. Speaker, unless they’ve had the experience of being an MLA or working around this place – is how fast we move legislation, particularly in Alberta. Not all jurisdictions are at that speed. But particularly in Alberta, how fast we move stuff like this through the Assembly – and I recognize that this is a motion – is staggeringly fast.

If you talk to the average person back in our constituency, they would be shocked that the people that represent them received a document at 3 o’clock or so today and are standing up in the Assembly attempting to figure out what’s best for their constituents and for the province of Alberta in that timeline, without having an opportunity to return to the constituents they represent, to speak to the doctors that they work with, the medical associations, and many of the experts that we have in this province that are available to us, that would certainly be able to provide us appropriate feedback for us to do our job.

Now, it’s one of the reasons why the opposition, as you know, Mr. Speaker, has risen many times to speak of concerns, not just on this motion but on several bills in the past, about the way we do things in the Alberta Legislature. We had hoped and we still do hope that with the new minister of democratic reform we will see some of those reforms so that we can do legislation differently, and we can get it right.

While this is an important subject – and I certainly think that the government’s heart is in the right spot by bringing it forward and trying to attempt to deal with the situation that they have to face and get this right – bringing it forward in a rushed way doesn’t do any of our constituents any good. I think that’s important. I think that’s something that we have to recognize.

You know, we have a short time on this, and I don’t want to take the floor for too much time and prevent other members from being able to speak to it.

But, again, we see it time and time again, particularly since this government has taken power, Mr. Speaker. We are bringing forward pieces of legislation that have significant impacts on our society, on the people that we represent, the people that have sent us here to do a job, and not providing opportunities for the other side of the House, the opposition, to be able to communicate with the people they represent, to get the feedback and the knowledge and the information so that you can make sure that you get things right – this is serious. For what possible reason would we want to limit it to six hours of debate? Can the government truly, with a straight face stand up and justify to Albertans and an Assembly of

87 people: we're going to limit this to six hours of debate, and we're only going to give you the information several minutes before you start to debate it. I think most of the constituents in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre would be appalled by that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know that I spent a significant time working in the nonprofit field. In the nonprofit field we have, of course, a board of directors. That's important for governance. I recognize that. I worked with many great boards over the years. But sometimes when you work with a board of governors all the time, you feel like you're working with people for whom it is their hobby, and it's your life. You have to interact with the board. You're trying to do that. This is something you do all day, and then they just come in, often on a volunteer basis in that world, and it's kind of their hobby. It's important. I'm not knocking the governance side of it. But that's sometimes how you feel when you're the executive director working with a board.

In some ways we are a massive board of directors for this province. The experts that have to execute this, the experts that are going to have to face the realities associated with the decisions that are made because of this and other pieces of legislation that we move through this fast, must be looking and going: "What? Is this a hobby for you guys? This is my life. This is important. I am the doctor who's going to have to stand in the room and get this right." "I'm the nurse that's going to have to deal with the realities of this, and you took so little care in it that you slammed it through the Legislature with only six hours of debate and never gave the MLAs the opportunity to speak to the people that it affects, to speak to the people that it'll impact."

That's very disappointing, Mr. Speaker. The government can't even say that with a straight face. There's no justifiable reason for that to happen, and it keeps happening in this Assembly. I for one am very disappointed about that, and I know the people of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre are very disappointed about that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will yield the floor to the next speaker. But I certainly hope that this government starts to consider working to bring forward good legislation, working with the people of Alberta to get it right the first time and helping the people that the rules and the legislation and the processes that we make here actually impact rather than trying to rush things through in the middle of the night, with very little notice and very little time for debate.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions of the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway, did you wish to speak to the motion?

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, this is an extremely important debate. The government has decided to speak to it tomorrow as well, so I look forward to delivering my speech tomorrow and, you know, hearing other members' speeches as well.

Therefore, I move that we adjourn the debate on Motion 17 until tomorrow.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 20 Climate Leadership Implementation Act

[Adjourned debate May 31: Mr. Shepherd]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thanks. It's great to be back up so quick with you. I'm sure you're excited to see me back up. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I have the privilege, of course, of rising today to speak to Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. Now, this bill – let's be clear on this – is going to make Alberta families worse off, and it's going to lighten their wallets. It's a bill, Mr. Speaker, that takes money out of Albertans' pockets at a time when they need it most.

**8:40**

If this government right across from me would open their eyes and take a look at the state of the economy in our province right now, they would see that Albertans are hurting. If they would take the time, Mr. Speaker, to travel with me back to Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and walk the streets of Rocky Mountain House or come to Rimbey and visit with the mayor or go to Sundre at the A&W – one of my favourite places to get political advice is the Sundre A&W; if you ever read any columns with me, I often refer to what they say – you would hear that people are hurting. You would hear that they're losing jobs and that they are suffering in my communities and communities right across this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, last year our province lost close to 100,000 jobs. You have to think about that: 100,000 jobs.

**Mr. Rodney:** How much?

**Mr. Nixon:** A hundred thousand jobs last year.

That is a staggering number, Mr. Speaker. That is a staggering number of kids right now who are in homes where at least one parent and sometimes both have lost jobs. That is a staggering, staggering number.

Those who still have work right now are facing a reduction in wages or hours. Now, I hear that often as I travel around my constituency right now. People are having to take less hours or less money to be able to keep working, and that has another staggering impact on families all across this province. It's making it harder for thousands of Alberta families to pay their bills and keep food on the table. That's making the problem worse because the next people you start talking to, Mr. Speaker, are small-business owners and people in our communities who can't get the bills paid because these families are suffering, and then that causes small-business owners' families to start to have trouble, and it spirals out of control.

Again, 100,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker. Adding to this downturn is the hardship that – what now? What is this government's response to that hardship, that I just said? What is this government's response to 100,000 people out of jobs? What is their response? What is their solution to get Alberta's families a leg up? What is their solution to get the families in Rocky Mountain House or Sundre or Rimbey a leg up? They're out of work. What's their solution? They decided to add an extra tax – an extra tax – to those families. Think about that: 100,000 people out of work, and this government comes here and adds an extra tax to those families who are trying to make ends meet.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm genuinely curious: what are these people supposed to do? What are they supposed to do? How are they supposed to mitigate the costs that are going to be put onto their families? Albertans are smart people, and they are already trying to reduce costs in their households by every means possible. We hear it every day when I'm talking to constituents. How is this tax going to help make Alberta families incentivized to leave less of a carbon footprint? How is it?

In 2008 Stephen Harper's Conservative government mandated that all newly installed furnaces, whether it be in a new home or a

retrofit installation, be a high-efficiency furnace with an efficiency rating of no less than 90 per cent – 90 per cent efficiency, Mr. Speaker. Ninety per cent efficient furnaces that have direct-current fan blowers use less natural gas and less electricity than any other furnaces that have ever been created. Due to the average lifespan of most of those furnaces this means that in less than 10 years – less than 10 years – almost every single furnace in this province will be high efficiency. Consumers will already be burning the least amount of energy possible to heat their homes and businesses. So despite what these government members are saying about increasing efficiencies to decrease the carbon footprint, almost all Albertans will already be burning the least amount of natural gas possible.

Albertans have also had their backs up against the wall for some time when it comes to the price of gasoline. [interjections] Now, I know, Mr. Speaker, as you can tell from the hon. member, that they find it quite interesting that constituents in my riding are going to have to pay so much more for fuel, but I don't, and I can tell you that they don't. Now, although the price of oil dipped down to its lowest state in late 2014, gasoline was well above the \$1.10 a litre mark for most of the time since 2012 and even shot up beyond \$1.20 several times. Being the fiscally prudent people that Albertans are, people have also taken measures to reduce their fuel inputs as much as possible.

What this government may not understand is that a lot of people in this province must drive vehicles that consume more fuel than the average family-sized sedan. The average family-sized sedan, the average small car that we might see in Edmonton and Calgary, won't get down my driveway. That's the reality of where I live, and that's the reality of where many of the people in our province live. Heavy industry in this province relies on pickup trucks and heavy equipment. The people that work in my constituency rely on pickup trucks. They have to. They rely on heavy equipment to get done jobs that we depend on them to get done.

As much as companies and consumers would like to only have to pay for a Smart car's worth of fuel every month, the reality is that to move tools, to move equipment and personnel from remote work site to work site often means that they need a vehicle that can handle a heavy load. That's the reality of the jobs. What are those people supposed to do, just bite the bullet and pay the extra price at the pump?

Mr. Speaker, last night I returned home to Sundre to speak at a 4-H sale. The show had been earlier in the day, when I was with you guys, but I managed to arrive in town to be able open up the auction. It's something that I enjoy doing. I often like to go to 4-H sales. As I looked at the families all across there – and I was in Sundre, which is my home in the constituency – and I looked at all the children coming to something that is extremely important to our communities, the entire parking lot was trucks and trailers. How does this government think that the people in my communities get cows to auction sales? How do they think we get horses to the things we do?

**An Hon. Member:** In a Smart car.

**Mr. Nixon:** We use trucks. We don't drive Smart cars where I come from. I know that the member across the way who is getting very upset about that doesn't realize that they don't drive a lot of Smart cars in Sundre because it doesn't work where they live. That's the reality.

What are these people supposed to do? What are they supposed to do? Are they just supposed to bite the bullet, or are you saying that those people can no longer take their kids to 4-H, that they're going to have to cut costs? Moms can't take them to hockey. Maybe

my kids can't go to the rodeo anymore; we shouldn't drive to that. That's the reality. You have to at least accept that there are those constituencies.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is certainly the message that this minister and this government is sending to the hard-working people of this province that actually make the income that the NDP is taxing. The people that actually pay the bills around here are not us. They are the people of Alberta, and it's something that this government seems to often forget.

When a parent has to take their kid to hockey or soccer practice, this tax will not impede their decision or make them think twice about taking the best care of their child. That's actually just the reality. The reality is that my community is not going to stop going to 4-H because this government raised its taxes. We're not going to stop living the lifestyle that we live there. We're not going to be able stop going to work. And I certainly ain't going to be able get a Smart car down my mile-long driveway in the snow. That's the reality.

Parents will keep taking their kids to sports, dance recitals, and other activities because they love their kids, Mr. Speaker. That's the reality. You know that. I've seen you with your grandkids. You love your kids. You're not going to stop because of a tax. All that this bill will do is to penalize these parents for encouraging their kids to live healthy lifestyles, to participate in extracurricular activities.

Mr. Speaker, I'm asking these questions because I believe that they genuinely require answering and my constituents say that they genuinely require answering. We haven't seen anything substantial from this government that tells Albertans how much this will cost their families and how these changes are going to affect the Alberta economy. Back to that 100,000 jobs that we've already lost, 100,000 families where at least one person with a job has lost their job.

Mr. Speaker, this is just another policy that is driven by an ideological view rather than empirical evidence. Why hasn't this government conducted an economic assessment of how this carbon tax is going to directly impact every family and business in this province? Why haven't they? That seems like something that you would do when you're bringing forward this big a piece of legislation, that is going to cost Albertans billions of dollars.

I met with a constituent this past week in a restaurant in a hotel in Rimbey. Now, this hotel's manager wrote me a letter a couple of weeks ago about how worried they were about what the NDP's minimum wage policy would mean for the staff at his restaurant, that are already getting paid close to the \$15 per hour mark.

This time he came over and gave me an earful about what the carbon tax would mean for his business. This is an owner operating a hotel, and like most small businesses, they are running a pretty small margin to begin with, Mr. Speaker. That's a fact. He asked me questions similar to the questions I just proposed to the government members of this House. Throughout this conversation I was asked what businesses like the hotel are supposed to do when they are already using high-efficiency boilers, high-efficiency hot water tanks, high-efficiency LED light bulbs, and even economizer cooling units, that use fractional amounts of electricity by using outdoor air to cool occupied spaces. What are they supposed to do when they're already doing all of that?

Like most Albertans in their homes, this business operator was also doing everything that he could do to use the least amount of energy. Already doing it, Mr. Speaker. This government has already made it hard enough on small operators like this independent restaurant and hotel in my riding by increasing sin taxes, increasing the minimum wage, and now increasing an enormous part of small-business overhead by increasing energy prices. That's what this bill does.

8:50

When the government moves forward with nontangible data on how their ideological economic policies will actually affect the economy, small-business owners like the hotel operator in my town often get forgotten. It is truly surprising that this government believes that it can march forward with what will be a massive tax increase without providing justification for how the economy will really be impacted, for how the small businesses in my riding will really be impacted, for how the families in my riding will really be impacted.

The NDP's rebate scheme was only designed to cover increased natural gas and fuel costs but ignores the fact that the carbon tax will hike the price of electricity. That's pretty important. Has this government given any thought to what this will do for grocery stores, that consume a large amount of electricity to keep their refrigeration equipment running, or the cold storage facilities that store every single frozen food that enters our major cities? Guess what, Mr. Speaker? These cold storage facilities consume the least amount of energy possible because like the hotel operators and everyday moms and dads, they already use energy-efficient equipment.

What will the increase in electricity prices lead to? What will it lead to? It's not going to stop them; they're already using it. It will directly lead to an increase in prices in every single grocery store that requires refrigeration, and that's all of them. I'm sure that even this government can understand how many grocery stores require refrigeration. How many do you think? All of them, right? That's right.

Mr. Speaker, let's do a quick recap as to what this carbon tax will really mean for Albertans. One, it's going to be more expensive to heat your homes, and since we live in the north in Canada, this just might be a significant cost to families that are already struggling. I would think that would be fair to say. Two, small-business owners that are already trying to optimize their energy efficiency will be getting slapped with increasing energy prices, and there isn't one thing they can do about it. This government has provided nothing that they can do about it at a time when we've already lost 100,000 jobs. Three, basic goods like milk, eggs, beef, and yogourt will all be more expensive.

This government, Mr. Speaker – let's be clear – is going to institute a tax that will have sweeping effects on all aspects of the economy but is asking us to trust them despite there being no economic assessment on how this tax will really be carried out. Albertans can't trust this government to take in massive amounts of tax to sit in a slush fund somewhere with nothing more than a promise to redistribute it later. The people of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre won't stand for it, and I won't stand for it.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is incomplete and needs further study, and I look forward to voting against it. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the magnificent riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. That was riveting. I enjoyed every moment of it. I do have a question for the hon. member, though, because I got a really clear visual of this friendly giant trying to cram himself into a Smart car in the middle of winter in order to save money.

Now, hon. member, correct me if I am wrong, but I believe there are some 49,000 farmers in this province. I believe that energy costs are already a significant input in agriculture and that, as any

businessperson would, they try to minimize and save on those costs. In your mind, is there any way you can think of where an electric vehicle or even some of these hybrid cars could possibly be utilized to haul cattle, feed, salt, and other things for our poor farmers, who have been told, "Well, just go buy another car"?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. It's a good question. If you have not spent a lot of time in communities like the hon. member's and mine – particularly mine as I live in the Rocky Mountains. To answer his question about the vehicles he is talking about: never mind hauling cattle or horses or trailers or equipment or tools or men and women to work, but the cars you're talking about can't get up some of the hills we drive down. They would struggle on my driveway at certain times of the year. We struggle on the road, once I leave pavement, to get to my home. I live in a really nice spot. I hope you get to come one day and join me in Bergen, just outside of Sundre. We have a lot of very, very steep hills. It's great to live there, and that's why we like it.

We need bigger vehicles just to get through our daily lives there. Just to get kids to school, we need bigger vehicles. Certainly, when we're hauling equipment, when we're hauling kids' calves to 4-H stuff and we're hauling kids' horses to rodeo things, when farmers are hauling stock, they need bigger vehicles. We also drive very, very big areas. Just for me in my constituency alone, from the top of my riding, just north of Rimbey, in Bluffton to where I live in Bergen, just south of Sundre, is two and a half hours one way.

We can't drive the vehicles that this government has suggested these farmers should just replace their trucks with. It is such a ludicrous assertion to the people of my community, and it shows that whoever has been writing this and this government when they speak about it, Mr. Speaker, have no idea about the reality of the communities that I represent. They have no idea about it.

I strongly encourage the government members, and I often invite them – I have the privilege of representing some of the finest people in this province but also some of the finest landscapes in the entire province of Alberta – to come west of Rocky Mountain House or Sundre. It's a pretty nice place. I hope you come to Ya Ha Tinda, one of my favourite places, one day. You are not getting to Ya Ha Tinda in a Smart car. You're not. That is the reality. You are not getting to Ya Ha Tinda in a Smart car. Those are the roads that my neighbours in my community and my family have to drive every day. That's the reality.

The government stands up and says: well, just buy a different car. That's what the Premier said, Mr. Speaker: just buy a different car. Is she suggesting that I should go back to Rimbey on the weekend here and meet with some farmers and say: "Oh, don't worry. I talked to the Premier. She said to just buy a different car to haul all of your stock."

You know, it's going to raise the cost of everything on vehicles. Vets, who often do calls inside my constituency, are going to have to burn extra fuel driving everywhere, and I'm telling you that they're not going to be in a Smart car.

So it is actually an insulting thing to say, and it really shows – it really shows – that this government often appears to not be leaving Edmonton and coming out and seeing what is the reality of driving in constituencies like Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. As always, I keep a standing invite to the Premier and all of her cabinet. Any time that they would like to come to Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to see the realities of the roads we drive, I'd be happy to take them on a tour and show them what's

going on and show them the realities there and maybe take them to the A&W. I'd like to see them explain to the farmers at the A&W having their coffee every afternoon that they should just buy a new car and that that's going to help them with all their problems on their farm.

Mr. Speaker, you know that's a ludicrous thing to say. I know that you wouldn't say that to the farmers anywhere near your constituency. Of course not. You're not going to say that. The Smart car is not even going to get into the field to go check the cows. It's not.

This government just shows how little they have thought about the impact on all Albertans, and that's just one issue, just driving. The reality is that this bill is going to stop some kids from going to hockey. Think about that.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I wondered, hon. member: if maybe you made the offer to the Minister of Advanced Education, he could come out and give some accordion lessons to people there.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I would like to begin by acknowledging the challenge the world is facing to reduce global emissions. There is no doubt that it's a challenge that must be met with the ingenuity and entrepreneurship that have marked the people of this province for generations. As my party said in the last election, climate change needs action and solutions. The members opposite can try and waste their time arguing this point instead of the point Albertans want us to be talking about, the impact this bill will have on their daily lives.

I would like to get the following on the record, Mr. Speaker. I would like to get this on the record so that the members opposite cannot say otherwise. Before the members opposite attempt to get themselves into hot water with a point of order, I would like to say that I believe in climate change. I believe in climate change. It is real, it is happening, and it is affecting the entire world. I want to put it on record.

I can assume that we can all agree on that point. I can assume that there is no point in arguing over a point we all agree on. That would be a waste of everybody's time. I will also be calling a point of order every single time that anyone accuses me or my caucus of believing otherwise. If the members opposite would like to get this bill through in a reasonable time, I would suggest they not cause us to debate a point of order and increase debate time.

9:00

The fact is that Alberta is a petroleum producer, and we have nothing to be ashamed of. We sit on the world's third-largest oil reserves. The world needs our environmentally produced oil. We also produce natural gas and other fuels the world relies on. If we are to keep Alberta a friendly place to invest in, we have to make sure we remain competitive with the world and that we do not send investment outside of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I really want to put on record that I believe in climate change. I will not debate the merits of climate change for the remainder of this debate. It does exist, and we can move on from that point.

What I will debate is the following. I will debate that a punitive tax will not change people's way of life other than to reduce the amount of money they have to spend. I will debate that this tax will hurt people more than the rebate will help. I will debate that this government did not run on a province-wide tax, that this is not what Albertans want. I will argue that this tax is not revenue neutral when compared to B.C.'s neutral carbon tax.

Now, let's begin, Mr. Speaker. How am I supposed to sell this tax to the residents of Calgary-Foothills? I am my constituents' representative, and I have to represent their interests in this House. Additionally, if there is something worthy that this government deems necessary for the people, my job is to bring that issue back to people in my riding for their input. Not only am I asking for their input, but I am asking them whether or not I should back this bill. If this bill is worthy enough for me to attempt to convince my residents that it is in their interest, I need to convince them to back me in voting for this bill. To do that, I need to have a solid argument to convince them that this is a good idea.

Except there is one very major difference with this bill and the reason I was elected. I ran on zero increases in taxes. This bill increases taxes. Asking my constituents to back a decision to vote yes on a bill that increases taxes will never fly with my constituents because I didn't campaign on that. Asking people in Calgary-Foothills to allow me to back a bill that raises taxes would be the equivalent of an MLA promising one thing and delivering the complete opposite. Members opposite have been accused of doing things they never ran on, such as with this very bill, but I'll not do that.

I will not vote for something that I did not run on. I would not trick my constituents into increasing taxes just because I was not fiscally responsible with their taxes. I would not create a province-wide policy that was not in my platform. As long as there is a punitive tax in this bill, I will not vote for it. I will not vote for something I'm explicitly against, which my constituents do not want me to vote for.

The NDP keep quoting a poll that shows the majority of Albertans support a carbon tax. If that was the case in my riding, I would support it as well since it is my job to represent them. What the NDP refuse to admit is that the poll, that came after they announced what their carbon tax would actually include, shows that Albertans are against this tax. People are happy to help the environment. People want to stop climate change. People want to make the world a better place, but Albertans do not think that this carbon tax is a good idea. A Mainstreet Research poll showed that 66 per cent of Albertans were against the incoming tax. That is well past a majority. That is Alberta speaking loud and clear, Mr. Speaker, that they are against this tax.

It is amazing how people will vote when people have all the facts. If I told Albertans that I will come out with a climate change plan that will solve the world's problems, I would imagine that every Albertan would be in favour of it, which is exactly how this climate change plan was advertised. The thing is that Albertans are not stupid, Mr. Speaker. Once the details of the plan were announced, that same Mainstreet poll showed that 68 per cent of Albertans opposed the plan altogether. Yes, once the details of the plan were announced, people opposed the plan.

It seems that this government is again falling prey to the same mistakes over and over and over. They refuse to consult Albertans and find out what they actually want. The NDP seem to think that they know best. They seem to think that they know how to best implement policies, without consulting Albertans. They don't even have their offices staffed with Albertans to even have the resemblance of Albertan thinking within their policies. It's not acceptable.

The poll continued on to show that Albertans are smart. Albertans know, first of all, for example, that the NEB, the board that approves pipelines, does not care what this government does. The NEB will approve or not approve a pipeline based on the economic and environmental impacts of the pipeline itself. The NEB will not approve a pipeline if a province taxes their people to death under the guise of being nice to the environment. The

poll by Mainstreet Research showed that 62 per cent of Albertans believe that this climate plan will not help with future pipeline approvals, and they're right. The NEB approved a pipeline, and this plan has not yet come to pass, complete and utter proof that this plan has no effect on pipelines being approved or not approved.

Let's continue on now to the economic impact of this bill, Mr. Speaker. I would point to the details of the economic impact of this plan if I had them. I would point to the economic impact study that was done for this bill if the government actually did one. I do not understand why this government refuses to complete or to table their economic impact study of this carbon tax on Albertans. Alberta is having a difficult time right now. Our economy is far different than it has been. Over a hundred thousand people have lost their jobs. Many people in Calgary-Foothills have lost their jobs, and they want to get back to work. Oil field companies are going out of business, and people are leaving the province in droves, yet this government refuses to evaluate our current economic situation and how this bill will affect Alberta's situation.

Is this government hiding something that they do not want Albertans to know? I'm sure that this government was afraid of giving Albertans more information, knowing that they would oppose this tax even further if they had more details. Maybe this government knows that the economic impact of this tax will be so detrimental to the people they advertise it will help that the government will do anything it can do to suppress that information. If that is a false statement, then prove me wrong. Release the information. Release an economic impact study done in Alberta on this tax.

The number of questions that I have over the fact that this government refuses to release this information would last us until the cows come home, but I have other questions that I would like addressed as well, questions surrounding the cap on emissions. I want to know how the quota for the 30 megatonnes is divided up. When this emissions cap was decided, was the intention of increasing this cap to pick winners and losers?

**9:10**

Let me expound before members opposite become too upset. When the NDP was sitting on this side, on the opposition benches, they accused the previous government of picking winners and losers. They accused the previous government of awarding contracts based on who donated the most money, but this government is appointing people who have donated lots of money to their party. This government is starting to look a lot like the previous government. That's why I question whether this cap is to pick winners and losers. Who will get to use the rest of this emissions cap? We're already consuming 70 megatonnes, and the cap is at 100 megatonnes, Mr. Speaker. There are only 30 megatonnes left, so who will be allocated that? Nobody knows. This bill doesn't speak about that.

**Mr. Orr:** I bet you they already gave permits to the big four that bought out . . .

**Mr. Panda:** Well, that could be the reason. That's right. They're supported.

Will this government pick who gets to use the rest of the allotted emissions? Will this government pick winners and losers like the last government did? Will there be an independent body that will determine who gets to use the allotted emissions cap? What's being done to ensure that this government divvies up the allotted emissions to whoever would be the best for Alberta instead of a friend of the NDP? These are the questions that the residents of

Calgary-Foothills want me to get answers to. I hope that the minister can answer these questions during this debate.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we are rushing through all these bills. Bill 20 is a 95-page bill, you know, in contrast to Bill 1, which is supposed to be the flagship bill of this government, that gathered dust for three months. We didn't rush that through. Now we are at the end of the session, and we have to debate day and night on Bill 20, which is 95 pages. We didn't have enough time. People are questioning . . .

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Integrity.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah.

. . . the thinking process and the integrity that goes into this thinking that we can just rush the bills through this House without quality debate. People want quality debate. We're not getting enough time.

It's the same thing when we were talking about the other motion just now, that the previous speakers were mentioning. We're bringing in bills and motions just 72 hours before the House is going to adjourn for summer. Albertans are wondering: what are the motives of this government? When they sat on this side of the House, they criticized the previous government for rushing through bills like that, but now it seems that it's acceptable to them.

This carbon tax, Mr. Speaker, like Bill 6, has really unsettled people in my riding because the premise is . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Questions to the Member for Calgary-Foothills under 29(2)(a)?  
The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was intrigued by what the Member for Calgary-Foothills had started to say about consultation and the importance of consultation within the legislative process. He brought up the fact that the job-creation bill, Bill 1, was introduced – what? – the first week of session, something like that, and I'm guessing that during the time that it had been sitting on the Order Paper, the government must have been doing a ton of consultation to work out exactly what that's minister's responsibilities were to create jobs for ridings like Bonnyville-Cold Lake, the one I'm from, and Calgary-Foothills, like my honoured colleague here is from. Now, this is an interesting thought, that we give a one-page bill three months, and we give a 95-page bill a week, maybe a week and a half, that is a lifestyle change for Albertans. It's going to impact everyone across Alberta whereas Bill 1 really only impacted the one specific ministry.

I would like to hear from the member on how he feels the consultation process for Bill 1 versus Bill 20 went, the differences between the two, and how he feels that this could have been handled better had we been given more time to look through this bill, to be able to go stakeholders and discuss this bill instead of rushing something through that probably will have massive unintended consequences because of the fact that we haven't taken the time to go through it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake. If his question is about the consultation process adopted by this government, I didn't see any consultation for Bill 1. They claim to have consulted industry leaders for Bill 20, but, like my colleagues here, I was wondering if that consultation was with only very few of the industry representatives. And if they broke ranks with their other industry colleagues and just supported this bill, were there any promises made to them in terms of allocating that remaining 30 megatonnes?



I don't know. Those are the questions. If the government can throw light on that and educate us in the next few hours and few days of debate, I'll be grateful.

Mr. Speaker, the premise of this bill is to decarbonize the economy and, you know, to improve the environment, and for that, what they're trying to do is to put a price on carbon. All those industrialists who supported the bill: in their regular business they do a cost-benefit analysis for every decision they make. In this very case there are costs, but there is no benefit. The benefit is supposed to be gaining social licence for pipelines, and we haven't seen that yet. The NEB doesn't care about the social side of that; they just look at the environmental and economic impacts of the pipeline and also the benefits of that. Based on that, they make their recommendations.

I expect and Albertans expect this government to do the same thing, that they will do a thorough economic impact study of this major environmental policy they're announcing. They haven't done that. This was supposed to be revenue neutral, and that's not the case. Mr. Speaker, at the end you really wonder why this government is rushing this bill.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Anyone wishing to speak to Bill 20? The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise and speak in support of Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. The title is the core of this NDP government and this NDP caucus. It recognizes the responsibility we have to the environment, Albertans, Canadians, and the world, and it acknowledges the impact that climate has on it. It asks that we do what Alberta does best – that is, to be leaders – and it commits to implementation, which was sorely lacking from the previous government.

You can't just talk about how great it would be if you could do something about the environment. Every day is precious time that we are losing. The world evolves and adapts with time, periods of time that we cannot contemplate, billions of years, not thousands of years, as some in opposition would plug their ears and try to believe. What we have done since the Industrial Revolution is to attempt to force this planet to expedite this process in a way that it simply cannot bear. This problem is not going to be addressed in any sort of meaningful way without strong leadership, leadership under a minister that has shown resolute strength and integrity.

This government asked Dr. Andrew Leach to undertake extensive consultation and to engage communities and to lead a panel of experts. All of this work culminated in the Climate Leadership report. The report states that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing us today and directly affects the health, environment, and economy of our province.

**9:20**

The consequences of a changing climate are already being experienced around the world and right here at home. There are few jurisdictions that experience this as acutely as rural Alberta: wildfires, severe drought, heavy flooding. This past spring was extremely dry. What some here may not know is that when you go to the outlying areas of Alberta where we have farms, people obtain licences to burn different materials on their property. One of the challenges is that these fires don't always go out under the soil. In fact, these fires can burn underground all winter and spark in the spring. Counties have service people that use a heat-seeking radar to find hot spots in an attempt to head off forest fires at the

beginning, but the spots they miss will take a larger life in the spring when conditions start to dry.

This spring I had the opportunity to visit a constituent's cow-calf farm, which under normal circumstances would have been a lot of fun. The tragedy is that I was visiting their farm because there was a forest fire, a fire exacerbated due to very dry conditions, a dry winter followed by a March and April almost free of rain. This fire took 75 per cent of their fence, all of their buildings save for their house, the husband's entire tool shop, and all of their feed for their cattle. They were devastated. They had three generations at home with them, including two very small children, one just a baby girl. They had invested everything they had into their farm. I sat at their kitchen table and watched the treeline, that was 50 feet away, still billowing smoke. One of the buildings they lost was sitting in melted pieces right beside their house. As I sat there, I asked myself: when is this going to happen next? How are we going to support these families, that are a vital part of the identity of Alberta? How am I going to help them up?

Mr. Speaker, this province's economy was built on agriculture. The New Democrats know that. Our party roots lie in farming communities. When we are faced with challenge, we innovate and we adapt. That's why we are acting today. This is why the government has made a crucial decision to exempt marked gas and diesel from the carbon levy. Agriculture will play an integral role as we work on economic diversification in this province.

Farming has been the most sustainable part of our economy for over a century. In 2014 it made up 1.3 per cent of our GDP. By focusing on how we can support our farms as we grow both local and international markets, we can work to grow that part of our economy. By exempting fuel used on farms, we recognize that modern farming is a challenge. Struggling with increasingly variable weather, our agricultural community contemplates whether they will keep fighting the good fight, that ultimately puts food on our table.

Farmers are always looking at how to innovate and lower their costs. They regularly consult with experts to make their operations more efficient. Farms are already putting solar on their buildings. They don't want to be subject to the fluctuating costs of energy when they know they can make themselves self-sufficient. The government announced this past February a new solar program for agricultural producers, on-farm solar management, providing \$500,000 in provincial and federal funding towards solar energy systems on Alberta farms. This is just one of the first programs that will assist farm operations in generating their own electricity.

Programs such as these can be administered through the second part of this act, that will introduce a lean agency named Energy Efficiency Alberta. We are the last province to establish this sort of agency, that has a mandate to promote, design, and deliver programs that carry out other activities related to energy efficiency, energy conservation, and the development of microgeneration and small-scale energy systems in Alberta.

This mirrors the values that Alberta farmers have, and it is long overdue, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** May I, Mr. Speaker? Regarding farming, I'm just wondering if the hon. member can illuminate the House here with any data that her government has done on the actual costs to farming of this carbon tax, something in the order of an economic assessment study, the real thing.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the hon. member. The cost is that person's farm. The cost is the feed that that person needs to now replace, the tens of thousands of dollars that it will cost to get that farm back up and running: all of the feed, the buildings, that person's tools, that they had just bought, to have a business that would supplement their farm income.

It is very difficult in today's world to make a good living at farming. That's why we have so many people that have off-farm jobs in oil and gas. That's one of the reasons why we have this climate change implementation act. We need to find market access because while we need to grow farming in Alberta, we are still dependent on oil and gas. Most of the farmers that I meet either work off-farm in oil and gas or their family does. So those are the costs.

The cost of doing nothing is to continue to sell our resources at a discount by shipping it by rail. The real cost is the emotional burden on these families that put everything, their entire lives, into their farming operations, and when they lose it, it is very difficult to get their feet back underneath them. That's the cost.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under 29(2)(a). I don't think the hon. member actually even came close to answering the question. I think the question was about the cost of the carbon tax on the particular farm she talked about. Now, she went on to also address other costs, but she didn't talk about the carbon tax, the cost to farmers, and whether there was any economic assessment done on that.

She did also mention something about the title, that the core of this bill is in the title, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. When I look through this Bill 20 here, I see three things: the Climate Leadership Act, the Energy Efficiency Alberta Act, and then other acts under schedule 3. Now, let's just look at schedule 3. In that is the Alberta Corporate Tax Act, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act, and the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act.

Now, if we look at the energy efficiency section of the bill, when I look at the table of contents, what I see – and this is a question to the member – is that we talk about the board. We talk about the duties and functions of the board. We talk about the chief executive officer. We talk about bylaws, business plans, reports, directives, regulations, the coming into force. I see all sorts of things about organization and structure, but I don't see a plan here. I don't see anything here that actually talks about climate. All we see is plans here.

Now let's go to the Climate Leadership Act. What I want to ask the member is this. When we start in here, we see the carbon levy on certain fuels. I guess my question is really: where is this climate leadership? To me this looks like it's a tax bill, purely a tax bill. If we go down, we're talking about the carbon levy in items 4 through 10. Then we talk about the mixture of fuels, rebranded fuel. We talk about carbon levy exemption certificates. We talk about prohibited sale, prohibited use. We talk about assessment of carbon levy to be remitted. We talk about overpayment of carbon levy, assessment of penalties, interest, payment by a third party, liability of directors for failure to remit. We talk about irregularities. We talk about warrants. We talk about offences and penalties.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 20? The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

9:30

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act. This truly is a shift in government policy. I think many of us welcomed the need for serious action on climate change. It proposes to create two new statutes: the Climate Leadership Act and the Energy Efficiency Alberta Act. The Climate Leadership Act will give government the authority to establish the carbon levy and consumer rebates. The Energy Efficiency Alberta Act establishes Energy Efficiency Alberta, a new agency that will provide programs and information to help people reduce their energy consumption, which would have it operating January 2017.

The bill also proposes to amend the Alberta Corporate Tax Act to reduce the small-business tax rate, which will help some small businesses adjust to the price of carbon. Effective January 1, 2017, that rate will be lowered from 3 per cent to 2 per cent. The bill also proposes to amend the Personal Income Tax Act and the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act. All of this points to a recognition that a carbon tax is a recognized international approach to reducing people's use and burning of carbon, by many counts the fairest, the simplest, the most equitable approach to producers and consumers of carbon-based fuels in shifting the priorities for fuel use to lower carbon and zero carbon emissions.

Clearly, this is an important step and one that, in principle, I fully support. The question, I guess, for many of us is: that, along with some of the other changes that have been made, will have exactly what impact on carbon and what impact on people's residential, commercial, industrial costs? Given the decision to phase out coal, the decision to target, at least, 30 per cent of renewables as part of the energy mix replacing coal by 2030 – and it's not clear whether that is 30 per cent of generation capacity or 30 per cent of generation. Those two are very different in terms of what they would require. Obviously, a lot more renewable energy would be required to provide the generation as opposed to having the capacity, because with just the capacity we'd have to have a lot of backup. We'd have to have a lot of, presumably, natural gas backup.

One could argue that this is an optimal time for making this transition: low prices in natural gas, the importance to the economy that we maintain some of our operations and some of our commitments to the fossil fuel industry, which has produced such surpluses of gas now and also, in the past, surpluses of our financial resources to build the schools, the hospitals, the roads, all that we have come to appreciate in this province.

Having said that, I think part of the challenge in this bill is the related policy decisions around the coal phase-out and the timing of the coal phase-out, the options, then, for a renewable with a backup fossil fuel secure base of electricity. Given that we are producing already 4,000 megawatts over what is actually required in Alberta today, there doesn't seem to be a lot of incentive to build new technology in this province, so the business case, the investment case, unfortunately, isn't here today. This is an unfortunate, I guess, convergence of a lot of different issues that now challenge... [An electronic device sounded] Who was that?

**An Hon. Member:** You.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you. If I could continue, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** That's okay. It's your first day.

**Dr. Swann:** Yeah. I haven't been here for very long. The first time that's happened to me, actually.

The question of the balance between renewable energy, which is clearly needed and is clearly the future, and the backup, the balance

between those two and how that either creates the business case for investment or discourages investment I think is a critically important one. That's why in the House I've been asking questions about what the cost benefit is of investing in the next 15 years, in what proportion of renewables and what proportion of gas-fired electrical energy, what impact that would have on the carbon levels that we're trying to achieve, how that would impact the cost of electricity in Alberta, and indeed what jobs would be created by that.

Where is the sweet spot there in terms of the balance between renewables, natural gas fired electricity, and the results that we all want to see: lower carbon, more jobs, and an alternate economy here? It doesn't look like the government has yet done that work, which makes it difficult. I mean, obviously, every bill has some incompleteness to it, but I would have thought that the climate change panel would have some of those numbers. It's not clear to me, throwing into the mix some of the changes that have occurred, that we know enough about what the appropriate mix is.

Having said that, one of the most fundamental things that we could ask of the government is that they put in place performance targets in this bill. How will we measure over the next year to three years whether this climate change bill is achieving its purpose in terms of carbon reduction, the cost of electricity, the jobs created? I will be suggesting an amendment in due course, not today, to that effect. Recognizing that all the pieces are not necessarily in place, we have here a bill that is taking us a good deal of the way towards less dependence on fossil fuels, a stronger connection to the climate and our commitment to future generations, and a recognition of the science that has been ignored in this House for the 12 years that I've been here and much longer by some measures.

We could learn from the B.C. example, where they brought in a carbon tax eight years ago. They have monitored that, and they have got, I would argue, the economic benefits from that, the job benefits from that, and the carbon reductions that may or may not be totally associated with that carbon tax but that have been associated with the balancing of the other elements of appropriate public policy around electrical generation and job creation. Hopefully, we can learn something from the B.C. example.

Again, this is part of a national approach to climate. I'm delighted to see the federal Liberal government taking leadership there. This province is taking leadership together with the other provinces. Hopefully, we can find some common ground and start making some real impact on the carbon emissions coming out of Canada and showing some leadership.

Obviously, Canada isn't the big producer of carbon emissions on the planet. China and India are the big ones with the U.S., but Alberta on a per capita basis puts out more carbon than any other country in the world. I think we have to acknowledge that. On a per capita basis we produce far more carbon than almost anywhere else in the world.

Leadership is what the world is looking for. If not Alberta, who is going to start to show some real leadership on this critically important issue that relates to health effects, water issues, extreme weather events, new infectious diseases? It may not be entirely due to human activity, but surely the indications are that a very substantial part of the warming going on on the planet is related to human activity and carbon-based fuels.

Methane is another big source. Of course, methane is something like 25 times more potent as a greenhouse gas, and we have lots of leaking wells, as far as I'm aware. I don't think we're taking that as seriously as we should and could. I hope that the Alberta Energy Regulator and Alberta Environment are looking at that as a very serious part of a climate change plan that will actually have an

impact, and I'll be pushing very much for that, especially in northeastern Alberta.

My understanding is that with the soft soils, the tundra, there is a very significant amount of methane leaking, and testing hasn't been assiduous. Accountability hasn't been strict. The cost of remediating small leaks is significant relative to some returns on some wells, and that makes it much more difficult for both the industry and government to get serious about some of the leaking that's going on across the province but particularly in the northeast.

**9:40**

Those are some of my comments. I appreciate the leadership, but I think we need to know much more than we do. I think the government has some of this information. I would ask that they put it out there. Let's have more discussion around: what is the appropriate balance to get the optimal results in terms of the economy, new jobs, carbon reductions, and electricity costs?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any questions for the Member for Calgary-Mountain View under 29(2)(a)?

Anyone else that wishes to speak to Bill 20? The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, this bill that we're looking at right now, Bill 20, as my hon. colleague pointed out, really is nothing more than a tax bill. There is really nothing in there that one could call climate plan leadership whatsoever. There's no plan. It's all about taxing: how they're going to collect the tax and how they're going to punish anyone who doesn't pay the tax. This carbon tax is really nothing more than a tax on everything. It is implemented in the midst of one of the deepest economic recessions this province has experienced since the Dirty Thirties.

This NDP government has not bothered to conduct an Alberta study of the massive implications this tax will have on indirect costs or even direct costs. I have asked repeatedly in this House for economic impact assessments. I don't know if the hon. members on the other side are just playing silly or if they really don't understand what an economic assessment looks like, but I have yet to get a straight answer. I will take the evasive answers as meaning, no, they have not conducted any economic impact assessment on any sector of our economy, and that is intellectual laziness.

The estimates place the direct and indirect costs of this tax conservatively at \$1,000. That's not our estimate. Those are numbers based on the people who understand these things far better than I do. Now, for the typical Alberta family, resultantly, the necessary cost corrections for this regressive, inequitable tax are entirely insufficient. This tax is regressive because low-income and fixed-income Albertans pay a higher proportion of the money that they earn satisfying their family's needs. As a percentage of their overall earnings, Alberta's most economically vulnerable will be paying more towards this tax increase than a family of higher means. This government is imposing punitive taxation measures on Alberta's poorest in this horrifyingly regressive redistribution of wealth. That's really all this tax is about.

Mr. Speaker, this government should be ashamed of themselves for implementing this tax that will increase the cost of everything. There really is only one taxpayer in this province. That's the people of Alberta. In my speech right now I'm going to detail for the assembled members just a few examples of the uncalculated, indirect cost increases, just a few examples of the uncalculated indirect social and economic cost increases for Albertan businesses and families that this government has refused to calculate. I've been reaching out to stakeholders in my community, in the magnificent

riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. You must come to the lake, by the way. I have a couple of school districts in my riding. One is Chinooks Edge, and the other one is Red Deer Catholic regional schools. They sent letters to the hon. Minister of Education outlining their concerns with this carbon tax, and they quantified. They did something the government did not do. They actually ran the numbers. Specifically, because the riding is large and we have a large rural population, busing students is a major expense for school boards.

With their projections, Chinook's Edge said in their letter to the hon. Minister of Education:

Our early projections show that there will be an impact to our Transportation and Facilities 2016/2017 budgets for the six month period of approximately \$70,000 which will increase to \$105,000 the following year. Although difficult to predict, there will also be significant increases to operating costs across the Division as our suppliers pass on the levy [that they experience to us]. We fear that with already tight budgets, this will have a direct impact to student learning in the classroom as staffing reductions may be necessary.

We have heard repeatedly from this government how they are the only people on the planet protecting front-line services. Well, news flash. According to Chinook's Edge school division, this carbon tax "will have a direct impact to student learning in the classroom." They have to bus the students. That is not an option. Buses take fuel. Children in the wintertime, in the very cold weather, need to be bused in. Their parents pay for that busing. Chinook's Edge is saying that it's going to cost them another \$70,000 just in the six-month period of that budget year on account of the carbon tax, and that's just them.

This does not even cover the cost of heating in the schools, which is another major expense. The cost of natural gas is going to go up, and school divisions, as we know, are already squeezed when it comes to budgets.

Well, another letter, this one from Red Deer Catholic regional schools, again sent to the hon. David Eggen, Minister of Education.

**Some Hon. Members:** Names.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Sorry. My apologies.

Sent on May 19, here they say that for the calendar year our projections show that there will be a significant impact to our Transportation and Facilities operational 2016-2017 budget . . . [of] \$78,000 in carbon tax and \$122,000 in 2018. The direct impact to our budget will grow even more in future years as we open several new schools.

And what else do they say?

We are very proud of the efficient way that we operate our Division and work very hard to balance our budget every year. It will be exceptionally difficult to absorb the cost of the carbon tax and hear this again,

without negatively impacting the student learning environment in the classroom as staffing reductions may be necessary.

Furthermore, they go on to say:

Placing this additional financial pressure on school boards by taxing back funds that they have been provided with to operate is not responsible.

School boards in this province operate on tax dollars, and they're questioning the sanity of the government taxing back tax dollars. It's ridiculous.

It is going to impact classrooms directly, and this is from the experts. This government failed to take the time to do a proper economic assessment to see just what this tax was going to do to every sector of our economy, to our way of life. This bill is so invasive that there isn't a portion of our economy, of our population

that isn't going to be adversely affected by this thing. That's just schools and school busing.

**9:50**

Now, how about hospitals? You know, years ago, when I was involved in consulting, I did some energy efficiency consulting for some hospitals. They are what's known as energy intense. To give you an idea of how energy intense hospitals can be – I'm going to get technical on you; hang on – an operating room is required to ventilate the air coming into and out of the room. A typical operating room has about 2,500 cubic feet of air per minute. So picture five feet by five feet by 100 feet long every 60 seconds going through that OR. It has to do with biological security within the OR. All of the air that goes out must have air coming in. When it's minus 30 outside, that air coming in at that rate must be elevated to a temperature of at least 18 degrees Celsius. So you have a 48-degree temperature rise that you have to accomplish in 60 seconds for a volume of air of 2,500 cubic feet. That takes an enormous amount of energy. Your solar panel isn't going to get to do that.

**Mr. Orr:** Just lower the temperature.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Right. Let's have our OR staff working in parkas. Then we can solve that.

**Mr. Taylor:** Or the patient.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Or the patient. Right. They live longer when they're frozen.

However, Mr. Speaker, that takes an enormous amount of energy. The carbon tax is a behavioural modification mechanism. Please, tell me how we can modify the behaviour of a ventilation system in a hospital like that when by law they're required to move that much air that fast and warm it up that quickly? It's simply not going to be the case.

Hospitals and hotels are energy-intensive environments. They require a fuel to burn. Solar panels will not do this. Wind turbines will not do this. They will have to use natural gas to do this. It's not an option. They have to use it, and they are going to be penalized. Our hospitals are going to be penalized. Again, our hospitals are operating on tax dollars. So now the government is taxing it back. It's ludicrous. It makes no sense whatsoever. None whatsoever.

I could go on, and I know you want me to. I do. I know you really want me to. I could keep going, but there's always tomorrow. So, Mr. Speaker, I have an amendment that I would like to introduce.

Shall I wait?

**The Speaker:** Do you have copies? Please, pass them around. Just give us a minute until it gets distributed.

Please proceed, hon. member. We will refer to it as amendment RA1.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll read the amendment. Notice of amendment to Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be not now read a second time because this Assembly has not received satisfactory evidence or assurances that a full economic impact analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned before in this House I don't know how many times now, an economic impact assessment is an extremely important instrument. It tells us what the impact of something is going to be upon us. In a democracy it just seems to

me that we have a responsibility to act compassionately whenever we are introducing anything that will impact our people. I like to think sometimes that if I was on the government side and I was introducing law, it just seems to me that I would want to enact legislation always with the thought in my mind as to how this is going to impact my wife and children, my mom and dad, my grandchildren, you know, my sons and cousins and uncles, the people that I know, my neighbours down the street. How is a particular law going to impact the people I care about?

In a democracy the people are the government. It's government of the people, by the people, for the people. Everything that we do impacts the ones we love, the ones we care about. So everything that we vote on should, in my opinion, always be done with this thought in mind: is this what I want to do to the people I care about the most?

**An Hon. Member:** It's not an ideology?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** No, it's not an ideology.

Is this what I want the people I care about to experience going forward now, not just for a year, maybe a whole generation. The things that we do in this House sometimes impact future generations for a very, very, very long time, multiple generations. Long after you and I are gone, the stuff that we do in here – and it's closer for some of us than others, I know – is going to impact for a very, very long time.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions of the hon. member under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. I would like to ask the member to expand a little bit more on this amendment that he's bringing forward. He talks a lot about doing a proper economic assessment. Of course, the government didn't do any economic assessment on this. If they did, then at least they never provided it to us or anybody in Alberta, the House or Albertans anywhere. I think this amendment makes sense, and I'm just hoping that the hon. member could just take a little bit more time and express just a few more opinions and concerns that he has, why he thinks it's a good idea to have this amendment.

You know, we look at this bill, and of course it's called the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I think we've established fairly well, though we can go into it further down the road here, that it's really just a tax bill. The Climate Leadership Implementation Act is really a misnomer because I don't see anything in here where it talks about the climate. All I see is about taxes and collecting taxes and penalties for taxes and offences and interest.

I would like to hear the hon. member just continue on a little bit, talking about this amendment. Hopefully, he can provide just a little bit more information to us because I'd definitely be interested in hearing more from him.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you to the hon. member and great bear hunter. Regarding this amendment and an economic assessment, when we were drafting the curriculum for NAIT's alternative energy program, we took a look at, I think, a total of nine different technologies. In the process of looking at those technologies, we realized that one of the really important things we were going to have to impart to students was that it's all well and good to, you know, feel warm and fuzzy about a particular technology, but at the

end of the day that technology has to be technically feasible and economically viable, those two things. If it failed on either one of those, then it fails. It doesn't even have to fail on both. But if it failed either technically or economically, then that technology failed in that particular site.

**10:00**

We devised some courses to teach students assessment of various kinds. One was site assessment because some technologies work here but not over there. Some technologies work well in that industrial environment but not in that one. Some of it is geographic. There are all kinds. Some of it is regulatory issues. Some work in this regulatory environment, and some don't work in that regulatory environment. Assessment, from a technical point of view, was really important to teach them. As I said, we were teaching them some nine different technologies, so there was a lot of course material about how to make an appropriate technical assessment.

Then we came to the economic assessment, the economics of renewable, alternative technologies. Now, as a result, we actually developed an economics course that was built specifically for economic assessment of alternative or renewable technologies. There wasn't one out there, so myself and another instructor built it. It was a great economics course.

We also did a life cycle analysis course, again determining at the end of the day whether this thing was financially feasible to do, regardless of which technology we're looking at. We were looking at fuel cells, microhydro, microgeneration, combined heat and power, ground source heat pump technology, solar and wind, both utility scale and small scale. I can't even remember them all anymore.

Economic assessment was vitally important. Without doing an economic assessment, you don't know what something is going to cost, nor do you know what its economic benefit is going to be to you, to the industry, to the region, wherever you're putting this thing. So we taught them how to do these assessments and not just here in Alberta because we recognized that the students would end up going all over the world. In fact, in the very first cohort of students that we had through the program, only a third were from Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members that wish to speak to amendment RA1 to Bill 20? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on this occasion to support my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake's reasoned motion on Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. The hon. member's amendment is entirely reasonable considering the government has once again pushed forward with ideology trumping due diligence. Asking for an economic impact assessment on this bill is in the best interests of all Albertans. After all, it's a tax bill. It only makes sense that you'd have an economic impact assessment on it.

As we have seen numerous times in this House, this government has a disturbing habit of not engaging in a robust consultation before implementing a significant piece of legislation. We saw it in the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act and again with Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. In both instances the government chose to ignore any reasonable motions brought forth by the opposition and instead relied on what could be considered a one-sided argument that supported their own position.

We simply cannot afford to allow a piece of legislation with such huge implications for all facets of Albertans' lives to simply be pushed through without proper economic review. To do so, as my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler is fond of saying, could have unintended consequences. In fact, up until it was mentioned by this side of the House, it appears that the government hadn't even considered the notion that there may be some trickle-down effects from this burdensome tax.

As we have mentioned before, had a proper economic impact assessment been completed, perhaps Albertans could have more faith in the government's numbers. Well, Mr. Speaker, they didn't, and the public doesn't. While the government maintains that lower income Albertans use less energy and with the rebate they could actually come out ahead by about \$22, that's really hard to be certain of as this government chose not to do their homework. Rebate amounts were based on direct costs of heat and fuel, not any additional costs, not to mention that different people use energy differently. Some travel more, burn more gas, therefore would have a larger impact on their wallet, on their pocketbook. The idea was only designed to cover increases in natural gas and fuel costs. By some estimates even families that get the maximum rebate will still be looking at \$400 a year in additional carbon tax costs, a number far above what the NDP came out with after the fact.

Now, I'm sure what members opposite will clamour is that Committee of the Whole provides the chance for more robust discussion. While it may indeed provide for discussion, the process favours the government as no independent verification or economic studies have been brought forth. Committee, of course, allows a much greater in-depth discussion because we can bring in witnesses, experts on one side of the issue or on the other side of the issue, both, so that we can get a well-rounded debate. We're here to make informed decisions. In order to make an informed decision, we have to have information. Instead, all we get are platitudes and ideological arguments from the ministers and NDP backbenchers.

Accepting and voting for this amendment would give Albertans time to get a much better understanding of the financial and economic consequences of the legislation.

I just want to remind everybody here that – I think it was just last week – we were debating Bill 1 and Bill 20 on the same day. Doesn't that seem a little odd, that we'd be debating the first bill and Bill 20 on the same day? Obviously, Bill 20 was thrown in at the last; ram it through as fast as possible and get away for the summer break.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Committee of the Whole deals primarily with the proposal of amendments to bills under consideration. During Committee of the Whole consideration most often only general comments are made on bills. This bill has too many nuances and far-reaching implications to simply jam it through the House simply because the government has a majority. To do so would solidify the public perception of an ideological-based approach by this government rather than show the ability to listen and consult before legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke at length last week on why this bill is a bad idea. It's based on ideology and is in no way revenue neutral, but that's what it was sold to us as when it was first announced: revenue neutral. Those people that stood on the same stage as the Premier and environment minister sat there and listened as the people in the audience heard the minister and the Premier tell us that it was revenue neutral. Well, it clearly wasn't, so I'm not sure how they

feel about their support for this bill, standing on the same stage and realizing afterwards that it wasn't what it was said to be.

There seems to be very little regard for any unforeseen consequences. This bill will harm everybody: charities, nonprofits, the agriculture industry, the manufacturing industry, and food processing, just to name a few. If this government honestly believes that there will be no passing on costs to the end user, we the taxpayer, then they clearly have chosen not to understand.

It's hard to trust a government that can't or won't be upfront with Albertans. We saw it with the flawed rollout and implementation around last year's Bill 6, and we are seeing it again with this carbon tax.

10:10

While the government claims that it will diversify the economy through green efficiency programs, which is scant comfort to those unemployed Albertans whose employment insurance will be running out all too soon, we look at this bill, and we don't see anything of a plan for the communities that are going to be affected by this. It's just about taxes. It's a tax bill. It's collecting taxes, penalties, punishments. Taxes. There's nothing in here that's going to help Albertans. There's nothing at all.

This is the second or third promise of jobs being created by this government. The first, much-hyped job-creation plan was an absolute failure, and the government is already distancing itself from it. It didn't create any jobs except, of course, the minister's. It was something that we told the government over and over again: this isn't going to work. Industry told us: this isn't going to work. Everybody said that it wasn't going to work. The government doubled down, tripled down, and said: yes, it's going to work; trust us. But it didn't.

They also promised jobs to compensate for the acceleration of no coal-fired generation and the numerous employment losses from that. These plans have yet to be shared with an already worried province. Now the promise of green jobs to replace those lost on this ideological journey, but when are these green jobs coming? Where? Who will they hire? There are lots of questions, but there are no answers. The problem is that how many Albertans will actually be employed still remains a mystery. I'm sure we will need to hire people to pick up the dead bats and birds off the windmill farms and sweep the snow off the solar panels so that they can work, but I doubt there will be enough employment to compensate everyone who has lost a job as a result of this government's misguided economic policies.

Quite simply, Albertans don't trust this government to get it right. Trust is everything in government, and right now trust for this bunch on the opposite side is on the low end of the scale. I believe that it was an Insights West poll that saw that nearly 63 per cent of Albertans polled thought that the current government was doing a bad job on employment and the economy. I don't think that this carbon tax will help those numbers, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it's hurting those numbers.

Again, I can't possibly stress this point enough. This carbon tax will be harmful to all Albertans regardless of their economic situation. In fact, based on analysis from the *Canadian Tax Journal*, it is realistic to estimate that a typical family will find itself out at least a thousand dollars every year once this punitive tax is up and running. Hundreds of thousands of Albertans are unemployed. Costs are increasing while economic growth decreases. This tax will hurt Albertans at a time when they can least afford it. Albertans have already been put upon by increases to business and personal taxes. Now this carbon tax is going to hit them with increases to the price of gasoline, diesel, and the everyday costs of living. This government's carbon tax will

punish everyday families and businesses. It will make life in Alberta significantly more expensive.

[The Speaker in the chair]

It is more important now than ever not to rush this bill through, Mr. Speaker. Let's take the time to get this right and make sure that what gets passed doesn't hurt the very Albertans that will ultimately pay for this tax. I urge the members to take every effort to consider what is at stake here and vote for common sense over ideology. Let's give our support to the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and vote for this reasoned amendment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members talk about the report that was done that they based Bill 20 on, but I'm not quite sure. There doesn't seem to be a lot of things they've taken from the climate leadership report other than taxes. When I look through this, on the very first page of the executive summary, in the very first paragraph, second sentence, it says:

The implications of climate policies – be they provincial, national or international – are significant. They will impact employment, future economic growth and stability, the government's ability to pay for social services, and Albertans' prosperity, opportunities and health.

So here in the very first paragraph of this report this group has its first warning for the government. It says: "They will impact employment, future economic growth and stability, the government's ability to pay for social services." Social services: those are set up so that we can help the vulnerable, the people that can't help themselves. That's one of our basic duties in society, and that's in the first paragraph. We're just going to ram this through. We're going to put it right to the end. We're going to ram it through.

Now, we could go on to paragraph 5, still on the first page.

We have taken great care to ensure this is a progressive policy that offsets impacts on most Alberta households and small businesses, [most] while protecting our core industries and supporting the transition needs of affected workers and communities.

It talks here in paragraph 5 about how they're going to protect our core industries and support the transition needs of affected workers and communities, but if you look at Bill 20, there's no plan here for our core industries. There's no plan here for supporting transition needs of affected workers and communities. There isn't. It's taxes. That's all it is.

I'll carry on. Still on the first page of the executive summary here it says that "Alberta is an export-oriented economy and changes to greenhouse gas policies will inevitably have an impact."

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any questions under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, the hon. member, who is a colleague and a friend, has brought some very good examples of why we need to reconsider this bill. We need to be supporting this amendment because of the fact that it is important to show exactly where we're going with Alberta.

Now, the member brought some really good points forward, really showing that there are parts of this act – he's pointed them out very specifically, and I commend the member for being so thorough in going through this 95-page document. It is remarkable that we have such a short time frame to be going through this document, yet to his credit he has taken the time to go specifically section by section and look to identify some of the concerns that he has, and he's bringing those concerns forward. My question to that hon. member is: do you have any more concerns with specific sections in this bill? Especially revolving around the fact that Alberta is going through an economic downturn, is it appropriate

that we are taking more taxes out of my riding, Bonnyville-Cold Lake, and yours in northwestern Alberta?

Thank you, hon. member.

10:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for the question. Obviously, the worst time to tax people more is when they have the least amount of money. We have unemployment skyrocketing. This government, of course, wants to blame everything on somebody or something else. They want to blame the previous government for everything. They want to blame the price of oil for everything that's happening when they're in charge. We know that that's not the whole problem. The price of oil is a problem, but that's not the whole problem.

We've spent a lot of time talking about the downgrades that the bond-rating companies have done on Alberta, losing our triple-A rating. We've had five downgrades, and since January 15 the price of oil has been going up, but we're continuing to be downgraded. That doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker. That doesn't hold water.

Now, I just want to carry on with this climate leadership report that the government says has inspired Bill 20, the tax bill. I was talking about the first page of the executive summary, paragraph 2. I mean, we talked about paragraph 1 already and paragraph 5. We'll go back to paragraph 2. Again, it says that "Alberta is an export-oriented economy and changes to greenhouse gas policies will inevitably have an impact." In just about every paragraph in this report they're warning us, they're warning Albertans about what could happen with this.

Now, they go on to say here – and this is very important, too – that "Alberta has arguably paid a steep price for the perception that our economy, resources and investment climate are not compatible with action on climate change." Now, the most important word here, Mr. Speaker, is "perception" because we know it's not reality. We know we have the cleanest and best environment. We have a great environmental record compared to all of our competitors. Can we do better? Of course we can. We want to always do better. There's nobody more concerned about the environment than the members on this side of the House, bar none.

But it says right in this report, like I said, in paragraph 2 that Alberta has "paid a steep price for the perception that our economy, resources and investment climate are not compatible with action on climate change." Here's an admission that it's just a perception. Now this government is going to charge Albertans \$3 billion in taxes for that perception.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Anyone wishing to speak to amendment RA1? The member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for the wake-up call. It has been a long night.

Thank you for the opportunity to rise and speak on this reasonable reasoned amendment. The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has put forward an amendment asking for "assurances that a full economic impact analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans." How anybody could find that an unreasonable statement is, you know, kind of beyond me.

This is about restoring confidence in Alberta with our investors, the people that come in and spend their money. A lot of the big unions represented on the other side are also big investors in our economy. The minister may claim that investment dollars are pouring in, but we're hearing a totally different story. We know that

companies are planning on moving because of this crippling carbon tax. This carbon tax puts Alberta companies that rely on natural gas for processing at a severe disadvantage to their competitive neighbours. They are also not confident that this carbon tax will be the end but probably just the beginning. This does not instill confidence in investors.

We're hearing that this government's policies and ideologies are causing very real concern in the investment community: an undefined debt ceiling with its accompanying downgrades, increased corporate tax, and now a new carbon tax. It is not just the carbon tax on their business interest; it involves the lifestyle of their employees. When you are planning a big project or planning on moving your head office, you want to attract the best people that are going to help your business survive. They want to live in an economy, a province, that has all of the advantages, the lowest tax regime, all that stuff. Attracting good companies to an area that is unstable and expensive means that they have to offer a premium over neighbouring jurisdictions just to get them to come up there. Now, we see that up in northern Alberta all of the time. In order to get people to work north of Fort McMurray, which is miles and miles if you're driving – it's a five-hour drive from Edmonton – we have to fly people from all over the country, pay for their flights, just so we can man those projects. So something that businesses look at is where the projects are going to be and how much it's going to cost them to get quality employees there.

One of the things that gave us the Alberta advantage was a good, stable, predictable government – I guess I shouldn't say all of those words together – predictable taxation, and one of the lowest tax regimes in the country. People could count on the fact that they were paying a flat rate of 10 per cent tax in Alberta. They knew how much was going to come out of their pocket. This made it easy to attract investment. This made it easy for companies to attract top employees. That's no longer the case. We had a call today and some discussion about companies that are actually planning on leaving the province just because of the carbon tax on natural gas on their processes. For some of the companies this tax alone will increase their costs by a million dollars a year. One tax, just the natural gas tax.

All we have seen in this past year is unpredictability, tax increases, bills being dropped in at the end of session and rammed through this House. We've seen downturns in the past. I've been through more than my share in my lifetime. The main difference this time is that there is zero confidence in this government to help the situation. Quite the contrary, as a matter of fact.

There are many concerns and issues that could very easily arise resulting from these taxes, and they need to be considered before we move forward. We here in this House need to be adequately satisfied with sufficient evidence and assurances by way of a full economic impact analysis when being representatives for our constituents. We owe it to them. It's our job to make sure that any bill that surfaces is adequately studied and that we have the time to make sure that it is a just cause for Albertans.

Wildrose does not disagree that climate change is happening, and we do know that Alberta must help bring about changes to improve conditions. However, this bill may be too much too soon, and proper process should always take precedence. The financial impact that it will have on society could be very detrimental. Albertans will be paying the toll, and it will be way too much, especially now when Albertans are out of work. Alberta needs to recover, and I don't think this government gets that. I asked the question earlier in the evening under Standing Order 29(2)(a) to one of the ministers about why normal Albertans are footing the bill and have to suffer through a carbon tax to help supplement research and development for bigger companies. It doesn't make any sense that they're exempt

from the same carbon tax that their employees and regular Albertans will have to pay.

This government is so focused on their risky, ideological ideas that they appear to have lost focus. The rebates that the government has promised to those who qualify will not be made available to nonprofits, schools, charities, and small and medium-sized businesses. [interjections] That's quite funny isn't it? Apparently. They'll have no choice but to either pass the bill to Albertans or to reduce their services. It's always enjoyable to stand up here to talk and listen to the members of the government laugh about people paying taxes and losing their jobs. It just makes my night.

What will that look like when municipalities have no choice but to reduce services or increase their taxes because of the increase? Will this continue to escalate every year when the carbon tax increases? How will Albertans be able to rebound from the financial mess that they're in now, and how can this NDP government continue to keep the blinders on and not see what Albertans are going through? These are the kinds of things that should be taken into account, and this government should be held to account and be required to do an economic impact study on this carbon tax. Part of that economic assessment should also include how this will affect the school boards and health centres. How will they keep up with the rising costs when they often struggle with resources? The schools will have to pass the extra fees on to parents, some of whom are already struggling.

**10:30**

I was at a meeting in St. Paul last night talking to people from AltaGas. They're a supplier as well as a customer, so they've got a very complex accounting system that they're going to have to put in place just to deal with this carbon tax.

Unfortunately, the NDP government has not only proven that it will not eliminate mandatory education fees but that, on the contrary, it will be increasing costs to these schools through tax increases. Schools will not be able to bear the burden alone, and fees will have to be increased to parents. Unfortunately, those who are elected to municipalities and school boards are the ones who will be blamed when they are forced to increase the fees. They'll bear the brunt of it, just like the municipalities did when they pulled the grants in lieu of taxes, when they pulled the \$50 million from the MSI funding. Municipalities have no choice but to pass those expenses on to regular ratepayers.

What about health care centres? Will the government be giving them the extra funding they will need when their costs increase from this tax burden to make sure that patient care is not sacrificed? The money has to come from somewhere. You have to cut somewhere.

The trickle-down effects of this tax will cause a huge burden to Albertans in more ways than can be imagined. I cannot express enough how imperative it is that an economic assessment be done. I still don't understand how anybody could not understand the need for an economic impact study to be done before you implement a tax like this.

What about those who invest in our economy? Our competitors are not facing the same carbon pricing, yet investing in Alberta now will be that much more expensive. As I said earlier, we're already hearing that people are backing away. They're holding off because they don't trust this government. They've seen nothing but increases in corporate taxes, carbon taxes, and just the instability and unpredictability of this government. They don't know what's coming next. Is this a time for us to be gambling with reducing our competitiveness for investors? Once the oil prices rebound, will investors even be interested in bringing jobs back to Alberta with



all the increases? They'll have other options, B.C. and Saskatchewan for one.

These are all things that this NDP government needs to take into account before barreling ahead with such risky taxes. The NDP budget will make things much worse, and now, with all the extra taxes, families will be hurting.

Yes, climate change is happening – I agree – but let's work through all of this systematically and make sure that all of the bases are covered and that we are not creating more problems than we are solving. We need to be sure of the cost impact. We need to be sure of the costs alluded to by my friend here from Grande Prairie-Smoky.

You know, our province is very clean. I've worked in the oil and gas industry most of my life. I know that we have a very responsible group of companies up there. The AER follows them. ERCB inspections are done all the time. The people that live up there, work up there don't want to pollute their own lakes and rivers. I can be very confident of that.

We need to be sure of the impact. We need to be sure of the cost. How will this tax improve CO<sub>2</sub> emissions? According to this bill they actually get to increase the carbon by 30 megatonnes. It's incredible. Carbon dioxide is the primary greenhouse gas emitted through human activity. We agree with that. Is the cost going to outweigh the impact, and can you prove this? During a severe recession is not the time to be introducing it. Waiting until the economy recovers is beneficial to all.

One of the issues is how the funds that will be collected from this tax will be redistributed. British Columbia has a completely revenue-neutral tax in that all the funds collected go to tax cuts. This government is not willing to do that. As I alluded to earlier, when I was asking a question, the revenue from the carbon levy may only be used for initiatives related to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases or supporting Alberta's ability to adapt to climate change. Again, is innovation in the oil and gas industry going to fall on the backs of the average Alberta taxpayer? That's what I read from that. British Columbia has a completely revenue-neutral tax in that all the funds collected go to tax cuts. This government is not willing to do that.

This bill will make the poor poorer, and Albertans will suffer those consequences. Next year Albertans will be paying extra for their natural gas, \$1 more per gigajoule – that's actually \$1.05 – and the year after that, it will rise to \$1.52. I'm not sure how those that are struggling will deal with these extra costs. They will have to make detrimental choices one way or another. You know, it may cut into their food budget or into what their kids do after school.

Gas prices are one thing, but to heat people's homes is not optional during harsh winters. In Alberta we had a mild winter last year, but maybe next year it's going to be – we've had 30 days in a row at minus 40. I've had to work in those conditions, and you just don't turn your heat down.

All we are asking for is that Albertans be adequately satisfied with sufficient evidence and assurances by way of a full economic impact analysis to ensure that no one suffers because of this tax. We are not saying that climate change is not happening. We are just asking this government to make sure they know the full impact this tax will have on Albertans who are struggling the very most. They can't afford it at this time. We need to look at it and make sure that we know exactly how much it's going to cost each family and each business. We do not need any more job losses in this province.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Any questions to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. member for educating us about exactly what we're looking at in the bill that's coming forward. Now, I did hear the member talk about loss of jobs and that the direction this province is going in is probably not conducive to what we've been used to in the past. I am proud to say that the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills is a neighbour of mine. He is feeling a lot of the same difficulties within his riding that I am feeling in mine.

You know, the fact is that when we start seeing the difficulties coming forward from this bill – and this has affected the oil sands because the oil companies didn't know where Alberta was going with this carbon tax until it actually had been released. Having worked in the oil fields for a long period of time, I believe there's a real experience that we can draw on from my colleague because he's been working within the industry for a long time. He's worked with the different companies within the area. He's had a lot of experience with them. Now, this is where I believe that that experience in working within the industry, having worked with other employees that have worked in the industry and having been a diligent follower of the environmental guidelines – to the member: do you feel that adding costs onto our oil sands at this time, maybe not directly but through the gas tax, is appropriate? And do you think that this is actually going to shut down more businesses within your riding like it is going to in mine?

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, actually, I think it will have an impact. We're already seeing, especially up north of Bonnyville, in the air weapons range area that I worked in, that a lot of the companies I worked with and had working for me and a lot of the employees – you know, you get to know these guys after working with them for 15 to 20 years, and you get to know their families. A lot of these guys are hurting. Some of them have lost their homes. Some of the businesses have had to close down. They've had the cutbacks. The oil companies have forced them to reduce rates to the point where they're just barely getting by. They're trying to bid on jobs at bare-bottom dollars just to keep their employees working because for a lot of these guys it is family. They've had these employees for 20 years, some of them, so they don't want to let them go. They know how difficult it will be to get them back, especially if they have to move away to a different centre.

**10:40**

So adding a tax onto these companies and these employees at this time is just very distasteful to me. Some of the companies up there have taken a 30 per cent cut just to stay in the industry. Like I said, they're bare bones and are sometimes dipping into their expenses or having to sell equipment just to keep their crews going. So, yes, it does have a detrimental effect on my area for sure.

I know the St. Paul area, and all the schools that I've talked to are putting together pricing right now to get me the numbers on exactly how much per school and per school board it's going to cost. I've also asked some of the medical centres and the seniors' homes for that. You know, it's pretty easy. You take all your bills from last year, see how much fuel you burned, and apply this tax to it. All these people are starting to do that, and we're starting to see on Facebook and Twitter and in the papers that the concern about this carbon tax is actually starting to boil. We will see people get as excited as they were about Bill 6 when they finally get the gist of exactly how much this carbon tax is going to cost them, how it's going to affect their families and their businesses.

I really think that we need to take a step back and do some proper analysis of this. We shouldn't have to ask the hospitals and school boards how much this tax is going to cost them. We should be able to tell them: "This is how it's going to affect you. This is what we're going to do to help you out so that you don't have to lay off front-line workers to make it happen."

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** On 29(2)(a), any other members?

Hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, are you speaking to the amendment?

**Mr. Dang:** To the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's really good to be able to have this fulsome debate here in the House on this amendment. The amendment is about the economic impact and why there hasn't been an impact analysis done on the effects of the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I want to really set the record straight on some of these issues because what some of the opposition are saying is simply absurd when we look at the realities of what the Climate Leadership Implementation Act actually does. What the act does and what the plan will do is that it will diversify our economy and create new jobs.

I know that members across the way talked quite heavily and quoted quite extensively – they cherry-picked but quoted it quite extensively – from the climate leadership report that was commissioned by the government, and I want to speak a bit about that. Members spoke about the climate leadership report, and that's exactly why we commissioned that report, Mr. Speaker. That report was done so that we would understand in a fulsome manner, in a whole manner, what the issues were surrounding carbon pricing in this province and how we were going to move forward in a tangible way to reduce emissions because we understand that man-made climate change is real.

We can look at the Climate Leadership report and at what the panel did, which was to consider over 25,000 online submissions, over 920 people attending public open houses, and 535 commissions from NGOs, industry, and academics. When we take all of these things together, we can try to piece this together and say: who was doing this analysis and generating this report for us? Who did the government commission to do this analysis and to do this assessment so that we could receive this data and move forward with the climate leadership plan?

Some of these were people like Dr. Andrew Leach, an economist here at the University of Alberta who does economic analysis as a daily part of his job; people like Linda Coady, who's an expert on corporate sustainability and economic interdependence; and people like Gordon Lambert, who's the Suncor sustainability executive and is a member of the Ivy Business School. We see that the panel that did all of this analysis and did all of this research and compiled the report for the government to use as we move forward with the climate leadership plan was filled with industry experts, filled with economists, and filled with people who really understood the business implications of what was going on.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from one of the submissions to the climate leadership report, which was from an economist that many people in this House might know or know of, Jack Mintz. He said that when you're making investments in very expensive technologies, you tend to like carbon taxes because you do get price certainty for carbon. We know that Jack Mintz isn't necessarily always one of our friends here on this side of the aisle, but even Dr. Mintz understood the gravity of this and understood that there absolutely was a reality that we did need a carbon levy to get price certainty for carbon.

I think that really speaks to this amendment. The opposition would like you to believe that no economic analysis was done at all, when we see world-renowned economists from all across Alberta and across the world, quite frankly, looking at this document and saying that there are tangible things that we need to be doing and very realistic things that are positive coming out of this legislation.

If the opposition believes in climate change and really wants to help, I want to refer them to another quote from that report that they were talking about, which is that we need to be framing this as "carbon competitive." That's an interesting quote because we can look at that and say: well, the report speaks to being carbon competitive in a global market. What does that mean? It means that the report did extensive analysis on how we can be competitive in a global market with a carbon pricing model. What that means, Mr. Speaker, is that we did have analysis done and presented to the minister and presented to government and presented to the public in the very report that they were reading. They read some of those economic effects themselves as I saw them quoting it right in front of me. It's going to be in the Blues and in *Hansard*.

They spoke, and they had very specific, cherry-picked quotes. I want to go on and explain to you a bit more about what those quotes really meant. They spoke about how there will be an impact on future economic growth and stability [and] the government's ability to pay for . . . services [in this province].

Well, the very next line, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had decided to keep reading instead of perhaps taking a break from doing whatever it was he was doing, is:

It means market demand will rise for low- and no-carbon energy sources and fall for high-cost and emissions-intensive resources. Technologies capable of separating economic growth from energy use and energy production from carbon emissions will prosper. This is the future for which Alberta must prepare.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that this report that they were quoting from intends for Alberta to prepare by doing things like implementing this legislation. What the opposition has done is that they have presented an amendment which impedes Alberta's ability to prepare in a timely manner for this very realistic and low-carbon future, that we must move towards.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition also quoted a line that I believe was from the fifth paragraph, from what he was saying. But the very next line, when he spoke about how there would be realities of how the carbon levy would affect the economy, was: "However, it is important to note that we are already experiencing real impacts from the status quo." What the report speaks to and what this government understands and what some members opposite don't seem to is that we as a society are feeling real economic pressures from not doing anything.

While some members of the opposition may decide that the best way to get around not doing anything is to yell and scream at our friends and our neighbours, that we're having to work with to make sure that we can get our product to market and to make sure that we have a realistic economy that we can grow here in Alberta, I don't think that that would be a very tangible and good thing to do. If they were to commission an economic assessment themselves, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that that economic assessment would suggest that they go and yell at the people you are trying to do business with and complain to the people you are trying to do business with and then disrespect the people you are trying to do business with. In my opinion, I do not believe that that would be a very tangible way of accomplishing your goals.

We look at some of these things, we move forward, and we say: well, how do we know that this government is keeping a very close mind and a close eye on this legislation doing very tangible things to ensure that we have a positive economic outlook and going back

and making sure that this economic impact assessment isn't really going to push forward this legislation? Well, what we can look at and say is: what is this legislation doing? It's enabling things. Like, this summer we'll be bringing in a large number of engagements on issues such as performance standards, innovation and technology, the methane emission reduction strategy, and energy efficiency. As we move forward in the summer, once we pass this legislation, there are going to be lots of very tangible ways that this government is moving forward to make sure that our business is competitive on a global scale.

When we look at things like the performance standards measures, we're seeing that this report and this legislation were crafted in a very delicate manner, were crafted in a manner very cognitive of what the realities of the economy were and what the realities of the economy today are, Mr. Speaker, which is why there are things like phased-in carbon pricing and things like looking at performance standards so that we will not be double-impacting people with the carbon levy.

10:50

We'll be absolutely making sure that we do ensure that businesses which are trade exposed will not be adversely impacted by a carbon levy. That's why we're looking at things like making sure that certain industries that will fall under the performance standards legislation will be able to have those movements and fluidity because we understand that there absolutely are economic realities in this province, Mr. Speaker. We absolutely understand that there are things that are going on that are outside of the control of this province and that there are things that are going on that are outside of the control of this government, quite frankly.

When we move on that, we can look and say: we shape legislation to ensure that we do the best job we can. We shape legislation to ensure that we do the best job we can to implement this report, which has done great economic analysis. It's done great social analysis. It's done great analysis in all sorts of aspects, Mr. Speaker. They speak about, for example, that we didn't do an economic impact analysis on what this would mean for certain types of families or certain types of low-income earners. That's why the report recommends and the government implemented things like the rebate program, where 60 per cent of Albertans will receive a full or greater than full rebate, and two-thirds of Albertans will receive some rebate altogether. I think it really does speak to the thoughtfulness and the fullness of this legislation. It's being rolled out in a very meaningful way.

We can look at how there are endorsements from industry such as Suncor, CNRL, and Cenovus, Mr. Speaker, that have looked at this piece of legislation and said: "You know what? We can work with this because the economics of this legislation and what we're doing here is something that we can get behind, and we recognize that in the global marketplace it's something that we must absolutely do." I can quote the Suncor Energy submission to the panel here, which says:

An efficient way to quickly target a significant and growing amount of end-use emissions would be the application of a natural gas, electricity, gasoline and diesel carbon price at the point of sale. There are various mechanisms for levying a carbon price, which combined with revenue recycling . . . could protect lower income Albertans while sending a clear price signal to change choices and energy use habits.

Mr. Speaker, what we're looking at here is a very large player in the Alberta economy. Suncor is a very large oil company that is trade exposed in some cases and does deal with a lot of large industry and a lot of large business across the province and many jobs. We can see this, and we can see that this is absolutely

something that Albertans can get behind, that the industry can get behind, and that we have done a meaningful analysis on this.

Mr. Speaker, really, in closing, I do want to emphasize that the government has done extensive analysis. The government has commissioned an extensive report, that is over a hundred pages long. I would know. I read it multiple times. We looked at this, and we can say that there absolutely was work done from the get-go. From the very beginning the work was done, and from that we can move forward on this legislation.

This amendment is nothing but a parliamentary trick the opposition is trying to do to hold up the progress of this government. I would urge all members of this Assembly to vote this down.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say . . .

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yes. Thank you, sir.

. . . that the passion is overwhelming, and it's appreciated at this time of night especially, so good on you.

One thing I'd like to say is that there are a couple of little things that are in here regarding an economic analysis or economic benefit or any of those things that we're bringing up. It is absolutely the responsibility of any government bringing through this type of legislation, that is going to alter the way that business is done in this province, to make sure that that's appropriate and that that's there for people to see. That's part of transparency. I do believe that you ran on that the same way that we did. It should be something that you look at. You take advice from us, and be proud of that, and bring it forward. It's a huge ask. We realize that. But it's an imperative ask when you're going forward in an economic situation like we are in right now.

I'd like to talk about the thoughtfulness comment and also about economic realities. I'd like to share a small story about economic realities with you for the last four minutes that we're in here. I have – it's an absolute privilege – in the beautiful and diverse riding of Chestermere-Rocky View a little coffee shop in Chestermere. Very, very, very good friends of mine. I have to say that as impassioned as the speech was that just came across the floor, what it lacks is the added imperative behind that passion, and I wish the passion was as much about what it is that you say on paper and what actually happens in real life. I wish that there was that wisdom, that understanding, and maybe that life experience in that speech and passion . . . [interjections] I don't understand why that's – it's straight across the board.

I agree, but I am saying that there is something in there, in that passion, that, if it could expand to understanding what's happening in his constituency, in my constituency, in the businesses in these constituencies, if a little bit more went into actually the businesses that are being impacted by this particular piece of legislation – you know what? – it would be such an impactful thing coming from that side of the room.

What I'm saying is – I'm talking about my little coffee shop, and I'm sure that the member has places in his constituency that he can relate this to and perhaps take some of my thought process and go forward within his constituency and ask the same questions that I've posed in mine and actually received from many, many, many people in my constituency. This little coffee shop we're talking about is a small, family-run business. Even at the best of times, especially in a place like Chestermere-Rocky View, approximately 90 per cent of the population – I mean, that's a guess – empties out

into Calgary every week to do their work there. A lot of the work that is done in Chestermere by the small businesses is supported only during certain times of the day, as you can imagine, because most of the people empty out and work in Calgary.

So not only are we dealing with a specific time frame when people can work; there are other challenges that go along with that. We're dealing with small businesses that are not only incorporating what's going to happen with this carbon tax but a minimum wage and corporate taxes and personal taxes and everything else, all of that accumulation of things that goes on there. Honestly, to the member across the way, if you could take that passion and actually apply it to the realities of what is actually going on in this province at a small-business level in any aspect outside of just what is written on paper – the model on paper hasn't shown any transference to real life. Those of us who have small businesses and are actually seeing what is happening on the ground know what's happening. We're being impacted directly every single day. [interjections] I'm not saying that you don't.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member.

**Mrs. Aheer:** That's what I'm saying . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, make your comments through the chair.

**Mrs. Aheer:** I'm sorry, sir. I apologize.

My point, Mr. Speaker, is that I know that they have small businesses. That's why this is so hard to comprehend. I understand that all of the members in this House have as diverse a region as I have. I completely respect and understand that. That's why I don't understand why that conversation does not come back to what we're actually talking about here, the impact on people, the economic realities, that the member so passionately spoke about. That's what I'm asking about. So the question to the member is . . .

**The Speaker:** Through the chair.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Sorry.

Through the chair, could the member please explain what economic realities he's speaking of in his constituency that he can relate to?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** It's getting late, folks. Let's stay focused.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Focus is hard at this late time of night.

Bill 20 is a huge step forward for Alberta, Canada, and our position on the world stage, Mr. Speaker. It puts in place a framework that will substantially change our society for the better. One of the opposition members likes to ask: what about the children? While I enjoy that, that is also a huge reason why we're bringing this forward. We're trying to create a better future for our children and our grandchildren, not only in terms of protecting the environment they will grow up in but also creating more diverse economic opportunities.

We've seen the research on climate change. We have read the research on climate change. We've heard the voices of scientists, academics, business leaders, and political leaders the world over, and they're all saying the same thing, that climate change is real and the best way to address it is to put a price on carbon. Should we

ignore them? I think not. We know that this is real and that wishful thinking is not going to make it go away. We will use this knowledge to make a positive difference in the world around us.

**11:00**

As Albertans we will not shy away from our responsibilities to future generations. We will do our part, and we're going to help Albertans to do their part. As part of the climate leadership plan we're establishing Energy Efficiency Alberta, a first-of-its-kind agency in Alberta which will help families, businesses, and communities reduce both their energy costs and their greenhouse gas emissions. That is a very important part of this bill, and we need to make sure that no one is left behind.

Mr. Speaker, we're also going to work to transition Alberta's electrical system. There are a growing number of indicators that suggest growth in the world's demand for electricity, particularly renewables-based electricity. As prices continue to fall, renewables are starting to outpace conventional energy types around the world. In fact, it was reported that in 2015 renewable energy was the largest source of new power added to the U.S. electricity grids last year. Technology is always evolving, so we know that costs will most definitely continue to go down. Albertan companies and communities have already been early adopters and investors in these technologies, and this government will make sure that we will not fall behind. Wind and solar systems, in particular, are appealing to all sizes of communities as they are highly scalable and distributable even without an existing electrical grid. While many jurisdictions are likely to have at least one or more options to produce electricity from renewable sources, Alberta is ideally suited for many of these sources, whether that be solar, wind, geothermal, bioenergy, cogen.

Mr. Speaker, we'll be needing hydrocarbons for some time to come, and Alberta is blessed with strong natural gas resources, which can help us reduce our dependence on coal and integrate with renewable options. Hydrocarbons will also have a bright future as more than just fuel. They are needed for plastics, agricultural chemicals, waxes, and asphalt, just to name a few.

As Albertans we need not fear this transition or ignore it, as our colleagues across the aisle would have us do. Rather, this is about seizing an opportunity, an opportunity to transition to more diverse sources of energy, an opportunity to create new jobs, an opportunity to take advantage of the vast amounts of natural renewable resources we're blessed with, and an opportunity to make a cleaner, more sustainable world for our kids.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak briefly to a project that exemplifies what this bill embodies, a project I'm incredibly excited about that speaks to comments from other members who voiced disbelief that anyone would invest in renewables here or that companies would come to invest in our province. I represent Nisku, where proud oil firms are hurting. But this slump also offers an opportunity. There's a solution that can create many, many jobs for oil workers, and it's starting at the centre of my riding, at the site of Leduc No. 1, a discovery that transformed Alberta's economy.

Leduc No. 1 has launched the living energy project, which combines oil and renewable energy industries in a way that has never been done before, the green and the black, and it does it in a way that gets oil workers back to work. This flagship project will change Alberta and Canada, cutting carbon emissions and power bills while lowering the cost of producing oil. That's why the oil industry supports it. It showcases gas, oil, wind, geothermal, solar, energy storage, and smart energy management systems all working together. It's a project built by oil workers and designed by Alberta energy entrepreneurs.

The living energy project will boost economic diversification, innovation, and agriculture. Alberta's energy industry is a world-class innovator, and we're proud of it. This project pioneers and showcases a unique Albertan invention that will cut fuel bills. It creates ultrasmart geothermal systems and intelligent combined heat and power units. The platform controls on-site energy reduction and power storage to cut the transmission tariffs that make up half of our energy bills. This designed and built in Alberta energy platform allows oil companies to slash their power usage and carbon emissions, pushing back at those who block pipelines, and it saves them money. Farmers have been using wind turbines for decades. They understand the economic benefits of renewable energy better than anyone. This living energy project will blaze a regulatory path for the use of the next generation of made-in-Alberta renewable energy.

Geothermal heat from wells that have already been drilled. Alberta only has 148 hectares under greenhouses, so it imports food from California. Ontario, in contrast, has thousands of hectares of land under glass. But we have a unique Alberta advantage: nearly 80,000 suspended oil wells that contain trapped geothermal heat. All they need is a permit for a change of use, a pump, and a heat exchanger, and that's 80,000 greenhouses or fish farms, let's say, supplied with free heat. This project includes Canada's first abandoned oil well to geothermal conversion using innovative, hydrocarbons-renewables bridging technology, and as I speak, its technical proposal is making its way to Alberta Energy, who will work with the Alberta Energy Regulator to test and issue this game-changing permit that won't cost taxpayers a cent. It will create a boom in, like I said, horticulture or fish farms or many other things. It's a groundbreaking innovation that will allow land and well owners to put abandoned and suspended wells back to work producing energy, farming and oil working together, the green and the black.

Under the regulations set by the previous government, when low prices forced an oil firm to stop producing, the regulators could seal up the suspended well and abandon it, which costs hundreds of thousands of dollars. There are approximately 230 small producers staring into the abyss of bankruptcy, and these regulations can push them over the edge. Allowing them to convert a well to geothermal cuts out the abandonment costs, keeping them in business, and preparing wells for geothermal puts the drillers back in my riding to work. At this very moment the oil firm is transferring the well to Leduc No. 1 and is preparing the well for conversion. Its contractors are local oil service firms suffering in the recession, but they are donating their services for free, proudly driving this project. They want to change Alberta, and they want to get back to work.

Methane escaping from producing oil wells into the environment is a wasted resource. This living energy project showcases an innovation that captures this free methane to power a horsehead pump, which is normally driven by an electric motor, and this cuts production costs and gains carbon credits. This lowers the cost of producing oil, and it saves small oil firms from the receiver, slashing oil's carbon footprint. As I said, the green and the black working together.

The coming renewables support program in this bill will create Alberta jobs. The living energy project's solar systems, made by Albertan oil workers, are cheaper than the Ontario systems that Alberta imports today, and these rugged, extreme-temperature, renewable systems are designed for Alberta's climate. They actually tilt to dump the snow off them, so you don't need somebody to brush that off. They are built by Albertan oil workers and are used by Alberta's great oil industry in oil fields that are off the grid. Free sunshine is cheaper than trucking in diesel for generators. It's designed in Alberta, it's made in Alberta, and it's

an Alberta solution, a renewable hydrocarbon hybrid system for the oil patch.

The project has already attracted German technology and Swiss capital. A Nisku steel fabricator, CCI, which is partially First Nations owned, was hurting in the recession and let go most of its workers. When Leduc No. 1 on my advice looked for local oil service firms to build its system, CCI stepped up. It got Swiss capital to develop a renewables division and transferred German technology and started hiring again. CCI is a proud Alberta oil services firm. It will export these systems to B.C., the self-proclaimed kingdom of green energy, and Nisku will be its export hub.

As well as steel, renewable systems need cement, electronics, aluminum fabricators, and laser cutters, and all these systems can be made by Alberta firms. This project is expanding Alberta's manufacturing base and will proudly showcase these made-in-Alberta solutions. The site was a centre of the first major discovery in energy and now will be the second discovery in a century. The living energy project will establish this great province as Canada's undisputed leader in green energy. Its systems are better than Ontario's, and we will export them to B.C. Alberta's proud oil industry will show these provinces yet again how to do energy as it transforms the province into a total energy powerhouse, the complete energy capital of Canada. The project is by the oil industry and for the oil industry. It will help us get pipelines built. It will change Alberta. It will change Canada. It's a win-win-win: a win for oil workers, a win for the environment, and a win for taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a part of the project, and this and many other projects to come are part of the reason why Bill 20 is being brought forward. We want to spur entrepreneurs and businesses from all over Alberta, Canada, and the world to come see this great province and to continue to make it a great place to live, work, and innovate. This is the right thing to do for today and for future generations.

Thank you.

11:10

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** If I could, please, Mr. Speaker. There are so many unintended consequences with this tax that aren't spelled out. The Member for Leduc-Beaumont lives in a rural area or his constituency is rural. Farmers that grow grain other than to feed their own or feedlot cattle mostly ship that grain for sale. That means that it has to run through an elevator, and then it has to be shipped. Rail already saw an increase in diesel fuel in the last NDP budget. I would assume that rail will take another hit on fuel with this carbon tax.

A farmer may have his product hauled to town to that elevator, and that sometimes means hiring a trucker. That is a commonly used form of getting grain to town. I mean, some folks have spent their money on their farms on other priorities. It's hard sometimes for farmers to have the ideal piece of equipment that they need for every operation, so farmers hire truckers quite a bit throughout this province to haul their grain to the elevator.

The elevator itself has a lot of electrical motors and such that elevate that grain. I've talked to one of the last independent grain elevators in western Canada. The amount of electricity used in their Alberta elevators is 111 megawatts of power per month. That's an average amount of power. Multiplied by 12, of course, it's 1,332 megawatts in a year. That cost has to be passed on to someone. They aren't going to eat that cost. It'll be passed on to the producer.

The price is poised to increase anyway as a result of the wind-down of coal-fired power. Even though we don't know exactly how

much that will be, the estimate in the *Canadian Tax Journal* was that a \$30-per-tonne carbon tax could increase the consumer price of electricity by about 7 to 8 per cent, a bit less in the first \$20-per-tonne increase, about 5 per cent. That may not be the correct percentage at the end of the day. I haven't heard what it may be, understanding that the regulations are still in the process of being written. If I was handed Bill 20 today and had to read it, I would understand that electricity is going to rise by that much.

What if a farmer irrigates? He has a cost for electricity for running those pumps that actually get the water to the crop, and he has a cost for electricity to run the pivots or whatever kind of irrigation equipment he uses. Only one person pays for that. Only one person pays that extra cost.

Sure, the purple fuel on a farm is exempt. That is great, that this government took the initiative and was determined to help out the number two industry in Alberta.

But do you see the unintended consequences that appear as we dig a little deeper? So many costs have to be passed on to the producer. I'm only talking about one industry here. A producer that cannot dictate the price of his grain: he's at the mercy of a global market. That's something that farmers worked for a couple of decades ago and wouldn't change now for anything. Now he's going to be charged more to grow his grain, more to get it to the elevator, more to get his product to the coast in export position because locomotives will be paying more for fuel and will have to pass the cost on to the user.

**An Hon. Member:** Just when they go through Alberta.

**Mr. Schneider:** Just when they go through Alberta. Well, this is where we are.

Mr. Speaker, for the member: do you understand the costs passed on to this one industry in Alberta? Producers in this province will have to pay more to get the same. I just wonder if you understand the unintended consequences.

Thank you.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Unlike what opposite members continue to say, we do completely understand. That's all I'm going to say about that.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seeing the time and the progress we've made this evening, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 20.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've done a lot of good work on both sides of the House – I enjoyed the debate from just about everyone – so I rise to move to adjourn the House for this evening until tomorrow morning at 9.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:15 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, June 1, 2016

Day 37

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, June 1, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Please bow your heads. Let us reflect, each in our own way. Let us remind ourselves of the privilege and the responsibility to advocate on behalf of the constituents who elected all of us. Let us remember to respect and accept each other's point of view although we may differ from time to time. Let us understand that the price of success is often the result of hard work, dedication, an unwavering determination, and a commitment to public service.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 20

##### Climate Leadership Implementation Act

Mr. MacIntyre moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be not now read a second time because this Assembly has not received satisfactory evidence or assurances that a full economic impact analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans.

[Adjourned debate on amendment May 31: Mr. Bilous]

**The Speaker:** Anyone wishing to speak on RA1? The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this morning to be in the House on such a glorious day and to represent the outstanding people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, working to defend the issues that are important to them and to represent individuals right across the constituency. And not only in the constituency but right across the province people are reaching out to the Official Opposition and expressing deep concern.

Now, I want to be very clear, Mr. Speaker, that of those same people who are expressing concern about the direction of this government, particularly around Bill 20, including myself and the Official Opposition, many of them are concerned about our environment and ensuring that our environment is cared for and managed in a way that leaves a legacy for our children and our grandchildren that they can be proud of and that also manages the other very important aspects of our province in conjunction with both of those things.

It's one of the reasons for this amendment, that my hon. colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake proposed. It is an amendment that seeks to ensure that the right balance is being struck. What we're discussing here this morning is a reasoned amendment, a reason why Bill 20 should not proceed at second reading, and I think it's a very, very solid reason, that

Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be not now read a second time because this Assembly has not received satisfactory evidence or assurances that a full economic impact analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans.

Now, we know that many in this House have read what some refer to as the Leach report. That particular report, while it is a fulsome report in many respects and makes numerous recommendations – some of them the government likes to adhere to, others not so much – they hold this report in such high esteem even though they don't want to listen to all of it. While this report has been presented and is the principal piece that the government likes to use to say that all of the study that should be done has been done, one of the things that there is a big hole in is an actual economic impact assessment. While, certainly, that report addresses some of the economic issues around the implementation of this carbon tax, it doesn't in fact detail all of the costs that may or may not be associated with this tax.

I can think of hundreds – maybe that's a bit of a stretch. But tens . . . [interjection] Maybe it is hundreds, actually. If I had the time – and I know that over the next couple of days we're going to have an opportunity to spend some significant amount of time together discussing this piece of legislation. I'm going to start, myself, a bit of a tally to find out if I do get to hundreds of items that that particular report didn't consider and how it potentially has a negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, it is critically important that we leave a legacy for our children both on the environmental file as well as the economic file because both are critically important to the success of the future of our province and to future generations that will continue many of the great things that this province has become.

I look at the economic impact of this particular carbon tax, and initially the government had said that the total cost that any family could ever incur on this particular tax is approximately \$800 a year. Then later the government said, "Oh, okay; it's possible that there may be some indirect costs," while initially saying that there were going to be no indirect costs and that the total cost would be \$800 a year. I'm getting a bit of a sense of the track record on this bill with this government. Initially they very proudly pronounced to the House that this bill would be revenue neutral, and now we all know that that's not true. Even the government acknowledges that that's not true, even though that is what they'd said. Then they said that there were no indirect costs and that all of the costs would be included in the number that they provided. Then late last week or early last week – I don't remember exactly when it was – they said: "Oh, okay. Maybe there will be \$70 to \$100 of indirect costs." We see this pattern of saying one thing, another proving to be true, and then the government saying: "Oh, okay. You were right. We didn't really mean it."

9:10

From all across this great province of ours people are contacting the Official Opposition, and the good people in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are contacting me, asking questions like: what about this cost; what about that cost? Just this week in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills we saw the Rocky View school division raise the cost of busing to families in the southern half of the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, Mr. Speaker, and the specific reason cited was the carbon tax.

**An Hon. Member:** It doesn't kick in till January.

**Mr. Cooper:** The reason they're increasing the cost of busing is because of the carbon tax, and while it might not kick in until January, school starts in September, and they need to be prepared for the carbon tax that comes in on the 1st of the year. While the tax may not be in place until January, significant costs are going to be incurred by school divisions, that are going to be handed down

directly to parents. This is an indirect cost, one that the government hasn't considered or, at least, hasn't provided any evidence that they have. So all this amendment does is that it asks the question. It states that this bill should not be read a second time until such time as the economic well-being of Albertans has been studied. Busing is one of those indirect costs.

Yesterday in the House my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View spoke specifically to the increased costs that other departments and other areas of government are going to incur. I had a good conversation with one of the municipal leaders in the constituency, in the community of Olds, that was focused around this issue and the cost that municipalities are going to bear because of the increased costs for them, whether it's the cost of running municipal vehicles or the significant cost that there's going to be in increased heating that they will see in their facilities, particularly around recreational facilities like pools. The amount of natural gas that's used in those facilities to provide recreation and to ultimately increase the health and well-being of the citizens of that community is going to have significant cost increases.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, there is one taxpayer in the province of Alberta. Now, fortunately, there are about 4 million of those ones, but there's only one person that fits the bill. The municipality doesn't have many levers, many revenue levers, as the former Premier used to like to say, at their disposal, so their fallback is to increase taxes to residents of that community, constituents of ours and Albertans.

Now, I specifically mentioned Olds, and I'll just clarify that in that conversation, we didn't have a direct conversation around whether or not the community of Olds would be raising their taxes, but it is a concern to municipal leaders that that may be a decision that is ultimately downloaded from the province onto municipalities. We continually see downloading of provincial responsibilities onto municipalities and then, at the end of the day, onto the taxpayer of Alberta. While the government might like to hide behind the downloading of costs, they're still very real at the municipal level. So the increase in indirect costs in municipal taxes has not been considered because sufficient, satisfactory evidence and assurances that a full economic impact analysis has been provided: that has not been done before this Assembly. It presents a major, major concern to Albertans that this hasn't been addressed.

I think of other provincial bodies and institutions and organizations and departments. I know that in central Alberta there are some provincial correctional facilities, and while I don't have the exact numbers, those facilities require a significant amount of natural gas to heat, and the increase in the tax on natural gas is close to 50 per cent. So the heating costs for our correctional facilities are going to increase by 50 per cent. If I am not correct, the challenge is that a full economic impact assessment hasn't been provided, and as a result, we would have the information, but we don't.

There is one thing that the government cannot dispute, and it's this: the costs for heating correctional facilities will increase. At the end of the day, those costs have to be paid by someone. I know that my hon. colleague from Drumheller-Stettler has spoken about the increased costs. [Mr. Cooper's speaking time expired]

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. I'd just like to ask the hon. member to continue on with his comments there. There seems to be a lot of discussion on this bill. Of course, we've talked about this before, but I guess we need to keep talking about it because this Bill 20 was just set in

our hands – what? – a couple of days ago. So the people that it affects are just learning its full effects now. Now, of course, we've had this Climate Leadership report, but that's not Bill 20. That's not what we're discussing here today. This is what they say is where they've gathered information for Bill 20, but there's a big difference between these two documents and what they discuss.

I think the communities and the people of Alberta haven't had time to go through this document. They haven't had time to figure out the full effects of it. It's a tax bill. It talks nothing about the environment. All it talks about is taxes. So I guess I'd like the member to continue with his thoughts on this and maybe expand a little bit more on how this is affecting everyday Albertans.

I noticed one of the hon. members yesterday from the other side was talking about how all these financial experts had looked at this. Well, I guess one question I would have is: when did the financial experts look at this? We've only had it in our hands for just a couple of days. I don't believe it's within parliamentary procedure to have been giving this document to other people outside of this House before us. So if that's what they're saying, then maybe they need to clarify a little bit more. Who's seen this before this Legislature has seen it?

But anyways, we'll allow the member to carry on with his comments. Thanks.

9:20

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, colleague. I appreciate your comments, particularly around the impact to Albertans, and that is at the heart of what we're discussing. This reasoned amendment asks that question because we actually don't know and the government doesn't even know what the answer is.

Now, they have provided numbers that have changed as the opposition has asked more questions and provided more evidence of some of those increased costs, particularly around these indirect costs. Just two days ago the Leader of the Opposition asked a question in this Chamber about a very, very good local business that employs a number of local folks right in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, Shirley's Greenhouse. The increased costs to that business alone are going to be \$30,000 a year in increased heating costs. That is a significant amount of money. One of two things is going to happen to their produce. They are going to produce less because they have to lay off a person because they can't afford it, or they're going to increase the costs of production and pass those along in the form of indirect costs in the cost of our food increasing.

The third very possible option is – I could tell you that when you run a smaller greenhouse in the province of Alberta, the margins are thin, but many small businesses just like Shirley's Greenhouse are passionate about producing local food and producing high-quality food, and the challenge is that this has the opportunity to prevent that from happening. I love the fact that when I go to my local Co-op, I can purchase local produce, but this sort of tax, that is going to increase the costs to Shirley's Greenhouse by \$30,000 a year, is the type of tax that runs the risk of putting that small business out of business.

Something else in terms of indirect costs, particularly to the vulnerable and charities: I had an opportunity to speak with the Rocky View handibus in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

You wish to speak to amendment RA1?

**Mrs. Pitt:** The amendment? Yes.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed, Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I value the opportunity to speak here to the amendment.

... be not now read a second time because this Assembly has not received satisfactory evidence or assurances that a full economic impact analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's admirable that we take our environment seriously. I really, truly do. Many years ago, when bottled water had first come out, some may have thought that to be strange, very, very strange. Now it's a part of our life. That certainly in itself has an environmental impact. Plastic waste is phenomenal for our environment. However, it's a part of our life, and I don't think that we want to be in a situation where we need to be buying bottled air, and I understand that. I get that, and my colleagues here absolutely understand that we need to be responsible for the world that we live in, the food that we eat, the air that we breathe. These are extremely important to everybody, and we've been given this Earth to take care of. But we've also been given this Earth to live, and I think that's very, very important for everybody here to remember.

This carbon tax bill has an impact on the way we live our lives, and I don't think it's that far of a stretch to say that this carbon tax bill affects not only the way we live and how we live, Mr. Speaker, but I think it could very well diminish the things that we not only want but the things that we need.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Fearmongering.

**Mrs. Pitt:** It's very unfair for the members opposite to call this fearmongering because they have yet to actually do an economic impact study, yet the individual, the school boards, the businesses, everybody that will be impacted by this tax are starting to calculate the cost that will be incurred from this piece of legislation, from this tax bill.

Rocky View schools, that is responsible for the busing in the constituency of Airdrie, has already said: your bus fees are going up for each child this year, and then they're going to go up every year afterwards. Do you understand what that means for a family that is already struggling to find the \$200 for each child to pay for that bus pass? It's significant. There are so many people where \$10 – just \$10 – is extremely significant, and this, Mr. Speaker, is just an example of the dangers at play when we haven't done a full economic impact study. I would bet that had we had an economic impact study, the evidence – the evidence – that would come from this study would certainly reveal the dangers and the harm to the human beings in this province. I will bet that nobody wants to see that happen. There has to be a balance here between people and the environment. I'm really not quite sure this is the appropriate way to go. This isn't balanced. This is very dangerous, very, very dangerous.

I think, you know, Mr. Speaker, as an example, libraries in our communities will be impacted by this. Many of our libraries have interprovincial sharing systems that are wonderful because we have such an opportunity to access so many different pieces of literature. This is wonderful. We should be encouraging this. But the cost to transport those books from one library to another have now increased. What does that mean? What does that actually mean? I'm really not quite sure they can eat that up. Either the municipality that houses the library will have to increase funding for the libraries, and we can follow that chain upwards, or the library is going to have to increase the membership fees, which again is another indirect cost to the consumer, to the children again. Maybe that's another five bucks a kid. I mean, just right there I get five bucks for a library pass; I've got another 20 bucks on a bus pass, just one kid. In my household I'm at 50 bucks just with those two costs. This is a

phenomenal, phenomenal impact, and I think we're just scratching the surface as far as the impact goes.

But we have the resources here to actually delve in deep, Mr. Speaker, and really, really study what this is going to mean, and then the rebate program could be targeted more fulsomely and actually address these issues. I really, truly believe that. You have time right now to step back, stop this now. Let's go back and do some research. Let's get some evidence. The NDP government always talks about evidence-based, evidence-based, evidence-based, yet on one of the most impactful pieces of legislation in this House we have yet to see what the evidence is.

9:30

**Mrs. Littlewood:** There's an entire report.

**Mrs. Pitt:** The report has yet to actually address the costs associated to the consumer.

You know what? Every single one of us is going to see the danger when our constituents come into our office and say: "I don't know what to do. There is no possible way I can make ends meet anymore. There is nothing else I can do." Then we get to winter, and what happens in winter? You will get your first heating bill, which is likely going to be outrageous. Then you go: "Okay. Well, I've got to turn this thermostat down. What's the lowest point I can put this thing at without actually putting my life at risk, my children's lives at risk?"

We have winter here, folks. Until you can turn up the heat in winter outside, you need to understand that there are things that we absolutely cannot change, and that is heating a home. I have energy efficient windows. I'm fortunate enough where I can put the money into my home to afford that. I can afford the expensive lightbulbs that bring down my electricity costs. Those are very expensive. Most people can't do that. Heck, I've been slowly doing this for years, you know. I've got weatherproofing on all my windows and all my doors, and I check those every year. I mean, those are almost luxury costs. There are so many people that can't afford this.

We all want to do what's right for everybody here, but there is a better balance between the environment and the people that live on this Earth. I get that you want to be the leaders and the champions of environmental protection because there are many, many areas in this world that do a really poor job at carbon management. Trust me, we're nowhere near the levels of some of those countries. I would implore everybody in this House to find the balance. We have an opportunity right here to put this on hold, and there would be no fault anywhere in saying: "Wait a minute. We've actually got to look after the people. It's about the people." One is not exclusive of the other. They work together.

This is about making sure that we can get children to school, Mr. Speaker. It's about making sure that our children have the opportunity to play hockey. Hockey is a very, very expensive sport to be in, and it requires a ton of travel. I know many people in hockey programs. I played basketball growing up, and we carpooled as much as possible for so many different reasons. I'm sure that hockey parents today do the same thing, but they still have to get their kids to the game. They still have to get their kids to practice. This doesn't mean, you know, that they have one less Starbucks a week to pay for the carbon tax. That's not what this is about.

This is about the impacts that have yet to come forward as evidence fully, and this is where that work should be done. This is the work of the government, to do a full economic impact study. This is our job. This is your job. We're willing to work together on this. It's about balance. It's about the people. I really, really, truly thought – there are a lot of stereotypes about the NDP government

out there. One of them certainly is that they talk about caring about people. I think that's one that you would probably want to make true. This is, Mr. Speaker, a very dangerous path to go down until we have the evidence. I don't know if I could implore anybody enough to do this.

Mr. Speaker, another example is the grocery stores. Our food costs will go up. You can't tell me that they won't; you absolutely cannot tell me. Everything comes in on a truck. Until we can create a giant bicycle and hire 20 people to ride this thing down the road, we've got to truck this stuff in, and those costs are certainly going up. There's no way around this. So guess what? These grocery stores, who are businesses, who employ people so that they can pay their bills, will have to let some workers go and/or they will increase the costs of the goods in the store. These are fruits and vegetables. These are things that keep us healthy. You're going to play the health card, but you're going to make fruits and vegetables more expensive? I think that's absolutely inappropriate. [interjections]

The government laughs. They think this is funny that there will be longer lineups at the food bank, with probably emptier shelves. Mr. Speaker, the food bank: let's talk about the food bank costs. Guess what? Everything still comes in on a truck there. It goes out on a truck. Heck, the people who pick up food from a food bank usually come in a car. For a vulnerable person who is down and out, who needs some help from the food bank, it will cost them more.

**An Hon. Member:** Buses.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Oh, buses. Let's talk about buses, Mr. Speaker. That's an excellent point. The NDP government wants everybody to only ride around on a bus, but the last time I checked, they didn't run on unicorn farts. It is completely irresponsible of this government to say: "Don't worry about your car. You're not going to drive anymore. We're going to put you on a bus, but we're not really sure if they run on gasoline or diesel."

I'm pretty sure they burn fuel still. This, again, is why we need a full economic impact study. We need the evidence because, clearly, the NDP government is not aware that buses run on fuel. I can't even believe this, Mr. Speaker. We need to see the evidence. We need to see the impact. I think that more than ever the NDP government needs to see the impact that their carbon tax bill is imposing on the people.

This is inappropriate behaviour from a government. Amongst other things, Mr. Speaker, I'm so disheartened to hear laughing about the impact on vulnerable people. "Don't worry. If you need the food bank, you can take the bus. But don't worry; I'm pretty sure your bus fees aren't going to go up. No. They're not going to go up." Are you kidding me? This is unreal.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Questions to the Member for Airdrie under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Dang:** Under 29(2)(a), Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to make some comments and get to some questions about some things that the hon. member across the way was saying. I am very concerned with what the member across the way is saying because the member has been quite impassioned in how she has portrayed and shaped this image and message about how the climate leadership bill is attacking children and is dangerous for families and so forth.

We understand that the vast majority of Albertans – 66 per cent of Albertans, Mr. Speaker, two-thirds of Albertans – will actually be receiving a full or partial rebate on the carbon levy. We actually understand that if you do the math, if you look at the economics, you can say that these people that she's talking about will be supported by the government. The government will be stepping in to make sure that we are helping our vulnerable, helping our

families and communities, and that we won't be making any drastic cuts to those services that these people are providing, like some members might be endorsing. Instead, what this government is doing is investing in those communities.

The hon. member across the way also spoke quite heavily about health impacts and how the costs of the food in your grocery store would go up and that the food bank lines would increase. Mr. Speaker, let's be very frank. There is a world scientific consensus that the adverse impacts of climate change will drastically harm our communities and drastically harm our families. What we are looking at right now are the adverse health effects of coal, the adverse health effects of climate change on things like food production in the world. What we are looking at right now is that we absolutely need to act to ensure that we will be able to have a tangible difference moving forward.

9:40

What the hon. member across the way is speaking about, using these terms I would like to say are fearmongering, may be speaking to a certain type of constituency, Mr. Speaker. What the hon. member across the way is doing is simply not looking at the facts of what this bill does. What this bill does is that it implements a plan to take tangible action that this government has plotted out through the Climate Leadership report, with very thorough in-depth analysis and very thorough and fulsome research that economists have done and experts in the industry have been a part of.

I'd like to ask the hon. member across the way: in the hon. member's opinion, are these economists wrong? The experts, the 25,000 Albertans that were consulted, the 920 Albertans that were involved in public open houses, the over 530 Albertans that were involved in the industry submissions: are all of these people wrong? These people were all consulted. The things that we are hearing about: the 25,000 Albertans spoke about those. That's what the experts on the panel like Dr. Leach and Linda Coady were speaking about, Mr. Speaker, when we saw the experts on the panel and they compiled this information and they came up with this tangible report.

The tangible report we've seen today and we've seen for weeks and months already. This bill has been out for weeks now, Mr. Speaker. What we've seen is that these are very realistic things that we can talk about. When we look at this, we can say: are we attacking Alberta's most vulnerable? Absolutely not. That is a ludicrous assertion. It is something that we as members should be ashamed to even be bringing up in this Chamber because it is something that is simply untrue. It is something that this government is full-heartedly against. We are here to support Albertans and to make tangible differences in their lives by doing things like taking action on climate change so that we can live healthier lives, so that we can live more fulsome lives in our communities, so that we can have an environment we can be proud of moving into the future.

As we look at all of this, I really do have to wonder of the member what the intention of this amendment is, whether it's to actually get that economic impact assessment. I don't understand if that's the intention or if it is for some reason to delay this bill in other ways. Mr. Speaker, I do wonder since we've seen all these very comprehensive submissions; we've seen this very comprehensive report, that consulted with thousands of people, quite frankly, that was analyzed by some of the top minds. We received submissions from top economists in Calgary, for example, like Jack Mintz.

We've seen the analysis. We've seen the expertise. Frankly, I don't believe that what the member across the way is doing is necessarily, in my opinion, something that they are being fully truthful about in the sense that they do not believe in the notion of



this amendment in the way that they are doing it. I have to ask that member: what really is the intent of this? We are trying to move forward on climate change.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Anyone who wishes to speak to amendment RA1? The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking to the amendment. This House has not received satisfactory evidence of an economic impact study on the effects of this bill. To prove this, I'll talk about a subject that has not even been mentioned once in the House.

This carbon tax is going to hurt families. I hope we have made that clear. If this is not clear, don't worry; we'll bring more clarity to that subject. Beyond the carbon tax, this will hurt initiatives this government has been trying to implement to diversify the economy. Let's take a look at some of the initiatives the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has been trying to do in order to diversify the economy and how those initiatives will be affected due to this carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, on the 1st of February the Minister of Economic Development and Trade announced a \$500 million royalty credit program to build petrochemical plants. He hopes that this subsidy will convince corporations to build petrochemical plants in the province. Now, just to refresh the House's memory, this program only comes into effect after the plant is built. This subsidy, this corporate welfare, was designed to compete with the Gulf coast, where most of these plants are built. The reasons they are built on the Gulf coast as opposed to Alberta are numerous, but the major hurdles that Alberta needs to work on in order to compete for this business are the upfront costs to build these plants.

But don't take my word on that. Let me read for you what the Minister of Economic Development and Trade said when asked a question regarding the increased costs to build in Alberta as compared to the Gulf coast.

There are some challenges that we face here in Alberta in order to attract investments like this, I mean, from our climate and the fact that construction costs are typically higher than on the Gulf coast. But what is interesting is that once a company gets into the operational side, we're quite competitive with the Gulf coast. So we believe, just as previous governments have done 40 years ago, that by incenting value-added in the petrochemical streams of methane and propane, which currently we don't have in the province, in the country, it will incent investment that will lead to long-term benefits for Albertans and, therefore, all Canadians.

That's what the minister said.

He continued later on in the press conference to say:

Alberta faces some challenges when trying to compete for projects like value-added on methane, propane versus our biggest competitor, which is Texas and Louisiana, but once we get over the hump of construction and we are actually into the operational side, Alberta is quite competitive.

The ministry is well aware that building costs in Alberta are, quote, a challenge and higher than on the Gulf coast. The minister, with all his powers granted by Bill 1, Mr. Speaker, which just passed after several months of debate, is able to do absolutely nothing about the construction costs. Instead, the minister promises that if they absorb the high construction costs, he will give them some corporate welfare after the fact. Now that this carbon tax is out, we know how the minister plans on recouping that corporate welfare. The ministry is going to back this bill, Bill 20, which will increase construction costs even further in the form of a tax. This minister is going to back this bill that, instead of attracting

investment, will scare investment away due to the ever-increasing construction costs.

Now, members across the aisle are probably wondering how construction costs are going to increase due to this climate plan tax. Well, let me lay out several factors as to why construction costs will increase. First and most obvious, every single construction vehicle runs on gasoline or diesel. The cost to run each of those vehicles will increase, obviously. Those bulldozers, backhoes, and work trucks cannot be replaced by a Prius. Those vehicles cannot be replaced by public transit. The people operating those vehicles cannot choose to lift the blocks of cement with their hands as if they were building the pyramids, Mr. Speaker. I guarantee that those vehicles were not sold because of their fuel efficiency. They were sold because they could be used to build efficiently. In construction you have to achieve productivity. They look for safety; they look for efficiency. So the cost to build these petrochemical plants is increasing due to this tax.

9:50

Second, every person working on those plants needs to drive to work. Public transit does not exist at the locations where a petrochemical plant would be built. Those people are going to want their costs covered. No one wants to work for free. The party opposite is not advocating for people to work for free; they're supposed to be the champions of workers and peasants and all. So if the cost of gas increases, the cost of labour increases to cover their costs. There's a direct correlation there, Mr. Speaker.

Now, how are the building materials getting to the work sites? Teleporters don't exist yet. In the future they will, but today we have to build these projects. A Prius cannot haul steel beams to your work site. Large trucks will have to drive to the work sites, hauling the building materials to build the petrochemical plants. I'm sure that these companies who are thinking of building anything in Alberta are having to rework their costs because they have budgets to meet. To make these projects feasible and viable, they have to do economic impact studies. They will do a cost-benefit analysis, and they have to trend the costs. I've been there; I've done that. That's how the industry works.

Wait. There's more. The roads to get to the building sites do not exist. They have to be built. And what is one of the materials used in road construction, Mr. Speaker? It is something that will become more expensive thanks to the climate leadership plan. The material is fly ash. Now, according to a search for "fly ash" in *Hansard* documents this has not been mentioned once. Therefore, I'll give a little explanation as to what fly ash is, and then I will explain why it will become more expensive thanks to the NDP's carbon tax plan.

The definition of fly ash reads, quote: fly ash, also known as pulverized fuel ash in the United Kingdom, is one of the coal combustion products composed of the fine particles that are driven out of the boiler with the fuel gases. The ash that falls to the bottom of the boiler is called bottom ash. In the modern coal-fired power plants fly ash is generally captured by electrostatic precipitators or other particle filtration equipment before the fuel gases reach the chimneys. Together with the bottom ash removed from the bottom of the boiler, it's known as coal ash. Yes, it's called coal ash.

For those who haven't understood why this will become more expensive, let me break it down for you even more. Coal ash comes from coal. And what does this government want to phase out? Coal-fired power plants. Now that the House has an understanding of what coal ash, or fly ash, is, I'll get back to my explanation as to why petrochemical plants will become more expensive to build, Mr. Speaker.

Fly ash has been used for many years in road construction as a fill material in concrete, lean mix subbases, and in more recent

years as a binder and aggregate in hydraulically bound materials. That means that the roads that would need to be built to get to the construction site would need to use fly ash. If there are no coal-fired power plants in Alberta, then there will be no way to get fly ash locally. So then we'll have to import the fly ash from either out of the province or out of the country, which will come with the added cost of increased fuel to truck the fly ash into the province. Now the fly ash will cost more to buy, Mr. Speaker, and more to ship. The costs for building these petrochemical plants is just increasing by the moment.

Wait. There's more to come. The buildings will be largely composed of concrete. Does the House remember how this carbon plan will increase the cost of concrete? The cost of concrete will increase because fly ash is a part of concrete. Fly ash will be more expensive because the NDP wants to get rid of the power plants that create the fly ash.

These are just a few reasons, Mr. Speaker, why the NDP is making the cost to construct buildings in Alberta increase higher and higher thanks to their risky, ideological policies. Instead of trying to attract business investment and growth, this government is scaring them away by increasing their start-up costs.

Of course, the costs don't stop there. Once the building is built, it will need to be heated. Another reason why the costs to operate in Alberta, according to the minister of economic development, will be only competitive is because heating costs are higher in a winter climate than a tropical climate. Now this government is increasing the already high heating costs compared to the tropical Gulf coast, with whom we are competing to attract investment. How is increasing the cost to build and to operate in Alberta encouraging diversification? The minister needs to explain that to the House, Mr. Speaker.

This government created a whole new ministry that is in charge of diversifying the economy. Encouraging new industries to invest in Alberta cannot be done by giving a subsidy with one hand and increasing the costs with the other hand. Is this government's plan to out subsidy their own taxes in order to make Alberta competitive with other jurisdictions? I don't know. Only the minister can explain that.

A higher tax is not the way to encourage investors. A hike on necessary operating and upfront costs is not how to encourage investment. Thanks to this tax and thanks to this carbon plan the cost to invest in Alberta will increase more than it is already. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade already has admitted that government subsidies, corporate welfare, is needed to attract investment. Otherwise he would not be giving \$500 million worth of it away.

The cost to invest will only increase thanks to this tax and to this plan. How in the world is this helpful for our economy? It is ridiculous that for one moment a member across the aisle can say otherwise. This carbon tax is horrendous for business investment, and for the reasons I explained, it's becoming increasingly difficult to do business in this province even before this tax. Now this tax is adding fuel to the fire in terms of businesses that are fleeing the province. Investments are fleeing the province and going to other jurisdictions like British Columbia or Saskatchewan.

As stewards of the economy what are we supposed to do? We have to make it easy for the entrepreneurs to do business in this province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Barnes:** Yes, please, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the hon. member for his strong words about Alberta families, about Calgary families, about everyone's concern for the environment, the timing, the impact, and the unintended consequences.

The city of Medicine Hat has a 9.9 per cent unemployment rate right now. My goodness. Two years ago you could get six jobs in the same hour. Has that changed? I'd like to hear from the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills how Calgary is doing economically, the impacts and the challenges that this new tax will have on businesses, on families that need to pay their bills and need to provide opportunity. I'm especially concerned that Calgary, with this new carbon tax and its impact . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I wonder if you can direct your comments through the chair.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member through the Speaker: I'm very concerned about tourism and how this new tax is going to have huge implications and drags on our interprovincial travel. Of course, Calgary is in such a wonderful spot in Alberta, close to Banff and close to skiing and close to many strong, strong tourism industries. Are you also concerned that this will be a drag and further increase our unemployment rate?

Thank you.

10:00

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my hon. colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat. Like Medicine Hat or Bonnyville-Cold Lake, most Calgarians are impacted by this downturn in the economy. Most of them, actually, are very proud Calgarians who care about the economy. Not that other Albertans don't, but Calgary is in a unique situation. You know, when I worked back in downtown Calgary, most of our morning meetings started with the sustainability movement, and we did safety topics. We used to do the sustainability movement. Everyone in that office or in that meeting would reflect every day like we reflect here every day when we start the business.

In most of the offices in Calgary, they think about the sustainability movement: what can I do to protect the environment? I mean, nobody has a monopoly on protecting the environment, as one of the other members on the other side claims to have. Everybody is responsible. Every parent wants to protect the environment that they want to put their kids into. We see if we can print less in a day. Instead of printing, is there any other way of communication? Instead of driving to work, can we take public transport? At home can you have energy efficient windows or doors and all that to preserve the heat without consuming more fuel? In the summer how do they conserve? You know, there are stories, Mr. Speaker. I can go on and on and tell you how proud Calgarians are.

Most of those people work, actually, on the projects for the oil patch, so they are the leaders in finding technologies to take carbon out of the air. Government doesn't do that. The government, all of us, the politicians here: we can lecture the people, but we talk more and do little. Those engineers working in downtown: they are the people who find the technology. I mean, they are the innovators of the technology to separate oil from the sands. They are the proud engineers that are going to find the technology tomorrow to take carbon out of the air in a cost-effective manner. We haven't stopped doing that; it's an ongoing process. But this government tax is not going to help Calgarians, for sure, when they are down, when they are looking for jobs, staying home.

Now, with these additional taxes, it's not helping Calgarians in any way. I mean, I heard comments from the . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. You're speaking to amendment RA1?

**Mr. Barnes:** To the bill, please, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** We're on the amendment.

**Mr. Barnes:** I'm sorry. To the amendment, yes.

**The Speaker:** You haven't spoken before?

**Mr. Barnes:** I have not spoken before, no.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the House for the opportunity to rise and talk for a few minutes on the amendment. I appreciate and I'm pleased that the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has brought this motion forward, that second reading of Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be not now read a second time because this Assembly has not received satisfactory evidence or assurances that a full economic impact analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans.

I know that a crucial step that the NDP government missed was the economic changes in our province since their election, over the last couple of years. I spoke briefly in a question to the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills about how the economic situation has changed in Cypress-Medicine Hat: a year and a half, two years ago, jobs everywhere, now a 9.9 per cent unemployment rate. I'm told every day that that does not include a lot of our good oil and gas workers because they're actually not employees. They're actually independent contractors who are small-business people, the lifeblood of the Alberta economy, the type of people that built the province of Alberta.

My goodness, is it the right time? Is it the right time for the implementation, which will make it harder for them to provide jobs, to create opportunities, to pay their bills, to build wealth? I would absolutely believe that an economic impact analysis could outline all of that and leave the NDP government to look further at where their ideology direction takes them.

In my four years as an MLA many, many people have cautioned me to be concerned, Mr. Speaker, about the unintended consequences of any legislation. There are a lot of smart people in government, a lot of smart lawyers and people that draft these things, but, my goodness, history is littered with examples of unintended consequences. I think back to the royalty review in 2008, 2009, that the previous government did in an effort to get Albertans what was deemed their fair share. Service industries were driven out of Cypress-Medicine Hat. Jobs went with them. Investment and wealth went with them. They went to Texas, the northeastern United States, South Dakota, Saskatchewan, and B.C., where royalties were more competitive, where costs were lower. I think the previous government's intention was to – well, actually, I don't know what their intention was, but the absolute result was to start this downturn in the southeastern corner of our province, where today we're looking at a 9.9 per cent unemployment rate. My goodness, the empathy I have for those people.

There are some other things that an economic impact analysis could have shown. I want to talk about the carbon leakage. A former

Finance minister put out an article a week or two ago detailing this. To me, it was tremendously interesting, the unintended consequences, that it could actually backfire. I'm sure that's not the NDP government's intention, but it kind of speaks to the fact, Mr. Speaker, that if we make our industries less competitive, if we make it so our industries can't compete and all that happens is that these carbon-producing industries move 200 miles, 400 miles to an area that doesn't have the same tax and is even more likely to have these types of emissions, we're looking at a situation where you're actually giving incentive for these industries in nearby jurisdictions to be more competitive and produce more carbon and actually do the opposite of what your ideology or what your good intentions might be. [interjection]

**10:10**

Now, I'm hearing from one of the members, "Oh, yeah, we have to be the most responsible people," and maybe we do. We do not want to be on the wrong side of this. But, my goodness, sir, an economic impact analysis would at least let us know what we're getting into.

Mr. Speaker, the economic impact analysis could take a full look at what this carbon leakage would be. You know, there's a saying in life that perception is reality, and the reality of the situation is that your good intentions may make it worse. Is that what you want? Keep going the way you are.

Back to the value of an economic impact analysis. I was Infrastructure and Transportation critic two or three years ago, and I found it a very interesting portfolio, with a lot of stakeholders reaching out. I remember the Macdonald-Laurier commission reaching out to me about the fact that in government in Canada so often infrastructure and construction are taken on by – we have the best intentions. Our heart is in the right place, but government doesn't go the step of looking at the costs versus the benefits, and we end up with boondoggles. We end up with many situations where hard-earned tax dollars get absolutely wasted – that's the worst scenario – or more often than not we don't get the value for the investment. We don't do the right thing.

Properly engaging some experts, some people that spend their time and their lives looking at these things, could absolutely direct not only the best way to do it but, Mr. Speaker, the best time to do it, and the best time may not be when we have a 9.9 per cent unemployment rate and rising. Now, they gave some good examples. You know, the one that I think of is the Montreal subway, where millions or billions of dollars had been spent and they ended up without a proper, cohesive cost-benefit plan. One instance where they said that it was done and did work was the bridge to Prince Edward Island, the Confederation Bridge. So I guess why I present a pro and a con – I'm not saying this; the Official Opposition is not saying this – is to say: "Let's look at all of the information. Let's get the experts. Let's look at both sides of this."

I've also had the opportunity to read a little bit about New Zealand. I think it was 25 or so years ago now, somewhere in there, that unfortunately the country of New Zealand got themselves into a heck of a situation. I don't know that they went bankrupt, but certainly all the steps were there, where they couldn't cover their interest, they couldn't cover their debt, and they couldn't make the payments on their social programs and actually had to break their economy down to the basics and eliminate government interference.

One of the steps that they took was a full, complete economic impact analysis on everything they did. It included things like sinking funds for infrastructure when infrastructure was going to be built so that they could ensure that they always had the money to maintain the things that don't pay revenue like schools and

hospitals and those kinds of things. It made sure that the consequences of what they were doing were fully, fully understood, as best as people can.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the result for New Zealand has been that their economy is back on track. They've become the leader in their area again. They've become a jurisdiction and an economy that can afford to pay for their social programs. The consequences of the big spending and the big taxation and the government interference were very, very hard on the New Zealanders, I understand, but through proper economic analysis, through involving experts they were able to maintain the services and the front-line workers and the things in our economy that we all want and we all rely on.

Mr. Speaker, I've been given a list of the uncalculated indirect social and economic cost increases for Albertan businesses and families. I'm told that it's not comprehensive, but, my goodness, it's already four pages. It looks like about 80 different strong elements of everyday Albertans' and Alberta families' lives are going to be affected by hidden costs. Yeah, we can rebate some of this, but we'll never get it all. We'll never be able to cover the jobs that are lost, the opportunities that are lost. Hey; an economic impact analysis could outline some of that for us, so why does this government not want to do it? Why does this government not want to take the proper time, engage the proper experts in making sure that we get this as good as we can?

Mr. Speaker, about halfway down page 1 I see how food production is going to be impacted. Of course, I see that greenhouses are on here, and I had to circle it immediately. In my constituency, in the town of Redcliff and throughout large parts of Medicine Hat and Cypress county, the greenhouse business is very, very strong. I remember that the previous government, when natural gas rates got high, rebated the industry. They felt that the industry was so important that they had to ensure that when gas prices were high, those jobs were protected, that keeping the cost of food affordable for all Albertans, especially seniors on fixed incomes, especially people starting out, had to be protected.

What is this government doing instead? The carbon tax will begin at \$1.01 per gigajoule and in 2018 will rise to \$1.52. At the same time the projected natural gas price in 2018 will be \$2.50. Natural gas is easily – easily – the biggest input other than labour, Mr. Speaker, in the greenhouse industry, so if they see a tripling of their natural gas costs, you know, my tomato sandwich is going to cost triple.

**An Hon. Member:** Tomatoes are terrible anyway. A bacon sandwich . . .

**Mr. Barnes:** Bacon. Who doesn't like bacon?

Mr. Speaker, I mean, you know, the industry has become a value-added industry. It's added packaging. It comes into the Calgary farmers' markets and sells to all Calgarians. It's in Medicine Hat. My goodness, you can walk into a lot of greenhouses in Redcliff, and there's nobody there, but you can leave your \$2 or your \$4 in the box and take a cucumber or a tomato. I guess the next time I go I'll have to leave a tenner.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Airdrie under 29(2)(a).

**Mrs. Pitt:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my hon. colleague for his insights. I very much enjoyed hearing this. It's unfortunate that the government side still thinks it's funny, the rising cost of food. They're not quite understanding the correlation, which is why an amendment like this is so important right now. It's important that we do the studies, that we understand the impacts because I truly believe that once this House understands the impacts

of this carbon tax, they will take a pause themselves as well. That's absolutely what I believe, so it was really great to hear your words.

**10:20**

The constituency that you represent in this House has a lot of greenhouses in the area. I'm not actually quite clear if it's the greenhouse capital of Alberta or the greenhouse capital of Canada, but I know and, Mr. Speaker, you would certainly know – I'm sure I'll be corrected here by my colleague or yourself – that there are many, many greenhouses in that area. We're really grateful for the products that they produce for our province. I like the flowers; in particular, the potted plants that come about this time of year for our gardens, and I'm a little concerned that next year those plants that, you know, make my house look pretty and my neighbourhood look nicer – there will certainly be fewer and fewer of them out there because those costs are going to go up because those, of course, are transported from Medicine Hat to Airdrie in a truck that uses fuel, which, of course, will have tax associated with it. Again, that's another study.

I was wondering. I'm certain that you've had conversations with these organizations in your constituency, and they've probably reached out to you on the impact of this. I know that there was a news story not too long ago where there was a greenhouse in that area that actually shut down because of the impending impacts of this government's policies, the minimum wage hikes and the carbon tax and, of course, the business tax hikes as well. That's certainly concerning, I mean, being the greenhouse capital of Canada or Alberta, which I'm hoping you will correct me on because now I'm actually really quite curious. It would be very good to hear.

I mean, these are direct food costs – direct food costs – and these are the fruits and vegetables that I had referred to earlier. You've certainly touched on this. I mean, a \$10 cucumber is outrageous. Not too long ago we had a broccoli crisis, did we not?

**An Hon. Member:** Cauliflower.

**Mrs. Pitt:** A cauliflower crisis, right? I mean, it's unfortunate that we're going to have a full on fruit and vegetable crisis here next year.

I don't know if the members opposite are aware, Mr. Speaker, but we are building, developing residential properties smaller and smaller nowadays – right? – and it's a reaction to reduce the carbon footprint here in our environment. With those smaller properties, obviously, you have a smaller yard, so you have less space where you can even grow your own food. I'm not sure if you're aware, but we actually are not able to grow a lot of things in this climate, especially when you have no space to even do it in your own yard. You know, I don't know what you want. You want everybody to live in apartments but somehow try and feed themselves, but they don't have any space to grow their own food. I don't know. This whole thing is just, like, this chaotic, rolling thing.

But I was hoping that my hon. colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat would be able to let me know what the producers in the greenhouse capital of Canada or Alberta have been concerned about.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you for the question, hon. member. They are very, very concerned about the increase in costs. They are very, very concerned about being able to keep their businesses viable and going. They do employ hundreds of people. They do produce all kinds of vegetables. There are many of them that grow the seedlings, the small trees, for reforestation, and there are many of them that grow the flowers that you talked about.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who wish to speak to amendment RA1 to Bill 20?

**Cortes-Vargas:** He has already spoken.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, we'll decide that over here.  
Hon. member, you've not spoken?

**Mr. Cyr:** Not to the amendment.

**The Speaker:** To the amendment. I don't believe you have. Please proceed.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been doing a lot of speaking, so I understand the confusion on the government side. I thank them for trying to make sure that I'm aware of which ones I have and haven't spoken to.

But to get to this amendment. It always is the job of opposition to try to make legislation better, and if they're not given the opportunity to or don't see a way that legislation can move forward, then they use something that's called a reasoned amendment and say: let's stop it now, and then we will work on bringing forward information that we need, and then we will take that information and maybe, possibly, bring forward a new act that we can actually all work with and move forward with.

Now, I'd like to be clear on exactly what it is that we are looking for in this reasoned amendment. This Assembly has not received satisfactory evidence or assurance that the full economic impact analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans. Now, to be clear, Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act – I would like to actually refer to it more accurately as either the carbon tax act or the Alberta consumption tax. This new tax that is being brought in by the NDP is one of many, and I would like to just be clear here because this is important. We're still reeling from the changes that have already been brought in, and it's important to say: what other taxes are we looking at here? Have we actually yet felt the full impact of these other tax increases that we have brought in?

My question to the government is that before you start bringing new taxes in, maybe we should see what the old taxes have done. How can we know what the increase in minimum wage is going to look like in Alberta? How are we going to know what the personal income tax increases, the 50 per cent increase on the highest marginal tax rate, are going to do to Alberta?

The corporate tax increase that we saw, that just happened: now, I will give the government credit. They did listen to the Wildrose. We specifically said: "We need to make sure that the small businesses in Alberta during this time frame are looked after by doing something, just a small thing, but it is something. Let's reduce the small-business corporate tax by 1 per cent." And you know what? To their credit they listened to us, and they implemented it. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. But this still doesn't change the fact that corporate taxes as a whole went up, and we still don't know what the impact of those corporate taxes going up is going to be on Alberta.

Now we are seeing a gas tax go up with this bill. That is going to have an impact on Alberta by itself. A natural gas tax is going to be added in this. Now, all of these increased taxes are going to be compounding on each other. We don't know the results of taxes you've already increased – we don't know – and you're adding more taxes to this.

Let's look at my next point here. Let's look back to the election on May 5, just over a year ago, that we have gone through. The platform of the current government was: we need to bring environmental responsibility back to Alberta; we're going to increase taxes. This wasn't a secret. I fully agree with the government. Their platform was on the website. They were clear that the environment was important to them. It was important to me

as well, Mr. Speaker. I believe that we need balance. They were saying that we need to make sure that we do this responsibly, and I agree. We do need to be making sure our environment is protected, but in the end what we're seeing here is a radical shift with the Alberta government right now.

**10:30**

We have been known for years to have the Alberta advantage. That is to mean that we have promoted business and individuals throughout Alberta to move forward with their earnings and be able to be contributors to the social system that we have in place. The Alberta advantage. You move to Alberta, you're going to get an advantage, the Alberta advantage. Now what we've seen is a transition away. The government has brought in the Alberta way. What is the difference with the Alberta advantage? What we're seeing is higher taxes, which brings higher unemployment. These two go hand in hand. What we saw with the Alberta advantage was stability. What has the Alberta way brought? Instability. When we start looking at what the Alberta advantage and the Alberta way are, you're seeing a chasm between the two ideologies. We're transitioning from Alberta advantage to Alberta way.

The next one was that on the NDP platform it was environmental responsibility, which most Albertans would agree with, to carbon tax, that wasn't on the NDP's website or platform. This is a different transition. This is where we actually see a change in phrases again: environmental responsibility to carbon tax. We all want to protect our environment, but the question that I have for the government is – we want to see Alberta in the forefront of environmental responsibility. There's no doubt, and I believe we were there. I believe that we actually were there. We actually need to be promoting ourselves as a province that is in the forefront of this area.

Fine. Okay. We're moving towards a different ideology. This is a government that has been fairly elected. Right now what we're looking at is this carbon tax. Now, that wasn't brought into the platform. Right now what we're not seeing are any actual goals, any actual way of getting to any achievable result other than: we want to bring in a tax. My concern here is that we've already had minimum wage increases, personal tax increases, corporate tax increases, a gas tax increase, a natural gas increase, potentially, and now we're going to increase carbon tax, which, in the end, like all of these, will increase the taxes.

When we start looking at what it is that the government is trying to achieve, the results here aren't being given any metrics that we can measure. What are we trying to do with this money? Now, I would say that the hon. colleague from the third party from Vermilion-Lloydminster brought up a very good point during estimates. We have a hundred per cent funding on all the environmental initiatives that are going forward. Does that mean that every one of them had a business analysis done? Or do we just have so much money coming in that we can't spend it fast enough? This is a concern because in the end we need to be picking what the best route for Alberta is, not just spending money, throwing a dart at the dartboard and hoping that it actually achieves what we're looking to do. That is obviously not the right direction.

Let's start again. Let's go from the top down here. Alberta advantage to Alberta way. Environmental responsibility to carbon tax. Then if we look at when this first was promoted, this wonderful carbon tax, it was promoted to Albertans as revenue neutral. They were saying: "You know what? We are going for every dollar we take out of the economy. Every dollar we take out of the economy through this new tax is going to have a result of tax reductions." That is what tax neutral means: tax increase, tax decrease. That is essentially what it is, and then you meet in the middle ground. That

is what B.C. is doing. That is a true carbon-neutral tax. But you know what? That's changed now. It's no longer revenue neutral that they're promoting, but that was the original message that went out. That's what people in Alberta still hear. That's what they already know.

This new term that we've seen pop up is "revenue recycling." Wow. That sounds like environmental recycling, doesn't it? We're responsibly spending our money. We're recycling it back into the economy. Every dollar that we bring in – guess what? – is recycled. Every dollar is recycled. If we want to be environmental stewards, let's treat all of our taxes that we have coming in, personal, corporate – they're all environmentally friendly now. Isn't that great? Let's be clear. This is not revenue neutral. We have an actual tax. That means we're collecting money, and we have no plan for that money other than we're just going to throw darts at the dartboard and make sure that when we are done spending the money and in the end putting a whole lot of debt onto our children – we've seen with Bill 10 that we are actually getting rid of the debt cap. We are leaving a legacy of failed experiments and debt for our children. That is not a legacy I would like to leave for my two little girls, Amelia and Charlotte.

How can we look at moving forward with this? Something that I would like to mention is that over the last five months the Premier has actually said that it is not time to reach out and make a big money grab because that is not going to help Albertans right now. That is exactly what this is. We have no direction for the money. We have no expectation of results for this spent money. We do know, by what the hon. Member for Airdrie has said, that it is going to affect Albertans. Even the government admits that. They admit that there are going to be direct and indirect costs for Albertans. This is not something that is in dispute. What is in dispute is the amount – the amount – of that impact.

Now, the government is being very clear, saying that it's going to cover all of the costs for the low-income Albertans. Well, we had one of the MLAs from Calgary southwest say that this is a partial – partial – payment back to Albertans. I agree with that fully. It is a partial payment back to Albertans because in the end – and let's go back to the amendment – without doing "a full economic impact analysis," we have no idea what the end result is. This is, again, bringing back the fact that we already don't know what the effects of the other taxes are going to be on us.

Now, I have been told by my colleagues in my last profession, which was in accounting, that they have given instruction to the clients that they needed to pay out all of the money that was sitting in their corporations before December 31, 2015, because they needed to take advantage of the lower tax brackets, which is tax planning. This is tax planning. This is tax planning at its finest. We actually will see a higher amount of taxes collected in this last year, that we won't see this year because we've already gone to the farthest extent when it comes to taxes. So we're not only going to see an increase in this carbon levy, bringing in a wonderful bit of money to make up for the personal taxes that the companies aren't going to be paying out because it paid out massive lumps in 2015 just to make sure . . .

10:40

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a), Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my hon. colleague. Not being an accountant, I'm very interested to understand a little bit more about this. If I understand the hon. member correctly, because of the massive payouts made in 2015, those funds are not going to be paid out in this fiscal year or

calendar year; therefore, the amount of revenue collected by the provincial government is going to be less than it might otherwise be. I would like to know from the hon. member if he could illuminate us a little bit on what that might mean to the government's own projections on just how much revenue this government is actually going to then net if these corporations made that payout last year. We have seen repeatedly that this government's projections both on costs and revenues have never been anywhere close to being reality, not even in the same galaxy sometimes.

I'm concerned that this government, which is already putting us deeply in debt, hasn't even done the appropriate study of revenue flows and cash-flow projections that a business would do. I'm concerned that they have not taken this into account, again, because they didn't do economic impact assessments – and they're just so straightforward – and they're unaware of it. They are forging on ahead under a false notion that there's a pot of money coming their way, which, in fact, if I understand you correctly, is not true. Would the hon. member please illuminate us a little bit more about that?

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you for the question. The fact is that when you bring in more taxes, there always are diminishing returns that are attached to these things. Now, we have an Alberta government that is bringing in significant tax increases. We have a federal government that has brought in significant tax increases. Now, this means that we had all of the smaller businesses paying out the cash in their companies last year, which means that this year they're going to go back down to their normal earnings that they would have had before. There are no corporate taxes that are going to be made in this next year even though the government is very clear that they're pushing forward all these great big tax increases, and the reason is that there are no companies out there making profits.

Now, we do have some of the companies that are related to government or government activity still out there, and they're still bringing in and generating income. I understand that putting money in right now to build Alberta up while Albertans aren't working, while we have an infrastructure deficit is something that probably will get more out of our dollars. But we were building at an astounding rate before. What happens here is that we're going to find that the personal taxes are going to decrease because, in the end, we had that big lump that was paid out, we have no profits or low profits coming in for the corporations, we have minimum wage increases, which will drive down the profits of these businesses within Alberta, and that means that fewer wages are taken by the owner or fewer profits are being made.

Now, I know that we're insensitive to the fact that profits are a driver for businesses. Somehow we've come to the conclusion that businesses in Alberta wanting to make money have become a detriment – a detriment – to Alberta. That is just not true because without a good, strong source of income, a good return on money, businesses don't thrive in Alberta. So what happens is that we've got a government right now saying: "You know what? They can just charge more. They can just charge more." You know, I've heard this argument consistently from the government: just charge more.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I think we've completed 29(2)(a).

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjection] Sorry for all the jocularity that goes on in the back row here.

I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak regarding the amendment to Bill 20, an amendment to a bill which seeks to

impose a carbon tax on Alberta. Now, I support my colleague's amendment to this bill, an amendment that states that "this Assembly has not received satisfactory evidence or assurances that a full economic impact analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans." I support this amendment. It is a little bit incomprehensible to me that in a delicate, frail economy such as this one, the government would wilfully inflict a policy that has the potential to be economically damaging. Worse is that they would do so without any sort of credible economic impact assessment, which this amendment speaks to.

Simply put, it is the very definition of reason that this debate pause until we have this economic impact study to demonstrate that there are no consequential economic impacts. Not only would the government's carbon tax increase costs to companies and job creators but also to everyday families. This legislation as presented will make life more expensive for Albertans.

Of course, as conservatives we recognize the inherent need to preserve, to conserve, to leave an environment for our children that is at least as good as the one that we ourselves inherited.

Now, speaking solely in the abstract, the concept of a carbon tax has been championed by numerous experts over other alternatives. But this government's carbon tax tends to go beyond a simple behavioural change incentive. Theoretically, the carbon tax is meant to discourage behaviours that produce emissions, discourage behaviours that use fuels that create those.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** What about greenhouses?

**Mr. Schneider:** Greenhouses, too.

But the broad-based application of the tax suggests that it's really more of a revenue tool than anything else. How else to explain the broad-based application? By definition the carbon tax is to modify behaviour to discourage heavy emissions, but what on earth does this government intend to modify within the behaviour of a nonprofit company, I wonder. Goodness knows that the nonprofits that serve this province from one end of it to the other often stretch the value of any given dollar further than anyone else is capable of, and we thank them very much for the abilities that they have in making that dollar go further to help those that are a little less fortunate than some of us.

**10:50**

To quote from the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations:

Furthermore, while impacts of the new carbon tax will be mitigated through a rebate program for individuals and a tax reduction for small business, no provisions were announced for the nonprofit sector. We are disappointed that the impact on the nonprofit sector fails to have been considered in two of the hallmark initiatives of this budget.

Likewise, a large segment of my constituency, as you know, Mr. Speaker, is involved in farming operations, as I said in my member's statement yesterday. I talked about Feedlot Alley, which is right dead centre in my constituency. Every day of the week for 52 weeks a year there is a requirement for feed products to feed the cattle, for feed products to feed hogs that are in Feedlot Alley. Now, my question is: what behaviour does this government intend to modify within the farmers in my constituency? The fuel for farm equipment is essential. It should go without saying that in rural Alberta not everything is as close in proximity as it would be in the city. The ability to drive is essential. To get from one portion of your farm to another at times takes miles and miles of required driving. Precisely what behaviour this government intends to modify within farmers is, again, unclear.

What the carbon tax will likely do is increase costs, making life more expensive. These are the sorts of issues an economic impact

assessment, as proposed in this amendment, ought to be in place to address. Of course, the legislation presented does include an exception for farming operations, an exemption to the fuel increase, but the definition of what is allowed in farming operations is left to the regulations, which we haven't seen yet.

I want to state something which I had long thought was self-evident. Farmers feed cities. Farmers feed the world. Farmers all over the world feed the rest of the world – that we've known for ages – and the food that comes from farms needs to be transported. If the carbon tax is raising the cost of fuel, raising the cost of transporting food, the invariable consequence is that food itself becomes more expensive. I can't think of a more ill-conceived idea than to make probably the most basic necessity of life more expensive.

In simple terms, if those on the government benches are so certain that their carbon tax will not cause major economic consequences for Albertans, they owe it to Albertans to demonstrate it through an economic impact assessment because as it stands, companies in my constituency are understandably worried. One trucking company that my office heard from expressed concern that big farming operations will have an unfair advantage since they are exempt from the carbon tax and they are also able to use purple fuel in all their trucks. The carbon tax will have an effect on his business, but it will also give bigger farmers a bigger advantage. It seems like it picks winners and losers at times.

Another trucking company I spoke with expressed concern that they are not getting exemptions. They run trucks up and down the road to these feedlots, actually. Their trucks would be hooked to trailers that would haul grain or trailers that would haul the livestock that is picked up at an auction market and taken out to a feedlot or picked up at a rancher's yard. Now, for this particular fellow, his costs were exceeding a hundred thousand dollars when he was running 16 trucks. Sixteen trucks is a pretty big fleet. That fleet has now dropped down to seven trucks due to the recession. Everybody feels the pinch of the recession; that's understandable. He told me that they were already charging 30 per cent less than what they should be and trying to figure out what they're going to do to absorb what is passed on as a result of this tax and what is passed on to clients with the tax. How much further, I wonder, will they be able to eat this cost so that they can stay in business?

Another company trucks most of the milk in southern Alberta from the dairies for processing. Their added costs will be directly added to the consumers' just because of the way their business works. They charge for the increased costs when they invoice. When it's delivered, that cost will be directly passed on to the processor, which, of course, will be directly passed on to the grocery store that sells the product, right back to the consumer, right back to Alberta families again.

It's a reasonable amendment that this carbon tax be delayed until an economic impact assessment is completed. Simply put, the bill is poised to make life more expensive for Albertans. In a time like this it's simply the wrong tax at the wrong time. It's bad timing for anyone who has to try and make a living in this economy. Things will change; we know that. It's just that it appears that this government is unable to demonstrate that there will not be economy-wide consequences.

I did just want to talk about a few other examples of uncalculated, indirect social and economic cost increases for Alberta businesses and families. You know, when I went to school – my goodness; I can hardly remember that – I do remember that if it was hot in class, the windows were all openable, if that's a word. We threw those open when it was hot, and if it started to get cool, we closed them. That was a different time, of course. Buildings today are climate controlled, which means that there are heating and cooling elements

within the structure which use electricity, probably natural gas, for heating and cooling. I hear from constituents all the time about school fees, that they kind of turn their nose up at. Nobody likes to pay those school fees, but because it's their children, they pay them. And they'll pay these extra costs that are brought on by this bill as well. It's just another burden to Alberta families.

Last night I brought up unintended consequences of this bill. My colleague from Leduc-Beaumont talked about the costs that, you know, seemed like they're unintended for agriculture.

School boards. That's another kind of a weird consequence of the carbon tax. The province of Alberta funds the school boards, gives them money for operations. Those dollars that are given are tax dollars from Albertans. The school boards pay for busing and heating and cooling, et cetera, and the dollars that school boards pay include increased expenses for the fuels that are part of operations. As an example, I read an article where the Edmonton public school board was talking about the additional costs of busing as an effect of this carbon tax.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2017, the government will charge consumers \$20 per tonne of carbon dioxide . . . produced by the combustion of gasoline, diesel and natural gas. The levy translates into 4.5 cents per litre on gasoline, 5.4 cents per litre on diesel and about \$1 per gigajoule . . .

Or GJ as I've been told it's affectionately called.

. . . of natural gas. Those rates rise again on Jan. 1, 2018.

In 2017, filling the tanks of the 500 school buses that transport Edmonton public students daily would cost an extra \$6,000 to \$10,200, depending on the size of the diesel bus's tank. Administrators haven't yet determined the potential cost to the [entire] district.

It goes on to say:

Heating public schools, however, will cost an estimated \$630,000 more for the eight months the carbon tax would apply, said Todd Burnstad, acting managing director of finance for Edmonton Public Schools.

**11:00**

It appears that all this government is doing is shifting dollars from Education into another government department. There's no gain in imposing a carbon tax onto a school board whose funds already come entirely from taxpayers. Those dollars are labelled for education, so it appears that funding for schools will have to increase in order for school boards to operate unless, Mr. Speaker, this is one of those consequences of the bill that hasn't been written into regulations yet.

As I said last night, if I hand the Bill 20 document to any person that wants to take the time to read it, they may have difficulty finding within the proposed legislation a portion that explains how the increased cost of electricity, the increased cost of diesel or gas for buses or the cost of natural gas for heating and/or cooling will be exempted. At the end of all this, will the school boards be given more money for their budgets to cover these expenses, and who comes up with the money for the province to increase these expenses? Would it be the Alberta taxpayer, shifting dollars from Education to a different government coffer?

I just want to talk about hospitals for a minute. Hospitals . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member

The hon. Member for Airdrie under 29(2)(a).

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much to my hon. colleague from Little Bow for the wonderful words of wisdom, so to speak. Basically, you crafted a good argument and gave really great examples about how this NDP carbon tax is literally a carbon tax on everything. You gave really great examples about the increases in the busing fees in your constituency and the concerns.

Certainly, we know there's going to be an impact on families. Those are, again, just examples of the indirect costs that haven't been calculated and that nobody seems to want to do any studies on. But, you know, barrel through, and pass this very damaging carbon tax bill.

I actually haven't heard any arguments at all from the government side about the environmental impact of their carbon tax bill. Like, what would be the purpose? I have to pay more for my heating costs in my home, yet what is the output on the other side? What are your measurables on the other side?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Lower carbon emissions.

**Mrs. Pitt:** I'm not even quite sure if you understand what less carbon emissions means, because you have yet to actually put anything down. We've asked for a lot of this evidence to be tabled. What is your outcome here? If you're trying to make a sales pitch, Mr. Speaker, if the government is trying to make a sales pitch, you would present an argument. If you want to sell Alberta on your plan, you would present a valuable argument. It's sort of like sales 101. I get that there is very little real-world experience on the government side – I get that – and it's unfortunate, but we are where we are.

I'm not quite sure if there is an appetite on the government side, Mr. Speaker, to actually go out and get some information, you know. So far I hear evidence that this government watches movies about climate change. I know that unicorns aren't real, but I don't think that this government does. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was really hoping that my hon. colleague for Little Bow would be able to tell me about the conversations that he's had with the constituents in his constituency and about the impact that this will have on his community. I'm really concerned that my hon. colleague is going to be in a situation, that I do believe every single one of us is going to be in, where our constituents are literally desperate because they just can't afford the costs here.

We could help to mitigate these damages if we had the research in place beforehand, but we don't have that, and there doesn't seem to be a willingness to do so. Before we go about impacting people's lives in a significant, magnificent way, let's do some research. That's it. Then your sales pitch is right there, and this would be a whole heck of a lot easier, and everybody would feel good and warm and fuzzy inside.

Instead, we're here asking so many questions, and we have so many concerns, and so do the people that elected us to be here to represent them. These are the questions that they're asking, and these are the concerns that they have. I think it would be extremely prudent for us to do our jobs, put our heads together, and move forward with a plan that everybody can buy into. Wouldn't that be just easier, Mr. Speaker?

I'm hoping that my hon. colleague for Little Bow would be able to give us some insight into what his constituents are saying.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who wish to speak to amendment RA1? The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity. The importance of an economic impact assessment here is extremely important. While I realize that there are a number of scientists and academics on the government side, it causes me to think that surely they would value rigorous economic analysis. Now, I understand that there would be great value to this, in fact. It would certainly take arguments away from the opposition if they



had a serious economic impact analysis. It would be an undeniable argument to Albertans, who would be able to look at it and understand it and make sense of it. It would make for a perfect bill. But just presenting it based on emotion and ideology and rhetoric: that may be their karma, but it really isn't real science or good academics, for that matter.

Economic impact assessments should be required for every major government program. We require environmental impact assessments. I understand that accounting is not nearly so sexy, but it would actually help to have the economic side of this as well.

The truth is that this is just a tax grab bill. That's what it's all about. It's not even an environmental – there is no environmental assessment. There's no real indication per industry of tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in reduction targets. There are no measurements of money that it will cost. There's no monitoring of the emitters or payers. It's all about payers. It's all about money. It's all about the fact that they want to create this tax grab, essentially. That is what it boils down to. I think that's why they're avoiding the actual economic side of an assessment. It's just not suiting their particular purpose, and that's troubling because I think an economic analysis would help to identify some of the incredible inequalities that are being put forward with this bill.

We listened just a couple of days ago to a carbon trade expert and business that works on reducing carbon in industry across Alberta. He pointed out to us that there's a huge gap between the specified gas emitter regulation and the carbon that those companies – 109, I think it is – are committed to and then the fact that there's a small-business tax credit for small businesses. But there's this massive gap for a whole bunch of mid-sized businesses in Alberta that don't qualify for the small-business tax credit, that are not part of the specified gas emitters regulation, and there is absolutely no protection or forward movement for them in this bill.

**11:10**

They have specifically said: "Fine. Charge us a million dollars, but what do we get for it? We don't get any help with improving our environmental footprint. We don't get any kind of tax credit. We don't get any kind of support in any way." There's this massive gap with these mid-sized industries across Alberta, which are actually significant employers, significant contributors to our GDP. I'm speaking particularly of food processors, food production; for instance, our malting companies in this province, one of which is in my riding, the kinds of businesses that actually use a fair bit of energy, a fair bit of natural gas in heating food products in order to sterilize them, in order to process them. They use a lot of natural gas. Part of the difficulty of this equation, that maybe an economic impact analysis would have identified, is that many of these companies, unfortunately – I'm not thrilled about this – actually have their head offices outside of this province. They are owned by others.

They are coming back and saying to us: "What kind of government have you guys got going on there? Why should we stay there?" One of them, in fact, said: "We could take our business, relocate it across the border, buy gas for export, which would be cheaper, and actually make more money if we relocated ourselves." This is called leakage. The Climate Leadership report actually tried to address this, but the government overlooked it. The reality is that businesses are actually saying this. They said it to us two days ago. They are willing to relocate. Even worse, some of them that are looking at expansion or even were considering coming into the province are at the point now where they're saying: "It isn't worth it. I mean, I'm charged with a cost that I don't have to pay in other jurisdictions. It makes it unprofitable for me. I'm not coming there till this gets all sorted out."

Another aspect of this is the fact that these mid-tier companies, who are expected to reassess their environmental impact, which is

good and great, have not been given any kind of an adequate time to do that. As we were speaking with the expert on this the other day, he pointed out to us that the time to retrofit in order to actually meet the deadline of January 1, 2017, is impossible. He said that most of the projects where we go in and recover heat energy, where we install lower footprint equipment, where we cogenerate electricity from recoveries and losses take two years from design to installation to actually being able to use it. We've got – what? – eight months, and these companies are supposed to have this all done. There's no help; there's no guidance; there's no timeline. There's nothing on this for them. So they are extremely frustrated, and the inequalities that are being created are just unbelievable. I think an environmental impact assessment would have helped with that kind of thing in a very, very real way.

I want to refer also again to the Climate Leadership report that was put out. On page 24, the second and third paragraphs, they talk about the fact that Alberta companies will need to find ways to reduce costs. Good. I agree. They will need to find ways to reduce costs. How is it, then, that the government is not giving them the time to be able to do that nor giving these mid-tier companies any assistance in doing that and, on top of it, while telling them to reduce costs, is piling taxes on top of them? It's just a complete contradiction of realities.

On page 21 of the same report it says that a two-degree "transition will require a significant change in energy use globally, but perhaps not as dramatic or as quickly as some [thought]." Here we have the report that is the mandate for all of this, the very thing that's supposed to be guiding it, yet they're not following it. There's such a headlong rush that, quite frankly, we don't believe they've got it right. In fact, we believe they've got it very wrong, and an economic impact assessment would in fact probably help a great deal with that. It would be very valuable if that were to happen.

The point of an economic impact assessment is the fact that it needs to address the actual costs that are being forced upon people. The Climate Leadership report doesn't address those economic impacts. I understand that it's your mandate. I've read it all. It does outline direction. It sends out signals, to use a phrase out the report, but the economic impact of costs is not really addressed there.

There literally is no risk assessment for businesses. There's no business plan to how to actually move this thing forward. While I applaud the idea of creating new green industries and new green forms of energy, anybody who's an entrepreneur understands that if you're going to launch a new venture, a new business, take a new direction to create a business, you need a significant and serious plan, and it usually takes at least three to five years to get to the point where you get a cash flow that is sustainable, that actually works. Up until that point in time you're putting investment into the company. Hopefully, you can get to the point where you are able to generate cash flow and become viable.

I know that there's some great encouragement, that there are companies out there wanting to create new industries. That is true. Unfortunately, the reality is that many of them are there – and I hate to have to say this, but I've heard it in my own riding. Companies wanting to create new green industries are waiting until they can find out how much money they can get from the government to fund it. There are people standing in line all over looking for tax breaks, for funding, for incentives. This is exactly what happened in British Columbia when the NDP were there.

As long as the government is handing out money or incentives or benefits or cash flow in some form or another, there will be lots of people. I mean, these business guys are smart. They know how to get money out of government. They know how to play all of the games, they know how to speak the right language, they know how to put together the business plans, and they know how to get the

cash in their jeans. That troubles me. I'm not going to say that every single one of them is like that, but the reality is that it is a huge, huge risk. Over and over and over again governments end up, basically, in fiascos over millions and millions of dollars of taxpayers' money just getting siphoned off from smart business guys who know how to play the game. That bothers me. I think that's a huge risk in this situation, and I think that there needs to be a great deal of care on this. An economic impact assessment would help in that regard.

For that reason, I entirely support the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions under 29(2)(a)?

The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've kind of been going through this debate here, I just want to start by saying that I appreciate the member's comments. I think he brought up some very good points. It's interesting what we hear from the other side. I mean, a lot of the time it's just kind of sniping and chirping and stuff like that.

You know, when we use the word "tax," they like to throw out the word "levy." I'd like the member's comment on this word "levy." Now, if I were to be just a little creative with the word "levy" and use a different spelling, it says that it's an embankment or a dam. Though some people may use some of those terms to describe this bill as being, you know, expensive, I just wanted to point out that the Don McLean song *American Pie* starts off with "So bye, bye, Miss American Pie. Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee was dry." So that actual spelling of "levee" might be more accurate because in his song he's referring to a ditch. I think that's probably right. This here is a bit of ditch that we're going to be throwing money into.

Now, the proper definition for the way that the word "levy" is spelled, how the government is using it, is that as a verb it's to impose a tax, fee, or a fine. As a noun it's an act of levying a tax, fee, fine. Synonyms to levy are tax, tariff, toll, et cetera. So it's very clear what a levy is. A levy is a tax.

Now, sometimes the government likes to use the word "price." Synonyms for price are cost, charge, fee, fare, levy. I'd like the member to maybe comment on this word "levy" that the government likes to use. I think it's pretty clear that levy is the same as tax.

11:20

Now, the definition of tax: "A compulsory contribution to state revenue, levied by the government on workers' income and business profits, or added to the cost of some goods, services, and transactions." That's obviously what's happening here. It's a cost added to goods and services. Another definition included words like "burden," "load," "weight," "demand," "strain," "pressure," "stress," "drain," "imposition." They are some definitions of the word "tax." I can see why the government doesn't like to use it, but when they use the word "levy," obviously it's the same thing.

The government, of course, sits on the other side. They like to laugh when we talk about the cost to individuals of this tax, but it isn't funny, Mr. Speaker. It's not funny at all. I'd like to have the member actually comment on that, too.

Now, another word we hear is "fearmongering." Well, we have a chance here to get the facts on this, to have an actual study done on what this actually will cost Albertans, cost business, loss of jobs. I mean, there are multiple things that can be the result of this tax bill, and we don't know what they all are. We're doing our best with the

information we have to gather things together, see what this cost is going to be on individuals, on families, on businesses, how many jobs will be lost, but we really could use a proper, full, in-depth study on this.

The Member for Edmonton-South West got up and talked about full and partial rebates. At this point, by now, we're starting to realize that there are more costs involved than what the government or the report has identified. He talked about full and partial rebates. I'm going to suggest that it's, at best, partial rebates and possibly no rebates. In fact, depending on your income there will be no rebates.

Another thing that the Member for Edmonton-South West said was that this bill has been out for weeks. Well, I hope that's not true, Mr. Speaker, because we've only had it for a week.

I mentioned before about the day last week when we were debating Bill 1 and Bill 20 on the same day. Now, let's look at Bill 1. Bill 1 is basically three pages long. It took 80 days from the time it was first introduced to the time it was passed, 80 days for a three-page bill . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members speaking to amendment RA1? The Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise and speak on this reasoned amendment to Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I think that it's a very reasonable reasoned amendment. I'm just going to go over it to help start this off and actually read it.

Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be not now read a second time because this Assembly has not received satisfactory evidence or assurances that a full economic . . . analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans.

I know we've heard people talking about that. This Climate Leadership Implementation Act does not speak about a climate leadership plan in any way that I could find. It talks about tax. It talks about how they can tax people, tax Albertans more, tax us on, frankly, everything for all Albertans. This is a tax plan. It's not a climate leadership plan. I hear the government say that it's about the environment and why the environment is so important, but why does this bill only talk about taxes? There's not a plan there.

If it's behaviour modification, if that's what you're trying to create out of that, if that's the tool – the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake talked about it last night, a behaviour modification tool – why are we going after hospitals? They have surgery rooms, which they have to have. They have surgery theatres that they work in. They have to have the air exchange. In the middle of winter that temperature has to be raised so it can be at least 18 degrees Celsius. It takes a huge volume of natural gas energy to do that.

This continues throughout the province. It's not just in my riding. It's not just in Edmonton or Calgary. It's in so many different towns throughout this province. They have the same concern. What economic impact assessment has been done? What studies have been done? I'd love to know what studies have been done.

What's going to happen in my riding? When you take a look at specifically what I have, we have a food processing plant in my riding that processes canola seed. To get canola seed from a grain to an oil takes a huge amount of energy. It's not just simply: squeeze, do this, and something comes out. It's using a large volume of energy day in and day out. As a result, the carbon tax that's going to be put on this food processing is going to raise the price of the oils, your canola oil that you use and enjoy. It's not just what you use at home. They have it in deep fryers at McDonald's,

if that's where you go, or any restaurant that deep-fries. Chances are that they're using canola oil that was produced locally, and it's going to be going up in price.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when they take the canola – the farmers have gone to the work of growing the canola and then putting it into a truck to transport it down to one of the grain terminals. Then the grain terminals will pick up that seed and put it onto trains. Well, we know that there are more taxes on the trains. We know that that's going to be going on. What's going to happen there is that if it's on a train and they're shipping it to Wainwright to be processed, well, it's going to cost that company. They're going to lose sales because somebody in Saskatchewan can make that same oil for 10, 15 per cent less, and consumers want to buy the product that's 10, 15 per cent less. So why wouldn't that train – that train only has to go another 30 miles from Wainwright to be in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It's literally that close.

If we just take this line of logic – and I know they have places to process the canola across the border in Saskatchewan. How hard would it be for them to now transport it just a little bit farther? It's going to cost them, really, next to nothing insofar as the cost of transportation. The processing of this canola is going to be huge as a result of this carbon tax. We're going to see the cost of goods go up, the cost, like I said, at McDonald's. And bakeries use it. They use it for so many different products.

Are we supporting Saskatchewan? Is that what we're doing? Saskatchewan doesn't have any regulations, so we're going to still get the carbon. If they're going to have the plant in Saskatchewan and the plant is going full tilt – it was going three-quarters and now it goes full tilt, so they doubled their capacity – the carbon still floats up in the air and comes back to Alberta. We're not any better off. You have not changed or modified any behaviour. You've just lost jobs for Albertans.

11:30

**Mr. Orr:** That's why it's wrong.

**Mr. Taylor:** That's why it's wrong. That's why I'm just so against what's happening here.

When I was growing up, you know, my dad always preached to me about: we leave the campground cleaner than when we found it. He wanted to have it at least as clean, if it was a really clean campground, or leave it cleaner once we left.

Wildrose believes that, you know, we've got to look after this environment, so I have no problem supporting having a cleaner environment. I remember back in the '70s, as will many of the members, we watched the terrible use of the processing. They didn't clean any of the coal. They didn't clean any of the gases that they were using. We all remember watching the fish floating up in the Great Lakes.

Canada got better. They understood that you can't do that. The message got across the United States, and they were able to change it. They didn't have to have all these tax regulations. The industry was told: you have to clean this up. You don't have to tax more, but you can make it so that you have these agreements to be able to go to this level of how much you're able to pollute. They slowly were able to pollute less and less, and now the fish populations have returned to the Great Lakes and returned... [interjections] Unfortunately, you know, I hear the chirping from the other side.

The government's policies on the fish. You know, we've got fish that are dying in lakes here in Alberta. They're the ones that have this environmental... [interjections] But we're the ones that are saying that we need to do something so we don't kill fish.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Taylor:** You know, we believe that you need to keep the campground cleaner. So any time you can do things that help – we slowly talk to the industry, and we find ways to help the industry become cleaner – that's just an advantage for everybody, not just Albertans but the world.

As we find technologies that help Albertans, we're able to export those technologies across the world, and places across the world are able to use those technologies and slowly become cleaner. We'll find places right now. We know that China and India have bad records from what they're doing, but they will slowly be catching up to what we have and using technologies that we currently have.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we just don't need another level of bureaucracy, and that's what we're getting. That's what we're trying to fight against. This carbon tax is just another level of bureaucracy. How much money is it going to cost us to implement it and run it and be able to do it? How much money is actually going to be going to what you really want it to go to? It takes a certain amount of money to be able to collect that money from that consumer, then to be able to take it to the government, and then the government has a slush fund. They're going to be able to use and move that money around. We're not sure where it's going to go to, what's going to be happening with it. Unfortunately, we're not sure. So we've just got more bureaucracy, without results.

Wildrose has been calling on this government to slow down this head-on collision course in tabling and passing this ill-founded legislation. We have seen their approach lead to huge conflicts with taxpaying Albertans, who deserve to be part of the discourse about how our province will grow and change under their government, the first new government, well, in 44 years. You know, you have a chance to make a difference in what you're doing.

We want to see what you're doing with this cost-benefit analysis. How are you working this cost-benefit analysis into what you're producing, into the money that you're collecting? If you could show us the cost-benefit analysis, if it was brought into this Bill 20 and shown, that would make a huge difference to our being able to decide what we think about it. Frankly, I don't like anything I see about this Bill 20, but it is what it is. If you want to make it a better bill, I'm suggesting that you have things like a cost-benefit analysis, impact assessments that are at least attached as addenda to it.

After this first year that you've had, we see the NDP government still going full tilt ahead on yet another bill that poses huge threats to our economy. This bill and Bill 10 are huge threats to our economy. Taken together, this legislation, passed this year, has fundamentally changed our economic standing and leadership in the world and, certainly, our country. We are moving rapidly from a have to a have-not province.

I had one of my constituents text me, and he said: you've got to tell them that we're changing; it's not the Alberta advantage but the Alberta disadvantage. He wanted me to be able to say that to you. That is how he's feeling about what is going on, and he's very passionate about this. He has a small business. He runs a gas station, which I know will be having to bring down taxes on everybody that comes to use his place. He also has a C store. He has refrigeration units to be able to sell ice cream and slushies and everything else. How is he going to change that? How is he going to make the ice cream warmer? It's just going to melt. You know, how is he going to make a slushie go a few degrees higher? Nobody is going to buy his product if he tries doing that, so how is that behaviour modification going to work there?

Albertans are broken-hearted, and they're concerned. You know, they're looking for assurances that they'll be able to enjoy the standard of living that we've all come to enjoy. Then we add the effects of the NDP's economic policies to the overspending that we've seen through the last two budgets and the interim supply bills

and to the unprecedented low price of oil, and we arrive at a very bleak picture for our province, for our economy.

Well, this government, obviously, cannot impact the price of oil. We know that. It's set as a world price. You're stuck with what the world is willing to offer. But they can do and should have done something to restore investor confidence . . .

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much.

**The Speaker:** On 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, 29(2)(a).

You know, I understand that the hon. member and his party are very concerned about the impact of the carbon levy on individual households, on small business, on charities, on our health system, on schools, and so on. I understand that they feel that this will make these services very difficult to deliver and put people out of business and bankrupt households and so on.

I'm just curious because the price estimate for the carbon levy in terms of a litre of gas is about 6 and a half cents. A couple of years ago gas prices were around \$1.10, and now they're at 80 cents, so it's about a 30-cent drop in the price of gas in a couple of years, I think. By my math, using 30 cents less nets out to people paying 23 and a half cents less for a litre of gas than they were a couple of years ago.

11:40

The question is: how did those businesses, services, schools, and so on survive when gas prices were 23 and a half cents higher than they are going to be once the carbon levy is fully implemented in a couple of years? Why were they able to survive and even thrive at that time? Suddenly this spectre that you're raising of a collapse in households and small business and public services is going to be the result of a 6 and a half cent increase on gas that's 30 cents less a litre?

I can make the same case with natural gas prices, for example, Mr. Speaker. We're headed for one of the lowest natural gas prices in history. You know, some are projecting \$1 per . . . [interjections] I'm getting some chirping there from the hon. member.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please.

**Mr. Mason:** The price of natural gas is going to go to, like, \$1 per thousand cubic feet, you know, just a fraction of what it was even a few years ago, and these prices will of course benefit consumers if not exactly the gas companies. How is this burden, then, going to cause all of the devastation that the hon. members opposite are suggesting when, in fact, fuel prices for natural gas and gasoline are actually considerably lower than they were a few years ago, when everybody did very well, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Taylor:** Well, I was very happy to recognize the fact that you don't control the world prices of fuel and gas. They've come down, and unfortunately that's a fact. I recognize the fact that you don't control that, but God bless us that we actually have gas prices down at this level right now because the economy is in such bad shape. The only way that Albertans will probably even be able to make it by is because we have gas prices down. It goes back to the question of cost analysis. Why didn't you have a cost analysis done prior to this? That's all I have to say.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, I have a question under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Battle River-Wainwright. I've been listening intently this morning, as I always do. You know, I have expressed some concerns with this particular carbon tax, but I'm very clear that I'm in favour of a price on carbon – yes, a carbon tax – the idea being that we want to disincen the things we don't like and incen the things that we do want.

I've heard a lot from the Official Opposition here over the last couple of days about all the things they don't like about this carbon tax. I understand that. My question is: one, do you believe that climate change is (a) real and (b) human caused? Two, what would you do about it? What would you do about it? What would Wildrose actually do? We have our plan. It's called Alberta's Contribution, and I will share a copy with the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright. The Alberta Party has a plan. Our job on this side of the House is not just to oppose the government; it's to propose ideas. What would you do, if anything, about climate change?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other individuals who would like to speak to amendment RA1?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:44 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

**The Speaker:** The door is secured, sir.

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Clark	Hanson	Panda
Cooper	Loewen	Pitt
Cyr	MacIntyre	Schneider
Ellis	Orr	Taylor
Gotfried		

12:00

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Payne
Babcock	Horne	Piquette
Carlter	Jabbour	Renaud
Carson	Kazim	Rosendahl
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Sabir
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Feehan	Miller	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Woollard
Ganley	Nielsen	

Totals:	For – 13	Against – 38
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[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

**The Speaker:** The House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:02 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, June 1, 2016

Day 37

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
 Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
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 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
 Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
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 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
 Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
 Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
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 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
 Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
 Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
 Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
 Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
 Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
 Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
 Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
 Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
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 Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
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 Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

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 Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
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 Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
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 McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
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 Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
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 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
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 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
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 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
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Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
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Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

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Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

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Kleinsteuber	

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Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

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Fraser	Strankman
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Kazim	

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Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 1, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour for me today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Mr. Jagjeet Singh Sekhon. Mr. Sekhon is a prominent personality in the Ludhiana region of Punjab. He was elected to public office as a councillor, served for the past many years in various positions in the milk industry of Punjab, a major part of the Punjab economy. Mr. Sekhon is presently serving as director of Milkfed, a major milk production subsidiary. He is accompanied today by Charanjit Singh Dakha, who is a Sikh community organizer here in the city. They've risen. Let's give them the warmest welcome from the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I will let the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View introduce first.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much for that gracious passing of the buck.

**An Hon. Member:** Torch.

**Dr. Swann:** Torch. Sorry.

Mr. Speaker, I'm especially pleased because this is the second time this year I've had a school come to the Legislature, in this case the fantastic school of Langevin in northeast Calgary. I want to introduce 53 students and six teachers and teacher helpers. Please stand when I mention your name so we can recognize you. The teachers include Kate Logan, Brianne O'Sullivan, and Clark Reid, and the parent helpers include Ms Rani Wong, Mr. Kaushik Banerjee, and Mr. Alex Himour. And all the students: please rise, and we'll give you a warm welcome to the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Now the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was trying to locate my son over there. I would just like to make a quick addition to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View's introduction. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my son Arjun Singh Gill, who is with his class from Langevin science school. The school is amazing. The teachers and the volunteers do a great, great job. You know what? Thank you very much to the teachers for taking care of my son because I couldn't do this, right? He always beats me at Xbox and all those funny things. Thank you very much. I would ask that he, his classmates, and their teachers again rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Welcome to all.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly an exceptional class of students from Calvin Christian

School, just north of the town of Coalhurst. These young folks, a couple of teachers, and some of the parents are from the marvellously outstanding constituency of Little Bow. I had the honour of meeting with these students and parent volunteers just a few minutes before the House opened. There are few greater honours in this job than meeting with students and speaking with them about the important work that we do here in this House. I also want to acknowledge the teachers and volunteers that made today's visit possible. I ask that you rise as I say your name – I know you're behind me – Mr. Trevor Aleman, Mr. Johannes Gerardus Jacobus Lock, Mrs. Jennifer Moens, Mrs. Michelle van Velthuisen, Mr. Maas van Velthuisen, Mr. John Vande Merwe, Mr. Derk Vossebelt, Mrs. Jackie Vossebelt. I apologize for the pronunciations if I was a little off there. I would ask that the students of Calvin Christian rise and that all them please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 35 visitors from Belvedere elementary school in my riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I can tell you that on a yearly basis I visit Mrs. Bogner's class, and it's one of my favourite parts of being an MLA, returning to a classroom to engage with our future politicians, future leaders of our great province. With Mrs. Bogner today are teaching assistant Mrs. Arntson and parent volunteers Kim Nguyen and Ms Ginther. The parents, staff, and students all are doing amazing work at Belvedere elementary school, and I'm very proud to represent them. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Hearing none, the Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests joining us from Edmonton Northlands. Tim Reid is the president and chief executive officer, and Cathy Kiss is vice-president of corporate relations. Edmonton Northlands is a not-for-profit organization that has been at the heart of Edmonton since 1879. At the beginning of May Northlands demonstrated the depth of those roots when it stepped up to the plate and quickly, efficiently provided a place where evacuees could find rest and safety as they fled the devastating Fort McMurray wildfires. The organization, its leaders, staff, and volunteers epitomize the generosity of spirit that Alberta is known for, and for that I want to personally extend my heartfelt thanks. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three members of the very strong and active Alberta Avenue Community League in my constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I would like to ask Nicola Dakers, Margaret Larsen, and Adam Millie to please stand and receive the traditional warm greeting of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the Edmonton Northgate Lions. The Lions' contributions to Edmonton-Decore are countless. I know I could easily spend the rest of the afternoon telling you about all the wonderful things that they do for our community, from sponsoring community groups and sports teams to raising money and volunteering time with those in need. The Lions are certainly a pillar in northeast Edmonton. Joining us today are Rod Zohner, Marge Berry, Wanda Coates, Greg Clark, Dawn Harper, Harry Clark, Darnell Addley, Ainslie Bovee, Brian Sieben, and Tom Scott. I would now ask all my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two CFL players from the league's greatest franchise, the Calgary Stampeders. Jabari Arthur spent eight years with the Stamps and has two Grey Cup rings. Randy Chevrier spent 11 years with the Stamps and has three Grey Cup rings. They're both in Edmonton supporting the Telus Days of Giving. I ask Jabari and Randy to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Someone told me that in this city there was another team. I can't remember the name.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand today and introduce to you and through you a group of people that have been outside helping with the Telus Days of Giving. First off, though the Stamps are a good team, the Eskimos are the Grey Cup champions. First, I will introduce two people from the Edmonton Eskimos. I wish you would stand as I call your names: Adrienne Bridgeman, who's director of partnership servicing, and Jed Roberts, who is a former defensive end and linebacker who played 13 seasons for the Eskimos. [interjections] Not done yet. I had a whole list, but everybody was so excited about the Eskimos that they just couldn't hold themselves. I understand. I understand.

The other group that I have here today was instrumental in putting together the kits for kids outside there that most of us contributed to. If you would stand, please: Andrea Goertz, Zainul Mawji, Shadi Sakr, Nicholas Cartmell, Japman Bajaj, Ramiro Mora, and Dan Campbell. I wish you all to give the traditional warm welcome to these people.

**The Speaker:** Welcome, and thank you.

It seems to me that the two colours seem to be pretty friendly up there.

Lacombe-Ponoka, another guest?

**Mr. Orr:** Yes, if I may. Sorry if my staff didn't get the notice to you. My apologies.

Anyway, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Thalia Hibbs and her son Harrison Hibbs. Harrison Hibbs is a grade 6 student at Father Lacombe Catholic school. He also plays Canada's two national sports as top peewee defenceman for the Lacombe Rockets this past hockey season and as pivot for his peewee lacrosse team, the Lacoka Locos. Thalia is currently vice-chair of the St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic school board and a two-term trustee.

She's active in her community and her parish, sitting on various committees, and coaches. Please rise as we give you the warm traditional welcome of this House.

Thank you.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### End-of-life Decision-making

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On rare occasions we have the opportunity to experience moments so profound and precious that they leave permanent marks on us, fleeting moments that provide not only a glimpse into the human condition but a deep and immersive understanding. These moments etch themselves into our very being and shape who we are. I have been blessed and humbled to be present as lives leave this world, to experience something so awe-inspiring that it reaches into a person and touches their heart and soul.

It was last year when a close family friend, Jeff, passed away from pancreatic cancer. I will forever remember the small and intimate room, the sounds of those final conversations, and those by his side. I was there when the palliative caregiver sat close to his bedside and asked him how he would like his final moments to proceed. They said to him: "You know, we can intubate you and keep you alive for a little bit longer, but you won't have the same capacity. You won't be able to speak to or hold your family." Then they said: "What we can do for you is to make you comfortable so you can pass naturally. You can tell your wife, Katie, that you love her. You can hold her hand. You can be together with your family." That's what he decided at that time, and it wasn't an easy decision.

I remember standing there, watching this conversation so personal and so surreal. I almost felt uncomfortable being there, yet it felt right, that I was supposed to be there. I never spoke with Jeff or Katie about assisted death or even whether it crossed their minds. But I was so grateful for the work that the palliative care team gave them with such comfort and respect and for every moment that I got to spend with him. We are all grateful for what he was able to contribute to his family and his young daughter's life in his final months.

The issue of assistance in dying is one that transcends mere politics and policy. It touches not only our heads but our hearts and our very souls. It is a discussion of grief and loss and pain and life and ultimately is a discussion of our shared humanity . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Calgary-Mountain View.

### Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire Recovery

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today it's more than appropriate to acknowledge our amazing province. Four weeks ago in an orange haze of smoke and flame an entire city fled by a single road, some north, some south. After reaching hastily prepared reception centres, many were forced to flee yet again as the wildfire continued to grow into a multiheaded beast. In other parts of the world this might have been an enormous human tragedy as well as an urban disaster, but here in Alberta it was the prelude to an astonishing story of courage, compassion, hard work, determination, a story that showed the world who Albertans really are.

Against all odds 90,000 people were evacuated safely and found shelter in cities and towns across the province. Against all odds

Albertan and Canadian individuals and businesses, already struggling with the financial crisis, answered their neighbours' need and made the Fort McMurray donation campaign the largest in the history of the Red Cross. Against all odds the fire was pushed away from much of the city and surrounding infrastructure. Firefighters toiled day and night to save the city while uncertain of their own families and homes. Their courage has been shown to the world on TV and social media, their bravery inspiring, offers of help from around the world.

Today, four weeks later, against all odds thousands are being allowed back into the city because of the laborious work of restoring essential services in record time by workers from across Alberta.

I join with all members of the Legislature to wish the returnees to Fort McMurray the best possible return as they rebuild their lives and their city, and we mourn with the families of Emily Ryan and Aaron Hodgson, who died in a car accident fleeing the fire.

Albertans are strong, but the strong also suffer both short and long term from the mental trauma of this disaster. It is not weakness to express the need for psychological supports. I urge those who have experienced unprecedented loss and devastation to speak up and reach out over the coming months and years as needed. You deserve the best that our province can give you.

You are not alone. All Alberta, all Canada stands with you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### Farmer's Day

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise in this Assembly and celebrate Alberta farmers. Almost 100 years ago the United Farmers of Alberta recognized the importance of setting aside a special day to celebrate and honour our farmers, so now the second Friday in June is Farmer's Day in Alberta. On June 10 farmers in farming communities will celebrate the hard work and contributions that our Alberta farmers make to this great province.

As many of you know, I grew up on a farm just outside of Grovedale and have been proud to be part of a farming community my whole life. Alberta farmers produce food sustainably through value-added production in developing new products that balance increasing food production with being good stewards of the land. Farmers understand that in 20 years the world will still be looking for Alberta to feed them and that we need to take care of our resources today to continue to produce food for generations to come.

Alberta farmers are savvy businesspeople who are accountable for every aspect of their business, including inputs, outputs, value, and quality of products. These farmers take the greatest pride in their products being world class. Alberta farmers are incredibly innovative, and they're always finding new and enhanced ways of producing the food to feed the world.

Alberta's agriculture producers are working with the Climate Change and Emissions Management Corporation, founded in 2009, to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that are attributed to managing biological systems. They have been consulting with industry to create the most sustainable farming practice to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

On June 10 I encourage everyone to take the time to celebrate and show their pride for our Alberta farmers. They are producing the food to feed the world, and they are doing an incredible job of it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

1:50

### Gender-based Online Harassment

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last year there has been a growing awareness of online gender-based violence. Hundreds of thousands of women face online harassment because of who they are and what they say. Women sports journalists and broadcasters, provincial and federal cabinet ministers, even our own Premier have been trolled online with hateful messages and name-calling due to their gender and public profile.

Mr. Speaker, as you and others in the House already know, shortly after I was elected, I experienced hate messages that were explicitly sexist and subject to taunting and online harassment because I am a woman. In May 2015, after forming our government with near gender parity in our caucus, an individual posted publicly on Twitter using the ableg hashtag, "Pretty confident things'll run smooth with so many broads' ladyshipping over the #ableg. Aren't you? Guys? Don't you want broads mitigating?" Another example is a comment directed at a federal female MP: "What a C you next Tuesday. Like seriously just go back to your house and run your car in your garage while you think of another anti oil campaign to attend."

Mr. Speaker, these are hateful comments. They're nasty, gender-based, and demeaning. They are not constructive, and it's no wonder so many women fear choosing politics as their career. In no way do they provide a constructive conversation on policy or political action. For many women things often escalate further. Name-calling, violent messages, rape, sexual assault, and even the threat of targeting family members are sent through online threats to feminists regularly. The practice has become so common that the process of reporting these has become second nature. The intersections of harassment get even more intense for women of colour, queer women, indigenous women, and women living with disabilities. They are targeted even more intensely, and the language used to attack them is almost unrepeatable.

Online communities are working to stand up against gender-based attacks online. Mr. Speaker, as a woman in politics I stand with all women who have experienced gender-based harassment. You are not alone in your struggle. I encourage all members of this Assembly to respect us and treat us with dignity and equality.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Carbon Levy

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Premier and NDP government refuse to be honest with Albertans about the full cost of this carbon tax. They know it will make everything more expensive for families at a time they can least afford it. They know that a carbon tax while everyone is hurting will just make everything worse. This is a mess, and Albertans are extremely upset. The Premier claims that indirect costs will only add up to a maximum of \$105 a year but gave no details. Will she tell Albertans if her vague estimates include higher prices on groceries because of increased transportation and heating costs?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise in this House and update the Assembly on why exactly a price on carbon is good public policy. People from both sides of the House, including conservatives such as a former PC Finance minister, somebody

who, I expect, many respect, wrote in an op-ed that “carbon pricing is cost effective – meaning that it achieves emissions reductions at the lowest possible cost to the economy.” He also said that “the legislation is offering sensible ecofiscal policy for Alberta.” I’m proud of the policy, and I think members opposite should be as well. Again, that was Jim Dinning, former PC Finance minister.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I love the word “sensible.” Let’s try applying it here because families are seeing the value of their homes go down. Their wages are dropping, and they have lost their jobs altogether. Rocky View school district has reported that busing fees are already going up, the Calgary school board is raising fees for next year, and the full force of the carbon tax won’t even come in until 2018. Across the province schools will be losing hundreds of thousands of dollars because of the carbon tax and, as a result, will be raising fees. Now, how can the Premier continue to insist that the indirect costs this tax will impose on Alberta families at a time when they can least afford it will only be . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, Albertans are proud of the fact that we are moving forward. The government that they elected knows that climate change is real. We acknowledge the science, and we are taking meaningful action. In terms of other orders of government, again, Naheed Nenshi, the mayor of Calgary, said that it was interesting to hear someone say that the thing that is going to help Canadian investment going forward is the fact that Canada is making real steps on pricing carbon. That’s Alberta. That’s a mayor in a major city in our province, and we are very proud to have the support of them and others, again, including conservatives from across the country, who know that this is the most meaningful way to move forward on addressing carbon.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree that investment in Alberta is a top priority, so let’s make things a little bit better for Albertans. This carbon tax means less money for families. It taxes charities, and it takes money out of hospitals and schools to pay for the NDP slush fund. This government continues to refuse to be honest about the full cost of the carbon tax, and it nickels and dimes families in every corner of their lives. It will mean less money for municipalities, which means less services and higher property taxes. Can the Premier come clean on whether she’s included higher property taxes, school fees, and transit fees in her estimates?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, it’s really nice to hear the Official Opposition say that they care about health care, education, and children’s services because during the past election we heard that there were going to be deep cuts in those areas, far greater than the impacts of being responsible in addressing climate change. Actually, in the televised address just prior to the budget the Leader of the Official Opposition talked about how great the 1990s were. Albertans said they don’t want to move back in time; they don’t want to bury their head in the sand. They want a government that’s going to stand up for health care, education, and our climate, and that’s what they’ve got.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

### Assisted Dying Regulations

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, we know the challenges the province is facing in responding to new legislation put forward by the federal government on assisted dying. On an issue of such severity, emotion, and gravity to so many Albertans it’s important we get this issue right. It’s why I was so disappointed at the last-minute presentation of regulations to a few MLAs as the government asked us to sign off on their motion. Why on an issue of life and death for so many Albertans is the NDP trying to push this motion and regulations at the last minute?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to recap, there was a Supreme Court decision well over a year ago, and the extension to that Supreme Court decision is coming up on June 6. Alberta is the only province in Canada right now that’s actually having this debate, and I’m very proud of the fact that we presented this to the Assembly. Albertans, I think, expect their elected representatives to engage in this topic seriously and responsibly, and rather than criticizing the timing, I would encourage all members of this House to embrace the opportunity, give the feedback, and consider the very draft regulations that we’ve brought forward for discussion.

**Mr. Cooper:** What matters here is that the government seemed completely unprepared to release the regulations until the very last minute and almost with no debate. As columnist Don Braid put it, “There’s rarely been such obvious proof of a panic rush at the legislature – and never in a matter so important.” Issues of life and death certainly deserve a lot more thought and care from any government. Will the Premier commit to giving all Albertans a chance to provide feedback on this motion and these regulations before they’re implemented?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the 15,000 people who took time to give feedback on this over the many months leading up to today. Once again, let’s be clear. This is the only Legislature in the country that’s having this debate right now. That’s because we understand how important this issue is, and we genuinely want to hear from the opposition. The opposition can choose to make their views heard, or they can choose not to, but the fact remains that Albertans would be well served to hear from all sides of this House, and that’s why we are giving this opportunity.

**Mr. Cooper:** How much feedback did you get on this motion?

As the government has already acknowledged, it is important to ensure that the conscience rights of all physicians and medical staff are protected under the new provincial rules. No one should have to be forced to perform a procedure that they have an objection to, but over the past few days many medical professionals would like clarity on whether or not they will be obligated under the provincial rules to provide referrals on this issue. Will the Premier please clarify to all Albertans what the provincial stance is on the issue of referrals?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We certainly take the responsibilities that



are being passed on in terms of the provision of the health care service very seriously. We are ensuring that we protect the vulnerable as well as those who don't want to provide the service. Certainly, they're expected to respect people's choices, as the Supreme Court has granted is their right, by arranging for a timely transfer.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

## 2:00 Education Administrative Workload

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education announced his intention to tame the Wild West of school fees. He said that knowing more about the range of school fees and how they are spent would help his ministry lower those fees, but gathering that information has school secretaries, teachers, principals, and coaches bogged down with massive amounts of trivial administration, what they call administrivia. There's still no report on how much parents spend, and the plan meant to lower fees actually is costing schools time and money. What will the minister do to solve the problem he created and get on track to actually reducing school fees?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we are very interested in making sure that we can reduce school fees over time. We made a decision, because of the current economic situation, to put that in the out-years' budgets, not this year's, but it's very important. You know, school boards are using this information to determine and to distill what are instructional school fees. This is the target that many school boards have taken the initiative on, which I'm very proud that they have done, and this is the target that I seek to aim for as well.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In April, in an ATA survey teachers reported that their primary classroom-focused tasks are being overshadowed by constant administrative work. Being overwhelmed by administrivia is taking a toll on teachers' morale and ability to work with students. Comments include, and I quote: due to the workload and expectation of a teacher now it is a ridiculous career choice, and I would never recommend it. End quote. This is unacceptable. What will the minister do to ensure that teachers are able to focus on the work that Alberta families rely on them to do instead of being caught up in endless administrivia?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, as a teacher myself I'm very conscious of making sure that we have kids in classrooms and making sure that the schools and teachers are there to look after them. So the very first thing that we did, right from the beginning, was to fund for enrolment. To be able to do that, we have made sure that we've put more than 1,100 new teachers into classrooms, more than 1,200 support positions. Certainly, that's far better than what this opposition would have done, which is cutting schools . . .

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More teachers and more NDP administrivia.

School boards now will be required to submit financial reports every month, but they will still be expected to align these reports

with government quarterly reports. Several school boards have cited serious concerns with this increased administrivia and increased workload. One board estimates that these onerous and unnecessary reports would require the equivalent of a half-time staff position, and they're worried that tax dollars intended for education should be spent on education. To the minister: how will you reduce administrative burdens to ensure that Albertans' tax dollars are used . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because, of course, we disburse about 97 per cent of the Education budget to school boards. What better way to make sure that we're spending efficiently than to make sure that they are getting the message to spend the money carefully? That's what we're doing, and certainly it's a mechanism by which we can make sure that every dollar is spent in the classroom, for teachers in front of the classroom. That's what our government has done, in fact, every step of the way.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

## Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The environment minister uses selective information to support her crusade against hard-working Albertans in the coal industry. An air quality study by the University of Alberta School of Public Health released in November 2015, more recent than the minister's 2012 report that she waves about all the time, shows that coal plants are a minimal source of Edmonton air pollution. To the minister: before you destroy the livelihoods of 10,000 Albertans working in the coal industry based on selective evidence, won't you consider all evidence and rethink your attack on Alberta workers and families?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have an Official Opposition that likes to deny the science of climate change. Apparently, we have a third party that also likes to reject the science of pollution and health effects of coal-fired electricity, which are well known. There is no end to the science on this matter, that NOx and SOx and particulate matter are a problem. That is why, for example, the Asthma Society of Canada has just gifted this government, honoured us with a leadership and public policy award this year, and the reason for that is that all Albertans will breathe a little easier as we phase out coal-fired electricity.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister is proving that she is using selective information to support her crusade against hard-working Albertans in the coal industry. The fact is that we know that the Liberal minister was in Saskatchewan last week praising carbon capture technology as a way to reduce emissions. The federal Conservative minister exempted some of Alberta's best coal plants due to modern technology use. We know that climate change is real; we just want to fight against things that cause damage to people. Since both sides in Ottawa recognize new technology, why can't this NDP government in Alberta get in touch with science?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the consensus around coal-fired electricity is broad. It's throughout the industrialized world. Most other jurisdictions are also looking at these policies. What we are doing is proceeding with a thoughtful plan for the six plants post-2030 that were not captured by the federal Environment Canada regulations. This is a thoughtful plan

that will proceed in negotiation with the electricity providers and with the communities in question.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, there you have it, Mr. Speaker. The minister is hanging with the Leap Manifesto party in Ottawa instead of the ones that consider science.

Mr. Speaker, 10,000 jobs will be lost because of the environment minister's demonization of an industry committed to operating in an environmentally responsible manner. To the Premier: since we know that your minister is committed to killing 10,000 jobs and you choose to call your budget, quote, the jobs plan, please describe the 10,001 jobs you will create to undo the damage your minister is determined to do.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, the overdramatization of what's happening in this House, if it wasn't so serious and if the misinformation wasn't so out to lunch, would actually be quite funny. But it is so out to lunch and so inflammatory and not honest. Let's remember what conservatives are saying about climate leadership and the work we're taking.

**Dr. Starke:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

**Ms Hoffman:** Again Jim Dinning: "The legislation is offering sensible ecofiscal policy for Alberta." We're moving forward in a sensible manner, and we should conduct ourselves accordingly in the House.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Decorum**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have very few hours left, we hope, in this time together, but please be conscious of the tone of the conversation in this room, in the exchange that's taking place. It's not helpful to the meaningful discussion and debate, and I would ask all sides to have respect for the institution.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

#### **Electricity Power Purchase Agreements**

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in one short year this government has proposed massive changes to energy and electricity in Alberta. Despite repeated questioning, the details of what, how, and the economic impacts that we'll have have been vague at best. Albertans deserve to know the options, and they deserve to know the impacts on their cost of living. For example, consumers are now bearing the risk and subsidizing the cost of the power purchase agreements. To the Energy minister: now that all the power purchase agreements have been returned to the Balancing Pool, why will she not at least return the high-cost power purchase agreements to their owners, which would be best for consumers?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. First of all, I need to be clear. These PPAs were not handed back because of the increase to the SGER. These PPAs were unprofitable, and the issue is that the power companies believed in what previous governments agreed to. They believed that they had signed contracts that send profits to them and losses to Albertans. We are taking necessary steps to protect the ratepayers. We're initiating an appropriate proceeding shortly, and all the facts will be before the public as the issues are adjudicated. This is no small issue, and we are being very . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Dr. Swann:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, the question wasn't answered.

With extremely low-cost electricity, what level of financial subsidy will the government provide to incentivize new renewable energy projects?

2:10

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we've tasked the AESO to consult with industry experts to recommend a program that will bring on renewable generation, keep costs low, and ensure the reliability of our electricity system. We have received that report and are reviewing the recommendations that the AESO has put forward to us. We will have a system in place to bring renewables online, with our first auction this year. We are pleased that 138 companies participated in the first round of the AESO consultation, and we're excited that companies are interested in doing business in Alberta.

**Dr. Swann:** That certainly remains to be seen, Mr. Speaker.

Given that uncertainty is exactly what Albertans and businesses don't need, why won't the minister transfer risk back to the power purchase agreement owners and allow them to make the business decision about whether to operate or decommission the coal plants?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I have more to say, I will be happy to update the hon. member and the rest of the Assembly. What I can say now, however, is that we will be taking the necessary steps to protect ratepayers. We will be initiating an appropriate proceeding shortly, and all the facts will be before the public as issues are adjudicated. Again, this is no small issue, and we are being very, very deliberate about how we proceed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

#### **Fort McMurray Re-entry Health Concerns**

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, the fire in Fort McMurray has raised many safety concerns. When wildfires burn homes and businesses, toxic chemicals can be released into the local environment. These toxins may be a health concern. To the Minister of Health: how can we assure residents of Fort McMurray that it's safe for them to return to their community?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for this important question. The re-entry timeline was built on the advice of experts, particularly the advice of our independent chief medical officer of health, Dr. Karen Grimsrud. Her recommendation is that it's safe for people not in the at-risk categories to return to Fort McMurray according to the phased re-entry, with the exception of Abasand, Beacon Hill, and Waterways, as long as people follow the proper precautions, outlined by Alberta Health Services. Certainly, we've conveyed that information to the individuals.

Thank you.

**Dr. Turner:** Mr. Speaker, given that the residents of Fort McMurray are anxious to return home and that air quality and water quality may become a health concern, to ensure that residents are safe, can the minister update residents on air and water quality?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. There's an app that we can all actually download on our phones. I've been doing it regularly and find it very helpful. It monitors the air quality and conveys that information to you from a variety of communities across Alberta. I'm pleased to report that this morning the air quality in Fort McMurray was a 2, which is really quite good, although it's important to note that there is smoke in the air today. This can cause some irritation in the lungs or eyes, but the air quality is quite good. A great deal of work has been done on the water treatment facilities as well, but a boil-water advisory does remain in effect until further notice.

Again, on the chief medical officer's advice people with medical conditions, including seniors and children under the age of seven, should not return right away . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the returning residents may have health concerns or may need to access emergency health care after their return, again to the Minister of Health: how can you reassure residents that they will have access to health care during the re-entry?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, access to the urgent care facility is very important. Basic services at the hospital are up and running, and we have established an urgent care centre to complement the services being provided in the hospital itself. The health care team at the hospital includes doctors, nurses as well as a surgical team to handle any urgent, life-threatening conditions, and we're also ensuring that there are mental health supports in those facilities and throughout the community.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

#### **Carbon Levy and Vulnerable Albertans**

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday my colleague from Little Bow asked pointed questions about the impact of the carbon tax on those who rely on supplements from the assured income for the severely handicapped, or AISH, program. Based on the non answers that were received, it sure does seem like the NDP government hasn't considered the unintended consequences of their carbon tax, so I will ask the question again. Will the minister commit to adding funds received from the carbon tax rebate to the fully exempt income list in the AISH policy manual?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is yes. These payments that they will get from rebates will be exempt.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Great news, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Those on AISH, though, are certainly not the only Albertans who have to worry about the unintended consequences of the carbon tax. Given that I am also worried for those Alberta seniors who rely on the guaranteed income supplement, or GIS, from the federal government and given that these seniors are provided a monthly nontaxable benefit based on annual income being below a

maximum annual threshold, will the minister promise these seniors that he is working with his federal counterparts to ensure that an unintended consequence of the carbon tax will not be a loss of the GIS?

**The Speaker:** The minister of seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, we care very much about seniors, and we're making sure that they will not have any clawbacks, anything like that, regardless of their income going up because of federal changes. We've already moved forward on some of that new regulation to ensure that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, I could go all day long bringing up scenarios that the government hasn't thought of yet.

Given that we've already seen how little this government likes to consult and consider the impact their legislation and ideology – sorry: world view – will have, will the minister commit to cancelling their carbon tax until a full economic impact assessment has been completed?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there has been an economic impact assessment. It's called a six-month-long review process, chaired by University of Alberta business professor Dr. Andrew Leach and with a number of other very esteemed panelists. We have examined the effect of carbon pricing across the Alberta economy, and that is why a broad cross-section of economists support carbon pricing and what we are doing to reinvest those levy revenues. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm trying to think of something very positive and humorous, but it doesn't come to me. Please, let's try and be a little more cordial and keep the volume down.

Calgary-North West.

#### **PDD Service Delivery**

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have seen a pattern in question period of answers from the government that claim that whatever they're doing is okay because our government did it, too, or that we can't ask about a problem because we didn't fix it ourselves. It is the antithesis of leadership, and people are getting tired of it. So I will ask once again on behalf of the PDD community about the supports intensity scale. It is humiliating, it is wrong, and, yes, our government didn't fix it, but your government promised to do just that. To the Premier: will you get rid of SIS . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. [interjection] Hon. member, if you would please keep confined to the time, and when I ask you to sit, if you would sit, I'd appreciate it. Thank you very much.

The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government believes that everyone deserves to live with dignity, safely, and with access to supports they need. As the member acknowledged, that's the issue created by that member's government. I didn't find anything on record when she was in government where she said anything about SIS, but having said that, I commit to reviewing all previous government policies, and SIS is no exception.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it is exactly as I suggested, the same answer every time.

Given that in Alberta in the absence of any comprehensive information from our government the only way we can measure the effectiveness of the transformation plan is a wait-list for PDD services that is growing at a frightening rate, will the Minister of Human Services commit to an open and comprehensive review of the PDD system? A real answer, please.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I would like to remind all Albertans that the previous government was cutting \$40 million from PDD, and we have added more money into the PDD. Since being in government, I have reviewed standard 8, I have reviewed contract alignment, and no policy of the previous government is an exception. We will review all policies in due course.

2:20

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, given that our current Premier had previously suggested . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, given that our current Premier had previously suggested that our government was only keeping SIS to measure how much they could cut in that department, can we assume that the only reason you're keeping SIS right now is so that you can make cuts?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I previously said, we have reversed the cut made by the previous government to this sector, and we are not keeping the SIS. We are reviewing that process. It's a huge undertaking; 11,000 clients have been put through by the previous government. In due course I will review the SIS. I am committed to reviewing the SIS and bringing in a policy that's more respectful in gauging the supports that people with developmental disabilities need.

Thank you.

#### Sage Grouse Protection Order

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, the provincial government dropped the ball on the sage grouse strategy, forcing Ottawa to implement a protection order in southern Alberta. The citizens in my riding care about the sage grouse and are good stewards of the land, but the order is creating havoc and standing in the way of sensible development. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: as attempts by successive federal and provincial governments have been unsuccessful, will you empower my constituents to implement some locally driven solutions so that these restrictions on economic development can finally be lifted?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the important question. It is true that many landowners down in southeast Alberta have struggled with that federal protection order, and there have been struggles over time to recover that species. There's no question about it. So we are committed to working with private landowners, to working with grazing lease holders on how we can improve that system. I would be happy to meet with those constituents, maybe over the summer,

in southeast Alberta to see if we can work together with the federal government to solve the problem.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the NDP government claims to be all about diversifying our economy and given that tourism is an important part of the economy at the Elkwater resort in the Cypress Hills, can the Minister of Culture and Tourism please explain the impact the sage grouse protection order is having on recreational opportunities in the Cypress Hills?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, you know, thank you to the hon. member for the question. It's a good question. I will happily meet with his constituents on this matter and see if we can speak with one voice to the federal government on this and ensure that we are moving forward in a way that recovers that particular species and in a way that ensures good stewardship of the land from private landowners and, of course, the grazing lease holders in the area.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you. Given that highway 61 is on the tentative three-year highway construction plan for widening and overlay of 15 kilometres east and west of Etzikom but that the other 30 to 35 kilometres of widening and overlay heading east to Orion and Manyberries are left untouched and given that the road condition is decaying with truck and bus traffic, to the Minister of Transportation: is the federal sage grouse protection order preventing highway 61 from being repaired?

**Mr. Mason:** Not to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

#### Education Property Tax in Calgary

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The current government hiked property taxes for Calgarians when they increased the Education budget and left the property tax formula unchanged. There is no doubt that education funding is important, but increased property taxes will hurt Calgary. They're already facing job losses, increased personal taxes, and the looming threat of a carbon tax. Why did the government choose to increase taxes and make things worse for Calgarians instead of finding funds for education through savings elsewhere?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We were clear that the Education budget is increasing by 2 per cent plus enrolment. That was our commitment, and we followed through on that. We use the same formula for the education property taxes that's been used since 2013, which is that 32 per cent of funding for education comes from education property tax. For some context, in the past, 20 years ago, it was 51 per cent, so it's gone rapidly down over that time period. The formula for distributing this education tax between municipalities has not changed. The amount of money, the provincial mill rate for education . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Panda:** Given that Calgary has been able to cut costs for homeowners without reducing services or raiding reserve funds and

since it's clearly possible to reduce costs by being financially prudent without what the government likes to call massive cuts, why does this government think it is impossible to lower costs through efficiencies while protecting front-line jobs when municipalities like Calgary are obviously able to do it?

**Mr. Ceci:** We are lowering the cost of government. This year we're at about 2 per cent growth in that, so the operational spending is lower than population plus inflation growth, far lower than the previous government's 4.6 per cent. We are keeping the mill rate down. This year it's \$2.48 per \$1,000. Last year it was \$2.50. We understand there's some frustration, of course, from municipalities, in Calgary in particular, but we have a \$10.4 billion deficit, and we can't meet all the needs that everybody has. We are going forward with a plan to increase spending on capital.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you. The hon. minister used to be a municipal leader, so if Calgary can do it, the government of Alberta can do it.

Given that we have asked the government time and again to reduce costs while preserving front-line jobs and services and given that we have provided the government with 10 different ways to do that, when will the Finance minister take our suggestions to lower costs and help Albertans instead of racking up debt, introducing taxes they didn't campaign on, and hurting Albertans?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, going back to what we're doing to assist municipalities, a number of things, including work on the MGA – we are working with them on that – on linear assessments, and potentially on MSI. So municipalities have us working with them as a government across many platforms, and they will see a stronger, more predictable funding cycle going forward with this government.

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

#### Bail Process Review

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday I asked the Justice minister three questions about implementing the Alberta bail review recommendations. The review arose, of course, out of the terrible tragedy in St. Albert that saw an offender out on bail shoot and kill RCMP Constable Wynn and injure Auxiliary Constable Derek Bond. I did not receive even one answer to any of my three questions, so I'm just going to ask again. To the Justice minister: when are you going to implement the recommendations?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question yet again. Apparently, no matter how many times I say it, the member can't understand that things like improving the justice system and educating our employees are ongoing things that will not be finished at some point. We will not at some point have educated every Crown prosecutor or every police officer because those people are still being born.

2:30

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I suggest the minister and I move beyond our elementary debate about the simplicity of section 524, but given that what is not in question is that the review includes numerous recommendations about better use of section 524 and

given that one recommendation is that prosecutors always consider seeking bail revocation when an accused on bail allegedly commits an indictable offence, again to the minister: how are you going to ensure prosecutors always consider bail revocation for alleged repeat offenders?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. Perhaps he can listen to the answer this time. Section 524 is part of our Crown education, which, again, is ongoing. We have sent instructions to all Crown prosecutors to always consider the use of section 524, and we continue to provide ongoing education on this. So that's how.

Thank you.

**Mr. Ellis:** It wasn't so hard to answer that question.

Given that recommendations 1 and 3 of the bail review report recommend using prosecutors for all bail hearings and given that the federal Crown has already acted on these recommendations by ensuring its prosecutors are available for all bail hearings, yet nothing has occurred provincially, again to the minister: what are you waiting for?

**Ms Ganley:** Again to the member: this is a complex and complicated issue. It impacts many of our stakeholders, which means that we're going to go out and we're going to have conversations with those stakeholders. We have already struck a working group between the Crown prosecution service and police services throughout the province to discuss this issue and to figure out what works best going forward. I outlined in the press release originally, you know, a detailed plan of which things we had moved on already, which things we were moving forward on, which things we needed to work with stakeholders on, and which things were not in our purview. I might suggest that the hon. member give it a read.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I want to draw your attention to again be cautious. Maybe just a reminder to all of you of Standing Order 23(j), to be conscious of that phrase "of a nature likely to create disorder." I encourage you all to think about what that might mean.

#### Fort McMurray Economic Recovery

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, the cleanup and rebuilding of Fort McMurray is no doubt going to be a long process. Luckily, the people who live and work in Fort McMurray are extremely qualified and are in the best position to ensure this work gets done. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what opportunities do Fort McMurray residents have to participate in rebuilding their city?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the opportunity to update the House on the incredible work Fort McMurray residents are doing to rebuild their city. Residents of Fort McMurray are leading the process of contracting for recovery and cleanup, and they have done an excellent job in ensuring that local employers are being used whenever possible. Both the province and the municipality will continue to give preference to local companies – that's local workers, local businesses – whenever possible, and we are also strongly encouraging private companies who award contracts to do the same.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that businesses in Fort McMurray were already struggling from the prolonged collapse of the price of oil and given that the fire and evacuation have only made things more difficult for these businesses, again to the same minister: what supports will be available for these businesses as the recovery efforts progress?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the important question. In addition to preference being given to Fort McMurray businesses during recovery and cleanup, we're launching a small-business support centre in partnership with the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo. The small-business centre will provide small and medium-sized businesses with a one-stop shop to help get the support they need to get their businesses back up and running as soon as possible. We'll continue to work in partnership with the regional municipality, the chamber of commerce, the economic development, their local construction associations, and small and medium-sized businesses.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that some businesses may have been lost in the fire and that these employees will be looking for work and given that we need to make this process as easy as possible for local residents, again to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what support is available to local residents and businesses as they return to work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member again for the question. The sooner people can get back into their homes and complete any needed cleaning and inspections, the sooner they can get back to their jobs and businesses. There is a range of supports available through the information centres in Fort McMurray to help make this happen. There are over 700 insurance adjusters and staff on the ground in Fort McMurray and more on the way to help process business and residential claims as quickly as possible. These are just some of the initiatives that we've begun to undertake, but we commit to working with the regional municipality and all partners in Wood Buffalo.

Thank you.

### Carbon Levy and Education Costs

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks I've been hearing concerns from school boards all across my riding about the carbon tax and what it will mean for the operation of their schools. School boards are worried about the combined effect of increased heating costs and the cost of fuel for school buses. To the Minister of Education: will schools be expected to reduce other programs and extracurricular activities to cover the cost of the increased utility prices that you are forcing on them?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, I've been working very closely with school boards to ensure that we get the maximum effect of the carbon levy and to make sure that they understand that it's a way by which you can increase efficiency as well. It's a call to look at your systems, be it through transportation or heating and so forth, and increase that efficiency. We will make investments to help them increase

that efficiency. What a great lesson opportunity for kids, and what a great way to ultimately save money for schools.

**Mr. Nixon:** It sounds like you're going to be building a lot of new schools.

Given that some school boards in my riding are forecasting seeing an increase of over a quarter million dollars in operating expenses over the next two years and given that these increased expenses will come directly from higher natural gas and electricity prices and since Albertans are already struggling to cope with an economic downturn, will this government commit to conducting an economic impact assessment of the carbon tax before downloading these costs onto our schools?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, over these next few months we will be working very closely with schools boards. I'm meeting with them over the next few days as well to talk on these and other issues. They recognize the educational component of this, which is very important. It's a good place, a good ground zero to start turning our economy, diversifying our economy, and reducing our carbon footprint. Who wants that more than anybody else? The children of our province. There are mechanisms by which we can do that. I think in the end we are doing the right thing.

**Mr. Nixon:** Given that Alberta's winters are some of the harshest our country has to offer and given that our schools already have high-efficiency boilers, furnaces, and programmable thermostats to reduce natural gas consumption and given that students and teachers need a comfortable classroom to both teach and to learn, again to the minister: the NDP speaks about finding efficiencies, but what are schools supposed to do to mitigate the added cost of the carbon tax that this NDP government is forcing on them?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, it's very interesting language, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we are working together with school boards in regard to a strategy which includes education for the kids, for families, for school boards, and for communities as well. It's a question of taking an opportunity here to learn more about how we diversify our economy, increase jobs, realize efficiencies, and ultimately do something for the kids who are actually in those schools in the first place.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### Agricultural Environmental Practices

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government likes to pretend they are the white knight and say that they're the only ones who ever have tried to decrease carbon emissions in Alberta and that nothing was done before they were the government, which is not true. Ag producers have continuously been reducing their carbon footprint through advanced technology such as zero till and increased production per acre. Does any minister – ag, environment, or economic development – know what the ag industry has done to reduce their carbon footprint?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

2:40

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our fall process of engagement included engagement with the agricultural sector,

and that engagement is ongoing as we find ways to ensure that we've got an efficiency program that fits with Alberta's particular agricultural output and particular agricultural mix. I've had many meetings myself with grazing leaseholders, with the Alberta Beef Producers, with the irrigation districts, and with many others on this matter of their greenhouse gas emissions reduction record so far. We know that we are going to move forward in partnership with that sector to ensure that we are all achieving our outcomes together.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the development minister said that nothing had been done before.

Given that Alberta was the first place in North America to place a price on carbon and given that the climate change and emissions management fund has done great work to reduce carbon in Alberta since 2009 and given that agriculture absorbs more carbon than it produces, to the minister: do you know that agriculture in Alberta is actually a carbon sink?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's a good question. It's a thoughtful question because we've had these conversations about carbon sequestration and about the excellent practices that do prevail in our agricultural sector. However, we know that we can do more. We have some energy-intensive production that also happens within Alberta. We're going to work with those sectors to reduce their emissions and therefore their costs as we move forward and make sure that we reinvest all of that carbon levy within this province to diversify the economy and create good jobs.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we agree that climate change is real and that humans have an effect on the climate and given that we have done more to actually reduce carbon than this government's carbon tax will do, to the minister: why does this government insist on punishing ag producers with extra tax when they have done way more to reduce carbon in Alberta than this government's carbon tax will do?

**The Speaker:** Madam Minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we recognize that there has been some good work done in the past, and we're going to make sure that we build upon that work and ensure that we reinvest the carbon levy within various aspects of the Alberta economy, including agriculture. We look forward to working in partnership with various aspects of the agricultural producers in order to ensure that we're making the right efficiency investments, that we're partnering with folks on renewables as well, which is a very exciting part of this package, and ensuring that we're investing in innovation and technology as well.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it may well be that some of you would like to leave the room. We have 30 seconds, and we will continue with Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements (continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

### Louise Dean School Program for Teenaged Fathers

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to share about the Louise Dean school, which I recently had the privilege of visiting. The Louise Dean school is not a typical school. It provides a supportive environment for new and expecting teen mothers to continue their education while at the same time learning many skills they will need as young mothers.

In the ongoing effort to support teen mothers, we often overlook a significant factor in their situation, teen fathers. Bringing teen fathers into the discussion and taking them in and supporting them as well as mothers is hugely important. Study after study has shown that children attain greater success when they come from a supportive environment where both parents are present. They are less likely to end up in poverty. They are less likely to be caught up in addictions. They are less likely to end up in the justice system.

As we've increased the supports available to teen mothers, we have seen a marked improvement in measurable outcomes, yet at the same time we have too often let down the fathers. They have often been stereotyped and pigeonholed as deadbeats, called uncaring or not wanting to be there for their kids, all the while ignoring that these are young people, still teenagers, and in most cases not even entitled to vote for the members in this room.

What we need are programs and services to support them in making better choices and finding success. Government needs to support this happening. An ounce of prevention is always more valuable than a pound of solution. That is why on March 24 I joined the Minister of Human Services and the Minister of Status of Women to help address this very issue. I was honoured to be involved in the event where, together with the Louise Dean school and Catholic Family Service, our government took concrete steps to help address this gap in the care of Albertans: helping fathers.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize the dedicated team at the Louise Dean school for working to improve the lives of young people in this province. Thank you for all the work that you do. Thank you, Louise Dean.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Drayton Valley-Devon Job Losses

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was talking to an upset constituent, Perry May,\* the other day, and he wants this government to know:

I think with the direction the NDP is heading in, Alberta is headed for an economic disaster. Companies in Drayton Valley have moved out, shut down, and laid off people. A lot of people are not working, some for a long time. Some are on unemployment; some people do not qualify for unemployment. Housing prices have dropped a lot. I have renters that are behind in their rent and are facing eviction with little kids. We have been slow all winter with my company, and in March my company had one job for 12 hours. I built a multimillion-dollar company with no debt, and I think it is not worth being in business in Alberta anymore.

Since my discussion with him I've seen business after business close down in my constituency. Just last week the cogeneration power plant, that ran on wood chips from the Weyerhaeuser mill, in Drayton Valley was shut down, throwing many people out of work and creating a problem for the Weyerhaeuser mill that before Christmas was wondering what it was going to do with all of the wood chips if the cogeneration plant shut down. Of course, many jobs will be lost due to the early phase-out of coal at the Genesee power plant. A former student has had to seek employment in British Columbia, and another gentleman I bumped into at Pigeon Lake said that he had to find work in Yellowknife.

\*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

To be fair, some of the lost jobs are the result of low oil prices, but many are also the result of the policies of this government. Whatever the reason, it is cold comfort to the people that have lost their jobs in my constituency. While this government promises jobs, my constituents seem to simply be losing theirs.

It is imperative that this Legislature carefully consider the consequences on the economy of legislation like the carbon tax. The decisions made in this House are not without consequence, and every time we raise taxes and borrow billions of dollars and see business capital driven out of our province, these actions have real consequences to real people like my constituents of Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Proceed, Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have here three letters that I would like to table. Two of them I referred to yesterday. These are the letters from Red Deer Catholic regional schools and also Chinook's Edge school division, where they outline the significant impact that the carbon tax is going to have on classroom educational environment and the reduction in staffing.

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of the government's draft regulations for medical assistance in dying, which were released yesterday in response to the opposition's request for more information on the debate on Motion 17.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an article referenced today in question period on behalf of the Deputy Premier. The article titled Alberta Takes the Lead with Carbon Pricing Policy just happens to be authored by three individuals, including former PC Finance minister Jim Dinning, who is also the former MLA for the gorgeous constituency of Calgary-Shaw.

2:50

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I made reference today in my question to a report from the University of Alberta, Investigation of Fine Particulate Matter Characteristics and Sources in Edmonton, showing that coal is a minimal source of Edmonton's air pollution. I have five copies.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm pleased to rise and table five copies of a letter received in my office on May 31 from hon. Barry House, MLC, president of the Legislative Council, and the Hon. Michael Sutherland, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Parliament in Western Australia, expressing their sympathy to the people of Alberta on the devastation caused by the recent fires in Fort McMurray. As I introduce this to table, I think with pride as we as Albertans – the world has been watching us. There are 300 South Africans that are helping our province as I speak.

The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got five copies of the World Bank's 2015 annual report titled Carbon Finance for Sustainable Development, where the World Bank president argues that a price on carbon is one of the best ways to reduce pollution,

“improve people's health, and provide governments with a pool of funds to drive investment in a cleaner future and to protect” vulnerable individuals.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Sabir, Minister of Human Services, response to WQ 1 asked for by Mr. Cooper on May 2, 2016: How many adoptions of children up to the age of 18 years were finalized in each of the fiscal years from 2008-09 to 2014-15 and from April 1, 2015, to December 31, 2015, and of those, how many were children in permanent care of the government prior to being adopted?

**The Speaker:** I believe, hon. members, there were some points of order made today. The first point of order was, I believe, by Calgary-Foothills.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just referring to Standing Order 23(i). When the minister was responding in question period today, like, she has been calling us out as climate deniers and has been quite regularly calling us – me and my caucus colleagues here have been subjected to that every day in this House. I brought it up to you a few times. Yesterday, unfortunately, the minister was not in the House ... [interjections]

**Mr. Cooper:** You can't refer to her absence.

**Mr. Panda:** No. I'm saying ...

**An Hon. Member:** You can't refer to her absence. Apologize.

**Mr. Panda:** I didn't mean that.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, to the chair, please.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. I'm sorry.

What I meant to say is that when I spoke about Bill 20 yesterday, the bill that this very minister is piloting, I put myself on record. You don't need the Blues for that, Mr. Speaker, because you sat in that very chair and heard me saying this. For the benefit of this honourable, wonderful minister I'm going to read this again. I said, “My party said in the last election, climate change needs actions and solutions.” Then I went on to say, “Before the members opposite attempt to get themselves into hot water with a point of order, I would like to say that I believe in climate change. I believe in climate change. It is real, it is happening, and it is affecting the entire world.” This is what I said. I repeated it a few times.

I also said that I wanted to clear the air here. If I am being assaulted verbally and insulted verbally in this House every time she speaks up, I said that I will raise this point of order. That's the reason I raised this. I'm referencing, too, 23(i) which “imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member.” So, Mr. Speaker, I brought it up. I don't know. How do I protect my own rights and privileges in this House if I am constantly – constantly – being assaulted?

I studied science. I believe in science. I worked in an industry for 30 years which has world-class monitoring of the environment. I now depend on myself, and I never drained public dollars to make a living. I am a proud Albertan who believes in science and climate.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.



**Mr. Panda:** I don't want to be subjected one more time to this abusive language.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I think I have the essence of your argument.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a disagreement over facts. Certainly, when many members of the Official Opposition caucus share information on the Internet that calls into question the science of climate change and outright denies that the science exists, including claiming that climate change is a hoax, there's a good basis for that assertion of fact. Those statements have been made by Cypress-Medicine Hat, Strathmore-Brooks, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, Drumheller-Stettler. Many members have shared such information.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to the matter?

The House leader for the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank my hon. colleague for raising his first point of order in the House. I think what we saw is a passionate member of this House who's tired of having words that aren't true shared about him.

I would just like to highlight. He indicated 23(i), and I would just like to add to the debate today 23(j), using "insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." It's very clear that this type of language, whether it's deemed parliamentary, unparliamentary, or not, creates disorder in this House every single time it is used. The hon. member has stated his position. He has clearly laid out the facts on this issue. Every time that he is insulted in this House by the language used by the environment minister, it's going to create disorder. I think it seems very reasonable that the member have the respect that he and all members of this House deserve in not having this type of language that's creating disorder in the Chamber or imputing his motives.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess I would make a couple comments. First of all, I think there's some clear evidence that some of the members, not all and certainly not including that member – I take at face value his statement that he believes in the science of climate change and believes that it is human caused, and I believe that some members opposite do believe that. I also do believe, as I think does the environment minister and most of our side, that there are some in the Official Opposition that are very doubtful about the scientific view of climate change as being caused by human activity. I think that that is a reasonable and fair statement to make in the context of the political debate that's now taking place. Furthermore, I believe that it is a matter of opinion or a difference of opinion between members as well.

3:00

In terms of the Official Opposition House Leader's second point, that it is language that is likely to create disorder, Mr. Speaker, we've seen lots of disorder on that side and not always provoked by anything said on this side. Often someone is simply trying to answer a question. To argue now that the disorder is caused by the statements made by the minister, I think, is perhaps a bit rich. I think that all of us have a responsibility to try and control the passions that give us our reason for being here when from time to time we

enter into some serious disagreement in the House. I think that the best form of restraint is self-restraint. I would suggest that hon. members on the other side should remember that.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe that the matter that is being addressed in the House today is, as I see from the Blues, the statement that says:

We have an Official Opposition that likes to deny the science of climate change. Apparently, we have a third party that also likes to reject the science of pollution and health effects of coal-fired electricity, which are well known.

On the point raised by the Member for Calgary-Foothills, first of all, I recall the statements that were made by yourself and noted them before. Certainly, under subsection (i): I don't believe that applied because there was no specific reference to a member.

However, I have ruled, I think, at least once or twice with respect to the climate change matter. If I've learned anything in this House, it's that making decisions such as this is with respect to the context and timing of the way comments are made. If we truly do, as the Government House Leader suggested, have self-restraint, I think in this instance, while I may not rule that there is an official point of order, to the minister of the environment, I think that you need to appreciate the point made by the other members. I would caution you on future use of that particular word, please. It clearly does on occasion create disorder, and I would ask that in the future you be more conscious of when and how it is used.

With that, I would hear the second point of order.

#### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if I'm not mistaken, I believe the second point of order raised today was by myself at the time of approximately 2 o'clock.

**The Speaker:** Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, please proceed.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, at approximately 2 o'clock, during an exchange between the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, the leader of our caucus, and the hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health – the Minister of Health and I have been waiting, and I've been scanning the Blues, but unfortunately that particular time period has not yet been put on the Blues. I've been waiting for it. But I do know that the Health minister used the phrase "not honest." Now, I've been waiting for the Blues to determine whether that was made in reference to something that the hon. member said or whether she was referring directly to the hon. member. But it really matters not whether it was referring to something that he said or whether it was referring to him personally.

Imputations of dishonesty are perhaps the most frequently found in the long list of unparliamentary language which starts on page 142 of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms* and does not conclude for some eight pages further. Certainly, anything suggesting dishonesty by a member is perhaps the most serious use of unparliamentary language in our House. Furthermore, on page 618 of Canadian parliamentary rules and practices, under Unparliamentary Language one of the first things that it talks about is the suggestion of dishonesty by an hon. member.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand – and I think that I'll very quickly have another opportunity to speak to this – that at times in the House we have very heated debates, but the suggestion of a lack of honesty on the part of another hon. member, either in what he or she says or, in fact, in what he or she is, is in fact the most egregious form of unparliamentary language that we have in this place, and I

would ask the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Health, to withdraw the comment and apologize to the hon. member.

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Health minister was expressing nothing more than a difference of opinion. It was in no way meant as a reflection on the hon. Member. It's just that, a difference of opinion, which, of course, is part of this House's tradition of healthy debate, and that was nothing more than a healthy debate. I hear the hon. member's comments and, you know, take them to heart. Actually, I have a lot of respect for this member for his knowledge of parliamentary tradition, but I do believe that at this time he is wrong and that it was nothing more than a difference of opinion and should be treated as such.

Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, if I could just add to that. I'm actually shocked that the hon. Deputy Government House Leader . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if you could wait. Opposition House Leader, were you wishing to speak to this?

**Dr. Starke:** Okay. I'll cede the floor.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker and my colleague. I am surprised that we've arrived here. From time to time we see people make errors in the words that they choose to use here, particularly when referring specifically to another member in the Chamber and their honesty. There are numerous cases that we could cite on honesty. Oftentimes as temperatures rise inside the Chamber, the best path forward and the most appropriate path forward is to withdraw comments and apologize.

Now, from time to time we will have a matter of debate, and two versions of the facts can exist, and politics can break out, but what we ought not have in this Chamber is an environment where we call each other or individuals inside this Chamber dishonest or not being honest. So it is disappointing. We certainly could have moved on from this. I hope that the Deputy Premier will be able to be present tomorrow to correct this problem because if, in fact, that is what has happened today, it is not appropriate and not becoming of any member of this Chamber to imply that another member is dishonest.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the Blues are present yet, but may I ask: who or what was the term "dishonest" directed to? Was it directed to a member or a statement?

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, again, I have been waiting on the Blues and scanning them. The term was not "dishonest." It was "not honest."

3:10

**The Speaker:** I do not have the advantage of the Blues – none of us do – nor did I hear the exchange because there was too much noise in the room at the time, so I didn't have an opportunity to hear what, in fact, took place. I'm having difficulty making a decision not knowing what the facts are. I think on this point, much to my chagrin, I will need to defer until I do see the Blues.

I think there was another point of order raised by the hon. Minister of Human Services.

#### Point of Order Insulting Language

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must start by saying that it's with profound disappointment that I have to rise on this point of order. I will refer you to 23(j), abusive and insulting language.

During question period the hon. Member for Calgary-North West asked me a question, and to the best of my ability I answered it. During that answer the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster made a comment clearly directed at me, stating, quote, what a loser.

I said that it's disappointing. Ever since I've been in this House the member in question is one of those members whose debate, whose knowledge on different procedural matters, whose articulate arguments on different matters I really look forward to, and I try to learn from those things. Hearing those comments from the member, who is among the most, I guess, experienced members in this House, is really not only against all kind of parliamentary language procedures, against this section, but it's personally offensive to me as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments on behalf of the hon. Minister of Human Services. While it is true in Canadian parliamentary rules and procedures that if either the Speaker did not hear the term or if the term does not appear in the *Hansard* debate records, then there can be no ruling on it.

I will save both you and the hon. member – I think this is a good example of how sometimes in the House things can become heated. I will tell the hon. member that I apologize for the comment that was made. I in no way wish to offend him, and I wish to withdraw the comment although it probably won't show up in the record anyway. But I do apologize.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Orders of the Day Government Motions

#### Medical Assistance in Dying

17. Ms Payne moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to implement measures to regulate medical assistance in dying consistent with the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *Carter versus Canada* (Attorney General) and any legislative measures approved by the Parliament of Canada to ensure that Albertans can benefit from the orderly implementation of this court decision so that:
  - (a) Albertans may exercise their rights to access medical assistance in dying;
  - (b) appropriate safeguards be put in place to protect vulnerable Albertans;
  - (c) conscience rights are respected while ensuring the right of patients to access this service;
  - (d) the practice of medical assistance in dying is closely monitored and measures regulating medical assistance in dying are reviewed within one year.

[Adjourned debate May 31: Mr. Gill]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to stand today to speak to this government motion, to debate such an important issue. As echoed by many of the members in this House, my colleagues here today, it's unfortunate that we're rushing through this important debate. Not only are six hours too short for this fulsome debate, but I think these are the wrong six hours. First, in my humble opinion, as members we should have consulted with Albertans and then maybe given six hours to debate on this important issue.

I want to be clear: this Progressive Conservative caucus is not here debating the issue of medically assisted death. The Supreme Court has made this decision. It's the law of the land and has been decided for over a year now. This government knew this deadline was approaching. They knew it a long time ago, but they left it to the eleventh hour so that we don't have a chance to discuss it with Albertans. That's pretty sad.

Nonetheless, our responsibility here this afternoon, in the time we have been given, is to debate a basic set of draft regulations to implement that decision in Alberta. Actually, our responsibility as legislators is more than to debate. It is to provide the government with the information it needs to build a first but functional set of regulations that enable patients who meet the Supreme Court criteria to be able to receive the medical services they need.

Our job as good legislators is to ensure that the regulations enable physician-assisted death for a competent adult person who

- (a) clearly consents to the termination of life, and
- (b) has a grievous and irremediable medical condition [including an illness, disease, or disability] that causes enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual in the circumstances of his or her condition;

that the regulations enable doctors to perform the required services in Alberta; that the regulations enable and protect doctors to act in accordance with their professional and personal obligations; and that the regulations protect, most importantly, vulnerable Albertans. What we're not here to do right now is to develop or acquire a full set of regulations that cover every conceivable circumstance under which a patient might seek medically assisted death.

This is new ground in Canada. It's new ground for us as Albertans to request physician-assisted death. We will learn what it means as family members, as physicians, as legislators to experience, perform, and regulate this important medical service. It will only be from actual experience in Alberta and in other jurisdictions that we will have the knowledge to develop a full set of regulations, practices, and safeguards about how to enable and deliver this service effectively and responsibly. Let us receive the guidance and expertise of medical experts, ethicists, and stakeholders. As we take this journey together, let us not use uncertainty about the future as an excuse to not comply with the Supreme Court ruling.

I have been an MLA for only a few months, but I am learning that it's an honourable job. It comes with an honour and a duty. A duty is to do the right thing, to be the voice for people who don't have a voice. An honour is to be morally responsible. I'm here to say to members that we have two moral responsibilities today, right now. One is to speak on behalf of Albertans, which many members have carried out by asking to pump the brakes on something of such incredible importance instead of trying to rush through something that will have such a drastic impact on the lives of Albertans. The other responsibility is to those people who are truly without a voice, to those Albertans who are suffering, making it difficult to live and enjoy a decent quality of life each day, let alone track down a busy MLA's and minister's schedule to share their views on such an important topic.

I'm proud of the robust debates we've had during this session as members. Debate on the environment, debate on the carbon tax – and we all remember the debate on Bill 6 – debate on a record deficit in our budget, and the debate on payday lending: issues that impact the lives of Albertans on a daily basis. They all received adequate debate. However, this topic, in our opinion, is more important than all of those topics. This is the most important thing in the universe – it's human life we're talking about – and we're getting six hours?

3:20

I'm proud to represent my constituents in this House by pointing out that many people in Calgary-Greenway were left out of the survey, despite the government's best efforts, due to language barriers, cultural barriers, barriers with technology, and even barriers with the way that the concept of death is framed in one of the most diverse ridings in Alberta. While medically assisted death impacts all walks of life, the majority of it impacts our seniors, who don't have iPads or online and tech-savvy knowledge. They don't plug into, like, online surveys and portals. We must ensure that we get their feedback and their comments on this issue.

As proud as I am to represent my constituents here, I am even more proud to be able to help reduce the suffering of Albertans. This is a privilege usually reserved for physicians in their treatment of illness. It is rare for that privilege and responsibility to be extended to us. We must exercise that responsibility with sound judgment and good intent.

Fellow members of the House, I urge you today – I urge you – to, yes, consider the objections, questions, concerns that you and your caucuses have received from your constituents and do your best to represent those concerns. Take every day this summer to consult if you want to. But let us also remember to represent those Albertans in our constituencies who don't want to suffer one more summer, those Albertans who have been waiting for us, or some government, to act to let them enjoy the right that the highest court in our land has affirmed for them, the right to end their own suffering.

Those Albertans who are most affected by this decision will never be the majority of our constituents, but those Albertans are the ones who need us most to represent their views, so let's listen to them. Although their individual circumstances are different, as legislators we can remove a common barrier for the clearest cases first, while we work out fair and just mechanisms to address the concerns brought up by other members of this House.

In summary, I'm just going to say that this topic means a lot to Albertans. This needs to be consulted on with all of the stakeholders: the seniors, the doctors, the physicians, the families. Six hours on this debate? It's embarrassing. Please, give it another thought, consult with our constituencies, and maybe we can visit this topic in the next session.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), hon member.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be interesting for me to hear a little bit more about why you really believe that six hours is too short of a time.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, and thank you, hon. member. The reason why I said six hours is too short is because, you know, we haven't consulted with anybody. We have not consulted anybody. I mean, an online survey of – I don't know – a few thousand people . . .

**Mr. Rodney:** Less than 1 per cent of the Alberta population.

**Mr. Gill:** Yes.

. . . out of a population of over 4 million Albertans: I'm not a mathematician by any means, but that's not a passing mark. We need to consult with Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Calgary-Greenway?

Anyone else who would like to speak to Motion 17? The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Government Motion 17. I believe that as a Legislative Assembly the citizens of Alberta through us may never speak on a more important issue than the one we are addressing today. In this motion are two important questions: how best should this Legislature address the issue of physician-assisted death, and how can we best implement physician-assisted death in Alberta? Both are important questions.

Physician-assisted death is about ending a person's life, and there is no more important issue that could come before this Legislature than the state-sanctioned, state-supported ending of a human life. For that reason, anything less than allowing the people a full, democratic opportunity to address this issue through a bill put forth by the government in this Legislature is unacceptable. It is an abrogation of our responsibility as legislators to pass on this responsibility simply to Executive Council. We are charged with the duty to choose a path that will ensure that whatever decision we make on the implementation of physician-assisted death, it will represent the will of the majority of Albertans while respecting the rights of all Albertans.

I do not believe that any Executive Council should be given the power to draft regulations on the safeguards around physician-assisted death or conscience rights of physicians and medical institutions without a fulsome debate in this Legislature. That is what democracy is all about. Each of the provisions that are brought forward in this motion and each of the regulations so recently provided to this Legislature, only yesterday, deserve a robust discussion and consultation with the people of Alberta. Albertans will have to make a decision on just how citizens will exercise their right to access medical assistance in dying.

The Supreme Court has ruled that Canadians have a right to access physician-assisted death, but it did not answer whether the public health care system must provide it or whether taxpayers must pay for it. That is a provincial decision. This will be a decision that Albertans will need to make through this Legislature, and it would appear that this government has already made that decision for the people of Alberta through these regulations of Executive Council.

Albertans should have the right to debate and decide through their elected representatives in this Legislature whether or not they choose to spend scarce health care dollars on physician-assisted death. Instead, should those same scarce resources be put towards increasing the availability of palliative health care that would work to ensure a loving, dignified death rather than create a medical system intent on redefining health care in such a way as to include physician-assisted death?

Built into the preamble of this motion is a reference to Carter versus Canada. This preamble says that Executive Council will seek to bring consistency between the recent Supreme Court case and the Carter case. Bill C-14, put forward to address the Supreme Court decision, says that physician-assisted death could only be accessed by people who face a terminal illness and who are close to death, whereas the Carter case sought a much broader interpretation on who would be able to access physician-assisted death.

This government created a huge problem when it brought to the Members of this Legislative Assembly only yesterday the regulations that will be used to govern physician-assisted death. There is a wise pattern that should be followed by this House. A bill is put forward and debated. If passed, then regulations are written

to carry out that legislation. This process ensures that both the legislation and the regulations represent the wishes of Albertans.

By proceeding straight to regulation, this Legislature will not have the opportunity to discuss the underlying issues and to come to a consensus on how physician-assisted death should be codified and then regulated. Albertans and various groups and societies that represent the vulnerable will never have the opportunity to come before a committee of the House to review the legislation and to make recommendations or to try to amend and make the legislation better.

This government, under the guise of a motion, has limited this debate on the breadth and the scope of who will be able to apply for physician-assisted death to simply six hours. This government has chosen a process that will limit the people's representatives to six hours and a process that has completely frozen out the people of Alberta to have any direct impact on physician-assisted death. This action is the equivalent of invoking closure after only six hours of discussion in this Legislature on a motion that will regulate the death of Albertans. I cannot find the words to express my level of dissatisfaction with this process and with the direction of the regulations put forward by this government.

These regulations are unsatisfactory in the extreme. For instance, regulation 2.1 states:

Before a regulated member provides a patient with medical assistance in dying, the regulated member must

- (a) be of the opinion that the patient . . .
  - iv. has a grievous and irremediable medical condition that causes enduring suffering that is intolerable to the patient in the circumstances of their condition and that cannot be relieved under conditions that the patient considers acceptable.

3:30

This does not bring consistency between the recent government case and the Carter case. This regulation completely ignores the narrow and restrictive approach to physician-assisted death being legislated at the federal level. It opens up the debate of whether physician-assisted death should be available to Albertans who are not simply terminally ill but also now for almost any mental condition. It opens the door to vulnerable Albertans suffering from depression, fear, and anxiety, all treatable medical conditions, as candidates for physician-assisted death.

As soon as you say "in the circumstances of their condition and that cannot be relieved under conditions that the patient considers acceptable," as soon as you say those words, you open the door to any Albertan suffering from a mental illness or phobia that concludes that life is no longer worth living. If you believe this is too extreme, then I would encourage you to educate yourself for there are individuals that have been euthanized in European nations that have adopted the very open set of regulations to govern euthanasia that are seeming to be happening here in Alberta. People that should be receiving help will now be able to choose physician-assisted death, and under these regulations there is no waiting period for those considering physician-assisted death.

I've had two family members in the past 10 years that have found themselves with what was diagnosed as cancer that was believed to be terminal that are alive today. Both went through the cycles of depression that accompany these kinds of struggles, and under these regulations both would have had the opportunity to apply for physician-assisted death. I will speak against this motion because it is my belief that this motion would have made it so much easier in their depression to have sought out physician-assisted death, and it is very possible that both of them would not be alive today had these

regulations been in place when my family was struggling to cope with their illness.

Next, this motion highlights the need for appropriate safeguards to be put in place to protect vulnerable Albertans, yet it has torn down the walls that those safeguards could have provided Albertans. I am very concerned. There is evidence out of countries like Belgium, that have already adopted physician-assisted death, that the safeguards built in to protect vulnerable people there have not been sufficient to stop the deaths of innocent people who had not given their consent.

We have the chance to do this right. When we do not get this right, innocent people will die. The least that should occur is that these safeguards are vetted through a process that puts forth a bill before the Legislature and where these safeguards are reviewed by a legislative committee that will consult with stakeholder groups and everyday Albertans. When the Legislature arrives at a consensus on the appropriate legislation and it is passed, then regulations will be drawn up that will help to carry out that legislation. We must get this right. Too often the safeguards do not ensure that the clinically depressed and the old and the vulnerable are safe, where the safeguards are manipulated and ignored for a whole host of reasons.

In Alex Schadenberg's book *Exposing Vulnerable People to Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide*, using studies from Belgium, he concludes that in Belgium there is evidence that nurses are participating in euthanasia with or without explicit consent and that the demographic group that is dying without explicit consent tends to be those patients whose families want to get on with the death or where the patient is seen as a bed blocker.

I do not believe that the regulations, received only yesterday, will be able to keep vulnerable Albertans safe. Will these regulations have the consent of the majority of Albertans? We will not know because we have not used the proper legislative process that would allow us to consult with Albertans. Will these safeguards be viewed as reasonable and effective before they are placed into regulation? We will not know, nor with this motion are we being given the time to consult and find out. Consultation must occur. We must educate ourselves as a society and as a Legislature.

This motion and the regulations that have accompanied it do not go far enough in protecting the conscience rights of physicians, nor does it respect the rights of religious institutions that provide health services. Conscience rights is a hugely important issue for this Legislature to discuss. Personally, I do not know how any Albertan, government, or any professional college could be allowed to mandate that any doctor or nurse could by regulation, law, or professional duty be forced into either participating in or referring a patient to someone that would provide physician-assisted death. The right to freedom of conscience and how it should be applied and balanced with the right to death should not be decided by Executive Council alone through regulation, nor should the College of Physicians & Surgeons be able to force a doctor to participate in or be forced to refer to another professional a patient desiring physician-assisted death.

Regulation 3 outlined by the government states:

A regulated member who receives an inquiry from a patient with respect to medical assistance in dying must ensure that contact information for the Alberta Health Services care coordination service is provided to the patient, or to another person identified by the patient, without delay.

How can we even consider passing a motion that will enable a regulation like this? Many doctors across this province have made it very clear that they will not participate nor refer a patient to anything that would allow that patient to access physician-assisted

death. Not only do I believe that position is reasonable under the Charter rights, but we have not even been allowed to consult with physicians to see what they would like. On a practical level this could throw whole communities into chaos. In a conversation with several physicians in my town they have said that they are personally unwilling to administer physician-assisted death and even to refer.

In passing this motion, we are willing to place physicians in a position where the only way that they can continue to practise is to leave Alberta. With rural towns already begging for doctors, on a simply practical level these regulations are about to throw our rural communities into crisis if these fine physicians decide to leave in order to preserve their conscience rights.

Our caucus has heard from palliative care facilities that the people that work in them will leave their calling if they are forced to introduce physician-assisted death into their facilities. In an already underaccessed part of our health care system, where only 30 per cent of Albertans have access to quality palliative care, are we really willing to support a motion that will leave dedicated doctors, nurses, and volunteers the only option of leaving their calling to palliative care in order to protect their conscience rights? This government has shown a complete lack of understanding on many issues regarding legislative process and respecting the will of Albertans. Now it is attacking physicians' conscience rights.

The actions of this government on this motion and the regulations that accompany it are out of line. This government needs to step back from this and reconsider this motion and the accompanying regulations so that due process and consideration are applied to physician-assisted death. Anything less, once again, sidesteps the democratic process.

I must conclude by saying this. Euthanasia and physician-assisted death are often a dangerous answer to the very real problem in society that we can call a lack of love. That may sound strange when you listen to the death with dignity arguments, but it is nonetheless true. Why do most people seek physician-assisted death? It's not because of pain. Pain specialists tell us that 97 per cent of pain can be controlled. Talk to physicians that specialize in pain or palliative care, and they will tell you that people seek physician-assisted death not out of pain or the fear of losing control or a lack of personal autonomy but because they fear becoming a burden to loved ones. Yet when people have access to proper palliative care and when they have the appropriate psychosocial counselling and when they know that they are loved, it is then that they choose life until natural death. It is surrounded by love and with the appropriate palliative care that they choose to die naturally, surrounded by the ones that they love.

Love, not this motion, not these regulations, not physician-assisted death, is the answer. Love, it is said, heals all wounds, and I can testify on that issue. Love finds the resources for palliative care. Love supports life. Love does not force the health system and physicians who up to now have preserved life to become physicians who administer death.

It is for all of these reasons that I must and will heartily vote against this motion.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

3:40

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on Government Motion 17. I'm going to open by talking for a couple of minutes about what this isn't because I think that's as important as what this is. What this is not is this Legislative Assembly making

a decision on physician-assisted death. That's been done, and I think it's important to make that clear. That was done a year ago by the Supreme Court of Canada, and at that point the Supreme Court of Canada served notice to Canada's national government that they had a full year, till June 6 of this year, to put in rules around physician-assisted death or it would be done for them. So we're not talking about whether we agree with physician-assisted death because we have no authority over that. That is done.

Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, this is a watershed moment in Canadian history. While I'm not a big fan of the courts making law, I think what's often true, not always true but often true, is that when the courts end up making a law because of a dispute that gets to the Supreme Court of Canada, very often those decisions change the course of history in Canada and change things permanently that may not have been changed if those decisions were made through any type of political process with any type of government with any Legislature, including the Parliament in Ottawa.

This is important, as my colleagues that have risen have said, because it is life and death, and it can never be taken lightly and never should be. This is exactly where, unfortunately, my unhappiness with the government's actions really reaches a peak. Knowing for a year that this was coming, the government dropped this motion on the table yesterday, seven days – seven days – before physician-assisted death would become the law of the land, two days before the scheduled end of the Legislative Assembly. I couldn't think of anything less disrespectful that this government could offer up to the citizens of Alberta than to leave on the table a life-and-death issue that they've known about for a year without bringing it forward till this late, late date. Incredibly disrespectful to Albertans.

Now, when we asked – and we did ask – to the government's credit we got some of the potential draft regulations around it. Here's the problem. These regulations should have been out in public circulation six months ago, Mr. Speaker, because regardless of what they decided in Ottawa on how to do it, the fact is that the court was going to make this happen. This should have been out for all 87 members of this House to discuss with our constituents months ago, probably six months ago. While this isn't the final word on it, looking at the proposed text for directive from Alberta Health Services – I'll read some of it to you because it's relevant. "Pursuant to section 8 of the Regional Health Authorities Act, I" – and it names the minister, but I can't say the minister's name in the House – "Minister of Health and Minister of Seniors, direct as follows." That minister hasn't been the Minister of Seniors since Groundhog Day, since February 2, four months ago. I'll be looking for an explanation from the government.

If indeed the government and the cabinet had these draft regulations in their hands four months ago, why the heck didn't Albertans have them in their hands? Why didn't Albertans have four months to talk to their Members of the Legislative Assembly to say: "I don't like this. I do like that. This is really important; thanks for including it. Have you thought of this? This could cause an unnecessary death or unnecessary pain for someone who is qualified." Disgraceful. Disgraceful. I can't imagine, Mr. Speaker, anything more arrogant than a government who inflicts upon Albertans the conditions under which they or a loved one of theirs might receive physician-assisted death with two days to discuss it in the House, seven days for all Albertans to really discuss it, and most of that after the House has recessed. Disgraceful, disgusting, disingenuous, political manipulation. I know that's a terrible thing I just said, but I believe it. To have something like this and drop it on the table at the last day without any chance for Albertans to give

their opinion on a life-and-death matter is probably the worst and lowest form of political manipulation that I've seen. Terrible. Absolutely terrible.

Mr. Speaker, you can't excuse that. You cannot excuse that. I know the folks in Ottawa have been – you know what? They left it to the last minute. But that is not an excuse for our province. That is not an excuse for our government, who knew this was coming. This was not a surprise. They had a full year. In fact, it would seem, by the documents, that at least four months ago the government had drafts of potential regulations in hand. Even if a minister stands up later and says, "Well, this was done last week, and that's a typo," that's still not an excuse.

They should have had something in hand six months ago. They should have shared it with Albertans. This should have been a nonpartisan, Albertan discussion about our future. No matter what political party you belong to, and if you don't belong to a political party, no matter what religion you belong to, and if you don't belong to a religion, no matter where you come from in the world, no matter what your sexual orientation is, no matter what your nationality is, no matter where you were born, it's personal. When someone in your life is considering their options at death, it gets personal, which is why I am so very offended by the fact that the government left this to the last minute when they knew it was coming. They knew it was coming.

You know what? Unfortunately, it's indicative of the government's attitude that "we know better than Albertans," consistent throughout the entire time they've been in government. "We know better. Do it our way. You don't need to know any of the facts. There, there, little Albertans. We'll just pat Albertans on the head because we know better." Albertans know better. They always have, and they always will, and they surely know better about the things they're thinking about during the end of life for a loved one.

Mr. Speaker, I could not be more offended, and the saddest thing about this is that it's too late to fix it. If the government did something really rare for this government and admitted they were wrong – and I don't know if they will or not – even if they did, it's too late. It's law in six days from now. It's done. It's over. You blew it. There's no coming back from this one. There's other legislation that they've made mistakes on that they could come back from by talking to the public. There's not time to have a province-wide, decent debate.

I know I heard the minister today talk about: 15,000 people answered the survey. Well, good. They might have gotten that little bit right.

**Mr. Rodney:** Less than 1 per cent of the population.

**Mr. McIver:** That's less than 1 per cent of the population, but that is about what they'd like to see.

But in terms of the draft regulations: zero Albertans. Well, maybe the ones on the government side, but outside of this House zero Albertans were consulted on what the regulations are. Zero. On a life-and-death matter, zero Albertans outside of the political process were shown the regulations. Zero. Zilch. Nada. None. On a life-and-death issue. This isn't whether we're going to paint the house blue or red. This is about life-and-death decisions about our loved ones. This is about the pressure that medical staff are going to be under to do or not do these procedures. This is about the incredible pressure that families will be under, and with all of that, this government says: "We know better than them. We know better than the doctors and the nurses and the other staff in the medical facilities. We know better than the families and the loved ones. We know better than Albertans because we have the power, and we're

wielding it, bless our hearts, to put these regulations in place,” with zero time for a decent discussion.

Mr. Speaker, the government has blown it. They’ve blown it in a really serious, offensive way that you cannot come back from.

3:50

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), Calgary-North West.

**Ms. Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to ask my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays to expand a little more on the four months that the government likely had an idea of what they were looking at in terms of regs and what could have been accomplished in those four months had those been made available to the rest of the members of this House and had we perhaps had the opportunity to go out and have those conversations in our constituencies. It seems like a massive amount of time, and now we are down to the wire, and it’s just a little hard to wrap my head around that. I’m wondering if you could expand on that.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you to my hon. colleague from Calgary-North West for the question. Mr. Speaker, again, we’ll wait for an explanation, which we may or may not get, from a minister on whether it was four months, but it should have been at least four or six months. There’s no excuse for it being less. In four or six months members of this House, on all sides, could have talked to people in our social and personal and business circles, including medical staff, including family members and loved ones and friends that have had to make these incredibly gut-wrenching decisions, and said: “What about this? What have we missed? What would have made your loved one more comfortable at the end of their life? What in the regulations could have made your loved one’s decision different at the end of their life? What step should the doctors, the nurses, the medical people, the family members take in order to not make the wrong decision?” To the hon. member, that opportunity has been lost. Again, it’s too late. It’s blown so badly that there’s no coming back from it because there is not time now for that opportunity.

There are so many stories – there are so many stories – of every Albertan who’s died from a serious disease, be it cancer, be it some other debilitating affliction, where an Albertan has suffered greatly and deteriorated greatly at the end of their life, and they and their loved ones had to make incredibly difficult decisions. There are so many stories that the people writing the legislation could have learned from about how you can make a right decision, how you can avoid making a wrong decision, how you deal with the ethical aspects of it, the potential feelings of guilt, the potential feelings of joy at being able to help your loved one. Gone. The government has left it too late with their I-know-better attitude, and I find this incredibly crass and the worst political move I remember ever witnessing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Gottfried:** Yes, please, Mr. Speaker. Everything that the Member for Calgary-Hays said is resonating with me. It reminds me of the MLA cafés that I hold in my constituency and the number of people, dozens of people, that came through on another issue that was not well communicated and not well consulted on in this community. That was the best practices guidelines, which caused a lot of concern. We were able to deal with that and address that and inform people well about that issue. I think that’s an important opportunity for us and, I think, not only a responsibility but a commitment and an expectation of our constituents that we have the ability and the time to do that.

I just want to ask the member what he felt about the opportunity for all members of this House, from both sides of this House, to do what is the right thing, which is not only to honour the privilege of representing them but to give them the opportunity to share their concerns, to share their opinions, to share their ideas of what is best for society so that we may bring those thoughts back to the House. I would like to hear his comments on how he feels that that could have been a great opportunity, that has been missed by us in this House, to do the right thing on behalf of all Albertans and our constituents.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, all I would say to the hon. member – and I thank him for the question – is that there are issues that, because of my life’s experience and one thing and another, I’d feel pretty qualified to advise this House on, whether I was on the government side or the opposition side. This isn’t one of those, and that’s why we needed to be able to ask Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, I just want to remind the House that this is very sensitive and very emotional and, as many of you have said, a personal issue. I would encourage you to be cautious about emotion, your management of emotion, and the words you use so that this House can hear that emotion, but let’s also be conscious of the other people in the House and the difficult decisions that as individuals they are having to make.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we talk about people leaving, it’s nice to actually have a baby in the House.

I wasn’t actually planning on speaking to Government Motion 17 – due to some personal experiences I’m quite torn on the issue – but due to the way this motion has been presented, I feel compelled to speak out against it. The way it was initiated was unfair to Albertans and unfair to all members of this Legislature. I’ve never actually been presented with a formal copy of the motion. I actually received a bootleg copy from one of our staffers, and I think that’s a little bit shameful. [interjection] Excuse me?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, through the chair, please, both of you.

**Mr. Hanson:** Mr. Speaker, 15 years ago we lost my dad to Alzheimer’s-related complications. Over a five-year period we watched a once extremely intelligent man deteriorate to the point where he actually forgot how to swallow. Visiting him was very troubling, both for him and for us. While you were there, he would be angry and frustrated because he knew that he should know you but didn’t. By the time you closed the door, he forgot that you were there. He ended up aspirating and dying from complications. I know that given a choice, he would not have wanted it to end that way, and I know that I don’t want to.

This spring we also lost my mother. She lived on O<sub>2</sub> due to COPD for the last 10 years or so. She signed a personal directive denying any intervention at all. She passed quietly, under her own terms, surrounded by family.

Over the last five years I watched my father-in-law and two very good friends die painfully over a long period of time from cancer. In all cases their last days were spent basically incoherent, on morphine for pain, and mainly cared for by family members because we were out in the country and don’t have access to the same palliative care that my mother experienced at the Royal Alexandra hospital. I commend the people that work there; they treated us very well. We don’t always have the same access to

palliative care in all areas of this province, and I think that is a failing.

What I'm trying to say here is that every case and every individual is different. Both of my children are in the medical field. One is soon to be a graduating doctor, and one is a nurse. I would not want to see either one of them legislated into making decisions or participating against their will. I think it's imperative that any legislation include a personal directive that would be honoured if a person, myself included, became incapacitated and couldn't make that decision on their own but had made it prior to that. This is a far too complicated issue to take lightly, and it needs to be fully, lengthily discussed with all Albertans and given proper time in this Legislature. We can't afford not to get this right.

The member said that this is too late. I agree; it probably is. But it is still my recommendation that this Government Motion 17 be withdrawn from this House.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I would recognize the Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in support of this motion, and I do so because of the feedback from many of my constituents, including the Lethbridge group of Dying with Dignity. I believe the first public forum I attended on physician-assisted death was almost three years ago. The previous two local MLAs were not in attendance. The first meeting that I had with a constituent was actually last August or September – I sent a message to my CA to check the actual date, but I haven't heard back yet – but I've been listening to my constituents for a long time.

4:00

The document What We Heard: Medical Assistance in Dying provides the responses from groups and from 15,000 Albertans to the survey. Actually, that's quite a number of people to respond to a survey. In the comments I received from constituents and a recent group-written submission in response to the federal bill, Bill C-14, to amend the Criminal Code, they expressed that they were in agreement with most of the recommendations of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, the CPSA. Should the federal bill not pass by the June 6 deadline, the Criminal Code prohibitions against assisted dying will be struck down, and the provinces will have the responsibility for implementing the Supreme Court of Canada's decision without a federal legal framework. The emphasis from those who spoke with me was that they are relieved that the CPSA has taken the initiative to implement many of the Carter recommendations regarding the provision of medical aid in dying to Albertans.

The Lethbridge group felt that advanced consent should be considered valid when made by a competent patient who at the time of the request has a diagnosis for a condition that is or could become grievous and irremediable. Another comment was with respect to waiting periods, which they felt should be flexible. I note that both of these areas are being framed in the federal legislation.

During my lifetime I have witnessed the excruciatingly painful lingering wait for death of a couple of people in my sphere of family and friends. I have listened to them begging their Maker to let them die and be relieved of this earthly pain. My dad died in 1993. I was with him for six days before he died, and I was there when he took his last breath. He was in so much pain that even to touch his bed he winced. This was certainly a tough time for me because I had a really good relationship with my dad, and we certainly did lots of things that I loved to do. He took me fishing. He taught me how to hammer a nail properly. He taught me how to put things together.

All of those things were pretty special in my life. Even though he died in 1993, I still have conversations when I am doing a project at home, and he certainly seems to guide me in the right direction.

I think that when somebody is in that kind of pain – my dad was diagnosed 13 months before he died. The doctor told him that he probably had three months to live, and it wasn't; it was 13. It was 13 really very difficult months. My dad would not have made the choice to die, I don't think, but I know that my dad is really pleased that I am standing here to speak to this motion because he always believed that people had to make their own decisions. But they have to make decisions where there's a framework where they can make those decisions.

I think it's cruel and unusual punishment for somebody to have to go through this and not have the ability to make those kinds of decisions. When dad died, he didn't have the ability to make that decision. I've heard some say that it is God's choice when one dies. I agree because I believe God is speaking through that person when they request medical assistance in dying.

Each of you has to make a decision here on how you're going to vote. I urge you to support this motion and understand that this decision is what is needed and necessary.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)?

Then I'll recognize the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'd like to thank the government for bringing these regulations forward to debate in the House. I'll be supporting the motion. I agree with medically assisted dying. I have some very personal reasons for that, which I don't think we need to get into.

And I think I support the regs. You know, I know we're not here to debate the issue about medically assisted dying. That's been done by the Supreme Court and by the federal government. That's really not the issue. We're here to talk about the regulations, which I just saw yesterday at 4:30. I'm not sure what the associate minister was trying to say there, but they weren't handed out in the House. I know that two of our guys got it, but I never did get one.

Nonetheless, it doesn't really matter what I think. I would like to have been able to discuss it with my constituents and bring their thoughts forward to the House as well. I know I won't be able to do that now, so we'll debate it. I know there were a couple of good doctors in the House that, with the associate minister, went around and consulted with people – I heard 15,000 people – so I think that was good. But at the time I don't think they had the regs to discuss with people. I don't think they showed them the regulations, so people are waiting to see what they are.

You know, I know this is better than a lot of the provinces, and I do appreciate the opportunity to discuss it here. A lot of them won't even get this much. I think it's great that we pass this. I won't go on because it's been said lots here. There's no sense in repeating what everybody has said, but I do need to be able to say to my constituents that I got up and spoke on their behalf, so that's why I'm speaking. When I get asked, "Why didn't you speak up for us?" I can say: "Well, we were presented with the regulations. They got passed. I didn't have time to consult with you, but I got up and portrayed that message to the House and to the minister." So I've done that, and I'll tell that to my constituents when they ask why they didn't get a chance to speak on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any questions under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.



**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity to speak on this profoundly important matter, in fact, one might say, a matter of life and death. The matter of life and death is perhaps the most consequential and significant decision that we here will debate and make a decision on as members of this place. It is no understatement that a society is judged by how they treat their most vulnerable, and indeed much of this discussion is shrouded in sentiment and compassion and benevolence.

There is a fundamental question that underscores this debate, which is to ask: what is more humane, to eliminate suffering or to eliminate the sufferer? That is at the heart of this matter, Mr. Speaker. That death can be prescribed by a doctor as a treatment option is more than just nonsensical. That we should accept the wilful ending of life as an act of health care speaks volumes about how we treat our most vulnerable.

We should be discussing how we can improve palliative care, not facilitating the desire for death of those who are at their weakest. We should be reflecting on what it is that makes an individual seek the end of their life sooner than the course of natural death.

In another Supreme Court ruling, the *Chaoulli* versus Quebec decision – I apologize; I don't speak French, so I hope I didn't butcher that name – the Supreme Court found that a faltering health care system is indeed a breach of the right to life itself because “access to a waiting list is not access to health care.” That *Chaoulli* decision was even mentioned in the recent Carter decision, which noted that state action could cause death or increase risk of death.

As legislators we need to examine whether failings of the health care system, either in the availability of end-of-life care or in broader access to health care, are to some degree complicit in making suicide appear to be a desirable solution for those who are suffering. To simply accept the Supreme Court's decision as ubiquitous is perhaps the high-jurisprudence equivalent of the naturalistic fallacy that exists in philosophy. To accept that the Supreme Court has spoken, that the matter is closed, *causa finita*, would not only be intellectually dishonest and, frankly, lazy, but it would also be a profoundly inadequate response given our roles as legislators and given the immense gravity of this subject matter.

#### 4:10

High courts in western nations have in the past made what we all recognize today to be completely heinous, atrocious decisions. We all know precisely what these decisions were: those that perpetuated profound inequalities that undermined the dignity of the human person. Simply put, high courts are not infallible by virtue of being high courts. It is integral to this matter that we recognize this, Mr. Speaker.

The same Supreme Court ruled in 1993 in the *Rodriguez* decision that the right to life does not extend to legalized assisted suicide. In that decision the court wrote:

To the extent that there is a consensus, it is that human life must be respected and we must be careful not to undermine the institutions that protect it.

This consensus finds legal expression in our legal system which prohibits capital punishment. This prohibition is supported, in part, on the basis that allowing the state to kill will cheapen the value of human life and thus the state will serve in a sense as a role model for individuals in society. The prohibition against assisted suicide serves a similar purpose. In upholding the respect for life, it may discourage those who consider that life is unbearable at a particular moment, or who perceive themselves to be a burden upon others, from committing suicide. To permit a physician to lawfully participate in taking life would send a signal that there are circumstances in which the state approves of suicide.

That was the Supreme Court, Mr. Speaker, in the majority decision in the *Rodriguez* versus British Columbia case in 1993.

Of course, the more recent Carter decision overturns that verdict. But it would be erroneous to assume that the Carter decision is definitive. In paragraphs 44 and 45 of the Carter decision the court mentions that the Carter case in question was bound by *stare decisis*, or what they criticize as the condemning of a law to stasis as a result of previous precedents. However, they did so by saying:

Trial courts may reconsider settled rulings of higher courts in two situations: (1) where a new legal issue is raised; and (2) where there is a change in the circumstances or evidence that “fundamentally shifts the parameters of the debate.”

Matters of assisted suicide warrant numerous incredibly sensitive considerations. These include questions of mental health, questions of self-interest of loved ones serving as proponents or opponents of a decision, questions about devastating physical illness, questions over the appropriateness of suicide as a response, and questions about how the complexities of individual cases align with previous court rulings and existing law.

Given the immense complexity of this matter it is not unreasonable that we may find the Supreme Court revisiting this decision for the same *stare decisis* reasoning they chose to revisit the *Rodriguez* decision and the Carter decision. It is not uncommon for the court to revisit decisions in subsequent cases. That the right to life extends to an inverse negative, the right to death, is a new interpretation, one that breaks with many other decisions by the same court and many others.

It is also worth noting that in the Carter decision, paragraph 127, the court said, “The scope of this declaration is intended to respond to the factual circumstances in this case. We make no pronouncement on other situations where physician-assisted dying may be sought.” All of this is to say that the very premise of this government motion, that we need to be taking the court's ruling together with any law by Parliament at face value, is, as this motion is worded, inadequate. Simply put, we need to be looking at ways to protect our most vulnerable, the heart of the matter, not ways of merely appeasing a contemporary piece of jurisprudence.

If we truly recognize the inherent value of human life, we need to be asking how we can help those who are suffering. For those who are suffering, we should be seeking those measures that can provide a genuine hope of a benefit. We should of course not be seeking treatments when there is no such hope or when there is a greater burden imposed upon the patient. Withdrawing care in recognition of the inevitability of a natural death is not the same as wilfully assisting with suicide.

One aspect of the motion put in front of us states that the rights of individuals who object to providing medical assistance in dying on any grounds are to be respected. The government needs to be clear up front on what they intend through this. Freedom of conscience and freedom of religion are protected Charter rights, Mr. Speaker. A concise moral objection against assisting with a suicide is likely to arise from the foundational objection to the wilful termination of life in such a manner. A mandatory obligation for a physician to refer a patient seeking assistance with suicide to someone eager to help facilitate it would likely be just as consequential and thus just as disrespectful of the initial objection. Alberta does not need to be looking to give physicians reasons to leave. Respecting the conscience rights of physicians properly is not incompatible with any aspect of the Carter decision or the current draft of Bill C-14 currently before Parliament.

There are two parts of this motion before us today that are arguably on a collision course. One of these is the section of the government motion that says, “appropriate safeguards be put in place to protect vulnerable Albertans.” The other is in the preamble

itself, which says that the government of Alberta would be doing so in compliance with “any legislative measures approved by the Parliament of Canada.” The very legislation that is the subject of this debate is still being debated before Parliament.

In Ottawa the majority Liberal government defeated numerous reasonable amendments aimed at protecting the vulnerable. These included requiring a prior review by a competent legal authority before someone can be killed. This included defeating an amendment requiring a psychiatric assessment of those with mental illness who request euthanasia. These included an amendment reaffirming the freedom of conscience of medical professionals. These are reasonable amendments aimed at protecting the vulnerable and still permissible within the scope of the Carter decision by the Supreme Court. If the members on the government benches opposite from me are sincere about the text of the motion “appropriate safeguards be put in place to protect vulnerable Albertans,” then the legislation that derives from this motion will look to put in place the safeguards that Parliament shamefully failed to include.

In looking at preventing harm to the most vulnerable, we need to look at other jurisdictions where assisted suicide is legalized and there are systemic case studies available. We should be looking at the failings of those systems with an eye to ensuring that we do not fail Albertans in the same way, Mr. Speaker. I was deeply saddened when a report emerged earlier this month from the Netherlands about the type of suicide that is approved. I want to read a few paragraphs from Britain's *Daily Mail* newspaper.

A former victim of child sex abuse has ended her life under Dutch euthanasia laws because she could not live with her mental suffering.

The woman, in her twenties, was given a lethal injection after doctors and psychiatrists decided that her post-traumatic stress disorder and other conditions were incurable.

It went ahead despite improvements in the woman's psychological condition after ‘intensive therapy’ two years ago, and even though doctors in the Netherlands accept that a demand for death from a psychiatric patient may be no more than a cry for help.

I cannot for the life of me conclude how legalized assisted suicide was helpful in this circumstance.

Now I want to speak to the haste with which this government is choosing to push this motion and accompanying regulations through, draft regulations that only saw the light of day yesterday, leaving scarce time for assessment, input from constituents or from experts in the field. On any other matter this would be disappointing, but it is so much more than that where it concerns a consequential moral matter. If we look at the significant debates that occurred in Parliament in Ottawa over the past century, moral matters pertaining to life and death were never subject to a rush, never subject to forced closure of debate by a government majority. In all of those circumstances members had the time they needed to speak on the significant matter of moral conscience and discuss due implications, Mr. Speaker.

4:20

The rushing of this legislation is a direct affront to the ability of members to speak on matters of moral conscience, to represent our constituents. Rushing this motion through here and removing the ability of elected representatives to speak on a grave matter like this are affronts to our western democratic traditions. Any decision on life and death is perhaps the most consequential matter that we will face. The fact that the Supreme Court, by all means not an infallible institution, has concluded that a right to suicide is, paradoxically, a part of the right to life should not mean that we should accept legalized suicide as a new moral or new normal.

We have an obligation to serve Albertans, to protect the vulnerable, to protect Albertans' rights. Studies have shown that those seeking suicide change their minds when their pain or depression is properly treated, and that's what a humane response here should be, that we find ways to increase the availability and quality of support for those Albertans who are suffering. It is understandable that we would want to look at a case of immense suffering and discomfort and ask why someone would want to carry on living in such a circumstance. Instead, we need to ask if we as a society want to seek an end to suffering by merely eliminating the sufferers. I would hope that the answer is no.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any questions or observations for the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that this is, unfortunately, an irresponsible approach to life-and-death legislation, and I also believe that it's incumbent on us to show great respect to the residents of Alberta and, more importantly, to their opinions, which we have not had a chance, since we received these regulations yesterday, to consult with. I personally feel that having that opportunity to speak with my constituents is of great importance to me and to the role that I've taken on and the privilege that I've taken on on their behalf.

In a debate where we hope to respectfully regulate what I hope would be the flight of people on the wings of angels, indeed the devil is in the details.

It should come as no surprise that the vulnerable rarely have a strong or outspoken voice. They rarely have that opportunity or even that capability to do so and rely often on society and governments and social workers and other people to be their voice, and this is our opportunity to do that as well.

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

With great irony, the date that this legislation, the federal legislation, comes into effect, June 6, is the first day of Alberta's 30th annual Seniors' Week. How ironic. I hope to be able to spend time during that week with the seniors in this community, and were we not forcing this legislation through on short notice, in an irresponsible manner, with inadequate time to consult, I would be talking to them. I would be asking them for their time to sit down for a cup of coffee, maybe have a bit of a round-table with them to find out what they feel, what they're thinking.

These are wise people, Madam Speaker. On the government's own web page for seniors we are asked to celebrate Seniors' Week.

Seniors make a difference in our communities every day. From supporting family members and friends to assisting charities and volunteering, seniors are deeply involved in our communities and their contributions benefit Albertans of all ages.

I think that when we're honouring them, we also need to honour their opinions, their futures, their challenges, and their dignity.

Madam Speaker, I also, sadly, have experience in compassionate end-of-life care. In 1978, when I was attending the University of Alberta, my young 61-year-old mother, a registered nurse who set up the first public health nursing system in Thailand, far away from the home that she grew up in, Parry Sound, Ontario, was diagnosed with inoperable, untreatable terminal cancer. With sincere appreciation for the compassion of so many medical professionals at that time, I believe that the end-of-life care that she received allowed her to pass with the minimal amount of pain possible, and for that I am grateful.

I also reflect on the condition of my own father, who before his death at age 87 suffered from Parkinson's disease, congestive heart failure, had a hip replaced, had suffered a perforated bowel years earlier. Were he not the stubborn, proud man that he was, would he have easily fallen into the description of grievous and irremediable medical conditions? That concerns me.

Madam Speaker, I'm very supportive of the Supreme Court provisions for a compassionate and dignified end to life. In fact, I have to say that I often think that for people to suffer indignities at the end of life is the ultimate cruelty. I think that there are people that need to be able to make that decision, and I think that that is a dignified and respectful option that is being put in place now by that Supreme Court decision. Again, we're not here to debate that. That has already been decided by our Supreme Court.

But I worry about the vulnerable, the mentally or physically infirm, and, even worse, the danger in these regulations of a non terminally ill individual who's having a bad month or even a bad year or even a bad several years exercising this option. Madam Speaker, those of us that have the privilege of working with those less fortunate in our communities have helped those people. We've talked to those people who have been hopeless at one time in their lives or another. I'm sure that everybody in this room has had a chance to see someone dig themselves out of those holes. In many cases we've had the privilege of seeing them recover and thrive in our communities.

I think that that's a commitment that we have, to help them. It's our responsibility to let them have that opportunity. It's our responsibility and our commitment not just to create an environment and a society in which Albertans can thrive but to fully support them, when they're down, when they're feeling hopeless, in achieving their fullest potential. I'm not sure that we find that in these regulations, Madam Speaker. I think we need that time to find out how we can ensure that those protections are in place while also ensuring that people, the terminally ill and those who want to have a dignified end to life, have that option as well.

Madam Speaker, I cannot support this motion until I have adequate time to consult my constituents, including giving time to the wise seniors I spoke about, possibly during next week's seniors' celebrations, and giving them the honour of listening to their wisdom. I will not be supporting this motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Oh, my apologies; 29(2)(a) comes into effect if there's anyone who has questions or comments.

Seeing none, go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak on Government Motion 17. This is a very interesting time that we are faced with in Canada and within Alberta, and we need to take the time to do this right. This motion urging the government to implement measures to regulate medical assistance in dying is asking Members of this Legislative Assembly to trust the Executive Council with getting the regulations right. I'm sorry. I will not be able to do that. Assisted dying is far too complex to leave the very regulations that will take Albertans down this path in the hands of so few without proper legislation in place to protect us. This government has shown complete disregard for the seriousness of this topic. Here we are with a government motion that appears to be hastily thrown together in order to quickly get this done before session is over, yet I am supposed to trust that the government has taken this issue seriously.

Madam Speaker, I believe that life is precious. I believe in the sanctity of life, and for that reason natural death is the route I have decided to follow. But that being said, I believe each person has the right to choose whether to live or to die. The decision to live or die is a deeply personal decision. It must be recognized that the decision to live will have limited impact on the rest of society. The decision to live is generally considered to be the normal course of action.

4:30

Madam Speaker, medical treatment has come a long way. Today we are able to extend life significantly through all of our medical advancements. These treatments have allowed us to interfere with natural death, allowed us to therefore choose life. We also have a right to choose not to interfere with the natural dying process. We have the freedom to refuse medical treatment; therefore, we can choose to live or we can choose to die. The question here is: does having the right to die constitute having a right to have someone else assist me, to be an accomplice in my premature death? I would suggest it does not.

Madam Speaker, I am concerned that if we go this route, where I have the right to have someone else assist me in my choice to die, our current view on the sanctity of human life will forever change. I believe this is not in the best interests of a civil society that respects human life. Regardless of what I believe, we appear to be heading down this road. Therefore, there are many issues to consider on this topic, and we need to properly protect all Albertans.

One issue we face if we take this route is to properly protect conscientious and religious rights. By no means should any individual be forced to participate in any manner if he or she cannot do so in good conscience. I have talked to medical professionals that feel they would be an accomplice to murder if they were required to refer a patient to someone who would assist their patient to die. How can we ask that professional to refer their patient?

What about proper consultation? Patients must be protected from being coerced into assisted dying. By no means should this ever be offered to a patient that has not asked for information about assisted dying first. Doctors are highly respected individuals in our society. Assisted dying may have never entered a patient's mind, but in the case where a doctor they respect has offered it as an option, they may now consider it. This could be understood as coercion.

What about a cooling-off period following a diagnosis, a time for the patient to reflect on the seriousness of this decision? What about requiring a second opinion from another doctor not affiliated with the initial diagnosis? How about a review panel to ensure the transparency of the system? Madam Speaker, I believe many checks and balances must be in place to ensure that this choice is not to be made lightly.

Madam Speaker, it must also be clear in legislation that we will protect vulnerable members of our society. I think about children. Should someone that is not yet capable of making mature, well-thought-out decisions be given the ability to ask another person to assist them in dying? Other countries are doing this. We do not hold youth criminally responsible for decisions they make that may end someone else's life because society has deemed them not fully mature and therefore not fully responsible for their decision.

The same could be said for people suffering from mental illness. We must protect the vulnerable who feel they are a burden on others, whether that is seniors or individuals with a long-term disability. We must continue to improve education and awareness for doctors and nurses surrounding palliative care.

Madam Speaker, I've had many discussions with family and friends as well as people within the health profession. Most people have taken very little time to thoroughly understand the possible consequences of assisted dying legislation and the regulations that

will be put into place. When professionals in the field, individuals that have spent a great deal of time working through the intricacies of this topic, appear to be split on which direction is the right path forward, I believe we must be very cautious. We must take the time necessary to properly understand the topic in order to protect the rights of all individuals. There is a lot to be considered here.

I know that many of these questions are being considered by our federal government, but the decision on this motion is far too important to be pushed through this Assembly. Hastily crafted wording on the motion and the subsequent draft regulations have proven to me that the government has not recognized the seriousness and the scope of this complex issue. I believe this Assembly needs more time. I believe this government has not been able to properly prepare and also needs more time. This is a very serious and complex topic dealing with the very sanctity of human life. We need to take the time necessary to do this right.

Therefore, I will not support this motion that would empower this government to implement measures to regulate medical assistance in dying. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, here we are on Motion 17, and I'm not going to stand and debate doctor-assisted suicide. That decision was made by the Supreme Court. I fully realize that. That is not our job to do here today.

Governments across Canada, though, have had a year to prepare for this ruling, and now, all of a sudden, it's a panicked rush. Physician-assisted death in this country, and no laws in place. That leaves us in a very uncomfortable spot right now. We have so many unanswered questions, and we need guidelines; we need regulations.

You know, it's interesting that my colleagues across the way, when they have risen to talk, have talked about the fact that: oh, we've had questionnaires out there, so folks have had a chance to weigh in. Yes, they've had a chance to weigh in on doctor-assisted suicide. That decision was made. Now the conversation is about what the regulations look like, and the fact is that we are seemingly not allowed to have more than a few hours' discussion about what those regulations look like. That is wrong. It's incredibly wrong.

We are thrilled, though, that the government decided to share the draft regulations, the orders in council, the directives. It's a shame that when those draft regulations were done, which was a significant amount of time ago – had those been provided to us, we could have had some very fruitful discussions within our communities of stakeholders who are very interested in having a conversation about this and did not get the opportunity to have a discussion about the regulations, which are extremely important.

There are so many questions floating around. What are the rules around mental illness? What are the rules around disability and dementia? None of those are clear, and people shouldn't have to wait to read an order in council to know what the rules are.

Now, I'm going to relate to you a bit of a conversation I had with a former colleague of mine who knows this subject all too well, and she is sitting in the gallery today. We know that in the last Legislature she had risen and spoken passionately many times and talked about her brother's struggle with Huntington's and the two-year journey that they went through as a family dealing with his Huntington's. He had actually said that he wished to have access to end-of-life options, and those weren't provided. So she was certainly glad to see that that was an issue that had been addressed.

But here is someone who has a history of Huntington's in the family, who, God forbid, one day would face the spectre of dealing with this herself, who is a passionate stakeholder and wants to have that conversation about what the regulations look like because she is someone who has dealt with this, who has a lot to add to the conversation. And she doesn't get to be a part of the conversation.

**4:40**

You know, I have to say this to the government. There are so many opportunities that you have to include people who have this lived experience in a conversation about what these all-important regulations need to look like, and you're not listening, and it's not the first time that you haven't listened. What we see here is an eleventh hour pass to address an issue that we have had over a year to talk about and what those regulations might look like. These are difficult, difficult, emotional decisions. I do not envy the government for having to draft these, but the fact is that they did not have to draft these alone. There are some pretty amazing people in this province who wanted to come to the table to talk about these regulations, to talk about it through the lens of their lived experience and to be able to help put together regulations that would have a meaningful impact on the lives of the people who will be faced with this terrible, emotional decision.

Make no mistake that this is a critical place to stop, to assess, to decide right now what consultation looks like because having no consultation on the regulations is unforgiveable. Please do not make that mistake.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I rise to speak about Government Motion 17, it's come to my attention that this is a serious and incredibly important piece of legislation that is to be debated in the Legislature. As I reflect over this, I am of the mind that our position in this Chamber is one of legislators but that we also have roles and responsibilities, and our responsibility is as representatives of our constituencies and to represent Albertans. When we are only given a small amount of time with the presentation of any piece of legislation, it gives me cause for consternation and concern.

It reminds me of the conversation that I – this subject matter of life and, as many of us know in the rural community, death, brings me to the conversation where, in a 29(2)(a) situation, I spoke to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster about his occupation and working with animals and treating them in life-and-death situations. When it comes to human life-and-death situations, it kind of makes me think: who in the H do we think we are to define and come to a point where we are going to make or legislate or regulate human life and death?

I've seen human life come forward in absolute squalor. Absolute squalor. People in those countries would live in the quality of bathrooms that we have in this society and think that they were in some magnificent location. Here we are in a relatively wealthy society, and we think that in six hours we're going to stand here and debate and talk about the end or decide upon the end of someone's life and dictate or decide on the quality of how that is ended? We are only a small percentage of a global environment, where people come and go from this global situation that we live in, in squalor and opulence. It's difficult. It's difficult to relate to this.

In my case I was elected as a representative of the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler, and I'm proud and pleased and happy to be here to do that. But we are thrust into these situations

and concerns where we're not given exact and opportune times to relate to our constituents. So it thrusts me back to a discussion about vulnerable people. This is a discussion about ethics and personal convictions, and we cannot properly get feedback from our constituents as to how we are to properly represent them.

I have personal life convictions. I, too, in 1985 stood at my father's deathbed and watched him perish. As other members have given heartfelt and life-yielding experiences of their personal convictions and their personal experiences as to how their parents came to life's end, I certainly understand the passion of that.

Madam Speaker, we need to get this exactly right. This is not simply some condition that the physicians are being presented with. This is final, and this is of great magnitude. Pontiffs and people with great platitudes throughout the world in other societies have made decisions on that. I want to have a chance to hear from my constituents and stakeholders on the specific provisions that these regulations bring forward. This is important. This is final. This is not simply a condition of health care treatment. We do not need to let ourselves slide into some sort of a poor choice of words.

I've seen and heard – and I'm repeating myself here somewhat – personal experiences and perspectives of others in this House, and it's with great respect that I do see and hear that. As an agriculturalist and as a person that has done hunting, I've seen wild animals begin their life cycle and I've seen them end their life cycle. In some regions of the world those animals are treated with some sort of dignity equal to human life.

Who in the H do we think we are to be able to decide this at some sort of a basic level or at any sort of a higher level? Madam Speaker, I'm actually glad to have this opportunity to speak about this and, hopefully, impregnate the minds of members across and members with me with the idea that this is a serious issue. It's massive. It has profound significance for Albertans and families and indeed for our Albertan society as a whole.

Since this debate began to unfold in the public sphere, I have heard from some of my constituents, about this many, by text and by e-mail and written. Five people, Madam Speaker, have had a chance to have input on this, and there are varied opinions. Many of these people, though, are churchgoing people. Does that provide special insight into it? I don't know. They feel it does. It gives them insight into what they believe is another sphere.

4:50

One thing is clear, Madam Speaker – and I'm hoping I am conveying some of it – that this invokes strong personal convictions and deeply held beliefs. There are many complexities and nuances to this discussion, and each deserves to be heard and openly explored. I would invite this government to allow Albertans to have a referendum on this subject matter. This is something that's been discussed by the Supreme Court of Canada, but it's not something that couldn't be singularly effected by the people of Alberta, not necessarily through the supposed greater knowledge that is in this Chamber but by going out to Albertans and allowing them to individually and singularly exercise their right on the answer to this question.

I think it's important, Madam Speaker, to note that every member of this House, with their due diligence to the issue of their responsibilities, should have given some thought over the weight – and I'm hoping to evoke that weight – of what we're here to decide as we go forward in our conversations. They've heard the stories, hopefully, on all sides as well, and I know there are a variety of opinions and stances that reflect the variety of thinking of Albertans at large.

I reiterate, Madam Speaker: is there a fear of allowing Albertans to have a referendum on the subject of this matter, that we're being thrust into six hours of debate on? Is there a simple level of mismanagement? If that may be the case, let's put it to the people. Open and free debate is perhaps the most important thing we can offer Albertans on the topic of assisted suicide. We owe the province a transparent conversation that fully explores all facets of this issue.

Because this is a matter of personal conviction and conscience, I'd like to express my desire to see these conscience rights protected for health care officials and professionals. I've heard the presentation of a physician who has moral and ethical objections, and those should certainly be respected.

Madam Speaker, I understand that there was a poll commissioned by the Canadian Medical Association that showed 63 per cent of physicians would personally refuse to perform this procedure themselves. Even more recently, 29 per cent of doctors surveyed by the CMA said that they did not even believe in referral. This is not, in my opinion, going to put access at risk, if that is what this government is concerned about, but it is a large segment of the health professional population.

We cannot ignore the input of our quality front-line practitioners who work in the medical field day in and day out and see these things with their own eyes daily, if not regularly, unlike each and every one of us in this case. I would speak only for myself, but I've heard from the self-testimonials of others in the Chamber that this is a singular, once in a lifetime, two or three times in a lifetime experience.

These people have great personal experience with this. They deal with it on a more regular basis. These people sometimes tell me that they cannot take part in good conscience. These are good, honest, hard-working health care workers who are anxious, worried, and fearful about how they may have to involve themselves in the process, especially in the absence of any conscience rights provisions in the federal legislation.

This is a vast change in the way medical practitioners approach medicine, and I would note that an overwhelming majority of the health care profession framework does not appreciate the conduct that they are being forced to involve themselves in. They're trained under such conditions that do not allow for this education, and we must all appreciate that their concerns are for professional changes that they have never been exposed to. I believe that this issue is so deeply personal and emotionally taxing on the mind that to require the participation of conscientious objectors would be grossly mistaken.

Furthermore, I do not see adequate safeguards in place for those suffering from mental health conditions. It reminds me, Madam Speaker, of an apology that was given by this Chamber for the treatment that was given to people that were in mental homes in, I believe it was, the '30s or '40s, where people were given a treatment that at that time was believed to be medically proper for their condition. It was not a terminal treatment, but the government then down the road, as recently as a few years ago, was actually forced to apologize for the medical treatment that those mental patients received.

The associate minister herself cited thousands of Albertans who want to see strong safeguards to protect the vulnerable. Madam Speaker, I am fearful that there could be broad and significant unintended consequences going forward. This profoundly significant motion should be presented to all Albertans, and I will not be supporting it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am very pleased to be able to speak about the issue of the medical assistance in dying topic. I've read through the material that we've had, I read through the report on what we've heard, the results of the survey. A lot of the questions, a lot of the points that were brought up, I think, if not totally answered, at least have certainly been addressed reasonably. I'll just go through a few of them with you.

The question about age was brought up: would there be people under the age of 18 being involved, or would there be any possibility of them having access to medical assistance in dying? The consensus was that, although more than half of the people surveyed supported the idea that people younger than 18 might be eligible, really, there was also a lot of concern that determining minors' abilities to understand the nature of the request and its consequences could be challenging. I think it's far more likely and reasonable that, in line with the Supreme Court ruling and the federal government, medical assistance in dying in Alberta would be limited to mentally competent adults aged 18 or older.

Of course, that introduces the topic of competency along with age, and an assessment of competency would be essential to determine if people qualify for medical assistance in dying. A number of survey responses talked about how applicants would need to complete an assessment of competency or mental capacity while they were cognitively competent enough to choose to request medical assistance in dying. There would have to be proof that people were able to make the decision, they could think through it and make the decision on their own.

Stringent assessments confirm if the applicant is able to fully understand the nature and consequence of their request. It would not be a rushed process. It couldn't be. It would have to be careful enough to be sure that people understood what it was they were asking and the consequences of it. The type and scope of the assessment and deciding who will administer it would be very important, and that's one of the processes still to be completely determined as we go along.

5:00

Every person who applies for medical assistance in dying support would be referred to a physician or other health care professional who could make the arrangements for the assessment and the rest of the process. An end-of-care team was recommended as possibly being very helpful because that could include a physician, a psychiatrist or a psychologist, a social worker, and, if the person wanted it, a spiritual care provider. All those people could be a team to help make the process suitable and effective for the person requesting the support. One survey respondent suggested that having staff trained in psychosocial end-of-life assessments would be a valuable support. Someone who has worked on end-of-life planning would know something about it.

Finally, the person making the request for medical assistance in dying would need to be certified as being competent by more than one physician. This might require having one of the physicians meeting with the person by teleconferencing, okay? In that way, the process would be accessible to those living in rural and isolated areas. It's absolutely true that otherwise that could be quite an obstacle. Having to meet face to face with two different physicians, for a lot of people, would be very difficult. That would make the playing field definitely uneven.

Another important part of the process is for the person to have a reflection period after the initial request during which he or she would have time to consider the request that they had made. At all times – and this is so important in all assessment – and at all points in the medical assistance in dying process the person at the centre of the process has the right to change their mind. This is vitally important, and it's essential in making sure that people are acting with informed consent so that nobody is rushed or pushed into anything.

One area that needs to be dealt with and was talked about was the issue of people who are experiencing mental illness and seeking medical assistance in dying. This is a very tricky area. I totally agree. One of the ways that some of the respondents in the survey addressed this was by saying that special cautions are needed in these situations, with the worry being that mental illness and addictions may potentially impair judgment, understanding, and appreciation of the consequences of their action. How exactly the cautions would have to be formulated is something that would be developed down the line, but we all know that that would be an area that needs to be particularly addressed. It may not be possible to establish some people's autonomous decisions if they're experiencing mental illnesses or addictions. That's a reality, too. It might just not be possible from the outside to tell if they are capable and are making a really good, informed decision for themselves.

Another concern having to do with people having mental illness or addictions is whether these illnesses or conditions are remediable or not. In other words, a person may believe that they will never recover from their condition, but most mental health workers believe that irremediable cases are rare. That, again, would need to be looked at very closely.

The conclusions reached by survey respondents were that additional time is needed to more thoroughly understand the issues of administering medical assistance in dying to people with mental illnesses. It was also recommended that if medical assistance in dying was made available to people with mental illnesses, at least one of the assessing physicians would need to be a psychiatrist. That would go a long way in helping to make sure that the person's mental illness was not being a factor, not making them unduly lean toward a request that they may not have truly appreciated.

I hope that helps something. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll recognize Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to join in the debate on Government Motion 17. From the outset I want to thank the Associate Minister of Health for providing this opportunity. On April 6, some eight weeks ago, I asked if we were going to have a debate in the Chamber. I didn't get an answer at the time, but here, now, in the dying days of this spring session, we are given that opportunity, and I would like to thank her for that. Yesterday I urged the minister to table the draft regulations and allow us to debate those in the House, and she has done that as well. Again, it would be wrong for me to not acknowledge that and thank her for it.

But I have to say that the late timing and the rushed nature of this and so many other aspects of this debate have revealed that this government is badly fumbling this vitally important issue. It's not like you didn't know it had to be dealt with. It's not like this came up as some sort of surprise. Ever since the Carter decision of February 2015 it's been clear that the provinces would be responsible for the regulatory framework that would establish the parameters for physician-assisted dying. That's been on our agenda since that time. In British Columbia shortly after the Carter decision

they established an all-party committee to develop the regulations on this issue because it is complex. It's a complex medical, legal, ethical issue. You know, while I'm grateful for the opportunity to debate this issue, I have to say that I am very frustrated that it's happening in such a rushed and disorganized manner.

You know, Madam Speaker, I've really been thinking about making this speech since 2012. Shortly after I was elected in 2012 was the first mention in this Chamber of physician-assisted death, physician-assisted suicide. I knew there would come a day when I would have an opportunity to speak on this. I have strongly held opinions on this. There are hundreds of questions that need answers, but I'm going to focus on four. First, what has been the experience in other jurisdictions? Second, what provisions are in place to protect vulnerable Albertans? Third, what does this do for palliative care? Fourth, what about the effects on medical professionals?

It's called now medical assistance in dying. It seems that we've had a progressive shift in the euphemisms to describe this. It used to be called euthanasia. Then it was called mercy killing. Then it was called physician-assisted suicide and then, up until recently, physician-assisted death. The Carter decision has set Canada on a path that other jurisdictions have already travelled; namely, Oregon in 1997, Holland in 2002, and Washington state in 2007. In every case the decision to take this first step on this slippery slope was made with the noblest of intentions, the relief of unrelenting and unrelenting suffering for patients for whom a cure was not possible. As a veterinarian, Madam Speaker, I understand the desire to provide that relief.

In all cases the intent was, as the Member for Calgary-Elbow has indicated, that this would be rare and that there would be rigid safeguards and that vulnerable populations would be fully protected. But that hasn't been how it has worked out in real life. In Oregon since 2005 the number of deaths by assisted suicide has doubled, and lethal prescriptions have increased by 76 per cent. During that same time frame the population of Oregon has only increased 7 per cent. In Washington in the period from 2009 to 2012 assisted suicide increased by 130 per cent while the population increased by 18 per cent. In Holland, a nation of only 17 million people, in the five-year period from 2005 to 2010 assisted suicide numbers increased 64 per cent, from 2,319 to 3,809, and in that same five-year period prescriptions for what they call terminal sedation went from 11,000 to 17,000 per year.

Madam Speaker, the numbers show that instead of being rare, in jurisdictions where it is now legal, physician-assisted death is becoming increasingly commonplace. Even more troubling is the relaxing of the original restrictions that were placed on this practice to protect vulnerable populations. This has happened in virtually every jurisdiction. Looking specifically at Holland, for example, the eligibility criteria have shifted from those that are terminally ill to those that are chronically ill, from those that suffer from physical illness only to extend it to mental illness, to mental suffering, to physiological distress, and now to where it is available to those over 70 who are simply tired of living.

### 5:10

In a troubling paper in the journal *Current Oncology*, noted University of Ottawa palliative care specialist Dr. José Pereira noted that "euthanasia has moved from being a measure of last resort to being one of early intervention. Belgium has followed suit," and so has the state of Oregon. The situation has progressed so far that the United Nations has found that the euthanasia law in the Netherlands is in violation of the universal declaration of human rights "because of the risk it poses to the rights of safety and integrity for every person's life."

Madam Speaker, you can understand why there's concern. You can understand why Albertans want to see the regulations that will govern this practice in Alberta and that will guard against the disturbing trend that has happened elsewhere.

Now, many other jurisdictions – Scotland, England, France, South Australia, the state of New Hampshire – have all decided to not go down this road because they don't want to see this tectonic shift in the relationship between patients and doctors. It's because of the inability to adequately protect against this inexorable slide.

Now, this is not the case in Canada. The Supreme Court has ruled, and it is left to us as legislators to establish the regulatory framework to govern this practice. And here I must disagree with the associate minister when she said in her opening comments, "Our responsibility in this matter is actually quite small." With the greatest of respect, Associate Minister, it's not. It's not small at all. In fact, a number of Canadian Senators, who started debating Bill C-14 today, some of whom have served in public life for decades, have stated that this will be the most important issue that they have ever debated in their careers as public representatives. Madam Speaker, I agree with that. As elected public representatives it's imperative that we take that same responsibility that we have been given on this matter and that we learn from the lessons that others that have travelled this road have tried to teach us.

What about protecting the vulnerable? Well, Madam Speaker, as I've outlined, other jurisdictions have gone down this road, each embarking on that journey with assurances that vulnerable persons would be protected and that no one would make this decision under duress. Everyone starts out with good intentions, but in practice the safeguards have progressively been watered down and subverted.

In our order in council, that we were given yesterday, under clause 2.2(c) it requires two independent witnesses to sign and date the request for medical assistance in dying. Now, that seems eminently reasonable. In fact, it has been used in other jurisdictions. But in Oregon, for example, 58 of 61 persons that requested medical assistance in dying received one of the required signatures from a physician who was a member of a pro assisted suicide lobby group. In Holland and in Belgium networks of physicians offering consultations on medically assisted dying have formed even though they have no specialized training in palliative care and no personal connection to the patient. The proposed regulations as we're debating them today do nothing to prevent this situation.

Madam Speaker, advocates for persons with developmental disabilities are also justifiably concerned, so much so that a coalition of advocacy groups has formed to develop the vulnerable persons standard. This standard argues that our constitutionally protected core values and rights in this country impose on government an undeniable obligation to make sure that vulnerable persons are protected with real safeguards. Suffice it to say that the Vulnerable Persons Secretariat will be watching the Senate and every provincial Legislature, including ours, in an attempt to protect those in our society who rely on us, on those of us in authority whose job it is to protect the most vulnerable.

Third, what about palliative care? Well, Madam Speaker, we need to focus on the quality of life, and that includes the quality of the final days of that life. Palliative care needs to be improved, made more accessible. We need to have those critical conversations about end-of-life care available, and we need to have that care available throughout the province. Recent statistics reveal that most Canadians do not receive palliative care as their life's journey reaches its inevitable conclusion. In Ontario four times as many patients die in intensive care than palliative care. In that same province 10 times as many patients die in acute care as in palliative

care. In fact, in Ontario only 6 per cent of patients that die pass away in palliative care.

Now, palliative care can and should be a beautiful thing. Even veterinarians, who have always had the option of euthanizing their patients, can and do seek to offer palliative care to their patients. In fact, a recent study showed that veterinary students receive three times the hours of instruction in analgesia and pain control that human medical students do. So we need to focus more on palliative care. We need to make sure that patients are supported and loved so that they never feel that they are a burden, which is easily one of the greatest fears that seniors face when they get sick. We've all heard it from our elderly friends and relatives. They say: I just don't want to be a burden.

Finally, what about medical professionals? My colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed quoted from the Hippocratic oath in his eloquent speech yesterday on this issue. Doctors take that oath when they earn their medical degree, and no doctor practising today entered the profession with the knowledge that at some point they might be called on to assist with the death of their patients. There's not a doctor anywhere who knew that that was part of the deal. People enter the medical field because they want to care for patients. They want to heal. They're trained to heal. They're trained to care. None are trained to assist with the death of their patients. I'm worried about the physicians in this province who are about to take on this burden, and I'll tell you why.

Veterinarians have always been called upon where it is appropriate to end the life of our patients. I will tell this Assembly that this is a profound experience. It changes you, and it may come as a surprise to members that veterinarians as a profession have always had a suicide rate higher than the general population. In fact, that suicide rate is four times higher than the general population. Our rate of mental illness and suicide is twice that of other medical professionals.

So what makes us different? Well, there are a number of things, but one issue that always comes up in the discussion is that veterinarians are the only health care professionals that are called upon to end the lives of their patients. That takes its toll. Nearly everyone in my profession knows a colleague who has taken their own life. In my case it hits close to home. The veterinarian who hired me as a fresh-faced, newly minted, 22-year-old city kid to work in an 80 per cent rural large-animal practice some 33 years ago committed suicide in 2002. I gave the eulogy at his funeral. There is something that is so very profound about the toll that it takes on ending the life of your patient. I don't think anyone in this room can really understand that, and there's no way that I can describe it adequately. But I guess I can tell you that my wife, who is also a veterinarian, could always tell the days that I had performed a euthanasia because she would see and she'd say: you had one today, didn't you?

I know many people who have told me that they didn't want to become a veterinarian because they couldn't bring themselves to euthanize a patient. Whether directly or indirectly, prescribing the death of a patient will have an effect on our physicians. This is especially true for physicians in small rural communities. I've known doctors that have delivered two, three generations of the same family. These doctors become an integral part of their community, and how much more difficult will it be for them to be called on to sign the papers, to assist the deaths of those patients that they have cared for.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to conclude my comments by saying this. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled, and physician-

assisted death is the law of our land. I'm not debating that. Whether I agree with that law or not, as a law-abiding citizen I respect that law. It is our job, though, as legislators to ensure that the law is upheld and that we place safeguards that are fully maintained and safeguards that are workable to protect the vulnerable in society. That's the other half of the Carter decision. These regulations simply do not do that. While the College of Physicians & Surgeons has developed a 19-paragraph, six-page document of advice to the profession on medical assistance in dying, it quickly notes that "this advice does not define a standard of practice, nor should it be interpreted as legal advice."

There are still many, many unanswered questions that these hastily prepared draft regulations simply do not answer. Madam Speaker, this is a profound subject that has understandably created a great deal of anxiety for many Albertans. As legislators we have the opportunity in a free vote – and I stress that this is a free vote; I certainly hope that none of the caucuses have been whipped on this vote – to vote freely on the wishes of our constituents and our own consciences. For me and my constituents I cannot support this motion, and I urge members of all parties to vote to defeat it.

5:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a). Questions or comments?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on Government Motion 17. My constituents in Little Bow have, in no uncertain terms, made clear that they have profound concerns with the assisted-suicide legislation that is currently before the federal Parliament.

There are two particular concerns that I wish to speak to, that we look to ensure there are adequate protections in place for those who are most vulnerable, those who have the most to lose as the result of this legislation, and the second is that we adequately respect the conscience rights of medical professionals in our province. The matter before us involves the government enacting a policy on the wilful termination of human life. I cannot think that there will ever be a more significant matter before us as legislators, and it is peculiar that the government is rushing this.

I want to bring to the attention of members here the recent comments of Dr. Kevin Hay, a family physician from Wainwright, Alberta. This physician served his profession for over a decade as the representative forum delegate for the north area of the central zone, formerly the East Central health region. Since the Supreme Court's Carter decision on February 6, 2015, the physicians' representative forum spent all of 20 minutes – that's right, a paltry 20 minutes – on this issue. When a motion taking a stand on the matter was tabled, it was tabled indefinitely, meaning that it would never come up for debate. What this means is that even physicians have not had adequate time to debate this incredibly grave moral matter. Without their input, the AMA opted simply to adopt the Canadian Medical Association position.

Madam Speaker, the frenzied hurry to push this matter through at all levels of government has left physicians without proper time to weigh in on the matter, and by rushing this legislation through here, without giving adequate time for us to consult with our own constituents, with our own communities, this government is depriving Albertans of the precious few opportunities that exist to weigh in on this delicate matter.

At the core of this debate is a question about the value of human life and how we as a society value human life. What does



compassion really mean? Does it mean that we do all that we can to help those who are in pain, or does it mean that we do all that we can to end the pain by ending those who have it? Simply put, we are devaluing human life if in the course of this discussion we are not giving due consideration to the adequacy of care that is available in our health care system. It says more about our society that someone in a time of suffering has concluded that they no longer have dignity, that the dignified option is the wilful ending of human life.

A September 2000 article that appeared in the *Toronto Star* discussing the international gathering of palliative care physicians that took place in Montreal noted that “studies have shown that most people who ask to die change their minds after being treated for physical pain or depression. But about 4 or 5 per cent continue to want euthanasia or physician assisted suicide.” If we are to accept those studies, it means that 95 per cent of those seeking assisted suicide are doing so as a result of not being adequately treated in the health care system.

The motion put before us by the government does not go nearly far enough in protection of the vulnerable. The mere mention that there be “appropriate safeguards” is simply not enough. What we are dealing with is the inversion of the duty of medical professionals to care for the most vulnerable, their obligations to provide health care now being transformed into an ability to terminate life, by definition the precise opposite of health care.

The consequence of the Carter decision by the Supreme Court is the termination of section 241(b) of the Criminal Code, which prohibited assisted suicide. As Parliament is debating a law on assisted suicide, it is worth particular note that the majority government in the House of Commons has been defeating amendments that had aimed to protect the most vulnerable. We have an onus to protect Albertans, and while the Supreme Court may have struck down a section of the Criminal Code pertaining to assisted suicide, that should not and cannot preclude us from doing what we can so that the wilful termination of life is not normalized.

This government motion should be looking at ways to encourage proper treatment of those seeking assisted suicide so that their suffering is properly alleviated. At its current stage in debate the federal legislation does not include a proper mental health evaluation for those seeking assisted suicide. In other words, it is possible that untreated depression is leading someone to conclude that their suffering, their illness, can only be remedied through death. We need to ensure that there are proper safeguards, especially with regard to those who are unable to speak for themselves.

A recent opinion piece that appeared in the *National Post* contained the following, which I wish to convey to members here:

Once you have normalized suicide, from a tragedy we should seek to prevent to a release from suffering we should seek to assist, it is logically incoherent – indeed, it is morally intolerable – to restrict its benefits to some, while condemning others to suffer interminably, merely on the grounds that they are incapable of giving consent.

Once assisted suicide becomes the law of the land, we as Albertans are faced with a choice. Do we become complacent with normalized suicide, or do we continue to recognize it as a tragedy to be prevented? In simple terms, this is a time for choosing, and we must also ask whether we are a society that respects freedom of conscience or if we are a society that does not.

The motion presented by the government speaks to respecting the rights of those in the medical community who disagree with assisted suicide. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms recognizes freedom of conscience as a fundamental freedom. It was recognized in the Canadian Bill of Rights before that. It's a right

that traces back to the Magna Carta of 1215 from England, part of a legacy of ordered liberty on which our freedoms and indeed our country are founded.

Indeed, it goes against the grain of over 800 years of history to force our physicians to act against their conscience in carrying out the wilful termination of life. Not only does it arguably undermine the very definition of what constitutes health care; it also undermines the original wording of the Hippocratic oath, the pledge that has guided physicians throughout modern history. Freedom of conscience must be universal because we have to recognize that a conscientious opposition to assisted dying is likely founded on a conscious objection to the termination of life in that wilful manner prior to the onset of natural death.

It is equally against the grain of that freedom to force someone to refer for such a service if they do not wish to carry out that service. Either we recognize freedom of conscience or we do not. Some issues are indeed clear. As provincial legislators we need to recognize that there are some developments, higher court rulings for example, that are beyond our jurisdiction, but health care is very much a matter of provincial jurisdiction. What we have before us are clear questions of how we take care of our vulnerable, how we respect a fundamental right such as freedom of conscience, and, most importantly, how we value life.

If we are a compassionate society, if we want to have a compassionate society, it's difficult to believe that we can become complacent and welcoming to the wilful termination of life. How we treat and how we respond to Albertans who are suffering is the legacy that we leave behind.

Madam Speaker, I will not be supporting this motion. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Rodney:** Madam Speaker, it is indeed under 29(2)(a), so this is comments and questions. Fifteen thousand Albertans indeed have responded to this issue. That might sound like a lot, but it is not; 4 and a quarter million other Albertans have not had the opportunity to have their say. Yesterday the government told us that our job is to be the voice of Albertans on this. However, they have not given us the opportunity to return to our constituencies to discuss the regulations, that were tabled just yesterday. I've been told by many that this is a travesty of democracy.

5:30

That being said, *Hansard* will show that every single member of the PC caucus has spoken to this bill, often very passionately, with great life experience. Obviously, in listening to our speeches, you know that our members are not being whipped, and that is a good thing.

I was very happy to hear the thoughts of the leader of the Alberta Party and the leader of the Liberal Party and many members of the Wildrose but only two of the NDP private members and the Associate Minister of Health . . .

**An Hon. Member:** That's wrong.

**Mr. Rodney:** Through the chair . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Three.

**Mr. Rodney:** Oh, wow. It's a whopping three. Think about that. [interjection] Who has given the time and application – I will go through the chair because I have some things to say, and I want to

hear from this member. I challenge that member right there to stand on his feet and represent his constituents.

I was even happy to hear from the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. She asked me a question under 29(2)(a), took four of the five minutes. That's fine. I'm very, very disappointed that given her rank and her portfolio she's not taken the opportunity to address this House on the issue in the time allocated to her. I wonder how the hon. member feels about this. I also wonder how the hon. member feels about the fact that despite his rank as the longest serving member of this House, we've not heard from the Government House Leader.

As you know, as the second-longest serving MLA of this House I jumped to my feet to speak to this motion at my very first opportunity. I apologize that I had to fight back some tears, but I trust that you will respect the fact that it was very balanced with research, and I felt honoured to contribute the little that I could to the tip of this iceberg.

I wonder how the hon. member feels about the fact that given that this is a life-and-death issue, we've not heard from the Minister of Education, the Deputy Government House Leader, the President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, the intent of 29(2)(a) is to respond to comments made by the previous speaker. I think you're drifting a little bit beyond that, so if you could stay on topic, please.

**Mr. Rodney:** I know that you worked with *Hansard*, but it's actually to offer comments, and this is part of a preamble to a question.

. . . the ministers of Human Services, Seniors and Housing, Indigenous Relations – you see that these are all related to this issue intricately.

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Rodney:** . . . the minister responsible for democratic renewal . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** We've had a point of order, hon. member.

**Mr. Rodney:** That's very nice. We'll deal with it in due course, right?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Go ahead, Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Have a seat, member.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, we'll deal with the point of order.

**Mr. Rodney:** Well, you know what, sir? I'm not referring to an absence, and don't waste our five minutes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member.

Go ahead, hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Speaker, the member is talking about who has and who hasn't spoken. We wanted to provide an opportunity particularly for the opposition to comment with respect to this matter. We had discussions with the House leaders in which we agreed to cede most of the time to the opposition so that they could make their comments with respect to that. That hon. member knows nothing about what he's talking about, and he is abusing his position. He's abusing the five-minute question-and-answer period to try and cast aspersions on the members of this government.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, did you wish to respond to the point of order?

**Dr. Starke:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I do wish to respond. Well, there is no point of order here, and that is because under 29(2)(a) the Speakers, both yourself and Mr. Speaker, have allowed tremendous latitude in the use of 29(2)(a). We've seen that throughout this Legislature. We've seen 29(2)(a) used for a variety of different ways and reasons. I would submit that my colleague was moving towards asking a question of the previous speaker, which is entirely within the realm of 29(2)(a).

With regard to the comments of the Government House Leader on the discussions that we have had, we have encouraged at all times – even in the discussions that we had as House leaders, there was indication that there would be debate, and there was never any specific indication as to how many members from each caucus would specifically speak although, you know, in the case of our caucus, I indicated that I suspected that all of our members wished to speak, and they have.

However, there is no point of order here, Madam Speaker. My colleague is using 29(2)(a) well within the bounds of the already established, very lenient guidelines and the great deal of latitude that has been established within this Legislature during this session, and I would ask that you allow him to continue to the conclusion of his remarks.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the point of order?

Well, I agree that there has been a great deal of latitude given on the use of 29(2)(a) in terms of comments. I'm a little concerned, hon. member, that your comments were starting to stray into relatively personal comments towards individual members, and I think that that could be a rather dangerous area to get into, so I would urge you to get to your question.

Let's move on. I would say that there's no point of order on this particular issue.

**Mr. Rodney:** Happy to. I will share with you – and you may know this from your time sitting upstairs, Madam Speaker – that this corner of the room has been far more personal in these sorts of attacks. This is not an attack, but in the past we have been called out by name of constituency. I have not done that, and I will simply say this: the ministers in these ministries are directly related to this issue.

I was asking if this member would like to hear from some of them, and I was listing some of the ministries so that people could hear that, for instance, when it comes to democratic renewal, Service Alberta, Status of Women, Minister of Advanced Education, or perhaps the Premier – as they have challenged us to represent, perhaps they would like to represent their ministry.

Actually, it's too bad I couldn't get quite to the end of my question because I wanted actually to pay tribute to people back there for their backgrounds in nursing, telecommunications, broadcasting, journalism, LGBT community, nonprofit community, indigenous communities, activism, social work, sociology, mental health – you see how this is related, don't you? – Canadian Cancer Society, public policy and analysis, Good Samaritan Society, community development, collaboration analysis, homelessness, Children's Heart Society, insurance agents, developmental disabilities, search and rescue, occupational health and safety, school counselling, a union representative or two, and, of course, more than one member, including the chair, of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee. This is ringing bells, isn't it? You have experience and expertise that you can share.

Madam Speaker, as you know from my speech yesterday and, obviously, from today, I have very strong feelings, and I am challenging that side to . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, the time is finished for this order of business.

Are there any further members wishing to speak to the motion?  
Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to start by offering my sincere thanks to the members who spoke on this very important and personal issue for sharing their concerns and suggestions for ways to navigate this new and evolving area of law and medicine. I would also like to extend a deep and heartfelt thank you to all members who shared their personal stories and experiences with family members and loved ones at the end of their lives as well as some very touching stories of personal professional experiences.

The Supreme Court of Canada's ruling on medical assistance in dying comes into effect this Monday. The federal government has the primary responsibility for legislation in the area, and we intend for any framework we put forward to fit within their legislative framework. Unfortunately, that framework isn't yet set and may be subject to court challenges. In the meantime Alberta must be prepared. Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services have been working diligently on this issue, and supports and processes are in place for Albertans.

It was really important for our government to hear from the opposition, to have this conversation in this House in whatever form we were able to. This is in addition to the thousands of Albertans that we have heard from, including a variety of stakeholders such as faith-based institutions, regulatory colleges such as the College of Physicians & Surgeons, and individuals with direct, first-hand experience in medical assistance in dying.

Madam Speaker, medical assistance in dying is an evolving area of law and of medicine, and our government will continue to hear from Albertans on this deeply personal and difficult decision.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 17 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:40 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	Miller
Babcock	Goehring	Miranda
Carlier	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Hoffman	Payne
Ceci	Horne	Renaud
Clark	Kazim	Rosendahl
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Coolahan	Loyola	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schreiner
Dach	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dang	Mason	Sucha
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Feehan	McKitrick	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	McLean	

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Rodney
Anderson, W.	Jansen	Schneider
Cooper	MacIntyre	Smith
Cyr	McIver	Starke
Gill	Nixon	Strankman
Gotfried	Pitt	van Dijken

Totals:	For – 41	Against – 18
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[Government Motion 17 carried]

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Speaker, in view of the hour I move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 7:30 this evening. Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:58 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, June 1, 2016

Day 37

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
 Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
 Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
 Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
 Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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 Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
 Government Whip  
 Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
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 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
 Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
 Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
 Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
 Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
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 Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
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 Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
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 Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
 Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
 Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
 Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
 MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
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 Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
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 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
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 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 1, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good evening. Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 20

#### Climate Leadership Implementation Act

[Debate adjourned June 1]

**The Speaker:** Anyone wishing to speak to Bill 20? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in this Assembly with my grave concerns around the impact of Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, and the impact it will have on my constituents in Chestermere-Rocky View if passed in its current form.

My constituents are stewards of Alberta's environment in the truest sense of the word. They take actions every single day to reduce their impact on Alberta's landfills. My constituents care for their land. Many of my constituents partake in alternative fuel options. I myself have the privilege of operating my home with solar panels, and that is why I know how much my constituents and all Albertans, for that matter, care about this province and about environmental stewardship. Albertans want to leave Alberta beautiful for their children and their grandchildren. Many of my constituents work in Alberta's world-class oil and gas industry. They strive every day – every day – to meet the high environmental requirements made necessary by our province's regulatory bodies at the request of the industry.

I know that my fellow Wildrose members know that Albertans want common-sense action on the environment. These are actions that take into account the progress that they have made on protecting our environment while acknowledging the difficulties of living in a northern province with infrastructure that is spread across large swaths of land.

My riding is filled with families, families that are struggling in these tough economic times. Many of my constituents rise early in the morning to travel into Calgary. These long commutes are daily, and they require a vehicle. They require a vehicle which, obviously, requires gasoline. Just by virtue of choosing to raise their children in a tight-knit rural and urban community within the riding of Chestermere-Rocky View, these families will be punished by this carbon tax.

The Alberta lifestyle is one that encourages mothers and fathers to remove their children from densely populated cities and out into the country, where their children can grow up to appreciate all of the things our beautiful province has to offer. Mr. Speaker, we would be remiss to take actions that discourage families from choosing to raise their children on acreages and farms, where they experience first-hand the majesty of our environment. Chestermere-Rocky View is a beautiful constituency, and it spans the entire perimeter of Calgary. We have a little bit of everything in this constituency. It's a beautiful, beautiful place to raise your children, and they learn their roles as the next generation of stewards.

Many of my constituents are farmers who, by the nature of their profession and this province's beautiful geography, are regularly forced to drive long distances, Mr. Speaker, for non farming related

activities. Simple actions like running their child's forgotten lunch to school, picking up formula from the grocery store, driving their sons and daughters to hockey practice take a little bit longer. Everyday activities simply take more fuel for a farmer.

Their drives involve back roads that are on unpaved gravel, and driving these roads requires a sturdy vehicle. A truck or four-wheel drive is a meaningful choice out where I live, and it is a requirement of the rural lifestyle in southern Alberta. My constituents have no choice. They have no ability to just change their vehicle to something else at this point that cannot haul what they need to haul from place to place.

Many Albertans feel that this government has done enough to punish farmers. The significant increases to their regulatory burden, soon to be forced upon them by Bill 6, will be costly in a lot of cases. Mr. Speaker, now, the government has proven no understanding of how Albertan farmers live their lives by imposing more onerous burdens on these families. When will this government stop increasing the cumulative burden they insist on imposing on Albertans? The government has done little more than make life harder for these hard-working families, and to what avail?

I dare to say: find me a farmer that does not care about the environment. Find me a farmer that does not understand the vital impact clean air, water, and soil has on his crops' productivity. These workers are amongst the most sturdy environmental actors in our province. They cherish this Earth, and they live outside, with their connection to the land. Each action the farmers in my riding take is a calculated necessity of their everyday reality.

This action by the government is ill planned and poorly timed. This punitive tax, that is at the core requirement of the carbon tax, is designed to punish families into changing their behaviour. It seeks to modify how Albertans live their day-to-day lives. We don't, however, see the members on the other side of this House rising to explain to the good people of Chestermere-Rocky View why they're wrong about their need to drive a pickup truck down gravel roads over another choice like a Smart car. We don't, however, see the members on the other side of this House rising to explain how driving one's child across the province to hockey practices and games and tournaments is a cardinal sin and in need of behavioural correction. We don't, however, see the members on the other side of this House rising to detail for us how commuting to work every day is something that Albertan breadwinners need to take more actions to avoid.

Mr. Speaker, the members of this House all know why the members opposite are so quiet on the punitive implications of the tax they support. If they did rise to detail the actions they are seeking to change through this tax, they would come across as a little bit more than detached from the realities of everyday Albertan life, and that is exactly what this tax is in this form at this time. This tax is detached from the realities of everyday Albertan life, just like the government that is seeking to implement it.

The families in my riding of Chestermere-Rocky View are not all in a position to buy new cars. These families are not in a position to shell out money on underfunded energy efficiency programs. Many of the families, actually, in my riding have two family members that are out of work right now, not one member but two. Two breadwinners in many, many families are out of work right now. I just want you to think about that as we're going forward with this. We have yet to see the parameters for these families that are struggling through an extremely difficult economic downturn.

The breadwinners for these families, Mr. Speaker, don't have an option of working closer to home. I think I mentioned yesterday that a good chunk of Chestermere empties out into the city, as do the other areas within Chestermere-Rocky View. Most of them

work within the city of Calgary, so this isn't a choice for them. This is part of how they live.

I can honestly say that it's sad for me to see that the government won't acknowledge how regressive and harmful their actions will be for Alberta families. The government hasn't even considered the full impact of the tax. We know that because there has been no release of the numbers to us. Yesterday we talked a little bit about the economic realities of this. Well, some of the economic realities, like I had mentioned yesterday, are these small businesses.

7:40

As we go forward with this and look at this bill and as you see the fallout from what's going to come as a result of this, how are you going to explain to my families and your families in your constituencies about the decision that was made at this time? I can honestly say that there are probably going to be some families within your constituencies telling you about how they're suffering. Then what are you going to say? What are you going to do at that time?

Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely imperative, as we create legislation in here, that we are actually able to stand and able to defend that and able to help the families understand that. Obviously, when we're creating legislation, we can't possibly make everybody happy – I realize that – but this government is going to have to be able to explain to families about what's going on in their constituencies and how the accumulation of all these taxes is going to impact their daily lives.

We are wondering why the environment minister, without any citation or foundation, is not willing to give us any numbers on this. They're not willing to see their numbers scrutinized. The question is: are they far too low? We need to know these things. The typical Albertan family will see a \$1,000 increase in expenses due to things like higher prices at the grocery store and the clothing store, high prices on food produced in greenhouses in the province, higher municipal taxes as the towns and cities struggle to keep up with the rising cost of powering municipal infrastructure.

When you increase the cost of transporting food, you increase the cost of food. I know that this government is maybe having some difficulties understanding the economics of this, but Albertans' demand for food is largely inelastic. Everybody here has to eat. Albertans need food to survive – that is obvious – and that is a dependence that they as individuals are going to be paying for, the extra fuel costs to transport their food into this province.

Mr. Speaker, this tax has hugely regressive implications. It will harm Alberta's most vulnerable. The equity redistributions that this government is promising are insignificant compared to the costs and, worse, are structured in a very, very – we don't understand the manner in which this is coming forward. Why will two roommates receive more money than a married couple? Right? It's quite interesting when you take a look at the little bits and pieces of this. The implementation of this carbon tax framework will hurt families.

We've all said it in this House – every single one of us had the opportunity to stand here – that Alberta is a province of innovators and entrepreneurs. We all know how fortunate we are to live here with the Alberta spirit and the immense talent and everything we have to work with here. I can hear it when the government speaks about how proud they are of the province that they live in, and I know that. That's why this is so disturbing. I honestly believe with all my heart that every single person that sits in this House knows the incredible people which they have the privilege of being here for.

Upon saying that, I would hope that the government would want to foster that spirit, not stamp it out. Think about what is possible. I

know you have. We have, for sure. What is possible here? Where can you put those dollars? How can you get those dollars back into the pockets of Albertans so that those innovations, those things that we talk about, everything that's possible in this province can actually happen. We all know the kinds of people that live here and the immense amount of talent that is here. We need to foster that.

The actions taken through this act and the subsequent complementary acts and regulations will serve to increase the cost of electricity and drive out business. Now, I've heard the government say over and over again that business is looking to come and invest here for electricity and renewables. Well, I would love to understand how that's possible when we have taken away our competitive edge. I look forward to hearing from the government how that is feasible when we have industry migrating out of this province faster than we can keep track. We have people leaving this province finding jobs elsewhere. I have two friends right now that are looking outside of this province.

So if we are looking at keeping our expertise here . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Airdrie under 29(2)(a).

**Mrs. Pitt:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I treasure the moment to rise with questions for my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View. We're actually neighbour ridings, so it's very exciting for us to be able to do many different things together between our constituencies. It was absolutely wonderful – actually, a sort of fun fact I have to throw in: Airdrie-Chestermere used to be a riding back in the day. Maybe it will once again as well. Who knows? Wouldn't they be lucky.

It was a very, very fascinating conversation because I know that my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View has extensive knowledge within the energy industry and especially in regard to renewable energy. The knowledge that she has, especially in terms of where we are currently and where we need to be in regard to economics as well, is absolutely fascinating. I was just really hoping that you could maybe expand a little bit more with some information in regard to, you know, the technology that's available and how feasible this is and if it's responsible, if it's not responsible, if it's going to work. Right? We all want to pay our bills and feed our families, but of course we need money to do that. Entrepreneurs certainly aren't going to invest in a business that isn't going to put food on the table at the end of the day. That's just how it is. Is it responsible to be offering, you know, government taxpayer dollars to fund these ventures when they really will just flop in the end? I was just really hoping that my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View could just talk a little bit more about that.

**The Speaker:** The hon member, and you will direct your comments to the bill.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yes, I will.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, sir. One of the things that I think is imperative when we go forward, Mr. Speaker, with regard to renewables is the time that it takes to get one particular product offline and another one online. As we've seen throughout many, many other parts of the world when we're looking at those feasibilities, there is a mechanism by which to do that. The hon. member from the third party mentioned today about our clean coal and where we're at with that and about how the phasing out of that at too fast a mechanism is like a boulder rolling downhill. We already had a mechanism in order to phase out coal because

Canadians care about that. Canadians care about lowering their carbon, and Canadians care about the health and well-being of their children.

So this was already taken on by our previous federal government. I truly believe that as we're going forward with renewables, especially with the amount of talent and technology that we have in this province, we are absolutely set to bring on people who are completely capable of actually taking us into that part of the world, where we can bring renewables online. It is a difficult situation to try and come up with understanding of how those are going to work. How do we take out one kind of electricity to bring it in with another? There are many, many things, and that would require a plan. I think, to go back to what the hon. Member for Airdrie was talking about, that to come up with that plan takes time and it takes an immense amount of understanding of the assets that we already have here and knowing how to make sure that the people who are already really invested in this province and in our electricity and in low-cost electricity – I mean, we are so fortunate here.

7:50

In order to make sure that that happens and that the ratepayer is not going to be absolutely squashed by a system that comes in that could triple or quadruple the amount that they're paying for electricity – there are a lot of families here, even as we stand right now, who are struggling. I can't even fathom for those families what it would look like if this program doesn't have a plan to come online and keep things as cost-effective as possible, but again to my hon. member, that takes a plan.

I think that probably one of the most concerning things is that we have not seen, Mr. Speaker, a natural gas plan. We have not seen a plan that shows any sort of retrofits to mechanisms that we have right now for natural gas. In fact, I think the thing that's even more concerning is that there are other provinces in this country that are looking at actually not even putting natural gas in and potentially going just to wind and to hydro. That bears the question, then: how are we going to bring that all together?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the indulgence of the House if maybe we couldn't stop for a second and have an introduction if that would be possible.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Please proceed, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to rise real quick and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly George and Paula Muller, who are from the city that some of us call home and the rest of us call our second home while we are here far away from home debating important matters of this province, the city of Edmonton. It was nice to visit with them outside. I'm proud to report that they are definitely Wildrose voters, and I ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. I hope he didn't eat too much at your house.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 20

### Climate Leadership Implementation Act

(continued)

**The Speaker:** We're on the main motion right now, I'm told.

**Mr. Mason:** Sorry. We're on the main motion, Mr. Speaker? And that is to give second reading? Why isn't 29(2)(a) . . .

**Mrs. Aheer:** I think I talked too long.

**Mr. Mason:** That was the five-minute period? Oh.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm glad that we have some young people at the table because some of the folks with grey hair had forgotten that. They are always correct.

Anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 20?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:54 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Miller
Babcock	Hinkley	Miranda
Carson	Horne	Nielsen
Ceci	Jabbour	Notley
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Turner
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Feehan	McKittrick	Woollard
Fitzpatrick		

8:10

Against the motion:

Aheer	Drysdale	Pitt
Anderson, W.	Gotfried	Smith
Clark	McIver	Starke
Cooper	Nixon	Strankman
Cyr	Panda	van Dijken
Totals:	For – 37	Against – 15

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order. I'm glad everyone is in such a great mood.

## Bill 20 Climate Leadership Implementation Act

**The Chair:** Are there any questions or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm happy to rise and speak in Committee of the Whole on the government's Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. We've had some considerable debate on this, and I don't think there is any mystery as to where I am on this.

The fact is that the bill doesn't really do what it's advertised to do. It doesn't actually do anything beneficial or nearly enough that's beneficial for climate. It's unfortunately more of a bill to create revenue for the government to fund their pet projects, to do some income redistribution and other things. There are many problems with the bill, but that is one of the big problems with the bill, Madam Chair, that it's not revenue neutral, that the bill actually takes a lot of money out of the economy without returning it, actually puts it into government programs rather than recirculating it in the economy. As a result, the bill in its current form is unsupportable.

But in the spirit of improving the bill and improving the environmental results that the bill could produce on behalf of Albertans, Madam Chair, I would like to move an amendment. I'd like to move it on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-South East. I have the requisite number of copies, which will arrive at your desk shortly, Madam Chair. I'll be surprised if you will let me speak before it gets there, so why don't I just wait for that.

**The Chair:** That would be great.

This will be known as amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise on this amendment. I move that the Climate Leadership Implementation Act be amended in schedule 1 by striking out section 3(2) and substituting the following:

- (2) The revenue from the carbon levy may only be used to provide rebates or adjustments related to the carbon levy to consumers, businesses and communities, including adjustments in the form of tax credits or tax rate reductions.

My intention with the amendment, Madam Chair, is to make the carbon levy revenue neutral. Of course, that would do several things that I think would improve the bill dramatically. First of all, it would actually focus the money taken from Albertans in the form of a tax – I know that the government calls it a levy – and it would make sure that it gets used in the economy. In other words, the amount of tax that comes out of the economy goes back in in other tax cuts, making it truly revenue neutral.

This would actually retain all of the benefit that the government's current plan has for the environment, but I think it would very much improve the effect of the government's current plan on the rest of the economy by making sure that the dollars go back into the economy. Then it's truly revenue neutral. The dollars would be there to provide businesses with incentives to spend. It would give households the ability to – somewhere in the economy there would be goods and services bought, which would create jobs for people, and of course they would work at those jobs, collect a paycheque, and spend money further into the economy as well. We know this is kind of important.

There are other examples where plans like this have been successful, and probably the most obvious one and the one closest to here is in British Columbia. Well, let's come back home here for a minute, and I'll move on to British Columbia in a little bit.

I don't doubt that the intentions of many members of the government were good with Bill 20, but the Progressive Conservatives believe that climate change is real. We know this and you know this because a decade ago, when we were in government, we of course instituted the first price on carbon, an industrial price on carbon, the first jurisdiction to do so in North America. It looked to address the emissions intensity of our largest emitters and put a price on what they emit, thereby incenting them to emit less.

Madam Chair, the carbon tax as it currently exists will not work for Alberta or Albertans. Page 6 of the government's own budget shows that more than \$6 billion of the carbon tax revenue over the next five years will be used for government priorities, projects, and initiatives. Another way to say the same thing, put differently, is that the government is only returning 29 per cent of carbon tax revenue to Albertans.

If the government truly wanted to avoid expensive and cumbersome procedures, there's a simpler answer. You could have the same emissions reductions, whatever they will be, purely related to a price on carbon, and again we could follow the lead of British Columbia. This is intended, not exactly but in a manner, to use that model, which has been somewhat successful. British Columbia put in their revenue-neutral carbon tax in 2008. Under their system every dollar earned through the tax is returned to the people through a tax cut. Within the confines and deliberation of Bill 20, a bill that we believe will pass because the government has a majority, we think that this is the best way to make the bill more manageable for all Albertans.

**8:20**

Really, again, we think the carbon tax is too aggressive on Albertans. It takes too much money out of the economy, too much money out of households, too much money from businesses, too much money, actually, from nonprofits and schools, too much money from seniors with what they have to pay for things, too much money from Albertans that have a low income.

Making the tax, or the levy, if the government prefers, revenue neutral, we think, would well and truly improve what would happen. It would make the carbon tax more efficient and transparent and ensure that government finds other ways to fund their other projects, potentially through finding efficiencies, giving government employees, through our PC caucus, through our Engage process, the \$4 billion challenge, or going straight to the government employees themselves and saying: how could you recommend that we save money in each department and each ministry? We believe that doing this is what good legislators ought to do to meet the government's goal of making the environment better but taking better care of the economy while so doing.

One of the outcomes from what British Columbia has experienced: their per capita use of fossil fuels decreased by 17 per cent during the first four years after their price on carbon. I know that in the current government the minister has said that they're not expecting a real curve or bend in emissions here till 2030. When you think about it, this would actually improve the government's current plan for environmental improvement over if they don't support the current amendment before the Legislative Assembly, Madam Chair, so I think it meets the government's goal of wanting to do something good for the environment.

Over the same period in British Columbia per capita greenhouse gas emissions declined by approximately 10 per cent right across the province. Statistics seem to show for British Columbia that because their carbon tax is revenue neutral, they've actually returned more money through tax cuts and rebates than they had collected in the scheme's revenue. Kind of a pleasant surprise for British Columbia, and wouldn't it be nice if Albertans could experience a similar



pleasant surprise, where the tax reductions may turn out to be more than the taxes taken out of the system, which is a good way to grow the economy, which the government has said they want to do.

The idea is to better achieve the results the government wants, give Albertans a better chance to grow their economy, to retain their jobs, to have a great quality of life, and indeed to meet those environmental targets that the government says often that they're very fond of. The tax as it's currently written here, without this change, will promote carbon leakage, which means you'll have people buying goods and services from other jurisdictions and bringing them here, from places that don't have the artificial inflation that the government's carbon tax would cause. It wouldn't encourage people to leave the province because we believe that by taking less money out of the economy, there would be more jobs and more opportunities for them here.

Madam Chair, this would fix what I think is a major flaw in Bill 20, and the nice thing about it is that the government would be able to meet the objectives that they want in terms of improving the environment and improving the economy. This will do everything that the government's unamended bill will do for the environment, but this will do a lot more for the economy.

With that, I will sit down and listen to the debate and discussion and encourage all members of the House to seriously consider what is intended to be an improvement to the current Bill 20.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to enthusiastically support this amendment. It is one of the core tenets of the Alberta Party's climate change plan, called Alberta's Contribution, which I have a copy of here for any member who would like to read it. I've given out many here in the last few days. We do have a plan for climate change, and I think that it's important to be able to say that as either a government or an opposition.

You know, in all seriousness, it is important, I think, that Alberta take action on climate change. But even being in support of a carbon tax, I think it's very important to be in support of the right carbon tax. One of the most important aspects of that, in my opinion and, I think, in the opinion of many Albertans and many experts, is revenue neutrality. This carbon tax as proposed by this government is in no way revenue neutral. There's talk of revenue recycling, which seems to be some new terminology, that I've never heard before. But the idea of a revenue-neutral carbon tax, where all of the dollars are sent back to Albertans through direct tax cuts, I think, is a very important aspect of any carbon plan so that it is not perceived, either in perception or reality, as a tax grab.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, who moved this amendment, talked about B.C.'s plans, and I'd like to talk about B.C.'s plans here in a little bit more detail. I have a recent budget from the province of British Columbia – and I think this is very informative in terms of what revenue neutrality really means – and I quote from the B.C. budget: "Revenue neutrality means that tax reductions must be provided that fully return the estimated revenue from the carbon tax to taxpayers in each fiscal year." You tell me if, quote, unquote, revenue recycling meets that test. It doesn't in any way. It does not. This amendment, on the other hand, would allow that test to be met.

When the province of British Columbia puts out its budget every year, they do a carbon tax report and plan, where they run down in great detail – all of us in this House know exactly the level of detail that a budget will go into – where that money in the carbon tax comes from and where that money goes to and how it is spent.

Some of the things that B.C. does – and I really admire their transparency here. That is another problem I have with Bill 20, a total lack of transparency. It is simply a framework that allows this government to implement policy through regulation at some point, undetermined, in the future. I have a very difficult time supporting a bill where I don't know what the outcome is going to be. When you have a government that says, "Trust me; it'll be fine," my first instinct is to not trust the government. I want data. I want numbers. I want details. I'd love to see draft regulations. That would be wonderful. We had a debate earlier today where we at least saw some draft regulations. I'd love to see that for Bill 20. I don't expect that'll be forthcoming.

Here are some of the things that B.C.'s revenue-neutral carbon tax report and plan covers. They have a B.C. low-income climate action tax credit. They have a reduction of 5 per cent in the first two personal income tax rates. There's a northern and rural homeowner benefit of \$200, a B.C. seniors' home renovation tax credit, a small-business venture tax credit, a training tax credit for individuals. On the business side the general corporate income tax is reduced from 12 to 11 per cent and then to 10.5 per cent and then to 10 per cent effective January 1, 2011, and increased again to 11 per cent in 2013. I seem to remember some history around that one. The small-business corporate income tax rate is reduced. The corporate income tax small-business threshold is increased from \$400,000 to \$500,000. These are very specific items that then have the associated amount of money that goes back to British Columbians as a result of making their carbon tax truly revenue neutral.

I'll continue. An industrial property tax credit, an industrial property tax credit for school taxes, school property taxes reduced by 50 per cent, an interactive digital media tax credit, a training tax credit for businesses, a film incentive B.C. tax credit, a production services tax credit: all of these are things that result directly from the \$1.1 billion that British Columbia collected. I believe I have an older budget – I believe the budget I'm looking at is for 2014 – but the principle stands. This is very clear and explicit and specific about how the province of British Columbia returns the carbon tax in a truly revenue-neutral way to the people of British Columbia.

8:30

Now, this is not something that we have seen in anywhere near that level of detail in this budget. What we have are line items that say things like \$645 million for Energy Efficiency Alberta over five years. For what? What is that going to be? Is it going to be a home renovation tax credit? Is it going to be discounts on high-efficiency furnaces? Is it going to be rebates for better windows? Is it going to be an electric vehicle credit? What's it going to be? Is it going to be geothermal heating installations? What is it going to be? How do we know that that \$645 million is going to be well spent? We don't know that, and Albertans don't know that. Those are the questions that I'm getting from my constituents and from the people of Alberta. What I would expect to see from this government is a very detailed, by line item, itemized accounting of how the carbon tax will be revenue neutral.

Now, I remind the government once again, in closing, before I hear from some other hon. members on their views on this issue, that I am in favour of a carbon tax. I believe the climate science, I believe that climate change is human caused, and I believe that Alberta has not only an opportunity but an obligation to address it. But we have to get it right. If we don't get it right, Albertans will not have faith in the carbon tax.

For those who don't know their history, our friends in Australia tried this. They rolled out a carbon tax, that was very unpopular,

and had to roll it back because they didn't do their homework ahead of time.

So what I would encourage this government to do is to think very long and hard about accepting this amendment, making your carbon tax truly revenue neutral. If you do that, the closer you get to that, I'm certainly much more inclined to support a carbon tax that is well and truly revenue neutral.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to the amendment put forward by my hon. colleague in the third party to substitute the following:

The revenue from the carbon levy may only be used to provide rebates or adjustments related to the carbon levy to consumers, businesses and communities, including adjustments in the form of tax credits or tax rate reductions.

Now, this amendment would limit the revenue from the carbon tax, which may be better used, and ensure a somewhat better revenue management structure compared to what is currently in the bill. Let me be perfectly clear, Madam Chair, that this is the wrong tax at the wrong time. But what this amendment will do is that it will eliminate the creation of the giant green slush fund that the current bill tries to create. The amendment will make this huge tax that the NDP has seen fit to impose on all Albertans marginally less egregious in the long run.

Currently the wording under section 3(2)(a) is extremely vague. What exactly does – I hope that you write this down because I'm truly looking for an answer – “initiatives related to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases” mean? It really could mean anything, and therein lies the problem. It could mean money going to the NDP's friends to study how to mitigate carbon. It could mean sending money to the anti oil sands Pembina Institute for studies of such. It could mean hundreds of millions of dollars spent on outreach projects dreamed up by the minister's college pals at Greenpeace. Really, we have no idea what the NDP has planned for this.

Madam Chair, this leaves the NDP in charge of a vague, brand new, billion-dollar fund with no accountability. And that in the hands of any government is very, very scary. “Trust us; we're the government,” right? Yeah.

Madam Chair, we've seen this with Bill 6 and now with Bill 20. The NDP fails to consult. It failed to consult farmers on Bill 6, and it failed to consult anyone on the carbon tax. You may have done the legwork before, a bit, but when the bill actually came out, you didn't put it back to the people to consult. If you did, that's sort of a breach of privilege because we just recently saw this, so I'd have some concerns there as well.

You didn't even consult your own Finance department to come up with an economic impact study on this tax. So it's pretty clear, Madam Chair, that this NDP government will do what they want, without consulting anyone, whenever they want. Leaving this vague wording in the bill just gives the NDP further wiggle room to spend the money on anything that could be related to carbon emissions, absolutely anything. This is mind boggling. This is ridiculous, unworkable, wasteful government programs that we might see come down the pipe. No accountability. This amendment that has been proposed would prevent the NDP from using any of these new revenues to come up with ridiculous, unworkable schemes with carbon tax money. Let's be clear. Let's be honest. Let's be straightforward. That's what Albertans want to hear.

Instead, that money will be used for rebates to consumers, businesses, and communities that are hit hard and for tax credits that might offset some of the damage that this tax will do to the entire economy. This amendment would put money back in the pockets of Albertans.

Now, of course, we in the Wildrose have long maintained that lower income families will be hurt most by this tax. The rebate will not fix that scenario. They're the ones who wince at the gas pumps already right now. We talked about this earlier today. That extra \$10 increase for one bus pass this year has a significant impact on families. They're the ones who worry about their busing fees, and the NDP refuses to believe this. However, this amendment will lead to more money in poor families' pockets and less money in creating bureaucracy, creating red tape, and creating new government programs.

Unfortunately, what this amendment cannot do is to undo all the economic damage imposed by implementing a \$3 billion tax grab during a recession which has already caused many in Alberta to lose their jobs and their sources of income. I believe there's more to come once this is implemented. As I've said before and I'll say again: this is the wrong tax at the wrong time, Madam Chair.

As the Alberta NDP has noted, Alberta is not the only place with a proposed carbon tax. B.C. has a carbon tax, as we all know. However, in a comparison between the two provinces B.C.'s tax is slightly easier to stomach because it does not allow for the creation of a massive government boondoggle with the carbon tax revenue. Now, why might this be? Well, first of all, B.C.'s carbon tax also only pulls about \$1 billion out of their economy, even with a bigger population, where ours will pull out closer to \$3 billion. Madam Chair, the part that is related to this amendment is the way they set theirs up to strictly guard against it being used to fund more government spending. That's extremely important not only to myself and my colleagues but to Albertans.

Now, this is probably because British Columbians had quite a lot of experience with NDP-funded government boondoggles back when the NDP was in power, in the 1990s. Any British Columbian could go on at great length about the waste and mismanagement that the B.C. NDP imposed on that province. It is no wonder that British Columbians sent them back to the political wilderness for a period that is now just over 15 years. And 18 years from now we will be saying the same thing.

One of the B.C. NDP's worst boondoggles was the fast ferries project. The B.C. NDP decided to speed up the crossing to and from Vancouver Island. In the process they managed to build new ships that were double the cost, years overdue, and were so unreliable and difficult to load with vehicles that any gains made by a faster crossing were negated. Even an NDP government minister called the ferries a failed experiment. We can stop this before you have to come back and admit to the failed experiment. What this B.C. NDP minister neglected to add was that the NDP's risky experiment had cost the taxpayers of B.C. literally hundreds of millions of dollars. Just think of all the other wonderful programming that we could finance with that kind of money.

**8:40**

Alberta is facing a \$10.4 billion deficit right now thanks to the NDP government. What Alberta does not have the money to do is to create a green slush fund that will go into funding risky NDP experiments. I don't want to see my province in that state, Madam Chair. We've seen how the NDP experiments end in other provinces right across this country: millions of dollars wasted, stuff that doesn't work, cost overruns, work delays. I could go on and on and on.

This amendment will ensure that money from the ill-conceived, ill-thought-out, and ill-timed carbon tax will at least make its way back to Albertans in some way, shape, or form and not to the government or those with a so-called NDP mindset or world view. This will not make the tax good, as has been documented extensively by our members here in the Official Opposition. Imposing a regressive \$3 billion carbon tax during a recession is one of the most foolish things anyone could do right now. This amendment is a good amendment in that it could at least protect taxpayers from the fast ferries, like the B.C. NDP's boondoggle, using carbon tax money. We may save Albertans one NDP misstep with this amendment, and that's what the goal of this amendment is.

Madam Chair, I support this amendment. I urge all members in the House to support this amendment. Let's make this the best this scenario could possibly be. It's okay to accept an amendment in this House from a nongovernment member. It's a good amendment. I certainly think this side of the House is likely in agreement with this amendment, so you would have the support there.

This is a very damaging tax in front of us, that hasn't had any studies. There have been no economic impact studies. It's going to be really hard for the government members and all members of this House to lend a shoulder to cry on to our constituents, Madam Chair, when they're not going to be able to afford to live in Alberta, and that's for the ones that choose to stay. I really hope people do. I really hope that Albertans stay here and hold on and stand up and have their voices heard. I hope that representatives are listening to their constituents as we were all elected to do, as we all promised to do when we got elected. The constituents in Airdrie are certainly telling me: "We do not want this carbon tax. We cannot afford this carbon tax. It will hurt us extensively. Here's exactly how this is going to impact my company, my industry. My employer has already said that this is what's coming down the line, so expect some cutbacks."

This is very, very dangerous, and perhaps with this amendment to make it revenue neutral, we can achieve both goals of being responsible for our environment and being responsible to the people that live in this province. I urge all members of this House to read it, to ask questions, to maybe answer some questions. I mean, I certainly have some concerns about the direction of the carbon tax funds. Where are these going? We don't know.

We know that the NDP government is an ideological government. Right across this country they have played games with taxpayer dollars, have failed over and over and over again, and now we have this problem here. Maybe, Madam Chair, this NDP government is just a little bit better than the other ones. Maybe they're a little bit better. [interjections]

You know, some on the government side say that they don't support the Leap Manifesto, that was passed by their party. Some. Some may say that only two of their members may have actually spoken out against it publically when they had the opportunity in front of their members. [interjections] Some may say that it's a little bit — you can see why I have issues trusting this government, Madam Chair, and trusting that this government will actually use the carbon tax dollars for the greater good . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for Airdrie has the floor, please.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I was just saying that it's hard to trust a government that passed the Leap Manifesto, which very clearly goes against the economic driving force in this province, yet this bill says: "Don't worry. We're the government; trust us. We're going to do great things with these dollars, with these hard-earned dollars. It's okay if some jobs

are lost. It's okay if some people take pay cuts, you know. Don't worry. We're going to be really responsible with this, but we're not going to tell you what we're going to do with this."

This amendment offers an opportunity for the \$3 billion to not only offset the carbon footprint but to not harm the people as much as it would without an amendment like this. It's extremely important, when we create pieces of legislation, that we thoughtfully debate, and this is what this is about. This is about me trying to change your mind, you trying to change my mind. I haven't heard anything other than a very one-sided argument from the NDP government, which doesn't involve any impact on the people that it absolutely will impact.

I have a hard time understanding why we can't achieve both goals, why we can't be proper stewards of our environment and proper stewards of the taxpayer purse. I just don't understand why we can't do both. This amendment offers that opportunity to make this bill a little less worse than it is but to come to a middle ground. I kind of think that's what our constituents would say to us, too; don't you think? Oh, wait. They have. "Find a middle ground. Work with the government. We should work together. We should get things done for the betterment of people."

Madam Chair, I feel like this government just doesn't care. They don't care about the constituents of mine in Airdrie. Airdrie feels like this government just doesn't care. They are really hurt by the implications of this carbon tax. Just today I was messaging with a friend of mine who works at a trucking company, which has gone very, very lean right now already. They're at barebones staff. She said, "We are just calculating the impacts of this carbon tax, and I'm scared. I am the only administrative staff left, and I may not have a job in 2017." I'm not quite sure who else is hiring at this point. Coupled with so many ideological policies from this government, there are not very many avenues to go.

This amendment offers the opportunity to make this bill just a little less worse. Until this government can show an economic impact study on the price of this carbon tax, I really feel that this should be put on hold. This government has no evidence of the impact that it will have on people, that it will have on the economy. It is irresponsible of any government to do something so significant but fail to produce any evidence.

I am not fearmongering, Madam Chair, like the NDP government claims this side to be. You hear that. They don't know what else to do because they can't produce any evidence on the impact of this carbon tax on the people, so they're scared. I think they're going to be a little bit upset when their constituents start talking to them and they can actually hear them. They will understand the impact on people's lives, people's families, people's children, and the generations to come. I am very concerned.

8:50

I would actually encourage the government to let this House know what their constituents have been saying about the economic impact on their lives. That is the side of the conversation that this government has yet to answer ever, and it's so disheartening. Like I said earlier, Madam Chair, this NDP government was perceived to be the government that really, truly cared about people in all ways, shapes, and forms, and this is the kind of bill that goes against all of that.

Things are tight. Budgets are tight. I don't know if you know what it's like to barely make ends meet and know what an extra \$20, \$50, \$100 is, know what an extra \$1,000, \$2,000 is, what kind of impact that has on your yearly budget. You will never catch up. You will never make ends meet. There are many people in those situations here today that are getting worse because this mess isn't stopping. This train wreck appears to have no end.

Let's throw Albertans a bone. Let's make this a revenue-neutral tax. This is extremely important to consider. Think about it, listen – I don't know – maybe open your minds because this is very serious stuff. We cannot be doing experiments on our province.

I urge all members of this House . . .

**The Chair:** I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, followed by Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do want to get some things straight here. Some hon. members introduced amendments, and I think there are some misconceptions about what's going on here. When we look at this amendment, it says: "The revenue from the carbon levy may only be used" for certain means. What this does is that it fundamentally changes what we are trying to do with this bill. This bill is something that has come out of a report, that has been through extensive consultation processes, including over 25,000 submissions, over 920 people attending public open houses, and over 535 submissions from NGOs and industry. These ideas were all compiled and boiled down by renowned economists like Andrew Leach, people from the industry like Gordon Lambert, and people that have great economic expertise like Linda Coady.

When we look at this, Madam Chair, we can say that the plan that's presented here and the way in which it's being implemented is actually very tangible and very core to a very strong message. It's a very strong bill that's going to be able to accomplish a lot of things. I think what this amendment does is that it really takes away from this made-in-Alberta solution. It really takes away from all the very hard work that the climate leadership panel had generated with the report, and it takes away from the revenue recycling that we're going to be seeing being done through the existing programs that are in the bill.

We know that we're going to be creating over 3,000 jobs by investments of over \$6.2 billion in the economy. Madam Chair, \$3.4 billion of that is going to be for large-scale renewable energy resources, bioenergy and technologies; \$2.2 billion of that is going to be for green infrastructure like transit opportunities across the province; and \$645 million of that money is going to be for energy efficiency corporations over the next five years.

When we look at all these things as a whole and the revenue recycling that's going in, this amendment would really take away from our ability to do that, take away from the government's ability to really invest in the economy and create those 3,000 jobs we're talking about for Albertans. We're talking about something that really fundamentally changes how we're approaching the issue, how we're approaching climate change and using the levy as a way to diversify our economy, as a way to move forward in a meaningful way on climate change in a thoughtful and carefully thought-out way that we see. There were experts from the economy, there were experts from industry, there were experts from NGOs. Madam Chair, there was quite a significant amount of consultation and development that went into this legislation. There was quite a significant amount of consultation.

When we look at all these things together, we say that absolutely we agree with, for example, Canada's Ecofiscal Commission, who uses the term "revenue recycling" quite extensively because we know that the term "revenue recycling" really does mean that we are spending that money back into Alberta's economy. That's the number one thing we want to talk about when we speak about the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. It's that this money that we are collecting from the levy is absolutely going to be spent into our economy. It's going to develop our environment, it's going to develop our industry, and it's going to develop and work with our partners. That's why we have endorsements from people like the

concrete associations and endorsements from people like Jack Mintz, who are talking about how a carbon levy, when you're looking at large investments in Alberta, is absolutely something that you want because it's a fixed price that we know about going forward in the future.

Madam Chair, what this amendment would do is take away a lot of those assurances. What this amendment would do is take away a lot of the ability for us to plan for the long term as a government, to ensure that there are these reliable, renewable technologies being invested in, to ensure that we are supporting Albertans by doing things like investing in the energy efficiency corporation. It would take away from our ability to ensure that we are rebating to two-thirds of Albertans. Sixty per cent will be receiving a full or greater than full rebate, and up to 66 per cent of people will be receiving a partial rebate.

Madam Chair, it's very important that we are able to do all these investments and we are able to do all these things to help Albertans across the board in a very dynamic manner as we move forward with this legislation and move forward with things like working on performance standards and whatnot. What this amendment does is take away government's ability to do that. I think that would be detrimental to all members of this House if we took away the ability to invest in our economy and took away the ability to really invest in diversification because, again, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act is absolutely something that's there to help improve Alberta's climate leadership and improve on Alberta's reputation internationally and get our product to market. But none of that's going to do anything for us if we can't use those funds to then invest into our economy.

Madam Chair, those investments are what is going to create a green market, a green economy, and green energy technologies that we can move forward with as we move forward with climate leadership. I think it's really important that we keep all these things in mind and we definitely shape the conversation and say that this amendment really does fundamentally change what the climate leadership plan would be able to accomplish. This amendment would take fundamentally away from what the climate leadership plan would be able to do with investments, would be able to do with the energy efficiency corporation, would take away from what the government would be able to do to help Albertans' lives, to help Alberta's reputation internationally, to help Albertans reduce their emissions and improve their health. What we're talking about here, quite frankly, is that this amendment is short-sighted and that we cannot move forward on the energy efficiency programs and on the green renewables programs that Albertans, frankly, want.

This is really important because if members across the way vote for this amendment, then what we're going to see is that the ability of the government to achieve what we have set out to do, which has been named internationally as a leader in climate change across the world – it's been referenced by the President of the United States of America. It's been referenced by the Prime Minister here in Canada. What this amendment would do would be to take away from all that hard work that's been done. It would take away from all the amazing opportunities, the awards that the government has received for social policy. It would take away from all these things. I know members across the way wouldn't want to impede the ability to invest in our economy and to create those diversified markets because we understand that we have to get off the revenue roller coaster of the traditional revenue streams.

I do want to boil it down to this. The program that the Climate Leadership Implementation Act has already does address all these issues through things like revenue recycling, diversifying the economy through investments, the Alberta energy efficiency corporation. All these things taken together cannot really be

possible with the amendment. I think the amendment doesn't necessarily address what this bill is actually trying to do, and for that reason, Madam Chair, I really do implore and I urge all my hon. colleagues from both sides of the aisle to please vote this down so that we can go forward with the great climate leadership programming that we're going to be rolling out this summer.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's certainly a challenge to speak after the Member for Edmonton-South West, just the sheer youthful energy of his address, not to mention the words per minute that would rival any auctioneer at Alberta's many auction marts. I would like to thank him for his remarks, and I do appreciate his passion on the subject.

9:00

Madam Chair, if you would allow me just a minute or two, I would like to just say that I note that the Premier has arrived this evening, and I know that she spent . . . [interjections] I don't want to get two points of order in one day.

**An Hon. Member:** Go for four.

**Dr. Starke:** Go for four.

I do just want to say on behalf of the members of our party – I think I speak on behalf of all Albertans – that I know that she was in Fort McMurray earlier today, and I just want to thank her on behalf of all Albertans for her leadership. I said this, Madam Premier, in estimates, where, of course, you had to be absent. The Deputy Premier sat in very admirably on your behalf. Both yourself and the Leader of the Official Opposition have shown tremendous grace under fire, and I do appreciate that leadership. I know from some degree of personal experience, although I wasn't nearly as directly involved three years ago during the southern Alberta floods where, you know, Albertans truly did face another great crisis, that we can all be proud of all Albertans for the efforts that they made and the contributions from all Albertans. I thank you, Premier.

Madam Chair, I do want to move on to the discussion on the amendment here this evening, and I just want to make a couple of things very clear from the outset. I've not yet had the opportunity to speak on Bill 20, and it seems that when we make addresses on this particular issue, it has now become necessary to make a certain amount of a disclaimer statement or some sort of mea culpa statement at the beginning of our address. I want to say from the outset that as a person who has been involved very much in a scientific profession over the course of my career, I've looked at the evidence, and I believe that climate change is real. I think the scientific evidence is quite compelling in that direction.

You know, even when sometimes there's conflicting scientific evidence, I look at evidence from my own career, if I can beg the indulgence of the Assembly to hear one more boring veterinarian story. Where I see it, actually, which is kind of interesting, is that when I was in veterinary school in the late '70s, early '80s, one of the things that we were told quite frequently – believe it or not, it was on the subject of parasitology – was that in western Canada, because of our climate, there was a whole long list of parasites that we really didn't have to worry about because no self-respecting parasite would live in our climate because it was simply too cold and too dry and it just did not support the presence of many parasites. So there was a long list of diseases that we were told that we would likely never encounter, never experience, during the course of our professional careers if we practised somewhere in the

prairies of Alberta. That's where I spent my entire veterinary career, in Lloydminster.

But what I actually found in the course of 1983 to 2011 was a difference in the types of parasites and the distribution and the range of the parasites that we saw. I'll use one simple example, the simple dog flea. Now, fleas are a very common parasite, but they are not common in western Canada, or at least they didn't use to be common in western Canada. There was a time in the mid-80s where the only fleas I ever saw on a patient were on the two miserable chihuahuas that came every year to Lloydminster with the midway that came to the Lloydminster fair, and for one reason or another the lady from Texas that owned these two miserable chihuahuas brought them to see me every year. After they tried to bite me, I would have to pick the fleas off these two dogs. That wasn't necessarily really pleasant, but the owner came and sought veterinary assistance, so I provided that.

What's interesting is that that was the only patient at that time that I can ever remember seeing fleas on. We were told in school: "You won't see fleas in western Canada. You'll see them maybe in the lower mainland, but you won't see them in western Canada." Lo and behold, over the course of 30 years in veterinary practice we started seeing dogs with fleas. We saw it in farm dogs mostly, and we'd usually only see it in the late summer – August, September, maybe into October – and then once the first killing frost came, the fleas were gone. Then over time we saw more and more fleas. We saw it year-round. We saw it not just in farm dogs; we saw it in domestic indoor dogs. It's a concern because, of course, fleas cause a great deal of irritation and a lot of skin, dermatology problems. You know, I saw that.

It wasn't just fleas. There were a number of other things, but it was primarily in the field of parasitology. Given that parasites are very specific in terms of what kind of climatic conditions they can survive in and that I saw in a span of 28 years a difference in the parasites I was seeing, just from that, to me, at least from a veterinarian's standpoint, from a simple cow doctor from Lloydminster, climate change was something real.

That's my perspective on climate change. You know, I would really appreciate it if members during the course of this debate don't ever say that I doubt the science of climate change or anything like that.

The second part, of course, of the equation is anthropogenic climate change. What effect is man having on the overall climate change effect? Madam Chair, I'll suffice to say on that matter that, quite frankly, it is difficult to perhaps know exactly what the effects are. That exact answer probably won't be known until all of us are gone from this Earth. But the truth of the matter is that we can't afford to make the mistake that we might be wrong. What I mean by that is that we cannot afford to not take action because the consequences of doing that in case we're wrong are catastrophic. It behooves us as occupiers of this planet to take care of the planet.

You know, Madam Speaker, you would certainly remember this. In the '80s our greatest threat was the tensions at the conclusion or the waning years of the Cold War. There were days that, literally, I would go to bed wondering if we would wake up only to find that the big one had started. There was so much tension between the United States and the Soviet Union in the days of Yuri Andropov and Ronald Reagan, and we wondered if that would be what finally put an end to our Earth. Thankfully, that never happened, and we backed away from midnight on the doomsday clock.

But now a new threat is on our planet. Quite frankly, that threat is not a global war threat. I believe that that has waned somewhat. I think the greatest threat that our planet as a whole faces right now is an environmental threat. We aren't going to bomb ourselves off

this planet; we're going to poison the planet to a point that the planet will no longer be habitable. So it does behoove us all to take the kinds of measures that we can that will make a difference, to try to go about making a difference in climate change. I'm not against the idea of trying to do something positive to address climate change. You know? This is perhaps where the greatest divergence is: what can you do, what is the most effective way to do it, and what is a way to do it that will work?

Now, the government has presented a plan. This is clearly a plan that, you know, came about as a result of the Leach report, which really was a well-done overall report. Lots of consultation, lots of input, certainly.

In terms of the four major tenets we can debate on some of them. Certainly, one that I have absolutely no debate on is to reduce the production and venting of methane. Methane is 27 times more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. Quite frankly, we have to address issues like flaring, like venting. We are a petroleum producer. Quite frankly, I think we almost have to put more of an emphasis on methane reduction, especially as it relates to our oil and gas production in this province. I believe that that would make a huge difference in terms of our contribution overall to greenhouse gases. I know that people in my constituency that work in the oil and gas industry are frustrated that we are not doing more about the venting of waste gases.

You know, we got rid of flaring – I get that, and I understand that – but replacing flaring with venting is . . .

**An Hon. Member:** It would make it worse.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, in many ways you're absolutely right. In fact, our local gas utility in the county of Vermilion River won an ecological award for devising a system whereby vent gases could be collected and actually are used to provide heating, natural gas, to a hamlet in my constituency. Now, it's a very small hamlet, not a large population. But that was something that they did, and, you know, clearly, they feel that that's something that could and should be done on a larger scale. I'm pleased with that aspect of it.

**9:10**

This amendment specifically addresses the revenue neutrality. This is something that is talked about early in the budget, early in the government's fiscal plan. On page 6 there's a breakdown of the carbon levy. I'll call it a levy because that's what it says here. You know, we can call it whatever we want. That levy is scheduled to collect \$8.7 billion in net revenue. Now, I will note and I have to confess that I find it a little bit amusing that the adjustment in the small-business tax from 3 to 2 per cent is taken out against the levy. I find that rather interesting because, really, how that all of a sudden became part of the overall climate leadership plan, I'm not entirely certain.

The other thing I'll just say parenthetically that I find curious and interesting is that when the small-business tax was cut from 3 to 2 per cent, the government is very proud of saying that that is a 33 per cent tax cut, which, you know, certainly it is. But when you increase corporate taxes from 10 to 12 per cent, which is a 20 per cent increase, you call that a 2 per cent increase. [interjections] No, I'm not going to suggest anything about the relative difficulty of mathematics. That can get us into trouble.

When you increase the corporate tax from 10 to 12 per cent, that's not a 2 per cent increase; that's a 12 per cent increase.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Twenty.

**Dr. Starke:** Twenty per cent increase. Sorry. Get that right. When you increase the highest margin of personal income tax from 10 to

15 per cent, that's not a 5 per cent increase; that's a 50 per cent increase. Let's make sure that when we're talking about these things, we get the math the same way both directions. It may be attractive to talk about a 33 per cent tax cut. I understand that, and that math is quite correct. But if you're going to talk about a 33 per cent tax cut, you'd better talk about a 20 per cent tax increase, because that's what it is.

As we move in to the breakdown on the climate leadership plan, I note that 71 per cent of the spending on the \$8.7 billion that's going to be collected over the next five years goes into very vague and very undefined spending like Green Infrastructure (Capital). Some \$3.4 billion over the next five years is going into something called Other Investment. Madam Chair, that, quite frankly, is not good enough for Albertans. That level of detail is not good enough.

You know, \$3.4 billion here is very close to the amount – if you go to page 50 of this document, all of the spending on all health care facilities capital for the next five years in the province is a total of \$3.473 billion. When I tell constituents that something called Other Investment is going to have the same amount of spending over the next five years, funded through the carbon levy, as all of the health care facilities in the province for the next five years, people are angry. If nothing else, they want to know what exactly is going to be bought with this Other Investment.

The list of capital projects in the capital plan is very well laid out on page 50, all of the different community hospitals and clinics and that sort of thing. It's well laid out, yet Other Investment is all we get. Other Investment. Those are the kinds of, if you want, vagaries that create a great deal of concern. That is why, as my friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays has moved, we believe that instead of placing all of these funds and all of this money into the hands of the government when it has been so poorly laid out, so poorly characterized, it is important that this levy be truly revenue neutral, as it has been in British Columbia. It has allowed for meaningful reductions in their consumption of fossil fuels. That surely must be the goal of this government.

I would urge members, therefore, to support this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A1?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, Madam Chair, I rise tonight on behalf of the wonderful people of the magnificent riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake to speak in favour of this amendment put forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-South East although I am going to bring up one issue that I do have with it. But I'm willing to overlook this one issue that I do have with it. If we just read briefly the amendment:

the revenue from the carbon levy may only be used to provide rebates or adjustments related to the carbon levy to consumers, businesses and communities, including adjustments in the form of tax credits or tax rate reductions.

I take issue with the issue of tax credits, Madam Chair. Generally speaking, tax credits only get applied against profit for businesses. As you know, at least as I hope all the hon. members know, profit is going to be scarce this year and next year and probably the year after that. So offering a tax credit to a company that actually can't use that tax credit because, frankly, they have no profit anyway is really a moot point to them. It's not that attractive, and it's not going to accomplish anything for those small and medium-sized enterprises. So that's the issue that I have with tax credits as being any form of incentive for anything to do with this particular amendment.

Now, if we all think back to when this government rolled out their first discussions, I'll say, on their climate leadership plan, they were using the term "revenue neutral," and it's been pointed out in this

House on numerous occasions just how false that statement really was, that, in fact, there was nothing revenue neutral about it. I find it kind of interesting that the hon. member who was speaking earlier here so passionately was saying that this amendment was short sighted.

This amendment is an attempt to take this bill and move it as close as can be had toward being revenue neutral. It can't get this bill all the way there because, really, frankly, if you read the bill through and you have a look at it from the point of view of, say, a chartered management accountant that might look at it – I've talked to some of the stakeholders out there in industry that have read through this bill. Their financial experts have read through it, and we've talked about it at length. Frankly, in my opinion and in their opinion there isn't any way to get this bill all the way towards revenue neutrality without actually gutting it completely, just taking it from the title and reworking the whole thing, you know, kind of like a car that's just beyond repair: just jack up the horn and put a new car under it.

This amendment tries to get us there, towards revenue neutrality. Now, the hon. member that was speaking so passionately earlier was talking about how short sighted this amendment was, yet there have been members on the opposite side, ministers on the opposite side that are pointing to B.C. and their carbon tax as something laudable. The reason it's laudable is because it is revenue neutral. I don't quite understand why the hon. member would be so passionate in calling this amendment short sighted when it's trying to get this bill towards revenue neutrality, which is what we were told we were going to have at the very onset of this conversation many months ago.

Another issue that I have, which was raised already by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, is regarding the \$3.4 billion on the Other list, that it is a big empty box with a \$3.4 billion price tag on it. Unfortunately, the way things are going, this government can put anything in that box they want to once the legislation is passed.

9:20

You know, the good people of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake are a little bit concerned that this government can put \$3.4 billion earmarked towards a box named Other, but they can't seem to find a nickel for an urgently needed urgent care facility in Sylvan Lake. They're concerned about the health of Albertans, shutting down all these coal plants under the excuse, "Well, we're going to save hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of lives," but they can't find a nickel to put an urgent care facility in a community that's just about 22,000 people, a community that has 700,000 to 900,000 tourists coming through it every year.

This government claims that, you know, we're going to saddle Albertans with a multibillion-dollar carbon tax in the name of health. Frankly, that's rather hypocritical, in my opinion, Madam Chair, when we can't come up with – and the ask this year, by the way, for the urgent care committee in Sylvan Lake was \$200,000. That was it, \$200,000. Yet we've got a box marked Other that's going to get \$3.4 billion. And this government is crying the blues to the good people of Sylvan Lake that they can't afford \$200,000.

For goodness' sake, Madam Chair, this government spent \$700,000 advertising the previous failed budget, the one they ended up having to turf after four months; another \$700,000 advertising the climate action plan; and another \$700,000 advertising this last budget. That's \$2.1 million on propaganda, but they can't afford to give the good people of Sylvan Lake \$200,000 for an urgently needed health facility, yet we've got this carbon tax in the name of health. Where exactly are your priorities? This does not compute. It does not compute.

Now, as I said, I support this amendment. And I want to also make it clear that our impassioned colleague across the way – and I'm sorry; I forgot what riding he's from . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Edmonton-South West.

. . . was going on and on and on at length about the climate action plan and how the climate action plan was some sort of an economic assessment. It reveals the hon. member's lack of understanding about what an economic assessment really looks like. The climate action plan is a high-level, almost philosophical document, and that's fine. There were a great deal of people that had a lot of submissions to the panel, but a lot of people making submissions to the panel does not mean that a lot of people's submissions got into the panel's report.

I should also point out that there are elements within the climate panel's report, that this government continues to say is the foundation of Bill 20, that this government is ignoring. Ignoring. For example, I have just a piece of it here on – here we go.

**An Hon. Member:** Do you want me to get IT?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, we'll see how it goes first.

It says:

Without our proposed consumer credits in place, the average Alberta household would likely see additional costs of approximately \$40/month in 2018, rising to \$80/month in 2030 assuming increases. Energy efficiency incentives and financing can reduce consumer energy bills, and programs can be tailored for the distinct needs of low-income households. However, these programs will not provide a sufficient counteraction to the new costs imposed on Albertans. Because of this, we propose a consumer rebate to households in the bottom 60% of income which would be sufficient to offset the impact of carbon pricing on them, which we recommend to be provided via a twice-yearly consumer credit. We also recommend that the government examine means to similarly protect the most impacted small and medium-sized business through similar mechanisms.

It's interesting to note, Madam Chair, that we heard earlier from an hon. member across the aisle that these rebates to low-income families were actually only partial when the climate action panel clearly said that they need to fully offset the impact of the carbon tax. This government is not even following the advice of the experts that they tout repeatedly as being the authors of a report that is the backbone of Bill 20. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The climate action panel laid out a plan, but Bill 20 is not a plan other than a tax plan. That is all it is, a tax plan. Read the table of contents, read through that bill, and what do you see? Taxes, how to collect the taxes, how to apply the taxes, how to punish people who don't pay the taxes. On and on it goes, without any GHG mitigation strategy contained within it whatsoever. To adamantly claim repeatedly that somehow the climate action panel's report lies at the backbone of Bill 20 is a myth, and it's continually being perpetuated by people who either have not read it or don't understand what it has to say.

**Mr. Strankman:** Can't connect the dots.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Cannot connect the dots. Good one.

In addition, we had this government the other day telling Albertans that indirect costs as a result of the carbon tax – and please correct me if I'm wrong – were, I believe, between \$75 and \$100 a year. Well, news flash: the climate action panel said that \$40 to \$80 a month – \$40 to \$80 a month – was going to be the impact.

In addition to that, even if the government's numbers are correct – they are not. But let's just assume for a moment that their \$100 a year in indirect costs is a correct figure. Well, let's just look at that. I believe the city of Calgary has already released numbers – oh, it's got to be even a month ago already now – as to the increases in property taxes. Then we had a couple of school boards releasing numbers as to the increased cost of transportation, broken down on a per-student basis. Just those two figures, Madam Chair, eat up that hundred bucks, and that doesn't include the indirect costs we are going to be facing for food and everything else that we consume, that we produce in this province.

Those figures of \$50 or \$75 or \$100 per year as being the indirect costs to Albertans is another myth being perpetuated by a government that hasn't taken the time and refuses to take the time to actually do an economic impact assessment of the full impact of this carbon tax on every sector in our province and every demographic within our province. That is shameful, that is irresponsible, and it is intellectually lazy on the part of a government to do something like that to our people without going through the process of determining what it's actually going to cost us.

They claim they're going to pull in about \$3 billion out of this thing. Well, we've got – what? – about a million families in this province. Just do the math. Do the math. It's a whole lot more than some \$400 or \$800 or even \$1,000 per family. It's thousands of dollars.

In addition to that, there are what are called lost opportunity costs. Some of those who've taken maybe some basic economics over there understand what I'm talking about, lost opportunity costs. We are going to have some other social costs that are going to be a result of this such as raised unemployment levels. We already tabled in this House two letters from school boards who informed the Minister of Education clearly – clearly – that the carbon tax is going to impact the transportation and facility costs to such an extent that it's going to impact the learning environment in the classroom through reduced staffing levels.

9:30

The carbon tax has now been connected to job loss directly, something that this government continues to claim will not happen. They are the great savior of front-line workers. They are the bastion of teachers and nurses, yet here we have a carbon tax from this government clearly impacting front-line workers. Educational assistants in the classrooms are going to be suffering job loss or cutbacks in hours because the school boards aren't going to have the money. They're instead paying carbon tax back to this government. It's shameful.

This amendment, frankly, in my opinion, doesn't go far enough, and I'm not sure that any single amendment possibly could improve this bill to the point that it needs to be improved. The best improvement for Bill 20 would be to send it to the shredder, frankly, but of course that isn't going to happen. This government has an agenda, and they intend on following through with that agenda roughshod over the people of Alberta whether they want this thing or not.

I am mindful of a poll recently taken. Granted, it was an online poll. Nevertheless, it was a poll, and this government hasn't conducted one of their own as an independent poll to counter it or refute it. That poll indicated that well over 60 per cent – I believe it was 68 per cent; correct me if I'm wrong – of Albertans are not in favour of a carbon tax. They're not in favour of a provincial sales tax by some other name. Albertans never have been. It's, I think, part of our DNA to be tax averse. However, here we are, debating this thing.

In short, Madam Chair, I support the hon. member's amendment. I would hope that all members will support this as we attempt

through amendments to make some kind of improvement to this terrible bill, and I will be voting in favour of this amendment.

I thank you for the time.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It gives me honour, too, to speak to this amendment, and I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-South East for the opportunity to speak to a positive amendment, that we have in front of us. I believe that a majority of the Chamber should be supporting a positive move to this amendment. I think we can all agree that this is a very important piece of legislation and it helps in many ways to make the lives of Albertans better. That's why we're here, to represent our constituents. That's why they've placed us in this Chamber and indeed in this room.

Unfortunately, this amendment is making our lives better only by reducing the harm of the legislation that it amends. What I'm saying is that this amendment only makes Bill 20 a little easier to swallow. There's a cartoon that's gone around that I've seen. It's kind of an interesting adaptation of what I'm talking about. There are two characters in the cartoon holding the piece of legislation. One says, "I don't think I can swallow this piece of legislation," and the other cartoon character says: "Well, you don't have to. It's a suppository."

Even amended this way, Madam Chair, Bill 20 places a burden on our economy and on Albertan families and especially on the most vulnerable people in our communities. This amendment strives to make it less burdensome. This amendment reduces the sting a little bit by enforcing a measure of revenue neutrality on a carbon tax. This ensures that the revenues collected from this new general tax are all returned to taxpayers and especially to those hardest hit and least able to afford it. This revenue will be returned, not simply recycled, a fancy, misleading way to say that it's spent. It will be returned to families struggling to make ends meet in this unfavorable economic environment that Albertans are now facing. It will be returned to charities seeing their operating costs soar. It will be returned to small businesses that want to help diversify our economy but increasingly can only barely stay afloat.

This bill is bringing in the wrong tax at the wrong time. If this amendment is passed, this will still be the wrong tax at the wrong time. A good friend of mine says that it is never the right time to do the wrong thing. If this is the only change we can make to this legislation, Madam Chair, at least it's a change for the better.

This carbon tax is only going to make things worse for Albertan families and businesses, punishing them while they're already struggling with increased costs of living and operating in our province. It will increase those costs of living more. The amendment will ensure that there is more relief to those who will need it most by dedicating all of the revenue collected to tax rebates and credits instead of just some of it. Previous speakers, Madam Chair, have efficiently and effectively described the methodology, how those inaccuracies will be affected.

This has been a pattern of the government, a consistent pattern to make things, in many Albertans' minds, worse, worse for Alberta families, worse for Alberta businesses, worse for Alberta communities, and in many cases worse for Alberta charities. The members opposite can rightly say that they have no control over the global price of oil or the intricate workings of the global economy, but no one has ever made the argument that they do. What this government does have control over is the legislation that they propose here in this House and, with that, the regulations that they implement outside of this Chamber. There are those with tools at their disposal. This is where they have been making things worse



and worse for all Albertans during an economic downturn. This amendment makes one of their policy proposals slightly less harmful.

I don't know whether it should be swallowed or used as a suppository, but they've done things to make things a lot worse already. The scheduled minimum wage hikes are making it even harder for businesses to make ends meet and for students and low-skill workers to find employment, even temporary or part-time. Corporate tax hikes are being passed on to employees, regular, hard-working Albertans, through wage stagnation or cuts, hiring freezes or layoffs. Increased tax and regulation costs to businesses are being passed on to consumers as well through increased prices on the goods that we buy. The hike in fuel taxes has everyone paying more at the pump.

Albertans would have to pay more and more all the time because of this government at a time when they simply can least afford it. Those least able to afford these new costs have to face them every day and exceedingly more, with the high levels of unemployment that we have in the province, Madam Chair. This bill threatens to increase costs on everything. It's making things worse, which, frankly, at this point is really no surprise for legislation coming from this government. Given this, the very least we can do here together is to let Albertan families and businesses know that their hard-earned money collected from them under this new tax will go back completely and unequivocally to Albertans and not to unaccountable initiatives, programs, and projects designated as Other.

This amendment ensures that all the revenue, not just some, is used to fund tax rebates or tax credits. It will ease the burden of the tax on everyday Albertans, the people we're supposed to be looking out for when and while we sit and work in this Chamber. This amendment still leaves the government with the ability and the flexibility to decide who receives a release from the tax. It ensures that more relief can be offered to more people or that those that need it most can receive even more than what the government had originally proposed. It simply removes the ability to divert revenues to new projects and initiatives that the friends and donors of the members opposite might prefer; in other words, Madam Chair, picking winners and losers. The government can't spend this revenue. It will be forced to focus on providing relief to the victims of this legislation – again I repeat: charities, families, school boards, greenhouses, small businesses – instead of giving unneeded subsidies to its special interests and corporate friends.

Let me again be crystal clear, Madam Chair. Bill 20 is meant to implement a tax that's wrong for Alberta at the worst time for Albertans. This amendment goes a little way to making it a little less harmful, and I hope and truly expect that members of the Assembly will support this amendment. It refocuses this tax on making the lives of all Albertans a little better, especially those who need the greatest help.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

9:40

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment, amendment A1, to the Climate Leadership Implementation Act.

Madam Chair, I think that it's become pretty obvious that from our perspective on this side of the House we believe that this is a bad piece of legislation, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, that this is bad because it is filled with clauses and sections that will tax an already weak economy and place burdens on consumers

and businesses and taxpayers and families across this province, because the taxes through a carbon tax on fuel, et cetera, make the price on everything more expensive.

While there's no way that we can support this carbon tax and this piece of legislation, I guess it is our duty to try and ensure that maybe we as the opposition can come together, convince the government to try to make this piece of legislation at least a little better.

I think back to a few weeks ago, when the government tried to place what I would characterize as a hostile amendment before this House and the hon. member down the way from me here had an unfortunate run-in with the Speaker and when this whole House was really not in a very good mood as a result of this hostile amendment. I would not want the government to consider this a hostile amendment. As a matter of fact, I believe that this amendment is a positive amendment, a friendly amendment, that this amendment actually attempts to take a piece of legislation that, from our perspective, is not positive and tries to make it a little better.

We would argue that any revenues that come from this carbon tax should be turned back towards Albertans, that it should be relatively neutral to the province and to the taxpayers and to the citizens of this great province. Taxing Albertans on the essentials of life simply to pad a government's slush fund is unacceptable, especially during a recession. We know that in this recession the citizens of Alberta need as much income in their pockets as possible.

I've stood up in this Assembly many times in the last few weeks explaining to the government just how significantly hard this recession has been on the citizens of Drayton Valley and Devon and in my constituency, the number of businesses that have shut down and have closed down, that we need at this time, rather than taking money out of the pockets of businesses, rather than taking the profits away from business, rather than making it harder on communities to be able to provide the services to the people of this province, rather than making it harder on families to be able to find the money for their mortgages, for their rents, to instead allow the people of this province to maintain and to keep the profits of their labour and to maintain the income that they need to survive.

In this amendment it asks that the revenue from the carbon levy be used only to provide rebates or adjustments related to the carbon levy to consumers, businesses, and communities, including adjustments in the form of tax credits or tax reductions. In other words, the money that is going to be coming in, that \$8.7 billion in funds collected by the carbon tax over, I believe, something like five years, that money that's being pulled out of the pockets of businesses and communities and consumers, Madam Chair, should be turned back into the pockets of these individuals in a way that would allow them to cover the costs they will be facing because of this carbon tax.

If you make it a revenue-neutral tax, then the citizens of this province would have a different view of this carbon tax than what they are presently telling me, which is that if this was a revenue-neutral carbon tax, they wouldn't be as concerned about those schools. They wouldn't be concerned about the transportation costs and the heating costs that schools are going to be facing and how those school boards, that they have elected, are going to be able to deal with the costs of this carbon levy, this carbon tax. They would be less concerned about the fuel costs that they are going to face.

Madam Chair, I don't know if the people on the government benches, that tend to come from the cities, are as concerned about this as my rural constituents are. In a rural constituency, where there is no bus service, where travelling to Edmonton costs a significant

amount of money, when you start piling on carbon taxes, 4.5 cents per litre coming up this January, when you start to place the kinds of taxes that we're going to be placing on diesel, that make it more difficult for the already struggling oil industry to travel across my constituency: these are serious concerns, Madam Chair.

We know that a truly revenue-neutral carbon levy, tax, and a Climate Leadership Implementation Act that is truly revenue neutral would probably have the support of the people of Alberta. Instead, we've heard so many of the hon. members talk about the increased costs that families are going to have. We've argued a little bit about what those costs are, but we know that at the end of the day they're going to be significant, especially in this time of recession. So we need to make sure that in this House we are seriously considering the costs that this tax and the Climate Leadership Implementation Act will place on the citizens of Alberta.

I was appreciative of hearing the hon. member in my caucus here talk about the lost opportunity costs and that idea that when you take money out of the equation and you spend it on one thing, there's a lost opportunity to have that money spent in another area of the economy. Rather than seeing it spent on teachers and aides and doctors and nurses, we're going to be seeing that this money is being placed into a general slush fund. Now, I don't know. That, I would think, would be of concern to the members across the way, but so far we haven't heard anything like that from their lips. We can see – well, at least for me; and I can speak only for me, but I think I can also speak for the members of the opposition – that the case of being able to try to maintain front-line workers in their positions is important.

And how we spend our money: we are going to have a \$10.4 billion deficit this year. It is going to be, I believe, by 2019 somewhere around \$60 billion. How are we going to be able to afford teachers and doctors and aides and nurses? Where is that money going to come from? You can only borrow so much. We know that this government has taken away the debt ceiling. Regardless of that, the economic facts are still there. You can only borrow so much money before it seriously begins to impact the economy of this province and the pocketbooks and the standard of living of the people of this province. If you want teachers in classrooms, if you want nurses in hospitals, if you don't want to see front-line cuts, then you'd better get control of your spending now, and you'd better make sure that the funds that are being accumulated by this government through revenues like the carbon tax are being spent wisely.

9:50

This amendment is asking us to ensure that the monies that we take in come back to businesses and communities and consumers in the form of tax credits or tax rate reductions, which would make it revenue neutral and which would then minimize the negative effect of this carbon tax and this Climate Leadership Implementation Act.

Now, there may be on occasion a place for the government to use some of our tax revenue for seed money, but I believe that one of the differences between our side of the House and the government side is that we believe that money is best left in the pockets of businesses and of private citizens, that it's better there than in the pockets of the government and expecting the government to use those funds to build and grow an economy.

On this side of the House we believe that private investment is what is going to build the economy of this province, not government investment. While there may be a place for some government investment, I think that anybody that is fair, who looks at a fair history of this province, can see that it's been private investment that has always, always been the engine of the economy of this

province. It's been the vehicle that has grown this province. It's been the hard work and the industriousness of Albertans and the wise choices they've made as businesses that have allowed them to invest their money and to create new technology that has grown this province.

Money that is left in the pockets of private Albertans, of private companies, will increase 10-fold the business climate and the investment climate in this province so that wealth is generated and wealth is created. I think that's a significant difference between how we view this province, how we see this province as being successful, and how a socialist, NDP point of view is in this province. I believe that we know and we have seen through the history of this province which has been better.

We just need to compare Saskatchewan to Alberta and the histories there. I think we can see, even though I believe that Saskatchewan is God's country and that Saskatchewan is the place of the greatest football team in the CFL, while there are many things of worth and of value from Saskatchewan, that one of the best choices we made in Alberta was diverting ourselves from the path of socialism towards that of private investment, private industry, capitalism, and a strong belief that that will grow a strong democracy.

Well, Madam Chair, we believe, then, that this amendment will make this bill a better bill and therefore this province a better province if this Legislative Assembly would choose to follow and vote in favour of this amendment. You know, I said that we believe that money left in the people's pockets for them to invest is better than giving it to the government to pick winners and losers. This green investment fund, that's going to have billions of dollars in it, is just a recipe for disaster.

Madam Chair, we can see that Albertans in private companies have invested their wealth into technology and into companies that have changed this province, where too often money left in the hands of bureaucrats within the government has simply left us with money that has been wasted and lost. Need we bring up for the members here the recollection of one entrepreneur who wanted the government to invest in Gainers and how that money was lost so very quickly? I'm sure that the members across the floor would support me on this idea that money that was invested by the government of the day into that individual and into that company was not in taxpayers' interest, was not within the interests of the citizens of Alberta, and should never have been done.

We can see, even if we go to the beginning of this province, Madam Chair, if we go all the way back to 1910, that there is a historical event that occurred in this province called the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway scandal. We can go back to one of the early Premiers of this province, a gentleman by the name of Alexander Cameron Rutherford. I think that those of you that have gone to the University of Alberta have heard of the Rutherford Library. We know that that name is a very prominent name in the history of this province. But Premier Alexander Cameron Rutherford was a Liberal. Now, I don't care if you're talking about a Progressive Conservative or a Liberal or even after 2019 the Premier of this province being Brian Jean of the Wildrose, okay? I don't care which political party is in power.

**Some Hon. Members:** Name.

**Mr. Smith:** Sorry. Sorry. The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

You know, really, it doesn't matter which political party you belong to. When a political party makes a mistake and starts to choose winners and losers and begins to invest in speculative practices, it's going to be a problem, Madam Chair.

What we've got with the Alexander Cameron Rutherford Liberals: they began to produce loan guarantees that exceeded the cost of the construction of the railway, loan guarantees that were never going to be able to be paid back, loan guarantees that had insufficient oversight. At the end of the day, because they had been so unwise in their investing, they fell as a government. This can be seen over and over again in Canadian history, and it is a lesson that we need to remember.

One of the earlier comments made by one of our opposition colleagues talked about the \$3.4 billion Other Investment line in the budget and questioned whether or not that was a good thing to have. You know, we need to consider how the monies of this government are going to be spent. We need to ensure that they are not being put into just general slush funds to be used at the discretion of this government or any other government. That is a bad practice regardless of the political party that you belong to.

You know, it's probably important that we stop for a second to figure out what we actually mean by a slush fund, and that's what our concern is, that the monies that are being set aside from this carbon tax are going into this big puddle of money that's going to be spent as a slush fund, an account that's used to buy influence and power, a fund that's used to bankroll the pet programs of the party in power. Political parties of all stripes, at all levels, have often been accused of setting up slush funds.

You know, for example, we are coming up to the 150th birthday of Canada. We are going to be celebrating that. In May 2015 the Conservative government federally set aside money and created the Canada 150 community infrastructure program. It sounds like a great idea. This government of the Conservatives set aside \$150 million for 1,800 communities across this country to have infrastructure projects built as a result of trying to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Canada. As they began to roll this program out, the opposition parties began to see that there were some problems. Number one was that the time to apply for this program was so short that many of the opposition constituencies did not seem to be able to get any kind of applications in to the program to be able to take advantage of that money.

Now, it was amazing that for some reason Conservative MPs didn't seem to have a problem. They had advance knowledge of this program, and their constituencies seemed to be able to be at an advantage over the opposition MPs'. You know, people were rightly skeptical of this program because they began to wonder why that was. That's the problem when you start to put out slush funds, monies that are supposedly targeted for certain programs but seem to have the ability to have strings attached and be used for the benefit of the government. Of course, that's one of the things that this amendment is trying to make sure doesn't happen. By making it revenue neutral, by having tax credits and tax rate reductions, we can see that it is even across the board. It can't be used for pet programs and for slush funds that create problems for government.

You know, it reminds me of another example, the Clinton Foundation, the monies that are famously abused and misused by ...

**10:00**

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to speak in favour of this amendment. Let's face it: this is a bad tax, and it's made even worse by bad timing. Obviously, the economy is suffering, and we have massive job losses in this province. This isn't helping. This is just going to make things worse. So there's no way that we can support this carbon tax. There's just absolutely no way. So what

we'd like to do is try to soften the impact to Albertans' pocketbooks. Now, the revenues from the carbon tax should be exclusively directed back towards Albertans, but that's not the case. The actual fact is that a lot of this money is going to end up in some sort of green slush fund with very vague directives on where it's going to be spent. This is taxing Albertans on everything that they do, everything that they buy. Everything in their life is going to be taxed by this carbon tax.

There's no clear definition in section 3(2)(a) of what these "initiatives" are. What we have is a tax bill here with no information on where it's going to go. The very vague wording in this bill lends itself to abuse automatically. Now, there could be some worthwhile projects, things like the retrofit programs, but these big companies won't even have an opportunity to take advantage of this because these retrofit programs have to be done by January 2017. These big companies don't have the means to change so much, even to make plans to change so much, and to find funding for these big changes before the term has expired on their opportunity to do it.

The government has broken trust with Albertans too many times. This is a tax that they never campaigned on, so how does the government expect Albertans to trust that the funds they collect from this tax will actually go into initiatives that won't spiral into cronyism and go into rewarding the NDP faithful? We've seen who they've hired, who they've given top jobs to, mostly from outside the province, actually, and that's a shame, Madam Chair. And when we talk about trust in this government, I think it's important to look back at Bill 18, where the government says one thing and does another.

Now, here is a quote from the now Minister of Education.

If we're not forced to absolutely maintain independence, we have a tendency to end up with the wrong people at the job, and things just turn out worse than we originally had intended.

Madam Chair, that's the Minister of Education talking about the previous government's bill to take AEMERA to an arm's-length organization. He goes on to say:

They approve a board who then appoints and reviews scientists. Any arm's-length or independent argument has to be attacked at this point. It's clearly an attempt to have control, then, of what the data and the endgame will actually be regarding the environment. We've seen problems with this already.

Now, the minister – we'll call him the minister of jobs, I guess. This is a quote from October 31, 2013.

We have a few suggestions for this bill, and there are a couple of concerns that I have, Mr. Speaker. First of all, we've been calling for an independent body ...

Did you hear that, Madam Chair? This is the minister calling for an independent body, called AEMERA, and now, of course, the government has taken it back in. There's been a pretty dramatic change in this minister's opinion over the years. Actually, it's only three years. In fact, since it's October 31, it's probably only two and a half years. He's all of a sudden decided, in the two and a half years since his government came into power, that they don't want an independent body for AEMERA.

He goes on to say:

... a body that's arm's length from the government, to be able to make decisions that are completely free from political interference.

This completely contradicts what this government just did and what that minister supported. This calls into question trust, the trust of Albertans.

Now, he goes on to say:

The challenge with this bill at the moment, with the way it's written, is that it's not going to be an independent, arm's-length body making these decisions. We're relying on the minister to

appoint people to this process or to this agency who will then select the scientists to participate.”

Well, this Bill 18, that they just passed, did that exact same thing. Here he is complaining about the minister having control over who to appoint, and what did they just do? They passed a bill where the minister appoints everybody.

The secondary challenge with that is: based on which credentials are these scientists going to be selected? How can Albertans be certain that they are independent, free thinking, and not influenced whatsoever by the very board that selected them?

Doesn't that sound familiar? [interjections] I think that sounds familiar.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, can we please keep the noise down a little bit? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky has the floor.

**Mr. Loewen:** This government has just passed a bill and argued the exact opposite. The exact opposite.

This speaks to the problem of appointments, to begin with, in any capacity. When you don't have an independent arm's length, a distance between government and a body that they're selecting, questions arise, questions about judgment.

We raised those same concerns, questions about judgment. And this government, of course, in 2013 said one thing and in 2016 did the exact opposite, a complete flip-flop.

Going on:

Again, if we're trying to put forward legislation that will in fact monitor and protect our environment, then we need some distance.

Well, Madam Chair, they just removed all the distance, all of it. They asked for distance in 2013, and in 2016 hammered through a bill to bring everything right back into government.

It goes on to say:

If this government isn't forced to colour between the lines, then they appoint the wrong people for the job.

So here they are again saying one thing and doing another.

The caution here is that the bill provides authority to the minister to appoint board members, and we want to make sure that the people that are on this board represent all Albertans and not simply PC interests or friends or friends of friends.

Again, Madam Chair, a clear example of a minister of this government saying one thing when in opposition and doing the exact opposite when in government.

Now, I'll go back to the Minister of Education.

Further to this independence and transparency of the agency, the agency being seemingly still dependent on ESRD and government for allocating funding based on some unknown plan or formula: really, again, how could they, Mr. Speaker, be seen as moving forward?

So here he is complaining about the independence and transparency because it's being dependent on ESRD, and this government just passed a bill to bring the whole thing right back into ESRD.

Madam Chair, when this government does something and they wonder why Albertans don't have any trust, it's things like this, saying one thing and doing another over and over and over again. To quote Mark Twain, it's never the right time to do the wrong thing.

**10:10**

Madam Chair, the Member for Edmonton-South West has been fairly vocal in this debate, and it's always good to hear the members in the government actually get up and speak and say some things because it does give us lots of things to talk about. Now, I mentioned before that he talked about full and partial rebates. Of course, we know now that we'll be lucky to have partial rebates when we look at the full effect of this bill.

He talked about that the bill had been out for weeks. Of course, as I've already said, the bill has only been out for one week. I talked about Bill 1, three pages long. The flagship bill of this government, three pages, was on the Order Paper for 80 days from the time it was first introduced to the time it was actually passed. Now this bill: one week, over a hundred pages, and it's going to be pounded through.

Now, they talk about all the consultation they've done for Bill 20, but actually I don't know how much consultation they've been able to do in the last week. They went around the province talking about the Climate Leadership report, and that's great, but that's not Bill 20, Madam Chair.

I know that it doesn't matter who I talk to in Alberta and ask if they're concerned about the environment; everybody is concerned about the environment. Nobody wants to see poor air quality. Nobody wants to see dirty water. We're all concerned about the environment. We're all concerned about wildlife. We're all concerned about fish. We're concerned about all those things. There isn't any Albertan that I've ever talked to that's not concerned about those things. But the question is: does Bill 20 address any of these things? There are no standards in here. There's nothing in here to tell us what could be accomplished, what the goals are. It's all about taxes.

The intention of this amendment is clear. It's to make sure that the people of Alberta know where this money is being spent. But I think the intention of this bill is also clear: it's a tax. That's all it is, a tax. There's no plan here at all, Madam Chair.

Now, we did have some discussion earlier about the experts that looked at this bill. Of course, I would like to hear which experts looked at this bill. I don't want to talk about the Climate Leadership report but this bill itself. The Member for Edmonton-South West read a few quotes out of this Climate Leadership report. Of course, he cherry-picked a few sentences to take from it to make his points, and I guess that's his right. But I want to read a full paragraph, Madam Chair. I'll read this whole paragraph. There's no cherry-picking of sentences here. This is a full paragraph.

From the beginning, we've engaged with our elected officials. From day one, our mandate was wide-open: what should Alberta do about climate change? No policy parameters, specific targets, or levels of ambition were imposed on us, with the exception of four areas for which we were asked to examine potential policy options: reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, accelerate the phase out of coal, and increase the deployment of renewable power.

Now, that's the whole paragraph, Madam Chair. This is right out of the report. It says, "From the beginning, we've engaged with our elected officials." Well, I would like to find out which elected officials because these people never engaged with me. I don't know if anybody else on this side of the House was engaged on any of this with this committee that made this report. So which elected officials did they engage with? [interjection] Yes. Maybe with NDP elected officials. Maybe. I don't know. There are no names here. But we know who they didn't consult. They didn't consult with anybody on this side of the House. But, obviously, they were involved in communications with these elected officials right through the preparation of this report.

Now, it says, "From day one, our mandate was wide-open." The whole world, wide open: that's the mandate that they had. Then it says: "No policy parameters, specific targets, or levels of ambition were imposed on us," and then we get to the next part here, "with the exception of four areas." Oh, so all of a sudden we went from the whole world is our oyster here and we can go in and look at anything in the whole world, no policy parameters, except that we've got to keep to four areas, which are: "reduce emissions,"

great, “improve energy efficiency,” great, “accelerate the phase out of coal” – we’re getting smaller – “and increase the deployment of renewable power.” So we went from the whole world to getting narrowed right down.

Are we surprised that they came up with the idea to accelerate the phase-out of coal? Well, that was in their parameters; they had to. Increase the deployment of renewable power? Of course, they had to. We learn a lot when we read these documents, Madam Chair.

Now, I’ll go on to Bill 20 here, and I’ll just read a little bit about this: schedule 1, Climate Leadership Act, part 1, carbon levy on fuel, division 1, imposition of carbon levy. We had a discussion already about the word “levy.” We know what that word means. It means tax. That’s clearly the definition in any dictionary. A levy is a tax. It goes on here: carbon levy on certain fuels, carbon levy on fuel used by interjurisdictional carrier, carbon levy on locomotive diesel, carbon levy on aviation gas and aviation jet fuel, carbon levy on natural gas. Natural gas: that’s what everybody uses to heat their home in Alberta. I don’t know what the percentage is, but I know that an extremely high percentage of Albertans use natural gas to heat their homes. Then: carbon levy on miscellaneous fuels, carbon levy payable by direct remitter.

We’re talking about a Climate Leadership Act, Bill 20, and as we go through, all we see is tax, tax, tax, tax, tax. It talks about carbon levy exemption certificate, duty of vendor, licence for exemption, rebate of carbon levy, prohibited sale, prohibited use.

We get into part 2 of schedule 1, and it talks about assessments: assessment of carbon levy to be remitted, assessment of amount owing, assessment of penalties, effect of assessment, interest, liability of directors for failure to remit. Again, we just continue talking more and more about collecting taxes.

We go on to part 3. Listen to the title of part 3: Investigations, Enforcement and Offences. Does that sound like something about climate leadership? Enforcement and offences. Under part 3: authority to enter on land, general powers respecting inspections, authority to stop and inspect motor vehicles, copies of records, demand for records and property, offences and penalties re direct remitters, offences and penalties re vendors and retail dealers, offences and penalties re consumers, offences re documents and records, failure to file returns or maintain records, general offences and penalties. Penalties, searches, offences, authority to enter land: that’s part 3, Madam Chair.

Part 4, administrative provisions and regulations, again talks about records, security for amounts owing, limitation on prosecution, waiver or cancellation of penalties or interest, regulations.

**10:20**

We go on to part 5, transitional provisions, related amendments, and coming into force. Here we are. We’ve gone through schedule 1 just roughly. I haven’t covered all of them, but I don’t see anything about the environment here. I see lots about taxes, how they’re going to collect them and how they’re going to penalize anybody that doesn’t pay them and how they’re going to police this, but I don’t see anything about climate.

Now, if we go to schedule 2, Energy Efficiency Alberta Act . . .

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I’m pleased to be able to speak to amendment A1. In the midst of all my homework here, I’m digging to find the actual amendment, amendment A1, essentially recognizing that

the revenue from the carbon levy may only be used to provide rebates or adjustments related to the carbon levy to consumers,

businesses and communities, including adjustments in the form of tax credits or tax rate reductions.

I want to be clear. I believe that this is a bad tax, but one thing is for sure. We are implementing a new tax at a very bad time. If ever there was a time for this tax to actually be revenue neutral, it would be at this time. At a time in Alberta’s history when many, many families are struggling to make ends meet, when many businesses are struggling to stay afloat and to actually keep their businesses solvent, to introduce more expense to these institutions, to families, and to businesses at this time is not fair.

I believe that it’s critical, if we are headed down the road of a carbon tax, that we recognize – I believe the Member for Calgary-Elbow made very important points. In order for Albertans to buy into this new tax, this carbon tax, it needs to be recognized that they’re not necessarily wanting to put themselves at a disadvantage in their competitiveness in a global trade environment. By adding a new tax, another new tax, we will be adding to the costs of these businesses.

Many people don’t understand that to a business, tax is just another cash expense. This is a tax on consumers, and this is a tax on consumable products that businesses use to be able to run their operations. At the end of the year, when they do their annual report, they look at their total cash costs, their total fixed costs. These taxes are just another expense that they need to take out of their profits. So in order to stay solvent, they have to find a way to be able to pay these new taxes. Many businesses are going to very much have to try and pass those new taxes on to their consumers. Businesses have the option where they try to reduce the expenses that they have in their operation by possibly reducing the salaries that they’re paying to their employees. It just becomes very difficult to stay competitive when we have new taxes that are needing to be managed.

The amendment is speaking to the need to be revenue neutral, and it’s critical that this tax be only used to provide rebates or adjustments. To allow the carbon tax to do other things, it’s not revenue neutral. I guess we’re trying a new terminology about recycling revenue. The fact that this is a new tax that is going to be invested back, so the government says, into projects in Alberta does not make this tax revenue neutral. What it does is make it a tax that the government is taking out of the pockets of Albertans, out of the pockets of Alberta businesses and deciding what they’re going to do with the tax as opposed to allowing Albertans to decide what they will do with that money. If we were to make this truly revenue neutral, Albertans and Alberta businesses would be able to continue to revolve that money in our economy and continue to make wise decisions.

I spoke last week about a couple of government ventures out on the east coast with regard to boondoggles that were started by government, all sounding very good and all sounding like really good investments, but because they’re government operations – governments have a hard time recognizing when to step back and when to withdraw from poor investments, and they continue to put in good money after bad and make the situation even worse.

British Columbia has a carbon tax. I’m sure we all recognize that. But what British Columbia did was ensure that they did not damage their economy and their ability to compete by instituting a carbon tax, a new tax. They instituted a carbon tax with this very parameter, that all revenue would be put in place to provide rebates and adjustments.

When we look at the initial act, we have wording where revenues would be spent on “initiatives related to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases or supporting Alberta’s ability to adapt to climate change.” This is the problem. This is where we run into trouble with this tax. This is where I believe many Albertans will have difficulty accepting this tax. This is essentially an open door for the NDP

government to support those with an NDP world view through their slush fund, and we have no idea what the plans are there. We can see that this could easily turn into what could be considered a green crony fund, a green crony boondoggle. I would be very concerned if that's the direction this government is going. History would tell us that that is the direction we're liable to be going in. Governments have a very poor track record of investing in different initiatives.

10:30

We are headed down a path, I believe, that is going to lead us to investing in failed projects, sinking money into operations that have not had proper discovery on business viability and economic evaluations into their sustainability. We have to be very careful on how we move forward with this tax. If we don't get it right, as the Member for Calgary-Elbow mentioned, it will put a very foul taste in the mouths of Albertans, and there will be no appetite to ever discuss a carbon tax again.

So let's be sure that the carbon tax is truly revenue neutral so that it does less harm to all those small businesses out there struggling to make ends meet. Like we said previously, if a business is already struggling and we add another expense with a new tax, it is going to put them in a very difficult situation.

We need to take the time to hear from experts so that we can get a ruling on the revenue neutrality. The NDP turned down an opportunity in second reading to send it to committee so that the committee could essentially have discovery on revenue neutrality. I think they already know the answer to that, so they turned that idea down because they recognized that they are not following what would be considered good practice when instituting a carbon tax.

As it stands right now, Bill 20 creates this Energy Efficiency Alberta corporation, a whole new entity where we will be seeing a new board, more bureaucrats, more investigations into looking at opportunities. It's going to make grants, contributions, or loans or issue loan guarantees. It's there to raise awareness; promote, design, and deliver programs; promote the development of the energy efficiency services industry. Are these investments? When we take money out of the economy and use it towards promoting and educating, is that truly investments that will return back? I guess if we can find some way to make these projects that we're educating for and promoting be viable business opportunities, maybe we can recoup the money that we invest in them.

But if we have a situation where we are promoting, designing, granting money towards these types of discovery mechanisms only to find out that there is no business case available that would prove to us that this is a good investment and that it's going to have a good rate of return and be able to be sustainable and replace itself over time, I believe that we've then taken tax money out of an economy, and essentially it's gone. We've burned it. If we haven't had any kind of discovery that has allowed us to recognize business opportunities in these areas, we will get into a situation where we are just, again, wasting money.

I guess one thing: I do believe that many Albertans do not have any idea what this Energy Efficiency Alberta corporation really is. They would like to have a little more clear understanding as to what this NDP government is planning to do with many of these billions of dollars that come into their slush fund with no direction as to how they are going to spend it.

Apparently, other members have alluded to the fact that there is \$3.4 billion that is being earmarked to be spent under Other. I don't know about you, Madam Chair, but to me Other does not necessarily give me a real clear indication as to what that is. We have no idea on this side of the House. I'm not even sure if the government members have any idea as to what that \$3.4 billion that is being earmarked for Other is going to go towards. Are we

padding the pockets of those that would have the NDP world view, making sure that they're taken care of? Or are we actually truly investing in future sustainability, where all Albertans will be able to benefit from the money, the \$3.4 billion that this government wants to spend on Other? I'm not even sure that the government has any idea how large \$3.4 billion is. It seems like we toss around the word "billion" a lot these days. All I know is that it is an awful lot of money.

A concern I have many times, too, Madam Chair, is with regard to how this carbon tax is going to affect agricultural businesses. What are the agricultural businesses going to be able to do to try and offset some of these extra costs? We live in a northern climate. I spent many years raising hogs in the hog industry, and it was critical that we kept our facilities heated. We had a lot of electricity costs. At the end of the day we are in direct competition with other producers around the world, especially to the south of us, that are not faced with many of these costs. The natural gas that we burned in our facilities, in our boiler units, will now be going up in price. I'm concerned with the rate that it is going up.

Many livestock producers are burning coal, and we're going to see the rate of coal go up significantly. As of January 1, 2017, high-heat coal will have a carbon tax on it of \$44.37 per tonne. That's a significant increase when you take a look at what is going to be needed to heat their facilities. The time it will take to retrofit all of the facilities that possibly could retrofit to natural gas: will they be able to have that completed by January 1, 2017? I fear not.

So I would hope that this government would recognize the need to help to retrofit some of those operations, and possibly some of that money will come out of Other. I have no assurance that this government will use it to rebate agricultural producers. The government has made it fairly clear, unless they have a change of heart, that they will not even be rebating our schools and our hospitals and all these facilities that are funded with public dollars.

10:40

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I know it's a long night. Everybody kind of feels it, and I can see that you want to get out of here. Sorry. I'll try to keep it brief when I talk about this.

You know, we're talking about:

The revenue from the carbon tax levy may only be used . . .

- (b) to provide rates or adjustments related to the carbon levy to consumers, businesses and communities, including adjustments in the form of tax credits or tax rebate reductions.

It seems like, well, that certainly is a better step towards what's been going on, with what the bill has, because we have a slush fund that's being built. It's a slush fund of \$3.4 billion, where, frankly, we just don't know what that money is going to.

This carbon tax at the very best should only be revenue neutral. It should not be implemented at all at this time, but at best it should be revenue neutral so that the monies that come in go back out to other businesses or people or individuals, cycled right through the system to be used as a behaviour modification tool. That's what the intent of this is. But when you're taking in that much more money, what are you intending to use that money for, Madam Chair?

What I'm concerned about is that because this is not revenue neutral, you could be driving businesses right out of this province. That's a concern. I've had people that, frankly, ever since we've been talking about the taxes that we have – and this is just another one of those taxes, the way the government has been working here in the past while with their programs, their ideology on these items. They're leaving. I have people all over my riding that have just

picked up their businesses, moved them out, or they're just trying to sell. They're trying to get the best dollar. They're taking pennies on the dollar to get out because, frankly, they don't see a whole lot of hope.

Even if this government in three years is defeated, which I believe it will be, how much are we going to be in debt? Looking at Bill 10, that's going to cost we don't know how much money in debt, along with this carbon tax, along with all sorts of other programs and spending, a debt ceiling that has no limit to it, and we're into a position where people have no confidence. I'm hearing that day in and day out. I keep getting e-mails and letters, and they're expressing their concerns to me.

I'll pick up the phone, or on the weekends, when I have time off, I'll go over and visit places like Provost. I go to Irma. I go to Edgerton. I go to Bashaw, to Bawlf, to Ohaton, Ferintosh, Forestburg, any number of them, like Hardisty. Hardisty is a really good example. You know, they have a lot of oil that goes through that town. That town is a small town, probably 800 people, maybe a thousand. It's, like I say, a very small town. But the majority of the oil in this province flows through that town. It's got a tank farm there that's absolutely huge. It's a wonderful facility. If people think that oil is dirty, that it's unclean, you should come down to Hardisty. We can arrange a tour. Come down to Hardisty – I would be more than happy to work with that – and meet the people I know. You can go to the USD station, where they put the oil onto the trains to ship it out. They have the oil tank farm there holding literally hundreds of millions of barrels of oil. If you go around there, you cannot find any oil that's sitting on the ground. If they find something, they look after that.

You're trying to create a carbon tax that is kind of punitive to people that use it. Frankly, they've become very clean users of this carbon, the ones that are working with it, and they're very responsible. I'm very proud that we have these people in Alberta.

We've gone from a position where 20, 30 years ago people were much more sloppy. Oil was spilled on the ground. Nobody looked after it. Programs have been put in place, and rules and regulations have been put in place. Frankly, Madam Chair, they've made this environment so much cleaner, and it didn't take any punitive action to be able to do that. They were able to do that just through discussions with the oil companies. If you go around to businesses, they're responsible now for what they're doing.

Frankly, I find that homeowners have become much more consistent with being clean. As you get new homes, to reduce the carbon taxes, people are starting to put in high-efficiency furnaces. All you had to do was say that you cannot have these mid-efficiency furnaces. So any new build of a home or any replacement of a mid-efficiency furnace will have to go to a high-efficiency furnace. You're achieving carbon reductions, but you're achieving it not by putting in a carbon tax but by putting in measures that actually change the behaviour. I'd say that it's not punitive. It's just something that people have to go to in the future.

It's not been a problem. People have changed from single-pane windows to you know, nowadays dual-pane with argon-filled glass to triple-pane windows with sunscreen to ones that actually adjust. If the level of light that's coming in from the sun is coming in at such an angle because we're in the wintertime, you will actually be able to benefit from the heat coming off the sun. But when the sun is up at a certain angle, it actually deflects it, and it stops the sun from entering, so then it has a cooling effect. It, in fact, accomplishes two things, the glass itself.

You can have programs in place that accomplish what you want to do. You want to change the behaviour. You want to change the mindset. What we're saying is that we don't believe that you need to punish people, especially beyond what revenue neutrality is.

This is, again, what this bill talks about. It's making sure that it has a revenue-neutral kind of a base to it. It provides rebates or adjustments related to the carbon tax to consumers.

**An Hon. Member:** The amendment.

**Mr. Taylor:** The amendment. I said "bill." Thank you to my fellow member here beside me, who corrects me when I make mistakes like that.

We have \$3.4 billion to be used for environmental projects. We don't know where those projects are going.

10:50

**Mr. MacIntyre:** They're called others.

**Mr. Taylor:** They're called others. What does "others" mean?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** They're expensive.

**Mr. Taylor:** It sounds awfully expensive. You know, I once did a calculation, and I put loonies side by side all across Canada – a loonie is about an inch, or 25 millimetres, long – and you go not just across Canada, but you go across Canada and a half. You'd be looking at this thing five and a half times, a row of five and a half loonies going across Canada. It would be just an amazing number of loonies if you stacked them up high. I didn't do the calculation on that, but obviously if they were actually end to end, we're talking 6,000 or 8,000 miles going upwards. It's going to be huge. That's what we're talking about for this.

How is this going to diversify the economy? I was kind of curious. How will this diversify the economy by putting in this revenue tax? It would be very interesting to me to find out if there's any way that spending money would do that.

Right now we're in the enviable position of being one of the cleanest producers in the world, right here in Alberta. If you want to look at dirty oil, if you want to look at pollution, go to California, go to China, or go to India. Those places are dirty. You know, we have technologies here that are great. As it stands, I think that we should be working on using the technologies, using the information and the knowledge that we have, and exporting them out to the world. The world then can be a cleaner place.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Chair, I'm requesting unanimous consent for one-minute bells.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, according to the standing orders in committee the first bell has to be 15 minutes, and then the next ones are one minute automatically. That's in committee, not the Assembly.

Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:53 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.

Gotfried

Strankman

Cooper	McIver	Taylor
Drysdale	Smith	van Dijken

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Feehan	McKittrick
Babcock	Fitzpatrick	Miller
Bilous	Goehring	Miranda
Carson	Gray	Nielsen
Ceci	Hinkley	Notley
Connolly	Horne	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kazim	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinsteuber	Shepherd
Dach	Loyola	Sucha
Dang	Luff	Turner
Drever	Malkinson	Westhead
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Woollard

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 20. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.**The Deputy Speaker:** Having heard the report, does the Assembly concur in the report?**Hon. Members:** Aye.**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.**11:10****Mr. Bilous:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report progress.**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Speaker, seeing the time and the progress we've made this evening and the camaraderie that's been shown in this House, I move that we adjourn until 9 tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:12 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, June 2, 2016

Day 38

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinstauber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinstauber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinstauber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, June 2, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect. As we continue our work on behalf of the people of this province, let us always seek a healthy balance between our role as legislators, our family responsibilities, and our own well-being.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 20 Climate Leadership Implementation Act

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise here this morning to discuss Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. Of course, the climate is changing, and Alberta has to do its part to mitigate that. Alberta's independent climate panel sought measures that did not overly involve government subsidy or other government interference, but of course that's not what Bill 20 is about. Bill 20 is about taxes. It's about increasing taxes on everything in Albertans' lives.

Now, it mentions in this report, the Climate Leadership report, that Alberta is perceived by many to need stronger policies to persuade others that we're serious about climate change and serious about the environment. But, Madam Chair, that's a perception. It's not a reality. Alberta has always had strong environmental standards, stronger than the rest of the world. We have nothing to be ashamed of here in Alberta. Our Premier likes to describe us as embarrassing cousins, but that's not the fact. The fact is that Alberta has a great record. Can we improve? Of course. That's what we do here in Alberta. We constantly strive to improve everything.

Due to our strong resource industry Alberta is second only to Saskatchewan's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita and draws considerable emissions attention due to 38 per cent of the national output, but we produce most of the energy here, Madam Chair. It's no wonder that it's shown that when the fire in Fort McMurray shut down oil production there, it had an immediate, significant effect on the Canadian economy. That's how important Alberta is in its energy industry. Because of that, we need to have respect for that industry.

Now, they talk a lot about the rebates to offset the effects on many households. They talk about how it's going to affect 60 to 65 per cent of the households in Alberta, who will be getting rebates. But, Madam Chair, those are partial rebates. They don't take into full account the actual cost to Albertans of this carbon tax.

Of course, the government came up with a reduction in the small-business tax, but that's not much consolation to the businesses that are going to be paying more and suffering because of this carbon

tax. Right now Alberta is struggling economically, and this carbon tax will make things worse.

I think Albertans need to know that this government isn't going to all of a sudden just keep increasing this tax and carrying on with that sort of agenda. They need to have some assurances that this government will come back to the Legislature if they want to change this any further.

Of course, Madam Chair, we would hope that this government would, I guess, come to its senses and realize how damaging this carbon tax will be on everyday Albertans and that they will leave it, not go ahead with it, do an economic impact study so that Albertans have a true understanding of what it will do to them.

Madam Chair, I would like to propose an amendment to Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. Now, I have the appropriate copies of the amendment here.

**The Chair:** If you could get the copies to me, please.

**Mr. Loewen:** Okay. I'll wait for your approval to carry on.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A2.  
Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 by (a) adding the following after section 10:

Adjustment of carbon levy rates

10.1 Notwithstanding section 79(1)(e), the carbon levy rates set out in the Table in the Schedule may not be increased by regulation;

and (b) in section 79(1)(e) by adding "subject to section 10.1," before "respecting the determination of the amount of carbon levy payable".

Now, Madam Chair, this amendment speaks to 79(1)(e) on page 66, where it says that not only rebated amounts but amounts payable can be set in regs. So this amendment ensures that, like fuel taxes, carbon taxes cannot be hiked in regulations like some others, like sin taxes and stuff like that, can be. I think it's perfectly reasonable to have this carbon tax go through the same process as fuel taxes, which means it has to come back into the Legislature to be properly debated.

Of course, we would like to see some robust public consultation on it, too, but this is at least a minimum, that at least it comes back to the Legislature to be discussed. Then the people of Alberta can have at least some opportunity to see what this government has planned when it's raising these taxes. There should be no hike in taxes without legislation and debate in this House. The government should not be able to increase carbon taxes overnight through regulation. Saying that regulations can determine, quote, the amount payable sounds like they can be raised.

9:10

It is not clear that the table in this schedule is binding, at least beyond 2018. If the government did indeed not consider this or had something else in consideration on this, then this amendment will make it very clear. And if they had intended that any increases to this carbon tax would come back before the Legislature, again, this amendment makes that very clear to us and to all Albertans.

I think the clause that exists in there now gives the government too much power to make changes to an economy-wide tax with no accountability or debate. The so-called sin taxes – alcohol, tobacco, those types – are able to be raised through regulation. Now, whether that is fair or not, that's different. This carbon tax is far closer to fuel taxes because of course, Madam Chair, fuel taxes affect everybody and everything, just like this carbon tax.

Madam Chair, you're aware of how things are, especially in the northwest part of the country where we live. We travel great distances all the time. Any tax on fuel, this carbon tax, will have a great effect on us. I know that when I'm here in the city, in the Legislature, in meetings here and everything, in any month of the year I'll see people riding their bikes, January, February, travelling to and from work, whatever they're doing, and I think it's great. It's great to see people out there, fresh air, exercise, not driving cars, not even riding in buses, just out there on their bikes.

But in my constituency there's only a small number of people that have that opportunity. For one, of course, the weather tends to be a little harsher in the northwest. In the majority of my constituency people are travelling 10, 15, 20, 30, 40, 50 miles to get to their job each day, so it's just not realistic to expect them to be riding their bikes to work every day. Obviously, this is going to have a greater impact on those people in our province, and those people are just as important as anybody else in the province, Madam Chair. Again, I think it's really important that we have robust discussion on any changes now to this carbon tax, that this government seems determined to push through.

Of course, this carbon tax applies to heating, too, and there isn't anybody in Alberta that doesn't rely on heating their home in the wintertime and, actually, just about any time of the year. When you start increasing taxes on the form of heat that the vast majority of Albertans use, then it becomes very important to every Albertan. How carbon tax increases are determined afterwards, after this bill passes, if the House so determines it will pass, should be open for debate and not just hiked in regulations.

Now, Madam Chair, Alberta is struggling economically. We know that. Over a hundred thousand job losses, and we don't even know the number of jobs lost for people that can't claim unemployment, contractors and small businesses that are out of business now that have no opportunity to collect unemployment. They're sitting there with payments on their equipment, payments on their homes and no income. This isn't being helpful. This tax is just making it harder for everybody.

This government has brought in the minimum wage hike, a personal income tax hike. Corporate taxes are rising. Now we have the carbon tax. Gas taxes have already increased under this government. This tax will make everything – everything – more expensive, Madam Chair.

Now, we talk about the rebates. Again, as time goes on, it seems like the government is coming to more of a realization that these rebates aren't going to cover the cost to lower income Albertans. Just some rough figures we've talked about are that with this carbon tax on low-income Albertans these rebates won't cover all the costs because not everything was considered when they were calculating these rebates. They thought: well, just the fuel costs, some heating costs. But there's far more than that, Madam Chair. Everything that we have has to be transported. Of course, in the northwest, well, in any part of Alberta there are transport costs for everything everywhere – our food, groceries, everything – so this tax makes everything more expensive. The calculation that the government had on rebates: it doesn't cover all the costs. We've now seen cases in the public sector where tax dollars that were dedicated for education, for health care, caring for the vulnerable – that money will end up in the climate fund, not where it was intended to go, not for education, not for health care.

Now, we know that for municipalities, cities, towns, MDs, and counties everything will become more expensive, too: all the fuel costs, all the heating costs, all the trickle-down effects of everything that's raised. They'll have no choice but to pass on these costs to the people in their constituency or reduce their services to their constituents. Madam Chair, that's not fair.

Again, we're all concerned about the environment, every one of us here. I don't believe there's any person in this House that doesn't care about the environment. In fact, I know that's the case. To suggest otherwise is just not true. And there's nobody here that doesn't want to improve how we do business here, how we operate, how we can help improve how we do business, and how it affects the environment. We're always looking for ways to do that, Madam Chair.

Now, I had a small town send me some figures that in 2017 they will be taking from the people in their town \$400,000 more for natural gas. That's a town of 2,000 people. That's \$200 per person just for natural gas, and that's in the first year, Madam Chair – the first year – before the full increases hit in 2018. These impacts are huge. This is definitely a case of the wrong tax at the wrong time.

Now, we talk about the rebates, but rebates aren't available for nonprofits. They're not available for schools. How about charities, Madam Chair, organizations that rely on volunteers, that help the most vulnerable in our society? How about those charities, who have to pay more money for everything they do, too?

9:20

Small and medium-sized businesses, Madam Chair: their costs are rising, too. What can they be expected to do with the increased taxes? They have two choices. I guess they can fold up shop, or they can raise the fees that they charge their customers. If they raise the fees to their customers, what does that do? Of course, that just makes everything more expensive for everyday Albertans.

For school boards the cost of busing, an enormous cost in rural Alberta, transporting children to and from school: more expensive.

For municipalities the road grading, transporting gravel to the roads, all the different things that they do that require gas or diesel: more expensive. Again, they're forced to either raise taxes to recover that or reduce services.

We talked some yesterday, I believe, about large businesses that are in a world-wide, competitive market and whose headquarters might not even be in Alberta. They'll have to make a choice. With the increased cost of natural gas, should they close their business down? Should they move it elsewhere? Those are decisions these companies are going to have to make. There's a retrofit program, but there's not enough time for these large corporations to plan on retrofitting, never mind getting the job done and having the revenue to do that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other questions, comments with respect to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe that this amendment brings accountability to an act that is lacking on any real metrics, any real transparency, and it's allowing the government to make regulations on the fly. This is a concern. Whenever you have a tax that the government can just move up and down at will, this is something that brings instability to all of the government that's involved and all the stakeholders that are involved.

Let's talk about some of the effects that this is going to have. In the end, what we need to be encouraging here is for the government to show that it's going to move in a direction and that it's going to stick to that direction, and if it's got the ability to be able to go into regulations and just change its mind at a moment's notice, that puts worry in the people that need to know that they can actually move forward with their businesses.

I know that the government has been moving Alberta in a direction that is showing that they want to, I guess, start to address

the climate change concern, and that's commendable. We need to start doing our part to make sure that our environment is actually something that we can know we've got a balanced approach to. Now, what I'm trying to get to here is that that word "balance" needs to come into play here, and balance comes through everybody that is involved with the carbon tax, the government included, knowing that they are able to count on a certain structure. That's what this amendment does.

Now, I like to read these because it's not always clear exactly what it is we're talking about. In the end, sometimes they can be a little bit more difficult to get through by what we're trying to bring in. This here is adding a clause, adjustment of carbon levy rates, to section 10. Again, we can argue whether this is a tax or a levy – a tax or a levy – but in the end what we're saying is that when you're taking money out of Alberta businesses, from Albertans that are taxpayers, your most vulnerable, we need to know, whether it is a levy or a tax, what exactly it is that they can expect.

Now, it says:

10.1 Notwithstanding section 79(1)(e), the carbon levy rates set out in the Table in the Schedule may not be increased by regulation.

I think that's quite reasonable. I believe that, in the end, we bring these rules into play so that we can't just go on the fly and say: "Well, you know what? Why 30? Why not 40? Why not 50?"

The fact is that we already do have taxes out there that are controlled by regulation. A good example is the sin taxes, the alcohol and tobacco taxes. We see those ones being adjusted quite regularly through regulation. I do understand that there is a component to discourage the use of alcohol and tobacco and to bring money into the treasury, and I can feel that the government is moving in that direction. If they price it too high, then what happens is that we end up with a lot of criminal activity bringing in the alcohol and the cigarettes. So it's a balancing act – it's truly a balancing act – on exactly: where do you want the tax? Are we competitive with other jurisdictions? If we're not competitive with other jurisdictions, then what happens is that the business goes to those other jurisdictions, and if there's money to be made or profit to be made at it, that resource or that service will actually flow through those jurisdictions into Alberta.

That's one of my concerns. You know what? Let's put in some reasonable expectation so that the government can't go in and unilaterally start raising these levies or taxes just on a whim. "We need \$50 million. Let's just raise this tax, or let's just raise that tax." That is a valid concern that I and my colleagues have, saying: let's actually make sure that if we are going to be adjusting something that is going to be impacting not just a small number of Albertans but almost every industry and every business, every resident of Alberta, there should be a discussion held. There should be something that Alberta is actually sitting down and debating. That's what we're saying: let's bring debate. Let's bring this somehow so that what happens is that the government can actually say, "We are raising this levy, and here is the intent; here is what we're going to do with that money," not that the money is just going to go into general revenues.

We need to be accountable. We need to be transparent. It needs to be reasonable. There needs to be a business plan. We haven't seen any of that so far with this bill. But you know what? Let's bring some limitations. Let's say that you just can't unilaterally start adding to the taxes.

A good example is something that we talked about over the last week, which is Bill 10. Bill 10 was getting rid of the debt limit that Alberta had. We were saying that there should be some accountability to taking on debt within the province. Now, you're saying: "Well, Scott, jeez, you know what? We'll be responsible

with regulations. We wouldn't want to start raising the levies that we've set here because we know better." Well, Bill 10, again, is a good example. We saw a 15 per cent of GDP cap set for Alberta four or five months ago, and last week we were already removing that cap. We didn't even extend it anymore. We didn't say: let's go to a higher number. We didn't say: well, let's examine what that number should be. It was: let's just get rid of it. That essentially is what this Bill 20 is doing. It is saying: trust us; we will set it at what we want, but we'll be responsible with it. That I find offensive, that we don't have any accountability for what these rates are actually going to be.

9:30

As a person that has read the federal Income Tax Act a lot, there is a reason why that book is this thick. It is to address and bring clarity and bring stability to governments across Canada. What happens if that clarity isn't there is that we end up with a lot of businesses taking advantage of the situation or, specifically, individuals starting to work outside the laws, which is why these things are being brought forward. Now, with regulations, these things can be changed very easily, and nobody would know. That's the problem. Nobody would know.

Now, in the end, you could raise the carbon levy against something very, very quickly, and because the industry that's affected doesn't want to get into a confrontation with the government that is moving Alberta in its own direction or ideology, then what happens is that they will actually not say anything because they're fearful that they are going to have some kind of reprisal. That is a concern. Suddenly we'll see businesses passing on this cost even though they have concerns. They will know that they are no longer competitive.

This brings it back to my original point. They know that they're no longer competitive with jurisdictions outside of Alberta, but because of the fear that they might have reprisals, they will do it anyway. They know that, in the end, they may not end up with a business. That is a concern. That truly is a concern. What we need to be doing is making sure that it is a playing field that is fair for everybody within Alberta. That includes the taxpayers: the residents, the businesses, the large companies. All of these stakeholders need to know that they can count on a structure that brings stability.

Now, it seems like every time we bring a bill forward in this House, there's something that has a component to it that brings instability to Alberta. The fact is that when we look at the amount of consultation that Alberta is doing when it comes to these bills, it is almost zero. Then what happens is that because we get these bills and we pass them within one or two weeks, there's not enough debate. Even when we do debate and move amendments like the one that we've got before us here that says, "Let's be responsible and put a limitation to what we are able to do by enshrining this in legislation," we see that the government is saying: "You know what? We know the direction we're going. It doesn't matter what arguments you bring forward. We are going to go in this direction." That is where the troubling part of all of this is. We end up with people having wonderful visits out on the front doorsteps, like with Bill 6. You know, the fact is that a lot of these things could have been prevented.

We see that a bill regarding the MGA review is being put forward. We have ministers going out to the communities within Alberta right now, and that's admirable. It's great to see that we actually have some engagement being done by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. They're saying: "You know what? Let's table the act that we're looking to push through. We will give Albertans the ability to see it, to read through it and find out where they fit

into this legislation.” Then they’ll be able to maybe go back to the minister and say: “Have you considered this? Have you considered that?”

That is the concern here, that a lot of times what happens is that when we go through these things so fast, the unintended results are what we end up with. Now, I will say that when we look at the unintended results, they bring on instability, which brings unstable government, which, in the end, as I’ve mentioned multiple times in this House, brings unemployment. That is where my riding is right now. We’re seeing a ton of unemployment. We are seeing a ton of vacant houses.

Now, this carbon tax, or levy, whatever way the government wants to phrase this, is going to continue to bring instability, but by bringing in the fact that the companies can know that before these rates can just be changed on the fly, at least there’s going to be some warning of it, they’ll be able to voice their concerns to the MLAs where their businesses or corporations reside. That is where we’ve got a very fair system, where if we do have an increase in a levy, we can actually have the MLAs saying: “Wait a second. We need to do more of an economic study to make sure this is what we’re trying to do.”

Nobody wants to pay taxes. I will acknowledge that. We all will pay taxes. It comes down to: how are we being treated, and is it fair? With this loophole in the current Bill 20 legislation, being able to change something on the fly doesn’t make any sense. It creates the exact opposite of what we’re trying to do, which is to bring stability back to Alberta. That is what the government continues to say, that with Bill 20 we will have the social licence to do all of the things that we want to do. We can make more oil. We can get pipelines. We can do all these wonderful things. But you can’t do any of those things without stability. Stability is always the key. An unstable government is always an unfair government, and that is something that I will live and die by.

The fact is that when we start looking at that, we’ve got an ability right now to change these levies. Are we going to be doing the necessary research to ensure that we are not going to have these businesses leaving Alberta? I’ve already mentioned that we’ve had increases in several of the taxes within Alberta. Again, as I’ve said several times – you know what? I agree fully and wholeheartedly with the NDP that these tax increases were not a secret. This was on their website. This is just a fact. They were elected as government with many of these tax increases. Whether it was accidental or on purpose that they were elected is debatable, but in the end they were elected. They had it in their platform. But this carbon tax was not there. I will ask the question: how can we state that this is the crowning framework for Alberta? It wasn’t even in their platform?

**9:40**

My comment here is that the reason it wasn’t in their platform is because the government knew that Albertans wouldn’t accept a carbon tax. They wouldn’t accept that. They demanded a balance to the environment; that I will agree with. That is something that the NDP did bring forward. They were very adamant on that, and so was the Wildrose because it is important that we are in the environment and able to have future generations enjoy what we currently enjoy or what our parents enjoyed.

Now, to get back to this amendment, we need to be looking at ensuring that Albertans can see stability coming forward. With the tax increases that we’ve already seen, which, I’ve just said, were on the platform website, we still haven’t seen the repercussions from this. I’m hoping that the tax increases that the government has pushed through, which were clearly on their platform, are where they end, that we’re done with tax increases. I’m hoping that this

carbon tax is the last tax that gets implemented because, in the end, this is hurting my riding.

The fact that we have left a gaping hole in being able to raise this tax whenever we want is a concern for me. There is no way that we should ever have such a large-impact piece of legislation going through like this, with such a gaping loophole. It isn’t reasonable that we are looking towards making sure that Alberta is not going . . .

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Chair. While we all sort of digest this amendment, I really feel it prudent that we go back and kind of discuss the premise around carbon pricing. You know, as we were talking about this climate leadership plan and as we were moving forward, I felt it prudent as a former business operator, who operated several different restaurants that made multimillions of dollars in revenue annually, to do a bit of homework and compare it to what is done in a lot of other nations. When I did some digging around carbon pricing, it’s not like we’re inventing something new that’s extraordinarily scary, that destroys the world. This is in place in 40 different countries and nearly 20 different cities and states. This covers a 13 per cent global emissions reduction, and this is citing the World Bank’s statistics that I’ve been able to pull up here. Forty countries. At the end of the day, if 40 countries are doing it, it seems like there must be some effective means about what is occurring here.

Now, I and many of the other members here generally speak about a very passionate member who used to sit in this Chamber. While there were certain policies of his that I respectfully disagreed with, there are many other merits and his business acumen that I actually respect immensely. I compare it to the great things that he did as a former chancellor of the University of Calgary. With pride I always say that he is a former Member for Calgary-Shaw. I’m speaking of former Alberta Treasurer Jim Dinning, who cited that carbon pricing is cost effective, meaning that it achieves emissions reductions at the lowest possible cost to the economy.

They cited in this report:

The Alberta government could have chosen to regulate emitters to use specific low-carbon technologies or to achieve a given level of emissions performance. But in fact, regulations cost more than a carbon price, because they reduce the flexibility emitters have to find the cheapest way to reduce emissions.

A carbon price encourages emitters to find innovative ways to avoid paying the tax, because the gain goes straight to their bottom line. In addition, a carbon price provides an ongoing incentive to find ways to reduce emissions, and this can be a powerful force for driving long-run innovation.

In my span as a former restaurant manager I had a very great opportunity to work for an American-based company at a very fortunate time. It was when California implemented their ways to reduce greenhouse gases. So the company took an approach, and they decided that across their company, internationally and nationally, they were going to put systems in place to reduce their output, to try to make sure that they could find cost savings. They built habitual changes. To me, in fact, it was a very engaging time to be at that restaurant because there are always so many different ways that you can reduce your emissions costs.

To throw back, I’m sure many of the members in this Chamber have looked at their energy bill. I remember that when my wife and I first bought our new house in the gorgeous constituency of Calgary-Shaw, we did a lot of things to try to reduce our outputs. We changed all of our light bulbs. We got that film where you use hair dryers to put it over your windows to try to reduce leakage. The challenge I had was that when we saw our bill the next time, we

saw a very small decrease, maybe a buck or two, and we were shocked. The reason is because the majority of our electric bills are service fees. So when we try to change the habits that we have, we don't see any return.

Now, going back to my time in the restaurants, one of the things that was very intriguing during that time that we were building on habitual changes was that there were a lot of stickers all over the place because we talked about firing times. Restaurants utilize a lot of natural gas. They use a lot of energy. You have light bulbs all over the place. You have restaurants that open – you know, you're usually there at 8 o'clock as you're opening at 11. One of the major habits that we all used to have going into these restaurants that we worked at was that you would walk in at 8 o'clock with your chef; you as manager would turn every light in the restaurant on even though there wasn't anyone in those spaces, and your chef would turn on every piece of equipment. He would turn on every stovetop, and you'd get going on your day, when in reality some of that equipment didn't need to be turned on for another three hours. There are also cases where you have your natural gas burners and you're leaving every single one of them on for a solid three hours when you only have five or 10 guests going into your restaurant. It's not very necessary, but the impact of doing this is so minute for these businesses that there is no incentive for us to really change our habits.

The thing that was very remarkable during this time was that we were able to find ways to really change our habits, whether it was changing our firing times so that instead of turning on the burners and the stovetops at 8 o'clock, we were turning them on at 11. That was three solid hours that we weren't pumping and burning natural gas through those lines. With our lights, instead of turning every light in our restaurant on at 8 o'clock, we were turning them on at 10, when our service staff got in to set up.

If you look at sort of the large scheme of things, in some cases we were reducing our outputs by 50 per cent, especially on a slower week. If you're to even look long term – because the restaurants that I operated could have been defined as a small business, so you have a small-business tax reduction, so we are going to be working towards finding our efficiencies – in theory, if I was to go back to one of my restaurants, we would actually be making more money next year.

You know, we have to find these ways to make sure that we work together to encourage these growths and changes because one of the major challenges that we really face with trying to tackle climate change is the convenience factor, and looking long term, I think there's a great opportunity for businesses to be those innovators that Jim Dinning talks about, for us to really lead the way. If you look at sort of the global spectrum of Alberta here, we have a lot of businesses that are founded or centred in Alberta.

**9:50**

Now, as we unroll this new climate change plan, it reminds me of the time that I worked for a U.S.-based restaurant, where because one state changed what they did, every restaurant across North America changed their habits. Since we have several Calgary- and Edmonton- and Alberta-based businesses, us changing our policy could potentially cause businesses across the nation and across North America and, potentially, across the world to change their habits and be ready for carbon pricing, which we are seeing start in several different jurisdictions, not only our own.

You know, I'm happy and look forward to seeing many fulsome debates, but I really felt it was important for us to pull ourselves back and look at the context of this entire thing here as well.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just like to comment on the previous member's statement. Good for them. Great for them. I just need to point out, though, that that was done by private industry prior to a \$3 billion tax grab, without any pressure from the government to force them into changing their behaviour. They did it for good, solid economic reasons. They did it of their own free will. Business everywhere is trying to find ways to be like this. I don't understand what the point of adding a \$3 billion punitive tax to them is going to help. It just kills business in Alberta. Anyway, they were doing it on their own already. What the point of this is, I'm not sure.

But I'll get to the amendment. Madam Chair, do we have a number by which we're referring to this amendment? I didn't hear that.

**The Chair:** A2.

**Mr. Orr:** A2. Thank you very much.

Carbon pricing clearly is valid. It works. There's never been much question about that. The challenge that we have and the problem that we have is the fact that unilateral taxation is not. This is actually an amendment that simply asks the government to exercise some restraint as it moves forward. Without this amendment the government is giving itself too much power. In fact, it's a very undemocratic situation we're beginning to find ourselves in. I would like to remind the House that the whole point of democracy, the whole point of the evolution of democracy has been to limit the power of the Crown, especially, if you go back to all of the early documents and all of the early fights in Britain, in regard to taxation. It's a limitation on the powers of the Crown.

I'm not a constitutional lawyer, but I would almost begin to think that we are approaching a point here where there could be a constitutional challenge that this grants powers to the Crown of taxation without any proper accountability at all. Essentially, every time the government wants to increase its slush fund here, all it has to do is decide in council that, well, we need a little bit more money. There's no consultation. There's no discussion in the House. There's nothing. They just do it. According to democratic principle in order for the Crown to increase the taxation that it takes from people, it has to have the authority of the House. It has to have the confidence of the House. It has to bring that money bill into the House. It has to request permission of the House. It has to win the vote, and if it doesn't, the government falls.

Here we have a tax grab that just increases itself in incredible kinds of ways. I would like to remind the members that this, in fact, is a carbon levy, which is just another word, as we've seen, for taxation. We're having unilateral taxation here without going back to the House. The Crown is going back about 800 or 900 or a thousand years and abrogating to itself the powers of taxation without representation in the House, without the vote of the House, without even having to bring it forward into the House. It is extremely, extremely troubling that we should be going this far.

The levy table that we're talking about, that would increase the levy rates, is, in fact, a bill that is taxation. This is troubling. This is problematic. This is as antidemocratic as you could possibly ever become. This is a real question of the Crown abrogating to itself the powers of taking funds without having to even speak in the House about it. This is troublesome. Every time the government wants money, it just takes it.

Furthermore, I think that it should be understood in another way. The use of electricity, of fuel, of heating fuels is essential to our

lifestyle. We can't just turn off the heat in homes. We can't just tell people, "You can't have any fuel. You can't drive anymore" because then they can't get to their jobs. This becomes a job-killing spinoff. In labour negotiations we reserve some things as essential services and rightly so. We should. Some things are essential in life. The government needs to protect the essential services of power and fuel for transportation, heating people's homes. But having the unlimited ability to just tax without restraint is counter to every principle of this House.

Of course, we see that with this government moving in this way endlessly. We have a budget in which they have raised the funding incredibly. They've removed the debt ceiling. We had a debt ceiling in this province, but the government wants the power of unrestrained taxation, and here we see it in a second form. First, we remove the debt ceiling. Now we give them absolute powers to raise the levy fees, the taxation fees, that are assessed to people. We're not just talking about small amounts of money here. This isn't just small fees in Service Alberta. We're talking about \$3 billion, which rises from there in the years to come. This is utterly and completely undemocratic.

This carbon levy, this carbon tax, is a burden upon the people. As we saw yesterday, the word "levy" is synonymous with "burden." Tax burdens were the whole reason for battles in England and in parliament to create democracy, and it virtually created, actually, revolutions in that country. The years between 1780 and 1820, as I've said before, were times of great social reform in Britain. They were driven by higher taxation. It was the high taxation of the Crown upon the people that drove much of the social action that actually led to the creation of social action and labour unions and all kinds of things. Here we have a government that wants to raise billions in levy fees at whim of parliament, at the power of the Crown without so much as even bringing it into the House for discussion. I think it's not only antidemocratic; it actually pushes the edge of being anticonstitutional.

Furthermore, the government ties up burdens for all kinds of other people that it doesn't lift a finger to resolve itself. How has the government actually shown others by example that it's reducing its own carbon footprint? Has the government done anything to reduce the number of miles that are going to be driven by government vehicles? Is the government going to turn down the heat in government buildings? Is the government going to do anything real and actual that actually reduces the carbon footprint in this province, or are they just going to set heavy burdens that require everybody else to do it and continue on their merry way, raising taxes and making them pay for it?

They set carbon footprint targets for industry. Where are the carbon footprint targets for government expenses and government vehicles and government buildings? They tell the people to suck it up and change their behaviour. I have yet to see a government footprint baseline and government footprint targets to quit their own carbon emissions. There are no directives to reduce the heat or the mileage or anything. What about all the government ABCs? Has there been any direction to them to actually reduce their carbon footprint? How will this government change its own behaviour if they expect the people to change their behaviour?

We are here asking if the government would amend its arbitrary powers, arbitrary powers of the Crown to tax the people. We have here carbon zealots burdening the people without consultation in an antidemocratic way that they aren't even practising themselves. This is the ultimate in hypocrisy. There are all kinds of people that are going to suffer immensely in this.

10:00

In my own riding just this last week I have a charity that is shutting down. Loaves & Fishes is the charity. They are ceasing to

operate on July 1. They're transferring their assets to someone else. They've been there for more than 20 years. They provide meals, soup kitchens, school lunches for children, all kinds of other services. They have facilities there, but they're so stressed for finances and are now seeing all of these increased expenses that are coming at them. They're not going to be able to pay their carbon tax. They're not going to be able to pay the increased costs. They feed 350 students a day, and in the economic downturn their income has just been too difficult to get. They say that grants are tight, donations are down, costs are escalating. So they are shutting the doors. They're asking someone else to see if they can take it over. Maybe they can do it, because they can't do it anymore.

Here's a case where the government was contributing about 30 per cent through grants and contracts and getting a hundred per cent social benefit, but now we have a carbon tax that essentially pushes them to the tipping point, where they are not going to be moving forward on this. This is not social licence to tax charities, my friends, to push them into insolvency. They're already on the razor's edge, and now we push them on this.

The authority to give the government absolute, unrestrained, arbitrary, unlimited powers of taxation is completely and entirely and totally wrong. If I could see the government actually changing their own behaviour, I might be a little bit more inspired with this particular kind of a bill. This carbon tax bill is nothing but hypocrisy to the core. I don't see the government practising their own efforts.

They accuse us constantly of not doing anything. Well, I'd like to share with you that I, in fact, spent the money just recently to build a house. It's a smaller house. I spent the money to insulate it to more than double the code. I bought the very best windows possible. Every single light that I put in is an LED light. I did not even put natural gas into my house because I built it oriented to the sun; I get solar energy. I did this all without the need of shrill screaming by the opposition, without the need of a \$3 billion punishment tax to persuade me to do this.

People understand this, and to sit over there and say that we don't understand any of it is the ultimate in lunacy. I have probably done more than many of you have done, yet you accuse us constantly of not participating or understanding or being involved. I think you're the ones who don't understand, who don't participate, who just want to scream and yell, yet personally I don't see any leadership or example on the part of this government doing these things.

You know, global warming has been around for a long, long, long time. I remember being in grade school in 1960 . . .

**An Hon. Member:** What?

**Mr. Orr:** In grade school in 1960.

. . . and hearing that there was global warming.

I'd like to share a couple of numbers with you. They're kind of quirky little numbers. When I was born, there were 2.7 billion people in this world. If you multiply the population of 2.7 by its inverse or if you just square it, you end up with 7.2. The population of the world today is approximately 7.2 billion. What that means is that the population of the world in my lifetime has increased by 2.7 times, almost three times. If I am fortunate enough to live a few more years, it will be three times in my lifetime, and then for you to sit over there and say that we don't know anything about this — you know, the population of the world in my lifetime has essentially tripled. You don't think that has an impact on the world we live in? Of course. What do you think? Did you guys just figure this out? Is that why you're so panicked? I mean, this has been going on for years and years.

It's the shrill finger pointing and the chicken clucking and all the rest that discredit your entire message, your entire thing. If you

would take a more balanced, sensible approach – there are many people, including the businesses that have just been outlined, including individual people, who are doing everything they can. A \$3 billion punishment tax just to try and win your political points doesn't win you any friends or any support in this province. No wonder many of the people in this province look at you and feel like that.

On top of it, I don't know if any of you have been outside this last winter. We just had the warmest winter we've had in years. Everybody loves it. So what does that tell you? Is the world getting any warmer? I mean, this has been going on for – like I said, since 1960 I've known this, and you sit over there and say that we're deniers. You're the deniers. You're the ones who don't get it. [interjections] Glad you're waking up. Glad you're waking up.

I think you've just discovered a reality, and all of a sudden you're panicked. What needs to happen is sane and sensible and realistic solutions, but a \$3 billion tax grab, rushed through, that punishes everybody in this province is not a helpful solution, especially when business and individuals are already trying to do it.

Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Wow. That is a tough act to follow, my friends. I'm not sure where to begin. I'm not sure if that's an argument that climate change is real and human caused or that climate change is real but not human caused. I'm not clear on that. Perhaps I'll have to go back and read the Blues, and we can determine for ourselves later.

You know, I wanted to pick up on the comments by the Member for Calgary-Shaw. I want to indicate that I am speaking in favour of this amendment. I think that there's some merit to putting some brakes on future increases to a carbon tax.

The arguments made by the Member for Calgary-Shaw really were around the need for a carbon tax in general, speaking about Mr. Dinning and his comments recently. I don't think, on this amendment, certainly from this seat, that we are in any way, that I am in any way questioning the need for a carbon tax. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: I support a carbon tax in Alberta. I'm not sure that I support this carbon tax. I think we need to not selectively read the comments of Mr. Dinning either. It's important to read the entire article and his comments around carbon taxation. The fundamental economics that he's talking about I absolutely agree with and I embrace. If you want to incent innovation, if you want people to avoid a cost, you make it cost more. That is really what Mr. Dinning and what the Ecofiscal Commission are talking about, and that is a carbon tax but not necessarily this carbon tax.

Why I support this amendment is that I think it's a good compromise. I think what it allows is for this government to pass a carbon tax with some assurance – and we will be bringing further amendments. I will be bringing a further amendment myself, hopefully this morning. But this as a part of a suite of amendments, I think, could get me onside with actually supporting this carbon tax.

One of the challenges Albertans have is a worry that passing this carbon tax with a government that through regulation could raise this carbon tax at will at some undetermined future date creates concern in the minds of Albertans. If any future increases to the carbon tax needed to go through the Legislative Assembly, I think that's a good compromise and builds trust, builds trust of Albertans that this carbon tax, in fact, will not have unintended consequences. It also allows us, which I think is the intent of the government by scaling in the carbon tax first at \$20 and then at \$30 a tonne, to figure out exactly what this tax is going to look like in practice, how it actually works.

Some of the concerns we've heard from our friends in Wildrose, some of what I would frankly say are more fantastical concerns,

that I don't think are likely to happen – I don't think that the world is going to stop spinning. I'm fairly confident that on January 1, 2017, the sun will still rise, and I think there will still be economic activity. But I think it's a fair question: what if? What if things don't go according to plan? What if this isn't as successful? I think Albertans deserve some opportunity to really understand what this particular tax means for them and to have some assurance that the tax rate will not go up beyond \$30 without a proper review by the Legislative Assembly. As the legislation is written now, via an order in council Executive Council can simply, with a stroke of a pen, increase the carbon tax. That's what this amendment addresses.

**10:10**

There has been talk, in fact, if you read the Leach report, of indexing the carbon tax over time. Now, I imagine that what the government envisions through the way their legislation is currently written is to in fact index and incrementally increase to ensure that the carbon tax keeps up with inflation and cost of living. But if that's the case, put that in the legislation. I don't see it in the legislation. I will stand to be corrected if it's in there. Regardless, I think it's important that any future increases to the carbon tax are brought before the Assembly so that all Albertans have an opportunity to debate that and not simply passed by an order in council, which is why I support this amendment.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thanks very much, Madam Chair. I just want to rise and clear something up for the House. I appreciate all of the points that have been made, and I appreciate the opposition's desire to ensure that if changes to these rates need to be made, they would need to come through this House in order to do so. I just want to assure the House that that is in fact currently the case in the legislation.

On page 79 of Bill 20 there is a table that sets out the carbon levy rates. It has one column that says "Carbon levy rate for 2017" and then another one that says "Carbon levy rate for 2018 and subsequent years." The rates in this table, being in the legislation, in the schedule, cannot be changed without amending the act. That would require bringing an amendment proposal back to the Legislature. So in order to change the rates that have been set out – \$20 a tonne in 2017, \$30 a tonne in 2018, continuing into the future – we would have to bring the legislation back. It would have to be opened up, and we would have to have another discussion in the Legislature.

With respect to section 79(1)(e), which was discussed in the amendment, about having the ability to change rates in the regulations, we've confirmed with Treasury Board and Finance officials that this regulation-making power does not apply to carbon levy rates. Basically, the carbon levy rates are there in the legislation, page 79. If you want to change them, we have to come back to the House to do so. So I would say that this particular amendment is unnecessary. As it is unnecessary, there's no point in passing it, so there we go.

I do appreciate the opposition members' desire to tell us that they believe climate change is happening now. I appreciate that. However, I would ask them to go a step further. If you believe that it's happening – and I also appreciate that you've been doing things in your own homes to, you know, make sure that you're using energy efficiently. I know that many of us on this side do, so that's fantastic, but that's not enough. It's not enough to reduce our emissions.

**Mr. Taylor:** What?

**Ms Luff:** Well, individuals – we have to do it as a whole society, and we're not doing it.

If you believe that climate change is real and that we want to preserve the environment and that we want to do something about it, my question to you is: what do you propose to do about it? There is broad-based consensus in the economic and scientific community that a carbon price, an economy-wide carbon price is the most efficient way to do this. It's the most effective. It's the most efficient. It's going to have the effect that we want, which is to reduce our emissions, which will help us combat climate change, which will help us adjust our economy in Alberta, adjust to what is a new global economy.

We are dealing with a situation in the economy where we are moving to a carbon-constrained future, and we cannot – we absolutely cannot – continue to do things at the status quo if we want our economy to adapt and diversify and for people to be able to have jobs moving forward. We need to do something to allow our economy to adapt. By saying, "We believe in climate change, but we don't want to do anything about it," you are not helping.

In summary, I would ask the opposition – okay. You believe that climate change is happening. Well, do you want to reduce emissions? Do you want to reduce emissions? Then, if you want to reduce emissions, do we want a more competitive, more efficient, less carbon-intensive future? We live in a particularly resource-based, trade-exposed economy, so in order to minimize carbon leakage and enable us to access markets, we have to show leadership in climate change. This is what we are doing. We are creating jobs. We are reducing emissions. We are making Alberta healthier for Alberta's children.

The amendment is not necessary. You have to open it up. We don't need it. It's already in there.

Thanks very much.

**Mr. Hanson:** Just very briefly, that clause is not clear. It does give the government an out. If you truly believe that that legislation is already in there, then you should have no problem at all voting for this amendment, which clarifies that. If we really want to do something about climate change, we should be taking our industry standards and bringing them out to the rest of the world and helping them get up to Alberta's standards.

That's all I have to say.

**The Chair:** Any further speakers to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:16 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rodney
Clark	Jansen	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Stier
Gill	Orr	Taylor
Gotfried		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Piquette
Bilous	Horne	Renaud
Carlier	Littlewood	Rosendahl

Carson	Loyola	Sabir
Connolly	Luff	Schmidt
Coolahan	Mason	Schreiner
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Shepherd
Drever	McKittrick	Sucha
Eggen	McLean	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Westhead
Ganley	Miranda	Woollard
Goehring	Payne	
Totals:	For – 13	Against – 35

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, there's been a lot of discussion in this House, or some discussion in this House last night, anyway – and it's certainly something that we talked about previously, under the last amendment – about the importance of the perception Albertans have on this particular initiative, on the carbon tax, and, I think, the merits of a carbon tax as a whole.

I've said it before, but again for the record I'll state that I am in favour of a carbon tax. The Alberta Party this past weekend, at our policy convention, in fact, voted in favour of a carbon tax as part of an overall suite of initiatives to ensure that Alberta has a sustainable and economically prosperous future, especially as it relates to electricity generation. This is something that I know is on the minds of not only many Albertans but many around the world as we try to grapple with human-caused climate change. How do we here in Alberta as an emitter but also as innovative, thoughtful citizens address those challenges? How can we truly lead in this area?

While I clearly have said that I am in favour of a carbon tax, one of the most important principles of a successful carbon tax, I believe – and I will make a case here this morning that I believe the evidence shows that for a carbon tax to be successful, it should be truly and genuinely revenue neutral.

With that, I would like to move an amendment, Madam Chair. I will hand this out now and wait for the table to get a copy before I proceed.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A3.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. I move that Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 in section 3 by striking out subsection (2) and substituting the following:

- (2) The revenue from the carbon levy may only be used
  - (a) for initiatives related to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, supporting environmental innovation and supporting Alberta's ability to adapt to climate change, subject to the requirements set out in subsections (3) and (4), or
  - (b) to provide tax rebates, tax credits or adjustments related to the carbon levy to consumers, businesses, and communities.
- (3) For the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, the revenue from the carbon levy directed to the initiatives outlined in subsection (2)(a) shall not exceed 50% of the total revenue collected in that fiscal year and the revenue directed in the subsequent 4 fiscal years to the same initiatives shall be reduced to the following levels:
  - (a) 40% of total revenue collected in 2017-18;
  - (b) 30% of total revenue collected in 2018-19;



- (c) 20% of total revenue collected in 2019-20;
- (d) 10% of total revenue collected in 2020-21.
- (4) For the fiscal years commencing 2021-22, and thereafter, there shall be no revenue from the carbon levy directed to initiatives outlined in subsection (2)(a).

I will unpack that for you. Just for those of you following along at home on Bill 20, I'm talking about section 3, starting on page 11. It's a long bill, and hopefully that will help.

Really, what we're driving at here – and I would argue that the amendment discussed and defeated last night was to in fact strike subsection (2)(a) entirely, which is probably preferable, where we would make the carbon tax revenue neutral out of the gate. This, I think, is a compromise and, I would hope, something the government would seriously consider, which would gradually make the carbon tax revenue neutral, allow the government to provide direct transfers and to support infrastructure-type projects or other initiatives but to only do so for the first five years of the carbon tax and wean the government's reliance off this over time.

Now, some may say: but, hon. member, shouldn't we be doing things like supporting environmental innovation and an ability to adapt to climate change, et cetera, by doing things like green transit and that sort of thing? While I absolutely, unequivocally support those sorts of activities, I don't believe that the carbon tax is the appropriate way to fund those sorts of activities. I believe that things like transit especially are initiatives that ought to be funded out of the existing capital plan.

What this does is that it enforces fiscal discipline on the government. It avoids the temptation, either real or perceived – and I would argue in this case it's real – for the government to borrow from the carbon tax, to use the carbon tax, to lean on that to fund what really ought to be core government programs. It resists that temptation. In reality it resists that temptation. In the perception of Albertans it's equally and, I would even argue, perhaps more important that Albertans then believe that the carbon tax is not a tax grab. Now, remember the frame that I'm coming at this from. I believe a carbon tax is a good thing. I believe it's time. I believe it's the right tool, but it has to be deployed the right way.

If Albertans don't have faith in the carbon tax, it's going to become a real mess. It's going to become a mess for this government, and there's a risk that what happens here in Alberta will be the same thing that happened in Australia. Australia implemented quite an aggressive carbon tax. A government subsequent to the more left-leaning government, the Labour government, that implemented the carbon tax, a much, much more conservative government, was elected as a result of backlash to that government's carbon tax. Unfortunately, as a result, they've scrapped it entirely, and now Australia is seen as a global laggard on climate change and carbon emission. That's a problem. I don't want my province to be in that position. As a result, I would genuinely encourage this government to consider supporting this amendment.

**10:40**

Now, I want to talk briefly about some argument for why a revenue-neutral carbon tax makes a lot of sense, and I'll refer again to the School of Public Policy briefing paper, volume 9, issue 15, April 2016, by Kenneth J. McKenzie entitled *Make the Alberta Carbon Levy Revenue Neutral*. It makes the case that I have made now, that

a price on carbon emissions . . . (at least partly) reflects the social costs of emissions. Viewed through this price lens, the carbon levy plays an important role in incenting firms and individuals to change their behaviour and move towards less carbon intensive activities.

I'm sure we all agree, and certainly the government side would agree, that that is the objective of a carbon tax. Those are good things. That's what we want.

He talks about:

The second lens . . . of a carbon tax [being] a part of the broad revenue system. Viewed through this tax lens, a carbon tax is not a very good, or efficient, way of generating revenue . . .

I think that's really important for the government to understand, and that is the driving purpose behind my intent here to make this carbon tax revenue neutral.

. . . the carbon tax is applied to a narrower base than . . . [other] taxes. Moreover [those] carbon taxes interact with other taxes in the economy, exacerbating the economic costs associated with those taxes . . .

I want to talk about the economic costs of corporate income tax, and I want to talk about the economic costs of personal income tax.

. . . research shows that the total cost to the economy of raising an additional \$1 in revenue through the corporate income tax in Alberta is \$3.79 . . .

I'll pause there for a minute. What that means is that every dollar increase to corporate income tax has a negative impact 3.79 times higher. That's not good. For personal income tax the negative impact of each dollar raised through personal income tax is \$1.71.

These taxes . . . impose higher costs on the economy than they [generate] in revenue.

That's a negative impact on the economy, corporate and personal taxes.

So if we swap the carbon tax revenue for reductions in personal and corporate tax revenue, that's a net positive to the economy just simply in a straight economic frame, but it has the dual benefit of incenting reductions in carbon emissions and creating a frame where innovation can happen. Let me tell you that if this province is good at one thing, it's innovation. We have a tremendous entrepreneurial culture. We have tremendous technical people, tremendous engineers and scientists and academics and finance folks, who know how to pull that all together. This is a tremendous opportunity for this province. I see that a carbon tax done right can be a tremendous opportunity.

I want to talk briefly about what that actually means in terms of impact on GDP. The Ecofiscal Commission has done a report where they evaluate the effects on GDP growth of various carbon tax options. By far the greatest negative impact on gross domestic product in Alberta is transfers to households. That has a negative impact of .12 per cent of GDP. Comparing that to a corporate tax reduction, it has only a negative .02 per cent impact on GDP. A corporate tax cut has by far – by some measures some would say that it's six times less of an impact on gross domestic product than to use the carbon tax transfers to households. Personal income tax cuts are also better than transfers to households as are investments in clean tech and transitional support to industry. The essential point is that the cut to corporate income tax is by far the best use of carbon tax revenue.

Let's talk, then, about carbon emissions reduction and what we actually expect to achieve, because one may wonder: all right; if we're cutting corporate tax, does that, in turn, increase carbon emissions? Of course, we don't want that. Well, the good news is that cutting corporate tax has very little – actually, if you look at the report, you need to really zoom in on the bar graphs to determine which line is higher. The cuts to corporate income tax actually result in exactly the same or perhaps even greater greenhouse gas emission reductions by the year 2032, direct actual reductions in emissions. The household transfers, corporate income tax, and personal income tax reduction in greenhouse gas emissions are essentially identical. There are substantially more actual reductions

of emissions than spending the money on transition support for industry. Technology investment has a slightly higher greenhouse gas emission reduction.

Now, emissions lost from competitiveness or carbon leakage: that would be either individuals or industry choosing to operate in a different jurisdiction yet continuing to emit, which I think, obviously, is an unintended consequence that we really want to avoid. The corporate income tax, in fact, is better than household transfers in that regard, but it's really not material. If you look at this chart – and I'm happy to share it with anyone who would like to see it – it is not a material difference. They are essentially the same thing.

What I'm saying is that if we're going to do a carbon tax, let's do it the right way. By using carbon tax revenue in a truly revenue-neutral way, we will find that we not only reduce carbon emissions; we have the least impact, the least negative impact on our gross domestic product and therefore on our economy.

Let's talk about British Columbia and their revenue-neutral carbon tax. In their budget they produce a very helpful, very simple, very transparent one-page summary of how British Columbia's carbon tax revenue is spent. In fiscal 2015-16 they forecast to collect \$1.2 billion in their carbon tax revenue, and they're going to offset that through personal income tax cuts, broken down by low-income climate action tax credit, that they're spending \$192 million on; reducing their personal income tax rates by 5 per cent in the first two brackets – that will use \$283 million – a northern and rural homeowner benefit; a B.C. seniors' benefit; a small-business venture capital tax credit; a training tax credit.

The general corporate income tax rate has been reduced to 11 per cent from 12. The small-business tax rate has been reduced through the course of the carbon tax from a high of 4.5 per cent in 2008 to 2.5 per cent. The corporate tax small-business threshold was increased from \$400,000 to \$500,000, which means that that lower corporate small-business tax rate applies on the first \$500,000 of earnings, not the first \$400,000 of earnings. A digital media tax credit, a training tax credit, scientific research and experimental development tax credit, film incentives, production services tax credit enhanced and extended from an earlier tax credit: again, this is a very transparent, very clear, very straight line from the higher tax that British Columbians pay at the gas pump. Those of you who have travelled to B.C. know what I'm talking about.

That's exactly what the experience is going to be here in Alberta. On January 1, 2017, Albertans will see a 4 and a half cent increase per litre and then a 6 and a half cent increase per litre on January 1, 2018. That is something that they see every single day and that has a direct impact on their pocketbook. Probably, if all goes according to plan, that will in fact impact the choices they make and will have, I would hope, a positive impact on carbon emissions, and that's the goal of this.

If this government can say, "Good news; I am also going to reduce your personal income tax so at the end of the day you keep more of that hard-earned money," Albertans will understand. They'll say: "You know what? I understand what we're doing here." What we're doing is that we're shifting a tax burden from one hand to the other because it's been determined that not only are there societal, social, moral benefits to reducing carbon emissions, but there's also an economic benefit in doing so. It makes sense. We want an incentive for people to work hard. That's a good thing. That's why people come to Alberta, why they stay in Alberta, that tremendously competitive tax rate.

On the corporate tax side I think it's remarkable to note that the least impact on our economy is through corporate tax reductions. I have a real concern that this government has raised corporate taxes from 10 to 12 per cent and, in so doing, I think, has chased away

investment. Now, we don't need to be reducing that perhaps even back to 10 per cent, but what if we were able to reduce it by a single per cent? What if we were able to make Alberta's large corporate tax rate tied for the lowest in the country? What if we were able to do that without a negative impact on the economy, in fact, perhaps even a positive impact on the economy? We reduce the risk of tax leakage, of companies choosing either to relocate or to file their taxes legitimately and legally elsewhere in Canada where there's a lower tax rate. At 12 per cent that's a risk. It's a real risk.

**10:50**

Many, many, many accountants make a very good living ensuring that their clients legitimately and legally file their taxes in the lowest cost jurisdiction. For a long time Alberta benefited from that. That is no longer the case with a 12 per cent corporate tax rate. What if we were able to use the carbon tax to reduce the corporate tax rate by even 1 per cent? What I think you will find is that that actually increases the take of corporate taxes in Alberta because it will generate more economic activity. It will result in more companies choosing to file their taxes in Alberta even if the economic activity is the same, but I think that it would ultimately benefit Alberta.

This, my friends, is a win-win-win. It's good for the province, it's good for the economy, and it's good for the Earth. I think that it's good for the government to be able to say: "Not only have we made this carbon tax revenue neutral over time, but we listened to an argument from the opposition. We looked at this amendment, and we said, 'You know what? That does make some sense.' We were thoughtful in how we implemented the carbon tax." Let me tell you, it's sure going to make it a lot easier for me to support your carbon tax.

I'm in favour of a carbon tax in principle. I'm not sure that I'm in favour of this particular carbon tax as it's written because I don't think you've taken the opportunity to benefit Alberta nearly as much as you could have. There's a real opportunity here to do the right thing, not just to accept an opposition amendment for the sake of accepting an opposition amendment but to really be thoughtful about whether or not the carbon tax, as laid out in Bill 20, is in fact the very best it can be. I don't believe it is. There are some elements of this that I really like, but there are elements of this that need fixing. What I suggest that this amendment does is that it fixes a big problem with this carbon tax.

With that, Madam Chair, I will return to my seat. I look forward to the debate and discussion and really, truly encourage the government to adopt this amendment and to move forward on it.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak to amendment A3. There are a couple of things that I have concerns about with respect to the amendment that's before the House here currently. One is the rate at which the Member for Calgary-Elbow is proposing to phase out the amount of revenue that the government is able to spend on initiatives outlined in section 3(2)(a). He's proposing that after five years none of the carbon levy funds that the government collects can be spent on any of the initiatives related to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, supporting environmental innovation, and supporting Alberta's ability to adapt to climate change.

My primary concern with this amendment, Madam Chair, is that I think that this phase-out is much too fast. I'm referring back to Dr. Leach's Climate Leadership report, where he says, "Successful

implementation of these [kinds of] initiatives... could yield emission reductions of... up to 3 MT/year by 2030.” He is suggesting that we spend money on initiatives related to reducing greenhouse gas emissions over a period of 15 years in order to achieve real carbon emissions reductions. If we were to adopt this amendment, I think that we would limit the government’s ability to spend the money necessary to achieve the reductions that Dr. Leach set out in the climate leadership plan.

I don’t share the Member for Calgary-Elbow’s optimism that if instead of directing the money towards greenhouse gas emissions reductions, we targeted corporate income tax reductions, that would necessarily reduce greenhouse gas emissions as much as the three megatonnes per year. I know that he quoted from the Ecofiscal Commission, and if he were to read the report that they produced in April of 2016, Madam Chair, of course he would see that their recommendations for what to do with the carbon levy fund recommend that personal and corporate income taxes actually be a lower priority than transfers to households and spending on greenhouse gas emissions reductions. I would refer the member to that particular document for that.

Madam Chair, the other issue is, of course, to make sure that those who can afford to pay for these emissions reductions are the ones who are asked to pay for them, right? We are, of course, a progressive government, and I remember during the election campaign that the Alberta Party also ran on a relatively progressive platform. Unfortunately, it seems like they’ve abandoned that since they’ve been elected. Regardless, the idea around introducing these income taxes with the transfers that we’re proposing is that it shifts the burden of paying for the carbon reductions from those who can least afford to pay to those who can most afford to pay, right? Progressive income taxes are something that is broadly supported by the people of Alberta.

When I walk around my riding and I talk about our climate leadership plan, people are very excited about the fact that we have a government here in Alberta that’s finally taking action on addressing climate change. They are looking forward to the government using the carbon levy revenues to actually undertake these kinds of initiatives, that are outlined in the legislation and that the Member for Calgary-Elbow doesn’t want to spend money on after 2021. I would suggest that if we were to adopt this amendment, we would be offside with the opinion of the majority of the people of Alberta because they want the money that we collect, this revenue, to be spent on these kinds of initiatives.

Broadly speaking, Madam Chair, the people of Alberta are in favour of government revenue collected from this levy being spent on energy efficiency programs, being spent on community energy initiatives. You know, the people in my riding are looking forward to seeing solar panels and windmills on rooftops and in fields all across the province, and if we adopt this amendment, we won’t achieve those things. Instead, we will continue to give the corporate tax giveaways that the people of Alberta voted clearly against in 2015.

For those reasons, because this amendment before us would severely limit the ability of the government to achieve the emissions reductions that Dr. Leach set out in his report and because it reverses the progressivity that we have built into the carbon levy program, I urge all of the members in this House to vote down this amendment.

**The Chair:** Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My apologies to the Member for Calgary-Elbow, who brought forth the amendment, but while we recognize the attempt to compromise

here with an ideological government bent on amassing a virtually unlimited slush fund, we cannot support even a phased-out slush fund. That said, if this government can’t even limit themselves to this generous allotment, they simply show just how greedy they are.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you. I want to address some of the issues that the Minister of Advanced Education took with my amendment. You know, we absolutely need to be spending money on green initiatives – absolutely, we do – and we need to be doing that in a way that is transparent for Albertans and very clear to Albertans. One of the great concerns I have with this particular bill is that we have \$3.4 billion to be spent on, quote, other initiatives, which the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster last night very eloquently pointed out is precisely, to the dollar, exactly how much we’re spending over the next five years on health facilities. On health facilities we have a very detailed outline in the capital plan of specifically what projects are going to happen, how much money is going to go to each one, where they are, and Albertans are clear on what those benefits are.

**11:00**

I’m really, genuinely – and I hope you take this in the true and sincerest sense in which it is intended – trying to help you succeed with the carbon tax because I believe a carbon tax is a good thing. It’s the right thing to do for Alberta. It’s the right thing to do for the world. I disagree with the Wildrose opposition. I don’t think you’re trying to create a giant slush fund, but the perception of Albertans is that that’s exactly what you’re doing.

It is incumbent on the government to answer these questions before the bill is passed. Like you did with medical assistance in dying, show us the regulations. What are you going to spend the \$3.4 billion on? What is Energy Efficiency Alberta going to specifically do for Albertans? How are we going to create incentives for renewable energies? What are you going to spend that money on? When are you going to spend it? Who are you going to spend it on? Does it mean that this government is going to get directly involved in business? Are you going to reregulate the electricity industry to compel renewable energy production? There are so many questions.

You know, with some of the language that was used by the minister, I worry. She talks about corporate tax giveaways. It’s a clear indication of the anticorporate and, I worry, anticapitalist bias of the people in that caucus. When you use language like that – those are your words, not mine – you can see how members on this side and, more importantly, the people of Alberta would get the sense that you’re out to get those evil corporations as opposed to trying to make Alberta truly better by trying to work in true partnership, a sense, from this NDP government, that government knows best: “Trust me. The money will just come from somewhere.” My huge concern with this government is that there’s very little sense of where the money actually comes from.

Why would investors, both within Alberta or from outside Alberta, the rest of the country, and the rest of the world, anyone or any institution, put money into Alberta to generate economic activity and to create jobs? There is a sense over there that money just happens, that investment just happens: don’t worry; those rich folks will just take care of themselves. Well, you know what? If we don’t create the right frame for economic activity in Alberta, those companies and that investment will go somewhere else. Right now there are billions of dollars – billions of dollars – on the sideline waiting to invest in renewable energy somewhere. Those dollars

don't necessarily need to flow to Alberta if we don't create the right frame.

I have so many questions on renewable electricity. We absolutely ought to have renewable energy built in this province. We have tremendous assets. We have a lot of wind, and we have a lot of sun, in southern Alberta especially. There's a lot of opportunity. We have opportunity for geothermal production here. If there's anything we know how to do in this province, it's how to drill a hole in the ground. We can do those things. If we get it right, there's great opportunity. But how? When? We're being asked here to pass Bill 20. What I'm trying to do is narrow the focus of the bill to ensure that Albertans have faith that we get this thing right on renewable energy.

How much government support is going to be required to incent the over \$8 billion in private-sector investment required to overcome the coal retirements? By the way and for the record, I'm on the record as being in favour of eliminating coal-fired electricity in Alberta. It's time to do that for all the reasons that we've heard outlined in this House. But if we don't get it right, with the proper mix of gas and renewables, we will not achieve the objective without either compromising Alberta's electricity grid or costing Albertans millions if not billions of dollars.

How do you ensure that we don't jeopardize the reliability and competitiveness? How much support will you provide to natural gas fired generators or cogen or something else to provide that baseload? How will you manage that coal retirement bulge between 2025 and 2030? The federal regulations will still see six coal-fired plants on stream by 2030, but most of them are going to drop off a cliff, if you will, after 2025. What happens? Are you just sort of crossing your fingers and saying, "Well, that's nine years from now; we'll figure it out"? These are important questions that we need answers to before we can support this bill.

What about those coal PPAs, those power purchase agreements? I worry that this government is about to file suit against the PPA companies returning their power purchase agreements against advice of counsel, which is saying: look, we're going to spend hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars on fighting these PPAs being returned, even though we know we're going to lose, just so the government can save face. Is that really what you're going to do?

Will the carbon emissions from this plan actually meet our Paris commitments? This government hasn't been clear on that. We don't know. We know they're going to reduce carbon emissions – we hope – by 2030. Will it actually get there? Will we need more? How are you going to actually measure, physically measure, and report carbon emissions? Have you done modelling on the economic impacts, good and bad, of a carbon tax? If you've done that, will you release the details to Albertans so we can all see it?

What is the role of Energy Efficiency Alberta? What specific programs are you going to deliver? Are Albertans going to get a rebate to buy a Tesla? Are we going to get rebates to retrofit windows or put geothermal energy in our home? When is that going to happen? That's \$645 million, \$45 million of which is going to be spent in this fiscal year. What's that for? How can we support the bill if we don't know that?

How are you going to achieve that 30 per cent renewable energy target? What if 26 per cent is the sweet spot where costs are not too high, reliability is still there, and we still achieve carbon emission reduction? Does that make sense? Or are you locked in on 30 per cent because it's a nice round number? What if 28 per cent makes more sense? What if 35 per cent is possible? Is that a hard-and-fast number? How do we know? That's the problem.

Back to the amendment. What I am trying to do through this amendment is increase the faith of Albertans in this legislation. By

saying that Albertans will be rewarded by reducing personal and corporate tax and by having the economics to back it up, that's going to help this bill be seen as more palatable to Albertans, and it will make this government's job easier to sell the merits of this bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Chair:** Moving back onto the bill, the hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm rising today to speak about the climate leadership implementation, and I was very glad to see something put forward. I will say this: I agree wholeheartedly that we need to act on emissions. Our caucus fully accepts the science of man-made climate change. We believe that climate change is real, it's happening now, and we need to have a plan in a province that is a high emitter.

You know, one of the things that concerns me a little bit when we all stand to speak in this House is that oftentimes there is a level of intolerance in the conversation – and it happens on both sides – but the idea that opposition folks in here would question Bill 20 is not akin to questioning the science of climate change. It is a conversation for those of us who think that carbon pricing should be a policy in Alberta – in fact, Alberta was the first jurisdiction in Canada to do that already – not a conversation about whether we think there should be carbon pricing but a conversation about Bill 20 and whether we think Bill 20 actually hits the mark.

You know, in that conversation I think one of the things that I have struggled with – and, of course, the Member for Calgary-Elbow put it very eloquently as well – is some of the issues around outcomes. We and Albertans have to have confidence that the tools are in place to measure the outcomes, and this bill, of course, has to definitely deal with the questions that we have now. You're assuming that this bill takes care of all the questions that Albertans have, and those of us on this side still feel that there are questions. Are we having a conversation about greater efficiency, are we having a conversation about reduced utilization, or is this a blend of both? Is this bill dealing with both of those things?

**11:10**

Now, I would argue that a conversation about greater efficiency is a hugely important conversation to be having right now and also a conversation about fairness. Does this bill make sure that everyone is sharing the burden of responsibility for carbon emissions? That's another question that I'm not sure we have answered. You know, when we talk about a cap on private vehicle emissions or power plant emissions or, you know, as the Member for Calgary-Elbow mentioned, we talk about reducing income tax, we're talking about fairness. Any piece of legislation we talk about here has to strike a balance. So when we stand to talk about where we think that balance hasn't been met, we are not disputing whether we should have a bill that deals with climate leadership. In fact, we welcome a bill that deals with climate leadership. It's whether this bill is effective in doing it the way it needs to be done in this province.

Certainly, you know, I've had concerns about the fact that the majority of people who are getting a rebate in this province don't realistically have an incentive to reduce their emissions at all. Sixty per cent of people get a rebate in the province but only after the Alberta government creates a huge bureaucratic infrastructure to

collect and then redistribute this money. You know, it just doesn't seem exactly – I'm not sure what the word is – efficient. It's cumbersome to the people receiving the rebate and expensive for those who are paying the freight on that. Sure, you're getting money back, and if you spend less on, say, fuel for your vehicle, it's a double win, but I'm not a hundred per cent sure that's going to be the end result here.

I think that with some amendments this is a workable plan. I'm not standing here and saying that this is a terrible plan and walking away without any opportunity to say: hey, we have some amendments, and we are honestly here to sit at the table and to help make it better.

You know, when we talk about – I think that the Member for Calgary-Elbow mentioned it – coal, certainly that's a concern for us. I absolutely agree we need to move away from coal-fired electricity, but we also need to make sure that we focus on making sure Albertans' power bills aren't an undue hardship as a result. That's what we talk about when we talk about balance. The carbon rebates will be a very cold comfort when electricity rates explode. So the question is: are we seeing something here that tells us that electricity bills will be kept at a reasonable rate? I'm not sure that that question has been answered here, too.

Was a cost-benefit analysis done? Was it done before the decision was made to move forward? If so, where is it? Why can't we see it? The cost of implementing renewables is high. What is the economic impact of the early phase-out of coal? All of these are questions that we are struggling with here, for those of us who absolutely embrace the idea of a climate leadership implementation but just wonder how this plays out.

Yes, we are moving to a low-carbon future. Yes, it is a great thing, but we need to do this with a sensitivity to the balance that keeps our province healthy. We need to be responsible stewards of the environment, yes, absolutely, but we also need an energy industry that knows it has the support of our government and the acknowledgement that the standard of living we enjoy here in Alberta is a result of that industry.

So we are offering up amendments, and we hope that you will consider the amendments and take them seriously because they are brought forward with the idea that we want to be at the table for this discussion and that we want to make good things happen.

To that end, I have an amendment, and I'm going to give everyone a chance to eyeball it.

Madam Chair, should I sit for a moment?

**The Chair:** Just give me a half a second to sort out the amendment.

This will be amendment A4.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will read the amendment, first off, that you all have in front of you. I move that Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 by adding the following to section 79:

Minister to report

79.1(1) In this section, "Climate Leadership Plan" means the Government's Climate Leadership Plan announced on November 22, 2015.

(2) No later than 15 days after the commencement of the first sitting in 2019, the Minister shall lay a report before the Legislative Assembly that includes a cost impact assessment of the carbon levy established under this Act and an update on the current status of emissions in the province and how this compares to the emission reduction targets identified in the Climate Leadership Plan.

#### Review of Act

79.2 Following the tabling of the Minister's report under section 79.1, and no later than January 1, 2020, a committee of the Legislative Assembly must begin a comprehensive review of this Act and the regulations made thereunder and must submit to the Legislative Assembly, within 6 months after beginning the review, a report that includes the committee's recommendations for amendments to this Act, the regulations made under this Act or any other enactment.

Basically, this amendment calls for the minister to do a full analysis of the carbon tax one year after it's implemented, and it also calls for a legislative standing committee to fully review the carbon tax and to present recommendations two full years after the tax is implemented.

We can stand here all day talking about what could possibly happen down the road. "What if we don't do this amendment? What if we don't do that amendment? What if we haven't changed things? What if we go the way of, you know, word for word, what the government wants to do?" But if it's in the legislation that we have to do an analysis a year from now, we have the opportunity then to look over everything that's happened and to say: "Aha. This isn't working. Here are the unintended consequences. Did we think about those? Is there a point now at which we can amend, going forward, to deal with those unintended consequences?" It is important to make sure that the legislation we pass in here is doing the job it's intended to do, to make changes if that legislation isn't working or if it ends up disproportionately affecting certain groups of Albertans. That's a conversation we are tasked with taking part in all the time in this Legislature because that's our job.

Our caucus is bringing this amendment forward because we believe that climate change is real. It requires action. We need to deal with it. We understand we have a bill here – we have looked very carefully and thoughtfully at this bill – and we have come up with amendments that we feel make the bill stronger. We are realists, we are pragmatists, and we know the government is intent on passing this legislation. We want to help make that legislation better. The government has accepted amendments like this one on Bill 5. They are common sense. They do absolutely nothing to dilute the bill. That is not their intent. We think there is no reason why the government and opposition would not be able to support this reasoned look back a year and two years from now.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, I hadn't talked to the hon. member before she presented this amendment, so I didn't know it was coming, but this is a brilliant idea. I think it's exactly what we need. I would really hope that the government, again, does give this some thought.

What we're trying to do on this side of the House is make this a better bill and improve the chances of it being successful, because success on carbon reduction, action on climate change, is important for our province. I think it's, hopefully, important to the government as well. I think it's important on the face of it. It's important because that's what we're trying to do in this Assembly. I genuinely believe that all of us on this side, all of us in this House, those of you on that side of the House, those of us on this side, are all here because we want Alberta to be a better place. I really think that this legislation comes from your desire and your perspective. Your world view: I believe those are the words that have been used in this Chamber.

11:20

But, you know, in all sincerity, you're trying, I think, in your own minds, to do the right thing, and if Albertans don't believe that, you're not going to be successful. This amendment helps Albertans believe that you're doing the right thing because you've put in a thoughtful review, once the act has been put in place, to look back formally, to bring it back before the Assembly in the full view of Albertans, and say: "What works? What doesn't? What intended consequences have worked? Which haven't? What unintended consequences have we learned about, positive and negative?"

When you are bringing in a change this monumental, the risks of unintended consequences are severe, and there have been some real concerns raised on this side of the House. Some of them, I think, are legitimate, some of them perhaps a little fantastical, but we don't know. It's a vacuum. We have no idea. You have no way of defending what might happen, what may be possible, because it hasn't happened yet. Why don't you take the opportunity to pass this amendment, to put this review in place, so those of us in this Assembly and future Assemblies can review this important piece of legislation to make sure it's actually doing what you think and what you claim it's going to do?

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just looking at this amendment, and, you know, it seems to be a reasonable amendment when I take a look at this because we're putting in place this full cost analysis. The member sitting next to me – well, the member that usually sits next to me – had talked in depth about a cost analysis. What had the government done for a cost analysis to go ahead with this? How is it going to impact things like hospitals and schools and businesses? What I like about what's happening here is that it puts in place the review of a full cost analysis on this carbon levy or tax, whichever way you want to look at it, and this whole process when you bring in such a major bill, that's going to affect all Albertans.

This seems to be, to me, a very reasonable, very thoughtful approach to what we should be looking at here. It's got:

A cost impact assessment of the carbon levy established under this Act and an update on the current status of emissions in the province and how this compares to the emission reduction targets identified in the Climate Leadership Plan.

And it shows a sunset clause, that we have to go and review it after that period of time, and if it's not working, then there's a way to stop something if it's a bad bill that comes in.

For these matters, yeah, I can support what they've got on here. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I want to thank the hon. member, my fine colleague for Calgary-North West, for bringing forward a really common-sense sort of amendment. I would like to hear if there is any opposition. So far I have not heard that. Perhaps in the spirit of all-party co-operation this is an amendment that will be received with the intention in which it was given and eloquently stated, as I may suggest, by the hon. Member for Calgary-North West. I appreciate the previous speakers from the Wildrose and also from the Alberta Party, as is often the case, speaking very clearly.

Rather than taking the time of the House to go into many, many details that I would love to go into – I'd like to see this pass – I will

simply mention a few quick points. I believe and I've experienced over four terms that it's of the utmost important for any government on any bill to have a mechanism in place for every plan simply to determine whether policies in theory are actually succeeding in practice. With something as important and as fundamentally changing as this is, we need to determine whether after two full years the carbon tax is working after it's been put in place.

It would provide for the minister, whoever the minister happens to be, this government, other governments, to investigate what's been done, what's working, what's not. Let's face it, folks – and you don't have to take it from this side of the House – it's something that all Albertans are going to be very curious about. With often the best of intentions, they want to be able to see. If we talk about new and different ways of doing things and continuing to move towards a transparent sort of not only government but society, there should be nothing stopping us from doing that. Even puppy-monkey-babies, on those silly commercials, know that this is a no-nonsense sort of thing.

Additionally, having a committee of the Legislature – and I would not encourage any of those three stakeholders I mentioned earlier to be part of the committee – will allow us to go back to the bill and see what can be done to make it better. That is the intention of this bill, and I encourage, with great respect and friendliness, all members of this House to get together and vote for this common-sense amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Many speakers on this side have talked about the need to do a cost impact assessment. In fact, we heard that from a lot of municipal leaders at the first MGA meeting last night in Two Hills. They're very concerned about the fact that an assessment was not done, that affects them and reduces their ability to raise funds. All it is: it is really going to cost them money without any real thought as to where they're supposed to come up with the oversight.

We would have preferred that the cost assessment would have been done prior to this bill being introduced rather than in 2019, but that being said, the bill is about accountability, and we do support accountability in government.

My other comment on this amendment is that it suggests that there's a target. All that I can really find in Bill 20 is that it is actually going to result in an increase in carbon to big industry, and I don't really see any reduction plans or specific targets in here that would show a reduction. So we really don't have anything to measure against.

What I do see in the bill are a lot of tax rates, penalties, assessments, warrants for entering property, that kind of thing. I don't really see anything about targets other than the implementation of climate leadership in the title.

That being said, we will be supporting this amendment because it does provide some accountability to this government, and I believe we really do need that here. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I'd like to speak in favour of this amendment also. I think this is a minimum requirement for a bill of this magnitude. Actually, the minimum should have been that this was done before the bill was brought in, but obviously this government is bound and determined to pound

this through. I can't imagine why the government would not support this amendment also.

We're talking about a cost impact assessment "no later than 15 days after the commencement of the first sitting in 2019." By then, Madam Chair, we should have lots of time to have figured out what the impact of this is. I think Albertans would deserve to know what the impact is of such an enormous tax on each and every Albertan.

Of course, it also talks about "an update on the current status of emissions in the province." Now, this government talks about science all the time. This would be just pure science. What did we accomplish with this? What is the status of the emissions? This is just common sense.

11:30

Again, it's about analysis. It's about accountability. When you bring in a bill of this magnitude, that's the bare minimum requirement. Really, this is just a little bit of accountability. The analysis should have been done before. We shouldn't be waiting for analysis after. We should have at least some idea of the direction this bill is going to take the province of Alberta.

Of course, this bill is going to create an enormous slush fund for the government, so they have to be held accountable for that, for how that money is spent. Madam Chair, if the government can't do at least this, then I think that obviously would raise even more bells and whistles for Albertans.

Now, when we look at all the other things that this bill can cause as far as trouble for industry and jobs in Alberta, you've got to realize, Madam Chair, that there are a lot of industries in Alberta that rely heavily on natural gas. Food processors, for instance, rely heavily on natural gas for the processing of food. Any time they're working with, say, you know, potatoes or sugar beets or anything like that, where they have to take all that moisture out of the product – of course, we talk about value-added product all the time in this House.

Here in Alberta we would like to take the raw product from the agriculture industry, value add, process it here, but of course this carbon tax doesn't lend itself to encouraging businesses like that to operate here. It's actually a discouragement. It'll only help to drive away these businesses and this investment in Alberta. Should they want to expand their operation, they have to now decide: "Okay. We have a new fiscal environment to work in right now. This is a huge change. Do we make the investment here, or do we make the investment elsewhere, outside the province?" A lot of these large corporations already have their offices outside of Alberta. They chose to have their businesses here in Alberta based on the fiscal reality at the time they set up the business.

We have an enormous advantage here in Alberta. We have cheap natural gas and lots of it. Of course, there are other jurisdictions that have lots of natural gas, too, but we have it right here, and it's clean burning. It's the best energy that we have right now as far as a nonrenewable resource. Why would we want to tax that so heavily and risk driving even more business and more jobs out of Alberta? I don't quite understand that.

Now these companies are going to have to decide not only whether they're going to expand their businesses here or their plants here or whether they want to build a new plant or a new company that might want to come in – "Do we go to another jurisdiction or not?" They can also decide now, some of these companies that have an opportunity to import products from outside of Alberta, either partially or fully produced – what are they going to do? Are they going to choose to do that, to import their products into Alberta because it's not economically feasible to do it here in Alberta? Really, we have no evidence that this cash grab will be effective at carbon reduction.

Now, we talk a lot about diversification. Everybody wants to see an economy that's diversified. Everybody wants to see that. But why can't we leverage what we have here in Alberta to diversify the economy? I always call it, like, killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. We have the goose laying the golden eggs. We have this enormous energy sector here with all the infrastructure to produce this wealth for our province. We can do it two ways. We can take those golden eggs, the revenue from this resource that we have, and we can use that to help diversify the economy, to help create opportunity for corporations to come in and invest in Alberta, create jobs, replace these jobs that we're losing now. Or we can kill the goose. We can crush the most important sector in our economy and then sit here and try to decide: where is the money coming from now? Where is this tax revenue coming from now?

I see that the other side, of course, are laughing and rolling their eyes and everything. I find that offensive, Madam Chair, and I think the people of Alberta feel the same way. We have an enormous problem in this province, over 100,000 job losses, not including the people that are contractors, who don't have the option of collecting unemployment and are sitting at home, not working right now. So we can sit here and laugh about that, but I don't think that they're laughing. I don't think the people of Alberta are laughing at all.

Madam Chair, again, I will be supporting this amendment. The best thing the government could do would be to do the assessment before. They could send this to committee so that we could gain as much information as we can from experts so that we and Albertans can make an informed decision. But the government has chosen not to do either of those, so I think the absolute minimum Albertans could expect from this government on this, if they seem like they have no other agenda but to pound this bill through, the least they could expect is to have an analysis afterwards to find out what it actually did and to show a little bit of accountability.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to the amendment introduced by the hon. member. I think it's really important for us to note that when we're talking about the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, we're looking at a piece of legislation that's gone through thorough public consultation and was developed by economists and people who really do understand the Alberta economy. It's a made-in-Alberta solution that we can be proud of because it's going to diversify Alberta's economy. It's going to create jobs in Alberta, over 3,000 jobs. That's why people like Michael McSweeney, the president and CEO of the Cement Association of Canada, are saying:

Premier Notley and her government have shown leadership in ensuring the Alberta government consults in a meaningful way on climate change with industries across the province. This will ensure that climate policies are designed and implemented correctly from the start and thus can protect the competitiveness of industry and the integrity of the environment. Our environment and our economy needs a price on carbon.

Madam Chair, when we look at these quotes and we look at what people have said about the Climate Leadership Implementation Act and how the act was developed by economists that have suggested things like investing \$645 million in the Alberta energy efficiency programs and investing in the economy and revenue recycling throughout our programs, we can be very proud of what this plan accomplishes and how we're going to be moving forward with this.

Of course there's going to be ongoing assessment, Madam Chair. Of course we're going to be reviewing the policies and ongoing matters, but really what we're doing as we move forward is that we've created a plan that will meaningfully reduce emissions in

Alberta. What it's going to do is to recycle the revenues from the reduction of those emissions, and it's going to create meaningful renewable energy programs in this province.

All these things taken together are something that we can look at and say that there was absolutely thoughtful and thorough economic analysis put into this because we had Dr. Leach on the panel, because we had Linda Coady on the panel, because we were endorsed by people from industry, from NGOs, from both sides of the aisle, from the economy, and by people like Jim Dinning, the former PC Finance minister.

**11:40**

Madam Chair, when we look at all these pieces together, as a whole, we can see that the Climate Leadership Implementation Act as it stands is absolutely a good way to diversify our economy, will absolutely create 3,000 jobs in the long term, will absolutely invest over \$6 billion in the economy over the next five years, and will rebate to two-thirds of Albertans a partial or full rebate on what they're paying on the carbon levy.

Madam Chair, we look at this diversification piece, we look at the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, and we can see that there was very thoughtful and very thorough economic analysis done. This is a plan that isn't just put together and hobbled together; this is a plan that's been well thought out, that from the beginning has been designed with economic analysis in mind, that's been designed to make sure that we would diversify our economy. Its been designed to make sure that we would create green jobs in Alberta, that we would put Albertans back to work, that we would help develop a new industry in Alberta, that we would help develop and foster existing industries in Alberta.

Madam Chair, this plan is a way that we can be proud of our economic and our environmental reputation on a global scale. It's something that makes us proud to be Albertans, and we can put this forward as a piece of legislation that will really further the environmental interests of Alberta and the economic interests of Alberta.

I think that there are a number of things in this amendment that aren't necessary because of all the very thorough economic analysis that's already been done. We've already seen very in-depth analysis and consultation with over 25,000 Albertans and hundreds of people in focus groups through the Climate Leadership report. Because of all this, I must implore all hon. members to please vote against this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, followed by Calgary-North West.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I would like to speak in favour of this amendment. It seems clear. Based on the lack of acceptance of any of the other amendments, we know the road that we're travelling here. I would just suggest that collaboration is key here on a bill of this magnitude. I'd highly recommend that as we go forward, there's some active listening to what's being said on this side of the House to try and help this bill be better.

I'd like to bring up a point of the hon. Member for Calgary-North West, something that resonated with me specifically. You said: it is doing what it is intended to do. I'd like to expand on that. We're talking about accountability, transparency, and something that the hon. member from across the way just mentioned, something to be proud of. Truly, if that is the intention of this House and of the government, wouldn't you want to show what you've achieved? Truly, wouldn't you want the opportunity to say, "These are the

goals, this is what we did, and that's how we did it," and to have those metrics? You are setting the bar for new metrics on an aspect that has never been seen so far with a climate action plan: your plan, your metrics, for the first time at this level.

I would love to know why you would not want to take an amendment that, seriously, gives you the opportunity to show all of Alberta why this worked or, even better, why it didn't so that it can be improved upon. Isn't that the point? Isn't that why we're all here in the first place, for heaven's sake? I'm absolutely mortified that you wouldn't take – this is your ability to say that you did the right thing or, even better, to admit that you were wrong and to fix it. For heaven's sake, like, this gives you an actual way of showing your metrics and what you created.

I'll go to the initiatives here. Maybe I don't have them all, but I'm going to go through a few things here. I've heard this: spearhead innovation of cleaner technology. Isn't that what you want? Wouldn't you like to know where you started, where you went, and how you ended up?

Let's go to another one: invest in cleaner choices. Well, that's wonderful, but I would think that Albertans would want to know how you did it, where you went, how you got that information, what we can learn from that, and improve from there. I've heard in this House a thousand times: we must do better. Okay. Then let's show better or, if you didn't, give Alberta the opportunity to help it be better. That's called collaboration, something that is highly, highly being missed in this discussion right now.

The third thing, leaders in energy efficiency. Show some leadership. Take responsibility for the decisions you're making in here right now, and show us some metrics in a year. It's a year after it's implemented. That's all Albertans are asking for. Show some leadership, show that you made the right decision, and show Albertans that this works. That's called transparency.

The fourth thing is cutting-edge clean technology. Well, just in case you didn't know, we have an excellent record already. Perhaps you could take some lessons from the record that's already presented, go from there, build on what's already there, bring some new ideas forward, and show Albertans what you did. That's called accountability.

The fifth thing is to pursue a low-carbon infrastructure. What plan have we seen so far where that is coming forward? Where is the plan? All we're asking for, all this amendment actually asks for, is for you to show where you started, how you got there, and how we can improve. Take it to heart. The government has that responsibility. It is your job.

That's all I have to say. Thank you so much.

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

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View for saying it so well. I wasn't going to rise and respond to the comments of the Member for Edmonton-South West, but I was trying to wrap my head around what he said in response to my amendment.

Now, let's keep in mind for a moment that this amendment is simply a call to do an analysis of this carbon tax a year from now and then for a legislative committee to review it two years from now. If what I'm understanding is correct, the Member for Edmonton-South West said, in a nutshell: the reason we're not even going to consider this amendment is because our legislation is so good that we don't have to look at it a year from now. That was sort of my take-away. I'm not sure if that was anyone else's take-away. I would say this. If that is the only argument against this amendment that you can come up with, you're kind of going for the bronze here.



You know, there are a number of us standing here and saying: "Yes. Let's talk about climate leadership. We're happy to be a part of that conversation. But – hey – how about this? Because we have concerns, let's turn around a year from now and do an analysis and see if it's hitting the mark where you say that it's going to hit the mark." But then you turn around and say: "Guess what? This bill is so good that we don't care what happens on the other side. It's so good that we don't have to listen to a word you say." It just sets off all sorts of alarm bells for me because I'm sure there is at least one person on the other side of this Chamber who actually thinks that makes sense. Why don't you prove you're not a whipped caucus, and why doesn't someone stand up and say: "Hey. Actually, we're okay with doing an analysis of a piece of legislation we brought forward a year from now and taking a look to see if it works"? How about that?

**The Chair:** I'll recognize Calgary-Elbow, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think the Member for Calgary-North West said it very well. My challenge to the Member for Edmonton-South West and to this entire government is: how do you know? The best decisions are made with good evidence.

Now, I think there's good evidence that a carbon tax makes a lot of sense, but what if this doesn't have the intended consequences that you want it to have? What if? Each and every one of you on the government backbenches or even the front benches feels that we should just simply take it as an article of faith that this is going to work. How do we know? Once this has been in place for a year, what if it isn't working the way you thought it would work? How will Albertans know and be able to trust that you're not simply ramming through legislation? And you're just going to sit there reading Facebook or tweeting or doing whatever you're doing while we raise objections or ask questions that I think are legitimate questions.

**11:50**

The Official Opposition accuses the government all the time of not consulting Albertans, of ramming through legislation, of just sitting there quietly while we waste our time and our breath on commentary in this House. I don't want that to be true. I want this place to work. I really hope the government does, too. This is the sort of amendment that I think – let's just talk politics for a moment. If you're able to walk out of this House and do a press briefing afterwards and say, "You know, we thought about this amendment, and we accepted some opposition amendments, and we wanted to make the bill as good as it could be; we listened to the opposition because they represent an awful lot of Albertans, too; look at us; aren't we a thoughtful government," isn't that a stronger position? Doesn't that make this a stronger bill? On the face of this amendment it makes it a stronger bill. On the political side, by accepting this amendment, that's also a win for you. So, Brian Topp, if you're out there listening, please, this is a good idea. This is a good idea. Politically I can make that argument, but on the face of the amendment, it's far more important than the politics. On the face of the amendment this is a good idea, to review the legislation.

I'll ask you again: what's the downside? Each and every one of you: listen to your heart of hearts on this one. As private Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta you represent the people who elected you to do the right thing for them and the right thing for the province. This is not a difficult amendment to pass. This is not fundamentally changing the intent of the bill. This is not changing the flow of dollars. This does not change the material impact of the carbon tax. All it does is that it brings it back to the

Assembly after a year to ask a very fundamental, simple, and important question: does it work? What have we learned? Albertans get an opportunity to hear that debate in the full view of the Assembly and in the public. That's what we should be doing in this Assembly.

So I'd ask you to please reconsider and support this amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is an opportunity for the government once again to try to embrace the concept of accountability. If there's anything about this government that's become a pattern, it's that they will not be accountable. I find that absolutely baffling for a party that presents itself as wanting to be a new face of government, new accountability, openness and transparency, but every time we have an opportunity to do that, they take exactly the opposite path. I mean, we had the opportunity for them to embrace a little bit of personal accountability with the debt ceiling. It didn't take long for them to completely retreat from that and end up taking the path of no accountability whatsoever. Here we have in this bill the same situation with permission, authority, freedom to raise the burden of the levy rate. They won't be accountable for it. They just voted down that amendment.

So here we have another opportunity. I mean, this amendment makes complete sense. It's so obvious. The one thing we've asked for again and again is some sort of economic impact assessment, some sort of actual measurement of emissions. If we can't have it before, surely, at least, we could have it after. I would like to suggest that what the government should be doing now is building some baselines to be able to include the actual emissions, even of the government footprint, so that they can begin to show people they've actually reduced some emissions. Here's another opportunity to make themselves accountable to the people, but they've rejected every single amendment in that direction, and here they're about to reject another one, it seems. They're speaking against it.

This bill has huge inequalities, but they refuse to even consider any of those things. Now we hear them saying that the bill is so perfect that they don't need to even look at it after. Will they allow the opportunity to confirm the effectiveness of their own bill, or are they just going to continue in intransigence about all of this? This is a massive tax appropriation by the Crown, without allowing any debate in the House over it in terms of the rate that's raised. They refuse to accept all the amendments. Truly, I mean, this pushes democracy back hundreds of years. This is taxation without representation.

If we can't at least have the debate before on some of these things, why will they not allow it after the fact? It's a great amendment. I can't imagine why anyone wouldn't support it. It's an opportunity for the government to show themselves to the people of Alberta, that they actually do believe in democracy, that they actually are willing to come forward and be seen and be known and be transparent in government. Or not.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports

progress on the following bill: Bill 20. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to adjourn the House until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:56 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, June 2, 2016

Day 38

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 2, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the great honour and privilege of introducing to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Balbir Choudary and Mrs. Shobha Choudary, the parents of my dear friend Raj, who is like a brother to me in many ways. I'm also happy to introduce Mr. Dheeraj Chawla; his wife, Ruhi Chawla; and their son Samarth Chawla. Dheeraj is a valued friend who has helped me immensely in a variety of areas. I would ask my guests to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my absolute pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly grade 6 classes from St. Benedict school in Leduc in the STAR Catholic school division. Students from each class have recently written to me regarding their upcoming field day that they're all very excited about, and from the sounds of it, it should be a fantastic day. The students are joined here today by parent helpers Dawn Fereday and Mrs. Sherrill Gering and teachers Ms Mandy Hauger and Mrs. Vanessa Jones. I'd ask that all the students, teachers, and parents rise, and can we please give them the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

For guests, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Jayson Miller. Jayson is here representing Building Hope, a Nazarene compassionate ministry. He and his colleagues help families in need with hot meals, clothing, and drop-in activities. Building Hope started in the Beverly neighbourhood more than 15 years ago, and they build meaningful relationships and create a sense of community. I thank Jayson for his incredible dedication and ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Les Landry and his service dog, Annie, from Cypress-Medicine Hat. Les has used his personal experience with posttraumatic stress disorder to serve the community through the various organizations he is very active in. Les is also the founding president of Respect the Service Dog, an organization to raise awareness about service dogs in society, and also started the Medicine Hat trauma and stress network. The support network holds weekly meetings and offers a support line for people struggling with PTSD. If Les and Annie could now rise, I ask that all members join me in welcoming him

and Annie and wishing them all the best in all their efforts to serve Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through to the members of this Assembly the Jardine family, who are visiting me from beautiful Calling Lake in Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater. This visit was actually occasioned by Robert Jardine, who is a grade 8 student at Edwin Par composite school, keenly interested in politics, and actually campaigned and won the student vote for me at Edwin Par school. It's great to have supporters like that. He's joined here by his sister Anna, who's a grade 6 student at Landing Trail intermediate school; his mother, Charity Jardine, who is taking a master's in cultural studies from Athabasca University and is the recipient of the Queen Elizabeth scholarship as well as the aboriginal graduate student award and wanted to have an opportunity to thank the government and the people of Alberta for supporting her in her studies; and finally, Ken Jardine, who operates the water treatment plant in Calling Lake. I would ask the Jardines to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you'll indulge me, I have two groups of guests today. The first is Joshua Buck and Blaire Christensen, who are my two very dedicated, hard-working constituency assistants. They do the hard work of making sure that the e-mails, telephone calls, and occasionally a fax get answered when I'm here in session. If they'd please rise. I would like to point out that, much to my being very upset about this, Blaire is actually going to be leaving me this fall to pursue her master of social work at the University of Calgary. If the House would please give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I also have a second guest, thank you very much. It's my good friend Matthew Reeves. I've known Matt for a number of years here. Back at the U of A when I was in the Delta Upsilon fraternity, he was my president. He completed his kinesiology degree at the U of A. Why I really wanted to introduce Matt today is that I consider him to be a hero because over the last few weeks and months – he is a wildfire firefighter – he's been fighting in the Peace River and Slave Lake regions, actually just returning home from his shift last night. He'll be redeployed on Monday to continue to do the good work of protecting Albertans. Thank you, Matt, and could he please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly as well.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Hon. member, those staff: do they write those speeches for you?

Are there any other guests today, hon. members? The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to other members of this Assembly Mr. Alf White, who is the president of the Boyle Street Community League association in my great constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. He does good work on behalf of his community. I would like him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Mason:** I have a second, Mr. Speaker. Also today attending the session is Mrs. Angela Johnson, who is a social work student at NorQuest College. She is presently doing her student practicum in my constituency office and has been doing an outstanding job helping my constituents. I'd like Mrs. Johnson to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Now the hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got a school group here doing School at the Leg. this week from Good Shepherd in Peace River. They were formally introduced on Tuesday, but they had such a great time here that they're back again today. I would just like to have them stand and receive our welcome again. Thank you for coming back.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other guests? Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really pleased to be able to introduce my lovely wife and daughter, who are here today. This time I actually get to introduce my daughter as well. She's graduated, now, with her education degree from Ambrose college. Would you please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure to introduce to you and through you today staff from Service Alberta who worked on two significant pieces of legislation this session, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016, and An Act to End Predatory Lending. These public servants have worked diligently to provide their best advice and to protect Albertans. Although they are a small group, they have done very heavy lifting to ensure higher standards of fairness for all Albertans. I am very pleased to have them here with us today, and I'll ask them to stand as I call their names. They are Colin Lloyd, assistant deputy minister of consumer and registry services; Di Nugent; Nathan Stelnicki; Sarah Leonard; Claudette Dunsing; Twyla Job; Brent Kornack; Katherine Olson; Trevor Bergen; Robert Whittaker; Scott Seymour; Marty Schwartz; Deb Wagar; and, last but not least, Rob Phillips.

1:40

I've saved Mr. Phillips for last not to embarrass him but to point out that this past Tuesday he retired after 34 years of exemplary public service, Mr. Speaker. Rob, with a lifetime of professional achievement now behind you, I want to express the gratitude of myself and this Assembly for your years of diligent public service to the province of Alberta and to all Albertans. Nowhere was this more evident than in your efforts and work on the consultations for and drafting of An Act to End Predatory Lending. We all wish you a long and happy retirement. I'll ask that this House please join me in celebrating these officials and Rob, on his retirement, and give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

### Farmer's Day

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nearly 100 years ago United Farmers of Alberta recognized the importance of setting aside a special day each year to honour farmers, declaring that every second Friday in June would be Farmer's Day. Formal acknowledgement has not been widely observed, but this year UFA is leading the revitalization of Farmer's Day on June 10. It will be a day to celebrate the unwavering spirit, hard work, and contribution of Alberta's farmers. I have the utmost respect for farmers, and I am proud to come from a family who worked and continue to work the land.

Agriculture in Alberta is our shared history. Sharing this story is more important than ever as we seek to raise the profile of the industry in a challenging economy. My constituency of Leduc-Beaumont is home to an incredibly rich agricultural history, and I'd like to share some of it with you today. The Ellett farm, north of Beaumont, has been growing grain and raising hogs for 129 years, Mr. Speaker. For five generations the Wedmanville farm has raised horses, produced beef, dairy, and grain. We also have the home of the Villettard egg farm. The Goudreau farm near Beaumont was started by some of the first homesteaders to arrive in the area from Montreal in 1894. The Bérubé family dairy farm is home to one of the founding families of Beaumont, operating since the late 1880s.

Mr. Speaker, we must recognize the contribution that farming families like these have made. This province was founded by farmers, it has been built and grown by farmers, and it continues to be supported by farmers. Demand for Alberta's agriculture products is high, and our farmers are world class. This is truly an industry worth celebrating on June 10. So please, everyone, make sure that you recognize our farmers and thank them for working so hard, day in and day out, providing the backbone of this great province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Municipal Funding

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week the Minister of Municipal Affairs introduced the long-awaited amendments and the new, modernized Municipal Government Act. The MGA hasn't had a thorough review in nearly two decades, and it was high time it was dusted off and looked over.

I've been an active member of my community for more years than I care to admit. I spent several of those years as an active member on boards and as a councillor for the MD of Foothills. Unfortunately, the issue of critical importance that still remains today is the lack of long-term, stable, predictable funding that accounts for inflation and population.

Municipalities are the level of government closest to the people, and Wildrose believes that more decision-making authority should rest with local elected officials. That's why our approach is to empower cities, towns, counties, and municipal districts to meet their own individual planning needs and to take the politics out of funding decisions at the provincial level. I was hopeful that the years of stakeholder consultations and research would have addressed this glaring issue; however, I along with the municipal leaders across the province were disappointed to see that this glaring issue remains today completely ignored by the proposed legislation. Until this issue is addressed in a meaningful and purposeful manner, our municipal partners will continue to bear the burden of this government's neglect.

Albertans deserve to know just how much more they will be paying because of this review. Albertan municipalities deserve better. Albertans deserve better.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

#### Edmonton-McClung Summer Fest

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The number of indigenous people living off-reserve in Alberta forms one of the largest and fastest growing segments of our urban residential population. This is certainly true in my suburban constituency of Edmonton-McClung. For example, some elementary schools in my riding comprise 30 per cent First Nations students.

Mr. Speaker, I think our most important responsibility as MLAs is to serve our constituents and bring them together. We should be the bridge between diverse communities by encouraging people to share their food, culture, and knowledge. I'm happy to say that on what I hope will be a bright, sunny afternoon, Sunday, July 10, I will try to do just that by hosting the inaugural Edmonton-McClung summer fest.

Mr. Speaker, organized out of my constituency office, this unique summer fest will feature indigenous drummers, dancers, singers, a hip hop artist, an authentic teepee with elder storytellers, and stick games. We want to share the beautiful First Nations music, dance, ideology, language, and history with our community. We hope that our brothers and sisters from the First Nations will attend in large numbers to celebrate their indigenous heritage and culture. I want to make everyone in my riding fully aware that we have a significant indigenous population living with us and that they bring tremendous value to our community.

One year ago the final report of the truth and reconciliation committee was released. As we honour the truth and engage in a reconciliation of our country, all Canadians should make a special effort to really get to know their indigenous neighbours. Beyond the dancing and drumming, behind the fabulously colourful regalia and elder storytelling, you will find a beautiful people with a rich and rewarding history and an ideology that should occupy a larger and more important space in our Canadian mosaic.

Come discover this for yourself at my first annual summer fest on July 10 in Edmonton-McClung at the Callingwood skate park. We will have bannock, a bouncy bus, and food trucks, too. Bring your whole family for a totally enriching experience and to get to know your First Nations neighbours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

#### Cultural Heritage Celebrations

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These past months in my constituency have been marked by a number of colourful and vibrant celebrations of culture among different communities. While each festivity was unique, they all involved gathering families eager to share traditions brought to Canada and with the aim of keeping them alive.

One member from a South Asian heritage expressed to me recently that 31 years ago they realized that none of the children in their community knew their traditional songs and dances. Because of that observation, the adults taught the children their traditions, with the end result that I and many other community members had the privilege of watching the enthusiastic youngsters cheerfully

demonstrating their heritage, to the delight of their parents and grandparents.

Most of us here have come from somewhere else, and some of us brought with us the traditions of our homeland. I was fortunate to attend an event at the Ukrainian cultural village last summer in which a genealogical project was being celebrated. Plaques were presented to members of families whose home villages and some family history about leaving Ukraine and coming to Canada had been uncovered. As part of the celebration there were Ukrainian dancers, food, and traditional music.

It brought home how important it was to maintain traditions and avoid losing them, as is the case in many cultures. I married into a family with a strong Scottish background who celebrated all things Scottish at regular ceilidhs. However, now that the older family members are gone, the celebrations are mostly memories.

Having the opportunity to witness these celebrations has made me realize how valuable it is to be able to keep and share our traditions with others.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

#### Centennial High School Leadership Conference

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week I had the opportunity to attend the opening ceremonies for the senior high student leadership conference hosted by Centennial high school in the beautiful constituency of Calgary-Shaw. This was the second time that the school has hosted this very important conference, and the timing coincided with the launch of the new *Star Wars* film, dubbing this event as A New Hope. There's a connection about this particular timing. The school believes that students are the leaders who are going to make this province and this country a better place for the future, hence a new hope.

1:50

Opening with dance-offs and cheering chants, this lovely event focused on developing leadership qualities, networking, and building effective, positive relationships among student peer groups. Students had great opportunities to develop skills by listening to distinguished guests and participating in important breakout sessions.

When I visited Centennial leading up to the conference, I saw students diligently preparing for the big event, planning activities for visiting students from neighbouring Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and even as far away as Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. Sadly, due to the wildfires in Fort McMurray the students from those high schools were unable to attend, but, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to share that these students, with their quick thinking and consideration, fundraised approximately \$2,000 for their friends in Fort McMurray. This was matched by the Canadian Youth Speakers Bureau as well.

Centennial high school's leadership has always taken an active role in leadership. I saw this during the 2015 election, where they advocated for improving the quality of public education. As I met a few students from around the province, it made me feel great to know that this province will be left in good hands. These students will cherish these memories that they created over the past three days.

I want to thank the leadership teachers from all across the province. Thank you for your time and efforts in organizing and attending this great event that Centennial was very proud to host. I also want to give a special thanks to instructor Brent Dickson from

Centennial high, who supported these students throughout the conference's organization, and special recognition to all the students and the parent council, who put in a lot of hard work to make sure this went off without a hitch.

### Point of Order

#### Parliamentary Language

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we begin Oral Question Period today, I'm now prepared to rule on the point of order raised yesterday by the House leader for the third party concerning comments made by the Deputy Premier. This point of order relates to the Deputy Premier's response to the leader of the third party's second supplementary question. As I mentioned yesterday, I opted to defer so that I could review the exchange in *Hansard*, which can be found on page 1378 of the June 1 edition.

The third-party House leader indicated that the Deputy Premier used unparliamentary language in her answer. I have reviewed the *Hansard*, and what the Deputy Premier said in response to the question from the leader of the third party is as follows: "Mr. Speaker, the overdramatization of what's happening in this House, if it wasn't so serious and if the misinformation wasn't so out to lunch, would actually be quite funny. But it is so out to lunch and so inflammatory and not honest."

The Deputy Premier characterized the statements by the leader of the third party and perhaps by other members of the Assembly as well as "inflammatory and not honest." However, these comments were in response to the member's statements and perhaps other statements made in the Assembly and not, in fact, directed at the member himself. It is for this reason that I find there is no point of order.

I would like to point out for the . . . [interjections]

**Mr. Rodney:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry. Could you repeat the last two sentences? It was too loud, and I really want to hear what you . . .

**The Speaker:** Please don't stand while I'm standing, sir. I believe everyone else heard it. You could read it in *Hansard* afterwards if you like, sir.

I point out for the information of all members *Beauchesne's* paragraph 494, which states in part that "it is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts; but no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible."

I would, however, caution all members of the House, as a general principle of good parliamentary practice, to be conscious of the time and context of phrases such as "and not honest" or, as I have heard told to me but have not personally heard them, statements like "tell the truth" that are being passed across the aisle. Please, hon. members, let's have a better time in this place and be respectful of each other.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

#### Carbon Levy Revenue Utilization

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP's carbon tax will take billions – billions – out of Albertans' pockets, and where will the money go? A mysterious slush fund that this government has vowed to recycle into unknown programs and initiatives. To be clear, this Premier is asking Albertan families to hand over a

thousand dollars a year to the NDP, and there are no standards in place to assure the billions of dollars she is syphoning from the economy will have any direct benefit for this province. How can the Premier take billions out of the pockets of hard-working Alberta families to pay for her very own slush fund?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let me begin once again by correcting the record that the number the members opposite continually – continually – insist on using, notwithstanding that they have been provided over and over and over again with the actual real information, is in fact inflammatory and not helpful to a very important debate that we need to have in this House and across this province about how to tackle the issue of climate change. I am very proud that this government is leading that debate not only here in the province but across the country.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, folks across Alberta are losing work. Their personal budgets are shrinking, and the NDP are asking them to forfeit a thousand dollars a year to an unaccountable expenses slush fund with absolutely zero accountability. It's more of the same: lazy and poorly thought-out laws we have come to expect from the NDP government. The Premier did not campaign on this, and now she's asking Albertans to hand over billions of dollars with zero accountability. Again to the Premier: what mechanism will this government put in place to show Albertans that their money will be handled responsibly?

**Ms Notley:** Well, let me begin, Mr. Speaker, that as we go forward reporting to Albertans on the progress of our plan in diversifying the economy, reducing emissions, and moving Alberta forward in terms of its development of a more progressive, sustainable nonrenewable energy industry, we will do so by using facts, which is exactly what the members opposite refuse to do, and it is no wonder that nobody – nobody – has any faith in these guys on this issue and why they believe that they are all people who deny climate change.

**Mr. Smith:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, a member of this Assembly was once quoted as saying that good Legislatures are interested in restoring the trust between them and the citizens of the province by moving forward on promises around transparency and accountability. That member was our very own Premier when she was in opposition. But today her government is trying to ram through a bill that rips billions of dollars out of the economy with almost no strings attached. Premier, why should Albertans trust this government to handle their money properly when this government won't answer basic questions on how it will be spent?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, we'll answer questions that are premised on the actual facts. None of the questions that have been asked so far have been, so that is difficult and challenging. What we have talked with Albertans about and what we will continue to do in as open and as transparent a way as possible is how our plan will move Alberta forward, ensuring that low- and middle-income families, indeed 60 per cent of Albertans, get rebates; how we incent better choices in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, both on the part of individuals and companies; and how we move our province forward as a climate

change leader and do our part to reduce damaging greenhouse gas emissions, which threaten the health and future of our . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### Support for Business

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February there were over 1,100 personal and business insolvencies in Alberta. In March there were another 1,200 added to that number. These are people's hopes, dreams, and lives going up in smoke. This trend line does not bode well for Albertans who right now are barely holding on. These figures represent an increase of over 40 per cent over the same time last year. Consumer debt in Alberta is on the rise. The numbers don't lie. Premier, why won't the government stop their high-tax, anti-jobs agenda and help their fellow Albertans?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We understand that families across this province have in fact been very significantly impacted by the dramatic drop in the price of oil, and we are very concerned about that. That's why our government has taken a balanced, careful approach to addressing the issue. We've maintained public spending and maintained important front-line public services, which Albertans rely on. We've invested significantly in capital construction to stimulate the economy and stimulate our GDP, something that all experts agree on. We've also introduced a very robust jobs plan, which through a number of different programs is going to incent small-business development.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Hunter:** Albertans expect this government to do no harm to Alberta's economy. This should go without saying. However, under their watch manufacturing in Alberta has dropped by 15.5 per cent, and now according to Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters there is risk of even more shutdowns. These jobs won't come back if this government raises the cost of manufacturing in Alberta through a punishing carbon tax and soaring electricity bills. Since this government took office, Alberta has lost 25,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector alone. To the Premier: when will this government stop punishing job creators so Albertans can get back to work?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What our government is doing is working with all Albertans to stabilize the slowdown in the economy and to work together with them to build resilience, to promote diversification, and to ensure that we are less vulnerable to the kind of commodity price shocks that we are dealing with right now. Members opposite wanted to take billions of dollars out of the economy through cuts. They wanted to cut teachers. They wanted to cut nurses. They wanted to cut services. They wanted to cut \$9 billion from our capital budget. Those things would have hurt jobs even more. We will not go down that path.

**Mr. Hunter:** Action in a year is not what Albertans need now. Job creators aren't buying this government's empty assurances.

A recent survey by Restaurants Canada found that 75 per cent of Alberta member restaurants expect sales to drop in the next six months. Restaurants Canada specifically cites increased taxes and this government's aggressive minimum wage hike as contributing

factors to struggling restaurants. Job creators and everyone else, for that matter, have lost confidence in this government's ability to stimulate growth and create jobs. When will the Premier start listening to the very concerned people of Alberta?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that when the price of oil was a hundred dollars a barrel and our economy was on fire, these folks were also against raising the minimum wage. The fact of the matter is that they don't care about the people who are very vulnerable, whose lives and family are suffering as a result of a very, very low minimum wage, one of the lowest minimum wages in the country. It is abysmal. We will move forward because raising the minimum wage will stimulate the economy, it will ensure greater equality, and it will reduce poverty. Those are the things that we care about.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Alberta College of Paramedics

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, a judicial review of the actions of the Council of the Alberta College of Paramedics has commenced in connection with the termination of the members of the college registration committee on January 22, 2016. The members were terminated without notice or reason and had previously raised concerns to the Minister of Health over inappropriate college governance. Could the minister avoid the expense of a trial in the courts and use her authority to resolve the issues through a Health Disciplines Board investigation instead?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, this is a serious matter, and it is before the courts. That certainly is where the matter rests currently, and I think it's appropriate for it to proceed according to the current process. Commenting further about the specifics around this situation, of course, in the middle of a trial wouldn't be conducive to good legal proceedings.

**Mr. Barnes:** Given that the minister could – also, section 4 of the Health Disciplines Act requires the director of health disciplines to produce an annual report, and furthermore the act requires that the minister table the report in this Assembly, and the act and its regulations also require the College of Paramedics to produce an annual report by March 31. Now, in June, none of these legal obligations have been met. Will the minister step in to increase transparency and investigate the lack of public reporting and other outstanding issues surrounding this?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm reluctant to trust Wildrose research given the history of things being conveyed that aren't totally untrue but are partially conveyed in a way that could lead somebody to believe that something is improper. I will certainly follow up and ensure that I have received the report and in due course ensure that it is shared publicly. Again, I respect the role that the college plays in providing oversight and governance.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that the minister is reluctant to answer the question and the termination of registration committee members followed their sending of a whistle-blower letter to the Deputy Minister of Health in October 2015, this letter allegedly caused retaliatory action against the whistle-blowers, and these

whistle-blowers have been required to pay significant out-of-pocket legal expenses to fight this complaint. A review found the complaint against them without merit. Will the minister ensure that whistle-blowers in organizations established by the government of Alberta are protected and specifically address . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It would be inappropriate to go into the very specifics of an HR situation, particularly in this House. I think that both members, employees and employers, deserve respect, and debating specifics of instances in this House is certainly not becoming of the Legislature.

In terms of the policy question that was asked, certainly there is whistle-blower legislation, and our government will ensure that we continue to move forward in a way that honours that, protects those who are vulnerable and who are doing their best to make sure that things are appropriate and forthright, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

### Correctional Officer PTSD and Suicide Incidence

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, studies show that correctional peace officers may be exposed to 28 critical incidents during their career such as assaults, suicides, and murders. For some officers their career is cut short because of mental health issues and, in too many cases, suicide. [interjections] I'm talking about suicide, and I'm being taunted by the government side.

I'll go straight to the Premier. Given that data is needed to fully understand PTSD and suicide among Alberta correctional peace officers, will your government commit to tracking and collecting data on it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I actually began my legal career doing exactly that, working on behalf of corrections officers who were suffering from PTSD, so I'm very aware of the issue. It's a very important issue, and I'll certainly look to see where the data is on that.

I will say that the issue that was sort of thrown out from this caucus is a good one, though, the degree to which there was an opportunity to talk about PTSD as it impacts corrections officers and the fact that this government specifically rejected that issue and rejected the import of that issue when the matter was brought forward a couple of years ago. We will certainly look to resolving that issue going forward.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, let's try again, Mr. Speaker, and see if the Premier is interested in helping.

I'll ask the same question again. I'll make it really clear. Will you ensure that data is collected and tracked on corrections officers in regard to the incidence of PTSD and suicide? Will you?

**Ms Notley:** Well, I think I did answer the question, Mr. Speaker. I actually believe it probably is already tracked, but certainly if it's not, I'll look into it. In fact, that whole issue of the safety of corrections officers is one that's very important to us and one that was missed by the previous government when they addressed the issue of presumptive coverage of certain staffpeople with PTSD. I thank the member for bringing it forward. We will certainly make

sure it is tracked. I think it probably is, but if it's not, it would be very easy to make sure it is.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I just wanted to remind you that spring has sprung, and I can feel the flowers growing in the room. As we go through these next few minutes together, I hope we can think about the weather outside.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, we've had strike 2, Mr. Speaker. The Premier hasn't answered the question twice. She said yes, and then she said that she wasn't sure. I'm going to give the Premier a third chance before she strikes out.

Will you commit to making sure the statistics are tracked for PTSD and suicide for Alberta's corrections officers, and will you report back to this House? I would appreciate a yes or no in the answer.

Thank you.

2:10

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe I actually said yes in the previous answer, but to be clear, the answer is yes.

One of the things that's really important to understand is that right now many corrections officers do not have their PTSD acknowledged by the very agency that would track it because it is not covered under the legislation that this government brought in and failed to include them in. The presumptive coverage of PTSD does not extend to corrections officers as first responders because the members opposite chose to exclude them. Some of the statistics are difficult to get because many claims have been rejected.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

### Highway 63 Road Condition and Services

**Cortes-Vargas:** Mr. Speaker, the voluntary re-entry of Fort McMurray started yesterday, and highway 63 is expected to be incredibly busy as people from Fort McMurray begin to return home. With workers and residents starting to make their way home, it's important that those travelling on the highways to Fort McMurray can also do so in a safe, manageable way. To the Minister of Transportation: was the highway affected by the fire, and can it handle the traffic expected over the next few weeks and months?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to report that the highway infrastructure was not damaged by the wildfire at Fort McMurray. The RCMP removed all barricades on highway 63 yesterday morning. We're tracking vehicle traffic volumes on highways 63 and 881. As of noon today roughly 3,000 vehicles have travelled to Fort McMurray.

I'm pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that the twinning of highway 63 is now complete, and I think that this will aid us considerably in the smooth reoccupation of the city of Fort McMurray.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that highway 63 is the main way in and out of the city and given that there were understandable but extremely long delays in exiting from the highway when the victims fled their homes, again to the Minister of Transportation: what is the minister doing to ensure that the re-entry process goes as smoothly as possible?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we have more than 100 Alberta Transportation staff that are working closely with the RCMP and the other stakeholders to monitor the traffic flows and the overall conditions on the highway during re-entry. Our traffic management plan is in effect from Anthony Henday Drive all the way to Fort McMurray, with digital message signs along the highways to update drivers with road condition information. We have traffic counters in place, and this will allow us to distribute any information about traffic conditions to the public very quickly.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that some residents who evacuated either had to leave their vehicles along the way or may no longer have access to the vehicles to get back, again to the same minister: what transportation supports and services will be available to help people return home?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Though many evacuees do have access to a vehicle, we know that a lot of people had to leave their vehicles behind when they evacuated the city. The Red Cross is there to provide regular bus service to Fort McMurray for people who had to leave their vehicles behind. We've been working to connect people with their abandoned vehicles for the last few weeks, ever since the initial evacuation. People who have abandoned vehicles on the highway can call 310.4455 or visit [emergency.alberta.ca](http://emergency.alberta.ca) for details on how to retrieve their vehicles.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### Alberta Serious Incident Response Team

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, 2015 was a record year for the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team, or ASIRT. The oversight agency investigates police misconduct and the deaths of people who are in police custody. The backlog of investigations has led to victims' families waiting for years for answers. Yesterday the executive director admitted that she doesn't know what could be done to speed up the conclusion of ASIRT investigations. To the minister: what is your department's plan to bring closure to the victims' families and address the mounting problems facing ASIRT's backlog?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I can take the question on behalf of the Minister of Justice. In the 2016 budget we have increased funding to ASIRT. That funding will help them add capacity and more employees to their staff, and the availability of that resource will help them deal with the backlog. We are working with our partners to make sure that things are dealt with in a timely fashion.\*

**Mr. Cyr:** Given that the time spent waiting for these investigations to close can be tormenting for victims' families and given that 46 of the 78 cases from 2015 are still open and since the executive director has said that this isn't about staffing levels, again to the minister: how can your department ensure that resources are being properly deployed to remove this backlog?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Member, for the question. On behalf of the Minister of Justice I can assure you that it was an issue of capacity, and that's why we have added \$3.5 million. We know that they can add more staff with that money and hire investigators who are more experienced in dealing with those issues. I can also assure you that we will work with our partners to make sure that these issues are dealt with in a timely fashion.

**Mr. Cyr:** This is about ensuring our justice system is efficient and respects the victims and their families. Given that this is a mounting problem, that appears to be getting worse each and every year, and given that the minister has the power to solve this problem, will the minister commit: how will conducting a review of ASIRT develop a path forward in eliminating this backlog?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I think the delivery of justice and the justice system are fundamental to a just society. I can assure you that our government is committed to making sure that we use all of our power and resources to make sure that we get this right.

Thank you.

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

#### PDD Supports Intensity Scale Assessments

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In question period yesterday the Human Services minister said, "I will review the SIS." This is great news and a decision that I and many of the stakeholders who reached out to me applaud as it seems their concerns are finally being heard by this government. To the Minister of Human Services: what is the timeline for conducting this review, and when will it be made public for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Yes, I did say in question period that I will review the SIS, supports intensity scale. I also mentioned that it's a huge undertaking that involves 11,000 people on those supports. So we will take the needed and necessary time to make sure that we get it right.

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, given that in question period yesterday the minister also said, "We are not keeping the SIS," and given this is a concern that I and the stakeholders that I've been working with have been advocating for, this is a move we applaud. To the Minister of Human Services: will you commit today to immediately suspending the SIS program until your review is complete?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will again reiterate that there are 11,000 people who have gone through the supports intensity scale interviews, and their supports were determined by the previous government through this scale. This was the policy brought by the previous government, and it will take time to change it. I would suggest that the member was in government; she knows it takes time. The only responsible thing would be to help me communicate that these things take time. And I will take that time.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

\*See page 1473, right column, paragraph 4

**Ms Jansen:** I wasn't asking about the review in that question. I was asking you to suspend SIS. It's a simple yes and no.

Mr. Speaker, again, given that yesterday in question period the Minister of Human Services said that he was committed to "bringing in a policy that's more respectful in gauging the supports that people with developmental disabilities need," again to the minister. You have admitted that it's disrespectful. You have said it's going to stop. Will you commit right here and now to meet the families, to stop SIS, and to consult with these very important stakeholders?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member, for the question. Yes, SIS was disrespectful and brought by the previous government without consulting. [interjections] What I will do: I will work with the stakeholders. I will consult stakeholders. I will consult all those who were impacted by this . . .

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

**Mr. Sabir:** . . . scale and bring in a policy which is more respectful towards persons with disabilities and that gauges their support in a respectful manner.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

#### Maintenance Enforcement Program

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The maintenance enforcement program, or MEP, protects single parents and children after a couple separates. It ensures equality in spousal compensation so financial responsibility is fairly divided between the parents. Section 7 of the MEP includes guidelines for sharing nonspecific health and education expenses, but during a recent review process the government stopped processing these expenses in response to "feedback from the courts and the legal profession." To the minister: why were families left in the lurch during this review, and what safeguards can spouses who have left abusive or unsafe relationships now expect to see?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I can assure the member on behalf of the Minister of Justice that the department officials will work with our community partners, with our police partners to make sure that we put in policies and procedures that work for families.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the government responded to the written question, "How many maintenance enforcement accounts were in arrears" as of February 29 of this year? Given that the answer was that, shockingly, more than 34,000 accounts are in arrears, with a balance of almost \$650 million owing, and given that this is completely unacceptable, to the Minister of Justice: what is your government doing to get this money back into the pockets of Alberta's single parents, where it belongs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you. Thank you, Member, for the question. I think it remains a priority for our government to help those in need.

As I stated earlier, we will work with our community partners, and we will work with our enforcement partners to make sure that we bring in processes and policies that work for Albertans and that provide them the supports they need.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, my heart is breaking for single parents right now. Given that the current economic conditions are making things difficult for parents to provide for their kids and given that single parents need child support payments now more than ever and since the minister has stated that a crossjurisdictional MEP enforcement agreement has been signed with other provinces, again to the minister: when will the province start collecting these overdue payments, and when can Alberta families finally expect to see some results?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the member that people who are single parents deserve and need the supports. That's why I mentioned that we will work with our enforcement partners to make sure they have the needed supports. At the same time I want to mention that our government also introduced the Alberta child benefit, which families will start receiving this summer. That will go a long way in helping single parents to bear the costs of raising a child.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

#### Provincial Park Administration and Staffing

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last budget estimates this government repeatedly discussed provincial parks in Alberta. When asked last month about whether the contracts to run these existing parks were tendered or serviced by provincial employees, the answer by the assistant deputy was that Parks uses both depending on cost effectiveness. To the minister: are all provincial parks in Alberta now actually open and fully staffed by either private contractors or provincial employees?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm filling in today for the minister, and I'm afraid I don't know that answer, so I will commit to getting back to you on that.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that for close to 40 years the Cypress Hills ski area was operated by a private contractor who operated and maintained the ski area and given that they ran a successful business that provided consistent rent for the government but that the government chose to run it themselves recently, to the minister: why did the government turn a profitable facility, that saw taxpayers receiving fair rent and good service, into a potential loss? Is this cost effective?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, again, on behalf of the Minister of Environment and Parks I will commit to getting an answer for you on that question.

**Mr. Orr:** Whereas Consort's Gooseberry Lake Rodeo, near Gooseberry Lake provincial park, will be hosting Canada's largest amateur rodeo in two weeks and given that this park and campground has been run alternately by both private contractors and public employees in the past, again to the minister. This year it



appears this park has been downgraded in both quality of maintenance and operations. Why the lack of on-site management this season, and does this mean your government is planning to close or redesignate this park?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Well, thank you again for the question. Mr. Speaker, I actually know where Gooseberry Lake park is. I spent many years there as a child visiting my grandparents, so that one will be of interest to myself as well, and I will get an answer to you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### Assisted Dying Regulations

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Four days from now Alberta must begin providing medical assistance for what used to be referred to as euthanasia or assisted suicide but is now referred to as assisted death. In the past two days we've had an extraordinary debate on the proposed regulations which will govern this pivotal process. Members of all opposition parties provided a great deal of feedback to the government, so to the Premier: based on the incredible insights that you have been offered in the six hours that were allotted, what specific sections of the regulations will you amend?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We were very pleased to have the debate in the House as well as being the only provincial Legislature in our country debating this at the moment. The cabinet will be reviewing the regulations shortly, and I look forward to sharing them after that discussion.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that Alberta will likely approve regulations for medically assisted dying before federal legislation is in place and given that based on the draft regulations Alberta's medical assistance for dying is more closely aligned with the Supreme Court's decision, or the Carter decision, than the proposed federal legislation, Bill C-14, which offers more protection for vulnerable Albertans, to the Minister of Health: what aspects of the regulations are you prepared to change to ensure that they will align with C-14 if it's approved in its present form?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As of Monday the Carter decision on this issue is the law of the land, and all of the regulations that we have put forward comply with that. At the time that the federal government finishes passing their regulatory and legislative framework around this, we will amend any of our regulations that are required to be, to comply with the federal jurisdiction.

**Mr. Rodney:** Mr. Speaker, we are looking for specifics. Perhaps we'll try it this way. Given that the legal ground for medically assisted death is expected to shift due to the differences between C-14 and Carter and given that Alberta's regulations governing the process of medically assisted death may well have to be changed to reflect future court decisions, to the Associate Minister of Health: will you commit to fully consulting with Albertans about any and all future changes to the regulations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As we've said before, the federal government has the primary responsibility for legislation in this area, and we intend for any of the Alberta framework to comply with the federal legislation. It is the Criminal Code they have jurisdiction over. It's not passing the buck; it's just the way it is.

We will continue to hear from Albertans on this very important and deeply personal issue. It is a very new issue in both medicine and in law, so we will be watching very closely as the situation develops in the coming months and years.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

### 2:30 Mental Health Services for Postsecondary Students

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One in 5 Albertans will experience mental illness in their lifetime, and 1 in every 10 Albertans will struggle with drug or alcohol dependency. Unfortunately, many of these Albertans – our friends, our neighbours, and our family members – will not reach out for help. Given that this can be even more complex for students in college and university, to the Minister of Advanced Education: how is this being addressed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has heard first-hand the concerns of Alberta students and administrators on this particular issue, and we recognize just how important mental health supports are for our college and university students. That's why I'm pleased to say that Budget 2016 provides over \$3 million to extend mental health grants on campus through to the end of July 2017. These four grants would have otherwise expired very soon. Our government knows that promoting and supporting mental wellness builds a more resilient community and ensures that Alberta students remain healthy and successful in their studies.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that mental health is a pressing issue for many of the students in my constituency attending university and given that they have been lobbying for these mental health supports, can the minister tell the House how these grants will be used?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, the grants will extend previous commitments, and that includes more than a million dollars to the University of Alberta as well as support to the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, and the Alberta Students' Executive Council. This is on top of existing commitments to Mount Royal and MacEwan universities.

These grants are used in a variety of ways. Some fund psychiatrists and psychologists as well as community social workers. Our government continues to work so that mental health and addiction resources can better serve all Albertans, including postsecondary students.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Minister.

To the same minister: given that all of the grants included in Budget 2016 are set to expire after the 2016-2017 school year, how does the minister plan to address this in the long term?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, our government has heard loud and clear that these supports are important to students, so we intend to create and maintain healthy, supportive campuses over the long term. I'm proud to say that we're committed to learning from the

great work that's already been done on campuses across the province. Together with our partners in Health we'll begin building a long-term approach to mental health supports, to be implemented by the time the existing commitments expire.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Mr. Speaker, this NDP government just cannot stop bragging about all the endorsements they're getting for their \$3 billion carbon tax. They trot out quote after quote from big energy companies, some of our largest emitters, who just love this plan. Why? Well, because they're all exempt from it. Meanwhile families, small businesses, charities, schools, hospitals are all bracing for increased costs on everything. Why is this government making everyday Alberta families foot the bill for this tax on everything at the time when we can least afford it?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, more and more conservatives are coming out in support of having a price on carbon, and they're urging others to join them as well. For example, in an interview with the *Calgary Herald* former Ralph Klein era Finance minister Jim Dinning said: we as conservatives ... [interjections] We as conservatives should stop dragging our knuckles on this issue. I'd encourage the members opposite to do the same.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yet 68 per cent of Albertans do not share the NDP world view on this, I might add.

Given that this government was elected on a platform of everyone sharing the economic pain and given that this carbon tax is certainly going to bring down a giant helping of economic pain on families and small and medium-sized businesses, why does the minister think that it's fair to ask everyday people to pay more just because she made what the *Financial Post* calls secret deals to exempt the largest emitters?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish I could thank the member for the question. However, certainly, the language that's being used doesn't reflect the world view of scientists or the majority of Albertans, who actually want us to acknowledge climate change and move forward. I wish the members opposite had a world view that respected climate change, that it's man-made, and that we are moving forward to address it responsibly, including many well-respected conservatives who are urging them to come out of the Stone Age and join the 21st century.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Mr. Speaker, there's nothing more ill-timed than an NDP tax grab without public support.

Given that on one hand the environment minister, who helped pen a radical book on protesting our energy sector, stands up in this House and accuses opposition members of denying the science and then, according to the *Financial Post*, strikes secret backroom deals with the largest emitters to exempt them from the very tax that is supposed to curb their emissions, will anyone other than the minister of anything over there stand up and defend this government's apparent gross hypocrisy in the matter?

**The Speaker:** I think I see a third point of order.  
The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. They are not exempt. Members opposite say that this is going to cost everybody more. What it's going to do is show that we're all doing our part – all doing our part – except for the people who, as former Conservative Finance minister Jim Dinning says, continue to drag their knuckles. [interjections] He also went on to say that carbon levies are the most conservative and business-friendly way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I don't know what you have against the business community, but they're onboard.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

### Carbon Levy Revenue Utilization (continued)

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Twice yesterday and twice today we heard the Minister of Health mention the fact that Jim Dinning supports the NDP carbon tax. Then the Member for Calgary-Shaw doubled down and tabled an article again commenting on how great it was to have Mr. Jim Dinning's support for the NDP's carbon tax. Now, this government has never been afraid to ignore facts to strengthen an argument. Mr. Dinning has stated that he supports a revenue-neutral carbon tax. To all the ministers, whoever wants to answer this: is your carbon tax ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Deputy Premier.

2:40

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Dinning joins a chorus of conservatives like Patrick Brown, Brian Pallister, and Michael Chong, all of whom served in Ottawa with the Leader of the Official Opposition. Certainly, a price on carbon that is going to be reinvested in the local economy to ensure that we move forward on economic diversification, something, I know, that members opposite, the third party, did very little to move forward and the Official Opposition has no intention of doing – instead, we're doing what Albertans want, which is reinvesting that money in diversifying our economy, and I'm very proud of that.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** The answer is no.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a revenue-neutral carbon tax utilizes the money collected to pay down other taxes to stimulate the economy and given that a \$1 decrease in corporate taxes results in almost \$3 in increased economic activity and given that a similar \$1 decrease in personal income tax results in an increase in economic activity of about \$1.40, again to the minister: why not utilize the revenue collected to stimulate the entire economy instead of just the project you deem worthy?

**Ms Hoffman:** Certainly, we've had conversations in this House around countercyclical funding, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like the third party is pushing for the same thing they did over and over again when they were in government, which is that when times are tough, cut public services, cut revenue, lay off teachers and nurses, and that certainly isn't what Albertans voted for. [interjections] Albertans voted for a stable government that's going to move forward reasonably, that's going to take opportunities that we have to show our leadership by giving rebates to two-thirds of Alberta households and also investing in economic diversification. This is the right way forward.

**The Speaker:** Maybe I should remind the members: we'll soon be able to get out of here. You can have time together, and won't it be nice to enjoy the warm – very robust today. Very, very robust.

I think we're on the second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that various noted economists have calculated that at \$30 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> the carbon tax will raise a total of \$6 billion in revenue – gentlemen and ladies, hon. members, \$6 billion – and given that the government reports \$2.6 billion in net revenue, it would seem that the government is not being entirely forthcoming with the rebates already built into the system. Again to the minister: why not clearly share the full details of these rebates with Albertans? If everything is above board, there should be no reason not to.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are many ways that we'll be continuing to communicate with Albertans in an open reporting process as we move forward.

I just want to clarify what I heard in the second question. It sounds like today the third party is in support of a price on carbon. It's nice to hear that they're ready to step up and move forward. But I want to be very clear that what they're saying is that they support a carbon price, but unlike our government, they want to use that revenue for tax breaks for the very rich and for profitable corporations. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, that's not what Albertans voted for.

**The Speaker:** Members, please.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

#### Short-term Personal Loans

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard from countless constituents who've reached out to thank our government for taking action to end predatory lending. The stories from these constituents and their experiences with the cycle of poverty are often heartbreaking, and many still have outstanding loans. While they're happy that this new legislation is here, they're anxious about what will happen next. To the Minister of Service Alberta: when does the \$15 limit come in, and when do instalment payments come into effect?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm proud to have had Bill 15 passed in this House and to take action on exploitive payday-loan interest rates with widespread support from both sides of this House. I'm proud to report that as of August 1 Alberta will have the lowest cost of borrowing in the country at \$15 for every \$100 borrowed. That's the max borrowing rate. Lenders won't be able to add on any additional fees or surcharges to customers. We are responsibly phasing in this approach and these changes to payday lending. In November payday borrowers will be able to pay back their loans in instalments with no penalty for early repayment. This will dramatically decrease the annual percentage rate on these loans. These are fair rules that ensure Albertans don't get trapped in vicious cycles of debt.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that these changes are coming into effect soon but given that some of my constituents still need supplementary funding to get their families through to their next paycheque and

they are interested in the new alternatives that will be available, again to the Minister of Service Alberta: what kinds of alternative credit options are on the horizon for these Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We know that Albertans need access to short-term, small-dollar loans that won't exploit or gouge them when they have unexpected expenses. That's why we're working with Alberta's credit unions, ATB, community groups, and others to put in strong alternatives. First Calgary Financial Credit Union is leading with their cash crunch loan. This is a microloan product that was piloted in Calgary. They will roll this out in August. It's exciting that Servus Credit Union will also offer short-term loans at significantly lower rates than payday lenders by the end of this year.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my office has heard from many constituents who are in support of these changes and given that these same Albertans have had many good ideas about additional initiatives that may be helpful, again to the same minister: what has the minister heard in terms of support for these changes?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We've heard loud and clear from Albertans that they wanted us to take action on predatory lending practices. I had the opportunity today to speak with many of our community partners. We took this opportunity to pass An Act to End Predatory Lending and bring in fair rules for responsible lending. Municipalities, mayors, city councillors, local BRZs, credit unions, and community groups all support these changes as well as many of our hon. colleagues from across the aisle. They all agree that this bill, which requires payday lenders to provide financial literacy information to borrowers, offers pathways out of poverty for many who find themselves trapped in a cycle of debt.

#### Highway 63 Road Condition and Services

(continued)

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I wanted to correct an answer that I gave earlier today in question period. I indicated that the number of vehicles that had entered Fort McMurray was 3,000. Actually, that is just the number so far today. As of this point there have been nearly 8,000 vehicles that have travelled into Fort McMurray as part of the repopulation of the city, and I can tell the House that there's plenty of capacity on the newly twinned highway 63. Traffic is moving smoothly and safely. God willing, that will continue.

**The Speaker:** Any additional comment?

In 30 seconds we will continue.

#### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

#### Special Areas Water Supply Project

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The special areas water supply project has long been studied as a potential irrigation project.

In this dryland region of southeast-central Alberta irrigation is a way to increase economic activity and create financial stability. In that diverse and sometimes difficult if not extreme area the challenges of life can often be overwhelming. Recently the social and human costs of these difficult times in my constituency near Hanna have been high. Like most regions in Alberta, the downturn in the oil and gas sector has had a very real impact on the area this irrigation project would improve. The downturn, when coupled with the impending phase-out of coal plants, would be a one-two devastating economic blow against this region.

2:50

We are all genuinely concerned that if agriculture takes any sort of economic hit to add to these challenges, it could become as bad in this region as it was in those Dirty Thirties. That is why this project is so vital to southeast-central Alberta. Mr. Speaker, this large, sustainable, renewable, job-creating irrigation project could be the very lifeblood of renewed hope for this region. It could provide economic leadership and become a shining example for much of Alberta. Responsible agricultural developments such as this could be the new benchmark of broad future development and good environmental stewardship. Irrigated land also has the benefit of establishing reliable, increased plant growth that conventional tillage cannot provide, and therefore it leads to significant increased carbon sequestration.

I encourage any members of this Assembly that wish to learn more to engage with me.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) I'm rising to advise the House that on the next available Monday written questions 17, 18, 19, 20, and 22 will be accepted, and Written Question 21 will be dealt with.

Also, on the next available Monday motions for returns 36 and 37 will be accepted, and motions for returns 38, 39, and 40 will be dealt with.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

#### Bill 23

#### Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to request leave to introduce Bill 23, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016.

Mr. Speaker, this bill has been circulated to the opposition parties, and I believe that there is consensus on all of the clauses of the bill. It's our hope that it can be passed, therefore, without debate in the House.

Bill 23 contains a number of noncontentious provisions. I will just briefly list those acts which are affected by this bill: the Business Corporations Act; the Chartered Professional Accountants Act; the Condominium Property Act; the Condominium Property Amendment Act, 2014; the Conflicts of Interest Act; the Fair Trading Act; the Health Care Protection Act; the Health Information Act; the Historical Resources Act; the Insurance Act; the Lobbyists Act; the Mines and Minerals Act; the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act; the Personal Property Security Act; the

Provincial Court Act; the Regulations Act; the Residential Tenancies Act; and the Statutes Amendment Act, 2015.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of tablings today. I'll try to be brief. The first one is *Hansard* from November 1, 2012. The Premier made remarks today about Bill 1, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2012, and *Hansard* shows that it was supported unanimously, including by NDPs.

This report is an article from CBC that indicates that PTSD numbers are not tracked in Alberta though the Premier said that they were at one point today.

I also have the requisite copies of a CBC article entitled PTSD Taking Its Toll on Canada's Prison Guards.

Also, an article by TransAlta essentially challenging the assertion that the health quality issues in Alberta are related to coal-fired generation.

And a *Regina Leader-Post* article on carbon capture and storage, where Minister McKenna, the federal Liberal minister, says that carbon capture is part of the solution to climate change.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and table the requisite number of copies for a question that was asked on May 25 by the MLA for Calgary-Greenway. He asked an important question about mental health supports for newcomers to Canada, and we've provided information here that is available for all MLAs to share with their constituents. If you have any other questions on the matter, please do reach out to my office. We'd be happy to provide additional information.

Thank you.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms McCuaig-Boyd, Minister of Energy, response to Written Question 12, asked for by Mr. Clark on May 16, 2016: "What is the status as of March 15, 2016, of the approval process for phase 2 of construction for the North West Redwater Partnership upgrader?"

**The Speaker:** I believe we are at points of order. I think we have three, the first one to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of my hon. colleague and speak to the point of order that he raised just before 2 o'clock. The Premier made some statements with respect to the opposition that, in fact, were dealt with yesterday. While I don't have the benefit of the Blues, I believe the statement that the Premier made was something to the effect of: Albertans think you are all climate change deniers. I'll leave it at: Albertans think you are all climate change deniers. Or something to that effect.

Just yesterday, Mr. Speaker, in your ruling from June 1, 2016, on page 1385 of *Alberta Hansard*: “I would caution you on future use of that particular word, please. It clearly does on occasion create disorder, and I would ask that in the future you be more conscious of when and how it is used.” While the ruling may or may not have determined if it was a point of order, I think what we saw yesterday was clear direction on this very topic, of the government making false accusations against the opposition about the opposition being climate change deniers. I think that the key language here is around “climate change deniers.”

While the Premier may have tried to have been a little bit creative by utilizing the words “all Albertans say,” Mr. Speaker, you as well as all members of this Assembly surely know that many Speakers have ruled that you can’t do indirectly what you aren’t allowed to do directly. What I think is that, in light of your very thoughtful words about members of this House needing to use caution around this issue and the very fact that it’s going to create disorder, the Premier is trying to do indirectly what she may or may not be allowed to do directly. This is not the type of language that is going to create order inside the Chamber.

3:00

Part of the other challenge: if, in fact, the Premier is allowed to continue utilizing this new technique in order to be able to call the opposition climate change deniers, what else, then, would the Premier be able to say by saying that all Albertans say that the Official Opposition are liars? Would that then be appropriate? Given the fact that you clearly provided caution when it comes to making false allegations against the opposition just yesterday and then to see the Premier the very next day – it is more than disappointing because it will continue to create disorder when the government makes false allegations against the opposition.

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’ll start off by saying that this is not a point of order. This is more of a difference of opinion. Quite frankly, I wrote down what the Premier said as soon as she finished. Now, I don’t have the benefit of the Blues, so this may not be word for word. She said something along the lines of: no wonder Albertans don’t take them credibly and believe they are climate change deniers.

Now, first of all, Mr. Speaker, this is a difference of opinion. This wasn’t an allegation against a member. On June 1 you yourself ruled that it doesn’t apply, 23(i). I quote you from *Hansard* on page 1385.

I don’t believe that applied because there was no specific reference to a member.

Now, I appreciate where the Opposition House Leader is trying to go with this, Mr. Speaker, but let me just start off by saying that the Premier was speaking from her personal experience. In conversations that she had with Albertans, they told her that they do not take the Official Opposition credibly and believe that they deny the science of climate. The Premier was citing from her personal experience from conversations with Albertans who believe what I just said.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, when the Opposition House Leader talked about using *Hansard*, basically, the House leader is accusing the Premier of using a lack of caution. Now, the last time I checked, that’s not a point of order, a member using a lack of caution.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is a difference of opinion. This is not a point of order.

**The Speaker:** The House leader for the third party.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I’d like to offer just a few comments on this matter. I’m actually surprised and more than a little bit disappointed at the comments by the Deputy Government House Leader because what he’s indicating, of course, pending your ruling, sir, is that basically any statement that is indicated in a quote, in a third-party quote, could be used in this House with impunity at any time. It is very clear that the language that is to be used in this House is such that it does not create disorder.

I think, Mr. Speaker, you will agree that we have had more than our share of disorder in the House recently and, you know, actually, quite a bit of it. As the hon. Official Opposition House Leader just said, it is not in order to do indirectly what is out of order to be done directly. You know, when the hon. Deputy Government House Leader indicates that the Premier was simply quoting from conversations, that’s not good enough. In fact, if that is ruled to be in order, then all manner of statements could be made in this House by hearsay, stating, “Well, I heard somebody tell me that,” and then continue the statement.

Very clearly, Mr. Speaker, that could create all manner of disorder because then it throws the floodgates wide open to any manner of statement under the sun. Clearly, that’s not a road that we want to go down in this Chamber; therefore, in this situation, given the context of the comments, I believe there is a valid point of order in this case.

**The Speaker:** I’m sure the hon. members would allow me a moment to read some notes. I’ve been involved in the House with you trying to keep the place a little more . . .

Hon. members, the Opposition House Leader I think used the phrase “creative” to describe circumstances and events which happen in here. That would not be my first word that I would use to describe it. As I indicated just yesterday, I reminded the House that the timing and context with respect to this use of language is an essential part of ruling in these matters, and I was surprised to hear reference in another time, in another context, of similar language. It could be that there needs to be – if I could ask the Deputy Government House Leader that he remind all of his members about the signal that I sent and cautioned yesterday with respect to those phrases and those words in the future and that he ensure that all members of the government caucus are aware of that.

I would remind all of the members. It happens in this instance that we were dealing with the government side versus the opposition. I’ve also sensed and experienced and seen in this room where the opposition was using language which would have the opposite effect. I would therefore caution again. I wish to the Deputy House Leader to please ensure that the message is received by all members. My caution with respect to this matter is that it’s obvious, depending on the interpretation of the receivers, that it is in a high-risk category of causing an uproar in this House, and therefore I would, hon. member, request that you heed that caution.

I will be again applying the principle of time and context. I have on several occasions ruled that it was in order, but as it continues to be brought forward, evidence seems to suggest that it may have an impact on disorder.

I think we have another point of order to rule on, which I have not yet had the time to read.

**Mr. Rodney:** So that’s a point of order or not a point of order?

**The Speaker:** I’ve cautioned, hon. member.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** There was a second point of order, I believe, by the Government House Leader. Are you prepared to speak to that, hon. member?

#### Point of Order

#### Remarks off the Record

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes, I am. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order on behalf of the Government House Leader. Around 2:20 p.m. the Member for Calgary-Hays shouted across the aisle, "That's not honest," to a response that the Minister of Human Services was delivering. Now, it's bad enough that the Member for Calgary-Hays shouted that once. He shouted it five times in succession: that's not honest; that's not honest; that's not honest; that's not honest.

3:10

**An Hon. Member:** One more time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please.

**Mr. Bilous:** That's not honest.

Mr. Speaker, that allegation wasn't just made to the House; it was made specifically against another member. Standing Order 23(j) – sorry. That's "to create disorder," absolutely. Also, 23(i): "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member."

Now, on this point of order, Mr. Speaker, I need to clarify, first of all, that the minister's response was talking about a program that was created by the previous government when they were government. So the Member for Calgary-Hays shouting, "That's not honest," first of all, is incorrect. It is wrong that the previous government didn't create a program that the minister was referring to. Second of all, it was directed at a member, not at a party but specifically at the member in his response. Quite frankly, that can be interpreted as the Member for Calgary-Hays calling the Minister of Human Services a liar. If he's saying that he's not honest and he's calling and questioning the integrity of the minister, that can be interpreted as calling the minister a liar.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of rulings that this is unparliamentary language: back on May 8, 2000, Speaker Kowalski – now, the member voluntarily withdrew the remark – March 15, 1995, Speaker Schumacher; February 22, 1995, Acting Speaker Clegg, to which the member voluntarily withdrew; on May 23, 1990, Speaker Carter; on July 21, 1989, Speaker Carter; on November 22, 1983, Speaker Amerongen. These are numerous examples of a member accusing another member of lying or calling him a liar. Again, shouting "That's not honest" at a member when they're answering a question is outright calling them a liar. You know, back on May 23, 1990, the Speaker said,

Hon. members have enough sense to be able to refer to *Beauchesne*. Shouting "liar" across the Chamber is inappropriate, unparliamentary, and exceedingly rude. Please refrain from doing so.

Mr. Speaker, I request that the Member for Calgary-Hays apologize to the House and the minister for his comment and to withdraw all said comments. Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to confess that I'm a little confused because just a little earlier this afternoon, basically about an hour and 20 minutes ago, you made a ruling, and it was using the exact same phrase: not honest. I will also point out that my colleague used that exact phrase. He did not say: that's not honest. He said "Not honest" in order to use the exact same phrase. He was very judicious in that.

Some consistency in rulings, of course, is something that we rely upon within this House. I'm familiar with all the precedents that the

hon. Deputy Government House Leader just reeled off with regard to honesty. I thought I had made that case yesterday when I raised the point of order when the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Health used the phrase "not honest" to refer to my colleague. You see, Mr. Speaker, earlier this afternoon when the ruling was made that "not honest" could be used in a context when it was not specifically applying to a member but to something that was being said, that seemed to indicate that there is a new standard in our Assembly.

I guess why I'm saying that I'm confused is that, you know, certainly, I had understood that there was a standard in place prior to today, and clearly that standard has, at least in the case of the phrase "not honest," changed, and that's fine. But I would rely – and I'm quite certain that I can speak without risk of contravention here, that surely if a phrase that's spoken by a government member that is ruled parliamentary and is ruled to not be out of order, the same principle should apply to my colleague the Member for Calgary-Hays.

As a result of that, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that based on the ruling that was made just earlier today, I think that the comments are entirely consistent with your rationale. I just feel that if it was not a point of order at 10 to 2, it can't be a point of order at quarter past 3.

**The Speaker:** The House leader for the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Cooper:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this is a good reminder to all members of the Assembly of what happens when we don't right the wrongs that we've made. The hon. deputy House leader has laid out a very consistent case of the words "not honest" being ruled out of order, and this whole challenge today could have been prevented if the Deputy Premier stood in her place and withdrew the comments that she made yesterday. But, for whatever reason, the government chose not to do that. There is a very true reality that rulings in this Chamber have consequences, and sometimes that means that what is deemed parliamentary will wind up being used by members inside the Chamber. That, I believe, is what happened here today.

I am in complete agreement – while it's my hope that the statement "not honest" won't continue to be used, because I don't think that it's helpful for the overall tenure of the place, the challenge is that we find ourselves with different sets of rules. When that happens, from time to time politics breaks out and members will use those rules to their benefit or to try and get a point across. I am in agreement that this is clearly not a point of order as the context certainly didn't change in the last hour and a half, so I would concur with my colleague from the third party that this isn't a point of order.

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** No problem. These are trying times for all of us, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly not every day that I would agree with the hon. Official Opposition House Leader. Sir, I will not waste the time of the House by repeating any of the remarks that have been made. You know, those who might be watching, looking forward to great debate probably are rather irked, and they might be thinking things like: what is good for the goose is good for the gander. The truth of the matter is that yesterday our – oh. Maybe I'll just wait until the Speaker is ready.

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry, hon. member. Please proceed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much. I won't reiterate the comments. I'll just pick up where I left off.

Yesterday in this House there was a point of order, and the third party House leader apologized and retracted statements even though, sir, he did not have to. He did do so in a matter of seconds. The hon. Official Opposition House Leader mentioned that if that had been done today by the Deputy Premier, we would not be in this place. This is getting deeper and deeper. I think everyone in this room knows that we're having bigger and bigger problems. I dare say that that is the reason why the spring session is usually done in the spring before Victoria Day, with great sincerity, sir. And that's why we have constituency weeks, so we can get out from under the dome.

I wish you good luck in this ruling, sir. The phrase that I used earlier I do believe applies. We're going to be hearing people say: what is good for the goose is good for gander. So I'm anxiously awaiting your ruling on this one.

3:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, thank you for the use of the word "luck" in making the decision.

I send the message again: time and context. But I did not hear the comments by the leader of the third party. I could not hear it because there was so much noise in this place that I could not hear it. It is not the first time that I haven't heard these kinds of statements being brought forward. Therefore, on this particular one – but I've got to tell the government again through the deputy House leader: let us try to avoid the use of those kinds of wordings in the House, please, to all of you.

Hon. member, I have to rule that I didn't hear it. It's not in . . .

**Mr. McIver:** I said it.

**The Speaker:** I noted that earlier, hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** I cannot tell – I said it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please. Thank you.

Point of order 3. The Deputy Government House Leader.

#### Point of Order Epithets

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise because at 2:37 the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, in asking a question, said: "the minister of anything over there." I will refer you to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 613, references to members: "A Minister is referred to by the portfolio he or she holds." That's from *Beauchesne's*, fourth edition, page 126. For examples: *Debates* October 6, 1997, page 530; September 16, 2003, page 7446-7447. In the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*: "A Member will be requested to withdraw offensive remarks, allegations, or accusations of impropriety directed toward another Member."

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake very intentionally – this wasn't a slip-up. This wasn't wrongfully calling a minister by their improper portfolio. Saying "the minister of anything over there" was done deliberately. It's spelled out very, very clearly. I mean, I could address the fact that this was done to create disorder. It was intentional, and I believe the member should apologize for that. Again, that was intentionally used to cause disorder, as I mentioned. The member should apologize to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, on this particular point, I think we need to be cautious about judging the intent of other members. I think, given this particular instance, in this time and context, again I would rule there is no point of order.

**Mr. Nixon:** You're done the point of order?

**The Speaker:** I'm done.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek . . . [interjection] I'm not on a point of order anymore. I thought we were moving on.

I seek unanimous consent to quickly revert to introductions for some guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

#### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be quick. I know there's lots to do this afternoon, but I was out a few moments ago taking a picture with the grade 6 class from Eckville, in the middle of my constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I always enjoy seeing faces from back home, as I know all of us members do, particularly on Thursday, when we get the opportunity to go back home. Eckville is a great place, a great town, and has always treated me well. Interestingly enough, they have the shortest mayor in the entire province and, of course, they have the tallest MLA in the entire province. I would ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

#### Orders of the Day

##### Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move a number of motions on behalf of the Government House Leader.

#### Committee Membership Changes

19. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mason:  
Be it resolved that the following changes to
  - (a) the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund be approved: that Mr. Coolahan replace Ms Miller;
  - (b) the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be approved: that Ms McKittrick replace Mr. Westhead.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, proceed.

**Mr. Bilous:** With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I'll read the other two motions to the House. No, I will not.

**The Speaker:** I'm advised that it's one at a time, hon. member.

Is there anyone who wishes to speak to the motion?

[Government Motion 19 carried]

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

### **Committee Referral for Child and Youth Advocate Act**

20. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mason:

Be it resolved that:

1. The Child and Youth Advocate Act be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review pursuant to section 23 of that act;
2. The committee may without leave of the Assembly sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
3. In accordance with section 23 of the Child and Youth Advocate Act the committee must submit its report to the Assembly within one year after beginning its review, and that report is to include any amendments recommended by the committee.

**The Speaker:** Anyone wish to speak to this matter?

[Government Motion 20 carried]

### **Committee Referral for Lobbyists Act**

21. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mason:

Be it resolved that:

1. The Lobbyists Act be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and the committee shall be deemed to be the special committee of the Assembly for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review pursuant to section 21 of that act;
2. The committee may without leave of the Assembly sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
3. In accordance with section 21 of the Lobbyists Act the committee must submit its report to the Assembly within one year after beginning its review, and that report is to include any amendments recommended by the committee.

**The Speaker:** Anyone wish to speak to the motion?

[Government Motion 21 carried]

### **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

### **Bill 20 Climate Leadership Implementation Act**

**The Chair:** We are on amendment A4. Are there any further speakers to this amendment? The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise on the amendment to Bill 20, the climate change leadership plan, the amendment, of course, put by my hon. colleague from Calgary-North West. It's an amendment to schedule 1 by adding the following section 79. Of course, it just makes it clear which legislation it is.

3:30

Madam Chair, what this will happen to clarify is that a ministerial report would be required one full year after the \$30 carbon tax takes

effect. I think that this is wise. It's often been talked about and, if not universally, almost universally accepted that a government ought to review its legislation from time to time. That's just good parliamentary practice. It doesn't matter which party is in office. It doesn't matter which province or if it's a federal government or a territory. It's just good legislative practice to do that because, as you know, Madam Chair, as time goes on, societal standards change, technological standards change, incidents happen that change legislators' and members of the public's opinions on how things should be done. So it's good to check in with the world, for lack of a better word. It's good for legislators everywhere to check in with the world once in a while to see if their legislation is still pertinent, whether it's still viable, whether it still makes sense.

Of course, there are a lot of things that, you know, you would think should be checked even though it's fairly self-evident that they don't. I will just give a fairly extreme example for illustration purposes: the fact that you've got to stop at a stop sign. You know what? We should review that once in a while. I don't think the meaning of that, in my view, is going to change for a long time, but legislative practice dictates that something as simple, straightforward, and undeniable as the fact that you need to stop at a stop sign – even that legislation should be checked in on once in a while to make sure that it's still pertinent. I suppose in some world – I may be dead before it happens – when vehicles fly instead of go on the surface, then that actually might be a legitimate thing to check. But my point is that as simple as a stop sign law is, that legislation should be checked out once in a while, too, to see if it's still pertinent.

Flash forward if you will, Madam Chair, to the climate change bill of this government, a complex piece of legislation taxing almost everything that moves in Alberta, affecting all the energy that gets consumed, designed to reduce energy consumption, reduce carbon emissions, designed to transfer massive amounts of wealth from one part of the population to the other, and a whole bunch of other contingencies in there, and it's new for Alberta. It's breaking ground. This isn't an update, in many ways, of previous legislation. It's something very, very new. When you consider that you ought to update from time to time the most rudimentary, basic, obvious, probably-will-never-change legislation like the stop sign legislation, then it seems multiple times more obvious that you should review once in a while some complex pieces of legislation like the climate change legislation.

Right now the government is reviewing, for example, the Municipal Government Act, another complex piece of legislation, and I would say that that probably should have been reviewed at an earlier time than it is. I won't say that they've got it right yet because I haven't had it in my hands long enough, but I will say that that's something the previous government, that I was part of, should have reviewed earlier than we did. I see government members nodding, yes, you should have. They're kind of making my point, Madam Chair, that legislation should be reviewed from time to time. It's good legislative practice.

It seems completely reasonable, completely reasonable to me, that in a complex piece of legislation like the government's Climate Leadership Implementation Act, if I got that right, or climate leadership plan – I think that's what they call it. It's a big piece of legislation. To say that it doesn't need to be reviewed is ridiculous. It's completely ridiculous. In fact, I hope that the government doesn't say that. They should support this because to say that a piece of legislation that new and that complex is perfect – although I think that the Member for Edmonton-South West might have actually said that – would be a little bit arrogant, to think that you couldn't possibly have made any mistakes.



I can assure you, Madam Chair, that I'm not picking on the government. I make mistakes every day. Listen; I don't think anybody in this House will argue with that. I make mistakes every day, sometimes on the simplest of tasks and tasks that I perform every day. I make mistakes. So to ask the government to admit that as great as they think they are and as hard as they say that they've worked on this and as many people as they say that they've talked to, for them to consider whether there's no possible way that they could have made a mistake – one would hope they wouldn't dream of being that stuck on their own perfection. I sincerely hope not.

When you add all of that up, this amendment is to simply take a look after we've had a year's experience with this legislation. I guess it's after the carbon tax goes up to \$30, so potentially we'd have more than a full year's experience with the legislation. After we've lived with this legislation for a year or two, why wouldn't you take a peek? Why wouldn't you take a peek? It's just obvious. It's common sense. It's good legislative practice, which is why I'm going to support it. I don't know why any member of this House wouldn't, unless, of course, they think they're perfect.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm really happy to see this amendment for a couple of reasons, and I thank the hon. member for it. This is great stuff. In the world of energy management we have a couple of subdisciplines within that. One of them is known as M and V, and it stands for measurement and verification. In the world of energy management one of the most important things to do is to measure the changes that you have made and verify that the results meet the targets that those changes were intended to meet. If in the measurement and the verification of results it is determined that you have not met what you engineered this change to accomplish, then you go back to the drawing board and you fix it.

As we look to the plans that this government has regarding this carbon tax, they are going to up this carbon tax after the first year. If they do not hit the pause button and actually conduct some serious measurement and verification – measurement of the impact that this carbon tax is having and measurement to determine that it is in fact reducing greenhouse emissions – and then forge on ahead and increase the carbon tax another \$10 anyway, that is absolutely a recipe for disaster. Absolutely. It is completely contradictory to all of the principles of energy management.

The people who are certified M and V experts in the world are laughing at what this government is doing. This amendment might quell a little bit of that laughter, but my colleagues that are out there in the field of energy management are laughing at what's going on because this climate action plan, really, in our mind, is an energy management plan. If you do not follow the sound principles that have been proven over time with regard to energy management master planning, the master plan will fail. This plan will fail.

I think this government at the very least owes it to the people of Alberta, given the enormity of this tax, to conduct, I'm going to say, an economic assessment one more time but, more than that, an environmental assessment, too, to determine that, in fact, this carbon tax is resulting in a change in emissions, a sustainable change in emissions, that they are meeting their targets, and that it is actually worth the pain that they are going to be inflicting upon our citizenry, 68 per cent of whom, if you believe the polls, do not support this carbon tax.

3:40

In addition to M and V, there is another concept that I want to just pass along here tonight, and that is a process called alpha, beta portfolio-wide. It interconnects with measurement and verification in this way. When you have an idea for an energy savings opportunity or an emissions management opportunity, the concept within the field of energy management is to take this perceived energy savings opportunity or emissions management opportunity and in a very small way enact the changes that you think you want to put in place. That's the alpha test. If the alpha test proves positive, the targets that you determined as you engineered this EMO, emissions management opportunity – if you meet those targets in the alpha test, you go to another site and duplicate the alpha test. Sometimes when we would perform alpha tests, we would say, "We need to tweak it this way," or "We need to tweak it just a little bit that way," and we would.

Then we would take our alpha test plus the tweaks and perform a beta test. Again, during and after the beta test we do M and V, which is measurement and verification of the results. If after the beta test it proved positive, then, and only then, we take those measures, those emissions management measures or energy savings measures, and we duplicate them what's called portfolio-wide, which is right across the full spectrum of, say, this corporation with 18 different branches or this manufacturing company with five different plants that were the same.

In the alpha test we put our theories for improvement to the test. If they prove, we do it again. It's called the beta. If they prove positive again and the results are just as good as the alpha, we go portfolio-wide. I realize this is slow. It takes sometimes many years to do an alpha, beta portfolio-wide, but the whole goal of it is to not waste money, to not waste resources or people's time because these things take an enormous amount of time. The third thing is: don't make a mistake that's irreversible. That's the purpose for alpha, beta portfolio-wide as a protocol for the enactment of energy savings opportunities or emissions management opportunities.

Everything that I just mapped out to you, Madam Chair, this government isn't doing. None of it. Even principle number one in energy management, which is to begin by using less, is not what this government did.

The very first thing that this government did after taking power was to increase the carbon tax under the specified gas emitters regulation by 33 per cent without even conducting any analysis of what that would result in. They still don't understand what that did because it wasn't very many days ago that I heard the Minister of Energy once again saying that the reason why the PPAs were returned to the Balancing Pool was because the cost of electricity is so low when, in fact, all the documentation from the PPA holders to the Balancing Pool all referenced section 4.3(j), a change in law, and the Balancing Pool adjudicated that and said: yes, you are right. That is why. And you have the right to return those PPAs to the Balancing Pool. The lack of understanding, the profound lack of a grasp of PPAs by the Energy minister, by this government is astounding.

Coming back to my original point here, if this government really, really is interested in greenhouse gas reduction, if that's the mission here, and we're going to be taxing Albertans to the tune of billions of dollars, they have an ethical responsibility to measure and verify that they're getting the results that they're supposed to be getting, especially before they go ahead and hit our province with a substantial increase in carbon of \$10, from \$20 to \$30. If they increase the carbon tax from \$20 to \$30 without proving to anyone that it's doing what they claim it's doing, that is beyond irresponsible. That is unethical. It really is.

I am fully in support of the hon. member's amendment here. Is it going to make Bill 20 palatable? No. Bill 20 is a terrible bill, ill-conceived, ill-timed, and without any targets in it. It's not a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It's really just nothing more than a tax bill.

**Mr. Hanson:** It's a tax grab.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** It's a tax grab. A tax grab. When our province is down, they're hitting our people with a \$3 billion tax grab.

In any event, in and of itself, just looking at the face value of this amendment, it's a great amendment. I support it fully. I thank the hon. member for this very wise amendment. I still recommend to every member on the other side of this House that they go enrol at NAIT in the alternative energy program. You need it desperately; desperately you need it.

I could go on, and I'm sure you want me to.

**An Hon. Member:** I do.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** You know, when we're in Committee of the Whole like this, the hon. member wants me to continue. Maybe I should bring in the curriculum.

**An Hon. Member:** Do it.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Just do it? If they won't go to school, we'll bring school to them. It's looks like I have some support for that. Madam Chair, it would save them at least about \$8,000 in tuition per year, and they could have that course for free. It might be fun, but I'm a hard marker. I'll tell you that right now.

In any event, Madam Chair, we have here an amendment that I wholly support, especially the review part. "Following the tabling of the Minister's report... no later than January 1, 2020, a committee of the Legislative Assembly must begin a comprehensive review of this Act." I honestly and emphatically support the concept of committee work. All of us in this place were sent to this place by the good people of Alberta to do a good job for them. [interjection] Thank you very much. I'm not done yet. I'm just thanking him. He's buttering me up for something, and I'm not sure what it could be.

In any event, Madam Chair, I support both parts of this amendment. I think they're valuable. I would encourage every member to support this, and I will sit down.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to speak in support of this amendment introduced by our hon. Member for Calgary-North West. I think it's a very good amendment, which has been also noted by other members of this House. It doesn't change the original intent of the bill. The amendment introduced simply allows the government to take an honest assessment of where they are at any given time pertaining to the carbon tax. You know, it's an old saying: what doesn't get measured doesn't get done. It's important that we measure, every step of the way, which way we're going.

What I can't understand is why the government would oppose this amendment. It's beyond my scope of thinking. I know the Member for Edmonton-South West is convinced that Bill 20 is the greatest thing since sliced bread and that there are absolutely no faults whatsoever within this document. He and others who remain silent would have us believe that the bill as originally drafted is so perfect, so beyond reproach, and so impervious to any analysis that to even consider a review would be a waste of time.

3:50

Here again is where we differ. If the government is so proud of themselves, so convinced that they have changed the landscape of our great province of Alberta, that they are taking leaps and bounds towards a low-carbon economy while reducing emissions and creating jobs, then they should have no problem proving it. If you're so convinced of your inevitable success, would you not want to take a review and hold it in your hands so you can wave it, like: "Look what I created; look what I created"? I think that's fair. "Look at how much better off Alberta is because of our action on this issue."

**An Hon. Member:** It's almost too easy.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you.

If you're afraid of doing this review, then you must not be confident in what the result would be. It is the only logical conclusion, in my opinion. No one is afraid of taking a test where they know the answers. It's the person who didn't study and winged it; that's the person who's afraid.

Also, we heard of all the assessments that this government has done and how they are convinced beyond a doubt that the impact of this tax on hard-working Alberta families will be minimal. Just a short while ago, on May 25, the minister of environment noted that, based on the internal economic analysis they have done, they have estimated that the indirect cost of the new tax to Alberta families will be between \$70 and \$105 per year. Now, this seems to be a manageable number. The problem is that no one has seen this analysis yet. Have you? I haven't.

The government is taking the approach, "Trust us; trust us; we've got this" instead of being up front, open, honest with the facts. This attitude only becomes clearer as the government speaks against this motion, which only requires a review. We're not changing it. Just review the program. That's it. You haven't been forthcoming with the information you possess. You sell numbers as if they're facts yet will not demonstrate how you came to these numbers so that they can be analyzed and confirmed or debated, like they would be in any other practical approach, any other academic situation.

This amendment is good public policy.

**Mrs. Pitt:** It's transparency neutral.

**Mr. Gill:** Absolutely.

It affords the government the opportunity to improve on its failures and celebrate its successes. If something is wrong, we can fix the problem, and if something is going well, keep on going on the same route. Nothing wrong with that. It allows an all-party committee to truly examine the bill and its impact to ensure that this is what's best for Albertans.

If you're really a champion about climate change, if you really want the world to see the NDP world view, why would you oppose this amendment? If we really want to be a leader on climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, why would you oppose this amendment?

Madam Chair, it makes this bill better, and really that's why we're here right now. Everybody has left their families to sit here to make this province better. Why are we not agreeing on something which is really practical?

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It was interesting to hear the comments earlier from the Member for Edmonton-South West. He talked about how thorough the consultation was, how it was a

made-in-Alberta solution, though I wonder why they don't hire more people from Alberta into the government brass there. Anyway, that's what he said about this bill.

He said that it was going to create jobs. Well, that remains to be seen. He said that the leaders in the community around Alberta spoke in favour of this. Of course, those are some of the same ones that stood on the stage with the Premier and the environment minister when they told everybody in Alberta that this was going to be revenue neutral. They seemed to be all onside at that point, but of course they obviously didn't have all the facts.

Now, this review is pretty simple. I mean, this is a thing that businesses do all the time. Even government does this all the time, or it should. It should review the things that it does to see if it was effective in accomplishing the goals that it was supposed to. Let's face it. Hindsight is 20/20. Why wouldn't you want to look at something afterwards with the full advantage of hindsight and do an analysis on it?

Just for instance, if I wanted to travel to the lovely city of Grande Prairie next week, a week from today, June 9, and I wanted to find out: what is the weather going to be like on June 9? I go check out Environment Canada, and I look for June 9, and I see what the weather is going to be like. They do a great job. I mean, that's what they do. Obviously, forecasts are sometimes wrong, but they're gathering the best information they can to get the best data they can to give us the best information. But do you think that it would be even better if I asked Environment Canada on June 10: what was the weather on June 9? I think they would be bang on.

This is what we have here. We have an opportunity to be bang on. We can look at this afterwards and say: "Did this work or not? What did it accomplish?" I think that this is very reasonable. It doesn't change anything in the bill other than to do an analysis on it afterwards.

Now, we can't comment on when we're going to be voting on this amendment, shortly, but this recorded vote – I just want to remind everybody in the House – on whether you supported accountability, transparency, analysis on a bill that you're going to pass yourselves will be in *Hansard* forever. I just want to make sure that everybody's very clear about that. This is going to be in *Hansard* forever.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just rising briefly to quickly note that, of course, all major government initiatives are reported on and assessments are provided. For example, the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act requires that all ministries prepare business plans and annual reports, which are presented to the Assembly. These annual reports contain the consolidated financial statements, comparisons of performance results to the business plan, and explanations of any variances between the two. These annual reports also include a report of the Auditor General on the departments' financial statements.

I appreciate the member bringing this amendment forward and the member's intent. Of course, it is the responsibility of specific departments to look after this legislation and to report on their work as part of that. However, as there are reporting mechanisms in place, I will be voting against this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:59 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Hanson	McIver
Clark	Hunter	Nixon
Ellis	Jansen	Panda
Gill	Loewen	Pitt
Gotfried	MacIntyre	Starke

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Nielsen
Babcock	Hoffman	Payne
Bilous	Horne	Renaud
Carson	Kazim	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dang	Loyola	Schreiner
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Eggen	Mason	Sigurdson
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard
Gray		

Totals:	For – 15	Against – 37
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[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Woollard:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 20. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. There's been some good debate today, but in light of the fact that there are some severe storms in southern Alberta and that we have many members from all sides of the House that reside throughout the province – they'll be travelling, and we wish everyone to travel safely – for that reason, I move that the House stand adjourned until Monday at 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:17 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to June 02, 2016**

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

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

### **1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 732-36 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.), 685-91 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.), 749-60 (Apr. 21, 2016 aft.), 825 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 1019-24 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed), 987-95 (May 18, 2016 morn.)

Third Reading -- 1172 (May 25, 2016 eve.), 1174-79 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cP-26.3]

### **2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1]

### **3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)

Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2]

### **4\* An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft.), 349-66 (Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 399-409 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.), 378-84 (Apr. 6, 2016 morn.), 415-28 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 450-55 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 428-33 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn.)

Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c10]

### **5 Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading -- 398 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 455-56 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.), 532-38 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed), 491-505 (Apr. 12, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 570-77 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed), 539-56 (Apr. 13, 2016 morn.)

Third Reading -- 577-83 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 cS-7.1]

### **6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 519-27 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 527-32 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 583-85 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c13]

- 7 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**  
First Reading -- 518 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 585-86 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft.), 682-84 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed), 649-51 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 820-24 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 902-903 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c6]
- 8 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 669-71 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 684 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 824-25 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 903-904 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c8]
- 9 An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 640-49 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.), 728-30 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 979-81 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1180-81 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c11]
- 10\* Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 599 (Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 671-82 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 730-32 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division), 691-703 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 950-51 (May 17, 2016 morn.), 1041-49 (May 19, 2016 morn.), 1103-13 (May 24, 2016 aft.), 1115-23 (May 24, 2016 eve., passed), 1077-81 (May 24, 2016 morn.)  
Third Reading -- 1124 (May 24, 2016 eve.), 1197-99 (May 26, 2016 morn.), 1263-85 (May 30, 2016 eve., passed on division)
- 11 Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016 (Bilous)**  
First Reading -- 773 (May 2, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 907-908 (May 12, 2016 aft.), 971-79 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1012-18 (May 18, 2016 aft.), 1024 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1068-69 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c4]
- 12 Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Feehan)**  
First Reading -- 802 (May 3, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 904-907 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 985-87 (May 18, 2016 morn., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1069 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c3]
- 13 Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016 (Gray)**  
First Reading -- 872 (May 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 965-71 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed on division)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1024-25 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1069 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c15]
- 14 Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**  
First Reading -- 872 (May 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 983-85 (May 18, 2016 morn., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1076-77 (May 24, 2016 morn., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1077 (May 24, 2016 morn., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c9]
- 15 An Act to End Predatory Lending (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 901 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1062-67 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1153-57 (May 25, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1172 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2016 cE-9.5]

- 16\* Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**  
First Reading -- 921 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1067-68 (May 19, 2016 aft.), 1071-75 (May 24, 2016 morn., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1157-63 (May 25, 2016 aft.), 1219-23 (May 26, 2016 aft., passed with amendments), 1197 (May 26, 2016 morn., adjourned)  
Third Reading -- 1223-25 (May 26, 2016 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c14]
- 17 Appropriation Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 950 (May 17, 2016 morn., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1025-29 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed), 995-1000 (May 18, 2016 morn., adjourned)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1070 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed), 1031-41 (May 19, 2016 morn.)  
Third Reading -- 1096-1103 (May 24, 2016 aft.), 1113 (May 24, 2016 aft., passed on division)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c5]
- 18 An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring (Phillips)**  
First Reading -- 964-65 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1125-35 (May 25, 2016 morn., passed on division)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1191-97 (May 26, 2016 morn., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1199-1205 (May 26, 2016 morn., passed on division)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force June 30, 2016; SA 2016 c7]
- 19 Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 1011 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1153 (May 25, 2016 aft., passed), 1135-40 (May 25, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1171-72 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1173 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cR-8.5]
- 20 Climate Leadership Implementation Act (\$) (Phillips)**  
First Reading -- 1095 (May 24, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1163-70 (May 25, 2016 aft.), 1173-74 (May 25, 2016 eve.), 1181-90 (May 25, 2016 eve.), 1311-21 (May 31, 2016 aft.), 1338-56 (May 31, 2016 eve.), 1288-98 (May 31, 2016 morn.), 1405-07 (Jun. 1, 2016 eve., passed on division), 1357-72 (Jun. 1, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1408-24 (Jun. 1, 2016 eve.), 1458-61 (Jun. 2, 2016 aft., adjourned), 1425-42 (Jun. 2, 2016 morn.)
- 21 Modernized Municipal Government Act (Larivee)**  
First Reading -- 1310 (May 31, 2016 aft., passed)
- 22 An Act to Provide for the Repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Ceremonial Objects (Miranda)**  
First Reading -- 1219 (May 26, 2016 aft., passed)
- 23 Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**  
First Reading -- 1454 (Jun. 2, 2016 aft., passed)
- 201 Election Recall Act (Smith)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 119-32 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft.), 303-304 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division)
- 202 Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 305-16 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft.), 470-73 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)
- 203 Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**  
First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 481-83 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities), 473-81 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft.)
- 204 Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**  
First Reading -- 468 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 616-30 (Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed)

**205\*      Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**

First Reading -- 707 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 839-50 (May 9, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 924-31 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 931-34 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force January 1, 2017; SA 2016 c12]

**206\*      Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (Goehring)**

First Reading -- 902 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 1241-49 (May 30, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 1249-55 (May 30, 2016 aft., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 1255-57 (May 30, 2016 aft., passed)

**Pr1      Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 1171 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 1197 (May 26, 2016 morn., passed)

Third Reading -- 1219 (May 26, 2016 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 ) [Comes into force May 27, 2016]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, June 6, 2016

Day 39

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Government House Leader  
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinstauber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinstauber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinstauber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, June 6, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. It's a beautiful day.

Let each of us in our own way reflect. Today marks the beginning of Ramadan, the holiest month for Muslims around the world, including thousands of Albertans. Let us reflect on a passage of Ramadan. Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may learn the piety of patience, compassion, gratitude, charity, and flexibility.

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Legislature Sobia Shahid. Sobia Shahid is a member of the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. She is the chairperson of the Committee on Right to Information and a member of the standing committee on revenue in that Legislature. She has focused her work on improving education and health care in her province, and she also heads the women's youth wing of her organization. She has certainly inspired a new generation of women in politics in Pakistan.

Sobia Shahid is joined by Dr. Muhammad Nauman Zafar and Dr. Shazia Zahir, two physicians related to her. Shazia Zahir is her sister, who just recently migrated from Pakistan to Canada. I welcome them to Canada and this province as well. They are also joined by a family friend, Abdul Hameed Khan, who has been instrumental in getting them here to the Legislature. I ask Mrs. Sobia Shahid, Dr. Zafar, Dr. Zahir, and Abdul Hamid Khan to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members, as some of you may be aware, four long-serving members of the Legislative Assembly security service, or LASS, will be leaving us at the end of this session. The LASS provides a vital service to each and every one of us, keeping the Chamber precincts, the Legislature Building,

and the committee meetings safe and secure as well as interacting with the hundreds of visitors who attend session each day.

I'd like to introduce each of the retiring members in turn. They are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I'd ask them to rise as I call their names. Mike deVarenes started with the LASS in May 2006. He formerly spent 27 years with the Edmonton Police Service, working in patrol and the intelligence unit. Paul Warechuk began working with the LASS in January 2001. He came into the position after a 33-year career with the RCMP, which included 16 years with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. Paul is joined today by his wife, Barbara. Russ Jackson began his employment here in February 2000. He previously spent 32 years as a front-line officer with the EPS and a further five years in communications. Finally, the procession today was led by Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms Gordon Munk. Gord joined the LASS in February 2000, having spent a varied 30-year career with the EPS. Gord has served in his current role since October 2009 and has attended this House with dignity and dedication. Watching from the Speaker's gallery is Gord's wife, Cecilia, his daughter Tracy Neufeld, and her husband, Cody.

In terms of combined years of service with the LASS, the total is 58 years and two months, on top of a further 122 years of aggregate police service, a staggering 180 years of total experience. I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that all members please show their appreciation and gratitude to all of these gentlemen for their many years of devoted service. I wish them health and happiness. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Welcome. I know I speak on behalf of all of the Assembly that that applause was very sincere. Thank you for your public service.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the other members of this Assembly several guests from my constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Mr. Abu Bakr Al-Rabeeah is a grade 9 student at Highlands junior high. He's also a Syrian refugee and is the subject of the book *Homes*, which tells his story of that horrific experience as well as the challenges and possibilities that he has discovered here in his new home. Accompanying Abu Bakr today is his mother, Nihad Addullah Saadon Al-Tameemi, as well as his ESL teacher from Highlands, Ms Winnie Canuel, who wrote this book based on Abu's story. Also in attendance is the principal of Highlands school, Mr. Brad Burns. I would ask Abu Bakr, his mother, Ms Canuel, and Mr. Burns to please stand and receive the traditional warm greeting of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Kristie Schneider, director of operations for Ghost River Rediscovery Society, a program we'll be hearing more about in my member's statement. I ask Kristie to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you Perrin Michalyszyn, who was a page at this

Assembly from 2011 to 2015. He was also the head page from 2014 to 2015. He is currently attending the University of Alberta, pursuing his bachelor of science, in his third year. I would ask him to rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the distinct honour of rising to introduce to this House a group of dedicated individuals who have been advocating for improvements to the PDD system in Alberta. I am honoured to know them and proud to introduce them to this House. I ask them to rise as I call their names: Gary McCallum, Katie McCallum, Sydney Goss, Elizabeth Pollock, Brian Pollock, Ward McRorie, Taisa McRorie, the persistent and amazing Leah McRorie, Jessica Wells, Sheila Roth, James Bannatyne, Leah Lyons, Mike Lyons, Bev Hills, Jamie Post, Kelvin VanDasselaar, Marty Normand, and April DiVito. A warm welcome from all of us in the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

1:40

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

### Carbon Levy Public Debate

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta we have the right to engage in a vigorous and passionate debate on issues of public policy, but last week nine members of the Official Opposition took that debate to a place that was disappointing, at the very least, and hurtful to 300,000 Albertans. In a blog post they compared the Holodomor to the carbon levy.

I have been honoured to stand witness to the survivors and the victims of this atrocity, and it defies simple logic or basic human decency to compare a crime against humanity to a public policy measure that has already been successfully adopted in many jurisdictions. They have since apologized for the offensive statement and have deleted the post. Regardless, I believe this sad episode is a reminder to all of us of the impact of what we say or write.

The Holodomor was an act of genocide that took the lives of millions of Ukrainian women, men, and children, and 300,000 Albertans are survivors or descendants of those who survived this crime against humanity. When we speak of or write about this atrocity, it should be in one context and only one context. We need to remember the suffering of our fellow human beings, with a unified resolve to prevent it from happening again.

I believe that everyone in this House has come here for the same reason, to serve Albertans to the best of their ability. But when people hear such hurtful and obviously wrong statements by elected officials, they question the motives of us all. That is why I want to be on record today to say that I deplore what happened last week. When members of this House apologize, we accept those apologies at face value, but their sincerity will be judged on their future actions and whether they have learned anything from putting such bizarre, hurtful, and simply wrong comments on the public record.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

### Ukrainian Heritage

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely proud of my Ukrainian roots. I was a traditional Ukrainian dancer for over 10 years. I was born in and still reside within a vibrant Ukrainian community. My family still follows many of the customs and traditions of our Ukrainian ancestors. As a born and raised Albertan I'm especially lucky to have been able to learn about my heritage from first-generation Ukrainian migrants.

My great-grandmother was born in Kiev. She was part of the first wave of Ukrainian migrants who came to this country in search of a better life. It was only a few years later when genocide was committed against the people of her land. My ancestors narrowly escaped this atrocity.

The men and women who formed this first generation of Ukrainian migrants faced discrimination when they arrived. Anti-Ukrainian sentiment was rampant, and life was not easy as these new settlers established themselves in early Canadian society. They didn't know it then, but they were building a keystone of Canadian life, and they would go on to become one of our most vibrant and proud groups.

My great-grandmother, like so many others, lived through warfare, famine, and discrimination. Her life was defined by the evils of war and hardship. When she saw her generation carry on the traditions of our ancestors, she knew that she had prevailed and that everything she went through was worth while. Today Ukrainian culture is woven into the fabric of our communities.

Recently a column went out with my name on it that inadvertently made light of not just my history but the story of Albertans of Ukrainian heritage across this province. This was wrong, and I speak for all members involved. We apologize unreservedly for this post. We believe that for any political party to try and push an agenda or an attack using the tragedy of the Ukrainian people in the Holodomor is deplorable. Our caucus honours the victims of the Holodomor genocide and stands firmly with the people of the Ukraine as they continue to work against forces who object to their freedom both today and always.

To the Ukrainian people: please accept our heartfelt apology. Thank you.

### Ukrainian History Remembrance

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, in my maiden speech, four years ago this week, I related some of my family history. Most members know that I'm very proud of my German heritage, but there's more to that story. My mother's family was German, and she grew up in a village of German Lutherans. But the village wasn't in Germany; it was in Ukraine.

The atrocities suffered by the people of Ukraine at the hands of Joseph Stalin are well known, or at least I thought they were. The Holodomor was cultural genocide of horrific proportions, death by starvation, imposed by a brutal dictator who had no compunction to cause the deaths of millions of innocent men, women, and children. But the atrocities did not end in 1933.

I never met my grandfather, whose name I bear. On November 11, 1936, trucks loaded with Russian soldiers rolled in to my mother's village, and all men aged 16 and older, including my grandfather, were loaded up and taken away, never to be seen again. The German word is "weggeschleppt," which means dragged away. My mother was 14 at the time. For the rest of her life she was haunted by images of that night, until she passed away three years ago.

The suggestion that the Holodomor or the other atrocities carried out on innocent people living in Ukraine are somehow related to a

bill that we are debating is an outrage. It insults the memory of those who died, it insults the suffering of those who survived, and it insults the efforts of those who have sought to educate our people on this dark and detestable chapter of human history. To suggest that the Holodomor was somehow the fault of the victims is shocking in its inaccuracy and disrespect. To make that suggestion for political gain is heinous.

Surely, Mr. Speaker, political discourse in this province has not sunk so low.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

### Medical Assistance in Dying

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to take this opportunity to honour a former constituent of mine, Donna Delorme. Donna was one of the first people who contacted me after I was elected, and her e-mail read:

Congratulations on your win. I'm thrilled for you.

Now, this is a difficult topic I know, but I am one of those disabled people who suffers incredibly 24/7 and want to be first on the list of those allowed doctor assisted death come February 6, 2016.

Donna was a fierce and persistent advocate for medical assistance in dying. She had been diagnosed with MS in her late 20s, and this, along with other complications, led her to being completely bedridden. She spoke out bravely, honestly, and passionately for the right of people to choose their own death. Through interviews, social media, and her blog Donna shared her day-to-day experiences, and I encourage all members of the House to take the time to read it.

Donna was thrilled with the Supreme Court of Canada decision to allow medical assistance in dying in Canada, thrilled that someone had finally listened to the voices of many who struggle and fight through insufferable pain every day. However, the laws did not come soon enough for her. I heard from Donna for the last time on August 25 of last year. She explained that even if change didn't come in time for herself, she would speak out in the hope of helping others. Donna ended her life a month later.

In a blog post that she wrote just five days before her death, Donna wrote, "On February 7, 2016 people like me can have access to our right to physician assistance to die . . . Please help me and those like me end our suffering by being as vocal as you can."

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of a government committed to a range of options for Albertans so that patients and their families can experience this process with the least amount of disruption or distress.

Thank you, Donna, for your bravery and passionate advocacy. You are missed, but we know you are happy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

### Ghost River Rediscovery Society

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to tell you about the Ghost River Rediscovery Society. The Ghost River Rediscovery Society is a unique leadership training program that has offered traditional and cultural-based leadership learning since 1997. The leadership program is aimed at First Nations youth, although it is open to all applicants who grew up in Calgary and haven't had the opportunity to explore a relationship with nature, helping them to strengthen and learn about relationships between themselves, community, and the natural world.

Leaders teach participants the importance of the natural world around us by conducting hiking and camping excursions that can be

up to five days in length. When not exploring the natural world, the leadership program educates and engages participants with the message that we strengthen our community through connection and celebration of both our commonalities and our diversity. Exploring the vitality of the past and the excitement of the present, they reach towards the future together, building strong and healthy communities.

1:50

Ghost River believes that by educating and engaging youth both on the land and in urban settings, it provides opportunities for youth to develop and learn new skills as well as offers guidance as they obtain a strong sense of self and explore connection to peers and cultural leaders.

In addition to the great work that they've done with youth over the years, Ghost River Rediscovery also offers aboriginal awareness training for individuals, businesses, and social services agencies as well as international groups through its affiliation with Rediscovery International.

I had the pleasure of visiting Ghost River's office, located in Calgary-Klein, and meeting Executive Director Adam Ross and Kristie Schneider, the director of operations. I'd like to thank Ghost River Rediscovery Society for its important work in engaging our future leaders.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I would recognize the Minister of Health.

### Members' Apologies

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise with regard to a point of order that was made last week and that you have provided your ruling on. I do respect your ruling; however, I acknowledge that some members of this House were offended by my remarks. I want to clarify that I did not intend to accuse any member in this House of making dishonest statements. Regardless, if that's the way those remarks were interpreted, I do apologize for that.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Hays, the leader of our caucus, I also would like to apologize to the House and withdraw the comments that he made on Thursday.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last November Albertans were shocked as the Premier announced an expensive new carbon tax that would hit them hard in their pocketbooks at a time they could least afford it. They are frustrated this NDP government will be taking more of their money to hand over billions to new corporate welfare experiments. The Premier did not campaign on this. She knows that if she did, she would not be sitting on the government side of the House today. Will the Premier get a mandate from the people before implementing her expensive NDP carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that in the last election our party stood very clearly on the platform and on the position that we would take real and substantive action on climate change. That is what we're doing, and that was the referendum. I appreciate that it's awkward for the other side to talk about the election because half the time half of them didn't know if they actually thought climate change was real during that time. Nonetheless, we were very clear. We do think it's real, and we think it is our obligation to take action on it.

**Mr. Nixon:** With this carbon tax Alberta will have the highest fuel taxes in the prairies. Diesel will now be more expensive here than in Ontario. Families who have to drive to work or take kids to hockey practice will now be poorer because of it, all at a time when Albertans are struggling to find work. This NDP government has failed to be honest with Albertans about the full impact of this tax increase. Why won't the Premier let Albertans have their say, whether or not they want to pay this expensive NDP carbon tax?

**Ms Notley:** Again, Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, the people of Alberta have had their say. In addition, as we talk about and we consult, which we did extensively after the election as well, with Albertans from all walks of life, we're going to do it on the basis of the best evidence and the facts. We will not engage in the kind of fearmongering hyperbole that we saw from this opposition just last week, which precipitated the round of apologies that we had to see today. We will not engage in that kind of debate. We will focus on the facts because we know they support our plan.

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

**Mr. Nixon:** Economists have weighed in. The impact of the NDP's carbon tax is roughly the same as a 3 per cent sales tax across the economy. Alberta has legislation on the books, called the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act, that handcuffs any Alberta government from bringing in a sales tax without a referendum. Albertans support this legislation. If a government is going to bring in the largest tax increase in Alberta history, they should follow that. Given that the Premier did not campaign on this NDP carbon tax, why won't the Premier at least commit today to the spirit of this law and hold a referendum on the NDP's carbon tax?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I believe I've answered that question now twice. But I will say that I was very pleased this weekend to see an opinion piece that was run in the *Calgary Herald* from the former Republican mayor of New York, who stated that Alberta is leading the nation and indeed the continent with our work on climate change and who identified the fact that this is what is necessary in order to promote economic diversification and economic growth and to prepare our economy for the future low-carbon economy, that all jurisdictions need to be ready for. I'm very proud of that. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it's a lovely day outside. It's a beautiful day outside, and the sun is shining outside.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP carbon tax will have a negative impact on the transportation costs for Albertans, particularly those who live and work in locations without public transit alternatives. According to Statistics Canada fresh fruit and vegetable costs rose 11 and 12 per cent respectively, year over year, in April. Just going to get groceries, running the children to school,

sports, or music class, or travelling to work will cost all Albertans more. Rural Albertans, folks in small urban centres and across our major cities will end up paying more at the pumps. Why does the NDP insist on taxing working families at a time they can least afford it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the member opposite probably knows if he's read even some of the information that we put out, our climate leadership plan effectively recycles money to two-thirds of Albertans through rebates, so as a result, these costs are not necessarily going to be as dire as the member opposite suggests.

We also lowered the small-business tax so that small business can adjust to our new low-carbon economy, and we will reinvest revenue from the carbon levy into the very strategies that will create jobs, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and reposition our economy to be competitive in the 21st century, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP carbon tax will also send the costs of municipal services higher, costs that will inevitably be passed down to property taxpayers, working families. Services like busing, firefighting, police, and garbage collection will all need more to cover their day-to-day increases. To the Premier: what analysis was done on the impact of this carbon tax on ordinary Albertans, who will be facing higher costs for day-to-day municipal services?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, as I said, there was an extensive analysis done through Dr. Andrew Leach's work, that consulted widely with the people of the province, across the province last year. In addition, we've heard, for instance, from the mayor of Edmonton that he supports this plan. In addition, as I just mentioned, we heard on the weekend that the former mayor of New York supports the plan and actually identifies that their climate reduction initiatives created jobs and stimulated more growth in the city of New York than anything that was going on in the rest of the country at the same time and effectively repositioned that city for better economic ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, it is not just municipal services that will cost more. Provincial services like snowplowing and highway maintenance, whose budgets have been cut \$33 million over the last two years, will also cost more. This means a further deterioration of services and worsening road conditions, as witnessed by the minister's own performance measures. Highway maintenance will cost more as a result of the carbon tax. Since the contracts have already been negotiated, will the minister have to open up those contracts in order to ensure proper maintenance will not be affected?

**Mr. Mason:** The answer is no, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow.

2:00

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month the Minister of Infrastructure admitted that his department hadn't done a proper study of how the carbon tax could negatively impact Alberta's construction industry. If the carbon tax isn't accounted for, it means that amounts listed in the capital plan for important projects like the Calgary cancer centre are now insufficient to cover the actual project costs. To the Premier: does the government intend to

provide revised capital plan figures that take the carbon tax into account, or will much-needed projects be delayed as a result of the carbon tax eating up infrastructure dollars?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we've seen, our Wildrose friends over there like to light their hair on fire about the impact of the carbon tax and grossly overestimate its impact. I would point out to hon. members opposite that there'll be about a 6 and a half per cent effect on the price of gasoline, but gasoline prices have come down in the last couple of years over 30 per cent. Obviously, these costs are lower now than when the economy was booming two years ago, so I'm sure there's going to be no shortage of ability to handle the situation.

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Labour was asked about where the jobs in the government's jobs plan were to come from, she said, "I would recommend that you talk to the Minister of Infrastructure with that question." Now, the government might be betting on the capital plan to create much-needed jobs, but after a year vague assurances and broken promises just won't cut it for Albertans anymore. To the Premier. We know that Infrastructure didn't bother to study the effect of the carbon tax on Alberta's construction industry. Did anybody bother to assess the impact on job creation?

**Ms Notley:** Well, indeed, Mr. Speaker, as I've said several times, we know that the climate leadership plan will have a positive impact on job creation. Actually, in the construction industry itself it's remarkable. I had the fabulous opportunity and privilege last Friday to engage in an announcement involving an ecosolar tour and to talk with a number of people in the construction industry who are very excited about the opportunity to engage in efficiency investments as well as renewable energy investments as they relate to construction. In fact, what we're going to do is that we're going to create more opportunity . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, in their desperation to draw in revenue after their credit-disintegrating budgets, this government couldn't be bothered to exempt even schools from their job-killing carbon tax. Edmonton public alone has estimated that the carbon tax will result in over \$600,000 lost per year. That's just from one board in our province. Why does this government think that education dollars are better used in a slush fund for pet projects rather than for funding schools or for building new ones?

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you that when I think about the impact of our climate leadership plan on the province of Alberta and on the future, one of the things that makes me proudest is the degree of support that we have amongst the very kids inside those schools that the member opposite is talking about. They want a government that will move forward, be innovative, take bold action, and protect their environment for their future.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Because they're listening in science class.

**The Speaker:** Did I hear the Advanced Education minister say that someone was listening?

**An Hon. Member:** He's having trouble today.

**The Speaker:** Yeah. I know. I know.

Was it the accordion lessons they took you away from?  
I'm beginning to see a little bit of sunshine in here.  
Calgary-Greenway.

### **PDD Supports Intensity Scale Assessments**

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have all heard how SIS is a contentious evaluation system which many PDD advocates, including our guests in the gallery, have been trying to get rid of for some time now. An additional concern which has been brought to my attention is the prohibitive cost of administering SIS. To the Minister of Human Services: can you outline for the House how much money it costs to administer SIS on an annual basis and how this compares to other models you're exploring?

**The Speaker:** The hon Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I would like to begin by saying that the SIS was brought in by the previous government, and at that time I am not sure if they did any monetary calculations. But as of last Wednesday I said that we are not keeping the SIS.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Again with the excuses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Human Services has said that he needs to review 11,000 files before he could even suspend SIS. Eleven thousand files is a lot of work, especially given that these files are not simple yes/no issues; these are human beings whose entire livelihoods are affected by these decisions. Again to the hon. minister: what extra resources are being specifically dedicated to this monumental task?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I'm happy to report that \$22 million extra has been added to that in addition to reversing the cuts that were proposed by the previous government. We have enough money allocated to that program to provide persons with developmental disabilities with needed and necessary supports.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think \$22 million is not going to go far.

Anyway, one concern that we have continued to hear from our PDD stakeholders is that they can't get timely responses. This is no disrespect to the minister or his hard-working staff. Human Services is a monumental task, and I'm sure you're all doing your absolute best. However, timely responses are critical in this area. Again to the minister: what specific processes or changes are you implementing to ensure a timely . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Which minister, hon member?

The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I think it's very important that people contacting my ministry get a timely response, and that's what our priority is. We have resourced our office well, and we have added money to the PDD budget. We will make sure that everybody gets the needed information and response in a timely fashion.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### **Oil and Gas Well Land Reclamation**

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Court of Queen's Bench ruled that the federal Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act takes precedence over provincial law. Now, this means that money from the sale of bankrupted companies' assets will go first to the companies' creditors instead of being used to pay for the cleanup of abandoned or orphaned wells. This will have far-reaching implication for the province's energy sector and for all Albertans. The current liability rating system is already creating headwinds, and any changes to make it even more stringent could further hurt an industry that's already suffering. To the Premier: are you considering any changes to the LLR system?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're working collaboratively with the oil and gas industry to work at the issue with respect to the orphan wells problem as well as the other matters that were raised by the member opposite. We will look at, obviously, the evolving legal status as it exists and ensure that we can come up with a plan that works for everyone that takes into account the current status of the law.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** My apologies. First supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like I may have caught the Premier by surprise on that one, so I'll try again.

The Orphan Well Association is funded by the oil patch through levies and security deposits based on well abandonment and reclamation liabilities, but their current funding only allows them to remediate barely 5 per cent of orphaned wells every year. Again to the Premier: with the number of abandoned and orphaned wells expected to increase in light of this ruling, will you commit to adding more funds to the Orphan Well Association to find a solution to this economic and environmental problem?

**Ms Notley:** Well, there's no question, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite raises an important issue and, indeed, a much larger issue, which is that over the last 20, 30 years this liability has been allowed to exist and to grow, and we haven't taken action at the appropriate time to insist that the polluter-pay principle be properly implemented in Alberta. It's quite true that after 20 or 30 years we now have a growing liability. We're looking at ways to address it. As the hon. member opposite knows, we have a number of financial pressures within our budget right now, and we have to address this carefully amongst those priorities. We understand this is the outcome of many, many years of a failure to act.

2:10

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's easy to say that it's industry's responsibility to reclaim the wells, but the fees already charged have, especially to smaller producers, a very negative impact. Instead of penalizing companies that want to rebuild our provincial economy, we should be enabling their success and at the

same time getting highly skilled oilfield service workers off the unemployment line and back to work. Again to the Premier: will you add to the orphan well fund to get Albertans with oilfield experience back to work while solving a significant environmental problem?

**Ms Notley:** Again, Mr. Speaker, as you're aware, we know that this was an ask that was put to the federal government as part of their overall economic diversification and capital investment plan. That was an ask that was put by Saskatchewan. We've indicated that it's worth reviewing. Again, as I say, the liability is huge, and the question becomes whether taxpayers of today should be paying for profits that were not applied to making these fiscally and environmentally responsible decisions in the past. It's a difficult issue to manage. We will certainly look at it. We're talking with our federal partners, and we'll consider the options that are there to balance those taxpayers' needs along with the fact that we now have an environmental . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
The hon. Member for St. Albert.

### **PDD Supports Intensity Scale Assessments** (continued)

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I continue to hear from constituents and members of the community of persons with disabilities on a daily basis, actually, about their concerns around the supports intensity scale. They told me that SIS was implemented with little consultation, and I know first-hand that it is a needs-based assessment. Given our government's commitment to ensuring all Albertans receive the supports they need in a respectful and timely manner, to the Minister of Human Services: what is our government doing to address these concerns?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this important question. First, I would like to thank the member for her passionate and continued advocacy for persons with disabilities. Since we were first elected, the member has been raising concerns about PDD safety standards and the supports intensity scale. Her work and contribution certainly have helped our government to make a real difference in the lives of persons with developmental disabilities. I'm also pleased to report that we will end the use of supports intensity scales.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. I know that members of the disability community will be happy to hear this news. Given the anticipation of seeing these changes, to the minister: when will our government move ahead with these policy changes?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member. As of today persons with developmental disabilities are no longer required to go through the SIS. My department will work with the persons with developmental disabilities, their representative organizations, the Member for St. Albert, and all stakeholders to make sure that we are bringing a solution that is Alberta-made and that is respectful to the persons with developmental disabilities.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is certainly good news. Given that our government is committed to working closely with people with disabilities in our community that have continued to express concerns about PDD policies, what else will the minister be doing to support persons with disabilities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. Since coming to office, we have been listening to the concerns from the PDD community about overly restrictive safety standards and the use of SIS. We have listened carefully to the advocates and their concerns, and we are taking action. When it comes to supporting persons with developmental disabilities, we are doing something that the previous government did not: listening to the PDD community and taking real action to address their concerns.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Premier's Office Expenses

**Mr. Cyr:** Another week, another story about how out of touch the Premier's office is with everyday Albertans. The NDP government has taken a page out former Premier Redford's handbook and has spent nearly \$340,000 to run her office in 2015. Times have never been better to be staff in the Premier's office; all the while Albertans have seen unemployment spike. My question is to the Premier. Can we expect to see more Redford-era spending but just underneath your banner?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It's a fair question. Certainly, we were looking at expenses that were incurred by the previous government some 40 years into their many terms. When our government assumed office, we certainly did have some extraordinary expenses, including technology as well as relocation, that we covered, but we do not expect to have that same level of expenses in future years.

**The Speaker:** The first supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that while tens of thousands of everyday Albertans are looking for work and the NDP government is carting in hyperengaged partisans from out of the province and given that the cost of moving all of the NDP partisans came with a price tag of over \$80,000, will the Premier acknowledge that NDP values are so out of touch with everyday Albertans that they simply couldn't find the staff to support her risky ideology in this province?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the staff that have stepped up and want to make sure that we continue to support Alberta as we move forward under our new government – this includes many, many, many Albertans who stepped up and who are filling the political positions – as well as selecting some of the best from other jurisdictions, who had experience with things such as major flood conditions in terms of natural disasters in Manitoba and other jurisdictions. That's certainly valuable to our government, and we want to make sure that we have the best. I will not apologize for making sure that we did hire them.

**The Speaker:** The second supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that the many issues managers hired by the NDP government are attempting to manage the issue of their bloated and out-of-touch Premier's office. Given that 7 out of 8 people hired as issues managers by this NDP government were hired from outside of Alberta at a price tag of almost a million per year, how can the Premier justify hiring so many non-Albertans to institute the NDP world view, that nobody in Alberta wants?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly important to us that we have the right people in the right offices. Rather than relying on people in the public service to do issues management work that certainly had a connection to the Premier's office, we thought it was appropriate to house them in that area. It is also the same complement of political staff in the Premier's office currently as it was under the last government, one that is much smaller than it was under Redford's reign. Certainly, we've moved forward in a cautious and thoughtful way in making sure that we staff the offices appropriately. I'm proud of the people who are working in the Premier's office in issues management. We're supporting Fort McMurray and continuing to bring people back home.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-North West.

### PDD Supports Intensity Scale Assessments (continued)

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I can even yell at the Human Services minister today. This is a good day. This is a fantastic day. I am so honoured to be joined by so many guests in the gallery today who represent the diversity within the PDD community. They are a nonpartisan group of people whose lives are personally impacted by decisions made by this government. So thank you to our Human Services minister. Please, if you could take this time to tell us what the plan is moving forward now that we have ended SIS.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for not yelling. The problem is that every once in a while, when she would look at her own government's policies, she would feel like yelling. As I said, the supports intensity scale was used only to measure the amount of money people get. There is functional assessment in place, and we will continue to work with our partners in the community to make sure that we get it right.

2:20

**The Speaker:** The first supplemental.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Human Services minister: we have some really wonderful advocates here in the gallery, and I will ask you respectfully if you can take the time to speak to them so that, going forward, the process we do put in place is respectful to everyone.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member. I can assure the House that that has been my approach. I have been working with the advocates. I can point to safety standard 8, where we consulted almost 2,000 Albertans, and I'm pretty sure that all of

these advocates were part of that consultation. Going forward, that's the thing I'm committed to do.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't really know what to ask next but to say thank you on behalf of all the people we've worked with in PDD.

Thank you.

**Mr. Sabir:** You're welcome, and thank you.

**The Speaker:** More sunshine.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Carbon Levy Revenue Utilization

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Alberta families are hurting, and they know that the NDP government is just making things worse. Albertans are angry. The NDP carbon tax is taking billions away from working families for an unaccountable green slush fund. The one thing Wildrose understands and the NDP doesn't seem to understand is that the money spent in this Legislature is not our money; it is the wages of working Albertan women and men. With no outcomes, transparency, or accountability for how this money will be spent, how can Albertans possibly trust this government to spend this money wisely?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there was plenty of opportunity to query the budget during budget estimates. I did notice that the Official Opposition took until minute 48 of their allotted 60 minutes to discuss climate change in the budget estimates because they were not interested. Clearly, this was building on not being interested in the climate change file through the entire consultation process, on which they took a complete pass. Utter silence from the Wildrose opposition. They don't have any alternatives because they reject the science of climate change.

**The Speaker:** I just want to caution again the House about the use of certain language that might cause an uproar in this place. Hon. ministers and members, I hope we abide by that.

First supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't realize that working Albertans were a detriment to a question at all since that's what we're speaking of.

Since the new NDP slush fund will create over \$6 billion in new government spending over the next four years and given that that's more money than will be spent on hospitals and schools during that same period, how can the Premier or anyone in this government justify rolling out billions of new spending without any protections or accountability for how the money is going to be spent?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we've made significant commitments to Albertans, in particular on the innovation and technology side. As the Energy critic the hon. member will know that such job creators as CNRL, Devon, ConocoPhillips, Suncor, Cenovus, ARC Financial, Total, and Statoil all support the climate leadership plan. It allows us to ensure that our economy, in particular our oil and gas industry, is resilient in a low-carbon future, which is a reality, just like climate change.

**The Speaker:** I see more clouds coming.

The second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. My question was actually about transparency, but I'll move on.

Since the NDP refuses to commit to being fully transparent with Albertans about how the carbon tax will be spent and given that Albertans right across the province will see their costs skyrocket for their gas and heating bills and given that Alberta families need to be able to see how this tax impacts their bottom line if they're going to be able to change their behaviour, will the NDP at the very least adopt some Wildrose suggestions to have every fuel receipt and bill for natural gas list the full amount of the carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we've outlined a number of job creators who support the climate leadership plan, which is going to reinvest money back into our economy to ensure that we're resilient. Actual job creators support this initiative. These are the folks who are focused on a serious appraisal and evaluation of climate policy, unlike the Wildrose Official Opposition . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Stop the clock. Please, if you ask the question, allow that the House can hear the answer.

Hon. minister, start again.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I've outlined a number of job creators who support the climate leadership plan, and that is because we will be making investments in innovation and technology and diversifying the economy with energy efficiency. Those are actual job creators that support this. These are the folks who are focused on a serious appraisal of climate policy, unlike the Wildrose, who are apparently . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister. You've had your time.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

### Children in Care

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wildrose believes in strong families and safe communities. The safety of children in care must be of paramount concern to this government. Stability for the children should also be a guiding principle when it comes to placing children in care. While keeping families together is always the goal, it is not always possible. To the Minister of Human Services: what current practices are in place to ensure that the safety of the children in care and a stable home life are the top priorities?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. The member raises very important questions and concerns. We are certainly committed to making sure that every child in Alberta has the resources to flourish and succeed and for safety, permanency. These are the fundamental things that we work on with families. When it's not possible, we do have a rigorous process of selecting kinship parents, foster parents to make sure that they have a place to call home.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that when a child becomes a ward of the process, there can be a fluidity between going from mom and dad to a foster family then back to mom and dad over and over again and given that this sort of back and forth can create instability and



further difficulties for the child involved, can the minister please clarify if there is a current cap in place for reunification attempts, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I certainly agree that stability is very important in a child's life. There is no cap on the attempts, and the reason for that is that every child is unique. Every case is assessed based on the best interests of the kid, so there is a subjective analysis, which we deal with based on the best interests of the kid in every situation.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Given that, as I've already mentioned, safety is paramount in these situations, Mr. Speaker, and given that we've seen many tragic episodes in our province where children were harmed because of failed reunification attempts, what is the minister doing to fix the reunification problem and provide assurances and a framework to show that the safety of the children in care is a top priority?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. When a child dies or gets injured in our care, certainly that's the most concerning situation. That's why the focus of our services remains on the safety of the individuals first and foremost. We make sure that whenever we intervene, we secure a safe environment for the children. I will mention that we have increased the budget for child intervention services. We have hired more staff to make sure that we can work with families, kinship providers, and foster parents to make sure that we provide . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### Assisted Dying Regulations

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A full year ago the Supreme Court made a ruling on assisted death with a deadline of today, but the federal Liberal government failed to finalize a law for all Canadians, and the provincial NDP government failed to finalize regulations for all Albertans. Alberta's draft regulations involving this literally life-and-death issue were rushed through in this Legislature and are still not approved by this cabinet. To the Premier: when will you be passing the regulations, how will you be protecting vulnerable Albertans, including those with mental illness, and when will you be clearly communicating this to all Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.  
2:30

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm very proud of the fact that our government brought draft regulations forward in a public and transparent way and that we had our debate in this Legislature, unlike what was happening in other provinces. I think it's important that we get feedback on the record. There were some comments that were given with regard to the actual regulations themselves, and we're certainly taking those into consideration as we work our way through cabinet. I expect that we will be able to provide clarity very soon, but I do want to make sure that cabinet has an opportunity to reflect on the feedback from this House and the What We Heard report, which gave feedback from 15,000 Albertans.

**Mr. Rodney:** As the minister has indicated, given that this cabinet has not yet made a final decision on the regulations, which will create critical guidelines for Albertans seeking medical assistance with dying, and given that last week the Health minister made it clear that cabinet would take two to three weeks to approve the regulations, to the Minister of Health: what possible reason could cabinet have for allowing this astonishing procedural gap, when exactly will cabinet approve regulations, what exactly will those regulations look like, and how exactly will they be communicated to Albertans?

**Ms Hoffman:** The questions that are asked are exactly the reason why this needs to go to cabinet, so that cabinet can have an opportunity to receive my recommendation. As members of any government, ministers bring forward a recommendation, but it's up to cabinet to decide what exactly gets approved. That's why we have a democratic process, Mr. Speaker.

What I did say was that it could take up to a couple of weeks. We're certainly working to have it done as quickly as possible. Regardless, we have a plan in place so that as of 12:01 tomorrow morning people can make sure that they have their rights respected and a process in place. We are moving very quickly with the regulations, and I will be happy to update the public as soon as those are finalized, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Rodney:** I believe the minister meant 12 midnight this past night.

Given that Alberta must now provide medical assistance with dying, which makes the lack of provincial regulations particularly concerning, and given that it's critical to monitor this sensitive, complex procedure, which may have already begun to occur, to the Associate Minister of Health: what specific data will be collected to track the number of Albertans who seek medically assisted death and the procedures used to take their lives, and will you commit to reporting this data in this House on a quarterly basis on an ongoing basis from now on?

**Ms Hoffman:** The law comes into effect, the Supreme Court decision, at 12:01 tomorrow morning, so after midnight tonight it becomes law for the country of Canada.

We are certainly ready to move forward. We have a number of pieces in place, including consultation that we did extensively with the College of Physicians & Surgeons, who are very supportive of the process that we have mapped out. We've worked with the medical examiners office to make sure that we can move forward in a way that tracks the instances moving forward. They've been very compatible with us in making sure that we can do that. As well, the motion that we did pass by government members in this House and one opposition member spoke to the fact that we are going to review this and make sure that we have a legal document that . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Off-road Vehicle Safety

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta remains the last jurisdiction in Canada with no law requiring off-highway vehicle riders to use helmets on public land. This government's previous commitment remains unfulfilled in this regard. There are now an average of 16 deaths per year in Alberta due to off-highway vehicle use, with almost 20 per cent being children under the age of 16. Almost 70 per cent of riders killed were not wearing a helmet. A public survey in 2008 showed over 80 per cent of Albertans support helmet legislation for off-highway vehicle use. To the

Transportation minister: when will your ministry bring in legislation demanding . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much to the member for that very important question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was a tragic accident this weekend involving two fatalities, including a very young man who apparently was wearing a helmet at the time. Helmets are not the only issue in terms of off-road vehicle safety, but they are an important one. I'm happy to tell the House we will be bringing forward legislation that includes mandatory helmets for off-road vehicles in the fall session of this Assembly.

**Dr. Swann:** Good to hear, Mr. Speaker. I've heard that before.  
Given that 1 in 5 deaths on off-highway vehicles are children under the age of 16, when will your ministry regulate ridership by children on off-highway vehicles that are designed for adults?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Another very important question. I can assure the hon. member that we're concluding our consultations, which have been extensive, over the summer. The issue of underage drivers of ATVs and other off-road vehicles is certainly something that's under very serious consideration.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My final question is for the environment minister. Given the supreme value of Alberta's eastern slopes for water and tourism and numerous studies indicating that off-highway vehicle watershed destruction already exceeds standards, can the minister tell Albertans why unregulated off-highway vehicle use continues to be the norm on our eastern slopes?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a very good question. What we have moved forward with is the following. We are engaged in linear footprint planning in the Porcupine Hills and Livingstone Range areas. We are working with the Crowsnest quad squad and others on the planning for the whole Castle region. We are moving forward with a number of initiatives that will regulate more carefully and encourage more responsible use of off-highway vehicles on Crown land.

### Openness and Transparency in Government

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, this NDP government was elected in part on a promise to be more open and transparent. During the government's transition last May there was significant controversy around the shredding of documents, to the point where the Premier herself issued a directive to cease all shredding. What has the Minister of Service Alberta done to ensure that such an event will never happen again?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I've been working very diligently along with the department in order to ensure that our protocols are sufficiently in place across government and that all departments are following equivalent standards. It's a matter of working across government

with all departments to ensure that we're all meeting sufficient levels of standards. There will be more information coming your way on this particular issue in the near future.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't want to start my hair on fire on that one.

Given that the current fee to file a freedom of information and protection of privacy request is \$25, one of the most expensive fees in Canada and a fee that deters citizens from seeking information, and given that the federal government has moved to ensure all Canadians have the ability to access information by waiving all fees beyond the initial \$5, when can we expect this government to stand up for transparency and lower the \$25 fee?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. This is the first I've been hearing of a request for lowering of a fee. It's certainly something that I will inquire about in my ministry, and I'm happy to bring back more information to the member with respect to how fees may be prohibitive to individuals accessing information. Additionally, I look forward to the work of the subcommittee, that all members of this House are participating in, with respect to transparency in government.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that more often than not this government provides requested FOIP material as image files and given that many FOIP requests end up being hundreds of pages long and photocopies and picture files that are not specifically user friendly and seeing as the federal government has issued a directive to all federal FOIP officers that they must reformat requests in formats that are user friendly, will the minister commit to making sure that the data issued through FOIP requests is provided in a user-friendly format?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. With respect to all FOIP requests and transparency our government is moving in a more open way than perhaps past governments have. We are looking at additional ways, and I have had some proposals brought to me with respect to how we can make the process easier and more transparent for Albertans and also to make sure that we're in line with other jurisdictions as that is an important aspect of this issue.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

### Carbon Levy Revenue Utilization (continued)

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week during question period it was noted that former PC Finance minister Jim Dinning supported a carbon tax provided it was revenue neutral, and much to my surprise this received a thunderous ovation from the government benches. To the Premier: please set the record straight. Does your government support a revenue-neutral carbon tax, and if you do, why was your party the only one that voted against

amendments which would have made the carbon tax revenue neutral?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the climate leadership plan, that we released in November, allows for a number of different ways in which the carbon levy revenues will be used. One is a broad rebate for up to 66 per cent of Albertans; another is to lower the small-business tax rate.

In addition, we will be making investments in green infrastructure and clean technology, which precisely mirrors the recommendations of the Ecofiscal Commission, of which Mr. Dinning is a part, in their Choose Wisely report, that was released earlier this year, Mr. Speaker.

2:40

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that on Thursday last week the Deputy Premier equated a revenue-neutral carbon tax with cutting public services, including firing nurses and firing teachers, and given that Bill 20 does absolutely nothing to fund teachers or nurses, leading one to question whether government ministers fully understand the concept of revenue neutrality, to the Premier: did you create a model for a revenue-neutral carbon tax in Alberta, and if so, why did you reject the model which has been effectively utilized in British Columbia?

**Ms Hoffman:** Just to clarify, Mr. Speaker, what was being proposed by a member of that caucus was that the revenue that we are receiving through the price on carbon be reduced in equivalence for the very wealthiest of Albertans, for profitable corporations, and what I said was that we were not elected to do that. While the Official Opposition was advocating for us to return to the proven methods of the '90s, which did result in significant layoffs, so would cutting taxes to the most profitable Albertans and to the major corporations. That's not what we were elected to do. We're reinvesting this money in diversifying the economy.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, given that Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson is taking his battle against Kinder Morgan to Ottawa and that Montreal Mayor Denis Coderre still thinks that Energy East will destroy Montreal and given that Alberta's climate change plan was supposed to garner social licence to gain approval for such projects and given that Mr. Robertson and Mr. Coderre seem intent to stick with their attitude of no pipelines ever under any circumstances, Premier, have you asked the federal government for assurances that they are prepared to utilize their authority and override municipal politicians, that have no say in pipeline decisions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will say about the relationship with the federal government is that they are pleased that a jurisdiction such as Alberta is exercising climate leadership. It certainly helps with conversations across this country about our market access and about the relative responsibility of our energy resources. In addition, what we have done is worked with them on things like the methane reduction strategy, which has been noticed by the rest of the continent. We're very proud of that.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm advised that the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General wishes to supplement an answer given

to a question on Thursday by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

The hon. minister.

### Alberta Serious Incident Response Team

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday of last week the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake requested information regarding the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team, or ASIRT. The hon. Minister of Human Services was kind enough to provide a reply and included a reference to the budget increase we have provided to ASIRT to assist them in the essential work that they do. For the record I just wanted to provide clarification. ASIRT's total budget for 2016-17 is \$3.5 million, an increase of \$480,000 over last fiscal. I thank the member again for the important question, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide this supplemental reply.\*

### Members' Statements

(continued)

#### Carbon Levy

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, sin taxes are the kind of taxes that governments levy on products they think people can do without, the kind of products, such as alcohol and tobacco, which could cause potential harm to the consumer. Governments have decided that for the well-being of individuals and society in general these products must be taxed.

This NDP government has now introduced legislation on a whole new era of carbon sin taxes, but unlike other sin taxes this carbon tax penalizes Albertans for consuming products that are essential to their family's everyday way of life: taxing the fuel necessary for mom and dad to get to work and for driving their children to school, music lessons, or soccer practice and taxing the natural gas families need to keep their homes warm. These are essential products Albertans need. This appears to be nothing more than a new tax grab.

As if that is not enough, through this new legislation the NDP government has arranged to funnel these new carbon sin taxes right into their NDP green slush fund. While other sin taxes go into general revenue, where priority is given to the needs of Albertans, whether that be health care, education, transportation, or similar programs, this carbon sin tax will be siphoned off and sent right into their new fund. At a time when this government is unable to pay all of their day-to-day expenses and is saddling Albertans with a mountain of debt, the NDP believes Albertans should trust them with a \$9 billion green slush fund. This government is willing to gamble these taxes on their pet projects without any clear economic analysis. This is not a credible plan. This so-called plan has very little potential to help create significant prosperity in Alberta. If this is a plan, it is a bad plan for Alberta. This government didn't campaign on it, and Albertans should not have to pay, especially at a time when they are already struggling. This is not what Albertans voted for.

### Presenting Petitions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm tabling a petition with over 1,300 signatures gathered from the citizens throughout the Banff-Cochrane constituency who are concerned with watershed values and are urging the government to "place an

\*See page 1449, left column, paragraph 10

immediate moratorium on clearcut logging operations in the Ghost Sub-basin.”

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) that at the appropriate time I will rise to discuss the breach of privilege that occurred by the government prematurely advertising their climate leadership plan. I have the appropriate number of coffees – clearly, I need a coffee – the appropriate number of copies of the letter that was provided to your office by the appropriate time this morning.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**Mr. Mason:** It’s my pleasure to table the requisite number of copies of my responses to each of the following: the Infrastructure Committee of Supply, the Transportation Committee of Supply, Motion for a Return 19, and Written Question 10.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the benefit of the House, I am just speculating that I will be referring to a number of documents at the appropriate time when the point of privilege is heard. In anticipation of that I would like to table the appropriate number of documents from the government’s website with respect to information on the carbon levy tax and rebates.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I’m pleased to rise and table the requisite number of copies of the Legislative Assembly Office 2015 annual report, *Thriving on the Challenges of Change*.

### Statements by the Speaker

#### Legislature Security Staff Retirements

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if I could take a few moments of your time to acknowledge the retirement of four of the Legislative Assembly security staff as well as 11 of their pages. I want to reiterate the words by our Deputy Speaker today about the LASS staff for their unwavering service to this Chamber, this Legislature, in fact the entire office. The work those folks do for all of us to make this place safe and secure is very, very much appreciated. Thank you again for your many years of service.

2:50

#### Page Appreciation

**The Speaker:** I would also like to recognize today 11 pages who are retiring this year by reading out a letter that they have asked that I share with all of you. Do we have all of the pages here? Could you please go get them?

Come. Come in. The door is not secure now.

This is the letter that they asked that I share with you.

The end of Session signifies something different for everyone. Although many of you are excited to return to your families and constituents, for the Pages this is a bittersweet time. The end of the Session is accompanied by the realization that for some of us our time on the Chamber floor has come to an end. We would like to express our sincere appreciation for the incredible opportunity we have had to serve the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

There are countless people who have made this into such an unforgettable experience. We would like to thank the Sergeant-at-Arms for teaching us the meaning of leadership; the Table Officers for their sense of humour and guidance; the staff in 315 and 412 ...

Those would be room numbers.

... for their constant support, words of wisdom and kindness; and the Security Staff for showing us that it’s important to find a job you look forward to, with people you enjoy working with. As well we wish to extend our gratitude to you Mr. Speaker and all Members of the Legislative Assembly, without whom, our role in the Chamber would not exist. It has been an honour to serve every member of this Assembly, each with their own unique talents, coffee preferences ...

This looks like one that should be framed.

... and comments under 29(2)(a).

Some of you folks could leave and write a book about that.

None of us could have anticipated the amount of knowledge we have gained throughout our time here. We now truly understand the good that parliamentarians and the parliamentary process does for society. We now appreciate that members are regular people, forming relationships, entering into negotiations, and resolving conflicts. Letting these members stand as an inspiration for ourselves, we wish to never cease striving for more than we ever thought previously possible.

As we reflect on our experiences at the Legislature, we recognize how fortunate we are to have had the “best seat in the house” to witness history in the making, along with previous generations of Alberta Pages. A 1913 *Edmonton Journal* article describes the Pages as “bright streaks of mischief,” and we are honoured to join the ranks of Pages whose laughter has echoed under the dome.

For many of us, walking into the Chamber on our first day here felt like walking into a history textbook ...

There’s no need to make fun of my hair.

... and we feel extremely privileged to have played even a small role in that story. Through every point of order, amendment, and early morning divisions, our time here has been unforgettable. The generosity and hard work of all the Members in this Assembly has shown us the type of leaders we would like to become and the future we hope to aspire to. For many of us this has truly been more than a job, it has been our second home. It has been a great honour and privilege to serve on the floor of the Assembly and as we close the door to our experience in the Chamber – holding it firmly shut ...

The wisdom of youth.

... we would like to say a sincere thank you for this incredible experience. Farewell, and don’t forget us.

Yours sincerely,

Joely Bragg, Josie Salmon, Erin de Kleer, Lindsay Hauser, Batul Gulamhusein, Cara Au, Azan Esmail, Samir Esmail ...

Those would be the two guys that look alike.

... Richard Mallet, Lily Zheng, Morgan Stang, and Lucille Bergmann.

I would now on your collective behalf call upon the Deputy Speaker to present a small token of our appreciation to the head page on behalf of the Members of this 29th Legislative Assembly. [Standing ovation] Thank you, hon. members.

I have no doubt – and I believe this is the thought that is in everyone’s mind – that some, in fact I expect many, of you may well be back in this room at a different time in your life. Thank you again.

I believe we may have had a point of order which has been withdrawn. Is that correct? Thank you.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

## Privilege Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today pursuant to Standing Order 15 to raise a point of privilege due to the actions of the government having offended the dignity and authority of the Assembly by running radio ads which presuppose that Bill 20 has already passed.

I'd like to start, first, with preliminary matters. Points of privilege must be raised at the earliest opportunity. The first I heard of this advertisement and the first time I heard the advertisement was on Thursday afternoon as I was driving back to the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. As such, I believe that this is the first opportunity I have had to raise this point of privilege, and therefore it is in order according to Standing Order 15(2).

Secondly, I provided the Speaker's office with a letter where I advised him of my intent to raise this point of privilege under Standing Order 15.

Mr. Speaker, let's get to the ad. The ad – and I'll do it with my best radio voice, I might add – is as follows: what would you say if I told you that Alberta families were about to get more energy efficient? Sounds good? Oh, yeah; keep talking. But what about my family budget? Introducing Alberta's climate leadership plan, a concrete action for change that strengthens Albertans' leadership on energy and the environment, and the transition will be made easier – this is an important part – with energy efficient programs and cash rebates for households that need them. The climate leadership plan: because it's the right thing to do. Learn more at [climate.alberta.ca](http://climate.alberta.ca). A message from the government of Alberta.

Now, I shudder to think what the cost of this message is, but that is not the point of privilege today. The point of privilege today, Mr. Speaker, surrounds the fact that this government has presupposed a decision of this Chamber. As you know, points of privilege are not to be entered into lightly because they are of a significant nature.

3:00

Presupposing a decision of this Assembly has been ruled on in this place on a number of occasions. One of the reasons why previous Speakers have ruled that this type of advertising is wildly inappropriate and presupposes a decision of the Assembly is because the advertisement of the day, including this one, didn't include any type of caveat with respect to what would happen. An example of that would be: subject to parliamentary approval. We wouldn't be here in this place at this time discussing this issue if the government had shown a wink of respect to the parliamentary process and approval that is yet to take place.

Now, the Government House Leader may stand up and argue that it merely says that it is introducing the climate leadership plan and that therefore it doesn't presuppose a decision. Or he might get up and say that Bill 20 isn't the climate leadership plan, that it is the climate leadership act, but without the act, the plan is nothing. The Government House Leader may argue as well with respect to the language around "introducing," but, Mr. Speaker, it's his job to try and defend the government. Sometimes he does it very well, and today I suggest to you that he may try to provide some wiggle room for the government. But let's be clear. Unless Bill 20 passes, then none of what they are advertising can occur. As a result they are communicating to Albertans, utilizing government resources, on a decision that has yet to be made in this Chamber.

Now, the ad goes on and asks us to check a website, so I did, Mr. Speaker, and imagine my surprise that the government has put up details on their carbon pricing plan which basically directly rely on the passage of Bill 20 through the Assembly. Perhaps someone in the minister's office wasn't checking details as appropriately as

they ought, or they weren't paying attention to the procedures here in the Assembly that would authorize this type of publication. Perhaps all of this information was released on Thursday afternoon given that the government – as we all know, the sessional calendar was to end last Thursday, and as far as I understand it, the ads all started running on Thursday, so it is quite possible that they then presupposed that the House would have risen and as a result purchased ads in advance of and in anticipation of that.

The point is, Mr. Speaker, that this action by the government has presupposed all of our role here, and it is a clear breach of privilege.

I might just highlight for you, Mr. Speaker, what it says, or at least what it said this morning, on the website in case there have been changes to such website to provide some further wiggle room for the government. On the website it speaks specifically about how the carbon tax will affect my family. Now, on the website it says "levy," but as you know, there's some debate about whether it's a tax or a levy. In this case it speaks about this mythical levy, and it says on the website that 6 of 10 Alberta households will – not may, but will – receive a rebate that covers the average cost of the carbon levy that they will pay.

Now, you know that there's a significant amount of debate around whether or not it will actually cover it. But the fact of the matter here today, sir, is that that rebate is not possible to be executed without the passage of Bill 20. As a result, not only does the advertisement presuppose the decision of the House, but also the backup documentation on a government website presupposes the decision of the House.

The other thing that the Government House Leader may rise and speak to is the fact that some of these measures may have been covered in Budget '16, but Budget '16, Mr. Speaker, does not implement the rebates for households, and if you check the website, the ad refers to just that. The website also references that starting on January 1, 2017, the carbon levy will be applied to fuels at a rate of \$20 per tonne and that one year later they will be increased to \$30 per tonne. Budget 2016 does not authorize the collection of a levy or a tax, yet it states on the government's website and in that ad that those things will be taking place. Now, I did spend a significant amount of time on the website looking for a small asterisk or something that would communicate that it is subject to the passage of Bill 20, and it certainly did not exist.

The Government House Leader is likely going to argue that Budget 2016 allowed them to do all of this. But, Mr. Speaker, if they've presupposed the decision of the House, what is the point in debating Bill 20? The Official Opposition has a significant number of amendments that may directly affect how the rebate program could be rolled out. I know that many of my colleagues are very strong in the gift of persuasion. It's quite possible that members on the other side will heed the wisdom of the opposition and, as a result, make a change to this. What the government has done is presupposed that all of the debate in this House has no value.

Now, don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker. We have from time to time had debate on needless legislation in the Assembly, including Bill 1. But I find it offensive to the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, who expect members of this Assembly to be able to debate pieces of legislation free from the presupposition of the government making these decisions. You can correct me if I'm wrong, but as of this moment Bill 20 still sits in Committee of the Whole, where there are various amendments that are being suggested, which may, in fact, alter various items that the government is advertising.

Briefly, Mr. Speaker, *Erskine May* says about privilege:

Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty... directly or

indirectly, to produce such results, may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.

Just as a reminder, this isn't the first offence of this nature that's been brought forward. In fact, Mr. Speaker, you cautioned the government on November 2, 2015, when, on page 401 of *Hansard*, you said:

While this is not a prima facie question of privilege, I would caution the government not to prejudge the actions of this Assembly or its committees into the future. It's my hope that this would not arise again, and I would stress to members that this Speaker, on behalf of this Assembly, does not take these matters lightly.

Mr. Speaker, I will give the Government House Leader credit that when you ruled on this particular occasion on November 2, there was a little more wiggle room than there is today. The government was much more cautious with how it used its language with respect to the decision that a committee may or may not make. In this case the government has thrown caution to the wind and clearly prejudged the actions of this Assembly.

3:10

In *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition, on page 25, it has this to say about privilege:

It is generally accepted that any threat, or attempt to influence the vote of, or actions of a Member, is breach of privilege.

Clearly, these advertisements are an attempt to influence the vote or actions of a member.

Mr. Speaker, I might just mention that Speaker Zwodzesky ruled on December 2, 2013, when he found a case where the government was advertising when they ought not. I know that the Premier on November 27, 2013, made some suggestions of the House that included this:

... members of this Assembly by including on the billboards the phrase "if passed." I would suggest that that is not the situation in this case because, needless to say, the brochure, which has quite irresponsibly and in an entirely inappropriate and overly political way – but nonetheless that's not in your purview – been sent out to Albertans' households, says simply that public-sector employees will take a wage freeze, and the only way that can happen is through the passing of Bill 46.

In 2013 the Premier argued that an advertisement that had been sent to Albertans' homes presupposed a decision of the Assembly. While this advertisement wasn't sent to people's homes, it was clearly heard on many radio stations all across this province, and that decision presupposed this Assembly's actions.

Mr. Speaker, if you find a prima facie case example of privilege here, I would be prepared to move that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing for study and to allow the opportunity to report back to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this case is clear. This government has not treated the Assembly with the respect and in the manner it deserves. It's my hope that you, too, will find a case that the privileges of members of this Assembly have been breached by this government.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, the *Erskine May* page: are you able to identify that?

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did not cite the page in my arguments, but I would be more than happy to provide it if you think it would be of assistance to your table officers.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While we received notice this morning from the hon. Official Opposition

House Leader of his point of privilege that he wanted to raise in connection to radio ads, which have been airing on behalf of the government, we did not receive notice of extending that point of order to documents appearing on the government website. Therefore, I don't believe that appropriate notice has been provided with respect to that, and I am not prepared to speak to that. If you were to rule that we are going to be dealing with the point of privilege outlined in the notice that we received this morning, which is with respect to the radio ads, I am prepared to proceed.

**The Speaker:** Government House Leader, if you would like to proceed with respect to the matter that you have before you, that you understand that you did receive with adequate notice, I would welcome you to proceed.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, you're ruling that the point of privilege that the House is hearing strictly relates to the radio advertisement. Is that correct?

**The Speaker:** Government House Leader, if you would proceed with the matter that you've addressed with respect to the radio ads, I would then intend to give the Opposition House Leader an opportunity to add the connection, possibly, between the two, and there may be others in the House that wish to speak to that. Could you proceed on the basis of the radio ads that you cited in your first comments?

**Mr. Mason:** I reiterate, Mr. Speaker, my view that proper notice with respect to the government website has not been provided.

I want to begin, Mr. Speaker, by stating what the chair has repeatedly stressed in times past, that accusations that members have breached privilege are very serious accusations that ought not to be made lightly. Erskine May's *Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament* defines parliamentary privilege as "the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively ... and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions." This is cited in *Beauchesne's* 24. The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, 2009 edition, edited by O'Brien and Bosc, goes further to lay out the categories of rights and immunities enjoyed individually by members. It lists freedom of speech, freedom from arrest in civil actions, exemption from jury duty, exemption from being subpoenaed to attend court as a witness, and freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation, and molestation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure all members that I as Government House Leader and indeed this government as a whole take this Assembly as a most serious, deliberative body and that we have the utmost respect for the practices and institutions of this Chamber.

With regard to the case at hand, the ads in question refer to this government's climate leadership plan, a plan that has been discussed at length in the public and in this Chamber. Let us review these timelines. On June 25 the government launched a review to be chaired by the Alberta School of Business professor Andrew Leach. On November 22, 2015, the Premier stood with Professor Leach as well as numerous employers such as CNRL, Cenovus, Suncor, and Shell and representatives from First Nations and environmental organizations to announce our government's climate leadership plan. On March 8, 2016, the Speech from the Throne further outlined our plan, including plans for an energy efficiency agency to help diversify our economy, reduce energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions. On April 14, 2016, the budget clearly outlined further details on how our government was preparing to implement the climate leadership plan, including investing the

carbon levy in Alberta through rebates to up to 60 per cent of Alberta families, efficiency programming, and much more.

3:20

Throughout this process the government has made numerous announcements and directly communicated with the public on the plan. The ads mentioned by the opposition reference this broad plan. Radio and online advertising began on May 25, and I was going to read them as follows, but the House leader of the Official Opposition did such a fine job, Mr. Speaker, that I could not hope to match his ventricular skills, whatever they are.

Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, is just one part of the broader plan outlined by this government. Specific measures set out in the legislation include a carbon levy and a carbon rebate, revenue recycling for those funds raised by the levy, and the establishment of Energy Efficiency Alberta.

I would note that there are elements of the plan not explicitly enacted by the bill. Notably, our work with communities impacted by the phasing out of emissions from coal-fired generation has already begun. I will indicate the other aspects of the plan, Mr. Speaker, that are not contained in this bill: the phase-out of coal-fired electricity in favour of 30 per cent renewables, methane reduction of 45 per cent over 2014 levels by 2025, an efficiency strategy, an economy-wide price, an emissions cap at 100 megatonnes, and an allowance for upgrading. In addition, the Leach panel discussed rebates to 60 per cent of Alberta households. Budget 2016 contained the budgetary aspects of Bill 20. All of this is part of the fact that we've been transparent with Albertans since the beginning, and I want to indicate just for the record, although it's quite obvious, that the budget has received final approval from the House.

In terms of precedents, two recent questions of privilege are directly relevant to this discussion. In October 2013 a point was raised regarding Bill 32, the Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act. At the time it was alleged that advertising about this bill took place prior to its passage. A photo was submitted to support the point of privilege. The Speaker noted at the time:

It is difficult to conclude on the basis of a picture of one sign that the government had disregarded the Assembly's role in passing legislation.

The Speaker noted:

Any prior advertising about the nature of a bill must be undertaken very, very cautiously, if it is undertaken at all, so as to not create any impression that the contents of the bill are already law when the Assembly has not even seen the bill yet, much less debated it and passed it.

It is very clear from this ruling that the practices of this House do not preclude any and all advertising relating to a bill yet to be passed, let alone the advertising related to a plan of which a bill is just one part. Further, I would submit that these ads do not create the impression that the contents of the bill are law. They do not refer to the bill's passage, and they do not invite applications for a yet to be approved program. They merely provide overall, general information about the government's ongoing plan. Furthermore, it should be noted that no *prima facie* case of privilege was found in this case.

In December 2013 the Speaker did find a *prima facie* question of privilege. At that time the question was about a government brochure, entitled *The Building Alberta Plan*, which was alleged to prejudge the actions of a committee of this Assembly as well as prejudging the passage of certain bills. At that time Speaker Zwozdesky ruled that this was a *prima facie* case of privilege as

the brochure created the impression that legislation was in effect concerning public service salaries when, in fact, the bills had not been introduced.

In making this ruling, the Speaker made reference to a ruling in Ontario whereby Speaker Stockwell, referring to a previous ruling, stated:

In ruling that there was no case for contempt, Speaker Fraser appears to have accepted the submissions of government ministers that the government had never intended the advertisements in question to be anything more than "informational" and that it had never been "the government's intention to suggest that legislation would not be submitted to Parliament for debate."

As stated above, it is my view that the ads referenced in this question of privilege are purely informational. For these reasons I submit that this is not a question of privilege. To find that this is a matter of privilege would be to find that the government cannot communicate with members of the public regarding virtually any matter that it intends on bringing forward until that matter has been passed in the Assembly. As noted, the ads make reference to the government's plan, of which Bill 20 is just one part, the ads are informational, and they do not leave anyone with the impression that the Assembly has concluded its consideration of Bill 20.

That is my submission, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The House leader for the third party.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, very briefly on the point of privilege, we have seen this before, this exact sort of situation or very similar situation, where the government uses its considerable resources to begin advertising something that is still before the Legislative Assembly. Now, the Government House Leader outlined a number of things that are within the climate leadership plan that are not within Bill 20 and that can be advertised, I would suggest, because they are part of the government's plan of attack, if you wish to call it that, part of the climate change leadership that he mentioned; for example, methane reduction and some of the other measures. These are not items that are currently up for debate.

I think, really, there's a very specific area here that the Official Opposition House Leader is referring to – and I do think that it is important that that not be included yet in government advertising because it presupposes the decision of the Assembly – and that has specifically to do with the rebates. There could be amendments made to the suggested rebates, that are very much part of Bill 20, and if those rebates are adjusted in some way or a decision is made, for example, to alter them significantly, then the advertisements that have gone out are in fact not accurate.

In this situation I certainly concur with Speaker Zwozdesky's ruling on December 2, where he did find, in a really, very closely parallel situation to what we're dealing with today, that the government, the previous government in this case, had committed a breach of privilege in that the advertising of portions of a proposal that had not yet been dealt with by committee or indeed by the Assembly was already going out as a *fait accompli* to the general public.

That clearly is not the way we should be conducting business here. Under the current circumstances and with what we're dealing with today, I do think that there's a very strong *prima facie* case of privilege in this particular situation, and I would ask that you rule accordingly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the question that you asked immediately prior to the Government House Leader rising as to whether or not a case could be made for the use of the website within whether or not notice was provided, I would just add that the advertisement in question clearly made reference to the website. As such, it is not the role of the opposition to ensure that the Government House Leader is prepared to defend the actions of his government. It is our role to provide notice of the concern. Our concern was specifically about the ad and, as such, the content in the ad, which included the website.

I might just add that the advertisement isn't just talking in generalities. It says that the transition will – not maybe but will – be made easier with energy efficiency programs, which, I might add, Mr. Speaker, are not possible unless the carbon levy is collected, and cash rebates, which are not possible unless the bill passes. When you say that the transition will be made easier, you have clearly presupposed the decision of the Assembly.

I know that you'll have an opportunity to review the decision of December 2, when Speaker Zwozdesky speaks specifically about this. In light of the time that we've used, I'll leave that for your reading pleasure.

3:30

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let me begin by saying that I intend to defer a decision on this matter because of the fact that it is, first of all, a point of privilege. It is significant and requires complete knowledge of all the background referenced in the various arguments put forward. It may well be that after, as a result of that review, I may wish to hear additional arguments that may need to be addressed tomorrow as a result of the second point that the Government House Leader is making. There may be a requirement to hear additional information after I have a better understanding of the case put forward today. I would defer the decision until I've had time to review the background.

### Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would respectfully request that we get unanimous consent for the following motion: that the Assembly proceed to consideration of Government Bills and Orders rather than private members' business, which would normally be considered under Standing Order 8.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 23

#### Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'll move second reading of Bill 23, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016.

As I indicated at first reading, this bill has been circulated in all its parts to all parties in the Assembly and should receive passage without debate.

**The Speaker:** Are there any members who would wish to speak to the motion for second reading of Bill 23?

Hearing none, would the hon. minister wish to close debate?

**Mr. Mason:** No. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a second time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 23

#### Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**The Chair:** We have under consideration Bill 23, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today for what I'm sure will be the first of many times this evening to begin to discuss Bill 20. [interjection] Oh, we're on 23? Sorry. I changed my mind.

**The Chair:** Do we have any other speakers wishing to speak to Bill 23?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 23 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 23.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur with the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Speaker, I'd like to again beg unanimous consent of the House that notwithstanding Standing Order 77 the Assembly proceed immediately to third reading of Bill 23, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We've had a request for unanimous consent to waive the standing order. Is anyone opposed to this request?

[Unanimous consent granted]



**Government Bills and Orders  
Third Reading**

**Bill 23**

**Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016**

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll move third reading of Bill 23, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to this bill?

Hearing none, hon. minister, do you wish to close debate?

**Mr. Mason:** No. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a third time]

3:40

**Government Bills and Orders  
Committee of the Whole  
(continued)**

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'll call the committee to order.

**Bill 20**

**Climate Leadership Implementation Act**

**The Chair:** We have under consideration Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to move an amendment. I have the requisite number of copies, and I'll begin reading once the table allows me to proceed.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A5.  
Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 as follows: (a) section 54 is amended by adding the following after subsection (2).

(2.1) If any record or property is provided to the Minister or an officer pursuant to section (1)(c) or (d), the Minister or officer shall give a receipt to the person who provided the record or property for any record or property provided at a location other than at the premises at which the record or property is kept.

And (b) section 58 is amended by adding the following after subsection (3):

(3.1) If any record is removed by the Minister or an officer pursuant to subsection (3), the Minister or officer shall give a receipt for the records to the person who provided the records.

This amendment, Madam Chair, would require an inspector under part 3 to provide receipts for records that they take for the purpose of copying them. Receipts enable both the person being investigated and the inspector to keep accurate track of the records removed for copying. An amendment would be required to the following clauses which concern the minister or an inspector or investigator to remove records: 54(2)(b) and 58(3).

A clause like this exists in several other pieces of existing Alberta legislation; for example, the Employment Standards Code, Oil Sands Conservation Act, tobacco and smoking reduction regulations, Drug Program Act, Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers

Identification Act, Funeral Services Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, and the Pharmacy and Drug Act.

When we told the minister's office about this amendment, we were clear to state that this is not intended to have any political overtones. This amendment will make the act more effective by improving the process of inspections under this act. Hon. members, it is important that we, of course, get legislation correct. Even if we do not all agree with the overall intent of the bill, this amendment will make any circumstance in which the above scenarios come to fruition easier for Albertans and enforcement alike to manoeuvre and feel confident in.

Of course, I encourage all to support this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the hon. member for the amendment. Indeed, it mirrors legislation in other levies and so on. Certainly, there's no problem with it, and we will be supporting this amendment.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, looking at this amendment – of course, I just received it in my hands now – it seems like it's a fairly common-sense initiative to have an amendment where for any of the records that are removed by the minister, you know, the person that they're removed from gets a receipt so that they know what's been taken. I think, obviously, that would make sense.

You know, we're talking a lot about the different effects of Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. Of course, there are a lot of negative effects to the people of Alberta when it comes to this tax, that's really a burden at a time when it's just, really, not great for Albertans. A lot of jobs have been lost, and a lot of people are hurting. A lot of people have taken cuts in wages and that sort of thing. So we're bringing in this bill – the government is putting forward this bill – at a time when Albertans really are suffering.

I think that as we go through this today, just like we did last week, there are going to be a number of amendments brought forward, and we would like to see the government, of course, look closely at all of them. It seems like there may be some support on this bill itself, so hopefully the government will look closely at some of the other amendments that we'll be bringing forward.

Now, we've talked about this before, where Alberta is perceived by many to need stronger policies on the environment and climate change and that sort of thing. We do need to really point out that Alberta is very strong in its environmental regulations as it is right now. Of course, rather than, you know, calling ourselves down or calling us embarrassing cousins or whatever the Premier and the government like to call us, as Albertans we need to really be trumpeting our stance and our strong environmental record. We can always do better, and we would strive to do that, but we feel that this bill, Bill 20, is brought in at a time when it's really just going to hurt the economy and hurt Albertans.

We have a strong resource industry in Alberta, of course, and we have to protect that, too. We need to make sure that that industry gets the support it needs. We've talked a lot about pipelines and that sort of thing in this House. We've seen, of course, where the fire in Fort McMurray shut down some of our oil production there and how it has an effect on the entire economy in Canada. We need to really have a chance to trumpet our successes in the industry and to

really, I guess, draw attention to the positive record we do have. I think it would be great if the rest of the world could catch up to some of our standards and the things that we're doing here.

Now, the government, of course, has talked about the rebates that they want to give back to households in Alberta. You know, as we went along here, I think even the government realized that those rebates aren't full rebates. The cost of this tax is going to be a cost on everything that Albertans rely on. It's not just the gas to drive, but of course that's a big part of it. Everybody needs fuel to get somewhere or go somewhere to receive the goods that they receive, so a tax on fuel is incredibly burdensome. You know, the government has said: well, the price of gas is down compared to what it was a year or two ago or whatever. You know, compared to its height, it is down from where it has been in the past, but it's rising right now, Madam Chair. As the price of gas goes up, when we add on these extra taxes, it just makes it even more burdensome for people. I don't think it's fair to sit here and say: well, the price of gas is lower now than at the height a year or two ago. I don't think it's fair to look at that and say that if the price is lower than the highest it's ever been, therefore it's fair to add tax onto it and make it even more.

I think we need to realize the total cost of all this and really be able to make Albertans aware. As far as making Albertans aware, we've talked about studies to show the actual cost, economic impact studies. This government has voted those down. We don't know the full cost. We're coming up with the best analysis that we can. We would have liked the government to do a proper economic impact assessment on this to see where we're headed with this so Albertans would really know what they're up against as far as this tax.

**3:50**

In this bill also is the increase in tax on natural gas. Of course, a large majority of people in Alberta heat their homes with natural gas, and raising that price is going to be a burden to everybody. Of course, that cost of heating goes to all the businesses, to homes. It goes to hospitals, schools, everything. This kind of tax hike on heating affects everybody, too, and every part of our economy. This tax will virtually make everything . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, are you referring to this amendment?

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes, I am, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Loewen:** What I'm getting to, Madam Chair, is that we're looking for ways to improve this bill. We've tried a lot of things to improve this bill, but the government hasn't been agreeable to any of these things. This is an amendment that could really help this bill, and we would like to see this amendment pass. If the government is in agreement, of course, it would pass.

I guess we'll leave it at that, and again I'll add my support to this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A5? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. First off, I'd like to say thank you to the member for bringing this forward. I believe this is actually a strong addition to Bill 20, and this shows that the opposition can work hand in hand with the government to make legislation better.

I myself have had dealings with this sort of process before in working as an accountant in my past. The fact is that the Canada Revenue Agency regularly writes receipts to the taxpayer that

they're taking records from, and the reason is that when a receipt is given, that protects both sides. It protects both the government and also the citizen or the resident that the records are being taken from.

This is an important point, and I will bring up a good example. What happened was that I had a Canada Revenue Agency agent take records out of my office. We used to host audits done in my office. What happened was that we didn't know that the agent had taken those records. She just put them in her carry-on bags there, and what happened was that when those documents had left, because of the way that she had done it, there was no way for us to know that those documents were no longer there. The reason this is important is that if original documents get misplaced, then who is to blame? Is it the government? Is it the resident? The resident no longer has the ability to state that they have the ability to prove or disprove the position that they are in.

Now, in this case what happened was that that agent in the end refused to acknowledge that they had done wrong. We moved through a process saying that taking documents away from an audit site without written permission was wrong, and I went through the process of going through the complaint process. Now, I'm uncertain, and I would love to hear from the hon. member if there is going to be a process in place. If there is a breach in not writing one of these receipts, how exactly is it that this resident is going to be able to hold the government to account?

Now, in this case there was a board that the CRA had put forward, and you would have a form that the CRA agent would fill out and that they would hand to you. If they didn't have that form, then they would have another form for you to complete the complaint saying that there was no form. It seems a little bit red tape-ish, but there was still, at least, a process there. My concern here is that we've got a bit of an open hole here if there is no process to make that complaint. Now, I don't know. Maybe this is something that could be done through regulation or something along those lines, some process that's already in place that I might not be aware of.

The concern for me is that if we do have one of these agents of the government deciding that they will unilaterally either give no receipt or, in the case of some CRA agents, that they would take records, well, it isn't very clear exactly what they took. I would say that that's probably not sufficient. A lot of times what happened was that when they actually did up one of those receipts, we would make them detail exactly what they took so that we could identify it later. The reason is that in the case of the CRA the taxpayer is responsible to be able to provide the records to be able to show their case.

Now, in this case, if these documents are, say, misplaced or shredded – in some cases, because of the fact that the government is such a large entity, with the CRA the problem was that they would accidentally shred things. I know it's horrific, but you've got to remember that we're talking about a big government here, right? If this does, say, hit the wrong desk and into a shredding unit, how exactly is it that we're going to be able to resolve that these documents actually existed? That is a point that I would like to bring up here.

I think that this is great. I think that this is actually a good move in the right direction, but I would like to bring up that there should be a process if there isn't one. I would like to know: who would be responsible should there be accidental shredding or lost documents or, let's say, even a breach in privacy?

That's what I wanted to say. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka on the amendment.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to speak in favour of the amendment. I think it's definitely an improvement to the bill

generally, precisely because it protects Albertans from loss of their property, from loss of evidence in the case of a dispute, from loss of funds in the case of fines or whatever recourse is being administered to them. Quite frankly, it's an abuse of power for the government to take documents without this kind of an amendment in place because it destroys the right of recourse for the individual involved in a dispute.

I definitely speak in favour of this amendment, and I'd like to suggest that all the other amendments to this bill are so intended as well, to make it actually better than it was in spite of the fact that it was referred to the other day as being so perfect that it did not need any review. The reality is that the amendments are intended to make it better, to make it more just, to resolve some of the inequalities that are in it, and to soften some of the costs to Albertans.

I speak in favour of the amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A5 carried]

**The Chair:** Back on the main bill, are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I have already gotten to speak, of course, on this bill in second reading, and I think it's well known to my colleagues on the other side that I don't support this bill, mainly because it's a massive attempt to drastically shift our economy, to carve out billions in new spending at a time when our economy is struggling. In addition to that, this government did not campaign on this carbon tax. They did not. They'll try to say that they did, but they did not. Most of the constituents I'm speaking to feel that it is nothing more than a provincial sales tax, just with a different name.

Quite frankly, Madam Chair, if the government is so confident that the people of Alberta support them in this move, they would be quite happy to take this carbon tax and bring it to a referendum and show it to the people. As such, I have an amendment that I would like to move, and I have the appropriate copies, which I will send to you.

4:00

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A6.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 as follows: (a) by adding the following after section 78.

Referendum

78.1(1) After the date on which this Act receives Royal Assent, the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall order a referendum under this section, and sections 4 to 10 of the Constitutional Referendum Act are deemed to apply.

(2) The question to be put to electors in a referendum under this section shall be the following:

Do you approve of the Climate Leadership Act and the carbon levies imposed by that Act?

(3) An order under subsection (1) is deemed to be an order under section 5 of the Constitutional Referendum Act.

And (b) by striking out section 82 and substituting the following:

Coming into force

82 This Act comes into force on the later of the following:

(a) January 1, 2017;

(b) the date on which the results of a referendum under section 78.1 in which the majority of the electors who voted in the referendum voted in the affirmative are announced by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Repeal

83 If a majority of the electors who vote in a referendum under section 78.1 vote in the negative, this Act is repealed on the date on which the results of the referendum are announced by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Madam Chair, this government likes to call Bill 20 a levy when in reality it is a tax. This bill will tax every litre of gasoline and every joule of natural gas. It will tax Alberta's energy consumption, and because energy is input into every product and service that is delivered in our economy, this tax will effectively be a sales tax. Bill 20 – or, as some have called it, the NDP PST – is a backdoor way for this government to sneak their sales tax past Albertans, and this is unacceptable, especially since our province has legislation in place to deal with the decision-making authority of a sales tax.

The Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act clearly states:

A member of the Executive Council may introduce in the Legislative Assembly a Bill that imposes a general provincial sales tax only if, before the introduction of the Bill, the Chief Electoral Officer announces the result of a referendum conducted under this Act on a question that relates to the imposition of the tax.

Madam Chair, by not honouring the spirit of the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act, the NDP are completely sidestepping the laws of our province. Instead of playing games, this government should do the right thing and honour the laws of Alberta. Albertans deserve to decide if they can trust this financially irresponsible government to take an extra thousand dollars a year out of their pockets.

This amendment makes the question as clear as it can be: do you approve of the Climate Leadership Act and the carbon levies imposed by that act? It's a very simple question, Madam Chair. I believe that this government has refused to put this bill to a referendum because they know that the people of Alberta do not trust this government to manage more of their money.

Let me be clear. I'm not advocating for every bill that goes in front of the Assembly to be put to a referendum, but in this instance the law is already very clear. A PST needs to go to a referendum. As I'm certain the minister responsible for democratic renewal would agree, the government has an opportunity to make this right and empower Albertans. Economists have speculated that this carbon tax will be the equivalent of a 3 per cent PST, so why won't the government honour the spirit of the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act?

Madam Chair, I asked the hon. Premier these questions earlier today in question period, but I received no answers. I'm hopeful that through the discussion on this amendment, we'll be able to hear from more government members as to why exactly they want to keep this important decision-making power away from Albertans.

Now, Madam Chair, I look forward to hearing other comments from other members of the Assembly on this amendment, but one thing. Going back home, as I'm sure all of you will agree, for the weekend is always a way to clear your mind on what you see in the dome and to talk to constituents that you represent. Every constituent that I saw back in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre thought that this was a PST and was unanimously against this and unanimously against the direction of this government.

So if this government truly feels that the people of Alberta are with them, they should not fear a referendum; in fact, they should endorse a referendum so that they could clearly have a mandate for their tax agenda. But they know, Madam Chair, that the people of Alberta are not with them, and they are trying to avoid answering to the boss, the people of Alberta, the taxpayers that are actually

going to be expected to pay for these ideological agendas of the NDP government.

My constituents and constituents all across Alberta expect better from this government, and it's time that we give them a chance to have a say in a tax that is being attempted to be imposed on them by this NDP government.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to this amendment? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you. I appreciate this amendment to Bill 20 because, frankly, it truly needs to have a referendum that speaks to the people, that speaks to them about what the implications are going to be of what's happening here, a referendum on the sales tax mandated. And whether you call it a levy or you call it a tax, it really comes out to the same thing.

The previous government had put in a law that said that if you're going to make any changes, you have to make them through a referendum. This levy looks and sounds and does everything – it quacks like a duck, walks like a duck, so it must be a duck, you know. That's what it's doing. It is imposing a tax. This carbon levy is a tax. The law that was passed in this Legislature was clear that when you introduce a PST, this has to be done through a referendum.

This is going to affect the economy across Alberta. It's going to affect everyday Albertans. Everyday Albertans look at this as being a tax, as being like a PST. It's going to cost literally hundreds of dollars out of the pockets of every Albertan. It's not revenue neutral. If this was a revenue-neutral one – it may not be looking that way, but it's going to be taking money out of the pockets, not in a revenue-neutral way, and it's going into the coffers, into this green slush fund that the government is setting up.

It's important for us to be able to look at this referendum as a way to clearly identify to Albertans what this government is doing, what we as legislators are doing in this House. We need to be able to take a step back and show Albertans exactly what's happening in here. Because this comes into force as of January 2017, we'd have time to be able to do this if the government just got to doing it.

The fact is that it's going to cause higher fees for schools. It's going to cost in higher fees for all Albertans. It's going to be higher fees for our food. The tax is going to be imposed on hospitals. It's going to be imposed on, like I say, schools, the school busing. It's going to be imposed on all sorts of food and services and, of course, the gasoline that's being used by everyday Albertans.

So asking for a referendum on it I don't think is unreasonable. It's the right of Albertans to be able to have a say, that we can have an honest opinion on this.

4:10

If there's nothing that the government is afraid of about what they're doing, what they're proposing, if they're not afraid of what they're bringing forth with Bill 20, well, this carbon tax referendum, I think, would speak to it clearly. This is a way for Albertans to be able to say yes. This is a tax. It looks just like a PST, acts just like a PST. They have a right to be able to say that, yes, they want this or that, no, they don't want this. Clearly, if Albertans want this type of a PST thing, then they will vote for it, but they deserve to have the opportunity to be able to say that this is going to be a yes or a no for them.

On that, I am in favour of this motion and of it being amended as has been written down here. With that, I'll just quit and say thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I'd like to speak in favour of this amendment. I think it only makes sense that since the government didn't campaign on this, they actually ask the people of Alberta how they feel about it. They seem to have a lot of confidence that the people are wanting this and are supporting this. Of course, I don't see it myself. I think there's one way to show Albertans that they actually care about what they think, and that's to ask them.

There's an act in place already, the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act. It was passed by Premier Klein, and it says: no general sales tax without a referendum. I don't think anybody believes that this is anything but a sales tax. Based on this government's new-found love for Ralph Klein, I think maybe they should pay attention to the bill that he brought in. In fact, maybe we need to get some I Love Ralph buttons for all the NDP members of caucus there because they seem to talk very favourably about the Finance minister during Ralph Klein's era. They quote him all the time now. He may even have been the Finance minister when they passed this Taxpayer Protection Act.

You know, they were quoting from an article about the previous Tory Finance minister, but there are some things that they haven't actually included as quotes of what he said. Dinning said that he has reservations about how the NDP plans to use this revenue from the carbon tax. So as much as they like to quote him as loving the carbon tax and everything, they don't quote everything that he says. They just selectively choose the words that they want to use to support their view. There's a quote from the previous Finance minister, and he goes on to say a few other things, too. Dinning said that he would shrink the rebate program and put the money towards tax reductions in an effort to make the levy truly revenue neutral.

Now, of course, we all remember, Madam Chair, that when the government announced this report, the Climate Leadership report, this was going to be revenue neutral. Of course, the people that stood on the stage with the minister and the Premier obviously had to have believed them, what they were saying, that this was going to be revenue neutral. Obviously, we've found out since then that that wasn't the case. This tax is not revenue neutral. Now, I'm not sure if they had a misunderstanding of the definition or if they were just trying to lead people down the wrong path, but clearly it's not revenue neutral.

Now, he goes on to say that he's also concerned that the government may end up in the role of picking winners and losers as it decides on investments with the tax revenue. Of course, that's a huge concern. The government talks about how they're going to be giving rebates from this tax revenue, but there's an enormous amount of that money that isn't going back in rebates. Where is it going? Now, we just came through a question period here where we saw the environment minister asked three times regarding how this money would be spent, and exactly three times we received absolutely no answer. In fact, it was basically on to rhetoric and no answer to the questions. It didn't even come close to answering the questions, actually. Of course, things like this make people even more concerned about what this government plans to do with that money. It is a lot of money, Madam Chair. It's a lot of money.

Now, they also like to quote an article that talked about revenue recycling. I just want to quote a couple of paragraphs out of that article. It talks about carbon pricing having two clear challenges. "The first is related to the fact that carbon pricing invariably leads to changes in product prices." There's the first sentence for you: carbon pricing invariably leads to changes in product prices. That's

true, Madam Chair. The price of everything will go up because everything involves oil and gas to either be produced or transported.

It goes on to say:

In particular, the price of carbon-intensive energy will increase. Since it is usual that lower-income households spend a higher fraction of their income on energy-related products than do households with higher incomes, carbon pricing has the potential to be regressive and thus unfair.

Madam Chair, we've brought this up multiple times now, and I guess it needs to be brought up again that this carbon tax is going to affect lower income individuals the most. Of course, the government talked about the rebates, but we now know that those rebates are not full rebates. They're partial rebates at best because the government didn't take into consideration all the factors of all the prices that would increase. So this is going to obviously affect lower income households the most, and that's not fair.

It goes on to say:

While carbon pricing is not necessarily regressive, this possibility is more likely in provinces with electricity-generation systems based on the burning of coal and other fossil fuels.

It just so happens that Alberta relies a lot on electricity generation based on the burning of coal and other fossil fuels. Therefore, Alberta is going to be even more damaged than other provinces would be by bringing in this carbon tax.

Now, it goes on to say:

The second challenge follows from the fact that different jurisdictions are not equally far down the road of carbon pricing, and differences between carbon prices across jurisdictions can create problems.

Madam Chair, what they're saying there is that there's a challenge because if Alberta raises its carbon tax higher than everywhere else, that puts us at a competitive disadvantage to other provinces and other jurisdictions. We compete with the U.S. for a lot of industry and that sort of thing.

It says:

Specifically, a more aggressive carbon pricing policy in any one Canadian province can lead to competitiveness pressures for businesses in that province, especially ones that are both emissions intensive and actively competing with firms from jurisdictions with a lower carbon price.

Madam Chair, that explains even more clearly the problems with raising our carbon tax and not having other jurisdictions follow suit. We need to use what we do as leverage to encourage others to do the same.

The Premier got up today in question period and commented on how the former mayor of New York loves our carbon tax. Now, I'm not sure how much carbon tax the former mayor of New York is going to be paying here in Alberta, but I'm going to guess that it's not very much. I don't know if he's got any friends and family in Alberta that are going to be affected by this carbon tax, but I'm going to guess very few, if any. It is interesting how far this government will go to find a supporter, and I would suggest that if it's not going to cost the former mayor of New York anything, then I'm not sure if Albertans are really concerned about what his opinion is on this.

4:20

Now, I would guess that the eastern U.S. has a lot of natural gas, and I would guess that if ours is priced higher than theirs, that'll make theirs easier to sell, so he may really, really like this carbon tax. He might really like it because it might be really good for the economy there and for the people that he knows and does business with. One thing I know for sure is that I don't believe it's going to affect his pocketbook at all, but I know it's going to affect everybody in Alberta in their pocketbooks.

We've seen the government run expensive ads selling this carbon tax to Albertans. Now, if Albertans support this so much, I'm not sure why this government is spending all this money supporting this and trying to sell it to Albertans. Albertans should just be accepting it. I'm not sure why they would need to be inundated with ads on the radio regarding this.

Madam Chair, when we look at this referendum, I think it's a really good idea. This amendment will allow Albertans to have their say, and I don't see why we can't give the opportunity to Albertans to have their say with such a huge, huge bill.

When I look through Bill 20 – of course, we've gone through it before, and we can go through it again – it's all about tax collection. It's all about taking tax from Albertans and how they're going to do it and what they're going to tax, how they're going to collect it, how they're going to enforce it. But there's one table in here called Carbon Levy Rates, and this gives an idea of what this is going to cost. Aviation gas: 4.98 cents a litre. That's in 2017. Come 2018, it will be 7.47 cents per litre. Aviation jet fuel: 5.17 cents per litre and, come 2018, 7.75 cents a litre. Bunker fuel: 6.36 cents a litre, going up to 9.55 cents a litre. These are all increases on top of the already existing prices of our fuel.

Butane: 3.56 cents per litre, and as of 2018 it increases to 5.34 cents a litre. Coal coke: \$63.59 per tonne in 2017, increasing in 2018 to \$95.39 per tonne. Coke oven gas: 1.4 cents per cubic metre and, in 2018, 2.1 cents per cubic metre cube.

Diesel fuel. That's, of course, what we use the most of in Alberta for transporting our goods, for transporting everything, you know, our food, our groceries. Every product that we use in Alberta has to be trucked in from somewhere. It has to be brought in from somewhere else. It's going to go up. As of 2017 it's 5.35 cents per litre. So every time you fill up with diesel as of January 2017, there will be an extra 5.35 cents of tax, and that's on top of the already existing tax on diesel fuel. Come 2018, it'll be going up 8.03 cents per litre. Again, that's an increase on top of what you're already paying for gas or diesel fuel in Alberta and on top of the already existing taxes on it.

Ethane: 2.04 cents per litre as of 2017, 3.06 cents per litre as of 2018. Gas liquids: 3.33 cents per litre and, as of 2018, 4.99 cents per litre. Gasoline. Of course, that's what the majority of Albertans will burn when they're travelling around Alberta: going on holidays, taking their kids to hockey, taking their kids to school, travelling to and from work. As of January 1, 2017: 4.49 cents per litre. Again, that's on top of what we're already paying for gas. I think right now in the city it's almost \$1.10 per litre. Well, if we are sitting at \$1.10 per litre on January 1, it'll be over \$1.14. Come 2018, we're going to go up 6.73 cents per litre. Heating distillate oil: 5.51 cents per litre and, as of 2018, 8.27 cents per litre. Heavy fuel oil as of 2017: 6.35 cents per litre and, in 2018, 9.53 cents per litre. High-heat-value coal: \$44.37 per tonne and, as of 2018, \$66.56 per tonne. Kerosene: 5.14 cents per litre and, as of 2018, 7.71 cents per litre.

Locomotive diesel: 5.94 cents per litre, 8.9 cents per litre as of 2018. Now, obviously, locomotive diesel is how farmers transport their grain to other jurisdictions where we sell. That's the most common way for grain to be transported. We have to compete in the world market selling our grain. Obviously, we'll become less competitive in the world market as it costs more money to transport our products to the markets that need them and want to buy them. So locomotive diesel is huge. Again, that's something that can affect everything. You know, we see on the trains the different products that are being hauled. We have automobiles quite often being hauled by trains. Any increase in fuel will obviously increase the cost of that product.

Low-heat-value coal: \$35.39 per tonne and, as of January 1, 2018, \$53.09 per tonne. Methanol: \$2.18 per litre and \$3.26 per litre as of January 1, 2018. Naphtha: \$4.49 per litre and, as of January 1, 2018, \$6.73 per litre.

Natural gas. Now, this is the big one, really, or one of the really big ones. Of course, that's what the majority of Albertans use to heat their homes. It's used for heating businesses. It's used for heating apartments. It's used for heating hospitals, schools. An enormous amount of the heating that goes on in the buildings in Alberta goes on with natural gas. Of course, natural gas is used heavily in industry, any products that need to be dehydrated. Farm products that need to be dehydrated use an incredible amount of natural gas. Processing sugar beets, potatoes, all those things: an incredible amount of natural gas goes into dehydrating those products. It's \$1.011 per gigajoule as of January 1, 2017, and as of January 1, 2018, is \$1.517 per gigajoule. So there's a huge increase. Obviously, that's something alone that's going to affect every person in Alberta because everything will become more expensive because of it.

Raw gas: \$1.15 per gigajoule in 2017 and, in 2018, \$1.72 per gigajoule. Pentanes plus condensate: an additional 3.82 cents per litre as of 2017 and 5.73 cents per litre as of 2018. Propane: 3.08 cents per litre in 2017 and, in 2018, 4.62 cents per litre. Refinery gas: 3.77 cents per cubic metre and, as of 2018, 5.65 cents per cubic metre. Now, Madam Chair, these are increases in the prices of all of these different products brought about by the carbon tax.

Refinery petroleum coke: \$63.86 per tonne as of 2017 and, as of 2018, an increase to \$95.79 per tonne. Finally, we get to upgrader petroleum coke: \$58.50 per tonne, increasing in 2018 to \$87.75 per tonne. These are all the increases that the government has in its Bill 20.

4:30

Madam Chair, there's really nothing in our economy that isn't going to be affected by this. Nothing. It includes everything. We have a bill here, Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, and it's a tax act. It talks about nothing but taxes, how much and how to collect it.

There isn't anybody in Alberta that doesn't believe the environment is important. There isn't anybody in Alberta that doesn't believe we need to be leaders when it comes to dealing with climate change, but we have to do a couple of things. We need to consider the economy we're in right now, and we also need to consider those around us, that need to follow us. We can be leaders, but we have to make sure that people are behind us because if we don't, then we're left alone.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A6?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak in favour of this referendum amendment. I think it's extremely important. The government claims over and over again that they have a mandate from the people although this was not part of what the people were asked to vote for, this massive tax grab. They didn't even hear about this until after the election.

The reality is that in politics oftentimes the vote is a vote against what they don't like, not necessarily a vote for. To say that they have a complete mandate to proceed with this is a bit of a stretch, but if they're that confident that they do, then a referendum would actually verify that and give them even more confidence to be able to move forward. It would be a strong assurance to them that they do in fact have the mandate of the people. I suspect that the reason

they won't adopt this amendment is because recent polls seem to indicate the contrary, and they're probably afraid that they wouldn't in fact have the mandate of the people if they actually put it to the people and asked them.

If they really want the mandate of the people, then it would be very appropriate that they seek a referendum from the people and let them have their say on it. This is a massive, massive tax grab. It is not a direct reduction of carbon tax. It is, quite frankly, a massive tax grab. I would like to remind the House of the report to the minister on this, the actual supposed guiding document that led to the direction of this entire bill. In that document the authors of the document actually point out that they have

taken great care to ensure this is a progressive policy that offsets impacts on [most] Alberta households and small businesses, while [also] protecting our core industries and supporting the transition needs of affected workers and communities.

Here's an issue of taking great care to protect the very, very people that we're saying should have, actually, the opportunity to express their opinion on this: the households and the small businesses, the core industries, the workers and the communities that are directly affected by this. The Climate Leadership report actually brings this into the fore and states that there needs to be great care taken with regard to this. I suspect that this government is rushing ahead, not willing to allow the very people that are identified in this report to express any concerns, to have their vote and their voice and their say in this thing. I find that quite troubling, Madam Chair, that that, in fact, would be the case.

Then if you go to another page, under the carbon competitiveness regulation part, page 5, part (b) talks about the "rebate to mitigate the impacts of carbon pricing on low- and middle-income Albertans." Maybe we should just ask low- and middle-income Albertans what they think about this, if they feel that it's an adequate rebate, if they feel that the cost that it's going to charge them – why not just give them an opportunity to express their approval or give their vote on it? I think that would be extremely important.

On the same page section (c) talks about the need to "improve the mechanism by which trade-exposed industries are protected." Why would we not ask industry, by means of a referendum, whether or not they think that in this bill they are protected "to ensure their competitiveness while encouraging and rewarding top performance"? What possibly could go wrong with a perfect bill by giving the people their vote and their opportunity to express their opinion on it?

Then I also would like to draw attention to a further page if I can get my fingers to it. Here we go. I'm looking at page 9, and I see there, just close to the middle part of it, that "successful implementation of these initiatives (based on a \$125M/year investment) could yield emission reductions of up to 1.5MT/year by 2020." That's an interesting couple of numbers. If you just do the quick little division there, it boils down to \$83 million a megatonne, or \$83,333 a tonne. We're asking Albertans to pay for each tonne of emissions \$83,000. That's a very, very high price for carbon, especially when the assessments will be set at \$20 and \$30 a tonne. I think we should give Albertans the opportunity to have a vote on whether or not they feel that's a fair price to buy carbon at so that it goes out of the system. That's a pretty expensive price per tonne, \$83,000 per tonne. Why should Albertans not have their opportunity to voice their opinion on that?

Then further on in the Climate Leadership report, page 11, there's quite a bit there on that page. The authors of the report actually acknowledge that these more stringent policies "would come at significant cost to the province due to lost competitiveness, with negligible impact on global emissions." Then they go on and talk

about the fact that if they put in more stringent requirements, it would not be tenable at all “until our peer and competitor jurisdictions adopt policies.” Then they talk about “not sacrificing wealth and prosperity [of Alberta] to emissions leakage.” Then they say that this “is the most stringent approach we felt we could recommend.”

I wonder how Albertans feel. I wonder if we should give the opportunity for Albertans to look at the plan, look at the legislation, and see if they agree with this: we felt this is the best approach to take. It's a pretty subjective approach, and I think it's something that Albertans ought to actually have the opportunity to speak on.

Then they go on to talk about how “greenhouse gas policies are often painted as win-win” – I'm reading right out of the carbon leadership report to the minister – “yet, at the granular level, they may not be.” You know, I think Albertans should have the opportunity to at least express their opinion. In fact, they may be a win-win, but maybe Albertans don't have that same opinion or don't have the same feeling about that since this is based on a “we felt” approach. The opportunity for them to express their vote in a referendum would only be fair and democratic.

During the campaign the government party opposite spoke strongly of democratic renewal, spoke of democracy in glowing terms as if they were going to bring back democratic renewal and democratic process and democratic openness, all these things, but, you know, the actions of this government betray the people. I don't see that democratic renewal, and as well I don't think very many people out there do.

4:40

People should have a say on one of the biggest policy and economic shifts in the history of Alberta. This is the kind of tectonic bill that actually does call for a referendum. Referendums aren't really that rare. They are, quite frankly, part of the democratic process, and many jurisdictions use them quite regularly. I don't see why, on such a major bill and such a massive economic bill, the opportunity for people to express their opinion would not be granted to them.

I strongly vote in favour of this referendum amendment and encourage everyone in the House to do the same. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I support this referendum amendment wholeheartedly. This government constantly chants the myth that on the 5th of May 2015 a majority of Albertans voted in support of the NDP's platform of change and in support of the NDP world view and that they somehow have a mandate for this tax by default, I suppose. Well, let's have a fact check. Only 40 per cent of Alberta voted NDP in that election, which means the vast majority, some 60 per cent, did not vote in favour of the NDP world view of things. They voted for someone else.

The inconvenient truth, Madam Chair, is that the NDP do not have any honest mandate for anything, not really, not with 40 per cent of the vote – not with 40 per cent of the vote – but especially a new and invasive and aggressive, society-transforming tax such as this one. They have no mandate whatsoever for such a tax as this. At no time did charities or school boards or farmers or restaurateurs or anyone else in Alberta go: “Yes, yes, tax me some more. Tax me as much as you want. Yeah, bring it on.” No one voted for that. This government does not have such a mandate.

You know, Madam Chair, one of the other principles of sustainable energy management plans – and I know they are going to get sick and tired of hearing me on this, but that's just too bad –

is a concept known as universal buy-in. Now, I've spoken at length to this House about sustainable and workable and successful energy management plans. One of them, of course, was to begin by using less, which this government did not do. On another one an hon. member – you know, I wish I knew where she was from – introduced an amendment on measurement and verification, I called it, but she called it something else. But that's all right. The government side voted it down because they do not want accountability in this thing. Nevertheless, that is a principle of successful energy management, a principle which, if not followed, will lead to ultimate collapse and failure of that energy management plan.

Another principle of sustainable and successful energy management planning is a concept known as the universal buy-in. Now, when it comes to buy-in, there are two ways of accomplishing buy-in in any organization, whether it be your house, with your own little family, or whether it be an entire region like the province of Alberta or maybe a multinational corporation. You can either have voluntary universal buy-in, or you can have forced universal buy-in, buy-in by decree, buy-in that does not take into account the people. It simply issues a decree: this is the way it's going to be, and you'd better buy into it.

However, when we're talking about sustainable, successful energy management master planning, of all the concepts and of all the principles – I'll call them the laws of a successful energy management plan – universal buy-in is the most difficult one to achieve because you're dealing with people. You're dealing with people, who have opinions, who have feelings about things. Sometimes people are afraid of change, so voluntary buy-in becomes a difficult thing to achieve but certainly not impossible. There are literally thousands of successful energy management plans out there that have been executed well, that are saving companies, multinational companies and small companies, literally billions of dollars in energy costs because they got universal buy-in and did it in a voluntary way. The voluntary method of achieving universal buy-in is slow. It does take time because you are having to take the time to listen to other people's concerns and, rather than invalidate those concerns, to listen honestly, empathetically to what their concerns are.

This government has not done that. They have forced a carbon tax on the people of Alberta with no mandate to do so, no mandate to do so at all. They have done this under the guise of saying: we need to bear this pain in order to eliminate emissions or reduce emissions in this province. But they never took the time to actually educate Albertans and really ask all Albertans to consider a tax as the mechanism by which we will reduce emissions in this province. That was never asked of Albertans. As I said earlier, the restaurateurs, the school boards, the charities at no time stood up and said: “Rah-rah. Tax me some more.” None of them, not one, and they still don't. They still don't. There is no universal buy-in, which means that this energy management plan is doomed to fail.

Now, the reason why universal buy-in is so important goes this way. When you're talking about an energy management plan within an organization and you achieve universal buy-in, every person in that organization, right from the bottom to the very top, is looking for ways to save energy. Everybody is involved in the process, and all those little things that everyone does achieves the goal. It works toward achieving the goal. Everyone is on the same team; everyone is pulling in the same direction. That's the value and the power of universal buy-in. That's why in the field of energy management so much time is taken to achieve buy-in.

Now, universal buy-in is achieved by lots and lots of communication. Universal buy-in is also achieved by something else I pointed out just the other day, and that is the alpha, beta

portfolio-wide concept of introducing changes within an organization: either taking advantage of energy savings opportunities or emissions mitigation opportunities, ESOs and EMOs. If you start with a small one like an alpha test like I outlined the other day, you prove your point. You prove to the general population within your region or your organization that, hey, this is actually working. Then you do that test again as a beta, and you say: "See? We've done it twice now, and it works." That goes miles, Madam Chair, in achieving buy-in because now people see tangible results, results that are measured, that are verified and communicated to people, measurement and verification, which the other side voted down.

I found that rather odd, that they would not want measurement and verification, because the very act of measuring and verifying the results proves your point. It proves your point that what you're doing is actually accomplishing what you claimed it would do. The other thing that M and V does is that it allows you to say: "Oh, Well, you know what? We achieved 80 per cent or 70 per cent of what we were trying to achieve. If we just make this little change and that little change, we can get ourselves closer to 100 per cent." That's the value, the huge value of measurement and verification. It allows you to tweak things on the fly. Then as you duplicate what you're doing in other jurisdictions across the province, you duplicate it with the new changes, the changes that get you closer to achieving 100 per cent success. All along the way you're communicating the good and the bad.

4:50

Part of the communication methods that we utilize within energy management is through newsletters in corporations or sometimes governments. These newsletters point out the successes, the failures, the changes that are going to be taking place in order to achieve an even greater success. The most successful ones, that I've researched, anyway, are those where in the communications they spell out: "You know what? We did really well here, but it didn't work right there." And they're honest about it: "Okay. It didn't work right there because of this and this and this, and we're going to institute these changes, which will help us." Then when they run the beta test with the changes, they report back again and say: "Well, guess what? You know, half of our suggested improvements did lead to a higher success rate." And maybe they'll need to do, you know, another beta test.

The goal is to get your plan tweaked to the point where success can be achieved and, once you get it there, to then go portfolio-wide right across the entire jurisdiction. Whether it be a company with 17 branches across the world or whether it be a region with 100 or 200 counties and towns, you do an alpha, a beta, a portfolio-wide, lots and lots of communication all along the way, lots of education all along the way because your mission is to achieve universal buy-in.

What we have seen from this government from the get-go is a complete lack of understanding about how to achieve universal buy-in. We saw it with Bill 6, where they rolled it out and told us: it's fine the way it is. The farmers revolted, and the opposition dug in. We fought hard, and out came five pages of amendments to a bill that we were assured was just fine in its first iteration. Again, no understanding of how to achieve buy-in and, instead, using their majority to force things on Albertans and denying even standing committees the ability to bring in witnesses and to pick these bills apart and come up with solutions that would make them better. None of that. Instead, it's like rule by decree, using their majority in this place to have a forced buy-in, and that right there dooms this whole thing to fail.

The people of Alberta do not support this carbon tax. The people of Alberta deserve to have a referendum and deserve to have a say in this thing. The last government we had was thrown out on the grounds that they were not listening to Albertans.

**Mr. Rodney:** What was that?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** They were thrown out on the grounds that they were no longer being compassionate and listening to the good people of Alberta, and Albertans took them from a 70-seat majority to where they're at today.

This government is following in the very same footsteps. They are acting in a manner that is not considerate of the views of Albertans, and the fear that they are currently demonstrating in not approving accountability amendments demonstrates to me that they know full well that they do not have a mandate from the good people of Alberta for this carbon tax. They demonstrate thoroughly that they do not have that mandate, and they know it.

If they really, really believe that Albertans are in support of their NDP world view when it comes to this carbon tax, then I recommend they put their money where their mouth is. Let's see a referendum of the good people of Alberta and make that question a very straightforward question. Let's put it out there to the people. Or are they afraid of the very people that they claim have given them a mandate to put this tax upon us? Put your money where your mouth is. Let's have this referendum. Let's see what the people of Alberta say, and then listen to what the people of Alberta have said.

Madam Chair, this government had within their platform in the election that they were going to do things differently. You all remember that? You all remember that there was going to be better government, government that listened to the people, more accountability? Do you remember more accountability? I remember that statement. Yes, more accountability. Well, here's your opportunity to demonstrate more accountability. Let's have some accountability with the good people, the voters of Alberta, on this carbon tax. Let's have some accountability right on this issue right here. If you don't have the intestinal fortitude to go to the people of Alberta and ask their opinion on this, then you genuinely reveal what you already know, and that is that you don't have any mandate whatsoever for this invasive, oppressive tax.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There was such passion in that last member's address. It was a rallying cry, I think, for all Albertans. A rallying cry. I would like to congratulate the previous member on getting us so inspired when it comes to governance in this province. [interjection]

Now, while the member from the opposite side may feel that his witticism is leading Alberta down the path to greater democracy...

**An Hon. Member:** Albertans disagree.

**Mr. Smith:** I would suggest that when I first stood up to speak, Madam Chair, to this issue, I brought to the attention of the government that legitimacy was going to be a problem for this government, that because they had not campaigned on this, that legitimacy, knowing that they could actually with a straight face stand in this Legislature and say that they had the will of the people behind them, was going to be a problem. You know, legitimacy is an important thing. [interjections] You know what? I'm not sure that that's a topic fit for this Chamber, and I will let this hon. member deal with that between himself and his wife.



**An Hon. Member:** Which one?

**Mr. Smith:** I'm not going there. I'm sorry. I'm going to assume that the hon. member across the way is as much in love with his wife as he said he was earlier in this session.

You know, we had a situation earlier in the session where we brought up a bill that really wasn't a bill: Bill 1, a Potemkin bill, a facade. When you bring forward a bill that really doesn't do anything, that gives the minister, supposedly, the ability to do his job when having appointed him as a minister has already given him the ability to do that, you've got to ask yourself: why are you bringing this before the House? You see, governments don't have to worry about legitimacy, I suppose, for a bill when that bill doesn't do anything, but when the bill actually does bring forward significant issues and significant changes to the province of Alberta and to how we're going to live our lives as the people of Alberta, then the government actually needs to have some legitimacy, and that bill needs to have legitimacy. That's the argument that we brought earlier, that when you actually are trying to pass a significant piece of legislation and you have not campaigned on it, you need to think about whether you have the legitimacy to actually pass that bill.

5:00

Now, this bill does make significant changes, and many hon. members have spoken to those changes. This climate leadership plan is going to create a series of taxes on everything, and that's going to hit the average Albertan family for at least a thousand dollars and probably a whole lot more.

This is going to affect school boards and hospitals in very significant ways. When we take a look at the heating costs, we know that the school boards have already published their best guesses as to how much this is going to impact their bottom line, yet when we look at the Education budget, we see that they have not built in the appropriate monies to be able to cover these very serious carbon costs. Heating costs: every single school, every single hospital, seniors, all of these are going to be affected by the increase in the price of heating. We know that that's going up about \$1 per gigajoule.

We know that transportation costs are going to be rising. All of those buses that all of those kids ride on for sometimes an hour to an hour and a half a day: they are going to have to find some way of paying for those costs. We know that this is happening. We know that it's going to occur, yet this government has not built into these budgets, the Education budget or the health care budget, these costs. So you've got to ask yourself: well, where's the money going to come from? Well, I think we know that potentially it could come from that green slush fund. You know, we know that it's going to create pressure on the purchasing of supplies for hospitals and schools because everything that is transported under this bill is going to be costing more – everything that is transported by rail, everything that is transported by truck – because there's a diesel tax that's going to be affected.

It's a little hilarious – well, it's hilarious if it wasn't for the fact that it's hurting our economy so badly – for this government to come back to us and say: well, at least 50 to 75 per cent of the costs of this carbon tax on businesses is going to be covered by the businesses themselves. What? When was the last time a government raised its taxes on gasoline and you saw the oil companies covering the costs of that increase in taxes? I would love to be able to see in detail how they came up with those figures. Businesses won't eat these costs. Businesses are going to have to compete both against businesses trading into Alberta from outside of Alberta, coming in from the United States, as well as against

other Alberta companies, and they're not going to be able to swallow those costs just because this government would like them to.

Everything is going to cost Albertans more, and because this is putting so much pressure on the rest of the business world, that we have to depend on for jobs, this government should be considering how it is going to get the legitimacy to be able to pass this bill and be able to say that they actually have Albertans' support. This government could call an election. If they really wanted to see if they had the support of Albertans, you could, on this issue, call an election and let the people of Alberta decide whether or not they will give you the support that you need in order to pass this piece of legislation. That is one option.

Now, I can understand – I can see the hon. minister across the aisle, smiling at me, and looking: oh, how could we ever do that? But, you know, I mean, governments have called elections on significant issues, and this could be one of them. However, you know, it would allow Albertans to decide whether they want \$3.4 billion in increased taxes being taken out of their pockets. They could make the decision on that election, but I don't think that's probably going to happen because this government understands that it might not get elected – it's almost a certainty – on this particular issue. This is a significant issue. I can actually understand that. Self-interest does usually reign supreme in the hearts of most people.

Our suggestion would be that this government consider a referendum or a plebiscite, Madam Chair, that would allow Albertans to speak. Now, when I was in my classroom – referendums and plebiscites are a little bit different. A referendum is a question that is put before the people where they get the opportunity to vote yes or no on a particular issue, and then the government is legally bound to actually implement the choice that the people have made, yes or no, on that issue. Plebiscites are a little bit different. A plebiscite follows the same process. You have an issue. You have a question. The electorate is allowed to vote on it, but the government has some wiggle room. They have the ability to decide, based on the results of the plebiscite, whether they're going to follow through with it or not.

We would suggest a referendum. However, people sometimes have different ideas about what the question should be in a referendum. Now, that's purely in the government's hands. The kind of question that they could put forward is entirely in their hands. However, the idea behind a referendum is that the question would actually be crafted in such a way that the people could clearly understand the issue, clearly see what the issues are that surround it, clearly get the knowledge and the understanding of what is surrounding it, and then would be able to make a clear yes-or-no decision as to whether or not they wanted this climate leadership plan.

You know, we do live in a democracy. I realize that for most decisions it's a representative democracy, but when you're a government that has not campaigned on this major issue and you're lacking legitimacy, a referendum would allow you the ability to move forward with some sense that the people of Alberta are behind you. You know, you could ask a question as to how you want to spend that \$3.4 billion worth of taxation. Do they want a climate leadership plan that is truly revenue neutral, or do they want one where they just are creating a great big giant slush fund, with the government able to dole out the money as they wish? You can ask the question, but you need to get the direction of the people if you want to have legitimacy on this issue.

Now, there's a long history in this nation of having referendums and having plebiscites. This is not something that is being devised by somebody that's outside of the NDP world view. This goes beyond left wing and right wing. Referendums have been used by

political parties from across the spectrum, and this should not be something that the NDP should be able to reject simply on political grounds. We have a long history of referendums.

Now, for a Baptist like me – I looked it up. I didn't realize it, but one of the first plebiscites in the history of our country was on Prohibition in 1898. Now, you know, I guess . . .

**Mr. Mason:** How did it go?

**Mr. Smith:** Well, it's interesting that you should ask. It was actually quite interesting. If we look at Prohibition in 1898 – I looked it up on Wikipedia here, and it said that in Alberta and Saskatchewan, because we were one territory, 68.8 per cent of the people were for Prohibition and 31.2 per cent of the people were against Prohibition. Now, if you had wanted a drink, hon. member, you could have moved to Quebec because Quebec was the only province to vote against Prohibition: 81.2 per cent of the people. I guess there was only about 18.8 per cent of the people that were Baptists.

Well, you know, interestingly enough, the government, because this was a plebiscite, decided that the support in 1898 for Prohibition was too close – the vote, even though it was a majority vote for Prohibition, was too slight a margin – and that there were too few people that had voted, so they chose not to adopt the measure. I guess, from the view of most of the people in this House, that was a good choice.

**5:10**

You know, we have a long history, as I said, of having referendums. We could go back to World War I, when we had to make a decision about whether or not we were going to have conscription, and the decision on conscription was so controversial, Madam Chair, that it tore this country apart. In 1917, in the middle of World War I, when, quite frankly, the allies were losing the war, this conscription crisis tore the country apart.

It set the stage so that in World War II Mackenzie King, the Prime Minister of the country at the time, was again faced with this issue of going into a war that was going to be a total war. He knew that. He knew that we were going to have significant challenges when it came to manpower – we were a country of, I think, something like about 12 million people – that we were going to have to put together an army that was going to have to be capable of fighting for a significant period of time. He went into the war knowing that he was leading a divided country.

**Dr. Starke:** What was his famous quote?

**Mr. Smith:** His famous quote: "Not necessarily conscription, but conscription if necessary."

**Dr. Starke:** And he got that from his dog.

**Mr. Smith:** Or maybe after a seance with his mother.

What we've got is a situation here where in order to solve the problem – as the war progressed, by 1942 it had become obvious to our Prime Minister and to the government of Canada that they had a significant problem. We were running out of volunteers.

We have a long history or tradition in this country of volunteer armies, Madam Chair. It's probably the reason why the Canadian armed forces have always been able to punch above their weight, the fact that a volunteer army is an army made up of people that see the need or the cause for the war. They're fighting because they understand the need for it and they understand the justice of it. They are there, putting their lives on the line, in order to stop whatever

the forces are that they're fighting against. We have a long, proud tradition of a volunteer army.

He understood that if he was going to have to bring in conscription at some point in time, he was going to have to have the support of Canadians and that a referendum was going to be important if he was going to have the legitimacy to be able to enact conscription. So Canadians went to the polls in 1942 in a referendum that said, "Are you in favour of releasing the government from any obligation arising out of any past commitments restricting the methods of raising men for military service." A very clear question: will you allow us to get out of our pledge not to have conscription? Canadians had to consider in this referendum – and in a democracy that's not a bad idea, asking the people what they would like to do.

On conscription in 1942 Alberta voted 71 per cent in favour and 28.9 per cent against, Madam Chair. Again, the only province that was different: only 27.9 per cent of the people in Quebec voted for it, and a total of 72.1 per cent were against. Again, a wise Prime Minister looked at the results, and even though the vast majority voted in favour of it, he went back, and he said to the people of Quebec: I'm going to do everything I possibly can to not bring in conscription. Of course, it wasn't until about this time in 1944, when we'd invaded Europe and when we started to take casualties in France and moved into Belgium and finally Holland, that the Canadian government was forced to bring in conscription. But it was not nearly as divisive because not only did the government have the legitimacy of the people through a referendum, but the people of Quebec could see that this government had done everything that it could not to bring in conscription. See, referendums, while they can be divisive, are also very good at drawing together consensus as well.

We know that referendums in this country have occurred not just in our far distant past but are actually being used, and used quite frequently, all throughout and across this country. We know, for instance, that in the federal election of 2004 the federal NDP came out with a policy that said that if the Liberal government of Paul Martin were elected in a minority government, they would press for electoral reform if the Liberals would be willing to use a referendum to get the support for that electoral reform. Of course, the electoral reform that they wanted . . .

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Of course, I'm in favour of this amendment, but I was so enjoying the previous member's discussion that I thought maybe we could have him continue and carry on. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have the hon. members across the way into this history lesson, and I really think that if they just listen to this history lesson, they will understand the wisdom and the value of this amendment.

Now, let us break into history again, and let us be helpful, as we always try to be, and help you to understand that this is not a particularly partisan thing. The reality is that the NDP in 2004 were willing to work with the Paul Martin government and bring in proportional representation if the government would find the legitimacy to do so by asking the people of Canada in a referendum. You see, this isn't left wing. It's not right wing. It's called democracy. It's called going back to the people and asking the people about a major issue, something that's going to radically affect their lives, something that's going to have a huge impact on their lives. You go back to the people and you ask them.

If you have campaigned on it, that's one thing. If you have not, then you need to go back to the people. That's what democracy is supposed to be all about. I think we've established quite clearly that this government did not campaign on the length and breadth and width of this kind of legislation for this climate leadership plan, so it really has a moral obligation to go back to the people of Alberta through a referendum to be able to ask their opinion about whether or not they would like to be taxed in the way that this government is asking them or going to be taxing them.

You see, Madam Chair, we can see that referendums are used across this country. We've had referendums in British Columbia. We've had referendums in Newfoundland. As a matter of fact, if we take a look at Newfoundland, Newfoundland entered Confederation because of a series of referendums that asked the people of Newfoundland: do you want to become a part of Canada? Will this solve the economic problems that Newfoundland was struggling with and the poverty that Newfoundland was struggling with? Rather than being a self-governing colony, could they become a part of this country? You see, even though it was divisive, even though there were some people on one side of the issue and another side of the issue – democracy doesn't claim that you're not going to deal with divisive issues; it only claims that the issues will be decided based on the will of the majority as long as that majority does not infringe on the rights of the minority. That's important. I agree with the hon. member across the way.

When we take a look at a history of referendums, we can see that there's been referendums in New Brunswick. We can see that there's been referendums in Nova Scotia. We can see that in 2007 there was a referendum in Ontario. We've had referendums in Prince Edward Island. We've had referendums in Quebec, of course, the famous referendums in Quebec in 1980 and 1995.

5:20

See, the idea is that wise government understands that there are times when it needs to go back to the people to achieve the legitimacy that it needs to move forward in another direction. For the people of Quebec: did the government of Quebec have the legitimacy to pull the province out of this country? You can't make a decision that important without the consent and the will of the people. We see in 1995 just how close we came, Madam Chair. In the 1995 referendum on national unity, on whether or not Quebec would stay in this country, it was 49.42 per cent for yes, they would leave, and 50.58 per cent for no, against leaving this country. We were so close to losing this valuable part of our country.

What many people don't understand or believe is that the Premier of the day had written a letter the evening before the results were in and was waiting to post a letter to the Prime Minister that said: if the results of this election are in favour of separation, we are immediately claiming the Canadian armed forces that are stationed in Quebec as Quebec forces. Madam Chair, I can hardly – it shakes me to the core to believe what could have happened to this country if the Premier of Quebec had been so irresponsible as to continue to send that letter to our Prime Minister.

Referendums are important. Referendums decide serious issues. Referendums allow the people to have the say, and in this democracy, in this country, and in this province we still believe that the people should have the ultimate say. I've heard people say that referendums are too divisive, that we should never have a referendum because they divide people.

I've heard people say that we should never have referendums because they allow ignorant people to be able to have a say on things they don't know anything about. You know what? Even though there may be members on the other side that believe, "Oops; too late," the reality is that the people and the common sense of the

common person in this province through a little over 100 years of democracy have made good choices. They are not ignorant people. They understand their own self-interests. They can deal with these issues. They deal with them in a civil, civilized way, and even though our emotions may get tied up into things, we deal with this in a way that breeds tolerance and respect. Once the decision is made, we move on, and we proceed to try to figure out how we can best lead each other in this democracy.

I would argue that this government does not have the legitimacy to pass this legislation and that it needs to go back to the people. You did not campaign on it. This is significant legislation, and you either need to call an election or you need to have a referendum of the people.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, that was a very interesting and enjoyable speech. I have always liked history, and, you know, I think the hon. member across the way is probably a pretty good history teacher.

What I'd like to say here is that it's true that there have been referenda on any number of very important issues, but I think what's happened here with the so-called carbon tax, in terms of our friends in the Wildrose, is that there's a loss of perspective. I think we've seen that. It was a very unfortunate thing that happened the other day, which we all dealt with today, but mostly that was just a matter of not seeing things in perspective.

The opposition has been lighting its hair on fire over this. You know, we've talked about any number of other things, other aspects of the climate change plan, dealing with methane, putting a cap on absolute emissions – there are many aspects – phasing out coal, and the carbon tax, which is what they like to call it, which is moving towards \$30 a tonne on carbon. All of the experts who are serious about climate change and who are serious about the economics of dealing with climate change are shifting towards favouring these types of levies or taxes on carbon as a way of accomplishing the goal of reducing emissions.

I think that members opposite, whatever their views are with respect to the science of climate change, probably realize that we do have to reduce our carbon emissions and that Alberta as a province needs to do so. We have invested billions and billions of dollars in oil sands, and that's going to continue for some time, and hopefully there will be more upgrading here in the province, more diversification in the petrochemical industry and in other areas. The point being that you need tools and you need mechanisms.

But it's about perspective. The hon. member has mentioned a number of referenda that have been held in this country on whether or not liquor should be banned, like, made illegal in the country as a whole, whether or not we should conscript men to go fight in world wars, whether a province should join Confederation or whether a province should leave Confederation, or the very form of our democracy. All of these are very large, important, and critical issues of a great magnitude and great importance, and I believe that that's where referenda may have a use, depending on the circumstances.

Again, it comes down to perspective. The Wildrose is concerned – and it's fair ball – that we're going to put a 6 and half cent tax on gasoline. Yeah, that's a totally legitimate issue to argue whether that's a good thing or not and what goals or what things will be accomplished by doing that versus what the costs are – totally legitimate debate – but it's not on the same order of magnitude of whether the country breaks up or whether we go to war. That, I think, comes back to the lack of perspective with our friends in the Wildrose. They're lighting their hair on fire about the carbon tax, and, sure, it's a great issue for you guys. You know, I can see that. But let's keep the thing in perspective, right?

Let's talk about the real issue facing us in this country and in the world, and that is the ongoing impact of the change in the world's climate and the unusual and destructive weather events that come as a result of the changing climate, the potential for rising sea levels in some of the most very, very productive and populated areas of the world. You know, it's not just Bangladesh; it's also New York City. It's also London. It's also Vancouver. We need to be addressing this, and if not our way, then what way?

Let's talk about what the Wildrose alternatives are. You know, we accept their statements on the face of it that a number of them, anyway, do believe in the science of climate change, that it's a human-caused activity and that it's potentially threatening to billions of people who live on this planet. Then what is the answer that you propose? This is really what I would like to talk about.

In terms of this amendment, you know, my view is that it's not appropriate because it's not on the same level of magnitude as the issues that the hon. member talked about in his history lesson for us. You know, let's get on with a good debate. Are the costs, which I think our friends in the Wildrose have vastly inflated, of this carbon levy worth the results that we get? That's a legitimate debate. We believe it is; you obviously do not. But it is not a world-ending situation. It's not comparable to man-made famines in history. It's not comparable to the conscription crisis that almost tore this country apart. It's not the same thing as whether or not Quebec is going to break up the country.

5:30

So let's have a little perspective, and let's get the debate back to what I think is a very legitimate debate. Are the results that we're going to get from this worth the costs? What are the costs, and what are the results? That's a good debate to have. I'm glad we're having it.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Let's talk about perspective for just a moment. Alberta is a democracy – that is, a participatory democracy here – with the people of Alberta determining our own future. The mayor of New York doesn't get a vote, yet he was quoted earlier today as though he's got something to tell us. In addition to that, whether there are experts that say this or experts that say that, the issue is and the perspective is that the people of Alberta are to determine their own future themselves, for themselves. This is not an aristocracy. It is not a monarchy. It is not a New York-archy or anything else. We are a democracy, and Albertans are the ones who are supposed to have the say here. Your fear of going to a referendum points out the fact that you're afraid of the very people who are supposed to determine their own futures, and that is shameful.

That's all I have to say.

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

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I won't be as passionate as my friend from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. But I think in terms of putting this in perspective, you know, I'm going to keep going back to the Climate Leadership Report to Minister. The Climate Leadership report actually quite heroically tried to warn the government that there would be concerns, and to minimize the concerns, to say that the concerns are trivial or not important is, I think, completely unrealistic.

I will quote again from the portion entitled What We Heard. What did they hear in the public open houses? Albertans shared some ambitious goals, for sure, but then there were also "concerns about the state of Alberta's economy and the impact of new policies."

Then with regard to the online survey, it "demonstrated the more polarized views of engaged citizens, while polling showed the wider population to be more pragmatic and diverse in opinions and beliefs." To say that this is a small, little issue, that it's out of perspective – you know, even the Climate Leadership report tried to say that this is going to be a controversial issue. There are very diverse opinions. There are very wide opinions, and they will be different.

I go on a little bit further, the next paragraph, the fact that more were "concerned that efforts from Alberta will have costs to the province which outweigh the benefits." So, I mean, we're not bringing up unrealistic things here. The Climate Leadership report says these things.

Then with regard to First Nations and Métis communities and the organizations that responded to that: "many comments we received centred on the impacts these communities will feel." Then they go on to say that this is "something we encourage government to address alongside the implementation of their response to our proposals." Well, I think we've seen that the government is more than happy to implement the proposals, but I don't see very much caution here even with regard to the very warnings in the report to be careful about this and to be cautious about how it happens.

Then I notice on the previous page, page 14, that in addition there were public open houses held in Calgary and Edmonton. I find that very interesting because Calgary and Edmonton combined are only half the population of this province. The other half of the population, the half that is most impacted, that will feel the costs the greatest, wasn't even included in those open houses. That was really a biased sampling of people making contributions. Now, I know there were all kinds of other ways by which to contribute, but the truth is that the open houses were a very biased sampling, and the people who were most affected were probably not even there.

I just think that we do need to put it in perspective. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:35 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Rodney
Cyr	Loewen	Schneider
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Smith
Ellis	Nixon	Starke
Gill	Orr	Taylor
Gotfried	Panda	Yao
Hanson		

Against the motion:

Babcock	Kleinstaub	Phillips
Carlier	Littlewood	Renaud
Carson	Loyola	Rosendahl
Ceci	Luff	Sabir
Connolly	Malkinson	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Shepherd
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Dang	McKittrick	Swann

Eggen	McLean	Sweet
Feehan	Miller	Turner
Ganley	Miranda	Westhead
Horne	Nielsen	Woollard
Kazim		
Totals:	For – 19	Against – 37

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I have one of two amendments to put forward. [interjection] Yeah. It doesn't matter. We can do it after.

**The Chair:** I already recognized the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. Go ahead, hon. member.

**Dr. Swann:** Okay. Madam Chair, I'll just circulate the amendment, and we'll take it as it comes. I'll wait until it's distributed.

**The Chair:** The amendment is A7.  
Go ahead, hon. member.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and give notice of an amendment to Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, to amend it under section 77. The topic is establishment of performance measures.

77.1(1) Within 6 months of the coming into force of this Act, the Minister shall establish and make public performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the carbon levy and any initiatives funded by its revenue, including but not limited to those developed by Energy Efficiency Alberta, in reducing emissions of greenhouse gases or otherwise supporting Alberta's ability to adapt to climate change.

(2) The Minister shall make public a report at least once each calendar year on the progress towards the performance measures established under this section.

I think, Madam Chair, the amendment speaks for itself. We're talking about a lot of money. We're talking about a major shift in policy in Alberta. We're talking about trying to impact not only carbon but jobs. We're talking about employment. We're talking about electricity prices. We're talking about costs of all kinds of activities, goods, and services in the province and so far haven't seen a lot of evidence about what we're going to be measuring and how we're going to assess the benefit and the cost of these measures. I think it behooves the government, if they're making such a dramatic change, to provide some indications of what the criteria are for measuring success, that they be identified explicitly in the bill, and that we, all Albertans in fact, have some sense of where success is going to be measured and who's going to be measuring it.

It's a challenge for any government to embark on a new direction. I've applauded the government already on the need for a carbon tax.

I think that in principle I support this bill, but I can't support any bill that asks for billions of dollars without any performance targets. It's just the basic requirement of all legislation and all good legislators, that we have some sense of what we're going to be measuring. Is it jobs? Is it carbon? Is it electricity prices? Is it the cost of food? That's basic for assessing the cost benefit of any public policy.

**Mr. Yao:** Even the Liberal caucus gets it.

**Dr. Swann:** Yeah. Thank you. I'm not sure whether that was a compliment or not. I take everything as a compliment; it's the least I could do.

I'm very pleased at this late hour to encourage people to discuss this: if not, why not? Why not have some explicit indicators so that all Albertans know what we're going to be measuring, how we're going to assess success, when we're going to say: no, this isn't what we had hoped for; we're going to make some changes. I think most people here have had this discussion to some extent already, but I think this is a little more clear, a little more explicit.

My constituents are saying: we don't see evidence that they've thought through the whole process and that they have some accountability measures there. I'll be having another amendment later that has to do with who should be measuring these and who should be overseeing some of the accountability measures as well, but for this particular amendment it's all about performance measures.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7? The hon. minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to thank the hon. member for his amendment. Certainly, I thank him for his consideration of this bill and for his appreciation for the seriousness of climate change.

There are a couple of issues with this. First of all, Madam Chair, we already have performance measures within the Department of Environment and Parks and the climate change office's business plan, and reporting on those is contained already within the annual reports. That information is consistent with the fiscal transparency act and the operation of the government of Alberta all told. Of course, there are a number of different times during which all members of this House may query the details within those reports, not the least of which is during budget estimates but also upon the release of the annual reports, which happens each June.

In addition, one of those performance measures is, of course, greenhouse gas emissions. The Auditor General has asked for some stock-taking of the previous government's specified gas emitters regulation, Madam Chair, and in our ...

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(4) the committee will now recess until 7:30 tonight.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, June 6, 2016

Day 39

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

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 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, June 6, 2016

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 20 Climate Leadership Implementation Act

**The Deputy Chair:** The Committee of the Whole has under consideration amendment A7. Are there any members wishing to speak on the amendment? The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll just continue my thoughts from before 6 o'clock. I commend the hon. member for his interest in matters related to climate change and, certainly, matters related to governance, and I commend him for his attention to detail within the act. The fact is that performance measures are already contained within the business plan, and reporting on them is contained within the annual report, which comes out each June. All of those pieces, in addition to the budget estimates, are open to query by Members of the Legislative Assembly at budget estimates time and at Public Accounts. This will duplicate those efforts that already exist within legislation, potentially with unintended consequences.

Moreover, the matter of performance measures will inevitably have to do with GHG reduction targets. While we do know that the work ahead of us that is proposed by Dr. Leach and within the climate leadership panel certainly forecasts a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the near term, a bending of the curve, if you will, there are a number of pieces that remain outstanding on this matter of measuring and reporting on greenhouse gas emissions. What has happened in the last year within Canadian politics is that, of course, we've had a reinvigorated sense of understanding and urgency around climate change at the federal level, prompting the federal government to take a number of initiatives and make a number of commitments with the United Nations in Paris last November and December. With that will come a great deal of negotiation and a great deal of resources from the federal government, indeed.

There has already been one first ministers' meeting on this matter. There will be another one, I believe, in October and in the intervening period a Council of Ministers of the Environment meeting, Madam Chair, which will have an effect on both what the federal commitments are from a resources point of view and also what Canada's targets look like because, of course, the matter of targets is federal. That is another intervening factor that we want to make sure that we are weaving into our work here in Alberta. Having said that, we already have established our own climate leadership policies, and we think that they are certainly sufficient in terms of Alberta doing its fair share.

While I can appreciate the spirit of the amendment, I think that it is already contained within existing government of Alberta legislation, including, Madam Chair, querying and reporting upon the activities of the energy efficiency agency. Not unlike any other agency board and commission that reports to a minister, that information is contained within business plans and within annual reports.

With that, I shall close my remarks. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. minister – or the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Close but not quite yet. Very soon, I'm sure. Three years max.

Madam Chair, I rise to support this amendment. I think this is precisely the sort of thing that would make Bill 20 so much stronger. As the minister knows, as the House knows, as I've said before, but it's important to say again, I support action on climate change in the province of Alberta. I believe climate change is real and human caused, and I believe, in principle, in a carbon tax as an important tool in the tool kit to achieve action on climate change.

It's very important that when we talk about transparency – there's this word that we throw around in this House on a regular basis, but what does that actually mean? What it means is that not only is the government taking action, not only is the government doing something, but it is seen to be done properly by Albertans, that for something as important as this we establish these performance measures.

I have a question for the minister. When you talk about the reporting that will be done within the annual report and within the business plans, will there in fact be a stand-alone annual report for the office of climate change, or will it be embedded within the Department of Environment and Parks? If so, will it in fact get the attention it deserves?

Now, I know, without question, that this file is of importance to your government and a focus for your government, but I have a very difficult time supporting a bill where I don't know what those performance measures are going to be. I don't know what Energy Efficiency Alberta is going to do with \$645 million. I would challenge the government to come up with those specific performance measures before you bring that bill to the House. It makes it very difficult for me to support a bill, although the principle of which, broadly speaking, I agree with, when my constituents come to me and say: "How is that money going to be spent? How is \$645 million over five years going to be spent? Is it money well spent? How are we going to know?" That's one of the most important questions any government or, frankly, anyone in a position of power or in charge of any sort of organization ought to be asking themselves. It's a fundamental question of governance. How do you know? What you're asking us to do in this House is say: "Just trust me. We're going to spend \$645 million over five years. It's going to be great."

Well, really, how do we know? What is the \$3.4 billion currently earmarked for the grandiose subject and title of Other Initiatives – how do we know what that money is going to be used for? Is it going to be used to pay off coal-fired power generators? Is it going to be used to provide an incentive for renewable energy? Is it going to be used for this government to start a Crown corporation to make investments directly in the marketplace in renewable energy or other things? I don't know. I don't know. The Minister of Infrastructure and Government House Leader's eyes lit up when I said that. Perhaps that is what's going to happen. Who knows? That's my biggest challenge with this bill.

I have to say that in my heart of hearts I do want to support a bill like this, if not exactly this bill, because I do think it's important that we take action in this province. But, hon. members on the government side, if you can't convince me to support a bill like this, who wants to work with you on climate change and to make things happen, you're going to have a pretty difficult time convincing the rest of the province who are skeptical about the need for action on climate change and the massive change this is going to bring.

I think that in establishing performance measures and being incredibly clear with Albertans on what it is we're trying to achieve,

how we know whether or not we're achieving that, tracking that along the way, reporting frequently and transparently with Albertans, and then if you need to, changing tack, maybe you're going to end up doing better than you think in certain areas. That's wonderful. Wouldn't that be a great thing? But if you're not doing as well as you might like, to be able to identify that fact early on – to report it transparently and say: “You know what? We thought it was going to go this way. It turns out that's not how things went, and as a result we're going to change course” – is the sort of governance and leadership that Albertans expect.

I would really encourage the minister and encourage the government to reconsider what I think is a very reasonable amendment, a thoughtful amendment, from a member who I know also shares your goals as they relate to action on climate change. I also think you ought to consider not only the content of the amendment, which I think stands on its own as a strong amendment, which only adds to Bill 20, but I also think it's important to consider the source of that amendment and the intent of the member, which is to strengthen the bill. This is not some political trick. No one's trying to pull the wool over your eyes. No one's trying to get one over on you. This Member for Calgary-Mountain View I think is trying to do the right thing. I think he's trying to make the bill stronger. If we can make this bill stronger, it's good for Alberta. Certainly, those of us in this corner of the opposition side are trying to do that through amendments like this.

I would really encourage the government to reconsider that and would very much encourage all members to support this amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7? The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you. I was glad to hear the minister stand up and speak because I had listened to her just prior to 6 o'clock and she referred to the business plan and that this amendment would not be necessary because performance measures were already clearly laid out there. I'll read to you what I could find in here. I have it with me, so if you'd like to enlighten us by reading it to us – under performance measure you have municipal solid waste to landfills and a target of reduction to 2018-2019. Then there are performance indicators that show actuals from 2010, 2011, and 2012, and they give us something from 2013-2014 but no actual performance measures. Minister, I'd be happy to lend you a copy. Oh, there is one other thing under performance measures. It's hunting and fishing licence sales.

I don't see anything there at all about greenhouse gas reduction in your business plan. You did mention that there was no need for this amendment to be put forward because the performance measures were already in the book. Could you help us out here?

7:40

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Yeah. As I was saying before the break, the Auditor General provided some thoughts on the performance measures that govern specified gas emitters regulation in his last report. He put it out in early July. So the Budget 2015 business plan contained within it the greenhouse gas performance measures, but what we did was that we essentially said in response to the Auditor General that we would be putting forward new performance measures that would align with the new climate leadership plan. That's what I indicated at budget estimates debate either in the fall of 2015 or the spring of 2016. I can't quite recall. It's possible I said it at both.

That is what we are doing right now in order to fulfill the recommendations of the Auditor General that were released almost a year ago now and to ensure that we've got the right performance measures in place for the new plan. That is to say, the performance measures around the performance standards; the output-based allocations that ensure competitiveness for our trade-exposed industries, for example; the GHG reductions that we can achieve through energy efficiency and demand-side management; and also an appraisal of the GHG reductions that we can achieve through the phase-out of coal-fired electricity. Those will all be contained. What we've done in response to the AG's recommendations is that, essentially, we are in the process of a brand new set of performance standards in order to fulfill exactly what the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View is asking for, which is a set of credible performance measures that are consistent with the climate policy that we have now, not the old one, and that can chart good, credible, transparent progress on our actions.

The final thing I'll say is that all of these matters that are contained within this amendment are already also within the Auditor General Act, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** You know how I hate to disagree, but you stood up just before 6 o'clock and then again in the last 10 minutes and said that this amendment was not necessary because the performance measures were already there. You said that they were in the business plan as well as other places. Which is it? Now you're saying that you're implementing these new performance measures. Which is it? Are they done, or are they not done? If they're not done, why can't we put this amendment forward?

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to echo the sentiments of my hon. colleague from Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills regarding these performance measures. I realize the performance measures that the hon. minister of environment is referring to in the business plan – I believe the hon. minister is not understanding the kind of performance criteria that we've been asking for, which is the reason why we've seen these kinds of amendments asking for performance measures time and again here so far, and that is sector-by-sector performance measures. If we're going to tax the daylights out of our school boards, what kind of emissions mitigation can we expect for the dollars spent?

There has to be a demonstrated cost benefit to the people of Alberta to spend the kind of money, billions of dollars, on emissions mitigation. There have to be some sorts of targets that we're going to achieve with this expenditure. Is the cost benefit really there, again, for charities, for hospitals, for municipalities, for average Albertan homeowners, for every sector of our economy? I think it's fair to say that Albertans have a right to expect some sort of criteria for this carbon tax because of the invasive nature of it, because of the breadth of it, because of the cumulative effect of it. It is so pervasive throughout every element of our society that I believe it's only fair to Albertans that they can see some performance measures from this government that make it worth the pain that's being inflicted upon them, and we have not seen that. That's not what's contained in the business plan.

Then the hon. minister of environment says that we're working on those performance measures, which is a direct contradiction of what she had just replied to my hon. colleague moments ago, that it's all in the business plan. Obviously, it's not. We're getting two stories here.

Then earlier, just moments ago, the hon. minister was referring to federal targets coming down. Well, if we're waiting for federal targets, why in the world are we introducing a carbon tax now, when we don't even know what the federal targets are going to be? None of this is adding up here, and I think the members opposite owe it to the good people of Alberta to put the brakes on this thing or accept some amendments to try to give Albertans the assurances they need.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on the amendment?

Seeing none, I will put the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A7 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:47 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Hanson	Rodney
Barnes	Jansen	Starke
Clark	Jean	Stier
Cooper	Loewen	Strankman
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Swann
Fildebrandt	Pitt	van Dijken

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Phillips
Carlier	Kazim	Piquette
Carson	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Ceci	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Connolly	Luff	Schmidt
Coolahan	Malkinson	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Shepherd
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Drever	McKittrick	Turner
Eggen	McLean	Westhead
Goehring	Miller	Woollard
Hinkley	Miranda	

Totals:	For – 18	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment A7 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We'll now return to the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak to the original bill? The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Yes. I have an amendment, Madam Chair. I'll give my copies and await circulation.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Go ahead, please.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is notice of an amendment to Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, that it be amended by adding the following after section 79:

Review by Auditor General

79.1(1) Within 2 years of the coming into force of this Act, the Auditor General shall conduct a comprehensive review of the carbon levy payable under this Act, the rebates and tax credits relating to the carbon levy and the effectiveness of any initiatives related to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases that are funded by Energy Efficiency Alberta or any other revenue from the carbon levy.

(2) The Auditor General shall complete a report within 6 months of commencing the review under subsection (1) and shall present the report to the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, who shall lay the report before the Assembly immediately if it is sitting or, if it is not sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

(3) When the Assembly is not sitting, the Auditor General may deliver copies of the report under this section to the Speaker, who shall immediately distribute the copies to the office of each Member of the Assembly.

(4) After the Speaker has distributed copies of the report pursuant to subsection (3), the Auditor General may make the report public.

I think it's become clear from the lengthy debate and the contention around the Climate Leadership Implementation Act that there's a lot of concern around the bill, a lot of support for the principle of the bill, and, in my view, tremendous support for a look not only at supply but at demand for energy in this province. We have to reduce our demand.

I'm pleased to see that there's an energy efficiency body created under this act, but I think that, like most people, we want to know that this will be properly measured, that there will be some transparent indicators that all of us can understand, even debate. Indeed, as I've indicated here, at the end of two years there should be a comprehensive review, before we get too far into this major initiative, by the Auditor General himself, whose role is to conduct value-for-money audits and who has gained a lot of credibility around the ministries in this government and, I think, from the point of view of the public gives a lot of assurance that what we're doing, well intentioned and well defined in general terms, is showing cost benefit, is showing where we're benefiting, where we're perhaps losing value or losing carbon progress in this case.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

Indeed, if one of the unspoken political agendas is just to show more jobs, if that's considered to be one indicator and the carbon is not reducing at the level at which it is targeted to achieve progress, then surely we need to know that. If, in fact, for political purposes natural gas fired cogen is not considered a priority because it wouldn't achieve in the short term the kind of political advantage that would be hoped for even though it's the better transition in terms of some of the indicators, including carbon – by the way, natural gas cogen delivers almost as much carbon savings as wind would in replacing coal – then one has to raise questions about the cost benefit of what we're doing.

I guess that for all of us the Auditor General is the figure we look to for credibility, for accountability, for value for money, and all of us, I think, including the public, would have a sense of comfort, shall I say, with a very challenging and very ambitious bill, that surely is trying to take leadership but lacks a certain amount of accountability because the measures, the performance measures, the targets simply aren't clear.

It's quite possible that the government itself will say, "These are the indicators that we've ultimately decided on, and by the way, they're all improving, and we should all feel very happy about this" when in fact a value-for-money audit might say, "Well, this other direction – for example, natural gas cogen – in the next two years

could deliver much more of the cost benefit and deal with our struggling natural gas industry and natural gas surplus as well as stimulating another side of our economy.”

I’m not saying that I know all the indicators, but I am saying that we as legislators and the public at large deserve to see what kind of performance measures we’re talking about. Clearly, this isn’t building new roads. It isn’t paying out the coal-fired power generators. Those are not legitimate calls on this carbon tax, so what is? Can we get some assurances that at the end of the day the value for money is there? I think that’s all we’re asking for.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

8:10

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to this amendment much of what is being requested is already covered in other government acts. First, this amendment would require review by the Auditor General, but that is already covered by the Auditor General Act. The Auditor General Act sets out:

11 The Auditor General

- (a) is the auditor of every ministry, department, regulated fund and Provincial agency.

The office of the Auditor General of Alberta can examine and report publicly on government’s management of and accountability practices for the public resources entrusted to it, which would include a review of the carbon levy.

The Auditor General Act also sets out how a report of the office of the Auditor General is to be shared with the standing committee and the Assembly and requirements to make reports public. I think that the decision as to what to audit and at what timing and so on should be left in the hands of that officer of the Legislature given that he reports to this entire body and serves this entire Assembly rather than simply the government.

Furthermore, I will direct the members of the House to section 3(2) of the act, which indicates:

The revenue from the carbon levy may only be used

- (a) for initiatives related to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases or supporting Alberta’s ability to adapt to climate change, or
- (b) to provide rebates or adjustments related to the carbon levy to consumers, businesses and communities, including adjustments in the form of tax credits or tax rate reductions.

Madam Chair, what we’ve done with this is to build straight into it uses of the levy that must be directed towards specific undertakings of the government either to mitigate against climate change – that is to say, to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions – or, on the other hand, to ensure that our economy can adjust to a carbon-pricing environment, which we’ve provided for through the reduction in the small-business tax rate and the rebate system, with 66 per cent of households receiving some form of rebate.

Madam Chair, we believe that the spirit of the amendment already exists within various acts, including the Auditor General Act but also the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, which requires us to report on progress, and the act itself under section 3.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, that precisely is my point. If the Auditor General decides, for example, that paying people who earn \$100,000 a year a rebate for their carbon levy doesn’t make sense from either a fiscal point of view or a carbon reduction point of view, I guess the question is: how will you know

that without measuring that particular impact on the middle class, who, in my view, don’t need the rebate? It will not incent them to change their behaviour.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A8? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I understand the intent of the hon. member in introducing this amendment, but I cannot support it, and my reasons are different from what the hon. minister of the environment may have brought forward. My reasons are that by the time two years transpire, it’s going to be too late. We need some answers earlier than that. To wait for two years for the Auditor General to complete a comprehensive report on something as invasive and oppressive as this tax is to wait far too long. By then we will have the carbon tax sitting at \$30, not \$20, and we will not know whether that was even the right move to make. It’s simply too long a period of time.

I don’t see this amendment as being what we need to try to improve this bill, so I will not be voting in favour of it. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I rise to support this amendment. I think that when we have a change as fundamental as a carbon tax, notwithstanding the fact that the Auditor General has the power to audit, it is important that we formally review whether or not the bill or the legislation that is passed and put into force actually achieves what we want it to achieve. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View asked the fundamental question: how do we know? Again, this government is asking Albertans simply: trust us.

You know, I wonder. That’s a couple of amendments here in a row where the Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office has said: “We’re waiting on some other things to happen. We’re going to come up with these metrics and measures later. Trust us. We’re going to get some information.” It makes me wonder if this government is acting too hastily on a very, very important file. Does the fast pace of this implementation, absent the knowledge of exactly what it is you’re trying to achieve, absent the knowledge of actual measures, absent the knowledge of what the federal government will do and what other jurisdictions will do both in other provinces as well as other countries, in fact, undermine what I believe to be your sincere efforts to do the right thing here? Are you risking the success of a very, very important file simply because you want to go ahead quickly? What’s wrong with taking the time to make sure you get it right? Why couldn’t we wait until you knew the details of Energy Efficiency Alberta before bringing in this bill?

Nothing is going to happen in the intervening six months between now and the fall sitting. Perhaps we could even move the fall sitting forward, a little ahead of the scheduled start of October 31, if the government believes that there’s some compelling information they’d like to bring before the House in terms of the details. It would give all of us a lot more information, would make it, frankly, a lot easier for myself – and I don’t want to speak on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Mountain View – and perhaps for him as well to support this legislation, to support the government’s work.

The other point I’d like to make to the government members is that I’ll ask you just to consider again the source of this amendment, that it is a thoughtful amendment from a thoughtful member who’s trying to do the right thing, whose heart, I know, is in the right place, and I’m quite certain it is aligned with what you’re trying to do.



Let's compare that to some of the heated and, frankly, shameful rhetoric that we've had from the Official Opposition, comparing the carbon tax to horrible, horrific incidents in history. The fact that that was even written in the first place, frankly, is shameful. There's no other word for it. The fact that someone would sit down and actually write those words and then put them out and then have nine members put their name to it is truly shameful. I'm not only speaking as someone who's a proud Ukrainian-Canadian – my mom is a Warnyca – but, irrespective of my background and personal beliefs, to not just draw the conclusions on that terrible, terrible incident in human history.

This is a carbon tax, which will add 6 and a half cents at the pump, which will add a dollar a gigajoule, which will have a variety of other taxes, aviation fuel and locomotive fuel. While I think that we can quibble in this House about the scale of those changes – some members may not believe that those sorts of changes are warranted in a difficult economic time, and that's a legitimate discussion – the sun is still going to rise on January 1, 2017, and I suspect that, with good fortune, it will rise on January 1, 2018. This carbon tax will not destroy the province of Alberta. Whether or not it's exactly the right thing to do, whether or not it has appropriate and positive consequences for our province I think is the essence of this amendment, of exactly what the member is trying to drive at.

So I would really encourage the government to think seriously about supporting this amendment when you've got thoughtful members here who are trying to help the government truly be better.

8:20

My belief, speaking for myself, is that our job on this side of the House is not to simply oppose what the government does for opposition's sake. I want you to succeed. I want this government to succeed because if you succeed, Alberta succeeds. Conversely, I do not want the government to fail because if you fail, Alberta fails. That is not what we should be here to do. What we should be here to do is to make Alberta a better place. The job of opposition is to enable the success of government. That's what I believe the job of thoughtful opposition is. We're not here to tear you down.

I really would encourage you, members, to think seriously about accepting this amendment because it does make Bill 20 a stronger bill. We're trying to make progress on a file very important to your government and, I think, to the future of this province. If we can succeed with this, Alberta is going to be a better place. That's what I think we should be trying to do here. So I do encourage members on the government side to please think very seriously about supporting this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A8?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A8 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:21 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Loewen	Starke
Clark	Pitt	Swann
Drysdale	Rodney	van Dijken
Jansen		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hanson	Miranda
Anderson, W.	Hinkley	Phillips
Carlier	Horne	Piquette
Carson	Jean	Renaud
Ceci	Kazim	Rosendahl
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schreiner
Cooper	Luff	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	MacIntyre	Stier
Dach	Malkinson	Strankman
Dang	Mason	Sucha
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Eggen	McKitrick	Westhead
Fildebrandt	McLean	Woollard
Goehring	Miller	

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 44
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[Motion on amendment A8 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm happy to rise to speak to Bill 20 here in Committee of the Whole. There have been a number of good ideas, good amendments put forward. It's unfortunate that so far we've just had the one that's been approved, but I'm going to propose one and give the rationale for why I would like to see this amendment go ahead. So if I could hand this off to the page. The original is on top. Perfect.

I'll just wait a few minutes for those to be distributed, but I'll say in general terms, Madam Chair, that the amendment I'm proposing has to do with the carbon tax as it applies to aviation fuel, recognizing, as the Minister of Environment and Parks has stated, that the carbon tax will be waived for flights that either originate outside of Alberta or, you know, are leaving to a location outside of Alberta but that for, shall we call them, domestic flights or intraprovincial flights, commercial flights, the carbon tax will be applicable on those flights. If I could just read the amendment into the record now.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Dr. Starke:** I move that Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 as follows. In part A section 7 is struck out; in part B section 25 is amended by striking out subsection (1)(i) and, in subsection (2), by striking out "7"; in part C sections 27(1)(a)(xii) and (xiii) are struck out; in part D section 61 is amended by striking out "7"; in part E the schedule is amended by striking out sections 1(1)(a) and (b); and in part F the table to the schedule is amended by striking out the following:

Aviation gas	4.98 ¢/L	7.47 ¢/L
Aviation jet fuel	5.17 ¢/L	7.75 ¢/L

So what's the rationale behind this amendment, Madam Chair? Well, I'd like to say that I'm very pleased to see that the minister has recognized that having a carbon tax on aviation fuel is a fundamentally noncompetitive move. They're absolutely correct in recognizing that. In fact, Canada as a nation is particularly uncompetitive when it comes to the costs of aviation.

Now, it is known that we are the second-largest, by square kilometres, country in the world and that we also are one of the most sparsely populated countries. Because of those realities – and those are realities that won't change anytime soon – aviation is, in fact, a critical aspect of transportation in Canada. It could be argued, certainly, for northern Alberta and for our northern territories that

without aviation it would be indeed very, very difficult for those parts of Canada to even be reasonably habitable.

Because of that, we have to recognize and try to do everything we can to reduce the impediments to aviation and civil aviation within the country. There have been numerous studies – well, actually, the World Economic Forum annually publishes a travel and tourism competitive index. I have a fair bit of familiarity with this from my time as tourism minister. While Canada as a nation does very well in terms of our airport infrastructure, sadly, we don't do very well as far as our cost competitiveness. In fact, out of 140 countries that were ranked in the 2013 World Economic Forum's travel and tourism competitive index, Canada ranked 136th. In other words, we only beat four other countries. As far as travel and tourism price competitiveness we ranked 124th.

8:30

It is something that has held back our tourism sector. It is something that has resulted in Canada as a tourism destination falling from second to 17th since 1950. It's because, quite simply, it is expensive to fly to and from Canada. In fact, 21 per cent of Canadians now choose to go to an American destination or an American departure airport to start their journeys rather than flying out of a Canadian airport. Now, Alberta is not as directly affected by that because our larger population centres are somewhat farther away from American departure airports. But, for example, in Windsor over 90 per cent of departing traffic drives across the border to Detroit to start their journey from Detroit. Abbotsford: over 90 per cent travel to Seattle to begin their journey. So this affects the ability of these airports to provide service.

We have a situation where competitiveness is definitively affected not so much by our base charges but by our fees and other charges. A study done by the Canadian Airports Council for the Conference Board of Canada in 2012, for example, showed that the fees for a round-trip airfare in Canada are roughly double the cost of the additional fees for the U.S. and that these fees constitute some 43 per cent of the overall ticket cost for Canadian travels whereas in the U.S. that percentage is only 14 per cent. So we have a situation where additional charges – taxes, fees – create a significant disincentive to travel, and what bothers me about this is that this creates a specific disincentive to travel within Alberta.

Now, as tourism minister one of the things that we always talked about was promoting Alberta to Albertans and trying to get people to stay home or at least stay within their province and discover Alberta. We have a beautiful province, Madam Chair. You come from a part of the province that most would consider somewhat isolated, and I'm sure that the fact that the plane flies to High Level is something that you appreciate. A lot of people might not otherwise travel to some of these destinations if it were not for the availability of flights. This measure, especially given that this measure unfairly disincentivizes travel within the province, makes no sense at all.

Let me talk a little bit more about the general thought behind aviation taxes. In January 2014 the C.D. Howe Institute issued a commentary entitled *Full Throttle: Reforming Canada's Aviation Policy*. In that study the C.D. Howe Institute talked a little bit about changes that airlines make because of differential taxation in different parts of the province. This is a somewhat long quote, but I do want people to listen very carefully.

Fuel taxes also lead to airlines trying to arbitrage between provinces or internationally, a practice known in the industry as "tankering." An airline can lower its after-tax fuel costs by loading extra fuel in the low-tax jurisdiction, but at the cost of carrying extra weight in-flight and therefore burning more fuel. Airlines engage in this practice if the cost of burning more fuel is less than the additional cost of taxes upon refueling, but the

economic cost of the distortion in terms of wasted fuel and environmental harm can be substantial.

Madam Chair, I just want to be sure that we understand some of the consequences that can come about – and they are, I would say, unintended – because of the levying of these additional charges on aviation fuel for flights within the province.

The recommendation of the C.D. Howe Institute in this study was:

Provincial governments should . . . reduce their aviation fuel taxes so that the amount of tax they collect is no more than what they finance for aviation infrastructure. Given current levels of provincial investment in aviation infrastructure [are low], this recommendation means that provinces should largely eliminate their aviation fuel taxes.

The challenge here is that this is not eliminating aviation fuel taxes; in fact, it's raising them.

Well, does it make a difference? Well, I guess there are two sides of that coin that we should look at. First of all, we should look at: does it affect the number of flights? I can say to you unequivocally that it does. A couple of years ago, when I was tourism minister, the province of British Columbia made a decision that it would drop its aviation fuel tax. Now, this resulted in a hit for the province of British Columbia on the revenue side, and it recognized that, but what it did was increase the number of flights in and out of Vancouver substantially. More and more airlines chose Vancouver as their port of call to come into North America because it became more cost competitive.

At the same time, the province of Ontario chose the opposite approach, to raise its aviation fuel taxes. Even though Toronto is the largest gateway airport in the country, the price, for example, of landing a 767 in Toronto with all the fees and charges included is more than double that of the next highest cost airport in North America. Madam Chair, these are the kinds of considerations that we need to take into account when we are looking at making these kinds of changes.

Again, as I said before, I think we want to be doing everything we possibly can to encourage Albertans to stay within their province, to travel within their province and see everything that Alberta has to offer. I know that Travel Alberta works very, very hard on this. One of the things we always talked about in the tourism department was: what can we do to reduce tourism leakage? What can we do to reduce the number of tourists that travel outside of our province, and what are the things that we don't have that we would like to offer? Well, unfortunately, we don't have oceanfront property – we know that – and we don't have beaches. I was looking, as an April Fool's joke, at the possibility of annexing Maui, but they had some problems with that. I will tell you that Alberta has just about everything that tourists are looking for, but if we, to our own Albertans, make Alberta a less attractive destination because we increase the cost, we're not helping our tourism industry. It's not just tourism; it's general aviation travel.

The city of Lloydminster has an airport, and we do have commercial flights in and out of Lloydminster. We've had for a number of years now only one place that you could fly to, and that was the city of Calgary. Now, that's great, but Central Mountain Air, which operates the service – and it used to be Central Mountain Air plus Peace Air; we had two airline companies that served us. We now only have the one. Central Mountain Air used to have 14 flights a week. There was no service on weekends, but Monday through Friday there were either three flights or just two flights a day. I just checked this afternoon. The number of flights that Central Mountain Air now operates is only seven per week. In talking to the airport personnel in Lloydminster, they've told me that the number of passengers that they are carrying to and from Calgary has been reduced by approximately two-thirds.

Airline competitiveness in an industry where the cost margins, especially when you're flying aircraft that are not completely full, something as small – and I'm sure that some are going to say that this is just such a small thing that it wouldn't affect the decision. It does. It absolutely affects the decision. Perhaps we would be better off in Lloydminster if the airport was in Saskatchewan, but as luck would have it, the Lloydminster airport is in Alberta. It would apply to this situation whereby the aircraft would have to pay the aviation fuel tax.

8:40

Aviation fuel taxes are not a help to the tourism industry, and they're not a help to general aviation. In fact, this is another one of those situations where there are consequences to what you're doing, and I'm quoting now from a seminal report that was done by the Canadian Senate. It was done in 2012, and it was called *The Future of Canadian Air Travel: Toll Booth or Spark Plug?* It talked about the lack of competitiveness of Canada's airports and our aviation industry in general. It says:

Aviation is critical to growing the . . . economy, supporting jobs, enabling investment and facilitating trade. . . . In these times of need for job creation and job protection, expanded air services offers a low cost, low risk, high reward way to grow and diversify our economy, allowing us to reach our full potential.

Madam Chair, placing a disincentive on increased use of aviation and commercial aviation makes absolutely no sense and runs directly counter to a number of the stated goals of the government. They want to diversify the economy, and they want to create jobs, but if you put a tax on aviation fuel, you will have exactly the opposite effect. We've already gone from 14 to seven flights in Lloydminster, and if it drops to five or four, at some point we may even see a situation where that service is cancelled completely. How is that helping with job creation? How is that helping with diversification of the economy? Well, the simple answer is that it's not.

If the minister or someone else is responding to this, I would really like to know: what is the projected amount of income that is going to be raised from this portion of the carbon tax, just on the domestic fuel carbon tax part? Unless it's a huge amount of money that the government is going to forgo – I understand that they would like to bring in revenue from this. I really question whether anyone has done a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether the measure that is being put in place here, selectively targeting domestic intraprovincial travel, will have the desired effect. Will it end up costing more than what it's going to bring in in revenue? Very clearly, if it is not going to bring in more revenue than what it costs the economy, then it makes no sense to go ahead and do it.

Madam Chair, I hope that I've provided the Assembly this evening with a number of arguments that they will carefully consider with regard to these two areas of taxation. Again, I applaud the government for leaving out-of-province travel and those flights out of the carbon tax. Clearly, they've recognized that that makes us uncompetitive with other provinces. I also want to point out to them – and I hope that they will take this in the manner in which it's intended – that creating a disincentive for aviation, for airline travel within the province is also a negative on our economy. It will work against job creation, it will work against diversification of the economy, and it will hurt our overall competitiveness.

It is not a measure that we should go forward with, and I would urge all members to support this amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** This amendment is A9. Are there any further members wishing to speak to amendment A9? I'll recognize Calgary-Elbow first, followed by Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. At the risk of sounding repetitive, I imagine that if we do go, in fact, as late tonight as it sounds like we might, that may become a bit of a theme for all of us in terms of repetitive arguments. You know, what I like about this amendment is that it is seeking to solve what I would consider an unintended consequences problem. The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has done a very good job of researching the impacts of this, and I think it's going to help, again, with the credibility of this carbon tax. Anything that we can do on this side of the House to make this a better bill I would hope the government would consider. I don't imagine this is going to end up costing a tremendous amount of money in terms of the overall carbon tax. In fact, it may be one of those situations where the loss of economic activity avoided by not disincenting the air travel domestically within Alberta would in fact offset any losses to government revenue from the carbon tax. I think it's a thoughtful amendment, I think it's something definitely worth considering, and I would strongly encourage the government and all members to support this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Rodney:** In the interest of time, tongue firmly planted in cheek, I will say – and I quote – that he had me at “Madam Chair.” With all great respect, this is not about politics; this is about making it better. The hon. House leader of our party has definitely done his homework, and I would really, really like to know from the other side if there is a reason to vote against this amendment because I can't find a single one. In the interest of time, perhaps after the next speaker we could call the question.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be brief. When we're talking about our economy here in this province, often we forget that there is a part of our province, the northern reaches of our province, that faces very unique challenges both on the business side of things and on the personal side of things. For remote communities, for remote First Nations communities, and for Métis communities in the north, they face unique challenges that are, quite frankly, foreign to Albertans who don't live there and experience these challenges on a day-to-day basis. One of those challenges is the increased cost of living just by virtue of the fact of their remoteness. In another life I was responsible for distribution of goods into our north, and many times we had to airdrop those supplies into communities in the north.

Now, this is not a luxury item. Air travel in Alberta's north is often a matter of survival. Sometimes we have situations where there are flights that are medical in nature, and all the time it is expensive. It's very expensive. So there is an unfair economic burden already on Albertans living in the north of our province, and aviation to them is a lifeline. It is not a luxury item, where they're taking a trip to Maui or somewhere like this. This is a lifeline for them for cargo that comes up there. It brings food, it brings fuel, and it brings medical supplies all winter long into these remote communities. They bear already what I would say is an unfair burden, and to add this carbon tax upon them is adding insult to injury. They already have a tough go. I don't believe it's fair at all to be hitting them, you know, with any kind of an increase or anything that could lead to an increase in the cost of living in the north.

Furthermore, if this government is very serious about economic diversification, we have untapped resources in the northern half of our province that are enormous. It's going to require a significant

amount of aviation in order to capitalize on it. Hamstringing them through any kind of an economic distortion like this is simply wrong.

I am fully in support of this amendment. I thank the hon. member for it. He has done his homework. I would hope that every member in this Assembly will support this amendment simply because aviation for many Albertans is not a luxury; it is an absolute necessity. It's a necessity for businesses, not just in the north either but right across our province. I would like every member in this Assembly to vote in favour of this good amendment to try to help improve a very bad bill.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A9? The hon. minister of environment.

8:50

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the hon. member for his careful work and for his previous service to our province in promoting tourism and so on. I certainly have benefited from his insights on more than one occasion as parks minister, and I'm sure I will continue to do so.

Madam Chair, having said that, there are a couple of issues with this amendment. One, the exemption for interjurisdictional flights is standard across jurisdictions in Canada. There are, in fact, interprovincial agreements on this matter, and that's why this legislation was written in the way it was.

Additionally, this is an economy-wide price in the same way that B.C. has an economy-wide price. Certainly, they still have an aviation industry in British Columbia, within the province, and certainly a very robust tourism economy. They have had a price on carbon that is economy-wide in nature since 2008. Certainly, their carbon levy is economy-wide and is phased in at \$30 per tonne currently. Of course, they do different things with the proceeds of their levy, Madam Chair, but we are reducing small-business taxes with ours, consistent with what British Columbia has done although our small-business rates will be lower than theirs when we are done with this. Of course, we have a different structure to our economy than British Columbia does. We have a much larger chunk of our economy that is trade exposed and energy intensive and requires that investment in public research and development in order to ensure that we remain competitive.

Madam Chair, that is why the Leach report recommended an economy-wide price and to address many of the competitive pressures that would come through programming and through a small-business tax reduction. We took that advice seriously, so that's why we have structured this the way we have.

I thank the hon. member for his work. Certainly, we will work with the airline industry going forward. This is not the only place in Canada or the world where carbon pricing is a reality, Madam Chair, in fact far from it. The aviation industry is working hard to work with other jurisdictions that are bringing in either cap-and-trade or economy-wide price arrangements within their jurisdictions. Certainly, they are also working very hard to reduce their fuel costs and their emissions. Canadian airlines have improved their fuel efficiency by 13 per cent since 2005. Certainly, they are aware that carbon pricing is a reality that is going to be in all of the jurisdictions in which they operate. Carbon pricing is the most market-efficient way to ensure GHG abatement, but it is also going to be phased in across Canada and around the world. We know this. Most jurisdictions are moving now because climate change is real, Madam Chair, and action is therefore necessary.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Madam Chair, thank you. Oh, we have a floor-crosser here. That happens. We're used to it. We've seen it before.

I'd like to thank the minister for providing some commentary. I appreciate that, and I appreciate the sort of more broadly based, generalized view that the carbon tax, in the view of the government, needs to be or should be economy-wide. That's the theory, and I get that that's the theory.

A couple of comments, I guess, I'll just make sort of parenthetically before I get to the two specific questions that I want to ask about. The first is with regard to the effect of the carbon tax on aviation in British Columbia. Yes, aviation in British Columbia certainly does continue, but one of the areas that a carbon tax has definitely had an impact on – and I know this from conversations with the tourism minister of British Columbia – is interprovincial flights. Central Mountain Air and Air BC, which are, you know, airlines that have and do operate in British Columbia, have had to alter what they're doing in terms of availability and frequency of flights because of cost competitiveness. While perhaps it could be argued that the one single factor of a carbon tax on airline fuel was not the straw that broke the camel's back, it certainly is a factor.

I would like to ask the minister, though, two questions that I raised during the course of my speech, and if she can answer, that would be great, and if she can't, perhaps she could communicate back to me at some later date. The first is: what is the analysis as far as the effect on tankerage? I outlined why tankerage can potentially be a major problem and why tankerage actually serves to work against the goal of reducing emissions. If aircraft are flying out of province in order to fuel up and then return to Alberta and in the process are burning more fuel because they're more heavily laden with fuel, how exactly is that fulfilling or meeting the objectives?

The second area. I note with a certain amount of interest that she mentioned that Canadian airlines have reduced their overall fuel consumption by 13 per cent since 2005. It's interesting. It sounds to me like Canadian airlines are changing their behaviour, but of course that behaviour has changed without the benefit of a carbon tax. I would suggest to you that for the most part airlines, because fuel is one of their largest single cost drivers, have been looking towards more efficient aircraft for many, many years. Certainly, for the manufacturers, whether we're talking about Airbus or Boeing or Bombardier, these companies have all, as one of their main drivers, been looking for aircraft that are more fuel efficient.

My second question to the minister – and I'm hoping that I can obtain an answer – is: what is the projected revenue that the carbon tax on aviation fuel for domestic commercial flights will generate for the province? I'd appreciate it if she could provide that information just in terms of an estimated number.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, the second question I'll take first. We do have that figure, and we'll get back to you on that, hon. member, and I'll table it in the House for the benefit of the House.

The second piece, on arbitrage: we will follow that matter closely. This is why we will be working with the aviation industry and others to ensure that we've got the appropriate oversight on this matter, and we'll report back to the House on our progress on that matter.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A9?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A9 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:58 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Jansen	Rodney
Clark	Loewen	Starke
Cooper	MacIntyre	Stier
Drysdale	Nixon	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Pitt	van Dijken
Hanson		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Phillips
Carlier	Kazim	Piquette
Carson	Kleinstuber	Renaud
Connolly	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Luff	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Malkinson	Schreiner
Dach	Mason	Shepherd
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Drever	McKittrick	Swann
Eggen	McLean	Turner
Goehring	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Notley	Woollard

Totals:	For – 16	Against – 36
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[Motion on amendment A9 lost]

**The Chair:** Moving back to the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to rise today to put forth an amendment. I'll provide the applicable copies, and I'll carry on once it's been distributed. Just let me know when.

**The Chair:** Just wait until I get the original, please.

This will be amendment A10.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would move that Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 by adding the following after section 3:

Accountability reporting

3.1(1) Prior to any revenue from the carbon levy being applied to an initiative under section 3(2)(a), the Minister shall make public an estimated quantity of emissions of greenhouse gases the initiative will reduce.

(2) Before May 31 and November 30 of each year, the Minister shall prepare and make public a report summarizing the effectiveness of each initiative under section 3(2)(a) for which the carbon levy has been used including an estimate of greenhouse gas reductions achieved by each initiative.

Madam Chair, the members opposite bemoan the fact that the previous government had no sense of accountability to the taxpayers at large. However, this government has shown numerous times that it is no friend to open and transparent government. Vague legislation that is long on promises and short on details has become a hallmark of this government. This government insists that this bill is all about changing behaviour and protecting the environment and not implementing another

crippling tax upon hard-working Albertans. Unfortunately, many see this as just another tax.

This amendment, if passed, should help to reassure Albertans that there will be some tangible method of reporting and accountability before the government starts throwing around taxpayer money. It is entirely reasonable that this government be held to a reporting standard on such an unprecedented initiative as this carbon tax.

As I've already mentioned, given this government's record on passing legislation without the details being fully written and public, Albertans simply can't trust this government to get it right. We've seen that with Bill 6 and multiple other bills that this government has passed. Albertans deserve to know where this money is going, what it's being used for, and who is benefiting financially from these initiatives. That's a minimum standard, Madam Chair, that Albertans should expect.

We simply cannot afford the mistakes being made in other provinces, where green energy initiatives have already caused skyrocketing electricity rates and a renewables industry built upon a shaky foundation of government subsidies. People often ask why this technology has to be so dependent on subsidies if the technology is so sound.

Madam Chair, we need to ensure that proper measures of accountability are in place for the taxpayers' benefit. By reporting twice a year, before the end of May and November, it almost certainly assures that these reports can be tabled in the House while in session. This will allow for the proper scrutiny and accountability of every initiative that has utilized taxpayers' money from the green fund. More importantly, it allows the public to be fully aware of the process. Considering that according to some polls more than half of Albertans oppose this tax, this would give some validity to this bill should the government choose to put in some transparency measures.

Now, we've seen here several amendments brought in to increase transparency, and of course this government has voted down every single one. But there is no reason that this amendment should not be passed if the government truly believes in being open and transparent. I sincerely hope that all members of the Assembly remember that it is the taxpayer that ultimately pays the price, and it would be nice if they knew exactly what they're footing the bill for.

Madam Chair, as I look through Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, the only place I can see any kind of reporting is under schedule 2, sections 10 and 11. I'll read section 10.

Business plans

10 The Corporation shall annually complete and provide to the Minister, in a form and at a time determined by the Minister, a multi-year business plan approved by the board, which must include

- (a) the budget for the fiscal years to which the plan relates,
- (b) the goals, objectives and targets for the fiscal years to which the plan relates, and
- (c) any additional information requested by the Minister.

Now, this contemplates a business plan. It contemplates a budget, goals, objectives, targets. We don't know what these goals, objectives, and targets are. This is pretty vague wording, that I believe this amendment will clarify.

This amendment will make public the cost and estimated quantity of emissions of greenhouse gases that the initiative will reduce. If this truly is a Climate Leadership Implementation Act and if it truly is to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, which is what we've been told multiple times, then there should be no problem making public the cost and the estimated quantity of emissions that this will reduce. I think that only stands to reason.

Of course, what's contemplated in section 10 here does nothing of the sort. It's a business plan, a multiyear business plan, so it could look into the future who knows how many years. Of course, all this information can be determined by the minister. Madam Chair, when we're passing a bill in this Legislature, we should have some clarity on this, and this amendment will help provide that.

Now, section 11 says:

The Corporation shall, at such time as the Minister determines, submit to the Minister any reports, records or other information required by the Minister, including any information required for the purposes of a review of the Corporation.

Again, Madam Chair, it doesn't say anything; it's just reports and records that the minister determines, whenever the minister determines.

9:10

This amendment, Madam Chair, will clarify that, too, because in part (2) of this amendment:

the Minister shall prepare and make public a report summarizing the effectiveness of each initiative . . .

So it's actually determining what the effect of the initiative is and actually reporting on it so Albertans know what their money was spent on and whether they got full value for it. It goes on to say:

. . . under section 3(2)(a) for which the carbon levy has been used including an estimate of greenhouse gas reductions.

Madam Chair, this is a great measurement to be used in the effectiveness of this act, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. If it truly is about greenhouse gases, then why wouldn't we want to include some sort of measurement afterwards to make sure that the initiatives were effective? We don't want to repeat the same things over and over again if they're not working. I think that stands to reason.

I think it only makes sense that we have this opportunity to show Albertans what this legislation will do, with some actual measurables for emissions, and what it has done because there are going to be multiple initiatives undertaken by this. We don't know what they are, necessarily. They're not really spelled out in the legislation here. But I think it's very fair to ask that we be able to measure them, of course, estimate what will happen, and then afterwards confirm what did happen. I don't think that's too much to ask on this one.

I would encourage all to support this amendment. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A10?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Again, Madam Chair, this is an accountability measure, an attempt to have the government do some measurement and verification proving that, indeed, this pain that they're inflicting upon our people is resulting in something good. To date, with a number of amendments that have been proposed and this government using their majority to shoot them down, I believe it's becoming quite apparent that this government doesn't want to be held accountable for their actions with regard to this carbon tax on our people.

This measure, I believe, is an extremely important one. It is: "Prior to any revenue from the carbon levy being applied to an initiative . . . the Minister shall make public an estimated quantity of emissions of greenhouse gases the initiative will reduce." Here, this amendment is asking for a target. If we're going to be going through this pain, if this government is going to have such an invasive tax as this upon our economy, then let's have some targets. Is this pain worth it? That's what this is all about: is this pain worth it? Can the government back up their claim that this is worth it? So

prior to the expenditure of money from this carbon tax being applied to any initiative, the minister, in all fairness to Albertans, ought to make public an estimated quantity of emissions that this measure is going to reduce.

If the government is so certain that this carbon tax is going to result in a significant reduction, there must have been or there ought to be some sort of assessment done, some sort of technical assessment done, emissions assessment done on just what that impact is going to be. Otherwise, this tax is nothing more than a tax, with no real reason for it other than a money grab. To put out actual targets like this amendment is asking for: all right; here is an initiative. The government figures this is a good expenditure of Albertans' tax dollars. Okay. Fine. What's the ROI on this? How many millions or tens of millions of dollars per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>-e are we actually reducing here? Or none?

You know, I've done a lot of case studies on different corporations and some of the energy-saving opportunities that they have tried to use or execute within their companies and some of the failed experiments. For a savings of maybe \$150,000 the company ended up spending four times that and five times that and six times that, so from a bottom-line perspective, well, that was not a good idea. But, you know, that's the reason for alpha, beta, portfolio-wide as a concept. This government is forging ahead with a tax. We've asked repeatedly for assessments, for economic assessments and so forth, technical assessments and what have you. The government refuses to bring them forward, if they've even been done.

I believe this amendment as an accountability mechanism is absolutely vital for the credibility of this government's climate action plan, and it's all about, as I said earlier today, achieving universal buy-in. Here is an opportunity for the government to achieve some real buy-in. If we're going to have this tax, let's have this thing be measurable. Let's have some targets that we can measure against to see that this expenditure is actually worth it in the end. Without that, then this government really has no credibility for what they're imposing upon the good people of Alberta. It's just a tax for the sake of a tax under the flag of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, without any measurement, without any target to shoot at, no target to measure against. That is just patently wrong, and it's unfair to Albertans.

This is a massive tax. I call it invasive because it invades every corner of our economy, every corner of our society. No corner will be left untouched by this tax. It is worse than, say, something like a GST. You know, there's an offsetting mechanism for businesses under GST. There's no such thing under this tax. It's going to be cumulative in its effect. It's going to be compounding in its effect. It's going to do all kinds of things to every sector of our economy, and without the studies that I have repeatedly asked for, this government is flying blind. They have no idea, Madam Chair, what the impact of this thing is going to be on every sector of our economy and on every sector of our society.

This amendment is a friendly one. This is a friendly amendment that gives the government an opportunity to provide credibility for their claim that this carbon tax is going to result in emissions mitigation. If the government is going to refuse to support this amendment, then what are we left to conclude? We're left to conclude and Albertans are left to conclude, Madam Chair, that the government is playing a smoke-and-mirrors game, that they just don't want the whole story known, that this is just a tax for the sake of a money grab.

We need this. It's a desperately needed part of this whole process so that Albertans can have confidence that the money that is being extracted from their pockets, especially during this economic downturn that we are struggling under – the people of Alberta

deserve to be treated with much more compassion here and much more respect. This is their money, their hard-earned money, Madam Chair. These are people, many of whom have lost their jobs, many of whom have had hourly reductions. Some have taken pay cuts.

9:20

I was talking to a fellow, an executive, just a couple of weeks ago. His company put a 20 per cent payroll reduction right across the company just to hang on so that they didn't have to lay off workers. They're also employing job-sharing to try to reduce the amount of hours so that they, again, don't have to lay off workers, so that they're holding on to Albertans, important workers, key people. They're doing everything they possibly can to hold on, hoping for a better day, hoping that the Alberta economy will rebound in time. The don't need to have this government come along and extract \$3 billion out of an economy for a teeny population of only 4 million people. Madam Chair, it's grossly unfair.

We come to this accountability reporting amendment. Those precious people of Alberta deserve the respect and the kindness to at least be assured that the money that is being pried out of their paycheck through this carbon tax is at least going to accomplish something that this government claims is the reason for the necessity of this carbon tax. This government claims that it's an absolute necessity to hit us with this carbon tax and to put our businesses in this province at a distinctly competitive disadvantage as to the rest of the country and even the world.

You know, I want to read something, if I may, from a document entitled Canada's Ecofiscal Commission. It's been referred to by the hon. minister of the environment. Correct me if I'm wrong, Madam Chair, but I think this document has already been tabled some time ago. The title is Provincial Carbon Pricing and Competitiveness Pressures. I just want to read a couple of things here. "Significant differences in carbon prices across jurisdictions generate the possibility that some firms in some regions will experience a competitive disadvantage." This is the report that the hon. minister of the environment waves, figuratively, as being supportive of this carbon tax, the way this government is rolling it out, yet it clearly states in the introduction that "significant differences in carbon prices across jurisdictions generate the possibility that some firms in some regions will experience a competitive disadvantage."

We're in a global economy. We have to look at our competitiveness around the world for Alberta products. Alberta, of all jurisdictions in our country, is trade exposed way beyond other jurisdictions. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe it's around 18 per cent trade exposed. That's a significant amount of our products being trade exposed. Differences in carbon pricing aggravate that. It causes distortions, a market distortion. It causes a competitiveness problem.

I'll read on.

In the context of carbon pricing policy, competitiveness pressures can arise when there is a higher carbon price in one Canadian province than in other jurisdictions—either foreign or domestic. In these cases, provincial firms competing in national or international markets might experience a "carbon disadvantage" relative to firms outside the province. Given that Canadian firms have traditionally focused much of their trade within the North American market, it is the policy differences between the various Canadian provinces and between Canada and the United States that are particularly important for this discussion.

My question, then, to the government would be: did you do any comparative analysis on this trade exposure and what kind of inhibitor this carbon tax was going to be on our trade-exposed industries?

In short, carbon competitiveness pressures come from carbon-price differentials between trading partners, not the absolute level of the carbon price. Under a uniform global carbon price, for example, there would be no competitive disadvantage between [Canada's companies, Alberta's companies, and any other companies].

However,

differences between carbon prices at home and abroad can have both economic and environmental implications. When we talk about competitiveness pressures in this report, we refer only to competitive impacts on industries between jurisdictions with carbon prices of different stringency.

It should be noted that that was the focus of this report. Not every jurisdiction around the world, of course, has carbon pricing, yet we're in a globalized economy. Alberta products have to compete on the global stage. It's important, therefore, that Albertan companies have an advantage, a competitive or comparative advantage, out there. That is job creating. By its very nature it is job creating. But this carbon tax is putting that at risk. It's putting it at risk, and there is no measurable accountability reporting to ensure that this expenditure and this risk that we're putting our products at are worth it.

In short, Madam Chair, I support this one hundred per cent. I thank my hon. colleague for the thoughtfulness that he's put into this, and I would hope that every member in this Assembly will support such an excellent amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's always a pleasure to speak after the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I do have to take this opportunity to take a look at this and say that there absolutely was some very sound economic research that went into this policy, and that's why policy-makers, scientists, and industry have endorsed a carbon price as simply the best way to reduce emissions. That group includes influential and prominent Canadians like Preston Manning, and even the World Bank can be cited as saying that carbon pricing is the best way to ensure the overall goal is achieved in the most flexible and least costly way to society.

Here in Canada British Columbia saw a 6 per cent reduction in emissions after four years of having a carbon price, Madam Chair. Really, we can look at this and say: what did we do for the research? The Climate Leadership report does come out and absolutely say that we will see absolute declines of emissions by 2020, and these declines could be as high as 30 to 35 megatonnes by 2020. That's through things like phasing out emissions from coal-fired plants, increasing our renewables use, putting a price on emissions, and establishing performance standards.

I want to touch a little bit more on performance standards, Madam Chair, because performance standards do exactly what the hon. member across the way was talking about, which was to ensure that the trade-exposed industries in Alberta are able to be competitive in a global marketplace. That is exactly what the economists recommended, and that's exactly what this government is implementing because we recognize and are cognizant of all of these concerns. Doing things like reducing methane emissions and investing in energy efficiency and investing in innovation in technology with hundreds of millions of dollars is simply what is going to get us to this 30 to 35 megatonnes. As we work with our stakeholders to finalize the implementation of these plans, we absolutely do believe and understand what the report suggests, which is that the 30 to 35 megatonnes are what you're going to see. I do think that really does succinctly account for this first point in the amendment.

Secondly, Madam Chair, there's a point about how there should be reporting and public accountability. There are already a lot of these steps in place in the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, which requires all ministries to prepare a business plan and an annual report. The annual report includes the consolidated financial statements and a comparison of performance results to the business plan and any explanations of variances between the two. These annual reports also include a report of the Auditor General on the department's financial statements. Really, I do believe that this is very sufficient for our purposes, for an audit of the ministry and moving forward from there. That is simply why the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act was brought in.

Madam Chair, quite simply, 30 to 35 megatonnes are what we're going to be seeing in reductions by 2020, and that's been done through thorough consultation and thorough expertise from our industry partners, from our economic partners here in the government and the research academies in this great province. Really, there are already a lot of accountability measures built in place in this government, so I really don't think that, necessarily, this amendment is needed at this time, and I would implore all members to vote against it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

9:30

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment. I know you'll be surprised that I will be speaking in favour of the amendment.

You know, Madam Chair, a little over a year ago the government changed. When people in Alberta voted for change, they were hoping that a new leaf would be turned over, that the new government would shed some of the ways of the previous government, that had become not nearly as responsive and accountable to the Alberta people. I think you'd even find, if you looked in a number of media reports or even in this House, that the third party has acknowledged that, that they had strayed, if you will, from some of their core principles of accountability and responsiveness to the Alberta public.

The sad thing – and I mean this genuinely because I, too, had this renewed sense of hope that when it came to being accountable, to listening to the needs of Albertans, to being responsive to that, the government of the day would turn back to the people, if you will, and be accountable to them. Obviously, there's a vast chasm between that side of the House and this side of the House, and there are a lot of varying opinions on Bill 20. But what I've been most surprised about is that the government has little to no desire to ensure that within the context of Bill 20 it is as open and accountable as possible.

While the Official Opposition does not like the direction of Bill 20, in this amendment we aren't even trying to make significant changes to the implementation of the bill but only, Madam Chair, to provide a level of accountability that Albertans expect. I think we'll find that over a period of time not only will Albertans expect it, but Albertans will demand it. This amendment is about being accountable and transparent to Albertans. The government wants to fund emission reduction initiatives with taxpayers' dollars, and taxpayers deserve to evaluate the success of their investments in the form of emission reduction reports from each initiative. If, in fact, we're going to be investing in reduction of emissions, then we should be able to measure the emissions being reduced. And as members of that caucus once believed, it's important that that report come back to the Assembly. It's not just a report for the inner workings of the front bench but a report that all Albertans can have access to.

Now, Madam Chair, we will continue in our position that this is a bad tax made worse by bad timing and by failing to come anywhere close to revenue neutral, but if the government is insisting on making these new tax initiatives, then we ought to make sure that they are accountable to the people. It's important that as we move towards reductions, there is accountability for Albertans and to Albertans. It's unacceptable that the government would impose a heavy carbon tax on Albertans and not be clear about how those funds are used, and that's exactly what this amendment does. It provides a vehicle for Albertans to know how and where these funds will be used, that they won't just be used for the political gain of the NDP, that they won't just be used in funding special-interest projects that are a net benefit to the NDP or their friends. An amendment like this provides the accountability to this Chamber that Albertans expect and deserve.

Madam Chair, my hon. colleagues from Grande Prairie and Innisfail-Sylvan Lake made some significant and persuasive arguments. I think it's important that we ensure that there is transparency for all Albertans on such a significant amount of resources. We're not just talking about 10 million bucks here, and even if we were speaking of 10 million bucks, Albertans should have accountability and trust and the knowledge of how dollars are being spent. But we are talking about billions of dollars.

I know that the outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills want me and this Assembly to be accountable to them, to be accountable to the people. What Bill 20 does is that it allows the government to hide behind legislation, to hide behind the inner workings of cabinet and not bring the types of accountability that Albertans know and deserve. That's exactly what this amendment does, and that's exactly why every member in the Chamber should support this amendment this evening.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A10?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A10 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:37 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Hanson	Rodney
Barnes	Jansen	Starke
Clark	Loewen	Stier
Cooper	MacIntyre	Strankman
Drysdale	Nixon	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Pitt	Yao

9:40

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Notley
Carlier	Horne	Phillips
Carson	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Ceci	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Connolly	Luff	Schmidt
Coolahan	Mason	Schreiner
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Shepherd
Dang	McKittrick	Sucha
Drever	McLean	Turner
Eggen	Miller	Westhead
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard



Totals: For – 18 Against – 33

[Motion on amendment A10 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the bill. Are there any further amendments, questions, comments? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Before I begin, I want to assure everyone that I've very carefully read my remarks, and like Don Cherry, *Hansard* is operating on a 30-second delay today.

Madam Chair, I've been itching to get back here and fight the carbon tax with my colleagues because that's what Albertans elected us to do. Now, a \$3 billion ND PST carbon tax on everything is bad enough, but there's another twist to this story, and that is that there will be a tax on tax in this.

**An Hon. Member:** Tell us more.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The plot thickens.

This NDP carbon tax is going to be a buried cost as a good. Therefore, in the way the federal GST is applied, the GST will tax the carbon tax. That is a tax on tax. Now, a \$3 billion carbon tax is going to hit Albertans hard enough, and my colleagues on the opposition side of this House have very ably spelled that out, how this is going to punish families and hurt our economy. But beyond that, now the GST will be applied to the carbon tax: a tax on tax.

Now, not only is this grossly unfair to the taxpayers of Alberta as a concept, but it is going to be a tax that we are paying for which we will receive virtually zero return. We're going to be paying extra taxes to Ottawa, essentially a voluntary giveaway to the capital. We're going to send more money to Ottawa without any requirement that a single dollar of that be sent back. Now, Madam Chair, I know that some members are very happy to send more money to Ottawa, but I know that the people of Strathmore-Brooks and, I believe, the people of Alberta believe that we send enough money to Ottawa, and we should not be doing this.

Now, at the very least – at the very least – if the government is going to go ahead with this, they should demand a rebate from Ottawa for this. If they are saying that we are acting in partnership with Ottawa to deal with climate change, that's fine. I can accept that. But if we're doing our part for climate change, why should we be handing more free money directly to Ottawa without receiving anything back for it whatsoever? The reasonable thing to do would be for the Premier to request of the Prime Minister that they rebate this money to the Alberta government. I think that is an entirely reasonable request.

That rebate money should be put back to Albertans in the form of tax cuts, or if they refuse to go the road of tax cuts, which they obviously are, they should increase the rebate on that front so when Albertans go to the pump or when Albertans buy groceries or they buy any product that could have the GST applied to it and they're sending more money to Ottawa, that money should be sent back to Alberta. The government insists that this entire scheme is about social licence, but, Madam Chair, it's very obvious that this is about wealth redistribution. This is not about social licence; this is licensed socialism. It is a tax grab, it is a money grab from Albertans, and it's going to send even more money to Ottawa without a penny of it coming back. That is why I and the Wildrose are proud to vote against the carbon tax.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** I was just simply going to ask the member: how much tax could a carbon tax tax if a carbon tax could tax tax?

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 20 in Committee of the Whole, and I'd like to move an amendment. I have the requisite number of copies, and I will wait for you to have a copy at the table before I continue.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you. I move that Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 as follows. (a) Section 4(1) is amended by adding the following after clause (c):

(c.1) fuel used in connection with the forestry industry or commercial tree nursery industry in the circumstances set out in the regulations, and

(b) Section 79(1) is amended by adding the following after clause (b):

(b.1) prescribing, for the purposes of section 4(1)(c.1), the circumstances in which fuel is used in connection with the forestry industry or commercial tree nursery industry.

Madam Chair, this is a relatively straightforward amendment. It looks to provide a little extra bit of support for those in our forestry industry and commercial tree nursery industry. This amendment would mean fuel use in the forestry industry and commercial tree nursery industry would be exempt from paying a carbon tax under section 4(1), and the circumstances would be prescribed in the regulations. The regulations would have the power to outline what, exactly, could be exempt.

Forestry plays an important part in Alberta's economy. It contributes around \$5 billion in economic impact to our economy and provides more than 10,000 jobs. It is also our third-largest manufacturing sector. The forestry industry is already being hit by carbon tax on transportation and locomotive fuels. These additional costs would mean many small producers would be forced out at a time when Alberta is really looking for this industry to lead and continue to diversify our economy.

Just as importantly, commercial tree nurseries have a vital impact on our province. It is also the industry that leads the planting of seedlings for oil sands reclamation. Early indications are that the carbon tax along with other recent policy directions from this government will mean a cost increase of 18.5 per cent to the industry. If some of the worst-case scenarios were to eventuate as prescribed, this industry could be forced out of Alberta within three to five years. The average natural gas bill for one nursery is approximately \$250,000 annually. It is estimated that the gas bill alone will increase to between \$350,000 and \$500,000 annually once the carbon tax is fully implemented at \$30 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>. I would ask all members to see the importance of this amendment and the positive effect it would have on the industry.

**9:50**

You know, the forestry industry along with the ag industry does a lot for the reduction of carbon in our province. They both have a carbon sink. With added technology – like in farming, the zero tillage has reduced our carbon footprint by a whole lot more than this carbon tax will. Now by punishing those two industries where we're looking for diversification and industries that could lead the carbon sink – I think it's unnecessary to punish them. The PCs support putting a price on carbon, but the way the NDP government has structured their carbon tax will hurt Alberta families and businesses.

There's no denying that climate change is real and that we as legislators can play a role in fighting it, but we do not believe this bill in its current form will achieve that goal. Bill 20 lacks important details about how the carbon tax will be implemented, how the new energy efficiency agency will be structured, and how much all of this will really cost Albertans. The NDP need to be much more transparent with Albertans. Bill 20 in its current form is deeply flawed, and our caucus has brought forward a series of amendments that will reduce carbon emissions without hurting the taxpayer, including an amendment to make the carbon tax truly revenue neutral. Without passing these amendments, we will not be able to support this bill.

Hon. members, I encourage you to support this amendment. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to offer my enthusiastic support to this amendment. I think it is very consistent with what the objective, – at least what I would hope is the objective – of Bill 20 actually is. If the objective of the Climate Leadership Implementation Act is to in fact reduce carbon emissions in this province, then there are, I guess, a couple of ways they can go about that. If the government intends to support important industries like forestry and seedling nurseries in their efforts to sequester carbon by growing more trees, one would hope that that's the sort of thing precisely we want to be doing in this province. Unfortunately, the way the carbon tax currently works is that we're actually going to increase costs on those very producers, and there's significant risk that we end up driving those companies out of business and out of the province, especially to places like British Columbia.

Now, that could lead to the second way that this government could end up reducing Alberta's carbon footprint. By putting companies out of business, I guess they're not going to be working anymore and producing no carbon. We don't want that. That, I can assure you, from this end of the House, anyway, is not what we want, and I would hope, in all sincerity, that that's also not what the government wants.

But this is a very good example of some nuance and subtlety that would be very important to build in to this bill, and it is a perfect example of the unintended consequence – at least I hope it's an unintended consequence – from the government as they work through Bill 20. I don't think that they intend just to punish nurseries and seedling companies, but when you add up the cumulative costs of carbon tax, of the minimum wage increase, of compliance costs with Bill 6, you're going to find that a lot of these companies are now moving from a very thin position of being profitable to a position of being not profitable. You may find – I think that there's significant risk that you'll find – that you put these companies out of business in a short period of time. They have choices. They can in fact move across the border to British Columbia, where they do have substantial exemptions for carbon-neutral or carbon-negative business. That's something I think this government should really consider as you work through the details of the bill.

An amendment like this is going to substantially strengthen the bill, improve the perception of the bill in the minds of Albertans, and gain the credibility which I think this government badly needs for this carbon tax and beyond.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I, too, rise to voice my support for this amendment and thank the hon. member for bringing it. Cypress-Medicine Hat is an extensive greenhouse part of our

province, and there are many, many good growers. The nurseries for seedlings is a very strong business, as the hon. member said, for reforestry in the oil sands area, throughout northern Alberta, and of course it's a great job provider.

I've been sitting here for a little while listening to many, many parts of the debate, and it is a bit hard to add anything new. Starting with the old part, I'm still amazed at how regressive this tax is going to be to all Albertans, with the unintended consequences, the hidden costs, the horrendous timing, when areas like Medicine Hat have almost 10 per cent unemployment, and how far reaching this tax is going to be for all aspects of our society and our economy.

One of the things that rolled through my mind, though, with this forestry bill and the, you know, attempt to have the carbon tax excluded from aviation is that if we're going to have a tax, no matter how bad a tax is, the tax base should be as broad as possible. That means shared as widely as possible. But I think in the case of the carbon tax, that makes absolutely no sense. It's because the money goes to a slush fund. It's because the money gets handed out directly to the government's friends and those insiders. So it's not going to be like a true tax, that actually goes into health services or education or roads and that are there for the use of every Albertan. I think that, yeah, there's really no way to spread this tax fairly across as many Albertans as possible because at the end of the day the recipients of the tax money are going to be specifically involved with the government. Of course, we saw that on the stage months ago. That's a great, great concern to Albertans.

I'm concerned, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow talked about, about the harm that this is going to have on the economy. Although it's an amendment or two ago, I remember one of my friends, who was very, very successful in the technology business, who is located in a city in British Columbia. I was talking to my friend, and I said: "Why not Medicine Hat? Why not Alberta?" He said: "Because of the airport. Because of the cost of flying out of here." I think back to the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. His point is bang on. It's going to make an already expensive industry, that already is in decline, even that much harder to survive, to be competitive. It's the type of industry that is exactly what we need to diversify our economy, to provide jobs, you know, to provide those high margins where companies and employees can pay taxes for the services we need like health, education, roads, and our social safety net.

Again, I thank the member for bringing yet another proposal forward of one of our strong, strong industries that is going to be so unduly affected as it affects, you know, other competitors and other provinces. I spoke last week about carbon leakage and how I think all we're really doing is giving a cost and a competitive advantage to Montana, to B.C., and to Saskatchewan. Because they'll be more competitive, we'll actually do the opposite of what the government intends and increase carbon but at the same time hurt the Alberta economy.

Madam Chair, I'm very much in favour of supporting a strong industry like forestry, strong environmental stewardship, like nurseries and seedling greenhouses and growers, and very, very much in favour of not doing Albertans and the Alberta economy any more harm.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you.

**An Hon. Member:** You again?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yeah. Me again.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I am in favour of this amendment, and I will illuminate the reasons why. Forestry as an industry is entirely

trade exposed. Entirely trade exposed. Not only is it entirely trade exposed, but the margins that the softwood industry in our country have been experiencing over the last number of years have been declining. It's been tough.

**10:00**

Forestry is one of those industries. I'm sure everyone in this House can remember the NAFTA wars in the softwood lumber industry. Our softwood lumber industry has spent literally millions and millions of dollars protecting itself. Being so terribly market exposed and having margins so terribly reduced over the last number of years has put our lumber industry at a significant disadvantage.

Another thing that we need to consider about this is that the boreal forest, which is, you know, the source of lumber in our province and in our nation, is one gigantic carbon sink. But as trees rot, they actually emit methane through the process. The only way trees are actually a hundred per cent carbon sink is if we harvest them. So the harvesting of trees in our province is actually helping the provincial government meet its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

To then come after this very same industry, that is being such an enormous help, and hit them with a carbon tax on fuel used in connection with forestry or commercial tree nursery operations is actually fighting against the very industry that could be helping. This is absurd, absolutely absurd. Here is an industry which, of the many industries in this province, is being enormously helpful in harvesting trees, these huge, beautiful carbon sinks that we have, and this government is penalizing them. Hello? What sense is this?

Furthermore, to take an industry that is 100 per cent trade exposed like this and to put them at a competitive disadvantage – and I pointed out from the Ecofiscal Commission report, that the hon. minister of the environment likes to wave around this place, that carbon taxes have the ability to damage competitiveness across jurisdictions – here's an example of that. Our lumber industry is going to be put at a competitive disadvantage, and it is totally trade exposed to the United States lumber industry. So not only are they being put at a competitive disadvantage, but let's remember that under NAFTA it is just as easy for a lumber distributor in Calgary to order out of the United States, out of Oregon or Washington, as it is for him to pick up a phone and order lumber out of High Level or to order lumber out of Grande Prairie. He can order lumber from wherever he wants to. NAFTA allows for that.

Now here we are putting our own lumber industry at a disadvantage. Now, you might say: oh, it's just a tiny little disadvantage. No, it is not. Fuel is an enormous input cost to our lumber industry because of the transportation cost necessary for moving our lumber to market. We move our lumber to market both by truck and by rail. By truck and by rail. And where is this carbon tax being applied? To transporting by truck and by rail. We have a locomotive tax. We have tax on fuel now. This is crazy. Here is an industry that is going to be hurt by this carbon tax. That means jobs. That means profitability.

**Mr. Hanson:** They're taxing baby trees now.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** And now they're taxing baby trees.

Now, just to show you that I'm not an angry Santa all the time, that I do indeed have a sense of humour, it really does something to me to see a group of people who are tree huggers taxing trees. Where does this come from? My goodness.

**Mr. Connolly:** What's next? Bushes? Flowers?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** You're probably going to be taxing flowers. Yes, florists are going to be taxed.

**An Hon. Member:** This is about greenhouses.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** You know, greenhouses are going to be taxed.

**Mr. Connolly:** Succulents? Cacti?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yes. Like, come on, you guys. It's terrible. I have pictures in my mind of little girls and their little tree: oh, it's taxed now. Like, come on.

However, in all seriousness, Madam Chair, we have a tax on a very trade-exposed industry. This tax is going to put them at a competitive disadvantage. It is going to result in more difficulty in moving Alberta's softwood products to market, softwood products that have to come from way up north in our province and get shipped all the way south in our province. The cost of transportation is one of the more significant inputs into softwood lumber. This is a terrible idea, and I would hope that all members in this House, especially those that love to hug trees, can support the exemption that this amendment is attempting to put forward.

Thank you for your applause, and I trust that you will provide support if for no other reason than you liked my speech.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't know how to follow that. It's not even that late.

In any case, what we're doing here with this carbon levy, with our climate leadership plan: we are not putting a price on trees; we are putting a price on carbon emissions. It's been designed to be an economy-wide price on carbon. We want to reduce emissions, which is why the price on carbon has been designed how it has been, to be economy-wide. It's something that is designed to be fair across all industries. This does not work if it is applied unfairly. We could be here all night . . .

**An Hon. Member:** We will be.

**Ms Luff:** We will be here all night while you try to exempt individual industries and individual aspects of individual industries at a time, but the premise of the price on carbon is that it is applied universally across the economy.

As such, we are not creating efficiencies and we're not encouraging efficiencies if we allow various exemptions. The thing with the price on carbon is that it really is a fundamentally conservative solution to something that we don't want. We don't want carbon emissions. Hank Paulson, the former U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, said: the solution is a fundamentally conservative one that will empower the marketplace to find the most efficient response; we can do this by putting a price on emissions of carbon dioxide.

Every industry in Alberta is important, and we as a government support every industry in Alberta that is working to create jobs here in Alberta, which is why we are going to work with industry and have been working with industry here in Alberta by using the funds from this carbon levy and putting back that money into industry to enable them to adapt to our carbon-constrained future, to be able to adapt and find efficiencies in their operations.

We cannot be here all night trying to exempt individual industries. This has been designed as a province-wide, industry-wide, economy-wide price on carbon to reduce emissions, which is what we want to do because it is the right thing to do, because it will help us diversify our economy. It will help us move Alberta

forward. We are going to work with all industries. Every industry is important. Every industry will get assistance through Energy Efficiency Alberta, through various programs that can be provided.

I would urge all members of this House to vote against this amendment.

**10:10**

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair. A couple of quick questions here. First off, on this question of trade exposure there has been some selective quoting from the Leach report and from the Ecofiscal Commission this evening. The performance standards that we are phasing in as we phase out the specified gas emitters regulation is exactly the mechanism, the public policy mechanism, that we are using to address these competitiveness concerns.

I know it's technical and hard to understand, but, you know, that is the reality, that what we are phasing in is an output-based allocation for trade-exposed industries like fertilizer, cement, certainly oil sands and other large final emitters, Madam Chair. Now, that is so that we can maintain a level of comparability with other jurisdictions because certainly other places, whether they are pricing carbon or instituting a cap-and-trade system, are increasingly using the performance standards in order to account for competitiveness concerns and carbon leakage concerns.

In addition, I've heard quite a bit of very strange comments coming from a party that purports to, you know, have the back of the oil and gas industry. However, I've heard a tremendous amount of hand-wringing over the composition of the stage on November 22. I've heard comments about big oil and this sort of stuff, Madam Chair, which is entirely inappropriate. These folks are job creators, and they contributed meaningfully to this process and continue to do so. Certainly, Alberta remains an energy economy and will be so for the foreseeable future. What we need to make sure of is that we are competitive moving forward. Certainly, the oil and gas companies recognize this if the Official Opposition does not.

Now, as for the amendment here with respect to use by the forestry industry, Madam Chair, I will say, first of all, that we have proposed to make reinvestments in the bioenergy program. That is a program that we are continuing to review. We have of course listed it in the budgetary allocations. That is an initiative undertaken jointly by the climate office, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, and the minister of economic development. Certainly, we know that we can be leaders on bioenergy, just as we are in other sectors. We're going to make sure that we are designing really smart, lean, efficient bioenergy programs that achieve those greenhouse gas reductions while ensuring that we are diversifying the economy.

I will just make the final point that for off-road use the forestry industry can use and does use marked fuel. It's not just for the agriculture industry but also for construction and forestry. They will indeed, for that off-road use, benefit from that exemption, Madam Chair, in addition to the investments that we will be making through reinvesting the carbon levy and through the in-compliance standards for the large final emitters. When we invest in innovation and technology, we fully anticipate that some of those initiatives will build on our strength as Albertans in the bioenergy sector.

**The Chair:** Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's rather obvious to the House that there seems to be some misunderstanding between the hon. minister of the environment and the hon. Member for Calgary-East. The Member for Calgary-East said that this is economy-wide and that it's fair because it's economy-wide. Then

the hon. minister of the environment gets up and says: well, you know, there's this exemption and that exemption and this other exemption. So what's it going to be?

It's interesting that the very industries that the hon. minister of the environment says are supportive of the carbon tax are the very industries exempt from it – no surprise – yet the very industry that could be helping with mitigation of greenhouse gases through the growing and harvesting of trees is being penalized for the industry that it is.

Insofar as off-road fuel, obviously, the minister of the environment hasn't worked in a logging operation. The more significant fuel use is in transporting the finished product all the way to market. Secondly, there's also the cost of natural gas to fire the kilns to kiln-dry the lumber before it's even stuck on a truck or a train. Obviously, no economic impact assessment was done on the lumber industry, for goodness' sake. This is terrible. Such a lack of understanding of an industrial sector that provides so much employment in this province and provides so much greenhouse gas mitigation – it's just terrible that this government is going to penalize this industry when it is already struggling under low margins and significant barriers to trade.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A11?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A11 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:16 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Fildebrandt	Pitt
Anderson, W.	Hanson	Starke
Barnes	Jansen	Stier
Clark	Loewen	Strankman
Cooper	MacIntyre	van Dijken
Drysdale	Nixon	Yao

**10:20**

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Notley
Carlier	Kazim	Phillips
Carson	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Ceci	Littlewood	Renaud
Connolly	Luff	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Malkinson	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Schreiner
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Shepherd
Dang	McKitrick	Sucha
Drever	McLean	Turner
Eggen	Miller	Westhead
Ganley	Miranda	Woollard
Goehring	Nielsen	

Totals: For – 18 Against – 38

[Motion on amendment A11 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I, too, have an amendment to present. I will hand this to the table and wait till you receive it.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A12.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I will read it out. I move that Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 as follows: (a) Section 4(1) is amended by adding the following after clause (c):

(c.1) fuel used in connection with an industry that produces a net negative emission of greenhouse gases in the circumstances set out in the regulations, and

(b) Section 79(1) is amended by adding the following after clause (b):

(b.1) prescribing, for the purposes of section 4(1)(c.1), the circumstances in which fuel is used in connection with an industry that produces a net negative emission of greenhouse gases.

The purpose of this amendment, hon. members, is to simplify the determination of what is and is not a net negative emission industry, perhaps not singling out one, as the previous member attempted to do, but addressing some of the concerns and questions that the minister had raised about picking winners and losers, or targeting, in particular.

I think that it's important to recognize that the purpose of this bill, as we've said previously, is to reduce carbon emissions. In doing that, we ought to be providing appropriate incentives as broadly as possible for any industry that does not produce carbon emissions and that, in fact, is net negative. I think that agriculture zero-till methods are one very good example, and there are many, many more examples of industries that are, in fact, carbon neutral or carbon negative. Those industries not only ought not be punished; they ought to be rewarded for their work. Those are the sorts of industries we want to see in this province.

The objective here is to reduce carbon emissions. If, in fact, we find that we're sending these sorts of industries out of Alberta, then we are going to find that maybe our carbon emissions go up in a way that we had not intended. The goal here, of course, is carbon reduction, and to spur new industries that are carbon negative or carbon neutral ought to be the intent. It's important that we recognize that there are industries that we have not yet identified that may fit into this category, and every one of those industries is important.

I would sincerely hope that given the importance of reducing carbon, if that is, in fact, the goal of the government, they would consider supporting this very important amendment, which I do believe will improve the bill and help raise the profile and the appreciation for the bill in the eyes of Albertans.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to this amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise in support of this amendment. You know, we hear a lot about carbon emissions in Alberta and how the oil sands are one of the highest emitters in the country, but we never look at the net difference of Alberta. The amount of carbon that's sunk in our ag industry and our forest industry is huge. I wonder if this government has done the calculation on the amount of carbon that's sunk in Alberta with ag and forestry compared to the number of emissions, and I wonder what the net difference would be.

This amendment is a great amendment, and I think that the industries that sink carbon should be rewarded, not punished.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you. Just to the hon. member's point, I've had ranchers and agriculturists call me and tell me that they feel that the value of carbon stored in our good rangeland and our agricultural land is \$13 billion a year, an incredible environmental record for our good producers.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to this amendment? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of this fine amendment from my hon. colleague. It seems to me that if this government is genuine in its drive to implement a tax which has been described around the world by experts as one of those behavioural modification mechanisms and we have a sector of our economy that's actually contributing to the sinking of carbon just by virtue of what that industry does and that industry or that sector is resultant in a net negative, they should be rewarded, not penalized. It doesn't make any sense whatsoever to penalize an industry that's actually helping in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

If this government is being honest with Albertans and honestly believes that their carbon tax is going to result in a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, if they really, really believe that that's the reason for this carbon tax, then any industry that's already contributing positively to the solution shouldn't be penalized. It only makes sense. For this government to penalize any industry, whether it be forestry, whether it be ag, whether it be greenhouses – anybody that's doing something that sinks carbon ought to be rewarded, not penalized. Yet they are not some, you know, that are being exempted under this thing.

I wholeheartedly support this amendment. I would encourage all members of this House to support this. I would encourage the government side to support this because this amendment right here will tell the truth on whether you really are interested in greenhouse gas mitigation or simply out there to grab a bunch of money out of the pockets of Albertans. If you're really serious about greenhouse gas mitigation and we've got industries that are actually doing this stuff and reducing greenhouse gases, then I expect that this government would be rewarding them. This amendment will allow you the opportunity to prove that you really are serious about GHG reductions. If this amendment is voted down, then that really will tell the story on what you're about with this carbon tax.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to the amendment. I do want to set some things out very clearly from the beginning about this amendment. I think this amendment by the hon. member across the way is really well intentioned, but what it does, again, is that it carves an emissions group out of that economy-wide price.

What we're looking at here is that we already have in the legislation, in the bill, an offset program. There's an offset program where we have the opportunity for industries that are large emitters to buy offsets from approved smaller emitters that aren't emitting. So what the hon. member across the way is talking about, there is already a program in place to address those sorts of issues. I believe that the offset industry that will come up as a result of Bill 20 is really a viable way to target that. That's in line with what the Climate Leadership report talked about and in line with the intents

of the bill and the intents of this amendment, really, I think. There is an opportunity for industries that are not emitting as much to really benefit from Bill 20, as is the intention of this amendment.

As we move forward, we can also note that in a lot of the industries we're talking about, there are already some exemptions such as the marked fuel exemption for farm use, Madam Chair. As we develop programming for microgeneration and energy efficiency in this province, we're going to be working with our partners in agriculture and in other industries to develop programming to make sure that we are capitalizing on these offset programs, capitalizing on generation in the province and reducing emissions across the province. That's why this bill, I think, and the offset program that we have already really do address a lot of the issues that are found in this amendment. When we talk about this and we talk about being competitive in a global market, I think that it's important to keep those things in mind, that we are shaping this legislation in a thoughtful way to make sure that as we move forward, it's an economy-wide reduction. That's why we have an economy-wide price. It's a reduction across the entire province, across all industries.

10:30

When we can find those optimizations and when we can find those efficiencies – we're working with our industry to develop those programs, and the offset program is one of those pieces, Madam Chair. That's why we have things like the performance standards piece, which allows trade-exposed industries to be able to compete in a world market without having to worry about the carbon levy in the same way as other industries, and that's why we've made sure that this is a very thoughtful and thorough piece of legislation.

Madam Chair, at this time I'd have to ask the members, because we already have programming in place for this, to vote down this amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A12?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A12 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:31 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Starke
Anderson, W.	Jansen	Stier
Barnes	Loewen	Strankman
Clark	MacIntyre	van Dijken
Drysdale	Nixon	Yao
Fildebrandt	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Carlier	Hinkley	Notley
Carson	Horne	Phillips
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinsteinuber	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schmidt
Dach	Malkinson	Schreiner
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Shepherd
Drever	McKittrick	Sucha

EGgen	McLean	Turner
Feehan	Miller	Westhead
Ganley	Miranda	Woollard
Totals:	For – 17	Against – 39

[Motion on amendment A12 lost]

**The Chair:** Moving back to Bill 20, the hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 20. I think it's time for us to talk about a very important issue to me, and that's charities. Charities come in all shapes and sizes, from your local food bank, as we've discussed here before, ensuring that families have access to basic food needs, to the larger national organizations like the Red Cross, who've supported so many in Fort McMurray as we speak and ongoingly, I'm sure.

Now, Madam Chair, all charities in Alberta are about to see a significant rise in their operating costs for fuel, heating, food, and travel, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, not to mention that those who use the food banks will see a rise in their costs as well. As I've referenced in this House before, these rising costs come at a time when charities are already facing a double-edged sword. On the one hand, due to the economic climate and the fact that many Albertans are struggling, charities are seeing an increased demand for their products and services and a decrease in the actual donations that are coming in.

This climate is only made worse as a result of this bill in its current form. This is specifically in regard to charities in our province. We have asked this government many times for a full market assessment – many times this has been shot down – and, in particular, for the effects that will be placed on charities in this province. It is also so important that as we as legislators debate bills, that we take a broad look at all aspects of society that are potentially affected. This would be the important, responsible thing to do when we're creating legislation. A government shouldn't be implementing broad-based taxation schemes without having all the answers first, Madam Chair. The result is that things like charities get missed from the equation. That's what we've seen here. Charities have been missed. Ultimately, it is Alberta's most vulnerable people that will suffer the most from a tax like this.

Now, this is why, Madam Chair, I come forward with a solution. I would like to propose an amendment which will include charities and charitable activities in the rebate scheme. While we know that the actual costs associated with this tax will undoubtedly raise the cost of everything, I believe that allowing charities to have some mechanisms for a rebate is a positive step towards ensuring that their important front-line social services are unhindered by this tax policy. We need to be responsible. We need to make sure that our most vulnerable are protected. I'm sure that this was just an oversight in such a large piece of legislation, and I'm certain that all members in this House recognize the importance that charities have in our society and for the people within Alberta and those who rely on our charities so much. I am pleased to rise to introduce Wildrose amendment 3, an amendment to extend the rebate to charitable organizations.

I have the appropriate number of copies here signed by Parliamentary Counsel. Shall I proceed?

**The Chair:** Let me see the original first, please.

This will be amendment A13.

Go ahead, hon. member.

10:40

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am absolutely pleased to introduce this amendment. It reads: Mrs. Pitt to move that Bill 20,

the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 in section 19 by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) The purposes and uses prescribed under subsection (1) for which a rebate may be paid must include charitable activities engaged in by registered charities.

Now, Madam Chair, this is an amendment, I feel, that all sides of the House can support. This is certainly something to strengthen the bill, to show our commitment to the most vulnerable people in Alberta by really protecting and promoting the work that charities do in our province and really supporting them and the activities that they engage in.

I just would like to stress, Madam Chair, that in this climate, this economic crisis that we are in, there are so many of us here in Alberta that rely on charitable organizations for day-to-day living: the food banks, Meals on Wheels. There are so many charities that need our support, and this is an opportunity for this House to show these hard-working individuals that we support them, that we've got their backs.

I will plead with members of this House to please support this amendment. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I wish to rise and speak in favour of amendment A13. Charities, I think, are the backbone of our society. Charities are very near and dear to my heart. I've been involved in charities for several years in my constituency, and I've had the privilege for the last two and a half decades to be involved in a philanthropic organization called the Shriners. Yeah, we wear those little red hats, we get in parades, we ride around, and we kind of look like we're having a lot of fun, but I'll tell you what we do. We raise an awful lot of money to take care of the vulnerable, the vulnerable people in our society. We provide financial support and personal support to many organizations.

These people are the most vulnerable in our society, and right now, in very tough economic times, what I've noticed in my own constituency is that the SNAPS organization, that deals with autistic children, is running into financial difficulty. The food banks in both Okotoks and High River: their demand is up well over 50 per cent. This carbon tax is going to impact the amount of capitalization they'll be able to receive. There's only so much money that we can raise on their behalf. Rowan House, a personal charity that I've been involved with for several decades in both my constituency and others, is a women's shelter. Right now they're turning away 10 to 12 families a month. They can barely keep the lights on. This tax, without an opportunity to provide them with any sort of rebate, is going to cause hindrance and a difficult situation for a lot of women and children who are in abusive relationships.

These are very tough economic times, and additional taxation is not a great thing to be doing to these organizations. I think that by refusing to exempt them, this government, in my opinion, is showing a profound disinterest in providing for the most vulnerable individuals and charities working within our society and, especially in my constituency, within this province. Charities need a break.

For the sake of the kids, for the sake of the children I deal with as a Shriner every day, I request that you please support this amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A13? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this amendment, brought forward by the hon. Member for Airdrie. I am most certainly in support of this amendment. One of the interesting things in the last election that I think we can all remember was when the PCs – and they brought it back; to their credit, they reversed it – started to mess a little bit with our charities across this province. I know that all of us remember the outrage that we were hearing at the doors or in town halls or wherever you might have been campaigning while that was going on. It was pretty clear that Albertans were upset.

Now, this House knows that I have a long history in the charitable sector. I know that members on the other side of this Assembly also have a long history in the charitable sector. I know that those members know that we rely on charities in the province of Alberta to help with our social needs. That's the reality. We have charities working with all demographics across our province that we depend on. Some of them have already been mentioned: Meals on Wheels for our seniors. I know the work I did with the Mustard Seed is going to be affected by this, and that's important.

What we have seen this evening over and over is the government standing up and saying that they're trying to make it fair or trying to justify the decisions and the overwhelming tax burden that they are about to put onto families, municipalities, schools. While I completely disagree with that and have made that very clear on the record, I think that, at the very least, this government should take a step back and look at what they're doing to charities because we depend on charities. That's something that this government stands up on quite often and tries to say that they want to support charities or at least the causes they're working on, but this clearly does not support charities.

I also would like to hear from the government side on what kind of consultation they have done with charities or the charity sector to understand what the impact of this new tax is going to be on their operations and what the impact is going to be on social issues all across this province and all across many different types of social issues.

Now, my dad – I talk about him lots because I'm proud of him – has left the Mustard Seed now. He's retired. He's in his well-earned retirement. For him, that meant that he went and became the executive director of Oxford House in his retirement because it was a little bit smaller than the Mustard Seed and, you know, he could work more closely with the addicts that he likes to work with. What they do at Oxford House is that they have houses where ex-addicts live together within communities independently within those houses. I was talking to him on Sunday. He was at my house, and before I came back up to Edmonton on Sunday night, Madam Chair, I asked him what their math is just on what they think the increased heat, electricity costs are that they're going to see because of this government's policies. He says that their preliminary math is showing that they are going to lose 1 bed per 3 houses because of this.

Now, think about that. The decision this government is making could cause one person not to have a bed just in that organization. That's just one organization of many organizations across the province that are depending on donations and are trying to help people, that we depend on as a province to be able to meet the social needs of our province. Now, I can assure you, knowing my dad and knowing the team that is around him, they're not going to allow that person to lose their bed. They're going to have to go out and fund raise extra money to pay for the carbon tax that this government is bringing forward.

However, our charities right now, all across the charitable sector – it doesn't matter which area they're working in right now – are facing the perfect storm. I think we should all acknowledge that.

They're facing the perfect storm. They're seeing an increased demand for their services because of the economic downturn in our province, whether it's food banks or any type of social issue right now. They're seeing a lot of increase in demand because of what's happening economically in Alberta right now. At the same time, the other end of that perfect storm is that people are losing jobs. People are scared. They're trying to keep their money closer. They're trying to be smarter with their money and ride out this economic downturn, and that means donations are down.

So now you have these charities that we depend on – and we depend on them as a province – to help those most vulnerable and most in need in our society, and they have to meet that increased demand, and they can't get the donations to meet that increased demand because of what's going on with our economy. That's the perfect storm. Now, this government under this Premier: their answer to that is to tax them. It's to tax them. It doesn't make any sense, and it needs to be explained.

This amendment right here allows the NDP government to correct what I hope is an oversight. I know the hon. Member for Airdrie also indicated that she hopes it's an oversight. I suspect that it's not, but we're going to find out here pretty quickly when we vote on it. If the NDP government is really committed to working with our charities, really committed to working to address the many social issues that we see all across our province, they're not going to let charities be punished by this carbon tax. Instead, they're going to support charities. They're going to support the important work that they do.

Now, I don't understand how the government could be shocked by this or could not know that that would affect charities. Do they not realize that charities have facilities that they have to heat? Do they not realize that they have facilities that need electricity or vehicles that need fuel?

You know, we stand up in this Legislature and have asked over and over questions about municipalities and what this government is going to do with this carbon tax. We haven't had many answers on that. We've been to school boards. I know all of the hon. members have been contacted by school boards, and we see the calculations on the impact this carbon tax is going to have just on getting kids to school on buses or heating schools. And, again, not many answers from this government.

**10:50**

We've brought forward concerns about the transportation costs throughout Alberta but particularly in rural Alberta, for parents to get kids to sporting activities or just to be able to get to and from work, and the answer from the Premier was to get a new car. You know, I have talked in great detail about how well that will work for communities like mine because Smart cars aren't going to be driving around Sundre very well in the snow or up and down the hills like we have to do.

But putting all that aside, at least on this issue we should be able to agree that we need to support our charities and our nonprofits, and particularly all the government backbenchers on the other side need to be asking themselves right now why this Premier and this government do not want to support charities. I think that's alarming. I know my colleagues think that's alarming. I think my colleagues in the third party think this is alarming as well as in the Liberal and Alberta parties, I am sure.

So this is our chance. This is our chance to stand up for our charities, to recognize the important work that they do for our communities, to cast a vote to make sure that we're able to protect that work and to help them continue to do it, particularly in light of the perfect storm that they are facing right now. I know that they're depending on us for that support.

I think that anybody who would vote against this amendment has to seriously be asking themselves why and be prepared for many questions from the charities inside their constituencies and across Alberta that are going to suffer as a result of the decision of this Assembly today. The people that they help are the most vulnerable in our society. They will be kids, homeless people, women's shelters, Meals on Wheels, as said before. That is important. That's important to me, and I think it should be important to everybody inside this Assembly.

With that said, I will take my seat and let somebody else speak to this amendment. But I encourage you to think about the impact your decision tonight will have on the most vulnerable amongst us.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to offer my enthusiastic support to this amendment as well. You know, I really believe that despite some of the more heated rhetoric which can come from this side of the House, this is an amendment that is intended to make the bill better. I truly believe that.

I don't believe that the government is trying to hurt the charitable sector, but this is, unfortunately, one of those unintended consequences that can come from legislation such as this. As I'm sitting listening to the debate and thinking about what I'll say in my remarks here, I can't help but think again that had we passed one of the amendments previous that would have incorporated a report, a formal report, back to the Assembly at some point shortly after the implementation of this new legislation, this is exactly the sort of thing that we would learn more about, the impacts on the charitable sector.

Now, I've talked with many in the not-for-profit sector in my constituency of Calgary-Elbow and all throughout the province, and there's a tremendous amount of concern not just about the carbon tax but about the cumulative impact of the minimum wage increase up to \$15 an hour compounded with the carbon tax. All of these things are piling cost upon cost upon cost, and much if not all of the not-for-profit sector to one degree or another relies on donations.

In this challenging economic time, as I'm sure you all know, charities are very stretched. As Albertans have shown in their true Albertan way, we do step up and we do help our neighbours in time of need. So while many not-for-profits have seen reasonable stability in the donation levels that they're seeing this year over last, there's a great deal of concern about what next year looks like. Now, even this year many have had some real challenges in raising money. Some are struggling to keep their doors open. This could very well be the issue that tips the balance.

I don't think the government is trying to harm the charitable sector, the not-for-profit sector, but unfortunately there's a big risk that that's exactly what happens with this bill. We have an opportunity here tonight to improve the bill. That's what the purpose of committee is. That's why the opposition and perhaps occasionally the government will bring in amendments, to improve the bill. This will improve the bill by addressing a real flaw that is going to have a negative impact, a substantial, significant negative impact, on one of Alberta's most important sectors. And it is important at all times.

The work that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre has done and that his family has done over the years at the Mustard Seed and beyond: I've a tremendous amount of respect for the work that they've done. They are truly a cornerstone institution in the city of Calgary that has made the lives of countless hundreds, thousands of people so much better.



I don't believe that you're trying to hurt that sector, but unfortunately, with the way the bill currently is worded, you do exactly that. You're hurting the charitable sector, and we know that's going to happen. We know that to be a fact. That's the reason that I would like to see a report come back to the Assembly within perhaps a year after this bill has become law, to ensure that we're not seeing unintended consequences in the charitable sector or in other areas of the economy, other areas of the province. We talked earlier about carbon-neutral or carbon-negative companies. Are we going to see those companies being put out of business or pushed out of Alberta? That's a real risk.

There are significant risks from this bill. It is being, I think, pushed through at a time when we don't have sufficient information. I would be very interested to hear if there's anyone from the government side who's willing or able to stand up and defend why you would vote against this amendment. I haven't heard from anyone on the government side, so I don't want to presume what your perspective is on this.

Given that we're on amendment 13, however, and 12 of them have been defeated – the only one succeeding was one rather technical amendment – I have to say that I don't hold out tremendous hope that you will support this one, but as a born-and-raised Albertan I do find myself always living in a positive and optimistic frame. I live forever in hope that the government will see the light on important amendments. We have yet to see them do that here tonight or through the course of debate on this bill, but I do live forever in hope that, in fact, the government will see the light.

I will return to my place, Madam Chair, and I will give a member of the government side the opportunity, I hope, to rise and explain to us if, in fact, you're going to accept this amendment. If not, I'm sure Albertans would love to hear why it is that you're not going to accept this very reasonable amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak to this amendment. It was the recommendation of the climate leadership plan that the price on carbon be economy-wide but also that a number of adjustments would be provided. A large part of that is through the energy efficiency efforts and efforts to phase in microgeneration, smaller scale renewables, and so on.

With respect to the charitable sector we had many conversations with many different groups over the course of last fall, Madam Chair, and many did provide their input into the public consultations last fall. There were many submissions, and some of them were from this particular sector. It certainly formed part of our deliberations and part of the consultations.

Where we landed on this, Madam Chair, where the panel's advice was helpful, was that many of these abatement issues can be addressed through efficiency programming. In order to facilitate that, I have had some conversations with many folks in the charitable sector in this new year, since the release of the plan in November, and we're going to work with them in ensuring that we are tailoring some of that efficiency programming directly to the voluntary sector and work with them in a working group kind of way as the efficiency work moves forward and as we stand up those programs. So that is how we chose to move forward on this given that the variability in this sector meant that a straight exemption would become very administratively difficult if not impossible on some level and given the position under the tax act and so on.

**11:00**

That is the choice that this government has made based on good advice and based on the evidence of what has happened in other

jurisdictions, Madam Chair. For that reason we will be voting against this amendment, or I'm going to recommend that we do that. It is for that reason that we are ensuring that we've got a robust consultation, working with groups in the charitable sector to ensure that we've got appropriate programming tailored to their needs.

Thank you.

**Mr. Nixon:** Madam Chair, I have to say that I'm a little bit taken aback by the minister's comments. Efficiencies? Well, it's important long term that we would probably bring that forward and move towards that. I would not argue with that. It clearly shows no understanding of what the infrastructure is in the nonprofit world that we depend on right now to take care of the most vulnerable in our province. Now, I'll stick to just the issue I know well, which is homelessness. If we're saying that efficiencies is the way to do it, that means that you are now proposing that we are going to renovate all of our homeless shelters immediately in this province, all of the buildings that we have built already in housing first.

Efficiencies? We already can't get people into treatment for addictions right now, and they're dying because of it, something that this government wants to stand up all the time and act like they're a champion of and then meanwhile will stand up inside this House and say efficiencies? It's a ludicrous thing. It shows that the minister did not consult with anybody in the nonprofit world and has absolutely no clue what our nonprofits need, and she should be ashamed of what she just said.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A13? The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Once again, I'm taken aback, like my hon. colleague, by this minister stating that efficiencies are going to provide a break for charities. Ten to 12 families a month are being turned away from the Rowan shelter in High River alone. These are women and children in a vulnerable situation. How do you tell a woman and a child who are being abused by their father or their parent that efficiencies are going to give them relief in their life? That, to me, is absolutely ridiculous. I don't believe you consulted with the number of charities that you said you did. I can't understand that. I've been involved in charitable organizations for almost 25 years. I couldn't think of one of them that would specifically state: if you make my furnace more effective, we'll be able to save children and women who are in abusive situations. Children and women. For the sake of the kids, come on.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to this amendment?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A13 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:03 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Pitt
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Starke
Barnes	Jansen	Stier
Clark	Loewen	Strankman
Cooper	MacIntyre	van Dijken

Drysdale	Nixon	Yao
Fildebrandt		
Against the motion:		
Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Nielsen
Babcock	Hoffman	Phillips
Carlier	Horne	Piquette
Carson	Kazim	Rosendahl
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Eggen	McKittrick	Sucha
Feehan	McLean	Turner
Ganley	Miller	Westhead
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard
Totals:	For – 19	Against – 39

[Motion on amendment A13 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the bill. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to say that I'm going to do this amendment as efficiently as possible because the hon. minister of the environment is encouraging charities to solve all of their challenges by being efficient. So perhaps if I propose this amendment in a very efficient manner, it will have the attention of the government and, as a result, will be passed.

I'd like to propose an amendment, and I'll just wait until you have it.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A14.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, we have seen some robust discussion this evening around particular areas of our province that will have a significant impact on their industry. We unfortunately just saw charities and the amendment around charities – that would have provided an exemption to those charities to continue the good work that they do. In fact, if there's one thing that I know about the outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, it's that a well-meaning group of individuals will outperform government every day of the week. It's unfortunate that the government doesn't recognize the good work that they do, particularly around this carbon tax and how they're quite likely going to be more affected than others while doing much of the work that, if they aren't there to do it, will ultimately fall on the government to do.

11:10

There are other areas like that that are negatively impacted by the carbon tax disproportionately. That's why I want to propose this amendment. I move that Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1, section 19 by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) The purposes and uses prescribed under subsection (1) for which a rebate may be paid must include fuel used for the production of food in a greenhouse operated for financial gain.

We have seen this government already heading down the road of identifying areas that would have a negative impact on a certain industry or another. A perfect example of this would be purple fuel. I know that many people in rural Alberta are appreciative of the

purple fuel exemption and the negative impact that that would have had on our second-largest industry, which we all know is the agriculture industry. So I find it a little peculiar that the government has chosen to provide an exemption for certain areas of the ag sector but not all areas of the ag sector.

Commercial greenhouse operators are farmers, and the fuel which they use to provide locally sourced food, something that I know the government whip is very passionate about, providing quality, locally sourced food – the fuel that they use, predominantly, is natural gas. Because of the carbon levy and the significant increase to the cost of natural gas – \$1.50 a gigajoule on natural gas – means that their heating source is going up 50 to 70 per cent. At the end of the day, a commercial greenhouse operator is just as valuable inside the ag industry as my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler is in terms of the end product. My colleague from Drumheller-Stettler grows a significant amount of grains. In the case of greenhouses, I know that in Cypress-Medicine Hat and down in that part of the province there are a lot of greenhouses. Instead of providing grains for us to consume, they will provide produce, and the gas that they use to do that is natural gas.

Now, I know that I have raised this point here in the House before, but I think specifically of an outstanding operation in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills called Shirley's Greenhouses. Shirley's Greenhouses employs anywhere between three and five people plus the operator. They do a wonderful job of providing natural, pesticide-free, locally sourced cucumbers, predominantly, but also peppers and some other vegetables. Their costs are going to increase by close to \$3,000 a month, between \$2,500 and \$3,000 a month. It's around \$30,000, and \$30,000 dollars is a significant impact, one where that business will need to make a decision, that the cost of produce will increase. As you can well imagine, Madam Chair, the margins inside the greenhouse business are often fairly tight in our northern climate because of the amount of input costs that they have that some other areas of the country and certainly south of us don't. Increasing the costs to greenhouses will not only have a negative impact on the business owner, who may struggle to stay in business, but certainly if they are able to stay in business, it's going to have a negative impact on all of us because the cost of food will be increasing.

Just today or yesterday the fact came out that year over year the cost of food is up between 10 and 12 per cent. This is a major, major concern. Not only are those costs going to increase at a time when Albertans can least afford them; it also has a significant negative impact on local businesses. Greenhouses have already been burdened with increased business taxes, minimum wage, costs associated with WCB and the enhanced protection for farm and ranch workers. There is major impact on this industry. While a traditional farm has the major cost of purple gas, for greenhouses it's heat. An estimated increase of approximately one-third of additional costs may be the difference between a viable business or not.

This sort of tax, Madam Chair, really undermines any claim that the government likes to make about buying local, supporting local marketing strategies when they're hitting these greenhouses with a 50 per cent hike on their natural gas costs. We saw in private members' business at the end of last session a significant discussion around the production of local food. If, in fact, the government's goal is to encourage that type of production, taxing greenhouses will have the opposite effect.

There are certainly other jurisdictions, including the province of British Columbia, that include an exemption for greenhouses in what is already a revenue-neutral carbon tax. This is a very good opportunity for the government to listen to stakeholders, to ensure that the production of food – we're not talking about a luxury. I

know that the government likes to discuss curbing behaviour, but if the government's goal is curbing food production, it is counterintuitive.

I believe that my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake is going to expand on some of the positive impacts that greenhouses have in terms of their role in reducing emissions and the critical role that they play in being part of a larger project. [interjection] It's with that that I'll encourage all members of this Assembly, including my hon. colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, who would be well served to pay very close attention to the very important debate that's happening here in the Chamber, to support a solid amendment that moves food production forward, that treats farmers equally, that respects the role that our food producers have, not just the good, not just those who are in the business of using purple fuel but those who use other fuels to provide food for this great land that we all enjoy.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It really is my pleasure to rise and speak to this amendment today in the House and, for once, before my hon. colleague from across the way. I do want to make some points on this and say that rather than debating what are the plain facts of the matter, the opposition is more concerned about spreading their half-truths and disingenuous information here. Either they do not understand what the plan is or they are more interested in scaring Alberta.

**11:20**

In my opinion, Madam Chair, we are looking at the simple facts, and the fact is that when we're talking about greenhouses and we're talking about these types of operations, natural gas prices are at absolutely historic lows. Even with the carbon price, consumers will be paying less for natural gas than they have on average in the last 10 years. An average household in Alberta in 2008 paid \$1,015 for natural gas in heating. With the carbon price in place this year those households would still only be paying less than \$360. A small business on average in 2008 paid \$5,300 for natural gas, and with the carbon price these businesses this year would pay less than \$2,500. Quite simply, if the members opposite have a crystal ball that allows them to see the price of natural gas in the future, you'd think they would have used that crystal ball to craft a shadow budget.

Madam Chair, what we are looking at here is an economy-wide price on carbon, something that economists came back with, industry came back with, nonprofits and NGOs came back with and said: absolutely, an economy-wide price on carbon is the way to go. We are pricing that carbon at the smokestack, not at the consumer. Industry is absolutely the best equipped to be able to find efficiencies in their own markets and their own produce. When we look at this, we want to say that government is not interested in picking winners and losers here. What we are looking at is that with an economy-wide price the industry will react, and we'll be able to move forward on tangible, viable emissions reductions moving forward to 2020 and 2030. When we look at this, we can see very clearly that this doesn't actually move towards that goal. What this does is that it spreads mistruths as we can see that natural gas prices absolutely are at the lowest they've been and are absolutely lower than the last 10 years on average.

Madam Chair, given all these facts and given all this information I really do think that all hon. members should be voting against this amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to correct the record, while it is a fact that natural gas prices are at a low point, it is also a fact that Shirley's Greenhouses will see an increase to their natural gas bill because of the carbon tax of \$30,000 a year.

**The Chair:** Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, the Member for Edmonton-South West has once again demonstrated a profound lack of understanding of the business world. The Alberta greenhouse operators are trade sensitive in that food producers from B.C.'s lower mainland, from Mexico, from the United States, from American jurisdictions are competing with our greenhouse operators for food sales. The price of natural gas is low all over the place. What this tax does is that it effectively doubles the per unit cost of natural gas to just our food producers – just our people – which puts them at a distinct competitive disadvantage to everybody else that they're competing against, and the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West obviously doesn't grasp how this works.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Now, I'm going to go on. I just want to demonstrate the absurdity of this bill and the advantage of this particular amendment to help our producers of food, the greenhouse operators in Alberta. We haven't had this government perform an economic assessment sector by sector, which has been very clear, but let me demonstrate just for a moment the absurdity, using the greenhouse operators as an example. The growing of food plants captures carbon dioxide. In other words, growing plants creates a carbon sink, and the growing and harvesting of repeated crops provides an enormous carbon sink. This government repeatedly touts the carbon tax as some sort of saviour of our environment, but their ignorance of the photosynthetic process of absorbing carbon dioxide is rather evident. Because this government refused to seek the input of all Albertans and didn't give greenhouse operators an opportunity to speak to this bill, the results are that this government is actually going to be punishing greenhouse operators with a tax on carbon when they are in fact providing a service to this province in providing a carbon sink, crop after crop after crop. It is absurd, absolutely absurd.

Another absurdity demonstrating the ignorance of some members opposite regarding the impact of this tax is the statement from the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West regarding food banks and comments from his colleagues that – this was the other day – people needing food bank food can just take a bus. Well, obviously, the members opposite have no clue about life outside of large cities. In the magnificent riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, for example, we have a dozen small towns and villages such as Elnora, Delburne, Lousana, Penhold, Springbrook, Spruce View, Gleniffer Lake, Pine Lake, Sylvan Lake. All of these communities are small, all have persons needing food bank services, and none of them have bus service.

We have greenhouses throughout this entire riding of ours because the people out there really love locally grown food, but in our winter climate a substantial amount of heat is needed for these greenhouses to operate. Yet now they are going to be hit with a carbon tax when, in fact, they're producing a carbon sink, just like with forestry, that we mentioned earlier. It's just absurd that this government is penalizing the very industries that are helping with greenhouse gas mitigation. Furthermore, it appears the government doesn't understand the challenges faced by other people and are

refusing to listen to them, refusing to give compassion and consideration to the unique challenges faced by certain sectors of our economy.

They're failing to achieve buy-in, which I talked about earlier. The greenhouse industry isn't going to buy in to this because they understand the value that they're providing this province in providing a carbon sink. They get that, but their own government doesn't get that. Oh well.

The lack of proper study, Madam Chair, and the very clear demonstration that this government doesn't understand the food supply chain is clearly evident. This government seems to think that just exempting purple fuel is all that is needed to offset the impact of this tax on our food supply chain. Well, I'm going to walk this House through the food supply chain so that they understand, so everybody understands.

Here we go. From the dirt to the kitchen an accumulative impact of this tax and what it's going to have on food looks like this. Seed needs to be treated, trucked. Fertilizer needs to be manufactured, in part from natural gas, and trucked to a distributor. Then the distributor loads it on a truck or a self-propelled spreader and hauls it to the farm. Tax is going to be added all along the way here. The farmer seeds and harvests his crop. Granted, his purple fuel will be exempt, but then a truck is going to come and haul that grain to market. That fuel is going to be taxed. It's hauled to an elevator or to a buyer. The grain is then hauled to a processor and taxed, perhaps to make pet food, perhaps to make livestock feed or cereal for our children or a malting plant to create malt for brewing. All of these processes will be taxed. They all use natural gas. They all use fuel in great amounts.

#### 11:30

From here the grain, now processed into a food like pasta or cereals or enriched feed for pets and livestock, is going to be trucked again to a retail outlet and taxed again and sold to us, the end user. Of course, at every step of this process the food had to be stored in a factory or a warehouse or a refrigerated storage facility. Each of these consumes massive amounts of natural gas or diesel, and the carbon tax will be added to the cost of their products. In this whole food supply chain we're seeing the cumulative effect of this tax.

This government's claim that indirect costs to Albertans will be a hundred dollars or less is a myth, a shameful attempt to sucker Albertans into believing that this carbon tax is relatively benign when, in fact, it is not. I just mapped out one sector of our economy, food. Whether it be from the greenhouse to the end user, whether it be from the farm to the end user, the cumulative impact of this tax is going to be enormous. This claim that indirect costs will only be a hundred dollars is an absolute, how shall I say – I can't use the L word. I'll put it this way: it is an economic use of the truth. Because I can't use the L word, I'll use that one. I trust that the chair is okay with being economical with the truth.

Well, Madam Chair, the cumulative effect on our food that I just spelled out is horrendously large, and had this government taken the time to do the kind of impact assessments I keep hammering and hammering away at, they would have realized this and could have put measures in place to mitigate that impact.

Now then, coming back to the issue of fresh food, our greenhouse operators are going to be damaged. Every one of us that is a parent or a grandparent understands the value of fresh fruit and vegetables for our families, especially through our long winters. We have a choice. We either truck it in from far, far away, or we grow it in greenhouses here, but whether we truck it or whether we grow it in greenhouses, it is expensive here. That's just one of the realities of living in this northern climate and living in this province that we

love. However, parents and children should not be penalized with a carbon tax on something as essential as fresh fruit and vegetables.

Furthermore, the greenhouse operators in this province provide an absolutely essential service to our families, providing us not only with fresh fruit and vegetables, but it's locally grown. These are industries that employ Albertans. These are industries that pay taxes right here. These are industries that provide us – and in terms of greenhouse operators, the majority of them, I think, are even organic. It is wholesome, it is healthy, it is far healthier than the stuff that gets trucked in here. Even on a good day lettuce out of Texas is a three-day truck ride. Having been a former trucker, yeah, I've done that, too. That lettuce had to be hauled a very long ways to get here – it's sold as fresh, but, you know, fresh is a relative word – whereas if you go to the greenhouse operator and if you buy it at the gate, it was picked, like, 10 minutes ago. There's nothing more nutritious than that.

These industries like greenhouse operators should be applauded for the service they're providing to our children. They should not be penalized with a carbon tax. Their fuel inputs in the cold weather is the largest input they have. Although the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West claims, "Oh, natural gas prices are the lowest they've ever been," that is not an excuse to go and tax them to death. That's no excuse to go and hit them with a tax that doubles the cost per unit, for crying out loud. Come on. They ought to be exempt. They ought to be applauded. They are our carbon sink.

I've spoken to a director of a natural gas co-op, who called me up not long after the carbon tax was revealed. Her administration people did some calculations, and the current tax is going to double the cost per unit of natural gas at its current market price. The impact on greenhouses is going to be profoundly devastating. As I said earlier, they are competing with other jurisdictions that are also able to have low natural gas and some jurisdictions that actually don't need it, like B.C.'s Lower Mainland. What we're going to see is our greenhouse operators put at such a competitive disadvantage that they are going to go out of business, and we're going to be losing Alberta jobs, losing Alberta taxpaying businesses, and losing the precious value of locally grown organic food for our people. This government should be supporting greenhouse operators, not hurting them. This is a terrible consequence.

Well, I've talked about, you know, the value of greenhouse operators and forestry industries as a carbon sink. I've talked about the localized, healthy, often organic, high-quality fresh fruit and vegetables that we can get from greenhouses. This food requires very little transportation, so from the point of view of pollution in general, which can come from transportation using diesel fuel or gasoline, having it grown locally is a huge advantage. If this government is really concerned about global emissions reductions, why would this government put locally grown food in jeopardy and prefer food grown 3,000 miles away, that has to get trucked all the way here, and all of that pollution per load of lettuce, per load of carrots, per load of whatever that's coming from Mexico or the southern U.S.? Why would they prefer something like that over locally grown, with no 3,000 miles of transportation needed, no pollution from all those miles of transportation, that leaves a very tiny carbon footprint? I would suggest that it's perhaps even negative from our greenhouses.

But without a proper environmental assessment, we won't know, and the government refuses to do that. Nevertheless, we do know that the carbon footprint of a head of lettuce grown in Lacombe and sold in Lacombe is going to be significantly less than a head of lettuce grown down in Yuma, Arizona, and trucked all the way up to the store in Lacombe. There's no comparison to the carbon footprint, yet this government is demonstrating preference here for

out-of-Canada produce by hitting our local growers with such a tax as this. It is absolutely absurd. It's absurd.

Now, it should also be made clear that a lot of these fresh fruit and vegetables that are being trucked in here are coming from and coming through jurisdictions that do not have a carbon regime like we do. In the Ecofiscal report the authors of that report specifically stated that if the government isn't careful about how they apply carbon tax, they may be putting Alberta firms at a distinct competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis companies in jurisdictions that don't have the same kind of carbon regime. That is precisely what is about to happen by taxing our greenhouses, who are competing with producers from outside our jurisdiction. Yet they wave the Ecofiscal report as being some sort of foundational document for what they're doing when, in fact, that is simply being economical with the truth, very economical with the truth, maybe Scottish with the truth. Being a Scotsman, I can use that.

11:40

If we had an economic assessment analysis done, Madam Chair, we would know these things. We'd know these things. We could have foreseen these things. We could have avoided this. We would not be putting our greenhouse operators at risk, and neither would we be inadvertently causing a gigantic carbon footprint on every head of lettuce or cabbage or anything else that we're having to import from jurisdictions 3,000 miles away. We could be growing it locally, providing jobs locally, providing taxes locally. But no.

Again, on account of this government's dogmatic insistence on not supporting this amendment, it is more evidence in support of my position that this is not about greenhouse gas mitigation. This is about taxation, nothing more than taxation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to take two or three minutes, and I'd like to talk a little bit about the greenhouse business as well. Of course, it's a very, very important and predominant part of Cypress-Medicine Hat, and I've been around it for a long time. One of the things that I really liked about the greenhouse business, when I talked to many of our good producers in it, was that many of them would talk about what a great family business it was. It was an opportunity for them to work with their children, with their spouse, an opportunity to do things together, an opportunity to work together and grow a much-needed commodity.

Of course, this is exactly what we're harming. This is exactly what we're putting in greater jeopardy by increasing their main input, the cost of natural gas. It was interesting that when I was fortunate enough to be first elected, in 2012, one of the big issues that greenhouse operators were concerned with was that they had just weathered a storm, going from \$15 to \$17 a gigajoule for natural gas, driving a lot of these family businesses out of business. So when an hon. member says, "Oh, natural gas is low; it's okay to pile on because it's low now," I'm sitting here thinking, "You know, my goodness, that's only five or six years ago that a lot of these families, a lot of these small businesses had their retirements harmed, their balance sheets hurt, the possibility of paying for their children's education or paying for some aspect that their family needed absolutely harmed. They finally get a break – they get an opportunity to make a little bit of extra money, to rebuild – and the NDP government steps in and, worse than not even thinking about it, takes it away with a gleeful laugh. It's a shame. It's a shame.

Alberta producers, Alberta families need the equity and fairness that come with a government putting in the right policies.

The hon. member talked a lot about the carbon footprint and, you know, not accessing vegetables and stuff from here. Well, let me tell you how it worked with flowers. Redcliff used to be a strong, strong provider of flowers for Medicine Hat and all of Alberta. Some side of eight or 10 years ago I noticed that very, very few flowers were being grown in Redcliff and Medicine Hat anymore even though we've acres and acres under glass, so I asked some of the operators why. Guess where they come from, cheaper, on a jumbo airplane? South America. Apparently, how our flower industry works now is that these flowers are grown in South America, flown overnight to Calgary or Edmonton, and then trucked to Medicine Hat and Redcliff cheaper than we can provide them. Madam Chair, to me that sounds like a heck of a step backwards when it comes to the carbon footprint. Every time you raise the cost of producing goods, every time you raise the cost to our suppliers, they are going to produce less.

The hon. member from the other side also talked about the fact that it was applied equally and that there was no sense in going into exemptions because there were no exemptions. As far as I know, that is erroneous as well. For good reason the oil sands industry is exempt up to 100 megatonnes. Why can't this be looked at in other areas? Why can't this be looked at in areas when it comes to food production, when it comes to strong family businesses?

I'm also concerned, though, talking to some of our oil and gas producers the other day, Madam Chair. I understand that because of the uncertainty around this carbon tax, because of the uncertainty as to how offsets are going to work, and because of, you know, the fact about what's going to happen when 100 megatonnes is hit – how's the next step going to happen? I don't think there are any new projects in our oil sands at all right now. That is of great concern when you think of the people employed in Nisku, in Leduc, in Calgary, in Athabasca, all around Alberta, when you think of what will happen as we lose yet more jobs because of the uncertainty that the new NDP government has created.

We have exemptions. We don't have clear rules. We have unfairness. We have a lack of equity for Albertans in good family businesses. Surely to goodness – surely to goodness – we can look at a rebate for the fuel used for the production of food in the greenhouses operated for financial gain. I seem to remember a motion from this government a short time ago trying to enhance local food production. Well, instead of talking about it, let's do something about it. Let's continue to ensure that Alberta families and Alberta food production stay as competitive as possible.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yes. Just while we're on the subject of greenhouses, I got an update from a business owner out in the St. Paul area that is in the reforestation tree nursery business. I had told her that we were possibly going to, or someone was possibly going to put an amendment forward to try and exempt the reforestation tree nursery business from this carbon tax. I had to call her and inform her that, unfortunately, the government had unanimously voted against that amendment. Her comment was that that will be the straw that breaks the camel's back. This is a business that's been running for many, many years, very well established. She said that between the carbon tax and the minimum wage hikes she'll have to lay off her workers. She has typically close to a dozen full-time, and then in peak, when it comes to shipping the trees out, they employ a lot more people

than that. So this is a business that's going to be closing down, and those people will have to, if they can in a small town, find a job somewhere else.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A14? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I wanted to speak in favour of this amendment, too, dealing with greenhouses. I think the word that's been used most is "bizarre," and I think that's still fitting. The Member for Edmonton-South West was getting up and talking about: since the price of natural gas is low, then now is the time to just hit it with taxes. I guess that's the answer to everything. If the price of fuel is below an all-time high, then we should just tax it right up to where it's as high as it's ever been or higher, I guess. I don't know what the plan is if prices recover and prices go higher. I don't imagine they're going to be lowering the taxes. I've never seen even a hint of that out of this government.

But I think what the Member for Edmonton-South West fails to realize is that because the prices are low here in Alberta for natural gas, the prices are also low in Saskatchewan and in Montana and in British Columbia, so by raising the taxes here in Alberta, that puts us at a competitive disadvantage to these other areas, these other jurisdictions right around us. When we have markets that rely on export and we have a government that insists on punishing the people and the businesses right in our own province, then obviously they don't understand how business works, how an economy works, how the world economy works. Now, the Member for Calgary-East said that this carbon tax was designed to be fair. Well, unfortunately, it's not fair to companies that export and have to go into the world market to try and be competitive. When they're not competitive, then, of course, they have to shut down shop. I mean, they have no choice, or else they start up their business somewhere else or do their expansion somewhere else.

11:50

We also saw here earlier this government vote down an exemption for charities. Of course, the minister gets up and suggests that these charities could maybe find some efficiencies. She suggested that this would be an administrative nightmare, to exempt charities. Are you serious? An administrative nightmare? These charities are registered charities already. They're already registered with the federal tax act. Are you telling us that it's too burdensome to recognize that on a simple tax form, that they can't all of a sudden receive some sort of benefit as a charity? These are charities that are taking care of the poor and the vulnerable in our communities, and this government insists on taxing them and then suggests that they cannot find an exemption for these charities because they just could find some efficiencies; it's an administrative nightmare.

When I look at this carbon tax bill – you want to talk about an administrative nightmare? – that's an administrative nightmare. The airline companies, the train companies have to calculate how much fuel they use while they're in Alberta, whether they land and take off and all these different things. There's a nightmare. You want to talk about red tape? There's red tape.

Madam Chair, the discussion gets more and more bizarre all the time here listening to people on the other side. It's actually good when they get up and speak – I'd encourage more to get up and speak – because then we can fully understand what they're really thinking. I think Albertans are actually, probably the proper word would be stunned to hear what they're saying on the other side, how

they're supporting this carbon tax, when it makes absolutely no sense at all.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A14? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I haven't had the opportunity to speak on this bill yet or any of the amendments, and I was hoping to be able to speak to this bill. The amendment that I see here is a reasonable amendment, that I will be supporting.

In my riding of Cardston-Taber-Warner we have greenhouses. We have a lot of produce that is produced there, and, in fact, farming is our mainstay in that area. I had the opportunity probably about six months ago of being able to go and take a look at one of the greenhouses in my riding, and I was impressed with the innovation. I was impressed with the entrepreneurial spirit. I was impressed with the ability of this entrepreneur to find markets globally, and I just took my hat off to him. I said: you know, this is the sort of thing that Alberta needs, and this is the sort of thing that will make Alberta great again.

Now, what we're dealing with here, Madam Chair, is a situation where this government out of one side of their mouth are saying: you know, we want to actually promote local, we want to promote local growing, and we want to promote . . . [interjections]

**The Deputy Chair:** Members, I would just like to remind everybody that although we are in Committee of the Whole, you still need to respect the speakers, please. The volume is increasing quite a bit on your side. Thank you.

Please proceed, Member.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Anyway, the issue here is that the government out of one side of their mouth are trying to say that they want to promote local growing, that they want to have entrepreneurs, businessmen and -women come to the table with investment, come to the table with their innovations, come to the table with their dreams and aspirations, that they should trust this government, start a business here and be able to grow locally. Unfortunately, the message is not being received very well. Unfortunately, we're in a situation where these entrepreneurs in my riding are telling me that even though they say that they want to have local growing and local produce, with this tax it actually disincentivizes these entrepreneurs and these businessmen and -women from setting up shop here or from continuing to expand.

Now, I actually am sad to hear the Member for Edmonton-South West say that this is not what we need. I'm sad to hear that he and his colleagues, it sounds like, would not be interested in exempting greenhouses. This is a duplicitous argument on their side. If they really do believe that they promote this concept of local growing, then don't disincentivize these entrepreneurs. I don't understand the argument there.

You know, I have to represent my riding, and it's a pleasure to be able to do so. As the south is known for their growing and their heat units, their ability to be innovative in that industry, I can tell you that this carbon tax is going to affect them in a terrible way. Madam Chair, I hope that the members opposite will rethink the concept of an economic impact study, that they will rethink doing first and then finding out what the consequences will be of their actions. There are unintended consequences to not truly thinking things through and not truly being able to assess what the damage is going to be.

I have had people that have contacted my office. One situation that I would like to point out is that a gentleman, who is 57 years old, contacted my office. He's not from my riding, but he contacted my office, concerned about what this carbon tax is going to do. He said that he was concerned because he had been an engineer in the oil patch and, obviously, had paid taxes for many years and had been a contributing resident of Alberta. These are the types of people that we want to have in Alberta. That's what made Alberta great. Unfortunately, because of the low oil price and because of some of the punishing programs and laws that have been brought in by this government, he now is no longer employed in that industry.

Being a strong Albertan and a resilient Albertan, he didn't just sit down and say: "That's enough. I can't do anymore." What he did, Madam Chair, is that he said, at 57 years old: "I need to retrain. I need to be able to get back on the horse. I need to be able to actually be a productive member of society." He was looking for options, so he contacted his MLA – he's from Calgary – and contacted the Ministry of Labour and one of the other ministries, the ministry of environment, I believe, and said: what kind of things do you have for me to be able to retrain, to be able to fit into this new economic environment of Alberta? What he was told is shocking. He was told that there's nothing that they can do for him. He was told that at his age to take the time to retrain would not really work in his situation. Unfortunately, Madam Chair, this is the unintended consequence of pushing too quickly to try to reinvent or redefine what Alberta means.

12:00

Now, change does happen to a society. It always happens, and, generally speaking, it will be embraced. But my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, who some of the members on the other side like to call Santa Claus, which I don't think is very appropriate, made some really good points. What he said was that you need to get universal buy-in. You need to get universal buy-in so that the people can come with your innovations, with your – I wouldn't say ideology but with your ideas for change. Unfortunately, when this sort of thing is pushed through like it is, we find that a lot of Albertans are actually left wondering: "How do I fit in? How am I going to be a contributing member of society in this new environment called Alberta, in the new way of whatever we define Alberta as with the green initiative?" So he talked a lot about being able to get universal buy-in, and I thought that was an excellent argument.

One of the examples or ideas about universal buy-in that I can say that I watched happen was the recycling program. I remember when it first came out. I remember my wife being absolutely ecstatic about it, and I said: I don't think this is going to go anywhere. I wasn't a visionary guy when it came to that – I admit it – yet my wife got involved. She got excited about it. She started doing the recycling, and a whole bunch of other people did as well, and now we have a very robust and strong buy-in to this recycling program. That's a good example, that when it's an initiative that can get that universal buy-in, it will actually promote something that's valuable to society. This is something that is a good example about how to be able to get that universal buy-in.

The member also talked about measurements and verification. He talked about being able to say, you know, that if you're going to bring forward a program, if you're going to bring forward a new way of doing something, how are you going to be able to measure that? How are you going to be able to verify that it's actually something that's accomplishing the goals that you're trying to accomplish? Again, that's a very good question.

I like to call it in business the plan, do, check, and adjust process. The best plans oftentimes don't take you in the direction that you

want to go, so you have to do it, check it, and adjust. Unfortunately, with this plan I don't see anywhere where this government is going to actually do those other parts of this process, and if you don't do that, then you have no way of being able to determine whether or not it's accomplishing what you're really looking for.

I guess the other concern that I have is that this whole carbon tax is not actually going to decrease carbon emissions. I've heard the argument many times, actually, from the Member for Edmonton-South West in talking about how we're going to decrease carbon emissions with this, yet your plan doesn't specifically show that it's going to decrease emissions. If you're selling it as a program to help Albertans and the children of future generations to decrease carbon emissions and global warming – I've heard the hon. Minister of Infrastructure say that it's about our children and grandchildren – if that's the truth, then why is this plan not specifically decreasing carbon emissions? I would imagine that if you're going to bring forward a plan and you're going to bring forward a strategy of being able to help our children and grandchildren in this way, at least you'd have that kind of measurable. But we don't have that measurable here. This is maybe one of the big reasons why we have 68 per cent of Albertans that are against this plan.

**The Deputy Chair:** Member, you are speaking to the amendment, just to clarify.

**Mr. Hunter:** Absolutely.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Hunter:** As I told you, I haven't had an opportunity to speak to this, and I had a lot on my mind.

The amendment talks about a specific aspect of this, of being able to help an industry or a sector of our society that provides a value to Albertans: fresh, locally grown produce. The government has said that they're not willing to accept this as being revenue neutral. They're willing to pick winners and losers. Well, I would say that a good pick on this part would be greenhouses. The greenhouse industry would certainly be a great pick for this government to say: "You know what? Other industries, heavy emitters, need to be penalized in some way to be able to make it work." But when it comes to actually growing, we've got a situation where the greenhouse industry is providing exactly what this government's plan is looking for.

I'm very much in favour of this amendment. I consider it to be in the wheelhouse of this program, of decreasing carbon emissions, so I am most heartily going to support this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on amendment A14?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A14 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:08 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gill	Pitt
Barnes	Gotfried	Schneider
Clark	Hanson	Smith
Cooper	Hunter	Strankman
Cyr	Jean	Taylor

Ellis	Loewen	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Yao
Fraser	Orr	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Piquette
Babcock	Hoffman	Renaud
Carson	Kazim	Rosendahl
Connolly	Littlewood	Sabir
Coolahan	Loyola	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Malkinson	Schreiner
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Shepherd
Dang	Miller	Sigurdson
Drever	Miranda	Sucha
Feehan	Nielsen	Turner
Ganley	Phillips	Westhead
Goehring		

Totals:	For – 23	Against – 34
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[Motion on amendment A14 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill. Any members wishing to speak to the original bill? The Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. What a pleasure it is to speak to Bill 20. Good morning, everybody. Wow. We are earning a paycheck today.

I'm beginning to think that this government really doesn't want to change this bill in any way, shape, or form. I'm really disheartened that this government does not want to support charities in our province. That was probably the low point of what is now yesterday. I'm really, really sad to see that. It's very apparent, Madam Chair, that this government is actually quite proud of the carbon tax or, in other words, the tax to tax everything, including charities. I don't really think that's showing leadership in that area, that's for sure. It's very much disheartening, right?

This government is very proud of what they're doing. I disagree quite heavily, and we've put forward many amendments to offer to make the bill just a little bit less bad. We tried to put the bill forward to Albertans so that they would have their say in a referendum, so that they would get a chance to actually have their say on a tax that will impact every single person, every single industry, every single charity in such a huge way.

This government refuses to put forward any type of measurable. We don't know what targets they want to reach. They won't report back to this House even with a simple air quality test. It's really quite disheartening. I feel in a way like I'm dealing with a stubborn child that just won't budge, that just won't reason, that just sits there. I have two children. I bang my head on the wall. This is really, really tricky.

Madam Chair, I would like to put forward an amendment, and I would actually like to offer it as a challenge to this government, who is so proud of the carbon tax, the tax on everything. I believe along with my colleagues that in your moment of pride you should get to print this everywhere we go. I would like to propose an amendment right now. I have the appropriate number of copies.

**The Deputy Chair:** Just wait till I receive the original, please.

**Mrs. Pitt:** I'll wait until you have indicated for me to proceed.

It's a wonderful amendment. You guys are going to like this one, though.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, this amendment will be referred to as A15. Please proceed.

**Mrs. Pitt:** All right. I will now read the amendment. I move that Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 by adding the following after section 10:

Disclosure of carbon levy on bills and receipts

10.1 Any vendor that prepares a bill, statement of account, receipt or similar record for the purchase of fuel by a consumer for which a carbon levy is payable under section 4(2)(a) or 8(5) shall indicate separately on that record the amount of the carbon levy paid or payable in respect of the fuel purchased by the consumer.

Madam Chair, this is an extremely important amendment. If this tax is to be used to change behaviour, perhaps the behaviour that they're trying to change should be notified. I certainly think that consumers will look at their receipts and see this tax on its own separate line item, just like the GST is, just like the other tax that we have. I think it's responsible. We should let people know what they're paying for so that maybe it will curb their behaviour. If this is actually what the bill is intending to do, I see no reason why this wouldn't be an amendment that's supported. This government is very proud of their tax-on-everything bill, so let's let the people know that they're being taxed on everything.

This is extremely, extremely important. We've seen this in other sectors. The restaurant industry just came to my mind. You're going to start to see them clearly label the minimum wage increase on the receipts because people need to know what they're paying for. Those \$50 nachos need to be clearly labelled: this is where your costs are going. I digress.

I want to speak to the amendment, though, Madam Chair. I think it's very important that when you're proud of something – and this is a simple PR strategy. This is what you're taught; I come from the world of marketing. When you do something good and something that you're proud of, you're supposed to tell everybody about it. This government is very clearly proud of the carbon tax bill – they're very, very proud of it – regardless of the fact that we don't have any measurables or any indication that we will ever see any measurables in relation to this carbon tax bill. It would be extremely important for this tax, or levy, whatever you want to call it, to be clearly labelled on the fuel products that the everyday consumer is going to be purchasing. This is important. It's real. If we want to curb behaviour, people should clearly see that.

12:20

I think we're going to see on our utility bills that come into the house a clearly labelled carbon tax on those heating costs. That's what we're going to see. I want people to see them at the pumps. I want them to see that so that they can figure out how to carpool a little bit more, so that they can figure out how to save some money for a smart car or whatever the strategy is here, possibly riding a bicycle in the wintertime. Maybe that's a strategy. I'm not really sure. All those commuters from Calgary to Airdrie and Airdrie to Calgary, I'm sure, would be really interested to know how they will cycle from Airdrie to Calgary in rush-hour traffic twice a day in a three-piece suit.

It is the most responsible thing, for this government to let people know what they're trying to do and help them to get there. It is actually very helpful to have this type of line item on the receipt for the products that they are purchasing, which, certainly in my opinion and in the opinion of my colleagues, if I may so speak on their behalf, is the right thing to do. It would be the right thing to do, to let people know what you're trying to do. If this government is truly so very proud of this carbon tax, I don't see why they



wouldn't support having it labelled on everything they possibly could.

**An Hon. Member:** Like a PST.

**Mrs. Pitt:** This is exactly like a PST. This is exactly like a PST. This is exactly why it should have gone to a referendum, but, alas, here we are.

I just think that this line item, the carbon tax levy, should be clearly labelled on receipts for the goods that people purchase. I would encourage all members to support this. I certainly don't see any reason why the government wouldn't support this amendment. I just really don't understand. You know, such pride is coming across from the other side, and it would be very confusing if this government didn't want to promote this.

I hear on my radio station all the time the climate change ads, and all I can actually hear is: ching-ching, ching-ching, ching-ching. That's what I hear. Really, it's horrible. Again, it's the boulder rolling down the hill. What a complete waste of tax dollars. If you're so proud, why don't we expand your reach a little bit more? This would actually be a very good advertising promotion idea for you guys. The government would benefit from additional marketing through legislation by having clearly labelled the carbon tax on the fuel that consumers purchase. It's all about reach. It's part of the overall marketing strategy. Perhaps you could save some money on the radio ads.

I encourage all members to support this bill. I really don't see why they wouldn't. You're welcome, for putting forward such a wonderful amendment. Please vote for this.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any members wishing to speak to amendment A15? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak on amendment A15. We have had many amendments come before this House in trying to make a bad bill a little bit better. I believe that this is a very good amendment, that will help Albertans to recognize the carbon levy that they will be putting forward in regard to the climate plan in this province.

I do believe that when I pull up to a gas pump to fill up my truck, I want to know how much of my fuel bill is for gasoline and how much is for taxes. So often people are quick to blame the oil companies for the increases in the price of their gasoline. It's critical, Madam Chair, that we get in a position where we allow them to recognize how much is actually being paid for the gasoline product and how much is being paid for the taxes on that gasoline product.

Come January 1, 2017, taxes on a litre of gasoline will look something like this unless there are going to be other increases to the federal or provincial fuel tax. Currently we have 10 cents federal excise tax on gasoline; we pay 13 cents in provincial fuel tax. As of January 1, 2017, we will pay approximately 4 and a half cents provincial carbon tax, which will rise to 6.73 cents per litre in 2018. On top of that, we have the 5 per cent GST tax on the gasoline and all the other taxes. So we've got tax on top of tax on top of tax.

If the total price of my gasoline is a dollar a litre, for simple figuring – I come to the pump; I buy 50 litres, and I pay \$50 – of that dollar per litre, 32.25 cents will go towards tax. This is important for Albertans to understand and to know. Almost a third of the price come January 1, 2017, is going to be tax. Only 67.75 cents of that price of gasoline will be going to the producers of that product. It is time to be completely transparent with Albertans.

If we look at the taxes on a litre of diesel fuel come January 1, the federal excise tax is 4 cents, 13 cents is the provincial fuel tax, and then adding 5.35 cents of provincial carbon tax and in 2018 all of a sudden 8 cents per litre for the carbon tax. Of course, then we add the 5 per cent GST. We add GST on the actual diesel fuel, and we add GST on the tax, so a tax on the tax. In this case, if the total price of a litre of diesel fuel is a dollar, then a little over 27 cents is tax, and the price of the diesel fuel is just shy of 73 cents a litre.

Having the tax displayed on the fuel receipt provides the transparency in pricing so that consumers are fully aware of what they're paying in tax and what they're paying the producers to produce that product. Given that all the cash registers and the gas pumps will have to be reprogrammed anyway to handle this new carbon tax, I believe this would be a relatively simple fix, relatively easy to administer, and totally transparent with the disclosure of taxes on the products that we're purchasing. I don't understand who would not want to know how much tax they are contributing. Cash registers already have the GST amount on it, and I think they can easily have the carbon tax as a line item also.

We have had great success in transparency of billing in Alberta. For instance, take the electricity that we consume in our homes and in our businesses. The generation of the electricity, the transmission of the electricity, the distribution: all of these are broken down so that consumers can easily see what parts of their bill go to what producers, to the distributors. It's very easy for the consumers to understand what areas are being broken out.

Even my hotel receipts: when I come to Edmonton and stay at a hotel, they break out the tourism levy. It's very simple to do. A line item: tourism levy. So I get to understand where those dollars are being spent.

12:30

The same can be done for the fuel charges on the receipt from the gas pumps. This amendment will do this, and I would urge my colleagues from all parties to support this, support transparency in the disclosure of taxes on our receipts at the fuel pumps. I believe that for retail gasoline it's important that we have full disclosure there. Then, also, if we're going to charge a carbon tax, or sales tax for that matter, we need to see the breakout on the consumers' natural gas bill so that they know what they are paying for. I'm not completely clear if that's already in the plans, but it is important that the consumers of these products are aware of the taxes that they will be paying on these products.

My gas rate for April was \$1.47 per gigajoule. For May the gas rate is \$1.22. Here we've got in January 2017 where this government feels it necessary to put in a carbon tax of a little over \$1 per gigajoule, just about doubling the current gas rate.

**Mr. Nixon:** How much?

**Mr. van Dijken:** Over \$1 per gigajoule. In 2018 that goes up to \$1.517 per gigajoule. That is more than what the actual gas costs at my home.

Madam Chair, one of our staff members actually brought in their gas bill, and that particular month they used 15.86 gigajoules of natural gas. If this had been January 2017, the \$1, one penny, one-tenth of a cent carbon tax on this bill would have cost this staff member \$16.03, increasing their bill by \$16.03. In January 2018, when that comes around, the carbon tax on that natural gas is going up to \$1.51 and seven-tenths of a cent per gigajoule. This means that gas bill would cost \$27.27 in carbon tax.

It's important that we have full disclosure on this so that Albertans know what part of their bill is carbon tax. These have very serious implications, especially for residents and some of our

most vulnerable people that are on fixed incomes. These kinds of incredible shocks from these price jumps can affect them dramatically, so we need to see these price spikes on utility bills broken out.

Now, there was a situation a few years ago when natural gas prices were very high. I will admit that the price is relatively low at this time, but at that time the government of the day chose to pay \$1.9 billion to everyone in the form of a natural gas rebate to combat the high gas prices. Those natural gas rebates were applied and noted on people's natural gas bills. For transparency and accountability's sake, just like the rebates were itemized on those bills, I believe it is important for full disclosure that the consumers are informed of this carbon tax. It is only fair that the carbon tax now show up on the natural gas bills in the homes. This will show transparency and accountability.

It's important to recognize that Albertans deserve full disclosure and transparency. I urge all my colleagues from all parties to support this important amendment to Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that this amendment comes forward with some very good intentions here. I see that a lot of the interest was in the pride of this bill, and I think Albertans are proud of this bill. I think Albertans do want to be part of the solution, and that's why Albertans are proud of the government for finally bringing in an Alberta energy efficiency corporation. We're the last jurisdiction in Canada to do it, and I think that's something that we can all in this Assembly be proud of when we pass this legislation. That's why Alberta is taking a leadership role internationally on climate change.

Speaking to some of the specifics of this amendment, Madam Chair, officials in the Alberta climate change office and Alberta Energy are working together to make sure that all the incremental costs are made clear to consumers when this rolls out. The Alberta climate change office and Alberta Energy are ensuring that everything that we see moving forward will be clear to consumers and that this will be in a transparent way for Albertans to be able to move forward. That's why the amendments to the regulations to enable the line items to be displayed in things like receipts are going to be made this fall in regulations.

With respect to that, I think that knowing that, Albertans can be very proud of this legislation, with things like the Energy Efficiency Alberta corporation. They can be very proud of Alberta taking a leadership role moving forward, knowing that the officials are working very hard in the Alberta climate change office, that the officials are working very hard in Alberta Energy and are moving forward on making sure that these incremental costs are going to be visible, are going to be transparent, and are going to be available to all consumers. These regulations will be made this fall.

We should hold off on this amendment for now, Madam Chair. I'd urge all members to take that in mind as we vote on this amendment and to vote it down so that we can move forward on those regulations.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any more members wishing to speak to amendment A15? The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would be remiss to not stand and allow the colleagues from across the way to understand that the Member for Edmonton-South West is proposing that what is essentially being proposed here will be put into regulations this fall. If that is the case, then I would suspect that this would be a very good time to put it into place now just for the very fact that it allows us to have a little bit more trust in this government going forward. There is a certain amount of trepidation that I move forward with in trusting that this type of regulation will actually be coming forward. If we do this now with this very clear amendment to the bill, then we will be certain that that's going to happen, and this government will not have that on their work papers to do it come fall. This allows them to just move forward on many other priorities that they might have.

I would really encourage all members to vote in favour of this amendment, that will give clear disclosure on all bills that the carbon levy will have an effect on. I'm trying to help them recognize that this should actually reduce their workload come fall.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A15? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to amendment A15. A colleague on this side was just telling me a story about how he had been preaching in a church and had got a little exuberant and a little long. At the end of the service a little old lady comes up to him and says: "I've got a really good watch from my ex-husband. I think you need it." I'll try not to take too long. I'll try to be succinct in my comments.

**Mr. Connolly:** Too late.

**Mr. Smith:** Too late. Yes.

We've already heard people talk to this amendment and suggest, Madam Chair, that receipts that show how much of the total price is accounted for by GST and PST are already available and that we should allow the carbon tax to conform to this pattern. There's real wisdom to that, that I think we should consider. I was glad to hear the member opposite talk about how they're considering doing this a little later on. I guess I would encourage the other side of the House to support this amendment. If you understand that this is a valuable path to pursue in just a few months, then why not begin right now?

12:40

You know, I believe that Albertans have a right to transparency when it comes to the taxes that are levied on them. We know that this is what is already done for the GST. When you purchase things, the GST is automatically added on, and you can see it on your bill. It helps to shed light on the effects of this tax on consumers' lives, and this would do the same thing.

As a basketball coach sometimes we had to make sure that the kids understood that there's a consequence for the actions that they have on the court, and I think that in some ways this transparency is very much like that. You know, it's not just for the gas that we would pay for at the pump; it's also for the natural gas bills that we will receive as consumers. When Albertans open up their utility bills, Madam Chair, they would be able to see the effects of the carbon tax on those bills. That actually helps to affect the way that they would start to live their lives. That's what the goal of this government is and what this carbon tax is all about. It's to try to change behaviour and to try to mitigate the way we live our lives and the way we consume carbon. You know, we all understand that,

but when we do things that can begin to mitigate and change the way we live, there are times when we need to know what those consequences will be.

We see labelling on soup cans and on medicines. Why? Because the ingredients in those things can affect the way we live our lives. They can have a serious effect on our health or on our ability to be strong and healthy. I believe that, in that same way, knowledge with regard to the medicines that we consume is important. It helps to inform our choices, just as this carbon tax would help to inform our choices when we go to the pump.

Albertans have come to expect this kind of transparency. It's a good thing. We've moved away from a hidden manufacturing tax towards a transparent GST, and I believe that this would be an appropriate thing to do with this carbon tax.

You know, I guess I would just come back to my last point here. When you're coaching basketball and you see these kids come out on the court, sometimes they just believe: you know, if I just work a little harder – if I just work a little harder – we'll be able to win these games. Sometimes that's the truth, but sometimes they actually have to break it down. Sometimes you have to break it down to the fundamentals of the game.

I can remember trying to teach my girls' team a pick and roll and having them understand that, you know, you have to set your feet, and you have to make sure that you're in good position so that when that person comes into you, you're not moving – it's a not a moving screen – you then have to roll, and you have to do a reverse pivot, and then you have to move towards the basket because you're going to get the ball back, and you're going to get that ball in that pick and roll if you're open.

I think that in some ways these kinds of sound teaching principles apply to this amendment. We need to make sure that the people of Alberta understand: what are the basic foundations of the taxes and the money that they're spending, where is it going, and why is it being taken from their pockets? Transparency helps them to understand that and then to be able to change their behaviour or mitigate their behaviour and mitigate the problems with the carbon footprint that we have.

I would speak to this amendment. I think that this government needs to demonstrate to the people that it's accountable for the monies that they collect. That means that the people have to understand where that money is coming from and why it's coming out of their pockets. So I would speak to this amendment.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, you're speaking to the amendment?

**Mr. Clark:** Yes, I am.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is with regret that I rise to speak against this amendment. I've spoken to many amendments this evening – this morning, I suppose, now – often speaking in favour of amendments brought by the opposition side because I think the intention, of course, of these amendments is to make the bill a better bill. I'm sure that is the intention. The hon. member, I'm sure, believes that that is what they're trying to do with this amendment.

Unfortunately, I just can't imagine the burden that this particular amendment will put on small-business owners in particular, to have to update their systems to display the specific information of a carbon tax, which will change 12 months into the implementation

of that. You know, it's a bit interesting from a party that, I know, purports to be supportive of business.

I do understand that you're trying to create some headwinds for the government in terms of their ability to pass the bill and to bring in some amendments. I understand that. You're trying to put some speed bumps in place perhaps. But this one, unfortunately, would be a speed bump not on the government or on the bill but on the very small-business owners that you purport to support. If there is going to be a carbon tax, I think that it ought to be just rolled into other prices, as with other taxes. We don't see a specific spelling out of the fuel tax on our gas receipts as it stands now and the cost to business owners, especially small-business owners, I think.

You know, the other thing I guess I'd point out is the seeming desire for the opposition to want to reduce or eliminate red tape. This seems like the opposite of that. This seems like a giant ball of red duct tape that you'd wrap up business owners in.

Unfortunately, I cannot support this amendment because I feel that it just increases the burden on an already overburdened business sector. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to just build on the comments from the Member for Calgary-Elbow if I could. He's quite right to point out that the provincial sales tax on fuel is not already listed on the receipts that are distributed when people purchase gas. Of course, provincial taxes on cigarettes and alcohol are also not on receipts when people purchase those products.

You know, to the Member for Airdrie's original argument that she made when she proposed this amendment, that people need to understand the choices that they're making in order to change their behaviour, of course that's only true in part with respect to the transparency that they're promoting here with the sales tax – or the carbon levy. [interjections] Forgive me, Madam Chair. It's 10 to 1 in the morning, and my energy isn't what it was three hours ago. I've spent a lot of it heckling these guys.

My original point, though, Madam Chair, was that cigarette taxes and alcohol taxes have been proven to discourage the use of those products. It's quite clear from all the studies that have been undertaken by people that have looked into the matter that when cigarette taxes go up and when alcohol taxes go up, the consumption of those products goes down. It doesn't have to be explicitly printed on the bill. [interjections]

**The Deputy Chair:** I have already cautioned you once in the House today around respecting when other individuals are speaking. I would appreciate it if the other side would also respect that, please.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I'm glad, Madam Chair, that somebody still has the energy required to heckle.

Back to my original point, the consumption of those products, alcohol and cigarettes, goes down when taxes go up, and it's not necessarily linked to whether or not the amount of those taxes is printed on the receipts. You know, we are advancing this carbon levy to reduce the use of energy. We are confident that the implementation of this carbon levy will do that, whether or not it's explicitly stated on the bill.

Furthermore, on the point of openness and transparency, I appreciate the members opposite wanting the government to be open and transparent about what we're achieving with this carbon levy after its implementation. Of course, the minister of the environment has said a number of times what measures will be in

place to ensure that that transparency and that openness and that accountability are achieved.

**12:50**

What I am looking forward to – and I understand that we're going to be here for several more hours – is the opposite side being open and transparent about what they would do about climate change, Madam Chair. We have been debating this now for – what? – 30 hours. We have not heard anybody stand up on that side of the House and say what it is they would do to reduce carbon emissions. So I encourage the members opposite, you know, to bring forward some amendments that would actually show the people of Alberta what they would do to reduce carbon emissions. I eagerly await those amendments. I suspect that they won't come, but in a world filled with unicorn farts, I suppose anything is possible.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to respond quickly to that. One of the main mandates, I think, for the carbon tax, obviously, is about modifying behaviour. I honestly think that if that's the direction the government has on why we're doing this and, obviously, if we're wanting to change the footprint, if it matters to people not just in their pocketbook but if they actually see where that's going, that's a bit of transparency that helps to bring forward the whole mechanism. It provides that transparency for the mechanism and gives all the reasons in the world for people to see that what you've put forward works, right? I don't think it's too much to ask.

We've given a mountain of amendments – mountains of amendments – and that's what this is about, just so you remember. This is about collaboration, hence the reason we have Committee of the Whole. Just to remind you, it is your responsibility to come up with these ideas, and it's our responsibility to help you make this better. Just to clarify our positions here.

**An Hon. Member:** Well, we're still waiting for you to do that.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Actually, we've had some great amendments. I'm actually extremely proud of the amendments that we've brought forward.

Having said that, this amendment actually goes to exactly what we've been talking about. If behavioural modification is key in this situation, then you need to show people how it's working so they understand, so they're actually seeing it. They can modify based on the numbers that they're seeing. In your own climate action plan and in the discussions that you had leading up to the action plan, you stated specifically in your statements that Albertans are savvy, that they understand the mechanism for change. It actually says that right in your own statements. So if they're savvy, why don't we give them the opportunity to actually see what you're doing so that when they're making the decision to change their behaviour, they actually have the metrics to fall back on?

With all due respect to the member – I don't know where he moved to; he was over there a few minutes ago – I think that we owe it to Albertans to regulate this. The fact that transparency could be put on hold because it might cause some work for a business – I own a small business. I have a couple of small businesses with my husband. I know, for myself, that it's just like when you have the GST or anything else. We had to change for that. So I don't know if that would be a good enough argument for me to suggest that that's not a good reason to do it. In a lot of ways it would provide the automatic metrics that we're asking you for to see if the

intention with which this bill is put forward is actually being fulfilled.

Thank you so much for allowing me the chance to speak.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Battle River-Wainwright. You're speaking to the amendment?

**Mr. Taylor:** Yes, to the amendment. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to rise and speak on this amendment, the disclosure of the carbon levy on bills and receipts. You know, this amendment doesn't necessarily make this bill better, but it adds clarity, clarity on what this bad bill actually has for consumers. It adds transparency and full disclosure, and that's something I think Albertans deserve.

This tax that's coming on here with Bill 20 makes everything more expensive at a time when Albertans are facing layoffs and cutbacks and are struggling to make ends meet. Businesses all across the province are hurting, and they're only going to hurt more with the implementation of Bill 20. We need to add clarity and transparency, and that's what this will do. This will give Albertans the full impact of what's happening with this bill.

I have to speak to a couple of points that I felt urged to just because a couple of members were speaking to them here. Edmonton-South West said that Albertans are proud of this bill, and I suppose the member doesn't count this government as being Albertans that are proud of this bill. Otherwise, he would be proud to be able to put the carbon tax or carbon levy on these receipts. If he was proud of it, if he was truly proud of this carbon tax, this carbon levy, it would go on the bills. He's kind of saying one thing and meaning another. I'm not sure where he's coming from on that, but I think that needs to be noted.

You know, another member talked about cigarettes and alcohol, that it curbed the behaviour of people with cigarettes and alcohol. However, when you have a house to warm, how do you curb that behaviour? How do you restrain that behaviour? This is an essential service in this province. You try cutting back or not using it at 40 below. The suggestion was that it cuts cigarette or alcohol use. Well, you try not using any natural gas or any electricity, the majority of which is driven from a carbon base. Does it make any sense that we want to be doing that as well? It makes absolutely no sense to me.

This government has provided us with several what I would call bad bills, and this is just another one in a long line of them, so we need to put transparency and full disclosure into this. It's been sobering to speak with my constituents and going on to other bills, but I haven't had to go too far out to actually ask my constituents about their opinions on bills because, frankly, they're mailing me and they're e-mailing me and they're phoning me. I don't have to go out of my way for them to want to talk about bad bills. They ask us: well, what can we do? We're putting in amendments, amendments that can bring transparency to this. This is an important aspect that we have to do.

You know, I have a person in my riding. His name is Ken. He's a small-business owner. Ken is a baker in Lougheed, a small town in my riding. He wrote me a letter and told me that if we factor in the cost of natural gas to power the oven, the cost of oil to lubricate the gears, the cost of oil product used on a belt-driven system, then the fuel cost to physically deliver a loaf of bread to the shelf, not to mention vehicle costs, road costs, et cetera, the cost of a loaf of bread would have to go from \$2 a loaf to at least \$3.75 to accommodate the energy increases. Because taxes never go down, in a way inflation can and will take root.

This goes for everything that's produced currently, from carrots to apples to grain to ice cream. You know, Ken went on to say that instead of offering us real leadership in a real crisis – and frankly we are in a real crisis and on the threshold of a new agricultural revolution – we are seeing a new method of taxation being implemented. Give us an alternative to taxation. Give us an alternative to carbon tax credits. Throwing money at a problem doesn't work if the government is using money inappropriately. The bottom line: more taxes do not equate to different or better results.

1:00

You know, Madam Chair, while Ken can try to anticipate how this will impact his business, he has no real way of determining the wider impacts of this bill. If you're able to put that transparency, the full disclosure of this carbon levy, on bills and receipts, he knows how much more he has to charge for that loaf of bread. It's fairly simple in that way. He has to do this work, but you're asking him to just try to fudge around here. Now he can explain to his customers: well, this is how much I had to pay extra as a result of a carbon levy that was placed on this.

It's making everything more expensive. It's making fuel more expensive. It's making a loaf of bread more expensive. It's going to make the cost of the flour that he's getting to his shop more expensive. It's going to make the sugar – they have to produce sugar if we want to buy local, made-in-Alberta sugar. We've got sugar beets. Sugar beets have to go through a rigorous, high-energy, high natural gas system to be able to produce sugar from a beet. That's just part of one of the ingredients. That, flour, yeast, all these different ingredients, salt, lard, whey powder: they all require this energy. If he has all these different facts, he can then know how much he should be charging.

If we bring this in, we bring in transparency. It's only fair for Albertans. It's fair for the Albertans that have automobiles. They can see what it is. It's fair for people that have homes. They can see how much that's costing them. And it's fair for people that have to produce food. All these people, right down the line, need transparency. They need to have full disclosure of the carbon levy on bill receipts, just as this amendment says.

Madam Chair, I am in favour of this amendment, and I hope everybody here votes in favour of this amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, you're speaking to the amendment?

**Mr. Cooper:** Just very briefly, Chair. I'm not sure if the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West will have the opportunity to respond or not. Just really seeking a little bit of clarification on the amendment in terms of the government's intention. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West said: don't worry; we're going to do this in the regulations, so there's no need for this in the legislation. But the Minister of Advanced Education said that it's way too hard and that this is ridiculous.

So I'm just hoping that we can have some clarity. If it's not going to be in the regulations, clearly everyone should in fact support the amendment because they've said that it will be. From time to time the government sends mixed signals about what they will or won't do, and I know that some of the folks in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have a hard time trusting what they say because it's sometimes all over the map. I'm curious. I understand that they may not choose to respond – and that's reasonable – but it has created some uncertainty on this side of the House with what their actual intention is here.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A15? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to make one comment. I had heard earlier the Member for Calgary-Elbow talking about how he would not be in support of this amendment due to the fact that it would increase red tape on businesses. Now, I think the reality is that bringing in a carbon tax is certainly going to add a lot of red tape to businesses and is something that businesses would not be in support of. So the argument is a little late in that way.

However, one thing that I wanted to point out to that hon. member and to the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West is that one of the values of being able to bring in this transparency is that it provides the consumer with the ability to, say, do a comparison. So if they were buying an apple one week and then the next week the carbon tax came in, rather than the retailers having the opportunity to – I wouldn't say price gouge – add some money or cost to that apple, they could say that there's a direct comparison, that the cost that the apple has increased is directly related to the carbon tax versus an increase in the cost applied by a retailer.

The value to this transparency amendment that I see and the reason why I'll be supporting it is because it provides the end buyer, the consumer, with the ability to see where the costs and the increases in those costs are for themselves. We've seen an increase in produce – as a family man I've seen it, being able to buy produce – extensively over the last little while. It's just always nice to be able to know where those costs come from. So I think that having this transparency at least provides for the consumer that transparency that they're looking for in being able to figure out and understand where those increases are.

This is the reason why I'll be in support of this amendment, Madam Chair, and I'd ask that all members support this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in front of the members tonight about this carbon tax amendment. Now, I would like to go back to my past occupation, which was accounting, and give us some insight on exactly what it is that this amendment is looking to do.

For the consumer, obviously, this carbon tax will be passed down indirectly through, say, apples or oranges, but for businesses – what they're trying to do is they're trying to capture what their cost of doing business is. For many businesses the cost of doing business, the major one, would usually be their employees. That's usually your biggest cost. The next cost is usually something along the lines of – well, for trucking companies, for instance, it would be fuel. For a restaurant or a warehouse or any business that has got a building of any sort, it would be natural gas.

Now, this is important because what we're trying to do is we're trying to find out where the business is and where it needs to be. What happens is that a lot of times the larger companies are on top of their margins, with a monthly and in some cases even a daily total. What happens here is that there are some businesses like the small businesses – I mean, your farms and your restaurants and all the small businesses that make up Alberta – and those businesses only do their taxes at the end of the year. A lot of times they don't know how much money they've made until they've progressed through the year.

1:10

What's going to happen, as January 1 hits, is that they're going to feel that they're doing fine because in 2016 they've made it through the tax increases that the government has implemented – the personal taxes, the corporate taxes, the minimum wage increases, all the other little taxes that have accumulated on top of them – and they've adjusted to show that they can actually remain profitable during this. It's been hard on these small businesses. What happens is that in order to do that, they have to raise their prices to be able to still be competitive and be able to make a profit.

Now, it's easy to say – it's easy to say – let's just raise the cost of a hamburger; let's just raise the cost of a truckload of grain. The thing is that it's easier said than done because a lot of businesses would have already raised it to what the market can bear. The whole thing about business is that it tries to be competitive with its neighbours, the businesses that it competes against. What happens is that – I fear that a lot of businesses aren't going to know that this carbon tax is going to kick in or know the effects of this carbon tax until the end of 2017, when they have done their taxes.

Why is this important? The reason is because a lot of businesses have razor-sharp profit margins. This amendment will give the businesses who do monthly bookkeeping the ability to be able to see how much carbon tax they're actually contributing to the Alberta government. This is important because what happens is that these businesses, if they can't react fast enough, go out of business. This is the nature of business.

It starts really simply. At first it seems like: "Gee, you know what? I have a hard time maintaining my bank account balance." So what is the next step? "Well, gee, I'd better go and get a line of credit with the bank." What happens is that they fill up the line of credit, and then they start to stop paying other necessary bills. That is where they get behind, and that's where we end up in a place that they can't recover from.

Now, I don't see anywhere in Bill 20 that says that they're going to help businesses that get into trouble because of the implementation of the carbon tax. We actually aren't keeping track of its effect whereas this amendment is asking that the tax be transparent. It's being shown to all of the business community. It also is important that we see exactly how much they're paying in carbon tax so that they can say: "You know what? Maybe this is an area that we need to work on. We see that we are putting out a large amount in actual carbon taxes, so this is a place that we can address and work towards to be able to reduce our carbon footprint."

That is something that the government can actually see a result from because what happens is that nobody wants to pay taxes. That is just a fact. Now they will go out of their way to make sure that the gas use is brought down by being more efficient, and it will be driven because of the fact that they are trying to drive down their costs. I hear where the government is going with this, that they want to drive down their costs. In the end, this is a good vehicle for our small-business community to see exactly what it is that is going out of their businesses. What we need to do is to make sure that we support our small-business community, and until we can actually give them a tool, this is a great amendment to do it.

I support this amendment, and I would ask everybody in this Legislature to support it. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A15? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Alberta Party, a table for one. Yes. Thank you. I have a question for the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. You referenced that one of the reasons you would like to see this

particular amendment move ahead is so that Albertans could see the true, transparent cost of the carbon tax on all of their bills. Could you give us some indication as to how much per orange or apple you believe a carbon tax would add? Would it be one-fiftieth of a cent? How much do you think we're going to see on a grocery bill, for each apple and orange, from the carbon tax? My point is that at some point it gets a little bit silly.

I understand where you're trying to go with the transparency, but frankly I think this would add overhead to businesses as opposed to streamlining things. You know, Albertans are going to know that their costs have gone up in certain areas, but I don't think it's going to have a material impact, necessarily, on the price of fruit and vegetables, for example, to the point where we would want to see a government force business owners of all sizes, big and small, to add that to their receipts. I think the burden of doing that is pretty extreme.

So I'm curious: how much per apple, how much per orange will the carbon tax add, do you think?

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on amendment A15?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A15 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 1:17 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Ellis	Orr	Taylor
Gill	Panda	Yao
Gotfried		

1:20

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Miranda
Babcock	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Hoffman	Notley
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Clark	Kazim	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinstaub	Sabir
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Luff	Sigurdson
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Feehan	Miller	Westhead
Ganley		

Totals:	For – 13	Against – 37
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[Motion on amendment A15 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the main bill. Any members wishing to speak to the main bill? The Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm honoured to rise today in support of Bill 20, the climate change leadership plan. We Albertans are known as go-getters. When we believe in something,

we do it. Climate change is something we believe in. We believe in the science, and we know that climate change is real. If we believe in it, that means we need to do something about it. That's why our government has Alberta's climate change leadership plan.

Madam Chair, I'm very proud of our government's decision to take real action on climate change. Our government is committed to moving Alberta forward, moving past the inaction and towards leadership on climate change. The climate leadership plan is the right thing to do today and for future generations. The climate leadership plan diversifies our economy and creates new jobs. As well, every penny raised will be rebated to Albertans and reinvested in our economy.

Madam Chair, I would like to talk a little about sustainability. Sustainability is a complex concept. The most often quoted definition comes from the UN Brundtland commission. Sustainable development is "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." From the National Geographic: they refer to sustainable development as a process for meeting human development goals while sustaining the ability of natural systems to continue to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend.

The climate leadership plan will also improve Albertans' health by phasing out harmful coal pollution in favour of cleaner energy. Pollution and greenhouse gas are two terms that are oftentimes used, and they overlap with each other quite a bit. The definition of pollution is: "Generally any substance that people introduce into the atmosphere that has damaging effects on living things and the environment is considered air pollution." Again, this definition is on the National Geographic website.

Greenhouse gas is a gas that absorbs infrared radiation and creates greenhouse effects. For example:

Carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, is the main pollutant that is warming Earth. Though living things emit carbon dioxide when they breathe, carbon dioxide is widely considered to be a pollutant when associated with cars, planes, power plants, and other human activities that involve the burning of fossil fuels such as gasoline and natural gas. In the past 150 years, such activities have pumped enough carbon dioxide into the atmosphere to raise its levels higher than they have been for hundreds of thousands of years.

Again, this is as clearly defined on the National Geographic website. That means that carbon dioxide is a pollutant.

Research has been done all over the world on the impact of a carbon tax on the economy. There is a lot of information available as well, with many examples of other countries successfully implementing the approach. Although it is an unprecedented approach in Alberta, it is not a primitive approach. We are not only catching up with the rest of the world but creating a plan that is even better. The climate change leadership plan will actually make Alberta the leader in sustainability.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Mr. Chair, let me share with you an example. Dublin, Ireland, is a great example, where Dublin proved itself by recovering its economy through a carbon tax, or penalty, for environmental damage. It drove prices up for oil, natural gas, and kerosene. Ireland has seen its emissions drop more than 15 per cent since 2008. It used to be one of Europe's highest per capita producers of greenhouse gas emissions, nearing those of the United States.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Because of the taxes they shifted to greener fuels and cars and began recycling ferociously. Automobile manufacturers such as

Mercedes found ways to build powerful cars with emissions as low as small Nissans. With the higher cost of fossil fuels, renewable energy sources became the supreme source of energy. That led wind power energy to soar. Mercedes and Volvo have high-efficiency cars that shut down instead of idling.

Further to that, Europe's strongest economies – Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands – have all had carbon dioxide taxes since the 1990s. Japan and Australia recently introduced them as well.

A resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, Aparna Mathur, said that a carbon tax is a good idea. She also said that according to some economists, "a carbon tax could [potentially] raise \$400 billion annually in the United States."

Madam Chair, our government is progressing by all means through this plan. I'm very proud of the extensive consultation and work that went into the development of our climate leadership plan. Indigenous communities, for example, also were consulted on the climate leadership plan, to fully utilize their wisdom. They strongly believe in taking care of Mother Earth, and having them onboard with this plan is one of the biggest assets for our province.

Our plan, Albertans' plan, will have a global impact. It has three parts. First is the carbon levy, which is a bank account for sustainability. It's the penalty for damaging our air, water, food; thus, the sustainability of human beings. So every investment towards the carbon levy is basically an investment towards sustainability. Energy Efficiency Alberta, the second phase of this bill, is the reward for taking care of our environment, that has an impact on the well-being of human beings. Rebates will be issued to offset the costs of insulation, retrofitting, and rebuilding across the province. Small-scale energy, microgeneration, energy efficiency, and conservation of energy: everything will be promoted. From the funds collected and invested in renewables, alternative energy and better technology will be created to create more jobs and to give Alberta an edge globally.

Madam Chair, this bill is the right thing to do for Albertans, and I would strongly encourage all members to join me in supporting it as well.

My personal story is that I immigrated with my family to Canada from an upper middle-income family, and we started our lives in Canada as a low-income family, basically starting at the bottom. The reason we migrated was because we wanted to pursue a higher quality of life. The definition of a better quality of life is to have access to better air quality, water, food, health care, education; overall, my own well-being, which is a combination of all these factors.

In our case, when we started our lives after moving to Canada, I had my struggles based on the change of culture and the financial situation and everything, but I was highly motivated because I still defined my life to be the best while being in Canada and being a Canadian. I had access to all the great things that make a society a better place to live and which define that nation to be successful. A successful nation or a developed nation is different from a developing one just because they have better access to all the things I defined: health care, education, air, water, food, and overall well-being of the human beings. That makes our nation superior or the best place to live in.

1:30

Having such a plan that is originating from Alberta and that will help make Alberta the leader globally is our government's excellent move towards that. Through this bill, Madam Chair, we are being valiant and vigilant as we are taking this bold and unprecedented step to secure the future for our future generations. Therefore, I would highly encourage all the members to support this bill because this bill has a lot of information based on thorough analysis and a

lot of research and consultation. It's a complete bill that will lead to the bright future of our province and for our future generations.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Climate change needs actions and solutions. I know and we on this side know that climate change is real, it's happening, and it is affecting the entire world. We're not debating whether climate change is real or not. We should be debating solutions to lower global emissions. Instead, we are debating a punitive tax on hard-working Albertan families.

The idea of putting a price on carbon is to change the consumption behaviours of people and reduce the carbon footprint. It's a great idea, but we need more carbon reduction in the most cost-effective way. At the same time, we do not want to reduce our ability to compete in the global market. We should not ignore the fact that our contribution to global emissions is less than 2 per cent, and we are already the leaders in monitoring and controlling emissions world-wide. But we should always aim to do even better. Instead of creating something better, the members opposite are constantly trying to avoid answering questions on their legislation.

Instead, they want to know what we would do if we were in the government. The backbenchers on the other side have begged us for a Wildrose plan over a dozen times according to the *Hansard*. Today even the member from the fifth party, sitting in the Member for Edmonton-South West's chair, was asking me: what's your plan? He said in the past, too: "What would you do? What would you do about that? What would the Wildrose actually do?" Even with his pamphlet of a plan, he is begging us for a better plan, which, to me, is a bit surprising.

The reason why we are debating the NDP carbon tax plan and not a Wildrose carbon tax plan is because we campaigned on not bringing in a single new tax. I think our leader said that many times, anyway. That's the first and most obvious reason why we have not proposed a tax to replace this NDP tax. We're not criticizing this tax because we think we can tax better; we are criticizing this tax because it's a tax and we do not advocate for higher taxes. The members opposite can beg us to put forward a tax, but we will not, no matter how hard the members opposite beg.

Another reason we are debating the NDP's climate change plan is because the NDP are in government. If the NDP are so intent on debating a Wildrose proposal, then step aside and let us be the government. We would be happy to take over government and put forward legislation for this House to debate. If the NDP would like to debate our budget, then step down and let us be in charge of the finances of this province. The members opposite are constantly asking for a Wildrose plan, the Wildrose budget, the Wildrose this, the Wildrose that. Well, the time to debate party platforms is during election time. If the NDP want to debate party platforms, then call an election today. The reason I am here is because we did debate our platforms during the by-election, and – guess what? – I am here. The Member for Calgary-Greenway is here. Now we are here to debate the government's plans and government legislation. The title that is being broadcast across the screen is Government Bill 20, not Wildrose Bill 20, so not the opposition climate change plan.

I know most of the members across the aisle have never been in government before. I appreciate that, but this is the parliamentary system. The opposition cannot submit bills that spend taxpayers' dollars or increase taxes. Therefore, no matter how badly you want us to put forward a bill that increases taxes or spends money, we are legally not allowed to do so. I would suggest that the members opposite stop asking for something that is not legally allowed to

happen and focus on the bill in front of us. Now, perhaps they would like us to create a plan that is not in the form of a bill but encompasses the same size and scope as their 95-page climate tax plan. Perhaps this government knows their plan is so bad that they hope we present a better plan that they can copy and take credit for. That's why you're asking for our plan. Reducing small-business tax is just an example, and you're welcome to take our plan and do that. I appreciate that.

There is another reason why we cannot create a plan the same size and scope that the government has presented. The Wildrose operates with about 27 staff members for 22 MLAs. Madam Chair, Wildrose operates with 27 staff members, just 27 staff members for 22 MLAs. That's barely one assistant per MLA. Instead, we have spent our time presenting plans that will help this government fix the economy. We have presented plans that will save money and get people back to work. We have presented a 12-point jobs action plan. We presented a budget sustainability plan that provided \$2 billion worth of savings without firing a single front-line worker or reducing services. Without firing a single front-line worker or reducing services. We found experts to provide feedback on equalization with the creation of an equalization panel.

We also were first out the door with a plan to assist Albertans to fight the problem surrounding fentanyl. Meanwhile the government has the entire bureaucracy behind them. Most of them may not even be from Alberta, anyway. Thousands of people working for the government: the whole department has more staff members than the Wildrose staff and MLAs combined.

**1:40**

If this government is so intent on putting forward a plan, then give us the exact same resources that were available to the government when creating this plan. Give us access to an entire department to research our own plan. If the government is unwilling to give us access to any of the staff members who are from Alberta – we'd prefer staff from Alberta, anyway – to create a plan, then we'll have to stick to debating this plan, the NDP's carbon tax plan. If the government is still looking for ideas, they can look at our members' past policies on the environment. We do have them if you want to look at that. You ignore looking at that, and you keep asking us: "Where is it? Where is it?" Go spend some time looking at our website. You'll find our plan.

The government has not even released the regulations that will be a major part of this tax plan. There are so many reasons why this bill needs to be withdrawn or at least postponed. That's why we'd use legislative tools to send this bill to a standing committee for scrutiny, so that none of the good people from Calgary-Foothills ask me: what's our plan? They're asking us to help the government make their carbon tax bill a better bill. That's why we are using all these legislative tools. We are proposing reasonable amendments, and you just ignore them, even the reasonable amendments. You are answerable to your constituents. The tools are in place to get more input from MLAs and stakeholders, but this government refuses to use those tools. That's why we are here at 2 o'clock at night discussing your bill, not our bill.

You would expect this government to look at provinces that have a better public service delivery model, that spend less per capita and deliver more efficiency. This government should take a look at provinces that have a better performing economy and have implemented a carbon tax. B.C. implemented a truly revenue-neutral carbon tax. Now, all taxes are spent by the province on some sort of program that is used by Albertans. One could say that if the definition of revenue neutral is tax revenue that is spent on people, then all taxes are revenue neutral, but that is not the definition no matter how many times the government says so.



B.C. has a revenue-neutral plan, revenue neutral by B.C. law. It states that the policy requires equivalent cuts to other taxes. B.C. has cut millions in income on other taxes to offset carbon tax revenue. The B.C. government has a transparent spreadsheet, which is balanced between cuts and revenue, to ensure that the tax is revenue neutral. This balance sheet is published yearly so that everyone can see where the money is given back to the people. This tax that's proposed by the NDP does none of that. Bill 20 does none of that. The money taken from Albertans goes into a slush fund, that could be used for who knows what.

If this government is looking for suggestions that are better than the plan up for debate in this House, then I suggest they use the tools available to them and make a better plan themselves. We're giving you the tools to make your plan better, if you want to use them. It's only available for another seven hours or so; then it expires. If you want to use the tools we're proposing, use it or lose it. Take this plan back to the drawing board and come back with something Albertans will not be harmed by. The government could start with an economic impact study on Alberta's economy and how this tax will affect Alberta's economy. That would prove to this House once and for all how this tax would affect Albertan families. The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka broke down the bare-minimum costs that would affect the typical Albertan and showed that the NDP's math is so far off. It is so far off. Thank you for doing that.

The rebate that the NDP advertises will cover all the costs created from this tax is nowhere near the true amount. My fellow colleagues have pointed out cost after cost that the NDP refuse to admit will affect Albertans. The awesome people of Calgary-Foothills do not want increased school fees because of this tax. They do not want increased food costs because of this tax. Albertans and Canadians expect that we'll have a reasonable debate in this House, Madam Chair, on the cost-benefit analysis of Bill 20. In this bill you'll find all information regarding tax collection and tax avoidance punishments but no benefits to the taxpayers. After paying \$2.6 billion in taxes, what is the return on investment for Albertans? We haven't heard from any of the government benches what the benefits, tangible benefits, are for Albertans.

The fantastic people of Calgary-Foothills are asking: how many new jobs will be created with this initiative? No answer. We've asked them so many times. When will these jobs be created? In 10 years? In 20 years? Nobody knows. But people want jobs now. They are looking for jobs now, not in 10 years or 20 years. We do not have a single detail regarding what type of jobs it will create.

Will this gain us market access? No one can tell us that so far. Will this gain us the mystical social licence? No answer. Dead silence on the other side. Will this bill reduce red tape as it creates new Crown corporations to implement red tape? Will this reduce our wait times in the health care system? Why is this bill not revenue neutral when it was first advertised as such? Why will it not fix the problems Albertans actually have?

This climate tax plan wants to cap the emissions at 100 megatonnes. We are already at 70 megatonnes, so who will get the allocation of the balance of 30 megatonnes? These are the questions, Madam Chair, that I'm being asked in my riding of Calgary-Foothills. Is this government giving preferential treatment to whoever backs their plan? That means that others who don't back their plan won't get any allocation, so that means there won't be any new jobs. If the 30 megatonnes is simply allocated to the existing producers just because they stood with you, will that reduce competition? Will there be no new projects if this government allocates these 30 megatonnes to their friends instead of allowing for a competitive marketplace?

The only thing this bill will do is increase the tax burden on Alberta families. That's why, Madam Chair, I'm not in favour of

this bill unless – unless – the government addresses my questions and concerns above in a satisfactory manner. Again, the government has another few hours left for debate today, Tuesday. If they want to make use of the time and answer our questions, then I'm open – I'm open – to hearing your answers to make up my mind whether I support this bill or not.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to begin just by briefly once again citing the Climate Leadership report to the minister. On page 17, on what climate leadership means to the panel personally, Stephanie Cairns begins with this short sentence. She says, "Alberta climate leadership presents a profound design challenge." Now, I do know a little bit about design challenges. I've been on some major construction projects in various places around the world. If there's any reality at all, it's that if you go into the construction management office, you will find against the wall a big tub, basically, full of blueprints, drawings, design drawings drawn by the designing engineering company. The interesting part is that there will be revisions upon revisions upon revisions upon revisions at a construction site. It just is a reality. To design anything perfectly the first time is absolutely unheard of.

I would suggest that this climate leadership plan does in fact have profound design challenges. In fact, we would argue that the design is deeply flawed and has significant problems that are going to make it ineffective and therefore a problem for Albertans, and that's why it needs to be improved. So, Madam Chair, in that regard I would like to introduce an amendment because the design of this plan is flawed, and we can't seem to make the members opposite understand how detrimental this tax plan will be to the province. They've refused to be responsible for the taxes they already have in their possession, and they insist on constantly raising taxes of all types. Since this government is determined to get this tax passed, the best that we can do is to hope to mitigate the damage.

That's why I would like to present the following amendment, of which I have the requisite number of copies, and the original is on top for the chair.

Thank you.

1:50

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member. If you can wait till I get a copy.

Members, we have an amendment. The amendment will be referred to as A16.

Please, go ahead.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move that the Climate Leadership Implementation Act be amended in schedule 1 as follows. In part A section 6 is struck out; in part B section 25 is amended (a) by striking out subsection (1)(h) and (b) in subsection (2) by striking out "6,"; in part C section 27(1)(d) is struck out; in part D section 61 is amended by striking out "6,"; and in part E the table to the schedule is amended by striking out the following:

Locomotive diesel	5.94¢/L	8.90¢/L
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Now, I'd like to say that, as everybody realizes, Alberta is a landlocked province. This is something that everybody has acknowledged in one form or another in this House. Of course, the pipeline debate wouldn't be such a large issue if our province was situated on the coast or at least with some sort of direct access to the coast.

The major way that our resources are exported out of this province is via rail. Without the railroad even our oil and gas industry would not have been able to grow to the size it is today, yet the oil and gas industry is hurting. Oil prices have dropped dramatically. This government has raised taxes on oil companies. The fires in the Fort McMurray area have stopped production for weeks, and now this tax is going to hurt them even further. The fuel tax increase for locomotives will damage our already fragile oil industry. I'm a bit baffled as to why the government insists on kicking our oil and gas industry while they are down. The tax already gets a share of revenue from the oil companies, and there's no need to be double-dipping. There is no need to tax oil and gas companies twice.

But it's not only our resource sector that uses the railroad. Manufacturers of all kinds that import goods into Alberta, not only goods but also equipment that is used in the development of many kinds of industries and manufacturing – these goods are all imported. The majority of them come in on rail in order to create new products for Albertans. These products will all become more expensive thanks to the carbon tax. Companies that use the railroad to export goods will have to pay more now to ship their goods, making them less cost competitive. Our economy is hurting, and this tax is aimed at our importers and our exporters. Albertan companies will incur higher taxes because the railroads will simply pass on their costs to Albertans.

Railroads actually can't easily find efficiencies in order to reduce their emissions. They can't find a more efficient route to take, in most cases. If this tax is supposed to encourage better stewardship of the environment, I don't quite understand how a railroad is supposed to change its environmental footprint. [interjections] Their ways are literally nailed to the ground.

**The Deputy Chair:** Members.

**Mr. Orr:** A railroad can't replace their diesel-electric engines with pure electric motors. The infrastructure simply is not in existence for a railroad that stretches across Canada. The government needs to explain how this tax on locomotives is going to change the ways or the habits and therefore the emissions of the railroad industry.

Furthermore, this tax is going to punish agriculture and farming and farm-related industries in Alberta. There's a good deal of agricultural implement manufacturing that goes on in this province. Most of it is shipped out by rail. The big one, of course, though, is the delivery of grain crops to market. Millions of tonnes, actually, are shipped to market by rail, and there is no price flexibility in that for farmers, producers. They are just going to have to take this out of their pockets. They are going to be punished again: first Bill 6 and now this. I think this government just doesn't understand the impact that this bill is going to have on our farm industry in Alberta. We talk about wanting to diversify the economy, about wanting to expand away from oil and gas, and here we are punishing probably one of our best likelihoods, which is the agricultural industry.

This amendment is something that should be a priority for all members in this Assembly if they care about Alberta businesses that export and import products for Albertan families. This amendment also assists our oil and gas sector, that has been taking a beating after the prices lately. We should not be taxing our industries when they're already down.

I ask all members to please vote for this amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As we all know, rail is vital to our key industries – agriculture, manufacturing, energy, forestry – so it's disappointing that the government wants to make things harder for those job creators during this downturn. Alberta, as my colleague said, is a landlocked province, and rail is necessary in order to export the products that we produce here. Certainly, as a farmer I understand that. Without the railway our energy and ag industries would not have been able to grow to the size they are today.

You know, Madam Chair, a carbon tax is supposed to be a behaviour-modifying piece of legislation. Where I come from – I'm not sure that I understand what behaviour will be able to be changed on a farm in southern Alberta. Farms, in truth, at the end of day, are actually way ahead of this anyway. We began using zero-till and minimal-till equipment to seed crops about 25 years ago. As a result less fossil fuel has been used in the seeding process on farms for years. The capacity and size of equipment for other processes on farms have also increased, so less fossil fuel is used to cover the same number of acres that we used to cover.

Farmers that grow grain other than grain to feed their own cattle or to ship to a feedlot mostly ship it for sale, and that means that it has to be sent by rail. Rail already saw an increase in diesel fuel during the last budget, so it's disappointing that locomotive diesel will take another hit on fuel with this tax. As far as ag is concerned, the cost for getting grain in export position just went up, and farmers don't have the opportunity to control their income, that being the price of grain.

Oil moves by rail daily in this province. Pipelines are a better, safer way to move our energy, but rail has been used for years, and it has increased, actually. Rail has allowed the energy industry to diversify. Now, all of a sudden it will cost more to ship oil. This tax will hurt our resource sector when they are already hurting. Why does this government insist on hurting our oil and gas industry when we're already down? This is a very depressed part of the cycle for oil and gas. The tax already gets a share of revenue from the oil companies. There's no need to double-dip. We should not be taxing our industries when they're down.

2:00

You know, Sea-Cans bring goods through Alberta from the coast as part of trading partnerships that we already have. The price for these goods just went up. Automobiles are moved by rail – we see that all the time – so the price of a vehicle just went up. Those costs to the railway have to be passed on. All types of manufactured goods imported into Alberta will become more expensive. Everything. Our economy is hurting, and this tax is aimed at our importers and exporters.

The railways have confirmed that they'll pass on the carbon tax to consumers. They're certainly not going to eat it. It means increased costs to farmers to move their grain, increased costs for automobiles to get here, increased costs for tourists to travel by rail. It costs 35 cents to move one tonne of grain one mile. One grain car holds 90 tonnes. That's \$31.50 to move one car one mile. Trains today are about 150 cars.

**An Hon. Member:** We adopted the metric system in 1974.

**Mr. Schneider:** Sorry, Mr. Scientist. I can't catch you over there.

If you move 150 cars one mile at that price, it's 4,725 bucks a mile. That just went up 9 cents a litre.

This amendment is something that should be a priority for all members in this Assembly if they care about Alberta businesses that export and import products for Alberta families.

That being said, Madam Chair, I will be supporting this amendment, and I encourage all members to do so. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on the amendment? The Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's very important that we all have an opportunity to speak to this amendment. I think it is important to recognize what this legislation does when we are talking about a carbon levy, when we are talking about the climate leadership plan and the Climate Leadership report. We're talking about an economy-wide price on carbon. We're talking about something that is designed to reduce consumption, designed to find efficiencies through industry, and to do that we really do need to work on an economy-wide scale here. That's why it was developed by renowned economists, and that's why it was developed by people in research and industry that have heavy backgrounds in these sorts of issues.

We're really looking specifically at a carbon price on locomotive fuel. We can see that the policy mirrors the fuel tax that we have here in Alberta and that we've seen in Saskatchewan. We can see that on top of that, the Railway Association of Canada reported that the industry saw a 9.8 per cent decrease in taxes in 2014. Even the locomotive industry, Madam Chair, is concerned about reducing their emissions, and that's why the Railway Association of Canada's 2015 report stated that

investments in modern locomotives, among other fuel-management technologies and policies, have allowed Canada's railways to make substantial emissions reductions, and to improve their fuel efficiency by 27.5 per cent since 2005.

Madam Chair, in addition to that, the president of CN, Claude Mongeau, even said that environmental sustainability is a strategic priority for CN, which is focused on lowering emissions, increasing energy efficiency, reducing waste, and encouraging environmental stewardship among their employees.

Clearly, industry understands the importance of taking action on climate change, and that's why we've been moving forward on this economy-wide price, and that's why I think it's very important to understand that in accordance with the Climate Leadership report and in accordance with all the thorough consultations and research that's gone into this, we are moving forward on this economy-wide price.

At this time, Madam Chair, I do have to ask and implore all the members of this House to vote against this amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A16 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:05 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Panda
Clark	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Ellis	Nixon	Yao
Gill	Orr	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Notley
Babcock	Hinkley	Piquette
Carson	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Horne	Sabir
Coolahan	Kazim	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Schreiner
Dach	Littlewood	Shepherd
Dang	Loyola	Sigurdson
Drever	Luff	Sucha
Eggen	Malkinson	Turner
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Ganley	Nielsen	
Totals:	For – 14	Against – 35

[Motion on amendment A16 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now on the original bill. Anyone wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, everyone. Investing in cleaner choices, making green initiatives more affordable, to be leaders in energy efficiency and cutting edge in clean technology: these are the primary strategies, as I understand them, for this bill. Just a couple of things I'd like to clarify, too.

2:10

With all due respect to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore – and she made some great comments about some jurisdictional comparisons between Alberta and Ireland and what they're doing – I just wanted to clarify a few things. Please correct me if I'm wrong. Dublin is sort of in a similar situation to us, where we're in a recession and seeing some downturn and whatnot. I'm pretty sure that some of their targets are being met as a result of defaults because of the recession. That's very similar to here. We may very well see some of those numbers here as well due to the simple fact that there is a downturn in the economy. I'm just saying that it might be part of the reason. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't try and do better. I'm just suggesting that that might be part of the reason you'll see those numbers decline.

As far as I know, they are not quite on target yet to reach their 20 per cent. That could change. Of course, theirs is agriculturally based, right? Their big thing in Ireland is beef. It's beef. I think it's close to \$1.5 billion a year in beef. That is what they sell. That's their big export, agriculture. It's a different group of things.

Nevertheless, it was very nice to have some jurisdictional comparison. The good thing about that is that you can actually take some information and actually compare it across the board, so I really appreciated that. Especially if we're actually going to look at how the numbers are being impacted from one place to another, it's nice to have some information. Again, please correct me if I'm wrong, but that's what I understand to be true about Ireland.

We want to make sure that the accountability factors are there. Again, I know we've said it a hundred times, but I think it's worth saying again: all of us ran on that. As many times as you may say what your plans are and all of those kinds of things, you are the government. I actually really look forward to these collaborative discussions, and I'm hoping that at some point collaboration will actually occur.

There have been some really, really great amendments in here. I think my favourite amendments have actually been the accountability amendments. What those do is give a lot of information to Albertans to show that the government is actually interested in not just waving around a document but in actually

standing behind it and being able to show that it worked. Personally, I would appreciate that, and I know that I speak on behalf of many of my constituents in that they would really appreciate the ability of the government to show foresight, that they care about what Albertans think, that they care about the impression that they're leaving behind. This is part of your legacy. I don't know. I would consider potentially maybe looking at some more of these accountability amendments.

I'd also like to bring forth an amendment if I could, please. I believe I have the requisite number of copies.

**The Deputy Chair:** Please go ahead.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 in section 19 by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) The purposes and uses prescribed under subsection (1) for which a rebate may be paid must include fuel used for the transportation of students by bus provided by a school board to or from the site of a school.

Madam Chair, this government is seeming to rush through a very, very punitive tax on Albertans. In the process of introducing the bill, the government, I believe, failed to understand the full ramifications. It seems like you're cherry-picking from a plan without looking at the full impact of this tax. Many, many of us have said this over and over again, that the cost-benefit analysis and the impact analysis are really, really important for Albertans to understand. Albertans are intelligent people. They are interested in what's happening and in what's going forward, and they're interested in being engaged.

In your own statements from the engagement process leading up to the climate leadership panel, you had a thousand people come to where they were able to come in and be engaged with this process, and many, many people also responded online. With that engagement process it's hard to understand why within that process, after being able to see what Albertans want, you would pick the part that has become a regressive tax grab. Oddly enough, the tax is going to hurt the people, Madam Chair, that the government seems to want to most protect, and that's the vulnerable. That was shown tonight. It was so disappointing to see the government turn away charities in this and accountability amendments, that will do nothing to alter what you're trying to do other than to show Albertans that what you've done is correct or that if you've made a mistake, we can fix it. That's the whole point. When you are hurting the vulnerable, you can't sufficiently correct the onerous impact of that tax.

The environment minister has been asked about the government's failure to study the economic impact. Also, you've said in the climate action plan that it must provide an incentive for everyone. Well, I'm not sure how the vulnerable are being incentivized here. I'm not sure how charities are being incentivized here in this tax on Alberta. She's replied with a variety of what feel like very ill-informed comments. The Ecofiscal report, that she keeps referring to as the economic impact study: it seems to the Wildrose that it fails to agree with the government's exceedingly low revenue-recycling numbers, and it fails, actually, to satisfy the criteria of the economic impact study.

The government is offering low-income families – these are families that are earning less than \$108,000, give or take, combined. The rebate under that is \$855 in 2018. The report, however, notes that the percentage of carbon pricing revenues required to fully compensate those households with those income levels in the other part, in the second income quintile, so the other 20 per cent of the population, well within what the government

considers to be a low income as earnings in this quintile are averaging around \$40,000, a rebate of \$1,130. The government will be offering in 2018 a rebate of \$855, Madam Chair, to low-income families that are spending \$1,130. That's just not good enough for Alberta's poorest families.

The government is using the numerous reports by Ecofiscal to prove that they're getting this carbon tax right and all the while not adhering to their own recommendations from the Ecofiscal plan. I mean, the report is not an economic impact study. It gives parameters by which to try and create this process, but it's not an impact study. There's no assessment on the added cost for groups vulnerable to the regressive nature of the tax like school children, particularly in rural Alberta, that have no option but to take the bus to school every morning.

I grew up in Chestermere. I've been there since 1979. It's grown substantially since then, but it's a long, long, long, long, long way to school. In fact, the bus that I took in the morning circled around the entire outside of what was considered Rocky View at that time before it even got to school. Even now, even with the growth of the city and the number of people that are there, the school is still on the outskirts of the city. In fact, because we're on the outskirts of the city, if people, especially teenagers, are wanting to work in the city of Calgary, how do you think they're going to get there? I'm just curious. I mean, if we're thinking about the tax base, just the relative tax base, and getting people working and getting to the city, like I mentioned before, most of Chestermere and, in fact, my entire constituency empties out into Calgary to work. So it's very punitive to a community like mine where the choices are very limited. There are not enough jobs in Chestermere to provide for everyone who lives there. There's no way. Most of the people do travel outside the city of Chestermere in order to work. If we're talking just about children, I mean, they have no option but to take a bus in the morning.

**2:20**

The minister keeps waving it around and using it as Canada-wide numbers. Well, the numbers the Wildrose used to estimate the impact, which the minister claimed, don't even apply to Alberta. These numbers don't apply. I mean, how can you use numbers if they're not relevant to our jurisdiction? The matter required further study, and instead of facilitating the study, the government has decided to ignore every report that disagrees with them. Failing to offer the proper numbers is not fair to Albertans, and they're angry about this.

I know you've said over and over again that your constituents are fine with the carbon tax. I don't know how that could be so different. My constituency is full of a diverse group of people, a very, very diverse group of people, and they're not all just one stripe or one type. There are many, many different people in my constituency. I have yet to receive a letter promoting this carbon tax, not one, and we have asked.

Again, I know that you think that doing a referendum should only be reserved for certain large-ticket items. I would wager that this is large enough in order to ask Albertans what they think. I think that the matter requires further study, and Albertans are left wondering if the environment minister understood the reports, because while their elected representatives debate in the House right now, in the wee hours of the morning, the government seems to irresponsibly and recklessly push through an ill-planned bill. Why? Because nobody's watching right now? I can't imagine how it is that you look at some of the amendments that have been given to you in collaboration, in the spirit of trying to make this better . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yes.

**The Deputy Chair:** Can I clarify that you are speaking to amendment A17?

**Mrs. Aheer:** I am. Thank you very much.

I want to make sure that when we're talking about accountability, when we're talking about transportation and school boards, you have to understand that everything else that's been put in front of you hasn't even been given a second look. Now you're given an opportunity to rebate to schoolchildren, especially in rural areas. I would really, really, highly recommend that you take a look at this one. It's good for everyone.

Madam Chair, the reason I've risen in the House today to introduce this important amendment is simply to make sure that the government has the opportunity to look at maybe a small portion, a thumbprint, of this that they maybe hadn't considered. The NDP failed to consider my constituents in Chestermere-Rocky View when they drafted this bill, and the government failed to take into account that the school boards would be saddled with the high cost of this tax and little option beyond cutting programs and increasing the already high and already regressive fees that they are forced to levy on parents.

I'm going to just give you a few examples here. The Calgary Catholic board, which my riding is a part of, has done some analysis of the financial impact of the proposed carbon tax. The following information was shared during their public board meeting, so I'm sure that the members opposite also have this information as well, but I'll still share it anyway. This board meeting was on April 27, 2016, and the meeting disclosed that Budget 2016 contained the implementation of the carbon tax, which is budgeted to increase the cost of transportation and utilities by \$350,000 in 2016-2017 and just over \$500,000 in 2017-18 and beyond. Is that correct? I mean, I actually read those numbers, and I was flabbergasted. The impact on the public board, that my constituents are educated through, again, is estimated at \$231,000.

**Mr. Yao:** Sorry. How much?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Estimated at \$231,000 for the upcoming school year and \$557,000 when it is fully implemented in January 2018.

**An Hon. Member:** No way. Wow.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yes, it is.

Again, I would love to be proven wrong here. How many arts programs will this momentous bill cost our children? I think of one program in particular that's been cut in our area, Trickster. My son is part of Youth Singers. They really rely on the grants and other things that have come from the government in the past. The children are going to be asked to sacrifice not only the quality of their education but other programs that help to make life wonderful in this province.

**Mr. Yao:** Why does this government not support the arts?

**Mrs. Aheer:** I don't know.

Why haven't we asked Albertans in a referendum if they consider that this sacrifice is worthwhile? Or maybe it's just not a big enough deal. I'm assuming it's just not a big enough deal to ask Albertans what they think.

**Mr. Nixon:** You've got to roll with it.

**Mrs. Aheer:** I'm rolling.

The polls tell us that nearly 70 per cent of Albertans are opposed to this tax. How will this bill impact children educated by other boards? There are questions that each and every member of this House should be asking themselves when they vote on this amendment this morning.

Our schools and our children's education should be exempted from the punitive impacts of this tax, and I would implore you to all vote in favour of requiring exemption for school boards. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A17? The Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, this is another amendment that is the same, more or less, as most of the amendments that have come before it. We countered the previous ones by saying that this is an economy-wide carbon tax. It is applied to everybody.

If we're talking about children and we're talking about students in Alberta schools, there is no one in this province who wants us to move on this more than those kids. I have taught kids in schools, and they care passionately about climate change. They know it's the issue of their time, and they want us to do something about it. They absolutely want us to do something about it. I have talked to school board trustees who are aware that, yes, this will have an impact, but they are onboard. They're onboard with this change. [interjections] Yes, they want to be part of this. There are schools that want to be part of this. They want to work. They want to be part of the solution. [interjections] I am speaking. You know, through the chair, please.

In any case, children want this. They want us to do something about it. They're passionate about it. They care about it. There is no one who cares about it more. There is no one who wants this more. We must apply this fairly. This, like I said, is the same amendment that has come before. We are doing this primarily, you know, for the future. I am doing this for my children. We're doing it for our children, so to say that we're impacting children negatively I think is unfair, and I would encourage everyone to vote against this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much. Thank you to the member. I completely agree with you. Kids are totally onboard with this. I completely agree with your statements. I think, however, that any vision – I mean, I've taught kids my whole life, and they're my biggest teachers, no holds barred, by far the biggest teachers I've ever had. The wisdom of children: it's absolutely imperative that we take it into this discussion. Kids especially, I find, when you have these discussions with them, are so intelligent that given all of the facts they're also going to understand that there is a cost and a balance to everything, and that's what this discussion is lacking. Nobody is disagreeing with you about what needs to be done for the environment. Not one bit. However, what we are lacking in this discussion is balance, and the kids would give you a balanced understanding of that, too, given the opportunity to discuss all parts of this.

2:30

Nobody is disagreeing that kids are passionate about this. They are. I talk to them about it all the time, too. But it's one of the three pillars; there's environment, there's economics, and there are also the energy aspects. Those three things in conjunction, in stewardship, have to be discussed all together. Those kids know

that, and you would know that because, obviously, you've talked to them as well. Please, as you're bringing forward thought processes like this – that's fantastic – let's actually talk to the sincerity of the full discussion because our kids all deserve that, and they're smart enough to understand it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A17 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:31 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gill	Orr
Clark	Gotfried	Panda
Cyr	Hunter	Smith
Ellis	Loewen	Taylor
Fraser	Nixon	Yao

Against the motion:

Babcock	Hinkley	Notley
Carson	Hoffman	Piquette
Ceci	Horne	Renaud
Connolly	Kazim	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd
Drever	Luff	Sigurdson
Eggen	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Ganley	Miller	Westhead
Goehring	Nielsen	

Totals:	For – 15	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment A17 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now on the original bill. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today with a notice of amendment. I have the requisite number of copies here for the chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Give me a moment to get the original. We'll refer to it as amendment A18.

**Mr. Gotfried:** I'll wait until the chair has copies in her hand.

**The Deputy Chair:** Please go ahead.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to propose an amendment to Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, with the act to be amended in schedule 2 by adding the following after section 2(5):

(5.1) Any grants, contributions or loans, or loan guarantees provided or issued by the Corporation pursuant to subsection (5) shall prioritize innovation, energy efficiency and the reduction of greenhouse gases by small businesses.

Madam Chair, this amendment would see the newly formed Energy Efficiency Alberta prioritize the sustainability of small

businesses when providing grants, loans, and pilot programs. This gesture will help small businesses by providing assistance as they address increased costs associated with the carbon tax. It will lead to meaningful cost and emissions reductions, achieve energy-conserving efficiencies, and prioritize entrepreneurship, innovation, and competitiveness amongst the small-business sector.

The incoming carbon tax will negate one of the few positive aspects of the NDP's budget, the small-business tax reduction, and we're greatly concerned about the impact on many small businesses who are struggling and, in many cases, teetering on the edge of bankruptcy and failure, which would then, of course, impact jobs and the vibrancy of our economy. Essentially, by imposing a carbon tax on small business, the government has undone the modest goodwill and the small shot of hope that they gave these risk-taking entrepreneurial Albertans when they thankfully listened to our repeated calls for reduction in small-business taxes, which, of course, we were thankful for.

In fact, the amount that small businesses must pay in carbon tax, if indeed any of them are lucky enough to actually turn a profit in this very difficult economy to be eligible for a reduced tax bill, appears set to greatly exceed any cost savings or benefit derived, which, Madam Chair, is of great concern to all Albertans. In fact, as we all know, it's the local businesses, the small businesses, the family-owned businesses that will suffer from that.

It's important that we understand the challenges faced by small businesses going forward and also put them in the best position possible to remain at the forefront of leadership and best practices in regard to the emissions, which this government says that they are so committed to, and the emissions management and, of course, energy-saving business practices, which will then affect climate change and the consumption of hydrocarbons.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

While the government has indicated that they intend on providing carbon tax revenue to small businesses through some as yet unidentified initiatives, this can be said of a number of other rumoured or inferred commitments, some positive and some, of course, negative in their impact. Amending the bill so that small businesses are directly referenced in this legislation I think is highly important so that they know because we all know that it's the confidence of businesses that will affect their ability to invest, their desire to invest, thereby creating jobs and increasing the activity in our economy. We need them to be directly referenced under the legislation, meaning that the government would continue to acknowledge, reflect upon, and react to the challenges facing this all-important job-creating sector. There's no escaping their monumental impact on our business, and it is often said that small business is big business, particularly in entrepreneurial Alberta.

2:40

Mr. Chair, I've spoken to many small business over the last year. Some are teetering on the edge. Some are deciding whether it's worth continuing to operate in this environment. Some have said that they've hired. They have three students on staff. Some of them, because of having a small business, have a nanny. I've spoken to one in particular who says – she's very close – that she doesn't pay herself a wage as the owner of that company but is looking towards the future, when she retires from her wage-paying job and has that opportunity. She's done the math on it, and at this point already, before this transpired, it's not worth running that business, taking that long-term risk anymore. Hence, she'll lay off four people in the process of doing that.

To the chair: this is a situation which we need to do everything to combat. We need to build confidence in our small-business sector.

We need to give them the opportunity to survive this downturn. Our future depends on that. The vibrancy and the diversification that we hear so much of depends on it. So let's work with them and support them rather than looking at them as a low-hanging source of revenue. Let's serve Albertans and support Albertans, their jobs, and this economy, which means so much to us.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other speakers on amendment A18? The Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to speak really briefly to this because I do want to recognize – the hon. member did mention it – the 1 per cent tax cut that this government brought in as part of the climate leadership rollout. As we move forward on those, we absolutely are interested in supporting small business. When we look at things like how the Energy Efficiency Alberta corporation – and we are the last jurisdiction to bring in an energy efficiency corporation – is absolutely going to be focused on finding energy-conscious savings for our businesses and our partners in industry and consumers as well so that we can help small businesses find those savings, I think this is absolutely the intent of the corporation.

The intent of the bill as a whole is absolutely to help find savings by reduction of emissions overall, so I don't think that this amendment is really necessary at this time. I think that the Energy Efficiency Alberta corporation absolutely will be doing a lot of this work moving forward. I think that the climate leadership report and the Climate Leadership Implementation Act do a lot of this work moving forward by those contributions and grants that we're going to be seeing as is, so at this time I'd like to ask all members to please vote against this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm proud to rise here to speak to an amendment to Bill 20 by my colleague. There's no question of whether or not Alberta's economy is hurting. I mean, we've all seen the numbers. We've all seen the job losses, and we all know somebody – our neighbours, our friends, our relatives – who've lost jobs in this economy. The one sector that is hurting very badly in Alberta is our small businesses. We know this because our constituents, Alberta's entrepreneurs, have reached out to us and talked to us and said, you know, that their small business, the mom and pops and those shops, are hurting.

A small business is a company that employs 49 employees or less. In Alberta just a few short years ago small business made up almost 95 per cent of all the businesses in this province. That's a huge, huge number. Of the total employment in Alberta small businesses employ about one-third of Albertans in the private sector, and that transcends quite a big range of industries as well: agriculture, forestry, oil and gas, and construction, just to name a few. In addition, in Alberta we're among the leaders in the country with nearly 40 small businesses per thousand people in the province. That's important to note, that critical role that small businesses play in hiring Alberta's youth. Studies show that businesses that have fewer than 20 employees have the highest percentage of employees aged from 15 to 24. Those are our youth that are going to universities while they're working. You know, that's helping them get through those stages in life. As you can see, small businesses are essential to Alberta. When small business struggles, Alberta struggles and our economy struggles. That's why I fully support my colleague's amendment to ensure that small

businesses are provided the support they need to weather both the carbon tax and the tough economic times.

Now we've seen this NDP government vote against a number of common-sense amendments that have been put by this side of the House, our caucus and other parties, amendments that would have made Bill 20 better for Albertans and for our economy to handle this new tax. We saw this government vote against a revenue-neutral carbon tax. We saw this government vote against supporting sustainable forestry jobs. We saw this government vote against supporting our tourism industry with the flights coming in and leaving the province. But I hope this government recognizes the incredible importance of small businesses as employers and as economic drivers.

Energy Efficiency Alberta needs to have the capabilities to support small businesses in Alberta, to support programs that are designed specifically for small businesses by providing grants, loans, and pilot programs that will lead to our province being able to maintain our competitiveness on the global scale. As mentioned by my colleague, Bill 20 will undo one aspect of the NDP budget, when this government took the advice from the PC's Engage initiative and lowered the small-business tax. On the one hand, this government offers some help to businesses in their time of need, and on the other hand they hand them the carbon tax, which will undo that help that they need. You know, it doesn't make any sense to me.

As members of this House we must serve as responsible legislators. This means ensuring we have the best interests of Albertans in mind when we sit here, when we, you know, make those important decisions. When our small-business sector survives, that means Albertans stay at work. They stay in jobs, and they feed their families. That means that our economy comes through these tough times intact and that, most importantly, as I said, Albertans stay working.

Mr. Chair, our role as representatives is to act on behalf of Albertans. If that's not our role, I don't know what our role is. I think we all know the truth. It lies within us. Just dig a little deeper and rise above the party colours and make the right choice. As Abraham Lincoln once said: the ballot is more powerful than the bullet. So let's use the ballot today and support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other speakers on amendment A18?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Acting Chair:** The question has been called.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A18 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:49 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Panda
Clark	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Ellis	Nixon	Taylor
Fraser	Orr	Yao
Gill		

Against the motion:

Babcock	Goehring	Nielsen
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Carson	Hinkley	Notley
Ceci	Hoffman	Piquette
Connolly	Horne	Renaud
Coolahan	Kazim	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinsteuber	Schmidt
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd
Drever	Luff	Sigurdson
Eggen	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Ganley	Miller	Westhead
Totals:	For – 16	Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A18 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to propose an amendment to Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I have the number of copies, and the original is on top. I'll wait to continue.

**The Deputy Chair:** This amendment will be referred to as A19. Please go ahead, Member.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you. I move that Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 in section 79 by striking out subsection (3). The intent of this amendment is to remove 79(3), on page 71, which says that "a regulation made under this Act is, if it so provides, effective with reference to a period before it was made." In other words, this section allows for this act to be made effective retroactively.

Now, maybe it's just me, but that sounds just a little heavy handed and undemocratic. Imagine if a government in power decided it was okay to make other pieces of legislation retroactive. It may be that this is just a wording error, or maybe there's some clarification that the government could give on this. As it is right now, we just don't believe it's proper that the government have the ability to jump in their DeLorean and make these regulations retroactive.

I will support this amendment and look forward to any discussion on it. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A19?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A19 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:56 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Panda
Clark	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Ellis	Nixon	Taylor
Gill	Orr	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Notley
Carson	Hoffman	Piquette
Ceci	Horne	Renaud
Connolly	Kazim	Sabir
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sigurdson
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Feehan	Miller	Westhead
Ganley		

Totals: For – 15 Against – 37

[Motion on amendment A19 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill, recognizing the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Madam Chair, I am going to move an amendment. I have the appropriate number of copies.

3:00

**The Deputy Chair:** This amendment will be referred to as A20.

**Mr. Nixon:** I will start with your permission, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Please go ahead, Member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Madam Chair, I move that Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 by adding the following after section 3:

Interjurisdictional initiatives

3.1 The revenue from the carbon levy may not be used for an interprovincial initiative under section 3(2)(a) unless

- (a) the total estimated costs of the initiative and the estimated reduction in greenhouse gases in Alberta are made public by the Minister, and
- (b) the Minister lays before the Legislative Assembly a letter from the government of each province participating in the proposed interprovincial initiative indicating that government fully supports pipelines that will be used for the transmission of oil, gas or any other commodity originating in Alberta.

Madam Chair, we've been promised that all funds will be spent in Alberta, yet the Premier has already signed a MOU with Ontario. This makes us nervous. At first, we wanted to dismiss this out of hand, but there's a possibility that collaboration could be productive. The last thing that we want to do is to send the carbon tax funds to work with a province that is holding up or opposing our pipelines. We are supposed to be getting social licence out of this, but it would just be too offensive to see carbon tax, slush fund dollars going to any kind of a partnership with a province who opposes Alberta's prosperity.

With that, I would ask all members to support this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A20?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A20.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A20 lost]



[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:02 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Ellis	Nixon	Taylor
Gill	Orr	Yao
Gotfried	Panda	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	Nielsen
Babcock	Goehring	Notley
Carson	Hinkley	Piquette
Ceci	Hoffman	Renaud
Clark	Horne	Sabir
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	Luff	Sigurdson
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Eggen	Miller	Westhead
Feehan	Miranda	

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 38
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[Motion on amendment A20 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the original bill. Anybody wishing to speak – sorry, hon. member.

**Mrs. Aheer:** That's okay.

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's 3:04 in the morning. We're doing really good.

I would like to propose an amendment as well to Bill 20. I have the requisite number of copies, which we can pass to you so that you don't have to come all the way down.

I rise in the House to move that Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 3 in section 4(2)(b)(ii) by striking out the proposed section 10(3)(g.1) and (g.2)

**The Deputy Chair:** Member, do you have the original?

**Mrs. Aheer:** No, I don't. I pulled the very bottom one.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. We'll just get you to sign one so that I have an original signature.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Okay. Sorry about that, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Please go ahead.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Okay. Thank you so much. By passing this amendment, the assembled members would be removing from Bill 20 the section amending the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act which irresponsibly extends the mandate of the CCEMF to include:

- (g.1) education initiatives, including education programs, research programs and scholarships;
- (g.2) outreach initiatives, including initiatives to provide information to stakeholders and the public.

The CCEMF has been given a clear mandate with good reason. The taxes levied on our energy producers have negatively impacted their ability to compete and attract investment from outside capital. This is a deal that they made in order to make this fund work, the losses in competitive advantage and losses of their ability to attract outside capital. The fund for outreach initiatives has no ability to reduce GHG emissions in the province, and the additions of these clauses are signs of the government's intention to mismanage the CCEMF. Industry is happy with the mandate of the CCEMF, and it should be left alone. These lines do little more than to allow the minister to turn the CCEMF into Alberta's newest billion-dollar slush fund. The climate action plan has posed serious challenges for Alberta's energy industry, challenges that will require serious investment into research and development and outreach, that they need to overcome.

Alberta has two of the cleanest coal facilities in the world, Keephills 3 and Genesee 3. These facilities provide jobs, and the companies that run them have invested significantly in clean-coal technologies like scrubbers for their facilities. Instead of helping the industry move forward, the NDP is using the carbon tax to financially decimate the coal industry and, with this clause in particular, to divert funds away from the industry's goal of reducing their environmental impact. Long before the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was Premier, she was pushing for the shutdown of coal with a private member's bill. The Albertans in these communities are already convinced that this government doesn't care about their livelihoods and doesn't have an interest in working with them towards further progress on clean coal. Voting down this amendment will only serve to reaffirm that.

The coal industry needs the funds made available to them by the CCEMF to progress towards their zero-emissions future. It has been estimated that the cost of retrofitting the average coal-powered electricity generator with carbon capture and storage is over \$700 million. That's just for one unit, not the six coal-fired facilities in Alberta but just one of the 18 physical units employing Albertans across this province. Our coal industry needs help bringing the costs down on the estimated \$1.5 billion needed to refurbish Sundance 1 and 2 with Japanese clean-coal technology.

**3:10**

The Coal Association of Canada estimates that these industries provide direct employment for 31,000 Albertans and indirect employment for 10,000. Without fast progress, the employees of these units are looking at losing their jobs in 15 years. It is prudent that this House remember that the 15 years only applies to those facilities that are not taken out by the government's irresponsible changes, via order in council, to the carbon tax rate charged against specified gas emitters last June, that led to the serious legal problems and the mass cancellations of power purchase arrangements. These irresponsible, poorly-thought-out changes to the specified gas emitters regulation means that many facilities will have less than 15 years.

While the government turns important research and technology funds into slush funds, Albertan communities that rely on the employment that these coal facilities provide prepare to turn into ghost towns. The funds should only be used for the purposes related to reducing emissions of a specified gas or improving Alberta's ability to adapt to climate change. This fund was set up with the industry in mind, and through the co-operation of the fund, it achieved a shared goal. Our industry wants to lead on the environmental file, and this House should be facilitating that desire, not impeding it.

I encourage all of you to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak on the amendment which is referred to as A21? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I find it strange that only 10 or 12 or a hundred hours ago the members across the way there were chastising us for not doing enough to advertise what we're doing with the climate leadership plan, right? They wanted to have it published on every gas receipt and natural gas bill in the province so that the people of Alberta would know what we're doing with our climate leadership plan. Now, at 10 after 3 in the morning, they want to take away our ability to engage in education and outreach initiatives to do the very thing that they wanted to do 10 hours ago, which was to tell the people of Alberta what we're doing with our climate leadership plan.

You know, I understand that at 3 o'clock in the morning the things we believe in are maybe not necessarily the things we believed in at 10 o'clock the previous night. It's not true on this side of the House, Madam Chair, but it is apparently true on that side of the House, well, except for our dear friends from Leduc-Beaumont and Calgary-Shaw.

If the member is honest and truly wants the people of Alberta to know what this government is doing with our climate leadership plan, she would withdraw this amendment, Madam Chair, so that the money in the climate change emissions management fund can promote and educate the people of Alberta about the good things that we're doing with our climate leadership plan. In case she doesn't want to withdraw the amendment, Madam Chair, then I would recommend that everybody in the House vote against this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. If I'm going to be in the House at 3:14 in the morning, I'd better at least be in *Hansard* to prove to the world that I was here. More importantly, I will be very brief. I know it's been a very, very, very long day, and we're well into the next day.

There are many things about this bill that I don't like, and I think there's a lot of work that needs to be done to make it better. I've said many times before – and I'll say it again for the record – that I support a carbon tax in principle. Climate change is real and human caused, and we ought to do something about it. Done properly, I think it can provide a real source of economic opportunity for Albertans.

You know, I think that this is an important aspect of the bill. If I were proposing a bill like this, which we likely would given that we are the only party on this side of the House to propose an actual idea as it relates to climate change – we have a climate change abatement plan. We're the only opposition party to do that. We know what other parties on this side are against; we don't know what they're for. I'm very clear on what I'm for.

I think the education initiative aspect of this bill is a very positive thing. I will therefore be voting against this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A21 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:15 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Ellis	Nixon	Taylor
Gill	Orr	Yao
Gotfried	Panda	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Carson	Hinkley	Notley
Ceci	Hoffman	Piquette
Clark	Horne	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Sabir
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Eggen	Miller	Turner
Feehan	Miranda	Westhead
Ganley		

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 37
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[Motion on amendment A21 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the original bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak?

**Mr. Panda:** Madam Chair, I rise to move an amendment. I have the requisite copies.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. The amendment will be referred to as A22.

**Mr. Panda:** Can I go ahead?

**The Deputy Chair:** Wait till I get the original, please.  
Member, please go ahead.

3:20

**Mr. Panda:** I move that Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 by striking out section 82 and substituting the following:

Coming into force

82 This Act comes into force on the later of the following:

- (a) January 1, 2017;
- (b) 30 days after the date on which the Minister lays before the Legislative Assembly an economic impact assessment of the provisions of this Act.

This amendment outlines one of the core issues that we have with this bill. As you can see by the amendment, this bill does not change the date as to when the carbon tax can come into effect. This amendment does not change what will be done with the carbon tax. This amendment simply asks for more information on how it will affect Albertans. We want to be certain that this carbon tax will not harm Albertans.

Madam Chair, when I worked in the industry, I dealt with logistics and impacts of multibillion-dollar deals on a regular basis. To make sure that those deals were risk averse, we used to use some tools like life cycle value assessment. Those were required before a project was put in motion. It was common sense to evaluate how

the project would affect the company and the people around the project. The assessment would show flaws in our plans. It would show how we could improve our plans. The study would show us many of the problems that we thought we had addressed in the first place and many problems that we had never thought of. Those studies saved the companies I worked for many millions and millions of dollars simply by doing our due diligence.

This economic impact study that I am proposing through this amendment could save taxpayers far more than just a few million dollars. If every member other than the NDP is correct, this study could save the livelihoods of thousands of Albertans. On the other hand, this economic impact study could show that everyone on this side of the House is totally out to lunch. Either way, this would be a very good thing for the NDP to vote in favour of. This could provide Albertans the legitimacy that this bill desperately lacks. The only reason for the government to vote down this amendment would be because they know that this study will prove that their carbon tax will not be beneficial for Albertans.

In the end, the ball is in the government's court. They can choose to vote down every single amendment we propose in an attempt to help Albertans, or they can choose to help make Alberta better. If this government wants Alberta to be a better place for everyone, then vote in favour of this amendment, and find out what can be done to improve this bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A22?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A22 as proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A22 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:23 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Panda
Clark	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Ellis	Nixon	Taylor
Gill	Orr	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Carson	Hinkley	Notley
Ceci	Hoffman	Piquette
Connolly	Horne	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Feehan	Miller	Turner
Ganley	Miranda	Westhead
Totals:	For – 15	Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A22 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the original bill.  
The Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment. I am moving this on behalf of the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I have the appropriate number of copies.

**An Hon. Member:** We miss him.

**Mr. Taylor:** You miss him so much, I'm sure.

**The Deputy Chair:** The amendment will be referred to as A23.  
Please go ahead.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Cooper to move that Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 in section 19 by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) The purposes and uses prescribed under subsection (1) for which a rebate may be paid must include fuel purchased by a municipal authority for municipal purposes as defined in the Municipal Government Act.

Rebates for municipalities only make sense. The costs incurred by municipal governments are in the service of everyday Albertans. These taxpayers rely on government for the services which provide safety, convenience and, indeed, which allow us to live in northern climates comfortably. The cost of heating our public buildings, including libraries, town halls, fire halls, police stations, is astronomical.

I ask all members to support this amendment. Thank you.

3:30

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak on amendment A23?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A23 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:31 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Panda
Clark	Hunter	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Ellis	Nixon	Taylor
Gill	Orr	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Carson	Hinkley	Notley
Ceci	Hoffman	Piquette
Connolly	Horne	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Feehan	Miller	Turner
Ganley	Miranda	Westhead
Totals:	For – 15	Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A23 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the original bill.

**Mr. Nixon:** Madam Chair, I have an amendment to Bill 20 with the appropriate copies.

**The Deputy Chair:** The amendment will be referred to as A24. Please proceed.

**Mr. Nixon:** Madam Chair, I move that the Climate Leadership Implementation Act be amended in schedule 1 in section 3 by adding the following after subsection (2):

(3) During a pre-election period, the revenue from the carbon levy may not be used

- (a) for new initiatives under subsection (2)(a), or
- (b) to provide rebates or adjustments under subsection (2)(b) at rates that exceed those in place prior to the pre-election period.

(4) For the purposes of this section, “pre-election period” means the period commencing 6 months prior to the commencement of the 3-month period during which a general election must be held under section 38.1(2) of the Election Act and ending at the end of polling day for that election.

Whether you’re a member of the opposition or a member of the government caucus, the concentration of power and the possibility of abuse are alarming. This Premier is asking members of this House to vote in favour of a bill that has absolutely no system to hold spending accountable, period. The least this government can do is to commit right here and now that they will not be using this slush fund as their own personal precampaign fund. It’s that simple. Well, Madam Chair, at least it is simple for the members of this House who are tired of seeing the government take advantage of their political position for the benefit of themselves over the benefit of all Albertans.

I encourage all members of this House to support this amendment and put in place some sliver of accountability in this slush fund for the Premier. I encourage all members to vote in favour.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak on amendment A24?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A24 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:37 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Schneider
Clark	Hunter	Smith
Cyr	Loewen	Taylor
Ellis	Orr	Yao
Gill	Panda	

3:40

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Carson	Hinkley	Notley
Ceci	Hoffman	Piquette
Connolly	Horne	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sigurdson

Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Feehan	Miller	Turner
Ganley	Miranda	Westhead
Totals:	For – 14	Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A24 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the original bill. The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. On behalf of the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills I would like to introduce an amendment. I have the required number of copies.

**The Deputy Chair:** This will be referred to as A25. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended in schedule 1 in section 55 by striking out subsection (3).

Section 55, of course, deals with warrants when “there are reasonable grounds to believe that an offence against this Act or the regulations has occurred and that evidence of that offence is likely to be found.” Subsection (3), which this amendment seeks to remove, allows for warrantless searches. Now, a warrantless search is a serious matter. Essentially, it’s a breach of property rights based predominantly on suspicion. This amendment strikes this section granting the minister the right to warrantless searches.

Maybe I’m missing something, but this reads like it comes out of a spy novel. Now, I’d love to hear why the minister thinks she needs these sweeping powers. Let me be perfectly clear. I really don’t like tax cheats, but I don’t think that they should be allowed to take this overstep in this section. If we were presented with a recurring problem where suspected tax cheats were regularly deleting important information after a warrant was done, I might be interested, but I just don’t see the problem this is addressing.

This section, in context, says that a warrantless search may be executed if the delay in obtaining a warrant would result

- (i) in danger to human life or safety, or
- (ii) in the loss, removal or destruction of evidence.

Now, as to the first aspect, regarding a danger to human life and safety, if there is any risk of danger to human life and safety, the appropriate response, Madam Chair, is through emergency responders. The carbon tax shouldn’t even factor into it.

With the second, context is entirely important. Regrettably, section 55 speaks about offences to this act or its regulations. Of course, we haven’t seen the full regulations yet. It is substantially troublesome that the government would ask that we here approve warrantless searches on the grounds that they may be in breach of regulations we haven’t seen yet.

Matters concerning private property should always be treated carefully, and any scenario where a government should enter private property, especially without a warrant, needs to be examined very carefully. Remember, Madam Chair, that when we asked them about the fentanyl issue, they said that that was unacceptable, yet here we see it now. The clear definition of private property and the enforcement of that definition are matters integral to any free society.

If there are members on the government benches who want to defend the subsections in question, I am very interested in hearing why they are bringing this forward.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I will be incredibly brief in speaking to this amendment. The reason why the bill was drafted in the way that it is is because these provisions are quite standard. There's nothing particularly nefarious here. It's usually fairly standard to have provisions allowing one to obtain evidence if there's a risk that that evidence will be destroyed.

So those are the reasons, and with that, I will sit.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A25?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A25 as proposed by the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner on behalf of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

[Motion on amendment A25 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill.

Seeing no speakers, are you ready for the question on Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 20 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 20. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur with the report?

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 20

#### Climate Leadership Implementation Act

**The Acting Speaker:** The Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of the Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office to rise and move third reading of Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act.

Given the lateness of the hour, Madam Speaker, I think I will be brief. The reasons for this bill have been, I think, canvassed in depth. This government is responsible not only to the people of today but to the people of this province tomorrow and into the future. That is why we are taking action to combat climate change.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

Any other speakers on the motion? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

3:50

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move an amendment, and I will pass out the copies here.

**The Acting Speaker:** Please go ahead, Member.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting "Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day six months hence."

**The Acting Speaker:** Having heard the motion as proposed by the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View . . .

**Mrs. Aheer:** I'm sorry. I was . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Oh, you can speak to it. Go ahead.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have proposed a number of amendments – I think that's an understatement – and the government has shown that it is unwilling to co-operate, and we feel that we just have absolutely no choice but to try and hoist this bill.

I rise today to bring to this House the concerns of my constituents in regard to the impact of the carbon tax and what will happen during these difficult economic times. As a representative of the beautiful and extremely diverse constituency of Chestermere-Rocky View I have many rural constituents that feel that the exemptions will not be sufficient.

Many of the farms in my riding are market exposed. They will be transporting their grain and other products to markets outside the province on trucks and trains. Just to be clear, too, farmers are already efficient. They use so many new tools and knowledge to be as efficient as possible. With any business or anything we have to keep in mind that efficiency is going to help us all with our bottom line. So, just to be clear, Albertans want to do this, and they are already showing an amazing ability to do this. They will be transporting their grain and other products to markets outside the province on trucks and trains.

I've received a number of letters about the carbon tax. One such letter notes what most Albertans are well aware of, that our farmers are stewards of the land, yet their behaviour is being penalized. This resident details in his letter:

Since the 1980s we have reduced our fuel consumption by reducing tillage at seeding time by 56 per cent. This reduced tillage increases the soil organic matter and therefore sinks carbon. We have done this by investing in new precision seeding technologies. There are many other new technologies to invest in like variable rate fertilizer. This takes the new tools and knowledge and new services, all of which take further investment.

These are Albertans that truly care about the environment and their impact on the water, soil, and air that allows them to prosper.

In the letter this resident goes on to detail:

On the livestock side of business we have invested in fencing equipment and labour to increase production through improved grazing management. We have much more investment to make to get all of the pastures properly managed. By limiting grazing duration and increasing rest time of pastures, production goes up by 25 per cent or more. As well, organic matter is trampled into the soil and carbon is sunk.

The resident has taken proactive steps to decrease the footprint of his family farm without any sort of punitive actions imposed on him by the government.

He goes on here to point out that this carbon tax will impact his ability to reinvest.

The carbon taxation reduces farm income.

And this is his quote.

Reduced income equals reduced investment. Reduced investment reduces efficiencies. Reduced efficiencies increase the carbon footprint and reduce the amount of carbon sink, a likely unintended consequence of the NDP's great economic experiment. Leave the money in the producers' hands to invest instead of in the hands of the government to invest, most likely, into the white elephant of economic experimentation.

There are individuals on the other side of this House that, we hope, understand about farming, and we would assume that with their understanding about farming, they would understand that exempting them on purple gas is not enough. It truly isn't. Rural Albertans are going to be harshly penalized by this tax, and we've gone into many of those explanations. Their electrical rates will go up due to the tax on specified gas emitters, and, Madam Speaker, the cost of moving the products they produce to market will go up. My constituent has a valid concern about the cyclical impact of this tax. This is the wrong time to be taking punitive actions against Albertans.

Exemptions for market-exposed industries are insufficient. It is not just the farmers, Madam Speaker. It is not made clear in this bill that the trade-exposed sector will qualify for an exemption needed to keep their businesses alive. At this point it is up to the minister.

This government is picking winners and losers with this bill. In the process this government is driving away much-needed investment dollars. This level of uncertainty is troubling, and that doesn't seem to follow the mandate of what this carbon tax is intended to do at all.

Case-by-case applications show that it will expose Albertan industries to unnecessary amounts of uncertainty and red tape. This will mean that some companies do not invest in Alberta because they're worried about the fact that they will not receive the exemptions that they need from the minister. That is at the mercy of the minister. Furthermore, they were worried that those exemptions are only partial.

Industries may leave as well. Every time I drive to Edmonton, I notice the Labatt brewery, and I wonder what will happen to the operation of a large international business with mobile capital, capital that is completely fluid and mobile and can leave this province at any time. They have no reason to stay here without the incentives to stay and the stability of a government that understands the importance of investment here.

This international business with its mobile capital: I wonder what the people that work in that factory will do if this radical high-tax agenda becomes too much for their employer. Ontario actually experienced a mass exodus of business just shortly after the implementation of its rapid, radical renewables agenda.

Electricity costs in Ontario are too high. Manufacturers find it difficult to open operations and keep their operations going in Ontario. I am assuming that this government does not want that.

Breweries like the Labatt brewery use significant amounts of heat energy in the processing of their products. Their production costs will go up significantly. Worse, they won't qualify for the small-business tax credit.

Alberta is filled with multinationals that locate their manufacturing here because of our competitive advantage. That's amazing, and the government has done nothing but erode this advantage. Now we're facing rising electrical costs under this bill.

Alberta has a clear competitive advantage in natural gas. This is an advantage that attracts industry, and we are undermining that by artificially increasing the cost of natural gas. Alberta is risking carbon leakage. Many businesses, actually, would choose relocating to a lower tax jurisdiction over upgrading equipment necessary to avoid this carbon tax. Don't we want to keep that investment here? I have to assume that that's not what this government wants to see, investment leaving the province.

4:00

Food processing provides another clear example. Plants like McCain Foods in Coaldale, Alberta, could leave, and Albertans would lose jobs. I don't think that the government quite understands that this is a wrong course of action to be implementing. I think that we're trying to grow our jobs market. I would hope so. This government specifically is desperate to increase the level of value added in the province. We've heard that over and over again as well, yet you're raising the electrical costs.

Bill 20 is a tax bill. This isn't about the environment. This is a wealth transfer, and worse, it's a regressive wealth transfer because the government has refused to calculate the full indirect and direct costs. On top of that, there have been some really, really fabulous and thoughtful amendments that have come forward that have seen absolutely zero collaboration. It's really hard for us to go forward and tell our constituents and Albertans that this is something that we got to work on together. They're going to be able to see for themselves that these amendments haven't been accepted or even spoken about in any way that is collaborative.

With that in mind, I cannot support this bill. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** It's a pleasure to stand up and to say: let's adjourn debate on the amendment to Bill 20.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:03 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Notley
Carson	Hoffman	Piquette
Ceci	Horne	Renaud
Connolly	Kazim	Sabir
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sigurdson
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner

Feehan	Miller	Westhead
Ganley	Miranda	
Against the motion:		
Gotfried	Panda	Smith
Loewen		
Totals:	For – 38	Against – 4

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the earliness of the hour, I move that we adjourn till 10 a.m.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:20 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:		
Anderson, S.	Goehring	Miranda
Babcock	Gotfried	Nielsen
Carson	Hinkley	Notley
Ceci	Hoffman	Piquette
Connolly	Horne	Renaud
Coolahan	Kazim	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinsteinuber	Schmidt
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd
Drever	Luff	Sigurdson
Eggen	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Ganley	Miller	Westhead

Against the motion:  
Loewen

Totals:	For – 39	Against – 1
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[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:37 a.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, June 7, 2016

Day 40

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**  
 Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
 Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
 Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
 Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
 Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
 Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
 Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
 Deputy Government House Leader  
 Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
 Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
 Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
 Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
 Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
 Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
 Official Opposition House Leader  
 Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
 Government Whip  
 Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
 Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
 Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
 Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
 Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
 Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
 Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
 Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
 Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
 Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
 Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
 Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
 Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
 Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
 Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
 Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
 Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
 Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
 Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
 Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
 Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
 Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
 Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
 Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
 Leader of the Official Opposition  
 Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
 Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
 Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
 Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
 Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
 Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
 MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
 Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
 Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
 Government House Leader  
 McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
 Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
 McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
 Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
 McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
 McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
 McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
 Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
 Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
 Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
 Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
 Official Opposition Whip  
 Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
 Premier  
 Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
 Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
 Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
 Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
 Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
 Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
 Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
 Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
 Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
 Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
 Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
 Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
 Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
 Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
 Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
 Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
 Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
 Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
 Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
 Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
 Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
 Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
 Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
 Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
 van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
 Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
 Deputy Government Whip  
 Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
 Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
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Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
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### **Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee**

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Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
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### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Jansen	Shepherd
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Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
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Kleinstauber	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
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Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

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Aheer	Kleinstauber
Babcock	MacIntyre
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Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, June 7, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Hon. members, let us, each in our own way, reflect as we together pass another milestone in the 29th Legislative Assembly. Let us reflect again on the great responsibility it is for each of us to hold public office. As we return to our constituencies, let us reflect on our past decisions, words we have spoken, and, most importantly, listen to the people we serve. Please be safe.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

##### Bill 20

##### Climate Leadership Implementation Act

Mrs. Aheer moved that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day six months hence.

[Adjourned debate on amendment June 6: Cortes-Vargas]

**The Speaker:** Is anyone wishing to speak on the amendment to third reading of Bill 20? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I once again rise in this House to discuss Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act. Unfortunately, there has been very little leadership and a great deal of ideology shown in this bill. The opposition has been diligent in providing numerous amendments that would see this bill include reasonable measures to ensure transparency and accountability. Once again the government has wielded its majority like a hammer and is banging this act through the Legislature with little regard for any unintended consequences it may bring about.

I’m going to share a quote by a favourite conservative former President of the United States, Ronald Reagan: “Government’s first duty is to protect the people, not run their lives.” This government would be well served to heed that advice.

The opposition has done its very best to ensure that the concerns of Albertans have been heard in this House, and it will be those same Albertans that will ultimately hold this government accountable. Polls show that Albertans in general are split on this carbon tax, and there was a great deal of vocal opposition to this proposed act. Despite the work done by the Leach panel, there are still too many unknowns in this act.

The public consultation engaged in here was done under the guise of climate leadership as opposed to taxing and spending, which is truly what it is. There may have been a completely different discussion had this been clarified. The NDP did not campaign on this carbon tax. At least there was more consultation done here than for the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, which put the cart before the horse and chose to legislate first and leave all consultation for later.

The major flaw with the work that went into this act, however, is the lack of any comprehensive economic impact assessment. This

tax will affect every part of our economy, and there are no external forces dictating that this has to be done for January 1, 2017. We should only be looking at implementing it ahead of our competitors if it genuinely makes sense for our economy, but of course it doesn’t. Just as with other tax hikes and the minimum wage, this government continues to have complete disregard for engaging in a robust review before implementing a significant piece of legislation. We saw it on the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act and again with Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. In both instances government chose to ignore numerous reasonable motions brought forth by the opposition and instead relied on what could be construed as ideology over economics, a position that supported their own beliefs despite any sort of economic rationale. Albertans cannot afford to allow a piece of legislation with such huge implications on all aspects of Albertans’ lives to simply be pushed through without the proper economic review.

This government did not even discuss possible trickle-down costs associated with the biggest tax grab in Alberta’s history until the opposition brought it up. Even then they downplayed it as minimal. Will it be minimal when companies faced with huge increases in costs choose to shut down and take the jobs and move to a more business-friendly environment? Several other jurisdictions are already trying to poach businesses from Alberta, and this carbon tax is just one more boost to the antibusiness climate that this government has created. We are experiencing climate change in more than one way thanks to this government.

Businesses simply aren’t going to wait around for these utopian green initiatives to be rolled out in coming years. They have to make plans now based on facts, not platitudes. I can’t help but wonder what this government will do when job losses continue to pile up and they can no longer blame it on oil prices or the failed policies of a previous government. Already we know that the low-price-of-oil excuse for the credit downgrade is not supported by facts. The price of oil has been rising, but the downgrades continue. This government will be held accountable. The people of Alberta will ensure that.

This bill is a poorly considered piece of legislation, fraught with unforeseen consequences. This bill will harm everybody: charities, nonprofits, the agriculture industry, the manufacturing industry, and food processing, just to name a few. Businesses and municipalities have been sharing stories about how badly just the fuel and natural gas increases are going to hit them. Municipalities are sharing estimated fuel and gas increases of a third between 2017 and 2018, and – no surprise – fuel will go up by more than 5 per cent, and natural gas will go up by more than 50 per cent.

The same hikes are looming over job creators in Alberta. Businesses are shelving expansion plans and cannot say for sure just how long they will be able to continue in this less than competitive business climate. National and international businesses that have facilities elsewhere may simply choose to increase production elsewhere and fold up shop here. Others will most certainly have to offset these costs by raising prices or sending more workers to the unemployment lines. Either way, once again Albertans will pay the price. The government will dismiss these arguments as fearmongering, but they are facts. They have chosen to provide no economic assessment of any type to clearly identify what these costs will be. Only time will tell, and if the government is wrong in its decision, as they say, the buck stops with them.

I just can’t see how this government can hang their hat on the belief that the rebates proposed will cover these trickle-down costs, everything from driving your car to buying groceries, and at least 40 per cent of Albertans will see no sort of offset to these costs. Many more will be losing money. The rebate was originally

designed to cover increases to natural gas rates, gasoline, and diesel but ignored the fact that this tax will have a domino effect, hiking prices on everything from electricity to groceries, rent, and goods and services. These costs will be absorbed by the taxpayer, the end-user.

Despite the assurances by the government that rebates are a little higher to help low-income Albertans deal with the costs passed on to them by businesses for goods and services, the government failed to bring up these extra costs before Wildrose started pointing them out. It's almost as if they hadn't considered it. Of course, had they actually completed an economic impact assessment, maybe Albertans would have been given a more accurate notion of how much the so-called levy will really cost.

#### 10:10

Even Mayor Nenshi stated in an April 14 article in the *Calgary Metro* that a carbon tax isn't going to fly. He said:

The City of Calgary fills many, many, many tanks of gas every single day. Our best estimate is that not being rebated the carbon tax on all those tanks . . . that we fill every day, the first year in 2017 will be about \$2.6 million or \$2.7 million, rising to \$6.5 million. To put that in context, that's a half point increase on the property tax – only for paying another order of government its taxes.

Nenshi went on to say:

Unlike the provincial government, the city does not, cannot and will not run a deficit . . . Our goal would be to shave that amount somewhere else, but that's hard to do on fuel. Police cars, fire trucks, garbage trucks and buses have to be out there, so as a result the only thing to do is go to the taxpayer for it.

Imagine trying to run a business in a climate that has already seen hikes in personal and business taxes. Now increases on fuel and natural gas, not to mention how those increases will affect purchases of raw materials and transportation of those goods and services, will further burden an already hurting sector. If this government really believes that there will be minimal trickle-down effects with this bill, then show us the proof. Show us any economic study or report that disproves these costs. Mr. Speaker, the government won't because they can't. Doing so would prove the damaging effect of this tax.

We in the opposition have spoken repeatedly about why this bill is such a bad idea. The Wildrose has gone to great lengths to propose common-sense amendments. It is not too late to take a step back and really consider the consequences for Alberta and to do right by them and reconsider this bill. At the very least, the government should let the people who will be paying this carbon tax, Albertans, make the final call on whether they support this radical change. Hold a referendum in the fall, and if Albertans support a clear question and authorize this carbon tax, I'll willingly move on to discussions on the best method to implement it. As of now you don't have a mandate for this, and neither I nor my colleagues will support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions of the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, are there other members who wish to speak to the amendment to Bill 20? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked a question to the hon. member just to my right, if you'll pardon the pun. I asked it in a rather flippant way, but there was something to it. I asked: how much tax could a carbon tax tax if a carbon tax could tax tax? Of course, we're referring to the multiplier effect that this indeed does have. So it sounds like it's funny, but it is not.

I will refer to the words of a different American President. You would think that he was speaking about today. He said:

You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot lift the wage earner up by pulling the wage payer down. You cannot keep out of trouble by spending more than your income. You cannot further the brotherhood of man by inciting class hatred. You cannot build character and courage by taking away a [person's] initiative and independence. You cannot help [people] permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves.

That's, of course, by Abraham Lincoln.

Now, did I say that this is in direct reference to this bill? I would say that it's in direct reference to this debate and a number of things that have happened in this House and beyond its walls in the last number of weeks. So I'd prefer to not be misquoted on that, Mr. Speaker.

It's been very disappointing that this government has shot down nearly every Bill 20 amendment that has come from this side of the House. It's obvious that the NDP are eager to end the discussion on the carbon tax and get out of the Chamber. Now, sadly, this is not new. We've seen this a number of times before, including as late as last week, when the government left the debate on the medical assistance in dying motion as late as they possibly could. Many believe that this was an attempt to divert attention away from Bill 20. [interjections] You may want to hear this. If it did, that would be fair to some extent since medical assistance in dying is indeed an absolutely critical issue. That being said, obviously, we're here to speak to this motion on Bill 20.

At every turn our PC caucus offered attempts to improve this bill because this bill, as it currently reads, does not serve Albertans. Amendments were brought forward that would have made the bill at least manageable for Albertans and provided much-needed accountability to the legislation, that our constituents have been asking for. For instance, the Member for Calgary-Hays moved an amendment that would have made Bill 20 a revenue-neutral carbon tax. The government said no. The Member for Calgary-North West moved an amendment that would have made the carbon tax more accountable by requiring that the minister and a committee review the impact of the tax. What do you think the government said?

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**Mr. Rodney:** The Member for Calgary-West moved and passed an amendment that will increase the accountability of the government's carbon tax inspectors by requiring that they provide a receipt for any information taken. Thank you, Government, for accepting that motion. You could say yes to this motion as well.

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, the hon. third-party House leader, moved an amendment that would have ensured the strength of the tourism industry, one of our powerhouses right now, one of our few. We know that the government said no to that as well. How about the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, who moved an amendment that would have protected our forestry sector? The answer again: no. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek moved an amendment that would have provided supports to help small businesses deal with the carbon tax. The same answer. A bit of a trend, Mr. Speaker. These were very well-researched, well-intentioned motions, and I really believe that the government missed huge opportunities.

But it's not just from this side of the House that there are suggestions being made. Just in a quick conversation with a constituent just a couple of days ago – he's well studied; he's insightful. He would have loved to ask the NDP just three questions if he was given the time. Will you simply allocate the projected

revenue from the carbon tax to offset the operating deficit? Will you dial back the number of individuals that are likely to receive credits or exemptions since those only undermine the energy conservation goal of the carbon tax? His third question that he would have loved to ask you is: will you minimize the use of the projected revenue for expensive green energy projects, that are not feasible without significant government money as we've observed disastrously in other countries?

I guess the question is: would the government like to talk to this individual, who happens to be a voter, and/or entertain perhaps a sober second thought on any of the thoughtful, well-researched amendments that have been put forward, considering, of course, the fact that this doesn't take effect until January 1? We know that department officials are scrambling to get the regulations done in time. What is the rush, ladies and gentlemen? Take your time and do it right. That's just a word to the wise. That's not a threat. It's encouragement.

Even though the NDP would not accept our amendments, I would challenge any government members to answer any of the questions I just asked because that member of the public, that voter, would like to hear from you. He really would.

I think it's a shame how the government has approached the discussion on Bill 20. They've tried one of two strategies. First, they've tried to frame the debate on this bill as the full climate leadership plan. Now, essentially, almost every time a government member has spoken, they've referred to the report by Dr. Leach. While there's some excellent work in the report, Mr. Speaker – that cannot be denied – it's certainly not all reflected in the bill. Bill 20 is about the carbon tax, Energy Efficiency Alberta, and mandating the CCEMC to be in complete unison with the climate leadership plan, which is one of the biggest concerns of this side of the House.

10:20

This bill doesn't make reference to their escalated coal phase-out, for one thing, something that's already revealing numerous problems – you can't deny that – that will come to the fore in the years to come. In fact, we're still waiting to hear from Terry Boston. Why don't we wait for his report? How much are coal generation companies going to have to be compensated by the government? We're told that the report will come later this year. Estimates are upwards of an additional \$10 billion that will have to be provided for stranded capital and lost revenue, which will inevitably have to be covered by the taxpayer. And, as I say, that number is not going to be right. If you're saying, "Then don't say it," well, I'm saying that we need to talk about this, and we can't make decisions until vital pieces of information like this are in. It's just wise.

The bill also fails to talk about another key strategy from the climate leadership plan, that was revealed in November 2015, the oil sands emission cap. It's vital that we use technology to reduce emissions per barrel in the future. We've already reduced emissions per barrel by about a third in the last 15 years alone. That's a good-news story. Now, however, using the command-and-control system may not provide the outcomes that the province is actually looking for. As new projects come online, we'll gradually move up to this emissions level. Now, basically, it's saying to investors: "No new capital investment is required in the Alberta oil sands. Go away. We don't need you. We don't want you." I ask: is that the message that you were actually hoping to deliver? Maybe it is. I hope not.

Furthermore, it doesn't talk about the methane reduction strategy. Thus far all we've seen are its goals, a 40 per cent reduction of methane emissions below 2015 levels by 2030, and that's actually my favourite part of the plan. We know that methane emissions are 25 times worse than other emissions, and it's important that we have better reporting and reduction strategies around venting and flaring.

It's certainly something that the previous government was developing, so we're very glad that the current government is continuing with that great work. Good job. However, the Member for Edmonton-South West has been parading this part of the climate leadership plan in debate on Bill 20 as if it was somehow relevant to what we should be discussing, and it's not. Just because our Prime Minister and the President of the United States have been talking about it doesn't make it any more relevant to the 95 pages that are sitting before us today.

The second strategy that the government has employed is to frame this whole debate, both in question period and during debate on this bill, with whether or not one believes in the science of climate change. Constituents have told me that that's a dirty political trick, and they thought that the government would rise above that. I hoped that they would. All hon. members of this House know that Progressive Conservatives understand that climate change is real and that human activity has impacted how the effects have been felt globally. Some say that the difference on this side of the House is that some here might consider it real and some might consider it just a problem. In any case, Mr. Speaker, we've known this since before 2008, when we were the first jurisdiction in North America to put a price on carbon. Pricing carbon can be effective, and we're on record upholding this fact.

However, Bill 20 is not the right mix. That's the problem. It's not the right balance, and it certainly does not meet the high legislative expectations that Albertans are demanding of us. This bill is about the carbon tax, and it's about setting up the new body to spend revenue on their priorities. In short, this is a tax-and-spend bill. Hon. members, we were hoping that there would be fruitful debate on Bill 20, but all we've had are puppy-monkey-baby answers in retort to serious and thoughtful amendments that would have made a very bad bill a little bit more palatable. This bill shows, with respect – and it's just the nature of time – that the government, this government, is definitely in its infancy. Albertans don't deserve to pay for another \$6 billion rookie mistake.

You know, I've been so honoured to spend 12 years in this Chamber. On the other side it's been closer to 12 months. I certainly am learning things every day; I trust that they are, too. I trust that one thing that can be learned here today is that they can indeed push the pause button. I've seen it before on many occasions. When something was exploding before our eyes, on a number of occasions we actually sent it back out to the real world and found out what was going on. I challenge each of you to do that. I challenge you to be in your constituency offices and talking to people, going to the grocery store, going to events.

Actually, I wish you well because you are going to get more than two earfuls. People are irate. In 12 years, Mr. Speaker, I've never seen them this mad – I thought it was the farmers' situation right before Christmas – and I've heard words like "arrogant" being used like they've never been used before in such a short amount of time. I encourage this government to get back on track – get back on track – do what you came here to do, the best for Albertans, but test it out there. Find out what people are really thinking. Don't pass this. You don't legislate and then do consultation later. That's not how this should work.

By the way, I mentioned \$6 billion. Yes, that's a number that has been thrown out, but as I started out by saying, that's just the beginning of the multiplier effect. I shudder to think what it's going to be. I'm concerned about not just my kids and, perhaps, grandkids one day but about every one of yours and of everyone's beyond these walls. I'm concerned about all the people who built this province who are leaving and/or shutting down their business. When I get calls – and I'm guessing that you get them, too. Grown adults are crying: the family business that we took generations to build is gone.

Am I blaming the carbon tax only? Absolutely not. It has not taken effect yet; I know that. But when you add up, literally add up, all the changes that that side of the House has pushed upon Albertans – read the paper, folks. God bless you, media; sometimes you get it right. The stories are all over all of the papers. I never thought I'd live to see this day in this province, to be really honest with you, sir.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, and many, many more that I wish we had time to go into and, in fact, wish we had a whole fall session to discuss, I will be absolutely voting against this bill. I am happy to vote for any motion to hoist this so that we can do the right thing, press the pause button, do the research, make the necessary adjustments. I'm happy to vote for a bill that has a lot more of these amendments that have come from this side of the House, that reflect the attitudes and actions, the very livelihoods of Albertans. Because I'll tell you that it's one thing for people to say, "I've lost my business," but I'm hearing other people say: "You know that great job that I had for 15 or 20 years? It just got extinguished."

Then it gets worse. I don't know if it's because of my previous portfolio in wellness or as chair of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, but people are telling me: "You know what? I've turned to a little self-medication. I'm in a lot of trouble," and/or "My spouse and I are disagreeing to the point where there's domestic abuse." You talk to any policeman out there, and they will tell you everything is up, including break and enter. If you shudder and you shake your head, look at it historically. In other places where economics go downhill, so does everything else.

You're here to raise Albertans up. So are we. Let's do this together. When these folks were on this side of the House, they talked about all-party co-operation. We're offering it. Please accept it. It's in the spirit of helping Albertans.

That's all the time I have for now, sir. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions or observations for the Member for Calgary-Lougheed on the amendment under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, are there any individuals who would like to speak to the amendment? The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. I just want to briefly respond to the hon. member opposite, who habitually prefaces disrespectful comments with the words "with respect" . . .

**The Speaker:** You're speaking on 29(2)(a), correct?

**Mr. Mason:** No.

**The Speaker:** Oh. Okay.

**Mr. Mason:** I'm speaking to the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

. . . thereby rendering it respectful, and I find that offensive, Mr. Speaker.

I did want to just correct the hon. member. There's an article here by David Mikkelsen, who writes that Abraham Lincoln did not author a list of maxims, beginning with "You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift."

One of author Ralph Keyes' axioms of misquotations is "Famous quotes need famous mouths," and the fulfillment of that need has, for the last several decades, put on the lips of Abraham Lincoln words that were not written until more than fifty years after Lincoln's death, penned by an obscure personage whose name is unknown to most living Americans.

The Rev. William John Henry Boetcker was a Presbyterian minister and notable public speaker who served as director of the pro-employer Citizens' Industrial Alliance, a position he held when, in 1916, he produced a booklet of "nuggets" from his

lectures, which included maxims such as "We cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong" and "We cannot help the poor by kicking the rich." Boetcker's collection of maxims eventually crystallized as the list of ten now familiar entries . . .

10:30

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, I would encourage you to speak to the amendment. You might have wished to speak under 29(2)(a) because everything I've heard seems to be with respect to the last comment. I urge you to speak to the amendment.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just felt that since the hon. member had brought in the formidable reputation of Abraham Lincoln to support his arguments, it would be better to show that it was simply humbug, and that's what I was trying to do. Thank you.

**Mr. Rodney:** That sounded like 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** I determined, in fact, hon. member, that it was not under 29(2)(a). I explicitly acknowledged that, and the member acknowledged it.

Are there any questions to the Government House Leader under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Rodney:** Yeah. Absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very simple. Are we here to debate whether a quotation has been misquoted by people throughout time since that time, or are we here to debate this bill and, particularly, this motion? I wonder if the hon. member is aware of so many Albertans who have spoken out on Bill 20 in their confusion and their concern. Have you heard this about the impacts to themselves and their families and their businesses? I wonder if he knows that part of the confusion is due to lumping together pieces of policy that really should not be pushed through as one piece of legislation. Does the hon. member know that we support a tax on carbon, which is the first part of the legislation? But we don't know – no one knows – enough about the second part, the opaque, mysterious, unspecified use of funds on assorted climate initiatives, because the government has not seen fit to outline to us or to Albertans exactly what those will be.

**Ms Jansen:** But the bill is so perfect that we don't need oversight.

**Mr. Rodney:** Oh. I've been told the bill is so perfect that we don't need oversight.

Back to 29(2)(a), the government – this is the Government House Leader we're speaking of – has repeatedly stated that additional funding will be provided to researchers and innovators supporting the greening of Alberta's energy economy. To paraphrase, you know, because he has a colleague in his caucus, the environment minister said: although we have a vague idea of what the government intends, we cannot be sure there will be no unintended consequences for overlapping with the existing funding initiative towards energy research and innovation. I'd be interested in an answer to that.

Now, after the summer the bill can be amended so that we can legislate on what this government has marketed this bill as, which is a piece of carbon tax legislation for emitters, by omitting the elements of the bill that have nothing to do with taxing emissions and by thinking thoughtfully about how revenues from the carbon tax can be applied to benefit Alberta and Albertans in a sustainable, revenue-neutral way. I'd be curious to hear what the hon. member has to say about that.

A year earlier the current Premier spoke to an omnibus bill that tied together three pieces of legislation – I remember it very well – just as this bill does in its three schedules. She noted that the general

rule is for each issue to have a separate piece of legislation. I'd be curious to see what the House leader has to say about this from May 8, 2013: "By putting three pieces together, of course, we cut that opportunity [for the time for discussion] by two-thirds."

Now, two years ago his other colleague – I'd be curious to hear what he has to say about this – the Minister of Economic Development and Trade said in his capacity at that time as opposition critic regarding the Condominium Property Amendment Act, which was on the table at the time, that passing legislation but leaving many decisions to regulation left Albertans in the dark as to what the new rules would be. How is this different? Well, it's different in many ways. This is a more than \$6 billion question, for one thing. Again, for me it's not just the dollars; it's the people and their livelihoods that I'm concerned about, and I know that others are as well.

To the Government House Leader, some of the members opposite believe that decisions would be swept into a dark corner – it sounds rather Machiavellian; it's not the way I like to think of it – where they'd be, you know, developed away from the light of day.

This member I was just speaking about stated:

Changes that impact people's homes should happen in the Legislative Assembly through, you know, our robust debate, through different points of view, and through adequate oversight.

He ended with this:

Well – you know what? – nobody said that democracy is the most expedient form of government, but we do live in a new Westminster-style democracy, and details that affect condominium owners should be discussed in the light of day, not behind closed doors in the cover of darkness. That, I think, is a very legitimate concern.

And it always is. It is with assisted dying, it is with this, and it is with everything that comes across our table.

If the minister and the House leader stand by sentiments like this, why are they prepared for this government to do the opposite on issues that are critical to Albertans who happen to use energy, which by last count was every single one of the more than 4 and a quarter million people in this province?

Albertans are asking, respectfully I might say, for a fulsome debate in which the government does not use political expedience to shy away from the hard work that is indeed required or, at the very least, Mr. Speaker, with a government that can provide the time and respect for this House to at least debate amendments brought forward from Albertans who don't necessarily share – and these are their words – the NDP world view. They don't want it just in voice mode. They really don't.

There are other members of this House, and as I've noted all of my career, not any particular party has a monopoly on good ideas. What we saw in the closing hours of debate in Committee of the Whole just a short time ago . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who would like to speak to the amendment to Bill 20? The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Could I ask for clarification, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** Yes.

**Dr. Swann:** Will I be able to speak to the bill after this amendment is voted up or down, or is there no further debate after this? The question comes right after? I thought that was the case. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to stand to speak to the amendment to Bill 20, the final level of debate. I really, really want to support this bill. This is, to me, a sea change that has been so important in my

political life. Of course, I was unceremoniously fired back in 2002, 14 years ago, because a government wouldn't listen to any criticism about the lack of action on climate change. Ralph Klein and Lorne Taylor – Lorne Taylor was apparently in the House yesterday and stayed quiet. Through the security they mentioned to me that he was there. He just was curious to see how the Legislature operates these days, but he didn't come to see me. As a public health officer representing all the medical officers in the province, we had passed a resolution saying that we have to get moving on climate change, and I was looking for a new job the next day.

It's been quite a run. I applaud the government for taking some serious steps towards this important initiative. The carbon tax is an important step towards reducing carbon use and changing behaviour, but it is one tool among many to change human activities. There is no single item in this bill that's particularly egregious, that I would say individually would prevent me from supporting the bill, but the amalgamation of a number of weak points in the bill leaves the bill open to becoming as ineffective as the previous PC attempts at a carbon intensity tax that was roughly \$2.50 a tonne in Alberta and had the predictable outcome of no change. It was business as usual for the last 12 years.

Fundamentally, there has been no indication so far that the government has actually identified the benefits as well as the costs associated with this important change. The carbon tax is an important step, and it seeks to achieve the change in industry and individual activities to reduce carbon and other greenhouse gases. It seeks to reduce, in fact, through coal phase-out, human health impacts, which is a laudable, important goal that I think future generations if not this generation will applaud. But the devil is in the details. Process matters. Details matter. It's not entirely clear what the goals of this, besides carbon reduction and greenhouse gas reduction, are.

**10:40**

There's no indication of the impacts on electricity pricing in this province, on jobs, on small and medium-sized business. We've heard questions around the nonprofit sector and charitable foundations and what impact this is going to have. A cost-benefit analysis, even though it would be preliminary, even though it would be open to a lot of uncertainties, would give us some sense that there's been some thoughtful analysis about where we might expect to see extra costs, which we all must pay if we're going to have a change, and where we would expect to see benefits.

There's a lack of performance targets for this government to evaluate itself against. I've referred to some other legislative business goals. No amendments requiring accountability, therefore, on this sweeping bill were supported, not even a commitment to an independent review of value for money, which, yes, the Auditor General could do, but he has many things to do. This may not be a priority for the Auditor General in the next three to five years, depending on how many resources he has and where his priorities fall.

This is supposed to be an incentive program to change behaviour, but there don't appear to be incentives for two-thirds of the population. We're giving them back whatever they have to pay in extra costs. I don't understand why someone of middle income, up to \$100,000 a year, should get a rebate when we're trying to incent them to actually change their behaviour, not just get more money for carrying on with the same old, same old.

Lastly, perhaps most importantly, the bill is not revenue neutral such as the B.C. model, which I have some affinity for. Instead of returning the tax expenses associated with the carbon tax, it's giving a pot of money to government to spend where and when it chooses. It's not clear to me what's in and what's out. I was unable to get

any clarity around what would not be acceptable funding for this carbon levy. It provides a pot of cash to be disbursed at the government's discretion.

I must say that this is a new government. They're trying to do the right thing. I don't know about the next government, though. What are they going to do with a pot of money that's \$3.6 billion in a year? We're basically trying to think not only about this government but the next government and whether there are checks and balances in place, whether there is accountability. [interjection] Yeah. That's why I'm really concerned. You guys might get this in three years, and then we're in real trouble.

The intentions are good; I have no doubt about that. But circumstances change. We've seen the government have to roll back on its commitment to a debt ceiling, for example. It's not enough to say: just trust us. There are too many variables. There are too many uncertainties at play.

I and the Liberal Party, then, have been calling for a carbon tax for years and a real carbon fee that provides incentive for reduced carbon fuel use, but putting a price on carbon is just not enough. On behalf of all Albertans we deserve a plan that includes explicit goals, performance measures, monitoring, a reporting commitment that's independent and that ensures that whether it's a New Democrat government or not, there's full accountability to Albertans, who are being asked to pay for this.

It's with a heavy heart that I must say that I cannot support the bill at this time. I can only hope that future sessions of the Legislature will be able to refine and remake significant portions of the Climate Leadership Implementation Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

**Ms Jansen:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I want to take a moment as well under 29(2)(a) to thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for fighting for a carbon tax and fighting for the environment all these years. I think it's got to feel especially bittersweet to get to a point where there finally is a plan and the plan doesn't measure up. It's like waiting 20 years for Christmas, and then when it finally comes, you open the present and there's nothing inside.

**An Hon. Member:** Except coal.

**Ms Jansen:** Or coal. That's right.

I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View because I think he has shown leadership on this issue for many, many years. I think it certainly deserves our admiration.

I want to ask as well: you know, when we talked about oversight and we brought up amendments and we looked at ways – frankly, I was very happy to have a conversation about a carbon tax because I have no problem with it at all either. I was just concerned about the oversight. Well, there were a few things that I was concerned about, but I was concerned about the oversight picture and what that looked like. I thought we had a pretty good amendment there, but even if it wasn't to everyone's liking, I would like to ask the member what he envisioned in terms of oversight that might have been a better option than what we're seeing now, which is basically to trust the government; they know what they're doing. I think that's the gist of what we got.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks very much. Thanks for the question. I guess the bottom line is: independence, clear goals, and measurable outcomes. This is what I think all of us want in any program, whether it's a social program, an economic program, or an environmental program. Who does that best? I know of no one better than the Auditor General to look at value for money, based on criteria which, one would hope, had been created in the bill. The criteria that we want to evaluate this bill on should be explicit. Then the Auditor General can either agree or disagree with those criteria and add more, but he can at the very least monitor and evaluate the outcomes on those indicators that have been identified as part of the goals of the bill and then report independently to the Legislature.

He's an independent officer of the Legislature. I trust his team. I trust his abilities to assess value for money. It would give, I think, all Albertans some comfort in saying: "Yes. This is a reasonable plan. We are willing to pay the extra money to do this, to start shifting our culture towards a lower carbon future." We have a man or woman, depending on who the Auditor General is at the time, who's going to report on this on an annual basis to say where we could tweak the thing and make some different decisions around where the money is going, what kind of value we're getting in energy reduction, energy efficiency, conservation, education, just exactly what we are looking for.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition leader.

**Mr. Jean:** On the bill, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** We're still under 29(2)(a), hon. member.

Any other members with comments under 29(2)(a) to Calgary-Mountain View?

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be respectful, I won't be taking all of my time this morning, but I do have some things to say, and certainly there are a lot of people that want an opportunity to speak about this bill because it is something new.

I did have an opportunity to hear the PCs earlier suggest that they've been waiting for some period of time for the carbon tax, and I know that if they had another 44 years, they probably would have got it done. Certainly, that didn't happen. I don't know why, Mr. Speaker. I'm still wondering why everything else didn't happen that they were planning on getting done, and here they are today supporting the NDP on this bill and on many other previous bills on a consistent basis. It's quite shocking that they would do that at this stage, after they've lost power, but they have done it.

I know that I'm fairly excited about this carbon bill because I think it's going to hurt our economy a lot. That's why I will be opposing it and, of course, all the Wildrose members will be opposing it. There could be a possibility for a carbon tax sometime in the future, Mr. Speaker, but I can't see me ever supporting a carbon tax at all, ever, that would be out of step with the rest of the world and certainly out of step with the rest of our country and North America as a whole.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that I noticed that the PCs, you know, liken this carbon tax to Christmas and to waiting for an opportunity to sit around the tree and be with family and open up the presents. I always liked that. My kids love opening up presents at Christmastime, but opening up a coal tax that's going to take, you know, at least \$1,000 out of every single family's pockets during the next year is not what I'd call a Christmas present. I'd call it more like coal in the stocking.

10:50

Unfortunately, we're not going to be able to provide coal in the stocking anymore either because, of course, the NDP has banned coal, so we're going to have to import coal from China or the United States in order to put it in our stockings. Now, that is, of course, something else, and only the NDP could come up with a plan like that, of course, with the support of the PC Party.

I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that there are three particular parts of this bill that do cause me some stress. The most important one – and that's why I put it first – is the hurt to families. Although we hear the PCs talking, you know, on the side there about families, they don't seem to care about the fact that this is actually going to pull at least \$1,000 from every household in Alberta.

Now, they say that it's only going to be about \$300, Mr. Speaker, and that 60 per cent of Albertans are going to get a full rebate. Well, you know, by the time you calculate that out – \$3 billion, one million households in Alberta – any way you look at it, that's \$3,000 per household. When you calculate it out, it's \$3,000 a household. Now, we've said \$1,000 because we might have large emitters and there might be some rebates, but the truth is that every single household in Alberta is going to have a thousand-dollar bill that they are going to have to pay out of their current earnings while they're being laid off, while they're receiving wage reductions of 10 or 20 or 30 or 100 per cent, as the case may be. They get an extra, added Christmas present. It's not even Christmas, but they get it from the NDP by way of a carbon tax. I don't think that's helpful.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, we're so adamant against it, because this carbon tax will make heating more expensive. Yes. Just the very fact that you heat your home in Canada, in Alberta: it's particularly cold here, and over Christmastime they are going to receive a higher heating bill. Maybe that's the Christmas present that they're talking about with this carbon tax.

Or maybe they're talking about the Christmas present of clothing. For every family member that receives clothing during Christmas, those clothes are going to be higher. Now, they say: "Oh, no. It's not going to affect that. Those are indirect costs that aren't going to happen." Well, Mr. Speaker, transportation is a big part of our economy, and when you increase prices of gasoline and diesel and all of the other things that go with transportation, that increases the cost of doing business for those companies, and they pass that on to consumers. Maybe that's the Christmas present that they were talking about. Maybe the Christmas present is that clothes are going to be more expensive, so people can't afford as many clothes.

Or maybe it's the fact, you know, that everything they buy at Christmastime is going to cost more money. That's because this is a tax that is going to hit every Albertan – every Albertan – on everything. That's what happens when you transport – 90 per cent of our goods are transported by truck in Alberta, and we manufacture very little here. That means that everything we buy, whether it's a television set, whether it's clothes, whether it's a suit, whether it's this binder – not to use props, Mr. Speaker, but I like yellow highlighters, and this yellow highlighter is going to cost a lot more money because we import them. That's what people forget. When we make our oil and gas sector and our economy less competitive, people have less money to buy things.

Another reason that I'm so upset about this, Mr. Speaker, is because it's not just hurting families, especially young families that are on fixed incomes and are living month to month. They don't know, sometimes, if they've lost their job, and they don't know if they're going to be able to afford something, even as much food. I went to the food bank here in Edmonton just a couple of weeks ago, and I had an opportunity to take some food from Edmonton's Food Bank up to Fort McMurray just late last week. The number of

people that were coming to the food bank here, locally, in Edmonton and in Fort McMurray was unbelievable. Now, Fort McMurray is a bit of an anomaly right now because we do have some problems, but the number of Albertans relying on food bank resources is unbelievable. I'm worried about that. Ultimately, it comes down to families hurting, and our families are hurting. The fact that Albertans have to go to the food bank is just unacceptable.

That's because the economy has been managed badly. There's no question that we have low oil prices, Mr. Speaker – and I fully accept that – although they are a lot higher than they have been in a long time. You know, it might come as a surprise to the NDP, but Saskatchewan's oil is sold at the same price as Alberta's oil, and there are still companies, international and multinational conglomerates, that are investing in Saskatchewan. They're just not investing in Alberta because it's not competitive.

We do compete with Saskatchewan, North Dakota, Texas, Pennsylvania. When we bring in a carbon tax – and people may not realize it, and they want to do their part for the world, which I do, of course, and I think that we need to be in lockstep with the rest of the world and, certainly, in lockstep with the rest of Canada and North America – for 4 million people that makes us totally uncompetitive in the oil and gas sector, that means that nobody is going to buy our oil and gas. Nobody is going to invest in the oil and gas sector in Alberta, and our competitiveness ultimately is going to be judged on the basis of whether people want to invest in North Dakota or Saskatchewan or British Columbia or Alberta. Right now, Mr. Speaker, it's totally evaporated.

They're not investing in Alberta not because of low oil prices but because of the policy decisions made by the NDP government. Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's any surprise because everybody has agreed to that. You know, they have said that there are low oil prices, but everybody also acknowledges the fact that investment has not dried up in Saskatchewan. Husky has invested just this year in Saskatchewan in the oil and gas sector, but nobody has invested in Alberta. Very few people have, and very few people will continue to invest in Alberta as long as the policies that this government puts forward are so antipipeline, are so anti oil and gas sector, and make our resources uncompetitive.

The final part that I want to talk about, Mr. Speaker – and why I left it to last is because it's so shameful. I've been involved in the nonprofit sector for many, many years, and the very fact that we would put forward good amendments, solid amendments, amendments that make a lot of sense – one particular amendment was to remove charities from this tax to give them an opportunity to not have to worry about gas when they, for instance, provide shelter, to not have those added heating bills. When they take Meals on Wheels around to people that are needy, the most vulnerable in our communities in Calgary and Edmonton and other places, that live on the streets, those people will not be able to afford to drive as far to put those meals to those people without added expenses.

Mr. Speaker, this money does not grow on trees for charities. I know that. I've talked to a lot of charities because I'm involved in charities, and charities are having a very tough time right now. They've been having a tough time since 2008. The number of charities that have gone bankrupt in Canada since 2008 would stagger most people's reality. It's shocking. This means that these groups, that do so on a totally nonprofit basis usually, just don't have the money anymore. That's why I just can't believe that this government is being so mean-spirited as to not provide an exemption for charities and nonprofits in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we have a homeless problem in Alberta – and I applaud some of the different innovative solutions that have come forward from different communities in Alberta – but whether it be homeless shelters or women's shelters, these groups need special

attention. This carbon tax, that's bringing in a tax on everything for everybody, is just simply not helping those people, the most vulnerable, and the people that help those people.

Ultimately, there's only one taxpayer. Even though this \$3 billion carbon tax, that is taking money out of our economy, is going into the coffers of the NDP, the truth is that they're not going to efficiently get that back to the people, and they're going to take a cut out of it. That's right. Every piece of money, every bit of money that comes in the government here takes a piece of to administer it, and usually governments don't do that very effectively or efficiently.

We would suggest leaving more money in people's pockets, making sure that some of these exemptions do actually happen, whether they be for charities and nonprofits or even schools, Mr. Speaker. Like, why are we taxing schools? Why are we adding taxes to schools? It does not make sense. We think there should be an exemption, obviously, for nonprofits, for charities, for schools, for hospitals, for municipal buildings, for municipalities, for all of these things because they're just taking the money from one side and putting it to another in their own slush fund, and we don't think that's helpful.

Now, in the interest of time and, Mr. Speaker, to show respect to all the other people that are here today, I just want to say that we will be voting against this carbon tax. We don't think it's helpful for Albertans. We think it's going to be very, very tough for charities and for the not-for-profit sector, especially now that the economy is so bad. We're just saying to this government right now: please, this is not the time. There's a time for everything, every season, but this is not the time to punish Alberta families with higher taxes that are ultimately going to take money out of our pockets and make life much more expensive and less easy to afford than it has been.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)?

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just curious, and I would like to ask the Leader of the Official Opposition: when he said that the bill was mean-spirited and unhelpful, on a sliding scale is it mean-spirited and unhelpful like not having any of your MLAs walk in a pride parade is mean-spirited and unhelpful? Or is it mean-spirited and unhelpful to take off your Wildrose pride T-shirt because it affects your brand? Just maybe you could clarify for us.

**Mr. Jean:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the leadership candidate for the PCs. If I had a PC membership, I would vote for her, and I encourage all Conservatives to vote for her because then, obviously, they'll only have one choice of a conservative party in Alberta.

**11:00**

What I'd like to talk about is the mean-spiritedness during this time – and that's what I was referring to – when people are out of work. I don't know, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure you're aware that there are over 100,000 people in the oil and gas sector that are out of work. You probably know that since the NDP formed government a year ago, 80,000 Albertans have lost their jobs. That's what I call mean-spirited, when people are losing their jobs by the thousands. In March 82 jobs every working hour were lost; 82 Albertans lost their jobs. What is their solution? Let's give a \$3 billion carbon tax to Albertans. That's not a solution; that's mean-spirited.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on the amendment to Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I want the House to know that I believe in a carbon tax. I believe climate change is real, it's human caused, and Alberta should take leadership on this file. I support a carbon tax, but I cannot support this carbon tax.

This carbon tax should be revenue neutral. It's been very clearly shown that the impact of a carbon tax can be best offset not through big rebates for two-thirds of Albertans but through cuts to personal and corporate income taxes so that Albertans can keep more of their hard-earned money, so we can create an attractive investment climate for our province. As other successful provinces have done with their carbon tax, like our friends in British Columbia, we ought to make this carbon tax revenue neutral.

In doing that, Alberta can and must lead on innovation, innovation to abate the impacts of climate change. We have in this province some of the best engineers, some of the best scientists, some of the best academics, some of the best finance people of anywhere in the world. What we have more than anywhere else in this world, anywhere else in the country, is the entrepreneurial spirit that ties all that together. In this province we can address climate change by creating companies and technologies that we can sell to the rest of the world to help the world mitigate and deal with climate change. In so doing, we will diversify our economy and we will enable the continued success of our core industry in oil and gas. That is what's possible from a properly structured carbon tax.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, that's not what this is. We on this side of the House, myself included, certainly tried to bring amendments to make this bill better. I believe in the Alberta Party that our job is not just to tear down the government. Our job here in opposition is not just to oppose for opposition's sake. Our job is to propose ideas, and we have proposed ideas. I brought amendments to gradually phase in revenue neutrality, to allow the government some time to transition and to create some technologies, but they rejected that amendment. I brought in an amendment to exempt carbon-neutral or carbon-negative companies from the carbon tax, but that, too, was defeated. I supported amendments from this side of the House, several different amendments, to add performance measures to the carbon tax bill so that Albertans know whether or not it's being successful, to support a formal review after a year to ensure that we're not ending up with unintended consequences from the carbon tax bill. But, again, those were all rejected.

There are too many gaps in this bill, Mr. Speaker. Albertans don't know what the \$645 million allocated to Energy Efficiency Alberta over the next five years will be spent on. Is it going to be home efficiency tax credits? Is it going to be low-emission vehicle credits? Is it going to be geothermal heating? Is it going to be transit passes? We don't know. Is it going to be none of those things? We have no idea. It's very difficult, impossible frankly, to support a bill that I want to support in principle without that information. There are too many gaps.

What about the \$3.4 billion allocated over the next five years to, quote, unquote, other initiatives? That's a blank cheque, Mr. Speaker. What is that money going to be used for when you compare it to the \$3.4 billion that's going to be spent to build Health infrastructure over the next five years, where we know there are 50 projects and we know where they're going to be built and we know when they're going to be built? There's total transparency. This carbon bill is a blank slate. What initiatives is this government not going to fund with \$3.4 billion? They couldn't even tell us what they're not going to fund. That's disappointing and unacceptable from a government that claims to be ready to govern.

It is important to have a plan. Any opposition party – any opposition party – that aspires to govern, any party that expects



credibility from Albertans ought to tell Albertans what their plan is. I challenge the Official Opposition: what would you do? If you were government tomorrow, what is your plan to address climate change? What would you do? They've been silent on that. We know what they're against. We have no idea what they're for.

The Alberta Party presented a very clear climate plan, Alberta's Contribution, because I believe Alberta has a contribution to make in addressing climate change. We can reduce our own carbon emissions. We must reduce our own carbon emissions. But just reducing Alberta's carbon emissions does not solve global climate change. Alberta's best contribution to global climate change abatement is Alberta ingenuity, Alberta entrepreneurs, Alberta technologies to help the rest of the world address climate change. That's what's possible in Alberta. If we do it right, if we allow the market forces to operate, we can succeed. That will diversify our economy, create great Alberta jobs, support our existing energy industry, get pipelines built. That's what's possible from a proper carbon tax.

Now, I'm not cheering against this government. I don't want the NDP to fail, because if this government fails, Alberta fails. I wonder about other opposition parties, whether they in fact want this government to fail. I think they do. I don't. I want you to be successful because if you're successful, it's good for Alberta. Unfortunately, we just can't know. We don't know enough from this carbon tax, whether or not you're going to do that.

There are simply too many questions, Mr. Speaker, with this carbon tax. I support a carbon tax, but I cannot support this carbon tax.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions for the Member for Calgary-Elbow under 29(2)(a)?

The Government House Leader. Are you speaking to the amendment?

**Mr. Mason:** No, Mr. Speaker. I would like to request unanimous consent of the House to set the bells on the hoist amendment at one minute.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I have one further request of the House. I'm requesting unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday was a bit of a significant day in Alberta in that at our Provincial Operations Centre, up in northwest Edmonton, we officially dropped the operations level from the highest level of 4 to 3. This by no means, of course, means that the work is over or that in fact the work in any way is any less urgent, but what it does mean is that as a province we are moving out of the emergency response phase of the Fort McMurray fire.

Over the last month or so, Mr. Speaker, many people have spoken about the extraordinary response of government to the horrible disaster that we saw in Fort McMurray. While there are many people to thank – and there will be many thanks over the course of the next few months, and indeed we all know that we owe a tremendous gratitude to the first responders who live and work in Fort McMurray – I'd like to take this opportunity today, as we are

moving from that level 4 to that level 3, to actually also thank and make special note of some key people who have led the provincial government's response to this emergency in a way that has earned our province, I believe, international recognition for the good work that has been achieved.

**11:10**

It's a tremendous honour for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a number of very special people. Alberta is blessed with an extraordinary public service, women and men who have devoted their careers to making Alberta a better province. We ask a great deal of them, and they deliver even more in return. This is never truer than when our province is facing the most dire of circumstances.

Today we are privileged to be joined by five public servants who have been key to organizing the province's response to the wildfires in Fort McMurray. Experts in their fields, they went above and beyond the call of duty. Let me begin. Bruce Mayer is the assistant deputy minister in the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, who was instrumental in co-ordinating the government's firefighting efforts. This is never an easy job, and during a hot and dry spring like we've had, it's a Herculean effort. Every day there are new wildfire starts, and every day Bruce's team meets them head-on.

One member of his team is Chad Morrison, the senior manager of wildfire prevention and someone who is known now to many Albertans simply as Chad the Fire Guy. Chad has done an extraordinary job briefing me, briefing my cabinet, and briefing members of the media and through them hundreds of thousands of Albertans about wildfire behaviour, fire weather, and how you go about fighting a fire that seems impossible to fight, that has become a beast. It's been a first-class education.

We also have with us today Scott Long, the executive director of provincial operations at the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. Many of you who have seen the press conferences that were held by our government over the course of the fire wouldn't know that Scott Long is the executive director of provincial operations at the Alberta Emergency Management Agency except that every time he stood up to answer a question, he would say: Scott Long, executive director, provincial operations at the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. Every single time. As well, with him is his boss, Shane Schreiber, the managing director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. Shane briefed our cabinet and our wildfire task force every morning for the last several weeks and has co-ordinated and been a constant source of information for me personally.

Together Scott and Shane co-ordinate a team of people that springs into action when disaster strikes. They partner with all government departments, regional or municipal emergency operations, other partners such as the RCMP, the Canadian armed forces, and the Red Cross. They kept the government and the opposition fully briefed on events that were moving at incredible speed. There wasn't a single question you could ask them about what was going on in Fort McMurray that they didn't know the answer to.

Finally, Sonya Perkins, director of emergency social services. In a devastating crisis people are vulnerable, and they have unique and special needs as they cope with circumstances beyond their control. Sonya and her team stepped up, providing the kind of care and support that Albertans deserve from their government when they need it most.

Thank you. Bruce, Chad, Scott, Shane, and Sonya are here, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Guests, it's really a privilege to see TV stars in our House and particularly TV stars who are heroes. On behalf of all of the Assembly – I think they would have stood for another 10 minutes had I let them – thank you very much.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 20

#### Climate Leadership Implementation Act

(continued)

**The Speaker:** Are there any other individuals who wish to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to rise to speak to this amendment on Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, a.k.a. the carbon tax. No one can or should dispute the fact that climate change is a serious issue about which we should all be concerned, and this concern should result in responsible government action. Now, this is the tricky part, where many of us in the House have differing opinions.

The government will tell us that Bill 20 is a be-all and end-all in terms of addressing climate change in Alberta. They will say that they must implement every piece of this bill as it is written because the previous government simply sat on their hands and did nothing. I'll come back to that in a minute.

As I was reading through this bill, I looked for ways to offer constructive feedback based on my personal and professional background and, most importantly, what I've been hearing from my constituents, and there was one section which stuck out to me right away. On page 93 this bill amends the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act. This act, of course, governs the Climate Change and Emissions Management Corporation, or the CCEMC.

This fund was created to serve as a key part of Alberta's climate change strategy, with the money being directed towards a stronger and more diverse lower carbon economy. I noted that this government must be a fan of the fund because they are including it as a key piece of the puzzle within their climate change strategy. Now, you might ask: was this fund created after May 2015? It must be, right? If not, then the tales of the previous government sitting on their hands and doing nothing about climate change must be false.

Well, if you take a quick peek at the CCEMC website, you will note in their About section the following:

In April 2007, Alberta became the first jurisdiction in North America to pass climate change legislation requiring large emitters to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Two years later the Climate Change and Emissions Management Corporation (CCEMC) was created as a key part of Alberta's Climate Change Strategy and movement toward a stronger and more diverse lower-carbon economy.

The CCEMC is an independent organization that supports and builds on the strategic direction established by the province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, therein lies some pretty good work done while the government was apparently sitting on its hands doing nothing.

Now back to the CCEMC as it is amended within Bill 20. The amendments to this piece of legislation ensure that the spending parameters of the fund align with programming in the climate leadership plan. These new parameters now include education and outreach, new partnerships, and administrative costs associated with the implementation of the climate leadership plan. Here is where I begin to have some grave concerns. I have concerns that monies paid and directed into the fund by industry will be redirected

towards outreach, which by any other name might be called PR or maybe even spin. Is that where your doctors of climate change science will reside given that recently a noted Alberta political scientist stated – and I'm paraphrasing – that the climate leadership plan has been a triumph of PR but certainly gives us no confidence in any measured success with respect to greenhouse gas reductions?

I am concerned that these monies will be used to sell this government's plan to Albertans instead of being directed towards initiatives which actually reduce our emissions. It seems clear that it is okay to use the science of stone cold facts to justify this legislation, but there has been little appetite to use science in the clear rejection of many amendments directed at true accountability in the verification of the outcomes promised. Accountability should be something that this Assembly and all Albertans come to expect from us, from this Legislature and from this government, but alas this is not the case with the rejection of so many well-reasoned and legislation-improving amendments from the PC caucus and others on this side of the House.

Next, I am concerned that the administrative costs associated with the implementation of the climate leadership plan will also be paid for by the CCEMC fund. This essentially means that industry will be funding the government's operations because they could not or would not find the money to do so within the department of environment. If this plan is so important, I would think that this government could find the money, albeit from within the buckets of red ink they've planned to spend on the shoulders of Albertans, within the department's existing budget to pay these costs.

Additionally, new partnerships are listed as a funding priority here. What does that really mean? What kind of partnerships, with whom, and with what goals in mind? If you're going to spend money, you better have measurable outcomes in mind and measure them before you get there.

Now, this fund will provide \$175 million to other investments under the climate leadership plan, but there are no grants to the corporation. This begs the question: will the fund still have the ability to provide grants to initiatives that the corporation suggests and that have been vaguely referenced in the legislation despite our attempts to tighten some of those clauses up, or will all of the decisions now go through Energy Efficiency Alberta or the climate change office? If the control over how grants and monies are distributed is taken away from the CCEMC, Mr. Speaker, that would be a tragic mistake.

#### 11:20

This fund has been able to partner with a variety of different stakeholders, and through this work they have received over a 5 to 1 return on investment, with 425 and a half million dollars being turned into a \$2.2 billion total value in projects. The work done will result in an estimated 11.8 megatonnes of GHG reductions by 2020. In six years of operation there were 10 rounds of funding, which have resulted in 13 projects funded to completion, 16 biological projects, one biological program, three adaptation projects, and 109 clean technology projects amongst a variety of other successes.

It would seem that the fund is quite effective and efficient in how they operate already, which is why I do not understand why this government seems intent on giving a great deal of control over this independent organization to the minister of environment. Mr. Speaker, the minister's control of these mechanisms and independent initiatives, quite frankly, frightens me. I would suggest that the accountability and independence to do the right thing in working with industry and on behalf of Albertans may well be lost. Nothing against our current minister, as this will be the case on an ongoing basis, subject to the perhaps misguided terms of this

legislation giving inordinate latitude without accountability to the seat occupied by just one individual.

Much of the success within this fund has been through industry-based partnerships, which leads me to my next point. When you phase out an industry, you phase out the research that goes with it. As this government has waged a war on coal, the investment and research dollars in this area have and will continue to dry up. Why would someone continue to invest in a moribund industry or, sadly, in the towns and regions where that industry has been a driving economic engine? Why would anyone or any corporation in their right mind want to spend money on coal technology when they know that even if they develop the most innovative and groundbreaking technology the industry has seen on this planet to date, they would still be phased out?

If the government were to allow the six newer plants to operate to 2050 and beyond, as allowed and approved by federal legislation, the government could then partner with industry. Interesting proposition. They could give them an emissions target and a timeline and tell them that if they do not meet this ambitious target within the specified time frame, they would have to cease operations. I think it's a challenge Albertans are up to. This gives industry the chance to innovate because it gives them a reason to.

Right now, with this plan and this bill, there is no reason to innovate in the coal industry or perhaps in any other hydrocarbon-based industry as nobody really knows who or what sector of the industry might be targeted next. For example, will we one day live within the Kathleen Wynne view of natural gas in this province? There are lobbying forces and manifestos from this government's friends across the country that would make it so.

Did this government ever think that if we could develop world-class, industry-leading clean-coal technologies, we could then export this technology and tie it to high-quality Alberta coal export contracts to meet that demand around the world? Like it or not, 40 per cent of the world's electricity comes from coal. Developing countries continue to use coal because it is cheap and it is reliable. Four hundred million people in India do not currently have electricity, and they aren't building windmills today, that I know of, to meet that demand. Two thousand new coal plants are planned to be built around the world, and we have now said that we will do nothing in the way of technology and innovation to help the global community protect that global environment. Is that responsible action, as we also kill Alberta jobs and communities, Mr. Speaker?

In recent conversation with the Chinese consul general it is clear that China could be a strategic partner in such an inspired endeavour. Is this not what economic diversification and valuing our scarce natural resources should look like, those partnerships that you reference so clearly in your legislation? If we were able to export this technology around the world, it would have a real, significant, and measurable impact on greenhouse gas emissions on a global scale. A novel idea, indeed. I hope that is undoubtedly the real target here, unless I am seriously confused by the climate leadership plan. Developing, patenting, and exporting technology fits really well into a lower carbon, knowledge-based economy, things this government claims to be a champion of.

Mr. Speaker, I guess that in closing, I would just like to ask that this government look at the bigger picture, respect our rich natural resources, balance environmental stewardship, give Albertans what they desire – a vibrant, healthy, and sustainable economy – and come to the table with industry to work towards promoting Alberta as a hub of balanced and responsible industrial innovation, which will absolutely align with what, I am confident, reflects Albertans' desire for impactful leadership on a global scale.

I beg of this government, Mr. Speaker, please, please do what I am hearing Albertans say. Yes, protect the environment, but let's

be balanced and responsible by also fiercely defending and rebuilding the Alberta advantage, which past governments, PC governments, have so often been blamed for creating. Was it really such a bad thing? Let's allow Albertans the stone cold facts that they need in the years ahead to judge the outcomes of your unamended climate leadership plan – oh, sorry; one amendment; thank you to the Member for Calgary-West – as it takes hold with both the intended and, sadly, with the many unintended consequences. You owe that to Albertans, and our future depends on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek?

Seeing none, the hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to be able to rise and speak to some extent on this bill. I was here until early last night, or, I guess, early this morning, but I didn't get the opportunity to speak to it then. I had a little bit more to say than what I normally get to say in answer to questions, in 35 seconds. So it is a pleasure for me to be able to take, my House leader tells me, roughly 10 minutes to speak to this.

I want to say that I'm extremely proud of this piece of legislation and extremely proud of this government's climate leadership plan. Action by this government with respect to climate change is one that is long, long, long overdue in this province. It is an action that we committed to Albertans we would take in the last election.

Albertans told us in the last election that they were worried about climate change, that they were worried about the state of the environment, that they were worried about Alberta's reputation internationally and nationally, and that they were worried about their future as a result. At that time we said: "We will take action on climate change. We will develop a balanced plan. We will consult with Albertans. We will go on the basis of the best evidence, and we will have that work done to present that plan to the climate change leadership conference in Paris in November." And, Mr. Speaker, we delivered.

This spring, as a result, we are now in a position of being able to bring in the enabling legislation for large parts of our climate change plan, but let me just talk a little bit about that plan. As much as we've heard the opposition here debating whether climate change is real or whether, in fact, it's just a product of I believe it was unicorn farts at one point, as one person suggested, the fact of the matter is that climate change is real, and we need to act. Leaders around the world understand that we need to act. So that's why I'm so pleased that already our climate change leadership plan has received the endorsement from a number of key people, not only in Alberta, not only even in Canada, Mr. Speaker, but from around the world.

I was very pleased to meet yesterday with the governor of the Bank of England, who indicated that he was pleased that Alberta was taking action and showing leadership on our climate change plan. As many members have already heard us talk about, Michael Bloomberg, the former mayor of the city of New York and also a chair of an international committee which is dealing with the financial effects of climate change world-wide, also said that Alberta was not only introducing a good leadership plan but that, in fact, we were leading the way with this climate leadership plan.

Experts on this issue from around the globe who are worried about the state of climate change believe that by Alberta's action to put a price on carbon across the economy as also a nonrenewable energy leader, a province which remains committed to promoting sustainable growth of our nonrenewable energy product, we have

shown a level of leadership that has not been seen in many places across the world. So we should be proud. Not only should we be proud, but what it does is that it is fundamental to repositioning our nonrenewable energy sector, our oil and gas sector, as a progressive, sustainable producer world-wide. It allows us now, Mr. Speaker, to have conversations with people we were not ever able to get in the room with. It allows us to have conversations with allies across this country and across the world, that weren't prepared to listen to us before, because now we are acting.

**11:30**

We are working, in fact, very collaboratively with industry to ensure that not only will we, when this plan is fully enforced, be continuing to export our nonrenewable energy product to other jurisdictions and to a greater diversity of markets but that we will also export a level of technological expertise that is driven by producing barrels of oil with less and less carbon in each barrel. We will lead the way in reducing the carbon in each barrel because we have a plan to work with industry in a co-ordinated, well-funded fashion. This will actually help transition our economy to not only being a leader in producing that product but also in how to produce that product and in the technology associated with producing that product in a more environmentally sustainable and responsible way. So I'm very proud of being able to do that and having been able to work with the energy industry on that part of our climate change leadership plan, Mr. Speaker.

In addition, what we are also doing is that we are moving towards incenting fundamental behaviour changes throughout our society because Albertans know that we need to take action on this issue. They know that we cannot continue to do things exactly the way they were done in the past, as much as the opposition would like that to be the case, but that we need to reposition ourselves for the future responsibly and reduce the degree to which we create emissions across our province.

So where we once were a province – in fact, we were the only province in the country – without a co-ordinated, thoughtful, well-researched, well-funded energy efficiency plan, we will now, through this plan and through this act, move into the forefront in this country, Mr. Speaker, with a robust, thoughtful, well-researched, well-funded energy efficiency strategy that will support small business, charities, low-income families, school boards, hospitals, and businesses as we all work together intelligently, thoughtfully, on the basis of the best evidence towards reducing our emissions as a province, as a community, as an economy, Mr. Speaker.

What we also have been able to do, notwithstanding the comments of those opposite, is that we have been able to develop a plan where we will be able to slowly phase out of coal, Mr. Speaker, and that is something that is long overdue in this province. We produce more emissions from coal in Alberta than the rest of the country combined. The fact of the matter is that the science is unequivocal. It is not good for our health. We need to find a way to phase out of that particular way of producing energy, and that will produce significant reductions in emissions in this province. To be clear, we are only doing that which is going on around the world. It is, again, time for us to understand that we need to take action, that we need to show leadership, that we need to be bold, that we cannot simply look backwards, cross our fingers, close our eyes, and hope that the world doesn't change around us. That is not leadership, that is not standing up for Albertans, and that is not giving them the kind of government that they voted for and have been desperate to have for many, many years.

One thing that we haven't spoken a lot about, of course, is our methane reduction program, another element of our climate

leadership plan. Our methane reduction program, which I'm sure members opposite will recall, formed the basis of the conversation between Prime Minister Trudeau and President Barack Obama when they met a couple of months ago. They talked about a methane plan that will be introduced and adopted continentally based on the model developed here in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. In fact, you know, a couple of weeks ago – maybe it was a month or two or three weeks ago; I can't remember – when I visited Washington, I heard from the President's special adviser on the environment and I heard from high-level government officials across Washington that they understood that that methane reduction program was Alberta's methane reduction program. In fact, they are moving forward in terms of a significant public policy move based on the work of the people of this province as a result of the broad, thoughtful, intelligent consultations led, of course, by the minister of environment and also by Dr. Andrew Leach and his fabulous panel, who did so much work for us last summer.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is so much in this plan to be proud of. There is so much in this plan that will ensure fairness, that will ensure low-income and middle-income families are protected as we move towards a transition, that will ensure a responsible, clear, economically sustainable path to economic diversification and energy diversification and, at the same time, buy that ever so important social licence for our nonrenewable sector to diversify our markets. All of that is wrapped up in this plan. It is one of the most ambitious policy agenda items of any government in this country for decades, and I'm so proud that our government has been able to bring it in for a partial landing today, a mere 12 months and two weeks into our mandate. We have more to come, but let me just say on behalf of our whole caucus that we are very, very proud to be voting on this bill today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments to the Premier under 29(2)(a)? Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's just one comment I have. Again, there's no disputing that climate change is a serious issue, but what I wonder is this. If we're demonizing hydrocarbon here in Alberta, what makes it okay to ship that product around the world and to the Third World so that they can take that demonized product and use it freely?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe that we are demonizing any product. We're simply acting responsibly. As I've said before, we're working very closely with many leaders in the nonrenewable energy sector, and we'll continue to do so.

**The Speaker:** Anyone wishing to speak to the amendment to Bill 20 as proposed by the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View?

I see none.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:37 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rodney
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Schneider
Barnes	Jansen	Smith

Clark	Jean	Stier
Cooper	Loewen	Strankman
Cyr	MacIntyre	Swann
Drysdale	Nixon	Taylor
Ellis	Orr	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Panda	Yao
Gotfried	Pitt	

**11:40**

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Notley
Babcock	Hoffman	Phillips
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Ceci	Jabbour	Rosendahl
Connolly	Kazim	Sabir
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Eggen	McKitrick	Turner
Feehan	Miller	Westhead
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard
Gray	Nielsen	

Totals:	For – 29	Against – 41
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[Motion on amendment to third reading of Bill 20 lost]

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:44 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Notley
Carson	Hoffman	Phillips
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Connolly	Jabbour	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kazim	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Eggen	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McKitrick	Turner
Ganley	Miller	Westhead
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rodney
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Schneider

Barnes	Jansen	Smith
Clark	Jean	Stier
Cooper	Loewen	Strankman
Cyr	MacIntyre	Swann
Drysdale	Nixon	Taylor
Ellis	Orr	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Panda	Yao
Gotfried	Pitt	

Totals:	For – 42	Against – 29
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[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a third time]

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I briefly request unanimous consent of the House to revert to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**Introduction of Guests***(reversion)***Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a very brief moment and acknowledge some of the Wildrose caucus staff here who have worked incredible hours to make this possible for us. Please rise as I call your names: Cole Kander, Maureen Gough, Hannah Storvold, Tricia Velthuisen, and Megan Brown. We owe them a great debt of gratitude for all of the work they've done today. Thank you.**11:50****The Speaker:** Are there any other guests to be introduced? Yes, hon. member.**Mr. Rodney:** For the sake of time, respecting the other members of this House and beyond, just a similar thank you to all the members of our staff. We have incredibly dedicated, conscientious people who do wonderful research and are very passionate about the past, present, and future of our province. I would like to also thank all of our staff members and supporters of the Progressive Conservatives. Thank you so much.**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I would now like to advise the House that pursuant to Government Motion 6 the business for the sitting is now concluded, and the House stands adjourned.**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 6, agreed to on March 9, 2016, the Assembly stands adjourned until Monday, October 31, 2016, unless otherwise ordered.

Please be safe.

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:51 a.m. pursuant to Government Motion 6]



## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to June 07, 2016**

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

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

### **1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 732-36 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.), 685-91 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.), 749-60 (Apr. 21, 2016 aft.), 825 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 1019-24 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed), 987-95 (May 18, 2016 morn.)

Third Reading -- 1172 (May 25, 2016 eve.), 1174-79 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cP-26.3]

### **2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1]

### **3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)

Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2]

### **4\* An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft.), 349-66 (Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 399-409 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.), 378-84 (Apr. 6, 2016 morn.), 415-28 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 450-55 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 428-33 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn.)

Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c10]

### **5 Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading -- 398 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 455-56 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.), 532-38 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed), 491-505 (Apr. 12, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 570-77 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed), 539-56 (Apr. 13, 2016 morn.)

Third Reading -- 577-83 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 cS-7.1]

### **6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 519-27 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 527-32 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 583-85 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c13]

- 7 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**  
First Reading -- 518 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 585-86 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft.), 682-84 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed), 649-51 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 820-24 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 902-903 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c6]
- 8 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 669-71 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 684 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 824-25 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 903-904 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c8]
- 9 An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 640-49 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.), 728-30 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 979-81 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1180-81 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c11]
- 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 599 (Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 671-82 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 730-32 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division), 691-703 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 950-51 (May 17, 2016 morn.), 1041-49 (May 19, 2016 morn.), 1103-13 (May 24, 2016 aft.), 1115-23 (May 24, 2016 eve., passed), 1077-81 (May 24, 2016 morn.)  
Third Reading -- 1124 (May 24, 2016 eve.), 1197-99 (May 26, 2016 morn.), 1263-85 (May 30, 2016 eve., passed on division)
- 11 Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016 (Bilous)**  
First Reading -- 773 (May 2, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 907-908 (May 12, 2016 aft.), 971-79 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1012-18 (May 18, 2016 aft.), 1024 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1068-69 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c4]
- 12 Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Feehan)**  
First Reading -- 802 (May 3, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 904-907 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 985-87 (May 18, 2016 morn., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1069 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c3]
- 13 Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016 (Gray)**  
First Reading -- 872 (May 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 965-71 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed on division)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1024-25 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1069 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c15]
- 14 Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**  
First Reading -- 872 (May 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 983-85 (May 18, 2016 morn., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1076-77 (May 24, 2016 morn., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1077 (May 24, 2016 morn., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c9]
- 15 An Act to End Predatory Lending (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 901 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1062-67 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1153-57 (May 25, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1172 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2016 cE-9.5]



- 16\* Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**  
First Reading -- 921 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1067-68 (May 19, 2016 aft.), 1071-75 (May 24, 2016 morn., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1157-63 (May 25, 2016 aft.), 1219-23 (May 26, 2016 aft., passed with amendments), 1197 (May 26, 2016 morn., adjourned)  
Third Reading -- 1223-25 (May 26, 2016 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c14]
- 17 Appropriation Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 950 (May 17, 2016 morn., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1025-29 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed), 995-1000 (May 18, 2016 morn., adjourned)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1070 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed), 1031-41 (May 19, 2016 morn.)  
Third Reading -- 1096-1103 (May 24, 2016 aft.), 1113 (May 24, 2016 aft., passed on division)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c5]
- 18 An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring (Phillips)**  
First Reading -- 964-65 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1125-35 (May 25, 2016 morn., passed on division)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1191-97 (May 26, 2016 morn., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1199-1205 (May 26, 2016 morn., passed on division)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force June 30, 2016; SA 2016 c7]
- 19 Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 1011 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1153 (May 25, 2016 aft., passed), 1135-40 (May 25, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1171-72 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1173 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cR-8.5]
- 20\* Climate Leadership Implementation Act (\$) (Phillips)**  
First Reading -- 1095 (May 24, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1163-70 (May 25, 2016 aft.), 1173-74 (May 25, 2016 eve.), 1181-90 (May 25, 2016 eve.), 1311-21 (May 31, 2016 aft.), 1338-56 (May 31, 2016 eve.), 1288-98 (May 31, 2016 morn.), 1405-07 (Jun. 1, 2016 eve., passed on division), 1357-72 (Jun. 1, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1408-24 (Jun. 1, 2016 eve.), 1458-61 (Jun. 2, 2016 aft.), 1425-42 (Jun. 2, 2016 morn.), 1479-91 (Jun. 6, 2016 aft.), 1493-1541 (Jun. 6, 2016 eve., passed with amendments)  
Third Reading -- 1541-43 (Jun. 6, 2016 eve.), 1545-57 (Jun. 7, 2016 morn., passed on division)
- 21 Modernized Municipal Government Act (Larivee)**  
First Reading -- 1310 (May 31, 2016 aft., passed)
- 22 An Act to Provide for the Repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Ceremonial Objects (Miranda)**  
First Reading -- 1219 (May 26, 2016 aft., passed)
- 23 Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**  
First Reading -- 1454 (Jun. 2, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1478 (Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1478 (Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1479 (Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed)
- 201 Election Recall Act (Smith)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 119-32 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft.), 303-304 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division)
- 202 Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 305-16 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft.), 470-73 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)
- 203 Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**  
First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 481-83 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities), 473-81 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft.)

**204      Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**

First Reading -- 468 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 616-30 (Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed)

**205\*      Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**

First Reading -- 707 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 839-50 (May 9, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 924-31 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 931-34 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force January 1, 2017; SA 2016 c12]

**206\*      Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (Goehring)**

First Reading -- 902 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 1241-49 (May 30, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 1249-55 (May 30, 2016 aft., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 1255-57 (May 30, 2016 aft., passed)

**Pr1      Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 1171 (May 25, 2016 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 1197 (May 26, 2016 morn., passed)

Third Reading -- 1219 (May 26, 2016 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (May 27, 2016 ) [Comes into force May 27, 2016]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, October 31, 2016

Day 41

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawthood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Government Whip  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
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Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
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McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
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McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
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Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
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Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
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Fraser	Strankman
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### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
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Clark	Malkinson
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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, October 31, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Let us reflect and pray each in our own way. As we commence proceedings today in this Assembly, let us contemplate about our opportunity to once again work together. Let us find a way in which our collective efforts will make our province and our country better. Allow us to find hope, not fear; to co-operate, not compete; to be inclusive, not exclusive.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute on our first day to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met. As we reflect on these former members, let us keep in mind the family members who shared the burdens of public life.

**Mr. Douglas Clifford Cherry**  
September 22, 1932, to June 16, 2016

**The Speaker:** Mr. Doug Cherry served the Legislative Assembly of Alberta as the Member for Lloydminster for two terms from May 8, 1986, until June 14, 1993. Mr. Cherry served in the Canadian Army from 1949 until 1961 and saw active service in the Korean War. In 1961 he began farming in the Durness district, Lloydminster. His community involvement included service on the Lloydminster Co-op, president of the Lloydminster Music Festival, councillor for the city of Vermilion River, and director of rural electrification. His service in this Assembly contributed to the establishment of the Lakeland College campus and the Husky Lloydminster upgrader. He was a recipient of the medals of honour for his military service and the Alberta centennial medal in 2005.

**Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC**  
July 20, 1956, to October 13, 2016

**The Speaker:** Mr. Prentice served as Alberta's 16th Premier, from September 15, 2014, to May 24, 2015. First elected in a by-election on October 27, 2014, he served the constituents of Calgary-Foothills until May 4, 2015. During his term in office he also held the portfolios of Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Prior to his service in our Assembly Mr. Prentice served as the Member of Parliament for Calgary Centre-North from 2004 to 2010. He held the important portfolios of Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 2006 to 2007; Minister of Industry, 2007 to 2008; and Minister of Environment, 2008 to 2010.

Mr. Prentice had a long-standing dedication to resolving indigenous issues. As a lawyer he had specialized in property rights and in First Nations land claims, and for a number of years he served as commissioner and later co-chair of the Indian Claims Commission of Canada.

His expertise and his service were recognized widely. He received the Alberta centennial medal in 2005 and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal in 2012. In 2013 he was the recipient of the honorary doctor of laws from the University of Alberta. Most recently he was a global fellow at the Canada Institute of the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC.

Out of respect for the wishes of the family and based on discussions with the caucuses, I expect further opportunities for tributes in the Chamber in the coming days for Mr. Prentice.

**Mr. Ralph Andrew Jespersen**  
May 9, 1925, to October 17, 2016

**The Speaker:** Mr. Ralph Jespersen was elected to the Legislative Assembly as the Member for Stony Plain on May 23, 1967, and served until August 29, 1971. Mr. Jespersen followed in his father's footsteps, farming the dairy and grain farm established by the family in 1903. During his tenure he used his experience to strengthen relationships between the agricultural industry and the government. After his service as a member he represented Alberta's agricultural interests provincially, nationally, and internationally through tenures as president of Unifarm, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and the Dairy Bureau of Canada. Over the years Mr. Jespersen received many honours and awards. In 2012 he was presented the Governor General's caring Canadian award for his long-standing contributions to his community.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Mr. Cherry, Mr. Prentice, and Mr. Jespersen as you may have known them.

Hon. Members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Joel Crichton, and I would invite all to participate in the language of their choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of the families who shared the burdens of public office and public service. Today I would like to welcome members of the Cherry and Jespersen families who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your name, and remain standing until all have been introduced. First of all, from the Cherry family: Brenda Cherry, daughter of Doug Cherry; Adam Brown, grandson of Mr. Cherry; Paul Natland, grandson of Mr. Cherry. From the Jespersen family: Bernice Jespersen, wife of Ralph Jespersen; Darcy Torhjelm, son-in-law of Mr. Jespersen; Delnita Torhjelm, daughter of Mr. Jespersen; Debi Mills, daughter of Mr. Jespersen. Thank you for being with us today and for the public service you have provided.

The hon. Premier.

1:40

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a number of individuals from across Alberta whose actions during and after the Wood Buffalo wildfire last spring demonstrated great courage and compassion. They represent a broad spectrum of organizations and municipalities from across this province: the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, Red Cross, our partners in industry, municipalities, and others. The actions of these individuals inspired a province and gave residents hope, and many more continue to work tirelessly in the long-term recovery of this community.

From the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo we have Fire Chief Darby Allen and the director of emergency management, Bob

Couture. From the provincial wildfire team we have Bernie Schmitte, forest area manager, Fort McMurray forest area; Jennifer Zentner, wildlife operations manager, Fort McMurray forest area; Chad Morrison, wildfire compliance and investigations manager; and Bruce Mayer, assistant deputy minister, forestry division, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. From the Alberta Emergency Management Agency we have Shane Schreiber, managing director, and Scott Lang, executive director of the Provincial Operations Centre, and from provincial emergency services we have Sonya Perkins, director of the provincial emergency social services team, and Eric Winterburn, deputy director of the provincial emergency social services team.

From the RCMP we have Deputy Commissioner Marianne Ryan. From Alberta sheriffs we have Sheriff Alex Moring. From Alberta Health we have Dr. Karen Grimsrud, Alberta's chief medical officer of health. From Alberta Health Services, Verna Yiu, president and CEO, and David Matear, senior operating director, area 10 and AHS incident commander for the Fort McMurray fire response. From the Canadian Red Cross, Jennifer McManus, vice-president, Red Cross Alberta, and Melanie Soler, vice-president, disaster management.

Mr. Speaker, these individuals are just a few of the thousands of Albertans who came to the aid of the region of Wood Buffalo and its residents, some risking their personal safety and having suffered loss themselves. While they may not seek recognition, today we say thank you on behalf of a grateful province. We are honoured by their presence here today.

I ask my guests to now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome and thanks of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly today guests visiting from Forest Heights elementary school, located in my riding of Edmonton-Gold Bar. They are here to attend School at the Legislature this week, and they are accompanied by their teachers, Frau Marion Fritz and Mr. Dean Jaster, and are chaperoned by Mrs. Beverley Fenton, who is also known as Grannie to the students. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

Seeing none, I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some social studies students from NorQuest College and their professor, Ms Diane van der Gucht. These students are exploring what it means to be an Albertan as well as perspectives of Canadian national identity and after their recent tour of the Alberta Legislature were so inspired that they asked to return to attend the opening session of the fall sitting. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, any other guests? The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly three men from Edmonton, who are in your gallery today, whose actions during the evacuation of Wood Buffalo last spring demonstrated

tremendous courage and compassion for their fellow Albertans. Jeff Fafard, Alex Frost, and Kavin Ban took it upon themselves to co-ordinate the collection of fuel, food, and water to displaced residents and then drove through the night delivering supplies to evacuee centres on the way to Fort McMurray. Going home, they were caught in the long line of traffic themselves, so they continued to provide supplies to others waiting on the highway. The actions of these three men ensured many families and individuals received the supplies they needed and lifted the spirits of so many during a tremendously stressful time.

Mr. Speaker, these men are just three of more than 200 people who were nominated as heroes of the wildfire, an online program that encourages Albertans to recognize others who have gone above and beyond to support the people who were affected by the Wood Buffalo wildfire. Today we say thank you on behalf of a grateful province, and I ask Mr. Fafard, Mr. Frost, and Mr. Ban to receive the traditional warm welcome and thanks of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I'm advised that there is another guest to introduce. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an old friend of mine. Jason Kenney was a Member of Parliament for 18 years. During several of those years he held senior portfolios in the federal government. Many of those years he served as my MP, and for some of those years I served as a city councillor at the same time he was my MP. He is currently a leadership contestant for the PC Party, and I would ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

### Responders Way

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to pay tribute to the first responders who worked during the Fort McMurray fires for their outstanding work battling the fire and keeping families safe. These hard-working people emerged as heroes for tens of thousands of Albertans who were forced to flee their homes in May and who are now rebuilding their lives and their homes. First responders during this devastating event proved their sense of duty and their desire to help others. They put themselves between danger and Albertans. They successfully helped families to escape and worked tirelessly to put out the fire.

While the fire destroyed 2,400 homes and businesses, firefighters saved about 25,000 buildings, Mr. Speaker, roughly 85 to 90 per cent of the city. All of the critical public infrastructure in Fort McMurray was protected, and the evacuation of 80,000 people was completed successfully, with one terrible vehicle collision with two fatalities. It's difficult to thank these courageous people enough.

Over the last seven months the outpouring of support from Albertans and Canadians has been tremendous and reveals the respect and admiration for the responders who dedicated their time and efforts to saving Fort McMurray. During the fire Albertans stepped up and demonstrated the strength and resolve that always gets us through difficult times together. Now as Albertans we are coming together to recognize and thank the first responders in a more permanent and visible way. On June 1, the first day of re-entry, firefighters used cranes to raise the Canadian flag above the

King Street overpass in an arch of welcome. The bridge was the unofficial welcome home point as residents returned to their city and their homes, preparing to rebuild their lives and their community.

1:50

Last week our government announced it is naming the overpass Responders Way. Our commitment reflects the impact made by the many responders who willingly assisted under extremely challenging circumstances.

I wish to thank the mayor of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, Melissa Blake, and her council for their support of this initiative, and I want to recognize Councillor Keith McGrath for contacting the province and asking to have this bridge named.

Finally, to the first responders, on behalf of all Albertans we hope this gesture is accepted as a small but heartfelt token of gratitude.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we have an opportunity to honour the heroes of the Fort McMurray fires. Through their service and sacrifice they've given so much to our community, and it is an honour to rise today and thank them for their tremendous effort.

I know these brave souls don't like being called heroes. They'll tell you that they're just doing their job. To run into a burning city when everyone is running out is incredulous to most people. To fight to save their neighbour's home even while their own was ablaze, they'll say that they were just doing their job. To live for days with almost no sleep, no food, and not enough air tanks to go around and a water supply that was dwindling, it was simply adapting to the job at hand, to keep fighting even when the smoke was so thick, visibility was impaired, and breathing was difficult. If people might imagine sitting around a campfire and the wind shifts and the smoke heads to you in your chair, that's what it was like 24 hours a day, seven days a week for these men and women. To improvise and organize the largest evacuation in our province's history is phenomenal.

Condolences to our friends who did lose family members during the evacuation, the Ryan and Hodgson families.

The main communications tower for the fire department was lost on the first day. For emergency services to co-ordinate so many crews throughout that community was a feat unto itself. These outstanding men and women are heroes.

On the day of re-entry our first responders welcomed home the people of Fort McMurray by flying a flag on top of our overpass at the entrance to the city. After being driven from their homes, our people returned to a sight of reassurance and endurance, and that is why this bridge has been rightly renamed Responders Way, and, to you, thank you so much for that. While there is no way the people of Alberta could ever thank you enough for your dedication and steadfast commitment to Fort McMurray, we hope that they will accept this symbol of our appreciation.

Finally, I do wish to thank those that volunteered in supporting our community and the emergency responders: the people who did drive up that highway to provide that gasoline and food to those that were stranded, the homeless guy that walked over to Mac Island, where emergency crews were staged, and started cooking what little food was available. That guy is a hero, too. To the folks that did drive into town, past every security block somehow, and then brought in water, food, coffee, whatever it was, they helped our responders just so they could have the basics so that they could

continue on. Those guys are heroes. To the volunteers who tirelessly worked to lend a hand by whatever means they could, whether it was taking a displaced family into their homes right across this province, right across this country or providing money, clothing, and support: Fort McMurray thanks you all.

To the communities and organizations in support of the displaced, from Lac La Biche and Boyle all the way down to Chestermere and Medicine Hat, from Northlands to Samaritan's Purse and so many other organizations: thank you so much.

Our community was tested, but the resolve has never been stronger. After many years of our community being the embarrassing cousin of Alberta communities, it's heartening to see that our province stood together, united with love and support, and for that I thank you, all, in tears.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to request unanimous consent from the House to allow a response from the Progressive Conservative Party as well as the independents from Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Elbow.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am privileged to rise and pay tribute to our first responders, the brave men and women who put themselves in harm's way to defend the community of Fort McMurray from the devastating wildfires of this past spring. These responders were led by the phenomenal Darby Allen, who was introduced earlier, but Darby would say that it was a team effort and that all first responders and all Albertans were part of that team, once again proving that as Albertans our theme song is *We Are Family*. When one member of the family hurts, we all hurt. These tremendous souls worked tirelessly to make sure that not one life was lost to the fire and that property damage was kept to a minimum. Sadly, they did this while some of their own homes were in flames. We can never thank them enough for that. As residents returned to the damage on the first day of re-entry, local firefighters used their trucks to hoist the Canadian flag above this overpass in a welcoming arch, truly a beacon of hope.

I want to thank the government for the naming of the overpass Responders Way – now you have me on *Hansard*, too, Premier – reflecting the significance of the impact of these brave responders. I also want to thank Mayor Melissa Blake and the council of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo for their support of the initiative, in particular Councillor Keith McGrath, who made the request to the province. Again, to the first responders on behalf of all Albertans: it's small gestures and big that make a big difference. In our caucus we're proud to have two past first responders, our members for Calgary-South East and Calgary-West, as well as our Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, who actually looked after animals – of course, he's a veterinarian – as they were leaving the wildfire.

Mr. Speaker, on this particular day on this particular issue we're family, we're all in it together, and I thank the government. This is a wonderful gesture to pay tribute to our very, very well-deserving first responders.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as a preamble to my remarks on the tremendous efforts of our first responders I want also to add my comments for the record congratulating this government, this new Premier for the extraordinary leadership they showed in this once-in-a-lifetime, I hope, event.

As all the world knows, the first responders of Fort McMurray are a breed apart. For weeks these men and women battled a fearsome beast and emerged victorious. Through their quick thinking and dedication nearly a hundred thousand residents were but for one tragic vehicle accident safely evacuated under the King Street Bridge. Then, with others, Fort Mac first responders threw themselves at the beast and would not back down. Through the eyes of the media we watched these responders struggle with hope and despair, triumph and tragedy, but above all we witnessed their determination to stand fast no matter what the cost. Their families, too, must be honoured and remembered. We witnessed several cases where families were evacuated while husband or wife or mother or father remained behind so that others might be protected.

Months later as the residents of Fort McMurray approached their city, unsure what to expect, they found their saviours welcoming them atop the bridge that now bears the name Responders Way. Though much was lost, many of these residents passed under this bridge to find homes and businesses safe from the flames. For residents of Fort McMurray and for all Albertans Responders Way will stand as a symbol of courage and hope and thanks from all Alberta. We will forever be in your debt.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If you ask an Albertan to describe a hero, it's pretty simple. They will almost always talk about first responders. They will talk about the people who run toward danger while the rest of us seek safety, the people who are highly trained and ever ready. But if you ask a first responder the same question, they don't consider themselves heroes. The answer is always the same: just doing my job. It is that humility, bravery, and commitment to others that defines a hero. So make no mistake; in the hearts of every Albertan each and every first responder is a hero.

2:00

Now, having myself lived through a natural disaster, my most vivid memories are not of what was lost in the 2013 southern Alberta flood but of the tremendous outpouring of support from Albertans. The one image I will never forget is the hundreds of firefighters and police from Edmonton and beyond streaming down the QE II to help, of the Edmonton Police Service patrolling my neighbourhood to make sure it was kept safe while their colleagues from Calgary could take a break or serve elsewhere. That is the true embodiment of what it means to be Albertan.

So today it is my great honour to recognize and thank the first responders present here today and throughout Alberta. Renaming the King Street overpass Responders Way will remind all residents and visitors of Fort McMurray of the heroism that went on in May 2016. The people of Fort McMurray have been served by these remarkable people, including the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, with little fanfare. They did it because they're Albertans, and Albertans look out for each other, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Government Policies

**Mr. Jean:** While tens of thousands of Albertans were losing their jobs this summer, the NDP were busy hammering Albertans with a radical economic agenda. They waged war on power companies,

they are taxing businesses out of existence, and their new carbon tax will kill Alberta jobs, make life more expensive for everyone, and hurt our top industries. I've seen first-hand the damages these policies are having across the province from Calgary to Grande Cache. What does the Premier have to say to these Albertans who are suffering because of this NDP government's policies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is actually extremely proud of our climate leadership plan. It is long overdue, and it's a fundamentally important initiative to do three things. First of all, it's to protect our environment and the health of our children and our grandchildren. It's also important because it's the right thing in terms of transitioning us to a more renewable energy based economy. Thirdly, it is important because it will finally help us break the landlock that climate denial has resulted in, getting no outcomes on that. So we are taking a different approach, and that's . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** A new report is actually out, warning that the NDP's accelerated shutdown of coal will cost Albertans \$8 billion. That's not including the social costs of destroying livelihoods and communities right across Alberta. The only economic impact study we've seen from the government on any of these policies is a leaked memo saying that the carbon tax will wipe out thousands of Albertans' jobs. Will the Premier release the government's own studies on the damage of all these NDP ideological policies, or have they just not done the work?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the internal studies that we've done, which show that, in fact, our climate leadership plan will be a benefit to Albertans and to Alberta jobs and to the Alberta economy, will be released today.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, most Albertans disagree.

There are actually over 150,000 Albertans currently employed in the restaurant industry just in Alberta, but because of NDP policies, over three-quarters of operators will cut their hours while nearly half are planning layoffs. Instead of doing anything meaningful to help low-income families, the NDP is taxing them out of jobs that they need right now. And with the NDP carbon tax set to kick in in just two months, things are going to get a lot worse for Albertans. What does the Premier have to say to the thousands of Albertans in these industries who will now be out of a job?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, interestingly, there was a recent study that came out that showed that notwithstanding that we have gone into the most significant recession as a result of the drop in the price of oil that we've had in many, many years, restaurant sales are almost the highest they've ever been, and that is after we put in an increase to the minimum wage. So the fact of the matter is that when you pay workers fairly and they contribute to their local economy, it grows the economy and it grows fairness. Those are our values, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Electricity Power Purchase Agreements

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, it can be hard to figure out which NDP policy mistake is doing the most damage to Alberta's economy, but this government taking itself to court over power purchase arrangements has to be very high on that list. We have the NDP

suing government agencies and taxpayer-owned power companies to rip up a 17-year-old, multibillion-dollar contract. Nothing says, “Don’t invest here” like ripping up existing government contracts. To the Premier: is her government still sticking to their ridiculous story that they didn’t know anything about the change in law provisions in the PPAs?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, when the previous government embarked upon a deregulation and privatizing of a fundamentally important utility that Albertans rely on, they said that we needed to do it because industry would take the risk. But then they went behind closed doors and negotiated a deal so that taxpayers would take the risk and consumers would take the risk should things be lost. [interjections] It seems to me that the members opposite in the Official Opposition also want to stand behind having corporations put those costs onto Albertans rather than standing up for Albertans. We’re going to stand up for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** I would remind both sides of the House to please keep your comments constructive. And a little quieter, please, both sides.

**Mr. Jean:** The financial markets and the investment community notice when governments try to rip up contracts. When this government changed the emitters tax on power plants, they changed the law and made these plants even more unprofitable than the bad NDP policies already have. The companies surrendered their PPAs, but the government is suing, saying that that part of a 17-year-old contract is invalid. How can this government claim they didn’t know what was in the PPAs when those rules were mentioned in submissions to the Leach report and, of course, when Enmax briefed them on it last December?

#### **Speaker’s Ruling Sub Judice Rule**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I rise to remind the House, all of you, of Standing Order 23(g), also known as the sub judice rule, which governs statements made in this Assembly about legal proceedings before the courts. Members should not be engaging in debate or asking questions which may prejudice a civil proceeding that is “set down for a trial or notice of motion filed, as in an injunction proceeding.” I understand that an application was filed in July of this year by the government of Alberta seeking a declaration with respect to several power purchase agreements.

It’s extremely challenging to make a determination on whether statements made in this Assembly might prejudice those proceedings without knowing all of the particulars of the case, and I must rely on members and ministers who have greater information about the possible prejudicial effect of a question or an answer. Members are referred to pages 627 to 629 in *O’Brien and Bosc* and pages 153 and 154 in *Beauchesne’s* for a discussion of the sub judice principle and the application to statements made by members in the House.

I would also note that Standing Order 23(g) states that “where there is any doubt as to prejudice, the rule should be in favour of the debate.” I will therefore allow some latitude with respect to this matter, but I would also urge members to exercise discretion when engaging in debate, asking questions, or giving answers on this matter or any other matter which may or may not be subject to the sub judice rule.

The hon. Premier.

#### **Electricity Power Purchase Agreements (continued)**

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In deference to your concern I will speak generally about the carbon levy, which some people might argue had something to do with this particular matter. It didn’t, but let me just say this. Many of the members opposite are still not sure about the science of climate change. The members opposite actually voted this weekend to hand over to the federal government the power over Alberta’s carbon levy. We are going to act on behalf of Albertans. We are going to work with Alberta businesses, with Albertan communities to move this province forward on something that has been long overdue.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, we either have a problem with incompetence in this government or no one is telling the truth. Enmax in documents makes it clear that they told this government about the more unprofitable clause in December. They put it in their cancellation letter to this government, yet the Premier’s top adviser swore that no one in the government knew about it until mid-March. The Premier needs to set the record straight. When did she personally know about the PPA exit clause? Is it her position right now that Enmax is lying?

2:10

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I’m not going to offer up my opinion about the state of positions put forward by parties to a legal proceeding. I will, however, say that the matter of moving forward on long-overdue climate change policy is something that we needed to do. It is critical to the future of our economy. It is critical to soliciting support and social licence in jurisdictions across this province, to get support for our efforts to get our products to tidewater, and it is important for the future of our environment and for the health of our children, and we will not back down on it.

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### **Home-schooling**

**Mr. Jean:** Many Albertans are concerned that the NDP government has mismanaged the Trinity Christian and Wisdom home-schooling file. It looks like the government will now be in yet another complicated legal battle, that will take, actually, months to resolve, while thousands of families’ and children’s lives have been thrown into uncertainty. It’s not acceptable. Where everyone agrees that taxpayer dollars need to be spent wisely, parents are asking why there weren’t more interim measures taken to avoid the frustration and anger created by this closure. Surely an administrator could have been appointed to run the school board. Can the Premier please explain why this wasn’t done?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, our government supports the ability of parents to choose the best form of education that they would like to give to their children. However, it is important that when public dollars are involved, those public dollars are expended in alignment with the law and with the rules that have been set out. So when we find that that is not the case, it would be irresponsible of us to allow these children to continue to attend places where the very public dollars that are dedicated to their education are not getting to them. Our government has worked closely to come up with . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** This board has nearly one-third – one-third – of Alberta’s home-schooling population. That’s 3,500 children. Many are asking if a public board would have received the same harsh

treatment for accusations of misallocated funds. It's like shutting down two large public high schools in mid-year. Barbara Duteau, one of the parents impacted, feels that the government has actually very much mishandled this file. She wants any problem with administration fixed and believes a solution exists outside of court. Once again, can the Premier please explain why they did not do all they could to ensure students' lives would not be thrown into chaos? Because they are.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. It's incumbent upon a government to make sure that public money is being spent where it's meant to be spent and that there's transparency there to see that. The home-schoolers by definition are being schooled at home, so they continue with their studies. They sign up with another affiliate, and they get the money that they deserve, that they're entitled to to make sure the kids get the education they deserve.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, there were other options available, not just shutting down a school system in mid-year.

The allegations raised by the government are alarming and need to be resolved. No one disputes that. But the fact is that thousands of Alberta parents and children right now are nervous about parental choice being eroded throughout our educational system. They want assurances from this Premier that the parent-driven models of education they have chosen for their children will be protected and always be in place in Alberta. Will the Premier please reassure Albertans right now that her government is not on a mission to wipe out home-schooling in Alberta?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, part of the reason that on the day the announcement was made, the officials from Education got on the phone and did a telephone town hall to all these parents to give them other places where they could continue their home-schooling was because our government is committed to allowing them to continue their home-schooling in a way where they receive the public dollars to which they are entitled. That is exactly what we did because we are absolutely committed to supporting those families and the choices that they have made. [interjections]

#### **Speaker's Ruling Decorum**

**The Speaker:** Now, I know, hon. members, that it is Halloween and you want to knock on doors and you're expecting to get a candy bag tonight, but if you are all speaking at the same time, the individual in the house won't be able to hand out the candy because they're not sure why you're there. Please contain that till you're able to knock on doors tonight.

The leader of the third party.

#### **Job Creation and Retention**

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, all over Alberta people are concerned about their jobs. They're looking for leadership from this NDP government, and so far there's been none. This morning Jack Mintz said that this government is going to need a specific set of policies to attract private investment to Alberta or else – and I quote – we're not going to get the jobs back in this province. To the Premier: since you must hear the same concerns in your office that I hear in mine, are you ready yet to reverse policies like the \$15 minimum wage, the early shutdown of coal plants, the carbon tax,

and cancellation of contracts, all of which have driven jobs and investment out of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, our government has been working collaboratively with a number of leaders in industry to do exactly the opposite. What we are doing is trying to bring more investment to Alberta through a number of innovative programs. This session you'll be hearing about tax credit programs, asked for by business leaders, that would incent investment and incent innovation. We've worked with ATB and AIMCo to make more capital available. We are making more investment income available. We're doing everything we can, and we're pairing that with massive investment opportunities in capital and in . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, people are starving because it's not working.

This government recently increased its use of the term "person-years of employment" to cover up the fact that their policies are costing more jobs than they are creating. When they opened the northeast Anthony Henday, for example, a PC-started project, they said that it created 10,000 person-years of work, which is true. Of course, Albertans know that that's a thousand jobs for 10 years or 2,000 for five years, not really 10,000 jobs at all. Meanwhile over a hundred thousand Albertans have lost their jobs. To the Premier: will you speak to Albertans in plain language about how you plan to replace those hundred thousand jobs?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying, of course, that our government is acutely aware of the number of families in Alberta who are hurting as a result of job losses caused by the drop in the international price of oil, over which we have no control. Notwithstanding that, we know that it's our role to work with them. So we're not going to cut services. We're not going to add more job losses. We're not going to do any of that stuff. What we are doing is ensuring stability in public services while working on a number of different initiatives to create and generate employment, and we will continue to do that.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, they're in denial of the fact that their policies are failing Albertans.

The Premier and her ministers like to drag out the old chestnut that opposition parties will lay off teachers and nurses. So here's an easy question for the Premier on the first day of session. Given that your government ministers and MLAs are the only ones talking about firing front-line workers, will you commit today to not lay off or reduce the hours of teachers or nurses during this term of office?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I really have to take umbrage with the premise of the member opposite's question. Quite clearly, the budget that the member opposite ran on in the last election had a billion dollars being lost and involved not hiring something like 1,100 teachers, so for him to suggest that we are somehow going to reduce teachers makes no sense. We are supporting public services. We are funding enrolment increases. We are maintaining public services, and we'll continue to do that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Opioid Use Prevention and Treatment

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week Alberta Health finally heeded the calls of public health and mental health experts, social agencies, police, and, yes, the opposition by making meaningful changes in the way the opioid epidemic is being handled in Alberta, now more than one death per day in Alberta. But there can be no assumptions that this crisis is abating: the still increasing numbers of dead, increasing ER visits, and months-long wait times to get into treatment. To the Associate Minister of Health: given that the Valuing Mental Health and addictions report 10 months ago highlighted our inadequately funded and dysfunctional system, when will Albertans hear on the progress . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Associate Minister of Health.

2:20

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Since the Valuing Mental Health report was adopted by our government, we've worked very strongly on a number of the key issues, including working in partnership with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities on a comprehensive opioid addictions plan. That plan now includes support for the research around supervised consumption services across our province as well as an expansion of the opioid dependency treatment in order to help save lives.

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, given that thousands of Albertans with opioid addictions currently wait several months on average to get into addiction-specific treatment, when will we see timely, integrated access to medical, mental, and social supports for these people?

**The Speaker:** The associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. When dealing with an opioid addiction, there are particular treatment methods that have been found to be most effective, and those are the opioid dependency treatments. Our government has invested in additional programs across AHS, including several specialized clinics, one of which opened a few months ago in the Cardston area and serves the surrounding First Nations reserve.

The other thing we're working on is working with family doctors across our province so that as specialized opioid dependency clinics are able to stabilize those patients, their patients are going to get transferred back into the community, where they will receive the treatment that they need.

**Dr. Swann:** You've got a lot to catch up on, Minister.

Given that your own data show that First Nation citizens have twice the rate of opioid prescriptions, five times the rate of emergency department visits for opioid addictions, and a recently eliminated federal program for HIV prevention across this country, when will we see evidence that Alberta Health Services and Health Canada are going to address this ongoing devastation among our First Nations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government has been working closely with our federal partners on this issue. We know that enhancing access to naloxone will reduce deaths from fentanyl and overdoses within indigenous communities and have been working with our

indigenous communities, both on- and off-reserve, to ensure that naloxone kits are available where they're needed and that there are trained people available to help people who are experiencing an overdose.

We know that access and system navigation are issues for many First Nations people, and we're continuing to work on this. We have provided a \$1.5 million grant to Alberta Health Services to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. associate minister.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

### Vegreville Immigration Centre

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour and privilege to represent the community of Vegreville in this Legislature. It's a beautiful, vibrant town of 6,000 hard-working people. Last week that town received sad and shocking news that the federal government plans to close the immigration, refugee, and citizenship case processing centre. It means the loss of 280 family-supporting, mortgage-paying jobs. To the Minister of Labour: what information do you have on this closure?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this question. I think I can say with certainty that all members in this House are deeply concerned about this announcement and its impact on a vibrant community in rural Alberta. There's no doubt that this is the wrong decision for the people of Vegreville. We are asking the federal government to reconsider. Upon learning of the closure, my office contacted Minister McCallum's office in Ottawa to convey the impact that this closure will have on the community and the families who live there.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the loss of 280 jobs would be difficult for any community to face and given that the loss is especially difficult for a smaller rural community of 6,000 people, to the same minister: what can you do to support the efforts to convince the federal government that this decision should be reversed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I'm deeply concerned about the impact that this decision is going to have on the town of Vegreville. I have written to my federal colleague the minister of immigration to express that concern about this decision and to ask him to reconsider. I believe we need to be united in this House that this service needs to remain in Vegreville, where these workers live.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this issue is so important to the community of Vegreville and that the leaders of Vegreville also agree that the decision should be reversed, to the same minister: what support can our Legislature provide to the people of Vegreville in hopes of convincing the federal government to reverse this decision?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to urge all party leaders to write to the federal government asking for a reversal of

this decision. I also want to congratulate the member for her advocacy on this issue. Thanks to your leadership the NDP Provincial Council voted unanimously to support the town of Vegreville in its efforts to reverse this decision. This issue should transcend partisan politics. We need to get behind Vegreville to preserve these jobs and the benefits they provide to this community.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Support for Agriculture

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I travelled around rural Alberta this summer, I saw the potential for historic bumper yields. Sadly, Mother Nature disagreed. Summer hail and an early fall snow have caused crops to be destroyed or to lay unharvested on the ground. To the minister: with the potential for insured losses to be in the hundreds of millions, do you have an estimated value for these unharvested and damaged crops?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the member for the question. I absolutely share his concerns about this year. It's been a real heartbreaker of a year. We've seen really dry conditions moving into some pretty good rains, potentially a bumper crop, as the member mentioned. I'm confident that their suite of insurance products through AFSC are robust and that they will be able to supply the needs of the farmers who aren't able to get their crops off because of the high moisture content.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that Bill 6 is one of the most contentious bills ever brought forward by this government and given that round-table consultations for employment standards and labour have just finished and OH and S ones have barely begun, again to the minister: with so much uncertainty around this legislation already, do you have a firmer timeline for these Bill 6 regulations other than late 2017?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question, added as a supplemental to the crop question he asked earlier. You know, we've had the opportunity to have our tech working groups. They've worked very hard. I'm very proud of the work they have done. I'm happy with the work they've done. All along we've been saying that we'll take the necessary time needed to make sure that we get this right, and I'm happy with the timeline we've had and the work they've done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given the overwhelming burdens farmers have faced this year with hail, unharvested crops, falling cattle prices, and feedlot closures due in no small part to this government's ideological policies, here is the \$64,000 question. Again to the minister: why, at the end of harvest and the beginning of session, have you planned your junket to Asia while farmers and ranchers are suffering from conditions out of their control?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. I'm hoping that the member realizes the potential that China and other overseas markets have for our producers in Alberta. I will not apologize for doing the work that this government can do to increase those markets right across the world and for having the opportunity to do so. That AFSC will somehow not be able to issue their insurance products because of standing markets is nonsensical.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Home-schooling

(continued)

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, last week Alberta Education revoked Trinity Christian School's accreditation amidst serious allegations of financial misconduct. Now, to be clear, our caucus does not condone the alleged activities, and we support the actions taken to protect Alberta taxpayers, but this closure has left roughly one-third of Alberta's home-schooled students, 3,500 children, without an accredited program. Despite assurances from Alberta Education that they are doing everything they can to assist these families, I'm hearing that quite the opposite is true on the ground. To the Minister of Education: can you assure this House that these families are being provided with the option to continue home-schooling their children?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

2:30

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. It's very important for everyone to understand that we do support home-schooling here in the province of Alberta, and we will try to facilitate as easily as possible those families that were with Trinity and can register with another affiliate. We have Alberta Education on the ground, and if there's any discrepancy or any rough spots, I'm glad to hear about that so that I can help to facilitate these students getting the money they deserve for their education.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the minister that there are all kinds of rough spots and that we'll be in touch with him.

Given that this investigation has been ongoing since even before you took office and given that you've been aware of this situation for quite some time and given that home-school students and families are experiencing understandable anxiety, stress, and confusion two months into the school year, to the minister: why wasn't this action taken in the summer months rather than during the school year?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. I know that this is not an easy thing to do, and I did it with a heavy heart, certainly. When I did receive the information, we went back to make sure that we did look at the numbers and audited again. It was a double check to make sure that we were in keeping that the irregularities that we saw were coming through on multiple audits, including on-site audits, so it was my duty to act because, after all, this is public money. I'm glad that the member recognizes that and home-school...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.



**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given concern over the NDP's past opposition to parental choice in education and to home-schooling in particular and given that the abrupt action taken partway into a school year clearly shows a callous disregard for the educational well-being of home-schooled students and given that this further raises questions as to the NDP's commitment to home-schooling as a viable option for student education, will the minister stand today in the Assembly and tell Albertans: does he support home-schooling, or does he plan on ending home-schooling in our province?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, I think, Mr. Speaker – thanks for that question – that I made it clear in my second comment that we do support home-schooling here in the province of Alberta to the tune of \$1,670, I believe, per student, and it's important that that money gets to the education that these kids need. If someone is registering – they can register at their convenience with an affiliate – it's not difficult to do. You know, all of these notions about anything else: there are certain groups, I believe, that are throwing gasoline on the fire, making it even more difficult to communicate because they're simply telling half-truths.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Human Trafficking

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP just can't seem to help themselves when it comes to spouting the importance of the NDP world view. We've seen it with the Leap Manifesto; we've seen it with the hiring of someone who refers to our province's oil sands as Mordor, and now we're seeing it with the very deeply troubling comment about the very real issue of human trafficking. The executive director of Progress Alberta and a close friend of the NDP trashed the Wildrose for raising awareness of the obvious and increasing number of victims. He called human trafficking a debunked fantasy. To the Minister of Human Services: does this minister also buy into the NDP world view of belittling those who suffered . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Mason:** For the opposition to try and hold this government responsible for the tweets of any individual, regardless of their political views, is absolutely absurd. Can you imagine if we held them accountable for the tweets of their supporters? Oh, my goodness, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I believe, Chestermere-Rocky View, first supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Well, thank you for that answer for these families that are suffering.

Given this horribly out-of-touch comment about this debunked fantasy of human trafficking, it's now time to shine a light on how serious this problem of human trafficking is in Alberta. Given that the executive director of ACT Alberta, a group that works to fight human trafficking, says that there's been an explosion in the number of cases reported and given that human trafficking threatens the safety and security of our communities, what steps is this government taking to address this growing problem in our province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for what is really a very important question. Our government is

committed to ensuring that we fight all forms of crime. We have met with ACT Alberta, and we are aware of their concerns about the increase in human trafficking. One of the most fundamental principles in ensuring that people are not vulnerable to this sort of human trafficking is ensuring that they have access to necessary government services, to jobs that pay decent wages, and things like that. Our government is absolutely committed to supporting those things.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Given that we need to ensure that men, women, and children are not trafficked for the purposes of labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, or the removal of organs and given that recently in Okotoks a 23-year-old woman was charged with human trafficking for exploiting teenage girls aged 13 to 16 whom she met on social media, what specific initiatives are in place right across our province to protect those that are being recruited for human trafficking on social media?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. In the last budget our government supported the ALERT team. That team includes the ICE team, the integrated child exploitation team. They work with all different police services across this province to ensure that everyone is sharing information and to prevent people from being solicited or trafficked online.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Calgary-Foothills.

### Energy Policies

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. Two weeks ago Enbridge announced cuts to 5 per cent of their workforce, laying off another 530 positions. This round of layoffs is more pain and suffering for hard-working Albertans. In Calgary we have a 9.5 per cent unemployment rate, the highest in any metropolitan region in Canada, and expected to reach double digits by Christmas. In light of these sobering statistics will the NDP government postpone the risky carbon tax, that will only hurt Calgary families?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. There's no doubt that the sustained international price of oil is having a significant impact on all families and communities and workers across this province. That's why our government this spring introduced our Alberta jobs plan budget, which has a number of initiatives to help set the right conditions to support businesses and industry and get our economy back on its feet. There are a number of things that we've done in the areas of access to capital, support for start-ups and small businesses as well as helping businesses expand markets.

**Mr. Panda:** Given that the NDP has created an economic environment where people are unable to give, which has led to the shelves of the veterans' food bank in Calgary being empty, and since on November 5 I am holding my annual veterans' food bank drive – and I hope MLAs on all sides will support this because the need is so great now – and given that when the carbon tax comes into effect it will hurt the charities even more, will the NDP

government acknowledge the damage their policies are having and cancel the charity-punishing carbon . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. Again, what the opposition needs to recognize or acknowledge is that when you are a province that has been overreliant on one commodity with one buyer for one price for so many years, when we have a collapse in that price, we are going to be hit harder than most other jurisdictions, which, quite frankly, is the case. We understand and sympathize with Albertans that are going through a very difficult time. This is why we've introduced a number of initiatives. Quite frankly – I will tell you more shortly.

2:40

**Mr. Panda:** The list of NDP policies that are hurting Calgarians goes on and on and on. Given that this summer they have launched a risky and expensive lawsuit against Enmax, which is owned by the city of Calgary, and given that they have begun an accelerated coal phase-out that will hurt hard-working Albertans and given that once fully implemented the average family will be paying a thousand dollars more because of the carbon tax, what will it take for the NDP government to use common sense, not ideology, and cancel those policies and drop lawsuits?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to clarify. First of all, our government's climate leadership plan puts Alberta at the forefront when it comes to doing our part regarding the environment. This is not only what a responsible global citizen does. There is an incredible amount of opportunity within our green jobs and transitioning workers from that phase-out of coal. We are investing in innovative solutions, working with business and industry as well as with not-for-profits. We have an advisory committee that is informing our government on how to help with this transition, but quite frankly . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-North West.

### PDD Service Delivery

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Human Services has been asked time and time again about his plan to deal with the wait-list for PDD. The community is still waiting to hear answers. The wait-list is still growing. We've heard one plan from this government, that is to put PDD clients up for bid by service providers, potentially even those from out of the province. To the minister: is it still your government's plan to openly tender supports to the lowest bidder anywhere you can find them?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member, for the question. I will begin by saying that our government is committed to working with the sector to ensure that they are listened to and their perspective is reflected in our policies, unlike – I know the members won't appreciate it when I remind them of their record – imposing solutions like PDD safety standard 8, supports intensity scale. I have been engaged with the sector over the last year and a half to deal with . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Ms Jansen:** Yeah. I like that, "working with the sector."

Given that when asked about procurement previously, the minister said that he had consulted with the community, and when I asked him about that consultation, he said that if I wanted to know what the community thought, I could ask them myself. Well, guess what? I did, and they didn't like it. Again to the minister: are you going to exempt the PDD community from this humiliating process? And guess what? They don't feel consulted at all.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Member, for the question. One thing I want to clarify is that we are not auctioning PDD services. It's misinformation, and it's wrong. We will not auction PDD services. That's not happening. I have been working with the PDD community. Over 2,000 Albertans participated in our consultation around safety and inclusion. Whatever they will tell me, I'm . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

I'd just remind the member about no supplementary preambles.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a major platform of this government has been to increase the minimum wage and they've been lauding it from coast to coast and given that the government has not offered PDD providers more funding to increase their own workers' pay to meet the new minimum wage, to the minister: did you forget to budget the minimum wage increase for PDD service providers, and if not, why does the minister believe that disability workers don't deserve a living wage? That's right. A \$10 minimum wage . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We have increased funding for PDD by \$22 million as opposed to cutting \$40 million back when you were in government. In terms of relationships going forward, we are working with the advisory committee which is looking at how we will fund the PDD services. We are in complete consultation with the PDD community, advocates, and service providers.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

### Economic Development

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: given that we are all painfully aware of the way the sustained low oil price has impacted our province, can you please give an update as to how your economic development policies have led to jobs for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. I'll start off by talking about how the more than \$34 billion that our government is investing in infrastructure is the largest infrastructure spend in Alberta's history and will sustain and create about 10,000 jobs a year for the next three years. The summer temporary employment program employed about 2,700 students this summer. That had been cut by the previous government. The Alberta Enterprise Corporation investments have supported about 1,100 direct and 1,400 indirect jobs. The modernized royalty framework has led to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. member, your first supplemental question.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again to the same minister. There are a number of small businesses in my constituency facing the challenge of today's economic climate. What are you doing to support entrepreneurs and small-business owners so that they can access the supports they need to maintain and grow their businesses?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. I want to start off by thanking the member, who's been an incredible advocate for small businesses in her riding as well as around the province.

Our government has been meeting with business leaders, industry leaders, and entrepreneurs around this province, and there are a number of initiatives. We've reinstated self-employment training programs. We have provided over \$10 million for small-business incubators throughout the province. We've also reduced the small-business tax by 33 per cent in this province, and that will take effect on January 1. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** You're not going to have time to go out there.

Hon. member, your second supplemental question.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. We know that access to capital is crucial for many of these SMBs. How is your ministry ensuring that capital is available to them?

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. First, last fall we increased ATB's capacity to lend to small businesses by \$1.5 billion. I signed a historic MOU with the Business Development Bank of Canada in March of this year where BDC is committed to providing \$1 billion in new business loans. We also will be introducing legislation in this very House for two tax credits, the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit, that provide incentives for Albertans to invest in Alberta companies to help grow our economy.

### Health Care Decision-making

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, last week doctors from the Red Deer hospital came forward to ask the NDP government why central Alberta is being overlooked for cardiac catheterization services. Quick access to cardiac care saves lives in the event of a heart attack. In fact, we could save 30 lives per year. We could shorten hospital stays, cut down on transportation costs, and improve quality of life. Is the minister going to commit to getting the community what it so acutely needs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Albertans, no matter where they live in our province, deserve to have the right care in the right place at the right time and, of course, with the right information. I've had the pleasure of working with AHS and with the Red Deer local community. I'm actually meeting with a number of the local advocates for this specific project on Tuesday, I believe – it is this week, for sure – and we're going to continue to make sure that we're making decisions in the best interests of all Albertans. I understand local desires among community, but we need to look at a province-wide system.

2:50

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that other patients, families, and community leaders support this while health professionals across the province are calling for better access to heart attack care and given that donors are willing to contribute millions towards getting cardiac cath for Red Deer and seeing that every part of the province pays into the system with their tax dollars, will the minister respect the local priorities of Albertans, restore true local decision-making in health, and let people do what is best for their communities?

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm really proud of the ongoing working relationship we have with folks in the central zone. In terms of Red Deer in particular, we've done work to expand access to operation capacity in that facility and we're certainly building on the cancer corridor, Mr. Speaker, because it's important that no matter where you live in the province, once again, you have access. Making sure that we take our time to do proper consultation, that there's something done on a system-wide or province-wide basis, is an important value, and it's one that I'm proud to live by.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this summer has seen the NDP embark on some truly bizarre priorities in health care and since their fascination with centralization and AHS control will cost us hundreds of millions extra to deliver laundry and lab services, when will our two ministers of Health stop letting their NDP world view cloud their judgment and start finding innovative ways to improve efficiency, access, and care for patients?

**Ms Hoffman:** Déjà vu, Mr. Speaker. I'm thrilled to be back and to have the opportunity to respond to the allegations that were expressed from the member opposite.

We do not make decisions on an offhand basis, in a campaign style, much like what was done by the now third party under the former government, what seems to be what's being advocated for by the members opposite. Certainly, we aren't planning on moving forward with billions of dollars of proposed cuts that would impact patient care all across our province. We're being stable, responsible, and we're moving forward with the mandate Albertans gave us, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud to do so.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

### Orange Shirt Day

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was the first day of school. Like children everywhere, Phyllis Webstad was excited. She was six years old, and grade 1 held such promise: learning new things, making friends, enjoying new adventures. Like children everywhere, she got dressed for her first day of school in her very best. Her grandmother had bought her a beautiful orange shirt, and Phyllis wore it with pride.

For far too many First Nation children like Phyllis, however, the reality was quite different. School became a place where culture and language were stripped away, a place of separation from parents, from family, from everything familiar, a place of pain, isolation, and loss. Beautiful clothing, lovingly made by grandparents in

honour of the first day of school, was garbaged. Hair was chopped. Children were bathed in chemicals to cleanse them of their aboriginal taint. Phyllis never saw her orange shirt again.

As these children learned the realities of the school they were forced to attend, some tried to escape, to run home to family and loved ones. We know the stories of Chanie Wenjack, Phillip "Bean" Swain, and Roderick Taypaywaykejick, who lost their lives in the frozen wilderness far from home. Many others died at school, often from unknown causes. Their parents never saw them again. Others endured years of unimaginable abuse and neglect.

Although most children managed to survive this experience, residential schools left profound and lasting generational scars. Children returned home to an environment and a culture where they were lost and unable to adapt. They often coped with alcohol and drugs, and when they had children of their own, they did not know how to parent them.

On September 30, Orange Shirt Day, people across Canada and children in our schools wear orange to remember the thousands of children who were once told that their lives, their culture, their language, their heritage did not matter. We share their story not only in recognition of the harm the residential school system did to innocent children like Phyllis but to encourage awareness and compassion and support for healing. Orange Shirt Day is an opportunity to unite together in a spirit of reconciliation and hope to affirm our commitment to future generations of children that every child matters.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent of the House to continue with the daily Routine past 3 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Bovine Tuberculosis

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, this has been an extremely trying year on farmers and ranchers. Heavy rain, hail, and early snow have harmed crops, many of which are still left in the field. Beef prices are falling, feedlots are closing, and now we have a confirmed case of bovine tuberculosis from a herd near CFB Suffield, in southern Alberta. This disease has the ability to be passed from cow to cow, from wild game such as elk to cow, or to humans in rare cases.

While this does not affect Canada's rating as being a TB-free country, this incident could be catastrophic to some ranches' viability. Once the cow has been traced to its source, that herd and all animals on that ranch are quarantined. The source herd will be destroyed for safety reasons, and compensation will be paid. Any commingling of cows will mean other herds may also need to be quarantined as well.

It is now reported that approximately 30 herds may be under quarantine, which presents major financial burdens for those affected. Numerous ranches have these cows and calves presold, and if they are forced into quarantine, they can't fulfill the contract nor can they be sent to feedlots. The onus to continue to care and feed for these herds falls entirely on these ranch families, all of this without their regular income from sales, never mind not having adequate corral space, feed, and water to care for these animals that they normally would have sold by now. This is an animal welfare issue, Mr. Speaker.

As if this is not bad enough, this area is also known for its hunting. Rumours and fears of this TB incident are already rampant in the hunting and outdoors communities, and the lack of accurate information from Environment and Parks to these communities is troubling.

The U.S. has had its share of bovine TB cases over the years, with dozens of such events being reported. While this is not a disastrous trade issue, producers do need some real clarity of the process from this government. This government needs to work closely with the federal government on this serious matter and present their plan to these affected ranchers now.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

### Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and, indeed, Progressive Conservatives across this province to remember the hon. Jim Prentice. Like all of us here and all who knew him, I was truly shocked when I heard the news of the tragic incident that claimed Jim's life.

My thoughts immediately went to his wife, Karen, their daughters, and grandchildren. They shared him with the public as their husband, father, and grandfather served his country and his province with such distinction, and they had just recently got him back, so to speak. I know that in the 17 months since he retired from public life, they enjoyed the extra time they had together. In fact, when I spoke to Karen last week, she told me just how much she enjoyed that time out of the public spotlight. I know that all Albertans and Canadians join us in thanking the family for sharing Jim with us all those years.

Mr. Speaker, Jim Prentice was a great many things: husband, father, grandfather, capable cabinet minister, trusted adviser, business leader, First Nations advocate, environmentalist, friend, and mentor. But above all of this, he was at his core a public servant. While he was also a skilled politician, he knew when to put partisanship aside for the betterment of the people he served. Jim had an ability to put differences aside and work with anyone, even when it wasn't easy, if the job was important to get done. That's why over the past few weeks we've heard politicians of all stripes describe him first and foremost as a gentleman. Jim spent only a short time in this Chamber as Alberta's 16th Premier, but it was clear that he had a profound impact on all those who had the honour of serving alongside him.

Mr. Speaker, our thoughts and prayers are with Jim's family as well as with the families of the three others who lost their lives in the incident as they mourn this tragic loss. All Albertans join them in their grief today.

3:00

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, as I indicated in my introductory remarks, at some point in the future, in consultation with the family a more formal opportunity will be presented for that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

### Education System

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to tell you about a series of consultations I held at the elementary schools of Edmonton-Manning this fall. Here in Alberta students begin to learn about local government in grade 6; they learn about the history and

process of democracy. I visited the elementary schools of Edmonton-Manning to encourage students to brainstorm, with myself, their teachers, and their families, ideas to make this province a better place for Albertans now and for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, the grade 6 students from my constituency have demonstrated an eagerness to engage in the democratic process and become future leaders in their community. These young students and all Albertans, regardless of their age, can enact change, and it is my belief that the leaders of tomorrow need to be encouraged and supported today. Therefore, it is our responsibility to guide them to what engages their minds so that they are better able to discover their unique genius and contribute that to the community they live in, for the mind is not a vessel to be filled but a light to be kindled, a light to illuminate the path forward for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, education is the passport to the future. Tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. I am proud to be part of a government that is investing in our schools and recognizes that education is the cornerstone of a healthy economy. We need to be future-ready, and the future starts today.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

#### **Soccer Without Boundaries**

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is good to be back in the Legislature. Today I want to talk about a man and his mission to provide a place for children to belong, a place to feel safe, and a place to have fun through sport. Jean Claude Munyezamu found inspiration in volunteerism both at home and abroad to found Soccer Without Boundaries. Soccer Without Boundaries is an award-winning organization aimed primarily at immigrant and low-income children throughout Calgary. Running year-round, the program stands on the strength of its wonderful volunteers – coaches, assistant coaches, and helpers – as well as those who donate soccer gear. This organization is an example of the generous spirit found throughout Alberta.

A variety of programs are offered and are designed to instill a sense of ownership, belonging, and pride in community in those children who are so often left to their own devices for many hours of the day. Mr. Speaker, by giving these children a safe, fun place to be after school and on weekends, Soccer Without Boundaries plays a key role in keeping children out of trouble. As you know, idle hands are the devil's playthings. I am so glad that the children of Calgary-Currie have these angels from Soccer Without Boundaries on their side, keeping them engaged in productive and constructive pursuits.

I was also privileged to join Jean Claude and Soccer Without Boundaries at their end-of-summer barbecue, where a simple children's sporting event brought out the entire community. It was a family affair, Mr. Speaker, and it was a community affair.

To Soccer Without Boundaries and everyone who makes it possible, thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

#### **Wildrose Education Policies**

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to be a Wildrose member. As the Leader of the Official Opposition said over the weekend at our AGM, we are unapologetic in our love for Alberta, and we fight for our policies and principles because they have proven time and time again to be the foundations of a society

where all can benefit. Wildrose is a member-driven party; we take direction from Albertans to lead and direct our work.

I'm proud that our members' past policies show Albertans that our party will always be on their side, policies like repealing the carbon tax and Bill 6, giving Albertans two free hours of parking at hospitals, and affirming our commitment to parental choice and parental rights. Wildrose has a bedrock education policy that reads:

[We] recognize that parents are the primary decision-makers for their children and their children's education, and protect parents' right to choose the education their child receives whether it be through public, separate, public charter, private school or homeschooling.

It rightly recognizes the supremacy of parents to be in charge of their child's education while recognizing the substantial effort and work that teachers across our province do every day to support our children.

When I talk to Albertans across the province, they tell me time and time again that they are worried about steps the NDP is taking to erode parental rights across this province. They see a government that tries to interfere with and amend private members' motions intended to protect parental choice. Parents have watched the government reject the application for a new charter school to help special-needs students. The only step they are seeing the government take to consult parents on new curriculum is a vague and misleading online survey.

Albertans deserve better. They can know Wildrose will always stand for a world-class education system. Wildrose is steadfast in supporting parental choice in educational opportunities.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

#### **Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 4(2) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act I would like to table five copies of the following report: Elections Alberta 2015-16 annual report on the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. Copies of this report will be provided to members.

#### **Introduction of Bills**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

#### **Bill 24**

#### **Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016**

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to introduce Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. Bill 24 will strengthen Alberta's legislation that supports wildfire prevention and firefighting activities. The measures include improved authority to restrict high-risk activities during hazardous fire conditions and tougher penalties for violations of the act. The bill will also further enhance wildfire-fighting efforts by clarifying operational processes, roles, and responsibilities. The devastation in Fort McMurray earlier this year is a solemn reminder of the incredible damage that wildfires can cause. Our government is committed to the protection of Albertans and their communities from the threat of wildfire, and this bill will enhance the tools

available to help keep our communities safe. I urge all members of this Assembly to support this important legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have six tablings today. I rise to table five copies of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate's special report *Voices for Change: Aboriginal Child Welfare in Alberta*.

Secondly, in my capacity as chair and pursuant to section 39(3) of the Legislative Assembly Act I would like to table with the Assembly five copies of the following orders, which were approved at the September 26, 2016, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: Revised Members' Services Modernization of Language Amendment Order, No. 1, being order 05/16; and Transportation Amendment Order, No. 13, being order 06/16.

In addition, as chair I would also like to table five copies of the October 2016 Special Standing Committee on Members' Services subcommittee on family-friendly workplace practices and policies final report, titled: *Review of Family-Friendly Practices and Policies for Legislators*.

3:10

I have received a resolution from the National Assembly of Québec as it relates to the federal health transfers. They request that this motion be brought to the attention of all members of the Assembly, of which I am now tabling five copies.

I am tabling a copy of a news release from earlier today announcing the appointment of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. This five-member commission was required to be established by October 31, 2016, pursuant to section 5(1) of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which was amended by Bill 7, approved by the Assembly last spring.

Finally, further to the purported question of privilege that was raised on June 6, 2016, I would also like to table five copies each of recent correspondence on this subject: firstly, my memorandum of October 11, 2016, to the Government House Leader; the Government House Leader's response, dated October 21; the Official Opposition House Leader's e-mail, dated October 24; his letter of October 25; and an e-mail dated October 25 from the Progressive Conservative House leader. I will give the pages an opportunity to circulate the documents.

### Privilege

#### Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, you will recall that near the end of the spring sitting, on June 6, 2016, the Official Opposition House Leader raised a question of privilege concerning government radio ads and whether those ads presumed a decision of the Assembly on Bill 20, which had not yet passed through the stages of the Assembly. I heard arguments from the House leaders for the government and the Official Opposition and the third party on June 6, 2016. The Assembly adjourned for the summer at 11:51 on June 7.

During debate on the purported question of privilege the Government House Leader objected to the Official Opposition House Leader making arguments with respect to a government website, [climate.alberta.ca](http://climate.alberta.ca), as this website was not referenced in the

notice submitted to my office. I have determined that as the radio advertisement in question referenced specifically the website [climate.alberta.ca](http://climate.alberta.ca), it was open to the House leader to make arguments as part of his presentation that the website as well as the radio ad contained content that constituted a breach of privilege.

In an effort to expedite the process over the period of adjournment, I offered the Government House Leader the option to make written submissions to me concerning the website. The other House leaders were to be copied on the Government House Leader's written submissions, which were received by my office on October 21, 2016, and which have now been tabled for the members. My office forwarded the Government House Leader's submissions to the other House leaders for comment. Given that the Government House Leader has now had the opportunity to comment on the website content, which, I note, supplements his arguments made in the Assembly on June 6 and can be found at pages 1476 and 1477 of the *Hansard* for that day, I will now ask if anyone else has anything new to contribute to the debate.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you tabling some of the information in the Chamber today. As you will note and as members will read the correspondence with enthusiasm, I'm sure, it will be noted that I take these points of privilege very seriously, so I'm glad that they're being done in an open way, where all members are able to provide comment on what is a very serious matter.

I would just like to reiterate the position that the website as well as the radio ad were clear breaches of privilege. They presumed the passage of the legislation. I think that it is of critical importance that we see the government being respectful of the Assembly and respectful of the privileges that each of us enjoys in this House. I encourage you to recognize that the government hasn't addressed the issue of the website. As such, you mentioned that it would be included in the ruling, but I encourage you to rule that this, in fact, was a breach of privilege, and if you see fit, I would be happy to move it to the standing orders, privileges, and printing committee following your ruling.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to the point of privilege?

Thank you, hon. members and Opposition House Leader. I have been attentive to your comments, and I would intend to take some time to consider them further. I hope to be able to do that very, very soon.

### Orders of the Day

#### Written Questions

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

[The Clerk read the following written questions, which had been accepted]

#### Debt-servicing Costs

Q15. Mr. Clark:

What has been the impact on Alberta's projected debt-servicing costs since the downgrade in the credit rating by Standard & Poor's, and what has been the impact on the debt-servicing costs since the notice of a credit review by Moody's and by Dominion Bond Rating Service during the 2015-2016 fiscal year?

### Bond Yields

Q16. Mr. Clark:

What has been the impact on Alberta's provincial bond yields since the downgrade in the credit rating by Standard & Poor's, and what has been the impact on the debt-servicing costs since the notice of a credit review by Moody's and by Dominion Bond Rating Service during the 2015-2016 fiscal year?

3:20

### Trip to Toronto and New York

Q17. Mr. Fildebrandt:

What are the deliverables from the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance's trip from April 25 to 29, 2016, to Toronto and New York?

### Trip to Washington, DC

Q18. Mr. Cooper:

What are the deliverables from the Premier's trip from April 27 to 29, 2016, to Washington, DC?

### Alberta Health Services Overtime Payments

Q19. Mr. Barnes:

What was the total cost of overtime payments to all part-time employees of Alberta Health Services for the fiscal year 2015-16?

### Surgery Postponement

Q20. Mr. Barnes:

For the fiscal year 2015-16 how many surgeries were postponed in each Alberta Health Services high-volume surgery site due to system capacity issues?

### Alberta Health Services Employee Earnings

Q22. Mr. Barnes:

As of April 1, 2016, how many Alberta Health Services employees were earning more than \$200,000 per year in annual salary and total benefits combined?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Disaster Recovery Program Claims

Q11. Mr. Clark asked that the following question be accepted.

How many disaster recovery program claims arising from the 2013 flood event that were previously approved have since been deemed ineligible?

Ms Ganley moved that Written Question 11 be amended as follows:

How many disaster recovery program claims from the 2013 flood event have been deemed ineligible, and why were they deemed ineligible?

[Debate adjourned on amendment May 16: Mr. Clark speaking]

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I will just take a few brief moments to recap some of the comments that I've made previously on this I think important question, but before I do so, I just want to welcome back all of my colleagues in the Assembly. It seems far too long, my friends, since we've all been together, and I look forward to a good few weeks of being together.

Now, the government has proposed an amendment to this which amends out the words "previously approved." I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that we know that 2,647 claims were deemed

ineligible. What this amendment seeks to do is to provide the Assembly with information that is already publicly available and fundamentally changes the information that I was seeking in this question. The information I'm seeking in this question comes from a number of very specific incidents in my own constituency but also in High River and other parts of the province where Albertans were approved for disaster recovery program funding and then subsequently disintitled from that. Now, I'd like to know how many there were. I'd like to know why. I think that's in the public's interest.

Now, I certainly hope that the vast majority – and I understand this to be the case, the vast majority – of claims for damage resulting from the Wood Buffalo wildfires are in fact covered by insurance or are eligible for insurance and therefore would not be eligible for the disaster recovery program. However, should there be claims arising related to the devastating wildfires or in the future when claims arise out of disasters unforeseen but, unfortunately, seemingly common in Alberta, it is very important for all of us in this Assembly, and through us to the people of Alberta, to understand why it would be that claims would be declined after having been approved.

I know of at least one case of that happening, and I know others have given me anecdotal evidence of that happening, and if, in fact, that's happening, we ought to know about it. I'd like to make sure that the Alberta Emergency Management Agency and all of the folks in Municipal Affairs who are responsible for this important program understand fully how it's working and also, especially and most importantly, understand how it's working from the perspective of the end users of the program.

Taken to its logical extreme – and this is, in fact, a scenario that was facing one of my constituents. She had been paid a sum of money under the disaster recovery program and then through appeal found that Municipal Affairs and the government were actually trying to claim that she, in fact, was not eligible for those funds. The money that she had received, which is not a substantial amount relative to the damage that she had, was long spent on the recovery process. Now, should she have found and had the Municipal Government Board found through the appeals process that, in fact, she was not entitled to DRP, having already spent the money, she would have been on the hook to give that money back to the government.

When we put people in situations like that, having faced a devastating natural disaster, I'm sure the members of this Assembly can well understand why we'd like (a) to know how often that happens and (b) to shine a light on why that might be happening. That puts Albertans in a very, very difficult position.

I would really encourage this government to reconsider their amendment because we certainly care about the people who have received this funding. I worry very much that if we find in Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo that there are DRP claims forthcoming, they would be handled with the knowledge of why it might be that someone would be deemed eligible at one stage and then, in this case 18 months later, the government potentially deciding: we made a mistake; we actually don't believe you should be entitled to DRP.

If it's not very widespread, that would be wonderful. I'd love to know that. If it is widespread, that's not a good thing, but we need to know that. So I would again encourage this government, please, to reconsider your amendment and to revert to my original question of: how many that were previously approved have since been deemed ineligible? I think that's in Albertans' interest.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further speakers to the amendment? Hon. member, go ahead.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good afternoon. I won't take too long on this matter, but it is one that is home to my heart as well. We've had an awful lot of issues dealing with the flooding in the past few years in southern Alberta, and certainly the differences of opinion on some of the investigations have put residents into situations where they become victims of all kinds of different rules and so on. It's been a fight for a lot of individuals, with some heartbreaking situations.

So it surprised me, frankly, when this was drawn to my attention because it seemed to me that the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow had asked a very important question, and I think we know what that question was. It was: "How many disaster recovery program claims arising from the 2013 flood event that were previously approved have since been deemed ineligible?" That is such an important question because there were a lot of people that struggled through this situation, got to a situation where they thought they were going to have some final reconciliation, and then suddenly it changed.

You know, to now see that they've struck out the "previously approved" section and reworded it and brought it back to say instead: "How many disaster program recovery claims arising from the 2013 flood event have been deemed ineligible, and why were they deemed ineligible?" That is a totally different thing.

I reiterate and agree with all that's been said by Calgary-Elbow. This is not the same question. If anything, if it were me and this question was to be amended, it could have been worded more strongly. But this "previously approved" situation does need to be addressed, and I would hope that that would be something that the House would agree with.

Thank you.

3:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, it's been a long summer, so I think it's worth while to remind members what the amendment is. The original question, as noted by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, was asking simply: what was the number of claims that had been deemed ineligible after being previously approved? The amendment that had been put forward by my ministerial colleague was to say not just how many claims had been deemed ineligible but why they were deemed ineligible. Frankly, I think that the amendment goes to providing a little bit more information to Albertans about the application of this program, how it's been used, and ensuring that Albertans understand where that money is going.

Amending this question allows for a better response, more accurately reflecting the two-stage process that all DRP files go through. The first stage, of course, is determining whether an application can be accepted under the established program criteria, things such as whether the losses occurred during the prescribed timeline of the event, whether the applicant owns the property in question, and if the losses were uninsurable in nature. The second stage of the process determines whether the items being claimed are eligible for reimbursement under the disaster assistance guidelines, and that can include lost or damaged items, cleanup hours and expenses, repair and replacement of structural damage.

Additionally, it's important to remember that funding under the disaster recovery program cannot be provided if other sources of funding are available to that applicant. So it's not meant to duplicate other forms of financial assistance that may be covered.

The 2013 program received more than 10,600 private-sector applications, and more than \$144 million has been provided to individual Albertans with respect to this disaster. All of those applications have been carefully considered. It's important, I think, to show not just how many claims have been re-evaluated but also the reasons for that to ensure accountability and transparency for Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further speakers to the amendment?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:33 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Kazim	Phillips
Babcock	Kleinstaub	Piquette
Carson	Littlewood	Renaud
Coolahan	Loyola	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Sabir
Dach	Malkinson	Schreiner
Dang	Mason	Shepherd
Drever	McKittrick	Sucha
Feehan	McPherson	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Goehring	Nielsen	Westhead
Hinkley	Payne	Woollard
Horne		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Starke
Barnes	Hanson	Stier
Clark	Hunter	Strankman
Cooper	Loewen	Swann
Cyr	McIver	Taylor
Drysdale	Orr	van Dijken
Gill	Rodney	

Totals: For – 37 Against – 20

[Motion on amendment carried]

3:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** Now we're on Written Question 11. Are there any further comments on this?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow to close debate.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I voted against the amendment, obviously, and am disappointed that it passed. I just want to say this, that what this written question now will answer are things that we already know. Information is already publicly available. We know that 2,647 Albertans were deemed ineligible, but we also know that there are certain criteria by which the disaster recovery program applies. The hon. minister had enumerated some of them: whether the damage happened during the course of a disaster, whether someone was an owner or a landlord, whether the losses were uninsurable. Those things we know. So we're going to find out – I actually suspect that if I dug deep enough on some of the government's websites, I may even be able to find out those specific breakdowns right now.



The reason I had asked the original question was because certain Albertans, including a constituent of mine, were originally approved for the disaster recovery program in relation to the 2013 floods and were then subsequently told that they were going to be disentitled or unapproved, if you will, and declined. If this is rampant, if this is something where Albertans are being approved for a program and then later on are told, "Sorry; actually, we made a mistake, and we think you're not approved," that's something worth knowing. So that's why I'm very disappointed that the amendment has gone ahead, and I cannot support the written question as amended because it no longer conveys the spirit which I was intending to capture with the original question.

So I would encourage all members of the Assembly to vote down this written question because it is not what I was intending at all and frankly does not, I believe, give any new information to Albertans which is not already publicly available.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Written Question 11 as amended carried]

### Blood Plasma Costs

Q21. Mr. Barnes asked that the following question be accepted.  
For each of the fiscal years 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16 what was the per unit cost of blood plasma purchased by Alberta Health Services, broken down by each supplier?

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to introduce this written question. This issue of where we source our blood products entered the public discussion earlier this year when a donation supply company announced it would like to offer its services to Albertans. Donors would be compensated a small amount for their time to donate plasma blood, a product in high demand and limited supply.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to tell the House why Canada does buy plasma. Canadians need plasma for two main purposes: transfusions, requiring about 50,000 litres annually; and, secondly, manufacturing plasma protein products, requiring 1.1 million litres of plasma a year. Currently Canada is a volunteer blood donor only country and collects about 190,000 litres of plasma a year, more than enough to cover transfusion needs, but not anywhere close enough to cover plasma protein products.

The minister doesn't seem keen on this idea, but there are a couple more facts that should be known here. First of all, as many patient advocacy groups in Canadian Blood Services itself have said, we rely heavily on paid donation services to meet global demand for blood plasma and manufactured blood plasma products. To meet our demand, the demand I just mentioned, we rely on imports from jurisdictions that do allow and do use paid plasma donations. Canadian Blood Services has increasingly accessed paid sources from North America and Europe, including Germany and Austria.

Madam Speaker, in 2013 Canadians paid \$670 million for this plasma; \$670 million. In a public statement from this year Canadian Blood Services said, "Drugs made from plasma donated by paid donors are just as safe as those made from plasma from volunteer donors." "Access to the commercial paid plasma market is essential in ensuring enough supply so that Canadian patients," Albertans, our friends and our neighbours, "continue to receive the life-saving therapies they need."

Now, having said these things, I thought it was informative that during our last go-round with Health estimates the Minister informed us that part of the reason for our very large increase in spending on the blood services line item was due to an increased cost in buying it from abroad. Madam Speaker, the weak Canadian

dollar has been identified as a contributing factor by the minister. Even worse, over the past two years the line item has grown by nearly \$30 million, or about a 23 per cent increase. I certainly accept that her answer was the truth given how the growth in this line item seems to correspond with the general trend of the Canadian dollar's value.

We know that blood plasma from paid donors is safe and essential. I think it is absolutely essential that Albertans know where our blood products come from and how much they cost us. Is this an area of health where we could be doing things more efficiently? Is this an area where we could be keeping the money in our country and in our province?

Madam Speaker, I understand that the government will be amending this written question. I hope that the result of the amendment will be good information for the public, transparent so we can better understand our blood supply in detail, including all that it costs and where it comes from.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that Written Question 21 be amended as follows: by striking out the phrases "each of" and "per unit," by striking out the word "plasma" and substituting the phrase "components (red blood cells, platelets, and plasma)," by striking out the phrase "Alberta Health Services, broken down by each supplier" and substituting "Alberta Health for use in Alberta, and for the same fiscal years, what was the cost of plasma protein products, broken down by product?"

The amended question would read as follows:

For the fiscal years 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16 what was the cost of blood components (red blood cells, platelets, and plasma) purchased by Alberta Health for use in Alberta, and for the same fiscal years what was the cost of plasma protein products, broken down by product?

I'm proposing these amendments in order to provide a more readily compared product and spend by category. The cost of transfusable plasma alone cannot be accurately calculated because the transfusable product line is a negotiated cost between Alberta Health and Canadian Blood Services, that includes an allocation of operational costs for the national blood program. Plasma costs as reflected in the product line reflect a calculation based upon an awarded market share contract between the manufacturer and Canadian Blood Services. This calculation is then combined with the actual utilization by the province to generate the price per unit. This is a complex breakdown that does not yield results for unit costs that can be accurately compared year by year. It is, however, possible to report product total spend per purchased product per year, separated into blood components. Again, that's red blood cells, platelets, and plasma.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Cypress-Medicine Hat, do you wish to speak to the amendment?

4:00

**Mr. Barnes:** Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've had a chance to read it. I appreciate some of the clarification around the language, but the amended version does seem to be missing one key element captured by the intent of my original question, and that is the source.

I appreciate knowing the cost of all types of blood products by fiscal year. We did already, however, have a sense from the government's Health estimates of how considerably they have been rising. If it is true that we indeed have been paying more, specifically for international blood plasma products, I would hope

that the government could provide where they originate and figure out exactly how much of this is attributable to the falling Canadian dollar. Perhaps the information the government intends to provide us will in fact list products by supplier and source. I certainly hope it does. I certainly think that this is a key requirement so Albertans know the truth and the facts as to where their blood is coming from, how it is accessed, and what it costs. Albertans deserve to know more of the ins and outs of their health system.

Madam Speaker, in the hope that this information the government intends to provide will in fact list the products by supplier and source, I will accept the amendment and ask the House to do the same and hope the government will actually be legitimate in increasing transparency.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills on the amendment.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I might just say that I appreciate the government's willingness to seemingly try and do their best to provide more information not just on the plasma side but on all types, including red blood cells, platelets, and plasma purchased by Alberta Health Services. I think that's a nice gesture to try and provide the opposition with some additional information.

However, one thing that I perhaps am more concerned with or certainly not quite as reconciliatory on as my colleague is around this issue of supply. It's unfortunate that in the minister's comments around what changes they would like to see amended to the question, the minister didn't provide a very robust answer as to why they have no desire to provide the information around supply – the suppliers, the types of suppliers, the amount of money that's spent at each supplier – which I think would have come in the initial question because it was very prescriptive in “broken down by each supplier.” We have a wide range of suppliers here in the province, and it's important that Albertans have a clear understanding of this critical piece of our health system.

It would have been great to hear from the minister exactly why they're unable to provide or, as my guess is, Madam Speaker, unwilling to provide the information around the supplier because if we look at the health system generally, we see a real challenge between the current government and private service providers. We've seen that in linen and we've seen that in other places, lab services, where the government has this real desire to centralize. All that my colleague was asking for is a real understanding of where the resources are going, to what suppliers.

The great thing about information, Madam Speaker, is that it shines light on situations for Albertans. There may very well be a number of Albertans that are concerned or would like to be reassured on the places that we're spending money when it comes to suppliers of these very, very important products. For the minister just to say, “Hey, listen; don't worry; we're going to provide you with all this extra information” – I'm paraphrasing here – but to not answer the entirety of the question, it seems that we're going to see a pattern this afternoon of the government making amendments to questions to provide the answers that they would like us to have but not provide the information that they would prefer we didn't have.

This is not the type of transparent, open government that this government was elected on. This is not the type of government that the hon. member or the Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation – when he was on this side of the House, he used to rise and speak on issues just like this, about the opposition and Albertans needing to have access to the information that is rightfully theirs.

So while I again say thank you to the minister for providing the information that we didn't ask for and clarifying the language so that we could get the information around that particular issue, they're still hiding information around the supply, and that should be a concern to every member of this House. I'll be happy to support my colleague in accepting the amendment, but know that this is not the right path for us to begin going down around this very important private members' business, amending questions so that the government can provide the House and the opposition the answers that they would like us to have, not the answers to the questions that were asked.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

[Motion on amendment carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** We're back on the written question itself. Are there any further members wishing to speak to the question as amended?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to close debate.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thanks to my colleague for again pointing out to this House and to all Albertans how crucially important transparency is. The number of a 23 per cent increase and \$30 million more for just Albertans, money that could go elsewhere – I would hope that the hon. minister and the government do actually go the step that they've left possibly open and actually provide this information for Albertans so we can have a clear, concise look at an important element of our health system.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Written Question 21 as amended carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:08 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Goehring	Payne
Anderson, S.	Hanson	Piquette
Babcock	Hinkley	Renaud
Barnes	Horne	Rosendahl
Bilous	Kazim	Sabir
Carson	Kleinstaub	Schreiner
Clark	Littlewood	Shepherd
Coolahan	Loewen	Strankman
Cooper	Loyola	Sucha
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Swann
Cyr	Malkinson	Sweet
Dach	McKittrick	Taylor
Dang	McPherson	Turner
Drever	Miller	van Dijken
Feehan	Nielsen	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Orr	Woollard

Against the motion:

Ellis	McIver	Starke
Gotfried	Rodney	

Totals:	For – 48	Against – 5
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[Written Question 21 as amended carried]

## Motions for Returns

[The Clerk read the following motions for returns, which had been accepted]

### Ministerial Meeting with Credit-rating Agencies

M36. Mr. Fildebrandt:

A return showing copies of all documents prepared for the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance in preparation for meeting with Standard & Poor's, Dominion Bond Rating Service, and Moody's Investors Service in Toronto on April 25, 2016.

### Alberta Health Services Severance Payments

M37. Mr. Barnes:

A return showing a list of all severance payments made to Alberta Health Services employees at the management and executive levels, broken down by each individual position, for the fiscal year 2015-16.

### Ministry Legislation Plans

M18. Mr. Cooper moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the most recent three-year legislation plan for each ministry.

[Debate adjourned May 2: Mr. Mason speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any further members wishing to speak to this motion?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to close debate.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd just like to take a little bit of a trip down memory lane, if you will. I know it's hard to believe that these very important questions... [A cellphone rang] That is like a total party foul. A phone ringing in the Assembly? How could it be?

The last time that this particular question was debated was way, way, way back, on May 2, and I will quote very briefly from *Alberta Hansard* of May 2, 2016, pages 782 and 783. Madam Speaker, this is a very, very important question. The people of Alberta have the right to know what the plans of this government are, and the reason why they ought to know what the plans of the government are is because, seemingly, day in and day out they surprise Albertans. They ran on one thing, and in many respects have introduced significant pieces of legislation that they didn't campaign on. Albertans deserve the right to know what, in fact, are going to be the plans of this government. That's why I moved the question.

Unfortunately, the Government House Leader rejected that question. You know what? He said: we want to keep our plans secret, and we're not going to provide information to Albertans that they deserve to know. In fact, he insinuated in his remarks that by me drafting the question, it was sheerly political. The quote here, Madam Speaker, is:

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While I hate to disappoint the hon. Official Opposition House Leader on this point, I know he had a sense that we might be rejecting it. Might I suggest that he probably drafted a question that he knew would be rejected.

I take some offence to the fact that he would go as far as to say that I drafted a question intentionally that he would reject when merely what our side of the House makes an effort to do is to get information that's important to Albertans.

4:30

The plans of this government, I can tell you, are important to Albertans. While many, many, many, many Albertans disagree with the plans of this government, they do have the right to understand what the future holds with respect to those plans. Worse yet would be no plan at all. Sometimes the lack of preparedness of the government makes me think that maybe there isn't a plan, which may in fact be worse.

Now, Madam Speaker, the government has the right to inform Albertans of the direction it's taking, and that is merely what the three-year legislative plan would do. It would give Albertans a sense of what is next, what they can be planning for, preparing for. It is more than a little disappointing that the government – perhaps it has a secret agenda. The problem is that we don't know. They could alleviate a lot of concerns of Albertans and certainly a lot of concerns of opposition members if they would just do the right thing, provide the information to the House and provide the information to Albertans so that we can ensure that this government has the best interests of Albertans.

[Motion for a Return 18 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Health Electronic Record System

M20. Mr. Barnes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of internal working documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government from May 22, 2015, to March 7, 2016, pertaining to the review conducted by the Ministry of Health into creating an electronic record/information-sharing system, as referenced during consideration of the Ministry of Health's main estimates on November 16, 2015.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, this is a very, very important topic and, of course, an ongoing topic of importance for Albertans and for our province, that was conducted and carried on through the previous government, the previous administration. To date I understand that somewhere between \$800 million and a billion dollars has been spent on Netcare electronic records, and the oversight, the accountability, and the effectiveness makes one wonder. My hope would be that the government would accept this motion to ensure, you know, secondly, that we can get value for our tax dollars but, most importantly, that we can help Albertans, that we can make our system better, that we can make it so the technology and the expertise that are available in many, many other jurisdictions and many other organizations have an opportunity to help Albertans.

I want to talk about a couple of examples. I've heard from, as I think many in this House have, Albertans whose adult children – adult children – unfortunately passed away or sicknesses worsened because of a situation in our system where we didn't have patient-facing, patient-interfacing electronic health records. Information was not available. Information wasn't conveyed. People weren't made aware of or didn't have the access themselves to understand or to know what the initial diagnosis was or the secondary diagnosis. They didn't have the ability to see that an appointment from a GP to a specialist wasn't happening in a timely manner and were not understanding the system, not able to have the interface, not able to have the contact. My goodness. The fact that it's costing Albertans their lives is not acceptable.

I want to talk about the efficiencies and the effectiveness for a second. Alberta Innovates, actually right over here at the Matrix

Hotel, brings in speakers from around the world from time to time, and I've been to a few of them. A short time ago they brought in an administrator of six hospitals in California and Arizona that have wonderful electronic health records. The effectiveness is what I want to talk about a bit. The administrators, the managers in the system, would take a look at the success or the areas of help that different health care professionals needed or were working with, and they would use best practices. They would share this information in a way that electronic health records made possible by making the information more timely and, you know, more pertinent.

Madam Speaker, this is the kind of thing that can save Albertans' lives, can make Albertans' quality of life better. This is the kind of thing that can get us more value for the money, the 21 and a half billion dollars that we're putting into our system now. It's being done in many other jurisdictions. Previous administrations and this one have spent \$800 million to a billion dollars, and we didn't get best practices. We still lack a truly comprehensive patient-facing side where Albertans could easily and securely access much of their own information, and we lack the best practices in sharing this information so that all health care professionals can get better and Albertans can benefit.

Of course, I see that the government has now added a \$400 million line item to the capital plan to address some of these issues. I assume that the major capital spend in this area was accompanied by some sort of thorough internal ministry review of progress, needs, and goals. And because it's Albertans' system, because it's Albertans' health – our families, our friends, our neighbours, our community – because it's our money that goes in there, the intent behind this motion was to ensure that the government is putting in the oversight to make sure that we get the best we can for our money, especially given the enormous expense of the past and the projected future spending. I think it's only right, Madam Speaker, that we see how the dollars will be used and how they will be prioritized towards an electronic health record system, making it better.

We've also spoken extensively about performance measures and accountability metrics, and timelines for major projects are part of this. What are the timelines going to be, especially in technology, where we're behind some other jurisdictions and it changes so quickly? This House and, through us, 4.3 million Albertans deserve to see what this government hopes to accomplish and when.

Madam Speaker, I would ask the House to accept my motion for a return. Let's ensure that Albertans get the quality of health care we deserve, especially for the money we spend on it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

4:40

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that Motion for a Return 20 be amended as follows: by striking out the phrase "internal working" and by adding "excluding documents that constitute confidential advice to the minister" after "government," so that the amended motion for a return would read as follows.

Mr. Barnes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government, excluding documents that constitute confidential advice to the minister, from May 22, 2015, to March 7, 2016, pertaining to the review conducted by the Ministry of Health into creating an electronic record/information-sharing system, as referenced during consideration of the Ministry of Health's main estimates on November 16, 2015.

Madam Speaker, I'm proposing this amendment to reflect our responsibilities under FOIP section 22(1) regarding cabinet and Treasury Board confidences. That section states:

The head of a public body must refuse to disclose to an applicant information that would reveal the substance of deliberations of the Executive Council or any of its committees or of the Treasury Board or any of its committees, including any advice, recommendations, policy considerations or draft legislation or regulations submitted or prepared for submission to the Executive Council or any of its committees or to the Treasury Board or any of its committees.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat on the amendment.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you again, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the associate minister for rising. Each party here acknowledges the importance of our commitment to a publicly funded health care system. As such, I want to challenge all members here to really consider who owns the health system. It isn't the government. It isn't the Ministry of Health. Of course, it isn't Alberta Health Services. It's the people. It's Albertans. It is our system. It is 4.3 million Albertans' system, and this system is ultimately accountable and beholden to the people and not the other way.

I find it interesting that under the umbrella of this public system, the internal working documents will not be provided and that there is a drive to defend secrecy and a push for less transparency and not more. Madam Speaker, it's especially important when we think of the accountability and the oversight that the already \$800 million, soon to be somewhere around \$1.2 billion, that has gone into this system has not achieved what other jurisdictions have achieved with less money, has not achieved everything we need so that some Alberta families suffer grave, grave consequences. Accountability and oversight depend on transparency between the government and the public. The information must flow to the owners of the system, all of us, and that is not just those in the House.

I found the associate minister's comments on FOIP interesting. My goodness. I think of how long it takes to get a FOIP request back. I look at, you know, how much it costs. Sometimes you can prove it's in the public interest and get your money back; sometimes you can't. Either way it's a time and a money constraint. Madam Speaker, FOIP is typically a tool of last resort. It's typically a tool of last resort to access information that is not already available. Besides, it's not the FOIP rules that we're discussing here today. What we're discussing is how transparent governments should be. In theory, with more voluntary openness from government FOIP should be less necessary. FOIP exists to access the information government, obviously, doesn't want to get out in the first place. Fortunately, a lot of times it comes out, so people can have a better look at the system and what their tax dollars get them or don't get them.

This government could just step up to do the appropriate thing by offering all Albertans, through the powers vested in this House, a greater degree of transparency, control, and accountability over their systems. But the government has decided to not provide some internal working agreements that, Madam Speaker, could go a long, long way – a long, long way – to ensuring that Albertans with expertise in this area, Albertans that have families and friends that have paid a huge price because we haven't been as good as we could have been could go some distance and make that happen.

Madam Speaker, I will be against the amendment, and I would hope and encourage the government to be more open in their dealings.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this very important question. As I alluded earlier, we are continuing to see a trend of the government answering the questions that it would like to provide the answers to and not the questions that are asked by members of this House and a real deflection of getting information out to Albertans.

As my colleague so eloquently spoke about, the importance around these electronic records and information-sharing systems and the great expense to very little results that we've seen thus far – the minister referenced the fact that there was a review under way. It's my guess and expectation of Albertans that they should be privy to the information that's included in that review. While I know that we've heard from the Minister of Health that they prefer to operate in voice mode, the very fact that – I mean, it's unlikely that any of these documents that they're claiming caucus confidentiality on actually exist because they likely operated in voice mode anyway. The real point here, Madam Speaker, is that these are very important pieces of information that ought to be produced and provided to the House.

Madam Speaker, I might just point out that while the government would like to use the FOIP legislation as cover, it in fact isn't required to apply to an Assembly's ability to require the attendance of a witness or order the production of documents. I would just, you know, like to briefly point out in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, page 136:

The Rights to Institute Inquiries, to Require the Attendance of Witnesses and to Order the Production of Documents.

By virtue of the Preamble and section 18 of the Constitution Act, 1867, Parliament has the ability to institute its own inquiries, to require the attendance of witnesses and to order the production of documents, rights which are fundamental to its proper functioning. These rights are as old as Parliament itself . . .

The only limitations, which could . . . be self-imposed, would be that any inquiry should relate to a subject within the legislative competence of Parliament, particularly where witnesses and documents are required . . .

Then it goes on to talk about the penal jurisdiction of Parliament, of contempt.

This dovetails with the right of [the] House of Parliament to summon and compel the attendance of all persons within the limits of their jurisdictions.

It's critically important.

The fact of the matter is that the government has the ability to produce the documents that the Assembly has asked for, and all that needs to happen is that the government members need to say: "You know what? This is important to Albertans, and the Assembly is going to require the production of documents."

But my guess, Madam Speaker, is that while we are clearly on private members' business, government members on that side of the House will choose today to not respect the tradition of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* and not require the government to produce the documents because the Assembly has summonsed them and that they will agree with the associate minister and say: "Oh, you know what? There's the FOIP Act, so we, you know, don't really want to provide the opposition members with the information that they asked for."

4:50

I think it's unfortunate. I think that Albertans expect better from this new government. I know that when this government was

elected, they were elected on a ticket of transparency, of openness, and what we're seeing is the same thing that we saw from the dying days of the previous, third-party's government. It's more than a bit disappointing. I will be pleased to support my colleague in his efforts to get information that Albertans so richly deserve.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow on the amendment.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to support my colleagues on the opposition side here and speak against the amendment. The information that the hon. member is seeking is of urgent interest to the people of Alberta. The project which we are discussing here, the electronic health record project, has been going on for far too long, has cost far too much money, and Albertans are left wondering why it is that we can transact business online with our banks, our most sensitive, private financial information, with great ease from anywhere in the world, yet this government is still unable to put together an electronic health record. Now, I don't deny for one second that there are many considerations around security and privacy, that are absolutely urgent, to be dealt with, but this is not the first time something like this has been done.

While I am sure the government has an instinct to try to hide as much of that behind freedom of information or perhaps the lack of freedom of information as they possibly can, it is disappointing that when a party moves from this spot in the Legislature where I stand currently to that side of the Legislature, they seem to adopt an entirely different mindset. I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that when I move to that side of the house, I will be as open as I possibly can. I will do that following the next election, when the people of Alberta select the Alberta Party as their next government.

But in all sincerity, I think that open data and open information ought to be a hallmark of government. Far too much information is hidden behind freedom of information. Again, it seems to be the freedom to withhold information for the government for their own purposes. I would like to see a model where information in government is open by default and only closed in rare exceptions. I think Albertans would not only find that there's a lot of very interesting information hidden behind there, but I think it makes for far better government. You might be amazed by what the people of Alberta could do with that open data. They could write apps; they could come up with all kinds of ideas and ways of making government more efficient and more effective if only you would listen.

This is a situation, a scenario which is calling out for the government to be more open, and I'm profoundly disappointed that the government chooses to amend questions to suit their interests rather than the public interest of the province of Alberta. So I will vote against this amendment. I encourage all members on the government side to perhaps surprise everyone on Halloween and scare their House leaders and vote against this amendment and support the importance of open data and open information.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:55 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Payne
Babcock	Kazim	Piquette
Carson	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Sabir
Dach	Luff	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McKitrick	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McPherson	Turner
Goehring	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Nielsen	Woollard

5:10

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Starke
Barnes	Loewen	Strankman
Cooper	McIver	Swann
Cyr	Orr	van Dijken
Ellis	Rodney	

Totals: For – 36 Against – 14

[Motion on amendment carried]

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, followed by Calgary-West.

#### Cyberbullying Awareness

507. Mr. Dang moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take steps to increase awareness in Alberta's schools of the effects of cyberbullying.

[Debate adjourned May 30: Mr. Smith speaking]

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak in favour of this important motion. According to a 2016 Angus Reid poll one-third of Canadians who use social media have been harassed or bullied online. For members of the LGBTQ-plus community and for visible minorities these numbers are even higher, with 58 per cent of respondents that identify as members of the LGBTQ-plus community reporting online harassments and 38 per cent of visible minority respondents experiencing harassment. These statistics are appalling, but it's even worse for Canadian youth. According to the Ipsos-Reid survey more than 50 per cent of Canadian teenagers reported negative experiences on social networks.

Canadians are facing sweeping sociological problems, and our leaders are failing at a structural level to give our youth the tools that they need to grow into socially responsible and well-adjusted adults. Bullying during youth can have a wide range of negative effects well into adulthood. Bullying can lead to depression, aggressive behaviours, low self-esteem, social anxiety, loneliness, isolation, stress-related health problems, school absenteeism, academic problems, and, tragically, too many teens are contemplating, attempting, or committing suicide in response to the strain of intense cyberbullying.

The world that our children are growing up in is becoming increasingly complicated. Our children are increasingly connected online. The value that our youth place on online connections is also ever increasing. In cases of intense cyberbullying the comment to

"just turn it off and go outside and play" isn't a solution. Teens use their computers for homework, to interact with their friends, to play games, to stay in touch with distant relatives. It's not just a choice to go online, but to some degree it's a requirement of modern life.

As this race to embrace new, constantly evolving technologies moves forward, Canadians are becoming increasingly vulnerable. Social media is a world in itself, and that has changed so rapidly and continuously defies conventional social boundaries. As a mother of two young men I'm acutely aware of the asymmetry of information between even myself and my sons when it comes to technology, and I know that I'm not alone. There's a significant information asymmetry at times between students and their parents or their guardians or their teachers or authority figures. This divide in technical expertise can leave some adults completely in the dark when it comes to our children's online realities. We need to give our teachers, parents, and students the tools to deal with online bullying.

It's really important that young Albertans know how and when to remove themselves from online conversations that have turned unhealthy. Our youth need to learn to identify these conversations and how to communicate their issues with a trusted adult or anonymously through the Kids Help Phone. Those adults that the youth confide in need to have the technological literacy to ask the right questions and offer real solutions. Our youth need to know how to track these conversations through screenshots or just to simply write things down. Our youth need to be educated in what constitutes a criminal offence, like a threat or even sexual exploitation, and, even more importantly, to whom and how to report these offences. Many social media sites offer options to users to report bullying, as do telephone service providers, and our youth need to know what their options are for dealing with these cyberbullies.

I think probably one of the most important things that our kids need to be taught is the role of the bystander and how that can help. When they see victimization, they are able to act on that as a bystander. Cyberbullying occurs in a variety of ways, as we know. There are websites that mock individuals or the posting of embarrassing videos or photos. According to the Red Cross 85 per cent of bullying incidents happen in front of other people. According to research by the Kids Help Phone 60 per cent of the time that bullying will stop within 10 seconds when someone steps in. This is the type of information that our youth need to be empowered with.

There is a recent story about a team of Alberta high school students, and they developed an app that was designed to curb cyberbullying, called the Sentiment Keyboard. It was developed by Jacob Reckhard, Christopher West, and Ibrahim Elmallah. The app was designed to detect negative language, and it gives the sender the option to reconsider their choice of words, and the algorithm actually analyzes the sentences and formulates a total negativity score. The Sentiment Keyboard was created to add a layer of awareness, encouraging the user to think about the impact that their words might have on others. It actually places the responsibility on the person who is using those words, and it also empowers the writer to make better choices by having that added layer of conscience.

It was a very inspiring story to read, and I think it speaks, more importantly, to empowering our youth to make good decisions. The youth actually – I mean, they're the ones who are promoting this. They are very much our teachers in this. They want to do more, and we need to help them with the tools to do more. I believe that together we can make a positive impact and increase awareness in

Alberta of the effects of cyberbullying, and what can be done to help them is an important step.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West, followed by the Minister of Human Services.

5:20

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to stand today to support Motion 507, which encourages the government to take steps to increase awareness of cyberbullying and the effects of this unsavoury practice in Alberta schools. I have watched this issue evolve from my time as an officer on Alberta streets, where at first I used to deal with basic uttering threats and bullying complaints. This behaviour then moved to the Internet, where bullying became prevalent, especially on Facebook and then Twitter. It was during this time that complaints about threats increased exponentially.

Now what I see is that bullying has gotten completely out of hand, in politics, too, as many of us know. Through fake online accounts people can abuse and manipulate others anonymously. I often wonder if cyberbullies even realize that their targets are people with feelings and families. It has become so serious that citizens, most notably young people, have committed suicide because the attacks have injured and humiliated them to their core. Something has to be done to gain control over this societal scourge. There is no one solution, but there are various avenues that we can take, and they involve – I know that I’m sounding like a broken record – three key pillars: education, prevention, and intervention.

Motion 507 suggests that we focus education and prevention programs on children, and I agree. Teaching children about cyberbullying is critical because they are at such an impressionable stage in their development. Educating them may help them deal with it if it happens to them. It may also curb their interest to engage in it. Furthermore, when we educate our children, they in turn educate their siblings and their parents. Young people who believe in a cause can become our society’s most effective lobbyists, and I mean lobbyists in a good way.

Online bullying took most of us by surprise because we did not grow up with the technology and programs that have allowed it to occur and proliferate, but our children are growing up with it. Do we want bullying to become part of their expectations of life? Of course we don’t. We must teach them early on that some of the behaviour evident in this world is wrong and hurtful. I would argue that we have an obligation to do this. Because young children are vulnerable and easily influenced, we have a responsibility to keep them safe. We have an obligation to teach them well.

My friend Rick Hanson, the former chief of police in Calgary, was a man ahead of his time. He, for instance, placed police constables in all levels of schools. This step was never about putting a seven-year-old in jail; he did it because when a child is facing a crisis, an officer is available to help that child. Police can tap into a whole complement of support for a child, from health care to social workers to mental health supports and much, much more.

I believe there are few larger responsibilities in our society than ensuring the welfare of a child. It hurts me to see children hurt either physically or emotionally, and because of my time on the streets as a police officer, I have seen too many young people hurt. My experience has taught me that if we can intervene and help a child at a young age, then we are helping society in the long run. When you deal with a 17-year-old who has gotten themselves into trouble with the law, it is difficult to intervene and turn them around. At this age a young person has usually been on a path towards a crisis

for many, many years. But if we reach out to them early, there’s more of a likelihood that they will take a positive path, and when that occurs, all of society will benefit.

Through our Education Act we already have policies to curtail and deal with bullying in our schools, and I see Motion 507 as a natural extension of the previous work, and I fully support it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’m pleased to rise today and speak in support of Motion 507. Cyberbullying refers to using technology or social media to engage in actions or behaviours intended to cause harm, fear, or distress. Let me begin by saying that such actions or behaviours are unacceptable.

Social media has changed how we communicate with each other, and it has changed the way bullying may occur because social media offers a false sense of anonymity. Some may be inclined to say things through social media which they may otherwise not say.

Cyberbullying can spread instantly and can remain online indefinitely, and there are studies and evidence that shows its existence and prevalence in our society. As many as 70 per cent of youth report having been cyberbullied, and 40 per cent of youth admit to being mean online according to the Canadian study *Cyberbullying: Our Kids’ New Reality*. Further, the 2016 prevention of family violence and bullying survey, that was referred to by my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View, revealed that 58 per cent of Albertans believe cyberbullying occurs in their communities. A couple of things that came out very positive from that survey were that the parents who say that they encourage their children to be respectful of people who are different from themselves have increased by 2 percentage points this year, making it 100 per cent. Also, awareness went up 6 percentage points to stand at 92 per cent.

Cyberbullying takes a toll on its victims, their families, and communities, and it comes with a high cost that we all pay in one way or another socially, emotionally, and economically. Because cyberbullying affects us all, we all have a role to play in ending it. In the same survey 81 per cent of respondents believe bullying prevention should be an urgent priority for the provincial government.

One way to prevent bullying and cyberbullying is by promoting healthy relationships. The province is continuing to develop resources that promote healthy relationships. At the same time we also provide resources for those who are being bullied or know somebody who is. There is 24-hour toll-free bullying helpline at 1.888.456.2323, and alberta.ca hosts an online chat line and numerous info sheets. There are several web-based resources that provide information to school-aged children and youth and their parents. Community-based supports are provided through six taking action on bullying sites that partner parent link centres with local schools to teach children, youth, and adults strategies to address bullying. Funding is provided to train youth to promote healthy relationships through the Shift healthy relationship plus program. Since 2012, 35,600 Alberta youth have graduated.

But we can always do more to promote inclusion and ensure welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe environments for our children. This is why my ministry supports the mental health capacity-building sites provided in partnership with Health and Education. This includes staffing and supports to implement integrated school-based community mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention programs. More recently we also provided funds to 14 projects through the family and community

safety grant program, totalling \$1.6 million. These projects focus on promoting healthy relationships and prevent bullying.

Madam Speaker, I believe that we all have a responsibility to promote healthy relationships and prevent bullying in our schools, workplaces, homes, and in our community, and our government is committed to doing just that.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

5:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of Motion 507. I look forward to this whole Assembly supporting the ongoing work that is done by strong, dedicated Albertans. They're already working hard to fight cyberbullying, and we are working together to bring that awareness to that very, very serious, very real problem.

People like my new neighbours, Bailey Dunbar and her mother, Natasha Dunbar: they have taken up the fight because Bailey is a suicide survivor. One day when she came home, she knew that something was wrong with her sister. She felt something in the pit of her stomach. This is her identical twin sister. She came home, and she found that her sister had died by suicide. Morgan was bullied all through school. She was called terrible names. Her mom, Natasha, tried to get her daughter help, but unfortunately she fell through the cracks.

They could remain angry, but they don't. They work. They worked hard by starting Morgan's Mission, a nonprofit that strives to raise awareness of cyberbullying in an effort to save others. They work with the city of Fort Saskatchewan, and just this past September the mayor, Gale Katchur, signed a proclamation from the city to recognize World Suicide Prevention Day. They held a candlelight vigil that night to remember the lost, and they walked and rallied to remind us all that the battle continues.

Natasha and her daughter Bailey struggle at times, but they're often visited by Morgan when a ladybug lands on Bailey's face while waiting for the bus or when Natasha finds Morgan's favourite stone in a purse of hers, that she thought she had lost.

I rise to tell this story because we need to remember who we're fighting for and that we're all connected. Through this, we believe in the values of inclusion, and we believe in the value of having healthy workplaces, healthy schools, and healthy homes and communities. It's these stories that we need to be reminded of, that there is a real cost, a human cost, when we work to do this.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 8(3) the mover of the motion has five minutes to close debate, so I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to start off by thanking all the hon. members who spoke today in the House because this is an issue that is so close to my heart. This is an issue that I care so deeply about because this is something that we are seeing every single day in our schools, in our communities, and in our families. When we talk about cyberbullying, we're really talking about promoting healthy relationships and preventing bullying all through our society. As was made clear today, every member of this House understands that probably more than anybody else as we see online harassment throughout our jobs and throughout our lives every day.

When I first came up with the idea for this motion, Madam Speaker, I said: I have to go to the people who are affected by this the most, and I need to talk to them about this. That's why I went to talk to principals. I talked to teachers, I talked to parents, and then I went and talked to students. What I learned when I talked to students was that something needs to change.

Education and awareness are essential, but beyond that, technology has absolutely changed the game of how we see bullying. I say that as somebody who was in school not too long ago, Madam Speaker, but even since then – when I was in school and in my younger years, we used MSN Messenger, and then you'd have to get off MSN Messenger when your sister wanted to make a phone call. Then when I moved into my junior high and high school years, you were on Facebook, you were on Twitter, you were texting. Whatever it was, you were using some form of communication.

When I was in school, I saw every day my friends engaging in so much of this communication, engaging in so much of this discussion, and some of that was negative. Some of that was so negative that I saw my friends struggle with mental health. I saw my friends struggle through making sure they were performing well in their classes and trying to ignore it.

The discussion that says, "Well, just turn off your phone and ignore it" or "Just turn off your laptop and walk away" is not the reality, Madam Speaker. We need to be working with our educators. We need to be working with our parents, our teachers, our friends to be able to have those conversations about: what is cyberbullying? How does cyberbullying affect our students and our peers? That reality is different today, Madam Speaker.

The days of cyberbullying are just beginning. The conversations that we need to develop and have moving forward are just in their infancy right now, Madam Speaker. Technology isn't going anywhere. This is the future, and when I go out and I see my friends still in university right now and they have these conversations – as we move forward, we know that there needs to be a lot of change. Last week there was a suicide attempt at the University of Alberta. Last year one of my friends committed suicide at the University of Alberta. What we see every single day when we go out into our classes and into our friendships and our relationships is that we need to take action.

That's why I do want to thank everybody who commented today because these are the issues that are going to be affecting our youth for years to come. These are the issues that we as government and we as educators and people that care really do need to act on. It's really my pleasure to be able to introduce this to the House today, and it's one of those issues that is, I think, going to make a difference for Albertans across this entire province and something that we need to lead on as a province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 507 carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. On that very positive and constructive unanimous note I think we may as well not tempt fate and call it 6 o'clock. So I move that we adjourn until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:38 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, November 1, 2016

Day 42

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
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### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
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Luff	Swann
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### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
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### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
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Fildebrandt	Piquette
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Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
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Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

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Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

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Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, November 1, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us commit ourselves to work together with determination but also with compassion and understanding as we carry out our duties to serve Albertans and those who visit us in this great province that we proudly share and call home.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

##### Adjournment of Fall Session

22. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the second session of the 29th Legislature 2016 fall sitting of the Assembly be extended beyond the first Thursday in December until such time as or when the Government House Leader advises the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded, and at such time the Assembly stands adjourned.

[Government Motion 22 carried]

##### Constituency Week

23. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that, notwithstanding Standing Order 3(6), the only constituency week for the 2016 fall sitting shall be held the week of November 14, 2016, with the Assembly reconvening on Monday, November 21, 2016.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In speaking to the motion, I would just note that per Government Motion 22 the government expects to sit past the regular rise date of December 1 in order to complete the business of the House. Motion 23 simply ensures that the extension is not interrupted by a constituency week.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The House leader for the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. I rise to speak just very briefly to the motion. I encourage my colleagues to support the motion; however, I just would like to address a couple of quick comments from the Minister of Justice. She said that the session not be disrupted by a constituency week as though meeting with our constituents is a disruption to the legislative process. I think nothing could be further from the truth, that these constituency weeks are, in fact, a very important part of the process. I just hope that that wasn't the minister's intention.

The other thing that I might just briefly add is that it would be very helpful in the era of, from what I understand of the government, trying to be a much more family-friendly Assembly – these legislative sessions are not a surprise to the government. They know that they are coming. It would be helpful if when the calendar is set out at the beginning of the year, they would do a much better job of working towards those dates and making sure that the

necessary arrangements are made in advance of the first day of session.

Those things would be helpful in the future, but I do encourage all my colleagues to support this motion.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other persons wishing to speak to Government Motion 23?

Hearing none, the Minister of Justice on behalf of the hon. Government House Leader to close debate.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think that there is anything additional to add.

[Government Motion 23 carried]

### Morning Sitting Adjournment

24. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that on Thursday, November 3, 2016, the morning sitting of the Assembly stand adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is in order to allow us to attend a Remembrance Day ceremony.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just would like to rise because this doesn't happen all too often, where I publicly thank the ...

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I neglected to tell you that this is a nondebatable motion.

**Mr. Cooper:** It's okay. I didn't want to thank them anyway.

**The Speaker:** Nice try. I didn't go trick-or-treating last night as long as you did.

[Government Motion 24 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 21

#### Modernized Municipal Government Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce the Modernized Municipal Government Act, or Bill 21, for second reading. I tabled the Modernized Municipal Government Act last May so that hon. members and all Albertans had time to review the changes, to ask questions, and to provide their feedback on the proposed amendments.

Over the summer my team and I travelled across this great province, from Peace River to Medicine Hat and 18 other communities in between, to meet with the public, municipal leaders, business, and industry to get their thoughts and feedback on the proposed changes. More than 2,400 Albertans attended the sessions in communities both large and small. We also received over 2,300 survey responses and 122 written submissions from municipalities, businesses and industry, civil society groups, and members of the public. My team compiled all of that feedback and released a what-we-heard summary on our website last month.

Because the MGA touches every single Albertan in some way, it was valuable to have so many people attend our engagement sessions and to hear their feedback both in person and online. I want to thank everyone who took the time to provide their input and for their interest in ensuring that municipalities have the tools and resources they need to build strong, sustainable communities for Alberta families.

#### 10:10

Alberta has been in the process of updating the Municipal Government Act for more than three years now. The last major review of the MGA prior to that was completed more than two decades ago and does not reflect new economic realities, changes in technology, or evolving municipal roles and responsibilities. Municipalities are at the grassroots of creating stronger, more dynamic communities, and we know that they need robust, forward-looking legislation to meet the changing needs of Albertans. The act is Alberta's second-largest piece of legislation and touches the lives of every single person in this province. It guides how we pay for our roads, where we build our schools, and how we develop strong communities to raise our families.

This Modernized Municipal Government Act is a culmination of nearly four years of comprehensive review and consultation with municipalities, local citizens and businesses, community organizations, the oil and gas sector, builders and developers, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties. This forward-looking and innovative piece of legislation contains a number of policy shifts. Municipalities will now form regional partnerships to better serve Albertans. Municipalities will have new tools to build better, more complete communities. The act will also support small business and increase industry competitiveness, and it will enhance municipal accountability. Colleagues, with this modernization of the Municipal Government Act we are turning a new page and beginning a new era of local government in Alberta.

As I noted, a key focus of the Modernized Municipal Government Act is on working together, growing together, and making Alberta better together. The previous structure of the MGA led to municipalities working against each other instead of working with each other. Instead of duplicating costly services, the revised MGA will require municipalities to come together through municipal partnerships to find new and innovative ways to integrate services, manage growth, and use land to become better environmental stewards.

Fundamentally, we recognize that our communities are interconnected and that they transcend municipal boundaries. It's very important that political leaders both in municipal government and provincial government recognize this because Albertans recognize this. Albertans are not focused on where lines are drawn on a map. They want efficient, effective services. Period. It is time to collaborate on the planning and funding of services that have a regional benefit whether they exist in municipality A or municipality B.

The Modernized Municipal Government Act will usher in a new era where municipalities are required to form regional partnerships to better serve Albertans. The metropolitan regions of Calgary and Edmonton will do this through mandatory growth management boards. Those two regions are the fastest growing in Alberta, with nearly 75 per cent of the population living in the Calgary or Edmonton area. This creates increased pressures both on the natural and built environments. Growth management boards will address these issues by developing collaborative approaches to the delivery and equitable funding of services.

These boards will also develop a growth plan for the region to help ensure the preservation of agricultural lands and the wise use of the environment. These boards will take a collaborative and co-ordinated approach to economic development, which will strengthen regional economies and support Alberta jobs, because increasingly regions and municipalities must collaborate to compete on a global scale. Growth management boards are a step forward. They're a step forward for smart growth, a step forward for economic development, and a step forward for protecting agricultural lands.

Outside of the metropolitan regions of Calgary and Edmonton, municipalities will develop intermunicipal collaboration frameworks. These frameworks will ensure that neighbouring municipalities partner on land-use planning, co-ordinate services of a regional benefit, and equitably fund those services. With a growing number of families in our provinces, a collaborative approach to service delivery and land-use planning is needed now more than ever before. Instead of unnecessary duplication of services, municipalities will now work together to deliver more effective, efficient services to their communities.

During challenging times Albertans expect their governments to manage the public purse and avoid duplication of services. Municipalities should work together to ensure that every dollar goes as far as possible. Greater regional collaboration through the MGA has been celebrated by municipalities, business, and the public as a step forward. Albertans are served better when their leaders work together, and that is just what we're going to ensure happens.

Alberta continues to grow. More than 4 million people now consider this province home, and our population is expected to jump by another million within the coming decade. As our population increases, we are facing a number of growth pressures, and one of the most complex and most pressing is affordable housing. Every person in our province deserves a safe, affordable place to call home. Affordable housing is an important part of the social and economic infrastructure of municipalities. It helps to attract and maintain a diverse workforce, which in turn ensures economic development and sustainability. There are more than 30,000 Albertans on waiting lists for affordable housing, and our government is taking action.

Through the modernized MGA our government is keeping another platform commitment and will enable inclusionary housing, which will allow municipalities to reserve a portion of new development for affordable housing. This important tool is used across North America and around the world to increase affordable housing and promote inclusive, complete communities. We want to ensure that Alberta's municipalities have strong, diverse housing markets that support not only their economic and social well-being but also their sustainability. Affordable housing is a critical need that has long been ignored. This step will allow municipalities and developers to work together to find solutions to this enduring problem.

Colleagues, Albertans want more than just houses; they want real neighbourhoods to call home. Changes to the MGA will help to make this happen by giving growing municipalities tools to ensure that new communities are built in a way that creates real neighbourhoods for families, Mr. Speaker, neighbourhoods that are kept safe by police and firefighters at nearby stations and ones where hockey practice is held around the corner and not across the city. To do this, off-site levies will see an overhaul. These one-time fees paid by developers are currently only collected for roads, water, sewer, and storm sewer systems, but Alberta's growth has created a demand for community facilities and services outside of these four infrastructure pillars.

The MGA is being amended to allow municipalities to collect off-site levies for community recreation facilities, fire halls, police stations, and libraries. Levies for these facilities can only be applied if the new development receives at least 30 per cent of the benefit of those facilities. This balanced approach will make sure the fire halls, swimming pools and services that Albertans need are there when they move in. These changes to the MGA will result in more complete, inclusive communities for Alberta families, communities where Albertans have an affordable place to call home, access to the infrastructure they need, and where growth is funded in a collaborative way.

Supporting Alberta business is one of the four key pillars of the Alberta jobs plan, and the modernized MGA supports this initiative. Right now all businesses are charged the same property tax rate regardless of their size. Changes to the MGA will empower municipalities to create a more flexible property tax framework between small and large businesses. This change will make life easier for small businesses and allow them to do what they do best, which is to support their communities and create jobs. Small businesses comprise 95 per cent of all businesses in Alberta and are responsible for 35 per cent of all private-sector employment in the province. This policy change, supported by many local leaders, will give communities another tool to build strong local economies tailored to their local realities.

10:20

Supporting our municipalities also means supporting the industries that their residents depend on. The updated MGA will increase industry competitiveness by linking nonresidential and residential tax rates. Municipalities currently have complete flexibility to set tax rates for different types of properties. This has created situations where nonresidential tax rates are significantly higher than residential tax rates, in some cases more than 10 times higher. The new MGA will take steps to end this imbalance and promote more accountability. We will be establishing a maximum ratio of 5 to 1 between nonresidential and residential property taxes. These changes to the MGA support Alberta businesses as we build a more resilient, diversified economy for the future.

One of the things we heard clearly from Albertans in the MGA review was a need to improve transparency and enhance municipal accountability. Like British Columbia did in 1995 and Ontario did in 2015, we are expanding the mandate of the Alberta Ombudsman to include the investigation of complaints about municipal actions or decisions. This will allow Albertans to bring matters of concern to the attention of an impartial third party that can investigate issues as necessary. It creates an additional accountability mechanism for municipalities and gives Albertans another resource to have their local concerns addressed in a fair, efficient, and transparent manner.

I am very proud of all the work that has gone into this review and of the progressive, forward-looking policy shifts in the Modernized Municipal Government Act. After second reading and debate on Bill 21 we intend to introduce House amendments to strengthen the Modernized Municipal Government Act. These amendments will reflect the feedback we heard this past summer. Many of these proposals are based on smart suggestions from engaged citizens and stakeholders we heard during our summer engagement tour.

Before any of the changes and amendments are proclaimed, there are approximately 45 regulations that will need further review and development before the Modernized Municipal Government Act is complete. These regulations will be developed and drafted over the coming months and posted online for public review and feedback in 2017 prior to final adoption. This will provide another avenue for local leaders, business, industry, and the public to help shape the future of municipal governance in Alberta. All changes to the

MGA, including regulations, will be proclaimed before municipal elections in the fall of 2017.

This modernized MGA empowers local governments and strengthens community collaboration. It is a piece of legislation we can all be proud of. It is one that takes us from a winner-take-all approach to where all of us win. I'm confident that Alberta will set the bar for outstanding, forward-thinking municipal governance legislation in Canada with Bill 21. Bill 21 will support municipalities in their work to build a stronger, more prosperous province for all Albertans, and I hope for all-party support in its passage.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice, I believe, has a request.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to request unanimous consent to revert to some introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker and fellow members. It is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you and through you several members of the board of governors for the 2019 Canada Winter Games, being hosted in Red Deer 821 days from today. Visiting us today are Lyn Radford, board chair, 2019 Canada Winter Games; Scott Robinson, CEO, 2019 Canada Winter Games; Scott Fraser with Alberta Sport Connection and 2019 Canada Winter Games board member; Tom Quinn, chairman of the Canada Games Council; Mary Anne Jablonski, 2019 Canada Winter Games board member. I would ask that my guests please stand and receive the traditional recognition of this House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome and thank you for your contributions.

Hon. members, for those who may not be aware, a former Deputy Speaker of this House.

Thank you for being here.

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 21

#### Modernized Municipal Government Act

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to all. It's my pleasure this morning to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, at second reading.

Before I begin my comments, actually, Mr. Speaker, on the bill specifically, I want to start by recognizing that Bill 21 is the culmination of years of review, study, and feedback. The entire process involved thousands of people and thousands of hours of debate and discussion across the province. I'd like to take a quick moment to acknowledge the dedicated work of Municipal Affairs' staff, local municipalities and their staff, industry stakeholders, and all the individual Albertans who worked so hard on this bill. Thank you. It is also important, I think, to mention that it was the previous government that began this review, and it's important for them to be recognized for their important work on this file. Thank you very much for that as well.

The Municipal Government Act, or the MGA, I've spent many years on. I will refer to it today as one of the largest pieces of legislation that Alberta has on the books, so it's somewhat fitting that Bill 21, which proposes to amend large sections of the MGA, weighs in at 123 pages. It is a huge, huge document to be looking at. While it's impossible for me to provide in 20 minutes comment and feedback on all the different changes, proposals, and edits, I will offer as much insight as I can in the time I have remaining and allow my esteemed colleagues on their own to look at and focus on specific areas of the bill which we have identified, which I hope will allow for deeper debate and discussion in both second reading and Committee of the Whole.

To start, then, the government has organized the proposed MGA changes into three broad groups based on the following: firstly, how municipalities govern themselves; secondly, how they plan to develop and grow; and thirdly, how municipalities are funded.

First, then, I will begin my comments by addressing the question of governance. According to the MGA website, "the amendments that fall under this question aim to improve municipal accountability, transparency, and viability, as well as reframe the relationship between municipalities and the Province." Well, that is for certain. It does attempt to do that. My caucus colleagues and I welcome some of these proposed changes and feel that the preamble that is suggested adds an important improvement to the language of the MGA, and it establishes more explicitly the type of relationship the province will foster with its municipal partners. I would like to make an important note, however. Just as the language and tone set by the preamble are an important improvement, there must be real, concrete actions by the provincial government that follow, for words without action are meaningless.

There are a number of additional items that fall under the governance category which I will take a moment to mention here, as my caucus colleagues will be more detailed, as I've said. First of all, the province proposes to expand the mandate of the Alberta Ombudsman to include municipalities. There's already a system in place, as most of the people in this room know and most of the Alberta municipalities know, of how municipalities govern themselves and what kinds of communications are available to residents. But this would provide, despite all of that, Albertans with an additional avenue to address their concerns with procedural fairness without having to undertake the onerous task of obtaining a petition, as an example, signed by 20 per cent of the municipal electorate before anyone in government will review a complaint about a municipality.

It's important to note that the municipalities have already worked, again, in many ways to address this issue themselves. As an example, a number of the larger municipalities have municipal auditors, and in the case of Calgary an integrity and ethics officer. Notwithstanding the work done by some municipalities, we must, though, ensure there are mechanisms that ensure that decisions by their local government are fair. I suggest that this is probably why the Ombudsman has been suggested as one alternative.

I personally believe there's an education gap sometimes between the citizenry and the elected officials themselves with regard to council roles and responsibilities. I'm happy to see that the province identified this issue as well through their proposal to establish minimum standards for elected official orientation and training. The current proposal is that municipalities must offer their elected officials training and orientation after all municipal, general, and by-elections.

**10:30**

As a former municipal councillor for the MD of Foothills I don't like that the province has left the municipalities to determine

whether they should make it mandatory for their elected officials to attempt. A lot of the feedback that we have received expressed a desire to see mandatory training, and I may have an amendment actually to table during the Committee of the Whole to reflect that.

The other major proposed changes that fall under this category are strengthening the impartiality of local appeal boards by prohibiting municipal councillors from forming the majority on any municipal appeal board or individual hearing panel. I hope that all members will join me and support me with this change. I think this is a good idea. It's long been indicated that the apprehension of bias and so on is so important, and I think this really, really puts this into a concrete form. However, I'm wary of the proposed changes to municipally controlled corporations. While my caucus and I agree that there is a place for a municipality to own its corporations, specifically utilities, I'm concerned that the province's removal of many of its approval mechanisms will result in municipalities entering competitive markets, which will only serve to hurt Alberta's already struggling economy, in our view.

Moving forward, I'd like to move on to the second category, how municipalities plan, develop, and grow. The MGA review website describes amendments that fall into this category as aiming "to improve municipal relationships, planning processes, and local decision-making," yet there are serious concerns across Alberta from several quarters on that statement. This category of amendments arguably proposes the most fundamental change to the planning division of the Municipal Government Act. The introduction of mandatory growth management boards, compulsory intermunicipal collaboration, and removing the small municipality exemption from the requirement of municipal development plans are just three examples of the many changes this government has proposed on how municipalities plan to grow and develop.

Firstly, and most importantly, the Capital Region Board is the only mandatory growth management board, or GMB, legislated by the MGA today. Now Bill 21 proposes a mandatory growth management board for the Calgary metropolitan area, yet the details, including membership, mandate, and scope, have yet to be released. This presents a significant change in how municipalities around Calgary may interact and relate to one another and, in fact, as it stands today without the details, removes some flexibility and autonomy from municipalities' ability to govern themselves. These are serious concerns by municipalities in the Calgary region.

Again, as a former municipal councillor I understand the importance of regional collaboration. Let me underline that. I understand the importance of regional collaboration, and so does Wildrose. We are and I am a strong believer in regional co-operation. Let me underline that. However, I have some serious concerns and questions regarding the growth management boards, including: which municipalities will be members? Will any member municipality hold an actual or de facto veto? What type of voting structure will be used? Will member municipalities be able to abstain from voting? Is there a dispute resolution process? If not, why not? What will be the mandate and scope of this new growth board?

Mr. Speaker, therefore, unfortunately, until these questions are answered and the rules around growth management boards are established by the government, it's impossible for us and our caucus and municipalities in the region to remain anything but skeptical and very concerned on this proposed change, and it has been that way for years.

As the minister knows and her department knows and a lot of people in this room know, this particular item has been one that has been argued for over a decade and a half. It was a system that they're returning to that was flawed in previous times, and therefore

a lot of people involved today still remain worried about returning to a system that didn't work before.

I had actually hoped that the governance details would be included in the bill, but so much is left to the regulations and backroom negotiations that it's hard to really know what is going to happen. All stakeholders remain very confused on this. For such a major policy proposal I would have hoped, like in the rest of the MGA, that they would have addressed some of these concerns and included the details in the legislation itself. Let's be clear. In the original MGA, as it is prior to this amendment, many, many of the functions and processes for municipal governments are very clearly defined. In this occasion it is not. This type of forced regionalization was problematic, as I said, in the '80s and '90s, and unless these adverse effects are properly addressed, this form of centralized control will remain problematic, just like it was in the '80s and '90s.

As I just mentioned, another major policy change proposal in this Bill 21 is the introduction of intermunicipal collaboration frameworks, or ICFs. Under the current MGA municipalities are not obligated to collaborate or co-operate with one another at all, yet they do. While most municipalities do have intermunicipal development plan agreements, or IDPs, outlining how they plan to develop and collaboratively work over the medium- to long-term solutions, it's not universal across the province. That is for sure. In fact, there are a number of municipalities that for one reason or another have no relationship with their neighbouring municipalities whatsoever. It is these outliers that the proposed ICFs plan to address, I'm thinking. Bill 21 provides municipalities with two years to negotiate these, which must address land-use planning in addition to planning, delivery, and funding of regional services and infrastructure. Should the municipalities fail to agree, as is proposed, to an ICF in that time, the third year is provided for arbitration, which will impose an ICF unilaterally, I understand.

I will repeat what I've said previously. I'm a big believer in regional collaboration; however, there are simply too many variables here, again, left unaddressed for me to approve this proposal as it stands at this time. Once again, a lot of these kinds of processes are very well and heavily described in the existing MGA. This one has no detail.

Some of the major concerns were raised by small municipalities, those with fewer than 3,500 people. Not only are these smaller municipalities now required to negotiate ICFs, which will undoubtedly cost tens of thousands of dollars, but the government is removing their exemption from having to establish a municipal development plan, or MDP. This is kind of like a double hit, and this will result in even more pressure on the municipalities' administration staffs. While I recognize that the department has suggested that there will be some mechanisms and templates to work from and support in some manner, these too are yet not known.

All these costs being piled on top of our smallest communities all at the same time is likely to challenge the viability of many of these municipalities to conduct their business in a proper fashion. Big Valley, in their feedback on Bill 21, described the issue they face:

There are numerous changes in the proposed MGA changes that we feel are disturbing to smaller municipalities. The significant increase to the amount of statutory planning that will be necessary over a very short [period of time] will cause capacity issues. Developing an MDP, IDP, & ICF when you do not have a planning department will be extremely difficult.

While one might argue that many of these communities would not likely survive long term as it is, I believe that to be a very pessimistic and unhelpful philosophy. Many of these communities predate the province, and it is incredibly distressing to see the provincial government saddle them with even more onerous and

costly regulations. It seems to me that for the past few decades they have existed without MDPs and some of these other things, and to thrust all these extra requirements on them is somewhat, I think, a little bit over the top.

It's for this reason that I will be submitting an amendment at Committee of the Whole that will extend the timeline for municipalities to develop an MDP from three to five years, and we may look at other amendments in this area. I hope all my hon. colleagues in the House will support this reasonable amendment when it gets tabled.

To move on again, then, Mr. Speaker, to the proposed amendments on conservation reserves, another part of the planning process, currently municipalities empowered by the MGA and its regulations can create environmental reserves in order to prevent pollution and/or allow for public access to waterways and to protect natural drainage courses and water bodies, et cetera. Because this is undevelopable land in most cases, municipalities are not required to compensate developers for environmental reserve land taken as ER. Unfortunately, there is little a municipality can do legally, though, to conserve land that falls outside of the definition of environmental reserve.

**10:40**

The proposed remedy is the creation of an additional type of reserve called a conservation reserve. That could be used to conserve environmentally significant areas: tree stands, grasslands, et cetera. Because this might remove or would remove land that could be developed, the municipality would have to compensate the developer in this proposal. As a long-time property rights advocate I appreciate the government ensuring that property owners are compensated for any conservation reserve taken from their land. I want to underline that. I appreciate that there is finally compensation for lands being taken.

My concern is largely that I believe that this type of problem might be better utilized through an environmental reserve easement, which exists already today, registered against the title of the land. By establishing the ERE, the title of the land does not change and the developer would still be able to establish a development using density calculation based on the entire land area. While development would be restricted on the easement, the developer would potentially benefit more under an easement than losing the title outright through a conservation reserve.

I realize I haven't touched on all the different topics, actually, that fall under the planning and development category as I'm limited in time, Mr. Speaker, but I'd like to touch on a couple of topics that fall under how municipalities are funded. The third grouping is to apparently "aim to improve municipal funding models to ensure a balanced, consistent, and efficient collection of municipal revenue sources." And I'd like to add, by the way, that the MGA did not address municipal funding in any large degree. But one of the proposed amendments is to centralize the assessment of all industrial properties by the province.

The province states that this is a requirement because of the complex nature of regulated industrial properties. Currently only linear properties are assessed by the province while the remaining industrial properties are assessed by the municipality in which the property is located. I found it interesting that the Assessors' Association in their feedback on Bill 21 amendments specifically advocate against the centralization of industrial property assessment. These are the experts in the field, the trained experts. I look forward to proposing amendments, therefore, during Committee of the Whole based on their advice and recommendations, and I hope that all of my colleagues in the House seriously consider the recommendations of the Alberta Assessors'

Association before passing judgment on the government's proposed centralization model.

Moving on to another proposed change is granting municipalities the ability to split the improved nonresidential property assessment class into subclasses. Municipalities already have the ability to split residential properties, of course, and apply a different tax rate. My caucus colleagues and I largely support the move by the province towards greater local autonomy and in turn in determining subclasses of nonresidential properties. However, I'm particularly interested in the potential to promote small-business development at the local level with this.

One of the most critical amendments proposed by this government that has given me the greatest pause, though, is the proposal to link residential and nonresidential tax rates at a maximum ratio of 5 to 1. This has been shown to be of concern across the province as well by most of the municipal associations, including the administrators' association or CAOs. This proposal would restrict municipalities from charging nonresidential properties at a tax rate that exceeds the lowest residential rate by more than five times.

According to Municipal Affairs most municipalities are well below the 5 to 1 ratio. That certainly is recognized. And this would only affect a handful of municipalities. According to stakeholder feedback, though, there are around 19 municipalities that exceed that ratio to varying degrees, and one of the largest reported variances, of course, is the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, which currently has a nonresidential property tax rate that is 18 times higher than its lowest residential rate.

According to the research we've been able to do over the course of the summer, most of our fellow provinces have established ratios, most significantly lower than Alberta's proposed, actually. Ontario has established an acceptable range between 6 and 1.1 times. British Columbia has a ratio of 3.4 to 1 for major industrial and light industrial properties, and New Brunswick is 1 to 5.1. While a ratio does result in an erosion of local autonomy, I believe consensus is possible.

I'd like to quote the Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, who in their feedback expressed the following sentiment: "While noting that this change does limit local autonomy and flexibility in setting mill rates, the AAMDC recognizes the proposed changes as reasonable and acceptable."

I want to point out at this time that we recognize the grandfathering clause on different municipalities like Wood Buffalo, but we certainly have concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I didn't realize my timer was off a bit, but I will carry on at another time with more. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Any other members who wish to speak to Bill 21? The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act. To begin, I would like to thank all Albertans who have taken the time to provide input on Bill 21. Their voice on this matter is crucial on drafting a piece of legislation that is beneficial to all Albertans. Their expertise and knowledge are invaluable. Alberta's strength is reflected in the resiliency, vibrancy, and diversity of our municipalities, and it is important that the government maintain a respectful two-way relationship with our municipal leadership and stakeholders. With that being said, I would hope that this government has consulted appropriately with Albertans and adequately considered the proposals they have put forth with the intent of improving the Modernized Municipal

Government Act. I suppose we'll have an answer to that question in the coming weeks.

Mr. Speaker, a theme of Bill 21 is intermunicipal collaboration. Collaboration between municipal partners on the surface, I think, is something everyone in this House can agree to. This concept is evident through the creation of the intermunicipal collaboration frameworks, municipal development plans, growth management boards, as well as others detailed within the legislation.

However, I think it's important that we bring to light some possible issues related to this concept and assist the government in areas where they will have fallen short, beginning with municipal development plans, which will require that all municipalities, regardless of population size, create a plan that helps guide important matters such as land development. It is important that government remain cognizant of the fact that these plans take time, money, and resources to develop. In some cases rural municipalities may lack the resources required to complete the plan in the given time frame as mandated by this government. In fact, without sufficient resources the requirements of developing a municipal development plan could hinder the operations of rural municipalities.

Additionally, there are concerns with respect to election timelines. Some of these planning timelines fall within the municipal election cycles. This could negatively impact and delay how plans are constructed. It is the finer details such as these, Mr. Speaker, which the government must keep in mind when imposing mandatory deadlines on local governments for municipal development plan completions.

Given these circumstances I hope this government is sensitive to the needs of rural municipalities and Albertans, something they've shown a slight disregard for in the past, and the individuals who work in local municipalities responsible for developing these documents. If completion of the plans within a mandated time frame becomes an issue for smaller municipalities, I would hope the government would consider increasing the time limit on proposal submissions or provide resources to municipalities to help facilitate the objective of meeting the timelines.

Staying with the theme of collaboration, Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn my attention to the growth management boards. Growth management boards will be required for Edmonton and Calgary regions with an expanded mandate to address land-use planning and the planning and delivery and funding of regional services. The government intends on using regulations to mandate some crucial nuances with respect to the scope of services being provided by these boards. As far as I'm concerned, the more time we can give these boards to plan for such crucial service delivery, the better. With that in mind, it would be my hope that the government is conducting appropriate due diligence with these entities to ensure seamless transition and not catching anyone off guard when the regulations are developed.

**10:50**

Yet another piece of legislation being determined in part through the regulation is splitting of nonresidential property classes. The revised MGA, Mr. Speaker, will determine categories for subclasses within the regulation. There is currently no direction on the types of classes or how many will be included. For the benefit of all Albertans during these troubling economic times some clarification would be appreciated, especially with matters pertaining to taxation, a favourite topic of this government.

This provides some examples whereby key sections of the MGA are to have important components determined via regulation. Mr. Speaker, it would be conducive to the development of the legislation if we could have some thoughtful, transparent, and

respectful debate on these issues for the sake of all Albertans instead of having important details determined in cabinet behind closed doors.

Mr. Speaker, another area of concern that I think we could work to improve upon in Bill 21 is definitional clarity and, really, clarity in general. There are some rather key concepts that need elaboration; for example, affordable housing. There is no clear definition with respect to this term or what it encompasses within the context of the legislation. Given the magnitude of this policy and its inherent effect on inclusionary housing, it would be nice to have lucidity around this topic.

Yet another example of subpar definitional clarity, Mr. Speaker, is with respect to off-site levies. The scope of off-site levies will be expanded to community recreational facilities, fire halls, police stations, and libraries where at least 30 per cent of the benefit accrues to the new development in the defined benefiting area. Where this threshold is met, developers will contribute to the cost on a proportional benefit. It is important that the government provide clear definitions of the defined benefiting area and appeal process regarding these levies. It is also equally important that we have clear language around what constitutes a 30 per cent benefit. How will this be calculated? Conveying this information is important as it will assist land developers in identifying costs, ensuring the financial feasibility of their companies and in turn helping to protect the jobs of numerous Albertans who are employed in the construction industry.

When we look at the language regarding environmental reserves, we have a signal from groups that are affected by this legislation that they would like to see changes in the language to provide – guess what? – better clarity. Specifically, developers and municipal stakeholder groups have requested that the definitions and purpose of environmental reserves be clarified as land unsuitable for development. This change in language is significant in that it would allow municipalities to preserve environmentally significant features without having to resort to designating the area as a conservation reserve.

These groups are also requesting that the government address the fact that the definitions relevant to environmental reserves aren't harmonized across different pieces of legislation. Where Bill 21 defines that it includes a body of water, it leaves out wetlands, which puts it out of alignment from the Alberta wetland policy, some would argue.

These are the kinds of issues that really start to frustrate municipalities. We are really just looking for some consistency and clarity in how these rules are applied.

When it comes to the rules regarding conservation reserves, municipal stakeholders have come to our caucus with some measured requests for changes to the bill. These are grounded ideas from people that work closely every day with our municipal leadership. We have municipal stakeholder groups advocating for a strong, efficient dispute resolution mechanism to deal with disagreements between municipalities and developers, and that, I think, is in the interest of all concerned parties. We would like to see the government's plan on what such a dispute resolution mechanism would look like and, more importantly, how the two groups will have their concerns addressed with respect in this manner.

Mr. Speaker, an area where the government does deserve a bit of credit is in the push to incent brownfield development. We absolutely need to do what we can to remediate these sites so that they can be put to productive use again. It is unfortunate that so many of these properties are sitting vacant, not contributing to the local economy, so we need to do everything that we can to make remediation and reclamation of these properties happen. The

government is working towards this, allowing municipalities with these sites to provide conditional property tax cancellation, deferrals, and reductions to make developing these sites more attractive. So kudos on that point. Let's just hope the NDP tax increases don't hinder potential development of such developments, making this policy change moot.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see municipalities will be required to list and publish all nonstatutory planning documents and describe how they relate to one another. We're all in favour of greater transparency in land-use planning. This is a good proposal. A list like this increases the accountability of municipal councils to their voters and helps residents engage with their council to make informed decisions.

Mr. Speaker, groups like the AUMA and the AAMD and C are telling us that they agree with the need for greater transparency around land-use plans. They want to be part of this positive change. However, for them and other municipal groups and leaders to truly be effective partners in this, they need to know what exactly is being required of them. So we have these groups come to us, and they ask us, "What exactly is included in these nonstatutory policies?" because they are looking at that legislation, and they are not finding any clarity. Further, when they are being required to explain how all these policies relate to one another but there's no prescription for that, what the process looks like, they start to worry about how to actually accomplish that. So what they would like to see is the government come forward with some clarity about what exactly is being asked of these municipalities. That clarity, or lack of, is something that we are seeing a lot of in response to this government's attempt at modernizing the Municipal Government Act.

There are just so many areas in this bill where we look at it and we see what could be a good idea if it wasn't weighed down by questions about scope and implementation. Legislation like Bill 21, which proposes to change so much about such complex legislation, is bound to have a number of unforeseen consequences. I think that we need to keep in mind as legislators and representatives of Alberta that it is our responsibility to do our due diligence and eliminate as much of that uncertainty as possible. I hope the government will strive towards this objective as the bill passes through the House and continue to work with all Albertans in this bill's development. I know the government has consulted this summer with lots of municipalities and stakeholders, so I look forward to the amendments that they will bring forward to address the concerns they've heard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions of the hon. member under 29(2)(a)? The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the remarks from my colleague from Grande Prairie. I just wondered. I heard him speak a fair amount on the fact that there were consultations over the summer and introducing a piece of legislation and then allowing municipalities to comment on it. I know that hasn't really been a trademark of the government, but I just was curious to know if he felt like that was perhaps a step in the right direction and that more of this sort of consultation instead of rushing bills through the House would be beneficial to Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Of course I support that more consultation is always better. I know this government did go around the province this summer, and I attended some sessions.

Unfortunately, the session I attended was overcrowded, so some of our mayors and reeves weren't allowed to come. That's unfortunate, but they did have a good showing, and the government heard lots of concerns from municipal leaders and stakeholders around the province. So I'm looking forward to their amendments. If they were truly listening to the stakeholders this summer, they should be bringing some amendments forward. We've yet to see those. I guess if they don't bring them, we'll have some amendments to bring on our own, but we'll wait to see what amendments they bring forward. That's exactly the right way of doing legislation: introduce it, consult with people, take it around the province, and then pass it. Good job on the government.

11:00

**The Speaker:** Are there any other questions or comments to the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just trying to set my clock here. I apologize.

I certainly appreciate the opportunity to stand in the House today and speak to Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act. I'd also like to thank, as my colleagues before me have, all Albertans that took the time and all those in the province that took time to make comments and suggestions to build this important act. Those of us inside the House that have spent some time on council – there are a few on this side; I don't know how many on the other side of the House – we certainly recognize how important the Municipal Government Act is. It is the law that sets out guiding principles for municipalities, and we need to make sure that we get this right. Municipalities are our partners. That being said, this is a huge act, and the proposed changes are also huge. Like I said, we need to get this right.

I'll speak today, I think, about municipal development plans. A municipal development plan is a long-range statutory planning document. "Statutory" refers to something that is related to a formal statute or law such as a by-law in a municipality. A statutory planning document provides a municipality – well, their elected officials, the administration, the ratepayers of that municipality, and potential developers – with a framework or an outline or an agenda of policies for making important decisions for that municipality regarding future growth and development opportunities within that municipality that creates the municipal development plan.

Statutory plans allow councils of that municipality to create wide-ranging development policies. Now, these policies of development can refer to the entire municipality in the plan or just a portion of that municipality. The policies of a municipal development plan tend to be put inside that document in order to shape and outline the potential or expected growth as well as profile the development or the progress of a municipality.

As the Municipal Government Act sits right now, municipalities with a population of 3,500 people or more are required to adopt a municipal development plan. Alternately, municipalities with less than 3,500 are simply encouraged to do so. Now, we all know what happens when you're encouraged to do something. You kind of say: "Well, thank you very much. I'll let you know. I'll take it under advisement." Probably not much happens. In the case of municipalities under 3,500 I would suggest that a large majority of those municipalities have not completed a municipal development plan.

You know, "encouraged" isn't generally a word that would drive a municipality to get on with developing such a hefty little document. Don't get me wrong. There are certainly municipalities

that have probably gone the extra mile to put together their municipal development plans. These things, like I say, can be considered hefty documents, certainly, for smaller municipalities, 300- and 400- and 500-person villages, that will now be required to create their own municipal development plans and, quite frankly, expensive too. We can talk about that a little later.

Now, the other thing about statutory plans such as the municipal development plan is that statutory plans at the end of the day absolutely must be aligned with the Alberta Land Stewardship Act regional plans, and in no way, shape, or form can the plans not be consistent with each other. The statutory plan and the regional plan for whichever area the municipality is in must be consistent. Regional plans set out land-use intentions and definitions and possibilities for a specific area of the province. They also offer the structure for land-use decision-making within that precise area.

Another consideration of the regional plan is the individuality of the particular area as well as the important parts within those individual areas within the regional plan. For instance, where I'm from our development and planning must be aligned with the South Saskatchewan regional plan. If I quote from the Alberta Environment and Parks website, I am told that the South Saskatchewan regional plan

ranges from the Rocky Mountains to the west, the Canada-U.S. border to the south, the Alberta-Saskatchewan border to the east and north to the tip of the Municipal District of Bighorn.

That's a very diverse area: mountains to the west, then down gradually through the foothills, out to the prairie, and gradually from the prairie towards a city like Lethbridge, where we traditionally see a drier area. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, you're aware of anything east of that. You know, a little drier area there and then you can drive 50 or 75 miles to the north and see completely different vegetation, where a more moderate climate would prevail. So these regional plans certainly have to be regional because there's so much diversity going on.

Compare that to the North Saskatchewan region, which is what Edmonton sits in. It's described as

bordered by the Alberta-Saskatchewan border to the east, Alberta-British Columbia border to the west; it peaks at the north boundary of Smoky Lake County and includes Banff National Park. It includes Edmonton and seven other cities.

So you can see the unique differences in the regional plans that are put forward.

Down where I live just about every tree that you run across was planted by a man or a human. A human. I'm not going to get in trouble here.

**Mr. Cooper:** A person.

**Mr. Schneider:** A person. Sure. I'll say the word.

Up here, 400 or 500 kilometres away, trees in the past have been removed for development and removed for farming, et cetera. I mean, up here there's brush everywhere, which encourages more wildlife or at least different wildlife than I would see down south and may encourage areas that need to be protected.

There are seven regional plans in Alberta: the lower Athabasca regional plan, the lower Peace, the North Saskatchewan, the Red Deer regional plan, the South Saskatchewan regional plan, the upper Athabasca, and the upper Peace regional plan. The lower Athabasca and the South Saskatchewan regional plans have been approved. The others have either not been started or are in various stages of development.

That brings us to another small issue. Just a few moments ago I suggested that all statutory documents, or in this case municipal development plans, must be aligned with the Alberta Land Stewardship Act regional plans. So if the regional plans aren't



developed, what then happens? In regions that do not have a functioning regional plan as laid out by the government of Alberta, all municipalities in the province inside of those regions will continue to use the provincial land-use policies developed pursuant to section 622 of the Municipal Government Act to guide land-use planning and development decisions until regional plans are developed in their regions and are approved by the provincial government. At that point the regional plans will replace the provincial land-use policies. So you can see how an MDP, a municipal development plan, and the regional plans actually fit together.

Just one other thing. In the event of a conflict or an inconsistency when we do get into planning, in our case using a municipal development plan here, any kind of inconsistency between that and the regional plan, the regional plan will always trump to the extent of the conflict.

**11:10**

Content of a municipal development plan will hold and reflect some common portions for a lot of municipalities. The Municipal Government Act says that a municipal development plan must address such issues as future land use and development within a municipality, also the delivery of municipal services and facilities as well as intermunicipal issues such as future growth areas and the co-ordination of transportation systems and infrastructure.

The municipal development plan helps council evaluate immediate situations or proposals in the context of a long-range plan. There is usually a list of objectives that the municipality sees as paramount, perhaps a statement about protecting quality farmland in the case of a rural municipality while allowing for subdivision and development to occur. A small urban municipality may speak of responsible growth management, environmental stewardship, and economic vitality and such, but what is common among municipal development plans for small municipalities is the fact that they can be very expensive to put together.

As I look through submissions from stakeholders, I generally start with the two biggest associations that represent municipalities throughout Alberta, those being the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties. These groups are in business to bring concerns of municipalities to government. It turns out that both associations believe that mandatory municipal development plans are a good idea regardless of the size of the municipality. It's important for all municipalities to have this statutory plan to ensure that there is a long-term, transparent approach to land development. But as I stand here and say those words, there is a reality. I alluded to this earlier in my short speech. I'm coming back to the fact that these municipal development plans can be a little expensive, and they're rather hefty tasks to undertake for these smaller communities.

We know that the municipal development plan must be consistent with the regional plan. Reality suggests that a lot of small municipalities – and I can think of several within my own riding – simply don't have a planner or a development officer sitting in the back room waiting for something to do, waiting for something to come across his desk so he can earn his salary. Those just aren't realities in small communities. They rely a lot on a bigger municipality that may offer little bits of help, whatever they can manage, to get their planning done. These little municipalities are doing their best to stay alive. They have income issues every minute of the day. I mean, there's lots to spend money on, a never-ending list, believe me, but having the wherewithal to be able to spend that kind of money for issues that are ongoing within small communities, for example, and to keep a development officer around just can't happen.

In the south, back where I come from, many municipalities let their planning work be done by an organization, actually a commission, called the Oldman River Regional Services Commission. ORRSC is what everybody calls it. Those folks certainly do fine work. They are on top of the regional plans, and they're on top of any potential amendments to the regional plans. Their work is quite accurate so that decisions about planning for statutory documents like municipal development plans align with regional plans, as we talked about before. This is a great organization that helps dozens of municipalities on a daily basis. I'm not sure there aren't just under 30 municipalities that use ORRSC to do all their planning, but the truth is that it's expensive to hire someone like ORRSC to create a document like a municipal development plan.

Where does the money come from for a small municipality to have a municipal development plan created? I've already kind of talked about the fact that it can't be generated from within. These little guys just don't have that ability. The possibility of templates and resources made available to municipalities to assist in the process of developing a municipal development plan is something that both AAMD and C and AUMA think is appropriate. Of course, those municipal associations wouldn't be able to fund something of this magnitude on their own. I would say also that the timeline requirement set forward in the amendment is perhaps not practicable.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just on the edge of my seat there with this very important information about MDPs and how they interact with regional planning and some of the costs that are associated with those in smaller municipalities. I am just a little bit curious to know if perhaps the member had a tiny bit more information to share with us on that very important file.

**Mr. Schneider:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I live to create speeches that put people on the edge of their seats. Really.

I would say that the timeline requirement – I think I said that – may not be practicable. We've already talked about small municipalities not having the capability of developing statutory plans like intermunicipal development plans, you know, which are coming up, and we'll talk about them at a different time. Intermunicipal collaboration frameworks on top of municipal development plans. It's somewhat overwhelming for some of these small villages, that anybody can argue shouldn't be around, but they are around. They have their own government. They're proud of that, and they're proud of what they do within their villages and their municipalities. This is a mountain, I would say, for these municipalities to be trying to climb.

Mr. Speaker, you know, to be perfectly honest, I can see some possible amendments coming forward to see if there are some possibilities of making this particular requirement something that is a little more in line with what small municipalities are actually able to do. That being said, I have every intention of supporting in second reading the ability for mandatory municipal development plans to be put forward in every municipality. But as I alluded to a moment ago, I expect that we will be providing a few amendments later on that will be well intended to make a document such as this just a little bit better.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I couldn't help but note that you made an observation that the wildlife that you see is different in this particular part of the province than in our south area. I just wanted

to caution you. Don't put too much determination in the House that this House is necessarily the definition of wildlife.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great privilege to rise in the House this morning to speak in favour of the Modernized Municipal Government Act. I think this is the way legislation ought to be done, and I want to really congratulate our minister and her staff for the fine job that they did. I think that we've got a real jewel in Municipal Affairs. I've had a chance to meet a lot of people that are working there, and I think they do a fine job.

I had the great pleasure to be able to participate in the consultations in Two Hills, Lac La Biche, Athabasca, and Rocky Mountain House, you know. And through mine as well, of course – I represent a large rural constituency – I've had an opportunity to speak on multiple occasions with councillors from Smoky Lake, Athabasca, Thorhild, and the MD of Opportunity.

11:20

One thing is that one of my prior careers, at the university, was to do qualitative research, and there's usually a kind of a guideline for when you know you've done enough research. It's when you reach what you call the saturation point. The saturation point is when you start hearing the same things from different quarters again and again. I'm quite gratified, listening to members of the opposition speaking on the bill, that I've also heard similar concerns from stakeholders and councillors from around the region. I mean, these are valid concerns.

I guess I would want to take a moment to congratulate, first of all, the obvious diligence and collaborative spirit that the Official Opposition is taking towards this bill. I think this is something that is critical to the future of the province, especially critical for those of us in rural areas, and I really appreciate the tone and the attempt to be helpful. I mean, that's kind of what the opposition normally is supposed to do. I think this could be a wonderful thing to see us put this together.

Also, I think that some congratulations are indeed in order to the former government for setting this consultative process up. You know, being part of the process, I think this is something that, as I said, is an excellent way to make sure that all the stakeholders are treated with respect and that when we put these things into force, they serve Albertans well now and into the future. It's especially important because, of course, I mean, the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, I think, was saying that it's one of the largest pieces of legislation. It's, in fact, I think, the second largest that we have.

Now, that being said, I guess I want to go over and just do a quick overview. I think our minister made an excellent, excellent speech, so maybe I'll just fairly quickly, you know, highlight what I think are kind of the key points or objectives of this legislation and then speak on a preliminary basis to some of the concerns that the hon. members in the opposition have raised. I mean, I think that this bill has three main focuses which I'll pick up, which are, of course, governance, planning and development, and revenues. What we're intending to do, of course, is to work to strengthen the municipal-provincial partnership by enhancing municipal accountability and transparency and to strengthen municipal capacity and viability.

Governance is something – unfortunately, I think it's been long overdue – where we do make some changes. I mean, I can actually speak from experience from just even around my own area. Actually, the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills might remember some of the issues that the county of Lac La Biche had some years ago with municipal governance, problems around that. Within my own constituency, of course, we had issues with the

town of Gibbons, the county of Thorhild, the town of Athabasca, neighbours, you know, to the west in Barrhead, Morinville. Of course, the county of Westlock has been having some issues.

These are actually real tragedies in these small communities because, I mean, unlike maybe some of the large metropolitan areas, when you have these types of conflicts that are not being resolved, you know, within municipal government, you're talking about friends and families fighting with each other. You're talking about long-term divisions in communities that are going to hell. It's really painful to be involved in them. So I think the problem we've had is that the MGA, to this point the only tool that citizens had when they've had concerns about issues in governance, was essentially a sledgehammer. As the opposition members highlighted, you had to go out, you had to get a petition, and then the whole long process sometimes took years in situations where, really, it was more about municipalities actually enforcing their own bylaws and regulations properly, right?

The Ombudsman being able to help in those situations, I think, is going to help a lot with that. I think that's a really positive part of this act that's going to make a lot of people's lives a little bit better and less stressful, especially in rural Alberta, when these changes come into effect.

Now, the other thing that I agree with – and I'm glad they highlighted it – is that when you deal with I believe it's council when they have these issues, very often the problems have stemmed from where councillors overstepped their boundaries, let's say, where they're not quite certain what their proper role in municipal governance is. You know, very often it's very well meaning, but they end up being involved and intervening in areas that perhaps they shouldn't, causing conflict of interest and causing all sorts of problems, and then things start to escalate. This very often, I think, comes from councillors not quite understanding just what their mandated role is. I think that having that training component is also going to make it, perhaps, that citizens will have less recourse to have to go to the Ombudsman to resolve these issues because fewer of these issues are going to be arising in the first place.

I think those are excellent things. I think that we actually have pretty close to unanimity on this issue. I'm trying to confirm if the opposition has actually brought up any major objections. That's a good thing.

Now, coming to the things around growth, one thing that I did also hear was some concerns around the mandatory growth management boards. Now, just so members of the opposition are aware, did we listen to the consultation? Did we listen to feedback? Well, of course, we did. You know, on the online survey over 50 per cent of respondents were in favour of these growth management boards. Now, those are the online respondents from the survey.

We need to make sure that the type of development that goes around our two major metropolises is appropriate, co-ordinated, and sets us up for the future. You know, how can we have responsible growth and development of Alberta's metropolitan regions if we don't have frameworks where the different partners have to sit down at the table to work things out? I mean, we really do need to work together to deal with increased pressures on our natural and built environments in order that we can capitalize effectively on increased opportunities for economic prosperity.

Now, there are a lot of really tangible benefits that can come out of this. For example, instead of duplicating costly services, municipalities will be able to work together to develop more effective, efficient services. I think that will be a real plus and give us some real cost savings. They can also, you know, work to encourage collaborative approaches so that we can develop infrastructure services that are used at our municipal and regional level. It's kind of hard to see how these things can be done

effectively unless you have enduring bodies that do have some type of framework in order for these discussions to be able to go on into the future.

Now, what are these things not about? They are not about reducing the autonomy of rural municipalities. You know, they are about empowering them to be able to work effectively with their rather larger neighbours. I mean, there's also absolutely zero conflict within these growth boards, making sure that agricultural lands are preserved, that you can't have granular approaches to service delivery and to other things.

Of course, change is always a bit unsettling, and I mean, there are going to be concerns, but because of the excellent collaborative relationship the province has been able to develop with municipalities, you know, this open-door policy, I'm very confident that these are going to be worked out satisfactorily and that down the line our municipal partners – Edmonton, Calgary, and the surrounding regions – are going to be very satisfied with the results, with the continuing help of the opposition in case we miss any of the concerns.

11:30

Now, the other concern – just give me a moment here. I know that with the intermunicipal planning agreements there are some concerns, especially from the smaller rural municipalities. The idea is that these are going to be onerous exercises. I just want to assure, you know, any municipal leaders that might be listening to this as well as the members of the opposition that, I mean, nothing could be further from the case. I think that there might actually be interested elements that are going around and telling some of these municipalities that they need to hire all sorts of expensive support – accountants and lawyers and so on – and spend tens or maybe twenties of thousands of dollars in order to put these things into place.

I would say that they might want to take that with a very large grain of salt. I mean, these are basically things that can be very simple, direct, straightforward. If municipalities have ones already existing, there's probably very little work that needs to be done. If they need a place to start, I mean, as the days unfold, you'll see that I'm quite confident there will be plenty of support and assistance for municipalities to get those into place. The results, I think, are going to be wonderful.

I mean, for far too long, especially in some parts – well, many of the members across the floor, as far as some of their own, know that sometimes rural Alberta hasn't been particularly good at collaboration. It tends to be that, in fact, your nearest community is your long-standing rival. I know that if you're from a small town and there's another small town there, you know, if we can do something that helps us and at the same time harms them, maybe that's not a bad thing, right? But that beggar-your-neighbour philosophy is one that we can't afford anymore. I think most of us have gone beyond that, but there are a few exceptions out there that might need some encouragement to sit down at the table.

What I've found is that even though sometimes you have these municipal leaders – because, of course, some are actually doing this already in advance. You know, I have municipal leaders in my own riding that maybe haven't spoken in quite some time that have been motivated to pick up the phone and start working together. What they find out is that once they actually sit down and start trying to work out these agreements, they realize they have a lot more interests in common than they might have thought and a lot of wonderful avenues where collaboration will allay all parts.

I think this is really, I guess, an excellent balance. I know that there were a lot of people concerned with these changes that thought what we were going to do in actual fact was to enforce

amalgamation. Now, nothing could be further from the truth. So having a model that encourages and helps facilitate co-operation while still preserving autonomy for municipal officials, I think, is the best way forward. I'm glad that the other members also agree with it in principle. Just like anything else, of course, change is a bit uncertain. You know, the devil is in the details, that kind of thing, and I'm sure that we will be working to satisfy them as the days go on.

Let's see here. Now, as far as having mandatory development plans for municipalities under 3,500, this is something where I've also heard, of course, from municipal councillors who say: "Well, look, we have two staffpeople in our office. They've got 500 other things to do. This is another layer of difficulty that you're..." [Mr. Piquette's speaking time expired] Oh. I had so much more to say.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a) are there any questions of the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater? The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you. I'll be very brief. Just more of a comment, I guess, and if the member would choose to respond, he's more than welcome to. It's just with respect to those plans and the costs associated with the plans and how simple they can be. I know that as a small municipality of 3,500, approximately, the community of Carstairs in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills – I once was on council and went through the process, and they aren't just small, one-page documents that are quite simple. They're, in fact, very involved.

I notice that we saw the government release an economic impact assessment yesterday, a one-page document on a \$3 billion carbon tax. But specifically to the MDPs and other intermunicipal agreements, Mr. Speaker, I actually take a little bit of – "offence" is the wrong word. But I am concerned that the member would say: "Oh, they're very simple. They're quite easy." In fact, municipalities take these planning documents seriously, and as a result they are costly and do require resources and professionals. So if we're asking them to be professional, we need to be cautious about how flippantly we speak about the importance of these documents.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Yeah. Well, thank you to the hon. member for the question, and I guess, well, commentary would be more apt. I was referring more to the intermunicipal agreements and, you know, updating existing ones. When you're talking about the municipal development plans, that's an entirely different matter. If I gave the impression that I was saying that those are simple and that you could do it on the back of a napkin, I apologize. That was not at all my intent.

Now, that being said, I mean, the concern for the small rural municipalities is that they're saying: we don't have the resources and the time to be able to implement these. Of course, as days progress, we're saying that I'm sure there will be assistance or that I'm confident of that. I can't speak for the ministry, but I'm confident that these concerns will be addressed.

However, I mean, you have to think of the contrary. What does it mean if a municipality doesn't have a plan for its sustainability, if it doesn't have any idea of where it's going to be in five years or 10 years or how to get there? Now, how does that impact their sustainability and viability if they're so caught up in the day-to-day minutiae of just keeping these communities running, which is very time consuming, that they don't have any sort of strategic idea of how they are going to be sustainable into the future? That is of

critical importance for a lot of our smaller communities where, you know, you've got issues of declining employment and you've got an aging population. We do have serious, serious issues without easy solutions to keep these communities sustainable. I really don't understand how we could reach a solution if they're not making sure that they're thinking about that future. I guess that would be my response.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other questions of the member under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I did want to rise briefly to take the opportunity here at second reading of this bill, Bill 21, I believe, if my numbers are correct, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, and just echo some of the comments that have already been made about the process and how that's been such a positive process, a process that has gone on for some time. I remember participating in 2013 or '14 in some round-table discussions in Red Deer, and that was my introduction to the process. So it's great that we're finally here, that we've had a chance through the summer to talk to municipalities in our constituencies, for the government themselves to go around.

I give the Minister of Municipal Affairs a great deal of credit for the work that she and her staff have put in travelling the province and doing so while battling the most devastating natural disaster in Alberta history, for certain, if not in our entire nation. I want to just acknowledge the tremendous work of the minister and, you know, those unsung folks who work in the background. I think all of us in this House know what that means, the impact that that not only has on their lives professionally but personally when travelling the province of Alberta. It's a big place. At the same time, it's, I'm sure, a nice opportunity to get to see the entire province.

So I did just want to acknowledge the tremendous amount of work that went into that process. It is good that we're finally here. The same thing on the opposition side. Some very good questions have been asked. It's nice, though, to know, at second reading anyway, that it looks like we have some consensus that we should move forward.

11:40

On the bill itself, I'm pleased to see that the government has raised questions about affordable housing. It's something I'm personally very passionate about, and it has been a big challenge throughout the province. Certainly, in my own constituency it's a challenge. That may not always be the perception of Calgary-Elbow, but I can tell you that it absolutely is a challenge for the people specifically in Calgary-Elbow but, of course, beyond, in the city of Calgary and all throughout the province. So if there are things that we can do through the Municipal Government Act to help address that, I'm all for it.

Having said that, I have some questions about the specifics of how this all works, the mechanics of this. I imagine those are questions, I would hope, that could be addressed at the committee stage, and I look forward to learning more about that. Growth boards and regional planning, of course, have been a challenge in many municipalities around the province, so having some framework which municipalities can work from, I think, can only be a positive thing.

On the opposition side, of course, our job is to find improvements. I certainly don't want to bring the mood down too much, but I do want to sound a note of caution that, really, the essence of this bill, I believe, is likely to come out through the committee stage. I know, again, that in listening to some of the

debate this morning, there have been a lot of very fair questions raised. The Official Opposition has indicated that perhaps they will consider bringing some amendments. I can well imagine that the government also, I believe – I certainly would not be surprised if we were to see some amendments from the government side as well. It does make it a little challenging at this stage for us to have what amounts to almost a hypothetical discussion. If some of the concerns that we are raising here on the opposition side are going to be addressed by the government in amendments – and I imagine and hope that they will be – I would urge the House to move as quickly as possible to the committee stage so we can have that discussion.

I also just want to put our friends on the government side on notice. Further to the very brief debate this morning on Motion 22, about extending the time of session, what I hope we don't see happen this time is what happened last session, in the spring, where not a lot was accomplished legislatively early on in the sitting and we found ourselves up against the clock at the end, sitting till late, late at night just to simply get through the legislative agenda. I hope that we don't find ourselves in that position again. As we are on day 2 of the fall sitting, we have the opportunity, I think, to move relatively quickly now without, obviously, shortcutting debate and to ensure that we have a thorough analysis and review.

Really, my point is: let's get to this legislation as soon as possible. Let's get to committee stage on Bill 21 in particular as soon as possible to ensure that we can have fulsome and robust debate and do so in a reasonable time frame and that we don't find ourselves up against the clock, bumping into the holiday season. I imagine it can be tempting for the government to do that at times, to perhaps rush through some things that may be a little more controversial than Bill 21. I just want the government to know that those of us on the opposition side are paying very close attention to the scheduling of the proceedings in the House, and we think it's quite important that we move relatively quickly through bills that we can and get to the heart of the matter.

With that, I certainly will support Bill 21 at second reading and look very much forward to seeing what amendments come forward at committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Before we go to 29(2)(a), I'd like permission of the House as I think the Minister of Justice has a request.

**Ms Ganley:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to request unanimous consent to revert to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my extreme pleasure to introduce in this House today sheriff recruit class 961. We have 13 sheriffs with us here today. The rest will be coming by tomorrow. They started their training on October 24 of this year, and they will graduate in February of next year. They are here touring the Legislature Building. Thank you very much for joining us.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 21

#### Modernized Municipal Government Act

(continued)

**The Speaker:** Are there any other questions under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Calgary-Elbow?

Seeing none, the Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to have the sheriffs here. Hopefully, we don't talk you out of sticking with the government after you hear how we operate in here.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief today. There's a lot more to say when we get to the amendments, but I will touch on that. We'll start off with the positive. I would congratulate the minister and the government for getting this here to the House. It's been a long time coming. I know the previous government tried for years and years to get this here and could never get it quite right. Don't be offended, Mr. Speaker, and I hope the minister is not offended when I say that the minister and the government didn't get it quite right. I don't know, with a piece of legislation this big, that you can ever get it exactly right. I guess what I'll appeal to the government on and part of the reason that I'm going to be brief is because I think we need to spend a lot more time in committee than we will on a lot of bills so that we can get it more right.

I'm happy, you know, to give credit for the efforts that the government and the minister have made travelling the province and hearing a lot of feedback. Even through that feedback, I think, and even with some of the amendments the government has pretty much publicly acknowledged they're going to bring forward because of what they've heard – that's good. There's a lot more that we need to talk about, and I sincerely hope that the government will take the time and let the opposition side of the House participate in this because this is an important piece of legislation.

After spending myself nine years on Calgary city council and eight of those on the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association board, I think I have a reasonably good understanding. Here's one thing I know for sure: the group of Albertans who elect people to the municipalities in Alberta is exactly the same group of citizens that elect people to this Legislature. If there was ever a piece of legislation that is political in nature, that we shouldn't take lightly, I think the Municipal Government Act is that.

There's a lot to be said here, I think, that we need to talk about. Affordable housing is a big issue. I think we need to be cognizant, as we go through this, that every time you pile a cost onto a municipality or allow a municipality to pile a cost onto a development project, then those costs, that cost of housing, that cost of land, can only be recovered from one place. We need to be aware of that.

I know that it talks in here about the off-site levies for fire halls and police stations and all of that. I think I heard in some of the government contact earlier or from the minister that it'll be more collaborative, and I would suggest that, in my opinion, it might be more collaborative. I can tell you that when I was at the city of Calgary, we collected levies for a lot of these things even though we weren't allowed to in the Legislature. "How would you do that and have that be legal?" you might ask. It is because we actually negotiated with the development industry and got them to voluntarily pay those levies, by negotiating with them.

I think we need to talk about this in Committee of the Whole. I know that many municipalities are in favour of this, so I'm cognizant of that. It may be fine, but I think we need to talk about

that. One of the things that this will do is change the power structure, which might be a little bit less collaborative. Because of the fact that we had to negotiate as a municipality with the development industry to get these levies before, that meant that both sides were at the table. We were fairly equal in power, if you will, in that the city needed the development industry to develop the land and do things, and the development industry needed the city for the land-use approvals to get things done. The only way to do that and pay for all the things with the levies was to come to an agreement.

Now we will be in a position where municipalities will be able to basically have all of the power, and that's fine until those that they depend upon go somewhere else because it doesn't make sense to work there anymore. I'm just asking that we be sensitive to that. I understand why municipalities want to do that, and I'm not against it per se, but I just think that this is one of many issues where we need to tread just a little bit carefully.

11:50

When we talk about the inclusionary zoning, again, it's one of those affordable housing things in that it sounds good to say that a certain percentage of land or a certain number of units in a building have to be affordable housing. The reduced cost received on one piece has to be charged somewhere else, so what you'll end up with is either less affordable housing somewhere else or less affordable business development areas somewhere else, which could make the municipality less competitive.

You know what? I'm not going to pick on the government here because this is complex, it's big, but my appeal is that the government take the time in Committee of the Whole. I think that if we work together in this Legislature, we can make a pretty good effort, started here by the government, even better.

I know the government has published just recently their What We Heard document, and they put it online. Thank you. It's always good when we don't have to look for it, when you push it right out there to us. That's very helpful, and I thank you for that, Minister. The government document What We Heard is a good document, but members of the opposition, the other side of the House, probably have a what-we-heard document, too, or at least pieces of it that we might have heard differently. I think that if we commit to working together on this, we can make it the best it can be when we're all finished. Again, when you're looking at something that affects every municipality in Alberta, which by definition it does, if ever there was a piece of legislation where we should take the time and hash it out clause by clause if necessary, Mr. Speaker, I think this is that piece of legislation.

I hope I haven't taken too long. I hope the minister and the government side will seriously consider this because I think that if we do work together, we can get the best result for all of us.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments for the Member for Calgary-Hays under 29(2)(a)? The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the Member for Calgary-Hays for his comments. I couldn't agree more that there is a significant amount of work to be done here on this piece of legislation and that all voices in this House are important in getting it right. I just wonder. I know that members of this Assembly will be familiar with our desire to have important pieces of legislation like this referred to committee . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you are under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Cooper:** Right, where I'm making a question or a comment, and I think that the standing orders allow for about five minutes for that to take place, whether it's me or other members inside the Chamber.

We like to make recommendations that these types of pieces of legislation are referred to committee. I know that the member spoke at length about the importance of Committee of the Whole. Do you think, Member, that while all the consultations that took place over the summer were important, if a piece of legislation like this had been referred to committee, from that committee, then, we could have all received the same information, we could have all heard from all of the witnesses at the same time, and then gone through a process of potentially amending the bill there instead of what is likely to be quite a rapid-fire, back-and-forth discussion on amendments coming up here in Committee of the Whole?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for the question, and I think it's a good question. Because of the complexity of this legislation and all the variables – and, again, I'm not pretending that it's easy, and again I'll compliment the government for getting it here. But to answer the member's question, yes, I think this would benefit from a committee. While the collective wisdom of 87 minds is good, lots of times the conversation can be less stilted with the collective wisdom of 15 in a committee. Things can move a little bit faster. You can have a more fulsome discussion. The process isn't quite as formal in committee as it is here in the Legislature.

In my opinion, to the hon. member, I believe that this legislation – and again I'll compliment the government on getting it this far – could probably even benefit from having some committee work done on it, not in the spirit of any partisanship but, rather, quite the opposite. I think that would actually make it more able to be looked at in a more fulsome, nonpartisan way because I think that on all sides of the House there's legitimate wisdom and legitimate input that would benefit the legislation, and that, of course, would benefit all of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or observations to the Member for Calgary-Hays under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand today and speak to second reading of Bill 21. I'd like to thank my colleague from Little Bow for the brief geography lesson that we received today. It was quite interesting.

It looks like I'm going to run out of time here pretty quickly. In my consultations with local municipalities, of which I represent quite a few, both rural and urban, kind of a common theme was sustainable, predictable funding. You know, much of that concern came from linear taxation, some of the losses that we've had in the last year; for instance, the loss of grants in lieu of taxes to urban municipalities.

One of the main ones that we've found with the rural municipalities when it comes to linear is the issue of noncollectible

taxes. We've got quite a few small gas and oil companies that are facing insolvency and leaving a lot of our municipalities with unpaid taxes, and in some instances these municipalities have been forced to rely on local residents, transferring it on to property owners as a separate line item on their tax assessments, some of them to the tune of anywhere from \$80 to \$200 extra over and above what they pay on their taxes.

Like I said, we've already seen this issue coming up in rural municipalities, and there's been some concern that this wasn't addressed as part of the MGA. What they would be looking at, rather than having to pass this on to their residents, which is very unpopular, I might add, is that they might see some assistance from this provincial government under this MGA to assist them in instances where they've planned for this taxation as part of their budget and then, at the end of the day, the oil companies have moved on and these taxes are uncollectible.

There's also been a lot of talk about the intermunicipal collaboration frameworks and municipal development plans, all very good ideas, and I'm seeing a lot of support from my municipalities in regard to that, you know, more from the urban municipalities than the rurals, of course, because the rurals are expected to share a little bit with the urbans as far as infrastructure goes.

The question that arises is: how do you commit to an MDP or an ICF or even develop one when you don't have a sustainable, predictable funding model? Right? You try to plan ahead. There are concerns over the MSI funding, that there's no real predictable model there, and they're facing these delinquent industrial taxes. In some of our urban areas we've got people that are moving out, losing their houses, and who can't afford to pay their taxes. We've had instances where residents have come to the municipality and negotiated payment plans for their taxes because they're going through hard times. All of these are issues that affect the development of the MDPs and ICFs with regard to sustainable, predictable funding.

**12:00**

Another thing with the MDPs and the ICFs – and I know that my colleague from Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater spoke on it – is that they do require extensive work and commitment by both urban and rural municipalities. Some of the smaller municipalities and villages may not have the funds available. Just adding this burden onto them may push some of these folks over the edge and make them unsustainable, where they'd have to be amalgamated in with the urban municipality, which puts another burden onto the urban municipality that's already done their MDP and hadn't planned on absorbing this other community. Their question is: will there be funding available to assist ...

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if I might interject.

We're at noon. A motion to adjourn till 1:30?

**Ms Ganley:** I can make that motion, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 12:01 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 1, 2016

Day 42

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawthood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
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Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
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Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),  
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Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
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Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 1, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of introductions to make today. First, it's my honour to introduce to you and through you two classes of students from the Victoria school of the arts, who are seated with us today in the public gallery and the members' gallery. With them today are their teachers Mrs. Nancy Adamson, Ms Hilary Mussell, Ms Annette Fraser, Ms Krystal Kulka, Mr. Remi Desjardins, and Mrs. Stacey Taylor as well as Mrs. Susan Hammett and Mr. Dan Mackie. I would ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

I have one other introduction. With us also today are some students from NorQuest College in the transitions to employment program: Brenda Chwyl, Ellen Robb, and Irena Darrah. I would ask that they also rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school groups that we have as guests today? The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you members of McArthur elementary school with their teacher, Ginette Larocque, and adults Mark Marchand and Brett Hudyma. I think they're coming a little bit later, but I just wanted to get it in that they're here because they're such an awesome group. Ms Larocque is their teacher; she also was my daughter's teacher years ago, so it's kind of a cool coincidence. Let's give them a hand for being here.

**The Speaker:** Welcome to them as well.

Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the great honour of introducing to you and through you four former heritage interpreters who've served at the Legislative Assembly Office's visitor services for a total of 35 years together. We have Mrs. Janet Scott, who served for 12 and a half years, from Riverbend, Edmonton; Mrs. Cathy de Frece from the constituency of Sherwood Park, who served for seven years; Mr. Charles Grelle from Spruce Grove, who served for seven years; and Ms Arlene Kissau, who served for eight years and resides in the community of St. Albert. I should also note that their service here at the Legislative Assembly coincided with that of six of our Premiers, including our current Premier. I would like to ask the four of them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

To the schoolchildren who are here: these individuals have spoken to many, many groups, and they know very much, far more than I do, about this institution.

Thank you for your public service.

The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you a constituent of mine, my younger brother Camilo Esteban Cortes-Vargas. I want to take a moment to recognize that he's a strong and articulate and very thoughtful young person. We get along most of the time although I was told today that in his mock Legislature he was the Leader of the Official Opposition. Later on I found out that he was advocating for lowering postsecondary education costs, so I believe that we're on the same page. I would ask Camilo to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any others? The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Tim Grover and Mr. Ryan Maxwell. Tim is the CEO of Terrapin Geothermics; Ryan Maxwell is the executive chairman. Tim is also the former executive director of the Alberta Party and a tremendously bright guy. I just wanted to acknowledge them here today and recognize them for their fine work on diversifying Alberta's economy and bringing remarkable new technologies to our province. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests for introduction today? The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some very special guests who have joined us in the gallery today. November is Family Violence Prevention Month in Alberta, and this year marks the 30th anniversary of when it began, in the town of Hinton. What started in Hinton in 1986 has since united Albertans to put an end to family violence in our province.

Today I would like to acknowledge a group of inspiring Albertans who are true community champions. I'm honoured to introduce Rasheal Charles and Carol Siziba from the elder resource and support team for helping elderly adults experiencing abuse and neglect. Also in the gallery are Amy Jeannotte from Youcan Youth Services, an organization dedicated to providing supports to youth who are impacted by bullying, and, lastly, Mr. Len Rhodes, CEO and president of the Edmonton Eskimos, who played a key role in starting the CFL's leading change program in partnership with Alberta Council of Women's Shelters. Through this program players go to the local high school and mentor younger men on gender-based violence prevention. Your presence here today is a reminder to all Albertans that everyone can do something to prevent family violence any time and any place. It's my honour to ask the distinguished guests to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

#### 2019 Canada Winter Games

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker and fellow members. It is my distinct pleasure to draw attention to the 2019 Canada Winter Games, being held in my hometown of Red Deer. To date this will be the largest event hosted in Red Deer and one of the largest multisport and cultural events held in Alberta in more than two decades. From February 15 through March 19 Alberta's

third-largest city will be the gracious host to over 3,600 athletes and coaches; 20,000 visitors are anticipated to generate an economic impact of over \$132 million and stimulate the social and cultural essence of my pride, Red Deer. The dedication of over 5,000 volunteers, an 18-member board led by chair Lyn Radford, and an experienced and driven administrative staff will no doubt produce the most successful Canada Games in history.

Embracing the social, economic, and cultural impact, these games have stimulated several contributions: the Red Deer regional airport, the Gaetz/QEII interchange, and the legacy of the G.W. Harris Canada Games Centre. This directly enhances the economy for the community-minded citizens of Red Deer, Red Deer county, and Albertans alike.

These games are a fantastic occasion for the over 100,000 Canadian athletes who have showcased their physical talent and spirit since the games' inception in 1967. I wish to thank the 2019 Canada Winter Games board of governors for their dedication and leadership in ushering in such a monumental sporting occasion. Additional pride goes to Red Deer's very own legendary Ron MacLean, co-host of *Hockey Night in Canada*, and his wife, Cari, the honorary chairpersons.

With breadth of engagement reaching our true north strong and free, Red Deer's 2019 Winter Games will resonate the pride of our Alberta. Go, team Alberta.

#### Medicine Hat-Cardston-Warner 2016 By-election

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate my friend and Conservative candidate Glen Motz on his victory in the Medicine Hat-Cardston-Warner federal by-election last week. Mr. Motz grew up on a family farm just north of Hanna, Alberta. While attending Hillcrest Christian college, he met and married his wife, Sue, and they have had two children, and now they have six grandchildren. Mr. Motz began a policing career in Medicine Hat in 1980. He went on to receive numerous accolades and service awards. My colleagues and I are very much looking forward to working with Mr. Motz on important issues facing Albertans.

1:40

Right now, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are immensely concerned about the lack of jobs and a reeling economy. They're worried about how they're going to come up with the money that they need to pay for these new taxes that these provincial and federal governments are saddling them with.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard some NDs criticize the 1 per cent and talk about how they represent the 99 per cent or, as they like to say, the majority of Albertans. However, I couldn't help but notice something very interesting about the last election. The NDP received 350 out of 34,000 cast votes. I believe that works out to about 1 per cent. I don't think it's a coincidence that only 1 per cent of the voters thought that the Leap Manifesto NDP are the best representation for them. Since the NDP can't be that excited about these results, perhaps they should re-evaluate their position and consider whose interests they really are representing.

This government continually claims that Albertans support its agenda, but seeing as we are here to help, we'd like to offer some friendly advice: you might want to get out a little bit more. Mr. Speaker, the results of this by-election send a crystal clear message to both the federal Liberals and the provincial NDP that in our neck of the woods we are most and still resoundingly strong and free, and we are still conservative.

#### Electricity Power Purchase Agreements

**Mr. Fraser:** There's a saying that when you think you're leading and you turn around and nobody's following, it really tells you where you stand. We saw that this summer when the government decided to forge ahead despite the warnings from private industry, all opposition parties, and the public service. The result: power companies having the legal right to return power purchase agreements to the Balancing Pool because of a clause that was clearly visible and well known for over 15 years. We saw this government try to pin perfectly legal contracts on the previous government and vilify power companies who have made tremendous contributions to our communities over the years. Instead of honouring legal contracts between government and our job creators, the government doubled down and launched an ad campaign in local papers across the province.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans know better. Because of PPAs we've had a reliable supply of energy over the past many years, and in fact Alberta has had the cheapest energy among the provinces historically. Albertans know about the contributions made by these power companies because they work for these companies: investments in capital utility infrastructure and green energy initiatives, just to name a few. Albertans are proud of the fact that these companies have invested significantly in renewable energy, and in fact 15 per cent of our grid is already from renewables. Thanks to these companies we are well on the way to the government's goal of 30 per cent renewables by 2030.

Enmax and Capital Power are owned by Albertans. Premier, you're suing Albertans. They know that no matter the outcome of this case, they will be on the hook for this costly litigation when they can least afford it. But rest assured that the PC caucus has Albertans' backs and will hold this government accountable and put forward solutions to avoid issues like this one in the future. The NDP have clearly lost in the court of public opinion. It's time for this government to own up to your mistakes.

**The Speaker:** Allow me to remind all members that there is a courtesy in this House that is practised: when members' statements are being made, comments are not made.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

#### Treaty 7 First Nations

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On September 30 I and many of my constituents attended a theatrical performance called *Making Treaty 7*. I attended this artistic show at the Grey Eagle Resort and Casino, which is on the Tsuut'ina Nation reserve lands adjacent to the constituency of Calgary-Glenmore. This amazing performance meticulously tells the history and story of First Nations communities, with a focus on the experiences of the people of Treaty 7. The performance took the audience back to the days when numbered treaties between First Nations and Queen Victoria were signed, from 1871 to 1921. It highlights the implications of what happened during the 137 years after the agreement was signed, in 1877.

Making Treaty 7 is also the name of a nonprofit cultural society responsible for the theatrical production, that conducts events serving the interests of people of all ages and backgrounds. Making Treaty 7 events not only appeal to Calgarians but also to Albertans and to all Canadians to pursue together a bright and sustainable future for all. The performance itself was at times profound and intense yet can raise the hope found in diversity, unity, and the story that we're all treaty people.

Calgary is built on Treaty 7 territory, and as the city grows, so does our culture. Hence, *Making Treaty 7* is a window to view the history of Calgary, this province, and to understand First Nations' experience of it. It is also a gateway to experience the evolution of our society as we all grow together as treaty people in the great city of Calgary.

I would like to congratulate the team of Making Treaty 7 for their outstanding and valuable contributions in our communities. I'm very proud to say that I am the MLA for Calgary-Glenmore and neighbour to the Tsuut'ina Nation.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Day of the Dead

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Remarks in Spanish] As one of the first three Latin Americans elected in the province of Alberta, it gives me incredible pride to stand in this Legislature today to speak on one of the most important celebrations of Latin America, a celebration founded on an indigenous world view that later was combined with the Catholic tradition brought by the Europeans that arrived on this continent. Day of the Dead is a tradition focused on our ancestors, highlighting for us the importance of our history through our familial and personal relationships, a celebration that allows us not to forget those who walked this Earth before we did. [As submitted]

Day of the Dead is a celebration where we honour our dead because of the indigenous belief that if we do not honour them, we will forget them forever. To me, this celebration is so incredibly important because it highlights a different understanding of the world. Some may ask themselves, "How is it that you may celebrate death?" but I will remind people that to the indigenous people of Abya Yala, or Turtle Island as our sisters and brothers here in the north call it, death is not something of which we are afraid. As we continue to explore each other's traditions and cultures, we begin to understand that we have much more in common than we have different.

On this Day of the Dead may you all reflect on those in your life who have passed and have left a resounding influence on the person that you have become. The more we understand our lives as being relational, the more we will understand the importance of how we all need to work with one another for unity so that we may build a better world for all.

I ask all the members of the Legislature to please join me and my colleagues in the rotunda at 6 p.m., after our session is over, for the official Day of the Dead ceremony. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### Seniors' Housing in Fort McMurray

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to a matter of great importance for the residents of the municipality of Wood Buffalo, from Fort Chipewyan to Conklin. My friend and colleague Brian Jean fought hard for two years in Ottawa to get the federal government to grant six acres of downtown Fort McMurray real estate to the province under the condition that it be used for the development of seniors' housing and long-term care delivery. Alberta's last three Premiers had promised to complete this project, yet this land remains empty today. This is a project that both the Wildrose and the NDP campaigned on.

People will retire in Fort McMurray. There are people who were born and grew up there. Their families are ingrained in our community. Grandparents in Newfoundland and Ontario are

moving there because their kids and their grandkids are there. Our indigenous communities are asking why this isn't built. The elders of our region desire to retire there as this is their ancestral land, and they wish to be close to their families so that they may pass on the culture and the language of the Cree and the Dene.

The last government committed to delivering 1,500 long-term care beds in the province, and this government has promised 500 more than that. I encourage this government to work with the people of our region and get Willow Square built. Consult with the community, and I promise you that you will not have an adversary but a knowledgeable and innovative partner that will help create a viable solution that will address our seniors' housing issues for the next 30 years.

This facility would be in the heart of Fort McMurray and has the potential to allow our people to age in community. Did I mention that it would also free up an entire floor of our hospital? Let's get this right. Support a seniors' facility in Fort McMurray, and fulfill a promise to our senior citizens.

Thank you.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Electricity Power Purchase Agreements

**Mr. Jean:** Earlier this year the NDP government decided to completely undermine investment confidence in Alberta by going to court to rip up 17-year-old contracts. My questions are not about the court case but about whether this government is competent or telling the truth. Today the Wildrose proved that Enmax briefed senior political staff and civil servants of this government about the change-in-law clause in the PPAs, and they did that before they used that clause to turn back the PPA. Does the Premier still stick by the government's fiction that they didn't know about this clause in the PPAs until three months later?

### Speaker's Ruling

#### Sub Judice Rule

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I feel the need to once again remind the House about the sub judice principle. I wish to remind you of Standing Order 23(g), also known as the sub judice rule, which governs statements made in this Assembly about legal proceedings before the courts. Members should not be engaging in debate or asking questions which may prejudice a civil proceeding "that has been set down for a trial or notice of motion filed, as in an injunction proceeding."

Let me say again that I understand that an application was filed in July of this year by the government of Alberta seeking a declaration with respect to several power purchase agreements. It's extremely challenging for me to make a determination on whether statements made in this Assembly might prejudice those proceedings without knowing all of the particulars of the case, and I must rely on the members and ministers who have greater information about the possible prejudicial effect of a question or an answer. Members are referred to pages 627 to 629 of *O'Brien and Bosc* and pages 153 and 154 in *Beauchesne's* for a discussion of the sub judice principle and their applications to the statements made by members in this House.

I would note also that Standing Order 23(g) states that "where there is any doubt as to prejudice, the rule should be in favour of the debate." I will therefore allow some latitude with respect to this matter, but I would also urge members to exercise discretion when

engaging in a debate, asking questions, or giving answers on this matter or any other matter which would be subject to the sub judice rule.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

### **Electricity Power Purchase Agreements** (continued)

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To begin with, there is absolutely nothing new in the documents that the member opposite referred to today. They've already been made public. I do congratulate him on his growing use of Google. Having said that, I think that, generally speaking, the matter is getting into a level of detail that is more appropriately reserved for the attention of the courts. This is not the appropriate forum for that detail. In general, our government will take every opportunity outside of the courts to stand up for consumers, both industrial and residential, and we won't stop doing that.

**Mr. Jean:** Every shred of public evidence shows that at the very least this government's bureaucrats knew of the change-in-law provision as early as last September, a year ago. Now the elected officials claim that they didn't know until a full six months later. It's unbelievable. The NDP excuse is that they were ignorant and that their staff was incompetent. Why does the Premier think that Albertans should pay for this colossal billion-dollar mistake, and why hasn't anybody been fired for incompetence?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, as I've already indicated, the information on the matter that the member opposite is raising has been in the public sphere for some time. Generally speaking, getting into the kinds of details that they're talking about is not appropriate for this forum, and what we are going to do is stand up for consumers, residential and industrial, because those folks should not have to be paying costs that are not rightly theirs.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, ripping up a long-standing government contract on the flimsiest of arguments is something that is beneath a democratic country in a modern economy. It will scare away investment in Alberta just when we need people to invest in our electricity industry. The government's handling of this is either incompetent or dishonest or simply both. Why is this Premier taking us down this path that will have long-term negative implications for Alberta's prosperity and short-term negative implications for getting anyone at all interested in investing in our electricity generation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we are about to commence a great deal of consultation on the matter of incenting investment into our energy sector and into our electricity sector, something that needs to be done because the current system set up by the previous government is not sustainable to attract investment into capital in the electricity sector. So we're doing that. We're doing that in good faith, and we will continue to have those conversations on behalf of all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

### **Carbon Levy Economic Impact**

**Mr. Jean:** Yesterday the NDP government released an analysis on their carbon tax that looks like it was scribbled on the back of a napkin. It was totally void of potential job loss numbers. It had zero information about what the carbon tax's impact would be on our most important industries. In no case did it cite the damage that it would cause for our farm and energy sectors, and nowhere did it calculate the devastation that the accelerated coal shutdown will have on communities across Alberta. When will the Premier release the full report and be honest with Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We released our most up-to-date conclusions yesterday, as the member identified. They show what most other reports also show, that under the worst-case scenario there would be a very modest negative impact, not taking into account the cost of doing nothing, which is significant. Our plan will diversify the economy, it will create jobs, it will protect the environment, and it will help Alberta reposition itself as the modern, progressive energy producer that it needs to be.

**Mr. Jean:** And, of course, almost triple the electricity rates for every Albertan.

The Premier's office is trying to hide behind a ridiculous excuse that the full analysis is subject to cabinet confidentiality, which is code for they don't want to release the numbers. The fact is that it took a year for the NDP to produce a single sheet of paper on the damages that this carbon tax will have on our economy. The fact is that the government isn't releasing their full analysis and is not giving Albertans the truth about what they can expect and the higher costs. When will the Premier release this government's report that shows all the numbers and come clean to Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, this is actually quite super rich coming from an Official Opposition where the fact is that they weren't able to release a shadow budget. The fact is that they weren't able to release their own response to the climate change issue. The fact is that they have no plan to deal with the climate change problems threatening our whole province and our economy. Very rich coming from that side.

**Mr. Jean:** The government's one-page brief says that the NDP carbon tax will cause only a, quote, modest drop in GDP, that modest drop at a time when Alberta has seen over 100,000 jobs vanish under the NDP's watch. A modest drop in the GDP means thousands more Albertans will be out of a job or they won't be able to find one. The fact is that the NDP's flagship economic policy is wreaking havoc on our province and hurting the working families who we are supposed to help and defend. How, then, can the Premier justifiably intentionally shrink our economy and cost so many Albertans more jobs and more quality of life?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I think that at a time of the kind of challenge that we have right now, the kind of hyperbole that we hear from the members opposite is not really helpful.

I'd like to point to another report done, in fact, by a minister in the Leader of the Official Opposition's former federal government and staff from the former Prime Minister's office, which concluded, actually, that "for energy producing provinces, an Alberta-style hybrid carbon price model ... improves economic performance by 1.43%." Not everybody, it appears, has their head firmly buried in the sand, just the Official Opposition.



**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
First question.

2:00

### Justice System Delays

**Mr. Jean:** There is a very serious problem in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. Sexual assault victims are watching attackers walk away scot-free. One woman suffered an assault that required multiple blood transfusions and surgery to recover from her injuries. Her attacker is now walking free around Alberta without any consequence. The NDP has been in power for nearly a year and a half, but the fact is that it has taken far too long for action. Our courts are starved for resources, and we've seen barely any public effort by this government to push Ottawa to appoint more judges. Why didn't the NDP act sooner so that we can see justice for the victims in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying that our government feels very strongly for those who are the victims of crime, and we understand that it matters a great deal to them to see the matter addressed quickly, as it does to all community members, because, of course, those kinds of things shouldn't be allowed to go unaddressed within our community and our society. Since we've been elected, our minister has worked very hard to push the federal government to appoint more judges. Indeed, we just recently saw, I believe, seven more judges appointed as a result of her efforts. We've also appointed, I believe, nine additional...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** While we welcome these new judicial positions, the fact is that we are still waiting for Ottawa, and the NDP failed to address this as soon as they came into office or soon enough. In my home of Fort McMurray a young mum of two watched the man accused of assaulting her walk free just last week. She had to listen to the attacker's lawyer actually say, and I quote: you're free; we won. This is totally unacceptable. What meaningful action will this government take, will anyone in this government take to sound the alarm to Ottawa and start giving our courts the resources they need to hold criminals to account?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again I very much sympathize with the people that the member opposite describes, but I think it's important to understand that part of the delay that we're dealing with is the fact that Alberta has had significantly fewer judges per capita than any other province in the country, and that difference arose under the watch of the previous Conservative government, of which this member was a member. You know, the matter has been allowed to fester for about a decade, and addressing the deficit in judicial services takes time. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. government members, I hope you contain your comments and volume.

**Mr. Jean:** I notice that with this government it's always somebody else's fault. They're in power, and they have to do it.

In Calgary there are potentially 400 cases that could be thrown out right now due to delays. Two murder cases are at risk of being tossed out. The fact is that resources for our courts and for our prosecutors are too low. There are not enough judges, and now the province is in a position where we are having to triage criminal cases. This is unacceptable. At a time when crime is rising across Alberta, this has significant ramifications for Albertans and all of

our communities. What can the government tell the scores of victims about why they haven't acted sooner to fix this problem?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've indicated, just two weeks ago our government did announce that we were funding 10 additional judicial positions. We've also added significantly to the rosters of Provincial Court judges. We also increased legal aid by 20 per cent. We also increased the budget to ALERT after the federal government cut funding, for a total of \$30 million. We are working diligently on this matter. The Minister of Justice is working diligently on this matter. We care very much about the communities that are worried about their safety, and we will continue to do that work.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

### Health Care and Education Funding

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I asked this question and didn't get an answer, so I will try it again today. To the Premier: will you commit today that your government will keep its promise to not lay off or reduce hours of teachers and nurses during this term of office? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his question, and I certainly hope that our exchange today doesn't put any of his guests to sleep. Let me just suggest that our government will continue to invest in public health care, and we will add more front-line services every year. There will be no layoffs, absolutely no layoffs. We will not go back to the slash-and-burn cuts of the 1990s, overseen by members of that caucus in the past, that hurt families and undermined our public services. We will continue to support our health care and our education.

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Premier, for that answer.

Mr. Speaker, my question now to the Premier is: is it your contention that up till now, between the time you were elected and today, you haven't reduced hours or laid off teachers or nurses during this term of office so far?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've indicated, there have been and will be no layoffs. What we have done is that we have cancelled the unfair health premiums from the previous government, we've partnered with physicians and signed a new agreement to save half a billion dollars to help slow the rate of spending growth and deliver better care, and we've moved forward on enhancing the use of affordable generic drugs, where appropriate, to bring in cost savings. We do need to control the rate at which our health care costs are increasing, and the Minister of Health is working diligently on that within the context of understanding the extreme value of our public health care system to all Albertans.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, this is instructive, Mr. Speaker, because up till now the Premier and her front bench have all said that they couldn't possibly reduce any expenditures anywhere in their budget without laying off teachers and nurses. [interjections] No. They've said it repeatedly. So I will say to the Premier: in between, would you consider perhaps not spending \$200 million on a laundry service for AHS that they don't need and \$50 million for a laboratory? Those are other ways that you could actually save the taxpayers money without laying off teachers or nurses.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, apparently, the members opposite want to lay off nurses, teachers, and laundry workers. Nonetheless, I would urge the members opposite to read the budget that was introduced last March because, in fact, we made it very clear there that it was our plan to try to slowly reduce the rate of increase in the health care sector. Under the previous deal, signed by members opposite, with respect to physicians, for instance, we were scheduled to see an 8 per cent a year increase in 10 per cent of the budget because of the AMA deal. We understood that it was necessary to reduce that rate of . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

#### **Power Purchase Agreements and the Balancing Pool**

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In September I released a detailed financial analysis showing that the Balancing Pool will be bankrupt before the end of this year. Now, I have a simple question for the Minister of Energy. When will the Balancing Pool run out of money, and what will you do when it does?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. We are working with the Balancing Pool and with the PPA matter right now, and we will have more to answer about that in the next while.

**Mr. Clark:** I guess we've learned why this is called question period, not answer period, Mr. Speaker. But I will try again. I will try again.

It is an indisputable fact that this government's policies have put the Balancing Pool on a path to bankruptcy. In fact, it may already be bankrupt today, right this minute. Again to the Minister of Energy: when the Balancing Pool goes bankrupt, will you commit here and now that you will not use taxpayer money to bail out the Balancing Pool?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. Again, to reiterate, we're working with the Balancing Pool and the finances going forward. It's a complex issue with the PPAs and all the different pieces of the puzzle. They do have money today, and we're working to make sure they have money in the future.

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, with respect, it's actually a very simple issue. The Balancing Pool may have already been bailed out by this government. This government is going to use taxpayer dollars to bail out the Balancing Pool to cover their own incompetence. The answer is simple. They could have chosen to accept back all of the PPAs and allowed the Balancing Pool to mitigate financial losses to Albertans. Again to the Minister of Energy: will you drop the

damaging lawsuit, accept back the PPAs, and set about the hard work of rebuilding Alberta's reputation as a great place to invest?

**2:10**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, actually, the member across the way is incorrect in his assumption that we have given money. We have not. We, again, are working with the PPA issue. The Balancing Pool has funds right now, and we will continue to work with them to ensure that there are funds moving forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

#### **Craft Breweries**

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, this summer you spent some time on the road touring small breweries across the province and meeting with local entrepreneurs. Given that the founders of Troubled Monk Brewery in Red Deer were pleased that government policy is supporting local businesses and employing Albertans, can you report back to the House about the tour and feedback you heard from other Alberta small businesses?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much to the Member for Red Deer-South. Yes, I did go around the province, to about six or seven different communities, and met with small brewers. I can tell you that they're very happy with the small breweries development grant and what we've put in place. That grant supports capital investment and allows them to hire on people, and they are doing that. I met the new person at Troubled Monk. There are over 43 small breweries as a result of the investment back in and 23 new licences as of May 2016. So beer is good, beer is fine in this province.

**The Speaker:** The first supplemental, please.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the important steps this government has taken to promote jobs and diversify the economy, to the same minister: can you explain to the House how Alberta's liquor market compares to other jurisdictions in Canada?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you to the Member for Red Deer-South. Mr. Speaker, our model is an open system. Anybody who wants to fill out a two-page application and give \$75 to AGLC can get their beer marketed in this province. There are over 7,435 labels of beer. All I can say is that there's so much beer and so little time.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we have heard from the opposition that they don't agree with this policy and prefer to see the government go back to the old way of doing things, to the same minister: can you tell the House why our government rejects this out-of-touch, backward-looking approach?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, the Member for Red Deer-South is totally correct in that assertion. We are standing up for breweries, small beer development, on this side. On that side they're standing up for breweries in other provinces. I don't understand that. We heard loud and clear that brewing in this province is good. It creates jobs. It needed a change. We listened; they don't want to listen. We're going to continue to drink Alberta craft beer.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

### PDD Service Delivery

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 1 the Minister of Human Services removed the criteria which determined the level of funding and supports received for persons with developmental disabilities. According to the department's website it says that the SIS, or supports intensity scale, is currently under review. To the Minister of Human Services: what is the status of this review, and when will it be published?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We know that that's an important issue for the disability community, service providers, and families, and it is critical that we listen to their feedback and work collaboratively with them. The feedback over the past year: we heard that SIS was not the right tool, and it was rejected unanimously by the entire PDD community in the consultations. That's why we removed it, and we will work with the community to bring in a tool that is more respectful and that works for the community.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Pitt:** No timeline, I guess.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that aspects of SIS were dehumanizing, but given that over the summer I've heard from numerous PDD care providers that their funding has been cut as a result of having no funding guidelines for government agencies and given that these caregivers often provide around-the-clock, life-sustaining therapy, when can we expect the regulations to govern PDD support funding?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Speaker. Thank you, Member, again. SIS was only one such tool with many other tools to determine the funding and to determine the supports. SIS primarily was used to determine the supports and outcomes. If there is a specific case where funding was cut, I will certainly look into it. SIS doesn't determine funding levels. Funding levels remain the same as they were before.

**Mrs. Pitt:** It's a half-truth, Mr. Speaker.

Given that families who depend on this funding are becoming increasingly frustrated with this government throwing money at layers upon layers of bureaucracy with little to the front lines and given that according to the ministry's website there are over 10 pages of senior VPs, VPs, directors, and other middle managers, what is the minister doing to ensure that public dollars are being effectively administered to the front-line care workers and the vulnerable Albertans they serve?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We are absolutely committed to making sure that public dollars are spent in a transparent and accountable manner. Ever since I've been minister, I have been working in consultation with the PDD community, their representative organization, and their guardians, who know best their problems and the solution to those problems, and that's what we will do going forward to make sure that the PDD dollars reach to where they belong.

Thank you.

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

### Electricity Power Purchase Agreement Lawsuit

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is not about the ongoing PPA court case but about the choice in counsel. The NDP has launched a court action against its own government to declare a portion of the PPA invalid. In doing so, it chose to not utilize its own legal counsel at Alberta Justice, nor did it hire an Alberta law firm. Instead, it retained a lawyer in British Columbia who has strong connections to the NDP. To the Premier: why are you using Albertans' tax dollars to hire NDP friends in B.C.? Is this not an insult to Alberta's legal community?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and, in fairness, to the member for asking the question as well. It's of course important to make sure, especially when we're in items of such high stakes, where we're standing up for Albertans – companies who've been very successful and making \$10 billion worth of profits now are at a point where they want to return potential losses back to taxpayers. It's important that we hire the very best lawyer in the country who has a track record of standing up for the public interest and for citizens. And that is who we absolutely chose in this case.

**The Speaker:** First . . .

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans have expressed surprise that the NDP is challenging its own government's PPAs and given that Albertans need to have faith that their government is working in their best interests and given that there has to be qualified legal expertise in the province of Alberta to handle this court challenge, again to the Premier: is the reason you went outside the province to hire Mr. Arvey because you could not find any competent lawyers in Alberta who share the NDP world view? Was no one qualified here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you for the question. In our world view taxpayers shouldn't be on the hook for something that the third party, who's asking the very question, allowed to be negotiated and potentially this loophole driven through by Enron, Mr. Speaker. That does not fit with our world view. Mr. Arvey has a proven track record of standing up for the public interest. The third party has a proven track record of putting in secret loopholes behind closed doors. I'll take Mr. Arvey any day. [interjections]

2:20

**The Speaker:** Just relax, folks.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been on the public record for 15 years.

Given that it is incomprehensible that not one legal counsel in the government's contingent of lawyers is capable of handling this court challenge and given that it is equally incomprehensible that no Alberta-based lawyers in our many experienced and respected law firms could have handled this case, again to the Premier: what was the process the government used in selecting Mr. Arvey to handle this important Alberta court case? Is it a sole-source contract, and how much is he being paid?

**Ms Hoffman:** Many years ago the previous government did pass a regulation to say that they shouldn't have to publish the Enron clause publicly . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Could you start again?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Years ago the third party today, then government, passed a regulation to say that they shouldn't have to publish the Enron clause, which, clearly, certainly wasn't in the public interest in any way. They certainly made covert efforts to make sure that this wasn't going to be well known by Albertans and for good reason. This doesn't reflect what they told Albertans when they talked about moving away from having liability on ratepayers' responsibilities towards having a shared responsibility with . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Federal Equalization Payments

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, last week a blue-ribbon panel commissioned by the opposition released a report on Canada's equalization system. The report confirms what most Albertans already know. The system is broken. Ottawa took \$190 billion more out of Alberta than it sent back to Alberta between 2007 and 2014. Albertans can no longer subsidize cheap government programs in other provinces. Minister, let's put partisanship aside. Will you stand with the opposition and demand a better deal for Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the equalization payments report I haven't had the opportunity to read it yet. It came out last week, and I'll get a chance to take a look at it, I'm sure. You know, talking about standing with Albertans, the Leader of the Opposition, when he was in government for all that period of time, never raised equalization as an issue. The former Prime Minister never raised the issue of equalization the whole time that he was in government. So it's pretty rich, as the Premier was saying, that now it's being brought up and being seen as something that has to change immediately when it's up for . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Well, now we know why the NDP is more popular in Quebec than in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta will not receive a penny of equalization this year despite being the largest per capita contributor for decades while Quebec will collect more than \$10 billion this year to subsidize cheap daycare and tuition – in 2011 Quebec put out a position paper making the case for their own interests. Will this government put forward a position representing our interests and stand up for Alberta?

**The Speaker:** I want to remind all members: after question 5 no preambles on supplementaries.

The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to remind the members on the other side that this side fights for Albertans every day, and we get things done. We get things done. We've gone after federal funding with regard to the wildfire situation. We've gone after the employment insurance changes for this province, and we are working with the federal government to get pipelines approved and built so we can get access to tidewater. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Was it that you all ate too much candy last night? Ease it down, folks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that every recipient province makes the case for why they should get more but that we

hear nothing but deafening silence from this government when it comes to defending the interests of the people of Alberta, who are hurting right now, you have to wonder if this government is more interested in representing the confiscatory federal transfer system over the people who have paid into it for so long. Which is it, Minister? Are you going to stand with the broken status quo, or are you going to stand with Alberta?

**Mr. Ceci:** I don't know what confiscatory means, Mr. Speaker, but I will tell you what I do know. This side is standing up for EI changes, pipelines to tidewater, more infrastructure funding so Mason can go out there and build. [interjections] We're doing the things . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Masons. Masons.

**Mr. Ceci:** Masons.

We're doing the things that are putting people back to work, diversifying the economy, and they're talking about something that won't happen for review until 2019.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, I just want to know. Have you been travelling a lot to visit pubs of late? It would be the first time that I saw the opposition and the government stand and agree on the same point of order.

### Affordable and Special-needs Housing

**Mr. Cooper:** In April, seven months ago, I rose in this very House and asked the minister of housing: why was it that in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills well over half of the available low-income housing had been determined to be uninhabitable and sitting vacant? Instead of acting, the situation has gotten worse. Now a total of 14 units, over 65 per cent, are unavailable to be rented out. The fix is easy, Mr. Speaker. It's a no-brainer. To the minister of seniors: when will these units be fixed?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'll have to get back to him in writing about the specific case he mentions, but since I have 20 other seconds, let's comment on what the opposition's proposal was with regard to infrastructure: cutting \$9 billion from the infrastructure list. I'm pretty sure that would cause a great deal of backlog throughout the province. Instead, our province is moving forward with a reasonable investment that's responsible and forward-looking to make sure that affordable housing is available throughout our province.

**Mr. Cooper:** Given that in early October I asked for an update from the minister and at the end of October I was told by the minister's office that they were reviewing the needs of the province yet all we hear this government talk about is the \$1.2 billion investment in low-income housing and given that this is an issue that doesn't need reviewing – it needs action – and given that I know of one central Alberta charity that in the past few months has assisted in 80 applications for low-income housing, without blaming anyone else, will the minister fix these units?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will have to get back with regard to the specific question. I'll be happy to table a response to the House about those specific units.

In terms of moving forward, we're moving forward on a plan to build 2,000 new long-term care beds throughout the province as well as dementia beds. We're also increasing affordable housing, as was mentioned by the member opposite. In terms of affordable housing, an investment of \$1.2 billion: that's a big difference from a proposed cut in infrastructure of \$9 billion. I'd say that moving forward with investment, putting bricklayers like masons throughout the province to work is certainly a move in the right direction.

**The Speaker:** Deputy Premier, that would be the second time that a name was mentioned in the House.

**Ms Hoffman:** No, no. Masons.

**Mr. Cooper:** Again, all we hear about is their investment when we need action now, and we need action for victims of domestic violence. Given that Mountain View region currently has no shelter for women or children while there are 41 bedrooms that sit vacant in this region and given that strategies, paperwork, waiting lists are not action, will the minister at least consider turning over one of these assets to a local charity so at least they could fix up the unit and provide the safety that women and children need when fleeing violence? What will it take for this minister to act?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Minister of Human Services.

2:30

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Member, for the question, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that there are many social deficits that we are dealing with throughout the province, homelessness, housing shortages, and that's why we have increased funding for women's shelters as well. This budget was increased \$15 million to make the budget a total of \$49 million, the most significant investment in a long time. We have also allocated capital money, \$1.2 billion, to look after these social deficits. We will continue to work with partners and the community.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

#### Bovine Tuberculosis

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been talking to Alberta beef producers who are concerned about the 30 ranches currently under quarantine in southern Alberta. In September the Canadian Food Inspection Agency found bovine tuberculosis in an animal sent to the U.S. for slaughter. It's been implied that the elk herd in Suffield may be a potential source. To the minister: can you please explain what's currently happening with this situation and what your government plans to do to control the outbreak?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to reassure the member that we have been in close contact with beef producers about the issue. We know that it is causing some producers a great amount of stress. We know the beef industry in Alberta is strong and resilient. We are monitoring the situation closely and looking at options we may have to support producers and urging the federal government to do the same. We will continue to listen to producers and to support our beef industry.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the first herd was quarantined on October 19 and given that the situation has escalated to 30 herds since that time, this ongoing situation is a growing concern for industry producers. To the minister: how will this situation affect our Alberta beef producers and their ability to sell their product to foreign markets?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Incidents such as this do happen at times, which is why there are processes in place. There are isolated cases of bovine TB periodically reported in Alberta and other provinces. We do not anticipate any market disruptions as a result of this situation. However, as previously stated, we are monitoring the situation closely, and we'll continue to be in close contact and conversation as we move forward and continue to support our beef industry.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Industry producers have assured me that there's no risk in eating Alberta beef. To the minister: can you explain what human health risk there may be due to this TB outbreak?

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a public health nurse I can tell you all about human TB and the implications. However, I don't think I could tell you the exact implications of bovine TB, so I'll be happy to get some information on that and get back to the member.

CFIA is leading this investigation. It is a federal matter. We have offered our support in this. At this point we've not been asked to help with the trace-out to determine whether TB is present in the local wildlife or any of those pieces, but we are monitoring the situation. We will continue to work with the federal government and producers to ensure we get product to market as soon as possible moving forward. We're not expecting any market disruptions, however.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

#### Calgary Southwest Ring Road

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you. I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. Recently there has been a big project going on in Calgary-Glenmore for the southwest ring road. What steps are being taken to ensure that commute times are reduced and that my commuters are able to attend family events as well as get to work on time? And how is this project going to unfold? Please provide the details in terms of what is going to be done to implement the project.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. We're delighted to be moving forward with the construction of the southwest ring road in Calgary, which is an important job, that will help create jobs and stimulate the economy. It will also ensure improved transportation options and reduce commute times for the people of Calgary. Preliminary work started in July, and we finalized our contract in September. Construction is happening on-site and will last five years, a targeted opening date of 2021.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Calgarians are expecting to see the west section of the ring road completed, to the minister: why can't this section be completed at the same time as the Calgary southwest ring road?

Thank you.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. I'm aware that there are some who believe that both sections of road should go at the same time, but the capital costs of doing so would exceed our capacity, and it would require an enormous amount of resources in terms of manpower, equipment, contracts, and so on. Quite simply, we have to build this road one section at a time.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Calgary's transportation infrastructure is expanding along with its population and given the fact that commute times are also an issue and the fact that the Calgary southwest ring road is one of the ways to improve the commute times and, as well, the public transit projects that are coming at the same time, I would like to get some more information. How will the government ensure that the completed ring road fits into Calgary's long-term transportation plan, including public transit?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, our government is committed to transportation infrastructure throughout the province. I'm happy to announce as well with respect to Edmonton that we have now approved our share of the Yellowhead project, with a contribution of \$242 million as our share for the completion of the project, that I know city council and the mayor have been very anxious to see. We're looking to the federal government as well. I know that this is a project that all of us want.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Home-schooling Providers

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Education. We have heard reports that parents are having difficulties finding alternative schools to register with because there are issues with picking up a program mid-year. The minister has encouraged families to find other options, but we are hearing repeatedly that it's just not that simple. To the minister: what are you doing to help these families?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, I'm very interested in ensuring that all families get a new affiliate so that they can get the money and the assistance that they deserve for home-schooling. We are fully in support of home-schooling and want to provide that assistance. I've sent a letter out to all school boards to reiterate their commitment to ensure that they take students in their area. They have a responsibility to do so. Our school boards do a great job, and I want them to do right by these home-school families.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We had one parent that was rejected seven times.

Yesterday you glossed over the impacts on families by suddenly shutting down their school. Given the minister has said that the parents will need to be reimbursed by Trinity Christian School for the costs that they may have already paid, what does the minister say to the family with five children that is waiting to get their fees back and now is forced to start all over with a new educational provider?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thanks for the question again. It's very important that we move the money that is due to each of these families, so for September and October we put Trinity on a shorter payment schedule because we knew there was a problem. We have the money for the rest of the year. We also expect a forensic audit to be completed for Trinity by auditors, and any of the monies that they had spent over will be returned to families. We're working very hard. If you can give me information specifically, hon. member, for individuals who are having difficulties, we will be there to help.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Forensic audits aren't going to help right now.

People are calling the right place, and the resources are just not there. Will you admit that you are unprepared to communicate with parents, to support families, and to deal with this fallout that you have created with the school, and will you answer the question that was not answered yesterday: what alternatives were there to outright closure?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the opportunity to reiterate that we are also calling every single family that has not registered as of yet to offer what assistance we can to get them the affiliate that they need. There are lots of options, and we can make it easier for them.

In regard to the audit and the closure this, again, is a fundamental responsibility of a government to ensure that public monies are being spent the way they should be. We had evidence of irregularities, so my office did the right thing.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

#### Bill 25

#### Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act.

If adopted, the act will establish a hard cap on greenhouse gas emissions, providing certainty to Albertans and to industry that in any given year the emissions from facilities in the oil sands will be below 100 megatonnes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a first time]

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks and

minister responsible for the climate change office, responses to questions raised by Mr. Loewen, hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky; Dr. Swann, hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View; and Mr. Clark, hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, on May 3, 2016, Ministry of Environment and Parks 2016-2017 main estimates debate.

**The Speaker:** I noted a point or order was made at approximately 47 minutes by the Opposition House Leader.

#### Point of Order

#### Oral Question Period Time Limits

#### Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of order with respect to order and decorum, Standing Order 13(2). "The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member."

During question period today, Mr. Speaker, you took the opportunity to stop question period and reiterate a point that you had made yesterday on sub judice. I just have a couple of quick questions around that so we can seek to understand better. One, I'm curious to know if the clock is stopped during the time that you are providing a point of clarification around sub judice as for the last couple of days we have not reached into questions, where we quite often get to 14.

I fully recognize that the government was poorly behaved today, and that may have added to the delays in question period. Maybe the opposition was loud as well, so it may not have only been your interjection that provided that. But I'm curious to know if in the future you'll stop the clock.

**The Speaker:** So the question is time. Is that your very first point?

**Mr. Cooper:** Yes, that is my very first point.

**The Speaker:** And your next one?

**Mr. Cooper:** That if you have stopped the clock.

Then I might just add that there are other areas on sub judice. Perhaps we won't get into the debate around sub judice today, but for purposes of clarification, is the clock stopped during that time given that we've now heard that two times?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I really do not know the answer to that question. I believe it is not; however, to be confirmed, I'll report back to you on the matter tomorrow.

The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Deputy. Thank you for that promotion, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to rise to address this. First of all, I'm not sure if this is a point of order, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, or if a point of order is the appropriate mechanism, as opposed to speaking to you outside of the House, when we're debating important matters.

But I just want to reiterate, Mr. Speaker – and I think it's worth while for members – that, as you pointed out, it's a long-standing convention that members should avoid excessive discussion of issues in litigation, particularly those which will likely be determined by the courts. Now, I recognize that primary responsibility does fall to members and to ministers to avoid such discussion. It's well written as the function of yourself, Mr. Speaker, your role, to remind members of this rule when a member seems to be trying to elicit a response on an issue that is to be decided by the courts. Quite frankly, I recognize first of all that the Premier did respond to the question, but at the same time I think

you are very much within your rights to remind the House of being very cautious when we are answering or asking questions.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

To the question asked with respect to the time issue, I'll address that tomorrow.

There is another point of order that I believe was yours as well.

**Mr. Rodney:** Just a question of clarification if I may, Mr. Speaker, and this will take a short amount of time. I appreciate that the previous question was asked to clarify if indeed the clock was stopped. We had a couple of stopwatches here yesterday and today, and we noted it. Mr. Speaker, you have every right – and I'm glad that you reminded all of us in the House about sub judice. That's very important. But it took three minutes yesterday, two minutes today, and I'm sorry to report that that meant two of our questions, which were, you know, important for our constituents, were not asked. That's my recommendation, that it's not . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you. You're noted.

I must remind the House in its entirety that when those reminders are required, I do it in the best interests of this House. If you're concerned about the time, I would advise all of you to use the other time, which doesn't require my interpretation, in a more efficient manner.

The second point of order.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I raised this question yesterday – I'm sorry?

**Mr. Nixon:** He just withdrew my point of order.

**The Speaker:** Yeah. We're agreed. I'm sorry. I didn't intend to raise the question of the name. I think it was obvious to all.

#### Privilege

#### Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

**The Speaker:** I mentioned the issue yesterday about giving a last point for the question of privilege which originated on June 6, 2016. I've now had an opportunity to consider the comments made by the House leader for the Official Opposition, which can be found on page 1572 of *Hansard* for yesterday. I have also been attentive to arguments made in the Assembly during the spring sitting and in written submissions, and I'm now prepared to provide my ruling on this matter.

Hon. members, you all will have had an opportunity to see questions of privilege argued in the Assembly and rulings delivered. As has been indicated on numerous occasions, questions of privilege are of a serious nature, not to be taken lightly. I tell you personally that I do not take them lightly. These questions are dealt with under Standing Order 15.

The Official Opposition House Leader met the procedural requirement of that standing order to provide notice of the question at least two hours prior to the commencement of the afternoon sitting by providing my office notice at 11:03 a.m. on June 6. I also confirm that June 6 was the first opportunity available to the House leader in raising this matter before the Assembly as he indicated that he had not heard the radio ad in question until the preceding Thursday afternoon.

2:50

I understand the facts of this matter to be as follows. Radio advertisements from the government of Alberta were aired on at

least one Alberta radio station as early as Thursday, June 2. The radio ad discussed the government's climate leadership plan and went on to explain that the transition will be made easier with energy efficient programs and cash rebates for households that need them. The ad then directed listeners to the website [climate.alberta.ca](http://climate.alberta.ca). At the time the ad heard by the Official Opposition Leader aired, Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, had not completed Committee of the Whole consideration.

The Government House Leader did not dispute the accuracy of the verbatim content of the ad as recited by the Official Opposition House Leader. I would also add that the Government House Leader was afforded the opportunity to comment on the [climate.alberta.ca](http://climate.alberta.ca) website, the contents of which were filed as Sessional Paper 217/2016. The website discusses, among other things, how, starting on January 1, 2017, the carbon levy will be applied to fuels at the rate of \$20 per tonne and how the levy will be increased in 2018 to \$30 per tonne. The website does go on to discuss how the levy will reinvest in the Alberta economy and how it will affect Alberta families and businesses.

At this juncture it should be pointed out that technically the matter before us now is a purported contempt of the Legislative Assembly as noted at pages 82 and 83 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition. I quote:

There are . . . affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges. Thus, the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or the dignity of the House, such as disobedience of its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its Members, or its officers . . . In that sense, all breaches of privilege are contempts of the House, but not all contempts are necessarily breaches of privilege.

While the Official Opposition House Leader made an argument that the matter at hand also constituted a question of privilege in that the actions of the government were an attempt to influence the vote or actions of him or other members, of this I have not been convinced. I am persuaded by the Government House Leader's argument that members were not prevented from doing their duty as a result of the information contained within the ads. Therefore, I will proceed to consideration of the matter solely as a purported contempt of the Assembly.

This is not the first time during the Legislature that this particular variety of purported contempt has been raised. My November 2, 2015, ruling was cited by the Official Opposition House Leader in his arguments on June 6. That ruling can be found on pages 400 to 401 of *Hansard* for that day and concerned a news release issued prior to the delivery of the Budget Address. Members may recall that I did not find a *prima facie* question of privilege in that case, but I did caution the government not to prejudge the actions of the Assembly or its committees in the future.

On a matter similar to that one that I ruled on last November, a *prima facie* question of privilege was found by Speaker Zwozdesky on December 2, 2013. In that ruling, which concerned brochures published by the government at that time, Speaker Zwozdesky made reference to prior rulings from the federal House of Commons and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which are likewise relevant to the matter under consideration here today.

Members will note that an important factor in the determination of these matters has been whether Speakers have previously cautioned governments of the day on their activities in what may be

a well-intentioned attempt at informing the public but, in fact, prejudices the decision of the Assembly or its committees.

I note the following passage from the Ontario ruling of January 22, 1997, where at page 1420 of *Hansard* Speaker Stockwell stated the following when considering a ministerial pamphlet discussing the government of Ontario's program for reforming municipal government in metropolitan Toronto:

In my opinion, [the claims of the brochure] convey the impression that the passage of the requisite legislation was not necessary or was a foregone conclusion, or that the assembly and the Legislature had a pro forma, tangential, even inferior role in the legislative and lawmaking process, and in doing so, they appear to diminish the respect that is due to this House. I would not have come to this view had these claims or proposals – and that is all they are – been qualified by a statement that they would only become law if and when the Legislature gave its stamp of approval to them . . .

It is not enough for yet another Speaker to issue yet another warning or caution in circumstances where the wording and circulation of the pamphlet appear on their face to cross the line. I say in all candour that a reader of that document could be left with an incorrect impression about how parliamentary democracy works in Ontario, an impression that undermines respect for our parliamentary institutions.

It's clear from the radio ad and the information presented on the website that the government communications concerning Bill 20 discuss the bill as if it had already been passed into law while, in fact, the bill was still under consideration in Committee of the Whole. It shows disrespect to the legislative process to presume that the passage of a bill in the form in which it was introduced in the Assembly is a foregone conclusion. There must be a balance and timeliness between the government's need to communicate information about its policies and programs to Albertans and the role of the Legislative Assembly to consider and debate any legislation required to implement these programs. While the government may certainly communicate its initiatives to the public through advertisements or online information, the distinction between the executive and the legislative branches of government must be respected.

I have concluded that the content of the radio advertisement as well as the government website, from which an excerpt was tabled on June 6, 2016, as Sessional Paper 217/2016, contain statements presenting the government's program concerning the carbon levy and associated rebates as fact when in actuality they were contingent upon passage of Bill 20 in the Assembly. The website outlines what the carbon levy and the rebates will do and contains no qualification that this is subject to the approval of the Legislature. I've no doubt that the government had good intentions in advising Alberta of the provisions and future impact of Bill 20, but at the same time the relevant radio ads aired, the bill had not passed through the necessary stages in the Assembly.

3:00

There are ways it can be communicated without presuming a decision of the Assembly. Members may note, for example, in my ruling on November 2, 2015, on page 400 of *Hansard* that day that I drew all members' attention to the choice of the language used by the Minister of Finance during the delivery of the Budget Address, wherein he noted that the government would be proposing a salary freeze for cabinet ministers and MLAs. Although a news release issued at the same time as the Budget Address was more ambiguous, one might say that the use of the word "propose" in the address itself was the saving grace for the government with respect to that question of privilege raised on October 28, 2015.



I have noted the Government House Leader's argument that the changes respecting the carbon levy and associated rebates were framed as part of the overall climate leadership plan. This bears some similarity to the brochure referenced in Speaker Zwozdesky's December 2, 2013, ruling, which was titled *The Building Alberta Plan*. Nonetheless, in that case the content was deemed to prejudice the decision of the Assembly and its committees.

In this case pursuant to Standing Order 15(6) I find that there is a prima facie question of privilege, which may be called a question of contempt, as the dignity of this Assembly was offended by the actions of the government in publicizing certain aspects of Bill 20 and presuming its passage prior to the bill making its way through the legislative process.

I would recognize the Deputy Government House Leader to inquire if he has any statements to make.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, both for your ruling and guidance, and I want to thank the members opposite for bringing this matter to our attention. This government would never, under any circumstances, want to offend or obstruct the dignity of the House, and as such I'd like to offer my sincere apologies to you and to all members of the Assembly. It was not our intention to imply that Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, was passed, and I regret if that impression was made to any member of this Assembly or to the public. We will endeavour to ensure that the choice of words in the future is more reflective of the legislative status of any bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. I appreciate you taking the responsibility and leadership on apologizing to the House, and I want to remind the government again to please be cautious of this in the future. I consider the matter closed.

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order. Yes.

### Point of Order

#### Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again on Standing Order 13(2): "The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member." I have a request to make of the Speaker. It seems to me that what has happened is that the government has been found in contempt on a breach of privilege for which the minister gave a very eloquent apology. Seemingly he was aware that he was going to be found in contempt and provided a prepared statement as an apology, which for the record I have a hard time accepting because they have been warned on numerous occasions by you and by previous Speakers. There seems to be a systematic problem inside the bureaucracy that this issue ought to be referred to Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, not dealt with based upon the Deputy Government House Leader's apology, that was clearly prepared prior to today.

I'm hoping, Mr. Speaker, that you can explain your ruling and how it's possible that they've been found in contempt of parliament and a simple apology is acceptable.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I just read a statement on my ruling, which was, I believe, quite extensive. I cannot speak to why the government and particularly the Deputy Government House Leader had a prepared statement. I believe he must have concluded that there was considerable exposure on behalf of the government of the

actions that they took. If there are any other suggestions – I cannot contemplate why and how the government arrived at that point. I would hope there's no expectation that I would have.

I think past precedence has said that a member is free to provide notice of a motion referring the matter to committees. However, since an apology has been given, the matter is concluded. As a reference I note Speaker Zwozdesky's discussion on this matter, found on page 3234 in the December 2, 2013, *Hansard*, in which he rules that a matter of privilege is concluded once an apology is offered. That's the reasoning.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 24

#### Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North on behalf of the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry I move second reading of Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise today for the second reading of Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act. The main objective of this bill is to enhance wildfire prevention, enforcement, and operational activities with the key focus on reducing the risk of human-caused fires. Historically the number of lightning-caused wildfires has outnumbered human-caused wildfires; however, the trend in recent years shows a significant increase in the number of human-caused incidents. Would it surprise you to learn, Mr. Speaker, that approximately 70 per cent of wildfires over the last five years have been linked to human activity? That's why this government must continue to put Albertans and their communities first, and the amendments to this act will do just that.

Yesterday the Premier rose in the House and recognized those who worked tirelessly protecting Albertans during the Fort McMurray wildfires. The people of Alberta and their forest resources deserve to be protected from the carelessness that contributes directly to more than two-thirds of wildfires we see each year. Each one of these wildfires is one hundred per cent fully preventable, Mr. Speaker, and through legislation like the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act we can give our wildfire experts the tools they need to bring that number down to acceptable levels.

3:10

The amendments we propose are supported by recommendations made following reviews of major wildfires such as the 2011 Slave Lake area wildfires as well as learnings from the last two wildfire seasons, which include the devastation that occurred in Fort McMurray earlier this year. The amendments can be grouped into three broad categories: enhanced fines, improved public safety and wildfire prevention measures, and operational amendments.

Fines. The proposed amendments would increase maximum fines for major offences and new penalties would focus on both industrial and individual violations. Penalties would occur for industrial offences like not having sufficient firefighting equipment on-site, to encourage improved compliance. New provisions in this act would give people like peace officers, forestry, fish and wildlife, and conservation officers as well as the RCMP the ability to hand out tickets for careless use of fire on Alberta's landscape. Those found burning without a permit, leaving a campfire unattended, or burning

during a fire ban or restriction could see themselves with a ticket from between \$150 and \$1,000.

The proposed increase in maximum penalties for major offences would help to deter reckless and irresponsible behaviour and remind Albertans that burning in the forested areas of the province comes with risks and responsibilities. It would also bring the fine levels in line with penalties issued under comparable Alberta legislation as well as similar wildlife legislation in British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

**Public safety and prevention.** In terms of public safety and prevention activities the proposed amendments include provisions that would improve our ability to restrict specific recreational activities that cause wildfires during hazardous wildfire conditions. In the same way we impose a fire ban when forests are tinder dry, we would have improved authority to restrict the use of off-highway vehicles, or OHVs, during the high fire-hazard conditions.

Mr. Speaker, I was surprised to learn just how easily OHVs can cause wildfires. Debris can easily be caught up in the hot spots of the vehicle – under the seat, near the engine, and near the exhaust – and then become superheated. On high to extreme fire-hazard days with only a little bit of wind that superheated debris can drop down onto the ground behind the OHV and start a wildfire. Restricting off-highway vehicles during these periods of extreme danger will go a long way to reducing the hundreds of OHV-related wildfires we've seen over the past number of years.

We also have improved authority to stop actions which interfere with fighting wildfires, including the restriction of drones, which make it unsafe for water bombers and helicopters to work on wildfires. We have seen in recent years the increased use of unmanned drones here in Alberta on wildfires and in our partner wildfire agencies across North America. As soon as a drone appears on a wildfire, all aircraft must immediately land or be diverted as a safety precaution. Much of our firefighting ability in this province is done by aircraft. Prohibiting interference with wildfire operations by drones on wildfires will help our firefighters because if you fly, we can't.

The enhanced prevention measures in the act strengthen the obligations for industry to assist in preventing wildfires.

**Operational amendments.** The operational amendments will further enhance firefighting activities by clarifying operational processes, roles, and responsibilities.

As the climate continues to change, we've seen our fire seasons become longer and wildfires become more intense. The March 1 start to the fire season has been established by ministerial order each year for the past five years in response to recommendations from the 2011 Slave Lake wildfires. We propose the officially designated start of the fire season be set at March 1, which is one month earlier than the April 1 date that is currently set out in the legislation. This ensures that spring wildfire preparations are well under way and our wildfire personnel will start the fire season ready to fight fires.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am confident that the proposed amendments will have a strong level of public support. Wildfire prevention and protection continue to be on the forefront of the minds of Albertans in the wake of the devastating fires in the communities of Fort McMurray and Slave Lake. As a result, the general public will be receptive to new measures aimed at reducing the wildfire risks to communities and enhancing the province's ability to combat wildfires.

An open, public survey conducted this spring also solicited input from the public as well as key stakeholders that included first responders, municipalities, indigenous people, industry, recreational associations as well as other affected groups. The survey responses indicated strong support for the proposed enhancements to the legislation and regulations, which were viewed as an effective

means to reduce wildfire risk and increase accountability and compliance across Alberta. The proposal to increase fines, for example, was supported by 96 per cent of respondents.

Mr. Speaker, I am proposing that the amendments to the act be passed through this House with the subsequent regulatory changes completed in the following months. The goal is to have all of the new measures in place before the beginning of next year's fire season, on March 1, 2017.

That concludes my comments, Mr. Speaker. I ask all members in the House to support this bill and support the hard-working wildfire professionals across the province who protect Albertans from the threat of wildfires.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to also give my input to Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016.

Kudos go to my colleague from Red Deer-North on her introduction of the bill. She also gave a marvellous member's statement today, and I compliment the member on that.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we recognize the exact title of the bill because it talks about forest and prairie protection amendment here in our legislation going forward. As you know and as you've seen in recent events in the Chamber, we live and die by the exact wording of what we say in this facility, here in the Chamber, sir. It's an honour to try and effect some of that professionalism as we go forward.

This act is one that deals with legislation dealing with forest fire rules and regulations. Mr. Speaker, this is a timely piece of legislation given yesterday's events in the rotunda, which I attended. It was a heartfelt moment, the wildfire first responders and local heroes recognition event. My thoughts not only went out to the community of Fort McMurray but to all those resilient people who faced untold hardships and uncertainty during the evacuation and the many that continue to face them today.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I had the honour to be visited in my home, actually, by a member, and I don't think it's inappropriate to mention his and his wife's names. Mr. Gary Exner and his wife, Bev, attended our home to express their personal appreciation for their temporary summer residence in the community of Stettler that they achieved. It was an honour to meet those folks.

Mr. Speaker, again, listening to those speeches yesterday and seeing again the raw emotion still close to the surface was a touching moment. The praise heaped upon those first responders and local heroes is richly deserved. Their leadership and conduct was not only admired and celebrated here in Alberta but all over Canada and the world at large. It's the bold but compassionate Alberta way.

In 2011, when a tragic fire struck the town of Slave Lake, numerous reports and recommendations came out of this disaster. One of note was the Flat Top Complex review. Within that report were recommendations that towns and cities adopt FireSmart policies to help such catastrophes from reoccurring. Specifically, it was recommended that

various actions were taken to reduce fuel loading in the Slave Lake area prior to the Flat Top Complex, however, more could have been done. Considering the rapidly increasing number and severity of wildfires in Alberta, there is the need to increase wildfire prevention initiatives.

In fact, the town of Slave Lake and the province invested millions of dollars retroactively fire-smarting the town. The FireSmart

program has proved so vitally important to the town of Slave Lake that the town is considering asking for a permanent \$4 million FireSmart training centre.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Wildrose have heard first-hand how adopting some of those FireSmart recommendations was instrumental in saving private property in what's now known as the Horse Lake fire earlier this year. These practices have been seen to help communities deal with the threat of forest fires by taking some positive, proactive measures. I can only hope that the government realizes the intrinsic value of this program and invests in it accordingly in the future.

Positive lessons continue to be learned from any such events, and we can only hope that government reports that come from looking at all aspects in regard to the Fort McMurray or, as some describe it, the Horse Lake fire produce more recommendations that are adopted going forward. These reports can be very helpful in how we attack these fires and defend our communities from future fires.

While it is unknown what will be in those reports, concerns have been brought forward both from the public and industry. Topics such as: was the fire fought in the initial days with every strategic resource available? Were there enough trained firefighters, effectively, boots on the ground? Was the fire fought at first light when the temperature is the coolest, humidity is the highest, and winds are at their lightest? Additional comments included: is there a mandate for fighting fires close to populated areas until it is completely under control versus a passive approach dependent upon circumstances?

All of these questions and more, I suspect, will be asked and answered in the coming months, as information is gathered from these reports. In no way would I or anyone want to insinuate or lay blame on the heroic efforts of those on the front line who were involved directly during the events of the Fort McMurray, Slave Lake, or any other catastrophic fire incident. As we know, a fulsome examination of past events is how we obtain valuable information, and those lessons learned will make fighting future events a more effective endeavour.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if I could embellish on that subject, as a light plane aficionado and pilot for some 35-plus years I know that the Department of Transport sends out to those involved with licences of many kinds national transport safety reports stemming from transport accidents similar to that which, unfortunately, took the lives of several, including former Premier Jim Prentice, in British Columbia recently. I'm looking forward to those reports so that as aviators we can all learn from those types of incidents so that they never happen again. If the automobile transportation industry would look into something like that, I think that would be effective for reducing motor vehicle transport accidents across the country.

Mr. Speaker, turning my attention back to this piece of legislation, known in this Chamber as Bill 24, it has on appearance certain housekeeping changes that it is our job on this side of the House to exercise what I would call proper due diligence. That being said, I have a few concerns about certain aspects of these changes.

While it is understood that in recent years of drier winters the fire season has been starting earlier than in the past, it is always advantageous that fire operators are prepared well in advance of the fire season. A change to the fire season, in fact, moving the start from April 1 to March 1, as laid out in section 17(1), is one such change. Now, the minister in section 17(2) of the act always had the power to move the fire season's timeline around. So while it may be redundant, I can accept the thought process behind this move.

What I have difficulty accepting is the fact that with the changes you have not increased the length of the season, from which begs

the question: how will this change affect firefighting contracts? We saw last year that this government chose to shorten air bomber contracts, ending them earlier than in previous years. If the season is starting an additional month earlier, will this mean that we may have even fewer resources later in the season? Will there be any provisions for flexibility in this regard?

Despite assurances last year there was much consternation within the industry, Mr. Speaker, and we met with some of those affected contractors. What happens if we have a long, hot summer? We had a situation last season where, despite reciprocal agreements with other jurisdictions, some resources were already unavailable to us when they were needed. I've heard in the Chamber the government's reassurance that they will stand by Albertans in the case of funding and the requirements necessary and fully accept that. Will this government ensure that we won't have fire contractors heading south or to other jurisdictions if a shortened contract offered here will be less financially viable than pursuing contracts of a larger length elsewhere?

These questions, Mr. Speaker and to members of the Chamber, are very important and need answers.

3:30

Another concern pertains to a section later in the act about fire control plans moving from being ordered by the minister to being ordered by the officer. In the section Fire Control Plans this bill says the following, and I quote again, Mr. Speaker, section 23:

(1) A person carrying on or having charge of an industrial or commercial operation on public land or within one kilometre of any public land shall at the request of a forest officer submit a fire control plan satisfactory to the forest officer, within the time determined by the forest officer.

(2) If a person referred to in subsection (1) fails to comply with the request of the forest officer within the time determined by the forest officer, the Minister may, by order, suspend the industrial or commercial operation of the person until a fire control plan satisfactory to the forest officer has been submitted to the forest officer.

It seems a bit vague on what defines an industrial or commercial operation within one kilometre of public land. Does that include a family farm next to Crown land, a taxidermist running a shop out of his acreage? I personally ranch public prairie land, and I have no inkling how I could contact a forest officer. I would challenge you, Mr. Speaker, in your constituency: how would you contact a forest officer to submit a fire control plan, never mind a satisfactory plan dictated by that officer? While this may seem as nitpicking, in this legislation it is important that we as those legislators see that there is no room for any potential overreach. The potential for an arbitrary decision of, to quote from the act, a "forest officer" having a negative impact on someone's livelihood is too great to be left to vagueness, and I'm sure, hopefully, my colleagues would agree.

Another concerning area is within section 31.4, where it talks about, Mr. Speaker, diseased and infected products and which used to say "product" but has been expanded to the direct word "thing" so that it would now read: "a forest officer may, without a warrant, seize any thing that the forest officer has reasonable grounds to believe harbours a forest pest." While this part used to refer to a product, which is vague – but it probably isn't a large leap of logic to understand they mean a wood product – the government is now replacing this vague term with the word "thing," an even vaguer term, although possibly in a prairie environment there may be some interpretation of the word "thing," but I'm anxious to understand what that might be. It reminds me, Mr. Speaker, of a B-class horror movie that was entitled *The Thing*.

With all due respect, the use of the word "product" would have been much more acceptable than the term "thing." Why wasn't this

term changed to “forest product” or simply just left as it was? I’d be open to hearing a concrete explanation for the reasoning for the substitution.

Mr. Speaker, I hope members opposite and the government and even members on this side of the Chamber would understand that I don’t wish to tear apart this document simply to oppose it, and that’s my position. We as diligent legislators have a duty to work for the betterment of all Albertans. There is no malice or ill intent intended today. There is much in this bill that is absolutely needed and some that needs to simply be tweaked, which is why we go through this process. While I have doubts that any of these changes would have prevented incidents such as the Slave Lake and Fort McMurray fires, I am inclined to tentatively support this bill provided that my concerns and others that may be brought forth are addressed through simple amendments to the bill.

With that, I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the time.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016, a bill that aims to enhance the ability of Alberta to fight and prevent forest fires in this province.

To begin with, I’d like to take a moment to acknowledge the strength shown by the people of Fort McMurray in dealing with the unimaginable tragedy caused by just such a wildfire. To see your homes, your possessions, and your livelihoods be consumed in such a terrible blaze must truly be a horrific and traumatic experience, and the grace shown by the residents of Fort McMurray and the surrounding area is truly an inspiration.

I would also like to acknowledge the incredible work done by our first responders and emergency management teams. Without their tireless efforts this terrible tragedy could have been far, far worse. So we are here today to do our part as legislators to make sure that all possible measures are being undertaken to prevent forest fires and that we’ll also equip our first responders with all the necessary tools to ensure their safety and the safety of those they put their lives on the line to protect. I am pleased the government is bringing forward legislation to this effect.

The government is proposing this legislation to bring forward the start of the fire season by one month. That will make the start of the fire season March 1 as opposed to April 1. I believe this is a good move, a move that recognizes that the fire season in Alberta can be as unpredictable as the weather, which all Albertans are aware makes it very unpredictable indeed. This move will give our fire management teams more flexibility in marshalling their resources to combat and, more importantly, prevent large and dangerous wildfires, so I expect this amendment will be well received by the agencies responsible for fire protection as well as all the municipalities, property owners, and wilderness enthusiasts that are threatened by wildfires.

Now, I understand that there are a number of provisions that were part of a consultation this spring that are missing from the text of the legislation. I’m referring to the provisions that dealt with debris removal, energy extraction, agriculture, and recreational use, amongst others. I believe a number of these provisions are expected to be dealt with through the use of regulation, and that seems reasonable. What I’d like to see and what I think a lot of Albertans would like to see is the government begin to release early drafts of what exactly these regulations are going to look like. With legislation like this, that concerns the safety and security of a great number of Albertans, the more discussion and transparency we can deliver, the better.

There are Albertans in the province that are eager to ensure that this government has taken to heart the important lessons of the Fort McMurray wildfires. My colleagues and I are eager to see that as well so that we can be part of the discussion to do our part to avert future disasters of this nature. So in the spirit of having conversations about how to best protect the Albertans we serve, I believe our caucus will be bringing forward some technical amendments to the Committee of the Whole. But as a caucus we are generally supportive of the government in this initiative, which we hope will help put Albertans’ minds at ease.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments to the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m very pleased to speak to this bill and to offer my support and hope that all members here in the House will also support it. It’s definitely overdue.

I just wanted to comment on moving the season up to March 1. This is actually something that’s been in place now for several seasons, but it required an order in council to do that, so now the legislation is simply enshrining that. The reality is that with climate change we are seeing earlier springs and hotter springs, and this is something that’s been needed for a few years now. This simply makes it a formal process that we can now go forward on.

3:40

This legislation in particular is really important to my constituency. That’s for a number of reasons. We had our own fire scare earlier this spring when a lumber yard located very close to the town of High Level had a fire among some of the product in the yard, and thankfully the very quick and astute work by the High Level fire department managed the problem. Otherwise, had the wind changed direction the way it did in Fort McMurray, we would have probably lost the town of High Level, so it’s important to us that we have good fire legislation and that we have good protection for those kinds of things.

Forestry is a big part of my constituency. It’s one of our key industries, and the lumber yards where the forest industries operate have what they call hog piles. One of my companies has a bit of a backlog, so recently, in an effort to have a dialogue with them on how we can find some creative ways to deal with this backlog, they took me on a tour of this hog pile. What it is is waste bark, it’s sawdust, it’s all kinds of stuff that they can’t use, but most of it does get recycled and turned into pallets, other things. But for the moment this pile was starting to grow, and I couldn’t believe that when I went on this pile, it’s actually smoking. It’s like a giant compost pile, really, and it’s generating a great deal of heat. This was something I didn’t realize until I saw this, that actually it could be a fire hazard, so it needs to be monitored.

That’s why I’m glad to see that in the amendments there is going to be some alignment over industrial waste so that companies have a target that they have to work for to make sure that they’re cleaning up this industrial waste and that the penalties will be increased should companies not be responsible. Mine are, fortunately, all very responsible and doing their very best, but it’s something that does need to be cleaned up in a timely manner. The legislation also allows for an appeal, so should there be a concern or some reason why the cleanup can’t occur in a timely manner, the companies do have the option to appeal.

Another area where it’s important to my constituency is the agriculture industry. At certain times of the year you literally can’t see the highway because of smoke and fog because the farmers are

clearing land and burning. They are required to get permits, but sometimes they're burning when they're not supposed to be burning. So the legislation will help by increasing the fines and giving a little more teeth to those who are enforcing the legislation to make sure that everybody has a permit and they can only burn when it's safe to do so.

Another area where it's important to my constituency is with the off-road vehicles. In the north that's kind of what everybody does. Everybody's got an off-road vehicle. Even little kids have theirs. It's quite amazing. But earlier this year there were a lot of complaints when the minister and the department had to say: sorry; no more off-road vehicles right now because it's too dangerous. People just didn't understand, so I think that with this legislation it's going to help raise some awareness as to why there are times when you simply cannot use these vehicles because it's just too great a risk.

Of course, I have a personal reason because I love campfires. I go camping, and there's nothing more frustrating to me than when we've got a fire ban and I can't go and sit out there and tell scary ghost stories with the grandkids around a campfire. But, again, you know, if I'm careless and leave that campfire burning, then I've got to be careful of that. It astounds me that 70 per cent of the fires in this province are human caused. I just think that's unacceptable and unbelievable, and while the majority are probably accidental – I know there are some that are deliberate, even in my constituency – again, we need legislation to deal with that. You get a few fines for not putting your campfire out, then the next time you're going to make sure you put it out before you go to bed. I think that's really important.

The public awareness and education piece is going to be huge as part of this legislation, so I'm looking forward to seeing how that's going to roll out. I think it's going to be a very positive thing.

I just wanted to add a little bit of a comment on some of the comments that the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler said about change of language. Seizing any "thing" – you know, when I look at what's out in these lumber yards, I think it's really limiting to just call it "product" because there could be a lot of things there, so I think that the language actually broadens that and makes it a little bit easier for the forest officer to interpret what might be subject to a fine.

With that, I'll conclude my comments. I just want to say that I really hope that we'll get lots of support on this. It's a great piece of legislation and overdue, and I'm really pleased that the minister has brought it forward for us.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any questions or observations under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Peace River? The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Member for Peace River. I understand that possibly her representative jurisdiction may be somewhat different than mine, so I wanted to see what her thoughts were on the terminology of the legislation where we talk about the prairie.

**Ms Jabbour:** Sorry, I didn't catch that last word, when you talk about the ...

**Mr. Strankman:** Prairie.

**Ms Jabbour:** Oh, the prairie. You're right, yes. In fact, until you brought that up, I hadn't really considered that would affect the prairie land, but definitely, you know, the fire that's smoldering right now in Fort McMurray is underground, so I know the prairie

can be subject to that as well. I think it's important that the terminology does recognize that it covers both forest and prairie and that it's comprehensive in that way.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Peace River?

Seeing none, I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in very, very strong support of this bill for many reasons that are very personal to me. In May 2011 I experienced something that nobody should have to go through and shared that experience with my whole, entire community at that time, surrounded by wildfires on all sides despite the fact that there are three highways leaving Slave Lake, or three different directions. All three were blocked by fire. My baby girl at that point in time and my father and I were in Slave Lake and weren't sure when we were going to be able to go, how we were going to be able to go. Of course, we were surrounded by many other individuals in that scenario.

When finally the RCMP said I could go, I drove past my community, and I saw the southeast quadrant on fire. It's not a superhuge town. I saw it, and I saw so much devastation, so much that had been burnt already. At the time I thought that I would never be able to return again. I thought my community was going to burn to the ground.

Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, due to the heroic efforts of the wildfire fighters despite the gusting winds, which created such incredible conditions that nobody could have anticipated, despite that – you know, it caused such a trauma for people to be driving through fire, to be driving through smoke, the effects that there were on children. Imagine these little kids driving through the fire thinking that they were going to die. That was the experience of people in Slave Lake when they left and the trauma that every single person in Slave Lake went through because they had to leave that community under threat of their life. Now, that kind of event we need to prevent. We need to make sure people don't have to go through that again.

Mr. Speaker, five years later I left this House to find out that the same thing was happening to people in Fort McMurray. I had to watch and hear all of the stories and imagine and see once again thousands upon thousands of individuals going through the same thing that the people in my community had to go through. People at the last second – again, conditions far beyond anything anyone could have anticipated led to a situation, because of a forest fire, in which those people had to leave their community not sure if they were going to make it, not sure what was happening to their friends and their family members, dealing with all of that, having to leave their community. Once again a whole, entire community was traumatized by that experience.

Both of those were spring fires. The majority of fires that happen in the spring are due to human causes, so we need to do everything we can to make sure Albertans do not cause fires that lead to the kind of trauma that happened to Albertans. We will never prevent every forest fire, Mr. Speaker, but if there's anything that we can do that can stop people from going through what the community of Slave Lake went through, what the community of Fort McMurray went through, I feel that our House is absolutely bound to do that in order to ensure that Albertans should not have to go through that if at all possible.

3:50

Certainly, those events reminded us of the importance of investing in programs that reduce the risk of wildfire. Mr. Speaker, there were a number of recommendations that came out of the Slave Lake fire, and there were many, many actions taken in response to

that. Out of the Flat Top recommendations we now have more firefighters available to protect homes and communities than before. We actually have 40 per cent more firefighters now than in 2011.

As stated, we have, without the legislation in place to ensure it, begun the fire season a month early, in March, in order to ensure burning restrictions and that early start for crews. Of course, also, the FireSmart program has continued to be supported in recognition of the prevention with that. The Wood Buffalo municipality is a great partner of FireSmart and has been engaged in that. We also have improved our wildfire response through fire information officers in 10 province-wide locations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know, just back to FireSmart, I'd like to say that there's actually been a substantial investment in FireSmart, and we're thankful for the work the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta is doing in terms of getting those dollars out in terms of vegetation management and educational programming.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of work that has been done, and I know that we are doing similar studies after Fort McMurray. I know that we will listen to those recommendations. We will move forward on those recommendations once we know what they are, and I look forward to hearing them and supporting them going forward.

Now, we have done all of that, but it is time for us to update the laws of this province to reflect those recommendations. It's time to strengthen Alberta's wildfire protection laws to enhance wildfire prevention activities and support the efforts of our wildfire fighters to keep Albertans and their communities safe. The world is changing, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that it's a longer, drier fire season. The risk is increasingly a challenge to all of us, and it is incumbent upon us as a House to do what we can to do that.

Certainly, restricting activities that human beings do, that Albertans do that would potentially cause a wildfire when fire conditions are hazardous should be a pretty straightforward option going forward that I hope everyone in this House can support. The idea that there may be actions that people are taking that would interfere with firefighting such as drone activity: you know, absolutely, there's nothing, Mr. Speaker, that should be getting in the way of wildfire fighters that are protecting people or are working to protect people, to protect our businesses, to protect industry in this province. Ensuring that we have very clear processes, roles, and responsibilities in place is absolutely essential.

Again, the amendments that we're bringing forward are supported by the recommendations and reviews of major wildfires that were done. Human-caused wildfires are a hundred per cent preventable, Mr. Speaker, so it's time that our legislation caught up with this to ensure that we do everything that we can to prevent that from happening again. I have to say on behalf of the people of Slave Lake – and I'm sure that Fort McMurray people would say the same – that, absolutely, there is tremendous support from people right across this province that watched it happen to all of us to ensure that this doesn't happen again. If there's anything that we can ever do, this is a very important measure to avoid the kind of mass community trauma that happened in Slave Lake and Fort McMurray.

Thank you so much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions to the Minister of Municipal Affairs under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I would recognize the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The tragedy of mass fire is unspeakable, so we truly must do all that we can to prevent fire, to

prevent the growth of these fires, and emotion and handwringing clearly is not enough. I fully applaud the intent of cleaning this act up, of renewing the language, of adding a bit for enforcement, but I really think that there's a lot lacking here. There's a lot that should have been dealt with.

Also, just a couple of concerns that I have. I guess one of my most important concerns is in section 23(2), where we give the definition or the understanding of a fire control plan to the utterly subjective opinion of a forest officer. Now, I have two problems with that. One is that it's very subjective. It just says "satisfactory to the forest officer," but there's no standard cited. There's no regulation to guide that forest officer as to what is satisfactory. There are no definitions of what a satisfactory plan would look like. There's no template of what a plan would look like. I think this is extremely subjective, and in that regard I think it's going to lead to conflict and dangerous issues.

Furthermore, I think that to give that kind of subjective and discretionary power to a forest officer, which is a change from the previous act, which stated "the Minister," is a significant change. To give that kind of subjective decision-making power to one of the civil servants of the province who is not accountable to the people, who does not have the public awareness of the minister I think is dangerous. Changing it from "the Minister" to "forest officer" causes me concern.

I also think that in 26(1) it's the same situation. It says: "Where a forest officer finds on any land conditions that the forest officer considers to be a fire hazard." Well, again, that's extremely subjective and onerous. Again, no standard, no regulations, no definitions, no indication of what one person might feel is and what another feels isn't.

Then I'm also a little bit concerned about an absence. There's no provision or requirement in this update of the act for the province or a municipality to have the permission or the authority to create and maintain fireguards around communities.

My friend from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre has a community that I'm afraid may be the next major fire area, Rocky Mountain House. If you've ever been there, there are forests all the way around and through and in the middle of that community. I also know that in the past the department of forestry has itself refused permission to cut provincial forests as fireguards. I'm afraid that that will happen again, where permission to municipalities or communities to actually create fireguards around their communities will in fact be refused by the department. I think that's something that should have been addressed in this particular update of the legislation.

The last thing that really troubles me is the removal of section 40, replacing it with 40 and 40.1, and that is that there is now no recourse on the part of citizens with regard to the administration of any of this law. It says that "no action lies and no proceeding may be brought against." We are denying the rights of citizens when we write this kind of law. I know it's become fashionable in the last few years, even reaching back into the previous government, to make it easier for administration to just do what they want to do and to allocate power to themselves while denying the rights of citizens to challenge that. There is a loss of accountability when you deny citizens the right of recourse or proceeding even if, as that particular 40.1 goes on to say, they have done it "in good faith."

I fully understand that oftentimes people may act in good faith, totally, truly good faith, but they misunderstand the situation, they misinterpret the law, especially when you grant the authority to a subjective level, to a forest officer who can do what he personally considers to be right or acceptable, a very subjective decision, and now there is no recourse to even question his personal, emotional, subjective decision on that. It's a return to medieval feudalism. It's

a return to a denial of the right of citizens to challenge what government does. Either that or it's a move – and I suspect even from the previous government, moving on, as I said, it's fashionable to be moving toward a more authoritarian, dictator style of government. It's not democracy when you remove the rights of citizens to recourse.

4:00

I think that the law needs to be carefully considered and looked at. It's extremely strong in those couple of items, and it's missing a couple of other points that I wish would have been included. Personally, I would like to see this go to committee. I think the intention is good. I think that it does need to be looked at, but I think there are serious considerations, and I would see that it be moved to committee so that it could be made even better than it is.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments to the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I listened to the previous speaker with interest, and I just had a few questions for him. He mentioned the firebreaks around communities and his concern about how those things will be managed. I wonder if he's familiar with the FireSmart program. I wonder if he can tell us a little about his understanding of the FireSmart program and how that protects various communities and the initiatives that that program undertakes.

Then he also, you know, went on at length about civil servants and his fear of them being subjective in their application of considering fire plans and safety plans. I'm just wondering. I have a lot of confidence in our civil servants. We hire these people because they're experts in the field. They do this day in and day out. These are the people that I trust to make these kinds of decisions. The member has made an allegation that he questions their ability to make an objective assessment of whether the plans that are submitted are accurate. I'm just wondering: is it the member's position that our civil servants aren't capable and are not experts in the field?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Orr:** Yes. Thank you for the questions. You know, I'm not trying to denigrate the purpose of what's intended here. I'm just trying to say that there are spots that I think could make it better. I am aware that there is the FireSmart plan, but I'm also aware that there have been challenges in the past, and it's not absolutely clear about the authority to act on some of those things. So I think that needs to be considered.

Secondly, with regard to the subjective nature of decision-making, where there is no clearly stated protocol or regulation or rule, there's no other choice but that it can be subjective. Somebody has to decide to make it. And, yes, they are competent, capable civil servants, but that doesn't mean that they will always make the choice that everyone else considers to be appropriate. As we all know, in our ridings we all have people who phone us who are struggling with: how is the law to be applied by those who are tasked with applying it? There are issues that come up every week. All of you have dealt with those.

So I'm not calling into credibility their intent. I'm saying that if we don't give them appropriate guidance, we are inappropriately tasking them with a responsibility that will put them in a difficult place and us in a difficult place, and we need to do better than that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other questions or comments to the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members who would like to speak to the bill before us, which is Bill 24? The Member for Grande-Prairie Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I'd like to speak to Bill 24, Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. Of course, we've heard discussions, and rightly so, about the Slave Lake fire and the devastation that it left. And, of course, even more recently and even more catastrophic as far as numberswise, anyway, we can remember the Fort Mac fire and its effects on that community and all of Alberta and, in fact, even Canada.

The effects of forest fires – I honestly can't imagine what it'd be like to lose my home in a fire. This spring when the Fort Mac fire was burning, there was a fire in our community. That day I'd actually driven to Edmonton for the Legislature the next day. I drove here on a Sunday night, and when I got here, I received word that part of my constituency was being evacuated. Of course, I turned around right then and drove straight back and arrived home at 4 o'clock in the morning to see what I could do to help with the situation there. Fortunately, for our sake and our community, we didn't lose any homes or anything. Again, I can't imagine what it would be like to lose a home and, in fact, to lose a whole community like what happened in Fort Mac and Slave Lake.

When I look at Bill 24, I do see a lot of good things, and I want to commend the government on those good things. There were a lot of things that needed to be cleaned up in that act. In particular, what I want to address is that I want to make sure that what we're doing with Bill 24 effectively reduces the opportunity for a Fort Mac or Slave Lake fire to happen again. With the situation that we're in and with the recent events of the Fort Mac fire, I think that has to be the goal of any discussion on forest and prairie protection when it comes to fires.

Now, when I looked at it, I looked at section 14, where it adds ATVs and the vehicles that could be restricted. Of course, that makes sense at times to do that. But we did have an ATV ban this spring, so that's not something that's necessarily new. Maybe this will allow it to happen more easily, but I would like to have a little more clarification on that and a little more understanding of what this is doing that wasn't done before.

I noticed, obviously, too, that the fire season will start a month earlier with this bill. Again, this spring was a classic example of an extremely early and dry spring where something like this, of course, would have been very helpful. Now, I do understand that the minister already has that ability to start the fire season earlier, so though this may make things easier or make it set in stone that the fire season starts earlier, it isn't something that's necessarily a huge change from what was there before.

We notice that the fire season now will start earlier, but this fire season, of course, the government shortened the contracts on the water bombers by one month. So we've extended the fire season by one month, but the government has shortened the bomber contracts by one month. That seems a little bit of an odd situation there, where there's kind of a greater disparity in time frame.

Now, if we look at section 23, we see some changes there where the word "Minister" has been replaced with "forest officer." Some of that, I guess, may make sense because obviously the forest officer is the person that would be dealing with some of these issues on the front line, not the minister. So some of that may make sense.

While we're talking about section 23, it talks about having "an industrial or commercial operation on public land or within one kilometre of any public land." Of course, what it suggests is that for anybody that has an industrial or commercial operation in those

parameters, the forest officer may have them develop a fire control plan that's satisfactory to that officer.

Now, what's maybe not contemplated in this bill is a possible change as far as, you know, what constitutes an industrial or commercial operation and what could be considered industrial or commercial. There are obviously a lot of different businesses and operations that would have no reasonable opportunity to pose a fire hazard. So I wonder if maybe some wording along those lines could be added into this, where we could suggest: an industrial or commercial operation that could reasonably pose a fire hazard. There could be a home-based business or something like that that doesn't operate in the outdoors at all that could fall under these parameters.

**4:10**

Now, if we read subsection (2) under section 23, it says:

If a person referred to in subsection (1) fails to comply with the request of the forest officer within the time determined by the forest officer, the Minister may, by order, suspend the industrial or commercial operation of the person until a fire control plan satisfactory to the forest officer has been submitted to the forest officer.

Obviously, this puts a lot of onus on the forest officer himself or herself. We have good people working in that industry, but it may be nice to have some parameters for them to work under so that they're not totally responsible themselves for anything along these lines that could go wrong.

I also wonder if there's any appeal process. Is the only appeal possible through the courts on these issues? Of course, if their business was to get shut down by a forest officer, how do they appeal or how do they make a claim that maybe they are in compliance?

We also need to realize with this same issue that having a business on public land is different than having a business within one kilometre of public land. Now, "public land" is a pretty general term that, of course, may include road allowances, grazing leases, marginal agricultural land that's interspersed with agricultural land, and then some of that marginal agricultural land has never been sold, so it still remains, you know, public land. So even though we could have a business that's within the kilometre of a quarter section of public land, they may be miles and miles from the actual forestry land that this bill would really be dealing with. I don't think that was the intent of this, to deal with businesses that are within a kilometre of land that's not expansive and could pose that chance for real catastrophic forest fire travel.

Now, in section 31.4(1) it talks about: "A forest officer may, without a warrant, seize any thing that the forest officer has reasonable grounds to believe harbours a forest pest." I think there was a change of wording from "product" to "thing." Of course, the definition of thing is: "an object that one need not, cannot, or does not wish to give a specific name to." When we talk about a thing, any thing, I think that leaves a lot of – well, I guess it basically includes everything because everything is a thing. I think that stands to reason. So I would like maybe a little bit of clarification on that. What was the reason for the change? Maybe there is a good reason, but it would be nice to know that. Maybe it could be changed to "forestry product" or something related to the forest industry. It may seem a little harsh to without warrants seize anything.

When it comes to invasive aquatic species, which is a similar issue, I believe – with invasive aquatic species, of course, they're trying to keep out these invasive species that could infect our waterways. Of course, it's very important to keep them out. The legislation on that, when it talks about the power of seizure, says that a forest officer or guardian may seize anything that the officer

believes on reasonable grounds might afford evidence of the commission of an offence or that has been used in the commission of an offence or is found in or on or at a place or conveyance and is believed on reasonable grounds to be a subject organism that is held without lawful authority to hold it.

This 31.4, I mean, I presume is talking about things like the pine beetle. Of course, we know the devastation that the pine beetle has caused to British Columbia in particular and, obviously, to Alberta, too. We've suffered a lot from the pine beetle. So it makes sense that we need to try to restrict the transport of these pests because they can do great damage to our local environment. I'm just wondering if maybe that wording that's used to deal with aquatic invasive species might be a little more appropriate for this bill here, dealing with the forest pests. I believe there are lots of good wording changes in this bill. Changing some of these things from "Minister" to "forest officer" because of a forest officer being on the front line: some of that makes sense. Like I say, I don't want to see the forest officers burdened with more responsibility than they have guidelines to follow. I think there's something to be said about that.

Overall, I mean, this is great because this is something that's very timely. We need to be discussing this. We need to be bringing this forward because of these catastrophic fires that we've experienced. We have to make sure that we do everything we can, as has been said before, to stop that happening to any other communities.

I'd also like to see a little bit more as far as how this lines up with the Flat Top Complex recommendations and that sort of thing. Maybe the minister will have a chance to explain some of this in greater detail for us. I'd look forward to that. Again, overall, I really like what's happening here as far as addressing some of the concerns that we have with our forest and fire protection in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments directed to the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky?

**Ms Jabbour:** I just wanted to ask a question for, I guess, more clarification. You had mentioned your concern that there was no ability to appeal. Section 37.6 does have the option to appeal an administrative penalty. Were you referring, then, to being able to appeal, like, the specified individual fines as opposed to administrative penalties?

**Mr. Loewen:** Well, thanks for the question. What I was referring to was section 23, when it talked about the industrial and commercial operations and the decisions that could be made by the forest officer in regard to that particular business, and of course in that section there it doesn't talk about any opportunity for appeals. It is good to have those opportunities for appeals, as you pointed out. I mean, that's great because in a democracy we need to have that opportunity to appeal decisions, and it is nice to be able to have the right to appeal without actually having to go to court and hire a lawyer and go through that expensive and time-consuming process.

Again, I just want to state that there are a lot of good things in here, and it would be nice to have the minister explain more. Hopefully, we'll have that opportunity to listen to him and have this fulsome discussion.

Again, these catastrophic fires are something that we need to avoid. There are other communities, I'm sure, in Alberta that could be in a situation where, if not handled properly, they could end up in the same situation, and we need to avoid any opportunity we have to lose property and even life as it comes to this.

We have to respect that the first responders, you know, when they're fighting these fires, are putting their lives on the line, and



by doing so, we need to do what we can to make sure that these first responders don't have to put their lives on the line to do that. There are always going to be some fires, but we need to do our best to reduce any opportunity to have these fires and to put our first responders in harm's way like that.

I think it's our duty to look at this as carefully as we can. Bill 24 is that opportunity to look at this to the fullest extent we can, and I would hope that possibly this maybe even could go to committee, where we could look at it and spend a lot of time and really go through this carefully to make sure that we've done everything we can.

4:20

Again, I can't imagine what it would be like to lose a home in a fire. Others have gone through that. I never have, and I would hope that nobody else has to do that. In late August I had an opportunity to go to Fort Mac and view some of that devastation. Again, I can't imagine. There are people's homes that were obviously burned to the ground, but they haven't had a chance to clean up or even start rebuilding yet. There are some homes that were standing at that time in perfect condition, that people weren't even able to return to at that point. So there's all that kind of stress and anguish that those people had to go through. Again, I can't imagine what it would be like.

I think, again, we have this opportunity with Bill 24 to open this all up, to make sure we get it right, because that's what we're here for. We're here to get it right. We're not here to just graze over and just, you know, do a few little tweaks here and there. If we're opening this up, let's do it right. Let's take it to the fullest extent that we can. Let's get as much consultation as we can. Let's see what we can do about bringing this fully forward in a way that we can do our absolute best to ensure this doesn't happen again.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** We're under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes, sir. My colleague has talked about some of the changes within the system, and I, too, talked about the changes of moving the fire season ahead, the potentiality under section 17(1), where the minister has talked about doing that. We've learned, through some of the questions that we had – and I believe my colleague was privy to that – in regard to the potential use of different products, that the time before the fire season is when our firefighters through forestry, et cetera, test the product . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I am an urban MLA, I really want to seek this opportunity to speak about something that's very unique to my constituency, something that this will really apply heavily towards, and that is the fact that Fish Creek park is right adjacent to and actually encompasses part of my constituency.

**Mr. Rodney:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you.

Anyway, the thing that's pretty unique to note on it is that because it is a provincial park, it does not fall under the purview of any municipal bylaws within the city of Calgary. In fact, on a technical standpoint, if you were to walk into the park, you have

technically left Calgary, which is remarkable for all those who live in that area, including myself, who can take his kids down there and can go for walks in those areas.

The thing that is very interesting to note is that during the last spring I had quite a few opportunities to meet with many of the park officials and managers of that park, and they had a lot of concerns in that area because it was a very dry winter for Calgary and southern Alberta. By around April of this year a lot of the foliage was very dry. They were very dry conditions, and, to be frank, they were preparing for the possibility of a wildfire in there. The area is very well established. A lot of the foliage is very old; it's very dry. To be completely candid, it gave them and myself a lot of anxiety because there are a lot of houses that back right onto Fish Creek park that would have been negatively impacted. There are businesses. There's even a university that backs onto that park. So there was a lot of danger that was seen there.

The problem that we have is that the city of Calgary has always been very good about keeping their bylaws up to date when it is trying to manage wildfires and grass fires in the area, but none of those apply to Fish Creek park. If there was to be a wildfire, I have a lot of faith and I know for a fact that the people who would be responding to that are the Calgary fire department. Ultimately, they would have a challenge trying to navigate some of the rules that exist within Fish Creek park and a lot of the outdated rules.

We also have to make sure that we're empowering our parks officials to have that opportunity to be able to manage the area and to prevent these wildfires from occurring. One of the things that I learned just recently is that there was a new deal signed in Fish Creek park. They're leasing part of the land near the water treatment plant for off-road vehicles, so the parks officials do need to have that power to put a ban on off-road vehicles if they know that there is a huge possibility of wildfires occurring. Further to the point, they also need to be able to have a bit more power to control uncontrolled fires that are lit within some of the grounds that are in that area as well. There are quite a few firepits and little camp stoves and things like that.

The other thing that we have to be very well aware of is that if there is the instance where a fire does occur in that area, we have to be able to allow people like CPS, who will fly HAWCS over there looking for hot spots and making sure there is no one in that park, the power to be able to do that without any disruption. So we have to make sure that we're putting those bans on the drone vehicles during wildfire events, because if that does occur, we want to make sure that everyone is safe during these times and that we can save homes and those people who are impacted and not deal with the disruptions that are coming from drone vehicles.

Now, if I may speak in regard to section 31.4, we've had an unfortunate distinction in Fish Creek park this year, and I had the unfortunate opportunity to be at the press announcement during this time. We have an invasive species, a weed that actually came into that park – and I apologize if I mispronounce it, because it's very uncommon – *Thesium arvense*. It's an Asian-based weed. It doesn't even have a slang term yet because it's very new to North America. One of the things that the park is doing to try to combat that, because of certain patches where it exists, is that they brought in one of our mussel-sniffing dogs, Hilo, and they've trained him to sniff out where that weed is. He can actually go around the park and find patches where they are, and he's been doing a very good job of it.

The downside is that we may not necessarily know when we have them at that park site. If we think there could be something that might have spread that weed that came into that park, we need to be able to contain that and detect whether or not that is the case. Right now Fish Creek park is doing a lot of work to combat invasive

weeds and invasive species. A lot of the grassland there is not native because it is reclaimed farmland. There was some industrial development at that point, and then we reclaimed the space. But people like friends of Fish Creek and the parks officials there have been working really diligently, and they actually have some trial spaces where they're trying to prevent invasive weeds from growing and are trying to grow it back to natural land. They're trying to reclaim a lot of that space.

But the challenge is that you're going to have these opportunities where people are bringing invasive things into the park. We have to be able to control that so that we can really grow that area. A lot of people have pride for this park. It's getting a little bit older, and we're dealing with a lot of challenges that come with invasive species coming into this province from just the natural occurrence of us being so mobile and moving around. This is always going to be a fight that the friends of Fish Creek and the parks officials will be managing, but we need to make sure that we're giving them all the tools that they can have to manage this appropriately as well.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

You know, I'm going to support this bill because I really think that it is the right thing for us to do, to give our parks officials the tools that they need to prevent any really devastating fires from impacting that area and also to make sure that they can manage and control any issues that do occur in that area.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The member just talked very passionately about Fish Creek park bordering his constituency there. I just wanted to ask the member if he feels that Bill 24 does absolutely every possible thing that it can to protect the forest in Fish Creek park.

**Mr. Sucha:** You know, when I look at the review of this, at a lot of the hurdles that we have in that area, I don't want to say any absolutes or have to eat my words, which would be very unfortunate if something were to happen to that park. There are sometimes bad seeds out there that will cause devastating things to areas, and it's very unfortunate when that occurs. But I think that this gives the parks officials a lot of tools that they can use to prevent fires and to also prevent the spread of a lot of invasive weeds and invasive species in this. I think it gives them a lot of great opportunities to really continue to allow that park to flourish. I fundamentally believe that this provides every tool that they need at their disposal.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions under 29(2)(a)? Drumheller-Stettler.

4:30

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the member, I too would like to ask him a question. Some of the new products that are available for firefighting are used in different jurisdictions and not so much in Canada. In the act here it talks about changing the fire season start from April 1 to March 1. I was going to ask that question to my colleague here, but I'll ask it to the member opposite. That's normally when the forestry department does their testing of new products, and I was wondering what he would think about the possibility. The product known as fire-retardant gel, actually, in urban areas similar to where the member opposite lives, provides excellent control that's able to be laid down by various forms, whether it be rotary- or fixed-wing aircraft. This product provides longer term fire protection, or so I've been led to believe. I was wondering if the member would think that this is an option,

that we might want to change some of this so that it would allow the forestry department to test throughout the season to use new products that are used in other jurisdictions.

**Mr. Sucha:** You know, I do have to apologize to the member as I'm not as familiar with a lot of those products. I guess he's given me some homework to review when I get off duty today as well, too. You know, it's always amazing to see how technology evolves over time and how forest fire fighting has changed over this vast amount of time. Even when you look at, as I alluded to before, a lot of the wildfire combatting that we've had within the urban area of Calgary, it was remarkable to see them fighting grass fires with HAWCS when they first got the helicopter in that area because it was never something that they had at their disposal, but they had it then. At the end of the day, I would have to read into these things a little bit more to have a more accurate response in relation to some of these products that are available.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further questions and comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Yeah. Just a comment on that previous question. I know that over the summer I was able to meet with some constituents that were looking at alternative products and testing of those products. In working with the agriculture minister, we were able to find ways to test and times in which they can test the different products. So I know that's already happening, specifically talking about the gels. It's not saying that it's being applied everywhere. It's going through the system of how we can test them right now. I just wanted to provide a comment on that front, knowing that a constituent of mine is also looking into that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I don't have a lot to add to the discussion except questions. Like many, I don't live and haven't lived in an area that is heavily forested, but having travelled in the U.S. a bit over the summer, I came across some folks who had some experience in the U.S. and were kind of astonished at the lack of regulations in Canada, in Alberta in particular, when I raised some of the issues around our forest management.

I'm speaking of areas like Idaho and California, where they believe they have largely controlled forest fires that affect urban settlements by very strict standards around fire belts and clearing the branches up to 10 feet in all trees that are anywhere near the urban areas. I don't know all of the conditions under which they have managed to control forest fires in those areas, but they have significantly reduced any serious threats to urban centres by setting in place some pretty strong barriers, including removing all flammable materials on the ground within several miles of an urban centre, as I say, branches no lower than 10 feet to stop it moving up trees – even if there is a grass fire, it won't move up the trees – and a setback distance of whatever it is, a very significant setback distance from urban settings for any major trees.

I wonder how much we've looked at other jurisdictions and the lengths to which they've gone to what they believe has virtually eliminated the risk to urban centres at a cost, obviously, of having nice forested areas close to urban centres and towns, which is a wonderful attraction for all of us. We love the forests. We love the

wildlife. We love the opportunity to move in forests, recreate in forests.

I hope the government has looked at other jurisdictions because the folks that I ran into just serendipitously on my vacation in the U.S. suggested that they think it's a thing of the past and that there are very practical and concrete ways, with setback distances and measures to reduce flammability in proximity to cities, to actually eliminate the kind of thing that we've seen in our northern communities. Obviously, there's much more dense forest in the northern part of our province than in many parts of California, but they took this very seriously, and they tell me that they have virtually eliminated the risk to urban and even smaller municipalities as a result of very strong standards for firebreaks.

I would commend that to the government. I'm sure they have looked at other locations, but there may be much to learn from other locations in North America that have more successfully than we have prevented forest fires affecting major populations.

Thank you. I'll follow the debate and do some more research.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to rise to speak to this bill. This bill is seeking to improve the existing laws by strengthening deterrents through tougher fines, improving the ability to reduce fire risk where fire conditions are hazardous, and clarifying operational processes, roles, and responsibilities. This is something I support. These legislative changes build on the more than 100 actions taken in response to the recommendations made in the Flat Top Complex report following the 2011 Slave Lake area wildfires. This is one of those learnings from the last two wildfire seasons.

These amendments generally can be grouped into three categories: enhanced fines, improved public safety and wildfire prevention measures, and operational amendments. I'll just focus on looking into public safety and prevention. One of the things that has been talked about at length is ATVs and the importance of what those who use off-road vehicles need to do in order to prevent forest fires.

As somebody who's a bit of an automobile enthusiast – I mean, quads, for example, often have many hot spots in them with debris accumulating underneath the seat as well as around the heat shields and around the muffler. For dirt bikes, which are my personal preference if I'm going to be using an off-road vehicle, spark arresters are very important as well as, again, making sure that you have no debris around the particular exhaust pipes. This is not to say that those who use off-road vehicles are not responsible users. When I've gone out enjoying our forested areas dirt biking, I found that users, on the whole, are responsible. However, this legislation provides for the ministry to restrict that use in the case when the fire risk is so high that even an otherwise responsible user may inadvertently start a forest fire.

It's interesting that technology of ATVs – it's new technology as well that has also become a concern that we are addressing in this legislation, specifically in the use of drones around firefighting equipment, specifically planes and helicopters. You know, I can imagine that years and years ago ATVs were a new technology that I'm sure needed to be addressed in the legislation of the day, and now we are moving forward with that while including drones in the legislation as well. Spark arresters and such on ATVs as well are another excellent example of things that can be done to prevent forest fires with your ATV. So if you don't happen to have one, you should probably get one on your dirt bike or your ATV.

4:40

Lastly, you know, one of the things that's come up that I was thinking about during the debate of this particular legislation is: why would providing the ability to prohibit the operation of off-highway vehicles narrow the ability of the public to use Alberta lands? Well, I think it's in the same way that we implement a forest fire ban when forests are tinder dry and have that approved authority to restrict the use of off-highway vehicles, especially when they pose a risk and the fire danger is that severe. Of course, there are already provisions, through forest closures, to close activities in a particular area, and I would imagine that if we were to ban off-highway vehicles in a particular forested area, it would be just that one step before a complete forest closure occurs.

On that note, Madam Speaker, those are just my couple of comments on this legislation. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I like where this bill is going. I understand that we want to increase funds, that we want to make it more difficult for and try to remove that human element from initiating forest fires. I'll be curious to follow this over the years because when we're talking about the evolution of our fire management, forestry, firefighting, and forestry practices management, this is something that does take years. It is interesting to see if increased penalties and fines and other restrictions will help alleviate a lot of these forest fires. So, to that effect, I do appreciate this bill.

But that said, we have to also recognize that we have a long way to go and that when we have events where we do evacuate a large community like this, 80,000 plus – you know, we had Slave Lake before that; we had Kelowna before that – hopefully people will learn and understand just through those events alone why we have to increase all these fines and put in these restrictions, because people are just generally stupid, and we will not ever learn our lessons. I truly do question whether it will really help because it is so hard to really understand how these things start.

When this last fire in Fort McMurray started, I knew right off the bat that it would have been man-made. We knew that. It wasn't lightning strikes. There was no thunder activity in the area. From the moment it started, anyone who has any experience or understanding of that field knew it was a person that started it. So it will be interesting to see. What I do desire is that our forestry division here with our provincial government does work with the other provinces and with the federal government and reconsiders our management practices with our forests.

One thought – and this is only my own perception based on my own studies and some reports that I wrote myself even – is that we've become very good at fighting forest fires. As a result, the fuel loads in all these forests have built up. Just remember that every year there are leaves shedding from these trees, that there are branches, that there's bark. It all comes down. It creates that layer of duff. Believe it or not, that is called duff on the ground there, that layer of composting mulch.

**Mr. Hanson:** It's not just a beer?

**Mr. Yao:** It's not just a beer on *The Simpsons*, folks.

That is where, when we talk about those fires burrowing into the ground, it lays right now. It is slowly burning, and I fully expect this winter, when it's 20 below, we will see an area appear out of the blue that is burned up. I've responded to many of those up in

Fort McMurray over the years. It is a very interesting spectacle to see a large area burned out that started from an ember that's in the ground.

I guess the point is that there is that dynamic with our boreal forests, that the type of trees – a lot of black spruces, conifers, and whatnot – are highly flammable, and we need to consider a policy about letting it burn, but we do have to ensure that we protect the priorities, which are structures and people, and use those FireSmart practices. But we do have to recognize that even with all these additional penalties and whatnot and additional enforcement, it is a lot about public education and enforcing that education in people and making them respect our forests as well. I hope that's something that we can continue on in our education system as well when we're dealing with this issue.

Fighting forest fires is a very expensive thing, as our government found out when they tried to cut back the budget. It's an unpredictable thing, and it's difficult to wrap our minds around it. It is a roll of the dice. You know, no fire might have started at all, and everything would have gone on as usual. But because of this fire we do see increased legislation, and I hope that we can affect it to do good within our province and, as well, share this information with other provinces and work together to come up with some practices with our forest management that will alleviate these issues.

These issues do happen more in the north, quite honestly, and if you look at northern Alberta, it does coincide with more increase in population, more industrial activity as well. Again, back to the fact that people are really the initiators of a lot of this, that goes without saying.

That's all I've got. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's our responsibility for today's and for future generations to ensure the safety of our communities all over Alberta. My constituency experienced a spring fire this past season, and while it was nothing like the devastation in Fort McMurray or Slave Lake and while one of our communities was under threat, our region was watching very closely, and people were evacuating. Due to the bravery of Battalion 6 Parkland fire services and others who answered the call to help, we were lucky that it didn't spread further than it did. These men and women put their community first, as must we.

Enhanced fines can prevent many of the fires, Madam Speaker, especially with the focus on industrial violations to prevent the spread of any accidents that may happen, which brings us in line with jurisdictions in B.C. and Saskatchewan that face similar challenges. The people of Alberta strongly support these proposed enhancements because we all watched in absolute horror when the devastating fires hit our northern cities in 2011 and again this spring. We stood as community members in Alberta. That's our community: Alberta.

The ability to restrict specific recreational activities such as the use of off-highway vehicles and to ban exploding targets, which also pose a higher risk of igniting a wildfire during periods of extreme danger, will help to reduce the incidence of preventable fires. In my region it was a preventable fire.

We know that many companies stood up in the spring as neighbours to Wood Buffalo and Fort McMurray, and strengthening the obligations for industry to assist will help spread the assistance so not every company gets stuck with a huge portion of the obligation.

Clarifying operational processes, roles, and responsibilities just makes sure that we know who's responsible. It gives us a line of hierarchies, if you will, so that there is somebody to respond and there is somebody to reply every time.

As the climate continues to change here in Alberta and in Canada and globally, our wildfire seasons have become longer, and wildfires have become more intense. We've seen it with disasters all over the world, and I don't think that we can imagine that we are exempt from any type of devastation.

I would just like to, you know, hope that everybody in this House supports this bill and that we can get through this and make a stronger, better Alberta. Thank you.

4:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask the member what she learned acting as the MLA at that time when there was the spring fire, what sort of things she was told by the municipality, perhaps, or experiences from the people that, unfortunately, had to go through it. If you could just tell us some further information that you gleaned from being the MLA at the time when that happened to your constituency.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, it was more of a grass fire, and it wasn't in one of our wooded areas, thank goodness, because there are quite a number of those in our constituency. It was around the town of Duffield, and it was very, very close.

You know, the municipality worked wonderfully. It was very clear who was there to help. The surrounding fire departments and the volunteer firefighters were out there fighting it for a number of days, and they fought it very well. They thought of us, and they let us go home every day while they stood and fought those fires.

You know, being a spring fire, it was very unexpected, especially in our constituency. And being so close to Edmonton, that was a large fire that was half an hour away. You know, had it come any closer, it could have been devastating for our entire region.

So I think, you know, what I learned was just to be able to work with our municipalities and make sure that they have the tools they need and that we're there to support them in the capacity that we can.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any further speakers to the bill? Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think that this is a really important bill to bring forward. It's timely. We see that this year has been particularly devastating for a number of communities across Alberta, including Lamont county. There was a fire, the northeast Skaro fire, and it was a fire that actually sent two firefighters to the hospital. It took homes, took businesses, and had lasting impacts on the families and the livelihoods that they try to make for their families.

It's really important that we move forward with legislation that doesn't only educate even though education is a huge part of it. We need to have deterrents in place for people in Alberta to take this very seriously, knowing that 70 per cent of our fires are caused by human activity. Being able to have fines of \$150 up to \$1,000 for

our peace officers and our fish and wildlife officers to hand out to people that don't put out their campfires is incredibly important. We have these people as incredible resources. They know the areas. They know the people that are using these camp areas, and I'm sure that they're going to be very happy to finally be in a place to actually make a better difference in taking care of these areas that they are in charge of.

Also, having fines that can go from \$5,000 to \$1 million for corporations and up to \$100,000 for individuals is something that is a further deterrent. I don't think anyone wants to be held responsible for penalties of that amount, but it's important that we have those tools for the court system to be able to use and to help really protect Alberta because, you know, we see the devastation. We see the impacts that happen across communities.

Also, the increased implementation of FireSmart initiatives: I know that this is something that different counties in my constituency have been asking for. Beaver county, that I was just in the other day: they were asking for more support because our municipal leaders really want to do their part, but they need that support. They need the province to be a collaborative partner when it comes to taking care of their infrastructure and the families that they look after.

Also, enhanced stakeholder relationships are incredibly important. I know that the fish and wildlife associations that are in the constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville are always talking to me about how they want to be responsible members in Alberta. They know the challenges, that having off-highway vehicles out in our prairie areas can lead to human-caused fires, so we have people that have that expert knowledge and first-hand knowledge that know how they can better partner with us in bettering outcomes for us.

Also, having a role for fire behaviour specialists, that we can increase that role is incredibly important. We have the highest educated population in Canada because we have people like this, that we can really glean this knowledge from and have them be also very active with us in helping to try and prevent and avoid these horrific things that can happen.

Also, the fact that we don't have legislation surrounding drones, the fact that we have unmanned drones that have the potential and have gone through these areas – when we have a fire, we need everyone to know that they might have the unintended consequence of grounding our firefighters when we need them up in the air the most. That's what happens with technology as it develops. The legislation oftentimes doesn't keep up, so we bring in legislation that has to really catch up with the innovation that has been happening. It would be nice to always be able to future-proof legislation for something as serious as wildfires, but this is one way that we can at least try and catch up to what people are currently doing for recreational activities.

We do see that the climate is changing. The fire that happened in Lamont county happened in March and April because it was so dry. We had an incredibly dry winter. People were trying their best to keep on the lookout, but the municipalities were not able to catch the fire that was happening underneath the peat, that ultimately turned into a forest fire. We need to make sure that we are keeping up with the climate, that we're keeping up with legislation that keeps us safe.

As I said before, when I was out in Lamont county to visit one of the farms, that lost 75 per cent of their fencing of their cow-calf operation and lost all of their farm buildings except for their house, which they only kept because all of their family came out and helped to keep the ground around it wet, as I sat at that table with that family, with their grandparents, with the young couple that was the farm owners, one of them holding their baby, I could see 50 feet

off into the forest that there was smoke still coming up. There were fire trucks still going back and forth, trying to keep an eye on the potential further development of fires that were still burning in the area.

It was a huge devastation for them. They lost their entire shop, that the husband had set up, with \$100,000 worth of tools. This is a family that was just trying to get their feet underneath them with this business because, of course, as many in this Legislature know, when you have a smaller farm operation, you need other means of income to keep that operation viable and sustainable, a stable income other than the farming operation that you have. It was incredibly devastating for them, and that was why I felt that it was, you know, a priority for me to go out there and visit them in their home.

5:00

I know that the counties and the municipalities really want that support with the FireSmart initiatives, and they keep reaching out. I am very pleased to see this legislation come forward so that I can go back to those county councillors and to the reeves and tell them that we hear them loud and clear and that they are doing the right things, that they do have the right ideas. Having the ability to bring in these bans to forests when they are tinder dry is how we can lower the risk of igniting these wildfires.

I think it's really important that there was good stakeholder engagement on this, that we heard from the public, that we heard from first responders, that have first-hand knowledge of how to deal with these situations. Like, our firefighters: they don't just fight fires. They are detectives. They are the people that know how to understand a fire that happened so that they can further educate us all in how we develop more legislation to try and address these issues that they identify.

Also, engaging with indigenous people so that we are quite mindful of how this might impact their treaty rights is incredibly important because in Alberta we all are needing to make sure that we respect those agreements, those treaties, those rights. It's incredibly important.

Engaging with industry, engaging with recreational associations: I know that the Alberta Snowmobile Association has done a lot of work with this. They have done ongoing work because they want to be good neighbours. They want to have fun, but they also want to be good neighbours at the same time.

I am happy to stand and support this bill, and I know that we have more debate to get to. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I'll close debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Hanson:** Just a curiosity question for you. You acknowledged the fact that it was very tinder dry all over the province in March and April of this year, and you saw the devastation that had happened in your own community in Lamont county. I'm just wondering if you'd like to comment on your thoughts when the government budget came out and cut all that money from the wildfire fighting program.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question. I think we all know that when a fire happens in the province, all of the resources are delegated that need to be. The people are brought in. The money is spent. The aircraft are . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Deployed.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** ... are deployed. Thank you.

We had the military come and actually work within the office of the Provincial Operations Centre. There was incredible partnership from day one, and I think we know that the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs did not spare any expense to try and assist those people and to try to protect critical infrastructure because we know that the replacement of all of that is incredibly expensive. We already know what the final number – well, I don't think we even have a final number. It's into the billions and billions of dollars that it'll take to rebuild it.

I think that we all are on the same page. When you have people in distress, when you have businesses that are affected, when you have pets in a home that need people to go and take care of them, round them up and feed them and water them and take care of them and love them until those families were able to get home and be reunited with them – we know that every person possible and every resource available was utilized. They stepped up to the plate in time of need and will continue to do that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Grande Prairie-Smoky, under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the opposition here, since we've been debating this Bill 24 in second reading, we've asked for clarification on several different issues with the bill. When we ask for clarification, it gives the government the opportunity to clarify and maybe make us fully understand why some of the changes that have been made have been proposed in this bill. I think it's only fair that somebody on the government side respond to these questions and queries that we have so that we can have clarification so that we know whether we can support a bill like this.

I'm wondering: is there anybody on the government side of the house that could answer any of our questions or concerns or the clarifications that we're seeking on Bill 24? Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, did you wish to respond?

**Mrs. Littlewood:** I didn't hear a specific question in there.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to repeat the question from the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. How does the member feel about cutting the firefighting budget? I don't think she actually answered that question.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** I've already answered the question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There are still a few seconds left under 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, we ask questions, we ask for clarification, and we receive nothing. We're in debate here on Bill 24, which is a very important bill. We all agree that it's a very important bill. The only thing that we would like is clarification on a few points. Now, I ask again: is there anybody over there that can provide the clarification that we've requested? Multiple members on this side have stood up and asked for clarification on multiple issues, and so far we haven't received anything. The concern is that we sit in here – we only have a certain amount of time to debate these bills. We ask questions. We want clarification. We get nothing.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just for clarification, hon. member, under 29(2)(a) the intent is that the questions are directed to the previous speaker, not to anyone who wishes to respond. That would not be appropriate use of 29(2)(a).

Any further speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to speak in support of Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act. I'm very honoured to be a co-sponsor of the bill, and I'm very appreciative for the minister's leadership. I congratulate him on this first piece of legislation, and I think that he couldn't have picked a much better topic for his first bill. So I'm really pleased to be a part of that.

Of course, I'd like to thank the first responders, who keep our communities safe. I know that in forest communities like the ones in Banff-Cochrane and particularly where I live, in Bragg Creek, when fire season comes around every year, people get pretty nervous. They never know what's going to happen. It's interesting because there's a bit of tension between people being afraid of a flood risk and a fire risk, both at opposite ends of the hydrology spectrum as it were. I do know that the forest communities can rest a little easier because they know that we have such professional people looking after us that are going to be keeping us safe and are ready to jump into action.

5:10

I'd also really like to recognize the volunteer first responders. Of course, the professional responders are the people who do this day in and day out, but it's not just the professional responders who keep us safe. There are people like Erik Butters. He is a councillor and the deputy reeve in the MD of Bighorn. He's also a rancher in the Ghost valley near the beautiful communities of Benchlands and Waiparous. I know that Mr. Butters would probably be the last person to call himself a hero, but I would be the first to say that he is, he and other volunteer first responders just like him. He's told me some stories about how he's jumped into action on very short notice and put out very small fires that could have otherwise escalated into much bigger events. So it's having people like him and others throughout our communities. He might just happen to be at home having dinner one night when he gets a call, and he has to go and respond to that immediately. It's people like that, who are scattered around our communities, who have the ability to respond very quickly to those kinds of situations and put out fires before they become a bigger issue.

There are also communities that border the Ghost valley public land-use zone, and there are, you know, accidents that happen all the time in these communities. People have accidents with their off-highway vehicles, or sometimes, despite their best intention and best actions, their fires get out of hand, so they need some help extinguishing those. These volunteer emergency first responders put their life on hold at any time of day or night. They don't know when they're going to get called. I guess that's the nature of the business.

There's another sort of category of volunteer first responders, and those are people like in the Ghost Lake village and in Redwood Meadows. We have an example of volunteer fire stations. They're people just like you and me. They have day jobs where they work, but they volunteer their time after hours, keeping their community safe. I'd really like to acknowledge those people because I think they deserve a lot of credit.

Another aspect of our public service that I'm really proud of is the fire lookout towers. I'm lucky to have three of those towers in the constituency of Banff-Cochrane. They're located at Moose

Mountain, at Barrier Lake, and at Kananaskis. There are dedicated individuals who sit at the top of these fire stations and take weather reports and observe the forest all day long, looking for signs of risk. If it weren't for these dedicated public servants, again, there could be a lot of other risks that we would face. I'd like to thank them as well.

When we talk about communities that are at risk for forest fires, the community of Bragg Creek, especially, has been identified along with other communities like Slave Lake and Fort McMurray as a high risk of forest fire. You know, Bragg Creek is one of the three remaining communities that hasn't yet experienced a fire, fortunately for Bragg Creek, but it's certainly a risk for the community, so one of the things that I'm really proud of our government doing is funding an emergency egress study. If you're familiar with the town of Bragg Creek, on the west side of the river there's really only kind of one way out, which is the bridge over the Elbow River. Our government has provided some funding to Rocky View county to study different ways that we could plan an emergency egress route. There's a lot more work to be done there, but I'm glad that we're taking steps to address the concerns of the community.

You know, all across Banff-Cochrane, pretty much from Cochrane all the way to Lake Louise and all points north and south as well, all of these communities are at high risk for a forest fire. Albertans and tourists alike go to these communities for the exact reason that they're covered with trees. This, of course, puts them at risk as well. A lot of these forests are old-growth forests, so there's a lot of debris and duff, as we've heard from a member across. There's certainly a high risk there, but one of the things that we certainly encourage to reduce that risk is the FireSmart program. The communities across Banff-Cochrane have engaged in FireSmart activities. I know that Canmore and Bragg Creek have done a lot of work on this. In Bragg Creek, in particular, the fire department went door to door, actually, and made sure that everybody in the community knew about the plan and that if they had any questions or needed any assistance, the fire department was available to them.

The little community of Waiparous, which is sort of northwest of Cochrane, was actually awarded a FireSmart grant because of the work that they've done. I was just looking at their website, actually, and they post almost quarterly newsletters to the residents talking about the different types of activities and emergency planning and that kind of thing. So there are really good examples of communities taking action and making sure that people know what the risks are and how they can respond to those risks.

I'd like to get into a little bit more about the bill rather than just talking about what our communities are doing. You know, of course, we've mentioned before that the purpose of the bill is to protect Albertans and their communities from the threat of wildfires. The amendments that we're proposing here are supported by recommendations that were made in the Flat Top Complex report as well as the last two fire seasons. For people who may not have heard of the Flat Top Complex report, this was a report that was based on the lessons learned from the 2011 Slave Lake fire, and almost all of those recommendations are adopted here in this bill.

Of course, we've mentioned before – it's been said in this House earlier – that, unfortunately, human-caused fires are the most common. There's a high rate of human use in Banff-Cochrane, which is great because people are getting out and enjoying the outdoors. It's close to Calgary, and people like to take their off-highway vehicles there and go camping or whatnot, and that's a good thing, but we also want to make sure that people understand the risks of enjoying the outdoors and make sure that they take steps

and understand the consequences if they don't do their part to keep our communities safe.

The bill strengthens our laws that enhance wildfire prevention activities. It supports our wildland firefighters and keeps Alberta communities safe. You know, if we can prevent fires from happening in the first place, we don't need to put our first responders at risk. If we can stop fires from happening, you know, that's a good thing in itself, but we also keep our first responders safe.

One of the things I'd like to talk a little bit about is just recreational off-highway vehicle use. We've talked about that a little bit before. One thing that I'm really proud of is to have the co-operation of the off-highway vehicle use community. I know that this is a very responsible group. They like to get out and enjoy the outdoors, but they also know that they have a role to play in keeping our communities safe, so I'd like to thank the off-highway vehicle community for their co-operation when we do from time to time need to restrict off-highway vehicle use.

Madam Speaker, the proposed regulations, from what I've been made to understand, also include a ban on what are called incendiary targets and also fireworks on public lands. This is a piece that I am particularly proud of because members in my community, including the municipal district of Bighorn and the Ghost valley community, had brought to my attention early on in 2016 that they were concerned about the use of incendiary targets. In the Ghost public land-use zone there are often people that like to sight in their guns and get ready for hunting season, and that's an acceptable use in that area, but one of the risks that the community members identified to me is with these incendiary targets. These are targets that, when you hit them, explode, and there is a risk of that explosion causing a forest fire. So in this bill, or rather in the regulations that would come afterwards, it's proposed to have a ban on incendiary targets.

It's because of the actions of the community, the Ghost valley community and the MD of Bighorn, who brought this to my attention. I, in turn, shared it with the minister. And I'm sure there are other groups as well. This is something that the communities can really give themselves a pat on the back for, standing up for themselves and making sure that they brought this to our attention.

That brings me to another point. You know, when we're talking about forest fires, when you look at a forest from a distance, it looks like there are just trees out there. I think what sometimes people forget is that there's a community in there. There are people living amongst those trees, you know, on acreages. It may be a very low density of houses, but certainly there are people living there. They want to rest easy at night knowing that they have adequate protection from forest fires and that people are going to be there when they need them, and they certainly are. But they also want to know that we're doing our part in making sure that we have laws to ensure that people understand the repercussions of forest fire.

#### 5:20

Of course, tourism is another big economic driver in Banff-Cochrane. People don't like to see burned-out forests. You know, that nice, intact sea of green trees is something that is attractive to tourists from all around the world. We need to do everything we can to protect our forests for that. Of course, forest fire is a natural part of the cycle, so we can't just suppress fire completely, but we do undertake activities like prescribed burns. These occur on a regular basis, and I know that there were a couple just occurring either over the last couple of weeks or even right now throughout my constituency particularly. I know that we've got fire experts that are responsible for managing those prescribed burns, and that's something that also not only protects from a larger forest fire, but it

also protects communities. It's actually also really good for wildlife, too. Wildlife like to live on the edges of things. You know, if we have a kind of homogeneous forest that doesn't necessarily allow for the type of habitat that is amenable to a high biodiversity in wildlife, prescribed burns and managing those fires accordingly is a way that we can also help with our wildlife.

Of course, with the forestry industry, as the Member for Peace River mentioned as well, we want to make sure that we're taking actions to protect the assets that belong to all Albertans but are harvested by our forestry industry partners, and that's something that is contemplated by this legislation as well, keeping those assets safe.

You know, with that, Madam Speaker, I think I've touched on a lot of important points as it relates to my constituency. I'd like to thank all the members for the debate we've had here this afternoon.

With that, I'd like to adjourn debate on this particular bill.

**An Hon. Member:** Is there no 29(2)(a)?

**The Deputy Speaker:** We've got a motion on the floor to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 21

### Modernized Municipal Government Act

[Debate adjourned November 1: Mr. Hanson speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to complete my speech, that I started before the lunch break today. I'll just get back to, briefly, what I was talking about, the fact that MDPs and ICFs that are required do require a lot of extensive work and commitment by both the urban and rural municipalities. My concern is for smaller municipalities and villages that may not have the funds available to undertake these tasks. We're hoping that there will be something in the legislation that will provide some funding for some of these smaller villages and towns that can't afford to do this on their own. We have to address the issue of secure, sustainable, predictable funding for all of our municipalities so that they can more easily comply with the requirements of this legislation when it comes to the MDPs and ICFs.

The intermunicipal collaboration framework: I've heard quite a few concerns from my area and others and especially at the AUMA conference as well. I've heard pros and cons from both. Urbans are looking forward to support from their rural counterparts; of course, the rural counterparts are not so much looking forward to sharing their funds. That being said, one of the arguments from the rurals is that the money collected from linear and equipment tax should be collected by the area where the buildings are or the pipelines are, basically where the taxation occurs.

The argument from urban communities like St. Paul and Bonnyville, for instance, that don't have access to those funds: a lot of the heavy traffic that is incorporated into those big industries does actually, you know, utilize the streets through St. Paul, through Main Street, through Main Street in Bonnyville as well, causing, of course, a lot of wear and tear to their roads and their infrastructure. That's how they're trying to approach the rural municipalities to get maybe a little bit fairer a share. So we're hoping that there will be some collaboration there when it comes to that.

One of the other things I did hear about a lot was the losses in revenue just over the last year in urban municipalities especially. There have been losses of residential and business tax revenue, to the point where there's delinquency and people just walking away from their homes or arranging to make payments with the cities or towns to cover their tax burden. You know, because they're unemployed, they can't just dish out \$3,000, so they've actually approached the towns and offices to negotiate a payment schedule. That's a very unfortunate sign of the times.

Also, one of the other things that we've heard is the recent loss of the grants in lieu of taxes from the province that cover the provincial property within their boundaries, a very big concern. It was something that they grew to depend on. We're hoping that there'll be something in the MGA to address that as well.

Rural municipalities. Again I'll mention the delinquent linear and equipment taxes. Some have attempted to pass the uncollectable taxes on to the ratepayers. You know, even when we're talking between the Municipal Government Act and the urban and rural municipalities, we have to remember that there is really only one taxpayer. They are being taxed to distraction – let's put it that way – not only through their municipal taxes but now the upcoming carbon tax, that they'll have to be facing in January. The local property owners are talking to me about this. They would like to be heard as part of this MGA as well from the fact that they are the ultimate source of revenue for the province and the municipalities, and they should therefore have a say.

Now, there's also some concern about smaller urbans within the boundaries becoming incapable of sustaining themselves and being forced into dissolution. Does the rural municipality absorb all of these costs? I can take into account a small rural municipality like the county of Two Hills. I'm just guessing at their budget, but they've got a lot of roads to maintain – it's quite a large county – and they're probably budgeting pretty close. Now, if they have to absorb a smaller community – there are a couple of them that are, you know, very close and are being looked at right now by Municipal Affairs to see about their sustainability. Now, what happens when they're absorbed into the county? I'm sure there's a little bit of an increased tax base, but there are also all of the infrastructure costs that go with that. My concern and question regarding this Municipal Government Act is: will there be some compensation to help out these urban municipalities to absorb some of these smaller communities and not have them become insolvent themselves because of the increased burden?

The proposal for the municipal development plans may allow some of these urbans to recognize that they are becoming insolvent, which is, you know, a good part of the MDPs. The municipal development plan, if it's taken over a three-year period – and some of them have asked, actually, for an extension to five years. Now, when they're doing those plans, maybe they'll see: "You know what? As we go further, it's getting harder and harder to maintain ourselves without increasing the tax burden to the local residents." At that point they may have to go and approach the urban municipalities or the municipal government and say: "Okay. We need someone to step in here and help us out, or we become insolvent." Then it puts another burden on that rural municipality. So there are some very legitimate concerns there.

The Ombudsman. A lot of the municipalities have told me that they don't want the extended oversight. The feeling is that the options already exist for residents and businesses to get the attention of the minister if they so wish. Now, the unfortunate part of that, not so much in the bigger cities but in a smaller centre like some of my communities – you know, the village of Lac La Biche or the county of Lac La Biche, the town of St. Paul, for instance – the only outlet for residents if they have an issue with the council is



to start a petition. Well, in a small town of 5,000 people, everybody knows everyone. All the town residents know all the councillors. It's a very difficult thing, and it causes a lot of division.

5:30

My thoughts and what I've tried to talk to people and the municipalities about are that possibly the Ombudsman, being the first step, may be able to talk to the people that are having the issue, show them that the county or the town council is actually operating within their parameters, and alleviate the stress that comes to a community when you initiate a petition that takes 20 per cent of the electorate. You know, when people go and start banging on doors and complaining about their municipal government, it's not a good thing, and I think of having the Ombudsman in there to maybe run a little bit of interference – I guess “interference” might be a bad word – to give them a sounding board where they could go and take it. He could have a look at what their complaint is, check it against the rules and regulations, and say: “Okay. Yes, you have a case. You could proceed with a petition” or “No, you don't really have a case, and all the petition is going to do is cause strife within the community.” I think that that's a problem with the present process, and I think that the Ombudsman could help to alleviate a lot of that. I think it may work both to the benefit of the ratepayers and the municipalities.

Centralized industrial assessment is another one that I heard a lot about both from my urban municipalities and the rurals, especially the rurals, the main concern being with the rural municipalities. They feel that local control and local assessment have worked very well, and they don't see any advantage to centralized assessment. That being said, I've also heard concerns from industry where they can have a compressor building in one county that's identical to a compressor building in another county, and the assessments can be very, very different in those two. That being said, also, the process is in place for them to appeal a decision and get some clarity on that.

You know, perhaps more consistent guidelines when it comes to assessments could be set out for these assessors so that they're more even across the board, depending on where they are located. I know that with some of them you have to also look at not just the compressor but at how much road is leading up to it, what type of highway or whatever the vehicles are travelling on. There are reasons for discrepancies in assessments as well because you have to take in all those other considerations.

Overall, I think that the people that I've talked to are quite happy with the changes that are coming forth in the MGA. With a few changes, you know, just a few tweaks, we can make this bill better so that we're not having to come back and review it and are trying to make as many people happy with, also, the highest consideration for the ratepayers and taxpayers, that are our ultimate responsibility here as a government. I think we definitely have to take them into consideration in all of our decision-making here.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to talk a little bit more about the MGA. You know, I heard a lot of questions and comments and concerns raised by the member on this, and I wanted to take an opportunity to talk a little bit about those.

You know, one of the things I heard about was concerns around the cost to the small municipalities of some of the changes that we're proposing, and it's legitimate. There are some costs

associated with those, and we are committed to working with them on that, and we've talked a bit about that. One is that we continue to have available the Alberta community partnership grants, available to municipalities to do the kind of work that we're talking about, to work on collaboration, to look at regional perspectives.

We also have committed to bringing forward the templates. We have already had some preliminary conversations, for example with AAMD and C, to talk about building some templates around those pieces.

When it comes right down to it, Madam Speaker, there is value in collaboration and finding the efficiency of services and working together and saving the ratepayers' dollars through finding those efficiencies. Collaboration in many ways is simply the cost of doing business nowadays in every situation, including municipalities, going forward.

You know, again, there was some general comment around the intermunicipal collaboration frameworks in terms of looking at them, in terms of talking about some of the money exchanges there. Madam Speaker, intermunicipal collaboration frameworks are about approaching things in the way we always should. It's about taking those geopolitical boundaries off, lifting them up and off, and thinking: what makes sense as a region? How would we do things if we weren't looking at it through our own individual lenses but looking at it from the perspective of what makes sense if we get rid of our egos, if we get rid of our perspectives as a community, and what makes sense for the region and, once you figure that out, putting them back on and figuring out how we deliver those services and how we fund those services in a very fair and respectful manner. I'm really excited about the potential for this to enhance the collaboration and really improve regional services for individuals.

I know the member has also voiced a concern around uncollectible taxes. Certainly, you know, Madam Speaker, the big down swoop on the roller coaster, that we've all experienced, has hurt all of us. Certainly, the provincial coffers are challenged, municipal coffers are challenged, and so are those of individuals and businesses. We're certainly committed to working with rural communities to ensure they continue to have access to all of the services that they need: health care, education, infrastructure.

We recognize that this issue of uncollectible taxes is intensified during a downturn in the energy sector, and we are working to address it. We have formed a working group with Energy, Treasury Board and Finance, the AER, and the AAMD and C to analyze the issues and challenges, and we're looking at some potential options. Madam Speaker, as the government of Alberta we recognize the challenges of that roller coaster over and over again, and we're working really hard and implementing strategies that we know will help smooth that roller coaster out and help prevent this from happening again in the future.

I also heard the member raise some issues around the sustainability of some smaller rural communities. It continues to be a challenge. The kind of regional collaboration we're talking about is one way to address that, by finding all those efficiencies and working together in ways that make us all healthier and more sustainable in terms of the communities that we live in. The issue that you talked about, dissolution of communities, is one of the reasons we need to do that collaboration now. By working together and developing those regional programs and processes, when all of a sudden we realize that a dissolution would be most appropriate for a municipality, then everybody is onboard and understands one another and has built the kind of relationships and learned to work together and looked beyond those municipal boundaries to look at how we should deal with things. It's why a regional perspective is so important. Certainly, there's more to that. Some of those pieces

were actually addressed in Bill 20 in terms of sustainability issues, but there seem to be some good processes that are working in place, and I expect the intermunicipal collaboration frameworks to be helpful with that.

I want to thank the member for the support for the Ombudsman. You know, absolutely, it is important that people have that third-party, nonpartisan person to go to. That's what we heard from Albertans. They were very loud and clear that this is what they wanted to see, and certainly our What We Heard document backed that up. I do want to say that you would actually avoid a petition by going through the Ombudsman. You wouldn't have to see the Ombudsman and say: do you want a petition or not? We'd just come right to the minister.

**Ms McKittrick:** Madam Speaker, I would first of all, like many others have done, thank the minister for the consultation process. I was very interested in the consultations and in the proposed act as I have had the pleasure of working with and for many municipalities in various capacities. As the MLA for one of only four specialized municipalities in the province, I have paid particular attention to how the modernized MGA will impact municipalities like mine.

5:40

I want to first of all also thank all of the municipalities – big, small, rural, and urban – who attended the consultations and a special thank you to the school trustees who also attended and spoke about their concerns regarding school sites. I have also appreciated the work that the AUMA, the AAMD and C, the Alberta School Trustees' Association, and other groups did to consult with their members and provide the minister with their important feedback. I think this really helped many municipalities to engage with the proposed act, and it identified how it might impact them. This act is very comprehensive and provides a much-needed modernization of the Municipal Government Act to prepare all municipalities for governing in this day and age.

I would like to highlight three key components of the act that I think will benefit communities. First of all, the ability for municipalities to enter into agreements with school boards regarding land for schools. As a former school trustee I know how challenging it can be for school boards to find the land that they need in the right location to meet the demands of students in that jurisdiction. The ability for municipalities and school boards to plan ahead together to set aside suitable school land is crucial.

Municipalities outside of the growth management boards will be required to adopt an intermunicipal collaboration framework. These frameworks will build on and support existing co-operation and require additional collaboration where needed. Through the frameworks, municipalities will be required to address intermunicipal land-use planning and the delivery and funding of regional services. Municipal Affairs will collaborate with stakeholders to develop the regulations that support these frameworks as well as the dispute resolution process, and the minister has spoken about how her department will be helping municipalities.

Now, I know that there already are great examples of intermunicipal land-use planning and the delivery and funding of regional services throughout the province. For example, when I worked in the county of Newell, I saw examples of the sharing of garbage services, fire services, and the joint funding of recreational facilities. The intermunicipal collaboration framework will also give businesses and industry looking to locate in Alberta a level of confidence that they can work with municipalities in the region to support their needs and maximize their investment.

I often think of the Industrial Heartland, which spans a number of municipalities and whose area I share with four other MLAs, as

a wonderful example of how municipalities have collaborated together and how this has allowed the heartland to be as successful as it is, providing jobs for thousands and spearheading the economy in the region. I think that the modernization of the Municipal Government Act will make sure that this happens for every region and municipality, not just mine.

The modernized MGA will also allow municipalities to have the flexibility to include inclusionary housing as an option within the allowed-use bylaws and could implement inclusionary housing at either the subdivision or the development permit stage. A regulation will be developed, with input from stakeholders, regarding thresholds for requiring affordable housing offsets and compensation to developers for supporting affordable housing, cash in lieu of affordable housing, and transparency and accountability for standards for monitoring and maintaining affordable housing units. This will mean that all municipalities will be empowered to play a stronger role in supporting the development of affordable and social housing units in all municipalities, including rural, urban, large, and small, and I know that, especially in the rural areas, affordable housing is a big issue. The act will allow all municipalities who are struggling with finding ways to provide more affordable housing for their residents to find some solutions. There are now long waiting lists for existing affordable housing projects, for rental subsidies, for projects like Habitat for Humanity, or for seniors' affordable lodges.

We need to find solutions to create more affordable housing. Municipalities are fully aware that finding affordable housing for their residents is an important concern. Municipalities like Strathcona county are engaging their staff, developers, and residents in consultation on how to provide the needed affordable housing. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Strathcona county for continuing to work towards affordable housing solutions, including the consultations taking place this week, and I hope that the proposed inclusionary housing clauses will help toward the much-needed provision of affordable housing for singles, families, and seniors in my constituency.

Madam Speaker, I once again would like to congratulate the minister on this bill and the work that she and her staff did to consult. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to touch on something that the member was talking about, the consultation with school boards. I know that school boards had not been included in the MGA process prior to the election last year, and I was just wondering if the member could further elaborate on why it was important to engage the school boards.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you for the question. As you all know, finding space for schools is a challenging thing for school boards throughout the province, again, be it in the big urban areas or even the small areas. Schools need to find space that is appropriate, that has the right kinds of road and transportation systems and also that matches the existing bylaws and planning of municipalities. I know that in my riding, like probably many other ridings, there have been a lot of challenges for school boards to work with municipalities to make sure that land is reserved, especially appropriate land. So I feel that the provisions under the proposed modernization of the Municipal Government Act will encourage both municipalities and school boards to work together to make sure that the land is reserved and that we can build the schools that all municipalities need.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to start my comments today by thanking the hon. minister for the hard work that she's put into this bill. I know that over my year and a half it has been a topic of conversation in the many municipal town and county councils that are throughout the Drayton Valley-Devon constituency. I know that this bill, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, is a huge act. Attempting to address all of the myriad needs in a municipal government and to do so in a way that meets all of those needs is a very challenging job, so I thank her for her efforts.

I'm sure that as we progress through this bill, we will have the opportunity to have some debate about where this bill progresses, where it goes, and whether or not there are areas that we can amend to further enhance the effectiveness of this bill.

You know, over the past year I've been reminded again and again, as I've met with my municipal councillors and county councillors, just how important the work is that these elected officials do for the constituents that I represent. You know, whether we're talking about a town or a village council or a municipal district, these individuals show great leadership as they attempt to meet the needs of their constituents. As a matter of fact, I often think that many of these individuals that I've come to admire in my constituency, Madam Speaker, show what I would consider a servant leadership, that in many ways they are there primarily to serve the needs of their constituents. I have a great deal of admiration for them. They put in countless hours, and they have a depth of knowledge of the issues in their constituencies and their areas of concern.

They are quite amazing when I consider that they are the most intimately connected to the people. Of all the levels of government that we have, whether it's provincial or federal, it's the municipal district, the municipal councillors, the town councillors, and the village councillors that are so completely and intimately connected to their constituents, and that brings both blessings and sometimes headaches as they try to deal with some of these concerns. I've learned, as I'm sure many of the MLAs in this Legislature have learned, Madam Speaker, that these elected officials at the municipal level have just as challenging a job as what we have. I have a great deal of admiration for them.

5:50

But these municipal elected officials must face a unique set of circumstances. They have a unique set of issues that they need to address. It's the municipal councillor that often faces these unique issues, often from a position that is very different from ours, as provincial or even as our federal counterparts would agree. Perhaps one of the biggest differences is that at least in my constituency, in the smaller towns and villages of my constituency almost everybody in their community knows their councillor. Everyone knows your county councillor or your municipal councillor, and it's these municipal officials that everyone feels very comfortable in contacting directly. They often know where you live, and they often have your phone number, and they are quite willing to stop you on the street whereas perhaps some of us provincial politicians or our federal cousins have a little more anonymity.

To be able to have an act that governs all of these realities is a challenge, and that's why I think it's so important that we MLAs, when we address this bill, do the best job we can to get it right. This bill will affect every Albertan in this province in probably the most

direct of ways. It provides supports to the municipal governments. This bill will cover a huge, wide-ranging area of things that are important at the municipal level, everything from centralized assessment to taxation ratios to solving problems between citizens that they may have with each other and even with their level of municipal government. So it's very important for us to deal with this and to get it right, and I'm sure that in the 15 or 20 minutes that I have to talk about it today, we are only going to be able to just scratch the surface of this bill.

Now, some of the parts of this bill are controversial. I have received diametrically opposed positions from constituents who are looking to see what this bill will do for their lives at a municipal level and what it will mean for the distribution of scarce tax dollars. In some cases I'm being told that we should take a look at linear taxation and in others that we'd better keep our hands off it. Sometimes the advice and the concerns can be quite different, one from the other, for like all levels of government, there is almost never enough money to meet all of the legitimate needs that almost any level of government has.

We're tasked with a job here when we look at Bill 21. How can we best help local government meet the needs of the community that they serve? How can we facilitate, you know, the building of roads and the providing of services that every one of our citizens needs at a local level? How can we provide the pools and the recreational centres, the skating rinks and the parks? How can smaller municipal towns co-operate with larger counties, that may have a much larger linear tax base? Yet the counties have their own unique concerns: how do they serve a smaller population, probably, but one that's more spread out and has the challenges of dealing with the problems of distance?

You know, in my constituency I have towns and I have county councils that have exemplary records of co-operation, but I also have towns and councils in my constituency that are made up of very hard-working and dedicated individuals that sometimes struggle over how to co-operate in the provision of the services that their constituents want and need and especially over how they can fund those ventures jointly where needed. That is the challenge that we have before us today, a challenge that we must seek to address and one that I'm sure, as this Legislature moves forward, we'll be able to do successfully.

Now, of all the pieces of legislation that have come before me, I think this is one where the debate in this House is actually going to have to be used to guide me as we move through the many different pathways that this bill can take us. I'm going to be leaning heavily on the discussions that I've had over the past year with various councillors, with the businesses and the residents in my constituency. I'm going to be leaning heavily on the advice that I've received from some of the stakeholders in education that we've been talking to when it comes down to dealing with off-site levies and the likes that affect education.

Know this, that as we go through this bill and as we start having more time to debate the issues that are going to be coming forward in this bill, I will be listening, and I will be referring back to the individuals and to the stakeholders that have been in conversation with me.

You know, over the last year and a half that I've been an MLA, I've learned at least one valuable lesson when it comes to municipal politics: don't stick your nose where it doesn't belong. If you're a rural MLA, you've probably learned this lesson as well. You share the same constituents as your local level of government, and if it hasn't happened already, it will happen that a municipal issue will arise where you will be asked to intervene. If I could give one piece of advice: don't. There is a reason why we have different levels of

government, and sometimes, Madam Speaker, we must impress upon ourselves as MLAs and upon our constituents that local municipal issues must be dealt with by the elected municipal representatives themselves. There are channels set out in the MGA for them to address the issues and not particularly for the MLAs.

I understand that people can be upset over decisions that are made at a local level. I mean, I can remember being a citizen in my own town. I live in a cul-de-sac in Drayton Valley, and I remember being faced with my kids being all under the age of five and with probably seven or eight additional kids of the same age in that cul-de-sac when a group home for troubled youth was going to come smack dab into our cul-de-sac. This was the third time in our town that they had tried to place the group home in an area that would be suitable for it. I can honestly say that at that time the parents and the families that were in that cul-de-sac worked very, very hard to try to figure out a way that they could be reassured that their children would not be adversely affected while at the same time making room for this group home.

Now, eventually the town ruled in such a fashion that they would allow the group home into that cul-de-sac, and some of us appealed it. At the end of the day that appeal ruled in our favour. I've always felt that it sort of left a bad taste in my mouth, that it left a bad taste with everybody when they looked in the mirror. I'm not sure that anybody was happy with the process that we went through there. But these kinds of issues happen every day at the municipal level of government.

I think I bring that up because, I mean, we have had people that have come to us and asked: well, what about the processes that are open to the constituents at a municipal level to appeal the decisions that are being made? Is there room for a place for an ombudsman? You know, I'm not sure that I have the answer on this one. I understand and I can hear the citizens that would like to have that option, that additional option for residents that sometimes feel that maybe they haven't been heard or that they were not in agreement with the decision that was made by the municipal government. While I understand their position and even at times think it would appear to be a logical next step, I do have some reservations.

6:00

Municipal government is supposed to be the most local level of government, with elected councillors that understand the local issues and are therefore best suited for making decisions. In my experience, that is almost always the truth. Even if the decision I referred to earlier in my cul-de-sac had not turned out the way that I had lobbied for with my neighbours, I would have had to admit that I had at least been listened to, that I had had a fair opportunity . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member. Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:01 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, November 2, 2016

Day 43

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, November 2, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Let us reflect. Around the world today people are concluding their celebration of Día de Muertos. It is a time of remembrance and reflection, a time to connect with our loved ones we have lost in death and keep them close. Let us keep them in our hearts today as the ripple of their lives continues to pass through us.

Please be seated.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to seek unanimous consent of the House to revert to Notices of Motions. This afternoon we're anticipating a large number of guests in the gallery, and I believe that there are some procedural discussions that need to take place under Notices of Motions. Out of respect for the government and the activities of this afternoon I ask for unanimous consent to move immediately to Notices of Motions so that I may present a motion identical to the motion presented by the current Premier in December 2013.

[Unanimous consent denied]

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 24

##### Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016

[Adjourned debate November 1: Mr. Westhead]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 24 this morning. I think it's imperative that we recognize all that we do to try and mitigate the potential dangers in our forests and prairies. We need to recognize that there are still going to be accidents that happen, and that's unfortunate, but what we can do is try and mitigate as much as possible and deal with the areas of responsibility we each face as a province, as communities, and as individuals.

The minister has proposed Bill 24. While it's welcome to see some changes and updates to this piece of legislation, I have a feeling we have not heard the last of wildfires in Alberta, particularly the Horse River wildfire, better known as the beast that attacked and destroyed parts of Fort McMurray. The beast is still alive, and it lays simmering and smoldering in the peat moss in Fort McMurray and in the muskeg bogs, and it will do so for many years.

On the farm we well know how the fire gets into the ground and into the roots of the peat moss, and it can flare up many years later. The right conditions – dry conditions, windy conditions, low humidity – can get these fires going again. We need to be ready, for sure.

My colleague from Calgary-Foothills tells me about his trip into northern Alberta, an area that I'm very familiar with, living in

northern Alberta, where he reports seeing huge stands of trees that are turning rusty orange, brown. No, they're not tamaracks changing in the season, but they are trees that are dying. They're shedding their needles, and we have to be cognizant that natural conditions are occurring that will cause problems down the road. We've built communities, people being able to do industry within the boreal forest, but at the same time we recognize that there's a natural fire hazard and that these stands of trees have been controlled in the past through natural fire burn.

I recall a fire in my constituency up in Chisholm in 2001, where that community was evacuated. It took out 10 homes, took out 120,000 hectares of timber. It was a very eye-opening experience for the people within that community towards the danger of fire. That fire in particular was initiated by a spark off the railroad tracks, steel on steel, and it turned into a forest fire. It was, I believe, in May 2001. I visited that community about a month ago. The community has shrunk because of the decrease in activity in the industry there, but the people that live there are very much in love with their community and do as much as they can to mitigate the threat of fire.

I reflect back to a time in my early childhood where in 1972 my father drove us up into Swan Hills. Swan Hills had just gone through a fire that came within a kilometre of the town. It was a huge fire, and it evacuated the town. The town was a relatively young town at that time, a lot of mud roads, gumbo roads. In 1981 there was another fire that went through. It came very close to the town of Swan Hills. I was a 19-year-old at the time, driving a truck delivering jet fuel to the helicopters that were moving the firefighters around in that area. At that time 2,000 people left the town, evacuated out of the town of Swan Hills because of the threat of fire.

What I refer to is the fact that those communities learned from the experience, just like the Slave Lake community has learned. But we as a province have to be cognizant of the threat of wildfire at any time. Many of our communities are within the boreal forest, and we need to do the best we can to mitigate that threat. A lot of that is going through education to provide awareness to individuals, to provide awareness to industry, and we all have a certain responsibility to ensure that the chance of wildfire is as low as possible.

Education will provide that awareness. We have some programs that also provide awareness. You know, when we look at the Swan Hills, the Chisholms, the Slave Lakes of the northern region of the province, one thing for certain is that once burned, twice shy. These communities are very aware of the threat that fire imposes on their community. We see how the FireSmart program, initiated, I believe, in 1998, has been a very effective tool to help these communities to keep their community informed, aware, and also provide grants to help them with such things as vegetation management within their communities, on the edge of their communities, and that type of thing.

The other aspect of trying to protect our forests and our prairies is, essentially, good planning at all levels: good planning, good training of our firefighters, and how that improves our ability to mitigate the risk of wildfire.

9:10

That being said, I do not believe that we have seen the last major fire. On the major fire in Chisholm the Chisholm Fire Review Committee issued the accompanying report in October 2001, so October of the very same year that the fire happened. The report on the Slave Lake fire, known as the Flat Top Complex, was issued in May 2012, a year after the fire.

On page 24 of the Flat Top Complex report there is a chart that shows total wildfires versus lightning wildfires. In that chart we'll see that it becomes very apparent that human activity is the most prevalent cause of wildfire during the month of April. Most lightning strike fires don't start until into the month of May, and we see there that that's where we can have the most impact on the mitigation of wildfire in our province.

I think what is recognizable is that humans are not the only cause of wildfire and fire issues within the province but that lightning is a situation that we have to be aware of also. While Mother Nature causes many fires, with the lightning strikes causing wildfire to open the cones and drop seeds and clear out the deadwood, the chart accurately shows that Alberta has significantly more wildfires in March, April, and May that are not caused by lightning at all.

Page 23 has a chart that shows that over a 10-year period, from 2002 to 2011, while lightning may have caused approximately 40 per cent of wildfire, resident and recreation caused 43 per cent. Industry combined caused about 10 per cent, incendiary came in at about 5, and about 3 per cent of the fires were of unknown cause.

Out of the 21 recommendations in the Flat Top Complex report, updating the Forest and Prairie Protection Act was one of the them, so I applaud this government for making updates. It has to be noted that budgeting for implementing the recommendations of the Flat Top Complex was cut by 4 and a quarter million dollars last year.

Humans are causing wildfire, over 43 per cent of it, according to this report, and people need to be educated about wildfire and how it can start so early in the spring. Education starts at home and extends into the classroom and then into the job site. Many work sites have safety briefings, and wildfire can be part of that briefing.

I reflect back again on the FireSmart program and how it has helped communities in my constituency and in neighbouring constituencies. I think of the work that's being done also in the town of Whitecourt in the minister's constituency and how they've embraced FireSmart programming to ensure that they can do as much as possible to mitigate the risk of wildfire. Every year the town of Swan Hills tries to do a little bit more to educate and to create programs that help to mitigate the risk with regard to vegetation management around their town and those types of things.

After the Slave Lake fire \$20 million was spent for FireSmart in the Slave Lake community, after the fact. Meanwhile grants from FireSmart to communities are capped at \$100,000. It would be good to review that to get an understanding. Is that the right number? Does the size of the community make a difference in the need within that community, and is there a possibility to look at moving that cap around based on the total area of that community? The size of the perimeter of the community is very important to understand what the costs of implementing FireSmart are. Is this good use of funds when it costs hundreds of millions to fight one incident? Has the government done any evaluation that a properly funded FireSmart program could possibly save us hundreds of millions of dollars in disaster funding?

Let's talk about people obstructing fire operations. The mass sales of controlled aerial drones – in today's world we see more and more of the aerial drones in our marketplace and individuals starting to participate in that activity. It has placed unmanned aerial vehicles into the hands of the general public, many hands. But unless you are a wildfire contractor using a drone to spot fires, Albertans are to leave the drones at home and out of the sky near a wildfire. Again, education will need to take place to ensure. We have penalties being introduced, but education needs to be in place to actually ensure that these operators know the threat of using these aerial drones.

Drones can do serious damage to air tankers. It doesn't matter if the drone is hovering or if it's moving at 50 kilometres an hour

towards an air tanker coming at it at 250 kilometres an hour. The impact will destroy the drone, no doubt, so the person is out the drone. But the impact will damage the air tanker and could even cause a crash landing. Keep your drones away from wildfire. Remember, all it took was a flock of geese no bigger than a drone to put U.S. Airways flight 1549, five crew members and 150 people onboard, into the Hudson river. We don't want to be responsible for crashing one of these air tankers. Again I reiterate: penalties are fine, but education is key to people recognizing the threat that these drones have on fighting wildfires.

With all the technological advances that have given us drones, why haven't the powers that be investigated using technologies to fight wildfires? I've sat down with individuals that are . . . [Mr. van Dijken's speaking time expired]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a) the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I was thoroughly enjoying the comments by my hon. colleague there. It sounded like he might just have a few more comments to make. I wondered if he would like to use the remaining time to conclude his comments.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Well, thank you, and thank you to the member for the request. Speaking with regard to technological advances, speaking to individuals that – there are new gels and foams that have been developed that homeowners can buy off the shelf but have not been implemented in mass attacks on wildfires. Surely in this day and age of advanced science we can do better than trying to spray down our homes with a garden hose to try and save it from a wildfire. That might be the only tool we have at our disposal, but we can do better with the technology that's available.

Research and development to make the ground and aerial attacks on wildfires more effective than they have been over the past I'm going to say four decades is necessary. Madam Speaker, it is critical to make sure the best practices are being used to fight wildfire when it happens. This goes all the way back to the Alberta Fire Review '98 Final Report, prepared for the Alberta Forest Protection Advisory Committee. Those best practices include attack at first light. A legal day is one hour before sunrise. While a night attack is dangerous, the sooner firefighters can get at a fire, the better.

Boots on the ground: important. The best practices outlined in the review – aerial attack only slows the progression of a fire. It doesn't put it out, and we saw this spring that boots on the ground, the people on the ground attacking the flames, can put the fire out. We still have people on the ground today attacking the fire that we had this spring up at Fort McMurray.

**9:20**

When the temperature is low, low temperatures slow the burning. We all realize that. When the relative humidity is high, higher humidity slows the burning. We have very limited control over that, but we can always hope that the conditions are right to slow the burn. When the winds are light – wind spreads the fire, and the faster the winds, the more the fire spreads.

This is how gains are made in halting the advance of a wildfire. It is imperative of each and every individual, it's imperative of municipalities and communities, and it's imperative of our responsibility as a province to try and move forward in wildfire awareness, in wildfire prevention, mitigation, and education of everyone involved in trying to lessen the hazard of wildfire to the communities within the northern boreal forest.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

**Ms McLean:** Madam Speaker, I'd like to request the unanimous consent of the House to do an introduction at this time as there's someone that's arrived in the gallery.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We've had a request for consent to revert to Introduction of Guests. I'll just ask one question: is anyone opposed?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

**The Deputy Speaker:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've noticed in the gallery Manon Plante, who is one of our ADMs in Service Alberta. She has joined us in the gallery with whom I presume are her children. That is correct. I'd like to welcome them to the House. I'd like to have Manon stand and have us all greet her with the warm introduction and greeting of this House.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 24

#### Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016

*(continued)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** We still have a minute on 29(2)(a) if anyone has any questions for the hon. member.

Seeing none, are there any other speakers wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today to speak in favour of these amendments. I think that they are long overdue and quite necessary. Now, does it mean that we're going to be able to avoid forest fires going forward with these types of changes? Well, I mean, unfortunately, you know, in the type of climate we live in, these are a fact of life for us, but I do think that these are very powerful tools to help us reduce the number of wildfires we have to deal with.

Now, as other speakers have noted, these amendments are supported by recommendations coming out of the Flat Top Complex after Slave Lake and also learning from, of course, the devastation that occurred in Fort McMurray this spring and then, of course, other fires that started around the same time. I mean, I think that – actually, I'm not sure if all members in the House are aware of just how close we came this spring to a perfect storm, where we had, you know, so many fires breaking out in so many different areas that we would have actually reached the point where our resources would have been strained. Fortunately, we didn't reach that point, and I think that a lot of the credit goes to, you know, the very proactive actions of members of volunteer fire departments and county emergency services, even on occasion an MLA or two in this House that got on top of the fires that, had they got out of control, would have caused some real problems for us.

Now, I know I speak for, you know – we actually had a fire around the same time in the Opal natural area in our area that potentially had been caused by off-highway vehicles. There was a lot of concern that, you know, things were so tinder dry that we could have had another fire up in Redwater as well. Some of the actions that our government took to restrict off-highway vehicle use

during that time were absolutely critical to make sure that this didn't happen, so I'm gratified to see that we're actually making sure that this is now in legislation.

You know, the enhancements being proposed – the enhanced fines, the improved public safety and wildlife prevention measures, and the operational amendments – make this bill and are going to take us quite a long ways to deal with this.

This is something where, you know – I don't want to echo the comments that I heard some members of the House make last afternoon, but definitely sometimes people don't quite get the gravity of starting fires during, you know, fire bans. I think it was just after we got sworn in last summer, during the Wabasca fire evacuation, I actually saw incidents where you had evacuees from the Wabasca fire starting fires while they were camping. At that time it's like – for some people it does seem that the penalty has to be increased in order to change the attitude towards the action. Although I think for the vast majority of people no penalty would even be necessary with this type of thing – I mean, you understand what the consequences are – but unfortunately there's always that small minority of people that, you know, don't perhaps weigh the potential consequences adequately, but the fine provides an incentive. Now, of course, there's a limit to how much incentive or how much deterrence you can get from a fine, but I think we're striking the right balance with the increase this year. You know, I think that's been validated by the 96 per cent support that respondents gave when we did a survey on that.

Now, down to restricting off-highway vehicles during times of extreme danger, as I said just in my introduction, I think that doing this on a temporary basis was critical this past spring to make sure that the situation didn't become even worse. Once again, this is an issue where you have a very small number of people who perhaps aren't quite aware of just the potential gravity of their actions. You know, the majority of ATV users are, of course, responsible people. They keep their vehicles clean. That being said, though, I mean, when it gets dry enough, a bit of long grass and hot exhaust is enough to spark something off. I think that sometimes these bans, you know, as unpopular as they may be, are totally necessary, and I'm gratified to see that this is in the legislation, as I know are firefighters across the province.

Also, being able to ban incendiary ammunition: I think that is just absolutely critical. I mean, I've seen situations during the height of the fire season, where you had people setting up these targets, right? They set up these targets, and they shoot that in trees. You know, it doesn't take a lot of imagination to see what possible consequences intentionally starting fires in secluded wildlife areas can have.

I think these proposed amendments are sensible and, you know, maybe overdue. Also, I think what's overdue is the recognition that our climate has changed. Whereas it used to be that your early spring would be cooler and wetter, there'd be less chance of a fire, now, I mean, things have shifted to the point where, you know, you have that dangerous early spring window where things are still tinder dry, and then you get those winds come up and extremely dangerous conditions. You know, we've been dealing as a province with this on an ad hoc basis, as if things would simply return back. Well, it doesn't appear that the clock's going to be turning back, and early hot springs are the new reality for our province, and it's a reality we need to adjust to, so having the fire season start on March 1 rather than April 1 I think will make sure that we are better prepared on an ongoing basis for when we'll start.

I mean, that being said, I'm not at all implying that we weren't prepared for what happened in Fort McMurray. It's just that, you know, it's better to have all our ducks in a row earlier just as a

matter of course. In that way, the preparations are well under way, and we have our personnel in place when the season starts.

9:30

Now, there are some other items regarding local repayment for certain types of fires, things like that. I think some of the issues may be what is talked about in Committee of the Whole, but, I mean, there's a lot of other good stuff in this bill. On second reading, you know, we have enough in here that I think this is a bill that deserves unanimous consent of the House, and I'm hoping to see that this will get it after we go through a fairly speedy passage because I don't think there's a lot dividing us on this issue.

Thank you for your time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, the last time I stood up under 29(2)(a) – I just wanted to clarify. I'm allowed to make comments and questions under 29(2)(a). Am I correct?

**The Deputy Speaker:** That's correct.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much. Okay.

Now, I think one of the greatest concerns here is not that Bill 24 doesn't do some great things, but I think what's of utmost importance and what's on all of Albertans' minds right now is: what is Bill 24 going to do to keep another Fort Mac or Slave Lake fire from taking place? Now, we see some things in here that will reduce the opportunity for fires to start, but once fires start, we need to know how to protect these communities, and there could be other communities in Alberta that have this same issue. So I think what's foremost on people's minds right now is: how can we reduce the opportunity for something like Fort Mac or Slave Lake to happen again? Obviously, that was catastrophic.

Now, on this side of the House we've asked for clarification, more information on this bill, and we would love to have the minister get up and explain more, give us more information so that we can understand what is being attempted in some of these changes with Bill 24. Some of these things may be perfectly legitimate, but until we can have some questions answered and some clarification, then it leaves us with some uncertainty.

Now, we talk about – where to start? We talked about section 31.4, where there was a change from “product” to “thing.” Of course, we would like to find out: what was the reason for using the word “thing”? Now, there might be a perfectly justifiable reason for it, but until we have the minister explain that to us or somebody from the other side that has the knowledge of the reasoning of why that word was changed, then we really don't have that clarification that we desire.

We also have a concern under section 23, where it talks about “an industrial or commercial operation on public land or within one kilometre of . . . public land.” Why couldn't we have something in there where these industrial, commercial operations – why couldn't it say something like: “that could reasonably pose a fire hazard”? Obviously, some businesses – let's say a home-based business that happens to be within one kilometre of public land – may not reasonably pose a fire hazard. Others, of course, could, and then it could be perfectly justified. Of course, we also have some concerns, too, about: “public land” is a pretty general term and may include land that I don't think this bill necessarily desires to include.

Now, the member that just spoke talked about tinder-dry springs, and definitely this spring we had one of those years where it was extremely dry. I do want to ask him how he feels about his government in their budget not accounting for enough money to

cover even the average of the cost of firefighting and also their government cutting the contract of fire bombers by a month. I'd like to find out his feelings on that, how he feels about things like that in years when we have such tinder-dry springs.

Obviously, the government is starting the fire season earlier, which is something the minister could do at any time. Maybe that'll give some opportunity for the minister to enact some preventive measures to help fight fires. There are all sorts of good things here that appear to be happening in this bill, but again, without the clarification that we need to have, we don't know what is fully being contemplated here. Yesterday in this very House we asked many questions.

## Speaker's Ruling

### Question-and-comment Period

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, this is probably a good time to just do a little bit of a refresher, clarification on the intent of 29(2)(a). It says:

Subject to clause (b), following each speech on the items in debate referred to in suborder (1), a period not exceeding 5 minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses to each Member's questions and comments.

I've tended to give a great deal of leeway on this because it seems to be the will of the House to allow members to continue their speech or use it for that kind of thing, but the intent is really to be an exchange and a question. You can make comments, but the intent is to allow the previous speaker to give some responses. As well, I'd encourage you to try and keep your comments and questions under 29(2)(a) relevant to the previous speaker as opposed to general to the House. Again, as I say, leeway as long as it is the will of the House to use it in that way. I'd appreciate that.

### Debate Continued

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to rise today and speak about the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. We've got to understand that the main objective of the bill is to enhance fire prevention. Of course, the enforcement is a huge part of it, ensuring that people are following the right rules and the intent of the act.

When we look at the different programs that are out there, especially in West Yellowhead, being a constituency where we are basically living in the forest – we've got many small communities that are actually etched right out of the forest itself. The forest is right there, as in what happened in Fort McMurray.

We're definitely in full support, of course, when we look at the FireSmart program and trying to buy extra time for communities to deal with fire that may be surrounding their community or hamlet or in the case of villages near lakes and stuff like that. But it's important to understand that the FireSmart program is just a tool that's used to buy more time. When I've talked to different forest firefighter people about this: it buys you a little bit of time but not a lot. So when we get back into, I guess, the meat and potatoes of exactly what the act is trying to accomplish, it is something that we really need, and it's been needed for a long time.

The other issue that really is important to consider is the pine beetle. The pine beetle is a huge problem for the western part of my constituency in particular because of the fact that once the trees are all dead, we've got a huge fire problem. You can witness that when



you go into Jasper national park, or you can go even farther west of that and look at what has happened in B.C. The forest fire concern there is huge, and with the fact that when you look at the idea of the westerly winds that can fan a fire, say that it did get started, how would you deal with such a huge mess?

**9:40**

Really, when you look at the purpose of the act, it is saying: okay, we're going to fine different people for doing things or companies when they do things out on the landscape. When we're looking at this, especially when forest companies pile up their debris from forest operations, for example, if we don't have particular rules about when they burn these piles, it can get away on you.

We had such a fire a few years ago, when construction was going on on a particular piece of highway, and for some reason or another the workers thought they could burn the big brush pile that was created. Guess what? It got away on them. What was further concerning was the fact that because we have chinooks in that area quite extensively, well, the fire really got big and out of hand. The problem was that they had no way of putting it out because your lakes are frozen and everything else. So these are the things, when you look at the act, saying: we need to make sure that when you do these things, if you don't do them right, the fines are big enough to make you think about what you're doing.

The other issue that we have very extensively in West Yellowhead occurs on many of the long weekends and weekends in the area because people come out to enjoy the scenery and everything else. But what do they do? They come out and they randomly camp. They don't want to go into the parks or anything else because the fact is that they have the ability to run their OHVs, whether they're quads, trikes, motorbikes, side-by-sides, and all these things. They bring them out to the area and have a great time.

Of course, when they do that, what happens? The possibility of fires created by OHV use is huge, and so is the fact about the random camping and the campfires that they build. They have their campfire in the morning, and they go quadding, and guess what? The fire is left abandoned. It shouldn't happen, but it does. We've had situations in the area where fires have gotten away. They were lucky that the forest company came in and got it out before there were huge losses. Nonetheless, this occurs on a regular basis. The thing is that it's important when you look at some of the aspects of the act, in hopefully trying to deal with this, that the understanding be there so that there are consequences, because right now there aren't any. So it's important that we look at that in dealing with it.

Also, we look at in the Hinton area the huge Hinton forest fire training centre. It is well supported by this government. You look at the manpower and the hours of training to get the forest fire people trained to adequately deal with fires. A lot of people don't know that they even have the pilot training in the centre, where they can go in there and actually sit in the cockpit of a water tanker or the plane that flies in front of the water tanker and learn how to fly it. I had a great time doing that until I crashed a few times, but it was a lot of fun, learning how to do this and the training that's provided and the hours that go into this.

So it's important that we look at this and say: we need this act; we need it to protect our forests. Also, when you look at the jobs, there are many communities in West Yellowhead that rely on forestry and the jobs and the communities that it supports.

I'm very supportive of this act, and I hope that everybody supports it. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to ask a couple of questions, make a few comments to the questions raised by the Member for West Yellowhead. I know that he speaks with a vast amount of experience from having been an employee in our Alberta parks service over the years. He's spent a lot of time in that environment, in our forests, and understands exactly the dangers of a dry forest and forest fires. I know that he has expressed to me in the past some concerns about the limited amount of power that some of the officials who work in the forest had against those contraventions they might have come across when they were patrolling in forested areas.

I'm just wondering: given his experiences what benefits does he see arising out of giving the power to issue tickets to peace officers, to forestry, fish and wildlife officers, and to conservation officers, who previously weren't able to actually issue tickets and under this bill will now be able to do so? What benefit does he see, from his past experience, in empowering these officials to actually ticket when they come across contraventions?

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you for the very important question. It is important. Before, it might be the forest officer that might be out there on the land base and that kind of thing, and of course there was always the inability, with the numbers, to be everywhere. You can't be everywhere. That is part of the problem. When you have the huge number in tourism that occurs in our constituency – for example, you can have small towns arise just on the weekends, where there are hundreds of people in groups all over the place, scattered throughout the Rocky Mountain base and foothills in the constituency – you can't cover everything whereas under this proposal it gives more ability for other people to be out there for different things who can issue tickets for this. It's important that this act does that because it puts more people out there watching and seeing what's going on.

So it is important. This is a very important part of it, to allow more people to issue tickets, and hopefully it will prevent some of what I call silliness that goes on out there. It doesn't matter whether it's the use of the OHVs or random campfires that are abandoned and these kinds of things. It happens all the time. If you get more people out there, hopefully this will be dealt with, and maybe people will take more responsibility for their actions.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, I agree with you a hundred per cent that having more people out there enforcing might be a very good thing, but I just have a question for you. As a member representing a heavily forested area like West Yellowhead, how did you feel last spring when your government cut the wildfire budget and cancelled the bomber contracts?

**9:50**

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you for the question. I did review that very concern with the minister at the time, and he assured me that it wasn't going to affect the forest-fire fighting ability that we had in place at the time. He assured me that it wasn't going to change the way in which they could address the issue of forest-fire fighting and that kind of thing. It was important to us. Because of that very concern, I asked the minister that question, and he assured me that it wasn't going to affect it.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just a question to the member. I know that the member has got some forestry companies in his constituency, and I mentioned in my speech yesterday how ...

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

Seeing none, do we have anyone to close debate? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North to close debate.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just like to reiterate that the objectives of the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016, were to enhance wildfire prevention, enforcement, and operational activities. It was all about the protection of Albertans, all Albertans. Some of the proposed amendments were talking about strengthening penalties for violations; improving our ability to restrict activities that can cause wildfire like off-highway vehicles when fire conditions are hazardous; improving our authority to stop actions that interfere with firefighting, including restricting drones; to designate March 1 as the official start of fire season; and to clarify operational processes, roles, and responsibilities.

Madam Speaker, I appreciated all the comments and support of the amendments from both sides of the House. At this time I would like to close debate on second reading of Bill 24.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a second time]

## Bill 21

### Modernized Municipal Government Act

[Debate adjourned November 1: Mr. Smith speaking]

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

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise this morning to speak on Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, at second reading. The MGA is a substantial piece of legislation which is a result of years of stakeholder consultations, reviews, studies, and thousands of hours of discussion. There are many people who must be thanked for their contribution to modernizing our MGA. This was certainly no easy task.

There is no magic wand to wave over a problem. However, through collaboration and thoughtful analysis we have a real opportunity to make this piece of legislation work for all Albertans. Local government is the sphere of government closest to the people, and they provide many of the basic services citizens depend on daily. This includes protection of persons and property, local transportation networks, planning and development, public utilities, critical social services, and, of course, parks and recreation and culture, just to name a few.

This summer I travelled across my constituency meeting with residents, including local citizens, elected municipal leaders, and industry stakeholders, on the proposed changes for Bill 21. There's been a wide range of issues raised. However, one thing I heard repeatedly was the question: are taxes going up again? This was important: are taxes going up again? Madam Speaker, Albertans are being taxed from every angle in Alberta, especially the middle and working classes. On the federal side the federal government has increased EI and CPP deductions, cut income splitting, and more recently doubled down on the job-killing carbon tax by proposing a carbon levy of their own of \$50 per tonne by 2022.

On the provincial side the NDP government has gleefully raised personal income taxes, increased user fees on almost every

government service, and of course that doesn't even include the NDP's own carbon tax on everything, which will raise gasoline and home heating prices beginning January 1.

On the municipal side taxpayers are hit with education and municipal property taxes and fee-for-use services like libraries and public transportation. This year alone Alberta raised 32 per cent of its Education budget through education property taxes charged to each property owner. While the tax itself is collected by municipalities, it is levied by the province. According to the *Edmonton Journal* this year's education property tax increase resulted in a typical Edmontonian family or household, assessed with a house at \$401,000, paying at least \$75 more in education property tax, based on initial calculations.

The constant march toward ever-increasing taxes is making things harder, and this is definitely affecting my riding of Bonnyville-Cold Lake as many of my constituents are saying that they don't have work or have reduced hours of work. That makes it harder to balance the family budget, heat their homes, and put food on the table. After seeing that, I was happy to see that Bill 21 included no new or additional taxing powers being granted by municipalities. It is nice to finally see some restraint coming from this government.

While Albertans may not face any additional taxation from municipalities, that alone does not solve the systemic issue of chronic underfunding of basic municipal grants such as the MSI, or municipal sustainability initiative. I have heard municipalities repeatedly asking, pleading for long-term predictability and a sustainable funding model, that they, unfortunately, were left disappointed with.

I am very disappointed to see city charters included not in Bill 21 but, rather, through backroom cabinet negotiations implemented through regulation. This government had the opportunity to do things differently, to improve on practices of the previous government. However, they chose to continue the regulation process that was set by the past government. Because this government refuses to address city charters through Bill 21, it is natural for people to wonder whether or not they will see additional tax increases through the city charter back door.

We are waiting to hear from the government just what these regulations will be for charter cities, but we've been told that they're not even written yet. This is the process we think must be discussed in the House, including engaging the people, the very people that may be taxed within these regulations. We are waiting to hear from the government just what these regulations will be for these charter cities. Again, how can we move forward with Bill 21 without any engagement?

10:00

I would like to take a moment to discuss the issue of centralized industrial assessment. Bill 21 proposes to centralize all industrial property assessment within the Municipal Affairs department. The cost associated with centralized assessment will be covered from the individual property owners, but the exact details are unclear. It is certain that municipalities will be left holding the bag for unpaid assessment fees, much as they are currently left responsible for unpaid educational property taxes.

Our concern with centralized assessment includes the loss of local autonomy, loss of established relationships between assessors and the industrial property owner, and concerns that the Municipal Government Board will be unable to handle all the assessment appeals in a timely manner. We recognize that there have been huge discrepancies in the way some industrial properties have been assessed from municipality to municipality. As my hon. colleague

stated earlier, we hope that when we get to Committee of the Whole, there will be amendments proposed to address these concerns.

According to the government press release, the revised MGA will include the linking of nonresidential and residential tax rates. The proposal is for nonresidential tax rates to be no higher than five times the lowest residential tax rate. While there are provisions for those communities that exceed the 5 to 1 ratio, I believe there needs to be more robust conversation around this issue. Based on the information provided in Bill 21, I simply do not have enough information to make a judgment on whether the 5 to 1 ratio is justified or even if the ratio is justified at all. I look forward to hearing more from the minister on how the ratio was chosen.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to continuing debate on this bill through Committee of the Whole and third reading. Hopefully, we'll get some clearer answers from this government in the debate which will follow. The MGA review and this discussion have been an enormous undertaking for the ministry, their staff, elected officials of all varieties, and the many stakeholders. I want to thank everyone who was involved in that review. Its broad implications on local government make the work everyone has put into this act so important.

Thank you. I look forward to supporting this bill in second reading.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

**Ms McKittrick:** I'd just like to ask the hon. member opposite: what services does he or his family use in his municipality, and isn't he using the services that are paid by his taxes? I'm kind of really puzzled about this constant issue around the amount of taxes we pay. I'm just wondering how much of those services you're actually using, and isn't this a great benefit to you and your family?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. My family lives in the city of Cold Lake. We use all of the municipal infrastructure. We, too, believe that there needs to be balance in the services that we are using. I am glad to see that the MGA is bringing forward some needed results that we are all looking forward to.

I do say that in the end, though, at this point my family is fortunate that they have my income as an MLA coming in while there are a lot of Cold Lake and Bonnyville residents that have no incomes or have limited incomes coming in right now. So it's distressing when I hear from the government that we should be running forward with increasing taxes. I do understand the concern that says that we are using these services, so we need to pay for them – and I fully agree with that concept – but at what point do we start to actually make it hard for the most vulnerable families in my riding to not be able to feed themselves, clothe themselves, or heat their homes?

This is the true concern here because in the end their incomes rarely get adjusted upwards, and we only continue to see the cost of living increase. How can we justify these cost of living increases? I will tell you that if municipalities across Alberta right now aren't talking about their mill rates during these hard times across Alberta, then I would argue that they need to go back and review the situation of their local communities because right now people are hurting, and we need to hear those voices.

I thank the member for the question and look forward to a follow-up.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Yeah. I also have an interest in the member's issues with taxes. I was just wondering if the member was aware that middle and lower income Albertans are not actually impacted by raises to personal income taxes. Those only start at \$125,000 a year. Also, are they aware that middle and lower income Albertans are not going to be affected by the increased carbon levy as they will be getting full rebates based on Statistics Canada numbers for how much gas and natural gas they use to heat their homes?

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

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's distressing that the government is using the carbon tax as not being a burden on our most vulnerable. Now we've heard a federal government that is looking like it's going down this road. When we start to discuss the fact that the cost of living does increase because of the carbon tax, the question is: how much?

We actually haven't had a study put out by the government that we can look at and say: is this an accurate view of where we're going to be seeing taxes implemented on our most vulnerable? So without the study, it is hard for us to be able to calculate the exact impact. But I will tell you that we as the Wildrose have come up with \$1,000 that it will cost a family, and from my understanding, it is just over \$600 that the government will be returning. That doesn't seem to be an equitable balance. If there are concerns with the government . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 21 in second reading? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to speak to this bill, the Modernized Municipal Government Act.

I'm sure the summer was a busy one for the government with this act being presented to Albertans for review and comment. I know that for me personally I certainly heard a great deal about it, a lot of discussion, concern, and some anxiety waiting for what was going to happen. It was a time to hear from stakeholders, from experts, and from Albertans. The feedback we have received has been tremendous, and I'd like to thank all of those that communicated with me and participated.

**10:10**

Of course, this act, the MGA, forms the basis for the way we organize our municipal government in relation to the province. Given the fundamental importance of municipal governments in the lives of citizens, the discussions we have in this Assembly today and beyond will be incredibly important.

Madam Speaker, it seems that the more local the government, the closer it gets to the people and their needs and desires. I don't just mean geographically. I mean in terms of the impact it can have on the lives of everyday people. It only makes sense that healthy, strong communities are those that are supported with good, empowered local governance. The way we can support that as provincial representatives is through appropriate, well-debated, well-thought-out legislation, and I hope – I hope – that we take the time and the proper care to do that.

There are obviously a great deal of points and policy areas addressed by this bill. Of course, our time is limited in this reading, but I hope that I can touch briefly on a few. I know that we'll have an opportunity to discuss much more as the bill progresses through Committee of the Whole and third reading and as stakeholders make their points known.

Madam Speaker, my constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat is somewhat uniquely positioned in this MGA discussion, being a very diverse mix of metropolitan and small-town urban but also with a very large rural municipal district, including a number of hamlets. Besides the diversity of businesses and nonprofits that exist largely within the city and towns, we are heavily – heavily – tied to the oil and gas sector, ranching, and agriculture. The city of Medicine Hat even owns its own utility.

Given all these various aspects that go into our social fabric and economy, the people of Cypress-Medicine Hat understand well the importance of ensuring that legislation maintains the right balance. When you have as many different factors to take into consideration as we do in southeastern Alberta, you have to be aware of how a large piece of legislation like this can impact all those different things, all the unintended consequences, all the impacts.

Madam Speaker, I know we've heard a lot about the big-city charters this summer, but I want to focus for a moment on the needs and concerns of some smaller municipalities that often fly underneath the radar, not only the municipalities that I represent but all small municipalities in general. I want to start with the intermunicipal collaboration framework, that being section 131 of the bill at page 105. This mandates that all municipalities that share a common border outside of the Calgary and Edmonton growth management boards must adopt an ICF within three years.

Now, I'm certainly not opposed to collaboration, and I think that many aspects of the delivery and planning of regional services lend themselves to a collaborative approach. It's also prudent to encourage municipalities to work together on things that are in their shared interest and where it makes sense. Madam Speaker, some of the smaller municipalities that do not have the capacity to have development departments or dedicated staff to put together and implement an ICF might be squeezed a lot by this.

This is a concern we've heard, and it's a concern that my colleague from Livingstone-Macleod brought to this Assembly's attention yesterday, I believe. Madam Speaker, I have heard this concern time and time again. I support the intent and aim of the collaborative approach, but I do want to ensure that smaller administrations in this province don't get unduly burdened by changes and that we make sure we're considering their unique needs and circumstances. This is something I'm sure we can discuss in more detail in the days and weeks to come, but it's also something we have to keep our eye on for the arbitration process and the potential unintended consequences of that on Albertans' communities and Albertan taxpayers.

Madam Speaker, there's another section here, section 23 of the bill, that deals with centralized industrial assessment. Now, I mentioned earlier that there is a great diversity of economic activity in southeastern Alberta, including the industrial sector, the greenhouse sector, so the issue of assessing industrial property is naturally of great importance and significance. You know, we talk about local decision-making in this Assembly. What could be more relevant to that than a discussion of this MGA? This is the core of municipal local government right here.

In that vein of local decision-making, empowering good people close to the community, with their ears close to the ground level to hear local concerns and needs, I want to express that I think we could stand to clean this section up in some different ways. Madam Speaker, as it is now, I've heard stakeholders, stakeholders including the AAMD and C, express that there is a loss of autonomy here for municipalities, that could adversely affect them. Of course, I realize that on the flip side there is an argument to be made that centralizing assessment may bring some streamlining efficiencies. Linear is already being assessed centrally, as I understand the process. However, that local authority comes with local knowledge

of the properties being assessed. I feel that it is good to maintain that strong connection to the community, the ability for citizens to be involved in their taxation process, their representation process. All the nuances might not be properly captured by, yet again, a one-size-fits-all approach from a government intent on centralizing.

Madam Speaker, I think that there's also the potential for the touted cost savings and efficiencies to fail to materialize. We may not save money. It may cost more. Local assessors might still be retained to verify the provincial assessments. Furthermore, these municipalities might lose some of the flexibility afforded to them under the current system. Most notably, the lack of annual on-site visits by assessors will result in assessments that are less responsive to local changes in property values. My goodness, have we seen that in the last two years, especially in our oil and gas industry and the hardship that so many good producers have faced there. Overall, I think we find that keeping this under local authority has its own advantages and ought to be strongly reconsidered.

I'd also like to make sure that we address the issue of stable and predictable funding moving forward. This bill is very, very vague in that area, but it's something we've believed in in this caucus for years. Madam Speaker, revenue sharing of statutory grants comes up over and over again from stakeholders and for a very good reason. Our local leaders need the flexibility to plan for their communities, but they also need a predictable outlook that allows them to make good, well-informed, the best for local people decisions. Revenue sharing from the province, in whatever form it takes, ought to be transparent and steady.

I think back to this current government's change with the grants in lieu program and forcing that cost in a less than fully transparent way across all ratepayers, all property owners across Alberta: the unintended consequences of taking more money out of our local communities, the hardship on property owners having to plan and in some cases raise their rents and raise their costs. When I talk to people in Medicine Hat, some believe that the province of Alberta owns or rents 60 properties. Their fear is that if this kind of program could continue across that basis, it could present some further hardship. Again, Madam Speaker, I would encourage this government to be as open and transparent as possible. It's something that we all criticized the last government for.

**10:20**

Madam Speaker, these concerns are just a small sample of everything we could discuss, but I think I'm running up against the time limit shortly, so I'm going to leave it there for now. I'm glad that I've received so much constructive input from so many Albertans, so many good councillors, so many good landowners, so many good citizens that rely on our services, and I hope that in the days ahead we all take the time to listen and we all take the time to get this act right. It's crucial that we take all of these perspectives into account and find the balance that allows our municipal governments to thrive and grow for the sake of all Alberta communities, for the sake of all Alberta families, and for the sake of all Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View speaking to the bill.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. A pleasure to rise and speak on Bill 21, Modernized Municipal Government Act. This act is good news, I think, for Alberta, in the works for many years under the previous government and now seeing some important review and positive changes that I hope we can make

even better by the end of our debates. The act is being amended in two phases. The first phase, introduced under the PC government in the spring of 2015 by Bill 20, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2015: largely consensus items that came out of the initial MGA review process. The second set of amendments are a result of the review that the new government has taken, its own consultations, and some key changes that I think, in the main, are positive. The last consolidation of the MGA for the record took place 20 years ago, so it's appropriate and important that we review these issues.

In July of last year the new government announced that it would be providing municipalities under the municipal sustainability initiative \$877 million in MSI funding in the 2015-16 budget. That's \$3 million less than what was proposed in the spring budget put forward by the PCs and still a far cry from the \$1.6 billion in annual MSI funding that had been promised under the previous government. This government, the NDP government, has not said that it is committed to funding the MSI at a particular level. I think that's an important issue, for municipalities to have some sense of certainty. No government at any level can properly plan and implement the necessary infrastructure and services without some more clarity and sustainability in their funding sources.

The NDP government has said, "We'll provide stable, predictable funding to both large and smaller municipalities and ensure they have resources they need to fulfill infrastructure priorities, such as transit." That was from their 2015 election platform. Given that we still are fairly dependent on one revenue source in Alberta, it may take some time, but we look forward to the ability and the willingness of this government to provide some certainty around this.

With respect to industrial and linear tax revenue in its 2015 election platform the NDP said that it will "sit down with local government stakeholders to review the question of linear assessment," an issue that the NDP is following from a Liberal initiative of 2008. It's an important consideration. I think we need to look at fair distribution. We're one province. We have limited new revenue sources without new taxes. We think it's an important initiative, and we would certainly support examining the more fair sharing of \$1.9 billion in industrial taxes between the cash-poor towns and the cities and some of the cash-rich counties. So we support this important review and finding a way in which all Albertans can win.

With respect to regional planning former Municipal Affairs Minister Bilous said that the NDP will legislate participation in growth management boards for those municipalities in the Calgary and Edmonton regions specifically. Presently participation in the Calgary regional partnership is still voluntary. While participation in the capital region is mandatory, I don't see that there's been a lot of lost opportunity there. We would certainly support making it mandatory in Calgary as well. Without bringing people to the table, we're wasting time and we're wasting decisions. One cannot make decisions without everybody at the table in a regional partnership. At the very least, since we've made so little progress in Calgary over the last decade, I think there's reason to believe that it's now time to move, and making it mandatory to be part of the decision-making I think is appropriate.

With respect to affordable housing in their election platform the NDP said that it will "expand the powers available to municipalities to allow them to mandate affordable housing in new development projects, expanding the supply," another item that we believe strongly in, especially for Calgary and Edmonton, but it should also be granted to other municipalities through appropriate changes in the MGA. More recently the NDP confirmed its intentions to allow for inclusionary zoning, and we support that.

With respect to city charters the government has said that it will "work with Alberta's cities to ensure the City Charter process is mutually developed and respects cities as economic and social drivers . . . giving them the tools to build the services their residents expect." Well, that's an appropriate initiative, and we have supported this need for a number of years as well, including giving cities more power to tax but limiting that taxation power and not including such taxes as income tax, sales tax, and those taxes that are currently under the jurisdiction of provincial and federal governments.

With respect to oversight of municipal decisions by the Alberta Ombudsman we have not taken a position yet on this. We are continuing to consult about expanding the role of the provincial Ombudsman to include its ability to investigate municipal decisions. There is some argument, though, to be said for having an outside review, which the government calls, quote, validating procedural fairness, end quote, and we have not closed our minds to that possibility. I look forward to the debate on this and hearing more from the urban municipalities. Especially the smaller municipalities may well benefit from having some oversight from the Ombudsman. It may not be as important for the large urban settings.

With respect to urban drilling we've said that municipalities should be able to decide for themselves if they want to allow oil and gas drilling within their own boundaries instead of this being decided by the Alberta Energy Regulator, and we stand by that.

I think I've covered most of the issues. We support stand-alone legislation, then, with respect to city charters for Calgary and Edmonton, with the perspective that new powers and autonomy are key for some of the extra demands that the large cities experience. I look forward to hearing more details about what that might include.

With respect to those extra powers in the big cities Ontario, for example, has authorized that the city of Toronto through its charter can generate extra revenue, but as I mentioned, they too have limited it and excluded wealth tax, fuel tax, and general sales tax, which I think is appropriate. There are a number of other options available to cities to bring in more revenue.

**10:30**

We believe that accountability mechanisms for new taxes already exist in the form of municipal elections. If local governments decide to increase taxes, they will be accountable, just as the provincial government is accountable if it changes tax revenues on the people of Alberta.

One other issue that I haven't heard discussed is the grant in lieu of tax on government-owned and -supported social housing. In October 2015, soon after the new government introduced its first budget, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association issued a news release saying that the province is reneging on its obligation to pay a grant in lieu of tax on government-owned and -supported social housing. Previously, the government exempted civic agencies like Calgary Housing and Capital Region Housing Corporation from paying property taxes on their affordable housing properties and covered off municipal revenue losses with grants from the Alberta Social Housing Corporation. This represents a downloading, according to the AUMA, of about \$15 million in costs onto the shoulders of municipalities, who are already struggling to address infrastructure deficits as a result of shortfalls in federal and provincial funding.

With Edmonton and Calgary being impacted at roughly \$5 million to \$6 million each and other municipalities across the province collectively bearing another \$4 million in costs, AUMA called for a decision that would reduce this extra burden. I think we

concur with that. The province should continue to pay property taxes on behalf of seniors and social housing facilities and not download this cost onto municipalities.

Finally, with respect, then, to the municipal campaign finance and disclosure legislation, we support amending the Local Authorities Election Act to ban corporate, union, and anonymous donations, to limit campaign spending to a specific amount per resident or elector, and to reduce the maximum allowable contribution amount from the current \$5,000 to dissuade candidates from relying too heavily on the financial support of a few major donors.

We also propose making municipal political contributions eligible for tax deductions, just as we do for the provincial and federal elections. Since municipal political contributions in Alberta don't presently represent a tax credit, we believe it may discourage some folks from seeking public office or contributing to municipal campaigns, to the detriment of our system of local government and democratic engagement.

Those constitute my comments, Madam Speaker. I look forward to listening further to some of the debate. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any further speakers to the bill? The hon. member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this morning in the Chamber to discuss what is a very important piece of legislation. I know that in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills there are 13 different municipalities, and many of those municipalities have taken a lot of interest in this bill and in this process. As has been mentioned on numerous occasions here inside the Chamber, this is a process that has been ongoing over a number of years and is very important.

As you know, Madam Speaker, the process of this Chamber is a passion of mine, so I'd like to commend the government. I know that it doesn't happen all too often. I'd like to commend the government on introducing a piece of legislation, consulting with stakeholders over a period of time, and then returning to the Chamber to discuss that.

I, of course, am of the persuasion that it would have been advantageous to refer this particular piece of legislation to a committee so that all members of the Chamber could have received the same sort of feedback that government received. Now, I recognize that all of the stakeholder events were certainly open to the public, and for that I also say thank you. But if it had been at the committee level, then all members of the committee would have likely been able to attend all of the meetings or at least have the same presentations, made by organizations like AAMD and C, AUMA, the Alberta Assessors' Association, all at committee. I think that we still have that opportunity. I just have a sneaking suspicion that at some point in time during my remarks I'll make a recommendation to the Assembly around that because this piece of legislation is vast.

As you know, Madam Speaker, it is significant, we've heard on a number of occasions, the second-largest piece of legislation that is currently on the books. It's important because it affects Albertans in a way that some Albertans may not be aware of because it affects the local governance of their community. It does have a direct impact on all of them. So it's critical, as my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat mentioned, and it is important that we get it right.

I'd just like to take a little bit of time and highlight a number of areas that, quite frankly, the legislation isn't perfect in. I know it's hard for you to believe that legislation that is presented in the House

from time to time isn't perfect, but that is the fact. Oftentimes legislation needs amendments, and one of the things that the opposition takes pride in is providing amendments to legislation, sometimes because we disagree with legislation but always with the desire to try to make that legislation better or stronger for all Albertans. Even when we agree, Madam Speaker, the opposition feels and believes that it's our job and responsibility to ensure that the legislation we pass is as strong as possible.

I think you'll probably recall a debate around Bill 1 in a previous session, where there was a unanimous agreement amongst the members that getting corporate and union donations out of the political process was a positive. But even then we offered up a number of amendments to try and strengthen that legislation, which is our responsibility. So I can only imagine that we, too, will be proposing a wide swath of amendments to this piece of legislation because there are so many areas where it hasn't quite gotten it right or the opposition has more questions on behalf of stakeholders.

I'd like to just highlight a few of them that I think will make a very strong case as to why the next stage of this bill should actually be at a policy committee and not just at Committee of the Whole. There are so many areas; for example, the intermunicipal collaboration framework. Many municipalities, particularly in the region of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, have really great intermunicipal frameworks or agreements that they have been able to create. There are others who haven't yet accomplished that task, but I've found that the majority of municipalities have a general desire for collaboration with their neighbours.

One of the challenges, particularly for smaller communities – so, for example, in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills we'd be talking about places like Acme, Linden, Carbon, Beiseker – is that oftentimes the costs of these frameworks and the additional planning resources that come along with that create some concern around smaller municipalities and their ability to get these documents completed.

#### 10:40

If we look at another planning document, municipal development plans, and the requirement that all municipalities regardless of population will be required to create an MDP, I think that there are some very strong cases to be made that municipalities ought to have their plans in place so that members of their community, developers, or others have a general idea of the direction of that community. The municipal development plan in principle isn't necessarily a concern or a challenge, but even some of the municipal bodies are highlighting this as a potential concern or risk, particularly around the timeline or templates for these documents. I think that we need to take these recommendations into consideration.

We move to centralized industrial assessments. Madam Speaker, I think there are some very robust arguments on both sides of this discussion, some merits in ensuring that there is some standard all across the province. But there is also merit in local assessors, who know the region better than one giant, centralized organization that may be based hundreds of kilometres away from where the assessment is taking place. There are a lot of questions around this particular issue. So far I've highlighted three. I hope to highlight another 15 or so all around this conversation about: what is the best way forward for this piece of legislation?

You know, Madam Speaker, that even this government, which was elected on being open and transparent, although yesterday they were found in contempt of the House, breaking the rules of the Assembly, something that I thought I would never see from this government, committed to being more open and transparent, and we're seeing a real track record of them not. My concern is that the government also has chatted with stakeholders, received some of

the same feedback that we have, and, as such, is going to show up in the Assembly at some point in time in the next few weeks with an amendment that is probably about the same size as these documents that I'm holding in my hand, maybe 15, 20, 30, 40, 50 pages – who knows? – of amendments, that will be expected to be debated at Committee of the Whole, which, as you know, is a very quick process that allows no additional input from any outside stakeholders.

If there's one thing that we need to absolutely make sure of, Madam Speaker, it's that this piece of legislation needs to be right. So I commend the government for introducing the piece of legislation, consulting, and now coming back to the House. But if you only went half of the way and you don't finish the consultation with a discussion around the amendments, we will have done a disservice.

That's why I will propose an amendment to the bill. I'll wait until you have a copy, and then if it's okay with you, I'll proceed while the amendment is distributed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Cooper:** If it's fine with you, I'll proceed. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 21, Modernized Municipal Government Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 21, Modernized Municipal Government Act, be not now read a Second time but that the subject matter of the Bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2."

Madam Speaker, all members of the Chamber will be familiar with Standing Order 74.2, which allows pieces of legislation to be referred to committee for further discussion and debate. One of the great things about that standing order is that "the committee may conduct public hearings on the subject matter . . . and report its observations, opinions and recommendations with respect to the Bill to the Assembly." This is a great opportunity for the government. Instead of proposing all of their amendments in one giant document here before the Chamber and then potentially – and I'm not saying that it's going to happen – rushing through that amendment in the Committee of the Whole process, they can actually go ahead and present all those recommendations on a clause-by-clause basis to the committee.

The AAMD and C, the AUMA, other vested stakeholder groups – in this case there's some significant discussion around affordable housing, so we could have individuals from the development community and otherwise come and speak to the committee, not just to the piece of legislation, which we've done a good job of consulting on already, but to what we can only imagine is going to be a significant amendment to this bill. As a result, then that piece of legislation can come back from committee, and I'm more than happy to ensure that that happens in a timely manner. That can come back to the House, and then we can proceed, having given the important legislation full and robust consultation at the committee level.

Let me just highlight, before the time has passed, some of the other very important issues around this bill. I think committee and all members of the Assembly, when it comes to actually voting on third reading, would be well served through the motion that I've presented. If we look at things like the 5 to 1 tax ratio, it would give us an opportunity to have a good working understanding of what the cross-jurisdictional tax ratios are. It would allow for communities that are already outside of the 1 to 5 threshold to express their concern around this – I know that there are some grandfathering clauses in the current piece of legislation – and to

make sure that they are well heard and that we have a real grasp and understanding of why that is important.

As mentioned by the minister just yesterday or the day before, discussion is around the splitting of nonresidential tax policy and that the MGA will allow nonresidential classes to be split into subclasses and taxed at different rates as defined in the regulation. Here's an interesting discussion about whether or not the discussion around that regulation should take place in the Chamber or at committee. You know, obviously, we have some concerns about this regulation, about these very important discussions taking place at the regulation stage and not at the legislation stage because it doesn't provide the same sort of certainty and understanding of exactly . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any hon. member wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Well, I would love to state . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Oh, my apologies. Standing Order 29(2)(a) still applies on this one. Do you want to speak under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Cyr:** Yes. That's actually what I was getting up for. I apologize.

I would love to hear a little bit more because he was cut off halfway through his comments.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**10:50**

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Let me just conclude the sentence there that I was working on and wrap it up with a big bow around why it's so important that this motion pass. There is always this constant pressure and very real discussion that should happen around what should be taking place inside the regulations and what should be taking place inside the legislation, and it's a balance that we need to get right.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

You know, municipalities have waited a significant period of time for this piece of legislation. To not rush this through this fall is totally reasonable for the committee to discuss what many believe to be significant amendments. The Minister of Municipal Affairs herself referred to the fact that she anticipates amendments, so I would strongly encourage the House to use the processes that are available to the House to ensure that we get the job right on the very important public policy that we pass here, that the legislation that we pass is, in fact, the legislation that stakeholders and, more importantly than stakeholders, Albertans need.

With that, I will encourage all members of the Assembly to pass this motion, and I look forward to debating it in committee.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to my colleague for his excellent points and his amendment to have this bill go for the opportunity for further dialogue with Albertans and for the further opportunity to get it right. I remember several instances in here between 2012 and 2015 when this government was in opposition asking the past government to do similar things and the lack of success that that had and the frustration that that led to around Alberta and in this House. I'd like to ask the hon. member

if he remembers similar instances and what he thinks about that scenario.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you to my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat. You know, I very often have exact *Hansard* quotes from the Government House Leader when he was the leader of the fourth party or the fifth party – I can't remember which one it was at the time – chatting about the importance of committee and the importance of getting legislation right. It's not that we want to talk about these things forever and at significant length. It's about getting this right for Albertans. We've been sent to the Assembly to represent them and make sure that the legislation that we pass is in the best interest of Albertans, and I am a firm believer that the best way to do that, particularly on very complex, large pieces of legislation just like this, is for it to be done at the committee level. I have seen this government vote against this sort of transparency measure in the past, and I hope that that won't be the case today.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. You spoke about many different pages of amendments, up to maybe 20. In your experience is that not really changing a large portion of the bill that was presented to us already and has been consulted on? Effectively, it's changed. Does it make sense in your experience to debate now, before we've even seen these amendments, and then wait until after the constituency break, based on a timeline which gives us very little time before Christmas, or should we perhaps be able to see maybe some of these amendments as they become available if it's not going to go to committee?

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in opposition to the amendment. I think this Bill 21, that's in debate before the House, is one of the most widely consulted on pieces of legislation probably ever seen. I mean, we're talking about changes that came out of a comprehensive review that was initiated in 2012.

There were extensive rounds of consultation in 2014 and 2015 that involved feedback from more than 1,250 written submissions, involved approximately 1,500 people at 77 in-person community meetings in locations across Alberta, 15 months of intensive policy discussions with municipal and ministry focus groups. Then this past summer, you know, with the proposed bill, after first reading we went out and toured the province. We went to 20 communities seeking feedback on the changes to the act. I mean, this is something that has involved all key stakeholders over a period of years, as members of the opposition have acknowledged.

I'm just a bit puzzled by what value-added we would have at a smaller committee level versus going to Committee of the Whole. I guess that perhaps the opposition has been bringing in a bit of a red herring on the concerns, maybe playing on the concerns of municipalities, in the sense that they're, you know, confusing regulation with legislation. Just to be clear, the minister has promised that when they're crafting the regulations accompanying these key changes, input will be sought from municipalities, key stakeholders, and the public again, so it will be an open and transparent process.

In this situation I do not think that, you know, referring this to committee will be worth the additional effort just simply because of the unprecedented level of consultation built into this process.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise. I thank the member for his comments. I believe that in my remarks I made very similar comments about how much we appreciated the fact that the government consulted broadly over the summer, all of the good work that was done. My esteemed colleague brought up the point of: does it materially change the bill? I guess we'll have to wait and see what the amendments bring, but if essentially we're going to have an amendment that is potentially the size of a new piece of legislation, perhaps we need to make sure that we can get input and feedback from them. So instead of presenting amendments in one large form, we could do it clause by clause in committee, and I think that that would be a much better way than potentially rushing it through.

The AAMD and C and the AUMA both made submissions that I believe, you know, encouraged the government to focus on 30 different areas. That is a significant amount of input. We need to make sure that the amendments that the government produces actually get it right. The best place to do that is committee, so I encourage the member to reconsider his position and vote in favour of the amendment.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Speaking under 29(2)(a), the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Yes. I'd just like to ask the member to comment. I recognize that there has been some fairly wide consultation across the province in the summer, and for that I truly do commend the members opposite. But I think we need to be careful, and I ask the member to comment on this. Seeking consultation doesn't necessarily mean that there has been any sort of consensus arrived at, and I think that's maybe the issue that we're getting at here.

11:00

I would like to just refer to a letter which I have here from one of the municipal boards in my area that basically says that they're "extremely concerned with the proposal," and their concern is a centralized assessment agency, but that's not the point at the moment. We're talking about this particular amendment, which would be whether this should be considered in committee or not. Then they go on to say:

It has been suggested that the notion of centralized industrial assessment has been proposed based on the consensus of stakeholders. Through discussions with our municipal partners, including other municipalities, the AAMDC and the Alberta Assessors' Association we believe there is not consensus amongst them regarding this. Your clarification on this consensus [would help] us in understanding the basis for this proposal.

Yes, there's been consultation, but I do not think there's consensus, at least not from these organizations. I'd just ask the member to comment on that, please.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is there anyone else wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, would anybody like to speak to the amendment? The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** I'll sit down. The boss says no.

**The Acting Speaker:** Okay.



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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:02 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Fraser	Stier
Cooper	Loewen	Taylor
Cyr	MacIntyre	van Dijken
Drysdale	Orr	

Against the motion:

Babcock	Littlewood	Piquette
Carson	Loyola	Renaud
Ceci	Luff	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Malkinson	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Schmidt
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Schreiner
Drever	McKitrick	Shepherd
Feehan	McLean	Sigurdson
Fitzpatrick	McPherson	Sucha
Ganley	Miller	Swann
Goehring	Miranda	Sweet
Gray	Nielsen	Turner
Hoffman	Payne	Westhead
Larivee	Phillips	Woollard

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 42
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[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 21 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are back on discussion of the main bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 21 in second reading?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

Oh, my apologies. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs to close debate.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I certainly am hoping for great support to move this forward. Municipalities desperately need at this point some legislation that is current and reflects the realities of modern Alberta and not Alberta 20 years ago.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity. I look forward to seeing great support for moving this through second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a second time]

11:20

## Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege and honour to rise in this Chamber to move second reading of the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, Bill 25.

Bill 25 establishes a 100-megatonne annual limit on oil sands emissions. The emissions limit legislation, the idea, the genesis for it, came to us through collaborative conversations between the oil sands industry, First Nations, municipalities, and environmental groups. The Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act is part of the climate leadership plan. Announced last year on November 22, 2015, the

plan establishes, amongst other things, an economy-wide price on carbon, a phase-out of coal-fired electricity, an energy efficiency strategy, a methane reduction strategy, and, importantly, this 100-megatonne limit on oil sands emissions.

Now, Madam Speaker, the concept of a limit on emissions is a new one for energy-producing jurisdictions. What it does is that it proves that Alberta is serious about our commitment to being a world-leading energy-producing jurisdiction, in which we use the power of innovation and technology to move the province forward in what we know is a carbon-constrained future. What this bill does is that it establishes government as a productive partner in that quest to reduce the carbon in the barrel. The government of Alberta was a productive partner in getting the oil out of the sand in the first place, and now we will be a productive partner with our partners in industry to reduce the carbon in the barrel.

What this bill signals, Madam Speaker, is that our province, our government believe that industry, our largest job creators, can rise to the challenge of a carbon-constrained future. What it does is that it establishes government as a productive partner in finding ways forward rather than rejecting the science of climate change or rejecting action, which is a de facto rejection of the science. What we have done is to say, “Yes, we must move forward,” and we do so with the contents of this act.

Madam Speaker, this act provides for exemptions. This act provides for allowances, not the least of which is an allowance for new upgrading in the province. This is a key objective of this government, to add value to our natural resources so that we can keep good, mortgage-paying jobs here in Alberta. That is a key priority for us, so that is why there is an allowance for 10 megatonnes of new upgrading over and above the 100-megatonne cap.

Madam Speaker, this cap, the mechanism and the logistics of it will be worked out in partnership with industry, with First Nations, with municipalities, and with environmental groups. We have established a precedent-setting, collaborative, co-operative table at which all of those who are affected are making decisions together.

Now, this has historic implications for firmly establishing Alberta as a world environmental leader among energy producers. Alberta has, under several previous administrations, faced increasing scrutiny related to emissions resulting from oil sands development. But our energy industry is unique in providing a significant amount of provincial and national revenue. It has also contributed to significant increases in emissions at a time when global pressure to lower emissions is growing. Alberta was increasingly seen as the reason for Canada not meeting its emissions targets, but what we have done is ensured a path forward with this legislation. We have ensured a path that will reinvest in new, innovative, emissions-reducing technologies here at home to ensure that Alberta is successful.

The cap on oil sands emissions, Madam Speaker, complements work that industry is already doing to lower costs. It internalizes the cost to emit carbon at a time when executives like Suncor chief executive Steve Williams are dealing with a lower-for-longer scenario for oil prices. Make no mistake; carbon is an input cost. Oil producers have asked governments to provide them with a carbon and climate framework around which they can make decisions about long-term investments and lowering those costs. We have done that. In many cases, reducing emissions reduces costs for producers by lowering the volume of fuel used in oil sands operations, both in situ and mining. Bringing costs down, including the cost of carbon, means survival for oil sands companies.

The emissions cap will speed the transition to lower carbon fuels, allowing companies to accelerate their innovation efforts and providing new jobs and revenue as Alberta-developed technology

is applied and adapted in other parts of the world. Some of this, Madam Speaker, is already happening. Smaller companies like Nsolv are working on ways to extract bitumen in SAGD operations with 80 per cent fewer greenhouse gas emissions. Titanium Corporation has tested equipment that extracts valuable metals from tailings ponds' waste streams, helping to reduce methane output from those same ponds. Companies like MEG Energy and Statoil have indicated their continued interest in applying innovative solutions such as cogeneration and new technology to their oil sands operations.

Instead of just talking about the issue and wishing it away, we are seeking to find specific, credible solutions that will ensure that the world looks at Alberta differently. Finding access to new markets has been difficult without a climate plan, Madam Speaker. By doing nothing, Conservatives at both the federal and the provincial levels led Albertans to an economic dead end and a boom-and-bust economy that put many families in difficulty.

The kind of collaboration that led to this oil sands emissions limit was unprecedented, and it preceded our government, Madam Speaker. In their 2015 sustainability report ConocoPhillips described it this way.

While initial conversations weren't easy, the groups discovered areas of common ground. Both wanted Alberta and Canada to have a strong economy, agreed that climate change issues should be addressed and that they had to work together to find workable solutions.

Since the climate leadership process began, our plan has been widely praised nationally and internationally. It puts us in a better position with our most important trading partners. That includes recognition from U.S. President Obama during his address to Parliament earlier this year, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, as the world adapts to a carbon-constrained future, our government has taken the position that we can either have a made-in-Alberta future on energy or we can have, as the opposition would have us have, a made-in-Ottawa or a made-somewhere-else future. Either way, there is no turning back. There is no nostalgic, olden-times era where no one objected to greenhouse gas pollution or the climate change it causes.

With this bill, Alberta makes clear to the world that energy-producing jurisdictions can establish limits and work and thrive within a carbon-constrained future. As a climate and energy leader we set a better course for our economic future by creating green jobs, green energy, and green infrastructure. Alberta must get the most value for our resources and find markets for our products, but we cannot do it without taking credible action on climate. Madam Speaker, our forward-looking approach will help to shift the debate about Alberta's oil sands production, improve market access, and provide certainty to investors.

11:30

Madam Speaker, the opposition is vociferously opposing acting on climate change, but I expect that even they share the views of Albertans that we need growth in the oil and gas sector, we need growth in the oil sands, we need the world to know that we are working hard towards reducing our greenhouse gas footprint, and we need a made-in-Alberta solution. These are the elements of a growth strategy for Alberta where the environment and the economy go hand in hand, because climate change is real.

Those who share the view that climate change is real are invited to demonstrate that by ensuring swift passage of this bill. The bill will send a clear signal to the world and, most importantly of all, to working women and men in Alberta families that our government intends to balance creating new jobs while being at the forefront of environmental policy.

Now, Madam Speaker, this bill is before this House because it is the right thing to do for our environment and our economy. This bill, crafted in consultation with First Nations, municipalities, affected communities, Métis organizations, industry, and environmental groups, is one more step to doing our part to address one of the world's most pressing problems. It is right to create conditions to get our products to markets that will pay more for our energy products as we begin the long transition to a decarbonized world in the future.

We have Albertans from all parts of the energy industry who have taken great pride in telling the world for decades just how good Alberta is at energy development, at developing new technology and sharing it with the world, at creating wealth and building one of the most successful, prosperous societies on Earth. That is justified pride on behalf of Albertans, Madam Speaker.

Now, wouldn't it be great if those same engineers, businesspeople, entrepreneurs, workers, and their families could also take pride in how their province is the most successful environmentally progressive province in Canada, how their province is a leader in clean tech and all the good mortgage-paying jobs that go with it, and how their province is the most advanced jurisdiction to take advantage of our energy resources today to invest in the energy of tomorrow?

Madam Speaker, by passing this bill, we can show the world that Alberta doesn't just do business, we mean business. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise as cosponsor of this piece of legislation, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, and proudly state that this government is following through on its climate change leadership plan, its commitment to establish a legislative limit on oil sands greenhouse gas emissions. We're taking a progressive and forward-looking approach to regulating and reducing emissions associated with energy production and will help change the debate about Alberta's oil sands production and improve market access.

It's all about long-term planning. This government is always looking to the longer term no matter what piece of legislation we bring forward to the House because, as it's commonly known, it's difficult for governments to look forward to long-term planning. They're typically focused on shorter, four-year cycles. Every effort is going to be made to make sure that the long-term solutions that Albertans seek are going to be part and parcel of the underpinning of every piece of legislation that we bring to this House.

I quite often am asked about what the reasoning might be behind this focus. It's basically because we know that Albertans are demanding that of us. Governments in the past have focused on a shorter term cycle of thinking. We in this government are determined to change that tendency and begin a path towards long-term thinking, especially in our energy industry.

Now, the limit along with the new output-based allocation approach on carbon pricing will help drive innovation and reduce emissions per barrel while still allowing for production growth and development of the oil sands resource. We strike a balance between our desire, of course, to continue producing energy in this province and to have energy be the backbone of our economy while also gaining the appropriate social licence, as is commonly said, to continue to produce these energy products and get them to market and also to receive the approval of society in general to get pipelines built to tidewater so that these products, that we so proudly produce, are sold at world price.

The limit is set at 100 megatonnes. The 100-megatonne limit provides room for growth and development of our oil sands resources to a production level that will be higher than at any time in our past and present as well as forecast out to 2030. The annual emissions limit was jointly recommended to government by Canadian and international leaders in Alberta's oil sands industry from Canadian and international environmental organizations. There is currently no plan to change the limit; however, the oil sands advisory group, which is a part of this framework legislation, will be giving advice on a pathway to 2050 and may consider the limit level.

Why now? Well, that's something that we thought important to implement right away as part of our climate leadership plan, and a commitment to establish a legislative limit is part and parcel of that plan. It's a major pillar of it, so the government of Alberta is delivering on its climate leadership plan and setting this legislative limit right now to provide certainty to industry.

It's often argued by members opposite that a cap is a limit to certainty, that it provides uncertainty, but in fact it's the opposite. Industry loves certainty, and this cap gives certainty to the industry so that it can make long-term plans, which is what this legislation is all about. It establishes a legislative limit on oil sands greenhouse gas emissions and provides the ability to make regulations in order to implement the limit. The effect is that greenhouse gas emissions from oil sands sites, after accounting for all exclusions, will be limited to a hard cap of 100 megatonnes of carbon dioxide in any year.

Now, it will apply to in situ sites, processing plants – for example, upgraders – primary production, enhanced recovery, experimental schemes, and all the buildings, equipment, structures, and vehicles associated with those sites. There are some oil sands emissions that don't fall under this limit. Many members of the government caucus recently went up to Christina Lake and visited the MEG Energy in situ plant there. We know that there are difficulties with producing certain types of in situ plants and there are costs involved. That's why there are certain exemptions under this legislation to allow that energy production to take place and to take into account the concerns that industry had about the costs that are associated with their production.

This limit does not apply to greenhouse gas emissions from new upgraders that finished their first year of commercial operation before December 31, 2015, and expansions to existing upgraders that occur after December 31, 2015, up to a maximum of 10 megatonnes combined. Now, once those emissions exceed 10 megatonnes, the 100-megatonne limit applies. These emissions were excluded in recognition of the added value and job creation that new upgrading can provide.

The 100-megatonne limit also does not apply to cogeneration emissions from the electricity portion of the energy generated or produced by cogeneration, combined heat and electricity generation. The limit does not apply to these emissions because of the low emissions intensity electricity that they provide to the oil sands sites and the Alberta electric system. The limit currently applies to primary production, enhanced recovery, and experimental schemes, but there is the ability to exclude emissions from these minor sources of greenhouse gas emissions by regulation in the future, once it's determined how the limit will be implemented.

**11:40**

Left to regulations is that the act provides the authority to make regulations to establish mechanisms to keep greenhouse gas emissions from within the oil sands within the 100-megatonne limit. The government of Alberta is seeking implementation advice of the oil sands advisory group on the types of mechanisms that could be used by February 2017. After considering the implementation advice of the oil sands advisory group, the

government of Alberta will develop regulations to implement suitable regulatory mechanisms in 2017. It will take effect when it's passed in the Legislature's fall session.

Emissions are projected to stay below the limit until 2030 under production forecasts developed for the 2016-2017 budget. In an unlikely development situation where all Alberta Energy Regulator approved projects with an announced start date are constructed and operating, the 100-megatonne limit is expected to be reached by 2030. Since oil sands emissions that count towards the limit will likely not reach 100 megatonnes between now and 2030, the limit will not directly result in emissions reductions before 2030. Although the limit may not directly reduce oil sands emissions within the 2030 time frame, current and future oil sands producers will likely take action to reduce their emissions and emissions intensity to keep emissions below the limit.

Greenhouse gas emissions from large oil sands emitting 100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year or more will be priced according to output-based allocations for any emissions above a product- or sector-benefit benchmark. The new output-based allocation approach to carbon pricing will act as the main driver for carbon competitiveness and emissions reductions across the different sectors of Alberta's economy.

The oil sands emissions limit complements the carbon levy and output-based allocation approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by putting a price on carbon and providing a legislative backstop on oil sands emissions. Together this will create the conditions for the oil sands sector to innovate and become more globally competitive. There will be no immediate effect on project approvals with the enactment of the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. The oil sands advisory group will provide implementation advice to government by February 2017, including implications for the project approval process.

Now the role of the oil sands advisory group. The group is composed of members from industry, environmental organizations, and indigenous and nonindigenous communities. An initial task of the oil sands advisory group is to provide implementation advice to the government of Alberta on the oil sands emissions limit by February 2017. Given their role in providing implementation advice, the government of Alberta sought feedback from the oil sands advisory group on the concepts included in the act. The draft bill was not shared with the oil sands advisory group in order to preserve the privilege of Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Now, the advice coming from the oil sands advisory group in 2017 could point to implementation through one or more methods, from policy to ministerial order, from new regulations enabled under today's statute to changes to the act itself next year.

Like industry and environmentalists, we see emissions from 2030 to 2050 being established in a manner consistent with Alberta making its contribution to Canada, meeting its 2050 greenhouse gas reduction targets and international climate commitments. The industry and environmental communities' advice to us is that this is the right time to limit to 2030, after which time a new path may be needed. However, the government has not put an expiry date on the emissions limit. The oil sands terms of reference encourage it to propose a mandate to advise government of a path from 2030 to 2050. We expect to receive advice from that in 2017, and that advice is very likely to have implications for the legislation in reference to what might happen after 2030.

With that, I look forward to engaging in debate on this piece of legislation over the coming days and certainly encourage all members of the House to support it.

I now move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wonder if I might seek unanimous consent from the House to briefly revert to introductions.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Having heard that request, is anyone opposed?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of 13 students, actually sheriffs in training, who are here with us touring the Legislature. They're training to become sheriffs and are from recruit class 961. They're brand new recruits that started training last week and will be graduating as Alberta sheriffs in February. I'm sure that they have a wonderful career ahead of them protecting Albertans, and I congratulate them. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Earlier today I made an effort to seek unanimous consent to revert to Notices of Motions to provide the government the opportunity of not airing our laundry this afternoon. Seeing as we're in this atmosphere of co-operation, I just wanted to see if maybe the government had changed their mind and was willing to provide unanimous consent so that I may propose a motion under Notices of Motions. I ask for unanimous consent to revert to Notices of Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Notices of Motions

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the government for changing your position from this morning.

I rise today pursuant to Standing Order 15(6), which reads:

The Speaker may allow such debate as he or she [sees] appropriate . . . to determine whether a prima facie case of breach of privilege has taken place and whether the matter is being raised at the earliest [convenience], and if the Speaker so rules,

which, clearly, Madam Speaker, was the case yesterday, any Member may give notice no later than the conclusion of the next sitting day of a motion to deal with [this] matter further.

As is laid out in the standing orders, any member may provide notice of a motion to deal with the matter further. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, yesterday I was not afforded that opportunity to propose that motion, so I rise to give notice that the motion I'll be moving at the appropriate time is:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 15(6) the Legislative Assembly refer to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing for deliberation and consideration the Speaker's finding yesterday of a prima facie case of breach of privilege and the determination of an appropriate remedy.

I might just add that the Premier in 2013 proposed this exact same motion, which was supported by the Government House Leader.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Did anyone wish to respond to that at this time?

**Mr. Mason:** No, Madam Speaker, I don't.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Oh, okay. Sorry. My error, then.

### Speaker's Ruling Motion Out of Order

**The Deputy Speaker:** Having heard this proposed notice of motion, I'm prepared to give a ruling, the proposed notice of motion under Standing Order 15(6) concerning a prima facie breach of privilege after an apology has been given.

Hon. members, what we have today in the Assembly is a situation that is almost identical to what happened on December 3, 2013. On that day the then Member for Edmonton-Strathcona provided oral notice of her intention to move a motion pursuant to Standing Order 15(6) referring to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing consideration of the Speaker's ruling of a prima facie breach of privilege on December 2, 2013.

Speaker Zwozdesky ruled that motion was out of order under Standing Order 48 because the Deputy Premier on behalf of the government of that day offered an apology to the Assembly. He indicated that after an apology was given, the matter was concluded. His ruling can be found on pages 3303 to 3304 of *Hansard* for December 3, 2013.

By way of additional authorities I reference Speaker Schumacher's ruling in 1993 on the effect of an apology. That can be found at pages 463 and 464 of *Hansard* for September 23, 1993.

11:50

Both Speaker Schumacher and Speaker Zwozdesky cited Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* on this matter, which states on page 267 of the second edition of that book: "An apology by the offending Member will invariably close the matter without the necessity of putting the motion to a vote." Yesterday the Deputy Government House Leader apologized on behalf of the government after the Speaker's ruling of a prima facie contempt. I must rule the motion proposed by the Official Opposition House Leader out of order pursuant to Standing Order 48. The reason, once again, is that an apology was given, and according to the practices of this Assembly once an apology is given, the matter is concluded. I consider the matter ended, hon. members. Let's move on.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Just raising a point under Standing Order 13(2): "The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member." I'm a little troubled by what appears to be a contradiction in the standing orders. Standing Order 15(6) clearly states that "any Member may give notice no later than the conclusion of the next sitting day of a motion to deal with the matter further." Clearly, a breach of privilege took place yesterday, and not only was there an apology given, but there was no opportunity for a motion to be made yesterday.

I know that you know that in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* this situation is also addressed, that when a breach of privilege has taken place, a member is provided the opportunity to provide a motion. I find it more than a little unfortunate that these particular standing orders are not being followed, and I find it very troubling that the Premier and the Government House Leader, while in opposition, found a breach of privilege very serious and at that time found that an apology wasn't acceptable, which is why they continued to move a similar motion as I am today. Now, just a few short months later, they choose to not respect the same things that they once had.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, as I have explained in detail, once an apology has been given, that concludes the matter, and no further breach of privilege occurs at that time. The apology ends the matter, and we are moving forward.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Speaker, having dealt with weighty matters and debated some legislation, it's been a very edifying morning. I propose to call it 12 o'clock and adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:54 a.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 2, 2016

Day 43

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
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Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Government House Leader  
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

## Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and Committee Services	Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 2, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Dyakuyu. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seated in your gallery, I'd first like to introduce Ukraine's ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Ambassador Andriy Shevchenko. Ambassador Shevchenko is a remarkable advocate for Ukraine and Ukraine's interests. Alberta has come to be known as the Ambassador's second home, and we are thrilled he was able to join us on this historic day. Bitamo, Ambassador.

For my second introduction, I'm very pleased to welcome to this House the executive of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council. The work that this council does in advocacy and promotion of the Ukrainian community across this province is remarkable, and they were instrumental in the creation of an act that will be introduced today, Mr. Speaker. I'll ask that they rise as I state their names: Ms Olesia Luciwi-Andryjowycz, president; Mr. Ivan Lypovyk, vice-president; Ms Daria Luciwi, past president; Ms Larisa Hayduk, secretary; Ms Romana Latenko, treasurer; Mr. Yaroslav Szewczuk, director; and Ms Christine Moussienko, director.

For my third introduction, and also seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce and welcome back a former Speaker of this House, Mr. Gene Zwozdesky. Mr. Zwozdesky, in addition to a storied career within the Alberta Legislature, is a leader in the Ukrainian community and was instrumental in bringing forward the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act in 2008, also known as the Holodomor.

I'd ask all of my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you and welcome, with particular acknowledgments to Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, hon. member. You said those words like it was natural for you to say them.

I would recognize the leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you, though you hardly need the introduction, and through you to all members of this House someone that you know better than the rest of us, your daughter Ms Stephanie Wanner, who is a child life therapist at the Stollery children's hospital in the division of pediatric oncology and who joins us in your gallery to observe childhood cancer awareness day in this Legislature. Also, since this is national Take Our Kids to Work Day, I think you have met that standard.

It also gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you Ms Val Figliuzzi. Val has been the executive director of the Kids with Cancer Society in Edmonton since 2004. Val brings great passion to her role as her son was diagnosed with cancer in 1991 and she was a great advocate for the superb treatment he received in both Edmonton and Texas to ultimately achieve a cure. She continues to work very hard for all children with cancer in northern Alberta.

Also present in your gallery is Ms Carmen Huth, whose son Karsten passed away November 25, 2015, at the age of 17 from leukemia. This is still the reality for over 20 per cent of all children who are diagnosed with cancer today. Ms Nicole Brosseau and her son Emmitt, who is five years old, are also present. Emmitt was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia – I failed medical school, Mr. Speaker – on August 5 of this year and is undergoing treatment now at the Stollery. We wish nothing but great outcomes for young Emmitt and his entire family.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I will introduce to you and through you to all members of the House my wife, Christine McIver. Christine is the founder and chief executive officer of the Kids Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta, which she founded 20 years ago. Mostly my life would be unbearable without her.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to stand today and introduce to you and through you from the wonderful small Ukrainian town of Myrnam, Alberta, a group of grade 6 students and their principal, Mr. Keith Gamblin; assistant principal, Adrienne Owen; staff Tara Campbell; and parents Irene Jacula, Deirdre Myshaniuk, and Rick Dees. If I could get the students and staff and parents to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you two classes from the bustling metropolis of Beaumont at Académie Saint-André; their teachers Miss Brittany O'Neill, Mme Stéphanie Therrien-Messier; their chaperones Mr. Michael Foley and Mrs. Leanne Bownes. If they would stand now and please get the recognition of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you some of the brightest students from one of the most beautiful constituencies in all of Alberta. The students today are from Roberta McAdams school, which we grand opened with the Minister of Education just a week ago. I read to them just a month ago. They're accompanied today by their teacher Mr. Ash Robinson and their chaperones Mrs. Sushma Dalal, Mrs. Kawalieet Nagra, and Ms Tamsin Carreck. If they could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

I believe you may have some other guests, leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and reintroduce to this House and all Members of the Legislative Assembly Mrs. Janice Sarich, former MLA for Edmonton-Decore and former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. Mrs. Sarich served with four Premiers and worked diligently to serve and advocate for the interests of Alberta from 2008 to 2015. She is a fourth generation Ukrainian, as her

great-grandparents emigrated from Ukraine to Canada in 1898 and 1901.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to introduce Heather Klimchuk, the former Member for Edmonton-Glenora from 2008 to 2015. Heather served as a former minister of culture and community services and of Service Alberta. Joining us today also is Jacquie Fenske, former MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, who served from 2012 to 2015. Jacquie contributed as a member of many legislative committees and represented her community with great vigour. I would also like to express regrets from former Premier Stelmach, who is attending a funeral today.

All of these guests are here today to support the introduction and ultimate passage of the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

1:40

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a group of hard-working civil servants from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. Staff members of the competitiveness and market analysis section of Agriculture and Forestry are here with us today. They represent the many women and men who work hard to ensure that our farm families are equipped with information on how they can best compete in the agriculture market. I would like to ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Dyakuyu, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly three distinguished guests joining us from the Ukrainian religious community here in Alberta and seated in the members' gallery. I will ask that they rise as I state their names: the Most Reverend Bishop David Motiuk, a bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic eparchy of Edmonton; His Grace Bishop Ilarion of the Edmonton and western eparchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada; as well as Ms Ann Lega, who is accompanying Bishop Ilarion here today. So please join me in providing the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly four guests joining us from Ukrainian community organizations in Alberta and seated in the public gallery. I'll ask that they rise as I state their names: Ms Andrea Kopylech, vice-president of the national Ukrainian Canadian Congress; Orysia Boychuk, president of the Edmonton branch of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress; Deborah Stasiuk, president of the Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts; and Ms Slavka Shulakewych – I was practising that one; sorry about that – program co-ordinator with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council. Please join me in providing the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and bitaemo to all guests here celebrating our shared Ukrainian heritage. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Brielle Anderson. Brielle is here with her mother, Kim Brundrit. Kim works in my constituency office, and Brielle is here job shadowing me all day as part of national Take Our Kids to Work Day. Brielle has been put to work by my constituency staff and has agreed to help any caucus who may need her help in writing a shadow budget for the upcoming budget. If you could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly four guests joining us from Ukrainian education organizations in Alberta. They are seated in the public gallery, and I'll ask that they please stand as I call their names: Ms Marian Butz-Gauk, president of the Edmonton Catholic Schools Ukrainian Bilingual Parent Advisory Society; Ms Ivanka Soletsky, president of the University of Alberta Ukrainian Students' Society; Ms Alicia Slusarchuk, president of Grant MacEwan University Ukrainian students' society; and Mr. Daniel Moussienko, president of the University of Calgary Ukrainian society. I would ask that all members please extend the warm welcome of this Assembly to them.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House three guests joining us from the Ukrainian community and seated in the public gallery. I'll ask that they rise as I state their names: Mr. Taras Podilsky, Mr. Jars Balan, and Mr. Michael Sulyma. If you could all please join me in providing them the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Dyakuyu, Mr. Speaker. As a proud descendant of Ukrainian settlers who arrived here in 1913 and had seven kids, including my father, it's my great pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two guests joining us from the Ukrainian community and seated in the public gallery. I'll ask that they rise as I state their names: Mr. Vitaliy Milentyev and Mr. Yarema Shulakewych. Please rise to receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two guests joining us from the Ukrainian community and seated in the public gallery. I'll ask that they rise as I state their names: Ms Marilyn Mucha and Mr. Bill Shostak. I ask that they rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although he's not currently here, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you

to all members of this Legislature Mike Carter, the president of the Calgary Firefighters Association IAFF local 255. He's been with the Calgary fire department for 18 years and currently holds the rank of captain. During his career he has responded to the Slave Lake fire, the floods in Calgary and High River, and most recently the fire in Fort McMurray. I would encourage all members to give him the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly now for when he arrives.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is my distinct pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you and indeed to all members of the Assembly some recent arrivals from the Ukraine that have become close to our family and myself: Yuriy and Lena Yemets and our newest Canadian baby, Destina. I ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very, very hard-working young lady from my office, one of my ministerial assistants, Katie Hasenbank. Katie was instrumental in helping to pull together many of the guests and visitors that we have joining us today as well as helping with all aspects of today. I'd ask all of my colleagues in this House to please join me in acknowledging all of her hard work.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

Are there any further introductions? The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Dyakuyu, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present to the Assembly six guests. If they could rise as I call their names: Natalia Toroshenko, a former Vegreville councillor and Ukrainian teacher; Hazel Anaka, co-ordinator of Babas and Borshch, a Ukrainian festival in Andrew; the mayor of Mundare, Charlie Gargus; a Lamont county councillor and deputy reeve, Daniel Warawa; a former Vegreville councillor, Greg Kurulok, and his wife, Chris, who own the Ukrainian Ceramic Cottage in Vegreville. Proud of their cultural heritage, proud of their community work, please join me in welcoming these guests with the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other introductions, hon. members? I think I speak for all of you when I say how fortunate we are to have the beautiful and appreciative people of this province. It's something we need to all cherish.

## Members' Statements

### Carbon Levy Advertising

**Mr. Cooper:** The NDP has taken a page out of the previous government's handbook when it comes to a complete lack of respect for Albertans. In fact, the Speaker ruled yesterday that they have been found in contempt of the Assembly. The NDP have shown the moms and dads, business owners, and oilfield workers across this province that they are beneath them by not considering them when introducing a \$3 billion carbon tax and then having the gall to ask those same hard-working Albertans to pick up the tab for

\$5 million to advertise the virtues of that carbon tax, that will hurt the economy and every single Albertan.

1:50

The NDP have shown contempt for the rules of the Legislature by breaking those rules and using \$5 million of Albertans' money to advertise a carbon tax that Albertans didn't ask for or didn't want. The NDP got off with a slap on the wrist and a quick apology, and they think that's okay. Oh, how times have changed. When in opposition, the Government House Leader railed against the government of the day for being found in contempt on a very similar situation with partisan ads. The Government House Leader called the PCs an affront to the dignity and respect that should be afforded to our Legislature. Pot, kettle, black.

The facts are clear, Mr. Speaker. The NDP has been caught breaking the rules, using the hard-earned tax dollars of Albertans to push NDP propaganda on the carbon tax, and they should be paying the \$5 million back. Actions have consequences, and the NDP's flippant use of taxpayer dollars to push out the carbon tax propaganda must be paid back. Albertans can count on the Wildrose for standing up to this government and for showing real leadership, unlike the NDP, who are willing to write cheques using Albertans' hard-earned money.

## Statement by the Speaker

### Oral Question Period Time Limits

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we start the clock on Oral Question Period, I committed to provide a response to the question which was raised yesterday with respect to stopping the clock. I'd like to briefly comment on that matter, which was raised by the House leader for the Official Opposition. I remind members that it's at the discretion of the chair to stop the clock when providing comments or direction on proceedings of this House. Yesterday I provided caution to members in the application of the sub judice rule during Oral Question Period, and I declined to stop the clock at that time. I think the particular point that was made and maybe intended by the hon. member at the time was on the length of the sub judice, which I wrote, on the second day. In the future I will be conscious of that and will continue to use my discretion, however, as to when I apply the principle.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** If we would now start the clock. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Carbon Levy Advertising

**Mr. Jean:** Earlier this week we saw a partial admission from this government that their carbon tax will cost thousands of Albertans their jobs on top of the over a hundred thousand that have already been lost since they were elected. Then, to make matters worse, just yesterday the Speaker found this government in contempt for breaking the rules with their \$5 million carbon tax ad campaign. We knew the ads were ineffective, and we knew they were a waste of money, but now we know that they should not have been allowed in the first place to have been able to spend Albertans' hard-earned money like this. How can the Premier possibly justify this ridiculous abuse of taxpayers' dollars during a time when Albertans can't afford it?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday our Deputy Government House Leader was very clear when he said that we “would never, under any circumstances, want to offend or obstruct the dignity of [this] House,” and as such, he offered our sincere apology, and I echo that sentiment again today.

However, let me be clear that while we sincerely do apologize for that situation, we will not apologize for making sure that Albertans are informed and aware that they finally have a government that takes the issue of climate change seriously and that will move forward to diversify the economy, to protect the environment, and to ensure that we finally take action.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** In 2013 the Redford PC government was found in contempt for breaking the rules with a partisan ad campaign funded by taxpayers. The now Government House Leader teed off, saying that in all his years of service he'd only seen the 44-year-old PC government held in contempt once and that a simple apology probably wasn't enough. Fast-forward to today, and it only took a year and a half for this NDP government to do exactly the same thing as the old PC government. Can the House leader please explain why Albertans should now settle for a simple “sorry” when his government broke the rules on a \$5 million campaign when he thought it wasn't appropriate before?

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We certainly take into account the Speaker's rulings in adjusting our position with respect to these matters. We take guidance from the chair, and we take that very seriously. I suggest the opposition should do the same.

**Mr. Jean:** If we actually thought it would stop them from doing so, Mr. Speaker, we could, but the only thing more grating to Albertans than this government's carbon tax ads is the carbon tax itself. Instead of campaigning an election on it, the Premier used taxpayer dollars to promote it, and still two-thirds say that they don't want it. What they do want are good jobs and, of course, a competitive industry, and they want to have a say on a carbon tax that will ultimately cost taxpayers a lot more money than \$5 million. Will the Premier test the effectiveness of her ridiculous advertising and put the carbon tax to Alberta voters in a referendum?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. Today we received an important endorsement for our climate leadership plan, and that was from the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. On CBC he suggested that having energy efficiency programs like retrofits of public institutions and hospitals and schools was a good idea. But what the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake fails to understand is that someone has to pay for that, that renewable energy and energy efficiency don't come for free, and that you need to show leadership in order to get these things into place so that we can reposition our government as the progressive energy-producing province that we are, and that is long overdue.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Prescription Drug Coverage for Rare Diseases

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans pride ourselves on a health care system that's supposed to provide universal health access, yet those who need the care the most still fall through the cracks. Haley Chisholm, a teenager from High River who desperately needs access to a drug called Soliris to keep her kidneys functioning, is an example of that. Her family simply can't afford it, and the province's short-term exceptional drug therapy program refuses to pay for it. Can the Premier please explain to Haley Chisholm why the health care system isn't there when she needs it the most?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, our Minister of Health, I'm sure, will look into that matter although, generally speaking, I will say that one of the things that we need to do if we're going to reduce the rate of increase in health spending is that we can't go forward with 6, 8, 10 per cent increases every year and that drugs are one of those things. That being said, on cases like this we need to be looking at it, and it will be looked at.

But, please, Mr. Speaker, to the members opposite, you can't take \$2 billion out of operating expenses and not restrict people's access to public health care. These guys are engaging in magical thinking if they don't understand that.

**Mr. Jean:** Very insensitive, Mr. Speaker.

Haley's doctors talked to physicians in the United States who've used Soliris successfully to treat patients suffering from the same condition as Haley, but in Canada our universal health care system won't even allow drug trials for this condition because not enough people suffer from it, so Health Canada says that it's not worth while to fund it. Unbelievable. Haley Chisholm is not just a number, and the province should step up and recognize this. Will the Premier today, right now, commit to reviewing the provincial regulations that prevent Alberta Health from funding Haley's treatment?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly have the minister look into it and get back to the member with respect to the particulars, but what I will say is that our regulations are designed so that health care professionals are making decisions about what is in the best health outcome for people. It is not politicians, so I will not be engaging in this particular deliberation because, quite frankly, that is not the way to have a strong, evidence-based public system of health care. Our minister will look into it and get back to the member opposite with the details, but we are not going to engage in political interference in evidence-based decision-making.

**Mr. Jean:** “I hope the government realizes that it's not really a waste of money to spend the money on me. I hope they see me as a person and not coins that they're spending. I have plans to do good things for people.” That's a message from Haley Chisholm delivered last week. The way we treat people in our health care system needs to change. It doesn't need to be so cold and uncaring. I believe the Premier would agree. Will she commit to making the systematic changes needed to support Albertans suffering from rare diseases, like Haley Chisholm, or not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I said, our government will continue to support our public health care system to the very best of our ability because we know that that is the way to ensure that everybody gets the care that they need when they need it. One of the ways to do that is to ensure that the matter is reviewed by medical professionals and that specific instances are reviewed by doctors who can tell us what is the best way forward. So we will



certainly look into this matter and find out what the evidence has been and what the decision-making has been.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

## 2:00 Electricity Power Purchase Agreement Lawsuit

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, we've been asking a lot of questions about PPAs because the government's efforts to rip up these contracts hurt Albertans in many, many ways. When a government goes to court to rip up contracts that have been running since the turn of the century, the investment community really notices. People become afraid to invest in Alberta, and they are. That makes everything more expensive for Albertans, and it's becoming so, and that hurts everyday Albertans. Does the Premier recognize that her decisions to have the government sue its own agencies and power companies are going to hurt Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the other investors in Alberta are the industrial consumers who need to understand that the rules that they have been advised about by the government are, in fact, the rules that are in place. Residential consumers of electricity also deserve to know that. We as a government are going to stand up for those consumers, many of whom are also investors, to ensure that the rules that they thought were in place were, in fact, the rules that were in place. Other than that, we will continue to stand up for fair prices for all Albertans.

**Mr. Jean:** The Premier doesn't seem to understand the great impact of the PPA lawsuit. Suing Enmax hurts Albertans, Calgarians in particular. This government acts like there is a barrel with billions and billions of dollars sitting in Enmax's office that the NDP can use in their slush fund. This government rails against the profits made by power companies, but Enmax is a social enterprise. Its dividends actually fund the city of Calgary. EPCOR and Capital Power actually fund the city of Edmonton. Does the Premier understand how our electricity system works in Alberta? Does she realize the mistakes that she's making on our electricity system in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, we fully understand this matter, and one of the decisions that we've made is that we are going to do everything at our disposal to stand up for Alberta consumers, individual families and industrial consumers, to make sure that they pay the price that they need to pay and not a cent more. At the end of the day, you can choose to stand up for the power companies or you can choose to stand up for Albertans. We will be standing up for Albertans.

**Mr. Jean:** Last year the NDP changed the specified gas emitters tax. They didn't consult with anyone. They got it wrong, and power companies warned them that they would turn back PPAs. No one in the NDP government listened, but that's because they didn't know what they were doing. FOIP documents now reveal that the Premier only asked for a beginner's briefing on how the electricity system works in Alberta in March, 10 months – a full 10 months – after she plunged the system into chaos. Will the Premier admit right now that she didn't know what she was doing, and will she call off this absurd PPA lawsuit against the people of Alberta, particularly Edmonton and Calgary?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would certainly urge the member to read the memo that his staff have been distributing because, of course, what it says is: further to the briefings the Premier has received on all these issues, we'd like more information. It doesn't quite say what you think it says, to the member opposite. Generally speaking, I will continue to answer this on a general basis because the matter is before the courts. Our government has made a decision to do whatever we can to stand up for Albertans – for regular Alberta consumers, for residential consumers, for industrial consumers – so that they pay the best prices they can for their electricity.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

The leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week the NDP government will take Alberta companies to court over power purchase agreements. With PPAs we've had a reliable supply of energy for years, and Alberta energy has been the cheapest amongst the provinces historically. Because this government didn't understand the impact of rushed policies, Alberta power companies are exercising their right to return the PPAs. To the Premier. Your ministers failed to properly consult with industry stakeholders and didn't take the advice of their hard-working public servants after you got advice. Will you now do the right thing and drop this court case before it starts because that's what's in the best interest of Albertans?

## Speaker's Ruling Sub Judice Rule

**The Speaker:** Would you please stop the clock? I simply want to remind the Assembly once again about Standing Order 23(g), the sub judice rule, which governs statements made in the Assembly about legal proceedings. I reiterate my caution to both sides of the Assembly in their statements, both in posing questions and in responses. I will provide considerable latitude, but I want to urge members to exercise discretion in making statements that may be subject to the rule.

Please start the clock.

The hon. Premier.

## Electricity Power Purchase Agreement Lawsuit (continued)

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that, I mean, it really is a bit rich coming from over there. Certainly, the position of these power companies is that they signed a deal, a deal that nobody saw in the public sphere because of an OIC to keep the deal quiet, a deal that said that they could keep their profits, and when they started to experience losses, taxpayers had to pay for it. That's what the companies are suggesting is the case, and it appears as though the members opposite think that that's just great and in the best interests of Albertans. Well, we do not.

**Mr. McIver:** News flash for the Premier. No matter who wins this lawsuit, Albertans lose. Albertans pay. You are causing this. You're causing extra expenses for court cases. You're causing extra distress on the very companies that invest in creating power, renewable and otherwise, in Alberta, yet you're forging ahead with the extra price tag of the court case when the same person is going to pay either way. Why are you so against Alberta-based

investment? No. You just said it. You're against profit. You're offended by it. Premier, why are you offended by companies making profit?

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be cautious about words used that might have a volatile effect on the House.

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, as you can imagine, reject almost the entire premise of that question. I will simply say that we will continue to stand up for Albertans. We will assert that the system was one where the private industry, who was intended to take the risk, enjoy the benefits of the profit, therefore, one would expect, would also endure the risk where there was some. Either way, we will continue to take whatever action we can to get the best deal we can for Albertans, and we will not back down from that, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. McIver:** In this province only the government thinks that profit is a dirty word, Mr. Speaker.

Given that our PC government put a price on carbon, worked with publicly owned companies like Enmax and Capital Power to invest in renewable energy, it was clear that we were taking a stand on the realities of climate change. To the Premier. The economic impact study you released this week was an insult to Albertans. Will you be accountable to Albertans and share a fulsome economic impact, not the flimsy piece that was presented this week, and make the case to Albertans? So far you haven't even come close.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we have released a good deal of information about this. Indeed, as I mentioned a couple of days ago, there have been other studies out there as well that have supported our position that, in fact, our climate change leadership plan will grow the economy, will ensure that we are able to diversify the economy, will actually overtake the cost of doing nothing, something which is not in any kind of economic analysis, will actually protect the environment, will actually position Alberta as a progressive, modern energy producer, and will ultimately enhance our ability to grow our markets. It will benefit . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

### Royalty Framework

**Mr. Malkinson:** Mr. Speaker, a recent study from the University of Calgary School of Public Policy concluded that Alberta's new royalty framework is making – get this – Alberta more competitive on the energy market than other jurisdictions in Canada, in particular our neighbours in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. To the Minister of Energy. While this is great news for companies, my constituents and everyday shop-floor Albertans want to know: how will they see the benefits of this new framework?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the member is correct. Jack Mintz on Monday wrote that our new royalty framework will make Alberta significantly more attractive for investment. He continued to say that Alberta is indeed more competitive than British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and many of the oil-producing states in the United States. This is going to attract

investment in Alberta, and it's going to help fund the health care and the education systems that all of us enjoy and want.  
[interjections]

2:10

**The Speaker:** Both sides of the House, please keep the volume down.

First supplemental.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the study did not factor in the carbon price, residents of Calgary-Currie want to know if the same minister can tell Albertans if and how the carbon price will impact the implementation of the new royalty framework.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct that Mr. Mintz's analysis did not include the carbon price. However, we have exempted on-site combustion of fuel at traditional oil and gas wells from the carbon levy for the next five years. This is going to allow companies to adapt and address methane emissions, and it will encourage investment in technology to do this, something which will be helpful to the midstream and downstream sectors.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister for the answer. Can the minister inform Albertans of the royalty programs that will come into effect in the new year?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, the new royalty framework takes place beginning January 1. We have two programs, enhanced hydrocarbon recovery program and emerging resources program. Those are for those harder-to-get resources, so it's a bit of a royalty break. It's going to bring out more drilling in those areas, and these are going to allow companies some assistance in accessing harder-to-get resources. This is a win-win-win for industry, it's a win for investors, and absolutely it's a win for Albertans, who are the owners of the resource.

### Electricity Power Purchase Agreement Lawsuit (continued)

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, it's no surprise that this government lacks the skill and mindset to partner with the greedy and selfish private sector. The Alberta no-jobs plan is a complete failure in getting Albertans back to work, yet you publicly vilify those you suggest will make massive investments in renewable and baseload power. To the Minister of Energy. Companies such as Capital Power and Enmax facing lawsuits are the same investors needed for job growth and stable, affordable power. Is this how the NDP world view envisions building relationships with industry, job seekers, and potential investors?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Consumers shouldn't have to pay for business losses because regulatory loopholes were created in secret, in a way that certainly appears to have been unlawfully negotiated by that party when they were in government. That's exactly why

we're moving forward by going to court. We want to make sure we have a fair and equal playing ground for Albertans and for all businesses here in the province of Alberta.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, given that socially responsible power companies are investing millions of shareholder dollars in renewable power technology and given that taxpayers currently carry no direct debt related to power generation because of billions of dollars of capital invested by these same companies, again to the minister: why does your government continue irresponsible and punitive legal attacks on business, despite their significant commitments, in what may prove to be a costly, poorly orchestrated effort to drive them away?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to set the record straight that that is not at all the intention of what we're doing. We are in the process of going forward and asking the courts for clarity around a secret, backroom deal loophole that was negotiated by Enron, that certainly doesn't fit with the principles that were sold to Albertans when we were moving to a deregulated market, which created lots of opportunity for businesses to make \$10 billion worth of profits. Now, the other part of what was promised by the then government is around that when there is time for losses, they need to step up and fulfill their part of the commitment. We are going to make sure that we protect Albertans as we move forward and create a good business environment for all.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans will judge by results, not intentions. Given that the success of your climate leadership plan must include private investment in renewable power and given that this government continues to erode investor confidence by arrogantly reneging on known clauses within 15-year-old contracts, to the same minister, a simple question: do you and your colleagues understand that irresponsible, ideologically driven policies and disdain for private capital are clearly driving investment out of our province? Yes or no?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the unlawful loophole that was created was dishonest. It was not forthcoming to the folks that were part of the consultations. It was negotiated in at the eleventh hour, and it certainly isn't the kind of business environment that business partners deserve in Alberta. That's why we're moving forward to provide clarity about whether or not it was actually lawful. We don't believe it was.

**The Speaker:** All members of the House, I remind you again about the language and tone that you use, as it causes an uproar in this House. I want both sides of the House to recognize that.

**Mr. Rodney:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** My apologies to the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I missed you. Please proceed.

### Political Party Funding

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. NDP members of the all-party Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee rammed through a motion for taxpayers to fund political parties despite opposition from every other party in this Assembly. This is not what Albertans thought they were getting when the Premier promised to do things differently. To the minister responsible for democratic

renewal: will you commit to this Assembly right now that your government will not spend a single taxpayer dollar to fund political parties?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister. [interjections] Minister, proceed.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The work of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee is very important to this government. Our very first bill, Bill 1, removed corporate and union donations to begin the process to get big money out of politics. The committee itself was not able to complete all its work due to a series of delays implemented by the opposition. We have been reviewing the results of that committee, looking forward to what we may be able to do with the work the committee has completed. I am not looking at any options to include new spending in changes to the election financing act.

**Mr. Nixon:** This past weekend Wildrose members voted to show that they knew it was wrong to fund political parties with tax dollars, but this government clearly disagrees. Given that tens of thousands of Alberta families are out of work and that the NDP is running record deficits on the backs of future generations and has been found in contempt of parliament for illegal advertising, to the Premier: how can you justify your party's self-serving plan to line your pockets with taxpayer dollars on the backs of Alberta families when they're barely making ends meet?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have told us that they want to take big money out of politics. We are looking at the best options moving forward. None of these options include new spending, unlike the members opposite, who want to increase the deficit by \$1.5 billion through tax cuts for their wealthy friends.

**Mr. Nixon:** Given that Wildrose members don't want political subsidies and are united with every other opposition party on this matter and given that whether it's the risky and ideological carbon tax or the misguided Bill 6, the NDP government seems immune to consulting, again to the Premier: what will it take for the NDP to realize that political subsidies using hard-earned taxpayer dollars are something that Albertans just can't afford and will not stand for?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will repeat for the third time that as we move forward with our election financing changes, we are not looking at using taxpayer money or adding new money into that system. What we are doing is making sure that campaign financing, getting big money out of politics, is a priority for this government. Under the current rules a person can donate \$105,000 across four years. That is big money. Getting that out and making sure that the committee could come to an agreement on that was a priority of ours. The opposition was not interested in doing so. We will continue to work to bring forward changes.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

I'm just wondering how many of the former MLAs are sorry that they're not back in this room. It's such an experience.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### 2:20 Brazeau County Agricultural Disaster Declaration

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today Brazeau county, which is in my constituency of Drayton Valley-Devon, declared a state of agricultural disaster "due to the hardship that weather conditions,

specifically, excessive and persistent precipitation have placed on local farmers.” Approximately 75 per cent of unharvested cereals in the region remain standing according to the most recent Alberta crop report. The county has requested a disaster recovery program be set up to address this issue. What is the NDP government doing for these Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mother Nature certainly presented a lot of challenges to farms this year: at the beginning of the year not enough water, by the end far too much. It's been a great challenge. Certainly, our government is committed to supporting the agricultural industry in this province, and we continue to look at ways to support our farm families in situations such as those in Brazeau county, who really have had a tough year because the weather just was not in their favour.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is serious as 84 per cent of the spring wheat, 64 per cent of the barley, and 79 per cent of the oats planted in this county are still standing and unharvested. The economic consequences could be dire. Given that the energy industry is hurting so badly and that Mother Nature has just walloped our second-largest industry, agriculture, what types of programs can the minister provide to these farmers who are calling for disaster assistance?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I may have heard a preamble in that first part. I know you'll be cautious on the next one.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This season, again, has been a roller coaster for many of our producers, and it has indicated again that how challenging or successful a particular year is depends completely on how Mother Nature chooses to respond. The delays in harvest in many parts of our province have substantially impacted the quality of crops, and there are tremendous concerns. We take these issues very seriously. The AgriInvest, AgriInsurance, and AgriStability programs are available to help mitigate the potential effects of these types of conditions when they occur. Again, we continue to work with the agriculture industry to provide the supports needed.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Brazeau county Reeve Bart Guyon has said that these extremely wet conditions over the past few months have resulted in very low crop yields across Brazeau county and given that he wants to call attention to this extremely important issue and he reminds us all that farmers feed families, and let's support them, will this government support our farmers in Brazeau county, and if so, how?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. AgriInsurance may be available to provide assistance through unharvested acreage benefits, which provides advance payment on insured crops that remain unharvested after November 30. We encourage producers to get in touch with their local AFSC office to explore their options and to submit their report before November 15 to help AFSC determine levels of advance if necessary. We continue to monitor

the harvest carefully to evaluate the final impact of this year's wet conditions, and we will continue to find ways to support Alberta's hard-working farm families.

### Government Policies

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, this weekend hundreds of conservatives from across Alberta gathered in Red Deer to discuss how to take Alberta back. Wildrose members voted overwhelmingly at our annual general meeting to kill Bill 6 and to scrap the carbon tax. These policies were proposed by the grassroots members of Strathmore-Brooks, who have felt these impacts first-hand. The closure of Western Feedlots in my constituency is a real-life economic impact study. Will the government commit to publicly releasing the full internal economic impact study of the carbon tax that the Premier talked about yesterday?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we indicated, we are looking at releasing all of the underlying data that uses the same econometric modelling that underlies the fiscal plan and the budget. Certainly, this work is ongoing with respect to the economic benefits of carbon pricing and the reinvestment of those substantial revenues in communities, in individuals, in businesses, and in First Nations.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago we got the news in Strathmore that Western Feedlots would be closing its doors. They cited as their reason that they were facing headwinds in the cattle market but also this government's policies on the carbon tax and the heavy regulatory burden of Bill 6. The concerns that we have raised are no longer theoretical. Real people in my constituency are losing their jobs. If the government will not reconsider its decision to force the carbon tax and Bill 6 on Albertans, what will they do to ensure that more businesses like Western Feedlots do not have to close their doors?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it is disappointing to hear about the job losses at Western Feedlots.

I will remind the member that, of course, marked gasoline for agricultural purposes is exempt from the carbon levy. I will further remind the hon. member of an initial \$10 million investment in on-farm efficiency programs, and we await additional investments from the federal government. I'm looking at how we can increase that programming over time. One final note, Mr. Speaker, of course, is that in June of last year a 1,400-pound calf sold for about \$2,800. This year they are selling for about \$1,800, so that's the state of the industry right now.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, at least we're hearing some positive signs that the NDP are at least quietly acknowledging that their carbon tax is creating real problems for rural Alberta. They introduced their \$10 million subsidy program to compensate farmers for the huge added cost of the carbon tax, but that \$10 million is equal to .3 per cent of the \$3 billion carbon tax. It's pennies. Why doesn't the government just scrap the carbon tax and keep the change?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason why we are pricing carbon is that climate change is real. I know that it is fashionable on the other side of the House to retweet conspiracy theories, peddle hoax memes, and otherwise cast doubt on the reality of climate change, but that is not the approach of this government. The approach of this government is to make thoughtful investments in communities, in the agricultural sector, to make folks' operations more efficient, creating good jobs and making our economy resilient to a carbon-constrained future because, once again, climate change . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

#### **Electricity Power Purchase Agreement Lawsuit Advertising**

**Mr. Fraser:** Today Albertans want answers but are seeing this NDP government refuse to answer questions on legal action against PPAs to avoid prejudicing the court case. It was only yesterday that the Premier said that getting into the details would not be appropriate for this forum and should be reserved for the courts. Well, this caucus agrees. It's entirely inappropriate to attempt to influence public opinion with the case before the courts. So would the Premier be able to tell Albertans why she launched an ad campaign in papers around the province? Does she consider that to be an appropriate forum to influence public opinion?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, we think it's important for Albertans to know what their government is doing to defend their rights and their interests. The Official Opposition and the third party have made it very clear who they're interested in defending, that being the other side of the contracts, companies who have been very successful at benefiting during the good times, and now they want to pass losses onto individual Albertans as well as to industrial consumers. We don't believe that's fair. That's exactly why we're asking the courts to make a ruling on whether or not the clause that was added at the eleventh hour by the third party and their subsidiaries is indeed . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given that the Premier and the Deputy Premier refuse to be held accountable on this issue and the Energy minister has been muzzled and given that the NDP instead thought it would best to explain a sham of a court case to Albertans with a \$100,000 ad campaign, to the Premier: \$100,000 may not seem like a lot to you, but it is to taxpayers, and with all due respect, Deputy Premier, instead of spending money on NDP political spin, would it not be better spent on education and health care?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. We are moving forward on making sure that Albertans are defended and protected. Certainly, we don't believe that the Enron clause is in the best interest of Albertans, nor do we believe it was done in a way that was appropriate. That's why we're moving forward with the courts and asking them to make a ruling on this so that Albertans don't have to pay more than what they were promised in the first place, which was shared risk and shared reward. It's time for that commitment to come through.

**Mr. Fraser:** Well, given that the NDP also used government services to launch a public website full of political rhetoric and given that in this House this government refuses to be accountable to Albertans on why they're suing these companies – Deputy Premier, suing Albertans is not going to bat for them.

The government can't have it both ways. You attempted to influence public opinion when the matter was before the courts, and Albertans aren't buying it. Today will you not waste another tax dollar on this litigation, trying to save your own political skin, and drop this lawsuit?

**2:30**

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd say that all Albertans have skin in this game, and the reason why we do is because 15 years ago we were promised that there was going to be public consultation and they would talk about what would be in the PPA contracts. At the eleventh hour the party that's asking the very question, clearly documented, negotiated with Enron and snuck in a loophole that certainly wasn't done in a way that passes any kind of nod test. That's why we're going to the courts, to make sure that the courts can make a ruling.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

#### **Educational Curriculum Review**

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has committed to developing new curriculum across six subjects over the next six years. Given that this curriculum change is focused on providing students with the knowledge and skill sets needed for Alberta's changing environments and given that Alberta's families are eager to see results, to the Minister of Education: can you please provide this House with an update on this integral work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much for the question. Last month we launched an in-depth survey on curriculum that's open to all Albertans. To date we have more than 19,000 responses that have taken the survey – it feels really good – and lots of great feedback that is being taken into serious consideration for the next round of development. You can see the survey at [curriculumsurvey.alberta.ca](http://curriculumsurvey.alberta.ca), and I would encourage everyone to fill it out. Working together, we can build a curriculum that we can all be proud of.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that perhaps the most important feedback the government will receive during this review is from Alberta families, how are you engaging families in your work on the curriculum?

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you for the question again. Along with the surveys we have a series of face-to-face meetings around the province in partnership with the provincial consortium. These sessions allow face-to-face meetings with parents and teachers and students to directly consult on these things. We've already had hundreds of these interactions, and we will continue to do so. Once again, of course, [curriculumsurvey.alberta.ca](http://curriculumsurvey.alberta.ca). We'll break 20,000 by the end of today, I'm sure.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the survey is one tool to receive feedback and guide the review and we know that this represents the beginning stages of the review, to the same minister: what are the next steps once the curriculum survey is closed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly we will be analyzing the results, and we'll share them with the public. We'll turn back to our working groups to develop a first incarnation of some curriculum. We have very interesting contributors there, including the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, who use our curriculum as well. Then we will come back to the public once again because, you know, changing the curriculum, developing, seeing what's good with our old curriculum, and improving on other aspects, I think, are in the best interests of all Alberta students.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

### Indigenous Community Concerns

**Mr. Hanson:** Mr. Speaker, it's a sad state of affairs that in our province our indigenous peoples are repeatedly left behind or face additional barriers in our system. Our justice system in Alberta has received the worst grade in the country for fairness and access. According to a recent study Alberta has the most disproportionate level of aboriginal incarceration of any jurisdiction in Canada. That doesn't happen overnight, and neither will fixing it, but we need to start somewhere. What specific steps is the Minister of Justice taking to address these serious problems in our justice system?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for what's really a critical question. The member is absolutely correct. This problem has accumulated over many years and decades, and it's really tragic, the overrepresentation we see of our indigenous populations in correctional centres. We have begun taking steps already to deal with interim remands. Ensuring that people don't go to jail for things like a C-Train ticket is the first step. We're also looking to ensure that judicial interim release is functioning in a way that's more fair to all Albertans, and we're working on other methods with the court and with the federal government, who is also very interested in this issue.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you. Given that an opioid epidemic is sweeping our province and given that finally the NDP has taken our advice and released more up-to-date statistics, unfortunately revealing that First Nations individuals are 5.5 times more likely to visit an emergency room related to opioid use, and given that First Nations individuals in our health care system are also being dispensed opioids at a rate two times higher than our non First Nations population, what is the government doing to address both the legal and illegal opioid epidemic in our First Nations communities?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the very important question. Our government is very concerned with the overrepresentation of First Nations people and indigenous people from Alberta in our overdose statistics, and certainly we are

working very closely with partners in the indigenous communities across the province. We know that the key way to address the opioid crisis is through harm reduction, which is why I'm proud that we're moving forward with expanding opioid dependency treatments as well as moving forward on harm reduction such as supervised consumption services.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you. Given that the Native Women's Association of Canada reports that Alberta has the second-highest number of cases of missing and murdered indigenous women across the country and given that an estimated 84 per cent of these cases are the outright murder of our sisters, daughters, and wives and given that the NWAC has found that overlapping and unclear jurisdictional areas have impeded solving these cases, when is the government going to step up, work across ministries and levels of government to actually do something to save lives?

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much for the question because this is an issue that is quite central to our concerns in this province, particularly with government, who has stood up time and time again to make sure that this government is behind the call for murdered and missing women, participating right away when we became government in the calls to the murdered and missing women inquiry and in participation in all the round-tables that have happened at the national level. We are very proud of the fact that we have, through our orders in council, adopted the national commission and made sure that Alberta is going to be at the forefront. As well, we've been working very closely with the families in the . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

### Electricity Power Purchase Agreement Lawsuit Legal Counsel

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I provided the government with an opportunity to explain why it chose to hire a B.C. lawyer for the PPA court case rather than its own legal counsel at Alberta Justice or an Alberta law firm. As per page 1603 of *Hansard* the Deputy Premier chose to prejudice the court case in her comments instead of answering my question, so let's give the government another opportunity, shall we? To the Premier: why are you insulting Alberta's legal community by hiring a friend of the NDP in B.C. instead of tapping into the wealth of capable counsel here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We do have many tremendous lawyers here in Alberta, and we're proud to have many of them employed by the public service in the government of Alberta. Mr. Arvay is by far Canada's pre-eminent constitutional public and administrative law expert. He has many proven successful verdicts when it comes to standing up for the public interest, including tobacco, and it was important that we use somebody who's got a proven track record to make sure that they're defending Albertans in this case.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we have just learned that the Associate Deputy Minister for Policy Co-ordination in Executive Council articulated under Mr. Arvay in British Columbia and given that it is a curious connection, for sure, and this

relationship further creates reasonable suspicion which further corroborates that this government is only interested in working with those with the NDP world view, to the Premier: do you really expect Albertans to believe that no one was qualified to handle this case in the province of Alberta?

**Ms Hoffman:** Once again, I'll say that we do have exceptional lawyers throughout Alberta, and we're very proud to have many of them working within the public service. We want to make sure that Albertans get what is due to them, and that is certainly somebody who has a proven track record of standing up for the public interest. I think it makes sense to have people who may have experienced that as articling students employed within the public service as well, so certainly I won't apologize for having smart people working in the government or hiring them to defend Albertans, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that since asking about the strange hiring practice yesterday, I've had many Albertans tell me they want answers and given that the Deputy Premier did not deny that Mr. Arvay was given a sole-source contract and given that Albertans are now relying on me to obtain the answers, again to the Premier: what was the process the government used in selecting Mr. Arvay? Is it a sole-source contract? Let me be clear here. How much is he getting paid?

2:40

**Ms Hoffman:** I imagine that the member opposite is familiar with the rules of public accounts and probably has been aware that one of the things that doesn't set you up for success is disclosing how much you might be spending on a particular case, but we will do absolutely what was done and what is practice as recommended by the office of the Auditor General around disclosure. We will continue to follow that in terms of the public interest, and, yes, there are times where there is a sole-source contract. A sole-source contract isn't a bad thing if you're picking the best person to actually move forward with the contract. I think it would be wise, and Mr. Arvay is arguably the best interest in arguing for the public interest. We'll be happy to disclose the details monetarily afterward. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** It's a wonderful day in the neighbourhood.  
I believe we are at Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

### Women's Representation in Municipal Government

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Provincially our caucus is almost at gender parity and our cabinet has more women than men, but at the municipal level women hold 26 per cent of council seats throughout Alberta. What is the Minister of Status of Women doing to support more women getting elected in municipal office?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We recently through Status of Women launched a campaign to get more women to run for municipal office. It's called Ready for Her. We're very excited about it because this problem starts well before election day. We know that most women have a good chance of winning if they run, but it's simply a matter of getting them to put their name on their ballot. In Calgary, for example, there were only eight women out of 49 individuals who put their names forward in the last election, so we're hoping to turn that around because you can't vote for a woman if she's not on the ballot.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that fewer women put their name on the ballot, why is it that fewer women decide to run for office?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. We know that women face different barriers than men do. Women are still by majority the primary caregiver in their homes, whether it's for their children or another family member. Additionally, we know that when it comes to running for office, women tend to need to be asked to run. I know that this was true for myself. I heard it from many women when we were on tour, and I know that it's true for many women who are currently elected here today. But, sir, we know that we make better decisions when our councils better reflect the populations they serve.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that women are so underrepresented now and given that they face these barriers, how many women do you expect to run next year?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you again for the question. For the edification of this room, we're talking about the municipal election in 2017, and I would personally like to see at least 50 per cent women on next year's ballots. As part of our tour we've created an online resource called readyforher.alberta.ca. It's a tool kit to help more women run for office and their supporters to help rally behind them. I believe in having the best candidate for the job. There are so many qualified women here in Alberta. It's simply a matter of getting those women to put themselves on that ballot and put themselves forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, I have a request from the Minister of Seniors and Housing. There's a supplementary response to a question from the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills yesterday.

The hon. minister.

### Affordable and Special-needs Housing

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills asked yesterday about something that is in my portfolio. I had the opportunity to meet with the directors of Mountain View Seniors' Housing, and at that time they gave the information about their plans going forward, their business plans, and in their business plans they do not include any requests at all for renovation dollars for their community housing projects. They have put forward alternative plans, and we're working very closely with them, so I just suggest that the member speak directly to those directors because they know best what's good in their community.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm quite surprised that the minister of housing would stand in her place, when there are 41 bedrooms sitting vacant because this government has chosen not to provide the resources for maintenance for low-income housing, and pass the buck along to another level of government.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday we asked a very important question with respect to the housing available in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and I would expect that the minister would want to do everything that she could to ensure that those housing units would be used by individuals.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, do you have a question?

**Mr. Cooper:** Yeah. The question is: is it not true that she would like to ensure that those units that are needed are made available?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Do you have the question, hon. minister?

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this government has invested \$1.2 billion over five years in the capital plan. We are committed to working with housing management bodies like the one in the member's riding. These representatives – mayors, elected officials on councils – have told us: we have alternative plans to serve the people in our communities. We're working with them directly to support them to do that.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds we'll continue with Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

#### Ukrainian Pysanka Festival in Vegreville

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first weekend of July each year marks a three-day celebration known as the Pysanka Festival hosted in the proud town of Vegreville, a weekend where you meet both performers and attendees that have come from across the world to enjoy the festival and perform in it. This year the festival chose Mayor Charlie Gargus and his wife, Debby, to be the hospodor and hospodynja. They are ambassadors whose job is to welcome all guests.

There are many activities held: the art show and sale; Ukrainian folk bands in the beer gardens; a folk arts showcase that displays traditional music instruments, clothing made by artisans, and pysanky; displays that show the uniqueness of designs and colours that represent different regions of Ukraine, reaching back in time over hundreds of years.

The yarmarok is a marketplace that brings vendors selling fine wares of exquisite wood carvings, beautiful embroidery, pottery, pysanky, and ornate clothing, of which I'm wearing an example from the region of Bukovina.

There are also demonstrations such as weaving silk and wool belts, the making of Ukrainian ethnokorail, cross-stitching, and poetry reading.

Families have also been long-time volunteers, putting on pioneer activities such as a blacksmith shop, a stone mill, rope-making demonstrations, leather-working, and one of my favourites, bread-baking in the pich, where the bread always sells out.

The centrepiece, however, is the grandstand show. All generations come together to watch performances both local and global: A.L. Horton school's Ukrainian bilingual program students sing both Ukrainian and Canadian national anthems; Ukrainian dancing from the Vegreville School of Ukrainian Dancing; Sopilka School of Ukrainian Dance; Sche Raz from Manitoba; the Volya Ukrainian Dance Ensemble and the Pavlychenko Folklorique

Ensemble; Oleksandr Bozhyk, a Ukrainian virtuoso violinist; choirs singing traditional Ukrainian ballads; Marianna Ilkiv, an accomplished soloist from Ukraine; and Millenia, a band that works to preserve and advance Canadian-Ukrainian music.

I will take this opportunity to say dyakuyu, or thank you, to all the organizers of the Pysanka Festival.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

#### Childhood Cancer

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, and my sincerest gratitude to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to deliver this statement today. Twenty-five years ago my wife, Christine's, oldest son, Derek, was taken by a brain tumour when he was just nine years old. This was long before Christine and I met. I know that since that time a lot has changed in the world, but very little has changed in the world of kids' cancer. Every year in Canada the equivalent of 20 busloads of children are diagnosed with cancer, yet from all of the research funding in Canada today only 3 per cent goes to children's cancer research. Cancer is the number one disease killing children today, and we still only devote 3 per cent to research. Over 200 Canadian children die from cancer every year. That's the equivalent of over six classrooms of children dying every single year.

2:50

Since 1980 only three new cancer drugs have been developed for kids compared to over 200 new drugs for adults, and these decades-old toxic drugs are destroying kids emotionally, physically, mentally. Seventy-five per cent of the survivors face a lifetime of serious health problems after treatment and lower levels of education and poorer employment outcomes. With roughly 30,000 childhood cancer survivors living in Canada today, we need to change this.

Research is the only answer, investing in children's cancer research to develop therapies that save lives without causing the devastating health problems that cripple their minds, bodies, and spirits. Mr. Speaker, no one begrudges any of the research done for adults, but the fact is that kids' cancer is different. It requires separate and different therapies and drugs as kids' bodies are not fully developed.

Again let's acknowledge the kids present in the gallery today who are in the trenches battling cancer right now. Both the Kids Cancer Care Foundation and Kids with Cancer Society are raising vital dollars for research and other life-enhancing programs for all kids that were diagnosed. Remember: 3 per cent of research for kids with cancer will never be enough.

#### Gord Downie and the Tragically Hip

**Mr. Westhead:** Mr. Speaker, the Tragically Hip is one of Canada's most iconic and beloved bands. With a sound that makes the headphones edible, it's music that can take you away. Yeah, it's perfect. Well, it isn't, and it is. It doesn't take much to ruin a moment like this. On May 24 the band announced that lead singer, Gord Downie, was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer and broke the hearts of everyone.

It's a sad thing; bourbons all around. But only a fool would complain. We were never more here. At Tragically Hip concerts across Canada this past summer Canadians danced the sidewalks clean and saved our tears for the show. The music was so loud it flapped my pant legs.

With 14 studio albums and five solo albums Gord Downie's contribution to Canada's collective consciousness is incalculable. If I had a wish, I'd wish for more of this. But there's got to be more



than just to despair. Gord Downie's latest project, *Secret Path*, is bringing renewed attention to Canada's shameful residential school legacy. Downie is retelling the tragic story of Chanie Wenjack, who died in 1966 attempting to escape a residential school in northern Ontario.

Gord, this one is for you. You infiltrate our lives; you resonate with meaning. Use it up. Use it all up. Don't save a thing for later. Just say it, convey it, sing out like a bird. "No tears," you said. Understood. Let's just see what tomorrow brings. There will always be much, much more than this. I'll just close my eyes; I'll just catch my breath. This is the only place to be, here, here, and here, et cetera, when something stirs in your heart, a feeling so strong and intense, when something occurs in your heart and there isn't a next sentence.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

### Calgary Country Hills Fire Station 31

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In late June I joined fire department 31 in Calgary-Northern Hills to have dinner and hear from the A crew after so many went to fight the Fort McMurray wildfire in May 2016. The first group of firefighters volunteered following a four-day shift cycle, boarding a bus at midnight headed north. In their words, they arrived the next morning at 6 a.m. to an eerie hellscape. Burnt trees were everywhere, neighbourhoods reduced to ash. In the midst of abandoned vehicles even a city bus was left stranded in the middle of a highway median, and fires still burned in Beacon Hill.

As the front line of the wildfire kept shifting, these Calgary firefighters were tasked with protecting critical infrastructure. Soon their five fire engines arrived by truck, and the crew was deployed to an industrial park near the airport. That first day stretched from 7 a.m. to 2 a.m. After working 53 hours in three days, this crew from Calgary was cycled out to limit exposure to toxins and other effects of the catastrophic fire. Captain Florence remarked that in 18 years he had never been to a fire they didn't put out. The crew just didn't want to leave; they wanted to stay and help the Fort Mac firefighting team.

From the 4th of May to the 7th of June 400 of 800 potential volunteers were deployed. Days after returning their skin smelled like campfire, their throats were sore, and their eyes watered, certainly from the air quality in the midst of that fire, possibly from the devastation they had witnessed. For Captain Florence and his crew it was humbling and very difficult as firefighters to leave a fire that was still burning. Yet in his words: nobody was putting out that fire but Mother Nature.

While his words ring true, we have no doubt that the efforts of these brave men and women saved much of Fort McMurray, and for that every Albertan is grateful. As Albertans we will support the front-line firefighters through the aftereffects of working in such catastrophic conditions. We'll continue to be inspired by the way these firefighters rose to the challenge to pull together in hard times and know we'll be safe because of our first responders.

I'd like to thank Mike Carter, president of Calgary Firefighters Association IAFF local 255, for joining us today.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader might have a motion to introduce.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask for unanimous consent to continue with the daily Routine.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Trust in Government

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This fiscal year has sure been a doozy. The NDP has plunged our province into record debt and deficit, and we have seen four major credit downgrades as a result. But what's in even shorter supply than money these days is trust. After years of poor focus from the previous government voters were expecting a lot more on the trust file. Building trust really isn't that hard. It's about doing what you say and saying what you do.

When they were caught obstructing freedom of information requests to such a degree that the Ethics Commissioner felt compelled to step in, they broke trust. When they said that a 50 per cent minimum wage hike wouldn't cost us jobs when a leaked government memo was actually warning them about expected, and I quote, significant job loss, they broke trust. When they broke contracts with power companies and dragged them into a costly court battle even though internal documents verified that they knew all the consequences of breaking these contracts, they broke trust.

But when they planned to impose a \$3 billion carbon tax on Albertans in the middle of a recession, they really broke trust. Then just yesterday we saw that this government was reprimanded for the complete contempt of this Legislature after they spent \$5 million of taxpayers' money on advertisements for a policy that had not yet been legislated. They shattered trust boundaries. They say Albertans want this when, in reality, polls show overwhelming opposition to this risky policy. They even went one step further and used their majority to shut down our call for a referendum even though 30,000 Albertans signed our petition in support of that. They know Albertans don't want their carbon tax. Anything they say to the contrary is just more dishonesty from a government that has lost its way.

The NDP are about to learn a hard lesson. People are angry. When governments break the people's trust, it is not soon forgotten. In 2019 they're going to have a lot to answer for.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

#### Bill 26

#### Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to move first reading of the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act.

Today it is my distinct honour to rise in this Assembly and introduce an act that would recognize the endearing contributions of Albertans and Canadians of Ukrainian heritage or origin to the province of Alberta. The act will establish Alberta's Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day as each September 7, beginning in 2017.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

3:00

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that pursuant to Standing Order 75 Bill 26, Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table information on bovine TB from the government of Alberta website. This issue was raised by the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti yesterday in question period. The document cautions Albertans that bovine TB does not readily transfer to humans. It also provides lists of precautions and best practices that hunters and farmers can adopt to prevent any potential spread of the disease. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three documents to table with you today. The first, providing evidence that I've spoken to the directors of Mountain View Seniors' Housing, much to the chagrin of the Minister of Seniors and Housing, is a list of all of the properties that are currently vacant and considered to be uninhabitable.

The second is a total listing of the deferred maintenance costs that each one of those properties will require, and though the Minister of Seniors and Housing may have suggested that they didn't ask for any resources, that's certainly the number that it will cost. As I mentioned yesterday in my question, perhaps she should consider donating one to a local charity so they could turn it into a seniors' home.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, is a copy of an article that was referenced during my member's statement where the Government House Leader made some quotes to the media about his concern around a point of privilege.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, given your concern of time I was a little puzzled that you would take so much time tabling those documents, but thank you for doing that.

Hon. members, I believe there were three points of order in the House today.

Government House Leader, I believe you raised a point of order. Is that correct?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to withdraw the point of order.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The second, I believe, is from the Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As a courtesy to you and the table officers and all members, our reference is 23(i) and (j). Out of respect for the intended unanimous passing of the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act I did not want to raise a point of order here today, but out of respect for all Albertans I must raise a point of order here today. That's the bad news, but the good news is that I will include a very time-sensitive solution in my very brief remarks.

At approximately 2:15 p.m. today the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek was asking questions about the NDP government eroding investment in renewable power by reneging on well-known clauses within 15-year-old contracts. In her reply the Deputy Premier used the term "unlawful" in a clearly unparliamentary fashion. Mr. Speaker, the comments were highly prejudicial to the court proceeding and fly in the face of your sub judice warnings in each of the past three days. It's highly insensitive and – I know

we're going to hear it in our offices – insulting not only to investors but also to you as Speaker, the members of this Legislature, the taxpayers of this province, who are the investors in many of these organizations, and therefore to all Albertans.

That said, indeed, I believe there is an appropriate, respectful, rapid response that has precedent in matters such as this, and that is, indeed, that the Deputy Premier rise in this Chamber now, apologize for her remarks, and simply withdraw them.

That concludes my remarks. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize, and I'm happy to withdraw the remark.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, in light of the very important business before the House – and I'm sure we'll have another opportunity to discuss this particular point of order – I'll be happy to withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Oh, very nice.

### Orders of the Day

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 77(1) such that Bill 26 can proceed to second reading immediately.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 26

#### Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and speak to Alberta's Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. As a Polack on my mother's side and representing tens of thousands of Ukrainians, some up in the gallery, in the constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, it is my distinct honour to be part of this wonderful day, where our galleries are filled with proud Albertans and proud Ukrainians. They are here to witness the hopeful passing of an act that will officially recognize the enduring contributions of Albertans and Canadians of Ukrainian heritage or origin to the province of Alberta.

I am very thankful that we have a government that is willing to work with all of our ethnic groups and communities and that they would adopt this as a government bill because it is that important. Ukrainians were here, breaking the ground by the sweat of their brow, before Alberta even officially became a province of our great country. That is why the bill is proudly called Alberta's Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. The bill was created in consultation with the Ukrainian community to ensure that they and their ancestors are properly remembered for all they contributed to Alberta.

We love holopchi and pedaha, or, as I used to know them, cabbage rolls and perogies, but Ukrainians built so much more than that. Churches were built that became the cornerstones of community and culture. Businesses were started across Alberta such as the Ukrainian Ceramic Cottage in Vegreville, a business that helped to support the Kurulok family so that Chris could stay home and work in the store while Greg was off at high school, teaching.

Nonprofit organizations such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, of which Olesia Luciwi-Andryjowycz is the president, have worked to preserve Ukrainian culture and heritage so that our future generations know and remember where they come from and to co-ordinate and represent the interests of Ukrainian Canadians.

Let's not forget the many political contributions that have come from people like Premier Ed Stelmach, former Speaker Gene Zwozdesky, and many more who have worked tirelessly to bring forward important pieces of legislation such as the legislation that recognizes the Holodomor as a terrible tragedy and that we have your office, Mr. Speaker, host every year, able to remember those that we have lost. This act will establish Alberta's Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day as each September 7, beginning next year, in 2017.

The first officially recorded Ukrainian immigrants, Ivan Pylypiw and Vasyl Eleniak, arrived in Canada on September 17, 1891.

I'm also honoured to recognize in this Chamber our government's proclamation of the year commencing on September 7, 2016, as in Alberta's Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act, which the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview first publicly announced on August 7, 2016, when we were at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, also opening up the Stelmach House.

There are many reasons why we are all proud to announce this act. Today there are approximately 345,000 Albertans of Ukrainian descent in Alberta. Ukrainian settlers were among the first Europeans to arrive here on Treaty 6, 7, and 8 traditional lands that make up our province. These settlers, many farmers, developed Red Fife wheat, a hardy strain of wheat that is still celebrated for becoming a critical part of the growing economy of Alberta.

Over time Ukrainian culture has become an integral part of Alberta culture. There are renowned Ukrainian dance companies such as Shumka that perform world-wide. As well, Albertans of Ukrainian heritage have made tremendous contributions in every aspect from business and industry to academia, public service, culture, and sports. Ukrainian Albertans have made Alberta a better place for us all to live in.

**3:10**

Today I am also happy to inform you of a number of significant anniversaries for the Ukrainian community this year. It is the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian settlement in Canada, and it is also the 25th anniversary of Ukrainian independence.

Canada's ties to Ukraine remain strong as on July 11 of this year Canada and Ukraine signed the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement, or CUFTA. I would wish to thank all Albertans and Canadians of Ukrainian heritage for their contributions to our province and for preserving their rich culture.

I will just end on one note, that I was able to take part in the Babas and Borshch festival this year, and it turns out that borscht-making is in my blood because I achieved third place. Thank you.

It is my deep honour to introduce this act, and I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank everybody for being here today. It's truly an honour to be with you on this historic day here in Alberta. I especially want to say thank you to my friends, my Baba and Dido Bobocel, for the thousands of perogies and cabbage rolls I ate before my 18th birthday. It is true, and I continue to eat them regularly.

When we reflect on the history of Ukrainians in Canada, it's clear that the Ukrainian-Canadian story is a story about the possibilities

of our province and our country. When two Ukrainian farmers came to this great land in 1891, they saw the opportunity in the Canadian western frontier where others saw immense challenges. The farmers sent word home about the strong farming conditions in Manitoba and what would later become, of course, Saskatchewan and Alberta. My own family came just 20 years afterwards and indeed saw the same struggles but the same opportunity and great possibilities. This movement, just two dozen years removed from Confederation, was a seriously new day in our history.

By 1914 180,000 Ukrainian men, women, and children came to Canada in search of those new, great opportunities, but life for these early settlers was far from easy, was very difficult, in fact. The rich farmland was covered in trees and rocks, and of course winter, as we know, is cold and unforgiving. Mortality rates were high, especially in infants.

These early pioneers were in many cases given no financial assistance from our government whereas others were. It was unfair and not appropriate. During the First World War Ukrainian Canadians were labelled as enemy aliens and, in the worst case of discrimination, forced to live and work in internment camps. This is unacceptable. These actions should never be repeated, and we need to remember that in order to make sure it never does, because even in victory the horrors of war were being experienced by innocent Ukrainian men and women right here at home who lost their property, their rights, and their freedoms.

The stigmatization of Ukrainians lasted for years. In fact, I just spoke to somebody that works for the Wildrose, and he told me a story of how his family had to change their name. That's unacceptable, and it's a dark chapter in our story but a chapter we cannot ignore so that we never repeat it.

Through this time Ukrainians relied on the strength of one another to persevere. Settlements were a means of survival. Vegreville, as I learned today, was more than 5,000 square kilometres and remains a symbol today of Ukrainian strength and perseverance. We've all travelled there before. I can assure you I have. I volunteered my time on a friend's farm, throwing bales of hay around just near there, and of course my kids love the giant Easter egg. Now they know what the pysanka really stands for: harmony, vitality, and community.

Vegreville is a great Alberta town, like so many great Alberta towns. It calls itself home to many – and I mean many – large Ukrainian families, and I've met many of them. It's great pride that I have that Ukrainian families are part of our rich heritage. Alberta also calls itself home to hundreds of thousands of other people, but I would say that Ukrainian Canadians have so much rich heritage that I truly enjoy.

I'm so proud to serve in this very Legislature with many vibrant and dynamic men and women of Ukrainian descent, including, of course, the hon. minister of economic development, who made today a possibility. To him I say thank you. Great move.

For 125 years Ukrainians have been contributing so much to the fabric of the Canadian way of life and the Albertan way of life. The Ukrainian story is a story about possibilities and opportunity in the face of immense hardship. But still Ukrainians have persevered time and time again, as we have in Alberta, as they fought to make their dreams of raising a family, building a homestead, and carving out their own piece of heaven, a piece of Alberta, a reality.

It is my sincere honour and privilege to help you celebrate Alberta's Year of the Ukrainian-Canadian. I am happy to do so and proud to do so. Thank you for this, and thank you to all of you for being here today. God bless you. God bless Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to start off by recognizing that one of our very own pages was born in Kiev, Ukraine, Maria Ovcharenko. I'm just looking to see if she's in the room, and she is.

On a side note, just this morning the Premier was telling me that she used to do Ukrainian dance, so we are trying to find a photograph of that.

Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise today and speak to second reading of Bill 26, the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. I'm very proud of my Ukrainian heritage, and I'm very pleased that this bill has been brought forward to honour the many contributions the Ukrainian people have made to our great province.

I want to first thank the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for introducing this bill and note, Mr. Speaker, that she's been an incredible advocate for the many constituents of Ukrainian heritage in her riding.

I'd also like to give special thanks, Mr. Speaker, to Olesia Luci-Andryjowycz, the president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council. Olesia was integral in advocating for this piece of legislation, was incredibly helpful in organizing so many of the members of the Ukrainian community to be here today, and provided extensive input on the bill. I'd also like to extend that thank you to all of the UCC Alberta Provincial Council executive members who have joined us here today. It's probably one of the most effective nonprofit organizations in our province, I think.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to acknowledge and thank my parents, Orest and Mary Ann Bilous, who, unfortunately, couldn't be here today but made sure that growing up, we not only understood and recognized but also celebrated our culture.

The journey our ancestors made to Canada was often one of sacrifice and uncertainty. My own grandfather came here as a young man alone almost 90 years ago looking for a better life. He had very humble beginnings as a shoemaker, but he made sure his children and grandchildren were proud of our culture and proud to give back to the country where he made his new home.

Many others made this journey, fleeing strife or even persecution, including the horrific events now known as the Holodomor. They overcame incredible hardships for a new start in our province, Mr. Speaker, and over the past 125 years they helped build this province. They were the grandparents, great-grandparents, and great-great-grandparents of so many Albertans today. These generations of Ukrainian Canadians became the backbone of communities across Alberta.

As the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville indicated, there are approximately 345,000 Albertans of Ukrainian descent in our province, and from 2008 to 2012 another 1,200 Ukrainians chose Alberta as their new home.

Today, as we celebrate 125 years of Ukrainian settlement in Canada and in Alberta, there is much to take pride in, Mr. Speaker, such as the strong role Canadians of Ukrainian heritage have played in building our province and our country and the strong ties that continue between Alberta, Canada, and Ukraine.

3:20

The Ukrainian language has been taught in Alberta schools since 1956, and instruction in Ukrainian was made available in 1974. Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to participate in Ukrainian immersion as a child helped me learn to appreciate my own culture and the diversity of our province, and I have to give a shout-out to my old elementary school, St. Martin. There are two Ukrainian bilingual elementary schools, St. Matthew and St. Martin, here in our great city of Edmonton.

Ukrainian culture has become a part of Alberta culture. There are renowned Ukrainian dance companies from Alberta that delight

audiences world-wide, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that as a boy I always looked forward to the excitement of dancing. I'm proud to also say that the Cheremosh dance company is located in my home riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans of Ukrainian heritage have made tremendous contributions in every aspect of Alberta society, from business and industry to academia, public service, culture, and sports. Ukrainian Albertans have made Alberta a better place for all of us.

It is in recognition of the incredible achievement of Ukrainian Albertans that I am so proud that this act will make official the recognition of the year commencing on September 7, 2016, as Alberta's Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Year and will establish September 7 as Alberta's Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day. Slava Ukraini. Slava Alberta. Dyakuyu.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister. I'm wondering: were you the teacher of the Premier in teaching her how to dance?

**Mr. Bilous:** Lord, no.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all of our invited guests. Special thanks to Ambassador Shevchenko for making the trip to Alberta. We deeply appreciate your presence as we consider this important bill today.

Today is an important day for Alberta and for our Ukrainian community in this province with the introduction of Bill 26, the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. This year marks the 125th since Canada received its first recorded Ukrainian immigrants. Canada was still a very young nation at that time, with so many possibilities, so many opportunities. So Canada must have shone like a beacon to people looking to start a new life, to take some of those opportunities for themselves, to use them to build a future for their families and future generations, and to strengthen their new country. That call was heard halfway across the world in Ukraine, and the first of many settlers began their journey across the seas to the young nation. We have been a better country for it every day since.

The relationship between Canada and Ukraine has always been a special one. Canada has the third-largest population of people of Ukrainian heritage in the world. There are over a million and a quarter people of Ukrainian descent in Canada, and the impact they have had on our country seems even larger than that. The friendship between Canada and Ukraine goes back to even before Ukraine declared its independence, in 1991, and this is in part thanks to the vibrant and local community of Ukrainian Canadians, that have already made their homes here.

As a result of that friendship between us, the understanding built by living with Ukrainian neighbourhoods and participating in Ukrainian culture, Canada was among the first nations to recognize Ukraine as an independent nation and the first nation to do so in the western world, Mr. Speaker. I think a large part of the reason Canada has long been a friend of Ukraine is that Ukrainians have long been good friends to Canada. They have been good neighbours, leaders of business, academics, dedicated public servants. Lord knows Ukrainians work hard.

We in the PC caucus are especially aware of the talent and dedication of Ukrainian Canadians in public life as we have had the pleasure of serving side by side with so many of them. We know that the Ukrainian community is very passionate about giving back and committed to being leaders in their community. That is especially true here in Alberta, where so many of our towns and cities were founded and built by people of Ukrainian heritage.

Because of this, Alberta has enjoyed the continued presence of a very large and passionate Ukrainian community.

Outside of Ontario, Alberta has the largest community of Ukrainian Canadians in Canada, and this is certainly not a recent development. Ukrainian communities were here before Alberta even became a province. The first settlers from Ukraine in Alberta shared the same entrepreneurial, frontier spirit that defines us as a province, and in this agricultural land of plenty called Alberta, Ukrainians know exactly what to do with that. Very effective and skilled farmers. The resilience and perseverance they showed mirrored the traits that are most prized by Albertans. There are many Albertans today that have come from other provinces and countries and who can empathize with the challenges that those early settlers faced.

Like many immigrants, they didn't always receive the warmest welcome on their arrival. It is indeed likely that many early Ukrainian immigrants faced discrimination in one form or another – no, it's not likely; it happened – but that prejudice was met with the same determination that carried them across an ocean, the determination to find and build their new home in Alberta. As they built their homes, built new communities, and shared their culture, they began to build Alberta side by side with other communities, and they found acceptance here in Alberta by demonstrating that one trait that Albertans respect above all others, hard work. It is partly their example that Albertans draw from today when we say that it doesn't matter where you come from or what you look like as long as you're willing to contribute.

It's impossible to tell the story of Alberta without telling the story of Ukrainian heritage, and that is what we are gathered here today to do. We have come together as Alberta legislators to designate September 7 as Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day. This is an important step in formally recognizing the impact Ukrainian Canadians have made in our province. Just as Canada stood up and recognized Ukraine as an independent nation, we stand up today in Alberta and recognize Ukrainian Canadians as an integral part of our province.

Make no mistake. It is vitally important that we have days like these to celebrate the heritage of Alberta's many diverse communities. It's important that along with recognizing the terrific hardships that these groups have endured like the Holodomor and the aggression Ukraine is dealing with today, we also recognize the good, that we take time to acknowledge the contributions from the sons and daughters of Ukraine that they make even today in our country and in our province. We celebrate that we are a better, richer, more diverse place when it comes to new communities, one with better food and, in some cases, better music, and we recognize the value and importance of that Ukrainian heritage in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad to speak to this bill today. I'm happy to be able to do my small part to mark this day of recognition. To all our assembled guests, the leaders and bright stars of the Ukrainian community, and to my Ukrainian friends and colleagues: thank you. It's an honour to be part of this today, and it's about time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, thank you for your support. You may have noticed that I've been passing on 29(2)(a), but believe that I do so on behalf of the House.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to take a few minutes and tell you a little bit about my family history. We don't often get a chance to do that in this environment and particularly on *Hansard*. I feel very honoured.

As a fourth-generation Ukrainian Albertan I want to say thank you to my great-great-grandparents William, Rose, Alexander, and Anna, who came here as courageous young adults, independent of their parents, to homestead. Before that, they had to make money in Edmonton, and they did. It was William who moved out to what was called Crippsdale at the time, originally – I think it's the Thorhild area now – and started the homestead. Rose, when she was ready, married him and followed thereafter. They had many children, who passed along, I think, those same skills of determination and hard work.

I have to say that my grandmother, who was one of eight children, was not only proud that she was able to provide for herself, but she was so proud that even though she didn't have an opportunity to complete her schooling, her younger siblings did. So many families took that sacrifice of staying on the farm and generating money to be able to support one another.

I think that it was at Easter time when we'd stop and we'd divide the one hard-boiled egg into as many pieces as there were mouths sitting around the table. We talked about Christ, of course. Khrystos voskres. The response was about: indeed he has risen. Voistynu voskres. We'd talk about that unity that brings us together and that when there are many mouths to feed, we take the time to be grateful for what we have, acknowledge those around who need, and find a way to share the prosperity. I think that one symbol, even though it was only once a year that we'd stop and divide that egg into equal parts, making sure that everyone had yolk and everyone had white, was an example of the kind of sacrifice that so many of those who homesteaded made.

3:30

William and Rose had a neighbour Alexander, who was a bachelor, and he heard about this lovely other lady, who lived over by Legal, whose husband had died the year before. She came over very young as well, married, and was clearing the land when her husband died, probably of the flu. It happened then far more regularly than it does now, of course. We're very lucky to have the strong public health care system that we do here in Alberta. She was already with child. She continued to clear the land on her own. She made it through that first winter. She planted her crop, and when Alexander said, "Would you like to marry?" she said, "Sure, but you have to come to my place because there's no way after all this hard work that I'm going to leave here and go to yours." I'm very proud that I still have cousin Isidore, his wife, Maria, and their three daughters living on that original homestead.

I think that we often talk about the great strides that women have made, and they have been making them for 125 years. They've been making them for far more than that in this province when you look back at the indigenous cultures as well. It's some of those feisty feminist roots, I think, that helped me, through the perseverance of my baba, who was widowed at a very young age, to continue to acknowledge where we've come from and where we're going.

To my nephews, Maxwell and Blake: I'm so glad that we still have the homestead in our family. I hope that they will get to spend some time there in the years to come.

Thank you to my colleagues, particularly the minister for economic development and the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for bringing forward this important piece of legislation and giving us the chance to acknowledge the rich tapestry that is Alberta.

Thank you again.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister. If you'll allow me a comment to say that we all share so much. If we're not to know where we're going, it's important to know where we have been.

The minister – excuse me. The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, especially for the appointment. It is indeed my honour and pleasure to speak today to Bill 26, the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. I also will be talking a little bit about my family, and I hope not to cry.

I'll just start with some history. The first officially recorded arrival of Ukrainian immigrants in Canada was in 1891 by two individuals, Ivan Pylypiw and Wasyl Eleniak, or Elaniak, as it's said up in our area of the woods there. While the first recorded arrivals of Ukrainians to Canada were relatively recent, I understand that they're thought by some to have started as early as the late 1700s. Ukrainian immigrants arrived as farmers and factory workers looking for a new life, and the settlers began to move west to set up homesteads. Since that time we've seen over 1 million immigrants, making people of Ukrainian descent the ninth-largest ethnic group in Canada.

I'd like to acknowledge my family and my wife's family, if I might. My great-grandparents, Frederick Krawchuk, originally Krevchenko – their name was changed when they arrived in Canada – and his wife, Olena Harbarenko, and their three children, Neda, my grandmother Minnie Hanson, and Uncle Paul arrived in Canada in 1910.

My wife, Donna's, great-great-grandparents John Kossowan and his wife, Marie Gumulik, arrived in May of 1889 with six children. Now every three years we hold a family reunion for the Kossowan clan, as they call it. There's upwards of 200 people, and they figure that that's about 50 per cent, maybe, of the descendants of that. They ended up with my wife's grandparents having 10 children of their own, so the family really expanded.

Her other grandparents, John Starosielski and wife Anna Onushko, and family arrived in 1929. Donna's grandfather Petro Labant also arrived 1928 and married into the Starosielski family, so that's where the connection is. We're very proud of them and very, very happy, when I look at some of the dates when these people emigrated to Canada, that they missed the genocide of Holodomor by a couple of years. You know, without them having the courage to leave at that time, my wife possibly wouldn't be here.

Ukrainian people are very proud of their heritage, their customs, and their traditions. They've been diligent in preserving their language and customs here in Alberta for well over a hundred years. My wife and I are both very proud to have been part of a Ukrainian dance group called Veselka, that we actually helped incorporate at its inception, in 1983, and we danced with them until we left the city in 1994. We're proud to say that the group is still going strong today, 33 years after it began. Being members of this group gave us many great opportunities to learn more about our heritage, traditional costumes, customs, and, above all, dance. Traditional Ukrainian dance is very vigorous, and as I age, I'm quite often reminded of my participation.

The Ukrainian people are very hard-working and devoted to family, devoted to their traditions and their way of life, and I'm very proud of my connection to the people of Ukrainian heritage, that have contributed to making Alberta the best place to raise a family in this world.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this year not only marks the 125th anniversary of the first settlers arriving in Alberta from Ukraine but also marks the 25th anniversary of Ukrainian independence as well as the 40th anniversary of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta, I

couldn't be more honoured to stand here and speak in support of Alberta's Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act.

Ukrainians have been a significant piece of the Alberta mosaic since the late 1800s. The mass immigration of Ukrainians to the west served as a catalyst for the formation of the province and its rapid development in the years to come. In the 1890s Canada promoted settlement of the prairies by allowing them to claim a quarter section of land for farming at a fee of \$10. The dream of owning land and access to forest products attracted thousands of western Ukrainians who could raise the \$150 needed to pay for train and boat passage. Whole families and the greater part of many villages joined this emigration, settling in western Canada. In Alberta Ukrainian immigrants settled predominantly northeast of Edmonton, which would later be known as the Ukrainian bloc settlement in east-central Alberta.

We have benefited in innumerable ways from the countless contributions of these settlers and their descendants. Many aspects of our lives have been influenced, including academia and the arts, as is shown by the numerous Ukrainian dance groups for all ages in our constituencies such as my own in Stony Plain, where the Parkland Ukrainian Dancers Society was originally founded, in November 1976, when Luba Eshenko, a Ukrainian Shumka dancer, began instructing a small group of 10 dancers on a trial basis. The course was sponsored by the multicultural centre and Stony Plain's recreation department and soon became known as the Stony Plain Ukrainian Dancers. They danced at several schools, the nursing home, Farmers' Days parade, and at the multicultural centre. Within two years the club grew to 41 dancers. Luba's brother Toby, a parent and former Shumka dancer, managed the group while Luba taught with Rodney Klimchuk, a fellow Shumka dancer.

Parkland Ukrainian dancers have performed at many events throughout Alberta, western Canada, and far beyond. Some of the highlights have included the opening and closing ceremonies for the Alberta Summer Games festival in '88; Canada Day celebrations at the Valley Zoo; Oktoberfest in Kimberley, B.C.; Malanka at the Jasper Park Lodge; and many of the banquets and award ceremonies in our own region; as well, Disneyland. Every year the Parkland Ukrainian Dancers Society hosts Malanka in honour of Ukrainian new year. This fun family dinner, performance, and dance is an event that people from all over our community look forward to.

The Ukrainian settlers and their descendants were also very influential in the education of our children here in Alberta as Ukrainian language has been taught in our schools since 1956 and instruction in Ukrainian was available since 1974.

Civil society in Alberta: many of the Ukrainian settlers and their descendants were strong proponents of the labour movement here in Alberta. Government, industry, economic advancement, and the prosperity of our province: we owe much to the hard work of those who came before us and continue to remain the backbone of communities across Alberta.

**3:40**

Alberta is where many of the earliest Ukrainian religious and cultural institutions were founded, organizations such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council; the Canada Ukraine Chamber of Commerce, Alberta chapter; and the Advisory Council on Alberta-Ukraine Relations, which was established by the government in Alberta in 2000 to promote and continue to integrate Ukrainian culture while encouraging Alberta-Ukraine relations.

Once the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement comes into force, it will help build lines of commerce and strengthen supply chains between the two jurisdictions. As an important trade partner of

Alberta Ukraine imports machinery, iron or steel products, meat, and animal feed.

The settlers from Ukraine embraced Alberta, and we are so blessed that they chose Canada, enriching us with their culture and being an integral part of our history.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. It's a tremendous honour here to speak to this bill. I want to offer a warm welcome to all of the distinguished guests who have joined us here today in the galleries, especially Ambassador Shevchenko, Mr. Speaker, and Olesia Luciwo-Andryjowycz. I practised that. I was going to get it right. My sincere apologies, Olesia.

In 1924 three brothers left western Ukraine destined for Canada, followed four years later by their sister, her husband, and two young children, who were a four-year-old boy and a one-year-old girl. They travelled by ox cart through Poland, France, and Germany in a small, rickety boat across the English Channel and then via transatlantic crossing, third class, from Southampton, England, to Quebec City. They boarded a train in Quebec City, travelled across Canada to southeastern Saskatchewan. They had \$10 in their pockets, and that meant that the four-year-old had to rely on the kindness of strangers on the train for some of his meals.

Now, they worked hard for 24 years as tenants of their relatives, and they moved no less than 18 times in those 24 years. They even spent parts of one winter in a granary. Now, they saved their money, and they eventually purchased their own land. In time their family grew to eight children. The sixth of those eight children is my mother, born Dee Anne Warnyca.

Now, this, I think, is a very typical Ukrainian-Canadian story. It is a real honour to honour the tremendous contribution of Ukrainian Canadians over the past 125 years. And if we've accomplished this much to this point, I can't imagine what we're going to accomplish in the next 125 years.

My family left Ukraine because they saw storm clouds on the horizon, and those storm clouds, sadly, came true in the form of Holodomor. We still have relatives in Ukraine; in fact, both my mother and my brother have been to visit the village, and I hope to go one day as well. I often reflect on how different our lives would be had my relatives not made that difficult choice to leave their family, leave home, and trek across the oceans to seek a better life in Canada.

Once in Canada those hardships, sadly, didn't end. They were not limited to just breaking the land, living in those harsh conditions. They were subject to systematic racism and exclusion, including internment during the First World War. Even to this very day my mother will hesitantly tell stories of name-calling and, sadly, much worse at school. But I have to say that my mom is the strongest and most resilient person I know.

Without question the defining characteristics of Ukrainian Canadians are that perseverance through difficult times, hard work, and a commitment to building community, a commitment to family. Now, the contribution Ukrainian Canadians have made to Alberta's economy, our educational system, agriculture, and especially the cultural fabric of this province forms such an integral part of what makes Alberta such a great place to live. That entrepreneurial, can-do spirit that motivated people to seek a better life 125 years ago, I'm happy to report, is alive and well today. So it is an honour to be one of the many Ukrainian Canadians to serve in this Assembly and to be able to recognize the remarkable history and contribution of

Ukrainian Canadians that have helped make Alberta what it is today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, again, to those who have joined us today. I really do enjoy hearing all the comments from my colleagues in the Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure for me and an honour for me to rise today on Bill 26, the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. I'd like to welcome as well the many guests that we have in the galleries to observe the debate today.

As I've shared with this Assembly before, I am of German descent, but my mother was born in Ukraine and lived there for roughly the first 20 years of her life, survived the Holodomor, and also survived the taking away, the verschleppt, of my grandfather in 1936, which is only one of the many things that Ukrainians both here and in Ukraine have survived. The resilience and perseverance of Ukrainians and those who lived in Ukraine is well known world-wide, and I think it has served them well here in Canada as well.

While my mother was of German descent, she could speak Ukrainian, though, which came in very handy because whenever my dad acted up, she would always swear at him in Ukrainian. It was also great because I got to eat not only German food but Ukrainian food, so I was raised with a love of pyrohy and holubtsi, but I have to admit that I just detest borscht. [interjections] It's a sad fact, especially living in east-central Alberta, which, as we sometimes call it, is that land beyond the garlic curtain.

In east-central Alberta, of course, we have many communities largely populated with people of Ukrainian descent, and I have many of those in the constituency of Vermilion-Lloydminster. They don't necessarily have Ukrainian names. Places like Innisfree and Clandonald aren't really Ukrainian names, but I can tell you that there are a lot more people of Ukrainian descent than of Scottish descent living in those very Scottish-sounding places. You know, the one thing that I'll say about the Ukrainian contribution to life in Alberta – and it's been said by many other members – is that it's been to every single aspect of life in Alberta, whether it's agriculture or health care or education, the contribution to our cultural fabric, and the contribution to public service.

It's that area that I really want to focus on today because many of our former colleagues, some of whom are here in the gallery, you know, certainly have taken up that torch, but it started many, many years ago. Michael Luchkovich was the first MP ever elected in Canada of Ukrainian descent, and he was elected in 1926. Now, at that time Ukrainians in Canada were still fighting against a lot of the kind of discrimination against Ukrainian immigrants, yet he bravely became the MP for Vegreville, serving and representing his constituents in Ottawa.

Appropriately, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress has named the Michael Luchkovich award in his honour to honour persons of Ukrainian descent who have served in public service in various facets with honour. I am so very proud of three of my former colleagues – former Speaker Ken Kowalski, former Premier Ed Stelmach, and former Speaker Gene Zwozdesky – all of whom have been named recipients of this most prestigious award.

The other part of that whole thing, you know, of the nature of being Ukrainian – and I think part of it comes from the overcoming of some of the obstacles and difficulties that Ukrainians had – is this tremendous sense of humour. In fact, Mr. Speaker, you'll be interested to know that another former member of the Legislature of Ukrainian descent decided that perhaps Speaker Zwozdesky, who used to be the artistic director for the Shumka Dancers, should

decide points of privilege and order by having the combatants do a quick hopak in the middle of the hall. We could certainly save a lot of time and a whole lot of checking through precedents.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, all kidding aside, though, I think we can all agree that the contribution of Ukrainian Canadians to life in Alberta and indeed to life in Canada is immeasurable. It has provided an inspiration to other immigrant groups that have come to this country because, you know, there is a little bit of competition and a little bit of rivalry. I can even say as a German Canadian: well, if the Ukrainians can do it, surely to God the Germans can do it, too.

It is something that we should all as Albertans be proud of, whether we share a Ukrainian background or not. In many ways, because of the way Ukrainians have become a part of our province, they have taken part in so many aspects of our life here in Alberta. We are proud of that, we honour that, and we thank them for that. So to all of our guests in the gallery, to Ambassador Shevchenko and others: we thank you for your contributions, and we are so pleased to support this act on behalf of all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Allow me to say to all of you that it's a privilege to hear these stories. It is really quite rewarding. And I can't believe he doesn't like borscht.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill 26, and I am honoured to be able to do so. I'm afraid, though, that I do have some bad news for members. In fact, we've been pre-empted in our proclamation by the town of Smoky Lake, who on July 29 of this year proclaimed It's Fun to Be Ukrainian Day, celebrating 125 years of Ukrainian settlement in Canada.

I'm indeed proud to represent a part of the province that has many communities that were either originally founded by Ukrainian settlers or where they had a preponderance of settlers coming from there. Boyle, which I'm happy to call home and, with apologies to Mundare, has the best homemade Ukrainian sausage in the province, Grassland, Redwater, Smoky Lake, Radway, Waskatenau are all communities with strong Ukrainian roots and a continuing Ukrainian presence that continues to enrich our region to the present day.

Although I'm not of Ukrainian descent myself, no one from northeastern Alberta is untouched by Ukrainian-Canadian culture, and indeed few are not connected to it in more direct and personal ways. Two of my brothers-in-law, in fact, are of Ukrainian heritage and, thus, so are many of my nieces and nephews, and I am blessed to have them as family.

It is indeed hard to imagine what life would be like in northeastern Alberta without the strong Ukrainian influence. Try to imagine a wedding or community dinner without Ukrainian food. Try to imagine a community celebration without the beauty of Ukrainian dance. In fact, try to imagine Alberta culture without the contributions of Ukrainian-Canadian musicians, writers, poets, and artists. Try to imagine our political culture without the strong commitment to collective action and social justice that Ukrainian faiths and political beliefs brought to the table. Ukrainian Canadians helped to build our economy and our culture and are an integral part of the rich multicultural tapestry that makes our shared culture so unique in the world and so robust. By celebrating Ukrainian-Canadian heritage, we are celebrating our own collective heritage.

Finally, the connection with our Ukrainian-Canadian community continues to enrich our province to the present day. In fact, Smoky Lake is twinned with a community in Ukraine and through this connection hopes to keep Ukrainian culture vibrant and living in Smoky Lake county while sharing Albertan technology and expertise with our new friends in Ukraine. By working together, Alberta and Ukraine can make both of our peoples richer for it. Canada and indeed the world benefit from our continued collaboration.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise on this occasion to speak in favour of Bill 26, the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. While not of Ukrainian descent myself, our family has the distinct pleasure of being close friends with some recent Ukrainian immigrants that have become like family. Yuriy and Lena and now Canadian-born Destina are new to Canada and are sitting here today watching these historic proceedings. Lena likes to refer to my wife as her Canadian grandma, and we couldn't be prouder of that title.

I would like to talk a bit about the history of Ukrainian immigration on this 125th anniversary of the first immigration to Canada. Ukrainians have been a significant piece of the Alberta mosaic since the late 1800s. The mass immigration of Ukrainians to the west served as a catalyst for the formation of our great province, and it helped accelerate its development in the years to come. The dream of owning land and access to the vast forest products attracted thousands of western Canadians who could raise the money needed to pay train and boat passage. It's my understanding that whole families and the greater part of many villages joined this immigration, settling in western Canada.

By 1914 more than 250,000 Ukrainians made their home in Alberta. Most of them were involved in crop farming, a lifestyle I share with them. While the benefit from this immigration was a great boon to our rural communities, it was also the post World War II immigrants that found their way to Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge. These folks helped expand our urban centres, populating and sharing their culture within our cities, making Edmonton the largest concentration of Ukrainians in Alberta.

Today about every fifth Albertan can claim Ukrainian ancestry, making our province home to one of the largest Ukrainian communities outside of Ukraine. Ukrainian culture has become so ingrained in Alberta that I doubt you could attend any wedding or function in Alberta and not find Ukrainian food staples right alongside Alberta beef on the menu.

I will leave you with this quote, found from a recent article quoting the president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council:

Ukrainians have touched upon everybody's lives... As Ukrainians we are farmers, we're agriculturalists, we're teachers, we're nurses, we're doctors. We are Canadian. We have integrated into the Canadian fabric, but we're also a very strong fabric on our own.

As I consider my new friends from the Ukraine, I couldn't agree more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to apologize in advance for any mispronunciations.

I'm pleased to speak in favour of Bill 26, Alberta's Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. Like most Albertans, I've been



influenced by the Ukrainian-Canadian community, and the first thing that comes to mind is the food. Humanity's most basic needs include food, and being able to go to the grocery store and buy locally made Cheemo perogies is one of the many advantages of living in multicultural Alberta.

A memory from growing up in northern Alberta is visiting the giant pysanka in Vegreville, and I'm sure many of my fellow Albertans have old Polaroids of themselves in goofy poses underneath it. I was happy to tell an audience in London, England, about the world's largest Easter egg when I presented at PechaKucha earlier this year.

I'd also like to acknowledge Cobblestone, here in Edmonton, for supplying the beautiful shirts that many members are wearing today and to thank the MLA for Edmonton-McClung for arranging for them.

I've been fortunate enough to attend some of the celebrations of the Ukrainian-Canadian community in Calgary this year. Most recently I attended the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian pioneers in Canada and the 25th anniversary of Ukraine's independence gala. After the world-class Ukrainian dance performers, the keynote speaker was Ambassador Shevchenko, who joins us here today. The Ukraine and Canada's Ukrainian community are very fortunate to have such an accomplished and passionate advocate. From his academic achievements to his remarkable career in media to his distinguished service in politics, Ambassador Shevchenko draws on his remarkable achievements in his commitment to furthering the interests of his country and his community. Thank you to the Ukrainian-Canadian community for your contributions to Alberta's and Canada's culture, government, and prosperity.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the contribution and impact of the Ukrainian-Canadian community are myriad, and I'm pleased to add my voice to those supporting the Alberta Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act.

4:00

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and greetings to all of our distinguished guests in the gallery here today. I am grateful for the chance to stand up today and speak to this bill. While I could certainly go on about the many, many accomplishments and contributions that have been made to our province and our country by the Ukrainian community, my remarks are more on a personal level, like many of you.

For me, a day like today, where we celebrate the heritage of Ukrainian Canadians, has a special meaning for me. I, like many Albertans, have my own piece of Ukrainian heritage. That heritage comes to me from my mother's side of the family. It's my great-grandparents – it goes back to them – a great-grandmother of mine, who I did know growing up, who came here in the early 1900s, and my great-grandfather, who came here to work as a coal miner, with the proud heritage, of course, in coal mining here in Alberta.

I sit here and I listen to all these wonderful speeches outlining the impact that Ukrainian Canadians have had on this country and this province, and I'm not at all surprised because all I have to do is think of my great-grandfather and my great-grandmother, who travelled so far from their home with so much uncertainty about what they were going to find here in this new land. I think that's something that occasionally gets lost when we talk about those early immigrants from Ukraine, and that is uncertainty. We tend to forget that the wealth of information that we have about other countries when we travel is relatively new, that they couldn't simply look up Canada online and see pages of information.

Instead, they might have a few photographs, letters, or perhaps – perhaps – as time went on, a phone call may have occurred. With just that information they would undertake this incredible journey, cross over oceans and continents in search of the opportunity to build a better future.

So, again, when I hear the lists of accomplishments, the numbers of leading public figures, the communities and legacies that have been built, I am simply not surprised because the strength required to leave everything you've ever known and travel so far in search of an opportunity defies explanation, and if you place that strength together with the freedom and opportunity that they found in Canada, in Alberta, there is simply no limit to what could be achieved.

But going back to my great-grandparents, they came here, they worked hard, and they built a life. They occupy my thoughts on a day that I don't think they would have been able to conceive back then, that one of their descendants might be sitting in a Legislature where a bill is going to be passed in honour of and to recognize the impact that they had on this community and on this province. So as much as Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day is about Ukrainian communities at large, for me it is about one man and one woman who took a chance to make better lives for themselves and their family, because Alberta as we know it wouldn't be here without our Ukrainian community, and I wouldn't have been here if it wasn't for my grandparents.

With that in mind, my thanks go to our assembled guests, to our incredible Ukrainian community in this province, those people who came here to build a better life. I thank you, all. God bless.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure as well to stand up and support this bill today. Welcome to our honoured guests.

When I first moved to Fairview many years ago, I was delighted as a Scottish-Canadian girl to find out there was an area called Highland Park just west of the town. To my surprise with Highland Park, there's not a Scottish person lives in it. It, in fact, is one of the many Ukrainian settlements in our area, and some of the first people of Ukrainian descent to come to Canada and some of the very best farmers in our area live in that and many other areas.

The first Ukrainian food I ever had was when I was in Fairview. I had never had a perogy or a cabbage roll before, and now I can't think of life without having those at many of our community events. We, too, enjoy in our area many Ukrainian dance groups, and some of them are multigenerational. There are grandparents, parents, and children all learning and passing on the culture of the dance. To fund raise, many times these groups cater, and in fact then we get to enjoy Ukrainian food again and again. In fact, it's a disappointment in our area if you go to a wedding or an event and there isn't Ukrainian food, which is a rarity.

I, too, have had the pleasure of hearing some of the stories of our pioneer people who came, the Ukrainians who came, and lived in granaries, as was described earlier. One lady in our community lived in a granary for two years. They raised two children in that granary until they were able to build their house and establish their farm. Again, when we talk of strong women, my goodness, she was one of the strongest women I've ever met.

I have a friend who is from Andrew, Alberta, who used to import up to Fairview. She had a Mundare sausage connection and would share that with all of us. In her words, that's the best sausage around.

I was often envious of people who had that Ukrainian connection because I don't in my family, but I got my wish four years ago, when my daughter-in-law, Andrea Kotylak, married my son. Her family came in the 1900s. They were one of the first, and I believe – and I was trying to text her to see if it's true – she's related to the Stelmachs. They certainly settled in that area. I see the pride in her in talking about things she's learned from her baba, and she and her dad to this day prepare Ukrainian food, the 12 dishes, the night before Christmas. To our delight, we have our own little Ukrainian cook in the family now, and I hope one day that I'll get to learn from her how to make borscht. Her mother makes the best borscht I've ever had.

I look forward to us passing this bill because then on September 7 we'll have another reason to celebrate with my daughter-in-law and have one more reason to eat Ukrainian food. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the privilege of being able to speak in favour of this bill, the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act, and recognize the significant and tremendous contribution of Ukrainian Canadians to the fabric of our society here in Alberta. I'd like to take a brief moment to acknowledge the dignitaries and guests here in the gallery today and to thank them for coming out to support this.

I've heard my colleagues here recognize the many unique connections that we have to the Ukraine to this day: the shared culture, the partnerships we have fostered, and, of course, the demographics of our province, where approximately 1 in 5 Albertans can trace their family tree back to Ukrainian roots. But on this 125th anniversary of the first Ukrainian settlers to this land I'd like to take my focus back to the history.

There is a rich and fascinating story to tell about how we became the province we are today, and our Ukrainian heritage forms a large part of that. We enjoy many blessings and comforts and conveniences today, but it's always good for a sense of perspective to respect the past. One of my favourite stories comes from an elderly gentleman in my constituency who recounted how his family first arrived in the first half of the 20th century, just shortly after the railway was built. Mr. Speaker, his family got off a train and promptly walked 20 miles to their new, empty plot of land, which they had never seen before.

4:10

Of course, there was no Google Maps or GPS or anything we now take for granted. They came anyway, and they did so for the promise of peace, prosperity, and freedom in Alberta. They also carried with them all of their belongings and their entire young family, including a newborn baby. Mr. Speaker, that newborn baby was my constituent.

Now, I know that a great deal of Ukrainian immigration was focused on the north end of Alberta, a little more so than in my home riding in the southeast, but I'm absolutely sure that most of these people of Ukrainian heritage have a story like this in their lineage, Mr. Speaker, a story of arriving with little and building a lasting legacy for all of Alberta. In some cases entire communities were moved from the Ukraine to Alberta, with new towns emerging almost instantaneously.

Of course, unfortunately, there were hardships along the way. The opportunity that the land provided came with many challenges and difficulties in the cold, untamed wilderness. There were some very heartbreaking and tragic stories from this time in history as well. It is with sadness that I say that many settlers were not as

fortunate as my constituent and his family. But, Mr. Speaker, these bonds, the bonds of community that sustained the Ukrainian settlers, are a source of continual inspiration for all of Alberta today. Our early communities thrived because of these strong bonds and the understanding that these challenges could be overcome together.

All told, the story of our Ukrainian heritage is a story of hope and optimism, of struggle and hardship but of resilience and strength also. Much in our world has changed in 125 years, but the lessons of the past continue to guide us today.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Ukrainian community and all Ukrainians for the heritage that is such an important part of Alberta today. I look forward to voting in favour of this bill, recognizing this part of Alberta's unique heritage.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to have Ukrainian roots on my maternal side. My grandfather, Sergi Mike Draginda, and my grandmother, Anna Oleniuk, came from Bukovina, Austria, as teenagers more than a hundred years ago. Shortly after getting married, they moved to southern Alberta, where my grandfather worked for a while in the mines in Drumheller, and they lived in the Lethbridge area. But as soon as they had earned a little bit of money, they moved and got a farm near Hairy Hill, where they settled and raised their five children: Donna, Dave, Bill, Renee, and my mom, Mary. They had some really tough times, of course, in those early years, and they really set the standard for hard work. I'm proud to say that Draginda family members have maintained that standard, and they've contributed to this province as teachers, musicians, artists, engineers, nurses, doctors, even politicians.

One regret I have is that I never did learn to speak Ukrainian. I think part of that was that they were so focused on learning English and adapting to their new country that they really didn't see it as a priority to teach us. My grandfather's most treasured possession was a very tattered, well-worn English dictionary, and he used that book every day to learn more English and look up new words that he learned. But I think they also didn't teach us Ukrainian because that gave the adults a way to speak about private things without us kids understanding.

One thing I did learn about the culture, though, was the food – it was a good part – and it's something that I've been proud to pass on to my children and grandchildren. I've taught them all how to make *pedaheh*, *borscht*, *holopchi*, and *nachynka*. Even the littlest ones get to sit around the table and squeeze dough together.

It's something that I think is really important, when we have this bill, because it does help to shine a light on the history and the heritage of Ukrainians like my family. By having this recognition, we are going to have an opportunity for all of us to learn more about Ukrainian culture and to celebrate this together.

I'm really pleased that this was brought forward, and I thank the minister and thank all of you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a first-generation new Canadian and an oil and gas professional I rise to also add my voice in support of making September 7 Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day. We all know how Ukrainians in Alberta have contributed to the development of the energy industry in Alberta. My career before being elected was in the energy industry in Calgary, where there are

thousands of Ukrainians. That's where I'll focus my comments today.

Ukrainians in Alberta joined the energy sector once the industry got fully under way in 1947 with the discovery of Leduc No. 1. It's the Ukrainian spirit of community, dedication to innovation, and focus on the strength of our families that has helped make our province one of the best places in the world. I saw it during my time as an engineer with Suncor as I travelled across the province. Our Ukrainian people and their descendants have defined Alberta and Alberta culture and our industries for generations.

As Albertans our energy sector has much to share with modern Ukraine. Ukraine's proven oil resources are 400 million barrels. That's relatively small compared to Alberta's reserves. It is the natural gas that has a lot more potential. Ukraine is believed to have 29 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and the largest shale gas deposits in Europe. So fracking, which has been used in Alberta for 50 years, will bring the gas on stream. Low-cost, plentiful natural gas will take Ukraine off energy dependence on its neighbours. Maybe Ukraine could even become an energy exporter.

I believe that with Alberta's incredible technology and workers we have a chance and an opportunity to share our expertise with Ukraine in the years ahead. It will take work and dedication. It will also mean that Albertans and all Canadians continue to stand with Ukraine and Ukrainians, who to this day are still fighting for their freedom. Canada is not a silent actor. With so many citizens of Ukrainian descent Canada will be a significant actor with Ukraine as the country reforms and moves forward.

The Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement was signed on July 11 this year, creating new opportunities for businesses in both countries. Free trade has been a boon to Canada since the signing of the original Canada-United States free trade agreement in 1989 and later augmented by NAFTA in 1993. The same can be true of Ukraine. Just as Ukrainian Albertans have worked so hard and developed such skills to develop Alberta's natural resources and make it strong and free and independent, we need to encourage the same thing in Ukraine.

Today's events have their roots in history, and that history needs to be celebrated. That's why I'm pleased to support Bill 26 to declare September 7 Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day. Mr. Speaker, I also enjoy vegetarian perogies.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other members who wish to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Ms Woollard:** I've just got a few things to say, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I rise to speak in support of Bill 26, Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. As with a number of other speakers, I don't have Ukrainian heritage myself, but I've had the opportunity to share in this rich culture in a number of ways. I went to school in northeast Edmonton, and at the time I was in school there, there was a very large Ukrainian population. One of the results was that when we got to junior high, instead of the usual things that you might learn in your standard home ec class, we learned how to make cabbage rolls and perogies, and it was wonderful. So when we left junior high, everybody knew how to cook good, basic, solid meals. We went on from there.

4:20

Later on as an adult I taught in the Parkland school division, and again there was a large Ukrainian population. What I found, to my delight, is that there were many, many people quite happy to continue cooking the traditional dishes for every social occasion.

We had a few custodial staff that everybody worked hard to keep very happy and not overworked because as a special treat they would make us a meal. So there are a lot of linkages there and a lot of benefits.

I was thinking when I was listening to people today that it was so common where we were living for people to cook Ukrainian food as part of meals and celebrations, and my children were grown up before they discovered that not everyone in Canada had cabbage rolls and perogies at wedding receptions. This was unheard of to them.

Thank you to all the Ukrainian people and people of Ukrainian heritage for the wonderful gifts you've given us all. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other members who wish to speak? I might need to look to experience to guide me.

Do you, Member for Edmonton-McClung, wish to speak?

I seek the guidance of the House. You will have heard the motion. Is there anyone who'd like to bring closure to the debate for second reading?

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a second time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 26 Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act

**The Chair:** Are there any amendments, comments, or questions with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to stand today to speak to Bill 26, the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. Like many of the people here, I'm sure that we've all understood and recognized that modern-day Alberta would be a very different place if it wasn't for those Albertans that have Ukrainian heritage. You know, I wish I could say that I did, but I can tell you that in one of the first classes that I ever taught, one of the students in my class was named Smithinski, so I don't know if that's sort of getting there or not, but I have hope.

You know, as a part of my past, as I look at the teaching side of my life, it was a pleasure to be able to bring to the attention of my students that we have a long history of immigration in this country, and it started, basically, after Canada became a nation, with Clifford Sifton, the minister of the interior, who was responsible for seeking out those that could help to open up the west in western Canada. Of course, like so many that came to the west, to the North-West Territories in the 1890s and, moving on, into the early 1900s, these individuals came seeking land, that quarter section for a homestead. Many of them came from the Austro-Hungarian area of Europe or the Ukraine, and they made their way to this foreign land that looked maybe familiar in some ways, and they had to try to carve out a living.

You know, I think that like so many of the early homesteaders, those that were of Ukrainian background realized very quickly that their neighbours often had to become their family, that when they came here, they were a long way from home. Like, I think, so much of the flavour of western Canada, we find that we want to maintain our traditions, our family traditions and our cultural traditions, but at the same time we embraced the families and the neighbours that

were around us regardless of where they came from, and it's created a really unique western Canada and Alberta.

The early Ukrainians came, and they tilled the fields. They created the property lines, and they built the roads and the infrastructure of this province. Today Ukrainian Canadians have continued to build this province in all of the areas of our economy, and we are just so grateful that they have come and become a part of the fabric of this great province. You know, every day that I drive back to my constituency, I see evidence of Ukrainian contributions to our province. I see the churches that dot my constituency, and every time I see them, the Ukrainian Catholic or the Ukrainian Orthodox churches with their iconic domes, I just feel at home. It's a part of who I am and a part of who we are as Albertans.

You know, modern-day Ukrainians in Alberta offer up some of Alberta's most notable tourist attractions. I know that as my wife and I have toured this province with our family, she has often wanted us to stop, like so many Canadians, at the various tourist attractions that dot this province. Whether it's the Glendon perogy or the Vegreville pysanka or the Mundare sausage, I think we have seen them all. As we've toured around Edmonton, we've been a part of the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village. I can remember some of the students in my classroom actually having jobs at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village. We are just so blessed in this province to have access to this heritage, even if I can't claim it to be part of my own.

You know, those sites that we've been talking about here, while they provide opportunities to experience Ukrainian cultural heritage first-hand, there are things that I haven't experienced yet. I understand that there are cossacks from Vegreville, and while I know that this past New Year's I had the opportunity to watch one of the Ukrainian dance troupes in this great province, I'm beginning to think that perhaps my days of being able to try out Ukrainian dancing are pretty much over, and I'm not sure that my knees could really take it any longer. I know that my jaw dropped to the floor as I was probably no further than from you, Madam Chair, as these Ukrainian dancers were going across the floor and jumping to heights that I'm not sure I've ever been able to jump and landing in ways that look so graceful, that I will never be able to do any longer.

You know, I'm just so happy and so pleased that we've taken the time today to take a look at the Ukrainian heritage we have but also the vibrant Ukrainian community that's here in this province as we speak. It's everywhere we go. You know, every Sunday morning on CTV Two you can watch the show Kontakt, which showcases Ukrainian news from Ukraine. You can watch musical vignettes and dancing and crafts. Businesses are highlighted both in English and Ukrainian, and even the commercials are in Ukrainian.

4:30

In addition, there has been a Ukrainian folklore program at the University of Alberta since 1987. In my own field of education we are just so blessed to be able to have the Ukrainian language and cultural education in this province and to have had it since 1902. The first provincial curriculum for Ukrainian as a second language was introduced in 1956, and Ukrainian has been offered as a language of instruction in Alberta public schools since 1974.

The Alberta we know today would not be the same without so many of these Ukrainian institutions, without the landmarks that dot our country and our province, without the leaders, without the language, and without the culture. So let's join together and make September 7 the day to celebrate the arrival of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, in Western Canada, and in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. It is definitely a great honour to be able to rise today and speak to Bill 26, the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. I must first thank the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for bringing forward Bill 26 and for all the hard work that was involved in advocating for this very long overdue recognition. As well, I would also thank the government for its swift action to support this piece of important legislation and for allowing me as well to bring the voices forward of my constituents in its creation.

Madam Chair, I'm not a descendant. I don't have any heritage that goes back to Ukraine. I guess the closest I can come to would be sort of nearby in Denmark, but I'm definitely very delighted to be able to represent a constituency that is made up of quite a few Albertans of Ukrainian heritage. Because of that I've had the privilege to attend many Ukrainian events, and I was even informed a little bit earlier that I've been blessed with a bit of a designation of an honorary Ukrainian. It's something that I will hold in very high regard going forward.

This year marks the 125th anniversary of the arrival to Canada of the first settlers from Ukraine, and since that time Ukrainians and Albertans of Ukrainian heritage have made countless contributions to the province of Alberta in all aspects of our lives including academia, the arts, education, civil society, government, industry, economic development and prosperity, and I could probably continue to go on.

Ukrainian culture is simply an integral part of the Alberta culture. Their community, their spirit, and their many accomplishments can be felt across our province and for me personally in north Edmonton. I can't even begin to express the gratitude I have for the Ukrainian community and how they have welcomed me with open arms. And I must say, Madam Chair, that there is nothing like good Ukrainian perogies, something that I've been able to have a part of since I was even a boy and some family friends were Ukrainian, so I've enjoyed that very much.

Madam Chair, I would first of course like to thank the settlers who left their homeland in Ukraine to journey thousands of miles to a new country and to set up their lives right here. I would also like to recognize the many Ukrainians who through the last century and even up until today have chosen Alberta as their new home. Finally, I would like to thank all Albertans of Ukrainian heritage for keeping their vibrant culture alive and for sharing it not only with me but with all Albertans. To all my friends that are in the galleries today, I hope that Bill 26 serves as a small token of appreciation for everything that you have given us, including some really great perogies.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to speak to Bill 26, Alberta's Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. I, too, echo the sentiments that have been expressed before about the tremendous history and contributions of our Ukrainian Canadians. The premise of the bill, of course, is to recognize the 7th day of September each year, commencing in 2017, as Alberta Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day, the 125th anniversary of Canada's first recorded Ukrainian immigrants. Alberta shares a special connection with the people of Ukraine. Thousands of Albertans trace their roots back to Ukraine, and their community has been a strong and integral part of our democracy, both in Alberta and Canada at large.

Lured by the promise of land and a respite from troubles in Europe, Ukrainians first came to the prairies in the late 1800s. Many found Canada to be familiar and recognized in her landscape and

her peoples a second homeland. Settling predominantly northeast of Edmonton, more than 250,000 Ukrainians had immigrated to Alberta by 1914. That's an amazing – amazing – influx. The next few decades were difficult. Many were incarcerated as enemy aliens during the First World War, and then the Great Depression took a large toll on a community composed primarily of farmers. In the aftermath of the Second World War another wave of Ukrainians found homes in Canada, settling in the urban centres of Edmonton, Calgary, and predominantly Lethbridge.

The Ukrainian community has never forgotten their heritage, and one of their most treasured contributions to Alberta are the customs and traditions that now permeate our society. It never ceases to make me smile when at festivals across Alberta I see new Canadians from many different nations smiling and laughing and participating in the dances, food, and celebrations of Ukrainian forebears, some of whom are now my cousins in the Vermilion and Vegreville area.

It should not be said, though, that the Ukrainian-Alberta community's most important contributions are cultural. They're teachers, doctors, lawyers, judges, and, yes, even politicians. There are several right here in this Legislature who identify with their Ukrainian ancestry, one of whom I just met outside, former Speaker Zwodzesky, a former Liberal. [interjections] Very, very former.

**An Hon. Member:** But he got better. He got the cure.

**Dr. Swann:** Somebody gave him the cure. Yeah.

Of course, I would want to highlight one of our favourites of Ukrainian ancestry, Laurence Decore. Many of you might not know that he was president of the Ukrainian-Canadian professional and business federation as well as the mayor of Edmonton and the leader of the Alberta Liberal Party. During his time as chairman of the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism he actually led a national lobby resulting in the constitutional change which acknowledged Canada's multicultural nature. He was also, as I said, leader of this illustrious Alberta Liberal Party.

I'm pleased that this government has brought forth this bill and heartedly endorse it. Ukrainian Albertans have contributed and continue to contribute immensely to our province and deserve all the recognitions we can bestow upon them.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, it's an honour for me to rise today in this Assembly to speak in favour of Bill 26, Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. As we all know, this bill will make September 7 an official day of celebration of the arrival of the first Ukrainians in Alberta in 1891 and will officially recognize 2016-2017 as the 125th year of Ukrainians in Alberta. Ukrainian people have played a crucial role in shaping the colourful tapestry of Alberta's culture and heritage.

In the 1890s Ukrainians immigrated en masse to Alberta for the promise of prosperity, freedom, and opportunity. The Ukrainian people, with their determination and hard work, turned tough quarters of unsettled soil into the prosperous farmland that we now see in our province today, and I can't imagine how tough that would be, to have to go with the plows that they used by hand and turn the soil like they did 125 years ago. It's amazing when I think about it. It is in large part because of their dedication to the land that our agricultural industry is now the second-greatest contributor to Alberta's economy.

4:40

But Ukrainian people didn't just contribute economically, although their contributions helped develop the province. They also brought their rich culture, traditions that can be seen today in Alberta and through various cultural centres, museums, choirs, dance troupes, and historical sites. Everywhere you look in Alberta, there are elements of Ukrainian culture that the early immigrants brought with them along the way across the Atlantic and the Canadian prairies and used to help to build the province that we now see today.

One in 5 Albertans can claim Ukrainian heritage, including many of my fellow caucus members. In fact, one of my colleagues shared with me his family's story about the great trials and triumphs of their family as they worked tirelessly to till soil riddled with rocks and trees, the trials of cutting hay by hand, clearing land one small patch at a time, and learning to grow foreign crops in a foreign land. They moved to a foreign country, far from any other settlements, where they did not know the language, how to farm the local land, or what their futures would hold. Life was hard and uncertain. They brought with them only hope for a better future. There was no end to the hindrances that Ukrainians faced in our province, yet they persevered and created homes and communities, all the while preserving their tradition, culture, and community.

I know that growing up in the province I was surrounded by the dynamic culture of the Ukraine, and I'm a better person for being exposed to it. Our Ukrainian ancestors' impact on this province is undeniable. They have helped to develop our industries, enrich our history, and shape our culture. They were pioneers of the west, and I could not agree more that their contributions should be honoured with this bill. I have boundless respect for the spirit and determination that encompasses their pioneering legacy and will always be grateful for the sacrifices that they have made to this province.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I've very proud to rise today and speak in support of the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act and bring forward a few stories of my own family's immigration to this country. I know that my father never spoke English until he was about seven years old. He told a story often about his first day at school in a one-room school north of Thorhild, where they were taking attendance for the first time. His English wasn't all that good. The teacher would call out the names of the people who were there, and Mary would say: present; Steve: present; Mike: present. When it came to my father, Vladimir Dach, as he was then known – I later knew him, of course, as Walter Dach – he didn't want to be greedy, so he said: no, thank you. He always chuckled telling that particular story.

Lots of other stories abound about how my baba and gido first came to the country in 1913 on what was said to be the last boat that was allowed to leave the old country before the First World War broke out. They arrived here basically with nothing. In fact, they had gotten rights to a homestead, but they switched homesteads, and they ended up finally in the Thorhild area. I'll have to share stories with the Minister of Health and find out exactly what friendships might have happened between our relatives in the Thorhild area because I learned today that her relatives come from that area as well.

With that, my father's English did grow. He went to grade 7. That was the end of his schooling. The teacher gave him the option to go to dances or go to school, and he chose dancing, so that was the end of it in grade 7. The musical tradition amongst the Ukrainian

community is something that's still very, very alive today. Most families had somebody who played an instrument of some kind, and the dances and entertainment were those that they provided themselves. I know that my dad's brothers and, actually, one of his sisters played music and sang in a band, and they were called upon many times to perform at country-hall dances. It was probably one of the most fun times of my father's childhood, growing up in the Thorhild area.

One other thing I wanted to say before I forget. I wanted to ensure that our gratitude was expressed to Mr. Speaker for allowing us to wear our traditional Ukrainian shirts today, the men in the House, without wearing a tie as traditionally is the custom in the House. So our gratitude to Mr. Speaker for allowing us to do that today.

I also wanted to say thank you, I guess, is the basis of what I'm saying today, to my great-grandparents and grandparents for having the courage to make that big jump, get on a ship, and come to an unknown land, which sometimes was overpromised to them as being the land of milk and honey. If you look at CP Rail posters from that era or even Canadian government posters from that era, talking about what they'd find when they got to the Canadian prairie, they were a little bit hyperbolic, to say the least. Because when you get to the Canadian prairie in the middle of winter and you get dumped off a train and you're looking at all those trees and stumps that have to be removed and you don't know how you're going to get to them without tools, you realize the posters weren't telling the whole truth. But they did get those stumps and those trees moved and crops planted little by little, usually living in a sod hut and then maybe a log house later on.

I know of early Christmases that my father recounts, that a few peanuts in a pile of straw beside the wood stove was a luxury. That was really the only Christmas presents he ever remembers as a child, just a handful of peanuts. Other than that, Christmas was a regular day, other than the celebration that they did and perhaps the prayers that they said.

I hope that today's new immigrants eventually receive the same warm welcome and integration that the Ukrainian community now has in our society. There's a bit of a backlash, and there's definitely some discrimination that's going on in our society right now that is similar to what immigrants of every wave of immigration suffered in our country. I think it's incumbent upon us to reflect today upon how the Ukrainian immigrant population was treated, in many respects very badly, by the established population here in this country and to try to apply that knowledge to what we sometimes see in our society today as a negative attitude towards immigration and the new waves of immigration that are taking place in this country right now.

I know that my baba never spoke English in her whole life. She was made fun of when she tried, so she finally just said: to heck with you; I'm not going to bother. I know that I never got to communicate with her in English or Ukrainian because we didn't know each other's language, but I know that the love and kisses and the "Oy, oy, oy, oy" were universal as we walked up the wooden sidewalk to her house. [interjection] Absolutely. There was always something beautiful cooking on the stove. It was a wood stove. She didn't have electricity. You could smell the crock of sauerkraut and kapusta downstairs, that she always made beautiful holubtsi out of. The love in her heart was true no matter what language she expressed it in. So I have very, very fond memories of her and of going to her house. She lived until I was about 10. She really gave me memories of the strength and commitment that has to be in the hearts of everybody who makes the big decision to emigrate to a new country. I'm very, very grateful that that decision was made.

I'm very proud to wear this shirt today and to be a member of the Ukrainian ancestral community here in this fantastic province of

Alberta, and I'll continue to support and be hopeful that I'll be allowed to express this Ukrainianness forever and hope to celebrate this every year in this House on September 7.

Thank you.

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

Members, it is getting a little loud in here. If you could just keep it down. Thank you.

Go ahead, hon. member.

4:50

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. While I do not have Ukrainian heritage, I do have immigrant grandparents with much the same stories and experiences as we've heard today. What I'd like to actually add to the debate is a current and ongoing part of the Canadian-Ukrainian story. In 2014 an endeavour called through the eyes of the children began with an individual in Lacombe and continues today. It's a Ukraine-Canada educational partnership involving students from Lacombe, Alberta, and students in Ukraine.

Students from approximately 12 different schools in Ukraine and 400 students in the Lacombe area have had some cross-cultural discovery through this program. There have been two trips to Ukraine so far, and there's another one planned this coming May, in 2017. One Lacombe student travelled to Ukraine with the adult sponsors. One Ukrainian teacher, Helena Romanov, from Lviv has come to Lacombe to speak to the students. The main focus has been on robotics education. On the first two trips the team took five robots. Not enough. In May they will be taking 10.

I have provided through my constituency office a Canadian flag and a substantial number of Alberta pins which have gone to schools in Ukraine. Just yesterday the first steps of a scholarship foundation for underprivileged students in both Lacombe and Ukraine was begun with a significant donation from a Lacombe resident. This is a wonderful program, and I'm proud to have a part in encouraging and supporting it. I am sure that it will ensure that the future of Ukraine-Canada relations will continue to enrich us all.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to chat on this. I want to talk a little bit about this bill and about my Ukrainian heritage. We've heard so much about where Ukrainians came from. For me, my family has gone back four generations in Canada with family names like Paluck, Pankew, and Siska immigrating here to Canada and spreading out amongst all three prairie provinces. My grandfather, for example, was born a farmer, and he tells me about how he was born and grew up in a one-room farmhouse out in Manitoba.

However, each successive generation of my Ukrainian family has aimed to succeed, to be better. As a result, my family has had a great number of successes here in Canada. We've been businessmen in the plumbing and sporting goods businesses. We have been teachers. We have been bankers. We've been serving Canada in a tank division after World War II, going on various NATO missions. We've been lawyers. Now in my family we have been MLAs. Well, one MLA. There's always time for more Ukrainian MLAs.

**An Hon. Member:** How would you rate that in comparison to the others?

**Mr. Malkinson:** Excellent.

However, you know, we've talked at great length about the food and culture, and I want to talk specifically about my family because

at the end of the day that is how I know my Ukrainian heritage, through my family. Over those four generations that my Ukrainian family has been here, we've tended to merge our culture with the best of our new-found home, which has created some peculiar family dynamics. Specifically, my grandparents have had a great appreciation for the outdoors, fishing, camping, even when they lived on the prairies, and also has somewhere along the way picked up at least a three-generation-old affinity for dachshunds, not the lapdog kind but the large ones that hunt gophers and squirrels with great enthusiasm. I'm not sure where they got that from, but perhaps it was from their fellow German immigrants.

Of course, like any family, you always get that good farmhand advice that is sometimes so unwelcomely given to your girlfriends, perhaps. One of my relatives always had a great affinity for telling any girlfriend I'd had for over six months that the best thing that she can do in a relationship is to never make her boyfriend choose between his truck or his dog because she will lose that choice any day of the week, which always made for a very uncomfortable conversation with my girlfriend after that happened. But what good is family if they don't make it awkward for you?

With that, I mean, I am so glad that I'm here to be able to vote in support of this. For all my relatives and to my baba and gido, who provided me with so much love growing up, I am going to be voting in favour of this bill, thinking of them.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report.

**The Chair:** We have to take a step back. Before we do that, I gather there are no more amendments, comments with respect to this bill.

Are you ready for the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 26 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

**Mr. Bilous:** Now I would like to move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Sweet:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 26.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur with the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 77(1) such that Bill 26 can proceed to third reading immediately.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 26

#### Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act

**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Speaker, I rise to move third reading of Bill 26, the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act.

Madam Speaker, there are a couple things that I wanted to do while we're here on this very, very historic day as the Assembly is debating the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act, which is a very historic bill recognizing contributions that Ukrainians have made to our great province over the past 125 years. I first want to thank all of the men and women that are in our galleries, from the Speaker's gallery to the members' gallery to the public gallery, who have taken time out of their busy day to join us today and witness this historic passing.

I should say, Madam Speaker – and this is a thank you to all members of this Assembly – that today is the fifth time in Alberta's history that a bill is moving through all readings of the Assembly in one day. Now, I appreciate that we're still in third reading and it hasn't been passed as of yet, but the fact that we've had unanimous consent to move it into third reading and we introduced it today is still historic. On that, I do want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all members of this Assembly, to all parties for agreeing to move this bill forward and for their participation in this debate. On behalf of the government it's greatly appreciated. I also want to thank the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for moving this bill, sponsoring this bill, and all of my colleagues on this side of the House.

5:00

Again, I want to give a special shout-out to Ambassador Shevchenko, who has joined us especially today for this bill, the Ambassador to Canada from Ukraine. His presence is very appreciated.

As well as other members, we have members from the board of the UCC Alberta chapter. We have men and women from the Ukrainian community who have contributed so much to our province in the form of volunteer hours to move – I was going to say their causes – to make sure that Albertans are educated on the contributions Ukrainians have made, and they continue to make significant contributions to our great province.

Madam Speaker, I will take my seat but want to invite all members of this Assembly, all members in the galleries, all of our guests – that at the conclusion of today's sitting everyone is invited to a small reception up in 512 to celebrate this day and this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just to clarify, hon. minister, you are moving third reading on behalf of the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville?

**Mr. Bilous:** Correct.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

Next on my speakers list to third reading I have the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to join my colleagues and to rise to support Bill 26, Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. Today all parties and members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta are collaborating to unanimously pass a bill which will commemorate the 125th anniversary of the first Ukrainian settlers in Alberta by dedicating September 7 of every

year to these great founders of Alberta and marking 2016 and 2017 as the Year of the Ukrainian-Canadian.

The hardships and extreme challenges these settlers endured were great. Despite their struggles, they settled the land in many areas of Alberta. They came to start a new life. Their work was long, but the reward they sought was freedom. Their drive, their rich history, their determination has resulted in some Ukrainians playing a prominent role in Alberta. Former Premier Ed Stelmach is a proud Ukrainian, and of course in my riding former MLA Genia Leskiw was the first woman and the first Ukrainian to ever hold a seat.

There are countless examples of Ukrainian contributions to this province, and I think it's wonderful that many of those will be recognized here in this Assembly today. Canada is home to the second-largest Ukrainian population in the world. It's estimated there are 3 million Canadians of Ukrainian heritage, and Ukrainian Canadians make up almost 10 per cent of our country's population. Today is about honouring the past and extending our gratitude to the future.

I urge all members of this Assembly to join me in passing Bill 26, Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. Thank you.

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and to take a moment to comment on the wonderful diversity in Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and I know that it's made up of a lot of members of the Ukrainian community. I would also like to take a moment to thank the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for being a champion of this legislation and working alongside community members to do it. I feel that she cooked her way into this and won awards and won the hearts over in a very authentic style. I know that you'll continue as the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville to get things done in the best interests of your constituents.

I'd like to also recognize the Ukrainian members of Strathcona-Sherwood Park and their countless sacrifices to grow our community. In fact, the very high school I went to in Sherwood Park has an aspect of this, as Archbishop Jordan high school has a really great program called the Ukrainian bilingual program. Over the summer I was able to attend a meet-and-greet with Ruslana. As many of you know, Ruslana is a famous Ukrainian superstar and a social justice activist, and it was an honour to witness her authentic energy. It moved the crowd with songs and with inspirational messages to maintain connection to their authentic roots of Ukrainian heritage. I know that this program does that continuously, and I learned a lot about the Ukrainian heritage through a lot of my friends that were in this program growing up.

As an immigrant I feel like I have a lot to thank of the Ukrainian community, and I would like to thank them for their dedication to building this province. For the sacrifices, thank you; for your knowledge and opportunities that you have created for generations to come, thank you; for your food that you have shared, thank you; and for your continual commitment to growing this province, thank you. I know that when community members of mine come to Canada, one of the first things that I go to show them is the Ukrainian food and the heritage here.

It is my honour to support this bill here today, and I thank all of the dignitaries for coming out, for making a long trip here, and for all of the work that made this day possible, for the collaboration between parties, for the championing by the MLA, and for the ability to have this debate and to have many witnesses for the debate here in this House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are a few times in this place that I'm sure we'll all look back upon with the circle on our calendar. From time to time this place can be a little adversarial. It has its moments where politics breaks out, but every once in a while it's great to be part of a day that isn't quite as adversarial, where we celebrate the best of things, where we celebrate the best of our province, and this afternoon has certainly been that.

I'd like to thank everyone, and I know some of you have stuck with us all afternoon. I'd like to thank you so much for being here in the gallery. I know that many of you have done so much for our province and for your community and for us all collectively. I'd like to thank you for that.

It's been so wonderful to have the ambassador, His Excellency, here with us, in his own right a superstar. In Ukraine after a successful media career he was elected three times, something that many of us aspire to do. He served as chairman of the Free Speech Committee, the youngest-ever committee chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament. He sponsored 60 legislative acts that were adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament, including laws on access to information. Sounds like he'd fit well in the caucus here. In many respects we all can aspire to a life of public service like he has had and continues to have. It's an absolute pleasure to have you with us.

Our great province of Alberta in our great country of Canada has been a beacon of hope for so many immigrants from so many parts of the world. Our province has a rich diversity that we are all proud of. Today I'd like to spend just a few minutes underlining the contributions of a particular group of Albertans, Ukrainian Canadians.

**5:10**

In Alberta 1 in 10 of us have Ukrainian roots. It's not unusual to meet Ukrainian students from the Ukraine, in fact, at the world's largest Easter egg in the small community of Vegreville. I practised saying the word, like, 15 times and just got scared by it: pysanka.

We're so blessed in Alberta with beautiful Ukrainian agriculture, art, dance. I feel like we could start a dance troupe of MLAs who have such a rich history in Ukrainian dance. Surely that would be led by the Premier and Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Tied in with the members from this side of the House, I think it would be a wonderful opportunity that could unite us around an important thing like Ukrainian dance, poetry, food, and the other cultural blessings in Alberta of this very special community.

Ukrainian Canadians are strong and resilient, often as a result of hardship that has swept that nation over the last 120 years: famine, oppression, Russian meddling in Ukraine dominated life in Ukraine. Many, many were forced to flee their land for lands of hope around the world, and many of them arrived here in Alberta. Under some of the worst oppression that we have ever seen, through famine and oppressive governments, such atrocities have taken place. Even today Ukraine faces aggression from the Russian leader, Vladimir Putin. Throughout all of this hardship Ukrainians kept coming to Alberta to prosper in both urban and rural Alberta.

So many incredible Ukrainians have made an incredible impact on the fabric of Alberta. We salute them. Of course, we salute the first Ukrainian-Canadian Premier, Ed Stelmach. We salute the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council, which has been active for a very long time in the province, putting on cultural events, raising money for so many important causes, including most recently supporting medical service for those in eastern Ukraine.



Over the past number of years, three open, transparent elections have taken place in the Ukraine, and Ukrainian Albertans have been there to observe as part of the elections observation missions, to ensure that those elections are done in a democratic way. In fact, one of those observers, who spent time on two separate occasions as an observer, had worked for me personally. I'm very proud to have supported him in his ability to go and be of assistance where needed.

Perhaps the most amazing thing to me about this incredible community is their commitment to three things: faith, family, and community. We all could be well served to look at the incredible amount of commitment that this community has to each other, to their faith, to their family and be reminded of the things that are truly important in each of our lives. To that I say thank you. Thank you for your efforts in our communities. Thank you for your efforts in building the very fabric of our province. Thank you for caring so much. May God continue to bless you, and may God bless Alberta.

**The Speaker:** I make the assumption that there's no 29(2)(a) request.

Hearing none, I would recognize the Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, if I might just very briefly ask for unanimous consent of the House to go to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is indeed a very special day as we come together to remember and celebrate Alberta's rich Ukrainian heritage, a heritage and culture that has been woven into the identity of this province for generations. As we mark September 7 as Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day, we also do it on the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian immigration to Canada. As Minister of Culture and Tourism I appreciate the importance of this milestone and the value of keeping this history alive.

I had the chance to celebrate one of those living pieces of history this summer when we opened Stelmach House at the Ukrainian Village. The building served as a safe place for Mykola and Dora Stelmach, who came to Canada from the village of Zavydche, Galicia, in 1898 with the dream of a bright future. They were eventually followed by the 170,000 Ukrainians who eventually immigrated to Canada by 1914. They were faced with the realities of a harsh Canadian climate and unfamiliar territory, but despite those challenges they not only adapted and prevailed; they thrived here. As an immigrant myself I value that determination in a personal way.

Like so many of those who we are here to celebrate today, I too started my journey elsewhere. I came to this country in 1988 as a refugee from Nicaragua, and I made my home in this beautiful province. My family left our country, our home in search of a better life, in search of a safe place to be, and we found it here, just like our Ukrainian pioneers did. We found that safe place in this province, and we are here today celebrating that history.

Most Albertans of Ukrainian ancestry can trace their roots back to the earliest pioneers who arrived in Canada during that time. Days like Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day will ensure that the stories of Alberta's Ukrainian ancestors continue to be told and continue to live on today.

As Minister of Culture and Tourism I am so proud to be able to stand here with all of the members of this House in celebration of this beautiful history. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other members who would wish to speak to third reading of Bill 26, Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act?

Seeing and hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville to close debate.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand today and close debate on what has been a lovely conversation, where people have talked about their families, their experiences, their histories. To be able to bring forward this bill and have something that is titled Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act, I think, is really important. Like I mentioned before, Ukrainians were here tilling the land, building the economy for a province that had not even come into this country.

But, of course, I want to recognize that amongst the many contributions that were brought by Ukrainians to Alberta and Canada to help build this province, it came with a lot of sacrifice. It came from families who took that chance to have mothers and children be separated for periods of time from their fathers and from their brothers and their sons, where they went to Canada and took a train to Alberta to see what was here, with the promise of a new life. They heard that there was good land for cheap prices, and it was something better than where they had come from. It was the opportunity to build something of their own. So with tears and sharing kisses, they said good-bye, but they were ultimately reunited here, and they built the farms that we have now.

If you look at the maps of who owns the different sections out in a constituency like Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, you see Stelmach, you see Warawa, you see Toroshenko, you see Kurulok, you see Gargus, you see Anaka, and those are the stories that have been so long a part of our province and that I'm so proud of.

5:20

Just a few people that have worked to help grow our culture and our economies in Alberta. We have people like Olesia from the UCC, who works all of the time. Whenever she is somewhere, she always enjoys a standing ovation because she works tirelessly in everything that she does.

Hazel Anaka brings people out to the town of Andrew, a town that only has about 300 people at a given time, and fuels the local economy by holding events like Babas and Borshch, where people come out from Smoky Lake and across Alberta, with many people from Strathcona county. Maybe I'll take first place in the borscht cook-off next time. We'll see.

Jars Balan is not here, but he's part of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta. It's a prized part of the university, where they do good, scholarly work to look more into what our history is.

Daniel Warawa, you know, not only is a deputy reeve and a councillor, but he's a farmer. He's one of the people that works to feed us on his 3,000 acres of land, and he welcomed me not only into his home but into his combine to take the flax crop off last year. I know that the peas were tough this year, but maybe next year it'll be better.

I want to thank Myron Kruk, who I didn't mention before. He's the president of the Vegreville Cultural Association, that actually puts on the Pysanka Festival. People just lend so much to the quality of life that we enjoy here.

There were four waves – and we're currently in the fourth wave – of immigration. In the first wave of immigration we had 170,000 Ukrainians come here in a very short period of time, between 1891 and 1914, and then we saw many more generations come after that. They were part of building our democracy, part of building our economy, part of building our identity, and also they were incredibly important with our labour movement here in Alberta. We had the sugar beet farm workers in the '20s and '30s. You know, they came here to do the work that the people here didn't want to

do. We see these stories time and again, that people come here for a better life, and we know that if they're good enough to work here, then they are good enough to be part of our communities and live here.

I just would be so remiss in not recognizing the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians. Even though I know that they enjoy a different sort of reputation among some circles, they have long-standing roots in Alberta and in organization, and they worked really hard to make sure that the Ukrainians that were here and working were taken care of. I am just so proud of them and of everyone else who has really raised the profile of Ukrainians. There was a time when Ukrainians were seen as a lesser people, when they could not speak their language, when they could not sing their anthems in various places, when they were persecuted in Alberta.

We have come such a long way, but we know and have recognition days like this because we need to constantly remind ourselves that we are a province that is built of many, many different kinds of people, many backgrounds, many socioeconomic factors, and it's these differences that we embrace because we are ultimately united. I think that it speaks volumes when we have so much support – unanimous support, it looks like – in the House to do this and to recognize this. It's incredible. I'm so proud of all of us here in the Legislature today. I think we have done all of our guests from across the world very proud, and I look forward to seeing this pass.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:25 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hinkley	Notley
Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Orr
Babcock	Horne	Panda
Bilous	Hunter	Payne

Carson	Jabbour	Piquette
Ceci	Jansen	Rodney
Clark	Jean	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Cooper	Littlewood	Schneider
Cortes-Vargas	Loewen	Schreiner
Cyr	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	Luff	Sigurdson
Dang	MacIntyre	Starke
Drever	Malkinson	Stier
Drysdale	Mason	Sucha
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Swann
Feehan	McIver	Sweet
Fildebrandt	McLean	Taylor
Fraser	McPherson	Turner
Ganley	Miller	van Dijken
Gill	Miranda	Westhead
Goehring	Nielsen	Woollard
Gray	Nixon	Yao
Hanson		

5:30

Totals: For – 70 Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 26 read a third time]

**The Speaker:** Congratulations to all of you. It's a historic moment. The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Seeing as how today is truly a historic day, it now being five pieces of legislation in Alberta's history read and passed all in one day, passed unanimously by this House, I will thank all members and invite all members and guests to join us in 512 for a reception, and I now move that the House stand adjourned until 9 tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:32 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, November 3, 2016

Day 44

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
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Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Government House Leader  
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, November 3, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Please bow your heads and let us reflect, each in our own way. Today let us strive to ensure that our actions that we take in this House aim to improve our tomorrow. Each day let us be reminded of the pure privilege of being able to serve the people of Alberta. Let us be inspired by our constituents as well as by one another.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Second Reading

##### Bill 25

##### Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

[Adjourned debate November 2: Mr. Dach]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to have the opportunity to rise before the House to discuss Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. I'm quite confident when I say that this is not new information to anyone in this room, that the government seemingly does not want or feel the need to conduct or release economic impact studies on the radical ideological agenda. Perhaps it's not surprising that when you're imposing long-debunked economic policies, it's tough to find anyone reputable to rubber-stamp whatever – I don't know what this is – policy that the government is deciding to push through on a whim.

As the opposition we're used to asking the NDP to slow down, to study the impact or to at least try and give Albertans the heads-up on the terrible roller-coaster ride that they're trapped on for the next three years, but not today. Today I'd like to take the opportunity to talk to my colleagues about a report released by the Fraser Institute that outlines exactly what the impacts of this policy will be. [interjections] I'm not sure what was funny about that statement, but I will continue. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Government members, please allow the member to make her statement. I'm having difficulty hearing her.

Please proceed.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I will be tabling the five requisite copies of the report this afternoon. I have them here if you'd like them.

In August the Fraser Institute released a study analyzing the economic impact that the 100-megatonne cap would have on Alberta's struggling economy. Nobody disputes that this cap is meant to cap future production. Using oil sands production forecasts to 2040 from the National Energy Board, the paper actually estimated future emission levels from the oil sands production and quantified what the prohibited production would cost. Using these production estimates, the Fraser Institute was able to determine that this policy has the potential to reduce cumulative production between 2025 and 2040 somewhere between 2 billion to 3 billion barrels of oil. Let me say that again: reduce the

cumulative production between 2025 and 2040 somewhere in the range between 2 billion to 3 billion barrels of oil.

Most Albertans view this as a serious loss and that it should be avoided, and I'm just not so sure what the government is trying to – maybe they view this as a win. I'm not sure. As a legislator and an Albertan I can honestly say that I don't understand what the members of this government are missing when they speak to their constituents. Every single day I have constituents coming into my office, struggling Albertans, and it's so compelling. I don't know about some of you, but it keeps me up at night. They're desperate for help and work, and they come into my office and they send me e-mails, hundreds of e-mails, phoning me, desperate for help. Just in case you didn't know, Alberta has seen a loss of 104,000 jobs in this downturn in Calgary, and the unemployment rate in August was at 8.6 per cent. Eight point six per cent. It's a hard number to say. I can't get my head around it. That's the highest rate in the province in September since 1994, the highest rate in 22 years.

Unfortunately, the government wants to absolve themselves of guilt by blaming the low price of oil for all of Alberta's woes, but losing billions of barrels of oil production by 2040: that is not a consequence of low oil prices. That is not. That is poor government policy. Those barrels represent somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$150 billion to \$250 billion. How do you get your head around that? [interjections] My goodness. These amounts are the most unimaginable sum of money. I really can't fathom it. The figure represents jobs. It represents numbers of social services. It actually represents and it provides our citizens . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, the Minister of Advanced Education's volume is just a little louder than normal, and I was having difficulty hearing. I'm sure he will tone it down. Could you continue? Please proceed.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I don't know about this side, but I find it appalling that the government thinks that these numbers are funny. I think that for every Albertan watching this right now, that is a shameful, shameful display from the government towards the people of Alberta.

As I'd like to say, and I'm going to reiterate just to make it clear: \$150 billion to \$250 billion. That is jobs, Mr. Speaker, that is social services that we provide our citizens, and it represents schools, hospitals, and roads, things that we take to understand that this government and this House actually care about. If you want to talk about cuts to social services, it has to be recognized that this type of backward economic policy that this ideological NDP government likes to pursue will have significant negative impact on our province's ability to care and results in higher taxes and less value for every Albertan dollar. A weak economy does not help the sick, it doesn't help the poor, and it certainly does not help the working class.

Now, the NDP don't like to keep track of what impact their green policies will have on GHG reductions either, and therefore the NDP do not like to keep track of the costs of their policies per abated tonne. The extensive research of the Fraser Institute has produced some estimates of the emissions that could be averted, so this is helpful information. As a result of the 100-megatonne emissions cap policy, they found that the potential emissions averted due to the policy change will be minimal – minimal – in comparison to projected global emissions. Not only are the oil sands a fraction of the per cent of global emissions, and any oil we don't extract here will just get extracted somewhere else – it's not like we can force companies to leave it in the ground. Even if we, even if this

government, if the NDP forces companies here to keep it in the ground, nobody else will.

The Fraser study goes on to note that “if all production from Alberta’s oil sands were halted, the resulting reductions in global emissions would . . . be quite minimal” and that in 2040, when the NEB projects oil sands production will be largest, meaning the emissions from production would be at the greatest point in 2040, the 100-megatonne emissions cap policy will avert – get this – only 25 megatonnes.

**9:10**

The report adds that the abated emissions, so the reduced emissions, will also come at a high cost per tonne. So with the cost per tonne of abated GHGs beginning somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$863 per tonne in 2025 and then increasing to a staggering \$1,172 by 2040 – let us put that figure into perspective for you. [interjections] And you can laugh all you want. Prime Minister Trudeau wants Albertans to pay a tax of \$50 per tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2022, and that’s just three years later than the NDP’s policy would see Albertans forgoing \$863 per tonne. The difference is astonishing. Estimates on the social cost of carbon do not come anywhere close to justifying this exorbitant rate.

The highest estimated cost, Mr. Speaker, for the social cost of carbon produced by the U.S. government’s interagency working group put 2040 costs of carbon at only \$96. While the paper acknowledges that this is only a first step in attempting to quantify the effects of Alberta’s 100-megatonne emissions cap policy on future oil sands production and related GHG emissions, I would have to say, as an understatement, that its findings are quite startling. I have to speak to how detached this government is from everyday Albertans. The paper’s findings are that their policy has the potential to reduce future oil sands production by a large amount but that the GHG emissions that could averted would be minimal to the projected global emissions. That is not the hallmark of a successful and prudent policy.

Furthermore, the cost of the averted emissions would be so incredibly high that it’s so troubling for all Canadians. Alberta is the economic engine of Canada, and it needs responsible policies to remain so. I believe that in this House that is something we all agree on. As the Official Opposition we are left with serious questions about the choices that this government is making by putting Alberta’s future prosperity at risk. There’s a severe imbalance of costs and benefits that result from this policy. Unsurprisingly, perhaps the NDP have once again failed to consider the broader economic impact of a policy before proposing it.

One cost they may not have considered is lease payouts for the stranded assets. The 100-megatonne cap actually doesn’t even cover the development of leases that we’ve already sold. For example, if prices pick up and everybody wants to develop, some will have to be told no. Will we be paying out leaseholders who are told that they can’t develop their leases that they bought because that would just put us over this artificial cap? You know, just like we are about to pay out the coal companies in an early shutdown, this is a question that we need answered.

Ultimately I feel – and I think I speak on behalf of our caucus – that this policy is short-sighted and ignores the fundamental realities of energy demand and economics. This is not funny. This is Albertans. This is families. This is the people we represent and their livelihoods and their quality of life.

Alberta is an extremely environmentally responsible jurisdiction – an extremely environmentally responsible jurisdiction. Our energy industry actively advocates for polluter-pay models. They work hard to innovate, to reduce their water usage, and they are at

the forefront of reclamation technologies and thus often restore their sites to a more pristine state than when they actually began their first extraction work.

As other countries . . . [interjection] Maybe you haven’t been there. You should maybe go check it out. I would go. Or perhaps you’re under the impression, Mr. Speaker, that it’s Mordor. Just to check, you might want to go and dispel this myth that has been prattled on about. As I’ve said, once you see it, once you understand it, there is absolutely no question about what our industry is doing. That doesn’t mean we can’t do better. There is always that opportunity. Here we do it better. Here we want the opportunity to do better. If given the economic environment to do it better, we’re always going to do it better.

As other countries move forward in their development and increase their energy consumption . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I have a sense that there may be a 29(2)(a) question. Is that correct, hon. member?

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Now, we’ve just heard several good reasons why this emissions cap is not a good idea. Yesterday, I believe, the minister, when she introduced this, said, “We need growth in the oil sands.” It stands to reason that if you want growth in an industry, putting a cap on it doesn’t make sense. She also said that we have justified pride in our industry, but that goes against what the Premier says, that we’re embarrassing cousins. I’m not sure where this pride is that this government is talking about here.

Now, this government always blames conservative governments for no pipelines, but who’s protesting the pipelines, Mr. Speaker? Who’s protesting these pipelines? We know who’s protesting these pipelines: the very people that this government hires and continues to hire. That’s who’s protesting pipelines.

I’d like to ask the member here. We know that we are the most socially, environmentally responsible oil-producing jurisdiction in the world. I would like to hear the government suggest otherwise. The minister just said that we should have justified pride in the industry. I’d ask the member to comment on this, on these different issues that I’ve brought up here about a government that calls us the embarrassing cousin, a government that hires anti-oil activists from across Canada to come here and work and be paid hard-working Albertans’ money, and then they sit there and bring forward job-killing bill after job-killing bill.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it seems to me that one of the things that gets flung across the floor on a regular basis is the words “climate denier.” That seems to actually be the only overarching message that comes back to us when we start promoting what we do in this industry. That’s actually the only answer that I can recall that we’ve received, which pretty much – as far as they’re concerned, flinging insults is the way to pivot away from actually speaking about what this industry does, whether, you know, we’re embarrassing cousins or we are climate deniers or whatever manner of slanderous comments and whatnot comes from across the floor. I’m not quite sure.

**9:20**

As a person who lives in this province, sends her children to school, who breathes the air, who eats the food from this Earth, and who drinks the water out of her tap, I can’t imagine a more insulting comment than to be called a climate denier because automatically that means anybody who’s me and who happens to believe in what I believe in doesn’t care about the earth, air, and water. I do take

offence to that, Mr. Speaker, and as far as I'm concerned, that's probably the biggest issue that I have here.

If we're wanting to talk about facts, I have a few, and these are to be helpful. [interjections] You can laugh. Please. Albertans are hearing you. They're going to hear you laugh, and they're going to understand that those of us who live here, who believe in this industry and also believe that they can do better, also believe that there is policy that needs to come down to create an opportunity for diversity, to create an opportunity to become more environmental. All of those things are not up for question.

However, if the overarching mandate that is coming from this government is to call me and my friends on this side of the House climate deniers, that includes my children, that includes my family, that includes my neighbours, that includes my constituency. I'm sure Chestermere-Rocky View is extremely thrilled right now for those people who voted for me to be called climate deniers, Mr. Speaker. Just to be clear, if that's the mandate, I'm going to continue to explain a few of the numbers, and should this side of the House like to dispute those numbers, that would be fine. Fine. That's great. This is an open discussion to have that discussion.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. You will recall that yesterday there was a point of order with respect to language which may come close under 23(j), so I caution all of the members to be conscious of the words that they're using.

I believe, finally, we now have the Minister of Advanced Education, who wishes to speak. Is that correct?

**Mr. Schmidt:** No, it's not.

**The Speaker:** Then I have the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that one of the worst things that we are dealing with regarding this bill before us has to do with this oil sands advisory group. Albertans were told that the oil sands advisory group's primary focus is to consider how to implement the 100-megatonne per year carbon emissions limit for the oil sands industry. This responsibility is still noted in their mandate, stated on the government of Alberta's website for the oil sands advisory group.

This panel has been riddled with controversy from the beginning due to the selection of Tzeponah Berman, an individual that once referred to the oil sands as Mordor, among many other contemptuous claims.

We noticed another thing, that two members of this panel have ties to ForestEthics, including Berman, and we're not just talking about a basic membership there; we're talking about former senior director and cofounder.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I read an article recently in the *Financial Post* about ForestEthics, and I would like to read it into the record.

New information contained in U.S. tax returns makes clear that a large percentage of the fuss over the Northern Gateway pipeline has been generated by a single, American organization: ForestEthics, based in San Francisco. In its 2012 tax return . . . ForestEthics claims credit for having generated fully 87 per cent of the letters of comment sent to [our] National Energy Board.

That's an astonishing number, Mr. Speaker: 87 per cent of the letters of opposition. These are letters opposed to Canadian interests, letters opposed to Alberta jobs, letters opposed to ending the price discount Albertans receive for our resources.

The *Financial Post* article states:

[ForestEthics'] campaign to halt the Enbridge Gateway pipeline has cemented itself in the Canadian media and citizenry . . . In the last six months of 2012, we amassed more than 25,000 new

supporters for this campaign and helped organize the largest act of Canadian civil disobedience in the history of the pipeline fight.

You hear that, Mr. Speaker? They're bragging about halting one of Canada's most important infrastructure projects.

The article goes on to note:

in August, we submitted to the National Energy Board 4,119 (out of 4,722 total . . .) unique Letters of Comment on the Enbridge tankers/pipeline project.

Those are ForestEthics' own words in its tax return dated September 30, 2013.

So now we've got two people representing an un-Albertan and an un-Canadian viewpoint on this panel. Worse than that, Mr. Speaker, ForestEthics boasted in their filings:

By stigmatizing "dirty" sources of energy, we can make it difficult to finance and sell these products.

It should be noted that California has far dirtier oil than we do, and this ForestEthics, based in San Francisco, makes no mention of that.

Mr. Speaker, this is a claim they make, that they have secured the tanker ban on B.C.'s coast. They are taking credit for that, a foreign organization taking credit for stopping tankers on our coast. That is an infringement on Canada, an infringement on Alberta.

This article states:

Since 2008, ForestEthics has been the workhorse of the Tar Sands campaign, co-funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Tides Foundation. Tides has dispersed more than \$20 million for the Tar Sands campaign, including . . . \$1.3 million to ForestEthics. The origin of these funds is not revealed by Tides.

These are foreign interests, Mr. Speaker, from a country that is seriously advantaged by landlocking Canadian oil, by forcing our product through their refineries, their pipeline infrastructure. As a result, they have left Canadian producers with no choice but to accept a significant discount on prices we are able to demand. In other words, we are stuck on account of this.

The article itself says:

By blocking pipeline and port infrastructure projects, environmental organizations landlock Canadian oil within North America and continue the U.S. monopoly on Canadian oil exports.

The problem with the funding of the Tar Sands Campaign is the secret donors that may have an agenda . . . contrary to Canadian interests.

This government – this government – has clearly stacked this panel with anti-Canadian and anti-Albertan interests, Mr. Speaker. It is reprehensible. This is our oil sands advisory committee. Our government is validating un-Albertan opinions, giving these foreign radicals a voice and a platform, giving these destructive ideas legitimacy in our processes. It would be hard for an elected government to show more disdain than this for the lifeline of everyday Albertans.

The NDP I Love Oil Sands T-shirts and photo ops aren't cutting it, Mr. Speaker, not when they're appointing people like this from the leave-it-in-the-ground camp. As if that's not enough, Berman is signatory to the Leap Manifesto, co-chair of this committee. She isn't just a member of the panel; she has a significant and influential position.

And it gets worse. There have been unchallenged allegations that participation on this panel is some kind of a reward for companies that agreed to publicly back the NDP climate action plan.

Furthermore, this panel does not represent a true cross-section of our oil sands industry due to the exclusion of small players, Albertan companies, wholly Albertan-owned companies. All but one of these companies are multinationals. They have hedged their bets outside of Alberta. For example, CNRL: they have assets in the North Sea. They are already preying on juniors struggling in this

economic climate to survive this government's radical policies. Statoil: main office? Houston. Assets? Norway, Gulf of Mexico, all over the world, really. Cenovus: Weyburn oil field in Saskatchewan; 50 per cent ownership in two American refineries. Shell: one of the largest resource multinationals, with significant assets on every continent in the world. Suncor: along with assets in a number of other provinces, they operate in Commerce City, Colorado. ConocoPhillips, an American multinational energy corporation: their assets are in Alaska, Latin America, Europe, Asia Pacific, Middle East, and Kazakhstan.

I don't know what all of their motives are, but I do know they are self-immolating their own industry just to get Trans Mountain twinned. This is a shameful thing given that the NEB had already recommended that project. It is disappointing to see the NDP government choosing to appoint extreme anti oil sands activists to co-chair this Alberta panel and stacking the deck. Albertans deserve much better, Mr. Speaker.

9:30

As if all that controversy wasn't bad enough, this House will not even benefit from the advice of this group before being asked to pass the legislation that this advisory group is discussing, for Pete's sake. Without their feedback, here we are today expected to implement a 100-megatonne cap. We've got this mess of a panel, and we're not even going to hear from them. What was the point? Healthy paycheques for left-wing friends? Was that the point of this panel?

During this time of economic uncertainty we need to have a balanced approach on environmental stewardship and ensure the success of our energy industry. Industry members are still very curious about how the 100-megatonne limit will be distributed, how the performance standards for GHG emissions will be crafted. This bill does not clarify any of that, and we are being asked to pass this bill without even knowing the full details regarding how fair this will be across the entire industry. This government continues to fail to see the urgency of clarifying their plans to drastically change the province's energy industry regulations. We've got the bill now, but the details we need to support it: they're not here.

Worse, this government isn't being honest with Albertans about the bill's role in pipeline approval. The NEB has already recommended Trans Mountain for approval after extensive vetting. The NEB has already looked at the GHGs in association with the pipeline itself and deemed them fair. Trans Mountain epitomizes common-sense infrastructure. Most of the right-of-way has already been secured as this was just a doubling. Beyond that, taxation in exchange for pipeline approval: really? A matter of interprovincial transportation as a core component to belonging to a federation is an abhorrent policy. This province has no role to play in pipeline approval aside from lobbying Trudeau to take the NEB, a science-based, evidence-based, apolitical body, and take their recommendations and approve that pipeline.

The whole thing is a charade by a government to push their ideological agenda, their radical agenda. This NDP government has done nothing more than spread misinformation about how pipeline approval really works. Pipeline approval is entirely a federal matter. In the real world when the merits of a pipeline are assessed, they are assessed based on the pipeline itself.

Only a handful of companies will be shipping product through Trans Mountain, not the entirety of the industry. It shouldn't be a radical idea that only the GHGs produced from the pipeline be considered in the approval process.

Beyond that fact, Albertans are sick and tired of listening to the NDP trash the environmental reputation of our energy industry. It is the best in the world, Mr. Speaker. Our industry is the most

environmentally responsible industry on the planet. They do not need a senseless cap that could cost Albertans somewhere between \$150 billion and \$250 billion in lost revenue. Long before the NDP was even a relevant factor in this province, these companies were spending every single day striving to innovate, working to use less water, advancing their reclamation techniques. The NDP did not invent environmental responsibility. Our energy industry has been practising it for 50 years.

The fact that this NDP government thinks pipeline approval should only be given after they've broken the entire industry, only after they've destroyed the industry's profitability, is unacceptable. I will not support this bill.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the member? Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I was wondering if I could ask you – you were speaking about a balanced approach. Would you mind giving us some examples from your perspective and potentially helping the government to understand what that balanced approach would look like?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, hon. member, for the question. There is a long-standing myth that somehow environmental responsibility and resource development are mutually exclusive, and the fact of the matter is that they are not. That has been simply the mantra of environmentalism for as long as it's been around, that you can't have both.

The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that you can have both, and our resource industries in this province have proven it year after year after year. You will not find anywhere in the world a resource industry, an agricultural industry, a manufacturing industry that is more responsible than what we have right here in this province.

If this other side over here really had a heart for greenhouse gas emissions and, I'm going to say, pollution in general, they would be trying everything they could to increase Alberta production of everything that we produce in this province, not lessen. Because we have this environmental responsibility ingrained within our souls, everything we produce here is produced with a greater environmental responsibility than anywhere else on the planet. So if you really want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, stop carbon leakage from leaving our province, cause it to come back the other way, have more products produced in this province, with our environmental record, and you will impact GHG emissions. They will go down as more products are produced here and fewer products are produced in other jurisdictions.

I'll give you just one of many examples. Greenhouses in this province are going to be shutting down on account of carbon taxation. That production is going to go to Mexico, and that produce – peppers, cucumbers, strawberries – is going to be loaded in diesel trucks, cooled and refrigerated by diesel-powered coolers, trucked 4,000 kilometres up the interstates to Canada. In the end, there will no greenhouse gas reductions whatsoever; in fact, it'll go the other way. We ought to be encouraging our greenhouse operators. They should be shielded from Bill 20. They should be encouraged for being the carbon sink that they are.

**An Hon. Member:** Why don't you believe in local food production?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** What about local food production?

These are just some of the things. Mr. Speaker, we are the most responsible oil-producing jurisdiction on the planet. That needs to be acknowledged, it needs to be rewarded, and it should not be attacked by this government.

**The Speaker:** Any other members under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, is it under 29(a)(a)?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yes, it is, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** Yeah. He won't give a speech.

**Mr. Schmidt:** No.

Well, anyway, I had the misfortune, of course, of starting off my morning listening to both the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I know that my day can only go up from here, Mr. Speaker.

But I did want to take issue with one thing that the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake said about carbon leakage. Mr. Speaker, of course, the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake is always in error but never in doubt, and again he made a mistake today when he said that if we wanted to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, industry should move here. Of course, if he knew what he was talking about, he would know that Alberta has the highest per capita carbon dioxide emissions of any province in the country except for Saskatchewan. And, of course, Canada has one of the highest rates of carbon dioxide emissions per capita of any country in the world. So, in fact, he is exactly wrong when he's saying that if we want to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, industry should move here.

Mr. Speaker, I think that that should cause all of the members of this House to take everything that that member says with a serious grain of salt because if he's wrong on that fundamental principle, I can only assume that he's wrong on everything else that he's saying.

**The Speaker:** Any comments under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** What I appreciate about what the hon. member said just now, Mr. Speaker, is his clarity in his anti Alberta business position. I'm thankful that they've finally had guts enough to admit what we and Albertans have known all along, that they are anti Alberta business; they are antibusiness to the core.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, you referenced a document in your presentation. I request that you table it this afternoon as a part of the Routine.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. It's from the *Financial Post*.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-East.

**9:40**

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in support of Bill 25, which imposes a 100-megatonne emissions limit on the oil sands annually. This cap is an essential component of our larger climate leadership plan and sends a clear signal that we are very serious about reducing emissions. While we are serious about reducing emissions, we are also serious about creating jobs, about getting our product to market, and about being the most responsible energy-producing jurisdiction anywhere in the world.

Now, I will not or will endeavour to not reduce this argument to insults. I do not deny that anyone in the opposition cares about the environment. I acknowledge that you all do. I think, however, that we share a fundamental disagreement in terms of where we stand in the world and how we're going to move forward.

Today I'm going to outline a few things. I'm going to outline where Alberta stands in the global picture currently, what has been ineffective in the past, and how we are moving forward with our climate leadership plan. The Official Opposition: they talk a lot, but they don't ever seem to talk about the actual issue, which is climate change. They say they care about the environment. They say they care about vulnerable people. However, they continue to not offer any solutions for how to actually tackle climate change. They don't offer solutions for how we're going to get our products to market or how we're going to help our most vulnerable or how we're going to get jobs back here Alberta.

It leads me to believe, in fact, that members of the opposition are perhaps living in a bit of a bubble, one where climate change is not the defining crisis of our time, where the world is not moving towards a carbon-constrained reality, and where business as usual is an acceptable option. Given that they have no real solutions and given that they don't seem to accept the reality of the world that we live in, I'd like to take a little bit of time to talk about Alberta in a global context.

**Mr. Nixon:** What's your plan?

**Ms Luff:** I'm getting there. I have a plan.

The world got together in Paris last year, and they decided that it would be a bad idea to allow global temperatures to rise more than 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. This is because if temperatures rise above that amount, it will have catastrophic effects world-wide.

**An Hon. Member:** Keep drinking that water.

**Ms Luff:** Here in Alberta that could mean more drought, more storms, more forest fires, more pests, less snow, more climate refugees, and a decrease in biodiversity.

I heard a member from the opposite side say just now: keep drinking that water. I'm sorry; I was trying not to resort to insults, but the fact of the matter is that you just accused me of saying some things that, in fact, are facts that 97 per cent of the scientific community agree on, and you... [interjections] The global community...

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I wonder if you might direct your comments through the Speaker, please.

**Ms Luff:** If I go back, I'd just like to emphasize what can happen in the world if global temperatures rise by 1.5 degrees Celsius, which is, in fact, something that we are on track to have happen; 97 per cent of the scientific community agrees on this. Again, things that could happen: more storms, more forest fires, more pests, less snow, less biodiversity. I want my children to grow up in a world that still has tigers and polar bears and woodland caribou.

The global community – the global community – has decided that these impacts are unacceptable, and we made commitments to act. Canada has made a commitment within this framework to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, and the federal environment minister has indicated that this is in fact a low ceiling, that we should be trying to do better than this.

Now, in this context, Alberta has a large role to play, as the Minister for Advanced Education has just mentioned. In Alberta we are some of the largest emitters per capita and also the largest overall emitters in Canada. We're responsible in Alberta for 37 per cent of Canada's total emissions, and we only have 11.7 per cent of Canada's total population. The oil sands represent 24 per cent of Alberta's emissions, and they are, in fact, the fastest growing

segment of our emissions profile. This government recognized this reality, the reality that if we didn't do anything, the federal government was going to impose policy on us, and we have seen in the past little while that this is actually true. In creating this climate leadership plan, we're reducing our emissions in a way that takes into account our resource-based economy, our trade-exposed economy. We've created a made-in-Alberta solution in consultation with Albertans and industry so that we can do our part to help reduce Canada's emissions to help us meet our global commitments. The Official Opposition would have us do nothing and let the federal government impose policies on us, and we've seen how effective that's been in the past.

In a global context, then, it is necessary for us to reduce our emissions. Action is necessary. Given that the oil sands have been the fastest growing contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, the cap, in concert with output-based allocations, sends a signal to industry that we're willing to work with them to lower emissions, to get the carbon out of the barrel.

The cap alone is not enough, however. The overwhelming consensus of scientists and economists alike is that the best solution is a broad-based carbon price. The Ecofiscal Commission of Canada, composed of folks like Preston Manning and Jim Dinning, whom the opposition seem to respect very much, has endorsed our plan, stating that "putting a price on [greenhouse gas] emissions is a clear signal to the world that Alberta is adopting sound ecofiscal policies to meet its environmental responsibilities."

The Leach report along with the Canada West Foundation report outline the need to find balance, a policy that shows we care about the impacts of climate change and signals to the world that we are becoming a more innovative place to do business without being so stringent as to cause emissions to simply move elsewhere. The Canada West report states that "Alberta's new climate [change] strategy provides a good example of how to thread the needle . . . The genius of the plan is that it injects competition into the mix . . ."

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** There's a point of order noted. There's a point of order.

**Ms Luff:** "... at the firm level by [introducing] 'top quartile' performance."

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, could we wait? There's a point of order raised.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, it's not acceptable for members to say specifically that anyone has endorsed their plan when they most definitely have not. I've seen the reports from the hon. Jim Dinning and Mr. Preston Manning. They have endorsed some form of carbon pricing. They have most definitely explicitly stated that they do not support this government's plan. I ask that the member withdraw the remarks as it is impugning the reputation of the former members of this place that she has talked about.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, can you cite an authority for the statement you've just made? I'm searching.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Mr. Speaker, this is most clearly a matter of debate, much like the opposition's position on climate change. Honestly, he didn't even refer to a standing order that he was

implying that the member went to. I don't believe that there's any point of order here.

**The Speaker:** I tend to agree that this particular comment – and I have not heard an authority cited.

So please continue, hon. member.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will continue where I left off with a quote from the Canada West Foundation report that states:

Alberta's new climate [change] strategy provides a good example of how to thread the needle . . . The genius of the plan is that it injects competition into the mix at the firm level by [introducing] "top quartile" performance . . . there is an incentive to perform better than one's peers.

Alberta's fossil fuel resources will have lower value if we cannot develop them with a lower emissions impact.

Now, here in Alberta we already have the lowest overall tax burden in Canada, with no sales tax and no payroll tax. What the members opposite don't realize is that the world is changing. We are moving to a carbon-constrained future. Our economy here in Alberta, if we leave it at the status quo, is going to become less viable. Our neighbours know this. Washington, Oregon, B.C.: these are regions we have to work with in order to get our resources to tidewater, and they're all making strides in diversifying and greening their economies.

The Official Opposition want us to slow down and be left behind, and when I think about how far ahead we could be if past governments had chosen to act on this, had chosen to take a different path 10 or 20 years ago, I get incredibly frustrated and incredibly angry. It is astounding to me the extent to which previous provincial and federal governments have dropped the ball on this file. Decades of ignoring the issue have left us without access to tidewater and with a severely tarnished international reputation.

It is absolutely true – absolutely true – that we produce some of the most responsible oil in the world, but you wouldn't know it. You wouldn't know that we produce some of the most responsible oil in the world. You wouldn't know that our total emissions are simply a fraction of the whole. At global climate conferences we won fossil of the year award for nonachievement five years in a row. Five years in a row.

9:50

I recently read an article from *Maclean's* magazine which was entitled Oil's Worst Enemy, and, no, Mr. Speaker, it was not talking about me. It was talking about environmentalists, and it was actually talking about our past federal Conservative government. The article quoted several oil industry executives who supported the idea of a price on carbon and, in fact, deemed it necessary. For years, the article argues, we've been heading down the wrong path. To quote it:

Instead of convincing critics Canada could be trusted to develop a carbon-intensive resource in a sustainable fashion, Ottawa instead boasted about Canada's "emerging energy superpower" status, lashed out at environmentalists and thumbed its nose at international climate change efforts, painting a target on the industry's back in the process.

The Official Opposition would have us continue down this path, but our government won't. As an energy-producing province our leadership on this issue can spur innovation and action around the world. I'm so proud to be part of a government that recognizes the scale of the crisis, that is rising to the occasion rather than burying our heads in the sand. There are incredible opportunities here that we need to capitalize on that will benefit all Albertans.

I have heard from members opposite that we on this side do not see or do not understand that people are suffering in our current economy. This is fundamentally untrue. I have friends, immigrants from Korea, who came to Canada and spent their life savings on a small restaurant in downtown Calgary. Because of the downturn people are not coming to their restaurant as much as they used to. [interjections] Let me continue, please. They work the restaurant themselves. Minimum wage is decidedly not a factor. So due to the downturn they're having to work other jobs. They're having to be a dishwasher and a liquor store clerk to continue to make ends meet. Fewer people in offices mean fewer lunch customers. I understand, and I'm acutely aware, but the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that all of the tax cuts in the world will not refill the office towers in downtown Calgary.

The price of oil is low. It's low right now, and it's going to rebound much more slowly than it has in the past. Our economy is changing. When I talk to friends who are engineers or I talk to the good people at Calgary Economic Development, they know that we ignore climate change and economic diversification at our peril. However, they are hopeful. They know that we can capitalize on opportunities in clean tech, renewable energy, and energy efficiency to create good jobs now and into the future.

Our climate plan is working to capitalize on these opportunities. I hear from constituents that there is a desire for programs to increase energy efficiency, to increase access to public transit, and to help individuals and communities install solar power. Currently in my office I have approximately 200 signed postcards from constituents who want to be included in our energy transition, people who want to focus on community renewable energy. Albertans want to contribute to a green energy future, and programs under our climate leadership program will help them do just that.

Until very recently Alberta was the only jurisdiction in North America without an energy efficiency program. Fortunately, we've established Energy Efficiency Alberta, and it has recently announced its first three programs. The direct install residential program will offer direct, no-charge installation of low-energy products to residences such as lighting, water, and heating. The residential consumer products program will offer point-of-sale rebates to residential customers at retail outlets with products such as lighting, insulation, and appliances. The business, nonprofit, and institutional rebate program will offer incentives for high-efficiency products and installation of electric and gas-based products. These are the first three programs from our energy efficiency program, that will all help to incent jobs, will help to reduce people's carbon emissions, and will help to move Alberta forward.

We are doing many additional things that are only the beginning of programs that will help to create jobs across Alberta, good jobs in clean, greener economies. We're working with school boards to put solar panels on 36 new schools as they're built across the province. This will have the dual effect of reducing costs for school boards and educating students about renewable energy. To quote the vice-principal of Sir John A. Macdonald school in Calgary, which has 40 panels:

It's important [that we] teach our kids about the realities of climate change. We expect many of our students, using the knowledge they learn about solar energy and other renewable . . . solutions in the classroom, will help lead Alberta as we transition to more sustainable energy.

We're also investing in farms to help them become more energy efficient. Through granting programs farmers will be able to lower emissions and costs. The Schuurmans, who are dairy farmers near Millet, said:

The energy-efficiency programs offered by the government gave us the incentive to move ahead with installing solar power on our

operation. In addition to the environmental benefits that energy efficiency and solar power provide, we have found that by investing in solar power we have been able to lower our dairy operation's power consumption by over 60 per cent.

Emissions Reduction Alberta is currently seeking new technologies that can help us achieve our methane reduction targets. They've earmarked \$40 million to help us advance technologies that reduce methane. The president of Seal Well Inc. supports this investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to thank the Member for Calgary-East. It's interesting. In 2011 the hon. member was protesting against pipelines and was calling Alberta oil dirty, so I'm not sure whether to say that it's hopeful that maybe there's an attitude change on that side. There seems to be some contradictory information that came from over there.

Needless to say, there are a few things that I'd like to comment on if I may. One of the things that you had mentioned in your speech was: where do we stand in the world? This side, our caucus, the Wildrose caucus, has made it very clear that anything that needs to happen has to be in lockstep with other jurisdictions in the world. I don't believe, at least I have not heard so far, that the Americans are putting in a carbon tax. Maybe I'm mistaken.

I'd like to understand how it is that in order for us to create good, clean energy in this province, which, in my understanding, would require an environment of investment, an environment to bring folks in to create an environment of industry that is able to go forward to innovate with green technology – we have some of the best technology in the world. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our technology was touted by government not only provincially but federally to go across the seas to all of these other jurisdictions, to be the ones in place to help those folks get their emissions under control? That would actually be a real solution. If you're asking for solutions – because I wrote this down, that we evidently don't have the solutions – I don't recall if I could count how many times that we in our caucus have presented that as a solution.

We are in the province with the answers. I don't pretend to stand up here to understand everything that goes on, but thank goodness I live in a province where every single expert lives. If I need expertise, guess what? I'm surrounded by some of the most intelligent, thoughtful, common-sense, and forward-thinking people in this industry that not only wish to do better but are doing better given the opportunity by government, by good policy. I'm very interested to find out – we have a lot of policy coming from this side, and potentially the outcomes are similar, but really good policy will actually produce an outcome that we could all agree on.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the member across the way from Calgary-East to explain to the House about the global community and what it is that this government is trying to do in order to make sure that the global community is in lockstep with the rest of us.

I'd like to just say one other thing before the question is answered. As other countries move forward in their development and are increasing their energy consumption, our global energy demand is only going to grow. There are needs for new emerging markets for energy products that will be met, and they will be met by other countries that can supply them with fuel. I would love to see us be competitive in that aspect. They are not trying to stagnate their country's economic growth.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, why don't we give the member a chance to answer?

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Well, I'm just going to finish my comments if you don't mind, Mr. Speaker, and then I will get to my question.

**The Speaker:** I believe there's a point of order.

10:00

**Mrs. Aheer:** Energy is at the heart of production and development, and cheap energy is an integral part of economic growth and is central to Canada's success. With respect to the emissions, I mean, it doesn't matter whether it's Canadian or Iranian supplies that meet the growing global demand; there is a demand for energy, and that demand is going to be met. It is inelastic. Energy is in demand and is going to result in emissions, so if we're talking in lockstep and doing a global outlook here, if those barrels of oil are going to come from anywhere, would you not prefer that they came from here and that we have some sort of understanding of what those emissions actually look like? We're actually the only ones that already know what that looks like. You actually said the numbers yourself. You actually said the numbers yourself, so if you look at your own numbers . . .

**The Speaker:** I sense that the point of order was withdrawn. Is that correct?

**Mr. Nixon:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I believe that the hon. Member for Calgary-East mentioned some documents in her statement as well. I would ask, same as mentioned earlier, that they are tabled today in the Routine. The Member for Calgary-North West.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, where to begin? You know, every time we enter a debate, which is, I guess, what we're calling what we're seeing here this morning in this Chamber, I always think about people at home watching and saying: "Huh. I'm looking forward to a debate on the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act this morning, and I want to hear some salient points from the government, and I want to hear some equally salient points from the Official Opposition." What we've heard this morning is none of either, and one of the problems I have with that is that when we're dealing with an issue this serious that affects people in this province, reasoned debate is critical.

On one side we're hearing: have reasoned debate. You know, with all due respect, when you're screaming it, it's less effective. On the other side, every time someone brings up a point on this, you yell: climate change denier. In fact, a point of order was called, and you couldn't even answer the point of order without again yelling "climate change denier," and that really doesn't help the conversation either.

We have a whole lot of people watching this, Albertans, who are not seeing reasoned debate on either side of this House. Albertans are looking for balance here, and they're not seeing it. To the argument, I think, that came from the government side about tigers, bears, and woodland caribou: you know, we're actually talking about an Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. Like, come on. We're talking about the possibility that people are going to lose jobs in this province.

Here's where I want to go into that. This bill actually creates an artificial scarcity in emissions without creating corresponding resources or incentives to innovate to reduce emissions. There are lots of people in the industry and people who write about the

industry right now who are looking at this and saying: "What argument are you actually making for this beyond coming at it from a purely marketing point of view? What is the idea here?" Well, the idea is that we'd like to see a greater co-ordination with other jurisdictions. We'd like to see a greater co-ordination within Alberta to incentivize innovation, and we want a greater transparency in the process around oil sands regulations, and we're not seeing that either. You know, here's the government that was going to do things differently. The transparency piece is, frankly, very hard to see.

We look at Bill 25, and a lot of experts are looking at Bill 25, and we're not talking about party experts. We're not talking about think tanks that represent one side or another. We're talking about people who are actually looking at this piece of legislation, and they're saying that it's going to strand a significant portion of oil sands resources and limit Alberta's economic growth. Now, how is it going to do that? Well, it's going to do that by preventing responsible development once the emissions cap is met.

Now, I know that you've got some key players here who are coming to your defence, and they're saying: this is fantastic; we're going to get right behind it. You're forgetting about the lifeblood of this province, that is the smaller companies, that are going to be shut out of the process. Those companies are people with families, with children, with mortgages, with kids to put through university. I appreciate the woodland caribou and the tiger argument, but come on.

The bill also favours current players by artificially limiting the size of Alberta's oil sands market, and you can't deny that that's going to be the case. It stifles competition, and it creates unnecessary barriers.

Now, when someone stands up to say that – and I think I've been on record as saying that I believe there should be a price on carbon. I believe that we need to reduce our emissions. I want to sit at the table, as do my caucus colleagues, and have a conversation about how we make that happen, but that's not a conversation that happens when every time we bring up points, you yell "climate change denier" or "your government had an opportunity to do something, and they did nothing" or any of that rhetoric because you know in your heart that that's not true. The holier-than-thou attitude that you represent on the other side is not actually helping.

There are people who want to have this discussion, and we want to talk about: what are the unintended consequences? Now, I remember standing up here on Bill 20 a number of months ago and saying that our caucus presented a number of thought-out amendments that we had spent considerable time working on, and one of them, the one I brought forward, was an opportunity to look at the unintended consequences of Bill 20. I'm sure that we could probably do the same for this and say: a year after its implementation, what are the unintended consequences of this bill? The response that I got from the other side was: this bill is so good, it doesn't need oversight.

To me, when you ask for reasoned debate and people ask to talk about the oversight piece – and in the past number of months we have heard from people who are seriously concerned as well about GHGs, who are seriously concerned about the environment but also concerned about jobs in this province – and they want to have a conversation about what this whole picture looks like, how it comes together, the idea that they're not even allowed to come to the table and tell the government about the consequences of their legislation is just wrong. It's wrong.

You know, when you create, as you're doing here, two classes of regulated oil sands emissions, those from facilities whose first business occurs before December 31, 2015, and that are going to be capped and those from new or substantially upgraded facilities



whose first full business year occurs after December 31, 2015, you are in fact creating two tiers of business in this province. Now, I see the nodding, so I see that you get that that's the case.

The disadvantages of this – and I'm going to bring up OSAG for a minute because I think that a lot has been said about the makeup of this panel. I had said before to a round of attacks on right-wing media that I didn't have a problem with who you put on that panel because I think that if you have dissenting voices from both extremes – and you have extremists on this panel, and I don't think anyone will argue that – somewhere in the middle you'll find some balance. Now, I'm not sure you've found a balance, but I don't think people should be afraid to have extremists sit down at the table for that conversation because the folks who are pushing for responsible development in the oil sands in Alberta just have to have a better argument. That's what I would say: come to the table with a better argument.

**10:10**

I will say that the OSAG consultation and the regulation-making process is not transparent. When you do that, when you put together that kind of a contentious panel and then you don't make the process transparent, what's the first thing people are going to say? Let's face it. You don't come to the table.

I remember when I got my master's, a number of years ago – I specialized in issue and reputational management – the first thing we talked about was: who do you bring to the table when you want to make an argument? You bring to the table your highest credibility sources. Let's be honest here, and I say this gently: you're not bringing to the table your highest credibility sources when some of the folks that you have over there are environmental protesters. So, yeah, not really. You know, this is a problem. You actually have to come to the table and do better and make the process transparent, and you haven't done that. I appreciate the effort. I think you need to come to the table with more transparency, and I think you also have to understand that when people talk to you about creating a two-tiered process and putting some of these smaller companies in jeopardy, you have to listen. You have to listen to those companies.

Finally, I will say to the comment – I did really roll my eyes right back in my head when I heard this – that all of the tax cuts in world will not refill the office buildings in downtown Calgary: they won't. But you know what? Showing the energy industry that you support them and the work they do and showing the rest of the world that you support the energy industry in Alberta will help refill those buildings.

I'll tell you what. During Stampede week I had more than 50 meetings with different oil and gas businesses in downtown Calgary. You know what that week is like. We meet a lot of people. I didn't hear one of those groups say that they encountered an open door when they came to you with their problems, and that is not acceptable. You need to listen. You need to pay attention. You need to appreciate the unintended consequences and have a seat at the table for people who want to come to you with their concerns. I don't see that happening here, and it's deeply concerning.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before giving the opportunity for 29(2)(a), I just want to underline again the principle under 29(2)(a). It's intended to give questions and comments, brief questions and comments, and not to allow any member on any side of the House to simply make another speech. I've also checked and looked at precedent. That seems to have been the past practice on a consistent basis, so I just want to remind you of that.

Is there anyone wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)? The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Calgary-North West and I have disagreed on many occasions, but I did enjoy in this rendition her use of the words "unintended consequences." I was just wondering if she could expand upon the unintended consequences that this policy may bring forward as she sees it.

**Ms Jansen:** Well, I'd like to thank the member for that question and talk about the idea that this bill favours existing leaseholders – and that's problematic – by limiting the size of the oil sands emission market. Any time you limit a market, there is going to be a segment of the population that is affected by that. Now, certainly, your larger companies are going to be a little more flexible, and that's not going to be problematic for them, but when you create an unregulated market for oil sands emissions, when you add new costs to the consumers and the idea that you lock out new entrants into the industry, that is problematic. What you're doing is limiting the opportunity for business and investment in this province. That's an unintended consequence. And when you do that, you create an unlevel playing field.

We don't even know what the other ones are. That's why I think, as we did on Bill 20, that to have an opportunity a year down the road to meet the stakeholders who will be affected – and we may not know all of them right now – and give them an opportunity to present their case to the government about the results of policy or legislation that is harmful, maybe in an intended way, is an extremely important piece of the process.

We wanted this for Bill 20. We didn't get it. We would like to see some more thought put into the unintended consequences of this. Listen to experts. Listen to economists. Listen to people who have spent 20 or 30 years writing about oil and gas issues. Have a conversation with them, and talk about what those unintended consequences are. Let's remember the idea that we're not going to know the half of it until something like this is put in place, and there has to be an opportunity for those people to come to the table at some point in the future, too. It's our responsibility to make sure they have the mechanism to do so.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View under 29(2)(a).

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. I also wanted to thank the Member for Calgary-North West. Some of the ideas that you did bring forward in Bill 20 were excellent. One of the ones that the member brought forward was about metrics and about accountability measures within this policy. As much as I may have been more passionate and lighting my hair on fire – and I apologize if I sounded like I was yelling; that's not my intention – I'm just a little passionate about this particular bill.

You had mentioned artificial scarcity. This is a very, very important aspect of what's going on with this bill. Would you mind, please, explaining a little bit more about that?

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you. Well, you know, I think we have a situation here where, when you limit industry's ability, when you limit people's ability to create businesses in the energy industry, you create an artificial scarcity. One of my concerns is that when you limit the oil sands emission market, you create an environment – and I've said this before – and you put limitations on it that shouldn't necessarily be there because they don't actually fit your end goal. I mean, you look at the idea. The Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act: I think it's a laudable effort. The thing, though, is that you're doing it, and industry is telling you that it's flawed. Here's the problem. When you create a piece of legislation that is designed

to speak to your base, there is an inherent tendency to be tone deaf to the other people who are affected by this.

Let's be honest here. You've got a base of supporters in the NDP who want to see lots of legislation that keeps the oil sands from working. I mean, you can't deny that. You can't deny that you've got a lot of folks who are saying, "We'd be happy just to shut down the oil sands tomorrow," and if you could do that, good God, your base would be in heaven. The thing is that you've got to find balance, and the problem here is that when you create something like this, there's no balance.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. I appreciate the really vigorous conversation around these issues. As many of you know, I got into this political game, if you want to call it that, or political role, political vocation, around climate change back in 2002. The then environment minister, out of Medicine Hat, ensured that I was fired in 2002 for criticizing the Klein government over its lack of action on climate change. Lorne Taylor was the nominal environment minister, but many of us called him the anti-environment minister.

I feel very strongly about the issue, obviously. It's about our children. It's about our grandchildren. It's about our global community. It's about leadership. A lot of the rhetoric I've heard today, especially from the Official Opposition, relates to what amounts to, really, a denial of the seriousness of this issue on our planet, a real lack of understanding that this is the most serious, most complex global challenge in our lifetime. It may not hurt us in Alberta for the next 25 or 30 years, it may improve agriculture in Alberta for the next 25 years, but it is a serious threat to the rest of the planet and indeed to Alberta and Canada in the long term.

**10:20**

If you believe the science, if you believe that policy change is essential to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and their connection to warming and extreme weather events and new pests and new infectious diseases, then you have to believe that bold leadership is needed, because we have done almost nothing. We have made no progress on this globally.

Now, Alberta is not to blame for it all, of course, but we have a really important role to lead as a primary energy producer, as a wealthy western democracy. Who else is going to show leadership on this if we can't? So I applaud the government for putting a cap on emissions. Where else are we going to start to say, "There's a limit to what the environment can take"? We can't just improve efficiencies and expect people to drive less. "Oh, my gasoline engine now only burns one litre per 200 kilometres, so I can drive more." That's part of what happens when we improve efficiency if we don't add a limit on what we're going to actually put into the environment.

If we believe the science, we have to be bold. Tinkering with technology is not going to get us there. We respond to prices, mainly, as human beings. Consumers and producers respond to cost, and if we can make it more costly to do the less environmentally friendly thing, then we can start to move people in the right direction. This is really bold. What this government has done, to put a price on carbon and to put a cap on emissions, is bold. There's no question. It is going to cause some suffering, and it is causing suffering. We see that. We have to be measured about it. We have to be listening. We have to be looking at alternatives. I'm glad to see that cogeneration is given a special dispensation in this.

Cogeneration is the most efficient way of producing energy while we're transitioning to a low-carbon economy. It makes a lot of sense to me.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We're at 400 parts per million now in our atmosphere, the highest in 10,000 years. If we don't say that there's a limit in Alberta, why would anybody else say that there's a limit on the global emissions? We have to say that there's a limit beyond which our environment simply cannot recover. Even today we know that in our lifetime we will not see any lowering in the carbon emissions in our atmosphere. It takes a hundred years to reduce the amount of carbon that's currently collected up there.

Both the Liberal government and the Conservative government in Ottawa failed us. They simply were not willing to take a bold step and see this as the most serious threat to the planet and requiring leadership. Again, Canada, as one of the most privileged, wealthy, and scientifically capable countries in the world, must show the leadership. Yes, we're going to have to pay a little more than other parts of the world. Yes, we might suffer a little more than other parts of the world because they are suffering immensely with extreme weather events, resource depletion, water problems, flooding. Let's get serious about trying to find the way forward. I hope this government is listening to the industry and finding that balance.

But we have been subsidizing the fossil fuel industry for decades. We have been subsidizing it in billions. Let's start providing the same level playing field for the renewable and clean energy sector. Why should we force the clean energy and technology sector to compete with current low prices of coal and carbon fuels when they have had all their infrastructure paid for, all of their accelerated capital cost allowance benefits, and all the research benefits that governments have poured into it for the last 50 years? Suddenly we're telling the renewable and clean tech: compete with what we have now; don't expect subsidies. Well, I'm sorry. That is simply untenable given the over 50 years of subsidies we've been giving to the industry.

Sector-by-sector standards under Stephen Harper haven't brought us to where we need to be. Cap and trade is difficult to monitor and to prove that sharing or trading credits between those who are planting trees and those who are burning fossil fuels is a responsible or a verifiable way of measuring. So a carbon levy is the way to go. It's simple; it's cheap; it's enforceable. It treats consumers and producers equally, and we're all going to have to pay if we want our children to have a better future. That's just the reality.

I believe that a cap on emissions is important. I believe that the larger industry, as the Member for Calgary-North West has said, is in an advantaged position. The larger industries are going to benefit more from this cap than the smaller industries, that are going to struggle. But I see this government is starting to pay attention to the smaller industries, the new industries that are coming on, and providing them with a little bit less of an impact from this cap. I see, again, the cogen, which I think could be a really interesting opportunity with the oil sands to provide the waste gas into a cogeneration facility and actually reduce the net emissions from our SAGD and even our mining operations substantially. It would actually keep our electricity prices at a reasonable level while we transition.

On balance, I look forward to some of the debate around Bill 25 and some of the very specific issues that are not at all clear. For example, the cabinet can approve exemptions for methods that result in low emissions such as small experimental projects and

primary production. I'm wanting more clarity around what kind of flexibility, what kind of judgments cabinet is going to make around specific projects. I think we need to know more about that.

I'm also concerned about being clear. What constitutes cogeneration, how is it different from combined heat and power, and how much cogeneration? If an oil sands plant is providing its own cogeneration to heat and electrify some of its own facility, does that constitute the full contribution that it's going to make to the province, or is it simply taking its own advantage of this exemption, where cogeneration gets exempted with a separate 10-megatonne limit? I would like to see that apply to contributions to the grid, the general grid, rather than just in-house benefits to the company itself. Those are some questions that I hope we can see more explicit details on.

We in the Liberal caucus have been calling for a hard cap on emissions for at least a decade. I for one welcome that, and I look forward to hearing more details, then, about what exceptions, what exemptions this government is looking at and how that could be misused, in my view, to allow favourites, picking winners and losers and not being transparent and clear with Albertans about why they're getting exemptions and how it's in the longer term best interests of carbon reduction and climate change management.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks to the independent Member for Calgary-Mountain View for his comments. I want to thank him also for voting with the opposition here against the carbon tax when the government brought that forward. That's good.

But I did want to ask him kind of one question. He talked about cap and trade being very difficult, but he seems to suggest that cap is fine. So I just wanted him to maybe explain himself, how a cap is fine and cap and trade is difficult.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. That's a good question. To me, what I see happening here is the best of both worlds. It's difficult to enforce, in my view, and provide adequate oversight for companies that, for example, trade a credit for a cap in this province with some other province or some other industry, whether it's tree planting or no-till farming that gets credits for doing what they're doing. Just how do you measure that, and how valid is that? I have not been a supporter of cap and trade because it's so difficult to verify the tonnage and the benefits, for example, for certain tree-planting operations or a renewable wind energy project that doesn't actually work because of various technical problems or wind issues.

On the other hand, a tax provides a very clear message to all of us that we have to change our ways. The producers have to change. The consumers have to change. In fact, then, a cap on emissions is saying to everybody that we have reached the limit. Four hundred parts per million is beyond what is recognized as a safe limit for the atmosphere; 350 is considered to be something that we could live with and have some stability in our climate. Four hundred, where we're at now, is clearly pushing the very edge of what is sustainable.

10:30

So putting a cap on it is actually recognizing, for all of us, that our combined activities now at 400 parts per million has to be the limit that we try to strive for. If no sector, especially our largest carbon-emitting sector and our least clean fuel, our most energy

intensive fuel, the tar sands, if we can't put a cap on those, how do we actually move beyond that?

**Mr. Yao:** Oil sands. Oil sands.

**Mr. McIver:** Really? Tar sands? Aren't you from Alberta? You're not even from Alberta talking like that.

**Dr. Swann:** Oh, I see. Okay.

To me, it's a combination of a serious, bold commitment to leading on climate. It's going to be difficult. I think there are lots of negotiations that need to go on. We need to listen to each other, not hammer each other, because we're all in this together, and our children and our grandchildren are going to pay the price for whatever we do, good and bad, losing jobs on one hand, gaining jobs in another area.

I certainly would like to see more greenhouse operations, food production, around Alberta. Given the benefits of solar and wind and our natural gas resources, why aren't we growing more food throughout the year, and not having this large transportation from South America and California for all our goods when we could employ people, we could develop our own more sustainable food security right here in Canada? Tremendous opportunities.

Creativity is needed, balance. As the Member for Calgary-North West said: let's listen to each other; let's not hammer each other. I think we all want the same thing – the best for our kids, the best for our planet, leadership – and it's going to cost us something, so let's negotiate, not beat each other up over what's considered to be ideological.

We call each other ideological. That's not getting us anywhere. If we're listening to the evidence, if we're listening to each other, if we're looking for better ways, hopefully, we will bend and change when we hear a good argument. That, to me, is the hope for this Legislature and for my session here. I feel much more positive than I have in years in working with a government that wants to do the right thing, doesn't know all the answers but with constructive debate I think will make some of the changes that are reasonable, that are rational, that are evidence based.

Thanks, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Sorry; under 29(2)(a)?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah. The problem that I have with this bill – and I'd just like you to comment on it – is a bill that looked for support from the major emitters. Now, if somebody came to me if I was a major emitter and offered me a policy that was going to give me the ability to gobble up my competition, my smaller competition . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Madam Speaker, since we are going to stop at 10:45 for Remembrance Day celebrations, I mean, after hearing both sides of the argument . . . [interjection] Sorry. Are we stopping?

**Mr. Nixon:** No. You're good. Keep going.

**Mr. Panda:** Okay. After hearing both sides of the argument . . .

**Mr. Schmidt:** You changed your mind.

**Mr. Panda:** I didn't change my mind. I mean, I respect the Minister of Advanced Education, being a fellow member of APEGA. As you

all know, members like us are the ones who actually help to bring oil out of the sands. Those are the ones, those scientists and engineers, that are going to help take the carbon out of the barrel, not the politicians on either side of the aisle.

After hearing both sides of the argument this morning, I'm thinking that we should have more debate because the oil sands advisory group is still working on their recommendations, how to allocate the remainder of the 100-megatonne emissions quota. I have a motion to move here, and if you permit me, I would like to do that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, if you could just wait for a moment until I've seen the amendment.

**Mr. Panda:** Sure. I have copies here for distribution.

I would like to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Madam Speaker, for the reasons that I explained before, I rise in opposition to Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, in its current form. If members opposite agree to move it to committee for fulsome discussion, we'll be happy to participate in that, but in the meantime I want to put some facts in front of every member here. In 2014 Canada's GHG emissions were 1.6 per cent of the global total despite being a coal country with the second-largest land mass. Alberta's oil sands make up 9 per cent of that 1.6 per cent, or .144 per cent of the global total, not even two-tenths of 1 per cent, Madam Speaker.

The NDP's 100 megatonne per year cap on emissions still means 50 per cent growth of those emissions over 2014 levels. This means that Alberta's oil sands greenhouse gas emissions will be allowed to rise to .216 per cent of the global total, so barely two-tenths of 1 per cent. But to keep the oil sands from going a little further in its fraction of 1 per cent, this government is placing a cap on Alberta's resources that will cost us \$150 billion to \$250 billion.

It's big money, Madam Speaker. To put that into perspective, that's about five to seven years of running this entire provincial government. That's how much wealth you're keeping in the ground. After hearing these numbers, I don't know how Avi Lewis or Naomi Klein are going to react once they figure this out. With \$250 billion do you understand how many zeros there are after 250? I already see some of the supporters of the Leap Manifesto raising their eyebrows once they see that number, \$250 billion.

You know, with that money you can actually implement your social agenda of building schools and hospitals and so many good things.

**Mrs. Pitt:** You could build everything. Everything.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. So maybe now, after hearing this, you may want to join me in opposing this piece of legislation. You still have time.

The numbers show that the increase in greenhouse gas emissions is negligible, 72 one-thousandths of a per cent. For that, the NDP is going to put thousands of jobs at risk and the livelihoods of families just trying to get ahead. As my colleague from Calgary-North West explained, so many livelihoods are going to be impacted. That is the unintended consequence of your policy. This 100-megatonne cap is an arbitrary number. We don't know what the science is behind that number. Why not at 150? Why not at 70 or 50? We don't know.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Now you understand science?

**Mr. Panda:** I studied science like you. I was on record in this House . . .

10:40

**Mr. Clark:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow on a point of order.

#### Point of Order Decorum

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, I sat this morning and listened to the debate in my office while doing some work. I know it got heated, and I know it does get heated, but it's happened too many times, when the hon. Minister of Advanced Education fires barbs across at the Official Opposition. I understand the Official Opposition will do the same to the government side. But, frankly, it does not further the debate.

So under Standing Order 23(j) I would respectfully request that the Minister of Advanced Education would refrain from taking shots at the opposition side and, equally, that the opposition side would refrain from taking their shots at the government. It does not further the debate. Frankly, it makes things a lot worse for this House and does not further the interests of this province. I would encourage the hon. minister of the Crown – I remind you that notwithstanding the fact that he doesn't sit on the front bench, regardless of that fact, he is a member of Executive Council. I'd encourage him, Madam Speaker, to behave accordingly.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. First of all, I'll address one of the comments that was recently made, where it was an unnecessary shot at a minister, in his point of order doing exactly that, to create disorder by insulting a minister.

What I will say, Madam Speaker, is that we do appreciate the fact that in this House parliamentary tradition is that heckling is a part of this process. Now, I appreciate the fact that we do want to allow all members of all parties when they are up speaking – they do have the floor, and we do recognize that. I don't think that this is a point of order. I think, again, in the process of debate within this House that members do make comments while others are speaking. Again, you know, we recognize that we want to ensure that all members have an opportunity when they rise and are acknowledged by yourself, by the Speaker, that they do have the floor.

However, I do want to emphasize the fact that comments, whether they're heckles or otherwise, do come from all sides of the House and that a member jumping up on a point of order versus one member in one instance is not an accurate portrayal of comments that come from both sides of the House during an exchange.

What I can offer to the House is that I would encourage all members to be aware of the comments that they make and try to respect the Speaker when they have the floor.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you. I'd just like to point out that this is the second time that the hon. minister has been reprimanded this

morning for speaking out of turn, and then when he was offered the opportunity by the Speaker of the House to join the debate, he refused. So the only time the hon. minister would like to speak is when other people are speaking.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Listen; I understand the reason for the point of order, but do we really want to say that there's no heckling in here? I mean, who are we kidding, folks? I don't think there's a point of order. There was probably a crack that wasn't required; there are cracks that aren't required constantly. Occasionally I author them myself. The fact is that this isn't Sunday school. This isn't a quiet meeting of contemplation. It's a public discussion – it's a public discussion – contemplation over public policy, and the public needs to hear it. While I have

some sympathy for the mover of the point or order, really, who are we kidding?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. I would just remind all hon. members that maintaining decorum and order in the House is the responsibility of the Speaker, and while I certainly appreciate feedback from members and reminders from time to time, that responsibility will continue to rest with this chair.

There is no point or order. But again I would caution members to please be respectful in the way that they heckle and keep the volume to a level where we can all still hear what's being said by the individual who has the floor.

I've been advised that we are at 10:45. Pursuant to Government Motion 24, as agreed to on November 1, 2016, the Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 10:45 a.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, November 3, 2016

Day 44

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 3, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to stand today and introduce to you and through you a group of 22 seniors from St. Paul Community Learning Association that are here in the public gallery today visiting, and they also took part in the Remembrance Day ceremonies in the rotunda. It's just proof that you're never too old to learn. I'd like to also point out that two of the members are from the suburbs of the sprawling metropolis of Owlseye, Alberta.

One other point that one of the ladies asked me. They go out all over the province, and this is part of their education process. One lady is trying to convince the organizers that a trip to the casino would be a good math lesson. I wish her luck with that. Anyway, if they would please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you a group of students from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, from the Three Hills school. In conversations with them earlier, if there's one thing I'm certain of, it's that one of them is going to have my job in probably only two elections. I'd like to welcome them here to the Assembly and invite them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly staff and students from D.S. MacKenzie school. D.S. MacKenzie is a school nestled in the northeast corner of my riding, Edmonton-Rutherford, named after the first Premier, therefore first among equals amongst ridings. D.S. MacKenzie takes pride in not just simply teaching students a one-size-fits-all model but in respecting the learning needs of all of their students and has done an excellent job representing students in this province. I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Seeing and hearing none, the Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members, on behalf of yourself, Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise and introduce to you and through you the first-place winner of the 2016 Royal Canadian Legion dominion poem contest, intermediate category, Quirina Thompson. Quirina shared her profound and beautiful poem with us today at the ceremony of remembrance service in the rotunda.

Quirina actually lives in your constituency of Medicine Hat, Mr. Speaker, as you know, and she is accompanied today by her family.

I'd ask that they all rise as I call their names: Dan and Barb Thompson, Quirina's parents; Jack Thompson; Marlene Thompson; Jacqui Cook; MaryAnne Gukert; Valarie Thompson; and, of course, Quirina herself. Please give them the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Did she mention it was Medicine Hat?

The Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you someone seated in your gallery who has shown true dedication for the well-being of his fellow soldiers, Regimental Sergeant Major and Chief Stephen "Sticks" Gallard of the Frontiersmen in Canada. He has organized a special evening for healing and remembrance on November 10 at 7 p.m. at the Trinity Lutheran church in Edmonton, where anyone scarred by war or conflict can attend and begin to heal. We would like to thank you for your service and ask that you now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Legislature Lisa Mueller, president and executive director of Epoch Energy, and His Worship Rob Mackin, the mayor of Hinton. Epoch Energy, with the support of the town of Hinton, has proposed the development of a geothermal project in the Hinton area. We would like to thank both of these individuals for their contribution in diversifying our energy sector. I would like to ask both of them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Michael Reinhart. Mike is presently the assistant business manager for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. He joined the IBEW in 1979. This month the IBEW is celebrating their 125th year, after being founded in 1891. I want to acknowledge Mike and the IBEW and thank them for their contributions to jobs, training, and diversification in the province of Alberta and our economy. I'd ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a wonderful friend of mine and her family: Samreen Junaid, Ali Junaid, with Dua, Raheel, and Raiyan. Would you please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand today to introduce to you and through you two constituents from Strathcona-Sherwood Park, Mike and Lynn Roppelt. Mike and Lynn own and operate GSS Integrated Energy, a company whose operations I will be speaking about in more detail later on this afternoon. I'm proud of the contribution that GSS has made to our

community and our province. I would ask that Mike and Lynn Roppelt rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Jacque Surgenor, Krystal Gibson, Amy Churchill, and Heather Wieler. They are part of a dedicated group of parents who raised about \$300,000 in two years to build a fully accessible playground at Westboro school in Sherwood Park. The parents wrote grants and obtained over \$100,000 from the province, \$91,000 in cash and donated labour from Strathcona county, and over \$100,000 from corporate sponsors and individual donations. I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

1:40

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

#### Remembrance Day

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today, as the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs and as the provincial liaison for the Canadian Forces, to honour Remembrance Day as we take the time to show our gratitude and respect to those who have fought to maintain the freedom, peace, and security that we are so fortunate to have in this country.

It was at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918 when the guns fell silent to end the First World War. It was intended to bring peacetime for our soldiers, yet here we are, a century later, still striving to bring stability to a fractured world amid one of the largest refugee crises in living memory.

In war, armed conflicts, and peacekeeping missions around the globe Albertans and their fellow Canadians have served with valour and without hesitation. The price has been and continues to be high. It has been and continues to be paid with the lives of our military or with their mental and physical health and their years of service, and it has been and continues to be paid by the families who soldiered on while their loved ones were away on tour or forever.

These are debts we can repay only by living honourably and in our own ways upholding the freedoms that they defended. We wear the poppy on our left lapel, closest to our hearts, to show the world that we remember, that we honour the sacrifices made for us, and that we who never saw a battlefield will continue to carry the torch and protect our society and its values. With that commitment, those who lie in Flanders fields and elsewhere can rest, and those who survived and who defend us still will know that we stand with them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. We must never forget.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

#### Clean Energy Technology Centre

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to bring to the attention of this Legislature some good-news stories out of Drayton Valley and the opportunities they present for the government. A few years ago the town of Drayton Valley lobbied the government to create a unique organization called the Clean Energy Technology Centre,

that would become a business incubator. Two of its initiatives are starting to grow fruit and reinvigorate the Alberta economy.

The first is between the CETC and Dan Madlung, owner of BioComposites Group. The CETC and the town of Drayton Valley have worked with Dan to set up the only manufacturing facility in North America that will create a one hundred per cent biodegradable matting out of natural fibres like wood and hemp. This business has just recently signed the first contract with an auto company to make the inside door panels out of hemp and flax. This new industry based on hemp has the potential to be a \$400 million industry in Alberta in the next four years.

Hemp takes five times the amount of carbon out of the air in one year that a North American forest will take out of the air in 20 years, and Alberta is the best place in the world to grow hemp. The stock that BioComposites is using is now a waste product of the hemp industry.

Interest in this manufacturing facility is growing so quickly that Mr. Madlung has now decided that the industry must go provincial, and he's arranging the financing to build more facilities. To do this, he will need to work with the CETC and with the various levels of government, including the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade.

The second company is a company called Gas Recapture Systems, that is working with the CETC to assemble the equipment that will be necessary to recapture all of the fugitive gases from flare wells and turn them into a saleable energy product. GRS is turning a waste stream into a profitable venture and dealing with carbon issues at the same time.

Both of these ventures are using their expertise and working with various levels of government and organizations like the CETC to help Alberta diversify economically.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

#### Geothermal Project in Hinton

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of Alberta's climate leadership plan Environment and Parks Minister Shannon Phillips and Eric Denhoff, deputy minister responsible for climate change, are working in partnership with the oil and gas industry to find innovative ways to combat climate change.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I would just remind you that we don't normally use ministers' names.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Sorry. I apologize.

**The Speaker:** Please continue.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Geothermal energy projects, which harvest energy from deep within the Earth, have been identified as an innovative way to deal with some of the abandoned, suspended, and inactive oil well sites found throughout the province. While oil companies complete environmental restoration work, we are looking for new ideas to redevelop some of these locations as industrial opportunities.

Epoch Energy in conjunction with the town of Hinton has proposed the development of a geothermal project to take advantage of the near perfect conditions for this type of initiative in the Hinton area. Lisa Mueller, president and executive director of Epoch Energy, is uniquely positioned to bring this groundbreaking vision to reality. Research supported by GeoDiscover Alberta, a provincial public information service, has identified Hinton as an ideal location to test the development of this groundbreaking industry. Supported by both Mayor Rob Mackin and my office, this

project is expected to replace much of the carbon-based fuel currently used to heat government buildings and other facilities located in the community. Additionally, it may be possible also to produce electrical energy because of the high heat value, and another project is the possibility of greenhouses in the area to produce local food.

We are all very proud of our efforts to work in partnership with the oil and gas sector and local governments to find innovative strategies to promote the development of green energy options.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

### **International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers 125th Anniversary**

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge that this month the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers will be marking their 125th year as an organization representing members employed in some of the most important trades in our province. After being founded in 1891 in St. Louis, Missouri, as the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, their Canadian arm set roots down in Ottawa in 1899. At that time they represented 286 electrical industry workers, with the goal of advocating for improved safety and training standards.

Today, representing 65,000 members from a diverse range of industries across the country, the IBEW plays a significant role in the lives of workers. Of the three locals in Alberta local 1007 represents EPCOR, local 254 represents Enmax, and local 424 represents 8,400 construction workers across the province. I recently had the opportunity to tour the IBEW local 424's facility. Their Electrical Industry Training Centre teaches a variety of courses, including photovoltaic systems and electric vehicle charging stations.

I'm continually impressed by the commitment of IBEW to ensure that their members have the best opportunities possible to upgrade their skills and to work in safe, equitable conditions. As an apprentice electrician and IBEW member I appreciate the efforts that go into ensuring workers have the best opportunities for training and employment.

IBEW 424 is doing great work to support the goals of diversification in our province by offering quality programs that are evolving to meet the demands of a changing industry. I want to thank assistant business manager Michael Reinhart and his colleagues for their great work and to congratulate IBEW on 125 years of great service.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### **Inclusive, Accessible Facilities in Sherwood Park**

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The United Nations proclaimed December 3 to be the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. As this date approaches, I am mindful of the ways we build cities, design buildings, and are inclusive in our communities and workplaces. I am fortunate to live in a municipality creating inclusive, accessible facilities where everyone can participate and feel a sense of belonging.

It was my pleasure to open the new Emerald Hills Leisure Centre, which is equipped with specialized change rooms, aquatic lifts and wheelchairs, and zero-entry pools thanks in part to provincial funding. The Glen Allan fitness centre recently reopened and now includes a wheelchair-accessible curling rink. I was able to see firsthand how the design allows wheelchair curlers to deliver a rock.

1:50

Community groups in the area are also committed to creating inclusive environments. Earlier I introduced representatives from the Westboro elementary school parent council. Recently this group celebrated the grand opening of a playground designed so that everyone can play. Ramps are wide and plentiful. There's lots of space around the pieces of equipment for wheelchairs. Kids of all ages and abilities can now enjoy the playground. The wider ramps are also handy for parents pushing strollers, grandparents using a walker, or even someone using crutches while their leg heals. The design is spectacular, as anyone who drives down Broadmoor Boulevard can attest to.

At the opening I noted that it takes a village to raise a playground. In this case it took a committed parent council, a supportive municipality, provincial funding through the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and donations from local businesses such as the Alberta manufacturers' recycling association. Thank you to the Westboro community and to all those involved in creating this playground. It is innovative projects such as this that encourage inclusion that I as an MLA want to support and inspire.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **Oral Question Period**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### **Energy Policies**

**Mrs. Aheer:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta used to be a proud leader in oil and gas production across Canada in all categories, but things have changed under this NDP government. The Petroleum Services Association of Canada announced yesterday that for the first time Saskatchewan will pass Alberta in oil and gas wells drilled in 2017. It's just the latest example of bad NDP policies, and it's making things worse for the working men and women across this province. When will the Premier stop driving jobs out of our province with their risky economic policies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Let me begin by first of all noting that this projection, of course, relates to both oil and gas and ultimately is a projection that is driven by the geological differences in the new plays in natural gas. That being said, I think it's important for the member opposite to take some note of the recent report out of the U of C which actually states that under our government the oil and gas royalty framework is now the most competitive in western Canada.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Since the NDP came to power 18 months ago, they've raised every tax they can think of. They've raised taxes on business, incomes, gas, beer, even on trains, and now Albertans are preparing for a damaging new carbon tax to come into effect in two months, a policy even the Premier admits will mean thousands more jobs lost. These policies are doing more to help Saskatchewan's oil and gas sector than Alberta's. What is the Premier going to do about it?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think on the matter, for instance, of the climate change leadership plan, you know, let me begin by quoting the CEO of Cenovus. In answer to the question of whether this was a radical plan, he said: I'm not sure I would use the word "radical" to describe being a leader; I would describe it as being bold, and I would describe it as something that is very significant, something that all Albertans should now be able to take pride in.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Well, the Premier has no one else to blame, then, for her own NDP government's record.

One of the reasons cited for Saskatchewan beating Alberta in drilling is, quote, a more attractive investment environment for producers. That's just a nice way of saying that bad NDP policies are driving jobs and investment out of Alberta. The fact is that when you rip up contracts with Alberta-owned companies, raise everyone's taxes, it hurts the very people we are sent here to help. I wonder if the Premier can tell Albertans why Saskatchewan is becoming a more attractive investment environment for producers?

**Ms Notley:** Well, one thing I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that when it comes to comparing this province with Saskatchewan, even after the carbon levy is fully implemented, there will be a \$7.5 billion tax advantage for investors here in Alberta.

### Carbon Levy

**Mrs. Aheer:** A Fraser Institute survey conducted last December found that among 126 world-wide energy jurisdictions, Alberta's perception among oil and gas investors had fallen from 16th to 38th. The reason? Bad policies scaring away investment. And now the CEO of Surmont Energy, Mark Smith, is warning that the new cap will squeeze them out of the province. So will the Premier at the very least stop her plans for a carbon tax in 2017?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think over 80 per cent of Albertans understand that a key mechanism for improving the opportunity for jobs and investment in Alberta is getting a pipeline to tidewater. So let me just quote from the head of Kinder Morgan, the next pipeline that is up for consideration. He says, quote: I think the Alberta climate change plan and the alignment with some very specific environmental organizations was a huge step forward. Then he goes on and says: as a matter of dark clouds parting, it was a huge benefit to me and us, and we've seen that on the ground.

**Mrs. Aheer:** The NDP is telling Albertans that we need a carbon tax to grow our markets – okay – but down south two major presidential candidates are promising zero carbon taxes. It means that Alberta's businesses and our energy sector are put at a significant disadvantage with other energy producing jurisdictions across North America when we can least afford it. Why does the Premier believe that Albertans should pay a carbon tax when our number one competitor, the United States, won't?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I am quite perplexed that that particular party, which claims to stand up for Alberta, wants to take a made-in-Alberta carbon plan and hand it over to Ottawa. It makes no sense to me because that, my friends, is the choice that is in play right now, and they are completely living in never-never land if they fail to accept that. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Calm down, folks.  
Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay. Well, Australia has repealed its carbon tax, and its economy is continuing to grow. The French Socialist government looks prepared to nix its carbon tax plan due to concerns about higher power prices and a sluggish economy. So maybe the Premier could give the socialists in France a call for some economic advice. The fact is that the government is more worried about raising everyone's taxes instead of getting people back to work. Why is it that at a time when major western

economies are dropping the carbon tax, this government is bringing the largest tax increase in Alberta's history?

**Ms Notley:** You know, it truly is the case that the members opposite are reaching, reaching – the Fraser Institute; really? – in order to be able to tell a negative story. Even though leaders from around the world and within our province describe our government as taking a leadership role in moving forward on a long-ignored issue, what they want to do is vote against Alberta, against Albertans, against diversification, against Alberta innovators because they don't seem to think that we can do it. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? I know we can.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Ethics and Privacy Investigations

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Alberta's Information and Privacy Commissioner asked for the Minister of Justice to be investigated, the second time in less than two months, for a quasi-criminal offence. There are currently three different investigations into what looks like a cover-up in the awarding of a tobacco litigation contract, and now the RCMP have told us in writing that they are doing an assessment of whether to investigate breach-of-trust charges. It is beyond me why the NDP government would want to cover up and obscure files. Has the Department of Justice turned over all the pertinent documents to this investigation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin that with this matter our government has done everything we can to responsibly move forward with as transparent a review as we can. That's why we first invited in a former Supreme Court of Canada justice, Frank Iacobucci, to review the whole matter. He made recommendations, including that the matter be referred over to the B.C. Ethics Commissioner for additional review. That has been done. We are doing everything we can to follow the directions of all the various and sundry legal advisors to ensure that the process has integrity, that transparency is promoted at every possible corner because that is a value we believe in.

2:00

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, again I've had to on a couple of occasions in this last week reference the sub judice principle. I hope that's not where we're going on this one. I would say that to both sides of the House.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, this is serious. Here are the facts. We know the Justice department had crucial files from Alberta's former Ethics Commissioner and that we now have the B.C. Ethics Commissioner reinvestigating the matter. We know that Alberta's Information Commissioner has had to appoint an independent investigator and an outside prosecutor to look into whether the Justice department criminally tampered with the related FOIP. Let's be clear. This miscarriage of justice is happening under this government, and they can't keep blaming this mismanagement on someone else. Can the minister tell us why under her leadership Justice is covering up what happened with the awarding of the tobacco litigation contract?

**The Speaker:** Hon. Premier, perhaps yourself or one of the ministers might provide information on any particular legal action



here or not, but if you're not concerned, please proceed. Not sub judice on this one? Please proceed.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I simply need to say that I reject the premise of pretty much all of that question. It is simply not accurate. I will say again: transparency and openness are exactly what our government is endeavouring to do while protecting the rights of all Albertans who would benefit from a successful tobacco litigation and at the same time ensuring that where there was any wrongdoing, it is openly and objectively assessed. So we are taking steps as appropriate to make sure that happens.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Nixon:** Alberta Justice is accused of manipulating FOIP applications and imposing arbitrary deadlines on request. Until we're shown otherwise, it's a cover-up, plain and simple. The independent adjudicator has still not received all the government documents requested despite more than two years of investigation. There is no evidence that Justice is co-operating with any of the three ongoing investigations, leading Canadian privacy experts to describe our Justice department as a rogue organization. Albertans are curious, Minister. How are you planning to clean up the mess in your department and re-establish trust for Albertans in their institutions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will simply say this, that we understand that there were additional recommendations made by an official from the OIPC, office of the Privacy Commissioner, and we are reviewing those recommendations. There will be additional information provided by the Minister of Justice in the days to come.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

#### Electricity Power Purchase Agreement Lawsuit

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the last two days the Member for Calgary-West asked the Deputy Premier about Mr. Joseph Arvay, the B.C. lawyer with close ties to the NDP that the government hired to litigate its PPA court case. The Deputy Premier refused to say what the sole-source contract given to Mr. Arvay was worth, so we looked it up for her: \$500,000. And that's just a retainer. To the Premier: given that there are surely a great many lawyers right here in Alberta who are more than qualified to handle this case and given that this money is coming directly from the pockets of hard-working Albertans, don't you think you should have at least spent the money in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely all of the rules were followed in the decision to secure the advice and work of this particular lawyer. I'm very pleased for the members opposite that they were successful in finding the blue book and looking up the amount. Congratulations to you all. That being said, the point here is that Albertans deserve to have the best representation that they can get, and I am firmly convinced that in selecting this particular counsel, that was the objective that we were achieving.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, \$500,000 is a lot of money, especially to the thousands of Albertans who are out of work right now. When you add this half a million dollars to the

\$100,000 you spent to influence both public opinion and potentially the courts through advertising, it totals as much as your government provided to Alberta community organizations to prevent child abuse earlier this month. That is shameful. Given that you're wasting borrowed money on this court case, money that Alberta taxpayers are on the hook for, will you cut our losses and drop this ridiculous lawsuit?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, it needs to be understood that the money that is reported in the blue book has not actually been spent. That was just the retainer, so in fact a fraction of that amount of money has been spent on the matter thus far. So less, not more. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I can't hear the Premier's answer. Please.

Hon. Premier, please continue.

**Ms Notley:** That being said, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to take whatever actions we can to protect Alberta consumers, residential and industrial. I know the folks over there want to protect the right of certain companies to pass on their losses to consumers and to Albertans, but we are going to challenge that as long as we can.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it curious that you insist that Mr. Arvay is the best person for the job when he has a long history of working with the B.C. NDP, close and personal ties to one of your government's most expensive patronage appointments, and given that the optics of paying one of your comrades half a million taxpayer dollars to take Alberta companies owned by Alberta taxpayers to court because you are too arrogant to admit you made a mistake are simply irresponsible, will you please save yourself from any further embarrassment and drop the case?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, we will continue our efforts to stand up for regular Albertans, for citizens, for consumers, for homeowners, for families, for business owners, and for industry because that's what we were elected to do. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I can see that all of us can hardly wait till Monday.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

#### Remand Centre Drug Overdoses

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Justice minister today. In the first nine months in Alberta there have been 23 near-fatal overdoses and three fatal overdoses in the Edmonton Remand Centre. In all of the year of 2014-15 in our federal correction services there were only six reported fatal overdose deaths, six in the entire federal prison system. This indicates a serious problem in the Edmonton Remand if not in the provincial remand system generally. Will the minister tell the House how many overdoses and overdose deaths have occurred in the other remand centres?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Of course, the safety of our inmates and of our correctional facility staff is absolutely of top priority at all

times. Unfortunately, it has been a long-standing challenge with correctional centres that sometimes drugs do get into them, and because of the recent wave of fentanyl coming into the province, that has had a really tragic impact on our correctional centres. We continue to work with our correctional staff to make sure that they are trained. They use drugs, they use searches, they use a number of methods to do their absolute level best to prevent those drugs from coming in.

**Dr. Swann:** My question was: will you table the number of overdoses and deaths in Alberta remand?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**An Hon. Member:** Hello?

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sorry. That was rather shorter than usual.

I don't have those numbers in front of me right now. We can certainly look into how those numbers are kept. Given that the hon. member has the numbers, I'm not really sure why he's interested in my tabling them, but I will absolutely loop back with my officials.

2:10

**Dr. Swann:** Well, Mr. Speaker, my final question is: will the minister call a fatality review and find out what opportunities for prevention, where we're falling down in protecting our children, our mothers, our fathers, our relatives who are charged but not yet convicted and staying in remand? I think we owe them a fatality review.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As I've said, the safety of our inmates and of our correctional facility staff is absolutely top priority for us. Whenever there is a fatality within a correctional centre, there's an automatic process that puts that before the Fatality Review Board, and ultimately that independent review board and not people at the political level makes the decisions on what ought to go to a fatality review. That being said, we do internal reviews of all overdoses and all deaths within corrections to make sure that we're always taking steps to get a little bit better.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### **Bovine Tuberculosis**

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year has already been very challenging for Alberta ranchers and farmers with the wet and snowy conditions delaying harvest in many parts of the province, and now in southeastern Alberta some ranchers are facing a stressful situation after a case of bovine TB was confirmed in a cow that originated from that area. To the minister responsible: would you please update the Assembly on this situation?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start by saying that our government supports farming families and is incredibly proud of the beef industry in this province and the iconic product that we export to the world. Our government remains very engaged on this issue and continues to work with industry and federal partners as the investigation continues. The CFIA has initiated an investigation into the case, and Alberta Agriculture and

Forestry continues to work closely with them to provide any assistance they may require.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The beef producers affected by this situation are very concerned by the quarantines preventing them from marketing their cattle, and these producers have been dealing with this situation for a number of weeks. To the same minister: what is the government doing to help ensure an expedient solution for these farmers and ranchers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These farmers and ranchers need our government to help the CFIA expedite the investigation and reduce quarantine times, and doing that is our priority. A team of staff has been set up to co-ordinate activities, identify areas of co-operation, and help expedite the investigation. The team is also co-ordinating communications from Ag and Forestry and CFIA to industry and reviewing CFIA situation reports to identify areas where Alberta can help. We know the industry in Alberta is strong and resilient, and we continue to work with our partners to support them through this.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, CFIA, is the lead on this investigation, again to the same minister: what is your department doing to aid our beef producers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've been in close contact with beef producers about this issue, and we know it is causing some producers a great amount of stress. A recovery team has been assigned to assess potential avenues for providing financial assistance to impacted producers. The Department of Agriculture and Forestry continues to work very closely with CFIA and beef producers to share information on financial options with affected producers. We will continue to listen to beef producers and affected parties to look for ways to support our hard-working farm families.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### **High-risk Offender Monitoring**

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently an Edmonton justice found a national sex offender registry to be unconstitutional. I know that there are always exceptions to a rule, but this registry is about keeping our community safe from repeat sex offenders. The Crown is still able to oppose and find alternative solutions, and I sincerely hope that they will. To the Minister of Justice: what is her government's position on the sex offender registry?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, obviously, it would be inappropriate for me to comment directly on the decisions of a justice who feels that they are enforcing the rights of average Albertans.

With respect to the Crown prosecution service we have a number of registries that work within police at a provincial level and a federal level to ensure that long-term offenders, that high-risk

offenders, that a variety of different offenders are tracked to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that we're keeping the population of Alberta safe. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** You guys done?

**Mr. Nixon:** Yes, we're ready, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'm glad.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that recently at a Wildrose AGM our members overwhelmingly passed a policy that says that Alberta should "improve monitoring of and strengthen restrictions on those who have been released from jail [and] still . . . pose a threat to the community" and given that the sentiment is echoed across our province from concerned parents to community members, what specific measures will the NDP be implementing to support this policy and keep our communities safe?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member, for what's really a very important question. Our Crown prosecution service has a number of ways in which they track high-risk offenders and long-term offenders, and they do make those applications whenever appropriate. In addition, we've made a number of reviews of different elements of the justice system, as has the federal government, to ensure that we're using the justice system more efficiently, to ensure that we're not using it in cases where people are suffering from mental health and addictions but to ensure that it is able to focus its resources on those who present a danger to society.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that according to the Justice website there are 40 high-risk offenders in Edmonton, 20 in Calgary, and 17 in other areas of the province and given that there are not enough resources for all these people to be monitored by the police forces, threatening the safety of our communities, what additional actions will the government take to stop these individuals from reoffending in our communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member, for the question. Well, certainly, it's the case that those offenders are monitored, both by Justice and by police, where appropriate. It has been my experience that our police partners do their absolute level best and that they actually do a fine job of ensuring that that's the case.

But we at Justice are always looking to move the ball forward, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we've instigated a number of system reviews to ensure that we are focusing critical resources like police, like jails, like the court systems on matters that actually pose a risk to the public as opposed to those . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-North West.

### School Fees

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In its 2015 election campaign the NDP government promised Alberta parents that it would cut

school fees in half. For the record, the pledge is on the NDP's 2015 campaign website and page 8 of its campaign booklet, which I will table. Allow me to quote from the website. "We will invest \$45 million to reduce school fees by half, with a particular focus on banning lunch supervision fees." To the Education minister. You've been in office now for a year and a half. When will you fulfill this promise for Alberta parents?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question as well. Certainly, we have been working hard to identify where school fees are being charged and how much. We were in a circumstance with Budget 2016 where we had to make some difficult choices. However, we've seen over time that with our process of looking at where school fees are, many school boards have reduced their school fees, and certainly in the long term we will endeavour to do so on a province-wide basis.

**Ms Jansen:** "Difficult choices." Alberta parents will remember that.

Given that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona criticized the previous government for school fees which she claimed were the result of poor management and given that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview accused the former government of downloading public services onto hard-working Albertans through the use of busing and supervision fees, again to the Education minister: reducing school fees got huge traction in the last election, but now that the voting is over, is your interest over, too?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are difficult choices to be made budgetwise. We chose to invest in enrolment so that we could hire 1,100 teachers, more than 800 support staff, and to make sure we kept the lights on. School boards appreciate it. Parents appreciate it. The kids appreciate it in the classroom. Otherwise, we would have fallen off an education cliff if the previous government had happened to have won again.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given this government clearly has no plans to reduce school fees and it's now downloading more costs onto parents with a carbon tax that school boards cannot afford to pay and cash-strapped boards have to increase school fees, particularly for busing, to help pay for this new tax, to the same minister: since you will not cut school fees, can you at least tell parents that you're not going to hike those fees up?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, I'll make it very clear that we are working to reduce school fees across the province. We weren't able to do it this year because of a difficult financial circumstance, which probably most people understand in the province – maybe this member doesn't – and certainly we're working very hard to make sure that we don't just keep the lights on in schools but that we have the best school system here in Canada based on the financing that we put into place, funding for enrolment and building new things like a school nutrition pilot and building a plan to reduce school fees in the out-years.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Home-schooling Providers

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard from parents that only 60 of 100 home-schooled students, out of the 3,500, as of yesterday have found an appropriate replacement for Wisdom Home Schooling. One of those parents, after being turned down many times by school authorities, has had to place their child, who has a special-learning need, in a public school authority in a classroom without an aide. Will this minister apologize to the parents of 3,500 students who have had their educational program of choice ripped out from under them and are now having to enrol in programs that may not meet the needs of their children?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. It's important to make sure that we're looking after each of the home-schoolers that need registration in an affiliate to move forward in education. It is home-schooling, so people can move forward because they are schooling at home.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member opposite to carefully read the report that started this in the first place and think twice about hitching his wagon onto allowing this financial situation to continue in that school.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not much of an apology.

We all want to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being protected while our students are getting a world-class education, but given that the minister's sudden decision to close Trinity has left 3,500 students and parents in a lurch two months into the school year with no authentic choices that meet their educational needs, Minister, what's to stop you from unilaterally closing any other school, leaving more Albertans suffering the consequences of your bad decisions?

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, I won't apologize for making sure that we spend public money appropriately, following the law. Once again, if this member wants to hitch his wagon to a circumstance like that, well, he does it at his own peril, quite frankly. We are making sure that we will have places for these students. If he has individuals who are having trouble registering, please come visit me in my office, and we will look after them. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The two front rows, please.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister has created an outrageous problem for 3,500 students and their families by closing Trinity Christian School without warning and given that he decided not to approve ReThink charter school in Calgary and given that the NDP tabled an amendment to Motion 504 that negated parental choice, why should parents anywhere in the province believe that he and his government support parental choice in education?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it might be a convenient point to exercise and indulge in hyperbole, but let's look at the facts. We have maintained stable funding for all forms of education, including home-schooling, private schools, and chartered schools across the province. This is an unfortunate circumstance. Certainly, we are working hard to mitigate the situation. I looked at it. It's home-schooling, so schooling does carry on. We will work hard with all parents and students to come to an amicable solution.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### Economic Development

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have been pleading with this government for stability and a sustainable economy. History has shown time and time again that this sustainability and job creation are the by-product of low taxes, entrepreneurship, and investment. What has the Minister of Economic Development and Trade done to create an atmosphere where investors' confidence can materialize into jobs that don't rely solely on government subsidies and spending?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. There's a number of initiatives that our government has embarked on over the past year since this ministry was created, including increasing lending limits of ATB by \$1.5 billion. We've also reintroduced the STEP program. We've reduced the small-business tax by 33 per cent starting January 1. Alberta will continue to have the second-lowest small-business tax in the country. I look forward to telling the member about all of the other initiatives our government is undertaking.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, given this government has gone after companies like Enmax and EPCOR, it could be argued that this minister is in fact doing the opposite to inspire confidence in people to invest and given that it's already hard enough to start a business and to be successful at it without making them even less competitive by adding a carbon tax and a 50 per cent increase to minimum wage, does this minister believe that he is creating an environment to nurture diversification or hinder it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to respond to this and to point out the fact that even with the carbon levy coming in on January 1, 2017, Alberta will continue to have the lowest taxes in the country, lower than Saskatchewan by \$7.5 billion. I'll tell you how else we're helping to grow local economies. By raising the minimum wage, we are putting dollars in the hands of hard-working men and women of the province who are going to be spending that money within their local economies. I can tell you as well that we will be introducing legislation on two new tax credits.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Hunter:** Minister, a person will not invest unless they're confident that they will be able to earn a profit.

Given that your risky economic policies have severely damaged investors' confidence in this province and as a result jobs are being lost and families in Alberta are suffering, Minister, will you tell this House how many net new jobs Alberta has created under the NDP and provide evidence that shows that your policies are actually working to help Albertans get back to work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd love to respond to this question. Increases to our Infrastructure investments sustain about 10,000 jobs a year for the next three years, and 2,700 students had summer jobs because we reintroduced the STEP program. The Alberta Enterprise Corporation investments: 1,100 direct and 1,400 indirect jobs. The modernized Alberta royalty framework has led to more than 80 new well approvals, supporting 135 jobs each. We

provided \$10 million to make Alberta's agrivalue processing incubator the biggest in the world, and that has created more than 400 jobs. The list goes on.

### **Ethics and Accountability Committee**

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, last June, amidst great fanfare, the NDP government appointed the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee. Now, after a slow start, the committee worked diligently throughout the summer and completed work on one of the four acts that we were asked to review. The work on a second act is also largely complete, and a great deal of information has been collected from hundreds of submissions on the other two acts. The all-party committee unanimously asked to be reconstituted to complete its important work, but now we hear that won't happen. To the minister: why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour, proceed.

2:30

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The committee that was proposed by this government was because we wanted to take a collaborative approach, working with all parties to review conflict-of-interest legislation, election financing, whistle-blowers, following on Bill 1, the act that banned corporate and union donations, getting big money out of politics. The committee worked well together to make some recommendations and made recommendations around whistle-blower protection. But when it came to stopping the old ways of doing things in elections financing, they did everything they could to stop it on the opposition side. They fought against getting big money out of politics.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that I was on that committee and given that when the minister was the chair, we met only four times during the first seven months of existence for a total of less than eight hours of meetings and given that the submissions of hundreds of Albertans on the elections act and the Conflicts of Interest Act have been collected and diligently reviewed by the committee and given that the mandate of the committee could easily be extended to allow for this important work to be completed, to the minister: what do you intend to tell the hundreds of Albertans who, because of your decision, will now be ignored by your NDP government?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour and democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have told us that they want to take big money out of politics, and we have responded. Moving forward, the committee will not be reconstituted, but we will be looking at the submissions from Albertans, the discussion that happened at that committee, and bringing forward some recommendations for our financial system to get big money out of politics. Today \$105,000 can be donated by one person across four years. That is big money still in politics. Although the opposition was opposed to changing it . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Not true.

**Ms Gray:** . . . we will be bringing forward reform.

**The Speaker:** Allow me to remind the House again about language and statements being made like "Not true." Please contain it. [interjections] I'm reminding the House, please.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the committee's work was continuously hampered by interference from the Premier's office and given that dozens of votes by the committee ended in a tie which was always broken by the committee chair in favour of the government members' position and given that virtually all of the contentious issues were decided in the government's favour even when there was overwhelming evidence of widespread public opposition, why doesn't the minister simply admit that this committee was merely a sham designed by the NDP government to tilt the electoral playing field in its favour?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Modernizing elections financing should have been a nonpartisan issue. Unfortunately, the opposition parties did everything they could to stop changes from being implemented. We are currently looking at the unfinished work of the committee so that we can move forward, making sure that our electoral laws match the principles that exist in virtually every other jurisdiction in Canada. We will be working to get big money out of politics. We will be working with Albertans to do this in a smart, modern way.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

### **Fort McMurray Wildfire Recovery**

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has now been six months since the Wood Buffalo wildfire forced tens of thousands of people from their homes. Many Wood Buffalo residents have voiced concerns about just how long they've been kept from their communities. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: can you provide an update on the progress of recovery in this region?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of the significant progress that has been made in the recovery of the Wood Buffalo region. Demolition and cleanup are close to complete, and rebuilding is under way. We continue to support residents as they work through the insurance process and to ensure the community has the mental health supports that they need. As someone who lived through a devastating wildfire in my own hometown, I know this will be a long journey, but we have been standing with the people of Wood Buffalo since the start of this disaster, and we will continue to do that in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for the answer. Albertans have shown just how resilient this province is and dug deep to contribute to those displaced by the wildfire. To the same minister: what assurance do these thousands of Albertans have that their money is going where it is needed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The generosity of Albertans is going exactly where it was intended, to making a real difference in the lives of those impacted by this devastating wildfire. Thank you again to the Albertans who dug so deep. Our government matched those contributions by individual Albertans to a total of \$30.3 million. Those funds are targeted towards programs to help residents economically and emotionally. Through the Canadian Red Cross we are giving to great, local organizations that are already on the ground helping residents and supporting business

owners so that they can reopen their doors and take care of their staff.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard that many small businesses in Fort McMurray are struggling right now. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what supports do business owners impacted by the wildfire have available to them?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. We know that the wildfires forced many residents of Wood Buffalo to leave behind their homes and businesses. It came at a moment's notice and at great personal cost. I can tell you that as soon as the evacuation ended, we funded a Back to Business Resource Centre to provide a one-stop shop for business, staffed with experts. Since then we've met with and I've met with business leaders, including the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and we listened to what they asked for. They asked for grants, for funding for their businesses, which we brought together, the other two orders of government and the Red Cross, and provided a \$60 million envelope.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

#### Forest Fire Fighting Contracting

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, the media reports that not only did this government bungle the awarding of casual fire bomber contracts by forgetting to put them out for tender, but they mishandled them so badly that they cancelled them completely during one of the driest wildfire seasons on record and then retendered them the day after the Fort Mac fire started, at the beginning of May. Notwithstanding the heroic efforts of the front-line personnel, did these errors in any way impact the emergency preparedness for that fire season?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It is absolutely absurd to imply that in any way the government of Alberta was not completely committed to ensuring that wildfire fighters had every single resource that they needed on the front line at every single moment during every wildfire in the province this summer. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Government members, when you knock on your desks that loud, I cannot hear the minister. Please contain it.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that it was found that the tendering of these air tanker contracts was so poorly handled and given that the department then tried to incorporate confidentiality clauses so fire companies would stop talking to the media and opposition about this government bungling, to the Premier: were these actions a direct result of ill-advised budget cuts, and why did you ask for these gag orders, that were clearly not in the deals before?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The contracts that are being talked about were actually for the 2017 fire season, so it had absolutely no implication for the fire season this summer. Certainly, we provide contracts for baseline firefighter services to provide a bare minimum of that; however, we have always had emergency

funding available to be utilized to work with our partners from across this country and around the world to ensure that for every single wildfire every single resource will be there. That happened this summer, and I'm proud of the work our wildfire fighters did.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, given that the revised tendered contract for air tankers on May 2 contained exemptions to allow the slower, smaller, amphibious AT 802 from B.C.-based Conair to work in Alberta and given that these souped-up crop-dusters carry a smaller water load that's a fraction of the L-188s' or the CL-215Ts', did this government compromise wildfire fighting operations by procuring smaller aircraft far below what is needed to properly work Alberta's fires? Will you correct these matters before the next fire season?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not profess to be an expert in fighting fires, and I would suppose that the member across the floor is not an expert in fighting fires either. We depend upon the experts in wildfire to tell us what resources we need, and when they tell us they need resources, we make sure they have them. I'm proud of the work they do. I am deeply opposed to any implication that our wildfire fighters are not doing everything they can to help Albertans, and we will continue to be there for them. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Members, please.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### 2:40 Government Agencies, Boards, and Commissions

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Electric System Operator, Energy Regulator, Petroleum Marketing Commission, Utilities Commission, China petroleum corporation Alberta Petroleum Centre, Market Surveillance Administrator, Transmission Facilities Cost Monitoring Committee, and the Balancing Pool, which is currently looking for no less than four new members, all report to the Energy minister. Will she take this opportunity right now to inform Albertans of all resignations that have been tendered for each of these groups in the past week, the past month, and indeed since she has become minister?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for that question, I think. Currently I'm not aware of any resignations this week. I can go back and give a report to the committee on all the things – we have been looking in the last while for members for the Balancing Pool as part of our ABCs' replacement of people.

**Mr. Rodney:** I look forward to that.

Given that outstanding Albertans are resigning from extremely important positions on all sorts of agencies, boards, and commissions across various ministries and that this is a huge problem for Albertans, I have a few questions for the Premier. Will you table a list of all of the board directors and chairs of all Alberta ABCs who've resigned since you've taken office, and when will you table that document? Will you and your ministers be tabling future documents of this kind in a timely fashion on a go-forward basis because of the importance of this, forging the future direction of our province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. The agencies, boards, and commissions review is ongoing at this time.

As people know, we initiated this review. About 301 agencies, boards, and commissions were doing the work of government. We do need to better understand what they're doing. There are lots of things that this government, when it came into office, didn't understand. They didn't understand how many people were getting paid, how many contracts were out there for different organizations, and we have culled all that information and brought it in. We're saving Albertans money by amalgamating many of the agencies, boards, and commissions: \$33 million over three years.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thanks to the Minister of Finance for that, but that wasn't the question. We'll ask it in a different way. Again to the Premier: given that more and more honourable Albertans are resigning from agencies, boards, and commissions across this province for all sorts of reasons, including political interference, as has been well documented, are you at all concerned about this alarming trend, and if so, what exactly are you and your ministers planning to do about this on behalf of and in the service of Albertans? Please tell us.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. You know, what we are doing is that we are resetting the appointment process for the agencies, boards, and commissions so those agencies, boards, and commissions will look more like Albertans and less like that side.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I did not note it, but I think I'm advised that there is a point of order that was raised earlier.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

### GSS Integrated Energy

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to be part of a government that is creating jobs and diversifying Alberta's energy sector. I constantly say that Strathcona-Sherwood Park is a community made of leaders, so it is an honour to again recognize constituents of Strathcona-Sherwood Park Mike and Lynn Roppelt and the innovative approach their company, GSS Integrated Energy, has taken to help Alberta move forward in an environmentally responsible way.

GSS is an Alberta-based company dedicated to improving energy efficiency and reducing consumption in residential, commercial, and industrial applications. They specialize in terra thermal energy exchange and storage systems, a process that captures waste heat to use when needed and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. They are proud of the many projects that they have been involved in across western Canada. These projects include residential builds that take place right in Strathcona county like Crimson Leaf Estates and other properties in and around Sherwood Park and Edmonton. Even in your own constituency, Mr. Speaker, Medicine Hat, they've provided specialized services for a variety of new and retrofit geothermal systems.

GSS uses the best high-performing technologies such as subsurface energy storage; solar, thermal, and photovoltaic energy; stormwater and grey water reuse; and cogeneration. They were recently recognized for their contributions by our local chamber of commerce during Small Business Week, winning the 2016 business

award for environmental protection. They were also named as a finalist for innovation in the new large-business product or work system category.

I am very proud to have the owners of GSS in my constituency, and I look forward to continuing to support their work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

#### Bill 27

#### Renewable Electricity Act

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act.

This proposed act will help carry out elements of the climate leadership plan. It will create the legislative framework to meet our target of 30 per cent of electricity produced in Alberta to be from renewable sources by 2030. Bill 27 will also formalize the commitment we made to create the renewable electricity program. The Alberta Electric System Operator will run the program. This bill ensures that the AESO has the authority to develop and implement the program, Mr. Speaker. This bill sets the groundwork for greener electricity in Alberta. It also helps to diversify our economy and create jobs while protecting Alberta's environment.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, I believe this is a money bill and it requires – is there an attachment to the bill being circulated?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** It's been submitted, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly. Is that a motion you would have intended to state?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Oh, I'm sorry. I did not know. Yes. It has been signed by the Lieutenant Governor and submitted to you.

**The Speaker:** We'll proceed. Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, there's an additional snag, to put it mildly. I rise on a point of privilege. I will give my brief remarks for you to consider, sir. Here's the citation for you.

**The Speaker:** I will take your point of privilege; however, I believe it's appropriate – I've been guided by the table – that we have a motion on the floor. The hon. minister has moved first reading of Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** I believe there was a point of privilege. The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

2:50

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of privilege as just stated. For the courtesy of you and the table officers, that's standing orders 15(5) and 23(e).

I understand – and it's well documented – that a government minister spoke to the media and at a conference this morning about a new renewable energy program which had not even been introduced in this House. A government minister spoke with the

CBC *Eyeopener* this morning and to the Canadian Wind Energy Association annual conference this morning. The government also issued a news release this morning describing the same renewable energy plan. I believe that those announcements were about Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, which had not yet been introduced into this House. I ask that you find that this government has violated the privilege of all members of this House.

This is the first opportunity, obviously, to raise this point of privilege since the introduction of Bill 27 just a couple of minutes ago, and that confirms that the bill was indeed that same bill referred to in the government minister's comments and news release. Mr. Speaker, the minister is clearly . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I will take this as a notice. At the end of the Routine we will give you an opportunity to finish your remarks.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite five copies of the report Home Again: Recovery after the Wood Buffalo Wildfire. This six-month progress report documents our government's immediate response to the wildfire disaster in the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo this May and our role in the region's recovery. Our government has been standing with the people of Wood Buffalo since the start of this disaster, and this report confirms our commitment to continue to support the region as it rebuilds and recovers in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. I rise to submit five copies of the Fraser research bulletin which I read from this morning in my documents.

Thank you so much.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Mr. Speaker. I have here the five requisite copies of the article in the *Financial Post* that I referred to this morning from Vivian Krause, Forest Ethics' Cash Pipeline, talking about ForestEthics, the San Francisco based organization that is trying to manipulate our pipeline process.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Opposition House Leader will speak to the point of order. Is that correct?

### Point of Order

#### Allegations against Members

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a point of order from during question period, the citation coming momentarily. That's 23(h), "makes allegations against another Member." The hon. minister of labour, jobs, skills, and training – I'm sorry; I sometimes get the name wrong of that department as it changes regularly – made an allegation to the Official Opposition that the Official Opposition had intended to keep big money in politics. And the reason why this is an allegation and not a matter of debate is that, in fact, the opposition proposed a motion to lower contribution limits on numerous occasions, many of which were significantly lower than \$105,000 over a four-year period.

As such, the minister has made a statement that, certainly, many people would say was not true and has made an allegation. In fact,

the opposition did not do something that she said that it did. Those sorts of allegations are not helpful in this Chamber. I would ask that she apologize and withdraw.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, having not been in attendance at the committee meeting, I can only take the member's word for it that the motions were made. Nevertheless, it is only part of the story.

One of the things that this government has been very, very interested in doing is to eliminate big money from influencing politics. There are many aspects to that and many aspects that were discussed in the committee besides just simply the question of limits per se. There is the question of: should money come from outside the province? There's the question of whether or not these rules should apply in leadership campaigns. There are many aspects and facets to it.

It is a matter of opinion on this side that the various tactics that were pursued by the opposition in that committee were designed to prevent it from reaching conclusions on a fundamental issue of whether or not money should be influencing politics in an unreasonable way. It is our submission, our view, that the opposition has been attempting to prevent the government from pursuing its objective of getting big money out of politics through a whole series of disruptive tactics.

So I would respectfully disagree with my colleague across the aisle and suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that it does not comprise a point of order.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members that would like to speak to the point? The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I had the distinct privilege of sitting in every single one of 20 meetings of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, and I want to speak in favour of my hon. colleague's claim of a point of order under 23(h). I would also suggest that there may even be a case for a point of order under 23(i), the false and unavowed motives that the hon. minister has cast at all members of the opposition.

To the Government House Leader's point that it was all about trying to get "big money out of politics," which is a lovely talking point, I can assure you that every single member on this side of the House agrees with that. We all voted in favour of Bill 1. We all also, Mr. Speaker, in that committee, supported motions and proposed motions that would in fact lower the donation limit even more than the \$4,000 limit that the government proposes. Any claim that any party on this side of the House would in any way support having more money or "big money" in politics is patently false. So the allegations being made by that side of the House, sadly, are absolutely incorrect.

I do think it's worth noting that in this particular committee we had all four opposition parties. We had the Wildrose agreeing with the Liberals, agreeing with the PCs, agreeing with the Alberta Party. Now, that is something. There's some ideological spectrum there, Mr. Speaker, my point being that the allegations made by the minister are, in fact, patently false. I would urge you, please, to find a point of order because it's the sort of thing that does a real disservice to democracy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

**The Speaker:** Any new information that can be presented with respect to the point of order that's raised?



I do not have the privilege of seeing the scripts, nor do I have a strong enough recollection of hearing the comment that allegedly was made. Ordinarily I would have probably ruled on this event, it seems, in part, but I don't want to forego my conclusion or send a signal that it may or may not be a point of order. I think I would like the opportunity to defer comment on it until I have an opportunity to read the Blues.

I think we can now move to the point of privilege. Are there any other comments that the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed would like to make under the point of privilege?

### Privilege

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to repeat the comments, just for the clarification of everyone in the room and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege under standing orders 15(5) and 23(e), which is, of course, anticipation. I understand that a government minister spoke to the media in a conference today about a new renewable energy program which had not yet been introduced in this House. A government minister spoke with the CBC's *Eyeopener* this morning and to the Canadian Wind Energy Association annual conference, again this morning, in Calgary. The government also issued a news release this morning describing the same renewable energy plan. So those are three different artifacts that I have right in front of me at this moment.

Obviously, these announcements are about Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, which had not been introduced in this House until moments ago, so I ask that you find that the government has violated the privilege of all members of this House. This is indeed the first opportunity to raise this point of privilege since Bill 27 was introduced. It confirms that the bill was indeed the bill referred to in the government minister's comments and news release. Mr. Speaker, the minister is clearly acting with contempt for the House. I'd ask you to find as such.

It's right here. The *Calgary Herald*: Alberta to Buy 400MW of Renewable Power as It Phases Out Coal. Sentence 2: "The government will table legislation later Thursday... but [the environment minister] laid out details of the province's plan in a morning speech at the Canadian Wind Energy Association's annual conference."

In addition, at 9:49 a.m. today from CBC News: Renewable Energy Program to Add 5,000 Megawatts of Capacity by 2030, Says Environment Minister. I'll read just a couple of the spots here. "So today is sort of the first step in the real nitty-gritty details for the investment community on how we're going to move forward on that." It goes on about this program and this bill. This was from this morning.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that none of this can be broadcast anywhere to anyone until it is tabled in this House. Also, from their very own media release this morning, the same thing, sir.

I think it's a little late for rookie mistakes; it's been a year and a half. Maybe it's time for this government to get this right, and today might be a good day to start.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you've cited a couple of documents. I trust you will be tabling those. Is that correct?

**Mr. Rodney:** I will be happy to in the future, yes.

**The Speaker:** I have a note here from the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, of course, I have not had the opportunity to review the documents and the news reports that are referred to by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed and to consider the precedents and so on. As a point of privilege is an extremely serious matter, the most serious point that can be raised in the House, I would respectfully request time to do research to compose the response of the government to this point of privilege and to afford other opposition House leaders the same opportunity. So I would request that I be allowed to make the response to this point of privilege on the next sitting day.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I, too, would need some time to look at the particular points, but I gathered from the Government House Leader that it could be as early as Monday that we would deal with this.

Opposition House Leader, do you have another point?

**Mr. Cooper:** Just seeking some clarification from you, Mr. Speaker, as to: if the question will be dealt with on Monday, I am also fine to reserve some comments until Monday. Having said that, if that isn't the case, then I am quite likely to speak in favour of my hon. colleague. You know, you found just this week, Mr. Speaker...

**Mr. Mason:** You don't get two chances.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Cooper:** I'm not sure who's in charge of the House today, Mr. Speaker, but it seems like the Government House Leader believes it to be him.

I will ask the question. If it will be dealt with on Monday, I will reserve my comments. If not, then I would like to provide some additional comment.

**The Speaker:** If we could just take a moment. I'd like to read 15(3). I'll read Standing Order 15(3) for the sake of those who may not have.

If the Speaker is of the opinion that the matter may not be fairly dealt with at that time, the Speaker may defer debate on the matter to a time when he or she determines it may be... dealt with.

I would be prepared to hear the arguments of all parties on Monday, after which time I would take the due time necessary to make a decision.

For those who may be leaving, have a safe journey.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

Mr. Panda moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment November 3: Mr. Panda speaking]

**The Speaker:** I am seeing the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills. Is that correct? Please proceed.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I was talking about this arbitrary 100-megatonne cap, which will risk thousands of jobs and will also impact the livelihoods of families who are just trying to get ahead.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Something happens when you implement a cap on emissions and also curtail the production. The first people into the investment get to make money, but the last people into the investment lose money. Doesn't that sound an awful lot like a Ponzi scheme to you, Madam Speaker? The NDP are turning the Alberta oil sands into a Ponzi scheme, where the rich get richer, because they were there first, and the poor entrepreneurs get turned into suckers and are not allowed to develop the resource they bought.

There are more leases sold than the emissions will allow, so who gets to develop? Bill 25 does not sort that out, but a panel chaired by a co-radical will tell us in February. That's not good enough. We need the answer now to give certainty to the industry, Madam Speaker.

Now, talking about the unintended consequences, which the Member for Calgary-North West talked about this morning, I fear we might have to pay out these leaseholders who will not be allowed to develop the resource. It's called property rights. When the Crown does something that negatively affects my property, I get compensated, just like our coal companies are going to get compensated for their stranded assets. Instead of having land sales and the government making money, the government will be in the game of purchasing land and losing money. Where is that money going to come from? Saskatchewan is not capping emissions of their heavy oil, nor is Venezuela. Maybe my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie can tell the House more about Venezuela's oil sands and how they compare to Alberta's in terms of emissions and their regulations.

Australia cancelled their carbon tax, and France just did the same, Madam Speaker. But only in Alberta is the NDP looking to curb growth and development. Only the New Democratic Party thinks it is fair to deny the world market a choice in their oil. You can buy a limited supply of ethically and environmentally responsible Canadian oil if you can find it, or you can buy cheap and plentiful Saudi Arabian oil. I can attest to their oil being cheap on ethics and the environment.

3:10

In many of those countries, actually, they need military efforts to bring the oil out and to export to countries like us and to other countries. Madam Speaker, the prosperity of Alberta and the prospects for Alberta are under attack by the radical environmentalists, funded by foreign investors. It's funny how there are never any Greenpeace protests in Saudi Arabia or Russia. Maybe, you know, they're scared of the cruel punishment they'd receive from the local governments there.

One study actually estimates that this cap on emissions will cost \$150 billion to \$250 billion in lost revenue to the Alberta economy over time. We already lose enough wealth to the rest of Canada that's not reinvested in Alberta, and the equalization system makes it worse.

The NDP like to crow and be proud about their carbon tax, but since 2007 the government of Alberta and industry were in agreement and have been paying a price in carbon dioxide emissions under the specified gas emitters regulation. Alberta was the first jurisdiction with a carbon tax in North America, and some of my colleagues on the opposite side were asking: what's your plan? Yeah. If you hear, you get it. The funds from the specified gas emitters regulation went to research and development, R and D,

the innovation that comes up with ways to actually reduce carbon dioxide emissions and clean up the environment. The accelerated reclamation of tailings ponds has been from R and D.

In fact, Madam Speaker, I worked on some of those projects when I worked in the oil sands: reclamation projects, water recovery and recycling, cogen projects. They were all aimed to reduce the carbon footprint. Our plan is to encourage those kinds of investments. I worked on those projects, and if some of you want to know more, I'll be happy to talk to you.

People, by and large, are looking at the NDP and asking: "Are you really capping the development of your resources? Really? Who does that?" I came from India, where I helped to build the largest refinery in the world, at Jamnagar in Gujarat, producing 1.2 million barrels per day. That's almost one-third of Canada's production. We are competing with India, and they're not capping their development. No, it's full ahead. China is not capping their development either. So we need to be taking the R and D we do here to make the oil sands and the energy industry overall as green as possible and export that knowledge to help clean up the largest sources of pollution in India and China and other countries. That's our plan.

Alberta's resources are not the enemy in the global fight against climate change, but the solutions are here to take to the front lines of that battle, Madam Speaker. Our companies here need some flexibility and time for technology innovation, but this bill is actually, you know, driving investment away because there is no certainty for those companies who want to invest in those technologies.

That's why I oppose this bill, and, Madam Speaker, that's why I moved this amendment this morning. I encourage everyone to support that amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) comes into effect. Does anybody have any questions for the hon. member under 29(2)(a)? Go ahead, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate my esteemed colleague for the experience that he has in this field. I would be interested to understand from his experience his understanding of what happens in a situation like this. We have this massive oil sands field where much of the field now has to be developed by SAGD and other deeper technologies to extract that oil because the shallower areas are being mined right now, but we have this hundred-megatonne cap coming on. What happens to all of those leases that have already been purchased and paid for by smaller players, many of them Alberta companies? They put out good money and in good faith invested millions perhaps billions of dollars in these leases, and now we have – correct me if I'm wrong – about a 30- or 35-megatonne window for development.

All of these remaining leases: let's remember that each one of those leases represents thousands of jobs. It represents thousands of jobs, billions of dollars of economic activity, taxes that are paid, moms and dads having good-paying jobs, children with futures, and now all of these leases that are out there – I'm sure the owners of those leases are sitting there in their boardrooms and smaller, because some of them are quite small, and they're looking at this 30-, 35-megatonne window, and they're saying: "I wonder if there's even going to be a place for us in here. Who's going to get dibs on this window? Are we actually going to be able to develop this lease we've already put hundreds of millions of dollars into?"

I wonder if the hon. member could just expand a little bit on how they're all going to fit in here and sort of the impact that this kind of cap on expansion is going to have for these players.

Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Madam Speaker, point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have a point of order raised by the hon. member. Go ahead.

**Point of Order  
Question-and-comment Period**

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As much as I'd really like to hear this debate continue on, in fact, under Standing Order 29(2)(b) the mover and the first speaker on a motion – 29(2)(a) doesn't apply to the speeches that they deliver. So as the Member for Calgary-Foothills was the mover of the referral motion, his speech is not applicable to 29(2)(a) nor is the speech immediately following his speech. It then kicks in after that according to 29(2)(b). As much as I hate to interrupt the dialogue that's going on here, this, in fact, is not in order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Could you repeat the citation for the standing order, which number it was?

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Standing Order 29(2)(a) designates the five-minute question-and-answer period that is so commonly used here in the Chamber. Standing Order 29(2)(b) specifically says that "the 5 minute question and comment period referred to in clause (a) is not available following the speech from the mover of the resolution or the Bill in opening or closing debate." Now, the Member for Calgary-Foothills made an acceptable, or allowable, motion to refer, but that motion and the speech after that motion are not applicable to 29(2)(a).

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I appreciate that. Actually, I was looking at the standing orders myself to confirm that, but the (b) portion applies to the mover not of the amendment, only of the motion or the bill itself. Amendments fall under the bill. It is in order to have 29(2)(a) on amendments, so we are in order.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Debate Continued**

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for a great question. Yeah, you're right. All the shallow leases were taken. Mine leases were taken. There are not many left. Most of the resource is deeper, and we need SAGD technology or other enhanced oil recovery technologies to get the resource out. That's why, you know, all those people who bought the leases before will be stranded, so they'll look for compensation, the same as in the coal phase-out situation we have.

3:20

That's why these unintended consequences – I mean, I respect the intention here of the NDP to reduce the carbon footprint, but the way we are rushing here, Madam Speaker, is not helping us. All those companies who are pioneers in this technology innovation need time and flexibility and certainty on the policy front. That's why it's not a good idea to rush this through. I see it as an attack on the prosperity and prospects in Alberta.

Every time I ask for an economic impact assessment of these environmental policies, I'm being blamed as a climate change denier. It is on record in this House that I studied science, that I believe in climate change, and I've worked on technologies that will reduce the carbon footprint. But they keep blaming us as being climate change deniers, which is not true. We are carbon tax deniers. We are reasoning with them on the economic impacts of these policies and how they impact livelihoods and kill jobs in Alberta.

That's why I encourage everyone in the House to actually support this amendment and, you know, to have fulsome discussions in the standing committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you. I just wonder if the member would clarify a little bit for me. Having worked on one of the largest projects in India and having said that there is really no greenhouse gas emissions planning there or commitment, am I right, then, in assuming that, in fact, if we make our production and our contribution to world markets out of price, then places like India will just pick it up? Carbon leakage will simply move to India? [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. I was quite interested to see this motion that the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act be not now read a second time but that it be referred to committee. I don't know about most hon. members, but the first thing I think of when it goes to committee is: okay; who really needs to be consulted here? On the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act I think everybody would agree that it is, in fact, the oil sands producers that should be talked to first and foremost.

It is from that perspective that I was interested to note that the industry caucus of the oil sands advisory group, composed of Canadian Natural Resources, Cenovus, ConocoPhillips Canada, MEG Energy, whose facility I had the opportunity to tour with many of my colleagues, Shell Canada, Statoil Canada, and Suncor have all come out in favour of this bill, saying that the "climate policy leadership reflects the ongoing collective support for responsible development of the oil sands." They go on to say that they "believe that by investing in technology and innovation, we can produce oil from the oil sands on a globally carbon competitive basis." They further go on to say that the "emissions limit acts as an incentive to continually improve our performance in a carbon constrained world" and that they "look forward to providing advice on the effective implementation of the emissions limit."

I am honestly quite baffled that there are members here claiming to speak on behalf of oil and gas workers when oil and gas workers are telling us that they want this. This is how we tell the world that we are acting on climate change, that we are committed to making sure that we live in a better world, and that we need to get a pipeline to tidewater. We cannot continue to ignore that the rest of the world is concerned about Alberta's emissions. We have the highest per capita emissions in the country, and that needs to change.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yes. Thank you very much. I appreciate the passion from the hon. member across the aisle. Perhaps the hon. member could educate the House here on just why it is that we should not put this bill into committee when we have yet to see the fullness of what the oil sands advisory group has to say on this issue. We have a bill that precedes that report. It's interesting to note that

the hon. member is quoting industry when industry is supposed to be talking to OSAG. Could the hon. member perhaps tell us why he thinks it's just fine to have a bill come before this House when we haven't even had the full report yet from OSAG?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. That's because I believe that this helps us get a pipeline as soon as possible. We know that the federal government is looking at a pipeline. That's coming up next month, I do believe. We need to show that we are taking action. We cannot wait for a report. We cannot refer it to committee when we talk to Ottawa. We need to act now. Well, quite frankly, we needed to act 10, 15, 20 years ago; however, we weren't in government then.

I hope that answers the hon. member's questions. We need a pipeline to tidewater. The federal government is looking at it now, and we need to act now.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's interesting to hear the hon. member say that we can't wait for a report. Then what in heaven's name are we having this committee for, and why are we paying them to do the work that we are paying them to do if we actually don't need the report in the first place, which is what he's telling us right now?

Granted, we need a pipeline to tidewater. The Wildrose Party has always said that we need a pipeline, and that has only become a revelation to the other side in the last 90 to 120 days. Furthermore, let's be clear that the NEB in the process of getting pipelines to tidewater is actually a federal responsibility, and somehow or other this bill really isn't going to speed that process up. It's a federal responsibility.

But I would be interested to know from the hon. member, Madam Speaker, why it is he thinks that we now need to have this OSAG report. If he's saying that we don't need this OSAG report, why are we still paying for it? They can all go home now.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I will repeat the last line I quoted from the industry caucus: "We look forward to providing advice on the effective implementation of the emissions limit." There is far more work for the advisory group to continue to do. It is not limited to just an emissions limit. It has a lot to do. The oil sands happens to be our biggest employer. I am baffled that so many members are intent on standing in this House and speaking against what they are asking for, against what our biggest employers are really looking forward to. They want to get to work, they want to be innovative, and they need to continue to work.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Okay. I would like to ask the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert about the workers, including Iron and Earth – the Member for Leduc-Beaumont and I attended their AGM – who are in the oil and gas sector who are very much involved in renewable energy and totally understand the challenges of not reducing the emissions. I was wondering if you could talk more about how the workers are also involved in this.

**Mr. Horne:** Absolutely, and thank you to the member for the question. Iron and Earth has certainly been a big movement recently. I know that they're very interested in looking at reducing our carbon footprint, and I also note that a lot of our oil and gas businesses are as well. In fact, when we were at MEG Energy, they were talking about their cogeneration program. They need steam. Of course, they're a steam-assisted facility. A lot of companies decide to bring in the water and just boil the water and do nothing with the energy.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this amendment to Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. Today I rise in opposition of this ideological bill. I have to wonder if this cap was well thought out or if the goal of this NDP government is to decide once again who will be the winners or who will lose out. Will this come to a point in time where the government will decide who gets to develop their resources and who doesn't no matter how much they paid for their lease? This government's record on cap keeping is something to contend with. Maybe that makes this bill a little bit less dangerous.

3:30

But last November, when a budget was presented – and we remember this budget – the same government legislated the debt to about 15 per cent of GDP, if you recall. Government members on the other side of the House promised – they promised – and they absolutely were saying that there is no way they are going to ask for more money. This is all of the money that they're going to need. This would be the extent of how much the debt-to-GDP ratio was going to be. That was it. You knew what the situation was at the time. We were in the same straits. In fact, the oil prices have gone up since that time, so we have seen oil climbing and not keep going down. So you're looking at a situation where you just wanted to weather the economic storm, and you said: this is lots of room. Unfortunately, that's what you promised. This, you said, was a firm cap.

Along came the budget in the spring, and the government then introduced Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act – we remember that one, too – which allowed them to get rid of that 15 per cent debt to GDP, in fact, to just take the lid off how much you can borrow, not putting any restraints, anything, on that. Now you can borrow, as I said in one of my previous speeches, to infinity and beyond, and that's what you're allowed to do with this other bill. You got rid of the cap, and you failed to plan how much would be the spending.

Now the NDP government is talking about putting limits on an industry, you know, a cap, but I would really like to ask: how did you arrive at this cap? What process did you take to get to that number? Has everything been accounted for, or will you have to come back to re-establish another number that's more appropriate? This causes me great concern because when the NDP was elected, a royalty review was announced. Although only minor changes came from the review, while we waited, it sent a message at the wrong time, throughout Alberta and the world, in fact, that investment in Alberta should be done with caution. The cap is one more signal to investors that the NDP government is not on the side of business, and this ideological cap will turn and worsen our economy.

I have to wonder why the government decided to task the oil sands advisory group to recommend all the details on how to implement the 100 megatonne per year emissions limit. Many of

the panel members boast about having stopped the Northern Gateway pipeline – those are the people that are on this panel – and would like our oil industry to fail. They said that publicly. I wonder how many of them even want us to get to 100 megatonnes. What metrics did they use to determine the cap? It's a nice round number, I'll grant you that. That being said, it makes me wonder if rounding off is the science that they used to determine this number. It sounds like an arbitrary number, and the bill does not answer how the performance standards for GHG emissions will be crafted.

I'm proud to be from Alberta and of the advancements we have made towards creating a clean environment. Concerns have been raised in the past about our environment. A lot of it's unfair, but Alberta companies listened, and that's why we have the cleanest technologies in the world, something that we should not be ashamed of. Instead, the government just calls us embarrassing cousins.

In times like this we should use this opportunity to diversify, not into industries that run counter to our energy sector but that complement it, ones that we already understand. Our province has been working in the oil industry for so long that they understand oil, and we have the cleanest technologies anywhere in the world. Why aren't we advancing those to places like China, India, the United States? Like, selling your technologies: it's all throughout the world.

Has this government completed and released a study to determine how many leases can be sold before the government has sold too many to accommodate the cap? Do you know where that is? Can you please tell us what that number would be? Is there room under this cap to accommodate the leases the government has already sold? Do you know that you are over the limit at this present time? Do you know by how much?

This NDP government continues to arbitrarily impose their ideological will onto industry, with no thought for the future of this province. The government continues to tie the hands of industry without even looking at the cold, hard facts. You know, the reality is that we live in an oil-producing jurisdiction, and we should embrace what we have for our technologies, not try to restrict them and kill our economy in the process. This ideology has imposed policy that has the potential to constrain future oil sands production by \$150 billion. By \$150 billion. That's what the number is. That's lost jobs, lost revenue, loss of potential, loss of innovation as a potential result of less money in the industry. Smaller oil and gas producers are worried that they will lose opportunities for business.

This government never ceases to amaze me. They talk about how they're doing everything possible to get oil to tidewater, yet they continually use anti-oil advocacy groups to propagate their true intent.

**Mr. Ceci:** That's not true.

**Mr. Taylor:** It is true.

The intent of this bill is sending signals to investors that this NDP government is not on the side of business in Alberta. Their ideological agenda is contributing to the economic crisis our province is now in. No other jurisdiction is creating limits on long-term oil production, especially if you look at – these are our neighbours – Saskatchewan, B.C. You've got North Dakota; you've got Montana. These are people right around us. They're not putting this huge cap on what they're doing. We're being unfairly put into this position for our businesses, yet this government continues to block out any potential for new business. I hope you realize that. That's what you're doing. You're blocking out potential for new business in this province with your actions.

I will not be supporting this bill – I bet that's not a surprise to you – in its current form. But I ask that everybody in this Assembly at

least consider sending this bill to the committee so that the effects can be further studied.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to my esteemed colleague for his comments regarding the referral motion. I would be interested to know from my colleague his thoughts on the value of referring bills to committee for further study in general.

Specifically, although we have had some mention from the other side of large players who have apparently spoken to this bill, I have yet to hear from a small player and, specifically, players who have leases that they are now struggling to find a way to develop up there. Perhaps you could speak to the value of having a more fulsome discussion with not only players in the patch but even everyday Albertans who have something to say about a bill and who look at the committee process, that is part of our parliamentary process, that the other side obviously doesn't like to use very much. Perhaps you could speak to the value of that in furthering and strengthening our democracy here.

3:40

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you to the member. This is a notice of amendment that says: "Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2." Why is that important? That was, I believe, what your question was. Why is it important that we send them to these committees? If you send them to the committee, you have a chance for experts to go and look at this, and you have a group that can have a fulsome discussion and understand what's happening within this industry.

If we just generally look at something as a whole here, we don't know the ramifications often because we're not experts in the oil industry. I wouldn't say all of us. We have experts in the oil industry that are out here, but not all of us are experts, and when you bring these to committees, you bring them to experts. The experts are able to lay out a plan and their rationale and determine if that limit, that number that you've set, is the right number or what that number should be and show different ways that you can arrive at a number that would be practical for not just Alberta but for our oil emissions. So it's important to be able to get the experts onside to have their say.

Without going to this committee, I don't believe that this will be properly looked at, and this is an important bill. Frankly, it's a very important bill – and thank you for bringing it up – and this needs to be looked at in the full context that it is.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers on the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this amendment. I'm going to speak in favour of the amendment, but that's not because I necessarily agree with the views of the Wildrose opposition on this topic. I actually find the idea of a 100-megatonne cap a compelling idea. I think the principle of what this bill drives at is probably a fairly reasonable principle, but the reason I support this amendment is that there are just too many questions for me.

As I sat this morning and listened to the debate, it got pretty heated at times, with lots of accusations being hurled back and

forth. But interwoven in between all of those things was, I guess, a theme that I detected from one side, being an argument that this is nothing but politics, that perhaps it's an attempt to shut down the oil sands and to leave the oil in the ground. I actually don't think that's what the government is doing. And the government would argue: well, it's just a practical way of ensuring we get pipelines built and market access to tidewater. I see no evidence in this bill that that's what's going to happen either. So I have many, many, many questions about this.

My answers to those questions are to find ways of incenting the oil and gas industry to develop technology to solve the carbon emission problem once and for all. Maybe this bill will do that; maybe it won't. But that's why I believe we need to send this bill to committee. You know, I'm optimistic. I'm ever the optimist, especially as I think about the innovation that comes from the oil and gas industry in this province. They're a world leader, quite literally, in environmental technologies, water-reduction technologies, tailings technologies – as the hon. Minister of Finance tries to distract me with the Associate Minister of Health's beautiful daughter. It's working. She's lovely. We've now got that in *Hansard* for all time. She is. She is. It's awesome, and it's great. It is really, genuinely great to see that in the Alberta Legislature. Long may it continue, my hon. colleagues, from other people than me.

We're done. Back on task here. Back on task.

You know, I want to talk a bit about the OSAG process. I guess my overall concern with the bill is that I wonder if we're cart before the horse here. That OSAG process may very well be a great process, but that should happen before we pass the legislation because it's going to answer all of the questions that we have here.

What about those smaller companies? The Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert had listed off a number of companies that are supportive of the 100-megatonne cap. I couldn't help but notice that those were all larger companies with established operations, and that's fine. That's great. Those companies are tremendous contributors to this province, tremendous job creators, tremendous environmental stewards, and tremendous contributors to the social well-being and fabric of this province. That is absolutely undeniable, and they should be recognized for the same.

But I do have a concern that this cap does disadvantage either new entrants or smaller companies, and I would like to know how exactly the process is going to work. How exactly are we going to mediate those disputes? Is it simply a mad rush for the remaining 30 megatonnes? How much additional upgrading do we expect to have? Is that 10-megatonne cap ample? Is it a lot of cap? Is it not nearly enough? These are things I don't know the answers to and that OSAG has been tasked with determining, but until that is determined, how in the world can we pass this bill? There are other bills. What are the penalties for exceeding the limit? What happens? Is production simply shut down? The small and large producer issue I've already talked about. How will new and existing projects effectively negotiate between using that cap room? I'm curious if the government anticipates subsidies or some sort of stimulus for producers to develop those new technologies to enable production to continue to grow while remaining under the cap.

I will note that I did have a look at the Fraser Institute report tabled by the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, and while I think that – I'll say this. I think a straight line between now and 2030 in terms of emissions growing in lockstep with production probably isn't accurate, and that's a good thing because I think new production coming on is likely to be far less carbon intense. That's a really good thing. You know, while I appreciate that it makes a point about the money that perhaps may be left on the table, all of these are things that would be answered by OSAG or at least I sincerely hope will be answered by OSAG. Will that curve bend? I

strongly suspect it will, and I think that's part of the objective here from this government.

On the flip side, the exemptions are actually quite substantial, exempting cogeneration, exempting an additional 10 megatonnes for refining. That's actually quite a lot. If part of the objective here is ultimately to reduce carbon emissions – I mean, that's one of those questions I have on the other side, saying: gosh, does that actually dilute or water down the effectiveness of a 100-megatonne cap? All of these questions are reasons why we need to have a committee review this bill.

Finally, who would be responsible for the lease payouts for current leaseholders for those leases that will not be allowed to be developed? The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, I believe, made this point earlier. In good faith companies have purchased leases, acquired leases, and spent a substantial amount of money. Are we going to strand those assets, and if so, what's the compensation model? Where does the money come from? How much is it going to be? Those are complex conversations and negotiations, and it may be a consequence, either intended or unintended, that has a negative impact on our province.

For all those reasons – and I suppose if I spent even more time on my feet I could come up with a few more – I will absolutely support moving this bill to committee. I don't commit one way or the other at this point as to whether or not I will vote in favour of the bill at second reading or beyond. I will say again, Madam Speaker, that the principle of limiting oil sands emissions is a good one. It should spur innovation in this province, but I'm left with far too many questions at this point in terms of how exactly we get there for me to be able to make a proper determination as to whether or not to support the bill in its current form. Again, I would advocate for this bill to be sent to committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

3:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask the hon. member a question regarding – and just to pre-empt my question, one of the things that he said that was very clear and compelling is that he may or may not agree with some of the people in this House about what the right numbers are or how that should look. One of the things that we need to look at is exactly that, hence the reason that committee would be so important. Given the opportunity to have experts from all levels of industry within this particular sector come forward, the hon. members in this room who are a part of that committee will have the opportunity to actually sit down with the experts that may determine one way or the other where we sit on how to move forward with this. That would be a discussion that I would highly encourage to happen, and that's something I would personally look forward to having. I am not an expert in this, and I require those experts to be around me to help to determine the right policy to come forward because the policy matters.

You were mentioning about innovation and about the opportunities that could come from any sorts of policies dependent upon what the government is seeing fit to do here. I guess my question, hon. member, is: do you think that it would be a good idea, that going to committee will slow things down a little bit, having the experts to be able to come and speak to us to potentially help you to determine how you would vote on a bill such as this?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you to the hon. member for the question. Yeah. It really is about getting answers. It's not so much necessarily about

undue delay or slowing things down, but it really is about thoughtful consideration and putting all of the facts on the table so that this House can make a reasonable assessment. Who knows? Perhaps even the Official Opposition may find that they have satisfactory answers to their questions, that in fact the 100-megatonne cap is beneficial to Alberta and not detrimental to Alberta, not disadvantaging small companies. It's entirely possible that we come up with that determination. In fact, I think it would benefit the government's case if they had very clear data that showed that that was in fact going to be the case as opposed to picking a number that seems high enough that we won't hit it any time really soon but is still a cap so that we can tell the world we have a cap. You know, I hope that there's some more detail beyond just that, beyond just something that was cooked up in a strategy session. I really hope that this is actually something that's well thought through.

Again, you know, the makeup of the committee: while I certainly have some concerns about the bias of some of the members, I will give that committee its opportunity to work and see if it can in fact come up with some answers to these questions. If it can, given the very wide range of views on that committee I think it will have a tremendous amount of credibility. But that committee needs to be allowed to do its work. If it does that work, presents their findings in detail before the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, we, myself included – I happen to be a member of that committee – would have an opportunity to further delve into some of those details, which might even make the process of passing the bill before this House that much more efficient.

**The Deputy Speaker:** No other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Any further speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am very happy to rise, that the motion for going to second reading on Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended. I would like to speak a little bit about the importance of committee. To reiterate many of the things that we've already heard in here, one of the most important aspects of this is stakeholder outreach and having people come in on such an important piece of legislation. We've presented many, many parts of what our concerns are with regard to this legislation that I think are worthy of slowing these things down. We want to make sure as a government body that we have the opportunity to actually speak with these stakeholders.

Now, as the hon. member had mentioned, there are some groups that have been consulted and have made their statements towards this particular bill. However, as was mentioned by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, there are many small companies that right now are going to be questioning whether or not they're even going to be able to get in the ground, Madam Speaker.

If you look at that just from a business point of view, from an investor's point of view, when you have access to this lease – and there's a process, Madam Speaker, to even get to that. You've hedged into the future the future of your family, your business, and everything else, thinking that this was going to be the opportunity that you would have to get into this industry, and now all of a sudden you might be beyond the cap that has been set by this government and not even have the opportunity to recoup what you've already put into that, not to mention the fact that whatever investors and people and things that you've put into the future to try and make sure that you are able to do this opportunity to create the ability to drill or to do any of these other things within this sector: all of a sudden that's wiped clean because of policy and potentially a random number. All of a sudden you're outside the good graces

of a 100-megatonne cap that no longer includes you in the discussion. No longer does it take into consideration the money, time, the energy, and everything that you did as a company to go forward in this industry. Suddenly everything that you've put your livelihood into is not important.

I highly recommend that the government consider the fact that these folks are going to want to come before a committee and, at the very least, talk to the government about how to move forward and potentially even give some suggestions that would help to mitigate some of the fallout from this situation. The whole point of committee isn't to slow things down per se, but it's actually to just step back for a minute and make sure that the processes in the policy that you're putting forward are actually going to be conducive to making sure that we are able to be productive. If we're looking at production, we're slowing down production in an industry that is growing. We're actually cutting off an industry at the knees without even understanding the projections within the industry.

We presented some numbers, and there's definitely room for discussion, Madam Speaker, about how these numbers work and all of that. That's fine. But if we are at least having the ability to go to committee as a group, as we are actually supposed to do in this House, as a joint committee to sit down with these folks and have a succinct discussion about how to move forward, the possibilities are endless. Those folks are the experts, and they can give us some insight as to how to move forward. They're the innovators, especially these small companies. I mean, my goodness, we're cutting them off at the knees before they're even getting going. If you want to talk about innovation and diversity and efficiencies, you're cutting the most important group of people out of a discussion, who will tell you how to be efficient, how to save money, how to do these things. When we're talking about the oil sands, even the small companies are humongous companies compared to some of the smaller companies that are in other types of production in the province.

These are not small numbers even for the small companies. These are large numbers. These are people and families and folks that were hoping that given the opportunity and having been able to get into the lease at that time, they're going to be job creators. Now, again, we're cutting them off at the knees before they even get started. How is the government without talking to these folks going to find out how they're going to compensate these people who are already having these leases? How's that going to happen? I'm assuming that's a question that you're going to want answered before there's another lawsuit.

I'd also like to just take a moment, especially with committee, with regard to some other comments that were made. One of the most disturbing comments, I think, that came from across the way, is: who needs to be consulted? Well, I'll tell you who. The folks that have already got those leases and other people that have the ability to tell us and help us to make this policy so that we are doing it the best, so that we continue being the most environmentally responsible, so that we continue to innovate. Those are the people that we actually need to consult.

4:00

To quote again the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, this government's advisory panel has not reported yet. How are we supposed to formulate any reasonable policy, Madam Speaker? I've been very vocal about how I feel about this panel and some of the folks that are on that panel. However, with all due respect, the government has created this panel, and I'm extremely interested, as is everyone on this side, to find out what the findings of that panel are. It is not my place at this point in time to make any prejudgment

about which way that is going to go. I have my own thoughts about that.

Having said that, though, that panel has been struck. That panel has been paid for with Albertans' hard-earned dollars, and Albertans deserve to know what that panel is going to advise this government before being able to move forward with actually creating policy about the industry that is being impacted by the government policies, by legislation previous to having the oil sands advisory panel even advise us. Please do; please advise us. I don't understand the backwards mentality of how that's feasible. We need to go very carefully forward with this.

Another thing that the hon. member across the way mentioned was something about implementation. That was actually a very interesting point because implementation is based on – you have to have institutional knowledge, and then there's policy involved with that and the economic realities of that, none of which we will even begin to understand, first of all, without understanding where the advisory panel is going and, second of all, without having due time to actually have some of these folks come before us and help us understand how this should be implemented. The implementation of this policy is actually the bigger picture, and I do not recall reading anywhere or understanding how that implementation is going to go forward.

It seems to me, based on comments from the other side, that that's the least of their worries. Who cares about the panel? Why do we even bother asking? Who needs to be consulted? Well, I would like to know. I'm sure Chestermere-Rocky View folks would like to know. There are a lot of people who, I can pretty much guarantee, are very invested in the future of this province, and I can guarantee you that they are watching wide-eyed what this panel is going to say and what they're going to do. I can guarantee you, with the amount of people that I personally talk to on a weekly basis, that this has been a major point of discussion, not a small one. A big, big, big part of the discussion. What do I say every time? Well, we've got to wait for the advisory panel to come back so that we understand where they're going.

I'm assuming that we're going to have consultation and stakeholder outreach because it's just a small portion, you know, of the economic realities of Canada. Madam Speaker, I assumed, maybe wrongly, that the government would be interested in making sure, based on transparency and accountability to Albertans, that that panel information would come forward, that we'd have some idea of the mandate of this panel and some idea of how that panel has talked to the stakeholders and have some of their input, and then we'd be able to go forward and legitimately look at this policy.

The whole point of committee is to be able to do those things under the auspices of this building that we are all so privileged to be here for. We are supposed to be in committee. That's our job. We were put here to have discussions, robust discussions, and we're going to disagree a whole bunch. That's okay. That's the point. So the amendment to go to committee is thoughtful; it's a process. It is part of the due diligence of this building to make sure that we do not just put something on paper and go: woo-hoo; time to pass it. That's not the way that this goes. This takes time. It takes time and energy and people and experts.

I can't begin to tell you. I mean, when I came into this portfolio, if I hadn't had the brilliance of the experts in this province, who literally have taken me from a minor understanding – even now I would say that, at best, I'm at a high-level understanding of this industry. It's so complex and diverse and beautiful and creative. I'm constantly amazed. But if it hadn't been for those folks and their energy and the time that they've put into me personally without asking, I don't think I could speak quite as passionately about this.

Because I respect the industry so much and I respect the process so much and I respect those folks who have so much more information

than I could possibly ever put forward in this House – so much, Madam Speaker – I can't begin to tell you how important it is for me personally, being educated by this industry, how much it would matter to me personally to be able to have the opportunity to go into committee with a diverse group of people with a lot of different ideas and the group of people in the middle who actually know this information to help us to figure out what is the best way to move forward.

Please remember. We have the best people in the world. Our geophysicists, geoscientists, and geologists are so underutilized right now. I can guarantee you that if this government decided to go to committee and invited in some of those specialists, they'd be here in a millisecond. This is an underutilized, massively talented group of people in Alberta right now that would happily come forward to help out with this information. I can think of hundreds of other people that would happily participate in committee as experts, come forward and help us actually craft policy that is going to inherently be there for our great-grandchildren, that we can be proud of, that we can look at and say: look at what we did not only for the oil sands but also for our own prosperity and for Canada.

It's very disturbing to me also that this government thinks that they can interfere with pipeline access. They think that some cap and other things or the social licence they keep talking about should impact national infrastructure. National infrastructure is all of ours. It's the prosperity of all of Canada. It's part of the federation. I take it very seriously that the government does not quite understand that it is the responsibility of the federal government to make decisions in the national best interest based on the information that comes to them from our very, very amazing NEB.

For the members opposite to assume that with legislation like this – I mean, there's no information to go on – our Prime Minister is suddenly going to look at a piece of legislation like this and go: oh, well, maybe we'll give them a pipeline. No. That's not how it works, Madam Speaker. If you would like a little bit more education on how the NEB works, I can try again. I've been saying it all along. The NEB is an arm's-length group. They consult, and they are your social licence. They are your social licence.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I enjoyed the comments made by the member just now and how she so succinctly expressed the value of going to committee and having more consultation. She covered how important it would be to have experts from all fields come and discuss it in committee, to have the small producers there, too, and to actually have the panel's report, which would be, of course, very valuable in making a decision on this.

**4:10**

I'm going to just read a couple of quotes from when the Minister of Environment and Parks introduced this bill, on collaborative conversations between the oil sands industry, First Nations, municipalities, and environmental groups.

This cap, the mechanism and the logistics of it will be worked out in partnership with industry, with First Nations, with municipalities, and with environmental groups. We have established a precedent-setting, collaborative, co-operative table at which all of those who are affected are making decisions together.

She also goes on to say that this bill was

crafted in consultation with First Nations, municipalities, affected communities, Métis organizations, industry, and environmental groups.



Now, of course, it's great to have collaboration with all of these groups. All of these people are Albertans. It's all good. But where I don't see any consultation is with the public, with the rest of Albertans. I see lots of consultation with different groups and everything, but if we were to take this to committee, I would like to hear what this member thinks about the opportunity for the public, for anybody in Alberta to have a chance to learn, listen, speak their mind.

We always talk about making informed decisions. We can't make informed decisions without information, and that's what a committee can give us. It can give us this information. It can give all Albertans information so that Albertans can make that decision for themselves, make that informed decision. So I'd like to hear the member maybe speak a little bit about that, too. Obviously, she's made some great points, and I commend her for that, but I see that there's something missing in all of this conversation on collaboration and consultation that was done on this bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you very much for your question. Look, I'm very blessed in that I have this portfolio of oil and gas, so my outreach is going to be very different from anybody else's in the House depending on who they get to speak to and what their specialties are. I have that distinct privilege of actually being able to speak to industry folks all the time, so my experience is going to be a little different. That's why this is so important. Having the privilege of having that portfolio, it's actually my responsibility to reach out to these people and to make sure that I'm listening and that I'm consulting and that I have good information to bring back for my personal education. But the expectation of everybody else and their portfolios and what they have going on – I mean, it would be great if we could always reach out to each other's portfolios, and I think quite often we're able to do that.

What this does by going to committee is that it actually brings all of the sector, all of the experts, the public – everybody – into our inner space to help determine policy that's going to impact them, the public especially. I mean, Albertans are savvy. They live this; they understand this. I have to tell you that some of the most compelling conversations that you have are out on the street with the public. They know so much more, you know, to a large degree than I do at times, even just their passion for the industry and for their province. If we're able to bring in the public, especially folks that work in the industry, people who are right now losing their jobs – the most compelling stories, of course, are from the people that end up in all of our offices, their absolutely heart-wrenching stories of job losses. I'm sure it's on both sides of the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, very much. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the referral motion. I come to the referral motion with somewhat of a unique perspective. Having had the privilege of sitting both in government and in opposition, I can offer a perspective that is perhaps a little bit unique.

When I sat on that side of the House, referral motions were always bad. I can see, so far at least, that the pattern of this government has been that that has become, perhaps you could call it, a contagious impression, that referral motions are always bad, that they're always in place to sidetrack or delay government initiatives that are important. Yet, sitting over here, I think it's a good opportunity to recognize that referral motions are not always

bad. You know, I see my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview over there, who often moved and spoke to referral motions when he was over here. I'd be certainly interested to hear his comments as well as to whether he senses a change in attitude towards referral motions.

But I'm inclined in this case, Madam Speaker, to absolutely agree with the need to refer this motion to a committee. It's because in the very words of the climate leadership plan document there are several phrases that indicate that even the drafters of this report were not exactly sure what the consequences of some of these measures would be, and it's because we were talking in some cases about time frames that are 10, 15, 20 years out.

You know, I went to the executive summary of the climate leadership plan, which I hadn't read for a number of months, and I found on page 25 under Technology and Innovation the following statement:

Even as the world acts on climate change, there will continue to be significant demand for oil and gas for mobility, heat and power. Alberta's challenge is to position ourselves as a preferred, low-cost and low-emissions supplier amidst the market shifts now underway.

I thought that made sense.

The report goes on to say:

Even as the world acts on climate change, there will continue to be significant demand for oil and gas for mobility, heat and power. Alberta's challenge is to position ourselves as a preferred, low-cost and low-emissions supplier amidst the market shifts now underway.

Now, Madam Speaker, I didn't make a mistake there and read the same sentence twice. The same two sentences appear twice on page 25 of the executive summary of the climate leadership plan.

Now, they had experts – I know that – and they did a lot of consultation. I know that as well. But maybe they should have hired a proofreader. When you have glaring errors like this in the report, a clear, glaring error like this in the report, it makes you wonder: well, you know, perhaps we need to take a closer look at some of what's in here.

On page 27 of the executive summary it goes on to say:

Many will look at these emissions reductions and claim that our policies will not place Alberta on a trajectory consistent with global 2°C goals, and in some sense this is true – the policies proposed ...

And I want everyone to listen to this carefully.

... for Alberta in this document would not, if applied in all jurisdictions in the world, lead to global goals being accomplished. However, more stringent policies in Alberta would come at significant cost to the province due to lost competitiveness, with negligible impact on global emissions due to carbon leakage.

The report goes on to say:

Imposing policies in Alberta that are more stringent than what we have suggested is not tenable, until our peer and competitor jurisdictions adopt policies that would have a comparable impact on their industrial sectors.

I want to be very clear about one thing, Madam Speaker. As I've said in this House before, I accept the science of climate change, and I accept that climate change is real. I further accept the need for us to take action on man-made climate change. I've been very clear on that, and I believe that that's important.

The third stage is what I call acceptance of climate change, and that is that Alberta and Canada have a role to play, even recognizing that we have a relatively small overall contribution to the world's greenhouse gas emissions. I know full well that Canada only contributes 1.6 per cent, I know full well that Alberta's contribution is less than 1 per cent, and I know full well that the oil sands overall

is .15 per cent. That does not absolve us of responsibility to do something about it. I cannot accept a situation that says: well, we're not going to do anything about it because they have to do something and they have to do something and they have to do something. That, to me, is unacceptable.

4:20

That being said, our measures that we choose to limit greenhouse gases have to be carefully chosen, and they have to be judicious. Because of the very risks that are pointed out in the climate leadership plan document, we have to make sure that we are not so far out in front of the game that all we are succeeding in doing is damaging our own economy and not achieving the kind of major contributions to greenhouse gas emissions that are, in fact, the goal of the report.

I'd like to further quote because this, I felt, was very interesting, too. On the bottom of page 27:

There will be concerns with respect to the impacts of these policies on our economy and on employment. Greenhouse gas policies are often painted as win-win yet, at the granular level, they may not be. In an export-oriented province like Alberta, emissions control policies will not make everyone better off. There will be trade-offs and transitions resulting from any policy which alters the way our economy values carbon emissions. Those with better technology, more willingness to adapt and a comparative advantage in low carbon resource extraction and infrastructure will benefit. Those without those advantages, or those who choose not to engage in emissions reduction opportunities, will not.

Madam Chair, my concern here relates, then, to how the 100-megatonne limit will impact the industry overall. Now, when the climate leadership plan was first announced, I heard about the 100-megatonne cap on emissions from the oil sands. Knowing that the current level is somewhere in the 66-, 67-megatonne level as of 2014, I said: well, you know, that really shouldn't be that much of a stretch for the industry to get under. One would assume that in the other 34 megatonnes that they've got left before they hit the cap, they will develop technology and innovation that will allow them to stay under 100 megatonnes, and it will not create an undue negative impact on development and investment.

It turns out that that was a somewhat naive and incorrect interpretation. In point of fact, after I've discussed this with a number of individuals in the oil and gas sector, they've told me that the 100-megatonne cap is already causing a decrease in investment in projects for oil sands extraction, and that's a concern to me. The companies that are losing out on this are, in fact, the companies that are the smaller junior oil and gas companies, that often are niche operators and can provide extraction in certain instances that are either not profitable enough for the large companies or the large companies simply aren't interested.

So while I'm interested in the group of companies that the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert quotes, he makes the assumption that the oil and gas sector is one homogeneous group and that they all agree on everything. I can tell you with absolute certainty that they are not a homogeneous group any more than beef producers are a homogeneous group or farmers are a homogeneous group or, for that matter, any number of other industry sectors.

The climate leadership plan talks about some players being impacted negatively and others positively. Well, a 100-megatonne cap – let us be very clear – favours existing operators. It favours those already in the business. And guess who approves of the 100-megatonne cap? All of those companies you listed off are already in the business.

It is a major concern of mine how this impacts the overall process. The development of an oil sands project has about a 10-

year time frame from initial conception to design to permit approvals to construction to commissioning to bringing it on phase. If you wanted to open an oil sands plant in 2026 or 2027, you needed to start planning yesterday. I was surprised by that, but these are large projects, and there is a lot of work to be done before they can actually move into that phase.

My concern is that the projections for when we will hit the 100-megatonne cap vary. Some people say that we won't hit it even by 2030, but there are a number of industry projections that indicate that we will probably hit 100 megatonnes by 2026, 10 years from now. So if you're a small junior oil and gas company that holds an oil sands lease that is considering developing a project for extraction, you are now concerned as to whether or not you're going to be able to develop that project because by 2026 or '27 there may be no room left in the 100-megatonne cap.

These are the kinds of levels of uncertainty that people are concerned about, that people in the oil and gas sector talk about. Very sadly, these are the kinds of issues that seem to consistently fall on deaf ears when they're told to this government, and that's unfortunate. This is our most important industry, this is and for years has been a number one employer of Albertans, and it is, in fact, an engine to our economy. I am concerned about the negative effects that a 100-megatonne cap will have on our overall industry, and I'm very concerned about how this will affect investment going forward.

With regard to the amendment by the Member for Calgary-Foothills I think it makes sense to refer this bill to committee. I think it makes sense to have a broader conversation that brings in not just the oil companies that agree with the government policy, but just maybe you should listen to some of the ones that don't agree with the government policy. It would be a novel approach, one that you haven't tried before.

Madam Speaker, it's important that we have also as much information as we can possibly get about what sorts of technology could indeed be applied and are on the horizon for reducing the carbon intensity of the extraction process. I think that's important.

Finally, Madam Speaker, referral to a committee would allow the oil sands advisory group to develop regulations and to go through that very important step of understanding exactly what the relationship between the oil sands advisory group and the Alberta Energy Regulator with regard to oil sands project approvals would in fact be. I am very concerned that what we are setting up here with the oil sands advisory group is a second-tier quasi-regulator and that it will just simply make the whole process of project and development approvals more complex. I don't think that that is helpful to us at all.

Until we have the role of the oil sands advisory group and the regulations that they will develop clearly defined for us, I think that in an issue like this, that is so critical to the long-term development of our oil sands and of our oil and gas industry, it's really critical that we take a very careful look, even as the authors of the climate leadership plan indicated needed to happen, at who are the winners and who are the losers, because they clearly state in the report that there will be winners and losers. The other side would have you believe that it is universally good for everyone. Well, the truth of the matter is that that's not how government policy always works, and it's certainly not how this government policy will work. They need to understand that, and they need to hear from those who will be adversely affected by the application of this 100-megatonne limit to know how it will adversely affect them.

I think referral to committee is something that should not necessarily happen automatically on all bills. I think some bills can be adequately and fully debated in the House and moved on, but on

complex issues like this one, I think that to have the input from industry experts, to have the input from indigenous groups, to have the input from environmental groups would be very useful. I want to point out that the input that was gathered for the climate leadership plan was excellent but that it is not the only input that's required.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate, as I always do, listening to our esteemed colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster. He brings to us a perspective from being on both

sides of this House, which I think is extremely valuable given the lack of experience of many members in this Chamber.

The hon. member touched on something – and correct me if I'm wrong – and I believe the words are “confirmation bias.” I believe that the hon. member could help us to understand something about that given the experience that he has had on that side of the House and some of the problems that were experienced with confirmation bias skewing the mindset of the party in power at the time. I know that . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to Thursday, November 3, 2016**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1 — Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading — 5 (*Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 685-91 (*Apr. 20, 2016 morn.*), 732-36 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft.*), 749-60 (*Apr. 21, 2016 aft.*), 825 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 987-95 (*May 18, 2016 morn.*), 1019-24 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1172 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1174-79 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cP-26.3 ]

### **Bill 2 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 96 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 162-67 (*Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 239-49 (*Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 251-59 (*Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1 ]

### **Bill 3 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 156 (*Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 157-62 (*Mar. 15, 2016 morn.*), 201 (*Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 239-49 (*Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 259-66 (*Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2 ]

### **Bill 4\* — An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading — 180 (*Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 285-88 (*Mar. 17, 2016 aft.*), 349-66 (*Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 378-84 (*Apr. 6, 2016 morn.*), 399-409 (*Apr. 6, 2016 aft.*), 415-28 (*Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 428-33 (*Apr. 7, 2016 morn.*), 450-55 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c10 ]

### **Bill 5 — Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading — 398 (*Apr. 6, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 455-56 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft.*), 491-505 (*Apr. 12, 2016 morn.*), 532-38 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 539-56 (*Apr. 13, 2016 morn.*), 570-77 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 577-83 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 cS-7.1 ]

### **Bill 6 — Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*), 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 519-27 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 527-32 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 583-85 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c13 ]

**Bill 7 — Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**

First Reading — 518 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 585-86 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft.*), 649-51 (*Apr. 19, 2016 morn.*), 682-84 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 820-24 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 902-903 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**

First Reading — 568 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 669-71 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft.*), 684 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 824-25 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 903-904 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c8 ]

**Bill 9 — An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**

First Reading — 568 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 640-49 (*Apr. 19, 2016 morn.*), 728-30 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 979-81 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1180-81 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c11 ]

**Bill 10 — Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 599 (*Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 671-82 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft.*), 691-703 (*Apr. 20, 2016 morn.*), 730-32 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 950-51 (*May 17, 2016 morn.*), 1041-49 (*May 19, 2016 morn.*), 1077-81 (*May 24, 2016 morn.*), 1103-13 (*May 24, 2016 aft.*), 1115-23 (*May 24, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1124 (*May 24, 2016 eve.*), 1197-99 (*May 26, 2016 morn.*), 1263-85 (*May 30, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c17 ]

**Bill 11 — Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016 (Bilous)**

First Reading — 773 (*May 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 907-908 (*May 12, 2016 aft.*), 971-79 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1012-18 (*May 18, 2016 aft.*), 1024 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1068-69 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c4 ]

**Bill 12 — Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Feehan)**

First Reading — 802 (*May 3, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 904-907 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 985-87 (*May 18, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1069 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c3 ]

**Bill 13 — Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016 (Gray)**

First Reading — 872 (*May 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 965-71 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1024-25 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1069 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c15 ]

**Bill 14 — Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**

First Reading — 872 (*May 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 983-85 (*May 18, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1076-77 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1077 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c9 ]

**Bill 15 — An Act to End Predatory Lending (McLean)**

First Reading — 901 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1062-67 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1153-57 (*May 25, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1172 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2016 cE-9.5 ]

**Bill 16\* — Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**

First Reading — 921 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1067-68 (*May 19, 2016 aft.*), 1071-75 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157-63 (*May 25, 2016 aft.*), 1197 (*May 26, 2016 morn., adjourned*), 1219-23 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1223-25 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c14 ]

**Bill 17 — Appropriation Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 950 (*May 17, 2016 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 995-1000 (*May 18, 2016 morn., adjourned*), 1025-29 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1031-41 (*May 19, 2016 morn.*), 1070 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1096-1103 (*May 24, 2016 aft.*), 1113 (*May 24, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c5 ]

**Bill 18 — An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring (Phillips)**

First Reading — 964-65 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1125-35 (*May 25, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1191-97 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1199-1205 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 30, 2016; SA 2016 c7 ]

**Bill 19 — Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1011 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1135-40 (*May 25, 2016 morn.*), 1153 (*May 25, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1171-72 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1173 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cR-8.5 ]

**Bill 20\* — Climate Leadership Implementation Act (\$) (Phillips)**

First Reading — 1095 (*May 24, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1163-70 (*May 25, 2016 aft.*), 1173-74 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1181-90 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1288-98 (*May 31, 2016 morn.*), 1311-21 (*May 31, 2016 aft.*), 1338-56 (*May 31, 2016 eve.*), 1357-72 (*Jun. 1, 2016 morn.*), 1405-07 (*Jun. 1, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1408-24 (*Jun. 1, 2016 eve.*), 1425-42 (*Jun. 2, 2016 morn.*), 1458-61 (*Jun. 2, 2016 aft.*), 1479-91 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft.*), 1493-1541 (*Jun. 6, 2016 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1541-43 (*Jun. 6, 2016 eve.*), 1545-57 (*Jun. 7, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c16 ]

**Bill 21 — Modernized Municipal Government Act (Larivee)**

First Reading — 1310 (*May 31, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1583-96 (*Nov. 1, 2016 morn.*), 1624-28 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft.*), 1634-41 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 22 — An Act to Provide for the Repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Ceremonial Objects (Miranda)**

First Reading — 1219 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 23 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**

First Reading — 1454 (*Jun. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1478 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1478 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1479 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016; SA 2016 c18 ]

**Bill 24 — Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016 (Carlier)**

First Reading — 1571-72 (*Oct. 31, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1609-24 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft.*), 1629-34 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 25 — Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act (Phillips)**

First Reading — 1606 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1641-43 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn.*), 1677-89 (*Nov. 3, 2016 morn.*), 1703-13 (*Nov. 3, 2016 aft., adjourned on amendment*)

**Bill 26 — Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act (Littlewood)**

First Reading — 1659 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1660-69 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1669-73 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1673-76 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

**Bill 27 — Renewable Electricity Act (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)**

First Reading — 1701 (*Nov. 3, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 201 — Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading — 92 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 119-32 (*Mar. 14, 2016 aft.*), 303-304 (*Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 202 — Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**

First Reading — 92 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 305-16 (*Apr. 4, 2016 aft.*), 470-73 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 203 — Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**

First Reading — 280 (*Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 473-83 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities*)

**Bill 204 — Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**

First Reading — 468 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 616-30 (*Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 205\* — Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 707 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 839-50 (*May 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 924-31 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 931-34 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2017; SA 2016 c12 ]

**Bill 206\* — Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (Goehring)**

First Reading — 902 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1241-49 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1249-55 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1255-57 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016; SA 2016 cP-19.7 ]

**Bill Pr1 — Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**

First Reading — 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1171 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1197 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1219 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 ]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 7, 2016

Day 45

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
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Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
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Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

## Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and	Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of	Committee Services	Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	
and Legal Research Officer		

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 7, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us reflect, each in our own way. As Canadians and as Albertans let us give thanks for the diverse culture, traditions, and the heritage in which we share. Allow us to be inspired by the diversity of this province, motivating us to act for the betterment of our society. Let us understand that differences more often than not bring us together.

**Hon. Members:**

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you 37 students from Muriel Martin school in St. Albert. Joining them today are Mr. Richard Pawsey and Michelle Kennett. If they could rise today and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to other members of this Assembly 17 hard-working people from Alberta Infrastructure's asset management branch. This team works with all government of Alberta departments to provide day-to-day administration and collection of rent from more than 33,000 parking stalls across the province for government employees, agencies, boards, and commissions. They also maintain the inventory and they report over 16,000 government-owned and -supported buildings, 13,600 land titles, and 6,700 other sites. We couldn't do it without them. I appreciate their work very much, and I would ask them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any further school groups to be introduced today? No?

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly visitors from my constituency of Edmonton-Strathcona. Brandi Kobes and Stephen Trott are both students in the Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental

Sciences at the U of A. Brandi has come from rural Saskatchewan to work towards her degree in human ecology and is interested in a career that involves community development. Stephen Trott is from Illinois, here to study agriculture business. Stephen is interested in advancing the agricultural sector while pursuing a career in public service. I would now like my guests to stand, and I'd ask the members of the Assembly to please join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly members of the Council of Alberta University Students, commonly known as CAUS. This group represents the interests of more than a hundred thousand university students from the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, and MacEwan and Mount Royal universities. Their continued advocacy work ensures a quality, affordable, and accessible postsecondary education system for all Albertans, and I admire them greatly. As Minister of Advanced Education it is always a pleasure to meet with them. I want to point out to the House that the executive director of CAUS will be leaving on maternity leave because she'll be becoming a first-time mother in the next couple of months. We wish her well on her new parenting adventure. I'd ask all of the members of CAUS to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly it is my pleasure to introduce Ms Jamila Moloo. I would ask her to rise. Jamila is the chair of the Nellie Carlson parent advisory council. That school council has been very effective in working with the teachers and principal, Henry Madsen, and getting the K to 9 school open by September 1 this year. I ask that all members provide Ms Moloo a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three guests from the town of Bon Accord in the exceptional riding of Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater: Randolph Boyd, the mayor of Bon Accord; Vicki Zinyk, the chief administrative officer for the town; and Steve Madden, assistant chief administrative officer. I'd like to welcome them and invite them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you a wonderful family from my constituency of Leduc-Beaumont: Mr. Robin Menaar, Mrs. Carol Menaar, Emma and Benjamin Menaar. The Menaars are a home-schooling family and engaged community members in Leduc-Beaumont. They have taken the opportunity today to come to the Legislature to watch the excitement of question period and to learn how respectful debate can lead to good policy-making. I hope we can set a good example for their family today, and I hope they have

a wonderful visit to the Legislature. I ask that they now stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. I hope you don't have too many high expectations.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature my daughter Tenea. You can stand now, Tenea. Tenea is a grade 10 student in Valleyview at Hillside high school. She decided that since it is a short week this week, she would take the week and spend it with me here at the Legislature. Her education is going to happen here this week, so we'll see what she learns today in question period.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Yet again another expectation that may not be met.

1:40

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

#### Nellie Carlson School

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Twenty-five months ago, during the by-election in Edmonton-Whitemud, our current Premier and I stood next to a bare field in Magrath. We noted a sign promising a K to 9 school for that site. That sign had been there for several years, thanks to these guys, despite Edmonton-Whitemud being represented by a long-term cabinet minister and interim Premier.

On September 1, 2016, less than 16 months after the historic election of our government and our commitment to re-funding education and infrastructure, the Nellie Carlson K to 9 school opened to several hundred bright children from my constituency. NCS is home to the Cub athletic teams and a burgeoning arts program. The building will be used as a model for other schools being opened in all parts of Alberta.

A special thanks goes to Clark Builders, who delivered the building on time and under budget. Thanks also to the Edmonton public school board, the teachers and staff at Nellie Carlson school, including Principal Henry Madsen, and the dedicated parent advisory council, who worked so diligently to get the school open.

Most of all, my thanks to Nellie Carlson, after whom the school is named. The students and staff are so proud to have the school named after her and were honoured with her attendance at the opening along with her husband of 70 years, Elmer Carlson, and five generations of family. I have met with and listened to the wisdom of Nellie Carlson on three occasions. She is a saint, in my opinion. Well over 90 years old, she has made several important contributions to First Nations, Alberta, and Canada. Thanks to her perseverance, the Supreme Court of Canada righted a wrong whereby First Nations women lost their treaty rights by marrying a nonstatus man.

She is also a proud Cree woman who has championed the teaching of First Nation languages and culture. Nellie Carlson is a role model for us all. In particular, she is a brilliant example for the hundreds of new students at Nellie Carlson school in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Whitemud.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

#### Home-schooling

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday parents and children of Trinity Christian School Association and the Wisdom Home Schooling Society let go a collective sigh of relief as the

Court of Queen's Bench granted a temporary injunction to halt the NDP government's decision to cancel their accreditation.

As Wildrose said last week, the NDP government did not consider other options for tackling financial concerns and left the families of 3,500 students to deal with the effects of its sudden actions just two months into the school year. Town hall meetings on home-schooling are taking place across our province, and we are hearing the human side of this story, the story of moms, dads, and children who have had nothing to do with the alleged financial improprieties.

In Airdrie I have heard from parents who have children with autism, and the traditional bricks-and-mortar school system just does not serve their kids' needs. I have heard from parents with kids who are in and out of the hospital with chronic illnesses, who have relied on this program and who otherwise wouldn't have an education. And I have heard of students being affected who had chosen Wisdom to suit their high-level sports programming needs.

The minister and this NDP government need to start thinking more about the human impact that their heavy-handed governance has on everyday Albertans, especially when it comes to the deaccreditation of an education program which serves so many Albertan students. Parents need to be assured that their government will act in a fair manner and that their education choices will not be undermined.

With this ruling to grant a temporary injunction Albertans and I expect this government to put kids and families first and to come up with a reasoned solution now.

#### Government Policies

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, recently this NDP government shelled out 5 million taxpayer dollars for ads to promote their climate leadership plan, and they were everywhere: on YouTube, in theatres, even on TV during the Rio Olympics. I'll bet those slots didn't come cheap. At one point in the ad a sincere-looking fellow on an equally sincere-looking horse leans over his saddle horn and earnestly intones: I never thought I'd see the day. And I have to agree with him, but I suspect we aren't talking about the same things.

I never thought I'd see the day that NDP government policies caused businesses to move operations from the Alberta to the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster because it was now the better place to do business. I never thought I'd see the day that the NDP government would shut trillions of dollars of clean-burning coal in the ground and destroy towns across our province instead of relying on the ingenuity of Albertans to develop even better clean coal technology. And I never thought I'd see the day that our Energy minister would tell energy workers to go look for work in B.C. if they couldn't find any in Alberta.

While we're talking about B.C., I never thought I'd see the day that this government would go there and spend a cool half million bucks to hire a lawyer to sue Albertans because apparently Alberta has none who are qualified.

I never thought I'd see the day when our farmers would get demeaned by their government, claiming it had to create a culture of safety.

I never thought I'd see the day when business was vilified and profit was a four-letter word.

I never thought I'd see the day when NDP government logic says that if you make carbon more expensive, we'll use less, but if we make labour more expensive, we'll use more. Must have something to do with that whole NDP world view thing.

Now, the sincere man on the sincere horse was no doubt talking about something else, but the Albertans I talked to are fed up. I

never thought I'd see the day when people are counting the days until the next provincial election so they can vote this NDP government out.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I remind both sides of the House that the past practice and tradition in this House is that you don't make comments or interruptions, either pro or con, while members are speaking.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

#### **New School Construction in Southwest Edmonton**

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since September I've had the fortune of opening three new schools in my constituency of Edmonton-South West. I've joined my colleague, the Minister of Education, in opening Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour school, Roberta MacAdams school, and St. John XXIII school in just a few short weeks. Next year we're going to be opening five more of these schools. I'm proud to be able to support a government which doesn't just make announcements on schools but actually gets behind and funds those schools so that parents and students can have a place to learn.

Mr. Speaker, these schools would not be possible without the amazing work of our school boards, our development partners, and amazing staff at these facilities. These new schools are full of worlds of opportunity for these new students. But behind those students we have an amazing team of parents, and those parents are volunteers who go out every day and do their best to make sure their students have the best possible learning environments. They work on groups like parent associations, they work on groups like playground groups, and they develop their communities into something that students can excel in. Much to the surprise of many parents, schools don't actually come with playgrounds, and with the support of our amazing parents and communities we're able to build amazing recreation spaces for all of our students.

Mr. Speaker, these schools are not just a place of learning; they are cornerstones of our neighbourhoods and our communities. Well-funded education means a well-educated populace that can go out and live and work and succeed in Alberta. A well-funded student means a well-rounded learner. A good education leads to good jobs and lays the foundation for a healthy economy. With these new schools we are preparing Albertans for success. Our children can't wait. That's why this government is so founded in supporting and funding education.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support a government that absolutely understands how important education is and funding education is.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

#### **Equinox Festival in Bon Accord**

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to rise today to recognize the great work done by the town of Bon Accord in holding their fifth equinox and dark-skies festival earlier this year. I had the honour of attending this free event personally, and I wanted to share the great impressions I have of it.

The people of Bon Accord have put a great deal of effort into reducing light pollution in their community. In doing so, they have become Canada's first dark-sky community and only the 11th town in the world to earn this certification from the International Dark-Sky Association.

The guest of honour at their festival this year was the famed Canadian astronaut Colonel Chris Hadfield. It speaks volumes to the capabilities of the town and their dedicated volunteers that they

were able to secure such an esteemed guest and host such a large and complex event so successfully. On a quick personal note, I'll say that this is one of the few things I've done as a member so far that my teenage son thinks is really cool. I had a chance to meet with Colonel Hadfield. It is dedicated people like these, found throughout Alberta, that Hadfield said that he was inspired by while living in Alberta, and in participating in this event, he had a chance to pay back a bit of that inspiration.

This festival has many benefits. It brings tourism and economic opportunities to the region. This year it attracted approximately 3,500 people. To put that into perspective, the community of Bon Accord has about a 1,400 population. It also brings the community together and fosters a love of science and astronomy. Culture, environment, and education are the three pillars of the community of Bon Accord, and it's events like these that bring these elements together in a very powerful way. I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to the town and their dedicated volunteers for hosting this event. It speaks to the community-mindedness and their commitment to preserving our night sky for all of us to enjoy.

Thank you.

1:50

#### **Oral Question Period**

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### **Job Creation and Retention**

**Mr. Jean:** More bad news came out for Alberta this past week. Calgary's unemployment rate is the highest it's been in over two decades, at over 10 per cent, a 120 per cent increase since 2015. Jobs are being shed all across all sectors, but the NDP is more interested in raising everyone's taxes and suing Alberta-owned companies than getting people back to work. What does the Premier have to say to the Albertans who have seen their companies and jobs be taxed and regulated out of existence because of this NDP government's policies?

**Ms Notley:** Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I would say to many Albertans that which most of them already know, which is that the slowdown in our economy is due to the international drop in the price of oil. Now, that being said, however, it is certainly incumbent upon government to do whatever it can to have Albertans' backs as they struggle through these economic times. That's why we have the Alberta jobs plan, and that is why we have a plan that just today we announced would create tens of thousands of jobs over the next three years, and we'll continue to do that work because we care about Alberta families.

**Mr. Jean:** This government has been in power more than 18 months and has overseen one of the most devastating periods of job losses in our province's history and is totally unapologetic. Compared to October last year, Alberta has lost 47,000 full-time jobs. That's 47,000 families whose lives have been thrown into chaos, whose EI is running dry, and all the government can promise them is new carbon taxes and more risky NDP economic policies. Jobs are being lost in construction, in manufacturing, and in professional services right across Alberta. Will the Premier please tell Albertans how many net jobs have been lost since the NDP came into power?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I said, responding to the fact that our economy was not well positioned to

immediately adjust to the dramatic drop in the international price of oil, we've been working very hard to support jobs. For instance, our Alberta jobs plan will create an average of 10,000 jobs annually over the next three years. More than 129 wells have been approved under our modernized royalty framework. Each well sustains about 135 jobs for a total of 17,000. Our investor tax credit will support up to 4,400 jobs over the next three years. We'll continue to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Over 100,000 jobs have been lost since this party has been in power, and I would challenge the NDP to travel to the communities that their policies are hurting the most. Go to Grande Cache, where you can see the desperation in people's eyes. Talk to people in Hanna, whose community is hanging on the edge of a cliff because of this government's coal shutdown, or talk to the tens of thousands of workers and professionals in Calgary who are stuck at home, desperate for a job but simply can't find one because there are none available. How can the Premier and her government be so indifferent to the harm these policies are having on working people, working Albertans, families, right across this province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I reject very much the premise of that case. We have been working very hard with coal companies to negotiate coal compensation because we made it very clear when we brought in our climate leadership plan that we would work with them to make sure that there was no capital stranded. Our minister of economic development is also in the process of going around and meeting with coal communities to talk about a just transition from coal because we believe that it's important to work with not only the companies but the workers and the communities who are impacted. Quite in opposition to what the member opposite has said, we are going to work to make sure that we make this adjustment together.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

### Oil and Gas Transportation to the West Coast

**Mr. Jean:** Last spring all parties in this Legislature followed the Wildrose lead and voted for our motion to fight any crude oil tanker ban by the federal government to British Columbia's north coast. This move would be aggressive and ideological, to intentionally block any current or future pipeline proposals heading in that direction, and now the Liberals are promising a moratorium later this fall. Can the Premier please explain if she has done anything at all to advocate against banning tanker traffic on B.C.'s north coast?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what we have done is that we have met with the government of B.C. and representatives there. We understand, quite rightly, that they are concerned about marine safety and that that's one of the things that needs to be appropriately addressed in order to secure social licence for approval of a pipeline going to the coast. So we were very pleased to see that today the federal government, having listened to us, having listened to the government of B.C., is moving forward very aggressively on significantly enhancing marine safety in B.C. as of today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jean:** The Wildrose motion passed by all MLAs in this House asked the government to do all it could to stop this move by the federal government designed to block new pipeline projects built from Alberta. It clearly stated that the government would support

the Northern Gateway pipeline project, but Albertans haven't heard a single peep from the Premier or the NDP government giving support to this project and the damaging move to block crude oil tankers on B.C.'s coast. When, if ever, can Albertans, Alberta families expect the Premier to denounce this heavy-handed move from Ottawa against Alberta's interests?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, our government and myself as Premier – I have made one of my primary goals the issue of getting our product to tidewater. As a result, I meet regularly with federal officials. I speak with the Prime Minister about this issue regularly. I have met with provincial officials across the country to talk about this issue. We are doing everything we can to move this matter forward. You know what? The report that came out last week about the Kinder Morgan pipeline from the Kinder Morgan panel said that the first priority that needed to be considered was whether a new pipeline would work in alignment with the national climate change plan, and – you know what? – it will thanks to this government.

**Mr. Jean:** The first priority of this government should be Alberta's families.

The Premier's NDP allies in British Columbia have done all they can to smear Alberta's oil and gas industry. They've inflamed protesters, and they continue to attack the integrity of Canada's pipeline review process. But not once have we seen any of Alberta's NDP demanding better from their provincial colleagues. Not once have they ever travelled to British Columbia to drum up support for our pipeline projects. Why hasn't the Premier travelled to B.C. to convince her NDP friends and the B.C. government to stop blocking Alberta's pipelines and start supporting them and Alberta's families?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what our government has done, as I've just outlined, is that we have met frequently and at great length with officials across the country, including representatives from B.C. Just a couple of weeks ago I met with a whole bunch of environmental NGO leaders to talk about why it was that we needed to get our pipelines to tidewater, in particular the one going west through B.C. So, in fact, we have done that work. But – you know what? – it's about getting the work done in a respectful way, not about political grandstanding. The latter will only create more division; the former will get results.

**The Speaker:** Third main question.

### Student Assessment

**Mr. Jean:** Experiments and new educational fads from NDP government bureaucrats continue to hurt test scores for students all across Alberta. One-quarter of grade 6 students and one-third of grade 9 students are failing their PATs. Grade 12 math scores are also on the decline. It certainly shows a broken system that is no longer supporting teachers or students in Alberta's classrooms. When will the Premier realize that we need to stop treating our children like guinea pigs in the classroom and start giving them the tools they need to succeed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by thanking the member very much for that question because, of course, it lines up very much with the fact that our Minister of Education recently announced a curriculum review process into which parents, students, and members opposite can all contribute to ensure that we do better on the matters of the education that we're

providing, to ensure that our kids are ready for the new economy. So I'm very pleased to hear that we're on the same page on this.

2:00

**Mr. Jean:** This NDP government seems more interested in taking instructions from the Alberta Teachers' Association boss than sticking up for parents and our students. Last month the ATA president argued that PATs are not a valuable assessment tool because they don't test important skills like creativity, collaboration, and citizenship. There's no question that they are campaigning to eliminate them. The Education minister is keeping the door wide open. [interjections] He hasn't yet made a decision on continuing with PATs, and this is not a laughing matter. Does the Premier plan to scrap standardized testing? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that we're not going to scrap is thousands of teachers. To be clear, if the member opposite takes \$2 billion out of operational revenue, which they plan to do, that's exactly what will happen. We are ensuring stability in our education system. We are working with teachers, we are working with parents, and thanks to the Minister of Education we are inviting all Albertans to be part of the conversation on how to make our education the best in the country.

**Mr. Jean:** Fearmongering and passing the buck on Alberta students' failing math grades by this Premier just isn't acceptable. We need to have a plan to get us back to a place where our province once again prepares our youth for a successful life, with a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy. I know that many parents share my concerns that an NDP world view will be the main focus of their current curriculum review. If the NDP do away with PATs, we will have one less mechanism to track these slipping scores. Why, then, does the Premier refuse to commit to PATs and standardized testing?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, math skills are critical to student success. We believe that very strongly, and we know that we can do better. I think that the member opposite would actually be surprised to discover the amount of common cause we have on the matter of improving our math scores. We are working on that. The minister is working on that. We are reviewing math, we are reviewing the curriculum, and we will move forward to ensure that the way we measure that is also done in a way that best ensures the greatest and most successful outcomes for our children.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

#### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government has developed a solid track record of failing to consult with and listen to Albertans. We saw it with Bill 6, and we're seeing it now with the job-killing carbon tax. This government is continuing to attack hard-working Albertans and their families with the coal phase-out. To the Premier. Thousands of Albertans will be out of work and their families' economic viability put at risk because of the coal phase-out. Have you been in contact with the hardest hit communities like Hanna, and what will you actually do to replace the good, mortgage-paying jobs they have today once your government rips them out of their hands?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the first thing to understand is that the coal phase-outs that will occur between now and 2030 were already going to happen because of the federal government regulations put in by the former Conservative government. That's the first thing to keep in mind.

That being said, our minister will be reaching out and consulting with workers and also with communities about how to do this with a just transition, to help retrain into renewable energy in some cases, to look at pension things, those kinds of things. We're taking a very open mind to this because we're very committed to ensuring that we support a just transition away from coal to clean, renewable energy for everybody's benefit.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the Premier didn't say that the minister has talked to them because that's not the case. Hanna has been trying to work with the government on an economic impact study because the expedited coal phase-out, the provincial part, will decimate the jobs of over 10 per cent of their population. One out of 10 people in the community will be out of work because of your policies. They've been waiting for an answer since June, yet who's on the job? To the Premier: since your minister is not doing the job, will you pick up the phone, call the good people of Hanna, and give them an answer? They need to know whether they're going to have jobs and what's going to happen to their community. Call the mayor.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member may or may not know, the government has actually engaged in a great deal of work to talk about the way in which we would go through a payout and also how we would negotiate the payout with the companies and the degree to which the companies would also work with the communities and the workers to make sure that they are justly transitioned. So that work is ongoing. There will be more to say about it in the very near future. As well, the minister will be out working with the communities in the very near future, once the coal transition part has been negotiated.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, now, thank you, Premier, for admitting that your government has been gazing at your navels instead of talking to municipalities.

We know that government got a report about a month ago where they paid over half a million dollars to get recommendations on the coal phase-out, but you haven't told the municipalities. To the Premier. You're sitting on Terry Boston's coal phase-out report. Albertans are in the dark. They don't know whether they're going to lose their homes. They don't know whether they're going to lose their jobs. They don't know whether they're going to have a community. When are you going to actually get on the phone, talk to Albertans? They're the ones that matter, not your NDP inner circle.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the report that the member opposite references is a report that is the foundation of the negotiations that are under way with the coal companies, you know, the kinds of negotiations that the members opposite suggest that we should do to ensure investor stability and competence. Once those negotiations are completed in good faith, we will then move on to make sure that the outcome of those negotiations is supported and also that the impact on communities and workers, if they are not addressed through those negotiations, will be additionally supported.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Adult Learning System Review

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the first things this government did back in June 2015 was announce a wide-ranging adult learning review, but very little has been accomplished in 18 months, and now they've scaled it back to focus only on tuition. When I talked with student leaders and administrators, I've learned that neither has asked for a tuition freeze. It seems they get it. I wish the government did. To the Minister of Advanced Education: will you commit to completing a comprehensive review to look at the needs of the system as a whole, including financial aid, noninstructional fees, mental health, board governance, and amend the PSLA?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. He is indeed correct that our government did implement a tuition freeze extension, and we're quite proud to be working to make sure that education remains affordable for all of Alberta's students. In addition to the other requests that he's stated with respect to board governance, a PSLA review, a funding review: all of those things we'll be rolling out in the near future.

**Mr. Clark:** We'd like to know when, Mr. Speaker.

Now, every PSE stakeholder I talk with is asking for quality and predictability, and it's frustrating to hear the minister continue to promise certainty but continually fail to deliver. On April 7, 2016, the minister said in this House:

We are going to be conducting the consultations around the adult learning review so that postsecondary institutions will have certainty about what will happen to their funding.

The student groups and administrators are asking for a legislated tuition cap to grow at a rate of no greater than CPI. Again to the minister: will you listen to students and amend the legislation to bring ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the issue of certainty that the Member for Calgary-Elbow raised, our government has provided certainty in funding. We've provided 2 per cent increases in the operating grants to every university and college, and we've committed publicly that there will be no surprises in the budget that we provide to universities and colleges next year. In fact, it was just last week that the president of Mount Royal University was on television telling the citizens of Alberta that he's very pleased that our government has provided certainty and predictability to the system. I'm very proud of the work that our government is doing in that regard.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, another big challenge for Alberta's postsecondaries is board governance. This government keeps moving the goalposts when it comes to board appointments. First, reappointments were rejected, then long-serving board members were asked to reapply, and now the minister has put a totally different process in place. As a result, several PSE boards have lost members and are having a difficult time making quorum. To the minister. I wonder: is this delay caused by your inability to find capable people who share the NDP world view, and

how long are you willing to let postsecondary institutions and their students suffer?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to making students suffer, nothing would make students suffer more than implementing the policies of the conservatives that are sitting across the way from me today. Making billions of dollars' worth of reckless cuts would hurt students more than anything else that's on offer from that side of the House.

**2:10**

With respect to board appointments, Mr. Speaker, we have changed the process of appointing party insiders and party donors to boards. We have opened the process. It is a transparent process, and once we find the right people to appoint to those boards, they will be appointed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

### Agribusiness Industry Development

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Leduc-Beaumont is home to Alberta's agrivalue food processing centre and business incubator. This facility has supported the establishment of companies that have resulted in 500 indirect and direct jobs despite these tough times. To the minister responsible: given that our agricultural industries are the backbone of communities like the one I call home, what is the government doing to ensure that these industries have every opportunity to grow?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for the question. He's absolutely right. Value-added agriculture industries are critical to supporting jobs and diversifying our economy. Since 2011 Alberta's agrivalue food processing centre and business incubator has supported 10 new companies that have generated \$60 million in investment in Alberta and created hundreds of new jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta jobs plan is working. I can inform this House that our plan will ensure the expansion of this facility by 2,350 square metres, making it the largest of its kind not only in Canada but in the world.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister for taking a clear stance that Leduc-Beaumont's agricultural industries are, simply put, the greatest in the world, and she'll get no argument from me.

What else can Alberta producers and people working in agricultural industries across rural Alberta expect from the jobs plan?

**Ms Larivee:** I thank the member again for the question. Our minister of agriculture is currently on a trade mission to Asia, building investment relationships that are essential to creating jobs and diversifying the Alberta economy. Our Alberta export expansion package will provide additional support for small businesses in Alberta looking to enter international markets with \$9 million of funding over the next three years.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve a better plan than no plan, and returning to the days of boom and bust will hurt, not help our

economy. On this side of the House we're not living in the past; we are building an economy for the future.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how would small businesses in Leduc-Beaumont get access to those supports?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through three programs: the export support fund for eligible companies to export to new markets, the global buyers and investors program for export-ready companies to connect with international buyers, and the export readiness program, which helps increase access to Alberta's 12 international trade offices.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has said that investing in our trade relationships is not a real plan of any substance, and the Member for Drumheller-Stettler disagrees with our government promoting trade at all, but on this side of the House we are proud of our businesses, big and small, and will continue to promote Alberta well beyond our borders and work to create jobs to diversify our . . .

**The Speaker:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

#### **Bovine Tuberculosis**

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, as we speak, there are over 30 ranches in southeastern Alberta under quarantine due to bovine tuberculosis. While these ranchers wait weeks for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to conduct testing, they are forced to incur tens of thousands of dollars in costs to feed, water, and corral their cattle over winter. What's worse, this is the one time of year that producers go to market to pay their expenses. Can the minister of agriculture tell us what the government is doing to help cut through the bureaucratic delays and expedite this process?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I have to emphasize that our government knows that the beef industry in Alberta is strong and resilient, and we're incredibly proud of the industry in this province and the iconic product we export to the world. We continue to be in close contact with beef producers about the issue. A team of AF staff members has been set up, using an incident-command system to co-ordinate activities to assess potential avenues for financial assistance, and we continue to work with the CFIA and beef producers to share information on financial options.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, seeing as the process continues at great expense to ranchers and their families, who are unable to access compensation for destroyed herds until the testing is complete, and since these producers face mounting stress and uncertainty from the prospect of having their life's work set back, even losing family pets and other important animals, what is this government doing to communicate with affected ranchers on how they will support them and communicate directly as they rebuild their lives?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hope that with the next supplemental you'll avoid the preamble. Thank you.

Hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The CFIA is leading this investigation, and we have offered our support in this matter. The

situation is an important priority, and the government of Alberta will continue to do whatever we can to help the CFIA to expedite the investigation or reduce quarantine times. You know, certainly, we've posted a list of programs available to affected cattle producers, from advance programs to flexibility on AFSC loans. We've begun the longer term analysis of whether future AgriRecovery assistance may be available to producers affected by bovine TB. We will continue to listen to beef producers.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that the cause of this TB case is still unclear, that the animal in question was near CFB Suffield and given that CFB Suffield had 200 head of elk introduced that now total over 10,000 and given that these elk have already impacted the agriculture sector by destroying crops and breaking fences, can the government listen to the solution offered by local officials and aggressively manage this elk for the sake of controlling and preventing further disease and damage?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact of the matter is that Environment and Parks is working quite aggressively to reduce those elk numbers. We certainly share that view, and we are working with the Department of National Defence so that we can manage our elk populations properly. We're working with CFB Suffield to develop a long-term management strategy. In response to concerns from hunters last season we created more breaks between hunts so that elk can return to the base rather than moving toward adjacent private land. That should improve hunters' experience on the base. We will continue to evaluate that hunt so we can better manage the elk population and ensure that hunters have a worthwhile experience.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### **Postsecondary Education Funding**

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government claims to be trying to make postsecondary education more affordable, but affordability should not come at the expense of the quality of the education received at any of our fine postsecondary institutions here in Alberta. Paying less for an inferior product is not affordability. To the Minister of Advanced Education: will your ministry be providing additional funding to postsecondary institutions to offset the cost of the tuition freeze, and if so, when will this funding be announced, sir?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government values providing high-quality education at a low cost, unlike what the PC government did when they were in power: offering a 2 per cent increase in 2013 and providing them with a 7 per cent cut. That's not the way this government operates. We will be providing predictable funding to the institutions going forward. There will be no surprises in the budget, and institutions can count on what we're telling them as far as their operating grants go.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to table page 17 of our last budget, which indicated that starting in 2015 and

every year forward we actually had increases every single year and no mention of a carbon tax.

On to the question. Given that the president of the U of A recently described the tuition freeze without offsetting . . . [interjections] Shall I continue, sir? Thank you.

. . . as a cut, a simple and pure cut to programs, and given that this seems to indicate that temporarily decreasing the cost of one academic year is more important to the NDP than the quality of instruction, to the minister: how do you intend to address these concerns that a continued freeze . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Hon. member, please sit when I stand.

**Mr. Rodney:** Happy to.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Minister of Advanced Education.

2:20

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure which budget the hon. member is referring to because the budget that the Prentice government brought down was scheduled to make a 4 per cent cut to postsecondary education this year and continued cuts last year. In fact, that's a time-honoured tradition of the PC government. I spoke to Jim Dinning not two months ago, and he said that when he was Finance minister, they cut postsecondary education funding. If this government wants to support postsecondary education in the future, they should vote for our budget in the spring.

**Mr. Rodney:** As mentioned, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to table that document that proves him wrong.

Given that there are concerns that Alberta's postsecondary institutions may increase tuition in one big jump as opposed to the gradual increase we would likely have seen if there had been no tuition freeze and that the president of Grant MacEwan likened the freeze to being stoned to death with popcorn and given that postsecondary students are concerned that a temporary three-year reprieve from tuition increases may be nullified by large increases when the freeze ends, again to the minister: how do you intend to provide quality education at an affordable price when your tuition freeze inevitably ends?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed is quite right to highlight the fact that our tuition freeze will end in the 2018-2019 academic year, and that's why we've launched our tuition review consultation. I encourage all members of the House to go back to their constituencies, encourage citizens to go to [tuitionreview.alberta.ca](http://tuitionreview.alberta.ca) to share their views on what tuition for postsecondary education should look like in the future because this government is committed to providing high-quality education at an affordable price for all the people of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### Seniors' Housing for Couples

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The divorce-by-nursing-home policy that was imposed by the previous government was crass, inhumane, and un-Albertan. This policy was allegedly scrapped in 2013, but we keep hearing stories about couples in care being torn apart after 40, 50, 60 years of marriage. In September we saw

reports of a Camrose couple being separated in care after 66 years together. Now our office has learned about a Ponoka couple going through the very same thing because of their varying service needs. To the minister: is this the quality of care that you would want for your loved ones?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, when there are those experiences where family members are separated, particularly when they've been with each other for so long, it definitely pulls at the heartstrings. Staff do everything they can to make sure that families can be reunited but that they're also in a level of care that's appropriate to make sure that they're safe. I have heard of a number of facilities. If you want to reach out specifically with the example, we'll do our best to try to help triage that, but our number one priority needs to be safety. That's why when we're building new facilities, we're finding ways to make sure that they can be safe and provide a variety of care in congregated settings.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, the couple from Ponoka has been contributing to this province for half a century. They deserve to spend their final years together. Given that this government currently has no plan to address the issue of couples who have varying needs of care who live in rural Alberta and given that Albertans expect our senior couples in care to be taken care of in their golden years, again to the minister: why does this government consistently fail to keep Alberta's seniors together?

**Ms Hoffman:** The member opposite maybe didn't hear it, but absolutely we are working to make sure that we can keep couples together and provide them a safe level of care as close to home as possible, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've made a commitment to build 2,000 new long-term care and dementia care spaces to support Albertans. The members opposite have proposed cutting \$9 billion from infrastructure spending; that certainly wouldn't help address the situations that the member is speaking to.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I think I might have picked up a preamble in your last supplemental. Try and avoid that this time.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, talk is cheap. We need action here.

**The Speaker:** That is what I would call a preamble, a classic example.

**Mr. Yao:** We know that there are serious issues with capacity in long-term care, and given that a lack of space is contributing to the issues around keeping couples in care together, Albertans want to know why this government is content sitting on its laurels, referencing a couple of long-term care bed announcements. Again to the minister: how many new long-term care beds have been built under your leadership, and when are you going to fully deliver on the 2,000 beds that you have promised?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely committed to building 2,000 new long-term care and dementia care spaces, and we will meet that commitment. We are on track to do that by the end of the term. We are absolutely moving forward in the right direction. I think you can look throughout Alberta to see the great progress we've made. There are many announcements being made already today, and construction is taking place as we speak, and that's important. Of course, in existing facilities it's difficult to make sure that the accommodations have been made to make sure that they're safe for



everyone, but moving forward we are absolutely making sure that we have the ability to keep couples together and provide a variety of care within one facility. I'm very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### Carbon Policies

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wildrose has repeatedly warned the NDP about the risk of Alberta's climate policies falling out of lockstep with other jurisdictions. The chair of the NDP climate panel knows that carbon leakage is a big deal. He said that until the rest of the world has policies that impose similar costs, you're not actually reducing emissions; you're just displacing emissions and the economic activity to other jurisdictions. The facts are clear. Alberta should be producing more goods, not less. To the minister of environment: how exactly does a punitive carbon tax prevent carbon leakage?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the hon. member is cherry-picking from the Leach report, which made a very clear commitment to a set of performance standards. That was the recommendation, which we accepted, which would allow for an output-based allocation for our large final emitters. I know those are big words and it's really hard, but the point here is that we are allowing for those competitive effects, and we are doing so in a made-in-Alberta way because the opposition's idea of a carbon plan is to have one imposed by Ottawa.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Just last Thursday the Minister of Advanced Education stood in this Assembly to accuse the opposition of being exactly wrong in our steadfast support for made-in-Alberta products as a solution to global pollution. Given that when Albertans produce, we do so under world-class environmental standards and given that the per capita metric that the minister cited is a false metric for evaluating emissions intensity – they should use emissions by GDP – does this government understand the devastation that policies leading to carbon leakage have on Alberta's economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are engaged in these conversations right now with the oil and gas industry, with the cement manufacturers, with the fertilizer industry, and with all other large final emitters to make sure that our performance standards system fits with the overall structure of our economy. You know, where we won't take advice is from a bunch of folks who don't accept the science of climate change.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Inexpensive and reliable power is a cornerstone of economic growth. Given that in 2015 78 per cent of Alberta's grid was used for either industrial or commercial purposes, demonstrating our job creators' heavy reliance on cheap power relative to our competitors, and given that neither U.S. presidential candidate supports a carbon tax and that Australia and this government's socialist comrades in France have both abandoned their carbon taxes, will the NDP admit that its carbon policies are harming Alberta job creators, just like France has discovered?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised at all that a party full of folks who deny the science of climate change are also denying the health effects of burning coal. The fact of the matter is that we are moving ahead because those health effects are

real and they are demonstrable, and we are doing the right thing for our children and our elderly. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** If all sides of the house don't want to be quiet for my sake, I hope we don't want to wake any children with our loud noises.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

2:30

### Capital Infrastructure Funding

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2015-2020 capital plan introduced under the previous government contained \$29.5 billion in projects, including the southwest Calgary ring road and the University of Lethbridge destination project, both mentioned by the minister in a recent news release. To the minister. You seem to be very excellent at taking credit for PC initiatives. You even just held a press conference, when you knew the opposition would be sitting right there, saying that you created jobs, and those jobs came from PC projects. Can you please outline to the House the number of jobs created by NDP projects, not the projects already announced under the previous government?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, thank you.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much for the question.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** Don't stand when he's standing.

**The Speaker:** That's right. You don't stand till I . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Sorry.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Mason:** Can I go now?

**The Speaker:** Now you can.

**An Hon. Member:** It's his first day, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Yeah. I know.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for that reminder, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I just want to indicate that many of the projects that the previous government was working on were stalled and were not going ahead. Their budget, that they ran on and lost the election on, quite frankly, was also something that's not designed to make good progress.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government announced the completion of the northeast Anthony Henday Drive to much fanfare and given the government's own numbers that this project supported 2,000 jobs over five years and given that this project was built as a P3, to the same minister again: will your government be continuing the use of a P3 model for creating capital assets given the success of this project?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we're very pleased that the Henday is now open right around the city, and I

think that people in the entire Edmonton region appreciate that. Clearly, that was a project that was initiated by the previous government.

With respect to P3s the jury is out as far as I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, and he's hailing it a success. I want to see what all the numbers look like when it's all in. We'll make an evaluation, and I'll let all members and the public know where we're going.\*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government has taken a special interest in the PC leadership race, I thought we could revisit the Premier's leadership promises. Given that she stated – and I quote – that we need to replace aging hospitals like Edmonton's Misericordia, unquote, and given that AHS is calling for a new Edmonton hospital, which would create a number of jobs as well as support front-line health care, can we expect a groundbreaking ceremony for Edmonton's new hospital soon, or is this no longer a priority?

**Ms Hoffman:** It's not a surprise to me that the member from the third party cares mostly about groundbreaking ceremonies. It was clear, from the progress that the last government made, that all they cared about was getting signs up saying that they were going to build something and not actually bringing about action, Mr. Speaker. That's why, when we came in and we looked at what had actually been done – they announced that they were going to do all this work at the Alex. They hadn't even done any beginning plans. So we've actually moved forward by investing in planning processes. We're bringing about real change. We're actually getting things built, and we're paying for it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

### Affordable Housing

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I speak with affordable housing stakeholders in Calgary, they're excited that for the first time in decades the federal, provincial, and municipal governments are all on the same page with regard to investing in affordable housing. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: how will investments made through the affordable housing agreement and the social housing agreement impact the affordable housing market in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I'm very proud that we've signed two agreements with the federal government. The social housing agreement transfers properties to full provincial ownership and provides \$892 million in funding to 2033. The investment in affordable housing agreement provides an additional \$94.5 million of federal funding over the next two years, funding that not only helps build homes but will diversify our economy and create jobs here in Alberta and will increase affordable housing here in this province.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in my riding of Calgary-East the Calgary Housing Company plays an important role in providing affordable housing and given that the company runs approximately 10,000 units for 25,000 Calgarians, to the same

minister: what changes can the company expect to see with the signing of these agreements?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had the opportunity to tour the Calgary Housing Company, and they can expect to see, through investment in affordable housing, significant capital investment in community housing, provincially and municipally owned units, housing for populations with special needs like those fleeing domestic violence and through the social housing agreement increased administrative flexibility for units previously owned by Canada Mortgage and Housing. This will create predictable operating funding to 2033.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister mentioned greater administrative flexibility for Calgary Housing. Can she elaborate on what that means and how it will affect tenants living in those particular units?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you. For example, a tenant living in social housing may improve their financial situation, and that puts them above the income eligibility threshold, and then they may be forced to move out of this housing. This policy is a disincentive for tenants and penalizes them for improving their financial situation, and this is certainly the wrong direction that we want to go in. Our updated agreements give greater administrative flexibility to explore alternatives like mixed-market housing and buildings. Tenants who improve their financial situation can continue to have stable housing as long as they pay market rent.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Wildlife Management

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wildlife damage to crops and hay bales has been occurring in Alberta for years. What's worse is that this year there are still crops lying in the field, leading to the potential of high crop losses in a year when farmers are already suffering badly from this government's ongoing wildlife mismanagement. To the minister: what, if any, new programs has your department developed to manage this ongoing problem, and what is your department going to do to start working with farmers and ranchers on wildlife management?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our work on wildlife management is ongoing, our work with the public lands, and our work with our fish and game policy is ongoing. We are always open to ongoing conversations with landowners on how we can best manage the number of tags, the wildlife management units, and the movement of wildlife, as I was talking about with CFB Suffield and many of the private landowners around there. If there are specific instances that the hon. member would like me to follow up with, I'm happy to do so.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Suffield elk herd has been damaging ranchers' fences and crops for years – and the problem has been getting worse – and given that your department has been failing at wildlife management in the areas of aeration, fisheries

\*See page 1773, right column, paragraphs 13 and 14

management, game management, predation management, and now the TB situation, to the minister of environment: when are you going to show the affected ranchers, farmers, and outdoor enthusiasts in Alberta a plan that will actually work and start taking wildlife management seriously?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the specific situation at CFB Suffield our department is working with area hunters to assess the risk of bovine TB in the Suffield herd. We've asked our department to organize a meeting with area hunters so they can present their concerns to staff. We are continuing to evaluate that hunt so that we can better manage the elk population and ensure that hunters have a worthwhile experience there. One of the biggest things we can do as well for the quality of hunting experience is to ensure biodiversity, and that's why we've moved forward on a number of those conservation initiatives as well.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, given that wolves are already being culled to assist the woodland caribou and given that ranchers around Alberta continue to suffer significant and ongoing livestock losses from both wolves and grizzlies all across the eastern slopes of our province, when will this minister's department stop picking wildlife winners and losers and do more to assist farmers and ranchers with proper predation control management programs and proper wildlife management programs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I'm happy to follow up with the specific landowner and the concerns that the hon. member has in his riding and along the eastern slopes. Of course, we do continue to move forward with predation control in order to manage our caribou herds in the Duvernay and Montney areas and elsewhere. But if there are specific concerns in his geographic area, I'm happy to follow up after question period.

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

## 2:40 Heritage Savings Fund Alberta Growth Mandate

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government is busy trumpeting its job-creation plan today. The Alberta growth mandate is an example of this plan. The mandate directs AIMCo to invest 3 per cent of the heritage fund into Alberta companies. Worthy? Undoubtedly. But jobs? Hey, let's find out. AIMCo invested \$40 million from the heritage fund into Calfrac Well Services. To the minister of economic development: how many jobs did the investment create?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Through our Alberta jobs plan we're moving forward by creating employment, diversifying our economy, protecting services that Alberta families count on. Today we released numbers on the progress that we're making with our Alberta jobs investments.

Specific to the investment that the member has asked me about, I will have to take a look and see if we can find a more specific numbers answer for him, but I am able to share additional information, like with the STEP program, where we were able to create 2,700 jobs for students this summer.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the purported goal of the Alberta growth mandate is to create jobs and given that AIMCo's investment in Calfrac is actually a loan to restructure its debt as well as options for AIMCo to purchase shares at a preferred price – yikes – and given that the government issued a news release boasting of the \$40 million as a means of supporting “innovation and environmental stewardship” in Alberta, again to the minister: why do you continue to claim that this investment is creating jobs in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Through our Alberta jobs plan we are using a number of initiatives to invest here in Alberta, including making a \$500 million investment available for the petrochemicals diversification program, providing stable funding to health care, education, and other services.

Regarding a specific investment as directed by this member, I do not have details on that, but we will take a look at his feedback and return.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Calfrac, like so many fracking companies, saw its operating income in Canada drop by more than half in 2015 and given that Calfrac is downsizing and restructuring its operations in Alberta due to the economic downturn, which included laying off 200 employees in Medicine Hat, and given that Calfrac is active in the U.S. and South America and Russia – perhaps I'm a little confused here – to the same minister: is your job-creation plan to create jobs in other countries?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our jobs plan has been creating jobs here in Alberta through a number of measures. We have through the STEP program created 2,700 student jobs. We are looking forward to creating 8,000 jobs in 2016 through the Alberta investor tax credits. We are looking at supporting businesses.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds we'll continue with Members' Statements.

## Members' Statements

(continued)

### Calgary Veterans' Food Drive

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, over the weekend I held my fourth annual Calgary veterans' food bank drive. The veterans' food bank targets services to veterans, ex-service, widows, dependants who are in temporary financial difficulties. About 50 volunteers went out in northern Calgary, where we raised over \$3,500 worth of food. In addition, we raised over \$1,500 in spontaneous donations at the Alberta-wide rally at McDougall Centre. But our volunteers at the doors could tell that there were people giving who were also down on their luck. Normally the veterans' food bank does about 90 hampers a month. This year they're up to 140 a month, a 55 per cent increase. They also normally spend \$10,000 to purchase food. This year it's \$50,000, and that extra money comes from the poppy fund, the money raised from the red flowers on your lapels. The carbon tax will cost the food bank more to heat and power the building and will cut back on donations received.

Traditionally people think of veterans as senior citizens. That's no longer the case. Due to Canada's involvement in Afghanistan a veteran can be in his 20s. Younger veterans used to find work in the oil patch, but the oil patch isn't hiring. It is not through lack of effort. Some veterans have applied for work more than 300 times and still have no job. Last week it was revealed that the unemployment rate in Calgary is 10.2 per cent, the worst rate of any major city in Canada.

Join me in thanking my volunteers, especially Stephen and Karen Davis and Emery Pritchard, for hosting and feeding the team while we helped the Calgary veterans community.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

#### Bill 28 Public Health Amendment Act, 2016

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to request leave to introduce a bill, Bill 28, the Public Health Amendment Act, 2016.

Immunizations save lives, Mr. Speaker. They protect our children and our communities and reduce the burden that we have on our health care system. Amendments are aimed at increasing immunization rates in our children and improving our response to outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases in our schools and communities. Amendments will also improve immunization services so that Albertans have increased access to safe, high-quality immunization services.

I look forward to discussion and deliberation with my colleagues in this House as we consider this important public health initiative.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the name of expediting the process this afternoon and not needing to wait until tomorrow, I will be referring to a couple of documents while we discuss the point of privilege later this afternoon. In anticipation of that, I will table two documents, both with respect to the point of privilege.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 19(5) of the Auditor General Act I'm pleased to table five copies of the following report: Report of the Auditor General of Alberta, October 2016. Copies of this report will be provided to members.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table five copies of an October 2016 article from the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy titled Alberta's New Royalty Regime Is a Step towards Competitiveness, which is a document that I referenced during question period on November 2, 2016. The article states that Alberta's new royalty framework is making Alberta's energy market more competitive compared to other Canadian jurisdictions, including its immediate neighbours, British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table five copies of a May 2016 article from the Canada West Foundation titled Look Out: Toward a Climate Strategy That Reduces Global Emissions, that I quoted in my speech on Bill 25 on November 3, 2016. The article states:

Alberta's new climate [change] strategy provides a good example of how to thread the needle . . . The genius of the plan is that it injects competition into the mix at the firm level by [introducing] "top quartile" performance . . . [and] there is an incentive to perform better than one's peers.

2:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. After your request on Thursday of last week I'm very pleased to rise today to table the five requisite copies of an Alberta government website post, an Alberta government news release, and a CBC article with quotations from the minister of the environment. Please note that these documents were all available online while Bill 27 was on notice but before it had been introduced, and it clearly shows that this government made details of Bill 27 available to the general public before that information was shared with this House, demonstrating the lack of respect of this government for this House and the work that we're trying to do here. That's the first set.

The second – and I'm sure the Advanced Education minister will appreciate this after today's questions – is simply, as requested, Budget 2015's fiscal plan 2015-2020 consolidated expense, page 17, ministry of innovation and advanced education, indicating increases for each of the years going forward, 2015 through to 2020.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling, and oddly enough, it's the same document that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed just tabled, but it says exactly the opposite of what he just said, that, in fact, postsecondary operations are receiving decreases in the years 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2018-2019. I have the appropriate number of copies that I'd like to table.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Schmidt, Minister of Advanced Education, return to order of the Assembly Motion for Return 12, asked for by Mr. Cooper on May 2, 2016, copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Advanced Education or its predecessor between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015; response to Written Question 14, asked for by Mr. Clark on May 16, 2016: what is the status as of March 15, 2016, of the adult learning review program proposed in the New Democratic Party election platform during the May 2015 Alberta provincial general election?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe that at approximately 2:41 there was a point of order made. The hon. member.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a point of order. At approximately 2:34 this afternoon, during question period, under 23(j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder," the Member for Calgary-East, after asking a question and as she was sitting down and, hopefully, caught on

camera, very clearly mouthed an obscenity over to this side of the House. I would ask that she stand and apologize for that remark.

This is, you know, getting to be a bit of a pattern here, a common pattern, that people think that just because they're not saying it loudly, a gesture or mouthing obscenities is acceptable, and it absolutely is not in the House. Heckling is one thing, Mr. Speaker, but this is another matter.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely apologize. As the member stated, things do sometimes get heated, and I felt like I was coming under a bit of a personal attack. But it's never acceptable in this House, and I sincerely apologize, and I withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Point of Order

#### Allegations against Members

**The Speaker:** I would like to, first of all, deal with a point of order that was raised at our last meeting. You will recall that I indicated that I was – the Official Opposition House Leader raised a point, but I did not hear the statements being made giving rise to the point of order. I didn't have the chance at the time to read it out of the Blues.

I have now reviewed the exchange between the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster and the Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal, at page 1699 of *Hansard*. This would appear to be a difference of opinion or a matter of debate in connection with what transpired in a committee, a committee which, by the way, has reported its findings to the Assembly. Members did have an opportunity to clarify their respective positions on the issue. I do not find that the statements constituted an allegation, and I find there is no point of order.

### Privilege

**The Speaker:** I also agreed at our last session that I would hear arguments in terms of the point of privilege raised by the House leader for the third party. First of all, to the hon. member, are there any new pieces of information? We have on the record your initial point. Is there anything substantive or new that you would need to add, sir?

**Mr. Rodney:** Yes, please, and thank you. I will be as brief as possible under the circumstances respecting the auspices that you have under this House.

I do rise to speak on the point of privilege related to a series of events which occurred last Thursday, November 3, 2016. Mr. Speaker, I quote from a news release issued by the NDP government that morning.

The first competition will see investors bidding to provide up to 400 megawatts of renewable electricity. The AESO will gather feedback from industry on draft commercial terms starting on Nov. 10, and before the competition takes place in 2017.

That was from the morning, sir.

Next I will quote from a printout taken from the Alberta government website, once again, released in the a.m., not the p.m., of November 3. "Alberta will add 5,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030 through the Renewable Electricity Program, run by the Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO)."

Similar comments, Mr. Speaker, were also made by the minister to CBC, as noted in the article which I've already tabled.

Until Bill 27 was introduced, AESO did not have any legislative authority whatsoever to organize the competition as listed by the government, and for the sake of the table, these powers are found in sections 5(1) and (2) as well as section 7.

It's clear from these sequences of events that the government was once again thumbing its nose at this House and its conventions, I might add, by sharing the contents of the bill with the general public before it was shared here in this House. I'd simply remind every one of us, Mr. Speaker, that this is not the first, not the second, but the third instance of this demonstrated lack of respect for the House. Well, the last time I checked, the province is run by laws which have to be debated and ultimately passed right here in this House, not by some political bureau.

I just can't help but point out that this is the second point of privilege we're discussing in short order. Just last week we heard from the minister of economic development. He was earnestly apologizing to this House and promised that the government would do better in the future. That was the same week.

Mr. Speaker, this government is supposed to provide . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm encouraging you to give some new information.

**Mr. Rodney:** Yes. I'm happy to.

**The Speaker:** We've had that before.

**Mr. Rodney:** I'm on my last page of the exact same thing.

**The Speaker:** Good.

**Mr. Rodney:** The House is to provide a check on government power. Sharing information contained within a bill with the general public while that bill was on notice but had not yet been introduced circumvents our Assembly and the important work that we're trying to do here, so it's staggering arrogance.

The last point, that is new, Mr. Speaker, is this. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was so surprised when the previous government was found in contempt that he stated: I've never seen a point of privilege be successful in events of the government of the past. I've been here for 13 years, and it's the first time in my experience. Fortunately for the member he didn't have to wait 13 years for a second one. My only hope is that the government will finally learn its lesson, and I hope it's the last time that we have to have a discussion of this nature.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to your ruling. I truly do.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, I have to say, listening to the hon. member talk, that there's scant information there to support his claim. Lots of rhetoric and attempts to chastise the government, but quite frankly, there's very little substance to this point of privilege, purported privilege, which has been raised. They are very serious, as I said on Thursday afternoon, and ought to be dealt with as such. They should not be brought up frivolously, but unfortunately I think that's exactly what's happened here, and it may be the inexperience of the hon. member as a House leader. [interjection] Maybe I can be allowed to proceed on my point without heckling, Mr. Speaker, by the hon. member.

3:00

Quite frankly, to summarize, we do not believe this is a matter of privilege because a copy of the bill in question was not distributed out of the House until it was given first reading, technical details from the bill were not part of Thursday morning's announcement, the program that was announced is not contingent on the passage of this bill, and where the minister did make reference to the bill, she did not prejudge its passage.

Mr. Speaker, let's first establish precisely what happened in this case, not starting last Thursday but actually going back to last year. In November 2015 this government launched an ambitious climate leadership plan that will make Alberta an environmental leader, among other things. At that time we said explicitly that we would be moving forward with a carbon levy. We discussed our plan to cap oil sands emissions, and we unveiled our target of 30 per cent renewable electricity by 2030. Why is that material? Well, each of these measures were the subject of subsequent legislative enactment.

Of course, on May 24 our Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, enacted a carbon levy as well as certain related rebates. Earlier last week my colleague the hon. minister of environment gave first reading to Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, which would cap emissions from the oil sands, and then on Thursday my colleague the Minister of Energy introduced Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act. Again, this measure expanded on what our government had previously announced.

In all three cases the government's policy objective was a matter of public debate well before any of these pieces of legislation were introduced. The measures had been outlined by the government, and elements of the plan had been the subject of debate in this Chamber on many occasions, specifically on March 15, April 12, April 16, April 18, April 19, April 21, May 3, May 10, May 12, May 16, May 24, May 25, May 26, May 30, May 31, June 1, June 2, and June 6. Renewable energy, the subject of Bill 27, was specifically raised in question period on May 24, May 30, and May 31. Mr. Speaker, these are matters of public debate, and of course there was no attempt by the opposition to claim privilege in either of the previous cases.

Let's talk specifically about renewable electricity. As noted above, the government outlined its commitment to renewable electricity, including a commitment to see up to 30 per cent renewables by 2030, last November. Shortly thereafter, on November 30, the minister of environment and the Minister of Energy noted that in pursuing that objective, Alberta would keep the cost of renewables as low as possible by using market mechanisms such as auctioning. In mid-September 2016 the government announced that Alberta will add 5,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity through the renewable electricity program, a competitive and transparent bidding process run by the Alberta Electric System Operator, or AESO. This matter was detailed in a September 14 *Calgary Herald* article.

On the morning of last Thursday the minister of environment was in Calgary to announce details related to the first auction, specifically that the first auction will be up to 400 megawatts. The minister did not announce details related to the bill although she did note that the government's intention was to introduce enabling legislation later that day related to our broader vision of 30 by '30.

It is worth noting here that the bill introduced and the programs and measures announced are distinct. The program details are not spelled out in the act. The government could develop a funding program without the existence or passage of the act. On Thursday at noon the opposition were provided an embargoed briefing, as is the normal practice adhered to by this government, wherein they

were provided a substantive document outlining various provisions of the act. On Thursday just before 3 o'clock the minister rose in this House to give the bill first reading. After first reading the media were given a technical briefing on the bill.

If I could for a moment, I would now like to summarize what is in Bill 27. For my summary I will quote from the briefing material provided to the opposition on Thursday. The purposes of the act are to establish a definition of renewable electricity for Alberta, provide the Alberta Electric System Operator with a statutory... [interjections] Mr. Speaker, I beg your assistance in muzzling the hon. member from Calgary. [interjections] You're out of order, sir.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, as I understand it, the Government House Leader is providing information. He asked for permission on Thursday to make his arguments today. The reference to new information is entirely – it is all new, it seems to me today, because he did not have the opportunity. However, I would encourage the Government House Leader to provide substantive information with respect to the point of privilege being raised.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've put quite a bit of work into this, and I hope that I can be permitted the opportunity to respond fully.

The purpose of the act includes legislating the target of 30 per cent renewable generation in Alberta by 2030, clarifying the Market Surveillance Administrator's oversight function and extending it to market participants involved in the renewable electricity program, and providing funding certainty for renewable electricity programs so that developers can secure better financing rates, thereby improving government program cost outcomes.

Details of the bill were not in the announcement. The act and the program are two separate and distinct things. If you go to the Alberta government website for the renewable electricity program, it clearly outlines what the program is intended to do, much of which has been discussed publicly for some time. First, Alberta will add 5,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030. The program will be run by the Alberta Electric System Operator, and the investment will be solicited through a competitive and transparent bidding process.

It outlines a competitive process, that the AESO will gather feedback from industry on draft commercial terms before the first auction takes place in 2017. The first competition will see investors bidding to provide up to ...

**The Speaker:** Government House Leader, you seem to be speaking to the details of the bill. I would encourage you to get to the matter as raised by the hon. member.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I have another page to read, but I take your direction. These are specific details on the renewable electricity program that are available online and to the public, none of which are contained in the Renewable Electricity Act and none of which are contingent on the act passing. Again, they are two separate and distinct things.

The precedent, Mr. Speaker. There are decades of precedent that allowed government to communicate elements of its legislative agenda to the public prior to the enabling legislation being given first reading. Just a few Speaker's rulings shortly, but to summarize, it's very clear based on the practices of this and other Houses that the government must have the ability to communicate with the public what its overarching plans and goals are. The final version of bills that may make up a part of that plan must be presented in the Assembly before they may be given to anyone else, but that absolutely does not preclude the government or ministers from talking publicly about that subject in any way.

On October 31, 2013, Speaker Zwozdesky made a ruling that can be found on pages 2655 and 2656 of that day with a regard to information that was released about Bill 32, the Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act, prior to its introduction in the Assembly. In that ruling Speaker Zwozdesky states the following:

Several points were outlined by the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills when he spoke on October 29 in this Assembly. These points are in our recorded *Hansard* proceedings on page 2528, wherein he said, amongst many other things, the following:

We had seen a sign, obviously in the orange and blue colours, displayed publicly outlining Bill 32. We've seen press releases and public statements outlining the details of Bill 32. We know, of course, that Bill 32 was on the Order Paper yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and it was not yet introduced until earlier today.

I'd like to underline the reference to press releases and public statements outlining the details of Bill 32.

There are clearly parallels between that case and this one, bearing in mind that the comments made by the minister of environment on Thursday in fact did not outline details of Bill 27. In fact, they spoke to a government program, the details of which are not contained in the bill.

Speaker Zwozdesky goes on to refer to a previous ruling of his. At that time, and also as with the case before us today, there was no factual basis to actually conclude that explicit and verbatim details or provisions of the bill were discussed. Accordingly, it was held that the member's ability to perform her functions in that instance had not been impeded. Again, the same thing can be said about today's matter.

3:10

The ruling continues:

I would like to point out that not every statement about a bill that is on notice will automatically lead to and qualify for a prima facie case of privilege. In fact, Speaker Milliken came to this same conclusion in a November 5, 2009, ruling concerning comments made by a federal minister at a press conference. In that particular case, it was held and noted that the minister had not disclosed details of a bill yet to be introduced since he had only discussed in broad terms the policy initiative proposed in the bill. Similarly, Speaker Milliken found that there was no impact on a member's ability to perform his or her duty in a parliamentary ruling that he made on March 22, 2011, which can be found at page 9113 of *House of Commons Debates* for that day.

Again, in speaking on the subject of renewable energy, the minister did not disclose details of the bill and only discussed policies and plans that are on the same subject field as the bill.

Speaker Zwozdesky concludes that

Turning to the case before us today, there is no allegation and, indeed, there is no proof that the actual bill, Bill 32, in its final form was provided to the media or to any outside entity prior to its introduction in this Assembly two days ago, and neither was any evidence found in that respect . . . Accordingly, the chair does not find that there is a sufficient factual basis to find that the actions of the minister constitute a contempt of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed has not even made a claim that the bill has been distributed in its final form prior to first reading. In fact, there is no factual basis that it has been provided, where any explicit and verbatim details or provisions of the bill have been disclosed. This Assembly was the first to see the proposed legislation in its final form.

On May 29, 2012, Speaker Zwozdesky ruled on a purported question of privilege that referred to "a press conference held by the Premier and the Government House Leader . . . in which both the

Speech from the Throne and Bill 1, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2012, were discussed." Speaker Zwozdesky stated:

In response the hon. Government House Leader noted that during the press conference Bill 1 was discussed but only in general terms and that no specific wording was provided to those in attendance. The Government House Leader acknowledged the importance of ensuring that members are the first to see proposed legislation in its final form before a bill is disclosed to outside parties.

The Speaker also noted "the Government House Leader's submission that the bill was neither circulated, nor was the specific content of the bill disclosed" and that "given the circumstances of this particular case the chair finds that the member's ability to perform her functions has not been impeded, and accordingly the chair is unable to find a prima facie case of contempt and considers this matter now closed."

Mr. Speaker, I have a number of other citations, which I propose in the interest of time to submit to you in writing if that is suitable to you. Or I can continue.

**The Speaker:** I would find that acceptable.

**Mr. Mason:** Okay. That's acceptable. Then I'll just conclude.

Mr. Speaker, in raising this matter last Thursday, the member made only cursory reference to our standing orders, for some reason citing Standing Order 23(e), which, of course, governs anticipation, being the practice whereby members should be called to order if during debate they anticipate a matter set out for debate later in the day. He made no reference to any citations related to the practice before us today, that being the discussion of bills prior to their first reading, nor did he explain how his privilege as a member could have been infringed by a minister of Crown discussing matters of state.

However, Mr. Speaker, he did make some comments that I would like to discuss. First he stated that "a government minister spoke to the media and at a conference [today] about a new renewable energy program which had not . . . been introduced in this House." Mr. Speaker, I would like to confirm that and say that the member knows full well that program announcements are not required to be made in the House. Ministers announce programs all the time. When those programs need enactment through either legislative or budgetary means, those measures come forward at the appropriate time.

Second, the member quotes from the *Calgary Herald*, which states, "Alberta to buy 400MW of renewable power as it phases out coal." That's true, Mr. Speaker. The *Herald* did say that. You know what doesn't say that? The bill. That detail is not part of the bill, and as such the minister or any other member is free to speak to the public about it. Specifically, a 400-megawatt program using competitive procurement and contracts with the eligibility criteria established here are all things the government could have done without this bill. This legislation is very specific in what it would accomplish, and the minister did not divulge technical details contained in the act.

Third, the PC House leader quotes the minister, from CBC, saying that "today is sort of the first step in the real nitty-gritty details for the investment community on how we're going to move forward on that," "that" referencing our 30 per cent renewable target, by 2030.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that target was set out in November. Initial details about how the auctions would get us there were a matter of public debate last month, as I've already outlined, and just like my previous point, those details are not set out in the enabling legislation. Just because there's a bill on notice called the

Renewable Electricity Act does not mean a member of cabinet cannot speak about renewable electricity.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, nowhere in the member's comments does he even attempt to claim that we have done what Speakers in this Chamber have stated might be considered a breach of privilege; that is, released copies of the bill or detailed elements of the bill. The minister has not breached the privilege of this House by discussing the government's policy over the past year. It's our submission that it is not a matter of privilege.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Government House Leader for his exhaustive comments. Very thorough.

I would just like to touch on a number of items today with respect to this point of privilege. Normally it's a real privilege to rise, but I'm a little disappointed to have to speak to another point of privilege, that was originally raised on Thursday. In fact, when the Member for Calgary-Lougheed first rose in his place to call a point of privilege, I thought perhaps it was on the way that the bill was actually introduced, in that I'm not a hundred per cent convinced that the Lieutenant Governor had actually been informed of this, but perhaps that was an overstatement.

The case that has been made by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed is that it is very clearly a breach of privilege. A mere two days after you, Mr. Speaker, found this government had committed a breach of privilege, we are again discussing the very real challenges that this government has when it comes to following the rules. Well, the last breach of privilege, that you found last week, was in regard to presupposing a decision of the Assembly. Here they are not respecting the rules of anticipation, and the very important part is: once the bill goes on notice and before it's introduced. So while the Government House Leader made a number of arguments around ministers of the Crown being able to speak to a piece of legislation, the key difference here is that the bill was clearly on the Order Paper and had yet to be introduced in the Chamber.

I want to reiterate a few points. Bill 27 first appeared on the Order Paper on Wednesday, November 2, and it wasn't introduced in this House until Thursday, November 3, at approximately 2:45 p.m. Again, that means that the government must refrain from providing detailed information about the bill during that time period. While the Government House Leader claims that they did, there are a number of statements both in the press release and on public record that specifically refer to the bill, particularly in the AESO's ability to deliver the programs of which they speak. Prior to the press release as well as the public comments that was not clear, and it is only the bill that provides AESO's ability in which to deliver on that.

As we learned last week, both the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Environment and Parks showed no hesitation in discussing the details of the legislation with the media or in discussing them during a lunch keynote to the Canadian Wind Energy Association. In particular, Mr. Speaker, they sent out a press release on Thursday, November 3, at 10:21 a.m., during the period the bill was on notice. This press release included many details that were contained in Bill 27 that hadn't been mentioned publicly prior.

3:20

As a point of interest, Mr. Speaker, it is not an uncommon practice for the government to send out embargoed press releases, one which this side of the House takes no objection to. This,

however, was not the case last week on the 3rd of November at 10:21. The press release was sent out well before the introduction of Bill 27. The press release specifically mentioned Alberta's Electric System Operator being responsible for the administration of the government's renewable electricity program, a point that the bill provides the ISO the ability to do. This detail was made clear in the bill and had not yet been known to the public. It also mentioned the specific number of megawatts it is expected to add by 2030. The press release said that it will add 5,000 megawatts. That sounds a lot like presupposing a decision of the Assembly. It also spoke about the AESO starting consultation on November 10. I'd like to ask the question: is that going to be prior to the passage of this bill or after?

Now, these may be two separate issues, one presupposing a decision of the Assembly in the language used in the press release and releasing information prior to introducing the bill while the bill is on the Order Paper, but, Mr. Speaker, both are extremely, extremely serious.

I'd like to draw your attention to a similar situation that occurred back on March 5, 2003, when Speaker Kowalski found a *prima facie* breach of privilege when the government provided information to the media while a bill was on notice. The former Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and Speaker Kowalski made comparisons to a situation in the House of Commons when Speaker Milliken ruled on March 19, 2001:

The House recognizes that when complex or technical documents are to be presented in this Chamber, media briefings are highly useful. They ensure that the public receives information that is both timely and accurate concerning [ongoing] business before the House.

In preparing legislation, the government may wish to hold extensive consultations and as such consultations may be held entirely at the government's discretion. However, with respect to material to be placed before parliament, the House must take precedence. Once a bill has been placed on notice, whether it has been presented in a different form to a different session of parliament has no bearing and the bill is considered a new matter. The convention of the confidentiality of bills on notice is necessary, not only so that members themselves will be well informed, but also because of the pre-eminent [role] which the House plays and must play in the legislative affairs of the nation . . . To deny to members information concerning business that is about to come before the House, while at the same time providing such information to media that will likely be questioning members about that business, is a situation that the Chair cannot condone.

That, Mr. Speaker, allowed Speaker Kowalski to say this:

The chair wants to make it very, very clear that the Legislative Assembly . . . of Alberta is not bound by decisions from the Canadian House of Commons or any other Assembly in Canada. This would be contrary to the nature of Canada's federal system. However, how could this chair hold that the Canadian House of Commons and its members are to be accorded greater respect and dignity than the members of this Assembly? The role of the chair cannot be to lessen the dignity and the respect of . . . [members of this Assembly].

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the debate that followed the *prima facie* breach of privilege I spoke of whereupon the Member for Edmonton-Highlands – incidentally, the current Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood – was permitted to immediately move that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the government in both the press release and in their public comments on what the bill would contain, in two separate media stories – and the fact that they released an



unembargoed press release to the media prior to the introduction of a bill that, in fact, was on the Order Paper. The precedent is clear that this House holds supremacy to the other forms of information to be released.

On that day in 2003 the now Government House Leader participated in the debate scheduled for March 6, 2003, on the matter and had this to say:

I just want to reiterate that what's on trial here is not the [Energy minister], who's apologized, but what is on trial here are the procedures that have sometimes been used by the government, and what we want to do is find an effective way to correct those so that the rights of members are respected in the future and we do not have to spend time in this Assembly on matters like this.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, it's not just about respecting the members but all Albertans as an extension of the people that we represent. Statements like this remind me that the Government House Leader wasn't always like he is today. He once believed in the rights of the Assembly and the respect and dignity it deserves.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to interrupt, but I must, with respect, make a point of order with respect to those last comments. Maybe the Opposition House Leader would like to withdraw them now.

**Mr. Cooper:** In the interest of time, Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw and apologize unreservedly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, the challenge, as I have laid it out, is that clearly this piece of legislation, Bill 27, was on the Order Paper when the government made numerous public statements, a lunchtime speech as well as a press release, with specific details, including AESO's ability to provide the oversight to this program, which only the bill provides them the ability and the power to do.

In closing, not only is it necessary for democracy in Alberta that another prima facie breach of privilege be found, but that you, Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 15(6) and the precedent established by Speaker Kowalski on March 5, 2003, allow this matter to be referred to the Assembly's Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I wonder if I could just ask you to speak to the question that you raised about the embargoed press release in greater detail. Had that have happened, what . . .

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it has been the common practice of this government to provide embargoed press briefings. As mentioned by Speaker Milliken, it is important, and in fact the press has a job to do with respect to dissemination of information across our province. I'm more than happy to table for you numerous embargoed copies of press releases that this government has provided to the press corps here in Alberta. What did happen last week at 10:21 a.m., well before the introduction of the bill, was that an unembargoed press release providing specific details about what the bill did was sent to the press well before all members of this Assembly had the ability to receive the bill.

The key privilege here that Speaker Milliken refers to is members' ability to respond in public without the appropriate information. That's exactly the position that this government put all members of this Assembly in by not respecting the rules of the Assembly and not respecting the traditions of even this government of holding embargoed press releases.

3:30

As such, I encourage you, Mr. Speaker, to find a breach of privilege and to refer this to standing orders and committees because what we don't need is another apology from the government but an actual discussion on how these things will be stopped and prevented in the future.

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone else who would like to speak to the point of privilege? Clearly, I need to have some deliberations on this.

Some new information, hon. member?

**Mr. Rodney:** Yes. Concluding remarks, sir.

**The Speaker:** I thought that we had decided the last time that you spoke that you had provided all of the new information.

**Mr. Rodney:** Absolutely not, sir. I have a few sentences. This has been very long-winded. A few sentences, I think, are in order.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, with respect, I simply don't think that would be appropriate at this time. Thank you. I think you had an opportunity to speak to the matter, and it's been so noted and in the record.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak to the matter? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Okay. Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak here for a few minutes. This is obviously a serious situation, which stops members of this House from being able to fully discharge their duties, including to answer questions. That legislation is to be tabled in the Legislature before being discussed in the public is an important principle. Details of the bill were, I would say, despite what the Government House Leader said, explicitly outlined in the three tablings that our Government House Leader made earlier. They demonstrate that in each of these ways procedures and protocols of the House were not upheld.

Perhaps it's the experience of this government to do this, but as this is not the first time, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that you do as the Official Opposition House Leader has recommended and rule that this is a point of privilege and that it be recommended to the committee so that we can avoid reoccurrence.

**The Speaker:** So noted.

Seeing no one else who has new information to ask, I think that there's been adequate shared information about the case being put forward by both sides of the House. I will clearly be taking an examination of that material plus all of the precedents.

I would now propose that we move to Orders of the Day.

## Orders of the Day

### Motions for Returns

#### Health Electronic Record System

M20. Mr. Barnes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government, excluding documents that constitute confidential advice to the minister, from May 22, 2015, to March 7, 2016, pertaining to the review conducted by the Ministry of Health into creating an electronic record/information-sharing system, as referenced during consideration of the Ministry of Health's main estimates on November 16, 2015.

[Debate adjourned October 31]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there someone wishing to speak to this matter?

Hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, are you going to close debate on the matter?

**Mr. Barnes:** Yes. It was my question that the government is wishing to amend, so if you will allow me, I will.

**The Speaker:** Could you just wait a minute, please? I'd like to consult with the table.

**Mr. Barnes:** Absolutely, yeah.

**The Speaker:** Just to clarify, hon. member, you'll be speaking to the motion as amended to close debate. Is that correct?

**Mr. Barnes:** Yeah.

**The Speaker:** That amendment passed.

**Mr. Barnes:** Okay. Oh, the amendment has passed already?

**The Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Barnes:** Okay. I don't need to speak, then.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 20 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:35 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Nielsen
Babcock	Jabour	Payne
Carson	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Ganley	McKitrick	Turner
Goehring	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Miranda	Woollard

Against the motion:

Aheer	Ellis	McIver
Barnes	Gill	Orr
Cooper	Gotfried	Panda
Cyr	Hanson	Taylor
Drysdale	Loewen	

Totals:	For – 36	Against – 14
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[Motion for a Return 20 as amended carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

#### Ministry of Health Fraud Detection Procedures

M21. Mr. Barnes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of internal working documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government from May 22, 2015, to March 7, 2016, pertaining to the review conducted by the Ministry of Health into their audit, compliance, and oversight procedures for the detection of

fraud, as referenced during consideration of the Ministry of Health's main estimates on November 16, 2015.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, health care spending this year is at over \$21 billion. I hope the government takes very seriously the issue of fraud in the health system. It potentially represents a very large amount of our spending. You know, some estimates of fraud in the system in Canada range anywhere from 2 to 10 per cent, but as the Auditor General so aptly pointed out for us approximately a year ago, in Alberta we do not have a clear picture at all of the scope of fraud at the 21-plus billion dollar health spending level.

I think back to estimates last year, when the Health ministry and the department were \$240 million over budget. I think back to a meeting I had with a predecessor who represented Cypress-Medicine Hat in the early '90s, who pointed out to me that in 1993 health spending was \$4 billion. So from \$4 billion to over \$21 billion in that 23 or 24 years without the oversight, without the assurance for taxpayers, for ratepayers, and, most importantly, for Albertans – children, seniors, the sick – who need as much value as possible from our system, who need as much value as possible for their tax dollars.

A lot of times it's just ensuring that the oversight, the procedures are in place so that our great, great front-line workers, whether they be health care workers, nurses, doctors, have the mechanisms to see what's going on and the mechanisms to ensure that things are done as accurately as possible.

You know, we also know that the Auditor General's report from last year explored health fraud, both on the billing and the usage sides. It was noted: an inadequate response from the ministry and policy-makers to measure, control, and decrease it. Absolutely amazing, Mr. Speaker. Some side of 44 per cent of the money we spend, over 50 per cent of the revenues we take in, and our government gave an inadequate response from the ministry, policy-makers to measure, control, and decrease it.

I hope to see the minister at some point provide this House with a clearer picture of the extent of the problem and the strategy for dealing with it. I appreciate that sensitive or confidential information may be somewhat involved here, but, my goodness, how could all of it be?

I remember that one of the things the Auditor General pointed out was Alberta's lack of expiry dates on our health care cards now, something as basic as a card with an expiry date. His analogy was: banks do it. Banks do it because they know it controls fraud. They know it's a mechanism for control on their expenditures and their bottom line and their profit.

Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely crucial for 4.4 million Albertans, for the next generation, that needs to count on value for tax dollars, that this government take seriously the consequences of all this spending and the impacts if we don't try to have the proper oversight, if we don't try to have as much value as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the government would accept this question. I would hope that the government would provide to this House the information that would make more value for all of us.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against Motion for a Return 21. Alberta Health works hard to ensure that the compliance and oversight measures used for the detection of fraud are effective. This is an issue that our government takes seriously, and that is why we are reviewing these measures to ensure that they are as effective as possible. Releasing detailed documents about a

review of these operations could hamper government's efforts in this area, and for that reason I would reject this motion.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to admit that I'm a little surprised at the outright rejection of this question. This is a good question, a question that goes a long way in assuring not only members of the Assembly but all Albertans that this government takes inappropriate use of taxpayer resources inside our health care system seriously.

As mentioned by my hon. colleague, it's possible that some of these documents would be confidential or pose a risk to the system in terms of those who are acting fraudulently knowing the ways that the government is looking to minimize that, but what the minister doesn't even provide are the documents that aren't confidential.

The Auditor General has clearly stated that there are concerns and issues around fraudulent behaviour. He has mentioned a number of different concerns. So for the government to say, "Oh, somebody might find out what we're doing; we'd better not tell anyone," that is more than a little disappointing.

4:00

I know that on a pretty regular basis members of the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills come to the office and have ideas on ways that we can minimize fraud inside the system. It is something that Albertans care about, and they want to know that the government is actually taking proactive steps to ensure that fraud doesn't occur. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that you'll be aware. My guess is that people in the constituency of Medicine Hat have come and said: "Why don't we get statements anymore on the health care that we use, not in the form of a bill but in the form of some acknowledgement of the health care that we've used? Therefore, we would be able to have a better idea on whether or not the services we actually used were the services that were provided."

I recognize that there is a level of costs that may prevent the government from going down that road. There may be a number of reasons, but the point is that many Albertans have a deep care and consideration for fraud inside the system, and they want to be reassured that the government is taking those things seriously. It would be interesting to have some sense or understanding of what level of fraud there is inside the \$20 billion health care system.

Let me be very clear, Mr. Speaker. Let me reiterate that I fully support the vast, vast majority of individuals inside our system. One can only imagine that there is some level of individuals who behave untowardly and don't appropriately spend those resources the way that they should, so as a result the Alberta taxpayer is the one that suffers.

One thing that I'm sure you'll hear me say on a number of occasions today is that this government got elected on a platform of being more open, more transparent, not less. I'm sure that the Minister of Health would be able to tell you that when she worked for the NDP caucus as a researcher, a very skilled and astute researcher at that, she likely crafted questions very similar to this around information that the government held that would be helpful for all members of the Assembly and, as an extension, Albertans to have. Now we see her not just as a researcher – and I don't mean just a researcher because these are some of the most important people in our lives – but as the Minister of Health. What do we see? The minister and the department protecting, if you will, the information that is so, so important to the debate.

I look forward to hearing from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat when he closes debate because just today the Auditor General's

report of 2016 came out, and my guess is that there is some very, very pertinent information in that report to this very issue. So I am very disappointed that the government, promising to be more open, more transparent, more accountable to the taxpayer, is flat out rejecting very important questions like this and not even providing information that may be publicly available, that may not be as confidential as other pieces of information with respect to revealing the ways that they fight fraud, just flat out saying: "No. We want to keep this secret from Albertans and reject the premise of the question."

These motions for returns and written questions are very important when it comes to the process of getting information out. We've seen this government take a number of different steps with respect to delaying information, whether it's via FOIPs and some of the worst record in terms of timelines around releasing FOIP information. Now we see it again here in the Assembly. The Assembly has asked for the production of a document, and we see the exact opposite of what we would have expected to see from this government.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to Motion for a Return 21?

**Mr. Taylor:** You know, when this was brought up, I thought that this was really a great motion for a return for having more transparency to find out if there is fraud in the health care department. I was shocked, frankly, when the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat said that between 2 and 10 per cent could be attributed to fraud. Frankly, that's a huge number when you're looking, as he also mentioned, at that \$21 billion going into the health care system right now. We need to have value in what we're getting for our dollar, and when there's this much potential fraud, we're not getting that value.

I was surprised that we got this response from the government, where they just outright rejected having this done. They could have taken the approach and said, "Yes, we will provide it; yes, there is confidential information" and worked with that. They could have redacted the information that was confidential, that you don't want everybody to see. When I'm looking out for the constituents in Battle River-Wainwright, they're asking me to get good value for their money. They want a hospital; they want a facility in Wainwright. That facility is going to be approximately \$240 million, and if you're looking at 10 per cent of \$21 billion, you're looking at over \$2 billion being left on the table because of fraud. Two billion dollars. You could have eight hospitals of the size that Wainwright needs just on that fraud that's occurring.

I think it's irresponsible to not have this review done and look for all the different fraud cases that are happening. It's critical for Albertans to be able to have the best value for their money. This government, I know, in the past, before they became government, stood for openness and transparency. That's what they fought for, and they said that that's what they will provide. When they have the opportunity with this motion here to be able to provide transparency and they don't, I'm frankly disappointed.

I just want to make sure I'm standing up for the constituents of Battle River-Wainwright in saying that they want a hospital. They could be having a hospital, perhaps, based on this, but we're losing the ability to have that money because \$2 billion could be gone in fraud.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who would like to speak to Motion for a Return 21?

Seeing no one, I would ask the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to close debate.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my colleagues from Battle River-Wainwright and Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have so eloquently pointed out, the main concern here is that this money that's lost to fraud doesn't help Albertans, whether it's an individual suffering while unable to get access to a pharmaceutical or surgery, whether it's a person that needs a rotator cuff, a hip, or a knee done. I don't know if you find the same in your office in Medicine Hat, but in Cypress-Medicine Hat the number of Albertans that have spent \$15,000 to get a rotator cuff fixed in Kalispell, the number of Albertans that have spent \$25,000 to \$30,000 to get a knee or a hip done in Great Falls is mind-boggling.

4:10

Secondly, though: the concern as to whose health system it is. It's not the government's. It's not the 87 of us in here. It's Albertans', and they expect us to run it with maximum results and maximum value. A government that doesn't even want to, you know, provide the basics – the Auditor General in his report, that we just received a short time ago, on page 118 points out two key things, again, that could go a long way to eliminating some of the fraud or impacts. He talks about health care processes and points out: "Establish a proactive check to ensure that individuals with an Alberta healthcare number continue to meet residency requirements." Our Auditor General is not scared to tell 4.3 million Albertans what to do. Why is the NDP government?

The second recommendation that he has caught my eye more. "Health care processes: Enhance processes to check for receipt of services for which physicians billed." One of my constituents has long pointed out to me and reminded me that he thinks every time we go to a doctor, we shouldn't pay a bill, but we should sign a bill on the way out so that we know what it cost. That would go a long way to raising the consciousness of Albertans as to the value, and it would go a long way to eliminating some of this fraud that may or may not be there.

We've also seen this government fall down on the \$800 million they spent on electronic health records and now another \$400 million without proper oversight.

Again, Mr. Speaker, colleagues, I'm disappointed that the government is hiding from being a little more transparent, and I would ask that all colleagues in the House vote against the government and vote in favour of them answering this question. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 21 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:13 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Ellis	McIver
Barnes	Gill	Orr
Cooper	Gotfried	Panda
Cyr	Hanson	Taylor

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Nielsen
Babcock	Jabbour	Payne
Carson	Kazim	Phillips
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Rosendahl

Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Ganley	McKittrick	Turner
Goehring	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Miranda	Woollard
Totals:	For – 12	Against – 36

[Motion for a Return 21 lost]

4:30

### Primary Care Networks Review

M22. Mr. Barnes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of internal working documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government from May 22, 2015, to March 7, 2016, pertaining to the financial review of primary care networks conducted by the Minister of Health, as referenced during consideration of the Ministry of Health's main estimates on November 16, 2015.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker and colleagues, we spent quite a bit of time in estimates discussing primary care networks. We discussed the primary care model and the fact that funding to them was substantially cut in order to deplete existing surpluses, the old argument of local jurisdictions saving for future betterment for everyone versus the most use at the best time for taxpayers' money and, of course, leaving money with taxpayers.

You know, the primary care model, to me, is extremely interesting, extremely important. In the four years I've been in here, I've heard different arguments on it. I guess, to me, we have a system where the government will so often say that they want the Albertan, the patient, to see the right person at the right time and with the right delivery model. To me, primary care networks are so potentially the solution to so many things in our system, whether it's mental health, whether it's physiotherapy, whether it's prevention, whether it's the comprehensive care that Albertans need so we can get off this model of treating sickness and whatnot and we can get on a model of well-being and prevention.

You know, there has been a lot of criticism about primary care networks, and I think a lot of it hasn't been justified. My understanding as to what has happened is that the previous government decided to set these up with the hope that, I think, some side of 70 primary care networks in the province would have the opportunity to develop sort of independently, sort of autonomously, to share best practices, obviously, hopefully, but to develop in a way where we could have many, many different points of best practice, where we could have many, many different ways of analyzing this and seeing what worked and what didn't work. Then that's when I hear that it started to maybe fall down. Did they share best practices? Could or should there have been a little bit more oversight so that we could focus on, let's say, mental health or prevention and wellness instead?

That, Mr. Speaker, is the heart of this question. Let's see the internal working documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government pertaining to the financial review so that once again we can see that Albertan taxpayers, that the 4.3 million Albertans that could benefit tremendously from a stronger health care network, again concentrating on prevention and wellness and the mental health aspect – are we getting the value for the programs, the systems that have all been put in?

It's back to: through the primary care networks we could have the opportunity to ensure that people get connected to the appropriate care provider in the best way. Is that happening? You

know, I was Health shadow minister for about a year and a half. I don't know. That's where, hopefully, the government will answer these questions. Hopefully, we'll see that we're getting value for money, and hopefully we'll see that in a world where technology and medicines and everything seem like they change instantly, we can see that we're staying on top of things to make sure they're happening right. Are we getting value? Are we getting our resources, our hard-earned tax dollars to the right places?

You know, I think we've had a lot of successes with primary care networks, but what is the long-term funding strategy to ensure that we're going to get more value and that Albertans are going to get better service? The question that especially was pertinent during the dates that I mentioned was that some of them were losing their surpluses. Some of them were losing funds that they were building up to hire professionals, to buy the equipment that was needed to ensure that proper facilities were put in place. How can a government know if it's doing the right thing if we don't have the proper oversight and the proper mechanisms? Most importantly, how can Albertans know that the government is doing the right thing if they don't share the information that ensures that, you know, we have the opportunity to look at what these financial reviews were and what they were going for?

Mr. Speaker, I think it's only proper that the House should be permitted to see the ministry's evidence for this review as to how they're going to ensure that we really get our full value out of primary care networks, and we should be able to see how the government intends to measure success and what it's doing to promote success. I think the primary care network budgetary item is somewhere around \$280 million. I'm sorry, colleagues; I don't have that right here. But, again, that is a tremendous, tremendous amount of money that could do a tremendous amount of good for Alberta families, Albertans who at times need some support. I hope that the government will provide this information in a full, you know, fulsome context so the 87 of us in this House can go back to our constituents and share the good ideas that we hear to make it better and to share where this is going. I would hope the government would answer this question in full.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move to amend Motion for a Return 22 as follows: (a) by striking out the phrase "internal working" and (b) by adding "excluding documents that constitute confidential advice to the minister and excluding data and information that is specific to an individual or a specific primary care network" after the word "government."

The amended motion for a return would then read as follows:

That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government, excluding documents that constitute confidential advice to the minister and excluding data and information that is specific to an individual or a specific primary care network, from May 22, 2015, to March 7, 2016, pertaining to the financial review of primary care networks conducted by the Minister of Health, as referenced during consideration of the Ministry of Health's main estimates on November 16, 2015.

I am proposing this amendment to reflect our responsibilities under FOIP section 22(1), regarding cabinet and Treasury Board confidences. The outcome of the government's review was released publicly in June, and the full report is available on Alberta Health's website. We promised Albertans that we would take steps to protect and improve our health care system, and we're making great progress. This fall we partnered with PCNs to focus on sustainability for millions of Albertans who use these front-line

services. Better financial management is part of ensuring that public health care dollars are directed towards care. We are working with primary care networks as partners, and together we will be able to achieve cost-effective, long-term health system reform.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health has moved an amendment. Wishing to speak to the amendment? The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment. I just really want to highlight a couple of quick things for you, particularly around the Assembly's ability and how we interact with the FOIP legislation. As you know, the Assembly has the ability to ask for documents, and it has the ability to require the production of documents. It's just whether or not the government in this case, if they vote in favour of the initial motion for a return, which I think at this point is highly unlikely given that they've just moved a motion that essentially changes the intent and really only provides publicly available information – but if they had supported the motion, the Assembly has the ability to require the production of those documents.

4:40

While I know that the minister likes to hide behind the FOIP legislation, last week I provided the specific reference in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* that indicates that we have that ability. Perhaps at a later date, like when we're back on the same motion, I will provide that reference again for you as I'm just having a little difficulty finding it here on the fly.

But there are a lot of issues that present a challenge to the amendment, particularly around – essentially, the government is offering to provide information that's already publicly available and answering the question that they would have liked us to ask, not the question that was actually asked. While I'm sympathetic to the government in that I appreciate them at least trying to provide something whereas in the last question we saw that they provided absolutely nothing and just rejected the question out of hand, now they use the FOIP legislation to hide behind not providing documents to the Assembly that, clearly, there is the ability for them to provide.

I just would like to quickly touch on a couple of things around this issue of primary care networks and why getting this information is critically important. We see in the Auditor General's report, that was released just today, on page 115 an outstanding recommendation, the department's accountability for the primary care network, this initial recommendation from the Auditor General, where it says:

We recommend that the Department of Health:

- establish clear expectations and targets for each of the PCN program objectives
- develop systems to evaluate and report performance of the PCN program.

Outstanding recommendation 7, Mr. Speaker, July 2012:

We recommend that the Department of Health proactively inform Albertans which Primary Care Network they have been assigned to, and what services are available through their [primary care network].

While these specifics might not be to the motion for a return today, they speak to an ongoing lack of desire for accountability that we see from this government. The Auditor General, Mr. Speaker, asked in 2012 for accountability around the primary care networks. Again, 2012, outstanding recommendation from Alberta Health Services – so now this isn't just the department, but this is,

in fact, Alberta Health Services – AHS accountability for primary care networks, recommendation 6, on page 40:

We recommend that Alberta Health Services within the context of its provincial primary healthcare responsibilities:

- define goals and service delivery expectations for its involvement in [PCNs]
- define performance measures and targets
- evaluate and report on its performance as a PCN joint venture participant.

My point is, Mr. Speaker, that since 2012 there have been outstanding recommendations. Now in the Chamber my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat asks for accountability measures and the review of the primary health care networks conducted by the Minister of Health, a review that the minister herself referred to during the consideration of the Health ministry's main estimates. This isn't a hypothetical review – or maybe it is a hypothetical review because we haven't seen anything that has come from that – but this is a review that she specifically referred to as under way. It would only seem reasonable that we would be able to see the information around that review, including the working documents and, at the very least, the conclusions of that review. So it's disappointing to see the ministry and the minister hiding from accountability. It's disappointing for them to continue to not respond to the Auditor General.

It is now – 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 – four years, much of which time this government has been responsible for. I know that this current government likes to blame the third party for a lot of the predicaments that we're in. Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of blame to go around to the third party. But in this case there's well over 18 months, yet this government chooses not to respond to the Auditor General, as he has proposed a number of recommendations, and now, perhaps even worse, has refused to provide all of the information available to this Chamber.

I'll let my hon. colleague speak about some of the challenges with this amendment, particularly not providing specific reviews to specific primary care networks. If we can't compare the good ones to other ones, how are we going to create any standards or have any real understanding of what's working and what isn't?

There is a smattering of real challenges with this amendment. I certainly am unable to support an amendment that doesn't provide more accountability, that doesn't provide more transparency, that doesn't provide information that 4.1 million Albertans so rightly deserve. It's disappointing. Again, this pattern of disappointment that this government is engaging in is not what they said when they got elected, it's not what Albertans have expected, it's not what Albertans had hoped for, and it's certainly not what I expected or hoped for either.

So I will not be supporting this amendment, and I encourage all members of the Assembly who believe in openness, transparency, and freedom of information to not support this amendment either.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else who would like to speak to the amendment to Motion 22? The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to take a minute or two. Every party here acknowledges the importance of a publicly funded health care system, and as such I want to challenge all of the members here to consider who owns this system. No, it's not the government. It's not cabinet. It's not the Ministry of Health. My goodness, it isn't even AHS. It's the people. It's Albertans. It's our system, and the system is ultimately accountable and beholden to the people, not the other way around.

We're seeing it here on notice of motion after notice of motion. The government is consistently reducing transparency, hiding

internal documents that may or may not be of a confidential nature. We're certainly reasonable and could understand, you know, if it had to be. But if it's just documents, especially the three that highlight around the Auditor General's concerns, his outstanding recommendations, as my hon. colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills just pointed out, from July 2012, "We recommend that the Department of Health proactively inform Albertans which Primary Care Network they have been assigned to, and what services are available through their PCN," that's basic.

I mean, I've talked to many, many Albertans who have no idea about all of the good services our primary care networks can offer to them, as I said earlier: mental health, prevention and wellness, and rehabilitation. The fact is that we should have the opportunity to look in and ensure that the government is making Albertans aware of this.

4:50

Again from July 2012: "We recommend that the Department of Health improve its systems for oversight of Primary Care Networks." As has been mentioned, oversight could just focus on sharing of best practices. We've got wonderful physicians, wonderful health care professionals. Sharing best practices could go a long way to improving the quality of Albertans' lives.

What triggered this specific question was to ensure that the PCN surplus funds are used in a timely and sustainable manner. Certainly, you know, I've heard that lots in my time as an MLA, that sometimes the government, the taxpayer has to give. Our health care professionals, our education professionals, our people that provide so many important supports socially for all Albertans: sometimes the government has to give them the opportunity to build up some funds, to do some long-term investing for a piece of equipment, a building, training for professionals. But by the same token the government is responsible for those tax dollars. So it's important to make sure that that information is two-way. The two-way part is what is greatly concerning me today.

Accountability. We're accountable for some side of over \$50 billion a year in annual spending, and that accountability depends on transparency between the government and Albertans. The information has to flow, Mr. Speaker, to the owners of the system, and that, of course, is all Albertans, not just those that are in cabinet, not just those that are on the government side but to all of us. So I speak against this amendment in the hopes that my colleagues on the opposite side will realize that the system belongs to all Albertans.

As great work by the Auditor General's department has shown, there have been three or four areas since 2012 that, had they been addressed, could have greatly improved this. So I'm asking the government to show us this information more than is just publicly out there so we could absolutely have confidence that Albertans are getting the maximum value for their hard-earned tax dollars.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other members who would like to speak to the amendment to Motion for a Return 22?

[Motion on amendment carried]

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Yeah. Thank you. I'd just like to speak a few moments on the main motion, Mr. Speaker, for a brief moment. I just wanted to state that, as you know, we've heard on a number of occasions that this government likes to hide behind FOIP legislation and doesn't respect the ultimate authority that this Chamber has and that members of this Assembly have. So I'd just like to highlight

for you and for members of the Assembly that this is private member's business, as you know, and we are all equal members of this Assembly, and we all have the ability to ensure that information is made available to Albertans.

I'd just like to speak, very briefly, about how important that information is and specifically refer to page 137 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, when it refers to the ordering of documents. It states:

The power to send for persons, papers and records has been delegated by the House of Commons to its committees in the Standing Orders. It is well established that Parliament has the right to order any and all documents to be laid before it which it believes are necessary for its information.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that the information around PCNs that the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has asked for is necessary information.

The power to call for persons, papers and records is absolute, but it is seldom exercised without consideration of the public interest.

Now, I would suggest to you that it is in both the public interest as well as the interest of this Assembly for us to have a real understanding and working knowledge around what exactly is happening with PCNs and the, I believe I heard my colleague say, \$280 million. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that \$280 million is in the public interest.

The House of Commons recognizes that it should not require the production of documents in all cases; considerations of public policy, including national security . . .

Again, this was not one of those cases.

. . . foreign relations . . .

Again, not one of those cases.

. . . and so forth, enter into the decision as to when it is appropriate to order the production of such documents.

Mr. Speaker, today we were asking for important information with respect to the expenditure of well over \$200 million and how effective that expenditure was. We weren't asking for information that is critical to the province's security, we weren't asking for information that is critical to our foreign relations or even our relations with Saskatchewan but the very important information that should have been made available to the Chamber with respect to how PCNs are working. This Assembly has the ability to send for papers and records. It is absolute.

I might just add, Mr. Speaker, that the majority of members of this Assembly should want access to information. They should want more openness and transparency. It is exactly what this government was elected on. I know that members of the public would like access to this information. It is disappointing to see that not happening.

I'd just like to cite briefly for you that in 1990 the Solicitor General refused to provide the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General with two reports, citing privacy issues like we saw today around cabinet confidentiality and a number of other changes that aren't of a significant nature. The committee reported the matter to the House. This is the challenge, that this government is not respecting the importance of the Assembly and they are hiding behind legislation, not providing the most accurate information to the Assembly, which is critically important. In that case in 1990 a question of privilege was subsequently raised, and the matter of the failure of the Solicitor General to provide the report was referred to the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a lot of discussion around points of privilege. We've had a lot of discussion around the information that is important to this Chamber. So far today we've seen the government outright reject to provide information. We've seen the government amend questions to provide the answers to the questions that they would have liked us to ask. Perhaps we should

have just asked them to write the motions for returns for us, and then they could have answered their own questions, similar I think to what happens during question period.

I can't stress to you enough the importance of the Assembly's ability to call for the production of documents. It's disappointing that this government hasn't done anything different than the previous government with respect to providing information to us. I don't want to go on too long, Mr. Speaker, as we are getting very close to 5 o'clock.

5:00

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I believe that it might be 5 o'clock.

**Mr. Cooper:** Oh, that's unfortunate.

**The Speaker:** I certainly don't want to interrupt such an enthralling debate; however, I need to interrupt and advise that the time limit for consideration of this item has concluded.

## Motions Other than Government Motions

### Affordable Housing Committee

508. Mr. Gotfried moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly establish a special committee to conduct a review of the current state of affordable housing in Alberta, and in conducting its review the committee shall consult with key public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders; study attainable home ownership, workforce housing, low-income rental accommodation, seniors' housing, and homeless housing options; and make recommendations for the creation and implementation of a comprehensive provincial affordable housing strategy.

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

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you can see, I'm honoured today to present Motion 508, which is on the Order Paper today. I'm somewhat saddened, because I've had the opportunity to work very closely with the Member for Calgary-East with respect to her bill, which we have not gotten to yet, but in the interests of moving this issue forward, I think it's important that we focus on the now, which is that now is an ideal time to leverage public investment in collaborative and innovative partnerships to increase our supply of flexible, affordable housing appropriate to current and projected demographic and geographic needs. It is also time, I think, for this Legislature to send a message to Albertans that we are serious about addressing chronic housing shortages and a lack of affordability across many segments of society.

There are three things that I want to talk about here. The who: the committee shall consult with key public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders. I call that PPNP. Public responsibility, of course, is incumbent here. In an environment of constrained financial resources we need to take a look at what we can do to leverage the resources of the other sectors. The private sector could bring capital, expertise, and business acumen to the table and deliver cost-effective results. Of course, the Minister of Seniors and Housing witnessed just a few shorts weeks ago a PPNP in action in a partnership for affordable and accessible housing, where we saw that business can be a force for good when society engages, challenges, and encourages it. The nonprofit sector also needs to be considered here because it's lean, it's mean, and it tends to be very passionate about the issues they're involved with. They can make great partners in solving some of society's most challenging and persistent issues.

Mr. Speaker, then there's the what. The committee will study attainable home ownership, moving some people, those people that are able, from rental into home ownership to help them not just today but to build equity for the future so that they can actually put money in the bank, that forced savings plan that we call a mortgage, so that they have the opportunity to do that – there are some great programs already in place that we can consult with – workforce housing, what I like to call public, essential, and key workforce housing; low-income rental accommodation; seniors' housing; and homeless housing and support options.

Then there are the outcomes, Mr. Speaker, the recommendations that we hope will come from such a committee. The committee will make recommendations for the creation and implementation of a comprehensive provincial affordable housing strategy. We know that there is lots of good work going on. Again, the Minister of Seniors and Housing has been meeting, I know, with her national counterparts. This is meant to support that opportunity, again, so we can move this forward with the support of this Legislature so that we can actually be key to this initiative, to this outcome, and to moving forward.

We'll support the good work that's already being done in the Ministry of Seniors and Housing. We'll ensure broad input, engaging Alberta's best, brightest, and most passionate from all three sectors, and we'll bring forward the best, most cost-efficient, innovative, out-of-the-box recommendations to complement the expertise within the ministry while recognizing the expertise, experience, and ideas of the private and nonprofit sectors in addressing an enduring problem in Alberta and indeed across most jurisdictions in our country.

In closing, esteemed colleagues, I'd like to say that this is not about partisanship. This is not about who or what party the member is from that is proposing this motion. This is about Albertans: young, old, frail, infirm, facing physical, financial, emotional, mental health and addiction-related issues or just unable to access affordable and appropriate housing, which many in our province are facing. This is about all 87 of us here today doing the right thing to ensure that we take one step forward in ensuring that all Albertans can reach their full potential through a thoughtful, comprehensive, collaborative approach to addressing a key issue for us all: a roof over our heads, sleeping in a warm bed, and an opportunity to not just survive but to thrive, Mr. Speaker, which I believe is part of the commitment we all make when we step forward for public service. These are important issues for us, and these are issues which face us in good times and in bad.

As I noted, I've had an opportunity to work with the Member for Calgary-East on her bill, and I would be very supportive of that as well as it comes forward. I know that there's good work going on in the ministry, but this is an opportunity for us here today to support the development, the comprehensive consultation across three sectors, which will be the source, I believe, of solving some of our societal issues when we can all work together across three sectors as Albertans across this province, setting aside partisanship.

I encourage all of you to support this motion, to take this one small step forward in achieving the goals and outcomes I know we are all passionate about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise and once again speak about affordable housing. It is so amazing that we spend so much time in this House talking about affordable housing. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for his motion, that is allowing us this afternoon to focus for an hour or so on the need for affordable housing. I only wish that so much focus on affordable housing had been in evidence under the previous government. We would not be in the situation we are now, with huge waiting lists,

buildings needing repairs, and the lack of appropriate supportive housing.

I was delighted when our government began its work to put together a provincial affordable housing strategy that will guide and direct the \$1.2 billion investment in seniors' and affordable housing. The government is currently consulting with Albertans affected by the lack of affordable housing, consulting with housing providers, municipal authorities, not-for-profits, housing co-operatives, and private-sector developers. The consultation included those involved with affordable housing for seniors, people with disabilities, those who need supportive housing, families, all Albertans that require the provision of affordable, stable, suitable housing.

I was one of eight MLAs who participated as an observer during one of the consultation sessions in Edmonton. It was a privilege to be in a room full of housing providers, advocates, municipal leaders speaking on what should be in the provincial housing strategy. I found that people were engaged, and they understood the need for government to develop a housing strategy so that a plan could be developed that would help all Albertans in need of affordable housing. It was also the opportunity for Albertans to participate in the consultation through an online survey. I'm hoping that the hon. member took the opportunity to indicate his support for affordable housing through his participation in a survey and that he had ideas to contribute to the process.

It is not only the provincial government that is engaged in developing an affordable housing strategy. As the Minister of Seniors and Housing indicated this afternoon, the federal government has signed an agreement with our province on affordable housing. I was very pleased at the recent announcement of funding from the Ministry of Human Services for the Alberta Rural Development Network to support projects on rural homelessness. Affordable housing is not just an urban issue; it's also a rural issue. This indicates clearly that while the consultation towards a strategy is taking place, the government is moving forward on key affordable housing issues.

I am always pleased when I can speak about how proactive my own municipality of Strathcona county is in dovetailing with the government's provincial affordable housing strategy consultations. Not only is there a community housing committee, led by two councillors of Strathcona county, but last week there was a community consultation on affordable housing, led by Heartland Housing, which is the local municipal housing authority. The municipality is being proactive by preparing its own plans so that they are ready when the government releases its provincial affordable housing strategy so that they can move forward knowing the needs and possible solutions and, therefore, have projects ready to work on with our Ministry of Seniors and Housing.

Mr. Speaker, while I am delighted with the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek's interest in supporting affordable housing, I will not be voting for this motion as the government is already moving forward to establish a provincial strategy for affordable housing.

Thank you.

**5:10**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise today to speak to the motion on housing brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I'm sure that you're aware of the statistics surrounding Alberta's affordable housing system. It's a very diverse system, involving over 350 partners. These partners help to enable more than 110,000 Albertans to benefit from different



housing programs within Alberta, including rent supplement programs, community housing, and seniors' lodging, to name a few. It's vitally important that we have these programs in place so that Albertans from all walks of life have access to safe and secure housing no matter the situation they find themselves in.

The *Edmonton Journal* reported twice over the past year, first at the end of December 2015 and again at the end of May 2016, that the wait-list for social housing in Edmonton has recently skyrocketed. As of the end of December there were about 400 families reported to be considered high-needs. In Calgary the need has doubled according to the *Calgary Herald*. Those are huge increases, and that is a concern that needs to be addressed. Those aren't the only ones. If you look at the annual reports, Medicine Hat and Red Deer also mention increases in the need for housing. And I've only mentioned four cities.

Those are not mere numbers, Mr. Speaker; those are people, several thousand people who are waiting for assistance with one of the most basic needs that a person can have. The government needs to be proactive in its development of an affordable housing strategy that will address the concerns that are being raised today.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? Assisting people with housing is noble. It's satisfying to know that people have a place to call home, a place they can return to at the end of the day, or a place that family can visit. But it doesn't end there. It's important that these places that people call home be safe places, be places where they don't need to worry about the level of care they will be given, and be more than just a motel because there's no permanent or semipermanent place for them. It's important that these places, while they may not have all the bells and whistles, meet the needs of the person or the family that resides there. Even more important is that there are such places for people who need them.

That's what I'm hopeful such a review, as brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, will do. Now, I'm not typically a fan of reviews, sir, but I think that in this case, where we're looking at the current state of our affordable housing, where it may be succeeding and where it may be failing, it is important. More Albertans than ever are out of work, and the demand for affordable housing is on the rise, as I mentioned earlier. The government needs to act on this and consult with all stakeholders to see how we can work together to fill the gaps that exist.

Our seniors population is growing and will continue to grow over the next decade or two. The government needs to evaluate the state of our current seniors' housing now and needs to bring a plan forward to enable us to effectively prepare for and manage the need in two, five, 10 years.

We don't need a bill directing the government to act. When it comes to conducting a review, the government has the ability to act on its own volition. Would such legislation, such a piece of paper be the impetus that the government needs to move forward on a housing strategy? It shouldn't be. It should be enough that the members of this House stand together to ask the government to put the time and resources into a comprehensive study of the current state and projected need of affordable housing here in Alberta.

For those reasons I support this motion. Sir, this is better drafted than the bill that's before us that is similar. It hits all the points. For that I commend the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I encourage all members to stand together and support this call for the government to evaluate the current system, consult with all stakeholders, whether private, public, or nonprofit, and create an affordable housing strategy for both today and tomorrow.

Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to speak on Motion 508. I'd like to begin by thanking the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing forward this motion. Through my time in the House and events around Calgary I've come to note that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek and I share a passion toward affordable housing for all Albertans, including seniors, so it comes as no surprise to me that the member would put forth a motion to establish a special committee to look at issues around affordable housing. I applaud him for doing so because today there are over 15,000 Albertan families on an affordable housing wait-list. Yes, that's 15,000. I've personally seen the stabilizing effect that having affordable housing has on low-income families who are working to improve their lot in life.

Given the previous government's lack of leadership on this issue the need for safe, affordable, and appropriate housing is clearer than ever. These families on the wait-list, Mr. Speaker, deserve better. I agree with the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek that improving the province's current housing situation and ensuring its supply of affordable housing is a complex matter requiring the engagement, consultation, and co-operation of public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders. However, we don't need to duplicate the work that is already in progress.

What I don't agree with is that a special committee as proposed in the motion will be helpful in reaching the goal of all Albertans having safe and affordable housing. This would slow down the good work already being done by the government on this issue. This government saw the need to act swiftly on housing, and as a result it's dedicated \$1.2 billion to investment in seniors and affordable housing. This is why, Mr. Speaker, our government is establishing a provincial housing strategy which will help guide the \$1.2 billion investment this government will make over the next five years.

Let's go over some of those investments, Mr. Speaker. It includes \$298 million for capital maintenance and renewal; \$582 million for sustainable housing renewal; \$148 million for new housing supply as well as \$120 million for housing for indigenous populations that are living off-reserve; \$13 million for new supply, specifically targeted at demographics like those who are homeless, for example; and \$14 million for planning new projects.

As reported in Capital Region Housing's 2015 annual report, no new social housing units have been built since 1993, this in addition to the \$1 billion inherited by this government in deferred maintenance from the previous government administration. That's over 25 years of inaction on this file, Mr. Speaker, by the previous government.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Shame.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Shame, indeed.

But make no mistake. Although the government had to act quickly on the housing file, we are committed to thoughtful discussions about how we move forward with respect to affordable housing.

So why are we moving toward an affordable housing strategy? Well, after more than four decades in government the previous government did not provide leadership on this issue, Mr. Speaker. After more than four decades in government the previous government allowed Alberta to be one of three provinces without an affordable housing strategy.

Let's be clear. Our government is committed to making thoughtful decisions about how we move forward with respect to affordable housing. This is why our government has had extensive consultations with thousands of Albertans across the province to ensure our government's strategy will guide the development of an effective and sustainable affordable housing system. This is why

our government has proceeded with extensive consultations on this issue through regional meetings, that were completed in June.

5:20

In fact, these regional meetings included the participation of eight MLAs, including the opposition Member for Calgary-North West. Mr. Speaker, our government proceeded with online engagement via a survey for Albertans that was completed this July. This was followed by a second round of targeted engagements, completed in September. In addition, our government is working with housing management bodies across the province to identify shovel-ready projects and has made numerous announcements of projects to build housing. In fact, I'm working with the city of Calgary and my local city councillor on a housing project that I hope to see built in Calgary-Currie, which I believe is very close to being a shovel-ready project. I hope to see that in my riding.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the demand for affordable housing is now, and it's not a time to form a special committee on housing. Now is the time to continue with the work that is already taking place as it is moving in the right direction. This is a focused government that's working toward affordable housing. [interjections] The opposition may laugh at our focus on affordable housing, but I believe that it is an important issue.

This focus and determination on housing has opened up further opportunities such as a recently signed deal on the social housing agreement with federal minister Kent Hehr, which replaces the outdated agreements that tied the hands of housing providers and allows them to find modern solutions to tackle the need of Albertans. Our government has also signed an affordable housing agreement with federal minister Amarjeet Sohi that will provide Albertans with sustained funds for renovation and upgrades.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to reiterate that I know the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek brings this motion forward with a genuine purpose, to see fewer Albertans without a place to call home, and that is a worthy goal. However, I do not believe that there is anything to be achieved by supporting this motion. Starting back at square one with consultations, as suggested in this motion, will not help Albertans who need homes right now. As a result, I will not be supporting this motion, and I encourage all others in the House to do the same.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to rise on this important issue, affordable housing, one that, it's my belief, all members of this House care about and surely one that all members of this House ought to care about. I'm a little surprised by what I'm hearing from the government side. I mean, when you read the motion from the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, it's really about working together on all sides of the House on an issue that I believe all sides of the House care about, affordable housing.

I'm a little troubled by some of the commentary because it seems inconsistent with other evidence that's before us. We heard commentary about a backlog in maintenance on the housing. To be clear, there is a backlog in maintenance on the housing, but the budget the government brought forward actually makes that backlog bigger rather than smaller. But I'm not here to criticize that, only to point out that the criticism just levelled is in no way legitimate by that member. They actually have increased the backlog since they've been in government. Again, it's just a matter of: it's a big job. The reason there's a lot of backlog is because

there's a lot of affordable housing because there has been a ton of work done by previous governments on this file for years.

I know this first-hand. During my time on Calgary city council I was the chair of Calgary Housing Company for three years running, so I speak, I think, with a little bit of knowledge on this when I say that the government of Alberta has for a long time been co-operating with municipalities across Alberta, private-sector and public-sector housing companies, and NGOs to provide housing. So there's nothing new here. This is a matter of moving forward in the best way possible.

The other thing that seems a little bit disingenuous: some of the slams from the government side, particularly when the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek offered an olive branch. It's like the government-side members snapped it in half and poked him in the eye. You know what? If there was ever a place where you actually ought to reach across the aisle and work together, it's on affordable housing. I would say to the hon. member that just spoke in particular: shame. This is a place where we should be working together. You know what? There are a lot of times to be partisan and hit each other over the head with partisan issues, and we'll do that. This isn't one of those days. This isn't one of those issues.

Further, I would say that it's further disingenuous, Mr. Speaker, when on the Order Paper today, though it probably won't be presented today, although time will tell, is Bill 202, the government's own bill coming up, the Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act. Wow. That sounds pretty darn similar: affordable housing review committee. That's what this is proposing. It could end up being exactly the same or almost the same as what the government is going to bring forward – we don't know because we haven't got the text of that before us – yet the government members have said that this is a terrible idea.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? I wish they would drop the partisanship just for this issue – just for this issue – and, as our Member for Calgary-Fish Creek suggested that we do, work together. You know what? The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek was a little bit modest in his introduction, if you don't mind. I know he doesn't come to this lightly or easily, and this isn't his first day concerned about this. As a member of the construction industry he has been part of introducing and bringing to the market attainable-housing issues. Some of the first attainable-housing programs in Alberta were authored by this Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, and I think everybody in Alberta owes him a vote of thanks for that.

Those aren't just words. Mr. Speaker, I've actually been at the ribbon cuttings for the openings that were done by his employer, a house builder, when he was there. He's being quite modest in not bragging about how much he cares about this and how much he's accomplished and how much he could contribute to the government side and all other sides by doing this. Again, listen; that's just one, but I fully believe there are many committed members on the government side and the other opposition benches that could contribute a great deal as well. I can tell you that the government – well, the current government would tell you that the previous governments haven't done anything. I can tell you from my time as chair of the Calgary Housing Company that there has been so much done. It's a large and complex process.

In fact, the 10-year plan to eliminate homelessness originated at the city of Calgary, adopted in a slightly revised form by the government of Alberta, and I would say that that's been a great success. Has homelessness been eliminated? No, Mr. Speaker, it has not. But has it resulted in a lot more people finding homes that would not have found homes without a concerted effort for them to do so? That's a yes. Every time you put a family or an individual in a home that they would not have had otherwise, I don't know any

way to call it anything but a success, and I would be surprised if anybody in this House would either.

I can tell you: it's so complex, and that's the reason why we all need to put our minds together. The Calgary Housing Company – I don't know if it's changed – when I was there, had nine different portfolios, you know: one fully owned by the city, one fully owned by the province, one fully owned by the feds, combinations of fed, provincial, city owned, city-provincial owned, city-fed owned, every combination of that, some with rent geared to income, some with mixed income. This is a complex issue that would be best solved, best dealt with if we work together.

You'll have to forgive me, Mr. Speaker, if I found it just a little bit disingenuous for government members to say that there's nothing to learn from other sides of the House here and that it will in some way slow them down to have a committee, particularly when on the same Order Paper for today is a bill suggesting the Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act, which has not yet been introduced. For the government side to say that having a committee to deal with this – really, folks, let's work together on this. Drop the partisanship. In all of our communities, big and small, across Alberta there are people who need homes. This is one place where we need to hold hands, put our collective minds together, and actually make it better. We'll poke each other in the eye on the next issue. This isn't the one.

5:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this motion. I'd like to begin by sincerely thanking the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing this motion forward on something that is an incredibly important issue. I absolutely agree with him that now is the time to leverage the many opportunities that are available to us to address this problem. You know, in the last 18 months since I was elected, I've had the opportunity to meet with people across my constituency. Whether it's been business, whether it's been community leagues and community groups, whether it's been at seniors' homes, everyone I've spoken to has always asked me about the issue of housing.

That's because here in the heart of Edmonton we're very excited because we're going through a period of revitalization. We're seeing growth downtown like we've never seen before. It's amazing, and it's wonderful to see. It's great for our city. But at the same time it's highlighting the issue that's been ongoing for some time. We're also realizing that we can't ignore that in the shadow of all this amazing and fantastic growth there are still far too many people who are living in its shadows, on our streets. We recognize that if we want to have a city that really has opportunity and space for all, we have a lot of work to do on the issue of housing. I was reminded of that just a few weeks ago, when I had the honour of joining in Edmonton's homeless count and I spent a few hours out on the streets talking to men and women who did not have a home and learning more about their experience.

So the question of housing is one that I have personally made a priority for myself as an MLA and as a representative for Edmonton-Centre. Together with some of my colleagues, in particular the MLA for Edmonton-McClung, I've had the opportunity to meet with many of the housing organizations here in our city, folks like the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, or ECOHH, Homeward Trust, the Capital Region Housing Corporation, the Greater Edmonton Foundation, E4C, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Boyle Street Community Services, the Terra association, Edmonton Inner City Housing

Society, and the Edmonton YMCA. I know that many of my colleagues on both sides of this aisle have had the opportunity to meet with these organizations as well.

I've had many conversations with my municipal colleagues about the challenges our city faces. They've spoken to me, and they've told me how they are ready and willing to be partners in addressing this key issue. I and my colleagues have been keeping in active contact with the Minister of Seniors and Housing, seeking information on our government's plan, asking what was going to be in the budget, asking for more information about the direction and the strategy that we were going to take. So we were incredibly pleased when we brought forward our budget this year and we learned that we would have an investment of \$1.2 billion to build and repair affordable and seniors' housing across Alberta.

We were even more pleased when that minister announced that we would be working to create Alberta's first provincial affordable housing strategy. Mr. Speaker, this crisis in housing didn't develop overnight. I recognize that this began back in the early '90s, and it began with our federal government as federal funding began to dry up and be withdrawn. Of course, that trickled down to the province, and that trickled down, then, to the cities. It had a bit of a ripple effect, and of course the many cuts in social services that we saw in the early '90s here in our province didn't help with that matter either, unfortunately, as we saw vulnerable Albertans who were struggling with mental illness and addictions often left to fend for themselves.

But I recognize that work has been done since. We've been working to try to recover from that gap, and I recognize that the previous government tried to do what it could in some respects. I recognize that cities in Alberta – Edmonton, Calgary, others – have stepped up and tried to do what they could. You know, many community organizations stepped up to try to fill those gaps. They went out and they worked with – well, they depended on public generosity. They worked with private industry and philanthropy and, of course, just competed for whatever government assistance was available.

So we find ourselves where we are today, where we have a bit of a patchwork of a system of bandages trying to staunch the bleeding. One billion dollars was mentioned in deferred maintenance, and again that's something that's trickled down all the way through all three orders of government. Unfortunately, there was no real plan to co-ordinate the resources and the interests of all three orders of government with our community partners to try to address that need.

But, Mr. Speaker, we're finally on the road to developing that plan. I had the chance to attend the minister's consultations here in Edmonton back in June along with representatives from many of the organizations I had the opportunity to meet with over the last 18 months. They provided a wealth of ideas and great thoughts and feedback. They expressed enthusiasm for our government's commitment and the opportunity to be partners in helping us fulfill it. As others have mentioned, there was the online survey. I know that myself and several of my colleagues made an effort to get out into the community to let people know that it was there, be they community organizations or individuals. Now our municipal community partners are ready to work with us to get this done.

I sincerely appreciate the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek's passion for this issue. I recognize his own personal investment in this. I'll tell you that my door is always open to talk with anybody in this House about how we can move forward on this issue, and I dare say that it's true for all of my colleagues and it's true for the minister. That said, I don't see a point in duplicating the work that's

already under way. The consultations are happening. We're speaking with our partners. The municipal partners are lined up, and they're ready to go.

When the minister brings forward that provincial affordable housing strategy next year, we will all be prepared to sit down and work together, and I am more than happy to work with any member in this House and to bring their thoughts and ideas forward because – you're quite right – this is an issue that we all need to work on together. I believe we should all support the work that's being done and the strategy that's going forward and the work that the minister is doing. I invite all members in this House to reach out to the minister and share with her your thoughts, your ideas, any connections, any networking that you have, and we can work together to address this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** You were standing, hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry for my exuberance in standing to be recognized.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's an interesting day here in the Chamber this afternoon. I am a little bit surprised. I'd like to commend my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek, who's been a long-time advocate on behalf of the need for affordable housing here in our fair land, and the good work that he's done in terms of reaching out to the government members and offering the opportunity to work together on such an important issue.

You know, one of the trademarks of the NDP, formerly the fourth or fifth party, whichever they were, was a continual calling upon the government to work together, and it's disappointing to see such an about-face. Issue after issue after issue we see an about-face from this government with respect to how they functioned in opposition and how they function in government. Mr. Speaker, I hope that if the Wildrose ever has the opportunity of serving as the government, we won't fall into the same traps that this NDP has with respect to, well, a number of issues, including points of privilege and saying one thing and doing another and all that.

But for today let me speak specifically about this motion that's before us. Just last week in the House, you'll know, Mr. Speaker, that I asked some very specific questions about deferred maintenance. Specifically, in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills there are currently 41 bedrooms that sit vacant, not because of the previous government but because of this government's inaction and their unwillingness to act and take necessary and important steps to have those facilities maintained and repaired.

While the government likes to talk about how much wonderful work they're doing on an affordable housing strategy, I don't know what can be more clear than when you have 41 bedrooms currently sitting vacant, waiting to be accessed by low-income Albertans, and this government sits on their hands while they try to put together a strategy. They have announced \$1.2 billion in funding for low-income housing, a very, very important initiative, but what many of those people need today is action from this government. They need to go ahead and identify a problem that clearly exists, with the 41 bedrooms sitting vacant, unavailable for low-income constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, but they've decided to play partisan politics on a motion inside the Chamber instead of doing the right thing.

5:40

Let me just highlight for you, Mr. Speaker, some of the inconsistencies of members of that side. I'll quote from *Hansard*.

I am delighted to be part of a caucus with such strong advocates for affordable housing, including the Member for Calgary-East. Bill 202 [provides] the Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act, which is in keeping with our government's priority for safe, affordable . . . housing. What I particularly like about this bill is that it addresses the complexity of providing affordable housing by engaging all the stakeholders involved.

My question today, Mr. Speaker, I guess, revolves around the issue: do members of that side of the House still continue to support Bill 202 given that today we have seen a very clear departure from supporting the things that they once said were important? That particular speaker, on March 16, was the hon. Member for Sherwood Park. She then said, "I . . . therefore urge all members of this Assembly to support this bill and to demonstrate their commitment to planning and action on affordable housing." I understand that that was before the strategy, but the question is: do they continue to support Bill 202?

I hope that the hon. Member for Calgary-East will be in her seat when the vote is called so that we will have an understanding of whether or not she supports a motion that essentially is a reflection of her bill. She said:

The aim of this bill is to hear from many Albertans and to take a big-picture look at this [critical] issue. I want to allow a committee to conduct a comprehensive review of affordable housing issues in this province. I want a committee to make recommendations that would make Alberta a province committed to housing security, a province where every Albertan has a safe, secure place to call home.

Mr. Speaker, that is a noble cause, and what I'm curious to know about today is whether or not members of that government will vote against Bill 202 just as they're voting against the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. [interjections] While the government would like to heckle the opposition because of the important work that's before the Chamber, they have shown a complete lack of respect for the dignity of this House just last week. It's quite possible, Mr. Speaker, that you yourself . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader. A point of order.

#### Point of Order Impugning Motives

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, 23(h), (i), and (j). To suggest that the government shows a complete lack of respect for the dignity of the House is completely incorrect with regard to – and I'm assuming that he's pointing to the point of privilege that was dealt with last week, for which we apologized, recognizing that it was an error. He cannot presuppose the other point raised by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, which is substantially different and a much weaker case, in my view.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the hon. member should not impugn the government's attitude towards this place and this House and our respect for parliamentary tradition. I think that it's unacceptable for him to be making those kinds of statements in this place, and I ask that you so rule.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the point of order I think what we have here is a very clear matter of debate. Last week this government was found in contempt of this Chamber, and I was merely referring to that fact, that the government is contemptuous of the Assembly. They've been found in contempt, and a case very well can be made that they show – they certainly showed then – a

lack of respect and dignity, that the Assembly desires. So I don't have a desire to withdraw because what we have here is a matter of debate.

You, Mr. Speaker, found them in contempt. Contempt is often referred to as a lack of dignity and respect. In fact, I was using the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood's own words, that he used both inside the House and in a media interview in 2013, that we've spoken about at great length.

I'm more than happy to have you rule, and should you rule that it is a point of order, we can deal with that at that point. I'm also willing to continue my remarks.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a private member's – the Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** You started my speech, Mr. Speaker. This is a private member's bill. I think the Government House Leader, the most seasoned one in the House, knows very well that he's just trying to take time away from a private member's bill. I'm suggesting as politely as I can that you should rule this for what it is, a frivolous complaint.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, what an interesting day. I'm hearing two things. First of all, a point of order. I'm not exactly certain that it's a point of order. However, I would also point out that the House did accept the apologies. It was considered genuine and sincere. I think it is inappropriate to be referencing that matter.

With respect to the second one, that is still yet to be decided. I have not made a decision.

I would encourage, therefore, that we return to the debate on the matter before us and focus less on the other legislative matters and more on the private member's motion that is here.

I think you were speaking to the motion. Is that right, Opposition House Leader?

**Mr. Cooper:** Yeah, to the motion. Mr. Speaker, I will speak to the motion.

In the name of not being as hot under the collar as one ought to be, I'll withdraw and apologize for my comments.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Cooper:** The point is, Mr. Speaker, that it is very surprising. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek intends to add value to this discussion. As you know, a motion of the Assembly is to urge the government to do something. The motion is not binding. But what the government is communicating today is that the work of members of the Assembly who want to add value to this conversation is not as important as the work that they're doing.

Now, that might not be their intention. We've heard a number of them say that they support the intent of the motion, but they just can't support the motion. I think it's unfortunate. I think it's disappointing. I encourage all members of the Assembly, particularly government members, to reconsider their position, understand exactly what this motion means and requires of the government, and in good faith to support that.

Now, with that said, Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty certain that we're going to have a recorded vote on this, and I would ask for unanimous consent of the House to go to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak to private member's motion 508 on the topic of

affordable housing, a subject which I also have some degree of authority on, having worked in the housing industry for many years and also being a board member for homeEd, the City of Edmonton Non-Profit Housing Corporation for six years. I find it unfortunate for the member who has proposed this motion, that in all likelihood was written many months ago. I must say that a lot has happened since the time that the motion was, in all probability, originally written. The Official Opposition and the third party seem to want to continue to talk about affordable housing. We want to build some. We want to get moving on it.

5:50

Now, since the late '90s, as other speakers have indicated and I can verify, the federal government was absent from the affordable housing file. The money just didn't flow. I know that we tried to get opportunities, tried to force the federal government to come up with money as housing management bodies, but the well was dry for decades, and it was impossible to get anything built as a housing management body because we didn't have a willing partner in the federal government. That's one of the things that we do have right now, a federal government which has funding for affordable housing available in partnership with provinces and municipalities. That has to be taken advantage of, hon. members. I think that not to do so would be a very unfortunate circumstance.

What we are looking at doing right now is moving forward and getting housing built right away. We don't need to go backwards into a consultation process that is already well under way, and by accepting Motion 508 that's exactly what we would be doing. We'd be leaving our hammers in the tool box. We need those hammers at a workplace, and we need those affordable housing units built or improved. Those people who are on that 15,000 waiting list need to be moved out of the situations they're in and into safe, affordable housing.

Our government understands the need for safe, affordable, and appropriate housing that is accessible for all Albertans, especially those who are most in need. As was mentioned before, 15,000 Albertan families are on an affordable housing waiting list, and they don't need to be forced to wait longer when we already have a process under way that will get us closer to the construction phase than if we were to adopt the policy proposed under Motion 508 and roll the carpet backwards into a consultation process which really is a duplication of what's already taken place.

Nobody underestimates the passion and commitment of the member opposite who proposes this motion about the affordable housing file. He's demonstrated over the years a commitment, but – make no mistake – we are committed to getting them built, making thoughtful decisions about how we move forward with respect to affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, we agree with the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. Improving the province's current housing situation and ensuring a supply of affordable housing is a complex matter requiring engagement, consultation, and co-operation of public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders. The need for a strategy is clear, but establishing a special all-party committee to conduct a review of the current state of affordable housing, as the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek says, is not the correct method. I cannot vote in favour of this.

I'd like to emphasize that our government is already taking action in creating a provincial affordable housing strategy. In fact, our government's strategy is expected to be in place by spring 2017 and will help guide and direct the \$1.2 billion in investment in seniors' and affordable housing. By voting in favour of this motion, we would be back at square one. This would leave the 15,000 Albertan families waiting for a safe, affordable, and appropriate home sitting on a waiting list for more time than is necessary. Given that the

Alberta housing crisis is the result of inaction from previous governments, moving backwards on our government's proactive approach is not the solution. These families deserve better.

The demand for affordable housing has been long-standing and never-ending, it seems, and the opportunity right now exists where we have a willing partner in the federal government. We should be taking advantage of it moving forward, coupling the financing that we are able to produce in tough times to join that federal government money and build and maintain units that need the maintenance and build more as projects present themselves.

This is why our government has proceeded with extensive consultation on this issue through the regional meetings that were completed in June. These regional meetings included the participation of eight MLAs, including the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek's colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-North West. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the government proceeded with online engagement via a survey for Albertans that was completed in July. It was followed by a second round of targeted engagements, completed in September. The fact is that thousands of Albertans across the province have provided their input, and through this extensive engagement and consultation process our government's provincial affordable housing strategy will guide the development of an effective and sustainable affordable housing system.

Mr. Speaker, the time for action is now. The hammers need to be getting out . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but Standing Order 8(3) provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of the motion to speak.

I would invite the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, I'm greatly disappointed by the response. You know, to go back and make this partisan by talking about what a previous government didn't do is to me unconscionable, given the fact that we have an opportunity here to do what's right. It seems to me that we've been talking about 2,000 beds, which was previously 2,612 beds, and we're cutting ribbons for that. It seems to me that we're still moving ahead with capital housing grants that were done by the previous government and that we have not seen a lot of net new beds occur in this marketplace.

Yes, this is a time for action. This is a time for consultation. Even within the consultations being done by the ministry, it talks about housing providers, Mr. Speaker. We need to consult the other sectors. We need to work with the private sector, who we've partnered with successfully in the past, to produce not just hundreds but thousands of beds for seniors' and affordable housing. We need to work with the nonprofit sector, who is being challenged today by – guess what? – the actions of this government in bringing forward a higher minimum wage. I talked to one provider. It has cost them \$921,000 of costs which are now coming off the plates and the services given to seniors. We are now bringing in a carbon tax. I talked to another provider. It is going to cost them half a million dollars of costs that are going to be layered on top, and that's going to come off the plates and the services delivered to seniors.

Mr. Speaker, this is a time to put down the partisan sabres here and to work with the private and the nonprofit sectors for the benefit of Albertans, not for partisanship, not to say that we're already doing something because what they're doing is talking to housing providers. They're talking to a narrow group of people that is not exactly what we need to do here, which is to partner with a broader sector, with the private sector, who bring expertise and capital.

We see the Resolve campaign in Calgary bringing millions of private-sector dollars to support the efforts for affordable housing and the efforts against homelessness in the province. We see the

private sector partnering to bring beds, both subsidized beds and market beds, to the market. I think we heard from one of the speakers here today, Mr. Speaker, that mixed housing is happening already in this province. We need to open the doors, we need to have conversations, and we need to bring the best and the brightest people together from all three sectors to solve this problem as we should have been doing for years and years. We were doing that. They're saying that we weren't, but that was happening.

I was a part of it. I was in the industry. I was one of the pioneers of the private sector in working to solve the problems of affordable housing in Calgary. I was proud to be one of the first authors of an attainable home ownership program in this province, bringing best practices not just from across Canada but from around the world. That is what Alberta is about, Mr. Speaker: best practices, doing it, a made-in-Alberta solution that we can do here with the entrepreneurial spirit, with the innovation and the expertise we have here, which is the public and the private and the nonprofit sectors brought together and firing on all cylinders.

That is what we should be focusing on, not throwing grenades at past governments, which I was not a part of. I have come here to do the work for Albertans. I come here to make sure that we work together, that we can partner with the private sector and the nonprofit sector and not worry about ideological issues, Mr. Speaker.

Business can be a force of good. I was at a ribbon cutting with the Minister of Seniors and Housing just two weeks ago with the company I previously worked for building affordable and accessible housing, Mr. Speaker. I see it every day. I see it all the time. We need to work together.

You know what? It disappoints me. You've got a bill, Bill 202, and I've worked and I've spoken to the member and I've suggested some positive amendments, which I hope will be accepted if we get to that bill. Mr. Speaker, this might be all we have to work with if we don't get to that bill for any reason. This is a chance for us to put down the partisanship and to work together to ensure that that work that they say is taking place over here – so why not make it better? Why not make sure that we have the stakeholders from all sectors involved with this? This is not to bring anything to a halt. This is a private member's motion. This is meant to enhance what government does.

6:00

I hope to provide direction from all 87 of us here in the Chamber so that we can do good work for Albertans, so that we can talk about the homeless, so that we can talk about those people who are struggling to find affordable and appropriate housing and rental, so that we can give the hand up to people that want to move from rental to home ownership, which will save the government hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars in the future by helping those households to build simple equity. Those mortgage-paying jobs that we hear about so much: we need to help those people that have mortgage-paying jobs to actually pay a mortgage.

Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed if we cannot get support from all sides of the House on this particular issue here. I thank the members in this House. I even appreciate . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, your time has passed.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 508 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6:01 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Ellis	Panda
Barnes	Gill	Taylor
Cooper	Gotfried	Yao
Cyr	McIver	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Nielsen
Babcock	Jabbour	Phillips
Carson	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Sabir

Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Goehring	McKitrick	Turner
Gray	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Miranda	
Totals:	For – 11	Against – 35

[Motion Other than Government Motion 508 lost]

**The Speaker:** The Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:06 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, November 8, 2016

Day 46

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
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Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
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Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
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Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
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Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
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McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
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Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, November 8, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Hon. members, just bow your heads and contemplate or pray as you wish. Today our neighbours to the south of Canada will be exercising their right to determine the future leadership of their nation. Let us commit ourselves to the maintenance of our long tradition of friendship and peace with the American people, with whomever they elect.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise today to move second reading of Bill 27, the proposed Renewable Electricity Act.

As you know, the climate leadership plan confirms Alberta's place as a progressive world energy leader by reducing emissions, investing in green infrastructure, and promoting innovation. This proposed act would help carry out elements of the climate leadership plan by creating the framework to meet our target for 30 per cent of our electricity supply to come from renewable sources by 2030.

Our government's measures to reach this target through the framework established by this act will bring important benefits for Alberta. It will facilitate \$10.5 billion of new private investment in our economy by 2030, and it will create at least 7,200 jobs for Albertans.

Now, let's be clear about what this means for our electricity system. It means that 30 per cent of our electricity energy will come from renewable resources. This puts Alberta amongst the leading jurisdictions around the world. It also means that the other 70 per cent will come from baseload sources, mostly from natural gas. This is good news for Alberta's gas producers.

How would Bill 27 bring these benefits? First, it would establish a clear understanding of what it means when we say "renewable electricity." Then a key element of the proposed act is that it would create the legislative framework to meet our target of 30 per cent of electricity generated in Alberta from renewable resources by 2030.

We recognize the importance of transparency to Albertans, so the act would require the development of interim targets and mandatory periodic reviews of progress towards meeting them. These steps provide clarity and confidence for investors.

It would also define the process for the Alberta Electric System Operator, or AESO, to develop renewable energy programs that would promote large-scale renewable electricity generation using a competitive process while ensuring reliability of the electricity system. It would enable the minister to set the objectives and criteria for the AESO to develop these renewable electricity programs. Once a program proposal is developed, including details of the

competitive process and costs involved, the AESO would submit the proposal to the minister for approval to proceed.

To ensure this competitive process is transparent and impartial, the legislation would require an external third-party fairness adviser to be appointed to oversee the competition and provide a public report. It would authorize the AESO to run this competitive process and, once complete, to advise the government of competition results. The AESO would also request approval of the quantity of renewables to be supported and the resulting cost. Based on this approval, the AESO would then proceed with awarding the support agreements to the successful projects.

The legislation would include a range of provisions needed to support this process. It would enable the AESO to take security interest in projects that receive support as this is the best way to protect the government's investment of carbon funds in case of generator default or insolvency. It is something like a bank holding a mortgage on a house. If a homeowner lives up to the terms of the agreement, the bank simply holds what is called a security interest. The bank only enforces the interest and takes ownership stake in the property if the agreement terms are breached. Similarly, this proposed act would enable the AESO to register a security interest to ensure a generator's compliance with this agreement. This provides the highest level of confidence that invested funds will have the intended result and puts government in the best position to recover funds in case of default or insolvency. The security interest would be part of the deal when projects successfully compete for support.

We've chosen this approach to protect Alberta's investment, but it is also important that the safeguards in place in the Electric Utilities Act continue to ensure objectiveness and independence of the AESO. This legislation would simply enable the AESO to develop these commercial terms if it deems them necessary. The AESO would then administer the contracts with generators and report the progress to government.

It is essential that renewable project developers and investors have the certainty that programs are supported by the government, in this case through reinvestment of carbon revenues from large-scale emitters. The legislation would make this crystal clear for investors. This would allow project proponents to secure financing rates which, in turn, will produce better program cost outcomes.

In fact, the provisions in this bill are carefully tailored to maximize the benefit and value for Albertans from our carbon levy budget. The investment certainty that will come from legislating our target will bring greater economic benefit to Alberta. It will also draw stronger competition for the program, driving program costs down. With investment certainty come lower project costs, better bids, and the most clean energy for the same amount of investment from the carbon levy funds. This is why we are confident the program will bring the lowest cost renewable energy to Alberta. These provisions would also provide the government with the ability to monitor the program, administration costs, and provide additional direction if needed.

The proposed act would clarify the Market Surveillance Administrator's oversight functions with the program, so it's clear that the MSA's traditional electricity market oversight also extends to participants in this program. The MSA's traditional oversight role is to monitor Alberta's electricity market to ensure it operates in a fair, efficient, and openly competitive manner. The MSA's oversight role will be extended to the AESO's implementation and administration of the renewable electricity program and the behaviour of the program participants and generators. In another measure to ensure transparency and accountability, the AESO would also provide an annual report of the program to the government.

Finally, the act would include amendments to several other pieces of legislation to deliver the policy elements and ensure overall legislative consistency. These acts include the Alberta Utilities Commission Act, the Electric Utilities Act, the Hydro and Electricity Energy Act, and the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. These amendments to the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act would enable the government to require an environmental impact assessment or other narrower forms of scrutiny for wind and solar projects of particular environmental concern.

**10:10**

Mr. Speaker, this proposed act is part of an overall approach to implement the climate leadership plan. By supporting the development of renewable electricity, we will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and ensure a greener future for our province, but our commitment goes beyond reducing emissions. We are committed to creating jobs and diversifying our economy. Investment in renewable energy will result in innovation and future economic security by encouraging growth in our green-tech sector. This proposed act would set the groundwork, demonstrating our clear leadership, promoting the generation of clean, renewable energy while ensuring reliable and affordable electricity for Albertans.

I look forward to seeing the support of this House in helping to move this important legislation forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in this place today to represent the interests of the hard-working families of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, to be their voice in response to this new bill before the House, the Renewable Electricity Act, Bill 27. I can honestly tell you that I've been waiting years for an Alberta government to come up with some kind of well-constructed, affordable, multigenerational, environmentally honest, financially sustainable, and technically sensible plan for renewables, and I'm still waiting.

Before us today we have another bill preceding a report from one of this government's hired experts. The members of this Assembly have not seen the Boston report, yet here is Bill 27, déjà vu from Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, which this government is currently asking us to pass without hearing from OSAG. It has become a bad habit of this government to ask the elected members of this Assembly to pass a bill without all of the information. It has become apparent that this government likes to give the impression they are consulting by appointing experts and panels to study this and that, Mr. Speaker, but this socialist government is only fooling themselves if they think Albertans are buying it. Here we have another bill before this House before anyone has heard from the experts. It's looking like many of these panels and experts are really nothing more than window dressing to give the appearance of consultation when, in fact, the government has already decided what the outcomes are going to be.

Well, I represent the dear people of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. These are intelligent people. I cannot support this bill on their behalf without knowing the mechanics, without knowing the cost, without input from the power industry or owners of our coal and natural gas resources, without input from Albertans. They need answers about the impact of this bill and what those impacts will be. Will it be affordable? Will it be affordable multigenerationally, environmentally honest? Will it be financially sustainable? Is it technically sensible? What will the liabilities be today and tomorrow and upon future generations?

Mr. Speaker, this government's contempt for democratic process is astounding. This government has replaced honest consultation with confirmation bias. This act will legislate the government of Alberta's 30 per cent renewable energy target by 2030 as measured on an annual basis. When I read that, I cannot help but think how this forced and arbitrary target will impact Albertan families and business owners. An independent study has found that Alberta's renewable subsidies could hit \$8 billion by 2030. This \$8 billion figure does not include the cost of coal phase-out or the social and economic impact this policy will have on communities like Forestburg, Hanna, and Keephills.

This bill is meant to complement this government's early phase-out of coal. That is clear. What isn't clear is the timeline. Maybe the Energy minister doesn't understand why the timeline plan for coal phase-out matters, but it is massively important, and it must be synchronized perfectly with the bringing on of renewable generation to prevent power shortages, leading to power purchases from the spot market at astronomical prices. It makes me wonder whether the Minister of Energy grasps that.

Alberta is currently in a state of significant oversupply, Mr. Speaker. At present Alberta has 16,261 megawatts of installed generating capacity. Peak demand in the 2015 climactic year, meaning October 2015 to March 2016, was only 10,982 megawatts. That is down, down a whole 247 megawatts from the record high of 11,229 in 2014.

It is recommended that a healthy grid operate with a 7 per cent overcapacity margin but absolutely no more than a 12 per cent margin. Well, in recent years Alberta has been operating with an overcapacity margin of up to 31 per cent.

Now, being 31 per cent over demand is a good thing for Albertan consumers and businesses. It means that power prices are really low, and low power prices provide a significant economic advantage to our industry, our commercial operators, our agricultural sector, and our people. Low power prices have benefited Alberta businesses, with a wonderful result of 78 per cent of our grid being industrial or commercial, and that means tens of thousands of jobs. We are competitive with low power prices.

In most Canadian provinces the industrial sector is much smaller, and power prices for everyone are higher. In provinces like Ontario it's connected to their overly ambitious renewable gamble, and they have been hemorrhaging manufacturing jobs because their power prices are making it impossible for many businesses to compete. That is known as leakage.

Inexpensive and reliable power is a cornerstone of any economic growth in any nation. That is why we see developing economies like India's building 85,000 megawatts of coal-fired power generation, utilizing J-Power's revolutionary clean-coal technology. They're doing so because it produces cheap power for a growing economy that needs to be competitive in a global economy.

Out-of-control electricity prices in Ontario are the result of out-of-control, forced renewable injections into their grid, injections not based on demand, not based on economic reality, not based on technical sensibilities but based solely on unsound ideology.

Make no mistake. Low power prices, a competitive, deregulated market, and energy reliability are all integral parts of what we commonly call the Alberta advantage. Jurisdictions with cheap and reliable power prices attract business.

Albertans keep hearing about jurisdictions that are moving away from artificially incented renewables or market-distorting policies that make everything uncompetitive and cost jobs. For example, France is ending its carbon tax. Australia ended its carbon tax. Germany is moving away from renewables and nuclear and back to coal. Greece is on track to get 1.75 billion euros in free carbon allowances for two massive coal plants, but they're burning lignite,

of all things, emitting seven million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, practically gutting Europe's climate action plans. I'm not happy about it when our far cleaner coal industry is being vilified by this Premier during her international junkets. Japan is moving away from nuclear and toward some of the cleanest coal technology yet seen, but we're not. What do all of these jurisdictions have in common? A population that demands jobs in a competitive global market.

This isn't done like Alberta. As a province we are facing one of the most difficult unemployment crises in generations. This policy in particular poses a great risk to Albertans of becoming a retractive economic policy. Instead of aiding in the economic rebound that is desperately needed, this will penalize businesses, homeowners, fixed-income seniors, everyone. This government continues to spin everyone on their diversification of Alberta's economy. Well, diversification requires an enormous injection of capital, ideally private capital, not taxpayer capital. You cannot possibly fund effective, sustainable diversification in a market where costs for energy are rising drastically.

This NDP government likes to follow the ill-advised economic principle of: if it moves, tax it; if it keeps moving, regulate it; and if it stops moving, subsidize it. But you cannot subsidize your way around high electricity prices. High electricity prices are detrimental to economic growth. Since economic growth is a core requirement of diversification, high electricity prices are detrimental to economic diversification. The problem with renewables, the way this government is bringing them in is that they do not like jurisdictions with low power prices.

As beneficial as these low power prices are to Albertans, the NDP has for ideological reasons introduced this bill, which is designed to force those beneficially low prices to rise. This legislation is needed because renewables cannot get to 30 per cent in a free-market situation. It is the intent of this legislation to drive up costs until prices are at a level where multinational corporations deem our jurisdiction worthy of being taken advantage of by their predatory, subsidy-seeking business practices. The legislation will artificially drive up costs.

**10:20**

A part of that will be taking coal offline. Mr. Speaker, in 2015 our generation by fuel-share breakdown according to gigawatt hours was 51 per cent coal, 39 per cent natural gas, 2 per cent hydro, 5 per cent wind, and 3 per cent biomass. This bill is asking for significant investment to bring up our renewable targets. By phasing out our coal assets 30 years earlier than expected, this government has done two things. One, they're artificially making room for renewables. Two, they are creating more investor uncertainty in an already rattled market. The phase-out of coal is central to this legislation, so why don't we have the results of the Boston report before we have this bill?

There are a number of economic risks associated with a 30 per cent by 2030 target; in particular, are Albertans paying for it on their tax bill or their power bill? And how much will it likely be? We have yet to have numbers from this government.

A related issue that's very significant is: how do we dial down coal? The significant increase this government made in June 2015 to the SGER levy has resulted in more than just lawsuits. The rash and ideological increase to SGER has compromised this government's ability to control the coal phase-out. Older plants, looking at millions that they will owe in carbon fees, have all the incentives they need to shut down early. Let's face it. You can have a timeline, you can have a calendar, but if these coal plants are hemorrhaging dollars, they will shut down prematurely. Then what? Half our load is powered by coal. Even with our current oversupply of around 31 per cent, the accelerated phase-out of coal

leaves Alberta at risk of serious electricity shortfalls when the wind isn't blowing in southern Alberta.

Alberta is in a precarious position. Due to oversupply our current wholesale rates are too low to support renewables, but if we phase out coal too quickly, Albertans will face skyrocketing power prices and utility debt as well as potential shortages. How will this government manage the variability of renewables? What power source will provide baseload generation? Where is the thorough natural gas strategy to increase investor confidence? When will the Department of Energy reassure our natural gas generators that the assets they hold now are not next on the chopping block? I have been asking the minister for this for over a year now, with no answer.

Instead of a natural gas strategy, there is a bill before this House giving the minister the power to instruct the Alberta electrical commission to put regard for obtaining the goals of the Renewable Electricity Act above regard for whether the generating unit is an economic source of electricity in Alberta or for whether there is even a need for that electricity. Alberta's existing power generation investors, the ones that this province will be dependent upon for additional private capital, are unlikely to find any market confidence in that clause. The legislation is clear. The minister may direct the ISO to purchase, to pursue generation that is both not economical in and of itself and not demanded by the market either.

We are in a dangerous position in Alberta today when it is no longer required to consider the need for electricity before asking the ISO to encourage a project to be built. Without having to regard the economics or the need for an electricity build, Albertans are greatly exposed to an Ontario-style boondoggle of Ontario proportions. When the wind blows, Ontarians are giving power away to the U.S.

This legislation furthermore gives the Energy minister an ability to interfere with the Independent System Operator, unlike what we have seen in this province. The irony of this is not lost on us.

Mr. Speaker, to make matters worse, this NDP government doesn't even seem to be interested in working through the legislative process on this bill. The NDP has presupposed a decision of the Assembly by already requesting that the ISO outline the criteria for a 400 megawatt RFI. This government just cannot get the order of governing the right way around. We have not heard back from the coal phase-out committee. At the same time, this government has asked ISO to operate outside of its legislative mandate by asking the ISO to set out the parameters of a 400 megawatt auction of renewable electricity. This bill hasn't even passed. The mandate of developing auctions is outside the current mandate of ISO. That is, for the record, why we are here today passing this bill. A number of amendments need to be considered for this bill, and all the while the ISO has already been required to craft an auction outline for the government.

This government is acting as if the bill has already passed. In doing so, it seems to me, the NDP are once again presupposing a decision of this Assembly. This is the third instance in a matter of weeks where the NDP has demonstrated its disregard for the authority of this House, just another example of the NDP's brazen disregard for democracy . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order.

#### **Point of Order Privilege**

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, if the hon. member believes that this is a contempt of the Legislature – he needs to sit down, actually, while I'm making my point. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members. The point of order.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. member believes that there is another question of privilege related to this, then he needs to make that or he should have made that at the first opportunity. He has not done so. But he shouldn't be just standing there and saying that we're in contempt of the House without standing up in his place and giving his evidence.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear a citation, and, you know, I've been listening quite intently to the conversation. I'd like to hear where the citation is, what the complaint is for the point of order. There has been serious contempt in the House here, and I believe that the member was just stating those or mentioning those specific ones. I don't think he was introducing a new point of privilege.

Thank you.

**Mr. Mason:** It's section 15 of the standing orders, Mr. Speaker: privilege.

**The Speaker:** Section . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Section 15.

**The Speaker:** You have something new to add?

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, I believe, just to reiterate, that the member was referring to a point of privilege that has already been brought up and delivered to the House.

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. I couldn't hear you.

**Mr. Hanson:** It's already been brought forward. He was speaking about a point of privilege that's already been brought forward and presented to the House and ruled on.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, as you know, these point of privilege experiences, point of order experiences seem to have raised their head considerably in the last week on both sides of the House.

Hon. Government House Leader, I think your point was to the comment that – you believe that the comment addressed by the hon. member was with respect to the citation which is currently under review. Is that what you were suggesting?

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously, neither of us has *Hansard* or the Blues with regard to that matter, to what exactly was said, but what I heard clearly was that this is yet a third example of contempt of the Legislature. Under privilege, section 15(2), it says:

A Member wishing to raise a question of privilege shall give written notice containing a brief statement . . . to the Speaker and, if practicable, to any [other] person . . . at least 2 hours before the opening of the afternoon sitting . . . before the Orders of the Day are called.

The hon. member has not done that.

10:30

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

I suggest, hon. member, that there was a matter with respect to this item that, at my best recollection, was discussed yesterday afternoon. I would urge the hon. member to speak to the substantive aspects of the bill and avoid those things that might cause some upheaval in the room. Please proceed with your comments, and if

you would, sir, be conscious of the point being made by the Government House Leader.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I will. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

Well, to just wrap things up a little bit here, I think it's very important that when this government, any government, appoints panels, appoints experts to advise the government and this Legislature on matters that come before this House – to introduce a bill such as Bill 27 gives the impression and may even be the reality that there is a presupposed outcome. We have Mr. Boston, who is preparing a report that has a significant impact upon the content of this bill and how this bill is going to roll out and the regulations behind it. We have yet to see that report tabled in this House, yet we are paying a substantial amount of money to have this expert come from the United States to take a look at our electricity industry and devise a plan, and here we are with Bill 27 already rolling out significant – significant – powers to the minister, significant impact to the electricity industry, and we have not heard this report. We have not seen this report. We just don't have enough information for this kind of a bill to come before this House and for us to be expected to pass it. There's a significant amount of work that needs to be done on this.

The mandate of developing auctions, just a side note, as I understand it, is currently outside the mandate of the Alberta Electric System Operator, and here we are passing a bill. That does not make any sense whatsoever. There are a number of amendments that need to be considered for this bill, and all the while the Alberta Electric System Operator has already been required to craft an auction outline. Again, that presupposes that the government has an already determined agenda before we've even seen this bill. They've been giving instructions to the AESO as to how to proceed, but we haven't seen this bill until, you know, just now.

Mr. Speaker, they're getting the cart before the horse again. The government is acting as if this bill has already passed. This is not acceptable. We as legislators need to have information. We need to speak to experts. We need to talk to stakeholders, and frankly I cannot in good conscience support this bill, and I must implore my colleagues on both sides of the House to do the same. There is much more information that is required for this.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak to this bill if I may. It's an honour to rise and speak to the Renewable Electricity Act. Let me be perfectly clear here. The bill, from my perspective, has several issues, and I believe that it is yet another bill that could possibly continue to hurt the people in Alberta.

Where do we begin? Let's start with the government's desire to ensure that at least 30 per cent of the electric energy produced in Alberta will be produced from renewable energy resources by 2030 as well as the central planning committee's ability to set interim targets in the meantime. Bill 27 disseminates zero detail on how exactly this government plans to implement its renewable electricity agenda, which brings me to my point: on what premise was the 30 per cent number mandated? How does the government plan on meeting this goal? How will the proposal increase electricity costs? All of these finer details, Mr. Speaker, are completely ignored and will put Albertans at risk.

Secondly, with respect to power generation how was this legislation co-ordinated with the coal phase-out? We know the

government wants to eradicate coal-generated electricity by 2030. We also know that about half of the power generated in Alberta comes from coal. If 30 per cent of power will come from renewables by 2030 and if we are to lose 50 per cent of our power due to the coal phase-out by 2030, where will the remaining 20 per cent come from by 2030, especially if the population growth and, therefore, demand for electricity continue to rise? We all know that is bound to happen with the government's ever so successful job-creation plan.

Details such as these need to be figured out, especially if the minister plans on mandating interim targets for renewable generation in the meantime. I think it would be a great benefit to Albertans if the government for the sake of transparency laid out its climate plan in full detail, clearly stating its intentions and plans moving forward. If they had nothing to hide, then they would have done so already. This is concerning to me.

With respect to these interim targets it's another problem. Mr. Speaker, they are to be determined by regulation. It seems to be a very common theme. If this government had any semblance of a plan, interim targets would have been clearly stipulated within the legislation. This would in turn at least signal to Albertans that a clear path is in place. Instead, the exact opposite is true, again increasing the need for the government to disseminate in full its climate leadership plan instead of guarding it behind closed doors, away from the public eye. Albertans deserve to see all these details up front and have them debated in the Legislature by their elected representatives.

Bill 27 also gives the minister sweeping power to interfere with Alberta's arm's-length electricity system operator, eroding the independence of this organization. Let me corroborate my point by referencing various sections of this current legislation, beginning with section 3(1) whereby the legislation states:

The Minister may, from time to time or on a periodic basis, direct the ISO to develop a proposal for a program to promote large-scale renewable electricity generation in Alberta.

Section 4 follows by stating:

When directed by the Minister under section 3(1) to develop a proposal, the ISO shall develop a proposal for a renewable electricity program that

(a) promotes large-scale renewable electricity generation in Alberta.

When we flip ahead to section 14(1), the pattern of ministerial meddling continues, whereby

the Minister may provide directions to the ISO for the purposes of enhancing accountability or the control of costs in respect of renewable electricity programs or renewable electricity support agreements under this Act.

Subsection (2) then goes on to state:

The ISO shall comply with any directions provided under subsection (1), subject to the obligations imposed on the ISO by renewable electricity support agreements.

I must say that it's pretty cut and dried, Mr. Speaker. The minister may provide directions, and ISO shall comply. It does not get any clearer than that.

Within this section it also references cost control. In section 14 the minister is able to provide clear direction to ISO on cost management with respect to programs or contracts. This provision apparently will allow the minister to have oversight and authority to make adjustments to costs of the program for the purposes of enhancing cost control. It would appear that the NDP is implicitly insinuating that this plan could in fact increase costs to Albertans. Why else would it include a provision for the minister to interfere with the matters pertaining to expenditures? Is the NDP government already doubting its plan? Albertans need stability in times such as these, not risky gambles, which is what this legislation is.

10:40

Given the aforementioned sections, can someone please delineate how AESO is any different than a government department? I am having trouble seeing the difference. The independence of AESO is questionable, given that the bill will enable cabinet to make arbitrary regulations with respect to renewable electricity in Alberta. The legislation clearly stipulates that in some cases AESO must comply with the direction it receives from a cabinet minister. I cannot help but think that this is another scheme, although less advertised, in the government's plan to centralize arm's-length independent agencies into departments. Who can remember AEMERA? I can.

Mr. Speaker, I want to discuss section 6 of the legislation, that discusses the so-called fairness adviser. It is my understanding that ISO must hire an external fairness adviser who will provide confidence to participants in the program by ensuring third-party oversight. This so-called adviser must be independently selected, not hired or selected by ISO. It must not have any direct connection to the minister's office nor ISO. Doing so would completely undermine the legitimacy of the organization. The preservation of legitimacy is crucial in circumstances such as this, and it is my hope that the government acknowledges this moving forward.

Now, turning our attention to section 13 of the legislation that states that ISO must provide an annual report to the minister respecting the contracts, costs, and other business aspects of this bill. I think the government is leaving out a key component to this report, that is jobs and investments either forgone or attracted by this venture. We hear constantly from the opposite members in the government buzzwords such as economic diversification, job creation, clean energy creation. The list goes on and on. If that is the case, I would hope the government is monitoring what it would laud as successes. Wouldn't this report provide the perfect means to do so within the scope of this project? It may provide feedback to them that their plan is not working. Just a suggestion.

Mr. Speaker, the net effect of Bill 27 will be to keep electricity prices in Alberta artificially low by subsidizing the generation of costly renewable power. Ultimately, this plan will wind up costing Albertans either through taxpayer-funded subsidies or higher power bills. It also undermines the independence of what was once considered an independent, arm's-length organization.

Mr. Speaker, given the litany of reasons I just listed as well as the many others that I have even touched on, I cannot support this bill, and I thank you for your time.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for demonstrating a significant grasp of the deregulated market. I would like to ask the hon. member to perhaps illustrate or talk a little further about the value of the independent nature of our deregulated market. Having been in this field for some time, I'm aware that our deregulated market was unique. It is the only one of its kind in all of North America. To have a province with no utility debt is unheard of, and it's as a result of the deregulated market. Could the hon. member perhaps illuminate a little bit further about the value of that and the value of having AESO being independent from political interference?

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you. Well, thank you to the hon. member for the question. You know, it has given Albertans the lowest power rates

in any jurisdiction that I certainly am aware of. Of course, my colleague from Grande Prairie here has echoed that, of course, with his experience in government. Speaking in regard to AESO specifically, it is very important for organizations such as that, if they are to be effective, in order to have that arm's length from government to be completely perceived as being independent by the people of Alberta – failure to do so will compromise, in my opinion, the confidence that the public will have not only in government but in the services that are provided.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-West?

Having seen and heard none, I would call on the Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act. I like renewables. I really do. Renewables are the only way to reduce – or not the only way but just one way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change. The fact that they're renewables means you can actually source that energy often. But they're not the be-all and end-all solution, and I have a serious problem with committing taxpayers and ratepayers to an unknown tab just to meet an arbitrary target of 30 per cent of Alberta's electricity generation from renewable sources.

Let's take a look at the renewables in Alberta. It's a little bit technical, but I just want to understand. We want to understand how this works. Solar power. We take a silicon wafer and use solar radiation, a photon, to knock an electron out of the orbit around the nucleus of the silicon atom, into the power grid. That's solar power, Mr. Speaker, and the price is coming down as new ways of manufacturing the panels come into place. People I talk to in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat are very pro solar but only if the solar panel manufacturers come and set up shop. Those cities don't want to just be the service centres for giant solar farms.

How about those giant turbines to capture the wind energy? Did you know that the average wind turbine is made of 185 tonnes of steel? That steel comes from the iron ore that has been cooked in coke, and the coke is carbon that comes from metallurgical coal, so each wind turbine needs a hundred tonnes of metallurgical coal to be built. If you like your wind farms, stop your war on coal or there won't be enough metal to make them anymore. Alberta coal miners ship our coal, the best in the world, away to make the steel to make the wind turbines.

By the way, people of the Pincher Creek and Crowsnest Pass areas of Alberta are saying: enough is enough. There are too many wind farms down there now, and the turbines and all the power lines and service roads have made a real scar on the landscape and the beautiful scenery there. "Please," they say, "No more wind power in the Oldman River valley."

Wind power has also been known to generate subsonic sound waves, known as harmonic resonance. There have been suggestions that as you get these sound waves acting at the same frequency as different organs in your body, a person can get sick. Headaches and nausea are the first symptoms. Usually the only way to get better is to move away from the wind turbine. Those are some of the side effects of these laws.

Need I mention the killing of birds and bats by wind turbines? Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you that there are a whole lot more birds struck and bats killed every year than there are ducks landing on tailings ponds in Fort McMurray, but no one cares about songbirds or golden eagles or insect-eating bats, just ducks in Fort McMurray. It

has become a passion for everyone, a fashion for everyone to criticize Fort Mac and the tailings ponds.

Then there is hydro power. Dams on rivers build reservoirs and pass water through turbines in the dam, turning electromagnets and inducing a current in the wires. It's not much different from the time of Faraday. The problem with dams is that they disrupt the natural migration and spawning patterns of fish, so fish ladders have to be built lest the poor fish get cut up in the turbines.

**10:50**

Dams also often flood prime agricultural lands, traditional-use lands, and communities. I was at the Dunvegan bridge this past fall, where Glacier Power has proposed a 110-megawatt hydro dam on the Peace River. This project I understand has lost its development rights, but a new group, AHP Development Corporation, backed by Concord Energy, Bowmont Capital and Advisory Ltd., and several individuals, wants to install a 330-megawatt facility 15.2 kilometres upstream from the Dunvegan bridge.

We have very few places to install large quantities of hydro capacity in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. Besides the Peace River, some have talked about hydro on the Slave River, south of Pelican Rapids. I have a feeling that the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and the Northwest Territories might have something to say about that project.

There was also a proposal to construct the Meridian dam on the South Saskatchewan River on the Alberta-Saskatchewan border, near Empress. That project was largely an irrigation project. I wonder how much hydro power it could generate.

Biomass energy is also a renewable form of electricity. I was up past Athabasca this fall and visited the Alberta-Pacific pulp and paper mill; Al-Pac, they call it. Al-Pac has the ability to convert biomass into electricity and sell it into the market. Biomass is also renewable. The trees keep growing and keep being replanted.

But enough about the renewables in Alberta. There has been much progress made without Bill 27, many other proposals out there, before it or the rest of the NDP climate plan came along. I see scary things in this bill, Mr. Speaker, things like asking the ISO to "prepare a budget for each fiscal year" where "expenditures for capital assets [are] allocated over the expected useful life of the asset." This sounds like the language of a government going into the power generation, transmission, distribution business. I bet the power companies will have something to say about this.

The minister will now be allowed to interfere in the ISO when there is an interest in a generating unit held by ISO. "Any ownership interest resulting from the enforcement of a security interest, [can] be transferred or assigned in accordance with any direction of the Minister." That sure sounds like government investment and involvement to me. After all, the \$10 billion or so in private investment to bring about the renewable generation will need some kind of government backing now that the PPA contracts debacle is scaring investors away.

If Albertans aren't on the hook through taxes, they will be on their power bills. I suspect both. We have had two decades of private-sector investment in our power system, though not without controversy, Mr. Speaker. Government did not have to spend the money for capital, and prices are pretty low currently other than transmission costs. The target of 30 per cent renewables in this bill is arbitrary, but more important is whether or not the generation is economic or not or needed. If the power is not economic, Albertans will pay and pay dearly on their power bills. If the power is not needed, it will have to be converted to heat and wasted or exported, and that raises the spectre of building a taxpayer-funded export power line.

In response to wikileaked diplomatic cables in 2011, when he was in opposition, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation was on record saying that there is nothing necessarily wrong with exporting surplus power to the United States but that by hiding it, they are proceeding with a policy that will require Albertans, through their electricity bill, to pay for this transmission infrastructure, which is worth billions and billions of dollars. That was the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. He said that in the past.

So how about it? Is this a stealth plan to build an export line on the backs of taxpayers? Maybe the fabled NorthernLights power line to Oregon. Surely, an anonymous NDP backbencher over there knows the full story.

As my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake said before, Alberta has 16,261 megawatts of installed generating capacity. Peak demand in 2015 was only 10,982 megawatts, down from the record high of 11,229 megawatts in 2014. Alberta already has more power generation than it needs, especially when the wind is blowing in southern Alberta, and this has resulted in low power prices for customers. So the ministry will be interfering with the AESO, which I believe used to be called the Independent System Operator. Fitting, as it no longer is.

The Market Surveillance Administrator, the person meant to watch the system and investigate complaints, will not be allowed to investigate any renewable electricity programs now. The Market Surveillance Administrator is being turned from watchdog into lapdog.

Mr. Speaker, this is dangerous stuff. The NDP is trying to make it unprofitable for the private sector to generate power in Alberta such that government will have to step in and implement a taxpayer funded – and warn renewable power plants to keep the lights on. And people's power bills will be going up soon.

I ask the anonymous backbenchers to turn on their government and vote down this money bill at second reading, before it saddles Alberta taxpayers with liabilities. It is not too soon before an election to see what direction Albertans really want to go on this bill, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Foothills?

Hearing and seeing none, I would recognize the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak this morning to the House regarding this bill. I'd just like to preface some of my remarks on this matter, because of my presence here today in this House, and that is strictly to ensure that the House is aware of some of the situations that we're facing in southern Alberta regarding this particular subject.

As my associate and colleague from Calgary-Foothills just mentioned a few moments ago, I think it's important for you to realize that my area down south, around the Pincher Creek and lower foothills and eastern slopes area, Lundbreck, Cowley and points beyond, is already fairly saturated with turbines, power lines, substations. It isn't, perhaps, the case that I get complaints every week, but I certainly get many complaints every month about the number of turbines that we have there, the number of power lines that we've recently had to endure the installation of, and the effects they're having on the viewshed in southern Alberta, which seems to contradict the intent of the South Saskatchewan regional plan as it takes a lot of farmland potentially out of production and seems to conflict with the South Saskatchewan regional plan's intent and goals and objectives of trying to preserve viewsheds.

Having spent a considerable amount of effort in the past year and a half on creating a new park in the region, it seems a little bit of a conflict to try to be promoting more turbines, more power lines, more substations, and more harmful impacts to the beautiful area than we've already had to endure.

Mr. Speaker, anyway, to go on further and so on, I want people to keep that in mind, that there are a lot of local residents and local business owners, stakeholders, et cetera, that are not – not – looking forward to having any more of this type of infrastructure created in the area without the proper type of review and the proper type of discussion on the subject.

11:00

Mr. Speaker, this bill, if passed, will legislate the government of Alberta's 30 per cent renewable energy target by 2030, which is tied to the phase-out of coal by 2030, as we've all heard already. The bill grants the minister the power to set interim targets and to become more involved with the formerly independent Electric System Operator. The reason the government gave for the necessity of this bill is that it is hoped that by legislating the target, it will give investors more confidence to invest in our province. At least, that's what they seem to say. I'm flabbergasted, flummoxed, befuddled, and utterly bemused by that claim.

**An Hon. Member:** Really?

**Mr. Stier:** Yes.

And I'm mystified because since taking over as government in 2015, the NDP government's relationship with the business community and investors has been more akin to some sort of a war or a warrior's type of direction. If the government was so concerned with building investor confidence in the province, maybe they should have abandoned their risky ideological policies, that have resulted in Alberta's credit being downgraded more times in the last 18 months than this province has had in the last two decades. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, come on.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A province's credit rating is essentially the credit agency's report card on the government's economic policies and a sign to investors of the confidence they have in our province. A credit downgrade is a big fat failure.

With policies like increasing income taxes, a 50 per cent increase in minimum wage, increases on the taxpayer, and the introduction of a carbon dioxide tax, it's no surprise that investors are rapidly losing confidence in this government. I don't think legislating unrealistic targets for renewable energy production is going to do anything to stave off further credit downgrades and investors' continued loss of confidence.

While I admit that the proposal by this government appears on the face of it to be a plan that's perhaps slightly better than the debacle in Ontario, let's not kid ourselves. Albertans will be paying for this. It still results in a whole pile of new capital, whether generation or transmission, and needlessly stranding coal assets at a cost of billions of dollars, which will result in consumers and taxpayers, everyday Albertans, being nailed with higher energy costs and more government debt.

Once again this Legislature is being asked to endorse a piece of government legislation without hearing back from the high-priced expert that was commissioned with the very task of determining the legislation's viability. Just imagine that. They set someone up with a task, yet they're proceeding without that task being completed.

With this quality of decision-making is it really any wonder why investors have lost confidence to invest in our province? I think not.

There are a number of questions I would like to pose to the government when the opportunity comes since the recommendations of the Boston report, advising the government on the cost and the timelines we're facing on coal, have not yet been received. This has been said time and time again this morning, Mr. Speaker. We have to obviously keep repeating that for it to finally sink in, I think.

My first question is with regard to the 30 per cent renewables by 2030. If the expert report this government set up isn't back yet – it's not until the new year, apparently, that it's predicted to come back – I'm very interested to know who determined that 30 per cent was a realistic target. According to a recent *Calgary Sun* article "there is virtually no chance of reaching this 'bold,' 'pioneering' and 'revolutionary' goal, if for no other reason than current technology can't produce that much power from wind, solar and biomass."

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add, getting back to my initial remarks about my area, that there's hardly a week that goes by – and there are frequently times when there's wind. That is true. But there's hardly a week that goes by when most of the time there's no wind at all. How can they decide that it would be worth while to put in wind and solar when we don't always have wind, when we don't have solar? Even though they have the capacity in those turbines to produce a lot of power, how can you get that capacity out of them when they really can't be efficient because there's nothing to turn them?

The same article that I mentioned goes on to say that "despite decades of research, even the latest battery technology cannot even out the ups and downs of renewable energy." And that's what it's talking about, Mr. Speaker, is the ups and downs. These turbines, these solar panels can't produce constant, reliable power.

The hon. minister cannot actually be asking Albertans to believe that this ND government knows how it will get the 30 per cent renewably sourced electricity along with all the backups that that much intermittent renewable would need without putting Albertans on the hook for billions and billions in added costs. I again ask this government to please explain how you arrived at 30 per cent. And what is your plan to get us there? We've been asking this for months.

Another concern I have with this legislation is that Alberta's generation capacity is significantly oversupplied. Much has been said about this this morning in this House. Currently Alberta's generation capacity sits at around 16,200 megawatts, but over the last two years our average peak demand was just over 11,000 megawatts. As I just mentioned, this means that our power grid is already significantly oversupplied. How does this government plan to drastically increase renewable power generation in a market that is simply not open to new production while not causing Albertans to be left with a very, very expensive bill that's not necessary?

Our current power generation grid is set up based on a grid that gets most of its baseload in power from coal-fired plants. Unfortunately, these power plants aren't necessarily located, however, in prime renewable power generation locations. For example, most of the wind power generation is located in my riding, as we've just talked about. Has the government considered the cost of building all of the necessary new infrastructure lines it will need with a completely reorganized grid? Who, by chance, do they think will be paying for all these additional transmission lines? Well, I think we know who will be paying for that in the end, Mr. Speaker. It will be the taxpayer, and it's not necessary.

That leads me to my next point, an issue that has risen in Ontario, where the government rammed through similar legislation, which was described in a recent *Financial Post* article. "Despite warnings

of harmful consequences by distinguished economists and professional engineers [the legislation] was adopted with unusual speed by the legislature, moving from its introduction to passage in just 11 weeks." Well, that sounds suspiciously like what this government is trying to do here, except it will be more like 11 days. Just imagine: 11 days.

While the opposition members are presenting their facts here today, it's well to be noted, I think, Mr. Speaker, that many of the government members are smiling and laughing as I make these comments, and I think that's inappropriate.

The article goes on to say:

There is no business case for all this green energy, as the auditor general has consistently shown, yet the government [has been] so forceful in implementing it that it took away from rural municipalities their planning and zoning powers, denying them any say in whether or not these intrusive projects would be imposed, regardless of local wishes.

This leads to my questions on: how will this government ensure that local municipalities and landowners are respected and ultimately consulted as the plan to increase renewable power generation moves forward? Where will these new wind farms go? Will it take good, productive ag land out of production? Doesn't this directly conflict with the goals and objectives of the South Saskatchewan regional plan? Will they receive proper compensation, or will the government instead enforce expropriation?

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of Bill 27 has made it crystal clear that this government is enamoured with the idea of a centrally controlled economic philosophy. Bill 27 apparently will empower the minister to direct the AESO or ISO to develop large-scale renewable electricity without considering whether there is even a demand for additional production.

Wildrose believes in a realistic renewable energy program driven by private-sector investment, not government subsidies. That respects the Alberta ratepayer and doesn't leave them holding the bag when this risky ideological experiment ultimately fails to deliver. Don't say that we didn't warn you when this happens.

Until this government is able to answer and address the serious questions and concerns we have with this short-sighted proposal, I cannot support this bill, and I encourage all of my hon. colleagues to vote against it here in second reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that, I now move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

11:10

## Bill 25

### Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

Mr. Panda moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment November 3: Mr. MacIntyre speaking]

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone who wishes to speak to this matter? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I mentioned earlier, we have a bill before us that we believe needs to be referred because it is unacceptable and, actually, irresponsible to ask any



member of this Legislature to support legislation without feedback from the oil sands advisory panel. This government put this panel together, and as flawed as I think it is, it is a panel that is supposed to be deliberating on the best way to roll out this emissions limit. We have not heard back from them.

This bill really does need to be sent to committee. There are other players in the oil sands, Mr. Speaker, that need to be heard from, Albertans that need to be heard from, experts that need to be heard from that have not been consulted by this government. The purpose of this referral is to ensure that the democratic processes that are the strength of our democracy are allowed, to bring in these other people with important things to tell us legislators about this bill. They need to have an opportunity to speak to it. It must be sent to committee.

In addition, we need to hear what OSAG has to tell us. These were the experts this government claimed we needed to have as a panel to advise this Legislature and the government on oil sands emissions limits and how to roll them out. We haven't heard from them, yet we've got this bill.

Again, it presupposes that the government has predetermined the outcome of the OSAG panel. That genuinely undermines not only investor confidence but the confidence of the good people of Alberta in the government's actions. Look, we have a system of democracy in place, and this government seems to continue to disregard the importance of that process in crafting workable legislation for the benefit of all Albertans. We have standing committees whose intention is to be a forum for Albertans and stakeholders to come together and advise on legislation, to improve that legislation directly.

I'm going to just take a moment and talk about confirmation bias. It works like this. You surround yourself with experts and advisers who think just like you do and you don't consider any opposing views. We have a significant amount of confirmation bias being conducted by this government already. The purpose of the legislative committees is to allow opposing views and other views and people who think outside the NDP world view box to come to this Legislature and speak to us legislators about the bills that are before us, to improve them, to bring points that we haven't considered, that the government hasn't considered to improve legislation that benefits all Albertans.

That very wonderful parliamentary process is being shortchanged because this government just wants to push bills through, claiming that they're fine on their first iteration. I remember, Mr. Speaker, when Bill 6 was before this House how they confirmed and reaffirmed and assured us that first iteration was just so perfect – just so perfect – and they were not accepting any amendments to it. But when the farmers in this province rose up and said, "Hold the phone; we have not been consulted," the government ended up issuing, or was forced to issue, six pages of amendments to their previously perfect five-page bill. Well, here we go again with another perfect bill, Bill 25, and we haven't even heard from OSAG. We're getting the cart before the horse has even come out of the barn. It's just an empty cart.

Here again we have something that Albertans deserve far better than. Not only did the NDP not run on these policies in the last election; they continue to make it clear that they're not interested in the feedback from not only elected members of the legislative body but not even feedback from their own oil sands advisory group.

Second point. This bill is very far reaching. We're talking about a 100-megatonne cap. Well, as my colleague from down south just mentioned in his speech on Bill 27, how did that number come to be? Who recommended that number, 100 megatonnes? Was it just pulled out of thin air? When I look at the exemptions that are within this bill, I get the feeling that the 100 megatonnes was pulled out of

thin air, and then there was a very loud: oops, we'd better exempt these guys, and oh, we better exempt these guys, and oh, let's exempt that one, too. Well, if we put this in committee, we may find that there's a significantly long list of exemptions that need to be put into this bill, and that 100 megatonnes may not even be the right number.

The cap is going to prevent current leaseholders from developing. We have already sold those leases up there. We've gotten the money from them. With this 100-megatonne cap it's a little bit deceiving. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe we're already sitting at 68. That leaves us about 30 to 32 in the window. So really what we're talking about now is that the existing leaseholders who have not yet developed up there have to somehow squeeze into a 30- to 32-megatonne window, but we don't have anything in this act spelling out how that remaining window is going to be apportioned. Not at all. There is obviously going to be a bit of a fight for the remaining 32-megatonne window. Is that enough to finish the development of the leases that these companies invested in, in good faith, giving good money for leases to develop these resources, and now this government is changing the game?

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Sounds a lot like SGER and changing the game on the PPAs and having to pay compensation. Here we are again, changing the rules of the game with sales already done, money already paid, leases not yet developed, Madam Speaker. Those companies, if I was them, I'd be saying: "Well, you know what? If because of this change in law I don't get to develop that lease and I've spent hundreds of millions of my investors' money on it, I'm going after the government of Alberta for compensation." Is that what we're going to be faced with?

These are the kinds of things that should this bill be in committee we can have those leaseholders come to committee, and they can tell us their story and tell us the challenges that this bill is going to force upon them. We need to hear from all the players, not just the big four that stood on the stage with the Premier for a photo op. We need to hear from everybody that's impacted – everybody that's impacted – and we're not being given that opportunity.

Once we pass this, frankly, we are going to be in what's known as an oversold position. It's the same thing that frustrates every one of us when we go to see the doctor, you know, and he's overbooked or when we go to get on a plane, and it's oversold. Well, we have a situation where we've got a 100-megatonne cap, but we have sold leases that far exceed that.

Of course, I can't help but say that I think this would be making a certain Tzaporah Berman exceedingly gleeful because it's going to force some of those leaseholders to leave it in the ground, and that is precisely what ForestEthics and the people that support Ms Berman want to see. They want to see Alberta leave it all in the ground: coal, natural gas, oil. We're a resource province. We are a resource province, and we should not be stranding those resources, stranding those investments, stranding those assets.

11:20

There are billions that have been spent buying these leases on the assumption and in good faith that they could develop those resources responsibly. Although this government has failed again to do their homework, we have an opportunity with this referral to committee for the government and all of us to get the homework right, to listen to what other people, other organizations have to say.

We have some questions that need to be answered. For example, how are we going to decide who gets to develop their leases in that remaining 30- to 32-megatonne window? How is that going to be decided? Is it going to be a lottery? Is it going to be an auction?

They've already paid for the leases. What will these stranded assets for those who lose out cost Albertans? They are going to want compensation. They've invested hundreds of millions of dollars, and now they're stuck. It's patently unfair.

We've not heard any information or analysis on the potential legal risks. I think it would be a very wise and prudent thing for a standing committee to bring in some of the legal experts out of the patch. There are law companies in this province that specialize in the law of the patch.

**Mr. Hanson:** And some from B.C.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** And apparently some from B.C., yes.

We need to be hearing from them. We need to bring these experts in. They need to be advising this government and saying: "Whoa, boys. Put the brakes on here. You're putting yourself in a very, very serious position here, subject to enormous liability."

The precedent for payouts has already been set, Madam Speaker. For example, under the lower Athabasca regional plan, under the coal phase-out and Terry Boston we know we're going to be paying compensation in these things. We're dealing with a PPA situation and those pending payouts. There are already – one, two, three – three precedents being set, compensation over stranded assets, and here we go again. Here we go again. Every single time that happens, it is the taxpayer who gets that thrown on his or her back again. It's government mismanagement on an enormous scale, in the billions of dollars. We cannot afford this.

This government has demonstrated an astounding lack of business acumen time and time again, and what we're asking for is to hit the pause button, put this into committee. Let's hear from people who do have business acumen, who have legal acumen, who understand what goes on out there in the oil sands, hear from these experts, hear the challenges that this kind of legislation is going to put upon them. It is vitally important that we get this right.

We're talking about not just money. I know we talk about money and billions like it's just nothing, but you know those billions of dollars we keep talking about: that's tens of thousands of jobs, tens of thousands of jobs for Alberta men and women, good-paying jobs, jobs that pay taxes, jobs that put their children through university, jobs that support local industry. These are primary industry jobs that always spin out into two times and three times the number of jobs by the time you spin it out into an economy, and every time we lose a primary industry job, that's the retraction in the workforce, too. We lose those jobs two times, three times.

When we see a statistic that, you know, such and such a primary resource company just laid off a thousand men and women, we need to immediately think: "Oh, my goodness. By the time two years transpires, that's going to translate into 2,000 or 3,000 lost jobs." That's the impact primary jobs have on secondary and tertiary business. It is vitally important when we're talking about those leases up north that we get this right because we are talking about a substantial number of jobs for workers who are currently unemployed in this province.

This is either – well, let's go here. This bill is going to impact the development of one of the largest job creators in our economy to the tune of \$150 billion to \$250 billion in undeveloped assets. That's \$150 billion to \$250 billion in undeveloped assets. The sheer size of this thing is demanding that it go to committee and have a really good look at this thing, thoroughly. We're talking about the future of a whole generation of workers. Just think of how many generations it's going to actually take to develop those leases up there. It's going to take a couple . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)? The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I wanted to thank the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for describing some of the main concerns. There are so many concerns. I do have a question for the member, but I would just like to reiterate a few things with regard to my question.

One of the things I have a hard time understanding and why I think it's so important that we go to committee is that Albertans are actually asking us these questions, and this is extremely complicated information, even for those of us who marinate in this every day. When we're talking to our constituents and the average Albertans that are speaking to us and asking for answers about this, it's very, very difficult for a person in my constituency to be able to say: "Well, I don't understand what the government is doing. I don't understand why the dollar figures that are being put forward aren't important and why there's no information coming to us about the excessive amounts of dollars that could go into absolutely destroying this industry."

The other thing, too, is that if you consider the fact of this need for speed on putting this through without actually having the panel advising us, Madam Speaker, it begs the question as to why would you, first of all, spend taxpayer dollars to have the panel come forward? Then the second question is: why are we not being given the advice from that panel? Whether we agree with who's on that panel or not, the government decided that these were the folks that needed to help make the decisions and advise on it. Now we don't even get the privilege of hearing what that panel says previous to legislation that will come forward from this House and then the regulations that will follow that we are not privy to. You think the average Albertan, just given that small amount of information, would require us as legislators to be able to go to committee to be able to ask those questions so that we can relate to our constituents what this government is actually trying to accomplish here.

I would like to direct my question to the hon. member, please, if he could explain. You were mentioning that we have approximately 32 megatonnes left over. Could you perhaps give the House a description as to who you think those very precious 32 megatonnes may end up going to? Because, quite frankly, we have many leases sold, as you had mentioned, many leases to many, many different companies. Does that mean that those folks who have already paid for those leases now have to lobby the government for access to those leases? Which would beg the question: who's going to win, and who's going to lose? I was wondering if the hon. member would like to maybe give us some opinions on who he thinks those leases might go to.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, it's an excellent question, but unfortunately it's an answer that we do not know. There are some things that we do know. There were four major corporations standing on the stage with the Premier, applauding her climate action plan, and I suppose one might think: well, are they going to be favoured in this? The sorry truth is that we don't know. This act doesn't tell us those kinds of things. There is no mechanism here for a fair, impartial, and honest apportioning of that 32-megatonne window.

We talk about megatonnes, you know, and we talk about billions of dollars. I want to bring this back just for a moment to jobs and people, Albertans. Not very long ago I was in Calgary for meetings – in fact, it was on Friday – consulting with oil sands companies at

their request about this bill. They called me to come down there because they had some very serious concerns. They are deeply worried about this bill and what it doesn't include and some of the things that it does include and the lack of consultation that they feel about this. They were not consulted, the companies that I was visiting.

**11:30**

You know, as worried as they were – I just want to relate a brief story. When I was driving through downtown Calgary, what really impacted me was coming across dozens of unemployed workers wearing their hard hats and their blue-and-yellow coveralls, hoping beyond hope that somebody would pick them up that morning and give them work even for just one day. This is Alberta. I've never seen anything like that in this country. It does remind me of what I saw in the Middle East.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other speakers wishing to speak to the referral? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to say that it's a pleasure to rise today to speak on this referral motion, but truthfully it's not. As many of my hon. colleagues have already pointed out, essentially what we're looking at with Bill 25 is a cap on our economy. All that this bill is going to do is continue to hamper investment more across Alberta and continue to create further uncertainty in our energy industry.

Now, I represent a very large constituency, as you know, but it really relies on the energy industry as well as agriculture. If you come to Rocky Mountain House – I know that many people on all sides of the aisle in this Assembly have spent some time this summer in Rocky Mountain House doing some of the tourist things that happen in our great backyard. We do have one of the most beautiful backyards in the world. But if they'd had time to just look away from the mountains and the rivers for a little bit and look at the industrial yards in our communities that are full, at all the rigs that are racked up, all the trucks that are sitting there and the equipment that has not worked now in well over a year – for our neighbours to the north, in Drayton Valley, it's even more obvious, as you drive through their community, how much this economic downturn has affected them, has affected the community.

As my hon. colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake said, it's important to recognize that when we're talking about the economy here, it just sounds like big numbers, but back home this is people. This is people and jobs, families that don't know how they're going to make ends meet. They don't see any hope in the future. As we were talking to them at rallies this weekend, it became more and more apparent how much people have lost hope, and that's really troubling.

The other thing is that when you talk to the employers in our community, right now in Rocky Mountain House I can think of many who are actually bidding jobs at a loss just to try to keep their employees working. That's happening all over, and I commend them for that. When you talk to them and you try to find out what is going on, over and over and over they will say to you that the lack of trust in the government, the lack of security in investment is what's stopping us from getting jobs inside our province.

Why would the government want to bring forward Bill 25 at all but particularly at a time when over a hundred thousand people are out of work? We already know that our large employers are having trouble getting work, do not trust the government. They know that investment has been hampered. Why we would bring forward another bill that would hamper investment is troubling.

I think it's one of the reasons why this referral motion makes sense. It's time to bring it to committee because then we could start to hear from our largest employers, from the people that this bill is going to impact, and from the other stakeholders that are associated with it what the costs will be to our community. We might be able to make it better. That's the point of going to committee.

Why the government would continue to try to ram through legislation of this type at lighting speed is troubling. Most of my constituents, when they find out how fast the NDP government is trying to move legislation through the Legislature, are shocked by that.

Madam Speaker, I know that you know that when we do things through committee, we can often make things better. We can hear from the Albertans that it affects. I think it's troubling to think that you would expect – not you, Madam Speaker; you don't expect it, of course – that the government would expect members of the Legislature to automatically know everything and not have a chance or the ability to communicate with the experts in this field, with the constituents that will be impacted by this, with the businesses that will be impacted by this to see other solutions that can make the legislation better.

I know that over the summer there was a lot of work done in the Ethics and Accountability Committee that I think illustrates why this referral is important. As you know, Madam Speaker, throughout the summer government members spent a tremendous amount of time trying to move forward motions on taxpayers paying for politicians' expenses. The opposition was very much against that. The government members on the committee at the time were very much for it.

Now, since then the government has changed their mind, and I commend them for that. I think that that was a great decision. I would like to think that after months and months of argument inside committee, we were able to make the government realize what a silly decision that would have been and how Albertans would not have liked it, how they would have been impacted by it, how they would have been disappointed by it. That's an example of a committee working.

In this case to bring this bill to committee would again allow an opportunity like that. In some ways we may be helping the government from making a terrible mistake, as we did in the Ethics and Accountability Committee, which, I have to point out, Madam Speaker, I've never been thanked for yet. I think the government should thank the opposition for that and give us a chance to help them make their legislation better in the future.

Let's be clear. This policy is likely to result in the stranding of our oil assets – the stranding of our oil assets – but we're going to try and ram it through in a couple of days without talking to the experts and, as has been mentioned by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake a couple of times when discussing Bill 25, without waiting for the report that the government themselves asked for on this. They're going to move forward without even hearing the report. One has to wonder what they already know about what's coming in that report. What's the need for the speed? Why would we not allow experts to communicate with all members of the Legislature to make sure that we make this legislation better?

You know, experts are estimating that the losses to our economy on this in terms of cumulative value of loss of production will be somewhere between \$153.41 billion and \$254.74 billion. Now, I want to put that into perspective, Madam Speaker. If every pipeline was approved tomorrow, we would expect a bump of about \$30 billion to the Canadian economy. Thirty billion dollars. That would be great. We would appreciate getting our pipelines built, without a doubt. But think about that in comparison to the numbers that are being predicted we will lose in production on our economy from

this bill. That's significant – significant – a significant amount of money.

I know the environment minister right now is heckling me. She obviously, Madam Speaker, through you to her, clearly has no concern about the hundred thousand people plus contractors across our province who have no work, about the thousands of people in the constituency that I represent who have no work. That's not a laughing matter, and that's not something to heckle about. When we go back to our constituencies and we see people losing their homes, losing their businesses, having to take pay cuts at work, it's not funny. It truly is not funny. We've got full shelter systems, food banks that can't keep up with the demand right now.

Outside of Rocky Mountain House and Sundre this summer the forest reserve, which is usually very, very full on the weekends, remained full the entire summer. Nobody had any work, so they went out camping with their families, and they tried to make the best of the summer. It's not funny. It's not funny. Losing all these jobs is not funny. Then the government wants to pile on. This is why people are frustrated. This is why thousands of people across the province protested against this government this week, from all corners of this province. They're frustrated, and they feel that their voices are not being heard.

By referring this to committee, by sending it to committee, we are able to give them an opportunity to have their voices heard. That's not unreasonable. That's not unreasonable. Just like when the government tries to bring in policies or government members on a committee are trying to bring in their policies to line their pockets on campaign expenses, it's important to hear from Albertans. We had great results from that. So I would argue to you, Madam Speaker – and I know you would not have been for that, of course.

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order.

**Mr. Nixon:** I argue to you, Madam Speaker, that this would be a fair way to point out . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Point of order. Sorry. The Government House Leader.

#### **Point of Order Imputing Motives**

**Mr. Mason:** Standing Orders 23(h), (i), and (j). The hon. member just suggested that the government members were trying to line their own pockets. Perhaps he would like to reconsider his words.

**Mr. Nixon:** Madam Speaker, that is a matter of debate. Clearly, within the committee . . . [interjections]

**The Acting Speaker:** Members, please, could you just let the member respond.

**Mr. Nixon:** Clearly, in committee the government members brought motion after motion after motion, attempted to bring forward motions that would get their political expenses paid for. I actually don't even think it's a matter of debate. I think it's a fact. As for a response to the Government House Leader's point of order, it is not a point of order; it is a matter of debate. [interjections]

**11:40**

**The Acting Speaker:** Members, please.

Hon. member, I would encourage you to think about how you are talking about some of the issues and return to the bill in front of you

and the referral in front of you instead of speaking about other committee matters and what has happened in the past.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will, for sure.

The reason that we are talking about a referral motion to refer this to committee is because of the need to make sure that Albertans and experts can have a chance to speak to this legislation that this government is bringing forward. Let's be clear. This government is in charge right now. They like to spend their time blaming the third party for everything that happened in the past, but they've been in charge for almost two years right now at a time when, again, hundreds of thousands of Albertans are out of work. So if you're going to bring forward a bill that, again, will lower the economy, cap our economy, and make things worse in communities that I represent and you represent, then yes, absolutely, that should go to committee.

There is not one reason that this government has presented for why this should not go to committee. They have not presented any reason at all. They have not. This is just, in my mind, an example of the NDP trying to get their tentacles into our energy industry again. They've already made it so bad, and people are suffering all across this province because of their decisions. Yes, the price of oil is low, but we know that from the very beginning the government has done things along the way, similar to what they're trying to do with Bill 25, which made things worse, which is why we should send this to committee.

They are making things worse for people. They are scaring away investors, they're creating instability in our industry, and they continue to force through legislation, as you know, Madam Speaker, without, in my view, consulting people appropriately. We have many examples of it. The carbon tax: we can tell that Albertans across the province are saying no. Overwhelming numbers don't like what the government is bringing forward. How does the government know that Albertans feel the same way about this bill if they don't take it to committee and give Albertans a chance to speak about how they feel about this bill? That's what committees are for. Why would we not give people a chance to talk about it? I would like to know.

I would like to know how the government came up with the cap number. That hasn't been presented. Did we just invent that? Do we have any expert testimony? Do we have anybody that can present to us that that's the right number? How did we determine that number? It would certainly be nice to know that. I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that that's something that we could find out through committee, which is why we have a committee process.

Again, we are dealing with a situation where our largest industry is in turmoil, and it is having an impact on real people. We should be able to at least agree on that. It is having an impact on families who are trying to make ends meet. It's having an impact on families who are trying to pay their bills. Again, in Rocky Mountain House I can name dozens of companies who are taking work at a loss just to try to keep people at work so they can pay their mortgages. I talk to constituents every month who are losing homes all across my riding, and I know that the government members do, too. What I want to ask the government is why they would not send something like this to committee so we can make sure that we get it right, make sure that we're not damaging our industry anymore, that we're standing up for industry.

Bill 6 was a great example of why this is important. Bill 6 should have gone to committee. There's no doubt, from the opposition's perspective, that that was the right spot for it to go. There was no doubt that the majority of Albertans were against Bill 6 from the

start. There's been nothing but consequences still from the adoption of Bill 6 across the community. We still don't have the panels done. We still don't have any of those things.

Why this is relevant to this, Madam Speaker, is: how do we know that this is not going to happen with this? How do we know the same thing is not going to happen with this. I know the minister is really upset, but let's hear why. Let's hear the answer to why this can't go to committee. We see time and time again that as this government legislates, they force it through too fast. They don't try to talk to the people that the legislation impacts, and they often make mistakes. At the same time we've seen through other committees time and time again that the opposition and the public have been able to bring forward good solutions to make the government's legislation better.

**Mrs. Aheer:** That's all we're asking.

**Mr. Nixon:** That's all we're asking.

Now, if this bill is perfect, then it would go through committee pretty quickly, I would suggest, Madam Speaker. If there are problems with this bill that are going to make things worse, then there are probably going to be some great ideas that will come from the industry, from the public, from the opposition parties, and we can make the legislation better.

Instead, we're here talking about forcing through a bill that every expert that we've been able to talk to so far says is going to hurt our economy, is going to lower our economy at a time, again, when over a hundred thousand people are out of work. Think about that number: a hundred thousand people out of work. And it isn't getting any better. I mean, we're almost two years into this economic downturn, and then we're going to bring forward a bill like this that the industry says is going to cap our economic activity, is going to cost more jobs.

We won't even take the time to send it to committee to find out from experts what's going on, if this is right, to find out if the number the government has chosen is appropriate, to find out how they chose or determined that the numbers inside this bill are appropriate. Why? I submit to you, Madam Speaker, why would we not send this to committee?

Now, I suspect that the government is not going to answer that question of why. I surely hope that they do rise and answer the question of why because I think Albertans want to know. I think they want to know why several junior oil and gas producers are worried that this will squeeze them out of the market.

Are we trying, Madam Speaker, to get to the point – I'd like to find this out through committee – where the market isn't determining what's happening in our energy industry anymore and instead the government is determining what's happening in our energy industry? I can tell you that the constituents that I represent want the free market to determine what's going on in our industry, not the government picking winners and losers.

Committees are a valuable thing. It seems to me that every time we talk about committees or referring a bill to committee, the government wants the opposition just to rubber-stamp their legislation. That is not our job. It is not our job to rubber-stamp your legislation, particularly when people that we represent are telling us that this is going to cost more jobs, particularly when people are telling us that this is going to cause more companies to shut down, particularly when people are telling us that it's going to scare away investors from our industry and from our province at the very time that we need more of them. We need to put more people to work.

Again, if you go to committee, Madam Speaker, we can get some answers from the government on those questions. We can also bring in experts who will be impacted by the legislation to speak to why

this matters. I think we can all certainly agree that going to committee makes the most sense. The question, then, becomes why the government would not support this motion to bring this to committee, to hear from all the experts. I mean, I can't imagine that the government would be concerned about what the experts have to say. I think that they would, in my mind, want to hear what the experts have to say to make sure we get this legislation right for Albertans, to make sure we get Albertans back to work.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, an interesting speech from the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, and a beautiful town, Sundre. I quite like it.

Madam Speaker, I just want to address some of the points that the hon. member has made. He's talked about stranding resources. He doesn't talk about the situation that the province is facing now and has been facing for some time, where because of international pressure, because of climate change, which is real and human caused, because of the growing awareness of that in the world, and because the government of Alberta previously had not been serious about climate change, nor had it taken any steps to mitigate some of the harmful effects of greenhouse gases, it's very, very difficult and has been impossible up until now to get pipelines.

The problem with this, Madam Speaker, is that it doesn't just strand some of the petroleum resources of the province; it strands all of them. Because we are unable to get our product to tidewater, it places an upset limit on the ability of us . . .

**Mrs. Aheer:** So you're going to cap ethical production? You're capping ethical production.

**Mr. Mason:** I'm sorry, Madam Speaker. The hon. member is chirping away at me.

**Mrs. Aheer:** I'm sorry. I didn't realize I wasn't allowed to.

**Mr. Mason:** Yeah. Thank you.

**Mrs. Aheer:** I'll keep chirping.

**Mr. Mason:** The hon. member says that she's going to continue to chirp. Well, let her chirp, Madam Speaker.

The point of the matter is that without new pipelines there cannot be any substantial increase in production of the products that we have, so it strands the entire industry, Madam Speaker. It strands all of the resources, and that is something this opposition can't get its mind around, which is that we have to do something in an international situation . . . [interjections] Oh, she's at it again. She's at it again.

**11:50**

It strands all of the resources, and we can't increase our production, practically, at all. The international situation is what is moving us in this direction. It's the international situation that means that the opposition to Alberta getting its products to market is almost – we're almost unable to overcome it unless we can convince people, convince the world, convince other governments in Canada and outside Canada that, in fact, we have a serious plan to combat climate change.

We've seen that with this plan, Madam Speaker. Everyone from the President of the United States to the governor of the Bank of England to the government of Canada has seen that Alberta has

been leading the world in terms of a climate change process, a climate change policy that's foremost in the world, which allows expansion of the production of our basic industry in this province, which is, of course, oil and gas. That is the accomplishment of this government.

I ask the hon. members opposite if they want to strand the entire production of this province and permanently landlock this province because of their head-in-the-sand approach to climate change? Is that really what you want, to stand up here and posture as the defenders of unemployed workers around the province? Madam Speaker, we all feel for those people, and we are all working to try and improve the situation so that we can get those people back to work, get those families back on their feet. That's what this government stands for, and we're going to continue to fight for those people.

But we're not going to do it in the way that the opposition would have us do it, by pretending that climate change isn't real. Now, they may or may not believe in climate change, Madam Speaker – I think it depends which member we're talking about – but one of the things that's very clear from all of this is that they don't want us to take any meaningful action about it. That is what they want. They don't want us to take meaningful action even though it means that we will strand all of the petroleum resources that are left in the ground in this province on a permanent basis. That's their plan for this province. That's their plan for those suffering families, for those people that don't have work.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak to the referral? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to point out that recently, when one of the members on this side of the House used the five minutes of 29(2)(a), the Speaker pointed out that that wasn't what it was for. Of course, we just listened to the Government House Leader go on a rant, a five-minute rant under 29(2)(a), where he talked about international pressures that have brought us to this point, where we have to talk about – we have to do all of these things that this government is doing.

Now, he did point out that the previous government wasn't serious and didn't do nothing about climate.

**Mr. Mason:** Didn't do anything.

**Mr. Loewen:** Didn't do anything, of course.

What I do remember is that the previous government spent \$6 billion on carbon capture. I'm not sure what kind of benefit we got when it comes to social licence, that this government likes to talk about, from the \$6 billion of taxpayers' money that went into carbon capture, which, of course, this government is continuing.

Now, he mentioned that it was impossible to get pipelines before. Well, that's very surprising that he would bring that up when this very government appoints people and hires people that are antipipeline activists, paid lobbyists for antipipeline organizations. That's what's happened with this government. They're going to sit there and point fingers and say: no, nobody else could get pipelines. But they won't take responsibility for their own actions.

We have the Member for Calgary-East, who stood up in this House and said all sorts of glowing things about this. Well, we've seen the signs, Madam Speaker: no more dirty oil. The Member for Calgary-East: I'm sure her constituents would love to ask her what she was referring to when she had a sign that says: no more dirty oil. What oil was she referring to, and what was she doing that day? What was she protesting? She was protesting pipelines, Alberta pipelines. Right here in Alberta she was protesting.

So can you tell me that this government wants to sit here and say that they support pipelines when they have done nothing but protest pipelines, just sat here and protested pipelines and hired antipipeline activists, paid them big money, Alberta taxpayers' money, to protest – and they're sitting here. We're supposed to expect that they're on Albertans' side, that they all of a sudden support pipelines, that they all of a sudden support the oil sands, that they all of a sudden support the oil and gas industry in Alberta? I don't think Albertans believe it.

**Mr. Yao:** Not for a second.

**Mr. Loewen:** Not for a second.

Now, another interesting thing. This is about taking this to committee, where it can be fully investigated. We can hear from experts. We can hear from the public. We can hear from a multitude of people. Now, this very government – in fact, the House leader got up in this very Legislature for years and railed against the previous government about taking things to committee. What is he doing now?

**An Hon. Member:** Roadblocking.

**Mr. Loewen:** Roadblocking. Denying that there's any advantage to going to committee. But, of course, when you're in opposition: oh, it was great then. Now, of course, not so great.

He also mentioned that the U.S. government sees us as leading the world. Well, we have a U.S. election coming up today. The two main candidates running for the U.S. presidency: neither of them have spoken for a carbon tax. Neither of them. Governments all over the world are going away from this, and this government is bringing in – so I'm not sure what part of the world they're leading. [interjections]

**An Hon. Member:** Just build a wall, and hopefully the carbon will stop there.

**Mr. Loewen:** Now, Madam Speaker, it's funny how the government here – they're laughing right now. The government side is just laughing right now.

I guess they think it's funny that Alberta has lost 100,000 jobs, and that doesn't include contractors that have lost their jobs and are underemployed, that aren't getting near the hours that they used to get. Now, this is the truth: 100,000 jobs. [interjections]

Yeah. It's interesting how the Government House Leader likes to talk about people on this side of the house chirping when obviously there's plenty of chirping going on from the other side, and that's actually from the ministers on the other side. Can you believe it?

**The Acting Speaker:** I'd just like to encourage you to speak to the referral, please.

**Mr. Loewen:** Actually, I presume that if the Government House Leader was talking about the referral under 29(2)(a), then I guess I'm still talking about the referral, too.

Now, this Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act is bad for our economy. It'll hamper investment. Companies don't want to invest in a jurisdiction that likes to put caps on things, change regulations in the middle, increase taxes. That doesn't give certainty to people with the amount of money that's needed to bring investment to Alberta to create those jobs. This government has done multiple things to decrease certainty in the energy sector.

Now, this policy is going to end up stranding oil sands assets. There are companies that have bought leases in the oil sands that now – the cap won't allow them to produce them. Because this

government hasn't done any economic study on this – they have provided nothing to us. They've got a committee that's supposed to be working on it, but they're not going to wait till that committee responds before they bring this bill in and try to pass it, so we don't have any idea what this is going to cost.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm sorry to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 8, 2016

Day 46

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
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Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
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Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
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McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
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Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
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Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of	Committee Services	Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
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Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	
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Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
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Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
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Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
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Dang	Taylor
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Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
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Gotfried	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
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### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
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Coolahan	McPherson
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### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 8, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Hinkley:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of students from Maskwacis Cultural College. Now, they are not here just yet, but if we could give them the traditional warm welcome, it would be appreciated when they get here.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you students and accompanying teachers from John Barnett school. Along with them are their teachers, Peggy Wright and Kenny Babatunde, and their chaperones, Ubah Ali, Kostas Karayiannis, and Nadine Bright. If I could ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly students and staff and parents from a school that's close to my heart, Donnan elementary school. They are accompanied today by parent chaperones Jade Gray, Cathy McMorran, and Lane Whitten and, of course, by their teachers, Mr. Scott, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Peters.

Mr. Speaker, if you'd like to indulge me for a minute, I'd like to acknowledge that Mr. Peters was my daughter's grade 6 teacher when she was in his class. There are teachers who make a difference in the lives of their students, and I know that he made a difference in the life of my daughter. I am so pleased that he continues to make that difference in the life of his grade 6 class to this day.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly staff in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism: Margaret Stewart, Brittany Sapiuk, Adam Bentley, Shauna Coombs, Fahad Khalid, Tom Bernier, Matt Brown, Clarissa Atienza, Hilary Pittel, and Martin Sasseville. I invite them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of outstanding young athletes, coaches, and support staff who made Alberta and Canada proud this summer at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. These fine young Albertans showed us all what human skill, endurance, grace, and strength look like in action. Our province is home to some of the best athletes in Canada.

I am extremely proud that we were so well represented by Blair Nesbitt from Stony Plain, Katelyn Wright from Edmonton, Amber Strypan from Plamondon, Tammy Cunningham from Red Deer, Heidi Peters from Edmonton, and Ross Wilson from Sherwood Park. Joining us today as well are members of the dedicated Paralympic support team: sitting volleyball coach Nicole Ban, massage therapist Chris Petch, team operations manager Charlotte MacNaughton, and team manager Ingrid Ruys.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out that the sitting volleyball team made history in Rio as the first Canadian team, men's or women's, to compete in sitting volleyball at a Paralympic Games. I'd also like to congratulate Ross for winning Canada's first medal of the 2016 Rio Paralympics and for taking home silver medals in paracycling, individual pursuit and individual time trial.

I am confident that I speak for all members of the Assembly when I say that each of these fine young athletes, coaches, and support staff makes us proud to be Albertans and Canadians this year. We look forward to their many future successes. Mr. Speaker, they are seated in your gallery, and I invite all members of the Assembly to extend a warm welcome to this tremendous group, who made the 2016 Paralympic Games so memorable. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Welcome. I think the applause reflects our pride in each and every one of you.

The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly veterans present in the House to mark Aboriginal Veterans Day. John McDonald, the president of the Aboriginal Veterans Society of Alberta, is a retired chief warrant officer who served 38 years in the military, with service in Korea, a peacekeeping mission in Egypt, and two tours of duty with NATO in Germany. His wife, Myrtle Calahaisn, also joins him. Mr. McDonald is also the co-ordinator and recruiter of the bold eagle program, a summer employment program for indigenous youth conducted by the military in Wainwright each summer.

Wallace Bona is a retired corporal who served 26 years in the military, with service with NATO in Germany and two tours of duty in Bosnia.

Jocelyne Eastman served 16 years between the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian navy. Clint Eastman served 20 years in the army and six years in the Royal Canadian Air Force. They are joined by their son Damien.

I would ask them to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A real pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the House four individuals near my hometown. While these hard-working students complete their studies, they're also advocating on behalf of their fellow postsecondary students, including foreign students, for improved affordability, for extended employment opportunities, and for reduced tuition. Representing the students at the University of Lethbridge are Cameron Howey, president; Hailey Babb, vice-president academic; Royal Adkin, vice-president, student affairs; and Michael Gale, vice-president, operations and finance. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three visitors from my constituency: Sherilyn Danis, Karen Popoff, and Bev Decore. Sherilyn and Karen are the co-managers of the Foundation of Administrative Justice, and Bev is an instructor and co-ordinator there. The foundation is a nonprofit organization that provides training to agencies, boards, commissions, and tribunals. It's a national leader in delivery of administrative justice training and education. I ask that all members join me in welcoming Sherilyn, Karen, and Bev to the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly individuals associated with the Myeloma Alberta Support Society. I can only name a few of these individuals, but we have approximately 40 volunteers, including patients, caregivers, family members, and doctors, taking part in multiple Myeloma Awareness Day here with us. Visiting us is the cofounder and chair of Myeloma Canada, Aldo DelCol. I'd ask him to rise. From my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud we have Robert Thiessen with the Edmonton chapter of the Myeloma Alberta Support Society, and from Calgary we have Norma Gilbert, president and caregiver, as well as Phil Unland, who's a patient in southern Alberta. I would now ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two of our youth leaders in the PC Party. The first, Emily Gilroy, has been PCYA president of events for the last two years, actively involved in the PCYA executive since her mid-teens, and has contributed an enormous amount of work to the party, especially since the May 2015 election. The second, Mr. Adam Brown, is the University of Alberta Progressive Conservative Association president as well as VP of operations and finance for the AUFSJ as well as serving PCYA VP policy for the previous year. Mr. Brown's grandfather was a previous member of this Assembly. I ask these two young people to stand as amongst the best and brightest in Alberta and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests, hon. members?

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

#### Foundation of Administrative Justice

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, under the former PC government compensation and spending for Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions grew out of control. I'm proud to represent a government that is committed to increasing transparency, fiscal responsibility, and having diversity reflected in Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions, which is why the vision of the Foundation of Administrative Justice is so important as it ensures that individuals involved with the ABCs are trained and certified in administrative justice.

In ensuring this vision, the foundation, a nonprofit organization, prepares agencies and tribunals for their responsibilities by

providing effective and vital training in administrative law and natural justice. The foundation also provides training for people who appear before decision-making boards. The training focuses on the best practices and procedural fairness. Training in administrative justice helps organizations write better decisions and creates more efficient and effective environments for decision-makers to work within.

All levels of government, adjudicators, unions, professional disciplinary panels, and indigenous people are examples of the people and groups that benefit from these courses. The foundation provides comprehensive education for members of commissions across Canada. The course focuses on interpreting laws, presenting and weighing evidence, holding effective hearings, and making and writing decisions.

The foundation was the first organization in Canada to implement a certification program for appeals and tribunals. Recently they launched e-learning to make education more accessible. To date 455 people have graduated with a certificate in tribunal administrative justice.

I would like to take this time to thank the foundation for their hard work and for providing legal training and educational opportunities to many Albertans. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The leader of the third party.

#### Job Creation

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about jobs, specifically the numbers released yesterday by the NDP government. While it's impossible to dissect all of the wild claims made in yesterday's news release in two minutes, I'd like to take a closer look at a couple.

First, there's the claim that the government's capital plan has been a major driver of job creation this year. Every single public infrastructure project that produced a paycheque in 2016 was announced, planned, and funded by previous governments. To date no new infrastructure projects have been announced by this government. Even if they were to announce them all today, it would be two years until a shovel hit the ground.

Now, let's talk a bit about the increased drilling numbers. While I'm happy to see that drilling activity in Alberta has increased, a projected increase of 53 wells next year according to PSAC, Petroleum Services Association of Canada, my enthusiasm is tempered by the fact that Saskatchewan's increase is 240 more wells. That's four and a half times more new wells and four and a half times more jobs than here in Alberta. Saskatchewan has the same low oil price. I find it interesting that the government continues to blame everybody but its own policies for the difference, because the facts, Mr. Speaker, prove otherwise.

The rest of the highlights in the government's news release were mere estimations of jobs they hope will exist at some point in the future, like a unicorn. While I'm sure the government's crystal ball is in good working order, none of these jobs exist today, which is of little comfort to the tens of thousands of currently unemployed Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, after a closer examination, it's a bit rich for the government to claim that they were at all responsible for any of these new jobs. By my estimation, the only jobs that they can actually take credit for are the jobs that exist in their imaginations, like a unicorn, and the last time I checked, imaginary jobs don't pay real mortgages.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

### Multiple Myeloma

**Drever:** Thank you. On September 28, Mr. Speaker, people gathered from across the country to march and raise money to help fund research for multiple myeloma. This was the first march to take place in Alberta, and it so happened to be in my beautiful riding of Calgary-Bow. I would like to take a second to thank Pamela Roberts for bringing this important cause to my attention and for the opportunity to participate.

Mr. Speaker, today marks a very special day as it is Myeloma Awareness Day in Alberta. It is supported by the Southern Alberta Myeloma Patient Society, the Myeloma Alberta Support Society, and Myeloma Canada. These three groups provide myeloma patients and caregivers with necessary information and support and also promote myeloma research.

Multiple myeloma is the third most common blood cancer in Alberta, after leukemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. In 2012 there were 209 Albertans diagnosed with multiple myeloma. This includes 127 women and 82 men. In that year 111 Albertans died of multiple myeloma.

As Alberta's population continues to grow and age, the number of new myeloma cases is projected to increase by 60 per cent over the next 15 years. In fact, at the Cross Cancer Institute and the Tom Baker cancer centre a large number of clinical trials on multiple myeloma have led to the development of new drug combinations that successfully shrink myeloma and extend survival rates. Thanks to increased prevention and screening efforts, new treatments, technological advances, and new research, more people are being diagnosed earlier, entering treatment sooner, and living longer.

I would just like to thank all of the people who came out today to support and raise awareness of multiple myeloma.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Supports

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Volunteers are the lifeblood of Alberta's communities. There are almost 25,000 nonprofit and charitable organizations in Alberta. This sector contributes \$9.5 billion to our GDP and employs 187,000 people. These volunteers and their organizations benefit and enhance life for all Albertans. They provide opportunities for volunteerism, connectivity, and caring for others, which creates self-reliant and compassionate communities. Charities do great things with enthusiasm and donations, resulting in minimal cost to government.

I commend the spontaneous generosity of Albertans. We are the most charitable province in Canada according to the CRA, but Albertans are concerned. The policies of this government are not helping in these difficult economic times. This government is taxing charities with a carbon tax, that will harm their efforts to supply struggling Albertans with the bare necessities of life. We have asked time and again for this government to exempt charities from this tax. We need to reduce costs on our nonprofits instead of increasing them.

As time goes on, it begins to appear that this government is against charities. Charities are saying that regulations are stifling their attempts to help vulnerable Albertans. When charities jump through all the regulatory hoops, bureaucrats create more blockades in the form of judgemental, subjective decisions on what charities can and cannot do. We need to create policies that help instead of those that harm.

Charities receive some funding by volunteering at casinos. In the north, with only one casino, the charity rotation is twice as long as

anywhere else in Alberta, which means half as much funding. Such disadvantage only adds to the loss of service and decline of community viability.

I call on all members to support our nonprofit, volunteer ventures through public policy and private participation.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

### Aboriginal Veterans Day

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today to honour Aboriginal Veterans Day. It is difficult to know exactly how many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people served in the two world wars and Korea, but indigenous people are believed to have had one of the highest rates of wartime participation in this country.

**1:50**

Many aboriginal veterans reside in my own constituency of Peace River. Canada's aboriginal volunteers often overcame cultural challenges and made impressive sacrifices to help our country restore world peace. Although many were awarded medals for bravery, they were serving a country that often discriminated against them. Equals on the battlefield were not always considered equals after the battle, and many indigenous veterans did not receive the same benefits other veterans were accorded, something the federal government apologized for in 2000.

Aboriginal Veterans Day, which began in Manitoba in 1994 with a private member's bill, is a day to celebrate the heroism and valour of indigenous members of the Canadian armed forces. It gives us a chance to honour remarkable individuals like Henry Louis Norwest, the Métis marksman from Fort Saskatchewan who set a sniping record during the First World War; or Charles "Checker" Tompkins from Grouard, who translated messages in and out of Cree to fool enemy forces during the Second World War; 300 men from Lac Ste. Anne who signed up to serve in World War II; Robert Berard, who always led by example, not only laying mines during that same war but by taking the lead as an 83-year-old veteran to raise funds for a memorial plaque honouring the aboriginal veterans of Alberta that was erected in 2004 in front of this Legislature Building next to the fountains.

Aboriginal Veterans Day also recognizes the everyday contributions, sacrifices, and accomplishments of these veterans and their families, who to this day continue to serve this country with honour. Aboriginal Canadians have demonstrated time and time again their great service and sacrifice for our country through their participation in Canada's military, particularly during times of conflict. In this season of remembrance we must never forget that.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### AISH Administration

**Mr. Jean:** There is nothing compassionate about a cold, centralized government that's more interested in paperwork than in taking care of Alberta's most vulnerable, but that's exactly what the Auditor General found yesterday in a scathing report into funding for those living with disabilities. He found a system that just doesn't care, that is clogged with red tape, leaving people waiting 200 days for benefits, a system that often doesn't even speed up for those facing terminal conditions, and he found a total lack of oversight from this

minister. How is the Premier going to hold her minister accountable for this?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for the question. I share his concern about the speed of access to AISH services for Albertans who are eligible for those services. It's something, actually, that has been a long-standing issue for me, and that's why one of the things that we can say is that the minister has already directed his staff to look into ways to streamline and to speed up the application process for the AISH system. Now, that's not the only thing to do. We know that more needs to be done, and we'll be looking at ways to improve the system for all eligible Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** In 2013 this Premier released damaging documents that she obtained which proved that under the PCs, the former government, wait times for eligibility status increased to 23 weeks, but now things have even gotten worse. Application processes are overly complicated, bureaucratic, and difficult to fill out for some of Alberta's most vulnerable. This is not compassion. This is a total failure of the previous and this current government to reform a broken system. Applicants are now waiting up to 24 weeks. Why hasn't this government done anything to improve Alberta's system?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the minister has already directed staff to come up with a program to simplify and streamline the application process. I would also go further to say that we have not done nothing. Quite the opposite. We've increased funding to AISH by roughly \$30 million. Generally speaking, with the disability community the minister has been working very hard on getting rid of the SIS evaluation, which was a big irritant, and also coming to resolution with respect to the accommodation standards. As well, we know that we have stabilized funding for that ministry as a whole, and the member opposite needs to remember that we would not have a stabilized situation in that ministry if we went ahead with the \$2 billion drop in operating . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:**

I could go on forever about how we . . . discriminate against the people with disabilities . . . because the very system we set up to establish their eligibility discriminates against people whose capacity to navigate that system is impaired by [their] condition.

That was this Premier speaking in this House in 2014, two years ago, so she knows the problem. It's the exact same system that she has failed to change, and her minister, according to the Auditor General, has no idea how to fix it. This is not compassionate. Why has the Premier done nothing in the last 18 months to fix our problem system?

**Ms Notley:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I think I just outlined a number of things that our minister and our government have done in order to stabilize the system and to slowly get improvements in the system, because I absolutely reject what the member opposite has just said.

That being said, though, I think I just need to reinforce the previous point I made. One thing that the member opposite cannot suggest is that taking \$2 billion a year out of operating expenses will do anything to reach the objectives he claims he wants to achieve, because it won't, Mr. Speaker. We care very much about

disabled Albertans. We will continue to work to improve the system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

### Electricity Supply

**Mr. Jean:** This government's ideological push to eliminate Alberta's coal industry comes at a tremendous cost. Thousands of Alberta jobs will disappear, entire communities will absolutely vanish, and billions will be paid out to compensate power producers for their stranded assets. On top of all this, Albertans will have to pay – get this – to import electricity from British Columbia. Can the Premier explain to this House and to all Albertans just how much wealth she plans to transfer to B.C. in exchange for Alberta to be able to keep its lights on?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it must be, you know, that in honour of the election down south the member opposite is engaging in a higher level of hyperbole than usual. Nonetheless, that is what it is.

To be clear, Alberta already imports electricity from B.C., Mr. Speaker, so to suggest that that's somehow a new thing is somewhat misleading. What we are doing is working carefully with communities, and we'll be working with impacted workers to ensure a just transition as we move off coal to a cleaner renewable energy fuel, which will be better for all Albertans going forward.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** There's nothing funny about Albertans' hard-earned tax dollars.

Albertans have just shelled out \$17 billion to pay for the transmission line overbuild authorized by the former PC government. It was an enormous, unnecessary expense, and taxpayers know that, and now the NDP is about to send more good money after bad. Instead of relying on Alberta's inexpensive natural gas system, the NDP's decision to import electricity from B.C. would mean that a new transmission line will have to be built. Can the Premier say unequivocally that Albertans will not pick up any of the billion-dollar price tag for this new electricity infrastructure?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that Albertans know that it is long past time for this province to get off coal as its primary source of electricity. It is time for us to move forward with our climate leadership plan, not only because it helps us with respect to social licence in other jurisdictions but also because it is better for the health of individuals and for the health of our environment. So we will do that, and in the long term it will pay off both economically as well as environmentally.

**Mr. Jean:** The Premier is giving away the farm so that we can import electricity from British Columbia over power lines that Albertans actually have to pay for.

It gets worse. This week the Trudeau government confirmed plans to ban tanker traffic off B.C.'s north coast. Goodbye Northern Gateway. A Wildrose motion to oppose the tanker ban and support pipelines in all directions was passed unanimously in this House, but the Premier has been silent on it. Can the Premier please explain why her multibillion-dollar plan to buy social licence for pipeline has only bought a licence to import power from British Columbia instead?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I think that the member may well be just speaking a little bit prematurely. But let me just say, generally

speaking, that I'm very pleased about the announcement that was made yesterday by the federal government with respect to marine safety. I think that the federal government is making great progress with respect to meeting a number of the conditions that the government of B.C. had outlined with respect to ensuring safety on their west coast, so I'm pleased by that. I hope that as we all continue to work together to make sure that we protect the environment while still building our economic infrastructure, ultimately we'll get to success on the economic infrastructure as well.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

#### **AISH Administration** (continued)

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Auditor General released a shocking report on the state of Alberta's assured income for the severely handicapped, or AISH. This report reveals serious issues with almost every facet of this program. Problems with appeal decisions, application forms, assessments, communication of denials, monitoring, prescreening, timelines, and transparency are just a few of the problems revealed in the AG's report. Can the Premier tell us: how has this been allowed to happen under her watch?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said, first of all, to ensure that these things work on time, you need to have staff there, and one of the things that ensures you still have staff there is continuing to fund the ministry. Of course, we increased and stabilized the funding for that particular ministry by 2 per cent this year, quite a bit different than what was proposed by the members opposite. In addition, we increased funding to AISH by \$30 million. We have made progress with both getting rid of SIS and moving forward on the accommodation guidelines, and we are now in the process of reviewing mechanisms to streamline the application process, as I've already indicated to the member opposite.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
First supplemental.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's interesting because in addition to basic accessibility, the AG's report also highlights serious concerns surrounding eligibility. According to the report bureaucrats within AISH are given insufficient guidelines for making funding decisions. They're also provided insufficient training, and as a result of this they're making inconsistent decisions. Apparently, it really depends on which day of the week a loved one fills out the AISH application as to whether they're going to be approved or denied. What immediate action will this Premier take to address the inconsistencies of the funding process?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the minister has already indicated, prior to the report coming out, he'd already directed staff to look at ways to streamline and improve the application process. In addition, we will look further at the recommendations made by the Auditor General, and we will implement all of them. We will move quickly on this because this is a matter we care a great deal about. To be clear, when we say that

we care about it, we also match that with a plan to not cut \$2 billion out of the annual spending of the government.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, on June 3 the Minister of Human Services bragged in this House about the improvement to AISH wait times, yet from this AG report, which uses data up to July of this year, it is clear that this is not the case, that wait times are actually increasing. Furthermore, the AG's report states that "the department does not [even] know what it needs to change to improve the program." No clue. Can the Premier explain how she will ensure that vulnerable Albertans don't have to wait 200 days to receive AISH supports?

**Ms Notley:** Again, Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, this is an issue about which I care greatly. As I've said before, we've been working on trying to improve the performance in this area and to streamline the process to ensure that we get better outcomes. The minister has asked for that work to be done. It will be done, and I look forward to reporting on the improvements to this House.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
The leader of the third party.

#### **Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement**

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday this NDP Premier, when asked about her government's faster coal phase-out, instead referred to the policy before she made things worse for Alberta coal communities. At a press conference the NDP blamed low oil prices and the struggling economy for their absolute failure to create jobs. They continue to point the finger at everyone but themselves. Alberta's coal communities know better. The Premier admitted yesterday in this House to not talking to communities and to hiding the Boston report from them and the families whose livelihoods hang in the balance. To the Premier: will you now hit the brakes on your accelerated plan and stick to the federal timeline for coal phase-out and stop killing Alberta jobs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to certainly correct one thing that was part of the member's question yesterday. I have been advised that the minister's office has been in regular contact with all the affected mayors that were referenced in the previous question, so you might want to check your facts on that one.

That being said, we are working diligently with both the coal companies as well as the coal communities to put together both a package so that we're not leaving capital stranded and, in the meantime, to work on a just transition, something that is long overdue in this province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, the Premier's call to the mayor of Hanna is like that unicorn: just didn't happen, Mr. Speaker.

Only one member of the advisory panel on coal communities is from Alberta. The lawyer hired for the PPAs is from British Columbia. Since the government doesn't know any good Alberta lawyers for the job and can only find one qualified Alberta coal expert to get advice from, including the people in the communities your policy will kill, this shows your disdain for the skills and abilities of Albertans. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: with so little faith in the knowledge and skills of Albertans, how can you possibly be trusted to defend their interests?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Generally speaking, as we move forward on these projects, we look for people who have experience with the same kind of matters that are being dealt with. Now, it is true; we have not ever in Alberta phased out coal. Quite the opposite. Anyway, where was I? We burn 60 per cent of the coal for all of Canada because these folks could never get it together to find a way to move towards a more renewable, more sustainable energy sector. So what we need to do is look outwards for people who have dealt with this.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. McIver:** There you have it. The Premier just said that qualified people in Alberta, like the unicorn, don't exist. We just heard it.

We know that coal jobs are the long-term mortgage-paying jobs for Alberta families. We know that oil and gas jobs pay the mortgage for Alberta families. Mr. Speaker, we know that installations of windmills and solar panels are short-term construction jobs, with few long-term mortgage-paying jobs attached to them after the fact. Since the NDP world view hampers or eliminates the industries with jobs paying Alberta mortgages today, please, Premier, on what basis do you call your so-called jobs plan just that . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the member outlined previously and as he knows from information that's been provided in this House, in fact, our jobs plan is creating jobs. We are working very carefully on it, and we will continue to work on it. You can't create jobs by cutting billions from operating expenses. You can't create jobs by cutting \$9 billion from capital. You need to work with businesses. You need to invest in the people of Alberta. You need to provide stability when otherwise there is instability as a result of international economic conditions. That is what we are doing, and we will keep doing it.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
Calgary-Mountain View.

#### **AISH Administration** (continued)

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Human Services minister. For many years MLAs and constituency offices have been hearing about AISH: the application process, the delays, the inconsistency in appeals. It requires too much outside help and is inconsistent and unfair. We've heard now from the Auditor General that the times actually have increased between application and decision-making. How does the minister reconcile his statement that application times have decreased and the Auditor General saying that they have increased?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I believe that Albertans deserve to receive the supports that they need when they need them in an accessible and timely manner. We have heard the concerns from Albertans, and we are working on a plan to reduce the wait times. We also accepted all of the recommendations that the Auditor General made, and we will make sure that they are implemented, wait times are reduced, and Albertans receive the supports that they need.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the minister could outline what he's done since he took office to improve the wait times, especially since the Auditor General said that they've actually increased.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, we have increased AISH funding by \$29 million to make sure that Albertans receive the supports they need. Secondly, as of yesterday we have improved the website. The new website is online, with a focus on plain language and making it easier and accessible for Albertans. I've also directed my ministry to look into ways to streamline the application process.

**Dr. Swann:** It all sounds very good, but it isn't improving the wait times, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the MLA salaries have kept up with the cost of living, when are we going to allow AISH people to keep up with the cost of living?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Member, for the question, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have increased funding for AISH, but due to our economic circumstances we can't do everything that we wish to do. We are absolutely committed to making sure that AISH recipients receive the supports that they need. It's not only the cash benefit. There are other benefits that are available with the AISH program, and we will make sure that we have stable funding to provide those benefits to all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

#### **2:10 Apprenticeship Training Awards**

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many students in Red Deer are receiving technical training from Red Deer College, but given that the downturn has resulted in many apprentices not being able to find work in their trade, to the Minister of Advanced Education: how are you ensuring that the government's future-ready initiative helps our province's unemployed apprentices?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my friend from Red Deer for the question. We know that Alberta's tradespeople have been especially hit hard by the economic downturn, and that's why I was pleased to announce two weeks ago the apprenticeship training awards. This is \$1.5 million to support apprentices to complete their technical training, and I can tell the House that I was touched by the words of a gentleman who spoke at the event who will directly benefit from this award. Without this assistance he says that he wouldn't be able to continue to progress toward earning his journeyman's ticket. There's no doubt that this award is preparing Albertans for success, allowing them to continue with their skills training and helping them find better employment in the future.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these services must be accessible, to the same minister: can you explain who is eligible and how apprentices can access these awards?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Such a perceptive question, Mr. Speaker. I'd encourage the opposition members to take some notes. The last thing that we want to do is make our students jump through hoops to receive this award. That's why we've ensured that all eligible apprentices who aren't currently working in their trade will be contacted by our department. Once their eligibility has been confirmed, they can expect a cheque in the mail covering approximately one whole period of technical training. This award will be broken up into \$1,000 awards for up to 1,500 apprentices to ensure that they're able to keep building the skills that they need in their desired field.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we have seen the challenges that arise when there are not enough skilled tradespeople, to the same minister: can you speak to how this initiative supports Alberta's economic recovery?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you to my hon. friend from Red Deer for that final question. First of all, we know that education is a cornerstone of a healthy economy, Mr. Speaker. That's why our government is working to ensure that Albertans are prepared for success, whether they're in the third grade or the third period of their technical training. This means providing a leg up to apprentices so that they're able to stick with their trade and complete their training. We're supporting Albertans to not only better their lives today by helping them become skilled trades professionals, but the apprenticeship training award is also great news for the economy as these are people who will be needed to support Alberta's economic success tomorrow.

#### Health Care in Central Alberta

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, last week I received a call from a constituent, Art Martin, alerting me to the fact that the cardiac stress testing and cardiac rehab programs had been cancelled at the Didsbury hospital. I am deeply concerned to learn that front-line workers have lost their jobs and that residents now will have to travel to Calgary for treatment. Worse yet, those residents will have to pay \$500 out of pocket for treatment. To the Minister of Health: why is she cutting programs and front-line workers in central Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government is engaged through Alberta Health Services in a review of the programs that are being provided in order to ensure that we are providing the best health service that we can across the province based on local needs.

Thank you.

**Mr. Cooper:** Given that local decision-makers wanted these services to stay in Didsbury and are now concerned with forcing central Albertans to drive to Calgary for treatment, particularly heading into winter, and given that, to make matters worse, residents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills will now be paying the bill for both gas to drive to Calgary and now to attend TotalCardiology, will the Minister of Health respect the fact that cardiac stress testing and rehab programs were working well at the Didsbury hospital and reverse this job-killing decision?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. Our government is taking a province-wide approach to health spending as well as to health programs, ensuring that programs are available where they're needed based on the needs of the population. It is important for us to remember that the members opposite wanted us to cut billions of dollars from health care, which would make these situations even worse.

**Mr. Cooper:** Given that the cardiac stress testing and rehab programs aren't the only programs that have been cut at the Didsbury hospital and given that four ALC beds were closed just this summer, resulting in the loss of local beds and positions for front-line health care aides, will the Minister of Health provide assurances right now to the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that the writing isn't on the wall and that this isn't a long, drawn-out plan to close the Didsbury hospital?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government is committed to a strong public health care system that is available to Albertans when and where they need it. We are not going to make ad hoc promises like the previous government. [interjections] We are going to take a strategic approach to health care services across our province, and we are going to support health care where it's needed.

**The Speaker:** We were doing so well. The volume ... [interjections]  
The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

#### Police Street Checks

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Justice has characterized street checks, which is a practice known as carding, as police just having conversations with people in the community. Well, that view alarms me. Police must have reasonable and probable grounds to suspect an individual is connected to an offence in order to stop them. Randomly asking citizens for ID, recording their personal information violates their fundamental right against arbitrary detention. It's also a form of psychological detention because they do not feel they can just walk away even though that is their right. To the minister: how many police services in Alberta card their citizens?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, as the member would well know, the process of street checks or checkups can encompass a number of things. It can encompass carding. It can also encompass talking to individuals without asking for ID. The premise behind community-based policing is well known, and we will continue moving forward with that. We have been working very closely with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police to ensure that we have guidelines in place around when someone can be asked for their ID and to ensure that everyone can be onboard with that program.

**Mr. Ellis:** Police must have reasonable and probable grounds.

Given that from 2011 to 2014 the Edmonton Police Service randomly stopped and documented 26,000 citizens and given that African-Canadians and indigenous people call this practice a form of racial profiling and given that last year the minister told the media that she had not acted on this issue because no one made an official complaint, again to the Justice minister: has anyone complained now, and if so, what are you doing about it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I think I'd like to begin by pointing out that the statistics from 2011 to 2014 were when the member's party was in government. Since we've taken government, we have been working very closely with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police to deal with this issue and to ensure that all people feel respected in Alberta. Not only do police have a need to ensure that they're able to talk to members of the community, but people have rights to ensure that they know that that's not going to be based on irrelevant factors. We're moving forward with that plan to make sure that everyone feels respected.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you. I was a police officer during that time, and that was not my instructions to the people that worked for me.

Given that carding violates the privacy rights of tens of thousands of Albertans and given that research shows that carding results in institutional racism at the hands of police, to the same minister: will you direct Alberta's police services to stop the unlawful practice of carding?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, I think the member will be aware that reasonable suspicion is grounds for detention, but in this case we're not always talking about detention. We're talking about a number of different practices, which is why we are working very carefully with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police to ensure that this issue is addressed so that police can attain their objective of making sure that everyone is safe while at the same time respecting the rights of all members of society.

## 2:20 Fire 'n' Wheels Raffle Licence

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of successful fundraising, AGLC told Fire 'n' Wheels the shocking news that they could no longer apply for a licence to donate raffle contributions to local fire departments in the MD of Wainwright. This money has helped local fire departments purchase rapid response trucks, jaws of life, and other life-saving equipment. That's been done for years. To the minister: why are the heavy-handed bureaucrats standing in the way of local charities who are just trying to support firefighters?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much for the question. You know, whenever a charity has an issue with regard to how they're wanting to expend their dollars, they do talk to AGLC officials, and there's usually a clarification of things that go on. So I would encourage Fire 'n' Wheels to connect with the AGLC representatives if they haven't done that. If they have done it already, circle back again, and I'll also do that.

**Mr. Taylor:** I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, there was no real clarification to them.

As a volunteer firefighter I know the long hours these men and women commit to making our communities safe. Given that the government had the nerve to tell Fire 'n' Wheels that departments, not charities, should do their own fundraising and given that it's not always realistic, considering that these men and women have full-time jobs and young families, will the minister demonstrate some

common sense and commit to allowing charities to continue fundraising on behalf of firefighters?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. You know, there are hundreds and hundreds, probably thousands, of charities in this province that raise money and are connected through either casinos or other ways, raffles like you said. The fact that AGLC is connected to all of them and it works all of the time, perhaps not in this case, means that AGLC is doing a stellar job, and I support them for it. But I'm certainly interested. If you have the information, please provide it to me.

**Mr. Taylor:** Well, thank you for that.

Given that we recognize the important role that firefighters play in communities across Alberta and given that Fire 'n' Wheels is facing an onslaught of red tape that is preventing them from acquiring the same raffle licence that they've obtained for the past eight years, will the minister commit to sitting down with me – and it sounded like you were saying that you might – and helping Fire 'n' Wheels obtain a raffle licence and cutting the red tape that's preventing the charity from purchasing new life-saving equipment for Alberta firefighters?

**Mr. Ceci:** Well, what I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that I'm always interested in supporting the charitable community and the work that they want to do in Alberta, as is this side. We are connected to charities. We are connected to serving Albertans. That side is backward looking. I'll sit down with that individual and Fire 'n' Wheels and check into this.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

## PDD Service Delivery

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Human Services. PDD service providers across this province are very concerned about the new template contracts, especially given the multitude of changes to the system. Providers need to be assured that community-based organizations with long-standing service to their community are not in jeopardy. Will the minister respect the strong community-based relationships of PDD service providers and work with them to create mutually acceptable contracts?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We are working with the Alberta Council of Disability Services, service providers, guardians, and Albertans who are receiving PDD supports to make sure that whatever step we take is in consultation with that group. We have demonstrated that by conducting a consultation on standard 8 and by eliminating the SIS, and I will continue to do that.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you. Given that many opponents to the new contracting process are worried that it undermines service quality and destroys community-based service capacity and development that leads to stronger communities and given that other service agencies such as women's shelters, family-managed services, and some aspects of children's services have already been exempted, does the minister have plans to exempt PDD-funded service providers from the new procurement model?



**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Everyone deserves to receive the supports they need in a way that respects their dignity. I want to make it very clear that we have no plan of putting PDD services up for bid or auction. That's not the plan. Clients will have the choice of who they want to receive services from. We will work with the client and the service providers to make sure that Albertans get the supports they need.

**Mr. Orr:** Given that when we are talking about these organizations, we're talking about people on the front lines providing care to those with developmental disabilities and given that this government has mandated minimum wage and carbon tax increases that impact service providers yet has no plan for how they will deal with the resulting economic impact, what is this government's plan to deal with the consequences of their ideological policies in a way that doesn't force a reduction of services?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our government believes that all Albertans working full-time should not have to live in poverty. They should be able to put food on their table. They should have shelter. If that's ideology, we are sticking to that ideology. Having said that, we will work with service providers to make sure that the impact of the minimum wage is accounted for and that Albertans receive the services they deserve.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### Indigenous Youth Suicide Report Recommendations

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Six months ago the office of the Child and Youth Advocate released *Toward a Better Tomorrow*. This report looked at seven indigenous youth suicides and offered recommendations on what the government could do to strengthen its support for indigenous children and their families in order to prevent tragic deaths like these in the future. The report made 12 recommendations for government to address the issues and move forward with our indigenous communities. To the Minister of Human Services: could you please, sir, update us on how many of the 12 recommendations have actually been implemented by your government to this point?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our government is very concerned by the incidents of suicide in indigenous communities, and we are committed to working closely within the government with indigenous leaders and community partners and the federal government to make sure that we have supports and safeguards in place for indigenous communities. My ministry is leading the co-ordination of the implementation of those 12 recommendations along with other partners in the GOA: Education, Health, Indigenous Relations, and Alberta Health Services.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Minister. The indigenous communities are looking for a number, hopefully towards 12.

Given that within this report number 8 dictates, "The Government of Alberta should ensure that mental health programs are more accessible, holistic and readily available in First Nations communities" and given

that without a thorough and collaborative response this issue will get worse before it gets better, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: could you please update this House and all Albertans on the specific initiatives that your ministry is undertaking? And, please, sir, what metrics are you utilizing to measure any and all successes?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As I mentioned, Human Services is co-ordinating the government response and working closely with Education, Health, Indigenous Relations, and Alberta Health Services. Mental health, certainly, is part of that. The work is under way on three initiatives. We are in the process of developing a youth suicide prevention strategy, we are also funding research on indigenous youth suicide, and we are also in the process of developing a cultural understanding framework. So there is work under way. We want to assure Albertans that ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

2:30

**Mr. Rodney:** I was looking for a response from the Indigenous Relations minister, but let's try number 3. Given that mental health is an extremely complicated issue, which, fortunately, is beginning to be discussed publicly, and given that youth who are suffering psychologically may not be comfortable or open when speaking with parents and caregivers and given that the same report noted in recommendation 6 that "Alberta Education should develop and implement school-based suicide prevention programs," to the Minister of Education: are programs like these actually being developed by your ministry, sir, and if so, what are the estimated implementation dates? Because every day it could be another ...

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we recognize as a government the importance of having a comprehensive mental health strategy, that I'm working on in conjunction with the ministries of Health and Human Services and Indigenous Relations. We have been working very closely with school boards and also ministry-wide to develop mental health strategies that can be implemented both into the curriculum and into support services that we have at each school. Certainly, this is an important issue.

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

#### New School Construction

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that the student population in this province continues to grow and that we will need new and modern schools to make sure that they are ready for success. To the Minister of Education: can you provide us an update on school capital projects, including how many new schools have opened this fall?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. In these past eight weeks we saw 32 new schools and modernizations completed. Many people, including members opposite, were invited to these openings. It's been a grand occasion for all. These schools benefit about 22,000 students, and we expect another 17 projects to be completed by the end of the

year. We worked very hard to find efficiencies in the process to ensure that these schools were started and finished on time, and I'm very proud . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the changing needs that students and schools face, to the same minister: could you please share some of the design features of these new schools that opened in the fall?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the question. I've had an opportunity to go to about a dozen of these openings, and certainly we can see the employment of very innovative design features as well as accommodation for programming. For example, Nelson Mandela school in northeast Calgary has an aviation program and a very open design, flexible classroom space which allows for team teaching and so forth. At Pembina North community school I saw a fantastic commercial-quality kitchen, a learning commons at Nellie Carlson. We're seeing innovation to build schools that are not just schools . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that schools are required to meet population needs, to the same minister: what steps are actually being taken to ensure that all future schools will open on time?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we've been endeavouring to bring up those schedules. We found that there were some building and budgetary problems that were getting in the way, so we have put \$1.9 billion into school projects in Budget 2016. We initiated a detailed monthly reporting risk analysis and a pay-as-you-go plan to cut down costs. I can tell you that schools are coming in much lower than the tenders that we expected. We've saved millions of dollars in this endeavour, and we've brought up the completion dates to many more schools being on time.

### Calgary LRT Green Line Funding

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, for some time Wildrose has supported the construction of LRT in Calgary. The former federal government committed 1 and a half billion dollars towards this green line project, but the NDP government has made no commitment to the project. The money is not needed right now and can be spread out over a period of time, so why won't the Premier commit to helping fund Calgary's green line LRT?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Well, certainly, we've had a number of meetings with the mayor with respect to this matter. We know that the council is very interested in it, but they are continuing to look at that and to refine costs. I am planning to travel down and have a briefing with Calgary transportation officials in the next week or two. We're going to do our very best. It's a very expensive project, but we're going to do our best to help the city of Calgary with that project.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, given the city of Calgary formally applied for government funding for the green line LRT in January 2016, with a deadline of needing to know by the end of October 2016, and given that the city of Calgary will have to split the project into phases without partners providing stable, predictable funding, can the Premier give a clear answer to the city of Calgary? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation and of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Eventually we will do that, but the city of Calgary is still in the process of refining costs, and there's a lot of work to do jointly between Transportation officials and officials in the city of Calgary as well as politically between myself and the mayor. I want the member to know that we're going to get to a clear answer, but I'm certainly not going to give it to him right now. That's something we're discussing with the city of Calgary.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the constituencies of Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-Klein, Calgary-Mountain View, Calgary-Northern Hills, and Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill stand to benefit from the green line and whereas the constituencies of Calgary-Fort, Calgary-Acadia, Calgary-Hays, and Calgary-South East would also benefit from the green line LRT construction, to the minister: you have administered Mayor Nenshi's funding commitment deadline, so what's the answer to Calgary? I'm asking one more time. Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I've given him my answer, and I'm not going to change that, only suggest, however, that the Wildrose Party in their platform promised to reduce capital spending over five years by \$9 billion. If they get into power, God forbid, there will be no green line.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### Forest Industry Issues

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The forest industry is one of Alberta's strongest industries and could lead the province in diversification along with the agricultural industry, but as with what happened in the energy industry, uncertainty will drive investment out of the province, uncertainty in timber supply and uncertainty in the market, because the softwood lumber agreement has ended. To the minister: given that the government is planning on increasing the cutblock retention from 5 per cent to 10 per cent, how will the government assure certainty in the forest companies' timber supply?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I will thank the member for the question. Our government very much supports the forestry sector here in Alberta. In fact, as we speak, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is in Asia with a number of forestry and agricultural companies looking at opportunities to increase our exports and our capacity to export to other markets. I look forward to talking a little bit about the state of the softwood lumber agreement in the next response.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the forestry industry is dependent upon their timber allocations to maintain strong businesses and given that they operate on an expected size of timber allocation, to the minister: with your latest plan to restore caribou habitat in Little Smoky and A La Pêche, will your protection plans for caribou rangelands result in decreased timber supply and uncertainty for Alberta's forest industry?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Certainly, Alberta must move forward with a range plan by October 2017, so that's why we're taking the time to get it right. We have put forward a draft, and I emphasize that word "draft." We are going to be speaking further once we are out of the duties of this House and go and speak to communities about that draft. But the fact of the matter remains that if we do not have a range plan filed by October of next year, one will be imposed on us by the federal government, and that is simply not a situation that is good for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not much certainty in the first two questions.

Given the predicament with the mountain pine beetle destroying the same timber supplies, the lichen that caribou eats and given that both these could decrease timber supplies, to the minister: what are you doing to make sure that your healthy pine strategy does not affect timber supply certainty for Alberta's forest producers?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We certainly know that mountain pine beetles remain a grave threat to the health of Alberta forests. In 2015-16 our government spent \$35 million to combat the mountain pine beetle, and we are working to minimize the spread of beetles north and south along the eastern slopes and to prevent beetles from spreading further east in the boreal forest. The spread of the mountain pine beetle has not been as significant as we were anticipating, and this is thanks to the weather and the good work done by the ministry. We will continue to push the federal government for assistance in fighting mountain pine beetle in the Hinton area. We understand this concern. We're listening to producers, and we...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Marijuana Legalization

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, given that the federal government has committed to legalizing marijuana and given that this will impact various areas of our communities, to the Minister of Justice, who recently travelled to Colorado to learn about the issue: how will the government tackle the issue of selling edibles and candies that contain marijuana?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. I want to begin by thanking officials in Colorado for sharing their knowledge in terms of what they've learned from the legalization of marijuana.

Our priority continues to be the safety of children and of our roads. This will require us to move forward very carefully, ensuring that there is strict monitoring of ingredients that go into edible products so that people know exactly what they're getting and regulation around packaging and design as well as childproofing and the shape that candies can be in.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Denver has seen a spike in the number of marijuana-impaired driving cases, to the same minister: what is the government doing to ensure roads are kept safe when marijuana is legalized?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Road safety is critical at all times and particularly in light of the legalization of marijuana that's coming. Despite the fact that Colorado has seen a significant increase in marijuana-impaired driving, those cases are still a very small percentage of the overall impaired driving cases that they're witnessing in that state. I think all Albertans need to keep in mind that driving while impaired by any drug is dangerous and illegal.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how is the government addressing concerns over where marijuana dispensaries would be located once it is legalized?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, one of the critical factors as we move forward on this plan is ensuring that our children are safe. We will be working with all levels of government to ensure that the right regulation is in place to ensure that this is kept away from schools. Depending on how the federal government ultimately decides to move on this issue, we will step in, and we will work with all levels of government to ensure that children are kept safe.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

I understand that the Government House Leader has a supplemental piece of information.

### Capital Infrastructure Funding

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I want to supplement my response from yesterday to the Member for Calgary-Greenway. We're creating 8,000 jobs this year from enhanced infrastructure investment. Under our government funding has increased by approximately 15 per cent, several major projects, including the \$80 million Gaetz-QE II interchange project in Red Deer, which will support 300 jobs; the University of Lethbridge destination project, which we are accelerating and providing increased funding for; postsecondary facilities like NorQuest, which had seen capital spending cut by the previous government by \$16 million. This employs 170 workers per month.

We've also doubled what was spent on capital maintenance and renewal by the previous government, going from ...\*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. McIver:** I appreciate the answer, the additional information, Mr. Speaker, from the hon. minister. But he mentioned just now

\*See page 1724, left column, paragraph 2

about doubling the expenditure on capital maintenance. On the average condition of the infrastructure will you have higher or lower percentages of good and poor infrastructure after you do that capital spending?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much for that question, hon. member. We've seen, in fact, a deterioration in the quality of many roads in the province as a result of the previous government reducing expenditures on capital maintenance, and it's very much a challenge. Alberta has more kilometres of roads than any other province. In fact, the previous government took in secondary roads from rural municipalities, so we have more roads to deal with. I'm not sure that even this will fully restore that, but we're doing our very best, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Government Policies

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The generally accepted definition of a recession is two consecutive quarters of economic decline, and no one disputes that Alberta is in one of the worst recessions since the 1980s. Over the past 12 months well over 100,000 full-time jobs have been lost. That number increases drastically when you include contractors. Getting Albertans back to work shouldn't be a priority; it should be the priority. Yet, inexplicably, Alberta does not even have a comprehensive job plan despite repeated efforts by the opposition to get the government to adopt our recommendations.

Just what has this government been doing over the last year? Well, the NDP has continued to appoint party insiders to nonpartisan posts. It has been engaged in cash-for-access fundraisers in Ontario. Just this fall they spent 20,000 taxpayer dollars on a partisan, invite-only, campaign-style event. More than that, last week this government was held in contempt of the Legislature for spending a half million dollars on a taxpayer-funded advertisement. After ramming Bill 6 through the Legislature and blocking a study of the carbon tax on farmers, the NDP has seen fit to dispatch the agriculture minister on a series of international junkets. While health care wait-lists and rural ambulance wait times continue to grow, this government is actively implementing policies that make health care more expensive at the behest of their union friends, all the while voting down a motion to bring greater transparency and clarity to AHS.

This is my favourite, Mr. Speaker. Over the summer the NDP committee announced their intentions to require direct, political-party funding from taxpayers. That's right. NDP MLAs spent the summer fighting to line their campaign pockets with taxpayer money in the form of reimbursed campaign expenses.

I know Wildrose will be debating hard to help get Albertans back to work, but when it comes to the definition of self-serving government, Mr. Speaker, clearly there is no debate.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women.

### Bill 29

#### Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce Bill 29, the Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act.

Vital statistics services are essential. There are over 60 amendments proposed in this legislation, the response to Albertans' expectations for modern services and an inclusive, compassionate approach to major life events.

I urge all members of this House to support this legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

### Bill 30

#### Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and request leave to introduce Bill 30, the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

This bill will enable government to establish two tax credits that, taken together, will drive innovation, diversify our economy, and create jobs. One credit will bring Alberta investors and small businesses together while the other will help ensure that Alberta is attractive and competitive for larger capital investments. By encouraging investment in new products and services and capital projects, the tax credits will offer increased opportunities for more economic activity, diversification, and employment growth. Introducing these measures at a time when businesses are facing challenges will make Alberta more competitive in attracting and retaining investments while creating much needed jobs. Together these tax credits provide significant support to Alberta businesses when they need it most.

This legislation will ensure that the government continues to promote economic diversification, support employers and entrepreneurs in creating jobs, and encourage investment in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a first time]

2:50

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table five copies of a January 15 article from *Maclean's* titled Stephen Harper: Oil's Worst Enemy, that I quoted in my Bill 25 speech on November 7, 2016. This article quotes many industry executives who see the value of having a price on carbon while arguing that the Harper federal government sent Canada down the wrong path when it came to providing environmental leadership.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite five copies of the Alberta jobs plan report. This report provides an update on some of the key economic initiatives and outcomes that have been achieved by our government as part of the Alberta jobs plan to date.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any other tablings or returns, hon. members?

Hon. members, I'd like to table for the information of members a copy of a letter I received from the Government House Leader at 12:56 p.m. today in connection with the purported question of privilege that was argued yesterday in the Assembly.

### Privilege

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I am prepared to rule on the purported question of privilege that was argued yesterday. Before I deliver my ruling, I want to alert members that although I did receive a statement from the Government House Leader shortly before the Assembly reconvened this afternoon, there was no new information nor additional citations offered, and I want to assure members that that information played no part in my ruling.

On November 3 the House leader for the third party raised a purported question of privilege in regard to comments made by the Minister of Environment and Parks describing the government's renewable electricity program prior to the introduction of Bill 27 in this Assembly. Having heard the arguments with respect to this purported question of privilege and having carefully considered all of the information, I'm now prepared to make my ruling.

To begin, members will recall that the House leader of the third party raised this question immediately following the introduction of Bill 27, on November 3, which can be found on page 1701 of *Alberta Hansard*. No objection was made to this approach; however, I would note that it is normally provided in writing at least two hours prior to the opening of the afternoon sitting pursuant to Standing Order 15(2). This would have provided notice to all caucuses before the issue was discussed in the Assembly.

However, I also note that the House leader for the third party tabled three documents related to his purported question of privilege, which are marked as follows: Sessional Paper 331/2016, which is a printout of a government of Alberta website detailing the renewable electricity program; Sessional Paper 332/2016, which is a government news release entitled Renewable Electricity Plan to Create Jobs, Spur Investment; and Sessional Paper 333/2016, which consists of a CBC News article under the headline Renewable Energy Program to Add 5,000 Megawatts of Capacity by 2030, Says Environment Minister.

The House leader of the Official Opposition also tabled two similar documents, marked as sessional papers 326/2016 and 327/2016.

Based on the documents tabled in this Assembly and the arguments presented from all sides, I understand the relevant facts of this matter to be as follows. Bill 27 appeared on notice in the Order Paper on November 2, 2016. The bill was not introduced in this Assembly until the afternoon of November 3, 2016. In the period between the bill being put on notice and when it was introduced in the Assembly, the Minister for Environment and Parks made public statements about the government's renewable electricity program to the media and at a conference in Calgary. In addition, the government of Alberta issued a news release which also detailed the program.

As I understand it, the central argument raised by the House leader for the third party is that the work of the members of this Assembly was impeded as a result. It was impeded because information about Bill 27 was disclosed publicly by the Minister of Environment and Parks as well as in the government news release while the bill was still on notice but prior to first reading.

The House leader for the Official Opposition further argued that public statements made by the minister discussing the ability of ISO, the Independent System Operator, to deliver programs that

were contingent on elements contained in Bill 27 presupposed decisions of this Assembly.

I would characterize the purported questions as twofold. Were members obstructed from carrying out their duties as a result of the statements made by the hon. minister and contained in the government communications? And did such statements offend the dignity of this Assembly? I want to clarify that the question being raised is probably termed more appropriately a question of contempt rather than a question of privilege although I'm advised that they are treated in much the same way.

You may recall my ruling on November 1, 2016. The Assembly "claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the [Assembly or its members] in the performance of its functions" or which offends the dignity of this Assembly. You will find a further elaboration of this principle in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, page 82. I can tell you, hon. members, that I have read that document many times.

Speaker Zwozdesky addressed a similar question of contempt in his ruling of October 31, 2013, which you will find at page 2655 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day. In that case a concern was raised about information that was released about a bill that was on notice prior to its introduction in the Assembly as well as a related government advertisement. In coming to this decision, Speaker Zwozdesky noted the crucial difference between providing the text of a bill or detailed comments to the media or any other outside entity prior to its introduction in this Assembly and a minister making general statements about a policy initiative contained in a bill. There should be no question that all members are entitled to see proposed legislation in its final form before a bill is disclosed to outside parties, the key point being "in its final form."

3:00

Not every statement about a bill that is on notice will automatically lead to and qualify as a *prima facie* case of contempt. This approach was also applied by Speaker Kowalski in his ruling of March 5, 2003, at page 304 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day. Speaker Kowalski applied it with respect to a government briefing provided to the media about a bill which was on notice but that had not yet been introduced. In that case Speaker Kowalski found that a departmental briefing had in fact provided detailed information concerning the bill and, therefore, constituted a *prima facie* case. But he went on to note that consultations on proposed legislation are not out of order, nor is the practice of sharing bills with members of the opposition before introduction.

Speaker Milliken of the House of Commons came to a similar conclusion in his ruling on November 5, 2009, which dealt with comments made by a federal minister at a press conference. In that case he noted that the federal minister had not disclosed details of the bill prior to first reading by broadly discussing policy initiatives proposed in the bill. While the House leader for the third party argued that sharing information about Bill 27 circumvented the role of this Assembly in the legislative process, no allegation was made by any member that the text of Bill 27 was provided to any outside party prior to its introduction in this Assembly.

I would also note that there is nothing that I can see in the materials tabled by the House leader for the third party or the Official Opposition leader which contains specific details of what was in Bill 27. As noted by the Government House Leader in his arguments, the government's renewable electricity program has been discussed in this Assembly and in public on numerous occasions, including policy statements made about implementing generation projects through auction.

After carefully reading Bill 27, I also note that the public comments made by the Minister of Environment and Parks as well as statements included in the government news release did not contain any details of the text of Bill 27 in its final form. The information provided by the government communicated only broad statements of policy and did not impede members of this Assembly in the discharge of their duties. I can also see no evidence in the materials which would have suggested that the government was presupposing the outcome of Bill 27 in this Assembly.

Pursuant to Standing Order 15(6) I find that there is no prima facie question of contempt with respect to this matter.

Finally, as I've noted before, a question of privilege, as I understand and continue to learn, is one of the most serious matters that can be raised in this Assembly. I again encourage members to carefully consider all of the facts of a purported breach of privilege as well as past rulings made in this Assembly before raising such issues. Let me also add, hon. members, that I want to caution the government again with respect to being more attentive to these kinds of announcements in the future.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Second Reading

##### Bill 25

##### Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

Mr. Panda moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment November 8: Mr. Loewen speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, previously when I was speaking, I was talking about having this bill, Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, referred to committee. This cap is bad for the economy of Alberta. This cap will restrict investment in the oil sands, and it will create further uncertainty in Alberta's energy sector. This government has already done multiple things that have created uncertainty in the energy sector. This kind of uncertainty restricts investment in our province, investment that turns into jobs.

Now, by adding a cap on oil sands emissions, we'll be forced to deal with an issue down the road of what will happen to the energy companies that have purchased leases whose production would fall under this cap. We've already determined, I think, that this cap won't allow for the full development of all the leases that have been sold already. So when you have companies that in good faith purchase leases from the government and do research and development to determine when they're going to produce these leases and then they find out that now they may not have an opportunity to recover any kind of income from these leases, we find that as Albertans the government may put us in a position where we're responsible to pay back that money and any of the damages that could result from these companies not being able to do what they were promised they could do.

This is just another example of this government trying to pick winners and losers in industry, and we know the government has a very poor record of picking winners. I guess that's it. Yeah. They

have a really poor record of picking winners. The government has a pretty good record of picking losers. With this cap we will have government deciding what's best for the market instead of allowing the market to develop naturally.

When we look at this cap of 100, if I was buying – let's say I was going to my local tire shop and buying a set of used tires. The owner of the shop might just say: yeah, give me a hundred bucks. That's a nice round number. But I would hope that when government makes a decision on something so important and so big to Alberta's economy like a cap on emissions of one of our largest sectors in our economy, they would probably not just be picking numbers out of the air, a nice round number like 100, for making such an important economic decision.

Now, the government hasn't given us any information on how they chose that number. In fact, when we look at the bill, it almost looks like the government picked a number and then thought: "Oh, we didn't think about this. We didn't think about that." The first thing that happens in this bill is that we start talking about exceptions, and then we add maybe another maximum of 10 megatonnes for these other exceptions.

3:10

I don't know that we should be jumping into this quite so fast. We have a 100-megatonne cap, and we have no justification for the number, nothing at all. A hundred is a nice round number, but we're not buying a set of used tires here. This is a huge thing in our economy. When we talk about this cap, we need to realize that this cap could affect jobs for working Albertans, for families. We're already sitting here in this province with over a hundred thousand jobs lost. Again, that doesn't include contractors. It doesn't include contractors that are only working a day a month or a couple of days a month. Those contractors don't show up on the unemployment numbers. So here we have a government coming up with the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, throwing a number out there, no justification for it, at a time when Albertans are suffering, families are suffering.

Now, there have been some studies done on what the cost of this loss of production will be on Alberta's economy: \$150 billion to \$250 billion. That's an enormous amount of money. We talk about pipelines here a lot and how much of a benefit pipelines would be to the Alberta economy, to the Canadian economy. Well, that pales in comparison to the potential loss of revenue that this bill could cost Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a short statement and then a question for the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky. You know, about 20 years ago we had a new company move into our area, and they took over some existing wells and facilities up there. They came in with some new ideas, new ways of doing things. They revitalized some wells that the previous companies had given up on, and some of those wells 20 years later are still producing oil. That's innovation, and that's what we need in the province. That's what's built our province. They would have been absolutely delighted in the early '90s with \$40-a-barrel oil.

A lot of times, I remember, when they were facing layoffs in the industry and things had slowed down to a trickle when oil was \$11 a barrel, they kept on drilling, kept progressing. It was part of the way we do things up there. When you're in a steam-injection facility, you kind of have to keep rolling and hope that things get better. They did get better, and that company is now one of the biggest oil and gas producers in Canada. From humble beginnings

back in the '90s to one of the biggest oil and gas producers, and I'm very proud to have been part of that and a lot of the innovation that they brought into the oil and gas industry in our province.

Now my question for the member. That entrepreneurial pioneer spirit brought our oil industry to where it is today. How is this new cap going to affect that? I would really, really discourage any members from encouraging a bill that is going to take away innovation, new ideas. It's very easy, when you're a large operator, to get stuck in the roll of things. It takes somebody coming in there with fresh new ideas sometimes to really revitalize our industry. I'd just like the member to comment on how he thinks this bill is going to affect that entrepreneurial spirit in Alberta.

**Mr. Loewen:** I'd like to thank the member for the question and his comments. Yes, when you put a cap on something like the oil sands emissions, what happens is that you restrict the opportunity for other businesses to come in there because they know that if they come in and there are already producers in there that are trying to use up the limit to that cap, they won't have an opportunity to grow. So they have decide: okay, am I going to invest in something like this? This investment is huge money. We're not talking about thousands of dollars. We're talking about millions and millions of dollars that these companies would have to invest, knowing full well that they may not be able to grow their company to a point to get a good return before the other companies that are already in place have used up the cap.

Now, these small companies that this is going to restrict: those are the companies, like the member mentioned, that would like to see their innovation, their ideas used to grow their own company. By putting a cap on there, we actually cap innovation from some of these small players that would love to get into this market but can't, and the ones that are existing there will look at it and say: "Okay. What can we do now? What are we going to do? Are we going to continue investing money and trying to grow, only to be swallowed up, or are we just going to have to give up and get out of this business?"

Now, when we look at this, we want this sent to committee. We want an opportunity to hear from experts, to hear from industry, to hear from some of these smaller players. We could even listen to the oil sands advisory group, that the government set up to advise us on the oil sands. Now, we know that the government appointed a radical environmentalist, an anti-oil, antipipeline environmentalist, as a co-chair. We know there are other members that are involved with organizations like ForestEthics, that boasts about having stopped pipelines. So what have we got going . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members who would like to speak to second reading of the referral amendment? The Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak in favour of referring this bill to committee. As all bills, I believe, should go through a committee process, this bill in particular, Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, raises many concerns for myself and the good people of Airdrie. Certainly, I and the good people of Airdrie would like to see this go to committee, where this bill can be thoroughly discussed and vetted. It can have time for the good people of Alberta to provide feedback on the implications that this will have for them.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 25 certainly sends a message to industry and possible investment that we're just not really interested – "We're good; we've got enough; we want to remain stagnant; we don't really want to bring anybody else in" – and that's certainly a concern for the people of Airdrie, the future of our children, and

what that absolutely means to them. I'm certainly raising a generation of entrepreneurs, where the sky is the limit, and when you teach your children that the sky is the limit, they can do anything they put their minds to if they work hard, if they get a good education. They can start up their own oil and gas company.

But this bill actually says to my children, to the people of Airdrie, and to the people of Alberta: "Actually, you're at your limit. That's it. That's all. Do no better because the government says that you can't." The government has decided: "That's it. We're good. Let's stay where we are."

3:20

Mr. Speaker, I have many concerns about this bill. In particular, the Alberta government put together an oil sands advisory group, chaired by radical people, people who believe and have authored the Leap Manifesto. Actually, this plays into that where it says: "Keep it in the ground. We're good. That's it. Actually, maybe go in reverse a little bit." This isn't progressive. This isn't forward thinking. This is ridiculous. This is actually in line with what Albertans feared when the NDP government signed on to the Leap Manifesto at their last AGM. It makes us shake, you know. Albertans know that. They sent a message in the last federal election, where 1 per cent thought the NDP was okay. One per cent. In saying that, I think that that in itself is actually a very good argument to send this bill to committee, where it can be discussed more thoroughly or where recommendations can be given, because 99 per cent of Alberta is not in favour of keeping it in the ground.

Alberta was created through an entrepreneurial spirit, where the sky is the limit, where you can do anything. I think that's the message that we need to send to investors. When this government wants to go about saying that they create jobs, this is actually a message that works against that. Investors do hear this message. They do see this. If this bill were to pass, I can tell you that that will go on the list of things to repeal in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, we need to send this bill to committee, again, because the oil sands advisory group, which has many controversial people connected to it, actually hasn't, from what I heard – maybe I missed it – made any recommendations yet either. So why do we have this group? Are they going to work on the back end of this bill and provide more feedback on this to actually make this thing worse in regulation? I'm not really quite sure. I don't know why we're creating oil sands advisory groups if we don't actually ask them to advise on anything. This simply doesn't make any sense. I mean, par for the course: there are multiple things with this government and their policies and their bills that just really don't make any sense. So perhaps we should send it to committee to knock out those details.

Albertans will certainly feel better. This government can feel better if they choose to pass this, what I think is a horrible piece of legislation, but maybe the due diligence would be there, and Albertans could be on their side. If this government had actually presented any arguments in favour of why a carbon tax is a good thing, that might have gone over better as well. You know, looking back, sometimes it can help you when you're trying to go forward.

The 100-megatonne cap on GHG emissions will place large costs on Canadians, not just Alberta – this is a far-reaching bill – through the constraint of future growth in oil sands development, but it will provide little in the way of avoiding actual GHG emissions. So what is the purpose there? This cap is entirely arbitrary. The government hasn't explained this number. There's, again, no argument from the government side. They have no actual good talking points on this thing. I have yet to see this.

Mr. Speaker, this bill should be referred to a committee because committees are part of the democratic process even though

sometimes the government doesn't treat them that way. This policy has the potential to constrain future oil sands production by over \$150 billion in lost value to Alberta's economy, even upwards near \$200 billion. That alone should be a place to pause, something to discuss in committee.

There's not enough room under the cap to even accommodate the leases that the government has already sold, so future investment actually stops right there. There is no more. This bill doesn't make any sense, but I'd be open to a debate or a conversation should the government ever stand up and defend their pieces of legislation.

Why would we trust that the regulations will be fair or good for our industry without proper debate? Let's do it in committee.

There are concerns about how the performance standards for GHG emissions will be crafted. Will it be by unit? By site? By company? This government does play and pick winners and losers. This bill does not answer any of these questions, Mr. Speaker.

If Alberta isn't producing the energy that the world wants, it will come from our competitors, plain and simple. Everyone else is laughing at this. Our competitors are loving the legislation that Alberta is pushing through here. We're the laughingstock of the world for the economic limits that this government keeps placing on us for arguments that they have not quite yet made.

Only a few major players have actually agreed to this cap. They might have considered that it will reduce the competition – I'm pretty sure they have – and give them a PR win without affecting any of their growth plans. So congratulations. You are now on the side of big oil, which is funny because many of you have protested big oil in the past. Environmental groups are also celebrating this decision because, of course, it keeps it in the ground, but they still want to oppose pipelines in every single direction. I was told that the carbon tax would give us a social licence on pipelines.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** How did that work?

**Mrs. Pitt:** That was denied right after, right? It didn't help. It didn't work. So let's try again: let's further punish the people of Alberta in the NDP's effort to get a pipeline built but, in fact, stop us on both ends. This is unbelievable.

The world will need more oil – they will – and no other jurisdiction is limiting its long-term production. Nobody else is doing it. You're not leaders. This is not a forward-thinking plan. You are not being leaders here. You're making us the laughingstock of the world. People are embarrassed right now to be called Albertans because of NDP government policies.

Now, it's unclear, Mr. Speaker, how they will decide which of the current leaseholders will get to develop. It's actually interesting. Our liquor store industry is regulated. There are only a certain number of licences that are actually allowed to be in the market. It definitely caps. If you're lucky enough to be a leaseholder of a liquor store, that's just fantastic. It limits the number of liquor stores that we have in our communities. Airdrie seems to get a lot of these licences, which is interesting, and Chestermere, too. They go in the small communities. They become sort of these golden tickets, and liquor store owners will do various things to get these. I feel like this is the wrong direction to go in to regulate such an industry. There might be payout costs if they have to cancel people's leases, because somebody is going to lose here. The people of Alberta are certainly in that path.

The main decision-makers for how this is managed are the oil sands advisory group, co-chaired by the controversial Ms Berman and featuring other leftie radicals from out of this province. Why are we letting people outside of this province make decisions for people inside of this province, people who don't understand that the reason they have \$7-a-day child care is because Alberta is paying

for it? They're laughing at us because even they know that. How is it that the NDP government is the only one that doesn't understand how that works? It is absolutely shameful.

If Alberta isn't producing the energy that the world wants, you're not going to make the want or the need go away. I will still heat my house in the winter. I turn it very low when I'm not home and at nighttime.

3:30

If Alberta isn't producing the energy the world wants, it will come from our competitors, and some of them have horrible, terrible human rights records. Unbelievable. Shouldn't we stand up for that instead of impeding our own economy? These would be some of the things that we could work out in committee. We could bring in witness testimony, experts. Heck, we should bring in other countries that have actually gone back from their carbon-limit plans.

I get that you're trying to save the world. I had those hopes as a kid. My children have those.

**An Hon. Member:** Who killed your dreams?

**Mrs. Pitt:** The NDP killed my dreams, and they're killing my children's dreams, Mr. Speaker, but I won't let that happen by 2019. The people of Alberta will make sure our children have dreams and aren't limited.

It actually says in the bill: limit our oil sands emissions. It's the most ridiculous concept I've ever heard of in my entire life. I think it would perhaps be prudent for this government to encourage an innovation fund so that the players in the oil sands will continue to develop technology that is seen nowhere else in the world but right here because we develop our energy responsibly, and we should be sharing those technologies. We have and we do, but we should be encouraging those kinds of technologies, not cutting our legs from underneath us, Mr. Speaker.

I really do caution this. When I hear from my constituents that actually send me information about the green policies that other governments have done, the failed ones, I might add, they have some serious, serious, valid concerns over what Alberta is trying to do here. These people are simply trying to do better. They're trying to show their children that the sky is the limit, that if they work hard and get a good education, they can be and do anything they want. They are so concerned that they're being absolutely limited in their ability to just be better. You know what? It brings up everybody around you when you do better and you can be better. "Keeping up with the Joneses" is a phrase coined for that very reason.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I just want to remind all members of the House, first of all, to be respectful to both sides of the House as they comment and make their observations.

I also want to remind the House that we are speaking to a referral amendment, and I would draw the House's attention particularly to 23(b)(i), where at this particular juncture of the discussions we're speaking to the referral amendment.

Is there a question under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was interested in the member's comments, and one thing that struck me is that she talked about the wide-ranging effects this bill could produce. It made me think. You know, she was just speaking in reference to how it affected her constituents in Airdrie. That's fair enough, for sure, but what it brought to my attention was how when we had the fire in Fort McMurray, the oil sands had to shut down for a short period of time – I think it was about two weeks if I remember rightly – and



how that actually had a noticeable effect on the Canadian GDP. It was a measurable effect. Two weeks of this industry being shut down had a big enough effect across Canada that it was measurable in the GDP. So I think we need to realize the full effects of the bills that we pass in this Legislature.

Now, we're speaking to the referral of this bill to committee. If we have a chance to view this in committee and hear different people speak to this – experts, economists – then maybe we could get a full understanding of what the effects of this bill could be. I appreciate the member striking that up in my mind as far as how the bills that we pass in this Legislature and the things that we do, what kind of effect they can have not just in Alberta, not just on our economy here in Alberta, not just with jobs here in Alberta but on the entire Canadian economy.

Now, she also brought up the point about some of the members of this committee. We talk about the Leap Manifesto and how the NDP supports the Leap Manifesto. Some of the members across say: "No, no, no. We don't believe in that. No, no, no." But these same people hire people that support the Leap Manifesto to work for Albertans. I don't know if that stands to reason, but if we had a chance to take this to committee, maybe some of these questions could be answered as far as who's making the decisions. If we sent this to committee, we might be able to listen to the oil sands advisory group's recommendations. But if the government's intention is to just pound this through in legislation and not wait for the oil sands advisory group report, then we won't have any idea what these people in this group would suggest.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you're waiting to hear some feedback from the Member for Airdrie?

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. I'd love to. I'd love to, actually. Yes, I would just like to hear the member's comments on the effects and how wide-ranging this bill could be for the future of Albertans and Canadians. Then if she has any other comments to share, that would be great to hear, too.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Airdrie, do you have any comments on the referral amendment?

**Mrs. Pitt:** I have many comments on the referral amendment, and I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his comments and his insight. I do know that up in his riding of Grande Prairie-Smoky there are many people that are very directly related to our beautiful, wonderful energy industry. I'm sure he gets quite a bit of feedback, Mr. Speaker, from his constituents, as all of us do because I believe that there are so many, a high percentage of Albertans, that are connected to our energy industry and very much love and want to protect our energy industry. This is why this bill is of such concern. I believe that my constituents and the people of Grande Prairie-Smoky would also actually like to have some input into this, and a committee would be a wonderful place where they could provide their comments.

Thank you. I have so much more to say.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

You're speaking to the referral amendment to Bill 25? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I am intending to speak to the amendment to refer this bill to committee.

If there was ever a piece of legislation that was brought here that looked like it's not only half baked but unbaked, it would be called Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, largely because when

you go through the bill – it isn't a long bill; it's just four pages and one paragraph on page 5 – what it effectively does is put an arbitrary emissions limit on the oil sands, 100, which really speaks to just how arbitrary it is. It doesn't say that this is a number that represents a certain amount of growth in the industry versus a certain amount of improved technology and whether all that balances off, including the growth in the world's demand for energy and how likely it is that Alberta will get there, and that this is about where we think it should settle out. You know, you would think it would actually be the result of not just math or arithmetic but a calculus formula with all these variables built into it. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's a round number: 100.

3:40

I understand to a certain degree why the government is doing this. They said a year ago that they were going to put a cap on emissions, so now they feel obligated to live up to the people that give them money and send them volunteers for committees and stuff like that, that they have to fulfill some of the promises that they made to their NDP-world-view friends. I get that, but I guess what this House deserves and what Alberta deserves is a little more thought and a little more substance and a little more meat on the bones before you make a major policy decision.

It doesn't even consider what unintended consequences there might be, how we might get to those unintended consequences, how we might avoid them. Nothing. It's absolutely without thought. I won't criticize anybody for trying to keep their political promises. But this one, if indeed all it is is a promise kept to, you know, the NDP-world-view people that the government is trying to please – even they shouldn't be happy, Mr. Speaker, because the government hasn't shown their work. They haven't shown how they got to this number, 100. They haven't shown that there has been any work into this number. There's nothing. They just said: we said that we're going to put a limit on it, and here it is. No indication whether this will be good for Alberta long term, whether it'll be bad for Alberta long term, whether it'll be good for the world's environment, whether it'll be bad for the world's environment. Nothing. They haven't done the work.

So when I see the amendment that says, "Okay. If you're that married to putting a limit on, let's do the work first," that makes sense. The bill by itself doesn't make sense, but if we support this amendment, we could give it a chance to add some sense to it, to add those considerations against unintended negative consequences. We might even be able to work together with experts, although the Premier did say in question period today that Alberta has no experts, nobody that she trusts to do anything. Nonetheless, I think there are lots of experts in Alberta that we could actually talk to. With all due respect to the Premier, I think she was incorrect on what she said out loud, in black and white, in question period today about nobody in Alberta being up to the task of making these decisions.

I think that if we actually pulled people together, we could say to Albertans: "If we're going to put a limit on the extraction of the resources that Albertans own, not that the NDP owns but that Albertans own, we're actually going to give you a good reason for doing it. We're going to actually put some math and some reasoning behind it. These are the unintended consequences that we have thought of on your behalf, Albertans, to make sure that you don't get caught without energy, that you don't get caught without royalties that you deserve, that you don't get caught cold in the winter, that you don't get caught without enough electricity because the line between Alberta and B.C. has been cut off because of a winter storm though there was lots of energy in Alberta that the government was unable to use to keep the lights on and the heat on in the winter."

Actually, this would be really neat: if there was a plan to extract more of the resources in a more environmentally friendly way to provide more energy for more of the future and more of the world through more pipelines to more tidewater. See, that would be a plan that would actually be in line with Albertans' best interests and their higher aspirations and hopes and plans for our children and our grandchildren. That's what Albertans deserve. You know what they don't deserve? Something written on the back of a napkin. "Because it's been a year, I owe my political supporters something, so fire this up, call it legislation, and serve it up to Albertans and hope they don't notice we haven't done any work at all."

The Official Opposition is actually throwing the government a lifeline here, a chance for them with their piece of legislation to be able to say to Albertans: "Now we've done our homework. Now we actually have a reason to put a limit on this. Now we've actually thought about the future of your children and grandchildren and the jobs you have today, that we're taking away as fast as we can in every other way. This time, at least, we're going to actually think about that before we limit the jobs in the future and everything else."

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I'll be supporting this amendment because the amendment turns out to be not just twice as good but about a hundred times as good as the bill is unamended.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions of the Member for Calgary-Hays under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member. I echo many of the sentiments that you brought forward.

If you don't mind, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments before asking my question. A couple of the things that the hon. member had mentioned – and I think it deserves to be spoken about again, that we are cutting off production of the most ethically produced and ethically developed oil in the world. If anywhere should be producing more, it should be us. We are the definition of doing it right, and if we are going to produce more, it should be here. Any government that would suggest otherwise and cut this industry at the knees – I don't understand it. I don't think Albertans understand it.

I think, to some degree, that's what the hon. member was bringing up, too, that you're looking at the most ethical, environmentally regulated industry in the world, and this government is looking at stopping that. Well, what's going to happen, then? Somebody else is going to produce that. It doesn't stop other jurisdictions from doing that. That's why we keep referring to this thing called carbon leakage. That means that whatever we're not producing here, where we can watch it, where we can regulate it, where we understand what's going on, where we can check the emissions, where we can have metrics that actually show what we're capable of, is completely out of our hands.

On top of that, it's an attack on prosperity in Alberta and in Canada, straight up. The minute that Canadians start getting wind of what this government has done and the impact that that's going to have on them, not only on us, what you saw happen on the weekend with those rallies is going to be minor in comparison to when Canadians actually understand what's happening as a result of this cap.

This is about understanding what we do right here. There are a bazillion different ways that we can improve, but capping the industry is not the way to do it. There are so many other ways, and given the opportunity to go to committee, we would have opportunities, if the government so desires the opportunity, to find out what to do. Or maybe, as the hon. member mentioned, this arbitrary 100-megatonne cap is the wrong number. Wouldn't that

be incredible, to actually sit down with all of us who are vested in this, not just on behalf of our constituents but on behalf of Canada, to figure out what that number should be, if there even should be one? Because again I reiterate: we do it best here.

I highly, highly recommend that the government understand that if we are not having that production in this country, happening here, where we have the best regulations, it will go somewhere else, and let me tell you that it's not going to be done to our standards, and we have no control over how that happens.

My question to the hon. member. There are many, many questions and many things that you've brought forward with regard to the economic impact. If you could speak a little bit about, potentially, some of the emerging markets and other things that could come as a result of bringing in specialists to a committee to understand: what are the opportunities that we have going forward given the fact that we could have a discussion about whether there even should be a cap but the detriment that could happen to any emerging markets coming in and investment coming into Alberta, potentially, with this cap coming forward?

3:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for her question. Well, I think the answer is that we don't know the answer, and there is the problem. The government hasn't done the work, and what the amendment suggests, to send this to committee, is that we actually do the work. Extrapolating the simplest of analogies, the oil sands now produces about 66, 67 megatonnes of carbon gases, GHGs, per year. The bill says to stop it at 100, at one and a half times. What if a pipeline does get approved even while this government is here? It could happen. It could happen because of their efforts. It could happen despite their efforts. It could happen, and all of us should be hoping for it to happen. Let's just say that it does happen and that because of that, there is a draw on Alberta's energy of one and a half times what it is now, say twice what it is now. Why wouldn't there be? There are 4 million people in Alberta. There are, you know, 300 million in the U.S. They're not using all of our oil. We'll be cut off . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand up and speak to Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, the referral motion, just to be clear. Before I get started, I'd just like to point out – and my colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky alluded to it earlier – that, you know, there's an old saying that a leopard can't change its spots. Now, we've seen – everybody, all Albertans – the pictures, protestors that are now sitting across the aisle, photographs. We've seen the books written or edited. We've seen the involvement in the Leap Manifesto. And now Albertans are expected to believe that the entire group is on the side of the oil and gas industry, that they now wholeheartedly support pipelines. I'm here to tell you that Albertans don't believe it, not for a minute, and we don't over on this side.

Getting back to the referral motion, important legislation deserves the scrutiny of committee. Now, we found last Wednesday that there was a very important piece of legislation, the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act, the culture act. You know, everybody agreed, "Let's push this through," and, boom, we got it done in one day. I understand it was only the fifth time in Alberta history that such a feat was accomplished. Now, that was a very, very important piece of legislation, too, so I'm not saying that every important

piece of legislation deserves to go to committee because obviously that one didn't. But anything that's as important as this, that's going to affect the future of Albertans, the future of our children, the prosperity of our province, deserves the scrutiny of a committee, deserves having people – Albertans, companies from Alberta, professionals from Alberta – with an interest in the oil and gas industry come forward and talk to us and give us their ideas.

Now, I spoke earlier about how proud I am of my part in the oil and gas industry up in northeastern Alberta and about some of the innovation that we saw. Some of the productivity that we saw up there was absolutely incredible, with the innovations that came forward. Those are the kinds of things that, you know, we threaten to stifle here without taking this to committee. There are many, many stakeholders that haven't had a chance to put forward their concerns.

**An Hon. Member:** Most.

**Mr. Hanson:** Most. You know, very few people have had a chance to speak to this.

As one of the biggest or the biggest industry in our province, innovative companies are sent all over the world to help out. They are sent over to Russia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait – you know, they've been all over the world – to South America. We've had drillers that have gone down there to help out those countries get their industry going. We have the technology. We have the people here. We have the innovation here. A lot of stuff, you know, that's being used today in the industry was invented here. Why would we want to stifle that by putting on a cap and reducing ourselves to only a few operators? We need small companies to come in, step in with new ideas – new geologists with new ideas, new engineers with new ideas – and bring them forward.

This legislation may cause some of these companies to become less competitive in an ever-increasing and competitive global market. On this side of the House there's no secret that we've supported pipelines in every direction, and we need to make that happen. Unfortunately, we're led to believe that the current government is now suddenly supporting pipelines, but the industry doesn't believe it, and Albertans don't believe it either, and I don't think the rest of Canada believes it, to be honest with you.

Alberta has always been a land of opportunity, especially for new exploration companies, some of the most successful oil companies in Canada, and I spoke about them earlier. The company that I worked for at one time, you know, started off as a small player with some good ideas. Now it's one of the largest in Canada. It's amazing. It's an amazing story, and it needs to be told, and we should be bragging about those types of innovations and those types of companies.

Like I said, a lot of their technology has been handed out. You know, the industry is quite good at sharing technology. We've shared that technology with a lot of other places in the world. We have absolutely nothing to be ashamed of here in Alberta as far as it goes with oil and gas production. I'm not embarrassed to be an Albertan.

Specifically, I don't want to see any legislation that takes away the pioneering, explorer spirit that has made our province great. What Alberta is all about is innovation. We talked about it last Wednesday, with the new settlers that came to Canada. It was the land of opportunity. If I might, my wife's grandfather started with a nine-acre piece of land, and when he passed away, he had 32 quarter sections of land. That's a success story. That's all we're asking here, that we do not limit the success stories in our province. Let's keep it going. Why should we stop now? Let's keep going.

Many times we have stood in this House not to try and stall legislation, as is the thought on the other side, but to give Albertans the opportunity to have their input into legislation that will affect their future and their prosperity. We do not want to see all the good people that we have trained and grown here in this province moving to B.C. and Saskatchewan or other places in the world and that then, when the price of oil comes back, we're struggling again to bring skilled labour back into our market. It is just not something we want to see, so we need to do everything we can to get the oil field back on its feet, to promote drilling in our province, to get these pipelines built, and to get the prosperity back that we once had.

Right now, today, I think we're sitting at close to \$45-a-barrel oil. Like I mentioned previously, there was a time when Calgary would have been leaping for joy at \$30 a barrel, and now at \$45 a barrel suddenly we're struggling, and I don't quite understand that. I think we just need to give the oil companies the opportunity to innovate and quit trying to penalize them for what they're doing. That's why I would like to see this bill sent to committee, where we can invite stakeholders to the table, get their input on whether there is a cap needed, if other jurisdictions are doing it.

If we're going to put a cap on our own emissions and create instability by introducing carbon taxes and reduce our competitiveness – my colleague talked about carbon leakage. We at least have some control over it here. We've got good bureaucracy that oversees the oil and gas industry here. It's not just running amok. Some horror stories from down in the States, when it came to the fracking that was going on in Pennsylvania, where people in the neighbourhoods had no control over what was going on: well, that doesn't happen here in Alberta. There's a whole process to go through before you can get a licence to do that kind of stuff. You don't just pull into somebody's backyard and set up a fracking rig, right? It doesn't happen.

That's why this particular legislation and many other important pieces of legislation – this won't be the last one in this fall session that we stand up and do a referral motion on. I can guarantee you that. There's more legislation coming that we will be asking to be referred to committee. I don't think it's a stretch. I don't think Albertans will be disappointed in their government if they backtrack and decide to send this to committee. I think it would be a good thing. It would show some faith in Alberta and the companies that work for us here. I don't understand why there is such reluctance to put some of this stuff to committee, where we can deal with it properly.

4:00

Albertans have a lot to say. Our Alberta oil and gas companies are some of the best in the world. They've got some great ideas, and maybe if they had the opportunity to come and talk to a committee, they might be able to bring some of those ideas forward and educate the people that are trying to make rash decisions here.

Any members that would deny Albertans their right to have a say in legislation that will affect the future of our province may be limiting their political careers. I think that was proven again – I'll reiterate what my colleague said about the election down south. Yes, it was federal, but it sent a very good message: 1 per cent – 1 per cent – one person in a hundred actually agrees with what's going on.

I would urge all members to support this motion to refer this bill to committee, where it belongs, in the interests of Alberta, of Alberta's oil and gas industry, and of the future of our province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, under 29(2)(a) are there any questions or comments with respect to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills?

Are there any other individuals who would like to speak to the referral amendment for Bill 25? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to speak on the referral motion for Bill 25, officially known as the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. You know, bills can sometimes get pretty funny names when they come to this place. They're often very politically loaded terms. A more appropriate name would be the economic opportunity limitation act. We give bills names that are designed to be political. The most famous one is perhaps the Patriot Act in the United States. No one can even remember what that actually stands for. Today we have the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. But we are not limiting emissions; we are limiting economic opportunity here. This is all a part of the climate leadership action plan, an unfortunate and irritating acronym.

You have to wonder if this bill was written alongside the Justice minister on their trip to Colorado, Mr. Speaker, because it doesn't make any sense. It's very fuzzy, it's very hazy, it lacks details, and it's quite arbitrary.

You know, you can generally tell how proud and enthusiastic the government is about its bills by how many speakers they put up for it. Well, they are silent as church mice over there right now. I'm waiting for a few heckles on that. They're not really speaking to this because they're not proud of it. That, or they don't know how to defend it. I remember the Bill 6 debates, where we all stood up, every single member on this side of the House. The Official Opposition and the third party all stood up and spoke to it consistently and with passion, and the members opposite sat as quiet as church mice. They're quite quiet now, Mr. Speaker, either because they're not proud of this piece of legislation or they don't know how to defend it. Both are quite disturbing.

Now, this policy very much resembles a cap-and-trade policy, and we were told that the carbon tax was to be a substitute for a cap-and-trade policy. You don't have to cap emissions if you're taxing emissions. Well, we're actually getting both ends of the stick on this one, Mr. Speaker. We're going to see a huge, \$30-a-tonne provincial carbon tax imposed, and they seem very happy to accept a federal carbon tax of \$50 a tonne attached. They're very happy to have that imposed on them because they like it when Ottawa tells us what to do. This is a government whose very nature is that they like Ottawa having more control over Alberta, and they're happy to have policies imposed as long as it meets their agenda. But they're going to impose a carbon tax on Alberta and a cap on emissions at the same time. We were told – the proponents of a carbon tax always tell us: well, this is the alternative to command-and-control economics; you don't have to have a cap-and-trade system if you have this.

This is evidence, Mr. Speaker, that the carbon tax is a cash grab. It'll do nothing for emissions. The carbon tax is going to take \$3 billion out of the productive sectors of our economy right now – \$3 billion – when we're already facing a massive recession. In Brooks, Mr. Speaker, it is approaching near-Depression levels right now. The Calgary unemployment rate exceeds 10 per cent. Our unemployment rates exceed Nova Scotia's for almost the first time in our modern history as a province. Out of the \$3 billion carbon tax the government is going to turn around and take \$10 million, 0.3 per cent, and give it to farmers to put windmills on their tractors or something of that sort.

The boosters of a carbon tax have said that it'll be a market mechanism to deal with global warming instead of command-and-

control economic regulations, but this bill is proof positive that they're going to give both. We're going to get a carbon tax on the one hand, and then we're going to get command-and-control regulations on another. We are getting the worst of both worlds.

That is because every expert agrees that if a carbon tax is to do what they hope it will do and change the economic incentives of the people, it will have to be many times the price that they're proposing. The \$3 billion carbon tax at \$30 a tonne is already a huge penalty on the families and small businesses of this province, but all it's going to do is to take money away from them. It's not going to significantly alter economic behaviour. You can't take the C-Train from Brooks to Strathmore, Mr. Speaker. People have to drive. People have to heat their homes. This will not significantly change people's behaviours. Most experts agree that a carbon tax would have to be many times the price they're actually proposing.

It is just a cash grab, which is why they're also now going down the road of command-and-control economics in the form of a cap of 100 megatonnes. But where did the cap of 100 megatonnes come from, Mr. Speaker? None of them can tell us. It's a number they picked out of thin air. It is arbitrary. It is based simply on impressing UN bureaucrats and Hollywood celebrities who are concerned about the danger of chinooks.

The Environment minister will be travelling to Marrakesh to meet with the UN soon to discuss this, and it reminds me of a song from Crosby, Stills, and Nash, the *Marrakesh Express*. If you'll indulge me.

Sweeping cobwebs from the edges of my mind  
Had to get away to see what we could find  
Hope the days that lie ahead  
Bring us back to where [we've] led  
Listen not to what's been said to you  
Wouldn't you know we're riding on the Marrakesh Express,  
[Mr. Speaker]

Now, "Mr. Speaker" was added by Neil Young when he joined the group later on. He also had something to say about the oil sands, I believe. As the *Marrakesh Express* says, they are not listening. They are imposing arbitrary regulations on the economy of this province, arbitrary laws. Edmund Burke says, "Law and arbitrary powers are in eternal enmity."

The carbon tax and this cap are supported by big oil but not by small and medium oil. The Big Country Oilmen's Association in Brooks represents mostly small and medium-sized oil companies, and they want nothing to do with this scheme. They want nothing to do with the carbon tax. They want nothing to do with the cap on emissions. You know why? They're not going to get any of the money back in corporate welfare on the carbon tax. They're not going to see their areas protected from competition.

Now, some of the existing large players in the sands will support this because it limits new entrants to the market and market competition. It effectively creates a cartel. It creates a cartel within the oil sands, a carbon cartel, if you will, Mr. Speaker, similar to what some municipalities have done with the taxi industry. If you issue a finite number of taxi medallions and refuse to issue more as the market and demand for them grow, you're going to create a cartel. You're going to create a near monopoly or duopoly for the existing market players. That's why existing taxi companies often like these kinds of systems, but new entrants don't like them. That's effectively what we're creating on a grand scale in the oil sands.

4:10

Now, no other major oil producer on the planet has any plan to cap their growth. Nobody intends to do this. The Fraser Institute, an institution regularly cited by members of the government, says that the cap of 100 megatonnes will reduce growth in the oil sands by

\$154 billion in economic activity by 2027. This at a time when we desperately need jobs in this province, Mr. Speaker. This is the absolute worst time to be doing this. The world is going to need more oil, not less.

If we're going to need to produce more oil in the world, Mr. Speaker, why not from Alberta? This will only increase the market share of Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iran, Nigeria, Venezuela. As much as the NDP might like to mimic the policies of Venezuela, I'm sure that even the Venezuelans understand that it doesn't make sense to cap the production of oil. It has not done anything for us. It has not bought social licence. The reason the government is doing this, the reason they're imposing this is to appease those Hollywood actors, UN bureaucrats, and their ideological base.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I do hope the *Marrakesh Express* goes past the referral.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, the *Marrakesh Express* is heading exactly where it needs to go.

The government has no mandate to do this, Mr. Speaker. We have to send this to a committee to ensure that we are getting it right. The leader of the third party put this very well: perhaps there's some merit in regulation of the oil sands, and we have that already. We can study the regulation of the oil sands without imposing an arbitrary cap of 100 megatonnes.

Not a single person on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is likely to stand up today and give a concrete and clear answer as to why they picked 100 megatonnes. I bet you \$20 that none of them are going to stand up and give us a real answer. They're going to spout some platitudes and ideological talking points, but they're not going to give an answer about why they picked 100 megatonnes because they have no mandate to impose this. I didn't see anywhere in the NDP platform where they said that they were going to cap emissions from the oil sands. I didn't see anywhere in the NDP platform or manifesto where they said that they would impose a \$3 billion carbon tax on the people of Alberta.

In fact, no government, federal or provincial, right now has any mandate for a carbon tax. No federal voters voted for the Liberals for a carbon tax. No provincial voters have voted for the NDP for a carbon tax. Mr. Speaker, the only people so far who have had a chance to vote on the carbon tax were the federal voters in Medicine Hat-Cardston-Warner, and as you know, the NDP are giving a new sense to the term "the 1 per centers." Only 1 per cent in that by-election voted for a carbon tax endorsed by the NDP government here. They have no mandate for it, and they have no support from the people of Alberta for it.

Mr. Speaker, I've been to the oil sands. I've seen the in situ sands in Cold Lake. I have seen the open-pit mining in Fort McMurray, as has, I believe, every member of the Wildrose caucus, and I would encourage members on the government side who have not gone to see this to go there and see it for themselves. Don't see it through the lens of Leonardo DiCaprio or Neil Young. Go and see it for yourselves. I'm sure you'll get to go up there for free. If you call one of these oil companies, I'll bet you that they'll bring you up there and they'll show you around. They'll even give you a little box lunch on the trip.

Mr. Speaker, I've seen this, and I am sick and tired of us vilifying our own industry. This is not something to be ashamed of. This is a miracle of science and one of the greatest achievements of mankind, and it was done right here by Albertans in Alberta. If that makes us embarrassing cousins, you should meet my family.

This bill is foolish. It is foolhardy. It is arbitrary. It lacks science. It lacks evidence. It lacks any form of measurement as to why they are setting a benchmark of 100 megatonnes. Mr. Speaker, this bill

is not worth the paper that it was printed on. We should send it to a committee and defeat it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments to the member under 29(2)(a)? Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** I'd like the hon. member to stand up and tell us how he really feels.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, I can smell a trap when I see one.

This is one of the biggest issues facing the Legislature this session. We've got some bills before us that are relatively inconsequential. We've got some bills that are administrative in nature, that we might find some agreement upon. But this is one – this is one – where we see a fundamental divide between members of the government and the opposition, where even the Official Opposition and the third party have found common cause in understanding that this bill is economic vandalism. It is economic vandalism.

Other bills that they have proposed, as foolhardy as they may have been, at least had some form of trade-off. There was a cost and a benefit. In my opinion, many of these bills' costs certainly outweighed the benefits, but on this I can see no benefit whatsoever. There is no benefit to capping Canada's market share in the global economy right now. There is no benefit whatsoever to saying that we're going to produce less oil as a share of the world market than Russia, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Nigeria. It doesn't make any sense. We are cutting off our nose to get nothing for it at all. It is purely to satisfy the ideologues that make up the base of the NDP and the Hollywood actors who they feel they need to kowtow to.

Well, I don't really care what those guys have to say because when I go to my constituency of Strathmore-Brooks, you know what people want, Mr. Speaker? [interjection] It's not a laughing matter in Strathmore-Brooks because people are losing their jobs. In Strathmore we have lost Western Feedlots. Bill 6 and the carbon tax were cited as some of the primary reasons for why they shut down Western Feedlots. They said that the carbon tax will impose huge new costs on them and make each head of cattle more expensive in Alberta relative to other jurisdictions. They're still open in Saskatchewan, but they're not open here anymore. So now we've got a mothballed feedlot in my constituency and for no good reason. We got nothing for that. It is economic vandalism.

You know, the members opposite laugh. They laugh at any kind of debate that questions the orthodoxy of extreme environmentalism, that puts environmentalism completely out of balance with economic development. I just don't believe that being responsible stewards of the environment must be mutually exclusive of economic development. The oil sands, Mr. Speaker, are a miracle of science, technology, and economics. We are able to take dirt and power cars with it. That is amazing. I am proud of it, but the members opposite are not proud. That's why many of them were professional protesters before they were elected. Many of them were ardent opponents of pipelines. The Minister of Education himself chanted, "No new approvals; no new approvals" on the steps of this Legislature just a few years ago, before he was the minister.

So now they've had to change their language around, Mr. Speaker, and I am glad that they've changed their language. But have their opinions changed in their hearts? In their hearts have they changed their minds, or are they still the radical, anti-economic development environmentalists that they were just a few years ago? I do not believe that being a good steward of the environment is mutually contradictory with economic development, and that is

why I will oppose a bill that arbitrarily caps oil sands development at 100 megatonnes without any scientific explanation why.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other questions or comments to the member? Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the hon. member a question regarding this 100-megatonne cap. If we cap our oil sands development at 100 megatonnes and no one else in the world is going to cap any of their expansion, I'm just wondering: how, then, do we actually impact greenhouse gas emissions? Does that mean that if we cap at 100 megatonnes, somehow people in the world are going to use less oil? There will be less demand because they read in a newspaper . . .

4:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of this referral motion.

You know, we had the opportunity this past summer to have one of our caucus meetings up in Fort McMurray, and as part of that, I got the opportunity to go to Fort McMurray for the first time and to see the oil sands plants for the first time. Their size was pretty impressive. When you stop to look at what they're doing up there and how they've carved this oil industry out of the wilderness, literally in our lifetime, it is one of the most awe-inspiring things I've seen in a long time. We had the opportunity to speak to the people that were there and to speak to the workers and to the managers of the facilities, to see the reclamation sites. I don't know how anybody could walk away from that not realizing just how important the oil sands are to Alberta, to Canadians, and, indeed, to the rest of the world.

I guess it's because of that that when we start to look at this referral motion – you know, this isn't just a minor decision. This is a decision to place a cap on an industry that has been the workhorse of our economy. This is a very, very important decision that we're going to be making. Because of its seriousness and because of the size and the scope of this decision that we're going to be making, it makes sense to this MLA that we would send this to a committee for study.

You know Bill 25 sets out a greenhouse gas emissions limit for all oil sands sites of a combined 100 megatonnes per year. As some of my colleagues have already mentioned, I'm not aware of how this was determined. How did we get 100 megatonnes? Why not 150? Why not 200? Why not 50? Why was it 100 megatonnes per year? For somebody like me, a layman – I was a teacher for 30 years – that's where some of the expertise of a committee could come into play. This is where we can bring in some of the oil sands producers, and we can ask them: is that a reasonable limit? We could ask the scientists to come in, and they could help to educate.

I think we've got many people in this House that have been involved in the oil industry at one point in time or another, and maybe they have a little more understanding than some of us. But I think there's a significant number of us in this House that could use the education that comes from being able to sit before a committee, to be able to listen to the people that come before it, to be able to bring that expertise to the table and help us to make a good decision because, as I've said already, the decision that we're going to make on this is going to be extremely serious. It's going to be very important for the Alberta economy and for the Canadian economy as a whole.

I know that for the people in my constituency that are so intimately tied to the oil industry, these decisions will impact my constituency. For the businesses that are going up to Fort

McMurray on a weekly basis, or have been, you know, this means jobs or no jobs. This means that their company either makes a profit at the end of the year or it doesn't. So the decisions in this House are not without their consequences, and it's important that we as a Legislature make a very educated and wise choice when we make this decision. That's why I believe that this referral motion is a wise thing to consider.

This is part of the overall climate leadership plan. The government, on the opposite side, claims that it's faced increasing scrutiny over unchecked emissions. Those who support this bill, Bill 25, believe that without government intervention, the emissions would surpass 100 megatonnes and that this was going to be unacceptable under almost any conditions. You know, that's what this committee could delve into: is that a reasonable position to take? Are we going to be creating such a serious situation going over a 100-megatonne limit that the consequences of that would just be unacceptable? I would love to hear the evidence for that, and this committee could delve into that question deeper.

You know, under Bill 25 the mine sites, the in situ sites, the processing plants, the primary production sites: all of these will fall under the new cap that this bill is proposing. And if it's passed, Executive Council is going to be able to make sure that the oil sands industry will not go over that 100-megatonne cap. They will use regulations and financial penalties for companies that do not reduce or do not bring their emissions under control.

Now, this 100-megatonne cap, as we've said, was agreed to apart from the Leach report, and it brought an unusual group of people together, whether it's Suncor or Royal Dutch Shell or Cenovus or Canadian Natural Resources, and I guess that speaks to one point of view. But I've heard other members of this House question whether or not the players, these major oil sands producers, weren't really acting out of self-interest, that it was a PR win for them, that it won't cost them anything, but that it will limit the competition that's already up in the oil sands. You know, there's some merit to that. It would be interesting to have a referral committee take a look at this and see if the position of these major stakeholders was self-serving or whether it was done out of a sincere interest to deal with an environmental problem.

We know that there are other major stakeholders, other energy firms that are strongly opposed to this cap. Whether we're talking about TransCanada or Imperial Oil, they've spoken out clearly against this cap. They also need to come before this committee. We would need to be able to see and hear their point of view as well. It's not like the industry that's working in the oil sands is speaking with one voice, so it would be important for us to hear all of those points of view. So before we do this, it would be wise, in my estimation, to call the experts to a committee and to ensure that indeed all Albertans' best interests are being served by this decision to either support or to not support Bill 25.

Now, I'm going to speak in favour of this referral motion because I think we need to better understand how Bill 25 will send what I believe could be a very negative economic message to the oil players in this world. I think this committee should study that and should consider this. I mean, this cap is just one more signal that we're sending to investors that the government of Alberta is not on the side of business and it's not on the side of marshalling and taking care of the Alberta economy. As a matter of fact, it could very well make our economy even worse than what the recession is creating as we speak. You cannot understand, I don't think, Albertans' anger over this bill without understanding all of the other NDP actions, all of the other government actions that came before this bill that have negatively impacted our economy.

I know that I've had members from some of the major stakeholders in the Alberta oil industry come to my office. They tell

me that over the past year every time they spend money in this challenging economic environment, they must do something that they call a risk analysis. You know, this risk analysis will look at things like – they tell me that every time they go to spend money and have to put this risk analysis together, they have to include things like: has the government increased personal or corporate taxes? Well, yes, we have. Every time the government decides to shut down a job-creating, low-power, cost-viable industry like coal, this again is considered to be a negative thing that you would put on a risk analysis. Every time a government rips up a contract that costs a business millions of dollars, that sends a really negative message to the businesses that are looking to invest in our province.

4:30

You know, that's something that we need to hear as legislators. I think that's something that all of the legislators in this Legislature need to consider but perhaps especially the ones on the opposite side of the House. Every time this government chooses billions of dollars of deficit by unprecedented borrowing and unprecedented spending, we see businesses add another item on their risk analysis. They've told me quite bluntly that they can spend their money anywhere they want in the world and they're looking for an investment climate where they will be allowed to see a profit, where the regulations will not keep them from pursuing profit, where they can invest their expertise with a reasonable expectation that they can benefit the economic climate, both theirs and the province's.

I think we need to have this referral motion because we need to make sure that we're not creating a climate in Alberta that is going to scare the capital away from this province. I think we need this committee to be able to hear from these major stakeholders so that when they come to us and they start talking about choosing where to spend their capital, when they start looking . . . [A cellphone rang] Am I supposed to dance, too?

They maybe can hear from these major stakeholders just how important it is for this government to be sending a positive economic message out there that this government is open for business, that they are looking for businesses to invest and for workers to move here and for this economy to grow. This committee could hear those kinds of presentations.

I think that when I look at the people in my riding, they've sent a very clear message that they do not support this cap on emissions, that they do not support a carbon tax, that during a recession they did not support the raising of corporate income taxes. According to a recent survey that I was able to find, 67.2 per cent of Albertans of voting age didn't really want a carbon tax.

Well, I know that last Saturday I stood out and listened to some of my constituents as they talked about a carbon tax and they talked about a carbon cap on emissions. It's just another facet, they believed, of the same misguided message that this government is telling the rest of the world. The message that they believe is being sent by this carbon emission cap is that it's safer to do business somewhere else other than in Alberta, and I think that's something that this committee could clarify. I mean, it's one thing for us as lay people to arrive at that decision and come to that belief, but a committee could clarify those things for us. They could provide us with the evidence that we need.

This committee needs to study the impact of Bill 25 on our economy because I believe that it's actually going to make our economy, that is already suffering, much worse. The oil sands have been the economic engine of Alberta – they've been the economic engine of Canada – for the last number of years, and Bill 25 is going to directly impact that engine. Bill 25 will make the oil sands the first major oil jurisdiction to intentionally limit its long-term production with a cap on emissions. You know . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Smith:** . . . the recently released Fraser report entitled *How Alberta's Carbon Emission Cap Will Reduce Oil Sands Growth* . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members. Thank you.

Please continue. I'm giving you another 30 seconds.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that they'll really appreciate my 30 more seconds.

The oils sands, as I said, were and are the economic engine of this country and of this province. It's the first major oil jurisdiction in the world that will intentionally limit its long-term production with a cap on emissions. The recent Fraser report entitled *How Alberta's Carbon Emission Cap Will Reduce Oil Sands Growth* estimates that placing a ceiling on carbon emissions could cost the Alberta economy \$150 billion to \$250 billion because of the resources that were intentionally locked into the ground.

Now, if we're going to make a decision like that, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't seem unreasonable to me that with that kind of wealth and with that kind of impact on our economy that we would bring in the experts to take a look and see if that is indeed what is going to happen to the Alberta economy. Is that what's going to happen to the Canadian economy? This doesn't just affect Albertans, and it doesn't just affect the workers that are up at the oil sands in Fort McMurray; it's all of the other industries across this country that have steel and buses and the trucks and all of the things that we purchase to be able to keep the oil sands running. This is not a decision that we make here that is only going to have an impact . . . [Mr. Smith's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Just for the record you did get the 30 seconds.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake under 29(2)(a). Is that correct?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yes, sir.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you very much. I appreciate the comments from my esteemed colleague from Drayton Valley-Devon. I would be interested to understand a little bit more about what he's saying. Specifically, if he could comment perhaps on this issue: if we cap our resource development, will it do anything whatsoever to reduce the amount of demand for oil globally or even domestically? If we don't produce it and if we don't benefit by that \$150 billion to \$250 billion worth of economic activity, does that mean that that won't happen anywhere? Does that mean that Saskatchewan will not fill that void? Does that mean that Russia won't, Nigeria won't, or maybe Saudi Arabia won't?

**An Hon. Member:** Venezuela.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Or Venezuela? Does that mean that India's growth in demand, which is slated to grow 32 per cent over the next six years for oil, won't be there for oil because the mighty province of Alberta isn't going to develop those resources, we're going to cap that development, we're going to restrict that development? Does that mean that greenhouse gas emissions globally are going to decline because we don't develop that resource? Like, if we don't do something up there, does that mean the whole world stops?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, that is, I guess, one of the most telling arguments for why we need to go to committee and have a referral motion. I think that there are some misconceptions out there, some that must be shared by members of this House, a belief that if we put a cap on our emissions, all of a sudden the other players in the oil industry around the world are going to stop producing oil. Of course, that's just not going to be the case.

We don't have to look very far to see that we do have the cleanest oil and energy production in the world. If we're going to stop producing the cleanest oil in the world, it's going to be replaced by other countries who are producing in ways that are actually going to make the greenhouse gas issue and climate change issue worse. How can we in all conscience sit in this House and under the guise of trying to make something better, actually make it worse?

4:40

Obviously, there are some on the other side that don't believe that that's the truth. That's why we need this committee, Mr. Speaker. They don't understand, I guess, the argument, and they don't understand the facts. They need to be able to be educated, and this committee could help them do that.

You know, others have argued and maybe some on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that the economic sacrifices that they're expecting Albertans to make when we strand our oil sands assets in the ground will be worth it because we're doing our part to reduce greenhouse gases. Well, Canada produces about 1.8 per cent of the global greenhouse emissions, and our oil sands are less than 9 per cent of that. So even if we shut down the entire oil sands, it would have a negligible difference in global output, about one and a half tenths of 1 per cent of global emissions.

**An Hon. Member:** One more time.

**Mr. Smith:** About one and a half tenths of 1 per cent of global emissions.

So we're proposing to take \$150 billion out of the Alberta and the Canadian economic engine for what is nothing more or less than a statistical rounding error. If this was actually going to have a statistical – if we could see that this was going to have a real advantage to the climate issue, if we were going to make a significant dent in it, you would probably be able to get the support of Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak to the referral amendment to second reading of Bill 25?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:42 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

Sergeant-at-Arms, the doors are secure? That is prompted by my experiential learning, as to why I say that.

For the motion:

Aheer	McIver	Rodney
Drysdale	Nixon	Schneider
Fildebrandt	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Panda	Taylor
Hunter	Pitt	Yao
MacIntyre		

5:00

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	McPherson
Bilous	Hinkley	Miller
Carson	Horne	Miranda
Connolly	Kazim	Nielsen
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Phillips
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Piquette
Dach	Loyola	Sabir
Dang	Luff	Schmidt
Drever	Malkinson	Schreiner
Eggen	Mason	Shepherd
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Ganley	McKittrick	Turner
Goehring	McLean	Westhead

Totals: For – 16 Against – 39

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 25 lost]

**The Speaker:** We are now back to the bill. The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate on this bill.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 24

#### Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move an amendment to Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. Would you like me to start or wait?

**The Chair:** If you could just wait until I get a copy, please, hon. member.

Go ahead, hon. member. This will be known as amendment A1.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would move that Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016, be amended as follows: (a) section 12 is amended in the proposed section 23 by adding the following after subsection (2):

(3) A forest officer shall notify the person referred to in subsection (1) whether the fire control plan is satisfactory within 14 days of the date the forest officer received the fire control plan.

And (b) section 17 is amended in the proposed section 32(2.1) by adding "for a period not exceeding 365 days or any extended period that the Minister may authorize" after "secure an area of land or premises."

That's the amendment. Would you like me to speak to it now?

**The Chair:** Go ahead. Continue.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Okay. Madam Chair, it's pretty straightforward. These amendments are intended to place reasonable time limits on



a couple of actions allowed by Bill 24. First, we're looking to introduce a two-week limit on how long a forest officer can delay before either approving or rejecting a fire control plan. We would like to see this amendment accepted to assure Alberta industries that the government is committed to moving quickly on reviewing fire plans. As the legislation currently stands, industrial operations could be held up, with no end in sight. We would like there to be some clarity about the length of time they can take.

The second part is a one-year limit on the length of time that a forest officer or fire guardian can cordon off an area during an investigation. This is not intended to limit an investigation. It is again about providing clear timelines for those impacted by these actions. We believe that one year should be more than enough time to complete an investigation. Of course, the minister would have the option to extend that time period if the circumstances warrant it.

I think, Madam Chair, that's pretty self-explanatory, and I'll take my seat.

**The Chair:** Any hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you. I'd like to just rise today to speak in favour of this amendment. Again, it's not to limit the ability of anybody in forestry to be able to do their job or to limit any investigation. But I can think of a couple of examples in my constituency right now where people are being delayed because of time constraints from SRD and forestry. Often we get phone calls from constituents in regard to leasing arrangements, particularly grazing leases, that they're trying to transfer between themselves, sales, and those types of things, Madam Chair. Sometimes those delays are well over a year or so, and it can often cause significant trouble in the agricultural industry for producers.

I can also think of a couple of other leases on the tourism side in my constituency that have right now been waiting over a year to get their leases renewed. It's holding up sales for those businesses, which is causing, of course, consequences. So if that same type of thing was to happen now with larger industrial operations in our constituency, I could see how this would cause significant trouble if they're waiting well over sometimes a year or two years just to transfer a cattle grazing lease. You know, if we're dealing with larger industrial operations, the consequences of that could be even more catastrophic.

In addition to that, I lived in a place where a large forest fire happened in the forest reserve, and during some of the investigation there it took a very long time for us to return to and be able to operate our business. So putting an appropriate timeline so that people that are impacted by, you know, what could be a catastrophic event in their business or in their life are able to get back to that kind of forces forestry to be able to accommodate and get something done in a reasonable amount of time.

I would encourage all of my colleagues to support the hon. member's amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I, too, would like to rise and speak in support of this excellent amendment. I think every one of us in this House has experienced times where we've made an application to a government agency and then we hurry up and wait. And we wait. In the case of businesses, time is money. It speaks to reducing the struggle that we have and the challenges we face regarding red tape in dealing with government.

As is noted in this amendment, "a forest officer shall notify the person referred to in subsection (1) whether the fire control plan is satisfactory within 14 days of the date the forest officer received the fire control plan." Having dealt with these kinds of safety plans and emergency plans in a previous life, 14 days is plenty of time to review these plans – many of them are going to be fairly straightforward – and get back to the applicant and let them know: yeah, you're good to go. We need to do things in a timely manner.

This province suffers from red tapeitis. It's a terrible disease. It slows down development. It slows down just about everything, and that costs money needlessly. It also puts jobs on hold. Many times there are subcontractors who are waiting and waiting to get going on a contract that has been awarded to them. Meanwhile the general contractor is waiting for some kind of government approval to come down the line before these subcontractors can begin their work.

I think it is extremely important, especially for something of this nature, that we put in place a timeline so that we're not inadvertently holding up Albertans from getting a good job done. Furthermore, if there is an issue with the fire plan, it is a timely situation where the forest officer can get back to the applicant and say: "You know what? You've got a problem here, and you've got a problem here." And in a timely manner they can make the amendments and get it back again for reconsideration rather than waiting six months, seven months only to find out that there are issues with the plan and now they have to go back to the drawing board. It's unreasonable to do that, and it does put things at risk. So I think timeliness is paramount. This amendment deals with that well.

I will be in support of this amendment, and I hope everyone in this House will be in support of this excellent amendment to put some time limits on these fire control plans so that both forest officers and developers can get the ball rolling with these fire plans, get them in place, make amendments if they have to, but get things in place so that our forests can ultimately be a safer place.

Thank you very much.

5:10

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the member for his very thoughtful amendments. You know, I've considered these amendments, and I'm not going to be supporting these. I would encourage members not to support the amendments for the reasons that I'm going to describe.

In terms of the timeline of 14 days for the fire plan I'd like to let the members know that we've consulted closely with the industry on this, and they've told us that the existing practices could be shorter or longer depending on the size of the industry and the complexity of the operation. I would be afraid that putting a time limit takes away our flexibility to ensure that we have the time to do our due diligence. In cases where there are very complex plans, putting a 14-day time limit might take away our ability to have that back and forth with the industry to make sure that the plan is satisfactory. It also allows us to work with forest companies and other businesses in the forest protection area and to engage in a thorough back-and-forth conversation.

In terms of the 365-day time limit for securing a scene, the experience that the industry and the ministry have had is that that time limit is not necessary. In fact, most cases can actually be secured within six months or less, and often smaller fires can actually be secured in less time than that. After the investigation is completed on-site, there's often a part of the investigation that

occurs off-site, so the scene no longer needs to be secured after the time that the on-site investigation is complete.

Just in the case where a scene would need to be secured in excess of a year, which, I just want to reiterate, has not been our experience, we want to make sure that the investigators have the tools available to them if it's necessary to go beyond the one-year time limit, without the need for the minister to renew or extend the timelines. This would include the ability to secure the scene so that investigations can be concluded.

Just in summary, Madam Chair, I think the member has put forward some very thoughtful suggestions, but in the experience of the ministry and with the consultations that have taken place, the amendments aren't necessary for the bill, so I would recommend that members vote against this amendment.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I must take exception to the previous speaker because I will support the amendment. The intent here is not to restrain the efficiency of government operations, not to put them under undue stress, but the reality here is that we need to balance rights. Because we have in government the ability to create the rules of the game, we really shouldn't always be carving out for ourselves unlimited opportunity and unlimited space and an unlimited amount of: well, what if we just create all of the potentials that we can possibly imagine? The reality is that we need to balance expectations here, and these can be significant impediments to the rights, to the financial success, to the future of Alberta individuals, companies, even municipalities, in fact.

I'm currently dealing in my riding with an entirely different situation, yet it is a somewhat relevant situation. There have been endless numbers of requirements put upon a construction company and consulting engineers, that have actually dragged the process out into years. What happens is that they reply with a requirement and hurry up and write it up in a week or two and supply what's asked for, and then they sit and wait for two, three, four months before they get any response back. Then there's another requirement, so they hurry up and reply with that one, hoping to get this resolved, and then they sit and wait for two, three, four, five months. This has gone on multiple times, and it costs the future; it costs the community.

In this particular case it's impacting the municipality. The municipality has a statutory plan in place, which has been impacted, and in this case not a forest officer but a different officer of the government has held this up literally for years. There needs to be just some sort of reasonable expectation of time.

For anybody operating in any kind of a committee or a relationship where there are shared partnership responsibilities, there should be some kind of time commitment. You know, if I say that I'm going to do something for somebody or if somebody says that they're going to do something for me, I'm never satisfied until I ask them: well, when? And if there's no answer to "when," that, in effect, negates the offer and the responsibility and makes it null and void because "when" can essentially turn into almost never or beyond the point of when it matters anymore or to the point where the individual or the company has been completely rendered dysfunctional because they're still waiting.

I think it encourages excellent public service to put reasonable timelines on, so for that reason I will in fact support the amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise again to speak in support of this amendment. I must say that I was not at all surprised to listen to the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane speaking against this amendment. I realize that for some people who have certain job experiences, delays and time delays and having some sort of expectation put on them to actually get off their butt and get the job done in a timely fashion is a novel idea. However, for most of the people that live in Alberta, right across Canada, actually, we have what is known as a get 'er done kind of mentality. These are the people in the private sector, the people that actually get out there and get dirty and get the job done in a timely fashion.

We have here an amendment regarding a potentially very dangerous situation, where we have developers that need to provide an actual fire plan and provide it to an expert in such things such as our forest officers are, to have it reviewed and get a response back in a timely manner. The whole, entire time that that applicant is waiting, there is not an approved plan in place. So if this drags on for a month, two months, three months, four months, and then finally the forest officer gets the job done, gets it back to that applicant, and says, "No, you need to amend it," now we have a few more months to wait.

It is not inconceivable given certain departments within this government to be waiting six months, seven months, or more before this applicant has an approved plan in place to protect Alberta's forests. It is inconceivable to me that any member of this House, given an opportunity to put a timeline in place that is reasonable, that protects our forests, that makes sure that government employees are getting after it, getting the job done, getting back to these applicants in a timely manner, and getting that fire plan approved and in place – that should be the norm and not the exception.

This is an excellent amendment. The arguments put forward by the Member for Banff-Cochrane are, in my opinion, unfounded and ridiculous and putting our forests actually at risk by not having some kind of timeline in place, whether it be the timeline referred to under subsection (3) of 14 days or whether it be the timeline under section B regarding the 365 days. There's nothing wrong with timelines. They're a good idea. It keeps things moving along, and it eliminates unnecessary, costly, and potentially dangerous delays.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

5:20

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to speak in favour of this amendment also. When I read section 23(1) and (2), it says this:

A person carrying on or having charge of an industrial or commercial operation on public land or within one kilometre of any public land shall at the request of a forest officer submit a fire control plan satisfactory to the forest officer, within the time determined by the forest officer.

The forest officer can ask for a fire control plan, determine the time that he would like it. There are no guidelines here as far as how long the forest officer can give a company or an industrial or commercial operation to produce this plan, this fire control plan.

Now, it goes on to say:

(2) If a person referred to in subsection (1) fails to comply with the request of the forest officer within the time determined by the forest officer, the Minister may, by order, suspend the industrial or commercial operation of the person until a fire control plan satisfactory to the forest officer has been submitted to the forest officer.

This amendment here adds:

(3) A forest officer shall notify the person referred to in subsection (1) whether the fire control plan is satisfactory within 14 days of the date the forest officer received the fire control plan.

Now, Madam Chair, if the forest officer feels that a fire control plan is necessary, he can demand that, and he can demand it in a time frame that he or she determines, but there's no requirement in this legislation for the forest officer to even respond on whether it's satisfactory or not. I don't find it unreasonable at all that the industrial or commercial operation at least receive some sort of response suggesting whether what they've done is acceptable or not within 14 days, two weeks.

Now, I don't know the exact implications of this other part I'm going to bring up now. "The Minister may, by order, suspend the industrial or commercial operation of the person until a fire control plan satisfactory to the forest officer has been submitted." I don't know if that will somehow put at risk this business's ability to operate while it's waiting to find out whether the plan is satisfactory or not, because the minister could shut down or suspend that operation. I believe this adds nothing but a little bit of clarity and a little bit of respect to the industrial operation that's required to do this.

The forest officer already has virtually complete control over every other aspect of this. There aren't any other timelines on this whole process except now the suggested amendment that the business receive a response whether the fire control plan is satisfactory. I'm quite certain that businesses required to do this would want to make sure that they did a proper job. I would think that they would want to know even sooner than 14 days whether they'd done a proper job or not, but of course this bill, without amendment, doesn't allow that opportunity, doesn't allow that respect.

Now, the second part of this amendment, part B, section 17, has to do with the cordoning off of an area. It says:

Section 32 is amended by adding the following after subsection (2):

(2.1) A forest officer or a fire guardian may, for the purposes of an investigation, temporarily cordon off or secure an area of land or premises and prohibit any person from entering or remaining in the area or premises until the investigation is completed.

Then (2.2) says:

A person shall not enter an area or premises that have been cordoned off or secured under subsection (2.1) without first obtaining the permission of a forest officer or fire guardian.

This is for the purpose of an investigation. If we're talking about a forest area here, I can't imagine how much of an investigation can happen one year after the fire. I would think that after one full year, for one thing, the investigation should be over. I mean, if it's important enough to investigate, you would think they would do this in under a year. Also, how about the evidence? What's going to be left of evidence a year after a forest fire when the forest starts growing immediately after the fire is done?

I don't see anything unreasonable about these amendments. I know this government has a hard time accepting amendments. They propose lots of bills that they, of course, bring forward their own amendments on because, obviously, they didn't do enough consultation or research to start off with, but when the opposition comes up with ideas to make a bill better and this government just flat out turns them down, I think it should be alarming to Albertans that this government seems to be unwilling to accept . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Common sense.

**Mr. Loewen:** . . . advice, some common-sense advice.

There isn't anything in this amendment here that isn't very reasonable, and it doesn't change the point of the bill. It, in fact, helps it: 14 days to look over a fire control plan that was demanded by a forest officer, to look at it and say, "Yeah, that's good" or "No, we need a little bit more." Does it make any sense to look at it for 60 days or 100 days and then come back and say, "No, it's not good enough"? Why not 14 days? Why not fewer than 14 days?

Of course, going back to the period of 365 days for an area to be cordoned off, we don't know what area could be cordoned off and how big an area and what effect it might have on businesses or individuals that want to access that. In fact, I would suggest that 365 days is probably double what's necessary. How about six months? What are they going to learn between six months and a year that they wouldn't learn in an investigation in the first six months? I don't see anything there, any reason why. Like I say, one year I think is plenty of time for an investigation, too much time, of course, when we see how fast forests grow after fires.

I think this amendment is very reasonable, a very reasonable amendment. I'd like to thank the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti for proposing this, and I think we could do well in this Legislature for Albertans by passing this amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to rise in support of the amendment moved by my colleague from Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Consistent with what I've come to expect from my colleague, this is a good, solid, common-sense amendment that the government would do well to consider. The first section surely only talks about whether a fire control plan is satisfactory within 14 days of the date that the forest officer received the fire control plan. Well, you know what, folks? It doesn't actually hurt, when you're securing an area to keep it safe from fire, to have a time limit on it. I think that's all this does.

I mean, right now, while the government might have received legitimate praise from all members, including me, for the good job that they did with the evacuation and rescue from the fire up in Fort McMurray, that should all by itself make us real cautious and nervous about what we can do to prevent future occurrences. Certainly, the Minister of Municipal Affairs' municipality suffered greatly from fire just a few very short years ago.

5:30

Again, in section B of the amendment: "'for a period not exceeding 365 days or any extended period that the Minister may authorize' after 'secure an area of land or premises'."

I don't think I need a long speech on this, Madam Chair, so you're not going to get one, but I would just counsel and recommend to members on all sides of the House and, I guess, specifically, government members that what you're getting here is good advice from someone elected from a forestry-intensive part of Alberta, a member of this House that's been around long enough and with a rural background, someone that actually is well suited, well situated to give solid advice, which is why when it comes time to vote, I'm going to vote to receive that solid, helpful advice and recommend that all Members of the Legislative Assembly do the same thing.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, we'll call the vote.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:32 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Drysdale	MacIntyre	Rodney
Fildebrandt	McIver	Schneider
Hanson	Nixon	Taylor
Hunter	Orr	Yao
Loewen	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	McPherson
Bilous	Hinkley	Miller
Carson	Horne	Miranda
Connolly	Kazim	Nielsen
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Phillips
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Piquette
Dach	Loyola	Sabir
Dang	Luff	Schmidt
Drever	Malkinson	Schreiner
Eggen	Mason	Shepherd
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Ganley	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	McLean	

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 38
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Actually, I would like to introduce an amendment. I can wait for you to get a copy before I speak to it.

5:50

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A2. Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Orr moved that Bill 24, Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 23 by striking out the proposed section 40.1.

First of all, I really would like to thank all of the firefighters and first responders who did help in the Fort McMurray fire and those who fight lesser fires across our province. They really do put their lives on the line for all of us. Quite frankly, it's still amazing to me how everyday Albertans helped out neighbours and strangers alike during the evacuation that happened at that particular time. There were a lot of unsung heroes, quite truthfully, and we celebrate them. Even though they may not necessarily receive medals, they certainly are deserving of them.

Legislative changes that would increase the safety of firefighting are a welcome sight, especially after, of course, this last fire season. We should always be looking for ways that we can make changes that will ensure the safety of Albertans during the crisis of major fires. There is one point in this bill that I do think is helpful: "Section 17(1) is amended by striking out 'April 1' and substituting 'March 1'." Extending the fire season will allow companies and the government to be more prepared for the fire season. The Fort McMurray fire caught the people, quite frankly, and the government off guard. We know this by some of the discussion around reducing the funding for fires. We've heard issues about the unpreparedness of the water bombers and the contract that's

associated with that. Extending the timeline for the fire season, starting it, actually, when there might even still be snow on the ground, will give much-needed time for everybody to prepare for the inevitable fire season that comes to us in the spring.

The companies that work in this area need firm deadlines as to when the fire season starts, when they need to be thinking about gearing up. Obviously, we can't actually control the fire, but we certainly understand that there is a certain time of the year when the risk escalates dramatically. It's not reasonable for businesses to just start and stop on a dime. They need some predictability. They need to know when their work starts and when it should end. So I think that this will actually help, and I hope that the government, with respect to the timelines and regulations in the legislation, will also find that helpful. Companies need this stability. As I said, firefighting is not a predictable business. While a fire could start at any time and be out of control before we know it, the legislation that we have before us will hopefully bring a bit more predictability to it and help us to be prepared for the beginning of the season.

There is a part of this legislation, though, that I do have a particular issue with. I'm thankful that the government is open to suggestions, at least in some legislation, and I trust that they will be in this one because I really am not here just to sort of make political points or to picket things. I think that there are opportunities to make really good legislation in our province, and I'm glad that we have a system of governance where we're allowed to participate in that. Multiple viewpoints will improve the legislation that will affect the lives of Albertans and our democracy. I do value that.

I'd like to draw our attention, though, to section 23, starting at the bottom of page 9 and following onto page 10, the new part, which reads:

40.1 No action lies and no proceeding may be brought against the Crown, the Minister, a director or a forest officer, or any person acting under the direction of the Crown, the Minister, a director or a forest officer, for damages resulting from any order or decision under this Act or the regulations made in good faith by the Crown, the Minister, the director, the forest officer or the person.

This section is new to the Forest and Prairie Protection Act. It's not a change of wording. Instead, it's an entirely new piece that the minister wants to add. Now, a quick search of *Hansard* discovered that sections like this were previously implemented in legislation and by previous governments over the objections, I might add, of the then current opposition.

My argument against this section is not about precedents. It's not that it's not been done before. My argument against this addition is that it should not be done. Right now we are participating in a democratic exercise to determine if this legislation is in the best interests of all Albertans. I would hope that this government would not say that this has been done before and that, therefore, we need to do it again just because. We need to look at everything from a fresh viewpoint. Quite frankly, that's what Albertans were hoping for from this government, a fresh viewpoint and a fresh way to look at things, not accepting something just because that's the way it was done before and, therefore, we should do it again. In fact, I think Albertans were hoping that this government wouldn't be like the last government, which is why they threw them out. If it turns out that something is the best course of action, then, yes, we adopt it.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 24. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

Thanks.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 9 tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, November 9, 2016

Day 47

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
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### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, November 9, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning. It was a long night.

Please bow your heads and pray or reflect in your own way. Grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things that we can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Let us work together for the betterment of this province, this country, and this world.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Second Reading

##### Bill 28

##### Public Health Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to move second reading of Bill 28, the Public Health Amendment Act, 2016, on behalf of the Minister of Health.

The intent of this bill is to make sure our immunization programs are protecting Albertans from vaccine-preventable diseases. Amendments are aimed at increasing our child immunization rates and improving the way immunization services are delivered in Alberta. This would better protect Albertans from outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases. Our current rates of immunization are not high enough to prevent outbreaks like measles or whooping cough. Outbreaks occur in our schools, child care facilities, and in our larger communities every year. They affect our children and all Albertans.

The amendments that are proposed to the Public Health Act focus on reaching out to parents of children who are unimmunized or underimmunized. Our proposed amendments will allow Alberta Health to collect student enrolment data from Alberta Education and match it with immunization records in the provincial immunization repository. This will enable us to better identify children with missing or incomplete immunization histories. Currently government is missing immunization information for about 15 to 25 per cent of our students. Public health professionals will be asking parents of these students to provide their child's immunization records, complete any needed immunizations, get a letter from a doctor indicating a medical exemption, or sign a form indicating they declined immunization for their child.

Parents may choose not to have their children immunized, but their children will be excluded from school in the event of a serious vaccine-preventable disease outbreak such as measles. This practice already happens, and it's not about punishing parents if they make a decision not to immunize their child. Rather, government has a role in protecting children and all Albertans from contracting a potentially deadly vaccine-preventable disease and preventing further spread of that disease.

In August 2015 the Canadian Medical Association expressed support for policies that would require every student to provide a declaration of immunization before being admitted to school. In addition, the Canadian Medical Association encouraged conversations between parents and health officials when there is a

decision not to immunize. Our proposed approach aligns very closely with these recommendations. The goal is to work with parents to immunize their children and to ultimately increase our immunization rates. We want to be able to remind parents who may have forgotten to immunize their children or to report their children's immunizations and, if needed, to address any questions that parents may have about the benefits or safety of the immunizations.

Having complete immunization information means that fewer children will be kept out of our schools unnecessarily during an outbreak. We'll be able to quickly and efficiently identify the children who need to be excluded from the school or other community setting. We also want public health officials to be able to seamlessly contact parents of children enrolled in licensed and approved child care programs during outbreaks. The bill provides a provision that clarifies that a medical officer of health can obtain parent contact information from those licensed and approved child care programs such as daycare when an outbreak or an exposure to a communicable disease occurs. These officials will contact the parents of children affected by the exposure or outbreak as required, and this is the current practice.

Amendments will also address the way immunization services are delivered in Alberta so that Albertans have access to safe and high-quality immunization. If passed, all health practitioners who provide immunization will be required to report information about all immunizations and follow vaccine schedules posted by our chief medical officer. All health practitioners will also be required to report adverse events following immunization, and all persons who handle, transport, or store vaccines will be required to follow protocols developed by government to ensure safety and effectiveness. These amendments will help ensure that vaccines are being given safely and enable the province to be able to keep more complete immunization information for all Albertans.

There are a few administrative amendments to the act also being proposed. An amendment will allow the chief medical officer of health to require doctors or professionals working in laboratories to report an incidence of a disease to a medical officer of health if the chief medical officer decides it is necessary. Doctors and laboratory professionals already report diseases to the chief medical officer. The requirement to report to a medical officer of health would be to support timeliness and rapid reporting to those working in the field. Another amendment would require that sexually transmitted infections be reported to a medical officer of health instead of the current practice of reporting to the chief medical officer.

In conclusion, immunization is one of the most important public health interventions we have. It protects our children, families, and all Albertans from the devastating effects of illnesses such as measles or polio. We want to work with parents and support them in getting evidence-informed information about the benefits of immunization and the importance of reporting immunization decisions with the goal of raising those rates. We also want to work with our partners who are involved in delivering immunization services to Albertans so that Albertans receive the high-quality immunization services they deserve and expect. With Bill 28 we are providing parents more opportunities to link in with supports in our health system. This will help and encourage parents to immunize their children.

I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage all of my colleagues on both sides of the House to support this bill, and I really look forward to hearing the ensuing debate. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to my honourable colleague for the introduction of the bill and the first comments. It's

important to note that this legislation does not significantly change the existing authority granted to the medical officers of health under the regulations of the Public Health Act, which currently can require children carrying highly infectious diseases to stay away from school and in the case of measles require unimmunized children to stay away until the outbreak is cleared. This, of course, is done for safety and for the sake of those with compromised immune systems.

Mr. Speaker, we know that immunization rates have fallen short of the ministry's targets for years, and we do value individual and parental choice over these medical procedures with coerciveness, and we are glad to see that this legislation focuses – focuses – on information collection and education for Albertans to make more informed choices. This is preferable. It is preferable to aid informed choice over more coercive measures.

9:10

We are encouraged to see improved reporting being required from health professionals also for adverse effects. We know that all medications carry some risk of adverse reactions, and it will help improve our understanding to have all this data aggregated, tracked, and analyzed.

Mr. Speaker, this bill does expand the information-sharing authority from just the medical officer of health's ability to get enrolment records currently from school boards to allow the Ministry of Health to get all records from Alberta Education, and as with any increase in information sharing, it is crucial to follow this up with robust protections to ensure that personal information is not inappropriately used or lost.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation also allows the medical officers of health to obtain records from licensed daycare facilities, and in the event of outbreaks this does seem to make sense. However, we also have to recognize that these daycare facilities are often small, with small administrative staff and very tight budgets. I have concerns with their ability to absorb new reporting requirements into their operating budgets if this process becomes too cumbersome. We want to see this program kept lean and efficient.

Alberta Health Services, with Alberta Health's \$21 billion, 55 per cent of the revenue we collect, 40-some per cent of the money we spend, as I understand the process, rather than Alberta Education will be reaching out to Albertans to ensure that they have informed information and to ensure that our public health people have the proper records.

I've seen last year's Alberta Health Services department \$240 million over budget. When I see another \$400 million going on top of the \$800 million already spent on electronic health records, when I hear from some of our good, hard-working front-line workers that they're fearful that the \$400 million will not be efficiently spent, that this money will end up in just an Alberta Health Services data redistribution analysis technique, I'm concerned that this doesn't become part of a bigger government, big information, big, inefficient system. I will be watching for that, and hopefully that will not detract from the opportunity to inform all Albertan families of the pros and cons of protecting their children.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will be asking my colleagues in the Wildrose to support this at second reading, and we will look forward to the discussion and the debate as this moves through the Legislature. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a privilege to rise today to speak to Bill 28, the Public Health Amendment Act, 2016. I can appreciate the intention of this bill and

its attempt to improve public health outcomes or, as I would personally put it, the wellness of Albertans. That's a matter of importance to everyone in this province, and due to my tenure as minister of wellness I can certainly attest to this fact.

Now, in this ministry we focused on policies that were positive, proactive, and preventative, that kept Albertans as happy, healthy, and out of the hospital as much as possible. I understand that this piece of legislation addresses this aspect of wellness policy, so for that I thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for following a policy path that was actually forged by the previous Progressive Conservative government.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 28 enables education and child care providers to share student vaccination records with Alberta Health so the department can conduct targeted outreach to increase vaccination rates of students. It also works to enhance vaccine safety and does so by ensuring that all publicly funded vaccines are transported and handled appropriately.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I speak through you to the members of this Assembly and, of course, all Albertans when I say that the science is irrefutable. Vaccines do work. They are integral in preventing communicable diseases, and they do help to protect the health and well-being not only of our children but of all Albertans. So policies such as this are in the public's best interest, and they do help to increase vaccination rates throughout Alberta. This is a value, an idea that I believe members of our Progressive Conservative caucus believe in and will support. The well-being of our children should be at the forefront of all of our policy decisions, and I'm glad that this government is making that a priority in this instance.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I want to be on record saying that the privacy of our children and their families must be reflected in this process. This must be achieved – and I trust that it will be – through the professionalism of our health and education and public service officials. It's of utmost importance that sensitive information pertaining to the health of an individual is maintained.

I also want to advise the government with respect to parental communications. The message must be conveyed that this bill does not interfere with the rights of parents to exclude their children from vaccinations for medical or other reasons. Ensuring and respecting parental rights is critical with respect to policy matters, and this simply must not be forgotten.

Wearing a different hat now, Mr. Speaker, as advocate for indigenous relations, this bill offers an avenue to explore an issue that's very near and dear to my heart, and that, of course, is the well-being of our First Nations and Métis and Inuit children. I understand and I acknowledge from first-hand experience the incredible challenges that are faced by indigenous Albertans. I really, really do hope that this bill provides the semblance of a framework that may be utilized by school divisions to address the wellness of our indigenous friends.

With the utmost level of respect I encourage the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford as well as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora to build – build – upon this legislation with effective policy that enhances the public health of our indigenous individuals and communities through wellness programs and by working, obviously, with our First Nations, Inuit, and Métis friends and, of course, with the federal government. Doing so will in fact enhance the quality of life for so many young people, and that's something that just cannot be overlooked in this process.

From a departmental perspective now, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the government has an appropriate plan in place to ensure that accurate data transmission occurs between our public servants in health and education. With a project such as this, the time and resources allocated do have the potential to be quite large, so we do have to do this right.

To sum up, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this bill utilizes a preventative, proactive focus in health care in order to improve wellness outcomes. That's something, in my humble opinion, that is lacking within our health care system today in a big way, and it's world-wide. It's equally important that we work to prevent disease before it occurs in addition to curing disease, and doing so can help to reduce health care costs and improve the quality of life for all Albertans. It's a win-win for everyone. Bill 28 helps to achieve this through the utilization of vaccines which are useful, effective, and efficient.

Now, as mentioned and just to stress the importance for one last time, it's our wish, our desire, our hope, our plea that this government find creative ways to work with our indigenous populations in ensuring that this bill maximizes wellness outcomes for them and for all Albertans. In working to achieve this, I am more than willing to extend a helping hand to the members opposite in charge of the Indigenous Relations file and, of course, wellness and beyond. Feel free to take me up on it. We can help.

Mr. Speaker, all matters considered, I am pleased to stand here today with my Progressive Conservative caucus in support of Bill 28, and I encourage all hon. members to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

9:20

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments for the Member for Calgary-Lougheed under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you and a very fine morning to you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be here in the Assembly this morning representing the outstanding folks from, as you know, the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills on a number of very important matters that will be before the House today, the first of which is Bill 28, the Public Health Amendment Act, 2016.

I'd like to just spend some time this morning chatting a little bit about the importance of this bill, a little bit about what this bill is, what this bill isn't, and some of the potential risks in the handling of this particular piece of legislation, in particular areas around privacy and potential costs of this. Let me be clear that there is significantly more that I support in this bill than any of the concerns that I may have around this particular piece of legislation. I think an overall desire to increase the health of Albertans is a very good desire to have. I think the overall goal of ensuring that we have a healthy and safe community is something we should all aspire to.

I want to just identify that this piece of legislation is about the sharing of information and then the ministry's ability to act on that information in the form of public health education and work in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health to ensure that those two departments are working well together to ensure that the level of vaccination across our province is to the standard that will assist in the health of those populations.

I do just want to note what this bill isn't. This bill as it currently stands is not about mandatory vaccinations. I know that there are people on all sides of the aisle that have some concerns around mandatory vaccinations. I can tell you already that even though this bill was just recently introduced, some outstanding constituents from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have already contacted me and the office expressing their concerns around the possibility that this is a bill on mandatory vaccinations. I assured them that it wasn't.

I think that there are two very separate issues there, one of which – I am in support of parental choice as well, although I am personally more than pleased to vaccinate my children. The concern around this bill – we should not get distracted that this is a

conversation around mandatory vaccination when it is truly a conversation around information sharing and the government's ability to educate the public on vaccines. In fact, in some cases, if the information is shared appropriately, it will identify potential challenges that parents may have been unaware of or a child that may have in fact missed a vaccine that they would have liked to ensure that their child had.

There are a number of strong points in this legislation, and I encourage my colleagues on this side of the House as well as that side to support this particular piece of legislation.

One of the things that I think the government needs to be aware of, though, is that the both Department of Health and AHS haven't shown the best track record when it comes to the privacy of Albertans. We have seen over the past 18 months a significant number of breaches of the privacy of health records of Albertans, and I think that as the ministry increases the total amount of information that they have and that they have access to, they need to also be ensuring that positive steps are being put into place to ensure that the privacy of Albertans is held with the highest amount of security as well as respect. We've seen significant numbers of breaches in this area, so as we add more information, that there's access to, I certainly have some pause around the ministry's ability to deal with that information appropriately. Now, I hope, Mr. Speaker, that that information will be dealt with appropriately, and I put certain amounts of trust in the minister to ensure that that actually does happen.

The other potential challenge or risk that I see as we increase the total amount of information and the sharing of information between departments is exactly the IT resources that will be required to ensure that that can be done in the most effective way possible, both for privacy purposes as well as for cost purposes. We see significant overbudget costs and overspending on IT resources inside AHS and the ministry, and that presents a risk when it comes to adding more departments that need the ability to communicate. This is an area that the government is not meeting their targets on, so to add more complexity is concerning.

That's not to say that the risk of that information sharing doesn't outweigh the complexity of the challenge, but it's something that both ministries need to be very aware of and attentive to because if this information is handled poorly, not only will it result in the opposite of the desired effect, but it will also cost taxpayers significantly for the government to not get it right. I certainly encourage both ministries to ensure that they're working as well as possible together, that the resources for IT management are spent as effectively and as efficiently as possible because if all of those things happen, we can wind up with a better system between the departments as well as, hopefully, better health outcomes as well as, hopefully, better IT resources.

Now, I'm sure you'll understand, Mr. Speaker, that even though this bill has the best of intentions, sometimes the delivery of this government hasn't been as good as it ought to be, so I think it's fair that we just raise some concerns and highlight some potential risks for the ministry and for the minister.

I'd just like to close by reiterating my support for the fact that we are not moving towards mandatory vaccinations but that parental choice is being retained and also my support for the health outcomes of this legislation being a real net benefit for all of our children across the province.

9:30

I'd like to thank the minister. I hope that they can deliver on this piece of legislation in a manner that achieves the outcomes that are set out in the legislation and do so in a respectful manner that

respects the privacy of all Albertans and the resources that will go into this piece of legislation.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), are there any questions to the Official Opposition House Leader?

Hearing none, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. After last night's results I guess anything is possible. I hear support from the Wildrose for a really common-sense health bill, and I'm pleased to see that even though it might shift some of the priorities away from individual freedom to collective good. That's part of the dilemma that we always face, but I guess that part of what I'm hearing from the government is that we will not take choice away from people, but we will enable them to make the healthy choice the easier choice. That's fundamental to actually improving population health.

We have to make it easy for the individuals based on good information and easy access and reliable records so that we can actually follow up with people in a timely way and allow them to make an informed choice instead of a somewhat uninformed or fearful choice or a choice that is made for them by their circumstances. I'm thinking particularly of low-income folks, single moms, who just can't get everything together, and somehow vaccination and vaccination timelines don't necessarily fit into their hectic schedule or their schedule of priorities.

The bill, as has been stated, proposes to amend the Public Health Act to introduce measures to boost immunization rates in schoolchildren and preschool children to better protect them from vaccine-preventable diseases, to better protect all of us from vaccine-preventable diseases. As we get older, of course, our immune systems weaken, and any of us could be vulnerable to conditions that we thought we were immune to from childhood immunizations, but these have waned and we are now vulnerable.

I applaud the minister and this government for moving forward on something that the Liberals have been calling for for some time, which is not mandatory vaccination but mandatory informed choice, to have accurate records, to have the ability to contact people, to have the ability to respond to an outbreak in a way that is really showing competence in the health system, that says, "We are calling you because your child has no record of immunization; therefore, we are going to have to exclude them from school" or "We're going to have to give some prophylactics," depending on what the condition is, "and we are going to reduce the spread. We're going to reduce the cost of this."

When one talks about prevention as cost saving, one has to recognize that the cost of addressing an outbreak of disease is phenomenal: chasing everybody that had any contact with a particular case, finding out their contacts, their family contacts, isolating them, quarantining them, keeping them out of work, and then getting all those folks in the school to upgrade their vaccine status. That's one of the opportunities of an outbreak, that everybody, if they haven't had their booster, gets called in for their booster. It is a huge and expensive undertaking to deal with an outbreak, not even mentioning the suffering and sometimes rare death in the case of measles or whooping cough or even influenza if it's a child who is vulnerable.

Let's remember that we're protecting those who for one reason or another can't have the vaccine and therefore are vulnerable to a disease. We're protecting those who are on cancer chemotherapy. We're protecting those who may need extra protection because of lung and heart disease and would be therefore extremely vulnerable to a particular condition like influenza, for example.

It's clear to me that this is going to be a cost-saving measure. I share the concerns of the opposition that we have to do this . . .

**Mr. Cooper:** See? Common sense.

**Dr. Swann:** Pardon me?

**Mr. Cooper:** It's common sense.

**Dr. Swann:** Common sense, yeah.

I share your concerns that it has to be done efficiently and effectively. We've spent a tremendous amount of money on IT, and we still can't communicate between doctors' offices and hospitals and hospitals and clinics. We have wasted a lot, millions of dollars, on IT systems that do not allow compatible sharing of information. It's really shocking that we have over the last 20 years, since I've been in politics and before I was in politics, been hearing iterations of IT systems that have not actually generated the kind of communication ability between physicians, between hospitals, and it's really unfortunate. We get duplicate testing done because doctors can't get a hold of results of previous testing. We can't share records from hospitals to clinics because their IT system isn't compatible. It's really unbelievable that at this stage, in 2016, we still have to find IT systems that will talk to everybody in this province and allow for efficient sharing of information.

The resources that are needed are going to be increased, I presume, because public health nurses are already stretched. We're now asking them to not only make continued phone calls but follow up with people and in some cases provide special clinics for their kids to get updated, in some cases spend an hour with a person because they really don't get it and they need a lot of information and persuasion, I guess, to see the opportunity for protection. It's definitely going to take more resources if we're going to do this well, more resources on the IT side and more resources on the nursing side to work with people. It's up to a third of people who don't believe in vaccinations, who believe that it's ultimately harmful, that it's ultimately going to cause them to be ill, that it's ultimately going to cause long-term damage to their unborn child, for example, or whatever the fear is. We're talking about new resources, extra resources, if we're going to do this well, and I know that the minister understands that.

I think this bill strikes the right balance. All of us will be safer. We have the data to back up incidents that occur from time to time, even polio. We've had polio outbreaks in communities in southern Alberta, where the whole community decided, for religious reasons or otherwise, that they didn't want any vaccines, and someone brought in polio from outside the country or maybe from some other part of this country and introduced it into a community. It spread through that community and threatened all those who either had weakened immunity – and there were older people – or threatened those who indeed never got a vaccine in our own mainstream communities. It is a tremendously costly thing to deal with even a single case of measles or mumps or whooping cough. Diphtheria, for example, crops up periodically. These are serious conditions, especially in a population that hasn't been exposed to them for decades.

Of course, what's happened is that successful prevention has meant that people don't think they need them anymore. That's the irony. Because we don't see diphtheria anymore, because we don't see haemophilus influenza meningitis much anymore – someone reminded me yesterday at a conference that we used to get about 200 deaths a year in Alberta from meningitis due to haemophilus. We had two last year instead of 200 as a result of the haemophilus meningitis vaccine that's available now. It's very easy for us as a society to say: "We don't need vaccines anymore. Let somebody else do it." Well, if you don't achieve what's called herd immunity, after the cattle herds, at least 80 per cent, preferably 90 per cent



coverage, you will get outbreaks. You get herd immunity if you get up to 90 to 95 per cent coverage for the vaccine.

No, vaccines are not perfect. Not everybody reacts well to them, and there are some reasons why individuals may not choose to have them after being well informed, and they have that right. They always have that right. Otherwise, it's assault to force somebody to take something they don't want. It always has to be their final choice. But we don't have a system yet that will properly identify those at risk, make sure they're given the full information, and make sure that we get the highest possible rates of immunization possible.

**9:40**

As kind of a parallel question for the minister, I guess, the next step really has to do with health care workers. Health care workers often refuse to take influenza vaccine and therefore put their own patients at risk in health institutions in the case of a flu outbreak. We also, I think, need to apply the same principle to health care workers if they're not prepared to protect themselves and therefore their patients. Some of the most vulnerable patients, of course, in our society are in hospitals. In some cases health workers would be bringing the flu virus in.

If they're not prepared to take the vaccine – and they have to have that choice, presumably; we can't force health workers to take flu vaccine if they don't want it – their fallback, then, is that they have to wear a gown and gloves and mask when they go into the hospital during a flu outbreak. That is only consistent with what we're saying here. We're saying that we want all children to be vaccinated unless there are extreme reasons not to. Well, I think the same principle is going to have to apply to health workers if we're serious about our ethical commitment to first of all do no harm. If we as health workers are taking a preventable illness into a hospital, then I think we are failing in some ways as well.

The same principle, I think, will have to apply. Whether we do that hospital by hospital or whether we do that maybe next year as a new bill, I leave that to the minister, but I think it's certainly something that needs to be discussed in the medical community, in the senior administration of Alberta Health Services. It makes a lot of sense to apply the same principle of mandatory choice, informed choice, and in this case ethical conduct to those who care for the sickest in our community.

So with those caveats, ensuring that we have the resources that these folks need to do a proper job and that we have an IT system that is communicating properly between physician offices and public health units and hospitals and that we get that integrated electronic medical record that we have so long needed, I'm all in favour of moving in this direction. It's a very progressive decision, and it brings us in line with Nova Scotia and Ontario. Ontario has gone even further. But we are, I think, finding the right balance between informing and allowing people to make a conscientious choice at the same time, making sure there are consequences for not taking a vaccine that is actually going to prevent spread in the community.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), are there any questions for the Member for Calgary-Mountain View? What is the wish of the House? Are there other members who wish to speak?

**Mr. Orr:** Under 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Orr:** Yeah. Please.

**The Speaker:** Yes. Proceed.

**Mr. Orr:** I just wonder. To the good doctor from Calgary-Mountain View: I'm interested in the reporting of adverse effects. I think that may have some interesting value in terms of resolving fears, confirming fears. I'd just appreciate it if you'd comment on that.

Thank you.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, an excellent question. Thank you. I'm very pleased to respond to that. Everything we do has benefits and risks, so the bottom line is: do the benefits of a vaccine outweigh the risks of the vaccine? It's statistically 10 to 1, the benefits over the risks; 1 in 10 may have adverse effects from a vaccine. There's a national reporting centre for vaccine-adverse events. You can look it up online. They welcome the data, whether it's headaches, fever. You can report anything that you feel is in a timely relationship to that vaccine, and that means at least within three days of a vaccine. If you have an adverse experience, it should be reported to your doctor. The doctor should report it to Ottawa and the adverse effects registry. That's the only way you get a good database, at the end of the day, especially with new vaccines being introduced all the time. That's the only way we can put together any epidemiology of disease versus vaccine risks.

I don't know that it's used as much as it should be. I don't know that doctors are reporting as conscientiously or patients are reporting as conscientiously as they could to keep that record current and up to date, but certainly events that bring people to hospital, events that cause death: those are all reported if there's any connection to a vaccine. And it has to be. We have to know, in fact, not only how that particular vaccine affected that person but what the cumulative impact is of the 30 or 40 vaccines that we've all had in our lifetimes. At the end of the day, epidemiologists are looking at those who have had that array of vaccines and those who have had none and trying to compare whether there's any difference in cancer rates or depression. Those kinds of comparisons all have to be made on the basis of fact, and it relies on people reporting adverse events as well as the prevention of disease.

Thanks.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members who would like to speak to second reading of Bill 28, the Public Health Amendment Act, 2016?

Would the Minister of Health like to close debate on the matter or the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud?

**Ms Hoffman:** No.

**Dr. Turner:** No, sir.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 24

#### Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016

**The Chair:** We are currently discussing amendment A2. Are there any further speakers to this amendment? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If I may, I'll just pick up where I was the other day, speaking on behalf of my amendment. We were

talking about section 23, which removes the checks and balances that should be in place for the protection of individuals. This section doesn't guarantee the protection of the rights of our citizens, and it implies that actions taken by the forest officers, individuals really acting under the direction of the minister, even when acting in good faith – and I don't think we should question that they would be acting in good faith – and I quote from the section, can have damaging results for the people of our province.

We realize that, sometimes, acting in good faith does unintentionally have the consequences of damaging results to citizens. So by putting this section in, in which there is complete immunity or no sense of accountability for forest officers, it really gives zero recourse for citizens in the instance of their rights being violated at the direction of the minister. I'm not saying that it would ever be intentional, but I am saying that consequently it can happen, and in fact the act essentially acknowledges that by talking about the fact that these results can be damaging.

There are many instances in which people act under the direction of their government, but that shouldn't mean that they or their government is restricted from recourse in the instances of actions that damage or harm people's homes or their livelihoods or their businesses. I'm just simply arguing for checks and balances, which is partly why we have courts in the land. The courts are there for, I suppose you could say, the little guy to ensure that government doesn't overstep their bounds. Some people abuse the power of the courts, and that's unfortunate – it plugs them up – but that's the function that we have, and we can't ignore it. We need to protect the rights of citizens without an overbearing authority, which can become abusive without those checks and balances.

**9:50**

I'd like to actually go back and quote the words of a current minister who used to be in the opposition, who rose with regard to a very, very same sort of phrase in the previous whistle-blower legislation. I quote this current minister as having said a couple of years ago, when referring to this phrase:

No action lies against a department, public entity or office of the Legislature, or an employee of any of them, for making a reasonable human resource management decision in good faith.

As you can see, that bill and this bill are almost word for word the same, identical in what's in section 23 of this bill.

This person continues to say:

There's too much that's either left for interpretation or up to the discretion of one person, the commissioner, which is too much power in the hands of one person and really should be given to the public.

You know what? I don't say this terribly often, but I do agree in this case with the current Minister for Economic Development and Trade, who I have been quoting, who said this about four years ago this month.

Another of our current ministers, the one for Education, on this same sort of subject also had similar thoughts on this issue two years ago in April, when he was against a section that, again, read almost word for word the same. I'm not going to quote it but just reference it.

I know that some individuals in this government actually probably feel much the same way about the abuse of power as we do. The NDP used to rail against the old government when they would exempt themselves from the laws. The old NDP used to be for a free and democratic society that did not abuse the rules. The old NDP used to be on the side of Albertans. Now that the old NDP is ministers, we're seeing a different side.

Although I'm starting to doubt it, I do hope that there are some remnants of the old argument, the old spirit of the NDP that used to

hate corruption and the unbalanced concentration of power that this section will in fact create. It is a step in the wrong direction. No one should be above the law, and we should not be creating laws that give individual ministers or individual employees of the state too much power. I hope that the two ministers I've quoted would speak with their colleagues and agree with the amendment that I'm now putting forward, that's now been tabled.

Frankly, friends, I just appeal to you on this. Think about the ordinary person who potentially becomes an abused nonentity in this. Democracy is one of the most valued parts of our heritage and recognizes that all citizens must receive equal civil rights. Most civil servants are, in fact, good and civil people, but all people make mistakes at some point. Nobody is perfect, and we don't expect them to be. Under this bill, though, they have significant powers to require costly remedies, to shut down businesses, to disrupt services, to really impact people's lives, to confiscate things. These powers are absolute, total, and non-negotiable when you take away the right to any kind of appeal or recourse or addressing the issue. Honest mistakes can happen that cost people their lives, that bankrupt them.

This bill actually creates a matrix in which people have to live, and there's no escape because there's not even a possible avenue of appeal or recourse. It's denied in this case. It's deliberately stripped away, and that's not fair for the people of Alberta, and that's my real point. While government employees should be protected from harm and harassment and liability – I have no problem with that – so should citizens in a just society. There should be a balance for them.

The difficulty here is that, in a sense, we're granting agents of the state absolute authority, and it's based on their subjective opinion. The only requirement in 23(1) and (2) is that "a fire control plan [be] satisfactory to the forest officer." Well, what if it's not satisfactory to others? I mean, obviously, the person may not be satisfied, but what about the case where municipalities are impacted and they're not satisfied or a fire chief in a particular area? What if there's a difference of opinion here? There should be some mechanism for appeal and discussion.

What does "satisfactory" actually mean? Does it mean effective? What if the plan that's viewed as satisfactory is, in fact, not effective? Or does satisfactory even hold the potential meaning of personally acceptable? Does an individual's personal bias or personal preference now have the uncontested force of law? What if a feasible plan is rejected and the demand for an impossible one is the only thing that will satisfy the officer?

Now, I recognize fully that most forest officers will be good people, but we're all human. All people have bad days, sick days. Get a speeding ticket, and you're mad at the world, and frustration just bubbles to the surface. It even happens in this House. When that, though, has the force of expressing itself in the force of law – and I don't blame people for feeling frustrated sometimes. But my point is that it just happens. Sometimes a victim with no rights is inadvertently created, and there's no ability to ask for a sober second opinion. They are silenced. My question is: is that social justice? No, it's not. So please think about the possibilities, the unseen impacts on people. Why do we continue to write laws that reduce people to nonentities, with no voice and no rights?

Thomas Paine, in 1789, recorded the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen by the National Assembly of France. Article 15 of that very famous declaration states, "Every community has a right to demand of all its agents an account of their conduct." Let me read that again. "Every community has a right to demand of all its agents an account of their conduct." But in this law we are going back on that basic principle of human rights and democracy and

stating that they do not have a right to demand of their agents an account of their conduct.

I'm simply asking that we enshrine the basic human rights of Albertans in your legislation. It's not okay that we create a state, one piece of legislation after another, that strips our people of basic civil rights to be heard and to be protected. Unfortunately, this trend and this pattern began under the last government. I was hoping, I think, with a great many people, that this would not continue in the current government. The temptation of government is to overstep its role, and I beg you to not go down that path. It's not unreasonable to create the checks and balances to power that distinguish a democracy from a totalitarian state, which, in fact, was the very struggle of the French Revolution. I certainly don't think we want to go back to 1789.

I'm all for an efficient, effective government and administration. I do not mean to create barriers or impediments to forest officers trying to do their job. I do ask that we don't trample the basic democratic rights of people by stripping them of the right to speak up in some legal venue or forum. All citizens should have basic civil rights of due process before a judge or at least some sort of an impartial appeal board. The previous government, as I said, began this oligarchic slide towards accruing power and rights to themselves while stripping away personal rights. You can do better. Albertans are hoping that you will.

I at least must defend the rights of the people to due process, to have someone who will hear their cause. The individual has no power in the face of the massive power of the state unless their right is protected in law. In this law that right is not protected, and I think that is wrong. It creates the potential for the abuse of power, and that makes the state a bully of the most abject kind.

I have tabled my amendment. I trust that you will give it good consideration, and I urge all members to consider it carefully.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

10:00

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to thank the member for bringing this amendment forward. However, this amendment would reverse the proposed changes to the legislation that would protect our forestry staff from civil action for doing their jobs. The section of the bill that this amendment would repeal protects forestry staff and everyone working under the direction of the Crown, including our wildland firefighters. It protects them from civil action while acting under direction of the Crown. The section in question does not protect those acting recklessly or with gross negligence. The Crown and minister already have these protections under the act. We think that front-line staff carrying out their normal duties in a reasonable manner deserve the same protections.

Madam Chair, this is a standard clause, and similar provisions exist in other acts such as the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, the Public Lands Act, the Fisheries (Alberta) Act, the Protecting Alberta's Environment Act, as well as the Water Act.

With that, Madam Chair, I would recommend that we turn this amendment down. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak in favour of the amendment. Let me be clear. The desire isn't that we are, you know, efforting to do all we can to find wrongdoing in front-line workers. Nothing could be further from

the truth. Of course, the vast, vast, vast majority of forest protection workers and forestry personnel are acting with the best intentions.

The challenge is that the bill doesn't provide any form of due process, and it also sets a course where even if an individual didn't act appropriately, there wouldn't be any of the appropriate checks and balances. So this amendment would create the ability for checks and balances to be in place. Perhaps a better balance needs to be struck between the two positions, but given the nature of the amendment, I think it's important that we would support this so that that process can still exist and we can move forward in a manner that is respectful of both sides.

I would encourage all members of the Assembly to support the amendment, and I look forward to doing so shortly.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further comments, questions, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to further discuss the government's proposed Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. As most of this House should know, the update of this act was one of 21 recommendations brought forth from the tragic 2011 fire in Slave Lake. The minister of then ESRD created the Flat Top Complex wildfire review committee as a review of Alberta's wildfire management practices after the wildfire that entered the town of Slave Lake and surrounding communities in May of that year. Three wildfires burned 22,000 hectares and destroyed over 500 structures. These fires became known as the Flat Top Complex. The cost of implementing all of these recommendations was estimated in 2013 at \$500 million. As of then, 13 of 21 recommendations had been implemented.

While preliminary estimates for the Fort McMurray fire are pegged into the billions, it's no doubt that any number of recommendations and dollars will not be sufficient to solve these kinds of catastrophic events, but it does give reason to pause and wonder how much less the impact would have been had there been more of these recommendations implemented in the years between 2013 and 2016.

Some of the broader recommendations from the committee included a proposal to expand fire weather advisories to include potential wildfire behaviour so that communities can be better prepped in case of impending threats. As we saw in the frightening evacuation of Fort McMurray, minutes and seconds can mean getting out of harm's way safely. While we are waiting for the reports to come out on the Fort McMurray disaster and the examination of how the fire was fought, another recommendation suggesting developing more specialized initial response firefighting crews would be timely. Advancements in techniques, equipment, and technology will always have this recommendation evolving.

As we continue to evolve in our strategies to combat forest and prairie fire threats, it's equally important to involve more agencies and jurisdictions in carrying out FireSmart risk reduction projects in communities. My colleague from Drumheller-Stettler broached this subject in his speech on how, through anecdotal stories, my colleagues and I have heard how FireSmart techniques were instrumental in reducing the damage of the Horse Lake fire. These community grants for FireSmart, while currently capped, could prove to be a solid investment in reducing overall fire damage to communities.

As I mentioned, amending and updating the Forest and Prairie Protection Act was recommended in the Flat Top Complex report, and I expect that as technologies and practices advance, the need for updating this act will continue. This is why I have some support for this legislation, though I'm hoping that robust discussion and compromise on possible tweaks to it are given due consideration by all members. Again, we are doing our best to work with the government on reasonable changes to what essentially will become a living document throughout the years.

With that in mind, there are some areas of concern that reveal a certain vagueness in what the government is trying to propose. Perhaps we should postpone debate until the minister is willing to answer the questions we have. So far, since the minister introduced the bill – he spoke about 150 words on it at that time – we haven't heard from him, and we've had multiple questions regarding it. As my colleagues noted several times with obvious exasperation, nobody across the aisle seems to be willing or able to respond to our questions or concerns.

One issue, to me, seems to be the wording in 23(1) which discusses fire control plans. While I'm sure everyone can agree that this is a very important aspect of the act, I have to again ask about the vague wording of "an industrial or commercial operation." It was mentioned yesterday. Hopefully, someone will expand on who exactly this refers to. A colleague used the example of a farmer running cattle on a public land. Will he need a fire control plan? Will a taxidermist operating his taxidermy shop on an acreage need one? Is there a threshold for a certain number of employees or other criteria that one uses as a benchmark? We would really appreciate some clarity on this.

Another thing that is a sticky point in this act is the term "thing." While I understand that other jurisdictions may use this term, places like Saskatchewan when talking about pest control make it clear that they mean wood. Specifically, they use the term "forest product." Pest and disease control of things such as Dutch elm and pine beetle: those threats are real and should be taken seriously, and I'm all for those protections. When we're talking about tracking and destroying pests and infested products, it's certainly understandable.

**10:10**

What isn't understandable is the wording change from "product" to "thing." Expanding a forest officer's power to a "thing" seems to be a way too judicial use of that terminology. It's just not clear how broad the term has to be in order to ensure eradication of diseased trees and pests. Again, these are questions that we've asked but haven't received any answers to.

I'm hopeful that the government doesn't mean to go full on Big Brother and want to include trailers, vehicles, or personal belongings. Do you? We have asked why, and I'm asking once more: why the change? If you're going to change terminology or descriptors, then support the amendment and use the term "forest product." It seems a sensible compromise that would certainly remove any ambiguity and one that I'm sure the government and all the members of this House can agree is a reasonable one.

I'd like to introduce an amendment at this time.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A3.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Loewen:** Okay. I move that Bill 24, Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 16 as follows: in clause (a) in the proposed section 31.4(1) by striking out "thing" and substituting "forest product" and by striking out clause (b).

I'm going to wrap this up by once again repeating that what we all want to do here is to make life better for Albertans. That's what the government members believe, and I'm certain the opposition parties feel the same way. We aren't always going to agree on ideological differences in this House, but when we're talking about something that can have a direct consequence on our citizens, I don't think trying to erase any possible misunderstandings or ambiguity is asking too much. I'm hopeful that we can get full support for our amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A3? Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm happy to give the government a few minutes to make some very important decisions on whether or not they're going to support this very important amendment.

**Mr. Bilous:** Tell me a little bit about that.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why don't I tell the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade a little about this very important amendment. I think, as my hon. colleague from the northern part of our province, one who has had a significant amount of experience with forestry products as well as forestry activities and other sundry related items, has so clearly identified for us, there's a significant concern and risk inside this particular piece of legislation, Bill 24, a bill, I might add, Madam Chair, that we are in favour of.

Let me just take a brief moment to say thank you to our front-line forestry employees, our firefighters, and our first responders, that do everything that they can to keep our province safe whenever possible. Let me just highlight the good work that has been done. Generally speaking, this piece of legislation endeavours to make some proactive steps around doing just that; that is, making our forested areas – thankfully, the Member for Banff-Cochrane let us know that those forested areas are often covered with trees – safer for all of our province. Not only is it about making them safe, but it's about managing the resources that are our forests.

You know, I look forward to being able to support this bill, but as you know, Madam Chair, the role of the opposition is to ensure that we get the best possible piece of legislation. That means, even on stuff we agree with like Bill 24, exerting to make sure that the legislation is as good as it possibly can be for all Albertans and the stakeholders that are involved with this piece of legislation, be they forestry employees, industry, Albertans.

One of the things that we've identified here is a change in language in the legislation, as my colleague identified, this move away from the terminology "forest product" to the terminology around "thing." Now, I would love to be able to provide the definition of "thing" – and I should just pull it up for us here briefly – but it describes such a wide swath of objects. One of the risks is that if you have this opportunity with respect to pest control in our forests and we only use the word "thing," there are many things that are inside our forests that aren't forest products, and it would allow a significant amount of leeway and ability for those things to be confiscated or moved. I just want to read section 31.4 for you. I'll just grab my bill here. As my colleague mentioned with respect to "thing," a thing in the forest in this case could be boats, ATVs, trailers, vehicles. It could go as far as backpacks that an individual may or may not be carrying.

When writing legislation, we need to ensure that balance is struck, and certainly, in my opinion and the opinion of my colleague, when we just say "thing," that doesn't strike the right balance. If we use terminology that we're more familiar with as well

as terminology that is used in other jurisdictions like Saskatchewan, that is significantly more clear and provides guidance and direction and a little bit more clarity around what would and would not be appropriate. I'm sure that even you, Madam Chair, would agree that, you know, the confiscation of an individual's backpack or some personal private property would not be the direction or the desire of this government; it's more specifically around keeping to forest products so that our folks out in the field are very focused on the job at hand.

Let me be clear. When we legislate, we need to consider the possibility that there will be one-offs out there. I don't believe that the government is putting the word "thing" here so that they can go out into the forest and, you know, disrupt individuals' lives, but I do believe it's possible that there may be a forestry worker that, under the guise of pest control, doesn't necessarily do the right thing. Ensuring that this is about forest products provides some oversight and some guidance to our workers, and I think that's critically important. So I will certainly be encouraging members of the government and members on the opposition side, that they need to consider just exactly the direction that we ought to go, that we shouldn't be opening legislation to wide, wide swaths of interpretation but should keep the language specific to the problem at hand, which is forest products.

10:20

I look forward to hearing from the government and all of the wonderful reasons why they will be supporting this amendment and moving this forward. It is important that we keep Albertans at the fore of all of our decisions, and I believe that Albertans would see the reasonability of this amendment. We're not asking for things that are totally unreasonable but for things that provide the department the ability to keep our forested areas safe as well as provide clarity for individuals who are enjoying our forests here in the province.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This being a very timely bill, considering Fort Mac, I'm glad this has come up here, and I'm glad to be able to speak on this notice of amendment. I was a firefighter; I still am actually a volunteer firefighter. After every major incident we would go look and see, well, what worked right, what went wrong, and I'm sure that's what happened with Fort Mac, Smoky Lake, all these different places that have had fires, that have had problems. So this bill is a timely bill. It's a good bill. We're able to reflect on some of the things that went right and some of the things that went wrong and make it better.

My concern with this part of the bill: it says in clause (a) that we should be striking out "thing." We should be striking out "thing" because, really, that's too vague. We need to have some clarity to what we're talking about.

When I was in real estate I used to write up contracts. If I went and started writing up a contract and I said what the chattels were that were going to be included with this house and I said, "Well, there's going to be a thing included with this house," when a person occupies the house, they would look and say, "Well, that cabinet is not there." "Well, we didn't write down 'cabinet'; we wrote down 'thing.'" Therefore, that's what we were talking about, this cabinet." I'd be in court. I'd be in front of a judge, trying explain that, because there was not clarity in this.

It's problematic. We need to be able to define what "thing" is. That's standard with practices across all industries. They have to have a definition. They can't just say: there's a thing. Madam Chair,

it's way too loose, and I just cannot – it's important to have that same thing in there. So on this amendment I encourage all the members of this House to consider this amendment and vote in favour of it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I'd like to thank the member for bringing this amendment forward as well as his concerns. If we change the term from "thing" to "forest products," we're not capturing a lot; for example, piles of logs, raw logs, trees, et cetera. We want to make sure that this bill captures all, so at this time I would encourage everyone to turn down this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to just touch on an important fact here. Under section 31.4(1) "A forest officer may, without a warrant, seize any thing that the forest officer has reasonable grounds to believe harbours a forest pest." Now, what's important here to establish is: without a warrant. Whenever we have one of our officers doing any seizures, we always have to be cautious whenever it's done without a warrant.

In this case here, we're saying that clarity is important, and I'll move a little further on that. On Bill 1, the act that removed union and corporate donations, I brought forward an amendment that said that services should not be allowed to be brought forward to political parties by unions and corporations. Now, the government came back, and they said: there's no definition of services, so we're not going to be supporting this because there isn't enough of a description of exactly what it is you're trying to move forward with this amendment. Now, while I would say that we could have established a definition, that was rejected on the basis that there was a government that said: well, it wasn't prescriptive enough.

Now we've got a government bill coming forward, and under section 31.4 we're seeing that the government is saying that an officer is able, really, without a warrant, to seize any thing that they are looking to bring forward. This is why we need to have some sort of narrow focus on what exactly it is that the government can actually seize. Right now I've heard from my local constituents that when it comes to fish and wildlife, if they have a reasonable concern, they can go into a vehicle and start seizing. That, I believe, is an important part of the job. Now, when it comes to a question of this magnitude, does "thing" encompass a vehicle? Let's say, for instance, that you were cutting timber in B.C. and there are some timber shavings in the back of your truck. Does that mean that that truck now is a thing and, therefore, something we should be seizing?

I have to say that in the end, I support Bill 24 and the intent of the bill. What we need to start questioning is: how do we make this bill better? I would argue, debate, if you will, that it is important that we are very specific when we give the ability to officers to be able to seize anything without a warrant. This is why we brought forward the amendment saying that it's not appropriate to use the word "thing" and we need to be more prescriptive, that it's, I think, reasonable to say "forest product."

Now, the member who just talked was saying that forest products may not be timber stands or log piles. Well, I would say that those probably fit under "forest product." This is an important part that we're looking at here. When we start to just open these things up, with no definition, we will have a problem. Now, I know that my

local forestry officers are good men and women, and I am certain that they are not going to be abusing this, but there always is the exception to that rule, and leaving this vague, the way it is now, gives opportunity for abuse.

**10:30**

Now, something along this line, an example that came to me when I was thinking about this specific amendment, was that as an accountant I actually had harvesters as clients up in Slave Lake. This is important because, let's say, for instance, that one of their harvesting units went up to B.C. to do some harvesting. Now, these are million-dollar units. Million-dollar units. Let's say, for instance, that that is deemed a part of a thing. Now, if a forestry officer obviously has a concern that we are having some pest coming along from another province, then absolutely that needs to be identified, but is it appropriate that we are shutting down an entire harvesting operation for possibly weeks and weeks and weeks when the season for forestry is such a short one? When we're doing this, we need to be very conscientious of knowing that this could impact a business, and it is important that we are establishing exactly what a thing is and how it will impact the people that are trying to maybe possibly enjoy the outdoors, maybe the businesses that depend on forestry.

Again, to bring this back, we do need to make sure that our forestry officers have the tools they need to be able to do their job to protect our forests. So it comes to balance. Balance is the key here, and that is what my colleague – my colleague is bringing forward this amendment, saying that right now, by not being prescriptive enough, there is no balance in this, and we need to be looking at bringing forward balance. That's why I'm saying that that balance seems to be forest product. Now, again, if there is a term that might work better for the government, I'm sure we can bring forward another amendment, but right now this one best fits what the government is trying to achieve.

I encourage all of the government and my opposition colleagues to review this amendment seriously and really consider the fact that it isn't just about us trying to be prescriptive and reduce what a forestry officer can do but to actually be saying to the forestry officer: what exactly is it that you're trying to seize without a warrant, and does it fit into a forest product? I encourage, again, everyone to vote for this amendment. If they have a deeper concern on this one term, maybe the government could come forward with their own amendment, but I don't believe that "thing" is an appropriate term whenever we use the words "seize without a warrant."

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, I think that this is a very well-thought-out amendment, and if I was in the opposition benches, I would probably be asking the same question myself: you know, is it really necessary to change the language in this, and is "thing" too broad? I thank the members for putting some thought into this and suggesting a very thoughtful amendment. Having thought more about it myself, I worry that it would be a little bit too prescriptive. I understand the member was saying that, you know, he would like to see it more well defined, but I take it as that that would take some of the discretion out of the hands of our public servants who are put in the position of making these decisions.

I think it's important for us just to walk backwards a little bit and recall what the present wording says and requires of a forest officer. The current wording: make sure that the forest officer has to have "reasonable grounds to believe [that] . . . an injurious forest tree pest infestation or non-indigenous invasive species infestation or

[something] that is otherwise diseased." There is a requirement there, regardless of what the definition is, that reasonableness applies to this situation. So, you know, putting myself in the shoes of a forest officer, if they are using their best reasonable judgment, their professional judgment, if they suspect that there's something that contains a forest pest that threatens our forest industry and Alberta's forests, I want them to have the ability to exercise their professional discretion in order to seize that object. My expectation is that they're not going to be seizing things like ATVs or chainsaws or this kind of thing. If in their reasonable judgment that's what they determine, then they have that ability. But most reasonable people exercising their judgment probably wouldn't reach that conclusion.

I think that there is so much at stake for our forests here that we need to give to the professionals who are charged with carrying out these duties on a daily basis the ability to make that change. I completely agree with what the Member for Red Deer-North said previously, that there are things that most people would consider as something that could harbour a forest pest that aren't currently captured by this definition. You know, she mentioned things like log piles, slash piles, raw logs. There are things that currently aren't captured in the definition. If we were to accept this amendment and revert to the previous wording, there are things that I think all the members would agree could very well harbour forest pests like these raw logs and log piles. Basically, once a tree is cut down, it's no longer considered, quote, unquote, a forest product. Therefore, the ability of that forest officer to seize that item, I'm sure the member would agree, a log sitting on the ground that is suspected to contain pine beetle – the forest officer should have that ability to seize that log, but right now they don't.

I see the member nodding his head. Perhaps I'm convincing him. You know, our forest officers are professional people. They take their jobs very seriously, and they have a big job to do. Making sure that they have the ability to carry out that task is the reason for the change in the wording, in the language to "thing." The member was talking a bit about being – he wants to see this legislation being very prescriptive, but I worry if we were to accept the amendment, it would be too prescriptive. [interjection] Yeah. It could endanger our forestry sector. I know that's not the intent of the member. Don't get me wrong. I just worry that when we start putting very tight definitions on things when there are so many variables out there, we need to make sure that the professionals have the ability to use their judgment and carry out their job.

Just to wrap it up here, Madam Chair, I think the members have put a very thoughtful amendment forward, and I understand their concern, but given what's at stake here in protecting Alberta's forests, I think we need to make sure that the professionals have the ability to carry out their job, keeping in mind at all times that the criteria of reasonableness is in the legislation. Anybody carrying out their duties has to exercise reasonable judgment that they would be prepared to defend in court if they're going to seize something. If someone questions their reasonableness, then that would have to be something that they would defend in court. I expect that our professionals are well trained. They're going to exercise their best judgment and act in a reasonable fashion. For that reason I can't support the amendment, and I would encourage the Assembly to not accept this amendment.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**10:40**

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to read through this bill again, just to give a better understanding of what we're

talking about here. It says: “A forest officer may, without a warrant, seize any thing that the forest officer has reasonable grounds to believe harbours a forest pest.” It goes on to say, “the Minister may order the destruction of a [thing] seized under subsection (1).” It goes on to say:

No right of compensation exists against the Crown or any person in respect of anything destroyed under subsection (2), but the Minister may provide such compensation in the amount or at the value that the Minister considers fair for the destroyed [thing].

There are a lot of ramifications to this term “thing” beyond just being confiscated. It’s contemplating destruction, and it also contemplates the value of it and whether the person will be compensated for it, so this isn’t just an issue of something being taken away, maybe cleaned up, maybe given back at a later date or whatever; this is talking about destruction and whether there’s compensation for that thing. That’s why I think it’s a very important word.

Now, again, I’ve mentioned before – and I’ll mention it again – that the minister responsible for this has brought in this bill with roughly 150 words expressed in this House regarding this very important bill, that he’s responsible for. About 150 words. That’s it. Now, we had one short response on some of the concerns expressed in this that was probably an additional 50 words. So when we’re asking questions about this and asking for clarification, we’re not getting responses, in particular from the minister responsible, so we’re sitting here trying to come up with ways to make this bill better. That’s what we’re doing here. We’re trying to make this bill better, and we have actual good questions.

Now, the member opposite from Banff-Cochrane suggested that this was a thoughtful amendment. Obviously, they admit that this amendment has merit. The only thing that would be better is if we had any ability to receive more direction on why the government chose to make these changes. Now, I don’t know, but I would like to ask: was there any situation that brought about this change? Did something happen or multiple things happen that all of a sudden the government decided that we need to change this word? We haven’t heard that. We haven’t heard if there are any situations that could have caused this.

The member opposite talked about that this needed to include trees and logs and everything, so that’s why it has to be “thing” instead of “forestry product.” I’m pretty sure that a tree or a log or cuttings or anything like that would fall under forestry product. They come from the forest. Previous to this the word was “product,” and obviously when the word was “product,” they were able to take away trees, logs, anything like that. That’s why we’re asking the question: why the change to “thing”?

In my community I know some of the forest officers. I trust them. I know they’re intelligent. I know they’re hard working. I know they’re reasonable. This has nothing to do with the credibility of our forest officers, who are doing their best to do their job. But we’re talking about legislation here, and this is legislation that will most likely last, so we’re not picking on government employees. We’re not picking on forest officers. That’s absolutely absurd to suggest that. We’re talking about this bill here before us right now and about the amendment that the Member for Banff-Cochrane suggests is a thoughtful amendment.

Again, we’re here to improve this bill. We want to make it better. We want it to represent what Albertans want to see in legislation, and in doing that, we have brought forward an amendment to be considered today. I would encourage everyone in this House to support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you. It’s a pleasure to rise in the House today to talk about this very important issue. When we think about what is going on today in West Yellowhead, we look at how the beetle has spread into our area. That it has spread quite badly is what we found out from the forest service and that kind of thing when we look at how badly it has infected the forests around Hinton in particular.

So when we’re looking at these things in relation to how it has spread and we compare that to what happened in B.C., this is what we learned. When we talked to the people in B.C. and dealt with the forestry people in B.C., a huge problem was found. When they were logging, the logging practices, the idea of transporting the logs down major highways and routes, and the storage of the logs on the log sites were a huge problem in spreading the beetle. That’s exactly what it did. They found that the practices in the bush, not cleaning the equipment, transporting the logs along various routes, and also the storage of the logs on various log sites were spreading the beetles.

That’s why we’re looking at trying to control this by putting in the definition of “thing.” It gives you the ability to say: you can’t transport that log down that highway because this is what you’re going to do, and these are the things that you need to take into account.

**An Hon. Member:** That’s a forest product.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** No. It’s the raw logs that have the beetles, not the product itself. The product is the end use of the log. What the log is made into is not at question here. The fact of the transportation of the logs themselves is the problem.

The forest officer should have the right to say, “Where did that come from, and does it have evidence of beetle damage?” and be able to control where that log is going and how it’s stored on the sites. We’ve learned that from the forestry people in B.C.

When the member was talking about the forest companies losing the ability to log for extended periods of time because maybe the machine had seized – a lot of these machines are cleaned at the sites where they’re doing the logging. They’re high-pressure cleaned to make sure that they’re not spreading the beetles. It’s very important that we have this ability for our forest officers to turn around and try and stop the spread of the beetles that way. That’s why we’re saying that this amendment needs to be voted down.

Thank you very much.

10:50

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the Member for West Yellowhead for his comments. I just wanted to ask him a couple of questions. In the previous legislation the word that was used was “product.” Now, just to clarify: were Alberta forest officers allowed to stop logs, people with firewood, that sort of thing that they believed had pine beetles and that sort of thing? Also, I just wondered how the pine beetle protection has been in Alberta compared to B.C. as far as how it was controlled and whether a good job was done or a bad job was done on pine beetle protection. And then maybe comment – obviously, where you are you’re adjacent to national parks and that sort of thing – on how the pine beetle problem has been there and that sort of thing.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yeah. I just want to point out that I wanted some more clarification from the government. Of course, I asked the

Member for West Yellowhead, who has experience in forestry and that sort of thing, three fairly simple questions but got no response. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to clarify a couple of the points the member was asking about, I just want to point out that the ministry briefed the Alberta Forest Products Association on the changes in the bill, including the language of “thing.” They have expressed no concerns, and in fact they stood on stage with the minister when the minister made the announcement. With that in mind, I feel confident that the association that encompasses all of our forest industries here in Alberta is supporting the language that’s in the bill, and that’s why I feel confident in voting against the amendment and sticking with the original language in the bill.

**The Chair:** Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. I’m glad to hear that the association, you know, stood with the minister on this. That’s great. I respect their opinion, but I also respect the opinion of Albertans, and when we debate these issues in the Legislature here, we need to have consultation with everybody in Alberta. When we bring concerns forward, we’re bringing concerns forward for Albertans, all Albertans.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

Seeing none, I’ll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:53 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Ellis	McIver
Barnes	Hanson	Taylor
Cooper	Loewen	van Dijken
Cyr		

11:10

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Payne
Babcock	Hoffman	Phillips
Bilous	Horne	Piquette
Carson	Kazim	Renaud
Ceci	Loyola	Rosendahl
Connolly	Luff	Sabir
Coolahan	Malkinson	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	McCuaig-Boyd	Schreiner
Dang	McKittrick	Sigurdson
Drever	McLean	Sucha
Eggen	Miller	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Turner
Ganley	Nielsen	Westhead
Gray		

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 40
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[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill. The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time I would like to move an amendment to Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A4.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to have the bill amended as follows: section 21 is amended in the proposed section 37.5(1) by adding “or the regulations” after “provision of this Act.”

Madam Chair, I wish to bring this amendment forward to provide clarification to the section on administrative penalties. I want to ensure that it is clear in this section that administrative penalties can also apply to the regulations. This will ensure that we can apply administrative penalties to industrial-based violations which are contained in the regulations. Currently the wording shows only that administrative penalties apply to the act, but that was not the intent of this section. It should include regulations as well.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to bring this amendment forward, and I encourage all in the House today to support this amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I’m just reviewing the amendment here. I think that it appears that we have an amendment that I will be able support.

I’d just like to highlight some of the challenges around regulations generally. I recognize that all pieces of legislation have them, but the amendment is providing some clarification about what will happen in the regulations and after the provision of the act. I just regularly like to have the opportunity to rise and speak about regulations and some of the risk that regulations present in the amount of power that is only held within the minister’s office and not externally with the Legislature. As we progress through legislation, you know, we’ve seen things like Bill 6, that has massive amounts of leeway in the regulation. We’ve seen other areas. We’re going to see pieces of legislation, I believe, in this session that are going to provide wide swaths of liberties to the minister or to other levels of government and put those inside the regulations solely. So I appreciate that the government is trying to provide some clarification on this particular amendment.

I guess one question that I do have is that, typically speaking, we would see on an amendment a stamp from Parliamentary Counsel, that Parliamentary Counsel has in fact seen this amendment and it has been approved through the regular ways and means, but on this particular amendment, at least the copy that I have received, there is no stamp from Parliamentary Counsel. So if the member opposite could provide some feedback as to whether or not it’s been approved by Parliamentary Counsel.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I’ll provide you some clarity. It’s a government amendment, and government amendments are dealt with a little bit differently. They get an initial, and you can see the initial on the left corner. That’s the approval by Parliamentary Counsel.

Are there any other speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A4 carried]



**The Chair:** Back on the main bill. Are there any further amendments, comments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Today I'd like to reinforce that I believe that I will support this bill. This is great that we are working together to make it stronger.

I know that forest fires have been a big concern for myself all my life. A good example would be that I was born and raised in Slave Lake, and even though I wasn't living in Slave Lake at the time of the fire, I did have an accounting office in Slave Lake at the time. I will say that when it comes to my clients, my family, and my friends, they were impacted by that fire in ways that today they're still reeling from. If there is any way that we can look at providing any relief from fires in any part of our province, we need to be investigating that.

Now, I'm not sure that this bill will actually change any people's activities, but – you know what? – I do believe that we need to update especially the penalties to ensure that they are something that people will take seriously.

Now, I talked a little about Slave Lake, but my riding also, the one I'm in now, did get impacted by the Fort McMurray fire. We saw a lot of smoke, and we also had a lot of evacuees coming to my riding, and one of my municipalities, the town of Bonnyville, was actually deemed an evacuation centre. To hear some of the sad stories that came from that area – and the worry that was on people just recently is a concern. Then, lastly, we had the Saskatchewan fire that was evacuated to Cold Lake, and it was an evacuation as well. We've seen a lot of fires go through my riding as well as a place where I'd lived, and I'll tell you, to hear the misery that is brought forward by a forest fire is something that we need to be very cognizant of and doing whatever we can to make sure that Albertans are taking our forests very seriously.

Now, the one thing I have to say is that for myself, our first responders, in all three cases that I've had experience with, have been remarkable, and I can't put that lightly because it is the truth. They go and run towards a fire when many are running away. I have to say that when they're putting their lives at risk, they need to be acknowledged. I'll tell you that in both cases, the Lac la Ronge fire in Saskatchewan as well as the Fort McMurray fire, I made sure that when those did go through my riding, the volunteers in my riding understood that the importance of what they were doing would contribute towards the well-being of Alberta and our neighbouring province of Saskatchewan.

**11:20**

Now, I'll tell you how seriously MLAs across the province take this, and it doesn't just go for our province; it also goes for the province of Saskatchewan. I have had dealings with the NDP from Saskatchewan, and it was revolving around the Lac la Ronge fire. I have to say that the Member for Cumberland and the leader of the NDP from Saskatchewan came up to visit the evacuation centre in Cold Lake. In the end, establishing communication with our neighbouring province was of the utmost importance. What we need to make sure of is that we continue to communicate with all those that are involved with these, all the stakeholders. In this time we saw the MLAs from Saskatchewan moving very forward, saying: "How can we help? Is there anything that the Red Cross is doing that we can reinforce? How can we bring support to our people within our province right now?"

That's something that is important. This is a job that all MLAs need to take seriously, and, you know, with this last Fort McMurray fire, I will say that I take pride in the Leader of the Opposition moving forward with his riding as well as the Member for Fort

McMurray-Wood Buffalo moving forward and making sure that they were with the actual evacuees at the time, making sure they understood how important it was that their needs were being looked after. I will say that it is an achievement that our Premier can put forward and which we celebrated: all of the evacuees were able to get out from the fire safely.

I will say that, going back to the Lac la Ronge fire, there were some communication problems to begin with. Now, that comes down to the fact that the past Municipal Affairs minister – I brought it to his attention that I had no way of being able to hear or understand what was going on, and he personally called my constituency office to make sure that I was involved in the communications, and that's something that I can take pride in, that these fires are not just partisan. This is nonpartisan, and we need to be looking at what we can do to protect our forests, to protect Albertans, to protect people from Fort McMurray, to protect people from Slave Lake. How do we continue to move these concerns that our forests need to be managed appropriately to ensure that we also have a source of enjoyment for our residents as well as opportunities to be able to work on this renewable resource that we've got and be able to continue to grow the business community within Alberta?

Now, having dealt with a lot of forest businesses in my past because of the fact that Slave Lake is surrounded by forest – and I do have forest within my riding, not as large as that was, the one that I came from – I will tell you that when it comes to making sure we protect our forests, this is something that we all need to take pride in. We need to be able to know from the stakeholders that in the end, Alberta is doing everything they can and everything we should.

Now, we have brought forward concerns about this bill, but these concerns, in the end, are trying to strengthen the bill. They're not trying to erode the intent of this bill. I think it's important to say that opposition and government working together to protect our forests is important. I know that even though it may seem like we're just here to bring forward only concerns, we also need to make sure the government understands that when they put forward a good piece of legislation, we'll support them in that. We support the government in the fact that as they continue to make strong legislation, the opposition is here to ensure that it's the best possible legislation going forward, and we are trying to do our part to contribute to the growth and the maturity of this legislation so that it meets all the needs and all the stakeholder needs.

In the end, it could be that the government may not have met every stakeholder out there when it comes to this legislation, and it could be that we do end up with resources that they don't have and feelings that need to be brought forward and concerns that need to be addressed.

The value of making sure that we are moving these concerns forward is what Albertans, I would argue, demand – I was going to say "want" – from their government and from the MLAs that are involved with this process. So I am only making sure that in the end, when we look at Bill 24, everybody in the House can take pride that they contributed to what's best for Alberta.

From my past experience with the different fires I think that we can only get better at managing our forests and ensuring that in the end, when we start to diversify into different areas, our natural resources are something that we can tap into and we can take pride in. I'll tell you that all of the businesses within the Slave Lake area and the Cold Lake area that deal in forestry can also know and take pride in the fact that those resources will be something that they can always tap into to be able to bring forward benefit to Alberta through the taxes that they pay and the people that they employ.

This is not a trivial matter. When we start looking at the fact that agriculture and forestry is the second-largest industry within Alberta, we need to start saying: let's look at protecting these industries so that in the end, this is something that we can depend on into the future. I do hear that we're not ever going to be able to say that this is going to be something that, if we don't manage properly, will always be there.

Getting back to Bill 24, we need to make sure that this bill, in the end, brings some sort of protections, and even though it is just penalties and regulations, we're moving forward at this point. It is a good start. I do believe we can do more, and I know that the opposition and the NDP government will be able to continue to move forward on protecting our natural resources.

When you start looking at how unemployment in my riding of Bonnyville-Cold Lake is at a high – looking at other sources of business, we can only hope they come from, at this point, agriculture and forestry within Alberta. I am encouraged to see that in the end, the farmers and the ranchers and the foresters in my riding are out there to ensure that we've got jobs. I also am encouraged that we have our military base, which brings stability to Cold Lake.

In the end, we need to be looking at: how exactly is it that we can get Alberta moving forward? How is it that we can do that? Well, a bill like this, protecting our forests, is a good start. I encourage everyone to vote for this bill, and I would say that in the end, I look forward to more legislation, that is being put forward for Albertans, looking similar to this.

I am encouraged to see that sometimes the government will actually move forward with amendments that the opposition has put forward. Now, I'm under the understanding that we actually haven't had one of our amendments put through by the government yet, but I am looking forward to possibly moving something forward in the future.

Thank you very much.

11:30

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill?  
Are you ready for the question on Bill 24?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 24 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point I move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 24. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official record of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading (continued)

### Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

[Adjourned debate November 8: Ms Ganley]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to rise today on Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, and I would like to propose an amendment if I could.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The amendment will be known as REA1.  
Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that it is necessary to have the recommendations from the oil sands advisory group tabled in the Assembly before the bill can proceed.

Madam Speaker, the oil sands advisory group, or OSAG, is a group that's been tasked with considering how to implement the 100-megatonne per year carbon emissions limit for the oil sands industry. Now, it's expected that they're not going to complete their work until February 2017. That's some four months from now. We are being asked to consider legislation here right now without the feedback from the panel that's been tasked with determining this bill's viability.

Now, I don't think that would make sense to too many people, actually. I'm hoping that the members of the Legislature would agree that if you have a group that's been tasked with a duty and you have a bill that is the essence of that duty, you would at least want to hear what they have to say, I guess, unless you already know what they're going to say. But we would have to presume that this committee would be operating, you know, on its own.

We've expressed it before and we'll continue to express that we do have concerns about this group. We know it's co-chaired by radical environmentalists whose past work includes that of former co-director of Greenpeace and the co-founder of ForestEthics, groups that have not been favourable to Alberta's oil and gas industry, period, never mind the oil sands, never mind pipelines. Others on the group: I see the Pembina Institute; the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society; Stand, formerly known as ForestEthics; another Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. When we look through at the background of some of these members, I think it raises some concern in the minds of Albertans. We look at some of these people that have been actively trying to stop oil production in Alberta and oil transport, and they're on a committee to provide feedback on a cap, which is of course designed to restrict production of the oil sands. But that doesn't take away the common-sense approach that we would at least wait until we've heard what they have to say.

Now, when we look at this cap, there are many problems with this cap. The government has sold leases that when fully developed

would exceed the cap. So that's obviously very concerning because we have companies that have in good faith purchased leases to do business, to produce oil, and if this cap prevents them from producing what they have purchased to do in agreement with the government, then obviously there is probably going to have to be some compensation paid out to them for that loss of opportunity, for what they've purchased in good faith.

It seems like this government is trying to get their fingers into all parts of the energy industry and, obviously, appears to be interested in picking winners and losers. Of course, we know government tends to be better at picking losers than winners, so that's not very helpful to the Alberta economy. This cap is completely arbitrary. I mentioned this before in this House, how 100 megatonnes – a hundred is just a nice round number. I would think that if there was any science or any economic analysis or any kind of study at all done on this, they probably wouldn't have come up with the number 100. It's just a nice round number, 100. I would guess that they might have come up with 97.5 or 103.2, or maybe they would have come up with 150 or 200. But as of yet we haven't seen one analysis on this, Madam Speaker, not one analysis from the government on how much this is going to cost, what it's going to do, how they came up with the number 100. Nothing.

11:40

Now, we might be able to hear from this oil sands advisory group on something along those lines. Maybe. I don't know. But it doesn't appear that we're going to hear from them before this bill passes in this Legislature unless this government would agree to this amendment to not read it now a second time and wait until we actually have the document that this group will produce.

There's been some analysis from outside groups on what this cap could potentially cost Albertans, \$150 billion to \$250 billion. That's an enormous amount of money, Madam Speaker. That same analysis comes up with the 3.3 billion barrels of oil. Again, that's an enormous figure.

This cap also has an opportunity to squeeze out smaller companies that want to operate, that may want to invest, knowing that there's a cap involved already and that they won't have the opportunity to fully grow to their potential.

I think it's time that we considered fully the ramifications of our actions here in this House: how it's going to affect jobs, how it's going to affect families, how it's going to affect our economy. I mentioned before how critical the oil sands is to the Canadian economy, how with the two-week shutdown with the Fort Mac fire it noticeably affected the Canadian GDP. Just two weeks. And now we're contemplating putting a cap on it.

This government has done no study, none that they have shown us anyway. Maybe they have some studies. I mean, there were studies on some of their other bills, and the only way we got to look at them was through FOIP. Again, maybe there is some study that's been done. If there is, I'd encourage the government to show it to us, to show it to all Albertans. If there isn't, then shame. Shame on this government that would bring in a bill as huge as this, with ramifications as huge as this bill could have on the Alberta economy and the Canadian economy, and that would not have done any sort of study.

For some reason this government doesn't like to conduct or, at least, release economic impact studies on their radical ideological agenda, and I don't think that's right. I think we as legislators in this House were sent here to make informed decisions. Albertans deserve to be able to make informed decisions on what we do here in this House, but it's impossible to make an informed decision without information, and we have none.

Of course, there are all sorts of red flags that go up when we look at the people involved in some of this decision-making. Lots of red flags. This government has and continues to hire and appoint anti-oil activists, antipipeline activists. Registered lobbyists: antipipeline, anti-oil. We've got the Deputy Premier who says that they're going to appoint and hire people with an NDP world view. I think that is alarming when we look at who they appoint and who they hire.

Now, Madam Speaker, I think as a legislator and as an Albertan I'm finding it hard to understand what this government is trying to do. Every day I talk to struggling Albertans desperate to find help and work. They come into my constituency office. They call me. They text me, send me e-mails. They're desperate for help. Over a hundred thousand Albertans have lost their jobs, and again that doesn't include the contractors that have lost their jobs and are not eligible to collect unemployment. They don't show up in those numbers, the contractors that are only working a day a week or a day or two a month even, barely able to make ends meet, struggling. And we sit here looking at legislation almost daily that does nothing but hamper the growth of Alberta, hamper investment that could create jobs right here to help these people.

Of course, the government likes to blame the low price of oil for all of our problems here in Alberta. But, Madam Speaker, that's not the full truth. It isn't helpful, the low price of oil. We know that. We admit that. We say that every day. But this government's policies have been damaging.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to this amendment? I'll recognize the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert first.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm a bit concerned about this amendment. As I've said before in this House on the previous amendment to this act, we all know that the Prime Minister and the federal cabinet are expected to be making a decision on a few pipelines coming up next month, and we need to be able to show them a plan. Shortly after they formed government, they brought in new regulations on pipelines and, significantly, that included a climate change test.

Now, of course, all of us in this House know that we're fairly responsible about our oil here in Alberta, but unfortunately not everybody in our neighbouring provinces is aware of that. So we need to show that we're taking action, and delaying this act for committees and for advisory groups to report back to us, that's simply not helpful.

There's a fairly broad consensus in this House – I would say almost unanimous consensus – that we need to get a pipeline. We all know that we need to be able to get our product to market. Unfortunately, our biggest customer isn't buying our oil as much as they used to, and in fact when they are, they're not giving us the same rate that they're buying at from everybody else. That's a problem and something we need to address, which is why we need a pipeline to tidewater.

I, unfortunately, heard a member chirping away earlier that perhaps we could get Keystone moving again. Quite frankly, I don't think that would be helpful. [interjection] I notice the leader of the third party is pounding on his desk at that, but I don't understand the reasoning behind saying – if our previous best customer is no longer buying our product, I don't understand why increasing capacity to sell to them is helpful.

11:50

We need a pipeline to new markets. That is something that we need to do, and that means we have to work with our neighbours.

We have to work with B.C. We have to work with – well, Saskatchewan is pretty easy to work with on pipelines, but we have to work with Manitoba. We have to work with Ontario, Quebec.

We have to get to a consensus on this, and I sincerely don't understand the reasoning that a lot of the members in this House are making that we need to delay all of this. Federal cabinet is considering all of this next month. We don't know how long a committee would take. We don't know how long an advisory group will take.

**Mrs. Aheer:** February, actually, is when it reports.

**Mr. Horne:** February. Okay. February is not helpful when they're considering it next month. That's several months later. Quite frankly, if we say, "Well, we're waiting on a report," I don't think that will be helpful to the federal government making that decision.

So, quite frankly, I can't support this amendment, and I would urge all members of this House to not support this amendment either.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** My apologies to the House. I neglected to offer 29(2)(a) for the previous speaker, so it does come into effect now.

Are there any questions for this hon. member under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I would just like to preface, just to reiterate a few of the things that I heard, and then potentially you would be able to answer me. I would really appreciate that. Thank you so much. I'm sorry for chirping, but I will continue to chirp from this side as well, and I'm sure as will the rest of the opposition parties over here.

I would like, first of all, to explain to the member that the entire reason for bringing forward this panel was to advise the government on how to move forward on a constriction of production in this province. Just in case the member wasn't absolutely a hundred per cent sure, I'm fairly certain that that was the reason that this panel came to be. I'm extremely concerned with the words that are being flung across over here, that delaying this discussion to make sure that we have the information that's coming from a panel, that was designated by the government, is not helpful and that there is a rush to pass this legislation and couple it somehow with the approval of pipelines, God willing, that will come down from the federal government.

Now, just to be absolutely clear, pipelines are a federal jurisdiction. Absolutely, a federal jurisdiction. So I would like the member to explain to me how it is that by delaying for a panel that is supposedly supposed to give us licence to be able to produce in our province, which we already do at high regulatory, high environmental, the best in the world – if he could please explain to the Legislature how it is that by rushing through this process, that we haven't been advised on, it is going to help us get pipelines.

Also, before he answers that question, as far as Keystone goes, just so that you understand, that actually helps us get to tidewater. It actually helps us get there. So just to be clear for you, just so you understand.

If you could please answer the question on ramming this legislation through without the panel discussions and without Albertans having some transparency on how this panel is going to advise the government. If the member could please answer that question.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert, do you wish to respond?

Further under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yeah. Just also responding to the member that just spoke regarding some of his comments. He suggested that we have fairly responsible oil production here in Alberta. I would suggest that it's more than fairly responsible. I would suggest that it's very responsible, and to suggest otherwise is disrespectful to our energy industry.

I would also suggest that we need pipelines. We agree. We need pipelines to every coast we can possibly get to. Members on this side of the House support all pipelines. These pipelines are built by industry. They're not paid for by taxpayer money. If the industry wants to build a pipeline, we should let them build a pipeline. It gets our product to market.

Now, there was a suggestion that he was against the Keystone pipeline, which probably isn't surprising. The Member for Calgary-East, of course, was protesting it, so I would suggest that that's possibly the case. His suggestion was that we need pipelines to new markets, and I agree. We need pipelines to new markets. But why would we turn down an opportunity to have industry build a pipeline to a market and get it to a coast for us? Why would we turn that down? I would like to find out from this government: are they for or against the Keystone pipeline? Come out and say something on that.

Also, there was a suggestion that the federal government is making decisions on pipelines next month. Now, I understood that the NEB makes decisions on pipelines, and the only thing government does, particularly this government and the members in this government, is put up roadblocks to pipelines. So I would love to hear the member's response to that.

Keystone: yes or no?

He also suggested that this was just a delay. This is a delay for information . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just again like to preface, I think, how important this is. The entire reason for this amendment is because, as we've stated, this OSAG panel, the oil sands advisory panel, isn't going to report to us until February. As we've said before, there may be contentious people that are on this panel that may not have been the first choice of us. You know, I'm not the government, so I'm not the one who gets to choose this panel. Having said that, though, I believe that I would be extremely interested in finding out what that panel has to say.

I find it extremely unacceptable and irresponsible to ask actually any member of this Legislature on either side to support legislation without feedback from that panel. I'm assuming, hopefully rightly, that the reason to take this panel to February was to actually give them a legitimate amount of time to deal with something that is tremendous and huge, that impacts all Albertans, impacts all of Canada. I mean, we are the economic engine. I could go on and on about the oil sands and those aspects. I'll give you some more numbers later.

My point is that I would have hoped that the time that was given to this panel was given for diligence and for thoughtful discussion and to be able to actually report back to us with very succinct information that may actually be convincing to Albertans, that

would ask if this is the right or wrong thing to do. Who knows? We have absolutely no clue.

We are asked every day about what's going on, and I can honestly tell you that I don't know. I don't know if any of you know. There's a humungous responsibility on our shoulders here as legislators to make sure that when folks are coming into your constituency offices and our constituency offices, at least we have some understanding. At least we could have said to them: "Well, this is the panel. I may or may not agree with it, but this is the time that they're reporting. Hence, after that we will have legislation and, potentially, ideas of where the regulations will go with this." But, no, that's not the way.

As we've been told by the member opposite, we have to ram this through right now, and it doesn't matter if the panel comes back and responds, and it doesn't matter if we haven't got any regulations. My goodness. I think the average Albertan looking at this right now will be absolutely devastated.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake asked recently, when we were out and about to just a general public meeting of people,

for a show of hands as to who knew what a PPA was, just to give you an example. Not really a household term. I would say that more than half that room put their hands up. Why? Because they're paying attention, because Albertans care about these kinds of things.

How are you going to go back to your constituents, how are we going to go back to our constituents and say: "Ah, it doesn't matter. We spent taxpayer dollars on this panel, but we're going to ram through legislation anyway, even though we don't know what the panel is going to say." Maybe you do. Maybe you're privy to information, and we just don't have it yet. I'm not sure.

All I know is that comments and things are flung across over to this side that we are supposed to . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the House stands adjourned until this afternoon at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 9, 2016

Day 47

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
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Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
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Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 9, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 54 students and staff from Annunciation elementary school. Students are accompanied today by Mrs. Maureen Ostrowerka, Mr. Chris T. Osayande, Rachel Hayward, and Mr. Chris Koper. It is fantastic to see them here this afternoon to observe question period. I would ask them all to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to welcome students and teachers from Cochrane high school to the Legislature today. I apologize for not being able to join them for their photo earlier this afternoon. I understand that they were participating in a mock parliament, and I'm sure they learned quite a bit. I'd also like to commend the students from this particular high school for having a very robust renewable energy program, that I myself have had the pleasure to tour, and I thank the students for their leadership on the environment. I ask the Assembly to give them their greatest warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Welcome.

Are there any other school groups for introduction today?

Seeing none, the Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm introducing a group that is here today from the Canadian Diabetes Association. I believe they're in your gallery. If they could rise while I introduce them. November is Diabetes Awareness Month, and it's a time to spread awareness about the disease, share information about risk factors, and work together to support people living with diabetes as well as their families. You may also see people wearing the blue circle pin that is the universal symbol of diabetes to show their support during this month of awareness. I ask that Emily Johnson, Michelle MacPhee, Janet Riganti, and Tammy Norris along with the other volunteers and staff members from the Canadian Diabetes Association please accept the warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. If Speakers are allowed to make observations on occasion, I must tell you that I have a daughter who had juvenile diabetes, so I particularly identify with the issue.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you key members of the Lung Association of Alberta and the Northwest Territories who are with us in the House today: Leigh Allard, president and CEO; Nina Snyder, chief operating officer; Monte Weber, chief financial officer; Dr. Mohit Bhutani, physician advocate; and Tim and Susan Penstone, patient advocates. These members are joining us during

lung awareness month and are providing a free clinic and lung health information in the lower rotunda today. Members of the Lung Association share our commitment to public health, and we thank them for their tireless work, especially as they raise awareness around the importance of phasing out coal-fired emissions. I ask that the members of this House extend our traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all Members of this Legislative Assembly 17 members from 4-H Alberta. I will be speaking about the launch of the 100th anniversary of 4-H Alberta later this afternoon. If they would all please rise as I read their names. We have with us today Kathleen Linder, Helen Andrews, Virginia Harvey, Monica Harvey, Dave MacTaggart, Kate Harink, Ty Harink, MacKenzie Denschikoff, Kiley Denschikoff, Holly Johanson, Tanytyn Monea, Adam Burnett, Judy Van Hecke, Dorothy Carlson, Shari Hanson, Dave Gower, Louise Erskine, and Mary MacArthur. Please join me in welcoming them as they receive the traditional warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly some individuals visiting from my constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar today: Veronique Wilson and her two children, Evan and Matt Wilson. They're also accompanied by their grandmother Monique Lecuyer. Matthew is a grade 6 student at Gabrielle-Roy, and Evan attends l'école Michaëlle-Jean, a francophone junior high school that opened its doors in Edmonton-Gold Bar this fall. I'm very proud of the francophone community that's in my constituency, and I'm happy to see that the options for francophone education are expanding. I ask them to please rise, as they have, and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests today, hon. members? Edmonton-Décore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly an incredible group of individuals from the Victims of Homicide Support Society of Edmonton, which I will be speaking about later. Joining us today are Jane Orydzuk, president; Kelly Rolston, vice-president; Susan Adair-Wolf, treasurer; Dianne Ilesic, secretary; Gayle Hanscom, director, and Mike Ilesic, board member. I would now ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Are there any other guests? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Member of Parliament for St. Albert-Edmonton, Michael Cooper. I'd like to thank him for his public service and would ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

## Members' Statements

### United States Presidential Election

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, today I want to congratulate President-elect Donald J. Trump and the American people in a free, open, and fair election. No matter what your political stripe, the outcomes of democratic elections and the democratic process must always be respected.

This election marks a new day for diplomacy between Canada and the United States. Our two countries have the largest trade relationship in the entire world. Alberta alone exports over \$100 billion worth of goods and services to our southern neighbours each and every year. According to news organizations this election has the potential to be a win for Alberta if – and that's a big if – our leaders show the political will to capitalize, but I'm hopeful that after years of anti-Alberta hostility from within Canada's own borders this election may bring good news for working families in our province.

President-elect Trump has called Canada a strong ally. He has committed to building the Keystone XL pipeline. So far Wildrose is the only party in this Legislature that has expressed support for pipelines in every direction. That includes Keystone. I hope the Premier . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we don't interrupt when a member is – the practice of this House is that there are no interruptions.

Please proceed.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope the Premier finally shows support for this project, too.

This is not about left versus right. This is about the people of our province, who are suffering because anti-Alberta politicians across this country want to see us fail. A Wildrose government would work with the new U.S. administration to enhance and defend the energy, agriculture, forestry, mining, and manufacturing industries. This election has presented a perfect opportunity to build pipelines and increase exports in some of our most vital economic sectors, all at a time when we need it the most. The question is: will we capitalize?

Premier, on behalf of the people of Alberta let me say: it's time to start speaking up and finding ways . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

1:40

### Inclusive Employment

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you. When you hear the label "most vulnerable," do you see a picture of a strong person, skilled, employable, independent, and valued? Likely not. We need to stop labelling Albertans with disabilities as our most vulnerable. We can call them our most unemployed, our most underrepresented but not our most vulnerable. They are people first, and they're not defined by their ability or disability. Whether they rely on a wheelchair, service dogs, need for staff, none of that defines them. They deserve our respect, and we need to commit to doing that, to giving it to them. Once we remove the label, we see the person: the premise of a 30-year-old movement called People First. Once we see the person, we can find solutions with them, not for them.

Did you know that October was nationally and internationally recognized as Disability Employment Awareness Month? Fourteen per cent of Canadians over 15 years of age have a disability; 411,000 working-age Canadians, who can work, who want to work, are not working. Unemployment and poverty are the daily reality of Albertans with disabilities. Unemployment rates for people with

disabilities are as high as 75 per cent for women; males are at 60 per cent.

People with disabilities make up a large pool of untapped labour with demonstrated value. Employers have invested time and energy and resources to be inclusive employers that value employees with disabilities. We know customers value inclusive employers and will go out of their way to support those businesses, and we know that employees feel pride at being part of an inclusive business or organization.

I would like us all to commit to recognizing Disability Employment Awareness Month next year. I would also like everyone to consider becoming an inclusive employer themselves. I think two out of 87 constituencies isn't a very good stat. We can do better than this.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### Remembrance Day

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today on behalf of our Progressive Conservative caucus to pay tribute to the women and men who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defence of Canadian values and to those who currently serve our country with such honour, both at home and abroad.

Time and again Canadians have bravely answered the call when freedom is threatened, when human rights are abused, and when darkness threatens to overtake us. Throughout history Canadians in uniform have served as a beacon of hope for marginalized peoples all over the world and as a tremendous source of pride for all of us here at home.

Mr. Speaker, not everyone is willing to put their life on the line in service of others. It takes a special kind of person to run into the line of fire just as others are running away. Those special people understand that there is value and nobility in standing up for what's right even if it costs them their life. From the world wars to Korea to Bosnia to Afghanistan and beyond, Canadian soldiers have proudly and willingly risked it all to save others from tyranny and terror. In doing so, they affirm our country's commitment to protecting the values of peace, tolerance, and freedom wherever and whenever they're threatened.

Mr. Speaker, when we recognize and honour our Canadian armed forces, implicit in the tribute is a huge debt of gratitude for the sacrifices of their families, so with my humble appreciation I'll share just a few apt lines from Laurence Binyon's Ode of Remembrance.

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

### 4-H Centennial in Alberta

**Mr. Hinkley:** Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate the launch of a year-long celebration of 100 years of 4-H in Alberta. For the next year across the province Albertans will celebrate this amazing youth program. What began in Olds as a way to modernize agriculture has grown to 335 clubs, 5,620 members, and 2,221 leaders across the province.

Today we have 4-H members in our gallery who throughout the year will celebrate 100 years of 4-H with art contests and a Western Regional Leaders' Forum in Edmonton this March. On the August long weekend hundreds of 4-H members, their families, and leaders will celebrate Centennial Fever in Olds, where it all began.

In 1917 W.J. Elliott, the president of Olds College, was disappointed with the poor quality of livestock in the area. Elliott

believed youth would be the early adopters and lead the way to improved genetic selection of livestock and crops.

Over the past century this fine youth program has promoted leadership skills, governance, farm safety, critical thinking, and public speaking. As an educator I knew which students were 4-H members because of their exceptional public speaking skills.

In my riding of Wetaskiwin-Camrose there are five active clubs: Coal Lake light horse, Camrose beef, Wetaskiwin horse, Rosebriar beef, and the Armena beef club. Through 4-H projects members learn how to raise a calf, teach it to lead, and show it in a sale. Horse members develop their riding skills, and members of small-engine projects can strip down and rebuild a small engine. Across the province thousands of children have benefited from 4-H, and hundreds of businesses have benefited from this training.

Let us celebrate everything that has happened in 4-H in the past 100 years. We all look forward to the next glorious 100 years of 4-H in Alberta. Congratulations.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

### National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. September 25, 2016, marked the annual National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims, giving us all the opportunity to remember those lost to homicide and to honour their memories. This day of remembrance serves to focus on the impact of murder on families and communities as well support for survivors.

Facing the death of a loved one is never an easy task, especially when murder is involved. Pain, anger, and grief are compounded by the crushing realization that a precious life was intentionally taken. But there is a beacon of hope out there for people who have experienced the loss of a loved one to homicide, a group that knows all too well the journey that someone is about to embark upon. The Victims of Homicide Support Society of Edmonton, founded in 1995 by Noel and Joyce Farion following the murder of their son, is a self-help group designed to offer emotional support and information about surviving the loss of a loved one to this horrific crime. The group provides ongoing emotional support to help people deal with the pain of their loss and rebuild their lives. Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of every month at the Central Lions seniors centre located at 11113 – 113th Street.

When you have lost a loved one to murder, reach out to the Victims of Homicide Support Society and remember this: you are not judged, you are not misunderstood, and you are not alone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### Electricity System

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A strong, competitive, and affordable electricity system is the cornerstone of economic development and growth. Low electricity prices and a stable system attract investments, encourage innovation, and lead to the creation of thousands and thousands of new jobs. For a heavily trade-exposed economy like Alberta, the ability to have a stable electricity market directly influences our province's ability to compete with other provincial and international jurisdictions. If we are more competitive, it means more money coming into Alberta. That means more jobs, more growth, more prosperity for an Alberta that right now is desperate for hope and opportunity.

That's why it's so critical that any changes we make are for the benefit of Albertans and are based in economic reality. Instead, this

government has time and time again engaged in policies that have shaken our electricity sector and put future investment in Alberta at risk. They started by raising the carbon tax on heavy emitters, with zero consultation. When power companies said that they could no longer afford the tax increases, they sued. Now we are debating legislation from the government that shuts down coal generation amid fantastic promises of no pain to Albertans. Mr. Speaker, we've heard these promises before.

Ontario right now is experiencing one of the worst migrations of jobs and money in its history. Skyrocketing energy costs are so bad that businesses can no longer compete. Ontario is experiencing job leakage and carbon leakage, which we talked about before, all because of government meddling in the province's electricity market. It's why a growing number of major western economies are rejecting initiatives like carbon taxes as they instead seek to build on technological investments that help reduce global emissions. Instead of shutting down coal generation entirely, Alberta should be celebrating its achievements in clean-coal technology and sharing them with the whole world.

Thank you.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Trade with the United States

**Mr. Jean:** I'd first like to take the time to briefly acknowledge and congratulate the American people for choosing their new President.

These election results will have a major impact on Alberta's economy. In 2014 Alberta had \$120 billion in exports. Ninety per cent of those exports were consumed by the United States. Important free trade deals for Alberta like NAFTA or the trans-Pacific partnership need to be defended now more than ever before. Will the Premier commit to working with other export-dependent economies like Saskatchewan to defend free trade in Washington?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We, too, join in congratulating the President-elect on last night's results.

We look forward to the opportunity to continue to work to better create opportunities for Albertans, whether it be through exports or through increasing opportunities for our economies to be stimulated in other ways. Soon the United States will have their new President, and we'll continue to move forward with other provinces across Canada, including the New West Partnership as well as working with other Premiers and the Prime Minister of Canada to increase opportunities of benefit for Albertans.

**Mr. Jean:** Whether it's energy, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, all of Alberta's industries are reliant on trade and our ability to move our resources and products to market. We cannot waste money simply travelling to talk about carbon taxes. It's time to do what we can to stay competitive and to protect Alberta's economy. With no softwood lumber deal in place and free trade agreements at risk, does the Premier have any plans whatsoever to meet with Republican leaders in the House and the Senate to promote and defend Alberta's export-dependent industries and Alberta families?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have a long history of having good trade relationships with folks south of the

border that we share, and we continue to work on that. We have offices set up in a number of provinces, and our Premier has spent time visiting investors and other elected officials in New York as well as Washington. I expect that we will continue to forge forward on building strong relationships for the benefit of Albertans.

**Mr. Jean:** One of the good-news items for Alberta from last night's election is a commitment from the President-elect to support the Keystone XL pipeline. For Alberta it will mean badly needed access, finally, to tidewater. It will help Alberta receive a fair price for our products and get Albertans back to work, which is so important. However, this Premier is on the record opposing the Keystone XL pipeline and refusing to lobby on its behalf. Will the Premier reverse her position on the Keystone pipeline and make seeking its approval her very top priority?

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm really proud to have a Premier and to be part of a government that works to make sure that every day we are fighting for Albertans and Albertans' best interests, Mr. Speaker. A big part of that is making sure that we continue to diversify our markets. That's why we're not going to give up on Kinder Morgan and we're not going to give up on other pipelines that are in the works. We certainly are going to find ways to benefit Albertans when it comes to improved market access, and we'll be proud to work towards that. We certainly will not stand in the way of progress. We want to continue to get our products to as many markets as possible.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

### Energy Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Calgary right now is facing the highest vacancy rates in its downtown core since 1985. With an unemployment rate in the double digits and an expected 30 per cent vacancy rate before the very end of this year, 2016, Calgarians are looking for hope. Instead, they are faced with the crush of a \$3 billion carbon tax from this government, frivolous PPA legal proceedings, and no plan whatsoever from this government to improve investor confidence. To the Premier: what will it take for the NDP to cancel their risky policies, that are only making things much worse for Alberta's families?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve a government that will continue to fight for them and their best interests every day, and that's what they have in the government of the day. We are standing up for the investments that are going to continue to create jobs throughout Alberta. We have a jobs plan that is working. We have seen investments that have created 8,000 jobs in 2016. We're looking at 12,000 in '17 and 10,000 in 2018. Things are starting to prove that we're having success. We're not going to back down on climate leadership, either, though. Albertans deserve a government that will diversify its economy and be responsible members of a global community, and we're proud to do that.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Jean:** Alberta in 2016: job losses, higher vacancy rates, shaky investor confidence, and now concerns for our export industry. With no carbon tax in sight for the United States for at least the next four years, Alberta simply can't afford to make our export industries and our energy sector even less competitive with new tax hikes and damaging regulations from this government. A carbon tax now makes less sense than ever before. How can this Premier

possibly defend this new tax on Alberta's industries and families when our number one trading partner and competitor will simply not have one anywhere?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In case the members opposite aren't aware, climate change is real.

Albertans expect us to act in the best interests of their families and for our shared economy, and that's what we're doing. That's why we have a made-in-Alberta solution, Mr. Speaker, that's going to lead to greater economic diversification, something the members opposite don't care about, and making sure that we have clean air, water, and a protected land for future generations.

**Mr. Jean:** Disingenuous fearmongering, Mr. Speaker.

Last night voters in one of the more liberal states in the union, Washington, also cast ballots to determine whether or not they would implement a state-wide carbon tax. What a novel idea, a carbon tax referendum to the people. The result was overwhelming, with 60 per cent saying no to a carbon tax in Washington. When our single biggest trading partner and competitor flatly rejects a carbon tax, joining countries like France and Australia, why won't the Premier hit the brakes on her carbon tax plan or at least put it to the people of Alberta? Listen to the people in a provincial referendum. [interjections]

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, we did have an opportunity a year and a half ago to have an election, and the people of Alberta voted for a government that said clearly that we were going to take action on climate change, and we are doing that. This is a smart thing to do for Alberta. It's smart for our economy and for our families. [interjections] We're moving forward with helping two-thirds of families recover some of the costs that will be impacted to their individual households, and we're very proud of that. But we're not going to pretend that climate change isn't real, because climate change is real.

**The Speaker:** Easy, folks.

Third main question.

### Electricity System

**Mr. Jean:** Instead of protecting jobs in our electricity grid here in Alberta, the Premier is leaving the door wide open to pay for a billion-dollar transmission line to import more B.C.-generated electricity to Alberta. At the same time the NDP government is determined to shut down our coal industry ahead of schedule, a decision that will put thousands and thousands of Albertans out of work, leave several historic Alberta communities at risk, and cost Albertans potentially billions and billions of dollars in payouts. Why won't the Premier be clear on whether or not her government plans to pay for a \$1 billion transmission line to import electricity from British Columbia?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. In question 1 the member opposite was talking about having good, collaborative relationships with neighbours in the east, west, and south of Alberta, and that's exactly what we're doing. We're moving forward with a made-in-Alberta solution because – guess what? – other provinces are taking leadership on that as well, including a former colleague of the member opposite, the Premier of Manitoba, who said: we certainly will develop a made-in-



Manitoba plan focused on the unique nature of our economy. That's what we're doing in Alberta. I don't know why the member opposite wants to just let all of this sit on Ottawa's shoulders. We deserve to have an Alberta solution for something that we are all committed to addressing, and that's climate change.

**Mr. Jean:** This government's experiments in our electricity grid will have a major impact for Albertans across this province. This government's policies will mean higher power bills and even higher taxes. For families and our businesses in Alberta this means less money to spend on their priorities. The fact is that the NDP is busy suing for Alberta-owned power companies but leaving the door wide open to pay for a transmission line to directly benefit B.C.-owned power companies. Does the Premier plan to help pay for a billion-dollar transmission line from B.C.? Yes or no?

2:00

**Ms Hoffman:** This government is committed to making sure that we are taking responsible action as we move forward on addressing climate change and that we're creating a fair playing field for businesses right here, that are proud to be contributing to Alberta's local economy. Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue forging ahead on acknowledging the science that is behind climate change and on working with local opportunities to increase investment in renewable energy and have clean air.

For the folks who are in the gallery, who are here about lung health, I hope that they know that the member opposite is advocating for increased pollution. We're advocating for increased safety of health and wellness for Albertans, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I believe it's your second supplemental.

**Mr. Jean:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. We're advocating for Albertans, and Albertans are right to be skeptical about the NDP's risky interventions in our electricity grid. They've seen other provinces go down this path only lead to skyrocketing power prices for consumers, for Albertans while jobs and investments flee their provinces. This is not what we want to see.

There is no shortage of steps that this Premier could take to end this mess. It starts by stopping her legal battles with Alberta-owned power companies, cancelling tax increases, and ending this ideological war against Alberta's coal industry. It's simple. Why won't the Premier accept just one of these ideas so that we can keep power bills low in Alberta for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are really proud to be investing \$34.8 billion over the next five years to build infrastructure in this province, which is going to help Albertans. It's going to be creating jobs throughout the province, and it's going to continue to help support the Alberta families that rely on those construction jobs as well as the jobs that are created in the long term that continue to support them.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to keep working with business in a fair and respectful way. That's one of the reasons why, when we announced our climate leadership plan almost a year ago, we had a number of business folks standing on stage with us, supporting us, because it's a fair and reasonable way to move forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

#### AISH Administration

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report points out that vulnerable Albertans on AISH are not readily able

to access the supports they need when they need them. We know that the government sometimes, under fire, will blame the previous government. But today I'd like to solve a problem. To the Premier. The AISH backlog is getting worse, and as legislators this should concern all of us deeply. I know your government accepted the recommendations in the report, but what is your government doing today to address this serious issue?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much to the member for the important question. We share the concerns that were highlighted by the office of the Auditor General and, like the member opposite, are committed to making sure that we are addressing those as we move forward. We've invested an additional \$28.3 million in AISH to ensure that the increased number of Albertans who need the support can access it, Mr. Speaker. This is something that is a complex matter, but investing that \$28.3 million is going to help make some of the issues that we're encountering far less cumbersome for the individuals who are trying to support those families and the citizens who rely on AISH and make sure that they can have a good quality of life.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, we know that AISH clients are some of the most vulnerable in our community, and we know that the measure of a society is how we look after our most vulnerable. I think we can do better. To the Premier. One of the Auditor General's recommendations was to improve reporting on efficiency and improve how we measure and monitor the process. Are you satisfied with your government's work on this front to ensure that no Albertans on AISH are slipping through the cracks?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I just want to reiterate something that my colleague from St. Albert raised earlier, and that's the importance of having a language that's inclusive and reaching out a hand towards people who are the most underemployed and, certainly, have a lot of potential to bring about, benefiting Albertans. That's one of the reasons why we're establishing a working group to build on the Auditor General's recommendations. It will be reporting back before the end of the year, and it's definitely going to be solution focused. We'll welcome contributions from all members of this House to help us find solutions because this is a matter of great importance to us.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.

Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I sent a file to the Human Services minister. An Albertan in need received cancer treatment as a child, and that treatment left this Albertan permanently unable to earn a living. Therefore, he was approved for AISH. He subsequently married a woman with an income level that took away the AISH benefits. The marriage is gone now, the medical condition hasn't changed, and the Albertan needs those AISH benefits back. Premier, will you work with your Human Services minister and see if you can get this Albertan the AISH support that he so rightly needs and has been approved for before?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the important question. We will be happy to have the office of the Minister of Human Services follow up with the individual that has been identified and do our best to come up with a solution that works for everyone. Mr.

Speaker, that's why we're really proud of the increase of \$28.3 million to the AISH line item, and we're also proud that we didn't move forward with proposed cuts of \$2 billion to operations in Alberta. We know that it's important to have stability and long-term investment. We're happy to work in collaboration to help address the matter that was just raised with us.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

### Lung Disease

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. November is lung health month across Canada. Fifteen per cent of Albertans are suffering from significant lung disease, with that number predicted to increase. As a physician I've seen the impact of lung disease first-hand, and I'm aware of the constraints on the quality of life of persons with lung disease. To the Minister of Health: what is the government doing to help support Albertans living with lung disease?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his ongoing work, whether it was in his other profession, during his candidacy, or as a caucus member, in continuing to move forward concerns that have been raised by folks, including the physician community and the Lung Association, who is here today, with regard to respiratory disease, which never stops being of utmost concern and importance to us. Albertans living with lung disease know that every breath matters, and that's why our government is partnering with the Lung Association to help challenge Canadians around acknowledging every breath and the challenges that might bring. We are making real reduction by keeping tobacco out of the hands of children.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that lung disease burdens so many Albertans and given that the national Lung Association has said that prevention is key, to the same minister: what preventative strategies is the government using to reduce the number of Albertans that do develop lung disease?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question and to our front-line health care workers who deliver preventative care and treatment to Albertans throughout our province.

This includes information around smoking cessation and strategies for Albertans who do want to quit; research that is being done at the respiratory health strategic clinical network, which we're very proud of, that is funded by the government of Alberta through Alberta Innovates; and we've also banned the sale of menthol and flavoured smoking products, that we know were enticing youth and ending up in those hands. We're taking concrete action to protect youth and all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Lung Association of Alberta and Northwest Territories recognizes that emissions from burning coal are impacting Albertans with lung

disease, can the Minister of Health inform the House what's being done to remedy that?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is right that coal power, according to research – a report that was put out by the Lung Association, the Asthma Society of Canada, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, and the Pembina Institute asserts that 92 premature deaths in Alberta every year are from the associated emissions from coal, and the costs associated with health care could be as much as \$460 million per year. It went on to say that an accelerated coal phase-out would more than double the health cost benefits associated with the federal government's coal phase-out and that we'll be able to prevent an estimated 600 premature deaths, 500 ER visits, and 80,000 ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

2:10

### Cardiac Care in Central Alberta

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the NDP claim to be champions of our health care system, outcomes are getting worse for patients and their families. If you have a heart attack in central Alberta, your chances of dying are increased 100 per cent compared to Edmonton or Calgary. Two years ago a feasibility study outlined the need for cardiac services in Red Deer to prevent increased heart attack mortality rates caused by travel delays to distant facilities. How many deaths will it take for this government to take action and save the lives of central Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the question. I've had the opportunity to visit Red Deer and many of those communities that are impacted in central Alberta who rely on important services in the regional hospital as well as in Edmonton and Calgary. AHS is working on improving cardiac services for the central zone, and that work includes considerations of this very important project for cardiac catheterization within Red Deer. We want to make sure that there is a province-wide plan and that every Albertan gets the right care in the right place at the right time with the right information. We're continuing to move forward on this project as well as others that are important to Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I realize that it is being considered, the provision for advanced cardiac care in Red Deer is needed now, not later.

Given that there are \$10 million of private donations that have been received for the needed cardiac services in Red Deer and given that it will save 3 and a half million dollars a year in reduced hospital stays and given that these procedures are already being done and paid for hours away, creating higher mortality risk, will the government save upwards of 30 lives a year and provide central Albertans with the cardiac catheterization lab that they need? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Members on both sides, would you terminate the discussion with each other immediately.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you for the question. Albertans depend on getting services as close to home as possible, but they want to make

sure that it's the right service for their condition. We are certainly working to move forward on increasing stability in the health care system through the budget, as opposed to cutting over a billion dollars from last year's operations. We've committed to increases, but smaller increases, every year because we do want to ensure stability and we want to ensure that we continue to have a world-class system. So there needs to be evidence taken into consideration as we make these decisions, but like the member opposite, I certainly want to make sure that we move forward in having the best care for Albertans across our province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister – and I will credit her – had said last week that she will work with AHS to improve cardiac services in the central zone and given that Red Deer hospital has the highest acute-care volume in the province outside of Calgary and Edmonton and given that AHS's strategic clinical network has affirmed that Red Deer has the cardiac volume to justify a catheterization lab, will the minister commit today to take action to save money, to save lives by approving that cardiac cath lab in Red Deer and set a date for its completion?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in the week we had a member from the third party ask me for a sod-turning. Today we have a member from the Official Opposition asking me to make a campaign-style announcement. I'm not going to do that. I'm going to make sure that we're working with the community, that we have a strong, stable public health care system. We're not going to be firing nurses and teachers and then allowing people from private sectors to build something that won't have staff. We're going to invest in front-line care, and that includes having evidenced-based decisions around where we put our infrastructure, and I'm proud to be the minister leading that work.

### **Energy Policies** (continued)

**Mr. Fraser:** Albertans and the Progressive Conservative caucus understand that we need to take action on climate change. Albertans reject the notion, though, that we need to pit action on climate change against jobs. Albertans know that we can have both. Private industry, investors, and municipalities impacted by the accelerated coal phase-out also know this. They want to create jobs and take action on climate change by enhancing clean-coal technology. To environment. The perception is that you've been absent in actually engaging with these communities and investors who want to continue research into clean technology. Do you understand that with your approach to accelerating the coal phase-out and killing coal, you're also killing advancements in research?

**The Speaker:** The Environment and Parks minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, this province is committed to a just transition for communities, and to that end, we have established an expert panel that is touring those communities, who will be reporting back to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. In addition, we are looking at, at a minimum, \$10.5 billion of new investments in renewables being phased in in addition to the new investments that will come from the other 70 per cent of the electricity mix, which is, of course, natural gas.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given that strides made in the innovation and research for clean-coal technology would create jobs, diversify our economy, and make Alberta a leader in green energy technology and given that all those opportunities will likely come to an end when you end coal, to the Premier. Your aggressive attack on Alberta companies with the PPA lawsuits spoke volumes. It seems you're using the same approach when it comes to the accelerated coal phase-out. Premier, will you show gracious leadership and speak with investors and researchers to continue to develop green innovation and revisit the accelerated coal phase-out?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, this province is committed to a thoughtful reinvestment of the existing price on carbon on large final emitters, and as that system evolves into a system of performance standards, we're going to do that based on the lowest cost per tonne and proven technologies. We're not alone in that.

You know, there are a number of Republican governors that were re-elected last night: Iowa, Oklahoma, Kansas. In Iowa the Republican governor said: every wind turbine that you see as you travel Iowa means income to farmers whose lands it is on, revenue to local governments in the county that it's located on, and jobs for families.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Fraser:** With respect, Minister, Albertans need a firm baseload for energy so that they can be confident with their business and their families. Given that this government is losing this PPA court case in the court of public opinion, Premier, will you assure Albertans that you won't play political games by dropping this court case then retroactively implementing PPA legislation, like you have with other legislation, that would further damage the confidence of investors and Albertans in this government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. As concerns the evolution of our electricity system and as we decarbonize it, we have committed to a just transition, of course, for the electricity generation companies. We have said that we will make a commitment to the workers, we will make a commitment to the communities, and we will make a commitment to ensuring that consumers do not see massive spikes in their bills in addition to not unnecessarily stranding capital. That's a made-in-Alberta plan. The opposition would have us have a plan imposed by Ottawa, and that's not our approach.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

### **Little Smoky and A La Pêche Caribou Range Plan**

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's no secret that this government has a horrible track record in consulting with Albertans and stakeholders prior to enacting legislation. In the case of the draft plan for the Little Smoky and A La Pêche caribou herds strong concern has been raised by local people, municipal governments, the public, outdoor groups, hunters, and trappers as well as the forest industry and its related businesses. To the minister: other than perhaps ForestEthics and the Natural Resources Defense Council, have any groups given any positive reviews to your draft plan?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Species at Risk Act federally mandates that Alberta manage 65 per cent of its critical caribou habitat. We have to file that plan by October 2017. The previous government had 20 years to fix this problem but did nothing. So we inherited a situation where the problem was admired for quite some time but action was not taken. That is why we appointed the mediator that we did, to take seriously the impact on our forestry industry in particular, to work in collaboration with the energy industry. We have a draft plan with which I have spoken to many different communities and many different stakeholders, including the local First Nations. We will move forward on a thoughtful response to that plan over the coming months.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that Mackenzie county could lose almost 60 per cent of its property tax revenue if the proposed 1.8 million hectare protected caribou zone is set aside and given the broad restrictions this Alberta draft plan for caribou places upon oil and gas and forest industries, hindering their ability to operate properly, to the minister: will you stop hiding behind federal threats and stand up for Albertans here in the House today and state there will be no job losses due to your ideological and unsubstantiated Alberta caribou action plan?

**Ms Phillips:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where the Official Opposition, despite all of the foot stomping and arm crossing, is simply opening us up to action by Ottawa. That is not the approach that we will take. That is not strength; that is weakness. Now, what we have done is that we have taken seriously the concerns of, in particular, the forestry industry in some of these areas in the Duvernay and Montney formations, in particular, those Little Smoky, A La Pêche herds. We did not accept the ministerial task force recommendations to the previous government because that would have cost jobs. Instead, we went back to the drawing board, and now we have a thoughtful plan to move forward.

2:20

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. I think we're seeing weakness here.

Given that our softwood trade agreement has expired and the dispute is far from being resolved and given that the moratorium on the forest industry cutting in the Little Smoky and A La Pêche caribou zone makes it nearly impossible for lumber companies to access the needed timber supply, endangering hundreds of jobs, to the minister. The Wildrose would prefer a balanced approach between industry and environment. In that vein, will you table the timber supply analysis used in the Alberta draft report that it based its recommended timber supply levels on, if it exists?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the mediator's report is public and contains a number of very thoughtful analyses and scenarios on this matter, and I commend it to the hon. member for his reading.

Now, Mr. Speaker, sitting on our hands and doing nothing is not an option, as the Official Opposition would have us do on a number of environmental files. It would force the federal government to impose a plan that would stop industrial development until 65 per cent of caribou habitat was reclaimed. That would mean serious job losses, and that is not a path that this government will take.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

## Carbon Levy

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP's carbon plan contains taxation powers and targets that are so misguided that the government cannot even bring itself to use the word "tax." One can only assume they are avoiding it because they know how punishing this will be on the families of Alberta. Heating our homes, fuelling our cars, buying groceries, and pretty much everything else is going to be more expensive as of January 1. Will this government start using honest language and admit that this poorly advised policy is actually just a tax?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the federal government has signalled its intent to bring in a floor price, or tax, if you will, on carbon. [interjections] Honestly, it's the law. They've committed to bringing in floor pricing on carbon. Of course, we have a made-in-Alberta plan already. What the Official Opposition would have us do is open ourselves up to a situation where we are having a plan imposed on us by Ottawa rather than a plan that is tailored to Alberta's economy. That is not the approach of this government. That is not in the best interests of the people of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie. I think we're on first supplemental.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Wow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Wildrose has repeatedly pressed the government to conduct a full economic impact assessment so the people of Alberta really know what the full cost of this tax is and given that the government has created a rebate for lower and middle-income Albertans to partially offset the cost associated with this tax, how did this government even determine the amount of the rebate without a full economic impact assessment?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we released our most up-to-date conclusions earlier this week. If we do not act, we would be opening the door to Ottawa. Our renewables plan will ensure \$10 billion in private investment and 7,200 new jobs in the province. Two-thirds of Albertans will receive a rebate to ensure that the carbon price does not place an unfair burden on their household budgets. The rebate is based on income, not emissions, so families can come out ahead. If families access new energy efficiency programs, which we'll also be providing, Albertans will have help lowering their emissions. They will have more money in their pockets at the end of the day.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that last Saturday people from across this province, including my own community of Airdrie, gathered in town centres and public spaces to demand a referendum on the carbon tax and given that in a recent interview the director of communications in the office of the Premier stated that – and I quote – we live in a country where everyone is entitled to their opinion and entitled to voice their opinion, unquote, will this government honour the people's opinions, uphold the Premier's office's commitment to democracy, and hold a referendum on the carbon tax?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, Ottawa has signalled that they will be bringing in a price on carbon beginning very soon, and that plan on behalf of Ottawa would not contain a carbon pricing scheme that works for Alberta's economy. Had Alberta not studied this matter, consulted widely with both the public and every major industrial group in this province, we would not have that in place if it had not been for this government. So we will not wait to have a plan imposed on us. It's a made-in-Alberta solution today,

or it's a made-in-Ottawa solution tomorrow. The opposition has made their choice. We've made ours.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Some young students just left the Assembly. I wonder why they left.

### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, a recent study completed by 15 industry participants outlined the true cost to Albertans for the NDP's ideologically motivated coal phase-out. Accelerating the phase-out comes with a price tag of \$4 billion to \$8 billion, almost as high as our ballooning deficit, and Albertans want answers. We know this government has trouble understanding the unintended consequences of their misguided policies. We saw it in Bill 6, we're seeing it with PPA lawsuits, and now with the accelerated coal phase-out. To the Minister of Energy: did the government complete a comprehensive economic impact study before pulling the pin on yet another irresponsible NDP...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, there is a cost to doing nothing on coal-fired emissions. That cost shows up in our emergency rooms, and it shows up in lost productivity, and it shows up in the health of the very young and the very old. That is why we have taken the action that we have, again, with a made-in-Alberta plan that will ensure a just transition and no unnecessary stranding of assets. We are doing it because the science behind the health effects of coal-fired emissions is as settled as the science of climate change, and both are real.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Economic evidence-based study indeed.

Mr. Speaker, given that in order to keep up with the demand for electricity, renewable resources need to be phased in as quickly as coal is phased out and given that the NDP government will rely heavily on private-sector investors to meet renewable targets, the same companies the Premier publicly vilifies daily, and given that you've invested in turning public perception against taxpayer-owned companies despite their commitments to a stable power grid and the communities they serve and now you're asking them for partnerships in billions in investments, again to the minister: simply put, do you regret torching those very bridges of trust and investor confidence in front of and behind you?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this topic of the investment appetite in the renewables space I will quote Calgary Economic Development president Mary Moran, who said:

As investment in renewable energy in Canada is growing rapidly, Alberta has been largely on the sidelines in this key part of the future energy supply, so we are pleased to see policy that provides the long-term certainty and stability that encourages global and local companies to invest.

This is a plan that plays to the best parts of Alberta's competitive electricity market while ensuring that we are staging the phase-in of renewables and also natural gas in order to replace the aging coal...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's not what I heard yesterday from the CED economic outlook people and the stakeholders that I met there.

Given that the unemployment rate continues to rise across the province, hitting double digits in Calgary, which was a big issue yesterday, and given that a new punitive carbon tax will hit Alberta families January 1, when they can least afford it, and given that we simply need to look to Ontario to see how ideological policies hurt families on fixed incomes the most, with increased power bills, and given you know accelerated coal phase-out will hurt these very families and Albertans, knowing that you do not have their backs, when will you stop pursuing the NDP world view and finally start being a Premier for all Albertans?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll happily direct the member to look at the Alberta jobs plan, which I released on Monday, which talks about the fact that this year Alberta is poised to have record investment – record investment – in capital investment, in manufacturing, in non oil and gas, in oil and gas; \$28 billion will be invested this year. As well, at this very same meeting that the member attended, they also talked about how there are many economists that are saying that Alberta is turning the corner and that for our economy there are positive projections for next year's outlook. We've had three months of growth.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

2:30

### Climate Leadership Plan and Indigenous Communities

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Success of the climate leadership plan requires collaboration and engagement from Albertans. In West Yellowhead the Hinton Friendship Centre has told me that for too long past Alberta governments have not worked co-operatively or recognized the leadership role that aboriginal communities can have in building Alberta's green future. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what is this government doing to involve indigenous people in the climate leadership plan?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It's very important that the First Nations and Métis people of this country have a very crucial role in our economy and help to build the workforce and benefit from the climate leadership program. Right now they're already helping to shape this plan as members of the Energy Efficiency Advisory Panel, the oil sands advisory group, and the Energy Efficiency Alberta program. Last month, as well, we introduced two pilot programs that are specifically directed toward the indigenous communities under our indigenous climate leadership plan. Right now 2 out of every 3 people in Alberta, including First Nations people, will be eligible for...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that indigenous communities are often directly impacted by the impacts of climate change, to the same minister: could you tell us more about these pilot programs?

**The Speaker:** Mr. Minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I'm very excited to announce, having announced these programs earlier this year, that these programs are open until the end of March. The first is the Alberta indigenous solar program, which will help the friendship centres and other indigenous organizations and the government to put solar panels on the roofs of buildings. The Alberta indigenous community energy program will help First Nations and Métis settlements conduct community energy audits. These programs will invest \$2.5 million into reducing power bills and making buildings more efficient. They're also smart ways of building expertise, creating opportunity...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the response. After these pilot programs end, what will the climate leadership plan look like for the indigenous communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We have already started working with the First Nations communities and the Métis community to help build these pilot programs. We want to encourage success, like is happening right now on Montana First Nation, which has put solar panels on their band offices, their water treatment plant, and 15 of their homes. Through doing this, they've been able to cut their energy bills in half and have developed important partnerships and big plans for the future. Through their band-owned renewable energy company they've trained 40 people and generated \$120,000 for their most recent installations. The climate leadership plan, like Montana First Nation's solar...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

#### **Bovine Tuberculosis**

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, a rancher in my constituency has hundreds of cattle, with a portion that is quarantined due to a case of TB being discovered in southern Alberta. The two herds have never come into contact. He has been unsuccessful in selling his unaffected cattle at auction given the unease that they may also be unhealthy. To the minister: what is the government doing to help this rancher and others like him in this situation?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been and continue to be in close contact with beef producers about this. It absolutely is causing them distress. The beef industry is an important industry in this province, and the product that they export is important to the producers and to the whole province. We are working with the CFIA and moving forward with this organization, and now we are continuing to actually extend and work with Saskatchewan on this issue. This is an important issue to our province, and we will do everything we can to support the CFIA and the producers to move forward to ensure that they can sell this amazing product...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, this rancher is incurring mounting costs for the care of his cattle that have been quarantined since the

beginning of this case. Given that Albertans like this rancher don't have unlimited resources and need to pay the bills to maintain their families, income, and what they're doing and given that this government is passing new legislation at a breakneck speed, to the minister: why is this government, then, taking so long to make a decision on these quarantined animals?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it is the CFIA who is leading this investigation, and we have offered all of our support in this matter. It is an important priority.

In terms of financial options AFSC posted a list of programs available to affected cattle producers, from advanced programs to flexibility on AFSC loans. Agriculture and Forestry has begun the longer term analysis of whether future AgriRecovery assistance may be available to producers affected by bovine TB. We encourage impacted producers to engage with AFSC or Agriculture and Forestry so we can continue to find supports that work for them. We will listen to beef producers and affected...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, given that we heavily rely on the United States to purchase our exports and given that a case of bovine tuberculosis has caused uncertainty in our valuable beef industry, to the minister: what is this government doing to ensure that our trading partners know that we are competent to handle situations like these when they arise?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, obviously, we're monitoring the situation closely in support of our farming families in this province, and we are urging the federal government to do the same. Again, there is very little risk to human health. We don't anticipate market disruptions as a result of this. It is something that periodically happens in markets. However, we are pressing the CFIA to move forward on this, to consider it an important priority. We'll continue to work with Saskatchewan to do the same, and we will continue to support the hard-working farm families of this province with every bit of support that we can give.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

#### **Municipal Minimum Property Tax**

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 21, the euphemistically entitled Modernized Municipal Government Act, purports to make improvements to the MGA, the large piece of legislation that has governed how municipalities operate for the past 20 years. However, one section was left completely untouched, the section that permits the levying of minimum tax. To the minister: given the egregious and penal nature and unfair nature of the section and the penalizing effects it has on the owners of property of lower value, do you support amendments to end this practice?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the work that we did amending the Municipal Government Act. I've certainly heard a lot of support from the other side of this House in terms of that. In regard to the minimum tax, certainly, there are costs that municipalities incur as a result of providing support to residents in the community. That is what property tax is about. Certainly, they

need to be able to recoup the costs of providing a very basic level of services to those properties, and we will continue to support municipalities to be able to do so.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the application of minimum tax in some communities results in property tax payable actually exceeding the property's assessed value and given that this practice seriously impedes the capacity for rural communities to be places where those on lower or fixed income can find attainable housing and given that this seriously damages the viability of small rural communities, to the minister: why won't you at least consider changes that would end the practice of levying minimum tax?

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order?  
The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I stated, we absolutely have support for the rural municipalities to be sustainable, to be viable. They need to be able to have the funds to provide support to the residents in their communities, and setting a base, low, minimum tax rate for property owners is a reasonable thing, and I continue to support them in the autonomy they have to be able to meet the needs of their residents and utilize all the tools that they have to be enabled to do so.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this government and indeed NDP philosophy in general prides itself on the world view of redistributing wealth from the rich to the poor and given that the application of the minimum tax does exactly the opposite, why won't the minister take steps to restore fairness to the application of property taxation in small communities across our province and end this practice?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the minimum tax provisions is an enabling piece of legislation. It doesn't force municipalities to do so. We continue to extend that tool to municipalities to utilize, and I encourage Albertans who feel that their municipality is utilizing that tool in a different way to work with their municipality to find a fair solution. We respect our municipal leaders, we respect our municipal leadership, and we will continue to support them to do the amazing work that they do to keep their communities healthy, sustainable, and viable into the long-term future.

### Opioid Use Prevention

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, the continued threat of fentanyl and other potentially deadly opiates is a concern for people in all regions of our province, including my own constituency of Sherwood Park. We've lost Albertans in our cities, in rural areas, and in our indigenous communities. Given that, can the Associate Minister of Health tell this House what the government is doing in response?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I've had the chance to sit with Albertans who have lost loved ones to addiction. Their stories are heartbreaking. We have lost Albertans with loving families, growing careers, and lives full

of possibility ahead of them. Two weeks ago I was at the Royal Alexandra hospital to announce several new initiatives to respond to this public health crisis. These include the expansion of opioid replacement treatment, co-operation with physicians in changing prescription practices, and beginning serious conversations in our communities about supervised consumption services. In all of our initiatives we are putting harm reduction first, and I am very proud of that.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, associate minister.  
First supplemental.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Public health officials and law enforcement officers have been supporting harm reduction as the most meaningful and cost-effective intervention that we can make to save lives. Given that harm reduction covers a wide range of activities, to the same minister: how is this government using this approach and to what extent?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Harm reduction is based on the belief that every person has dignity and worth and that Albertans living with addiction are no less deserving of health care than any other person living with a serious chronic disease. Harm reduction is driven by hard evidence from other jurisdictions that has proven that by offering support rather than stigma we can make a real difference for families. I was honoured to be joined at the Alex by Petra Schulz, who lost her son Danny to addiction. She told us her definition of harm reduction. It's keeping them alive so they can make a better decision on another day.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the response. Can the minister tell this House how supervised consumption services are distinct from safe injection sites?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We know that the use of illicit drugs will always be a high-risk activity, and while supervision can reduce that risk, we can never make it entirely safe. We also know that people use substances in a variety of ways, not just through injection. We'll be able to connect with and support those Albertans as well. Lastly, the model we are exploring in Edmonton will embed these services in existing community agencies so that people will be able to have access to a full range of social and health services at several locations. We're proud to support this work and make meaningful interventions to save the lives of Albertans.

**The Speaker:** We'll proceed in about 10 seconds.

### Presenting Petitions

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.  
The Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All Albertans deserve to go to work in an environment free from harassment and bullying. Bullying at work can have a long-lasting psychological impact, to the point that the harassed individual can demonstrate symptoms similar to those of PTSD. What's more, psychological harassment

and bullying at work impacts a company's bottom line from absences and nonengagement.

As such, I am pleased to present this petition, sponsored by Wendy Gaucher-Bigcharles and Linda Crockett of Alberta Bullying, that has more than 1,300 signatures. It reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to: introduce legislation to address the issue of psychological violence in the workplace; protect employees from being exposed to hazardous work environments due to workplace psychological violence; and, request the federal government to introduce similar legislation in the House of Commons to address this issue for federally regulated employees.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 31

#### Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to request leave to introduce this Bill 31, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016.

The legislation is necessary to enact some of the results of the first phase of the government's review of public agencies, boards, and commissions, also referred to as the ABCs review. The government established this review to ensure Alberta's agencies are, in fact, relevant, effective, efficient, and well governed. As part of Budget 2016 we announced the amalgamation and dissolution of 26 agencies, boards, and commissions. The proposed bill will allow the dissolution of three entities that were established by statute, and they are the Government House Foundation, the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, and the Wild Rose Foundation. [interjections] Not the Wildrose Party, though that wouldn't be bad either.

The work of these agencies continues within government or through other means. The proposed bill also includes provisions to enhance the administration and governance provisions in other legislation affecting agencies, boards, and commissions identified through our ABC review. Finally, these additional provisions will help ensure effective governance and support other policy decisions that have been made to date.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

#### Bill 207

#### Veterinary Profession (Clear and Timely Price Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2016

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Veterinary Profession (Clear and Timely Price Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2016.

It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce Bill 207. This bill intends to regulate the profession's governing body, the Veterinary Medical Association, to provide clear and timely disclosure for services that are within the scope of veterinary medicine. Specifically, this bill requires the members of the veterinary profession to disclose to their clients a narrow set of predictable fees that a client is likely to incur for services unless they are needed services in an emergency.

I look forward to discussing this important topic with my fellow colleagues in this House.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 207 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

2:50

#### Bill 208

#### Occupational Health and Safety (Protection from Workplace Harassment) Amendment Act, 2016

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce Bill 208, the Occupational Health and Safety (Protection from Workplace Harassment) Amendment Act, 2016.

Every employee has the right to work in an environment free from psychological harassment and bullying. This bill would amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to include a specific definition of psychological violence and add prohibitions for psychological violence in the workplace. I look forward to future discussions about this bill with my colleagues in the House.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 208 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** I was just going to request a reversion to introductions if possible.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some individuals who are dedicated to ending harassment in the workplace. I'm not sure if they're all here, but if you could stand when I call your name: Wendy Gaucher-Bigcharles, a constituent who was a catalyst to my private member's bill, who came to my office and cosponsored the petition as well; Linda Crockett, the founder and executive director of Alberta Bullying, also a cosponsor of the petition; Jared Matsunaga-Turnbull from the Alberta Workers' Health Centre; Pat Ferris, a researcher in the field of workplace bullying; Dr. Jonathan Eustace and Dr. Michelle Drefs, representatives of the Psychologists' Association of Alberta. Thank you. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table five copies of a report from the Asthma Society of Canada, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the Lung Association, and the Pembina Institute entitled Breathing in the Benefits: How an Accelerated Coal Phase-out Can Reduce Health Impacts and Costs for Albertans.



**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to section 21(1) of the Child and Youth Advocate Act I rise today to table five copies of the 2015-16 annual report of the Child and Youth Advocate.

I also would like to table five copies of the page biographies for the Second Session of the 29th Legislature, fall 2016, so that all of you know these wonderful young people who serve us every day.

Hon. members, I think we may have a point of order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on the point of order.

**Cortes-Vargas:** We're going to withdraw the point of order.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

##### Bill 29

#### Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move Bill 29, the Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act.

I'm proud to have tabled this bill yesterday because this legislation touches personal moments in every Albertan's life. Every Albertan uses vital statistics services at some point in their life, whether they are planning a wedding, becoming a new parent, dealing with the death of a loved one, or are travelling and need a birth certificate to apply for a passport. That's why it's important that we update this legislation to reflect the modern reality of today's Alberta. There are over 60 amendments proposed in this transformative legislation, changes that respond to Albertans' expectations for efficient public services and an inclusive, compassionate approach to life's major events.

Bill 29 clarifies that parents can choose any last name for their child. This helps families avoid costly and complex processes when changing a child's name. It also empowers parents to use cultural naming conventions such as placing the family name before a given name, as is done among Cambodian, Japanese, Korean, and Hungarian communities, to name a few.

Our government respects the dignity of represented adults. We will amend the Marriage Act to remove the requirement for a doctor's letter to marry the person of their choice. At the same time, we are giving guardians more time to intervene, if they feel compelled, by extending the notification period from the current 14 days to 30 days before a marriage licence is issued. Several groups, including Right to Love and the Calgary Sexual Health Centre, have advocated for this very change, Mr. Speaker. We have also received letters from doctors who say that the decision to marry is a personal one that should not require the consent of a doctor, and we agree.

Alberta is a compassionate province, and this act reflects those values, particularly during times of grief. We are reducing the burden on grieving parents of a stillborn child by not requiring parents to name a stillborn child in order to register the stillbirth, but they still certainly have the choice to do so, Mr. Speaker. We are providing them with the ability to later add or amend the name if that is part of their healing process.

One mother wrote us a few months ago letting us know that after a long and traumatic labour she was forced to quickly come up with a name to register the stillbirth. She and her partner provided a nickname that they had referred to their unborn baby as during the pregnancy. In her words, she said that the fact that her child never had a real name had been weighing very heavily on her, and she

pleaded for help to be able to give her late child a name that she says he deserves. As a new mother myself I cannot fathom the pain of losing a child and how difficult it must be to grapple with these decisions in time of deep loss and mourning. We are giving parents the time they need to grieve and heal instead of being bound by restrictive and uncompassionate rules and timelines.

With Bill 29 we are also protecting the privacy of Albertans, Mr. Speaker. We are restricting who can search for vital records such as registrations of birth, marriage, or death. This change is of particular importance to protect the security of vulnerable persons fleeing domestic violence or harassment. We are also removing the need for legal changes of name to be published in the *Alberta Gazette*, and we are removing the need to provide a reason for requesting a legal change of name.

Albertans are telling us they want improved access to vital statistics services. The Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act will enable a future online birth registration system that will make it easier for parents to register births from anywhere, any time, on any device of their choice. Not only will it save taxpayers nearly \$460,000 over four years; it will also reduce errors from the current paper form system. The act also paves the way for other e-services like online marriage registrations for marriage officiants. We are also introducing a new commemorative certificate, Mr. Speaker, a decorative document to commemorate special occasions such as a 50th wedding anniversary or a 100th birthday or even to complete a family tree display.

We are now adding midwives to the list of professionals who can register a birth and acknowledging the essential role that they play in the health and well-being of expectant mothers and the safe delivery of babies.

With this act Alberta is leading the country in being an inclusive and welcoming province. We are preparing to include a third marker on vital records for those who do not identify as male or female, and I'd like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park for her instrumental contribution to this change. This makes Alberta the first jurisdiction in Canada to make this change in its Vital Statistics Act. This change will take effect after regulatory development and when the federal government makes a similar change so that legal documents such as provincial birth certificates are aligned with federal documents like passports.

3:00

We are also removing the outdated requirement for proof of sex-reassignment surgery in order to change one's sex on vital records, and we are expanding the list of professionals who may confirm an applicant's affidavit for change of sex to include registered social workers, nurse practitioners, and registered nurses.

These proposed changes to modernize the Vital Statistics Act are essential to making government work for Alberta's families and are critical in building an inclusive province that respects the rights of all Albertans. I'm proud our government is proposing these amendments and look forward to the debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my absolute pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 29, the Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act, at second reading. After taking some time to review the proposed changes, I am so happy to say that there is much in this bill that I support. The province is undergoing change just as society as a whole is

undergoing change, and in order to meet these changing needs, Alberta's legislation that regulates how these changes are recorded needs to be updated and modernized from time to time.

Bill 29 proposes to modernize and clarify the language of the Vital Statistics Act and the Marriage Act. This includes formal recognition in the act itself that removes the requirement to show proof of gender reassignment surgery when requesting a change to a birth certificate.

The Vital Statistics Act provides the framework by which the government and its agencies collect, manage, and store information about Albertans. For example, it is important for the government to know when a baby has been born in Alberta, the location where the baby was born, and the name of the baby. This information allows the government to provide this new baby and their family with the legal documentation such as a birth certificate, that is needed in order for the baby and their family to access the critical services that they need. A birth certificate is considered a foundational legal document that can be used to verify identity in order to obtain other very important legal documents such as a social insurance number, driver's licence, passport, provincial health care number, et cetera.

As I mentioned, our society is changing, and with the advancement of technology, that change seems to be happening faster and faster. Albertans are much more interconnected and dependent on technology than ever before, and their government must keep up with them. That's why I'm so pleased to see the amendments included in Bill 29 that will allow for parents to fill out and submit birth registrations online. This will result in a much more efficient process, that should result in parents obtaining their child's birth certificate in a more timely manner.

Giving birth is already an incredibly stressful and beautiful experience for parents, but sometimes the last thing that you're worrying about at that moment is whether your handwriting is sufficiently legible on a form or if you have misplaced important paperwork. I can attest to that, having had very, very long and very, very difficult labours and it being the very, very last thing on my mind, especially when that little munchkin was put into my arms. I'm very grateful for the opportunity that we'll be able to do this and to even potentially have a caretaker, husband, wife, whoever happens to be in the room with you able to help you out with that information.

To keep up with the baby theme, another change that I'm extremely happy to see is that the government is clarifying that parents may choose the last name they want for their child. That allows parents to change their child's last name without the need for a costly and complex process. That not only protects and respects the fundamental rights of the parents to make these important decisions, but it also removes the needless institutional barriers that might discourage parents from changing their child's name when and if they feel that's appropriate.

Canada is a richly diverse country. Just last week we celebrated the passage of the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act, honouring the many contributions of Ukrainian Canadians. According to the 2011 census Alberta is home to over 220,000 First Nations, 156,000 South Asians, and over 40,000 Latin Americans amongst many, many, many others. While we are all Albertan and we bring all of our individual cultural experiences with us, one of the most important aspects, I feel, that's really reflected in this, one of any culture, is its language. More specifically, it's the individual naming practices in different cultures. For example, naming conventions in Asian cultures, including Japanese, list the family name first, followed by the given name. Actually this bill, Bill 29, clarifies that Albertans will be able to use their cultural naming convention when naming their children, and that's wonderful. I

think that just really, really speaks to the diversity and inclusiveness in how this bill is moving forward.

Again, in my personal family my father's middle name became his first name when he came here because his first name is very long and difficult to pronounce, and his middle name is actually a very common name. If there is a lot of those common names in a room, it's a little difficult to figure out who they're talking to, however. Then when my father-in-law came to Canada, they mispronounced his name when he entered the country and actually wrote it down wrong. It's actually wrong on his certificate from when he immigrated here. I think that this will give a tremendous amount of dignity to the folks that we have that are wanting to follow that cultural practice. Hopefully, we will be able to get that a little bit more correct for future generations and other people's names.

If I may, I'd like to move on to another topic that is very important to me personally, and that is amending the proposal to repeal the requirement for a physician to certify that a represented adult has the capacity to marry. I don't know how a physician who sees a child or a represented adult a few times a year would ever feel comfortable, let alone qualify, to have the intimate knowledge to make such an important judgment call, including the authority to overrule an individual's parents' or guardians' rights. Obviously, the decision is best left to the individual and their family and the guardian to decide, and I welcome this change. Again, I can speak from a personal experience in my family. I want nothing more than for my 18-year-old to have the privilege of being married and having a family one day, and I would be absolutely just blown away if somebody was able to take that right away from him, let alone my ability to encourage him to have this life that he so desperately desires. This is a very welcome change.

One of the things in the amendment that is interesting is that there has been an increase to the time that the parent or guardian has to intervene if they feel that the represented adults should not marry, from 14 to 30 days. This is extremely important. There is definitely much emotion and very many different circumstances. These are thumbprint issues from person to person, Mr. Speaker, and it's very important that families and guardians have some time to have discussions and potentially a period in which to get together with all of the family parts involved to make sure that this is the right decision and that that person, that represented adult, also feels like they're being represented and that their personal emotions, decisions, and feelings are not being pushed aside in this decision.

3:10

In closing, I would truly like to reiterate my support for the changes proposed in this bill. Unfortunately, I was not able to touch on all of them. There are so many. But I believe that this bill truly improves and modernizes how government and agencies collect, manage, and store information about Albertans while also providing an extremely compassionate and inclusive approach to major life events. For this reason, I will be supporting Bill 29 at second reading, and I encourage all of my honourable colleagues in the Chamber to support it as well.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other members who would like to speak to second reading of Bill 29, Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act? Calgary-Hawkwood.

**Connolly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak on the Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act. I cannot tell you how excited I am about this act. This will affect every person born in our province, whether they are planning a wedding, becoming a new parent, dealing with the death of a loved

one, or making gender-affirming changes to their birth certificate. While I won't name all the fantastic things this bill will do, I would like to highlight just a few important changes.

The legislation will help to bring the Vital Statistics Act into the 21st century and assist to end institutionalized discrimination of persons with developmental disabilities and the LGBTQ-plus community. I don't know if anyone in this Chamber has ever attempted to change their name or has a friend who has tried, but I can promise you that it is incredibly difficult. This act will not only make it easier for parents to change the names of their children, for any number of reasons, but it will also strike out the need for legal name changes to be published in the *Alberta Gazette*.

Albertans change their names for a wide variety of reasons. Many do not feel safe having their old name published along with their new name in the *Gazette*. It can be incredibly dangerous for people who are fleeing an abusive relationship or people who change their names to reflect their gender identity, and several other reasons, to have their names published. A lot of times people want their name changed to affirm their gender identity, and when their names are published in the *Alberta Gazette*, they are often fired from their job or can be evicted when their employer finds out that they don't go by the name that they originally said that they were.

Removing the need to provide a reason for requesting a legal name change will also assist Albertans who wish to change their name legally to do so without fear of stigma. One of the many reasons people are afraid to change their name legally and are hesitant to do so is because they don't want to have to explain their reason for doing it. The decision to change one's name is not something people do lightly, and it can already be an incredibly emotional and difficult time in someone's life. Putting up barriers for people who wish to change their name legally is not going to solve anything, and I'm happy to see our government taking action on this.

This bill will also continue our government's record on leading the country in creating a more inclusive and welcoming province. Our government is preparing to include, once this bill is passed, an X gender marker on vital records for those who identify as neither male or female. This will make Alberta the first jurisdiction in Canada to do this change in its Vital Statistics Act. Many Albertans do not identify as male or female, thus it can be incredibly difficult and triggering when forms, websites, et cetera, only offer two genders.

It's also infuriating when people tell me that those who do not identify as male or female should just identify with their sex assigned at birth or according to their genitals. Mr. Speaker, personally, I don't believe the government nor anyone has the right to ask people about their genitals, nor should people be required to divulge information as to what their genitals look like; however, this is often what happens to gender-nonbinary Albertans. Currently in Alberta if a gender-nonbinary person doesn't identify with the sex they were assigned with at birth, they have to prove to the province that they have had gender-reaffirming surgery, and while many gender-nonbinary people choose to have gender-affirming surgery, many do not. That's just a personal choice that one may make.

Gender-reaffirming surgery is also incredibly difficult to have in Canada. Currently there is only one clinic in Canada where you can have this surgery, and in order to be able to get this surgery, you have to have signed documents from, I believe, two doctors in Alberta, one psychiatrist as well as another doctor. There are only one or two doctors in the entire province that will sign these forms for a patient.

Albertans have the right to identify with their true gender, and I'm glad to see our government being a leader in the world on these issues. I know of many Albertans who will be incredibly happy to see our government moving forward on these issues, making sure that one does not have to have gender-reaffirming surgery to show that they are not the gender they are assigned at birth and that they

know who they are and that the records show that they know who they are.

I would highly encourage all members of the Legislature to support this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to Bill 29? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. I won't cover a lot of the ground that previous members have covered, but I did want to rise to speak in favour of Bill 29, to thank the hon. minister for bringing it forward and allowing Alberta to lead the nation, particularly as it relates to allowing Albertans to live their lives as they are, not the way the government says that they should be. I think that's a very important point, and I do hope that the rest of the provinces in Canada will follow Alberta's lead on this.

There are other aspects of this bill that I think are quite positive. The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View I think did a very good job of outlining some of those as well, as did the minister. Anything we can do to reduce stress on parents at difficult times and to allow people more choice over naming – one of the things, I think, that I find fascinating about this job is that I learn things that I didn't know were laws. That, in fact, there's a registrar in this province that could have dictated and that to this day can dictate what someone chooses to name their child seems, frankly, foreign to me and doesn't seem right. I'm pleased to see that that will change with the passage of this legislation.

I certainly will be supporting it and enthusiastically encourage all of my legislative colleagues to do the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Calgary-Elbow?

Are there any other members who'd like to speak to Bill 29, the Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand and talk about this piece of progressive legislation. It's going to benefit all of us, I think, and streamline processes, communications, accuracy, timely changes. We're just learning this week that the federal government is starting to move on the whole issue of gender markers in their legislation as well, so it seems like we're somewhat in sync federally and provincially on at least the gender identity changes that they're looking at – also, the rules around people who want to change their birth certificates but haven't yet undergone gender-reassignment surgery.

Online birth registration through computer, tablet, and smart phone; online registration for birth confirmation from doctors and midwives; and pursuing online marriage registration for officiants like MLAs: that just speeds and facilitates things wonderfully. We are an online society now, and we're, I think, appropriately catching up with some of our technology. Baby names, name changes, marriage certificates: we don't see any problem with this. It's pretty noncontroversial, and the proposed changes are very consistent with our policies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:20

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions for the Member for Calgary-Mountain View under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members who would like to speak to the bill?

Is there a motion to close debate?

I'm going to go to the vote.

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a second time]

## Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

Mr. Loewen moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that it is necessary to have the recommendations from the oil sands advisory group tabled in the Assembly before the bill can proceed.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment November 9: Mrs. Aheer speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m going to just back up a little bit to where I was before. I think it’s important enough to reiterate. We are speaking in regard to making sure that – we want to see this bill put on hold until the OSAG reports. We’ve gone over a lot of reasons why this is important, but I just need to reiterate that there is a massive level of responsibility here that this House has to Albertans to make sure that the panels that the government is bringing together, that the folks that they put on these panels, that the information that comes forward from these panels, that everything that is required for Albertans to understand what the government is doing is there before we move to ramming through legislation that has not yet had the ability of the panel to speak to it.

Everyday Albertans right now are talking about all of these issues. I realize that when we’re under here, it might feel like everybody knows what we’re talking about, but they don’t. As I said before, when I’m in my constituency and people are asking me about – and like I said before, there are some very, very interesting people on this panel that are bringing forward a lot of controversy amongst the folks that I speak to. I firmly believe – and I think I can speak on behalf of at least my constituents – that they’re going to want to know what this panel brings forward before legislation is passed here because any regulation that happens after the fact is under the ministry and has absolutely no ability to be talked and spoken about robustly in this Legislature.

The importance of bringing the panel forward was obviously important enough for the government to strike one but not important enough for them to bring forward the panel discussions prior to ramming through this legislation. I take personal responsibility for being able to convey at least to some degree where the government is headed with this. As I said before, the concern then comes up: has the panel already reached its decision and we’re just not bringing that? Maybe the government isn’t happy with the direction that the panel is going.

I would have to say that I would have assumed that the government – the reason why you’ve stretched it out to February was to give them, in good conscience, the ability to deliberate on this massive piece of legislation that is going to alter, constrain, and change the future of how we produce in this province. This cap on production changes the whole look of prosperity, not only for Alberta but for Canada, and I would think that the government would want that information back.

Evidently, the government picked experts that they think are at least somewhat, it seems to me, by looking at these names, I mean, like, similarly thinking, minded people. You know, we have people from CNRL on there. We have Ms Tzaporah Berman that is on there, from Stand and from Greenpeace, and we have many, many other folks on there that if given the opportunity to have to choose a panel, may not have been my first choice, but I’m not the government. The government has that privilege of being able to

choose that panel. But with that privilege, they also have the responsibility to make sure that the information that comes from that panel is made accessible not only to us but to Albertans.

This is not what you campaigned on. This government campaigned on transparency, and to be able to withhold panel discussions and information and advice that comes from that panel prior to putting through this legislation is not what they campaigned on, Mr. Speaker. That level of transparency and accountability is absolutely imperative, especially in situations like this, when we’re looking at – these are job creators. This is about how our province is going to move forward. This is about stability. This is about investment, about everything that we have come to talk about on a daily basis in here, and it just doesn’t seem to be getting through.

There is a cost to creating this panel, too. This isn’t a small number of people. This is a large panel with, obviously, a great deal of expertise in their areas. Am I to understand correctly that the government is going to suggest that we ram through legislation even though the taxpayers are on the hook for paying for this panel, yet the panel is not going to respond back to the Legislature, let alone to Albertans, but that’s supposed to be okay because, as the member across the way said earlier today, delaying it is not helpful and it doesn’t matter what the panel says? Wow. I find that extremely concerning, especially because it was the government that decided to put forward a panel. I don’t know if somebody can explain that to me, how that works, but it just doesn’t seem to make sense to me that you would strike a panel of advisers, of experts, yet ram through legislation before the experts are able to speak about it and then expect Albertans are just going to be okay with that. I highly, highly doubt it, at least for the folks that I talk to in my constituency.

With the absolute privilege that I have of being in the industry and talking to these people all day – nobody knows what’s going on. I would wager a guess that that brings a tremendous amount of instability. As a person, you know, if I was involved in this and I’m looking for an investor – an investor is going to look at a full package. They’re going to look at the tax regime. They’re going to look at what the government is doing, what their priorities are, and how it works within their ability to invest and be able to report to their stakeholders. It really doesn’t look very positive on that side of things. If I was a business person and this was my situation and I had money to invest, I would be very wary. I’d be very concerned.

If you go back to the manifesto aspects as well, because they do have Ms Berman on this panel – this is not new information. Specifically it says in the manifesto, Mr. Speaker: no new infrastructure projects aimed at increasing extraction of nonrenewables, including pipelines. That is explicitly said within the manifesto, and we have people like that on this panel.

Again, the issue I raise is: do they already know what the panel is going to say and that it really is irrelevant and that’s why we’re going to ram it through, because it doesn’t matter? They already know that the panel is aligned with the ideology of this government, so we’re just going to push through the legislation because the panel is already aligned with that. Albertans don’t get to have a say.

On top of that, we couldn’t even get this government to go to committee with us on this, to actually bring in other experts to potentially round out this discussion. That’s really all we were asking for. If the government is correct in their arbitrary amount of 100 megatonnes, well, then the experts would most certainly back that up.

Believe me, if that is what the experts and all of the other companies that are involved in this – and there are a lot more than just the big four that the government keeps talking about. If those folks and those people were able to come in and discuss this with the government, Mr. Speaker, a more well-rounded discussion

could have happened so that all of us would have the information we need to go forward and not just grasp at straws here, trying to figure out: "Well, what is 100 megatonnes? Where did that come from? Where is the 30 per cent coming from?" These arbitrary numbers leave us very uncomfortable. Again, if I could reiterate, the instability that that brings to the sector just drives investment right into the waiting and open arms of other jurisdictions.

3:30

The government has been bragging about this panel, about the industry folks that are in there, about the environmental folks that are in there, about the aboriginal folks that are in there, that are going to help bring to this panel some clarity and bring clarity to the government, yet again I will say that we are going to ram through this legislation without any clarity. What is the point? The member across the way said it best: "What does it matter? Ram it through. We don't need the panel's advice." I'm sorry. I find this very, very hard to take, and I find it very difficult to be able to go back to my constituency and say: "Oh well. It doesn't matter. The panel's advice going to the government doesn't matter because they're just going to ram it through anyway." I mean, this cap is about a cap on prosperity. It's a cap on production. We've said it, and I will say it a hundred times more: we should be producing here.

I was going to say, too, that when we're on this side, the amendments to the bill are an absolute priority for all Albertans to, again, be able to have a robust discussion in here. It doesn't matter if we agree or not, but that is the ability of the opposition parties and, actually, of the government, to be able to bring amendments that can make these bills better.

I'm curious about how it is that we're supposed to help create reasonable amendments, thoughtful amendments, accountable amendments when we don't know what the panel is going to say. How is one supposed to do that? It's not common sense, Mr. Speaker. We are trying to create amendments to make this bill better, but we are grasping in the dark trying to figure out how this is all going to work. There are a lot of puzzle pieces coming together here, and I'm going to tell you that from my perspective, it's very concerning.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), are there any questions for the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View?

Seeing or hearing none, are there other members who would like to speak to the amendment to Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act? Mr. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, on the amendment this afternoon, the reasoned amendment, as you know. There is a lot that can be said about this particular piece of legislation, and it is certainly going to – this legislation shouldn't be passed. As you know, I would never want to presuppose a decision of the Assembly and be found in contempt, as some have been. Should it pass, there will be significant and wide-sweeping changes to the face of our province and our province's ability to continue to be a world leader in resource extraction. Let me be clear. Our province has been a world leader, and it will continue to be a world leader.

The thing that this bill does and one of the reasons why we've proposed this reasoned amendment to delay the legislation is that sometimes when you place a cap or a limit on the opportunity for success, you can actually have the opposite effect. We have been a world leader in technological advancements and responsible resource extraction. The government will argue that once you have a cap, everyone will get better to try to get under the cap. We've

seen significant advancements with respect to removing resources in an environmentally responsible way because, one, it's the right thing to do; two, the competition in the marketplace; and, three, there is always a desire to become better at what you're doing.

When you place a cap, it's quite possible that many players who would have otherwise wanted to engage in the process will actually say: "You know what? We're going to go to another jurisdiction, and we aren't going to be spending our resources on becoming better because the opportunity for growth isn't there." When the opportunity for growth is limited, people's desire to spend real dollars on becoming better at what they do is often reduced because the upside or the benefit of doing that is no longer present.

While the government, you know, likes to say that this is going to actually encourage people to be better, what it's going to do is allow the biggest players, the ones who already have significant investment in the marketplace, to continue as they are and only expand. Under the guise of reducing emissions, we're going to see emissions increase to 100 megatonnes and limit the amount of industry players in the marketplace, and it's very likely going to prove to be less responsible than more responsible. I think that's a shame.

Mr. Speaker, the government, through significant amounts of fanfare of their own and public resources being spent on speaking of panels and advisory groups, has cobbled together a group of folks that are going to be providing recommendations on the extraction of oil sands. In some strange way they've said: "We want to listen, except on this one massive issue, where we intend to limit the potential of our province by limiting the production amounts in the oil sands. We want to put together this panel because consultation is important." This is paraphrasing, Mr. Speaker. "Consultation is important, except on things that we've already made up our mind on."

I think you'll recall, Mr. Speaker, a pretty significant and robust discussion inside this Chamber around other pieces of legislation, like Bill 6, where the government was saying the same sorts of things: "Oh, we want to consult. We want to listen, except here's the piece of legislation that proves that we don't really want to do that." That's exactly what's before us in the form of Bill 25, this fanfare and posturing around consultation, yet legislating on a significant, significant portion of our economy, of our ability to be competitive in the world marketplace, because the government doesn't seem to want to be confused by the facts. They've already made up their mind.

What this reasoned amendment does is that it allows the government the opportunity to pause, to take a step back, and to say: "You know what? Let's just put this down the road a little and wait for this recommendation."

3:40

Now, Mr. Speaker, much like the government already quite likely knows what's going to be in the report, I have a sneaking suspicion that there are going to be many things in the report that others in this place don't entirely agree with, but the key factor here is around this consultation piece. The government likes to say one thing and do another. Really, all the opposition is trying to do today is to be here to help the government, to give them the opportunity to say one thing and do one thing, and that one thing is that they said that they want to have the OSAG panel, that can provide input and feedback and direction. While it's unclear if we will agree with the OSAG report, I think it's reasonable that if you asked your friends to provide you with advice, you'd want to get the advice before you moved on to drastically changing the face of the province.

The opposition has taken the opportunity to propose this amendment that will give the opportunity for the government to do

just that. What we're talking about with respect to changing the face of the province is important, not just today but tomorrow as well, not just tomorrow but the future of our province. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we are a world player in this market. We have been blessed with resources that have provided so much for our province. I think of the future of our province at a time like this, and that future is very important.

That's why we need to make sure we get it right. That's why taking a pause of six months to get the appropriate information before we dive headlong into an ideological position that this government has presented, a position that's going to limit our industry's ability to compete in that world market that I just mentioned, a limit that's going to provide a significant leg up to all other energy producers that surround this province, a limit that is going to give a giant gift of thousands of jobs to Saskatchewan and thousands of jobs to North Dakota and thousand of jobs to Manitoba – I'll take that back; I don't know about Manitoba – and thousands of jobs to Montana, thousands of jobs even to, likely, the state of Washington, Mr. Speaker, who you'll know last night voted against a carbon tax. When we limit our potential, we limit the opportunity of our province. It is more than just a little unfortunate that we are going to give significant gifts to our competitors to make our position in the world weaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you've heard over the last number of days in debate – and I know you know this – Alberta is, if not the best, one of the very best at producing energy in an environmentally responsible way. As my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View said, it is much better for us to be producing energy in our environmentally responsible ways than it is to allow other jurisdictions with significantly less environmentally responsible policies to outproduce us and have a significantly negative impact on our industry and not even have the benefit of carbon reduction.

What we will see is the significant leakage of our industry to other jurisdictions with policies and legislation that do not provide the same sort of oversight. So we're going to wind up with the worst of both: jobs that have been lost, ripped out of Albertans' hands, and the overall impact of an increase in carbon emissions from our neighbours. We need to be doing much, much more to encourage the reduction as an overall unit, not as an individual in a much larger group, because while we all have a responsibility, we can't wind up with the worst of both scenarios, where jobs and industry go to another jurisdiction and emissions still increase.

This opportunity here that the government has before it is to take a pause. In this case, we've identified the fact that the committee has been struck. A significant amount of public dollars and resources have been placed in this committee's ability to deliver on important information. I don't hold a lot of hope on this particular issue, but it is, frankly, my hope that the panel will come back with a much more reasonable position than this piece of legislation, that will address some of these very important issues that we spoke about here today, these very important issues of jobs and industry fleeing our jurisdiction in the form of carbon leakage yet emissions actually increasing.

Who knows what the panel will come back with, but if the panel does in fact come back with recommendations that are contrary to this legislation, I don't understand why we would create such uncertainty inside our producers – large, medium, and small producers – over that duration. Mr. Speaker, you know that the wheels of government often don't turn as fast as many would like them, and . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I was so pleased that you didn't interject or make a comment when the gentle heckling took place

on the other side of the House. I consider that a sign of hope for the future.

Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I also felt the same way, but I thought the future of Alberta felt the pain of us saying that we should strand the asset of \$250 billion in the ground. I thought that was what the baby was crying about.

I'm just curious. The good people from the best of the 87 ridings, Calgary-Foothills, are telling me why it should be referred to the committee, and that's why I moved the first amendment. Now I'm curious to understand what the MLA from the second-best riding of Alberta is hearing from the people he represents, the good people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. What are they telling you?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, the great people of Calgary-Foothills holiday in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. So many people want to go there and be able to spend time in such an outstanding area.

3:50

You know what? It's a really good question, though, because when I reach out to members of the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills – you know, the good thing in some respects right now, Mr. Speaker, is that I don't need to do a lot of reaching out to folks. People are contacting me on a very regular basis and expressing their concerns. It's good that they're engaged in the process, but rarely are they engaging in the process because they're calling my office to say: "You know what? This NDP government: I have never been happier."

You know, I had a constituent call and ask: why, Mr. Speaker? They didn't say "Mr. Speaker." They said my name, but that would be wildly inappropriate to say here. They said: why does the no development party, like, the NDP, want to limit our potential? They call and say: "What can be done? How? Is there anything you can do to get this government to slow down?" They're concerned with the speed at which the NDP, the no development party, is trying to change the face of our province.

This reasoned amendment, the ability for the NDP to listen to Albertans – because one thing that they all do agree with is that they all want what's best for the province. They often don't believe that the no development party's plans are what's best for the province, but they have a real desire to see the province succeed.

Mr. Speaker, in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills the effects of job losses are heartbreaking. You know, I look at the community of Crossfield. I don't know the exact number, but my guess is that inside the community there are probably only somewhere around 1,000 to 1,500 jobs. Just recently 120 of them were lost, and many of those 120 families who have been negatively impacted are fearful that the NDP will continue to make decisions that have a negative impact on our province's ability to remain competitive in a world marketplace. What that means for them is that it's so difficult to send their kids to hockey practice, to make sure that the mortgage is paid. In one – one – fell swoop 10 per cent of their people lost their jobs.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

On the amendment to Bill 25, the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to the amendment. Many people in the opposition have spoken, and we're

getting good debate on the amendment motion that's before the House today. Many members opposite have spoken about the future of Alberta being put at risk by the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act because they suggest that we might be stranding the asset. However, as part of the climate change plan that we've introduced, this Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act is going to do basically the opposite because we're looking at a very long-term strategy here. We're not looking short term, and the opposition is focusing on short-term things.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

While we're very much aware of the economic situation in the province and the fact that the oil sands are an integral part of our economy and that they must be looked at as a long-term strategic asset which we want to develop, you must look at the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act as a measure that will do just that. It's designed to prevent the stranding of assets while driving down the carbon output per barrel.

Now, some across the aisle have said that our legislation presupposes the outcomes of OSAG. Well, in fact, exactly the opposite is what's happening. This advisory group will determine its own outcomes by consensus, determining what advice to pass on to the government. The very diverse nature of the individuals on this panel will ensure that there's a robust debate amongst themselves, and they will independently come by consensus to the advice that they wish to pass on to government. We've established this committee with a view to having it designed so that robust debate takes place within it, and we expect very good, high-quality advice to result from that panel.

We're definitely not in a situation where we're looking to strand the asset and put Alberta jobs at risk. We're here to protect the long-term interests of this province and its most outstanding resource, the oil sands. This Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act is designed to make sure that that asset is there to be developed for the long-term future. Madam Speaker, we have to have a place to sell this asset. In order to ensure that there is a market, we have to make sure that the world knows that we're producing it at the lowest carbon output per barrel possible so that we end up being able to export this product globally by using pipelines that we hope will be built in the not too distant future.

So to suggest that we are not looking after Alberta's interests by proposing this act is totally incorrect. We're doing what is difficult for governments to do, and that is to look at the long term, Madam Speaker. The long term is something that governments historically have had difficulty with, but we're doing that hard work, and we're looking after Alberta's interests by having that long trajectory.

The climate leadership plan released on November 22, 2015, committed to establishing a legislated greenhouse gas emissions limit on the oil sands of 100 megatonnes in any year with provisions for cogeneration and new upgrading. Now Alberta is bringing forward a new Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act which establishes this 100-megatonne limit on oil sands greenhouse gas emissions in any year, consistent with the government's commitment in the climate leadership plan. Implementation of the limit will be considered by a multistakeholder oil sands advisory group over the next six months.

Now, an act that establishes the limit but leaves the detail regarding its application and implementation to regulation allows the oil sands advisory group to complete its work and provides the opportunity to engage with stakeholders and the public on regulatory details for the implementation of the limit. The composition of OSAG was designed especially to make sure that there were people from all spectrums of the debate regarding the oil

sands involved in the advice construction process so that the government was getting a full and complete view of arguments that would be presented through the oil sands advisory group deliberations and that they would be guided by the best possible robust debate and outcomes from that committee in order to make decisions and policy adjustments as time moves forward.

I think that by focusing solely on oil sands emissions, the new act highlights the government of Alberta's pledge of swift action on the climate leadership plan and sends a strong message to national and international stakeholders of Alberta's commitment to limiting oil sands emissions as Alberta works to increase market access. The new act needs implementation mechanisms – for example, compliance and enforcement tools – but details on what may be needed require further consideration and input from stakeholders and Albertans, and that will be done through the oil sands advisory group.

Bill 25 states that the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act “shall be construed as forming part of the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act, and the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act shall be construed” in the same way. This means that the tools set out in CCEMA's comprehensive legislative framework such as compliance and enforcement tools and regulation-making authority may be used for implementing the limit set out in the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act.

4:00

To suggest that the future of the province is at risk because we are limiting, through this Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, the amount of carbon that may be produced in the exploitation of our oil sands is absolutely wrong. What we're doing, Madam Speaker, is protecting this asset for the long-term future of Albertans. To suggest otherwise is a misreading of the facts.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Go ahead, hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. If I may, I'd like to make a few comments before I ask my question, just in regard to what the hon. member said. I just wanted to speak in regard to short-term aspects. Madam Speaker, 3.34 billion barrels of oil: think about that. Between 2025 and 2045 that is what we could be losing purely based on bad policy.

Let's talk about time here, if that's what this is about, the short term, not to mention the fact that the OSAG panel – all of the things that the hon. member said about compliance, emissions: this is coming into the House after the legislation has been passed. There is absolutely no way to put that together. I don't understand – and I would love for somebody to be able to explain this to me – how it is that we are supposed to ram through legislation without the advice that the member was talking about.

It's a bit of a contradictory term. He says in one term that we're not wanting to push through this legislation, yet we're only concerned about the short term. Actually, it's quite different than that. If we were only concerned about the short term, we wouldn't be thinking about investment, we wouldn't be thinking about the overall look, of what this looks like to anybody else who's literally laughing at us right now and scratching their heads. There are all sorts of jurisdictions all over the world that are just yahooin' right now because they're going to become highly competitive while we sit here and wait for the panel to come and advise us on legislation that's going to go through sometime in the next two weeks. I don't understand it.

I have a question for the member. You were saying that the panel is going to bring advice about compliance in the coming months, whenever that is. I was wondering if that member could answer this question: how is it that the government and the opposition and the House are supposed to understand what compliance is prior to the OSAG panel commenting on what's happening, as we pass legislation without knowing what the advisory panel is bringing forward?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Edmonton-McClung, do you wish to respond?

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, the fact of the matter is that the whole asset will be stranded without public support. As part of the climate leadership plan this piece of legislation is designed to gain that public support so that the asset can move forward, be produced and transported to offshore markets, ultimately through pipelines that we hope will be built with the public support we hope to gain by pieces of legislation like this, which limits carbon and which is in the public interest. By lowering the carbon footprint per barrel on the production of our oil sands, that's how we're going to gain that public support to get those pipelines to tidewater so that we can actually sell to the world at world prices this strategic asset of the province of Alberta over the long term.

This oil sands emissions cap will drive innovation. Putting a limit on oil sands emissions shows how Alberta can be an energy producer and a world leader on climate action. It will drive innovation and reduce emissions per barrel while still allowing for production growth and development.

Now we look forward to reviewing the implementation advice offered by our oil sands advisory group. The legislation limits oil sands greenhouse gas emissions to an annual maximum of 100 megatonnes, as I've said, with allowances for new upgrading and cogeneration. That figure was established by a diverse group of stakeholders and was recommended to government by environmental organizations and representatives of Alberta's oil sands industry. It sets a framework for additional implementation advice for the oil sands advisory group, which was announced in July 2016.

The cap is a cornerstone of Alberta's climate leadership plan, allowing the oil sands industry to grow sustainably while repairing the province's reputation. Limits on oil sands emissions will provide an incentive for companies to invest in greenhouse gas reduction as well as innovative technologies that will pave the way for Alberta's energy industry to lead in a low-carbon future. Alberta's climate plan and the oil sands emissions cap were lauded by U.S. President Barack Obama, and Minister Phillips will promote the plan at the United Nations climate conference later this month in Marrakesh.

**The Deputy Speaker:** A reminder, hon. member, not to use names in the House.

Do we have another speaker to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, followed by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on this amendment. You know, this is an issue that, interestingly, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and I have been kind of chatting back and forth about a little bit. I think it's important for me, first off, to say that in principle I absolutely support the 100-megatonne cap on oil sands emissions, and I support it for a couple of reasons. One, I agree, in fact, that it will spur innovation so that the next tranche of

development that will happen will be lower carbon than the development that has happened to date. Now, that's happening anyway, so it means that the 100-megatonne limit will not likely be hit for at least 15 years and probably longer than that. That's a good thing. Those are made-in-Alberta technologies that the world wants and the world needs if we're going to address global climate change.

That speech made a tremendous amount of sense last week, that speech before the election in the U.S. that happened less than 24 hours ago. We knew where the world was going. At least we had a pretty good idea where the world was going on the Paris climate accord, and it represented a tremendous opportunity for Alberta.

Now, I think we ought to take action on climate change because it's inherently the right thing to do irrespective of what the rest of the world is doing, but we have to be very careful in this province, in this Assembly, to not disadvantage Alberta, to not put our province in a position where other jurisdictions, including, obviously, the one immediately to the south of us, are emitting more as a result of their lax policies – so the world has more carbon in it – yet we've disadvantaged ourselves. If we had produced in Alberta at a higher standard, with lower emissions – I think it's very likely that we will be producing energy in a way that actually contributes to an overall reduction in carbon emissions globally. A molecule of carbon is a molecule of carbon irrespective of where it's emitted. Now, I don't know what's going to happen. This election is less than 24 hours old. We're all still processing it, and Donald Trump doesn't officially become president until January.

The reason I support this amendment is that it allows OSAG to do its work before we in this Assembly are asked to pass legislation. We can pass that legislation with the benefit of the knowledge of the deep and detailed work that that panel has done because they will be able to take into account all of these factors and others in terms of what's feasible, what is a reasonable stretch target for a reduction of oil sands emissions and other emissions. Their focus, of course, is oil sands emissions.

**4:10**

It's important for this House and especially the hon. members on the government side to understand my support for the principle of addressing climate change because, as I've heard a couple of times in this House, including today in question period, climate change is real, climate change is human caused, and climate change is a defining issue for our generation. We must do something about that. I do think that it presents not just a moral obligation for us as Albertans and as citizens of the world to do something about climate change, but it is a tremendous business opportunity for this province if we get it right. We have tremendously innovative people. We have an entrepreneurial culture. We have remarkable technical people. We have great universities. We have smart finance people. This is what Alberta's contribution to the world can be: the technology to reduce carbon emissions.

Which isn't to say that we move away from hydrocarbon as a source of energy. In fact, what it may mean is that we enable and unlock the use of this tremendously convenient, this tremendously energy-dense source of energy for the world while still reducing carbon emissions. That's possible, and that can come from Alberta. Those are good things. That's more than just a good thing. It's the kind of thing that can allow our province renewed prosperity, that can allow our energy industry, our oil and gas industry the support it needs, not just globally but within our own country, to build made-in-Canada pipelines. The people whose land the pipelines will traverse will recognize that Alberta's product is, in fact, a clean product, that Alberta has made a tremendous contribution to the



fight against global climate change, and that they are proud to have that product cross their land because there's a benefit to them and a benefit to the world. That's possible. All those things are possible.

The reason I support this amendment is in no way intransigence on the climate change file, but it's really a reality check, an opportunity for the OSAG panel to do its work, to report back. Then this House can pass legislation in full knowledge of the implications of what a 100-megatonne cap is. Maybe 100 megatonnes is too high. Maybe we find that, hey, it should be 85. Maybe we find, you know, that that actually isn't feasible, that it should be higher. I don't know.

It's very difficult, and it's an unfortunate trend that this government has continued from previous governments, of simply passing enabling legislation that allows for regulations to be created after the fact and saying: trust us; it's going to do wonderful things. Unfortunately, it seems to happen a lot. It's been a trend, I presume, in other Legislatures as well, which is unfortunate. I don't have that data before me. As a single MLA I get a little busy at times and don't have a chance to do research on those sorts of things. You know, it's unfortunate that the Legislative Assembly is not allowed the privilege of full information when being asked to pass legislation. That's what this amendment would do.

With that, I would encourage this government to take an opportunity not to back down from a climate change strategy in any way, not to feel that your values are being compromised but, in fact, to really thoroughly examine the issue using a panel that you yourselves have set up, that you yourselves have appointed thoughtful, capable, and diverse members to. Allow them to do that work, and then allow this Chamber to do its job of evaluating the results of that work in an open, transparent, and public way, hopefully a nonpolitical way, that will then engender some real support for the outcome of that.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will return to my place. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise in the House today to speak to Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, and specifically on the reasoned amendment. Once upon a time in this beautiful province of Alberta we were a land of opportunity. This province was a place that individuals, moms and dads, young people, corporations, entrepreneurs could come to and make an investment, build a future, build a business, hire people, make those businesses even bigger. This was a place where people came to live out their dreams. That's why I came here in the '70s.

I was a British Columbian. I was a young fellow, graduated from school, and we had an NDP government. There was no work. There was no work for most of my fellow graduates, so we left the province of British Columbia and came out here, to Saskatchewan and different places, to find jobs. This was the land of opportunity right here in this province, and that's why a lot of us settled here in this province to make a life here. That was just on a small scale, just me.

But there are corporations that came here, too, large ones, investment groups who found a business-friendly environment. There were lots of resources here, and those resources could be developed: agricultural, forestry, and, of course, our subsurface resources as well. It was a place to come and do that, and many, many people came. Many, many corporations came.

But now we have a government in place that wants to cap development. They want to cap development under the guise of

capping emissions, and they want this House to pass a bill, Bill 25, before we've even had an opportunity to listen to a panel that this government struck specifically with a mandate to advise this House and this government on these very issues. As has already been stated, it provides or, rather, it's causing a credibility gap, a serious credibility gap, and it's another nail in the coffin of this current government because their credibility continues to suffer at their own hands.

Now we have this bill, and although it's seemingly a very straightforward bill, the implications of it are so extremely far reaching. It is really a very large bill because of the scope, because of the long-term impact it's going to have on development in this province. Part of it is based on what I believe is a false premise, that somehow, if this government puts a cap on emissions in this province, it's going to do something towards saving the planet when, in fact, what it's going to do is result in another massive carbon leakage.

As we have already detailed, not just the Official Opposition but other members in this House on this side have already demonstrated very clearly the impact that the carbon tax is going to have on carbon leakage. This bill accomplishes the same thing. Putting a cap on our development does not put a cap on the demand for oil in the world. The demand is going to continue to grow. Depending on which organization you go to to find out what that growth looks like, it is significant, and that demand is not going to be curbed because the province of Alberta has a cap on their development.

As a result, that oil is going to be consumed by somebody, and that oil is going to be provided by somebody, and as my esteemed colleagues have pointed out, those somebodies that are going to be producing that oil to meet that demand do not have our environmental record. Many of them do not have our human rights record. Some of them can't even educate their little girls. That's irresponsible. That's the net result of this kind of carbon leakage, where other jurisdictions in this world – I'll use the words “despot regimes” – are going to be producing oil without any regard for the environment, producing oil and getting money for it. Some of those jurisdictions are funding terror with that.

**4:20**

The more that we produce here in an environmentally responsible way, in the Alberta way, where we respect human rights, where we respect the laws of our land, where we respect our fellow man, the more we do here, the more we help this planet. But when we have something like this, putting a cap on our development, we're not helping the planet at all. We're making things worse. We're making things worse because that carbon leakage is a reality. It's going to happen.

Now, we had the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung accusing the Official Opposition of only looking at things from the short term. That was the accusation. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung went on at length telling about how this bill is taking the long view, the long term, and so forth. Yet just the other day the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert said: we can't wait for the report; we're in a hurry; we need action now. It was a rather short-term type of a statement that they can't even wait for their own panel's report before we get this legislation passed.

That's not the long view. That's not the long-term view. The long-term view would be to make use of the panel that you struck and listen to what they have to say. Get that report out in the public, and let the public even have a critique of what this panel has produced. You know, like the hon. member from the outstanding riding of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills pointed out, there might be some stuff from that panel that's actually pretty good, that we can agree with.

The point is that we're not going to know. This legislation, if we follow the government side's timeline, will already be signed, sealed, and delivered before that report comes out. That is contributing so much to this government's credibility gap again, just like Bill 6 did, just like this bill does, putting the cart before the horse again, just like Bill 27: get the legislation passed, and then see what the experts have to say. This isn't a hockey game, where you shoot the puck into the corner and then dig it out. This is impacting people's lives, livelihoods, whole, entire industries.

This government's credibility gap continues to grow. I just checked on the polls to see where the Premier's popularity rating is going. It's got the glide path of a brick, and it's because of things like this: poor governance, poor management. It's really unacceptable. It is completely irresponsible to ask any member of this Legislature to support legislation without feedback from OSAG. That's why this bill must not now be read a second time.

I want to talk a little bit about this social licence that we apparently need to have although Nigeria doesn't need one. Saudi Arabia doesn't seem to need one. Iraq and Iran don't seem to need one. Russia doesn't need one. But somehow the little province of Alberta has to have a social licence. Albertans received notice the other day from the federal government – the federal government – you know, the only level of government in our beautiful federation that actually has any say on interprovincial pipelines. Our nation's Liberal Transport minister commented to CBC that a "moratorium on crude oil tanker traffic off British Columbia's North Coast [would be in place] by the end of the year." Well, what happened to our social licence? I think someone may have revoked our licence.

Albertans are paying billions of dollars. We have a \$6 billion carbon tax, half of which is being paid for by regular old Alberta moms and dads and half of which is being paid for largely by juniors out in the patch so they can subsidize their competitors, actually. The \$3 billion being paid by the taxpayers: well, much of that is going to go to the environment minister's slush fund for her green friends and their pet projects.

You know, a 60-year-old school in desperate need of better windows, better doors, better insulation, a high-efficiency heating system: what good is that old building without a solar panel on the roof? This government gets things kind of backwards all the time. We should be doing very deep retrofits on these old buildings first. Reduce energy consumption first. Begin by using less first. Then with the energy demand that's left over, you go to the roof and put some sort of energy production system on the roof like solar panels. But, no, putting a solar panel on the roof provides an excellent photo op. Meanwhile the heating system is 40 years old, 50 years old, the windows are about that old, the doors are that old, and the insulation and building standards of that day are nothing like what we have today in the codes for our highly insulated buildings.

We have a coal phase-out and billions of dollars in stranded assets compensation. I say billions because no one can be bothered to let Albertans know just exactly how much that's going to cost other than that it's not going to be on the cheap side. There will be no sale on that one.

We have a mass turn-back of power purchase agreements because of this government not doing their homework when they took office that at the end of the day is going to be costing us, oh, just a few hundred million dollars. There's also the risk of more stranded asset claims from this particular bill, Bill 25, once we work out which leaseholders aren't going to get to develop their share of the 3.34 billion barrels left in the ground.

And don't think I have forgotten about the 30 per cent by 2030 renewables target. We've heard that AltaLink is quite excited about that one, undoubtedly because of, one, the costly transmission

system upgrades required to get our system ready for reliability issues with renewables to that degree; two, the high transmission costs from moving our utility-scale power units away from central coal areas to the southern part of the province, where there is a chance that the renewables might just be able to earn back their embodied emissions – it might just be a snowball's chance, but it may be a chance – and three, the intertie buildup required so that B.C. workers can take Albertans' jobs and sell us power at a premium when the wind doesn't blow and the sun doesn't shine. With guaranteed rates of return on new bills like this, why wouldn't AltaLink be supporting this government?

This government used social licence, that phrase, as justification for hitting Albertans with the largest tax increase in the province's history, and thus far there is precious little to show for it except higher rates of taxation, caps on development, jobs lost. This is the cost of this social licence?

Well, Northern Gateway is dead. We are voting to cap oil sands. Why, again? So our oil sands players can get their pipeline? The pipeline for our oil sands players is Northern Gateway. Oops, that's kind of awkward.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I just wanted to have you potentially speak to a few things. I just wanted to bring up a few things that you had mentioned and a couple of the red flags that had been brought up as a result of not being able to have the OSAG panel advise the government previous to the legislation going through. The government has repeatedly said that they're onside with pipelines, but I don't think that that is conducive to capping production. In fact, Ms Berman stated not so long ago that there was no need for pipeline capacity, and I'm assuming that's as a result of the cap on the production of our resources here. It's the only way that I can put those two together, maybe because it's already been decided.

4:30

I was wondering if the hon. member could potentially comment on: originally we had made a referral to committee, and since that referral has not been passed, potentially, would you be able to explain to this Chamber why it is that we would need to discuss this in committee and potentially at this point in time put this bill off for some time until that advisory panel comes forward with their advice?

Thank you.

**Mr. Dach:** Ask your question through the chair.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, just a reminder: not only through the Speaker, but also if you turn around, the microphone can't pick up your voice for *Hansard*.

**Mrs. Aheer:** I'm sorry. Thank you so much. So through you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Go ahead, hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to my esteemed colleague. I think it's becoming really obvious, not only to members on this side of the House but even to Albertans in general, that repeatedly this government is rejecting any ideas about allowing Albertans to speak to legislation. We had put forward a referral to committee for the purpose of getting experts in, getting testimony in, getting Albertans able to come and talk about this, and

allowing all of the people who have leases, which are many, more than just the famous four that stood on the stage with the Premier, all of the juniors, to come and talk about stranded assets and what this Bill 25 is going to mean to them. The government didn't want to hear that.

Today here we are on a reasoned amendment, and we're putting forth the argument: "All right. You didn't want Albertans to speak to this in committee. How about waiting for OSAG, you very own panel, that you struck?" What we're hearing from the government side today is: "Well, yeah, we struck the panel, but, no, we don't want to hear from them either. Just pass the bill. Hold your nose and pass the bill." Well, no, that's not how it works. This is supposed to be a democracy, Madam Speaker, where it's government of the people, by the people, for the people, but the people aren't being allowed to be heard. The people who are directly impacted by this piece of legislation are not being permitted by this government to speak to this piece of legislation, not in committee, not even this OSAG panel.

It is very important for the credibility of this government to hit the pause button on this piece of legislation and allow the people of Alberta an opportunity to have their two bits. I don't hold a lot of hope that the government is going to, you know, listen. They aren't listening to Albertans, and now we find out that they're not even going to listen to their own panel. They just want this bill passed. That's really unfortunate, but it is what it is. This government continues to just push away any concept, any idea of listening to Albertans.

I believe the phrase is confirmation bias, where you surround yourself with people that nod their heads and agree with you and you don't want to consider that maybe there is another opinion out there, an expert opinion that just might be different than yours and be a good idea, too. It just appears to the people of Alberta that this government is of the mindset that if an idea does not come from the NDP world view, that idea is no good.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have some pretty deep concerns when it comes to Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. I'd like to start off with exactly what the mandate is of the oil sands advisory group, or OSAG, because I think it's important to go back to it. This is on the Alberta government website. Let's start with the first paragraph here.

The province is establishing an Oil Sands Advisory Group (OSAG) composed of members from industry, environmental organizations, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to advise government on the oil-sands aspects of its Climate Leadership Plan and ensure that its initiatives are effective and widely supported.

My first question is: why are we ignoring these people? This is a valid concern. I would hope that industry would play a part in the planning for exactly how this 100-megatonne cap is going to affect them.

Let's go to environmental organizations. I am unsure exactly how you came up with a round number of 100 megatonnes. That is a reasonable request. Where did that number come from? Did you pull it out of the air? Now, I have heard my colleagues say: "Why not 80? Why not 120?" Where did it come from? The fact is that we have not put the work into figuring out what it is that we need and why we need to put it there.

Now, the indigenous and nonindigenous: this government has been stating nonstop that it wants to consult with these groups, yet it's got the opportunity right now to do that, and it's choosing not to.

**An Hon. Member:** Shame.

**Mr. Cyr:** That is shameful, very shameful.

We need to be looking at exactly – these groups are saying: let's work in consultation. Again, like a broken record, we bring up Bill 6. It's a bill that continues to plague this government. It's a bill that I called the No Consultation Act because that's exactly what it was. This is the same way. We have got an act right now being put forward, and we had a group of individuals tasked to work out the actual specifics of how it would work. So we're going to create these limitations and then work out how it's going to work afterwards. It makes no sense, which is why a lot of these bills have had failure written all over them.

Let's talk about caps. One of my favourite caps was the debt cap. The debt cap was something that the government rushed into. We told them that they were going to meet that cap and they were going to have to extend the cap. It makes no sense. What you're doing is making no sense. Now, Wildrose has been very clear. We're not for caps, but at least a cap would prevent the government from going incredibly deep into debt. Now, when we start looking at this . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Speak to the amendment.

**Mr. Cyr:** This is speaking to the amendment because you're setting another cap without actually going to anybody to find out if it is an accurate cap.

This here is important to note: in the end, we got rid of it. The government backtracked and said: it doesn't matter with debt anymore. Here we're setting up another cap. We've got no advice from any of the groups that are being put into this. I would argue that some are of deep concern to myself and a lot of Albertans as they are anti-oil.

Now, let's continue down here. Let's start with the fact that you're ignoring stakeholders. Let's go with what the actual focus of this group is. "Specifically, the group's primary focus is to consider how to implement the 100 megatonne per year carbon emissions limit for the oil sands industry." Why bother? Why even bother creating these wonderful advisory groups when you have no plan to actually even consider what they have to say?

Now, let's go on the opposite chance that possibly you actually have a report from them already. Let's say that you've actually got something from them, a draft report, say, or something where the government knows the direction that this group is going in. What if this anti-oil group and some of the members come back and say, "30 megatonnes is that number that we need to cap"? Well, that's an embarrassment. So what do we do? We change the cap.

4:40

The other thing is: let's say, for instance, that this group comes back and says that how we calculate GHGs is incorrect. We need to go in there and figure out how to change it. Let's say that they come back with: Alberta is putting out 120 megatonnes of GHGs. Suddenly we're above the cap, again ignoring this group that they have set up for, again, advice to the government, again, which we won't know until we actually see what it is.

Let's talk about the deadline, February 2017. If you knew you were going to put this bill forward, why didn't make their mandate sooner? Why did you have to go with February 2017 when you knew you were going to ignore them? You could have easily had September, and if that wasn't enough time, then we should have put off this legislation. So you put out a group that you knew was going to fail – you knew it – yet you still did it anyway. This is why Bill 6 is relevant. You put out legislation that didn't actually consult, and then you found out later that it failed.

Now let's go to the next one: "develop durable, effective structures and processes to address local and regional environmental issues (i.e., air, land, water, biodiversity, [and] cumulative effects)." This sounds like spending the carbon tax.

We've got now two sets of legislation that they were to advise on that we have rammed through and rushed, with no idea how to implement. Again, it comes down to creating an environmental study, an impact study, if you will, on the effects. We need to study what we need to implement, how it's going to achieve those goals, and what it will cost Albertans, my taxpayers in my riding, my most vulnerable Albertans, my seniors, my residents on AISH, which we've heard awful things about in the last couple of days. We have no idea where this is going, but, hey, let's institute it anyway because caps are a good idea. Well, again I'll go back to the debt cap. That wasn't a good idea. You rolled over on that one. Do you think this one might not end up as well as the debt cap did?

Now, let's go with the last one: "provide advice to government on investing carbon price revenue in innovations to reduce future emissions intensity." Well, I would like to say that we are already seeing that across the world we've got provinces, we've got countries, we've got states that are all putting money into something without doing an actual study on how the money will actually reduce these emissions.

Now, a good example is this one here. I've got an article up here. It's Fail: Busted Wind Turbines Give College Whopping Negative 99.14% Return on Investment. Somebody dropped the ball. That cost the school. Now I hear that our schools are looking to get into wind turbines.

**An Hon. Member:** Oh, my God.

**Mr. Cyr:** I know.

This is insane, that we have an entire part of our government right now going in a direction that could end up costing that school system and its students – and that is a travesty – because somebody didn't do the impact study. Guess what? There's no wind at this school. Of course, it's not going to make money. It's a great idea, but in the end, they lost – what? – almost 100 per cent of their investment. That is because somebody wasn't watching. That is the responsibility of the government. You know, the problem here is that it takes years for this stuff to realize those losses. They don't happen overnight. In the end, we're burdening not ourselves but possibly our children with this lack of oversight by government.

Now, I will tell you that when we start looking at all of the things the NDP have brought forward, my riding is sitting on the second-largest resource in Alberta – the second-largest resource in Alberta – so this impacts me directly. This means that people in my riding, Bonnyville-Cold Lake, are consistently shown the doorway when it comes to these businesses because, in the end, these businesses are saying that it is too unstable in Alberta to be able to continue business here.

What we've got here are a bunch of laws that this government has brought forward that have created consistent unstable government decisions, which, in the end, cost me jobs in my riding. That means we have a dependence on social programs that we've never seen before, at unprecedented levels. We have food bank use that we can't even keep up with. We've got incredible need. We've got people in my office crying. They're saying: I can't make it, and my family can't make it.

**An Hon. Member:** Raise the minimum wage.

**Mr. Cyr:** Again the government's solution is to raise the minimum wage. Well, great. That's awesome. All of my riding can work at

minimum wage. That sounds like a great idea. That sounds exactly like an NDP decision.

Anyway, to go back to the jobs in my riding, we've got people right now that are going to Saskatchewan and B.C. to find work. It comes down to the fact that these oil companies have got to be able to see a stable government move forward.

This is where this social licence – this is what this act is supposed to be buying us. It's supposed to be buying us the ability to somehow get a pipeline by taxing Albertans heavily, and it will somehow give the rest of Canada the warm, fuzzy feeling that we deserve a pipeline. Now, I can't make that connection, but where I can make a connection is that we have actually got the ability to influence. We need to stop going to these NDP rallies that are fighting against our oil and go to the governments and say: this is essential for Alberta. Debt caps aren't going to help that argument. The fact is that, in the end, our transfer payments are going to become less and less, and these provinces no longer will be able to continue with the same level of standard of living that they are currently at.

Now, when we start looking at this province and this debt cap, we start asking ourselves: well, what is it going to do?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Emissions cap.

**Mr. Cyr:** This emissions cap. Thank you.

This emissions cap will allow the existing land sold the ability to emit. Now, I've heard from one of my other colleagues who said that we have more land sales than the emissions cap will already account for. That seems pretty shocking. I see that we still have land sales happening in Alberta. Is that because we start seeing that companies are preparing for the cap? Eventually what's going to happen is that by having the lease, there's going to be a value attached to it, which means that it's going to have an emissions limit attached to it. That is where the problem comes in here. We're no longer trading in our natural resource; we're going to start trading in our leases. That means undeveloped leases. That means people out of work. That's people in my riding out of work, and it is shocking that we would go down this road.

Now, if the answer here is to reduce carbon emissions, this isn't going to do it. As we've heard from Calgary-Elbow, 15 years is his anticipated time that we're going to hit this cap. So what is it actually achieving?

4:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As someone who directly worked in the oil sands, I know a lot of experts who can give all of us legislators advice on whether or not we should support this 100-megatonne, arbitrary cap on oil sands emissions. Today I heard other colleagues of mine here talking about how a cap on emissions is, in turn, actually a cap on production and a cap on opportunity for success and a cap on development and so on. Actually, this bill puts the equivalent dollar amount of five to seven years of government capital and operations at risk by not developing the resource. One report said that it could be up to \$200 billion of wealth that will be stranded if we legislate this bill and leave the resource in the ground. That is the wealth that's going to stay in the ground. If it does not get developed, people don't get to buy cars or homes or trucks or raise families because there will be a lack of developing the resource.

I mentioned in my earlier remarks that the first people into this investment get to make money, so all those big companies like Suncor, Syncrude, Shell, CNRL, Imperial, who are already there and established, can make money, but the last ones, all these small and medium companies, won't have the opportunity because they won't have enough guaranteed space for carbon dioxide emissions under the cap because they won't be producing soon.

Another downside of this policy here, Madam Speaker, is that those small companies won't be able to raise capital because the lenders will think that these projects won't be viable. They won't give them loans, or even if they give them loans, their finance cost will be higher because it will be a high-risk business, so they'll charge them higher interest. This Bill 25 takes these little companies and turns them into a takeover target by the bigger companies, so big fish eating the small fish.

Do you see where I'm going, Madam Speaker? This is how the Ponzi scheme rolls out. The last one in loses money, so all these small companies will become the takeover targets of the big market players. Capitalism subtends to monopoly, but crony capitalism guarantees monopolies. Whoever thought the NDP and Suncor would stand together and support this policy for the same reasons?

What people forget is all the trade union labour that has been employed by big companies like CNRL, Shell, and all, that the juniors tend not to have, and it is the trades, Madam Speaker, as represented by the Alberta Federation of Labour, that stand to benefit from the crony capitalist Ponzi scheme of consolidating the oil sands operations that the NDP want to enable.

**Connolly:** Crony communists or crony capitalists?

**Mr. Panda:** You can choose whatever you want to be, but the people sent you here to represent them. I suspect that that's not what I'm hearing from my neighbouring riding of Calgary-Hawkwood. [interjections] Yeah.

These people who will not be able to develop because they would exceed the cap: I want to hear from them and find out what their compensation demands will be. Madam Speaker, if they can't develop the leases they bought, it will be their right to ask for compensation, and the taxpayers will be on the hook.

How does the NDP expect to create innovation and green jobs when new companies are not permitted to develop? People like Columba Yeung, for that matter – Madam Speaker, he's an entrepreneur who has started this company called Value Creation. He has appropriate upgrading technology he wanted to employ on this upgrader project that he wants to build which will have far less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Under the emissions cap his company, Value Creation, will not be allowed to develop its leases and thus make the money to build the low carbon dioxide upgrader.

The NDP fail to grasp that it takes wealth creation in order to enable taxation to fund the social programs they want to create. You want to build schools, you want to build hospitals, so you need to first create wealth, which will enable taxation. Social programs like in-house laundry for Alberta Health Services is an example which you want to continue, but capping oil sands development at 100 megatonnes won't help that cause, Madam Speaker. A program that could easily be contracted out at far better value for money like in-house laundry for Alberta Health Services: they don't want to do that. They want to go for expensive alternates. That's okay, but then we should allow oil sands development, which will bring us that revenue.

At the end of the day, Madam Speaker, we know that the NDP say: forget economics; we're doing what is right. But doing what is right in the NDP world view not only hurts people; it's also outright wrong. Australia realized that when they cancelled the carbon tax.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott took the right decision to get rid of it, based on the feedback he got from his populace. France, under President François Hollande of the Socialist Party no less – the Socialist Party – will be dropping the carbon tax.

Policy matters. You all know my thoughts because I can tell you that if this were in India, this would be a bad policy, Madam Speaker. India is not capping their development. India is racing very fast to catch up and have the middle-class lifestyle of the western world. They have their dreams. They have the largest young workforce, with hundreds of millions of youth.

**Mr. Dach:** Yeah. What was the air quality in Delhi last year?

**Mr. Panda:** I'm coming to that. Stay tuned.

They want to improve their lifestyle. We can't tell them not to have that standard of life, but the demographic shift and the markets for those people are enormous. They want our energy. Also, it's a good thing to trade with them because they're the largest democracy in the world. In the same way, China – I travelled a lot in China for business. Although it's not a democracy, they embraced market capitalism under the Communist Party, and they need our energy, too, Madam Speaker. They want our energy very much. Both India and China want energy security, and they want affordability, too, so we can partner with them and export our energy to them because Alberta can be a reliable supplier for them.

5:00

That's why I'm asking the NDP not to use their, you know, majority in this House and abuse it to have this bill imposed arbitrarily. We are asking you to refer this to the committee so we can have a fulsome discussion, and in the meantime the oil sands advisory group can also give their recommendation. Then we'll see whether the 100 megatonnes is good enough. Or is 150 a good number? We don't know now, but we can use those good experts that the NDP approached to do this job. We should let them finish their job and use the findings before we vote on this bill, Madam Speaker. That's why I moved the first amendment, and I compliment my colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky for bringing this amendment. We are hoping that all the people there who are concerned will vote in support of this amendment and do the right thing for Albertans.

With that, I would like to adjourn the debate, Madam Speaker.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act

[Adjourned debate November 8: Mr. Stier]

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

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege today to rise to speak to Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act. I have concerns with this bill, many concerns, in fact, that I would classify as a litany of concerns, so please excuse my lack of brevity on this matter as I proceed with my second reading speech.

First of all, let me preface the speech by stating that I'm in favour of renewable energy infrastructure and policy when, of course, the policy and infrastructure are implemented and constructed appropriately, taking into account the current market structure. I view renewable energy as one of the tools that can be used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and, in turn, address some of the concerns that we have as a society and as a province around global warming.

But let me be clear: renewable energy programs must be implemented in a way that is respectful of the current power generation structure and, of course, power purchasing arrangements. Without this respect and trust, this mutual respect and trust, which the government has already undermined, the contractual legitimacy between two parties is severed, thereby destroying the stability of a contract and rendering it moot. Not a great environment for moving forward, Madam Speaker.

Why would anyone agree to sign a contract for power generation if they knew one party has a record of backtracking on its commitments and reneging on the certainty that allows for well-reasoned, collateral-backed investment and financing? Are these concepts alien to this government? No wonder. The dearth of business experience may be showing through. This is not what I would call bargaining in good faith, Madam Speaker, and it sets a poor precedent for future agreements, which could be directly impacted by this legislation. Hopefully the government figures out how business works one of these days and eventually can move forward, because their track record on this matter has been nothing but an assault on business and thereby an assault on job creation.

Secondly, renewable energy infrastructure and policy should be constructed and implemented in a way that respects jobs and prevailing economic conditions. That is the common-sense approach, Madam Speaker. I know my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-West alluded to this fact earlier in debate, but let me reiterate. There appears to be a huge and unaddressed gap in the plan and in the act given the power generation needs of Albertans and the industry associated with this irresponsible coal phase-out.

Given that the government wants coal-powered generation eradicated as well as all the mortgage-paying jobs that go with it by 2030, never mind the provincial unemployment rate we currently have of 8.5 per cent and double digits in Calgary – and you don't even want to guess the stats that might be pushed forward in the likes of Hanna, Hinton, Forestburg, and others in the years ahead because of this legislation – and given that approximately 50 per cent, in fact a little bit more than 50 per cent, of our electricity currently comes from coal, what will be used to replace it by 2030? The government and their central planning committee would like you to believe renewables, but their central planning committee has already determined that 30 per cent of power generation will come from renewables by that time. Last time I checked, we need to fill a 20 per cent gap with respect to power generation, from that 50 or 55 per cent to the 30 per cent.

So where is that baseload going to come from? You don't seem to have much of a plan there. In my books a decrease in supply means higher electricity prices for Albertans, not to mention the spectre of grid instability and brownouts to turn us into a third-world country and worse. Not only are you spurring unemployment through our coal phase-out, but you're also spurring higher electricity prices, further moves toward an uncompetitive environment for business and investment and a signal to industry that we are not, in fact, a business-friendly nor investment-welcoming jurisdiction. A great combination, Madam Speaker. Talk about making a bad situation worse.

Madam Speaker, this legislation appears to be haphazardly cribbed together on the back of a napkin by a government that continues the piecemeal charade which is its climate leadership plan, a plan that is hurting Albertans from all corners of this province due to its poor forethought and execution. Did I mention the unintended consequences of creating Albertans' latest tourism attraction? I think I did that before. It's called the new millennium Alberta ghost town. New economy jobs, indeed.

Madam Speaker, let us turn our attention to section 7 of Bill 27. It is my understanding that the Alberta Electric System Operator,

which is referred to as AESO, will "hold a competitive process" for renewable generation. The ISO "shall advise the Minister of the results of the competitive process," including the total quantity of renewables offered as well as the corresponding costs that will be payable via contracts. Thereafter, the ISO must receive ministerial approval on the quantity, the cost, and the final form of the contract prior to selecting successful participants and entering into contracts with certainty. Now, I think this section is quite pertinent to what I was saying before regarding trust, respect, and contractual agreements. A novel idea, indeed.

This government is demonstrating poor faith and now has a poor track record with respect to honouring contracts as evident through the current lawsuits around PPAs. Given that contractual agreements play such a vital role in this legislation, how will banks and investors view contractual validity? The government has, whether intentionally or not, decreased the value and certainty of a legal contract in the eyes of Albertans and external investors, or in this case I think we call these PPAs. Has this fact been considered? I certainly hope so as the foundational structure of this legislation is dependent upon it. How do we get people to invest in renewables? Madam Speaker, if we don't encourage other people to invest in renewables, I worry that we're going to have to do it with government funds, and those funds are covered in red ink today.

Secondly, another glaring concern for me is how this section enables the minister to choose winners and losers with respect to renewable generation. This is a problem. I went to look at our provincial partners in Ontario and see their renewable electricity plan. As of September the government scrapped plans for \$3.8 billion in renewable electricity projects. Three point eight billion: that's a lot of zeros. One motive for this decision: high electricity costs. Interesting. Correct me if I'm wrong, but did I not state this as a risk earlier in my speech? Unintended consequences, Madam Speaker.

**5:10**

AESO was intended to be a not-for-profit organization that manages and operates the provincial power grid. They were intended to work with industry partners and government to make sure reliable power is available to consumers and industry as required but with a vision to the future of Alberta, Madam Speaker, a vision of opportunity and the hopeful return to vibrancy in this province in the future that we all hope for.

Given the above information one can surmise that AESO is intended to be an independent organization operating at arm's length from government, Madam Speaker, not tied to and attached to and influenced inextricably by. However, the legislation we're looking at reads counter to this, undermining the independence of AESO.

I know my colleagues have echoed this sentiment, Madam Speaker. The language in this bill corroborates this statement in more ways than one. It explicitly states that when the minister provides direction, the ISO must comply, as evident within section 14. Can someone please explain to me how this once independent organization doing the best for Albertans and industry and consumers is now not going to be a simple and direct tool of the minister?

**An Hon. Member:** NDP world view.

**Mr. Gotfried:** NDP world view, indeed, an interesting lens to look through.

It would be my hope that government respects the independence of this organization and develops an internal system of checks and balances to maintain its autonomous nature, again in the best

interests of Alberta: taxpayers, consumers, and industry. That is how we succeed, Madam Speaker, by working together with the different sectors of this economy.

Madam Speaker, in order for organizations such as AESO to function efficiently, they need to remain arm's length from government. I suspect that we would have heard that from some of our esteemed colleagues on the other side of the floor in years past, that requirement and need for independence from government. I cannot stress enough how important this is, and it is my fear that this government is disregarding this fact.

Madam Speaker, overall, this bill exposes Albertans to unknown costs to subsidize green electricity generation, which I personally believe can and will stand on its own in time in a competitive marketplace. That will be the innovation that we see, those will be the initiatives that we see from industry, and if we subsidize it too much, we will kill the opportunity to do it right and to do it well.

It also allows cabinet to make unaccountable political decisions at the expense – and I say again in solid, hard, red ink: at the expense – of Albertans through the minister's ability or inability to pick winners and losers in renewable energy and to subsidize them in an irresponsible manner, possibly, not in the best interests, both short and long term, of Albertans.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Additionally, it fails to account for and support auxiliary infrastructure required to make diverse renewable resources work in Alberta. This legislation, like the climate leadership plan, appears to be slapped together without any semblance of a strategy or framework to consider the current electrical market structure, grid stability, economic conditions, job protection, or, of course, lack thereof.

Mr. Speaker, I'm in favour of renewable electricity. I think we're going to see us reach those goals in time. I believe it has a place and a future in our province but not as this current cadre of antioil crusaders intends nor on the irresponsible and costly timelines they propose. Renewable electricity generation should tap into the innovation and ingenuity of our citizens and invoke the Alberta advantage, setting a positive environment for investment, not subsidies, something the NDP world view seeks to advantage. The Alberta advantage seems like an alien concept. Renewable generation should work hand in hand with current market structures, market realities, complementary clean-coal technologies, and other electrical generation, from cogen to geothermal to hydro and others.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons as well as many others associated with this irresponsible, ideologically driven push into a world, an all too familiar world these days, of unintended consequences, in spite of what I choose to believe are the best of intentions, I cannot and will not support this bill today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, under 29(2)(a), is there a question for the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek?

Seeing or hearing none, you'd like to speak to Bill 27?

**Mr. Carson:** Yeah.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an incredible honour to stand in the House today in support of and as cosponsor of Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act. A year and a half ago Alberta elected a majority New Democrat government. They voted that way not only because we promised to protect education and health care in this province but, most importantly, because more than any other

party during the election and to this day we had a vision to diversify our province's economy.

Mr. Speaker, the last two years have been incredibly hard on all of our communities and the province as a whole. Our overreliance on one commodity, with very little action in the past to capture new markets for our products, has put Alberta in a vulnerable position to the global oil markets. During the last election many Albertans recognized this inability for their government to be forward thinking and chose a new path. To this day we have made incredible progress in partnership with industry and other stakeholders to ensure we are at the front of a green energy transition. Over the last year and a half with the New Democrat government in Alberta we have seen an incredible shift in the dialogue around how industry and environment interact because we recognize that the time to take action is now.

Mr. Speaker, climate change is one of the biggest threats to the prosperity of our province. If we do not take action now, it will only be to the detriment of all of communities, not only because of the fact that other jurisdictions are ahead of our progress in terms of implementation of renewable generation programs but, more importantly, because of the cost that climate change has in our industries.

Bill 27 creates the framework in which our green transition can take place. Alberta's electricity system plays a key role in our government's climate leadership plan. After being elected, our government established the Climate Change Advisory Panel, following through with our campaign commitment to take action on climate change. Through these recommendations we have put forward a number of programs that will ensure the economic and environmental sustainability of our province, whether you live in an urban community or a rural community.

If passed, Bill 27 will make changes to the Alberta Electric System Operator, or AESO, to ensure that their mandate aligns with our goals of creating programs that support renewable energy and the diversification of our electricity system. This bill continues our commitment to a greener economy by establishing targets of 30 per cent renewable energy by 2030, signalling to industry that Alberta is ready to diversify its economy and its workforce through development of our renewable resources. It will also require the development of interim targets and mandatory periodic reviews of progress and will establish a legislative definition for renewables.

Bill 27 updates the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act to add wind and solar electricity to the list of activities the director of Environment of Parks can put to greater environmental scrutiny, such as an environmental impact assessment in some circumstances, ensuring that all things are considered when developing such projects. These changes will not, however, alter existing regulatory processes of the Alberta Utilities Commission in regulating wind- and solar-powered projects.

The bill also legislates that a fairness adviser will be put in place, chosen by ISO, to oversee competition and to provide public reporting on the procurement process to ensure fairness, and it sets out a process for ISO to award renewable electricity support agreements to successful applicants. Through consultation with stakeholders it was recommended that a security interest be introduced to protect investments in case of insolvency. This is not something that is new to legislation, and it is important that we have the means to ensure cost-effectiveness and stability within our electricity system.

It is also important to stakeholders and investors alike that we provide market assurance, leading to better financing rates for investors, which is why such renewable energy programs will be backed by revenues collected from carbon pricing directly coming from carbon revenues and not general revenue.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 27 will establish a framework for AESO to procure renewable energy projects and lay out a path of transparency throughout the process. This bill signals to renewable energy producers that Alberta is the best place in Canada to invest their money with our firm commitment to reach 30 per cent renewable energy generation within our province by 2030 and a clear path to lead us there.

In my constituency and across the province I have heard the calls for a transition to a greener economy because Albertans recognize the incredible opportunity we have to lead the country in both nonrenewable and renewable energy development. Bill 27 will enshrine our commitment to diversification and, in conjunction with renewable energy programs, will bring billions of dollars and thousands of quality jobs to our province.

Mr. Speaker, there has never been a better time to invest in renewable energy projects, and we'll move forward with this plan because that is what we were put in this Legislature to do. I am very proud to be the cosponsor of this bill, and it is pleasure to stand in support. I would also like to thank the minister for bringing this forward.

Thank you.

5:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, under 29(2)(a), are there any questions for the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark?

Seeing none, the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View. To the motion. Is that right?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act. I was sent a very interesting and pertinent document for today's debate. This is based on a study that was recently published by the journal *Energy Policy*, titled Energy Return on Energy Invested, EROEI, for Photovoltaic Solar Systems in Regions of Moderate Insolation. This article found the EROEI of temperate latitude solar PV, or photovoltaic, systems operating in the latitudes of Earth between the tropics and polar regions to be .83.

If correct, that means more energy is [being] used to make the [photovoltaic] panels than will ever be recovered from them during their 25 year lifetime.

So I'll use PV for photovoltaic if that's okay.

A PV panel will produce more CO<sub>2</sub> than if coal were simply used directly to make electricity. Worse than that, all the CO<sub>2</sub> from PV production is in the atmosphere [immediately, like, today], while burning coal to make electricity, the emissions would be spread over the 25 year period.

Wildrose has continuously brought to the attention of this NDP government the concerns about carbon leakage. Turning China or other jurisdictions where these products are produced into industrial wastelands so that we can put solar panels on our houses to push this particular idea is not beneficial in our shared goal of reducing pollution.

In summary of this very technical paper Euan Mearns writes on Energy Matters:

So what is an EROEI? It is ...

And it's just simply stated, and I say this lightly because this is very big information.

... simply the ratio of energy gathered to the amount of energy used to gather the energy [or] (the energy invested).

So it's basically the energy gathered versus the energy invested.

Euan Mearns goes on to provide an example, noting that:

using PV to illustrate the point, the energy gathered will [also] depend on latitude ...

So that's where those solar panels are.

... the amount of sunshine, the orientation of the panels and also on the lifetime of the panels themselves. And how do you record or measure the energy invested? Do you simply measure the electricity used in the PV factory, or do you include the energy consumed by the workers ...

Like the drivers, anybody who's involved and participating in creating these things.

... and the miners who mined the silicon and the coal that is used to make the electricity?

That's in these other countries where they are still using coal to produce electricity.

Feroni and Hopkirk go into all of these details and come up with an EROEI for [the] temperate latitude solar PV of 0.83. At this level, solar PV [or photovoltaic] is not an energy source but is an energy sink. That is for Switzerland and Germany.

So while the authors of this source paper focused on Germany and Switzerland, they believe that it would actually be considerably worse in northern jurisdictions.

Euan Mearns goes on to write about the EROEI, that is so important, noting that

it is a concept that is alien to most individuals, including many engineers, energy sector employees, academics and policy makers. The related concept of net energy is defined as ... EROEI - 1 (where 1 is the energy invested).

The net energy is that surplus energy left over from when we gather energy from activities that are used to power society, so when we're building hospitals, schools, aircraft carriers, growing food, whatever it is using energy.

In the past the EROEI of our primary energy sources - oil, gas and coal - was so high, probably over 50, ...

That's the number that that represents.

... that there was bucket loads of cheap energy left over to build all the infrastructure and to feed all the people that now inhabit The Earth.

But with the net energy equation for what we're talking about right now, based on that energy for the solar PV, we have a serious problem: .83 versus 50. So as a policy-maker I am pleased to be able to share this report with my colleagues today, and hopefully we can have a good discussion about what this actually means.

Euan Mearns goes on to ask the question that is surely on everyone's minds. He writes:

So how can it be possible that we are managing to deploy devices that evidently consume rather than produce energy? The simple answer is that our finance system, laws and subsidies are able to bend the laws of physics and thermodynamics for so long as we have enough high EROEI energy available to maintain the whole system and to subsidize ... [the] renewables. Try mining and purifying silicon using an electronic mining machine powered by The Sun and the laws of physics will re-establish themselves quite quickly.

That's not going to happen.

In very simple terms, [the] solar PV deployed in northern Europe can be viewed as coal burned in China [for example] used to generate electricity over here. All of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, that underpin the motive for PV, are made in China. Only in the event of high energy gain in the PV device would solar PV reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

And I'll go into that a little bit more later.

I think the most worrisome part about this is that that very important piece of information has not been considered. Not only am I concerned about the solar technologies that I read in yesterday, but there's an award-winning Surrey company that described itself as a world leader in wind turbines, and they've gone out of business. An article published in the *Vancouver Sun* tells the story of a Canadian company: "A bankruptcy notice on the front door of Endurance Wind Power in the Campbell Heights industrial area ...



confirms that the company's operations are now being overseen by [another company]." The article states that "Endurance chief executive Brad Bardua said the company suffered after government subsidies to small-scale wind turbines dried up."

Wildrose has consistently warned – consistently warned – the members of this Assembly about the risks of propping up renewables artificially. That's what this is about. The article explains that "Endurance assembled 50-kilowatt turbines at its Surrey plant," and in Britain they had 225-kilowatt turbines. "The company had about 120 employees globally, including some staff in Denmark and Italy, with about 30 in B.C." Endurance is just another example of a rent-seeking company that is not economical without market-disrupting subsidies from governments. And then they end up going bankrupt.

I fully, fully support renewables in the instances where the market demands them. I actually run my own home off of 40 solar panels, so I have personal knowledge about this and what it took to build them and the energy and the infrastructure that was required to put those things on the back of my house. But Albertans are becoming increasingly concerned about this 30 per cent by 2030 and tying our economy to it. We feel that without an assessment of those embodied emissions – that's including the energy you put into what you're actually getting back out – from the building, installing, disposing, shipping of these renewables, without it being made clear how these renewables will complete in a free market and respond to the laws of supply and demand, we are very concerned that we're destroying a market-demand-supported industry to actually replace it with an incentive-supported industry. It doesn't improve anything.

Given all this information and the questions that it raises, I feel very strongly that it is necessary for this House to send this bill to committee for further review, so I would like to introduce a referral amendment, please.

5:30

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View has moved an amendment referred to as REF1.

Would you like to speak to it?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions of the hon. member under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, then, I think we're dealing with the amendment. The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise again and speak to Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, this time on my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View's referral motion. There are a number of things that need to be said regarding referring to committee. We've brought it up a number of times.

**Mr. Cooper:** How many?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** A number, a large number. I would say at least once a day since May of 2015.

The value of sending legislation to standing committees – and I happen to be on this Resource Stewardship Committee. I'm very pleased to be on that committee. Resource stewardship is an extremely important component of Alberta society, and I feel very privileged to be part of the Resource Stewardship Committee. I only wish that that committee could actually do work on resource stewardship, good work on resource stewardship.

We have an opportunity with this referral today to engage with Albertans, with stakeholders, with experts, members of the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta, small and large generators, some of the cogen people, some of my colleagues from the renewables industry regarding microgeneration and things like that. All of these people should be given the opportunity to speak to this very important piece of legislation. I believe it is incumbent upon this House to support this referral to committee and allow Albertans to come to this place to speak to it.

This policy as it currently stands poses somewhat of a risk to Albertans of becoming retractionary, a retractionary economic policy. A retractionary economic policy, for those that perhaps don't understand, is a policy that causes our economy to shrink a little bit, sometimes a lot. But to shrink a little bit is retractionary. It means that our GDP goes down or our growth in our GDP is not as robust as it might otherwise be because of a particular economic policy from the government. Instead of aiding in the economic rebound that we so desperately need right now, this act actually stands to penalize businesses, homeowners, fixed-income seniors, and everyone. This policy is actually putting our current electricity rates at risk of going up, and it's likely going to make things even worse right here in Alberta.

Renewable technologies – and there are so many of them out there – are an exciting field to be in. I felt very privileged to be part of the renewables world, the renewables industry. There was a lot of interest in the '90s, in the early 2000s regarding renewable technologies. One of the things we discovered when we were building program content is that there are some renewable technologies that are market ready, there are others that are not yet market ready, there are some renewable technologies that are still quite, I would say, ethereal. You know, on paper, mathematically, they ought to work. That's one thing. But just because something can be made to work on paper doesn't necessarily translate into a technology that you can actually put on the grid or put in a building or actually make it technically work with existing systems that we currently have.

Then, of course there's the economic viability of renewable technologies. It's one thing for a renewable technology to be technically feasible. It's entirely different when it comes to the economics. One of the things that we promoted in the program at NAIT that we developed was: somebody's got to pay the piper. You can be ever so excited and get all kinds of warm and fuzzy feelings about a particular renewable technology, but somebody's got to pay the piper. That technology had better be able to stand on its own two feet economically after you have determined that it is even technically feasible. So there was an order to things.

In the program today the students are still taught: you do a feasibility study, you do an economic study, and there are some very important checkpoints along the way to ensure that it doesn't fail because, at the end of the day, people are spending a great deal of money putting some of these technologies into play. If that technology is going to be an economic failure, we are talking about two things: somebody is going to lose a whole lot of money and, secondly, and I think equally important, it puts a real bad taste in the mouth of the investment community when they see projects that, to them, are some new technology and it fails and it costs their investors money. It's like: once bitten, twice shy.

I ran into this overseas. When we opened our offices in Tel Aviv, we had an opportunity to go to the kingdom of Jordan to do a feasibility study for a very large hotel. It was one of the largest hotels in the kingdom of Jordan, in Amman. They had an excellent engineering team in-house. The wonderful thing I've discovered about engineering is that it doesn't matter what language people speak. I've worked with Russian engineers, Arab, Jewish, just all over the world. When you get out the drawings and you've got engineers around the table, we all speak the same language. Even when we can't understand one another, we can understand the drawings. It was fun.

So there we were, and we were looking at this huge hotel. It was a couple of hundred rooms, many stories tall. They had an absolutely horrific electricity bill because in Amman the temperature can get upwards of 40 to 50 degrees Celsius, so you can imagine the cooling load that they have to deal with. So we were looking at different technologies that we could possibly employ in this building to bring down this astronomical electricity bill that they experienced, to try to save them some money. Lots of money. We're talking many hundreds of thousands of dollars every year that they were hoping to be able to save with different technologies.

5:40

One of the things that I ran into very quickly – in fact, I think it was somewhere through the first or second day that I was there – is that there were some senior engineers and accountants who were on the board of directors of the company that owned this large hotel, and they told me the following story: you know, we had some engineers here from France, and they tried this and this and this technology, and it cost us. I forget how much money, but it was a lot of money, and it bombed. It bombed terribly, and they went back to France. Now here I was, basically another salesman at the door, saying that I could save them hundreds of thousands of dollars in cooling costs. They were extremely hesitant to give us a green light, extremely hesitant because they had been so bitten by that first failed renewables project.

I ran into that in Egypt. I ran into it in Jordan. I ran into it in Israel. I ran into it in Malta. I ran into the same thing in the West Bank. It was like there were these engineers running around two or three years ahead of me wrecking renewables. It was terrible. It made it extremely difficult to break into that market because of the failure of these projects.

We have a similar problem looming here. There are jurisdictions – and you don't have to go very far. You just have to go in eastern Canada to the province of Ontario. Under their Green Energy Act they forged ahead with renewables, and look at where they're at today. The people of Ontario are very upset at the kind of energy costs that they are facing. Now, yes, they blamed their government, but honest to goodness, Mr. Speaker, some of the dirt hits perfectly acceptable, perfectly good, technically good renewable technologies. That bothers me greatly because I have seen it in so many places in the world.

There are places in the world, Malta being one of them, where it wouldn't have mattered how good the project was. Malta is a very small island. There's only a handful of investors on the whole island, and they were adamantly opposed to anything renewable because they had been taken to the cleaners once already: thank you very much; we are not going to do this again. It wouldn't have mattered if it was a gold-plated project; they were not going to invest in it. It was extremely disheartening.

In the province of Ontario those poor souls over there right now are suffering terribly beneath the weight of an out-of-control renewables policy. They have utility debt up to here. They are the most indebted subsovereign jurisdiction in the world, and a big

chunk of that is on account of poor government policy impacting what should have, could have been perfectly good technology. As someone involved in the technology side of things that concerns me deeply.

We have an opportunity, by taking this bill to committee, to get the technical experts. We've got bunches of them right here in this province. Get those technical people in the door of this place because of the 87 people in this room, how many can actually say that they understand the technical aspects and the economic aspects of renewable technologies? Not many. You know, no one is an expert in everything, but we have experts in this province. We have experts right across this country. Those people, who are my colleagues, love renewable technologies, and they go out of their way to educate everybody who will listen.

It is imperative that we pause, take the time, go to committee, get these experts in the door. Let's hear about it because I guarantee you – I know my colleagues – they are going to come up with a better mousetrap every single time, certainly better than what a bunch of politicians could possibly throw together. Let's just be real honest about that. Let's get the experts in the door.

I don't want to see renewables in my province fail. As I said earlier today, I've been waiting for a renewables act for a long time. Please don't make it fail. I've seen too many failures around the world, and I've seen what it does to those marketplaces. People are so jaded; they will not accept renewables no matter how gold-plated they were.

Another little story. There was a particular project that I was doing a feasibility study on, and I was meeting some hesitancy from the board of directors and the bean-counters for that company. Fair enough. I mean, fair enough; it's their money. On the team that I headed up there were four engineers that I was supervising. We had this thing nailed down technically. I was absolutely sure. We actually went through and designed this thing three times to make sure that our numbers were absolutely ironclad.

Then we converted it to the financial feasibility. We had the economics down, Mr. Speaker. We knew exactly how much energy we were going to save, how much money we were going to save them. We were absolutely confident. We got in the meeting with their board of directors and their senior engineers and accountants, and they're just coming at the team . . .

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find that a thrilling story, especially when you start talking about accountants. I would love to continue to hear what their thoughts are, so please continue so that we can finish off your speech.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member. When we got in this meeting, the only way the corporation was going to accept our proposal was if I was willing to put my name on the hook for the financial responsibility if it failed. This is multimillion dollars. I don't have multimillion dollars. However, we went back to the board of our company and put it to them, and said: "You know. This is it; this is where the rubber meets the road. Are we willing to do this?"

Of course, the board of directors are not engineers; they're not technical people. They're accountants. I'm sorry for calling you a bean-counter, but they're bean-counters. They're looking at us on the team and saying: "Man, if you guys drop the ball, they're going to find you floating in the Mediterranean somewhere. You'd better be right." Well, we did. It happened. We got the contract.

Everything was fine. But that's the hesitancy that we were meeting because of failed renewables projects. It was an extremely difficult hurdle to overcome, Mr. Speaker.

For the sake of the whole renewables industry in this province, let alone the people of Alberta, for the industry, please, put this to committee. Let's get the industry in the door, and let's have a really good discussion with them about every line of this act. Let's take our time and, for goodness sake, get it right. If we get it wrong, the cost is going to be enormous. It's going to set renewables back, potentially, a whole generation. Let's just take the time.

I would appreciate it if every member of this House would be in support of this referral to committee. Let's take our time. Let's hear from the experts, and let's do a really good job for the sake of Albertans and for the sake of renewables in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:50

**The Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake?

Seeing no one, is there anyone else who would like to speak to amendment REF1? The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to this amendment. I've never really seen an amendment like this before. It's brand new to me.

This legislation, as was mentioned earlier, was developed with the best practices within other jurisdictions. This legislation, I think, needs to be in place for us to continue moving forward with renewable energy programs, and with this bill itself, not the amendment, the proper checks and balances are in place for us to move forward with renewable energy development.

We on this side of the House were elected to this Legislature as a government to diversify our economy. There are millions, if not billions, of dollars of investment waiting for us to move forward with this bill and this legislation to start implementing these programs. I find it quite interesting that the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, being a teacher of renewable energies, is so adamantly against any renewable energy course that we're trying to take in this Legislature. To be fair, he has said that he would like to see other programs, but I guess he's happy to wait 20 or 40 years before that happens.

Renewable energy is dropping in cost and gaining in efficiency every single year. We've seen this. We've seen other jurisdictions taking advantage of these programs. We've seen communities within our own province taking these programs and running with them. I think that it's important that we encourage these communities that are moving forward on renewable energies and not discourage them, like the opposition seems to be very excited to do.

I would just also add that this bill has been made in consultation with the Alberta Electric System Operator, the Market Surveillance Administrator, the Alberta Utilities Commission, Alberta Environment and Parks, the Alberta climate change office, Alberta Treasury Board and Finance, just to name a few. [interjections] I think that the members don't seem to really believe that these organizations understand the challenges within the industry. It seems a little funny to me. Not organizations, I suppose, but government agencies.

Respectfully, I will not be supporting this amendment, and I do encourage my colleagues to do the same. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Shepherd:** Yes. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark for his thoughts on this amendment. I know that this member has worked in the electrical field and has some knowledge

and experience in that area and, of course, knows some individuals who are interested, actually, in participating in the renewable plan and putting in some investment in that regard, certainly some young electricians and others who are interested in working in that field. I was wondering if he'd be able to share some thoughts on sort of the potential that this investment could bring to the province.

**Mr. Carson:** Sure. Thank you very much for the question and the comment. I have indeed through my career in the electrical industry met several people on my path, not only people who are interested in working in the field but also in investing. I mean, an incredible amount of opportunity coming through my office and, I've heard from my colleagues, coming through their offices as well. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars ready to be disbursed throughout our province, ready to invest in the future.

Of course, I've said it before. It is so important for us to continue developing our nonrenewable resources. Well, this works in conjunction with that. Many, many investors coming through my office. I mean, it's just incredible.

I was down at union hall IBEW 424. They're increasingly putting more people through the programs. I was here one week ago talking about their 125th anniversary. They're developing so many people that are ready to do electrical vehicle charging stations at people's homes and at the commercial and even industrial levels as well as photovoltaic systems.

I kind of see where the opposition is coming from in terms of: if I don't believe in climate change, man-made climate change specifically, well, then I don't really believe in renewable resource programs either. I understand that. I appreciate the time to respond to that.

Just a final comment. We've heard from the opposition several times on this bill and on other bills: "Well, China is not doing anything. Why should we?" I think that is an incredibly sad argument, and I think it's time for us to move forward.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A couple of things I'd like to ask the hon. member about the great, long lineup of investors beating a path to his door looking for handouts, like hogs to the trough. I'd be interested if the hon. member might illuminate us a bit on just who this long line of investors beating a path to his door are, if he could name some of these investment groups, and if he could perhaps illuminate for us just how much subsidy these companies are looking for.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To be honest, I don't have a list in front of me of the investors themselves. [interjections] I think that many of my colleagues have had people coming into their offices. I think that it's incredibly naïve to say that no one has come to our office. So many people... [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that many investors have come to his office, too, and I think that it's unfortunate that he's not willing to work with them, really, to be honest.

I think that we do need to move forward on this bill, as I said. I don't think that this amendment is necessary. I think that it's time

to move forward, really just laying out a framework for this green-technology economy.

You know, I will leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), any other questions for the hon. member?

Anyone who would like to speak to amendment REF1? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, that was priceless, listening to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark speak. I don't even know where to start, actually. He suggested just in his last comments something about: "Well, China is not doing anything. Why should we?" Nobody was suggesting that. But how about the U.S., our largest competitor, our largest trading partner? They're not doing a carbon tax. They're not doing any of this stuff. How about Saskatchewan, right next door to us? How about Saskatchewan?

And he says: all sorts of support. He lists a whole group of people that support it, but I never heard one thing about Albertans. Not one thing about Albertans. Have you gone to Albertans with this and told them how much their power is going to increase because of this? How much is it going to cost? Now, he talks about all these investors running through his doorway to invest. With subsidies, of course, or a guaranteed return on investments: that's who's running through his door. Of course, anybody with their hand out to get something for nothing would love to be there. So all sorts of support, none from Albertans.

He talked about that they developed this with the best practices from other jurisdictions. Like Ontario? Is that one of these best practices that they've used? The lessons from Ontario? A complete failure in renewables. A complete failure.

He also suggested that everybody voted NDP, so they must love everything that this government is doing. We just need to point to the last election. One per cent support with the same candidate that they used in the provincial election a year and a half before. One per cent. Right in your jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker. That's the kind of support that they have from the people of Alberta. That's very clear.

He also said that the last years have been rough. Yes, the last year and a half has been very rough, since this government has been elected. They always blame the world price of oil, Mr. Speaker, but their policies drive investment away. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Loewen:** They drive jobs away. This government in its term has lost over a hundred thousand jobs. They had a plan to create a hundred thousand jobs. Well, that's a 200,000 job deficit, Mr. Speaker – 200,000 jobs – from what they promised to what they've delivered. That's not acceptable. That's not what Albertans want to see.

You know what we haven't seen, Mr. Speaker, on any one of these policies that they've brought forward? Do you know what we haven't seen? We haven't seen an economic impact study on any of them. We haven't seen proper consultation with Albertans. Albertans haven't been told the truth on anything. All over the place this government does things behind closed doors and doesn't consult Albertans, doesn't give them the full information so that they can make an informed decision on whether they want to support it.

All we're asking with this amendment, Mr. Speaker, is to have this go to committee so that it can be looked at, so it can be reviewed, so we can ask Albertans what they want, so we can ask experts to come in. But this government doesn't want to see that. They don't want to see any input. They don't want to have Albertans judge this by what it is. They don't want to have their carbon tax reviewed. They hid reports on that. We only find out this information when we use FOIPs. That's not right.

This government needs to start listening to Albertans. They need to start paying attention to what Albertans want, and they need to give . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. However, in accordance with Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:01 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, November 10, 2016

Day 48

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and	Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of	Committee Services	Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	
and Legal Research Officer		

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, November 10, 2016

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Acting Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect, each in our own way. Let us give thanks for the precious gift of freedom and peace which we all enjoy today. We must remember those who fought for us to have those gifts. Without these brave men and women who sacrificed everything for our country and our province, we would not be able to enjoy the freedom and privileges we have now.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 28

#### Public Health Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to address Bill 28 here in Committee of the Whole. I want to preface my remarks by congratulating the Health minister as well as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for bringing forward this piece of legislation. I think that what we see here is a very good measure and a very good attempt to bring forward a proactive preventive medicine measure, one that I think will truly improve health outcomes in our province.

I want to maybe go out on a limb a little bit here this morning by saying that I'm going to take a guess that I've probably administered more doses of vaccine than anyone else in the Chamber. Having been on thousands and thousands of occasions on the nonpointy end of the needle, I will tell you that vaccination is something that I feel very, very strongly about as a public health measure. I feel so strongly about it that I think it is extremely important that we do whatever we can in our province to improve the knowledge and the understanding of vaccination so that it is something that people understand more broadly.

I was dismayed a couple of years ago when there was a study released that indicated that over 1 in 5 Albertans still believed that there is a causative link between childhood vaccination and autism spectrum disorder. That, my friends, is something that all of us have a role in combating, the fallacy and the lie that that is. All of that, for those of you who don't know the background, came about as a result of a bogus article that was published in *The Lancet* in 1998 by Andrew Wakefield. That article has proven to be incorrect. That article has proven to be false. The fact that there are still folks – I'm going to talk about this in a second, about how, unfortunately, a lot of folks in society today take their scientific information from the world of celebrity. We've seen that problem in the debate that we've had with regard to Alberta's environmental record. We know that we've had prominent visitors come to our province and make

rash statements that are so completely false; yet, without naming names, they should perhaps have gone down with the *Titanic*, in fact, and they did.

Madam Chair, I want to say for the record that as a Rotarian one of the jobs we had in Rotary representing our vocation was to inform our fellow Rotarians about something that we would know within our vocation that might not be widely known amongst the rest of the group, and in many ways I consider our Chamber to be a little bit like that same sort of organization. We all come with our different skills and our different abilities and our different backgrounds.

We heard yesterday from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, who has a long and distinguished career as an oncologist, and he spoke very directly about the importance in a public health sense of vaccination. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, similarly, reiterated his comments, and I was very interested to hear him use the term "herd immunity" because I do know a little bit about herd immunity. Herd immunity, though, is a concept in public health that is extremely important.

Every year in estimates – and the Health minister will corroborate this – I ask about our targets, our vaccination targets, that we set out, and I ask why we fall so short of those targets and if the targets in the estimates in the business plan for the Ministry of Health are, in fact, reasonable or if they're, you know, something that we should adjust. She correctly says that these are the targets that have been set out by the World Health Organization that we have within Canada for childhood vaccination, and therefore that is what we should strive for.

Bill 28, in my view, creates a balanced approach to how we might improve our vaccination performance within our young people. I certainly applaud the government as well for crafting a bill that respects the rights of parents to make choices on behalf of their children with regard to vaccination. That is something that we have to respect. That is something that has to remain within the hands of parents because parents ultimately have to make choices on behalf of their children and especially in this case. We're talking about infants. Very clearly, parents are making all of the choices at that age and at that stage. Anything that we can do in this Legislature to allay some of the fears that are out there, the groundless fears about vaccination, I think is something that is very positive.

Vaccination has an actually very long history that goes back nearly 10 centuries, but it's probably best known for the more recent history that started with the British physician Edward Jenner. Dr. Jenner made the observation at a time when smallpox had a mortality rate of 60 per cent amongst adults and 80 per cent amongst youth that those that had common contact with cattle rarely developed smallpox, and if they did, their case of smallpox was considerably less severe than others in their cohort group. He made a guess without knowing a thing about virology, without knowing that viruses even existed, that there was something that people handling cattle were exposed to that in some way protected them against smallpox, and he was right. He was a keen observer of his patients, as good doctors are, and he made the conclusion that there was something – and he didn't know what it was – that protected people who worked with cattle against smallpox.

9:10

As it turned out, it was a related disease caused by a related virus that was nonfatal. In fact, it was the cowpox virus, and it was Jenner that determined that the cowpox vesicles contained something. Of course, he was living in a time before there were electron microscopes, so he could not actually see what that something was. He made the conclusion that there was something in the cowpox vesicles that protected smallpox patients. Before long he was actually treating early cases of smallpox with the extract, as we'll

call it, that was developed from these cowpox vesicles. Now, we know that Louis Pasteur then made a lot of great strides forward in terms of the development of vaccination.

For those of you who are interested in things like this, the word “vaccination” actually comes from the Latin root word “vacca,” which means cow. That is because the initial vaccinations were done from something that was derived from a cow. As a veterinarian, of course, I’m very proud of that.

But I do want to talk a little bit about the whole concern with regard to the adverse reactions. Vaccines are developed and have been developed over the years by pharmaceutical companies. I know that out there there is concern or there is suspicion about this thing called big pharma. I think that one of the things we have to recognize is that big pharma and the vaccinations that they have developed are part of the reason why public health has made such great strides forward. Vaccination is something that saves our health system billions of dollars a year, and if we could increase the numbers of people that are vaccinated, we could save our system literally billions of dollars a year. It is one of the most effective ways of reducing health care costs that is available to us. As a veterinarian who spent probably 80 per cent of my time in practice doing preventive health care as opposed to reactive health care, I can tell you that vaccination was a big part of it.

In this bill it talks about making sure that we have vaccination records for children attending schools and daycare and that those records be shareable. I think that’s critically important. To me, it’s bizarre that you can place a child in school with no knowledge of vaccination records whatsoever, yet if you want to board your dog in a kennel, you have to show proof of vaccination. Does that really make any sense? If you want to put cattle into a community pasture where there is commingling of cattle from different herds, you have to show proof of vaccination. If we’re doing it for cows and dogs, Madam Chair, we should be doing it for our children.

Madam Chair, I’m going to refer to a monograph or commentary that was published in 2015. Unfortunately, I only have one copy of this. I’m going to take some direction from the Clerk’s table as far as how I might be able to table five copies of this without breaking copyright law. It’s a commentary from the C.D. Howe Institute, and it’s entitled *A Shot in the Arm: How to Improve Vaccination Policy in Canada*. This is an excellent, excellent commentary. I would certainly recommend it. It’s only 14 pages long; it’s not overly technical. It talks about vaccination policy in Canada. It specifically talks about Alberta, and it talks about how Alberta could improve on what is right now an underperforming level of child vaccination. It gives a number of measures, many of which I think are embodied in the piece of legislation that we’re debating.

Specifically, Madam Chair, in the report, and I’m quoting now from page – well, I said that it was 14 pages long, and here I’m quoting from page 15. We’ll get that straightened out.

We believe that Alberta should consider adopting a model that mandates informed choice upon school entry or earlier. This means including enforcement mechanisms to encourage parents to decide one way or another. Such mechanisms could involve requiring written consent or refusal in infancy and again upon entering school, with proof of having spoken to a physician or nurse. Stricter measures would be financial penalties, similar to the Australian model, or the threat of suspension, as in Ontario.

I’m glad that we’re not looking at those. I think the first step is to try to encourage education and to allay the fears of those who still have doubts, who still are listening to some of the PhDs on *The View* who have opinions on vaccinations rather than on the overwhelming weight of scientific evidence that shows the benefit of vaccination.

Madam Chair, once again I’d like to commend the minister and the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, and I certainly appreciated the comments from my colleague for Calgary-Mountain View and his long experience in the public health field.

I can tell you that as someone who has administered vaccines to many, many patients and has seen adverse reactions in a minuscule number of those patients and in every case has been able to react and respond and take the necessary measures to ensure that that adverse reaction was taken care of and who’s accidentally vaccinated myself against any number of different dog, cat, and cattle diseases and carries titres against a number of different diseases that I’m unlikely to develop at some time in later life – I have been rabies vaccinated, as an example. That’s something we get standard as veterinarians, and, you know, quite frankly, with some of the patients I’ve dealt with and even now in political life, I’m rather glad I carry that protection.

Madam Chair, all kidding aside, I think this is a good piece of legislation. It is one that our caucus certainly supports. I would encourage all members from all sides and all parties within the House: for the sake of our health overall but especially for the sake of our young children let’s pass this, and let’s get on the ball with regard to educating Alberta’s public to make sure vaccination becomes more widespread.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. In regard to your tabling, if you could please just table the publication information, that would be sufficient. Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Ms Woollard:** Hello. Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for the point of view of immunization from the point of view of a veterinarian. As a teacher I have a lot of the same concerns. We see a lot of the issues that happen when we have someone who is not immunized in amongst the class when there is a vaccine-preventable outbreak of disease. Of course, the majority of the students are protected by their own immunizations, but you always worry, legitimately worry, that if someone is not immunized and they are not isolated, they can be carrying a disease well away from the classroom to people who are not immunized for any number of reasons. Infants, because they’re too young – you know, there’s a baby at home, and that child can be exposed to a disease. People with compromised immune systems can be exposed, and all of that is needless.

So as a teacher working in an educational system, the faster, the more quickly you have the information as to which students need to be isolated in order for them not to be spreading the disease, contracting and spreading, it’s really, really helpful, and it’s better for everyone. It’s better for society as a whole for sure. In that regard I totally agree with the thoughts expressed previously that this is a very good bill.

The other thing I want to mention – and we’ve brought it up before, some of us of in the older MLA crowd, that we well remember the days when we did not have the vaccinations and the immunization programs available, and we don’t want to go back there. [some applause] Thank you. So much needless, I mean, now preventable harm and death that we just don’t want to see reoccurring when it doesn’t need to happen. We have very good mechanisms to keep people from contracting many of these diseases, and we want to use them for that purpose. Basically, mechanisms that will help lessen the likelihood of harm being spread in our society, particularly to our children, is a pretty legitimate and worthwhile cause.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I hope everyone will support this bill. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

9:20

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Vaccinations. You know, the problem with the whole antivax community is the fact that we have a generation of people who didn't experience the hardships of these diseases when they proliferated back in the day. If we don't learn these lessons from our parents and our grandparents and our forefathers and mothers, then we're destined to circle back and relearn these harsh lessons because these are dangerous diseases. Let us remind people of what something as simple as the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine has provided or what we had when we did not have these diseases.

Measles. You know, everyone hears about it, but what are measles? You know what? These are all viruses. It'll cause you to have a fever, you'll get a rash, and you're going to get cold-like symptoms. Ah, that doesn't seem so bad. There are some ocular issues as well, so you get a bit of photophobia, so that means that the light is very impairing to you. More importantly, from measles you can get brain damage, and there is a percentage of people that actually died from this brain damage. If they did not die, they were impaired because that computer chip in our head, there, was damaged, so these people could not have good lives.

Mumps. Again, with every disease there's a fever. That's your body fighting these infections. They get headaches. Your glands will swell. But did you know that mumps will lead to meningitis? There's temporary and permanent deafness. I should go back. Does anyone know what meningitis is? I know there are some health care professionals in the House. Meningitis really is the swelling of the tissues that surround the brain and whatnot and our central nervous system, and when that swells, it impacts our nervous system and impairs things there. So mumps, again, is a very dangerous issue. I might also say that there is painful swelling of the testicles. I know; it's nuts. I know.

Rubella. There are very serious complications from rubella. Rubella is probably the worst one, and people don't recognize this. When your daughter grows up to become an adult and she's pregnant and she gets exposed to rubella, 9 out of 10 will get birth defects. It leads to brain damage of that little one. It leads to heart defects. It leads to liver, eye issues, deafness. So it's not just impacting the person that makes the decision not have that vaccination; it impacts that baby that's inside of them. Nine out of 10 women who get rubella during pregnancy will have a child that will be difficult to manage when they get older.

We've forgotten the lessons of our parents and our grandparents, and that's why we have to look to the history books. That's why we have to remember why these things came about, and we have to make proper, educated decisions on getting these vaccinations. Really, in the scheme of things, we would have had these things wiped out, and we wouldn't even be exposed to them, but unfortunately we are now, and that's a shame.

With that in mind, I do support vaccinations. Thank you very much. But I also do support the freedom for someone to say no. It is what it is.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is really a pleasure to stand here in support of this important bill, that has the support of teachers as well as parents and all of us. It's been very refreshing, actually, hearing the discussion, and I appreciate the contributions from all members of the Legislature. I only wish that we could inoculate this spirit of collegiality and co-operation into our other discussions such as on the carbon levy. What are the chances?

**An Hon. Member:** Let me write the budget, and you've got a deal.

**Dr. Turner:** We're waiting for a budget from you guys.

Anyways, the bill is aimed at increasing immunization rates. I agree with the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster that one of our jobs is to create the environment in which immunization rates are increased, and I think that this bill is going to do that through the dissemination of information about the benefits of vaccinations and immunizations as well as in the interdigitization of the various communication systems that allow our teachers to know which students may not have had their vaccinations. Those students can be excluded in the event of a preventable infection occurring in that community.

These amendments will also improve the services for immunizations. It's very key that we actually make the immunizations, vaccinations available to all Albertans and make it easy for them to get so that these sorts of situations don't arise. I think all Albertans want to be healthy. They want to be able to protect their children. If we make the services more available, that's going to be very positive.

The objective is to achieve full immunization through information sharing and to better protect Alberta students and their families in the event of an outbreak. I really do appreciate the input from all members that have spoken on this. I think that there are some very good ideas. I'm also very appreciative of our public health officials. We have a phenomenal public health system in this province. We need to give them the resources to get the job done well. We also have a phenomenal education system in this province and a system in the province that actually keeps track of the students in that system, and we can use both of those good systems to make the immunization rates better.

With that, I will again urge, as before, all members to support this important legislation.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Good morning, Madam Chair. Thank you so much. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak if only briefly. I know that it's hard for some members of this Assembly to believe that it can be brief, but I will do my very best.

Let me just begin by saying that I believe that children are our future, and it's important that we do everything that we can to set our children up for success. While there is still some significant public debate around vaccinations, I think that it's critically important that people have the access to information they need to make the best available decision. Much of this piece of legislation is around just that, around the ability for our public health officials to be able to communicate and allow parents to make the best choice possible.

I think that it's also very critically important that the bill still allows them to make that choice. I mentioned it yesterday, but I want to reiterate it today because sometimes in the course of public discussion what we're actually talking about can get derailed. What this bill does not do is require mandatory vaccinations. What it does do is takes many steps in the right direction of encouraging parents

to be aware of the decision that they're making. What it does is allow government health officials to directly contact folks and have a conversation around that. I think that those are reasonable steps that we can make to ensure that people have the information that they ought to when they make a decision as important as around their children's health, around vaccination.

I just want to reiterate a point, and I'm hoping that the minister might have an opportunity to respond to alleviate some of my concerns around the privacy of this information. The information that we're going to be sharing from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health is very sensitive and personal information. First of all, it's information about minors' health. It's information in many respects about a decision that a parent has made or not made, and that decision is a very private and personal decision that that parent might make. What we don't need to see is any sort of, first of all, breaches of privacy or any abuse of this information with respect to a decision that a parent might make for their child.

9:30

I think many members of this Assembly are aware, Madam Chair, of the bad track record of AHS on privacy breaches, and we've seen a significant increase in investigations. I know that the Privacy Commissioner has spoken quite sternly both to AHS and the ministry about the importance of keeping health information private generally. As we move towards expanding the amount of information sharing between Education and Health, much of which is very private and very personal information, I'm hoping that the minister this morning, at the conclusion of my remarks, would be willing to provide some reassurances that these issues have been clearly and robustly considered, discussed, and that a plan has been put in place on how this will take place, any potential consequences for breaches of that privacy. That way we'll have some reassurances.

As you know, Chair, I like to give the government the best opportunity to respond best, but I also am deeply passionate about holding the government to account. If, in fact, we'll be able to hear the plan today, I hope, and if the government hasn't done their job in respecting the privacy, respecting this information, then we, then, will be able to point back to this time and say: "You know what? The government hasn't fulfilled their commitments, and Albertans expect this government to do just that."

I will be supporting this piece of legislation and encourage my colleagues to do the same because much about the education side of this, much about parents being able to decide what's best for their children with the right information is, I believe, a step in the right direction, but there are some concerns. It's my hope that we can have some of those at least alleviated a little this morning.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks to the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for his comments and his endorsement of the bill before us here today.

Obviously, we have hit a good balance. I can tell from the comments here today in regard to this bill but also from, I believe, the larger medical community and from education partners across the province. We had, in fact, trustees and representation at our announcement last week, and I was very proud to see their enthusiastic endorsement of this initiative that we've undertaken here. It's very important to note that we had parents, parent council representation there as well and so forth. You know, sometimes when you build legislation, those stakeholders' endorsements and then, of course, what we hear in debates in the House here help us

to gauge how we will move forward on any given legislation generally and then on this specific piece of legislation as well.

I know that from a health perspective it's absolutely essential that we are using the time available to us when we see an outbreak of a disease, that we act in a timely manner, and information gives us that upper hand to make the best use of time. Just to remind everyone about how this legislation works, how this initiative works, we are simply passing enrolment information over to Alberta Health Services for them to cross-reference with their immunization records.

In regard to privacy, in regard to the integrity and security of that information I would suggest that this is at least as secure as before. Both of those ministries and both of those lists are secure and protected by legislation and the law. I would suggest that, you know, we even actually have a double fail-safe mechanism here because we're passing information from two ministries, cross-referencing it over. On every level of the privacy that exists on both of those lists I would suggest that we have a very safe and secure method by which to undertake actions in the case of an outbreak of any given disease.

You know, just to fill in more information on that as well, detailwise, for students that are coming from other jurisdictions across the country and/or even from other countries, we are, again, passing that information over. Then we have an opportunity, I think, for both ministries to cast a second look on those individuals and that file so that, again, there's another level of sort of scrutiny that would help individuals to get the immunizations that they need to help keep themselves safe and our larger communities safe, too. It's a pretty good idea. I mean, it's innovative, and I think that it will help us over time – we can track this possibility – to in fact make our children safer in the province here.

You know, again, we have put that provision recognizing an individual's or a family's right to make a choice here, but I think that it's important, Madam Chair, to not – I mean, that's there. It's on the paper, it's in the bill, but, you know, I don't think we want to necessarily put a big neon light and sign around that nor make it particularly straightforward and just a matter of course for an individual or a family to do that. I think that part of this bill, again, is for people to take a long second thought about the implications around immunization, not to treat it frivolously. Nor should it be something that is decided on the spur of the moment or just by omission and/or some other choice that hasn't been backed up by some serious thought over time. Okay. I think that's important.

I know the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills emphasized that opt-out aspect of this very prominently in his speech. I think that, you know, we have to just remind you all here today, everyone listening, that this is a very serious decision that requires time and consideration and reflection and to reflect on the implications for an individual but for the larger community, too, because the only way that immunization works across the board is to ensure that we're getting as many people as possible. The implications are dire. We've heard speeches from other quarters here today. I mean, it can involve jeopardizing the health and mortality of thousands of people, potentially, so I think that needs to be part of our education here as well.

I know that the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is a big fan of Whitney Houston, and he must have forgotten the next phrase from that very fine song.

I believe the children are our future  
comma,

Teach them well [to help] them [find] the way.  
We've got to get that part in there, otherwise it doesn't make any sense, right? You've got to have one to have the other. Just a little



lesson on, you know, quoting songs and so forth for the future, to help us find the way.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

9:40

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak in favour of this bill. You know, there's always a balance, in any legislation that we have, between trying to promote public safety and at the same time trying to protect individual rights and freedoms, and I think this bill finds that balance. I know that we've had a great deal of conversation about not requiring mandatory vaccination but at the same time working towards sharing records that would allow officials to be able to contact parents and to encourage them to do that.

I want to talk a little bit today. I very much appreciated the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster bringing in some of the history and medical science that lies behind the concept of vaccination. I enjoyed the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, with his vision for how we can co-operate in this House. I truly enjoyed that. I guess I'm really glad we've been spared from either hon. members actually standing up and singing this morning the verses from that very amazing song.

I do want to perhaps take this down a path that's maybe a little more personal. As a teacher I've had to help kids in my class that were sick. You know, obviously, when we're dealing with student safety, it's a very important issue, and I think this bill moves us towards more student safety with the idea of being able to identify those students that have not been vaccinated, making sure that, should an outbreak occur, they're not placing themselves in harm or danger by attending a school, for instance, during a measles outbreak. I think this sharing of information, from a teacher's point of view, is a very positive thing.

I know a very personal side of the story. I believe that this bill could have helped my father. My father contracted polio as a young boy. It radically changed his life. He moved off the farm at 13 years of age to go and be the first one in his family to finish and receive a high school degree. He was in school one day when his teacher noticed that he was walking a little funny. There ensued some doctors' appointments to find out that my father had had polio and that it had damaged the muscles in his back and his stomach and that he was developing scoliosis of the spine. So as a 14-year-old boy he had to travel by train all the way from Shaunavon, Saskatchewan, to Regina, where he had surgery to fuse his spine and then spent the next several years recuperating from this.

So when I look at this bill, I see a very personal side to this story. My father has always led a very active life. He's overcome that polio. He's got full mobility, and he would look back and say that probably that event in his life actually made him a better person, but he was one of the lucky ones. When we start talking about trying to achieve a rate of 97 per cent vaccination for the year for polio and we're only at 76 per cent, I think of some of the kids that could be very negatively affected, and I think of people like my father.

I can stand in this Legislature and say that I can support this bill. I think it's found a balance. I think it allows parents to be parents and to make the final decision but with the information and with the sharing of records that will allow for some public safety. So I will speak and will vote in favour of this bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I maybe have a few comments and questions in regard to this bill. While I think it's probably a good step forward in an effort to streamline processes and actually protect the public's safety, I do express some privacy concerns, which have been eased a bit by the minister's comments earlier.

One of the other concerns that I would have with this bill is the way in which parents and children are contacted by the Department of Health and how those conversations take place, if it'll be a contact to the parent or if it'll be a contact to the child. How can the minister offer assurances that there won't be intimidation tactics used by the public health officials when having these conversations? That is of great concern, especially if the information is from the department to the child. I do express some concerns there. While I feel like this is mostly fairly good, I'm hoping the minister can offer some assurances that children will not be coerced to make decisions, may or may not be offered the full scope of information. It is certainly a concern, and I hope to get some assurances.

That's it. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The clauses of Bill 28 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

## Bill 29

### Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Chair. It's a pleasure to rise this morning and speak to Bill 29, the Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act. I spent a little bit of time reviewing the bill, and I'm happy to state that I'll be supporting this piece of legislation, and I would encourage all my hon. colleagues to do the same.

Madam Chair, society as a whole has undergone change, and it's important that the government routinely modernizes and recalibrates so as to ensure that it's in the best position to serve Albertans. I think about my own kids and how different their childhood is to mine. I, perhaps like you, Madam Chair, grew up in a time of VHS and bubble TVs. I remember having to co-ordinate with my family when I could use and get access to the Internet as when I was on the Internet, my family couldn't make any phone calls because of the dial-up connection. In fact, there was a period of time in my very young growing-up days, in grade 3, when I lived in a fairly remote part of this province, and we actually had a party line. Even before the invention of this fad they called the Internet, they had these party lines, where my three neighbours were all on the same phone line.

It's a very different world that my children are growing up in than I did. Madam Chair, I remember sitting down for a movie night with

popcorn and pop, only to discover that someone had forgotten to rewind the VHS. Let's just say that if I was to tell my kids today, "Be kind and rewind," they would have a very funny look for me.

9:50

**Mr. Schmidt:** That's the way your kids always look at you, Nathan.

**Mr. Cooper:** That's so true.

It's quite possible that there are some members, some of my esteemed colleagues on the government side of the House, that are also unclear with the statement "be kind and rewind." We used to have these big VHS tapes, and you had a special machine that you could put it in to rewind the thing because it was twice as fast as the VHS. Anyway, you get the point.

I also think about my kids and how they might react if their Christmas present was the complete series of *Gilligan's Island* on VHS. For the benefit of the Minister of Education this morning, I will refrain from singing the *Gilligan's Island* song or whistling it for you, but I do hope that it's now stuck in many of your heads here this morning.

The kids certainly would be shocked if the Internet access was only available through dial-up. Sure, technically it's possible to watch movies on VHS or access the Internet via dial-up, but it's not the most up-to-date system and certainly not something folks would categorize as convenient.

I think this bill is basically the government updating to buying a Blu-ray player or updating to the SuperNet. Albertans expect their government to be able to communicate with citizens in a modern and streamlined manner.

I'd like to highlight a few changes in this bill. I'd like to highlight the formal recognition of midwifery as a legitimate health care profession in the Vital Statistics Act. As you'll know, Madam Chair, the Wildrose caucus has long been an advocate of the expansion of midwifery services and their recognition as legitimate health care professionals. While I admit that this particular change may seem minor as midwives are already authorized to file a birth notice within the province, this bill amends the Vital Statistics Act to officially list midwives in legislation along with physicians.

Albertans have already been using midwifery services for many years, and frankly it's high time that the government formally acknowledged this great service they provide to thousands of Alberta couples. I know first-hand of the great work that midwives are doing right across the province. My brother and his family have five children, and they have benefited individually and collectively from the use of midwife services.

Now, I don't want to get too overly philosophical this morning, but there are some very, very unique and compassionate things in this piece of legislation. One of the most amazing things about humanity that I see every day is our collective ability to experience compassion for one another. Now, I know we've seen right across North America an unfortunate trend away from compassion and even here in our own province, but I have an incredible amount of hope and belief that we will continue to experience compassion for one another and that we will continue to provide compassion for one another. The dictionary defines compassion as, quote: a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for one who is stricken by misfortune accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate suffering. End quote. This bill proposes to introduce a little bit of compassion for individuals and families who are experiencing a difficult life event such as the stillborn birth of their child or the death of a loved one.

Madam Chair, you know that I'm a parent. My beautiful wife and I have three beautiful, extraordinary children. I could not be more proud of the individuals they have become thus far in their lives, and I look forward to sharing many, many more years of life with

them. Getting to see them learn to drive or graduate high school, get their first job, or get married will be wonderful experiences that I will be blessed to have. I cannot begin to imagine how difficult it is for the parent of a stillborn baby who should be celebrating one of life's most joyous occasions but instead has to make difficult choices like the name they wish to give their deceased child. At present we have a very cold and not compassionate process in which to handle this most horrific situation.

I came across a story in a paper recently of a network of photographers who are a part of an organization called Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep. This organization's mission is "to introduce remembrance photography to parents suffering the loss of a baby with the free gift of professional portraiture." This organization has over 1,700 photographers in over 40 countries around the world, including here in Alberta. One of the parents interviewed who accessed the services stated: "That night was the worst night of my life. But when I look at the images, I am not reminded of my worst night. I'm reminded of the beauty and blessings [my son] brought."

Bill 29 proposes to bring a little of that compassion to the process of recording stillbirths in Alberta. Parents will now have the ability to forgo naming their child right away or if they wish to at all. This flexibility is allowing each family the ability to process their grief in a manner that works for them.

Another change proposed by Bill 29 is commemorative certificates. Sadly, stillborn children are ineligible for a birth certificate. It leaves the family with no other document recognizing their child other than as a death. I can only imagine the painful memory that it must be for parents dealing with this unimaginable grief of the loss of a child. While the details of these certificates are yet to be hashed out, the idea is that a commemorative certificate will allow parents to obtain a ceremonial birth certificate. While the certificate itself has no legal standing, it will allow parents to honour their children in a much more compassionate way.

Madam Chair, I've never experienced the magnitude of a stillborn child. As you know, I have two adopted girls, and my family, too, has dealt with a number of challenges through the pregnancy process. Anything that we can do to assist individuals who are dealing with some of life's most challenging situations is something that I am more than happy to support.

I'm happy to see this government introducing compassion into how it deals with people going through difficult life events. This is one of the reasons why I will be supporting Bill 29. There are a number of very important issues that Bill 29 addresses, but for today I think I will leave it at that.

10:00

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 29, Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act?

[The clauses of Bill 29 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

**Mr. Westhead:** Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**Ms Woollard:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 28 and Bill 29.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does Assembly concur with the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 24

#### Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege this morning to move third reading of Bill 24, Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

I want to thank all members on both sides of the House for the discussions that we've had on this very important piece of legislation. It's clear to me from the comments that were made throughout the debate of the bill that in general I think members are supportive of the enhancement of wildfire prevention, enforcement, and operational activities.

The modernization of this act is an important step in reducing the risk of human-caused wildfires. As was discussed earlier, approximately 70 per cent of wildfires over the last five years have been linked to human activity, and this legislation will introduce measures that will help reduce the risk of human-caused wildfires and enhance firefighting operations. These activities include strengthening penalties to serve as a deterrent, simplifying the process to restrict recreational activities when fire conditions are hazardous, officially designating March 1 as the start of the wildfire season, and clarifying operational roles and responsibilities.

During the second-reading debate and the Committee of the Whole we discussed various aspects of the legislation, and I'd just like to take some time now to address some of those discussion points to make sure that there's clarity on those points. During the debate there were questions about the provisions related to delegation of authority. We want to ensure that the front-line staff, who have the most experience with how this legislation works on the ground, have the ability to make decisions when it's appropriate as part of their day-to-day duties. Of course, higher level decisions will still be made by the minister as required.

In terms of the part of the bill that addresses the wildfire season, starting the season one month earlier than before will allow our wildfire managers to identify potential issues and ensure that fire permits are obtained earlier in the year. An early wildfire season start will allow our wildfire managers to be ready to respond when the spring comes. It won't in any way affect the contracts that we have in place. These contracts are multiyear, ensuring that the resources are available as needed, and can be extended in the fall based on hazard levels. Our government will continue to ensure that we have all the firefighting resources that we need to keep Albertans safe from the risk of wildfire.

During the last wildfire season the government enacted an off-highway vehicle restriction to help reduce the likelihood of wildfire started by exhaust or hot debris. This was done at the time using a provision of the act mostly reserved for forest area closures. The new provisions in the act will allow us to implement an off-highway

vehicle restriction in the same way that we do with fire bans currently. We are essentially simplifying the process.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I was incredibly pleased and honoured to be here to listen to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry introduce Bill 24 into the House on the same day that the Premier recognized the first responders from the Fort McMurray wildfire. This bill will help them to do their job, and I'm proud to stand in this House today for its third reading.

We will now move on to updating the act's associated regulations over the winter, in time for the start of next year's wildfire season on March 1.

Again I'd like to thank all of the members for their support of the bill and for the support of our wildland firefighters. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to be cosponsor of Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. I feel it's a great bill, and I'm just so honoured to have the opportunity to be cosponsor of it. As we've heard from both sides of the House, this bill is well supported. This bill contains amendments that protect Albertans and their communities. This bill contains amendments that will strengthen our province's wildfire protection laws, amendments that will enhance wildfire prevention, and amendments that will give more support to our wildfire firefighters.

As we heard from the Member for Banff-Cochrane, approximately 70 per cent of wildfires over the past five years were triggered by human activity. Madam Speaker, this bill will strengthen penalties for violations and increase maximum fines for major offences for individuals or corporations, which will deter reckless and irresponsible behaviours. This bill includes administrative penalties focusing on industrial violations such as insufficient firefighting equipment on-site or failing to meet industrial operation precautions.

Amendments include improving the ability to restrict specific activities during fire season that could ignite a wildfire such as the use of OHVs, amendments that will improve the province's authority to prohibit actions such as drones, which interfere with firefighting operations, and operational amendments designating March 1 as the official start date of the fire season. That earlier start date will ensure wildfire preparations are well under way when they need to be. The amendments are supported by recommendations which were made following the reviews of major wildfires such as the 2011 Slave Lake wildfire and learnings from the past couple of wildfire seasons.

I would like to thank all those in the House who spoke to this bill. I appreciated your comments, stories, and your support. No matter how hard we try, I don't think that a single one of us could erase the images in our heads of what we watched from our televisions and computers just a few months ago: residents of Fort McMurray driving down the highway, flames on both sides of the highway, embers landing on the vehicles. We could hear the conversations of parents talking to their children, answering their questions, trying to keep them calm and trying to keep themselves calm, not knowing what was going to happen from minute to minute.

**10:10**

No matter how hard we try, I do not think that any one of us here in the House today could erase the images of our exhausted wildfire fighters, their faces blackened from soot, laying on the ground,

resting their bodies, trying to catch a short sleep before they went back towards the flames, or the images of volunteers walking from vehicle to vehicle handing out water and fuel so that families could keep driving away from the flames.

Madam Speaker, no matter how hard we try, we will not prevent all forest fires, but today is the day that all in the House can do their part to ensure the safety and protection of our Albertans and communities. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. I commend this government in its attempt at legislating more responsible behaviour in our treasured forests and prairies. Fire has been the source of so much that is good in human history, but it is also our biggest threat. Without fire, we wouldn't have the means to be warm. Without fire, we couldn't have cooked our food to a more palatable and digestible state. Without fire, we would have no development of metals and so many other technologies. But fire destroys, and Fort McMurray was only the latest of Canadian communities that were ravaged by fire. In most recent memory we have Slave Lake and we have Kelowna, and there will be more. Make no bones about that.

First off, I am concerned about our forestry department. Their job is to manage our forests, so even though the fire season was legislated to be April 1, I would hope that these professionals would be doing their due diligence 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. It would be more than a shame if it was identified that they put no effort into being proactive in their attempts at ensuring that Albertans are safe and that risks in their portfolios would be identified and plans made to alleviate these issues. It seems to me that this should be a daily chore for them. It would be just as bad if it turned out that they were literally handcuffed from moving ahead with any initiatives or regular operations that would involve the alleviation of threats because of a date on the calendar. It'd be a shame if the report that is due to come out in 2017 were to demonstrate gross negligence or a lackadaisical attitude towards fire prevention and threat suppression. Wouldn't that be a scary thought?

That said, if moving up the date by a month will empower SRD in an attempt at ensuring that they will have the time to assess and alleviate dangers, so be it. I will agree with this part of the bill.

Increased fines. The intent of the increased fines is, again, noble, but we just have to remember that it is a very difficult thing to prove that people have started a fire. It is very difficult. If the forestry department can identify the careless and negligent, all the power to them. This aspect is great, but it must be in conjunction with education.

Now, I see what the government side is currently doing, what with their spending money on advertising. I watch the commercials on the new carbon tax. I see the advertising on the climate change plan, and it's a lot of money to promote people to build gardens on the roofs, without using fall protection. Your own commercials contradict your ideological agenda. I can't believe that the government would choose to spend a lot of money on this propaganda when it could be spending this money on real things, like educating people on real issues like protecting our forests.

**An Hon. Member:** Climate change isn't a real issue?

**Mr. Yao:** Climate change is a real issue. My apologies.

Smokey the Bear is a mascot that everyone knows. The character Smokey the Bear is ingrained in our psyches, at least those of a

certain age, like that of the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and older. I do recognize that many of the folks on the government side haven't a clue of what I speak, so I will explain. Smokey the Bear is a mascot that was promoting safety and responsible actions in the forest environment stateside, but even Canadians knew of him as we were exposed to American television channels. His message was clear: respect the environment; respect the forest; watch out for dangers in the forest; be careful of your actions with fire; listen to the park rangers. Alberta and Canada need new mascots to carry these messages of safety. We need someone who will amuse, entertain, and educate people.

I find our government quite comical. I wonder how good the members across the way would be at promoting safety in our forests and warning of the increased fines. You're all charismatic, sharply dressed folks. You're fine ambassadors for fire prevention and smart forest practices.

But that said, we have to remember that education is the key here, and we need to have more education for people. Probably our most effective weapon against future forest fires is education. This bill doesn't really address that, but it does a little, and I will support it. Let us be clear that we do have a lot more to go if we want to prevent forest fires.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. We live in a diverse province. It has miles of grassland, prairies and plains, thousands of acres of coniferous and deciduous forests. While most of our population lives in cities, even that population is never more than a short drive away from a rural landscape that will be dominated by those prairies and the forests. All of us enjoy this proximity to nature, and we all enjoy the beauty of our province. That's a part of being Albertan, being close to nature.

But the raw beauty that we live in can also be very dangerous. To live in Alberta is to understand that nature has a power of her own and that nature can turn our lives upside down in a very short order. Whether we are talking flooding and precipitation or drought and wildfires or any of a dozen scenarios that nature can throw our way, we understand that it is important to be prepared in this province. Just as we have to teach our children that being out in nature is one of the greatest experiences in life, we must also teach them to respect nature and to respect the weather and the terrain and the wildlife that occupy this province.

Bill 24 is about being prepared, and it's about being ready for the inevitability of nature in Alberta. There is a fire season in Alberta, and it is different every year. There are forest pests and biological realities that we must consider and that we must prepare for if we are to protect Albertans, Alberta towns, villages, forests, and prairies. In the recent past we've seen fire consume huge swaths of forest and major parts of communities. Indeed, the Flat Top Complex report helped to birth this bill. After the shocking Slave Lake fire we asked: how could we have done a better job? One of its recommendations was to update the Forest and Prairie Protection Act.

We've had to learn from these incidents that we need to plan in order to minimize the damages to Albertan communities through programs like the FireSmart program. The FireSmart program helps communities plan for and minimize the damage to communities and to homes, to industries and to the landscape by a wildfire, whether

it's preplanning, setting up fire suppression, water supplies, staging areas, evacuation procedures, or any of the myriad other logistical pieces that go together in being prepared to fight and to combat and to overcome and, if necessary, to flee a wildfire.

Communities can receive grants of up to \$100,000 per community through the FireSmart program to help communities minimize the damage of wildfires in their communities. I know that several in my constituency have received those funds. I can think of several, Cynthia being one of them. However, the cost to communities of the recent fires is in the millions, so one wonders just what this funding will do, really, to address it and what communities will be able to do to minimize that damage.

**10:20**

Bill 24 addresses the issue of wildfire preparedness in three main areas: amendments to the fines, empowering forest officers, and the clarification of amendments. Well, no one is arguing that these are not important areas to address. One wonders if this bill adequately covers these issues and if there are other pieces that should have been included in this legislation.

For instance, in section 17 the provisions for the fire season seem to be largely gratuitous. This period runs from April 1 to October 31 each year. While this bill provides for an earlier start date to the fire season, this does not really make much of a difference as 17(2) already gives the minister the ability to modify the fire season and to adapt to environmental conditions. So what does this provision actually change or do to our capacity to plan and manage forest fires? I suppose it encourages planning. But, then, what if this winter instead is a long one? Have we wasted resources? Wouldn't flexibility be better? Fire companies already had the winter to prepare for the upcoming season. Better planning seems to be the logic behind a firm date, and we will monitor whether that is effective.

One of the pieces of this bill which I support is the increased authority or the flexibility for conservation officers to use their judgment on the ground. I believe that this bill is trying to improve our ability as Albertans to be prepared for the inevitability of wildfires and to enable our officers to deal in a crisis with the critical decisions and responses that are necessary in order to protect life and communities. Being able to stop machinery or off-highway vehicle use if there is a perceived danger of wildfires makes sense. However, this provision presupposes that officers are in the right place at the right time to be able to see people using their ATVs in the backcountry and to take appropriate steps to prevent forest fires.

A concern I have about Bill 24 is:

Section 31.4(1) A forest officer may, without a warrant, seize any thing that the forest officer has reasonable grounds to believe harbours a forest pest.

(b) in subsections (2) and (3) by striking out "product" and substituting "thing."

This takes a reasonable "product" to a vague "thing" and makes this portion of the legislation fraught with possible misinterpretation. It is not unreasonable for an officer to be able to seize a product that harbours a forest pest. We are all aware of the damage that the pine beetle can do, and we all understand that certain noxious weeds can do great damage to our fields and forests and waterways, but replacing "product" and substituting "thing" is far too broad. Laws need to clarify the actions of government and citizens, and I'm not sure that this law does that.

The language in bills that will become law must use specific language. Laws limit our actions. They set boundaries. They help to clarify situations so that individuals will live to together in community in a harmonious fashion. When laws are vague, they can be open to abuse, to confusion, and they can be used by

overzealous government officials not to enhance public safety and security but to unnecessarily control the freedom that we as citizens should be able to exercise. Also, the increase in fines for companies and individuals when they leave unattended fires or leave an area with debris that could prove a fire hazard will hopefully make people think more carefully about their approach to fire safety. While this power already existed under the minister, giving the fire officer power to ask any commercial operation within a kilometre of public land for a fire plan, under threat of closure: this might be too broad. Were there really any complaints in the past with regard to this, and what's the appeal, other than the minister being the one to be able to order the closure?

Madam Speaker, my concern about this bill falls into a larger framework. The government has tried to make sense of the devastation from the fires of Slave Lake and Fort McMurray, and they have put this piece of legislation together, which may or may not make a difference to our communities and families across the province. This bill falls short of what we would expect if the government looked more critically to find the lessons in the Fort McMurray fire. For instance, the recommendations in the Flat Top Complex report are largely ignored, yet that report provides state-of-the-art analysis and ideas for reducing the risks. Updating this legislation is only one of the recommendations and perhaps the one that will have the least impact on the ground in a fire situation.

My larger concern, however, is that this government once again has failed to listen to other stakeholders in drafting and working this bill through the legislative process. They've certainly ignored the opposition. The opposition parties are not on this side of the House simply to speak against anything the government tries to do. We have a very real and important part to play in making sure that legislation that is passed by this House in fact will do what it purports to do.

There is expertise on this side of the House, that is repeatedly ignored by the government. We used the legislative process, debated the bill, and brought up ideas to make the bill better. We're not playing politics to hear ourselves talk. We do not stand up to address a bill in second reading or Committee of the Whole just to play out a part. As Albertans and as people who have been affected by fires in Fort McMurray and in other areas of this province, we have valuable insight and input to offer, yet as seems to be the norm with this government, they have largely ignored the input of the opposition.

Obviously, we need to do more to prevent the devastation of forest fires across the province, but our questions on whether this bill is on target to do that, our questions on whether the legislation is enough, our suggestions for implementing previous recommendations to prevent forest fires, and our concern that there is no mention or inclusion of new or evolving technologies that may provide safety to communities and families have been largely ignored. They are offered not in the spirit of grandstanding but in a sincere and concerned manner that speaks to our commitment to reducing or minimizing the risks of devastation from forest fires.

Our members, thankfully, have lived through such a catastrophe and have much to offer by way of recommendations to keep Albertans safe. We wish this government had listened more carefully to our suggestions. We still support this bill but want to remind the government that there is much more to do in preventing, fighting, and recovering from fires.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak on 29(2)(a)? Comments, questions?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this morning to speak on Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. There is nothing more devastating to a community than a natural disaster, never mind having a fire rip through your community. These devastations claim people's lives, homes, livelihoods, families, animals, and way of life.

We all sympathized with all the folks up in Fort McMurray when just last year a large fire ripped through their community, leaving homes, businesses, pets, and other important items behind to escape with just the clothes on their backs and, gratefully, their lives. Many lost things which can never be replaced, like our leader, who had to leave behind his family and all the precious memories of his late son, that were completely burned up in that horrific fire. In that same fire many, actually over 100,000 people, had to flee that horrific fire, narrowly escaping with their lives. Then there was the Slave Lake fire a few years back, in 2011 to be exact, which devastated that community. Thousands of lives will never be the same because of the loss from that fire.

**10:30**

The main parts of this particular bill deal mostly with amending fines and empowering forest officers to make quicker decisions in the face of a fire threat. There is not a whole lot here, but I'm happy to see some positive aspects that will hopefully prevent some tragedies and maybe curtail and help reduce the magnitude of potential fires. Increasing fines for individuals and companies will hopefully encourage some to think twice and decrease some of the incidents that happen.

In drier years and seasons helping companies to prepare by beginning fire seasons earlier is definitely a wise move, but I am just reminded of what happened last year in Fort McMurray when this government reduced the water bombers' contracts and reduced the overall budget. How will we prepare this year if the funds are not properly allocated? We can't continue making the same mistakes over and over and expecting different outcomes. Some proper planning and foresight needs to be taken into consideration. We hope that increasing fines will deter some of those who are careless, but just that alone will not deter all. I am sure you're quite aware of that. Things will happen.

While I am pleased to see that this government now takes fire prevention more seriously and is taking some steps to improve fire readiness – I'm saying that I can see that they mean well and want to do the right thing – I believe that more could be done. We could add some very important amendments to enhance this bill, especially now, since we are taking the time in this House to address these extremely important issues. I know that we are the opposition, but when it comes to matters such as the safety of all Albertans, I think that having all parties involved would bring about well-rounded discussions, especially expert advice received readily. I want to emphasize that. All of the devastation that one fire can create should give us good reason to review all the amendments and make sure that this bill is adequately equipped to be the very best of our ability. I'm disappointed that we won't be allotted that time to ensure a stronger review.

This bill is being amended out of a direct response to the devastating fires in Fort McMurray and Slave Lake. I'm disappointed that the questions we have raised were not answered, at least not very well, in particular by the minister, who hasn't answered anything at all. I really wish that we could take the necessary time to cross all the t's and dot all the i's so that we could tell Albertans that we took the time to make sure we had the best Forest and Prairie Protection Act review possible.

I ask you now: can we say that any of these additions would have prevented the fires in Fort McMurray and Slave Lake? We know

that the Flat Top Complex wildfire review committee submitted a 95-page report to the minister of environment and sustainable resource development in 2012. That report listed many recommendations. Many of those recommendations from that report were not used. The only recommendation that was used was to update the Forest and Prairie Protection Act. Interestingly, this recommendation suggested that definitions in the act needed to be updated. In section 31.4(1) subsection (b) proposes changing what can be confiscated from a "product" to a "thing". This section indeed gives officers too much power and does not define what "thing" might be. That causes me concern. We needed to narrow the scope of what the government included when they gave the forest officers the power to seize and destroy. This section seems to add anything, which is too extensive. I believe that more thought should have been put into this section, frankly, way more thought.

We also see the updating of administrative penalties – \$5,000 clearly isn't enough – and I do agree with the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry on that number, especially when you see all the destruction that can occur from a fire. It has to be enough so that people remember what it could cost if they are not responsible in lighting fires, an amount that would significantly hurt the pocketbook. They've got to feel it there, right in the pocketbook.

Mr. Speaker, more thought needs to be given, and even though I do support this bill, I still would have liked to have seen more thought and amendments to clear things up and create better legislation. I said "Mr. Speaker," and it's Madam Speaker. I apologize. I saw a little bit of a chuckle, and it's well deserved.

I understand that it was suggested that implementing all the recommendations from the Flat Top Complex report would have been around \$500 million back in 2013. Would that investment have reduced the damage that was inflicted by the Fort McMurray fire? FireSmart recommendations are just a common-sense approach.

So, Madam Speaker, while my colleagues and I do support Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016, I would have liked to have seen some of the amendments my colleagues brought forth included and a bit more time taken to bring in additions and subtractions that would have strengthened this bill. I also hope this government does not think that this file is now closed, because this bill only scratches the surface of things we need to do to be able to prevent, fight, and recover from fires.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. First of all, I would like to thank the government for bringing forward this piece of legislation. While it's certainly not as complete and fulsome as we probably would have liked to have seen, it's certainly a step in the right direction in a number of different areas.

I'd also just like to briefly thank the government for the way that they worked so well with the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo during the Fort McMurray fire. It would be lovely to be able to – my colleague from across the way talked about a vaccine of collaboration. It would be great to see the same sort of collaboration that we have at different times like during the fire. I thought the Premier did a very good job both working with the opposition during that time and representing our province, frankly. So it's good to see that the government is

acting on some of the issues that have arisen since that time, and this bill is a small step in that direction. I do believe that there is a significant amount of work to be done.

**10:40**

Just recently my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat was speaking of a report down in that part of the province identifying some significant fire risks for the area of Cypress, in the Cypress Hills, a report that gives some indication that if there was to be a wildfire in that area, it's possible that residents on the hill and in that area would have less than 10 minutes to evacuate. So there is a ton of work that needs to be done.

I'm sure my colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre will speak about some of the older forests in that constituency and some of the risks that that poses. How we manage those forest assets is critically important. How we manage those assets both from an environmental perspective, a recreational-use perspective, as well as living in and managing the risk is so critically important to those regions and, in many respects, to our entire province because we are so fortunate to live in a resource-rich province. It's not just what's below the ground; it's also what's above the ground. We have a forestry asset that is the envy of many jurisdictions across North America, and we need to be taking all of the steps to ensure that it is managed well.

Just yesterday, Madam Speaker, we had the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky speak about Mackenzie county and some of the issues around the forested areas in Mackenzie county. From memory, I believe he spoke about 1.3 million hectares of land that is going to be tied up in the draft caribou management plan. All of these factors are so important in how they work together, be it wildlife management, wildfire management, forestry. It is a very complex environment that we function in.

We saw a number of pieces of this legislation, and as you'll be very aware, Madam Speaker, I was pleased to support this bill at all stages of its reading thus far and will continue to do so at third reading. It's important that we improve our fire readiness for all of our province, and it's tough to know exactly what the results of these steps will be. Will they prevent forest fires? It's tough to actually know, but it's important that we take the steps that we are able to take, the reasonable means that we're able to take to do what we can to minimize that risk. That risk will never be fully eliminated, but it is important that we do what we can to minimize the risk of forest fires.

There are a number of potential areas of concern, as have been mentioned by a lot of my colleagues in terms of the definitions. I recognize the government's position around a "thing" or a "forest product" and what a forest product is really already defined as and how that presents a risk to even being able to move something as simple as a pile of logs, which is clearly a product of the forest. But we still have some reservations around the possibility of the abuse of the word "thing."

Oftentimes in this Legislature, you know, politics is the art of what's possible. It may not have been possible to have a perfect definition, but it's important that we all work to do our best to ensure that the legislation balances the needs and requirements of forestry professionals as well as the freedoms that we all enjoy and that those that use the forests for recreation or for economic purposes are also able to do that. As has been highlighted on a couple of occasions with the use of the word "thing," does that leave the opportunity for abuse or the inappropriate seizure of things that really ought not be seized under the guise of pest control?

It's my hope that the government will continue to take proactive steps, whether it's truly implementing programs such as FireSmart, which was developed to reduce the negative impact of forest fires.

You know, I know that there was a lot of public discussion around FireSmart prior to the Fort McMurray fire and whether or not the resources were actually being expended that had been allotted to prevent fires. Sometimes a significant event can happen, and we get distracted by that, not allowing other areas that were engaging in the FireSmart program to really continue along there. Sometimes the worse thing that can happen is that we allocate resources to such an important program and then those resources aren't actually expended on that program. So our best intentions have gone awry in that we had the intention of preventing forest fires, but when it actually came down to the nuts and bolts of ensuring that the program is delivered upon, we failed in that area. Fire protection has multiple aspects. Prevention is certainly one of them, and we need to make sure that we are delivering on the programs where funds have been allocated because they have the real opportunity to reduce costs across a number of departments if we prevent these sorts of fires.

Let me just conclude, Madam Speaker, with a reminder or a reaffirmation of my support for the legislation. Oftentimes when I rise in this place, even if it's speaking in favour, it doesn't mean that it's only about heaping praise on the government but about the government's job to make sure that we get the best possible legislation the first time past the post. I'd like to thank the government for bringing it forward. I hope that the extension of the fire season as well as some of the discussion around fines will make a positive impact on our province, and I look forward to supporting this bill at third reading.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the original bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today, of course, to speak to Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act. As you know, Madam Speaker, I represent several communities that are in the mountains and within significant forest areas of our province. While my communities have been fortunate enough not to experience something similar to what happened in Fort McMurray or Slave Lake, without a doubt, we've had a few close calls along the way. It's a fear that many people within the communities of Sundre and Rocky Mountain House, in particular, in my riding worry about at certain times of the year. They have had close calls. I can think of times when people have been praying that the wind changed and didn't go the wrong way on us.

**10:50**

You know, first, of course, let me express my sympathies to my colleagues from Fort McMurray and all the people from Fort McMurray. I can't imagine the trauma that that has caused on their families.

You know, my family in 2007, roughly, 2008 lived through a fire. We woke up in the middle of the night, and a significant portion of our property was on fire. Fortunately for us, Madam Speaker, our living quarters weren't destroyed, but it was traumatic. My twins, my youngest children, Austin and Chyanne, were about three or four at the time. They still remember that night very, very clearly and probably will for the rest of their lives. It is really traumatic to see part of your life on fire like that. I think that it's noble that we would work to make sure that that doesn't happen to anybody in the future and try to prevent fires like Slave Lake and Fort McMurray.

With that said, Madam Speaker, I'm happy that we brought forward some legislation, and in general I support Bill 24 and the intent of what the government is trying to do with it. I'm glad that they brought it forward.

My communities, though, Madam Speaker, have a lot of old-growth fires. So what's happened – most of the big fires that I can remember in the last decade around my community may have been started by human causes or lightning, back and forth, different situation for each fire, but often the reason that they became so big and became so dangerous for our communities was because the forests were really, really old in that area.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, welcome.

One near my area called the Wildhorse Creek fire in about 2006 was started, I believe, from man-made causes. That's what they determined. But the reason that it took off so fast and became such a big fire was because of how old the forest was. It became an extremely dangerous situation really, really fast. If the forest was not that old, it would not have become as dangerous as quickly and would not have been as hard to control. This is the problem, particularly in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, which has such vast forest areas. The problem is trying to manage the issue between what's natural for the forest and what we have to do to try to protect lives and property and livelihoods and that those two issues are balanced.

I know that in the Ya Ha Tinda in my constituency, a place that's near and dear to my heart, there is evidence that our First Nations people were actually lighting fires in that area on purpose for centuries. What they would do is that most of the community would move on when they were done hunting in that area, and they would leave behind some people that would light the area on fire. If you've ever been to the Ya Ha Tinda, which is one of the most beautiful places in this province, you'll know that it's famous for its abundance of game, its beautiful landscapes, and all that. Fire was natural for that. We need to make sure that we're not only protecting property, which is what we're trying to do with this bill, have plans in place to try to prevent another Fort McMurray, another Slave Lake, but we also have to recognize that we're going to have to let the forest do its natural process. When we try to prevent that natural process, we actually create bigger danger for the communities that are associated to it. Kelowna, I think, would be another example, our neighbours to the west. That was a very, very old forest, and we saw how quickly that situation became dangerous.

I am disappointed that there isn't a lot of talk about that within this bill, and I do encourage the government going forward to have some further discussions amongst themselves, amongst the bureaucrats that are involved in forestry as well as the communities that are bordering our old forests.

The other thing I will point out, Mr. Speaker, in this bill, as many of my hon. colleagues have – it's a little bit troubling and disappointing that it's really only about forests, it feels like, with this bill. We've seen lots of prairie-type fires, and prairie fires can be extremely dangerous, certainly, for the same type of reasons. They can be just as fast. In 2015 during the last week of the general election – this was more in the foothills area, but it was outside the forest – I had to rush home from the other side of my constituency to be with my family to spray all the barns down and do all that stuff. It was the same thing: a fire that was moving across an area that had no forests, and it was coming very, very fast. Several of my neighbours lost homes in that situation. So it's a real threat. It really can happen. I think that until you've seen it, you can't fully understand how quickly a fire can move across large grass areas. Just like with the old-growth forests, we need to make sure that

we're addressing the prairie fire issue as well going forward, you know, so that we don't see that within our prairie communities.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Welcome back, Madam Speaker.

The last issue I want to talk about – and I'm disappointed that the government, Madam Speaker, did not move on this issue – is the issue of the time. I know that the third party brought forward an amendment to try to cap and make specific the time that a forestry officer would have to report back when making fire plans. It may seem simple. Why would forestry take this long? Is the opposition saying that the bureaucrats would try to drag it out? That's not what we're saying. I represent communities where we already know how far behind our forestry officers are in many things and how far behind our SRD officers are in many things.

I can think of two major forest reserve leases right now where the real estate sale has been held up for over a year because they're waiting on a plan. That's a significant thing for small businesses that are trying to move forward. I can think of a dozen grazing leases right now where the sale is being held up for the same reason, because they're waiting on reports. Now that we're going to be working so closely with the industrial areas and commercial organizations to prevent fires, it's a good thing. We also have to make sure that we're not limiting their ability to do business and that there are reasonable timelines for forestry to interact with them.

So with those things that I'm concerned are not in the bill and with the true encouragement of the government to look at those things going forward, I will say, though, that in general I'm very happy that we brought forward this legislation and will be happy to support it.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** My apologies. Not under 29(2)(a).

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members with questions or comments?

Seeing none, are there any wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just like to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

Mr. Loewen moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that it is necessary to have the recommendations from the oil sands advisory group tabled in the Assembly before the bill can proceed.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment November 9: Mr. Panda]

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.



**Mr. Nixon:** We're on the motion, correct, Madam Speaker?

**The Acting Speaker:** No. We're on the amendment.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Would you like to speak to the amendment?

**Mr. Nixon:** Yes. Absolutely. I just wanted to make sure where we were at. Sorry, Madam Speaker.

As I have said before in rising to speak on Bill 25, I have deep concerns with this bill. This bill, in my mind and in many of my colleagues' minds and I think in the minds of professionals all across the industry in this province, is essentially just a cap on our economy, Madam Speaker. I know that you know that we have lots of concerns. I think you probably share with me the concerns for the things that are happening in our communities right now across our province, the trouble that families across our province have run into right now because of the economic situation. I think we can all sympathize with all of the families that are out of work right now, the stress that that is likely causing their families and our communities as a whole. I think of my friends and neighbours back home who have been affected by this economic situation, and it really troubles me. I'm sure it troubles the members opposite as they think of the people in their constituencies who have been impacted by the economic downturn. I certainly know that it does my caucus colleagues.

The reality is that that's what we face as a province right now. We've lost over a hundred thousand jobs in the last year. When you add in contractors, something that is a little harder probably to calculate but something that really impacts my community – many people across my community work in the contract business and in some way associate with the energy industry.

As I talked about earlier when we were debating Bill 25, Madam Speaker, the forest reserve outside of my constituency is a place that people all across the province gather on the weekends. It's quite a sight. If you ever get a chance to go up in a helicopter west of Rocky Mountain House or Sundre on the May long weekend, you will be pretty impressed at how many people they can cram into the forest back there. Then often as the weekends end, it gets smaller. There are certain people vacationing, but it's a lot quieter back there. For the whole summer, if you talk to the RCMP and fish and wildlife who are patrolling west of Sundre and Rocky Mountain House, this year it stayed packed with trailers and everything, and that's because people were out of work, so they just chose to go camping for the summer and enjoy their time with their kids. It really illustrated how many people are out of work. Somebody might say: well, they should be looking. But there just is no work right now. The fact that we would be considering a bill right now that would further cap our economy is troubling to me. It's troubling to me why we would do that when we see such tough times.

**11:00**

The other thing is that this bill is going to hamper investment going forward, which will limit the ability that we have to be able to get out of this tough economic situation and, in my mind, will just continue to prolong the situation that we find ourselves in. I think that we owe it to the people that are suffering in our province right now to be focused on trying to increase our economy and get people back to work, not trying to decrease our economy and limit people's ability to work going forward.

You know, there are some studies right now, Madam Speaker, or some numbers that experts have given us in regard to what the reduction would be of our economy going forward as a result of Bill 25. The predictions are anywhere from a \$153.41 billion to a

\$254.74 billion reduction in our economy. I think that sometimes when you're in our business, in the Legislature, we see these big numbers and they just become numbers on a sheet because we deal with so many of them. But that's a staggering number, especially when you look at the fact that if all of the pipelines that we want approved were approved today – and let's hope that happens – the estimated increase to the Canadian economy would be \$30 billion. Thirty billion dollars. It would be great, but the smallest predicted loss to the economy because of the bill this government is bringing forward, Bill 25, is a \$153 billion loss and even upwards of \$254 billion, so it could be considerably more.

How can we justify bringing forward at this time legislation that could reduce our economic activity that much, that could reduce it that drastically, particularly when we still haven't even seen the report that the government has commissioned on this very topic come forward? We haven't even seen that, so we don't even have all of the facts before us right now to be able to make a decision along those lines.

At the same time, when you add in the fact that 100,000 people have already lost work largely because of the reduction in our energy industry, you know, the fact that we're now seeing some trouble within our agricultural sector, which will compound the problem that we're facing economically in the province of Alberta, I think, Madam Speaker, it's reasonable to say that it's incumbent on the government to stand up and explain why they would want to reduce our economy this much and, ultimately, cost us more jobs at a time when we've already lost more than enough jobs.

I think that government members would agree, I would hope, that losing 100,000 jobs in one year on their watch is more than enough jobs to lose and that one of our top priorities right here, right now should be trying to spur our economy on, to get out of the way and stop making things worse, which, in my mind and in most of my hon. colleagues' minds, is what this government has done in regard to this economy and jobs so far. They've been able to actually make the situation worse by interfering. Most Albertans that I've talked to and, I suspect, that all members of this Assembly have talked to just say the same thing: please stop making it worse and, instead, work with us to reduce the red tape, get people back to work, get paycheques back to families, and help us. That's what they want to hear.

But this bill does not do that, Madam Speaker. This bill reduces the economy, caps the economy, and it causes a tremendous amount of difficulty for our industry going forward. The other thing about it is that it picks winners and losers. Many of the constituents that I've talked to don't want the government in the business of picking winners and losers in our industry. They want the market determining where we go. I think that any time we see the government attempting to get their fingers so far into the largest industry in our province, we have to be asking ourselves: why? Why would we do that?

Again, though, why at a time when constituents in the ridings of everybody in this Assembly are losing their homes at alarming rates now, when employers I know in my constituency – and the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon will also, I would suspect, say this as well, that there are many employers right now who are bidding work at a tremendous loss to their organization just to keep their employees working. They're doing what they can for our communities. They're doing what they can for their employees to try to survive this situation, to get us to the next stage so we can move Alberta back onto a prosperous footing. They're taking a loss in their company, sometimes a drastic loss, and they're just trying to hang on and not lay off their employees, because they understand the consequences to their employees' families.

We here in this Chamber should be at the very least thinking the same thing: what is the consequence of Bill 25 to the very people that are suffering so much right now across our province? It is significant when you look at how much money will be reduced from our economy going forward. We also have employees right now across this province – I've talked to many of them in my constituency offices – who have had to take pay reductions at work to be able to help their employers keep their businesses going. They've had to accept the fact that they've had to reduce their pay, often causing a tremendous amount of difficulty for their families back home.

So if you're one of those employees sitting in a community somewhere in Alberta right now and you're hearing that the government wants to cap our economy, cap production, limit investment trust further in the future, create instability in our largest industry, you have to be wondering: "What is my government doing? I'm trying to pay my bills. I can barely get my house paid for, and my government is trying to cap the economy, stop my opportunity to be able to find more work in the future, create more job loss, cause more contractors to go out of business." Madam Speaker, I think you would agree that that's a pretty reasonable thing for them to be asking.

One of the reasons why we wanted this bill to go to committee was because we wanted to be able to make sure that the industry and experts would be able to communicate to all members of this Assembly what exactly this bill would do, what exactly would be the consequences and the benefit of this piece of legislation to the people of Alberta, because, Madam Speaker, that is who we're here to represent.

We're not here to represent ideological organizations; we're here to represent the people of Alberta. Those are the people that sent us here. Those are the people that have entrusted us with a great responsibility to come here and continue to make our province the greatest place in the world to live, not to come here and limit the ability of their economy going forward, not to come here and cause more people to lose jobs, not to come here and pile on at a time when people are losing homes and banks are foreclosing on homes, not to come here at a time when employers are having to lose money just to send people to work.

This is all at the same time that we have one of the largest tax increases in the history of Alberta, that we're about to put on the people of Alberta, that we're about to put on the charity sector of Alberta, which is suffering terribly as well. Charities, as you know, Madam Speaker, are facing the perfect storm right now in our province. They're seeing a significant increase in demand for the services that they provide to the people of Alberta while at the same time seeing a significant decrease in revenue from donations and from the government because of the economic downturn that we face. We now pile a tax onto the charitable sector, through a carbon tax, that makes things worse for them, and now, with Bill 25, we're bringing forward a bill that's going to again make the economy even worse, cause more job loss, which is going to put more demand on our charities.

The food bank in Rocky Mountain House can't even keep up. The food bank in Calgary can't keep up. It seems to me, Madam Speaker – and I'm sure you would agree – that when food banks aren't able to keep up with what's going on in our province, maybe the province's elected officials' top priority should be the 100,000-plus people that are out of work. To me, it seems like that should be the highest priority of this House right now. Sadly, instead, we're standing here debating a bill that will make it worse for the very people that we've been sent here to help.

We still see no explanation from the government members of how they can justify reducing our economy by upwards of \$254

billion, not to mention the carbon leakage scenarios, which are very real, that the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has done a very great job in this Assembly of articulating. There's been no response from the government at all, but . . . [interjections] I know. The postsecondary minister is indicating that maybe he has a response. I look forward to hearing it next, but I haven't seen it yet.

**11:10**

The fact is that we could do all of this – we could do all of this – succeed in reducing our economy, succeed in putting more people out of work, succeed in seeing more people lose their homes, succeed in more businesses being shut, more poverty, more frustration in our province. Also, on the other side we'll be seeing all our industries leave our province, leave our country, go elsewhere in the world, continue to produce their products, and employ people of other nations. Nothing but silence, Madam Speaker, and I know you've seen it. Nothing but silence from that side of the House on this issue. Nothing but silence. It's disappointing. It is.

We have a company in Sundre right now that provides water. It's been there for as long as I can remember. It provides water to all the local businesses, you know, in the big bottles. I don't know what you call those. I guess they're big water bottles.

**An Hon. Member:** Carboys.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah.

I had a coffee with the owner of that organization when I was last back in my constituency. He employs six people in the community of Sundre. It's not a large community, so an employer of six people is important to our community. He's having to lay off half of his staff. Half of his staff. That's why we should be voting for this amendment, to be able to give ourselves time to figure out why this is being brought forward, to make sure that the facts and the consequences for the people that we represent are clear and that we're making decisions, not rash decisions, Madam Speaker, but intelligent, thought-out decisions, with the full consequences of that decision that we're going to make on the table so that we can make the best decision possible for the people that we represent.

That's not unreasonable, I don't think, Madam Speaker. I'm sure you don't think it's unreasonable that we would do that. I know that you would be just as concerned about your constituents as I am.

You know, Meals on Wheels out of Olds. The other day my colleague from the Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills constituency, right next door to me, let us know that it's going to cost them about \$4,000 or \$5,000 more a year just because of the carbon tax. That's a significant thing to a small charity doing great work in the community of Olds. That's significant to them. We need them to do that.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to 29(2)(a), questions or comments? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Well, thank you. My colleague got cut off there, and we were talking about a very valuable asset to his community. I think it's a really important piece of this conversation as to why we should stop and go back and maybe start again. I just think it's a really useful piece of this conversation, and I'm hoping my colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and all those other wonderful towns in a beautiful part of Alberta could tell us a little bit more about the Meals on Wheels and maybe some other valuable organizations within the community that just really, really feel like they're getting kicked and kicked and kicked. This is important, and I think this House needs to hear about that.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you to the hon. member for the question. What I was talking about was the tremendous impact that our nonprofit sector has on the social safety net of our province. They're important to us, and the fact is that they're seeing such an increase in demand on their services because of what's going on in the economy.

The reason this matters for this bill, Madam Speaker, is because this bill will further reduce the economy and put more pressure on those organizations at the same time that this government has chosen to tax homeless shelters, seniors' facilities – and this is what I really don't get – our school boards. We have to think about this. We take taxpayer dollars. We send them to our school boards to be able to fund education, which we all believe is important. They're already taxed and having trouble keeping up. We put in a carbon tax, which drastically increases the cost of heating the schools and drastically increases their biggest cost, which is transportation, so it drastically increases their bus costs. We don't increase anything for them in regard to the carbon tax we just put on them. We're now going to hire administrators to collect the carbon tax back from the same school boards that we just sent money to.

Now, I know that the hon. members have talked to their school boards because I share some of the school boards with some of the members across the way, and I know that the school boards have been very, very clear about their deep concern about the impact on them, on municipalities, and on charities. This goes to the core of what's wrong with Bill 25. We already have so much trouble that is going on in our constituencies because of what's going on with the economic situation. We already have a government who has made it tremendously worse on the nonprofit sector, on Albertans, moms and dads, and now they're going to pile on their ideological agenda with this bill and further reduce our economy, further cause more people to be out of work, put more pressure on the nonprofit sector just to hold things together, and in some places they're just barely hanging on. That's a fact.

All the while, Madam Speaker, they won't even rise in this Assembly and justify what they're trying to do. They won't take the time to get this to a committee and ensure . . . [interjections] I see that the member from Athabasca thinks it's really funny about people out of work, but I've been up to Athabasca recently. It's not that funny to them, I can tell you that. We need to make sure that we are getting this bill right, make sure that we're not wrecking our economy further. That's all that this bill is doing, and that's why we have to have a serious conversation because the people that you represent and the people that we represent are depending on us to get this right, not to make it worse for them.

Now, I know that the member from Hinton is heckling right now at me about this, but there are people in his constituency that are just as much out of work. I know because I back onto his constituency. They're suffering just as much as the people in my constituency, so this should not be a partisan issue. The fact is that people are hurting in our province right now – that's the fact – and this bill will further reduce the economy, further put more people out of work, and continue to make things worse, all at a time when the government that is bringing it forward has already made it worse for charities, made it worse for schools, made it worse for municipalities, and made it worse for Alberta families.

Instead, we could slow this legislation down. We could do it right. We could make sure that we understand the consequences and that we're making the right decision for the people of Alberta, not just rashly pushing through legislation without a thought to the consequences.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to rise today to speak on the amendment to Bill 25. You know, I support my colleagues in the views they've already expressed on this bill. I'd have less opposition to this bill if it was presented as an alternative to carbon tax rather than that the government would go through with the tax, but it means that they're going to go through with it. We don't want to see them go through with that tax.

This emission limit is in addition to the carbon tax that this government is levelling on Albertans and Alberta businesses. A cap on emissions gives at least some semblance of being a measure to actually help battle climate change whereas a carbon levy seems to be just another tax that families have no choice but to pay. Ultimately, this emissions cap that our government is introducing is just one more signal among many others to Albertans and to investors that this government's priorities are, frankly, mixed up.

You see, Canada produces 1.8 per cent of global emissions, and Alberta's oil sands are less than 10 per cent of that, just a fraction. So even if we shut down development in the oil sands entirely, there'd be a negligible difference in global output. Globally, the demand for oil is increasing. We all know that. The facts are out there. This negligible difference would also not last very long because other jurisdictions would pick up the slack, and they're not always in places that have high environmental standards or ethical practices. Some are in war zones. Some are spewing out pollution and CO<sub>2</sub> and carbons.

**11:20**

Alberta is one of the best places in the world for our practices. I've heard some people suggest that Alberta is setting a good example to other jurisdictions by introducing measures such as a carbon tax or emissions cap. It's possible that this hamstringing of our resource sector will gently nudge other governments who are considering action, but the signal that is being sent much more powerfully is to investors, and that signal is that this government is not on your side.

We're an example to the world when it comes to democracy and human rights, and this world does have dictatorships. The oil-producing countries that don't see the value in democracy don't care about environmental leadership either. Got to think about that. We care, and they do not. They will take this opportunity to make more money and steal more of Alberta's investment instead because investment will travel where the money is.

This government's press release when this bill was released said that this cap is about repairing the province's reputation. Well, Madam Speaker, I'm proud of what Alberta stood for before this NDP was elected. Alberta leads the world with its exemplary environmental stewardship and commitment to worker safety in the energy industry. What kind of leader doesn't prioritize the well-being of their own people rather than enabling those they disapprove of?

In fact, Madam Speaker, wouldn't it actually be worse for the climate, globally speaking, if other jurisdictions start producing oil that Alberta doesn't because the world needs the oil? It would certainly be worse for human rights. If Alberta emits less per barrel of oil produced than other jurisdictions but is still prevented from producing more oil because a cap has been reached, then we have other countries picking up the slack to meet the global demand. I'd say that it would be better for us to compete with the least environmentally friendly businesses and outproduce them if we're

outproducing with clean technology and clean oil. I'd rather see us doing that and providing the world with the additional oil that it needs.

But no. Here in Alberta there are Albertans without work, praying for the economy to pick up again, and the government goes about introducing a cap for Alberta, what seems to be, frankly, an arbitrary number. Our economy is struggling, and now is not the right time to put restrictions on economic growth. Innovation is a good thing. What's stopping investors from going to other jurisdictions where they're rewarded for innovating and investment in jobs is welcomed?

Madam Speaker, the Official Opposition isn't against everything this government is trying to accomplish, and I think in many cases we want the same results or outcomes. We want clean technologies. What the Official Opposition is asking for is for this government to slow down and to not rush into decisions or implementation of new legislation. We need to take the time to have proper studies done and to think things through.

It's clear that this government has no intention, has no interest in providing everyone in Alberta with an economic impact study with regard to the climate leadership plan that they put forward. We've seen no studies about the impact that the premature closing of coal-fired electricity plants will have, no studies about the impact on workers at those plants and what it means for these towns, nor what the government is going to do about it. Do they care?

Alberta also needs the time to digest what the government is advocating for. So you come up with an idea, you come up with a plan, but you don't give Albertans time to digest what that idea is. Instead, it seems to just get rammed down their throats.

They also need time to adjust. The speed with which this government is trying to pass bills tells me that they aren't really interested in listening to what Albertans have to say. Bill 6 comes to mind. Minimum wage comes to mind. The carbon tax comes to mind. The NDP might say: we heard Albertans' concerns, and this is the answer. Well, it might be a concern, sure, but the NDP is then shoving their own solution down Albertans' throats without listening to what Albertans think and what the best solution is.

You know, I've heard time and time again in my constituency, in my riding, that this government has not consulted them. They've heard your message that, "Yes; we're consulting Albertans," but they're asking me: "How come I can't have my input into what they're saying? Where's that opportunity for me to be able to consult and give feedback?" I know that they've sent e-mails. They've sent letters. They've tried making phone calls. But this communication has not been a two-way street.

Look, we all want to live in a clean, healthy environment, and we want a sustainable, thriving economy. You know, when I used to go camping with my dad, we'd go to the campsite, and my dad would always say: we're going to leave this campsite as clean or cleaner than when we got here. I think that's what we as legislators are expected to do, to legislate and make sure that we're keeping this environment as clean, if not cleaner, and industry has been moving in that direction.

Industry in Alberta has been an example across the world, leaving the campsite, as it were, cleaner than it was 20, 30 years ago. But there are fair disagreements in how, the best way to go about attaining these results, and the appropriate timing for making these significant changes. It is not compassionate to kick people while they're down. I thought the left prided themselves on compassion. Where's the compassion when people don't have jobs and they're looking for answers?

Madam Speaker, this is an important piece of legislation. This potential law will set in motion a lot of different processes that counter many of the processes that Alberta has had here for many

generations. This is not to say that change at times isn't important. I think we can all agree that fresh eyes and fresh ears on any issue in Alberta is important. But this government promised to be more open and transparent than the government before it. I can't help but wonder if this government meant it then or if it was just an election idea that they have pushed aside as bill after bill is rushed through this House at breakneck speed. [interjection] Exactly. Thank you.

If this government thinks that legislation can have a significant positive impact so as to change our environment and the economy for the better, then it should acknowledge that legislation also has the potential to have a significant negative impact on both the environment and the economy, too. This is just logic. No jurisdiction with a bad economy has a good environment across the world.

Again, this is an important piece of legislation. Shouldn't we give it a fair amount of time for policy and research and deliberation with the stakeholders? Let's see what OSAG has to say. That's a fair request. The government should hear what the people and the industry think of what this piece of legislation could mean for the province. Doesn't the input of the people from this province who elected this government matter? After we've heard from OSAG this bill could be sent to committee.

11:30

Committees allow people with concerns an opportunity to share their thoughts, people that the government might have missed, in quiet consultations in advance of presenting the bill. We can talk about this stuff in committees. Then the committee can bring back the recommendations to the House and enhance the chance of doing the most good while creating the least amount of harm.

Madam Speaker, this act, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, is directly related to the oil sands advisory panel created last summer. What was the point of creating the panel if the government is going to go ahead and enact legislation like this without hearing from the group first? You know, Albertans would like to know: why are we spending money on this? Why are we spending the time? Why are we putting in the effort without actually hearing from the panel? Have the recommendations of this group been predetermined?

There has been a lot of criticism about some of the members of this panel. I know that some of my colleagues talked about the appointed panel members last week. It is understood that there are industry reps on the panel, and most of the reps are the companies' government relations folks or environmental affairs folks. This is somewhat good news, I think. We want people with boots-on-the-ground experience to counteract the expected views of nonindustry members that spend their time expressing their disapproval of Alberta. A lot of other countries want what we have, and shame on us if we don't take advantage of our good fortune.

I think it's fair to suggest that appointing known radical environmentalists or anti-oil sands activists flown in from other parts of the country – and I'm assuming that these airplanes used fossil fuels; I can't imagine how else they got over here – to advise the Alberta government on its implementation of the climate leadership plan is a bit of a problematic situation in my mind. Even so, Albertans want to hear what the group has to say now that the government has gone out and put forward the panel.

People have told me that they think the NDP want to keep the oil in the ground. That's what I hear. I live in an oil area. The NDP isn't doing much to convince them otherwise or to calm their fears. If keeping the oil in the ground . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Comments or questions?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:33 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	Gill	Smith
Drysdale	Nixon	Taylor
Fildebrandt	Pitt	Yao

**11:50**

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Payne
Babcock	Hinkley	Piquette
Ceci	Hoffman	Rosendahl
Connolly	Horne	Sabir
Coolahan	Kazim	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Schreiner
Dach	Larivee	Shepherd
Dang	Loyola	Sigurdson
Eggen	Luff	Sucha
Feehan	Malkinson	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Ganley	Miller	Woollard

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 36
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[Motion on amendment REA1 lost]

**The Acting Speaker:** We are now back on the original bill, Bill 25. Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm tired of this government. I'm tired of the ideological bent that this government is using in its messaging and its actions.

The Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act limits growth on our own industries at a time when we need to create jobs, increase the ranks of the employed, and initiate and dictate the conversations with other Premiers and provinces on getting pipelines built to tidewater. This arbitrary cap will benefit the large companies who already own many of the leases that will fill out the difference between the current capacity and future capacity. Many of the small players, small Alberta companies and Canadian companies, are extremely concerned that they won't be able to grow, that they will be literally squeezed out of the energy market, and this is a major concern in a free market. This government might have the best of intentions with its environmental initiatives and these attempts at getting social licence in order that we get acceptance for our products but quite honestly demonstrates a bit of naïveté on our end.

This government's other environmental initiative, a carbon tax in the middle of a recession, is an absolute crock. They've created a new tax in the name of the environment, but it's still a tax. Any tax that makes things more expensive in an attempt at reducing consumption in the name of the environment is still a tax regardless

of what you call it. This environmental initiative of limiting emissions in order to get social licence from other provinces and other countries is naive because every province in this country has benefited from the oil revenues that come from Alberta, and every other country that is condemning Canada for our natural resources are hypocrites because everybody uses petroleum products.

Virtually every nation that does have petroleum industries is worse than us in their environmental records. The United States, where there's so much well-funded resistance to our oil, is a prime example of this. In California they not only have the most emissions-intensive oil in the world but have petroleum industrial sites in the middle of residential neighbourhoods, yet we don't hear about them. They put tall walls around these industrial sites and line the exteriors with trees in hopes of mimicking a state.

We have hired guns in the Tides Foundation, mercenary groups that claim to fight for the environment but seem more like shells funded by the very oil companies that they claim to disparage.

Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya all export oil to the western nations, the so-called First World nations. These countries are known to stifle democracy and the rights of women. They have a vast difference in their classes of people. They deny basic human rights to so many, especially their immigrant workers. Yet England, Germany, France and so many others continue to buy product from them. None of these countries in the Middle East put limitations on their own products unless they're doing it to control global prices. Most countries prefer to grow their industries as they understand the needs of a good economy and money to function.

Whatever happened to ethical oil, ethical energy? Everyone jumped off that bandwagon when they realized the implications of limiting their access to energy, but they all did find a nice target to direct their hypocritical ethics towards. They feigned concern about Canada's energy industry, using left-wing tactics to their own benefit. It gives their own citizens the perception that their governments are environmentally ethical, and they have good feelings the next time they vote for their hypocritical governments. Do the members out of our government side, the NDP comrades, understand how they have benefited from our oil riches?

Those who worked in restaurants and cafes surely realize how much less in tips they would have made if there was no energy industry here in Alberta. The geologist from across the way probably wouldn't have experienced utilizing his education if it weren't for our oil industry's exploration investments. Would the environmental activist from across the way understand that she couldn't sit and sip her lattes with her professor and debate the finer points of a green Earth policy if it weren't for an industry that funded the very schools and universities that she hung out at while others worked hard in our northern communities, paying taxes on their hard-earned money?

The other side calls this emissions act a way of increasing competition amongst oil players, and they once again demonstrate that they haven't done any consulting, which is reflected in every bill that they've put out so far. They've consulted, all right. They consulted with the big four and are favouring those big players while squeezing the little guys out. It's a shame to see the activists from across the way who are so noble in their environmental cause look the other way provided these oil companies would stand with them hand in hand. I believe that term is called "hypocritical." This government speaks of the environment like they own it.

Truth be told, I've never met anyone that does not believe in clean earth, clean water, and clean air. All of my friends from Fort McMurray are very environmentally aware. We all recycle, we turn out the lights when we leave a room, and we have thermostats that are programmable, reducing energy costs. We have energy-efficient homes with high-efficiency furnaces. We have triple-paned

windows with proper insulation. But I cannot and will not apologize for living in a northern climate that goes from plus 40 degrees to minus 40 degrees Celsius.

We need to have homes that are carbon intensive to build because it's through science – do you know science? – and technology that we have designed engineered homes that require these plastics, that require these petroleum-based building materials that blend wood with glue and other miscellaneous building materials. You're right; we don't live around the equator, where they build houses made of concrete and steel and they don't have central heating because they're in a climate that doesn't require it. But I'll tell you what about our engineered houses: these engineered pieces provide the strength to support roofs that can hold up to our elements, the snow loads. We have fibreglass insulation. We have thick plastic sheets lining our houses to prevent moisture from entering our homes and exposing us to mould and mildew. I will not apologize for living in the north and lighting a furnace to stay warm, nor for living in a carbon-intensive home.

The point is that I feel we as Canadians are feeling the brunt of environmentalism, and it is unnecessarily impairing us from succeeding as a economy and, more importantly, as an influencer. You see, when we are at our finest and our economic engine is humming along, Albertans and Canadians put their kids through higher education. They invest in their future. It's because we want our children to have a better life than we did. We want our children to work in more prestigious professions and industries to ensure their financial viability and that these kids grow up into fine Canadians, albeit shielded from some of the realities as they didn't have to follow their parents and work in a mine or drive a limo.

They can learn the finer points in life and listen to their idealistic professors with tenure who can preach about the most virtuous aspects of our society, the most idealistic desires of mankind.

That's where Canadians can be most effective. Every backpacker that comes from this country – and there are many – are fantastic diplomats. We are worldly people with a good reputation throughout the world. Canadians volunteer across the world, and we work in orphanages, communal farms, rescue and respite operations in environmentally challenged areas. We have Canadians that volunteer to teach people about language, clean water, and sustainable families. This is where Canadians are most effective. It's countries in Central America, South America, Africa, Asia, and so many other areas across the world where there is far more wasteful pollution and contributions to global warming. They still burn their garbage. They still use so much plastic and leave it on the wayside. They do not recycle. We need to educate people in these countries and ensure that they do their part in contributing to a low carbon intensive world.

To that effect, I'll buy your ticket to some faraway, distant land so that you can educate the masses about their impacts to the environment and get them thinking more globally because here you're speaking to the choir. We understand global warming. We understand the intent of your . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, November 10, 2016

Day 48

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

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Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 10, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Welcome. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly His Excellency Agustin Garcia Lopez, ambassador of Mexico to Canada. His Excellency is accompanied today by Mrs. Cecilia Villanueva, consul of Mexico in Calgary; Mr. Iker Reyes, minister counsellor; Mr. Luis Brasdefer; and Mrs. Juana Ruiz, deputy consul of Mexico in Calgary. I'm pleased to say that there's a great potential to build on our already strong relationship between Alberta and Mexico, which includes common interests in energy, agriculture, trade, and investment. Albertans value our relationship with Mexico, and this visit is a great opportunity to explore new areas of collaboration. They are all seated in your gallery. I invite them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly, and I say bienvenido.

**The Speaker:** Welcome to the Legislature. I must tell you, Your Excellency, that the hon. minister does a much better job of Ukrainian than he does of Spanish.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly visitors and students from Almadina Language Charter Academy. There are apparently 90 of you here today. Welcome. They are from the wonderful riding of Calgary-East and, also, the wonderful riding of Calgary-Fort. You'll be hearing a little bit more about them later today in my member's statement. Would they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you parents and children from Destiny Christian School, just outside of Red Deer, who are here visiting the Legislature today and seeing what we all do for them, on their behalf. If they could all rise now, please, and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you the SML Christian Academy group. They're a group of grade 9 students from Stony Plain. I had the chance to spend some time with them, and they had very interesting questions. They were so passionate about their questions and what they wanted to learn today. I'd like to introduce Mrs. Vanessa Hamilton and her class. If they would rise, we will give them the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups?

Seeing none, the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly Captain Richard Dumas and Major Nik Nystrom. They are seated in your gallery. Captain Dumas has served since 1978 and is currently the adjutant of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and aide-de-camp to the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. Major Nystrom, officer commanding B squadron of the South Alberta Light Horse, Alberta regiment, is currently employed in the Department of Economic Development and Trade. These gentlemen have been invaluable to my role as the government liaison to the Canadian Forces. I want to sincerely thank you both for your service and dedication to Canada. Please stay standing while we give you the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Lieutenant-Colonel Kevin Weidlich. Lieutenant-Colonel Weidlich is the commanding officer of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and a veteran of three international operations. In addition to his army reserve career, Kevin is also chief of staff to the Progressive Conservative caucus. He is seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I proudly ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you a group from the Iraqi Canadian Association of Edmonton, which is a nonprofit organization that operates out of my riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I'll ask them to rise as I say their names. We have Dhiaa Raheem, Abdulrahman Al-Rasheed, Anna Mikael, Ammer Jawdat, Ziyad Altorany, Ola Al-Obaidi. While promoting awareness between Iraqi rights and others, the association assists Iraqi Canadians in Edmonton in a number of ways through translation services, and they offer language assessment and employment services to newcomers and connect them with community resources. I'll ask all members of the Assembly to join me in giving them the warm traditional welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Rajesh Angral; his wife, Manu Bhagat; and their seven-year-old son, Soham Angral. Rajesh is a long-time friend of mine and also a mutual friend of the hon. Minister of Human Services and the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills. Rajesh, you know, is very active in our community, a community leader. He runs ethnic radio stations and holds multicultural events in and around the city. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. It's particularly pleasing when I see two or three parties acknowledging friendships with our guests.

The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Mr. Khalid Hansraj. Khalid is the managing director of the Clean Energy Technology Centre in Drayton Valley. The CETC is central Alberta's go-to full-service business incubation facility, where researchers and entrepreneurs can access a variety of business supports, including commercialization services and corporate training. Most notably, the CETC is working with two companies, BioComposites Group and Gas Recapture Systems, both of which I've spoken about in this Assembly. BioComposites Group alone is projected to create 200 direct knowledge-based jobs and 600 indirect jobs by 2022. Supporting new business ventures in support of diversifying our economy is critically important to Albertans. I would ask Mr. Hansraj to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a couple of people visiting from my constituency today, Stefana Mocanu and her husband, Vasile Mocanu. Stefana is a local author who when she arrived in Canada in 1989 had an English vocabulary that consisted of only three words: hello, thanks, and, that most Canadian word, sorry. It was her ambition to write books one day, and recently she published her debut novel in English, *Finding Eve*. Stefana would like to encourage others with the message that dreams come true when you work hard, believe in yourself, and never give up on your dreams no matter how impossible they seem. I'd ask them both to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two sets of guests, the first being Savannah Rae, who is a grade 6 student at Queen Alexandra school, located in the Premier's constituency of Edmonton-Strathcona, accompanied by her grandmother Helen Rae, who lives in my constituency of Edmonton-Meadowlark. They are here today for a tour of the Legislature and to watch question period.

Mr. Speaker, my second set of guests are Jeffrey Swanson and Austin Hurley. They are grade 12 students at Jasper Place high school, located in my constituency of Edmonton-Meadowlark. They are job shadowing me today and are also here to watch us through question period and to see what it's like to be an MLA.

I'd now ask all my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Ms Usha Gupta. Usha is an innovative and creative leader, currently holding the position of president of the Niketan dance school, where she mentors students in traditional Indian dance. Usha has received numerous awards for her work in the community and has just recently been inducted into the city of Edmonton's 2016 Arts and Culture Hall of Fame. There's no question that Ms Gupta's influence has impacted the arts community in a profound way. I would like to invite all the members of the House to attend her upcoming music and dance

event, Unnatti, on November 20 at Festival Place. There will be a 3 p.m. show celebrating the prosperity and growth of Indian culture as well as a bazaar, taking place between 2 and 7 p.m. Usha is already standing. I ask all the members to please give her the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my real pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly Dr. Alexander Paterson. If Dr. Paterson could rise. Sandy Paterson has been a medical colleague of mine for 40 years. He currently works at the Tom Baker cancer centre in Calgary, and his expertise is in the treatment of breast cancer and in maintaining bone health in cancer patients. Sandy is job shadowing me today as an MLA, and I've been vetting him for the Calgary-Fish Creek Alberta NDP nomination. Dr. Paterson, please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly seven members of the Alberta Federation of Labour child care working group. Please rise as I call your name: Siobhán Vipond, Chris Gallaway, Glynnis Lieb, Susan Cake, Ron Palmer, Sam Nuako, Cori Longo. The child care working group runs the Fair Start for Kids campaign and sponsored a petition, which I will table today, calling for universal early childhood education and care. Let them now receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Sean van der Lee. Please rise. Sean is my lawyer, for good reasons. He is my friend, and I'm fairly certain we will see him sitting on this side of the House when the Wildrose forms government in 2019. Please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

I believe there's another introduction from Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Yes. Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you the members of the Mill Woods seniors friends group, many of whom live in Edmonton-Ellerslie. The executive is made up of Sudhir Somaiya, C. Patel, DharamPaul Mahajan, Maheshchandra Naik, Navin Bhatt, Kantibhai Patel, R. Patel, and Ramesh Patel. The executive of the Mill Woods Seniors and Multicultural Centre run a group that caters to various needs for our seniors in our community. Every Wednesday the group will organize its programs for its members that provide them a platform to acquire skills so they may become more independent. Last month it was my pleasure to help this group organize a presentation on elder abuse along with the office of the Seniors Advocate. The group has now been active for over two years, and I wish them the very best for their success as they continue to serve the community. I'd ask them all to stand and please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests for introductions today? The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the House the members of the Southwest Edmonton Seniors Association, known as SWESA. SWESA's goal is to ensure that seniors can pursue activities with their peers, enriching their lives through healthy and satisfying recreation and social engagements. Their organization is a cornerstone and has accomplished much for individuals over 55. Here with us today are Doug Carter, Ev Carter, and Phyllis Fleck. I'd ask you to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, let me just make an underlying point. We have today military individuals. Tomorrow we will all be celebrating in our constituencies the great life that we have of peace in this country. Earlier this week we had First Nations Legion members who have served our nation. I just emphasize to all of us that the celebration of this event, the recognition of this event is more about the price that's paid and the peace for the future than it is about the past. We must never ever forget.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

#### Almadina Language Charter Academy

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about the quality of public education in Alberta and about a particular school that embodies that quality. Often when I talk to parents, especially those about to choose a kindergarten for their children, they ask me: "What's the best school? Where will my child have the best chance of success?" My answer to that question is always "anywhere" because here in Alberta we are fortunate to have one of the best and most equitable school systems in the world.

OECD and PISA data show that regardless of socioeconomic background, any child in any school in Alberta has a similar chance of success. I'm proud of the teachers, principals, and school board trustees who support the success of all our children in all our schools in Alberta every day.

One such school doing excellent work to educate students in my riding is Almadina Language Charter Academy. I had the pleasure of recently attending their 30th anniversary. One of the things that always strikes me when I attend an Almadina event is the strong community engagement. Hundreds of families were present to celebrate the anniversary. Among the alumni present was a cardiologist who spoke of the sense of community, high-quality teaching, and goal-setting environment at Almadina that helped him strive to be able to reach his dreams.

Almadina specializes in teaching ELL students. At Almadina English language learning is embedded in every program of study, including subjects such as math. They are also, to my knowledge, the only school in Alberta that teaches Urdu, Arabic, and French and where the children sing the national anthem in all of these languages.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Almadina on 30 years of innovative education for ELL students as well as 30 years of building an active, engaged school community.

Almadina is excellent and unique, but so are many schools in our exceptional Alberta public school system. I am proud to be part of a government that truly values education, that continues to fund

every new student that enters our public system. This recognition of the value of education will ensure Alberta's success now and into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

1:50

**Carbon Levy**

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans are worried about the economy. Forty-seven thousand full-time jobs have disappeared since last October here in Alberta, but the NDP's carbon tax, lawsuits, and dangerous economic policies continue to make things much worse. Like it or not, the U.S. election made it clear: America will pay no carbon tax. This means our number one competitor in oil and gas will have a significant competitive advantage, and it has Albertans even more worried. Why is the Premier driving jobs out of our province and slamming Albertans with a new tax they simply cannot afford?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the first thing to note is that our climate leadership plan was developed with the expectation that nobody else was actually going to have a carbon tax in place. The fact of the matter is that what happens in the U.S. or does not happen in the U.S. has no relevance to what we already were planning to do because we modelled them to not be doing it. This narrative that has developed in the opposition over the last 24 hours, where they're celebrating what appears to be bad news to Alberta, is actually wrong.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Acting alone on carbon taxes leaves Alberta in a bad situation, and the Premier's refusal to back down on the carbon tax has Albertans even more worried. The Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors has said that because of this carbon tax, quote, Alberta is going to continue to be less competitive and that is bad news for Alberta's economy and Alberta workers. End quote. Premier, this tax is bad for everyone in Alberta, whether it's workers, families, schools, municipalities, businesses, and, yes, even charities. Why won't the government at least let Albertans vote on a carbon tax through a referendum?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government believes that climate change is real. Our government believes that a responsible global citizen needs to take action to address the issues around climate change. We also believe that this will ultimately improve our marketability in markets not just south of the border but throughout the world. That's why our climate change plan has specific plans in place for trade-exposed industries to ensure that we remain competitive. I would urge the member opposite to look into that.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, even this Premier has admitted this carbon tax will hurt our economy's ability to grow. Here is what Gary Leach, the president of the Explorers and Producers Association of Canada, had to say, quote: if our major competitor isn't levying a carbon tax on energy intensive industries, there's a real risk that those industries are going to migrate out of jurisdictions that levy that kind of tax. End of quote. Premier, Albertans are really nervous. They want the government to put their interests first. Why,

then, is the NDP threatening jobs and our economy with this new carbon tax and won't back down?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, I believe that our climate change leadership plan will actually promote the kind of diversification that we need to grow our economy. [interjections] An organization called Canadians for Clean Prosperity, an organization that includes former Conservative MP Monte Solberg – I think you've heard of him – put out a report earlier this fall that endorses our plan, and they say, "The hybrid model, applied at the national level with regional trading, is seen to . . . alleviate [the] competitiveness concerns."

#### **Speaker's Ruling Decorum**

**The Speaker:** Table officers, you might just stop the clock for one moment.

Allow me to just underline again – we're all going to be heading home for constituency week – that the objective here is to have an engaged debate and dialogue. Let's be conscious of not only the number of hecklings but, more importantly, the volume.

Second main question.

#### **Energy Policies**

**Mr. Jean:** Let's quote somebody else. "Our position on the Keystone [is] that if we ship unprocessed bitumen to Texas . . . we will give tens of thousands of Alberta jobs to Texas." That was the position of this Premier and the NDP government in June 2015. Now, yesterday TransCanada announced it remains fully committed to the project. The incoming U.S. administration has said that it's going to approve this pipeline. There should be no question about it: if this gets built, it's going to be great news for Alberta's families. Will the Premier change her position on the Keystone pipeline? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would urge the member to read the newspaper as I've actually commented on this at great length, but if we want to go for round 5, that's fine. The fact of the matter is that with the current economic situation that Albertans are facing and with the current need for our energy industry to move towards recovery, it is our view that we need to work with all members of the industry to find ways in which they can increase their trade with the United States. But in the meantime our focus is on ensuring that we get Canadian access to tidewater from a Canadian port in order to ensure that we . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, I didn't hear a yes or a no there.

With free trade agreements being put under the microscope, it's more important than ever that you defend Albertans' interests. The Keystone pipeline will create a lot of jobs here in Alberta, remove the bottleneck in our oil sands, and help Albertans get back on their feet in time of need. The Prime Minister supports it, Saskatchewan supports it, but this Premier has failed to speak out publicly in favour of it. It's a yes. Albertans want to know if this Premier is committed to defending our industries and Albertans' quality of life. Again, does she support Keystone? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Again, Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, we are happy to work with our energy industry to find ways in which we contribute to their opportunities to enhance trade with the United States. But what is a really good use of this government's time is to focus on those things over which we have agency, and we have agency over pipelines in our country, so those are the matters that we are going to focus our attention on.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, these are simple yes or no questions, and they matter to Albertans. Here's another issue that the Premier refuses to give an answer on. We've asked both the Premier and the Deputy Premier this question several times and still have not got a clear answer. The NDP's ideological coal shutdown means that the province looks set to fund a \$1 billion transmission line to help B.C.-owned hydro. B.C. is asking Alberta to pick up the tab. Will Albertans be paying for this \$1 billion transmission line in their power bills or in their taxes? Yes or no?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the decision to move Alberta off of coal-fired electricity generation is not an ideological one. It is a science-based one, it is a health-based one, and it's an environmental protection based one.

Secondly, honest to God, the member opposite is making stuff up. There is no \$1 billion transmission line, and I would suggest that he stop trying to scare people with suggestions of the same.

**Mr. Jean:** Clearly, your economic moves are scaring Albertans enough.

#### **Electricity Power Purchase Agreements**

**Mr. Jean:** Earlier this year the NDP government decided to completely undermine investment confidence in Alberta by going to court to rip up 17-year-old contracts. Now we hear rumblings that the NDP will abandon their hopeless court case. That should be good news; however, the rumblings say that the NDP will instead use legislation to accomplish what they have no hope whatsoever of accomplishing in court. Will the Premier please assure investors that she won't turn Alberta into some sort of banana republic that uses legislation to rewrite long-standing contracts with Alberta-owned companies?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, this is a matter that, in particular, is before the courts. In general, our government is committed to the notion of ensuring that consumers in Alberta pay the fairest prices possible for their electricity, and we will do everything we can to ensure that that is what happens.

**Mr. Jean:** Our FOIP documents show clearly that the Premier needed a basic briefing about how the power system works here in Alberta last March. Now we have these rumblings about using legislation to rip up long-term contracts. The Premier should know how these bad, heavy-handed decisions cause capital to flee, hurting Alberta families. Albertans want the Premier to be on their side. She needs to put away her ideological hammer. Can the Premier confirm that she won't use legislation to undo these long-standing negotiated contracts, that were done in the best interests of Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me just say that there's a quote we'll hold on to, that those contracts were in the best interests of Albertans. But more to the point, let me just say this. Our government will do everything we can to ensure the fairest and



most competitive energy and electricity rates for Alberta consumers, industrial and residential, because that's our job.

2:00

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, ripping up a long-standing government contract is something that is unacceptable in a democratic government, in a modern economy. It will scare away investment to Alberta just when we need people to invest in our electricity system the most. The companies that sign these contracts include some that are wholly owned by the people of the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. Will the Premier show respect for Edmontonians and Calgarians and go back to the negotiation table with Enmax and Capital Power and clean up the mess that her government has made?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I will agree with one thing that the member says in that we are certainly trying to clean up a mess that was left for us. That being said, the driving principle that we will adhere to as we do this work is to ensure that the citizens of Alberta get the best deal possible, and we will do whatever is necessary to ensure that outcome.

**The Speaker:** I just would like to point out that I've been very, very generous, but there's a loud voice coming from right in that row someplace. I would hope . . .

The leader of the third party.

### Keystone XL Pipeline Project

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is desperately in need of pipelines to get our resources to market. Without them we are forced to sell at a steep discount. Like it or not, Alberta is a resource-based economy, and without a robust industry we can't sustain the jobs, the public service, and our high quality of life. To the Premier: the pending change in administration in the U.S. has offered renewed hope that the Keystone XL pipeline will become a reality. Will you now please express your full and enthusiastic support for this project?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I think, first of all, that we need to be somewhat cautious in terms of taking every single, solitary platform declaration from the folks south of the border and assuming that immediately they will become fact. What we know is that between now and Christmas the federal government will be having to make a decision about a pipeline within our country. That is the focus that we are keeping our attention on because that is the thing over which we have most agency and which comes first. Overall, as I have said before, we stand with our energy industry. We are going to do what we can to help them improve their economic return.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday an NDP private member actually taunted our PC caucus for supporting Keystone XL. We know that the member was reading from a prepared script. I respect that the Premier doesn't want to talk about promises, so let's talk about fact. Premier, when the day comes that the U.S. President approves Keystone XL, will you and your government stand in the way?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is: of course not.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, sometimes small progress is what we get. Thank you, Premier.

For someone who is supposed to have Alberta's best interests at heart – and you claim to be a pipeline champion – you don't sound very enthusiastic about this opportunity. Since Keystone will go a long way towards providing jobs that are desperately needed in Alberta, good mortgage-paying jobs, between now and the day the President, we hope, approves this pipeline, will you stand up and begin to champion the Keystone XL pipeline?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I think the whole story of this pipeline and the fact that the previous government spent gosh knows how much money going down to the States and lobbying and lobbying and lobbying and then a decision was made and there was absolutely nothing they could do about it – the reason why is because it's a pipeline to tidewater over somebody else's country. When it comes to things that we can do, the agency that we can demonstrate, the work that we can do to deliver outcomes for our industry partners, we need to focus on the places where we can actually have an impact. That's exactly – exactly – what our government has been doing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Ethics and Accountability Committee

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Shortly after being elected, this government created an all-party committee with the ambitious and overdue goal of reviewing the core statutes that govern our democracy. The first year the committee was a success. We passed most motions unanimously, but we simply ran out of time because the job was too big. If you don't believe me, just ask the hon. Government House Leader, who said, and I quote: I acknowledge that it may not have been realistically possible to get through everything that was on its plate. To the Premier: will you accept the unanimous request of the committee and re-establish it so we can finish our important work?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, our government will be moving forward with some of the recommendations that came out of that committee, but at this point it is not our intention to re-establish it.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, that's a shame, Mr. Speaker, because we agreed on a lot. We agreed on the need to get big money out of politics, and the process worked. We voted unanimously in favour of doing so. We proved the process worked because this government listened to the opposition's concerns about taxpayer dollars going to opposition parties, and I will offer my kudos to this government for agreeing that it's not what Albertans wanted. Again to the Premier: given the thoughtful input of stakeholders like the Chief Electoral Officer and the Ethics Commissioner and especially the hundreds of Albertans who shared their views with us, will you let the committee finish its work?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, on our side of the House we did truly want the committee to work, and it's unfortunate that members of the other side of the House did not. They walked out, they delayed, and, quite frankly, they engaged in bullying behaviour of the chair and other members. You know what? We made a commitment to Albertans to take big money out of politics. The members opposite don't want to take big money out of politics. Ultimately, we're not going to let them filibuster in order to avoid having that happen.

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, this is very frustrating. The committee worked. That is the truth. Never once in the history of this Legislature has any committee reviewed four pieces of legislation in a year. It's never happened. It can't be done. All of the members

on this committee worked very hard, including government members, who gave up time with their families to improve democracy. At least, that's what I thought we were doing. I want to ask the minister responsible for democratic renewal – Minister, I know you're better than this. I know you care about democracy. Please prove me right. Re-establish the committee.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is correct. We do care about democracy. We do care about making sure we're getting big money out of politics. After the unanimous passing of Bill 1 to ban corporate and union donations, this government is committed to following through with that. The opposition agrees. The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock was quoted as saying: this committee is now dysfunctional, in my opinion. The committee was not working. The opposition members were filibustering, making unfounded accusations against the chair, and at one point they all walked out. We will move forward with legislation that makes sense and will return democracy.

**The Speaker:** Thank you hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-East.

#### Small-business and Self-employment Assistance

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In tough economic times Albertans are resilient. In my constituency I see nonprofits working with people seeking to start their own businesses and exciting, new small-business incubator markets. It's crucial that the government work with Albertans to help them move forward. To the Minister of Labour: what government programs are available to help Albertans learn the ropes of starting their new business?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through the self-employment training program we are giving a leg-up to Albertans who are looking to start a new business as a way to support themselves and their families. Albertans can visit self-employment training providers across the province to receive formal instruction on business plan development, one-on-one business counselling, coaching, guidance, as well as how to implement that business plan. We are very pleased to help equip the entrepreneurs with the tools and the confidence that they need to realize their dreams and contribute to the prosperity of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the tough economic times in my riding and in Calgary in particular can the minister tell us how many Albertans benefited from this program and where they're located?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In today's challenging economy and competitive labour market it's more important than ever that Albertans have the support that they need to become self-employed if they choose to. Since May 2016 we've added more than 500 new seats in Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat. In fact, I'm very pleased to say that we recently signed an agreement with Meyers Norris Penny to support 150 seats in Calgary. We recognize the importance of this program and are looking to expand it to other communities throughout the province.

2:10

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you. Given the need to make every dollar count, can the minister tell us how much the government of Alberta is investing in this program?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently Alberta Labour has self-employment contracts equalling approximately \$5 million over the next two years. Approximately \$1.9 million is allocated to the self-employment training this fiscal year in partnership with the government of Canada. We will use every penny we can under our labour market development agreements to help enterprising Albertans, especially at a time when they need it most.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

#### Oil Sands Advisory Group Membership

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's another day and another NDP adviser wanting to shut down our pipelines. This time it was oil sands advisory group member Karen Mahon, who fired off a fundraising e-mail this Tuesday as the Canadian director of Stand, an antidevelopment organization formerly known as ForestEthics, soliciting donations to stop Kinder Morgan, to kill Alberta jobs. Well, actions speak louder than words. Will the Premier condemn the work of her panel member's fundraising to destroy Alberta jobs, attacking our industry, and working to stop pipeline expansion?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, on the issue of our work advocating for Kinder Morgan, I could not be more proud of our Minister of Energy, our minister of trade, our minister of environment, and all the other members of our caucus, who are regularly advocating on behalf of getting our product to tidewater. With respect to particular members of the OSAG, let me be clear. Those people were put in place to give us advice on how to move towards the cap on emissions. They were not put in place to give us advice or to do anything else with respect to pipelines, so what they do on that matter doesn't really matter.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Premier.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Mr. Speaker, out-of-work Albertans are baffled and, frankly, offended. Given that the oil sands advisory group is tasked with advising this government on the oil sands aspects of the climate leadership plan and given that this plan includes a cap that independent estimates say will result in the destruction of up to \$250 billion worth of desperately needed jobs and investment, why on earth did this government appoint this person to this panel, and when will Ms Mahon be shown the door?

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, the issue of putting an emissions cap in place, first of all, has done tremendously positive work for our government, for our province, and for industry in terms of earning social licence. The idea itself came from the industry. That idea came because we brought all parties together to start talking to each other instead of at each other, and that is why we have all parties on the OSAG. We will continue to govern on that basis by bringing people with disparate views into a room to work out solutions, not just yelling at them across the aisle the way the members opposite do.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Mr. Speaker, this government has zero credibility – zero credibility – on the energy file. Bernard the Roughneck has done more in the last month to defend Alberta's energy industry than our own silent Energy minister over there. Given this NDP government's atrocious hiring practices, that have seen a slew of antipipeline activists – Marcella Munro; Tzeporah Berman; the Energy chief of staff, Graham Mitchell; and Karen Mahon among many others – receiving healthy salaries courtesy of Alberta's taxpayers, Albertans are left wondering: is there anyone over there genuinely defending Alberta's development interests?

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, for years the members opposite have advocated for the oil industry by talking to a really small group of people in an echo chamber and refusing to listen to Albertans, to Canadians, to community members, to indigenous people, and to people who care about this issue. The way you move towards resolution, the way you move towards solutions, the way you move towards getting the job done is to talk to everybody, and we will not apologize for it. In fact, we will do it more.

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

### Electricity System

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's electricity generation is largely made up of coal, 51 per cent, and natural gas, at 39 per cent. If renewable generation replaces 30 per cent of coal generation by 2030, it leaves natural gas generation at 70 per cent, yet this government has done nothing to incent new natural gas generation. In fact, we see the opposite. To the Premier: what happens to prices and stability in 2030 if natural gas has not replaced the baseload currently provided by coal?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our plan, as I've said all along: we are, true, going to 30 per cent renewables by 2030, 70 per cent likely natural gas. We've worked with the AESO. We have a plan to move along in increments so we can keep the lights on, we can keep prices stable, and attract new investment into Alberta in a responsible fashion.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, that plan seems to have a stick in someone's eye.

Given that this government has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars, taxpayer dollars, vilifying companies like Capital Power and Enmax and given that Capital Power recently delayed their Genesee 4 and 5 plants, a \$1.4 billion project, because of uncertainty around Alberta's coal phase-out, PPAs, and electricity markets, again to the minister. Your government talks about creating jobs and attracting investment. Talk is cheap. Will you withdraw your punitive lawsuits and work collaboratively with industry to ensure such important projects get off the ground to give us that baseload?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. You know, we work every day with our industry, talking about the issues, how we can work together. At the beginning of my ministry I said that I will always work with industry. We will be collaborative, and there will be no surprises. We're doing that. Minister Bilous and I are working on the coal phase-out with regulations. We worked with Minister Phillips. [interjection] Again, we're working with industry every day.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I might point out that . . .

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Sorry. The hon. minister of environment.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, I don't see "collaboratively," and frankly I see a lot of surprises.

Given that Capital Power also stated that the Genesee project is partially contingent upon fair asset compensation for early coal shutdown and given that the government continuously disputes industry expert estimates on what that compensation should be and given that this government is currently hiding the Boston report from the public and this Legislature, to the Energy minister: will you stop the charade, release the report, and work transparently with these companies in order to ensure an adequate supply of natural gas generation before 2030?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** As I mentioned earlier, we are working with the companies. We have said all along that we will negotiate with them, and, you know, we will deal with the six companies that are post-2030. Just to be clear, we have people who have supported this position, and one of the opposition members, the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, in an interview said: we can provide options for green power to consumers that they don't currently have. That's what we're doing in this whole movement to cleaner power.

### Beer Tax

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, when the government introduced protectionist tariffs on out-of-province beers in October 2015, we warned the minister that this was unconstitutional. The minister refused to listen, and the courts ruled against them. When they took a second kick at the can with a revised tariff program in July of this year, we again warned the government that this was unconstitutional. Both times they refused to listen. Yesterday an injunction was granted by the courts against this unconstitutional tariff. We told the government that these taxes would end in a lawsuit. Why didn't the minister listen?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the courts have ruled on an injunction, nothing more than that, and we are moving forward with our great beer program, that's supporting Alberta brewers in this province. It shows that we've got Albertans' backs. In the last two weeks I've had two questions from this member talking about this sort of thing. I just want to know: why is he standing up for Ontario and Saskatoon and not Alberta?

2:20

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Not understanding trade agreements: it sounds like someone who just got elected elsewhere, Mr. Speaker.

Given that regardless of what the minister thinks is good beer tax policy, it's obviously unconstitutional to put a tariff on Canadian products from other provinces – we put forward our six-pack beer tax plan, which would support small and medium-sized brewers in Alberta while clearly respecting interprovincial free trade under the Constitution so we could avoid being sued. Again, would the minister reconsider his position and work with the opposition to craft a beer tax policy that is compliant with the Constitution?

**The Speaker:** By the way, fellow members, if you are nice to each other, you can go and have a beer rather than talk about beer.

**Mr. Ceci:** I have a question for the member across the floor. I want to know: has he ever gone out and talked to the Alberta brewers and the people who are working in those industries? If you talk to them,

Mr. Speaker, they support what we're doing, they support the jobs that are developing, the investment that is happening. I just want to know: why does he want to put Albertans out of work? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** We just want to know what the minister has been drinking, Mr. Speaker.

The government is suing itself over power purchase agreement contracts that they broke. The government is being sued over the gross mishandling of the Trinity home-school shutdown. The government was sued over its unconstitutional beer tax changes in October 2015. Now the government is being sued over its beer tax changes from July. So far the government's most successful job-creation program is for B.C. litigation lawyers. How many times does this government have to be sued before they understand that they should hire lawyers before, not after, they get sued, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, I just want to reassure everybody that we have the most open beer market system in the world, in Alberta, in the country. Over 7,000 products of beer are available here. That tells us that everybody who wants to get beer into this province, everybody who wants to drink different beer can do it in this province. We're not obstructionist to anybody.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

#### Resource Industry Jobs

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people in my constituency have gone through downturns in the economy before. This time is different, however, because in my constituency they also believe that the policies of their government are actually working against them. For instance, the decision to shut down coal early will negatively impact constituents at Westmoreland Coal and the Genesee power facility. Will the Minister of Energy please explain to these workers which green energy company, not a government program but a company, they can apply to for a job in order to take care of their families?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to phasing out coal over a period of time, up until 2030. I want to remind the House that 12 out of the 18 facilities are closing pre-2030 due to federal regulations. The remaining six: we're working with not only the companies, but also I've struck a panel to engage communities, workers to ensure that there is a fair and just transition moving forward.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a carbon tax, emission control caps, and a host of other NDP initiatives have scared oil capital out of this province and given that many oil-related companies have either left the Drayton Valley-Devon constituency or are working with skeleton crews and given that the hotels across my constituency are literally vacant and the restaurants are empty and given that I have many constituents looking for work to pay their mortgages and take care of their families, how many new jobs has this government created in the Drayton Valley-Devon constituency?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll begin by pointing the member to the Alberta jobs plan, where this year what's forecast is record investment in our province. Non oil and gas investment this year is expected to reach a high of \$38 billion. Capital investment in the manufacturing and service sectors is expected to reach a record high of \$21 billion. The oil and gas sector is expected to invest \$28 billion in Alberta this year. As well, we've had a number of folks from Calgary Economic Development, the city of Edmonton: all recognize that we're turning a corner.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that oil and gas, agriculture, and timber are the top three industries in Alberta and given that we've lost 47,000 jobs across the province since October and given the international trading policies the President-elect of the United States espoused on the campaign trail and given that the softwood lumber agreement expired in October, what is the minister of agriculture going to do to protect the jobs in my constituency that depend on softwood lumber exports?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start by saying that in the past three months there has actually been a net growth of jobs in Alberta by 25,000. Now, we recognize that we still have a long way to go, but I can tell you that this is exactly why currently the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is in Asia with companies from our agriculture and forestry sector, promoting trade to increase the capacity and increase our market share in those countries. Next week I will be going over to Asia myself again with a series or a number of companies, looking at increasing the amount of exports that Alberta companies have in our Asian markets.

**The Speaker:** There was a point of order noted. Is that correct?

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

#### Municipal Government Act Amendments

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last spring the Modernized Municipal Government Act was introduced, and since then the government claims to have conducted robust consultation that addressed the needs of our municipal partners. We are now well into November, we've completed second reading on the bill, yet municipalities across our province are in limbo with respect to how this legislation will affect them. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The AAMD and C convention occurs next week, but Committee of the Whole discussion on the MGA has mysteriously been pushed until the following week. What sort of radical amendments are you hiding from our municipal partners?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I'm very proud of the work that I have done building a relationship with municipal leaders from across this province in the time that I've been in this role. We have worked tremendously hard to engage very closely and to be the most transparent anyone has ever seen, I think, with any piece of legislation. We have from day one been open with what we are doing with this. There are no big surprises. What you see is what you get: a Modernized Municipal Government Act designed to help municipalities move into the current century.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, the mayor of Calgary certainly wouldn't agree with the minister.

To the same minister: given that your self-described exhaustive consultation now appears to be an utter and complete sham and given that this AAMD and C fall convention appears to be the last opportunity for the municipal leaders to thoroughly discuss the proposed changes to a bill that they might have to live with for the next 20 years and given that if you actually addressed stakeholder concerns, there would be no reason for you to further delay the MGA, please, Minister, why are you intentionally delaying the debate on amendments to this bill until after the AAMD and C convention?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The implication embedded in that question is absolutely absurd. The amount of feedback that we got from Albertans was so great. I mean, we heard from thousands and thousands of Albertans about what they wanted to see in the MGA. It takes time to compile that, to thoughtfully incorporate that information into some amendments coming forward. I'm looking forward to bringing them forward, and I reassure all municipal leaders that there will be no surprises.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the government's plans to centralize industrial assessment into the NDP politburo will have serious negative consequences for many municipalities and given that it will do a complete end run around years of accumulated expertise that has been developed, putting municipal finances at risk and given that this is the very kind of government interference in local decision-making that this very minister decried just yesterday, how will you work with municipalities to address this issue and mitigate assessment inconsistencies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Centralized industrial assessment is not a surprise. That's why we presented it in May, why we gathered feedback on it from a number of stakeholders throughout the summer. Inconsistent industrial assessment and many issues were raised by industry stakeholders during consultation on the MGA. Albertans deserve a fair, predictable, efficient tax structure, and that includes industrial property taxes. We are interested in improving how industrial assessment is assessed, and I look forward to working with municipalities to ensure that as we move forward with this, it happens smoothly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

### 2:30 Door-to-door Furnace and Energy Contract Sales

**Connolly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recent days I've heard concerns from my constituents in Citadel and Hawkwood about misleading door-to-door sales of furnaces. I've heard stories about door-to-door salespeople leaving the impression that they are with the government of Alberta in order to pressure my constituents to buy furnaces. Often these salespeople are returning two or three times to the same house even in one day. To the Minister of Service Alberta: has there been an increase in complaints about this kind of sales practice?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. In fact, I've heard a multitude of these same complaints, and unfortunately they seem to be getting more common. After a total of 41 complaints about furnace sales from 2010 to 2015, this number has jumped to 147 so far in 2016 alone. The scale of this

jump in complaints is obviously concerning. We are monitoring this situation very closely and evaluating our options for protecting consumers, particularly our seniors, from misleading practices when it comes to the sale of furnaces and other household energy products.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Connolly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we have seen growing concern about these furnace sales and given that in the past we have also heard concerns about door-to-door electricity contract sales, to the same minister: can you tell the House what our constituents can do to protect themselves from these predatory practices?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the energy contract sales the member mentioned, we unfortunately continue to see high numbers of complaints, with 244 complaints registered with Service Alberta so far this year. We saw a dramatic jump in complaints in 2015, and they've continued. When a salesperson comes to your door, Albertans should not feel pressured into signing a contract on the spot that they don't want. Albertans should also be aware that they have the right to cancel a contract within 10 days of receiving it for any reason. I encourage anyone with concerns about door-to-door sales to call our consumer protection line at 1.877.427.4088 or visit [servicealberta.ca](http://servicealberta.ca) to learn about their rights.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Connolly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that concerns regarding these unethical practices seem to be growing, to the same minister: what actions are being considered to protect consumers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. As the minister that is responsible for much of our consumer protection, when Albertans raise concerns, I certainly listen. We're absolutely committed to protecting Albertans from unfair business practices, and that's why we're evaluating our options to protect consumers. I encourage any Albertan to call or write to my office with their experiences of these practices, and I encourage the members across the aisle as well if you're constituents are coming to you with these concerns. Their thoughts and ideas are important to me about how to strengthen these protections.

Thank you.

### Renewable Energy Projects in Southern Alberta

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, landowners in municipalities in southern Alberta are very concerned about this government's plan for renewable power. There has been no information or local consultation about locations of proposed wind and solar projects, transmission lines, or infrastructure. These new, unsightly projects could further degrade our beautiful viewshed and the critical tourism industry there. To the environment minister: where exactly are these projects going to be located, and can you guarantee that the rights of landowners will be respected in those proposed regions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have introduced new legislation, the Renewable Electricity Act, and in that act we do speak of environmental impact assessments, depending on the size of the project. That wasn't in the former legislation at all, so there will be protections for landowners going forward.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think we heard where they're going to go.

Landowners have heard that stuff before, and now there's a continued lack of trust. Given that this NDP government has yet to repeal that draconian property rights legislation the Land Stewardship Act, better known as Bill 36, that they always opposed, and given that legislation could be used as a big stick in negotiations around wind and solar projects, will the minister confirm that there is no intent to use any of those draconian bills to force wind and solar projects through in areas where landowners will be negatively impacted?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thanks for the question. The new legislation is going to enable projects to be built, but to be clear, investors will come in, and there will be rules for each project. We don't decide what the projects are. In consult with the ISO and the renewables auctions, investment and businesses will come in and do those, but landowners will be consulted before any projects are decided.

**The Speaker:** No preamble on this one.

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, the lack of overall commitment and consultation on landowners' rights from the members opposite is still troubling. Given that in addition to locations and consultations, no information has been released about potential compensation to landowners whose operations could be negatively affected by these wind and solar proposals, will the minister confirm today that all landowners affected by these changes will be fully compensated at fair market value, or is expropriation a high possibility?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** I believe I've previously answered that. In the new act there is a provision for consultation, and at the end of the day, that will be respected. But I do have to say that there's lots of, you know, support for this. The mayor of Stirling said: I think there is great opportunity for us to do something here in considering wind farms. Mary Moran from Calgary:

As investment in renewable energy in Canada is growing rapidly, Alberta has been largely on the sidelines in this key part of the future . . . supply, so we are pleased to see policy that provides the long-term certainty and stability that encourages global and local companies to invest.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

### Public-private Partnerships for Capital Projects

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The other day I asked the Minister of Infrastructure if he would continue to use P3s given the success of the northeast leg of the Anthony Henday, and he stated, quote: the jury is still out on P3s. Unquote. Well, the funny thing with a P3 is that all projects built in this manner undergo a value-for-money assessment. Could the Minister of Infrastructure please tell this House what the value-for-money assessment for the northeast leg of the Anthony Henday project was?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is fully committed to ensuring that Albertans finally have the infrastructure that they have needed for so long, that we utilize the tool of

infrastructure to ensure that Albertans have jobs during this time, using it as a stimulus measure. There is very clear evidence that that is moving us forward and boosting our economy. I'm proud of the work we've done, and we will ensure always that we utilize the tools that will most effectively ensure that Albertans get access to that infrastructure for the best price and the best quality.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Gill:** Well, it's a good thing that those . . .

**The Speaker:** No preamble, hon. member. What's your question?

**Mr. Gill:** Given that the good old PCs got Deloitte & Touche LLP to do a value-for-money assessment which indicated the P3 model provided a saving of \$371 million on the northeast Anthony Henday project alone, to the minister: while the P3s have not always worked for schools, they repeatedly worked for major infrastructure projects. Given their repeated success, is the jury back in on P3s?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is moving Alberta forward finally, and that means getting taxpayers the best value for their dollar. The opposition would take Albertans backwards by finding ways to shovel public money to their deep-pocketed friends regardless of whether a P3 makes sense for Albertans. We are going to consider the evidence to ensure future projects get taxpayers the best value for their dollar.

**Mr. Gill:** Given that the minister of seniors stated in estimates, "We are moving away from private or community ownership and back towards the province financing and owning housing assets" despite the exceptional results found when the previous government partnered with the private and nonprofit sectors in this area and given that it seems like this government is reluctant to partner with the private or nonprofit sector in any capacity, to the Minister of Infrastructure: are you opposed to P3s and other public-private and nonprofit partnerships because of the economics or the NDP's world view?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are taking a look at our departments and practices to make sure, and that includes evaluating whether P3s are a good deal for taxpayers. The PC world view would have them focus on helping their friends get richer rather than doing what's best for everyday Albertans. We will continue to make sure that taxpayers get the best value for their dollar in Alberta.

2:40

### Members' Statements

(continued)

#### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Loewen:** Never before has a carbon tax on Albertans made less sense than it does today. The United States will have no carbon tax for at least four years. The state of Washington voted against it. Australia repealed theirs, and their economy is growing. France is nixing its carbon tax because of fears of its impact on the economy. Major western economies know we all have a role to play in reducing global emissions, but that can't come at the price of killing jobs, punishing charities, and hurting families.

It's why thousands of Albertans gathered together last week to peacefully rally against this carbon tax, a carbon tax that the Premier has admitted will shrink the economy, a carbon tax that will cost the typical household a thousand dollars a year and will raise the cost of everything. People gathered in my city of Grande Prairie. They gathered in Calgary, in Edmonton, and all the way to Lethbridge. It's certainly no secret that almost two-thirds of Albertans oppose this carbon tax, and polls have confirmed this.

Albertans are scared. They see their friends, neighbours, and family members unemployed and hurting. Their hours have been cut, their wages reduced. People see this government providing little more than window-dressing jobs plans that have done nothing to offset the hundreds of thousands of job losses suffered in this province.

They are seeing reports that next year for the first time more wells will be drilled in Saskatchewan than in Alberta. One of the reasons: it's because policies matter. The government can't control the price of oil, but they can control how they react to it, and they have reacted poorly. This government did not run its election platform on a carbon tax. This is a blatant attempt to avoid a referendum on a provincial sales tax, plain and simple.

Locally the county of Grande Prairie has been helping subsidize charities' utility bills. Once this tax hits, local charities will be hard pressed to handle the burdensome costs. The county has been generous, but this increase, coupled with the other effects of the carbon tax, will hit the county hard.

The Premier should accept reality, put the good of the province first, and, at the very least, put the NDP's damaging carbon tax to a referendum.

#### Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

**Dr. Swann:** I stand today to speak on a very difficult new reality for Albertans who believe the science of climate change and the urgent need for greenhouse gas mitigation. Strong leadership was long overdue in Alberta. All of us must share in the cost of reducing emissions. This government has shown welcome leadership, but real change is never easy. It's even less easy following the election of an unpredictable U.S. President who denies man-made climate change.

While I support the targets and timelines for cleaner energy development with its triple benefit for climate, jobs, and an alternate economy, we must hit pause on other parts of our energy-focused legislation, especially on less urgent bills such as Bill 25. Given Alberta's deep dependence on oil and gas, our current economic weakness, and the yet unknown economic threat from the U.S., I see merit in pausing and allowing the new reality and expert views to inform further our decision on the bill before us. Not stop, just pause, a pregnant pause, perhaps.

I've heard the Premier say that her climate plan was developed independently and that actions of our biggest customer and competitor will have no effect. Even so, I don't believe that anyone planned for the U.S. to go full speed in reverse. Proposals announced by Mr. Trump in his truth-challenged campaign have already begun to unfetter the U.S. fossil fuel industry and may drastically alter the investment climate and competitiveness here in Alberta. The ramifications of this election are sending shock waves through the global and Canadian economies. From free trade to energy, many U.S. policies are now in doubt. We have no idea yet what economic effect these changes will have on Alberta, nor have we in opposition yet seen a reasonable analysis of the effects our Alberta carbon policies might have.

Here in this House we serve Albertans. We're mandated to craft for them the best possible laws, policies, and regulations. Our

struggling economy and uncertain investment climate are now faced with unpredictability that will be better understood in the new year, when the oil sands advisory group reports.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Your time is up.  
The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

#### Métis Week

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise today and speak about Métis Week. Taking place the week of November 16 every year, the anniversary of Louis Riel's death, Métis Week is observed across the Métis homeland.

Riel's political passions were a rallying point for many. For the people of Quebec he was a champion of French language rights. For the people of Manitoba he was founder of their province and a unifying force, bringing the first western province into Confederation. For the Métis he remains a fearless visionary who fought to secure a just and fair future where all Métis people could live proud and self-determining lives. For Canada he was the son of a new nation, the Métis, born from the intermarriage of First Nations people and European newcomers.

A complex figure, Riel spoke the languages of Cree, French, and English. But he also spoke the language of resistance, and as the leader of the Northwest Rebellion Louis Riel was hanged on November 16, 131 years ago. In Riel's own words:

I am more convinced every day that without a single exception I did right. And I have always believed that, as I have acted honestly, the time will come when the people of Canada will see and acknowledge it.

With time he has become a part of the fabric of our country. If we look around Alberta, we see the importance of the Métis to our province. Towns like St. Albert, Lac La Biche, St. Paul, and Lac Ste. Anne were founded by the Métis, and the fur trade that pushed European exploration westward was often supported by the Métis. The Métis have also served in our military, in our Legislature, and have led our communities. Whether it's fiddling, jigging, or singing, the Métis have helped to shape our culture.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all Albertans to celebrate the contributions of the Métis people to our shared history and to celebrate Métis culture next week.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

#### University of Lethbridge Achievements

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, almost a year ago I spoke of Lethbridge's footprint in outer space through the Herschel SPIRE project. The University of Lethbridge has yet again come to the forefront. In just the past few weeks five of its faculty members have been elected to royal societies around the world in a breadth of disciplines that speak to the university's strength as a liberal education institution that has grown into a respected research leader.

Dr. Louise Barrett, psychology, Dr. Joe Rasmussen, biology, and Dr. Bruce McNaughton, neuroscience, were all recently elected to the fellowship of the Royal Society of Canada. Dr. Artur Luczak, a neuroscientist, was elected to the Royal Society of Canada's College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists. Dr. Paul Hayes became the first U of L faculty member elected as a fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry. While these faculty members are singled out for their recent awards, they represent an excellence that is prevalent throughout the university's six faculties and schools.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that people are taking notice. Last week the U of L was ranked third place amongst the undergraduate

universities in Canada. It has been in the top three for five consecutive years. The U of L has greatly exceeded even the most optimistic goals of its founders, one of whom was my grandfather-in-law Reed Ellison. This is reflected by its record enrolment, its impact on the southern Alberta region, its now 40,000-plus alumni, and an ever-growing national and international reputation. As the U of L is coming up to its 50th anniversary, stay tuned. There's more to come.

2:50

### Remembrance Day

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, tomorrow this House won't sit. We will all come together, however, along with Canadians from the west coast to the prairies to the Maritimes. We will join and remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom and democracy and those who continue to do so in a world where tyranny persists. Countless men and women have given their lives so that we can enjoy the privileges we do today as Canadians. Tomorrow we will remember their courage and valour in the face of evil and despair.

This year we will mark the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, where more than 24,000 Canadian soldiers were killed, wounded, or went missing. We will also commemorate Beaumont-Hamel, a devastating battle for Newfoundland, where only 68 of more than 800 soldiers who took part answered roll call the next day. We will also use tomorrow to honour the men and women who currently wear the uniform and put their lives on the line for our safety and security. Tomorrow we honour the fallen, revere the brave, and salute all the members of the Canadian armed forces and their families for their service and sacrifice for our country.

I urge all Canadians to attend a Remembrance Day service in their community, of which there are many planned. I also urge them to spend some time with a Canadian veteran, old or young, and learn about the roads they've travelled to protect the sanctity of our freedom and democracy. These ordinary men and women have truly accomplished extraordinary things. On behalf of this entire House, to them I say thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I am pleased to table five copies of the committee's report recommending the reappointment of Ms Jill Clayton as Information and Privacy Commissioner for a five-year term, recognizing the excellent service she has rendered Albertans. Copies of this report are available online or through the committee's branch.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a memo in response to questions from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View from November 3, 2016.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to table five copies of a document that is a petition entitled Fair Start

for Kids Campaign. This was sponsored by the Alberta Federation of Labour child care working group. Fair Start for Kids is a province-wide campaign for universal early childhood education and care. I am particularly pleased to be tabling this document as I have been a child care advocate since my children required child care. Now both my grandchildren and my one great-granddaughter require child care. Things have not changed much over that 40-year period.

**The Speaker:** The documents, hon. member. We normally don't make elongated statements at this particular part of the agenda. Could you wrap it up, please.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Yes. I'd like to read the petition into the record. "We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to ..."

**The Speaker:** I think we need some clarification. If you would just wait a minute.

Hon. member, I'm advised that you do not need to read the petition. If you would ensure that the pages have the document.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three documents to table, referenced yesterday during the debate on Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, by my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View. The first is five requisite copies of the Postmedia article on global wind turbines going bankrupt. The second is a review of the energy return of solar PV by Mr. Euan Mearns, citing the study regarding .83 as the EROEI. The third document is the source document for Energy Return on Energy Invested for Photovoltaic Solar Systems in Regions of Moderate Insolation.

A fourth document that I wish to table is one that I referred to today. It is a copy of the letter from Ms Mahon soliciting funds for the shutdown of the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of a document entitled A Shot in the Arm: How to Improve Vaccination Policy in Canada from the C.D. Howe Institute, which I referenced during debate on Bill 28 this morning.

**The Speaker:** I believe we are at points of order. The House leader for the Official Opposition.

### Point of Order Referring to the Absence of a Member

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm a little hesitant to rise today on this particular point of order. The citation is referring to the absence or the presence of a member. Earlier in question period the deputy House leader referred to the absence of a minister in a fairly boastful way, about him being overseas in China. I just think that the rules should be applied equally to both sides of the House. I did, however, notice that yesterday during question period the minister took the opportunity to tweet about his trip in China. I think that during question period it would probably be advantageous if he didn't, as he may incite himself in his absence from question period. I just think that the rules should be applied equally.



**The Speaker:** Absolutely, hon. member.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** All right, Mr. Speaker. First of all, for the member opposite to be talking about a member tweeting during QP when the member is in a different time zone in a different country: I don't even think I need to argue that point.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know, I just want to clarify. The purpose of the rule is to prevent members from being shamed for not being in the Chamber. The purpose is not to prevent a reference to legitimate business that a member is doing that may take them away from this Chamber.

I also want to point out the fact that the minister that we're speaking of has put out a press release with dates and where he will be. So it is on the public record, of public knowledge the work that he is doing elsewhere.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, might you agree that, technically, the matter ought not to have been raised. It seems to me that there is some point that needs to be made here. However, let's understand that there is a difference, in my perspective, from a tweet from another place versus mention in the House. They are two different issues.

But I think, to the Opposition House Leader, that was not what was intended, in my perspective, in the original intent in the standing orders. Please, let's all – and I can tell you that you may have on occasion heard me make that reference in error. I hope that this just simply draws our attention to the matter.

3:00

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Second Reading

##### Bill 30

##### Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill 30, the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act.

Bill 30 would enable government to establish the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. Together these tax credits would drive innovation, diversify our economy, and create new jobs. The Alberta investor tax credit, or AITC, would offer a 30 per cent tax credit for investments made in small Alberta businesses between April 14, 2016, and December 31, 2019. With a budget of \$90 million over three years, the AITC would be provided on a first-come, first-served basis starting on January 1, 2017. Under the legislation eligible businesses would be allowed to raise a maximum of \$5 million directly through investors or a maximum of \$10 million through Alberta venture capital corporations in every two-year period.

The maximum tax credit for an individual would be \$60,000 per year, supporting up to \$200,000 in investments. The tax credit would be refundable, Mr. Speaker, and could be carried forward for up to four years for individual investors. There would be no maximum tax credit for corporate investors. It would be nonrefundable and be carried forward for up to four years. Investments would need to be equity investments and be held for at least five years to ensure that the company has the capital for an appropriate length of time to use for operations and growth. Equity

investments would need to be used for activities that support a company's growth.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the AITC would be available for investments in companies that are substantially engaged in proprietary technology research, development, or commercialization; interactive digital media development; video postproduction; digital animation; or tourism. The investment criteria were developed through extensive consultations with business and investment leaders across Alberta and are designed to encourage economic diversification.

The legislation would also enable government to establish community economic development corporations, or CEDCs. CEDCs are for-profit investment funds that invest equity in locally owned businesses recognized for their positive social, economic, and environmental returns to communities. My department would be engaging in targeted stakeholder consultations to ensure the program design is successful. The CEDC portion of the program would be implemented more toward the summer of 2017.

The registration process for AITC will be announced pending passage of this piece of legislation.

The second tax credit this legislation would enable, Mr. Speaker, is a capital investment tax credit, or CITC, which would encourage large-scale capital investment here in Alberta. As with the AITC, the CITC would support new jobs by fostering increased economic activity through the labour required to construct or make these new investments in capital assets or through the positive impacts in related industries once these investments are up and running and turning a profit. CITC would offer Alberta companies a 10 per cent nonrefundable tax credit of up to \$5 million. In addition to this, the tax credit would be available to companies across the province involved in activities of manufacturing, processing, and tourism infrastructure, companies that are making an eligible capital investment of over \$1 million.

Eligible costs would closely align with capital costs allowed under the federal government's capital cost allowance, including the acquisition of buildings, equipment, and machinery. Applicants will be required to apply for conditional approval in advance of the investment, with the tax credit being claimed only when the capital investment is in use and the company is turning a profit. I need to add, Mr. Speaker, that that came directly from a number of consultations with business and industry leaders across the province in all sectors who asked, on the capital investment tax credit, that there be a precondition or a conditional approval screening type of thing, not a first-come, first-served basis.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The application process would be competitive, with each application being evaluated based on its positive economic impact. It's expected, Madam Speaker, that CITC would support \$700 million worth of investment and up to 4,600 direct and indirect jobs. These tax credits offer the right support for Alberta businesses at the right time. Introducing these measures at a time when businesses are facing challenges will make Alberta more competitive in attracting and retaining investments while creating much-needed jobs. Together these tax credits provide significant support to Alberta businesses when they need it most.

Madam Speaker, this legislation would ensure that the government continues to promote economic diversification, support employers and entrepreneurs in creating jobs, and encourage investment in the province. I can say that I am very proud of the work that our government has done in preparing this piece of legislation, the number of consultations and meetings that not only I but my colleagues on this side of the House have had, meetings

with businesses, industry leaders, entrepreneurs in all sectors, in all corners of the province.

Madam Speaker, these two tax credits are something that the business community has been asking for for decades. This is something that other jurisdictions have had. The province of British Columbia has had an investor tax credit since 1985, and because of it, they have helped to diversify their economy and drive investments in their local businesses. It is about time that Alberta levels the playing field and continues to remain the most competitive and best province to invest in.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to talk about Bill 30, the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. Wow: \$165 million over three years – that's a lot of money – \$70 million for capital investment tax credits over two years, targeted to manufacturing, processing, and tourism; \$5 million for capital investment tax credits for the cultural industries; and \$90 million over three years for the Alberta investor tax credit. It is targeted to proprietary technology research, development, or commercialization; interactive digital media development; video postproduction; digital animation; and tourism. Some of these make a lot of sense, and others seem a bit random, and I look forward to hearing the explanation from the minister.

The economic downturn has resulted in staggering job losses in Alberta. While the low taxes in Alberta have resulted in diversification away from the energy sector, from 33 per cent to 25 per cent of GDP over 25 years, more can be done to break our addiction to and reliance on one sector of the economy. I came from a meeting with a stakeholder this morning who does proprietary technology research, development, and commercialization. It was an Edmonton-based company, and they do business in the energy sector all over the world, Madam Speaker. They're very interested in these programs. Proprietary research and commercialization are a challenge in every sector, but as they say, the devil is in the details, and the Wildrose will be watching how you manage those details.

Normally we on this side, Wildrose, would not support a bill like this to allow programs to target only certain sectors of the economy, but there are some differences here that will keep my mind open. These programs are nonrefundable tax credits. They're not grants, the free money some governments like to hand out. These programs are not loans. Banks and credit unions hand out loans and evaluate businesses on their merits. Government loans employ the bank of last resort, or crony capitalism, and these programs are not loan guarantees; that is, the use of the Alberta government's triple-A credit rating to allow a lower interest rate for borrowing and assuming the project in case of default. Oh, sorry. Alberta doesn't have a triple-A credit rating anymore.

3:10

Most importantly, investor confidence is at record lows, and we have a jobs crisis that needs special measures. Edmonton has a lot of developing industries that these programs target. I went to a start-up party 7 and saw first-hand the interactive digital media development happening in this city. I didn't see any members from the NDP at that launch party, where businesses showcased their new products. At least the ministry is trying to do something for the business community.

The Calgary Chamber of commerce called for these tax credits and convinced the government, with the first investor tax credit

program, to help equity capital flow to small business in our province. British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, and a number of U.S. states have investor tax credit programs. Alberta loses new business to British Columbia because of this program, and B.C. has higher taxes, including a sales tax.

Now, the minister talks about tourism getting a boost from these tax credits. He has touted supporting up to 4,400 new jobs over three years and contributing up to \$500 million to the province's GDP. I hope these are really new jobs and not just replacement jobs for the communities where oil and gas is on the decline. That's about 1,500 new jobs per year, Madam Speaker. We shall see.

Not only job creation; let's talk about enhancing our tourism products. Let us start with the basics, hotels, Madam Speaker. I'm talking about hotels in the province. When you get to some of these tourist communities like Canmore, Waterton, Pincher Creek, Banff, Edson, Hinton, Jasper, Drumheller, the quality of some of the tourism establishments, the hotels and the restaurants, is old and dated. They have not changed in 40 or 50 years. The buildings are old, tired, rundown, and worn out. They are nothing special architecturally and have no need of historical designation. They harken back to an era when the highways through the mountain passes were dirt two-lane roads.

We ask people from all over the world to travel to Alberta, to come and visit Alberta. They are not all staying in a Fairmont or at a fancy hotel property, Madam Speaker. If these visitors have not made accommodation arrangements in advance, when they get here, they're often disappointed. International tourists do not want to stay in a roach motel. You can have wonderful memories and experiences in Alberta, but if the stay in the hotel is poor, then all that goodwill goes down the drain, and then they won't be back again in Alberta. I can only hope the hotel sector steps up and uses the capital investment tax credit to update and modernize their hotels so that Alberta can have reputable products and visitors will keep coming back.

Now, Madam Speaker, there is one more good thing about this bill. It creates a registry of venture capital corporations. If we know who all the venture capital corporations are, we have another tool that can be used to connect businesses seeking investment to them and unlock even more private investment. But this is where things get complicated with Bill 30. You see, the minister will have the power to require venture capital corporations to seek approval before they can change their share structure. The minister will also have to approve the venture capital corporation to raise money. The minister can also dictate to the venture capital corporation whether or not the investment in a business is allowed depending on how many employees the business has and the wages the business has. That sounds heavy handed. We heard the minister say that it will be first-come, first-served for these tax credits, but we still don't know how the minister will select the winners of these credits. Is it ministerial interference or essential oversight?

As I interact with more stakeholders during the break next week, Madam Speaker, I'm sure we'll come up with a number of questions. I'm sure many hon. members would like to ask a few questions of the minister. I'm also certain that the NDP would like to have their stakeholders come in and tell us how important this program is to the targeted sectors. I look forward to more discussion during Committee of the Whole. I'm hoping that the minister will have answers for us in the next debates.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the minister for bringing this forward. Bill 30: there's a lot to it. It's very dense. It's a bit like eating a brick of cheese. Even if you like cheese, it kind of leaves you feeling a bit stodgy. But I will do my best to unpack some of the more important aspects of the bill and share my thoughts on it.

First off, I want to say that I like the intent of the bill. I certainly agree with the principle of an investor tax credit, of the capital investment tax credit. I have to agree with it because it was our idea. We proposed it and pushed very hard for it, so I will happily and enthusiastically support the minister for picking up the torch and moving it forward. Certainly, no, we're not the only ones who supported this good idea. The chambers of commerce around the province, many economists think this is certainly a better idea than the job-creation tax credit. Without going on too much – I don't want to praise the government too much lest anyone get the wrong impression – it's certainly far better than the job-creation tax credit they originally proposed. So good on them for doing that.

What I would quarrel with in this bill is the scope of the tax credit itself and the amount of the tax credit that is available. Given the economic challenges facing our province, given the desire for us to attract business to broaden Alberta's economy in a very challenging time – and I say this as a member representing Calgary-Elbow and Calgary facing more than 10 per cent unemployment. Our province as a whole facing unemployment above 8 per cent is a huge issue for the people all over this province. There are people I have talked with who have done all of the right things in their life. They've gone to school, they've tried hard, they have started a career, they've raised children, they've invested in a home, and they find themselves out of work. They say: this was not the plan. They're not out of work through any fault of their own. They're out of work because of an unfortunate circumstance.

Certainly, a lot of that has to do with the global economic downturn, with the energy rout that has gone on and on and on. I would suggest that it's exacerbated by government policy and made worse, but this bill and this idea of an investor tax credit can undo some of that damage, can turn that around and get Albertans working again and get business investment happening again. Things like the PPA lawsuits certainly don't help. They drive investment away. Ideas like this and tax credits like this can in fact create economic activity and create jobs and create prosperity for Albertans, but I would suggest that \$90 million over three years, \$30 million a year, is far too low. What I would rather see is a substantially higher level of tax credit, perhaps in the nature of .05 per cent of GDP in the first year. That's \$150 million. That's a lot of money; there's no question. But if we genuinely want to get after it and really want to create and stimulate investment in this province, I think that's what we should be looking at. Frankly, I'm not certain how much impact a \$30 million tax credit is going to have. Is it even going to be measurable? Is it going to have an impact right away, or is it the sort of thing that over the course of years and years eventually we'll find that the economy has gradually broadened?

3:20

Speaking of broadening, the bill itself and the tax credit I think is too narrow. It's put the government in a position, put the NDs in a position of picking winners and losers and saying, "These are industries that are desirable and good, and those are industries we don't like." Frankly, I don't like that concept one bit. I think that really the only reasonable criteria ought to be: has this particular business been given money from government already? If the answer is no, then I think they should be eligible for this credit, and I think

that it should be relatively straightforward to apply for the investor tax credit as well.

The other question I had – and I'll thank the minister for his response to my note. The capital investment tax credit is a prequalification tax credit whereas the Alberta investor tax credit is first-come first-served. Now, prequalification: that actually makes a lot of sense when you're talking about capital projects. You may or may not choose to go ahead with the capital project based on whether or not you will in fact qualify for the credit. So in that vein it makes sense. But the investor tax credit being first-come, first-served, that could work, the problem being: what if it runs out early in the year? What if we get a flood of applications early on and the \$30 million is gone? Well, on one level, great news. We've got lots of folks investing, and that tax credit is all used up. That's great. But that tells me that there's more investment out there that could help diversify our economy, could help put Albertans back to work.

What if those businesses, those investors, had been counting on that tax credit and they find, "Uh-oh, we were the thirty-first million dollar spot"? They say: "You know what? That means the investment no longer makes sense. We're going to pull that back. We're going to put it into another province or we're simply not going to do it at all. We're going to keep the money in the bank." That's an unfortunate situation, and I'd be curious to know from the minister in the course of debate if this is something that his ministry has considered. Is it something that they've done some research and some work on to know whether \$30 million is the right number or, frankly, it was arbitrary? They picked it out of the air, and they just said: that sounds like a nice saleable figure; we'll use that.

So I would like to see the scale of this investor tax credit ramped up to be substantially higher than that \$90 million over three years number, which really is only \$30 million a year, obviously, and also the scope of it and the eligibility for the investor tax credit to be far broader than it is. I think in doing that, perhaps the government will in fact achieve its stated objectives of encouraging investment in the province.

Again, I'll remind the government that it is not only things like investor tax credits that will attract investment but the overall economic price for doing business in a particular jurisdiction. When you have corporate taxes going up as they have and when you have a government that seems willing to go to extreme measures to tear up old contracts, that doesn't help. That creates a very unfavourable investment climate, notwithstanding tax credits, because there's a fear that if a government decides in the future that these tax credits were perhaps not such a good idea, the government will just come and change the rules and take the money away from you. So I would really remind the government that these sorts of things – while it may feel good ideologically to go take on these big companies, I would encourage you to remember the impact that has on investor confidence. I would also encourage you to recognize that you're misguided in your perception of what these electricity companies are.

But staying on topic, I do think it's a positive, this bill. I have my concerns in areas. I'd like to see it expand, but generally I am in favour of it, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 30, the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. I'd like to thank the minister for his contribution. I hope to see more legislation in the vein of what we're potentially seeing here. Many of the actions that the government has taken to

date have not been helpful, and I'm optimistic that the legislation before us today will at least not make things worse, that it will in fact be helpful. So I wanted to thank the minister for his contribution to this.

Most of the things that this Legislature and this government have done to date have not been helpful, however. We've seen a 20 per cent increase to the business tax in this province, Madam Speaker. That has not incentivized a single person to come to Alberta. Not a single business has decided to come to Alberta because taxes went up 20 per cent on profits. Increases on income tax of up to 50 per cent for some income earners have not incentivized a single person to do business and invest in Alberta. The \$3 billion carbon tax, with the exception of a few corporate welfare recipients, has not incentivized anyone to do business in Alberta. The \$15 minimum wage is going to hurt business in Alberta, and the government suing itself with the PPA lawsuit significantly damages investor confidence in Alberta. These are actions that have significantly hurt the economy in this province.

But this particular bill has the potential to be positive, and we're going to have to proceed in more in-depth debate before we can assess if this bill is in fact going to be on the whole positive or not. I'm optimistic at this time. The bill establishes a capital investment tax credit and the Alberta investor tax credit. The intention is to attract more capital, more investment to Alberta, something that is desperately needed to create jobs in the province. I'm very happy to see that the government is acknowledging that if we don't have investment into this province, we are not going to see jobs created.

In the 1990s this province had by far the most business investment in the country, many, many times more than any other province on a per capita level. Even on a gross level we were in the same ballpark as Quebec and Ontario. That is an amazing fact, Madam Speaker. But we have seen investment very much dry up in this province, and it is important that we take measures to try to attract some of that capital back.

Now, I have some concerns, some very real concerns about this bill, and we're going to be asking serious questions of this government and of the minister of economic development and diversification. If we can get real and substantive answers, if the minister participates fully in the debates and we can get the answers that we require, then I am hopeful that we could find some level of consensus on the bill.

One of my major concerns with this bill, however, is that it is overly targeted and sectoral and prescriptive rather than broad-based economic policy. Good economic policy does not have the government deciding which sectors are to gain and which sectors are not to gain because the sectors that do not gain from a policy but still pay taxes are therefore subsidizing the other sectors or businesses that do receive the benefit. It is a form of robbing Peter to pay Paul. We're very concerned that the legislation targets some specific sectors rather than the economy as a whole.

The legislation targets proprietary technology research, development and commercialization, interactive digital media development, video postproduction, digital media, and tourism. Now, these are all very important parts of Alberta's economy, and these are all sectors that we want to encourage growth in. I'm very concerned, however, if we are only targeting these sectors, because if you provide a benefit to some sectors but not others, those other sectors still have to pay the taxes and therefore subsidize other sectors of the economy. That is not good economic policy, Madam Speaker.

3:30

I hope that the minister will take heed of this. There is a lot of merit in an investor tax credit. That's a concept that I believe the

Official Opposition can get behind, but it is very concerning if it is targeted only at some sectors. You know, when there are two businesses in downtown Brooks and one can qualify – downtown Brooks is bigger than you think, Madam Speaker. When two businesses, side by side, are looking to invest and expand their operations but only one can qualify and the other cannot even though they might be investing the same amount of money – they might be looking to hire the same number of new employees, they might be looking to do almost identical things, but one is included in the sectors that are included in the legislation and the other one is not – that is not fair. That is actually limiting the potential economic development and new jobs that we're creating in this province. These sectors need to be supported, but good economic policy should be broad based and not sector specific as much as we can help it.

Another concern is that one of the sectors listed here is development and commercialization. On the plus side, that's a pretty broad thing. We're arguing for broad-based public policies, but it is an ill-defined area that is eligible for these tax credits. Development and commercialization are very ill-defined in the legislation, and I hope that the minister can perhaps explain and discuss that in some more detail.

Now, the cost to the treasury of this is substantial, at \$165 million. As the Member for Calgary-Elbow has pointed out, we could very well potentially want significantly more than that, but \$165 million is still a very substantial cost to the treasury. When we are engaging in tax expenditures of this kind, we need to be doing so very carefully and very deliberately, with all of the information possible at our fingertips. When we are spending \$165 million in a tax expenditure like this, we need an economic impact study. We should not be passing major economic policies or major expenditures or tax expenditures as a Legislature and as a government without having all of the information available.

The government claims that the CITC and the AITC will create up to \$700 million of investment, and I sincerely hope that that is true. I hope that we will get there, but I have not yet seen any math or evidence or studies of any substance to support that. I am hopeful, but we need evidence. We need more than a news release claiming that it will be so. I'm asking that the minister engage in debate, answer these questions, and provide an economic impact study on what he hopes the CITC and the AITC will achieve.

I'm also very concerned by the potential for the arbitrary use of power in the minister's role in this bill. There is a hard cap of \$165 million. While that is positive in that it limits the cost of the program, it also gives the minister potentially the power to pick which applicants are to receive this credit and which ones are not. This is not an open-ended tax expenditure program, say, you know – remember the children's sports tax credits federally. I think there were about a hundred tax credits passed federally at some point for various purposes. These things can get out of hand if we have too many tax credits.

Those were open-ended programs, where, if you qualified, you did receive the credit. That is not necessarily so in this case if I understand the legislation correctly. It is that those eligible to receive the credit will not necessarily actually get the credit because there is a hard cap of \$165 million, and the minister himself will play some role in determining, if there are more applicants than money available, who will get it. That is always very concerning, to give that kind of power to politicians.

It will not necessarily happen, Madam Speaker, but I'd be very concerned about voting to give power to a minister to say: I like this company, but I don't like this company. Perhaps this business has endorsed the government policy at some point and given them kind of cover, and this business has been a pain to the government, and

they're not going to get a tax credit. Or perhaps it could be what constituency a business is in. This business is in a government constituency, and this business is in an opposition constituency or a swing constituency.

Political considerations should not be a part of this kind of decision-making. While no one is accusing the government of doing it – they have not done it; the legislation has not passed – I would be very concerned about giving those kinds of powers to a minister. That kind of decision-making will inevitably creep in even if the minister has the very best of intentions, as I'm sure he does. When you give politicians that kind of arbitrary power without proper oversight, abuses of that power become extremely difficult to prevent.

I am certainly open to supporting this bill, and I am optimistic that this legislation will, on net, be positive, but we need more information, and I hope that the minister will be in the Chamber for the entirety of this debate to participate in the debate, particularly when we get to Committee of the Whole and the back and forth and the questions that we have, the amendments that we are likely to present. If the minister will deal in good faith with the Official Opposition and, I believe, all opposition parties, then there is a chance that we can come to some kind of consensus. As rare as that happens to be on these kinds of pieces of legislation, we might actually get to it from time to time.

I look forward to further debate and the minister's responses to our concerns. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I wanted to follow up with the member about one item that he spoke of specifically and especially since he is the Wildrose critic for Finance as well.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** It's minister now. [interjections]

**Mr. Sucha:** Oh, right. Shadow minister.

Anyway, as he spoke to this, he said that he wasn't very fond of sector-specific tax credits, that were specific to one area. When I was in university, I actually studied television broadcasting, and that is a sector that needs sector-specific tax credits to actually stay competitive. In fact, you study about these tax credits and how to leverage them as well to really help to promote the industry. The industry has a lot of growth, it's very dynamic, and it's a very competitive industry. You really want to bring it into this province. Our province has a very competitive tax credit system for television and film, which has helped for many great series like *Fargo* to be filmed here as well.

So this creates a lot of concern for me, and I would hope that the hon. member can clarify some things. Would it be the Wildrose's stance to eliminate this tax credit if they are not a fan of sector-specific tax credits?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Calgary-Shaw for the question. As now I've been appointed a minister, I'm getting used to answering questions in the House.

Thank you for the question. It's an interesting, reasonable, and good example that he's brought forward: sector-specific tax credits, like we have for television and for movie production. As a basic rule we want to avoid sector-specific tax credits. They do distort the marketplace. There is a role for them from time to time. We should

not be dogmatic or overly ideological about these things, but as a basic principle of good economic and fiscal policy, that's something that we want to avoid.

When we go down the road of sector-specific tax credits, it gets very easy to riddle the tax code and make it more complicated, more distortionary. If we have an overall high basic corporate income tax rate and then we decide that now we're going to provide sector-specific tax credits for one industry, the lobbying effort to amend the tax code both on the business and the personal income tax sides to favour every other specific industry gets very intense. In Washington, D.C., the lobbying industry exists primarily to influence the tax code, and similar situations exist in the lobbying industry in Ottawa and to a lesser extent here in Alberta. In Alberta we're blessed to have, compared to other jurisdictions, a relatively simple tax code.

3:40

**Mr. Cooper:** It was even more simple before.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** It used to be more simple, Madam Speaker, and we have committed to making it more simple again.

As a basic rule we want our tax code to be as simple as possible. It is sometimes reasonable and pragmatic to have some kind of carve-out, some kind of sector-specific tax credit. We should not be so dogmatic as to say that we would never do that, but we want to be very cautious when we're doing that.

We also have to think: what is the goal of that tax credit? Every government program, every tax expenditure, every government spending program should always have a goal, a measurable goal, attached to it. I believe the goal we're trying to achieve here is economic development, investment, and economic diversification, and there are sectors of the economy that would certainly be positive for us to grow as part of economic diversification which are not listed here.

So if we're trying to consider: "What is the goal of this piece of legislation? How can we cast as wide a net as possible to achieve the goal?" I believe the intent of the legislation here is of good intent that, I know, the Official Opposition, the government, and the Member for Calgary Elbow have so far supported. How are we going to achieve that? How are we going to measure that? I think that the way we've defined the sectors here is still overly narrow, overly prescriptive, and if we can broaden that definition to more sectors of the economy, there's a better chance that we can find consensus on this piece of legislation.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any more under 29(2)(a)? No?

Then I will recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. Although I applaud the sentiment and intentions of this bill and thank the minister for presenting it to this Legislature, sadly even the title of this bill may mislead Albertans. This bill invests in Alberta at the most nominal level, and the government, sadly, isn't even committed to its own program on a long-term, go-forward basis. We need that stability to attract long-term investment and hence jobs. This government has taken what was originally actually a very good idea and transformed it into some sort of a Franken-program, pardon the term. It has been mentioned to the minister in the past.

**Dr. Starke:** That's my term.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Oh, that's his term. Halloween was a few weeks ago, I think.

These tax credits were suggested in April while the Calgary Chamber, Calgary Economic Development, and many other groups have been calling for this for months, so we're glad to see it. Our caucus promoted the idea of introducing a small-business venture capital tax credit program in our Engage document, released earlier this year. We do believe in this initiative. Certainly, that is the thing that we can agree on. Something needed to be done to overcome a decided lack of investor confidence in our province.

Venture capital tax credits are an excellent way to connect investors with small to medium-sized businesses and, when done properly, offer an exceptional return on investment for the issuing government. However, therein lies the problem. The program needs to be developed, implemented, and supported in such a way to initiate and maintain long-term investment and thereby success. It does absolutely no one any good to commit a small sum of money for a short period of time in the hopes that some kind of magic and hope will take care of the rest over the long term.

I'm not always prone to throwing out kudos to British Columbia, but British Columbia has an excellent venture capital tax program. Between 2001 and 2008 every dollar issued as a tax credit generated \$1.98 in provincial tax revenue. I would argue that that's a pretty good investment for Albertans. During that same period \$256 million in tax credits issued attracted over \$2.3 billion in equity investments. These investments helped not just create but leverage new, stable, long-term jobs while strengthening that province's economy. We should be taking heed and building and improving upon the success that their program has yielded. Unfortunately, this government has decided to introduce an inferior, made-in-Alberta, NDP-world-view vision that I hope we can improve upon.

You need look no further than the Alberta investor tax credit to see this. This tax credit only applies to companies who work in specific areas such as information technology, health technology, interactive digital media, and digital animation. Now, here's the first area where I have problems with this bill. I understand and appreciate that the government is trying to diversify the economy, and I support that endeavour always. Any and all economic growth is good for Alberta as long as it's sustainable. We agree on that. However, by limiting this tax credit to an arbitrary group of sectors, as was mentioned by other hon. members earlier, this government has limited the potential success of this program and the opportunity for success for more Albertans and, dare I say, jobs for more Albertans.

This program should be available to all businesses in Alberta which employ fewer than a hundred people. Out of every 20 start-up companies, you can expect maybe one star which becomes a breakout success; three zombies, which are companies that are still alive but not growing; and 16 failures. This government is gambling this entire program, again a well-intentioned program, on hitting that one star out of the park rather than letting the market decide, as was, again, mentioned by earlier members. We need to be sure that we're not picking winners and losers. If only particular sectors that the minister likes or that this government likes or wishes to make winners are able to apply to this particular program, then the government is very openly and publicly picking winners and losers, again not letting the market and those private investors who are leveraging decide.

A vast number of businesses in Alberta are struggling right now. We all know that. I see it in my own constituency in strip malls, in the manufacturing sector, across all sectors, indeed. By opening this up to all small and medium-sized businesses, the government would be exponentially increasing the chance of success for this program,

and I would encourage them to do that. Obtaining early-stage venture capital is not an issue exclusive to burgeoning industries. Even small companies in the most developed sectors – oil, gas, agriculture, forestry – struggle with obtaining funding at that stage of development. Removing the sector restriction and extending the three-year window for the AITC program indefinitely would exponentially increase the success and reach of this program.

I'm all for developing new industries and moving towards a diversified economy. However, ignoring industries which have traditionally been successful in Alberta helps no one. These industries have been successful for a reason. They are the best prepared to create more jobs and attract further investment. This readiness is not restricted to any particular sector, Madam Speaker. Make no mistake; we need those jobs and that investment now, ready to execute, shovel ready, with both feet on the ground. However, we should be trying to encourage investment in businesses which have the potential to create and sustain jobs, those that are willing to put their own skin in the game and those investors along with them.

Emerging industries, which the government is heavily targeting, often take time to incubate, to get off the ground, to become sustainable, and to develop long-term success models. We should be assisting businesses in this process, not helping them initially and then running away once they start to become successful. The government has demonstrated an unlimited willingness to spend money. It would only make sense for them to contribute a relatively small sum of money, leveraged against the potential of a \$2 return on a \$1 investment, and this has been documented, of course, as noted in other jurisdictions.

With the program itself, this government has had months to consult with businesses and others to fine-tune this program, yet questions remain. Where are the parts of this bill that address exiting a small business or company if the partnership doesn't work out? What if small businesses merge, acquire? What if small businesses become successful and grow beyond a hundred employees? Hopefully, the minister will take the time to answer these questions over the course of debate, and I hope that he'll be open to positive amendments which will improve this legislation.

**3:50**

Now, if we move to the capital investment tax credit, again the government has taken what was initially an excellent idea and warped it. I think the NDP might call it bending a curve. As it stands now, the CITC will only apply to businesses in manufacturing, processing, and tourism infrastructure, industries which, I would argue, deserve our support, but why not extend it to all businesses in Alberta? Shouldn't the government be encouraging any and all capital investment in our province at this very difficult time in our economy? Is this not the same government which has budgeted for billions and billions of dollars of infrastructure spending? In the face of an economic downturn they feel this is the best way to stimulate the economy, but I would argue that leveraging private investment and other capital investment in our economy is a very successful way to increase economic investment and economic activity and jobs.

If you believe that, would it not make sense to leverage that private money to achieve the same results, to multiply that \$1 to create \$2 and maybe even higher leveraged results? In that way, you create a number of jobs at a fraction of the cost of a wholly publicly owned capital investment project. But that might be contrary to the NDP world view.

Again, the government is only half-heartedly committing to its own program. The CITC is a two-year investment of \$70 million. Why, Minister, only two years? Individual companies are able to

access \$5 million in tax credits through this program. If each year is \$35 million, that means there's potential for seven companies in a single year to eat up the allocated money. Again, the government has committed billions and billions of dollars to capital infrastructure projects which are still nothing more than a wish and a dream and in many cases do nothing to leverage the economy. Why not reallocate some of that money into this program so that the private dollars can be leveraged to build projects which are ready now while also helping Alberta businesses? Again, the private sector is much better at being shovel ready, with both feet on the ground.

Within the actual workings of the program itself our caucus has enormous concerns with the bureaucratic burden placed upon applicant businesses and individuals. In British Columbia, if you're claiming a venture capital tax credit, you simply enter the amount of the credit you're claiming onto two lines of your T1 income tax return: simple, transparent, and not caught up in red tape nor costs of administration. However, in Alberta this program will force investors or companies to apply to the minister – and I know the minister has better things to do – for his approval before they can claim the tax credit. To make it worse, the minister is able to rescind that approval of the tax credit, and there is no firm timeline in terms of responses from the minister nor the necessity for explanations from that minister.

We should be striving to make this program easier, perhaps working ever more closely with civic and regional economic development agencies, collaborating with regional tourism organizations, and making sector outreach across all sectors a key component of such capital or investor initiative. Madam Speaker, we need to make such programs, to encourage and leverage private and corporate investment, easier to access, not more difficult. I am hopeful that comments and amendments to improve this legislation from all members of this House will be welcomed to the benefit of all Albertans.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I just cannot comprehend why this government would do and embark on such a positive initiative half-heartedly and not commit fully to this program over the longer term and, in the process, make it very difficult to access for anyone who does not fit into the realm of the NDP world view.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to hear that generally there is support for this bill. I think it's really excellent for the province. I'm really excited about it. I did hear the member opposite speak about the B.C. program, which has been wildly successful for British Columbia. From 2001 to 2008 B.C. gave out \$191 million in venture capital tax credits. I'm wondering: would the member like to see a reduction in the AITC tax credit available in Alberta from \$30 million a year?

**Mr. Gotfried:** No. In fact, to the hon. member, thank you for the question. We'd like to see this program extended to a longer term period and committed to with enough money that it can be accessed not only by the restricted industries that are targeted but across all industries. When we're investing billions and billions of dollars in infrastructure, quite frankly, with \$1 equalling \$1, and we have an opportunity to take in a \$1 investment and leverage against investor and private capital and corporate capital to create \$2 in tax revenue, I think that that is an easy formula for us to take onboard.

I'm encouraging greater investment, so if there are any discrepancies in any dollars here, I think what we have from the B.C. example – again, I'd like to see a made-in-Alberta solution. Not everything that works there is going to work exactly as it does here, which is why we need to ensure we have the research in place to demonstrate what we can do. We will have that information and those statistics as we go forward if we have a well-developed and well-structured program that, hopefully, will yield similar if not better results to what we've seen in British Columbia.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm proud to stand up and speak today on Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. It's consisting of two new tax credits that will enable growth in small business and will support investment, entrepreneurs, and the criteria for both were developed in considerable consultation with businesses and investment leaders throughout Alberta.

The Alberta investor tax credit will refund 30 per cent on investments made by small businesses, support up to 4,400 new jobs over three years, and contribute up to \$500 million to our province's GDP. This bill is very broad. Any company engaged in development or commercialization can qualify for the AITC as a small business as well as including sectors that traditionally are not included in this type of bill.

Madam Speaker, we have consistently lagged behind other jurisdictions in Canada for too long both in terms of venture capital dollars invested and deal flow. B.C.'s small-business venture capital tax credit, that supports equity investments, has been in place since 1985, and our new Alberta investor tax credit includes many of the proven aspects used in that jurisdiction. Companies under the program in B.C. have faster revenue and employment growth than control samples, and by encouraging local investors to invest in Alberta, we will see Albertan companies expand, innovate, create jobs, and show small-business success during our current tough economic situation.

The Alberta investor tax credit will allow investors the option of investing directly and acquiring the tax credit, or they may choose to invest indirectly through funds such as registered venture capital corporations. In this way, Madam Speaker, the AITC is a de-risking tool that makes investing in Alberta more attractive and encourages the private sector to see the benefits of investing in nontraditional sectors, resulting in a more diversified economy here in Alberta. Investments will be eligible for this tax credit on investments as of April 14, 2016, and by making this available to Alberta businesses that have at least 80 per cent of assets in Alberta, we continue to support companies with a significant presence in Alberta.

Businesses that are substantially engaged in research and development, development of interactive digital media, and tourism, to name a few activities, will benefit substantially from this bill, Madam Speaker. In the riding of Stony Plain itself our small and medium businesses are one of the pillars of our communities. Having programs that are designed to benefit them will support our rural communities as it supplements existing programs and addresses existing gaps.

The second tax credit included in Bill 30 is the capital investment tax credit, which will support \$700 million worth of investment and

up to 4,600 direct and indirect jobs here in Alberta, and though there are companies that are struggling here in Alberta, private capital investment remains higher here than in any other province in Canada. As part of our jobs plan the capital investment tax credit will refund part of a business's costs for new machinery, equipment, and buildings, which can help increase a company's output, because "while government must play a key role, it's up to all Albertans to support our entrepreneurs," as Arlene Dickinson, CEO of District Ventures, points out. This tax credit will encourage large-scale capital projects by offering a 10 per cent nonrefundable tax credit of up to \$5 million, which is expected to incite \$10 million to \$40 million worth of exports province-wide.

4:00

Due to these challenging economic times and the global drop in the price of oil here and around the world we see lower cash flow, which can be boosted by investor confidence and timely investment decisions. Because the capital investment tax credit is not sector-specific, it will be available to companies across the province, industries such as manufacturing, processing, and tourism infrastructure that are making an investment of \$1 million or more. The activities identified have strong potential for growth in the current economic environment and over the long term. This includes much of the oil and gas supply chain as well as industries that have the potential to grow in the future. Through the short-term nature of the CITC we have the opportunity to re-evaluate the program as the economic situation evolves.

By continuing to promote diversification of our economy, supporting our employers and industry, and enabling entrepreneurs and job creators as well as encouraging investment in Alberta, we are demonstrating meaningful action on the economy in Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak on the bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon on what's been a spectacular week. I'd like to begin by congratulating the government for going a week without being found in contempt of the House. I would also like to start by congratulating the minister on Bill 30. My hon. colleague the independent Member for Calgary-Elbow mentioned the size of the bill. When you compare it to the first bill that the minister introduced, he's really made up for the one-page piece of legislation. I hope that this particular piece of legislation is significantly more successful than the last piece of legislation that the minister introduced.

You know, I was thinking this afternoon, Madam Speaker, about this piece of legislation and about the minister. Let me preface my comments, and I mean this in the most genuine way: I have nothing but the utmost respect for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**An Hon. Member:** But . . .

**Mr. Cooper:** I don't know if I would say but. [interjections] This is a serious matter, okay? There are children in the gallery, the cutest children ever to be in the gallery.

I was reminded of a song. As you know, Madam Speaker, from time to time I am reminded of songs, and this particular song is called *The Greatest*:

Little boy in a baseball hat  
Stands in the field with his ball and his bat

Says, "I am the greatest player of them all"

Puts his bat on his shoulder and he tosses up his ball.

And just for the sake of our analogy today, we can imagine the boy to be the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview in this particular case.

And the ball goes up and the ball comes down

Swings his bat all the way around

The world's so still you can hear the sound

The baseball falls to the ground.

We'll call that ball Bill 1. This, Madam Speaker, was really that, a strike, and it was unfortunate. But you know what?

Now the little boy doesn't say a word

Picks up his ball, he is undeterred

If there's one thing I can say about the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, that is true about him.

Says, "I am the greatest there has ever been"

And he grits his teeth and he tries it again.

And the ball goes up and the ball comes down

Swings his bat all the way around

The world's so still you can hear the sound

The baseball falls to the ground.

I know that this minister wasn't solely responsible, but we'll call that the carbon tax.

He makes no excuses, he shows no fear

He just closes his eyes and listens to the cheers.

We'll call that the backbench.

Little boy, he adjusts his hat, picks up his ball, stares at his bat

Says, "I am the greatest [in the land]"

And he gives his all one last time.

And the ball goes up like the moon so bright

Swings his bat with all his might

The world's as still as still can be

The baseball falls, and that's strike three.

Now it's supertime and his momma calls

Little boy starts home with his bat and ball

Says, "I am the greatest, that is a fact

But even I didn't know I could pitch like that!"

Madam Speaker, I often speak to the good people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills when they are disappointed or frustrated with this government. It's my hope that Bill 30 won't be strike 3 for the hon. member but will be a home run because I think it's important that we do our best. I often say to the folks in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that I want the government to do what's best for our province because I am an Albertan prior to a politician.

Now, we've seen some big swings and misses from this government, but as I said, I have nothing but the greatest respect for the minister, and here he is, taking another swing. It's my hope that he isn't found to be the greatest pitcher in the land but the greatest hitter in the land and hits one out of the park with Bill 30.

Now, we have heard some challenges around this particular piece of legislation, and I share many of those with my colleagues with respect to the reach of the investor tax credit. I share some concerns with my colleagues around limiting sectors with respect to this particular tax credit, but there are a number of things inside this piece of legislation that do provide some potential opportunity. I know that I have heard from some economic developers, some chambers who are voicing their support for this piece of legislation.

You know, it's been a good week, and I don't want to focus too much on the negative plight that we're currently in with respect to jobs, Madam Speaker, because I know that Albertans know very well where we are as a province.

It might sound like I am supporting this particular piece of legislation wholeheartedly. I would say that's a bit of an overstatement. I support



this legislation with some reservation, with some concerns, and I look forward to having those addressed at Committee of the Whole.

In the meantime I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

**4:10**

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As riveting as this afternoon has been, with some fascinating stories and very good initial debate, looking at the clock, I move that the House adjourn until Monday, November 21, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:11 p.m. to Monday, November 21, at 1:30 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to Thursday, November 10, 2016**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1 — Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading — 5 (*Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 685-91 (*Apr. 20, 2016 morn.*), 732-36 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft.*), 749-60 (*Apr. 21, 2016 aft.*), 825 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 987-95 (*May 18, 2016 morn.*), 1019-24 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1172 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1174-79 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cP-26.3 ]

### **Bill 2 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 96 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 162-67 (*Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 239-49 (*Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 251-59 (*Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1 ]

### **Bill 3 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 156 (*Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 157-62 (*Mar. 15, 2016 morn.*), 201 (*Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 239-49 (*Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 259-66 (*Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2 ]

### **Bill 4\* — An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading — 180 (*Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 285-88 (*Mar. 17, 2016 aft.*), 349-66 (*Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 378-84 (*Apr. 6, 2016 morn.*), 399-409 (*Apr. 6, 2016 aft.*), 415-28 (*Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 428-33 (*Apr. 7, 2016 morn.*), 450-55 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c10 ]

### **Bill 5 — Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading — 398 (*Apr. 6, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 455-56 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft.*), 491-505 (*Apr. 12, 2016 morn.*), 532-38 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 539-56 (*Apr. 13, 2016 morn.*), 570-77 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 577-83 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 cS-7.1 ]

### **Bill 6 — Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*), 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 519-27 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 527-32 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 583-85 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c13 ]

**Bill 7 — Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**

First Reading — 518 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 585-86 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft.*), 649-51 (*Apr. 19, 2016 morn.*), 682-84 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 820-24 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 902-903 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**

First Reading — 568 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 669-71 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft.*), 684 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 824-25 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 903-904 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c8 ]

**Bill 9 — An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**

First Reading — 568 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 640-49 (*Apr. 19, 2016 morn.*), 728-30 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 979-81 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1180-81 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c11 ]

**Bill 10 — Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 599 (*Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 671-82 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft.*), 691-703 (*Apr. 20, 2016 morn.*), 730-32 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 950-51 (*May 17, 2016 morn.*), 1041-49 (*May 19, 2016 morn.*), 1077-81 (*May 24, 2016 morn.*), 1103-13 (*May 24, 2016 aft.*), 1115-23 (*May 24, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1124 (*May 24, 2016 eve.*), 1197-99 (*May 26, 2016 morn.*), 1263-85 (*May 30, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c17 ]

**Bill 11 — Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016 (Bilous)**

First Reading — 773 (*May 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 907-908 (*May 12, 2016 aft.*), 971-79 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1012-18 (*May 18, 2016 aft.*), 1024 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1068-69 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c4 ]

**Bill 12 — Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Feehan)**

First Reading — 802 (*May 3, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 904-907 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 985-87 (*May 18, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1069 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c3 ]

**Bill 13 — Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016 (Gray)**

First Reading — 872 (*May 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 965-71 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1024-25 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1069 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c15 ]

**Bill 14 — Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**

First Reading — 872 (*May 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 983-85 (*May 18, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1076-77 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1077 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c9 ]

**Bill 15 — An Act to End Predatory Lending (McLean)**

First Reading — 901 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1062-67 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1153-57 (*May 25, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1172 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2016 cE-9.5 ]

**Bill 16\* — Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**

First Reading — 921 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1067-68 (*May 19, 2016 aft.*), 1071-75 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157-63 (*May 25, 2016 aft.*), 1197 (*May 26, 2016 morn., adjourned*), 1219-23 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1223-25 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c14 ]

**Bill 17 — Appropriation Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 950 (*May 17, 2016 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 995-1000 (*May 18, 2016 morn., adjourned*), 1025-29 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1031-41 (*May 19, 2016 morn.*), 1070 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1096-1103 (*May 24, 2016 aft.*), 1113 (*May 24, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c5 ]

**Bill 18 — An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring (Phillips)**

First Reading — 964-65 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1125-35 (*May 25, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1191-97 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1199-1205 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 30, 2016; SA 2016 c7 ]

**Bill 19 — Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1011 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1135-40 (*May 25, 2016 morn.*), 1153 (*May 25, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1171-72 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1173 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cR-8.5 ]

**Bill 20\* — Climate Leadership Implementation Act (\$) (Phillips)**

First Reading — 1095 (*May 24, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1163-70 (*May 25, 2016 aft.*), 1173-74 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1181-90 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1288-98 (*May 31, 2016 morn.*), 1311-21 (*May 31, 2016 aft.*), 1338-56 (*May 31, 2016 eve.*), 1357-72 (*Jun. 1, 2016 morn.*), 1405-07 (*Jun. 1, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1408-24 (*Jun. 1, 2016 eve.*), 1425-42 (*Jun. 2, 2016 morn.*), 1458-61 (*Jun. 2, 2016 aft.*), 1479-91 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft.*), 1493-1541 (*Jun. 6, 2016 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1541-43 (*Jun. 6, 2016 eve.*), 1545-57 (*Jun. 7, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c16 ]

**Bill 21 — Modernized Municipal Government Act (Larivee)**

First Reading — 1310 (*May 31, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1583-96 (*Nov. 1, 2016 morn.*), 1624-28 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft.*), 1634-41 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 22 — An Act to Provide for the Repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Ceremonial Objects (Miranda)**

First Reading — 1219 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 23 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**

First Reading — 1454 (*Jun. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1478 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1478 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1479 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016; SA 2016 c18 ]

**Bill 24\* — Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016 (Carlier)**

First Reading — 1571-72 (*Oct. 31, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1609-24 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft.*), 1629-34 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1786-91 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft.*), 1797-1806 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1849-54 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn., adjourned*)

**Bill 25 — Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act (Phillips)**

First Reading — 1606 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1641-43 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn.*), 1677-89 (*Nov. 3, 2016 morn.*), 1703-13 (*Nov. 3, 2016 aft.*), 1754-61 (*Nov. 8, 2016 morn.*), 1776-86 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft.*), 1806-09 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn.*), 1826-35 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft.*), 1854-60 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn., adjourned*)

**Bill 26 — Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act (Littlewood)**

First Reading — 1659 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1660-69 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1669-73 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1673-76 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

**Bill 27 — Renewable Electricity Act (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)**

First Reading — 1701 (*Nov. 3, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1747-54 (*Nov. 8, 2016 morn.*), 1835-42 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 28 — Public Health Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**

First Reading — 1726 (*Nov. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1793-97 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1843-47 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 29 — Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act (McLean)**

First Reading — 1774 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1823-25 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1847-48 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 30 — Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act (\$) (Bilous)**

First Reading — 1774 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1873-81 (*Nov. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 31 — Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 201 — Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading — 92 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 119-32 (*Mar. 14, 2016 aft.*), 303-304 (*Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 202 — Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**

First Reading — 92 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 305-16 (*Apr. 4, 2016 aft.*), 470-73 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 203 — Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**

First Reading — 280 (*Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 473-83 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities*)

**Bill 204 — Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**

First Reading — 468 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 616-30 (*Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 205\* — Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 707 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 839-50 (*May 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 924-31 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 931-34 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2017; SA 2016 c12 ]

**Bill 206\* — Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (Goehring)**

First Reading — 902 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1241-49 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1249-55 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1255-57 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016; SA 2016 cP-19.7 ]

**Bill 207 — Veterinary Profession (Clear and Timely Price Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2016 (Cortes-Vargas)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 208 — Occupational Health and Safety (Protection from Workplace Harassment) Amendment Act, 2016 (Coolahan)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill Pr1 — Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**

First Reading — 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1171 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1197 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1219 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 ]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 21, 2016

Day 49

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

### Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
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Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
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Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
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Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
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Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
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Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
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Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
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Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

#### Party standings:

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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### **Executive Council**

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Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 21, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us bow our heads and reflect and pray, each in our own way. Let us remember those who served our province in earlier years and who have now passed on. As current MLAs it is important that we learn from the experience of those before us and use that information to establish better public policy in service of our citizens.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute on the first day to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met. With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of the families who shared the burdens of public office and public service.

**Mr. John McKenzie Thompson**  
March 22, 1924, to November 1, 2016

**The Speaker:** John Thompson served as the Member for Cardston for three terms, from 1975 to 1986. Born in California, Mr. Thompson spent most of his life in Spring Coulee, Alberta, running the family farm. In 1943 Mr. Thompson returned to the United States to enlist in the U.S. army. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge and was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service. After the war he served as a school trustee for the Cardston divisional school board for eight years and then for 11 years as a Member of this Legislative Assembly.

**Ms Bonnie Mary Sheila Laing**  
March 30, 1937, to November 11, 2016

**The Speaker:** Bonnie Laing served as the Member for Calgary-Bow from 1989 to 2001. Prior to her election Ms Laing was an elementary school teacher for 26 years. During her service as a member Ms Laing's leadership abilities resulted in her chairing the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, the Calgary housing committee, the Calgary caucus, and the health system funding review committee. Ms Laing received the Alberta centennial medal in 2005.

In a moment of silent reflection I ask you to remember Mr. Thompson and Ms Laing as you may have known them.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark. I would invite all to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please be seated.

## Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly 33 brilliant students from St. Alphonsus elementary and junior high school. They're accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Sheila Crane and Miss Kailee Smith. I would ask them to please rise now and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of employees from the Advanced Education ministry. As a former public servant myself I know that the public service is filled with talented and dedicated individuals, none more so than the people who work for the Ministry of Advanced Education. I ask that they please rise as I read their names. We have with us today Susan Latham, Eric Martin, Mary Ann Haylalapit, Kelly Wiens, and Sue Gadag. I ask that all members of the Assembly give them the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today? Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my hon. colleague for Edmonton-Decore I'd like to welcome the students and staff of St. Vladimir school. The teachers who are here today are Dan Slupek and Vanessa Sibilla. I ask that the students and staff of St. Vladimir please stand and be recognized by this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups?

I would then recognize the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we mark the beginning of Restorative Justice Week in Canada, it gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two dedicated individuals who are here on behalf of Alberta's Restorative Justice Association. I'll ask that they rise as I say their names and remain standing to the end. Jan Moran is the treasurer with the board of directors and has been a member of the association for 10 years. Fernande Bergeron is the secretary of the board and has been with the association for three years. The association provides information, education, and awareness towards best practices in restorative justice in Alberta. I would ask that the Assembly give them the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all the members of our Assembly representatives from the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation. Earlier this fall I met with the teams and these folks, who are committed and passionate advocates who work every day to support Canadians living with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. There's no cure for this devastating disease that causes scarring on the lungs and makes it more difficult to breathe each and every day.

Thank you to our guests for your tireless efforts. I'd ask that you all please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, do you have a second group?

**Loyola:** Indeed I do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the Committee on Political Action at AUPE. Farris Sobhani and fellow committee members Mike Dempsey, Bruce Macdonald, Danielle Nadeau McMillan, Dustin Abbott, Henry Wakoluk, Ed Mullin, Peter Snowdon, Bill West, and John Lomas are committed to social action and promoting meaningful democratic participation. I'd ask Farris and all members of the Committee on Political Action at AUPE to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly individuals from two amazing groups who are here today to celebrate Career Month in Alberta, the Career Development Association of Alberta, or CDAA, and Women Building Futures. Career Month is a chance for Albertans to encourage and celebrate lifelong learning, career development, and professional achievement. The CDAA is a professional association of 300 proud members dedicated to providing employment and career services to a broad range of organizations, including government, nonprofits, and indigenous agencies. I'm very pleased that the CDAA's executive director, Paula Wischoff Yerama, could join us today as we celebrate their important work. We also applaud the work of Women Building Futures to encourage and support women to enter apprenticeships and careers in nontraditional trades and occupations. We welcome Kathy Kimpton, who is the new CEO. I would ask my guests to please rise and remain standing to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the staff team of Workplaces, an exciting new small business in the Edmonton-Meadowlark constituency. I'm very proud to introduce Bruce Baker, president and founder; Mitch Cammidge, managing partner; and Jen Garrison, business development lead. I want to commend Workplaces on their commitment to innovation, strategic planning, and partnership. Their approach to improving operational efficiencies and standards in business management will certainly contribute to positive growth in our business sector. I would ask that they please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests? Red Deer-South.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly individuals from three more amazing groups who are here today to celebrate Career Month. Today we have with us Julian Daly and

Eric Bishop from Boyle Street Community Services, Shirley McBride from the McBride Career Group, and Steve McGean from the Bredin Centre for Learning. I would now ask my guests to receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly by rising.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House Mr. Nolan Raber and his wife, Kayanne. If they could stand and please receive the warm welcome of the House. They are from my fine constituency of Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Any other guests?

**Mr. Loewen:** One more, yes. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House Erika Schofield, who is our receptionist and assistant in the Wildrose office. We see her lovely face every time we walk in in the morning, and it's great to see her here today. If you could rise and please accept the warm welcome of the house.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

## Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

### Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC July 20, 1956, to October 13, 2016

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month all Albertans were united in grief and remembrance after the untimely and unspeakably tragic passing of former Premier Jim Prentice. In this House, where Jim served briefly but very well, the remembrance continues. We hear his name often wherever colleagues gather. Today I add my voice to theirs and remember with sadness and with gratitude a remarkable Albertan and a remarkable leader. On a personal level I am grateful for the friendly, thoughtful advice he shared with me during the transition of government, and my gratitude is shared on a much broader level. The people of Alberta and Canada have much to be grateful for a life that lived for public service.

Indigenous people found in him a genuine and sincere champion. Banking and industry courted his agile and practical business mind. Environmentalists could relate to the man, who called himself a green Tory. As the federal minister of environment he oversaw the greatest expansion of our national park system in almost 100 years. He also was an advocate for new pipelines to bring Alberta's energy to the world because Jim Prentice believed that people are equally served by the protection of our environment and by the progress of responsible development.

Still others recognized his commitment to human dignity, saw his empathy turned into action, and experienced his graciousness firsthand. Through education, hard work, and a vocation for making a difference, Jim Prentice left the coal mines of Alberta for the floor of the House of Commons, to the boardrooms of the nation, and, ultimately, for room 307 of the Alberta Legislature as our 16th Premier. But wherever he was, Jim Prentice carried with him his love of Alberta and his vision of our province's potential. It is why he volunteered in his community, it's why he supported the Children's Cottage through the Jim Prentice-Stephen Ames golf tournament for kids, and why he helped found the Calgary Police Foundation.

Jim Prentice cared passionately about restoring a relationship of respect between the government of Alberta and our province's indigenous people, and he was determined as well to restore a professional public service for the benefit of all Albertans. I'm honoured to be able to carry both of these priorities forward. As Premier he also introduced the first version of Alberta's child benefit plan to reduce inequality. Here, too, we are honoured to have been able to build on this initiative.

When a dedicated public servant is cut down in the prime of his life, it is a reminder to us all that in the sometimes rough world of politics we must never lose sight of the humanity, the dedication, and the contribution of each of our colleagues. It is a charge to us all to carry forward the best of Premier Prentice's work, and that is exactly what all of us in this Legislature, I believe, are determined to do, Mr. Speaker. I believe that it is one of the best ways that we can pay a lasting tribute to the Premier we all knew as a friendly, thoughtful, and dedicated leader and dedicated public servant. I believe that seeing his legacy in action will be a continuing comfort to the Prentice family and indeed to all Albertans.

We also remember that his final flight was not made alone. Other families are grieving, and we share our thoughts and our condolences with them in their sorrow. I ask this House to remember all the victims of this tragedy, including the one we knew best, Jim Prentice: leader and friend, Premier and visionary, and always a proud Albertan.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jean:** I rise today to pay respect to the life and legacy of my former colleague Jim Prentice. Jim had a storied career in politics that took him from his home province of Alberta, that he loved so much, to Ottawa for seven years, but I know that his heart, even in Ottawa, was always here in Alberta. At the federal level it was an honour to serve with him in caucus and to run against him provincially in the 2015 election. I always respected that at his core it was his love for his province that called him to serve. Jim was also a good hockey player, and we spent more than a few Tuesday nights in Ottawa playing some very aggressive shinny.

What I respected the most, though, about Jim was the love that he had for his family, and that is the gaping hole that has been left behind with his sudden passing. Everyone in this House here today knows that a life in public service isn't meaningful without also having an excellent home life. That is what grounds you and reminds you of why we serve here. Jim never lost sight of that, and he never lost sight of being a great husband, a great father, an excellent grandfather, and a pillar of his community. He was so proud of his children and his grandchildren.

My heart aches for Jim's wife, Karen, his daughters and their two partners, and, of course, his two grandchildren. A sudden loss of any family member is never easy, but my prayer is that the memory you have of Jim provides you with comfort during this exceedingly difficult time.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the three other men that were lost in the plane crash and their families and their loved ones, who are also grieving from this sudden, tremendous loss in their lives.

1:50

In this Chamber and federally Jim demonstrated the nobility of public service. In the coming days, weeks, months, and years I will be guided by that legacy of civility and serving for the betterment of all Albertans.

Jim, we miss you, and we will continue to try our best to make our province, that you loved so much, even better tomorrow than it is today.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent from the House to provide an opportunity for a representative of the Progressive Conservative Party as well as the MLAs for Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Elbow to respond to the ministerial statement.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to thank the hon. Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition for your touching tributes. I'm honoured to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and Progressive Conservatives across Alberta to remember the Hon. Jim Prentice. His death last month came as a terrible and incredible shock to all who knew him. Even today it's just a little bit hard to believe he's not here with us.

We've had a few weeks now to reflect upon the man that Jim was and the remarkable legacy that he left behind. From Jim's humble roots in the coal mines of the Crowsnest Pass to serving as Alberta's 16th Premier, Jim's values of faith, family, and public service guided every day of his life. While he may have spent his first 12 years in Ontario, it's well known that he quickly fell in love with Alberta when his family came here in search of a better life.

It was this love for our province and its people that fuelled his relentless pursuit of leaving everything he became involved with just a little bit better than he found it. Whether it was as Prime Minister Stephen Harper's right-hand man, minister of the environment that he cared so much about, minister of Indian affairs and northern development that he cared so much about, vice-president of the CIBC, or the 16th Premier of Alberta, Jim's drive was always aimed to make those things better than he found them. I believe that it was his innate ability to bring other people together for a common purpose that helped him achieve that very goal.

Mr. Speaker, I experienced this first-hand following the PC leadership campaign in 2014. Despite the fact that Jim and I were rivals in this contest, he invited me to be part of his cabinet after the votes were tallied because, to him, doing the best for Albertans meant putting political differences aside and working together. The Member for Calgary-West sometimes says that he is here as a direct result of Jim Prentice.

Mr. Speaker, Jim showed all of us that doing the right thing isn't always easy and isn't always popular, but that should never stop any of us from trying to do the right thing. He dedicated his life to trying, and in my humble opinion, Alberta has gained much from Jim's efforts.

Our thoughts continue to be with Jim's wife, Karen, their daughters, grandchildren, and the entire Prentice family, and the families of three others whose lives were lost at the same time as Jim lost his. Words cannot express how sorry we are for all of those families and their loved ones.

Our hearts break for the loss of a leader who had so very much left to give. Rest in peace, Jim.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The passing of Jim Prentice and three others in the tragic airplane crash last month is a loss to us all. Jim's story is quintessentially Canadian, the blue-collar son of a hockey player who worked the mines to pay for law school, a lawyer who chose to direct his career towards the most challenging and perhaps least glamorous area of Canadian law, helping First Nations. Jim was a statesman whose principles

demanding his participation in the public sphere, both federal and provincial, and whose talent brought him to the highest levels. Above all, Jim was an Albertan who saw his province in need and returned to make peace where there was division and unrest.

Jim and I disagreed on many things – after all, he was a Conservative and I'm a Liberal – but our ridings overlapped, and on the occasions where we worked together, I saw what so many had. Jim was kind, earnest, hard working, intelligent. His constituents had no greater advocate than Jim.

For Jim's family he was a devoted father and husband rather than the great politician the rest of us knew, and his passing is certainly one of personal tragedy. Their home is a stone's throw from my own, and I know our community has mourned with the family. Words, of course, are insufficient, but please know that you, the family of Jim, are in our hearts, thoughts, and prayers.

The world is changing quickly, and there are tumultuous times ahead for Alberta and for all of Canada. Jim's passing has taken from us someone whose guidance, patience, and experience will be missed sorely. I believe, though, that his legacy as coal miner turned lawyer turned statesman will inspire in us all a belief that we're all in this together, and it is celebrating our differences, not trumpeting our similarities, which makes Jim Prentice's Canada strong and free.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise to recognize the life and contribution of former Premier Jim Prentice. I want to first send my most heartfelt condolences to his wife, Karen, his daughters, his grandchildren as well as his family and legislative colleagues both in this House and in Ottawa. I also want to remember the three other families who lost loved ones in this terrible tragedy.

Jim's life was dedicated to serving the people of Alberta and Canada. He believed in the importance of political engagement, whether that was through volunteering in his community as a young man, seeking elected office, or working as a lawyer, where he turned his talents to helping people who needed his expertise. Throughout his legal career he fought for the rights of those around him, whether it was through land claims negotiations while working closely with First Nations, working with the Sikh community to build a gurdwara in northeast Calgary, or defending the rights of same-sex couples across Canada. Jim Prentice was a man who held the courage of his convictions. He was one of the few Conservatives to vote in favour of same-sex marriage in the face of strong opposition. He did so because he knew it was right.

He was more a traditional legislator than a true politician, which perhaps is the highest compliment that could be paid in a time of increasing polarization. He believed politics should be used to influence policy, not just win the day for the sake of power for power's sake.

Jim was also a mentor to many young people, and that mentorship continued after his political career because he knew he could help young people become the leaders of tomorrow to keep our province and our country strong.

Through his tireless efforts Jim Prentice left a legacy that will benefit Canadians for generations to come. He will never be forgotten.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, on your collective behalf I have been in communication at various times over the last weeks with the Prentice family. As we all have appreciated in your comments today, they've experienced extraordinary grief. The family has

asked that I express to you their appreciation for the kind remarks they have received from all parts of the House. It meant very much to them. I indicated to them that at any point in the future when they have the strength to come back to this House, I would be facilitating that process. So from the family to all of you: thank you.

## Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Deaths of Children in Kinship Care

**Mr. Jean:** Serenity was a shy girl with dark hair and big brown eyes. She was active and liked to climb and play. But after being placed in kinship care and despite the repeated warnings of Serenity's birth mom, Serenity died bruised, beaten, malnourished, and suffering from hypothermia at only four years old. She was a victim of a broken system, a system that has time and time again been promised to be reformed, to be fixed without any success. To the Premier: what are you going to do to ensure Serenity's story of suffering is never ever repeated in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for raising this matter. This is a very serious matter. There's not a soul who could have read the story that he describes and not been moved and deeply troubled by the experience of that child. I know that there are a lot of people who spent this weekend being very, very, very troubled by that story.

We are continuing to do the work that we think is necessary to improve the role of the provincial government in protecting all young people in the province. A lot of work has already happened since that particular tragedy took place, but it doesn't mean that it's done. It's not done; it's ongoing, and we all have to work together to bring about success.

**Mr. Jean:** The injustice of Serenity's final year wasn't laid out in the Child and Youth Advocate's report, it wasn't highlighted by the Justice department, and we have yet to see the medical examiner's report. The fact is that we know what we do today about Serenity because of an *Edmonton Journal* column. A system that operates in secrecy is going to continue to fail our children. To the Premier: where was the report from the medical examiner, where was the report from the Justice department, and why didn't the Child and Youth Advocate present the full picture of Serenity's life in care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for those questions. Indeed, those were the questions that I asked myself when I read the report in the *Edmonton Journal*, but unfortunately what we are advised is that because the matter is still under active criminal investigation, the medical examiner was asked not to disclose or release the report. Hence, the OCYA went off and wrote the report that he did. Work continues on this matter, and we are committed to ensuring that the tragedies experienced not only by Serenity but by other children in the system are properly addressed.

**Mr. Jean:** While in opposition this Premier highlighted the fundamental job of protective services, and I quote from her: "We care for those who are least able to care for themselves." Serenity was not taken care of. Serenity was physically and sexually abused by those who were supposed to care for her. She was 18 pounds

when she died, and this happened in part because in the final 11 months of Serenity's life no workers checked in on her. To the Premier: what immediate steps and changes will be made to the system so that what happened to Serenity never happens again to another child in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, those are very appropriate questions. I'm advised that after that event occurred, indeed, work has already been ongoing to improve oversight of kinship care placements, to increase resources in that area. As you would know, our government put more money into that area in the last budget because we know that this is a big problem and that more work needs to be done. We will be vigilant, and I know that the people who work on the front lines try every day to keep children safe, and all Albertans need to be focused on that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### Electricity Power Purchase Agreements

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you. When last we sat, the Leader of the Opposition asked the Premier an easy question, one that she should have answered with ease and confidence. She should have shown that she understands that when governments talk about using legislation to change 16-year-old contracts, investors get worried and avoid Alberta. So let me repeat the question: will the Premier assure investors that she won't turn Alberta into a banana republic that uses legislation to forcibly rewrite long-standing contracts?

**Ms Notley:** Well, I think, Mr. Speaker, that one thing we all do know is that if there is ever a situation where on one side corporations are looking for massive profits and on the other side stand the people of Alberta, we're pretty clear on where the folks on that side will land, and it will not be on behalf of the people of Alberta, which is what our government is doing. We are standing up for Albertans, we are standing up for Alberta consumers, and we will do all that is necessary to get the best outcome for them that we can.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** For over a week this Premier has been asked about the government's threats to use legislation to change the power purchase arrangements that exist between power companies. These PPAs have served Albertans well since 2000. Sometimes they're profitable; sometimes they run at a loss. All of them include a provision that if the government changes the law and intentionally makes a PPA unprofitable, the buyer can return it. Will the Premier commit to never using legislation to break long-standing negotiated contracts between companies?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, one thing I can say is that our government absolutely supports standard change-of-law clauses in contracts. Those are completely reasonable. That's not actually the matter that's at issue in this case, however. Nonetheless, as I've said before and will continue to say until the matter is resolved, we are going to do everything we can to stand up for Albertans.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** The government ripping up a long-standing contract between businesses is something that is completely unacceptable in a free economy. The PPA the government is suing over is a contract between Enmax and TransAlta and the Balancing Pool. The government is not even a party to this contract. Doesn't the Premier understand that when her government threatens to use law to change other people's contracts, she fundamentally threatens

all business and investment across Alberta? Why is she trying to drive away investors?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, what's really important is that investors who are looking at putting their money into Alberta should know that they should be able to understand what the utilities, what the supports are for them. They should be able to go to transparent places – regulations, OICs, reports – and know: oh, this is exactly what it looks like. When it doesn't look that way, that also undermines investor confidence. We are working to improve investor confidence and also to support Alberta consumers.

**The Speaker:** Third main question.

### Energy Policies

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Today we have another Trudeau announcing that he's going to stick his nose in Alberta's energy business yet again. Without consulting several of the provinces impacted, he unilaterally announced that he would accelerate the feds' own coal shutdown timeline to 2030. Of course, for an NDP government already committed to destroying jobs in our coal industry and disregarding technology advances, they don't seem all that concerned. Can the Premier explain to Albertans whose livelihoods will be destroyed why they are letting Ottawa mandate our policies?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that is deeply ironic because the members opposite would like us to forgo our climate leadership plan so that Ottawa could write our policies for us. We're not doing that. We have a made-in-Alberta plan. We have a plan that's way ahead of Ottawa's. We have a plan that has worked with Alberta businesses, Alberta consumers, Alberta communities, that will work for Albertans because we take our job seriously, unlike the folks across the way.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** This NDP government's reckless agenda against our electricity sector is doing serious damage. They're threatening to rewrite legislation that governs our whole power industry. They've declared war on Alberta-owned power companies but somehow believe they can still bring in \$10 billion of new investment out of thin air, I guess, and they're shutting down our coal industry, happy to have Ottawa's blessing now. How can any Albertan possibly trust this government to manage our economy?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, economic leaders throughout the world are actually getting out of coal because they understand that it is not the future of economic growth, unlike the folks over there. That being said, we have worked closely with coal producers. We made a commitment when we said that we would phase out coal to work with them to ensure that capital was not left stranded. We are engaging in good-faith conversations with them because that's what you do in a responsible way when you make hard decisions in order to bring about necessary, long overdue change, and that's what we will do on behalf of all Albertans.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Alberta has six coal plants that can operate efficiently well past 2030. There is no guarantee from this NDP government that we will be able to provide enough power to our grid without significant rate increases for consumers, businesses, and families. Alberta should be negotiating exemptions. Instead, the NDP are celebrating the shutdown of an industry that thousands of Albertans rely on for their livelihoods. The only thing the NDP doesn't celebrate, of course, is the idea that America is going to approve Keystone. Why won't the Premier negotiate exemptions

for Alberta instead of letting Ottawa dictate changes to our power grid?

**Ms Notley:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite really doesn't understand his file. To be clear, the member opposite would have us do nothing so that Ottawa told us exactly what to do. Instead, what we've done is that we've worked with our stakeholders in Alberta and we've negotiated what works for Alberta because that's what a good government does.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

## 2:10 Electricity Power Purchase Agreements (continued)

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It was good to have a constituency week. It provided time, for example, for government cabinet ministers to talk to Albertans, and as a result I have some questions. We have learned, for example, that cabinet has already approved, in principle, legislation to retroactively change the PPA agreements from 16 years ago, and Albertans deserve to know the details. To the Premier. Since your cabinet is talking about approving this move, please share with this House and all Albertans today: what are the details of the upcoming PPA?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the premise of the member opposite's question is absolutely false, and therefore I have really nothing more to offer.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps we'll try this. We know that cabinet ministers have been talking some more, and we are pretty certain that the government has made a settlement on the PPAs with Capital Power. Since Alberta taxpayers and Alberta electricity customers will pay for this agreement, again to the Premier: please share with this House and all Albertans details of your agreement with Capital Power and how much it will cost Albertans.

**Ms Notley:** Again, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, our government will work very hard to get the best outcome for Albertans and for Alberta consumers that we can, and when we are at that point that we believe we have reached the best outcome for Alberta consumers that we can get, we'll be happy to speak more on it.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We also know from cabinet members that the Balancing Pool for electricity is losing in the neighbourhood of \$70 million to \$90 million a month, and two out of the three Balancing Pool members have resigned due to inappropriate interference by this government. To the Premier: how much will Alberta electricity customers and taxpayers pay for your government's gross mismanagement of the PPA and the mess that the Balancing Pool is in now?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, I reject once again almost the whole premise of the member opposite's question. But what I will say is that, generally speaking, electricity in Alberta, the market, is in tough shape because of the deregulated energy only market system that the members opposite put in place as part of a risky ideological experiment which, quite frankly, is not working. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

## Fentanyl Overdoses

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Despite frequent calls from public health experts and the opposition, the government has decided not to call a public health emergency in relation to the fentanyl crisis, stating that it's able to effectively fight the emergency without such powers. Last week in a joint statement released from Ottawa, B.C., under a declared public health emergency, committed to release monthly data tracking, one, illicit drug overdose deaths, two, the proportion of deaths where fentanyl is detected, and, three, nonfatal overdoses requiring emergency response. Given that the associate minister has said that she already has such data, will she now tell us the number of opioid overdoses reversed through naloxone . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, the information that the hon. member has listed is now available online on Alberta Health's website. We've committed to releasing quarterly reporting on the opioid crisis and other substances of misuse, and we're open and transparent with the public on the trend data. We feel it's really important to make sure that that data is accurate so that we're able to allocate our resources in the appropriate way because we cannot sacrifice the lives of Albertans for this PR exercise of more recently released numbers. We want those to be accurate numbers. Also, data . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Dr. Swann:** To the associate minister again: are the number of naloxone reversals increasing or decreasing since the last report?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the opportunity to answer the rest of the question. As of September 30 over 6,400 naloxone kits have been distributed to Albertans, and the reported number of usages is over 400. We know that that is an underinflated number, however, because not everyone is reporting the usage of the kits. In the time frame that the member is asking about, for the first half of 2016 there were 3,752 emergency room visits relating to opioid overdoses that have been reversed.

**Dr. Swann:** And that's not an emergency?

Overdoses, in reporting from emergency departments, have now reached approximately 25 per cent of all emergency visits for drug use. Can the minister tell us whether they're increasing or decreasing?

**The Speaker:** The associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We have found that as this crisis is continuing, the number of visits is seeming to increase. We are continuing to keep tabs on those numbers, and we are working hard to ensure that treatment is making its way into the hands of people who need it. We are working with our partners in the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta to expand access to opioid dependency treatment, which is the best practice for treatment for people with opioid addictions. Additionally, we are working very diligently on the harm-reduction

file, including supervised consumption services across our province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

### **Agricultural Environmental Programs**

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Farmers agree that we all have a role to play in protecting our environment, but producers have told me that they are concerned about the impact of the upcoming carbon levy on their operating costs. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what is the government doing to invest in agriculture and to help farmers, including those in Leduc-Beaumont, protect our environment, and keep these farms sustainable and our farming communities vibrant?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. Last month I was proud to announce \$10 million in funding to help producers reduce their emissions and become more efficient in the process. This includes an enhanced on-farm energy management program, that will cover up to 70 per cent of capital purchases, up to \$750,000; an on-farm solar program; an irrigation efficiency program; and an accelerating agricultural innovation program to help food processors become more efficient. But this is just the first step. We're committed to working with our producers to become even more efficient and competitive than they already are.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that past agricultural sustainability programs have proven to be in high demand, to the same minister: how many producers will this program help, and how quickly can producers begin accessing it?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that these programs are already being delivered through the joint provincial framework known as Growing Forward 2. This gives us the ability to move forward quickly, more quickly than building programs from scratch. Producers are already familiar with these programs, so we're confident we can provide supports immediately. The number of producers accessing the program will depend on the applications. My department is committed to work with producers big or small, to process applications in a timely manner. We'll monitor the uptake as we move forward.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's climate leadership plan provides a made-in-Alberta approach to deal with the threat of climate change, to the same minister: how will you ensure that Alberta producers remain competitive, efficient, and well positioned compared to other jurisdictions?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, I've had the pleasure to talk with producer groups across the province: the Greenhouse Growers Association, the crop sector, chicken and pork producers, to name a few. They are supportive of our most recent commitment. They're also supportive of the carbon levy exemption on marked gas and diesel, but they understand that the recently announced funding is a first step forward and more is to come. By Alberta's moving forward, our producers will be a step ahead of producers in other provinces that choose to not act to address emissions that lead to climate change. We're committed to an ongoing dialogue, to work

with producers, and to address agriculture emissions. By doing so, we'll have a more competitive, efficient industry in the years . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### **Deaths and Injuries of Children in Care**

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, a child in care deserves to be safe. What happened to four-year-old Serenity while in kinship care couldn't have been further from a safe place to grow up. While in kinship care Serenity withered away, and for the last 11 months of her life no one was even checking in on her while she was being beaten and starved. To the Premier: what are you doing to protect our kids in care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. These are certainly heartbreaking losses, and our thoughts are with those who loved and knew these young people. We have taken the recommendations made by the Child and Youth Advocate very seriously, and we have accepted them in full. We will work with the advocate to make sure that these are implemented in letter and spirit, and we'll be able to avoid similar incidents happening in the future.

Thank you.

2:20

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that promises to reform our system and promises of transparency have not worked – the only reason we have additional details about Serenity's passing is because of a column by Paula Simons – and given that the advocate has detailed several recommendations over the past two years which could have saved Serenity's life, to the Premier: why are you not taking action on these reports?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. In all cases we make sure that we protect the identity of the family, the child, and their loved ones, and there's no exception to that. At the same time families can choose to grieve the way they like. As I said, we have accepted the recommendations made by the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, and we will make sure that systemic improvements are made so that similar incidents can be avoided in the future.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, the Child and Youth Advocate only investigates when something devastating has happened in our system. Given that we need to be fixing the system before it gets to the point where light is shed by the Child and Youth Advocate because of abuse, malnourishment, or death and given that there have been many others who have died in government care during this government's term, will the Human Services minister commit to adopting the advocate's recommendation and fix this broken system before we get another report?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I can tell all Albertans and this House that we have accepted every recommendation the advocate made to this government, and we are taking action to make sure that his recommendations are implemented. For members' knowledge, I will add that we provide a death and serious injury report to the

advocate for every death and every serious injury, and as an independent officer he can choose to investigate whatever he deems fit.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### **Balancing Pool Board of Director Resignations**

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Energy will recall that I rose in this House on November 3 to ask her if she was aware of any resignations in any of the agencies for which she's responsible. She rose to state, "I'm not aware of any resignations this week." Now, the Balancing Pool sent out a press release dated the very same day, November 3, indicating that two of its directors, including the chair, had tendered their resignations. I understand that they tendered their resignations to this government several days before their press release went out. Will the Minister of Energy clarify for the record when she and her office staff became aware of these resignations from the Balancing Pool?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. At the time the hon. member asked me, I was not aware. Later that afternoon I received the letter of resignation.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given the understanding that the two Balancing Pool directors resigned several days before the Balancing Pool sent out a press release regarding their resignations and that the Balancing Pool was forced to send out their own press release because the government would not announce their resignations, will the minister explain to this House and to all Albertans why this government did not announce their resignations and why it left it up to the Balancing Pool itself to break the news instead?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. As I mentioned, at the time of asking I was not aware of any letter. The letter: I'm not sure where it was sent first, but it did make its way to my office later that afternoon. That's all I know. The reasons given were that it was at the end of this month, and that's all I am aware of.

**Mr. Rodney:** Mr. Speaker, I wasn't just talking about the resignations; I was talking about the press release.

Given the understanding that the two Balancing Pool directors who tendered their resignations resigned because they were fed up with this government's political meddling in the affairs of the Balancing Pool, including the NDP's ill-advised PPA lawsuit, will the minister rise to explain how this government justifies its interference in the affairs of the Balancing Pool, an agency that's supposed to be free from political meddling, and can she tell Albertans if the only remaining member of the Balancing Pool has also tendered their resignation? If so, who, if anyone, is tending to the ever-important Balancing Pool here in the province of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. In advance of any resignations we're aware of, we were out getting new applications in for the Balancing Pool and continue to do that. We do have an interim person in place right now until we get that person. If there is another resignation, I'm not aware of it, and I would question why the hon. member across knows this in advance of myself.

#### **Member's Change in Caucus Affiliation**

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, nearly two years ago some members of this House had choice words for those who crossed the floor from

opposition to government. For instance, the NDP leader said that both sides were, quote, guilty of betraying the people who voted for them. She also called it, quote, a betrayal of the parliamentary process and democracy itself while noting that they must have been doing a poor job in opposition if they had to join the government. Is the Premier now comfortable with betraying the voter as long as she is the one who benefits?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. In this specific case that the member is referring to, we've seen a party that has abandoned any sense of being a voice for practical, moderate policy in the province of Alberta. In turn, the people of Alberta are looking to the government – that is, an NDP government – when they have a choice between a rash, hateful, mean ideology and one that's inclusive and embracing and respectful. We see where people are moving.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, no. Voters in Calgary are left frustrated and deeply hurt that their voice in government has been misrepresented.

Given that we've seen the NDP government taking radical action against business and investment and seeing that piles of new taxes and regulations are crippling the Alberta economy, driving Calgary's unemployment past 10 per cent, and since NDP support is in free fall, can this government honestly say that they are honouring the voters by turning an opposition voice into just another booster of the damaging NDP world view? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please.

The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Calgary-North West has a long tradition of standing up for her constituents, and no matter what side of the house she's been on, she's been very pragmatic, focused on outcomes, and problem solving oriented. We've been able to accomplish a lot in a really thoughtful, pragmatic way when she was on the other side of the House, and I'm sure she will continue to serve the constituents of Calgary-North West with respect and honour. She is a welcome member of our caucus.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I've been reminded. As I look at the notes, I do hope your supplemental questions are with respect to government policy rather than any other matters.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House we believe Albertans have the final say, not the politicians. Given that elected members should remain accountable to their constituents at all times and given that the Premier herself said that previous crossings to the government were a betrayal of accountability, will the Premier agree with the Wildrose that voters . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member. [interjections] Hon. member, I don't believe you hit the target in terms of government policy.

The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No matter who leads the opposition, whether there be many parties or not, we know that a progressive, moderate choice that makes Alberta move forward as opposed to an extremist, reactionary choice that's hell-bent on dragging Alberta back into the last century is the direction that the province of Alberta is moving on, and we are proud of that. On this side of the House we believe that climate change is real, on this side of the House we believe that protecting health care and



education is of utmost importance, and on this side of the House we believe in diversifying our economy, having good, stable jobs, and supporting families.

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Noted. [interjections] Hon. members.  
The Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

2:30

**Carbon Levy**

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP's ideological carbon tax will increase the economic burden on many aspects of the public and private sectors, not only from stalling growth but from prohibiting it. From postsecondary institutions to municipalities, all will suffer some kind of loss. I want to know if the NDP government has counted the cost for our postsecondary institutions. To the Minister of Advanced Education: can you please tell us how much this tax is costing universities and where you expect them to get the money from?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you. I find it hilarious, actually, that the member opposite, who represents a party that wants to cut billions of dollars from every sector of the public service, including postsecondary, is asking me to provide the costs to postsecondary education of the carbon tax. As soon as he comes clean with his plans for postsecondary education, Mr. Speaker, we'll talk about where we're giving the money to them. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, all of the energy earned in the last 10 days is clearly demonstrating itself in the House today.

**Mr. Taylor:** I suppose that means that he doesn't have a clue or that he hasn't done an economic impact study.

Given that institutions are likely going to have to cut wages, staff hours, and invaluable courses due to the government's risky policies, to the Minister of Advanced Education: how does the government expect institutions to deal with the rising cost of inflation, a massive new carbon tax, a tuition freeze that many students and universities aren't on board with, and still deliver world-class education?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the students will remember in the next election that the members opposite are advocating for skyrocketing tuition increases, which, of course, students in this province are very much in favour of as well as their parents.

What we have committed to is predictable, sustainable funding for every university and college in this province, and we've delivered on that promise.

**Mr. Taylor:** No. Rate of inflation is what we're talking about.

Given that at the AAMD and C I heard that municipalities are very concerned about the carbon tax and will have to pass the buck on to taxpayers and given that municipalities are already having a hard time collecting taxes from about 10 per cent of the ratepayers because of work shortages and will have to raise taxes to accommodate for the carbon tax, how is the government going to ensure the viability of small communities like Forestburg, Killam, Hardisty, and Wainwright, who will be hard hit by these bad economic policies?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can say very proudly that this year, at a time when our revenue was cut by 20 per cent, we had sustainable funding for municipalities, and I can state with virtual certainty that that would not have happened with any of the folks on the other side. We will continue to work with municipalities to ensure that we provide the supports they need to move forward, to find the efficiencies they need to help them be efficient going forward, but we're not apologetic for the fact that we are remaining the number one supporter of municipal funding, ensuring that they have the stable funds that they need, that they never would have . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Electricity Power Purchase Agreements

*(continued)*

**Mr. Fraser:** This past week the Progressive Conservative caucus, municipalities around the province, and private industry raised concerns about this NDP government considering retroactive legislation to nullify the PPA contracts, contracts that have been a benefit for Albertans for over 15 years. With all due respect, Premier, you need to stop dodging questions on this issue. You spent hundreds of thousands of dollars of public money trying to convince the court of public opinion, and then you've hired NDP outsiders who are anti-Alberta to fight Albertans. Premier, to date how much money have you wasted because of this ill-informed lawsuit?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You want to talk ill-informed? Talk about bringing in an 11th-hour, behind-the-scenes Enron clause and putting them to these agreements. Talk about ill-informed. Talk about cabinet making decisions not to disclose that through the typical public process, which would enable members of the public and the media to be aware of decisions that may or may not have been made. We're going to stand up for Albertans, and I am proud to do so.

**Mr. Fraser:** Well, that's interesting because all those binders you bring into this House, you should be reading.

Given that power companies are reeling at the idea of retroactive legislation and given that the threat alone is driving electricity investor confidence to new lows, do you actually realize that you need these investors to fulfill your plan of 30 per cent by 2030? And how are you going to rebuild these partnerships that you've destroyed in just a year and a half?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to do my homework. I wish the member opposite would do his.

Instead of taking part of the profits that were very successful over the last several years and using that to offset current potential losses, the other sides of the PPAs want to pass those losses on to consumers. We can stand up for Albertans, or we can do what the members opposite are proposing, which is bury our heads in the sand and pass more bills on to Albertans. I'm going to stand up for Albertans, Mr. Speaker, and I wish the members opposite would pretend that they want to do so as well.

**Mr. Fraser:** Well, I understand my role here, but you didn't understand the impacts of your ideological policies, and Albertans

know that you've been backpedalling from the start. Now that you realize you're going to lose this court battle, you're just going to change the rules with retroactive legislation halfway through. Even a grade school child knows that this is wrong. It's clear that you have no intention of following through on this costly legal battle. Will you tear up the right contract today, Joseph Arvay's contract, and send home your NDP lawyer?

**Ms Hoffman:** We are committed to taking action on climate change. The world is calling on all of us to do our fair share, and the members opposite want to pretend that we're still living in the 20th century. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're going to move forward in a thoughtful way to curb emissions, to provide a secure electricity system to Albertans, and we will consider any tools required to do so. Of course, we would like to work with partners, and that's why we're setting up fair, responsible ways of moving forward in greening our electricity system instead of picking winners and losers like the third party did for decades.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

### Family Violence

**Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Violence in any form is unacceptable. It affects children, adults, seniors, and devastates communities. Constituents in Calgary-Bow want to know what is being done to ensure that people affected by violence have the supports they need. To the Minister of Human Services: what is the government doing to support survivors of family violence?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I would like to thank the member first for her leadership on the issue. Her safer spaces private member's bill enables survivors to end a lease without penalty and breaks down a real barrier for survivors of family violence. I would also like to acknowledge that members of this House passed this legislation unanimously. So Albertans should know that they can access these important supports through Alberta Works' centres in Human Services.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that we need to prevent family violence. Given recent reports that domestic violence is on the rise in parts of Alberta, to the same minister: what is our government doing to prevent family violence?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member. Our government is committed to taking action to prevent family violence so that no one has to live in fear nor suffer silently as a survivor. We have taken many important steps: increasing FCSS funding by \$25 million, investing \$15 million in women's shelters, investing another \$8.9 million in family and community safety program grants to 53 programs across the province. We recently announced some more supports during this month to support the work across the province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that November is Family Violence Prevention Month, to the same minister: how is the government raising awareness regarding family violence and prevention strategies to make sure we continue to be strong partners?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I did outline some steps that the government has taken, but I recognize that we all have a role to play in preventing family violence. I am proud to acknowledge that Family Violence Prevention Month originated in Hinton, Alberta, 30 years ago. This year's theme is Reach Out, Speak Out, which encourages all Albertans to send a powerful message that these crimes have no place in our society, and our government is reaching out for partners to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis is an irreversible, fatal disease that scars the lungs and greatly reduces quality of life. There is no cure for the permanent damage short of a lung transplant. Last month I met with members of the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation. They presented a patient charter calling for improved access to community-based services, long-term chronic care, palliative care, and research towards a cure. Can the Minister of Health commit to addressing the concerns in the IPF patient charter and outline how this will be done?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Last month I also met with the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation and had the opportunity to hear some of their stories. It is a devastating disease, and there are many struggles that are ongoing for patients with that disease. They told me about access to appropriate medications and specialized treatments that are necessary to components of fighting this disease, and we are moving forward on a number of their recommendations that align with that goal. We are also working to review the others that remain. I'm pleased that the specialized clinics that we do have here, both in Edmonton and Calgary, are world class. While it is devastating, there is no place better in the . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Minister. IPF greatly reduces oxygen uptake in the lungs, severely limiting the ability to walk, move, and even breathe. Given that current eligibility standards for financial aid for home oxygen are outdated and based on unrelated chronic diseases and since these inappropriate standards for IPF require patients to periodically retest for eligibility despite the disease being irreversible, degenerative, and exhausting, will the government end this wasteful and very unpleasant testing standard and work towards developing standards specific to pulmonary fibrosis?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the relevant and superimportant question, particularly for those living with this disease. Our government is going to continue to work with the Alberta Health Services clinical advisory

committee, the medical professionals in the field that make patient treatment decisions. Earlier this year, in consultation with lung disease specialists, amendments were made to the criteria to provide greater access to funding in the area of home oxygen, and that is certainly a step in the right direction. With regard to other recommendations my department is meeting with clinicians practising in this area and will continue to review the procedures and testing to find additional ways that we might be able to increase . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, also timely, November is Lung Month, and we have the opportunity to raise awareness for chronic lung illnesses. Given that chronic disease management is such a crucial component of the health system and given that inappropriate handling of chronic diseases can result in massive inefficiency and reduce quality of life as patients are moved in and out of hospitals, what is the government doing to ensure that people suffering from chronic respiratory disease get access to care in their home or in their community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think we all agree that we want to ensure that Albertans get the right care in the right place at the right time, and this means providing services as close to home as possible.

For people suffering from chronic respiratory diseases we've made some improvements effective November 1 that I'm very pleased to update this House and all Albertans about, and that's listing both Esbriet and Ofev for public funding under the Alberta drug benefit list, ADBL, for patients who meet the criteria in need of those. We've also increased our investment in home care to \$611 million. That will help thousands of Albertans receive medical assistance in their homes, which the member speaks about.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

#### Trade Mission to China and South Korea

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry recently returned from a two-week trade mission to China and South Korea. Alberta producers need the ability to expand to new markets and explore growth opportunities overseas. The minister had said that this trade mission would focus on opportunities for value-added food processing, agricultural products such as beef, pork, grains, and livestock genetics. To the minister: did you sign any new agreements that will expand markets for Alberta agricultural producers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Thank you for having me back. It was a very good trade mission. It was my first to China and my first to South Korea. We were able to meet with many producers and processors in China and also processors and industry leaders here from Alberta as well. We were able to sign several agreements on co-operation and memorandums of understanding in both the northern province and throughout China and in Korea as well. I'm looking forward to a very fruitful return for that trip.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it is important for all Alberta producers to foster relationships that gain access to new markets and given that you said that you'd also focus on opportunities for lumber and pulp exports, to the minister: did you sign any new agreements that will help expand markets for Alberta's forest producers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. I had the opportunity to meet with Canada Wood both in China and in South Korea, exploring opportunities to expand our markets there. There are some great opportunities. Even though the economy has taken a bit of a dip in China, it's still the second-largest economy in the world, and they need lumber. Their construction is still going at full blast, an opportunity to have lumber there. As well, Korea is recognizing the value and the durability of Canadian and Alberta lumber in particular, and those talks continue. I'm very happy with our fruitful discussions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there were many scheduled meetings for your trade mission in China and South Korea and given that you said that contacts you spoke with were keen to buy Alberta products but they mentioned that trade barriers with Canada gave them pause to buy Alberta products, to the minister: what talks did you have with the Chinese government about these trade barriers, and what solutions did you generate?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very thoughtful question. For the very first part of the mission I was able to accompany the federal agriculture minister on his discussions with Chinese officials, everybody recognizing that they want more of our product but working through those federal regulations to increase our trade to Asia and China and South Korea. Happy to work with our federal colleagues and provincial colleagues across the country to continue that work on making those regulatory changes to increase our trade in Asia.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

#### Building Codes and Efficiency Standards

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Minister of Municipal Affairs announced changes to the Alberta building code to harmonize with the national energy efficiency standards. Given that many people in Calgary-Northern Hills have mentioned that they want to green their homes by using things like LED lights, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: how is the government harmonizing the Alberta building code with the national energy efficiency standards?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These changes will save Albertans money and ensure that Alberta continues to be a leader in the fight against climate change and a competitor in the carbon-strained economy of the future. Building responsible and sustainable homes is not a trend. It is the future, and it is the right thing to do. These code changes support our climate leadership plan by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating more modern

and efficient homes and businesses. Climate change requires us to look at all policy from an environmental lens and to make decisions that not only move Alberta forward but also . . .

2:50

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you. Since these changes were announced, my constituents have asked how this will impact them. To the same minister: what efficiencies will these code changes target?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has done more work in the last year than in the past six years to bring Alberta's code up to date. These code changes will promote and improve energy efficiency standards for windows, lighting, insulation, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. These changes will ensure that the amount of energy used by homeowners and businesses will be permanently reduced and that the savings will continue into the future. This is good for the environment and good for everyone who has to pay for electricity.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given the current economic climate due to the drop in the price of oil, how will these changes save homeowners money and support efforts in confronting climate change?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, man-made climate change is real. We can either act now or be left behind. Ignoring climate change is not a solution. On this side of the House we refuse to engage in head-in-the-sand politics when it comes to action. We are adopting policies that promote energy efficiency while delivering long-term cost savings to Albertans. Albertans will see an approximate 20 per cent saving on their energy bills, while nationally the code updates will result in \$70 million in cost savings for building owners in 2016 by improving energy performance in over 24,000 . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The chair will recognize the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Giving an eye to the clock, I wonder if I might seek the unanimous consent of the House to continue with the daily Routine past 3 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The Member for Red Deer-South.

#### Career Month

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to acknowledge Canada's first-ever Career Month. Spearheaded nationally by the Canadian Council for Career Development and locally by the Career Development Association of Alberta, CDAA, Career Month highlights the role they play in assisting Canadians and Albertans to find their way to a suitable career and a stable career. As CDAA notes, career development is about direction, and in this fourth week

of November the focus is on government and agencies to ensure meaningful work for our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a member of a government that understands the importance of intentional career development and one that sets a priority to ensure that all Albertans are future ready. This integrated approach to education and skills training will ensure that every Albertan has the skills they need to succeed in a changing economy. Valued partners like CDAA, McBride Career Group, Women Building Futures, Bredin Centre for Learning, and Boyle Street Community Services, to name just a few, offer Albertans education, training, apprenticeship, and mentorship opportunities every day, setting them on the path to a successful career.

In these challenging economic times, Mr. Speaker, it is more important than ever that Albertans can find the meaningful supports that they need to establish themselves in jobs that support themselves, their families, and pay the mortgage. In my area I'm proud of the work being done by the McBride Career Group, which just launched a construction pretrades training program, and the Bredin Centre for Learning, where they provide work skills training for all levels of residents, from new immigrants to the unemployed and underemployed in our region. Our government is creating new jobs and building an economy for the future.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills

#### Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the residents of Calgary-Foothills to pay homage to our former MLA, the Hon. Jim Prentice. Although I did not know Jim well personally, as his successor in the riding of Calgary-Foothills I have learned a lot about him over the past year.

Jim was widely respected for his loyalty. He was loyal to the PC Association of Alberta, he was loyal to the PC Party of Canada, he was loyal to the Conservative Party of Canada, and he was loyal to his many friends therein until the very end, friends forged over five decades of public service in and out of office, friends like Manmeet Bhullar, who was in many ways the son Jim never had. Jim was a great friend and family man to his wife and daughters and a legislator who will always be respected for his accomplishments in the political sphere.

He created the modern blueprint for engaging in respectful dialogue with Canada's First Nations. As minister of Indian and northern affairs he signed treaties with the Maa-nulth and Tsawwassen First Nations in British Columbia. He also negotiated the residential school settlement, which led to the apology from the Prime Minister. As environment minister he went camping with David Suzuki in traditional Haida territory. It's my understanding that Jim was writing a book about his experiences working with First Nations and the challenges of reconciling energy development and the environment in Canada.

Jim's life tragically ended before he could write his final chapter, but his legacy of peace and reconciliation will serve to remind us of his work for generations to come. For this he will never be forgotten. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

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

#### Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two years ago I was a sergeant with the Calgary Police Service, working hard and standing up for what is right. Premier Prentice, who only knew me through

reputation, recognized a kindred can-do spirit in me and urged me to run for public office. It was a leap of faith for me to jump from the police service into politics, but Premier Prentice had made a similar move when he unselfishly left a prestigious corporate role to serve the people of Alberta.

I'm not reinventing the wheel as I go about my work as a member of this Legislature. I am following his lead in setting up a public service for a higher calling. Today I fully appreciate the gift that is the privilege of serving Albertans, and that was his gift to me. Premier Prentice not only inspired those around him, but he also cared about you as a person. He became a father figure to me in that even after I was no longer working directly with him, I still wanted him to be proud of me.

Prior to his passing I saw Jim and Karen at an official function. Karen took a moment to tell me how proud they were of my success with Bill 205. Jim will never know how much those words meant to me because while we had plans to get together, that, sadly, will never occur now. If any of you have that special person in your life, I do urge you to take that opportunity, maybe even today, to let them know how much they mean to you.

We all have so much to thank this man for: his strong moral guidance, his incredible work ethic, his compassion, and his bravery in telling us truths that we did not want to hear such as warning Albertans about the pending economic challenges, which have since come to pass. Premier Prentice has had a strong influence on Canada and Alberta, and that influence will continue for generations to come. His family, former colleagues, and friends will ensure that his spirit lives on.

Thank you, Premier Prentice. Sir, I promise you that I will keep fighting and standing up for what is right.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### **Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC**

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to honour our dear friend and esteemed past Premier, the Hon. Jim Prentice. Jim built inspirational, personal, professional, and political legacies in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and well beyond. He loved his family so much, and it's such a shame that their time together was cut short.

3:00

As minister of Indian affairs and northern development as well as industry and environment, stakeholders were consistently amazed at how generous Jim was at sharing his experience and expertise. After personifying fierce commitment to public service, Jim could have extended his time working at the highest levels of corporate Canada, but he gave it all up to serve the people of the province he loved so much.

Mr. Speaker, I have never met a person like Jim Prentice before. He was equally at home in a coal mine and in a farmer's field, on Bay Street, on Wall Street, in the Legislature, in the Parliament, the State Department, and at a hockey rink. In true Canadian fashion I can tell you that some of the most treasured memories I have with Jim occurred on the ice, where he was strong, smooth, strategic, prepared for everything, and one step ahead just like he was at virtually everything else in life. When *Maclean's* magazine asked Jim to describe his role in Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government, he said: "I always do what I'm asked to do. The penalty kill. Dig out the puck on the power play. Muck in the corner, or take a hard hit."

Jim wanted every one of us in the PC caucus to deliver the best for Albertans because they trusted us to represent their views, interests, and priorities, and we simply could not let them down. Jim was a leader of unquestionable dignity, and those closest to him respected, admired, and loved him. Mr. Speaker, I will never forget the last long talk that I had with him, that happened to be after the untimely death of our beloved friend Manmeet Bhullar.

Alberta lost a true champion who we will dearly miss, and I encourage us all to continue to build the best Alberta possible together because that is exactly what Jim Prentice would have hoped for and what all Albertans indeed do deserve.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

#### **Calgary Football Team Achievements**

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to celebrate two Calgary football teams who will be bringing their Alberta pride and intensity to Ontario to compete for the highest honour in their leagues. This weekend the Calgary Stampeders will compete in the 104th Grey Cup, and the University of Calgary Dinos will compete in the 52nd Vanier Cup.

The Stampeders, led by first-year head coach Dave Dickenson, had a dominant 42 to 15 win over the BC Lions and ex-Calgary head coach Wally Buono. The weather was perfect for football in front of a sold-out Calgary crowd who helped propel the Stamps forward. They now move forward to face the Ottawa Redblacks, quarterbacked by former Calgary QB Henry Burris. The Stampeders, with a few Alberta boys on their roster, are favoured to win, but they still need our support as they try to bring home their second Grey Cup in three years.

Not to be outdone, on a team stacked with Albertan-born talent, hometown boys veteran quarterback Jimmy Underdahl and running back Jeshrun Antwi both helped the Dinos rout the X-Men 50 to 24 on Saturday. This comes on the heels of victory against the defending Vanier Cup champions, the UBC Thunderbirds, coached by former Dinos head coach Blake Nill. They now face Laval Rouge et Or in the Vanier Cup for the third time in seven years. While they lost in 2010 and 2013, I know that they can avenge those losses and bring the Vanier Cup home to celebrate the University of Calgary's 50th anniversary.

The Dinos will play this Saturday in Hamilton, and the Stampeders will take the field the following day in Toronto. Mr. Speaker, I'll be cheering them on this weekend and hope that they can have the support of all members of this Legislature to bring home this Calgary pride. Go, Stamps, go. Go, Dinos, go.

#### **Carbon Policies**

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, I've been a farmer for most of my life. Rural Alberta is in my blood. I also served as a councillor in a rural municipality for six years. I've attended about 12 Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties conventions during my tenure. That being said, I just want to talk about the last AAMD and C conference, that was held right here in Edmonton last Thursday.

It was a little chilly outside of the Shaw Conference Centre, but, Mr. Speaker, it was ice cold inside during the ministerial forum. In my dozen or so conventions I have never heard the government booed. I have always seen audiences at least offer polite applause after an answer from a minister. Well, it was clear on Thursday that this government has definitely not clicked with rural Alberta. As a matter of fact, one gentleman from a municipality stood up and

asked a question of the delegates. He asked: who here thinks that shutting down coal-fired power plants in Alberta is the right thing to do? He looked around, and he saw one hand. He then asked: who here thinks that this is the worst decision in Alberta history? Virtually every other hand in the building went up. This gentleman then said to the ministers: we just want you to listen to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, this was very telling for me. Most rural municipalities in Alberta were represented during this convention. Right in front of the ministers that represent this government, 99 per cent of the convention showed them that they don't agree with the direction that this government has taken with regard to the premature shutdown of coal plants or the carbon tax that will be levied on their municipalities on January 1. In fact, during the convention 93 per cent of the delegates voted in favour of exempting municipalities from the carbon tax. It's unbelievable that this government claims that those representatives of our rural Albertans are their partners.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

A point of order is noted.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to give oral notice of a motion for tomorrow's Order Paper, the motion being as follows:

Be it resolved that:

1. The 2015 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate office be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship for the purpose of conducting a review of the recommendations outlined in the report;
2. The committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
3. In accordance with section 5(5) of the Property Rights Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 60 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. I rise today to provide notice that at the appropriate time I'll move the following motion:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the systemic problems identified with kinship care and the safety policies governing it, the issues of secrecy still present in the child intervention system and the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, and the serious concerns raised about whether the recommendations made by the Child and Youth Advocate are being fully implemented.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of items to table today. First, I rise to table the requisite number of copies of the Horse Racing Alberta 2015 annual report. Over the past year Horse Racing Alberta has reported a number of positive

results throughout the province. In March of this year our government renewed a 10-year agreement with Horse Racing Alberta to ensure that this important industry will continue to thrive across this great province and continue supporting the more than 7,000 Albertans who work in the horse-racing industry. Thank you.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, with regard to Motion for a Return 1 I am also pleased to table the requisite number of copies in response to a motion for a return from the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. These are ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015, as the member requested.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, with regard to results-based budgeting in accordance with section 3 of the Results-based Budgeting Act I'm also pleased to table the required number of copies of the fifth annual results-based budgeting report. This report provides a summary of the RBB process, describes the lines of businesses, and highlights some of the findings on the work that has been completed to date.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Alberta Securities Commission I am pleased to table their 2016 annual report. The commission is doing excellent work, and our government is pleased to once again confirm our commitment to an Alberta regulator that is responsive to the needs of our local market. I should take a moment to once again congratulate Mr. Stan Magidson, the new CEO of ASC, who is showing tremendous leadership in his new position.

Lastly, Motion for a Return 31. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the requisite number of copies in response to a motion for a return from the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. The member requested responses received from Albertans through our online survey for Budget 2015. The government received over 2,900 responses from Albertans, and I'd like to thank, of course, all of them for their feedback. I should say that our government worked hard to deliver a budget that protected front-line services while continuing to maintain our province's position as the lowest taxed jurisdiction in the country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are all the reports.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I am pleased to table five copies of the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta's 2015-16 annual report pursuant to section 63(1) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, section 95(1) of the Health Information Act, and section 44(1) of the Personal Information Protection Act.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Carlier, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, pursuant to the Farm Implement Act the Farmers' Advocate office 2015-16 annual report; pursuant to the Livestock Identification and Commerce Act and the Stray Animals Act the Livestock Identification Services Ltd. report to the minister and summary of activities, reporting period April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016; pursuant to the Agriculture Financial Services Act the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation annual report 2015-16.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Eggen, Minister of Education, return to order of the Assembly Motion for a Return 13, asked for by Mr. Cooper on May 2, 2016, copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Education between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

Also, responses to five written questions asked for by Mr. Smith on May 2, 2016: Written Question 2, what is the government's

projected estimate of the cost to implement full-day kindergarten in Alberta; Written Question 3, how much has the government spent on the student learning assessment pilot projects for the fiscal years 2010-11 to 2014-15 and from April 1, 2015, to February 29, 2016, and what are the details of what the money was spent on; Written Question 5, for the fiscal years from 2010-11 to 2014-15 and from April 1, 2015, to February 29, 2016, what was the cost to the government to develop and implement the provincial approach to student information initiative; Written Question 7, in Alberta how many English as a second language students were registered in the 2014-15 school year, and how many of those students will continue beyond the five years that are totally funded by school boards; Written Question 8, in the public, separate, and francophone school systems in Alberta what was the total amount of funds collected through fees, fundraising, donations, and gifts in each of the fiscal years from 2010-11 to 2014-15?

Pursuant to the Teaching Profession Act the Alberta Teachers' Association 2015 annual report.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Sabir, Minister of Human Services, return to order of the Assembly Motion for a Return 6, asked for by Mr. Cooper on May 2, 2016, copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Human Services between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe there were two points of order raised today. Three? Okay.

The first one from the House leader for the Official Opposition.

#### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will raise three points of order today, one on behalf of my hon. colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner.

The first one is with respect to language likely to create disorder, 23(h), (i), (j), and (k). During question period today the Minister of Health made a number of very wild accusations. Without the benefit of the Blues, I believe her language was something to the effect of hateful and violent with respect to what the opposition was. One thing I am one hundred per cent sure of, Mr. Speaker, is that the hon. member used the language: the opposition is hell-bent. I'm certain that you will find this language unparliamentary, and I would ask that she apologize and withdraw.

**The Speaker:** The House leader for the government.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Opposition House Leader has cited two different instances in the same point of order, and I would propose to deal with them a little bit differently.

In the first instance, the language "hell-bent." Mr. Speaker, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, talks this way about unparliamentary language. It says:

Since the Speaker must rule on the basis of the context in which the language was used, points of order raised in regard to questionable language must be raised as soon as possible . . .

It goes on to say:

In dealing with unparliamentary language, the Speaker takes into account the tone, manner and intention of the Member speaking; the person to whom the words at issue were directed; the degree of provocation; and, most importantly, whether or not the remarks created disorder in the Chamber. Thus, language deemed unparliamentary one day may not necessarily be deemed unparliamentary the following day. The codification of unparliamentary language has proven impractical as it is the

context in which words or phrases are used that the Chair must consider when deciding whether or not they should be withdrawn.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've taken the liberty of getting some definitions of "hell-bent." The hon. Deputy Premier used that in the context of what she deemed the opposition was trying to accomplish. In *Merriam-Webster* it says, "Very determined to do something especially when the results might be bad . . . stubbornly and often recklessly determined or intent." *Oxford* says, "Determined to achieve something at all costs," and dictionary.com says, "1. stubbornly or recklessly determined; 2. going at terrific speed," and so on.

3:20

Now, Mr. Speaker, in that context I don't believe that it's either unparliamentary or satisfies the requirements of 23(h), (i), or (j), and I would argue that it is not a point of order. Moreover, that particular term has been used in this House many times with no point of order being called or sustained by the chair. Not to single out our two newest roommates in the House, but the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore used the term on April 20, and the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View used it on December 4, 2013. There are many other instances. I don't mean to particularly single them out. I'm arguing that there is absolutely nothing unparliamentary or contrary to the rules with respect to that.

In terms of the other language that the hon. House leader for the Official Opposition has raised . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Could I just clarify? I have records that we had two points of order. The first one was yours with respect to the exchange between the Minister of Health and Cypress-Medicine Hat. Then I saw one later from the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Cooper:** And I called an additional one after your interjection with the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat immediately following his question as well.

**The Speaker:** For my sake, if no one else's, could we deal with the first point of order on the exchange with respect to the Minister of Health and Cypress-Medicine Hat?

**Mr. Cooper:** Yeah. That's the understanding that I'm currently under, that we are dealing with that right now.

**The Speaker:** Good.

**Mr. Mason:** I'm at a loss to understand what the issue is, Mr. Speaker. I'm dealing specifically with that point of order, which included two pieces of language, one of which, I've just argued, is not unparliamentary and does not violate the standing orders.

#### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Mason:** The second one: the Deputy Premier used the language "violent" and "hateful" if I recall correctly. Is that what the Opposition House Leader suggested? Mr. Speaker, there's no question that as we've seen political developments in this province unfold on social media and other areas, including at meetings, there has been violent and hateful language used.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. She said that about us.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to that, there's no question that that type of language has unfortunately become part of the daily experience of politicians of this province, including members of this House and, in particular, with respect to members who are female, and I think it's very unfortunate. However, in terms of . . . [interjections] Do you guys mind? Okay. Are we ready to go?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members. [interjections]

Hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, could we let the Government House Leader proceed? Thank you.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. However, with respect to use of those adjectives with regard to members opposite, I think that it may be argued that the Deputy Premier exceeded the norms of what is normally acceptable in this House, and on her behalf I would like to withdraw the expression and apologize.

**The Speaker:** Are we dealing – which one?

### Point of Order

#### Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

**Mr. Cooper:** The second point of order.

Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today during question period – I rise on Standing Order 13(2), "The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member." During the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat's question – he was speaking about a policy, if you will, around electoral recall. I just wanted to highlight chapter 11, page 504 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, when it speaks specifically – it doesn't speak only about government policy but about matters concerning "internal party matters, or party or election expenses." Clearly, the member was not asking about a matter of party policies; he was asking about government policy and was it the government policy to support recall or not. Clearly, it's not their policy, but I would just ask if you might be able to provide some additional comments on: why the interjection when he wasn't asking about party matters? He was clearly asking about government matters.

**The Speaker:** I do have a copy of the Blues. I trust that we are dealing with the same matter. The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House we believe Albertans have the final say, not the politicians. Given that elected members should remain accountable to their constituents at all times and given that the Premier herself said that the previous crossings to the government were a betrayal of accountability, will the Premier agree with the Wildrose that voters . . .

I interjected as Speaker and said:

I don't believe you hit the target in terms of government policy.

You were asking for an opinion, my opinion, and that's why I ruled on the matter and why I consider the matter to be closed.

Is there a third one?

### Point of Order

#### Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Cooper:** Yeah. This is the last one, Mr. Speaker, from me. During Members' Statements my hon. colleague from Little Bow was speaking about a very chilly reception that members of the government received from AAMD and C. I'm rising specifically on Standing Order 23(j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder."

Mr. Speaker, I don't have the benefit of the Blues, as you do, but during that, the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood heckled: perhaps they should have used eugenics. [interjections] Everyone on this side of the House heard him use the word "eugenics." We all know that that is an extremely unparliamentary accusation to make. The science of eugenics: improving a human population by controlling breeding to increase the occurrence of desirable characteristics. I would like to give the member the opportunity to rise and let this House know that that is not a reference he was making to all members of rural Alberta.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the hon. Official Opposition House Leader didn't have the advantage of the Blues. I haven't either, but I did take the liberty of asking the hon. member in question to let me know what happened, and he sent a note to me. It was in response to a member's statement, an interjection to the effect that – the member's statement was that getting off coal was the worst policy in the history of this province. The hon. member then said: is it worse than eugenics? That is the context. Now, the hon. member was interjecting during a member's statement, which he ought not to have been doing, and for that I apologize on the member's behalf.

**The Speaker:** Again, context, the situation: I noticed noise from this side of the House when the hon. Member for Little Bow was speaking. Clearly, in fact, today I reminded members again – I'm not exactly sure who it was on that side – that the practice of this House is that for two minutes you give the opportunity to the member to speak. Most of the time this House has respected that practice. If it was the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood who made the noise – I did not hear the specific comment – you were clearly out of order in terms of making a comment at the time the Speaker was hearing.

3:30

I also want to go back to the other point because I think these points tie together. I did hear an exchange with some – and, thank you, Government House Leader, for the apology from the Deputy Premier. The language that was used does escalate this House, and I just want to, for another time, remind all of the members of this House that if you want to move forward with good legislation, you need to listen to each other and respect each other. I would hope that it begins to change here.

I believe we move to the notice of motion.

## Emergency Debate

### Deaths of Children in Care

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to propose a motion under Standing Order 30. I should note before I begin that written notice was provided to the Speaker in accordance with Standing Order 30(1) and has met the conditions of Standing Order 30(7). The motion reads as follows:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the systemic problems identified with kinship care and the safety policies governing it, the issues of secrecy still present in the child intervention system and the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, and the serious concerns raised about whether the recommendations made by the Child and Youth Advocate are being fully implemented.

Mr. Speaker, this issue meets the conditions of Standing Order 30(7).



(7) A motion under this Standing Order is subject to the following conditions:

- (a) the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration.

What could be more urgent than the death of children in care? Last Friday the office of the Child and Youth Advocate released a devastating report. While we will focus predominantly on one child, it was on the deaths of two children in care. Then over the weekend we read in the media additional details that had been found out by a reporter. Her name was Serenity, and she was just 19 pounds when she died. The system failed her, and we need to do everything that we can to make sure it never happens in Alberta again, and that can start right now.

- (b) not more than one such motion may be proceeded with on the same day;
- (c) not more than one matter may be discussed on the same motion;
- (d) the motion must not revive discussion on a matter that has been discussed in the same session pursuant to this Standing Order;
- (e) the motion must not be based on a question of privilege;
- (f) the discussion under the motion must not raise a question that, according to the Standing Orders, can only be debated on a motion on notice.

*Beauchesne's* 387, on page 113, says the following:

The Standing Order is clear that the question be specific and must require urgent consideration. It must deal with a matter within the administrative competence of the Government and there must be no other reasonable opportunity for debate.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, this issue is not before this House in any form of bill debate, and the most reasonable opportunity for debate is today.

I'll continue with the quote from page 113.

But... decisions based on these conditions are bound to be subjective and few clear cut decisions can be made. In making his ruling, the Speaker may, on occasion, take into account the general wish of the House to have a debate.

Mr. Speaker, when you make your decision today as to whether or not this matter should proceed, I encourage you to consider that this very important matter is, yes, urgent, and I would consider it to be an emergency, but even if it's not an emergency, I would suggest to you that you consider the last point, when it says, "In making his ruling, the Speaker may, on occasion, take into account the general wish of the House to have a debate." I know this for sure, that on this side of the House it is our wish that we have this debate. I would suggest that if you reached out to the Member for St. Albert, perhaps the Member for Calgary-North West, or any parent in this House, it would be their wish as well.

*House of Commons Procedure and Practice* says the following on page 695:

However, in one exceptional circumstance, an application was approved for an emergency debate on "the sudden and unexpected revelation of events which [had] taken place in the past, in that they might precipitate a course of conduct which, if allowed to continue unchecked, would certainly classify itself as an emergency and a matter of urgent consideration".

Mr. Speaker, if any of the recommendations, if any of the secrecy that surrounds this issue continues and is allowed to continue unchecked, clearly it is an emergency and a matter of urgent consideration.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. This topic did come up in question period today, but I would suggest to you that a 35-second question and answer certainly do not do justice to an issue of such

importance. This House, the media, and, most importantly, Albertans, who have been touched by this most horrific tragedy, deserve a full and robust discussion, and we cannot shy away from debating hard topics such as this one. It would be a disservice to our constituents, who elected us, if we did.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that it is my job to communicate the importance of the need for the debate in my remarks, but very briefly here are some of the facts. The office of the Child and Youth Advocate has continually highlighted some major problems with the lack of care and oversight of the kinship program. Serenity was just 19 pounds when she died. Media reports over the weekend indicate that she was both physically and sexually abused, yet some of those facts were left out of the Child and Youth Advocate's report, which brings us to one of the major questions on the need for debate today. Why is it that the department is not doing more to ensure that the information that the Child and Youth Advocate needs is shared with his office? Secrecy around this issue serves no one.

Secondly, it is the ongoing and continued systemic breakdown of the kinship care program. The Child and Youth Advocate made a number of recommendations, including the implementation of a home study tool specific for kinship care. This House deserves to be able to speak about this important and urgent matter.

On November 25, 2013, three years ago almost to the day, a very similar issue was raised in this Assembly, yet we still see these tragedies happen. Now, I'm sure you know, Mr. Speaker, that on that day in November three years ago an emergency debate was not granted. We still, from three years ago, continue to see more deaths of children in care. I know of the death of a child in care, a foster family in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, yet the Child and Youth Advocate has yet to report on it. This is a continued and ongoing problem that deserves the attention of this House. Today is the day to start work to ensure that this never happens again.

3:40

Let's look back to three years ago, when the emergency debate was requested by the Official Opposition on a very similar topic. Back then the Government House Leader provided remarks, that I hope we don't hear today, that included excuses as to why this debate ought not proceed.

I will gently remind the House of remarks that were made on that day on pages 3057 and 3058 of *Hansard*, November 25, 2013.

That is why the people of Alberta expect this Assembly to take this issue... seriously, because [it's] fundamental to what we do in this Assembly. We care for those who are least able to care for themselves; you know, fire, police, taking care of those who cannot [take care of] themselves. It is fundamental to what we do in this Assembly. So if we don't take this matter seriously and we don't treat the gaps which have been revealed basically this morning to most of us, if we don't take those matters seriously, then, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that we are not taking the role of this Assembly seriously either.

Mr. Speaker, those were the words of the Premier three years ago almost to the day.

I hope that all members of this House will speak about this very important need and that we will be able to unravel some of the circumstances that arose in the lead-up to this report and to this very, very, very tragic situation that is before us.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise and respond to the comments and the arguments that have

been made by the hon. Official Opposition House Leader. As legislators we are all committed to protecting the most vulnerable amongst us. That is, in our view, an important role of government but not just of government, of the entire community. It is an obligation of civil society as a whole. I think that in this Legislature we're in a good position to work together from time to time and to work across the aisle in order to deal with some of the more difficult and challenging and intractable problems that exist. Certainly, the question of children in government care, whether it's in kinship care or directly in government care or foster care, is something that is critical to, I think, all Albertans, and it's something that I think we all need to collectively put our attention towards.

Our government has been working very hard on this file, and we have made progress, but, Mr. Speaker, more progress clearly needs to be made. The heart-wrenching stories that we've heard, most recently on the weekend in connection with the tragic death in care of Serenity, I think, have pulled on the heartstrings of all of us and all Albertans. I think that we should take the opportunity to talk about it. We should take the opportunity to talk about what can be done, what ideas we might have, how the government could better improve its response, and I think we're open to hearing the thoughts of all of our colleagues with respect to that matter.

So, Mr. Speaker, I support the request of the hon. Opposition House Leader for a Standing Order 30 emergency debate. I think that if children suffering in our care is not an emergency, is not something of the greatest possible priority, then what is? With the greatest respect, I concur with the arguments made by the Official Opposition House Leader and want to indicate that the government would welcome spending this afternoon on this most critical matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who'd like to speak to this matter?

I am prepared to rule on the request for leave on a motion to proceed under Standing Order 30(2). The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills has met the requirement for at least two hours' notice. It was provided to my office at 10:57 this morning. The motion:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the systemic problems identified with kinship care and the safety policies governing it, the issues of secrecy still present in the child intervention system and the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, and the serious concerns raised about whether the recommendations made by the Child and Youth Advocate are being fully implemented.

The relevant parliamentary authorities on these subjects are pages 689 to 696 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, and *Beauchesne*, paragraphs 387 to 390. To the hon. House leaders who have spoken, I see and sense that there is a strong willingness on all sides of the Assembly to debate the matter. On page 695 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*: "The Speaker may take into account the general wish of the House to have an emergency debate and grant a request for an emergency debate."

I find that the request for leave is in order. The rules governing the procedure once the chair finds the request for leave to be in order are as follows. Standing Order 30(3) requires that the question be put to a vote of the Assembly. If there are objections to the question, then the chair will ask those members who support the motion to rise. If 15 or more members rise, the debate will proceed, and each member who wishes to speak will have 10 minutes to do so until all who wish to speak have done so or until the normal hour

of adjournment. If at least five members rise but fewer than 15, the question whether the member has leave to move adjournment of the ordinary business is put immediately and, if necessary, is determined by division. If fewer than five members rise, the debate will not proceed.

Now the question. Shall the debate on the matter proceed? All in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** Opposed, say no. I'm hearing unanimous consent to proceed with the matter.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to begin by saying thank you to the Government House Leader and government members for having the courage of their convictions to proceed with such an important matter.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, I have a significant level of involvement, or I should say that I have had a significant level of involvement with the department. Let me be clear this afternoon that this discussion today isn't just a blame-game, point-fingers, find-the-culprits discussion around who did it, what happened, and when, although all of those things are extremely important. Today ought to be a step in the direction of ensuring that this doesn't happen again.

Mr. Speaker, you know that I myself have three children, and one of those children is very close to the age of Serenity. For some reason my wife and I were granted an incredible honour and blessing to be able to provide for Peyton what for some reason people who were closest to her at her birth were unable to.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, this weekend, after reading Paula Simons' multiple stories – and I know that some of my colleagues will be able to quote from them – I was just struck at what it was to be three, and when I picked her up and cuddled my kids, just the heartbreaking ache that came over me, so much so that while chatting with my spouse about the debate today and the possibility of it happening, my nine-year-old was asking: "Well, what are you going to be talking about, daddy? Points of order?" And I said, "Well, son, I'm sure that we'll talk about points of order," and my wife said: "You know what, bud? There are some things that mom and dad talk about that we want to wait until you're a little bit older to know" because the details that were released this weekend in the story are devastating.

Mr. Speaker, the Child and Youth Advocate seemingly did his very best. He did his best with the information that he had available to him or at least what we believe he had available to him. It is critically important that we provide every resource available to the Child and Youth Advocate in the future to ensure that he has all of the information that is required to report accurately on what's happened.

Mr. Speaker, while the work of the Child and Youth Advocate is of critical importance, it saddens me to know that there are circumstances that happen in this province that require his presence. It saddens me to know that since he began investigating this report, there have been additional deaths of children in care. We are going to read another report just like this, where a foster family begged the department to intervene, where a foster family, who are constituents of mine, lobbied on behalf of the children that were placed in their care, but their concerns fell on deaf ears, and the children that were in their care were placed back in the care of family or kinship care, and tragedy struck again.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen over a long period of time the ongoing problems around the deaths of children in care. Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. Where possible, it is my heart's desire for every child that is in the department to be able to go home to a loving family that can provide the care for them. But more important than my heart's desire or the desire of the department or the desire of a bureaucrat in Edmonton or wherever they may be, more important than my desire for them to have that home, it is for them to be safe, to not be put in harm's way. That is not what we have seen on numerous occasions.

Mr. Speaker, for 11 months Serenity was in kinship care with no oversight. The Child and Youth Advocate reports that multiple stakeholders advocated to the department for intervention. These are the exact sort of challenges that must be stopped today. Additional safeguards with respect to kinship care need to be addressed. We must and we have to do better.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't just about Serenity. This is about another child who was nine months old. The very complex needs of an infant were not taken into consideration when the department made decisions based upon a family unit. Every single child inside a family unit is unique and important, and we saw a nine-month-old who will never see its first birthday because of a decision made by a system that was broken, that placed the needs of the group ahead of the needs of an individual.

Mr. Speaker, it's my heart-cry today that as we move forward together as an Assembly, this government will take proactive steps. I know that we heard the Minister of Human Services today speak that they have accepted the recommendations, but what we need to know are regular and consistent updates in this House on how progress is being made. I don't mean talking points; I mean actual progress. I mean actual results of the way that we're addressing the kinship care program, the way that we're dealing with the sensitive issues around cultural sensitivities, kinship, our desire for families to be together, yet that very most important, primary need and desire of safety of the children who've been placed in our care.

Mr. Speaker, it's my hope that this won't just be a bunch of politicians talking about this for one day. I make a commitment today to children in care that I will advocate on their behalf, that I will work diligently to ensure that the government continues to make the steps in the right direction so that the issues of Serenity and the nine-month-old and the child that has close personal connection to my family from Three Hills, that these things do not ever happen again.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to this, having been through the 2014 round-table under former minister Manmeet Bhullar and heard some of the same kind of stories that are so tragic and so preventable at some level. At another level our human condition, our human systems, are sometimes unable to change, unable to move to the next level for a variety of reasons, whether it's lack of staffing, lack of training, lack of recognition of risk level, and prioritizing some of these very, very complex, very, very troubled families and individuals that are dealing with these placements and new relationships.

In some cases I applaud the former government for trying to move towards a kinship model for First Nations because it's very clear now that about two-thirds of the children in care are First Nations. We needed and still need to find a new way to address the problem of children in care coming from very troubled, broken families, generations of residential schools and the trauma that those families have experienced, their inability to parent, their lack

of parenting training, their lack of parenting models, and in some cases mental health and addiction problems.

All of this was reviewed to some extent on January 28 and 29, 2014, with 13 experts, 91 in-room participants, 475 online participants across the province for two days reviewing some of the issues around the deaths in care and the process of reviewing deaths in care and the importance of reporting consistently on deaths in care and the importance of consent of the parent, parent family, the custodial family, and even, if it was an older child, consent of the child to be publicly reported and identified.

4:00

So very sensitive issues around public disclosure yet so profoundly neglected prior to 2014, when these numbers weren't even adequately identified, they weren't publicly reported, and parents were told not to speak in public about the death of a child because of various sensitivities in law and other things that discriminated against their ability to inform all of us and to expose a system that wasn't transparent, wasn't accountable, and wasn't making the changes that were needed, indeed consistent, comprehensive reviews of every death, which was part of what this round-table called for.

It also identified the lack of an orientation to prevention, an orientation around identification of caregivers, custodians, families that weren't quite qualified, weren't quite up to the standard that we would hope but that would be then identified as higher risk and monitored more closely. So an attitude of prevention was identified as lacking in the department. Another area of deficiency was identified as a lack of culturally appropriate knowledge and expertise in the department to deal in this case, obviously, with First Nations issues.

All of that identified there, and overlying the whole picture a departmental culture of fear and blame and shame. Front-line workers, who burned out quickly, felt overwhelmed by the demands of the work they did and had too many cases to try to deal with, too much distance to travel, and, in many cases, quietly, on the side, indicated that they spent over 50 per cent of their time filling out forms on a computer, leaving them much less time to actually work with parents, work with children, work with caregivers, custodians, adoptive and foster parents. Very complex, very demanding work often resulting in a media event like this, a death, an example of abuse and suffering potentially preventable but for many different reasons either wasn't identified or wasn't acted upon. In many cases some of the family members felt that they couldn't speak about it. That much, I hope, has changed.

It's timely that we have this discussion because I don't know what's changed. I look forward to hearing the minister say what has changed since that round-table in 2014 in the death review process, the public-reporting process, the focus on prevention, and addressing the culture inside your department, sir, of blame and shame and the real sensitivities at the front line of feeling like they are the problem, the front-line caseworkers, who don't last long, from the report. There's a high turnover of these folks on the front lines because of the suffering they see, the trauma they themselves experience when trying to deal with these very troubled families and very difficult situations.

So I myself would like to know more about what has actually changed since that round-table. Certainly, I don't feel like there's been more public communication about these. Maybe there has been. Is there consistent and timely reporting on some of the goals that were established at that round-table?

All Albertans but especially those who are fostering and sponsoring children and custodians need to know that they are being supported more appropriately, that we are identifying trends,

and that we are identifying in the department those who are a little higher risk than others and giving them extra attention, extra visits, extra support, extra training, whatever it is they need, or, on the other hand, saying: "No. You're simply not up to the task here. We're going to have to re-place this child. Even though there are advantages to being in a kinship relationship because you're in a First Nations culture and you can benefit from that, you do not have the skills, you do not have the attitudes, and you do not have the ability to do what is necessary to keep this child healthy and growing and developing in a healthy way."

It may well be that we are now doing death reviews in a much more consistent and appropriate way. We are reporting on the numbers, but the next level of change has to be within the culture of Human Services so that there is a more supportive and understanding training environment for these young social workers who are so traumatized and so quickly leave the work. Are they given more time to do their work? Are they given the training to know how to deal more effectively with some of these extremely difficult families and when to call it: "Enough. We can't tolerate this anymore. There's too much risk here. We are going to intervene. We're going to be blamed for intervening, and we're going to be blamed if we don't intervene."

That's the catch-22 that these folks have to deal with, anger and frustration whether they intervene or whether they don't intervene. There are people who are very, very upset with decisions that this department makes in every child's case just because of the nature of this tremendously important role that this department has taken on.

What constitutes a serious injury? This is another question. Part of the round-table was that not just deaths should be reviewed but that any serious injury should be reviewed to see whether this is the breaking point. "This is an indication that we cannot leave this child here any longer. They say it's accidental, but what's the evidence that it was an accidental or deliberate injury to this child?" What constitutes a serious injury? How well are you identifying those indicators of serious risk?

As I mentioned, a death in care typically involves a broader range of people than other child deaths. It may include birth families, siblings, other children at home, child intervention workers, kinship caregivers, communities, and agencies. That takes a tremendous amount of time in a department that is time-challenged, resource-challenged, and indeed mostly has young graduate social workers working there because once they can find other work, they don't necessarily want to do this kind of work. It is tremendously challenging work.

It was felt in this round-table that current investigations lacked, again, the prevention mandate and placed extraordinary pressure on the front-line child intervention workers, discouraged honest communication, and diminished the grieving and healing process that many needed to carry out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity. I would like to begin by thanking the Opposition House Leader for bringing forward this motion and for his passionate remarks this afternoon and for his advocacy around issues respecting foster children and foster homes.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more heartbreaking in this world than the death of a child, and being Minister of Human Services, I can tell you that there's no day more difficult than when you receive the notice of a death. While we are all here as elected representatives

of our communities, this makes us think about our own families and our own loved ones, and I can say that we want all children to be safe, to be fed, to be loved, and to have the opportunities that our province can provide so that they can reach their full potential. The death of any loved one brings grief and great loss, and when a child dies before she or he had a chance to fully experience life, it is a tragedy that defies words.

We owe to this little girl the time to reflect on her death. As the Premier indicated earlier, this is an open matter and still being looked into, but we can certainly discuss what we need to change in our system to prevent similar tragedies from happening again. We can talk about the issue today because that's an issue which is very near and dear to everyone in this House and that everyone cares about. This is an issue that transcends party politics.

**4:10**

This heartbreaking loss has made it clear that the child intervention system must be improved to better protect children and youth who receive services or who are in our care. The system certainly has fallen tragically short for far too long for far too many children. We are beginning work on how we can improve the transition for children in care so that they have permanent and loving homes.

The issues involving these children are complex. It begins with addressing poverty of families, an issue that has been ignored for too long, with real and tragic consequences for children. That is why we introduced a number of new measures to directly address poverty, including a new child benefit that provides real money for low-income families and those who can't afford the costs of raising children.

This tragedy happened on a First Nations reserve. As a nation we must address the widespread poverty, addiction, and inter-generational trauma of the devastating and ongoing legacy of residential schools prevalent on those reserves. These are issues that are facing indigenous reserves and families across this province and across Canada. Any change must be done in consultation with First Nation leadership, and it is up to all provinces, in particular, that we do that in partnership with community partners, in business communities, and with the federal government so that we get this right.

The child intervention system has been a priority for our government and an issue our members have long advocated for. With the benefit of having colleagues who have worked on the front line within the system, our government has taken the opportunity to take real action to support young people who come into our care. While we do know that the system won't be fixed overnight, we are steadfast in our commitment to taking action as quickly as practicable to make improvements. We know that this starts with ensuring that the child intervention program and those who have oversight of the system such as the office of the Child and Youth Advocate have the resources and capacity they need to continue to do their work.

This is why even in challenging fiscal times we have added more money into the child intervention system and we approved through an all-party committee the resources for the office of the Child and Youth Advocate less than six months into the government. In total we have increased \$37 million to support the work of the child intervention system.

Every time that a tragedy occurs, we do look into the circumstances and make improvements. Of course, every tragedy, every issue is difficult and different. For instance, in the province we have 1,700 children in kinship care homes. I do recognize that one death is too many, but at the same time there are 1,700 children who do

receive services in safe, caring, and loving homes in kinship care in our province.

At the heart of the work that we do to support families lies the caring and intelligent front-line workers that devote their lives and time to the issues facing indigenous communities and issues facing Albertan families. Often these workers are asked to do too much with too little, and we know that their work and dedication is at the heart of how we can improve support for youth and families. We need to provide them with the needed supports and resources to do their job efficiently.

Let me be clear. We have much work ahead of us, and the stakes couldn't be higher. Every single member of this government, this caucus, is committed to this cause, and we will be working closely with families, workers, communities, business leaders, and many others to make these improvements. While this is a problem that touches everyone in this province and touches every province in this country, we know that Alberta must take leadership to improve our system for the safety and well-being of young people.

With respect to the comments from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, since that round-table I think there was progress made as well, and the department does provide every death and serious injury report publicly on a quarterly basis, and we do share that with the office of the Child and Youth Advocate so he can look into the systemic issues and suggest improvements. In this case we have received that report. We take the advocate's recommendations very seriously, and we have accepted the recommendations that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate made. We also provide public responses, that are available on the Human Services website, as to how we go about implementing those recommendations.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start with just a few thank yous, one to you for allowing this to occur. I would like to thank the hon. House leader for the Official Opposition for making this motion in the first place. It is apparent not just on this day but in the past and I'm sure in the future that his dedication to our future generations is something that's beyond reproach. I know that's shared by yours truly as a fellow dad and by, I dare say, every member of this House. It's part of the reason that we're here.

I'd like to thank the hon. Government House Leader for also agreeing to this debate. He didn't have to, but he did. I would like to thank the Minister of Human Services for rising just moments ago and explaining what is happening with his ministry now. Let's face it, sir, with the greatest of respect, this is something that hasn't just faced you; it's faced previous ministers, and every minister that will come after you will also have to deal with this, sadly, as long as there's the human condition. It's incumbent upon us, it's our honour, and it's our obligation to deal with this as best as possible. I wish you and everyone in your department Godspeed.

I also look forward to hearing from every other minister in this government, and I'll tell you why, Mr. Speaker. It's because this is an issue that affects every single department that this government is charged with. Again, I look forward to hearing from the other ministers and the Premier on this as well as the folks who serve as private members.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, I am so sad that we are speaking about this here today. Oh, now it's Madam Speaker. Welcome to the chair.

4:20

I'm so sad that we're speaking about this today because it's too late for Serenity. When I first heard about this, I was bordering on being physically sick. But I can tell you that I am so glad that we're talking about this today because it's not too late for other young Albertans. Madam Speaker, I think just about how every one of us has a ribbon on today for National Child Day, and just yesterday I tweeted out for Universal Children's Day "Children are more important than anything else in our world! Today is Universal Children's Day." I could have written so much more, but it's a tweet. I could have said: every day should be children's day. But I had room for a link to their rights from the United Nations as well as to our Legislature.

You know, we're all wearing these here today, but also on our desks here today was the report, the annual report 2015-2016 from the office of the Child and Youth Advocate here in Alberta. I would like to salute them and thank them for doing incredible things. I'll just do a short list of 10 categories. I want to point out, first of all: did you know, Madam Speaker, that in the last year alone a total of 2,535 young people were served by this office? That's seven a day. No wonder we're speaking about this. This is urgent, not just right now but every hour.

You know, these folks advocate for young people; they connect with experts to better serve younger children; they contribute to systemic advocacy, which is absolutely critical; they speak up about issues affecting young people; they connect people with knowledge; they advocate on children's mental health; they engage with youth in the justice system; they connect with community organizations; they focus on sexual and gender minority youth; and they identify issues at the regional and agency level. Madam Speaker, on page 20 there are no fewer than seven different quotations from youth about how invaluable these services have been for them. I dare say that in many cases it's actually saved their lives.

I know this, tragically, from first-hand experience as well. A few careers ago, before this one, I was honoured to serve as an educator and administrator for over 13 years in three countries, from kindergarten to university. I started out in the West Indies, went over to Nepal, two of the poorest countries on Earth. You know, times are tough here, but – holy smokes – if you compare it to what's happened in those absolutely impoverished regions and the consequences that incredible poverty wreak, it was heartbreaking.

But the heartbreak isn't just overseas; it's within our own borders as well. I've been so sad to see so many terrible things. You know, my first job in Alberta was in Calgary, right after the Calgary Olympics. I was hired as a special educator for what they called the skills enhancement program. That was a code word for a holding tank for kids that could not fit anywhere else or people had since cast aside. It included children with severe learning disabilities, children who simply could not speak English, children who had nowhere else to go. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that there were a number of con artists in serious trouble with the law – very serious trouble with the law – in our classroom. There were prostitutes in our classroom. There were drug traffickers in our classroom. These children were in junior high.

That being said, there were some incredible success stories because of what they did and because I was fortunate enough to have a little bit of luck in partnering with a bunch of wonderful people in the community, often without the parents or in spite of them. God bless them. You know, in senior high school, they actually created a position called youth ministry co-ordinator. For some reason they asked me to help out there in the classroom, in private counselling sessions, and in the community. The abuse that

I saw was of every kind. You know all the categories, ladies and gentlemen. I won't go through the list. Yes, there were success stories. We reached a lot of kids and helped a lot of them. But for some of them they were too far gone, and the results were catastrophic.

I guess I'm pointing out, Madam Speaker, that wherever we are, whatever the age, this is happening. It's happened in the past, it's happening now, and it's going to happen in the future. We need to not only talk about this; we need to continue to do more, different, and new things.

You know, when it came time to be in government, I was so honoured to be the chair of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission and also the associate minister of wellness. We started some great programs that helped a lot of people with healthy eating and active living and helped a lot of folks with education and treatment when it came to addictions and mental illness. Back then it was crystal meth. Now it's fentanyl. It's other things.

This is often life and death for folks. It really is. You turn to appendix A in the aforementioned report: 16-year-old Sam, nine-year-old Bonita, six-week-old Nicole, eight-year-old Ella, 17-year-old Catherine, two-year-old Teanna, 17-year-old Makayla, 10-month-old Lily; 14-year-old Asinay, 15-year-old Sage, 18-year-old Cedar, 15-year-old Morley, 15-year-old Kari, 15-year-old Victoria, and 18-year-old Jacob. We had our little friend last week. I shudder to think who it might be today, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year. Who knows what will happen next? Who knows when? Who knows what they will undergo? Madam Speaker, it is a life-and-death issue, and if even one death or even serious injury can be avoided because of what happens here today, this was time that was extremely well spent.

With the few seconds I have left, as PC House leader, MLA for Calgary-Lougheed, an Albertan, and just as a dad I urge everyone in this Chamber, every minister, and every Albertan to do everything possible to make sure that we have the skills to be the best parents we could possibly be so we could pass on the best life lessons that we can to our children so they can experience success of every kind, which, really, is not only the opportunity but the right of every child, not only within our borders but within Canada and beyond.

God bless Alberta, and God bless our little Albertans. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. First off, I would like to thank my colleague for bringing this motion forward. This is something that's been haunting me for quite a while, well over a year, when I started to receive reports from the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. Certainly, I think that for all of us this has been a really tough weekend, reading the report of Serenity and others.

One of the things that I was really hoping to achieve from the emergency debate here today was actually some answers from this government as to what is actually changing. It was really disheartening, Madam Speaker, to hear today, after the government was given notice of our intentions to hold an emergency debate, that the Premier and the Minister of Human Services were not prepared in any way, shape, or form to answer any of the questions about the systemic problems in our child intervention system. I was also disheartened to hear the minister just speak a few moments ago and actually use the words: I think there are some changes being made from the committee that was formed many years ago.

I want nothing more, Madam Speaker, than actual changes to be made within this system, and I will do whatever it takes. If it takes me screaming and yelling at the top of my lungs, then that is what

I will do until something moves, until something changes. This is, I can assure you, a topic that will not be left alone.

4:30

More money is not always the answer in a system. Actually, this government is fortunate enough to have a body that provides recommendations to the government on how to change the system, recommendations that we've been given over and over and over again. Yet nothing has changed. Absolutely nothing. We already know of deaths of children in care under this government's watch. Those reports will come, and if they're the same systemic problems that have come from the reports that we've received in the last year and a half, this government should be removed. I don't say this to play political games. I really don't. I really don't. I do it so that somebody wakes up and pays attention. I'm sick and tired of hearing: well, we are just going to fund this, and everything is going to be fine. There are reports here that clearly define problems in this system, and nobody is doing a thing about it. These are children. If it's not true, like the other side says, then somebody please stand up and tell me what is happening. More money is not the solution. We know that.

The Human Services' plan clearly states that their ideology is an unlimited number of reunification attempts. We see time and time again that this is not what is best for the safety of the child, yet we continue to go down this path. Can we take a look at that? That is one of the problems I see, and we need to seriously address this. Seriously address this.

We have cultural sensitivities that we need to address in our kinship care program, and I understand that. In many cases it does work, and this is the best thing for the child, but when the safety of the child is at risk, that is first and nothing else.

Serenity was living just under an hour away from Edmonton, yet no one would offer an hour of their time to drive out there and check on her. Beaten, starved, raped, four years old: just one of the cases. This is just one of many. This is a fail, an absolute fail.

I truly would like to know what progress has been made on the recommendations that have come out of previous reports, and if there's something that I can do, whatever it is, to help fix this problem, please let me know. I'm sure that everyone in this House is more than interested to fix these problems. This isn't politics; this is children's lives. Madam Speaker, I want to state here today that I will promise that I will do whatever I can to help change the systemic problems in our foster care and our kinship system.

I've had many conversations with foster parents who are reprimanded when they stand up for the children that are in their care. They're told that they are not the parents and they have no right to be. Yet when our government's ideology is to keep placing our children back with their parents who have abused them in the first place and we do this over and over and over again, that's a fail. I've actually seen this first-hand. I have a family near and dear to my heart that continually goes through the heartbreak of watching a child that they love come back from a visit with their birth parents in a traumatic state, yet the workers don't or the system doesn't care. How is that okay? How do we allow this to happen? We need to stop and go back to putting children first.

This is an emergency. This is a problem, and we need to stop ignoring it or stop just saying things and make some progress. Let's do this. Let's work together. That is my goal. I know that's the goal of my colleagues here for sure. I'm pretty sure that it is for the government. Let's get to work here, guys. Let's send this to our internal committee. Let's actually implement some of the recommendations listed in these reports that keep coming out on children who have died. Not next week. Today. We can do some of this stuff today. We could do it immediately. We can stop trying to

be politically correct when we should actually be loving and caring in a situation where our children really, actually do matter and they are put first.

I know that sometimes you can disconnect yourself from the problems, from the deaths of the children in these reports because they're not yours, but they are. When they are in government care, this is all of our responsibility, and if this Legislative Assembly can't address these problems, we shouldn't be here. Over and over again: Ella, August 2015, eight years old; Nicole, June 2015, only six weeks old; Teanna, two years old, November 2015; Makayla, 17 years old, December 2015; Lily, 10 months old, March 2016; Onessa, 17 years old, October 2016; Netasinim, 15 years old, October 2016.

I urge this Assembly to get it together, to figure out what the best course of action here is, to put our children first. Our children in care deserve better. They were removed from their homes because they were not in safe situations, and we're placing them in other unsafe situations. For what purpose? Some of these children are removed from loving homes while in care, but for ideology's sake we move them somewhere else when we are shown that that didn't work in that particular case. Roll it back. Not every case is the exact same answer. There are unique situations. Let's respect the voices of the people that are closest to our children.

Whatever I can do, I will help. I promise you that from myself and my colleagues. I urge members on all sides of this House to step up and do something and take action about our kids in care. It's not about tweeting snarky things. Let's get to work here.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand today to support the many calls from both sides of the floor to take this situation as an emergency and to respond to it with all of our integrity, with all of our heart, with all of our desire.

But I've got to tell you that as a social worker for 34 years in this province, with a specialization in the area of child sexual abuse and neglect, having worked for the government in child welfare, having worked in private practice for many years working with children who have been sexually abused, having done the research study on the incidence of child abuse and neglect in the province of Alberta over the last three terms, that has been repeated, having been involved in this issue as somebody standing on the front steps of this Legislature, I absolutely have to express my frustration at the things I hear coming from across the floor, in the last speech particularly.

You know, I have been committed to this issue since I was a young pup just out of my first social work degree, in 1982, and I have devoted my whole life to making sure that the children of this province get the best care that they possibly can. When I hear comments like, "Children are moved from one house to another because the front-line workers don't care," I can't tell you the depth of concern and anger I feel that that kind of accusation would be made, that that's the level of analysis of this situation that is going on.

4:40

It's absolutely incredible to me that you can take a look at a situation and so narrowly focus on one activity without any kind of estimation of the context of why that's happened, why this system has been a failure for so many years. I was a child welfare worker in 1982, and I can tell you that I started organizations back then dealing with front-line workers to resolve these kinds of issues. You know who it was who always repressed and stopped us from moving forward on the actions that we needed? It was the right-wing parties of this province. That's who it was. That's why I was

standing on the front steps of this Legislature protesting along with thousands of other workers while there were cutbacks going on.

You talk about the fact that there's an ideology problem here. I can tell you that you're damn right. Sorry, I apologize and withdraw that. You are right. There is an ideology problem. I can tell you that it was the right wing of this government that took the Child Welfare Act and removed the words at the front of that Child Welfare Act that said that the act is to be concerned about the best interests of the child and replaced them with an act dedicated to the preservation of the family. That was ideology, and that came from the right wing of this province. That did not come from the front-line child welfare workers, who protested those kinds of behaviours and who said: "Do you want to know what the real problem is? The real problem is that there are structural reasons why people live in poverty. There are structural reasons why people commit acts, horrendous acts, of child abuse and neglect."

The right wing always, every time, votes against doing something about that, and we're tired of that all the time. They stand up and ask for individual things for their individual constituencies, but when we say, "The issue is structural; we have to change how this society works," they're never there for it. When we say, "We need after school care, we need food programs in the schools, we need child care that's affordable for everyday people," are they there saying, "We would like to vote for an increase in the budget for child welfare, we would like to vote for an increase in the budget for education, we would like to vote for an increase in health care"? Do we ever hear that? We do not because they keep their focus narrow. Some individual has committed a horrendous act, and that's all we can talk about.

There's a death that's been caused by one horrendous person, and we all feel that tragedy. I know that they feel that tragedy. I feel that tragedy – I feel it in sadness; I feel it in rage – but then I do something about it. I go out and analyze the system. I use my brain to look at: how has that happened? In my PhD research I can tell you that we looked at what happens that causes a child who is raised in an abusive situation to become an abuser themselves. I can tell you what happens. It's the lack of appropriate interventions, the lack of opportunity, the lack of structural change. As soon as we start to impose those kind of things in a child's life, we provide structural invitations for success. We make sure they have opportunities for loving, caring people outside of their family in daycares, in school systems, in hospital systems. We see a drop in that child abuse and neglect. So what do we do? We come into the House, and we vote for improvements to those systems – health care, social services, education – because we actually don't want children to die. That's why we do it.

I get really tired of individual workers being blamed. I get tired of people being told that they don't care. I tell you what. I can tell you that we care in a way that does not only include our hearts, but it includes our brains, where we look at the research, we follow up the practice that's done in the community, and we look at the issues.

Right now this child is a child who died on a reserve in this province. One of the primary issues has been brought to the Human Rights Commission at the national level, and they have said that the issue is that it's been neglected financially. That's what they said. They said that the amount of money put into the child welfare systems on reserves is between half and two-thirds of what is being put into child welfare systems in the provinces. That is a human rights violation. If you're not voting for more money for children on-reserve, then I really have to ask: what is it that you see when you read that Human Rights Commission result that tells you that it doesn't matter whether they get those services, that it doesn't matter whether they get things, that we just now have to be sunshine and rosy and treat our children better? I'm not putting up with that

happy-go-lucky kind of “we’ll just be nice people” anymore. I want to be determined people. I want to be people who will put our money where our mouth is because that’s how the system works. If you don’t put money into it, it’s not going to get better.

You want a better system? You stop hiring people when they come out of their BSW or, worse, with no social work training at all coming out of a geology degree and turning them into a child welfare worker at the age of 22. If you want a better system, you start hiring them at 30, and you pay them twice as much because they’ve got life experience and they’ve got training that says that they’re going to do a better job. Then you give them 10 families, not 30 families, and you say: “We want you to actually fix things with those families. We want you to develop a relationship. We want you to understand the families, the support systems, and the socioeconomic situation that we are in. We want you to change all of that. You know what I’m going to do to make sure that you can do that right? I’m going to provide you with the resources you need. That’s what I’m going to do. I’m going to pay you what you’re worth. I’m going to give you the money so that you can put those kids into Boy Scouts and hockey and art classes so that they can live the life that we want all of our children to live. I’m going to do that because I care.”

And I do care. If I get told one more time that I don’t care, I am going to ask that person how much they have done over the last 34 years, how many kids they have seen who came in their door when they were six years old who were sexually abused because they lived in a house with 12 people and there were bedrooms only for six. That’s what I want to ask them. What did they do about the housing on reserves? What did they do about the fact that we don’t have water on-reserve? What did they do about the fact that the teachers on-reserve are underfunded compared to teachers off-reserve? What do we do about the fact that child welfare workers are not funded? What are you doing about the real issues, not the ones that break your heart but the ones that you understand from your analysis of reading the literature or working with the people in the community and figuring out where the pressures are, where the problems are? Have you done that work? Then you come to me and you tell me I don’t care, but until then I don’t want to hear that I don’t care.

I can tell you that there is lots we can do. Every death is a tragedy that should not have happened. We can get together across the floor, and we can . . . [Mr. Feehan’s speaking time expired.]

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Next on my list I have Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, one of the things that is great about living in this province is that we live in a democracy where people of divergent points of view can get up and speak. I want to thank the hon. Minister of Human Services for his comments, and I want to thank the government for allowing us to have this debate today. I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for his comments. The passion is there. I know that there are times when we could have a rebuttal and we could have a debate as to the causes of why families are in crisis and how we deal with them. Suffice it to say that on this side of the House I think there is just as much compassion. There is a time for rebuttal, and there is a time for debate.

4:50

I think that we have had opportunities in this House today and on previous days to talk about how perhaps we’re more compassionate when we provide people with jobs and finances to be able to take

care of their families than to have big government, but suffice it to say that I think everyone in this Legislature understands that we have a responsibility, Madam Speaker, as legislators to ensure the safety of our kids, our children. More importantly, I dare say that we have a responsibility as citizens to ensure that we take care of the children that are in our society.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford brings a great deal of experience. We recognize that. Please understand that after 30 years of being an educator, I too see the human side of this equation. When I look back on my 30 years of being a teacher, I’ve seen times when I wished that I had been able to do more to help the kids that I taught. Some of them are no longer here with us. I see the value of a foster care system and a system of adoption and a system of kinship care. I have three cousins that were welcomed into our family through a system of foster care and adoption, two of whom were First Nations, one of whom we thought was First Nations but turned out to be Hawaiian. So I see the value of foster care.

I think all of us in this House recognize the difficulty that comes with trying to deal with families in crisis. I saw it as a teacher. I see it in my church. I see it in my community. I see families in crisis. They have a myriad of reasons for why they are in crisis, and that’s what makes dealing with it so difficult. We are tasked in this debate with focusing in, however, on one child and a system that let one child down in a tragic way. I don’t think we’re here today to focus in on any one individual caseworker or supervisor. It’s not appropriate. We are aware that these caseworkers are in many cases overburdened and are trying to do the best job that they can. But it still speaks to a system that has broken down, and it is not acceptable for us to turn our eyes away from that.

We have a broken system when it allows children to suffer and die. We have a broken system when a child can be physically and sexually abused and malnourished. If that doesn’t tell us that we have a broken system, then we’re blind. We have a broken system when we can have a four-year-old child who cannot speak for herself, who weighs 18 pounds, is obviously suffering, yet we leave her in her placement. That’s a broken system. I guess we need a response from this government and from this ministry that will recognize that it is not only broken but that we have to take some concrete steps to fix it.

You know, if I was looking at this without the experience, which I don’t have, of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, I’d ask questions like: are we ensuring that the training that we have for our caseworkers is adequate? That’s a question that needs to be asked, and I think it’s a question that needs to be answered, Madam Speaker. Do we have training and support that will help them to recognize and to address child safety? Do we allow them the ability and the training and the knowledge to be able to identify the risk factors that need to be assessed and need to be recognized to ensure that they will recognize when a child is in danger? Do we have a commitment on behalf of the Legislature, of the government, of the caseworkers, of the supervisors that they understand that it must be child-centred and that at the very forefront of this child-centredness we have the safety of the child as paramount regardless of where that child is placed?

This really isn’t about whether this is a kinship placement or whatever kind of placement you want to call it. This is about child safety. This issue is about child safety, and it must always be about that first. That’s what I was taught as a teacher. I’m sure that’s what you’re taught as a social worker. Somehow it’s been lost in this situation, in this case.

Have we done the job in providing the resources and the care and the education necessary for the kinship providers to adequately take care of the children that have been given into their care? That’s a question that needs to be asked, Madam Speaker. We have a



responsibility to ensure that they are and that they have the resources that are necessary for these family kinship units to be able to serve the needs of these children.

I know that as a teacher, as an educator there were times when I had to sit down with another colleague and I had to ask them: "Do I really understand what this child is going through? Am I seeing it? Do I need another pair of eyes to look at the situation and be able to see if I'm actually teaching this child in a way that respects them and that encourages and engages their learning?" Well, I think that there are times with kinship, with the adults that are in that relationship that are overseeing these children, where maybe self-reporting is not good enough, where they need an objective pair of eyes on that situation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Official Opposition House Leader for raising this today and the government for agreeing to go ahead with the debate. I think this is important. When we have children dying in government care or freshly out of government care, I don't think that we could really say that there's a lot we do around here that's more important than that. So I think this is time well spent.

You know what? I'm not one of the experts, but here's what I think about this because I have seen this. When we were in government, children in government care were dying. With the current government, children in government care are dying. None of it's good. None of it's what we want. But I'm interested, as long as we're having this debate, in thinking about how we make it better.

I think back to my former colleague Manmeet. When he was the Human Services minister, he actually started to address this and started to open up the doors and make arrangements so that parents whose children had died could actually talk about it. There was a time when – I'm sure it was well intended, but it occurs to me that it's not a good idea – they weren't even allowed to talk about their own kids. There's more to be done.

5:00

When I hear this today, I think to myself: what can we do? I hear the aboriginal affairs minister, who, with all due respect, lost his mind a little bit just now. I guess he was passionate, and I'm sure he meant what he said. I really don't want to throw him under the bus, but the fact is that he spouted off a whole bunch of answers that he had, but his government has been in government for a year and a half, and they haven't put those actions into place.

Madam Speaker, you could argue that our government could have done better, and I'm sure that the next government after this can do better, too. It's a complex problem. It'll never be simple. You're dealing with the problems of society. When children are taken from their parents and put in government's hands, that means that something isn't perfect or that somebody believes something isn't perfect. You're dealing with a difficult situation. Rather than poke each other in the eye all day about whether right-wing people don't care or left-wing people don't care – well, that's good entertainment for whoever is watching, but it doesn't actually get us any closer to an answer.

I'm probably going to take less than my 10 minutes because I'm hoping that the Premier will stand up and commit to forming an all-party committee where we can actually talk about this. We've heard from people on both sides of the House that say: I know what to do. Well, maybe it's time to do it. Maybe it's time to stop pointing

fingers and saying that right-wing people don't care or that left-wing people don't care or that you people don't care. If this matters to us, why don't we sit down like adults and actually put some stuff on the table? I could talk longer, but I'm hoping to get a commitment from the Premier that she'll do that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by Calgary-Elbow.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Never has it been more obvious that the interactions between the many areas within departments and ministries influence each other in the success of our outcomes. It doesn't matter that the services and processes we're talking about today are the responsibility primarily on that reserve of the federal government. The issues facing our service sectors and even more complex life-and-death problems facing Alberta children are complex and intersect in so many areas, whether it's mental health, addictions, inclusive education, poverty, access to services, safe housing, or supports for people with disabilities.

I raise this because I think we all understand that the changes required to solve the problems that result in these tragic deaths of innocent young children are multilayered and complex. The senseless death of yet another child is infuriating to all of us. I know that. It's heartbreaking to all of us, but we can't simply bow our heads and wear a ribbon to mourn a loss. We have to fight like hell in any capacity available to us in order to make sure this doesn't happen again. I can't wait till we get to the point where we stop just reacting. We have to know that there are so many factors that lead us to this place, the place where we lose children.

Indigenous communities and families face huge challenges and a disproportionate amount of loss, violence, and deep-rooted issues that continuously threaten to tear individuals, families, and communities apart: childhood trauma, exposure to domestic violence, parental addictions, mental health problems, often many that are untreated but some that are treated, and the frequency of death by suicide, which is shocking. Nobody should have to die so that a system improves.

On a side note, I would like to thank Paula Simons and the *Edmonton Journal* for their story, that I think all of us probably felt physically sick reading. I'm thankful for real journalism. This is their job, and I'm grateful.

All of these social problems need to be front and centre on a regular basis as evidenced by the time and the money that we invest in them. I know that these problems transcend party lines, but I do want to point out that we need to use our time properly. The opposition uses their time to score points with their base. They tend to ask the same questions every day. I get it. I get what you're trying to do. Carbon levy, coal-fired electricity: all very vital issues to discuss. Making fun of ideology, sharing a fun bottle of Leninade: I get that, too. However, I have noticed that social issues predictably come up when there are headlines. Why are they not on your top-100 list? These are not stale issues. These are issues that need to light a fire under all of us every single day.

I remember that during the first session our Premier stood up and faced family members of missing and murdered girls from Alberta, and their families were sitting above us. She stood up, and she publicly asked then Prime Minister Stephen Harper to conduct an inquiry befitting the horror of the problem. We stood and clapped, and we saw tears streaming from their faces. But not everybody in this House stood up. That's bad politics. These are important issues. [interjection]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, it's not appropriate in the House to be sharing what's on the screen, so please respect the member who has the floor.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Ms Renaud:** That's unfortunate.

Another . . . [interjection] What's that?

**Mr. Rodney:** Would you like me to read what it says, Madam Speaker?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert has the floor.

Go ahead.

**Ms Renaud:** You may know one of my constituents. Her name is Velvet Martin. She is a powerful advocate and had a daughter with complex disabilities who, for a number of reasons, was in care. She was in care when she died. Although this is one of the far too many tragic stories that we've had to hear in this House, even before we were in this House, we have much to learn from families and from women like Velvet. They're incredible experts, and they are so willing to share. They're reluctant experts, but they have a lot to offer, and I think we need to take them up on that. That is truly collaboration. Us discussing it here today is good. It puts a spotlight on a very important issue. You're right; it doesn't solve the problem, but I think it gives us momentum to go forward and solve the problem.

I think we all received some pretty thick books about Canada's truth and reconciliation process and the recommendations. Here is another example. I'm guessing that probably all of us didn't read them all. I know I didn't read all of the editions, but I commit and promise that I will now.

Thank you for your time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you very much to the Member for St. Albert for her thoughtful comments not just today but for the work that she's done throughout her career advocating for people who cannot advocate for themselves. It means a tremendous amount for the government front bench and their advocacy.

I really do especially want to thank the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for bringing up this issue. I think that the government certainly deserves credit for accepting that this is, in fact, an emergency and worthy of time spent in this House. You know, I think there's no question that everyone in this House wants to find a solution and that things will get heated and emotional. Frankly, I'd be surprised if they didn't – I'm not sure any person could – when looking at the situation with Serenity, specifically, but more generally at the systemic issues that have been discussed here this afternoon.

The questions I have are around why these problems continue. I know some of the root-cause issues have been discussed here this afternoon. But what steps are being taken? In fact, while the government has only been in power for about 18 months, I think that's enough time to have really started to dig into some of this stuff.

I have to say that were I to find myself on that side of the House, not just as, perhaps, the Minister of Human Services but if I were any member of the front bench, I would really ask some very sharp questions about what the current state of the system is. What are the constraints? What are the challenges? What are the resource shortfalls? I'd really bring that before not just my colleagues in my

own caucus but before this House and before all Albertans so that Albertans know that not only is something being done, but it is seen to be done. This is an issue that for decades has been crying out for transparency.

5:10

I want to recognize again and acknowledge the tremendous work of Paula Simons, Darcy Henton, Karen Kleiss, and other journalists who have done a lot of work. What I find frustrating is that it seems to take media reports and that level of digging for these issues to be truly brought to light. I would suggest that it is the job of government to surface these issues, even if they are politically challenging, even if they are awkward. I know that there are, clearly, rules around privacy and that we need to respect that, but I would challenge that the life of children in care in this province or children who have been in care or that are active with the child welfare system ought to take precedence over privacy.

It's interesting. We have the annual report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner – and I've read part of it – and one of the themes that emerges and one of the themes that I've seen is using privacy laws, which are put in place to legitimately protect the private information of Albertans, as an excuse for inaction or as an excuse or cover for things the government doesn't want us to know about, that we ought to know about. The more information that's out in public, the better.

What I want to know is: what's happening today? We know what happened to Serenity and so many others that we've heard about in this House. What's happening today, and what is the government doing about it specifically? It seems like this government has continued on with a lack of responsiveness to foster parents, other guardians who will advocate vociferously on behalf of a child who it seems may be being put into kinship care. When I read the recommendations of the Child and Youth Advocate, specifically in Serenity's case, the recommendations, to me, are on one level very straightforward and on another level tremendously troubling.

I will start with the first recommendation. It talks about the creation of a home study tool specifically for kinship care – I think that makes sense – that is relevant and addresses the unique kinship circumstances. I think we ought to do that. The question is: why is that not being done already? That, to me, seems like one of the obvious things we ought to be doing. What the Child and Youth Advocate recommends is that we use that tool kit to collect information, working with community professionals who are familiar with the applicant regarding the demonstrated ability of that kinship applicant. Are we not now evaluating the demonstrated ability of a particular kinship situation to accept a child in care? Is that not happening? If that's not happening, that seems to be a pretty obvious root cause of why there could be problems.

Now, I want to emphasize that I believe the kinship care model is a very good model. It is what we ought to be pursuing, ensuring especially that indigenous kids are kept within their own cultural frame as much as possible, but never should they ever be put in a situation where that's going to put the child at greater risk. So that then goes to the supports that are required for kinship care providers, and that's the second recommendation of the Child and Youth Advocate, providing a continuum of culturally relevant supportive services. Is that not in place today?

One of the nice benefits of sitting next to my hon. colleague here for Calgary-Mountain View is that we were talking about Jordan's principle. The question of jurisdiction was raised earlier. Jurisdiction should never be an excuse for not providing proper care. Jordan's principle says that regardless of jurisdiction the first level of government that interacts with a child in this case should take responsibility and then let the administrators in the background

figure out the money piece later. That's absolutely vital. I wonder to what degree that has exacerbated this particular case and to what degree that is causing problems on an ongoing basis.

But perhaps the most troubling recommendation of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate in this case is recommendation 3: "require that caseworkers complete a child-specific assessment and resolution of risk factors prior to terminating guardianship." Are we not doing that now? Is no one assessing what the needs of that child are? Are they not assessing the risk factors of a kinship care model, of a specific kinship care situation? Are there cases where the government of Alberta is taking children out of a safe situation and putting them into a situation of risk? That's the implication of this recommendation. That seems to be what's happened in the case of Serenity, and if that's something that's more than a one-off, we have a very, very serious problem.

If I were in a position to be making decisions, if this recommendation was placed on my desk, the first thing I would do is say: what in the world is going on? How is it possible that we need someone in care, a child in care, to die in tragic and horrible – heartbreaking doesn't even begin to describe the thoughts I had when I was reading the Paula Simons article on this. How is it that that needs to happen, that an investigation needs to take place covering the better part of two years, for us to be looking at a recommendation that is just patently obvious? Before you place a child in care of anyone, make sure it's safe for them to be there.

It literally puts a chill down my spine as I think about the fact that there may very well be children right now in this province – in fact, it seems likely that there are – who have been put into dangerous situations where they are likely to face abuse, perhaps to the point of being starved to death, of dying in that situation. I don't suggest for a second that the government wants that for the kids. I know they don't. I know for a fact there are members of this House sitting here today who have directly worked with kids in care. I know that they don't want that either. I know for a fact they don't. But why is it that we have to let children die? That seems to continue. It seems to be a pattern and a cycle that's repeating over and over again.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I think, like all members of this Assembly, that over the last few weeks as I read Paula Simons' articles, her first article on November 16, I was shocked. As I read her article over this weekend, I was physically ill thinking about what happened to poor Serenity. For me and, I suspect, many of the parents that are in the Assembly and the House this evening, my thoughts were for my kids, to think about them and the preciousness of them, my nieces and nephews, just to think that somebody, a little Albertan like that, could be so abused and ultimately lose their life because of the situation that they found themselves in. Well, our responsibility is as a province, and nobody saw it. Nobody was able to deal with it despite warnings.

For me, when I read it, my main thought, my first thought, truly came to my dad. Most people in the Assembly are going to think: "Well, you're talking about a kid. Why would your thoughts go to your dad, hon. member?" My dad – his story is well documented in this province – came from a terribly abusive home. A terribly abusive home. The story that I remember him telling us – and he doesn't talk too much about his childhood – was that the routine in his house when he was little and even as a toddler was that his dad would come home, and if you could get the door open to your bedroom, he and his brother, before his dad took off his boots, then you wouldn't get beaten. You know when you're little and you're

trying to open that door and you can't get it open? That was the game that they would play.

My dad tells this story – this breaks my heart when I think about it – of the one day he finally opened that door and he still got beaten. He came from a terrible, terrible place. It's a miracle – it is nothing short of a miracle – that he survived that, that he was able to escape that because of some people. What is truly a miracle beyond that is that he was able to become a great person within our society, somebody who was able to raise six sons, somebody who was able to accomplish so much in the world of poverty, to be able to help thousands of people, you know, and overcome that terrible childhood that he had to be able to do that.

5:20

When I hear it, at first I think of the abuse that my dad went through, and it just breaks my heart to think about any child going through that. I also think about what Serenity could have become. What did we lose? We lost her when she was a toddler. I mean, if that had happened to my dad, I wouldn't be here, Madam Speaker, and neither would my five brothers, all our children. His legacy now will be his kids. You can imagine that with six boys, all their wives, and all of them with multiple kids now, we have to rent a hall just to get everybody together. But if he and the people that helped him weren't able to help him escape that situation, that would not be possible. That's where we failed Serenity. I think we can all agree on that. We were not able to help her escape that situation, and that's tragic. It's just tragic.

I think we have to talk about the key facts here. We have a four-year-old named Serenity who died after being in kinship care. That's a fact. At the time of her passing she weighed just 18 pounds, which is the typical weight of a nine-month-old baby. She had severe bruising, including in her pubic area. She was hypothermic and was suffering from a suspected head injury. There was a lot more that was listed in Paula's article that I can't even say because it's just too horrific to imagine. That child was in care, in our care. Something went terribly wrong. That's what we're here to discuss today.

I know the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford spoke very passionately earlier. I want to be clear, Madam Speaker. That is a cabinet minister, who is around the cabinet table right now, in government, who has more ability than almost anybody else to help fix this situation. Albertans that I am talking to about this right now and the kids that are in care right now that may be facing similar situations as Serenity's don't care what we look like on Twitter. They don't care who can talk more passionately here and get the best Facebook post. They need help. Our system has failed them, has failed many children along the way, and continues to fail them. If we continue to have partisan conversations, focus on partisan politics and not on how we solve this problem, we will not solve it, and sadly we'll be back here again in another 18 months talking about another Serenity. To me, that is unacceptable. That is unacceptable.

I thank the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, my neighbour and my good friend, for bringing this up today because I think it is a great opportunity for all parties in this Assembly to have a discussion about something that is just so horrific, to be able to talk about why this took place, what the recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate are to stop it from taking place in the future, and to hear some answers from the government, Madam Speaker, on what they are doing to make sure that this does not happen in the future.

Now, Madam Speaker, I want to be clear in saying, first of all, that, of course, nobody in government hurt Serenity. I honestly, one hundred per cent believe that every member of this House and every

party is absolutely horrified by what happened to that little girl. But the people that can fix the system to make sure that it never happens again sit on that side of the House, and standing up and taking partisan jabs at the opposition and trying to accuse us of not caring about social issues is not going to help the next Serenities of the world, kids that are in abusive situations right now that we need to get help. Do we honestly think right now that where they're at, where they're sitting, they're going, "Oh, jeez, who cares more about social issues?" Come on.

Everybody in this House cares about kids. They care about their kids. They care about their neighbours' kids. They care about kids. Everybody is horrified by what happened here. It's not a competition. The question is: what are we going to do about it? I truly was hoping, Madam Speaker, during this debate that we could talk about that, talk about the tragic incident that took place, talk about the death of a little girl that happened on our watch, on our province's watch.

To be clear, Madam Speaker, the death did not take place when this government was in power, but the investigation into the death has taken place largely while this government was in power, for the last 18 months. This government wants to continue to blame the third party for everything that goes wrong. That's not acceptable. Members of the third party have stood up and said: hey, we could have even done it better. I suspect that if we were on that side of the Assembly and if the 2015 election went differently, we could have done it better, too.

This should not be about politics. This should be about: what do we do to make sure there's never another Serenity in Alberta? What do we do? I was hoping during this debate that we could hear some answers to some questions instead of partisan attacks by the government. I would like to know: what concrete and specific measures will be taken to watch and supervise kinship care going forward? What have we done to watch and supervise kinship care based on what we have now found out?

They can do that. They're in charge of that, not this side of the House. All we can do is come and raise the concern on behalf of the children of Alberta. I want to know what has been done to oversee and improve child visitations. I want the ministers to stand up, through you, Madam Speaker, and tell us what is being done. I want to know what has been done to oversee and improve the checks that are placed on every adult living in a kinship care home. This side of the House can't do it. All we can do is raise it. We're doing our job. We're raising it. We're not blaming the government for what happened to Serenity. What we're asking them is what they're going to do to make sure it doesn't happen again. Not one answer from the government in almost an hour and a half of debate.

I want to know what is being done to improve the release of information to the child advocate, the person that our Assembly puts in charge of helping our children and youth in our province. Clearly, as you read through Paula Simons' article, the system is broken, the right information is not getting to the right people, and severe tragedies are happening because of it.

Right now, Madam Speaker, somewhere in this province an Alberta child is probably being abused in our care. Is that anybody in this Assembly's fault? No, of course not. They're not doing that to that child. But we can help them. What is the point of being an elected MLA and coming to this historic building if we can't even do something as simple as helping our kids in our province? Instead, we want to sit in here and talk about who's going to have the better Twitter comment and cares more about social issues.

I want to know what has been done to improve the communication between the chief medical officer and Human Services. We still can't get the information from the chief medical officer on what happened to this child. What's being done? The government can

change that. The government has the ability to deal with it. I would love it if the hon. Premier would rise and explain what her cabinet has done for that.

I want to know what has been done to improve the communication between the various justice agencies and the child advocate. Somebody reported abuse in the home that this child was in, Madam Speaker. Somebody reported it. While that child was being abused, somebody reported it, and nobody came to help.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to rise today and join in the discussion on an issue that I think we all recognize cuts close to the hearts of all Albertans. I thank the Opposition House Leader for bringing forward this opportunity for us to discuss here today.

You know, as the minister noted, I think there is nothing more heartbreaking in this world than the death of a child, so it's deeply important that we consider every way in which we can ensure the safety and protection of all children who receive services or are in our care, that we ensure that they are safe and protected. There is no question, as we've heard here today, as has been heard from all sides, that Alberta's child intervention system needs to continue to be assessed and improved to make sure that events like this don't take place again.

As the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I recognize the essential role of the Child and Youth Advocate in upholding that standard and providing the considered, sober critique that's required to ensure that government meets its obligations to the children it protects and serves. I commend the current officer on his dedication and commitment to fulfilling that role and continuing that work, including through this report that he's brought forward today.

Madam Speaker, it's my understanding that at the time of the advocate's report the investigation into the situation was not yet complete. Now that it has been completed, the advocate is showing the respect for other related investigations that remain ongoing by not discussing further details. I appreciate the advocate's consideration and restraint, and our government is committed to the same. We will respect all investigations that are going forward and will not jeopardize the legal process by divulging information that may affect them. Our government, however, is committed to ensuring that child intervention programs and the advocate themselves have all of the resources they need to continue with their essential work, and the minister has outlined all of the ways in which we have done so so far.

**5:30**

As members know, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices has been tasked with reviewing the Child and Youth Advocate Act, the legislation which empowers and enables the work of the advocate. I've appreciated the co-operation of members of the committee from all parties as we've undertaken this review and assembled a comprehensive list of stakeholders to make oral presentations in the new year. Through this review our committee will develop recommendations on how this key piece of legislation may be improved to ensure that the advocate has all of the powers and resources necessary to complete his essential work on behalf of Albertans. I'm happy to say that we'll be hearing from both Justice and Human Services as well as a wide range of community partners who work with youth who are receiving services, with youth in care, and with youth involved in the legal system and that this will include, specifically, indigenous organizations and perspectives. I

look forward to working with all members of the committee to ensure that our report is both considered and comprehensive so that we can ensure that the advocate is able to continue to do the important work he has done in highlighting the challenges and the issues that we face in our childhood intervention systems.

I think, as we've heard here today, all members in this House care about children in care. We may differ in some of our perspectives on how we need to get there. We may differ in our approaches or in how we feel certain funds should be spent, but I don't think there's any question that all of us want to see this system improved. I appreciate the perspectives that have been brought out by many here today.

You know, Madam Speaker, I myself don't have children, but I am an uncle to 13 nieces and nephews. I love them very much, and when I hear these stories, it breaks my heart. I think of the children in the system who are just looking for the simplest thing: to be loved, protected, and kept safe. I think of all of the dedicated workers who for years have struggled to fight for these children and the families they serve, sometimes while being asked to do far too much with far too little.

I don't think we're here today to lay blame on any particular group. These are systemic issues. They are complex, they are deep seated, and they are deep rooted, and I can understand the need and the feeling for some kind of catharsis, to get angry. Certainly, if there's any issue on which to feel emotional, it is the death of a child, but our job as legislators is to come here and give this considered, sober, and careful thought, to respect the processes that are in place, to acknowledge the legalities and the other barriers that are there and how we must be careful, in some respects, of the information we share and the information we discuss but recognize that within those constraints, we still have the opportunity to have reasoned, considered debate as members about how we can improve a system that is so important to all of us and all Albertans and, most particularly, to these children.

I look forward to continuing our work with the Committee on Legislative Offices to do our part in ensuring that the advocate has all of the resources and powers that are required to do this important work. I look forward to continuing to work with our minister to ensure that we are doing our part and continuing to dig into and untangle these problems, that have built up over years and are going to take time to take apart and address, and to ensure that as we do that important work, we are watching, we are careful, we are considerate to make sure that not one more child has to have an experience like this and lose their life.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to bring a slightly different focus to this that I think also needs to be a part of our conversation together as Albertans. Let me begin by saying that I don't question at all that everybody cares, but I do think that it's not enough just to care. Care and wisdom or administrative excellence don't necessarily go together, and, yes, there are structural and ideological impediments to the system that have caused this event to occur.

My question and the point that I need to bring forward is related to the fact that Serenity was in a safe and caring foster home. She was with a loving and stable young couple. They were emotionally calm. They had no addictions. Their care for her was excellent. Even her mother has acknowledged and said how happy and how healthy she was with them. I know this because they lived in my riding and the foster parents came to my office after to ask: "What

are we supposed to do? Why was she yanked out of a very good home against their protests?"

We cannot say that the government or the people involved didn't hear or didn't know because these people protested as loudly as they possibly could. They did everything they could. Against their pleadings, in the face of their tears, they spoke for this child who couldn't speak for herself in adequate kinds of ways. They spoke, and the point is that they were completely rebuffed, completely rejected, not listened to.

You can be as passionate as you want about the need for pouring money all over the system. Money would not have fixed this in the least iota. This girl was in the safest environment possible. Everybody that was involved realized and knew that, and the reality is that it's either government policy or ideology or bureaucratic arrogance – I don't know what it is – that will not listen to the ordinary, common-sense, sensible people of Alberta. When it gets to the point where it's not about the best for the child, when it's about forced kinship at any cost, at the risk of abuse, forced kinship regardless of safety of the child, forced kinship without any consideration to the people who are actually already caring for her and realize what's going to happen regardless of safety, where does that come from? It comes from government policy being pushed down the system to individuals without any care for the child.

My ongoing question is: why do these issues get covered up? The reports that we've received from the office of the Child and Youth Advocate didn't report any of the facts about the existing foster care relationship in which this child was healthy and happy. Did they ask why this child was yanked from a safe environment and put into one that is utterly, totally destructive, that was so abusive that we can't even hardly imagine it? I mean, I just don't get it. Is there anything more tragic than the death of a child? Well, yes, I think there is. It's government policy that makes it happen again and again and again.

What about the human side, even for this foster parent family? What's the human side for them? What do I say to them when they come in crying with grief for this little girl because they were giving her good care and true love, and they got thrown under the bus by the system and the policies and the bureaucrats who said: "No, she has to go into kinship care regardless of her safety, regardless of anything for her benefit, regardless of warnings; it has to happen because it's policy"? That is a crime, my friends, of the highest degree.

I have to ask: how long will this foster family, this young couple, grieve for the little girl that they tried to protect? And government muzzled them, government handcuffed them, government shoved them completely out of the way and said: we know better than you do. What help has been offered to them as a couple? Is it any wonder we have a hard time finding foster parents in our province because of the way things get managed and handled? They will carry the absurdity of this grief for having had her torn away from them and then seeing what's happened. They will carry that with them for the rest of their lives. That was created by government policy, my friends.

**5:40**

You know, residential schools were a crime. I fully agree. Is this really any different? Government policy pushed forward regardless of the situation, of the people, of the impacts, of the effect. Government was driven by an agenda and not by listening to real people. We have to get away from this big-government, government-knows-best idea and start listening to the real people in our province if we actually really want to care about people and really want to make a difference in the lives of the Serenities,

because the way it works currently, we will be doing this again, and that is tragic.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Clearly, the story of this young child is absolutely devastating to anybody who reads it. Anyone who read Paula Simons' article and still had a dry eye at the end of it: you know, I really, honestly, might be somewhat concerned for them. I mean, the amount of emotion that it drew out of all of us. As a mom and as a nurse the idea that a child could go through that is absolutely heartbreaking. Clearly, everyone in this room understands that no child should ever have to go through that.

You know, I referenced my time as a public health nurse. I dealt many times with children who had concerns and became involved with the intervention system, and it was clear to me at that time that the system was broken in so many ways. That, Madam Speaker, is one of the reasons that I am here, sitting in this seat today. It was on behalf of vulnerable children, that I felt there needed to be a better voice for them. The loss of many children over the years – many members seated here are here in part because they have been advocating for so long for changes in that system, advocating on behalf of those children, and felt the need to take action in order to change that.

Certainly, that broken system has been a major priority for this government. A system that is so broken cannot be made whole overnight, Madam Speaker, but those children stay in our minds, and we stay committed to moving forward on their behalf as fast as possible. Certainly, proof is in some of the actions we took. Certainly, money alone cannot solve everything, but it is a start, the increased funding to the Child and Youth Advocate, the increased funding for child intervention.

Madam Speaker, these are very complex issues, and certainly hindsight is always 20/20. The system is broken, but we look to the office of the Child and Youth Advocate to give us advice, to help understand how to change policy, to move forward to help repair that broken system. We certainly take all of that advice very seriously and accept all the recommendations that come from the advocate.

The challenges for families that need child intervention are complex and rooted in issues such as poverty, such as addictions and other mental health concerns. Certainly, the issue of inter-generational trauma and the travesty of residential schools and the legacy that they have left and how they have impacted so many families in Alberta – issues such as these are relevant to many indigenous families across Canada, and I have spoken to many of those families in my own riding.

Madam Speaker, the overrepresentation of indigenous children and youth is a serious concern and an issue that I know we all take seriously. For myself, again, I've listened to those stories from people in my riding, from families, and it certainly is something that I'm passionate about moving forward. I'm passionate about moving forward, and it is so wonderful to see the passion of people around this room and the commitment from everybody in this House to working together to take action on these complex issues. This is a very long-term goal, to try to deal with some of those underlying issues. I look forward to working together to address those issues of poverty, addictions and working together to help with the legacy of residential schools.

Some of the work we've been doing already. You know, being the co-chair of the mental health review was a very powerful experience, seeing the impact of addictions but also having those conversations with people about the impact of residential schools. I

met with many representatives from First Nations communities as well as settlements and heard their stories and heard the horrific stories of how that legacy of residential schools has impacted their capacity to work together as families and to take care of one another.

Again, the education initiatives we're doing to equalize education are helpful. I am very proud of the apology that our government did to those who suffered under residential schools in Alberta. We all need to take responsibility for that and commit to finding some resolution for those individuals. Part of that – and it's wonderful to see – is the cultural understanding framework in Human Services, that makes sure that we provide culturally appropriate supports and services to individuals.

You know, regardless of many of these long-term strategies and identifying those issues, we need to ensure children in care and families get the support that they need now. That support, Madam Speaker, is delivered by front-line workers who are smart, who are caring, and who are dedicated to justice for the families that they take care of. But they have been stretched, so stretched, to the limit for many years, being asked to work miracles with far too few resources and asked to do far too much. Money may not solve everything, but it sure as heck helps to make sure that we have the bodies that we need to do that. I look forward to the support of these people who also see the importance of this, to ensure that we have the financial support for those individuals, to ensure we have the bodies we need to do that work. It is with the commitment and the hard work of those front-line workers along with the work of families, communities, and our indigenous leaders that the system will be improved.

I'm also so thankful for the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. Again, through the mental health review I had a chance to meet with them. I also met with some of the kids to whom they had provided some support and who looked to them as supports. It was powerful to see the connection children had to the advocate's office and powerful to see the passion in their eyes. I know the work they are doing. The experts in this are so essential. I think it is important that we recognize that we are not the office of the Child and Youth Advocate and that we have that office there for a reason, to do the expert analysis of these situations, to provide us with the policy guidance that ensures that we take the steps forward that are evidence based, to ensure that we get to the outcome that we need of ensuring that these children are safe. We all have that end in mind, but it's important that we work with the office to ensure that we have information-based guidance in terms of how to go forward, which is why we take the recommendation from the advocate so seriously.

This is a heartbreaking issue not just here in Alberta but right across the country, right across Canada. I see Alberta being a leader in many areas in this country, and I look forward to moving forward and being a leader in this area as well. It is for the sake of Alberta's children that we do so.

Madam Speaker, social issues have to be taken seriously by this House. We have to learn from this. Child intervention has to have the support to be funded adequately, and more than that, we all need to be committed to taking action on the root issues that prevent some of Alberta's children from being safe and being loved the way that all Alberta children deserve to be treated.

When I go home, I will hug my children tight, and I will grieve some more for those children that are still hurting. I will keep talking to people in my communities about how we can do this better. Madam Speaker, it has been said many times that it takes a village to raise a child. We together owe it to the children, who need us to work together to put the child intervention system back together again.

Thank you to everyone in this House for your passion on this issue. It truly gives me hope that we can work together to truly move forward and make progress on this important issue on behalf of Alberta children.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to also thank the House for the opportunity for us all to speak about this very important issue.

I'm just reading from the website.

Kinship care is a family home that is approved to care for a child in need because of a family connection or significant relationship to the child.

Kinship caregivers provide:

- a child with love and care in a familiar setting
- parents with a sense of hope that their child will remain connected to their birth family
- families with a sense of trust, stability and comfort
- an ability to support and maintain lifelong traditions and memories
- support to a child in building healthy relationships within the family
- guidance and reinforcement of a child's cultural identity and positive self-esteem.

Yet in this situation Serenity faced beatings by wire hangers, was deprived of food, beaten for stealing food. I'm trying to visualize this little, minuscule four-year-old running into some pantry somewhere and stealing something off a shelf that she could reach to feed herself and potentially her siblings as she's starving to death here in Alberta. I'm trying in my brain to reconcile that vision of this munchkin traipsing across some cold kitchen floor to find food. Then she was sexually abused. We have failed this child.

I think that probably the most troubling aspect of all this is that there are probably kids in kinship right now that are receiving this love and this care and those aspects that are so important – I don't think any of us would disagree with that – but to echo the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, there were things that were happening in this particular situation that leave us all absolutely stone-cold terrified. When the birth mother, who the children were taken away from because of addictions and other situations, was reporting to people on her visitations that there were bruises and weight loss, that wasn't spoken about.

How is it that that happened? That's my question and one of the questions that I think as a group we need to be able to answer first and foremost. Where did we fail this child? She was starving. How long did it take for this little person to deteriorate to 18 pounds? Like, think about that. We have healthy little babies hanging out here in the Legislature with us, beautiful little children. Imagine for one moment that one of those precious souls was being starved to death. It is enough to make me run out of this place screaming, wondering how I can help.

How is it, then? Are we just asking questions? Are we formulating an idea? I understand that there are dollars that are being put towards this, but do we understand where we've already failed? If we don't understand the system that failed this child and other ones, there is no amount of dollars that are going to go into that system to save the next child if we don't understand where the breakdown was in the system in the first place.

We failed Serenity. Now the answer to the question is more resources. Well, that's wonderful, but if this mother, who knew that her child was suffering, the first person that would have the most ability to describe what her child is going through, was not listened to, can somebody please explain to me how more resources would have helped that situation? We weren't listening to her in the first place. Are more resources going to make us better listeners? I don't understand how that works.

You know, this is a hard situation to even breathe through. When I was explaining this to my children – and mine are 18 and 19 – we sat down at the kitchen table to discuss this particular issue. It's like the Minister of Municipal Affairs was saying: you just squeeze your kids tighter, absolutely. But the question that my 18-year-old and 19-year-old asked is exactly that question. Why didn't they listen to the mother or the family that had taken care of her and was actually raising a healthy, happy little girl? Question two: why was she wrenched from this family for kinship? It says right here, "Kinship care is a family home that is approved." Somebody approved this family to take this baby. Okay. Fine. It's a mistake in this situation, but now the resources are going to go to care? We obviously do not understand the families that are coming into these situations.

Obviously, we dropped the ball somewhere. I don't understand the entire concept of policy to implementation. There is a breakdown in that gap there. There is a huge gap. I don't know how to fill that. I don't. I am not an expert. I'm a mom, and I'm an aunt. I hope to be a grandparent one day. I am going to have a hard time reconciling this in my mind, knowing that on our watch – and I say that collectively: our watch, not yours, not ours – another child is going to come to me on a piece of paper as a death because we were writing policy when we know it's broken. Can we not just all agree on the parts that are broken and focus just a little bit, for a moment, on those things?

We obviously know that some things are working correctly, but the transparency of this issue is about what's not working. It's the hardest thing to do sometimes, to look at a situation and say: what am I not doing correctly here? It's hard. I know that. But it is in service of these children and these families that we have to take a hard look at what is not working and be honest about that. The third party very willingly said that they may not have followed through the way that they should have. All of us are going to suffer those consequences, but to actually put it off and say that we're going to just keep discussing it?

Okay. We're discussing it. What is action item number one that all of us are taking away from this today? I want to know. Action item number one: what is the action that we're taking today? Two, where are the dollars being spent so that the child actually is being advocated on behalf of? Our front-line workers are our voices and the eyes to the hearts and souls of what is happening in these families. Are we not listening to them either? Who is the decision-maker in this? All I know is that with the burden that is on my shoulders of being here – and I'm just speaking about myself – it's hard to breathe.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, November 22, 2016

Day 50

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

### Second Session

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McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

#### Party standings:

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of  
House Services

Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel  
and Legal Research Officer

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services

Nancy Robert, Research Officer

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Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, November 22, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect or pray, each in our own way. Hon. members, November is the month of the Holodomor commemoration, a time when millions of Ukrainians lost their lives. We commemorate this tragedy in order to ensure that it is never forgotten. Let us today be reminded of the strength and tenacity of the Ukrainian people who helped settle this province of Alberta.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

##### Alberta Property Rights Advocate

25. Mr. Carlier moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that:
1. The 2015 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate office be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship for the purpose of conducting a review of the recommendations outlined in the report;
  2. The committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
  3. In accordance with section 5(5) of the Property Rights Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 60 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to speak to Government Motion 25, referring the annual report of the Property Rights Advocate to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. First off, I want to say that I intend to vote in favour of this motion, and I urge my colleagues on this side to do the same. However, as a member of the Resource Stewardship Committee I want to highlight for the Assembly some issues we encountered back in August and October.

We had vigorous debate in August and October because we had a situation where stakeholders wanted to have meetings with the committee about issues important to them and we weren't allowed to invite them because of a little-known standing order that prevents us from doing more than one item of business at a time. I refer to Standing Order 52.04, "An order of the Assembly that a Bill, regulation or some other subject matter stands referred to a Legislative Policy Committee shall take priority over any other hearing or inquiry."

Now I'd just like to read my comments from the October 24 Resource Stewardship meeting, where I had this to say out of frustration from our side. It says:

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. I just want to clarify what I think Mr. MacIntyre is looking for. When we are given a mandate by the Legislature to deal with one item, like we're dealing with right

now, it's just that when, you know, we've set dates for consultation and we've set dates for the Ethics Commissioner's report, in the meantime we've got three or four months sometimes where the committee is just sitting and waiting for these reports to come in. What we would like to do is simply be able to address other issues that Albertans want us to talk about in the meantime, while we're waiting, with no interference at all with the committee. But as the standing orders read right now, we're kind of paralyzed by that mandate. What we'd like to do is just recommend to the Legislature to relook at the standing orders to give us a little bit of leeway in times when the committee is sitting and, you know, waiting for reports to come in so that we can address some other issues.

That's the end there, from *Hansard*.

I just note that we will have to pause our review of the Lobbyists Act to deal with the property rights annual report, and I think there's ample time to do both of these items concurrently. I just find it a little surprising and a little frustrating that this is exactly what we tried to get done back in August and October and were outvoted by the members of the government.

**Mr. Panda:** They do that all the time.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah.

All we got all summer was government MLAs saying that they couldn't possibly do that, and I just wanted to note for the record how ridiculous I think those statements are. Albertans expect us to get all the work done even if it means doing more than one thing at a time, which now we seem capable of doing.

In closing, I hope the Government House Leader hears the frustration we have with the rules and that he remains committed to implementing the necessary changes to the standing orders that would allow the legislative committees to adequately deal with the work and therefore better serve Albertans, doing more than one thing at a time.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Motion 25?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Carlier:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, to close debate.

[Government Motion 25 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Third Reading

##### Bill 24

##### Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016

[Adjourned debate November 10: Cortes-Vargas]

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who wish to speak to Bill 24? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Yeah, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for that. It's an interesting and an honourable day to be rising in the Legislature to speak to the government's proposed legislation, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. It's a broad piece of legislation, and we are here today to discuss amending the act. This is a laudable piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, as far as it goes, and as I've mentioned previously, amending the document was one of the recommendations coming out of the tragic Slave Lake fire of 2011. That fire gave rise to the Flat Top Complex report, and that report as well as the events of this spring during the Fort McMurray fire bring us here today.

This likely will not be the last time this act is amended, as much as I wish otherwise. As events unfold and technology advances, this document, much like the Flat Top Complex report's other recommendations, will be modified as time passes. Some might call it a living piece of legislation in some regards. That in no way diminishes the work being done here today, which is critical to the process.

There is a paragraph from the committee at the beginning of the Flat Top Complex report, and it seems relevant, Mr. Speaker, to our discussion today. "Adversity can be a cruel teacher; however, adversity creates an opportunity to learn, and learning is the catalyst that inspires people to evolve and adapt to new opportunities, threats and realities." As we consider this, it would also be a good time to take a careful look at the numerous recommendations of the Flat Top Complex. Important ideas were borne in this document, including the advancement of the FireSmart program. Now, it was mentioned several times how, during the Fort McMurray fire, several instances of fire-smarting a property had been instrumental to those properties being saved or damage being mitigated by adopting FireSmart techniques. The government's own website has categories for fire-smarting homes as well as businesses.

Mr. Speaker, this point cannot be stressed enough. The program and its techniques could have had the ability to mitigate the devastation of a fire. Is it the magic bullet? Will it be the answer in every situation? Of course not. It is simply one more tool at our disposal that could help in a similar situation. The town of Slave Lake believed in it so much that they spent almost \$20 million to fire-smart their community and are advocating for a FireSmart learning centre to be based in their community.

#### 10:10

This program should merit more consideration by the government, as should the rest of the recommendations from the Flat Top Complex report. This report deserves more than lip service and \$4 million in budget cuts. As we receive the reports from the Fort McMurray fire, let's try to ensure that those recommendations are treated as an investment in further prevention rather than a line item in a budget. Natural disasters are something that we can never anticipate, but hopefully a little foresight and preparedness can certainly help us to mitigate those effects.

That's what we're trying to do here today. We are trying, through, hopefully, some positive changes to this act, to mitigate some possible problems before a situation or the situation arises. It's how we mitigate them within those changes that we may disagree on. As were many of my colleagues in opposition, I, too, was troubled that this government seems to believe that they always know best and, as such, voted down every amendment that had been brought forward by opposition parties, no matter how common-sense and practical we may feel them to be.

If making legislation that much stronger is the goal of this government, then dismissing reasonable amendments out of hand shouldn't be threatening to any party in power. It's almost as if the government learned very little from their days in opposition and is heading down the same path that brought down the last government. Mr. Speaker, I was here for that cycle. Reasoned debate is one of the tools used here in the House to try to make legislation work for all Albertans, not just government insiders.

We had an instance where a member of the third party brought forward a reasonable amendment to simply put a timetable on a forest officer requesting a fire control plan so that the business knows within two weeks if its plan would be acceptable or not. Mr. Speaker, I have reached out to try and find in the town of Hanna where there is a forest control officer. Hanna is in the centre of my jurisdiction, and Hanna is a prairie town. As many

of the members opposite and many members on this side know, we live and die by the words, so sometimes the wording of legislation going forward is important. This seemed reasonable enough that my party supported the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti's amendment. Having a fixed timetable is a reasonable expectation in legislation. For example, when you get a parking ticket, you have a time allotted to dispute it or pay it by. We all have to file taxes by a certain date. It's a reasonable and a straightforward idea, at least to most of us.

The second part of the hon. member's proposal was that any forest officer or guardian have a limit of one year that an area may be cordoned off for investigation, again, what we believed to be a reasonable proposal and a reasonable time frame. Many of us spoke on how the forest would grow, seasons would change, and the area would simply evolve back to a state unlike it was when the investigation started. The cordon is useless after a year, so why restrict a forest like that? It didn't change the bill's intent; it simply gave a fixed timetable. We live within fixed timetables in every aspect of this House: term limits, speaking limits, how long we can debate, how long we sit. The list goes on, Mr. Speaker. It's amazing that once again a reasonable amendment was dismissed and voted down without due consideration simply because the government has the power to do so.

Our side has proposed a few amendments that would clarify some ambiguous terminology. Replacing the term "thing" with the more precise term, at least in our opinion, Mr. Speaker, "wood product" was not in any way trying to derail the legislation but was simply improving an area that could easily be interpreted as vague or ambiguous. "Wood product" is a perfectly acceptable term, that, I may add, is used in similar legislation in Saskatchewan. As noted by my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills when we introduced this amendment:

When writing legislation, we need to ensure that balance is struck, and certainly, in my opinion and the opinion of my [esteemed] colleague, when we . . . say "thing," [in our opinion, Mr. Speaker] that doesn't strike the right balance. If we use terminology that we're more familiar with as well as terminology that is used in other jurisdictions like Saskatchewan, that is significantly more clear and provides guidance and direction and a little bit more clarity around what would and would not be appropriate.

It certainly was understood what the members were trying to achieve on this side of the House, but unfortunately some government members did not grasp the concept that, yes, "wood product" does cover things like piles of logs, raw logs, trees, et cetera. Perhaps the member couldn't see the forest through the trees there, Mr. Speaker.

Wanting to remove any ambiguity or possible misinterpretation helps forest professionals do their jobs and helps to ensure they don't get carried away. It doesn't hinder it, in my opinion, and that's what these amendments were striving for. Amending legislation is about learning what needs to be fixed in a previous version and amending it to make it work, hopefully, even better. That is our goal here, Mr. Speaker.

While I certainly dispute what this legislation is as good as, we could have made it, in fact, hopefully, better. The act will be a better piece of legislation than it had been previously, and as such my colleagues and I will vote to pass this bill. But I would also remind the House that there is more to do to make our communities and foresters and, as the bill discusses, prairies even safer from wildfires.

With that, I thank you for the opportunity to rise and speak, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler?

Seeing and hearing none, I recognize the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. Of course, with the concerns we've had with the recent forest fire in Fort McMurray, it's very timely that we're dealing with this right now. There are a lot of great things in Bill 24 that we agree with and are happy to see are in there. We're happy to see this moving forward.

We had an opportunity to make things, we feel, just a little better with this bill, but of course those amendments that we suggested have been voted down by the government. Now, one of the amendments – and some of the amendments were put forward by the third party – had to do with timelines, the different timelines that areas could be cordoned off for. They suggested a timeline of a year. The different timelines that a forestry officer should respond to a fire plan: 14 days. In fact, these are more than reasonable amendments, that would have helped make this bill a lot better.

When I look through this bill, I see a change that adds off-highway vehicles into this act. Of course, we know that the minister already had the ability to add off-highway vehicles and restrict them at any point they wanted. Of course, maybe this makes it easier, but the opportunity was already there for the minister to restrict off-highway vehicle use.

Now, when we get to the fire control plans in 23(1), this is what it says, Mr. Speaker.

A person carrying on or having charge of an industrial or commercial operation on public land or within one kilometre of any public land shall at the request of a forest officer submit a fire control plan satisfactory to the forest officer, within the time determined by the forest officer.

I'll just go on to read subsection (2) also.

If a person referred to in subsection (1) fails to comply with the request of the forest officer within the time determined by the forest officer, the Minister may, by order, suspend the industrial or commercial operation of the person until a fire control plan satisfactory to the forest officer has been submitted to the forest officer.

10:20

Now, it would have been nice, and maybe we'll get some clarification today on this issue, to see – what this does, Mr. Speaker, is that it puts a lot of burden on the forest officer if there are no guidelines for the forest officer to follow when it comes to this issue. Of course, the amendment that was suggested was that within 14 days of submitting the fire control plan, the forest officer would have to respond and tell the industrial or commercial operation whether it was satisfactory or not. Now, I think that would be perfectly reasonable, especially when you consider that if the plan isn't suitable, the minister may by order suspend the industrial or commercial operation. When you have such a serious repercussion for not having a satisfactory fire control plan, I think it only makes sense that once they submit one, they would like to know as soon as possible whether it's appropriate or not so that they can adjust it, change it, make it better, do whatever it takes to comply.

The existing part of this regulation is a little bit vague, I think, when it comes to operations on public land or within one kilometre of any public land. Now, in areas, for instance, like where I live, there is a lot of public land intermixed with farmland, agriculture, and that sort of thing, so this could come into effect for a lot of different farm-based businesses, farms, which are businesses, too.

By not having that clearly defined – say, for instance, an industrial commercial operation where there could be an opportunity to create a fire. There could be home-based businesses that operate within a home or within a small shop or something that have no opportunity to create a fire, that a forest officer could come and say: okay; I want a fire control plan.

I think what would be interesting, Mr. Speaker, is to find out what the guidelines are going to be for these forestry officers so that they have something to work with while they are performing their duties, because they're very important duties. Now, of course, I live in a community where there are forestry officers. I know them. I trust them. I have a lot of respect for them. But I think they would even want some guidelines to go on so that they know what their job is and what they're responsible for.

Now, we haven't had any opportunity to hear from the minister in this regard, so hopefully today we'll be able to hear something. We've debated this I don't know how many days now. Probably five or six or seven different times we've debated this. Maybe today we'll hear some more from the minister on some of these concerns that we have.

Then, of course, in regard to these fire control plans: is there any appeal process for them? That would be interesting to know, too, especially when you have something as serious as having a business shut down. I think that would be something that would be good to hear, too.

Now, we also talked about the diseased and infested products. That's kind of interesting, the word "products" there. It says underneath that heading, "A forest officer may, without a warrant, seize any thing that the forest officer has reasonable grounds to believe harbours a forest pest." Our concern was the word "thing," and we made an amendment to suggest "forest product" rather than "thing" because we felt, especially without an explanation of why the word "thing" was used and substituted in there – was there any situation that caused this? We know that forest pests, you would think, would be found in forest products, not in things, necessarily. Of course, the title of that is Diseased and Infested Products, so using the word "product" or "forest product" underneath the heading Diseased and Infested Products would probably stand to reason.

Now, we also discussed how with the transportation of aquatic species that we don't want in Alberta, there's similar legislation there for restricting the movement of these invasive species, that we don't want. Of course, the wording of that is a little more clear as far as what the possible ramifications are and what they can do. I think my suggestion at the time was that maybe we should be looking at that legislation and seeing how that would apply in this situation here with forestry products that could harbour these forest pests.

If we go on to subsections (2) and (3) in this same part, where it talks about – like I say, subsection (1) talks about: "A forest officer may, without a warrant, seize any thing that the forest officer has reasonable grounds to believe harbours a forest pest." Well, subsection (2) says, "The Minister may order the destruction of a product seized under subsection (1)." Of course, it's suggesting to change "product" to "thing" again. Again, it's not necessarily just about seizing a thing; it also talks about the destruction of the thing seized.

Going on to subsection (3):

No right of compensation exists against the Crown or any person in respect of anything destroyed under subsection (2), but the Minister may provide such compensation in the amount or at the value that the Minister considers fair for the destroyed [thing].

So again we have a situation here where anything may be or could be seized, could be destroyed, and it's up to the minister's discretion

whether there's going to be any compensation and the amount of the compensation.

Now, again, I don't see anything here specifically in this section as far as whether there's any opportunity to appeal any of these decisions, so I think, you know, that as far as respecting the rights of Albertans, maybe we could have some clarity on that.

Again, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of good things in this bill. We're happy to see this bill being brought forward because it does bring some good things to the table. We would have liked to have seen some of our amendments passed to make this a little better. It would be nice to have more clarification from the minister on some of these things because maybe some of them make perfect sense, but until we hear an explanation as to why these changes were made, then we don't know exactly why they are here.

Now, of course, probably the number one thing, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to make sure that fires like the Slave Lake fire and the Fort McMurray fire don't happen again. We need to do everything we can. Some of these things may help situations like that from coming up again, but I'm hoping that in bringing this Bill 24 forward, the department and the minister have included every possible thing they could to make sure that these fires don't happen again. We know that we can't stop all the fires. We know that there's human error involved. We know there are natural forces like lightning that happen, that create forest fires. We can't stop every forest fire from happening, but what we can do is reduce the opportunity for a disaster to happen.

10:30

Again, I don't know that I see a lot of things in this bill that have to do with suppressing fires once they start. There are a lot of things about keeping fires from happening, which is good. We need that. That's the first step, undoubtedly. But what we'd like to see is how to keep these fires from doing the damage like was done in Slave Lake and Fort McMurray. I would hope that as we move forward, this becomes basically a living document where as we discover and find new ways to keep these fires from causing the damage like has been done, we'll bring them forward and we'll take care of them as soon as possible.

I think that what we're here to do is make things better for Albertans, safer for Albertans. That's what we feel on this side of the House, and I'm sure that's what they feel on that side of the House, too, Mr. Speaker. What we do here has a direct consequence on Albertans, on how they live their lives, how government policies and regulations impact them. So I think the best thing we can do is to erase any possible misunderstandings or ambiguity. That's not too much to ask. It also isn't too much to ask to make sure that we're doing everything we can so that these fires, that have created so much damage recently here in Alberta and affected so many lives, don't happen again, that we do everything we can to make sure that that doesn't happen again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Are there any questions to the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I would recognize the Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity this morning to speak to this bill. It's something that's a bit near and dear to my heart because over the years at the family farm we've had a couple of incidents. It reminds me, actually, of one here just a couple of years ago, when we had a spontaneous fire incident on the property next to me. It happened at about 11 o'clock at night, and we're madly rushing around trying to get equipment

started and running and getting the fire department out and working like crazy until 4 in the morning to keep the fire from going straight across our grasslands and taking out the house and buildings and all the neighbours with it. It's something that's very important, and we've seen that happen this past year, obviously. It's a devastating thing when it happens. It's a frightening thing, and I think everyone knows that.

Anyway, just to get into what we've got prepared here today for me, I wanted to start, of course, like everyone else has by taking the opportunity to thank our firefighters and first responders all over the province. I mean, after all, they're the ones that are dealing with these devastating effects of wildfires first-hand. I think often as regular Albertans that we don't really realize how blessed we are to be living in this province with these kinds of people. They have so much to be proud of.

With the fire this summer, devastating as it was, it was an opportunity to see our world-class firefighters at their best. I think we saw an awful lot of people work very hard and do a fabulous job in one of the most frightening things I think anyone has ever, ever seen in western Canada. The fact that there wasn't more damage and desolation as a result of this fire is amazing, and it's a testament to their hard work and dedication. Once again, to all the fire responders, first responders, all the people involved, all the people and volunteers, all the different communities: we thank you from the Assembly of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we often forget that decisions we make in this Chamber really matter and that there are real-world consequences, if you want to call it that, when we change legislation, or, in this case, sometimes when we fail to change legislation. While I commend this government on taking action against wildfires – wildfires are actually a significant problem in Alberta – it would have been nice to see more concrete action. This government is taking steps, albeit small ones, to combat wildfires – there's no doubt – and I wanted to state that very clearly. I recall watching the evacuation on television last spring and seeing how close the fire came to swallowing up thousands of people as they tried desperately to leave. This was, quite simply, frightening. Everyone did their best, and it's just too bad we weren't able to do more at that time.

I think this bill would have been something that we could have worked upon to do a bit more. It's well intentioned – I don't think anyone questions that – but there's so much more we could have done here with the debates we've had over the past few hours and days on this. While wildfires are a fact of life, we shouldn't have to accept that what happened to Slave Lake and Fort McMurray was inevitable.

The devastation that these fires wrought on those communities was, I believe, preventable insofar as if we as a province had perhaps been more proactive and possibly could have at the very least mitigated and reduced some of the impact of the wildfires on those communities. So today I cannot help but feel that we may have been missing an opportunity to make this bill better. I think other speakers have mentioned this on our side of the House this morning, and it seems to be a common thread of comments with respect to what this bill had and what it could have had.

I want to emphasize a point my hon. colleague made earlier. Fire prevention and the recommendations contained in the Flat Top Complex report and the numerous other reports on wildfires published over the years should be treated as an investment, not simply an expense. I know that one of the first things any investor worth their weight in gold will tell you is that there's no such thing as a sure thing. I think it's safe to say that whoever coined that saying wasn't aware of the Flat Top Complex report and the FireSmart program.

The FireSmart program was developed to reduce the negative impact on human health and safety, communities, homes, industries, and landscapes. The current FireSmart grants max out at a hundred thousand dollars per community, I'm told. The question is: are we maximizing our return on investment when a single fire incident can cost tens of millions of dollars? Perhaps not.

The fact is that many of the recommendations within the FireSmart program are really common-sense things, like using asphalt shingles on houses instead of cedar shakes, plaster instead of vinyl or wood siding on new and renovated homes, or using coloured rocks in your garden and flower beds instead of tree bark. These are simple investments that could be made or at the very least actively promoted by the government. Fire mitigation is as important to preventing wildfires and the impact of wildfires as flood mitigation is to preventing and mitigating the effects of a flood. At the very least, it is an investment in peace of mind.

I'm disappointed that the government rejected, as my colleagues have said, some of our many quality amendments, too. I try not to take it personally, but when the government defeats every and even the most common-sense and practical amendments that could have been made to the legislation, that could have made it so much better, a person begins to wonder why. Why do they do that? I can tell you that as a member that's been here for over three and a half, close to four, years now we've seen this time and time again.

Why do we have this type of misguided thinking in this House, thinking that you could get, I suppose, when you buy into a claim that only the government caucus members can be real legislators? The government seems to always reject ideas from the opposition outright. Am I saying the legislation is bad, that it should be defeated, this legislation, that is? No, I'm not. But I am disappointed that the government let the opportunity, nonetheless, to make the legislation even better slip by.

10:40

Obviously, more needs to be done in Alberta to prevent wildfires from devastating our communities. There is no question about that. Bill 24 is certainly a step in the right direction, Mr. Speaker, but there needs to be serious questions asked. Is this legislation enough? Why did the previous recommendations to prevent wildfires fail to be implemented? We've had the lessons of the past. The Flat Top Complex report taught us that. The Slave Lake fire taught us that. Where did we perhaps slightly fail in reacting to this situation? How could we have done better? These are the questions that will remain for some time, and I know that everyone that was out there volunteering and everyone that saw the results later probably themselves thought: how could we have done more? It's a serious thing, and it is a very worthwhile comment and thought to consider.

I'd like to finish off by saying again that I'm happy to see the government take some action here to improve fire readiness. Even if they're small steps, it's steps that are worth while to do. For that reason, I will be supporting this bill.

Thank you for your time this morning, Mr. Speaker and to all.

**The Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members who wish to speak to Bill 24? Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, you have already spoken, have you not?

**Mr. Hanson:** Not on third reading, sir.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Please proceed.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a couple of points I'd like to make. You know, listening with interest to the discussion and debates that we've had so far, what I've come to understand is

that the best way to fight a fire is fire prevention, and I think this is what we really need to focus on with this bill.

Now, during the debates I asked a lot of the members opposite, when they got up to speak and they talked about fire tragedies in their area or they spoke about the wonderful assets of the forests and the tourism in their areas and adjacent areas, what their thoughts were this spring when the budget came out and they saw very significant cuts to both the wildfire budget and the water bomber budgets. You know, I understand their reluctance to give me an answer to that question. I'm not really surprised that they wouldn't speak against their own government's budget. [A child vocalized] It wasn't that bad. Anyway, like I say, I didn't expect them to criticize the budget even though their constituents were very concerned about the cuts that were made there.

I also noted on numerous occasions the concern I had with cuts to the Transportation budget, specifically with regard to mowing along Alberta highways. You know, I'm very concerned about this, and a lot of my municipalities as well have raised concerns regarding the leaving of tall grass and debris, not only for how it increases the risk of animal strikes but I travel the highways quite a bit and you'll see people flicking cigarette butts out the window all the time. I know that it's something that's very, very difficult to police. I didn't see any mention of it here in this bill, and I don't know what the regulations are that we could use to stop that. But it just seems to me that it's kind of counterproductive to make cuts to budgets and then talk about trying to reduce wildfires on the prairies and forests when one of the highest risks of fires starting is man-made and a lot of times on highways people just not even thinking, flicking cigarette butts out the window.

Like I say, allowing the debris to build up along highways, cutting budgets to wildfire fighting, and messing with the water bomber contracts just seem to be going the wrong direction when it comes to protecting our forests and prairies. Like I said when I started speaking, you know, the best way to fight a fire is to prevent it from starting in the first place, so it just seems to me that we're kind of going in the wrong direction when it comes to working against prevention. I don't think more regulation is the answer. Better planning and learning from the very expensive and heartbreaking lessons of the past would be the best step forward.

So I would really encourage the government in next spring's budget to maybe reinstate some of the funding that they have for cutting the debris and grass along the highways, maintaining our wildfire budgets. You know, we're moving the firefighting season up by a month, so maybe we should also be looking at making sure that our water bomber contracts are in place. If we run into another spring like we had this spring, the devastation is going to be there if we have a wildfire breakout. We need to be prepared for it, and it should be part of that budget. Again, very important – I can't stress it enough – cutting the grass along highways is a major concern.

Thank you very much for allowing me time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills?

Seeing none, are there any other members who wish to speak to Bill 24? The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm grateful that we have this bill before us, actually. In a former life I was a firefighter, a rural firefighter, which meant that we fought everything that was a fire, whether it was a forest fire, a house fire, a car on fire, anything. We responded to everything. We were an hour away from any other source of assistance, so whether it be medical emergencies or fires or, you know, whatever, the local volunteer fire department had to respond. It was located in British Columbia,

right in the midst of the boreal forest, so forest fires, of course, were a big part of what we did.

I'm grateful that the department is conducting a postmortem on that fire and that we have this bill before us. Just to tell a little bit of a story, as a fire department we always performed postmortems. I think that there isn't a fire department anywhere, whether it be urban or rural, that doesn't do postmortems on every single action that they do. Sometimes it's called debriefing; sometimes it's called postmortem. The goal of the postmortem is always: how can we do this better? How can we do it faster? How can we respond with more assets to that fire? When you're talking about fire, as we witnessed in the Fort McMurray fire, seconds count. Seconds count. Getting as many assets and the right assets on the fire scene as quickly as possible to control it, to even steer it if you can't put it out is extremely important.

One of the things we always looked at in our postmortems was: did we have the right assets on the fire scene at the right time, how could we have improved getting those assets there, and what assets did we actually have at our disposal? One of the things about forest fires that's different than, say, a house fire is that you have at your disposal a lot of assets that you as a fire department may not actually possess. For example, when we were at one particular fire, it was quite a ways away from a source of water. Ordinarily, when fighting forest fires, we will start sucking water out of any body of water that's around just to get enough water on it. In this particular fire we were a little bit limited, but there was a gentleman who ran a water hauling business just a couple of miles from where we were fighting this fire. We literally got on the phone, got a hold of him – his name was Jim – and said: Jim, how many water trucks have you got, and can you get them to this fire now? Within 20 minutes we had tens of thousands of gallons of water. That was an asset that we tapped into to help us put this particular fire out, which had started from a skidder catching on fire out in the bush.

In the Fort McMurray fire, because of the sheer size of this massive beast, an enormous amount of resources had to be brought into play as quickly as possible. I think that everyone who was watching this fire realized that there was an asset deficit. In the early days of this fire there was definitely an asset deficit. It may not be that the firefighting people up there didn't have these assets in-house but that there were assets up there that could have been tapped into but weren't. I believe that as things go forward in the postmortem on this fire, the water bombers issue, the contracts for water bombers, is going to be a significant factor in assets that were there, available to us, but were not made use of in a timely manner. Water bombers, to be effective, have to be brought in very quickly and early in a fire. They have a limited ability to knock down a major fire, as we saw. That requires boots on the ground. That requires an enormous amount of heavy equipment to be brought to bear. Now, if you've ever toured up there in that area around McMurray and going as far north as Fort Chip, there is a massive amount of heavy equipment up there, and that heavy equipment is an asset. It's part of a fire team's inventory even though you don't own it.

**10:50**

In the postmortems that we conducted in our fire department, we actually made an inventory of equipment that wasn't ours. We had three sawmills in our area. They had tons of heavy equipment over there. We actually went and saw: what have they got that we can beg, borrow, or steal if there is a really bad fire? Of course, it required their co-operation, but they were eager to co-operate and help. If there was something that was beyond the capability of the equipment that we had, here was an inventory that we could tap into and get. If we needed Cats, if we needed loaders, if we needed

whatever, it was a wonderful thing to have that huge amount of assets at our disposal as a fire department.

As the postmortem on this fire is explored, I really hope the department digs deep because we have a couple of facts that we cannot escape as Albertans. We have a massive boreal forest. It is huge. We have all kinds of things that can start that forest on fire. We are going to have more forest fires in this province – that is a fact of living with a boreal forest – and it is possible that we are going to see fires again of the scope of the Slave Lake fire and the Fort Mac fire.

Since these are, in my opinion, inescapable realities, it behooves the government to do some really serious soul-searching in how both Slave Lake and Fort Mac were handled, to take a look at the command structure. I'm aware that in the first 10 days of the Fort Mac fire there were a whole lot of meetings taking place here in Edmonton and not a whole lot of activity when it came to helping the 80,000 people that were fleeing Fort Mac. There were meetings and meetings and meetings, but unfortunately there wasn't a lot of stuff in motion. It took time for things to get in motion to the degree that was necessary for the volume of people that we had to deal with and help. Of course, things did ramp up, and all was good, but a function of effective planning is to get mobilization happening within moments of something major like this. In other places in the world where they experience catastrophes on a regular basis, whether it be earthquakes, whether it be tsunamis, whether it be whatever, they make some pretty detailed plans on mobilizing assets, mobilizing help to their people, and it's this kind of planning that I would hope will come from the postmortem that's going to be conducted on the Fort Mac fire.

I commend every front-line first responder that went to fight that fire: the ambulance, the police, the aid workers, the citizens of Alberta that just rose up and started shipping food and shipping clothes and Pampers, you name it. Anything and everything that was needed was moving. Alberta as a province rose to the occasion, and I think it made every one of us very proud to call ourselves Albertans during that fire. I especially, though, want to commend the firefighters who stood like a wall against that fire. There were times when decisions were being made by those men and women on the front lines with nothing more than a hose full of water standing between them and an absolute wall of fire. I know what that is like as a firefighter. To anyone here who has been a firefighter, you know what it's like when you're standing there and you and the team make a decision: "We are not moving. That fire is not coming past us. We're going to stand our ground." I know that there were decisions like that made by those brave men and women every day during that fire. I love them, I commend them, and I'm very proud of them.

I'm in support of this bill. I think this bill is a good beginning. I believe there's much more that should be done and, hopefully, will be done. Of course, you know, we were very disappointed that the firefighting budget was cut during the budget. We were very disappointed that statistically and historically we spend about \$500 million a year on firefighting in this province and this government seemed to just ignore that reality and only budget for a fraction of what was needed and then justified the reduction, only then literally weeks later to be faced with a wildfire that consumed millions and millions and millions of dollars. Like the Boy Scouts say, you should be prepared.

We have a history in this province. We have a boreal forest. We cannot escape the reality that we will have fire. This government is duty bound to put things in place where we can deal with those fires effectively. If you budget \$500 million and you don't happen to use it one year, happy day. But if you don't budget for it, I think that you're living in a fool's paradise. It is vitally important that in future

budgets the government take the time to plan for fires and to have fire plans in place, good ones. You know, we had to evacuate during the Slave Lake fire; we had to evacuate during the Fort Mac fire. I don't doubt that in the future we're going to have to see evacuations again. Those kinds of plans need to be put in place. There needs to be appropriate funding and assets ready to mobilize for the sake of our citizens.

To the good people of Fort McMurray: you know, there were no lives lost as a direct result of that fire, and I know from talking to the people in McMurray that there is really only one reason, and that is because of the enormous amount of training that oil sands companies and other companies in Fort Mac and area put their staff through. The evacuation was orderly. It was just amazing to see that many people move out of a city that fast, that orderly. They were calm, they knew exactly what they were to do, and I applaud the training that our oil sands companies and other companies in Fort Mac and area have put their staff through. I will say that that probably saved a whole lot of lives right there, that very fact that they had that kind of training. So I applaud our oil sands companies and the others up in Fort Mac that provide that excellent kind of training for their people.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, just let me say that I do support this bill, but I do want to make it clear that this is a good start, that there's some road to go on this particular file. I want to echo my esteemed colleague's statements regarding amendments from the opposition. You know, partisan politics is, unfortunately, a reality. However, when it comes to issues like this, where we're talking about the health and the safety of the people of Alberta, I believe it behooves the government to get down off their partisan high horse and take a good listen to the amendments that come forward from everyone in this House. We all have skin in this game, and it would be, I think, only reasonable to expect the government to listen to the amendments, that have been well thought through and provide an opportunity for this government to improve the legislation that comes before this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there questions under 29(2)(a)? I wondered if maybe the Finance minister had a question for him because he was talking across the hall.

11:00

**Mr. Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, I do have one.

**The Speaker:** You have a question under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Ceci:** I do. Thank you. When I was listening to the speaker, he seemed to have some inside knowledge about the activities that didn't go on, in his mind, from the Provincial Operations Centre, or the POC. He seemed to talk about the front line as if it somehow guided itself, that all the front-line responders were acting on – I don't know – intuition. Does he not think that there was co-ordination from the Provincial Operations Centre with the people on the ground in Fort McMurray the whole time, right from the beginning? He seems to suggest that, you know, everyone else was off on vacation and that the only people there in Fort McMurray were doing the work. I just don't know where you get that information. I'd be really interested if you have some inside information to that being the case. If not, why would you impugn the Provincial Operations Centre and the work they did?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Mr. Speaker, to clarify, I by no means am suggesting that POC was on a holiday. What I am suggesting is that in the days immediately at the very front end of that fire there were

resources that were necessary to assist the people who were fleeing – specifically food resources, places to stay, materials that were needed – that were not being mobilized in a timely manner, and in the inquiries that I made regarding those specifics, repeatedly I was told, “Yes, we're meeting about that; yes, we're meeting about that,” but there were no wheels turning.

The towns up in that area – the town of Boyle, the town of Athabasca, the town of Lac La Biche – those communities, without POC's intervention or assistance or anything, rose up to help those people while POC got their act together regarding getting materials and food and the other things necessary for a population of 80,000 people that needed somewhere to stay. I'm not talking about the fire suppression resources or firefighting resources that POC was taking care of in their command and communications structure. I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker, those 80,000 to 90,000 Fort McMurrayites that were on the road looking for somewhere, that had to evacuate. POC was not moving fast enough to get these people fed, watered, sheltered, clothed, but the local communities up there did. They're the ones that saved the day.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? My attempt at humour caused them to speak.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising, of course, to talk today about Bill 24. I've spoken about Bill 24 . . .

**The Speaker:** Excuse me, hon. member. Could I get guidance from the table? I understand that you have spoken before on Bill 24.

**Mr. Nixon:** Not to third reading. I have not spoken to third reading.

**The Speaker:** Just a moment until we check.

Hon. member, I've been advised that the exact date was November 10 on which you spoke on this item. That's the information that we have on the record.

Is there another member who wishes to speak to Bill 24? I have on the list, possibly, Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Nixon:** He already spoke, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Okay. I didn't check his name off.

Are there any other members who would like to speak to third reading of Bill 24, Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016?

Seeing none, I would ask the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry to close debate.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and move third reading of Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016.

I want to thank all members on both sides of the House for the discussions about this important piece of legislation. It is clear from comments made throughout the debate on this bill that members are supportive of the enhancement of wildfire prevention, enforcement, and operational activities.

The modernization of this act is an important step in reducing the risk of human-caused wildfires. As we pointed out earlier, approximately 70 per cent of wildfires over the last five years have been linked to human activity, and this legislation will introduce measures that will help reduce the risk of human-caused wildfires and enhance firefighting operations. They include strengthening penalties to serve as a deterrent, simplifying the process to restrict recreational activities when fire conditions are hazardous, officially

designating March 1 as the start of wildfire season, and clarifying operational roles and responsibilities.

During the second reading debate and in Committee of the Whole we discussed several aspects of the legislation. I'd like to take some time to address some of the discussion points to make sure there is clarity. During debate there were questions about the provisions related to delegation of authority. What we want to ensure is that front-line staff, who have the most experience with how this legislation works on the ground, have the ability to make decisions where appropriate as part of their day-to-day duties. Of course, higher level decisions will still be made by the minister as required.

In terms of the part of the bill that addresses the wildfire season, starting the season one month earlier than before will allow our wildfire managers to identify potential issues and ensure fire permits are obtained earlier in the year. An earlier wildfire season start will allow our wildfire managers to be ready to respond when the spring comes. It won't in any way affect the contracts we have in place. These contracts are multiyear, ensuring the resources are available as needed and can be extended into the fall based on hazard. This government will continue to ensure we have all the firefighting resources we need to keep Albertans safe from the risk of wildfire.

During this last wildfire season the government enacted an off-highway vehicle restriction to help reduce the likelihood of wildfires started by exhaust or hot debris. This was done using a provision of the act mostly reserved for forest area closures. The new provisions in this act will allow us to implement an OHV restriction in the same way that we do a fire ban right now. We are essentially simplifying the process.

I was incredibly pleased and honoured to introduce Bill 24 in the House on the same day that the Premier recognized the Fort McMurray wildfire first responders. This bill will help them do their job, and I'm proud to stand in this House today for its third reading. We will now move on to updating the act's associated regulations over the winter, in time for next year's start of wildfire season on March 1.

Again I would like to thank all members for their support on this bill and for their support of our wildland firefighters.

That concludes my comments, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a third time]

11:10

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 30

#### Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act

[Adjourned debate November 10: Mr. Cooper]

**The Speaker:** Are there any members who wish to speak to second reading of Bill 30? The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on second reading of Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. It sounds like a wonderful plan. We hope this one actually has some effect because, you know, what we've seen from this department in previous bills hasn't been all that effective in creating jobs. So we're really, truly hoping that this one will have a little bit more effect.

The tax credit, if it works, unfortunately won't do nearly enough to cancel out the negative effects that we're seeing from the upcoming carbon tax.

**An Hon. Member:** Levy.

**Mr. Panda:** Tax.

**Mr. Hanson:** It's a tax. [interjections] Now we're talking semantics. Albertans know that a tax is a tax is a tax. [interjection] Yes, if it quacks like a tax and waddles like a tax, it's a tax. I understand that the reason for calling it a levy is so that you can implement it on other levels of government like municipalities.

You didn't just flip me the bird, did you, Minister?

**Mr. Ceci:** No, no. I was trying to listen to you.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you. I appreciate that. [interjection] I am very sensitive to that.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, as I was listening to the chorus of song, I thought it would have been a great piece of music that I ought to tape for one of my grandchildren to fall asleep to, but let's try and stay on topic.

Hon. member, I'm sure you'll want to focus your discussion on the chair.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to do that. I had no idea that my comments would have that effect.

Anyway, as I get back to this, if this proposal actually has the desired effect, it's not going to be enough to counteract the effects of the carbon tax and the tax increases on businesses, individuals, and corporate taxes that we've seen in the last 18 months. Although it is a step in the right direction, we really think that some decreases to corporate taxes to make Alberta a little bit more attractive for investment and also, you know, holding back, eliminating the carbon tax until the economy improves a little bit would help go a long way to improving things.

Now, Alberta is facing a jobs and economic crisis, and steps must be taken. We agree with that a hundred per cent. I don't think there is anybody in this House that would argue against that. You know, I support that initiative a hundred per cent.

Nonrefundable tax credits, not grants or loans, are something that fits in with my way of thinking, especially in these economic times. Adding more money to the budget: you know, we're already facing \$10 billion in deficit this year, so I don't see any value in increasing that. I did receive some correspondence from one of the chambers in the province that had some concerns about it. They would like to raise a concern that many of the members have expressed since the program was originally announced. Specifically, there's been discussion about the government's intention to artificially limit the pool of businesses that would be eligible to participate in the program. The evidence suggests that investor tax credits work best when the government adopts a hands-off approach and instead places the onus on private investors to make the final decisions on risk, efficiency, and ultimately where to deploy their capital.

Now, this is a message that we've been trying to push across for the last 18 months, for sure. The private sector, given the proper incentives to invest money on their own – like, we're talking about, you know, making our province the most attractive place to do business and set up a head office. That is the best initiative for increasing business development and creating real jobs in the province. We would agree with these statements that keeping a hands-off approach from government is probably the best to allow the public sector to do what it's always done in Alberta, which is to increase jobs and invest in our province.

Going on, another point was that productivity is a big problem in manufacturing and that the CITC will help Alberta's 9,000 manufacturers compete with foreign business. Again, when you have a statement like that, which is what we should all be interested in doing as part of government, and then you set people up to fail



with a carbon tax that other jurisdictions that we're competing against don't have – I'll be addressing that in a statement tomorrow. We're actually losing some businesses here in Alberta because they're competing with Saskatchewan and British Columbia, where they don't have these punitive taxes, or they do have a carbon tax, but it is revenue neutral.

Like I said, you know, Mr. Speaker, I understand the difference between the terms "tax" and "levy" and that the word "levy" is there so that we can penalize our municipalities. You know, I understand, and municipalities understand, too. Albertans aren't fooled by the difference between the words "tax" and "levy". We're not fools, and Albertans aren't fools. They get it. You know, you can wordsmith all you like, but a tax is a tax. The modest programs will not offset, again, the general chill in investment caused by the government's other antibusiness economic policies and tax hikes.

Personally, I will be supporting this because it is a step in the right direction. It isn't taking new money and putting money into the system; it's actually allowing private investors to invest and get tax credits for it. But when you throw in a carbon tax, dramatic minimum wage increases, start suing Alberta-owned power companies, shutting down coal, killing communities, record deficits and borrowing, you can't fix all that with, you know, a \$70 million tax credit. I just don't see it. Again, it is a step in the right direction, so I will be supporting it at this point.

Thank you. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please.

Are there any questions to the member under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I would recognize the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand today and discuss Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. Now, it is good to see that with the problems Alberta is facing with the loss of jobs – over a hundred thousand jobs lost in the last year, year and a half since this government has been elected, and of course that doesn't include the contractors that are either unemployed or underemployed that won't show up in those numbers. So it is good to see that this government is taking one small step forward in attempting to create some jobs.

These are nonrefundable tax credits. They're not grants or loans or loan guarantees, so that's good to see, that it's very specific as far as what they are. Now, they've listed the different industries that they want to see this go towards, and there's probably some debate on maybe having more businesses covered under this, though it is good to see that they haven't picked specific companies. I think that part is good. We don't want to see government picking particular companies that they want to take care of with any kind of tax incentives or anything like that. It's good that they've opened it up to industries in general, but again we probably would like to discuss at some point: why not more industries?

Now, some of this may help as far as tourism. Of course, tourism is important in Alberta. It obviously creates jobs. I think we had the minister of tourism talking some months ago about the U.S. dollar, how the U.S. dollar rising increases tourism here in Alberta because, of course, people from outside the country, from the U.S. in particular, obviously, can come into our country, come into Alberta, and their dollar buys more because their dollar has a higher value. Now, when you talk about a carbon tax and how it actually increases the price of everything, that actually has a negative effect on tourism. If the U.S. dollar rising increases tourism, then it only stands to reason that if the U.S. dollar rising allows them to buy more when they're here, obviously adding a carbon tax on that

increases the price of everything and would actually drive away tourism.

**11:20**

I've enjoyed the discussion here on the tax and levy, but what I'll do maybe is read the definition of a tax: "A compulsory contribution to state revenue, levied by the government on workers' income and business profits, or added to the cost of some goods, services, and transactions. That's right off Google. When I type in "tax definition" on my iPhone, it's the first definition that comes up. Imagine that.

**Mr. Panda:** Oh, you'll have to look at that through the lens of the NDP world view.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yeah.

**Mr. Panda:** You may read it differently.

**Mr. Loewen:** It also says that it's "a strain or heavy demand." I would think Albertans agree that it is a strain and a heavy demand. It's a burden, a load, a weight, a demand, a strain, pressure, stress, imposition. All right here.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I wonder if you could get all those words into a standing order that we could use for the future.

**Mr. Loewen:** We could work on that.

Now, when I go to "levy," the first line here says: "Impose (a tax, fee, or fine) 'a new tax could be levied on industry to pay for cleaning up contaminated land'." This was an example they used. Right off the top, "Impose a tax, fee, or fine," is the definition of "levy." I know that the government likes to talk about levy or tax, and they say: it's not a tax; it's a levy. I mean, I think we're pretty clear on what it is, and I know Albertans are really clear on what it is.

Getting back to Bill 30, after all this time and this government bringing forward multiple bills with no economic analysis, I would hope that this one has an economic analysis. If it is, in fact, there, where is it? Can we see it? Is that possible, an economic analysis on something to deal with money and the economy?

It's unfortunate that this program is only going to target certain sectors. Again, we'd like to see why it wasn't broadened to include more sectors of the economy.

Another thing we're unsure of: is it first-come, first-served, or does the minister pick which companies come up? That's not really clear. It would be nice to see how that works. I'm not sure how that works. Hopefully, the minister can clarify that for us.

Now, it does seem like there's a lot of ministerial interference in this as far as the minister making a lot of different decisions. Is it just oversight, or is this actual interference? I think that's a fair question that it would be great to hear the answer to.

Now, one thing we do know is that a fair, low tax across the board would be the best for the economy. Is that something all businesses could benefit from? It would be across the board. It would be a sustainable strategy. It would be something that businesses could rely on.

There does seem to be a fair amount of red tape for these venture capital corporations. They have to go through this process, of course: registration, ministerial approval to change the share structure, ministerial approval to raise capital, and then the minister may impose conditions on that. Also, the minister can direct how many employees and wages as conditions before an investment in a business is permitted. Now, if that is, in fact, true, which is what it appears to be, then I think it restricts businesses in their ability to

operate in a profitable manner so that they can create jobs and work in this economy.

Now, it does say – we're not sure why – that venture capital corporations can't have a controlling stake in the small business. Maybe there's a good reason for that. I'm not sure. But it would be good to hear what the minister has to say on that.

What happens if the business becomes ineligible for the tax credit? Must they divest? How does that work at that point? I'm not sure if that's clearly spelled out in the bill. It'd be good to see that, too.

One thing that's certain, Madam Speaker, is that this program, this bill, won't undo all of the uncertainty that investors have in investing in Alberta. Right now these corporations and individuals that have large enough amounts of money to invest in our economy, to create jobs – they don't want to invest in a jurisdiction where there's this kind of uncertainty. We have a government that comes in, starts raising taxes, starts changing rules, starts trying to rip up contracts, and all these different things that don't provide stability for our economy.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, there are still a lot of questions. Again, it's good to see that the government is doing something with, you know, an attempt here to create some jobs and to get some investment in Alberta. But, again, unless they can prove to companies and individuals around the world that have that money to invest, to create the number of jobs – we're looking at over a hundred thousand jobs, again, not including the contractors that are underemployed or unemployed. That's a lot to make up with a small program like this.

The investors need to have confidence. They need to know that this government isn't going to change the rules in the middle, that they're not going to rip up contracts. I don't believe this government has been showing that. These investor tax credits will work best when government has a hands-off approach. As long as the government is still meddling and still interfering, we risk losing even more investment. It's better when the private investors make the decisions on where to put their money. That's what's best. That way they can decide on their risk level.

Madam Speaker, like I say, it's good to see a start here. This might be the start of, you know, job one created by this government. It would be good to have some of these questions and concerns answered. Again, it would be great to see this government kind of change the feeling in the investment community so that they can come back to Alberta, invest, have the confidence, and create the jobs that Albertans need.

Thank you.

11:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have five minutes for questions or comments.

Seeing none, the next speaker I have on my list is Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, our province is facing a jobs and economic crisis. We've said that over and over again. Every Albertan in this province recognizes that we have some very serious challenges as a province. Anyone who has been in this province for 40 to 50 to 60 years – we've kind of been here before in the past, but this time it is different. It's very different.

It's interesting that we have this bill before the House. I find it a little bit ironic that even the title of this bill, Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act – given that this government is single-handedly responsible for so much divestment in this

province, I find it ironic that they are now trying to attract investment to this province, but they're trying to attract that investment without going back and undoing the very things that have caused the divestment in the first place. I find that rather ironic.

Recessions do not cause divestment. They don't. If the low price of oil was, in fact, the reason for divestment, then our neighbour Brad Wall would have nothing to brag about, but in fact he has a great deal to brag about. He's facing the very same kind of price of oil that we are, yet Saskatchewan's economy is rocking 'n' rolling. Yet this government continues to bury its head in a dark place and look at the price of oil and say: well, that must be the reason why everything is falling apart here. Well, this province has had low oil prices in the past. We've experienced these kinds of things before. But if you look also at our history, you will find government intervention, governments doing what governments should not be doing, as the single biggest factor in divestment. So now we have this government attempting to put a Band-Aid on a hemorrhage. It is a Band-Aid on a hemorrhage.

We have this Bill 30, the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. Well, I have a news flash. You know, Alberta's economy has been diversifying for years and years and years. Take a look at our agricultural sector: innovation from start to finish. Take a look at oil and gas resource development: innovation all over the place, diversification. We even have somewhat of a tech industry in this province. All over the place we have diversification. Believe it or not, Alberta was going down the renewable technology road before the NDP learned how to spell "renewables." We were actually on that route, and we had thousands and thousands of installations of renewable and alternative energy technologies throughout this province long before the NDP dreamed up the climate action plan. Albertans are an innovative people. Albertans are always looking for diversification.

Albertans, by our very DNA, look for opportunities. That is the reason why we have the Alberta that we have today, because people from all over the world came to this province because there were opportunities. The reason that we had those opportunities is because in the history of our province, going all the way back to 1905, what you see is Albertans seeing what we've got for resources: how can we optimally use those resources for the betterment of our families, for the betterment of our children, for the betterment of our communities? Governments of the day tried their best to create a climate where those opportunities could be realized, and that took investment. It took all kinds of investment from outside and from within this province.

But now we have a government that seems to think that without the government doing something, nothing happens, that the wheels just won't turn. The reality is this, Madam Speaker. Economic wheels, the economic wheels of our economic engine, turn without the government's intervention. What stops the wheels turning is government intervention because the people of Alberta are people who recognize opportunities and will capitalize on those opportunities and make the wheels turn if the government would kindly get out of the way. But we have a government in place today that has an ideology that somehow – the private sector is almost being vilified all over this place, and profit is just a four-letter word. Yet profits support our charities, profits provide jobs, and profits fuel all kinds of things in our society and amongst our people. Profit is a good thing. It pays everyone's wages, and it pays taxes.

But this government looks at companies and the men and women that own those businesses as some kind of golden goose: we're just going to squeeze that old goose as hard as we can and somehow get more golden eggs out of that goose. Well, guess what? Eventually, if you keep squeezing the goose, you squeeze the life out of it, and

that's what we have happening in this province right now. So along comes Dr. Government with a pill called Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, because they've killed diversification, because they've killed investment in this province, and now, realizing it, they come up with a little Band-Aid to cover the hemorrhage. That's really all this thing is. It is a Band-Aid on a \$40 billion to \$50 billion hemorrhage out of this province.

It didn't have to go very far. That investment, a lot of it, found a friend next door in Regina. Remember that they're getting the same price for oil that we are getting. I know that in the magnificent riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake we have a lot of Sylvan Lakers that are working now in Saskatchewan. They're still living in Sylvan Lake, thank God, but they are actually working in Saskatchewan because there's nothing here. Some of them are working for the very same companies because those companies found a friend. They found a friend in Regina that understood business, understood basic economics, and created a climate that we once had. We had it, and this government within just a few months totally kicked the legs out from under our economy.

On the 22nd of October, 2015, we had a new Minister of Economic Development and Trade. He was given a whack of money, taxpayers' money, in a budget, millions and millions of dollars. Well, months go by; months go by. We're waiting for the big jobs announcement. Nothing. It's amusing over here. We go: you know, one job – one job – was created. Then we came to another budget cycle, and lo and behold, not having created any jobs, the government's solution was: well, let's give that minister way more money. Somehow throwing money at that is going to create more jobs. Well, news flash: if you've got someone in a position of authority that doesn't know how to create one job with \$100 million, giving that person \$200 million isn't going to automatically result in more jobs being created.

11:40

**An Hon. Member:** Two jobs.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Maybe two.

Money is not the problem. The problem is a government that is so antibusiness in their ideology that it seems like every week that goes by, they're hitting one sector or another with something that is chasing away investment or taxing that which does happen. So they tax it and tax it till it stops moving, subsidize it to get it moving again. This is the socialist mantra, and it's harming this province.

Yes, we have a jobs and economic crisis all right, and, yes, there are steps that this government needs to take, and those steps actually need to be in reverse. That's where those steps need to be. They need to back up, and they need to realize the harm that's being done. You know, you cannot solve a problem until you recognize the cause of the problem, and until this government owns that their ideologies and a bunch of their policies are aggravating an already bad situation, until they own that, they're not going to fix the problem. Band-Aids like this aren't going to solve that problem.

We've got a Minister of Economic Development and Trade that's been in the saddle since the 22nd of October, 2015, and how much actual diversification has happened? What's the return on the investment that's been placed in that minister's hands? It's not looking good. It's not looking good at all.

Now I want to talk just a little bit about venture capital and red tape. You know, in creating a business-friendly environment, one of the things that a government can do is reduce the kind of overbearing regulatory measures – we call it red tape – that are in the way of those economic wheels that I talked about earlier. There are different jurisdictions around the world that have red tape reduction strategies where if a new regulation comes in, they have

to get rid of one, so when you've got one more piece of red tape, there's another piece of red tape that's got to be done away with. They do that because they recognize that red tape is a hindrance to economic activity. Some attempts were made in this Legislature from this side to put in place some kind of red tape reduction, and of course this government voted it down.

I just wanted to talk briefly about venture capital. There is a part of this particular bill dealing with venture capital companies. They, as I understand it, cannot have a controlling stake in a small business. Well, I've been involved in some venture capital projects overseas, and, you know, we didn't have a problem giving a controlling interest to the venture capital company that was investing millions and millions of their money in our business. It's a situation where the venture capital company will come in, they'll take an interest in the company, and they'll invest money in the company.

But they have usually a short-term exit strategy where they will be in an ownership position in that company for three years, five years, seven years and then they want to back out, because the business model for most venture capital companies is that they're not interested in owning a whole bunch of companies and running those companies; they are in the business of renting money. They will rent your business that money for a fixed period of time, and then they want to come out and take their money and profit with them and go do it somewhere else again. This is their business model.

So I don't understand the rationale saying that VCs can't have a controlling stake in a small business. Like, I just don't understand that. Is it that the government doesn't understand venture capital as a sector, as a business model? I expect that that is probably the reason. But from a small-business person or even a larger business person's perspective, we don't have a problem giving a controlling interest to a VC because there is this window of opportunity here: we need their money; we need their investment.

Often venture capital companies bring more than just money. Most of them, the ones that are really successful, have a team, and when they invest in a small company, like they were doing for the company I was a part of overseas, they brought with them some expertise that we didn't have in-house. So along with the money came this wealth of knowledge and connections that were extremely valuable, and it was more than worth giving controlling interest on a temporary basis to this VC.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments for the previous speaker under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to just thank the member for his comments. I found it very interesting to follow his speech. As always, the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has a lot to say on this important matter.

I found it most interesting as he was discussing how this bill does not go far enough, particularly not far enough to deal with the damage that we've already seen in our province because of some of the actions that the current government has taken; for example, the carbon tax, something, I know, that we hear a lot about as we travel around – I know all members of this House are hearing concerns about that – as well as tax increases that we've seen on businesses and individuals since this government started; a dramatic minimum wage increase, which I know is, like, one of the number one things I hear about back in my constituency, deep concerns about the impact that that's having on small businesses in our communities and on youth unemployment now because of the actions of this government; as well as shutting down coal. So is this bill going to

go far enough, Madam Speaker, to deal with the coal shutdown that is being brought forward by this ideological government that's seeing communities like Hanna completely wiped out?

I know, Madam Speaker, that you know that over the last week at the AAMD and C this government was probably the first government in history to be booed like that at an AAMD and C conference. That shows how concerned people are with the damage that's going to happen to certain communities in rural Alberta, in particular in regard to the coal shutdown. I'd like to hear from the member if this bill goes far enough to address that as well as, of course, the record deficits and borrowing that is coming from this ideological government, the borrowing against my kids' future and my grandchildren's future, something that I know I hear often about from my constituents, a deep concern about the long-term impact that that's going to have on Alberta. Will this bill go far enough to deal with that? I'd like to hear from the hon. member on that. As well, of course, we do know that well over a hundred thousand people have lost their jobs since this government took power, not to mention all the contractors that are out of work. The number gets really, really high as we start to look at the unemployment across our province. This bill: does it take care of that?

The last thing, Madam Speaker, I would like to hear from the hon. member on is the fact that this minister has brought forward stuff before, in the past, that they've had to scrap because it was completely ineffective. Do we see any evidence in what has been brought forward by the government now to show that this will be effective this time, like economic analysis, those types of things, or is this just more of the same empty promises for Albertans?

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, you wish to respond?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you. Thank you to the hon. Member for Rimby-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. There are a number of things that were brought up there, and I'll just quickly go through them if I may. This business of levy and tax: one of the things we heard from the councillors who attended the AAMD and C just a

few days ago was their disappointment at how this carbon tax is impacting them. They consider it to be a tax on a tax, as do some of the school boards, because, as we all know, school boards and counties and municipalities get their funding from taxation, and now this government is carbon taxing a tax. It just seemed to them to be absolutely ridiculous that the government would look at tax revenue as a source of a tax grab. It's just absolutely ridiculous to them. It is a tax. You can try to butter it up and call it a levy all you want. It's a tax.

Just to briefly touch on what government can do differently regarding the shutting down of coal, right after this government took office, there was an immediate move to vilify the coal industry. It was immediate, within weeks. We saw a dramatic increase in the carbon tax under SGER, and coal never had a hope. It didn't matter. I asked the Minister of Energy, I asked the minister of the environment, and I think I may have even asked the Premier: if clean coal technologies are available, would you allow, then, for us to continue with coal? The answer was clearly no, which is odd because here's something that could be diversifying our economy.

**11:50**

In diversification, effective diversification, you take the strengths that you've got and you build on those strengths. We had a very vibrant coal-fired electrical generation sector, that was providing inexpensive baseload right across this province, and cheap electricity means competitiveness in the marketplace. But instead of saying, "Okay; what can we do to make that better?" that's not the approach the government took. Instead, this government is going to put thousands and thousands out of work.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In honour of the ceremony that we are having today, I would ask for consent of the House to adjourn till 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:51 a.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 22, 2016

Day 50

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 22, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a former member of the Alberta Real Estate Association it is indeed my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 68 members from the Alberta Real Estate Association. The association represents the interests of more than 10,000 realtors from across Alberta. They're here to attend question period and will be hosting an MLA reception later tonight at the Matrix Hotel. Please join me in welcoming the association and let them receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, and welcome. I understand that there may even be a member here from the republic of Medicine Hat.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. The first is a school group. I don't think that they have joined us yet, but there are 38 folks in total with us today. They are visiting from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. It is the Prairie Christian Academy. They are led by their teacher, Michael Robertson, who is a significant volunteer for the TUXIS youth parliament as well. I'd ask that if they are here, they would rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other school groups today? The hon. member.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure indeed to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three classes of students from the marvellous constituency of Edmonton-McClung, joined by teachers Danielle Flook, Bob Shulko, and Paola O'Connor as well as parent helpers Amel El Sayah and Nina Gerhardt. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms Jabbour:** Mr. Speaker, on your behalf I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly four guests visiting the Legislature today in recognition of the eighth anniversary of the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act. They are seated in your gallery: Slavka Shulakewych, the provincial co-ordinator of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Alberta Provincial Council; Yarema Shulakewych; Natalia Talanchuk, a survivor of Holodomor; and Orysia Talanchuk, Mrs. Talanchuk's daughter. I'd also like to extend a warm welcome to all those present who attended today's Holodomor ceremony. Our guests have risen, and I'd ask that they all receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House

members of the board of family and community support services, aka FCSS. FCSS President Arnold Hanson is also a councillor from Beaver county and a cow-calf producer. He's also joined by Vice-president Vicki Van Vliet Vaitkunas, Cathy Needham, Janet Wilkinson, and Executive Director Deb Teed. FCSS programs have been leaders in addressing local needs and working collaboratively to create conditions that foster social well-being in 319 municipalities and Métis settlements across the province. They've recently celebrated their 50th anniversary. I thank these members of the FCSS board for their ongoing contribution to Alberta and Albertans, and I ask them to please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. I know it's hard to believe in my young life that I would have had that much experience, but I'm proud to say that it was that program that kept me in Alberta for such a long time. Some would say that wasn't good.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my hon. colleague from St. Albert I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you honoured guests from Concordia University's business and government course: Dr. Alison Yacyshyn, chair of the Concordia school of management, and Mr. Liam Connelly, adjunct professor. Also in attendance are Concordia students Emily Robbins, Brandon Vollweiter, Sami Ayyaz, Breanna Grolway, Melyssa Barakat, Emma Neufeld, Alexander Roihjert, and Theodore Krein. Please join me in welcoming them and let them receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you three hard-working people I know very well from Cypress-Medicine Hat and from Medicine Hat. Not only do they help families find homes and build communities, but they spend considerable time making the real estate profession better for all, including the general public. I know this first-hand because I had the pleasure and the privilege of working with all three of them at great length in my last career. First, I'd like to ask Tim Seitz to rise, the president of the Medicine Hat Real Estate Board. Then I'd like to ask Jeff Lanigan to rise, the political action representative for the Medicine Hat Real Estate Board. Then, third, I'd like to ask Randeon Bray to rise, the executive officer of the Medicine Hat Real Estate Board. Please accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you Trevor Buttery and Sara Sarbar. Trevor is a practicum student from MacEwan University in the social work program. He's in his first year and has been an outstanding addition to our team. Sara Sarbar is a new part-time constituency assistant in my office. Her sense of humour, inquiring mind, and meaningful service of constituents are invaluable. Thank you so much to both of you for joining our team. I appreciate all of your hard work. I'd ask that you now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise and introduce to you and through you Amber Stewart. Amber is the Calgary board of education trustee for wards 12 and 14. She is the dedicated wife of Alan Stewart and the mother of three beautiful children: Isabelle, Kyla, and Kendra. Amber has been an excellent advocate for Calgary-South East families. She is a good friend, and I'm honoured to represent her as her MLA. If I could ask Amber to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

1:40

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House Andre Tinio. Andre is a fourth-year student at the University of Calgary, and he has a bachelor's degree in arts, majoring in sociology and minoring of music from the University of Alberta already. Andre is presently completing his bachelor of social work degree. He is carrying out his field placement in the Edmonton-Riverview constituency office and will be there until the end of December, or maybe it's the beginning of December, actually. I just want to thank him so much for his energy and enthusiasm. We have appreciated his contributions so greatly. Andre is seated in the members' gallery. I ask him to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce Mr. Emery Pritchard, who is my constituent. He is also chief information officer with Drift Production Services Ltd. During times of fire and flood Mr. Pritchard's company stands at the ready with heavy equipment and manpower to assist Albertans at the call of AEMA. Mr. Pritchard is Métis and has assisted me greatly with my annual food bank drive in Calgary-Foothills. With Emery is Curt Gossenberger, emergency operations co-ordinator for R&R Rentals of Red Deer. Both of them are here today attending the Alberta Emergency Management Agency conference in Edmonton. I ask both of them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome from all of my colleagues here.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly one of my best friends, Mr. Sanjit Singh. He is the president of the Appraisal Institute of Canada, Alberta's chapter, and he owns one of the realty appraising firms in Calgary. I'm proud to call him one of my best friends, and I cherish his friendship a lot. I now would like him to rise and receive the traditional welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you a young lady who contacted me just last week by the name of Jorja Fisher. Jorja is a grade 6 student at Senator Patrick Burns school in Calgary. She's doing a project called "taking action." In this project they need to research a concern that they are worried about and then try to help fix that concern. Her concern is the Alberta economy and getting pipelines to tidewater. She is here today to watch question period and see how she can be part of taking action. I invite her to rise. She's joined by her mother and father, Joe and Chelsey Fisher, and her grandfather Gary Frost.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other visitors today?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I have two more constituents. Mr. Sanjit Singh is also my constituent. I also have Robyn Moser, who is a realtor and long-time member of RECA. She is on the council. I ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Any more visitors? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by congratulating you on your most excellent new mo.

I want to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly Mr. Brian Reinboldt. He is a realtor with Royal LePage, from the most conservative constituency of Strathmore-Brooks. He is here with his colleagues from the area today. I ask that my colleagues would give him the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

## Members' Statements

### Harassment and Women in Politics

**Ms Jansen:** "What a traitorous bitch." "You both are a disgrace to Alberta, lying bitches." "Now you have two blonde bimbos in that party that are clueless." "Another useless tit goes NDP." "Dead meat." "Sandra should stay in the kitchen where she belongs." "Fly with the crows [and] get shot." "Dumb broad. A good place for her to be is with the rest of the queers."

Mr. Speaker, today I rise to make a simple request of my colleagues. To all of the honourable colleagues in this House: if you are stunned by the words you have heard in the last few days, if you reject the inherent violence behind them and you know that harassment and abuse, even if it's verbal, even if it's online, and even if it's directed at a political opponent is poison, let us be strong and clear in our resolve that no matter where we sit along political lines, we stand together against this. In our words, in our actions every day from all sides if we don't feed it, we must oppose it. Please oppose it. Don't ignore it. Don't look the other way. Don't excuse it. Our daughters are watching us. They are watching the challenges facing women in politics today. Imagine if we let that poison become normalized or if our daughters forgo the political arena altogether. That scares me.

I am so proud to have joined a pragmatic, centrist government which has a place for moderate women. Together we will fight for women. We will fight against this language of harassment and violence, and I hope everyone in this House fights it, too.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

### Deaths of Children in Care

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Wildrose called on this Legislature to undertake an emergency debate on children who are dying in care. This debate was prompted by the recent Child and Youth Advocate's report on the case of Serenity, a four-year-old girl who was starved, beaten, sexually assaulted, and suffering from hypothermia when she died from a brain injury in September 2014. This was the opportunity for the government to outline the actions that they have taken to address this problem and

also to detail what their next steps forward will be. Unfortunately, this is not what happened.

I was especially disappointed when the minister of indigenous affairs blamed provincial opposition parties for failing to acquire adequate federal funding on reserves and then insisted this problem could be addressed by throwing more money at a broken system. This is not acceptable, and Alberta's children expect and deserve more.

The people of Alberta are looking for leadership in a system that has failed to make badly needed changes, where kids are dying. We need someone to stop passing the buck and to ensure that children's safety is a priority for this government. Kinship care, foster care, and the child welfare system as a whole need action now.

The advocate's report clearly states that there are systemic problems, which government can no longer ignore. For instance, the home study program relies heavily on self-reporting by the applicants, and there is no requirement to attend training or counselling. Here is just one area the minister can take action on immediately. It is time for this NDP government to stop paying lip service on the recommendations and start taking action.

No one is directly blaming this government for causing harm to children, but we are asking for accountability. There have been 15 deaths and several recommendations which have been accepted by this government. It is time for results. Let's honour past victims, prevent future atrocities because that's what we as MLAs are here to do.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it's just been brought to my attention that the – I will address this issue at a future time in the agenda.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. Jean:** There used to be a time when the NDP cared about the working men and women across this province, but now they are more worried about winning the approval from a group of elites and bureaucrats in Ottawa. It's been over a year since this Premier announced that 10,000 coal jobs will be destroyed in this province but still has shown no long-term plan for the people who will be losing work. This government promised a report from their \$600,000 man, Terry Boston, on how they'll shut down coal in Alberta. When can Albertans expect to see that report?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe Albertans can expect to see that report on Thursday.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you. The NDP has found time to fly to Paris, to Morocco, but they haven't found time to visit communities like Hanna and Parkland county. They haven't taken the time to look in the faces of the people who are now losing hope because this government does not have their backs. I can understand the Premier's hesitation given that whenever the NDP stands in front of rural communities they get booed, but will the Premier commit to personally attending public meetings in towns like Hanna, Grande Cache, and Forestburg to see the damage her policies are having on people's lives? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows, our government has appointed a panel to look into the matter of how we can orchestrate a just transition, a fair transition as the province moves off coal at an accelerated level beginning in 2030. That panel has been established. It has begun its work, and it will be travelling to all those communities very early in the new year.

**Mr. Jean:** That must be a no, Mr. Speaker.

Ontario's Energy minister is warning about the dangers of taking coal offline. A shutdown of our coal sector will either mean massive rate increases for consumers or higher tax increases to subsidize industry. The NDP admitted as much today by putting a cap that's twice the size of the current regulated rate. They're trying to control future rate increases after scaring away all the investment from Alberta. It shows no one in this government understands basic economics. Why are we not fighting Ottawa to protect coal jobs that can help keep Albertans' power bills low?

**Ms Notley:** Oh, Mr. Speaker, there is so much failure to understand that is embedded in that question. It's really hard to pick which place to start, but let me say that one of the things that is causing volatility in our market is the fact that under the previous federal government, of which the member opposite was a part, 60 per cent of our coal was going to come offline anyway. Interestingly, when we took over government, we discovered that there was no plan to replace that coal or the generation of it, so there's a great deal of work that has to be done to correct a broken system, and in the course of doing that, we are going to make sure that the fundamental principle is that consumers be . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
Second main question.

#### Energy Industry Competitiveness

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans are hurting a lot right now, and the NDP government is not helping at all. Today the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors announced that 2016 has been one of the worst years on record for the industry, and 2017 won't be much better. Wells drilled are actually expected to be 58 per cent lower than in 2014. The industry is saying loud and clear that a carbon tax will make it more difficult for this industry to succeed, especially when the United States, our biggest competitor, won't have one. Why is the Premier then committed to a policy that makes things worse for drillers all across Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think that it is important to remember that the period of time that the member is comparing to is when the price of oil was twice what it is right now, so I think that might have something to do with the drop, but that being said, it is absolutely critically important that this province and this industry reposition itself as the modern, progressive industry that it is, that can compete on an international basis, understanding that we have accepted and acted on the issues of climate change but can still balance a good, responsible oil and gas development and economy as a result.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, there was some good news for one western province in today's report. It said that Saskatchewan is leading any recovery in the sector. It's the same forecast put out by the Petroleum Services Association of Canada last month, who predicted that Saskatchewan will have more wells drilled than

Alberta. These are jobs that should be going to men and women who are out of work in Alberta right now, but NDP policies, these policies of this government, are pushing them away. How can the Premier excuse Alberta's energy sector falling behind Saskatchewan's?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite is playing fast and loose with little phrases from the reports because, in fact, there is over five times the investment in oil and gas in Alberta relative to Saskatchewan, and there is more investment in oil and gas in Alberta than the rest of the country combined. But – you know what? – the other thing that's really interesting is that in Alberta after the climate levy is imposed, we will still have a \$7.5 billion advantage over our neighbours to the east.

**Mr. Jean:** Here's some advice for this government from the head of CAODC, Mark Scholz. "To achieve a healthy oil and gas industry, governments must . . . consider the cumulative costs of doing business in Canada versus other global jurisdictions." It's good advice, especially when we know our biggest competitor, the United States, won't have a carbon tax. But the NDP continues to ignore this advice. A carbon tax and an antienergy agenda will only hurt Albertans already in need of so much help. Why does the Premier insist on making things so much worse for all Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that this province and our industry needs to be able to diversify its markets from not just being reliant on our neighbours to the south. They've gone from being our biggest customers to being our biggest competitors. One of the ways to do that is to fix the reputation, which, unfortunately, under the previous government, has not been particularly helpful to energy industry leaders here in Alberta. So we have done that, and we have done that with the support of many leaders in the energy industry, and we will continue to reposition our economy as the modern, progressive economy that we are.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
Third main question.

### Investigations of Deaths of Children in Care

**Mr. Jean:** We now know that almost two years after Serenity died, her autopsy report was finally completed. A Justice spokesman said that the delay was because the case was highly complex. I agree. The death of a four-year-old in care who was physically and sexually abused and suffered severe head trauma is complex, but it also deserves more than a postponed report that may never come to light without media pressure and that won't be released publicly. What assurances can the Premier give that the secrecy surrounding Serenity's death isn't the default of this government?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the question by the member opposite because we're all very, very concerned and troubled by all the facts, and I appreciate the effort that everyone put into debating and discussing this yesterday in the House. The fact of the matter is that the children's advocate typically has the information and publishes most of the information. That's as a result of actions from people on this side of the House. But on top of that, in this particular case we will await the request and the direction of the RCMP with respect to the release of further information because we do not in any way want to compromise the work that they're doing.

**Mr. Jean:** The safety of children in care must be this government's top priority, but that doesn't seem to be how it works. Serenity died

in September 2014. It is obvious that a crime has been committed. An autopsy was performed shortly after, within a year for certain, but somehow it takes two years for the autopsy report to be completed and sent to the police. Has this case been investigated in the last two years? We don't know. Has any progress been made? We don't know. Will the Premier commit to finding out why the horrific death of this little girl wasn't a priority for the various parts of her government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is correct in that the final report was not completed until much later because of the complexities that he alludes to. But he should also know that the medical examiner was in touch with the RCMP with respect to preliminary findings within days of receiving the information and has been in touch with them throughout. In terms of the progress of the investigation, that is a matter for the police to deal with independently from those of us in this House.

**Mr. Jean:** Serenity's death is obviously not a partisan or political issue. This is about finding justice for Serenity, fixing a broken system, and making sure that what happened to her never happens again. What we need are solutions, and so far we haven't seen any at all. The Human Services minister said last week that he accepted the child advocate's recommendations, but we need more than that. Will the Premier be accountable and commit to making public the detailed changes that have been made to the system because of what it learned from Serenity's tragic death?

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we absolutely will do that. There are reviews under way internally, and as that information is completed, that would become public as a matter of course. In addition, it's important to understand that work has already begun within the ministry. It began after this horrible, tragic event. It began well before our government was elected to ensure that some of the problems that were identified are improved upon. But it doesn't mean that it's all better. It doesn't mean that there isn't still work to do. It doesn't mean that front-line workers aren't working as hard as they possibly can with these tragic events over and over and over again. It does mean that we all have to come up with ways in which we can support the work that they do.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

### Electric Power Prices

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government's all-out war on Alberta business continues. Today the Premier declared profit a dirty word by limiting the price on electricity. The Premier seems unaware that today's low prices are the result of competition and that an artificial price cap will limit investment and, by extension, limit that competition. Combined with the carbon tax costs, this will surely make Alberta the worst place in Canada to generate power. To the Premier: why are you doing everything in your power to run these companies, many of which are owned by taxpayers, out of business?

**Ms Notley:** Well, I think, first of all, Mr. Speaker, it's clear to me that the member opposite doesn't understand the announcement that we made today. We are not doing anything to interfere with individual businesses, with people that provide these services within the market to consumers. What we are doing as the government, though, is capping the degree to which families have



to pay volatile energy prices because of the folks over there thinking that every family wants to be a spot trader expert. That is not what Alberta families want. They want consistency, predictability, and affordability in their utilities, and that is what our government will deliver.

**Mr. McIver:** Alberta's electricity customers have had reliability and good prices until this government messed it up. The government set a hard cap at 6.8 cents, which is about twice as high as what Albertans are paying now. Thanks for all the help. You know what? They wouldn't have put a cap on if they didn't believe their policies were going to drive prices even higher. Did the government do an impact assessment before making these dangerous moves, how much are prices going to skyrocket, and when will you share the information with Albertans? Or were you just guessing?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, there's so much in there that it's really hard to sort of figure out which part that is incorrect to focus on. In any event, what we are doing is providing certainty for consumers. This in no way impacts what generators or providers would get for the energy that they produce.

Let me just say that it is outrageous that the member opposite would say that their system provided stability in volatility. In 2012 it went up to 15 cents, a \$70-a-month shift in their bill in one month.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Ontario Premier recently apologized for causing high electricity prices, and our Premier is going down a similar path. Alberta power generation companies are going to be bleeding profits from the carbon tax and the shutdown of coal generation. You're further knee-capping these companies by dictating how much they can charge. Premier, are you attempting to beat these companies into submission so you can reregulate them to conform to NDP ideology, like Ontario has done and then apologized for?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that in Ontario there was an acknowledgement that they kind of lost focus on who the most important player in all this was, which were the citizens and the consumers and the customers. That's exactly where our focus is. Unlike the folks over there, we start by making sure that people have reliable, predictable, affordable utility prices because that's what families in Alberta need.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Foster and Kinship Care Supports

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the wake of the tragic death of Serenity, Albertans are looking for answers. They want to know why she was left in the care of people who starved and assaulted her to the point of death, they want to know who will be held accountable and when, and most of all they want to know that it won't happen again. One of the problems highlighted by the Child and Youth Advocate is the lack of support for foster parents, especially in kinship care. To the Minister of Human Services: without changing the topic and telling us that some other party would do something different, why did your government cut funding for foster care support by \$3.5 million? Your government.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. First, I would say that we didn't cut funding for Human Services. We increased funding for Human Services, stabilized funding. Secondly, in terms of foster care and kinship care we accepted the recommendations that came out of the specific review. We have accepted every single recommendation. We are tracking progress, which is available on the Human Services website, what actions have been taken.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. More than anything else, Albertans want to know that this is not going to happen again. After cutting the foster care budget, you did make an increase. You increased the intervention budget by \$25 million. Well, no wonder. If support and training isn't there, intervention is going to be needed. To the minister again: why are you short-changing prevention and only funding intervention after the damage is done?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Since 2012 there is a new practice framework. There was the signs of safety program approach. That helped us reduce the caseload; hence, the caseload in foster care and kinship care. Services were diverted more to family reunification and strengthening of families; hence, those adjustments between those budget lines. Overall, the budget for child intervention was increased by \$37 million. So that is wrong, that we cut anything from Human Services.

**Mr. Clark:** It's right there in the budget, Mr. Speaker: \$3.5 million down for foster care supports.

One of the most troubling aspects is the fact that there was little or no oversight from Alberta's child welfare system after Serenity was placed in kinship care. This was in spite of repeated requests from her mother that the government investigate the mistreatment of Serenity and her siblings. Albertans want to know why this happened, who is responsible, and, most of all, that it won't happen again. Again to the minister: has anyone within Human Services been held accountable, and what changes, if any, have been made inside your own department in the 18 months since you've become minister?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. A couple of things. This case has been looked into from two different angles. From a systemic review perspective the Child and Youth Advocate has reviewed it. We have accepted recommendations. These are systemic recommendations. We will act on those recommendations. And as the Premier mentioned, there is still an active investigation. Nobody here is an expert. The experts are dealing with that investigation, and in due course we will share the result of that investigation.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

### School Nutrition Program

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a teacher and an educational psychologist with many years of experience I know that students who are healthy and happy are better able to learn and

acquire the skills they need to prepare them for their futures. To the Minister of Education: how will the 14 newly announced nutrition pilot programs impact schools this year?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed this is a very important question. Last week I had the pleasure of being a part of this very important announcement. We identified 14 school boards to participate in the pilot project, and they were given a grant to develop their own creative solutions to school nutrition in one or more schools. We know that students cannot focus on learning if they're hungry, so a program like this will help students across the province to reach their full learning potential.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I understand that schools were given flexibility in the first year of the program, to the same minister: did this approach lead to innovation and partnerships within the pilot programs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you very much for the question. Schools have adapted the program to best meet the needs of their students. Edmonton public, for example, used their partnership with E4C. [interjections] I think maybe the opposition should listen to us. It's actually very important to deal with this.

Calgary Catholic is using brown bags, kids' Meals on Wheels. Medicine Hat schools are using the greenhouses to teach children a seed-to-table science program – quite a number of different programs based on creativity and making sure that we have the best learning outcomes and nutrition outcomes in our schools.

2:10

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we know that there's a great deal of need for a school nutrition program, to the same minister: will this program grow in the years ahead?

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, absolutely. This program has \$3.5 million this year. It's a start. [interjections] Maybe the opposition thinks this is a funny thing, but it's a serious issue. I wish they would not be laughing while I'm doing this. Thank you very much.

We're growing the program next year, and then we'll grow it again within a couple of years. Each of the 87 school boards will have a school nutrition project.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### Electricity Power Purchase Agreements

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We recently received a FOIP document that shows that government incompetence is costing Albertans millions. Enmax surrendered the Battle River PPA to the Balancing Pool, and the pool can keep the PPA and suffer a \$245 million loss or pay \$100 million and be done with it. Seven months have gone by, and most of the Balancing Pool directors have quit. We wonder: did the government interfere in this easy decision to save \$145 million?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the important question. I have to agree that the

previous government sold out Albertans over and over again by pretending to take risk and share it among both parties but transferring it all onto individual consumers. Today our government is stepping up, and we're taking real action to protect consumers, both personal and small industrial, because it's important that we get a fair rate for our electricity.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Given that Albertans should be concerned that 4 out of 5 experts on the Balancing Pool board have abruptly resigned and given that the minister hasn't told us why, Albertans are asking: is it because of reckless, ill-informed, and damaging interference from the minister such as carelessly costing Albertans \$145 million, or is it worse? Is it the systematic destruction of the independence of the Balancing Pool, now to be replaced by ideological decisions from a cabinet that doesn't understand the electricity system at all?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be clear, there's been one resignation, the chair of the board, where no reason was given. There was one who chose not to run. In the meantime we have been recruiting for other people, and we will have someone in place before the end of the resignation date, which is November 30.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** We all know the damage the NDP's absurd decision to take Alberta-owned power companies to court is having on Alberta. Given that the mayor of Calgary called claims by the government that they are close to reaching a deal with Enmax completely false and seeing as Enmax has said it's false, too, why are the Premier and her government suggesting in public that they are close to reaching a deal? Are Enmax and Mayor Nenshi lying, or is it this government?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier. Please proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Power companies in Alberta deserve to have a fair opportunity to make good profits, and that's certainly what we want to do, make sure that we've got a fair system moving forward. We've mentioned previously that we're happy to work with the companies that were trying to return these PPAs to develop a fair and reasonable system that will protect Albertans. No matter what, we're going to ensure that we have Albertans' backs. I wish anybody on the other side would attempt to do the same, other than you guys. You guys are my favourite.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Greenway.

### Energy Policies

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week saw the gathering of many of Alberta's municipal officials for the meeting of the AAMD and C. The Deputy Premier was told that the carbon tax and the early phase-out of coal would be devastating for the community of Stettler county. When a concerned citizen asked for assistance from the provincial government in paying the ruinous costs of the carbon tax, the Deputy Premier laughed. Shame. To the Deputy Premier: do you find it amusing that your government's policies are threatening the very existence of some of our rural communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we have reached out to many of the communities that the hon. member is talking about from Hanna to Grande Cache. They have been reached out to by the minister of economic development, who is, of

course, leading this transition conversation. You know, when we took over, there were 12 plants that were slated for decommissioning under the previous federal government's coal regulations, regulations that, of course, the Leader of the Official Opposition voted for, and we discovered, to our horror, that the previous government had no plan to engage the communities that were affected by those regulations.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government insists that they are listening to our rural communities and given that only 8 out of 18 ministers, less than half, actually bothered to show up to the AAMD and C – let me try it again. To the Deputy Premier again: if you are being honest about your government's commitment to actually listen to the valuable feedback from the communities hit hardest by your policy, why is it that so many ministers refused to actually show up and be accountable?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The time that we have those conferences is periodically throughout the year, twice a year. During that very same time we had the minister of economic development with 80 Alberta-based companies over in Asia trying to sell Alberta businesses and get good access for our products. We also had ministers standing up and leading on climate change, speaking at international environmental conferences. We're going to do work on behalf of all Albertans. I'm proud to be one of the cabinet ministers who was there to answer questions, and I look forward to having more opportunities to engage with rural communities at AAMD and C or otherwise.

**Mr. Gill:** A sorry would have been nice.

Given that our municipal leaders are clearly losing faith in this government's willingness to listen to their concerns, as evidenced by the audible booing that accompanied the Deputy Premier's defending their ill-conceived carbon tax, and given that the province should be trying to maintain a respectful relationship with the municipalities, again to the Deputy Premier: will you try to get this government back to a place where your municipal officials can trust and believe it when you say that you're committed to listening and stop this punitive carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Noted.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, first of all, I will not be booed, Mr. Speaker, in the exercise of my work.

**The Speaker:** I think the booing phenomenon is not acceptable in this House, and I expect all members to listen to what I'm saying in that respect.

The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week, of course, was constituency week. I was scheduled to be out of the country. I am aware that many rural municipalities have questions about both the coal-fired phase-out and our climate leadership plan. So what I did

is that I reached out to the AAMD and C, and we'll be scheduling a telephone town hall so that I can take those questions and we can have a fulsome discussion about the coal-fired phase-out and the supports that will be coming from this government, about the \$2 billion worth of municipal infrastructure that's . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

### Protection of Children in Care

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Child and Youth Advocate's report on the tragic death of four-year-old Serenity he details three systemic issues which have failed our children in care. In the kinship program potential caregivers self-report parenting skills or abilities, which, according to the advocate, does not lend to an objective evaluation of the applicant, obviously, putting children at risk of being in dangerous, unvetted homes. Will this minister immediately change subjective do-it-yourself evaluations to better serve our children in care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Child death is a tragedy, and the report mentions that we have accepted that, and we will make the changes that are needed.

I just want to share with the House that there are 1,700 kids who are cared for in kinship homes, which are a bit different than other foster homes, more traditional, culturally appropriate homes. It doesn't mean that everything fails. They are providing an important service, and they need to be respected for that.

2:20

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that the second systemic issue raised by the advocate is about conflicting direction about whether kinship care training is mandatory and given that this policy is meant to support caregivers on a wide range of supportive services to address maltreatment, abuse, trauma, grief, and loss, to the minister: during your 18 months in government how have you addressed the issue of mandatory training for those serving our children in care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Safety of children is paramount, and when we place kids in foster homes or kinship homes, there are checks and balances. The advocate has recommended that kinship training be mandatory – there are two different trainings; one is mandatory – and we've accepted the recommendation. We will work with our kinship and foster parents to make sure that we provide them the supports they need and ensure that kids are safe when they are placed in kinship or foster homes.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, cutting the funding didn't help.

Given that in the advocate's report the third systemic issue raised was that there needs to be a prioritization of safety over all else and given that he also raises the concern that other factors such as a connection to family and culture may have been given precedence over safety, to the minister: explain how this policy serves our children in care.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. There is no thing which our department considers paramount over safety. Period. These recommendations are for

systemic improvements, and a precondition to understanding these recommendations is that you read the system as a whole and see how these recommendations make sense. They are for systemic improvements. We've committed to that, we will implement that, and we will make improvements that are needed and necessary.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

#### Fuel Tax and Carbon Levy Revenue Utilization

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the government increased fuel tax and raised almost \$1.5 billion from the users of our highways, an additional \$525 million, yet this government saw fit to cut the highway maintenance budget. Instead of dedicating the fuel tax revenue to highway maintenance, preservation, and rehabilitation, the fuel tax goes into the general revenue fund. To the Minister of Finance: with so much increased revenue collected from users of the highways, why did you cut highway maintenance some 14 per cent?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much for the question. You know, this government, of course, is committed to making sure that safety of Albertans, whether on highways or off-road vehicles or indeed in kinship care, is paramount moving forward. We have directed a rather large amount of money through our capital investment plan, 15 per cent more than the previous government, to make sure that we are building for the future, we're prepared for the future, and at the same time we've got Albertans back to work. We have their back; they don't.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Environment minister's carbon tax will not be deposited into the general revenue fund and can only be used on climate change initiatives and is not available for highway maintenance and given that the Finance minister will raise the taxes on gasoline another 35 per cent with the implementation of a carbon tax, will the Finance minister commit to not funnel any more of the fuel tax away from much-needed highway maintenance?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. You know, what I'll commit to is making sure that we have the available funds necessary to address the programs and services Albertans want and need. What I won't commit to is making the cuts that this side wants to make on capital, on infrastructure, and putting people out of work. I won't commit to that. Maybe you will.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, given that carbon taxes will be funnelled into a green slush fund and given that publicly funded institutions such as health providers, school boards, and the like will be faced with either reducing services or coming to the province for increased funding from the general revenue fund, does the Finance minister recognize he is creating a higher operating deficit as he funnels general revenue funds into the Environment minister's green slush fund by forcing public-sector institutions to pay carbon taxes?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, here's what the Wildrose thinks is a slush fund: millions of dollars in new investments in indigenous communities so that indigenous communities can have energy self-sufficiency and economic development. Here's what they think is a slush fund: \$2.2 billion over the next five years into municipal infrastructure, \$650 million into energy efficiency programs so that homes and businesses can become more

efficient. We can create good jobs while we do it. We know they don't want to take action on climate change, but they can't deny the jobs that are going to come to Albertans from these initiatives.

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

#### Electricity Power Purchase Agreements (continued)

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first step in attracting investment is building relationships on trust and respect, while significant capital only flows when investors are assured that risks do not outweigh rewards. Instead, this government has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars attacking the very companies they seek future investment from and, even more, suing these same companies for having the audacity to invoke the terms of a legal contract. To the Minister of Energy: do you honestly believe that litigation, smear campaigns, and retroactive legislation will build positive working relationships with electricity producers and investors?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, it's another day and another member of the opposition standing up for corporations, against ordinary consumers, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I am deeply troubled. I understand that these Enron clauses were negotiated in before that member was in government, but surely he knows that something wasn't right with those because Albertans do. Albertans deserve to have stable, affordable electricity, and our government is going to stand up for Albertans when it comes to that. I wish the other parties would actually stop and think about the people that they're refusing to protect because Albertans deserve a government that's got their back, and that's what they've got.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sadly, the proof will be in the pudding.

Given that this government has completely lost any credibility with power producers and given that this government is considering retroactive legislation in order to avoid contractual obligations, contrary to ethical business practices, and given that the president of the Calgary Chamber compared these actions to that of a banana republic, again to the minister: do you really think that business leaders in this province have any confidence in this government with your penchant for such Chiquita-style legislation?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, just a word of caution. I mean, I've heard a few things said in here today. I heard the phrase "contrary to ethical guidelines." I just want to caution you, if I understood that correctly. Let us all be conscious of the fact where implications are made.

The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You want to talk about being ethical? How about when the government of the day sold deregulation as a way to transfer risk from the public to the private sector, and today they're asking us in this very House more than once to just take those risks that have been inserted eleventh hour into these negotiations of some sort and pass billions of dollars on to consumers. We're going to stand up for consumers. I know they want to pretend that everything they did was good, but I can tell you that that was not good.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Straight from the Karl Marx playbook.

Given that litigating against Alberta companies for simply following legal contracts flies in the face of accepted business practices and given that introducing heavy-handed retroactive legislation would further erode investor confidence and given that these actions will continue to negatively impact investment with respect to capital infrastructure and power generation, again to the minister: is your government on behalf of taxpayers preparing to finance much-needed capital projects in natural gas and renewable power generation in Alberta with an even deeper sea of red ink?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, it looks like the banana is in the tailpipe, Mr. Speaker. If there's one thing you can count on from the opposition it's that they'll side with corporations to go up against Albertans any time they get a chance, and that's exactly what we're seeing yet again here today. Our government is going to do everything we can to stand up for consumers to make sure they get fair electricity prices, and that's the job of government.

**The Speaker:** I hadn't heard that one before.  
The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

### 2:30 Consultation with Métis People

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is home to the largest Métis population in any province in the country, and many of our towns and cities, including St. Albert, were originally settled as Métis communities. Last week the Alberta government joined with Métis leaders and community members to celebrate the dynamic culture and traditions of Métis people in our province, but we all know that actions speak louder than words. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what action is the Alberta government taking to support the aspirations of Métis people in our province?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question, who I know is part of the Métis Nation of Alberta himself. You know, this is really an exciting time for Métis people in this province, a province that has the most Métis people across the country, and it's going to be a very good time in the future. In fact, we have been working with the Métis leaders on a program identified as working toward a better future. We're taking action on a number of priorities, including consultation policy for nonsettlement Métis and a new framework agreement for the Métis Nation of Alberta. Alberta has a long working relationship with the Métis people, and it...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this spring the government of Alberta announced a new consultation policy for Métis settlements, to the same minister: how does this government plan to address consultation among nonsettlement Métis?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government is committed to ensuring that Métis people have a meaningful voice in the management decisions that impact them. We took a big step with the Métis settlements agreement last spring, and we're taking the same kind of collaborative approach to develop a consultation policy for Métis people who do not live on one of our province's eight Métis settlements. We'll continue to work closely with the Métis Nation

of Alberta and build a policy that makes sense for Métis people across our province.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what is this government doing to implement the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, specifically for the Métis people?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government has been engaged with Métis leaders and communities to find practical ways to implement the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. We've received written submissions from the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Metis Settlements General Council, and I have had multiple meetings with both organizations and many of their constituents to move these initiatives forward. The United Nations declaration is guiding our work in many ways: incorporating Métis perspectives in our curriculum review; appointments to agencies, boards, and commissions; access to libraries for Métis settlements; and many other initiatives.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Carbon Levy and Agriculture Costs

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, since spring we have talked about this government's ill-conceived carbon tax and how it will affect families, school boards, charities, food banks, and on and on. We also need to consider how this carbon tax will harm the second-largest industry in this province, agriculture. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. You have an agricultural background. Does this NDP government have any idea about the devastating effects that this carbon tax is going to have on the folks in this province who are charged with feeding the world, or does your government care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Absolutely, we understand, you know, the importance of agriculture to the economy of Alberta. It's our second-largest industry. It's the basis of the culture of this province as well. We've taken it into consideration. I've been listening to farmers, producers, processors right across the province to ensure that we have their ideas, that we have their thoughts going forward so that everyone can do their part on climate change.

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, given that any and all increases to agricultural operations are borne solely by farmers and ranchers and given that farmers cannot pass on the increased costs of producing a bushel of grain nor the increased costs of putting extra weight on cattle before market, it is fair to say that farmers in every corner of this province feel betrayed because their government is the one cutting into their bottom line and indeed threatening their livelihood. Farmers want to know: why is this government so determined to tax them right off their farms?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As I said, we are listening to the farming community. That's why we've had the opportunity to exempt marked fuel, the purple fuel that they use, their diesel and their gas, right across the

province, something we've heard. We're continuing our conversations with other sectors, including greenhouses, intensive livestock operations, irrigation operators, and all farmers right across the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, given that natural gas, propane, and electricity even with the new cap are huge, nondiscretionary costs for grain farmers and ranchers and given that these costs are only going to skyrocket in January because of the carbon tax and given that all costs related to agriculture will increase, including the costs of shipping grain from the bin to port, farmers and ranchers are worried. They're wondering how tough it's going to get to make a living on their own property. Will the minister please explain exactly how this carbon tax, quote, is uniquely tailored, end quote, to meet the needs of Alberta farmers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for the question. Very recently, a few weeks ago, I was able to announce a \$10 million fund to help farmers find those efficiencies with carbon issues. We've had support from the crop sectors, greenhouse sectors, and intensive livestock operators who see this as a good, positive step.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement**

*(continued)*

**Mr. Fraser:** Yesterday the federal government introduced their own accelerated coal phase-out plan. Instantly what we saw was Nova Scotia negotiate a deal where they don't actually have to reduce their emissions. They were able to introduce a cap and trade system. While this federal plan still hurts Alberta, it seems they're willing to work with the coal industry. Honestly, I never thought I would see the day that a Trudeau government would offer up a better plan to the energy sector than the government of Alberta. Deputy Premier, when are you going to start fighting for Alberta, our coal industry, and our oil and gas industry?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. Of course, Alberta already has a coal phase-out plan in place, and that is why the federal government will not be imposing a plan on this province. We will have a made-in-Alberta plan instead. That plan will stabilize prices for consumers, as we saw today, it will not unnecessarily strand capital, and it will ensure that we are making appropriate investments in communities to transition, something that the previous government utterly ignored.

**Mr. Fraser:** Well, that's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, because when we're already at 15 per cent renewables, we're the first jurisdiction to put a price on carbon. Quite honestly, you should stop with the rhetoric that the Prime Minister is going to bow to you and everybody else will have to take what they put in.

You know, listen. The federal government recognizes that coal is an important part of industry in countries like Japan, Germany, and Denmark. Why do you hate coal producers so much?

**The Speaker:** I caution again. Be aware, hon. members, all members, of the preambles.

The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we have committed to a phase-out of coal already set by the previous federal government and accelerating the post-2030 in such a way that makes sure that we are not having a plan imposed on us by other jurisdictions but we have something that works for our deregulated electricity system and that protects consumers. That is why we are phasing in 70 per cent natural gas and 30 per cent renewables, to take advantage of the natural advantages that Alberta has with cheap and plentiful natural gas and excellent renewable resources.

**Mr. Fraser:** Coal communities, oil and gas communities, from Hinton to Hanna, Castor to Cold Lake, Calgary to Edmonton to Edson: Deputy Premier, you say that you're working in good faith with these communities as you implement your policies, but being booed at a provincial convention last week shows otherwise. I'm sorry that you got booed, but why are you keeping these families and communities who built this province in the dark?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the hon. minister of economic development is leading a consultation with the affected communities to make sure that we are putting workers and communities at the centre of this, which the previous government did not do. That is why we have committed funds within the budget papers that the member will note, and we will continue to do so. You know, the fact of the matter is that we are doing this because the science of the health effects of coal is as settled as the science of climate change.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. It's been a robust day today.

2:40

#### **Statement by the Speaker**

##### **Election Anniversaries**

**The Speaker:** I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that precisely 12 years ago today, on November 22, 2004 – it will go down in Alberta history as a significant event – the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, the Member for Edmonton-Calder as well as the Member for Calgary-Lougheed were elected for the first time to this Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Additionally, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was re-elected on that day 12 years ago, having been first elected in a by-election in 2000. One can only speculate on what has encouraged them to stay.

##### **Members' Statements**

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

##### **Holodomor Memorial Day**

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise on behalf of my Progressive Conservative colleagues to recognize the Holodomor and pay tribute to its victims. Holodomor, death by starvation, is applied to the genocide perpetrated against the people of Ukraine by Joseph Stalin in 1932 and '33. But Stalin's reign of terror continued for another two decades, with millions more Ukrainians executed or exiled to Siberia.

Now, as I recently shared here in the Assembly, 80 years ago this month my grandfather was taken from his village in Ukraine by the Red Army and was never seen or heard from again. Today the horrors of Holodomor are well documented, but we are still unable

to say exactly how many people perished as a result because for decades the Soviet government actively denied that these atrocities even took place and any mention of this dark period was strictly forbidden. It wasn't until the fall of the Soviet Union that the survivors and their families could finally tell their harrowing stories.

Now, as we recently observed in this Chamber, Alberta's history is steeped in Ukrainian culture. Settlers from Ukraine came in search of a better life as they helped build our province into what it is today. Many MLAs of Ukrainian descent have made outstanding contributions to our province. Premier Ed Stelmach left a lasting mark as he served Albertans with great distinction, and Speaker Gene Zwozdesky's long career was highlighted by his sponsorship of the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act, designating the third Saturday in November to honour the victims and remember the heinous acts committed against them.

Mr. Speaker, mankind must never hide from the dark truths of our past. By commemorating these dark periods in human history, we renew our resolve to never again stand idly by as forces of evil attempt to wipe an entire ethnic or cultural group from the face of the earth.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

### National Housing Day

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on National Housing Day to remind everyone that Albertans deserve a safe and affordable place to call home. Seniors deserve to age in community, where they want to be, with their friends and family. Here in Alberta, however, the state of housing is at a tipping point.

After decades of chronic underfunding from previous governments, we now have over 15,000 Alberta families on wait-lists for affordable housing. There's approximately \$1 billion worth of deferred maintenance, where many housing units are in disrepair. Alberta remains one of three provinces without a provincial affordable housing strategy. That's why I'm proud that our government is taking action by moving Alberta forward and modernizing the housing system to ensure it is there for those who need it now and in the future.

As part of the Alberta jobs plan we are investing \$1.2 billion over the next five years in seniors' and affordable housing. We're developing a provincial affordable housing strategy to help guide and direct this significant investment and ensure that our housing system is sustainable. We've signed two agreements with the federal government that give our province more flexibility in administering made-in-Alberta housing programs, allowing us to focus on tenant needs. We are investing more than \$167 million in community-based programming to support Albertans experiencing homelessness and women and children fleeing family violence. But it isn't just about tackling homelessness. It's also about preventing homelessness and helping struggling Albertans by maintaining the Alberta seniors' benefit, introducing the Alberta child benefit, and increasing the minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, in my 30 years as a real estate agent and six years on the board of HomeEd, the city of Edmonton nonprofit housing corporation, I can tell you that a home is more than a roof. It represents stability, dignity, and hope. I'm proud that this government is committed to providing that hope to everyone that calls Alberta home.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

### Navratri

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to represent an inclusive and very culturally diverse riding, which allows me to have the privilege to connect with numerous cultural groups and attend many events and festivals. One example of a wonderful festival that takes place in my riding is Navratri, the festival of music, dance, and colour.

Navratri is an important, major festival for the people from Gujarat, a western state in India. Navratri is celebrated all over India and Nepal and is dedicated to the worship of the Hindu deity Durga. In western India, particularly in the states of Gujarat and Mumbai, the nine nights of Navratri are celebrated, with the famous garba and dandiya raas dances performed on all nine nights. Garba is a dance performed with hand and feet movement. Dandiya is a traditional folk dance from Gujarat, and it's famous not only for the steps of the dance but for the colourful attire and the colourful sticks made of beautifully decorated bamboo, which are struck left and right to the tunes of the music. For the past few years the government of Gujarat has been organizing the Navratri festival celebrations on a regular basis for the nine nights of Navratri. People come from all over Gujarat and even from abroad to participate in the celebration.

Navratri is a very popular, lively, and exciting festival which engages people of all ages from early evening until well after midnight. Youngsters socialize with their friends in the large arena space, then join a line of dancers, then leave again to play. Older people visit with each other on the sidelines, then dance at their own pace when it suits them. Navratri is a spectacular event showcasing interactivity and participation, filled with music, movement, and colour.

Thank you.

### Parliamentary Debate

**Mr. Hunter:** Last Saturday I had the privilege of attending the funeral service for Thelma Milne. Thelma passed away at the age of 87, leaving a legacy of service and love for all those who knew her. She was the first female mayor of Cardston and a veritable advocate for women's rights. I tell you this not because I had a lot of experience with her but because the experiences that I did have with her were amazing. The first time I chatted with her was when she called me over to her home to get to the bottom of something she had heard about me. You see, Mr. Speaker, she wasn't the type of person that judged a person based upon what others told her. She was a straight shooter right to the very end.

Now, the reason why I bring this up is that recently I read an insightful article from an introspective CBS journalist, called *The Unbearable Smugness of the Press*. In it he says that the liberal elements who have decided to abscond with the name "progressive" have embarked on a shrill shout-down campaign to shut up conservatives. I quote the writer. "If we mock them enough, call them racist enough," and – I will inject a phrase that the NDP use quite often – call them climate change deniers enough, "they'll eventually shut up and get in line." Our perceptions of reality and our ability to understand each other get skewed when people are shouted down into silence. That's when assumptions flourish. I encourage all members of this House to try to actually listen to each other and stick to debating policy rather than spewing vitriolic castigations like calling someone a climate change denier.

Mr. Speaker, our time-tested democratic processes are brutally mocked when healthy debate is shut down and shouted down. The strength of one's argument is always diminished when this tactic is employed. I am quite sure Thelma would be pleased to see us debate

issues in a most ardent manner, but she would most certainly call foul at the number of shrill shout-downs coming down to us from those so-called progressives as of late.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

2:50

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. As Government House Leader I would like to give oral notice of a bill for tomorrow's Order Paper, the bill being Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016, which will be sponsored by the hon. Minister of Finance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with the requisite number of copies of several documents. The first is a copy of a CBC article which details that the federal government is not adequately funding child care on reserves.

The second is a copy of the Human Rights Commission document the Minister of Indigenous Relations referenced yesterday, which should serve as an action item this NDP government should be addressing with several of his federal counterparts.

The third is a copy of the Child and Youth Advocate's investigation on Lily, who drowned in a container with homemade alcohol and drowned while in her mother's care, resulting in criminal charges. Take action for Lily.

The fourth is a copy of the Child and Youth Advocate's investigation on Onessa, who died by suicide when she was 17 years old. She had involvement with child intervention services that ended approximately five months before her death. Take action for Onessa.

The fifth is a copy of the Child and Youth Advocate's investigation on Netasinim, where he and his younger brother were apprehended living in the community garbage dump. The child was returned home at the age of 15 and, while playing in a river without supervision, died as a result of drowning. Take action for Netasinim.

The sixth is a copy of the Child and Youth Advocate's investigation on Marie, also known as Serenity, who died at four years old, beaten, starved, assaulted. Take action for Serenity.

The seventh and final document is a copy of the Child and Youth Advocate's investigation on Sharon, a nine-month-old who died in her parents' care just two months after she was returned to an abusive home. Take action for Sharon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table 10 copies of the response to Motion for a Return 11.

**The Speaker:** Any others?

**Ms Phillips:** There are nine more, I believe, in a box because there are so many of them. I don't know where that box is, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'll have to retrieve my tabling, and then I'll present it later in time should the House allow me to.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. The leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** I apologize for interrupting you, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling, five copies of an article from the *Toronto Star* where Premier Wynne apologizes for causing high electricity prices with policies similar to what we're experiencing in Alberta.

**Mr. Gottfried:** I'd like to table five copies of an article by Chris Varcoe of the *Calgary Herald* with reference to a banana republic, the PPA battle royal, and the impact on attracting investment for renewables and natural gas.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and table five copies of an e-mail that I received from an individual that I introduced earlier in the House, Jorja Fisher. She mentioned in her e-mail that it is a very big concern that many Albertans have right now and it's also a concern that needs to be dealt with soon because Alberta's economy is going down really fast, and this needs to be handled with respect to our economy and the need to get pipelines to tidewater. I think we can all learn a little from young Jorja Fisher.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to section 28 of the Ombudsman Act I rise to table five copies of the Ombudsman's '15-16 annual report.

In addition, pursuant to section 33(1) of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act I am also tabling five copies of the Public Interest Commissioner's 2015-2016 annual report.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Mason, Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation, return to order of the Assembly motions for returns 3, 17, and 33, all asked for by Mr. Cooper on May 2, 2016: Motion for a Return 3, copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Transportation between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015; Motion for a Return 17, copies of all documents relating to the fall government staff retreat held at the Camp Chief Hector YMCA from September 18 to 20, 2015, including a list of participants, a breakdown of costs, and agendas; Motion for a Return 33, copies of documents and briefings, including Power-Point presentations, outlining the internal government process for the preparation of government legislation.

On behalf of the hon. Minister Miranda, Minister of Culture and Tourism, return to order of the Assembly Motion for a Return 16, asked for by Mr. Cooper on May 2, 2016, copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism or its predecessors between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

On behalf of the hon. Ms Gray, Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal, pursuant to the Government Organization Act authorized radiation health administrative organization annual reports for the following: Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors, July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016, with financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2016; Alberta Dental Association and College, January 1, 2015, to December 31,



2015, with financial statements dated December 31, 2015; Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, November 1, 2014, to October 31, 2015; College of Physicians & Surgeons, January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2015; University of Alberta, April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016; University of Calgary, April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Feehan, Minister of Indigenous Relations, return to order of the Assembly Motion for a Return 14, asked for by Mr. Cooper on May 2, 2016, copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Indigenous Relations or its predecessor between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

On behalf of the hon. Ms McCuaig-Boyd, Minister of Energy, return to order of the Assembly MR 2, asked for by Mr. Cooper on May 2, 2016, copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Energy between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

And finally, on behalf of the hon. Ms McLean, Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women, return to order of the Assembly Motion for a Return 4, asked for by Mr. Cooper, and motions for returns 26 and 27, asked for by Mr. Cyr, all on May 2, 2016: Motion for a Return 4, copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Service Alberta between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2015; Motion for a Return 26, a copy of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Annual Report 2013-14, prepared by the government of Alberta; Motion for a Return 27, a copy of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Annual Report 2014-15, prepared by the government of Alberta.

3:00

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe we're at the time of dealing with some points of order that were referenced earlier in the discussions. I believe the first one is from the Government House Leader.

#### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. During question period today the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake referenced a difference of opinion with respect to certain actions taken around the power purchase agreements, and he referenced a disagreement between the mayor of Calgary and Enmax and the government or a purported difference of opinion. He asked the hon. Deputy Premier the question: is the mayor of Calgary lying, or are you? Now, Mr. Speaker, there's a real question – and you have access to the Blues in case my recollection is not precise – but it seems to me that this is, well, close to unparliamentary language. I'm referencing page 618 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, dealing with unparliamentary language.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, the use of "lie" or "lying" or words to that effect has been long understood to be a very, very serious breach, perhaps the most serious case of unparliamentary language that is there, and is never acceptable. Whether the implication of the hon. member crosses the line or not, obviously the hon. member sought to approach that line as closely as possible. I would argue that he crossed it, but I would leave that, of course, to your wisdom and discretion with respect to that matter.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think, you know, we could spend some significant time determining whether or not this is a matter of debate or whether it was use of unparliamentary language. My hon. colleague clearly didn't call anyone in this House a liar. He simply asked a question. But I will close with this: in the name of trying to improve decorum, some of which we did

not see as positive as it ought to be today, I will withdraw and apologize on behalf of the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. Yes, the use of the language in this House does have its impact. It is context, but let us continue to build more of this kind of communication and relationship rather than the stuff that was earlier in the day.

Was there a second point of order?

**Mr. Mason:** Oh, Mr. Speaker, yes. Thank you very much. During question period today members opposite in the Wildrose opposition engaged in booing of a member. You called it at the time, Mr. Speaker. That's why I wasn't necessarily going to present a formal point of order.

**The Speaker:** Yes. I had made a decision in that regard already, and I know – I'm looking at the Government House Leader – that it was noted. Thank you very much.

Do you have an apology to the House?

**Mr. Loewen:** Yeah. I'd like to rise and say that, of course, in this House we see a lot of comments and gestures going back and forth between different sides of the House, some of them in good humour and some of them not so much. Of course, we realize that one of the ministers was booed at the AAMD and C conference here just this past week. Obviously, this is unacceptable in this House, so I unreservedly apologize for the members on this side.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Try not to distract from the intention. I think I ruled earlier that that was inappropriate. Thank you for your comments.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

#### Bill 21

#### Modernized Municipal Government Act

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is truly my honour to rise today to speak on Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act. Bill 21 seeks to amend the Municipal Government Act to make it a more responsive piece of legislation that gives municipalities and businesses the tools they need to build strong communities and a more resilient and diversified future for Alberta families.

Madam Chair, modernizing the MGA is critical to ensuring our province's future prosperity and to improving the vitality of our communities. With more than 700 sections, the act is our second-largest piece of legislation and touches the lives of every single person in our province. It guides how we pay for our roads, where we build our schools, and how we develop strong communities to raise our families. Because of this, I tabled the Modernized Municipal Government Act last May so hon. members and all Albertans would have time to review the changes, ask questions, and provide their feedback on the proposed amendments.

We are very proud of how robust, transparent, and accessible our consultation has been on the MGA. Over the summer my team and I travelled all across the province to meet with Albertans, hear their

thoughts, and gather their feedback on the bill. More than 2,400 Albertans attended 21 different sessions in communities both large and small. We also received over 2,300 survey responses from Albertans and 122 written submissions from municipalities, businesses, industry, civil society groups, and, of course, members of the public. It has been an honour and a privilege to discuss the future of our municipalities with thousands of Albertans, people who care about their communities, Madam Chair, and serve them in many significant ways. I want to thank everyone who took the time to provide their input.

It's because of their thoughts and feedback that today, finally, I am introducing House amendments to the Modernized Municipal Government Act. These amendments, introduced today, could make the policies proposed in Bill 21 even stronger and more effective.

As it stands, the Modernized Municipal Government Act is a forward-looking, innovative piece of legislation that contains a number of policy shifts. Municipalities will form regional partnerships to better serve Albertans. Municipalities will have new tools to build better, more complete communities. The act will also support small business and increase industry competitiveness, and it will enhance municipal accountability. Madam Chair, by modernizing the MGA, we can turn the page and begin a new era of local government in Alberta.

To further strengthen the Modernized Municipal Government Act, we are introducing key amendments, which I am tabling now so hon. members can see how we are responding to input received from stakeholders on how we can strengthen the amendments to the MGA. Colleagues, as you know, Albertans want real neighbourhoods to call home. Our proposed changes to the MGA could help make this happen by giving municipalities tools to ensure that new communities are built in a way that creates real neighbourhoods for families, neighbourhoods that are kept safe by police and firefighters at nearby stations, and ones where hockey practice is held around the corner and not across the city.

3:10

To do this, off-site levies would see an overhaul. These one-time fees, paid by developers, are currently only collected for roads, water, sewer, and storm sewer systems. But Alberta's growth has created a demand for community facilities and services outside of these four infrastructure pillars. The MGA would be amended to allow municipalities to collect off-site levies for community recreation facilities, fire halls, police stations, and libraries.

Colleagues, Bill 21 proposes that levies for these facilities could only be applied if the new development received at least 30 per cent of the benefit of those facilities. During our consultation tour we heard very clearly that municipalities felt that a 30 per cent threshold would disadvantage smaller communities, who would not be able to utilize the policy tool to create complete communities. For that reason, we are introducing an amendment to Bill 21 that removes the 30 per cent minimum threshold.

That means that all municipalities would have the option to work with developers to help pay for the facilities in their new communities at a level that makes sense and reflects a fair share, whether that be 5 per cent or 50 per cent. This approach would make sure that fire halls, swimming pools, and other services Albertans need are there when they move in, and the result would be more complete, inclusive communities for Albertan families, communities where Albertans have access to the infrastructure they need and where growth is funded in a collaborative way. We heard from small and rural municipalities that this would benefit how their communities are developed. This amendment is a direct response to their feedback about how off-site levies could better serve small towns and rural municipalities in Alberta.

Our amendments also clarify some of our other key policy proposals.

**The Chair:** Hon. minister, if I can just interrupt you for a moment. Could you just pause for a moment so we can start handing out the amendments for everyone – otherwise, we won't have the opportunity – and then you can continue.

**Ms Larivee:** Sure.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A1.

I've had a request, perhaps while we're just waiting for the pages to finish handing that out, to revert to Introduction of Guests. We'd need unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests (reversion)

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm honoured to rise today to introduce to you and through you Cheryl Low, chair of the Calgary Catholic board, and Cathie Williams, who is the trustee in my constituency from the Calgary Catholic board of education. I would like to request them to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the House.

### Bill 21 Modernized Municipal Government Act (continued)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you so much. Our amendments also clarify some of our other key policy proposals. Colleagues, we know that collaborative approaches are necessary to eliminate the duplication of costly services and to help municipalities deliver more effective, efficient services to their communities.

This is why we are proposing to reform growth management boards in Edmonton and Calgary and why we are proposing to bring in intermunicipal collaboration frameworks, or ICFs, for the rest of the province. Regional collaboration on items like transportation, recreation, and emergency services is a win for everyone involved, municipalities and, especially, the Albertans that they serve. Our amendment clarifies that members of the Edmonton or Calgary growth management boards won't also have to form ICFs with other municipal neighbours on regional issues already dealt with under the growth management board. This simplifies the process while still ensuring smart growth and collaborative approaches to the delivery and equitable funding of services.

We are also proposing an amendment to ensure that inter-municipal development plans are bargained in good faith. Good-faith negotiating already happens in many municipalities across the province, but we would confirm our commitment to that process through this amendment.

We are also proposing a change that would encourage councillors to attend postelection orientation meetings by requiring municipalities to offer training, to be held within 90 days of each councillor taking office. This proposed amendment would help newly elected councillors understand their duties and responsibilities and would ultimately help municipalities to provide well-managed, transparent, and accountable local governments for Albertans.

We are also proposing to amend Bill 21 to encourage fair representation on regional appeal boards. Under the Modernized

Municipal Government Act councillors would not be able to form the majority on local appeal boards. We are proposing an amendment that would also prevent councillors from forming the majority of membership on regional appeal boards even if the councillors are from different municipalities.

During our summer consultation tour concerns were raised that councillors from different municipalities may have similar interests or predispositions, which could create bias if councillors are able to form a majority of the panel. We want to address those concerns and avoid any real or perceived bias on such boards. Councillors are the ones who make the original decisions; therefore, they should not also form the majority on a board that is looking into an appeal of those same decisions.

We are proposing that membership on all appeal panels, local and regional, be restricted to one councillor. This amendment would promote fairness and ensure that these boards are objective and impartial when reviewing cases. In rural areas and small towns, where we heard it can be a challenge for municipalities to recruit people for appeal boards, we are proposing a potential exemption, granted by the minister, for municipalities who request it, to assist with their capacity limitations. We are directly responding to municipal feedback by making this amendment.

Another amendment would ensure that greater accountability measures are in place for municipally controlled corporations that are sold or operated outside of Alberta. This would ensure continued transparency and responsible choice for municipalities and citizens.

We are also proposing to amend Bill 21 to allow all cities and other municipalities with more than 15,000 people to set alternative decision-making timelines for subdivisions and development applications. Such municipal hubs may need more time to gather all the information they need on all the complex applications that cross their desks, and this amendment would support them in their work by allowing them more time. This amendment responds directly to municipal feedback on how the MGA can support them to handle the high volume, complexity, and diversity of development applications in rapidly developing communications.

These are important changes that we are proposing, and I'm very proud of all the work that has gone into reviewing the MGA over the last four years. But, Madam Chair, this work to modernize the MGA will not end with Bill 21, not even with these amendments, because over the summer we didn't just hear feedback on what was already contained in the bill; we also heard a lot of new suggestions for changes to the MGA.

Today I'm pleased to share those ideas with all Albertans through a discussion guide, continuing the conversation. Some of these new policy ideas are big and potentially groundbreaking, including a proposal to enable municipalities to create parental leave policies for elected councillors. This change could make elected work more family friendly or encourage more women to run for public office.

We also want to hear feedback about using the MGA to build bridges and support better working relationships between municipalities and their indigenous neighbours in First Nations or Métis settlements. As a government we are committed to meeting the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and want our legislation to support that work.

We're also determined to support all of our municipal partners in taking action to address climate change. One policy proposal would give municipalities more direct authority to consider the environment in all their decisions about land use and development.

Madam Chair, these proposed policies need careful consideration and thoughtful feedback to ensure that they meet the needs of Albertans. Starting today, Albertans can go online to read the proposals in the discussion guide and then fill out an online

questionnaire to let us know what they think about the potential policy shifts. We will also be meeting with key stakeholder groups to gauge their thoughts, including the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, indigenous leaders, and representatives from business and industry. We need their input on these complex proposals so that together we can strengthen the MGA.

3:20

Madam Chair, hard work and thorough consultation will continue to sharpen and strengthen the Municipal Government Act to make it a modern piece of legislation that supports municipalities in their work to build a stronger, more resilient province for all of us. The last major review of the MGA was completed more than two decades ago and does not reflect new economic realities, changes in technology, or evolving municipal roles and relationships. Municipalities are at the grassroots of creating stronger, more dynamic communities, and we know that they need robust, forward-looking legislation to meet the changing needs of Albertans.

These amendments were developed after conversations with thousands of Albertans about how this bill can serve their communities. Madam Chair, I'm proud today to table these amendments to Bill 21, and I hope for all-party support in the passage of these amendments and of this bill. Thank you.

With that, I would like to ask that the committee now rise and report progress.

**The Chair:** Hon. minister, I've just been advised that you would need to adjourn debate on the amendments and on the bill before we can move to the next stage, so if you could please make that motion.

**Ms Larivee:** Okay. Can I make that motion?

**The Chair:** Yes. All right.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Chair:** Now the motion to rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur with the report?

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 28 Public Health Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to move third reading of Bill 28, the Public Health Amendment Act, 2016.

The aim of this bill is to protect Albertans against vaccine-preventable diseases by increasing our child immunization rates and improving the delivery of immunization services across Alberta. With this bill public health will be able to connect with parents and guardians of school-age children who are missing immunization information. They can explain the benefits to any guardian who has any doubts or concerns about immunization. Our hope is that by providing parents with evidence-informed information, we can support more parents in immunizing their children and provide their records so that if there is an outbreak, those children who aren't immunized can be protected.

I would like to begin by thanking my colleagues for their support of the bill, particularly the two cosponsors, as well as members from other parties who also spoke in support of this. You've expressed your support for an approach that enables conversations between public health professionals and parents and guardians to support children in having the very best protections for vaccine-preventable diseases.

You've also raised some important points about protecting information of individuals and Albertans' privacy, which I'm happy to address here. This bill enables Alberta Health to collect student enrolment data from Alberta Education and cross-reference it with Alberta Health's existing immunization records. It's a one-way transfer of information that uses existing databases to enable a more efficient information-sharing process between Education and Health.

If the bill passes, Alberta Health would not share immunization information with Alberta Education, school boards, schools, or child care facilities. Alberta Health would share with Alberta Health Services the student enrolment information collected from Alberta Education. Public health professionals employed by Alberta Health Services, not school authorities or daycares, could contact guardians of students with missing immunization information. The information provided by Alberta Education would include contact information for guardians but not contact information for students like a student's cellphone number or e-mail address because it's the actual guardian's information that public health professionals wish to have so that they can speak with the actual guardian.

If Bill 28 passes, my department would work with Education, Alberta Health Services, and school authorities on implementation that would take effect in the next school year. As part of the plan my department would work with key stakeholders, including the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, to make sure we can meet the objectives of the legislation while protecting Albertans' privacy. To make sure we continue to protect Albertans' personal information, my department would work with Education on an information-sharing agreement. Both departments have already begun work on privacy impact assessments to help inform this legislation.

Our goal is to implement the proposed changes at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year, as I mentioned. If this goal cannot be achieved, changes would be implemented at the beginning of the '18-19 school year. A communications campaign informing parents and guardians of new requirements to provide immunization information will occur in the upcoming spring, and school registration forms will be updated as required.

Bill 28 also includes amendments that add requirements to immunization service delivery. If passed, my department would work with health professionals on implementing these changes so that Albertans can receive high-quality immunization services in a safe and consistent manner throughout our province.

I think we all agree that we want to keep Albertans healthy and that immunization is one of the most important tools we have in

public health to ensure that Albertans can indeed stay healthy. My goal with this legislation is to make sure we are immunizing as many Albertans as possible, to engage with Albertans to make sure they understand the benefits of immunization, and to provide high-quality immunization services.

Once again I thank my colleagues for their support, and I look forward to the passing and implementation of this legislation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak on Bill 28, the Public Health Amendment Act, 2016. As we close the final stage of debate today, I know that members of this House have spoken at length in the House about vaccinations and immunization. We've spoken about . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm sorry to interrupt you. I just want to remind members that we're no longer in committee and that you're required to be in your seat. If you wish to carry on a conversation, please take it outside. Thank you.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We've spoken about herd immunity and the rates needed to preserve protection against disease for an entire population. We've spoken about our current rates and strategies to bump them up. But it seems to me that this piece of legislation is as much if not more so a bill about information as it is about vaccination. At the end of the day, the government is not granted any additional power to make immunization mandatory or withhold schooling toward that end. The ability to keep unimmunized children away from school in the event of an outbreak already exists by regulation. The ability of the medical officer of health to request school enrolment records already exists.

In this regard the legislation changes little, and I think the way that we are proceeding with Bill 28 is wise. We are leaving that element of choice over such medical procedures in the hands of parents. Our hope is that parents use information provided by our public health officials to make informed choices in consultation with the primary care professionals who provide for their health care needs. Where this bill makes perhaps the biggest change is in allowing the Ministry of Health to go directly to the Ministry of Education to gather enrolment records and begin to proactively clean up any missing data that is held by the Health minister.

3:30

As I understand it, about 15 to 25 per cent of students' immunization records are incomplete. I think that the last thing we'd want in the middle of a measles outbreak would be to have agents desperately trying to figure out whose records are incomplete or who is at risk of contracting this disease or who has been immunized out of province and just hasn't yet transferred the documentation over. If the intent of the legislation is to get more proactive with the way we handle this information and let parents know that they need to update their personal information ahead of time, I think that we all can agree that this is sensible. It's all about informed choice. All told, the goal is to have better information for public health officials, better information for parents, and better information for the health professionals who provide that family primary care.

It's important to note that the flow of information is from Education to Health. I know that there are a lot of sensitivities and special considerations and a concern about sharing personal health information and for good reason. It's important that we keep this

information safeguarded, especially in this day and age of vastly increased electronic and digital record keeping and with privacy concerns seeming to become so much more heightened in the public's consciousness. With these considerations in mind it is more important now more than ever that the government stay vigilant in protecting Albertans' health information.

This is quite timely. I see that we recently received the 2015-2016 annual report from the office of the Privacy Commissioner. In that report we see that both privacy complaints and self-reported breaches regarding health information are higher for this past year than the previous two years. Now, is this due to an increased awareness? Is this due to people becoming more sensitive about protecting their personal data in this information age? I'm not sure. We do know that despite the protection of law and the best efforts to comply, legitimate privacy breaches do happen. Mistakes do occur. The fact remains that privacy concerns are only becoming more significant. I hope that with this increased authority to pull information from Alberta Education there comes an increased vigilance in our Health department in protecting it, and while health information will not be shared from Alberta Health, the enrolment data that they do gather, including phone numbers and home addresses, is no less sensitive and no less deserving of the strongest protection under the law and internal policy.

To the extent that new measures specifically regarding vaccinations are made in this piece of legislation, we see an increase in the reporting of adverse effects, and again I think that this is a common-sense addition. Every medical procedure and every drug carries a risk however rare or insignificant, and I am encouraged to see reporting of potential effects as they occur. This improves our understanding and allows a more transparent sharing of information to the public. That's nice to see.

Finally, I'd like to be sure that the expanded measures listed in Bill 28 are implemented efficiently, effectively, and in accordance with the intent of this bill. The Minister of Health has been given expanded powers of information and data collection, but this shouldn't be accompanied by an expansion of government bureaucracy to implement the changes. I hope to see the government hit its targets within its means.

All told, there are some positive steps in this bill as well as some concerns that it get implemented correctly. It is certainly shooting towards an admirable goal, but as with many bills, getting from the idea to the implementation is always a challenge. Sharing information, as long as it's done appropriately and carefully, can yield good results.

Public health is a serious matter. If this legislation can legitimately and genuinely improve our response to potential outbreaks, it is worth supporting. I would encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill. I hope that we can use this legislation to help keep parents informed of existing government policy to ensure that appropriate immunization standards are met.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to rise and very quickly today offer my support for this bill. I'm the parent of two young children, two and four, who have recently been through all of their immunizations. I think that it's really important as a government to take action on ensuring increased immunization rates across the province for all of our children. You know, I taught in school, and I saw how fast outbreaks can move through schools. I understand that in today's society a lot of the time parents are just

busy. I know my kids didn't get immunized on time. It took me a while to get it done.

I do just want to take this opportunity to give a huge shout-out to the East Calgary health centre, which is in my riding. They do an amazing job of keeping parents informed and making sure that they're getting their kids immunized as close to on time as possible. They provide all sorts of other resources, too. They do a great job of explaining why immunization is important and making sure that parents are aware of the risks and the benefits associated. They also weigh children there. They just really provide an excellent resource to the community. I wanted to take the opportunity to thank the East Calgary health centre and all the public health nurses there for all of the amazing work they do on behalf of all of the children in east Calgary every day.

In addition, I think it's important to point out that immunization is important because there are lots of people in our society who for one reason or another can't be immunized. You know, I think of my friend who recently underwent chemotherapy treatments for leukemia and had a reduced immune system for a period of time and wasn't able to get immunized. There are lots of children with various immune diseases who aren't able to get immunized. So having the opportunity to make sure that we can protect those people who don't have the capacity to get immunized by having a high enough immunization rate in the general population to really protect them from diseases I think is really important.

I really appreciate the approach that our government took when developing this legislation, making the effort to have an education component and making people more informed, allowing people to make an informed choice and not taking away anyone's, you know, right to refuse immunization if that's something that they continue to choose to do. I know that that was an area of concern for lots of people in my riding who I spoke to. They were concerned that there might be mandatory vaccinations. So I appreciate the angle that the government took when developing this legislation.

I just wanted to take the opportunity while I had it to offer my voice in support of this bill. I think that increasing immunization among all children and everybody in Alberta helps to contribute to the health of everyone in Alberta, helps to reduce overall health costs, keeps kids in school, and is just generally a good direction to take.

Thank you for listening. I would suggest that everyone continue to support this piece of legislation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) now comes into effect if anyone has questions or comments for the previous speaker.

Seeing none, are there any other speakers wishing to speak to this bill?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hearing the call for the question, the hon. Minister of Health to close debate.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think this is the second-fastest moving bill we've had in this House, after the Ukrainian bill that we passed at the very beginning of this sitting, especially if you don't count the week that we've been away. It speaks to the fact that we've struck the right balance in making sure that education is the key focus. We are focused on getting our immunization rates up, and we want to do that by alleviating any concerns that parents might have and protecting public health at the same time.

I think this is going to be very good news. I was pleased to have so much support shown in this House as well as by the parties that

were there to support the announcement when we made it at the beginning. Thank you. I think this is going to certainly bring about better health outcomes for Albertans, and I'm very pleased to be able to say that I was the minister when we brought this legislation forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a third time]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to have unanimous consent of the House to revert to Tabling Returns and Reports.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### 3:40                    **Tabling Returns and Reports** (*reversion*)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We're only about a third of the way there. The boxes continue to arrive.

This is a response to Motion for a Return 5, which was requested by the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I can't help but upon this tabling say thank you to the public service, who went above and beyond in staying late. I will certainly take the volume of this request into consideration when further requests of things that are already made public are made in this House. I think it speaks to the commitment that both the public service and our ministry have to achieving the goals of transparency.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'm also impressed by the hard work of our pages.

## **Government Bills and Orders** **Second Reading**

### **Bill 27** **Renewable Electricity Act**

Mrs. Aheer moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment November 9: Mr. Loewen speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, you still have a few minutes left if you wish to continue speaking on this bill.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I stand to continue the discussion on Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act. I just want to make sure it's clear that Wildrose believes in a realistic renewable energy program driven by private-sector investment and not by government subsidies. Recently I had a chance to go down to southern Alberta, and while I was down there, I saw many windmills operating. Of course, I know that there are a lot more down there than the ones that I saw east of Lethbridge. These ones obviously didn't require any Bill 27 to get them working. I think one of the concerns we have is that this plan to go 30 per cent by

2030 is a plan that's going to require a substantial amount of private investment, in fact, probably over \$10 billion of private investment, but with problems like what we've seen with the PPAs, that's created a lot of investor uncertainty in Alberta. In fact, a lot of the government's bills and plans that they've brought forward have created uncertainty in the investment community.

Now, the ratepayers in this province have been promised a painless accelerated transition to renewables. That's happened in other provinces, too, where they've suggested: "This is going to be great; trust us. You'll love it." But in the end we see government bailouts. We see increased rates. We see failure over and over again. Now, I don't think we need to continue down the same path, using the same plans that other provinces have used, only to have the same failure. I think we can learn from others' mistakes. I think there are other ways to have a renewable energy program. There are other ways to reduce greenhouse gases. It doesn't always take government intervention and taxpayer dollars.

Now, we know that the accelerated phase-out of coal is going to cost billions of dollars. We haven't seen any report from this government on how much it's going to cost. They have somebody hired to do a report on this, but that report isn't done yet, and here we are contemplating a bill that in essence has to do with this report that we have yet to see. Yet we have to make a decision on this and have to debate this without having all of the information that's supposed to be available.

Now, again, the government has picked an arbitrary target of 30 per cent. I don't know why they chose 30 per cent. I don't know why they didn't choose 20 per cent. I don't know where that came from. It's something like the emissions cap of 100 megatonnes. I guess it's just a nice round number. I don't know. Maybe because it's 2030 and 30 per cent just sounds nice. I don't know if that's a way we want to make decisions that are going to cost taxpayers billions of dollars, just picking nice round numbers and catchy phrases.

Now, like I mentioned, there are already renewables being used in Alberta right now, but they won't get any special treatment because they're already operating. But with this legislation there are new companies that could come in and take advantage of this, that existing companies never had the opportunity to.

Now, when it comes to phasing out coal early, we'll have to pay those companies that set up those power generating plants in good faith, understanding that they were going to, you know, have X number of years to recover their investment. We're going to have to pay them for their stranded assets. Then we'll have to pay them again for new gas production to serve as a replacement baseload. I'm not sure about the thought process here. We have some of the cleanest burning coal-fired generators in the world, technology that should be used all over the world. It could make a huge difference in emissions if they used our clean coal-burning technology in other parts of the world where they're still building coal-fired generating plants. That would do something. That would do something.

You know, the federal plan was that after 50 years per plant these coal-fired generators would be shut down. That wouldn't wastefully strand assets. But by accelerating it, we have stranded assets that Albertans are going to pay for. There's only one place that that money could come from, and that's from Albertans. It's either going to come in the form of taxes, or it's going to come in the form of higher electricity bills. But they're going to pay for it.

Again, we haven't received the recommendations from this report that is supposed to be being done on these stranded assets and the timeline for phasing out coal, but we're discussing this here in the Legislature without the benefit of what these reports could say.

There doesn't seem to be a requirement to consider the economics of an electrical project or the demand for an electrical project. I guess that at the minister's whim deals could be signed, plans could be made, but we have no idea of the economics or the demand, whether it's actually there for these projects.

Now, this bill allows the minister a lot of involvement that we haven't seen in our deregulated electricity sector since the electricity sector was deregulated. This is a big change from what's happening now. The 30 per cent by 2030: picking targets like that isn't a good idea. Electricity should be generated in response to market demands. That includes ratepayers voluntarily choosing retailers who offer a proportion of renewable. Like I said, we already have some renewables taking place right now in Alberta that didn't require Bill 27 to happen.

3:50

Now, here's a list of U.S. failed renewables projects that received subsidies and failed: Amonix solar; Solar Trust of America; BrightSource; Solyndra – we heard a lot about Solyndra in the news; it received subsidies, failed – LSP Energy; Energy Conversion Devices; Abound Solar; SunPower; Beacon Power; Ecotality; A123 solar; Uni Solar; Azure Dynamics; Evergreen Solar; Ener1. Here are a bunch of projects in the U.S. that received subsidies, received taxpayers' money, and failed still.

Now, recently Ontario scrapped \$3.8 billion in wind and solar investment. Why? So they could stop the rising electricity rates due to the failure of their feed-in tariff green energy program. Ontario is starting to realize that their idea and their plans have been a failure. The cost of electricity is rising, and it's hurting their economy. Why can't we learn something from these other jurisdictions that have gone down this road? Ontario's 2010 \$9.7 billion deal with Samsung guaranteeing manufacturing in the province in exchange for Ontario buying electricity at favourable rates from the company was a colossal failure. By 2013 it was forced to renegotiate.

How can Albertans be assured that this kind of thing won't happen here, signing huge contracts with companies that Albertans will be on the hook for for who knows how many years, 20-year contracts, and then if things go wrong, what happens? What happens if Albertans decide they don't want that?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. There are a lot of names in that constituency. Try saying it several times in a speech over and over. But they're all great places.

I really appreciated the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky's speech on Bill 27. I think he raised a lot of interesting points that I could tell all sides of the Assembly were listening to with great interest. I do have a couple of things I'm hoping that he can expand on under 29(2)(a), particularly around the fact that there is a report that's been commissioned and that is not done, as far as we're aware, and has not been reviewed by the government or by other members of the public or the opposition and around the concern that some of his constituents might have about the speed that we would be bringing this legislation through the Assembly given that such an important report has not been completed. The work, obviously, that has been commissioned with that report has not been able to be reviewed by people making the decisions around this legislation.

Also, I think he touched on it a little bit, but if he could expand a little bit more on how he sees the importance of making sure the private sector is driving investment and not the government picking winners and losers.

Lastly, I know he's had the opportunity to tour several communities throughout the province of Alberta that are being drastically impacted by the phase-out of coal in our province, something that this government has accelerated significantly faster than the federal government had proposed. If he could just expand a little bit on the devastation that is being caused by the government's decisions or will be caused by the government's decisions in regard to coal, the feeling that is happening in places like Hanna and Stettler county and the impact of that and why that shows that this bill should go to committee.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the questions. Yes, we've seen this over and over again, where this government seems to be so focused on this agenda that they don't take the time to do the economic studies, the effects that it's going to have on communities. As the member mentioned, there's a report that's supposed to be done on this, but we don't have this report. By sending this to committee, as was mentioned, we can have the time to have this report in our hands.

I've said this before in this House, too. The only way we as legislators can make informed decisions is with information, and that's the only way Albertans can make decisions, too. Albertans will develop an opinion on this, and we've heard some of their opinions already at an AAMDC meeting that just happened last week. The people that were there overwhelmingly did not agree with this government's plans. They said no. They said that this is going to hurt their local communities. I think that, similar to the last federal by-election, there might have been 1 per cent that supported it, but 99 per cent don't support these things, Madam Speaker.

This government has already planned to bring in a carbon tax on January 1. It's passed in the Legislature. It's planned to come in on January 1. That's already causing grave concerns in the communities around Alberta. When you add things like this, it builds and builds, so the concerns that Albertans have grow and grow. There are a lot of unemployed Albertans, over 100,000 unemployed since this government came in, again not including contractors. Albertans are hurting, and this won't help.

Now, when the private sector decides to do something like this, they take the risk. They make their plan, and it's up to the company and the shareholders to make a decision on whether they want to invest or not. But when government gets involved, then it's the government making decisions with taxpayers' money.

Now, there are several communities in Alberta that are deeply concerned about the phase-out of coal and what's going to happen to their community.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment on Bill 27? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is done. Did you want to speak to the amendment?

With no other members wishing to speak, then I will call the vote on the amendment.

**Mr. Nixon:** No, no. We sent you a speakers list.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Okay. The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** This is for the amendment, yes? Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to a bill that gives me great concern, a bill that pursues ideology over economic realities. That bill is Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act. The way this legislation has been thrown together raises a number of questions, and we have not heard answers from this government.

This bill is technical and complex, and the appetite of the NDP to push through this legislation is not fair to Albertans or the stakeholders that stand to be affected by such a dramatic change in Alberta's electricity market. I have to echo the concerns of my colleagues that have spoken before me and ask that this bill be put to committee for further review. Clearly, we have to examine this issue more in depth and hear from electricity experts on how this will impact the market. We need to hear from Albertans on how this market disruption will affect their livelihoods and how, at a time when there are literally thousands of Alberta families looking for work, increasing the costs of running their households will impact their families.

4:00

Madam Speaker, there is no reason why such a highly complex piece of legislation such as Bill 27 should not be brought to a committee for further study. It's the responsible thing to do. We have the tools at our disposal to conduct a proper and thorough review of this legislation. This side of the aisle is asking for the government to get to work. Albertans expect that you be honest and transparent about the policies that you put before the House and explain to them what your plan will mean for Alberta's families and communities.

The NDP didn't campaign on this platform, but here we are. In only a handful of hours this government sees it as responsible to introduce market-altering legislation with little to no dialogue with the public. This is certainly not what Albertans were voting for when they were promised a government that would do things differently. I want to know – and I want to hear it from the government members – why they insist on putting through legislation without proper consultation and investigation.

We thought you had learned after Bill 6, but you did not. You continue to go, and we're at 27 now. I believe that the governing members won't put this bill to committee because they fear that most Albertans won't agree with the outcomes of Bill 27, just like the rest of their bills. That's exactly why you should put this bill to committee. If you're worried that your bill won't be popular or won't receive support, then we should know that before passing it into law. Maybe, just maybe, you will hear some good arguments from third parties and improve this thing instead of just opposing everything that comes from the opposition. Our advice is brilliant, quite honestly. We're here to help. Just because you won the election, it doesn't mean that you can unilaterally ignore the public's input for the rest of your term. You have to do the right thing. Let's get to work on this together.

Madam Speaker, I have to say that I am almost at a loss for words as to why this government is so resistant to friendly assistance in crafting legislation. Do they not hear the poetry that comes from this side of the House? We are seeing a disturbing trend with this NDP government, and I can guarantee you that it is not going to go unnoticed by Albertans. First we had the Bill 6 debacle, where Wildrose time and time again tried to show this government that more work needed to be done. The thousands of families on the front steps of the Legislature also tried to show this government that their half-baked idea was out of touch with the lifestyle of rural Albertans, but still their cries fell on deaf ears.

This past spring we saw the government ram through what's turned out to be one of the most unpopular pieces of legislation that has ever come out of this Assembly – might I add that it hasn't even

come into effect yet – Bill 20, the carbon tax. Bill 20 is another example of how this government simply will not listen to good ideas regardless of the source. We tried to exempt charities, but no. We tried to exempt schools, but no. We tried to exempt greenhouses, but no. Do you all still think you're right? Do you think your leadership was right to make you vote against charities, schools, and greenhouses? Members over there still seem to think that if it's not from their own bench, then it's not worth listening to. That's not democracy, and that is not good governance. [interjection] Yes, listen.

So instead of repeating the mistakes of the past, why not try something different and deal with Bill 27 properly? [interjections] Madam Speaker, I'm looking across the aisle and I see, you know, a lot of disinterest over there, some sarcastic comments, but we have to recognize that this isn't a joke. Your actions have consequences. Just because you're guaranteed the best job that you're ever going to have for the next two years, that doesn't mean that all Albertans are having the same experience right now. Far from it, actually. So I hope that you all take your jobs seriously. I know that the Wildrose is here to work, and we're ready to put the time in to get the legislation right. It's what Albertans expect from us, and it's what we should be expecting from you.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to ask the member. I know that in the county of St. Paul over the last few months I've had a number of complaints and there have been articles in the newspaper regarding a project or a planned project to install 90 windmills on 75 quarter sections of land east of St. Paul or up in the northeast area. All of the farmers up there are, you know, already up in arms about this. One of the stipulations that they've been told is that if they want to go hunting on their own property, they'll have to get permission from the owners of the wind turbines before they can access their land. [interjections] Seriously, yeah. This is what they're being told.

They've had landmen coming and negotiating with them before this bill is even passed. Much to their frustration they've actually been told: well, all your neighbours have signed up, so you'd better sign up or you're going to miss out. And then when they go and talk to their neighbours, that's an absolute sham. They're being told this by a contractor out of Ontario that is actually paying a landman a day rate to go around and try and get these farmers to presign this stuff. Now, my understanding is that they haven't even done the tests yet, set up a test turbine to see if there's enough wind in the area to even get this project going in the first place. This is just how ridiculous it is. They're getting people all excited over nothing or what could potentially be nothing.

I'm just wondering if the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo has experienced any of that, has heard anything like that from up in his area. I just wanted to take this opportunity to make sure that the people from the county of St. Paul and the farmers in that area know that their message is being heard, that this is what's actually going on in our province before this bill has even been implemented. If this is the way it's going to be carried out, it's very, very unfair as far as the landowners involved. They're not going to have a whole lot of say in the implementation of this and will lose control of their property rights in the meantime.

Thank you.

**Mr. Yao:** You know what? My good friend points out a very good point. The legislation and the bureaucracy surrounding a lot of these



initiatives is quite awkward and might not be written specific to a lot of these passive implementations of energy resources. As a result, they're applying a lot of rules that are really difficult to overcome, and they don't make sense. They just don't want it.

Certainly, I can't comment on that in particular, what's going on in his constituency, but I can certainly talk about mine. I know that up in — I just had a meeting with ATCO. They're looking at some different power generation. They're looking at all the alternatives, including solar. What they're actually finding is that with a lot of the legislation, a lot of the bureaucracy that's put in place, it's so difficult for them to put even the simplest plants in. They do have a desire to try putting a solar array up in Fort Chipewyan, but the legislation and all the bureaucracy that they have to go through is so heavy and so difficult that it's impairing them as well.

**Mr. Hanson:** And the sun only shines four hours a day.

**Mr. Yao:** During the summer it would certainly get a little bit more light but during the winter not as much.

They're willing to look at these things, but again they're finding that there are legislative hurdles around all of that. That surprises me from this government. They do want to initiate a lot of these different environmental technologies, but what adds to the increased expense of everything is a lot of legislation that surrounds them and impairs them from actually going ahead, if I understand the situation correctly with these companies and what they're trying to provide. I know that they're looking at solar panels on every light post. Again, the amount of bureaucracy that they'll have to go through just to do that sounds like it's enormous because of how the legislation is written regarding energy producing machines or processes.

If our government wants to help, here's another way you can help: take a look at the bureaucracies, what they have to do to put in a lot of these things. They are passive. Definitely, they do not have the impacts of some of the more intrusive energy-mining industries that we have, but they still deal with that same bureaucracy.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks on the amendment.

4:10

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 27. Bill 27 is a part of the larger climate leadership action plan of the government, the CLAP. It is a part of a series of bills the government has brought forward to deal with emissions, ostensibly, but are a thinly disguised plan to re-engineer the economy. The most dreadful part of the CLAP is the carbon tax, that we've already debated and that the government members have voted to pass. Members of the Official Opposition and current members of the third party all voted unanimously against it, and I was very pleased to see the strong resistance that came from the opposition side of the House. That was the carbon tax.

We're currently also debating the limitation on oil sands emissions, a very poorly thought out piece of legislation that arbitrarily caps emissions coming from the oil sands. Poorly thought out. It arbitrarily picks a number of 100 megatonnes of emissions a year without any scientific basis for why they actually picked that number. Both the carbon tax and the oil sands emissions limitation acts are arbitrary and ideological pieces of legislation.

This part of the CLAP, the 30 per cent requirement of renewable energy, is also ideological and arbitrary. Why did they pick 30 per cent, Madam Speaker? I don't know. The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, I believe, was the one that pointed out that they are

requiring this by 2030, so 2030 and 30 per cent renewables. I'm not sure if it was designed as a slogan, perhaps so that they could tell their ideologues at conventions or Leap Manifesto confabs what they're doing, that they're going to 30 per cent renewables by 2030. But they haven't yet provided any scientific data as to why they have picked 30 per cent.

Now, perhaps more renewables is a laudable goal, that there is a public interest in moving toward more renewable energy. But what is the basis for picking 30 per cent? It appears so far, because we have not heard any significant elaboration or explanation from the government side, that 30 per cent renewables is an arbitrary number with an arbitrary date. They have so far provided no evidence.

They want to get to 30 per cent, and they're going to do that by fiat. They're going to do it by mere government legislation that they're going to get somewhere. This is the ultimate expression of the big government, government knows best, attitude, that the government can simply legislate outcomes, that the government knows better than market forces, that the government knows better than investors, that the government knows better than what people who have their own money and skin in the game think should happen. They are going to legislate that we are going to get to 30 per cent.

Now, when we engage in command and control economics, there is always a cost. When you have to force the economy to move against natural market forces, you're going to have a cost attached. Sometimes that cost might be worth it. That cost might have a return for it that is desirable, but there will be a cost, and we don't know what that cost is going to be, Madam Speaker. That's one reason we need to send this to a committee for study. We don't know what the cost is going to be. There will be a significant cost whenever you directly intervene to distort market forces. Market forces on their own will not get to 30 per cent.

We already have some renewables in Alberta because there is a market for them, but investors and market forces have made it very clear that there is not yet the incentive to get to 30 per cent, so they're going to have to get to 30 per cent only by command and control economics and direct government intervention into the markets. As I said, interventions can at times be justified. Sometimes an intervention in the market can lead to an outcome that we might want to correct for, but we have to acknowledge that every time we do that, there is a cost attached, and if there is a cost, we should know what it is. But so far the government refuses to say. We haven't heard a peep from them about what the cost of this is actually going to be, which is one reason members on this side of the House believe that we should send it to committee for study.

So what are those costs going to be? There is almost certainly going to be a cost to government of taxpayer dollars that will need to be invested. Every other jurisdiction that has engaged in this kind of direct intervention in the economy and power generation has found a significant cost to taxpayers to be attached. We need to find out what the cost is to government. We need to find out what is going to be the cost to consumers.

We can look at other jurisdictions that have seen power bills go through the roof. Power bills have gone through the roof in other jurisdictions that have done this. If we are going to do the same thing in Alberta, we need to know what the cost to consumers is going to be. Again, we've heard absolutely nothing from the government side of the House about what the cost is going to be to the consumer, to the Alberta ratepayer, to regular families and individuals.

We need to know: what is the economic impact? Now, this government has a real aversion to economic impact statements except for secret ones that get leaked to the media. Those are the only ones that we ever seem to get out of this government. We ask

this government to show us their math, show us their economic impact studies. What is going to be the real impact on the economy of their actions?

Now, they've said that there was no economic impact study for the carbon tax. We found out that that was a little less than true, Madam Speaker, when it ended up in the newspaper. I will be interested to know if the government has an internal economic impact study that they're not sharing with Albertans right now. That would be something that I'd like to know. If there is, I would like to see it. But when they say that there isn't, it's a little difficult to believe them when they've denied that there were internal economic impact studies before and then they get leaked to the *Calgary Herald* or the *Edmonton Journal*.

So if they refuse to give us one here, then we need to send this to a committee to finally do an economic impact study. We've got some great staff working for us in the Legislature, Madam Speaker. Let's put them to work. Let's get an economic impact study.

We should also in committee discuss the feasibility of what they're trying to achieve. Now, they're trying to achieve something that's very ambitious: 30 per cent of electricity generated by renewables by 2030. That's an ambitious target, but I'm interested to know about the feasibility of that. Just because government declares that something shall be so does not make it so, Madam Speaker. Governments legislate that they want things all the time, but that doesn't mean that it will all be so. We ban things. We prohibit certain products all the time, but those products still make it into the black market. Governments can declare things all they like, but it does not always make it so in reality.

So if the government declares that we're going to get to 30 per cent renewables by 2030: okay, fine. Even if we accept everything else, that there's going to be a cost, that there's going to be an impact to the economy, what will be the feasibility? Can they actually get there? What is going to be required to get there? We don't know any of that yet, so it would be irresponsible for us to pass such a huge and impactful piece of legislation without actually knowing the feasibility of it, without knowing the economic impact of it, without knowing the cost to government, and without knowing the cost to the consumer, Madam Speaker.

So far we hear nothing realistic about protecting consumers coming from that side of the House. They have promised to legislate or regulate a cap on electricity prices, but we know that that's baloney, Madam Speaker. You can promise those things all you like, but at the end of the day, it's going to drive costs up, and if you legislate a cap on prices, the consumer is still going to find a way to pay at the end of the day. We have real questions about this legislation.

We can look at what other jurisdictions have done on just this topic. We can look to Germany. We can look to Ontario. Let's use Ontario as the most close and relative example. Power costs in Ontario have gotten completely out of control. It is driving business out of Ontario. It is absolutely crushing the Ontario economy, killing manufacturing jobs, the good, blue-collar jobs of people who need to feed their families and pay taxes. They're losing their jobs because those factories can't stay open with the power costs they're facing. Ontario families are being driven into energy poverty. They're being forced to make real choices on subsistence. That's a difficult one to say, Madam Speaker. They're being forced to make very tough choices about keeping the power on or feeding their families right now.

They might laugh about it, but the Premier of Ontario herself has admitted it: the billions, billions upon billions of wasted tax dollars in Ontario; Auditor General reports into the wastefulness of these programs; political interference from the Ontario Liberals; insider contracts with people who are a part of the Liberal Party, who are

just feasting themselves on government contracts, the kind of thing that used to plague us here in Alberta. We are opening the door to similar kinds of corruption and waste of taxpayers' dollars as we see running rampant in Ontario right now. It has been an absolute disaster.

4:20

Now, just a few days ago Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne herself declared their government's energy policy a mistake. That is a quote from the Premier of Ontario. She said, "People have told me that they've had to choose between paying the electricity bill and buying food or paying rent." She continues: "That is unacceptable to me. It is unacceptable that the people of Ontario are facing that choice. Our government made a mistake. It was my mistake." Words of Ontario Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne. If we needed a prophet of some kind to go to the future and tell us what this government's energy policies are going to look like, then surely they should trust the prophet Kathleen Wynne.

Now, we should not pillory her for admitting a mistake. It is an extremely costly mistake that is bankrupting Ontario, that is driving business out, that is hurting and devastating families. But she has admitted a mistake, and we should accept when people apologize. It'll be interesting to see if the people of Ontario accept her apology in the next election.

Now, when people apologize, though, they should learn from their mistakes, ideally. Sometimes we do, and sometimes we don't. But we should learn from others' mistakes as well. We should look to other jurisdictions to learn from their successes and their failures, and by every measurable outcome possible, Ontario's energy policy is a failure. This is virtually the same policy – this is virtually the same policy – and it is crystal clear that it, too, will be a failure. But instead of learning from the examples of Germany or Ontario, this government is copying them.

Now, you know, when I was a young man, I made several poor life choices. I can remember that in high school I had a friend in particular who made a lot of poor life choices. He was my favourite friend. He was a lot of fun. I remember some of the things he would do, and they looked like a lot of fun. I saw him late at night after partaking in high school activities doing something that looked like a lot of fun. He rode a cart down a hill, and he got hurt. I learned from his mistake, Madam Speaker, and I didn't do that. Right now Ontario is our friend, and Ontario just went down a hill. Ontario is hurting. We should follow the example of others. We should not follow the example of Ontario.

We should send this bill to a committee to understand its effect on other jurisdictions. We would be neglectful if we passed a hugely powerful and intervening piece of legislation like Bill 27 without knowing what effect it will have on Albertans. We should look to what other jurisdictions that have experimented with the same kind of legislation have done, how it worked out.

Even if we grant the rest of this bill, there are real feasibility issues. This government is going to need to attract huge sums of investor capital, potentially in excess of \$10 billion. I'm not sure who would want to do a deal with this government right now. This government is doing everything in its power to erode investor confidence. It is doing everything in its power to destroy the sacredness of contracts signed with businesses in good faith. When businesses sign contracts with the government of Alberta, they expect that the government of Alberta will honour its word, not that they will sign something and then for political and ideological reasons try to tear it up a few years later. They are doing everything in their power, with the power purchase agreements, to erode investor confidence. It is being called an example of a banana republic.

Now, even if they can find some companies to sign on to their deal . . . [Mr. Fildebrandt's speaking time expired]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre on 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Nixon:** Yes, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much. First of all, I appreciate and thank the Member for Strathmore-Brooks for his comments and his well-thought-out presentation. I share his concerns about bringing forward this at such lightning speed without sending it to committee and the consequences that we will possibly see. We know, as he pointed out, that our neighbours to the east in Ontario have already seen significant consequences, that I think at the very least we should examine in comparison to the legislation that's being brought forward by the government. I think that I can speak for everybody and say that we don't want to pass legislation and in the end, years down the road, all we have is a bunch of worn-out wind turbines that our kids are paying for for many, many years. That's a legitimate concern.

One issue that he touched on particularly that I find extremely interesting is the fact that 30 per cent by 2030, that plan, will require \$10 billion in private investment to be able to do. But as you know, Madam Speaker, the PPA mess that we've been watching this government walk head-on into is going to scare away, almost certainly, whatever investors are reasonably thinking about coming to Alberta to invest in that. I think that I'd like to hear a little bit more about his concern about scaring away investment and the fact that the policies that the NDP has already brought forward in our province continue to scare away investment and the impact it'll have on this current plan they have here.

Then last is the situation the coal phase-out is having in communities that, you know, members on this side of the House represent and members on that side of the House represent. It's a terrible situation. If you take a trip to Stettler or the Hanna area right now and talk to people, they're scared. People are really, really scared. They're scared, and they should be scared. We're talking about their livelihoods, we're talking about the future of their communities, and this government's not talking to them.

They're talking to everybody but the people that this impacts, which is why, Madam Speaker, we should take something like this and bring it to a committee so that not only the members of the opposition can participate in the process and speak on behalf of the people that they represent and bring forward the concerns and the things that we know but we can also give an opportunity for the public to participate in the process. I know the Member for Strathmore-Brooks would completely agree with me on that.

The thought of pushing forward this legislation without a proper review and consultation with the communities that it impacts is appalling, in my view, and something that this government, Madam Speaker, as you know, continues to do over and over and over. They're almost two years into their mandate – they're almost two years into their mandate – and we're still seeing this type of behaviour from this government. It is extremely disappointing, and I'm sure the Member for Strathmore-Brooks would like to expand on that.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Indeed, I would, Madam Speaker. I thank the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre for his remarks.

There's an interesting thing that's going on in Germany right now. They are reopening coal-fired power plants that they had already shut down. The wind turbines that they are selling to jurisdictions in North America require vast sums of energy, cheap energy, to produce. So Germany is actually producing wind turbines to sell to us made with coal-fired power plants. I would

know, Madam Speaker. The Germans generally know how to make a good buck in that sense. They know what they're doing because, like Ontario, they've lived and are living through the high cost of power there. For them to remain competitive, they've had to reopen coal-fired power plants. We should learn from the examples of jurisdictions that have gone through this.

The huge damage that has been done to investor confidence in Alberta is going to have a real cost. Even if the government can find people who are willing to sign a contract with them, they're going to pay a risk premium because this is a government that obviously does not respect the sanctity of contracts. Now, interest on a loan is largely variable, based on risk. If you are a not particularly credit-worthy borrower, you're going to pay a higher interest rate. The same is going to go for the risk to who you're signing a contract with. If a business is signing a contract with another business and they believe that that other business might not deliver on their end of the deal, chances are that one of those parties is going to have to pay a higher cost to account for that risk premium. That is exactly what's going to happen here. Consumers and taxpayers are going to have to pay more, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers on the amendment? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

4:30

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to this referral amendment for Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act. Just the other day – it's much the same as what my friend from Strathmore-Brooks talked about – I read the article in *Maclean's* about the Premier of Ontario's words at her political party's annual general meeting. I mean, it just bears repeating again, and I will provide this document for the House. I'm quoting directly from it. Wynne said that part of convincing Ontarians that she wants to do what is in their best interests is admitting when she's made a mistake. She was quoted in the article as saying:

People have told me that they've had to choose between paying the electricity bill and buying food or paying rent.

A quote from Ms Wynne again. She said:

That is unacceptable to me. It is unacceptable that people in Ontario are facing that choice. Our government made a mistake. It was my mistake.

Then:

After her speech, Wynne wouldn't point to any specific decision on the electricity file that she deems a mistake, but said her focus was on the big issues [rather than] facing the system and she hasn't always paid enough attention to how costs were accumulating on people's bills.

Auditor general Bonnie Lysyk has said the electricity portion of hydro bills for homes and small businesses [in Ontario] rose 70 per cent between 2006 and 2014.

Seventy per cent.

Well, Madam Speaker, the government of Ontario also decided to phase out coal-powered electricity and pursued hefty contracts for wind and solar power.

**Mr. Yao:** Where are they now?

**Mr. Schneider:** Well, that's a very good point. Where are they now? They have an overabundance of electricity that they sell at cheaper than what they can produce it for. It seems to me that this government may be running down the same rabbit hole. I don't know. It's maybe not running down the same rabbit hole, but the parallels begin to become very noticeable. Not only is this

government pursuing the same path, but it's doing so in a particular hurry, it seems like.

Madam Speaker, 55 per cent of Alberta's power comes from coal, so replacing that capacity will be challenging, to say the least. You know, there's always a question: what will it cost to kill coal completely by 2030? Well, that seems like an important question, what it'll cost in the sense of dollars and cents. It has been said that 30 per cent renewable energy by 2030 is a plan that could very well require over \$10 billion.

The provincial government's carbon tax, when you get to the human side of it, will cost the average Alberta household a thousand dollars annually by 2018 and getting on to twice that amount by 2030. That's according to the climate leadership action plan. Now, what was that called again?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The CLAP.

**Mr. Schneider:** Oh, there you go. Commissioned by the Alberta government. That's very clever. I find that very clever of my colleague from Strathmore-Brooks.

An extra thousand dollars a year, of course, will be a burden. There's no question. Although the government does plan to subsidize some of the lower income consumers, this act will legislate the government of Alberta's 30 per cent renewables target by 2030 as measured on an annual basis.

This bill will necessitate the phase-out of coal. Under the bill the minister will be given the power to set interim targets within 30 per cent by the 2030 framework. It's hoped that legislating the target will give investors more confidence.

It states in the act that the Alberta electrical commission must put regard for obtaining the goals of the Renewable Electricity Act, once again, 30 per cent by 2030, above regard for "whether the generating unit is an economic source of electric energy in Alberta or to whether there is a need for the electric energy to be produced by such facility in meeting the requirements for electric energy in Alberta or outside Alberta." This legislation is needed, to be perfectly honest, because renewables can't get to 30 per cent in a free-market situation.

The legislation will inevitably drive up costs to families and businesses. While there is a federal plan that is being phased in – and it's actually a plan to be phasing out coal after 50 years per plant – that particular plan did not wastefully strand assets, which is what is going on in Alberta here, in this particular plan.

Phasing out coal is obviously a costly decision – I think we all determined that – because we will have to pay generators out for stranded assets. That cost hasn't been determined yet. There's been money put aside, but we haven't heard what the actual number may be. We could probably find out that number if we were headed to committee. Then after we have paid out generators for stranded assets, we pay them again for new gas production to serve as a replacement baseload.

We have not seen a plan for coal-dependent communities and how they'll be transitioned towards new industries. We just don't know what that will cost. Getting to committee to have experts come and tell us about the dismantling of a coal-fired plant and potential refitting for natural gas is something that Albertans probably would like to hear the numbers on. They're big numbers, no matter how you add it up. Ten billion? Well, those numbers kind of roll off the end of your tongue. Millions, billions don't seem to matter when we're talking around here in big numbers like that, but they certainly do to Albertans.

Once again, the minister, with this act in place, "may, from time to time or on a periodic basis, direct the ISO to develop a proposal

for a program to promote large-scale renewable electricity generation in Alberta," a level of government involvement that we have not seen in our deregulated sector, energy sector, electricity sector. Whether you like the way that works or not, I believe that will be pretty accurate.

You know, I believe in a realistic renewable energy program driven by private-sector investment and not government subsidies. Ratepayers in other provinces have been promised painless accelerated transition to renewables only to see either government-funded bailouts or increased rates on their power bills. Phasing out coal early, regardless of technological improvements, is potentially the wrong decision and an expensive one, and that is why it would be nice to see this go to an all-party committee for discussion and for experts to come and give testimony.

This government is rushing through legislation without doing, I would say, due diligence. Substantial research and analysis is how we get to the bottom of this kind of stuff. I'm afraid this only increases the chance that they will actually make things worse for Albertans, not better.

**4:40**

This is a terrible time in Alberta's economy. There have been job losses. There are people going to be placed out of work. Certainly, some have already lost their jobs. It kind of makes you wonder what will happen to the folks that have been mining for years, whose family members have been mining for years. This is how they make their living. This is what they've been doing. We don't have a concrete decision on what that'll look like either.

If this government truly believes they're on the right track with their policies, then why – why? – are we scared of engaging in more thorough research and analysis, which is what a committee would provide. We should refer this bill to a multiparty committee and use the services of the hard-working, nonpartisan research staff at the Legislature and other experts and stakeholders that the committee can reach out to.

I would hope the members of government at least think they have the best interest of Albertans in mind when they introduce bills like this. It's just hard to believe that with something this huge – I mean, the dollars and cents that we keep talking about are monstrous. That decisions about that kind of money can be decided without experts, that would be invited to committee to determine the economic impact study – I mean, "economic impact study" seem to be words we use around here quite a bit. We don't seem to ever be able to convince the government that these kinds of things are fairly important.

Madam Speaker, even policies pursued with good intentions can go wrong and have negative, unintended consequences, but then you want to be able to look back and say: look; we made a mistake. Based on careful research and talks with stakeholders and those that we invited to our committee to help us make decisions, we can turn back and say: "Okay. Well, we kind of missed that a little. We can certainly go back and relook at this again." The best course of action may be something other than where we're headed right now, but no one has brought up this aspect that we see at this point.

Unintended consequences of coal being phased out and renewables coming in and the cost, and where we sit with this government at the moment is that places like municipalities have not been exempted from – what was it? – the climate leadership action plan. Municipalities. Goodness gracious. We were just at a meeting last week where representatives from municipalities all over the province came to one place for four days, in Edmonton, and talked about the climate leadership action plan. They talked about the pain that it'll cause their municipalities. They voted, actually. They determined to vote amongst themselves as to

whether or not the carbon tax was something that they could support, and 93 per cent of them voted against that. A gentleman stood up and asked the people that were there. He wasn't even talking to the government, who was sitting there, waiting to speak to them. He didn't even ask a question of the government. He asked a question of the people in the building that represent rural Alberta all across Alberta.

**Mr. Hanson:** He asked them to listen to Albertans.

**Mr. Schneider:** Yeah. He asked them what they thought: show us your hands if you believe that shutting down coal-fired power plants was the right idea. One hand went up. The next question he asked was whether or not this was something that could possibly be the worst decision in Alberta's history, and the rest of the hands in the place went up. The last thing he said before he left his microphone was: "Please. We're just asking you to listen to Albertans. We are telling you that this is not what we . . ."

**Mr. Hanson:** They were there.

**Mr. Schneider:** Oh, I know they were there.

I asked a question today about the carbon tax and agriculture. There are unintended consequences with agriculture, too.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Speaker, and thanks, of course, to the hon. member for his presentation. He talked about a lot of concerns about this bill in that presentation and, I think, articulated several good reasons why this bill should go to committee. Particularly, I think what resonated with me in this hon. member's presentation were the concerns that he's hearing in the communities that he represents and also at places like AAMD and C, where there are locally elected politicians from all over the province that represent municipalities and counties that are in constituencies, of course, from the opposition caucus and the third-party caucus as well as the government caucus. And the overwhelming frustration that was being expressed by the reeves and the mayors and the town councillors and the county councillors of our province was: this government will not take time to discuss things with us. Overwhelmingly, that is the main thing that you would have heard at AAMD and C.

I don't think – and I think that's what the hon. member was trying to point out, Madam Speaker – that it is unreasonable for our local municipal politicians to expect to be consulted with by the provincial government. They are elected by their communities to represent them on issues important to that community, to their town, to their county, and to towns and counties in my riding, in your riding, and in other members' ridings. That's their job. Overwhelmingly, the number one concern over and over and over is: this government won't talk to us. That's why this is relevant, in the course of this referral motion, to what the hon. member was discussing. That's why this has to go to committee.

We've seen in other jurisdictions that ratepayers were promised painless, accelerated transition into these types of products, only to see either government-funded bailouts, so our kids and our kids' kids paying for the mistakes of the government – we're seeing it right now in Ontario – or really, really expensive power bills and a Premier having to come out in another province and apologize for a mistake that was made.

This government has a chance to look at other jurisdictions where this has taken place in the past and be able to get it right, and if they think that they can convince the opposition and most of the province

of Alberta, most of the people in Alberta, that to bring this through without consulting with the people that it impacts is appropriate or is going to be effective – and to not provide any sort of comfort or confirmation that they've been able to avoid the mistakes of other jurisdictions both in our country and abroad. As the hon. member said in his comments – and he pointed it out very, very well – this government still will not stand up and explain or answer the questions and concerns that are coming from municipalities that they represent as well as that I represent. They're not doing that, Madam Speaker. As the hon. member said, that is at least the first step that should be taking place when we're bringing forward legislation like this.

Instead, we continue to see this pattern. I'd like to hear the hon. member's thoughts on the pattern that we continue to see from this government and the concern that his constituents and the people that he represents have with that pattern of not consulting the very people that the legislation they're bringing forward is going to impact.

Committee is a perfect place to do it, as the hon. member pointed out. I think he did a great job of pointing that out. I don't think that it's unreasonable and most of the constituents that I talk to do not think that it's unreasonable to expect the government of Alberta to consult with the people that they're trying to make laws for. So through you, Madam Speaker – and I want to hear if the opposition member that just spoke agrees with me – I challenge the government to hold a town hall in Hanna, you know, and to go there and ask that community how they feel. If they won't take this to committee and give an opportunity for that community and the other communities that are going to be impacted to be able to speak to how this legislation impacts them and their families and their livelihood, then, at the very least, pack up and drive down to Hanna, to Stettler county, and see how it impacts them.

Go to other communities in the province. Get outside of the bubble of Edmonton – because you won't go to committee, and I wish that you would – and talk to the people that are outside of this area that we have around the dome. Hear their fears and their concerns, and you might find out that the legislation that is being brought forward by the government is going to have a negative impact on those communities. There is nothing wrong with making sure that Albertans are happy with the legislation you're bringing forward and understanding all the consequences of the decision of the legislation. We're talking about whole communities that could be devastated because of these bills.

4:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I speak to this motion for referral of the Renewable Electricity Act, Bill 27. You know, we have a very serious job that we do in this Legislature. We have the opportunity in a democracy to represent the wishes of our constituents. We cast forth visions, where we want this province to go, but that vision should always be directed by the will of the people. This motion for referral allows the people to have impact beyond just us as legislators in this institution. It would allow people that are often better versed and have more experience to come before us as legislators and help us better understand the consequences of the laws that we bring forward in this institution. That's an important thing to be able to do, especially when we're dealing with a piece of legislation where I have yet to be able to see how it will propel this province and its people towards a more prosperous future.

I am not against renewable energy, but I insist, if it is going to be used, that it have a productive and a positive impact on the future

of Alberta and Albertans. This government has set forward a target of 30 per cent by 2030 for renewable energy, perhaps a laudable target, but we really don't know because we haven't seen anything – I have yet to read or hear anything – that would explain to me: why 30 per cent? Why not higher? Why not lower? With the impact that this can have on our economy and on the lives of Albertans, I think there needs to be more discussion, so I would prefer this motion for referral so that we can have that discussion, Madam Speaker.

This increase of our energy sources to 30 per cent renewable energy, Madam Speaker, implies a phase-out of coal. We know that this government has been moving towards that. It's been a frustrating experience for me simply because I know that one of those electricity-generating coal plants that will be shut down is in my constituency.

We've heard the government cite some statistics about the number of people that are hurt by the coal industry, and I question those sometimes. When I look at the West Central Airshed Society, that has been studying air quality in my constituency for over 30 years, I know what the facts say. I know what the statistics say. I know that we have better air quality in my constituency today than we had 30 years ago. I know that the air monitoring stations right next to the Genesee coal plant meet or beat every ambient air quality test that the province does. So I question what value, from a health perspective, we're actually bringing to Albertans when we meet the air quality standards or beat them. There's a disconnect here that I think this government needs to pay attention to because when they make these decisions, they are impacting Albertans, and they are impacting my constituents. They are taking them out of jobs that pay well, where they can be taxpaying citizens.

I have been to these generating facilities. I have seen the Westmoreland Coal facility. I have seen the work that they do in regeneration and reclamation. I know that they are a very responsible industry. When we start talking about shutting them down and when we start talking about putting up 30 per cent renewable electrical production at the expense of the coal industry and at the expense of coal-generating stations and shutting them down early and impacting the ability of electricity-generating companies to be able to make a living and to make a profit and to hire people and to keep workers being productive, it's a very big concern.

We are presently, to my understanding, at somewhere around 11 per cent renewables. I spent some time last year in Holland looking at one of those kinds of renewables, biomass, to see if we could bring that over to Alberta and into my constituency and do so in a productive fashion. I was very impressed with some of the facilities that I saw there, how they are taking biomass products, producing methane gases, producing electricity, producing heat that is put back into businesses in that area. But while I was over there, the one question that I had for all of them was: how much are you subsidizing? Would this make sense in a free market economy, or are you subsidizing this? When we came back, then, at the end of the day, when they crunched some numbers, we saw that it wasn't going to be able to be a market-driven solution.

At the end of the day, then, Madam Speaker, that means that it's going to have to come down to the taxpayers and to either some form of grant or subsidies in order to make this thing work. While there may be some areas where you may want to try to do that at some point in time, I suppose, you've got to make the case for it, and I don't believe this government has.

Instead, legislation is being used because we know that the free market cannot do it and go down this path economically. We know that it's going to raise the costs of everything for families. And as so many of the people on this side have already pointed out, Madam

Speaker, there are many, many countries and many, many places in the world where we can look to see the price of electricity escalating when we go down this path, creating all sorts of problems for the communities and for the nations that have pursued this path.

When you see the price of electricity double and triple, as it has in Ontario, and when you realize as a business that you have to cover those costs, that is going to make you less competitive in an international market. When companies start abandoning the places where they have been able to receive competitive electrical prices based on coal and they leave because they cannot compete and more people lose their jobs, I don't believe that it is an unreasonable thing to ask ourselves as legislators on both sides of the House: why are we going down this path, and why are we pursuing it?

5:00

We have one of the cleanest, if not the cleanest, coal industry in the world. By phasing out coal early, we leave stranded assets, as we've talked about already in this House. That really speaks to companies that are going to have stranded assets, which means that it's going to affect their profit margins and their bottom line, and it's going to make it more difficult for them to be competitive and to stay in business. At the end of the day, these increased costs do get passed on to the consumers and to the taxpayers of this province. I think that's worth studying, Madam Speaker, before we go down that path. We need to ensure that we have a stable replacement for the energy that we're taking offline. From everything I've heard, renewables are not going to be able to do that.

I don't understand. I think it's a poor idea to pursue this path, and I believe a motion for referral is the appropriate thing to do in this House presently because we know that the Boston report has not yet reported its findings. It's supposed to look at costs and provide a timeline for the phase-out of coal. It's not yet reported. How can we pursue this without first hearing from these individuals and this report? That is responsible, appropriate decision-making which I would hope this government would pursue. We need to pass legislation with appropriate and proper study. We have to have the consultation to determine that this legislation is actually viable, if it is actually going to help the people of Alberta. This government has not made that case, yet it continues to move forward. It makes no sense to me, Madam Speaker.

We have communities that are dependent on the jobs that are being produced through the production of coal-generated electricity. I was out in my area at Genesee, and I went and toured the Westmoreland Coal mine. I stood on the deck of one of those huge cranes and watched it as it scooped up the coal. I drove through the reclamation sites and saw the responsible reclamation of land and the planning that's gone into that. Every one of those families, every one of those men and every one of those women working in that mine was proud of what they were doing. They were proud of the fact that they were taking care of their families. They were proud of the fact – and they produce electricity from the coal that they were mining – that that's being done in the most responsible environmental way that we have anywhere in this world, yet we are shutting it down early. It makes no sense.

I can tell you that I have talked to the people in my constituency that work in these mines, that work in these electrical plants, and they don't understand. When they see their jobs on the line, when they see that they can't pay for their kids' tuition to a school or a hockey team or for music lessons, when they see that they can't take care of their families – this is not an exercise in just wishful thinking or just some ideological university discussion. This is something that is impacting their lives in a very real fashion, and I don't understand how anybody in this House could sit here and ignore those concerns. I don't think any one of us, Madam Speaker, got

elected in a democratic fashion to ignore the wishes of the people of this province. I find it very difficult, therefore, to understand how anyone in this House could support this legislation.

Let's take this to referral. Let's take this to a committee so that it can be studied, and perhaps then we can make an informed decision rather than just one that respects party lines.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Hanson:** Under 29(2)(a). Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just briefly, then, I'll ask the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon to expand if he can. On March 17, 2016, the headline read, "Ontarians just signed up for more expensive, unreliable electricity they don't need." It goes on to say that "in 2015, the auditor general found that from 2009 to 2014, Ontario consumers paid generators \$339 million [just] for curtailment" of power. That means: because they don't need their power, they're just going to pay them to idle and coast. We have some wonderful coal-fired generators that would coast for a very, very long time.

Carrying on, on September 27, 2016, the headline now reads, "Ontario cancels plans for more green energy, citing strong supply of electricity." In six months a total flip-flop. Now, it had a lot to do with the plummeting polls of the Premier of the day there, and I think probably politics has got a lot more to do with it than common sense or trying to save the taxpayers any money. So I'm just wondering.

You know, as the Member for Strathmore-Brooks had mentioned before, we can look back at all of these different jurisdictions. We can look at Germany. My wife and I were actually lucky enough to be over in Europe this fall for a week or so, and we talked to people over there. You know, I asked a lot of people what they thought of the wind-powered energy because you see a lot of power lines, a lot of wind turbines up there, and a lot of them said: well, it's kind of a joke. They're so expensive to maintain that a lot of times when they break down, they're not even fixing them. They rob parts off them until there's nothing left to rob, and then they tear them down. They say that some of them are actually not even tied into the grid; they just stand up there and spin for no reason. That's part of the reason why they're going back to coal-fired generation in Germany. We saw a lot of turbines in Germany. We saw a lot in the Netherlands and also in Sweden and Denmark and offshore.

I actually like driving down the highways and looking at the hills and the forests without turbines on them, thank you very much – and all the power lines and infrastructure that will be needed to supply this stuff. So I think that people really need to understand what we're getting ourselves into.

I'd like the member, if he could, to talk a little bit about whether there are any proposed projects for his area of Drayton Valley-Devon. I know that there are a lot of people unemployed there, and they'd probably welcome the work. I'm just wondering. We have all these indications from other jurisdictions that have gone green and they've tried to promote wind power and solar power to the point where the government is using taxpayers' money to subsidize this, but they find that they still can't make this work.

The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky also mentioned a bunch of companies that have been in the business, and I'd like to mention one called SunEdison, one of the biggest solar panel producers, installers, suppliers, maintainers, global market, very heavily subsidized by the Obama government. They couldn't even make it; they went bankrupt this year. So why would we not look at the examples that are being laid out for us? All over the world it's been tried. Why does this government have to keep following? Are we that much smarter that we're going to do it so much better than

Germany or Ontario or Sweden or any of the other countries? What is it that makes this plan so much better than all of those other plans world-wide?

Thank you.

5:10

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question there. You know, I think the member makes a very good point. Why would we use and follow a plan that has only pushed us down in other jurisdictions and other nations of the world?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 27. One of the things I did throughout my research here in consultations about this bill is take a look at our Electric System Operator website. It says that Alberta has about 800 windmills connected to the grid here today, and as you can see – well, you can't see, but this morning coal and gas were generating about 95 per cent of the demand, and wind was generating a stunning 41 megawatts of their 1,434-megawatt capacity over a 10,000-megawatt demand. That's about .4 per cent of Alberta's demand.

We know that you're phasing out coal. While it may seem like a good thing, this plan of putting up windmills, let's follow through the NDP thinking. Let's assume the government forces Alberta to build another 7,200 green windmills to 8,000, or 10 times what we currently have. Today 8,000 windmills would only be producing 4 per cent of all of Alberta's power requirements. Four per cent. The cost of 7,200 new windmills would be about \$14 billion, or about \$3,500 for every single man, woman, and child in this province. That's it. Right? Simple.

Now, if we can't rely on wind from day to day – the wind doesn't always blow – other forms of generation will need to be built as well for backup. Now, hydro is out. We don't have Niagara Falls in our backyard. It likely means that we'll use more natural gas power plants, and we need to build them. Now, that can take out our cheap coal. Think billions more. If windmills actually worked, you would think companies would scramble to put them up for free in Alberta. If this made economic sense, we'd have them everywhere. But it doesn't, so this government is going to subsidize them. Of course, these companies will only do it with a guarantee from the Alberta government.

Now, Ontario: if you want to see a real-world example of how green energy has failed, look no further than Ontario. Many of my colleagues have stated the disastrous experiments in Ontario, the Premier herself admitting that it was a mistake. They've spent billions upon billions putting up wind power, and because we really can't rely on it, billions more on other types of generation so their lights will work on calm days. In the last five years Ontario's electrical power has gone up 88 per cent for every residence and business.

**Mr. Yao:** How much?

**Mrs. Pitt:** An 88 per cent increase in Ontario's electrical power. That's not going to do anything to help people.

Now, at the same time Alberta's has gone up just 7.7 per cent. Ontario is facing another mass increase here in January, and they will continue to skyrocket for years. This is out of control. Manufacturing in Ontario is facing these costs, and they will move to lower cost jurisdictions over time. Automakers have already begun to leave Ontario. Alberta may soon be on the same pathway,

billions spent to look green while doing little, if anything, for the environment. Now, the website updates every 30 seconds or so, and I've seen wind as high as 730 megawatts but only for part of the day. I encourage you to keep an eye on that website.

One of the other problems, concerns that I've heard from constituents and people right across Alberta – and it actually gets very little attention – is the high number of birds that are killed by windmills. As you may know, birds and bats especially are an important part of our ecosystem. [interjections] The other side doesn't care about birds, apparently, as they yell across the aisle at me about how false they think the words that I'm saying are, that windmills kill bats. But they do. It's a real thing. Look it up. They actually kill a high number of these birds. If you ever go to visit a wind farm, which I suggest that you do, you will actually see the death on the ground, and I don't think that's funny. [interjections] The other side resents what I say.

You know, it's such a news media story when the birds are killed in our oil sands, which are actually very few and far between now because they have made great strides, but it's less of a tragedy when a windmill kills a bird, especially for this government. But it's extremely important to keep that in mind.

Now, bats are especially important to an ecosystem and probably one of my favourites because they eat mosquitoes. With the threat of the Zika virus floating around, I think we should do whatever we can to protect our precious bats. [interjections] And the government laughs at Zika virus. Absolutely.

We have a wildlife rescue foundation in my constituency which I was fortunate enough to visit, Madam Speaker. It was a really neat trip. They had animals of all kinds. Particularly when I was there, there were birds of prey. Raptors and vultures are especially vulnerable to windmills. In many cases where the windmills are placed also tends to be where they fly most of the time, again creating a threat to the ecosystem.

Without that balance, which has not actually ever been mentioned once, I think, in the dialogue from the government side, this isn't a good piece of legislation. I've never heard this government talk about the birds.

**An Hon. Member:** Why would the PC MLA cross the floor?

**Mrs. Pitt:** I don't know why PC MLAs cross the floor. I'm sorry.

Now, I must say that the Wildrose believes in a realistic renewable energy program driven by private-sector investment, because if there's money in it and it makes sense and it's a good idea, it will garner investment. Government subsidies do not create a sustainable program.

Now, 30 per cent by 2030 is a plan that requires over \$10 billion of added private investment, but the PPA debacle has created investor uncertainty in Alberta's electricity markets. There are actually a lot of debacles that are creating uncertainty in many, many industries and markets. Will there be a change-in-law provision for renewable investments? Put an Enron clause – is that what you're calling it? – in the new subsidy program.

5:20

Now, ratepayers in other provinces have been promised painless accelerated transition to renewables, only to see either government-funded bailouts or increased rates on their power bills. We all know people in Ontario who regularly post their bills on Facebook with outrage, and these are regular human beings who could, you know, perhaps be able to pay for their daycare a little bit better, but instead they're going to try and keep their lights on.

Phasing out coal earlier than the federal timelines regardless of technology improvements is the wrong decision, and it's an

expensive one. We've heard this before. We're just not quite there yet. Why don't you take your slush fund from the carbon tax there and do some research and improve these technologies before we force them on Albertans? Unreal. I mean, the cost to make a solar panel actually puts out more in pollution than it is worth in energy intake.

Now, this bill gives increased power to the Alberta Electric System Operator, AESO, but it also makes them less arm's length, and there is more involvement of the minister.

The ISO may, in accordance with any commercial terms that are part of a renewable electricity program, hold a security or other interest in a generating unit . . . in relation to generator default or insolvency.

Now, it isn't clear what they mean by "hold a security."

There are instances in which the minister is given the power to interfere with the ISO. For example:

Any interest in a generating unit held by the ISO . . . and any ownership interest resulting from the enforcement of a security interest, shall be transferred or assigned in accordance with any direction of the Minister.

Also:

The [Market Surveillance Administrator] is not permitted to investigate complaints against the ISO regarding the development of a proposal for a renewable electricity program.

Now, there are many more problems that exist with this bill. Where did the 30 per cent target come from? Out of nowhere? How did we get there? This is unfair to existing renewables because they won't get this special treatment. Companies here in Alberta who have gone out of their way to try and figure out how to make renewables profitable: they will not be rewarded. The fact that this legislation is needed because renewables cannot get to 30 per cent in a free-market situation is scary.

The federal plan of phasing out coal after 50 years per plant did not wastefully strand assets. Phasing out coal early is a costly decision because we will have to pay generators out for stranded assets and then pay them again for new gas production to serve as a replacement baseload, with, in addition, more gas as a fitting complement to intermittent renewables.

We have not received the recommendations of the Boston report advising the government on the costs and the timeline for phasing out coal. So once again this session we are being asked to pass legislation without hearing back from the panel that this government commissioned to determine the legislation's viability. Is that a smoke-and-mirrors show? It certainly sounds like it.

We have not seen a plan for coal-dependent communities and how they will be transitioned towards new industries. This is the cart before the horse. There isn't a requirement to consider the economics of an electrical project or the demand for an electrical project.

The Minister may, from time to time or on a periodic basis, direct the ISO to develop a proposal for a program to promote large-scale renewable electricity generation in Alberta,

a level of government involvement that we have not seen in our deregulated energy sector. More government can never be good. Now, this government thinks that competitiveness is an issue from program to program and not for the overall process.

In general, directed targets are a terrible idea. Electricity should be generated in response to market demand. There are many examples in other jurisdictions that we can learn from, so please do.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Airdrie for her comments. I think she made a lot of



very pertinent points about Bill 27 and what we're talking about here. I was particularly interested in her comments around the large number of birds and bats that wind-powered mills kill every year. Now, members on that side of the House think it's funny that birds die needlessly. They're not hunted; they're not eaten; they're not used for anything except grist in the windmill. They seem to find that funny.

I know I recall that the Minister of Energy certainly, you know, made a comment in the exchanges here asking us to table evidence that windmills kill large numbers of birds. That might be a fair trade-off, having a large number of our birds and wildlife killed by these wind-powered mills, but even if it's a fair trade-off, it is certainly well known that these windmills are killing a lot of birds, contrary to what the Minister of Energy might think about it. She has asked us to show her the evidence. I think that she could expect some tablings in that regard.

I'm hoping that the Member for Airdrie could perhaps elaborate on her points around what windmills are doing for fowl life in Alberta.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Well, thank you very much for continuing to pursue knowledge. [interjections] Sorry. It's been a long day. [interjections] But perhaps we should talk about the birds instead of personal insults from across the floor from the Member for Calgary-North West and perhaps focus on the issues.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for Airdrie has the floor, please.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The very real issues that are very rarely given the appropriate amount of time to discuss, the very real issues for the people of Airdrie and for many people across Alberta, who are actually frustrated with the lack of attention to windmills causing deaths of birds in this province, a very, very important part of our ecosystem and something that should be talked about in this House – I hope that I'm not the last in this conversation because it is important, and I would be more than happy to come back with stats on the deaths of birds here in our province, here in Alberta.

Certainly, I'm sure Ontario would be more than happy to share their information with our province, and I hope we can learn much from what's going on over there. I hope we can learn much from other jurisdictions in this world that have gone to a subsidized renewable energy market and have realized that our technology is not quite there yet and that perhaps we need to go back to the drawing board and do something different. It would be kind of neat to see a lot of these projects, but they need to be done the proper way. They need to be economical. They need to be able to run my refrigerator in the nighttime and all of my neighbours' as well because that is a very real problem. At the end of the day, I think we all need to realize that sometimes the wind doesn't blow and sometimes the sun doesn't shine. Those are two very real factors in a renewable energy market. Sometimes facts are tough. I get that. I really do get that.

I should find some . . .

5:30

**An Hon. Member:** Cats kill 200 million birds a year. Should we get rid of cats?

**Mrs. Pitt:** Wow. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion. I wanted to preface it by saying that I don't believe there is anybody in this Legislature who isn't for renewables. I think it's something that we all would like to see in our mix of electricity production. I think that it's something that we'd like to see done properly and in a businesslike fashion. I think therein maybe lie some of the challenges that we're facing right now. As much as we'd like to see it and there's a vision and an opportunity to do something right, we do need to address it in a businesslike fashion.

Just last week I met with a senior vice-president of one of Canada's largest financial institutions, and their specialty was energy-sector financing. What they told me was that most of the projects that we're talking about here stand alone in their own right, are not really currently viable for commercial investor financing, which is a challenge for us, Madam Speaker. We do need financing to achieve this. We need them to be economically viable. The question is always asked: if they were economically viable, we'd already be building them today. We wouldn't need subsidies. We would just need a good fiscal and regulatory and taxation environment, and those investments would be happening. But they're not. There are some reasons behind that. Obviously, there are some risks here associated with it, and there are economics.

One of the other things that was mentioned is the lack of PPAs. It would be great if we could go to all of the renewables and say, "Here's a PPA, and here's another PPA," and they could take that as collateral to the bank to get the business loans that they require to take those innovative ideas forward. But, sadly, I don't think there is a lot of trust, not even from the renewables community but certainly not from the investment community, in a PPA in today's world, sadly, and we all know why that's the case. So really we're down to the large companies that can finance across a large base of assets to finance these jobs. Only large companies have the ability to do that: the TransAltas, the Capital Powers, the Enmaxes, the ATCOs. Strangely, that's the same list of companies that this government is suing, and those are the ones that have the financial wherewithal to move ahead. I fear that they will decline that opportunity.

So where does that leave us, Madam Speaker? Basically, that says that unless government or let's call it the taxpayer is willing to take on the risks of these renewables or to provide huge subsidies and take on risky loan guarantees, many of these projects just are not going to happen. We're not going to get to that 30 per cent target that we're looking at. We're not going to be able to replace the other 25 per cent of coal that we're shutting down. People forget, of course, that we have to build the 30 per cent baseload that goes with the renewables to ensure that we have reliable and, hopefully, affordable energy as well.

Madam Speaker, I met with one of my constituents a couple of weeks ago who has what I thought was a brilliant idea. It's not out in the public realm yet, and he asked me not to give too many details, but he had an amazing idea. It was utilization on unused but flat, three-phase electrically serviced land that is not being used. It's actually some parcels that are contiguous but in between some highly productive agricultural land. He has an amazing plan in place that he could move forward with, and he can't find financing. He's talked to ATB. He's talked to the commercial institutions and the other commercial banks, and they've told him that they can't finance him because he doesn't have that collateral of a PPA, he doesn't have a contract that will ensure that he actually has a revenue stream when he builds this. So he's caught in a conundrum right now because he can't get support. He's talking to ATB. Obviously, we've heard a lot about next year \$1.5 billion of loans out there and some dollars from AIMCo and other organizations,

but he can't find out how he can access those dollars. That's one of my concerns. How are we going to finance this? How are we going to move forward? How are we going to achieve it?

I have another concern, Madam Speaker, which I'll call the apples-to-apples syndrome here. You know what? I think we all love the idea of renewables and wind turbines and solar panels, but I'm going to talk a little bit about a wind turbine. I had another constituent that came to me, an academic. He said: you know, the problem is that everybody talks about solar panels and wind turbines as if they're kind of a magic thing and we snap our fingers and they appear and they generate renewable energy, but they don't. If we're going to approach the renewables in a businesslike and logical and rational manner so that they can be viable, so that they can compete, can produce electricity for Albertans in an economically viable way, can provide investment opportunities so that we can move ahead with it, we need to look at the reality here. We need to actually compare apples to apples, and nobody seems to want to do that.

I've heard that it takes 285 metric tonnes of metallurgical coal to build a wind turbine. That's an interesting fact right there. That is burned, and that creates effluent into the environment, and we don't seem to want to know about that or capture that. That same plant that builds it needs power input. I suspect that those very plants are not driven by wind turbines and solar panels. I would guess that that is not the case, and I'd like to be proven otherwise.

What about the costs for the supports of those manufacturers and the fact that it's unlikely that that's going to be manufactured here in Alberta, Madam Speaker, or probably even anywhere in North America because of economies of scale and divisional labour? It's probably going to be Korea or China or some other industrialized nation with the economies of scale to do that. So we're exporting jobs. We're affecting our balance of trade significantly because all of those products are going to be brought in when we could actually produce energy from our mines here, coal mines, and natural gas drilling as well.

So we finish that wind tower, and then it has to be trucked to a port, burning up some hydrocarbons. Where are we accounting for that? Then it goes onto a ship. Last time I checked, those ships are not running on wind turbines or solar panels either, so we're burning up some more hydrocarbons. Then it gets to the west coast, and we put it on a train or truck to get to Alberta. Then we have to truck it to the site. Then we get a helicopter to hoist it into place.

Then there's another consideration here, Madam Speaker. Gee, we don't have transmission lines to where those wind turbines are. So we get the backhoes out, and we get the earth movers, and we get the equipment and machinery to lay down those transmission lines. Oh, by the way, those transmission lines were produced using hydrocarbons. Nobody's captured that, Madam Speaker.

We've got all that captured, so when is the break-even, Madam Speaker? It's not on day 1, when we go and we admire and we cut a ribbon of that wind turbine or that solar panel. When is that payback? Why are we not willing to address the facts so that we actually go into this with our eyes wide open, so that we compare apples with apples? So when we walk in and turn on that switch or we cut that ribbon, we can say: "Isn't this a wonderful thing? We have now created an opportunity to capture renewable energy resources. By the way, the payback's not going to come until seven years and six months from now, but that's okay because if that turbine will last us 20 years, that means we can get some net back on that after seven years and six months. It'll only be 12 years and six months where we get the payback before that is past its serviceable life and then we have to haul it away and recycle all that."

At least we'd be honest with ourselves, Madam Speaker, that what we're achieving – we are actually willing to talk about the facts so that we can deliver that in a way that is economically justifiable, financially feasible, and actually means something to Albertans.

Some of the other hon. members have talked about some of the other costs, and I think we have to look at that. It's not just the financial costs and the greenhouse gas costs and all those other things. We need to factor in: what about the birds that we're killing? What about the land that we take out of agricultural production? What about the talk of the low vibration waves that are rumoured that are also causing effects to residents and to cattle and to the birds that are out there as well?

5:40

Madam Speaker, I just worry. I'd like to think that everybody in this Legislature is for a good thing, for reducing our footprint, for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. But let's do it responsibly. Let's do it in a way that recognizes that just because we wave a magic wand of renewables, it doesn't mean they don't have a footprint and an impact. And let's know that. Let's know that it's five years and two months or seven years and six months or 12 years and three months that we're going to get a payback. I think that that's a responsible thing to do.

And I think that that's one of the flaws of this move forward, that we actually need to be responsible. We need to be willing to look at the facts. We need to be willing to balance the pros and the cons of everything we do. We need to look at the unintended consequences, and we need to play our own devil's advocate. I would challenge the members across the floor here to be that to themselves, to make sure that they take a look at the unintended consequences, to look at it from another perspective of "Why should we?" and "Why shouldn't we?" and balance those and make sure that we're doing the right thing.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments for the hon. member under 29(2)(a)?

Any further speakers to the amendment?

I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:42 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Fildebrandt	Nixon	Smith
Gotfried	Pitt	Strankman
Hanson	Schneider	Yao
Loewen		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miranda
Carlier	Hoffman	Payne
Carson	Horne	Phillips
Connolly	Jansen	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kazim	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinsteuber	Shepherd
Dach	Littlewood	Sigurdson
Dang	Loyola	Sucha
Drever	Luff	Sweet
Eggen	Malkinson	Turner

Fitzpatrick  
Ganley  
Goehring

McCuaig-Boyd  
McPherson

Westhead  
Woollard

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.

Totals:

For – 10

Against – 37

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, November 23, 2016

Day 51

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
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van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

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Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, November 23, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect or pray, each in our own way. Hon. members, let us empower and encourage one another to speak up about issues that are important to us, particularly those issues that are important to the residents we represent. Let us respect the differences of opinion amongst us and use these differences to work collaboratively for the greater good of this province.

Please be seated.

Hon. members, I would just like to take a moment before we proceed with the business this morning. I would like to introduce to members a new person at the table. As some of you know, I'm a bit challenged on the pronunciation of certain names, so I'm sure she won't hold it against me if I don't pronounce this correctly: Aurelia Nicholls. Aurelia was born and raised in Ontario and obtained her undergraduate degree, with a double major in history and business, at the University of Waterloo in 2003. Aurelia subsequently moved to Edmonton, which many of us have also done, and attended the University of Alberta, where she completed her law degree in 2006. Aurelia has been seconded from Alberta Justice, environmental law section, and is working in the office of Parliamentary Counsel as part of our professional development opportunity for the fall sitting. I would encourage all the members to please welcome Aurelia to the table.

Aurelia, I must tell you that this will be an experience like none other. Welcome.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Third Reading

##### Bill 29

##### Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today at third reading to discuss the amendments outlined in Bill 29, the Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act. While we have debated the details of the bill during Committee of the Whole, I'd like to take this opportunity to provide some real-life examples of the impact these amendments will have on the lives of average Albertans.

The first relates to new parents, Mr. Speaker. Once the online birth registration service is fully operational, new parents will be able to submit the required birth registration information online either at the hospital or at home instead of filling out a paper form that needs to be completed before they leave the hospital. Not only will this give new parents some time to consider important registration information like the name of their newborn; it will also reduce registration errors and increase the speed with which new parents can obtain a birth certificate by giving them the option to order it at the time of registration.

The next example relates to adoption information. Recently a young man, born in Alberta but adopted in British Columbia, contacted vital statistics requesting release of his original

registration-of-birth document. After hearing about the requirement to provide the registrar with an Alberta court order, he decided against pursuing his option as he could not afford the time and expense to obtain a court order. As a result of the new amendments, Alberta will now be able to share this information with B.C.'s postadoption agency, allowing this young man to obtain birth registration information directly through that organization. Individuals born and adopted in Alberta already have this option through Alberta Human Services.

The third example involves the LGBTQ community. As a result of these amendments, an LGBTQ youth working with a social worker can now ask the social worker, with whom they have an established relationship, to complete the required letter of support to assist them in applying for a change of sex. This will make the process more comfortable for the youth and reduce barriers. For the transgender community, once the nonbinary marker is operational, an individual will have the opportunity to obtain a birth certificate with a nonbinary marker instead of a male or female marker.

Finally, commemorative certificates for many happy celebrations will now be possible, like a commemorative marriage certificate for a 50th wedding anniversary.

These are just a few examples of the many ways these amendments exhibit both compassion and inclusivity and positively impact Albertans while demonstrating this government's commitment to innovation in service delivery.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, I wonder if you might read into the record the actual movement of third reading, if you would.

**Ms McLean:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I move third reading of the Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Opposition House Leader. Good morning.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to congratulate the minister on moving third reading of an important piece of legislation this morning. I had the opportunity to speak at some length, as often is my weakness, about this particular piece of legislation at an earlier stage of the bill, and there are many wonderful things in this piece of legislation, as I pointed out at that time. I look forward to a smooth passage the rest of the way.

**The Speaker:** If the House will allow me, hon. member, I think I recall you saying earlier in the day that your son is very wise because he has recognized you as the person who makes the most points of order in this place.

Are there other members who wish to speak to Bill 29? The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As one of the cosponsors of Bill 29, the Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act, I'm pleased to rise today to speak in support of the bill. The way government handles vital statistics isn't talked about often, but it's important because every Albertan interacts with the government on vital stats at some point in their lives, whether they are getting married, welcoming a new addition to the family, or dealing with the death of a loved one. It's important that when Albertans have these interactions, they feel included and respected by their government, and that's why it's necessary that we modernize this legislation.

The amendments proposed in this legislation lead the way for Alberta to become one of the most inclusive and compassionate

jurisdictions when it comes to our approach to life's major events. I'd like to highlight some of the key changes we're making to increase the inclusivity and compassion of our vital statistics practices.

The act clarifies that parents can choose any last name for their child. This helps families avoid costly and complex processes when changing a child's name. It empowers parents to use cultural naming conventions like placing the family name before given names, which is a custom in many cultures.

Our government respects the dignity of people with disabilities. The 1928 Sexual Sterilization Act was indicative of the misguided and dangerous eugenics movement. Thankfully, people with disabilities are no longer sterilized without consent simply because they have a disability, but still there are many leftovers from the eugenics movement, like section 27 of the Marriage Act. This section forced people with disabilities to obtain a doctor's note in order to marry. Some of the most important aspects of a fulfilling life for all of us are to be as independent as we are able, to be included in our communities, and to be loved. Like anyone, people with disabilities have the right to fall in love, to marry, to divorce if they need to, to have children if that's something they feel able to do responsibly, and the old legislation removed their decision-making power and left it in the hands of people who in many cases did not know them or only knew them by their labels.

Changing the requirements for people with disabilities to marry is an important step toward honouring their human rights and supporting their access to the same things we all want, a loving partner and a life in which we can enjoy fundamental freedoms. That's why we're amending the Marriage Act to remove the requirement for a doctor's letter for a represented adult to marry the person they love. At the same time we're giving guardians more time to intervene, if they feel compelled to, by extending the notice before a licence is issued from 14 days to 30 days. I know Albertans with disabilities from all over the province applaud this long-awaited change.

We are making changes to help families who have experienced the heartbreaking tragedy of stillbirth and reducing the burden on grieving parents by not requiring them to name a stillborn child in order to register the birth.

We're protecting the privacy of Albertans by restricting who can search for vital records such as registrations of birth, marriage, or death.

We're removing the need for legal name changes to be published in the *Alberta Gazette*, and we are removing the need to provide a reason for requesting a legal name change. These changes will help to protect the privacy and safety of people who are going through major life changes, those who may be transitioning their gender, or people who might be fleeing domestic violence.

**9:10**

We've heard from Albertans, who expect access to government services to keep pace with modern technology. This act enables a future online birth registration system that will make it easier for parents to register births. The act also paves the way for other services, including online marriage registrations. We are also introducing a new commemorative certificate to commemorate major life events like milestone wedding anniversaries or 100th birthdays, if we should all be so lucky to get there.

At the heart of our government's work is the idea that everyone in Alberta deserves to feel included and to be treated respectfully. I'm proud of this modernization of vital statistics legislation. It moves Alberta toward an even more inclusive and compassionate province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a) are there any questions for the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill?

Seeing none, are there individuals that would like to speak to third reading of Bill 29?

Seeing none, is the desire to bring closure to debate, if you're ready?

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 31

#### Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much and good morning, Mr. Speaker and members of the House. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 31, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016.

This legislation continues to implement results of the first phase of our review of agencies, boards, and commissions, also referred to as ABCs. Government initiated the review to ensure that agencies are relevant, effective, well governed, and continue to meet the interests of all Albertans. Phase 1 looked at 135 ABCs subject to the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act, excluding postsecondary institutions, which will be reviewed in phase 3 early next year.

As part of Budget 2016 we announced that 26 agencies will be consolidated or dissolved, saving \$33 million over three years. My colleagues in cabinet have proceeded with dissolving identified agencies that were established by ministerial order. These entities do not require the repeal of legislation. However, three of the entities being dissolved were established by statute, and this legislation is necessary to dissolve them. The three entities are the Government House Foundation, the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, and the Wild Rose Foundation.

**An Hon. Member:** And anything with that name.

**Mr. Ceci:** The Wild Rose Foundation.

Though these three entities are to be dissolved in the legislation, the functions will carry on within government or through other existing mechanisms. We do not anticipate any service disruption to Albertans.

The Wild Rose Foundation ceased operations in 2009. Since that time programs and services in support of the nonprofit, voluntary sector have been administered by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Government continues to support community-based organizations across this province with matching grants through the community initiatives program, or CIP, and the community facility enhancement program, or CFEP.

The Government House Foundation was responsible for guided tours of Government House. This function is now carried on by the Alberta protocol office.

The Seniors Advisory Council was established more than 25 years ago as a voice for Alberta seniors. The way government connects with seniors has evolved over those years, Mr. Speaker. Alberta now has a strong network of senior advocacy groups and organizations that accomplish the role of the council, including but not limited to the Alberta Council on Aging, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, the Alberta Association of Seniors

Centres, Seniors United Now, and many other groups that provide effective voices for Alberta's seniors.

The proposed legislation before you also includes provisions to enhance the administration and governance provisions in statutes for the Human Services appeal panels. There are five key changes that are reflected in the Human Services appeal panel statutes and regulations. These include: one, maintaining a quorum of three for all substantive appeal matters and allowing for a panel of one to convene for procedural matters and emergency situations, which will be identified later in regulation; two, the ability to appoint a provincial chair and vice-chairs for each of the panels; three, adding a three-month grace period to ensure no lapse in services when appointments expire; four, defaulting to the maximum term set in APAGA for quasi-judicial bodies, which is 12 years; and five, removal of the maximum cap to total number of panel members for family support for children with disabilities appeal committees. These enhancements are administrative in nature and will facilitate alignment to enable efficiencies in cross-appointments of panel members and consistency within the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act.

As part of our commitment to openness and transparency this legislation also includes a requirement for dissolved or amalgamated public agencies to disclose compensation if a board member or employee has met the disclosure threshold when the agency is dissolved or amalgamated. To enact this policy direction, an amendment to the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act is proposed and a regulation will set out the process for doing this.

Provincial agencies, boards, and commissions play a pivotal role in delivering innovative programs and services to all Albertans, which is why we are committed to ensuring that they are relevant, transparent, accountable, and well governed.

Additionally, this bill would amend the Travel Alberta Act to remove the requirement for the Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism to be a member of the board of directors. We've identified that there could be a potential conflict for that deputy minister as an operational lead of the department and the minister's representative to the board.

I look forward to discussion on this bill and would ask that all members of the House support it. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this morning and speak to Bill 31, Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. We'll call it the ABCRSAA act for short.

**Mrs. Aheer:** That's short?

**Mr. Cooper:** Okay. We're not going to call it that for short.

It is always a pleasure to rise in the House, and I do take a certain amount of pleasure when the government has begun to see some of the light and the truth in Wildrose policies.

**Mr. Ceci:** Amen.

**Mr. Cooper:** I appreciate the amen from the minister, and it's great to know that he's seeing the light. He can take some time to step into the light as well.

Oftentimes, Mr. Speaker, we hear from the government constantly, consistently telling us that our financial policies don't work, that we would cut every front-line worker from every ministry to save money. Of course, nothing could be further from

the truth. This bill is an example of policies that include a Wildrose suggestion about shrinking some of the agencies, boards, and commissions and agencies of government all at a time that preserves front-line workers.

**9:20**

This bill is full of Wildrose savings policies. We've recommended them many times to the government to make government ministries and agencies, boards, and commissions more efficient. They, of course, when speaking about our policies, say that that would be impossible because it would lead to hundreds and thousands of job losses and we would have cut eleven billion dollars. It's just not true, Mr. Speaker, because here we see a common-sense solution that's been proposed by the Wildrose in Bill 31, which shrinks the size of government and will quite likely save money and at the same time preserve front-line services to Albertans.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I hope we see more bills like this put forward by the government, and I hope that they'll put forward a bill, like Bill 31, that takes aim at some of the bloat in government. You know, I think we can look at AHS and see that there are significant amounts of redundancies in an organization like that, that spends \$14 billion or \$15 billion a year. There is the opportunity to find efficiencies and redundancies that don't affect front-line services, and the government proved that that's possible through this piece of legislation. This bill shows that it can be done, that less government can provide the same services. B.C., for example, does more with less government spending when it comes to their health services and a number of other areas, and now this government is doing more with fewer ABCs and, hopefully, less spending of taxpayers' money.

Sometimes I get a little frustrated that I have to constantly defend our policies when they clearly work, and we can see that by this piece of legislation. The government likes to attack us when we ask questions about ways that we can find efficiencies, but even though they're attacking, it sounds like there is some listening when it comes to finding efficiencies here. I might just add that this was recommendation 5 in our 2016 Budget Sustainability Recommendations plan.

I do have a few questions, and I'd like to just put those questions out. I recognize, Mr. Speaker, that this particular stage of the bill doesn't really provide the best opportunity for the minister to answer the questions, but I think it's fair that we put some questions out before the House, and then that, I hope, will give the minister the appropriate time that he needs in order to respond to some of our concerns, perhaps at a later stage of legislation in Committee of the Whole, or I'm happy if he reaches out directly to me and I can share those with some folks.

First of all, you know, I'm curious to know how much the review of the agencies, boards, and commissions has cost so far. I know that there were some estimates at the beginning of what the costs were going to be, and I'd love an update for the House on the progress. I also understand that the government sometimes doesn't like to provide the House updates, but I think it's really important in the name of transparency if the minister would be able to let us know where we're at in the process, the costs, and whether or not the review costs are going to come in in a comparison against the savings and just exactly where we're at with this.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the review is being done, as I understand it and has been spoken about, in three phases. It would be great if the House could get an update on the timelines and when we can expect the next phases to be finished and exactly what phase we're in and where we're at in that process so that we can have a bit of a sense as to the overall direction of the review of the ABCs.

A third question is: for each of the ABCs that were affected in this review, can the minister provide some more details and explanation behind the closure for the House to review? We want to ensure that there wasn't any mismanagement that's been reported to the people of Alberta and that the actions that have been taken were as appropriate as possible so that we can continue to be as transparent as possible.

Next, I'd just like to touch on the portion of the bill that's dealing with appeal boards. With the implementation of a single person being able to preside over an appeal in an emergency situation, does the government foresee appeals being granted more or less or about the same as the three-person panel appeal board? Obviously, you know, the minister has mentioned that there will be some emergency situations. It sounded like they will make an effort to limit those, but where does the government expect those situations to arise, and is it likely that those situations will be more or less likely or about the same? Will there be oversight to ensure that single-person panels are not approving appeals significantly more or less than the three-person panels?

Mostly, I want to ensure that the system is not being abused in the case where appeals are being granted at a higher rate in single-person appeals and encouraging people to create emergencies that might not actually be, just to try to get their appeal granted. I hope that we will ensure that in the case of an emergency the appeal is not more likely to fail if a single person is the appeal. I'm hoping that we can get some reassurances and that they can be provided to the House, that the single-person appeal will be as effective as a normal panel.

Mr. Speaker, my last line of questioning that I'm hoping we can get some feedback on in committee is around the emergency part of the appeal. The bill states that emergencies will be defined in regulations. It's seems we're beginning to see a trend, and I used to keep a list of quotes from former members of the government, including the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, the Premier, the Minister of Transportation, and the Minister of Education, from when they sat in the fourth party around this issue of moving concerns that really ought to be in the legislation into regulation. I know that when they were in the opposition, on a number of occasions they rose in the House to speak just to this issue and the concerns that it creates.

We have a significant issue around what is going to be an emergency and how it will be defined, and as the minister mentioned this morning, it's going to be defined in the regulations. Any time that that happens, it opens the process up to abuse. Now, I'm not saying that in every case regulations are abused, but I'm saying that it opens the process up to abuse and to a lack of transparency and to the ability for concerns to be raised in the future. I just believe, Mr. Speaker, that we are in the process of legislating. This is a significant portion of this bill, and how emergencies will be defined is of critical importance to this bill. So it's not something that should just be put into regulation but really needs to be dealt with here.

9:30

I have many questions as to why the government seemingly is continuing to do these sorts of things behind closed doors with less transparency, and it is very concerning. Why does the government want to define emergencies behind the closed doors of cabinet with less transparency? I don't know the answer to that, but I think it's critically important that we bring these things to the House so that we can all have input.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't just about – you know, oftentimes when I speak about bringing things to the House, it sounds like it's important just for us MLAs to know it. But when we bring things

to the House, it's really about being transparent to the people of Alberta and being transparent to the folks in each of our constituencies that may have an interest in this piece of legislation as it may affect them with respect to appeals and Bill 31. I see no good reason why the government could not create an emergencies definition here in this bill for everyone to see and debate. It's concerning that the government is hiding behind the closed doors of cabinet to create these definitions.

We have seen a track record or pattern of when this does not work out well already in the short tenure of this government on bills like Bill 6. Without significant encouragement from Albertans and the opposition, it's quite likely that the vast majority of those regulations would have been created behind closed doors. Now we see that they are out there continuing to consult on those regulations, but that's not the case with most regulations, Mr. Speaker. Oftentimes it's the work of concerned Albertans and the opposition who bring these things forward. We shouldn't be having to force the government to be more open and transparent. They were elected on a platform of doing things differently than the former government, and we're seeing them do more of the same.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I have spoken in this House at great length about the need for committee and for consultations around pieces of legislation like this. You know, there are many really strong things. I still think that on the vast majority of legislation, it would be advantageous for it to go to committee so that experts in the field – and, obviously, many pieces of this legislation are very, very good with respect to the reduction of the overall number of ABCs, but on this emergency piece there's no reason why we shouldn't send it to committee and have some discussion around the definition and really work for a positive resolution on that.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I know that you've seen me move a lot of amendments that would send a bill like this to committee. I'm not going to do that this morning, much to the excitement of all members of the Chamber, quite likely. But I would encourage the minister to try to clarify a lot of the questions that we've raised, a lot of the concerns at a later stage in the bill.

I do look forward to being able to support this piece of legislation. However, if the minister is unable to provide that sort of clarification that I think Albertans deserve, it does – you begin to have to weigh the pros and cons of some of the concerns that still are in the bill and the pros of listening to some of our suggestions and ideas around preserving front-line services yet still working to correct the size of government.

Thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the ongoing debate around Bill 31.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 31, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2106. This bill is part of a larger effort to ensure that the government's agencies, boards, and commissions are relevant, effective, efficient, and well governed. While this bill is a small piece of the overall legislation, it can't be overlooked that there has been some good and important work being done at Government House Foundation, Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, and the Wild Rose Foundation.

Ultimately, Bill 31 and the dissolution and amalgamations that have already occurred or will occur with the passing of the budget will make the ABCs function more effectively to the benefit of public interest. The proposed amendments will help make people the focus of the good work being done at the agencies, and it will have immediate benefits. I do recognize that this is good legislation,



and it's focused on people and good governance. We don't need to clamour for praise on this, Mr. Speaker.

For instance, Mr. Speaker, proposed amendments will enable effective administration for the Human Services appeal panels through several changes that ensure consistent governance provisions. The Human Services appeal panels provide a fair, impartial, and independent quasi-judicial process for Albertans to appeal decisions made by the department. I think we have heard the proposed amendments from the Treasury Board, but I think I will just reiterate them.

The proposed amendments to the appeal panels include to remove maximum and minimum number of members or quorum per panel, remove maximum length of service as an appeal panel member, provide authority to designate a chair and more than one vice-chair, change authority to designate a chair from mandatory to permissive, remove power to designate the secretary as well as provide a three-month grace period for members to continue after appointments expire if they're not replaced.

A good example of the proposed amendments having an immediate positive impact is the removal of a quorum of at least three members. Currently there must be at least three panel members for all files brought before the panel. Dropping the quorum to one or two will remove unnecessary costs to the department and time delays in the proper disposition of appeals. Mr. Speaker, there are many times when certain procedural matters can be fairly adjudicated with one or two panel members.

Another example is the removal of the maximum of seven appeal panel members from the Family Support for Children with Disabilities Appeal Panel. The FSCD is the only Human Services appeal panel with a maximum number of members. Due to this maximum, when cross-appointments were done in May of 2016, members could not be appointed to this panel. This leaves this panel at a disadvantage, and any increase at all in the volume of cases would place tremendous strain on the other members and delay appeals.

In addition to improving Human Services appeal panels, Bill 31 continues the effort to provide the public with transparency in regard to public-sector compensation. It was identified that the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act does not provide sufficient authority to disclose compensation related to entities that are dissolved or amalgamated throughout the year. Amendments to the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act found in Bill 31 will require disclosure of compensation for public bodies that are dissolved or are amalgamated.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the three ABCs in this bill have done good work for the province; however, these boards have either been nonfunctioning or their functions have moved under the purview of a ministry. The Wild Rose Foundation has not been an active board since April of 2009, and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was assigned responsibility for the foundation at this time. Much of the \$6.5 million that the foundation had was used to support Alberta's Vitalize Provincial Voluntary Sector Conference, a conference used for training Alberta's volunteers. The future of the conference and new ways of delivering training and support to volunteers are being looked at as we speak.

The work of the Seniors Advisory Council has been valuable, and we thank members for their work over the years, but there are a number of organizations that work on behalf of advocating for seniors in this province. The seniors ministry is also working to clarify the Seniors Advocate role, and it is seen as being able to provide some of the reporting and awareness functions previously performed by the council. This is an annual cost savings of approximately \$200,000.

9:40

Also, Mr. Speaker, the Government House Foundation will be dissolved; however, funds will be provided to the Alberta protocol office in order to continue public tours of Government House, keeping this historic building accessible to the public.

While, of course, there are cost savings with this bill, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we should focus on the efficiencies and good governance that is being created in our ABCs with this bill and the fact that this will be beneficial to the public that utilizes these services. As such, I urge all members of the Assembly to support this bill.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions or comments to the Member for Calgary-Klein under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this morning to speak on Bill 31, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. You know, I was kind of saddened, I guess, to hear these woeful words from the minister and the other members on the closing of the foundation in 2009, but I have words of encouragement for them. The Wildrose Party started around the same time as that was completed, so there are words of encouragement for you.

I'm also pleased to see that the government is looking for ways to reduce governance and to look for ways to improve spending practices. Just a few short days ago the Auditor General criticized this government because the AISH program was too hard to navigate. The AISH program is systematically failing severely handicapped people who cannot otherwise provide for themselves. There are roadblocks, inconsistencies, and inefficiencies, said Merwan Saher. Anyone who could not fill out the application forms properly or who could not navigate the system was being left in the dust. The assured income for the severely handicapped was riddled with severe issues, which failed a lot of the most frail in our society.

When it comes to the agencies, boards, and commissions that we're talking about today, we're seeing some positive steps, where the government evaluates a system and makes improvements. I know that AISH is not a board, but I'm happy to see that this approach is being used. The point is that we need to step back and evaluate the government's services. There are too many examples of where we need to do this.

For this simple reason alone I'm happy to see that with Bill 31 the government is at least, hopefully, attempting to make some positive changes to the system that is extremely broken. The need for a more transparent system is vitally important so that the inefficiencies are caught. When agencies and boards are held accountable through legislation for their actions and when things are brought to light, then and only then can the changes be made.

I am also encouraged to see that there will be some appeal board changes, especially in the face of emergencies. As we know, the Auditor General found grievous problems with the AISH appeal process. I'm also hopeful that some of the changes in this legislation will make things easier for decisions to be made quickly when emergencies appear.

It's also encouraging to see that this bill will bring about the beginning of a reduction in spending. For far too long this government has had a spending problem. This province spends more per capita than any other province in Canada, and this can potentially start to be curbed with this legislation. So that's where I'm happy with this legislation, which hopefully brings about

further and more changes. By reducing the number of ABCs and by reducing the amount spent on the ABCs where inefficiencies lay, we may begin to see an improvement in how much the government will need in the upcoming budget. One can always hope, Mr. Speaker.

Right now almost 50 per cent of the provincial budget is spent supporting the ABCs, and of course a lot of that is for Alberta Health Services, but I am sure that with the help of the support in this bill, we can now begin the work of finding inefficiencies and improve and tweak the system. Overlapping of the ABCs will be, with any luck, done away with, and inoperative ABCs will be done away with completely. This will likely save the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. That encourages me.

Wildrose has been an advocate for smaller government for a long time, and getting rid of the front-line staff is not the answer. We have never advocated for this even though there may be some that have tried to paint us into that corner.

**An Hon. Member:** Are you sure?

**Mr. Taylor:** I'm sure about that. I'm absolutely sure that we've never advocated for that. We want to get inefficiencies out.

We have always run with a premise of getting rid of inefficiencies. Simply correct the doubling-up of services and agencies that no longer have a purpose. That's what I'm sure of. The need for increased transparency and open government is the belief that citizens deserve the right to documents and to proceedings that allow for effective public oversight. For far too long there's been an entitlement of secrecy in this government, and this should not be allowed in any democratic society. We have seen too many instances of abuse of power. People fail to perform their duties, and financial abuse occurs when they are not held accountable. [interjection] I know the minister is pointing on the other side to the third party, but they have to take responsibility now. They've been in power for well over a year and a half, so it's time to own up and start saying: we're responsible.

Transparency also encourages residents of Alberta to become more engaged in the legislation process. I can't stress how important this could be on bills. Take Bill 6, for example. This bill was made better by the engagement of stakeholders, who literally gave me hundreds, perhaps thousands of calls, e-mails, letters. Although it's not perfect, the bill itself, far from it, these farmers and ranchers helped us make that bill better than its original form. Greater transparency was needed on this bill. Too much of Bill 6 was done through regulation after the bill was passed.

So I'm somewhat hesitant but happy to see that the government is willing to start this process. Even though there are some improvements that could be made to this legislation, which, I feel, are important to discuss, my overall sense is that the legislation may be the beginning of improving services, decreasing our provincial budget, and beginning the process of restoring some trust in the system once again. This will hold our government to a higher standard, something that has been needed for quite some time.

This bill isn't perfect, of course. For instance, the bill states that emergency situations will be defined in regulations. I see the need for this somewhat as we never know what will be necessary to add. However, I know that I and other Albertans worry about what the government can do with these regulations. The unknown is what happens, and there are problems at times that arise from it.

Many times this government has said one thing and done another. We see how they've managed to push legislation through without thought to the taxpayers or the elected representatives of this House. I truly hope that this is not one of those times. I truly

hope that some good will come out of the legislation, that emergency situations will be treated as such, an emergency. There's been so much waste. I hope that this will completely improve a broken system. It's time. It's time to start looking for a different way of making things better, just like what the Auditor General said about AISH. So many people are working inside a broken system and all of them working hard but failing to provide assistance to the most vulnerable.

That's sometimes how I view this government. All are working hard but working with a broken system. Take a step back and with the help of others, also known as the Wildrose opposition here, find the inefficiencies and truly put the pieces back for the good of the province. I know you were saddened with the closure of the Wild Rose, so you should be encouraged that we're willing to help. We're here to help. The government has been working hard, throwing money at this program and at that program without a thought to consequences for the taxpayer. For us to pursue action, we must develop a vision. We need a vision, and I sure hope that this government will step back a bit and stop forging on, thinking that money will change everything.

9:50

This bill, I have to say, is a step in the right direction: smaller government; the removal of ABCs that no longer serve any real purpose; the removal of the duplication of the ABCs; and, of course, the one that I hold really near and dear to my heart, reduced spending. I will give this government credit for those items. On this bill I just mentioned, one thing is for sure. The truth of this government's intention for this bill will eventually come out. Let's hope that they are all sincere.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Battle River-Wainwright?

Are there any other members who wish to speak to Bill 31? I recognize Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to speak today. I have to say that whenever we look at efficiencies within government, this is something that I myself take pride in. I would have to say that this is about Bill 31, Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. From now on I'll be calling them the ABCs, the agencies, boards, and commissions. Now, it's important here to understand that as of November 5, 2016, we have 301 ABCs in Alberta, all working towards one goal, and that's to help Albertans.

I'd like to put some, I guess, understanding behind what it is exactly that we're trying to encourage here in Alberta. I keep thinking of how I can put this into something that I can actually move forward into an example so that I can get a better understanding, and the best way for me is commercial vehicle insurance. Now, as an accountant my past was to sit down with my clients and say: is your commercial vehicle insurance updated regularly? This is important because commercial vehicle insurance is very costly. The reason I bring this up is that almost immediately when you buy a new vehicle or a piece of equipment, you get insurance on it because you have a loan. It's automatic. You need to have it in order to be able to take that piece off the lot. So you go and put it on your policy, and you add it to the cost of that policy. Now, over the years what happens is that this equipment gets paid off, and you have to ask yourself: do I have the appropriate insurance on that piece of equipment?

What happens is that you'll find that you've insured it for more than its value, which means you are actually paying more than you

need to. This is important because sometimes what happens is that you actually will be overinsured for something that you will never get a payout for on the policy. Now, when we're looking at this commercial insurance, you need to be looking at: do I have the appropriate insurance for this? Let's say, for instance, that you have a backhoe, and in that year or several years ago that backhoe's motor died and you can't find a motor for it anymore or its frame is no longer able to continue working. What happens is that usually it will sit in the yard, and they'll use it for parts for other pieces of equipment. The problem is that that backhoe never actually gets taken off the insurance, and when we're looking at this, that means that it's an added cost to the business, which is why I would sit with my clients and say: have you reviewed this?

This is why these 301 ABCs are important in this. We need to establish that it was set up for a purpose, that it has a mandate. At some point did it fulfill its mandate, or has its mandate changed? In this case we have the three agencies. We have the Government House Foundation, the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, and the Wild Rose Foundation. They all started with a premise and a mandate. That was to encourage Albertans to move forward. This is something that is important, but over time something changed, and – you know what? – government didn't go in and review in this case the insurance policy to make sure that they were actually functioning the way they were supposed to.

Now, one concern that I did hear from across the other side here was that they are unfunding these organizations and in some cases taking those funds and putting them back into government. I'm not saying that this is not maybe needed, but we do need to ask ourselves: are we creating bigger government out of this? This is a question that I would like the government to answer. It is important that we are establishing that even though we are reviewing these ABCs. Are we actually finding savings here? Is there duplication that we are now moving away from, or are we creating duplication in the government departments?

Now, I understand that it's important that we identify each and every one, and I'm glad to see that the government is moving this forward because this is needed. This is a recommendation that Wildrose brought forward as well, and it's good to hear that the government is actually wanting to look at the opposition's route to saving money. Whether these advisory or decision-making, quasi-judicial, or governing bodies were all formed with the intent to provide Albertans with opportunity, we always need to be looking at how to do it better.

I do understand that we need ABCs. There is a function that they bring, and we need to be looking at each and every one of them. We need to know exactly what each one of them is doing, and it's healthy to have a review. I believe that it's long past the time that we have the review.

It is important that when we start looking at these agencies – you know, my colleague for Battle River-Wainwright did bring up the valid point that if there was an agency out there that would connect with the Wildrose Party, it would be the Wild Rose Foundation, but we recognize that the Wild Rose Foundation also needs to be able to fulfill a mandate, and it is responsible for us as MLAs to be looking at finding ways to reduce the burden on our taxpayers. We need to continually look at reducing the red tape that we are seeing within Alberta, and we also need to be looking at duplication, both of which have been something that the Wildrose has been committed to addressing and moving forward.

Now, I do see that we have about \$33 million of potential savings over three years. I am curious as to exactly why we used three years. That does seem to be an odd time, and it seems like the government does use three years for a lot of its estimated savings or costs. I suppose that if it took three years to wind these three ABCs down,

well, then that would be applicable, but from what I'm hearing, this is something that more or less is going to be done pretty much right away.

**10:00**

Now, we do need to note a concern that I know my colleagues have touched on. Section 6(3.1) reads:

The quorum to hear an appeal is 3 members, but an appeal may be heard by one member for procedural matters related to the appeal or in emergency circumstances provided for in the regulations

Could someone from the other side elaborate on how they came to the standard provision for emergency meetings? It does seem to be odd.

It would be nice to see exactly how the regulations are going to be rolled out. It does seem that a lot of this does seem to have – when it comes to regulations, an important part of the process when it comes to the bill, it would be nice to have an idea or even an outline of where these regulations are going. This is something that we have not heard from the government with most of the bills that have been brought forward, and this is a concern. Really, it's about the regulations, that really make the difference for a lot of these things being moved forward.

Mr. Speaker, while I say that this is a great move by the government to move forward with this, I do have concerns. My colleagues have brought concerns forward. I do believe that in this case I would encourage all the members of the House to support this bill.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake? The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. One brief question, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member talked about a concern about wrapping up the activities of these things immediately rather than, say, over three years if I heard his argument correctly.

**Mr. Cyr:** No. I was asking if you are wrapping them up over three years, or is this something that's immediate?

**Mr. Mason:** Okay. I guess the question I have is – as the President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance indicated at the beginning, a number of these ones that are being terminated have actually not been functioning for several years. They really don't exist except in theory. Is there a reason for delaying in that case? That was my question. I may have misunderstood his comment.

**Mr. Cyr:** I would like to thank the Government House Leader for the question. My question is: how is it that we're saving \$33 million over three years? You brought up the point that we're terminating these things right now. That is my question. How did you come up with three years' worth of savings?

**Mr. Mason:** By consolidating some of the actuals.

**Mr. Cyr:** But why three years?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, through the chair.

**Mr. Cyr:** I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I got flustered. When you talk about savings, this is something that I'm very passionate about.

I guess the question is: how did you come up with three years? Why not five years? Why not six months? Is there a specific reason

that you had chosen that time, and how is it that \$33 million is the savings for that time frame? If the House leader can answer, that would be . . .

**The Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members who would like to speak to Bill 31? I am presuming that we're prepared to move the second reading of Bill 31.

The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Sorry about that, Mr. Speaker. Just in response to my colleague and the questions of why three years and why \$33 million, as he probably remembers, I opened my deliberations on this topic by talking about the dissolution of 26 agencies, boards, and commissions, three of which we are talking about today because they are in statute and need to be in this bill to dissolve them. The other 23 were amalgamations or dissolutions that didn't need to be raised in statute because they were created in other ways.

The three years, in particular, speak to the 2016 budget that was introduced in April of this year. It's a three-year fiscal plan, and we identified the savings over the three years of that fiscal plan, introduced in April. That \$33 million is real money that will be taken out of government in addition to the hundreds of millions of in-year savings that we've found in 2015-16, 2016-17. There are real savings in addition to the \$33 million, but the three years responds to the three-year fiscal plan that was introduced in April 2016.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, I may have made a disconnect. Were you speaking under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Ceci:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** I see. Seeing that any other individuals do not wish to speak to the bill, would you like to bring closure, hon. minister?

**Mr. Ceci:** No. I think I appreciate the members of the government side who spoke to this and are passionate.

**An Hon. Member:** How about the other side?

**Mr. Ceci:** I was going to get to that. I was.

I just want to reflect first on the government's side and thank them all for their understanding of the reasons to do this and ongoing support as we move forward with phase 2 and phase 3.

On the opposition side I know that there are many people who agree passionately with the direction of this government with respect to the removal of monies that are no longer needed for the presentation of organizations that aren't necessary any more. We will be working to get some answers for those people who have asked them, and in Committee of the Whole I'll have a portion of those answers. I won't have them all, but I'll get back to people in writing with respect to other things.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity and latitude.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a second time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

10:10

### Bill 31 Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam. Just with respect to some of the questions that were put earlier, I want to reflect on timelines for all phases of this work that we are undertaking. As members of this House have heard me say, before we started this work, there were 301 agencies, boards, and commissions doing the work of government. The amount of money they were involved with spending on behalf of government was significant, is significant. It amounts to somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20 billion more dollars.

The timelines for the review. We are in the second phase of that review now, where we're looking at the non-APAGA agencies, boards, and commissions. There are 146 of those that we are taking a rather in-depth review of to make sure that they're all providing the good cost of service, quality of service and doing what they were originally set up to do and asking the question: do they still need to be there, or can some other vehicle deliver their work in an amalgamated form, or if they're dissolved, can they be brought back into government or indeed some other way of delivering that service? So that's what we're in now, the second phase of that review.

The third phase is looking at the postsecondary institutions, and that is coincidental with this phase. We're doing that work now, and we're hopeful that by the new year we will be completed and make recommendations on phases 2 and 3.

Also on the agencies, boards, and commissions we're looking at the compensation of the 26 large ABC CEOs and designated office holders. We're looking at that to ensure that the remuneration of those individuals fits with a public-service approach to the delivery of their programs and services. So that work is ongoing as well.

The 26 agencies that have either been dissolved or amalgamated have been reported. You know, they're numerous, obviously. Some of them, as I've shared and as others have shared with you, stopped their functions a while ago, so they're in name only, and we've eliminated those, ensuring that the closures of those 26 agencies or amalgamations in some cases was as appropriate as possible. It's something we've circled back and made sure of. So we feel like we're on good ground that way.

With regard to the single-person appeal panels I can tell you that the part that hasn't seemed to be a concern to anybody is where there's a procedural matter: you know, someone hasn't shown up for their appeal, and the procedure needs to be that that appeal is now closed. We don't need three people to decide that. One person can make that administrative decision and give that judgment, that decision.

But where there are emergencies – and that was the question that was raised, too – and a single person is brought in to hear about those emergencies and those emergencies aren't defined in legislation, we are taking the opportunity to reflect before we put it in a statute. We're not going to put it in a statute because we don't think it would be the right thing to do, to put a definition for emergencies in statute. You can't actually put down in writing an understanding of every emergency a client would experience in their lives. So we're taking the step to gain input from others about how they would define emergencies, and then we'll take that and put it in regulation.

We're leaving that up to the Minister of Human Services to discern after gaining input from knowledgeable people about what

an actual emergency could be defined as, and we're doing that, again, so we don't have to come back into this House, so that he doesn't have to come back into this House at some point and say: "You know, people are showing up for emergencies. We want to help them. We want to review their situation, their file, but the statute won't allow us to do that because it doesn't adequately define all aspects of that person's life that they are experiencing an emergency in." So I think that's the wiser course in this case. Certainly, we'll continue to monitor how that works through the Minister of Human Services.

Other questions: will a single-person panel be as effective as a panel of three, or will people be manufacturing emergencies, when ultimately they're defined in regulation, to get in to see an appeal panel? You know, those and more questions like that really need an experience, really need us to understand through experience, where the problems are before we're making judgment about people or circumstances or raising potential problems that don't exist.

With the caveat that I'll provide more information directly to the member with regard to things like the budget for the ABCs and where we are with that – and I mean the budget for the review process of the agencies, boards, and commissions and where we are with that – and, further, perhaps discussion with that member about any concerns that he has with regard to the 26 agencies that have either been dissolved or amalgamated, I think it's probably a better thing to zero in on as opposed to just saying: how are all of the dissolved or amalgamated agencies doing? Alberta Innovates was four agencies, and we've taken steps to harmonize and make one large agency, a more effective, efficient agency, out of Alberta Innovates than the four portions it had before. So it's continuing to operate.

Lastly, as we move forward, Madam Chair, to review the non-APAGA boards and then the postsecondary institutions, Albertans will always know that we are working to make the agencies, boards, and commissions system better. Where it is not working, we'll make improvements to ensure that there is value for money being provided to Albertans. We took some pains to open up the whole recruitment process to agencies, boards, and commissions through a new [boards.alberta.ca](http://boards.alberta.ca) website. I heard yesterday that that website has had I think it was 14,000 Albertans either seek it out or apply for different agencies, boards, and commissions as a part of our recognition that, really, the old system of getting appointed to an agency, board, or commission in this province was out of date and not transparent.

So with a lot of pride I say that Albertans, when they know they have the ability to step forward and to help out this province and to give their best, have come out in droves to put forward their names. Now, not every Albertan will be suitable for every agency, board, and commission that needs to be . . .

**An Hon. Member:** What?

**Mr. Ceci:** Not every Albertan will be suitable, but many who were suitable had no avenue, had no way in to put their name forward because they, frankly, weren't connected in ways that the previous government required people to be connected. We are making things more transparent, we are making things more open, and that's one small example of how that has occurred.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention during this debate that I know Albertans are watching us. They're learning lots about our agencies, boards, and commissions. They now know that they can go to [boards.alberta.ca](http://boards.alberta.ca) and apply and learn more about the agencies, boards, and commissions or put their name forward. All Albertans deserve the opportunity to serve, and a transparent posting and recruiting process is a way to do that.

I hope that that answers some of the questions or all the questions that have been posed to me as the main mover, and I appreciate my cosponsors for this.

I'll turn it back to you, Madam Chair.

**10:20**

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments with respect to this bill? Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Madam Chair. When I returned to Alberta in 2012, I got involved with several groups, and I began hearing from, certainly, many Albertans in my community but, really, Albertans throughout the province. They were complaining about the number of boards, agencies, and commissions and the amount of money that was going into them, and they didn't seem to see anything visible or tangible to show for all of those ABCs. I listened quite intently, and certainly now our government has also listened. This act to amend is presented, and we're debating it.

This has been an interesting process for me. I watched the dissolving of the three entities, and the one that, I guess, stood out for me was the Seniors Advisory Council, which was one of those entities. I'm a senior, in case you didn't notice, and I'm a member of several senior groups, so I felt that this is where I should really focus my comments in this debate. Initially I felt a little concern that seniors' issues would not be heard if this council was dissolved. Having said that, though, I know that there's a huge network of seniors' advocacy groups and organizations which provide input to the government on seniors, and I know this because I was part of those groups, and I did advocate for seniors as a member of those groups.

The two seniors' groups of which I'm a member are Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre and the National Association of Federal Retirees, and they continue to provide to me feedback, concerns, recommendations. I continue to advocate on these issues as an MLA, issues such as the federal-provincial health accord. I reach out to seniors in Lethbridge-East on a regular basis, in fact at least twice a month, to get their thoughts on a number of issues. I receive plenty of feedback, and that feedback I share with the minister of seniors and whatever other ministry those issues happen to relate to.

Last week I was very fortunate to facilitate a session with representatives from seniors' groups across the province and the Minister of Finance. The purpose was to garner input as part of prebudget consultations. There were about 19 groups represented, and that actually represented tens of thousands of Alberta seniors. The southern Alberta branch of NAFR reported to me their participation in a town hall meeting the week of November 8 in Edmonton with interested stakeholders, provincial government officials, and the Canadian Mental Health Association to share their views on the development of the new federal-provincial health accord.

These are just a couple of examples of ongoing information and issue-sharing that is being done on behalf of seniors. There are community think tanks such as Public Interest Alberta, the seniors' task force, the Canadian Mental Health Association, even the Fraser Institute, who share with the government on a regular basis about seniors' issues.

NAFR actually held eight town halls across the entire country during November to discuss seniors' health care issues. At the Edmonton meeting there were 120 people in attendance. Some of the issues discussed included the federal government's level of financial support to the province's health care and pharmacare strategy, the issue of dementia. The recommendations coming from these may in fact save some money. Long-term care, home care,

elder abuse, palliative care, et cetera, are all issues considered, discussed, and brought forward.

As you can see, seniors' issues are being brought forward from many advocacy groups. Recommendations were given on many of the focus areas given the unsustainable health care costs across the country. Because of this ongoing input from advocacy groups such as the ones I've mentioned, I as a senior feel that the dissolution of the Seniors Advisory Council is a reasonable action, and I stand in full support of this bill.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in support of Bill 31, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. I will also respond briefly to the question raised by my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Bill 31 includes many things, but it also includes some amendments to legislation and regulations governing Human Services appeal panels, of which there are six. These amendments will make sure that the appeal process remains efficient and that the concerns respecting services are heard in a timely manner and in a fair and consistent manner. These six appeal panels are established by different means. Some of them are in legislation, some in regulation, some established by ministerial orders. They relate to assured income for the severely handicapped, child care licensing. They're under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, the Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act, the Income and Employment Supports Act, and the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Services Act.

These panels provide a fair, impartial, independent quasi-judicial process that enables Albertans to appeal certain decisions that are made by the department. Last spring we decided that as we move towards more person-centred and more integrated service delivery, we will have these panel members appointed to hear a spectrum of supports, so they will be approved for cross-appointment to these panels. Any panel members can hear about PDD, AISH, income support, a variety of concerns, and look at those things in a more holistic manner. This will also help us manage appeal time because some panels are busier than others, so it will give a consistent kind of workload to the panel members across the spectrum.

Certainly, with these amendments it's our hope they will create administrative consistency with respect to the quorum requirements. Quorum requirements are not the same across the board. Some just require one, some require three, and some say three to seven.

10:30

Chair and vice-chair appointments, the grace period for expired appointments, maximum years of service, and maximum number of members allowed on the panel: I will briefly touch on these changes.

As I said, the quorum requirement will be amended to allow a quorum of three for all substantive matters and a quorum of one for procedural matters or emergency hearings. That was the question of the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, so I will address that.

Then the designation of a provincial chair and several vice-chairs will be clarified to ensure that the leadership structure is there to support cross-appointments of the panel members.

We are adding a three-month grace period to all appeal panels, allowing members to continue to serve for a short period of time after their term expires so that the process continues without any disruption.

The references to the maximum length of service will be removed from all pieces of legislation and regulation, and by doing so, what will happen is that the default length of the term, which is a 12-year standard in the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act, will apply to the term limits. So there will be no limit set in the specific pieces of legislation. Rather, we will default to the APAGA 12-year default term, so they won't be able to serve more than 12 years.

Finally, the cap on the maximum number of appeal panel members will be removed to allow members to be cross-appointed to all six panels. Currently that cross-appointment is not possible for the Family Support for Children with Disabilities Appeal Panel, which has a maximum membership of three to seven members.

The concern regarding the one-member panel, when that will be used: it will only be used for very specific purposes. When determining, for instance, whether a panel has jurisdiction, one member can adjudicate on that procedural thing and make a judgment. But for all substantive matters there will be a three-member panel to hear the merits of the appeal. For instance, for a person with developmental disabilities: the authorizing legislation provides the minister with the authority that they can establish a panel of one member, but in practice that was never the case. It was always a three-member panel. Sometimes people appeal and then they abandon those appeals, so we still need to adjudicate and make a judgment that the appeal has been abandoned. In that case maybe a one-person panel will be able to make that decision.

Then there is the question: what will constitute an emergency? Human Services will be looking at different hearings and will develop a regulation on what constitutes an emergency. That provision will provide us with the flexibility that if somebody is in palliative care or something and their appeal is scheduled for some later date, in case of an emergency, to make sure that the benefits are made available in a timely fashion, we can constitute a panel of one. But I just want to reiterate that in all circumstances appeals will be heard by a panel of three members on all substantive matters.

In short, I fully support Bill 31 and the changes that we have proposed with respect to Human Services appeal panels, and I ask my colleagues to do the same. These amendments will make our panels, our hearings more efficient, more fair, more consistent across the spectrum of our services, and they will allow us to do cross-appointments so that the appeals and concerns of Albertans can be looked into from a more holistic perspective and can be addressed as quickly as possible.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** I will recognize the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Bill 31, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, appears to be one of those omnibus pieces of legislation. Sometimes omnibus legislation can create some difficulties moving forward. I would suggest that this time we're mostly doing some housekeeping with regard to things that need to be tidied up, agencies and boards that have not been operational for a period of time. I would agree that these are things that government needs to continue to review to be sure that their bodies of governance are relevant to the day and that they are doing the work that's necessary at the time.

I want to thank the ministers for speaking to some of the questions that we've had already. That's very helpful in moving forward in a way that is transparent and open, and it allows us to feel a certain level of comfort with regard to the process that's being moved forward. Reducing the size of government bodies that serve

little or no use at this time is important work to do and also moving forward with some amalgamations where we can see that there's opportunity to tidy things up.

Moving two, three, four bodies under one umbrella can be a very effective and a very efficient way of doing things. With that being said, there is a certain amount of review that has to continue to be sure that that's working effectively also as we move down the road. I know there were some questions with regard to Alberta Innovates moving under one umbrella. The member from the Liberal Party did bring forward some concerns. Again, it's important that we continue to review and be sure that we are providing Albertans with open, accountable, transparent governance in all of these situations.

Following on with the review of agencies, boards, and commissions, the ABCs, Bill 31 is going to eliminate three more that needed a statute in order to be eliminated, and that's a good thing. One of these is the Wild Rose Foundation, a funding agency for volunteers and nonprofit organizations. These volunteers and nonprofit organizations are very important in all communities right throughout the province, so we want to be sure that we are continuing the work that the foundation did.

Programs affiliated with the foundation moved into the ministry in 2009, so the foundation was, effectively, not being utilized. The financial support for this sector is available through the community initiatives program and the community facility enhancement program. While I know that the Wild Rose Foundation was popular with some – and I do love the name; I like the name – I'll be watching to see whether we have covered it with the CFEP and CIP programs, and I think we might. This is where we can recognize that sometimes there is overlap within government and that efficiencies can be gained by moving things and amalgamating things.

**10:40**

The next agency to be eliminated is the Government House Foundation. I never understood why we needed an agency separate from Alberta Infrastructure to oversee a provincial heritage asset. We don't have an Alberta Federal building foundation per se, so I believe that this is a good move again.

The next ABC to disappear is the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta. It was set up at a time when we had no seniors ministry. The roles and responsibilities of this body have largely been assumed by the ministry and activism opportunities, as the Member for Lethbridge-East has spoken about, and taken over by other seniors' organizations. I also would agree that the move to eliminate that advisory council is necessary in this bill as we do some housekeeping to tidy things up.

Bill 31 will also make sure that the finances of these bodies that are being wound down will be disclosed.

Now, I mentioned that this bill is omnibus, and there are some things here that have nothing to do with ABCs. The Travel Alberta Act is amended to remove the deputy minister from being mandated to be part of the board of Travel Alberta. It will now be up to the minister to decide if they want their deputy minister there or not, to sit on the board of Travel Alberta. Perhaps the Minister of Culture and Tourism could provide some insight into why this move was made. Fundamentally, I don't see anything wrong with it, but some insight into that could be useful.

The next omnibus part of this bill deals with amendments to six acts, and we received some information from the Human Services minister on how that's moving forward: the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Act; the Child Care Licensing Act; the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act; the Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act; the Income and Employment Supports Act; and the Persons with Developmental Disabilities

Services Act. The changes to all these laws are said to make the appeal panels transparent and set panel sizes and quorum, important parts of governance.

Bill 31 allows an appeal panel of three people to be represented by one person in the case of emergency and that emergency situations will be defined in regulations. This is a part where I find there is a little bit of a lack of transparency. The minister, I must admit, did speak to it and gave some clarity, but whenever we get to the point in pieces of legislation where we have emergency situations that will be defined in regulations, on this side of the House we can never be sure that all of our concerns are being answered when it's done behind closed doors. So we will trust the government to do what's right for all Albertans in this case.

This makes things nice, clean, simple, and easy to understand. Small "c" conservatives like less government. Keep-it-simple government is part of this drive to small, efficient government, and I would suggest that this is a good thing.

Madam Chair, no red flags come up, from my perspective, with this piece of legislation. I am pleased that this bill does the housekeeping necessary to eliminate three of the ABCs that were already being served in other manners. We look forward to additional ABCs being eliminated or amalgamated, whichever the case may be, to find those effective cost savings and efficiencies.

I must also note, as the Opposition House Leader had noted in his comments at second reading, that it is important that we move forward in a way that is very open and transparent. Accountability is important, not only for members in this House but also to be fully accountable and transparent with all Albertans. I believe that that's the best way to gain trust with Albertans, when they can feel that no political games are being done with regard to agencies, boards, commissions, and the like and that no political games were done in the past, no political games are done in the future. Albertans will reward governments that are open and transparent, I believe.

With that, I would suggest that this bill is a necessary bill to help improve and move towards more effective and efficient government. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Calgary-Bow.

**Drever:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 31, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act. The ABC review and this act give government the authority to dissolve the Wild Rose Foundation, the Seniors Advisory Council, and the Government House Foundation.

The government is committed to managing the province's resources in a fiscally responsible manner. Our review of agencies, boards, and commissions is identifying what is working and what could be improved and what is no longer providing value to Albertans. As announced with Budget 2016, government has decided to amalgamate or dissolve 26 of the 136 agencies explained in the first phase of our review. Most of this is now complete, but three agencies require legislative amendments for their dissolution. This bill will accomplish that.

I would just like to take a minute to talk about Government House Foundation. The Government House Foundation is a historic site, including promoting the public interest and receiving donations of historic objects and art. I am pleased to say that the Alberta protocol office will continue to operate public tours and special events at Government House, and the foundation's assets will be transferred to the department. The projected cost savings are approximately \$40,000. However, \$23,000 of this would be transferred to the Alberta protocol office to support continued public tours at Government House, so the cost savings would be \$17,000. I would

just also like to say that the board, which has four women and four men, which is great because that means there is gender parity, had four members' terms expiring on April 30, 2016, and the remaining four in 2017.

I just wanted to have my minute to talk about Government House and the great things that it does for the public and for all Albertans and how open and transparent this bill is. I think that we are doing a great job as a government to make sure that there is transparency for all Albertans, and I just would like to ask every member of this House to support this piece of legislation.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity just to speak briefly to this. I won't be long because I along with my colleagues find it quite easy to support the bill. Obviously, it is in the interest of smaller government and savings and efficiency, and of course that's something I think we can all support. I'm glad to support it. I won't repeat a lot of what's been said.

I'm also glad to see that in this particular case, from a culture point of view – I need to refer to the Auditor General's report which identified these items, that flagged the effort on this. I realize that this was attempted once already, and the entries had to be reversed. I'm glad to see that the government is coming back and doing it right this time, getting the process right. I do think that's important when you're dealing with the assets and the procedure, the legal proceedings, those kinds of things. Congratulations to government for coming back and getting it right this time.

Also from a culture point of view, the one question I might have had would be if some of the benefit of these organizations was being lost. In this case it clearly isn't. For instance, the preservation of the asset of Government House and all of the benefits that go with that is continuing and will continue to benefit Albertans, so I appreciate that.

10:50

The Wild Rose Foundation: of course, the support for nonprofits and volunteers is extremely important. I want to continue to say that that needs to be a part of what happens in Alberta because they really are the ones who in many cases are not just the culture makers but also the culture carriers. They do much of the work. They have the vision. They have the donations. They just do a lot of the work, so my thanks and my congratulations to all of them.

The only last thing I might say about the Wild Rose Foundation is: my thanks to the Minister of Finance for clearing up any possible future confusion about the use of the name. There could be the possibility of confusion when we form the next government as to conflict of interest, those kinds of things, so thank you for clearing up the name and making the path clear for us. Congratulations.

**The Chair:** Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do have a couple more questions based on the answers that I got from the Minister of Finance. From the answer that we got, it was \$33 million, to go back to the nuts and bolts on this, over three years. My understanding is that that would mean that \$11 million was, I guess, saved by the dissolutions, amalgamations, and consolidations. I'm trying to get what was said by the minister from the press release that was given out, and I'll quote the press release that was sent out on November 9. "Those agencies were among 26 agencies, boards and commissions identified for consolidation or dissolution in Budget

2016, an initiative that will save \$33 million over three years." Now, I guess there's a little bit of confusion. It makes it sound like because you shut them down, you're going to save \$33 million.

Now, just to be clear here, I heard from the Member for Calgary-Klein that you're going to be reviewing some of the functions that were being done and moving those functions, maybe, into government departments. They can correct me if I'm wrong on this. Is this \$11 million, like, a gross amount for just shutting down the money that you're putting into these different commissions, boards, and agencies, or is this \$11 million in net savings that Albertans and taxpayers will see? This is an important part. We're showing through government press releases that we're going to be saving money because of an action of this bill. I would say that it could possibly be shown as misleading if we're actually either spending the exact same inside of government or we're net zero for savings. If the Minister of Finance could answer this question. Again, it doesn't mean that I won't be supporting this bill even if it is net zero because I do believe that bringing simplicity to our agencies, boards, and commissions is admirable, but I would like to hear a little bit more about the \$11 million.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak?

**Mr. Ceci:** With regard to the savings that have been identified, this bill, that's been brought before, is not the trigger for all that's happening. That started when we started phase 1 of our review, in April 2016. We are seeing those savings in terms of bringing administrative functions back into government for agencies that have been dissolved whose function was still necessary but could be delivered better by government, administrative savings; savings in salaries that have occurred as a result of not needing the executives or the staff who were responsible for either those dissolved agencies or the consolidated ones. So the savings occur as a result of paring back the number of agencies and amalgamating agencies and dissolving agencies.

That \$33 million has been identified over three years. It is monies that won't get spent as a result of the actions, and that's just the start of it, Madam Chair. We still have 146 agencies in phase 2 of the review that are getting examined for similar kinds of opportunities.

Not so much on phase 3, which is the postsecondary institutions. There won't be that sort of direction taken in that area. You know, are they functioning as well as they can possibly function, and do they have the necessary board strength and governance strength they need? We know that there are a number of postsecondaries that are waiting for appointments to their boards and governance structures, and we're working quickly. I know the Minister of Advanced Education is working as quickly as possible to make sure that they have the necessary people in place to continue to drive forward their important mission and function for postsecondary education in this province.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Just before I recognize the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, just a general reminder that when we are in committee, yes, we've got a little more freedom to move around. But it's difficult for me as chair, when individuals are standing, to determine who actually is standing to speak. So if you want to have a conversation, taking a nearby chair would be appreciated. Thank you.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess one of my follow-up questions to this, then, is – it sounds like the government is dissolving these. My question to the Finance minister is: are we moving all of the staff and management into government directly?



Has there actually been somebody that has been, I guess, reduced in the government agencies, boards, and commissions? If not, then it does appear that all we've done is said: we were funding these agencies, boards, and commissions by \$11 million, and then we moved those people all inside the government, but that \$11 million is now saved because they're no longer in there. That, again, is a concern that I've got with this. In essence, my concern here is that it's a shell game. It's just moving around the actual cost to taxpayers to a different part of the government. Has there actually been a reduction in the management and the staffing within these agencies, or did they just actually all move into the government and become government employees?

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To answer the member's question – I think the Finance minister did quite a good job of that, actually – it depends on the agency or the board, and in this case there will be differences. For example, the seniors' advisory panel will be completely dissolved, and some of the functions will move under the ministry, so there are direct savings, as the Finance minister said, as a result of salaries being reduced. I don't think it's the shell game that the member is alluding to. Also, Madam Chair, I just wanted to . . . [interjections] Yeah. That there are no net new positions is the bottom line on that.

Also, Madam Chair, I just wanted to clarify something on the Travel Alberta piece that the member from Morinville and surrounding area alluded to.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you.

What was actually in the legislation prior to this bill was that the Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism was automatically appointed to the board. With Bill 31 what we want to do is remove that provision from the act because we thought that there was some potential conflict of interest with the deputy minister sitting on that board as the deputy minister does, of course, participate in policy discussions and finance discussions. So we thought that it was appropriate that we remove that individual from the board.

That's all at this time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

11:00

**The Chair:** Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Yeah. Just for follow-up on that, the way I understood it was that the minister still had the ability to appoint to the board, but maybe I misunderstood the way the wording was. It sounds from the comments that there will not be that opportunity for the minister to appoint the deputy minister to the board. The way the comments were worded was essentially: it will not happen again.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Madam Chair, the member is correct.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. I think there is a necessity to also identify some of the concerns that were raised by my colleague for Bonnyville-Cold Lake with respect to one of the agencies that was dissolved. I do know that there are a number of those individuals, if not all of those, who have found a spot within

the ministry now to work. So it can be perceived as possibly saving money by efficiencies in dissolving agencies, but in this respect the majority of the cost of employees under the agency now becomes a cost of government under the ministry, so possibly we're not saving as much as we think we are through this whole process. It's something to be very aware of and to continually work to make sure that we're delivering the services necessary in an efficient and an effective manner at all times for Albertans.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Just a quick note on a question that was asked previously, Madam Chair. The total ABC review cost is \$800,000, and so far we have spent \$630,000, making this an excellent value for taxpayers.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other questions or comments with respect to the bill?

If not, are you ready for the question on Bill 31?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

[The clauses of Bill 31 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Chairperson. I move that the committee now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 31.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading (continued)

### Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

[Debate adjourned November 10: Mr. Yao speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. Immediately I'm struck by the fact that once again we are discussing yet another way the government intends to limit this province, yet another way the government is putting its clumsy fingers into the management of our economy, yet another way the government is regulating away our prosperity, yet another way the

NDP is treating Alberta as an obstacle to be managed as opposed to a place of limitless potential to be unleashed.

Madam Speaker, I'm also struck that the government is regulating away the survival of many Alberta businesses, communities, and towns. My goodness, I think of the number of welders, fabricators, and construction people as far away from the oil sands as Bow Island, as Medicine Hat, as Redcliff, as Foremost that provide valuable products and services to the oil sands, that provide valuable jobs for families, for the youth, and here we are limiting – limiting – that opportunity.

Madam Speaker, I think it was actually Liberal leader Laurence Decore who said that the government must be careful that its arms do not become tentacles. Government must avoid the temptation to believe that they can micromanage and command the economy to do their bidding with every tinkering and decree. This government has clearly not heeded such wise advice.

Sometimes I wonder if this NDP government wouldn't actually prefer that they were governing somewhere else, somewhere without a robust oil and gas industry, but instead, alas, they make Alberta in their utopian image. I believe that the Premier said in this House yesterday that business in Alberta would have to – would have to – reposition itself to the NDP's agenda. She used the word "reposition." I humbly submit that it is perhaps the NDP government that should reposition itself to Alberta, to Albertans' communities, families, and needs. But, Madam Speaker, until that happens, we're here to talk about more limitations.

I find it interesting that the NDP's panel of advisers on the newly created oil sands advisory group hasn't even completed its work yet, and here they are charging ahead anyway. The OSAG was supposed to give a somewhat apolitical and legitimate gloss to the NDP's actions, trying to cover this rigid dogma with yet again the appearance of objective analysis, but of course that really didn't materialize, did it? Instead of giving any sort of reasonable expert advice, it seems that hardly a week can go by without yet another member of the NDP-appointed panel revealing their true feelings about Alberta's energy sector.

They started out on the wrong foot with a co-chair, another signatory of the Leap Manifesto, by the way, comparing our industry to a mythical place of doom and evil straight out of a fantasy book. Though you think it might stop there, you'd be mistaken. Madam Speaker, yet another OSAG member insisted that, no, we don't need pipelines. She even sent out a fundraising letter to that effect. Just imagine, an NDP appointee living off the Albertan tax dollar making fundraising appeals for her eco-radical buddies. We are past the point of parody now.

#### 11:10

Finally, I'd just like to note that in response to an economist analysis that we need increased pipeline capacity, the same co-chair of the NDP's advisory group insisted that, no, we don't because of the limits we're putting into place. It is her belief that we must charge towards a future of, and I quote, managed decline. A future of managed decline: fewer jobs, fewer opportunities, less wealth, less opportunities to help our communities and our families. Madam Speaker, I never thought I'd see the day when the Alberta government – the Alberta government – would be talking about managed decline. From this cap itself: \$154 billion of managed decline estimated, never mind all the spinoff.

Madam Speaker, in a province of free enterprise, economic liberty, innovation, and hard work, in a province that brought us the Alberta advantage, in the best jurisdiction in the entire world, here we are talking about how to manage our decline. So perhaps it's not really a surprise that the NDP is charging ahead with our decline even though they don't have the completed analysis of their

advisory panel. We all know what's going to come out of that, and the NDP does, too. If they didn't know, they wouldn't have appointed them. I thought it was interesting that the managed decline comment came in response to a discussion about pipeline capacity. Pipelines in this cap are very much related in that they are capacity issues, wealth issues.

The analysis concluded that even with both Trans Mountain and Keystone XL we would reach maximum capacity within a decade. The same economist also stated that getting Keystone XL would mean a reduction of \$5 to \$6 per barrel in the price differential, the discount that producers here must accept to sell Alberta's product. That's \$5 million to \$6 million every day for tax revenues, for services, for wealth for our employees, for wealth for our investors: managed decline.

But building capacity is not really the goal here, is it? Despite the fact that the world needs our oil and gas, despite the fact that eastern Canada buys 800,000 barrels a day from Saudi Arabia, despite the fact that we produce it here in an incredibly responsible way, and despite the fact that our oil sands contribute a fifth of 1 per cent in global emissions – a fifth of 1 per cent – while supplying the world with ethically produced energy, Madam Speaker, despite all of these things the government feels a strong need to cap.

This government has a remarkable faith, a blind faith, in its ability to create economic growth and innovation, growth for its chosen winners, of course, its chosen winners by decree. They seem to believe that enough central control, enough bureaucracy, enough regulatory hurdles, and enough tax will suddenly create a bustling and booming economic climate. Under their all-knowing and watchful eye they think they can guide production as they see fit. And it seems that each intervention spurs another. Every time the NDP meddles, they create the need for more, and all the while business confidence is in free fall, people are nervous and anxious, investment is limited, and the economy contracts.

Madam Speaker, I had breakfast this weekend with an oil and gas investor, and I was told that when his company buys a field that straddles Alberta and Saskatchewan or straddles Alberta and B.C., before they close on the deal, they ensure that they sell off the Alberta part. They don't want to be part of the managed decline. They don't want to be part of this government picking winners and losers. They want the right to create jobs, take care of their communities, and build wealth for all Albertans.

There is a very real temptation for politicians to enter this building and believe they know best about all facets of the economy and the way that Albertans choose to live, build, and raise their families. Rather than getting out of the way, there's a temptation for a government to insert itself where it shouldn't and create artificial constraints where they ought not be. The government's limitless belief in itself creates limits on people everywhere else. I'd mentioned the jobs that are going to be lost in Bow Island, Medicine Hat, Redcliff, and Foremost, never mind Leduc and Beaumont and Fort McMurray and Sherwood Park and everywhere where this will impact communities and families.

Expanding government boundaries into the space naturally requires other entities, whether individuals or businesses, to feel the squeeze and leave or quit. I'm afraid that, contrary to the NDP's belief that it can create by limiting, that it can encourage growth by constraining, and that it can spur investment by intervening, the reality is that growth is a function of people going about their lives and producing for themselves, their families, and their communities.

We are not going to create lasting economic growth and productivity by putting limits and managed decline on our strongest sectors. In fact, estimates have put our total expected loss as a result of this policy at roughly \$150 billion. One hundred and fifty billion

dollars gone from our economy. These are dollars that can no longer be used to invest, to hire, to donate, to build, to enjoy, to share, to live, to help.

Ironically, while the government boasts about diversification, they may actually be achieving it by driving down our powerhouse industries. They have bought into the myth that we can incentivize growth in smaller sectors by punishing the larger ones.

Madam Speaker, I cannot support this bill. I cannot support further limitations on our economy and on Albertans, who have created such extraordinary wealth, expertise, innovation, and opportunity already. Wherever I go around Alberta, Albertans are telling me the same thing. I reject the flawed idea that government alone can direct us to do better things when I have already so clearly seen what the unleashed potential of Albertans has achieved. We do many things incredibly well in this province, perhaps none better than excellent energy production. It's time that this government respects what people here can do, have done for all of us in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments for the previous speaker under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to move an amendment if that's all right. Do you want me to read it now?

**The Deputy Speaker:** If you could just wait a second until I get a copy of it.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Drysdale:** On behalf of my colleague from Calgary-Lougheed I would like to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence."

11:20

Madam Speaker, I rise today to issue a hoist amendment on Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, and have the requisite number of copies to do so. The rationale for this hoist is based on a lack of stakeholder consultation and the haphazard rationale to rush this bill into law while the oil and gas industry is facing the ill effects of the NDP world view as well as the low oil prices.

Madam Speaker, I know, in speaking with industry representatives in Calgary, that small to medium-sized oil and gas businesses have not been consulted on this plan. These companies employ thousands of Albertans and Calgarians, and they are vital to the Alberta economy. Why this government has chosen to forge ahead with such a plan when we are facing record unemployment levels within our province has me perplexed. This is a time when we need to be incentivizing all small and medium-sized start-ups. This legislation sends a very poor signal to business. Bill 25 will undoubtedly strand a significant portion of oil sands resources and limit Alberta's economic growth potential by preventing responsible growth once the cap is met.

This bill also favours current players by artificially limiting the size of Alberta's oil sands market. This only serves to stifle competition and create unnecessary barriers to future participants. Additionally, by failing to provide any details on potential regulations, this legislation creates even more uncertainty and risk for investors and further weakens an already fragile economy.

Again, corroborating my point with respect to the lack of consultation, if the government has nothing to hide, then please

finish this legislation within the Legislature, not behind closed doors in cabinet. Transparency has also been a common theme for the NDP. The government must provide clarity around the role of oil sands advisory group membership and how their role will be affected by regulation. Will the group be acting as de facto regulations for all future oil sands development, or are they merely a cover to provide legitimacy to NDP policy?

Madam Speaker, for the sake of all Albertans, I encourage this government to consult appropriately and to take into account the current business climate, that is putting us all at a disadvantage and which is being made worse by this government and the uncertainty that they continue to create.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd just like to say that I clearly will be supporting the amendment, and I appreciate the member moving it forward. The NDP in this case are setting out a greenhouse gas emissions limit, and my concern with that is that, quite frankly, this cap on emissions does two things. It is a complete business killer, and secondly, it will do almost nothing to actually reduce real greenhouse gas emissions. The cap on emissions is, in effect, not just a cap on emissions. It's a cap on oil sands. It's a cap on Canada's GDP. It's a cap on business. It's a cap on innovation. It's a cap on jobs. It's a cap on the future of Albertans and Canadians. It's a cap on affordable energy, a cap on transportation, a cap on competitiveness. It's a cap on everything we do in our life.

For instance, just this last week, constituency week, while I was home, I had three different business owners come to me and express their frustration with the policies of the government. One of them put it this way. He asked me to come to his place of business. He sat there, and he looked at me and said: "Can you give me one reason why I should not move my business to Saskatchewan today? Everything I do I can do just as easily over there for a lot less cost. Why should I stay here?"

The other business I spoke with is on the edge of insolvency, a small retailer in the area who is struggling because of loss of rent, loss of business activity, essentially on the edge of bankruptcy.

The third one is actually a fairly large business in central Alberta, the owner of which I met with the other day. His comment to me was: "Well, you know what you can say for me? You can thank the NDP for forcing me into early retirement." He had just gotten back from Phoenix. He'd bought a house in Phoenix. He was moving. He's leaving the province.

These are the real realities. This is an antiprosperity bill. It's an antifuture bill. It's a bill that puts up barriers in front of businesses and is literally driving them out of the province. You might think that, well, it's just a couple of small businesses in a small riding. Then I read a week ago today in the *Calgary Herald*, November 16 – actually, it was first published on November 15 – a column by Don Braid, who points out that the number of businesses that have closed in Calgary is staggering. In the range of 11,000 businesses have closed or moved this year in the city of Calgary.

He goes into some details if you want to read it. He calls it "a disaster, a small business extinction unlike anything we've seen in nearly 40 years." He goes into the details: "Two thousand Calgary businesses [have absolutely] closed their doors over the summer." Another 1,800 have moved into smaller digs, trying to survive. "In the first nine months of this year, 11,400 Calgary businesses have either vanished or moved."

These are astounding numbers. Even if you want to add in the new businesses that have started, many of which are people who

have lost their jobs and are trying to create something to stay alive, in the city of Calgary we're still at a net loss of over 4,000 businesses. The reality is that most of the new businesses are not going to be big-time employers. They're not going to have big-time wages to hand out to people. This cap on emissions is part of what contributes to a cap on almost everything that happens in our province. This is self-harming behaviour, quite frankly.

Albeit it's for a cause, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by .035 per cent, the reality is that it's not going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in any measurable way. I guess you'd have to forgive some Albertans for feeling that all of this is just a cover for socialist engineering, a grand wealth transfer, a desire to take wealth and distribute it in different kinds of ways, to create some kind of a new fantasy green economy. Who knows where that's going?

The environment minister said on January 11 in Calgary that we may not need the carbon tax forever if we can find ways to reduce emissions. Fine. The suggestion that the tax may not be permanent is an interesting idea. I would suggest that maybe a single province-wide greenhouse gas free day would actually reduce the annual emissions of our province a lot more than a cap on emissions on the oil fields and on business and on our futures actually would.

What would it take to actually reduce our net annual greenhouse gas emissions? How about a greenhouse gas free day or no coffee for a whole day? Just turn the utilities off for a day. Prohibit fuels for a day. Prohibit the creation of electrical power for one day. It would actually reduce greenhouse gases more than this bill will, and I think it would actually even create more awareness of the difficulties of reducing greenhouse gases. It would bring people's attention more to it. If this is about changing behaviour and creating awareness, let's create awareness.

There's another option, too. You know, we can talk about the science of various things. There is pretty good science out there for clean coal. We could actually engage in clean coal and reduce greenhouse gas emissions without putting a cap on everybody's businesses, on their futures, on their jobs, on their lives. There are options out there whereby we could actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions without capping the existence and the future of Alberta's economy. So my challenges are to you that this really is about reducing the prosperity of Alberta while at the same time not effectively actually reducing any greenhouse gases in serious ways.

Thank you.

11:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** I neglected after the mover of the amendment to offer the provisions of Standing Order 29(2)(a). Does anyone have any questions or comments for this member under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Just a quick question for the member. He suggested shutting down the entire Alberta economy for a day, and I'm just wondering if he's done an economic impact analysis and what that's shown. How much would that actually save, and how badly would that hurt the economy?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. A wonderful question, actually. The answer is no, just as you haven't done one on your whole carbon tax thing.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, is there another speaker to the amendment? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity to speak on the hoist amendment today. I rise to speak again in opposition to this ideological bill. There are many reasons why I think that this bill is onerous and why it will not have my support. The government is yet again trying to control industry and impose another cap and hamper investment and create more uncertainty in Alberta's energy sector. Once again, this government is forging ahead without consultation and without feedback from the very panel they asked to determine the law's viability. The oil sands advisory group, chaired by Tzeporah Berman, has not even completed its work, and it won't be complete until February of next year. Sounds like a great reason to put this off, as the hon. member next to me has suggested, until the spring, doesn't it?

We can't possibly trust that the regulation will be fair or positive for the industry. What about all the leases the government has already sold? How do you accommodate for them? Are you planning on using taxpayers' dollars to pay them out, too? Where is this money going to come from?

This cap will cut out any possibility of new investors, and investors' confidence will continue to wane. This 100-megatonne emissions cap has been introduced by this government as one part of their climate leadership action plan. Did the government not consult with all the stakeholders before going ahead and arbitrarily coming up with a figure? The oil sands have been paying for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions under the specified gas emitters regulation levy since 2007. Alberta was the first jurisdiction in North America to put a price on carbon. However, industry was in favour of this agreement and did not see all the funds go towards industry research and development.

The government holds fast to the claim that it has faced increasing investigation over unmanned emissions. All mine sites, in situ sites, primary production sites, and the processing plants will be held accountable by this emissions cap. Alberta oil sands only make up approximately 9 per cent of the nation's total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and Canada is about 1.8 per cent of the world's. As China brings on coal power over the next four years, that 1.8 per cent that our entire country produces from all kinds of electricity will shrink. While the 100-megatonne cap will allow 50 per cent growth from 2014 levels, if Alberta isn't producing the energy the world wants because of the cap, our competitors, many of whom have horrible environmental and human rights records, will supply the world with the energy that they need. The world needs more oil, and no other jurisdiction is limiting their production, except here. This hurts our economy on so many levels.

Industry is trying to maintain, and many oil workers are out of jobs due to the strain on the economy. I'm not really entirely sure why the government wants to hamper further production and let other jurisdictions pick up the slack, ones that, frankly, don't have the record that we have. Oil will be produced, and it will be used world-wide. If we don't produce it, someone else will, jurisdictions that, frankly, don't have either the environmental standards that we have here in Alberta nor the mechanisms that will give their workers a fair pay and a safe work environment.

If this bill is passed, I feel the government has missed the mark on trying to cut down global emissions. Jurisdictions outside of Canada that do not have our standards will produce more as a result of increased global demand for oil, but here in Alberta we will be limited. Can you imagine that? Clean, ethical oil limited because of bad policy. This truly needs to be thought through completely. Why not try to rebuild the Alberta advantage and build a strong economy? So much could come from it.

In Alberta we're experts in clean oil production. I believe that we need to place more focus on that and on our technologies that we're good at and export that to the world, sell that to the world. That's

part of diversifying our economy and supporting what our industries already have. We have to ask ourselves: why are we discussing this right now while we have all these problems in our province? What's the hurry? Are we not sending out a negative message to investors that this province is not in support of their investments and all the businesses that come along with that?

Unlike Saskatchewan, all the decisions that the NDP has made over the last year and a half have made our economy worse and will continue to stifle growth while Saskatchewan picks up in this industry. Increases to corporate taxation, emissions caps, increases to personal taxes, the massive carbon tax, shutting down of a valuable industry like coal produces, and destroying contracts: this is so far what the government has done for our province and still has the audacity to say how oil production is the reason for the huge deficit. No. Actions from this government to destroy the industry, department overspending, and the borrowing of billions of dollars to run the province will eventually drive the last nail in the fiscal coffin that we're facing.

Oil will bounce back, but we won't be able to capitalize on it because, frankly, companies are leaving our province. They are leaving. From all over my riding I get word that they're leaving for Saskatchewan or that they're closing up shop and going and doing something else in British Columbia. They are leaving. This government's antibusiness stance is driving thriving businesses to other jurisdictions like Saskatchewan, again, or the States. You look at North Dakota. Have you asked Albertans and leaders of industry for their input regarding your climate change plan?

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes, we have.

**Mr. Taylor:** Okay. Good.

Have you asked outside investors what they think of our province?

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes.

11:40

**Mr. Taylor:** You know, what I find interesting, though, is that investment now is flowing into Saskatchewan. So if you asked them, how well did you ask them? If they are starting to move their investments and shift to other jurisdictions, I don't think you asked the right questions or maybe listened to what they were saying.

According to the report released by the Fraser Institute... [interjections] Okay. I was waiting for that.

The report, entitled *How Alberta's Carbon Emission Cap Will Reduce Oil Sands Growth*, states that placing an emissions cap will cost Albertans between \$150 billion and \$250 billion in revenue due to resources not being produced. This decision will have a severe adverse effect on our economy for years to come. Where's the social licence that this government bought?

Now that the newly elected President promised approval of the Keystone pipeline, in the new year will the Premier be discussing this with the new President, or will she kowtow to the environmentalists she has appointed to the oil sands advisory group? It's a good question. We will soon see if what the Premier has been promising this province will come to fruition or if she is going to be just appeasing us with empty words.

The Middle East, Texas, North Dakota are not – not – placing a carbon tax on their production. The U.S. has elected people at all levels who are prioritizing economic growth – that's something we sure need in this province – over carbon reduction, and they're happy to steal any North American investment they can from us. Many countries will not entertain a carbon tax because they know it will cost jobs. I ask the government to stop trying to control the industry and imposing further damaging caps that hamper

investment and create more uncertainty in Alberta's oil industry sector.

For these reasons I will not be able to support this bill in its present form. [interjections] I know that saddens you guys over there.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a) for the hon. member who has just spoken?

Seeing none, I'll recognize Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I believe this is the third amendment to this bill that I've risen to speak on. This one wants to read the act in six months. Now, I find that a bit strange. I know that when I talk to industry and when I talk to front-line workers, what they want is certainty out of the government. They don't want us delaying things for six months on something we've already talked to them about so that we can go back and talk to them again and then do the same thing. That's just a poor way of doing business. So in the interest of that certainty, I rise to speak against this amendment, as I'm sure the Opposition House Leader is surprised to learn.

We need to be able to get investment flowing in Alberta. I know there are lots of people waiting. I had a meeting with an individual just last week who is contemplating whether or not he wants to build a refinery here in Alberta. He actually thought I was a member of the Wildrose Party when he came into my office, which was a bit interesting. What that does show me is that there are people looking at this province, but what they are waiting for is certainty. They are waiting for things like this bill to pass third reading, to get royal assent so that they know what they're investing in. The more we delay on these things, the longer these investors are going to sit idle, and that's further down the road that we're creating these jobs. We need to get Albertans back to work, and quite frankly I can't support delaying this any longer.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, Madam Speaker, I am saddened and wounded, shocked by the government members' decision to not support such a sensible amendment, proposed by a colleague of mine from the third party.

**An Hon. Member:** No colleagues here.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, you do know things about changing colleagues.

**An Hon. Member:** Not on your scale.

**Mr. Cooper:** Certainly not on the scale that I understand about it, but I think that the results might be similar with respect to this.

You know, I do find it interesting with respect to the comments around investment in refining given that this piece of legislation provides an additional cap or exemption for refining, which may be why individuals are chatting about that. I'm certain that you're not hearing from many individuals or mid-sized companies that are coming to your office speaking to you about making significant and large multibillion-dollar investments in oil sands productions because you're capping their future. While I believe the member when he said that he had someone come speak to him about refining, Madam Speaker, the bill provides an exemption for refining. It is possible that people want to continue to invest in refining, but what they don't want is a cap on the direction of our province. I understand that they want certainty, but they certainly

don't want this certainty. They want a certainty that provides a path for investment in the future, and this doesn't provide it.

It's more than a little disappointing to see the government continue down this path of capping our ability to extract resources out of the oil sands, and it's disappointing that the government isn't willing to stop and wait for their experts. Now, I get that they think that the folks that we on this side of the House often refer to – I get that they don't like those experts, but they've selected their own experts. You would think that they would want certainty from them prior to rushing through this piece of legislation.

It's unfortunate that the member isn't willing to wait six months. It's unfortunate that the government is not willing to wait six months. With respect to refining there already are some provisions in this although I am certain that at Committee of the Whole we will have some significant discussions around that 100-megatonne cap. It's unfortunate that they're not willing to wait for their experts to provide certainty that they're on the right path.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Spruce Grove-St. Albert, did you wish to respond?

**Mr. Horne:** Just a quick response. If we're interested in providing certainty, then I would suspect that what the hon. member really wants is not to in fact wait six months for a decision on this but instead to move it to third reading, where he could vote against it. I'm a bit concerned about the strategy of delaying six months longer to provide that certainty to industry. The only conclusion I can come to is that this is little more than a political game.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the comments. I would just like to follow through with the aspect of certainty. I would like a little bit more clarification on that because my understanding would be that in order to have some of that certainty for the industry, we would need to see that panel come forward with some of their discussions. So much of the certainty, in my understanding anyway, would be coming from understanding the direction that the panel is going to come back with regard to the cap because the whole point of the panel being put forward was to make sure that we had an understanding about that 100-megatonne emission cap. It's very hard, I would think, to provide certainty without having the panel coming back with their research and their information. Whether or not we agree that the people that are on that panel are the right people, that's at this point not relevant, but to the government in order to provide that certainty...

11:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you so much. I am very honoured to stand and speak to this amendment. Thank you to the member for bringing forward this very important amendment to make sure that we actually have the time to look at this bill. There are so many reasons that this bill needs to be put off for at least six months so that we can actually take a look at some of the information that's coming forward. There are so many reasons. Again, I'll reiterate the fact that the panel has not brought forward their information.

This gives us the opportunity to actually bring in more stakeholders into our space, to be able to talk to them. As the member across the way had mentioned, he's had people come into his office to speak to him about that. Can you imagine? Given a

little bit more time, I think that all of us would have a lot more visits from people in the small and medium-sized groups to be able to come back and give us some information.

One of the things I want to say is that the aspect of slowing this down – and we've mentioned this before – is to bring forward an economic impact study. Albertans are on a roller coaster already. They really are. Some of that roller coaster is being imposed by this government. The volatility of the market is further being hampered by the volatility of the policies that are coming forward. A lot of that has to do with the inability to create stability or to create certainty.

Like we've mentioned before, we don't know if this 100-megatonne cap on emissions is even the right number. It was a number that was pulled from thin air. It could be more. It could be less. Who knows? Unfortunately, the panel that's been put together to bring this discussion forward will not be giving us any of that information till February, as I understand it, so how are we supposed to put through a bill that has not had the information brought forward by the panel that was created by the government to actually advise all of us on how that's supposed to work? It seems like a common-sense idea. I would think that the government would have amended their own bill to actually bring this forward, realizing that the panel's information was not going to coincide with this bill going through. It really makes us question the validity of putting this bill through without actually having all of that information.

If you look at the forecasts into 2040, the prohibited production will cost Canadians billions of barrels of prosperity, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 2 billion to 3 billion barrels. I mean, how is that a win in anybody's imagination? I just don't understand it. There are interests outside of Alberta that are laughing at us and literally applauding the government for keeping our oil in the ground and capping our production. There are competitors absolutely everywhere globally that are completely grateful to this government for giving them our piece of the market because what we are not producing here we can guarantee is going to get produced somewhere else.

I mean, obviously, this is not a piece of legislation that is for Albertans because it's actively – actively – hurting the people that live in this province and hurting Canadians. Anybody else in the rest of the world are going: woo-hoo; we get to buy into this market right away. [interjection] I find it appalling that you think it's funny. It's not. This is actually a very serious concept and one that the government doesn't seem to understand. Other people, other nations, other jurisdictions are literally ecstatic that we are not going to be in the market, that our piece of the market is being capped.

This government is actively campaigning against Canadian oil. The panel co-chair, Tzeporah Berman, has actively spoken out and continues to speak out against responsible development, but where's the response to other development? Why is it that our oil and gas and our production here in Alberta is under attack? We should be producing more here, not less, especially if the regulations are in place to make us better. Why would we be giving away that piece of market when we know ethically and responsibly that we are the best developers of this energy? I mean, we should always, always continue to want to do better, work together to do better but not be against the very thing that brings prosperity to Albertans and Canadians. So many people are asking these questions.

I was so surprised at the member across the way. The person that was coming in to look at potentially investing in a refinery was not concerned about the fact that they may invest into something that may also have caps on it, may not be concerned that whatever investment might come into this province – that we have a

government that chooses people to be on a panel that actively works against Alberta and Canadian oil. I'm not sure how a person would feel that there's a relative investment to make there. But, like I said, I would be interested to hear about that.

Again, where is the engagement with the stakeholders? That's really what we're asking for here with not pushing this bill a bit forward. We do have every manner of technical expertise in this province. If you want to know how to get things out of the ground here, this is the place to do it. We have the technical expertise. There's a huge brain drain happening right now. They're leaving our province. There's going to be a time that we're going to want to ramp this up, and where are these folks going to be? We're just pushing them out the door.

What about our small and medium industry? How is the government planning on compensating the leaseholders? Has that mechanism been worked into this? This might be a really good reason to hold off on putting this bill forward. It may not have been something that was thought of when this bill came out on paper.

There are a minimal number of leases that are left over after where we're at with this megatonne cap already. Those are very, very valuable leases. So how is that going to be determined? It might be something worth putting time into and a little bit of space between what's happening right now, the panel coming back to

figure out how that's going to work. How is the government going to compensate for leases that have already been sold?

**Mr. Cooper:** That's a fair question.

**Mrs. Aheer:** I think it's a reasonable question.

Again to the member across the way: how do you entice investment? I mean, how do you feel about shutting down economic prospects? We're the third-largest oil reserve in the world and, at least for the moment, the fifth-largest producer. So how do you justify somebody like Karen Mahon, the national director of Stand? The Premier hired environmental lobbyists and protestors to help with climate regulation, evidently to buy a social licence for pipelines. What this government and the federal government fail to remember is that they're not giving enough credit to the thorough and legitimate NEB process. There are no provincial or municipal vetoes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:59 a.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 23, 2016

Day 51

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
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Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 23, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

### Statement by the Speaker

**Mr. Manmeet Singh Bhullar**

**The Speaker:** If I might, hon. members, I would ask that you remain standing. One year ago today we in this House lost one of our colleagues and friends, Manmeet Bhullar, in a tragic auto accident. Mr. Bhullar represented the constituencies of Calgary-Montrose and Calgary-Greenway from 2008 until his untimely passing, on November 23, 2015. For those of us who knew him, we recognized him as a passionate and unwavering member dedicated to public service, and he will long be remembered by Albertans. If we could take a brief pause.

Thank you. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this House sitting in your gallery the Honourable Valerie Garrido-Lowe, minister within the government of Guyana's Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, and Toshao Gideon John of the Paramakatoi village. Minister Garrido-Lowe and Toshao John are here on a reciprocal visit after two staff members from my ministry had the privilege of joining them at the national Toshao's conference in Guyana earlier this year. During their visit they will continue their exchange of ideas and dialogues on a range of topics, including indigenous consultation, with staff in my ministry. They both bring a wealth of experience and a passion for strengthening their communities, and we are grateful they could be here. I would ask them to please rise – thank you – and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, and welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 60 students, staff, and chaperones from the Centre for Learning@Home. The students and chaperones are accompanied today by teachers Brittany Cushion and Daryl Drozda. They join us from many different communities across this province, and I'm grateful that they could be here this afternoon. I know they have all learned a lot already today as earlier they had debated both lowering the voting age and whether or not candy should be banned from schools. I would now ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly

28 students from Dewberry school. Now, Dewberry has distinguished itself as being the home of three generations of winners of the Rangeland Derby at the Calgary Stampede, and based on statistical probability, at least four of these students will someday become chuckwagon drivers. They are accompanied by their teachers Jen Romanchuk and Shalene Zayac along with chaperones Kelly Davies, Melanie Stevenson, and Sheldon Quickstad. They are seated in the public gallery in the corner, which is sort of where I spent most of my school years as well. It is a pleasure to have them here, and I ask my colleagues to join me with the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Hon. students, at times today this might remind you of chuckwagon racing.

Are there any other school groups to be introduced today?

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to the House two individuals co-ordinating a campaign to urge the federal government to reverse a decision to move the case processing centre out of Vegreville: Marianne Hladun, regional executive vice-president for prairies, here from Winnipeg, a Public Service Alliance of Canada activist and member serving many committees and bargaining teams; and Michelle Henderson, chief shop steward for the Canada Employment and Immigration Union, a component of PSAC, local 30876 rep, and employee of the CPC in Vegreville. I ask that they rise so that we may extend the traditional warm welcome of this House and continued support because it does affect us all.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, do you have another introduction?

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time it's a great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Anderson family, Curtis and his parents, Karen and Norman, who are visiting us from the Innisfree area in my constituency. In 2002 Curtis was a combatant in the bull riding event at the Ponoka Stampede and suffered a severe brain injury, but never one to be deterred, he cowboyed up, and since that time Curtis and his family have conducted the Courage Canada Trail Ride on the last weekend in May and have raised over \$167,000 for brain injury survivors and their families. [some applause] Yes. Thank you. Additional funds have also gone to the Canadian Pro Rodeo Sport Medicine Team and the Make-A-Wish Foundation. I ask that all my colleagues give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some very special people who work in the schools in the Wood Buffalo region. When fire swept through the area in early May, these fine individuals put the safety and well-being of the students first while often not even knowing how their own families and homes had fared. These officials are just a small group out of hundreds who acted very quickly to get students out of harm's way, and their actions deserve to be commended. Joining us today are trustees Nathalie Lachance and Karen Doucet and superintendent Robert Lessard. From Fort McMurray Catholic I have trustee Tracy McKinnon, superintendent George McGuigan, and deputy superintendent Monica Mankowski. From Fort McMurray public I have

board chair Jeff Thompson, vice-chair Linda Mywaart, trustee Tim O'Hara, and superintendent Doug Nicholls. I would ask them all to please rise and receive a very warm greeting from the members of the Assembly here today.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Legislature three guests from Advocis. Advocis works with Albertans to provide financial advice and help ensure the financial well-being of many Alberta families. They're not here specifically to give me guidance; they help all Albertans out. They're in town to have a conference later. Joining us today from Advocis are Greg Pollock, the CEO; Wade Baldwin, the board chair; and Rob McCullagh, a member. I ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Ceci:** The second group of guests I'd like to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the Assembly are two guests from the Alberta credit union system. They are here as we introduce the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016, later today. Garth Warner is the president and CEO of Alberta's largest credit union, Servus Credit Union, and Steve Friend is the president and CEO of Vision Credit Union. I'd like to ask these guests and others who are here with them that I didn't get an opportunity to introduce but who are with the credit union system to stand up and receive the traditional warm welcome.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three home-schooling families from my constituency of Wetaskiwin-Camrose, strong advocates for parent-directed education and also very successful stories in that area. If they would please rise and remain standing as I call out their names. We have Shane, Robyn, Josh, and Josie Smith; we have Nola, Emma, and Marta Hutchinson; and also Neal, Emily, Joan, and Amy Bishop. Please join me in welcoming these three wonderful families, and let them receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Courtney Hare. Courtney is currently the public policy manager for Momentum, a Calgary-based social enterprise focusing on poverty reduction and economic inclusion. Her work involves designing social and economic policy. Most recently she's worked on payday lending, children's education savings, and local investment funds such as CEDIFs. Courtney also has the distinct honour to have replaced the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board at his job at Momentum. I would like to ask Courtney to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the

Assembly Dr. David Bailey and Dr. John Basarab. Dr. Bailey is the president and CEO of Genome Alberta, a not-for-profit funding agency focused on genomics research. I look forward to speaking about Genome Alberta later today. Dr. John Basarab is one of Alberta's, if not Canada's, leading researchers in beef cattle management and breeding. I would ask that they rise and please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and to the House Kathy Hughes: Calgary schoolteacher, educator, volunteer for the Canadian Mental Health Association, and a passionate member of Forward Action in Mental Health. Kathy has also courageously shared her own lived experiences and expert opinions as government implements the mental health review. She's a strong advocate for timely, patient-centred continuity of care for mental health and addictions and a health system that truly supports these values. I'll ask Kathy to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other visitors to introduce today? The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Oscar Buera Jr. Oscar is a financial adviser, life insurance agent, and associate vice-president of Greatway Financial Inc. He is also a member of Advocis and supporter of YMCA international, and Oscar is a Filipino-Canadian community leader. More importantly, he came all the way from the most beautiful and diverse riding of Calgary-McCall. I ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

### Mr. Manmeet Singh Bhullar

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was one year ago today that our friend and colleague Manmeet Singh Bhullar headed north on the QE II highway to join his colleagues in this Chamber. As he drove, the weather deteriorated, and he wound up in the middle of the first snowstorm of the season. Seeing multiple vehicles in the ditch, Manmeet pulled over to help a motorist in distress. It was then that the unthinkable happened, and just like that a bright light in all of our lives went out.

In the months since the terrible day we've had no choice but to carry on. Our constituents elected us to bring their voices to this place and to make sure that their views are heard loud and clear by the government. We take the responsibility very seriously.

Manmeet took that responsibility very seriously. Mr. Speaker, never before have I met anyone so selfless in their dedication to serving others, whether it was a constituent, an Albertan in need, or an Afghan family seeking to flee religious persecution in their homeland. He worked tirelessly to achieve a positive outcome for all who came to him for help.

Mr. Speaker, there are reminders of our dear friend everywhere, and his absence, even a year later, is glaring. Whether it's catching a glimpse of his photo on the wall in our caucus office or preparing

a question on an issue that was important to him, Manmeet crosses our minds every day. We miss his big heart and his booming laugh. We miss his compassion for all who suffer and his passion for helping them. We miss his dedication to his family, his constituents, his community, and his province. Most of all, we miss his friendship.

Manmeet died as he lived, helping others and as a hero. As we go about our work, we strive every day to honour him by carrying on that legacy of selfless service, and I hope that we're making him proud.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a bizarre situation unravelling here in Alberta. Our government, the one that should be creating an environment that attracts investment and creates real private-sector employment, is doing anything but. The carbon tax will put Alberta business at a distinct disadvantage not only interprovincially but internationally as well. Instead of listening to the thousands of Albertans who rallied against the tax across the province, this government instead is pushing ahead with its job-killing strategy. It's like owning a gas station on a corner, advertising your gas for 20 cents higher than the station across the street, and then wondering why no one will stop at your convenience store.

A perfect example of how bizarre this tax is relates to our greenhouse industry. I spoke to an independent greenhouse that will be facing a \$20,000 increase in operating costs just due to the carbon tax. There is no way they can absorb these costs, so it will be passed on to consumers. Of course, those consumers are also being hit by the tax at home, so they'll have fewer dollars to use for buying vegetables and landscaping. Not only will the greenhouse face unmanageable new costs as a result of the tax; they will also have fewer sales to compensate.

Even more bizarre is the impact on two nurseries in my area that supply seedlings for reforestation. They may be facing insolvency because they can no longer compete with operations in British Columbia and Saskatchewan due to our higher minimum wage and now the carbon tax. Mr. Speaker, reforestation actually increases carbon absorption, yet our government's tax is penalizing the very producers who will reduce our carbon footprint. This government is not only working against Albertans, but this tax is working against the very situation that they are trying to address.

The most recent real poll, the by-election in Medicine Hat, showed that NDP support is at 1 per cent. This is consistent with the cold shoulder they received at the recent AAMD and C conference last week. Albertans clearly are saying: bring on 2019, and let's hope there's something left to salvage.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Electricity Power Purchase Agreements

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, there are real big changes coming in electricity, driven by a government that has demonstrated that it doesn't know what it is doing when it comes to electricity, but I will respect the embargo. So let me ask a question on behalf of the people of Calgary, who have been so poorly served so far by this

government. Actions of this government threaten the profitability of Enmax, and that means no dividend for the city of Calgary, and that means the property taxes of every single home in Calgary could go up by as much as 4.5 per cent a year. Why is the Premier kicking Calgary when it's already hurting so much?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Quite honestly, the foundation of the member opposite's question is not particularly accurate. The issue of the PPAs does not have a direct correlation to property taxes in Calgary, and to suggest otherwise is really not helpful. However, we will continue to stand up for Albertans. We will continue to do everything we can to get the best deal for Albertans and to get the best outcome for all Albertans because we are on the side of consumers. We are on the side of Albertans who are trying to make a go of it here in this province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, Albertans know that there is a disagreement on the facts between what the Premier is saying and what the mayor of Calgary is saying, and I know which one we think is telling the truth. The NDP changed the law relating to power plants and to Enmax, and it exercised its change-in-law provision. Action and consequence: straightforward stuff. But this government sued when they were in the wrong and is now threatening to legislate a change to a 16-year-old contract. Enmax and all of its profits belong to the people of Calgary. Why is the government continuing to punish Calgarians?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the only person talking about threats of legislation is the member opposite. It certainly is nobody over here. Quite frankly, that kind of hyperbole, whether coming from there or from other parts in the community, is not helpful to a reasonable, respectful, grown-up, mature discussion focused on coming to pragmatic business outcomes that ultimately will serve Albertans, serve Alberta consumers, serve Alberta homeowners, and serve Calgarians, too.

**Mr. Jean:** The government rails about big companies making big profits, but these are Alberta companies with Alberta investments creating Alberta jobs. What this is really all about is that the NDP government wanted to raise the carbon tax. It didn't understand the consequences of its action and where we are now, but now we have court cases and threats of banana republic, retroactive legislation, and a wholesale change in electricity, all the result of NDP incompetence. Will the Premier admit that when it comes to this file, her government is simply in way over its head?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what I will admit is that our government is committed to ensuring that Albertans get off the roller coaster of volatile prices in their electricity brought about by the risky ideological experiment of those folks over there. We are focused on that. We are also focused on moving this province forward into this decade, into the future, by ensuring that we take the appropriate action to protect our climate, to get off coal, and to reposition our economy for the success that we know we can all attain.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** Food bank use in Alberta is up a staggering 136 per cent since 2008. These are moms and dads who are trying desperately to take care of their families as we get closer to Christmas. Demand is

going up while people's ability to give is going down. The NDP's carbon tax will just make things worse. In just 38 days it will add \$21,000 in extra costs to the Calgary Food Bank alone. Why is the Premier taking money away from charities and Alberta's most vulnerable citizens and those most in need at a time when they can simply not afford it?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear the member opposite talk about food banks because, quite frankly, we would like people to use them less. That's why this government got rid of a regressive flat tax and brought in a progressive tax. That's why this government brought in the first-ever child tax benefit, to take 350,000 children off the rolls. That is why this government raised the minimum wage, so people working full-time don't have to stop at the food bank on their way home.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, what this government is not working – and Albertans from every background know the damage the carbon tax will have. School boards across the province are worried. They're the ones who pay for the fuel and gas that run our buses and heat our schools. It's why Wildrose put forward an amendment to exempt school boards from the carbon tax, an amendment, by the way, the NDP voted against. But now the Education minister is saying that school boards will be, quote, first in line for the money. Will the Premier please confirm whether funds taxed from families will be used to compensate school boards, yes or no?

**Ms Notley:** Well, what the Education minister was talking about was that through our energy efficiency program, something that we clearly talked about, something that is long overdue in this province – we were the only province without an energy efficiency program, if you can imagine that, Mr. Speaker. One of the first announcements through there was for \$9 million to 36 schools to put in solar panels so that they could reduce their emissions. And that is the kind of thing that we will continue to do because we believe in moving this province forward. We believe in increasing renewable energy. We believe in bringing down our emissions because we believe climate change is real.

**Mr. Jean:** Here's the problem. There are moms and dads in Alberta who will receive zero dollars for paying more to heat their homes and to drive their kids around. There are truck drivers, farmers, construction workers, office assistants who won't be receiving a penny in compensation for paying more to drive to work. Every municipality will be on the hook, and our most vulnerable and our charities will see millions of dollars taken from them to pay for a massive slush fund and corporate handouts. Why is the Premier trying to pick favourites? Just scrap this ridiculous carbon tax that will hurt all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The favourite that this government is picking is the environment. The favourite that this government is picking is the health of our children. The favourite that this government is picking is our ability to move forward into a 21st-century economy, not staying stuck in the past, pretending that there are no challenges for us to face, because that's what good leadership looks like.

#### Investigations of Deaths of Children in Care

**Mr. Jean:** The circumstances surrounding Serenity's death are tragic and deplorable, and she deserved so much more from this government. I am appalled at just how little movement there has

been in investigating her death and how much secrecy continues to surround this file. We now know that the RCMP continued to wait for paperwork related to Serenity's death. It's been two years, and we don't need more excuses; we need action from this government. What steps is the Premier taking to remove backlogs and secrecy in government departments so we can give Serenity the justice she so clearly deserves?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let me first begin by saying that it is not appropriate for me or anybody in this government to comment on the course of the RCMP investigation. The RCMP will manage the issue the way they should because that's what's appropriate. As we've already talked about, there are a number of efforts going on within the ministry and will continue to go on within the ministry to improve the support that we give to all children at risk because, quite frankly, I think all people on both sides of this House believe that that is a fundamental priority for all of us.

**Mr. Jean:** The legislative tools that we have to investigate Serenity's death are broken. In the Kinship Care Handbook, drafted in 2015, it clearly states, "The Enhancement Act provides the [Child and Youth] Advocate with full access to information," but clearly that is not the case. The advocate was unable to receive a copy of Serenity's autopsy report. We don't know if her death has been ruled a homicide, was left as undetermined, or something else. Why was the enhancement act circumvented? And why was the advocate, who is supposed to represent vulnerable children in our province, not receiving full disclosure?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we've already answered this question. The fact of the matter is that the medical examiner gave ongoing reports to the advocate as this matter unfolded. The final official report was not forwarded until later, in part at the request of the police. But the fact of the matter is that the information was shared, and the advocate was able to prepare a report. Most importantly, we continue to be focused on moving forward on the recommendations of the advocate from this report and others because, quite frankly, we want to make sure that the system is better.

2:00

**Mr. Jean:** A system set up on a foundation of secrecy is always destined to fail. The longer we allow our child services system to operate in the shadows, the greater the chance is that what happened to Serenity will actually happen to another child. I know there are wonderful people on the front lines trying everything they can do, but there is a culture of secrecy that is failing our children. Change needs to start at the top. What specific measures is the Premier taking to end the secrecy that permeates the department related to children in care?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't actually think that the issue of secrecy is at the heart of the challenges that we face today when it comes to keeping children at risk in Alberta safe. What I will say that this government has done is that when we were in opposition, we lobbied relentlessly to have a children's advocate who was independent, and it was as a result of our work that we now have an independent child advocate. The next thing we did was reverse cuts that were made by the previous government, these guys' forthcoming in-laws. We reversed those cuts in order to ensure that the youth advocate had all the tools at his disposal to do the investigation.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

Could we please stop the clock for a minute so I can speak to the parliamentary adviser?

The leader of the third party.

### Child Intervention System

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, one year ago today our friend and colleague Manmeet Singh Bhullar tragically lost his life on the QE II highway helping a fellow Albertan in need. Among Manmeet's many accomplishments were changes he made to the child intervention and welfare system when he was Human Services minister. After learning the details surrounding the death of little Serenity, it's clear that the system still needs care and we have much more work to do. To the Premier: will you work with all of us, establish an all-party committee to take an in-depth look at the systemic issues plaguing Alberta's child intervention system?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's certainly a very interesting question. We've certainly had forums within which we've been able to have more wide-ranging conversations, and we have a committee that would appropriately consider that matter. It's a question of whether that can be put forward on the agenda through the all-party committee that already exists, but I'll take the request under advisement because I think there's a certain amount of merit to it.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Premier. I know all Albertans that read Paula Simons' column on the tragic death of Serenity were heartbroken. The system failed the little girl, and Albertans want answers. We're halfway there, Premier. Will you commit today to referring this to a committee that could properly deal with this issue? We can all work together on it. This is not partisan.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly, as I said, will take under advisement the suggestion that the member has with respect to the particular matter that the member refers to. Because it's still under investigation by the police, that's not one that we could refer to committee, but actually I suspect that it touches on a number of issues that could still be discussed at a committee and that would be effectively addressing some of the issues that were at play in this particular tragedy. As I say, we'll give it some consideration.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we know that as we speak, there are many children in care who could benefit from immediate action to improve the system. Premier, when will you tell this House which committee this could go to to be dealt with? I appreciate where you've come today with these questions. Thank you for that, but I think Albertans at home will be interested to know when we'll hear back from you about what committee and how that might happen, please.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I can't give you a specific time or date on that one, but I certainly will make my commitment to the member opposite that I will report back to him personally on the matter and on how we can address the matter as soon as possible.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, as we move forward with the questions – I've received several notes over the last couple of days – I want to remind all members to address their comments through the chair.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

### Electric Power Price Cap

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently Albertans are benefiting from historically low electricity rates. However, many of my constituents in Edmonton-Manning have raised concerns about the volatile nature of our province's electricity system. I have heard from families and businesses alike that they feel vulnerable to sudden price increases. To the Minister of Energy: why is the government capping electricity rates for consumers?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. We are standing up for consumers, for families, small businesses, and farmers. That's why we committed in our election to look at smart regulating and why our party has a long tradition of standing up for consumers and families. Yesterday we were proud to announce a cap to protect families so their bills will be fair and affordable. I know that when we had a small business, a cow-calf operation, it would have been nice to be able to predict our bills from month to month.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the capping of electricity rates impacts everyone from distributors to retailers to consumers, to the same minister: how will the government be working with stakeholders to implement the rate cap?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We committed yesterday to a cap, and we also committed that we will work with retailers, distributors, and consumers to come up with the best plan to meet the guarantee. We want to make sure we get it right. We also understand that there are areas such as Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, and the REAs that don't fall under this system right now, but we will be consulting with them to make sure they are included.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the current economic climate and the need to diversify Alberta's economy, again to the same minister: will this rate cap apply to small businesses and farms?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Yes. As I mentioned: families, farms, small businesses. They all feel the squeeze of budgets, and as prices skyrocket such as they did in 2013, they want to be able to predict their bills. The opposition sometimes talks about protecting investment, but we need to look at protecting small businesses that suffer from a volatile electric system. As our economy stabilizes, we do know prices will go up, and we need to make sure that things are stable, predictable, and affordable.

### Child Intervention System and Indigenous Children

**Mr. Hanson:** Mr. Speaker, there were 53 reports of serious injury and death to the office of the Child and Youth Advocate in 2015-16, and indigenous children and babies represent 51 per cent of these incidents, yet this government chose to reduce the child intervention budget by more than \$3 million. That just does not make sense. Can the Minister of Indigenous Relations stand here

today and tell Alberta's indigenous communities that his government is doing everything it can to prevent these horrible things happening to indigenous babies and children in care?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that it's a priority for our government to provide children with the right supports and the right resources. I heard the member say that we made cuts in this budget. I disagree. It's incorrect. We have increased the child intervention budget year over year, and I can provide the details. I can submit the estimates. That's not the case. We didn't cut the budget for child intervention. We increased it by \$37 million.

**Mr. Hanson:** Given that this isn't a new problem and the troubling fact is that many children in care are being neglected and abused and given that the Auditor General found in July that the department does not have a process to follow up with instances where it has identified that services don't meet standards and given that the AG also found that more than 80 per cent of children in care did not receive frequent and enough contact with their caseworker to meet minimum standards, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: how can there be any assurances that what happened to those 53 babies and children won't happen again? Where are the safeguards in our system?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. There's no question that the death of children in our care or otherwise is a heartbreaking situation, and we do know that our system has fallen tragically short for too long for too many children. That is the reason that we are taking action. We have increased the budget for child intervention. We are providing training to our staff. We are providing foster and kinship care with opportunities for training and the supports they need.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Hanson:** Since our system is in particular failing our indigenous youth and given that in the AG's report indigenous children were on average nearly one and a half times as likely not to have face-to-face contact with their caseworker every three months and more than one and a half times likely to have gaps of seven months or more between face-to-face contacts with their caseworker, will the Minister of Indigenous Relations take some responsibility and acknowledge that under his watch his department is failing indigenous children?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. The member correctly points out that there are issues in our indigenous communities. These are the broader discussions that we need to have, and we need to talk about the root causes of these issues. We have seen from a Canadian human rights decision that historically our children on First Nation reserves have been underfunded, and these are the priorities that our government is working on. We are working with indigenous communities, with our federal counterparts to make sure that our indigenous communities . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-West.

#### **Electricity Power Purchase Agreement Lawsuit Legal Counsel**

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have offered the government five opportunities to tell us why it snubbed Alberta lawyers by choosing a friend of the NDP counsel in B.C. to handle the PPA court case. We asked if there was a sole-source contract and how much the lawyer was being paid. We received no answers, but we discovered that it is a sole-source contract with a \$500,000 retainer. The only information the government provided is that the B.C. lawyer has a track record of standing up for the public interest. To the Premier: do Alberta lawyers not stand up for the public interest?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of our Alberta lawyers. I think that we have many that are doing excellent work in this area. We also know that Mr. Arvay is the pre-eminent constitutional law expert. I think Alberta lawyers would agree with that. I think his track record is very clear, and he's been recognized by national organizations for his tremendous work in this area. I think that Albertans deserve somebody who has that kind of a track record to stand up for them for this specific case when the party that's asking this question set them up to be taken for billions of dollars of loss. That's not fair. That's why we hired Mr. Arvay.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in his report last week the Auditor General noted that sole-source contracts are acceptable under certain circumstances, for instance if only one qualified service provider exists, and given that based on the sole-source contract Albertans can only assume that the friend of the NDP lawyer in B.C. is the only qualified service provider, again to the Premier: did you even look in Alberta for other qualified lawyers?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We did follow our sole-source contracting guidelines as outlined by the Auditor General. That's why we posted the amount of the retainer in the blue book. I'm glad that the member figured out how to use Google and look up things in the blue book. That's what it's there for, so that you can have information to ensure that you're aware of how the public is spending its money. That is the cost of the retainer. We know what the cost would be if we did nothing, and that's \$2 billion of liabilities passed back to consumers. We deserve the best on the side of Albertans, and that's what they've got in this government and Mr. Arvay.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. Given that the Auditor General directed the government to provide thorough rationale for sole-source contracts and given that members of this government while in opposition were highly critical of the previous government's sole-source contracts and given that I am offering the Premier one last chance to outline the process for retaining their NDP world view lawyer before I ask the Auditor General to investigate, again to the Premier: as per the direction of the Auditor General, what

was the process used to retain this out-of-province lawyer? Please tell us now.

**Ms Hoffman:** We did not break any rules, Mr. Speaker. This was a sole-source contract, with the aim to get the very best counsel to defend the public interest. I know that the members opposite have no interest in defending the public, only in standing up for corporations. Another day, another member: this is not fair. We used the public interest and somebody who's a pre-eminent lawyer in constitutional law, and we're proud of that. We will be happy to disclose everything through the traditional Public Accounts process that the Auditor General has endorsed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### Electric Power System

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few minutes ago the NDP announced an ideological antimarket overhaul of Alberta's electricity system, a system currently providing Albertans with plentiful power at low, low prices. The NDP's brilliant plan is to move the burden of risk away from corporations and onto the backs of our taxpayers, all this in support of their misguided policies on carbon. Will the Energy minister just admit that the NDP have created the investment hemorrhage in our province that they are trying now to solve?

**The Speaker:** The Energy minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. What I will admit is that we have had a broken system for a long time. Continuing to do the same thing and expecting different results is not leadership. We're choosing leadership. We're coming up with a capacity market. We have consulted with investors and industry and the AESO, and they have advised us that this is a good direction to go in.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** There's nothing broken, Mr. Speaker, about low energy prices.

This government recently clued in to the fact that they are the ones responsible for scaring away \$20 billion needed to make their 30 per cent by 2030 renewables plan a reality. TransAlta and Capital Power were ready to invest billions to build combined-cycle natural gas units, shovel-ready plans that were prepared and would be financed without taxpayer debt. Will this government please explain why they are now shifting the financial risk of future electricity projects onto the backs of our overburdened taxpayers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. I'm surprised at the question about TransAlta and Capital Power since they were the ones standing up with us today and they're the ones we have consulted with, who have also told us that this is a good system to go to. [interjections] They also stood up today and said that this will change their plans to invest in the future and in the near future.

**The Speaker:** It's getting warm in here.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Albertans are getting sick and tired of Whac-A-Mole governments, where the government enacts one crazy policy, then legislates crazier ones to try to deal with the unintended consequences of the first one. Given that the one thing we know for sure is that this change will result in higher prices and given that we know that just seven months ago this government was asking for

electricity-for-dummies briefings, why does the minister think that tampering in a market she doesn't understand is a good idea for Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for that question, Mr. Speaker. Currently we have an outdated market – there's only us and one other jurisdiction in North America – but there are states like Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, 33 states in the United States, and the UK who have systems like this. Industry has told us and investors have told us that they will invest in a system like this. They will not invest in one where we rely on volatility for consumers and for business.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### Seniors' Issues

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week it became clear that shareholders have hit a tipping point with their frustration over the lack of co-ordination in the Ministry of Seniors and Housing. This government stands accused of failing to take seriously significant seniors' issues like surgical wait times, transportation, insufficient home care. Minister, this government has been in for 19 months. What are you doing to tackle these issues and protect our seniors community?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to talk about the things that we're doing. We've invested \$1.2 billion in our capital plan over five years in supporting seniors' and affordable housing. We've kept the Alberta seniors' benefit even in these tough economic times. We've put \$1.2 million into supporting groups to make sure that elder abuse doesn't occur in this province. There are many things. I could go on, and I will in the next answer.

**Mr. Yao:** You've committed a lot of money, but you haven't spent much of it.

You're also supposed to do a review of the Alberta Housing Act, if I recall. Since this review includes a survey with the very same stakeholders that have decried this government's treatment of Alberta's seniors and vulnerable and given that a similar review of the seniors' lodge program has been completed and its results were made public, will the minister commit now in the Assembly to making the results of this survey public?

**Ms Sigurdson:** We are reviewing the Alberta Housing Act regulations. They come due ahead in March 2017. That consultation is under way, and certainly we will be very happy to talk about that when it is complete. We have been very busy going across the province regarding our affordable housing strategy. Again, in contact with housing management bodies across the province we have gotten very positive feedback about our consultation process. We're very proud. We've appointed a Seniors Advocate in a transparent competition. We're so pleased. We are one of only two provinces. We're really trail blazers in . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, given that this government still does not have a seniors strategy after almost two years into its mandate and since the same government still does not have a plan in place to

replace the ASLI grants, again to the minister: cabinet shuffles aside, what is taking your government so long to make a viable plan for Alberta seniors? When are you going to make it a priority?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. This government is working very hard with stakeholders across Alberta to make sure that we're working on a very great plan for the Alberta affordable housing strategy. We're working with housing management bodies. I've been to many sod-turnings, was at one yesterday. There is a lot of investment across it. We're getting money out the door so that housing management bodies can maintain their units and take care of the deferred maintenance of a billion dollars that we inherited. We're working diligently to support seniors in this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### Electoral Boundaries Commission

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has recently established a new membership for the Electoral Boundaries Commission that will recommend changes to electoral boundaries for the next provincial election to reflect Alberta's changing population. This committee will decide for all Albertans what any potential changes will look like. This commission should be set up as fair and effective representation for all areas of Alberta. To the Minister of Justice: why has no one been appointed to this commission that represents rural northern Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The committee contains five members: a chair and then four other members. Two of those members are required to represent rural Albertans, and they do.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many rural ridings are expansive in geography and it has been noted that for many of these, if expanded, it would be impractical for an MLA to travel across their constituency and effectively represent their constituents and be able to meet Albertans face to face on many occasions, to the minister: can you assure northern Albertans that this commission has their best interests in mind when assessing electoral boundaries?

**The Speaker:** Just a moment. Stop the clock for a second, please. I'll just remind the House that the particular line of questions is with respect to a matter which may not be the direct impact of the government, so I would caution both sides in terms of discussion on this item.

The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for what I think is a very important question. It's important that the Electoral Boundaries Commission represents all Albertans, which is why the legislation puts certain brackets around who can be on that commission and how it's set up. One of the interesting things about this particular act is that while only a certain amount of population variance is allowed, there are certain exceptions allowed for remote or northern ridings to ensure that MLAs are able to effectively represent their population, and those will be respected.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a majority of the NDP seats are held in urban ridings and given that it would be in the best interests of this government to ensure that urban ridings are increased but that the rural ridings are combined and, as such, will hold fewer seats in the House, to the minister: are you trying to tilt the electoral boundaries in your favour to help you in the next provincial election?

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

I want to remind the House about the comment I made to the member earlier. It seems the last particular question – I'm going to wait to see the Blues on that. I'll address the point of order at the end.

Are there any other comments the minister would like to make on the matter?

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, just that the Electoral Boundaries Commission is set up as an independent commission. We're happy to have them do their work, and we're happy to ensure that all Albertans have effective representation and fair representation.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

### Rural Transportation Infrastructure

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a challenging time for rural Alberta. Many small towns are struggling, and businesses are being hit by the downturn in the economy. I have heard from my constituents in Wetaskiwin-Camrose that one of the challenges small towns currently face is aging infrastructure. These projects require significant investment that rural municipalities often cannot bear on their own. To the Minister of Transportation: what are you doing to help rural Alberta sustain their local transportation infrastructure?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government has chosen to significantly invest in improving infrastructure throughout the province – urban and rural, north and south – to help stimulate the economy and to keep Albertans working. As part of the Alberta jobs plan I'm happy to share that we're planning to restore funding to the strategic transportation infrastructure program, or STIP, after it was defunded by the previous government. Thirty five million dollars in STIP funding is going to be made available in 2017, if the budget is approved, and I'm looking forward to elaborating in my next question.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that STIP has existed for many years and some municipalities have asked for changes in the way it is delivered, to the same minister: what changes have you implemented to reflect the needs of rural municipalities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, this program will allow local and rural municipalities to invest in local bridges, local resource roads, and community-owned, publicly used airports. We consulted with multiple stakeholders, including my attendance at a workshop of AAMD and C in March. We have increased the eligibility for airports for lighting, and we have increased the eligibility for resource roads.



**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, to the same minister: can you speak to the timelines for when rural communities like Wetaskiwin and Camrose will be able to apply and access that funding?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We want to get projects under way in 2017. Applications are now open and the application deadline is February 3, 2017. We should see construction on approved projects this coming spring and summer, which means we will be taking advantage of the next construction season. We know these projects are important to rural Alberta to provide the jobs and the infrastructure that make those communities prosper.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### School Fees

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's actions are frustrating Albertans. This government introduces and passes bills that they never campaigned on and which Albertans do not want, and then they do not fulfill the campaign promises that they actually made. This government campaigned on an education promise to lower school fees by 50 per cent, and then they, quote, consulted with stakeholders in education as to the best way to do this. Now, when they could actually keep a promise, the silence is deafening. When is this minister actually going to fulfill his education promises to the people of Alberta rather than breaking those promises?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. We know that, certainly, school fees are difficult, and we know that in these economic circumstances there's even more of a burden on families, so we are certainly working hard to rationalize what school fees are being charged around the province, between school fees that might be for field trips and so forth and then base instructional fees. I know that I have, for example, the Fort McMurray trustees up here who very generously waived all school fees for the school year in Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo. I congratulate them for that.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Calgary's unemployment rate is now in double digits and given that the *Calgary Sun* has reported that there is a 58 per cent increase in families receiving school fee waivers because they cannot pay those fees and given that the Calgary board of education says that there has been a steady increase each year in fees waived since 2012, when will this minister recognize that Calgary families are struggling under the economic realities of today and work with the school boards to lower school fees?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the last part of that question is the essence of what we are doing, engaging with

school boards, not just in Calgary but around the province, to look for ways by which we can reduce school fees. Certainly, we have built it into our longer term budget to fulfill this campaign promise.

It's important to note that the choices we did make for this year were to fund for enrolment. If you don't do that, if you follow something like the Wildrose plan, you would be losing teachers and support staff and have an increase in school fees as well.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the carbon tax will increase transportation costs, heating costs, electricity costs, and extracurricular costs for schools and given that the minister has refused to provide an exemption for schools but is now making vague promises to access money from the NDP green slush fund created by the carbon tax, how is the minister actually going to keep his government's promises to reduce school fees that Albertan families can't afford to pay and which are the result of an NDP belief that you can tax people into prosperity?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, that's such a tangle of questions, but I'll try my best to work through. First of all, I will not apologize to advocate for monies to go to my schools in regard to building carbon leadership, and that's where it belongs. Carbon leadership belongs in the schools, and school boards have told me explicitly that they're happy to participate in that program. We will make sure that we have compensation. You can see already, as a measure of good faith, the 36 schools boards that we're putting in solar panels for. In regard to school fees: yes, we are going to reduce them as part of our campaign commitment.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

### AAMDC Fall Convention Attendance by Cabinet

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nearly a week has passed since the AAMD and C fall convention, but I'm still hearing from rural leaders who are upset that only eight cabinet ministers chose to show up for their ministerial forum. Now, I know that the environment minister was off riding on the Marrakesh Express, and the economic development minister was on a non carbon-emitting slow boat to China, but that's left eight other ministers with some explaining to do. To the indigenous affairs minister: what pressing piece of government business kept you from attending AAMD and C?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, I was caught in the airport for eight hours in Fort McMurray and missed the event. I am proud to say that I was in Fort McMurray for the oil sands gala honouring the heroes of the fire in the spring. It was a wonderful evening. We honoured many heroes, and I was very proud to spend time in Fort McMurray, unfortunately more in the airport than necessary.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the Leader of the Opposition drove to Edmonton to be there that morning while he sat in the airport, that's a pretty weak excuse for someone who shows so much strength in condemning others.

Let's move on. Now, given that the rural leaders also noted the absence of the Human Services minister and given that this led them to speculate that this minister must feel that there is no need to

answer to the pressing needs of rural Albertans who seek to obtain services from his department, to the minister: what pressing piece of government business kept you from attending AAMD and C?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I guess when the member was doing the counting, we were doing the real work. We were focused on the relationship that we had with municipalities, and our minister was working with . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I thought we were going to make some records today and get further down the list, but the last five minutes have been very intense.

Can you finish your answer, and then we go to the second supplemental?

**Mr. Sabir:** I just wanted to say that we were focused on our relationship. We have a very capable minister who deals with the leaders from rural Alberta, and we are working on the priorities they are sharing.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure rural leaders will be interested to know that this minister doesn't consider consulting with them "real work."

Given that public safety is a major concern in all parts of Alberta and given that many rural leaders wanted to address the issues of mounting crime in their municipalities, the absence of the Solicitor General was also duly noted. Mr. Speaker, would the minister explain her scheduling decisions, or are rural leaders accurate when they say that you and your government must think that criminal activity never happens outside the big cities?

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'll begin by saying that of course we think that crime in every part of this province is important. That's why we invest more in policing than any of the other western provinces. That's why we have the ALERT model. On that particular day I was, in fact, in Red Deer, meeting with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police to discuss such issues.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Rocky View County Roads

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite the best efforts of Alberta Transportation to make improvements to the intersection of highway 1 and highway 791, accidents are still happening. Ultimately this intersection needs to be converted to a proper interchange, and being a federal highway, federal building Canada fund money could be applied. Since I received your letter a week ago, can the Minister of Transportation also share with the Assembly the status of the interchange? How much national infrastructure component of the building Canada fund money will be applied to this project?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, hon. member. Thank you very much for the question. Well, the safety of Albertans on our highways is of critical importance, and that particular intersection has some particular safety issues. I'm happy to talk to the member, as I have in the past, with respect to steps that we can take to improve safety for Albertans at this intersection and throughout, in fact, our whole system. We're looking at the phase 2 now of the

federal infrastructure program. When we receive details, we'll have a much better answer, and I'll be able to provide her with more information, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Given that the local high school is about a kilometre away from this dangerous intersection and given that young novice drivers are challenged to make a left-hand turn across two lanes of 110 kilometres an hour traffic, can the minister tell me when his department will hold community conversations with the residents of Chestermere on either installing Jersey barriers to convert the intersection to a right in, right out or force traffic on the Trans-Canada to slow down to 70 kilometres an hour for the traffic lights that will need to be installed as an interim measure?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, there are many potential solutions there, and we have implemented some additional lanes to allow for acceleration. We've looked at reducing the speed limit and installing lights. In fact, there's a considerable risk that that could increase the danger if people are expecting traffic to move slowly and it doesn't slow down. We have to be very careful about what that looks like. We're certainly in conversation on an ongoing basis with the city of Chestermere with respect to this matter.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Given that the Glenmore Trail, highways 8, 560, 791, and 797 are all provincial highways serving the commuters of Rocky View county and interfacing with county roads and the hamlet of Langdon and given that Alberta Transportation faces challenges with growing urban and suburban development, what agreements exist between Alberta Transportation and Rocky View county to fix the highways where growing development negatively impacts the highways along the provincial highway that may not fall within the highway rehabilitation timelines?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not quite sure I grasp the full intent of the question, but we're certainly working with all of our rural municipalities with respect to the intersection of provincial highways and local roads with respect to safety, and we're going to continue to do that, including in Rocky View county.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, my apology. I skipped a member on the speaking list.

The Member for Calgary-Klein.

### Renewable Energy Strategy

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents agree that we all have a stake in ensuring long-term environmental sustainability, but they are also concerned about the current economic challenges we are facing here in Alberta. The Minister of Environment and Parks attended COP22 in Marrakesh last week and met with global leaders and companies looking to invest in clean energy. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: what can Albertans expect from the global renewable energy market?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we heard loud and clear after meetings with the World Bank, international investors, and others is that there is a \$23 trillion private-sector investment opportunity as the world moves towards addressing climate change. What that will mean for Albertans is that we'll be creating good jobs in Calgary, in places to address our methane emissions, for example, in clean tech, in efficiency, both on the engineering side and on the construction side. You know, we're opening the door to those kinds of investments because we're not ideologically opposed to taking action on climate change.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans are eager to get back to work to support their families, to the same minister: how will our government's climate leadership plan bring investment to Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the 30 per cent renewable generation target by 2030 opens the door to a minimum of \$10 billion of investment and a minimum of 7,200 jobs throughout Alberta. I mean, this is a nonideological economic undertaking. That's why people like Iowa Republican Senator Chuck Grassley says that clean electricity creates good-paying jobs for Iowans, boosts farm lease receipts, and grows the revenue base. Kansas Republican Governor Sam Brownback says that Kansas is not just the wheat state; it is the renewables state. I wish that the Wildrose were similarly interested . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what are companies saying about investing in renewable energy in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the VP of Siemens Canada says that Alberta gives the industry something to focus on in Alberta. The VP of a U.S.-based renewable company, Colin Edwards, says that Alberta is a dream place to build, not the least of which because of our skilled labour. Now, I know that the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake just two weeks ago in this House called these companies "hogs [at] the trough," but we call them job creators. We look forward to working with those companies to create good jobs for Albertans.

### Members' Statements (continued)

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Indigenous Community Environmental Initiatives

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Treaty 7 Grand Chief Charles Weasel Head recently joined the Minister of Environment and Parks on the mission to Marrakesh to talk about the importance of collaboration among different orders of government in addressing climate change and to speak about indigenous efforts on adaptation and mitigation. A key take away was that indigenous communities around the world face similar challenges of having enough capacity to address the impacts of climate change while having the opportunity to take advantage of economic opportunities and job

creation through renewable energy development. We all understand the serious threat of climate change, not just for our own communities but for the whole planet, Chief Weasel Head said.

First Nations and indigenous communities have an important resource, their traditional knowledge. These traditional systems of adapting to extreme weather like drought and floods are shared and protected among elders. Collaboration and knowledge sharing is key, Chief Weasel Head says, and about also respecting treaty rights and ensuring that indigenous communities are included in decision-making early on. The Kainai First Nation is working with the University of Lethbridge to assess ways to mitigate emissions and adapt agricultural and ranching practices, develop training programs, and find alternative transportation choices. In Marrakesh it was really important to hear what is going on globally, but it's also important to go back to our communities and see what we can do, he said.

The economic benefits for First Nations in Alberta are great, particularly when it comes to jobs and revenue from renewable energy projects like wind and solar. The governments of Canada and especially Alberta have been very co-operative in helping the Kainai nation develop ways to engage with industry on renewable energy projects, and Chief Weasel Head hopes to see some of the projects come to fruition in the coming years.

I'm proud to be part of a government that will collaborate meaningfully with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis so we may all continue to carve a respectful path for all our peoples as we move Alberta forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

### Genomics Research and Methane Reduction

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Albertans ramp up their efforts to go green and our government takes the lead on climate change, we often talk about what we can all do to meet the challenge. I would like to point out to all members that in addition to our government's latest initiatives, Alberta researchers are working diligently to find new ways to meet the challenges of climate change head-on.

Livestock operations are often cited as a major contributor to methane emissions, but researchers led by Genome Alberta, a not-for-profit research funding agency at the University of Alberta, are using genetics to reduce the emissions from dairy and beef cattle: fewer burps and belches, it is often said, with tongue firmly planted in cheek. With funding from the government of Alberta and matching federal and industry funding, research has been under way since October 2015 to find the genetic markers that will make livestock more feed efficient. On-farm operations such as Sunalta and U of A teams led by researchers Dr. John Basarab and Dr. Paul Stothard are hard at work to increase feed efficiency in cattle, which in turn reduces emissions. Their work has the potential to reduce emissions by 11,000 tonnes per year, which could mean as much as a 26 per cent reduction in agricultural methane emissions in Canada over 10 years.

With the strong support of the government of Alberta, Genome Alberta has been able to take \$7.7 million in provincial core funding and leverage it into \$155 million worth of research over its first 10 years. Most of this funding has stayed in the province to support research jobs, bolster genetics research at our academic institutions, and add to the diversification of the Alberta economy.

In early 2017 Genome Alberta will be part of an \$85 million national funding competition to bring clinical genetics into the health care system through personalized medicine. We wish Alberta

researchers the best of success in this new research funding competition that will be at the forefront of using precision genomics technology to improve the health and well-being of all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

### Educational Curriculum Review

**Connolly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I held a consultation in my constituency to hear what Albertans want to see in the revised curriculum. I'd like to thank the parents, teachers, and students who attended and told me clearly that they want a 21st-century curriculum that will reflect the current realities of Alberta and the most up-to-date teaching methods.

At my consultation I was happy to hear a wide variety of opinions on education, from parents asking for consent-based sexual education to teachers asking for updated art, drama, and music programming to students asking to not be limited to a certain amount of credits if they choose to take two or more languages. One thing nearly everyone agreed on is the need for more specialized teachers and smaller class sizes, which is why I'm proud to be a part of a government that puts public education and students first. We are committed to consistent and stable funding through tough economic times, in contrast to the opposition, who believes that firing teachers and school staff will somehow invigorate the economy.

With a properly funded education system we are supporting our youth, and we will continue to have the strong, intelligent workforce that Alberta is known for, but there are changes that need to happen. Teaching outdated and oftentimes problematic concepts to our students reflects poorly on our province, which is why revising the curriculum is so important. The revised curriculum and our government's stable funding will give our students the tools they'll need to succeed in the future, whether they choose to go to university, a polytechnic, or head straight right into the workforce.

Thank you.

### Conservatism

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, nearly two years ago a majority of the members of the former Official Opposition abandoned their duty to hold the government to account and to stand strong for the conservative values that their constituents elected them to represent. Their shortcut to power and promise of cabinet was short-lived when Albertans overwhelmingly rejected politicians who put themselves and not Albertans first. I believed then that for conservatism itself to be saved, the Wildrose must be saved, and here we are with 22 MLAs and the strongest Official Opposition in a generation. We have stood by our principles, and we have stood for Alberta first.

Putting Alberta first means putting Alberta before ourselves. It means putting Alberta before our parties. It even means putting Alberta before our constituents. It means doing what's right, not necessarily what's popular. It means boldly looking to the future while anchoring our values and moral compass in the greatest achievements of our history.

Alberta is the beating heart of conservatism. From Ernest Manning to Ralph Klein to Stephen Harper, Alberta has been the cornerstone of the conservative movement across Canada that others have looked to for strength.

2:50

As a growing number of us no longer saw ourselves reflected in our government over the last decade, the conservative movement

nationally has suffered. Conservatives across Canada look to us again to show strength and leadership. They are looking to us to demonstrate the vitality of the conservative movement, and here at home they are looking to us to put Alberta first.

Ronald Reagan coined the 11th commandment when he said: thou shalt not speak ill of any fellow conservative. I've been guilty of breaking that commandment. After a year and a half of socialist rule Albertans expect us to be better than that. Our history demands that we aspire to something better. Alberta was built by great men and women who stood by the strength of their convictions. Alberta was built by great men and women who put Alberta first, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I need to remind you again that in Members' Statements there's been a practice – and I think it's a good one for this House – not to make any comments. I heard a few more today. So, again, please practise what the practice has been here in the past.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation and Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to give oral notice of a motion for tomorrow's Order Paper, the motion being as follows:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1), commencing November 28, 2016, the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business for the duration of the Second Session of the 29th Legislature 2016 fall sitting unless the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting that day by providing notice under Notices of Motion in the daily Routine or at any time prior to 6 p.m.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 32

#### Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016.

Credit unions are an important part of Alberta's finance industry and communities. The proposed bill includes amendments that will modernize and strengthen the credit union system and help them continue to contribute to a growing and vibrant Alberta well into the future. These amendments aim to improve consumer choice, encourage economic growth, and strengthen governance and accountability within the province's credit union system.

I said earlier that there are members of the credit union system who are here to witness this near-historic event because this act hasn't been changed in over 30 years.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the five copies of the article that I referenced yesterday in my member's statement, The Unbearable Smugness of the Press.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have several documents to table in response to comments from the Minister of Energy that windmills for power generation do not kill birds. I've got some documents, many of them peer-reviewed, to the contrary. The first is Wind Energy Development, which shows that wind power can have a negative impact on both birds and bats through fatalities or displacement or habitat loss.

I have a document titled mitigating wind energy impacts. This paper approaches ways to reduce, although not eliminate, the deaths of birds and bats caused by wind farms.

I have a paper titled research priorities for wind energy. This paper talks about mitigating the damage caused by wind farms to migrating animals.

I have a document titled Bird Communities and Wind Farms. This paper uses an extensive database of bird fatalities at a wind farm in Mexico to examine ways to further reduce bird fatalities.

I have a document titled white-tailed eagles. This paper examines the white-tailed eagle deaths in Norway caused by windmills. They did not show any clear evidence of avoidance flight responses to wind turbines.

I have a document titled estimation of bird fatalities at wind farms. In Japan protected species of birds are examined. They found 52 dead birds in a 17-month period at this particular wind farm.

I have a document titled a collision risk model. This paper predicts avian fatalities, which they say are a leading concern for wind farms.

I have a document titled prioritizing avian species. This paper talks about the decline in population for those species that are long-lived with low rates of reproduction. This examines 428 different avian species located in the United States that are at risk. They point out that the golden eagle was at high risk of population decline.

I have a document titled ABC's bird-smart. This paper examines how poorly proposed and existing wind farms can harm the environment. They list ways to prevent death through preconstruction risk assessment and science-based decision-making.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have a document titled Canadian estimate of bird mortality. This paper estimates that eight birds were killed per year per turbine at wind farms in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Minister of Energy takes the time to read these documents.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I believe we had a point of order earlier today. I think it was the Government House Leader's.

### Point of Order

#### Allegations against Members

**Mr. Mason:** It was indeed, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. Well, I rise under Standing Order 23. I'm going to go with (j), and I'm certainly going to go with 23(i) as well, and I guess (h), too. So we'll go for all three of them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, during question period today the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti asked a number of questions of the Minister of Justice, and his second supplemental question, his final question, contained an allegation or implied an allegation that the government was doing something to prejudice the outcome of the Electoral Boundaries Commission's report in its favour.

I've got the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act here. First of all, the chair is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and it must be someone who's either

- (i) the Ethics Commissioner;

- (ii) the Auditor General;
- (iii) the president of a post-secondary educational institution . . .
- (iv) a judge or retired judge of any court . . .
- (v) a person whose stature and qualifications are, in the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, similar to those persons referred to in subclauses (i) to (iv).

Mr. Speaker, we have, of course, appointed a respected judge as chair of that commission.

Then the other four members are appointed by yourself, Mr. Speaker, "on the nomination of the Leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition in consultation with the leaders of the other opposition parties represented in the [Legislature]." I'm certain that the Official Opposition fulfilled their duty with regard to that section. So two of the five are appointed by you, Mr. Speaker, on the recommendation of the Official Opposition, and two are appointed by you on the nomination of the President of Executive Council.

3:00

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are other requirements as was referred to, specifically that there must be rural and urban representation amongst the commission and so on. So to suggest with no evidence whatsoever that the government is somehow trying to structure an Electoral Boundaries Commission to provide a biased outcome is an outrageous allegation, and it reflects not just on all members of the Assembly but on yourself as well as the person who makes the final appointments. I think it's very important for the work of that commission that the hon. member apologize and withdraw those comments contained in his second supplemental question because without any evidence whatsoever the hon. member has now called into question not just the government appointees but all appointees, including the Official Opposition's recommendations to yourself as well as the chair, who is a judge.

I don't think we can allow that to pass, and I would urge that you rule in favour of my point of order and that the hon. member withdraw those comments and apologize.

**The Speaker:** The House leader for the third party.

**Mr. Rodney:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I find it quite baffling that with the wealth of experience of the hon. Government House Leader he has to take the rest of question period until he stands up to flip open his Standing Orders and choose, oh, I don't know, "I'm going to go with (j)" – that is what he said – and to add the others. You know, we need to do our homework before we come to this Legislature, and obviously that was not done in this case.

It's quite obvious from the questions, if you have the opportunity to review the Blues, sir, that the hon. member was simply inquiring about an issue that is directly related to an act passed in this Legislature. He has every right to do that. He was asking a question related to which the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General is responsible.

You know, I can tell you that, again, question 1, he was simply trying to ask why the government had not appointed anyone from rural northern Alberta to the commission. He was also attempting to understand why, in the minds of many people from rural and northern Alberta, they had been ignored in that choice. He wasn't asking about the commission and its work but the choice of this government. That's government policy. It was not directed at any government member, which is directly related to 23(h), (i), and (j). Therefore, it does not apply.

Mr. Speaker, you know this as well as anyone. Rural Albertans matter, and the hon. member was simply asking the exact questions that his rural Alberta constituents are asking. That is his job. It will

be a sad day indeed if a point of order is ever ruled such that the questions that affect Albertans are ruled out of order.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you seem to be . . .

**Mr. Rodney:** Answering the question.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, would you please be seated while I'm standing, with respect.

You seem to be arguing the point that was raised rather than the substance with respect to the standing order. Could you get to the final point in terms of why you believe that I should rule against the point of order that was raised?

**Mr. Rodney:** It's because the sections he picked don't apply, sir.

I will end with this. Questions are regularly asked about third parties, quasi-judicial bodies, agencies, boards, and commissions, and much more. There is no point of order here, Mr. Speaker, and I trust that you will simply rule as such.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, do you have any comments?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Mr. Speaker, you know, if it's your wish for me to apologize, I will do that. I just found it strange that nobody from the whole northern half of this province sits on that commission, and that was my question. The whole northern half of the province isn't represented.

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise. Well, there may have been the opportunity for the Government House Leader to take some objection to the fact that they were asked to answer a question based upon a set of facts that they're really not responsible for on the role of the commission. There may have been a point of order on that. What we're currently discussing because of the citation that the Government House Leader used was clearly a matter of debate. My hon. colleague didn't use abusive or insulting language likely to create disorder. He merely asked a question about it.

As has been said by numerous speakers, sometimes we have to accept two versions of the facts. That is what I would encourage you to do today. This is clearly a matter of debate. If he had raised a point of order about a piece of policy that was beyond the control of the government, perhaps that would be different.

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. members, if I might, to the last point made by the Official Opposition House Leader, had I not interjected on the first supplemental question, the case might well be made, but I did caution the House. I have read the Blues, which I have. The question in this instance, which was addressed to the government, is: "Are you trying to tilt the electoral boundaries in your favour to help you in the next provincial election?"

In fact, I do recall this matter with some clarity. Under the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act it is very clear – and I quote – that two persons are appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature. Members are appointed, the first two being nominees from the government, the next two by the Official Opposition. In fact, I can recall the discussion with the Official Opposition House Leader to ensure that the third party was consulted in this matter.

With respect, hon. member, I would request in this instance that you consider an apology to the House. It would be appropriate, in my opinion.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I won't apologize for representing the whole northern half of Alberta, but I will apologize to you and this House for my actions.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 30

#### Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act

[Debate adjourned November 22]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any members who wish to speak to Bill 30? The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, please proceed.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to stand and . . .

**The Speaker:** Could we just pause a second while the members exit? Stop the clock. Thank you.

Proceed.

**Mr. Hunter:** Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to stand and speak on Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. I'd like to start off by saying what I like about this bill. I think it is an opportunity that we as the Official Opposition offer positive remarks when warranted. Alberta is facing a jobs and economic crisis, so I view this bill as an attempt to take a step to address this crisis.

While I don't support attacking our oil and gas industry, I do support positive initiatives to diversify our economy. I'm pleased that this bill targets developing industries more generally and isn't simply another exercise of corporate welfare where the government singles out a specific company for benefits here and there.

I appreciate that this bill calls for tax credits to be issued rather than grants. Grants would imply more taxpayer dollars being spent, which need to come from the private sector in the first place, and that private sector is struggling. This province also has a debt problem and needs to watch its spending. Grants can be important for some nonprofit organizations, but here we are talking about businesses that do make a profit if they are successful.

3:10

A loan is another alternative to a grant, and I'm glad the government isn't expecting businesses to take out government loans and then pay them back. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that this bill provides tax credits and lets businesses keep money they've fairly earned.

To the members opposite I'd like to say thank you for their work on putting together this bill. However, I do hope that they will listen to me offer some concerns and suggestions that I have. While the bill targets industries more generally, the AITC aspect seems to be narrowly targeted at specific industries. I would appreciate some explanation as to why specific industries were targeted over others. I hope that there are no conflicts of interest involved here, Mr. Speaker. Why is an agribusiness eligible, for example?

An issue that I'm personally interested in, Mr. Speaker, is red tape. Paperwork can get very onerous for businesses. This bill is lengthy, and we don't have the regulations yet, so I'm worried that this act will be too complicated to be useful to Albertans. I also think that awarding these credits on a first-come, first-served basis will increase the chances of businesses making errors because they might be acting with haste. While we want to create jobs now, we also want sustainable job creation.

I'm also concerned about all the hoops that companies have to jump through and then make a deal before they even get confirmation that they will get a credit. They have to go through registration, receive approval from the minister to change a share structure, and receive approval from the minister to raise capital. The minister may impose conditions such as how many employees the business has or what their wages are before an investment is permitted. This seems a bit like bureaucratic micromanagement, but I look forward to the minister illuminating this House as to why they are necessary.

I hope that as the regulations associated with this bill get crafted, the government will put themselves in the shoes of business owners. The eligibility requirements for this tax credit should be clear and transparent. I also hope that the registration process and the process to obtain those credits will be clear and uncomplicated. It seems to me that the minister is more involved than should be necessary. My fear is that there is still too much discretion to select the actual businesses that will receive the credits. Who gets the credits should be established with objective criteria.

In the bill there is a clause giving the minister the discretion to refund the excess amount of the tax credit over the Alberta tax otherwise payable. I hate to say it, Mr. Speaker, but that does sound like cronyism. I think that all governments should be mindful when they pass legislation that they won't always be the government in power. So while in power it might be nice for oneself to have more power and discretion, but do you really want the subsequent government, that may be formed by members of a political party that you don't support, to have that same broad power and discretion to pick winners and losers? I think not.

I think the focus needs to be on ensuring that this legislation actually leads to more investment in the economy. If investors are too skeptical about whether they'll end up receiving the tax credit or not, they might not take the risk.

British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, and some states in the United States have similar investment tax credit programs. Has the government taken a look at those and done comparisons to see what works and what doesn't? If so, will they share this research with the public? If not, why not?

In addition to a crossjurisdictional comparison, is there an economic analysis that has been done? If so, can we see it? If not, why can't we see it?

Finally, are there any measures in place to evaluate the success after the first year to see if we are actually creating jobs and investments or just giving tax dollars away?

While I think the government took a step in the right direction by introducing this bill, I hope they will take another step that I can support, which would be to listen in good faith to the amendments proposed by the opposition as we debate this bill. That could lead to helpful amendments and, I think, lead to a good piece of legislation that will benefit all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions of the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing no one, the Member for Edmonton-Centre to speak to the motion.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and have the opportunity to speak to Bill 30. You know, recently I had the opportunity to attend the Startup Canada awards, which were held here in Edmonton. While I was there, I had the opportunity to speak to Dr. Randy Yatscoff, who is the executive vice-president in business development with TEC Edmonton, TEC Edmonton being a group that supports entrepreneurs and innovators here in our city.

As I was talking with Dr. Yatscoff, I asked him his thoughts on the bill as proposed and on the work of our Minister of Economic Development and Trade. As I spoke with him, he had very high praise for the minister. He said that this was a minister who finally gets it. He spoke of how proud he was of the work that the minister had been doing in meeting with stakeholders and discussing the parameters of this legislation, conversations that I know he's been having quite a few of since we first discussed the possibility of these credits in our budget earlier this year.

I know that the minister has been working hard to consult with stakeholders. In fact, I can assure all members of this House that we worked especially closely with stakeholders here in Alberta, in particular the Calgary Chamber and other chambers across the province, to create the Alberta investor tax credit, a credit that they have been asking for and, as Dr. Yatscoff noted to me when I spoke with him, that they have been asking for for years in this province and that other provinces have been enjoying for decades.

It's our intention that this legislation be as broad as possible to provide the greatest benefit to investors, job creators, and their employees. Our proposed Alberta investor tax credit would be applicable across sectors and would offer a 30 per cent tax credit to investors who provide capital to Alberta companies doing research, development, or commercialization of new technology, new products, or new processes in sectors including but not limited to renewable energy, manufacturing or processing, agriculture, agribusiness and agrifood, transportation and logistics, financial services, and the creative industries.

To put it simply, this legislation will keep eligibility criteria as broad as possible and allow investment and business leaders to make the best decisions to help diversify our economy and create good jobs for Alberta's families. In fact, based on conservative calculations, we know that this credit would support up to 4,400 new jobs over three years and contribute up to \$500 million to the province's GDP. We will be sharing the outcomes of this tax credit in future years pending the passage of this legislation.

I want Alberta business leaders and investors to know that they can be confident that Alberta will continue to be an investment leader because we are listening and working together to build an economy for the future. I also want them to know that their views matter and that we are open to finding the best way to ensure this tax credit works for them. Despite the stubbornly low oil prices Alberta's GDP remains the highest per capita among provinces, and we are still attracting the highest level of private investment in Canada. In fact, per capita investment in Alberta today is more than double the national average, and we are on track to hit record levels of investment in a variety of sectors. We want Alberta to continue to be Canada's best place to invest in business growth, and that's why we are listening to Alberta workers, economic experts, and business leaders to support even more investment in the province.

I look forward to having the opportunity to speak some more to this credit as we move forward with this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud under 29(2)(a)?

**Dr. Turner:** Yes, sir. And Edmonton-Whitemud is the most beautiful riding in the city.

**The Speaker:** I know. I'm told that very often.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you for the opportunity to ask some questions of the MLA for Edmonton-Centre. Dr. Randy Yatscoff is a constituent of mine, and I wanted to provide a little bit of background on Dr. Yatscoff. Dr. Yatscoff is the president of TEC Edmonton, but prior to that he was the CEO and chief research

pharmaceutical company that was successfully developing a substitute immunosuppressant that would replace a drug called cyclosporin, which has a lot of toxicities that make doing things like kidney transplants very difficult.

3:20

It's interesting that another physician here in Edmonton just received the Prix Galien, which is the top lifetime research award from the Canadian pharmaceutical association, for the work that he did on this same drug. Dr. Yatscoff is a very good witness to what we need in this province for developing new opportunities and supporting our entrepreneurs. I'd like to hear a bit more about what Dr. Yatscoff had to say about this bill.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for the question. As I said, when I spoke with Dr. Yatscoff, he was quite open with his praise for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, noting that the minister had spent quite a bit of time consulting with the community and talking with people in the technology field, innovators, investors here in Edmonton and across the province. He spoke of a trip they had taken to California to have the opportunity to see the tech sector there, the kind of investments that were being made, and to discuss the kinds of opportunities that are available here in our province as well. Certainly, it was an excellent evening that I had the chance to spend with him there.

The Startup Canada awards for the prairie region did celebrate and recognize several businesses here in Edmonton and around Alberta who are, as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud discussed, innovating particularly in the field of health services with some very innovative, I think, products that are being distributed around the world and have great opportunity for us to continue to grow that sector of our economy. This credit is something that's going to help build on that by encouraging further investment, providing the start-ups – these innovators, these people who represent the real spirit of Alberta – with more opportunity to be able to develop their ideas, to innovate their products, and to share those with markets around the world.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other questions for the Member for Edmonton-Centre under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members who would wish to speak to second reading of Bill 30?

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a second time]

## Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

Mr. Drysdale moved on behalf of Mr. Rodney that the motion for second reading of Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment November 23: Mrs. Aheer speaking]

**The Speaker:** Is there any member who wishes to speak to the amendment to second reading of Bill 25? The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment, an amendment that would give the opportunity for the government to do the right thing, an amendment that would provide the government an opportunity to heed their own advice in many respects.

You know, we saw this government propose what they are talking about, being a very important multistakeholder consultation group in the form of OSAG. I'm sure that there are literally dozens of people watching at home, and for their sake OSAG is the oil sands advisory group. I know that sometimes we in this House have our own sort of language around different abbreviations.

This particular group, OSAG, has been identified and put into place to try and provide some feedback and information on ways to proceed in the oil sands industry. We've seen all sorts of extremists appointed to this organization, many of which we certainly have some concerns around, those who have lobbied and actively campaigned against Alberta's resource industry. So, obviously, we have some reservations about this particular advisory group.

But that being said, Mr. Speaker, the challenge that we face is that the government is legislating on something prior to hearing from this group, on which they have placed a lot of weight. They've spoken at length about the need to hear from all stakeholders, and they've made excuses for those who have campaigned actively against our resource industry, saying that these are important stakeholders to hear from and that that's why they've been appointed to this particular advisory group. While I fully accept that that is the case, then why not actually listen to them?

What this amendment does is provide an opportunity for the government to do just that. It provides them an additional six months for the oil sands advisory group to report back. There has been significant investment in this organization, significant investment in terms of resources that they're going to need to be able to provide information to the government, yet the government seems a hundred per cent committed to charging forward on this piece of legislation.

Now, I wouldn't want to presuppose the recommendation of OSAG, but it's my guess that even the recommendations that come back, given that they've appointed many of their friends and closest allies – my guess is that the information is going to come back and report something very similar, that the government has done an incredible job of capping emissions. Some would say that that's capping our future. I will say that in just a couple of minutes. You know, my guess is that when the report comes back, it will support their position, but that doesn't mean that we should not allow them to report back in a timely manner that can influence this very, very important piece of legislation, that in many respects will curb Alberta's future, that will guide the policy in the oil sands over the next number of years until, hopefully, there's a new government and the cap can be removed.

I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the very best thing about this piece of legislation is the ease with which it can be undone. Just as they are placing a cap, a cap can be removed. But the real risk is in the period of time between the implementation of the cap and as we see capital flee to other jurisdictions because of the uncertainty that this legislation creates with respect to what may happen in the future around the ability for additional investment in the region.

Now, I know that there are a number of organizations who have spoken quite highly about a cap on emissions, but, Mr. Speaker, most of those organizations, particularly the industry side of those organizations, stand to receive the most benefit from driving away competition in their marketplace from a cap just like this. If the government is going to legislate in a manner that provides certainty to – I don't know – let's just say, four big companies, why wouldn't they want to support this? It provides a disincentive to new investment in their market share. We often hear the government



speaking about that. I'd like to know how much consultation they did with other relatively significant industry players but not the big four, the ones they like to speak the most highly about.

3:30

I know I've spoken in the House, Mr. Speaker, about some of what very well could be the unintended consequences of legislation like this, when you've guaranteed certain players a significant ability to grow and really not have to be as innovative as they may have otherwise been to try and be more competitive because they're going to get the lion's share of the growth in emissions. It's quite possible, as my colleague and friend from Drumheller-Stettler says when speaking about legislation, that there can be unintended consequences of legislation. I'm curious to know if the government has really taken any time to consider just that.

One of the things, Mr. Speaker, that the oil sands advisory group might be able to provide some feedback to the government on is just that, the unintended consequences of this legislation and whether or not there's a possibility that innovation will actually decrease because of lack of competition in the marketplace, less requirement to be competitive, because the lion's share of the emissions are going to be made available to the four companies that are already the largest players in the region. It presents a real challenge to other players in the industry. It presents a real challenge to Alberta, frankly.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday you were able to meet a young lady who's concerned about just this. Well, it may not be her specific concern, the emissions cap. Her concern is around the economy and what's happening here in Alberta. A bill like this does not help the economy grow. A bill like this does not help the economy grow; it will do the opposite. We see people like Jorja Fisher expressing their concern about the direction that the government is taking with respect to our economy, with respect to our energy industry and the impact that the energy industry has on our province.

This government is steadfast in their commitment to cap these industries' opportunity. Mr. Speaker, Alberta has long been a haven of free enterprisers, a haven of the entrepreneurial spirit, with the freedom to create, the freedom to grow industry. Alberta has long been a haven that has created a desire amongst its people to expand. The whole time that we've done that, we've done that in one of the most environmentally responsible ways in all of our neighbouring jurisdictions and, frankly, the world. That doesn't mean that there are no improvements that need to or could be made, because we can always do more.

Mr. Speaker, you've heard me say this before in this House: at the heart of being a conservative is the need to conserve. The very first environmentalists were the ranchers, the farmers across our province, that knew we needed to take care of the land this year so that we would have the land to be able to provide next year. That in many ways has been the foundation of resource extraction in our province.

Now, that doesn't mean it's perfect, but putting a cap on our ability is not the path forward to creating balance between economic reality and responsible energy development. We have this significant overreach by this government trying to put their hand on every aspect of our economy, trying to engage in industry in the way that should be left to entrepreneurs and to the innovators, and creating a circumstance that really limits Alberta's potential to grow.

So I encourage the government to take a pause on this. I know that the government often – I almost said “always,” but that might not be true – believes that the opposition is only out to get them, that the opposition is only here to sabre-rattle and try and score political points, but, Mr. Speaker, I can point to a whole bunch of points where the opposition's goal and desire is to create a better Alberta. The problem is that when we bring things to the House, the government

– you know, their immediate reaction is: well, the opposition has said it; it can't be a good thing. But there are lots of examples where we have provided meaningful ideas, and to the government's credit I think that maybe twice they've listened.

But here is an opportunity. Some would say that three times is a charm. Here is a charm that is an opportunity, a place where the government can make a difference. They can go out to Albertans – I know, Mr. Speaker, that during the last provincial election I knocked on doors and said: “Hi, I'm Nathan Cooper. I'm running to be your MLA in the next provincial election.” There wasn't one person who said: “You know what we need, Nathan? We need a cap on oil sands emissions.” It didn't happen. It didn't happen. The people of Alberta are not asking the government to create a cap on emissions.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, as an individual with so much experience in this House, the use of your own name is really inappropriate in the House.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure. I didn't see you rise, so I wasn't sure if you were speaking to me or heckling me. But, with that said, I would never want to use the name of any member of this House, including that of myself, so for that, to you, sir, I withdraw the use of the words “Nathan Cooper” and apologize unreservedly.

Mr. Speaker, a cap on our future is not what the outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills were asking for when the now current Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills was knocking on their door.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions for the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills under 29(2)(a)? Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm curious to know from the hon. member for the outstanding riding of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills: what exactly were people concerned about when you were knocking on their door?

**Mr. Cooper:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I'll definitely make sure that this is relevant to the debate because rarely were they chatting – I might just add that I'm glad that other members of the House are beginning to understand just how outstanding the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is. You know what? They were talking to me about good government. They recognized that the prices of our commodities weren't the government's fault, just as they are not this government's fault today, but they were asking about things like not making our economic situation worse. They were concerned about jobs and the economy.

3:40

They were concerned about our energy industry. They wanted to know that they would have a government that had their backs, not a government that would in the first days of their reign be attacking industry, not a government that would be implementing a carbon tax that they didn't campaign on, not a government that would be taking runs at all different types of sectors in this province. They wanted a government that knew that Alberta's primary economic driver was the energy industry and that we ought to do what we can to assist that industry. So far the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have been very disappointed. I'm sure there are a few that haven't been, but the vast majority – I want to try and represent everyone, so I recognize that there are a few of them, like, at least half a dozen, that are pleased with the government's role.

**An Hon. Member:** About 1 per cent.

**Mr. Cooper:** About 1 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

The vast majority of them are expressing to me disappointment about the way that the government has gone and attacked our industry. Here's an opportunity for the government to take a step back, put a pause on the cap, and really re-evaluate the best path forward for our province.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to ask the member how many constituents are in the constituency . . .

**An Hon. Member:** The outstanding constituency.

**Ms McLean:** Yes, the outstanding constituency, you know, which I certainly agree with.

. . . of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, as that was his poll, potentially, and whether or not he has had the opportunity, I suppose, to door-knock in some other fine constituencies. His door-knocking seems to suggest that he has only done that in the run-up to the election, which is interesting, in fact, given that, you know, the issues of the day at the time were significant, certainly. However, some of the issues of today were not perhaps fodder at the door at the time. Really, I'd like to know the size of his poll, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Cooper:** Obviously, some polls are bigger than others.

Let me tell you, hon. minister, that I have spent a lot of time . . . [interjections] Easy, easy. I have spent a lot of time knocking on doors since the election . . .

**Ms McLean:** How many?

**Mr. Cooper:** Thousands.

**Ms McLean:** How many? You don't know the number . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister.

**Mr. Cooper:** There are well over 30,000 constituents in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I have spent a lot of time since the election knocking on a lot of doors, holding town halls, and speaking to people about the economic damage that this government is doing. I can tell you that a cap is not what they're asking for, and larger polls is also not what they're asking for.

**The Speaker:** Not sure where the rest of the story was going to go. The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was highly entertained when the minister, as my old English teacher would say, left her participle dangling.

Mr. Speaker, on to the amendment before us. I rise to speak in favour, and there have been some good points here that I've heard in the last few minutes. Really, what needs to be seriously considered is: how will this affect the future of Alberta? When you consider the cap, it's been noted before that 100 is a pretty round number, which does really speak to the fact that when the government came up with the number, it doesn't seem to be – and it's not indicated in the bill – actually based on anything. It doesn't seem to be based on any need or want. It's more, I think, checking a box of some promise somebody made, but the work hasn't been put into it to actually know. I'm not sure a cap is appropriate, Mr. Speaker, but even if there was one, you would hope that it would be based on some thought and some science and some research, and

with the round number like 100, with none of the research included in the bill nor presented in this House by any of the government members, one can only assume that it hasn't been done. That alone is a good enough reason to support this amendment.

You know, Mr. Speaker, 100 megatonnes is one and a half times the emissions right now. You can see, really, why the current large oil sands companies would be in favour of that, because it essentially locks out other large projects. Here's what I believe that we all know about this. The oil sands are probably the world's largest environmental cleanup in history in the fact that the industry is doing that. But the projects are very large, Mr. Speaker. In fact, just to give some context to that, the projects that get built in the oil sands are so large that the government of Alberta has actually created pieces of legislation to make it possible for them to get built. What I mean by that is that I can say from my time as labour minister once upon a time, I made I think it's section 30 in the labour code. Even if I don't have the section number right – and I apologize if I don't have it right – I can explain what it is. It's something quite unique in the labour code because most of the businesses in Alberta make a choice whether they use a non-union shop, or in some cases that would be a Merit Contractors model, or a fully unionized shop with the building trades or work with the progressive contractors in CLAC.

Well, in the oil sands projects, Mr. Speaker, we've actually got legislation where to get the projects built, all three of these groups are allowed to work on the same site together, and they've all signed off on each other working there. Why? Because the sites are so big. There is so much work. Each of the groups, each of the labour groups recognizes that no one is going to invest that amount of money, that number of billions of dollars, into a project unless they can be sure that they're not going to have labour stoppages. In case any of the labour groups can't provide all the labour, they don't want to make it impossible for those projects to get built because each of their groups gets so much labour and so much work that none of them wants to take that away from themselves or each other. I say that just to explain just how massive the projects in the oil sands are.

Consequently, when someone has to sink that many billions of dollars into a project with, you know, the companies up there tell me, a payback of 50 or 60 years, I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, who's going to do that in an environment where the emissions are capped on day one and when they don't know how much of those emissions the people that are already there are going to use up. Who's going to put \$8 billion or \$6 billion or \$10 billion into a project that you are not even guaranteed that you can run at full capacity for a number of years to get your money back, to get your investment back? That really highlights for me just what a bad idea this cap is and how much thought has not gone into it by this government.

Further, right now we're talking about blocking future development, future jobs for Alberta families. We're talking about blocking future revenue for the Alberta government, which, if they're wise, will put it to good use. That is actually limiting the potential of Alberta, where Alberta's government should actually be expanding the potential of Alberta, actually reaching for the sky and challenging Albertans, and, oh, getting out of the way so that they can actually build a bigger, brighter, better Alberta with more opportunities for their children and grandchildren. This seems to do exactly the opposite.

3:50

That's why this amendment should be supported in the long term but even in the shorter term, Mr. Speaker. There was an election south of the border recently where a soon-to-be President of the United States has said quite clearly and openly that he supports the

Keystone XL pipeline. Again, there is another opportunity for Alberta families for jobs, for opportunity to create futures for children and grandchildren, and another opportunity for the government to have more revenue, again, only if they do their job right, to spend on things that are good for Alberta or maybe even spend on paying down the debt that they're accumulating at a superfast rate. So there are more reasons why the government shouldn't lock down and limit the opportunities, because we don't know how much of those remaining emissions will be used to put product in the Keystone XL pipeline.

Now, the Premier and the government have been pretty inconsistent, but lately, I will say, to their credit, the Premier has been saying that she is in favour of pipelines to Canadian tidewater. I thank her for saying that. I sincerely hope that she means what she's saying, and today I'll take her at face value. I'll just say: good; thank you. Even that, Mr. Speaker, talks about how much product it's going to take to fill those pipelines to the east coast, to the west coast, to the north coast. When you start artificially putting caps on emissions, limiting the future of Albertans, the unintended consequence might be that if a pipeline gets approved by the federal government, it will limit our ability to take maximum advantage of that. Again, the legislation doesn't make mention of that. It doesn't make mention of any plans, any contingencies. It doesn't make any mention of having maximum opportunities for Alberta families and even the government's revenues under this arbitrary number that the government has put on the legislation.

It tells me that the amendment should be passed so that the government can take some time, talk to not just the oil sands energy companies but the other energy companies across Alberta, too; to really think about if indeed a cap, any cap, is a good idea; but also to think about: if you are going to put one on, what is a reasoned set of logic that you could support that with? Clearly, that work hasn't been done yet. Further to that, it even matters, Mr. Speaker, if the government and industry are able to work together and get further processing done here in Alberta. I know the North West upgrader is under construction for upgraded petroleum products. There are other projects coming forward to take the liquids out of gas and make all manners of plastics and polyethylene and polypropylene and butane and all the other elements that are available and ways to ship them. To have done the work to know whether the good results of those projects would be shipped on train or truck or pipeline and actually have a logical set of conclusions adding up to some cap, if the government was indeed to put one on: clearly, that work hasn't been done.

Again, by putting the cap on without the work being done, it actually puts the government at risk of artificially limiting the opportunities of Alberta families, limiting the opportunity for the government to pick up revenue to pay some of the debt that they're taking on, limits the opportunity for Albertans to have the best quality of life they can have and the jobs in these different industries in these different places around Alberta. Mr. Speaker, it actually by extension limits the opportunity of Albertans for all the diversified ways to make a living in a province with a good economy that is underpinned with energy, agriculture, tourism, and forestry, the big four. It limits those opportunities, too, by extension.

When you add all of that up, I think it's pretty clear that this amendment actually improves the arbitrary legislation with a round number, which gives somebody the ability to check a box and say: I said I was going to do this, and I do it. It actually is going to offer the government an opportunity to check the box and say: I did it with good reason, I did it with good research, I did it with good background, and that is why you should support it.

This is a very good amendment. I intend to support it. I encourage all members of this House to do the same for the reasons that I have

outlined just now and for the reasons that other members of this House have given here ever so recently.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know . . .

**The Speaker:** Excuse me. I'm sorry. Are we under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Fraser:** No, on the amendment.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Klein. Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Coolahan:** Correct.

**The Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to ask a clarifying question to the member. First of all, I'm just blown away at his lack of knowledge of the labour code, and that was the labour minister. Anyhow, I'm glad we have a change in government. My question I'm asking the member is: did he suggest that unionized environments are less efficient than non-unionized environments and that unionized environments are keeping investment out of Alberta?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I didn't even say anything remotely similar to what the member is asking, so, no, I didn't say that. I would correct the member that actually there is a section that allows on the big oil sands projects for CLAC, Merit, and Building Trades to be on the same site. That co-operation is actually helpful. It's actually helpful to get big projects built. All three of the groups have signed on to it. I know that when I was minister, I signed off on at least one order to make that possible on a project. I appreciate that the hon. member across tried to take a cheap shot, but he, frankly, didn't really do his homework before he went down that road. That's unfortunate. What I was saying was that all these groups are important. They all have something to offer. Why? Because they put Albertans to work in Alberta. When they co-operate, they're even more valuable together than they are separately although they are valuable separately, too, Mr. Speaker. Each one is very valuable separately, and they each contribute a great deal to the economy of this province and the future of Alberta families. I would thank them all for that.

I don't think I talked about efficiency at all, but I am talking about opportunities for Alberta families, for Alberta's economy, opportunities for the government, that the hon. member supports, to achieve more revenue to meet their goals. Now, I know their goals may not always be the same as ours because we're more business friendly and really more in touch with what Alberta families need and what is actually good for the economy and good for the future of this province. I think that we're hearing that every day from Albertans from across this province, how much better they were served about – what? – 19 months ago than they are today, and that's been a consistent message. Mr. Speaker, that's why I'm counselling this government to actually start thinking about what is better for Alberta families. Putting an artificial cap on is going to take away jobs from Alberta's children and grandchildren in the future and Alberta families today, that need those jobs to support themselves, to be self-sufficient, and to create a quality of life that they and their kids and grandkids look forward to.

I would encourage the hon. member and all members of this House to support this amendment because this amendment really supports improving this piece of legislation, that, frankly, needs

improving. That's why I've chosen to get up and speak to it. I sincerely hope that members of the House will see the wisdom in improving not only this but any other piece of legislation that they can. I would say to hon. members that the amendment brought forth by my colleague here from Grande Prairie-Wapiti – and I think my colleague from Calgary-South East is looking forward to speaking to it – makes it better.

I think that's one of the key things that we want to do here as members of this House, to look at how we can make the future better for Albertans. The 100-megatonne cap actually makes it worse. It actually limits the potential for Alberta's economy to grow and the jobs and the opportunities. That truly is a shame.

Again, that's why I'll be supporting the amendment, and that's why I encourage members of this House to do the same, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

4:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't come from an oil and gas background, and predominantly that's why I wanted to take the role of the Energy critic, the Environment critic, because I have no ties to big oil and gas and I have no ties to any junior oil and gas companies or environmentalists. I really wanted to approach this position from a perspective of new learning, eyes wide open, and try to understand all the issues. I think that in terms of speaking to other members and some of the work I've done in this House, people can see that I take an approach of collaboration and, really, not just wanting to oppose to oppose but really trying to articulate an argument that makes sense.

This amendment, Mr. Speaker, I think is pragmatic. I think it's one that certainly I'll support because it gives us an opportunity to take a second look, to really understand what this bill will be doing. It gives the government some time to consult, to look at the environment around us.

Mr. Speaker, I can only think of a couple of things – I look at my medical background, and, you know, just historically there was a time when it was immoral, wrong to use a cadaver, to study it for medicine. After somebody had passed, it was a sacred thing, and people thought of the body and the spirit all in one. Certainly, imagine if they had limited that exploration around medical science because it didn't match with the Church or it didn't match with certain spiritual practices and traditions.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

What I'm saying, I guess, is that when you look at this, there are so many things – and the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays had mentioned it, the North West upgrader. I think what we're seeing around the world, particularly from the Paris convention, which this government attended on our behalf – there is an opportunity. We are seeing countries more and more – as the technology becomes stronger, particularly around wind and solar and other renewables, it is now more affordable. It is easier to tie those things into the grid. I certainly admit that, and I would say that in Alberta, because we have those resources, wind and solar, we should be using them. Biomass: we should be using it. Full stop. But we should not limit our ability around certain technologies with other resources.

I'll use coal, for example. Yes, I understand the government wants to phase out coal, but we have coal-fired plants in this province that burn as clean as natural gas. When I look at some of the infographics that the government has given, they want 30 per cent renewable energy and 70 per cent natural gas. I guess my question is: why would you limit the coal piece of it if it's burning

as clean as natural gas? To me, that's an equal, and let those coal-fired plants phase out in the time that was originally allotted.

When we think about the oil sands, one of our greatest resources, that has employed millions of Albertans, given them good-paying jobs, supported families, supported numerous charitable groups, made life better here in Alberta, not to mention the technology that has come along with it – there have been great advancements because of the work done in the oil sands and other parts of the oil industry in Alberta – why would we want to limit that? The reason why I say that is because I think what you're seeing, going back to the other countries that are coming along and certainly with the new government – and this is something they can be proud of – is that they have certainly pushed people into a space of uncomfortableness, and that's not necessarily a bad thing, but you've got to give them time to adapt.

We don't know that right around the corner there is a technology that improves the way that we pull the bitumen out, the way we process it. There is huge opportunity. I don't see why it's so hard for the government – and maybe they will. I'm not sure, Madam Speaker. We're talking about six months, a six-month reprieve, then maybe send it to committee. Maybe there's a piece of technology that allows us to produce more. Maybe there's a breakthrough in terms of pipelines to tidewater. I can tell you that there are some excellent things out there. Again, I'm approaching it as a wide-eyed paramedic, never in the oil and gas industry, taking courses at SAIT with my colleagues, talking to oil and gas industries, visiting new technologies that are amazing, Alberta technologies by Albertans that one day, I guarantee you, will resonate around the world. People will go again, "There's Alberta, a leader," like we always have been.

So I think it is prudent to step back, take a little time. Government members, I know you're so busy with the work as you stare at your computers, but think: if we could take six months, take a look at it, hopefully there's some technology that helps. We're talking six months. We're not saying, "Don't do it," but if there's a technology piece there within six months, isn't that a benefit to Albertans? Isn't that what we should be trying to do here?

I think every member in this House – and we've heard a lot of it, you know, particularly from the Member for Calgary-North West. There is nobody in this Chamber, I believe, that is here to do harm to Albertans. We're all here for the common goal to make sure that Albertans succeed and, hence, our children. That's my stake in the game: my kids, my parents. So you want to try to make the best decisions. They don't always come easy, and that's why we need to work at it.

Madam Speaker, I'll be supporting this amendment. I hope other people just take a minute, look at it, maybe talk to the people in their departments, particularly around the energy file, and talk to their members and say: what's six months? It gives them time to consult. It's a win-win for both sides. We're not saying, "Don't do it"; we're just saying at this point: "Take six months. Take a step back."

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments for the previous speaker under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Last we spoke here, I think we ran out of time. Not everyone got to hear the poetry that was flowing from my mouth, so I'm just going to continue on that a little bit here.

The Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act limits growth of our own industries at a time when we need to create jobs, increase the ranks of the employed, initiate and dictate the conversations with other Premiers and provinces, and get pipelines built to tidewater. We need more time to evaluate this act; thus, we need this amendment passed.

This environmental initiative of limiting emissions in order to get social licence from other provinces and countries is noble, but it's naive. Every province in this country has benefited from the oil revenues that come from Alberta. Every other country that is condemning Canada for our natural resources is a hypocrite. Whatever happened to ethical oil, ethical energy? Everyone jumped off that bandwagon when they realized the implications of limiting their access to energy, but they did find a nice target to direct their hypocritical ethics towards. They feigned concern about our energy industry using tactics to their own benefit. It gives our own citizens a perception that their governments are environmentally ethical, and they all have good feelings the next time they vote for their hypocritical governments.

To the members of the government side: our NDP comrades understand how they have benefited from our oil riches. Would the minister of environment understand that she couldn't sit and sip lattes with her professor and debate the finer points of a green Earth policy if it weren't for the industry that funded the very schools and universities that she hung out at while others worked hard in our northern communities, paying taxes on their hard-earned money? This government speaks of the environment like they own it. Truth be told, I've never met anyone that doesn't believe in clean air, clean earth, clean water.

4:10

The point is that I feel that we as Canadians are feeling the brunt of environmentalism, and it is unnecessarily impairing us from succeeding as an economy and, more importantly, as an influencer. You see that when we are at our finest and our economic engine is humming along, Albertans and Canadians put their kids through higher education. They invest in their future. It's because we want our children to have a better life than we did. We want our children to work in prestigious professions and industries that ensure their financial viability. They can learn the finer points of life and listen to their idealistic professors with tenure who can preach about the most virtuous aspects of our society, the most idealistic desires of mankind. That is where we can be most effective.

We are worldly people with a good reputation throughout this world. Canadians volunteer across the world. We work in orphanages, communal farms, rescue and respite operations in environmentally challenged areas. We have Canadians that volunteer to teach people about language, clean water, and sustainable families. This is where Canadians are most effective.

It's countries in Central America, South America, Africa, Asia, and so many other areas where there is far greater pollution and contributions to global warming and climate change. They still burn their garbage. They use so much plastic. They do not recycle. We need to educate people in these countries and ensure that they do their part in contributing to a low carbon intensive world.

We understand climate change. We understand your concerns and the intent of this bill. We just feel that we should be targeting the real problems in our global environment, and that is every other country out there but not Canada because we already are the highest standard. The minister of environment recently came back from overseas, Marrakesh, I believe, where she attended an international environmental conference. I would ask this minister if she were here: did she propose any changes ...

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**Mr. Yao:** Oh, sorry. I withdraw.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I won't hear the point of order, but just a reminder that we don't refer to the presence or absence of members in the House.

**Mr. Yao:** Right.

I wonder if we had any representatives that proposed any changes to measuring the environmental impacts of man. Carbon limitation by itself is only one part of the solution. Did the conference consider any other measures to make the overall measures be more accurate? You see, they're clear-cutting rainforests in Central and South America that are large carbon sinks. Instead, they're expanding housing divisions, cattle ranges, and coffee farms. Land is key. Virgin land, untainted by man, is even better. We need to promote undeveloped, undisturbed land all over the world. In Canada we have an abundance of that. There needs to be a certain amount of weight, a certain value for countries that promote nature and reward conservation.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Population. You know, Mr. Speaker, from the minute that man lit his first fire, he was contributing to carbon pollution. Every man needs a fire to keep warm, to cook our food, to heat water into steam that starts a process of harnessing energy. Quite frankly, if it weren't for immigration, Canada wouldn't be growing because our first-world lives have led to an educated people, people who focus on the finer things in life that are inherent in our culture. We are having fewer children. In some cases people aren't even choosing to have any at all. We are following our intellectual pursuits, our higher education, our careers.

But not so in so many other countries of the world that continue to grow at an exponential rate. Our population is currently 7.4 billion and is expected to grow to 11.2 billion by 2100. Sir, that is a lot of people. Keeping it simple, that's a growth of 50 per cent from current numbers. Where we see two people, there will be three right across this world. If you recognize the impacts that man has, we need to add this to the measurement when determining this environmental pricing scheme that is currently in place.

To summarize, the current measuring tools don't fairly weigh all the aspects of mankind's impacts. If this province's ministers are going to support their home and protect their environment, they have to do more than tout how they're impairing their own economy. They have the ability to influence the world to more accurately measure man's impacts and then pressure the world to be more responsible, because only when the world changes its habits will we see our planet's health improve.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Anyone under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake under 29(2)(a)? Please proceed.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak in support of this amendment to put a pause in a process that's been quite hurried. We have seen repeatedly from this government a pattern of legislation coming out before all the facts are in, legislation coming out before a full analysis has been conducted, legislation coming out even before a fulsome consultation has taken place with the people of Alberta. Repeatedly, repeatedly, bill upon bill upon bill, in this way: legislate first, and then stay tuned for the details. Unfortunately, when the details start coming forward, when Albertans start realizing the nature of a particular piece of legislation, the people of Alberta rise up in alarm.

I remember Bill 6 very clearly, like it was yesterday, and now we have a bill that is before this House when we still have not heard from OSAG. Yet we were told, when OSAG was first commissioned, that this was going to be the body that was going to have the experts and consult with the experts to craft the details surrounding oil sands emissions. But for some strange reason – and I personally was very surprised to one day find Bill 25 being introduced in this House when we had not heard so much as a peep from OSAG.

It just seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that this pattern of legislate first and then find out there's a problem is like what one of the people in the press told me the other day. It's like playing Whac-A-Mole. It's like: the government comes up with a policy, and then up pops an unintended consequence, so they whack that one down with another policy, only to see another unintended consequence pop up, and they try to whack that one down. It's bill after bill, policy after policy like this.

All we're asking with this particular hoist is to pause for a minute and have an opportunity to get things the right way around here and to listen to everybody – and I mean everybody – that's going to be impacted by limiting development like this. I realize that there were a handful of oil sands companies that the government consulted on the drafting of this bill that they have talked about, but that is confirmation bias, Mr. Speaker, to surround yourself with people that will shake their heads and agree with you and never hear the dissenting side of things.

There are other investors out there who have leases that they've paid good money for, and now somehow this government is legislating their investment to be nothing, to be worthless because those leases now – and they're massive – have to try to squeeze into the remaining 32-megatonne window. So although we talk about this Bill 25 as an Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, it is really an oil sands development limit act. That's really what it is. Unfortunately, the government of Alberta has already been paid for the leases that have been sold, and to limit the development without hearing from those companies that invested substantial amounts of money, were prepared to invest substantial amounts of money into Alberta jobs for our people, taxes to be paid to our government, royalties to be received, to just shut them out like that is highly offensive and very irresponsible action on the part of a government.

4:20

What needs to happen, really, is for everyone to just chill for a bit, park this thing for six months, have an opportunity to talk to everybody that's impacted by this limit. Is this limit actually reasonable? Does this limit not in fact favour a few and disfavour a lot? Having that confirmation bias by having just a handful of major players influencing the construction of a bill like this leaves some Albertans questioning whether this, in fact, isn't just the choreographing of an exclusive club, creating an environment up in the oil sands that's going to favour just a handful of companies who've had their hands in the crafting of this and to disfavour or cause to be at a competitive disadvantage a bunch of other players up there who have innovation, have innovative ideas, can employ a lot of Albertans, could pay a lot of revenue for taxes and royalties. These companies are scrambling now. They're at a significant disadvantage because of this development limit act, which is what it really is.

Although it has been asked for a number of times by persons on this side of the House, we still have not seen the methodology used to calculate or to come up with 100 megatonnes as a limit. Let's see the analysis. Where is it? We've asked. Numbers of people over here have asked. I mean, if this is the right number, then fine. Justify it. That's not an unreasonable request. Albertans ought to have

confidence that their government actually took the time to do some kind of scientific analysis to determine that this 100 megatonnes is the right number, but we haven't seen that. We've asked, and it has not been forthcoming.

Some things that have been calculated are that we have a cumulative lost opportunity cost here of somewhere between \$150 billion and \$250 billion in lost economic activity.

**Mr. Yao:** How much?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Between \$150 billion and \$250 billion.

I don't know what that translates to in jobs, but, you know, just as a good old guess I suspect it would put most Albertans back to work again. But it's not going to because there's this arbitrary figure that's been determined, 100 megatonnes. Now, if there isn't an economic impact assessment that's been done or some sort of technical analysis that's been done, then how was that number developed? Was it just a dart thrown at a wall full of numbers and it happened to hit 100 that day? Albertans need something that is much more scientific in its origins than that.

I think it behooves the government, especially this government, that has, as I've said, this track record of legislating first and then finding out, oops, and then having to backtrack and come up with Band-Aids to fix something that could have been avoided if they just would have slowed down and taken some good old objectivity and listened to Albertans, the experts that we have, and we've got a lot of experts here in this province.

I would dare to suggest to this House that there is no other jurisdiction in the world with the level of expertise in oil and gas development that we've got right here in this province. That expertise needs to be brought to the table and listened to. Let's be really clear about one thing: this act that we're looking at here was crafted by politicians. Politicians made this thing, and this province is full of experts in the field, thousands of them, tens of thousands of them, and they have not been heard from. It's incumbent upon the politicians that craft legislation, regardless of whichever government is in power, and it's incumbent upon us all as legislators to listen to the people that actually know way more than we know.

Now, we have a couple of people that have been elected to positions here who are experts in their field. We have, you know, an hon. member over here that's an expert in the world of EMT. We have another one here in EMT and firefighting. We have different expertise represented around this room, but when it comes to this kind of stuff, when we're talking about oil sands development to the tune of \$250 billion, it really behooves us all as legislators to just put it in neutral for six months, and let's listen to what those experts have to tell us.

Let's have a look at the analytics that were done to determine the 100-megatonne cap to begin with. As I've said before in this House, it's a little bit deceptive because we're not really talking about 100 megatonnes. We're talking about a 32-megatonne remaining window and a massive amount of oil sands development that's going to have to squeeze into those 32 megatonnes.

I would like it very much if everyone in this House would support this amendment right now, this hoist amendment, just to put this thing on hold for a while. Let's take a really good look at this so that we can avoid having to try to come back later and fix this bill.

I remember the Bill 6 situation. The government brought in Bill 6 and threw it down on the table here, and it was advertised as being perfect as it was. Perfect. "Let's just run this thing through the House: first, second, third readings. Let's get it proclaimed, and let's rock 'n' roll. We've got farming solved in the province of Alberta." You remember that? It was all perfect. Well, that five-

page bill that was so perfect caused such a furor within the field of experts that were out there, the farmers themselves. If there was such a thing as a PhD in farming, they'd each have one. Those experts did not feel like they were consulted whatsoever. They rallied here, they rallied all over this province, and we had a massive petition because they weren't consulted, because the government was rushing through a piece of legislation. Eventually, thanks to the farmers and the uproar that they caused, we saw six pages of amendments to what was touted as being a perfectly fine piece of legislation. Obviously, it was not so perfect.

So here we are again. We have a bill coming before us in a hurried manner when the very body commissioned to advise the government on this thing has yet to report. It's absurd in the extreme, just absurd, because we're talking about, really, the future of our province. This is definitely impacting the future of our province. When you look at that price tag of the lost opportunity cost of \$250 billion, we're talking about a significant chunk of Alberta's future. That's your children and mine, our grandchildren, and the future employment opportunities they have. This is going to impact the revenue stream coming to the provincial coffers to fund education and health care and seniors and all of that. When you consider the enormous economic impact that limiting this development poses to our province, how important it is, therefore, that this is done right and not in a haphazard way.

I submit to this Assembly that by pushing this thing through based on its first iteration, without amendment, this government is looking for trouble. They really are. They're looking for trouble. This is going to be another catastrophe looking for a place to happen. It's going to be another Whac-A-Mole policy, where a bunch of unintended consequences are going to pop up, and this government is going to have to try to whack them down, just like we're seeing in the electricity sector, where the government came into power and without even thinking about it increased the carbon levy under SGER by 50 per cent, and, oops, it triggered section 4.3(j), an unintended consequence. So let's whack that down. We'll just go to court and sue Enmax and stop them from complaining about what we've gone and done to them through SGER.

4:30

Well, that court challenge was a sham, and obviously they were going to lose. So, okay; whap, now we have got to come up with a solution. Well, we'll legislate. We'll have retroactive legislation. That will solve the problem. Well, does it? It absolutely destroys any credibility the government has as a partner in a contract.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening, of course, to the member speak and talk about "do it right" and how maybe taking a little time and maybe, for instance, waiting for the report from OSAG might be something that could happen in that six-month period while there's going to be some more consultation. Of course, there's always been some concern over the members that have been appointed to OSAG. Of course, there are some people there that seem to have some pretty radical views and views that don't line up with Albertans' and don't line up with support for the industry that they're representing in that committee.

I just wanted to know if the member would like to comment a little bit more on some of those things. He's brought up some really good points, and I'd be interested in hearing some more, too, if he had any other points that he'd like to bring forward. Obviously, he's somebody that has a pretty good handle on this file, both with the energy issues and the oil sands and that sort of thing but also with

the electricity market and some of the changes that this government has brought forward there. So if this member would like to expand on some of those things and about consultation, about waiting for a report and how much of a benefit it would be to put this off and have some time to consult and find out what the report is going to say and what Albertans want to say about this.

Thanks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, thank you to the hon. member for his request. I'll just talk a little bit about OSAG and the potential value that isn't going to happen. You know, the people of Alberta look to government for good governance. The government put in place the oil sands advisory group to advise them on this very subject right here. Now here we are with this bill before us, before we've even seen the OSAG report. If this bill passes before the OSAG report comes out, it's going to send a signal to Albertans that's really very clear. First of all, the OSAG was a complete waste of their tax dollars, an absolute waste of tax dollars. It was nothing more than an attempt of window dressing on a government's already predetermined plan – already predetermined – and there was no reason for OSAG to be commissioned in the first place because the government already had signed, sealed, and delivered what they wanted to do.

Having this bill actually before the House in this form, as it is right now, already confirms the suspicions of many Albertans that the government simply had this thing already ironed out as to what they wanted to accomplish and that we never needed OSAG in the first place, that it was already mapped out. So even from just, you know, a basic imaging look on this thing, this looks really, really bad. It looks tacky as can be. The government had a predetermined plan here. It is: oops, we forgot we hadn't heard from OSAG yet. There wasn't even a pretense. It's just terrible.

So OSAG is going to issue a report. Well, I have a prediction. OSAG's report is going to look an awful lot like Bill 25. Won't that be a surprise? Surprise. Won't we be shocked? Frankly, Mr. Speaker, they've already let the horse out here. You know, the OSAG now is just a sham. It's just a sham. It's just window dressing. It has no credibility left.

**Mr. Cyr:** It's like the consultation with the farmers.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yeah. Just like Bill 6 and the supposed consultation with farmers that never happened.

We have here a bill that is going to be impacting hundreds of thousands of potential jobs in this province, and it behooves this government just to put it on pause for a while. Let's listen to the juniors that are out there, listen to every single stakeholder in the oil sands, every company that's invested up there and is looking at that 32-megatonne window and saying: how are we going to squeeze in there? They need to come and talk to us. We need to hear what they have to say rather than have just a small group of very large corporations determining the outcome of oil sands emissions.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Members wishing to speak to the amended motion? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm here today to speak to Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, are you speaking to the amendment?

**Mr. Loewen:** Yes, I'll be speaking to the amendment to Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act.

Mr. Speaker, while the government continues to defend this ill-advised bill, we have to continue to point out some highly relevant facts that Albertans do not know. We now know that an independent estimate predicts that this cap could cost us in production 3.3 billion barrels of oil by 2040. Three point three billion barrels of oil. Reports have determined that we could have a cumulative loss of between \$150 billion to \$250 billion in lost production. That isn't just money; that's jobs. It's people's livelihoods that this impacts. Further to that, this policy is likely to result in the stranding of oil sands assets. This government just doesn't learn.

With its carbon tax, its accelerated phase-out of coal, and the tampering with PPAs that's causing alarm in the investment world, this bill will surely not help. This bill's emissions cap is entirely arbitrary. There has been no rationale given for this from a government that clearly hasn't thought this out. Did it not occur to them at any time that we are already in a position that if the present leases were fully developed, we will have already exceeded the 100-megatonne cap?

This is where stranded assets come in. How is this government going to deal with producers that want to develop their oil interest but the cap will prevent this? Are the taxpayers going to be on the hook for compensation to these producers? Who is going to decide which companies get to develop their interests and who doesn't? The government once again put itself in a position of picking resource winners and losers. Why can't the government get out of the way and let the market decide? Why must they insert themselves into every market? It's a story we are seeing over and over again with this government. Once is bad enough, but this is a pattern developing over many different business sectors.

This government seems to be embarrassed by our resources rather than to take a position to celebrate them. This could not be more obvious than by the numerous examples of government members actively protesting our natural resources. They gave speeches. They helped write books. They appoint radical environmentalists to the very panel that has been tasked to oversee this law's viability. Seriously, you can't make this stuff up. It's so ludicrous. These radicals even in the last month have been protesting against projects that would help our resource industry. In the Premier's leap of logic this provides balance to the panel, she says. Mr. Speaker, if balance is appointing fundamental opposition based on ideology, then the members opposite need to put down the manifesto and listen to Albertans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the minister's own words she says, "We are seeking to find specific, credible solutions that will ensure that the world looks at Alberta differently." You know what? That's true. The world is looking at Alberta differently. This government's policies are driving investors out and keeping investment out of Alberta, investment that creates jobs, investment that has left Alberta, that has cost jobs. That's the message that people are getting from Alberta. Every time we turn around, this government comes up with a new policy, a new bill, a new regulation that destroys investment. Now, the minister went on to say, "By doing nothing, Conservatives at both the federal and provincial levels led Albertans to an economic dead end and a boom-and-bust economy." Well, this government: there's no boom; there's only bust. Only bust.

4:40

She goes on to say that they've gained recognition from U.S. President Obama during his address to Parliament earlier this year. Mr. Speaker, President Obama didn't put a carbon tax in in the U.S. Hillary Clinton said that she wasn't going to either. President-elect

Donald Trump is not going to do it either. So our largest trading partner is not doing a carbon tax, but this government is. So when we sit here and we ask this government to take six months so that they can receive the report that their appointed people are supposed to prepare and to have a chance to listen to Albertans, to study the effects of what this bill could do, that's not unreasonable. It actually is only common sense.

Now, the minister also said that we need growth in oil sands. I'm trying to figure out the discrepancy here. We need growth in oil sands, but we're going to put a cap on it. That's a contradiction. "We have Albertans from all parts of the energy industry who have taken great pride" – this is the minister speaking again – "in telling the world for decades just how good Alberta is at energy development." Well, I would hope that this government is telling the world how good we are here at energy development.

Now, this government doesn't like to conduct or release economic impact studies. Over and over again they have come up with bills and ideas and regulations. No economic impact study. In fact, when we did find one through FOIP, we realized it had been hidden for a good reason, because it didn't stand the test of what Albertans would have liked to see.

Mr. Speaker, I think it only makes sense that this amendment pass, that this government take the time it takes to figure out exactly what this is going to cost Albertans. That's what we're here to do. We're here to represent Albertans. We're here to do what's best for Albertans. We've had over 100,000 job losses in the last year and a half, since this government has taken over, not including the contractors that have lost their jobs, that won't show up in the figures, or that have lost contracts and are only working a small percentage of the time. Wouldn't it make sense to step back and say: "Okay. What's really happening here? What are the full ramifications of this bill?"

Now, Mr. Speaker, every day I have struggling Albertans desperate for help and work. They come into my constituency office, they call, they e-mail, and they text. Job loss: they're suffering. They're desperate for help. But we don't see the help coming from this government. We just see bill after bill that sends messages to the investment community that Alberta isn't a place to invest, and that's sad. They suggest that this bill is going to provide certainty. This bill provides nothing but uncertainty along with everything else that this government has been doing.

Of course, they like blaming the low price of oil for all the problems. The low price of oil this government has no control over, but these bills that they have passed that have created the uncertainty in the investment community are the government's doing. They have to take responsibility for those actions. Those actions have cost jobs and will continue to cost jobs into the future. There are other jurisdictions around us that are doing a lot better than us that used to never do as well as us, but since this government has come in and started passing these bills and doing these things that create uncertainty in the market, the jobs aren't coming back. The jobs are going.

Now, the NDP doesn't like to keep track of what impact their policies will have on greenhouse gas reductions either. They don't seem to want to keep track of anything. What are the effects economically? What are the effects environmentally? Where is it? There's nothing. Now, there is a report that's supposed to come within a couple of months from OSAG, but we're going to be passing this bill before it shows up. That's what the government wants, anyways.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]



Now, we have to realize that Alberta is an extremely environmentally responsible jurisdiction. The oil that we produce here is better than anywhere else in the world. If we look at some of the other jurisdictions where oil is produced, they don't have the standards that we have. Now, as other countries move forward in their development and increase their energy consumption, our global energy demand will only grow. The needs of the new, emerging markets for energy products will be met. The question, Madam Speaker, is: will they be met by us, or will they be met by some of these other jurisdictions that don't have the environmental standards that we have, that don't treat their citizens like we treat them here? So that's a choice we have.

With respect to emissions, it does not matter whether Canadian or Iranian supplies meet this growing global demand. As long as there is a demand for energy, that demand will be met, so we need to be the ones to produce this energy and do it in an environmentally responsible way. Can we improve? We're always improving here in Alberta, always. Oil sands is a classic example. The way it started and the way it is now are totally different: far better environmental standards now, far less impact on the environment.

It's not just the environmental policies that we have here in Alberta that make it better to produce the oil here rather than in these other jurisdictions. Socially we have a far better record than a lot of these other jurisdictions.

Now, this government doesn't seem to like the idea of carbon leakage. They don't seem to want to recognize that that's a real phenomenon. But if this government truly wants to do something to help the global fight against climate change, then Alberta's economy should be producing more because this is where it's done in a most responsible manner. There is no more environmentally responsible jurisdiction than Alberta. We're doing better than we were before and will continue to do better. We'll continue to improve. Albertans have always taken that stewardship seriously. We've always demanded that polluters do better to reduce their impact, and that will continue.

Madam Speaker, we need to understand that taking the time to review this bill, taking the six months, hearing what the committee has to say – I mean, we have no idea what they're going to say. We can presume, based on who's been appointed to it, what they're going to say.

4:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to thank the hon. member for bringing up some very important reasons as to why we need to give a pause to this particular bill and give some time to put some ideas, too. I just have a few comments, and then I have a question for the hon. member.

One of the things that you were talking about that is really, really important is the impact that this is having, not only on Alberta, and that other jurisdictions are going to produce when we're not doing that. There is absolutely no slowdown here. It's a matter of where this production is going to happen.

If you're willing to do an economic impact study – and there are very, very good pieces of information out there that give some very good direction as to what that may look like, and I highly recommend that the government take a look at this because the roller coaster that Albertans are on due to, as the government has said, the volatility of the market cannot also sustain volatile policies. It's one thing to have to be able to bend and change due to the volatility of the market, that the government has no control over.

It's a whole other thing to be creating policies that are volatile, that actually contribute to the demise of this market.

So if the government is going to hamper the ability of the sector to produce properly and environmentally and ethically in this province – again, to bring up what the member had said, there are reasonable forecasts of prohibited production, that Canadians will lose billions of barrels of prosperity, and this is not a win for us. There's no way that we can even conclude that that's a possibility.

Also, the member had brought up some very important things about stewardship. That is something that is not mentioned in this at all by the government, the stewardship that is actually happening here in this province, the unbelievable environmental regulations, and what this industry already does that is so right, that given the opportunity, given the economic opportunities to do so, we'll continue to do better. It has to do with efficiencies. Efficiencies are created by doing things better, by doing them faster and spending less money and reducing energy costs all around. This suits the industry, to be able to do this given the appropriate economic environment to do that.

He also mentioned something about emerging markets. How is it that we're supposed to bring in emerging markets when we're capping the very prosperity that is driving this province forward?

My question is to the member. You were going on to explain about the small and junior companies, and I was curious. I'm sure that like probably every member in here you've had people reach out to you, potentially talking about investments or what they would have liked to invest. The government members seem to think that there's a need to rush this legislation through. Would you be able to comment or discuss why it is that you feel that this government is in such an absolute hurry to get this legislation passed before the panel has a chance to respond back to us?

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the member for the questions and comments. Obviously, this bill will have impacts on other jurisdictions, not just ours here. It will have repercussions around the world because, as we've already stated, this demand for energy is going to come from somewhere. The question is where. Do we want it to come from here? Do we want it to come from some of these other countries that don't have the standards that we have? That's definitely a concern.

Now, one thing we should be doing: if we want to really make a difference on climate change, we need to spread our technology around the world, our clean-burning coal. There are coal plants being built all over the world right now that don't burn as clean as our clean-burning coal here. We should be getting that technology to those countries because that would actually make a difference on climate change.

Now, when we drive investment away from Alberta, it's not just Albertans that lose. It's Canadians that lose because this is a major part of the Canadian GDP. We've seen that with the . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's no secret that I'm not a huge fan of adding arbitrary caps to anything, and we've already had the experience, as I've mentioned before, of the debt cap. We've seen what happens when government starts to go down the road of just pulling numbers out of the air.

Now what I'm looking to say is: let's take a different direction. I went with the direction last time of trying to explain it through past legislation that had been pushed through the House. Let's bring this

down to a different level. I was thinking about Christmas and my youngest daughter, Charlotte, the pride of my life. Both my daughters are the pride of my life.

**Ms Hoffman:** Good catch.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you. The Minister of Health said, "Good catch," and I have to agree with her.

My daughter is at the point where she's picking toys out, right? Of course, she's got to pick that toy that every other child in Canada or probably North America wants. I've never heard of this toy before, so when she came to me with it, I was, like: "Wow. Can you tell me all about this new toy?"

**An Hon. Member:** Is it a Hatchimal?

**Mr. Cyr:** It is a Hatchimal. Thank you very much. Apparently, the government has also run into this difficulty.

It's called a Hatchimal. Now, these little toys are furry, birdlike creatures. I had to look this up because I didn't know. I really didn't. All I heard from my daughter was: it's a toy you cuddle with, and it hatches. That's essentially what I knew about it. It's a furry creature that is inside of an eggshell. What happens is that the child needs to cuddle with this little toy for about half an hour, and it'll hatch. It comes in various colours, and it's quite the amazing little toy.

Now, in the case of this little toy, it's about \$70, which . . .

**Ms McLean:** Did you get one?

**Mr. Cyr:** I don't want to ruin my daughter's Christmas gift – I've got a question from the minister – but she's going to probably be very happy.

This Hatchimal is about \$70. Coincidentally, it is – and I'm going to go into it – very close to our current megatonnes, which is 68 megatonnes. I'm going to slowly work into how exactly this toy has relevance to this amendment. What we've got here is a dynamic company in Toronto that came up with an incredible idea that our children are really engaged with, and they really, really, really want to have this new toy. Now, it's meant for and its target is little girls between six and eight. My daughter is seven, so it kind of makes sense that my daughter would be the target for this.

5:00

Now, the problem, as we all know, with these toys is that they are always sold out, and this toy specifically – and I need to go slowly with this. NPD marketing, not NDP but NPD, says that it holds five of the top 10 spots: first, second, sixth, ninth, and 10th. This toy actually holds five of the top 10 spots. So when we look at this toy, it is in an insane demand right now, and we're looking at this toy possibly selling for thousands of dollars when it comes to eBay.

What we're looking at here is going back to the debt cap. I told you I'd get back here. Now, my concern is that when you've got a debt cap, you've got a commodity suddenly that has value, that 30 megatonnes. In this case, with this toy, would it be reasonable for us to allow a company to start selling these toys for a thousand dollars? Well, that doesn't seem to be a thing that we would allow in Alberta. I do understand free enterprise – we need to go there – but we also need to understand that there's gouging involved in this as well.

The problem here is that by setting an arbitrary debt cap, we are creating a market that would never have been there, and this market is worth, as my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has stated . . .

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Magnificent Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Magnificent Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you.

**Mr. Cooper:** It should be "incredible."

**Mr. Cyr:** I'm getting a lot of feedback. I will say that when it comes to ridings, though, Bonnyville-Cold Lake is the most beautiful.

But let's get back to this. Now, what we're looking at here is that we've got a commodity suddenly that we've created with this 30 megatonnes. To hear my colleague, he says: "You know what? There is a ton of value with our oil, and there is an incentive for us to have people say that they want all of that profit." This is the important thing – and this is something that he's mentioned as well – that when you use very few people to create an arbitrary cap, a lot of times what happens is that they may take advantage of the opportunity of being the only ones being heard. That is why it is important that we go and we start hearing what the oil sands advisory group has got to say even though – and this is important – it is stacked with people that are not for extracting oil sands, because I would like to know where they are going with this 100-megatonne cap.

My concern is that when we get to this report, we're going to see a one-page document, and that one-page document is going to tell us that it's good for us. There's not going to be any economic study done, but it's going to talk about our social licence, the social licence that we're purchasing with this, a social licence that has been rejected by our closest trading partner.

Now, with this hoist that we are moving forward, it is reasonable to say that we don't know what the President-elect is going to do because he's not in office until January. It is reasonable to say that we should at least know the direction of our closest trading partner. This is distressing, that we are setting arbitrary amounts without talking with any advisory groups, without any experts. But we do have a 100-megatonne cap – well, that's great – and we do have a carbon tax. Well, that's great, too. What we don't have is the fact that this was not something that the NDP campaigned on. Shutting down our oil sands, which potentially could happen here, is not something that was campaigned on.

I will tell you that when it comes to Bonnyville-Cold Lake, we are seeing incredible unemployment right now. We have people coming into my office saying: Scott, what can I do? [interjection] I apologize. I withdraw using my name. I will say that when it comes to my constituency, they are coming to my office and saying: "What is the outlook? Where do you think you're going to go?" You know, I do have to say that it has slowed down for the layoffs when it comes to the oil sands in my riding, and I have also heard that this new drilling program that's being brought forward is possibly going to bring a few more wells into my riding.

The thing that distresses me about this is that I've had, actually, a couple of constituents come to me and say that they put out job requests for these drilling rigs that they are planning on starting, but they can't get the people to run them. How can that happen? The reason is that people right now are struggling to find jobs, but they know it's only temporary. They know that this is going to be a six-month window maybe for work, and the job that they've got right now they need to hold on to, or the job that they've got in another province, which is, unfortunately – Saskatchewan is my closest neighbour. We're right on the border with Saskatchewan, and they're booming right now. They've got all of my tradespeople moving across the border and putting their houses on the market to buy in the province next door. I get distressed when I hear that, when we've had such a strong investment in my riding.

I also have to say that right now, when I hear that somehow we are getting a skilled labour shortage because we are only seeing short-term investment, this distresses me as well. This was never a problem in my riding before, but here we are today. Now, in my riding, unfortunately, when it comes to jobs – and this is serious. I just need to say that when it comes to my riding, we do need to consider the fact that this cap that is about to be put onto my constituents without any consultation is going to affect them further. I'm going to see more layoffs, and I'm going to see more houses vacant in my riding, and that is tragic.

Madam Speaker, I will be encouraging everyone to please hold off on this bill, at least until we can find out where the current President-elect is going and when our advisory committee can get back to us on exactly what the intent of this cap is going to be.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), questions or comments?

Seeing none, are there any further speakers to the amendment?  
The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

5:10

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to speak in favour of this motion. One of the things that I wanted to first of all say is that I was living in a community – and I won't say which community it is – and there was a desire by that community to put a cap on growth of the community. A lot of the people in the community were thinking: oh, actually, this is fantastic, because what's going to happen is that it's going to put a higher value on the homes and the rest of the lots that they have available. In reality, that was the outcome. The housing prices skyrocketed.

But the problem with it was that this was a community that a lot of young people wanted to move to. The price of those homes got to the point where they were priced out of these young families' price range, and they were no longer able to move to this community, that they were moving to prior to when this cap on its development was implemented. So this was an unintended response to this policy that they had made. Unfortunately, in my opinion, it was ill thought out, ill planned, and because of that, there were a lot of problems that were created.

It turns out – hindsight is always 20/20 vision, Madam Speaker – that what happened in this situation was that there was still such a desire to be able to move to this community that the then mayor and council ended up getting rejected by the people of the community because it was just such a shemuzzle. They were elected out, new people were elected in, and they removed the cap.

Now, I say that because this bill seems to be ill conceived. It really is something that I've been thinking a lot about. I thought: here is an industry that we have, being blessed to have the kind of natural resources that we have in this area, yet the strategy of this government is to actually keep it in the ground. I know they don't like us to say that they're trying to keep it in the ground, but this is, in effect, the same thing. There's no difference with this.

They just don't like what happened the last time, when the Leap Manifesto group said, "Let's keep it in the ground," and you know the outcome. We know what the outcome was. Down in Medicine Hat we saw what the outcome was. The Leap Manifesto federal NDP got 1 per cent of the popular vote. The reason why that happened is because people here in Alberta are very grateful for that resource that we have, very grateful for it. So to put a cap on that, in my opinion, is absolute folly.

But here's the other point that I wanted to make on this. The federal government comes to us, and their climate leadership plan is that you'd either have a cap and trade plan or a carbon tax. Now, I know that in Alberta we love to give equalization payments galore,

so we've decided that what we're going to do here is that we're going to do both. We're going to provide Albertans with a double whammy, a double gift, cap and trade and a carbon tax.

This is a government that keeps on giving. I'm pretty sure, seeing as we have Christmas coming up, that Albertans will consider this simply coal in their stockings. It's not something that I think they're going to be grateful for, and in 2019 I think that they're going to tell this type of Santa what they really think of those gifts.

**Mr. Cooper:** They're getting rid of coal, so you won't get any of that in your stocking.

**Mr. Hunter:** That's true. They're getting rid of coal as well. Maybe they're just trying to get rid of any of the evidence there.

Madam Speaker, in reality, what this bill is doing to Albertans is that it is saying: "We want to abandon the resources that we have. We want to abandon those assets." I think we've already heard ample evidence here today that those leases have already been oversold. We've gotten again into another situation where an ill-advised decision has been made, and the unintended consequences are going to be that there are probably going to be lawsuits from these companies. All of a sudden now a bill or a policy has been made, and we're in a situation where these guys are going to have to sue them. They're going to have to sue the Alberta government again, and who's going to have to pay for that? The people of Alberta are going to have to pay for that, just like they're going to have to pay for the outcome of the lawsuits against Enmax and the other ill-advised lawsuits that are going on right now.

I think that it would be wise for this government to take a look, go back to the drawing board, look at this over the next six months, consult, consult, consult with as many of the stakeholders and as many Albertans as they can so that they have the opportunity to be able to get it right this time. That will allow this government to be able to step back and say: "What are those unintended consequences? Are we actually going to be in a situation where in 2019 Albertans cast their judgment on us and say that we didn't do right in multiple situations but especially in this situation?" You know, I think that by stepping back, they could put a feather in their cap versus capping the emissions, and I would highly recommend that they do that.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any further speakers to the amendment?

Are we ready for the question?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:17 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	McIver
Cooper	Loewen	Panda
Cyr	MacIntyre	Stier
Fraser		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	McPherson
Carlier	Hoffman	Payne
Carson	Horne	Phillips
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud

Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Shepherd
Dang	Loyola	Sucha
Eggen	Luff	Sweet
Feehan	Malkinson	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Ganley	McLean	Woollard
Totals:	For – 10	Against – 39

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 25 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm rising to seek unanimous consent to go to one-minute bells for any subsequent votes this evening.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will now put the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:35 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:		
Anderson, S.	Hoffman	McPherson
Carlier	Horne	Payne
Carson	Jabbour	Phillips
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Renaud
Coolahan	Larivee	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Sabir
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Eggen	Malkinson	Sweet
Feehan	Mason	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Ganley	McLean	Woollard
Hinkley		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	McIver
Cooper	Loewen	Panda
Cyr	MacIntyre	Stier
Fraser		

Totals:	For – 40	Against – 10
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[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a second time]

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we had some really good progress today. I would like to move that we adjourn until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:40 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, November 24, 2016

Day 52

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
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Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

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Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Carson	Jansen
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Fraser	Strankman
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Kazim	

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Cyr	Malkinson
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Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

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Babcock	MacIntyre
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Drysdale	Rosendahl
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Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, November 24, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect or pray, each in our own way. Hon. members, as we conclude our work for this week in the Assembly, let us allow ourselves to take the time to refocus on the tasks ahead. Let us continue to work diligently on behalf of our constituents and to seek to understand before trying to be understood.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Third Reading

##### Bill 31

#### Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move third reading of Bill 31, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016.

I appreciate the excellent discussion we've had with our fellow hon. members on this bill, and I'm pleased to see the general support for our government's direction on agencies, boards, and commissions. This bill is an important step in our ongoing work to make sure Alberta's public agencies are relevant, effective, and serving the interests of Albertans. It reaffirms our commitment to transparency and providing Albertans access to the services and organizations they require.

To briefly recap the discussions that we've had, this legislation would dissolve three agencies identified in the first phase of our review and will contribute to an overall savings of over \$33 million over three years. I want to confirm that these savings are indeed net savings, given the questions from the opposition during second reading and Committee of the Whole yesterday. The work of the agencies dissolved through this bill continues within government or through other mechanisms. This bill also enhances governance and provides consistency for Human Services appeal panels. It is in keeping with our commitment to transparency and disclosure of compensation for top officials. Our government's work will continue in the coming months with reviews of agencies not subject to the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act and postsecondary institutions.

I'd like to thank the hon. members for their ongoing support of this work and for this bill. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Mr. Clark:** It's Calgary-Elbow, Mr. Speaker. Close.

**An Hon. Member:** Right around the corner.

**Mr. Clark:** That's right. We're right there.

Yes. Thank you. I did want to rise briefly and speak to Bill 31. I'm certainly happy to support this bill at third reading. It's always nice to see government looking carefully at some of the structures

that are in place that were in existence under a previous government and going about finding some efficiencies. That seems to be a unique and new thing from this particular government, so I'm pleased – pleased – to see that they have gone down this path. I'll be very interested to see the results of further reviews of agencies, boards, and commissions. It seems like an area that is ripe for further consolidation. Again, very, very interested in seeing what comes forward.

One area, as we speak of agencies, boards, and commissions, that I always think about is governance, their role in governing and providing leadership and appropriate controls over different aspects of the provincial government. That's obviously always a very important topic. Some would argue that the most important thing we do as legislators is to provide that governance function, and certainly each of these boards has a very important role.

One of the most challenging and troubling aspects of board governance at the moment in the province I think – and it doesn't get enough coverage or discussion amongst Albertans because often their work is done out of the public view although a lot of their work certainly is in the public interest – is board governance at postsecondary institutions. We have in this province seen under this government a remarkable and, I would say, shocking lack of attention to the important work of replacing board members of postsecondary institutions in particular.

They've gone about two or three, at least, different cycles and ideas on how they're going to replace retiring board members. First they refused to accept nominations, reappointments of dedicated board members who had been there for a number of years and were doing so in a volunteer capacity, bringing their tremendous skills. Then they asked those board members to reapply for the same position, and in good faith the vast majority of them did so. Then they moved the goalposts again and said: well, actually, that's not what we're going to do; we're going to put together a website, and we're going to open it up.

Now, I want to hasten to add and emphasize my belief that diversity on boards is critically important. It's very, very important that we ensure that our agencies, boards, and commissions reflect the diversity of this great province. That absolutely ought to be a goal. Equivalent to that goal, however, Mr. Speaker, is actually running these organizations, running them effectively in the immediate term and ensuring that they have people at the board table who are capable of doing the job. But, frankly, before we even get to capability, we need to make sure these boards have quorum. There are boards in this province who are at quorum or perhaps even below quorum, and they've had to beg board members to simply stay on.

So I really encourage this government, as you consider agencies, boards, and commissions, to please get on with the job of appointing board members to postsecondary institutions, to not bias the process by choosing a narrow world view as part of the criteria, and to, absolutely, I think, appropriately seek diversity on boards. Again, I want to emphasize how important I believe it is that the boards around this province reflect the diversity of our province, not to shortchange those institutions – in many cases they're multibillion-dollar institutions or billion dollar-plus institutions – by discounting the tremendous experience that a lot of the existing board members have or people with formal designations like the Institute of Corporate Directors designation, or ICD. That's a very high standard that is brought to these boards. I think it's very important that we maintain that expertise.

Having said all of that, I will support Bill 31 here at third reading. I think it's nice to see some consolidation work.

While I have the floor, very briefly, Mr. Speaker, I do find it always fascinating how numbers are thrown around this floor:

we're going to save \$33 million over three years. You could easily say that we're going to save \$66 million over six years or \$88 million over eight years. It's always interesting how the numbers get big. We just sort of decide: "\$11 million dollars a year doesn't sound like a lot, you know, but \$33 million seems like a pretty good number. Why don't we choose that?"

With that personal opinion and commentary on the state of political communications in our society today, I will return to my place, Mr. Speaker, and listen to the remaining speakers on this important bill.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who wish to speak to Bill 31, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 31. Now, I don't have a particularly long habit of saying nice things about government bills in this House, but it's never too late to say nice things in the spirit of the approaching holidays. I think we can all agree . . . [interjections] I am getting heckled for saying nice things already. It's American Thanksgiving today. I suppose old habits die hard. I'm trying to be nice, and even then I get heckled by this government. It reminds me of old times.

9:10

I think we can all agree that this bill will save taxpayers some money, and that is a rare thing coming from this government. But it will save taxpayers money. You all know that if there is anything that I like, it is saving taxpayers money. In my time at the Canadian Taxpayers Federation I made it my business to harass politicians who did not like to save taxpayers money and in fact squandered it. I made it my job to point out as often as possible where money was being misappropriated, where it was being overspent, and that merely throwing money at a problem is not the solution for everything.

Now, while there were very significant problems with spending in the previous government, I didn't think it could get any worse than that. Well, I've been wrong before, Mr. Speaker. But I'm happy to see that there is at least some silver lining to the gold-plated spending habits of this government.

When the ABC, agencies, boards, and commissions, review was announced, I was skeptical. I was not sold at the time that this government would go through with their plan to cut the size of government and spend less money, but here we are. The Minister of Finance is showing some solid conservative Wildrose qualities in this reduction in spending and in the size of government. [interjections] You see, I try to say nice things about them. This government doesn't know how to take a compliment, Mr. Speaker.

When those of us on this side of the House propose cutting spending or cutting the size of bureaucracy and eliminating duplication, it's apocalyptic. It's going to result in the mass laying off of all of our nurses, all of our teachers, all of our doctors when we propose cutting one orange cent out of this government. But when the NDP do it, it's merely good administration. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, these guys really just don't know how to take a compliment. I invite them to join the Wildrose. We can't offer them cabinet, but we can offer them a good conscience in the next election.

I truly hope that this review of agencies, boards, and commissions continues and that this government will continue to cut bloat in government and to save taxpayers money.

The primary issue and perhaps the only issue I have with this bill right now – and it is an issue for every member of the government

who sat on the opposition side, all four of them – is the part that will be defined by regulations. My colleagues have pointed out that this government used to be against regulations to define things that affect the lives of Albertans. The minister said yesterday that . . . [interjection] Well, I know the Minister of Education does love regulations now, Mr. Speaker, but I do remember a time in opposition when they were quite opposed to giving the government broad powers to merely regulate things without any accountability to this Legislature, but things do change. Now, at least for today, this government does believe in cutting the size of bureaucracy and cutting spending, and I hope that this spirit can continue all the way through to budget day.

The minister said yesterday about this issue, which I need some clarification on:

We're not going to put it in a statute because we don't think it would be the right thing to do, to put a definition for emergencies in statute. You can't actually put down in writing an understanding of every emergency a client would experience in their lives.

Now, perhaps the government could clear up how you cannot put in writing in statutes what an emergency would entail, yet they somehow are going to put in writing in regulations what an emergency would entail. They'll put it in regulations, which would require writing, but they're not going to put it in legislation. I would like some clarification as to what the difference is between writing in the bill and writing in regulation.

If the only difference is that they have not yet consulted and that's what they are waiting for, then this is not a reasonable excuse. This bill could have gone to committee, and we could have consulted there and put it in this bill instead of ink it in the regulations, Mr. Speaker. We could have gone to committee and consulted to determine this before we pass it into legislation. To quote the minister again from yesterday, "So we're taking the step to gain input from others about how they would define emergencies, and then we'll take that and put it in regulation." It sounds like that is the case. It sounds like this minister has not yet consulted on what an emergency would entail.

It makes me wonder: what else did the minister not consult on with this bill? The minister obviously knew that emergency appeals exist, but who did he consult with to find out what emergency appeals exist, and how come those people could not have told him how an emergency would be defined? Did they not give a definition of what an emergency was when they told him that there were emergencies?

So let's be straight with the minister. I will support this bill and the Official Opposition will support this bill because it saves taxpayers money, and we can change regulations if they don't consult properly, and then stakeholders will revolt.

I am getting frustrated with this government refusing to consult before a bill is drafted and not after. It's like their ability to regulate the beer market. Instead of consulting lawyers before they created rules around beer taxes, they consulted after. Now they are being sued.

**Mr. Cooper:** Did they get a B.C. lawyer for that, too?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I'm not sure if they hired B.C. lawyers, Mr. Speaker, or Alberta lawyers, but in either case they have drafted legislation and regulations, and they got sued.

I believe this is now the second time in a year that this government is being sued on the very same issue. I expect at least a strong possibility that this government will be on its third beer tax system, perhaps within a matter of months, depending on how things go in the courts. It is an example of this government's

inability to do their homework before they draft legislation. They draft legislation. They put it out there. They'll put out all the government propaganda to support it, perhaps even go on a pub crawl to support it. Then they end up in the courts, or they end up in hot water with stakeholders and people who have a serious stake in this legislation. The government needs to learn to consult before, not after, it legislates and regulates.

Bill 22 isn't even on the docket anymore because the government consulted after and found out that they don't even need the legislation to do what they wanted to achieve. Too often this government is sloppy and at times even amateurish, and that is why I'm a bit of a stickler on the topic of consultation. I have no agenda when it comes to how an emergency appeal is defined. I just want to ensure that stakeholders are being properly consulted on the topic, and I know that this government is not properly consulting stakeholders.

Just yesterday I met with Advocis, a group who wanted to talk to the Minister of Finance about regulations that could potentially jeopardize up to 5,000 jobs in this province, and the minister cancelled the meeting just hours before the scheduled time. Stories like this flood into our offices about the minister not properly consulting the people involved. That's why I'm very concerned every time this government says that they will consult after the legislation is passed. What is holding this government to account so that they will consult? What is holding this government to account if they would just define emergency appeals however they like? Will the regulations prevent those who need an emergency appeal from getting that appeal because this government did not consult properly? I've not seen evidence to the contrary.

Another example is Bill 6, Mr. Speaker. I don't think we even need to say much more about how that went when this government decided that it knew best, before farmers and ranchers in this province. I suspect that it will probably cost the jobs of quite a few members on the opposite side of this House in 2019.

We will support this bill, Mr. Speaker, but I do not support how this government constantly insists on defining everything in regulations and not legislation, and I am seriously concerned about their inability to consult before, and not after, they draft legislation. So I and, I believe, the Official Opposition will be supporting this bill, but let's take this as yet another warning of what is a proper way to govern this province.

Thank you very much.

9:20

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Klein under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Coolahan:** I actually just want to clarify some . . .

**The Speaker:** With the Member for Strathmore-Brooks? Yes? Proceed.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Okay. I just wanted to thank the hon. member for his very kind words – that was wonderful; thank you – and his support of this bill.

I just wanted to clarify on the consultation around emergencies. Of course, consultation was done with members of the boards and the commissions. We were led to understand that it is actually better to define emergencies through the regulations because, you know, it's much more difficult to change it in the legislation. Defining emergencies through regulation allows us greater flexibility to expand on that definition because emergencies, by definition, are sort of ad hoc things that happen.

Anyway, I just wanted to clarify that we have consulted on that and that this was the best route to go for defining emergencies. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Member for Strathmore-Brooks, any comment?

Any other questions to the Member for Strathmore-Brooks under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members that wish to speak to Bill 31?

Seeing and hearing none, is there an hon. member who would close debate on the matter? To close debate is Banff-Cochrane. Oh, I'm sorry. Lethbridge-East wants to speak.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** I move to close debate.

**The Speaker:** Sorry. The Member for Banff-Cochrane can close debate on the matter because he initiated it to the hall.

Would the Member for Banff-Cochrane like an opportunity to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

**The Acting Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 21 Modernized Municipal Government Act

**The Acting Chair:** Currently we are on amendment A1. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Chair. Before we get started here in the debate this morning, I'd like to make a request for dealing with amendment A1. If it's okay with you – and I'm not sure if the third party has additional comments – I am comfortable if we debate the amendment as a whole, but I wondered if we could request that votes be separated so that we can vote on part C and part X separately and that then we vote on the rest of the package.

**The Acting Chair:** Yeah. Please proceed.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Okay. Thank you, Chair. If I might, I have a subamendment to the amendment, and I have the requisite number of copies here. Then I'll wait until you give me direction to proceed.

**The Acting Chair:** I just need to see the original, and then we'll proceed.

**Mr. McIver:** Okay. Well, I'll have that for you just as soon as I can. As soon as you give me the word, Chair, I'll continue.

Chair, while we're waiting, on the government's motion, we'd like to vote on the subamendment separately so that we can make it clear which ones we're for and which ones we're against.

**The Acting Chair:** That's fine. Please proceed.

**Mr. McIver:** Okay. Thank you, Chair. I rise today to move a subamendment. The requisite number of copies have been delivered. I move that amendment A1 to Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, be amended in part EE by adding the following after clause (c):

(c.1) in the proposed section 708.29(1) by striking out clause (h), which says that we "must meet any other requirements established by the regulations."

Chair, the intention of the amendment is to provide clarity to municipalities with respect to the purpose and objectives of the intermunicipal collaboration frameworks. Stated within the legislation, ICFs could have a scope much larger than anticipated by municipalities given the proposed regulation. This amendment would respectfully force the government's hand to provide clarity to municipalities in regard to the role of an ICF.

As the legislation reads currently, the latitude of what could be included in an ICF and what it could require is very large. It would be beneficial, I believe, if the government could communicate clearly with municipalities what their intention with respect to this matter is instead of making decisions without proper consultation. I believe this will improve the legislation. I think it'll actually help the government in the future to stay onside with municipalities.

Mr. Chair, I encourage all hon. members to support this subamendment, and I thank you for this opportunity to speak to it.

**The Acting Chair:** All right. We will refer to the subamendment as SA1.

Are there any hon. members who wish to speak to the subamendment? The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the subamendment. It didn't appear that anyone from the government was going to talk about whether or not it was a good idea or a bad idea, so I guess somebody in the House needs to be ready to do some work.

My hon. colleague the Member for Calgary-Hays has moved a subamendment that really seeks to provide some clarity to municipalities. I know that I have done a significant amount of chatting with municipalities all across the province with respect to this particular bill. I know that I had the opportunity to spend some time at AAMD and C last week, which was a good chance to hear from municipalities. Certainly, this issue is one that is important to them and wanting to make sure that the parameters are very clearly defined and wanting to ensure that the direction with respect to the surrounding municipalities and other issues that are associated with that are clearly laid out.

That's what my colleague intends to do, and I would encourage members of the House to support it.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Okay. Thank you, Chair. Actually, I think I'm glad that I'm standing up and speaking on this bill. It's especially good since my colleague and I are often mistaken because we share the great, wonderful Strathcona county. As I think we've both spoken about in this Legislative Assembly, Strathcona county is one of only four specialized municipalities, so the issues around the Municipal Government Act have a lot of importance to our county because we're both an urban and a rural area. We represent a lot of the issues that are faced by most members in the Assembly, including those who live in rural and urban areas. I'm looking at the amendment, and I'm trying to figure out why the hon. member thinks that this would really be better for municipalities and what issues he really wants to address in proposing this subamendment. How would that, for example, better benefit a county like mine?

9:30

**Mr. McIver:** Okay. I appreciate the question, and to be clear, what's really interesting is that within the hon. member's question exists the answer. In other words, she says: I don't know what you would want to talk about that would be different in the ICFs. That is exactly the reason for the subamendment, because municipalities don't know either. The government has given itself unlimited

power to make all kinds of changes to what's required in the ICFs, and this kind of says – it encourages, by taking it out, that they have to follow any other regulations. It's kind of a reminder to the government that before you put other regulations in, you probably should talk to the municipalities. You know, don't give yourself a blank cheque.

You know what? Actually, the government will probably be even more popular with the municipalities. This won't really limit their legislation. It'll be a sign from the government that they're going to talk to municipalities before they change the requirements for municipalities to meet on ICFs in an unlimited way, thereby probably bringing the government closer to the municipalities. When the member says, "I don't know what the government could possibly change that you're concerned about," the question is the answer. The municipalities don't know either, and this, hopefully, will encourage the government to talk to the municipalities before they add a big burden on them in a great number of regulations on things where municipalities may not have any idea of what is in place today.

I'm grateful for the question. I think it's a good question, and I think the question itself points to how important it is that all members of the House support the subamendment.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. You know, with the greatest sincerity, folks, let's just boil this right down to what this is about. The subamendment's intention completely is to provide clarity to municipalities with respect to the purpose and objectives of intermunicipal collaboration frameworks. I dare say that it would also provide clarity for this Chamber and every Albertan. That's what I hear continually. Perhaps you have.

I know it's been 12 years for me where I've been hearing people thank previous governments when we do this. It's not as though we're trying to pat ourselves on the back. Think about this, folks. When you go to events like AUMA and AAMD and C, don't you hear them say: "Look, we've got our fingers on the pulse here. This is a local decision. Please. We know the situation. Work with us"? It's the same thing with you on the government side when there are decisions that you fear the federal government is making that really are your prerogative. It's not right for them because you are more local than they. We could use the example of: if something applies to a condominium association, those who are involved in that government would be saying: "Hey, back off, provincial and federal governments and even municipal governments. We have our own bylaws. Please allow or work with us to change it, and we'll do it together." That's all that this is about.

The last point that I wanted to make: folks, this really is a win-win-win. It's for the municipal governments, it's for you as the provincial government, and it's for every Albertan. I truly believe – and I'll conclude my remarks this way, Mr. Chair, by saying that it would be greatly beneficial if the government could communicate clearly with municipalities what their intentions are with respect to this matter instead of just making decisions without appropriate consultation. We certainly learned the hard way that if you legislate first and consult second, that's a big problem. This just allows you to do that. There's nothing more and nothing less.

I encourage – perhaps one of the ministers could let us know if there's any reason that they see as to why this would cause any problems whatsoever. This is sensible, nonpartisan. Let's help local decision-makers be part of the process so that we get it right the first time no matter who happens to be in government or opposition, who happens to be in the mayor's chair or the reeve or a councillor in any jurisdiction here in Alberta.



**The Acting Chair:** I will recognize the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, followed by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm rising in the House today, I guess, to speak against this subamendment. You know, I understand, maybe, the intention behind it, but, I mean, we're not talking about – if this was a process where you could even, with any sort of plausibility, talk about a blank cheque, I could see the reason behind it, but this is one of the most consulted-on pieces of legislation in Alberta history. Many stakeholders on multiple occasions have had opportunities to discuss the intermunicipal collaborative framework.

Indeed, it is, I think, going to be doing the most work as part of the MGA. This is, I think, critical for ensuring rural sustainability, for finding the kind of synergies, you know, that close collaboration can bring. This is something that we heard loud and clear from stakeholders at the various consultations around the province, including the four that I had the great privilege to be able to attend. Now, we have been talking, as members of the opposition and the third party are aware – I mean, we've been working very closely with the municipalities step-by-step through the consultation and through this process. My understanding is that they do support ICFs and that they do support the process that we're following right now.

As the Member for Calgary-Klein made reference to just earlier, sometimes the most appropriate tool for a legislator is actually to leave certain aspects of the bill to the regulations. That's for excellent reason. The reason is because that provides a type of flexibility that is necessary for certain types of situations, and I think this is that type of situation. I mean, they're meant to be deliberately broad so that municipalities have that option to be able to actually, you know, sort of have the ICF agreement fit their local context. So if through mutual agreement there are some items that make sense for them to be able to include in the ICF, there's a flexibility in the process that allows them to do so.

I guess, in addition to that, these regulations are not something that the government is intending to do in isolation. These are indeed being developed in collaboration with the AUMA and with the AAMD and C. [interjections] Well, I mean, actually, I'm not going to respond directly to crosstalk.

From my understanding – I was at AAMD and C for a huge part of it, and I had an opportunity to talk to a lot of county councillors, a lot of village mayors, a lot of towns, and I know that they were greatly appreciative, actually, of the tack that we've taken with the MGA. They were really impressed with the level of consultation, the level of accessibility that our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Municipal Affairs staff provided throughout the process. Of course, there are always questions. Of course, when there's change, there are concerns. But, I mean, these concerns weren't about a lack of trust in legislating the parameters. These were the types of concerns that could easily be handled through regulations that they have, through their close, collaborative agreement, you know, or relationship, that we're able to handle.

I think that not only are ICFs a wonderful element of the MGA and a great compromise for the types of, you know, cost-cutting concerns that the province, counties, municipalities, and, indeed, residents have, but also the way they're being developed and the way that we're leaving certain elements to the regulations, which, I want to reiterate, are going to be consulted on and are being developed in collaboration with stakeholders, is the most appropriate way to go.

So it is for these reasons that I think this subamendment would actually be a bit counterproductive in the sense that if it was legislation bound, it would, you know, take us coming back to the

Legislature to perhaps provide some flexibility to the ICFs. I think the municipalities, rather than being thankful that we made this change, might end up being a bit frustrated that we've put a box around, well, what types of discussions they can have and they can't have without any easy or simple remedy for that box.

So I would urge my colleagues to vote against the subamendment. Thank you.

9:40

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Let me just first address the issue of whether municipalities feel that they've been completely consulted with or hurt. I think that in this case, clearly, there's been an attempt by the government to consult with municipalities, which is a pleasant change from what this government has done for the last 18 months. I will agree with that. But I represent 22 towns and counties and school boards, and I can tell you that every one of those municipalities does not clearly understand – they've made it very, very clear in all my meetings with them – what the government intends to do with this. So the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays is attempting to make sure that we take away the blank cheque and that we make sure the government has to consult and work with the people that the rules and the regulations that they want to build are going to impact. I think that's a great subamendment.

Now, we have a government member standing up and saying: "Oh, don't worry. Take our word for it. Everything is going to be okay." Well, the constituents I represent have heard that too many times. "Take our word for it. We consulted you about regulating your farms": no, they didn't. So why would they accept it again this time? There's no reason, not one good reason that has been provided by this government, and not one cabinet minister has risen to answer the questions, good questions, from the Member for Calgary-Hays. Not one cabinet minister has taken the time to answer them, and they expect the opposition to believe that they truly were consulting and working with the communities that this legislation will impact. I think that's ridiculous. It's ridiculous. And to say that they have a complete blank cheque from the AAMD and C and the AUMA on this is not true. That I can guarantee you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations. It's the first time I've seen you in that position. I look forward to working with you in a proper manner this morning.

I'd just like to talk on this subamendment that the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays has put forward for a couple of moments if I could. I think one of the things that has, you know, been brought to light here this morning is that a lot of us feel as if the government tends to continue to put forward legislation and not do enough proper consultation and so on and so forth. One of the things that has always come forward over the years that I've spent here is the regulations. The member has, I think, made a great point here.

We're going to be going to a new system, where we're going to have these things called intermunicipal collaboration frameworks. They're brand new. A lot of small municipalities all over the province have never had to have such things. These things aren't just any other statutory document like MDPs and IDPs. These things are things that they will have to pay a consultant to put together, and they will have to take the time and the money to travel here and there between the other municipalities to have these discussions over the next two and a half, three years to try to put

something together, yet that is being asked of them when they don't know what's going to come up in regulations that haven't been written yet. They have no idea. So how can any municipality – and I know that the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays and I used to sit in IDP committee meetings years ago. You know, you can have a reasonably good conversation about something if you know what the details are. Well, that's not going to be the case here.

With these bits of legislation in Bill 21 we have an awful lot of things that are going to be new, as I've said, and an awful lot of things that will probably raise the steam a little bit in most of these meetings because they've never had to do this. It's pretty difficult for me to understand, if the details are not known, how these things can be done. So if we leave (h) in there as has been written, that just says that the government can continue, as they do with a lot of bills, to make regulations as they please, and this House has no control of that. We have no discussion about it. We do not bring in a regulation document.

I've got a few here this morning with me. I think one of them is on municipal corporations, and another one has to do with subdivision and planning regulations. The MGA is a book that is that thick, 800 sections long. It's not a normal bill, like any other bill that we normally debate here. So we have to realize that the regulations are where the details are. Pardon my language, Mr. Chair, but most municipalities think that the damning is in the details and the damning is in the regulations, but we don't get to debate them.

I am in support of this amendment, Mr. Chair. I would urge all the members here to give this some reflection.

I'll only close with this: how can municipalities deal with a new intermunicipal collaboration framework document, how can the consultants deal with it if they don't know what's going to be in the regulations and they're not debated here?

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA1? The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Chair. Just a couple of short notes on this. I'm actually quite proud of my area, Leduc and Beaumont, for a lot of reasons.

**Dr. Starke:** Big win yesterday.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Yeah, there was a big thing going on.

One of the big things that I really appreciate with my area and what they do down there and that I noticed right off the bat was the way that they work together. You know, they've got so many agreements that have come over the years. I think that's down to, to be honest, the two mayors for the county, a big part of it, and the city of Leduc work so well together and their councils work so well together, not only around the city of Leduc but with some of the smaller areas in the county – Warburg, Thorsby, Calmar, New Sarepta – all these little areas that are in there and the little towns and villages.

You know, my eyes got opened to it, I think, at the AUMA, the first AUMA I had gone to. My two mayors did a presentation on collaboration, intermunicipal collaboration. One councillor from the province that watched it: she was actually in tears because of how well they were working together. I know that a lot of other places around the province are doing similar types of things and are working well together. Our citizens cross boundaries, and we can have duplication. You know, we can have people paying twice for the same thing, using all these taxes for one thing here and the other. We've got to work together, which is a good thing.

To this subamendment – I've just got a few notes that I wrote down. I'll read them so that I can stick to my script a little better. I know that we are proud of these municipalities. A lot of the consultation – because this type of consultation is not just from yesterday or last week or two weeks ago. This has been going on for years. It started with the previous government. All this legislation has been ongoing for a long time. We have been working with these associations on details for the ICFs for a while now. We're not saying that it's perfect. We're not saying that there's a blank cheque, like the opposition tries to throw out there all the time. To be honest, Mr. Chair, I don't like making things up. I don't like speculation and things like that. It's not how I work. I don't appreciate that.

There's a lot of work going on. Are there issues? A hundred per cent there are, and that's why we're consulting. That's why we keep speaking to people out there, and we will continue to do that. If you actually read what's going on with this bill, you would know that, but sometimes some people like to put things out there that might not be quite exactly what's laid out in the bill and maybe a little misinformation. Some people like to do that, but I go on truth and facts, and we're reading this right here. Nobody's ever said that we're perfect, and I'll reiterate that again. I try to tell my wife that all the time, that I'm perfect, but it doesn't really go over very well.

9:50

**An Hon. Member:** What?

**Mr. S. Anderson:** I know. It's amazing. Shocking. I know, guys.

You know, we have been consulting a lot on this, and we will have regulations outlining more specifics from the ICFs coming forward once we complete the collaborative work . . . [interjections] Nobody wants to hear me? Jeez.

**The Acting Chair:** Hon. members.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Then we'll draft it so it's something that works with all the municipalities for the residents for the benefit of that regional co-operation.

In regard to the subamendment from the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays the clause that is in question in this is a standard clause in legislation to allow for flexibility, and I think that's a key word, "flexibility." We have to be able to adapt, and we have to be able to listen and to understand what the concerns are. It's there to deal with these unanticipated circumstances, but we haven't to date, that I'm aware of, had anybody come up with concerns about this particular clause, and most importantly we are actually actively engaging with municipalities on the ICF framework as part of a robust, transparent, and extensive consultation.

I'd just like to say that I'm pretty proud of what we've been doing, and it's a continuation of some good work from before, and we need to continue to have these conversations. We always do. You know, I love being at AUMA and AAMD and C and meeting with regional officials from around the province. I think it's incredible to have these conversations and always understand the concerns and issues from particular areas because every area is different. You know, I think my amazing area of Leduc-Beaumont is outstanding and far and above the best place in the province, but other people might have words about their own. For me it's due in part to the collaboration that we have in our area. I think it's amazing what they do down there. I really appreciate it. It's the way I was brought up, to try to work together with people, and I think that we're doing that.

I'll sit down and let other people have a chance to speak now, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Chair:** Are any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment? The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you again, Mr. Chairman. I want to express my appreciation to the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for bringing up the comments he just had. You know, once again, we are talking about this regulations issue and whether or not we're going to leave the section (h) in the bill. The hon. member brings up some great points, but we have to keep in mind that he lives in an area where there is a capital region board. They have a bunch of things set. They have a bunch of rules. It's already been done and in motion for the past eight years.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** And it's working.

**Mr. Stier:** It may be working. I don't argue that, hon. member across the floor.

What we are talking about, though, is that these new collaboration frameworks will have to be created, as I said a moment ago, and his point versus my point I think is a little bit moot. It's not necessarily fair to compare an area that's got an established, huge metropolitan area plan with a whole bunch of rules and guidelines whereas we're trying to legislate and put together a new collaboration framework with a lot of these kinds of clauses that are going to really change how things happen out there in those other municipalities that don't have such a big capital region board.

Again, fair enough. I understand his points of view, and I recognize and respect them, but what we're talking about are two different kinds of things here. So that we can be clear, I'm supporting this motion to strike item (h), and we should be able to be talking openly ahead of time about what the regulations will be before we just allow an open-ended clause that any regulations can be established at any time.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** I'll recognize the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, followed by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah. I just wanted to actually respond to the last comment here. Now, once again, I'm having a difficult time seeing how this process could be considered a blank cheque or how this process could be construed as not actually allowing for a maximum of consultation. Now, the previous member was saying: well, I hope that we get an opportunity to look at these regulations. Well, as a matter of fact, every single MGA regulation that's going to be coming out of the review is going to be posted online for 60 days so that all Albertans can see what is proposed and give feedback on it.

**Mr. Nixon:** Six whole days.

**Mr. Piquette:** Sixty. Six, zero. Yeah.

I mean, we've shown right from the beginning of this process that we are committed to open and transparent consultation on all of these MGA regulations, and members of the opposition are speaking to a lack of trust that I certainly have not seen among our partners and stakeholders. These draft regulations, you know, are going to be developed, and I just want to be kind of clear here on who those stakeholders are. They are, you know, the stakeholders most affected, so we're talking about municipalities, municipal associations, school boards, community organizations, business and industry, developers, everyone. These regulations will then be presented to Albertans in early 2017.

I mean, I'm nonplussed that the members could construe this as anything but an open and transparent process involving all stakeholders. As, in fact, the two peak municipal organizations in the province are both part of this collaboration, I'm just kind of a bit confused where they're saying that this lack of trust and lack of communication is coming from because it's certainly not coming from the partners and stakeholders that I've had the great pleasure to meet, like I said previously, at AAMD and C just recently but also as part of the consultations during the summer and then also in discussions with the municipalities that I have the privilege to represent in my own riding.

Now, of course, they do have questions, and when I previously spoke to this bill, I think we talked about that and brought some of the answers. But, you know, those questions are certainly not revolving around a lack of trust that we're not going to be open and transparent about the regulations. The concerns that they might have about the scope and parameter: like I said, they will be getting ample opportunity to discuss them with Municipal Affairs and, of course, with the minister, who, as I've said before, has been very accessible throughout this process.

One thing I should say is that, you know, I don't want the members across to give an unfair characterization of the level of respect that I've seen municipalities actually have for our Minister of Municipal Affairs. I've heard wonderful things, saying that she's down to earth, she's accessible, straightforward, and understanding that, really, it is with the best of intentions that this legislation is going forward in a spirit of true collaboration. On those grounds I think that this is – and I've said this previously – the way that legislation, ideally, should be done.

One thing that's a bit unfortunate is that, you know, at the beginning of this – we were at the last reading. I was quite impressed by the constructive tone that members of the opposition took, where they were bringing forward some of the concerns that I'd also heard. I don't think that this amendment seems to fall into that same category, where they want us to – I don't know – kind of step back in this process, where we actually have some good consensus around the broad parameters and now we have to work out the fine details in a process that's actually acceptable and suited to the task and with a degree of flexibility that means that if there are some adjustments that need to be made further down the line, there's a capacity to make them easily.

You know, maybe that is unfair. Perhaps there are a few that have those concerns. For those I just want to reiterate that we are continuing to consult on the regulations. We've committed to doing that. We are going to be working with stakeholders. And just one more time so there's no possible misinterpretation: these stakeholders include the municipalities, the municipal associations, the school boards, community organizations, business and industry, developers, everyone who has an interest in it. These regulations will be posted online for 60 days – that's six, zero, just to be clear on that – so that all Albertans can see what is proposed and give feedback on it.

10:00

Finally, through this and continuing to the present we are absolutely committed to open and transparent consultations on all of the MGA regulations. If there are any municipalities that have those concerns, you can lay them to rest.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to rise again to speak to this subamendment, which I am happy to support.

Just a couple of responses to the last hon. member who spoke. He asked the question: which communities did not trust this government during this situation? In fact, he said that he has not found any communities that did not trust what's going on with the government right now. I can name many: town of Rocky Mountain House, town of Sundre, village of Caroline, county of Clearwater, county of Mountain View, Red Deer county, Lacombe county, Ponoka county, Rimbey, the town of Bentley. The list goes on and on. That's just in my constituency. I can assure him that maybe where he represents there are no trust issues, but I would encourage this government to leave the House, as I have many times before, and travel Alberta, and they will find out very quickly that there are very few municipalities and people in this province that trust this government.

With that said, the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont in his well-prepared comments pointed out concerns that he felt that this amendment was an attempt or something along those lines that would maybe prevent co-operation between municipalities. I certainly echo his comments. I agree with him that co-operation between municipalities is important, and many of our municipalities work very, very hard together already. Rocky Mountain House and Clearwater county received an award from this minister just last year for the hard work that they do. Both that town and the village and Caroline, for that matter, in that county and that county work very, very hard together. That's very impressive. They've got concerns about this. That doesn't mean that they're going to stop co-operating. It doesn't mean that anybody says: we don't want to make it easier for counties and towns to co-operate together. To say that is ludicrous, Mr. Chair. They've got concerns about this.

The reason they have concerns about this and the reason the hon. member was right to bring forward this amendment is because they don't trust this government, because this government over and over and over through their legislation have passed things that have punished their communities and have made things harder for them. To continue to ask these communities to trust this government while they make regulations – if that's the answer all the time, then the answer back to them, Mr. Chair, is: Albertans don't trust you no more, so try something different.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I wasn't going to bother getting up and responding to this good amendment till the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater stood up because every time that we stand up in opposition to each other, my popularity in his constituency improves, so I really can't miss this opportunity.

Just one other thing I'd like to point out. We talk about municipal collaboration, and the Member for Leduc-Beaumont got up and spoke about his concerns there. I just want to say that the announcement yesterday is going to do anything but improve the collaboration efforts between the city of Edmonton, the town of Beaumont, and the county of Leduc. I just wanted to point that out.

Now, the amendment seeks to strike out clause (h), which reads, "must meet any other requirements established by the regulations." It's kind of a redundant statement because if it's in a regulation, then it's going to have to meet it anyway. The concern here is that the regulations aren't yet written, so we're going to bind municipalities to something with clause (h) that isn't even written yet. Until we know those regulations, you know, saying that it has to be bound by the requirements established in the regulations when we don't know what they are yet just seems to be a bit of a blunder

on that part, so I will be supporting this amendment to remove clause (h).

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to speak to this amendment. I certainly would be challenged to hear that there has been any lack of consultation on this bill. I've been told even by members of the opposition that this should be the role model for consultation with municipalities and with the people of Alberta. I'm very proud of the work we did consulting broadly right across this province. Even at AAMDC I met with many, many municipalities and had the opportunity to talk with them one-on-one with any questions or concerns that they had.

Mr. Chair, this particular question did not actually come forward to me, but I think that the most important thing is – and I thank the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater for bringing up the process – that even in the regulation process we're fully committed to very transparent, open consultation on this. I look forward, and we're continuing. Right now we're engaged in an intensive process to develop more details for the ICFs with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, with the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, with the Association of Summer Villages of Alberta, Alberta Rural Municipal Administrators Association, the Local Government Administration Association of Alberta, Metis Settlements General Council, Canadian Home Builders' Association, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

Mr. Chair, beyond that, once we have a draft regulation in place, I cannot repeat enough that that regulation will be posted for 60 days to the public, including all of the members across the floor, to submit their feedback on that so that we can all work together to ensure that that regulation is in the best interest. Once again, there is nothing being done behind closed doors. I've been fully committed to that. I've received a lot of positive feedback from municipal leaders across this province, and I'm proud of the relationships I've built with them and the trust that I have personally built with many of those municipal leaders. I look forward to continuing to build those relationships.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to preface my comments and question on this subamendment to thank the minister for what I've heard has been some very robust consultation. I think that that's a positive thing and there's been some very positive feedback. But I think, you know, what we're trying to do here is in the spirit of best practices and continuous improvement and to make sure we have the best legislation. There are many of us out there talking to many different stakeholders and finding out that there's some fine-tuning that we can do at this stage, which I think will improve this legislation and then help you to guide the regulation as we go forward.

I'd like to think that there's an opportunity for us in this House – and I think maybe it's a lesson for all of us, whoever is sitting on that side – to consider that amendments are not meant as criticism; they're meant as an opportunity to improve. If we work together in this House as legislators, then our main goal is actually to provide the best legislation for Albertans, to provide input, constructive input, to improve that legislation, and that we not see amendments as an affront to good legislation and the good work that's been done across the floor.

I'd like to encourage everybody in the House to support this amendment, not because it's meant as criticism but that it's a constructive opportunity for us to work together in this House to provide positive legislation, to amend legislation to make sure it's the best it can be for all Albertans, to recognize that even with robust consultation there's other consultation and other input coming from across this province, different stakeholders, of which some of us may have stronger or less strong relationships with or a history or a background in certain areas that will allow us to do that. I would just like to encourage everybody in the House to support this amendment, not to criticize what's done but to improve what's done.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

10:10

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have been listening to this back and forth, and I will say that whenever you've got regulations being drafted, especially something of this magnitude, it's important that before it's enacted, we have a good understanding of what exactly it is that we're moving forward.

Now, I did go to one of the open houses, and I have to thank the minister for setting those up. Unfortunately, the minister couldn't be at the open house that I went to in Lac La Biche, but the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater was there. I will say that a lot of the concern that I had heard from inside that meeting was specifically about ICFs, and one of the concerns was: exactly how is it that you're going to bring this forward? It was my understanding that more information was going to come out afterwards on exactly what was going to be brought forward with regulations. Now we're hearing that we have to wait for the regulations after the bill has been passed through the House.

I guess my concern here is that when it comes to consultation, in this case I think that we did hear in one of the open houses that it was a concern that regulations were being drafted and there wasn't enough input into those regulations. I think that by getting rid of or striking (h), this subamendment will add clarity to exactly what it is that the government is trying to do. I think that we need to be working together with the municipalities. I do believe that we have heard that ICFs, especially in my riding, are going to be a contentious issue when we bring this forward.

I would like to know more about the 60 days. We put the regulations down, we wait 60 days, and then you just pass it through anyway? Or is it going to be 60 days, we have our Municipal Affairs do their changes to the regulations, and then we're going to get another opportunity to see what comes out? I think this is important. We're going to only get one crack at something as important as ICFs. I'm not saying that we need to put this off another three years. That's not at all what I'm going for, and I'm not saying that. In legislation you can't always make every party within Alberta happy, but you can at least find compromise in a lot of places. How exactly is it that we're going to know that the government seriously took the recommendations from our municipalities, specifically Bonnyville-Cold Lake, and implemented them into the changes, into the regulations? My question is: will there be a second draft, if you will, for our municipalities to be able to see that they've been heard?

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Yeah. I'll be brief because I've spoken once, Chair. All I would say on this is that I heard a lot of concerns, particularly at AAMD and C, about the ICFs, particularly from some of the smaller population municipalities. What they said to me was that this seems to be insensitive to them. What I mean by that is that there are municipalities with one, two, maybe three ICFs to do because those municipalities are on their borders. But there are a lot of rural municipalities. I know that even the Member for Leduc-Beaumont, I think, named half a dozen in his area where one rural municipality would have to deal with half a dozen other municipalities.

When this House sets regulations, that's one regulation, but for some municipalities that could be 10 or 20 separate negotiations that they're triggering. I see the minister nodding, and I'm sure that she knows this, so thank you. All I'm saying is that this amendment is essentially intended to not put the minister offside with the municipalities by having unintended consequences by burdening them with 10 or 20 negotiations or even four or six because that's a lot of work, too. One is a lot of work, for goodness' sake, but four or six for a small municipality with limited resources and limited staff is not a small burden. It's a large burden, so this is just a way to have the government check in to make sure that they don't accidentally put too big a burden on these municipalities. That way the minister will be more popular than ever with them if the government supports this.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment?

Seeing none, I'll put the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on subamendment SA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:15 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Schneider
Cooper	Hanson	Smith
Cyr	McIver	Starke
Ellis	Nixon	Stier
Fildebrandt	Rodney	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	McLean
Carlier	Hinkley	McPherson
Carson	Hoffman	Miller
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Clark	Kazim	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinstaub	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Larivee	Schmidt
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Drever	Loyola	Sigurdson
Feehan	Luff	Swann
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Turner
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Goehring	McKittrick	Woollard

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 39
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[Motion on subamendment SA1 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** I would remind all hon. members that during the recorded vote count we must ensure that there is silence so that we can record it appropriately.

We are back on the amendment. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Actually, I just wanted to make a suggestion that we move to one-minute bells.

**The Acting Chair:** Under the standing orders it's already provided for.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Yes. Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to speak again here to Bill 21, and I'm going to be talking about the amendments that we received just two days ago. I'd like to give a little, brief overview, if I could, to start.

Once again, having met at the briefing on this document and its introduction, I'd like to take a quick moment to acknowledge the dedicated work that the Municipal Affairs staff have done, you know, to get things right. It's a great opportunity to be in this process again today to talk a little bit about those.

I think it's also important to mention, as I said the other day, that the previous government started the review of the MGA with the co-operation of a lot of the municipal associations and stakeholders. So as we move on, I think it's important to thank them again for getting this going.

Mr. Chair, the amendment document that we're talking about from a couple of days ago has been organized into a few basic groups, as they had done in the first instance with the bill, and it talks about elected official training, appeal board composition, municipally controlled corporations, decision timelines, off-site levies, planning matters, assessment, and, of course, the intermunicipal collaboration frameworks. We have organized ourselves a little bit on this side of the House with the Official Opposition in having a few speakers on some of these topics, so I'll be referring to some of this as a brief overview and then move into allowing my colleagues to speak up on specific matters.

Bill 21 amendments, just like the mother ship, the actual MGA itself – as I said the other day, it's one of the largest bills that the Legislature has been asked to pass, in my experience, so far. It is, I think, bigger than the Responsible Energy Development Act. We worked on the Education Act, which has yet to be proclaimed. I remember that that was a big one. But this is the elephant in the room, I guess, if you want to put it that way. So it's possible to talk a little bit about a lot of things, but it's not possible to talk a lot about everything. It's just huge.

Let's just get down to some of the things that I had mentioned a moment ago with my colleagues. I personally believe, first of all – we're talking now about the training of councillors and so on, and I said this the other day, too – that in a provincial election there is a tendency sometimes, as there has been in the past actually, to notice a bit of a gap in the knowledge and the education of people once they are elected, particularly with reference to the roles and responsibilities of a councillor. You know, as an MLA now I've seen a lot of the municipalities across the province that had a lot of turnover after the last election go through a lot of difficulties and hurdles with their new roles.

So I'm happy to see that this issue has been raised, as I've said before. I think that the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills will be digging into this here in a bit more detail, but I'm certainly supportive of having the training that has been indicated in the bill, and I'm certainly supportive in most respects about the intention to try to make it virtually almost mandatory to offer this. That's sort

of what I feel on this. I think it should be mandatory for all ratepayers to have the benefit of the people who are judging on the merits of various issues that come to their desks having some knowledge to make proper decisions. It's so important.

I think a lot of the feedback that we've received from the municipal associations who represent the municipalities and their councils has indicated their support for the most part as well. How that will happen, how that will take place, who will administer that: those things are a bit of an unknown. I myself, when I was first a councillor many, many years ago, was fortunate because the AAMD and C provided those kinds of courses, and I suspect maybe that is how those kinds of things will go in the future. But our Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, or the House leader for the Official Opposition, as he's known, will probably be digging into that topic.

On to municipally controlled corporations just briefly, as an overview. We certainly understand – and I've experienced where municipally controlled corporations exist, and they seem to work very well. We are a little bit concerned, as I said before, about how these things might take place. We are aware of the regulations that are actually in place now. You can actually see those because they've been discussed and they've been in place. Our Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills will be talking in more detail about that. We do like some of the things that are in the regulations now, and we think that the suggestions by the department to make it a little bit more open may give us a little bit of angst. So we'd like to talk a little bit more about that.

Moving on to the other topic of how municipalities plan, develop, and grow. I said earlier today and I will say it again, going into the intermunicipal collaboration frameworks topic area – this is a new area for the MGA in the 700 block of the 800 sections in the MGA – that for the bigger cities, mid-size cities, larger municipalities that have internal staffs and administrations that are quite familiar with statutory consents and the various documents, this may not be as much of a challenge.

**10:40**

But for the bulk of the smaller municipalities that have larger areas, although they may at some point in time, I suppose, one day after I'm long gone, have larger administrations, frankly, a lot of them will hire consultants or have extremely expensive types of ventures to consider because those consultants will have to work with several municipalities at once to try to put these things together. They will be billing for their services, and these are huge documents that will have to be considered, a lot of meetings, a lot of time, et cetera, et cetera.

My colleague from Little Bow will be digging into that matter shortly, and we're going to be talking about IDPs and all the interrelationships between the intermunicipal collaboration frameworks that are proposed, IDPs, and MDPs. We're certainly glad to see some attention paid to timing. But, relatively speaking, we need to talk, I think, and we will be talking to the main bill about that matter as well.

Moving on, Mr. Chair. I'd like to also get a little bit into the centralized assessment topic that's part of the amendment document, of course, and for the record just say that we understand the needs of the industry to try to get some sort of stability in how assessments are done from an industrial point of view. We understand that the major industries in the province have some pretty complex installations and that they have some marvellous, marvellous different types of processing facilities and all kinds of things and that there would perhaps be a benefit in some respects of having assessments sort of all being done out of one spot and then some sort of standards established throughout the province.

On the other hand, we also note that for a lot of the smaller municipalities some of the rules that exist can be worked with perhaps more easily and more locally, too. The removal of having someone do industrial assessments locally would also perhaps hamper some of those smaller departments if they were to lose some of that responsibility. Our associations have mentioned to us that those are concerns. We think they're valid. The assessors' associations have mentioned – and the assessors are highly trained, skilled people – that these kinds of changes are a little bit of a concern for them, too.

Our hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake will be speaking here to that as well. We're fortunate to have a gentleman in our presence who has a bit of an accounting background. I'm looking forward to hearing what he has to say in great, fine detail, as accountants can do, and he's got a bag of beans here with him, by the way.

Another one – and the one that I'm going to speak a little bit about because I have a bit of experience with it – is the amendments regarding the actual members that can sit on appeal boards. Of course, the appeal boards have over the years provided the public with an avenue to get their decisions reviewed and somewhat perhaps addressed and/or decisions of councils overturned, especially on the subdivision and development appeal board side. Of course, too, some of this applies, but not so much, to the actual local assessment review boards. Nonetheless, the intent, I understand from the department and from all the documents I've obtained so far, is that the idea is to limit the number of councillors that can sit on some of these boards.

We have several boards that are being dealt with here in the act and in the amendment. There's the subdivision and development appeal board, and most often a lot of municipalities separate those meetings up. They have different members on different boards because, of course, the subdivision appeal board meeting is generated as often as not by an appeal from the applicant who didn't like conditions that were given to him as a result of his meeting, or it may be launched by the municipality itself if something wasn't quite correct.

Nonetheless, it's odd to think that a councillor could sit on a matter that he was already acquainted with when he sat in judgment on the original application when it came for redistricting or rezoning and eventually for subdivision. If that councillor, you know, had taken the training as, as an example, I did and looked and perhaps was aware that the government does produce a subdivision and an appeal board training manual – and it talks about different kinds of issues that happen during appeal board hearings and all of the kinds of rules and different administrative laws and natural law kinds of things that they have to be aware of – it is possible that that subdivision appeal board member, if he was a councillor, could have some sort of influence on a decision that the board would make that would perhaps not be fair. Particularly, having more than one councillor, which sometimes, I guess, has happened on some of these boards, even makes it more difficult to render a fair decision for the board.

We're in support of, again, having a maximum of one councillor as part of the group on these boards, but, you know, I'd like to remind members in the House today that the selection of appeal board members is critical. Development appeal board members – developments are usually handled by the development officer in a municipality and their staff. Whether it's a garage that's being applied for or someone wants to put up an arena or something, usually development officers make that decision. That decision can be approved, or it can be denied, and, as is the case many times, it might go to an appeal board if they couldn't get what they wanted. But developments, therefore, and those kinds of processes have not

involved councillors at that point, so it's okay for councillors to sit on a development appeal board, and they usually do, but again we're talking about not having undue influence from the council in these decisions. We're supporting that we do not have too many councillors on these boards. We think it's a great idea, actually.

Nonetheless, the apprehension of bias is so important. I can recall many times when I have actually had to appeal decisions that I was involved in. Maybe people in the room don't know this, but when an appeal board meeting first starts, the chairman is usually required to ask if anyone has a problem with any of the members on the board because they feel there may be a bias issue and so on. Sometimes an applicant of an appeal sees a councillor there or maybe two councillors that may have been saying things prior to the meeting starting and prior to the meeting being held. The appellant can actually challenge that member, and often as not sometimes they can ask that that member be not able to sit on their matter because they feel that they have some bias.

This is a very important part of the system, and I, in fact, have had to ask some members of appeal boards to not sit on the matters that I was against. The system works fairly well, but certainly when a councillor is there, it does give one a little bit of an angst as to whether or not that person could be fair because they deal with a lot of these things throughout the week and may not necessarily be totally fair because of that extra knowledge. We're supportive of that.

I think that that's my portion of it. Now, Mr. Chair, my time is coming to an end, I think. I don't know how much more time there is.

**The Acting Chair:** You have four minutes.

**Mr. Stier:** Four minutes. Thank you for that.

I'll just end my end for now. We're generally supportive of a lot of the things that were in the amendment here, I think. My other colleagues are going to speak to some of these matters, and I look forward to hearing the discussion on that today.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 21 in Committee of the Whole. The Municipal Government Act is an incredibly important piece of legislation. It's been referenced before that it is one of the most in-depth, longest pieces of legislation that governs municipal governance throughout our province. Because of that, of course, it is one of considerable concern, whether you are involved in the governance of a large urban centre, like Edmonton or Calgary, or whether you're involved in the governance of a smaller centre, even a village or a summer village, or indeed whether you're involved in the governance of a rural municipality. For that reason there has been considerable interest in this whole process of amending the Municipal Government Act, which, as has been correctly pointed out, has been under way for some time.

**10:50**

You know, the consultation process, really, has been ongoing. I'd like to actually stress that I don't think that it will stop once the MGA is passed. I would actually hope that the conversation continues. Although, perhaps just out of deference to the people who have been involved with this project for so long, especially people in the department, it might not be bad to give them a bit of a breather because they've been working on this for a long, long time.

Nonetheless, I do want to acknowledge the various people involved in the Municipal Affairs department who have been

working on this for a long time. I do think, you know, very sincerely, that they are trying to produce the best piece of legislation possible. As my colleague the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek pointed out in debate on the previous amendment that we were talking about, really, our goal here is to produce a piece of legislation that is as acceptable, as workable, and will stand the test of time. Again, just owing to the size and the complexity of the MGA, this is not an act that gets amended every other day. Hopefully, this act, whether it ends up getting passed in this fall session of 2016 or perhaps in 2017, is an act that will be around for perhaps some considerable length of time.

It is in that interest and because we are trying to improve this piece of legislation as best we can that I have a subamendment, Mr. Chair, that I'll distribute to the pages. Once they've had a chance to hand it around, once they've had a chance to get that subamendment to you, Mr. Chair, then I will go into some of the details of it. Just give me a second, and I'll also bring it up here on my screen as well.

In broad measure, Mr. Chair ...

**The Acting Chair:** Hon. member, just one second. I just want to verify that.

**An Hon. Member:** Easy. Whoa.

**Dr. Starke:** Whoa. Where have I heard that before?

**The Acting Chair:** Please proceed, hon. member. I just wanted to verify that I had the original copy.

This subamendment will be SA2.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you. For the record, Mr. Chair, I move that amendment A1 to Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, be amended in part E by striking out clause (a) and substituting the following: "(a) in subclause (ii) in the proposed section 284(1)(f.01) by striking out subclauses (iii) and (iv)." What does all that mean when you boil it down? Well, if you're following along either in the House or at home, we're looking at page 14 of Bill 21. It has to do specifically with the definition of "designated industrial properties." This is an area of considerable concern to both rural and urban municipalities.

Now, many in this Chamber will recall and certainly I know that the Municipal Affairs minister will recall that a considerable concern was expressed about the status of linear property. I know that she heard a lot about linear assessment in the months leading up to the introduction of the MGA, and she probably heard a collective sigh of relief go out from municipal leaders across the province with the assurances that linear property would not be one of the things that is, you know, removed from their own tax base. That was there. This section indeed deals specifically with that and, in fact, deals with linear property as well as, as it says in subclause (i), "facilities regulated by the Alberta Energy Regulator, the Alberta Utilities Commission or the National Energy Board."

But it's subclauses (iii) and (iv) that are causing considerable concern to municipalities and to municipal councillors right across our province. In subclauses (iii) and (iv) it indicates that designated industrial properties will be defined by regulation. We once again get into this discussion of what is included in legislation and what is included in regulation. I know that we have received assurances not just from the minister but from other members that the regulations would be posted online and that there would be the opportunity for consultation and discussion. But, you know, once again, here we really need to provide a level of assurance to our municipalities.

When I was attending the AAMD and C last week, I heard from a number of different rural municipalities right across our province,

and I certainly heard from the three that are within the constituency of Vermilion-Lloydminster: Minburn county, Beaver county, and the county of Vermilion River. All three of these counties expressed a major concern in the definition of designated industrial property because indeed the tax base that they go from, the tax base that these counties depend on, and indeed it's not just rural municipalities but includes urban municipalities as well, is one that they depend on in order to provide the revenue that they need to be able to run their municipality. The notion that it could be defined in regulation and not within the legislation is of concern to them.

It is a subamendment that is intended to provide assurance and to provide some level of certainty to these municipalities that designated industrial properties will be very clearly defined and that it'll be defined, hopefully, within the legislation but at the very least that regulation cannot allow an arbitrary definition of something as a designated industrial property one day or in one county and then something else in another county.

You know, there is concern about the application of regulations in this situation. I think the minister did the right thing by making it very clear that linear assessment was not part of this overall, that this would stay within the bounds of the municipality, but the designated industrial property is yet another area that they depend on in order to be able to have a tax base so that they can provide the necessary services for their ratepayers. I think that it's very important that we clearly define what designated industrial properties are within the legislation and not simply leave it up to regulation. That's what this subamendment essentially does. It removes subclauses (iii) and (iv), which allow for that degree of uncertainty to creep into this.

Again, I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is interested in maintaining a good working relationship with municipalities all across our province. That has always been the goal of Municipal Affairs ministers, and I think they also find that municipal governments are exhilarating to work with. They can sometimes be very challenging because by their very nature they serve the same group of taxpayers that we as provincial representatives do or indeed at the federal level, and sometimes you can run into jurisdictional conflicts – let's just call it that – in which there seems to be, you know, working at crosspurposes. We don't want to see that, wherever that's possible, to mitigate or avoid that.

I'm going to encourage my colleagues to take a very close look at this subamendment. I do believe that it improves the overall bill because I think it removes one of the potential sources for a lack of clarity, and I think clarity is something that I know we always aim for when we're drafting legislation, and I would encourage colleagues to support the subamendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Hon. members, before we proceed with the discussion on subamendment SA2, I would like to advise the committee that on amendment A1 we will be having separate votes for sections C, E, K, and X.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA2? The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I want to thank the member for acknowledging the work of my department. I don't know how I will ever make up to them the amount that I've asked from them in the last little while to make sure that this is the best piece of legislation, and they have delivered exceptionally, and I'm glad to put it on the record that I feel that I have the most amazing department staff in the government of Alberta.

In regard to centralized assessment the truth is, Mr. Chair, that we certainly heard from industry that there was a desire to have



consistent assessment across the province and that a way of doing that would be to have a single assessor, not only a single assessor but a single appeal process. You can imagine that with 344 municipalities that's an awful lot of rules to manage, particularly when you're talking about infrastructure that crosses borders. For example, you would have something such as a compressor station on a pipeline. Basically, it came from exactly the same factory. Identical. Literally identical. Same place. No difference in structure. The value of it, not just the taxation because rates vary, of course, between municipalities but the assessed value of identical property is different from one side of the municipal border to the other. Of course, with that, the challenge of appealing on so many different fronts simultaneously created a substantial barrier.

**11:00**

With that, we committed to ensuring that there was a consistent, fair process to ensure that there is consistent assessment of the value of industrial property across the province, very similar to what we do with linear property right now. With that, we brought forward the recommendations that we have now. Interestingly, because of the fact that this brings to industry that consistency, that stable prediction, they know exactly what's coming, and we certainly know the value of predictability to industry in terms of making investments. By doing that, they actually are willing to pay the cost of the assessment. Actually, right now municipalities have to pay the cost for linear property assessment and, of course, the other industrial property, and now industry will be picking that up. I'm glad that we could actually find some cost savings for municipalities in that as well.

You know, for many of us, when we make a change in things, there's some anxiety with that, Mr. Chair. Certainly, those municipalities that have a substantial amount of industrial property, I've been meeting with them, working with them, and assuring them that the transition process will be respectful and worked out with them. I look forward to those ongoing conversations. They are great partners, and I always value conversations with them.

Mr. Chair, in terms of this subamendment there is some guidance in terms of what designated industrial property is in Bill 21, and the regulations actually will include the specific plants around the province that are considered industrial property. Obviously, there's some recognition that when you have a list that is that specific, it really needs the opportunity to be amended in real time. Certainly, I respect my colleagues and would love to have them at the table to have these conversations about policy decisions. However, having to bring to the floor an amendment to the MGA every time there is a new plant that is built or a new plant that is decommissioned in the province would be burdensome to us all and I don't think the best use of our time.

I look forward to continuing to work with the municipalities to ensure that we do have the very best legislation that meets their needs going forward, and again I look forward to those continued conversation with our respected partners, our municipal governments.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to get some clarification while we have the minister here. The clauses that we want eliminated by this subamendment refer to (iii) and (iv). Clause (iii) is: a "property designated as a major plant by the regulations." Now, if we look at the heading of subclause (ii), it says:

by adding the following after clause (f):  
(f.01) "designated industrial property" means

- (i) facilities regulated by the Alberta Energy Regulator, the Alberta Utilities Commission or the National Energy Board.

Now, could the minister give me one example of a major plant of any kind that wouldn't already fall under the jurisdiction of the Alberta Energy Regulator, the Alberta Utilities Commission, or the National Energy Board?

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course, they all do fall under those jurisdictions. We're using those plants to be a guide as to what is considered industrial property or not so that everybody has clarity. If they fall under the jurisdiction, they are industrial property. Those provide some guidelines in terms of that, but the regulation will specify individual plants, and that's where the regulation comes in, in terms of specifying them. It is not just about providing guidance and criteria. You actually just listed some of the guidance and criteria there. This will go beyond that to make sure that we work with the municipalities to target those specific plants and ensure that those are listed in the regulation so that there is no lack of clarity with municipalities, right down to each individual place, if they are industrial property or not.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a couple of quick comments and then a question about regulations, I guess, and this government's desire to continually increase their ability and expand the opportunity to make significant changes inside regulations. I guess I'm a little bit confused. The minister spoke about, you know, hearing from industry and sounds very supportive of industry. There are lots of days when I appreciate that from the government, but there are also lots of days where they come and sue our industries and create all sorts of havoc amongst people in your fair city and the mayor of the city that you represent with respect to the power companies. I think it just sends a very confusing message. One day the government is suing industry. The next day they're saying: we're great partners, and this is exactly what industry wants. I hope that the minister might provide some additional comments.

As well, I have some concern about the comments that she raised with respect to basically saying that, you know, if we had to make an amendment to the MGA that would include information around the regulation, that would be a waste of time. You know, these pesky laws just get in the way all the time, really slow down the decision-making of the government. Mr. Chair, I acknowledge that there is some balance that needs to be met with respect to regulations or the legislation, but making these broad-based statements – and we heard from the minister and from my hon. colleague that, you know, generally speaking, the majority of the plants are already considered to be a facility regulated by the AER, the AUC, or the NEB.

Then there's this little problem at the bottom here in clause (iv), "any other property designated by the regulations." It winds up being this significant catch-all. It has no requirement to be based upon the above. I get that these are industrial guidelines, but "any other property designated by the regulations" provides a wide swath for the cabinet to be able to make decisions based upon perhaps the needs of the day. You know, we need to be very cautious. I know that this cabinet is honourable, and they would never do anything in regulations that would be untoward. Now, not all of the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are convinced of that, but I believe the best of this government. The challenge is that we

don't just legislate for today but we legislate for tomorrow and the government after that and the government after that. So when we leave these large catch-alls, "any other property designated by the regulations," we open ourselves to significant risk.

I am a firm believer that finding the right balance is important, and that's why I'll be supporting this subamendment.

**The Acting Chair:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I did want to take the opportunity in the interest of ensuring that we have clear information on this. I recognize that not every member, because it is a large document, has had the chance to make it through all the pieces, so I want to assure the member that if you look at the amendment, it actually says to strike out subclause (iv), "any other property designated by the regulations." We've already taken that action, removed that, and replaced it with more specifics, again, in recognition that flexibility is required and that regulation engagement with our stakeholders will continue.

It is important that this is a responsive, flexible piece of legislation, Mr. Chair, because what I promised to the municipal governments is that it would not be something that would be necessarily burdensome. With that we're making it as responsive as possible to meet and be responsive to their needs.

**11:10**

You know, Mr. Chair, certainly, I want to say that there is no contradictory stance when we talk about the fact that I'm happy to advance the interests of industry here in this House and that at other times we have challenges with them. I'm unapologetic about that because the reason that we are here is to ensure that we meet the needs of Albertans, and in many cases it is in Albertans' best interests to support industry as best as possible. They contribute to a healthy Alberta, and I'm proud to work with them and to support them. But when industry brings forward or makes some choices that are not in the best interests of Albertans, that is when the government is required to step forward and to challenge industry on that. So 99 per cent of the time we'll be working with industry and supporting them, thankful for the work that they do and their presence here in the province. We would not be Alberta without that. However, that does not mean that in every single instance we will do so if it is very clear that it is not in the best interests of Albertans.

Once again, I do not support this amendment. I think it's in the best interests of municipal governance that we have the flexibility to change the actual specific listing of those plants by regulation, a much more responsive action to take. There is the clear criterion in terms of an overarching guideline as to what would be included in the legislation, which provides a lot of information to municipalities, but moving forward to bring the specific listing of properties into this or failing to identify them at all I don't feel is in the best interests of municipalities.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Chair. Just rising briefly to support the subamendment by my hon. colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster, and I would ask the minister politely, I hope, to reconsider her opposition to it. I think this really is an improvement. I heard the minister say something – and I don't think I can quote her exactly – about all municipalities understanding what's industrial or that they all agree or something of that nature. I appreciate, Minister, that I know I didn't get the quote right exactly, but it was something of that nature. That's part of the problem here.

I know the minister is working hard to get this right, so I want to give her credit for that. Despite that fact, she's not right about that.

I can tell you that after spending nine years on a municipal council, not only do all councils not agree on what's industrial and what isn't; lots of times there are divisions within council about what's industrial and what isn't. You know what? These are honest disagreements. There's nothing bad, nothing nefarious, nothing evil going on. There's just real, honest disagreements of opinion. Not only that, but each municipality in their land-use bylaws gets to designate classifications of property. One might go I-1, I-2, I-3 for heavy, medium, and light industrial, and one might go IH, IM, and IL and then maybe have subcategories on there, where you've got medium or light industrial that includes retail or medium and light industrial that doesn't include retail.

You know, for example, you might have a machine shop that sells some particular gadget or something that they make in the back that has become popular, so they have a retail store and sell it out the front. It could be an industrial butcher shop in the back that sells meat out the front. It could be a whole range of – Princess Auto, I think, in some ways in Calgary at least, is designated industrial, and in other municipalities it may be designated as pure retail. Neither municipality is really wrong. They've just chosen within the proper scope of authority that they're given within the Municipal Government Act to make these determinations, and they are right in so doing. That is why we need to look at this, because the assumption that I think the minister is making, that it will be easy to get everybody to agree on what's industrial and what isn't, isn't quite that straightforward. There are so many nuances, so many nuances, from a machine shop making parts for RVs or trailers or cars that are broken and not easily available, to a machine shop that's actually making skids that will have gas and oil plants that get shipped around the world and be put together as massive oil and gas production facilities, or it could be something that's making frames for affordable housing, you know, factory-produced housing, or any other range of things that get produced.

Again, no one is lying here. No one is lying here. The government is not lying here. The municipality is not lying here. Nobody is lying here. The fact is that there are honest and true disagreements on what's industrial and what isn't, and I think that the subamendment by my colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster actually helps in getting past some of those misunderstandings, which is why I hope that the members of this House choose to support this subamendment.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment? The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to take a brief moment or two to support this subamendment as well. You know, I'm not a litigator, and I am not as experienced as some of the hon. members that are here that preceded my election. Nonetheless, there are a lot of experienced people here that used to sit on councils and have got a lot of experience on the government side, and when they bring forward a subamendment such as this, I tend to listen.

When I look through the original Municipal Government Act and I look at section 284 – and I'm looking at my old copy that I used to use when I was a consultant; actually, I've got the older copy, but it hasn't changed a lot – one of the things that strikes me on this whole thing is that section 284 of the act included a complete and very detailed set of definitions in section (k), which described what linear property was. In that section (k) there are an awful lot of descriptions about electric power systems, street lighting systems, cables, amplifiers, antennas, pipelines. You name it and it was fully described in section 284. So when we were talking about linear, we

knew what we had, and it was in the act. Of course, therefore, if it was in the act, it's something that can be debated in the House as we are talking today.

It's interesting to see that in Bill 21 on page 14, as the hon. member has mentioned, they are taking that set of definitions, clause (k), and striking the whole works out. Then they are giving a new definition to linear property. There are four or five items under linear property, and instead of all the detail that was in the act, they talk about, first of all, electric power systems. Where they had a large definition for electric power systems and all the information pertaining to electric power systems so that we knew what they were going to be working with there, they've now said that "electric power systems" is going to have "the meaning given to that term in the regulations." This House doesn't deal with regulations, as we've known. They've done that to the street lighting systems, to the telecommunications systems, to the pipelines, to the railway property. So they've taken all the clarity out with the striking of that clause.

As the hon. member has pointed out, there are a couple more clauses that he is concerned about and that I am as well, and so are our members here on this side, too. Designated industrial property comes up with a new set of definitions, and it is pretty open. It basically says:

(iii) property designated as a major plant by the regulations . . .

Well, we don't have the regulations. We're not dealing with any regulations.

(iv) any other property designated by the regulations.

So where we had some specifics before in the old act, they're going to move that all over to regulations, and we won't have a chance to work with it.

Based on that and a lot of the other comments by the members on this side of the House, Mr. Chair, I cannot do anything except be very happy to support this subamendment. Thank you.

11:20

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA2? The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There have been several questions that have been brought up specifically about this, and it looks like we're taking quite a bit of detail and shoving it into, well, almost – what? – half a sentence in both cases here. My concern always when we start to move away from detail in the legislation – and don't get me wrong. I do understand that going with clear, precise terms in legislation is our goal in everything we do. Actually, to be honest with you, it makes a big difference when we're trying to interpret.

When we see that linear property has a very extensive – very extensive – definition here and see that it goes down to (k), linear property, I have a concern that now suddenly we are going to see a specifically different definition for linear property coming up in the regulations. Now, this is a concern for my riding of Bonnyville-Cold Lake because there is a lot of linear assessment in my riding. My worry always is that when there were discussions about the MGA review, there were extensive discussions on how to deal with linear assessment. Now suddenly that whole issue has gotten thrown off to the side, saying: we're not going to deal with that. Okay. Apparently, this is something where the government feels that what's being done, in my opinion, is the appropriate direction that was done in the past. Through regulations is there a way of being able to change exactly what is deemed linear assessment?

Now, when we look at this, there's a lot to linear assessment, and I do want to touch on some of it because it's important. My honoured colleague has actually brought up some very good questions, but specifically let's look under section 284(1)(k)(i).

Electric power systems, including structures, installations, materials, devices, fittings, apparatus, appliances and machinery and equipment, owned or operated by a person whose rates are controlled or set by the Alberta Utilities Commission or by a municipality or under the Small Power Research and Development Act, but not including land or buildings.

Going through this, this is very, very specific on exactly what power systems would include.

Now, going forward, I know that regulations really are, in the case where we do one of these acts, something where it's important to know what you're dealing with. It may not be brought up as a specific concern because we actually don't know what's going to be in the regulations. We've talked about regulations already, saying that by using regulations, stating that you're going to dictate or define something after the fact – what we did here is 60 days. Again, I'm thankful that it's not a week. It does seem that there is a little bit more time on that.

In this case, let's say, for instance, that the definition of linear assessment does change inside of the regulations and that somehow this is going to very much impact my riding. I am going to have constituents from Bonnyville-Cold Lake saying: Scott, why wasn't this brought up?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Names.

**Mr. Cyr:** I would like to thank my colleague. I will again say sorry about using a name in the House.

**An Hon. Member:** Third time, we've got to kick you out.

**Mr. Cyr:** I have been told that I might be thrown into the corner soon.

As the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, representing them in the House, what exactly is it that I brought forward as a concern saying that these definitions should have been brought forward before the legislation went in? I guess the thing here is that when we start looking at definitions, because in the end definitions actually are very important when it comes to linear assessment or industrial assessment, how exactly is it that we can go so broad with something so important?

Now, I will say that when we were looking at this, this is a new definition. This is something where the government looks like they're reducing the Municipal Government Act, and then they're trying to, it looks like, make this a smaller act. That's always admirable. I have to say that when it comes to some of these acts that we've put through, it needs to be something that we can actually be able to interpret. But when we've got regulations doing the work of the act, that's never a good thing. So that's one point that I've already brought up.

Now, I am, again, concerned with part (iv) under (f.01). What we've got is: "any other property designated by the regulations." I did a quick check, and I didn't see . . .

**Ms Larivee:** It's page 3 of the amendment.

**Mr. Cyr:** The definition is on page 3?

**Ms Larivee:** Part E, clause (a): "by striking out subclause (iv)."

**Mr. Cyr:** What I am looking for specifically is the definition of what "any other property designated by the regulations" actually means. Now, I don't see the definition here – and the government will correct me if I'm wrong – and in this case that does bring concern to me as well because this really opens up exactly what other property designated by regulations could be. In this case one of the thoughts that comes to mind would be, let's say, that we get

a small solar farm, for instance. Could that suddenly be deemed an industrial property? This is an important one because we don't know the extent of how large or small this operation could be. I always have to be concerned because we had it very well laid out before about linear property.

Now, again, I'm not here to hamper the government from being able to do its job – that's not the entire goal of this – but what I am trying to do is say that I do have concerns brought forward by my constituents and my colleagues, and I would hope that the Minister of Municipal Affairs can answer a few of my questions.

**The Acting Chair:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Once again, I have to state that I understand, given the size of not only the legislation but even the amendment package that I presented, there may have been some oversight on that piece. But I want to be clear that I did hear some concern around the broad, undefined nature of subclause (iv), that includes “any other property designated by the regulations.” You will note that in section E of the amendment that I brought forward, if you look on page 3, clause (a) actually says: “striking out subclause (iv).” So I already recognized that. I heard that from stakeholders.

11:30

The amendment that I brought forward certainly allows for greater transparency with respect to the designation of property as designated industrial assessment, and it provides clear guidance that it includes solely assessing the land and other property that supports the operation of regulated facilities and major plants. That particular subclause I already had suggested that we remove. I'm really thankful for agreement that that is a good way to go. Hopefully, that lays to rest some of the concerns with that particular issue there.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA2?

Seeing none, I'll put the question on the subamendment SA2 as proposed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on subamendment SA2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:31 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	Gotfried	Rodney
Cyr	Hanson	Schneider
Drysdale	McIver	Starke
Ellis	Nixon	Stier
Fildebrandt		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	McPherson
Carlier	Hinkley	Miller
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Clark	Kazim	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Larivee	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Sigurdson
Dang	Luff	Swann

Drever	Mason	Sweet
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Feehan	McKittrick	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Woollard
Totals:	For – 13	Against – 39

[Motion on subamendment SA2 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** We are back on amendment A1. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise today to move subamendment SA3 to Bill 21. I have the requisite number of copies, and I will begin reading once the table indicates for me to proceed.

**The Acting Chair:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that amendment A1 to Bill 21, Modernized Municipal Government Act, be amended by striking out part Z and substituting the following:

Z Section 112 is struck out and the following is substituted:

112 Section 664(1) is struck out and the following is substituted:

Environmental Reserve

664(1) Subject to section 663 in subsection (2), a subdivision authority may require the owner of a parcel of land that is the subject of a proposed subdivision to provide as environmental reserve that part of the parcel of land which is unsuitable for development if it consists of

- (a) a swamp, gully, ravine, or coulee, or
- (b) a strip of land abutting the bed and shore of a water body.

(1.1) A subdivision authority may require land referred to in subsection (1) to be provided as environmental reserve only where, in the opinion of the subdivision authority, the land is unsuitable for development for one or more of the following reasons:

- (a) the natural features of the land present a significant risk of personal injury or property damage occurring during development or use of the land;
- (b) the land is required to prevent pollution lying within the bed and shore of a water body on or adjacent to the land;
- (c) to ensure public access along the bed and shore of a body of water lying on or adjacent to the land with an area of not less than 6 metres in width.

(1.2) For the purposes of subsection (1.1)(b) and (c), “bed and shore” means the natural bed and shore determined under the Surveys Act.

Mr. Chair, this amendment seeks to bring mutually beneficial clarity to the term “environmental reserve.” In speaking with industry, this has been a glaring concern for them. The scope with respect to what can be classified as environmental reserve is ill-defined. By defining environmental reserve as land not suitable for development, it is my hope that we can support and bring some clarity to municipal and industry partners. This is a fair and balanced clarification of the parameters, and the needs of both municipalities and industry I believe will be met by this subamendment. It respects the priorities of both parties. It recognizes the need for environmental reserves to be balanced with the economics of sustainable development and growth in light of a tight land supply and development density targets.

Further, Mr. Chair, I think that this is an opportunity for us to consider those broader partnerships that we need within our

communities to ensure that we have both the economics of development but also the protection of the needs of Albertans and also the protection of the sustainability of municipalities.

11:40

Part of that partnership I think recognizes that we have an industry that's not very good at blowing its own horn. It does a lot of good. I'll speak a little bit more about what we see in Calgary. We have the Resolve campaign, with millions of dollars donated by the building development industry towards affordable housing; supportive organizations and institutions like SAIT, Bow Valley College, University of Calgary, Mount Royal University, and the list goes on; supportive nonprofits and charities like the Kids Cancer Care Foundation, Children's hospital, Habitat for Humanity; the development of industry-driven solutions to affordable housing, PEAK home ownership, Attainable Homes Calgary, and many others, Mr. Chair.

I believe that there are future partnerships here that can be developed if we're able to balance, again, those needs of economic sustainability and the needs of municipalities, the ability to partner on things like recreation centres, schools, parks, playgrounds, constructed wetlands, those things that make communities great, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, this is an opportunity for us to, again, improve the legislation, not to discredit any of the great work that I think has been done by the minister. Some consultation: again, we've heard from industry and we've heard from municipalities with robust consultation and, actually, significant alignment on many, many issues. So it's my hope that all members can rise in support of this subamendment because it improves the legislation. It does not take away from the great work done. It does not take away from the opportunity to do what's best for Albertans and, again, as has been mentioned by many of our colleagues here today, is an opportunity for us to take enduring legislation to make sure it's as appropriate and robust as we possibly can.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to subamendment SA3? Are we ready for the question?

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Yeah. I just thought I would rise and give the government a couple of additional minutes perhaps to collect some thoughts and see if they might be able to add some comment to my hon. colleague's subamendment and have some sense about whether or not they will be supporting this subamendment.

I certainly know that my colleague has taken some significant time and thought as well as reached out to a number of stakeholders. I feel like I'm saying a few more kind things about him than maybe I ought, but I know that he's done a lot of very good work on this subamendment, and I think that it is certainly worth chatting about. It's my hope that prior to the call of the question we may be able to hear some thoughts from folks on the other side of the House as to whether or not they believe that he has good thoughts.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. An interesting challenge here near the end of the morning session with respect to a section of the MGA that goes to my heart and soul, and having sat on councils and rendered decisions about the taking of environmental reserves when subdivisions are being worked upon, I'm quite acquainted with this section of the old act. It seems to me that perhaps this

generates a few questions that some of us that have experience with this may have for the hon. member.

In Bill 21 the department has gone to a great length to change the definitions of "water body" and "body of water." In former days this gave the department a fair amount of difficulty because the Water Act had a definition for a body of water; various acts had a definition of a water body, drainage courses, natural drainage courses, rivers, shores, streams. Hon. member, on page 2 of Bill 21 it talks about a new definition of a water body, and it says:

- (i) a permeant and naturally occurring body of water, or
- (ii) a naturally occurring river, stream, watercourse or lake.

What they've done is change the way that the environmental reserve is to be dealt with by using those new terms.

I'm just wondering if you want to expand on your thoughts with respect to the changes you're suggesting under environmental reserve based on that new definition or if you're just wishing to change, more importantly, the other suggestion you have where you're talking about a bunch of other things that haven't normally been here before, specifically about (1.1)(b) in your subamendment: "the land is required to prevent pollution lying within the bed and shore of a water body." Do you have definitions of what "pollution" would be? Do you have other things to back this up so that if this were to be challenged one day at some hearing that I happen to be at, there would be some clarity for the applicants or the appellants? Do you have anything on that, please?

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Member, for your questions. I think what we're trying to do here is ensure that there's an opportunity for us to take a look at this land in a different perspective, in terms of the use of the land and the potential use of the land, for the most part here.

With respect to the pollution clause you're correct. I think that there may be some additional regulations required to define that more clearly, but I think the intent here, really, is to ensure that the land that is unsuitable for development also recognizes the adjacent use of the land and the potential for contamination of that land. It could be from drainage issues and things like that that may be subject to concerns with respect to water quality and drainage. We, obviously, have storm ponds that are most often parts of developments to ensure that there is appropriate storage and collection of stormwater, which may be contaminated from other sources, road sources and things like that, that we're also able to recognize some of the concerns around that.

You're absolutely correct. I think that we're trying to define the use of the land and the disposition of the land that can be put into environmental reserve, but there's no doubt that the regulations will need to clearly define what some of the other terms are there. I think that's part and parcel of what we're going to have in many different aspects of this legislation.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you once again. I appreciate the time and the patience of everyone in the House while we try to get legislation right.

Along the same vein, the previous clause that would relate to some of the stuff that you're actually asking no longer be there, I believe, was the former clause (b): "land that is subject to flooding or is, in the opinion of the subdivision authority, unstable." That was the old clause that we had for some time, and I guess you're suggesting, therefore, that your section (1.1)(a), (b), and (c) replace that broader definition. Is that what we're going with?

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you again to the member for the question. That's entirely correct. These are some definitions that we've looked at and spoken with industry about in terms of clarification. Again, a lot of it, I think, is recognition of the disposition of land for environmental reserve, how it is classified before it is pushed into environmental reserve, and the fact that it is not developable land. That really is the key, that that land can be utilized and considered for the environmental reserve without sort of prejudice to the opportunities for further development on that land but also recognizing that some of the land can be rehabilitated and used for development in many cases as well.

**The Acting Chair:** The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Having had some experience in protecting wetlands and water bodies from development, I think it's important, when you talk about swamps, gullies, ravines, or coulees being natural habitat for wildlife, if we can somehow incite developers to – because the equipment exists to change the landscape completely. A gully: whereas you say that it's undevelopable property, with a few dirt trucks and some track hoes and Cats you could eliminate a coulee or a gully pretty quickly. This serves to give some incentive to developers to, rather than developing those areas, leave them natural and promote some natural habitat.

11:50

You also mentioned that they may be dangerous to construction. That would be my only concern, that if they're dangerous to construction, they might be dangerous to little kids that are going to live in that neighbourhood as well. But a few bumps and scrapes and bruises probably aren't a bad thing when you're growing up either.

If the intent of this is to promote the protection of some of these natural habitats, I would support this subamendment. Thanks.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other member? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you. I'm going to stand to support this. I think my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has done some work on this. I don't see that he criticized what the government had there but rather that this is an attempt to improve it.

This is a sensitive area and an important one, Mr. Chair. During my time on a municipal council a lot of these issues came up constantly. You know, when somebody wants to develop a piece of land, I think they accept right away that they have to give up a bunch of it. I mean, they give up 10 per cent of it typically for green space. They give up allowances for roads and sidewalks. Sometimes they give up allowances for public amenities, maybe a police station, maybe a fire hall, maybe parks, whatever it happens to be. Sometimes they even will build a park for the municipality and even put in the deep and shallow services for the municipality. All that is part of the business.

Where it gets sticky or dicey or where you get misunderstanding is on some of the definitions of further dedications and further expropriations on things like environmental reserve. I think the hon. member has done a good job of trying to make it clear what is and what is not a potentially good idea for environmental reserve.

As the hon. member from the official opposition talked, I didn't hear him recommending it, but he was just recognizing the reality that you can change the shape of any landscape if you've got big enough equipment. You can move water courses. You can eliminate hills; you can create hills. You can remove gullies; you can create gullies. I didn't hear him suggest that you should always do that, and I'm surely not suggesting that you should always do that. It's just a recognition that that can happen.

The dedication of an environment reserve is very often completely appropriate, and very often those that develop land are a hundred per cent in favour of it because they recognize that when they're doing ethical business, they want to leave things behind that are good. Where it runs into problems is when you get into a discussion about what is and what is not environmental reserve, and those discussions could be around where a piece of land, for example, is completely dry and has been dry for as long as anybody can remember. The municipality, on the other hand, may have aerial photos from every year back 150 years, and from 25 to 75 years ago that piece of land might have been wet. Once that happens, when a piece of land is dry . . .

**The Acting Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt . . .

**Mr. McIver:** I was just – I respect that, Chair. I'll stop.

**The Acting Chair:** Pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will rise and report.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in this report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.  
The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Mr. Speaker, I think we've made some good progress this morning and had some good discussions, and just seeing the time, I would move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:55 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, November 24, 2016

Day 52

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 24, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a distinguished guest representing the Republic of Turkey. I'm very happy to welcome Mr. Anil Bora Inan, consul general of the Republic of Turkey. With the consul general here today is the honorary consul general in Edmonton, Mr. Kenan Tan. Between 2011 and 2015 Alberta averaged approximately \$27 million in annual exports to Turkey, and, in turn, Alberta averaged approximately \$66 million in annual imports from Turkey, so we'll have to balance that off at some time. We share an appreciation of learning from collaborative relationships between our postsecondary institutions. I would now ask Consul General Inan and Mr. Tan to rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly the fantastic students of the grade 6 classes of Simons Valley school in Sandstone in Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. They're here today with their teachers and chaperones, and there's a lot of names: Charlene Mudry, Laurie Reeve, Andrew Cull, Colleen Nabata, Vanessa Blyth, Beth Potter, Amie Lee, Susan Nicoll, Jessica Mehain, Kristi Peterson, Megan Limbird, Cherallee Rutledge, Maegan O'Brien, Candy Moe, Maha Abbas, and Tejinder Singh. I had the pleasure of visiting these classes earlier this year, and I'm so impressed with how well behaved and engaged the students are. I would like everyone to rise and please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school groups, hon. members?  
Seeing none, the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Ms Rosalind Davis. Rosalind has been here meeting with all sides of the House to talk about the scourge of fentanyl addiction. Sadly, Rosalind lost her partner, Nathan, to fentanyl addiction, and my member's statement later today will be about that. I would ask that Rosalind please rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Ava Touch, who is a student with the Simons Valley school that was just introduced so well by their MLA. Ava is an important part of the Oxford House family. My dad is the executive director of the

Oxford House, an organization I'm proud to support, that works with addicts in our province. Ava's grandmother, Ms Twitney, is the finance co-ordinator at Oxford House, an important member of that team. I would like to let the Assembly know that just recently Ava, through a cycle-a-thon, helped the Oxford House to raise \$12,000 for addicts. I can tell you, of course, that the Oxford House family is very, very proud of her, but I can also tell you that her grandmother is very, very proud of her. I would ask that she rise – I know that she's behind me – and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** She's pretty small for \$12,000.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three members of the Strathcona County Diversity Committee: Anna Attademo, Parvaneh Tashakor, and Mariam Farooq. Coming from very different backgrounds, these three women provide leadership to the committee. They are also involved in volunteering for organizations such as the arts council, affordable housing, Heartland Housing, and Movie in the Park. Their wisdom and passion make them natural mentors for some of the less-experienced members of the committee. It has been a pleasure for me to get to know them and to support their activism to create an environment where everyone is welcome and supported. I would like to ask Anna, Parvaneh, and Mariam to please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome from the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly another home-schooling family from Wetaskiwin. If my constituents would please rise as I read their names: Yoshiya Kim, a surveyor from the oil field now working in Edmonton; his wife, Sandra Kim, a former volunteer firefighter with the city of Wetaskiwin and now a home-schooling mother of five for the past six years; Abigail, the oldest daughter who's in grade 10 and is interested in how policy is shaped; Anna, the younger daughter in grade 6 and here to learn about how government is formed and runs; and the youngest son, Daniel, grade 1, just happy to explore the grounds and building. If we could please welcome them with the traditional warm welcome.

Thank you very much.

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

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly Mrs. Leah McRorie. This is not her first time, and I doubt it will be her last. This fierce advocate for inclusion of people with disabilities has reached out to every side and party within this House. Whether you've met in person, received e-mails, or been skewered on social media, you know this tiny and mighty advocate will hold us all accountable as it relates to inclusion, equality, and human rights. Please join me in thanking her and giving her the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who have guests here today? [interjection] Hon. member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, I didn't see you; my apologies.

**Cortes-Vargas:** That's okay, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly guests of one of our pages, Jessica Hermary. Her parents, Nadine and Robin

Hermery, live in the constituency of Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and they run a family business that has been in operation for 50 years. They are accompanied by Erika and John Auton, Jessica's grandparents, who also live in Sherwood Park. I would just like to ask them to all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Now, are there any others, hon. members?

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women.

### Violence against Women and Girls

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to acknowledge the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, an annual day on November 25, which is tomorrow, designated by the United Nations General Assembly in 1999. To be free from violence is a basic human right, and every citizen has the right to live without fear, harassment, and violence.

Around the world and here in Alberta women continue to experience actions that threaten their dignity as human beings. It can be a demeaning comment, an act of physical or sexual violence, or it can end a life. Some people believe that violence against women and girls only happens in other parts of the world, yet I look around this Assembly and see the faces of women who have courageously shared their stories of abuse and survival. It happens in Alberta, and it happens far too often, leaving survivors to deal with fear, shame, powerlessness, and loneliness.

1:40

There is no excuse, Mr. Speaker, no reason that validates violence against women and girls: not a disagreement, not drinking too much, not the loss of a job. Canada's chief public health officer called family violence a serious public health issue, noting that women are most likely to experience violence, and the outcome is even more dire for indigenous women. Today and every day I will stand up to violence against women and girls in this province. It is entirely possible to prevent gender-based violence, and even more importantly, it is essential that we do.

That's where the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence Campaign leads the way. Every day from tomorrow until 16 days later, on Human Rights Day, December 10, Status of Women will highlight a different action aimed at preventing and eventually stopping violence against women and girls. In addition, on December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women in Canada, we will be holding a vigil on the front steps of the Legislature, Mr. Speaker, in commemoration of the 14 young women who were murdered at l'école Polytechnique de Montréal, who died only because they were women.

You will notice many members, Mr. Speaker, wearing an orange button today with the phrase "share your action, 16 days, 16 ways" and our Twitter handle @Alberta\_Women. We wear orange as it's the United Nations symbol of a brighter future and a future without violence. Tomorrow the Calgary Tower and the High Level Bridge in Edmonton will glow orange to remind us that a future without violence is possible.

We can all be part of the solution, Mr. Speaker, to a problem that has absolutely no place in our province. Thank you. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise in response to the statement given by the hon. Minister of Status of Women. Violence against women is a very serious problem, affecting thousands of people in this province. We know that Alberta has some of the highest rates of violence against women in the country, whether it is intimate partner violence, sexual violence, or the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Many Alberta women may be suffering in silence, unsure or simply too afraid to leave the situation that they're in.

It is the duty of all political leaders, not just in our province and our country but around the world, to be part of the solution, not the problem. It's especially incumbent on men to recognize the pervasiveness of violence against women and ensure that the language we use does not minimize the seriousness of the issue. I will be the first to admit that in the past the language I've used has failed in that regard, but I commit to being part of the solution, rather than advancing the problem. When we hear someone minimize the impact of violence against women, we must call it out. When we see someone in danger or experiencing violence themselves, we must step in.

There is no simple solution to this serious problem. It will take all of us – every one of us – as political leaders to work towards solutions. Every single Albertan deserves to feel safe, and it's incumbent on all of us to raise our sons and our daughters and to teach our peers that violence against women in any form is absolutely unacceptable. There is no grey area. Strong communities that recognize the dignity, value, and worth of all women are better for it. Together we must work as political leaders and as all Albertans and all Canadians to curb violence in our communities. Value all people, and we will all be better for it.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the House to provide unanimous consent so that a representative of the third party as well as the two independent members be allowed to respond if they so choose.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the existence of a day dedicated to highlighting the desperate need to end all violence against women, but I am saddened that we need to have this day at all. While this day is recognized internationally, sadly we cannot think of it as another country's problem because women are being victimized daily in this province.

It is true that violent actions committed against women can sometimes have a direct correlation to the state of the economy, and we say that because we all know that Albertans are struggling at this time. Police services around the province are citing that domestic violence has spiked. In the first 10 months of the year the Calgary Police Service has responded to 20,000 domestic calls with close to 3,000 involving suspected violence. Think about that. We are talking about thousands of women and children in crisis.

As legislators we spend time debating the best actions for the economy, job creation, investment, and so on. During these economic arguments we put up a lot of figures and make dire predictions, but let's not forget what we're really here for, and that is people. We have a responsibility to understand the human impact when jobs disappear, unemployment jumps, bankruptcies spike, mental health deteriorates, addictions spin out of control. None of

these are acceptable excuses, but inevitably domestic violence raises its ugly head.

As an advanced-care paramedic I've seen the toll that violence takes on our society when women are victimized, and all too often first responders, like the hon. Member for Calgary-West, see the start of it, and we also see the fatal end.

I reiterate: everyone in this House needs to remember what we were sent here for, and that is people. More than ever we need to let the women and children of Alberta know that they are not forgotten and that we will stand with them. As legislators we are privileged to have this ability to address this issue, and so we should. On this day, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we can take a vow to protect them while we fight to put an end to this terrible epidemic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to stand, too, and speak to International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Around the world mothers, daughters, sisters, grandmothers are at risk of injury simply because they are female. In Canada alone the statistics are horrifying. Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence. On any given night in Canada 3,500 women and 2,700 children live in shelters because it isn't safe at home, and on any given night 300 women and children are turned away from shelters that are already full in Canada. Finally, every week a woman is killed by her intimate partner in this country.

Violence includes the far more common psychological abuse, trauma every bit as damaging as physical trauma, causing fear, anxiety, and even suicide among women and their children. These may appear to be distant acts committed by anonymous people, but the women suffering, often in silence, are our friends, our neighbours, our family, our co-workers.

Right here in this Chamber the hon. Member for Calgary-North West has to be guarded physically because of the utterly contemptuous threat to her life. Tomorrow is not only a recognition of this widespread violence; it's also a commitment to end the violence, a task that falls to all of us.

Silence is complicity. Strong supportive voices, especially from men and boys, must be heard to say that misogyny, whether oral, in print, in social media cannot be tolerated. Awareness, education, and advocacy are tools used to fight this, but we in this Assembly have the power to do more. We can pass bills, reduce poverty, increase access to education and life skills for girls and boys, and ensure stable, safe living environments for women and children, as well as improve the criminal justice response. By speaking and acting together against violence wherever it occurs, by increasing the supports available to women and the children they care for, we will end violence against women.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

1:50

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today to recognize the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Violence against women is a human rights issue and a consequence of systemic discrimination and the persistent inequalities between men and women. This is especially true for indigenous women and girls, who are far more likely to be the target of violence. It's not just a global problem we discuss in theory; it's

an issue that we see here in our province, in our homes, in our communities, and, sadly, in our own political arena as women are abused and mistreated every day in our province.

Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence. I'll say that again. Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence, and that doesn't count the taunts and psychological abuse that far too many women continue to endure. Worse still, every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. It's absolutely horrifying to me that women and girls across the world and in our own province live in fear of violence.

As the son of a strong mother, as husband to a strong feminist who every day leads by example, and as a father of daughters this issue of ending violence against women is deeply personal for me.

We must recognize that violence takes many forms and acknowledge the difficulties many women face when they come forward about the violence that they have faced in their own lives. We must believe women when they do come forward and stand with them to fight against the culture of violence and harm that permeates our society. Our first response must be: I believe you.

I encourage all Albertans to participate in the United Nations 16 days of activism against gender violence, but it's also important to continue the activism every single day beyond that. It's up to all of us, men and women, to call out people who harass women online or in our daily lives. Believe the women who come forward with stories of violence, listen and act on what they have to say, work to create a culture that rejects violence, threats, or verbal abuse as a way to deal with problems or to exert control, teach and encourage the people around you that any and all forms of violence against women are simply unacceptable, and, most of all, support the women in your lives in their activism to end violence against women.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

## Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

## Government Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Today the NDP's economic plan received another thumbs down from Alberta's job creators. A survey from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business shows that 45 per cent of Alberta businesses are preparing to let go of workers over the next three months. In 37 days the NDP's carbon tax comes into effect. They are destroying with that 10,000 coal jobs in the province, and they are just flat out making life far more difficult for Albertans in need of hope and a hand up. With Christmas just around the corner and more jobs expected to be lost, how can the Premier possibly stand behind these NDP job-killing policies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Official Opposition has his sources; we've got ours. Yesterday Canadian corporate executives urged the federal government and the provinces to keep taking action on climate change. This letter was signed by companies like General Electric Canada, SNC-Lavalin, Shell Canada, Rio Tinto, Teck Resources, Forest Products Association of Canada, and Suncor, a major employer in that member's riding. I hope he'll stand up for the employees at Suncor. I know this government will.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, 71 per cent of entrepreneurs also say that tax and regulatory costs are hurting their business. Translation: the carbon tax and NDP red tape is hammering their bottom line. Nearly everything the NDP has done since coming into government has made it more difficult for Albertans to succeed. They have taken more money out of people's pockets, they are attacking Alberta-owned power companies, and they are shutting down safe and reliable coal-generated electricity. How does the Premier think taxing and regulating jobs out of existence in Alberta will do anything but make things worse for Albertans?

**Ms Hoffman:** The market we inherited was broken. A government that shows leadership steps up to the plate and finds ways to fix it, and we fixed it by making sure we have a capacity market that will also ensure that the market benefits are affordable, stable, and predictable for consumers, both small industrial and local consumers. We have an obligation to keep the lights on in citizens' houses, and we're going to make sure we do that in an affordable way, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jean:** Yesterday the Premier said that she would like to see Albertans use food banks less, but everything this government has done has made Albertans use them more. In Calgary alone food bank use is up 22 per cent in just one year. What's the NDP's response? Well, to tax charities through a new carbon tax, to put a tax on everyone else, and to destroy 10,000 jobs in Alberta's coal industry, which will devastate many communities throughout Alberta. When will the Premier actually meet with the working men and women her policies are hurting so much?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, our government works every day to engage with Albertans. It's important that we hear their voices. Guess what? We heard their voice loud and clear a year and a half ago when we held an election, where the Official Opposition was proposing a plan that would relive the deep cuts of the '90s, laying off teachers, laying off nurses. Instead, we're working to support our private investments, those jobs that we have in Alberta, as well as supporting the public. I have to say that they were given a choice: do the proven failed methods of the past or choose a better path, and they chose that path.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

### Electric Power System

**Mr. Jean:** When I asked the Premier why her NDP government is punishing the people of Calgary, she responded, "The issue of the PPAs does not have a direct correlation to property taxes in Calgary." That's not true. Mayor Nenshi has made it clear that cancelling the PPAs threatens Enmax profitability, and that could mean losing the Enmax dividend. That means that property taxes in Calgary will go down by 4.5 per cent per year every year. Does the Premier think Mayor Nenshi is not telling the truth? Yes or no?

**Ms Hoffman:** The government has been very clear all along that we would welcome discussions with other parties involved in the PPA agreements that were executed. We're working to negotiate settlements, Mr. Speaker, as we have stated. We will protect Albertans by shouldering the up to \$2 billion cost that the members opposite are pushing so hard to just pass on to consumers without having their day to stand up for themselves and get a fair return. All Albertans deserve to have an opportunity to have their voices heard, their bills affordable, and that's what they have in this government.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, I know that profit is a dirty word for many across the aisle. Here's the bottom line. The profits Enmax has generated over the last eight years mean that they have been able to send back over \$450 million in dividends to their shareholders, the city of Calgary. When Enmax profits, the people of Calgary profit as well. By risking that dividend, this Premier will force property tax increases on every single Calgarian at the same time she's bringing in a massive new carbon tax. How does the Premier expect Calgarians to pay for all these new taxes?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. How does the member opposite sleep at night knowing that he wants to pass \$2 billion worth of potential liabilities onto Albertans from all parts of this province? That's the real question we should be asking ourselves.

While we have some provisional agreements moving forward, we're working on creating more opportunities to have a reasonable, fair, and balanced approach. When we have tough times, Mr. Speaker, we're always going to be on the side of Albertans. I wish the opposition would consider doing that every now and then instead of just siding with corporations.

**Mr. Jean:** The member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake had it right. This government is practising Whac-A-Mole politics. Change a policy without thinking, realize it is a mistake, and then make a bigger mistake trying to fix the first mistake. When it comes to the electricity system, we have seen thoughtless and reckless tax increases, ridiculous lawsuits, and banana republic like threats of retroactive legislation. Now we have a complete overhaul of the electricity market from a Premier that just months ago needed a basic primer on electricity. Can the Premier understand why Albertans are very worried right now?

2:00

**Ms Hoffman:** The member opposite quoted one of his caucus members. I'll be happy to quote another. The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka suggested that we scrap the climate leadership plan and replace it with one day a year when all utilities in the province are shut off. He said: "Prohibit fuels for a day. Prohibit the creation of electrical power for one day. It would actually [really] reduce greenhouse gases more than this bill will." [interjections] I don't have a punchline here, Mr. Speaker. I just want everyone to know how deep the Wildrose think tank is when it comes to climate change. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, you may have noticed that all of the children are sitting very quietly and watching because they know that there is soon going to be a recess. Very soon this afternoon you're going to get a recess.

Third main set of questions.

### Investigations of Deaths

**Mr. Jean:** Secrecy and confusion continues to cloud the tragic death of four-year-old Serenity. Yesterday the Premier claimed that the child advocate received ongoing reports from the medical examiner, but the advocate says that that's not the case. His office didn't even receive a response from the medical examiner despite repeated requests for information on the autopsy. In fact, the advocate says that the only information he has is what's been reported in the media. So I'll try again. Were files hidden from the Child and Youth Advocate related to Serenity's death? Yes or no?



**Ms Hoffman:** I want to thank the member for raising this important question. All child deaths are tragedies, and this one is, of course, no different. The Premier did misspeak yesterday, and I want to apologize for that. When she said that the Chief Medical Examiner had been in touch with the Child and Youth Advocate, it was, in fact, the RCMP that the chief medical officer had been in contact with. There was, as I understand, no intention to keep any records. She simply misspoke. It was the RCMP, not the advocate.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you for that answer.

Secrecy also pervades the office of the Chief Medical Examiner, however. Serenity's death has highlighted a serious problem with the time that it takes to complete an autopsy report, with hers taking more than two years to complete. When Alberta Justice was asked specifically how many other files have taken over two years to complete, they wouldn't even provide an answer, so I'll ask the Premier the same question. How many other cases have taken or continue to take the Chief Medical Examiner over two years to examine and conclude?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for a fair question. Obviously, this case in particular is very complex, and the government is reviewing the specifics of this case to identify what can be done better and to move forward as quickly as we can in due course and with due process.

With regard to other cases at this point I think that the office is right to focus their energies on making sure they wrap this up and move forward. But that's a fair question, and at a later date I'll be happy to answer it.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you. It comes as no surprise to many Albertans, however, who read the headlines that the office of the Chief Medical Examiner has had problems over the past few years. With all the distractions that have taken place within the office, cases have simply lagged. We are coming up on the fifth medical examiner in a span of just two years. This office must operate properly so that deaths are properly investigated. What is the Premier going to do to reduce secrecy and increase stability within the medical examiner's office so that these deaths are properly investigated?

**Ms Hoffman:** I just want to say that I believe that all members on all sides of this House believe that we must do something to improve our child intervention system to also prevent those types of tragic situations from happening in the first place. I know that the staff works to prevent them as much as possible. We do need to focus on decreasing poverty, addressing systemic and long-lasting inequality. Not enough has been done to continue the review and augmentation of services for children. Of course, there is work to do to make sure that the resources are adequate to prevent these things and, if they do occur, that they are properly investigated. I think that's owed to all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.  
The Member for Calgary-Hays.

### Child Intervention System

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin asked why the Child and Youth Advocate was not given access to little Serenity's autopsy report as he's entitled

to under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. I thank the Deputy Premier for admitting that the Premier misspoke yesterday. It was courageous to admit that. Thank you. But it still takes us back to the original question, which I'm sure you'll agree is important, so I'll ask it again. Why did the Child and Youth Advocate not get access to little Serenity's autopsy report as he is entitled to under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you for the question. I'll be happy to answer the first, but probably the specifics around the office will be better addressed by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. I do want to say that the RCMP has been in touch, and the Chief Medical Examiner was working with the RCMP. Of course, the Child and Youth Advocate office is well respected, and we will continue to work with them to find ways that we can improve the system. Thank you for the question. I will be happy to have my associate respond further.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Ms Simons' column today revealed that the Child and Youth Advocate was not supplied with an interim report, nor were they told that they could not have access to the information due to an ongoing police investigation. To the Premier: with an issue as serious as abuse and death of a child in care, what can you do in the future to get better and more timely information so (a) you can act on it and (b) you can keep this House up to date?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. There is nothing more heartbreaking in the world than the death of a child. In this particular case the autopsy report wasn't forwarded because the RCMP still has an ongoing investigation, and they've asked us not to release this information at this time. So we are committed to working with them in ensuring that they have the tools that they need to continue their investigation.

In terms of the lack of communication around giving or not giving the report, we will work with the office on their procedures to see if we can make some improvements going forward, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I think we all agree that Alberta's child intervention system is broken. It's a shame when Serenity and other beautiful children fall through the cracks, and Serenity has yet to receive more justice. I was happy to hear the Deputy Premier say that she wants to work with the Child and Youth Advocate. The Child and Youth Advocate told me that he likes the idea of an all-party committee. The Premier yesterday said: maybe. Has the Premier been able to move from maybe to yes on agreeing to an all-party committee to deal with children in care of the government so we can all work together as a team?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question was raised yesterday, and the Premier did commit to following up with the member, particularly about his proposal. We still stand by the fact that we need some time to consider that and find the best path to move forward should that be the one executed. I appreciate that the member is proposing something that's solution focused. Of

course, we all are committed to finding solutions, and this case in particular, I think, speaks to the tragedy that has occurred and the fact that none of us want to stand by and have to talk about another one in the future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Government Policy Development

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In 2016 this government brought in a host of new policies that are changing the very fabric of Alberta society, from energy and environmental transformation to large minimum wage hikes to dramatic investment decisions, in the midst of a profound recession. What is missing, of course, is a comprehensive analysis, details. Albertans and all of us are being asked to take a lot on faith. To the Premier: can you tell us why the government continues to announce massive policy change without tabling appropriate analysis, which the Legislature needs to properly inform debate?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We continue to address a number of problems that we've inherited, and I think the responsible thing for our government to do is: when you have a system that you've inherited, show leadership, step up, do what's best, make determinations, work with the public service to gather the evidence, and move forward in a thoughtful way.

With regard to specific items of interest, I'd be happy to respond to any of those. I think we've tried to do that as best we can as a government in an open way as we move forward while protecting the interests of all Albertans, Mr. Speaker. So we're very proud of the work that we're doing and the fact that our government is addressing a number of very serious issues.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Dr. Swann:** My follow-up question is for the Energy minister. Given that the government has referred repeatedly in the media to the expected report of the oil sands advisory group and given that this group has been tasked with, quote, how government might implement the legislated 100-megatonne-per-year limit on oil sands emissions, end quote, and given that there's no indication that the oil sands group will report while we debate the bill, what deliverables should this Legislature expect from the oil sands group?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and climate change.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. It's a good question. The oil sands advisory group was tasked with providing the government with advice on how to give regulatory effect to the oil sands emissions limit. Of course, the oil sands advisory group is made up of folks who asked for the oil sands emissions limit. They asked for it because it provides investment certainty going forward as we act on climate change and provide an investment climate that signals to the world that, yes, we are a carbon-constrained jurisdiction but that, yes, we are also a responsible oil and gas producer.

2:10

**Dr. Swann:** It's a bit confusing that they wouldn't report to the Legislature while we're debating the bill. That's all I'm saying.

To the Finance minister: given that on Tuesday this week both the Education minister and the Energy minister promised carbon tax funds, one to schools and one to backstop the electricity industry, and given that the agriculture minister has promised carbon funds to farmers and given that 60 per cent of Albertans have been promised a refund cheque, can the Finance minister show us the calculations for how this tax will cover the growing list of promises ministers are making?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you for the question. We have modelled the amount of money that'll be coming forward with the carbon levy over five years. We know what the amount of money is, and we've portioned, basically, a third to rebates, a third to efficiencies, and a third to innovations over those five years. So we have to, going forward, keep within those monies, that we don't have a bigger envelope than that, and I trust the ministers to come forward with requests that fit within that envelope.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

### Physician Services Agreement

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 18 the government of Alberta and the Alberta Medical Association signed a historic new agreement that I consider to be good for physicians, taxpayers, and, most importantly, good for Alberta families. Can the Minister of Health elaborate on the benefits Alberta families will see from the new amended agreement?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for this important question. The agreement that was in place certainly was seeing increases at rates that were unsustainable, 6 to 8 per cent increases in that one line item every single year. The agreement was negotiated by the third party. As soon as we took government, we asked the AMA to come back to the table because we knew that that wasn't sustainable. We want to have a strong public health care system for decades to come. Both recognized their responsibilities, and we were able to come up with a really strong agreement that's going to provide a significant benefit to Albertans both in terms of savings and access.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: for patients and families living in rural and remote communities, how will this new agreement help them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased at the signing of the agreement to be joined by the president of the AAMDC. We know that for the first time Alberta will have in process a plan to actually manage where doctors go, where they're most needed, and the specific skill sets that are required for those communities. Many of those could be rural or remote communities, which we've heard from, or it could be specializations within urban centres as well. I know that one of the members opposite talked about how sometimes it feels like a whole gaggle of kids chasing after one ball to secure a doctor to come to their community. That's not fair. We're going to make sure that we're working in partnership with the communities and with the AMA.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that the budget for physician services is a large component of Alberta health care costs, how will this new agreement reduce the rate of growth in health care spending?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We did see, as I mentioned in the first response, historic increases of 6 to 8 per cent. This deal, we know, will save us in the range of up to \$500 million over the next two years. That's a significant investment that will be returned to the citizens of Alberta. And I have to say how proud I am of the fact that we had a very difficult situation, and we sat down with the impacted parties and found a better way to move forward, saving money for taxpayers as well as ensuring that we have stable access and actually an improved system in areas where it's certainly needed. This is going to help us enable the right care in the right place, the right investment.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

#### Government Communications with Agencies

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP has a big problem with secrecy. The Information Commissioner pointed out that she shouldn't have to tell the government not to break the law. Well, we received a FOIP that included an e-mail, sent after Enmax briefed the Assistant Deputy Minister of Energy about turning back their PPA, telling a public body recipient to read and delete the sensitive e-mail and its attachment. Is the Minister of Energy complicit in ordering the destruction of these documents, or is this another example of her not being aware of what's going on?

**Ms Hoffman:** It's my pleasure to be able to step up and assure this House and all members that neither did the minister nor any political staff direct the destruction of records that are required to be saved under the FOIP Act. My expectation is that public records are preserved and managed under the FOIP Act. I think we all deserve that expectation to be executed. With regard to a request for an investigation I have no concerns with that, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Given that we have an ADM in Energy telling the Balancing Pool, an independent agency, to break the law and given that we know that most of the Balancing Pool board has now resigned and given that court documents relating to the PPA lawsuit show significant discrepancies between what this government says and what Enmax says happened, what can we expect this minister to do with senior officials telling others to break the law?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Some days the opposition uses Google. I'll be happy to update them that this ADM is no longer an ADM within the ministry or the electricity file that was mentioned. The same briefing note that the opposition has released since July is the note in question, and this briefing note did go on to say that the "or more unprofitable" clause was never brought forward to the government. That's the update on the situation, and I can provide those assurances to the members opposite.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** About a year ago we had the CEO of Alberta Health Services resigning, citing that she was uncomfortable with the government's instructions to operate in voice mode. Given that now we have an assistant deputy minister telling an arm's-length

agency to delete embarrassing e-mails in violation of the law and given that almost every day we have discrepancies between what this government says and what the evidence shows, what answer can this minister offer Albertans disappointed in a government that once upon a time claimed to do things differently?

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm proud of my government's record, Mr. Speaker. The member who asked that very question has asked me on a regular basis to intervene and help his community increase access to 24/7 care. I'm working hard to make that happen, and these are the types of interventions that he's speaking to. That's the job of the Minister of Health, and I am proud of the record I've had in standing up for every one of our communities, including for the members opposite.

In terms of this situation it was made very clear that neither did the minister nor any political staff act in any way that was ill becoming of the office or our expectations. My expectation is that FOIP records are preserved and managed under the FOIP Act, and I welcome an investigation if one is approved. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

#### Tobacco Reduction Strategy

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, decreasing tobacco use is the single most impactful public health measure that could be pursued in our province. To that end, I would like to commend the Health minister for extending the ban on flavoured tobacco to include menthol. Minister, that was good work. But I am dismayed that AHS has decided to cut funding for highly effective programs funded by community-based grants under the Alberta tobacco reduction strategy. Minister, could you please tell Albertans why AHS is cutting funding for these programs?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for raising the important question and for your support in moving forward in making sure that Albertans can be as healthy as possible and finding ways to improve smoking cessation as well as limiting access for children, who are proven to be attracted to some of these flavoured products. That certainly is a step in the right direction. I'll be happy to follow up with Alberta Health Services with regard to the specific question that was raised. I haven't had an opportunity to do that yet, but now I will certainly do that and be happy to follow up with the member.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the 2014 AHS annual report noted that there was a direct link between Alberta's increased life expectancy and decreased tobacco use and given that these community-based grant programs have been shown to be highly effective in contributing to decreased tobacco use and given that the Health minister should be actively supporting these measures that have been proven to contribute to the health and longevity of Albertans, to the minister: will you commit to restoring funding to these valuable and effective programs?

2:20

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the important question. I want to point out that the last question from the Official Opposition was about me intervening. This question is about me intervening in a different way, Mr. Speaker. I think the question is a fair question. If we know that there's an opportunity to have proven programs that have supported Albertans, I will ask the questions to make sure that the programs are moving forward in the best way possible in service

of Albertans. That's the job of the Health minister, and I'm proud to do it.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the cuts to community grants programs are hard to justify or, indeed, even comprehend and given that these programs can be cut without involvement of protected AHS staff positions and given that community-based programs are one of the most effective parts of the tobacco control strategy, to the minister: are you allowing AHS to protect union jobs instead of funding these programs, or have you been too busy defending your government's losing position on PPAs this summer to even notice that it's happening?

**Ms Hoffman:** That's quite a long stretch, Mr. Speaker, to get from point A to point B. Kudos for trying. I have to say that I will do my job, which is speaking to the organizations that we fund and entrust to deliver the best care to Albertans. In term of AHS that's smoking cessation. I will be happy to follow up with them and report back to this House. I'm proud to stand up for Albertans when it comes to smoking cessation opportunities as well as standing up for Albertans when it comes to making sure they're not being gouged unfairly for electricity deals that that party invested in.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

#### Access to Information

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three weeks ago Premier Notley told the Assembly that transparency and openness are exactly what her government is endeavouring for, yet 19 months into office and the Privacy Commissioner is describing Alberta's access to information as a crisis situation. According to the commissioner's annual report 13 of the government's own ministries are heavily redacting documents requested by the Privacy Commissioner. To the Premier: why under your leadership is the government following the previous government's trend and keeping secrets from the people of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think there is an annual period that the member referred to there, and I'm pretty sure it was before May 2015. We all agree that it's important to ensure that Albertans have timely access to the information that's important to them. It's clear that there have been many challenges for many years here in the province of Alberta in part due to the increase in complexity of the requests. I filed many of those when I was supporting opposition MLAs. I'm sure you're filing many as well. This includes requests that require consultation with third parties and involve multiple departments. We'll continue to work on moving forward and providing timely access and appropriate responses within the guidelines of the legislation.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, given that when this government was in opposition, they wrote letters to the Privacy Commissioner asking for investigations into delays in the release of records, clearly we know that they were well aware of the access to information problems before they took office, and given that they have done nothing to improve our system of governance, again to the Premier: is accountable government not a priority for the NDP, or does she just not care?

**Ms Hoffman:** Absolutely we're committed to being accountable. We have been addressing the backlogs, which have been impacting the ability to respond to requests in a timely manner. The system that's been in place is able to adapt to some of the different types of information requests, but it does take time, Mr. Speaker. We know that it's important to have timely access. That's one of the reasons why in the last budget we provided for increased investments in a number of areas that would support FOIP officers. Amendments were brought forward by the members opposite to take that increased funding to the FOIP offices out. You can't have it both ways. We're trying to move forward to increase access, and that includes supporting FOIP officers.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has had 18 months, and that's about all they have left, so I suggest they hurry up.

Given that in 2006 the Government House Leader promised to "open the curtains on government secrecy and let the sun shine in on the closets of the most secretive government in Canada" – I agree – why, Madam Premier, does your government continue to fail to honour the promises of the Government House Leader to "ensure that the public information is available to those to whom it belongs, the public"? Stop the secrecy.

**Ms Hoffman:** I seem to recall times where people were making assertions that perhaps in 18 months we'd be looking at Premier Smith sitting in this very seat. We sure know what happened there, Mr. Speaker, so I'd ask that the members opposite respect the public and the choices that they make in democracy.

**Mr. Cooper:** Just let the sun shine in.

**Ms Hoffman:** We are committed to letting the sun shine in. That's why we're moving forward to develop best practices guidelines for all departments, to ensure consistency in how FOIPs are processed and also improve co-ordination across government departments to ensure more timely responses to requests. That includes in some areas needing to have the staff available to do that, so I hope next year you don't propose cutting those as well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### Violent Crimes

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. New data from Stats Canada determined that Edmonton is third in line for the murder capital of Canada. According to this data there were 604 victims of homicide in Canada in 2015. More than 5 per cent of those murders in Canada were all attributed to Edmonton. What is your ministry doing, Minister, to address this alarming increase in homicides within Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Keeping Alberta communities safe is a priority for our government. That's why our government puts more than half a billion dollars into policing. That's more than any of our western neighbours. We contribute on a per capita basis to municipalities to assist with policing. We also have investments in ALERT, which is an Alberta-specific model that does a great job of gathering intelligence and keeping it together. We will continue to work with our police partners to ensure that Albertan communities are safe and resilient.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in Calgary the crime severity index, or CSI, which measures the volume of severity of police-reported crime, rose to its highest level since 2009 and given that Calgary reported the largest jump in crime for any Canadian city, what is your ministry doing about violent crimes in Calgary?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I think I'd like to take a moment to clarify that even though the crime severity index has increased in Calgary, it is still down compared to years previous in the 1990s, you know, so this is still an improvement. Both Calgary and Edmonton and the whole province of Alberta are very safe. We will continue to invest in policing. We already invest more than in any other area. We have some of the best police in the entire country, and we will continue to work with them.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in another study Alberta led the country in killings related to organized crime and given that this is shocking since in 2015 we saw a 205 per cent increase from the previous year in gang-related killings, to the minister: is the funding provided to ALERT and other police agencies enough, or have you just dropped the ball on this file?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, as I have said, we provide more funding to municipalities to assist with policing than in any other western province. I find it a little ironic that the members opposite who would cut billions of dollars out of front-line services are now complaining that we don't fund front-line services well enough. We invest in ALERT. It's a fantastic program, and we're proud of it.

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

#### Small-business Assistance

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent article by Don Braid highlights tough times in Calgary. Unemployment is at 10-plus per cent, and job seekers are nearing a hundred thousand, these both occurring without the full impact of minimum wage increases and a punitive carbon tax. The article notes these as primary concerns amongst struggling small-business owners and their employees. To the Minister of Finance: can you provide us with any research that shows that the 1 per cent reduction in small-business tax will offset negative impacts of your misguided minimum wage increases and carbon tax?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much for the question from the member opposite. For research, I can tell you that other provinces have cut their small-business taxes, and the small-business owners are very happy with that in those provinces. We're harmonizing our small-business tax so it's not uncompetitive with other provinces. That's what small-business owners in the chamber told us. We are doing what they want. That's the right move.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe you should get some researchers instead of those ideologues on your staff.

Given that the same article cites a CFIB study indicating that 94 per cent of business owners lack confidence in the government's

plan to support small businesses and entrepreneurship and given that this government has had ample time to consult and develop a plan to support the very survival of small businesses in Alberta, to the Deputy Premier: if you have been consulting with small business, why do the vast majority of them lack confidence in your actions and plan?

2:30

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, these two years of recession have created a challenge for everyone, not just small-business owners but people who have day jobs, who work, who are employed on a daily basis, so it's a challenging time. What we've done is that we've put investments back into this province. We are putting more money back into capital investment than this government over here did. We're investing in small business by taking taxes, lowering them, and we're investing in tax credits all across this province – those will come in 2017 – which will create greater and greater stability.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'll just remind you, no preambles, please.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Mr. Speaker, but a few short years ago the Alberta advantage was in place. Given that 40 per cent of small businesses indicate imminent layoffs, citing low revenue and high costs, and given that local city councils and chambers are clamouring to provide lifelines even though the full impact of the carbon tax and minimum wage is yet to be felt, again to the minister: how high does unemployment have to get in Calgary and across Alberta before government takes real action, like suspending minimum wage increases and delaying the carbon tax, to address the real and devastating crisis Albertans are now facing?

**Mr. Ceci:** Perhaps the member opposite wasn't sitting – well, we delivered a budget in 2016, in April, and our main approach there was to invest in infrastructure. Jobs are happening as a result of that. We invested in the STEP program that they cut; 2,700 jobs resulted this summer from that. We're also investing in diversifying the economy, and that will create more jobs. And there's been an uptick in jobs, I think you would recognize as well. We're getting back on our feet, not going backwards, where you want to go.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

#### Government-owned Housing Safety

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, recently I was reminded of the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning as it took the life of Steve Steffler, a stalwart supporter and investor in our local music scene. I was very concerned to hear that in October another tragedy occurred, where a family of seven in Edmonton was rescued and evacuated from their social housing unit due to carbon monoxide poisoning. Now, given that this housing unit did not have a carbon monoxide alarm, to the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what is the government doing to avoid tragedies like this in the future?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm deeply saddened by this tragedy. My condolences go to the Turi family and the Steffler family.

My ministry is taking immediate action by providing additional funding to install carbon monoxide detectors in all government-owned units by the end of January 2017. We have asked housing management bodies to make this a top priority.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can she update the House on what the housing management body at Capital Region Housing has done to address this problem in this particular unit?

**Ms Sigurdson:** We have spoken with Capital Region Housing staff, and they have installed a new furnace and a carbon monoxide detector in their unit. Mr. Speaker, many social housing providers have been installing carbon monoxide detectors while doing other upgrades for a number of years. For example, Capital Regional Housing installs carbon monoxide detectors whenever it replaces older furnaces in the units. The action we are taking will accelerate having detectors installed in all government-owned social housing units across the province by the end of January 2017.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that this situation is indicative of the larger deferred maintenance deficit that we have in the province, that has built up over a number of years, to the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what steps is our government taking to ensure that we begin to address this deficit?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're investing \$1.2 billion in seniors' and affordable housing to ensure that Albertans have a safe and affordable place to call home. We have also partnered with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation through investment in the affordable housing agreement. This new agreement gives the province an additional \$95 million to address the disrepair of some of our aging housing units that we inherited from the previous government.

### Financial Services Industry Regulations

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, we understand that the Alberta Securities Commission has under serious consideration, following the lead of their Toronto counterparts, eliminating the commission-based fee structure for financial advisers. The opposition has not yet decided if this is a positive or a negative move, but it is a move that will have significant ramifications for this industry and for our economy. Will the Minister of Finance commit to open and public consultations with the Alberta Securities Commission to hear all sides out before any changes are made?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we're very interested in this issue. Financial planning is an important thing for all Albertans, and I wish more and more Albertans did it because we have such a high debt level in this province as individuals. You know, the thing I want to say is that the ASC is looking at this. They're following the lead of not only Ontario but of Canada, the Canadian Securities Administrators. They're looking at this issue. They'll start open consultations in December. The member opposite doesn't seem to know that, but in December, for five months, the ASC is going to be ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, I wish the government took financial planning more seriously.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that Advocis represents 9,000 financial advisers in Alberta – they're a hugely important part of our economy and a key part of helping Albertans plan for their future – before a major change to regulations affecting their industry is made, it only makes sense that they should undergo substantial consultations with them first, but for the second year in a row the Minister of Finance cancelled his meeting with them and instead sent a member of his staff. Is the minister as uninterested in smart financial planning for Albertans' personal lives as he is in smart financial planning for Alberta's government?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ceci:** Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. I introduced Advocis here. I went to a reception last night where – I talked at the Advocis reception, and many members of this House were there. A member of my staff did meet with them for a good long time, and I understand that the Minister of Health met with them, too. So we are very interested in that sort of thing. We're interested in jobs all across Alberta; 9,000 people work in financial planning. We're interested in that here. You know, the member opposite seems to be more interested in jobs in Ontario, in jobs in Saskatchewan, in jobs in B.C. because he stands up for brewers in those places and not ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty sure that's just where they hire their political staffers from.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that financial adviser and financial planner are not professionally protected titles – anyone in Alberta can use those titles without repercussion, and this has the potential to leave the consumer of financial services open to advisers and planners who are clearly not qualified in financial matters. I'll refrain from discussing the qualifications of the Minister of Finance in financial matters. Does the minister have under consideration any proposals to protect Albertans from unqualified financial authorities other than themselves?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much for the question. As I said in my first response, the Alberta Securities Commission will have an approximately 130-day consultation period, where any Albertans can weigh in on the paper that will be written and put out, and there will be public meetings as well. That's one thing. Then there will be a long period of review of those consultation responses. So I'm not sure what the member opposite is looking for. There will be consultation, there will be review, there will be recommendations. Is he saying that we should just make a decision here and not hear from Albertans? That's what we're going to do. That's what we're following up with, and we're doing that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### Electricity Power Purchase Agreements

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans don't know what to believe from this government when it comes to the PPA lawsuit. When asked recently if she would introduce retroactive legislation in order to nullify PPA litigation, the Premier refused to deny that she would, stating the simple catch-all that the government is prepared to do what it takes to protect Albertans. Just yesterday she accused the opposition of being the only ones talking about retroactive legislation. Can the Premier please clarify for everyone in Alberta: has your government at any point considered or drafted

retroactive legislation that would impact this crucial PPA situation for all Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for paraphrasing what the Premier has said on many occasions, which is that we are going to make sure we stand up for Albertans. We've made it very clear that we welcome discussions with the parties that were directly involved, and we've made some good progress on that. I look forward to updating members soon. We are working to negotiate, but of course when parties maybe aren't at the table, I think it's important for you to consider what other tools you might have to deliver the best results for Albertans. Certainly, I think that's what Albertans expect, a government that will take any measure necessary to defend them.

2:40

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that Albertans deserve more than just words – they need actions – and given that we've been told that the government has indeed drafted this legislation and that cabinet has approved it already and that the NDP may be utilizing it as a hard-ball negotiating tool, to the Premier: is your government stooping to the level of using potential retroactive legislation as a leverage club in your ongoing negotiations with Alberta PPA negotiators and holders?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, there are many hypotheticals and long reaches in that question, but in terms of what we're doing, we're absolutely committed to standing up for Albertans. We've made that clear since I stood up about eight months ago and said that we were going to do that moving forward, and we've taken measures to make sure that we have the best legal supports that are experts in the area to defend Albertans. We've also been engaging in active conversations to get the best results for Albertans, and I'll be happy to update all Albertans about that very soon.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that in response to a question yesterday the Premier stated, "The issue of the PPAs does not have a direct correlation to property taxes in Calgary, and to suggest otherwise is really not helpful," and given that the mayor of Calgary has stated the complete opposite to that and given that the question was asked earlier today but unanswered by the Deputy Premier, let's try the Minister of Finance, who served on Calgary city council and must know: if Enmax pays Calgary no dividend, what is the exact significance for the city's budget, and who has a better understanding of what impacts municipal taxes in Calgary, this government or the locally elected city council? Please tell Calgarians.

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is about government policy, and I'm proud to say that our government supports a policy that will make sure that Albertans are protected. Consumers shouldn't have to pay for business losses because of regulatory loopholes that were secretly negotiated by Enron and also secretly approved so they wouldn't have to be published in the traditional way. I think that they are working very hard to try to pretend that they are experts on this file, and the only thing they're experts on is what happened in the past, and that was not good. We are doing things to move forward and protect Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

## Syrian Refugees

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This month marks the anniversary of the first Syrian refugees coming to Canada and to our province to escape the unimaginably tragic circumstances still going on in Syria. Can the Minister of Labour please inform Albertans on the current number of Syrian refugees in our province and what supports this government is providing to them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government remains committed to successfully resettling these extremely vulnerable refugees who've come to Alberta. Over the last year we've welcomed more than 5,800 refugees, of which nearly 4,200 are Syrian. My ministry and ministries across our government in collaboration with community partners have taken a number of actions to support the refugees, from providing health services, education, and housing to income supports. Our government is working hard to make sure refugees are getting settled and receiving the supports they need to enter the workforce.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: with the federal government now beginning to reduce its support to Syrian refugees after being in our country for a year, what is our government doing to address this change?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite the reduced federal funding for the almost 4,200 Syrian refugees who now live in Alberta, we will continue to support them. Refugees can continue to access the supports provided by our settlement agencies such as language training, employment supports, orientation, and referrals, among others. When the Syrian refugees arrive in Canada, they already have permanent resident status and, like all Albertans, have access to a wide range of employment and training opportunities.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Loyola:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: in our current economic conditions has the settlement of these refugees in the province affected Albertans' ability to receive similar supports or find employment?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier, the Syrian refugees are like all Albertans and have access to the same resources. Immigrants to Alberta have played and continue to play a vital role in shaping our province's social, economic, and cultural life. There is no question that the current economic situation has affected many Albertans, including new Albertans. Our government continues to offer assistance to those seeking employment and training opportunities. Refugees are not taking anything away from Albertans. They are Albertans.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Strathcona County Diversity Committee

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sherwood Park has a reputation for being a homogeneous and exclusive community. In

fact, it is comprised of people from many cultural, family, and socioeconomic backgrounds. As in all communities, there are people who feel excluded. Sometimes these voices aren't heard, but more importantly there are people who work to create a community in which everyone feels genuinely welcome no matter what their circumstances are.

I was pleased to work with others in the community to initiate the formation of the Strathcona County Diversity Committee. This committee is a group of individuals who strongly believe that there is unity in diversity. The members of this committee demonstrate their passion and commitment to respect and inclusion by working alongside others who share these values. The main objectives of this group are to share, encourage, and celebrate diversity in Strathcona county, to identify and work through challenges faced by newcomers, and to promote safety and inclusion for all people.

It has been less than six months since this committee was formed, and already they have a list of remarkable achievements. They have become a familiar addition to community events and festivals, setting up booths to actively promote diversity in public settings. They joined forces with altView, the LGBTQ support agency in Sherwood Park, to walk in the local Canada Day parade. This committee responds to negative messages that speak against inclusion and diversity by writing letters to the local newspaper and by promoting positive messages through social media. They organize the highly successful blanket exercise to familiarize the community with indigenous history and begin a community dialogue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the members of the diversity committee for the leadership they have shown to address the issue of inclusion in Strathcona county.

Thank you.

### Harassment and Women in Politics

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, last week I posted the following on Facebook.

I have increasingly become disappointed with the level of debate and public comments directed towards public officials and in particular women serving the public.

Hateful, violent, sexist comments are not acceptable in any way or in any form.

I want to encourage all individuals to consider our words carefully. These are people's mothers, daughters, fathers and sons. We owe each other our best. Women in politics should not [have to] serve in fear.

I will do my best to ensure I speak in ways that will honour the women in my life and remind others [to do] the same.

This post isn't about one particular [incident] or case study, but the state of politics as a whole. If I want to be a part of the solution to the current level of debate, I need to add my voice. We encourage what we tolerate and we should no longer tolerate this.

When we work together to elevate [public discussion], we create a path where more women will want to get involved in politics. And that's in the best interest of all of us.

In the modern world, personal values are often discussed in [very impersonal ways] with total strangers on social media. This can be a good thing. We can learn a lot about each other through discussions of identity, matters of faith, and politics.

However, too often these discussions end... without resolution, when debate over competing rights escalates into [name-calling]. This is... where... attacks and bullying tactics are employed to devastating effect, driving wedges between us and tearing at the very fabric of [our] society...

I am hoping to point out that, lost in all this noise is the concept that as true equals, we have a responsibility to treat each other as such...

We all owe this much to each other, our Province and most certainly our children.

It's time for all [Albertans] to choose a better version of ourselves so we can bring the best out in others!

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

2:50

### Fentanyl Use Prevention

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're joined today by Rosalind Davis, whose partner, Nathan, tragically died from a fentanyl overdose. Illicit fentanyl is a scourge that knows no boundaries. There are no typical opioid addicts. On average, more than one Albertan dies every day from an overdose. It is a crisis and deserves to be treated like the emergency that it is.

Rosalind and Nathan had big plans. Both of them were professionals, Nathan holding an MBA and had a career as a stockbroker. They bought a house together and set about renovating it. It was while working on their house that Nathan hurt his back and was prescribed opioids. It became apparent there was a problem, and Rosalind confronted Nathan and asked him to seek treatment. He did. But this is where the system let him down. He was told that there would be a four-month wait for an outpatient treatment program. Fortunately, they had the means to pursue private treatment.

Sadly, after getting clean and sober, Nathan relapsed, something that is tragically common amongst people overcoming addiction. He again sought help but was unable to find the supports he needed to get and stay sober. Over time he started sourcing opioids on the street and died from an accidental fentanyl overdose.

Nathan is just one of the hundreds of Albertans who have fallen victim to the terrible disease of addiction to the point of losing their lives. Each and every one of these lives has their own story. There is no typical opioid addict. It could be your sibling, your parent, your friend. It could be someone who's street involved, or it could be your next-door neighbour. Opioid addiction is a crisis in Alberta, and while the provincial government and professional bodies have taken some steps to address it, much more needs to be done. Declaring a public health emergency seems to be an obvious step, and I again call on the Associate Minister of Health to do so immediately.

We also need to ensure treatment is available, both in-patient and outpatient, and we need to provide a variety of methods beyond traditional 12-step programs, which do not work for everyone.

I want to recognize and thank Rosalind and Nathan's family for dedicating their time to ending this crisis. It's too late for Nathan, but it is not too late for others.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

### Psychological Harassment and Bullying

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently tabled private member's Bill 208, which seeks to add psychological harassment and bullying to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. I introduced this bill because it's needed. Alberta is one of the few provinces that does not have this type of legislation. While I've received a great deal of positive feedback for this bill, what was unexpected was the volume of inquiries I've received about whether this legislation would cover political parties and politics in general. Most referred to the level of harassment and bullying seen



in the general public towards each other and, in particular, from those in public office and those seeking public office. Curbing this type of discourse is, of course, not something that we can legislate. Treating others with dignity and respect must be taught in schools, modelled by our teachers, our parents, and our public officials.

We here in the House, from all parties, have a role to play in this. Defending actions by saying that we have a “victim-as-virtue culture . . . creating a leadership class of wimps” will and does impact the future of this province. Mr. Speaker, how do you think this impacts young adults thinking of seeking public office? Do they think the path to success is found only by belittling and bullying those that oppose us? I surely hope not, and I strongly believe that this is not what Alberta is about.

We recently saw the most divisive election ever south of the border, that was defined by bullying. Let’s not bring this type of politics to Canada or Alberta. Apologizing after bullying and harassment isn’t good enough, Mr. Speaker. We need to check ourselves before we cause damage, use a filter, and think about who’s listening.

I am proud to say that I belong to a party and a caucus that preaches and practises respect, dignity, and inclusion for all. It is evident that if other parties can’t grasp and practise this, it will clearly be our gain.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

#### Child Protective Services

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to rise and speak to an issue that has been at the centre of my professional life and close to my heart. Like all Albertans, the story of a child who is traumatized and neglected has touched me deeply. It has made me reflect on the choices we make in this Chamber and on the decisions we choose to make collectively as a society.

As you know, I had the great honour of being a child protection worker before I was elected. This was my career for 12 years, and I engaged in this work because I believe that every single child in our society should be afforded the opportunity to succeed. It was also a career that forced me regularly to confront the single most difficult question that can ever be asked of a parent: can you still care for your child? Mr. Speaker, there is not a single child protection worker who wants to remove a child from their home and from their family. There is simply nothing more difficult. Nothing cuts more deeply than this fundamental decision.

Today I’d like to express the enduring respect I have for my colleagues on the front lines, who are committed on society’s behalf to nurturing the well-being of Alberta’s most vulnerable children. My colleagues sacrifice their personal safety, time with their families, and their own mental health to do this work. They do this work because they care about our children, and in doing this work, they see the best and worst in our society. They see a world full of complexity, filled with intergenerational trauma, poverty, addiction, and mental health concerns. They see parents on the margins of society who simply can’t fulfill their basic duties.

But our front-line workers also see the very best in our communities and in our society. They see communities come together in times of need. They see hope in the eyes of every child. They see opportunity in working with parents, and they see the joy that occurs when families are reunited in a caring and safe environment.

Mr. Speaker, when members of the opposition ask what we have done to address children in care, I can personally tell you that we have protected thousands of children, we have reunited thousands of families, and we have supported our front-line workers in the most desperate of circumstances. At the end of the day, that’s why I’m here, to support our children and our future. [Standing ovation]

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, if I may, I don’t want this to run out. I would wonder if we can get unanimous consent to continue with the Routine.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

#### Home-schooling Funding

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are proud of our education system, which is based upon the principles of parental choice. We fund all educational choices to one degree or another, and in the case of home-schooling we fund a sound education and a good value for the tax dollars. Albertans are concerned over the actions of the Ministry of Education with regard to Trinity Christian school and Wisdom Home Schooling. Among other things, Albertans expect the Ministry of Education to do at least two things, hold Trinity and Wisdom and all education programs accountable for using sound practices in governance and funding and, secondly, apply regulations the same way that they would for any other educational authority.

The Department of Education began an audit on Trinity and Wisdom during the summer and informed them that they should continue operations as usual, yet in spite of that direction the department forwarded only a small portion of the funding for September and none for October, when the government arbitrarily and suddenly closed the school without warning. It would appear that the department predetermined the outcomes of the audit before it was complete. The minister needs to extend the full funding allocated to Trinity for their student enrolment up to the time that the school was closed.

This is not the only fiasco in home education. There are concerns about teaching resources, clawbacks to funding, and inconsistent implementation of reimbursement standards between home-school programs and public and independent school authorities.

Home-education families from across the province are coming together this Tuesday, November 29, in a rally at this Legislature to bring attention to the challenges they are facing with this minister and his Department of Education. We encourage all Albertan families to join us on the steps of the Legislature at 11 o’clock and ask this government to listen to them and to support your educational choices fairly and equitably.

3:00

#### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two items for which to provide notice to the House today. First, I would like to give oral notice of the intention to introduce Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, which will be sponsored by the hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Secondly, I would like to give oral notice of the intention to introduce Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety, which will be sponsored by the most-excellent hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday during question period in reference to the budget for Human

Services I mentioned some numbers. I'm happy to provide five copies of the budget for Human Services, where it does show indeed that there is an increase, but on three separate occasions, which I've taken the time to highlight for the minister, where it comes to child intervention, the amounts for 2016-17 are indeed less than they were for the year previous, which shows to me that they have made cuts to that.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter from 60 groups, including those in the oil and gas industry, urging the government not to back away from plans to bring in a country-wide price on carbon. These companies include Shell Canada, Cenovus Energy, Teck Resources Limited, and Suncor. Together they represent 15 per cent of Canada's GDP with \$300 billion in sales and over one million employees. "Putting a price on carbon, to reflect the real environmental costs, is the most effective way to reduce emissions, stimulate innovation and drive energy efficiency."

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Ellis:** Calgary-West, but thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** Sorry. My apologies.

**Mr. Ellis:** I'm just tabling an article on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I believe he referred to a *Calgary Herald* article by Don Braid: Deepening Economic Crisis Spells Trouble for the NDP. I have the requisite number of copies to be tabled. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Anyone else?

Hon. members, I believe there was a point of order from the Government House Leader. I'm going to use the fast track on this issue. It seems to me that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre may have inadvertently used the name of the Premier in his speech, and I'm sure he would agree to withdraw it.

**Mr. Nixon:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker. In my eagerness to ask my questions today, I mistakenly used the hon. Premier's name. I certainly do withdraw and apologize for that.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

## Orders of the Day Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

### Evening Sitings

26. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1), commencing November 28, 2016, the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business for the duration of the Second Session of the 29th Legislature 2016 fall sitting unless the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting that day by providing notice under Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or at any time prior to 6 p.m.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that the Clerk did not want to miss the evening sittings next week.

[Government Motion 26 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act

[Debate adjourned November 22]

**The Speaker:** Individuals wishing to speak? The Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a privilege to rise today and move a hoist on Bill 27.

**The Speaker:** Sorry. Hon. member, I'm advised that on this particular bill you have spoken already.

**Mr. Ellis:** I have not.

**The Speaker:** Is there another member who wishes to speak to the referral amendment? Oh, I'm sorry. It's on the main motion, sir.

We're back on track, we think. Main motion. Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today to move a hoist on Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, on behalf of my hon. colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster. I have the requisite number of copies for the House. I would move that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence."

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you're moving an amendment to the main motion. Is that correct?

**Mr. Gill:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Would you like to continue?

**Mr. Gill:** Please.

First of all, I'd just like to say that we in the caucus are not against the development of renewable energy in this province, not at all. In fact, I think you'll find that our government oversaw the growth of the wind energy sector in southern Alberta quite successfully. We're absolutely on board with expanding the role that renewables play in the Alberta energy market. There are a number of benefits that we could see from the increased use of renewables if these programs are implemented in a way that actually ensures their long-term viability and in a way that ensures that Albertans aren't going to be on the hook.

But what we are seeing from this government and specifically with regard to this bill is that the appropriate steps aren't being taken to ensure the success of these programs. Forgive me if you've heard this one before, but we don't believe that the government has done their homework on this. I'm sure you have heard me saying something to this effect before because it's a point that this government simply doesn't seem to get.

We recently saw that this government is actually bringing in a cap on the rate that Alberta power companies can legally charge for their product. This to me sends a very clear signal, and I think it's sending that same signal to the industry, by the way. The signal that they are sending is that they are slowly realizing that their collective actions, all these various policies that they have brought into force in the last year and a half, are harming business.

You won't hear this government admit it, but that is exactly what this rate cap is all about. They know that they're harming these businesses and that in a normal marketplace all of these costs that they are piling on mean these companies would have to raise rates. There's simply no other way for some of these companies to stay viable. They need to be able to offset the money that they're losing because of the NDP policies somehow. The government realizes this too late, once again, so they go with the heavy-handed approach to keeping the rates low.

3:10

They should have just done the actual work that being in the government requires, to go to industry, and not just the industry they want to pick and choose, and get some input. It can't just be their favourite companies that are getting to help shape policy. It has to be all the various hard-working Albertans that these ideas will impact, which brings me back to my point today. I don't believe that this bill can, in good conscience, pass second reading.

These are simply two unknowns presented in this bill. There is too much power being delegated to the office of the minister and too much uncertainty that we're told is going to be resolved in regulation. The problem with that is that we simply don't have confidence that this government will make those regulations in a responsible way. They haven't shown themselves capable of doing the necessary homework to bring forward responsible regulations that'll protect Albertans from the kind of favouritism they have displayed.

This bill needs to go back to the drawing board because there needs to be a lot more detail that gets brought forward to this House because we are all representatives of Albertans in this House. We are here to give them a voice, and I think that this bill in its present form takes away that voice. So in recognition of this, Mr. Speaker, and in the best interests of Albertans it's my hope that the government can take the appropriate time to revisit this legislation at a later date and ensure all related externalities are minimized and that Albertans are consulted appropriately.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'd like to clarify for the record that you are moving the motion on behalf of the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. Is that correct?

**Mr. Gill:** That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Under 29(2)(a), anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment to Bill 27? The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to support the amendment moved by my colleague for Calgary-Greenway on behalf of his colleague the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned recently in this House, I am very much in favour of renewables being a power source, but I'm not at all certain that this Bill 27 is the way to go about increasing their use. By going to the committee, at least we could have got the experts here from the energy industry, could prepare properly, and they could have educated all of us, including me and the backbenchers of the government, about this Bill 27, whether this is the way to go or not. But we have been denied going to committee, so now all of us here, MLAs, are to go out into the stakeholders' community and do our own consultations.

We know the NDP has a hate for thermal coal fired electrical generation and label it a main source of climate-change-causing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In fact, people from Leduc-Beaumont actually call me and wonder why their MLA actually hates coal-fired electrical generation. We know the NDP cite coal-fired electric generation as

promoting premature deaths, but, Mr. Speaker, clean coal retrofit technology is not being allowed by this NDP government in order to reduce emissions and save our rural communities like Hanna, Forestburg, and Genesee.

We have not received the recommendations of the Boston report, advising the government on the costs and timelines for phasing out coal. At the time of writing this speech, I haven't seen that yet. The government told us that it will be soon, but we haven't seen that yet. Let's go out and hear from the experts first-hand.

This bill proposes to have 30 per cent of power from renewables, and the NDP brag that it will generate \$10 billion in investment. That sounds good, but of course we all will be paying for it through either our power bill or through our carbon taxes. What the NDP has not told anyone about this massive, arbitrary 30 per cent target on renewables by 2030 is that the estimated \$10 billion of private investment required is going to be more, much more.

Why will it be more? For every megawatt of installed solar, wind, and biomass from the NDP plan an equal megawatt of natural gas generation will need to be installed as a backup. The sun does not always shine, and Tesla storage batteries are not mainstream yet, Mr. Speaker. The wind does not always blow, and again the storage issues of that energy are not entirely solved. So for every coal plant we pay out, we will need to build wind or solar to match it and then build a gas peaker plant to be running all the time, ready to ramp up when the wind dies down or the clouds block the sun.

Biomass. Well, it's not clear whether biomass counts, but it requires a secure supply. Given that the forest management area plans are due and have not yet been approved by the minister of environment, there is no security of biomass supply. Natural gas will be needed. The nice thing about natural gas is that next to no transmission infrastructure is needed. The gas lines are already in the ground, and the generating can occur very close to the need. Natural gas is cheap and plentiful. Thanks to fracking technology, natural gas is being found everywhere, and high prices are not expected to return.

So why would someone waste their time and money and only install renewables, without guaranteed production of electricity and with a gas backup needing to be built anyway, when they can simply divert their money into natural gas only and be guaranteed to make money?

When you drive south along highway 2, Enmax has a natural gas electric generating station installed just south of Crossfield. There are three exhaust stacks, one for each 50-megawatt unit. That's 150 megawatts installed, and more 50-megawatt units can be installed on-site. As power is needed, the units come on, and as power is not needed, the units shut down. [A cellphone rang] Mr. Speaker, I think all the members are eager to get home soon.

Mr. Speaker, these natural gas power generation units are very clean, simple, reliable, and provide cost-effective electricity.

The NDP plan to tinker with the market to drive the price of electricity up in the hope of making the renewables viable. If the renewables aren't viable, the NDP will make them viable with the infusion of taxpayers' dollars. Shades of buying shares in or entire power producers and assets outright are right here in this bill in section 8, Mr. Speaker.

Then there is the build-out of transmission lines. Ratepayers have only started paying for the Bill 50 lines that connect our coal plants. Now, how much more do we need for these renewables and gas? I assume that it's not going to be \$10 billion. It's going to be much more. Such a waste of scarce capital, Mr. Speaker.

3:20

Relying on renewables alone is not enough, Mr. Speaker. That's why we need to consult the experts and delay this bill and hear the

answers from the experts that the government is denying us. I'm certain that we can make this legislation much better than it is currently presented. That way, we all can encourage lower carbon dioxide emissions to fight climate change.

Having said that, I urge all members of all parties here to support this amendment, brought forward by my colleague from Calgary-Greenway, and help make this legislation better. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Foothills? Are there other individuals? Were you wishing to speak to the matter?

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed, Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member says that Albertans will be on the hook. Well, we disagree in more ways than enough. Then he talks about the cap on energy and what the cap will do to business. Well, let's be clear. The cap is here to protect business and, of course, the consumers. The consumers are the ones that we really want to protect from the spikes in the energy bill. That's why we're proposing a cap. It makes sense, and it's the important thing to do.

Also, you talk about our bad policies, too many issues, and that we didn't do our homework. Well, I disagree there, too. We consulted with the AESO, the Alberta Electric System Operator; the Market Surveillance Administrator; the Alberta Utilities Commission; Alberta Environment and Parks; Alberta climate change, plus Alberta Treasury Board and Finance. We worked with these people in putting this bill together. It's important that we consulted with these people to do that.

It's important that we protect, above all, consumers against, like I said, the spike in the energy bills. One of our key priorities is to help ensure that electricity rates remain affordable for all Albertans and to avoid the price spikes of the past. In fact, from other jurisdictions we've seen the lowest price for renewables emerging from a competitive process. In some cases the addition of renewables will reduce the market price of electrical energy.

The bottom line here is: why should we wait another six months to put this legislation into practice? I urge all the members to vote against this hoist.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Any questions for the Member for West Yellowhead under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to stand to speak about this motion to Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, and to talk about some of the concerns I have heard from my constituents. I got out a bit further than the dome and talked to some of the constituents that would be affected by this bill. Some of my colleagues on this side have talked to their people as well. We've talked about renewable energy projects being started in their ridings, and these renewable energy projects are wind farms and solar projects. I'm disturbed by the manner in which the government is overhauling our power grid.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share with this House an experience I recently had that was very illuminating to me. I attended an open house where a solar company was talking to the residents of the municipal district of Taber. Representatives from that company were touting to the residents the virtues and values of having this

solar plant put up in their neighbourhood. Many of the residents at this open house were upset about the project because it was going to be an eyesore right next to their acreages, that they had invested in for their retirement. I can definitely sympathize with the reasonable concerns they expressed, and that is why I went to this open house.

I found out new information at this open house that was very concerning to me. I asked someone from the company specifically how much they can produce electricity for at this proposed plant, and they said, "15.4 cents per kilowatt hour." So then I asked, "What is Alberta's Balancing Pool buying electricity at right now?" They said, "1.2 cents per kilowatt hour." So I asked them, "Well, are you going to get subsidized to the 15.4 cents?" They said: "Absolutely not. We're only going to get an 11.4 cents per kilowatt hour subsidy." I asked for how long this contract would be, and he said that they're getting a 20-year contract. So then I asked him, "Where else have you been doing projects like this one?" He responded that they're an international company. I asked about whether they had plans to do these in Saskatchewan, and they said, "Not at this time." I said, "Would you be doing it in Alberta if you didn't have this subsidy?" Their response was illuminating. They said no.

So the real question, Mr. Speaker, is: how can the government claim they are creating jobs with these renewable electricity projects? The reality is that they're buying jobs. We'll be paying a whole whack of money – and by "we" I mean taxpayers – to pay for these international companies to come set up shop here in Alberta, which they wouldn't do unless they had these subsidies.

I want to point out some hypocrisy in this government. I personally don't judge a company based solely on its size or solely where its headquarters are located, but I've heard NDP members rage against big multinational companies, and I hear them encourage Albertans to buy local. I find it ironic that this government plans to engage in big multinational contracts, with huge implications for Albertans, to build these renewable energy projects in our province. The government is getting its money from a massive carbon tax that they are levying from everyday Albertans to pay these multinational corporations to come in and do this. It would be interesting to hear how Albertans feel about the so-called champions for the little guy and for Albertans if they knew that this is what they were doing.

But back to my story. I also asked this company what the capital injection would be from this government. Now, they didn't quite answer this question, but looking a little deeper into this, I found out that the government is going to act like a cosigner, essentially, so that these companies can go to the bank and actually get the money they need to get these projects off the ground.

Mr. Speaker, let's say that your child, fresh out of university with a student loan and not a long track record of paying back credit, goes to the bank and says: I want to buy a \$500,000 house. The bank would look at your child's track record and financial circumstances and say that they're not going to give your child any money. So the child goes to you, the parent, and asks if you'll cosign for the mortgage, and you say yes. The bank doesn't look at your child's ability to pay. The bank is now only looking at your ability to bail out your child, which you're legally required to do as a cosigner. This is a situation that these companies have been presented with. What company would say no to such an arrangement with the government guaranteeing their loan?

3:30

Without these massive subsidies these projects aren't viable to stand up on their own two feet. While this government might claim that we'll have \$10.5 billion in private investment coming in, if the

government is guaranteeing these loans and taxpayers might have to pay all that money back to the bank, that means nothing in terms of new investment in Alberta. Would that money be coming in if the government was not guaranteeing these loans? If not, would the bank be willing to give them these loans? I guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, that they would not. So this whole idea that the government is creating jobs is ludicrous.

Projects of this nature and size haven't been sustainable in any other jurisdiction. They've been a complete disaster.

Now, I'm not saying that renewables can't work. We had over 10 per cent of our grid renewable even before this government took over. Many individuals, like my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View, have been using solar panels for years. But when the government forces massive transition like this, we are looking at a boondoggle of epic proportions in the making.

In Germany they put more than a trillion dollars into making it work there, but it didn't. Now the government of Germany is moving away from this and back to coal. For some reason this government doesn't want to look at history and learn from past mistakes. I believe it was George Santayana who first said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." We're not even looking back into the histories that far, Mr. Speaker. As we speak, people in other jurisdictions are suffering from policies like the ones this government is just introducing now.

Pursuing a 30 per cent target by 2030 is a huge undertaking, and a target that seems to have been chosen by a communications department, not an economic one. Rather than making that percentage and due date the goal, how about we make this the goal: to keep electricity prices stable for Albertans while achieving a sustainable, stable power grid? No matter what kind of shell game the government tries with our power bills, when they drive costs up, we will either pay as ratepayers or as taxpayers, Mr. Speaker.

Meanwhile Albertans are already facing this economic downturn and struggling to pay their bills. Electricity is a daily essential. People can't simply stop using it, and I highly doubt families could reduce their usage enough to not see cost increases. I'd like to see this government provide numbers on this. I hope this government will look at the situation in Ontario, the situation in Germany and tread carefully when it comes to our power grid.

I want to say one more thing before I finish. I'm disturbed by the unwillingness of the current government to engage in proper consultation with landowners who are going to be living next to the visual evidence of these boondoggles. When NDP members of this House were in opposition, they slammed the government for – and I quote the now Minister of Infrastructure – "trampling" over property owners' rights. Well, I think the members of this House should review what they've said in the past about the Land Assembly Project Area Act, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, and the Electric Statutes Amendment Act and see if they're talking differently now because they're the ones in power and their ideology favours some forms of electricity generation over another.

With that, I think I have made my views clear today, but this discussion is not over, and I look forward to many, many more robust discussions about it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments with respect to the presentation by the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I think it's very interesting to listen to this member speak because he lives in an area where there are windmills already, power-generating windmills, so I think he can speak with some experience as to the desirability of them in the community and as far as what the local people are

saying about them. It's also interesting to note, of course, that they already exist in Alberta. These are ones that have existed before Bill 27. So there's wind power already being generated in Alberta.

I think it's also interesting to hear some of the comments that he's heard from these companies that are going to be taking these projects and bringing them to Alberta: guaranteed return on investments, guaranteed prices for power. Of course, the government has put a cap on the price of power now, but what happens when these companies all of a sudden aren't making money with the price cap? Who's going to pay then, Mr. Speaker? That is what I'd like to find out. Who's going to pay for the power then?

If the companies can't make money, it would just be like a restaurant where they put a cap on the price of a hamburger. Once the price of a hamburger comes to the point where the restaurant can't make any money, what's going to happen then? The restaurant has to close, or somebody has to subsidize the restaurant to help pay for the hamburger if they want that hamburger to be produced still.

There are two ways companies can make money in this market. One is by selling electricity, and the other is by subsidies from the government. What's important to remember is that, either way, that money comes from the taxpayer, either in the form of electricity costs or subsidies to the companies to keep operating. I wouldn't mind hearing the member speak a little bit more about that. I thought it was interesting to hear the comments from the companies that he was able to talk to.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the esteemed Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky. He talked about windmills. After the conversation with this solar company I went to them and talked to them about other renewable projects, and I asked them if they had any track record. They said, "Yes. We have actually built one of the largest wind farms in Alberta." I said, "Well, that's great. Tell me about it." I said, you know, "Is it viable?" They said, "Well, sort of." Their answer to this was that it was only viable in the fact that if they sold into the power grid at the going rate, they had to actually sell their carbon credits to California in order for it to become viable. Even projects in the past were not viable on their own in terms of selling into a grid.

I am a hundred per cent for renewable energy as long as it's sustainable and viable, as long as it is not going to put an undue burden on the taxpayer and the ratepayer. If our technology hasn't gotten to the point where we can actually on a large scale implement these projects, then we need to wait until we have that wholesale change in technology or that advancement in technology so that we can do that. These decisions should never be based upon ideology. They should be based upon: what is the best thing for Albertans?

Unfortunately, again, I alluded to the situation in Germany and in Ontario. Those are recent examples of where ideology was placed before the economics made sense, Mr. Speaker, and I would say that after a \$1.2 trillion boondoggle in Germany we don't want to go anywhere near that kind of a boondoggle. What we're looking at, in my opinion – and this is the thing where I think that Albertans, once they start right waking up to what's going on, are going to be absolutely irate. If the government thinks that Bill 6 concerned them, I think that they're going to see a lot more concern after Albertans realize what's going on.

**The Speaker:** Another member who would speak to the amendment? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

3:40

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'd like to speak to Bill 27 and this amendment. This plan is unrealistic and adds further uncertainty to Alberta's economy and electricity market. Wildrose believes in a realistic, renewable energy program, driven by private-sector investment, not government subsidies. Thirty per cent by 2030 is a plan that requires over \$10 billion of added private investment, but the PPA debacle, which was created by the government's carbon tax, has created investor uncertainty in Alberta's electricity markets and all across the economy. That's why these companies need subsidies, or guaranteed prices, in order to operate.

Ratepayers in other provinces have been promised painless accelerated transitions to renewables, only to see either government-funded bailouts or increased rates on their power bills. Ontario is a prime example of this kind of mishandling, and this government is determined to go down the same route as Ontario.

Phasing out coal earlier than federal timelines, regardless of technological improvements that have made our coal as clean burning as natural gas, is the wrong decision and an expensive one. To think that the plan is to pay billions of dollars to shut down clean-burning coal and replace it with natural gas is ludicrous. The government is committing to an arbitrary target of 30 per cent with no data or analysis to say whether that figure is realistic and at what cost and what the effects will actually be on the environment. This legislation is needed because renewables cannot get to 30 per cent in a free-market situation, which, of course, means that legislation will inevitably drive up costs to families and businesses, not to mention that this is unfair to existing renewables because they won't get this special treatment.

Phasing out coal early is a costly decision because we will have to pay generators for stranded assets, then pay them again for new gas production to serve as a replacement baseload. The previous federal phase-out plan left no stranded assets as the generators were allowed to run out the lifespan of their plants.

Now, we have been waiting for recommendations of the report advising the government on costs and the timeline for phasing out coal. One report, we've heard, says that it'll cost about \$8 billion to phase out coal, but once again this session we're being asked to debate legislation without hearing back from the high-priced panel that was commissioned with the task of determining the legislation's viability. Again, as usual, we have not seen the plan for coal-dependent communities and how they will be transitioned toward new industries.

There isn't a requirement to consider the economics of an electrical project under this bill or the need for that electrical project. Electricity should be generated in response to market demand, which includes ratepayers voluntarily choosing retailers who offer a portion of renewables. This legislation involves far-reaching government involvement, which, as we've seen, is never helpful. The renewables this government is considering have failed around the world. Why must we go down these same twisted and harmful trails? Can't we learn from others' past experiences?

There are other things. Why is this government so dedicated to destroying investor confidence that would create so much investment and jobs for Albertans?

Mr. Speaker, when this bill was introduced, the minister said this: "It also helps to diversify our economy and create jobs while protecting Alberta's environment." Well, there's one thing for sure: we have seen absolutely no evidence of any of those statements because we've seen no impact assessments. We've seen no reports. We don't know the cost this bill will cause. Where's the analysis? It's truly a wait-and-see bill. "Yeah, it sounds good. Let's do it. Let's pick some arbitrary numbers. Let's throw some ideas together

and see what happens." Well, I don't believe that Albertans want us to gamble on their future, on their jobs, on their families, and what this will cost.

Again, this plan is going to require over \$10 billion of private investment. Of course, we don't even know exactly how much. That's just a figure that we've picked because we haven't seen any reports. We haven't seen any analysis. Now, we know what's happened in other provinces, the damaging effects of going down this road without truly understanding the costs and the impacts that it will have. We look at places like Ontario that, of course, went down this route. Now they're backtracking. Now they're trying to find ways to solve the problems that they created. But this government wants to carry on and do the same thing.

This amendment makes sense. Why not take the time to get the report, do some analysis, and see what's actually going to happen here, what the possible effects are?

Now, Mr. Speaker, this government is just picking numbers out of the air again. No analysis, no facts, nothing that we can go on: over and over again we see this with this government. They say that some of these policies they have are supposed to bring stability to the marketplace, but every single thing has actually brought instability – no investor confidence anymore, investor confidence that would add jobs. They sue power companies. Do you think that's a good selling feature for getting companies to invest in Alberta? Lawsuits and talking about retroactively changing contracts? I don't think it sends a good message, not a good message at all.

Now, they talk like there was never a plan to phase out coal already. The federal government did have a plan to phase out coal over time. It wouldn't have left any stranded assets that would've been the responsibility of the taxpayer to pay for. That was actually a plan that wasn't going to cost taxpayers' money. That was clear.

But, Mr. Speaker, this government again is jumping into things that they don't understand fully. They're running by the seat of their pants. They continue to try these experiments, and these experiments are costly to Albertans, to families: over a hundred thousand jobs lost since this government came into power, and no plan to change that.

Mr. Speaker, I think it only makes sense that this government take the time to look at this properly and see what the effects will be. There's no protection for the consumer, for the taxpayer that will be on the hook for this. Nothing. Can you believe that we'd be considering a bill where there's no requirement to consider the economics of a project before it's approved? Does that make any sense? I don't think it makes any sense to Albertans.

Now, one of the members opposite – I think it was the Member for West Yellowhead – gave a list of who they consulted on this. You know who I didn't hear on that list, Mr. Speaker? I didn't hear "Albertans." All sorts of companies, of course, would love to jump in and have a guaranteed return on their investment because they build these things. You know, if I was building these things and you came and asked me if I thought it was a good idea, I'd tell you: "Yeah, it's great. Sign me up." No Albertans were consulted on this. Six months would give that time.

We have a government here that's losing popularity fast. I think that if we look at the last federal by-election, we can easily see that. That was, of course, close to your own riding, Mr. Speaker. Right there, in fact.

3:50

**An Hon. Member:** One per cent.

**Mr. Loewen:** They received 1 per cent – the same candidate that ran in the 2015 provincial election. That shows a lot, Mr. Speaker,

1 per cent, 1 per cent of the vote. [interjections] I mean, they were just narrowly ahead of the Rhinoceros Party, just narrowly. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let the member finish.

**Mr. Loewen:** I think there'd be time for this government to sit back and listen to Albertans. If something like an election like that doesn't send a message to this government, if people rallying on the steps of the Legislature for multiple things and more rallies coming doesn't send a message to this government, I'm not sure what does. Obviously, all they can think of is going down the same rabbit holes that other governments went down that have caused nothing but grief to taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, obviously, the opposition hasn't had much success in getting the government to step back and do some research, provide the research to this House and to Albertans. Over and over again they expect us to pass bills with no economic impact study, no study on what the effects will be on the economy, no effects of what it'll do for the environment. Nothing. Over and over again this government comes up with these plans without any research to back them up.

Of course, you know, through a FOIP document we did find something about the carbon tax that the government had researched. It wasn't a very good response that they got to that, but of course they didn't provide that though we asked for something multiple times in this House. They pretended like it wasn't there. Obviously, it was. Over and over again, Mr. Speaker, the same thing: this government continues to pass bills in this House without the information to make an informed decision. Now, there's a possibility that if you had this information, maybe Albertans would buy into it, but I don't think so. Otherwise, the information would be here, but it's never here.

Now, obviously, Mr. Speaker, the best way for electricity to be generated is in response to market demand. People will buy; people will sell. The government having to get its hands in everything – and that's another thing this bill does. It allows greater intervention by government. I don't believe that's helpful. I don't believe that Albertans think that's helpful either.

We don't have an idea of the costs. There must be some studies out there on what's available right now for electricity and how much is needed and how much they plan to create and at what cost. These companies are already going around to places in Alberta and discussing what their plans are. Why don't we have those plans? Why hasn't the government compiled those and brought them to this House so that we could see what the cost is going to be and see how it's all going to work? This is an incredibly complicated system, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Were there any questions to the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky? The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really very informative and educated information whenever my esteemed colleague from the outstanding riding of Grande Prairie-Smoky gets up and tries to hold the government to account. I see the heckling, but there is no information coming forward on the questions he's asking about economic impact analyses or evidence or consultations. I can understand them heckling us being the Official Opposition, but today even our colleague from Calgary-Mountain View, an experienced legislator in this House, asked the same questions. Kudos to him. In fact, it was music to my ears because I never saw him asking the kind of tough questions he had, but it's great to hear him asking those questions. That's our job.

We talked about polls. I don't want to go into that, you know. We can look at recent polls in Calgary-Foothills or Calgary-Greenway or other polls. I don't want to go into that, but I'm curious to ask my colleague about this amendment we are debating here and the points he raised about analysis. Also, to me, personally, based on my own observations here and the information I'm getting from my constituents constantly by e-mail and phone call, they're saying that the government appears to be tinkering with the market just to drive up the price of electricity with an intention to make renewables viable. That's the observation by many Albertans these days, Mr. Speaker.

I'm curious to ask my colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky if he heard the same thing in his area of northwest Alberta and if he had any further success when he talked to the members opposite in private discussions, you know, if they were able to provide any evidence or analysis so all of us can make an informed decision. Really, if renewables are going to be meeting the target of replacing coal-fired electricity in a timely fashion, with no further economic impact to the taxpayers, maybe then we all will be open to supporting the bill. We are looking for that information. I'm curious to ask my esteemed colleague: what are his thoughts are on that? If he can finish his thoughts on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for the questions and comments there. You know, when I talk to my constituents about these things – my colleague used the word “tinkering,” and I think he's being kind when he uses that word. Tinkering would signify something small, but it's not small. What the government is doing are enormous overhauls of the Alberta economy. The carbon tax, \$3 billion: I'm sorry, but that's not tinkering. That's meddling heavily. That's interfering. That is not helpful to the Alberta economy. Making things more expensive here as opposed to other jurisdictions around us is not helpful. That doesn't help investment on a large scale or a small scale.

Living in the Peace Country, we see a lot of British Columbia plates – lots of them – at all the stores: Costco, Walmart, Staples, and Home Depot. Why do you think they come to Alberta to shop? Taxes, Mr. Speaker.

4:00

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, I won't belabour issues, but I'm pleased to speak to the second reading on this important bill, Bill 27, and enthusiastically support this in principle. This is the second reading. This is where we talk about the principle of the bill. Generally in third reading we talk about the details of the bill and how it might be implemented and what some of the problems . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, just for clarity, you're on the amendment.

**Dr. Swann:** We're on the amendment. I will be speaking against the amendment. This is a critically important time in Alberta history. You know, we are almost the last ones to the game here in Alberta. The rest of the world is going on way ahead of us. I was wanting to just illustrate that by some numbers from the United Nations environment program which indicate public market investment in renewable energy was up 21 per cent last year, \$13 billion. This is a market that is booming. This is an investment opportunity that's growing. It is recognizing that we are moving on

from a fossil fuel dependent province to something that's a better mix. Obviously, we're going to need fossil fuels for decades, but let's start, at least, to make a serious commitment to renewable energy.

So let's not toss this bill out quickly. We are being asked to support, in the first phase, 400 megawatts of renewable energy in 2017 on a competitive bid process. There's nobody that's going to build new renewables without a longer term commitment, and we don't want people to bid without a competitive bid process. So if we want to see any start, any indication to the rest of the world that we're serious about shifting our energy dependency from coal-fired power to renewables, let's start now.

There may be many details that are untenable, depending on how this market unfolds. I agree in many ways that we haven't been given the details that we need to ensure that the energy that we are going to be paying for is competitive and that it's not going to cost more. But, frankly, as somebody who has been waiting for legislation for 12 years in my own political life and even before that, before I got into politics, we have to start making progress not only to convince our partners in Canada as well as internationally that we're serious about climate change but that we see the writing on the wall for energy savings, cost savings in the long term, jobs.

Increased numbers of jobs will be associated with renewable energy – that's a fact – two to three times more jobs associated with renewables than with the traditional fossil fuel energy. When people like our esteemed Calgary Economic Development director speak so positively about the opportunities even in Calgary to start moving in this direction for jobs and diversifying our economy, becoming less dependent on this single resource, I think we have to take notice. I think my concerns, like many, are that if we lose control over this building and if we, as a result of going too quickly, don't attract either the investment or have to start subsidizing investment because of artificial targets that aren't met with the phase-out of coal, then we're all going to be very uncomfortable with what happens in an already difficult economy.

But this is the time to talk about, in my view, the important message we're sending if we're now talking about the principle of the bill, slamming it at this level and punting it at this level without talking about all the dimensions that we need to, including how it's going to be, what the bidding process is going to be like, how much we're going to have to subsidize in some cases if the price is too low. If the price of electricity continues to be as low as it is, there is no question that those who are in contracts to produce renewable energy are going to have to be subsidized because they are going to have to make some money over the next 20 years or they're not going to build. That's just the reality.

Frankly, I'm willing to pay, as the Stern report from the U.K. has said, 1 per cent of GDP today so that my children don't have to pay 20 per cent of GDP to deal with the extreme weather events, the new infectious diseases, and the massive migration of people that are going to be coming here looking for a place to stay because they are flooded out of their own homes and can't get the access to the resources. I am willing to pay more to try and make sure that we move along this line.

This is a baby step, folks. This first 5,000 megawatts particularly is a baby step. Let's make sure that we don't throw out the baby with the bathwater. Let's give this a chance to see what it can do. We obviously don't have all the facts, but we're going to have to hold it accountable. We're going to have to have checks and balances. We're going to have to see what the timelines are with the coal phase-out.

But let's get serious about what is the most serious threat according to many institutions, including the United States Defense department. It says that global warming is the most serious threat to

stability on the planet today. That's pretty impressive when the United States Defense department says that this is something that we have to get serious about.

I misspoke, Mr. Speaker. It's only 400 megawatts at the first bidding. I said 5,000. It's a 5,000 surplus. That's what we have right now, and that will be keeping our prices so low, but it's 400 megawatts that's actually being proposed in the first competition.

I just wanted to get my views on the record because it sounds so negative right now. We can see the holes so far in the lack of detail, the lack of costs and benefits and how it's going to work in terms of sequencing, but I guess at this stage in the debate, pending more information, that I'm hoping we will see over the course of this debate, I am in principle very much in support of finding a way to move forward on renewable energy for our sakes and for future generations and for the sake of our pipelines. This seems to be an issue for much of Canada, that Alberta has not been responsible in managing its carbon, has not been responsible in enforcing good environmental regulations, has not been responsible somehow in ensuring that the health of the environment, which is the basis of our economy, has to be paramount if we're going to have an economy and if we're going to have a healthy population.

I will be voting against this amendment, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)? Cardston-Taber-Warner to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Mr. Hunter:** Yes. I was interested to hear the points made by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. He says that he's very much willing to pay more, but the question this House has to ask is: are we willing to tell other Albertans that they have to pay more? My question to the member is: are you so sure that you are right that you are willing to trump the 80 per cent that are against this and tell them that they have to pay more for their price on electricity?

**Dr. Swann:** Well, that's a fair question, Mr. Speaker. I've wrestled with this ever since I got into the Legislature. The population of Alberta in certain polls has said that they want to see business as usual. What does leadership look like when you see the writing on the wall and you see that many Albertans are not fully informed? In this case none of us are fully informed about the details of this issue. I guess they elected me to lead, to represent not only their interest but their children's interests. They elected me to ensure that I looked not only at short-term economics but the longer term economics and environment and health. That's part of the reason I was a champion for getting coal out of our electricity sector.

4:10

I think the question has not been asked: how much would you be willing to pay to ensure a better future for our children? It's usually presented to the population as, "Are you willing to pay substantially more for cleaner energy?" without saying what the health impacts might be and what the long-term impacts will be in terms of our pipeline opportunities. It's always a black-and-white question that seems to be asked in polling without kind of the nuances that people, I think, need. "Well, compared to what? What benefits am I going to get, and what costs am I willing to pay?" It's a much more complex question than just: are you willing to pay more or less for your electricity? It's kind of like asking people: are you willing to pay more taxes? Well, very few people will say yes unless it's going to deliver something more to their lives.

It's a difficult question. We have to wrestle with it as legislators. Are we going to kind of follow the polls, or are we going to actually lead on something that we know at a very deep level has been neglected for many years, particularly in Alberta, where we have the technology, we have the money, we have the smarts, we have



all the resources we need to lead on this issue rather than be dragged along with the rest of the world, that are moving way ahead? As I mentioned, the UN environment program indicated a very substantial increase in renewable investment all over the planet. People are looking for business opportunities not only because it's making money for them but also because it's moving us in the right direction as a planet.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. That is very, very important and insightful information that you shared, those data. I'm not saying that we're against that. All the intent of this amendment is: let's call a time out because we have seen the behaviour of this government. We have seen the behaviour of this government on Bill 6, on the MGA, on the carbon tax. Can we consult on it with the stakeholders? That's the whole idea. Just delay it six months so that we can consult. Every single Albertan will be impacted. We recognize climate change, and we recognize that this is important. The whole world is going towards this direction, and we need to be there. I understand that, and we support that. All I'm saying is: why is the hon. member opposing that we do more consultation, sir, if I may?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Dr. Swann:** I wasn't going to speak about Trump, but I guess I have to. He has thrown a wrench, I think, into a lot of our thinking and planning. He has certainly raised a lot of questions about how competitive we're going to be. If the coal industry gets a huge spur from Trump in the States, it raises real questions about our ability to compete in our own petroleum industry, and it highlights, again, our overdependence on the U.S.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to seek unanimous consent of the House to move to one-minute division bells for the remainder of the afternoon.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yes. Just speaking to the hoist amendment still.

**The Speaker:** Yes. You have not spoken to the amendment yet?

**Mr. Hanson:** Not to this hoist, no.

I just want to quickly, you know, reaffirm that what we're looking for is a six-month delay in processing this bill at second reading. It puts us into May. We'll be back in the House in May for sure. What can happen in six months? Can people change their minds about green energy? Absolutely they can. I spoke earlier about how in March of this year the Ontario government announced a 1,000-megawatt project in green energy – wind, solar, and hydro – and all of sudden in September: whoops; let's stop this. They announced in September that they're getting out of the renewables industry because it's just not profitable and it's costing Ontario, especially in the opinions of Ontarians toward their government, some pretty heavy costs. The Premier actually got on record apologizing to consumers in Ontario. This is what can happen in six

months. It happened in Ontario. You go from a 1,000-megawatt project to: we're shutting down our investment in renewables. All we're asking is to take a step back.

We say that we're here looking out for the best interests of Albertans, so why don't we do that? Let's take six months. Move this bill to the spring session. We can have a second look at it, and maybe during that time we can do some consultation with some people that aren't actually in the renewables business, talk to people that will be affected by it instead of the people that will profit from it. If those are the only people that you've consulted with, that's a little one sided.

I spoke also about the European countries. I mean, we don't have to look very far. We don't have to do very much research. You can get on the news wire. You can get on the telephone and call other jurisdictions and see how things are working out for them. Germany is going back to coal. Why is that? Because the wind turbines and the infrastructure are too expensive. They're not providing a good service to their citizens. Germany has a population of 80 million people. They've got a lot more tax base to work from than our entire country, let alone our province. They have 20 times the population of the province of Alberta. They can't afford to do it with their tax base.

What is it that makes our government think that they're so much smarter than the people in Ontario, so much smarter than the people in Germany, so much smarter than the people in Sweden, so much smarter than the people in New Zealand? All these people are going away. Oh, you're shaking your head yes. You're all that much smarter than all of those people. That is amazing. [interjections] Well, that's just plain arrogance.

**The Speaker:** Through the chair, please.

**Mr. Hanson:** I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I will address the Speaker.

We have an opportunity here. Not to scrap the bill, okay? Everybody agrees that green energy is something that we can invest in, something that the private sector should invest in. But if we have to start subsidizing the solar industry and the wind industry and hiring companies from Ontario and manufacturers from outside of the country, how is that going to benefit Albertans other than the odd job for a labourer here or there? It's not going to benefit us at all.

We need to take six months for some sober thought, take some time for consultation, take some time to do some research into other jurisdictions. Maybe there's something that they've done that's failed that we can do differently. I don't know. But until we have that conversation, we're just guessing and going ahead blindly.

I remind the House that there's a project planned for my area. You know, you talked about consultation. Nobody was consulted. Suddenly a landman from a company from Ontario showed up, started banging on farmers' doors trying to make deals with them to sign contracts. He actually lied to them, said: "Well, your neighbours have all signed. You're going to miss out if you don't sign." People are smart enough to say: "You know, I'll wait. I'll talk to my neighbours first." Then they go talk to the neighbours and find out that he told them the same story. Absolutely nobody has signed out of 75 quarter sections of land that they want to put 90 wind turbines on. Nobody has signed an agreement with them. They didn't even come and consult with the county before they started knocking on doors. Is that consultation? As I said, he didn't have a whole lot of luck.

I don't believe my constituents want this project. I think they've been very clear on that, especially without any real plans or numbers showing that wind turbines are even feasible in our area. There aren't any in our area. There are some in southern Alberta,

the Pincher Creek area, where it's windy all the time. Wonderful. You know, I've lived up in my area for 50 years plus, and I don't see it being a place that could sustain wind turbines of any sort. It looks to me like it's a blind investment. It's only going to be there – as was said before, a private-sector company would not be investing without heavy subsidies from the government. Is that good planning, just throwing money into something because it's an idea and idealistic? It's ridiculous, right?

4:20

Why are we doing this? If there was such a profit to be made in green energy here in this province, up in my area, the people in my area would be building windmills on their own – I can guarantee you that – just like they do when it comes to oil and gas. We talked about this in the other bill, where small, innovative companies sprout up. You have a geologist and a petroleum engineer get together, and they have an idea. They go take over some fields that the other companies have walked away from and start building that up, and you end up with a company as big as Canadian Natural Resources, that started out just that way, innovative and willing to take a risk. They didn't ask for government subsidies.

We need to leave this to the public sector. Take six months and do some real research, do some real homework, make sure that this is what's right for Albertans before we just start throwing their money. Even if you use money from the carbon tax for the green slush fund, it's still Albertans' money. You're taking \$3 billion out of our economy to put into this stuff so that companies from Ontario can come here and install it and take the money home. Fabricators from other countries that are building the steel in the wind turbines can send their material over here and take their money home. That's going to take \$3 billion in investment out of our province every year. Again, everybody shook their head yes, so I have to assume that they still think that they're smarter than Ontario, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, all of these countries.

**An Hon. Member:** We're learning from other people's mistakes and moving forward on that. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Quiet, please.

**Mr. Hanson:** Please, yes, why don't we learn from other people's mistakes? Why don't we? We're clearly learning from Ontario and Saskatchewan's mistakes when it comes to voting.

What I ask everybody to do is please vote in support of the hoist motion, put this bill back to May. [interjections] It's funny that you always want to yap but you never stand up and talk to anybody.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, point made.

**Mr. Hanson:** Anyway, if I could get everybody to vote in favour of the hoist motion. If you're really interested in protecting the interest of Albertans, support the hoist motion. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions for the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Sabir:** Yeah. Under 29(2)(a) it's my understanding that I can have a brief comment relating to the member's statement and a question, so I will have a brief comment, in the interest of time. We are almost at the end of the day.

In his comments the hon. member used the example of Germany, that Germany is moving back towards coal because renewables are

not working. Well, in Germany over the last four or five years the portion of renewable energy has increased. The reason they might go towards coal is that they have put a plan in place that they will retire all their nuclear plants by 2022. With that plan they have also stated that they will move towards a target of 80 per cent from alternative, renewable resources by 2050. These are just simple facts. [interjections] Yes, they're entitled to their own opinion but not to their own facts. That's the comment.

**Mr. Hanson:** After having the opportunity of actually visiting Germany over the last couple of months and talking to people there, actually talking to people, asking them what they think of their green energy program, the real people, the people that are paying the bills – they're actually not even repairing wind turbines because they're not profitable and cost too much to maintain. When the thing breaks down, they just leave it hanging there unless they can steal a generator off it or one of the propellers off it to supplement one, to get another one going. Once they've robbed all the parts off of it, they tear the thing down. They're still paying for the footprint on the land because of the infrastructure, but the units themselves, they're finding, are too expensive to maintain to justify the feeble amounts of power that they do get out of them when the wind is blowing.

Yes, they are replacing their nuclear power plants with coal. So we're going to shut down our coal and build turbines. It's like we're swimming – have you ever tried to swim upriver? That's exactly what we're going to be doing, sir, in the next six months.

All we want to do, Mr. Speaker, is move this bill to the spring session, give the government a chance to do some real research and some real consultation with people other than those that are going to profit from this bill.

Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

Is there anyone else who would like to speak to the amendment? The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. I recognize that we're late in the day here, but Albertans pay us to be here right till 4:30, so let's be here right till 4:30, shall we?

The fundamental question here is: do we as an Assembly, do Albertans and we on Albertans' behalf want to address climate change or not? Do we believe it's a problem worth addressing? If so, how are we going to do that? What tools are we going to use? What's the most cost-effective way of doing that? I think we do want to address climate change, and I think that even though we have a new administration coming in in the U.S. that appears to be sending very strong signals that they don't want to, that doesn't mean that we as Albertans don't have an obligation to do something.

Now, that raises the question: what is something? What should we do? The real question then is: do we trust the government? Not really is the short answer if you ask me. I don't really trust the government because if you were to ask the government, everything is fine. They're willing to enter into lawsuits that scare away investment, and while we sit here, they're in the process of announcing a settlement. I understand that there's about a hundred million dollars that is coming from the climate leadership plan that is going to go into coal-fired power phase-out. I don't know if that's a smart idea or a bad idea. I've no idea. But I don't really necessarily trust the government.

I'm not sure I trust the opposition either, though, because I'm not convinced of their sincerity that they would like to tackle climate change. I imagine that's a topic of some debate within their caucus.

I don't think there's a universal belief within the caucus as to whether or not they should. There are some who believe climate change is real and human caused, there are some who believe that we ought to do something about it, and there are some who don't believe that and think we ought to not do anything, that we should let the ice caps melt.

So, you know, I will be voting against the amendment. I will likely support the bill in principle, to the great disappointment of my good friend from Calgary-Greenway. I will bring some amendments, I think, once we get to committee. I have questions

about the target of 30 per cent, I have questions about where the money is actually coming from for this, and I have questions about the minister's control.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will return to my seat and see if we can vote.

**The Speaker:** I think it is 4:30, and the House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to Thursday, November 24, 2016**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1 — Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading — 5 (*Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 685-91 (*Apr. 20, 2016 morn.*), 732-36 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft.*), 749-60 (*Apr. 21, 2016 aft.*), 825 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 987-95 (*May 18, 2016 morn.*), 1019-24 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1172 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1174-79 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cP-26.3 ]

### **Bill 2 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 96 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 162-67 (*Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 239-49 (*Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 251-59 (*Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1 ]

### **Bill 3 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 156 (*Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 157-62 (*Mar. 15, 2016 morn.*), 201 (*Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 239-49 (*Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 259-66 (*Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2 ]

### **Bill 4\* — An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading — 180 (*Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 285-88 (*Mar. 17, 2016 aft.*), 349-66 (*Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 378-84 (*Apr. 6, 2016 morn.*), 399-409 (*Apr. 6, 2016 aft.*), 415-28 (*Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 428-33 (*Apr. 7, 2016 morn.*), 450-55 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c10 ]

### **Bill 5 — Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading — 398 (*Apr. 6, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 455-56 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft.*), 491-505 (*Apr. 12, 2016 morn.*), 532-38 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 539-56 (*Apr. 13, 2016 morn.*), 570-77 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 577-83 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 cS-7.1 ]

### **Bill 6 — Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*), 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 519-27 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 527-32 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 583-85 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c13 ]

**Bill 7 — Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**

First Reading — 518 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 585-86 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft.*), 649-51 (*Apr. 19, 2016 morn.*), 682-84 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 820-24 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 902-903 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**

First Reading — 568 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 669-71 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft.*), 684 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 824-25 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 903-904 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c8 ]

**Bill 9 — An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**

First Reading — 568 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 640-49 (*Apr. 19, 2016 morn.*), 728-30 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 979-81 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1180-81 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c11 ]

**Bill 10 — Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 599 (*Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 671-82 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft.*), 691-703 (*Apr. 20, 2016 morn.*), 730-32 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 950-51 (*May 17, 2016 morn.*), 1041-49 (*May 19, 2016 morn.*), 1077-81 (*May 24, 2016 morn.*), 1103-13 (*May 24, 2016 aft.*), 1115-23 (*May 24, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1124 (*May 24, 2016 eve.*), 1197-99 (*May 26, 2016 morn.*), 1263-85 (*May 30, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c17 ]

**Bill 11 — Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016 (Bilous)**

First Reading — 773 (*May 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 907-908 (*May 12, 2016 aft.*), 971-79 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1012-18 (*May 18, 2016 aft.*), 1024 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1068-69 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c4 ]

**Bill 12 — Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Feehan)**

First Reading — 802 (*May 3, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 904-907 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 985-87 (*May 18, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1069 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c3 ]

**Bill 13 — Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016 (Gray)**

First Reading — 872 (*May 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 965-71 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1024-25 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1069 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c15 ]

**Bill 14 — Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**

First Reading — 872 (*May 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 983-85 (*May 18, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1076-77 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1077 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c9 ]

**Bill 15 — An Act to End Predatory Lending (McLean)**

First Reading — 901 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1062-67 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1153-57 (*May 25, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1172 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2016 cE-9.5 ]

**Bill 16\* — Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**

First Reading — 921 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1067-68 (*May 19, 2016 aft.*), 1071-75 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157-63 (*May 25, 2016 aft.*), 1197 (*May 26, 2016 morn., adjourned*), 1219-23 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1223-25 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c14 ]

**Bill 17 — Appropriation Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 950 (*May 17, 2016 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 995-1000 (*May 18, 2016 morn., adjourned*), 1025-29 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1031-41 (*May 19, 2016 morn.*), 1070 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1096-1103 (*May 24, 2016 aft.*), 1113 (*May 24, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c5 ]

**Bill 18 — An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring (Phillips)**

First Reading — 964-65 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1125-35 (*May 25, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1191-97 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1199-1205 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 30, 2016; SA 2016 c7 ]

**Bill 19 — Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1011 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1135-40 (*May 25, 2016 morn.*), 1153 (*May 25, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1171-72 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1173 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cR-8.5 ]

**Bill 20\* — Climate Leadership Implementation Act (\$) (Phillips)**

First Reading — 1095 (*May 24, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1163-70 (*May 25, 2016 aft.*), 1173-74 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1181-90 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1288-98 (*May 31, 2016 morn.*), 1311-21 (*May 31, 2016 aft.*), 1338-56 (*May 31, 2016 eve.*), 1357-72 (*Jun. 1, 2016 morn.*), 1405-07 (*Jun. 1, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1408-24 (*Jun. 1, 2016 eve.*), 1425-42 (*Jun. 2, 2016 morn.*), 1458-61 (*Jun. 2, 2016 aft.*), 1479-91 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft.*), 1493-1541 (*Jun. 6, 2016 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1541-43 (*Jun. 6, 2016 eve.*), 1545-57 (*Jun. 7, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c16 ]

**Bill 21 — Modernized Municipal Government Act (Larivee)**

First Reading — 1310 (*May 31, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1583-96 (*Nov. 1, 2016 morn.*), 1624-28 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft.*), 1634-41 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1939-41 (*Nov. 22, 2016 aft.*), 2009-24 (*Nov. 24, 2016 morn., adjourned, amendments introduced*)

**Bill 22 — An Act to Provide for the Repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Ceremonial Objects (Miranda)**

First Reading — 1219 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 23 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**

First Reading — 1454 (*Jun. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1478 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1478 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1479 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016; SA 2016 c18 ]

**Bill 24\* — Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016 (Carlier)**

First Reading — 1571-72 (*Oct. 31, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1609-24 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft.*), 1629-34 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1786-91 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft.*), 1797-1806 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1849-54 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn.*), 1915-22 (*Nov. 22, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 25 — Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act (Phillips)**

First Reading — 1606 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1641-43 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn.*), 1677-89 (*Nov. 3, 2016 morn.*), 1703-13 (*Nov. 3, 2016 aft.*), 1754-61 (*Nov. 8, 2016 morn.*), 1776-86 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft.*), 1806-09 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn.*), 1826-35 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft.*), 1854-60 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn.*), 1971-77 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn.*), 1994-2006 (*Nov. 23, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 26 — Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act (Littlewood)**

First Reading — 1659 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1660-69 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1669-73 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1673-76 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

**Bill 27 — Renewable Electricity Act (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)**

First Reading — 1701 (*Nov. 3, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1747-54 (*Nov. 8, 2016 morn.*), 1835-42 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft.*), 1944-57 (*Nov. 22, 2016 aft.*), 2038-47 (*Nov. 24, 2016 aft., adjourned*)

**Bill 28 — Public Health Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**

First Reading — 1726 (*Nov. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1793-97 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1843-47 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1941-44 (*Nov. 22, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 29 — Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act (McLean)**

First Reading — 1774 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1823-25 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1847-48 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1959-60 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 30 — Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act (\$) (Bilous)**

First Reading — 1774 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1873-81 (*Nov. 10, 2016 aft.*), 1922-26 (*Nov. 22, 2016 morn.*), 1992-94 (*Nov. 23, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 31 — Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1960-66 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1966-71 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 2007-09 (*Nov. 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 32 — Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1990 (*Nov. 23, 2016 aft., passed*)



**Bill 201 — Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading — 92 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 119-32 (*Mar. 14, 2016 aft.*), 303-304 (*Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 202 — Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**

First Reading — 92 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 305-16 (*Apr. 4, 2016 aft.*), 470-73 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 203 — Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**

First Reading — 280 (*Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 473-83 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities*)

**Bill 204 — Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**

First Reading — 468 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 616-30 (*Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 205\* — Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 707 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 839-50 (*May 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 924-31 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 931-34 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2017; SA 2016 c12 ]

**Bill 206\* — Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (Goehring)**

First Reading — 902 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1241-49 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1249-55 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1255-57 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016; SA 2016 cP-19.7 ]

**Bill 207 — Veterinary Profession (Clear and Timely Price Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2016 (Cortes-Vargas)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 208 — Occupational Health and Safety (Protection from Workplace Harassment) Amendment Act, 2016 (Coolahan)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill Pr1 — Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**

First Reading — 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1171 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1197 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1219 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 ]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 28, 2016

Day 53

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (ND)  
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Government House Leader  
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk

Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House  
Services

Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and  
Legal Research Officer

Aurelia Nicholls, Sessional Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services

Nancy Robert, Research Officer

Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms

Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 28, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us bow our heads and reflect or pray, each in our own way. Today let us allow ourselves to speak passionately and freely about the issues before us. Let us also practise patience with one another.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark.

**Hon. Members:**

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I proudly stand today to introduce a class from Westbrook elementary school, who are here in the gallery, from the Edmonton-Rutherford constituency. This school is well known for their creativity, their work with diverse students, and their extensive French program. Today we have with us 36 members of the school, including their teacher Shawn Nordstrom and the parent chaperones Momina Muhammad and Taqi Syed. If I could ask them to all please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, both the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park and I are pleased to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly a group of Sherwood Park home-schoolers. The students are accompanied by their teacher. Les étudiants et étudiantes sont accompagnés par leur enseignante Mme France Gagnon and with chaperones Ms Judy Wolowich Negrey, Mr. Todd Faulkner, Mrs. Jennifer Kennedy, Mrs. Dawnelle Block, Ms Sharla Quantz, Ms Jane Fernandez, Ms Shelley Brewer. One of the parents, Mrs. Jennifer Kennedy, is a published writer. There's a very special young man with them. One student's grandfather is Roger Brewer, who is the current sessional recordist, and the other grandfather was the former Sergeant-at-Arms William Semple. The student's name is Dominic Semple. I would like to ask the parents, the teacher, and everyone to stand up and receive the customary welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

Seeing and hearing none, the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly

five representatives from three organizations dedicated to improving the physical and mental health of youth in Alberta. Mr. Bill Wells is the chief executive officer of the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, and with him is their president, Mike Roma. John Jagersma is the executive director of the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta. Brian Torrance is the executive director of Ever Active Schools, and with him today is student Tiffany Gingras. All these organizations recently provided me with valuable input and feedback on my private member's bill, the Active Schools Week Act, which I'll be introducing later today. I'd ask that all my guests rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly two constituents of mine, George Winter and Pam Carlton. George is a retired professor of economics and the dean of business at Athabasca University and still runs a grain farm in Athabasca. George spent two years in Indonesia as director of the Sulawesi regional development study, which was a joint University of British Columbia and Canadian International Development Agency project. Then he spent an additional two years as dean of agriculture at the CIDA project. Pam was an Australian volunteer abroad and spent two years in Tonga, where she was a librarian at a large girls' school at Queen Salote College. She then spent two years at the University of Swaziland as a librarian and at the faculty of agriculture. This accomplished couple are both seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I ask them to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you members of the information management branch in my ministry of Service Alberta. I ask that our guests rise as I read out their names. The work of this branch is certainly paving the way forward for how our government manages one of our most strategic resources, information. I'm so pleased to introduce them. We have Maurine Johnson, Madeline Driscoll, Hany Alanwer, Sunea Corry, Kelly Foisy, Matthew Brown, Ryan Dyck, David Kruch, Andrew Chu, Boryana Vasileva, Johanna Loyola, Kathleen Levesque, Sherry Lovelace, Garth Clarke, and Jeff Kocuipchyk.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my incredible constituency staff for Edmonton-Decore. Maria Vicente and Denis Sidlin have been with me since the beginning and continue to be invaluable not only to me but to all my constituents of Edmonton-Decore as well. I would ask that they now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today – and I'm very proud to do so – to introduce Lindsay Law and her

lovely children Eliza, Adaline, and Isaac. Now, Lindsay is a happy home-schooling mom of no fewer than five children. Her family has just finished a cross-Canada tour, visiting many of the legislative buildings across the country. Of course, they're very happy to be here in our Legislature building in Alberta. Eliza is 12 years old. She loves to play the piano and cook and sew and read and help with her baby brother. She's organized a number of activities to raise money and goods for organizations such as the Calgary Food Bank and coats for kids. Next is Adaline. She's 10 years old, and she positively enchants with her cello and loves gymnastics and yoga and helping organize the house. She's currently working at starting a snow removal business. Finally, last but not least, Isaac, 7 years old, loves to build cities with Lego and play outside and read. His favourite place to visit on that recent trip was the CN Tower. I ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

1:40

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you two great friends of mine, dedicated pillars of our community in southeastern Alberta. They know the importance of family, community, and staying involved in politics in our communities, all the time raising a family and running a successful farm. In addition to that, Joan is the niece of former Premier Harry Strom, and Jim has greatly helped me through two campaigns, knocking on hundreds of doors, attending 30 or plus town halls with me, all the time only falling asleep once, and talking to many Albertans about property rights and the problems of excessive taxation and government. If I could ask Jim and Joan Babe to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Welcome, neighbour. There are several people who do fall asleep when the hon. member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is speaking. They occasionally fall asleep.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great honour to stand up in the House today and introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly an individual that is actually at the core of my life, an individual who's so incredibly supportive, an individual whom I could not live without. She's incredibly dedicated to our children as well, a wonderful mother, an incredible volunteer on the campaign when I needed her, and that's my beautiful wife, Johanna Loyola. I'd ask her to please stand and for her to get the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for the St. Albert constituency.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you a group from the Skills Society, a local nonprofit organization that has provided supports to people with disabilities since the early '80s. In advance of International Day of Persons with Disabilities they're here to celebrate. I'd ask them each to rise as I say their name if they are able to: Lisa Robinson, Sanja Zenkijevic, Cathy Monk, Dawn Kamara, Chris Bruce, Geneva Auger, Emily Hannem, Michelle Pasemko, Sue Brewer, Sarahlynn Sparks, Jennifer King, Erin Mueller, Erin Kinloch-Galesloot, Barbara Wegoye, Danielle Hayes, Lasha Robert, and, last but not least, my

friend Bev Hills. Please join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

## Active Transportation

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, as most in this Chamber know, I'm a bike commuter, and I try to use it as my main means of transportation year-round. It's not always possible, though, particularly when I have to travel longer distances in a short time, so there are days when I have to drive even just a short distance from my home to this House.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, on the days that I ride, I feel better and I arrive in a far happier, healthier state of mind. The small bit of exercise I get riding from home to here helps clear my head, connect me to the world around me, and reset my perspective. This was also true when I was young and, like most kids, used to walk or bike to school; however, as of 2009 only 13 per cent of children were still doing the same. Studies show that when children get a small amount of exercise before school, they arrive more focused and ready to learn. With rising rates of obesity and chronic disease, it's more important than ever that we start learning healthy habits while we're young.

That's why I'll be introducing Bill 209, the Active Schools Week Act, which mandates that the first full week of October be designated active schools week and that in that week all Alberta schools hold participatory activities encouraging students to bike, walk, or wheel to school, activities like Belgravia school's walking school bus supported by Ever Active Schools or the Blood Tribe in Treaty 7, who bus their students within a kilometre or two of school and then let them walk the rest of the way. These are small steps that make a big difference in building community and healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, active transportation is the best way to start and end a school or work day. I look forward to introducing Bill 209 later this afternoon.

## Government Policies

**Mr. Barnes:** Medicine Hat and southeastern Alberta know all about ups and downs. From the introduction of the railway to bumper crops to drought and depression the area was forged in times of challenge and bold determination. We know the hardship of times like the 1980s, but we also know the abundance of the boom years.

The circumstances may change, but do you know what has stayed constant? Through it all the people have always believed that hard work and the bonds of local community could create great things. The weather might not co-operate sometimes, the land doesn't always produce as it should, energy prices fluctuate, but ultimately Alberta is great because of Albertans, the people who go to work to provide, the people who donate generously to help others, the people who care for family and loved ones.

There's something wrong with the picture today. In Cypress-Medicine Hat we have innovative, productive businesses like greenhouses and fabricators already being crippled by new taxes and regulations. We have investors looking at other jurisdictions because they fear what the NDP government is doing to the economy here. We are told that we need to aggressively raise the price of carbon to get less of it.

Well, come to Medicine Hat and ask a local not-for-profit what raising the price of labour does. All of these damaging actions have one theme tying them together: the government does not believe in Albertans enough to let them grow and thrive, free from burden. The NDP believes a myth that they can create growth by adding constraints, that they can encourage productivity by punishing earnings, and that a stick is a better incentive than a carrot.

If the strength of Alberta is the people, then the goal must be to foster freedom and self-determination. The Alberta advantage was about much more than money. It was a fundamental principle that free enterprise, opportunity, and the strength of our people could guide us far better than any government. Mr. Speaker, it's time to bring that spirit back.

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

### Government Policies

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in witness of a disturbing trend in policy and legislation from this government since formation, in May of 2015, a trend that has no doubt contributed to the unprecedented decimation of investor confidence while undermining our economy's ability to claw its way back from the effects of low oil prices. Fully 45 per cent of Alberta businesses say that they expect full-time equivalent reductions in the next three months, and I have three articles here to table in support of this claim.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, we do not hold the NDP responsible for the price of oil. We do however believe that the actions taken by this government have exacerbated the situation. But beyond this, it's this government's attitude toward private-sector interests in Alberta we find most disturbing. In the short time the NDP have wielded power, they have taken every opportunity to vilify business and, indeed, all those who dare to risk capital in hopes of modest profit in our province.

When it comes to corporate and personal tax increases, they tell Albertans that greedy business owners can afford it. When it comes to minimum wage increases, they call business owners who are concerned about their ability to remain solvent selfish. When it comes to Alberta's electricity companies, they paint them as profit-mongers who have earned billions on the backs of Albertans, but what they fail to mention is that these same companies have invested billions at no cost to the taxpayer in building Alberta's electricity generation infrastructure. These companies deserve our respect and gratitude, not the contempt they have received from this government.

We all know that, ideologically speaking, New Democrats are fans of neither private capital, the demon root word of capitalism, nor industry. They would rather create 10 public-sector jobs on the back of taxpayer debt than the hundred private-sector jobs we need. What's most disappointing to me is that they have clung to this misguided ideology at Albertans' expense. For Alberta's sake I hope they will listen to those who elected them and act accordingly.

Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** Her Majesty's Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Jean:** While no one blames the Premier for the low price of oil, Albertans are tired of our province's finances being driven into the ground. Following multiple credit downgrades today's fiscal update

presents a very bleak picture indeed. The department of debt interest payments is quickly becoming one of the largest departments across this government: a \$10.8 billion deficit, multiple tax increases, and 13 per cent in new spending over the four years. Given that the Premier refuses to actually cut spending, how long does she think it will be until our next credit downgrade?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

1:50

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is apparently a cut week, an ideology week and also a cut week. Last week was a spend week. It's never clear to tell. You know, it's interesting, for sure.

The Q2 update was just presented to the people of Alberta today. It shows that we are more or less on track with what we outlined previously, and it shows that we are slightly ahead of the game. When we went into the last election, we said to Albertans: we are going into hard times, and you can have a government that has your back, or you can have a government that's going to blame you and download costs onto you and your family. We chose the former, and so did Albertans.

**Mr. Jean:** Here's an easy tip for some cost savings: don't throw out \$200 million in outdated government-run laundry services, or the Premier could try not spending an eye-popping \$1.4 billion on killing good jobs in Alberta's coal sector. I know Albertans don't care much for paying for international junkets to promote the carbon tax. The NDP could cut those, too, or just take the easy step to thin out the layers of bureaucracy through attrition. Will the Premier take just one of our Wildrose ideas to save Albertans from crippling levels of future debt?

**Ms Notley:** Well, I'll tell you one thing we won't do, Mr. Speaker. We will not follow the member opposite's first priority, which is to spend over \$2 billion on the wealthiest, most profitable corporations in the province, because that's their first spending priority. That is not what Albertans voted for. They voted for the exact opposite.

**Mr. Jean:** Today's announcement means every Alberta household will owe \$56,000 in debt by 2019. Here's why it's a problem. Eventually governments run out of spending other people's money and have to pay back the banks, and that money does come from Alberta taxpayers. At a time of record unemployment that means more taxes on Alberta's families. More taxes means less for families to spend on groceries, on their kids, or on taking care of all their loved ones. Will the Premier then start fixing the budget and commit to no more tax hikes to Albertans? Yes or no?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I think the really important thing that the members opposite like to try to forget is that even now, even with us moving ahead with the carbon levy — you know what? — Albertans have an over \$7 billion tax advantage over the next lowest taxed province in the country. So that is being maintained while at the same time we invest in teachers, we invest in nurses, we invest in Albertans, and we ensure that we have their back while we come through these hard economic times.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** In just 34 days this NDP government's carbon tax will take effect. This tax will have severe implications for hard-working Albertans who are already suffering through one of the worst

economic downturns in recent memory. Albertans have been incredibly vocal in clearly stating that they do not want and cannot afford this NDP carbon tax. To the Premier: will the NDP cancel the January 1 implementation of this tax before it causes any further damage to our economy and everyday Albertans across our great province?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, just last week a significant group of Canadian corporate leaders came out to say that what Alberta is doing with pricing carbon is exactly – exactly – what our economy needs. Indeed, the TD Bank came out with a report saying that what we're doing with respect to pricing carbon is exactly what our economy needs. You know what else? What it will do is that it will help move our province toward reaching the kinds of environmental goals that our children and our grandchildren need us to start working on today.

**Mr. Jean:** The NDP knew this carbon tax was not going to be popular. That's why they didn't put it in their election platform, and now, with just over a month to go before it's implemented, they won't give Albertans a chance to have their say on this tax before they put it in place. Families are going to see the cost of filling up their cars, buying their groceries, and heating their homes go way up all because of this NDP carbon tax. To the Premier: before implementing the tax, will you please respect the will of Albertans and put it to a referendum?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, we are proud that we are leading the country in moving our nation forward in terms of taking action on climate change, something that is long overdue and something that will also coincidentally position our economy to be a leader worldwide. While we are doing that, we are ensuring that low- and middle-income families will receive a rebate so that should they reduce their carbon they will actually come out ahead.

**Mr. Jean:** The NDP insist on plunging ahead with the carbon tax, yet they still don't know what the full economic impact will be of the carbon tax. Municipal governments are trying to figure out how large a cost this tax will have on Albertans but aren't getting any answers at all from this government. In fact, the Lacombe county council wrote to the Premier, asking her about the financial impact of the carbon tax, but they still haven't heard back. To the Premier: have you still not figured out the numbers, or are they so bad that you just don't want Albertans to know them?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what we know is that we will have over \$2 billion invested in green infrastructure in our municipalities. What we know is that we'll have over half a billion dollars invested in energy efficiencies, something that the members opposite, over there, forgot to do for 40 years. We didn't have an energy efficiency program in this province at all. Jaw dropping. Shocking. We are finally moving forward, and I'm very proud of that fact.

### Energy Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP interfering in our electricity system will cost our province and taxpayers billions of dollars. Their ideological drive to wipe out coal generation in our province will mean rising costs, the end of low power prices like we're paying today, and higher taxes. We know that the impact of these changes could wipe out Enmax's profitability, and that means that property taxes in Calgary will go up as much as 4.5 per cent per year, every year. Will the Premier admit that her government didn't

understand the consequences when they decided to mess up our electricity system?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the fact that we have been able to move forward as effectively as we can on a number of different electricity files. We inherited a system that was falling apart, and we've been working diligently – diligently – to fix it. We are getting off coal, we're moving our economy forward, and we're creating stability and affordability in our electricity system at long last.

**Mr. Jean:** The cost of wiping out six fully-functioning, high-efficiency coal plants will ring in at roughly \$1.4 billion. Killing coal plants likely means that the town of Hanna, for instance, will lose hundreds of jobs, putting the whole town at risk, but this government doesn't seem to care at all. They're more interested in flying to Paris and Morocco than meeting with the hard-working men and women whose livelihoods are being destroyed right across the province. Eliminating coal generation means that we need up to \$25 billion in new generation, an investment that would be subsidized, of course, through Alberta taxpayers. Why is this government punishing Albertans during a recession?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, we are very proud to be moving forward and phasing out coal. But let me just say that as a result of some of our announcements last week, the coal compensation and the capacity market, one of the heads of the coal companies said, and I quote: the fact that we have this capacity market really enables us to convert some of our coal plants to gas, keep our workers working, keep those communities strong, and be able to provide capacity to the system as we go through the decades. That's not this government speaking. That's one of those industry leaders who actually has faith in our system.

**Mr. Jean:** All paid by Alberta taxpayers.

In the past 18 months this NDP government has introduced a carbon tax that they didn't campaign on; accelerated the phase-out of coal, that will cost Albertans billions and billions of dollars and devastate whole communities; overhauled our electricity system, that offered consumers some of the best electrical rates in Canada; and scared away investment by suing energy companies over long-standing contracts. It's quite a mess in a very short period of time. Does the Premier understand that none of these changes will lead to a more prosperous Alberta?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the status quo situation with our electricity market was this: there was only one other jurisdiction in North America that was still relying on that kind of electricity system. In Alberta we know that electricity would have capped out at \$999 per megawatt hour. That jurisdiction, Texas, in order to keep their system going, had to increase that to \$9,000 per megawatt hour, a one thousand per cent increase in volatility. I am not prepared to make Albertans put up with that kind of volatility for their risky, ideological experiments.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

2:00

### Government Spending

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Over the last 18 months thousands of Alberta families have had to take a hard look at their household expenses and make some tough decisions to balance the

bank account in the face of lost jobs and reduced income. Albertans are making sacrifices, yet the government that they elected to spend their dollars wisely has proven itself incapable of making those same tough decisions in the face of this recession. To the Premier: why does your government refuse to acknowledge reality and adjust spending like Alberta families are doing every single day?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in the last election the member opposite's party ran on the idea of firing nurses and sending 12,000 new kids to school that September without a new teacher. And you know what? Albertans said: no, that's not the way we invest in the future, that's not how we have each others' backs, that's not how we move forward. So we're going to go with what Albertans told us to do.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I congratulate the Premier on bragging about her \$7 billion tax advantage – I will remind her that it was \$11 billion two years ago – and that's before the carbon tax and the \$3 billion in debt from all the borrowing they're going to do.

Albertans expect their government to avoid borrowing for day-to-day operations, and the second-quarter fiscal results today reveal that operational spending continues to rise. To the Premier. Our caucus has provided just a few examples where you could significantly trim expenses without impacting the front lines. Why do you refuse to even try?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that increased our spending in this last quarter was a \$100 million addition to Human Services, and just last week we were hearing from members opposite about how that should be a priority. You can't have it both ways. Decisions aren't magical. When you make something a priority, then there are consequences to it, and we made that a priority.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. The Premier points to something that represents 1 per cent of the deficit that they're taking on this year alone. There's another 99 to try on, Premier. Don't quit yet.

Mr. Speaker, you know what? Eleven billion dollars is going to need \$3 billion in taxpayers' money just to service it without paying down the principal. To the Premier: when can Albertans expect your government to show how you plan to pay the billions and billions back that you're borrowing and when?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the plan is to establish a careful and prudent way forward that supports Albertans, that supports our schools, that supports our hospitals, that supports Human Services, that supports firefighting, that supports the things that Albertans count on. As we do that, we will carefully manage and reduce our spending in a way that gets us to an appropriate outcome with respect to balancing the budget.

But, you know, it's really quite rich for the member opposite to be talking about this because if you look at the way spending was done over the last ten years, it looks like an outline of the Rocky Mountains: no planning at all.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

#### Provincial Fiscal Deficit and Coal Phase-out Costs

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today the government claimed that we have a \$10.8 billion deficit. Now, that

in itself is a very big number, but they haven't included the \$1.1 billion coal settlement because they say that they're still trying to figure out the accounting treatment. Well, that's like driving a hundred miles an hour but still trying to figure out if you're actually speeding. To the Finance minister. Your department is full of experts who have the answer; I just suspect that you don't like the answer. Will you confirm that, including the coal settlement, we actually have an \$11.9 billion deficit?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I will conclude and tell the House is that this member's staff was briefed fully on this this morning. The answer that I'm providing to the House is the same one that officials from Treasury Board and Finance provided earlier, and that is that this transition payment will start next year and be paid out over 14 years. That's the answer.

**Mr. Clark:** Today's announcement said that it's still to be figured out, but I don't know what's still to be figured out. This money is money that the government owes to others, which is the textbook definition of a financial liability. If you don't believe me, why don't we check the actual textbook. The public-sector accounting standards define liability as having a legal responsibility to pay, must be paid in a specific timeline, and the obligation to pay has already occurred. Again to the Minister of Finance: can you tell me which of these three does not apply to the coal settlement?

**Mr. Ceci:** What I will tell the member opposite is that we will start paying out the transition payments next year. Q2 is focused on this year. The officials have briefed people. Out of an abundance of caution we put that note in the Q2 update. That was occurring at the same time as we were concluding our Q2 deliberations, so we're being transparent, upfront. We'll start paying next year, not this year.

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, there are plenty of liabilities that we are not currently paying that show up as liabilities.

Even if you didn't know the exact number of what that liability would be, you knew that during coal negotiations there would be a number. It's irresponsible and negligent but, I suppose, politically convenient not to include the coal settlement in the deficit estimation. Can you confirm here and now that in the Q3 update and beyond we will see a \$1.1 billion increase to future deficits?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. What I can confirm is that in our annual report we will include a contractual obligation as a note that will be present for all to see.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

#### Softwood Lumber Export to the United States

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the United States Lumber Coalition submitted petitions to the U.S. Department of Commerce to request an investigation into Canada's softwood lumber. This means that our province's forest industry can expect higher duties on wood products exported to the United States. Because the United States is a key market for our forest products, this will have great impacts on Alberta's forest industry and the communities it sustains, including many communities in my constituency of West Yellowhead. To the minister . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member, for the question.  
The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the member for the question. Forestry is the backbone of the economy in 70 communities supporting 20,000 Albertans. It's a sustainable industry built on a renewable resource. The industry is not subsidized, as the Americans would have some believe, and I'm confident that the courts will once again agree.

Both Minister Bilous and I recently concluded trade missions to Asia. We need to continue to look for opportunities in these rapidly expanding markets. At the same time we will support the federal government's actions to fight this unfair trade action and continue to support good jobs in the forest sector.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that nearly 20,000 Albertans are employed in the forest industry, including hundreds of my constituents in Grande Cache, Hinton, and Edson, what will the minister do to fight this decision and support thousands of Albertans that work in the industry?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government will continue to work closely with the Alberta Forest Products Association and our federal counterparts to fight this unfair and punitive trade action. While this action is disappointing, it is not unexpected. We knew the Americans were gearing up, once again, for a fight. We shifted resources within the department to handle legal issues that might arise. I've also asked my officials for strategies to deal with the impacts of this action, keeping in mind that the Americans are looking for every excuse to justify their move. But at the end of the day, it's an international trade dispute, so it falls on the federal government to fight it in the courts.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the imposition of duties will reduce demand for Alberta products in the U.S., again to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what is the government doing to support our forest industry during what will likely be a long dispute so that these communities can remain prosperous?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, it's clear that we need to diversify Alberta's forest product trade. This is the fifth time the Americans have alleged unfair practices here in Canada. Every time their allegations have been untrue. I am confident that this will happen again. The fact is that our forest management practices are amongst the best in the world. This is something that our trading partners in Asia recognize, and this presents a great opportunity to increase trade. We must also look for opportunities here at home. This government will develop wood-first policies through the development of an Alberta wood charter. A wood charter will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from construction by using sustainable forest products. It will also stimulate . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

2:10

#### Health Care Wait Times

**Mr. Barnes:** Last week yet another report shed light on the wait time problems that continue to plague our incredibly expensive health care system. In fact, the problem seems to have only gotten worse since the NDP was elected, with wait times for medically necessary procedures far exceeding what health professionals deem

reasonable. The minister's own health data confirm a system moving in the wrong direction for Albertan's hard-earned dollars. Will the minister's legacy in this role be one of increased rationing or one of actual improvement?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the report that I believe has been referenced as a Fraser Institute report. I look forward to seeing it tabled later in question period.

We are working to make sure that we have a stable, well-funded public health care system that helps to address the needs of Albertans. Addressing wait times: I think we have work to do in that area, Mr. Speaker, and I'm committed to addressing it as opposed to the members opposite who were proposing to cut billions of dollars from public services, which would have resulted in laying off nurses and teachers and increased wait times. That's not leadership. What we're doing is.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that wait times have worsened across a wide array of procedures, as confirmed by the government's own reporting, and given that patients and advocacy groups tell us that these excessive wait times cause tremendous physical and mental anguish, putting further pressure on our systems' needs, does the minister intend to actually do something for those living in pain and create efficiency in our bloated health care system?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to highlight some of the things that we have done. We restored \$800 million in health care spending that was projected to be cut by the last government on their way out the door. We also have made significant improvements in terms of wait times for mental health treatment for young people and children, a 92 per cent reduction. I'm incredibly proud of that. Instead of a 13-day wait, these children now have what they need in terms of care the same day or the next day in either Edmonton or Calgary. We're building 2,000 more long-term care beds so that our seniors can live in communities instead of acute-care hospitals. We're moving forward, and those members are proposing that we move back to the '90s, which will result in deep cuts, and we are not doing that.

**Mr. Barnes:** More money into a broken system is like pouring water into sand.

Given that the minister's actions have not created any meaningful improvements and have not come with any expectations of results and since her promised cost curve bending has been blown apart by constant budget overruns, is it finally time that the minister check her ideology at the door and start to focus on real solutions that actually help Albertans who rely on the system that we so lavishly fund?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish that the research department for the Official Opposition would roll their sleeves up and actually look at data, not estimates put forward by the Fraser Institute. We have reflected on some of the specific data: a 92 per cent reduction in wait times for children with mental health needs. That's significant improvement, and I'm proud to stand up for those children, those families and continue to move forward.

### Provincial Fiscal Deficit

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Finance minister released his second-quarter update, and it was interesting to compare his numbers with those released last week by his counterpart Minister Doherty in Regina. Saskatchewan is facing the same global oil price shocks as Alberta, to say nothing of potash and uranium. Because of lower revenue, their projected deficit has doubled to \$0.8 billion, only one-fourteenth of our own projected \$10.8 billion deficit. To the minister: have you called Minister Doherty, and have you asked him to share some of his spending restraint ideas with you?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, I don't need any more spending ideas. What I do need is an economy that turns around. In 2017 we're seeing an uptick in the economy of 2.3 per cent. We are seeing that we're reducing our expenditures on operations. Those are the things that'll get us in the long run. Saskatchewan, frankly, has – what have they got? – a \$14 billion economy. Fourteen billion dollars. We're at \$300 billion. Their budget is \$14 billion; ours is \$50 billion.

**Dr. Starke:** Minister, Saskatchewan has a \$14 billion budget, not a \$14 billion economy. Get your numbers straight.

Mr. Speaker, given that the Saskatchewan Finance minister has released five pages' worth of ministry-by-ministry spending restraint initiatives, which I will table for this minister's edification, and given that these initiatives are trimming over \$217 million from that \$14 billion budget, a 1.5 per cent reduction, without laying off a single teacher, doctor, or nurse, to the minister: if you were doing your job as well as Minister Doherty, you would be able to realize \$777 million in savings. When can we expect you to do that?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this was answered by the Premier earlier. We will get back to a balanced budget in time. We are going to work on bolstering the economy. We are going to work on diversifying and investing and protecting Albertans through this downturn. We will get back to a balanced budget, and when we do – 2024.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, the Riders will win the Grey Cup long before then.

Given that today's Q2 update shows an increase in general debt-servicing costs of \$33 million and given that Saskatchewan's debt-servicing costs are forecast to actually decrease by \$5 million and given that Saskatchewan is quickly gaining on Alberta in having the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the country, which we used to be the undisputed leader in, to the minister: what measures are you taking to try to curb the growth of our debt and attendant debt-servicing costs, or are you simply too proud to ask for helpful advice from our neighbours?

**Mr. Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, with regard to the fiscal plan we have before this government and Albertans, we will get to about 15.5 per cent debt to GDP by next year. We're at about 10 per cent now. I'm comfortable at 10 per cent debt to GDP. That's not the lowest in the country, but I'm comfortable with it, and we will get to lowering that when our economy picks up.

### Vacancy Rate in Calgary

**Mr. Panda:** According to Friday's *Financial Post* close to 40 per cent of Calgary's available residential rental listings are

unoccupied. As of this March 15,000 households in Alberta are on a wait-list for social and affordable housing and housing supports. With higher supply, does the Minister of Seniors and Housing see the opportunity to get more people off the streets of Calgary, or is the NDP trying to implement rent controls?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government, even in these very difficult fiscal times, is showing our commitment to people with our investment of \$1.2 billion in affordable housing over five years in our capital plan. We are taking care of repairs. We inherited a billion dollars in deferred maintenance in units that were not kept up under the previous government, and we are investing in that right now, so we are working very diligently to support vulnerable Albertans.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, given that the commercial real estate in Calgary is also suffering with an office vacancy rate of 25 per cent and continuing to rise and given that Alberta Infrastructure spends almost \$210 million leasing office space for the government every year, is the Minister of Infrastructure actively shopping for bargains on new premium office space so he can consolidate government offices in downtown Calgary and lower taxpayer expenses for the years to come?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Department of Infrastructure has an extensive program to consolidate office space, to move out of lease space, where possible, into government buildings, and to increase the density of employees. I'm sure that the department is always looking for a better deal for the taxpayer. I want to say that we are working consistently to reduce the amount of space that the government occupies, and that is something we inherited from the previous government.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, given that 11,400 Calgary businesses have vanished or moved in the first nine months of 2016 due to NDP economic policies and given that the NDP has a passion for driving away jobs and investment to other jurisdictions, hence the 10.2 per cent unemployment rate, how does the Minister of Economic Development and Trade propose to fill Calgary's vacant residential and commercial real estate? With Manitoba NDP staffers?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta jobs plan is making a difference in the lives of Alberta families by diversifying the economy and creating employment here in Alberta. We have new infrastructure projects added to the capital plan that are estimated to sustain over 10,000 jobs a year for over three years. We restored the STEP program, that was cut by the previous government, providing 2,700 jobs. Alberta's modernization of the royalty framework has led to increased drilling this year. By early fall 2016 more than 129 new wells had been approved, which is 135 new jobs. We're doing many things.

### Forest Industry Issues

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, the softwood trade agreement with the U.S. has expired this past October, creating an unease in an already uncertain industry. Now we are hearing of efforts by U.S. lobby groups pressuring their government to impose trade

sanctions on our lumber imports. This could be devastating to our forest industry. Both the ministers of economic development and Agriculture and Forestry have recently travelled overseas on trade missions. Can you tell us today if any sizeable new agreements have been signed to send Alberta forest products to the Asian markets?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I continue and we will continue to stand for our forests – it's a viable industry in Alberta – stand for the communities and all the workers in the forest industry. The member is right. I did recently return from an Asian market, where I had an opportunity to speak with Canada Wood, both in China and South Korea, looking for what the member just suggested: extending our markets into those countries.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Loewen:** So nothing new.

Given that the lumber industry is already highly trade exposed and given that the carbon tax will cause increases in fuel for mills, for the rail transportation, and fuel for transportation of the raw logs, all of which will do nothing but compound this disadvantage, to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: how does this government expect our forest industry to remain competitive in any market when your policies continue to handcuff industry and risk its continued viability?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We absolutely recognize the importance of the viability of the forestry sector to Alberta. It continues to be important. It relies heavily on exports, obviously the United States markets as well. We continue to support them in every way we can, expanding and extending those markets also into Asia, into South Korea and China in particular.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Loewen:** Support them by raising taxes on them. Okay.

Given that I recently asked the environment minister about her caribou draft plan and given that it contains no timber supply analysis but makes recommendations that if implemented will cost hundreds of jobs in the forest sector, job losses that could be compounded by the lack of a softwood deal with the U.S., and considering companies already have uncertainty surrounding their forest management agreements, to the minister: will you state for the record that your government will do a proper timber supply analysis and consult with industry and affected communities before implementing any further action on your caribou draft plan?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To make it perfectly clear to this House and the member opposite, the Species at Risk Act is federal legislation. We're working with that legislation to make sure that we have something built here in Alberta, working with the forestry industry on a draft plan to do just that, to ensure absolutely the viability of species at risk but also to ensure that our forest industry remains working on the landscape, and we'll continue to do so.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

#### Amber Athwal

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By now most of us have heard of the tragic story of Amber Athwal, a lovely four-year-old who has

yet to regain consciousness following a dental procedure. Her family is not satisfied with the response they have received from the Alberta Dental Association and College with regard to their ongoing investigation. They simply want to know what happened. To the hon. Minister of Health: will you commit to ensuring that the findings of this report are made public so that something like this never, ever happens in Alberta again?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I, too, had the honour of getting a chance to spend some time with Amber and her family. This is a very difficult time, so for them to welcome us, I think, is a tremendous credit to their strong spirit. We have been working with them. We at this point are confident and want to respect the college's process, but I want to be very clear. The family deserves answers, and so do all Albertans. So we'll be working to make sure that the college's process is complete, and then answers can be shared with the family and with Albertans.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that when I met with the Athwal family last week, they told me that they feel they have been left in the dark by the government and that despite any efforts that may have been made, they're hoping for increased communication from the Ministry of Health, again to the minister: will you personally ensure that more channels of communication are open with the family and that they receive the information they need in this difficult time?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We have been corresponding with them regularly. My deputy chief of staff and my office have recently spoken with them, and we'll make sure that – I believe they have his personal phone number, so it's even deeper than the ministry, somebody directly in my office, because it's important that they have an opportunity to feel heard. While it's a very difficult time and we might not be able to give them all the answers we want, we want to know what their questions are to be able to support them through this transition.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Amber's father, Raman Athwal, has been forced to quit his job in order to be by his daughter's side and given that this loss of income is compounded by the fact that this family does not fully know the extent of the brain injury suffered by their daughter, again to the minister: in order to ease the suffering from this tragedy, will you or someone from your ministry reach out to this family and help them access any and all support which they're entitled to moving forward?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Yeah. When we did have an opportunity to meet, I talked about what some of their nervousness was and some of their concerns. Certainly, having some support and liaising with Human Services is one of the areas around what types of supports might be available to help with transportation and those types of things when you have a child who's in a wheelchair. So we're working with them and co-ordinating with them and Human Services. I also want to say that Amber's mom made it really clear



that she wants Amber to be in an inclusive school environment, and it made me feel very proud to be able to say that no matter what, no matter how full Amber's recovery is, she has every right to attend a public school, and we'll make sure that we support them in that initiative, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

### **Bridge to Teacher Certification Program**

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have more than a dozen schools in my constituency of Calgary-Shaw, and when I visit these schools, I can see that students want to develop skills and knowledge that will benefit them in the changing and more diversified economy. Many industry professionals and tradespeople have real-world experience to share and assist our teachers in the classroom. To the Minister of Education: what is the minister doing to support these types of collaboration in our schools?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much for the question. We all know that good jobs begin with a good education, and we also know that industry professionals with experience can help to prepare our students for success. So that's why we have initiatives that we're building up, like the bridge to teacher certification program. This program allows professionals to begin teaching in the classroom while still earning their postsecondary degree. We're hoping to expand this program considerably, and I believe it'll give us lots of good exposure for young people and industry professionals to work together in our classrooms.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the bridge to teacher program provides students with an opportunity to collaborate with local experts, to the same minister: what impact has this program had on our students and schools?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly seeing first-hand the positive impact of this program in our schools. Last month I was at Salisbury composite high school in Sherwood Park and met a professional there who was teaching cosmetology while working to earn her teaching degree, Zena Duguid. She's been paired up with a certified teacher through the bridge to teacher certification program and sharing real-world knowledge and experience with her students. I know first-hand that the kids really connect with industry professionals like this in different programs, in cosmetology and different trades, and it just gives kids another perspective that they wouldn't otherwise have.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what amount of funding is being provided to the bridge to teacher certificate program this year, and what are the plans for the program moving forward?

2:30

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've invested \$800,000 for the certification program in Budget 2016, and this funding will build professionals for, we're hoping, 10 different trades. We're starting to see medical professionals interested in this now as well, so it just

keeps expanding exponentially. I'll have further conversations with Alberta Education about expanding this program in the future.

We are hoping, of course, that this will help us to build a more diversified economy. We know that education is the cornerstone of a healthy economy, too, and that supporting programs like the bridge to teacher certification program will help to have our kids being ready for the future.

### **Didsbury Hospital Services**

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, on November 8 I asked the Minister of Health a question regarding the slow death by cancellation of health programs at the Didsbury hospital. The associate minister responded with, "We are going to support health care where it's needed." When I asked her specifically if it was "a long, drawn-out plan to close the Didsbury hospital," she replied with, "We are not going to make ad hoc promises" and then said that we'll be using "a strategic approach." To the minister. I'm a little confused. Does your strategic approach include closing the Didsbury hospital?

**Ms Hoffman:** Not at all, Mr. Speaker. We're committed to making sure that we work with communities and support them. We have no plans to close the Didsbury hospital or any other hospital. We'll certainly be working with communities around challenges that might be encountered. I know that sometimes it's difficult to attract and retain staff in some of these communities, and we need our local communities to help us address some of those concerns. But we look forward to working with them, and there is no plan to shut down the Didsbury hospital.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Minister. Given that two major cuts have taken place at the hospital, including the most recent to the cardiac rehabilitation centre, which came as a complete shock to residents, doctors, and front-line workers, why was this cut made with no consultation of patients or doctors in the hospital and seemingly no consideration for aging patients who now have to drive to Calgary and pay \$500 for the same service?

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm very proud to be the Health minister in a government that believes in public, universally accessible health care, so I'd be happy to answer if you can provide details around the dollar amount you raised. That certainly doesn't reflect the values that we have around public, universally accessible health care, Mr. Speaker.

With regard to the specific program at the hospital itself I believe that their AHS zone co-ordinators are working on how best to ensure that everyone has access to the right services in the right place, and sometimes certain programs might need to be moved. But I'll be happy to follow up in further detail with the hon. member if he chooses to raise that question after . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, all patients have been asked to pay.

Given that this cut is real and will cost front-line jobs and potentially puts at risk the lives of those living in central Alberta, not to mention the cost and burden of having to drive back and forth to Calgary, and given that if you have a heart attack in central Alberta, you are 70 per cent more likely to die than having one in Calgary, will the minister please tell me why she's willing to make such a risky decision, and will she reverse this damaging cut at the Didsbury hospital?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I know that some numbers were thrown around there, and I really hope that the member does follow up with me so that we can ensure that we are clear about what it is he's referring to when he says that patients are being asked to pay. I think that's important for us to be able to follow up on.

With regard to the strategic clinical network report regarding cardiac care, that was released publicly. There is a desire to increase capacity for cardiac care throughout Alberta, and we want to make sure that everyone, no matter where you live, whether you're in the central zone, north, south, Edmonton, or Calgary, you have access to the right care in the right place at the right time, Mr. Speaker.

### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. Fraser:** As a paramedic you're trained to read people's voices, their tones, to pick up when they're in distress – the crackly voices, the tension, the fear – and that's exactly what I heard when I decided to call a few mayors in communities that would be impacted by the Terry Boston report, released last week. What was more concerning, they said that they hadn't heard anything from the minister's office in months: no further engagement, no briefing on what was in the report, and nothing that would explain the impact on families in their communities. They didn't even receive a copy of the report. Premier, you promised families impacted by this coal phase-out that they would be engaged. Why did you break that promise?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade is leading the process of engagement with the affected communities. His department has worked with over 40 stakeholders in this area across the province where we have post-2030 plants and even some of the communities where we were seeing some coal-fired shutdowns between now and 2030. Part of the work – and I will discuss it more in subsequent questions – is to ensure that we have the right regulatory framework for coal-to-gas conversion.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Fraser:** Minister, respectfully, if you'd listen to these mayors and you'd talk to them, they're genuinely concerned and afraid.

Given that this government has passed the buck to electricity companies, stating that the \$1.1 billion settlement will cover transition – and that doesn't seem like a lot of money spread out amongst dozens of coal communities – and that what's more disheartening is that you don't seem to care about these rural families, why do you think it's appropriate at all for this government to skip out on these conversations with these families, period?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, earlier this year the Minister of Economic Development and Trade met with over 40 community leaders from municipalities, First Nations, and labour organizations. We also received more than 800 submissions from the public on this plan. Our three-member panel will travel to affected communities early in the new year, but what we announced on Thursday provides us the architecture and a policy framework in which to ensure that we are doing the right kinds of transition for these communities, including coal-to-gas conversion, where it's economically achievable and where the investors want to make those decisions.

**Mr. Fraser:** Again, respectfully, if my job was being taken away and the announcement came, I would like to know either before or very shortly after, not months later.

Given that these families are still left in the dark regarding their income, their social well-being, their future and given that you haven't contacted the leaders of these communities, what commitment can you make today to reach out and appropriately engage the leaders of these families, who need answers today?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the well-being of the workers in the community has been at the forefront of our minds as we've been moving through this plan for what happens 14 years from now. That is why the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has met with over 40 community leaders and others, that is why we have ensured that the companies that we negotiated with are making investments back into those communities, and that is why we have ensured the regulatory framework that is required to do coal-to-gas conversion and that will keep the municipal tax base and ensure jobs in those communities into the future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Well, thank you very much. I'm very proud and pleased today to rise for the first time in question period as one of the fabulous five members of the overflow government caucus who sit to the left of Mr. Speaker.

### Legal Aid

**Mr. Dach:** As a former volunteer probation officer I know firsthand that there are several parts of the justice system that need to function together for it to work effectively. An important piece of that puzzle is legal aid. Last year alone Legal Aid Alberta served close to 300,000 Albertans. To the Minister of Justice: what is the government doing to ensure that legal aid services are available to Albertans who need them?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the critical question. Our government understands the vital role that legal aid plays in a functioning justice system. That's why we've invested an additional \$9.4 million this year, bringing legal aid's total budget to \$77.9 million. Since taking office, our government has increased funding to legal aid by 20 per cent.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I have heard concerns from my constituents in Edmonton-McClung about whether legal aid is reaching the Albertans who need it the most, to the same minister: what is the government doing to support low-income Albertans with serious legal issues?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for another important question. We have increased the qualifying income threshold for legal aid, which means that more people are able to qualify for services. There's also been a change in the scope of service to ensure that we're focusing to a greater degree on assistance to low-income Albertans. The fact that Alberta needs a predictable and long-term plan to deliver legal aid services is something that we are working very hard to achieve.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there is an ongoing review of legal aid, again to the same minister: what is the status of that review?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. Our goal with the legal aid review was to ensure that we had an efficient and sustainable legal aid program providing service to low-income Albertans for years to come. We continue to engage with stakeholders, including Legal Aid Alberta, the Law Society, and the legal community as well as service providers and the courts. This review is ongoing, and I look forward to sharing more information as we move forward.

2:40

### Members' Statements (continued)

#### Water Management

**Mr. Westhead:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going with the Tragically Hip theme again. In 1989 the Hip released the song *Trickle Down*.

Thoroughly discredited by none other than the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, trickle-down economics stifles growth and creates damaging income inequality. It remains a mystery why the conservative parties continue to pursue this failed ideology. But the kind of trickle-down I'm pursuing has to do with the way our most precious resource trickles down through the landscape. That resource, of course, is water.

In order to effectively respond to a changing climate, we must take water management seriously. Climate change mitigation is about carbon, but climate change adaptation is about water. Intact ecosystems slow and moderate the impact of climate change by preserving the water cycle. Indeed, our glaciers act as the thermostat for North America.

Alberta is fortunate to have some of the most significant headwaters in western Canada. As the world experiences and prepares for a changing climate, it is critical for our prosperity that we ensure Alberta's supply of fresh water can meet our future demands. Global water scarcity will not necessarily be defined by direct transfers of liquid water but by how much is traded in the form of water embodied in food. This could greatly advantage Alberta's agricultural sectors but – and this is the crucial point – only if we are able to address land-use practices as they relate to water quantity and quality. Alberta's water future depends on the ecological integrity of our eastern slopes. Conservation of intact wild spaces like these is a deeply rooted Alberta value consistent with the goal of water security.

Like the Tragically Hip, I'm also waiting on the trickle-down. Water takes time to get around. When it comes to water security, it's just a matter of a trickle-down.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

#### Legacy Children's Foundation

**Connolly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk about an important organization in my riding, the Legacy Children's Foundation. Since 2006 the Legacy Children's Foundation has been working hard to create all-inclusive music programming in Alberta that engages financially challenged families and vulnerable youth.

I want to congratulate Legacy on receiving funding to continue their work across the province. They've received a \$20,000 grant

from the municipality of Wood Buffalo and a \$30,000 grant from the Red Cross disaster relief fund to buy instruments that were destroyed during the devastating fire that raged through Fort McMurray.

I'm proud to say that Legacy bases its operations out of my riding. The organization and its executive director, Darryl Wernham, work tirelessly to improve the lives of children and youth. They believe that all children and youth have the potential to grow into self-reliant, contributing citizens.

Through Darryl I had the pleasure of meeting a young woman who was having a hard time in school and who started learning guitar through their programming. This spring she played on stage at the Juno awards in Calgary.

Earlier this year Legacy received a community initiative program grant from our government that went directly to help youth living in poverty in Calgary. With the money Legacy was able to buy turntables to start a DJ program. These initiatives are a perfect example of how our government and community partners can work together to improve the lives of youth and families across Alberta.

I would like to thank Darryl and their board of directors and everyone involved in Legacy Children's Foundation. The work you all do is invaluable to the countless youth you help every day. I would also like to point out that Legacy is currently running an Indiegogo campaign to help with funding. Their goal is to raise \$50,000 for their gift of music long-term mentorship program. I urge all fellow members to make a pledge today and help Legacy continue their work across Alberta.

Thank you.

#### 2016 Football Championships

**Mr. Rodney:** Congratulations to the Calgary Stampeders on one of the best seasons in history: 16 wins, including the complete dismantling of the CFL's second-best team in the western final; winning every single home game; most points scored; fewest sacks allowed; most wins by a rookie head coach, Dave Dickenson, the coach of the year; rookie of the year, DaVaris Daniels; most outstanding offensive lineman, Derek Dennis; most outstanding Canadian, Jerome Messam; and most outstanding player, quarterback Bo Levi Mitchell, with a league high 32 touchdowns and an .853 winning percentage, the best in league history.

Apparently, however, the Ottawa Redblacks did not get that memo. After the Stamps overcame a 20-point deficit, they could have claimed the biggest comeback in Grey Cup history if they'd punched it in from the two-yard line with only seconds remaining, but instead Ottawa, with a losing record in the regular season, played their best game of the year and scored the biggest upset in Grey Cup history in overtime. Congrats to the Redblacks and to former Calgary Stampeders Henry Burris, the oldest quarterback to win the cup.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, the news was similar for the Calgary Dinos, whose starting quarterback was injured in the first quarter but came within 23 yards and 23 seconds of winning the Vanier Cup.

Quick note to Mr. Commissioner: if you want the Vanier and Grey cups to remain Canada's biggest parties and if you want to engage and inspire newer and younger Canadians while increasing attendance and revenues, please start the season in June, end it in October, and expand the CFL to 12 teams. We can do that. Canada is ready.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, to everyone within the U of C and the Stampeders organizations: thank you for an incredibly entertaining year. It wasn't the first time that the better teams lost, and it won't be the last, but I promise you: we will be back, and we'll be better as we learn lessons from this year.

Mr. Speaker, we were dreaming of big wins this weekend in honour of number 31, Mylan Hicks, who was tragically killed earlier this fall. I know that everyone in Alberta was hoping to have his name etched on the cup. I just trust that the family knows: no matter what, we will never forget you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mylan.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give oral notice of a bill for tomorrow's Order Paper, that bill being Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, which will be sponsored by the hon. Minister of Energy. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and responsible for democratic renewal.

#### Bill 35 Fair Elections Financing Act

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Fair Elections Financing Act.

This bill ensures that Albertans have a fair, democratic, and modern electoral system. Alberta's election spending and contribution laws have lagged behind other Canadian jurisdictions, and it's time we did more than just catch up. We want to lead the country in limiting the influence of big money on elections. It's why we passed Bill 1 last year to ban corporate and union donations, and it's why we're taking the next step with these amendments.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans want an electoral system where good ideas matter more than deep pockets and where integrity and transparency of the system is paramount. With these amendments in Bill 35 we can provide them with exactly that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 35 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation.

#### 2:50 Bill 36 An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and introduce Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety.

The amendments we are proposing would require people who use off-highway vehicles on public land to wear helmets during OHV operations. Mr. Speaker, if it passes the House, this bill will help to reduce thousands of unnecessary injuries and dozens of deaths that Alberta's OHV community suffers every year.

There are certain provisions within the proposed amendments, including exemption for Alberta's farming and ranching community and for operation on First Nations and Métis settlement land. It is our intention to support Alberta's long-standing OHV tradition by requiring people to wear helmets whenever they are operating an off-highway vehicle on public land.

I look forward to the conversation with all of the colleagues in this Chamber. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 36 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

#### Bill 209 Active Schools Week Act

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to request leave to introduce a bill being the Active Schools Week Act, Bill 209.

Studies show that when students get a small amount of exercise before school, they arrive more focused, attentive, and ready to learn. As rates of obesity and chronic disease and provincial health care costs continue to rise, it's more important than ever that we encourage Albertans from a young age to build habits that will improve their physical and mental health. This bill mandates that the first full week in October be named active schools week and that all Alberta schools have participatory events or activities that encourage students to walk, bike, or use other active means to get to school.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss and debate this bill with all members of this Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 209 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table a document that will clear up some misinformation respecting our supports for foster and kinship families. As you know, our commitment includes stable funding for Human Services, although it was suggested by the Member for Calgary-Elbow that we have made some cuts to that.

I'm tabling a quick facts sheet, and I have the requisite number of copies. It shows the government investments in this area, including the total budget for foster care over the past three years, the number of approved foster and kinship homes, and additional investments in training. The March 2015 budget proposed by the third party reduced foster care funding to \$163 million while our 2015 fall budget included a \$7.5 million increase for foster care supports to make it \$170.5 million. As part of Budget 2015 approximately \$1.4 million of additional funding addressed the increase in monthly respite costs and annual vacation allowances provided to caregivers. Caregivers also received an additional \$50 per month for respite support, increasing respite days from once to twice a month.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, there's no need to read the document. You simply could table it for the House.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that there were no cuts made to Human Services for foster care.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Minister of Treasury Board and Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table two reports. The first is the requisite number of copies of the 2016-17 second-quarter fiscal update and economic statement.

The second is the requisite number of copies of the 2016-17 second-quarter Alberta heritage savings trust fund report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of the report I talked about in question period. Although the Health minister does not like the source, she cannot deny the results. As a matter of fact, her own information supports the same. We are now second last in wait times in Canada.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, the same speech I gave to the minister.

**Mr. Barnes:** Five copies showing that access to a waiting list is not access to health care.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the five copies required of a letter from the Lacombe county reeve, referred to by the leader during question period, in which the reeve asked the government to provide all relevant information to all citizens of Alberta regarding the financial impact of the proposed carbon levy. Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table five copies of a document from the October edition of Windpower Monthly. This paper recently named our very own Minister of Environment and Parks as one of the world's most influential renewables policy-makers. Investors around the world know that Alberta is open for business when it comes to renewable energy.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of the document that I referenced during question period, entitled Spending Decisions Backgrounder, from the Saskatchewan Department of Finance. No speech.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite five copies of three articles referenced in my member's statement today: Nearly 50 per cent of Alberta entrepreneurs may lay off people in [the] next 3 months; Alberta small business confidence wavers; and Three-quarters of Alberta entrepreneurs oppose expedited phase-out of coal generated electricity.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Why, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of the document I referenced during question period, which, I'm sure, will be of great interest to the Minister of Finance: the public sector accounting standards, concepts and principles, section PS 1000 to 1300, which very clearly define liabilities. I have the requisite five copies and look forward to a long, thoughtful discussion with the Minister of Finance about the same.

**The Speaker:** Government House Leader, you have a request?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would respectfully request the unanimous consent of the House to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House a number of distinguished guests. Denise Pelletier is an HR practitioner, author, speaker, and traumatic brain injury survivor. She is a strong advocate for helmet use on ATVs. Joining her today is her father, Leo Pelletier. Brent Hodgson is the president of the Alberta Off Highway Vehicle Association, which is dedicated to providing motorized recreational opportunities and which advocates for the safe use of off-highway vehicles. Laura Nelson is the executive director of the Farm Safety Centre, which promotes safe agricultural practices and also supports the use of helmets on off-highway vehicles. I would ask that Denise, Brent, and Laura rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, I hesitate to mention it, but it is 3 o'clock, and we are ready to go to Orders of the Day.

## Orders of the Day

### Motions for Returns

#### Primary Care Networks Review

M22. Mr. Barnes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government, excluding documents that constitute confidential advice to the minister and excluding data and information that is specific to an individual or a specific primary care network, from May 22, 2015, to March 7, 2016, pertaining to the financial review of primary care networks conducted by the Minister of Health, as referenced during consideration of the Ministry of Health's main estimates on November 16, 2015.

[Debate adjourned November 7: Mr. Cooper speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to what is a very important question. The challenge is, Mr. Speaker, that we've heard from the government that what they intend to do is to amend the question to ask the question that they want to answer, not the question that's helpful for Albertans to know but, clearly, the question that they would have preferred my hon. colleague to ask.

3:00

As you know, we had a chance to speak briefly about this a couple of weeks ago. We have this continued trend of lack of accountability on behalf of this government. This government, when they were the fourth party – I remember the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood standing in this very place, a little bit to the left of me, which really should have been a lot to the left of me, but he stood in his place on numerous occasions and spoke to questions just like this. The government of the day, the now third party, used to do this exact same thing.

This government, Mr. Speaker, while running for election, often promised that they wouldn't ever be like the previous government. Now we see them doing the exact same thing, and that is trying to hide information that's critically important to Albertans with respect to their health care. As you can see, the question is with respect to the financial review of primary health care networks that was conducted by the Minister of Health when we were at main estimates on November 16 last year.

It's incredible to me that throughout this process the time to get information is so delayed. We've seen this government delay FOIP requests. We saw the FOIP commissioner, the Privacy Commissioner, just two weeks ago make some very, very significant claims and express some significant concern around the direction that this government is going.

**The Speaker:** Are there other members who wish to speak to Motion for a Return 22?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to close debate.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my colleague has just clearly outlined, here we have a government saying one thing in opposition and now clearly wanting to answer a question that doesn't fully involve what was asked and what we were looking for.

Why it's so critical, why it's so important to have internal working order documents for this government: the first reason is primary care. How often do we hear that acute care, that hospitals and our front-line workers are great and necessary, but they're not the answer? They're not answer to improving many, many Albertans' quality of life. They're not the answer to wellness and prevention and mental health and all those things that we spend hours and hours debating and tens and tens of thousands of taxpayers' dollars on. Here we had an opportunity for the government to show us – to show us – you know, what they're considering, what their plans are, if any. Maybe that's what they're hiding, but we'll let Albertans decide.

It dates back to how these primary care networks were set up, Mr. Speaker, by the last government. The idea of our great doctors and our mental health people and our dietitians and our physiotherapists and our allied health people, as I hear them called, doing so much for Albertans: I'm told now that the idea was to put these different primary care networks throughout the province and let them develop independently so they could all work on their strengths and their own individual ideas.

But, Mr. Speaker, so much of the criticism of them has been that that at times has failed because what has been best practice in one area was not shared with another. Then we've looked at a situation where: did Albertans, did the taxpayer, who was so willing to pay for this, you know, to help somebody with mental health or wellness or prevention, get the value that they could have achieved otherwise? That's why those internal working documents would have been so crucial. They could have showed us that the government actually cared, cared about helping Albertans and cared about value for our hard-earned tax dollars. Instead, we have a situation where the government is clawing back surpluses, they're not clawing back surpluses. Are they communicating? Are they reaching out to primary care networks? Who knows? Obviously, this government doesn't want to tell us.

I would ask all my colleagues to vote against the question as amended, and I would ask this government to please provide the information to truly help Albertans, all Albertans, with those things that are past the acute care and the emergency care but those things that can truly make a difference. A good start would be sharing

internal working documents with the 87 representatives of Alberta's 4.3 million people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 22 as amended lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:07 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

Against the motion:

Aheer	Fitzpatrick	McKittrick
Anderson, S.	Fraser	Miller
Babcock	Goehring	Nielsen
Barnes	Gotfried	Orr
Carlier	Hinkley	Piquette
Carson	Horne	Renaud
Connolly	Hunter	Rodney
Coolahan	Jabbour	Rosendahl
Cooper	Jansen	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Sucha
Cyr	Kleinstauber	Sweet
Dach	Littlewood	Taylor
Dang	Loyola	Turner
Drever	Luff	Westhead
Drysdale	Malkinson	Woollard
Totals:	For – 0	Against – 45

[Motion for a Return 22 as amended lost]

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, just one clarification. The division that was just called was on the amendment?

**The Speaker:** Motion for a Return 22 as amended.  
The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Calgary Emergency Medical Services

M23. Mr. Barnes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of internal working documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government between May 22, 2015, and March 7, 2016, pertaining to the review conducted by the Minister of Health into the decision to incorporate Calgary emergency medical services into a central dispatch system, as referenced during Oral Question Period on December 8, 2015.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel this is a very, very important question. It gets to the heart of local decision-making, it gets to the heart of communication and consulting between the provincial government and the duly elected representatives of our municipalities, and it gets at the heart of value for hard-earned tax dollars.

We maybe all remember the story of the building that Alberta Health Services leased for EMS in Calgary and then basically never occupied it for that reason, and now the building appears to be drastically underutilized. I think the number was \$60 million that it's going to cost Alberta taxpayers over the next five years. That number is not drastically underutilized.

You know, we have this system where – and I'll just talk about it in a big way for a second. We're spending over 21 and a half billion dollars this year. I think the NDP government is already \$260 million over budget, and the costs grow and grow. At the same time,

on their own websites and by independent third parties the results are slipping. We are finishing more and more consistently in the bottom of the pack when it comes to wait times, when it comes to transplants, when it comes to emergency response.

What better way, Mr. Speaker, for the government to engage all Albertans and maybe particularly the 87 of us that sit in here with the opportunity to discuss what works, how we could make it better? Clearly, what works in this case is what the Mayor of Calgary said some time ago, and that was: let Calgarians, let local people, best allocate resources to needs.

It's also clear that there was some miscommunication, some uncertainty between the ministry and Alberta Health Services. They seem to be on different pages. Alberta Health Services wanted to move towards centralization. The minister seemed less sure. How confusing for local decision-makers. Mr. Speaker, that would be bad enough if it was a road or electricity or something that would be necessary for making our economy stronger, but, my goodness, this is life and death. This is EMS services.

It is clear now that certain plans were in the works that were not compatible with the goals of local decision-making. We've kind of backtracked. We're kind of in this no-man's-land, and we can't stay there, especially when we've leased a building that is millions of dollars and is now underutilized, especially when there is some uncertainty on the best way to help Calgarians.

There's a review under way, apparently. The Minister of Health promised that, but we need to see the evidence of if this review is under way and what it's looking into. Then, of course, Mr. Speaker, maybe the most pertinent step: we need to share this information with the public. That sunlight, that transparency is what will lead to a better system, is what will lead to cost savings, is what will lead to helping Albertans. I think it's only fair that communities that have been grossly and greatly affected by centralization have the exact same access to information that the government does so they can look at the process and see where they fit in, to see how they could help more Albertans, more Calgarians.

3:30

You know, if the minister is reviewing this information, Albertans, especially Calgarians, need to see what the minister sees on matters like this that have a direct impact on their community, a direct impact on their families, a direct impact on their neighbours and friends, the information, Mr. Speaker, pertaining to the review conducted by the Minister of Health into the decision to incorporate Calgary emergency medical services into a centralized dispatch system and the miscommunication around what the city of Calgary wants, the miscommunication between Alberta Health Services and the Minister of Health and all of us with the goal in mind of working together, of making it so Albertans and Calgarians are truly served as best as they can be with our limited tax dollars. So, Mr. Speaker, I will ask all my colleagues in the House to please support the following motion, and I look forward to receiving this pertinent, necessary information from our government.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite has filed a motion relating to the incorporation of Calgary EMS into a central dispatch system. On behalf of the Minister of Health I move that Motion for a Return 23 be amended as follows: (a) by striking out the phrase "internal working" and (b) by adding "excluding documents that constitute confidential advice to the minister" after "government."

The amended motion for a return would read as follows: that

an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government, excluding documents that constitute confidential advice to the minister, between May 22, 2015, and March 7, 2016, pertaining to the review conducted by the Minister of Health into the decision to incorporate Calgary emergency medical services into a central dispatch system, as referenced during Oral Question Period on December 8, 2015.

I am proposing this amendment to reflect our responsibilities under FOIP section 22(1) regarding cabinet and Treasury Board confidences.

The Minister of Health has been unwavering on her statement that she's going to make the right decision for Calgary and the province. Our government is very proud of the respectful and collaborative relationship it has with the city of Calgary, and the minister has heard the mayor's valid points about the plan as it was implemented by the previous government. The Minister of Health has directed AHS to pause on the changes to EMS while we negotiate an effective shared solution that will improve EMS dispatch in Calgary and its surrounding communities. I am very optimistic that Albertans will get better emergency response service as a result of these negotiations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there other members who would like to speak to the amendment as proposed by the Deputy Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Health? To the amendment, Cypress-Medicine Hat?

**Mr. Barnes:** To the amendment, please, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I'm against this. I'm surprised that again the current government is trying to hide behind hopes, and hope is not an acceptable strategy.

Just a short time ago the Privacy Commissioner outlined how freedom of information requests are apparently slower and, you know, more infringed upon than even the last government's. My goodness, when is this government going to learn that it's Albertans' system, it's Calgarians' system? I said it earlier. If we put some sunlight, some transparency on the internal working documents, not the confidential advice but the internal working documents – let's see what we're looking at. Let's see how we can get more value for Albertans and for Calgarians, and let's see how we can get better service.

We've seen a government that says that it's going to do it differently, says that it's going to do it better, but we're not seeing that, Mr. Speaker. So I would strongly encourage all of my colleagues in the House that are not part of cabinet to vote against – to vote against – this amendment and ask the government to provide more information so when we return to our constituencies, many of which, of course, are in Calgary, we have more complete, robust, and wholesome answers, that we can tell Calgarians, as to where their tax dollars are going and how we can make the system better.

Again, I just feel the need to say once more that we see report after report showing how Alberta's system is slipping, how where we used to be the top in transplants and waiting times and those kind of things, we're now last or second last in spite – in spite – of good, good front-line workers, in spite of over \$21 billion of taxpayers' money put into the system. You know, maybe the thing that is lacking is the transparency, the chance for some sunshine and some innovation.

So please, colleagues, vote against this amendment, and let's try to make Alberta better for all Albertans. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support my colleague in his advocacy to have members of the Assembly vote against this particular amendment. I'd just like to highlight an article, that I'll be happy to table in the House, that I think speaks to the culture that's being created in this government and a lack of desire for transparency and openness to providing information.

I know that while I may have forgotten exactly where we were in the process recently, I know that you'll remember from a few weeks ago, while I was chatting about the ability that the House has to call for documents – I get that the deputy deputy deputy House leader rose and suggested that there were issues around caucus confidentiality. But the fact of the matter is that the Assembly has the ability to require the production of those documents if the Assembly has the will, and while cabinet may not have a significant desire, it's in the ability of the House to call upon cabinet to produce those documents. All it takes is a few private members to go ahead and support that desire. I'd encourage those members of the Assembly particularly who aren't in cabinet to support that, to support openness and transparency because the decisions that cabinet makes are important to all Albertans – not just to the government and not just to the bureaucracy but to all Albertans – so that ought to be shared with everyone.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, this document speaks to the culture that's being created in the government, a culture that doesn't encourage transparency and openness but does the opposite. And I'll be happy to table the document that I referenced. It is a CBC article dated October 27, 2016. The headline is FOIP Commissioner Orders Investigation of Alberta Justice.

While I recognize that here we're speaking about a motion for a return with respect to the Minister of Health and we see the Minister of Health dodging, in many respects a motion for a return or a written question is much like a FOIP request except that the opposition or, in this case, my hon. colleague the private Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat shouldn't have to jump through all of the same sort of hoops. Mr. Speaker, if you've put any FOIP requests in, I'm sure you'll see that there are a lot of them – a lot of hoops, that is – that often result in an initial: no; we won't tell you that. Then there's a significant amount of appeal process and so on and so forth. That shouldn't be the case inside the Chamber, but here we have it; it is.

3:40

This culture that's being created – and I'll mention specifically the document, where it says:

Alberta's freedom of information commissioner has ordered an investigation into whether Alberta Justice wilfully attempted to mislead or obstruct the commissioner, or altered or falsified a record to evade FOIP requests.

Now, the Privacy and FOIP Commissioner, in ordering the investigation, accepted a recommendation from the former Nova Scotia FOIP commissioner, who is actually having to adjudicate the inquiry because it could be putting the FOIP commissioner, who essentially reports to Justice, in a bit of a bind.

Now, in this case the FOIP commissioner's request for the investigation is specific to tobacco litigation, but in a letter released to the CBC, Clayton said that she had opened up an offence file and retained a certain Edmonton private investigator to conduct the investigation.

Clayton said her office would usually contact special prosecutions at Alberta Justice at the outset of an investigation and arrange to meet with a designated Crown ... [but] said that in this case, "I don't see how my office can work with a designated Crown prosecutor from Alberta Justice since any potential offences may involve Alberta Justice, who would be in a conflict advising my office."

Therefore, by separate letter she's requested that the Minister of Justice and Sol Gen appoint an independent special prosecutor to work with her office.

This is exactly the type of problem that we have with this government and, quite frankly, the former government as well, but when this government was elected, Albertans were hoping that they would see a change. I know that my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake has spent some significant amount of time working to try and ensure that access to information can be granted, but what we see is more roadblocks being put up by that.

Mr. Speaker, I actually believe that we put a FOIP request around this particular issue with respect to the documents and internal working documents but had limited success there, so we thought: "Well, you know what? This government believes in openness and transparency, or at least that's what they told everyone. Why don't we go ahead and do a motion for a return? I'm sure they'll be happy to provide the information." Unfortunately, that's not what we have seen. We've seen this government doing exactly what they're doing in Justice, in the words of this particular journalist – and I'll just double-check to make sure – when they asked the question "whether Alberta Justice wilfully attempted to mislead or obstruct the commissioner, or altered or falsified a record to evade FOIP requests." These are significant and serious claims, and it was a big enough concern to the Privacy Commissioner that she went ahead and wrote this letter and so on and so on.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps the next time I'll be able to speak about this issue of the government not doing the right thing. Just last week we saw the Privacy Commissioner make statements that she didn't feel like she should have to order a government body to follow the law. I look forward to referencing the exact quote from the Privacy Commissioner because one thing I know for certain is that the Privacy Commissioner is doing her job with respect to trying to get information to Albertans. It certainly appears that this government isn't doing their job in respecting the FOIP process, and now we see them not respecting the Assembly in the way in which they ought.

I strongly encourage members of this House to vote against this amendment, and I strongly encourage members of this House to think about not just my words, Mr. Speaker, because I know that oftentimes the government objects to things that I say, but about an independent commissioner of the Assembly who has very similar, strong words directed at this government. It's my hope that they will take that into consideration as they oppose this amendment. Should they accept the amendment, I hope that what we don't see is the government making a decision to then oppose the question altogether and not provide any information, as we saw in the last question.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other individuals who would like to speak to the amendment?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:47 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miller
Babcock	Horne	Nielsen
Carlier	Jabbour	Piquette
Carson	Jansen	Renaud



Connolly	Kazim	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Sucha
Dach	Loyola	Sweet
Dang	Luff	Turner
Drever	Malkinson	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Woollard
Goehring	McKittrick	

Against the motion:

Barnes	Drysdale	Orr
Cooper	Gottfried	Rodney
Cyr	Hunter	Taylor

Totals: For – 35 Against – 9

[Motion on amendment carried]

**The Speaker:** Are there any other speakers to the original motion as amended?

Seeing and hearing none, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to close.

**Mr. Barnes:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Things have been kind of interesting in here this afternoon. If I've got it figured out, it seems like the government, the NDP caucus, will – you know, should I be happy with maybe just getting part of what I asked for, or should I encourage a system where the government closes the door totally on transparency and openness of the system, which is what just happened in that last vote? We saw a government that totally turned down an opportunity to provide a little information. To provide a little information. [interjections] We're still confused over here.

**The Speaker:** Through the chair, please.

**Mr. Barnes:** I guess, you know, we'd like to have as much information as possible. We'd like to have the government be open and transparent. We'd like to reduce or eliminate articles like the one my hon. colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills talked about, where the government was totally castigated and criticized for being worse than the previous government for openness and FOIP and transparency.

My goodness, in my four and a half years of being in here, it surprises me that we have to FOIP information as much as we do. It surprises me. It surprises me that, for the benefit of the people I represent, for the benefit of Albertans, we are not given more information so that we can make the system better for all, again, especially in this case, where there were the three entities involved – the city of Calgary, Alberta Health Services, and the ministry – that had huge, huge communication difficulties all the time. Tens of thousands of taxpayers' dollars were being spent on a near empty building.

You know, here we are. I guess I'll just sit back and see what the government decides to do, but again I would ask each and every one of you to vote according to providing more openness, more sunshine, more transparency to all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion for a Return 23 as amended carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

#### Alberta Health Services Lawsuits

M24. Mr. Barnes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a list of lawsuits in which Alberta Health

Services was, as of March 31, 2011, named as a defendant, indicating the cause of action and amount of damages claimed.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. For a number of reasons I feel this is a very, very pertinent, very, very important question. First of all, in my constituency office a number of people come in and talk, usually with a lot of care and concern for neighbours, friends, and loved ones, about lack of access, lack of surgery opportunities, wondering why, then wondering sometimes whether it's pharmaceutical situations and wondering how they can truly make the system better. Some speak a lot about how they end up going to Montana, to Kalispell and Great Falls, because they want to return to productive lives, and they can't wait the length of time that the rationing of Alberta Health Services has caused. So they go to Montana and spend tens of thousands of dollars to get their surgery done.

Mr. Speaker, the ones that really, you know, make me think longer and harder are the ones that feel that they've been so wronged, they go to a lawyer. They actually go to the extent to file a claim, to spend money, to cause that extra stress and concern on their family. When it's gotten to that point, it's a situation where we, as the people that are given the oversight of the system by Alberta voters, if we had this information, could really help make the system better.

4:10

I'm sure there are a myriad of solutions and answers, whether it's back to the primary care networks, where we direct an Albertan to an allied health worker, whether it's mental health or a dietitian or physiotherapy. Maybe it's a system of ensuring that our good front-line workers, whether they're nurses or doctors or aides, have the opportunity to understand something better. This is the kind of information that those of us that aren't in cabinet and government – and that's the vast, vast majority of us. If we had this, we could truly make the system better. We could help Albertans not go through that stress, that monetary setback of having to go in a direction that I'm sure they do with only the most seriousness of thought and concern.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask all my colleagues that are here today to ask that this question be answered, to please, please support this, with the idea that, once again, sunshine is the best way to make the system better. Openness and transparency will help all Albertans, and in the last three or four motions for returns the government's desire not to do that is very concerning, as highlighted by the press, as highlighted by other speakers. I will ask my colleagues to do the right thing and provide as much information to all Albertans as we can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other individuals who wish to speak to Motion for a Return 24 as moved by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Health I move to reject Motion for a Return 24. The motion asked to return a list of lawsuits in which Alberta Health Services was, as of March 31, 2011, named as a defendant, indicating the cause of action and the amount of damages claimed. Any lawsuits filed against AHS in the Alberta courts are generally matters of public record and could be sought by the opposition outside of the Assembly. Generating this list and a description of each lawsuit would require considerable resources that could better be used elsewhere to support our health system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Speaking to the amendment?

**Mr. Cooper:** There's no amendment, but I'll speak to the main question because they just rejected the question, which is what they regularly do, reject accountability, responsibility. It's not my words. It's the Privacy Commissioner's, the FOIP commissioner's, who I may have been paraphrasing. They are equally as strong. I will be happy to table a document, Mr. Speaker, an article from November 23, just last week. The headline reads this: Access to Information in Alberta Nearing 'Crisis Situation,' FOIP Commissioner Says.

We have very important business before the House that has to do with the liabilities that the government is responsible for in terms of the number of people that may or may not be seeking legal action against AHS, and there is one organization that has the ability to provide this information. Every single lawsuit isn't published. You can't google every single lawsuit. It is not possible to know every time the government is named in a lawsuit, so my colleague merely asks a question that would provide information to Albertans. What and how many lawsuits has the government been named in as a defendant? It doesn't ask for all of the details of everything to do with those lawsuits as some of that would likely not be admissible, but it asks for a list of lawsuits in which AHS was named as a defendant.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this is about the government knowing exactly what Alberta Health Services is up to, and while AHS being sued isn't always an indication of whether or not they've been doing a good job or a bad job, it can give some idea of the number of claims that are on the increase or decrease. It can give an idea of whether or not we are moving in the right direction. It can help us take the temperature of what Albertans are feeling. Instead, the government decides: no, we won't provide you any information.

Now, I know that the government two weeks ago passed an amendment to ask the question that they wanted to answer and then voted against the amendment that they had passed. That can be confusing. What they are choosing to do is to not provide information to Albertans. In not just AHS, but also in virtually every area of the government we see this.

As the FOIP commissioner has said, access to information is at a near "crisis situation." A quote from Ms Clayton: "What I do know is that Albertans are not receiving timely responses (or any response, in some cases) to their requests for access to information." Clayton wrote: "I am calling on this government, and public bodies in all sectors, to reverse the course we are on."

All that we're doing here is asking this government to act on the words of the FOIP commissioner and reverse the course that we're on. Mr. Speaker, I know that this afternoon we're going to see a number of situations, including around information with respect to Bill 6, which is now a year old and the consultations are yet to be completed, including some areas of the agriculture industry, education, and human services and some other things that the independent Member for Calgary-Elbow is interested in, a consistent pattern of doing exactly what the FOIP commissioner has said not to do; that's to provide no response at all, which is exactly what's happening to my hon. colleague. He's going to receive, in some cases, no information at all, just as the FOIP commissioner mentioned.

She went on to say, in that same article from just last week, "I do not believe I should have to order public bodies to comply with a clear obligation under the law." Mr. Speaker, agencies and departments of government have a requirement to provide information to Albertans.

This government is on a very disturbing trend of not providing any information, as we see in this question and as we saw in question 22. The government has determined that they don't want to reverse this dangerous course that we're on, that they don't want

to provide any information to this House, not just to public bodies but to the Legislative Assembly, the body that represents all Albertans.

4:20

Mr. Speaker, this is a very troubling trend. I know that I've spoken at length about it because it's something that I care a lot about. I care about the ability of Albertans to have access to information that is important to them. I care about Albertans having access to information that gives some indication of the work that AHS or other bodies are doing. I care about access to information around human services.

We had a case in the House just last week where the government said one thing and did another. They said that the Child and Youth Advocate had been getting updates when they hadn't. It is a major, major problem and a major obstacle that this government is going to face if they don't respect Albertans and their ability and need to have access to information.

We're not asking for the moon when we ask for a list of lawsuits where AHS is named. We're not asking for every detail around that lawsuit. We're merely asking for the ones where they're named as a defendant, the cause of the action, and the amount of damages claimed, not even who's asking the question or not even who's filing the lawsuit, but just the information that AHS is responsible for.

I know that the government has a track record of ducking and weaving around information that AHS has and what they should and should not be responsible for. Sometimes it's AHS's fault, and sometimes it's not. Here we have another case just like that.

Mr. Speaker, it's my hope that members of the backbenches, who are filling the vast majority of the Chamber today, would not reject this question but require the minister and, in turn, AHS to actually answer the question that is important to Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just thought I would stand up and engage in some of the conversation around privacy and what the government can and cannot do and what the government is doing in regard to this particular amendment and the issues around discussion about Alberta Health Services being able to have records provided to the opposition around their court cases.

My understanding when I look at the government of Alberta is that there are ministries within the government of Alberta that have the capacity to share information when it's public record. Justice would be considered one of those ministries that can disclose information when there is litigation in place. So if we're looking at Alberta Health Services and we're discussing whether or not there are potential lawsuits in place, that is public record. That is not under Health but, in fact, under Justice.

I would encourage the opposition, when we're talking about these things, to make sure that we're actually talking about them in what the capacity of the government is. The capacity of the government is, of course, to release information when requested through Justice about potential litigation. That can already be happening with the Alberta Health Services request, and as the minister correctly said, this request is only a matter of asking Justice to release the information around the litigation.

I would also like to caution the opposition that when we talk about the legislative officer in the context of privacy breaching and not providing FOIP requests when required, this request under this motion is not actually something that would have to be under a FOIP request. This would be something where you would just specifically go and look on the registry of Justice and see that there is potential

litigation. It is a matter of just researching what Alberta Health Services may or may not be involved with within the justice system.

Again, I would be looking at defeating this motion in the context of: this information is relevant, it is open to the public, and it can be done at any time if the opposition so chooses to request those records.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to Motion for a Return 24?

Seeing and hearing none, I would give the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat an opportunity to close debate.

**Mr. Barnes:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two overwhelming thoughts I'm sitting here with. First of all, this is not about providing the information to the opposition; this is clearly about providing it to Albertans. The FOIP process can be expensive and cumbersome. Let's just make it so that they have direct connection to their system. After all, it's Albertans' system.

My other thought is almost scary. I'm sitting here thinking that if they can't provide basic information on lawsuits, the cause of action and the amount of damages claimed, my goodness, maybe it's because there are too many lawsuits. Maybe the people of Alberta are in huge financial jeopardy and risk with the amount of lawsuits. But, my goodness, how will we know? How will we know? The Alberta government is not willing to provide this in a clear and concise manner.

I wonder when Alberta Health Services – again, way past \$21 billion annually now, when we look at it. You know, there's a management principle, Mr. Speaker: if you can't measure it, you can't manage it. As I said earlier, here we are in a system where Albertans, I'm sure the vast, vast majority of them, at the end of the line, where a loved one, a family member, a community member, as maybe the system has failed them, has fallen through the cracks, not had the access that we know our good front-line workers can provide, have gone to, you know, the extent of a retainer and a lawsuit and all those things, and our own government – our own government – can't easily provide this information. My goodness, how are we going to run \$21 billion, over half of our revenues, over 40 per cent of our spending?

This transparency, this openness would allow Alberta Health Services and the Ministry of Health to do it better. Granted, okay, she's the minister. It's her prerogative to run the system her way, but I think there's a lot of trepidation, and there's a lot of, you know, peril ahead if you don't run it in an open and transparent way.

I will clearly say that the 2012 election was so different than the 2015 election. In 2012 at the doors Albertans wanted to be more involved in their government, wanted to be more open and more knowledgeable, more part of the process. Fewer Albertans falling through the cracks was a huge, huge concern. Maybe two years from now we'll be there again, and the government will feel the accountability of the voters.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues that aren't the percentage that's part of cabinet to please make it so that Albertans can have access to this information – as my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills has pointed out, it's just the cause of action and the amount of damages claimed – so that Albertans clearly know where the system is broken, where we can make it better, and what the extent of our liability and responsibility is.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 24 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:29 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Fraser	Orr
Cooper	Gotfried	Rodney
Cyr	Hunter	Taylor
Drysdale		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Nielsen
Babcock	Jabbour	Payne
Carson	Jansen	Piquette
Ceci	Kazim	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinsteinuber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	Luff	Sigurdson
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Turner
Goehring	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Miranda	Woollard

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 39
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[Motion for a Return 24 lost]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### Legal Aid and Self-represented Litigants

M25. Mr. Cyr moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of any studies or briefing notes prepared for the government between January 1, 2012, and February 29, 2016, regarding legal aid or self-represented litigants in Alberta.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, when we start talking about legal aid, this is something that we need to consider as one of the most vulnerable parts of Alberta's entire population: people that can't afford to defend themselves. This is something that has repeatedly seen news saying that it's underfunded and has some real strain within the system. To hear that the government is going to be rejecting this motion for a return is very distressing for myself. I would argue that a lot of Albertans would agree with me when I say that these briefings that are being put forward by the Alberta government should be made public so that we can have an understanding of exactly what needs to be fixed within legal aid.

Now, I will read from a CBC article posted July 15, 2014. It was called Legal Aid Funding to be Probed by Auditor General. This is an Auditor General being asked by our current Premier for a review of the legal aid system. A quote that she's got in that article – I'll go word for word – is:

I know Legal Aid is doing the best that it can with the ridiculously meager resources it has at its disposal.

But ultimately the best decision is to properly fund Legal Aid and that's a decision our justice minister needs to make, and that's a decision he's choosing not to.

Now, at this point we have seen our Minister of Justice putting money into legal aid, and I will applaud that decision, that we need to actually reinforce – I know this is a contentious issue because, in the end, putting money right now into anything is a huge concern for all of our taxpayers when we're running this much of a deficit. We're running, I believe . . .

**Mr. Ceci:** A \$10.8 billion.

**4:50**

**Mr. Cyr:** Yes. Thank you, Minister of Finance.

... a \$10.8 billion deficit.

Whenever we start to look at deficits this large, we do need to be making sure that every dollar we put forward is accounted for. That's why these briefings are so important, to find out how exactly it is that Alberta is spending its money. Are there efficiencies that we can find within the system? That actually is what I'm after. Is there something that we can go forward with?

Now, this is something that came up when I was working as an accountant. One concern that I would have is because my office would do low-income single parents' returns for free. What would happen is that we would get these low-income single parents coming into my office, and they would have some very distressing stories, and some of those were related to our legal system. Now, when it came to their situations, it was hard for them to move forward with their lives without resolving some of these concerns that they had.

I myself heard that the way legal aid works right now – and the government can correct me if I'm wrong – is that in order to apply for legal aid, you had to go several times before being accepted for it. That tells me that it may not be working the way that it's supposed to. It looks like what it's doing, from what I can see and through what my clients could see, was using that as a filter to avoid bringing people into the system. Whenever we've got something along that way saying, "Let's bring red tape into protecting our most vulnerable," that does seem to be a problem. That's why I'm saying that when it comes to these briefing notes, is this something that has been identified as a problem within the legal aid system, or are there some other problems that we're just not aware of?

Now, I do know that when it comes to legal aid, we're always looking to see how we can help people. That always seems to be the root of everything when it comes to legal aid. When we start looking at how we can help people, it's coming down to what studies we've done. I know I've been pounding on the government for economic impact studies. Well, this one here isn't an economic impact study. It's just a study that the government has already probably done on how the system is working – how the system is working – and on what needs to be improved and on who exactly is being impacted by the fact that we have people that may not be able to get legal aid.

Now, one thing that does trouble me – and it has been brought up by myself – is that when we do bring up the minimum wage, people working at minimum wage will no longer qualify for legal aid. This is a concern. If you're working for minimum wage, will you be able to continue moving forward? That's something that I believe would probably be in one of these briefs that we are asking for. It is amazing to see how one change the government can make will actually have an adverse impact on our most vulnerable. That is a concern that I have, that in the end we're not able to help people because we've set the bar too low, because the fact is that minimum wage is going up so rapidly.

We only find out this stuff after it's become a tragedy. We've seen this going through with the child advocate and the recent discovery with Serenity. We don't identify these problems until way too late, and then we start working on solutions way after the fact. This is the problem with the legal aid system. Are there systemic problems that need to be identified, and why are we not moving forward on this?

Now, many of you may not know this because this was something that we had done in our training session within the Legislature. Actually, legal aid was the very first question that I asked the

Minister of Justice about. This is something that I myself have a deep interest in, making sure that legal aid is actually functioning the way it's supposed to. If it means that maybe funds aren't the problem here, then what is the problem, and how can we get to it?

I hear frustration. I hear frustration from all the stakeholders that have been involved with legal aid. It goes from the lawyers to the prosecutors and the actual vulnerable that are using the system. I also know that a lot of people right now in my riding are really having troubles because of the fact that they were making large amounts of money before and with this downturn are making no money, and they don't qualify for this because of their past incomes.

Now, I'm not unilaterally saying that we need to go in and increase legal aid's funding at the risk of going the other way. But that's why these briefs are so important to be actually going through. Why is it that the government is choosing not to release something as simple as briefs that are prepared? This is something that we, as all Albertans, should know. Is our system working? I will make the argument that, in the end – from the beginning, which is January 1, 2012, all the way up to February 29, 2016, we may see a progression of how legal aid has changed in the last four years. That progression: what exactly is it that the Alberta government is doing? Is it getting better? Is it getting worse? We won't know because, again, we don't have any of these briefings.

I encourage the government and the minister to release this and become transparent when it comes to legal aid. These are people in need, especially right now in the hard times that we're having.

When it comes to my riding right now, unfortunately ... [Mr. Cyr's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my hon. colleague the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General I stand today to respond to the motion for a return from the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of any studies or briefing notes prepared for the government between January 1, 2012, and February 29, 2016, regarding legal aid or self-represented litigants in Alberta.

Unfortunately, the motion is too broad to be accepted. If the ministry were to provide copies of all briefing notes and studies regarding legal aid or self-represented litigants, it would be inadvertently releasing personal information, waiving legal privilege, and jeopardizing security measures at courthouses.

First, self-represented litigants often have unique and complex issues. As a result, specific issues in cases may be discussed at length within the ministry, and releasing the accompanying documents would publicize the litigants' name and legal complications.

Furthermore, it is a reality that vexatious litigants tend to be self-represented. Therefore, some briefings concerning self-represented litigants provide advice on whether or not to seek a vexatious litigant application. My hon. colleague tells me that publicizing these briefings would in effect disavow the importance of the solicitor-client privilege in our judicial system.

Lastly, some self-represented litigants are also vexatious litigants who have persistently engaged in inappropriate courtroom behaviour. Security considerations are also outlined in some briefings.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, I hesitate to interrupt; however, the time limit for consideration of this item of business today has concluded.

## Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Equalization Program

509. Mr. Jean moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to complete and make public a report by August 31, 2017, that evaluates the current equalization formula and outlines the improvements the government will seek on behalf of Albertans when the equalization program is next renegotiated.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to stand up and present to this Legislative Assembly my very first private member's motion. I did have an opportunity to pass a private member's bill in Ottawa, and I remember it was with extreme interest for myself and my colleagues to be able to do a first private member's bill. It's a practice that didn't start all that long ago but certainly has evolved and that I think can only get better as time goes.

5:00

This particular motion is a motion to urge Albertans and this Assembly to move in a certain direction, and that direction is towards declaring ourselves on a national issue, an issue that takes much of the wealth out of Alberta and returns it to Ottawa, and in return we get no service back to that same value.

Many of you may not realize that we do have the opportunity to speak our mind on the national stage in relation to how our money is spent. Our Constitution is not very clear in relation to the formula itself, and there is an opportunity, therefore, to express ourselves, much like Quebec did in the last go-round. Every 10 years or so, depending on what is decided between the provinces and the federal government, there is the opportunity to discuss the renegotiation going forward. In this case we've got 2019, the next time the equalization will be changed, and we're just asking that the Legislative Assembly take seriously this motion and put forward an argument or a position of where Alberta is.

You've all heard me talk a lot about that this year. You know, I think the reason why I talk about it so much is because when I go from constituency to constituency, I hear Albertans clearly tell me that equalization is important to them. They think that since we sent somewhere between \$22 billion and \$28 billion a year between 2007 and 2014 to the federal Parliament, to the federal government, which we didn't get back by way of services, that gives us a pretty good position to negotiate from, especially when you consider that Quebec receives about \$10 billion a year for equalization and Quebec has some services much less expensive than ours. In particular, I'm not sure if many of the members across the way know this, but in Quebec you actually have an opportunity to receive tuition as a student for almost half the price that it would cost an Alberta student. That means that somebody is subsidizing that or paying that amount, and in part it is Alberta.

Right now we have what I would consider to be one of the biggest downturns in Alberta's history as far as I've been alive, and it really concerns me. It concerns me especially when you consider that we have over a \$10 billion deficit, and this government hasn't curbed its spending whatsoever, in fact increased it, not looked for any efficiencies in government at all. There is a tremendous opportunity, then, to move the other way, which is to say that compared to the rest of the country, we need to be treated the same.

Now, I know that to date the Finance minister and the NDP government have said that they are agnostic to equalization, but for

Albertans I think it's an issue they care deeply about, and I would suggest that the minister take that into consideration. For any members, as I've said, that have travelled across the province in their constituency, whether it be in rural or urban Alberta, Albertans make it clear that they want to renegotiate the deal on equalization and get a better deal for Albertans, especially at this time.

I believe that's especially true because Albertans as a whole work hard. They pay taxes, they support their family, and right now they have a family member or a friend for sure that's unemployed. They're saying to themselves: why can't I get employment insurance? In Quebec 58 per cent of the people that apply for employment insurance are covered. In Alberta it's less than 40 per cent. In many of the maritime provinces it's over 90 per cent; if you apply, you get covered. You know, there are a lot of Albertans right now that are not just unemployed and their employment insurance has run out, but they weren't on employment insurance because they were private contractors and, therefore, weren't eligible for employment insurance.

While the Montreal mayor has been actively campaigning against our pipelines, the province of Quebec continues to enjoy many payouts as a direct result of the taxes generated here. This wealth is generated largely as a result of our petroleum industry, our oil and gas industry, our energy industry. They're being disingenuous when they won't exploit their own natural resources in the north, yet they're prepared to take the money from us, our hard-working Albertans who pay their taxes, pay their employment insurance benefits, send it to Ottawa but don't get services back in return.

As many of you know, many of these people, the men and women that work in the oil sands and elsewhere around Alberta, do pay taxes in other provinces. It's definitely something to consider. I do believe that Albertans are deeply compassionate and very interested in helping the rest of Canada when times are tough, but we need to follow through and put our best position forward, especially considering that the federal government right now is spending a lot of money on a lot of projects, and that money comes from Alberta at a time when we simply don't have it.

We're going to continue to pay, my understanding is, equalization payments even while we're in this deficit, even while we have over a hundred thousand Albertans that are unemployed. You know, some people think that it's just numbers, but somebody has to pay it back. By the time this government is finished, at the trend they're going, it will be the people of Alberta that pay back over \$2 billion a year in interest payments. Two billion dollars a year in interest payments: that's \$2,000 a household just to pay the interest at the current rates.

So it's not a laughing matter, and I think that what we need to do is make sure that during this period of time we find as many efficiencies as possible but also put our best foot forward to the federal government in negotiating what I think could be a tremendous opportunity for this entire Legislative Assembly. I truly think we could move forward with an opportunity to work together and to create an environment where Ottawa would actually take notice.

Last year at this time at our AGM our members passed a resolution to ask for us to do this. In February our caucus convened an advisory committee of three economists from across Canada: one from Alberta, one from Ontario, and one from eastern Canada. They came up with that amount, and the study is online if you want to see it. It does actually indicate that between 2007 and 2014 Alberta did send about \$190 billion to Ottawa that we didn't get back in any form of service. That's an average of over \$20 billion a year, and it's more than 10 times the value of our heritage savings trust fund. Primarily, that money appeared as a result of our exploiting our natural resources. That's \$6,000 more per person per year than we

send to Ottawa through things like taxes, CPP deductions, EI premiums, and they don't come back to Alberta by way of programs or infrastructure.

The fact is that whether it's pipeline approvals or infrastructure investments or CPP benefits that even reflect what we get for seniors in Alberta, it doesn't seem like we are getting our fair share, and we're still paying. We've never seen, I believe, more people out of work in this province than are out of work right now. I really do implore this government to negotiate and negotiate hard, to bring together a committee of like-minded MLAs that could put forward a good argument. I would suggest that there's never been a more important time.

5:10

It is designed for the opportunity for all Canadians to benefit in our natural resources indirectly, and I think that's contrary to the Constitution. Notwithstanding, there is a clause within the Constitution that defines the amount we pay based upon the room for taxation, or the fiscal capacity. That doesn't mean overtax us any more than you already have done, but it does mean that the formula itself fails to acknowledge what the recipient provinces are providing by way of either hydro rates or subsidization for babysitting, and it doesn't take into consideration the fact that there are higher costs in Alberta as a result of sometimes a boom. That's gone now, but it means that costs are higher here for the things that we need such as babysitting or other services that we as parents or homeowners or businesses have to pay. In Quebec we have a situation where the electricity bills are subsidized. I think it's wrong. Even in Manitoba the same thing exists.

In essence, that's not considered in any equalization calculation; it is exempted. Our oil and gas, our oil sands are not exempted, and once we burn it, it's gone. So there's certainly a situation there that we believe is unfair. Even over the entire country other experts have stepped forward and suggested that the equalization formula needs to be renegotiated, and other provinces have as well, including Saskatchewan, who is right next door to us. There is also an opportunity to reach out to Saskatchewan and talk to their minister, talk about that we as two provinces have a lot in common, more in common than most jurisdictions, that we could work together and try to improve our position with the federal government. We can't afford the status quo any longer because we're not going to be in the same situation that we were in just a number of years ago for a long time.

This would be an opportunity, I know, to reach out to other caucuses or to other governments right across the provinces. We have even opposition parties in Ontario and other parts of eastern Canada that are interested in a fairer deal. We do have an opportunity to build not just strategic partnerships on legislation that might be to our advantage in negotiating with the federal government but also, as like-minded people across our country, in bringing in legislation that will help the people. We've seen, for instance, that Saskatchewan has a much better issue of wait times in the health care system than does Alberta, and there are some opportunities there to adopt that model instead of continuing to pour money into the existing model.

As I mentioned before, I think it's important as well because we can truly expect that Quebec will probably bring forward a position paper this time as well since they did last time, and I think it's incumbent upon us to represent the people of Alberta and put forward a good argument on how to reduce equalization payments from Alberta and all of those other payments that we need to worry about. I truly believe that when we send tens of billions of dollars to Ottawa that we don't get back in services and other provinces

receive that money instead, I don't think it's fair when we have people living on the streets.

I went to Grande Cache just a few weeks ago, and there I met a gentleman and his wife that had to live in their vehicle. I don't know why we have people living on our streets and living in their cars who would rather live in houses when we're still sending billions of dollars to Ottawa. I'd rather see them employed and living in an apartment or a house and building up their life.

Truly, by supporting this motion, you could reach out to your constituents and show them that you're actually working for them and interested in keeping more dollars in Alberta. You talk about that as a government in relation to upgrading and refining capacity. Why not just straight cash and income tax and CPP benefits and EI benefits that go one way and don't come back the other?

This is an opportunity, in conclusion, for all parties to come together and say, "We in Alberta right now need your help, Ottawa," because we do. I know that you stay a lot in downtown Edmonton, but if you get out to Calgary and see the 40 per cent vacancy in residential, the 25-plus per cent vacancy in commercial in towns like Hanna or Grande Cache, Parkland county, where people are very worried, this would be a good signal to them.

I would encourage this government to come forward and support this motion. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise in the House today to talk about how our government stands up for Alberta's interests and actually gets things done. The folks on the other side of the House are all about talking and tweeting, but when it comes to actually getting things done for this province, they get nowhere.

Today the topic is equalization – and I'll get to that in a moment – but I do think it's curious that the Leader of the Official Opposition wants to raise an issue on which he was virtually silent when he was in Ottawa. For nearly a decade, Mr. Speaker, he represented Alberta in Parliament and sat in a desk behind the Prime Minister from Calgary. What happened on equalization?

**An Hon. Member:** Nothing.

**Mr. Ceci:** Absolutely nothing.

The Leader of the Opposition could be forgiven if he was out there fighting the good fight every day, but he wasn't. In his decade in Ottawa with the Prime Minister from Calgary he mentioned equalization once in the House and twice in committees. He sat on the Finance Committee for nearly a thousand days, and he mentioned equalization a single time. Not much of a record. The success of the former Conservative government on moving forward on their hobby horse is equal to their success in getting pipelines built to increase international markets at tidewater. You would think that after all that time and all that talk and so little success, they would have even an ounce of humility, but instead they puff up their chests and they let the rhetoric fly like the last decade didn't even happen.

Let's talk about our record. Our government is focused on working with the federal government and other provincial partners to get results that help Albertans right now. Our government signed an agreement with the federal government to make \$1.08 billion in funding for infrastructure available through the federal public transit infrastructure fund and the clean water and waste-water fund. That means getting roads, bridges, transit, and other infrastructure projects built to create jobs now. We are working with other provinces to get a new agreement on health care funding, Mr.

Speaker. We are working with the federal government for approval on much-needed pipelines so we can get Alberta's oil to market.

People on the other side are very excited about the possibilities of getting the Keystone XL project built now. They are ready to hang a mission-accomplished banner along the border, believing the work is done now. If it gets built, it will be helpful, but it does not solve the biggest problem that our industry has. It does not stop the fact that we are selling our product at a discount every time we ship out a barrel of oil. We need those pipelines built in Canada, and from coast to coast we need those pipelines built so that oil flows to China and other markets and we get full value for our product. If pipelines to offshore markets get built, it also means we have some leverage with our American customers. We also have to recognize that there is a huge risk of unintended consequences if we open up the issue of federal transfers to the provinces.

5:20

Equalization is a comparatively small part of the federal transfers. It's a comparatively small part. In the 2016-17 budget the federal government sent just over \$49.4 billion to the provinces through the Canadian health transfer and the Canadian social transfer. The federal government is paying out nearly \$7.3 billion of those transfers to our province to help pay for health care and other services Alberta families need. By contrast, less than \$18 billion is available through equalization. The per capita system for these transfers helps Alberta. If we begin an argument for significant change to equalization, it opens the door to a broader conversation that could be very, very bad for Alberta.

Any good strategy that deals with transfers needs to consider all of the pots of funding, not just one. That's why my colleague the Minister of Health is fighting hard for better funding for health. That's what is in Alberta's interests, not engaging in the hack-and-slash approach to health care that the Leader of the Opposition is pushing for now.

As for the report released by the opposition, it's little more than a bashing exercise to other provinces. Think about that for a second. In 2019 we are going to enter into complicated multilateral negotiations, and the Official Opposition's plan, if you can call it that, is to poke any potential allies in the eye even before those talks begin. That gives you a little insight as to why the Conservatives have failed so miserably in getting anything meaningful done for this province.

We believe in fighting for Albertans' interests, but we believe in doing so in a way that is based on results and not just headlines. We will get our share of the federal infrastructure funding. We will work with the federal government to get pipelines built to improve access to markets. We will continue to fight for new funding agreements for health care. When the time comes – when the time comes – we will make sure Alberta gets its share of transfers. We'll do so in working together respectfully and collaboratively and like adults. But we refuse to cherry-pick and pick one issue in isolation without looking at all the other issues that are at stake. Looking out for Alberta's interests means working with our partners and toning down the rhetoric. We refuse to engage in the opposition tactics, Mr. Speaker, which are loud, misguided, and an unqualified failure.

Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on this motion about equalization payments, and I note with interest that the member opposite, the Minister of Finance, presided over a period of time in Calgary where the increase in taxes was almost double the rate of inflation. It's interesting to see that he's found a way to become so prudent in his spending.

But let's get to some more details about the issue at hand. What we should be talking about here is the entire system of transfer payments from the federal government to the provinces and territories rather than just the equalization payments in isolation. That gives us a more fulsome picture of the topic at hand. As you may already know, the government of Canada's transfer payments to the provinces include the Canada health transfer, the Canada social transfer, and the equalization payments. The Canada health transfer is provided to all provinces on a per capita basis to support access to public health care. The Canada social transfer is also provided to all provinces, again on a per capita basis, to support core social and education programs. By contrast, only six of Canada's provinces receive equalization payments: P.E.I., Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, we know that those numbers are large and largely on the backs of Albertans in many cases.

In order to have a fruitful discussion, though, about the equalization component of transfer payments, it's important to understand what equalization payments are. From the letters and comments my caucus colleagues and I have received, we see that there's a lot of misinformation out there being spread, unintentionally or otherwise, about equalization payments. That is really of no value to the conversation for Albertans in benefit of what we need to do in the future.

Every Canadian income and sales tax payer in every province contributes to the funds used by the federal government to make transfer payments; hence every taxpayer contributes to the equalization portion of transfer payments. Provinces with more residents or whose residents are more economically productive – that was an Alberta we once knew – will generate more taxes to the federal government. The provincial governments themselves do not give money to the federal government for transfer payments or equalization payments. There is no cheque.

Equalization payments are intended to ensure that each province has enough fiscal capacity to deliver core government services. Equalization payments are provided to provinces whose per capita gross domestic product is less than the national average per capita GDP. Equalization especially benefits those provinces that have relatively weak tax bases due to small industrial or consumer bases or small natural resource endowments, which, of course, shows that we have broadly spread resources but that they're not always within the geographical areas of all of the provinces within Confederation.

To clarify the misconceptions of some Albertans who have been misinformed about how the transfer payments work, the Alberta government transfers exactly zero dollars – again, no cheque – each year to the federal government for transfer and equalization payments. The funding for federal equalization payments comes only from individual Canadians and businesses by federal personal and corporate income taxes, the goods and services tax, customs duties, and other sources of money for federal general revenues. A high-earning individual in Quebec will pay more tax dollars towards equalization payments than a low-earning individual in Alberta, so it is indeed a federal program meant to benefit across the board in Confederation.

Out of the federal government's \$71 billion in total transfer payments in 2017, Alberta will receive \$5.79 billion, or \$1,364 per Albertan, in transfer payments under the Canada Health Act transfer, \$4.226 billion to deliver health care in this province, and the Canada social transfer is \$1.546 billion for postsecondary education, social assistance, social services, early childhood development, and early learning and child care. Those transfer payments can only be used for the purposes specified. Again, the money for transfer payments and equalization payments comes from individual taxpayers, not provincial budgets.

Mr. Speaker, what is Alberta's role in Confederation, this country we all love, the one that we are all patriotic about while also being passionate about our own province and our own cities within Alberta? As we take a closer look at which provinces receive equalization payments, let's remember that Alberta's role in Confederation was not always as an economic powerhouse. It isn't today either, but that's another story. It's important to regularly update how we calculate transfer payments because the provinces in our great country are always changing and, with that, of course, going through challenges.

For the last 50 years Alberta is the only province not to receive money from the equalization program.

**An Hon. Member:** Say that again.

**Mr. Gottfried:** It's 50, 44, some kind of a number in there that's kind of interesting.

Despite a projected 2.9 per cent, or \$9.5 billion, decline in GDP Alberta's \$317 billion contribution to Canada's trillion-dollar economy will still be close to 16 per cent.

As a comparison, Alberta's GDP has been approximately \$80,000 per person each year while Quebec's GDP has been around \$45,000 per person each year. Again, that was the Alberta advantage we once knew. The amount of taxes collectable by the two provincial governments will continue to favour Alberta until Quebec's economy catches up to the national average at around \$55,000 GDP per person per year or until Alberta's economy, unfortunately, declines to the national average, that race to the bottom that I think we've heard from some of our members here. Alberta's GDP would have to fall by approximately one-third in order for Albertans to stop being net contributors to equalization. I personally am hopeful that we actually won't get there.

A province's fiscal capacity is determined by their ability to collect personal income taxes, business income taxes, consumption taxes, property taxes, and natural resource revenues and is currently used to determine how much a province may receive in equalization payments from the federal government. Under the current formula unique large-scale revenue sources such as electrical generation are not captured by the definition of fiscal capacity. That needs to be captured. Consequently, provinces like Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba receive more in equalization payments than if those resources were counted like Alberta's energy resources. That's something we need to do going forward, Mr. Speaker, to compare renewables and nonrenewables in the same calculations and in the same way. Those are value and those are resources that we hold within our provinces and as part of Confederation.

5:30

According to the province of Quebec's most recent budget the way that the federal government treats revenues from Hydro-Québec is a point of contention with the federal government. They expect to receive approximately \$2.7 billion in revenues from Hydro-Québec on incomes of \$78.6 billion. By comparison, with an almost fully developed energy industry Alberta received an estimated \$2.7 billion in natural resource royalties in 2015-2016, \$1.5 billion in bitumen and \$1.2 in natural gas and other.

Meanwhile some provinces continue to block efforts to increase the national economic benefits of fully developing and diversifying our potential energy exports without recognizing changes in the provinces' natural resource exploitation since the last major change to transfer payments, back as late as 2004. We must think seriously about what it means to have financial and economic models that position some of our natural energy resources but not others as

expected drivers of sustainable economic and social growth and the wealth that we enjoy thereby.

Mr. Speaker, we need to help Alberta help Canada. That's really what we're about in this Legislature. We can continue to be one of those economic engines, and we can contribute more than our fair share sometimes, but – you know what? – we need to do it in a respectful way that balances the resources and revenues and income of these other provinces and compares like with like. As we approach scheduled renegotiations of transfer payments in 2019, Alberta needs to ask our fellow partners in Confederation to help us help Canada. If Canada's provinces and territories want to enjoy the financial benefits of Alberta's natural resources, we must all clear the way for Alberta's exports to flow freely and responsibly to markets where they are demanded.

Mr. Speaker, it reminds me of I think it was 2012-2013, when 80 per cent of the new jobs in Canada were created here in Alberta. We were supporting the graduates, the youth, the workers that were being displaced by other industries across this country, and we need to put our stake back in the sand and re-create that Alberta advantage that we've lost, because we don't mind supporting this great country. You know, Albertans are proud to contribute to Canada's strength and prosperity through the jobs and resources that tens of thousands of individuals have helped our province develop and share, that risk capital that I talked about earlier today.

Now Albertans are asking other provincial leaders to support Alberta's role in Canada's transition to a more diverse economy that builds and sustains long-term investor confidence – those two words again – all-important not only to the future of Alberta but to the future of Canada. Alberta can fulfill its responsibilities as a key member and contributor of Confederation by being thoughtful in its approach to renegotiating transfer payments in 2019, possibly with some new leadership in this great province. In addition to strengthening Canada's economy through internal trade, opening pipelines from Canada to the east and to the south will reduce our dependence.

Mr. Speaker, thank you. We need to be responsible . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today and speak about the motion introduced by the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin regarding equalization. One would hope that having spent 10 years in the House of Commons as a Member of Parliament, one would have learned something about bringing people together rather than creating division amongst the Canadian population. Pitting Canadian against Canadian, Albertan against Albertan seems to be true to form for the Leader of the Official Opposition.

But I think one little detail kind of explains this a little bit, and it's his pronunciation of the name of our second-largest province, which is a bit of a pet peeve for me. I'm thinking that after 10 years in the House of Commons he'd learn to pronounce the name of our second-largest province in either one of our official languages. Quebec is English; Québec is French. Q-bec: I have no idea what language that is.

What I'd like to do, though, is insist that we do things in this province that minimize the divisions in this country, that don't pit Canadians against Canadians, that don't lash out against other parts of the country.

I'm very proud to stand up to speak to this motion, Mr. Speaker, because it actually allows me to talk about what our government is doing to promote the interests of Albertans. The members on this



side of the House are getting things done while members on the other side would rather keep their talking points to rhetoric.

After almost 10 years representing Albertans, there was zero movement on equalization from the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin. He served under a Prime Minister, sat behind him yet virtually was silent on equalization. The Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin was not lobbying his colleagues and the Prime Minister to do anything. During his time working with the former Prime Minister, as was mentioned, he mentioned equalization once in the House and only twice in committee. During his time on the Finance Committee, a committee on which the Leader of the Official Opposition sat for a thousand days, the member only said the word “equalization” once, yet he stands today in this House and pits Canadians against each other, pits Albertans against each other, following his true-to-form – true-to-form – analysis in trying to tell us that equalization is something that is damaging to us as Canadians. Well, in fact, it’s a design that is one of the underpinnings of our Confederation. After 10 years of virtual silence, no matter how you look at it, it’s a bad record that the Leader of the Official Opposition demonstrates when he talks about equalization today. Nothing was said before.

Let’s, Mr. Speaker, now talk about the current government’s record. The government has shown its commitment to Albertans. Our government and the federal government signed an agreement to make \$1.09 billion in funding for infrastructure available through the federal public transit infrastructure fund and the clean water and waste-water fund. Given these and other infrastructure projects – these investments will stimulate job growth. Our government recognizes that job creation is crucial during these times, so our government is doing what it can to ensure that Albertans remain employed, with good-paying jobs. We also recognize the importance of our public health care system. We heard from Albertans on this issue. This is why our government is consulting with other provinces to get a new agreement on health care funding. Our government is also working with the federal government for approval on much-needed pipelines so we can increase market access for Alberta’s oil.

Mr. Speaker, I must speak against the motion before the House today. The fact is that there is a real risk in opening up discussion on equalization at this time. Be careful what you wish for. As the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin is aware, equalization represents a small portion of our federal transfers. To discuss equalization would signify discussion on all federal transfers, which could create many unintended consequences. In 2016-17 the federal government will be providing Alberta with \$7.3 billion through the Canadian health transfer and the Canadian social transfer. Of the \$49.4 billion sent to all provinces, Alberta is receiving nearly 15 per cent of all transfers. These funds are helping to pay for the health care and other services Alberta families and communities rely on, yet the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin wants to maybe put those at risk by opening up equalization negotiations at this time. On the other hand, less than \$18 billion is made available for provinces through equalization. I cannot support this motion because if we start restructuring equalization today, it may open up wider discussions that could negatively impact Albertans.

We need a holistic view on the whole issue, and I do not believe the Leader of the Official Opposition has used this perspective on equalization. He simply looks for ways to divide Canadians and Albertans unnecessarily. Our government will not put the services Albertans rely on at risk, and I’m proud to be part of a government that is proactively engaging with federal and provincial partners for Albertans rather than undermining our health care system by cutting funding, as the Leader of the Opposition is pushing for.

Almost one month ago the opposition released its report on equalization, which proved to be an exercise in criticizing our provincial partners. Given that we are entering multilateral negotiations on various issues in 2019, including equalization, the Official Opposition is asking for the Alberta government to start infighting with potential allies. Once again: division, division, division. Let’s do something that joins people together and has a positive effect. I’m proud that our government is not aligning itself with the rhetoric used by the members opposite given that this would only weaken our government’s position, which would adversely affect Albertans.

5:40

On this side of the House we’re committed to standing up for Alberta’s interests. This is why we’re standing up for Alberta’s health care system as the Minister of Health continues to work on a new funding formula. This is why our government has signed agreements for the federal infrastructure funding and in the process is improving the services that Albertans use while ensuring they remain employed. This is why our government works with the federal government to ensure that oil has access to new markets.

This is why our government will collaborate with its federal and provincial partners to ensure that Alberta receives its fair share of transfers. These negotiations will be based on pragmatic and forward-thinking solutions, not on the rhetoric of the Official Opposition, and they will be in a spirit of bringing people together rather than dividing them and looking for solutions that have a positive effect for both Albertans and Canadians as we move forward in ensuring that the equalization that is negotiated in the future is one that continues to join us together and benefits both Albertans and Canadians right across the country.

Thank you.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I’m really disappointed that government members forgot who elected them, who they have to represent, but the Official Opposition and all the opposition here are actually representing Albertans because they know that they were elected by Albertans. We are on the side of Albertans.

I am proud to rise to support the Leader of the Official Opposition’s Motion 509, calling on the government to make Alberta’s position public by next summer so we can begin a national conversation. This reasonable motion before us today gives everyone in this House the opportunity to tell their constituents about this danger and do something to help Alberta get a better deal from Ottawa. The aim of equalization payments is to ensure that reasonably comparable levels of services are available at similar taxation levels and, second, that the commitment is only to the principle of achieving reasonable comparability. In 2014 over \$28 billion was extracted from Alberta taxpayers and sent to Ottawa, never to return. How are we supposed to grow and develop Alberta if we force Albertans to make a net contribution to Ottawa that is bigger than the entire budget for the national defence of the Canadian federation? It’s not right.

It is not just we politicians who have been saying that we need a better deal on equalization. Academics, economists, and ordinary Albertans all realize that equalization isn’t working for Canada, whether we are a have or a have-not. This is why the Wildrose turned to the experts and the think tanks to help understand equalization better and figure out what we need to do. Yes, the Wildrose sought help from Dr. Marco Navarro-Génie at the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies out of Halifax.

Halifax is surrounded by four chronic net-recipient provinces of equalization: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec. Some say that equalization allows those provinces to

not reform their public services to get better value for money. That is recommendation 3 from our report,

that equalization be made conditional on steps being taken by recipient provinces with relatively high program delivery costs to reduce costs so that the per capita costs of providing programming in the recipient provinces would not exceed the national average.

Equalization also creates disincentives for recipient provinces to grow their economy for fear of going off the equalization payments. We see that in Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick they do not want to develop their resource industry out of unfounded environmental fears, fears that we have dealt with in Alberta for 50 years. But Quebec can sure offer substantially lower tuition fee rates at public universities and colleges than other provinces, and the students will misbehave and riot and bang pots and pans together to protect that low price. They will also protest Energy East and fracking without realizing that it's Albertans, many working in the energy sector, that are paying for their cheap tuition.

Besides the equalization program, there are other cash transfer programs from Ottawa that put Alberta at a disadvantage – we call these stealth equalization – programs like employment insurance. If you fish for a living on the east coast, after two days on a boat you can qualify for employment insurance. Fishermen's employment insurance is income based, not based on the number of days worked. These self-employed people are no different than farmers and ranchers. I don't see farmers' employment insurance based on the income they made; in fact, they, like all the other self-employed folks in Alberta, aren't eligible at all. It was Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau that set this scheme up for fishers in the 1970s with the support of his Maritimes lieutenant, Allan J. MacEachen. It was a bad scheme then, and it's a bad scheme now.

Maritimers and Newfoundlanders – and I should know; I have one working for me – joke about going on lotto 10/42: work 10 weeks, and get employment insurance for 42 weeks. Wow. What a great disincentive on the search for work, job creation, and innovation. Who would want to do anything when all you have to do is work for 10 weeks and get pokey for 42 weeks? Then you can spend your time going for coffee, driving a quad or snowmobile on the trails, or working under the table in the black market. Maritimers and Newfoundlanders will complain that their industries are seasonal. That's right. Some probably are, but what about the rest of the year?

Alberta farmers and ranchers have a seasonal industry, too. So does oil and gas. Did you ever hear of a spring breakup? Some people will complain about all the people that will have to move away from their communities to find work. Well, I promise they won't have to move as far away as I did. That's just life sometimes, Mr. Speaker, especially when your government isn't generating an investment-friendly economic environment. People all over the world move all the time to find work. Look at all the economic immigrants like myself. We didn't choose easy street. Why do small communities out east get to live on easy street on the backs of Alberta taxpayers? It's a wealth transfer, pure and simple.

Here we have oil and gas workers out of work, and their EI has run out. What are they going to do? Our guys out here can't work anywhere for 10 weeks and then get 42 weeks of employment insurance. Of course, they can't rotate in and out of a rig for 10 weeks each and collect from the government for the rest of the year. That would be wrong and a terrible disincentive. Instead, if they can't find any work, they'll have to turn to the Minister of Human Services and demand income support. It's not fair, Mr. Speaker.

Our recommendation 5 reads, "That substantial reforms to the Employment Insurance (EI) Program be made to [ensure that it treats] similarly situated Canadians with more parity." Alberta paid

over \$3.3 billion into EI in 2013 and received only \$1.4 billion in benefits. That includes maternity leave. That means that almost \$2 billion was transferred out of Alberta to pay for EI in places like Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the case for reforms is clear, and negotiations will get nowhere if we wait. We need to educate Albertans and Canadians on the facts. So I rise today to add my voice to that of the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin and call on the government to evaluate the current equalization formula and outline the improvements they will see on behalf of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I ask all members of this House to support this private member's motion. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for proposing this motion. You know, our government is working collaboratively with our federal and provincial partners. We're also working hard to create made-in-Alberta solutions to the situations that Alberta is facing. And while I agree that Alberta has a role to play when equalization is next renegotiated, I'm quite concerned that the Leader of the Official Opposition has a profound misunderstanding of how equalization payments actually work.

5:50

He would rather drag other provinces through the mud, provinces whose co-operation we are seeking to work towards approval for a pipeline to tidewater. You see, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition has been encouraging Albertans to stop equalization payments, but that is so preposterous. I have to state that again. The Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin, the Leader of the Official Opposition, is encouraging Alberta to stop equalization payments. Does anyone want to take a guess how much Alberta has paid in equalization payments to other provinces?

**Some Hon. Members:** Zero.

**Mr. Westhead:** You're right. It's zero, Mr. Speaker. We have paid nothing to other provinces. It's the federal government that makes payments to other provinces, not Alberta. The motion proposed by the opposition leader leads me to believe that he would rather have Ottawa impose a solution for us. Alberta is facing difficult economic circumstances due to the low price of oil. We have a challenge ahead of us, and there's no doubt about that.

I can tell you that our government is working hard to address the situations Alberta faces. We're putting more money in Albertans' pockets by raising the minimum wage. We're putting Albertans back to work through our \$35 billion infrastructure plan, a plan that, I might add, the Leader of the Official Opposition wants to cut billions of dollars from and risk thousands of jobs. We are investing in our children's education by hiring teachers and support workers, but the opposition wants to cut those jobs, too. We are ensuring stability in our health care system, saving millions by working with Alberta's doctors to slow the rate of growth and ensure we have a sustainable public health system, but the Official Opposition wants to cut billions from health care, putting front-line services at risk.

Mr. Speaker, is the Leader of the Official Opposition asking Ottawa to solve our problems for us? Albertans are enterprising and resilient people, and I will always stand up for Alberta. I know that we have an important voice to add when the equalization formula comes up for renewal.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition owes Albertans an explanation why he sat as an MP for 10 years and failed to speak up for Alberta's interests. Of all the topics the

opposition leader could have chosen, he picked something that we have no control over. He says that he stands up for the energy sector, so why didn't he propose a motion on that? I know why. After he resigned from federal politics, he actually said that the rate of growth in the oil sands is too fast, that it should be slowed down. Shame. [interjections] That's right. I will table the document tomorrow showing that the Leader of the Official Opposition was opposed to the growth of the oil sands. I can't believe it. That's not how we feel on this side of the House. All I know for sure is that this government stands up for Albertans, and we have shown that through our actions. The opposition, on the other hand, would rather look to Ottawa and argue that the oil sands shouldn't be allowed to grow. That's not what I call standing up for Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition leader clearly doesn't understand how equalization works. In his opening comments he confirmed that. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, it's with some hesitancy that I want to interrupt such a fruitful and constructive discussion as exists here today. I interrupt.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition to provide up to five minutes on the motion.

**Mr. Jean:** You know, Mr. Speaker, the last member was right. I did ask and suggest that we should slow down the oil sands in Fort McMurray, in that area. I have to tell you why, though. You see, we were sending so much money to Ottawa that we had no money for infrastructure for the people of Alberta, and that's what they forget. They forgot that I don't work for the people of Ottawa, and I don't work for the people of Manitoba or Newfoundland or British Columbia. I don't work for the people of the Northwest Territories or the Yukon, and I love those places like I love all of Canada. I love the people of Alberta more, and that's why I work for them.

When we're sending \$22 billion to \$28 billion a year more in money through our income taxes and EI and all of our CPP payments – and, yes; it's me. You know what? You pay it, too. Yes, you do. You pay all those payments, too. They go to Ottawa, and they don't come back to us in any way of a service. That's what happens. You're right. It's not a cheque that we sign to other provinces. It's actually cheques that all of us pay to Ottawa in taxes that we don't get back in any way, shape, or form in services. That's why I'm working for the people of Alberta, and I'm saying to them that I'm prepared to, since – what the heck – the contract comes up every 10 years for renegotiation, stand up and say: let's renegotiate; let's speak for the people of Alberta.

Do you have any idea how many people aren't covered by employment insurance right now? Here in Alberta there are thousands of people that aren't covered by employment insurance. That's because for years and years we've paid into employment insurance far more than we ever get back, and we only get about 38 per cent of our people that apply that get covered but in Atlantic Canada almost 100 per cent; in Quebec, more than 58 per cent. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Government members, members, could we have some silence so I could hear his final, closing arguments, please.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry I feel passionate about it, but this contract opens every 10 years. So we have an opportunity right now to sit down with Ottawa and say: what can we do differently to make it more fair since right now we're not in the same situation we were in a couple of years ago? You may not have noticed because you're still spending money the same way, but I've noticed because I see thousands and thousands, tens of thousands of Albertans out of work, and I'm worried. So I'm saying: if we can, if you're not prepared to look over in the expense

column, please look out over on the other column, where the money that comes from all Albertans goes to Ottawa and doesn't come back. It's a net number. It's not a gross number. It's a net number. It's a big number, and that number is going to continue for the next couple of years because you guys aren't prepared to do anything about it.

They subsidized hydro rates. We know that for sure. Our baby-sitting costs here in Alberta, daycare, are 550 per cent greater than the average cost in Quebec. All this member can do in his speech is make fun of my pronunciation of Quebec. I've never heard my name used so much, my title. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Have you heard my name used so much in any particular 10-minute segment? They must be worried because when you don't have anything of substance to say and you're concerned and worried, you throw dirt. That seems to be all they can do, throw dirt, while the Wildrose Party on this side of the House is standing up for Albertans and saying: how about we renegotiate a contract that comes up every 10 years and make it better since the province that receives the most money out of that program – they put forward a position paper. What's wrong with us, since we're paying it? It seems fair.

Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to do is first of all implore them to reconsider because I would like to see some of them re-elected in the next election, not a lot. Only a couple need to stand up.

But I would ask for unanimous consent to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 509 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:59 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Panda
Barnes	Jean	Rodney
Clark	Loewen	Schneider
Cooper	MacIntyre	Smith
Cyr	McIver	Stier
Fraser	Nixon	Taylor
Hanson	Orr	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Miranda
Babcock	Jabbour	Nielsen
Carson	Jansen	Payne
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Goehring	McKittrick	Westhead
Hinkley	Miller	Woollard
Hoffman		

Totals: For – 20 Against – 40

[Motion Other than Government Motion 509 lost]

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:05 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, November 28, 2016

Day 53

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

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Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk

Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House  
Services

Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and  
Legal Research Officer

Aurelia Nicholls, Sessional Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services

Nancy Robert, Research Officer

Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms

Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, November 28, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act

Mr. Gill moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment November 24]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? I'll recognize the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, here we are. I want to speak about a story, a fantasy, and a narrative that is in a story that is being written. Is the government assuming that Albertans are not paying attention to this convoluted puzzle that is starting to take shape, with the punchline being that Albertans will be on the hook no matter what is said here, how it is justified, and how much the present under the tree could have the most beautiful wrapping on the outside of all the provinces in the universe and that we are doing something magnificent for our province? So let's rehash some of the finer points that have come leading up into this bill. I mean, this is a gift that keeps on giving, starting January 1, 2017.

Let's go back a little. We have the carbon tax. We keep hearing that in order to be competitive or worthy to participate in the global market, that as a petroleum-producing jurisdiction, that whether it's a carbon tax, which does nothing, nothing to change our environmental footprint – it doesn't change emissions. We don't know where these dollars are going to go, although I'm assuming at some point here there's going to be some information that is passed along to us as to how these dollars are going to be spent. Or whether you add in a lawsuit that will cost Alberta families billions in taxpayer dollars, or we could even take a look at the subsidies that will fill the gaps between generation and distribution of renewables – honestly, I don't know about anybody else in this House. I know that on this side we have a lot of people asking us, Madam Speaker: when is enough enough? Like most fantasies, we ponder what it would look like, and it paints a very pretty picture, but the reality is way less picturesque. I'm curious. What is the enough factor for the government?

We have a massive combination of taxes, lawsuits, ideological overhaul of the electricity industry, no metrics, zero accountability, a tax on our prosperity, caps on our environmentally responsible development of our oil sands, panels that are paid for by Albertans that do not report previous to the legislation it represents. The fantasy continues with the promise that the government is going to stabilize the electricity market. So then the question is: how is the government or, more aptly, how are taxpayers going to pay for the difference between the cost on your bill and the difference for bringing in renewables and bringing them online? Where is that going to be? How are Albertans going to know what's going

with that? Right now, when you look at your bill, we know exactly what we're paying for. So that's my question.

That subsidy will make up the difference, will come out of the pockets of every single Albertan. Here are some of the consequences. Once upon a time you could choose your retailer because it was a competitive market. Once upon a time we had zero electricity debt. Once upon a time we had efficient and economical electricity. I might add, we are the leaders in clean-coal technology.

How does the story end? Well, Albertans are sacrificed to ideology. Albertans lose competition that they once had and kept those electricity prices low. There is absolutely no justification at this point in time, at this economic point in Alberta for this to be going on right now. How is that justified? How is anybody going to look into the eyes of their constituents and say, “Oh, well, you know, we have a plan but absolutely no information to Albertans about how that's going to roll out.”

Albertans are on the hook for new builds of the new power plants, wind farms, and everything else, and those costs will be hidden. This is not a fantasy. This is a . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Nightmare.

**Mrs. Aheer:** . . . nightmare. Ha ha. Thank you.

There will be massive debt – massive debt – to compensate for this new infrastructure, let alone the maintenance, and with absolutely no plan on how this is going to roll out. Where is that discussion? When Albertans ask me, I'm certainly not able to give them an answer about that. We'd sure love for the government to be able to provide us with some information, some concrete information about how this plan is going to roll out, aside from the fact that they're going to sue themselves, aside from the fact that they're going to charge a carbon tax to Albertans, aside from the fact that we don't know how those stranded assets are going to be paid out. But we're assuming that you're going to use those dollars that you're bringing in from Albertans to pay off those stranded assets. These are all questions that come in on a daily basis to me. I'm quite certain you're going to be having some of those questions as well. How are we going to compensate for this new infrastructure, let alone the maintenance, with no plan?

Why is the government not looking to other jurisdictions where renewables have failed? Obviously, we would love to see renewables come on in line and be successful. But the only way that we're legitimately going to learn about how to do this appropriately is also to honestly take a look at what has not worked. It's a difficult thing to do, but it's probably the most important aspect of putting forth policy: doing that comparative analysis and making sure that everything that you're trying to do and all of the policies that you're trying to bring forward are actually conducive to what you're trying to accomplish. That's part of the responsibility of creating policy: making sure that that transparency and that aspect of accountability is available to Albertans so that they understand what they're paying for.

Are Albertans going to have to choose between heating their homes and eating? I'm just curious. It's a question to the government. We've seen it in Ontario. There are actual stories about people who are having to choose between paying their hydro bill and putting food on the table. How is this justifiable? How are we going to explain to the families and the people that come in to see us that that's the priority of this government? We are in an absolute downturn, economically, right now, and this is the priority. It's mind boggling. Ontarians cannot afford their power right now. Has the government not understood the very serious consequences of this policy?

We've been saying it since the beginning: if you are able to give a positive economic environment and the ability for the market to do what it needs to do, there are natural things that happen within that. One of those things that we have benefited from is low electricity costs. It's unimaginable to me at this point in time especially that the priority would be to go into a massive change within the market itself when there are probably a million other ways based on other jurisdictions and other information as to how to bring these online appropriately.

This is called the climate leadership action plan. Where's the leadership? We understand the action items. Those are coming across loud and clear to Albertans. What is the plan? This is a massive puzzle: little, little, tiny pieces that are kind of being put together, and as we see that picture develop, it's a little bit scary.

**Mr. Cooper:** It's a lot scary.

7:40

**Mrs. Aheer:** It's a lot scary.

We will and would be able to produce cleaner – and would probably continue to be leading in clean technology given a positive environment and given the opportunity for the market and for the innovation and the diversity that this government touts on a regular basis to actually kick in and do what it's supposed to. I don't know about the rest of the government, but I certainly hear from people all the time about incredible innovations, incredible ideas, incredible things that are feasible and possible. These are things that people have, in the private sector, already put their money, ideas, energy, everything into to already create an environment that is going to be better for our great-grandchildren.

I don't understand why, if we're going to look at what's possible, we're not looking to our own technical expertise and talent right here in this province before initiating a plan that has absolutely no ability to change emissions, that will not change the footprint by 2025. I'm not sure. It seems strange and counterintuitive in a petroleum jurisdiction, where we have the lead on environmentals in the energy sector, that you would not be pushing that forward and seeing that technology come to light.

Why are we penalizing Albertans? Why is there no accountability to these dollars within the carbon tax? Where are those dollars going? I'd like to know. I'm sure that everybody on this side of the House would like to know, too. I'd really, really like to have an idea of where those tax dollars are going to go. We've heard all sorts of ideas of where we think they might be going, and it seems to be getting stretched over a whole bunch of different things, but, like I said, as that puzzle comes together, it seems to me that those dollars aren't going to be helping out Albertans at all, but that it's going to be going towards paying off mistakes that this government has made already, and we're not even into this plan yet. Those dollars are already spent because of the mistakes that this government has already made.

The question that we should be asking is: why a capacity model? Well, the only way that the government can get to their random number of 30 by 2030 – I mean, where did this number come from? The only way to possibly get there is not through deregulation because you can't attract investment right now. There's no way. When you tear up a 16-year-old contract, who is going to invest in that? There's no way. There's absolutely no way. You have to go to a model, and you have to be able to subsidize those markets in order to be able to bring them online. The contracts themselves – I don't know. Tearing up contracts: as a businessperson I would have a very, very difficult time looking at a government assessing my risk and putting my dollars into something that could potentially not mean anything. There is absolutely no trust in the words at all.

The government has itself created uncertainty. You know, the question is: why now? Why at this time when Albertans are down? We're at a low. Our morale is down. There are so many things that are happening around us. Why? Why would the government choose this moment to kick Albertans while they're down? Another slap across the face.

Again, maybe I can only speak for myself and the people that I meet, but I can say decisively that every single place I go, the first demand is "Get rid of the carbon tax," every single time. Every single time. Then you add on to that the capacity model that is happening now and the lack of transparency within that model – because all Albertans are going to see on their bill now is that one small amount. Everything else is going to come from their tax dollars, and they're not going to know what they're paying for. Congratulations.

Well, again, I can't imagine why you would be doing this in such devastating times and why the government would want to drive away investment dollars. Well, it certainly leads to the question of so many other things. Why cap prosperity? Why bring in a capacity model to a deregulated market that people have a choice in? Why would you do that? People are scratching their heads yet again.

Policy matters, Madam Speaker. Policy matters. Contracts matter. Investment also means that there is risk. Investors are going to look at this and see that contracts are not honoured, and we will see investment leave. We already have.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) comes into effect if there are any questions or comments for the previous speaker. The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes. I was listening to the previous speaker talk with passion about how scary it is for investors to invest in Alberta at this time, with all the different programs and bills that this government is passing and all this different legislation. Obviously, investors want to see some stability, and of course we see nothing but instability from this government day after day after day in this Legislature. They keep bringing in bills. They keep bringing in legislation. They bring in Bill 27, and of course the next thing you know, they're putting a cap on electricity rates. I'm not sure why they put a cap on electricity rates. They say, "The price is going to go down; it's going to be good for Albertans," but I can't imagine why you'd put a cap on something that you felt was going to go down or stay the same. Obviously, they have a big fear of it going up.

I'd like to hear the speaker talk a little bit more about that and also the other legislation that has been brought forward by this government that has created instability. Obviously, this market here, this plan with Bill 27 is going to require a massive amount of outside investment in this province, and I'd like to hear more about why this investment hasn't been happening already. We know there has been some. We see windmills out already on the landscape. Obviously, those ones happened without Bill 27. But what we would really like to understand is: how come all of a sudden there is going to be billions and billions of dollars' worth of investment in renewable energy in Alberta? How come now, and why not before? I'll maybe listen to what the previous speaker has to say about that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Chestermere-Rocky View, do you wish to respond?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yes, please. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the question. Well, I'd have to say in response to some of that that I don't know if the government quite understands the up-and-

down nature of the market, that was taken care of in the retail market. That transparency in that retail market is what actually has kept us debt free with regard to electricity. This is huge. I don't know if people truly understand what a gift that is, to not have electricity debt, to actually understand that what you're paying on your bill is transparent and that you have an option to look at what's going on and that you have an opportunity to make decisions based on that bill. That's not a fantasy. That was actually real. That is a part of what we've all had the benefit of for the last 16 years.

To your point: I'm curious, too. Is the government promising that they can control volatility? What about the times that we are calm and dark? Oddly enough, calm and dark are the peak times during the morning rush to school and work and other activities and also when we come home. So what is it going to cost to get wind energy from the rural areas to the city? I'm assuming – I'm assuming – that we're not going to be building wind farms on the tops of city infrastructure. I'm curious about the cost of tying wind into the larger bits and pieces.

Again, there are some serious transparency issues here which are contributing to the instability of which you were speaking, and for a government that continues to suggest that previous contracts were all done in secrecy – well, I think Albertans would like to understand how this is any better. It is going to take billions to shut these companies down, not to mention the job losses. The taxpayer, Madam Speaker, is on the hook for \$97 million a year for 14 years. That's because of this government's policies. Again, congratulations. That doesn't even include the money that it will take to bring these very expensive renewables online. Now, on top of that, we're replacing high-efficiency, world-class generation, and we are losing thousands of jobs.

Again, to recap one more time: we have the carbon tax; a 100-megatonne emission cap, then trade, I might add, because – guess what? – the leftover megatonnes will be very lucrative and extremely pricey. I would think there are going to be some winners and losers there. Thirdly, the lawsuit for power purchase agreements: that's going to cost Albertans millions. A capacity market that kills competition and will cost Albertans in their tax dollars, will not be transparent in their bills, and will lead to electricity debt – an arbitrary target, another one, of 30 per cent: that is a policy decision and not a real target and does not reduce emissions.

7:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always discouraging when we start to see that the government is creating legislation arbitrarily. I thought: well, let's talk about one of the government's predecessors in going down this road. That's the Ontario government.

Now, I want to refer back to a throne speech, actually, on July 3, 2014. It's a Speech from the Throne to open the 41st Parliament of Ontario. Now, in the middle of the speech – I don't want to read the entire speech, but I do think that there are important parts of the speech that we should look at – it's going to start off with what the government is doing.

As it pursues sustainable resource extraction to further the provincial and national interest, your government restates the necessity of protecting our environment for today and tomorrow. Ontario's conservation efforts and clean energy initiatives have moved our province down the road to a sustainable energy future. A growing renewables and energy innovation sector can become an [import-export] industry for our province and our country. It can help to reduce . . .

reduce

. . . climate change-causing emissions in other areas of Canada's energy sector and elsewhere in the world.

That's very ambitious.

Ontarians are proud to be leaders in the global fight against climate change. The closing of Ontario's coal-fired electricity plants stands as North America's most significant climate change initiative. Your government is encouraged by the United States' newly announced restrictions on coal emissions, but Ontarians know there is more to be done here and around the world.

Climate change is an overarching concern for this province, as it is for this country and the world. That is why your government is giving responsibilities for climate change to a new Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

Increasingly extreme and unpredictable weather hurts farmers, puts pressure on infrastructure, and at the worst of times, robs people of their homes and livelihoods.

This is important: robs people of their homes and livelihoods. We're going to be going back to that part.

The new Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change will co-ordinate action across government to limit greenhouse gas emissions and will renew work with communities across Ontario . . .

And this is something else we'll go back to.

. . . on adaptation to the growing impacts of climate change.

Your government also knows that climate change solutions need to span borders. Ontario will work with other provinces and territories to develop a Canadian energy strategy, which includes co-ordinated efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and which recognizes the important role of renewable energy and energy conservation. While the provinces are leading this effort, your government will encourage federal partnership in addressing this challenge, which is both local and global in scale.

Well, as it's not a shock, on November 19 we have Premier Wynne now saying – and there's another article I'll reference. Premier Wynne Calls High Electricity Prices Her "Mistake": that's the name of the article from the *Star*. It's November 19, 2016. This is a quote from the article. "Premier says Saturday that she takes responsibility 'for not paying close enough attention to some of the daily stresses in Ontarians' lives'."

Now, this is important because right now we're going down the same road. It's like we haven't learned anything. We are using arbitrary numbers, and we're trying to come up with solutions without any impact studies. This is exactly what our Ontario government did.

**An Hon. Member:** Not our government.

**Mr. Cyr:** The member of the government corrected me: not our government. Thank you. Not our government yet.

Let's talk about exactly how this is impacting them. We're looking at a government, that is going down a road, that has stated: "We know what's best for you. We are going to continue to go down this road even though we have pulled numbers from the air with no actual foundation behind them." Where did 30 per cent come from? This is a question we've got, but nowhere do we actually have any answer to this.

**Mr. Yao:** Shame.

**Mr. Cyr:** It is truly shameful.

We've got to realize that this is going to impact our province so dramatically that people will be deciding between making a mortgage payment or an electricity bill. That is shocking, and that is where Ontario is right now. Now, I do understand that the government brought in an arbitrary cap, or limit, on the kilowatt hours, and this does seem to be what the wonderful Premier of

Ontario somehow missed in their wonderful scheme to move Ontario towards this direction with no actual impact studies. That's the point in all of this. When you do no foundational work, when you actually don't put the time in to see if this is the right direction, you get these decisions where our most vulnerable are hurting.

Now, let's go back to this throne speech because it's important that we hear exactly what they said. Bear with me here. "Increasingly extreme and unpredictable weather hurts farmers, puts pressure on infrastructure, and at the worst of times, robs people of their homes and livelihoods." That is exactly what she has done with the high power rates in Ontario. It didn't take a person with a PhD to realize that when you put more costs on people, eventually businesses will shut down, and people won't be able to have a standard of living that we would actually say is a standard of living that we would hope any person in Alberta would hope to achieve. This is something that we've had, a high standard of living, in Alberta for a long period of time.

When we start looking at how exactly it is that we're going down the same road, making the exact same problems, and using, probably, the same throne speeches: how exactly is it that we think it's going to result in a different consequence? We are shutting down coal plants, which is going to affect people's lives. We are going to see massive adjustments when it comes to our electricity prices. We are going to have taxpayers on the hook for the mistakes this government is making for years to come.

**8:00**

How is it that we are not actually bringing forward solutions? We're not actually reducing the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions because what we're doing is that we are taking money out of people's pockets for heating their homes. Now, how exactly is it that you stop heating your home?

Now, we're talking about this bill, which is trying to bring forward some very ambitious goals for the government, and I've always encouraged that government needs to set high priorities for itself, and this government has. I don't remember, in the platform that the NDP put forward, that it said: "We are going to bring a carbon tax in. We are going to go down the same road as Ontario, but we're going to do it right." I don't remember that being there. Was that there?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** No.

**Mr. Cyr:** No? I think that had Albertans seen that in your mandate, that you say that you got from Albertans, you probably wouldn't be where you're at.

Let's talk about the recall legislation. How many people right now have these wonderful rural ridings that may consider recalling an MLA should that be there? I know that's the fear of the government. That's because we're not responsible right now with this legislation. We're not looking towards how to reduce our pollution or our greenhouse gases because that's not what this does.

What it does do is to put a burden on Albertans. It puts a burden on our seniors. It puts a burden on all the most vulnerable people within our province. Putting forward a \$600 wonderful little payment isn't anywhere near what the cost is going to be because in the end we haven't actually seen an impact study. We don't know that. What we have seen is that the government put forward something that was FOIPed out, and the government said: "Wow. You know what? It's different than what we're actually doing." The study that was actually put out was showing harm.

When we start looking at this as a grand strategy here, we start to actually go to a repetitive plan. What are we looking at? We're

looking at debt. What are we looking at? We're looking at a sustained debt going into the future. What we're looking at putting forward is something that is only going to harm Albertans.

Now, when it comes to this, I have to go back to my constituents and say: is this the direction that you think is the right way for Alberta? You know what? I actually – and I don't know how many MLAs did this in the room – held three open houses in my riding regarding carbon taxes. I actually went out to where the constituents were, and I said: "What are your thoughts? This is exactly what's going to be implemented. This is how we're going to move forward as a province. Do you believe that this is the right direction?" What I did hear over and over was "repeal." This is exactly what people are saying. People aren't saying: let's come up with arbitrary caps. People are not saying: let's come up with 30 per cent. What they are saying is: "I need to feed my family. I need to make sure that my business is viable so I can employ Albertans who pay taxes."

You know what? When it comes to rural, we take this very seriously, and it's not a coincidence that we've had rallies within Alberta. When it comes to rural Albertans trying to come forward and bring their concern forward, this government has been deaf. This government has been so deaf when it comes to Bill 6. This government is deaf when it comes to debt. This government has been deaf when it comes to overspending. At some point our children are going to pay for this lack of any sort of governance that this government is putting forward.

When we're looking at this hoist amendment that we're going for, let's at least wait for the panel to come forward and come up with some solutions on how to implement this. I know that's about the debt cap, but at least maybe they've got some solutions there to come forward. But I think that ship sailed a long time ago. When we look at exactly where we're going with this, we always need to be asking ourselves: are Albertans going to be paying a disproportionate amount?

Now, I myself got into this because I was very dissatisfied with where the government was going. I was very dissatisfied, as a person that is conservative to the core, in the direction our province was going, which was a very socialist direction. Now, right now we are looking at a government that is actually socialist moving forward these agendas without talking with Albertans, without consulting with Albertans. What they do is internet surveys to reinforce what it is that they are trying to say instead of actually holding town halls.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I find it fascinating that in the best interest of parliamentary and democratic procedures the hon. member went out and actually spoke to the people. These are the people who are going to be paying the bills. These are the people who are going to be struggling. These are the people who are going to be feeling the full burden of whatever it is this government does to them, and this very responsible MLA went out and sought input from his constituents to bring back to this House to be able to tell this House what his constituents' concerns were, and that is a wonderful thing to do.

**Ms Renaud:** That's our job.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I am mindful that the previous government was punted out of office and out of government because they didn't listen to the people of Alberta, and we are seeing many of the same sorts of things happening with the current government. In every poll that's taken Albertans are saying: no carbon tax.



I would be interested to hear from the hon. member what the constituents were telling you at these town hall meetings regarding this government's performance in general, regarding carbon taxation, yes, and perhaps give a report card.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, what I hear from the government side is: it's your job. That's from the MLA from St. Albert. You know what? I would agree with her. Why isn't she going out to her constituents and doing the same thing that I did with town halls? If she was . . .

**Cortes-Vargas:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, we have a point of order. Go ahead, Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Cortes-Vargas:** I'm just going to say that the member is starting to go into 23(i) there, imputing false motives to the member. I would suggest that if he has comments on the bill itself, he continue with his comments, but I suggest that he retract where he's going with this.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I assume that we were speaking about 23, and clearly what we have is a matter of debate. Now, while I will say that the hon. member may choose a different way of approaching the subject, he hasn't said anything that is unparliamentary. He hasn't moved, in my opinion, in that direction. While, you know, government members may be upset with a position that the opposition might take, I would just remind them that earlier in the House their members made accusations about the pronunciation of a word. This is what happens sometimes in the give and take of this Chamber.

I will assure that the hon. member has heard the comments. Perhaps he would be willing to withdraw, but this is clearly not a point of order. It's a matter of debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Bonnyville-Cold Lake, did you wish to say something?

**Mr. Cyr:** I'll just withdraw the comment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

### 8:10 Debate Continued

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to continue to speak. To go back to my constituency and the town halls that I had hosted with the local MPs from two ridings, two federal MPs, what it is that we're actually trying to get out there and hear what Albertans are saying about what's happening with the carbon tax both federally and provincially. Now, I'm not going to focus on what we said federally, but I will tell you that people were shocked, and I will say that it is unfortunate that people still haven't heard about the carbon tax.

But they kept saying, "Scott, you need to vote against it," and I'm, like: "Well, unfortunately, that is no longer what we can do with this. What happened is that this has already been through the House." So then they say: "Well, what can we do?" I said, "The

only thing we can do is be aware of the taxes that are being levied against us so this isn't a shock, so that when January 1 comes, you're going to see a jump in your price by 5 cents." They go, "Well, what can we do about this?" and I said: "Well, at this point we need to be aware that this is the direction the government is going in. If you don't believe in the government's direction, it is important that you are in constant communication with your MLA."

This is why I am holding these town halls. This is exactly what I'm trying to accomplish. I am trying to get your feedback, but I'm also trying to make sure there's awareness so that people will know that this carbon tax is coming, that they are going to see it on their gas bill, they're going to see it on their electricity bill, they're going to see it on their food bill, they're going to see it on their gasoline, and they're going to see a different level of life when it comes to this.

Now, I do understand that the government has come forward with the \$600 amount that they're going to be giving back to our most vulnerable, but in the end I don't think anybody will agree that that is the actual cost. We don't have an impact study. Until we have an economic impact study, we won't ever know what the true cost is. But why bother burdening us with the details? Just like what this bill is going forward, just exactly what this hoist is trying to come up with – it's trying to give the government time to be able to do an impact study, to be able to show Albertans that this is the right direction. We need to put this decision off so that . . . [Mr. Cyr's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to rise tonight to try and address, I think, some of the misinformation, perhaps, that is being spread around and that is causing some disconcertion among constituents and among, you know, folks on this side of the House.

One thing that I want to address just right off the bat: we are talking tonight about the 30 per cent renewable target. We're not talking about the cap on emissions. We are not talking about the carbon levy although it is all part and parcel of one climate leadership plan, that will work together to continue to move Alberta forward.

I'm hearing a lot from the other side specifically about Ontario and that we are moving in the direction of Ontario. Now, where we are similar is that we are making a commitment to bring more renewables into the mix in Alberta. Where we are very different is how we are going about this process.

Today in the *Calgary Herald* there was an article by Blake Shaffer, who is a fellow at the C.D. Howe Institute, and, you know, it says in his article:

Many will draw the connection between Ontario and Alberta. They share the objectives of reducing emissions by shutting down coal and increasing renewables, such as solar and wind. But the policies to get there are critically different. So let's move past the rhetoric and dig a little deeper into the policies.

Let's start with renewables. Ontario made a costly mistake selecting the prices for their renewable procurement . . . Ontario promised prices as high as 80 cents per kilowatt hour, [which is] more than 10 times [the average in] today's Alberta electricity [market].

Alberta is instead using competitive auctions to [drive] the price for renewables. Market forces will drive costs down.

Market forces are something that the opposition seems to like very much. What we are doing here in Alberta is moving ahead with a competitive, market-based procurement process, which will drive

investment and bring money into Alberta. Places in the United States that have these kinds of competitive mixes, that have capacity markets – currently we're one of two energy-only markets in all of North America. It's us and Texas. There has to be a reason why multiple markets have moved towards the idea of a capacity market, and the reason that we have is because it creates more stability in the energy market and allows room to incent renewables.

Something that I think is very important for everyone to know is that any funds that are coming in for our renewables programs are coming from the carbon levy on large emitters. So we are not paying for this through taxes levied on people in Alberta. We're not paying for this using everyday Albertans' money. We are using the carbon levy on large emitters, so all of the money that is paying for this is coming through there.

It's very clear that we have made choices to not go down the road that Ontario has gone down, and we need not be afraid. A lot of the time when I'm talking to people in my constituency – and to pretend that we don't go out to our constituencies and talk to people is blatantly false. I have had three in-person town halls, one telephone town hall. I go out door-knocking almost every week. I know that all the members of my caucus are doing the same. Do we hear concerns from people? Of course, we hear concerns from people, but we also hear a ton of support. I hear support for renewables and more renewables every day: people who want the opportunity to work in renewables, people who want the opportunity to put solar panels on their roofs, people who want the opportunity to participate in a new economy.

The opposition, you know, continues to think that we're living in a different world, on a different planet, a planet where, you know, climate change isn't happening, a planet where we have a great international reputation here in Alberta, a planet where we can continue to rely on a single industry to fund our economy in Alberta.

The fact of the matter is that we need to move forward, and people are excited about the opportunity for renewables. When I get the chance to talk to people who are afraid, who are concerned, when I talk to people about the rebates that we're offering, when I talk to people about the opportunities and the investments that are going to be coming through these renewable programs, they're excited, and they're not so scared anymore. It's just a matter of correcting misinformation a lot of the time. You know, this is really exciting. This piece of legislation is exciting, and we need not wait an additional six months.

You know, the AESO has gone forward. We asked the AESO: what do you think is an appropriate amount of renewable electricity to generate here in Alberta? We want more electricity. We asked AESO: how much do you think is a reasonable amount? They came up with the idea that they thought 30 per cent was a reasonable amount.

As the AESO built our recommendations for government, we were keenly aware of ensuring that competitive outcomes drive the best result for the province. Reaching 5,000 megawatts of new renewable generation is a complex task, but we are confident we can reliably integrate this much renewable energy into the electricity system in a cost-effective manner by accessing the benefits of robust competition.

That's from AESO, and that's one of the reasons that we're doing this.

What will this bill mean for families and communities here in Alberta? It's going to mean up to 10 and a half billion dollars in new investments, it's going to mean up to 7,200 new jobs, it's going to mean the single largest market for renewables in Canada, and it's going to mean reduced numbers of incidents of lung disease and reduced numbers of trips to the hospital for asthma.

You know, people are excited about this. To hear the opposition talk, you would think that renewables were going to cause the sky to fall, when we've been very thoughtful about this process. We've been very thoughtful.

Mary Moran, the president and CEO of Calgary Economic Development, said:

As investment in renewable energy in Canada is growing rapidly, Alberta has been largely on the sidelines in this key part of the future energy supply, so we are pleased to see policy that provides the long-term certainty and stability that encourages global and local companies to invest. Calgary is a centre of innovation across the entire spectrum of energy resources and growth in renewables is a key element of our 10-year-economic strategy Building on our Energy to expand the economy and diversify our key industries.

The other important thing, I think, to note is that when we look to other jurisdictions and we look to jurisdictions that have targets for renewables, the states in the United States that have had targets for renewables and that have had a functional renewable energy plan have actually seen the smallest increases in their electricity rates between 2005 and 2010. So states that have the most solar and wind saw the smallest increases in their electricity bills. The smallest increases.

Here in Alberta we're moving forward. It's very possible to have 30 per cent renewables and to not have increases in our energy bills. The fact of the matter is that we are in a situation right now where we're seeing some of the lowest prices in a long time not because of anything particularly special that we've done but just because natural gas is at the lowest market price, you know, it's been in a long time. So we're taking the volatility out of the market. By introducing a cap on electricity, we're taking the volatility out.

8:20

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Volatility was never there.

**Ms Luff:** There were times when it went from 3.2 cents in February to 14.1 cents in March. There's a huge amount of volatility. You know, members opposite say that we don't understand the ups and downs of the market, talking like volatility is a good thing to have in the market.

I think it's really important that we address some of the misinformation that's out there. It's not true that renewables drive prices up. It's not true that we're going down the same road that Ontario is. It is true that we're bringing new investment and new jobs into Alberta, and it is true that we're moving Alberta forward to a healthier mix of renewables. It's true that that's going to help us meet our global climate contracts. The other side talks about breaking contracts all the time but seems to have no problems with the idea of breaking climate contracts that we've signed with the rest of the world.

In any case, I do just want to point out a couple of things that the opposition has said that have been misinformation. The other week the Member for Calgary-Foothills talked about the fact that "wind power has also been known to generate subsonic sound waves, known as harmonic resonance." Recently a Health Canada study found that there's no evidence to support a link between exposure to wind turbine noise and any of the self-reported illnesses and chronic conditions. There's no association between multiple measures of stress and exposure to wind turbine noise. I mean, that's one thing that they were talking about that has been thoroughly debunked by actual scientific evidence.

Another thing that was mentioned was the fact that solar panels take more energy to produce than they actually create. In fact, that paper that they were citing from was, you know, years old. It talks

about Germany and Switzerland, which are much cloudier places than Alberta.

It was mentioned that we are actually further north here than Germany or Switzerland whereas if you actually look at a map, you would find that that's not true. We also have abundant amounts of solar energy here, more sun here than we have in a lot of places.

The price of renewables has plummeted massively in the last five years. It continues to go down. They found that renewables are in fact cheaper to generate than most other – the only other thing that you can put in now that's cheaper than renewables that provides electricity at the same cost is cogenerated gas, which is something that we're looking into as well.

You know, the opposition says that they love renewables. They're constantly talking about how much they love renewables and that renewables are great, but when it actually comes down to it, when the tires finally hit the road, they want to stall, and they want to go back. They don't want to recognize our economy here. They don't want to move forward.

I would argue that everyone in this House should definitely stand against this hoist motion because we need to move forward with this. Companies are counting on investments. Albertans are counting on the new jobs that it's going to bring. Albertans are counting on us to move forward with this.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education, under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to just take a minute to thank the Member for Calgary-East for having the courage of her convictions and addressing the House this evening.

I'd like to just offer, if I may, Madam Speaker, a few comments before I get to asking the Member for Calgary-East a question. Certainly, I want to start off my comments by making an observation that whenever the Member for Calgary-East or another female member of our caucus gets up, the volume from across the aisle tends to rise to quite significant levels. [interjections]

**Some Hon. Members:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, we have a point of order. Go ahead, hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you. I would just like to point to Standing Order 23: makes accusations of unavowed motives to another member. Madam Speaker, I'd also like to say: language that's likely to incite disorder. Now, while the member didn't say anything that was unparliamentary, he certainly made an allegation about how members on this side treat one gender or another, and nothing could be further from the truth. While I think they choose to laugh, I know that my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View was insulted by the allegation, and when a statement like that is made, it has created disorder, certainly, for her.

Members on the other side of the House often will take this holier-than-thou position and throw allegations toward this side of the House meanwhile insulting members of our caucus, meanwhile insulting the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View. This sort of allegation and accusation is not positive for ongoing debate in this Chamber, and I would suggest that that member withdraw and apologize.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Yes. Madam Speaker, you know, hearing the Opposition House Leader make an argument about past things that happened that I don't know is relevant – the member didn't mention any particular person by name and, as the Opposition House Leader himself pointed out, didn't use any unparliamentary language either. So I'm not sure what the point of order might be. I don't think it was well versed by the Opposition House Leader, and I do not at this time feel that there is any point of order.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to reference 23(i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." Just to be clear, when a member generalizes about an entire caucus or the opposition, they might as well be saying it to a member, and it includes female members and other members. Again, trying to assume which gender on this side is or isn't – I guess the question is that earlier there was a point of order called by the government on this issue by generalizing from somebody over here that they understand their state of mind.

Now, when we're talking about robust debate in this House, we should be allowed to speak amongst one another about different ideas. Certainly, the ideas that the government proposes we may disagree with – we have constituents that we represent – so sometimes that debate gets a little bit loud. What I would say, Madam Speaker, is that it is equal and the same. I think that what would do this House good is that while, yes, there are issues in this province that need to be addressed – and we spoke about it last week in this Chamber – we should start to respect each member of this House for the work they do and the words that they say individually, and that's how they should be graded, not based on a generalization or a robust debate about certain things.

Now, the Member for Calgary-East speaks about the bill, in particular of hoisting it. There are members here that talk about it, and when they're talking about it, the member is basically saying that (a) we don't believe in renewables, which is not true. Many of us do believe in renewables, and we believe that they are part of the plan moving forward.

Secondly, to say that members on this side haven't done their homework and should take a look at it – this bill, in fact, does talk about taking money out of general revenue to backstop renewable programs.

**An Hon. Member:** Are you speaking to the point of order?

**Mr. Fraser:** The point of order that I'm trying to make is that we should be able to have the debate without this type of conjecture imposed one way or the other that limits the ability to debate. What I'm saying is that everybody should take a look at the members of this House, what they've done before they entered this House, what they do in this House, and how they treat people outside of these halls. That's how they should be judged. Certainly, if they're bullies towards anybody – any gender, any race, any creed – then, yes, that may be a subject here or perhaps with the Ethics Commissioner and so on and for the voter, but to just generalize like that, I don't think it does this House any good.

That's our point.

8:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any others wishing to speak to the point of order? The hon. government whip.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to make a few comments. One, I'd just recognize that the comments that were made previously were an observation of something, and it was an observation of experiences expressed from this side. That being said, we recognize that the opposition has actually, when we've been speaking about this issue of implied sexism that happens, been very willing and vocal in supporting a conversation that invites inclusivity in this House. I think it's important to continuously remind ourselves that the way we unconsciously respond to speakers can be interpreted in different ways, and that's why this is a matter of debate. I think what we have here is a matter of debate.

That being said, what we really want to build is an inclusive space for everybody. The argument that because one person doesn't feel it, it's invalidated, I feel, doesn't recognize experiences. In the sense of what we are here to do today, which is debate this bill, I hope that we can actually get back to that. You know, we do recognize, absolutely, that the opposition works hard with us to create an inclusive space and has been very receptive to doing that. I think we do always have to be aware, and bringing it up is an important thing to do in the House.

Because of that, I think we can go back to the debate and withdraw what was said and move forward.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I take it, then, that the hon. Minister of Advanced Education is willing to withdraw those comments.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That will satisfy the point of order.

I just wanted to add to the comments. This is the second point of order we've had tonight. The first was moving in the direction of something that was personal towards an individual member, which was perhaps a bit more concerning. This was directed towards a whole group. That doesn't necessarily make it any less serious. I know we're all quite sensitive right now about gender issues and that sort of thing and violence directed towards one gender, but I would really caution the House to try to avoid seeing that in everything that we do. There is a give-and-take that has to happen in this House, and I've been quite lenient allowing that as long as it doesn't get too overwhelming. Please try to be respectful of both sides, and let's move on with the debate.

You are still under 29(2)(a).

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. To further my comments to the Member for Calgary-East, I certainly appreciate her taking the time to illuminate us in this House about the differences between the Ontario experience with moving to renewable electricity and what Alberta's experience will be moving to renewable electricity. I know, certainly, that when I go door to door in my constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar, I do hear a lot of support for the carbon price, our plans to move to renewable energy, but I do hear citizens in my riding raising the concern of the Ontario experience in particular.

I find that this article that the Member for Calgary-East referred to, that was published in the *Calgary Herald* today, written by Blake Shaffer, who is an expert in Alberta's electricity market and who currently works for the C.D. Howe Institute, certainly not a front for the socialist hordes but a rather pragmatic think tank – you know, I certainly appreciate the fact that experts are weighing in, contributing to the public discourse. Certainly, Madam Speaker, when we have expert opinion brought to bear on these issues, I think we can all make much better decisions than if we just base our decision-making on

wild accusations and unfounded misinformation that we often hear presented in the public discourse on this issue.

I did want to make a comment and ask a question, of course, Madam Speaker, on one of the issues that the Member for Calgary-East raised, and that was on where the money for the renewable electricity generation is going to come from. Certainly, she referenced that the climate change and emissions management fund was going to be the source of some of the money that will pay for our transition to renewable energy, and some of that money will be used to transition Alberta off coal-fired power. Of course, our government was quite proud of the settlement that we reached last week with the coal-fired power generators to transition Alberta off coal and move into the future of renewable energy.

You know, I'm just wondering if the Member for Calgary-East would like to perhaps correct the record as far as the rest of the money. Certainly, it's my understanding that some of the money collected from the carbon levy, that will be levied on natural gas that's used to heat our homes and on transportation fuels that are used to power our vehicles, Madam Speaker, will also be used to help fund the transition to renewable energy. I'm wondering if perhaps the Member for Calgary-East would like to take this opportunity to clarify her original statements on where the money for renewable electricity is going to come from so that all of the people of Alberta are operating from the same set of facts and so that we can use these facts to make a wise decision.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Yeah. Certainly, I mean, I did just want to quickly take this opportunity, which I realize is perhaps not answering the question. I would like to say that perhaps when I do get up to speak, the opposition has a tendency to get quite loud, and I would say that it is not because I am a woman but that it is because I am talking about a subject that they are very passionate about.

Now, given that, I would also like to say that in any other workplace it is not acceptable to yell and badger someone when they are trying to make an argument. This is coming from me personally. When folks on the other side are making an argument that I don't agree with, I have a tendency to not say anything because I feel like that is a more respectful option than yelling at someone and bullying them across the aisle.

I would perhaps like to ask that, moving forward, we try to be more respectful and listen to each other as opposed to yelling because it can be very hard to continue to think when people are yelling at you. In no other workplace is that acceptable. We don't accept bullying in any other workplace. I don't feel like it should be acceptable in this one either.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Moving on, do we have any further speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Drumheller . . .

**Mr. Barnes:** Cypress-Medicine Hat. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I couldn't remember either.

I just have six or seven quick little points. I think this hoist is a fabulous idea. Ultimately, we're the ones that are accountable to our constituents, accountable to Albertans, accountable to get it right. I'm always worried about unintended consequences, but, my goodness, the volatility of changing our electric system – I understand right now that Alberta is, I think, the leader in North America, where the highest percentage of our electricity users is industrial as opposed to residential. I think it's 85 per cent. My goodness, if we get that wrong and drive investment and drive jobs out of the province, if we put in a situation that leads to microgeneration, which in the short run will obviously have some

benefits, it will pass the cost of this renewable program, the huge cost of the transmission lines, which our last government left us with, on to fewer and fewer users. Madam Speaker, I'm greatly concerned – I'm greatly concerned – about the affordability for people on fixed incomes, particularly seniors, and I'm greatly concerned for both industry's capacity and its ability to be competitive here in Alberta.

8:40

Unintended consequences. I have an article here from *Forbes*, and it's called Germany's Green Energy Disaster: A Cautionary Tale for World Leaders. I'll just jump in to page 6 of 7, and it says:

In other words Germany is dirtying the planet in the name of clean energy – and sticking its citizens with an ever-escalating tab so it can subsidize an energy source which will never generate sufficient power.

Also:

Because renewable power sources have been so unreliable, Germany has been forced to construct numerous new coal plants in an effort to replace the nuclear energy it has taken offline. In fact the country will build more coal-fired facilities this year than at any [other] time in the past two decades – bringing an estimated 5,300 megawatts of new capacity online. Most of these facilities will burn lignite, too, which is strip-mined and emits nearly 30 per cent more carbon dioxide than hard coal.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, I believe, has requested this hoist, and something like that alone makes me think that we should put the time into ensuring that we get it right before we're all accountable to our voters in just two years.

I, too, have another article from Ontario that made me chuckle a bit.

The province [of Ontario] will now buy \$6-billion worth of electricity produced by Samsung's wind farms and solar projects over the next 20 years, which is \$3.7-billion less than the original 2010 agreement, said Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli . . .

"I think what we've heard here is an admission that the Liberal government's energy project has been a colossal failure," said New Democrat Jonah Schein.

Energy minister Bob Chiarelli goes on to say, "This was the most [important] step our province could take . . . to bend the cost curve for ratepayers." Now, we've heard the Health minister say that many times, that instead of costs going up 6 and a half per cent, we're going to bend the cost curve and only have them go up 3 and a half per cent. Here we are with a situation where the Ontario Liberal government committed themselves to \$9.7 billion of renewables and, because it was too onerous on the citizens, backed down to \$6 billion, and now the Energy minister is trumpeting his horn like he's actually saved them money rather than just putting them less deep in the hole, again another reason, Madam Speaker, why we should take our time. We should look at this, and we should make it as right as we can before we're all accountable two years from now.

Thank goodness that electric generation has been as affordable as it has been in Alberta the last few years because of the extra transmission costs and distribution costs burdened on ratepayers by the last government. I think we've been paying somewhere around 3 cents a kilowatt hour. This article goes on to say, "Ontario will pay Samsung 13.5 cents a kilowatt hour for wind power and 44.3 cents a kilowatt hour for solar power." Incredible: 44.3.

In my constituency office I've had some of these renewable companies come in, and the talk is that they want the money from the carbon tax and that they want the guaranteed rate or feed-in tariff. We are here to represent the ratepayer. We are here to ensure that our economy stays strong, that we have opportunities,

and that seniors and those on a fixed income are in a position where they can live.

You know, there is a whole bunch of things. I understand that each wind turbine takes the same amount of concrete as five house basements. My goodness, think of the energy involved in making that kind of concrete. At some point could we have a little bit of a look at the fuller picture?

I also remember reading in the last two or three days, Madam Speaker, about one of Alberta's electric generation companies that now wants to turn their attention to hydro. It may be a good thing. I don't know if we're set up right for that. I've heard some concerns about the damming, the energy that goes into building the dam, and what happens when you have a body of water stored. I also remember three years ago sitting on one of the legislative committees where we talked to a lot of First Nations groups up in northern Alberta about the possibility of that.

Madam Speaker, as good as that may be, there are thousands of questions around that, too, but in the next six months we could maybe develop some of those answers – some of those answers – so that we could get the best electrical system for all Albertans, the best opportunities for all Albertans. You know, again, because two years from now we're all accountable, it's important for us to get this right.

Because of unintended consequences like Germany having to build a whole bunch of coal electric generation, because of the situation, from what I've heard, where sometimes seniors can't afford to heat their homes in the manner that they need to, because I've already seen tremendous, tremendous extra increases on Alberta ratepayers, I think that it is prudent to take a long, hard look at this in the next six months, Madam Speaker. Let's do everything we can so that the 87 of us get it right.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments for the previous speaker?

Seeing none, are there any further members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Yeah. Just a quick comment, Madam Speaker. This is second reading. We're talking about the principle of the bill. We haven't seen any amendments to speak of that I . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** My apologies, hon. member. It appears that you have spoken to the amendment.

**Dr. Swann:** Is that possible?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes.

**Dr. Swann:** It must have been my double.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, any further speakers, then, to the amendment?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

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

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

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Fraser	MacIntyre
Barnes	Gill	Panda
Cyr	Loewen	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Miller
Babcock	Gray	Miranda
Carlier	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Horne	Phillips
Clark	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dang	Loyola	Sigurdson
Drever	Luff	Swann
Eggen	Mason	Sweet
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	

Totals: For – 9 Against – 41

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 27 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd ask for unanimous acceptance of the House to go to one-minute bells for subsequent votes.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The precedent of this Assembly is that following the defeat of a hoist amendment, the Assembly will proceed immediately to the vote for second reading.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:05 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	McKitrick
Babcock	Gray	Miller
Carlier	Hinkley	Miranda
Carson	Horne	Nielsen
Clark	Jansen	Phillips
Connolly	Kazim	Piquette
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Rosendahl
Dach	Littlewood	Sabir
Dang	Loyola	Schmidt
Drever	Luff	Sigurdson
Eggen	Mason	Sweet
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Fraser	MacIntyre
Barnes	Gill	Panda
Cooper	Loewen	Yao
Cyr		

Totals: For – 40 Against – 10

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a second time]

9:10

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

### Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 27. As the House will note, I voted in favour at second reading because I believe in the principle of renewable energy and renewable electricity. Unfortunately, I'm not certain that this government has got it exactly right.

With that, I will propose an amendment to Bill 27. I have the requisite number of copies here and will wait until you receive the original before I continue speaking.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The amendment reads: Mr. Clark to move that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended in section 2 as follows: (a) in subsection (1) by striking out "30%" and substituting "25%"; (b) in subsection (3)(b) by striking out "30%" and substituting "25%."

The rationale for this, Madam Chair, is quite simple. While the goal to increase renewable electricity generation in this province is a laudable one, I think, one that's overdue and one that absolutely ought to be pursued – I will note that a goal of phasing out coal-fired power by 2030 and incorporating renewable energy was part of the Alberta Party platform in the 2015 election and also part of the Alberta Party shadow climate plan, called Alberta's Contribution, because we feel it is important that we take action on climate change – the question, then, is: how do we take action on climate change, what are the impacts of that, and how do we make sure that we maximize the positive impacts of the renewable electricity plan while simultaneously minimizing unintended consequences or negative impacts?

Fortunately, there's been a very thorough report and study done by EDC Associates. They've prepared a very comprehensive – even their summary report is tremendously comprehensive. What they found is that there is an exponential increase in cost to retire coal-fired power and, more importantly, to bring renewable energy from 4,200 megawatts to 5,000 megawatts, the difference between 25 per cent and 30 per cent. In addition to that, there is a substantial increase in unreliability or, put another way, in concerns about reliability as we move from 25 to 30 per cent. At the same time, we don't necessarily gain much when it comes to carbon emission reductions.

If I can just speak briefly to the details of the report, their direct quote is that 4,200 megawatts of renewables "is a safer level" than a higher level of 5,000 megawatts or more.

If the 2030 renewables target is set at or below 4,200 MW and follows the 2/3 replacement objective,

being two-thirds of coal-fired power replaced by renewables, the market is not as stressed ... and can be expected to sustain sufficient spontaneous new baseload capacity additions to ensure the currently specified electricity reliability threshold.

That is a threshold which is set out by AESO in its long-term adequacy rule.

In plain language, then, Madam Chair, that says that if we take it down to 25 from 30 per cent, we still achieve an objective of bringing on substantial new renewable energy capacity, which I think is important. I will agree with the government. It's important to do so. I think Albertans want us to do something. However, it does so at less cost while increasing reliability and also, interestingly enough, reduces price volatility based on the way that the market will operate. Now, I will acknowledge that perhaps with some of the other changes that have been announced by the government, price volatility is a separate issue that will need to be dealt with and debated as we move towards that.

The other thing that I think is important to note is that they looked at a couple of different scenarios. One scenario they called the cliff scenario, which is that you go to 2030 for coal and then the six facilities that would live on beyond 2030 under the current federal regs would drop off a cliff, if you will, which is essentially this government's plan. Interestingly, EDC Associates finds that to be a cheaper option. Being a person who relies on data to make decisions, I think it's very instructive for us to understand that, in fact, it may be less expensive if we allow the market to properly work, sending a strong signal that coal-fired power will in fact be entirely offline by 2030.

With that, Madam Chair, I would challenge anyone else in the opposition, if they have another plan, to please share that plan with us. I think this strikes an appropriate balance between ensuring that we bring on some renewable energy and maintaining reliability but doing so at the least possible cost to Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? Go ahead, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the hon. member's amendment, and I will be supporting this amendment for reasons that are technical in nature. In studying the deployment of renewables into different grids around the world, something that seems to show up is a pattern where anything beyond about 23 per cent generally can cause some grid instability.

Now, I took the time to speak to the actual people in the control centres here in Alberta who manage our grid, and I was saying to them: "You know, you're the people that actually run the grid. You are the ones determining the inflow and outflow of electricity to meet the different demand loads presented hour by hour, minute by minute throughout the whole, entire year." They understand dispatchability. They understand the variable nature of renewables very well. These are the experts. These are the people that really do understand electricity.

I believe the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat was talking about the percentage of industrial and commercial loads that we've got in this province, and he was correct. It is very, very high here. That is often referred to as our baseload because that's sort of what we have to maintain all the time.

9:20

In any event, in talking to these experts, I asked them, "Just how much renewables can your management system and the mechanisms throughout this province that we currently have in place at substations and elsewhere, that are the actual devices that control our grid – what sort of percentile of variable dispatchable-type power can you actually handle?" They told me: "At a maximum 30 per cent. We'd be comfortable at something less than that."

I see in this particular bill that's before the House right now the wording "at least 30%." That is a concern from a technical point of

view because as soon as we get into a position where our current mechanisms and grid management tools cannot handle the variable nature of renewables coming in, we are talking about more billions of dollars just to handle the renewables coming on. But with our existing system, according to what the fellas were telling me, they can handle 25 per cent. They can handle, you know, that percentile. As I said earlier, in some of the research that we did a few years ago, it appeared that beyond 23 per cent is where some grids in the world started to get a little shaky.

So I'm happy to support the hon. member's amendment here to strike out 30 per cent and substitute 25. Just for the sake of grid stability here it would seem to me to be a prudent thing. The hon. member was mentioning the research from EDC, and I read the same research that he did. I attended a couple of workshops from EDC, and they were mapping out just what happens to the grid, they were mapping out what happens to the cost, and I remember them saying exactly what the hon. member has just said, that there is this point beyond which there is an exponential increase in the cost of bringing more renewables on.

I believe it would be prudent on the part of the government to consider the hon. member's amendment because this amendment is actually based on science. This amendment is based on a technical appraisal of our current electrical system and its ability to handle the variable nature of renewables coming on stream. I believe that from a technical point of view the government needs to listen to the technical experts out there who have done their homework, done the research. They have recommended in their own report and in what they have told me, too, that 25 per cent is manageable. It's a doable number. To go beyond that, we are risking grid instability, and to go beyond that, we are risking an exponential increase in cost. We are already going to have a problem with the cost of bringing these renewables on.

I would hope that every member in the House would give serious consideration to this amendment. I believe it is sound. It is in keeping with the technicalities of the grid that we've got. I'm going to be encouraging all of my colleagues in the Official Opposition to support this amendment. I would hope that members opposite would also support this amendment for the reasons that I have stated and that the hon. member has stated. I believe it's a responsible thing to do. I believe that a 30 per cent target, albeit ambitious, was not based on a technical understanding of the limitations of our grid.

Given that, I would hope that the hon. members on the other side would consider this 25 per cent as being a responsible amendment, one that they can support, one that will achieve a significant percentage of their targets and goals without causing undue instability to our grid and without causing an inordinate amount of extra money for that last 5 per cent, as was quantified by the EDC folks in their research.

In closing, Madam Chair, I would hope that all members in this House will support this amendment. I believe that it is perfectly good.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View on the amendment.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I won't be long. I can't stand much longer.

There's another reason besides the technical reason to consider, and I hope that the government would at least review the technical evidence before they reject it outright. The second reason is that it would send a message that you're not totally tied to a plan in which the circumstances have changed.

It would send a significant message to Albertans generally but, certainly, the industry in particular that says something like: “We had a plan in place. We had it thoughtfully and scientifically planned, but the whole environment has changed. We recognize the deep recession. We recognize more and more the impacts that the carbon tax will have. We recognize the changes south of the border. We now are seeing a longer term suffering in our industries and small businesses, in employment, and in the economy. Based on good evidence, we are reconsidering the whole plan and just pulling back slightly because we are using evidence to make our decision. We’re not simply blindly going ahead because this is what we said we’d do six months ago or three months ago. We’re going to reconsider the evidence.”

Good leadership also has to do with reassessing the situation, the conditions, the environment, the context, the science and saying that it may be time to adjust course a little bit. This is not a major change in one sense, but it could have a major impact in terms of the negative effects on our economy and on jobs. It has both the scientific and the political benefit of saying to the electorate: “We listen. We take in evidence. When the plan looks like it could be improved based on new circumstances that weren’t in place when we first made the plan, we are prepared to pause and readjust where we’re going.”

Thanks, Madam Chair. I will be supporting it.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, we’ll call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:28 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Cyr	MacIntyre
Barnes	Fraser	Swann
Clark	Gill	Yao
Cooper	Loewen	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	McKittrick
Babcock	Gray	Miller
Carlier	Hinkley	Miranda
Carson	Horne	Nielsen
Connolly	Jansen	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Dach	Larivee	Sabir
Dang	Littlewood	Schmidt
Drever	Loyola	Sigurdson
Eggen	Luff	Sweet
Feehan	Mason	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 38
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We’re back on the bill. Are there any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, in respect of this bill, this particular bill is going to legislate the government of

Alberta’s 30 by 2030 plan, and in the process the government is making some very sweeping changes to the way our electricity system operates. We have seen a cap on the RRO. We’ve seen Bill 27 come forward with some really sweeping changes.

I understand why they are going this route. It’s an attempt to mandate renewables. In some respects the government, I think, sincerely doesn’t want to have some of the horrible problems Ontarians are experiencing right now. I also realize that renewables will not grow within our system without the government’s artificially incenting them because they cannot compete with gas and coal. So this government believes that in order to make a place for more renewables, there must be some sort of system in place to artificially insert renewables into our system here.

Of course, there are some significant public relations advantages for this government because they have spent some time flying around the world, telling the whole wide world that Alberta is taking the lead on climate change globally, et cetera, et cetera.

**An Hon. Member:** Social licence.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** And, of course, perpetuating the social licence myth.

So I get that there is need for a photo op or two and that there are some significant PR advantages to pushing renewables, whether we actually need that generation right now or not.

I also understand that the government has finally clued in that in order to get the build-out happening in this province – there are, depending on the estimate you would believe, anywhere from \$10 billion to \$25 billion worth of build-outs that are going to need to take place here.

In addition to those costs, of course, we are going to be having significant costs relating to the closure of coal and the social costs of taking care of those families that are losing their jobs. I realize the government is going to try to spin some things about job development in that, with the natural gas that’s going to have to be built to back up the renewables, there will be some jobs there. But I’m reminded that in touring the Shepard facility just outside Calgary, it was remarkable how few people it actually takes to run that massive combined-cycle plant down there.

Coal, on the other hand, is labour intensive. It does take a lot of manpower to mine it, process it, burn it, maintain the plant, and so on, and any way you want to look at it, even converting existing coal to natural gas is going to result in job losses. That’s just a reality of things.

In addition, the other jobs number that we’ve seen the government throwing around was 7,200 jobs in renewables. Let’s be real honest. Those are mostly construction jobs. It takes very few people to maintain a solar farm. It takes very few people to maintain a wind farm. So those 7,200 jobs are going to be there for a while, and then they will be gone.

Insofar as the investment of billions, tens of billions, some possibly \$20 billion worth of investment in this province for the construction of wind turbines: let’s remember exactly where that money does go. That money is going to be going to corporations like General Electric, Vestas, or SNC-Lavalin, and none of them are Alberta companies. I mean, you can talk about this investment coming into Alberta, but that investment is going to hang a 180-degree U-turn and head right back to Holland or right back to Florida or right back to somewhere else outside the province of Alberta because Alberta does not manufacture wind turbines. We do not manufacture solar panels. We don’t manufacture any of those very expensive components. We are going to get to sell a



whole lot of concrete, and we will have some of the installation people but not all and not even probably most.

9:50

If you take a look at what happened in Ontario when they were doing their renewables build-out, the money fled the province. It went to places where these corporations are from to supply all of this very unique, specialized equipment. So this story of, "Oh, we're going to get \$20 billion worth of investment in Alberta": no. It's going to come in here; it's going to hang a U-turn. They're going to buy this expensive stuff, and that money is going to go. If they choose Vestas, it's going to go to Holland and so forth.

Now, in addition to this, we have in this act some particularly problematic sections. I'm going to be introducing an amendment here to Bill 27. Can I continue, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** It'll be a moment.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** We'll wait. All right. We can wait.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. MacIntyre moves that Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, be amended in section 20 by striking out clause (b).

Now, what's with that? Well, I'm going to read to you something out of the Electric Utilities Act, which Bill 27 impacts. The section I'm going to be reading out of the Electric Utilities Act is found in division 2, section 16, and it is specifically referring to the Independent System Operator's duties and authority. Section 16 is specific to the duty to act responsibly. Now, the Alberta Electric System Operator, which is the ISO as written in this particular part of the Electric Utilities Act – I'm just going to read one of these requirements.

Duty to act responsibly

The Independent System Operator must exercise its powers and carry out its duties, responsibilities and functions in a timely manner that is fair and responsible to provide for the safe, reliable and economic operation of the interconnected electric system and to promote a fair, efficient and openly competitive market for electricity.

Now, I want bring the House's attention to the words "fair and responsible." This is outlining the mandate and the rules by which ISO must operate as a body responsible for our entire electric system. The lawmakers of the day put in place section 16, which is a great section, and it gives specific instructions requiring the ISO to conduct itself, to carry out its duties in a fair and responsible manner.

Now, in Bill 27, for whatever reason the government is striking that out and doing away with the fair and responsible requirement of ISO to operate specifically with regard to renewables. So what the government is actually saying in Bill 27 is that ISO does not have to conduct its duties in a manner that is fair and responsible to provide for the safe, reliable, and economic operation of our electric system when it comes to renewables. This is ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous. How can you say such a thing to not just AESO but, I mean, to any management structure? It's like coming along to the management structure of a business and saying: "Well, you know what, guys? You don't have to act in a fair and responsible manner when it comes to this part of our business. You can just do whatever."

But we're not talking about just any little business here. We're talking about the entire electric system in the province of Alberta, serving 4 million people, serving a massive number of heavy industries, an enormous number of commercial industries. What we're saying in Bill 27 is: "You know, AESO, you have to act fairly

and responsibly except when it comes to renewables. For some reason renewables are so special, AESO, you don't have to act fairly and responsibly there."

Frankly, that's an irresponsible part of Bill 27. We can't have an organization, a management organization like AESO, not operate fairly and responsibly in anything that they do. They must always act fairly and responsibly, whether it be for conventional generation, whether it be for renewable generation, whether it be for anything to do with our electricity system. It is absolutely incredible that the government would somehow exempt renewables when it comes to being fair – being fair – and being responsible. What that's saying to the good people of Alberta is: this government believes that it's quite all right to be unfair and irresponsible when it comes to renewable technologies, thank you very much. That's ridiculous. That's not sound governance. I can't believe that you guys even – what were you smoking that day? It's crazy. It really is. You can point of order me on that.

What we have is this. Under this act this is the wording concerning subsection (1): "Subsection (1) does not apply to the development of renewable electricity program proposals under the Renewable Electricity Act," completely absolving AESO of any requirement for fair and responsible conduct when it comes to renewables. Somehow renewables are just that special that you can just do whatever you want.

As you can see, Madam Chair, that was, really, pretty low-hanging fruit for an amendment. I mean, it's just glaring, that this government would have our AESO absolved of any responsibility to be fair. What kind of a rule is that, that you don't need to be fair when it comes to renewables, that you don't need to be responsible when it comes to renewables? That in and of itself is unfair and irresponsible, and that's why this amendment is there.

I would encourage every member in this House. You know, the press is going to have fun with this one. We've got a government in place that doesn't think it's important to be fair and responsible. It's kind of strange.

At the end of the day, you know, it makes me wonder: is the reason for this because the government understands that these proposals that are coming into it aren't going to be fair or responsible or economic? Is it because this government already knows that some of these proposals coming in are not going to be reliable, that they're not going to lead to a reliable, stable grid? You know, I had some staff looking at these things, and the statement was: this is staggeringly enlightening. It gives us a really good idea of where the government's head is at. It looks like the government is actually trying to absolve itself and its arm's-length bodies from the duty to act responsibly.

10:00

Now, I am aware that in other places within this bill – and we'll get there – is that for the first time since AESO was mandated, the government is actually reaching into AESO, and the arm's-length nature of AESO is being eroded. They are no longer going to be independent from political interference. I can see that this government is wanting to in a way protect itself in that they're not going to be requiring AESO to be responsible or fair because AESO is not going to be able to be responsible and fair when the government is getting in there and politicizing something that should have been independent and arm's length.

I'm wondering if that is not some of the real reason why we just lost four out of five of the members of the Balancing Pool. We've had some resignations. These are professional people. They knew their stuff. They're gone. They're gone. And there was no real reason for them to resign other than that we were seeing an awful lot of interference from this government.

Now, it's not a real surprise to some of us when we see the lack of responsibility that this government has demonstrated thus far in so much of its legislation and policies, but to just blatantly come out like this and say: "Well, you know what? We're going to push these renewables, and we don't care whether it's fair. We don't care whether it's responsible. We're going to have 30 per cent by 2030, and to heck with any of the consequences." That's exactly what this government is saying, and that's why this amendment is vitally important.

AESO needs to conduct everything they do in a fair and responsible manner, as they have been originally mandated to do. That was not broken. It did not need to be fixed. I see absolutely no reason whatsoever why renewables should somehow be exempt from fair and responsible actions on the part of our Alberta Electric System Operator. It makes no sense. I would hope that all members in this House would themselves act fairly and responsibly and insist that the arm's-length agencies within this province also act fairly and responsibly.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would ask that the committee rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Sweet:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 27. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed, say no. So ordered.  
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. We've had a lot of good work this evening. I think there are some sensitivities that we maybe need to reflect on over the evening. I move that we adjourn until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:05 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, November 29, 2016

Day 54

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
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Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (ND)  
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Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
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Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
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Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
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Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Government House Leader  
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Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
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Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
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McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
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Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
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Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, November 29, 2016

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Acting Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect, each in our own way. Hon. members, let us take a moment to send our thoughts and prayers to the family and friends of Captain Thomas McQueen, the pilot of the CF-18 fighter jet who tragically lost his life yesterday. The loss of a life is always difficult, and today Alberta feels this loss.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 21 Modernized Municipal Government Act

**The Deputy Chair:** The Committee of the Whole has under consideration amendment A1, subamendment SA3. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the subamendment? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to speak regarding the subamendment presented by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I want to say thank you to that member for the work on this proposed amendment and to say that while the intent of environmental reserve certainly is to address lands not suitable for development, past experience has shown that there is a need for greater certainty around this definition. The term "unsuitable for development" alone is simply too broad and open to interpretation. That is the reason that the term was removed from the previous planning act in 1983.

Throughout the MGA review we heard that a clearer definition of environmental reserve would benefit municipalities and developers alike because it would address the problem that an unclear definition was leading to different interpretations and applications across the province. For example, AAMD and C told us that the definition for environmental reserve should be clarified within the MGA to promote consistent use of these tools in the land-use planning process. Over the summer we asked Albertans for feedback on our approach to environmental reserve, and two-thirds of respondents agreed with the proposed direction in Bill 21. Only 8.7 per cent disagreed.

Our intent here is to create greater certainty and precision for both municipalities and landowners. That is why we stand by the clarified definition in Bill 21 and do not support the proposed amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Chair. I appreciate that, and I just wanted to speak in favour of it. My colleague from Calgary-Fish

Creek, I would say, more than knows what he's talking about on this. This is really an opportunity to provide a platform, if you will, or a set of rules under which the many municipalities in Alberta and the people who do building and developing in those municipalities can have a more fruitful discussion and a more fruitful working relationship. So I think that I would ask members of the House to support this.

I think you will find in the fullness of time that this is actually doing the municipalities a favour and will probably make Alberta a better place. I think everybody recognizes that there are certain times when land has to be given up by people that are developing it for a whole variety of legitimate reasons: park space, roads, environmental reserve – very important – protecting waterways, watercourses, wetlands. All of those things matter a great deal, and you need a set of rules under which to talk about these things, where both the municipality and those that seek to develop land can come to the best decision, not just for today but for the long-term future of Alberta.

For those reasons I would ask members of the House to support this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on the subamendment?

[Motion on subamendment SA3 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the original amendment, A1. Any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the fact that I'm allowed to stand in the House today and speak to the Modernized Municipal Government Act, the amendment to Bill 21, and the amendment to the amendment. That gets a little lost in the water when I talk to local press about a subamendment to an amendment to an amendment of the MGA. That being said, on Monday of last week a colleague of mine and I met with, among other folks, bureaucrats from Municipal Affairs to go over the government amendments to Bill 21, the amendment to the Municipal Government Act.

Madam Chair, it will be intermunicipal collaborative frameworks that I will be speaking about this morning. Now, ICFs are a new addition to the Modernized Municipal Government Act. Intermunicipal development plans have certainly been around for some time, and while not mandatory right now, there are several municipalities that have completed them. Intermunicipal collaborative frameworks are now mandatory, and intermunicipal development plans will be a mandatory part of an ICF. Wow. That's another one when you talk to local press where they kind of go: wow. Anyway, a municipality must develop an ICF with any municipality, either urban or rural, that it shares a border with. The exception is those municipalities that are part of a growth management board. More about that in a minute.

You know, Madam Chair, it is understood that Albertans routinely cross municipal borders when accessing services or infrastructure, so it may make some sense that if services or infrastructure provide regional benefit, then perhaps all municipalities in that region should share some responsibility in the funding model. I just want to say that rural municipalities understand why the proposed intermunicipal collaboration frameworks have come along in the Modernized Municipal Government Act. Basically, it has to do with linear funding not

changing from the rural municipalities and an effort to have collaboration with their urban neighbours. I know urban municipalities have been asking for something, at least they were asking for part of the linear funding for years, so it appears that this was the solution here.

**10:10**

As a rural MLA I represent both rural and urban municipalities in the riding of Little Bow, and in my riding there has been sharing of linear revenue for years. However, there are many urban municipalities in the province that feel that they provide significant infrastructure and service amenities to rural residents without receiving any corresponding compensation from rural municipalities. That one has been tossed around for several years as well. The government hasn't touched linear funding, but the proposed mandatory intermunicipal collaborative frameworks must include provisions for the joint funding of shared services, which ultimately would see linear funding likely being used in those instances. Anyway, I just wanted to make that point clear before I moved on to the particular aspects of an intermunicipal collaborative framework.

You know, Madam Chair, I think intermunicipal relationships for the most part have been generally positive in Alberta. There are always exceptions: some for very good reasons; some for all the wrong reasons, as it turns out. Mandatory council training, on another topic, could possibly help in that resolve, but we're talking about ICFs at the moment.

Anyway, back to these intermunicipal development plans and intermunicipal collaboration frameworks. In the proposed legislation IDPs will be a necessary part of ICFs. Intermunicipal development plans must address things like land use, future residential development, future transportation corridors, possible future annexation considerations between those municipalities. Intermunicipal infrastructure has been removed. In the new amendments from the government service delivery has also been removed. An IDP will also include something like where potentially an industrial site may be located, so that could also be part of an IDP.

Madam Chair, I quote from the Lacombe county and village of Alix IDP.

Intermunicipal planning is an effort between two or more municipalities to make long term land use planning decisions. An Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) should approach the area with a regional perspective. Municipal boundaries disappear during the development of future land uses and reappear in order to administer the preferred land use pattern.

IDPs are broad-based policy documents that strive for environmentally responsible development without significant unnecessary costs and unacceptable negative impacts on either municipality. Both municipalities face growth pressures and an IDP searches for mutually beneficial solutions.

I just found that IDP when I was searching around online and felt it relayed an accurate description of what an IDP actually is.

In the past an IDP was a voluntary plan. Now it is proposed that an intermunicipal development plan is a mandatory part of an ICF. Two or more councils of municipalities that have common boundaries must, by each passing a bylaw in accordance with the act, adopt an intermunicipal development plan to include those areas of land lying within the boundaries of the municipalities as they consider necessary, which will be a component of the ICF that is also necessary, mandatory. Madam Chair, that sounds like a lot of municipalities that have to implement two statutory plans plus an ICF.

One more, which will be known as a statutory plan that is now mandatory, is a municipal development plan. A municipal

development plan is a long-range planning document that provides a municipality's elected officials, administration, ratepayers, and developers with a framework of policies for making decisions regarding future growth and development opportunities within said municipality's borders. A municipal development plan almost has to be completed before an intermunicipal collaboration framework can be set up. So a municipal development plan used to be mandatory for only towns that had a population of 3,500 or more and cities, of course. Now all municipalities must complete a municipal development plan.

I just want to say, Madam Chair, as a municipal councillor in southern Alberta for several years, that the municipality I sat on received about half of its annual budget from linear funding, so you can imagine the criss-crossing of pipelines and the above ground machinery and equipment that was within those borders. That municipality was certainly favoured with oil and gas exploration.

Long before I arrived on the scene, municipal leaders of that municipality determined that some of its linear money should go to recreation agreements with all of its urban counterparts within her borders. Truth be told, most of the money for recreation in those municipalities came from that linear funding, and it was no small sum at the end of the day. So I have certainly been witness to collaboration between rural and urban municipalities and communities, and I've also been witness to a rural municipality sharing some of its linear funding with its urban neighbours. As it turns out, I guess I was lucky to have been witness to some of that kind of collaboration and sharing.

I also have a rural municipality within my riding that has very little linear funding, yet they still find a way to be able to share something with their rural neighbours, urban neighbours within their municipality. So that's another successful collaboration even based on the fact that they don't have linear funding to share.

However, that aside, consider the statutory plans that I've discussed here plus the intermunicipal collaborative framework. Imagine what small communities, small towns, or small villages are thinking. They have got to be saying to themselves: "How can we be expected to put together all these documents, all these statutory plans? How can we be expected to put them all together within the now three-year timeline suggested in the Modernized Municipal Government Act amendments?" To be frank, it is a short timeline, and from the communities that I've talked to – and, believe me, when I say small, I mean small communities in my riding: 122 in one, 279 or 298 or something in another. Small.

Madam Chair, the opposition, of course, has been engaging in extensive stakeholder outreach, and we've been striving to receive whatever feedback we can get about these proposals. We certainly have feedback from municipalities across the entire province, that I'll share in a moment. But to start off, I think I'll share submissions on the Modernized Municipal Government Act, MMGA, that were sent by the two organizations in this province that represent rural and urban municipalities, namely the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. Okay. I will talk about submissions from those two organizations with regard to MDPs, IDPs, and ICFs.

Municipal development plans. The Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties in their submission does support the requirement for all municipalities to have an MDP, is supportive of the idea, but they do suggest a few changes. Number one, "Municipalities should have up to five years to complete [an] MDP." Number two, "The province should fund AAMD and AUMA in developing additional resources and templates to assist those municipalities [as] capacity challenges."

In gathering their data from their rural municipalities, AAMD and C members

recognized that this will challenge many small municipalities including summer villages.

There is a reality. AAMD and C believes:

Without sufficient resources or tools, the requirements of developing a [municipal development] plan could push many municipalities into dissolution.

On the other hand, MDPs will not have to be extensive for small municipalities. That's understood.

AAMD and C also notes:

... these planning timelines falling during the election cycle ... could impact how the plans are done. Templates and resources ...

according to AAMD and C

... should be available to assist in this process.

Now, our friends at AUMA, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, say pretty much the same thing about MDPs that AAMD and C is saying. With regard to intermunicipal collaborative frameworks and intermunicipal development plans, AAMD and C

supports regional collaboration [of course] between municipal neighbours and [certainly] recognizes the need for municipalities to work collaboratively to plan, fund and deliver services. Where possible, this should be done through local decision making. Bill 21's requirement for ICFs and IDPs presents a balance between local decision making and mandatory inter-municipal collaboration by requiring municipalities to meet province-wide standards in their agreements ... details [can] be determined locally,

according to AAMD and C. AUMA also supports the ICF and IDP concepts but also states:

Municipalities should work collaboratively and make decisions on the planning [and] funding ... [while acting] in good faith in the negotiation,

something, I think, that almost goes without saying.

**10:20**

As far as some of the submissions that we've received with regard to this topic, I'd just like to quote from some of the municipalities we heard from. Sturgeon county is certainly supportive of the change and the amendments to Bill 21. However, it states that it has some concerns around the capacity for rural municipalities to complete all required intermunicipal collaborative frameworks and corresponding intermunicipal development plans within a three-year time frame.

Parkland county, on the other hand, states that it is unable to support ICFs. Parkland county claims that this change will have a significant impact on the county as this will require intermunicipal development plans with municipalities sharing a border that are not part of the Capital Region Board. They also say that a definition for regional services is something they believe is required. Major concerns exist around the scope of work and, certainly, the costs.

All the way down to the village of Barons: they say that it strongly feels that intermunicipal collaborative frameworks should be voluntary and not mandatory. Barons believes that better relationships can be made when it is done willingly and voluntarily versus mandatorily.

Lac La Biche county states that as a regional municipality their county will have to negotiate intermunicipal collaborative frameworks and intermunicipal development plans with its neighbouring six counties, two Métis settlements, and throw in one improvement district. They don't expect negotiations to be difficult because most of the areas that border them are relatively uninhabited. They are hoping for reduced intermunicipal collaborative framework and intermunicipal development plan requirements for rural/rural neighbours since they believe that the

main thrust of intermunicipal collaborative frameworks and IDPs is to encourage collaboration between rural and urban municipal neighbours.

The village of Big Valley suggests that a significant increase to the amount of statutory planning that will be necessary over a very short timeline will cause capacity issues. Developing three statutory plans when you do not have a planning person in the building can be extremely difficult. Financial assistance through provincial grants would be helpful, but it will not address the extra demand on staff time for small offices that often only have one employee.

You can see, Madam Chair, how municipalities think about these proposed changes to the MGA. I have given a fairly broad examples of municipalities' thoughts throughout Alberta about the changes. You know, we aren't necessarily against the amendments here in the Bill 21 amendment, but I think there is a common theme here when we hear the concerns of the two associations and the concerns of municipalities. No one knows what the regulations will say. The legislation is one thing, but the regulations can make things more difficult yet for municipalities.

You know, what we're really worried about is the cost of putting forth an MDP, an IDP, and an ICF, especially for small municipalities in this province. They plain don't have the capacity, whether it be financial or physical, to put together these documents within a three-year time frame. This is a huge concern. This is what we hear. If they certainly don't have the training to begin to put together an IDP, an MDP, and an ICF, they would certainly have to be in contact with a consultant, and those folks cost money.

I guess the last thing would be: what kind of support is the government prepared to offer to these municipalities? Consider the work and the money that's involved for a village of 300 that has, you know, had all of its elevators torn down, which were their tax base. Where will the line item in the 2017 Municipal Affairs budget appear, and how much money will be in that line item to help these municipalities in this endeavour? Those are the concerns that municipalities have. Perhaps the minister has thought about all that and will move forward with something in Budget 2017.

Let's just remember that small municipalities – and there are lots of them across Alberta – certainly may only have one employee. That employee is the CAO, and he writes the agenda for council, and he hires someone to come in and do maintenance, and he answers letters, and he talks to ratepayers, and now he has three statutory documents that he needs to deal with.

Those are the concerns that we certainly have. They pretty much mirror the concerns of the municipalities. Those are our partners. They must live by this document, so let us consider that when we make our decision on this matter.

Madam Chair, I'd like to make a motion for a subamendment today with regard to the intermunicipal collaboration frameworks, municipal development plans, and intermunicipal development plans. I have the requisite number of copies here, and I will wait until you have received it and seen it before I continue.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, the subamendment will be referred to as SA4.

Just a reminder, please, to everyone in the House. The volume is getting a little bit loud, and I'm not able to hear everything that the member is saying. So if you could, if you're going to have long conversations, maybe find somewhere else to do it or keep the volume down, please.

Hon. member, please continue.

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Schneider to move that amendment A1 to Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, be amended as follows:

- (a) in Part T in clause (b)(i) by striking out “2 years” and substituting “3 years”;
- (b) by striking out Part U;
- (c) in clause (b) of Part EE as follows:
  - (i) by renumbering subclause (i) as (i.1) and by adding the following before subclause (i.1):
    - (i) in subsection (1) by striking out “2 years” and substituting “3 years”;
  - (ii) in subclause (ii) by striking out “2 years” wherever it occurs and substituting “3 years.”

The purpose of this subamendment is to extend the timelines for municipalities.

**The Deputy Chair:** You’ll have to speak again, hon. member.

**Mr. Schneider:** I’ll have to speak again? All right. That’s fair enough.

**The Deputy Chair:** I see that one of your hon. colleagues, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, would like to speak to your subamendment, so we’ll let him.

**Mr. Cooper:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. The hon. member was giving such a riveting dissertation on the need for amendments to ICFs, and likewise I wondered if he might be willing to just conclude his thoughts, that I’m sure will be persuasive and that the government will be quick to act upon.

**Mr. Schneider:** You know, Madam Chair, last week I gave a speech where I think it was the same member told me that I had written a speech that had people on the edge of their seats, and I told him that I live to write speeches that put people on the edge of their seats. Now, this is riveting. This is riveting stuff.

**Mr. Hanson:** Stick to a monotone so we can handle it.

**Mr. Schneider:** Sure.

The purpose of this amendment, if I could get back to this amendment, is to extend the timelines for municipalities to develop all the planning documents that are being made mandatory in Bill 21. I just want the minister to be aware of what my goal is here. As we know, the timelines for statutory documents changed last Monday. With regard to the Modernized Municipal Government Act, at the end of the day we’d like to see everything, all of the stat documents – ICF will also be called a stat document once it’s passed – be a three-year and that the potential arbitration for an intermunicipal collaboration framework document be given an extra year.

I know that when we met in the meeting last Monday, the government put all these plans so that the numbers weren’t scattered all over the map. They basically said: three years for everything. Well, that means two years for an ICF plus one year for arbitration. We now have municipal development plans and intermunicipal development plans that are allowed three years. I really hope that we can talk about an ICF being three years as well, and in the event of arbitration that can take an extra year.

**10:30**

Intermunicipal collaborative frameworks reduce the duplication of services and increase efficient and co-ordinated service delivery. Intermunicipal collaborative frameworks will allow for improved land-use infrastructure planning across municipal boundaries. That is clear. The ICF changes won’t solve every problem – I’m sure there’s nothing we could write down that would solve every problem – but they will at least get the municipal leaders of the municipalities to sit down at a table and start discussion about what

collaboration they can determine between themselves. If they’re still unable to come to an agreement, arbitration allows a year for there to be a settlement. Certainly, there would be an arbitrator involved. That would move that situation forward.

Now, the issue is that this could be burdensome for smaller communities. I’ve talked about that. Folks, outside in rural Alberta there are villages that have one employee, and that person will be under huge amounts of stress to make this happen. Even if they hired it out to a consultant, they now have to figure out where the money will come from. I know that we are hoping to see either some templates for these statutory documents or – I know the minister talked when I was at the meeting in Lethbridge – that there may be potentially some money somewhere to help with all these issues.

We’re proposing that the timeline be stretched out one more year to allow municipalities time to adjust to this change. All plans need to be complete within three years, and the ICFs will still have an additional year for arbitration. That’s where the end result of the amendment is.

That being said, I encourage everyone in the House today to consider what I’ve said about small communities when they make their decision about intermunicipal collaborative frameworks. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA4? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I want to thank the member for recognizing the value of intermunicipal collaboration frameworks. Some of the biggest, most exciting changes we are making to the MGA are about creating a new system of collaboration between municipalities to help make them sustainable, smart land-use and servicing choices that benefit all citizens no matter where they live. These partnerships will bring together neighbouring municipalities to partner on land-use planning, co-ordination of services of regional benefit, and equitable funding of those services, which will mean, for the residents, integrated services and cost sharing on regional projects that transcend municipal boundaries. The MMGA does set a two-year time frame in which municipalities must create ICFs where they don’t yet have agreements on items determined to be of regional benefit.

While this is a lot of work for municipalities in a condensed time frame, we want municipalities to succeed in working together now. Certainly, we do not achieve success as one but as many. We know there is work that has already been done by many municipalities which have great working relationships and similar agreements in place. There are more than 600 examples of intermunicipal agreements already in place, and the provincial government wants to see that work expanded. Intermunicipal collaboration will help communities work together, grow together, and become stronger together, and by working together, we can strengthen Alberta’s regional economies, taking us from a winner-take-all approach to one where we all win.

Certainly, with that, Madam Chair, we are fully committed to support the smaller municipalities to be able to complete this work in a timely fashion. We’ve already been quite clear in terms of the fact that we will be working with the municipal associations to create templates and other resources to ensure they have the support they need to move forward. Certainly, there is an abundance of staff within the Department of Municipal Affairs to provide assistance to municipalities in doing this work, and there is also, of course, a certain amount of funding available through the Alberta community partnership grants. Municipalities can choose to utilize funds from that.

Madam Chair, certainly, there are many examples already of municipalities recognizing the benefit of working together and choosing to utilize those resources to move forward in recognition of the fact that, you know, a few dollars expended at the front and some time expended at the front allows them to find the efficiencies that actually support them to be more viable and more sustainable going forward. Certainly, the citizens and residents of the communities in municipalities do expect that municipalities have a plan for municipalities to go forward.

You know, certainly, the member referred to some municipalities that maybe don't have a lot going on on their borders. We only ask that they have a conversation about those issues, and if they both agree that there is actually no overlap, then they can agree that there's no requirement to come up with a plan on that. There just needs to be documentation of that question. The ICFs are a very flexible tool, recognizing the variety of different agreements and relationships that happen between municipalities. We certainly created a tool broad enough to do that.

Madam Chair, when it comes down to it, again, residents expect their municipalities to have a plan going forward, to know what's happening with that municipality, to know where that municipality needs to go in the future, so we will continue to work with them to ensure that they have the tools they need to go forward with that. It is important, again, that that kind of collaboration actually lead to increased viability and sustainability of municipalities by working together to get that work done as soon as possible so their citizens can have access to the co-ordination of services, the land-use planning, and equitable funding sooner rather than later. For that reason, I will not be supporting this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA4? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Actually, this amendment was brought to me by one of my local councillors. I'm not saying that this is where it had come from, but I am saying that this was one of his concerns, that there might not be enough time to be able to do all of the municipalities across Alberta within this time frame. There are areas or ridings where the municipal governments aren't collaborating as productively as some of the others, and we've heard, like one of my colleagues here said, that they've had some sort of agreement in place for a lot of years. This is not the case in my riding, and the concern is that we're going to have the two years lapse where they're trying to get through this but not be able to get the support from the municipal government that they need to be able to create this.

Now, I'm sure the minister has got the answers, but my concern is – and this is from my understanding – that I believe this start date would come into effect when the bill is proclaimed. Does that mean that that two-year period starts at proclamation, or does that two-year period start when the regulations are done? This is an important fact because if it takes a year for the regulations to be done for this part of the ICF, then that means we've only got a year left to be able to create the ICF within my constituency.

With the fact that it has got some potential for having, I guess, distractions become part of this process, my question is: will we end up with many of our municipalities caught within this arbitration process? Will we be able to manage having a large volume of municipalities within this arbitration process because of the fact that we don't have enough time? This is where I see that right off the bat we've got to have some extra time so that we can see the regulations, have the municipalities interpret the regulations, and then work together. It takes time for it to be done. Now, if the

government has these regulations ready to go, then they should have these regulations released already so that the municipal governments can actually see the direction that this is going.

**10:40**

One of the questions that I've got is that some of these ICF parts in here are a little vague and open to interpretation, and that is, I guess, when it comes to my riding, where some of the concerns are going to be brought forward. And this isn't something that is unique to my riding because when I went to one of the government town hall meetings in Lac La Biche, this also was a concern that was brought up, exactly what Bill 21 meant to ICFs and exactly how to interpret it.

Now, I am looking forward to the process of municipalities working together because I believe that it's in the best interests of municipalities to work together. I don't agree with it being forced, but I do understand that the government is going in this direction. The problem is: are the timelines too tight for it even to be possible? And that is what I would like to hear from the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Have they actually got a timeline on how this is going to take place, and if not, then are we going to be putting a lot of strain on our municipalities in arbitration when that could have been avoided by just adding an additional year? If I could get an answer from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I'd appreciate that.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA4? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 21. Before I get to the meat of the matter, I'd just like to thank my colleague from Little Bow for his persuasive speech, the silky smooth '70s sounds of the Member for Little Bow. I also heard him use some animations like nnnnn, and I'm kind of curious to know how *Hansard* will be recording that. I look forward to the reading tomorrow.

But on to important things about this amendment, Madam Chair. The Member for Little Bow has made some very important points, particularly with respect to timelines. That's exactly what this amendment does do; it expands the timelines. I know that you'll be aware that when Bill 21 first was introduced, there was a range of timelines to finish the statutory documents around ICFs and MDPs and all of the other acronyms that are included in Bill 21, some of them two years and some of them five years. So through consultations – and some of the associations were concerned around that lengthy timeline of five years – the government decided to collapse all of the agreements to two years.

Well, the big, big challenge with that, Madam Chair, is that a number of municipalities will struggle greatly to be able to complete all of those documents. For example, the county of Mountain View, which, as you know, makes up a large portion of the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, will need to form an agreement with the town of Olds, the town of Carstairs, the town of Didsbury, the town of Cremona, the town of Sundre, Red Deer county, Clearwater county, Rocky View county, and Kneehill county, and that is only for ICFs. That doesn't include any of the additional stat docs that also need to be completed. So you have nine agreements that need to be done in two years. We're looking at less than three months per agreement for that particular county.

The challenge with that is, as you know, that many of these councils only meet sometimes once, sometimes twice, possibly three times a month. In large respects, these are volunteer councillors who give of themselves to this process. The challenge:

in order to get these very significant documents accomplished, it's quite likely going to take more than three months for each municipality to do that. So now we have a situation where Mountain View county needs to enter into nine of these agreements, and part of my concern is on the enforcement of what happens if this isn't completed.

In Bill 21, under Measures to Ensure Compliance with Frameworks, section 708.43(3)(d) states: "withholding money otherwise payable by the Government to the municipality pending compliance with an order of the Minister." Part of my concern is that if these documents aren't completed in the allotted two years, will then, in fact, the minister act to withhold potential grant funding, MSI dollars, gas tax transfers, and these sorts of funding requirements, that are so critical to our municipalities, based upon them not having finished any of the stat docs? Obviously, that issue would still exist if we accepted the amendment and it went out to three years, but the big difference there, then, would be that we would at least give more time and opportunity to have these ICFs approved.

Now, let me be very clear. The process of accomplishing an ICF is an important process. You know, ICFs certainly will have the potential to reduce the duplication of services and increase efficiencies, co-ordinate service deliveries, so the co-operation that can be found in the ICFs and the co-operation that can be found through ICFs is not necessarily a negative, but the timelines that the department has laid out certainly don't provide appropriate time, particularly in the smaller municipalities. My colleague from Little Bow provided some of those examples. For example, the village of Cremona will need to have multiple ICFs with its neighbours, and I know they only have a couple of employees.

One of the other big challenges with this particular proposal around ICFs, generally speaking, and small municipalities is that it's quite likely that, whether it's in staff time, which is still a very real cost if they do it in-house, or municipalities go externally and get consultants to do it, some of these documents will wind up being a net cost to the municipality of \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000, or, certainly where there are larger, complex negotiations, upwards of \$50,000.

So there are lots of concerns and potential risks around ICFs, lots of potential positives as well, but certainly the timeline that the government has laid out isn't fair. It doesn't respect small municipalities. In fact, it doesn't respect large municipalities as well, particularly in the case where there are multiple stakeholders or multiple municipalities inside the boundaries, typically, of a county.

I know that we've heard from the minister this morning and that she is encouraging her colleagues to not support this. I hope that she will reconsider. I mean, the Member for Little Bow was exponentially more persuasive than I, and she, you know, isn't going to listen to him. I hope that she'll reconsider and think about some of the consequences of having only two years allotted for the planning process around ICFs. I wondered if she might have a moment to comment around: what exactly are the plans of the department if those aren't completed, and will grant monies be withheld from those municipalities which, either through lack of time or lack of desire, haven't got these documents completed?

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA4? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

10:50

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks, everyone, for the time this morning on this very important matter.

I just have a couple of quick comments to add to what my colleagues have already presented this morning with regard to the timing of the intermunicipal collaborative framework idea and MDPs and IDPs and trying to match these up. I think that my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills did a great job of pointing out a lot of the timing issues, as did the Member for Little Bow. It seems to me that there may be just a little bit of refinement that I'd like to add in, and that is that when we have a lot of municipalities throughout the province that are considering having to now possibly hire consultants to do this because a lot of them, as was said earlier, don't have in-house planning departments and so on, there may be some sort of economical or cost-saving advantage to having these timelines match up.

Given what we've already said in our comments this morning and given that the new change is a very, very big new change, as was pointed out clearly, I too would like to back up what the Official Opposition House Leader has said. To the minister: please, would the minister reconsider her comments that she made already this morning and look at the possibilities of this? All we're asking for is more time to get it right.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA4? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was hoping to provide some opportunity for some feedback on this so that I would have the opportunity to respond to it at one time. I certainly want to clarify that the process for this is that, absolutely, they will not be required to start the timeline for the IDPs, the two years, until the legislation is proclaimed.

Those regulations will be posted online, based on the feedback and stakeholder engagement that we do. There will be a draft version posted online this coming spring, spring 2017, and all municipalities, including all the members across the floor, and all of the public will have the opportunity to provide feedback on those regulations as well. I'm looking forward to collecting that feedback to ensure that, just as we worked to make sure that the legislation was the very best piece for the people of Alberta, the regulations also continue to best reflect that.

Madam Chair, those regulations will be in place at the time that the legislation is proclaimed, prior to the election in the fall of 2017. Essentially, incoming councillors will be able to familiarize themselves with the new MGA and all the amendments and all the requirements prior to being elected so that they know what they're getting into and also so they have a fresh slate to work with and have a new council to work through all those processes and there's no interruption mid-term with that.

Absolutely, they will have the full two years to work on that. I think one of the things I wanted to highlight as well is that the legislation provides for and enables municipalities to do more regional planning. So if there are a number of small municipalities embedded within a rural municipality, then they can get together and work together on a plan. It's not a requirement that they have to be bilateral agreements. Certainly, they can have agreements with multiple municipalities if there is indeed an overlap of services in municipalities that reside close together.

Mostly I just wanted to highlight our commitment to working with municipalities. In fact, there are so many municipalities that are excited about this already that several communities have already applied for the ACP grant to get started on developing their IDPs, and there's nothing keeping them from getting started on it now if they so desire. Many of them already have IDPs and productive

relationships with their neighbours, so there's a lot of great work going on. A lot of work being started already is going to capitalize on the work that has been done for a long time. But when it comes down to it, we'll make sure that they have the templates, make sure that they have the support of the staff, the advisers, the support of staff in our planning department in order to move forward.

Certainly, for some of the smaller municipalities – for example, you know, a summer village that has 10 people – we're not talking about a document that requires substantial work by a consultant but something that they can work on together through a template, with support of the department, in a very short period of time. Between the excellent work that my department can offer in terms of all the advisers that we have on staff for municipalities along with the templates and along with the ACP grants, I'm looking forward to continuing to work with them to ensure that they get the work done in a timely fashion so that their residents can, sooner rather than later, take advantage of all of the amazing opportunities that this kind of collaboration has to offer.

Once again, I'm not standing in support of the amendment because it is important that we get moving on this right away and ensure that Albertans can have the advantage of it sooner rather than later. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to SA4? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Yes. Thank you. I appreciate the comments back from the minister in relation to our request to only extend this by one year. It seems as though she's not convinced that that would be the right way to go, but she's brought up a couple of interesting points that I cannot resist talking to a little bit because the door is open.

Yes, there is an election coming up in October '17. We're going to see a massive amount of interest at the local level, I'm sure, in this, so it occurs to me that we have got to talk a little bit about that. The number of people that come into municipal elections and are surprised by what they find once there is quite surprising, I think. Once again, you've given us another point, I think, Minister. I think this is an added point we didn't think of this morning, so thank you. This is another reason we should extend it one year. All those people are going to be so blind to some of the things that are going on, as they currently are, let alone these changes. The regulations, of course, we won't be debating here today, and I know that you're going to be putting them on the sites, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Still, I would believe that we're not making a large request – it's a small request – and because of the election I think this is a great reason for it to be extended that extra year, which our amendment is asking for.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA4?

Seeing none, I will call the question on the subamendment.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on subamendment SA4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:57 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Drysdale	Loewen	Panda
Fraser	McIver	Schneider
Gotfried	Nixon	Stier
Hanson		

Against the motion:

Carson	Larivee	Payne
Ceci	Loyola	Renaud
Connolly	Luff	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Malkinson	Sabir
Dang	Mason	Schreiner
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Shepherd
Feehan	McKittrick	Sigurdson
Ganley	McLean	Sucha
Goehring	McPherson	Turner
Hoffman	Miranda	Westhead
Horne	Nielsen	Woollard
Jansen		

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 34
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[Motion on subamendment SA4 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the original amendment. Any members wishing to speak to A1? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Perfect. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. On behalf of the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills I would like to propose an amendment to the amendment to Bill 21.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, if you could just wait until I have a copy of the original, please.

**Mr. Hanson:** You bet.

**The Deputy Chair:** The subamendment will now be referred to as SA5.

Please go ahead.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Mr. Cooper to move that amendment A1 to Bill 21, Modernized Municipal Government Act, be amended in part X by striking out the proposed subsection (2.2) and substituting the following:

(2.2) Subject to an appeal under section 648.1, an off-site levy may be imposed and collected for a purpose referred to in section (2.1) only if, in respect of the land on which the off-site levy is being imposed,

- (a) no off-site levy has been previously imposed under subsection (1) for the same purpose with respect to the land on which the off-site levy is being imposed, and
- (b) at least 15% of the benefit of the purpose, as determined under the regulations, is anticipated to benefit the future occupants of land on which the off-site levy is being imposed.

This amendment instates a threshold of 15 per cent rather than the current 30 per cent of the benefit of a proposed community infrastructure – police station, library, fire hall, recreation centre, et cetera – to protect consumers more from the effects of rising house costs.

Originally off-site levies could be charged for water, infrastructure, sanitary sewage, storm sewage, drainage, and roads. Bill 21 originally brought in new capital projects that will now be included, and they are recreation facilities, fire halls, police stations, or libraries. For these new areas in Bill 21 there originally had to be a minimum benefit to the new members of the community of 30 per

cent. In this amendment the government has chosen to take away the 30 per cent minimum benefit, or this amendment would propose to take away the 30 per cent minimum benefit. While it's true that the benefit should be proportionate, the 30 per cent minimum was a reasonable threshold to balance needs of municipalities against the rising cost of new homes. We feel that 15 per cent would better reflect a reduction in that.

Housing affordability is very important. Our housing industry not only supplies homes for Alberta families; it also employs many, many workers. So in an effort to regain this balance, we are proposing a new threshold of 15 per cent to protect consumers more from the effects of rising house costs.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to subamendment SA5? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. During the government's summer tour we heard from many municipalities and members of the public who are supportive of our proposal to expand the scope of off-site levies to help build fire halls, libraries, police stations, and recreation centres. Such facilities are expensive but highly valued and should be part of complete, safe, healthy, and growing communities.

Until now municipalities had to dig deep into existing tax revenue to fund construction, the responsibility weighing heavily on them and individual taxpayers. This new policy spreads part of that responsibility to developers, new home buyers, and growing communities to help pay a fair share. Essentially, it's growth helping to pay for growth.

Additional feedback received over the summer identified a number of suggestions to further improve the proposals put forward in Bill 21. In particular, many municipalities suggested that changes were needed to make this tool more accessible to small communities across the province. Most notably, we heard that the proposed 30 per cent threshold for applying these levies was problematic. Under the House amendment that we made, municipalities would be able to – and, of course, it's enabling legislation only – charge developers one-time fees based on the benefit the new development would receive from the new facility, whether that benefit is 1 per cent, 10 per cent, 50 per cent, or more. There's no minimum or maximum benefit, just a shared responsibility among all partners to help pay for growing communities and valuable services.

Madam Chair, we heard very clearly from municipalities that that threshold was a challenge for smaller communities to be able to utilize this tool. So on behalf of those smaller communities and ensuring they've all the tools that they need to support the infrastructure development in their communities, we chose to remove the 30 per cent threshold, and with that, a 15 per cent threshold would continue to present a challenge for those municipalities. By removing the threshold, Alberta municipalities are better positioned to create healthy communities, provide a more consistent level of service to all their residents, and manage growth within their boundaries. Of course, Madam Chair, developers will contribute to the costs of some community facilities based on the degree of benefit while municipalities will continue to find the rest through general revenue.

11:20

So this is, again, about providing an opportunity for municipalities to engage with their residents, to engage with their development industry to create a bylaw that would make sense to ensure they meet the infrastructure needs of their communities.

Again, it's just another tool in their tool box so that Albertans in new communities have a more consistent level of service from fire halls, libraries, recreation centres, and police stations. Albertans in existing communities will know they are not shouldering a disproportionate burden in funding services for new development through their taxes. Expanding the scope of off-site levies and basing them on a fair formula is good for communities and good for all of Albertans.

Again, the developers pay only a proportional benefit for this, and it is important that we ensure that small communities have the access that they need to this tool, so I will not be supporting this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay. Thank you very much again, Madam Chair. I just would like to speak briefly to the issue of off-site levies and in particular this amendment. The number one priority that we need to consider, I guess – there are two things: basically, the needs of the municipalities and their ever-shrinking funding abilities. The other thing that we have to consider also is the taxpayer. We're seeing taxpayers being faced with ever-increasing property taxes. We're seeing a lot of people, especially in the construction industry, facing cuts to their hourly wages and the number of hours worked, and then on January 1 we're going to be seeing a carbon tax come in, that's also going to be stepping in on that.

I'd just like to look at section X of the amendment. It says that it is amended by striking out the proposed section and substituting the following:

(2.2) Subject to an appeal under section 648.1, an off-site levy may be imposed and collected for a purpose referred to in subsection (2.1) only if . . .

(a) no off-site levy has been previously imposed under subsection (1) for the same purpose.

I understand that that is where the 30 per cent has been struck from the list.

Looking at the recommendations from the AUMA and the AAMD and C, they voted to support

the expansion of the scope of offsite levies to include the land and buildings for community recreation facilities, fire halls, police stations and libraries, and in general, supports the notion that those who benefit from a facility or service should pay for that service in a manner that is proportional to their benefit.

Under the current MGA it says that currently the MGA mandates that off-site levies can only be used to fund the construction or expansion of roads, sanitary sewers, waterways, and land connected to those types of infrastructure. This amendment does seem to reflect the needs and wants of the AUMA and the AAMD and C. The only reflection of the off-site levies that is found in the amendment is the area where it covers appeals of off-site levies. So it does give tools for developers to address that.

I'm going to drift off a little bit onto education of councillors and county employees. I had one incident brought to my attention where a person was going to develop a shop on private farmland out in a county, and when they got their off-site levy, they had factored in all kinds of things like waterlines out to the property and sewer lines out to the property, which would have been totally unworkable anyway. But initiated onto this, roughly a hundred thousand dollar project, was an off-site levy of \$750,000. This is a concern for a lot of communities, just these off-site levies put forward under bylaw by the municipalities, and the caution is to make sure that people understand that these can actually lead to lack of development in



their areas if they try to introduce too many off-site levies onto developers.

The idea of setting some type of limit on it: we felt, you know, rather than to just have a limit of zero, people would be tacking on anything that they could come up with, and even if a person was building an acreage five miles out of town, they could tack on parts of the police station or parts of recreational facilities. So we do feel a need that there should be some level that reflects the use of a new development and limits, at some point, the ability for the municipality to tack on a levy just arbitrarily. The fact that the municipality should actually have some time frame on when they have to build this facility – and that should be reflected in that cost. There was also the concern about where the funds would be held until such facility was completed.

I really think that having some sort of threshold in there for setting an off-site levy on a new development – and I think 15 per cent is a nice fit between zero and 30. We wonder where the 30 per cent came from. It just seemed like an arbitrary number anyway. Again, our concern is that off-site levies may actually stifle development in some areas, so we do need to have some sort of limits on the levels of off-site levies as well as a time frame on when projects have to be completed by.

It is fairly clear in the amendments where it does cover the ability to appeal, which is a good addition in there.

A couple of the other things. One of the recommendations from AUMA and AAMD and C was to remove the 30 per cent threshold. I don't believe from our conversations that they wanted it reduced down to just a zero but did want some sort of threshold limit on that.

One of the other recommendations from AUMA and AAMD and C was to “enable multiple municipalities to use the offsite levies to fund the same facility when new development in each of the municipalities use and benefit from the new facility,” so we're asking, I guess, if that is going to be a part of the intermunicipality framework, that they'll have to consider these as well. Does that allow one municipality to impose levies through an agreement onto developments in another, which is a concern also to some of the people there.

I guess I would just encourage anybody else that would like to speak to this amendment. I do think that we need some sort of limit on it, and I believe 15 per cent is better than the 30 per cent and also better than just leaving it wide open to interpretation by municipalities.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA5? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you. It's great to be back in the House, where it's warm and cozy, and talking about significant pieces of government business and particularly amendments, a very good amendment moved by my hon. colleague. It's just like it was my amendment.

I'd just like to rise and speak in support. You know, this amendment is really about striking the right balance. We went from one extreme to the other, from 30 to zero, and perhaps 15 is, well, about balance. It's approximately in the middle of zero and 30. This is a good opportunity to ensure that there's a threshold of 15 per cent of the benefit for proposed community infrastructure around police stations, fire halls, libraries, rec centres, et cetera. Really, it has the potential of protecting the increasing housing costs for the consumer.

11:30

When legislating, oftentimes it is about balance, about finding the right balance between all stakeholders that are involved. I know that the government some days likes to cozy up to industry. The next day they like to sue industry and never really know what's coming or going.

This particular amendment comes to us not as a direct result of industry, but certainly industry spoke out strongly about this particular portion of the MGA. I think that this is a reasonable compromise to developers that will provide some certainty for them and also ensure that off-site levies aren't used where the value isn't there. That's certainly what we can see if the threshold is zero, that development costs can increase dramatically with the use of off-site levies.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Now, while I appreciate and respect the fact that, you know, municipalities have to be competitive with their neighbours and that if one municipality is overusing off-site levies, perhaps that will have its own way of sorting itself out – there was certainty for the building industry, and now there is zero – this is a very reasonable compromise, one that strikes the right balance. I would encourage the members of the government to also support this amendment so that we can respect both municipalities' individuality, if you will, in local decision-making as well as provide certainty to developers. So I encourage members in the Chamber to support it this morning.

As I've mentioned and as I'm sure you'll hear me mention on numerous occasions, with Bill 21 it is so important that we get it right this time. It's so important that we legislate in a manner that will allow future growth and have consideration both of the development side and the municipality side.

I look forward to the ongoing debate not just around this issue but around issues included in this bill.

**The Acting Chair:** The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning. Good to see you there again today.

Just to sum up, then, I think that our colleagues here this morning have talked a little bit about this change, that was proposed in the amendment, from zero and now going to 15 per cent. I think there needs to be a bit of emphasis, which I'm picking out here from what's been said so far, and I'll perhaps provide a bit of that. The growth of a community is so important. With inflationary costs and all of the other things that happen in a small community, small-town situation, where you have higher costs for building materials, road materials, all kinds of different things, a municipality needs growth to offset those higher costs to maintain the municipality's services and programs. Good growth means having the right administrative rules and costs and things about it where it will encourage development and, hopefully, attract investment and speculators to come out and buy properties to develop.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Certainly, one of the economic factors that is so important to developers is that the administrative costs and all of the added costs, that a municipality can sometimes think they should perhaps throw at a developer's application, can make it noneconomic to proceed. With this bill, the original Bill 21, we have seen a lot of changes coming through that may have been a bit of a blow to home builders and developers in general. This is one of them where, you know, if we have no limit as to how much a new development will be making use of new fire halls, libraries, and police stations, et cetera, without

a rule, we have the situation where a developer could on the whim of the council be hit with a substantial levy.

So it makes sense to have some sort of level between zero and up to whatever we set. The original bill said 30 per cent. There were some thoughts in the department that 30 per cent was probably a good number. Then the government came back, and their department talked about removing it totally in the new amendment bill that we're working on right now. We think it should still be there but at a reduced level. Fifteen per cent is palatable to the various associations we've contacted with this suggestion. They like this idea so that if it's shown that in their development there will not be any probable benefit to having these types of facilities within their development, they're not hit with unnecessary costs.

I think the 15 per cent level makes sense, and I would encourage all members in the House this morning to support this change as it's not that much different from what they originally had suggested, and it kind of gets it partway and helps to support the developers' positions.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA5? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to speak in favour of this subamendment as well. Having spent about a good dozen years in the building and development community, you know, there's a lot of risk that's taken by people within the industry. These are the same people that we've been talking about over the last few days, people taking risks to invest in creating jobs in our communities. We've seen that take place, creating jobs on the land development side, but that also furthers the opportunity for the creation of jobs in the residential construction industry and in the commercial real estate industry that, as well, complements that.

I'm concerned that if in a headlong approach to do this – and as much as I also understand the municipal side of this and that there has to be sustainable development, the development industry has always said that they're willing to pay their fair share. I think the concern is where that goes into imbalance. I think that we need to be cognizant of that, and I think that this limit recognizes that 30 per cent was maybe too high, zero per cent is maybe too low, and 15 per cent is maybe a compromise that allows us to move forward in recognizing that risk capital that is put forward, Madam Chair.

Without that risk capital, we don't create the economic activity that we so desperately need in this province, and we don't create an opportunity for a fair return on investment amongst those developers, who, by the way, give up land for municipal reserves, who create amenities within their communities, who donate to recreation centres voluntarily. I happen to have worked for a company that put up a million and a half dollars for a regional recreation centre, which was not required by any legislation. We see that time and time again. I think it's an industry that doesn't blow their own horn very often about the other investments they make in communities outside of their commitments. In fact, in Calgary there are voluntary payments that are made towards some of the community amenities and services that are done voluntarily by the industry to support that.

I think this subamendment is one that is in the spirit of compromise. I hope that it's taken as being a balance between the interests of the municipalities, which I think is of grave concern for all of us, to ensure that they can fund the infrastructure that they need and the services that they need to offer and the amenities that are expected by communities – the schools, the recreation centres, the parks, and those things – also recognizing that the best thing for

the building and development industry is to also have those amenities. Those facilities are the amenities and the selling features that they go forth with to their potential residents in that community to say: "We have schools not just coming, but they're announced. We have a recreation centre. We have the fire and police services that we require in those communities. We've protected the environment. We've protected areas that we're going to conserve for parks and park reserves and environmental reserves and municipal reserves."

**11:40**

I think that we need to take that balanced approach. We need to recognize again that we live in a time where those investments are at significant risk. We do not live in a robust economy right now, what we've had in the past, which was almost guaranteed strong net migration numbers from not just across Canada but from around the world because of the strength of our economy. Those dollars that are put towards such developments are now at very significant risk.

I can tell you that the people that I talk to within the industry say that they're meeting their expectations and that those expectations are, at best, about 40 per cent of what they would have been just two years ago. They're keeping the lights on. They're trying to keep their employees employed. They're taking on third-party work that they never would have done during regular, robust times. They're still building on spec sometimes, single-family homes, multifamily. They're incorporating attainable home ownership, they're incorporating affordable rental, and they're incorporating accessible housing within many of those through their work with organizations and initiatives such as the Resolve campaign in Calgary. I know that there are similar initiatives in Edmonton and across the province to deliver affordable, accessible, attainable housing.

I think we have to recognize that there are lots of voluntary things going on at the same time as we are putting in legislation to govern what we expect as minimums from the industry, again recognizing that there is always a balancing point there but that that balance has been put a little off balance over the last two years with the economy, Madam Chair.

I would encourage all members of the House to consider this subamendment as being a rational one, a common-sense one, and one that recognizes that we need those investments. We need them to move forward. We need to be cognizant of the economics around those decisions, and we need to use those economics and respect the risks taken to create jobs in this province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA5?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on subamendment SA5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:43 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	Hanson	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Starke
Drysdale	McIver	Stier
Gottfried	Nixon	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Nielsen
Babcock	Jansen	Payne
Bilous	Larivee	Piquette
Carson	Littlewood	Renaud
Ceci	Loyola	Rosendahl
Connolly	Luff	Sabir
Coolahan	Malkinson	Schreiner
Dach	Mason	Shepherd
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Drever	McKittrick	Sucha
Feehan	McLean	Turner
Ganley	McPherson	Westhead
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard
Totals:	For – 12	Against – 39

[Motion on subamendment SA5 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the original amendment, A1. Are there members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak about Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, and the subamendment that the government has put forward. I again would like to recognize all members of this House, government officials, associations, and municipalities who have contributed at various stages of the consultation on this bill and this amendment. This review comes as a result of much discussion, but there's still work that needs to be done.

One topic which I believe requires more scrutiny is the decision to remove local industrial assessment and centralize the process in provincial bodies. I know that I brought this up awhile ago, but I think more answers are required from this government, specifically the changes that have been made to section 289(1), which reads, "Assessments for all property in a municipality, other than designated industrial property, must be prepared [by the assessor appointed] by the municipal assessor." This proposed change would centralize the responsibility for all industrial property assessment with the provincial government. Likewise, the provincial government will be responsible for defending the assessment if appealed. All assessment appeals will be adjudicated by the Municipal Government Board. Industry stakeholders seem to prefer to have one appeals process, and under the new centralized assessment, there is now a specific assessment appeal process and adjudicator, which should result in more consistent rulings. This is something that we can agree with.

11:50

My colleague from Livingstone-Macleod, who is also the shadow minister for Municipal Affairs, has been busy consulting with stakeholders to find and hear what the options are on this subject. One thing that we've heard in respect to centralizing industrial assessment was that this change came as a result of inconsistencies found within a few particular municipalities, which may have been better addressed by working with each different municipality. The county of Rocky View, for instance, believes that the change reduces municipal autonomy, is unnecessarily disruptive, and has the potential for significant loss of municipal revenue. The proposal will also result in province-wide job loss as responsibility shifts to the centralized authority. This is one point which was echoed by the AAMD and C, Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties.

Based on our understanding, there are five points which most accurately summarize their position on the centralization. One:

AAMDC members have expressed considerable concern about the centralization of assessment on designated industrial property because it could lead to decreased local autonomy and local knowledge of the properties being assessed. Further, municipalities are concerned that assessment will be lost or missed and that the proposed cost reductions will not materialize as municipalities retain assessors to verify provincial assessments.

Two:

As noted, the AAMDC does not support the centralization of assessment of designated industrial property but if it is going to continue forward, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen the process.

Three:

Clarify that designated industrial property can apply to residential and agriculture properties only in cases where there is a mixed use on the property.

Four:

Exempt municipalities from paying the requisition to fund the centralized assessment body if an industrial property owner does not pay their property taxes.

Five:

Ensure assessors are based throughout the province and not centralized in Alberta's metropolitan centres.

Now, we've heard that the AUMA, Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, is generally supportive of this bill. There are a few recommendations that they say need to be implemented to improve this bill:

- Require the provincial assessor to share valuation details and other relevant information with the municipal assessor/municipality to ensure transparency;
- Require updates to regulated assessment rates annually;
- Create a third party audit function so that the province is not auditing its own assessment;
- Enable municipalities to participate in any assessment appeals for assessments provided by the provincial assessor.

The Alberta Assessors' Association also provided comments, which I'd like to read into the record. Quote: the association has completed a careful analysis of this issue and does not support the creation of a central agency to prepare industrial assessments. We do recognize ...

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report progress.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 21. I wish to table all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Madam Speaker, thank you very much. I think we've made some good progress this morning. Seeing the time, I move that we adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

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







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 29, 2016

Day 54

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
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Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
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Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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David Eggen	Minister of Education
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Hanson	Woollard
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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 29, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Hon. members, I would just ask, once again, that we take a moment to extend our sincerest and deepest sympathies and prayers to the family and friends of Captain Tom McQueen, the pilot of the CF-18 jet who tragically lost his life yesterday. If we could just take a moment.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I've got the pride and joy of being able to announce one of my local schools to you and through you to this Assembly, the Holy Cross elementary school. This school that I'm announcing today is a school that both of my children, Amelia and Charlotte, go to.

I also would like to make a special announcement. We have a young man up in the gallery whose birthday it is today, Luke Boisvert.

I would like the parents to stand first. I will name you by the first name. We've got Leanne, Matthew, Clint, Bev, Joy, Tyra, Joleen, David, Teresa, Julia, and Gerald.

If you could all please stand – and I'll have the students stand as well right now – and we'll acknowledge you to the Assembly. Thank you for coming today.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I have two groups that I'd like to introduce at your pleasure. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the members of the Alberta Home Education Association. The association provides assistance for home-educating students and families and advocates for the authority of home-educating parents. Paul van den Bosch is the president of the association. Paul has degrees in journalism and in education, and he and wife, Mary, have seven children. The oldest two have gone on to postsecondary success. His daughter will be receiving her master's degree this spring from the Franciscan University of Ohio, and his oldest son has his BA from Concordia University here in Edmonton.

Patty Marler is the government liaison for the Home Education Association and has been advocating for home education for over five years. First and foremost, she is the home-educating mother of four children, two of whom have graduated from their home education programs and then graduated from the university and from NAIT. Patty believes that parents are the best decision-makers for their children. She has two of her children, Brianne and Qiu, here with her today.

We had an exciting rally this morning in celebration of home education. Parents from across the province came to bring attention to the successes and the challenges that home education families are experiencing. Could I ask this group to rise and that we give the customary warm welcome of the House to Paul and to Patty.

**The Speaker:** The second one.

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Legislature the staff and students of

Aurora elementary school. In a small town like Drayton Valley you get to know your neighbours, and when you teach in a small town, you get to know just about everyone. Some of the teachers today were my colleagues two years ago, and one teacher in particular was a former student of mine. I think that as I talked to the students today, for probably about a third of them I taught their parents. It is a great pleasure for me today to have Aurora elementary school please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any additional school groups?

Seeing and hearing none, the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Edmonton Salutes Committee, who are seated in your gallery. The mandate for the committee is to promote and recognize our local military community contributions both at home and abroad. Please welcome Tammy Pidner, community member; Alex Tsang, Major (Retired) and president of the Edmonton United Services Institute; Ferd Caron, councillor for Sturgeon county; Marvin Neuman, director of real estate for Canada Lands Company; Kaetlyn Corbould, military and protocol liaison for the city of Edmonton; and in our Chamber Brian Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms and director of visitor, ceremonial, and security services for the Legislative Assembly. I would ask the committee to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, it is my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of hard-working civil servants who work for the economics and competitiveness division of Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. They are Ann Boyda, Shukun Guan, Emmanuel Laate, Olubukola Oyewumi, Philippa Rodrigues, and Rawlin Thangaraj. They represent the many women and men who work hard to ensure that our farm families are equipped with information on how they can do better in the competitive market of agriculture. I would like to ask that all of them now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly an addition to our constituency team in Edmonton-Glenora. Lowell Walls is keenly interested in helping others and has a deep commitment to supporting people looking for assistance. That's why he is a social work student who is completing his practicum in my constituency office. I ask that Lowell please rise along with Tonya and Dylan, who've been introduced previously, to receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Greg Tabak, a proud Albertan and a good friend. Greg is a senior manager with Enterprise car rental system, a big supporter of Alberta's tourism industry, and one of the nicest people I know. I ask Greg now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two women who work tirelessly to support constituents in Calgary-Acadia. Carla Lloyd works full-time in our office, and she's a compassionate advocate for people in our riding, with a commitment to equity and a knack for keeping us organized and on track. Heather Erlen works both in Calgary-Acadia and Calgary-Bow, and she does an amazing job supporting our constituents with casework and referrals and is a super-strong voice for our community. I'm honoured to have them both working with me, and I couldn't do what I do if not for them. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If you'll indulge me, I have two introductions today. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a fantastic group of Alberta students and mentors from Mindfuel who recently shared their urban tundra science research project on a global stage. The team is made up of students from Edmonton high schools and has the support of research advisers and a mentor from the U of A.

1:40

The students are here today with their mentors in the members' gallery. I ask them to rise as I call their names, and I will apologize in advance for mispronouncing their name: Mindfuel CEO Cassy Weber, Tammy Yamkowsky, Lizzie MacNeill, Mike Ellison, Yassir Mohamed, David Herczeg, Sushil Kumar Senthil Kumar, Rafael Rigon, Teresa Nguyen-Pham, Lujia Cai, Ethan Agena, Karoline Nguyen, Seymour Dadashov, Joshua Cruz, Ejovan Agena, Kelly Shi, Catherine Paet-Pondanera, Farynna Loubich Facundo, Kim Hang, Jacob Xiang, Emman Nnamani, and Rochelin Dalangin. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

My second introduction, Mr. Speaker, is a young man named Jordan Latter. He's a social work student at MacEwan University, and he's currently fulfilling his practicum in the incredible Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview constituency office. Before starting school, he worked as a community support worker and a child and youth care worker for several years. He's entered the social work program so that he can be an advocate for those in need and increase his capacity to positively impact human services in Alberta. I see that he's risen. I would ask my colleagues to join me in giving him the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a person that spends each day tirelessly advancing workers' rights. Not only is Mike Scott a constituent from the outstanding riding of Edmonton-Decore, but he's also a supporter, and more importantly he's the president of CUPE local 30. Mike, thank you for all you do for all of your members, and I would now ask that you please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to rise and introduce to you and through you a group of local self-advocates from the capital region who tirelessly advocate for full inclusion of persons with disabilities. The Self Advocacy Federation is an integral organization, and they continuously remind us: Nothing about Us without Us. I'd like to ask each person to rise as I say their name: Amy Park, Emily Rypstra, Daisy Stacey, and Keri McEachern. Please join me in welcoming this group.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Brendan Miller of Walsh LLP of Calgary. Brendan is a constitutional lawyer and a strong civil rights advocate, and I am proud to call him a friend. My guest is seated in the members' gallery, and I ask him to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests for introductions today? The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Maurice Brunelle. Maurice is an IT specialist in the Ministry of Human Services. Twenty years ago I collected bone marrow fluid from Maurice at the Cross Cancer Institute. Maurice had volunteered his stem cells to the unrelated bone marrow registry, and his stem cells were transported to Ontario, where they were transplanted successfully to a police officer there. Maurice, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

#### Rabi al-Awwal

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rabi al-Awwal is the third month in the Islamic calendar, a calendar that depends on moonsighting. The word "Rabi" means "spring," and "al-Awwal" means "the first" in Arabic. This year the first day of Rabi al-Awwal is expected to be December 1. The name of the month implies celebration and happiness as it is followed by the months of mourning and grieving known as Muharram and Safar.

Rabi al-Awwal is one of the very important and significant months for Muslims. It is a month when two special occasions are celebrated: Eid Milad-un-Nabi, the birth of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and the Eid-e-Zahra, the festival of Fatima's family. Fatima was the daughter of Prophet Muhammad and the mother of Imam Hussain, alaihi salaam; therefore, she is celebrated on Eid-e-Zahra. On this day the happiness of Prophet Muhammad's family was restored after the martyrdom of Imam Hussain and the announcement of his present successor, Imam Mahdi, alaihi salaam, was made.

The festival of Fatima's family is celebrated on the ninth day of Rabi al-Awwal, and Prophet Muhammad's birthday is celebrated on either the 12th or 17th day of the month. Therefore, the entire week is declared the week of unity amongst Muslims to spread peace and justice all over the world.

In this month both occasions are celebrated world-wide with lighting, decorations, Quran recitals, prayers, parades, communal meals, feasts, charities, and donations along with lectures and poems on Islam. On these days the mosques, homes, and streets are liveliest and the joy of celebration is at its peak.

This year the celebrations of Rabi al-Awwal coincide with the holiday celebrations, uniting all of us together in sharing the joys of the season. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Parliamentary Debate

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The word “respect” is thrown around a lot in this House. I love robust debate and have been subjected to many loud and passionate heckles from all members opposite at some time or another, and I’ve participated. Without passion we wouldn’t come up with the best solutions for our province, but there’s a double standard that is palpable that comes from the NDP members of this House. There is heckling that is part of debate, but there are jabs and low blows, and that is what I experienced last night.

All members of this House are more than capable of standing up for themselves, including the amazing female members on all sides. I was astounded to see the Minister of Advanced Education, of all people, stand up and try to belittle the opposition for sharing our opinions. I happen to think that all of us have our own voice. Yes, even conservative women. I’m not asking for chivalry; I’m asking for respect for my opinions. Words in this House are being twisted to suit the government’s side. I regularly have my motives questioned as I fight for a better province.

It was laid out in black and white for me last night that this minister does not respect me, my caucus, or the Legislature. I have never had to defend myself so much or be afraid to say what I think in this House. A weak apology was offered by the Advanced Education minister last night, and I’ll accept that weak apology and move on, but since you also felt the need to interrupt a debate with attacks on my caucus, my resolve has only deepened. I know that the members of my caucus, that I stand beside each and every day, are going to continue to defend Albertans across this province who are depending on us.

Minister, would you please give me the courtesy of listening to my words rather than judging my tone, gesture, and facial expressions? I will offer you the same.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

### Paramedics

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The role of the opposition is to hold the government accountable, and it is not necessarily to oppose everything the government proposes. I’m extremely proud to represent the constituents of Calgary-South East as their elected member in this House. In fact, before being elected, I served Alberta communities and my constituents as an advanced care paramedic. In that pride I’m also very humbled that Albertans have allowed me to serve them.

Alberta paramedics and EMTs have been historically recognized as some of the best in the world, and now there is a future where they can build on that success thanks to this government, the hon. Minister of Health, the Department of Health, and Alberta Health Services. Earlier this year the government proclaimed paramedicine and the College of Paramedics under the Health Professions Act. Since then we’ve seen positive changes at the College of Paramedics. There’s been a new president and council elected, a

well-attended AGM, and greater engagement from the members it governs. Make no mistake. Former administrations and staff from the College of Paramedics have been strong champions in making this change as well.

With paramedics now under the Health Professions Act, it opens the door to better health care for all Albertans. The possibility for more treat-and-release and treat-and-refer protocols allows for less wait time and more community care based practice. We can now also realize the opportunity for a paramedic practitioner degree program, again, which would combine the best of both skill sets in emergency medicine and community paramedicine. Under the Health Professions Act paramedics can have a greater latitude to work in other health care settings. Again, this will enhance collaborative practice in our health care system. This act also increases the accountability amongst registered members of the college.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, while I disagree with this government on several issues, on this particular issue the government has done a good thing not just for paramedics and their profession but for Albertans. I believe that this is going to provide better health care for all communities, and the government should be commended.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** Her Majesty’s Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Federal Equalization and Transfer Payments

**Mr. Jean:** Last night the NDP voted unanimously against fighting for a better deal for Albertans on equalization. I would suggest that the NDP occasionally get out from under the dome so that they can actually speak with Albertans across the province. This is a serious issue. Albertans send at least \$20 billion or more every year to Ottawa than we get back in either transfers or services. We are compassionate, but we are also getting a raw deal under the current system. Why would the Premier refuse to at least form a position on equalization rather than just ignoring it and voting against it altogether?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to fighting for Alberta’s interests, they’ve got a government that’s on their side. The Leader of the Official Opposition has a record that isn’t worth writing home about when it comes to this file. In his decade in Ottawa he did nothing on the equalization file. In those 10 years he mentioned equalization once in the House and only twice in committees and not with anywhere near the result that I think Albertans would have hoped for if he was going to pretend that he was fighting for this file today. He had an opportunity to do so as a member of the government caucus in Ottawa.

**Mr. Jean:** I know that the Premier thinks that getting a thumbs-up from Ottawa to shut down coal jobs and bring in a carbon tax is her idea of getting a good deal for Albertans, but Albertans do think differently. They see a system where their taxes subsidize Quebec for cheaper tuition, whose politicians then turn around and attack our pipelines and our way of life. They see neighbours and family members lose their jobs and struggle to qualify for EI payments even under this system. Albertans have been getting a raw deal from Ottawa on transfers, on EI, and on equalization. Why won’t the Premier stick up for Albertans and stick up for all of us and work harder for us?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, in his decade in Ottawa he had about as much success as he did on getting pipelines built, Mr. Speaker. When he

talks about success, the very thing he's asking about, let's remind ourselves what we have done in working with Ottawa for Alberta's interests. We have new federal infrastructure funding for projects that'll create jobs here in Alberta. We're working with the federal government to improve eligibility for employment insurance with great respect, and we're fighting for Alberta's interests on improving federal transfers to Alberta, not just equalization.

**Mr. Jean:** And let's not forget a hundred thousand Albertans out of work because of this government.

We all work for Albertans. It's our job to actually stick up for them and fight for them. The NDP had a real opportunity last night to be on the side of the people of Alberta and set the record straight. They had a chance to show Canada that Alberta is serious about getting a better deal for those who pay taxes in this province. Those are Albertans. Saskatchewan has said clearly that they want to negotiate reforms but need partners. Why does the Premier refuse to even work with Saskatchewan's Premier to fight for a fair equalization system for Albertans?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition thinks that the way to get things done at the national level is by poking a stick in the eye of our potential allies. We believe in diplomacy. We believe in working co-operatively with our partners. That's why at my FPT meeting and at many of the others we're willing to talk about how fulfilling the federal platform can help to get better results for Albertans. We're going to keep doing that every opportunity we can, with diplomacy and respect, not by cheap headlines, that the Official Opposition is proposing, and Twitter wars.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

### Energy Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Here's another example of the NDP failing Albertans. Ottawa is showing the same enthusiasm for killing jobs in our coal industry as the Alberta NDP. The NDP is going to spend \$1.4 billion of Alberta taxpayers' money to do it and leave our system in need of billions of dollars more in generation to be subsidized by Alberta taxpayers. Instead of shutting down high-efficiency coal generation across Alberta, why doesn't the Premier just negotiate a deal with Ottawa to keep these plants in Alberta online?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be a part of a government that isn't afraid to take action and be leaders right here in Alberta. Because our government took action, we are ready for the federal accelerated coal phase-out with a made-in-Alberta plan. Under our Alberta plan companies will be compensated \$1.1 billion so they can keep investing in Alberta companies. That's leadership. When there's a tough issue that needs to be tackled, our government isn't afraid to do it. We're not just going to look to Ottawa to solve our problems.

**Mr. Jean:** Here's the problem. Both Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan have negotiated deals to keep their coal plants running past 2030. The NDP has had an opportunity to cut the same kind of deal for the 10,000 men and women in Alberta who work in our coal industry, but instead they're putting ideology above Alberta's job creation. As one of Canada's major money managers of Canoe Financial put it yesterday: there's an insane amount of naiveté with this government. Why won't this government acknowledge this,

change course, and start to stand up for good-paying Alberta jobs for Albertans?

**Ms Hoffman:** We are very proud to stand up for Albertans and for their jobs, Mr. Speaker. That's why we came to the federal government with a plan, and that's why our coal units will be converted to natural gas generation and will have an extra 15 years of operation before they are phased out. Dawn Farrell, CEO of TransAlta, said: we've been very public about the benefits of these conversions; these are low-cost investments that can lengthen the average life of our coal fleet by up to 15 years. They're going to keep mortgage-paying jobs in local communities.

**Mr. Jean:** Unemployment in Alberta is near record levels, but in just 33 days the NDP's carbon tax comes into effect. That means that in 33 days charities will see millions of dollars taken from them. It means restaurants, farmers, engineers, construction workers, entrepreneurs, and Alberta's families will all have less money to help finance billions of dollars in green slush funds under the NDP. It's a tax that has a full thumbs-up from Ottawa. Why should Alberta have to pay this tax, that will only hurt Alberta jobs, our economy, and our most vulnerable citizens at a time they can't afford it?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, it sure sounds like the Leader of the Official Opposition is proposing that we spend 10 times the cost of doing the proper phase-out of these coal units to instead invest in risky technology. Instead, what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is that we're diversifying our economy. We're creating many different areas so that people can have good long-term employment. We can protect our environment, our air, and our water while protecting jobs, and that's exactly what our government is doing.

**The Speaker:** Third main question.

### Parental Choice in Education

**Mr. Jean:** Since taking office, the NDP have steadily eroded parental rights and choice in education in Alberta. It shouldn't be a surprise seeing as, before the NDP was elected, the NDP repeatedly took shots against our current education model, that acknowledges the importance of diversity and parental rights. Today on the steps of the Legislature concerned parents voiced valid concerns about the NDP slowly taking away parental choice in education. To the Premier: do you continue to believe, as you stated while in opposition, that you are steadfastly opposed to all nonpublic school options? Yes or no?

**Ms Hoffman:** No, Mr. Speaker. We stand on our record, which is showing that good education is fundamental to a good society, and that's why we are working diligently with parents to ensure that the payments that they are entitled to do in fact go towards those parents. As a steward of public dollars we owe that assurance to the public and to the parents who are entitled to those payments. We are working to make sure that we support public, Catholic, and our record will stand. We are also standing alongside parents who choose home education, private, or charter education.

**Mr. Jean:** Recognizing choice in our education system is incredibly important to families all across our province. The Education minister plans death by a thousand cuts when it comes to choice in education in Alberta. He has denied new charter school applications tailored specifically for special-needs students and has made sudden changes that have disrupted education delivery for students and failed to consult about those changes. Will the Premier



admit that under her leadership the NDP is seeking to do away with choice in education in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our record points to the fact that that couldn't be further from the truth. I'm very proud of the experience I had as chair of the Edmonton public school board, which has a variety of choice programs within a public education model as well, including supports for home-schooling families. If we want to talk about what the Official Opposition is proposing for education, they proposed significant cuts in the last budget. The third party proposed not funding any of the new student growth. Instead, Albertans elected a government that stands by our children and our future, and that's why we're investing in education.

2:00

**Mr. Jean:** It's clear that the NDP is attempting to move parents from the driver's seat as the central decision-makers for their children to the back of the bus. Parents today have the choice to choose from public, Catholic, francophone, public charter, private, or home-schooling. Good choice in education. This diversity has actually strengthened our education system as a whole while saving millions of dollars for Alberta taxpayers. Will the Premier please confirm that all of the choices in education that she has mentioned, that I have mentioned will continue to be options for families all across our province and that they'll stop the attacks on these choices in education and that parents will continue to always be in the driver's seat of their children's education?

**Ms Hoffman:** The only ones attacking education are the Official Opposition, Mr. Speaker. That's why our government was proud to stand by increases to the Education budget to provide stable, predictable funding so that children can have the very best education. That's why we are working with parents to make sure that the funds that they're owed – those parents who choose home-schooling – are indeed theirs, and we're providing some clarity and stability because we know that we waited for more than four decades under the third party. Today we have a government that's going to stand up for children and for their rights.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

#### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier stood there and bragged that her government would, quote, never download costs onto Alberta families during these difficult economic times, yet we see them racking up debt and taxes at an unprecedented rate. The government is incapable of making difficult decisions that Alberta families are making every day and is downloading the cost of their fiscal incompetence onto the next generation, who will ultimately have to clean up this mess. To the Finance minister: do you not realize that by avoiding tough financial decisions now, you're sacrificing the prosperity of our children and grandchildren?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Another member of that party gave me a piece of paper that said that Alberta has the lowest debt to GDP of any province in the country – the lowest debt to GDP – so we are taking the actions that we were voted in on in May 2015, which are to protect services, to protect programs, to invest in this province, and to diversify the economy.

**Mr. McIver:** Up to what the minister has said, I will say: you're welcome, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier also bragged that Alberta has a \$7 billion tax advantage over other Canadian jurisdictions. Two years ago that advantage was \$11 billion. She also inherited a \$1.1 billion surplus, a \$6.5 billion fund, and a triple-A credit rating. Now we've got a double-A credit rating, an empty contingency fund, and a \$10.8 billion deficit in this year alone. For the first time in decades Alberta is borrowing for operations. To the minister: when will you restore Alberta's \$11 billion tax advantage?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what we also inherited from the other side? We inherited the inability to balance a budget. If you look back at the number of times when oil was at \$105 a barrel – they couldn't balance the budget. It's at \$45, and we're doing a good job.

**Mr. McIver:** High price or low, we never went in the soup \$11 billion in a year, and you're headed way higher.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I also asked the Premier when Albertans could expect to see a reasonable plan to pay off the mountain of debt her government is accumulating. Instead, she talked about bringing the budget into balance, refusing to give a timeline. Albertans know – and government should – that a plan to repay debt is not the same as a plan to balance the budget. Again to the Finance minister, who ought to know. I'll ask again: when will your government present a realistic debt repayment plan?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I delivered Q2 yesterday, and in Q2 we saw that a more positive economy is coming in 2017, 2.3 per cent growth. We also saw that the deficit is smaller at this point. So with regard to the challenges I want to let you know that the Saskatchewan minister is in the same position we are. He says that you don't want to shock your economy by firing literally hundreds of teachers and nurses and putting hundreds of people out of work. So we're keeping everything stable in this province. That's what Albertans expect.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

#### Tobacco Reduction Strategy

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's second-quarter financial update contained very little good news for Albertans. A quarter-billion-dollar piece of that report was cost overruns in health care. Prevention, now approximately 3 per cent of our health budget, clearly must become a larger part of bending the curve in health care. The Premier has been quite vocal on a number of occasions regarding the health effects and costs of tobacco use to individuals, families, and the health care system. However, tobacco legislation passed in this House three years ago and supported by the Premier when in opposition remains to be proclaimed. To the Premier: what's the delay?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We have been able to move forward on a number of those pieces, including the banning of flavoured tobaccos, including menthol, in Alberta. We're very proud of that, and we are continuing to work with the chief medical

officer of health and others in a public health way to make sure that we're supporting Albertans and moving forward in a thoughtful way as we move forward with implementing additional pieces of the legislation.

**Dr. Swann:** Given that e-cigarette use is skyrocketing and given that youth are now almost as likely to try e-cigarettes containing addictive nicotine and given that Health Canada has now specifically recognized the danger e-cigarettes pose, will the minister commit to adding e-cigarettes to the tobaccolike products list and protect young Albertans by banning them in public establishments and workplaces?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for a question that is clearly connected to government policy and something that I think we have heard and many of us advocated for in terms of an expansion and looking at an area for implementation. I've been working collaboratively with my federal counterpart, the Minister of Health for Canada, and they are looking at bringing forward a number of different precautions and safeguards in the area of e-cigarettes and vaporizers and other types of tobacco products. We'll be looking at ways that we can have complementary collaboration to provide the very best safety for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Given that when in opposition the NDs made strong arguments against lobbyists from the tobacco industry having access to government ministers, in contravention of the framework convention on tobacco control, a global treaty of which Canada is a signatory, and given that there are still more than a dozen tobacco lobbyists currently operating in Alberta and on our lobbyist registry, will the minister commit today to ensuring that neither she nor her caucus members meet with tobacco lobbyists behind closed doors?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's certainly my intention. I'm glad to have it on *Hansard*. That's the way that we plan on moving forward, by making sure that we protect Albertans. They always deserve to be our number one stakeholder when it comes to making important decisions about their public health.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

#### Municipal Government Act Consultation

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I attended the consultation on the MGA in Hinton this past June, and I've worked closely with municipal leaders in my riding of Stony Plain to get their feedback and input. These same leaders as well as many of my constituents would like to continue their participation by engaging in the consultations on the recently released discussion paper. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what will this consultation look like?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the summer during the MGA consultation tour I heard many great ideas from Albertans across the province, and I thank them for sharing them. Some of those ideas led to the current bill while others led to new policy proposals. These new policy ideas were collected in a discussion guide, *Continuing the Conversation*, where we are now asking

Albertans to share their feedback on these new, potentially groundbreaking proposals as they did not have a chance to comment on them over the summer. We will be collecting that feedback until January 31, and based on that, we'll bring forward further amendments to the MGA in spring 2017. I encourage all Albertans . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
First supplemental.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the feedback the Ministry of Municipal Affairs received throughout the summer during the consultations throughout Alberta, to the same minister: can you tell us what new proposals the government is considering?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're considering a number of new policy ideas from Albertans that are innovative and forward-looking. Included in those are measures designed to strengthen collaboration between school boards and municipalities, that allow municipalities to create parental leave policies for elected councillors, and to empower municipalities to take a greater role in protecting the environment and combating climate change. These proposed policies need careful consideration and thoughtful feedback to ensure that they meet the needs of all Albertans, so I continue to urge interested parties to go online and tell us what you think.

2:10

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've heard about potentially introducing parental leave for municipal councillors and given that the Ministry of Status of Women launched the Ready for Her campaign, which will encourage more women to seek office, again to the same minister: how is the minister working to remove barriers and diversify these important councils?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is one of the proposed policies that I am most looking forward to receiving feedback on from Albertans. It builds off a lot of the work done by the Minister of Status of Women's Ready for Her campaign and would enable municipalities to create parental leave policies for elected councillors. This change could make elected work more family friendly or encourage more women to run for public office. Women still face more barriers when it comes to deciding to run for office, and it is policies like these that move us forward to more diversified representation in Alberta's local government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

#### Carbon Policies

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Carbon leakage is a real issue in any plan to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere. Bad policy choices can lead to economic activity moving to jurisdictions that don't care about the environment. The spectre of a federal carbon tax is looming on our horizon, and there is considerable risk of carbon leakage as a result. Will the NDP be lobbying the feds to apply a hefty carbon tax to oil coming into Canada from regimes with no carbon tax and especially those despot regimes that support terror, enslave people, and oppress women?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, this question of trade exposure and carbon leakage has informed our hybrid system of an economy-wide price with a system of output-based allocations. We are in consultation with the various industry sectors on the question of these output-based allocations in order to allow for the consideration of trade exposure and some of those competitive pressures that many in Alberta's industries face. I just met today, for example, with members of Fertilizer Canada on this very matter. I'll have more to say about it in subsequent answers, I'm sure.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Given that this government seems to care more about making their friends in the eco-radical community happy and handing them paid gigs on government panels and given that so far it seems that this government has not thought out the consequences of carbon leakage since we have yet to see the government's real plan to deal with carbon leakage, will the Premier pause the carbon tax until she gets a plan?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are a number of job creators in this province that the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and the Wildrose have called self-immolating, and they're attacking those job creators, folks like Suncor, folks like Shell, folks like Syncrude, who publicly support a carbon price with a system of output-based allocations. Enbridge, TransCanada, Royal Bank, CNRL, the Cement Association, the Mining Association: these are the folks that the Wildrose thinks are eco-radicals. These are the folks that the Wildrose talks down every chance they get.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Given that the chair of the NDP's own climate panel knows that carbon leakage is the weakness of carbon taxation – he said, quote: until the rest of the world has policies that impose similar costs, you're not actually reducing emissions to the extent that you think; you're just displacing emissions and the economic activity to other jurisdictions – and given that the carbon tax will hurt economic activity without actually reducing global emissions, why is the NDP blindly rushing headlong down a policy path that hurts Albertans without having an honest answer to the problem of carbon leakage?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've heard this before, a half interpretation of the Leach report, because it went on to recommend a system of output-based allocations, which we are currently negotiating with the industry sectors in question. That is why many, many Canadian corporate executives have been urging the federal government to move forward with carbon pricing and climate action, companies like GE Canada, SNC-Lavalin, Shell Canada, Rio Tinto, Teck Resources, Forest Products Association of Canada, Suncor, large employers in all of our ridings, who are looking to us to find a way forward for Canada.

#### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. Fraser:** Yesterday I asked about supports for families impacted by the accelerated coal phase-out. Clearly, this government completely missed the mark in providing any information to rural families or municipal leaders on how their communities will change. With all due respect to the economic development minister, I'm surprised that you didn't reach out personally to these communities on such an important matter. Minister, I've spoken to a few more mayors since yesterday, and still your office hasn't returned their calls. Why are you afraid to properly engage with these communities?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Most of that premise is actually factually incorrect. First of all, I have sat down with many mayors and councillors from affected communities. That was several months ago. Since then one of my ADMs has been reaching out to each of the mayors individually. We set up a coal panel, which in the new year will be going into these communities. We are engaging with the local municipalities because we value their input.

**Mr. Fraser:** That's interesting, Minister, because you sat down with them in June, you released the report last week, and they didn't even get a copy of the report.

Given that the NDP have shirked their responsibility on this issue and are hiding behind the very businesses they shut down and are now asking them to help families and communities in the transition and given that families brace for the worst, this government is only planning on speaking with these communities months down the road. Premier, you haven't clearly outlined how businesses are supposed to adequately support these families to make this transition. Will you instruct your economic minister to do his job properly and outline transition support for these families?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the transition plan for workers and for communities has been at the forefront of our minds. That is why we have, first of all, engaged with the companies in an appropriate negotiation to provide certainty. Part of that certainty has been the capacity market and has been the negotiation of the transition payments over time. That is why TransAlta, which is one of the very important, embedded companies in this province, has said: this allows us to convert some of our coal plants to gas, keep our workers working, keep those communities strong, and be able to provide . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given that the truth is that the NDP government doesn't seem to have the backs of Albertans and given that the truth is that the NDP seems to have no interest in collaborating with these investors, to the Premier: you've told Albertans that these investments are here to replace the coal phase-out, but we know that these projects aren't even being planned. Where do you expect the investment in renewables to come from if struggling design companies in Alberta aren't even designing the projects?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what we have done is put forward a careful, thoughtful plan in negotiation and in consultation with the affected companies, ensuring that we are keeping that capital here in Alberta as we transition our electricity system. Now, when we took over, there were already 12 of the 18 plants scheduled for decommissioning, and we discovered to our horror that there was no plan for any of those communities. That is why we have dedicated funds within the budget. We are looking at our apprenticeship and training investments, and we are moving this province forward.

#### Health Care Wait Times

**Mr. Barnes:** Yesterday the NDP benches laughed and dismissed Alberta's serious wait times problem because they didn't like that the source of the report was the Fraser Institute. Well, it's funny because in 2008 the Premier had no problem using the same annual

report to criticize access to psychiatric care, and in 2010 the NDP Education minister cited the report to argue that the PCs needed to spend even more. Does the minister deny that wait times are getting worse or just her ability to do something about it?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I said yesterday and I'll say again today that we are committed to making sure that we provide support to help address ways that we can lessen wait times, but instead of what's being proposed by the Official Opposition, which is privatizing and outsourcing and allowing people to queue-jump, those who can afford to, we're doing so in a thoughtful, collaborative way. They're proposing billions of dollars in cuts and privatization. We're proposing stability and working together to address wait times in a reasonable way. I'm proud of our record to date.

**Mr. Barnes:** Given that wait times for back surgeries are worse than in May 2015 and that median cataract waits are 38 per cent worse and that shoulder surgery waits are 15 per cent worse and that the average pacemaker waits are 68 per cent worse and given that carpal tunnel is worse and hernia repair is worse and prostate surgeries are worse and urgent and semi-urgent CT scans are over 60 per cent worse and MRIs are worse and on and on and on, how long do we have to wait for the NDP to get serious about real improvement?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the assertions that have been raised by the Official Opposition. Rather than proposing billions of dollars worth of cuts, which would result in laying off many nurses, which would impact our ability to access specialized services, including diagnostics, we are working together with the front lines. While we're in difficult financial times, I'm very proud of the record we have in working with organizations such as the AMA to bring them to the table to find ways, find up to half a billion dollars worth of savings in just the next two years that we can use to address some of the concerns that are being raised rather than proposing ideological transfers to privatization.

**Mr. Barnes:** Given that in the first-quarter fiscal update Health was projected to blow its budget by a hundred million dollars and seeing as the second-quarter update now shows \$260 million in cost overruns and since last year's total health spending was nearly \$300 million higher than projected, the Health minister is clearly confused about which way the cost curve needs to be bent. When it comes to the Health budget, where will the minister's wild ride end up this year?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, I'll tell you where we're not going to end up, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to end up where they're pushing us, where they really want us to go, which is laying off nurses, firing those who are providing the important front-line care, because it's important that we work to provide what Albertans elected us to. While I want to acknowledge that we haven't hit our targets yet, the member opposite is speaking about a 1 to 1 and a half per cent increase over what was projected, which is down significantly from the 8 per cent that the members opposite have so much fun flirting with around moving forward on their former agenda. We're moving forward in a reasonable, thoughtful way, working with partners in finding ways to reduce the rate of increase.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Victims of Crime Fund

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Crime is rising across Alberta. Because of chronic shortages in courts, sex offenders are seeing their charges stayed and are now allowed to walk free on our streets. Victims are more vulnerable today than ever before. That's why I was surprised to hear at today's Public Accounts meeting that the NDP is thinking about using the victims of crime fund for legal aid. Yes, we need to ensure that legal aid is properly funded, but why isn't this money being used to help victims?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'd like to begin by stating that the premise of that question is completely false. The member was in the committee today when my deputy said that there are brackets in the legislation for what that money can be used for. We have no intention of using that money for anything but victims of crime. Sometimes victims of crime, victims of domestic violence need emergency protection orders, and those funds can be used for that purpose. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** First supplemental. [interjections] Folks, if you continue to raise that, I'm going to stop the clock.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Legal aid is important. We both agree with that. It helps low-income Albertans to speed up the justice system, but money needs to go to victims. Given that there are over 170 victims' services organizations and given that we have a massive surplus to support victims, why are these 170 organizations being left to just fend for themselves?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, we're absolutely committed to seeing that those funds reach the victims that they're intended for. The Auditor General has asked us to take the time to do the work to identify the needs of victims and to see how to best meet those needs, so we're going to do that work to ensure that we're getting the money out the door in order to support victims of crime, not just for the sake of getting the money out the door.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The victims of crime fund should go to victims. Period.

Given that Alberta's victims of crime fund has surged to a record \$56 million and given that there are several organizations providing counselling and mental health support for victims across Alberta, where is this government's plan for getting more of this surplus to these essential community organizations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Well, of course we intend for all of the funds in the victims of crime fund – I've said it before and I'll say it again – to reach victims because we think that that is incredibly important. We have a lot of organizations working incredibly hard across this province to support those victims. We are going to do the work that the Auditor General has asked us to do to ensure that we understand what those needs are, to ensure that we know how to meet those needs and that we have measurable objectives to

meeting those needs. We're going to move forward to support victims, not just to get the money out.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### Opioid Use Prevention and Mitigation

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Federal Health Minister Philpott has brought opioids to the national stage with a summit on the crisis. Yes, she called it a summit. Our PC caucus has been blowing the whistle loudly on this ever since Alberta started seeing a shocking number of deaths, including in our vulnerable indigenous communities. We applaud the federal Health minister for this initiative that saw health ministers from across Canada attend, including B.C. and Ontario, the two other hardest-hit provinces. To the Health minister: what did you and your associate minister learn at this summit, or did you even bother to attend?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I was very pleased to represent Alberta at the Opioid Conference and Summit that was held earlier this month. One of the things that we learned at the summit is not just that the opioid dependency problem that we're seeing in this province is a complex, multifaceted one that requires a variety of responses but that the movements that our government has been making are on the right track and supported by experts from across our country. Additionally, provinces across our country are looking to Alberta as a leader on this issue.

**Mr. Rodney:** Speaking of leaders, the question was whether the Health minister was in attendance.

Now, given that the opioid crisis is a life-and-death issue for Albertans yet our province has yet to declare a public health emergency and given that the summit applauded British Columbia for its network and framework for dealing with its opioid crisis, including declaring it a public health emergency, and given that on November 21 the associate minister told this House that more information and awareness about this crisis would be a wasted PR exercise, again to the Health minister: when will you declare this a public health opioid emergency in this province?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm pleased to be our government's lead minister on this file, and I work diligently on this issue day and night. I can't speak to how other governments have associate ministers working, but in our government I am considered an equal member of this team, and I'm working very hard on this issue.

As for the question of data, our government is able, because we have a single health region, to compile most of the data that other jurisdictions require specific legislation to be invoked to gather. I'm very proud of the Q3 report that we've put forward that has a wide range of data, not just . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Rodney:** I shudder to think of how the families feel about the leadership.

Given that many provinces, including British Columbia, have approved the nasal spray version of naloxone, which is much easier to administer, especially for those who are not first responders, and given that naloxone is saving thousands of lives and Narcan can

save more and given that we have not heard of its use in Alberta, to the minister in charge: has Narcan been issued anywhere in Alberta? If so, to whom, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We do know that naloxone is able to save lives by reversing the effects of an overdose. However, medical attention is still required after administering naloxone. Our government has increased the access to naloxone across the province to have 13,000 kits available. We have also been working with our partners in Justice to have the nasal spray available. The RCMP has made that move for their members, and that is something that we're continuing to explore. We know that getting naloxone in any form out to the community where people need it is going to help save lives.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

### 2:30 Flood Damage Mitigation in Southern Alberta

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The municipal district of Bighorn was hit hard by the 2013 floods. They experienced alpine torrent flooding, much different than the overland flooding experienced elsewhere during the 2013 event. Bighorn's small population is now struggling to move forward on flood mitigation infrastructure they need to protect their communities. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: what is the government doing to protect the municipal district of Bighorn?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is of course taking action to reduce the threat of future flooding in communities like the MD of Bighorn. We've committed \$500 million over 10 years to protect homes, businesses, and the economy through the Alberta community resilience program. In February we committed over \$3.3 million to the MD of Bighorn for mitigation work on Heart Creek. We will continue to work with those communities, like the MD of Bighorn, to make sure that residents and businesses are protected.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that similar to the municipal district of Bighorn the town of Canmore and the hamlet of Bragg Creek eagerly await community-level flood protection, again to the Minister of Environment and Parks: when will residents of these communities see shovels in the ground and these projects built?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we worked with the federal government to secure \$5.5 million in federal funding for Bragg Creek and \$14.4 million for Canmore. This builds on over \$50 million of provincial funding already in place to fund local mitigation efforts in Bragg Creek and Canmore. Working with our municipal partners, we expect construction to start on the Bragg Creek flood barriers in the next construction season, spring 2017.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that indigenous communities such as the Tsuut'ina and Stoney Nakoda First Nations have been quite severely impacted by the flooding, what steps has the minister taken to support First Nations?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, indigenous communities in Alberta were hit hard by the 2013 floods, and it's important that we partner with them to make sure that they are protected and that they have a voice in the reconstruction. That's why we committed \$2 million to construct an extension of the Redwood Meadows berm onto Tsuut'ina lands. We also committed \$400,000 to flood proof the sewer lines, to prevent flood waters from overwhelming the local sewer system.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### **Bovine Tuberculosis**

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta ranchers are concerned about what is happening with bovine tuberculosis. According to the federal ag minister the ag recovery program is meant to pay for the ongoing cost for feed, transportation, and interest payments due to the TB quarantines. Now that the CFIA can begin setting up a high-risk quarantine feedlot for these ranchers, who will cover the cost of setting up this commercial feedlot, meeting the CFIA standard, and what is your plan B?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Absolutely, I understand the stress these producers have been going under. CFIA continues the investigation of a federally reportable disease. A lot of the onus is on the federal government. I've had the opportunity to meet twice with the federal agriculture minister. We've met with the CFIA, we've met with the Alberta Beef Producers, the individual producers, Canadian Cattlemen's Association, going through to make sure that programs are in place, that we can support these farmers as they go through this incredibly stressful time.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Every rancher in Alberta knows that they could have been the victim of poor government policy. Given that today the federal ag minister stated that while this program will help out with these costs for these affected ranches, this program will only cover about 90 per cent of those costs, will this government be topping up this federal funding with the newly announced \$222 million disaster expense for agricultural indemnities, or is that money strictly for unharvested crops?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I had the opportunity to review the programs with the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation to find out what programs are able to better assist these producers. That work is ongoing. I'm very happy with the department for the work they've been doing, the collaboration they have done with other ministries, including Alberta Health, to ensure that the health of producers are protected, the health of Albertans is protected, and the health of the industry is protected.

**Mr. Strankman:** Mr. Speaker, ranchers are worried and scared. Given that there are over 40 premises currently under quarantine

and given that there are now 10,000 cattle destined for slaughter, leaving the financial viability of these ranches in question, Albertans are wondering if the minister will use this line item to assist these ranchers with loans owed to financial institutions so that they don't default due to circumstances completely beyond their control.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the follow-up question. This couldn't come at a worse time. These producers are looking for their one and only paycheck. It came at a time now when we want to ensure that the work that's being done by the CFIA is being done to be able to get a handle on this. To ensure that we maintain our tuberculosis-free status is important for the industry, again, working with AFSC, CFIA, agriculture Canada, and the federal government to ensure that support for the producers is there when they most need it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Provincial Fiscal Policies**

*(continued)*

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The late Member for Calgary-Greenway was a wise man. I clearly recall two exchanges he had with the Finance minister in June 2015, when he warned that the NDP's economic policies would push taxpayers and business out of Alberta. The minister confidently responded by saying: they won't leave Alberta; in fact, they will stay here because of our beautiful mountains and our new NDP government. To the Finance minister: it's a year and a half later, and business confidence is at an all-time low. Is this not in contradiction to your earlier pronouncement?

**Mr. Ceci:** I remember the Member for Calgary-Greenway as well, and I really appreciated his work on that side. I just want to say that our plan is having, you know, across the economy – it's going to be growing next year. Next year the confidence of people will be returning because they know that we're investing massive amounts of money into capital infrastructure across this province, putting people back to work. They know we are working to diversify our economy, and our EDT minister is doing that work as well. They know that if they stick with Alberta, we will stick with them.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that yesterday's second-quarter fiscal update shows a precipitous decline of \$877 million in corporate taxes – oh my – and given that corporate taxation has been an important revenue pillar through 80 years of small "c" conservative governance and given that this NDP government continues to display nothing but contempt for Alberta business, again to the Finance minister: given that the late member's predictions have come true, are you going to moderate your policies, or will you continue to ignore his advice?

**Mr. Ceci:** Well, he just mentioned the Q2 update. I want to say that the Q2 update also talked about signs of improvement in our economy. It talked about many areas where there is an upswing: the number of wells being dug, the amount of manufacturing done, the amount of export happening. That is happening.

You know, the deficit is also smaller. He didn't talk about that. We are holding the line on expenses. We're moving forward. That's what Albertans want, and that's what we're doing.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the proof of this government's policies is evident by the deplorable state of our current economy and given that this government is pushing out corporations with the accumulated effects of accelerated taxation, the highest minimum wage in the country, and court action to renege on long-standing business agreements and given that the carbon tax is waiting in the wings, set to crush those still keen to remain in Alberta, to the same minister: are you willing to at least moderate one of these policies in order to help re-establish business confidence?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade is so proud of the work he's doing and involved in it out there that he wants me to talk about the record of investment that is going on in this province. The record of investment is \$38 billion a year, higher than any other province, private investment in this province. You're not mentioning that. You're also not mentioning that capital investment is ready to flow again because of the work we're doing to increase the capacity market for electricity. That will change things as well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

#### Transportation Infrastructure

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents in Red Deer are concerned that the infrastructure needed to reduce traffic congestion and increase safety by providing better access to highway 2 has taken too long. Given that Alberta Transportation is investing \$4.7 billion towards new road projects and bridges, to the Minister of Infrastructure: will the concerns of my constituents be addressed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

2:40

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for her question on behalf of her constituents. I'm pleased to say that projects like the Gaetz Avenue interchange are progressing very well at Red Deer and will be ready to serve Albertans and visitors from around the world in time for the 2019 Canada Winter Games. Construction on this \$80 million project started in September, and Albertans can see it as they travel between Edmonton, Calgary, and all points in between. Once it's complete, the interchange will improve travel on this very busy corridor and provide access to key destinations for local residents as well.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's capital plan invests \$2.1 billion for capital maintenance of roads and bridges, to the Minister of Infrastructure: what impact has this investment had on the province's infrastructure deficit?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Members will know that this government inherited a very, very large infrastructure deficit, and as indicated in David Dodge's report, it's the time to invest now for the future. In fact, we're experiencing many contracts coming in at 10 or 15 per cent below budget, and we can reallocate that money to build additional infrastructure, including transportation infrastructure to make our roads safer and to make the travel more efficient and convenient for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the current economy and the state of our province's aging infrastructure, to the same minister: what results is this investment having for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Our \$34.8 billion capital plan is putting Albertans back to work. By enhancing the capital plan by 15 per cent, as Mr. Dodge recommended, we're creating 10,000 new jobs over three years. Ten thousand. Not only are these investments in hospitals, schools, roads, and affordable housing creating good family-supporting jobs, but they will result in projects that will facilitate our economic recovery and enhance the overall quality of life for all Albertans.

#### Members' Statements (continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

#### Edmonton Salutes Committee RCAF Captain Thomas McQueen

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about the Edmonton Salutes Committee, which was established in 1997. I have been honoured to work with this dedicated team over the past year and a half in my role as the provincial government liaison for the Canadian Forces. The committee's mandate is to promote and recognize our local military community contributions both at home and abroad.

The Edmonton Salutes Committee membership is drawn from the city of Edmonton, corporate Edmonton, surrounding municipalities, and the government of Alberta. Military members from the 3rd Canadian Division Support Group, HMCS *Nonsuch*, and the Canadian Forces recruiting centre prairies and north detachment Edmonton, representing army, navy, and air force, each have a seat at the table. The committee has collaborated to promote and support incentives such as the Freedom of the City parade and ceremonies; collaborating on the Griesbach's Flanders field park commemoration; celebrating the city's namesake ship, HMCS *Edmonton*; and supporting the Military Family Resource Centre and other organizations seeking to recognize the military in the capital region.

On return from deployment in Afghanistan troops were met by the members of the committee, who offered Tim Hortons coffee and doughnuts. The committee also arranged for an Edmonton Police Service escort from the airport to the base. Edmonton, through the efforts of the Edmonton Salutes Committee, enjoys a strong relationship with the military and a well-deserved reputation as a garrison town.

Through the commitment of support for the military community it is with a heavy heart that I share my deepest condolences to the family and colleagues of Captain Thomas McQueen, the pilot who perished in the CF-18 fighter jet accident yesterday. It is never easy to lose a member of the Canadian Forces. The families and communities, 4 Wing, and CFB Cold Lake, Alberta, and Canada have suffered a tremendous loss. On behalf of Albertans I would like to extend my deepest sympathies and gratitude to the fallen soldier and his family for their commitment to serving Canada. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

### Organ and Tissue Donation

**Dr. Turner:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the altruism and community spirit of Albertans who donate blood, bone marrow, stem cells, and cord blood. I also want to recognize and encourage Albertans in their involvement in organ donation so that our world-class heart, lung, liver, islet cell, cornea, and kidney transplant programs can continue to benefit Albertans.

I was the medical director of the blood transfusion service here in Edmonton for 15 years. I became involved because my leukemia patients needed a reliable local supply of platelets and red blood cells to benefit from their chemotherapy treatments. I learned that Edmonton and Calgary had the best blood donors in Canada, and they are routinely supplying other parts of Canada. Today it was my pleasure to introduce Maurice Brunelle. Maurice is one of thousands of Albertans who have volunteered to donate marrow or stem cells to the unrelated bone marrow donor registry run by Canadian Blood Services.

Twenty years ago I collected bone marrow from Maurice at the Cross Cancer Institute. It was transported to Ontario and transplanted successfully to a police officer with leukemia. Twenty years later donor and recipient are friends, and Maurice's community extends across Canada. Bone marrow and stem cells from Alberta donors have been used across Canada and around the world.

Using what we learned from the UBMDR, hematologists in Alberta now use stem cells to rescue the bone marrow function of patients with lymphoma, myeloma, and other cancers that require high-dose chemotherapy. Our patients in the cancer program now have as good an outcome as patients anywhere in the world.

I also appreciate Alberta parents who contribute placental blood to the cord blood bank. Placental blood cells are particularly important for patients who are unable to find a donor on the UBMDR. Cord blood is special in that it does not cause the graft reaction that stem cells from adults do.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I implore all Albertans to follow the example of stem cell donors like Maurice and sign their organ donor cards and make sure that all their loved ones know about it.

Thank you.

### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, this government is trying to pull a fast one on the people of this province. One day they say that they have to shut down our coal plants or else the federal government will shut them down for us. The next day we learn that both Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan have made deals to keep their coal plants operating beyond 2030. This government didn't even try to get a deal for taxpayers or defend the thousands of Albertans who make a living in the coal industry. They are putting thousands of families out of work in communities like Hanna, Forestburg, and Keephills.

To make matters worse, they're paying a king's ransom to shut down these plants: \$97 million a year for 14 years, \$1.36 billion. This money could be better spent on pressing needs like building critical infrastructure or even reducing taxes. There is no need to shut these plants down early and put thousands of Albertans out of work.

The federal government is clearly open to compromise, but this isn't about the federal government. This is about that government across the aisle who puts ideology before all else. To no surprise, Mr. Speaker, this government is made up of NDP world view activists from B.C., Manitoba, and also Ontario, where, by the way, the most unpopular Premier in all of Canada just apologized for completely mismanaging the electricity file. This government is already starting to backtrack by imposing a cap on what they know

will be higher power prices. Alberta taxpayers will be stuck with paying the rest of the bill. This government knows they've sold Albertans down the river, and Albertans know it, too.

But there is a better, more stable vision for our province, one where the government actually defends people over ideology. This government is letting people down while this government continues to serve the NDP world view.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

2:50

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

#### Bill 34

#### Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 34, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

The proposed bill would enable the government of Alberta to manage the impacts of the coal power purchase arrangements on the Balancing Pool and provide consumers with stable electricity prices.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 34 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I would like to table the requisite number of copies of a letter I received from Dr. Les Ellis, a veterinarian from Lloydminster, stating his opposition to proposed government Bill 207.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of a letter I received from Dr. Tim Goodbrand, a veterinarian from Vermilion, stating his opposition to Bill 207. I have many more.

**The Speaker:** Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table three documents to which I referred yesterday. The first one is a document regarding an interview with the Leader of the Official Opposition where the title says Help Fort McMurray by Slowing Down Oil-sands Development, ex-MP Says. He says: I'd like it slowed down; sometimes it feels like we're racing to the end; the oil is not going anywhere.

The second document, Mr. Speaker, is a report from the World Bank stating the problems with trickle-down economics.

The third document is a report from the International Monetary Fund also confirming the problems with trickle-down economics, that the Wildrose believes in.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a report by EDC Associates that I referenced last night in debate on Bill 27, Multi-client Study of Potential Impacts on the AB Electricity Market of Policy Implementation Choices for the Climate Leadership Plan, which shows a 25 per cent renewable target is much more economically viable than a 30 per cent target.

Thank you.



### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Bilous, Minister of Economic Development and Trade, response to Written Question 13 asked for by Mr. Clark on May 16, 2016: what are the deliverables from the Minister of Economic Development and Trade's recent trip to Washington, DC, from February 3 to 5, 2016?

On behalf of the hon. Ms Ganley, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, the Alberta Law Enforcement Review Board 2015 annual report, Alberta Human Rights Commission annual report 2015-16; pursuant to the Legal Profession Act the Law Society of Alberta 2015 annual report.

On behalf of the hon. Minister Miranda, Minister of Culture and Tourism, pursuant to the Wild Rose Foundation Act the Wild Rose Foundation annual report 2015-16, pursuant to the Historical Resources Act the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation 2015-16 annual report, pursuant to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act the Alberta Foundation for the Arts 2015-16 annual report, pursuant to the Alberta Sport Connection Act the Alberta Sport Connection annual report 2015-16.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 25

#### Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A1.  
Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Fraser to move that Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended by adding the following after section 2:

#### Annual Report

2.1 Commencing one year after the coming into force of this Act, the Minister shall, as soon as practicable after December 31 each year, prepare and make publicly available an annual report, which contains:

- (a) the reduction, expressed in megatonnes, from the previous calendar year in upgrading emissions and greenhouse gas emissions;
- (b) the estimated amount of greenhouse gas emissions, expressed in megatonnes, that will be produced in the first year of commercial operation by oil sands sites approved under the Oil Sands Conservation Act in the year for which the annual report is made;
- (c) the amount of funding provided by the Government of Alberta for research or developments to reduce upgrading emissions and greenhouse gas emissions for the year for which the annual report is made; and
- (d) the amount, expressed in megatonnes, of greenhouse gas emissions for each type of greenhouse gas emission excluded under section 2(2) for the year in which the annual report is made.

I rise today to speak about the amendment on Bill 25. We'd like to see this bill amended to include the annual reporting mechanism. As we've certainly noted in this House, we in the PC caucus do not believe that this bill has been thought through enough. We believe that there are some serious issues that have not been addressed by this government and that there are going to be real consequences in the prosperity and everyday lives of Albertans, so we're not generally supportive of this bill.

That being said, we do believe that there are some changes to this bill that this government should absolutely be considering. If the government is committed to barrelling ahead on legislation like this, then we hope that they will at least allow members of this House to provide their input in trying to improve this piece of legislation. The amendment we are proposing today is along those lines, and the amendment tries to at least allow for measures for this government and Albertans that can actually gauge the success of this bill. That's why we are proposing that the government release a progress report of sorts at the end of each year.

This report is going to contain information like how much progress has actually been made in reducing upgrading emissions. We're also looking to see how much greenhouse gas is being produced by facilities approved under the Oil Sands Conservation Act. This will give us some understanding of whether or not this bill is accomplishing its stated goal, which is information that I'd hope the government would like to have and information that I'd hope they'd be willing to share with Albertans.

We would also like to see this report detail how much money is coming from the government in terms of supporting research and development on emissions reductions. I think it's important that we can demonstrate to Albertans that we are delivering value for their tax dollars, and it's hard to know whether or not that kind of investment is worth while if we don't have the information on spending in one consolidated location.

3:00

Lastly, we'd like to see this report include a summary detailing the amounts of various emissions detailed in the bill. Again, this is important information when we're making decisions on the effectiveness of the act. We want to measure where exactly we're seeing reductions or, perhaps, where we're seeing increases so that we can measure whether or not we're making progress or simply shifting emissions between different categories.

As you can see, this is a report card of sorts, the kind of amendment that aims to increase accountability and transparency in government programs. Hopefully, if the government is being honest about their desire to increase transparency, they will have no problem with this amendment. I look forward to their thunderous support of what really is just a common-sense improvement to the legislation.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am grateful to the hon. member for this amendment. I will be supporting it, and I would encourage all members of this House to support it. If I had my druthers, I would druther that we had this happening monthly. Given the advent of technology today there are places you can go on the web and you can see, live stream almost, the kinds of activities that are happening with different industries in different places around the world. We know that we have the technology right now to live stream GHG reductions. It would be nice if Albertans could go to a website and actually see: okay; well, here's

this particular industry sector, and here's the amount of emissions that are being handled. Kind of like our debt clock. You can go and see how the debt is just clicking off and clicking off. You know, I would like to see that clock run backwards, but it isn't going to happen at least for a few years.

Anyway, back to this particular amendment. As I have said in this House before, you cannot manage what you do not measure. We have attempted on a number of occasions to have this government accept amendments to different bits of legislation to measure the effect of a given piece of legislation or a given policy that this government puts out. I am grateful that we have this amendment before us because here's a performance measurement that we can take to see how effective the government's actions are on this file. It is vitally important because as we go forward, of course, we're hoping that we're going to see some sort of reductions taking place, although as we've mapped out earlier, if they don't take care of the issue regarding carbon leakage, the net to the globe isn't going to be positive.

Nevertheless, as you look through this particular amendment, you've got "the reduction, expressed in megatonnes, from the previous calendar year in upgrading emissions and greenhouse gas emissions." I'm grateful for that because now we're going to be able to look over previous year after year after year and see how we are doing. I would hope that having a measurement like this, the government or the people within the department can then look at how we're proceeding, look at our progress, and make adjustments as we go along.

I mean, it's very important that we do make adjustments because initially, of course, whenever we human beings embark on something, invariably the best laid plans of mice and men end up having to be changed on the fly as we go forward. You know, this particular issue of greenhouse gas emissions is just one of those things where the government has an idea that if we do A, B, and C, it's going to result in a particular outcome. But there's no guarantee those outcomes will actually be reached, and if we don't measure what we're doing as we go forward, the government is not going to know what they're going to need to do to improve the outcome at the end of the day.

Here we have (b):

the estimated amount of greenhouse gas emissions, expressed in megatonnes, that will be produced in the first year of commercial operation by oil sands sites approved under the Oil Sands Conservation Act in the year for which the annual report is made.

Again, if I had my druthers, I'd druther have seen a bill where specific components in this big thing we call greenhouse gas emissions – I would rather have seen a splitting out of those things. Maybe where the government will go if they approve this is actually list for us the particular emission and its level as we go along here. Because with the technologies that the oil sands group are employing and with the technologies that at least some of us in the House are aware of, that are just waiting in the wings to get deployed in the oil sands, there are going to be different emissions impacted differently with these new technologies that are coming out. It would be very important from a scientific point of view, from a research point of view, to actually watch as we go along how we're impacting these different components in the greenhouse gas emissions mix. So I would rather have seen a splitting out here, but that's fine. The amendment is good as it is. It can always be amended later.

"The amount of funding provided by the Government of Alberta for research or developments to reduce upgrading emissions and greenhouse gas emissions for the year for which the annual report is made." It's very important to the taxpayers of this province that they know that their tax dollars are being used wisely. Without a

performance measurement like this to actually see how much we're spending per tonne of reduction – that is vitally important to taxpayers. The people of Alberta are hard-working people. Great gobs of the money that they are earning is being taken out of their pocket by this government's tax, tax, tax on this, that, and the other thing. It would be, I think, only respectful that the government would then have some sort of performance measure in place to assure the taxpayers that – you know what? – yes, we took those taxes from you, but look what we managed to accomplish with them.

Without some sort of measurement and verification of that, then what do the taxpayers have to go on? Just trust me that it's working. That's not good enough, Madam Chair. That's not good enough at all. This is their money. It's taxpayers' money. They have a right to know that the money that is being taken from them – and when it comes to carbon taxation, if the polls are accurate, and I have no reason to doubt their accuracy, it is being taken from them against their will. They at least ought to be given the decency of knowing that money is being used appropriately.

What else can I say about this wonderful amendment that we have? I hope to see more amendments like this because it's clear that Bill 25 is going to be shoved through this House, but I would hope that the government will at least have the sense to take good, serious consideration of amendments that are brought forward to the House, that are an attempt to make this bill better than it currently may be. We have to make improvements to it. It is impacting one of the most significant industries in our province. I would hope that the government is not just presuming that they do know best and that we're just going to have to take their word for it.

I'm aware that there are certain industry participants that have reviewed Bill 25. They want to see some amendments made to it because of the impact Bill 25 is going to have on them. I would hope that this government will listen to some of those voices that we represent over on this side and that they would in fact listen to those industry people, who I know have been attempting to make contact with the members on the other side.

All in all, I'm very happy with this amendment. I would encourage my colleagues in this House to support it. I look forward to more such amendments coming forward to try and improve this bill.

Thank you very much.

3:10

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to rise and speak to this amendment. I commend the member and his caucus for putting forth thoughtful amendments to this bill, Bill 25, of course, which was asked for by the oil sands industry. When we took the decision to move forward with this, it was on the advice of oil sands operators, and we listened to them. We listened to their concerns around tidewater access, and one of the things that they brought to us was that they asked us to grapple with the issue of greenhouse gas emissions coming from the oil sands through a legislative mechanism of a cap. So that's what we have done. We listened to Shell, ConocoPhillips, Cenovus, Statoil, CNRL, Suncor, and MEG.

Now, on the matter of reporting, Madam Chair, first of all, the Auditor General has flagged this matter of GHG measurement and reporting several times over the years. Of course, we inherited a carbon pricing system from the previous government, and in successive reports the Auditor General indicated that the government was not providing accurate and timely reporting on emissions

inventories. That is why we have taken steps to ensure that our emissions inventories are keeping pace. We have ensured that we have the right kind of support for this given that this is such an important undertaking of our government. In fact, it's so important to the national economy and, indeed, to our investment climate going forward so that investors can make investments in the oil sands in a way that they know there is a climate policy that will surround those investments and therefore insulate those investments from some of the political uncertainty that was arising from having no real serious and robust climate policy, which is why oil sands companies asked us for this in the first place.

So there has been that Auditor General recommendation, and in our department the climate change office is moving forward with a number of different initiatives to ensure that we've got the right measuring, reporting, and verification happening, Madam Chair. However, in the aggregate – and this is broken down by industrial sector as well – we do have reporting via Environment Canada and Natural Resources Canada. They form part of our national emissions inventories, which then, in turn, form part of our nationally determined contributions to the UNFCCC. Those are national emissions inventories to which Alberta provides its data on an annual basis once it has been appropriately measured, reported, verified. We undertake those efforts in conjunction with the federal government.

Certainly, they do take time to verify, Madam Chair, and there's a good reason for that because with carbon pricing now with tradeable permits, with an offset protocol system, and so on, they must be real. They must be substantive. Yes, technology is changing, but that is why there is some lag time. We are working on 2014 inventories right now that form the basis of Canada's analysis and recommendations to the UNFCCC, which is, of course, the framework convention on climate change, which provides, then, the baseline for our nationally determined contributions under the Paris agreement.

In addition, Alberta already is part of measuring, verification, and reporting with other subnational governments. Here again it's important for us to have a uniformity across jurisdictions, particularly as jurisdictions begin to take on Alberta's offset protocols in agriculture and elsewhere. We report through the climate group, our membership in the climate group, which is the compact of states and regions, which is, of course, an international body, Madam Chair. So we undertake those efforts as well.

In addition, the National Energy Board, Madam Chair, does consider emissions as part of their pipeline applications. In fact, they did an upstream emissions impact assessment for the Trans Mountain pipeline, and that's one of the reasons why oil sands operators wanted the cap in place. What it does is that it takes that question of the upstream emissions impact off the table as a consideration in NEB deliberations because the energy infrastructure in question is already within an emissions limit that is then woven into Canada's overall climate strategy. On that point I will simply say this. Having robust measuring, reporting, and verification within an overall architecture of climate policy that is thoughtful, that works with oil sands operators is what leads to success for all Albertans and all Canadians.

So while well-intentioned, we cannot support this amendment because we already have a number of different measuring, reporting, verification, and other systems in place, Madam Chair, and we would not want to jeopardize our intergovernmental relations or other relationships at this time.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View on the amendment.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to commend the member for this amendment. I will be supporting this amendment as well.

One of the things that the minister was mentioning was about the FCCC reporting in conjunction with all of the other reports that come forward. As much as I agree that those metrics are already there, the problem is that those metrics might not necessarily be being translated back to Albertans so that they understand the way that this is working. Metrics are actually about where the dollars are going, how they're being spent, and how that is actually going to not only impact us here in the province but show an overall impact to Albertans about how those dollars are being spent.

As much as there are already aspects of these things that are going forward – and I agree with the minister that there are established protocols to show things already – we're not talking about those specific protocols. We're actually talking about reporting to Albertans about what is happening with the hard-earned dollars that are going into a fund when it is not understood by any of us how that's going to be spent.

There are specific metrics. For example, if we're talking about accountability, what is the difficulty in making sure that some of these reductions – especially because this entire climate action leadership plan is based upon the assumption that there is going to be a change in the overall footprint, I don't understand why there would be an issue or why anybody would disagree with the aspect of wanting to make sure that those express megatonnes are made available to Albertans so that they understand where we started, where we got to, and where we're going.

This is an aspect of accountability that will actually uphold what this government is trying to do, not just at a national level or an international level. We've asked many, many times to make sure that there's crossjurisdictional information to make sure that the ideas that are coming down from this government actually make sense. So these are actually specifics for Albertans. The government keeps saying that this is a made-in-Alberta project. Well, then, make the accountability made in Alberta, too. Make sure that those metrics and those pieces of accountability are actually transferring to Albertans in this province so that they understand what is happening. That's what this amendment is about.

This is about relating back to "the Oil Sands Conservation Act in the year for which the annual report is made." The member is asking to make sure that the first year of commercial production of oil sands sites under this is made available to Albertans. This is different than what the minister is talking about. We're wanting it to be broken down so that Albertans understand where their hard-earned dollars are going. I don't think that that's too much to ask.

When the minister was talking about the oil sands groups that are already involved in talks about this, we understand that. But there are a lot of other smaller companies, small and medium-sized companies, that were not included in those discussions that may be cut out of the megatonnes that are leftover. It brings to mind a question of who it is that's going to be available to be able to even purchase, trade, or participate in the leftover megatonnes. This is another bit of accountability that makes sure that this government is not picking winners and losers and that there is accountability there. That's what this amendment is about, in my opinion.

3:20

I think that as much as I agree with the minister that there are things there already, this goes to that next step of accountability, not at a federal level but at a provincial level, on behalf of the folks here that are paying the dollars into this plan to evidently be able to change the way that we do things here, to change our footprint. We've said many, many times that there's nothing in this plan that's

actually going to change the footprint. There's nothing here that's actually going to reduce emissions.

So that's why I fully support this amendment, and I encourage everybody in this House to also support the amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just coming back to this amendment again, the hon. minister of the environment said that she didn't want to endanger relationships that we may have with other jurisdictions. Frankly, I think it's kind of a stretch to suggest to this House that monitoring Alberta's emissions is going to somehow endanger a relationship we may have with some other jurisdiction. Like, give us a break here.

Coming back to this, I understand, you know, what the hon. minister of the environment was saying about the monitoring on a macro scale of emissions that does take place currently and that are reported at that level. But if you get down into the details of this particular amendment and take a look, for example, at part (b),

the estimated amount of greenhouse gas emissions . . . that will be produced in the first year of commercial operation by oil sand sites approved,

what this is basically saying is that when a new site is going to be coming on stream, this amendment would require that there be an estimate made of the GHG reductions for this new site coming on.

Again, you cannot manage what you do not measure. The importance of this is that when we receive an estimate and that site comes on, a year later we have the actual measurements. We can then go back, and we can compare the actual measurements with the estimate. If there's a difference, then both the government and the company involved can go back to the drawing board and say, "Why was our estimate off?" or, if it's close: "Well, great. It confirms the equations and the calculations that we used to come up with an estimate that was right."

Any way you look at it, measuring on a new site coming on stream is very valuable, not only to the people of Alberta but to the company as well. They are going to probably be developing other sites, and if a particular methodology of measurement has proven true for them at this site, then they can use that same methodology in another site, do that same measurement and verification again. If it proves true there, then they've got something very valuable that they can use in planning forward, which is extremely valuable to them, not just valuable from a scientific point of view but valuable in dollars and cents to that company and certainly valuable to Albertans.

I think that part (b) of this amendment is extremely important and one that is not currently being utilized. I would see that as development happens, going forward here to develop the rest of these leases up in the north, this particular section within this amendment is very, very important going forward.

Secondly, we have part (d):

the amount, expressed in megatonnes, of greenhouse gas emissions for each type of greenhouse gas emission excluded under section 2(2).

There is within section 2(2) a list of exclusions. Now, if we are not going to be keeping track of the GHG emissions excluded, we have the potential of a runaway freight train. We have emissions that are happening that are not even being looked at. They're not being reported. This is extremely important. Why would we be going through the trouble of having all kinds of legislation about GHG reductions, but here's a list of exclusions, and we're not even going to watch them. We're not even going to pay attention to them. That just doesn't make sense at all.

It is very important that those excluded GHG emissions be reported and recorded so that we can see what is happening there. Again, you cannot manage what you do not measure. When you have something like this that's an exclusionary and you've got something happening that you're not even watching, that's not a good idea, not a good idea at all.

Again, I would ask the hon. minister to reconsider her position on this. This is an excellent amendment, one that I support, and I would encourage all members of this House to support it because, again, you cannot manage what you don't measure. This amendment puts in place some excellent measurement and verification metrics that I wholeheartedly support.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any further speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to offer some friendly advice to the government. The government has talked a lot about risk and what it looks like to partners, investors, and bankers, but ultimately the true test is: what does it look like to Albertans?

What we want and what we need in government and what creates sustainability in our banking systems, our financial institutions, and our partners right across the world is when there is political certainty. When you create a bill that doesn't have a measurement of performance, that is something that other governments that come in the next election or the election after that may want to overturn, that type of uncertainty.

There's an opportunity here to be very transparent, to show exactly what we're doing, mostly for Albertans and for their sake, if the government believes that what they're doing is the right thing, to have those performance evaluations in there. But it also says to everybody else and to opposition members like myself that the government is open and transparent, and it shows to Albertans that they're open and transparent.

Again, I'm encouraging the members to take a look at this, you know, read it, talk to their administrators behind the scenes, and get this done because this is transparency. This is what Albertans are asking for, and we want to see that it gets done, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to say that I think it is important that the House supports this amendment. It really will tell the rest of the world that we are going to do a good job on monitoring, and that's going to matter.

Today, of course, they had approval for a couple of pipelines, including one to B.C. [some applause] I thank my colleagues in the House for that cheerful outburst, and I share that sentiment with you a hundred per cent. But I will say that I'll be happier – and this is the point of my argument here – when there is oil flowing through the pipeline. [some applause] Good. I'm glad we all agree on that. Thank you.

I think this talks to getting between here and the oil-flowing part because I think that's when we can really celebrate. Today is good news. I'm not going to dampen it. I'm very, very happy, and I think I heard that other members of the House are happy, too. It's wonderful news. But it doesn't change the fact that we have to get to the point where there's actually oil going through the pipeline.

This government has talked about it. Listen, I haven't been sold completely. I have to tell you that. Largely, not sold. They said that the secret is getting along with other jurisdictions. Okay. You know what? I'm not arguing with that. I would just say that it has been

presented and not yet proven, and when I see that we get from today's good announcement to oil flowing through and there are no protests along the way, if there are no protests along the way, then I will say that this government has got that social licence.

I'm not sure there are not going to be any protests. I'm still waiting to see, Madam Chair, whether that happens. But if the government truly believes that what they're saying is that it's about working in partnership with other jurisdictions, a very useful amendment like this would be a good place for the government to say that they really mean that.

3:30

While I don't like Bill 25 – I make no excuses or exceptions to that – this would improve it, and it would actually give the government a chance to make a demonstration that they're willing to work with other parties in order to get the pipelines built and things done.

For that reason, I am going to recommend that members of this House, including on the government side, vote yes to this amendment. At the end of the day, it doesn't stop the main purpose of the legislation, to put a cap on emissions, whether I like it or not, but it does say that you are going to look at how you measure it. It will actually demonstrate some of that working together that the government has said time and again that they think is one of the keys to getting a pipeline successfully built.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd just like to stand up and speak in support of this amendment. The technology is there. It has been. We're measuring greenhouse gas emissions right now. It shouldn't be a big stretch to quantify that and do a report to Albertans so that they can feel – you, know, this is a really good opportunity for the government to gain back some of the confidence of Albertans and to show them responsibility, show them that exactly the targets we're shooting for are being maintained. Like I said, the technology is already there. Why not measure and confirm that the policies you're putting in place, that the money you're spending from Alberta's carbon taxes are actually getting the results that you want?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I would like to speak in favour of this amendment. It starts by saying:

Commencing one year after the coming into force of this Act, the Minister shall, as soon as practicable after December 31 each year, prepare and make publicly available an annual report.

Now, it appears that the government doesn't want to support this motion, which, I should say, is quite alarming. With "one year after the coming into force of this Act," there's plenty of time for preparation for this to happen, and it doesn't have to be produced until "as soon as practicable," which leaves a pretty wide door open as far as when this report would be deemed necessary to be out for the public to see. I don't see any excuses here why this would be any sort of burden on the government. In fact, what it would do is give the government an opportunity to show exactly what it's doing. If this government is serious about being open and transparent, it would only make sense that they do this.

Now, it goes on. This report is supposed to contain:

- (a) the reduction, expressed in megatonnes, from the previous calendar year in upgrading emissions and greenhouse gas emissions.

When we have this cap that this Bill 25 puts in place, I think it would be valuable to know where in relationship to the cap the emissions are, especially concerning upgrading emissions and, of course, greenhouse gas emissions. So there are two different aspects to it. Of course, the upgrading emissions fall under a different cap than the greenhouse gas emissions, but both are capped. This is an opportunity for the government to clearly express what the emissions are to the public of Alberta and to know where they are in relationship to the cap.

Now, it goes on to say:

- (b) the estimated amount of greenhouse gas emissions, expressed in megatonnes, that will be produced in the first year of commercial operation by oil sands sites approved under the Oil Sands Conservation Act in the year for which the annual report is made.

This provides an opportunity for the government to provide the estimated amount of greenhouse gas emissions that would be produced in the first commercial year by oil sands sites approved under the Oil Sands Conservation Act. Again, this gives an opportunity for the government to be transparent, to provide information to the public. If there's any attempt to be transparent, to provide information for people to make informed decisions, then this is the perfect opportunity for the government to do that.

Now, the report is also supposed to contain:

- (c) the amount of funding provided by the Government of Alberta for research or developments to reduce upgrading emissions and greenhouse gas emissions for the year for which the annual report is made.

Again, this should be no burden to the government. It's purely the amount of funding provided by the government of Alberta, taxpayer money paid out for research or developments to reduce upgrading emissions. Clear and simple: taxpayers' money. Really, what that amounts to is: should taxpayers have a right to know where their money is going? I think they do. In fact, I know they do, and I think Albertans expect that, too.

The next part:

- (d) the amount, expressed in megatonnes, of greenhouse gas emissions for each type of greenhouse gas emission excluded under section 2(2) for the year for which the annual report is made.

Now, if we look at section 2(2), that's where it talks about the exclusions that wouldn't fall under the regular 100-megatonne cap. I'll just read from it here.

In determining the greenhouse gas emissions for all oil sands sites combined in a year for the purposes of subsection (1), the following greenhouse gas emissions are excluded.

Item (d) under 2.1 is specifically referring to section 2(2), which is the exclusions, the amount of megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions for each type of greenhouse gas emissions excluded under section 2(2). What is excluded is:

- (a) cogeneration emissions attributable to the electric energy portion of the total energy generated or produced by cogeneration, as determined in accordance with the regulations.

So one of those exclusions is cogeneration emissions attributable to the electric energy portion.

Now, the next portion:

- (b) upgrading emissions
  - (i) attributable to upgraders that complete their first year of commercial operation after December 31, 2015, or
  - (ii) attributable to the increased capacity resulting from the expansion, after December 31, 2015, of upgraders

that completed their first year of commercial operation on or before December 31, 2015.

Some of these exclusions that this would refer to are upgrading emissions under the guidelines that I just read.

It goes on to say:

as determined in accordance with the regulations, to a combined maximum of 10 megatonnes in any year.

So upgrading emissions has the cap of 10 megatonnes.

Now, also excluded are:

- (c) greenhouse gas emissions from any prescribed experimental scheme or any experimental scheme within a prescribed class of experimental scheme.

Again, this request in this amendment would ask for the amount of emissions to be reported from experimental schemes also.

**3:40**

Now, also excluded are:

- (d) greenhouse gas emissions from any prescribed primary production or any primary production within a prescribed class of primary production.

Again, another exclusion here, described as “prescribed primary production,” that this amendment would ask for a report on.

I would think that the government itself would want this breakdown anyway, and if the testing and reporting that are already being done are, as the minister suggested, robust, then I would suggest that this is already happening, and the only thing that comes into question is whether a report is going to be made for the public. There shouldn't be any problem with passing an amendment such as this. If it's already being done, as is suggested, and it's not going to be hidden from the public, then it would only make sense that this amendment is perfectly reasonable.

Now, it goes on to another exclusion.

- (e) greenhouse gas emissions from any prescribed enhanced recovery or any enhanced recovery within a prescribed class of enhanced recovery.

Again, another exclusion here that this amendment is requesting.

Now, we had a chance to listen to the minister talk about how the oil sands companies asked for this cap. Obviously, as soon as this NDP government was elected, I guess the oil sands companies came running to this government and said: we want a cap. They asked for it. I mean, they had to have. That's my understanding. I wasn't there, so I can't say, but I guess they just came running and said: “We want a cap. Please cap us.”

Now, I would suggest that if their shareholders thought that this was going to be damaging to them, they probably would have said something, so obviously there's something in it for these companies that came running and asking for the cap, because I'm sure those companies that supported this didn't come running to ask for something that would hurt their business. Of course, we weren't there when these deals were made and how this all came about, which is why transparency is such an important thing in this world, especially in politics. I'm sure ourselves and a lot of Albertans would love to know how this all happened.

The minister also said that the Auditor General said that the previous government was not doing accurate reporting. Now, I don't know what's changed since then as far as the accurate reporting, but I guess I would hope that it is accurate now. We haven't seen the latest Auditor General report on that, so I'm not sure where that is, but I would hope that now it's being accurately reported.

The minister also talked about how, as far as investment, the climate change plan that the government has brought in gives industry certainty. Well, there are a lot of different aspects to the climate leadership plan that the government has brought forward, and we keep seeing things pop up all the time as far as other little parts of this plan, almost as afterthoughts, kind of like the

exclusions. It's almost like they came up with the idea: “Well, a 100-megatonne cap sounds pretty good. Let's go with that, a nice round number.” Then it was, like: “Oh, except how about this? How about prescribed experimental schemes?” “Uh-oh. Um, well, maybe we'll have an exclusion for that.” Then it's, like, “Well, how about cogeneration emissions attributable to the electric energy portion?” “Well, yeah, we'll just exclude that, too.” “Then how about upgrading emissions? We don't want to stop upgrading.” “Well, we'll throw that into the exclusions, too.” Prescribed primary production: “Oops. Another exclusion there.” Then prescribed enhanced recovery: “Uh-oh. I guess we'll have an exclusion there, too.”

Of course, we sit here in this Legislature, and we just got handed another bill today, where the government has got to figure out how to get money into the system to pay for it, I guess. We just keep coming up with new ideas all the time. The one we were handed today was the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, loans to the Balancing Pool and guarantee.

Now, obviously, this is all related to the climate leadership plan that the government has, all of this stuff, but they just keep throwing stuff piece by piece at us here. Of course, never is there any sort of report. There are no economic or environmental assessments or studies, none of them. This stuff is just thrown up here, and any time we ask for any kind of report or any kind of study that justifies any of this, there's never anything unless, of course, through FOIP something leaks out, and then you realize: well, that didn't make us look good, so we didn't want to tell you about that even though you asked a hundred times for it.

Now, the minister also suggested that the reporting from Environment Canada and some other groups is already reported annually. She suggests that there's robust testing and reporting, and that leads to success. But then she says that she can't support it. She can't support a bill that provides clarity and appropriate reporting. She made the bizarre statement that somehow it would jeopardize the testing and reporting in the other jurisdictions that are involved. Like, I would hope there's nothing to hide here, Madam Chair. I would hope that the only reason it could jeopardize anything is if somebody didn't want to see it. Are we involved with groups or organizations or jurisdictions that are scared of having reports like this made? I would hope not. I would sure hope not.

Now, we look at the Climate Leadership report. I'm just going to quote from it here. “Alberta's action on climate change will not take place in a vacuum – what happens globally, both politically and economically, will determine its relative success.” Well, Madam Chair, there have been a lot of things politically and economically that have happened since this report was released, so I think that's correct. We can't have this climate change plan happen in a vacuum. We've got to look at what's happening around us. There was a recent election with our largest trading partner that spelled clearly some directions of our largest trading partner, but this government hasn't blinked. We have an economy that's suffering and continues to suffer. More and more each day Albertans are suffering job losses.

**3:50**

A simple request like an annual report on what this government is doing and what's happening in the oil sands – annual reporting somehow is taboo. I don't understand why. I haven't heard an excuse that makes any sense at all other than, I guess: maybe since it comes from this side of the House, then we've got to turn it down. I think this spells out pretty clearly some reporting that would be very advantageous and beneficial for Albertans.

I don't see a problem with having annual reporting as soon as practicable after December 31. That's very reasonable. It doesn't

even put a deadline of, you know, three months or six months or a year even, just “as soon as practicable.” So there’s no problem with that. Then, of course, waiting till one year after this act comes into force: that makes sense. Let’s wait a year, and at the one-year anniversary let’s look at that then.

Now, when we look at this motion, I think it makes a lot of sense. I think it would provide the government with an opportunity to show Albertans what’s happening, what they’re doing, what greenhouse gases are being emitted in various stages of the oil sands operations. So this is just a good amendment.

**The Chair:** Are there any other speakers to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to elaborate a little bit on what the member was talking about. One of the things that we have to remember with amendments like this is that this is about trust and about making sure that Albertans and Canadians know that they can trust this government.

There have been a lot of aspects – and we’ve alluded to many, many of the aspects – that have come forward with this particular bill and the little puzzle pieces that are coming together, that I know in my constituency – and I’m sure I can speak on behalf of many on this side of the House that are trying to explain what the overall gist of this entire climate leadership action plan is. It’s obviously convoluted. There are a lot of things that are going on, a lot of moving parts at all times. So it’s absolutely imperative that the government take a look and take a step back and make sure that those metrics and that accountability are consistently there in order to be able to show Albertans what it is that you’re doing.

Now, there are so many things. We’ve talked about the 100-megatonne cap on prosperity, and the minister had mentioned earlier that that was something that these companies wanted. They wanted that cap. Well, here’s where the issue comes in of whether or not the government is actually acting on behalf of Albertans appropriately, because as much as those corporations may have suggested that that might be appropriate for them – why is that? Well, it could be because they’re first on the docket to be able to apply for those leases that are left over in that 100-megatonne cap.

This is a major trust issue for Albertans. This is a major trust issue. All of a sudden companies that have leases, that have already paid for those, are now not going to be able to follow through with things that they banked on, with projects that they were going to put forward in the first place. So those metrics for the reasons why the government is making these decisions are imperative. Albertans are looking to the government to give them some sort of understanding and clear process about how these are moving forward.

The other thing: we could go on with the cap on electricity. Any of the companies that, again, are standing up for this cap: well, we have to ask why. Why are those companies standing up? Well, that’s a good question. That’s because the government is not explaining how it is that they’re going to be able to fill the gap between the amount that is supposedly going to be stabilized in the electricity market and what’s left over when we bring renewables online. Where is that coming from? Where are those dollars coming from? Those are subsidies. Even though the average Albertan may not see that on their direct bill for electricity – guess what? – it’s going to be in their tax dollars. That is a piece of transparency that, again, at least when I’m out talking with Albertans every day, is a major issue for them. A major issue.

We could go as far as looking at even the 10-megatonne cap that is going to be on upgrading. There are so many things in here that are counterintuitive for the prosperity of this province.

As the other member had mentioned, with pipeline approvals at this point in time, which are wonderful and that all of us are just jumping up and down and absolutely grateful for – well, that’s wonderful, but now if we’re going to build capacity, all of a sudden, though, we are hamstringing capacity at the oil sands level. How does that work out? How is that in any way conducive to building capacity but not producing?

We’ve said it a million times in here and I’ll continue to say it: we should be producing in Alberta more, not less. We should be doing everything in this province more, not less. We are the best example. We are the people that should be producing. As the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake had mentioned earlier, carbon leakage is a massive issue. If we’re not producing here, somebody else is going to do it. They’re not going to just stop and say, “Oh, Alberta is not producing suddenly” and decide not to produce. That’s not how this is going to happen. This is another issue of trust for Albertans because on one hand you’re suggesting that this is all for the conservation and the betterment of our province, yet we, who produce better than anywhere else in the world, are now being told that we’re not supposed to produce because – I’m not quite sure why.

The question remains, then, that when we’re bringing in and when the member has brought in an amendment that provides the government the ability to show metrics and be accountable, they should, with everything that they’ve got, be ecstatic to have the opportunity to show the things that they’ve done well. If you truly believe in what you’re doing, why not show us? If you truly think that this is the best decision, why not show Albertans? If you really, really believe that this is going to do all the things that you intend it to do, which are all great intentions, why not be as transparent as possible for Albertans and show them that that’s what you’re doing?

You can have all the words in the world, you can give all of the ideas in the world about what you think is going to happen, but the actual metrics and the actual timelines of what’s going to happen – where we started, where we are right now, where we were, and where we’re going – are imperative to Albertans to understand the processes of this government. It’s imperative for us to understand the processes of this government. So why not show us? Why not pass a piece of legislation, an accountability piece of legislation? Do you know that we’ve brought on this side many, many pieces of accountability legislation? Many. Not one has been passed. Why? Why? If this is such a good deal, if this is so good for Albertans, why not show them? Why not be accountable a year from now, six months from now, whatever that is, to show them in emissions, in megatonnes what it is that their dollars have purchased for them? Obviously, social licence was one of those things.

Obviously, this government seems to know better than anybody else about how to reduce emissions, yet every piece of information that we brought forward has shown that there is no change in emissions and there’s no change in the footprint. So I’d like to know why it is that this government is so determined to not pass any accountability legislation to show Albertans how this is going to work.

This is a very, very straightforward amendment that basically gives you the opportunity to show Albertans how this worked out. It gives you every bit of ability to show people that what you’re doing and what you’ve come up with is the right thing. Are you afraid that you are wrong in maybe some of these decisions that you’ve put forward? Is that why you don’t want to be accountable? Is that why you refuse to pass any amendments on accountability when, actually, this amendment does nothing but make you look good? That’s all it does. It gives you the opportunity to do what you

said you were going to do when you were campaigning, which is accountability and transparency. So why not pass it?

4:00

There's absolutely no good reason to look at this amendment and not pass it. Just because there are other pieces of legislation that are federal and global that have tracking mechanisms of what's going on, how does that translate to Albertans and the carbon tax, that they're paying in order to garner some sort of social licence that this government keeps talking about in order to be valued enough to be able to produce in a province that produces better than anywhere else in the world? Please, please explain to me why you wouldn't want to pass a piece of legislation that explains to the world and to Canada and to Alberta why you're doing such a good job. Please, I would love to understand why.

These are such small asks. This is actually saying: this is what happened; we have this many megatonnes in emissions changes that actually changed the footprint. Albertans will thank you for that. They will be grateful for what you have put forward. Everybody on the government side of the House keeps saying that Albertans are grateful to you, that they're happy that you did this. Well, then, great. Then prove to them that what you're doing is appropriate. Prove to them.

The pipelines are not the jurisdiction of this Legislature. They are the jurisdiction of the federal government. Prime Minister Trudeau has done the right thing by Canada by putting through national infrastructure that is going to help out all of us. That is his responsibility. That is his job.

As I've said before, this House, with all of the activists on that side that have been antipipeline, that have pushed to make sure that it stays in the ground – I mean, wasn't it Karen Mahon, who is on the oil sands advisory panel, that specifically said today that there is no reason to increase capacity? Oddly enough, I don't believe anybody on this side of the House yet has heard anything from the oil sands advisory panel. Anybody on this side? No? So here's yet another piece of accountability that has not come from the government.

Why not pass an amendment that will give you all the credibility in the world to show Albertans that what you're doing is right and fair? Why not? That's all this does. You're already telling me – the minister has already said to all of us that that already happened, so why don't you do it for Albertans, then? Albertans are going to look at this, and they're going to say: yet another time this government refuses to pass an amendment that makes them accountable. That rides on your shoulders, purely on your shoulders.

If you think that social licence – maybe we should talk a little bit about what social licence is. Social licence is an ongoing discussion between the NEB and the people along the lines of disturbance, ongoing, all the time. The NEB is our social licence. We have it. That is their job. Their job is to make sure that they're constantly, every single time, having ongoing discussions with everybody along lines of disturbance, with all people.

If you want social licence, there it is. You want more? Tell Albertans that you're doing the right thing. Give them the opportunity to understand what you're doing, that the hard-earned dollars that you are taking out of the pockets of Albertans in this carbon tax are actually going to do something. Give them the opportunity to be able to understand what you are doing, especially when your panel is not going to even report before this legislation is going to be passed, when you have activists on that panel that are actively speaking out against pipelines and against the oil sands right now, even with a pipeline being passed as we speak. It's up to you.

This is a great amendment. I would highly recommend that everybody in this House consider the opportunity to show all

Albertans that what you say is true and that you're willing to stand behind it and have some accountability for the things that you want to see happen in this province.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'll recognize the hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I was planning on reserving some of these remarks for speaking to the actual bill, but since the questions were asked by the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View just in her recent speech, I feel like speaking to the amendment is actually probably more the appropriate time.

I have to say how proud I am to rise on the floor of this Assembly and speak about the proof, which was asked for, and the proof is specifically . . .

**Mr. Hanson:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** Hon. minister, we have a point of order.  
Go ahead, hon. member.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Hanson:** Just relevance, Madam Chair. We're on an amendment.

Thank you.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, it's well known that we provide a great deal of latitude in committee to speak about many matters, but the interesting thing is that the hon. member making the point of order doesn't even know what the hon. Deputy Premier is going to say, and he's already up there trying to stop her from saying it. I would argue, you know, that until the Deputy Premier has concluded her remarks, the question of relevance is absolutely premature.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Madam Speaker, I called a point of order for relevance because if you check the Blues, the minister stood up and said that this has no relevance to the amendment.

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to the point of order?

I will rule that there is no point of order. I have this afternoon given great latitude to all of the speakers until it became apparent where their point was going, so I shall continue to do that.

Go ahead, hon. minister.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. I'm pleased to respond to the last speaker on the amendment, and the speaker asked a very clear question. She said: where's the proof? I have to say, Madam Chair, that the proof is in the pipeline. Earlier this afternoon the federal government announced their decision to approve Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline. Prime Minister Trudeau and his government have approved energy infrastructure projects that are critically important to the economic future of the people of Alberta and the country of Canada, and in doing so, the federal government has shown extraordinary leadership.

To all of the members of this House, the members of our House: our province has been brutally slammed by the collapse of commodity prices in Alberta, and the result has been a long, dark night for the people of Alberta, Madam Chair, but today we finally see some morning light. We are getting a chance to break our land lock. We are getting a chance to sell to China and other new markets



at better prices. We are getting a chance to reduce our dependence on one market and to be more economically independent, and we are getting a chance to pick ourselves up and move forward yet again. When the member asks, "Where's the proof?" I'll say again: the proof is in the pipeline.

Of equal importance, we are building the economy with a stronger new national environmental policy. We are getting out of coal by 2030. We are implementing an emissions cap in the oil sands, and we will all be phasing in a \$50 carbon levy to help reduce emissions and help finance the transition to a lower carbon economy.

4:10

Madam Chair, to the people of Alberta who have waited so very long for this day I say this: Albertans are used to being leaders, and that's what we are doing here today. We all knew our province had driven itself into a dead end, so Albertans decided it was time for change. That included ending climate change denial, and that included working constructively with other Canadians instead of just shouting at them or tweeting mean remarks at them. As we've now seen here today, that's how you actually get results.

The message to all Canadians today is also clear. We've made a choice. We've chosen regularly – we've been told by the Official Opposition that you have to make a choice between the environment and building the economy, and that Canada is going to be a global leader on climate change is the answer. We can do both, Madam Chair. Our country will still create jobs and a greater economic equality.

Finally, to our neighbours in British Columbia . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. minister, if I could just interrupt for a moment. We do need to get to the amendment, so if you could kind of direct your comments in that direction, please.

**Ms Hoffman:** Very happy to.

I listened to many speakers make arguments counter to this – many other speakers previously – and I want to set the record straight. I was asked: where is the proof? Madam Chair, I am speaking directly in response to the questions that were raised from Chestermere-Rocky View.

Finally, to our neighbours in British Columbia our government says this . . .

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Point of order.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Madam Chair, I believe the matter under debate is an amendment on reporting metrics for the bill at hand. I'm not sure how this has anything to do with it.

**Mr. Mason:** It is absolutely outrageous that the Official Opposition is trying to prevent the Deputy Premier from talking about this critical, important announcement that was made today, that they're using points of order that could have been used against any one of their speakers with respect to their comments because their comments were wide ranging. Wide ranging. The fact of the matter is, Madam Chair, that the opposition doesn't want us to talk about the fact that our program is working. We have got not one but two pipelines approved by the federal government, and they don't want us to talk about it. Well, we're going to talk about it, and we're going to talk about it from here to the next election.

**Mr. Hanson:** Madam Chair, please. Please don't allow the Government House Leader and the minister to highjack the debate

that we're in the House to do today on Bill 25. We are in Committee of the Whole for Bill 25. We are not here to make pipeline announcements that are already all over the media. We don't need it here. We all know about it. Thank you very much for the announcement. Can we just get on with the debate on Bill 25, please?

**The Chair:** Any further speakers to the point of order?

I will allow the hon. minister to continue, but again I would caution. I have given a great deal of latitude this afternoon, but we are speaking on the amendment, and we do want to stay on topic and not get sidetracked.

Please continue.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To be very clear, I'm speaking in opposition to the amendment, and these are some of the reasons why. We, I think, need to acknowledge the fact that we are engaging in metrics, and we are reporting on these in very clear and concise ways as we move forward.

Just like B.C. was a leader in addressing climate change, the rest of the country is catching up to B.C., Madam Chair. B.C. has always argued for strong measures, which we're referring to in this bill. Some argue that these metrics are irrelevant to the amendment; I would argue that they are relevant. B.C. has always argued for strong measures to protect our coast and its waters, and that's going to happen, and it must happen. B.C. has always played a key role in building our national economy as Canada's leader and gateway to the biggest market in the world, that being the Asia Pacific. These B.C. priorities are now shaping all of our priorities.

These are putting in place strong national climate change policy, and we are getting on with creating jobs and economic equality under the terms of that new policy, which demonstrates as clearly as it possibly can be that we don't have to ask working families to choose between protecting the environment and making a good living, Madam Chair. We can do both; we are doing both. Let's work together right across this country to protect our environment, and let's work together, as we are doing today, to show that there will be jobs and prosperity for Albertans and Canadians alike in a greener future.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, in regard to the amendment I just wanted to clarify. Again, the amendment was about providing metrics to make sure that Albertans understand what this government is doing. Just to be clear, the insinuation that only the government can balance environment and prosperity is a slap in the face to every single other Albertan that lives, breathes, eats, and sleeps in this province. So be careful about who it is that you're talking about. This is about Albertans. And you're right; this pipeline will bring prosperity to all of Canada. Thank goodness for that.

But if we're actually talking about the amendment and about proof, this amendment helps you. It helps you. It helps you to make sure that what you're doing actually has availability to the average Albertan to know what it is that you are doing. The fact that the federal government has passed, finally, to get a pipeline to tidewater is a gift to absolutely everybody. It is a gift to everybody. Congratulations to all of us.

Having said that, we need to make sure that the policies in this government, in this province are conducive to making sure that that capacity actually has the availability to fill what's going to be going to tidewater in the first place. Everything that is happening in these

bills is kneecapping our oil sands and everything else that is actually going to provide capacity for a pipeline that you obviously find is important.

It's completely counterintuitive to this entire pipeline announcement that you just said right now. Completely counterintuitive. Let's keep in mind that in order for the pipeline to be useful, we have to fill it with product. Why don't we talk about and make sure that in what you're trying to actually accomplish with what you're doing in this bill, which is a 100-megatonne cap on emissions, you are telling Albertans why you're making the decisions that you are? That accountability helps you. That is the proof that we are seeking, not the proof that this government is going to try and take credit for, a pipeline that is put through by our federal government, and that is their responsibility.

Every single province in this country will work in lockstep to make sure that national infrastructure is put through on behalf of all Canadians. It is the responsibility not only of this government but every other one, and the federal government ultimately makes that decision.

Now you're telling me that it's great that we have a pipeline, but you're willing to actually stop production to reduce capacity to go into said pipeline. It makes no sense. How about you show us some proof by actually putting through an amendment that holds you accountable and shows Albertans what it is that they're going to be getting from this climate leadership action plan?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I'll defer to my colleague.

**The Chair:** I'll recognize Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to the amendment. On behalf of all members of the Official Opposition and, I believe, all members of the opposition and all members of this House we are very pleased to see pipelines being built. This is good news for Alberta, and it's good news for Canada. However, I am certainly concerned that we've got two out of three. It appears that political interference around Northern Gateway is completely unfounded. We are still pleased, nonetheless, to see Kinder Morgan and line 3 being approved.

4:20

I think it's very important to note that a key part of that was depoliticizing the process. We should all be thankful to Stephen Harper, who put in place the process to make this happen. You see, Madam Chair, it's important that we depoliticize this issue. That's why this amendment is important. The amendment is important so that we can measure things, you see. The members across have been protesting and have been working with the protestors for years. They opposed pipelines for years. Now I'm happy to see that they saw the light on the road to Damascus. But you know who didn't have to be convinced 10 years ago? Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who was on the right side of history in this.

Madam Chair, many of the members across were vehement foes of pipelines. They opposed pipelines. I remember the Minister of Education chanting on the steps of the Legislature, saying: "No new approvals. No new approvals." He led a chant on the steps of the Legislature. Remember that the Member for Calgary-East, before being elected, was a vehement opponent of pipelines. Now, we certainly appreciate it when people change their minds, when people come to a better conclusion along the way. We are pleased to see members across finally supporting pipelines.

This amendment is important so that we can actually measure the progress of what they're proposing to do here. They're proposing a huge and, I believe, damaging limit on oil sands development. Now, if we're going to get something out of that, we want to be able to measure it. When Ronald Reagan was negotiating nuclear arms control treaties with the Soviet Union and, of course, good friends of the NDP members like Castro, he was accused of not trusting the Soviet Union in their arms reduction. President Reagan's motto in dealing with the Soviets was "trust, but verify." Now, I'm not saying that I trust the NDP, but even if I did trust the NDP, I believe we would still want to verify what they're doing. We want to trust but verify what they're doing, which is why we need to actually measure what they're doing.

We're not convinced that any of this will even necessarily lead to pipelines because, at the end of the day, the radicals have not been appeased. Elizabeth May has stated that she is willing to go to jail. The federal Green Party leader has stated that she is willing to go to jail to stop Kinder Morgan from happening. These are people who do not respect the rule of law. These are radicals. These are extremists who do not understand that economic development is necessary for human existence, Madam Chair.

In addition to getting an official clearance for pipelines, I'll believe it when we actually get some oil flowing through those pipelines, Madam Chair, when we actually get the oil moving through them.

#### **Point of Order Referring to a Nonmember**

**Mr. Mason:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair. There's a well-known convention in this place that you should avoid attacks on individuals who aren't present in the House to defend themselves. As someone who was elected as a member of the House of Commons by the people in her constituency, Elizabeth May should not be dragged into the mud in this way.

**Mr. Hanson:** Madam Chair, that individual has been mentioned in the paper today. It's simply a matter of debate, and it was brought forward by my colleague. It's public knowledge. It's not something new that he's inventing.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Madam Chair, the individual noted is in the papers. I'm merely quoting what the individual herself said. That individual has no ability, thank goodness, to appear in this Chamber in any case. It is a matter of public debate. There's not a personal attack on anyone. It's not questioning anybody. This is quoting what they have said on the public record, what they have said to the media, what they have said in their own Legislature. This is a matter of debate. The Government House Leader is talking nonsense.

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to the point of order?

I don't believe we have a point of order at this point. However, I would caution members. Things are getting a little heated in here this afternoon. Let's try to be a little more respectful on both sides and keep this dialogue going, and let's move through the work we have to get done.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Very good points.

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** This is important. It is important to measure what the government is attempting to achieve here. A think tank often quoted and loved by members of the NDP, the Fraser Institute, has

as their motto If It Matters, Measure It. When we're talking about limiting the economic development of this province, when we're talking about limiting huge economic drivers like our oil sands, we want to be able to at least measure it. If it matters, measure it.

It is important that we do that because if we do buy into the argument of social licence, which I believe is a phony argument to begin with, even if we do buy into that, we're going to need some evidence to tell the radicals what's actually been done. We've got people who are promising to use force, violence, civil disobedience, and breaking the law to stop pipeline construction.

I'm pleased that we finally got legal approval for the pipeline, but I'm not going to believe it until we get oil running through it. And I'm optimistic that we will get oil running through it. But it will be very, very useful for the NDP to be able to tell their radical friends in the eco-movement what they have actually achieved. If they can go there with a measurable and say, "Mike Hudema, look what we've achieved; we have hurt the oil sands by this much," then perhaps – perhaps – he'll be less likely to want to get in the way of pipeline construction. If we can actually measure these things, they'll be able to have more evidence to actually take to some of their more, let's say, enthusiastic protesting friends and tell them that they're hurting the oil sands just fine, that they can allow some pipelines to go through.

Madam Chair, it is important that we can actually measure what we're doing. In absolutely everything we do in this place, especially on very important legislative matters like this, it's important that we set accountability for ourselves. You know, on the budgets, Jim Dinning brought forward legislation in the early 1990s to require regular, quarterly updates so that government would have to be accountable to the Legislature on how they're tracking their budget in between the bookends of the fiscal year. The government before that, the Getty government, was notorious for going wildly off budget and without any accountability measures in between introducing the budget at the beginning of the year and the fiscal report at the end of that year. So they brought in reporting measures, regular quarterly updates, so that the government would have to be held accountable in between those budgets.

We had a second-quarter fiscal update just yesterday, and I could see that the Minister of Finance just hated – hated – standing at that podium delivering the news that they're still not meeting their budgetary targets. Nonetheless, they had to be held accountable because there were reporting requirements. I think that all members of this Legislature agree that it is important that we have quarterly fiscal and economic updates even when the government doesn't like the news in them. We're asking for something similar when we're talking about reporting and accountability requirements for this bill.

I would thank the Member for Calgary-South East for his important contribution to the debate, and I'd encourage members of all parties to vote for the amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, on the amendment from the hon. Member for Calgary-South East I think there are perhaps some points that need to be made regarding the value of measuring and verifying those measurements. The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks was mentioning just how important it is, going forward here, that this government has something to talk about and tell its base, its supporters, as to how well it's doing on the greenhouse gas reduction front.

4:30

Any time a government – in fact, with an awful lot of the things that take place within this Legislature, with laws that are made,

policies that the government makes, there are often cases of unintended consequences. I'm aware, as I think everyone in this House is aware, that oftentimes when a government enacts policies or laws in an attempt to help something, inadvertent harm is done over here that wasn't counted on. It becomes very important, especially in a democracy, where the mission ought to be for the government to always be helpful to all people that they're responsible for, that any time there is a harm inadvertently done someplace in our economy or in our society, the government would back up and say: "Whoa. Okay. Well, we need to make a little change here, a little change in course because we've inadvertently done something that is going to result in damage."

Going forward, this government is going to need to have some sort of evidence, as the hon. member pointed out, that they can take to their base and say: look; look at what we're doing on this front. Now, we have some conflict that currently exists in that although we have an announcement today of these pipelines being done, we also had earlier today announcements from a member of the oil sands advisory group, OSAG. That announcement came at 5:28 p.m. PST, and it said, Trans Mountain Pipeline, Even if Approved, Won't Be Built. That came from Ms Mahon, who's on the OSAG panel.

Here we have actually a member on the government panel who recognizes that having the federal government approve something doesn't necessarily mean that we're going to be getting oil coming out the other end just any time soon. It's a sad thing when the statements made are things like this: "Granting a permit to build this pipeline will not end this issue. It will only be the beginning of a long and drawn out fight. And the real tragedy is that issue keeps us looking backward to the extraction economy." She ends by saying, "The world doesn't need this pipeline."

It sounds to me like the social licence either got revoked or never got picked up down at the registries. It sounds to me like the social licence hasn't occurred, that the radicals in the environmental movement such as this individual sitting on our OSAG still don't consider this government's actions good enough to warrant favourable response to such a vitally important piece of infrastructure. Obviously, this government's, you know, damage done to the Alberta economy in the name of social licence hasn't done the job.

What I'm suggesting, Madam Chair, is that if this government can adopt some measurement and some verification of that measurement, maybe, just maybe the people who are so – I refer to them often as frothing-at-the-mouth radicals. Maybe, just maybe if they see some hard evidence, real evidence that greenhouse gas reductions are taking place on account of specific policies and specific actions that this government is taking with regard to the oil sands, maybe, just maybe people like Ms Mahon will write out a social licence and deliver it to the Premier.

I'm not holding my breath, you know, that that's going to happen, but it seems to me that the government at least needs to make the effort. After all, they're destroying our economy. They're taxing Albertans into the ground. The very least they could do is at least measure some of that effect.

Now, I want to, if I may, take a moment and explain a little bit about the value of just what we're talking about when we say measurement and verification. Historically, when you're talking about the implementation of any kind of energy efficiency project, it's been carried out by project owners to either replace or upgrade equipment or plants and systems and things like this. Of course, dollars and cents always matter. They matter to everyone. So it is very, very important that any time these kinds of programs are put in place, the savings from the project have to be regarded as an added benefit, and the savings versus the amount of energy reduced,

the savings in money versus the amount of energy consumption reduced or pollution reduced needs to be quantified because effectively what you do when you do that is that you justify the expense. It becomes a justifiable expense or perhaps not. Maybe it's too expensive.

In the world of business, anyway, it's always very important to weigh the impact with the cost of achieving that impact. The same thing goes for a provincial economy. We have an impact befalling this economy, and it is monstrous. It's huge, a great impact on this economy. We have an enormous impact on the current leaseholders up in the oil sands, who are going to have to try to squeeze into that 32-megatonne window that remains. We have an enormous impact from this government's action on the upgrading and partial upgrading that we want to see take place in this province.

All of these are huge impacts, yet repeatedly this government has rejected calls for measuring the effect of the impact to deliver the promises this government is making, not only promises to Albertans, but the Premier and the ministers in this government have been making promises to the world about the impact that their policies are going to have on the world's greenhouse gas situation. So a lot of press around the world has been, you know, focused in on what our Premier and the ministers have been claiming, yet when asked to verify that, to measure that so you can verify that, this government repeatedly shoots those proposals down. That really harms credibility. It harms credibility not only here in this province amongst the people of Alberta; this harms our credibility globally because now this government isn't going to have anything to prove that all of these measures they're putting upon Albertans and upon our economy actually result in what they claim it's going to result in.

When the climate leadership plan was first rolled out, this government stood in this House and stood before the people of Alberta and said: we're taking a leadership role; we're going to show the world how it's done. Except what wasn't said was: but we're not going to measure it so we can prove it to anybody. That's pretty silly. Here we have a perfectly good amendment coming forward from the hon. Member for Calgary-South East to put in place a simple little measurement process to prove, in fact, that the reductions are taking place and in such a way that we can quantify the cost per tonne of the reduction.

Now, if you're going to provide leadership to anybody in the world, one of the marks of leadership is that you can turn around and see people following you. If you claim to be a leader in something, you turn around and there's nobody there, you're not really a leader in anything at all. It's just talk. If this government is really serious about providing leadership to the world – and let's be really frank about this. Alberta is a resource giant because of the blessings we have beneath our feet. We have some of the most abundant resources in coal, in oil, in natural gas, and on top, the surface, in agriculture, in forestry, and our greatest resource of all, the precious people of Alberta. We have this abundant resource beneath us.

**4:40**

We're a tiny, little population, but Alberta: right from the very beginning of our province we have always punched above our weight. It's in our blood in this province. We're a strong, innovative, creative, compassionate bunch of people. We love to work together.

I remember in the '70s when our oil and gas people were travelling all over the world because the world wanted the kind of drilling technology that we had developed here. Our experts from oil and gas resource development were travelling all over the world. When I started travelling all over the world – and I was not involved

in oil and gas – people in the Middle East knew where Alberta was and they knew what Alberta was. They knew. "Oh, you guys. Don't they call you blue-eyed Arabs?" Yes, they did. We were and are a resource giant in this world. We led. We turned around and you could see nations following our lead in resource development.

Well, this government made a gigantic claim, spent a bunch of money, flew to France. They spent a bunch more money, flew to Marrakesh, claiming to be a leader, claiming to have figured out how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Lots of claims were made, but without measurement and verification, those are empty claims, unprovable claims, claims that – well, you know, at some point you've got to put your money where your mouth is. So if this government really, really believes that they have the answer and that the measures they're putting in place and the pain they are causing our economy are really going to bring greenhouse gas emissions down to the level that they claim, then there shouldn't be a problem measuring it.

But what happens now, when you have amendments like this coming forward that are asking for simple measurement and verification metrics to be put in place to prove it and the government then votes it down? What kind of message does that send to Albertans and to the world? "Oh, well, what are you hiding? What are you afraid of? Why don't you want these measurements to take place?" "Is this just, you know, not true? Are these claims just fiction? Is this government over there in Alberta putting its people through all of that pain for no real greenhouse gas reductions?" Those are the questions that are going to be asked.

There are going to be more conferences like COP21 and 22. There are going to be lots more. What the world is looking for are some real answers to pollution, not just pretend answers, not just a bunch of academics sitting around in a circle, drawing things out on paper. The world wants boots-on-the-ground, concrete proof that this may work or that may work or this is working or that is working. That's what the world is wanting; they're wanting real proof.

This government has made a whole lot of claims, they brought a whole lot of policies in place, they brought a whole lot of pain to our oil and gas sector, to our electricity sector, and they trot out different corporations, saying: well, they're approving of what we're doing. Well, yeah. Take a look at their share price. You bet they approve of it. Some of them are completely exempt; it's just going to wash right through.

Ultimately, it will be the moms and dads of Alberta that pay every form of taxation in this province. It ultimately comes back to that taxpayer, and there's only one. Whether it be in our electricity sector, oil and gas sector, everything a government does in the form of taxation comes back to the moms and dads and the young people trying to eke out a living in this province. When you're going to put a population through that much grief in the name of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, I believe the government has a moral obligation to actually prove it – to actually prove it – and this government has repeatedly voted down mechanisms to prove it. They're going to stand up and say: well, those pipelines prove it. No, they don't. They don't prove anything at all regarding this government's policies and work. The NEB was created to be nonpolitical. The NEB was created for the very reason of protecting transprovincial pipeline approvals, to remove them from the political process because it was just getting mucked up. Unfortunately, we're starting to see the current federal government start to meddle with it again.

We have the same thing happening in this province with our electricity sector. AESO was originally developed to be nonpolitical, to get the politics out of critical infrastructure, to get it

based on what people actually do need. Unfortunately, we saw political meddling in that process even before this government came to power. We saw massive transmission line infrastructure built, and we're still paying for it. It wasn't all needed, but we got it anyhow. Now this government is making things even worse, reaching deeply within the mechanism of AESO and completely gutting its ability to act independently, the same as with the Balancing Pool.

Here we have now Bill 25 capping emissions, capping development. The government is making claims that this is somehow going to lead to greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Here's a wonderful amendment coming along allowing the government the opportunity to prove – to prove – to Albertans and the world that what they're doing will work. You know, the beauty of M and V and the reason why measurement and verification are used in private industry so much – in some projects we measure down to really small, not macro but at the micro levels – is because as we go forward with those measurements and we start getting the data back, we can make adjustments to the processes to maximize, to optimize.

Now, optimization is absolutely critical. I will say that in this particular situation, where we're talking about the entire oil sands development, to optimize the policies is going to require measurement and verification of those results. Otherwise, you start with a policy at the front end, you make the stupid presumption that it's got to be right exactly like the first iteration, and we just start going forward with our eyes closed. Not having measurement and verification is driving with your eyes closed, with no speedometer, no oil pressure gauge, nothing, nothing to tell you the condition of the vehicle or the direction you're going, to know that it's even right. Simple measurement and verification are your eyes and your ears as you go forward with a project. You can make little tweaks as you're going along, and you get it right. Optimization is always the goal, to optimize whatever that program might be.

Measurement and verification come in as an enormous economic benefit, especially if what you're measuring has some value to it. When we're talking about things like carbon credits, things like allocations, those things have value to them. Measuring and verifying the results . . .

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thanks very much, Madam Chair. I just want to take a few moments to make a few comments with respect to this amendment. It is clear that reporting on the outcomes of this policy or any other policy is important. The Minister of Environment and Parks has made it clear that this information has already been gathered and is publicly available, so in that particular case I think this is a little bit unnecessary.

4:50

Now, the hon. member has said, you know, that the proof is not in the pipelines, but on a macro level. Madam Chair, I think that the hon. member is not right. The purpose of a number of steps this government is taking with respect to oil sands is to create political conditions. Some have called it social licence. I think that's a very misinterpreted and misunderstood term. Social licence assumes that you're going to get everybody to agree that your pipeline is a good thing.

You know, we've heard from the hon. Member for Brooks . . .

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Mason:** Strathmore-Brooks. Thank you. A beautiful part of the country.

. . . that, you know, there are all these radicals and extremists and all of these protesters and everything. There are a significant number of people in this country, in Alberta, but also a greater number perhaps in the province of British Columbia who have some real concerns.

Madam Chair, the intention of the policies that we have implemented with respect to the oils sands are in order to create the political conditions for the approval of the pipelines, which we've seen today. It doesn't mean that every environmental organization or every environmentalist or every First Nation or every citizen is going to become convinced of the value and the need for pipelines for Alberta. That was never the intention. What it does do is create the political conditions for other governments – the federal government and other provincial governments – to say yes.

You know, the hon. member talks about the NEB. Well, the fact of the matter is that these pipelines already received conditional approval some time ago from the national regulatory bodies. What we saw today was a final political decision by the government of Canada to approve these pipelines. I just want to quote the Prime Minister this afternoon, Madam Chair, with respect to this matter. He said just today: let me say this definitively; we could not have approved this project without the leadership of Premier Notley and Alberta's climate leadership plan.

Hon. members are talking about how we're constraining growth in the oil sands and so on. Actually, putting upset limits on it that will allow saving about a 50 per cent increase over current levels has allowed for the growth of the oil sands. It's contrary to what the members opposite are suggesting. What it actually does is create conditions where we can go forward and continue to grow the oil sands and that we can get infrastructure to get those products to tidewater in place, and that's what we have done.

You know, the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks wants to give credit to former Prime Minister Harper. Madam Chair, I almost choked when he said that because what we had seen under the former Conservative government, of which their leader was a member, and under the former government of Alberta was essentially a policy of pretending that there were no real issues with respect to development of the oil sands. Although they would acknowledge climate change and even admit that it was caused by human economic activity, they in effect wanted to just close their eyes and hope that the issue would really go away.

I remember when I believe it was the Stelmach government decided they were going to spend \$3 million in New York in the American market to try and persuade Americans that everything was fine. But, of course, Americans have access to the data that the hon. member says that we need to pass this amendment. The Americans had access because that data was available.

They weren't fooled. They're not fools, Madam Chair, and this whole idea that there were no problems and no changes in policy that had to be addressed was in fact what led to 10 years of systematic failure in the siting of new infrastructure, which led eventually to a situation where the oil sands themselves were going to stagnate. Now, we've lifted those restrictions by accepting a voluntary cap that will allow a substantial expansion in the oil sands. Putting in force other measures as well has created room for the oil sands to continue to be the engine of economic activity of this province and of this country. When the price of oil recovers – and we believe it will – there's going to be renewed activity in the oil sands because they are going to have additional capacity that they can take advantage of to get their products to market.

What I want to say to all the members opposite is that we've seen proof today that the policies of the Alberta government with respect

to that industry are working, that it is focused very much on the key economic driver of this province, and whatever individual members on this side or the other side may have had to say about it in the past is immaterial. The opposition keeps going back to that. The fact of the matter is that the government will be judged not by what individual members said when they were much younger and not involved in politics but by what the government actually does and what it actually accomplishes. They can try as they might to discredit individuals on this side of the House, but the fact of the matter remains that the policy has been a solid policy that has allowed for political conditions to allow continued expansion in that key driver of our economy, that key creator of jobs and at the same time acting responsibly with respect to the very real threat faced by this planet by human-caused climate change.

The last point that I would like to make is that the opposition has vehemently objected to being characterized as climate change deniers. Fine. I take them at their word that they believe that climate change is real and that it is caused by human activity. But the fact of the matter is that they have no proposal to deal with it. If, in fact, climate change is going to bring about major changes to the planet that will render significant portions of it uninhabitable in our children's and grandchildren's lives, then that is a most serious matter, and any party that wants to be taken seriously for government must address this very fundamental question. It's fine to say, "We believe in climate change," but you can't say, "I believe in climate change, and I understand the impact it's going to have on future generations on this Earth, but I don't want to do anything about it."

I think we've adopted a prudent course that combines responsible environmental stewardship with sound economic growth for the province, and when the price of oil begins to rise, as I believe it already has, I think we're going to see renewed economic activity and the creation of jobs that we all want to see, that communities that have been hard hit by unemployment are going to recover, and people are going to be able to make a solid contribution to their community, to their province, to their family, and hold their head high because this province is once again, Madam Chair, going to be the economic leader of this country. We have taken the first critical step today.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

5:00

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd just like to stand up again in support of this amendment because it is all about accountability and transparency, which I believe all parties actually campaigned on in this last election.

I'm really starting to understand why this government doesn't want to wait for the oil sands advisory group's report in February, which we tried to push forward in an amendment earlier to have this hoisted till spring.

I just want to read you a little bit here. It says:

Having been arrested more than 20 times over the course of her career, her work day is equally likely to include an announcement next to [Alberta's Premier] as a stint in jail for blocking a tar sands pipeline . . .

She has no doubt her future will include many more arrests as a "raging granny" and environmentalist, she laughed . . .

The latter occurred before her detention on Burnaby Mountain, B.C. during the 2014 protests against Kinder Morgan's controversial Trans Mountain pipeline expansion designed to bring Alberta bitumen to Vancouver harbour. Almost exactly a year later, [she] was on-stage next to [Alberta's

Premier] to announce a climate plan supported by the CEO's of Big Oil and Greenpeace Canada.

No, I'm not talking about a current government MLA. I'm talking about OSAG member Karen Mahon. That's probably why they don't want to wait for this report to come through. You know, the Premier and the NDP might publicly support pipelines, but hiring all of these known anti-oil operatives with Alberta taxpayer money sends a very, very clear message to Albertans, and we will stand by that.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to speak also in support of this amendment about accountability.

When I look at what's happening here and some of the conversations we're having today, I see that, you know, this government has a group of friends and a group of appointees to their energy advisory group, OSAG. They have their hand-picked lawyers. They have their own advisers and authors of the environment minister's stone cold science, one of the wonderful favourite terms that I love to hear, stone cold science. I dare say many of their own MLAs and the rest of the people who perhaps give a rat's nether region about social licence will work tirelessly, endlessly and will chain themselves to trees in defiance of the rule of law and ensure that the celebration, gloating, and claims of single-handed success of a federal pipeline approval will be very short lived. That's why the accountability here is so important.

As pointed out, the Prime Minister once said that the government grants permits but only communities grant consent. As noted by the now famous Ms Mahon, who's a member of the OSAG group, there will be mass protests, there will be lawsuits, Madam Chair. So where is this approval going? Is this actually going to get us to tidewater? Is this going to get Alberta products and oil to tidewater? Let me point out that a permit was issued approving Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline over two years ago – this is, again, by claims from Ms Mahon – and no shovel has ever broken ground.

You know what, Madam Chair? The rule of law means nothing. Social licence means nothing to the people who will oppose this in defiance of what's best for Canada and best for Alberta. Your own hand-picked champions plan to openly defy the laws of this land, thumb their noses at democratically elected legislators like yourselves, and tell Alberta where to go with their social licence. Mark my words and make no mistake that these are the vehement, frothing naysayers that even you and your brethren of the Leap Manifesto are ill equipped to convince that access to tidewater for Alberta oil or gas is good for Alberta, good for British Columbia, or good for Canada. It's just not going to happen with the attitude we see from the people that are pushing that agenda.

Their claim is that a hundred people were already arrested: grandmothers, academics, priests, students, and First Nation leaders. Line them up. They're all your friends. Maybe you need to get on the phone and tell them: there's a protest coming; you might want to be there; get the placards out. You might even remind some of your members: get your placards out, guys; this is placard season.

There are already seven legal challenges to the pipeline before the courts, and more are predicted. Wow. Gee. I think there are some lawyers in B.C. that are pretty good on this stuff, aren't there? Some hand-picked lawyers. I'll bet you that the same law firm that you've selected to help you with the PPAs is going to be really busy in British Columbia making more millions of dollars on the backs of taxpayers, Madam Chair.

Oh, by the way, Canadian law requires the protection of endangered species and restoration of their habitat. Oh, we're going

to use that. We're going to chain ourselves to trees to do that. But nobody thinks about whether it's appropriate to apply the same rule to thousands of tankers approaching our east coast and heading up the St. Lawrence with foreign unethical oil on it, Madam Chair. Wow. Let's stop that Alberta oil from getting to market.

Granting a permit to build this pipeline will not end this issue. It will only be the beginning of a long and drawn out fight.

Oh, Ms Mahon again. Wow. She seems to be popping up here thanks to the friends of this government, Madam Chair, from coast to coast.

She also says:

And the real tragedy is that issue keeps us looking backward . . .

Backward. Oh, sounds like Alberta.

. . . to the extraction economy that was . . .

Oh, I guess that means that we're dead here in Alberta. The economy is done, isn't it?

. . . instead of forward, to the renewable energy economy that is forming.

That is going to create such vibrancy in the Alberta economy and create jobs out in those coal mining towns and put all those oil and gas workers back to work. Oh, no. Actually, they're going to be putting up solar panels and wind farms, aren't they? Oh, yeah. We're going to be farming wind from now on, and that's going to give us lots of business, except that all the farmers are going to lose their oil and gas jobs, and we're going to replace that with a new economy, so the smaller farms are going to be gone.

This, my friends, is the economy of this government – this Minister of Environment and Parks, this Energy minister, this Premier – and fully consistent with what we have now come to know and loathe, the NDP world view, Madam Chair, that is killing the province that I love. Support this amendment, support accountability, and – you know what? – be honest with yourselves, and make sure that what you're saying and what you're gloating on today are not words that you will eat tomorrow.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This government is pushing off public annual reporting on emissions. This is absolutely disappointing, and it's quite incredible that this government would not want annual reporting from oil companies on their emissions to be made public. I have no doubt that the government side has really warmed up to those seats over there, enjoying life in the public service, with that big salary, and don't consider themselves members of the public. It's really unfortunate because it's the public that should really appreciate this. It's when you're in the public and you're not in the government that this is the kind of information that you want.

If I might just abbreviate this, you are saying that you don't want the government to publicly make reports that state the reduction in upgrading emissions and greenhouse emissions; that we do not want to release the information that estimates the amount of greenhouse emissions that would be produced by these oil sands sites; that you do not want this information to be released that reflects the funding that the government, your tax money, is paying in regard to research and development to reduce the emissions and greenhouse emissions, gas emissions. Finally, you're saying that you don't want the public to know the amount of greenhouse gas emissions for each type of greenhouse gas emission that is excluded under the act. I find this really incredible because government bodies have a duty to provide frequent and accurate reports to citizens because it's their money, it's their livelihoods, it's their province.

You know, typically bad data isn't detected until it's too late. Nothing is more frustrating and more time consuming and labour intensive than having to start from scratch after realizing that you can't glean any useful insights from the information that has been provided. That's why it's important that our government is transparent and accountable. One example of bad data are the power agreements. If only you'd thought to look at all of the aspects of the contracts, then perhaps Albertans wouldn't be on the hook for billions, like a Wynne-led Ontario. It's astounding that this government, made up of people who criticized and picketed pipelines, oil sands, would not want annual reporting from oil companies to be made public. It is astounding.

**5:10**

You know, you spent the first eight months of your governance destroying confidence in our oil sands development. How do I know this? Because Saskatchewan is currently absorbing a lot of investment that would have continued here in Alberta; hence, my friends that are moving to Saskatchewan. Why did they leave? That's what happens when you do a royalty review. What you don't recognize is that on the international investment charts these international oil companies simply see this jurisdiction as imperilled; thus, they move their attention away from Alberta. Fortunately, a Brad Wall led Saskatchewan kept their investments here in Canada.

Only after eight months of looking at the facts and understanding how important natural resource development is to the Canadian economy did you truly recognize: oh; maybe we should take the Wildrose stance and support our industries. I congratulate this government for demonstrating that they can indeed learn, that they can indeed be educated. You have gone from picketing this Legislature, from standing in these very same pews above us and getting escorted out, to supporting oil. This is fantastic. Eight months it took for you to listen to the Wildrose and accept our stance.

Measures are important. It is where we use this evidence to help us with our decision-making. When we give pharmaceuticals as an example, we use the science of trial and error, measuring the reactions of patients when they're treated with various drugs. Here we want the public to be given the opportunity to measure the impact and the results of incentives and initiatives that are supposed to help clean our air. These measures can be used to identify good initiatives and technologies that achieve their objectives of reducing emissions and for us to recognize those that have not worked. It's important to measure these things as they will receive other benefits of claiming to achieve these environmental goals. Because what if they're wrong? What if some of this information that these oil companies give us on their initiatives is wrong? We need to measure these things.

Transparency and accountability are Wildrose staples. These are our core values. I thought, perhaps, that a New Democrat government would be along the same path, but the rejection of this amendment is the epitome of your lack of transparency and accountability. It truly is. Not only this, but I can't help but wonder what will happen in a couple of years from now should there be a new government in place. The former environmentalist picketers turned politicians turned back to Joe Public will look back at some of their own decisions and go: oops; we messed that one up, didn't we? I'm asking this government to look back to your roots, to remember where you came from, and to ensure that government and industry are transparent and accountable because you're in the position to support this. You have to recognize that it might benefit you in the future when you're not sitting in that seat any longer.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think we have to say that it is a great day for Alberta to have two pipelines approved today. I think that's a great day for Alberta.

What's interesting is that the Prime Minister approved Enbridge line 3, which will allow western oil producers to ship up to 760,000 barrels of oil per day from Alberta to the U.S. Midwest, not the coast but to the Midwest. It's still good. We're getting our oil to market. That's great. That doubles the capacity of the existing line. This is already an existing line. It's not a new pipeline. It's an existing line. It goes to the U.S., not to the coast. That existing line had pressure restrictions for safety reasons. Now, it's also important to note that Canada's National Energy Board recommended this in April, recommended that the government approve this line 3 replacement project, and of course there were some conditions involved. So this was approved by the National Energy Board last April.

Now, the Trans Mountain expansion – again, it's an expansion of an existing line – would triple the capacity of an existing pipeline network that links Edmonton into the Vancouver regions and that would ship roughly 890,000 barrels of crude oil and petroleum per day. The NEB recommended that project for approval in May – I believe it was around the middle of May, May 17 or something like that – along with, again, some environmental, financial, and technical conditions.

Now, I do want to point out that this government brought in their first Climate Leadership Implementation Act, which is Bill 20, on May 24 of this year. So the NEB had already approved both of these before the government even started on their climate leadership plan. That's when they brought their bills in. I think that's kind of an interesting fact.

Now, another interesting fact is that the federal government approved the Northern Gateway pipeline back – let me see here – in 2014. So the Northern Gateway pipeline was already approved by the government, but of course two years later the federal government has now not approved it. I think these are some interesting facts on pipelines. Of course, it seems like the present Alberta government want to pat themselves on the back for this, but this is similar to getting elected on third base and then claiming that they hit a triple. That's not the case, Madam Chair.

The NEB does a lot of good work to approve pipelines, and there are people that stand in the way. There are governments that stand in the way. These people are like the people that this government appointed to the OSAG panel, who are still threatening to prevent the just-approved pipelines. Does that make any sense to Albertans, that the same people that this government appointed to a panel are protesting pipelines, pipelines that have just been approved? I don't think that makes any sense at all, Madam Chair.

Now, I do want to read one other thing here, too, that I thought was kind of interesting.

In October the International Energy Agency, the IEA, released a review showing that 16 countries around the world are making significant progress towards developing legal and regulatory frameworks. Alberta is the only jurisdiction and the first one in Canada to move forward with legislative amendments, so while others are talking about tackling climate change, we are acting.

Anybody have any idea where that came from? I think we've heard that a lot: "while others are talking about tackling climate change, we are acting." That sounds like something that this NDP government has been saying.

I'll go on to read the next paragraph here.

CCS is a new technology, and quite simply it is a game-changing technology in the fight to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Well, that probably should be your first indication of where that first quote came from. It came from the previous government on November 3, 2010. They were tackling climate change with new CCS technology, "game-changing technology in the fight to reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

Madam Chair, we've heard this before. This government wants to pat itself on the back for something that it had nothing to do with. The previous government didn't do anything with what they tried. They tackled climate change, too, and six years later we got some pipelines.

5:20

The Government House Leader got up and spoke here just a little bit ago. He talked about the previous government's closed eyes, that they just closed their eyes to environmental problems. Well, reading *Hansard* from 2010, they had it all under control, just like this government claims to have it under control.

He also said something about lifting restrictions by putting in a cap. That doesn't even make sense. I think a cap is a restriction.

He also talked about discrediting individuals for things that they did and said when they were young, you know, holding up signs that said: no more dirty oil. How about these individuals that were just appointed to a panel by this very government to represent Albertans while they're protesting pipelines that are getting approved now? This government wants to take credit for pipeline approval when they're hiring people that protest pipelines. Does that make any sense? I guess this is the new reality of common sense in Alberta with the NDP government.

Now, he also said that the Wildrose has no plan for climate change. That's not true, simply not true. If they go back to the last election campaign, they can see our plan for climate change. In fact, it had some similar things as far as using natural gas. The government is suggesting that we didn't have a plan for reducing carbon emissions, but some of the plan is the same. So how could we not have a plan when parts of our plan are similar to your plan?

Another thing that the Government House Leader talked about: sound economic growth. His idea of sound economic growth was that the oil prices are going to go up. They're going to recover, so it's all good. We hear this government talking about this roller coaster, that we've got to get off this roller coaster where we depend on the price of oil. But what did he say? Sound economic growth depending on oil prices. They're coming up, so everything is going to be fine. It doesn't sound very promising to me as far as a government that's suggesting that they get off the oil roller coaster.

Now, we know, of course, that the government has cancelled the opportunity to have the Northern Gateway pipeline. I would like to hear what this government is saying about that. We have a Prime Minister that just overrode an arm's-length review process, the NEB, overrode the previous Prime Minister's approving it, but then he wants to do a victory lap, too, on approving two pipelines that already exist. He's the same one that put the ban on the Northern tanker traffic.

This government over and over again is doing things contrary to what they've said in the past. The NDP spent its days in opposition bashing the previous PC government regarding this very thing about transparency, about reporting. They bashed the oil sands for their emissions not being recorded properly, and now somehow today their suggestion is: "Nah, we don't need these reports. That's all fine. The studies are already being done; therefore, we'll just leave it." This is the exact same stuff that the members of this government that were previously in opposition railed on the previous government about over and over. But today it's all different now: "This is different. We don't have to report. Why would we have to report?"



Well, Madam Chair, I think it only makes sense that this government should report to the people of Alberta how their legislation is going to affect emission reductions, emissions reporting, emissions, period. I still don't understand what would be wrong with reporting. What would be wrong with "as soon as practicable after December 31 each year, prepare and make publicly available an annual report"? Annual reports are just a common way of doing business, and it should be a common way of doing business in government. Any government that wants to be open and transparent should not fear an annual report.

The suggestion is that the report contain "the reduction, expressed in megatonnes, from the previous calendar year in upgrading emissions and greenhouse gas emissions." Now, upgrading emissions fall under a separate cap along with cogeneration emissions. So why wouldn't it be appropriate to calculate and report the reduction of emissions? That's what this is all about. I mean, if this is about emissions, if this is climate leadership and climate leadership is reducing emissions to protect our environment, then why wouldn't we want to report the reduction, the amount?

Now, it also goes on to say to report the greenhouse gas emissions "that will be produced in the first year of commercial operation by oil sands sites approved under the Oil Sands Conservation Act in the year for which the annual report is made." Again, Madam Chair, this only makes sense. It's reporting greenhouse gas emissions. This is what this is all about, I presume, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. Emissions from oil sands: that's what it's about. Why can't we have a report on the emissions from oil sands if we're talking about the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act? It doesn't stand to reason.

5:30

It goes on to say, "the amount of funding provided by the Government of Alberta for research or developments to reduce upgrading emissions and greenhouse gas emissions for the year for which the annual report is made." Taxpayers' money. The government of Alberta doesn't spend their money; they spend taxpayers' money. They spend our money. They spend Albertans' money. That's what the government of Alberta spends. It's not the government of Alberta's money. There's only one place they get their money from, and that's from us. So why would there be a problem with providing the funding amount that the government gives for research or developments to reduce upgrading emissions? I mean, it'd be a pretty simple cost analysis. We find out how much emissions have been reduced, we find out how much money the government of Alberta has put into it, and then we have an idea of what the cost is for reducing emissions. It doesn't seem like much to ask.

Now, of course, the minister suggested that all this testing and reporting is happening, but I don't believe that Environment Canada is doing reports on the amount of funding provided by the government of Alberta for research developments. I would presume that none of the other environmental organizations that are involved with the testing and reporting do that. I don't think that would make sense if they're reporting and doing the analysis. Why would this be a problem, then? This is obviously something that's not happening, but it should be happening.

I think that when we provide people with information, they can make informed decisions. It's pretty easy to go out into a crowd and say, "Wouldn't you like us to do something for the environment?" Everybody says: "Yes, of course, we want you to do something for the environment. We're all concerned about the environment." All Albertans are concerned about the environment. But then if you said, "Oh, we're going to pump millions of taxpayer dollars into something, and we might not get any results," they might think: "Oh, hmm, second thoughts. Why don't you come back with something that works?" That's what I would do. I would want to

have something for my money. When I go to buy something, I like to get something. I like to get something when I buy something. So I would think that Albertans would love to have this information.

Now, going on here, it talks about the report on "greenhouse gas emissions for each type of greenhouse gas emission excluded under section 2(2) for the year for which the annual report is made." Again, we get into these exclusions from the 100-megatonne cap, so this is asking for an annual report to include these emissions from all these different things. Again, Madam Chair, I don't know that Environment Canada and these other organizations that are doing the reporting take that into consideration.

**The Chair:** On the amendment, the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to this amendment. As I think has been pointed out quite effectively by many of my colleagues throughout the evening, it's important to make sure that the government, when bringing forward legislation of this type, can make sure there's a mechanism within that legislation to ensure that the government is accountable to Albertans. I can't think of anybody who would find that unreasonable except, possibly, unfortunately, the government members through their indication of how they intend to vote on this amendment.

We have a bill, Bill 25, which experts are predicting could cost our economy from \$153.41 billion to \$254.74 billion, somewhere in there. Now, I don't know about you, Madam Chair, but I think that's an astronomical amount. The government is quite excited about some pipeline announcements today, and I agree with them on that, but even if every pipeline that we hope for in our province right now was approved, the expected bump to the Canadian economy would be about \$30 billion. Compare that to upwards of \$254 billion that we're going to lose from this bill if it passes this House.

The hon. member has brought forward this amendment, which reads, "Commencing one year after the coming into force of this Act, the Minister shall, as soon as practicable after December 31 each year, prepare and make publicly available an annual report, which contains," and then it goes on to describe some metrics of measurement and some measurements that would make the government have to be able to report to the people of Alberta the impact of this legislation that they brought forward, which is going to cost \$254 billion, possibly, to our economy.

If we're going to say that Albertans want to invest that much in continued job loss, continued negative impacts on their business, continued negative impacts on the energy industry – now, I would argue to you, Madam Chair, that they don't want to do that. If we are to take at face value the government's argument that Albertans as a whole want to lose \$254 billion on their economy, I would say that at the very least Albertans would be reasonable to say to their government, "We want you to be able to show us the results of the legislation that you brought forward that has caused us so much grief, has caused so much trouble for our economy," to show that at least that investment that Albertans are going to make, not the hon. members across the way – Albertans, everyday Albertans are going to make that investment – that the results have had a meaningful impact.

I would submit to you, Madam Chair: why would the government be concerned about a simple amendment to make sure that they are accountable for the decisions they make? If this legislation is going to have such a positive impact – to be fair, no government member has really stood up to show what the positive impact of Bill 25 will be. Assuming that they're bringing it forward because they think there will be a positive impact, if there's going to be such a positive

impact from this legislation, you would think the government would want to have some sort of accountability and measurement and mechanism to be able to report to the people of Alberta the success that they've had with this bill.

Now, most people in the communities that I represent have absolutely zero trust in this current government. You would drive a long way through Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre before you could find an NDP voter, and you would drive even further before you would find somebody that trusted this government, particularly now, after they've been in power for two years. That's fair, but there are other places in this province where they might have trusted this government. They obviously trusted them enough to elect them and give them a chance to govern. I would submit to you, Madam Chair, that for those people at the very least this government has the responsibility to report back to them on the results that they're having with their legislation.

By not passing this amendment, it looks to me like the government is concerned about what may be reported in a year, and that shows a tremendous lack of confidence in Bill 25, the legislation that they're bringing forward and asking members to vote on despite clear evidence that it will continue to cause more hard-working Albertans to lose their jobs, more families to not be able to make mortgage payments, less vacations for children and their families, less positive stuff and cause negative things to our economy. That must be it. That's the only thing that would make any sense to me, Madam Chair. They don't want the report to come forward, an annual report to hold them accountable, because they know that Bill 25 obviously won't accomplish what they think it will accomplish, or at least they're concerned that Bill 25 won't accomplish what they think it will accomplish. Otherwise, they would be excited to pass this amendment and make sure that there are accountability measures put in place to show the positive and the great results for Albertans that this piece of legislation is going to have.

But over and over we're hearing from government members that they will not support this amendment, so the only logical conclusion, I would say, Madam Chair, is that the government is not that confident in Bill 25, and given the estimates of upwards of \$254 billion lost in our economy, I've got to say that I don't think I'd be too confident either if I was a government member across the way.

5:40

This is why the hon. member brought forward this amendment. I think this is why I certainly am going to support this amendment. I believe all of my colleagues in every opposition party will support this amendment. I think it's a great amendment. I thank the hon. member for bringing it forward, and I would encourage members opposite to seriously consider why they would want to vote against a measure that simply requires them to report to Albertans the progress that they've made with this legislation and the results that this legislation has brought forth.

I can't think of any other business setting where you would make decisions that could cost upwards of \$254 billion and require anybody to make that level of investment and not put in some sort of measure to make sure that the investment is working, some sort of measure to make sure that you are aware if you need to make adjustments to the decisions that you're making. Certainly, if I was a government member and I thought that legislation was going to have a great, drastic, and positive impact on the people that I serve – and let's be clear, Madam Chair, that they serve the people of Alberta; it's a privilege – I would excitedly vote for this and would excitedly want to put in place something that would show the people of Alberta the great accomplishments of the legislation.

I think for myself – and I know, certainly, that the people I represent and, I suspect, the majority of Albertans, Madam Chair, are asking themselves why the government would not vote for something as simple as this. The fact is that it's pretty clear that they're bringing forward legislation that's going to cost Albertans about \$254 billion, and the logical thing is that, of course, you would not want to vote for this if you're the government because you are not proud of what's going to happen and you're scared of what the results of that annual report would be.

So I highly encourage all of the members of the Assembly to vote for this simple accountability measure, which does nothing in any way to negatively impact the legislation the government has brought forward.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

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

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:42 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Nixon
Ellis	Hanson	Panda
Fildebrandt	Loewen	Strankman
Fraser	MacIntyre	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Phillips
Babcock	Kazim	Piquette
Carlier	Kleinsteuber	Renaud
Carson	Larivee	Rosendahl
Connolly	Littlewood	Sabir
Coolahan	Luff	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Malkinson	Schreiner
Dach	Mason	Shepherd
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Feehan	Miller	Sucha
Ganley	Miranda	Turner
Gray	Nielsen	Westhead
Hinkley	Payne	Woollard
Hoffman		

Totals:	For – 12	Against – 40
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, I would move that the committee rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 25. I wish to table copies

of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed, say no. So ordered.

**Mr. Mason:** I move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, November 29, 2016

Day 54

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
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Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
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Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
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Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

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MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
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Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
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Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
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Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
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Babcock	MacIntyre
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Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 29, 2016

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act

**The Deputy Chair:** We are currently on amendment A2. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill? Seeing the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. I will flip here through my notes to find my briefing notes prepared by my crack staff. One of the concerns I have about section 20, as the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake had very adeptly pointed out, is that it talks about the governance and control of the bill and – Madam Chair, I'm going to return to my spot, find my notes, and if there's someone else who would like to speak, I will allow them to do that rather than just rambling on and putting disinfo into *Hansard*.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? Seeing the hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Okay. Thank you. I believe that A2 was the motion to strike 20(b). Is that correct? Yes. Okay.

Our government has committed to growing renewable energy in Alberta to secure the investment, economic development, and job-creation benefits that renewable energy offers. We are pursuing this in part through renewable electric programs that will promote large-scale renewable electricity generation through fair and transparent competitive processes. When considering this amendment to strike a section, we need to be very clear what this provision does and what it does not do.

With the current provisions ISO still has a legislative duty to ensure that the administration of the auction and contracting processes of the renewable electricity program are fair, efficient, and openly competitive. This provision does not absolve the ISO from its responsibility to provide for the safe, reliable, and economic operation of the interconnected electric system. The ISO continues to operate under its duty in this regard. In fact, this responsibility is reinforced by section 4 of this bill. Section 4 makes clear that the ISO will develop proposed renewable electricity programs that employ fair and transparent competitive processes and do not jeopardize the safe, reliable, and economic operation of the electricity system. In other words, the bill does not relinquish the ISO's duty to act under these principles of fairness nor to provide for the safe, reliable, and economic operation of our system. On the contrary, if you read the bill, not just section 20 in isolation, you will see that we are reconfirming this duty with respect to the ISO's new role of designing renewable electricity programs.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Those are precisely the aspects of this section which I think are so vital for us to retain. While I appreciate the Minister of Energy assuring us that safe, reliable, and economic performance of the electrical system is maintained in other areas of the bill, I'm not sure I see it quite the same way.

Obviously, we want our electricity system to be reliable. We obviously, I would hope, would like it to run economically. But above all else it's important that it is safe. So for a bill to be striking the provision that requires renewable production to be anything other than "safe, reliable and economic" strikes me as not just odd but, frankly, dangerous. It seems like, without question, renewable electricity is getting special treatment, preferential and positive treatment in a way that other forms of electricity do not.

Although, again, I suppose we have to take the minister at her word, that other aspects of the bill ensure that this will be the case. I'm generally quite concerned about the concentration of power within the minister's office and away from an independent, arm's-length body like the Independent System Operator.

I'm certain that our electric system can be operated, including renewables, as it is now, with the same set of rules for all forms of electricity. Ensuring that "safe, reliable and economic" stays in the bill, I think, is exactly the intent of this amendment brought by the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, which is precisely the same amendment that I had intended to bring. He got to it first, so I can only enthusiastically support him and would really encourage all other members of the House very much to do the same.

Again, as much as I would like to take the minister at her word and, as she said, trust me, I'd frankly trust but verify. So let's include it in the bill. Let's accept this amendment and ensure that section 20 remains in the act.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to speak in favour of this amendment, too. The minister had us go through and check section 4 and section 20 in the bill. They do read differently. Though I'm not sure of the exact differences, there is a difference between what she's suggesting.

Section 4 says:

When directed by the Minister under section 3(1) to develop a proposal, the ISO shall develop a proposal for a renewable electricity program that

- (a) promotes large-scale renewable electricity generation in Alberta,
- (b) employs a fair and transparent competitive process,
- (c) does not jeopardize the safe, reliable and economic operation of the interconnected electric system, as defined in the Electric Utilities Act, and
- (d) addresses the renewable electricity program objectives and evaluation criteria, if any, established by the Minister under section 3(2).

Now, when I read the existing section 20, it says:

The Independent System Operator must exercise its powers and carry out its duties, responsibilities and functions in a timely manner that is fair and responsible to provide for the safe, reliable and economic operation of the interconnected electric system and to promote a fair, efficient and openly competitive market for electricity.

So there is a difference there as far as one of them saying, “When directed by the Minister,” and the other one saying, “Must exercise its powers and carry out its duties.” Of course, the existing one relates to “the interconnected electric system,” and section 20 just says, “When directed by the Minister.” So I think there is a difference between these two, and I think that by striking this section, that ISO act in a way “that is fair and responsible to provide for the safe, reliable, and economic operation” – I think that is very worrisome.

I don’t think that there should be anything like that taken out of a bill or any other act by government. Obviously, it was in there for a reason, and I think we need to make sure that we don’t have any problems down the road with striking out something that says fair and balanced. So I’m going to suggest that all the members of this House should support this amendment and make sure that this doesn’t lead to any sort of misconception of what should be and shouldn’t be fair and responsible.

7:40

This section of the Electric Utilities Act is titled “Duty to act responsibly.” Duty to act responsibly. Now, I think that that spells something out very clearly, and by removing it, obviously, that changes things. In 20(b) it says that this section doesn’t apply to renewable proposals. Why would that not apply to renewable proposals? If in section 4 it says the same, then how come 20(b) says that this section doesn’t apply to renewable proposals? Is that because renewable proposals aren’t economical or they’re not reliable or the government doesn’t want to see them economical or reliable or safe? This is actually kind of incredulous to think that this type of wording has been taken out by this act.

Now, it seems like this government is trying to absolve itself and its arm’s-length bodies of the duty to act responsibly when it comes to renewable energy. I would suggest that renewable energy shouldn’t be treated any differently than any other energy. To suggest otherwise is bizarre, to say the least.

Now, I think that when we look at Bill 27, we have a lot of issues. I’m just going to read a quote from the Energy minister when she talked about it here. She says, “It will facilitate \$10.5 billion of new private investment in our economy by 2030.” Now, it’s always great to have investment in our economy, but this investment has to be paid for by somebody since it’s for our electricity. Who’s going to be paying for that \$10.5 billion? Which company is going to come in and drop \$10.5 billion into our laps here in Alberta and not expect that it’s going to be paid for, plus profit? This isn’t a \$10.5 billion gift. It’s a loan with interest with profit on top of it because, being as this is to produce electricity here in Alberta, that we will be using as Albertans, it’s going to have to be paid for by Albertans. Does that not make sense?

When I see somebody talking like that, just like, “Oh, yeah. Here’s \$10.5 billion. Look at all the jobs it’ll create. Look at all the money that’s coming in,” well, it all has to be paid back by Albertans because this isn’t something we’re exporting. This is something we’re consuming here. If it was \$10.5 billion of investment and we were exporting oil, for instance, then the return on investment could come from outside the country. But unless we plan on exporting electricity, then it’s going to be consumed here, and it’s going to be paid for by Albertans.

What I would suggest is that we should support this amendment, make sure that renewables are treated like all the rest of the energy produced in this province, make sure that it’s fair and balanced and that the companies have a duty to act responsibly. Madam Chair, I’ll leave with that for now, that I believe that this amendment should be supported. It seems that this government – I’m not sure why they would want to do this. Maybe it was an oversight, but if

it’s an oversight, let’s correct it. We have an opportunity right here right now to correct it if it’s an oversight.

If it’s not an oversight, then I think Albertans should be as alarmed as I am over this government’s willingness to strike a section that seems so common sense. I don’t know. It just seems like it’s bizarre to have this taken out and for the government to sit there and think that it should be taken out and leave it the way they have it.

I’m going to suggest that all members of this House support this amendment. Let’s get this back into the act, where it belongs, and let’s do what’s right for Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to support this amendment to put the words “fair and responsible” back into this bill. There are a couple of things. The fact that the words “fair and responsible” would in any way need to be excluded from any part of this bill or any bill, for that matter, seems absolutely ludicrous to me. I don’t know. Maybe it’s just late at night, but those are not words that I would be recommending that you cross out from any piece of legislation that is going to bring forward a bill that is supposedly going to be good for Albertans. “Fair and responsible” would be the first words that I’d want put into anything.

Having said that, as the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky said, it’s not just those words, “fair and responsible.” It actually is a precursor to the other part, “to provide for the safe, reliable and economic operation of the interconnected electric system.” Maybe the question is: whose idea was it to scratch this from legislation? Who would remove the words “fair and responsible”? It doesn’t make any sense, Madam Chair. I look at it from this point of view. Lookit, we have an arbitrary number that the government has told us that ISO picked. ISO picked 30 per cent. Okay. Well, that’s interesting.

I’m curious about the renewables groups that already have skin in the game and that have already contributed to the market from the aspect that they’ve actually invested in this province with their hard-earned dollars and work already. I’m just curious: is it fair and responsible to them to have this come in, that will potentially not even allow them to come into this system? I’m curious: is that fair? Is that responsible? I’m assuming – I may be wrong; it may be somewhere else in the bill – that they’re going to receive some sort of fair treatment as a result of this, considering that they’ve already put skin in the game, that they’ve already done this. These subsidies and everything else that is going to make up for these gaps: is that going to be attributed to them as well? It doesn’t sound very fair and responsible, does it?

Then, on top of that, the 30 per cent: is that even possible in a free market? Again, is it responsible or fair to Albertans that somehow within this capacity market you’re going to subsidize it enough, based on the taxpayer, to make up for the gap? It doesn’t sound very fair and responsible, does it? I would think that this government, again, would like to potentially take some accountability and transparency.

I’ll try it again. This is accountability and transparency written into a bill that will protect you in the decisions that you’re making. I find it appalling that a government would decide that pulling out the words “fair and responsible” is okay. I don’t care how many times it’s in the bill. Put it in 15 times, 20 times, a hundred times, enough times to make sure that Albertans feel that they are being adequately represented by this government on this file. There is

absolutely zero justification that this government can make for pulling those words out of this. If it was, as the member had mentioned, an oversight, so be it. We'll let it go. But my suggestion would be that this government would want to vote for "fair and responsible."

7:50

If you look at, as the member had mentioned, the \$10.5 billion of private investment that is supposedly magically going to appear somewhere for these projects, I would assume again that they would want the words "fair and responsible" in this legislation so that they understand that when they come into a contract – although this government likes to rip up contracts. Maybe that's why they pulled out "fair and responsible." Then again, if it's in there, maybe you might have a chance of actually bringing investment online.

I'm telling you, as a person looking at this, that if I was an outsider looking in with my \$10.5 billion sitting around, I would certainly be looking at that part of the bill and going: I don't think I'm going to take on that risk. And given the track record of ripping up contracts, of creating a carbon tax that you did not campaign on, of costing the taxpayer \$97 million a year for 14 years, I would highly recommend that you vote yes for this amendment with "fair and responsible."

Right now, as it stands, not only does this government pull these words out of the bill, but you have to pay generators for stranded assets. Where is that going to come from? Oh, yes. That's right. The specified gas emitters. Well, once that ends, then we go into the carbon tax. Those are tax dollars that you're going to be using to pay back stranded assets. You have – what? – about a year left of specified gas emitters, I'm assuming, before the carbon tax kicks in at \$30 a tonne. Yes? So now that money is going to come from the taxpayer. You've got that plus the subsidies the taxpayer is on the hook for to fill the gap between your 6.8 per cent and whatever else the differential is for the renewables coming online. Then – guess what? – the taxpayers are also on the hook to pay for new infrastructure.

Let's go backwards again: carbon tax, subsidies, the new infrastructure – gee, that seems like an awful lot; it doesn't sound very fair and responsible – and then, on top of that, the new gas production that is going to replace the baseload. Depending on the volatility of that market, the taxpayer is on the hook for that one, too. It doesn't sound very fair and responsible. You might want to think about putting those words back into this piece of legislation.

**An Hon. Member:** But how about that pipeline?

**Mrs. Aheer:** I would talk about fair and responsible. Actually, it was one pipeline. The number three, just so you know, is a fix. They fixed it. It already exists. Number three already exists. They're fixing it. I can send you the article.

Anyway, back onto "fair and responsible." "Fair and responsible" is something that maybe this government should put back into their legislation – I'm just suggesting – but you could stand and vote against "fair and responsible." That would be fantastic. It's another Facebook moment. It's up to you. You're the ones who are pulling this one out. My recommendation to you would be to put "fair and responsible" back in so that the ISO has the ability to at arm's length make some decisions, based on this new legislation coming through, that will be transparent and accountable to the people that we all represent in this House.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, it's interesting. The hon. Minister of Energy stood in this place just a little bit ago and went on at length about how we don't need this amendment, claimed that there are other places in the bill where "fair and transparent" was covered off, but the reality is that we're talking about "fair and responsible."

Furthermore, this bill that's before us, Bill 27, makes a couple of amendments to existing legislation. One of those is the Electric Utilities Act, and I'm going to go there. Maybe the minister didn't quite understand what this bill actually does, but it makes a serious amendment to an existing piece of legislation. The particular section that this messes with – and I'll just word it that way – is the duty to act responsibly under the Electric Utilities Act, and it is specifically stating in law that the Independent System Operator has a duty to act responsibly. That is the law.

Now, I'll just read it out. It's not a big sentence.

The Independent System Operator must exercise its powers and carry out its duties, responsibilities and functions in a timely manner that is fair and responsible to provide for the safe, reliable and economic operation of the interconnected electric system and to promote a fair, efficient and openly competitive market for electricity.

One of the key words in here is "must," that the Independent System Operator must carry out its duties this way, that it must act responsibly.

Along comes Bill 27, and Bill 27 says, "No, you don't," because Bill 27 says that section 16 does not apply to the development of renewable electricity program proposals under the Renewable Electricity Act. So here we have an act, or what the government hopes will become an act, the Renewable Electricity Act, going in and saying about another act that it doesn't apply, that it doesn't apply to renewables, that they're exempt from ISO operating in a responsible manner, that it does not apply to the development of renewable electricity program proposals under the Renewable Electricity Act.

The minister stood in this House, gave us a speech, but not once did she mention any reason not to include "fair and responsible." There was no rationale given, none whatsoever, for the removal of it. But she did sort of infer: well, trust me. Well, guess what? That's not what we're here for. If we lived in a world where it was "trust me," we wouldn't have a single law on the books about anything. The department of highways could post a speed limit of 100 K. [interjections] Yeah, some of the hon. members on the other side, you know, could say to the policeman: "No. Don't use that radar on me. Just trust me. Trust me." Not going to happen. Not going to happen. If we could live on "trust me," we wouldn't need this Legislature. We're not here to live on "trust me," especially with this government that we've got. Trust is something you've got to earn, and so far you don't have real good marks. You don't have real good marks.

Here we have this bill, and we're trying to put an amendment in place to provide accountability. Now, we just spent a significant amount of time earlier this evening talking about accountability, and again for – I don't know – the umpteenth time this government voted down an amendment that was attempting to put in place some measurable accountability. Here we have another amendment, and this amendment is attempting to stop the government from removing an existing accountability measure under the Electric Utilities Act, an accountability measure that has been there a long time already that states that the Independent System Operator must act responsibly, that it is their duty. And not only just responsibly, but it must be fair. The other key words here are that it must be an "efficient and openly competitive market." Now, I get why the government wants to trash that particular section. This government

is attempting to force upon our good people an entire agenda of renewables that they cannot guarantee will be fair or responsible or efficient or openly competitive. There really is no other conclusion a person could draw.

8:00

As much as they don't like the comparison to Ontario that is drawn not only by myself but by members of the press – I've been receiving some e-mails and some comments from people in Ontario who've been watching what's been going on out here, and both on Facebook and in our e-mails we're getting these things from people in Ontario, and they're saying: "Guys, don't go that way. Don't do what's happening to us in Ontario." They're saying: "Stop that government from going down the same path that Kathleen Wynne and McGuinty took us." So as much as this government doesn't like that comparison, the reality is that if this government is trying to ruin or take out of an existing act an existing measure of accountability, then we're really only left with one conclusion, and that is that this government doesn't want to be held accountable for acting fairly, responsibly, efficiently, and competitively in providing us safe and reliable electricity.

Now, if this was just a single oversight on the government's part, I could kind of live with that and say: "Okay. Well, you missed that one, but you could back up and fix that." But that is not the only little piece of evidence here regarding the irresponsible manner in which the government is pushing Bill 27 and the contents of it. I'll touch on that a little bit later on.

I will close with this comment. You have an opportunity to leave in place a duty for our independent system operator to operate in a fair, efficient, responsible, competitive manner. You have that responsibility. You have this opportunity, and I would recommend that you don't miss this opportunity.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to A2?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Deputy Chair:** Seeing none, I'll call the question on amendment A2, proposed by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:03 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Panda
Clark	Loewen	Rodney
Cooper	MacIntyre	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Taylor
Gotfried		

8:20

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miranda
Babcock	Hoffman	Nielsen
Carlier	Horne	Renaud
Carson	Jansen	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kazim	Schmidt

Connolly	Kleinstauber	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Feehan	McKitrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McPherson	Westhead
Goehring	Miller	Woollard
Gray		

Totals: For – 13 Against – 37

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill. Are any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to present an amendment to Bill 27. I have the requisite number of copies here and will await you receiving them before I continue.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The amendment will now be referred to as A3. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This amendment, which I will read out, is as follows: "Mr. Clark to move that the Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended by striking out sections 10, 11(2), and 12."

I seek to strike these sections, which I refer to as the blank cheque sections of this bill. [interjections] I knew that would get a rise out of my friends in the Wildrose, but I think it should attract the attention of all members of this House because it presents a substantial risk to Albertans, to the public purse.

You know, I want to preface my comments on this, as I do all comments on Bill 27, by reiterating my support for renewable energy, renewable electricity. I think that it's an important part of Alberta's future and ought to be something that we see more of in this province. The question is how we go about doing that and what risk we put taxpayers at in so doing. When we look at the example of Ontario and the mistakes that have been made there, one of the mistakes was an unlimited backstopping of renewable energy to the significant detriment of Ontario taxpayers and Ontario citizens. These three sections put Alberta taxpayers at precisely the same risk.

Let's step through what these sections are. Section 10(1) says:

If, according to a monthly statement provided under section 9(b), the ISO is to pay a generator, the Minister shall pay the ISO the amount set out in the statement.

Now, I presume and hope, for the minister's personal finances, that that isn't her personally. I can only think that it is, in fact, the Treasury that ultimately would backstop that.

Section 10(2):

If, according to a monthly statement provided under section 9(b), the ISO is to collect funds from a generator, the ISO shall, on receipt of those funds, pay them to the Minister.

So if there's money to be collected, it goes back to the government and goes to the minister, but more troubling, of course, is that if there's money to be paid, it is paid in an unlimited capacity by the minister.

Section 11(2) says:

If the Minister determines that the ISO's costs and expenses are prudent and that the fees levied under subsection (1) are insufficient to recover these costs and expenses, the Minister shall pay the ISO the amount of the shortfall.

So if the ISO is short of money for any reason that is deemed, quote, reasonable and prudent, the minister shall cover that as well,



without limitation. I've no idea how deep that hole could get, but my sincere worry is that that hole could get awfully deep.

**Section 12:**

On notice from the Minister to the President of Treasury Board, Minister of Finance, payments shall be paid from the General Revenue Fund for the amounts payable by the Minister to the ISO under sections 10(1) and 11(2) that have not been paid from [CCEMC] under the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act.

So that's interesting because, first, the ISO and the minister, the Crown are going to drain the CCEMC. If you've been following the news at all in the last week or so, you'll notice that there have been an awful lot of calls on the climate change and emissions management fund and the climate change fund. Those funds, as far as I know, have already been spoken for for coal contracts, coal payout contracts, and other areas. At some point you can no longer get blood from the stone, and money will have to come from the general revenue fund.

Again, this creates nothing more than a blank cheque, where any losses under the renewable energy plan are borne exclusively by Alberta taxpayers. Again, while I am very much a supporter of action on climate change and I believe that renewable electricity ought to be a big part of Alberta's future, I have a very difficult time giving this government or, frankly, any government a blank cheque, unlimited funds from Alberta's treasury, to backstop renewable electricity projects. I wouldn't want to give unlimited funds from the public treasury to backstop anything. That's absolutely, grossly irresponsible. I propose to fix that problem by removing the ability of this government to backstop renewable electricity in its entirety and allowing these contracts to work within the market, allowing the market to work to balance out the costs and, potentially, the profits.

The other challenge I have with this is that it weakens the independence of the ISO. There are a lot of aspects of this bill, and I imagine, as this evening rolls on, that if I have an opportunity, I'll present further, additional amendments – I imagine my colleagues in the opposition may do the same – that address the weakening of the ISO's independence. The ISO is intended to serve at an arm's length from government, and as we've seen from this government time and again, especially on the electricity file, the government is reeling all of these independent agencies back in under the purview of the government because they want to have command and control over everything that happens within the electricity file.

Now, this is a tremendously complex file, and I don't expect rank-and-file Albertans to unpack all of the details. That's our job in this Assembly, to understand the details behind the management of the electricity system. I have a hard time believing that we can trust the minister and her ministry to run the electricity system as effectively as an arm's-length agency like ISO, so I have substantial concerns both on the financial side but also on the governance side and the independence side. The system was set up to allow for independent, arm's-length control, not to allow the minister to dictate what happens on a minute-by-minute basis. That is a substantial concern. Again, we'll bring specific amendments that address other aspects of independence as the evening progresses, but this amendment primarily focuses on addressing the financial aspects of this.

I really do hope that we hear from the minister on this. I'm very interested to hear her perspective, and I would love this evening at some point to hear from some of our friends on the government side as well. I know they're here. It's lovely to see them. I see you all over there having a chat, playing on your phones. That's very good. I hope you're enjoying yourselves, but, you know, in all sincerity, I would really love to hear from my hon. constituency neighbour in

Calgary-Currie. He often has something interesting to say, and I would love to hear his perspective.

But in all sincerity, this is an important issue. We have a government that is writing a bill that seeks to allow the government of Alberta to backstop renewable energy projects with absolutely no limit whatsoever. Perhaps if the government feels that there is a reasonable limit that they'd like to propose, they'd maybe consider introducing a subamendment to this. But until we see something like that, I seek to remove these sections to constrain the government's ability to commit Alberta taxpayer dollars to really the nth degree because I think that's absolutely poor governance in the first case and incredibly risky for Alberta taxpayers and an already stressed public purse.

With that, Madam Chair, I will return to my seat and look forward to hearing from both sides of the House on this important issue. Thank you.

**8:30**

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I very much appreciate the amendment coming from the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow. Here again we have a situation similar to what we just went through, where accountability seems to be necessary in this bill. You know, we just talked about the duties of ISO to operate an efficient, openly competitive but also economic operation. It's a duty of ISO to operate in an economically responsible manner, but of course if you're going to strike that down, then you can do what you want. As properly noted by the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, we need to have something in place here that is at least going to bring some financial accountability if not any other form of accountability.

Madam Chair, the world is littered with failed renewable projects and failed renewable companies, literally hundreds of them. During the years 2010 to 2012 there were over 100 serious failures, and I'm not talking about some little solar company that did, you know, 20 installations on houses one year. We're talking about billion dollar corporations around the world that succeeded in getting hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayers' money in the form of incentives and then, well, went broke. The money is gone. Oh, well. So sad. Too bad. The taxpayers ultimately end up on the hook for it. As noted by the hon. member, there needs to be some accountability, some financial accountability.

We had the minister stand in this House saying more or less: trust me. No. Not going to do that. That's not what we were sent here to do. We were sent here to hold government accountable. We were sent here to enact legislation that is responsible, that is fair, that is an appropriate use of taxpayers' money. Now, here we have a situation where under the sections noted, under 10, 11, and 12, it would appear that we have the government deeply involved in what was once an arm's-length organization, an arm's-length organization that was really supposed to manage on its own, stand on its own two feet, staffed with professionals to manage Alberta's electricity system. And they managed it fairly well under the terms of the Electric Utilities Act. Now we're seeing this government striking some of those sections regarding accountability from the act. That's a very irresponsible thing to do, not one that I believe is in keeping with what Albertans want.

So I'm very much in support of this amendment. I believe it is the responsible thing to do to put some accountability back in place, and I would encourage all members in this House to support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to speak in favour of this amendment. All too often we see this government saying “Stay tuned” or “Trust me.” That’s not our job. Our job is to investigate bills and legislation on behalf of Albertans to determine whether they can do damage to Albertans and our economy. That’s our duty here.

Now, we see an opportunity here where the government basically wants to have a blank cheque. There are no numbers here at all. Whatever it takes, the government is just going to fork out the cash, I guess, and this cash, of course, isn’t the government’s cash. It’s taxpayers’. It’s Albertans’ money. I find it alarming, as the Member for Calgary-Elbow did, that this government would leave us in such a situation where they would want a blank cheque in this legislation to cover any costs of a basically failed renewable electricity project.

Now, Madam Chair, it seems like everywhere we go in Bill 27, all we see is the government backstopping all these different things in this bill. I’ll just read a part here. Well, for one thing, I got a kick out of the minister’s comments. She said, “Using a competitive process.” I’m not sure what kind of competitive process would be involved with taxpayer money incentivizing this process. That’s not really a competitive process. I guess you can find out which companies can . . .

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Who can hit the trough the fastest.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yeah. Who can hit the trough the fastest. They’re lining up there to see: “Okay. Who can we get this money from?”

It just seems like everywhere I look in here – let’s see. Here’s another comment from the minister. “It would enable the AESO to take security interest in projects that receive support as this is the best way to protect the government’s investment.” We’re talking about investors coming here and spending money on renewables, but the minister herself is saying that we have to have a way to protect the government’s investment. What investment does the government have? It’s the “investment of carbon funds in case of generator default or insolvency.” Carbon funds. Where do the carbon funds come from, Madam Chair?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** From Albertans.

**Mr. Loewen:** I think they come from Albertans. Exactly. That’s where the carbon funds come from. It’s taxpayers’ money. It’s Albertans’ money. This government not only wants to support these investments with carbon tax funds from Albertans in order to incentivize them to open up shop, but then if something goes wrong and they all of a sudden go broke, go into default or insolvency, the government is still going to kick in and take care of it on that end, too. So it’s taxpayer money initiating it and taxpayer money in the end if it fails.

I think this is a good amendment. We should support this amendment. The government doesn’t need a blank cheque. The government needs to explain to Albertans what their plan is, how much it’s going to cost, and then Albertans can make a decision from there.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I need to stand up and speak to oppose this amendment. It’s clear that the opposition do not understand how capital investment is attracted, and eliminating these clauses would eliminate the backstop altogether. Through engagement sessions with government, renewable investors and developers told us that the funding certainty would allow the project developers to secure finances at much better rates. This funding certainty would also reduce program costs. This feedback was verified by Alberta Energy’s review of programs in other jurisdictions.

To encourage investment, the legislation backstops the primary source of funding, the climate change and emissions management fund, with reinvested carbon levy funds from the general revenue fund. Setting a limit would undermine the objectives of these sections to facilitate better access to financing and lower financing costs. For example, Alberta Energy calculated that the increased funding certainty will reduce program costs by hundreds of millions of dollars, Madam Chair, using the indexed renewable energy credit for the first auction of up to 400 megawatts of renewables. By increasing financing costs through getting rid of these sections, that would cause prices to increase and would decrease the faith that investors would have in this legislation.

**8:40**

So we need to not vote in this amendment because it would be damaging to investor confidence. It would signal loud and clear that we aren’t fully committed to this program in the long term. On the whole this amendment would increase program costs. It would limit interest in investing in Alberta. The general mechanism of budgeting and reporting and transparency will still be applicable to this program, so this would demonstrate and verify that reinvestment in carbon levy funds be would used to fund the renewable electricity program.

Again, I speak against this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I will first recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow and then the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. Clark:** Madam Chair, thank you so much. I appreciate the minister standing up and sharing that insight with us, but of course the government backstopping a loan is going to make rates better. You’ve got a multibillion-dollar organization willing to essentially, literally, cosign a loan.

You know, I have a business idea. I’m going to open a car wash, and if my credit is terrible and there’s a lot of risk that my car wash might fail, I would like to get a loan. Now, I’m going to go to the bank, and the bank is going to say: “Greg, you seem like a nice guy. You don’t really know what you’re doing, and you’re going to have a high rate of interest if I’m even willing to give you a loan at all.” But I go: “No, no. I’ve got the government of Alberta, you see. They’re going to backstop my loan. It’s all good.” And the bank goes: “Really? I’m in. That sounds fantastic.” It’s really like asking mom and dad to cosign your loan for a car. That’s what this is. Oh, that’s fine. What could possibly go wrong? What could go wrong? It’s renewable electricity.

Look, I want to be really clear. I believe in human-caused climate change. I believe we need to do something about it. I believe that renewable energy ought to be an increased part of the grid in this province. I believe we need to ramp down coal and eliminate it altogether. Those are things I believe. There’s a better way of doing it, though.

Let’s get back to the argument at hand here. What could possibly go wrong with the government backstopping loan guarantees? I

mean, it's not like anywhere in Alberta history we've ever had a loan guarantee backstopped by the government of Alberta go wrong. Has that ever happened? Oh, wait. Wait. Hang on. The last time oil was in the tank in a big way was the mid-1980s. There was a Premier – I think his name was Getty – and he had this idea that we were going to backstop business ideas. Now, one of them was the Gainers meat-packing plant, a giant multimillion-dollar loan guarantee. You know what? That defunct organization's loan guarantee is still on the books and the budget of the government to this very day.

Surely that was the only one that happened, right? They wouldn't do that more than once, would they? No, no, no. Oh, what? Wait a minute. MagCan in High River. That's right. I love High River. Some of my best friends are in High River. There's a giant MagCan facility. You know what we're going to do? We're going to process magnesium because, why, it's the metal of the future, isn't it? We're going to diversify Alberta's economy. We've got a brilliant idea. We are going to create hundreds if not thousands of jobs. All we need to do is have the government of Alberta backstop a loan. What could possibly go wrong? Well, we found that out. But it only happened twice.

**An Hon. Member:** It only happened twice?

**Mr. Clark:** No, it didn't. It didn't. We also had NovAtel. That's right. Now, NovAtel, while I will grant you that they do still technically exist, cost, if I'm not mistaken, \$500 million, \$600 million, and that's in 1980, 1990 dollars, right? That's a lot of money.

While I will acknowledge that there could perhaps be some differences between direct investment by government in specific businesses and a plan to backstop renewable energy, there actually isn't that big of a difference because the similarity that runs through those three historically poor choices by previous governments in this province and this plan is an absolute blank cheque. If things go wrong on the renewable energy side, Alberta is on the hook irrespective of how much it costs. There is no bottom here. This is a bottomless pit, potentially, of money. Now, I hope I'm wrong. I hope this doesn't come to pass. I hope this succeeds because if it does, it's good for Alberta, and that's all I care about. That's what I'm here to do, make things better for Alberta.

There is a way of ensuring that we can bring renewable energy on stream in this province without putting Alberta taxpayers at this massive risk, and it's not backstopping. I don't have the Blues because the minister just stood up, but I believe the word "backstop" was actually used in the minister's speech. I would at the very least like to see some limit on the amount of money that this government is willing to put up and backstop, but barring that, I think we need to take these out entirely, which is why it's very important that this amendment pass, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Okay. Well, I'll just take a few minutes to speak to this amendment, too. The Member for Calgary-Elbow just listed a few different failures right here in Alberta where the government backstopped loans, which cost taxpayers millions of dollars. But none of them were renewable energy ones, so we could say: what could go wrong with renewable energy? Well, how about Amonix solar, a manufacturing plant in Las Vegas? More than \$20 million of tax credits and grants given by the Obama administration. It didn't last a year. Solar Trust of America filed bankruptcy also.

BrightSource warned Obama's energy department officials in March 2011 that delays in approving a \$1.6 billion U.S. loan guarantee would embarrass the White House and force the solar energy company to close. BrightSource lost billions of dollars but is getting more money to keep trying. It's not working.

I'll end on one of the nice big ones that everybody should remember: Solyndra. Obama gave \$500 million – that's half a billion dollars – to Solyndra, who shut its doors, laid off 1,100 workers after billions in losses due to failure to make a solar product that worked. They couldn't even make one that worked. We don't need to do the same thing as Mr. Obama did, throw taxpayer money down the drain.

This is a good amendment. We can support this one. We can make sure that the taxpayers aren't on the hook for unseen amounts of money. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I listened with rapt attention to the hon. Minister of Energy actually admit in this House: well, when I talked to the renewables companies, they said that if I'd underwrite their loans, if I'd protect them, they'd come and play in our sandbox. Like, hello? You know, a fact of banking: if a regular financial institution or investment house is not going to back a particular project, what in the world is a government doing backing that project? We went through how many failed projects by Mr. Pocklington and that whole era. If you remember, it was one thing after another after another, and the government of Alberta was just shelling out the money, doing this exact same thing. Those businesspeople back then gamed the government. They schooled the government big time, promising: well, you know, it's going to be 500 jobs or 300 jobs or 200 jobs, whatever. It was hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money just vaporized, gone, and then these things failed anyway.

8:50

In the world of renewables all over this world we've been seeing the very same thing: massive corporations taking advantage of the reality that there are some politicians who don't understand the very things that they have so much authority over, one of them being finance. Here we have our minister, the hon. Minister of Energy, saying: well, the renewables company said that, you know, if we will backstop their loans, they'll come and put renewables in our province. I say again: if the investment community, if the shareholders in those companies won't finance those things, no government has the right to do it. It is wrong to do that. When the financial experts, the ones who understand risk, the ones who understand how to even calculate risk, have done the calculation and say, "No; that's too risky," then no government ought to be backstopping that thing with taxpayers' money. No way. If these corporations cannot come here and stand on their own two feet financially and compete in this market and build renewables, then they need to go. They need to go someplace else. It is totally inappropriate for this government to put the taxpayers on the hook. Totally inappropriate.

We're going back now, way back to an era in this province where governments – it was cronyism to the nth degree. Government was in the business of business. Wasn't it called the Alberta Opportunity Company? Isn't that what it was called? They were just lending out money left, right, and centre. I remember that in the industrial park just north of Leduc there was a company that started up and got a bunch of government money. They said that they were going to be producing marble tiles for new home construction taking place in

Hong Kong and Shanghai. And somehow or other here in Alberta, where we don't have marble in the first place . . .

**An Hon. Member:** They got shanghaied.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yeah, they got shanghaied.

They were going to slice marble and granite here into tiles and ship them all the way over there for the housing market that was just going crazy over there. There was millions and millions of dollars. I remember that the photograph in the newspaper at the time showed the owners standing in front of a very large saw blade. Well, when I was a young fella . . . [interjection] Yeah, I'm still a young fella.

When I was slightly younger than I am now, I worked in a sawmill in British Columbia, and we had saws just exactly like that saw blade. So I took a little trip over there to the industrial park in Leduc – I didn't live very far from there – and here was this great big 8-foot-diameter saw blade sitting outside. This was apparently the saw blade that was going to be cutting marble and granite and making these tiles. I looked at that saw blade, and I thought to myself: "Man, I worked on saw blades exactly like that in the mill. That is no marble-cutting, stone-cutting saw blade. That's a saw blade with removable carbide teeth for cutting logs." And I thought, "Our government just got gamed by two people from Holland who are way smarter than the politicians that just gave them a bunch of money." Sure enough, within weeks – within weeks – the owners were gone, the warehouse was empty, the saw blade was still sitting outside the warehouse, and the money was gone. Imagine. It boggles my mind, first of all, that the politicians of the day were . . .

**Mr. Taylor:** Gullible?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Gullible: that's a much better word than I was thinking of.

They were gullible enough to believe that somehow we could import huge slabs of marble all the way to Leduc, Alberta, slice them into floor tiles, and ship them to China and actually be a viable business.

Then there was the one in Prince George, British Columbia, where they were going to make chopsticks and bowls out of poplar for the Chinese market. Yeah, they were going to compete with the Chinese, making chopsticks and bowls out of poplar. Guess what?

**An Hon. Member:** Don't give them any ideas.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yeah. I shouldn't be giving you ideas.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, as much as I love the history lesson that we are going down, I'm just curious if you can loop it back to the debate, please.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Let me loop it back. Thank you, Madam Chair. Fasten your seat belts. We're going to loop back. Here we go. Ready? [interjection] Now, the hon. member is suggesting that I want a free trip to China, and this is not true.

Let me loop it back for you, Madam Chair. The reality is that too many governments, including this one, have been bamboozled by carpetbaggers, salesmen that know more than they do and absolutely convinced the government: "Well, we'll do this for you if you, government, will backstop our loans. If you will underwrite our investment, then we'll come here." All of a sudden when a government does that, there is zero risk – zero risk – for that corporation. They don't have to act responsibly anymore because they are going to be smart enough to come in and get what they need.

Let's just look at this. The renewables companies that are going to be coming in here are going to be subsidized. Now they're going to have their loans underwritten – this is a licence to print money – with absolutely zero compunction on their part to stay viable. They could pull the plug next year and walk away, have all of whatever plums and carrots this government is going to give them to come here, and we the taxpayers of Alberta are going to be left holding the bag. All over this world there are failed projects like this one.

Here we've got a California project. If you know the Ivanpah solar thermal plant in California, it's one of the largest renewable projects in the United States: \$2.2 billion. Guess what? Ivanpah had said to the government of the day: we're going to generate this much electricity with this plant. The government goes: "Ooh. Let us help you out." Well, guess what? Fifteen months later they're only producing 40 per cent of the promised amount of electricity. Take a guess who's on the hook. The taxpayers, good old taxpayers.

**An Hon. Member:** Same ones.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Same ones.

Over and over again we have governments trying to look good by incenting something. It doesn't matter what industry. When governments get involved in the business of business, business they don't understand, when they start providing backstopping, underwriting loans, grants, or guarantees to corporate entities, those corporate entities will take advantage of that. They will not act responsibly, and they will put us at risk because they no longer have any. It is patently wrong for this government to be backstopping anything to do with the renewables industry.

This amendment that we have before us is a sound amendment, and it needs to be supported. The government has a moral obligation to protect the taxpayers of this province and to stop fleecing them. Enough is enough already.

Thank you.

9:00

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to add a few little things into what the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake was saying. This is just a few other, just a couple, failures that Barack Obama had when he was in power. He blew \$150 billion to increase renewable energy generation by a mere 1 per cent. I'd like to read this into the record from the Institute for Energy Research.

Obama has spent at least \$39 billion a year on his green energy projects . . . President Obama subsidized solar and other renewable energy in the United States with taxpayer money to the tune of \$39 billion per year on average for the past 5 years.

**An Hon. Member:** How much?

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thirty-nine billion dollars per year.

These massive subsidies, however, have done little to increase the contribution of solar power to the electricity generation mix as solar is expected to produce just 0.6 percent of electricity generation this year.

This was in 2015.

Disregarding the cost to the American taxpayer and the failed solar projects in the United States, President Obama has pledged billions of dollars to fund solar energy development in India. On his trip to India, President Obama was hoping to bring back a deal similar to the one he made in China to peak the country's carbon dioxide emissions by 2030. However, Prime Minister Narendra

Modi rejected the President's proposed global warming deal, realizing his priority should be to bring power to the hundreds of millions of Indians that lack access to electricity.

At least 36 of his taxpayer funded green energy projects went belly up. Now here's just a small portion of this list. These are all bankrupt green energy companies that were subsidized by the American President.

Evergreen Solar (\$25 million)  
SpectraWatt (\$500,000)  
Solyndra (\$535 million)  
Beacon Power (\$43 million)  
Nevada Geothermal (\$98.5 million)  
SunPower (\$1.2 billion)  
First Solar (\$1.46 billion)  
Babcock and Brown (\$178 million)  
EnerDel's subsidiary Ener1 (\$118.5 million)  
Amonix (\$5.9 million)  
Fisker Automotive (\$529 million)  
Abound Solar (\$400 million)  
A123 Systems (\$279 million)  
Willard and Kelsey Solar Group [\$700,000 and a little bit]  
Johnson Controls (\$299 million)  
Schneider Electric (\$86 million)  
Brightsource (\$1.6 billion)  
ECOtality (\$126.2 million)  
Raser Technologies (\$33 million)  
Energy Conversion Devices (\$13.3 million)  
Mountain Plaza, Inc. . . .

It goes all the way down. I can read about at least 20 more.

This adds up to a tremendous amount of money that was taken out of taxpayer pockets in the United States. Now, the reason that we read about this and the thing that we need to understand about this is that that money actually disappears. It goes towards the corporations that have been made promises and not towards the people that should actually be benefiting from what renewables could actually do for us.

I would just like to do this as we wanted to have some crossjurisdictional information here so that going forward better decisions can be made so that we don't end up going down the same route.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** I would recognize the Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It says here that if there are insufficient [funds] to recover those costs and expenses, the Minister shall pay the ISO the amount of the shortfall.

You know, all of this would not be possible if it was not for Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, the unlimited debt ceiling. This is the problem with this, and we need to make sure that we support these amendments because we'll have this happening in the future. We won't have any limit as to how much the government can spend. I don't know if the government was thinking ahead when they put Bill 10 in or it just dawned on them that they could spend this much money. This, to me, is wrong to backstop.

Thank you.

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

If not, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:05 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Panda
Clark	Loewen	Rodney
Fildebrandt	MacIntyre	Taylor
Gotfried	Nixon	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miller
Babcock	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carlier	Horne	Renaud
Carson	Jansen	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kazim	Schmidt
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Drever	Mason	Turner
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Woollard
Goehring	McPherson	

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** We are back on Bill 27. The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

9:10

**Mr. Rodney:** Well, thank you so much, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to pass this on through the pages and read it into the record at your earliest convenience, sir.

While it's on its way, I'm happy to just read it into the record.

**The Acting Chair:** Please go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you again, Mr. Chair. I'm very pleased to move an amendment actually on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-South East, and it reads as such. Mr. Fraser to move that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended in section 13(1) by adding the following after clause (c), and, ladies and gentlemen, it's just two sentences:

- (d) the estimated number of jobs created under renewable electricity programs during the fiscal year, and
- (e) the total dollar amount of investments, other than funds provided pursuant to section 10, made under renewable electricity programs for the fiscal year.

In the spirit of all-party co-operation, if that indeed would be possible tonight, and just for the sake of efficiency, Mr. Chair, I'll just briefly point out the relevant points that are leading us to, you know, the rationale for this amendment. The first and most important point to make here is that it's only right and only fair that we ensure that Alberta taxpayers are receiving value for their tax dollars because we recognize the opportunities and the benefits that we can receive from greater renewable electricity generation in this province and also because we recognize that our first responsibility, of course, is always to the citizens of this fine province.

Inherent in that responsibility is, I would say, the duty, honour, and obligation to be sober guardians of the public purse so that we're able to face all of our constituents, as all 87 of us in this House need to be able to do, and say to them that we did the best job we could to ensure that their hard-earned money was spent in a responsible way. I don't believe that if we voted for the bill before us today in its present form, we could honestly say that we were

certain that the money was being treated in a responsible way. Now, part of the problem is that we in this House do not have enough tools to effectively measure whether or not that money is being invested under these renewable programs and that it's actually benefiting Albertans in the way that the government is hoping for, and we are all hoping it would be a wise investment.

Additionally, there's a section of this bill that deals with annual reporting. That's what everyone is looking for these days, annual reporting. The reporting that's included does deal with some important issues – and I'm happy to acknowledge that that is happening with this government on this bill in this case – but we would like to see that reporting expanded just a little bit. So our amendment, the amendment that you see before you, Mr. Chair, adds two additional categories to that reporting section.

We'd like to see that report include statistics. I mean, people are always looking for performance measures, in this case regarding how many jobs are actually being created by these renewable energy programs. You know, I've got to say that that would actually be a very good thing for this government to share. I would think that they'd be very proud to share the number of jobs that are created as a result of this. That's a good-news story. I would really want to know why the government would not want to include this. Perhaps it was just an oversight, but perhaps it can be fixed right here and right now, with this simple sentence asking for exactly that.

Mr. Chair, since this government expects that these investments are going to kick off what might be called a green energy gold rush, I expect that they'd be very happy to include these numbers in the reporting. Albertans would also like to see additional details on the dollars. How many dollars are being invested into these programs? It's their money, and they deserve to know. That's what we're asking for here. This way the government can make a reasoned – a reasoned – evaluation of whether or not there's value provided in these investments, and that's only fair.

Mr. Chair, that's all we're asking in these simple, short amendments, that the government commit to providing reasonable additional information and simply reaffirm their commitment to transparency, which is something that they've said is a hallmark of theirs, and good for them if that indeed is the case.

In advance I will say thank you on behalf of Albertans if you simply make those numbers available to all of us so we can better evaluate the success of the program and the effect that it's having. I hope the government will see it the same way.

I thank you for your time, Mr. Chair. Onward and upward.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

We'll recognize this as amendment A4. Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to rise to speak in favour of this amendment. I do hope – really, sincerely hope – that the government will agree to include this in the bill. It doesn't have anything to do with spending money or restricting the spending of money. It won't cost anything. But what it will do is that in the interests of transparency but also of garnering support from Albertans for what I believe is an important policy initiative of the government, which is promoting and expanding renewable electricity in this province – if we want to get Albertans onside, let's provide them with the data to show them what the benefits of the program are.

And if I could offer one constructive criticism of the government's efforts to date, it is that they have not done, I think, a very good job of explaining the need to Albertans for action on

climate change in a way that answers the “what's in it for me?” question for Albertans. I think it's a fair question for any Albertan to ask of their government. Sadly, I don't think this government has done a very good job of that. This amendment addresses that particular problem.

Anyone who's ever run any organization – private sector, public sector, not-for-profit – knows that if you don't measure something, you can't manage it. So if we don't know how many jobs are being created in an objective way, how are we going to know whether or not this is a defective program or if, in fact, the government's claims to be creating jobs and spurring economic activity are in fact truthful or if they were fantasy? I'd like to think that it is true, and if it is true in fact, we should see a positive jobs report.

The dollar investments, I think, are also very important information for Albertans to know, especially if it excludes the dollars spent under section 10, which, as I previously had tried to do, amends out what I would – I'm not using my word “backstop”; I'm using the minister's word “backstop.” That's what section 10 does. But the opportunity here is for this government to provide not just transparency but a report back to Albertans.

In all sincerity, Madam Minister, I think this is a very thoughtful and worthwhile amendment. I do really encourage the government side to include that. It would certainly lighten the mood in the House this evening and raise all of our spirits. I think Albertans would be pleased to know that while we are in this House in the evening hours, we're not wasting anyone's time or money. In fact, we're making some progress, doing some good work on behalf of Albertans. I think that by passing this amendment, we have an opportunity to show them that. But, you know, materially, I think, it also improves the bill, and I would sincerely encourage all members of the Assembly, particularly on the government side, to support this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** I recognize the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have had our own Energy minister tell us that the renewables switch is going to result in 7,200 new jobs in this province. The solar industry says that there are 70,000 jobs knocking on Alberta's doorstep. Well, what are we afraid of? Let's see. Let's publicly report.

**9:20**

Here we have another good amendment to this bill simply requiring some accountability, another measurement and verification number, something that we can give to assure Albertans that the promises that are being made by this government actually come to fruition or, perhaps, not. But it at least allows the government to try to justify the billions of dollars of taxpayers' money that are going to be handed out. When we're talking about the kinds of job creation that this province needs, I don't see why the government wouldn't jump at an opportunity to prove the claims that they're making, that this drive towards renewables that they claim is going to provide jobs actually does just that.

How many jobs? This government is claiming that their answer to the hundreds of thousands of men and women in this province that are out of work, who are the people who work in the patch, work in the oil sands, who had really good-paying jobs – really good-paying jobs. How good, you ask? [interjections] You did ask, didn't you? In excess of \$90,000. I had neighbours that were pulling in \$160,000, \$180,000 a year.

**An Hon. Member:** Right out of high school.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yeah, right out of high school. I'm not saying that that was necessarily a really good idea, but – you know what? – they were out working hard, and they were earning their pay.

Even in our coal sector the average income was between \$92,000 and \$96,000. Now, this government is saying that those hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of thousands of jobs that were lost – well, the renewables drive is going to provide work for all those people. Okay. Let's see. Let's see if that is so. I don't know why the government would shy away from a metric like this to measure the amount and also, as the hon. member has asked for in this amendment, "the total dollar amount of investments, other than the funds provided pursuant to section 10, made under renewable electricity programs for the fiscal year." In other words, it's another metric to measure the actual amount of investments coming into this province in answer to this government's drive to renewables.

But especially the jobs: that is very important, Mr. Chair. We have so many people out of work, and so many of those people who are out of work are not on EI. These are the small contractors, that man or that woman that's got a welding truck, a small welding fab shop, things like that, people who provide labour. Some of the other people out there in the patch that were subcontractors: they're not on EI. You don't see their numbers in any of the unemployment figures that are thrown about in the media, but there are at least as many and probably more of them than there are employees that are out of work and are qualified to collect EI. Those are the numbers that are on the roll. Those kinds of people are looking at this government and the government's promises: well, the renewables boom is going to provide you with employment. Really? Really?

Installing solar panels, to that 60-year-old welder that was in my office here a couple of months ago – he's worked on pipelines his whole life. He's got a welding – I'm sorry. He does not have a welding truck anymore, Mr. Chair. He lost it. He lost his house, he lost his welding truck, and his marriage was on the skids, too, because of just a horrendous economic downturn, and this government has aggravated it. You know, that's just not a unique story. There are tens of thousands of men and women across this province that are in similar dire straits. What does this government hold out to them? "Well, the renewables boom is going to provide you the employment you need." Really? Really? Not going to happen. Not going to happen.

Nevertheless, the government has an opportunity with this amendment to put it on the line. Let's see. Let's track the number of jobs created under the renewable electricity program during each fiscal year. Let's have a look at the total amount of investments. This government started out by saying \$10.5 billion in investment, and here it just keeps climbing. I don't know that the last figure was. The last one I heard was \$25 billion. But we know that this government throws around these billion-dollar figures, and I'm not sure they know exactly how much money that really is. All right. If the government is going to be able to attract all this investment, again let's put it on the line. Let's measure that.

Now, I do understand that, you know, the government is going to backstop investment coming into this province, so I guarantee you and all Albertans that there's going to be a stampede like hogs to the trough of renewables companies like General Electric, SNC-Lavalin, Vesta, Siemens, all those big European and American corporations that make billions of dollars on the sale of wind turbines and solar farms at the utility scale. Yes, they support carbon taxation. You better believe they support carbon taxation. It's like a licence to print money. It is just amazing how much money they make. Now we've got a government right here in Alberta that's just dangling that carrot out to these guys, saying: "Y'all come on over here. We will underwrite your loans. We will

backstop your investment. We will incentivize you." And away they come.

All that we're asking for, all that the hon. member is asking for with this amendment is: "All right. Let's have a look. How many jobs are actually going to be created? How much investment is actually going to come into this province?" As I've said before, when you're talking about, you know, a wind turbine that is a number of millions of dollars, that investment is going to come in all right, but then there's going to be an invoice from Vesta or Siemens or General Electric or SNC-Lavalin. That billion-dollar invoice is going to get paid, and that money that came in is just going to hang a U-turn and leave, and we will be left with the debt. The taxpayers and the electricity ratepayers are going to be left with the bill for this. We are going to be paying for all this.

Let's not fool ourselves or attempt to fool Albertans that we're going to have \$20 billion or \$30 billion worth of investments that are going to come here and remain here. It does not work that way. It doesn't work that way because those units are not manufactured here. The only jobs that are going to be here that are going to employ Albertans are the assembly and installation, and then it's done. There'll be a few maintenance jobs to maintain these. We are not talking about any kind of an industry that could possibly absorb the hundreds of thousands of highly skilled men and women from the patch. That is not going to happen.

If those people have a hope of being re-employed, we need to have pipelines in every direction, we need to have no limits on development in the oil sands, and we need to have to no limit to the responsible development of our resources. This government is constraining development. Constraining development.

The long and the short of it is, Mr. Chair, that I support this. I would encourage all members to support this. It's a perfectly fine amendment to put some accountability in place, and, God knows, this government needs accountability.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? I recognize the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

9:30

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just like to start by speaking again in favour of this amendment. Again, the member brings forward an amendment that will do nothing but actually help the government provide accountability and transparency to the people that we all represent. Again, I have such a difficult time understanding why the government wouldn't want metrics to show what you've done, what you've accomplished.

I mean, we can start again with having accountability for the metrics of how it is that this is going to roll out and where you start and where you go, but this is actually about – this government actually created a portfolio for Economic Development and Trade, a portfolio that's actually dedicated towards diversification, that's dedicated towards job creation, that's dedicated towards actually getting people in this province back to work. At least that's my understanding of the creation of that portfolio. Actually, this amendment speaks extremely well towards making sure that the development of that portfolio and the relative jobs and whatnot that would come from that as a result of policy would actually strengthen that portfolio and what is supposed to come from that portfolio. If we're actually talking about job creation, we might not be super proud of that.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The issue that all of us are talking about on this side isn't the government's desire to create jobs. I mean, that is a very important goal, and it's a goal that all of us could get behind. However, what's happening here is that the dollars that are going into these programs are subsidized dollars. Those are not dollars that are coming because the private sector invested and there was a market for it, and then that's what created the dollars that created this job creation. That's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about: the government is going to subsidize these programs and supposedly will be able to create jobs from those programs. And as the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake said, these aren't even jobs that have any sustainability. Again, that's a part of the portfolio for Economic Development and Trade: diversification, sustainability, job creation. These are all things that that portfolio was created to do, so why would the government not want to be able to prove to Albertans that this is actually happening, especially under the auspices of that portfolio?

The amendment is exceedingly helpful, again, to help prove to Albertans that this is what this government actually had intended. The unintended consequence of this is that, once again, the transparency is not there. How is it that you will be able to defend or justify the dollars that are going to go into this when there is no accountability on you to make sure that Albertans understand what you're doing? How are you supposed to justify to Albertans, especially all of these folks that have lost their jobs? As the member had said, there's no way that these jobs are going to in any way be able to get the same people that have already lost their jobs back into other jobs.

We're also talking about a tremendous amount of time between when this kicks in and when these things are actually being built and when we will see these aspects come to fruition. So let's actually consider the timing with this as well so that you have time actually to describe how this will roll out, the jobs that you expect to have happen, and how that relates in regard to the programs that you're actually promoting. I mean, as a businessperson that's an imperative part of any business plan.

As an investor coming into this situation, there's a tremendous amount of risk. We were talking about \$10.6 billion, potentially \$25 billion. That's a tremendous amount of risk for any person, investor to make.

If you can't even guarantee that you are going to be able to stand by your numbers, your metrics, the rollout of these programs, let alone being able to provide the talent and tech that's going to be there, let alone being able to be sustainable, let alone being able to prove to Albertans that you're actually capable of doing that – I really feel that it's in the best interests of the government to be able to tell Albertans that you actually did this on their behalf, for them, so that these jobs could be created. I can't understand, unless you are actually, truly concerned that this is not what's going to happen. Maybe you foresee the boondoggle well in advance of it actually happening, and if that's the case, well, I mean, we're hooped, then, aren't we?

I would hope that the government would prefer to be able to show Albertans in a very, very succinct way that they have the best interests of Albertans, that they're willing to put themselves on the line like any other person that would be investing in a business like this, in the risk that you're expecting investors to take. The risk isn't on you to tell the truth and to tell the narrative of how this is going to roll out. It's incumbent upon you. It's the responsibility of the government to do that. So I speak in support of this amendment, and for the sake of the government I highly recommend that you also support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and also thank you to the Member for Calgary-Lougheed for bringing this amendment forward. First, I would just like to say that this government, without a doubt and without any reservation, believes that accurate reporting of jobs and investments through this program is of the utmost importance. This reporting that is in the bill itself already would be consistent with other renewable and climate initiatives and programs currently under development, most of which will not be administered by the ISO. Adding these specific reporting requirements in static legislation would be inconsistent with the reporting structures that are in place already along the broader use. Finally, 13(2) already provides the government the authority to require this kind of reporting with no further legislative action, should the government choose so.

I've heard a lot over the amendments that have been put forward so far, and I do appreciate hearing amendments from all members of the House. It's important that we consider all aspects of the bill and hear from all sides.

It's a common occurrence, I'm hearing from the opposition, that they're telling Albertans that they have to choose between renewables or the oil and gas sector. I think it's unbelievable to hear this conversation taking its toll. I mean, they sit there and they stand up and they say: well, we support renewables, but here are a hundred cases where it failed. That doesn't sound very supportive at all, really.

Hopefully, the opposition will stand up at some point in this debate and talk about some of the amazing initiatives throughout the country and across the world that have been beneficial because I'm sure there are some. I'm sure that if you took a quick google, you'd be able to find one or two that you could talk about if you really care about renewables as much as you say you do. We can look across the United States; for example, the many Republican jurisdictions talking about the importance of renewables. The Republican Governor Sam Brownback talks about aiming for 50 per cent renewables by 2018. I mean, if the Republicans do it, I hope that the Wildrose can see it in their hearts to do it as well.

With all that being said, I am standing to say, first of all, that I appreciate all the work that the minister has done. I think that she's probably done more consultation than has been done on this amendment. With that being said, I will not be supporting this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to A4? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to speak to a couple of the points that the hon. member across the way brought up. One of the things, again, is that we keep hearing that we're making Albertans choose. That's interesting. I was just speaking about it. In my own personal life I have a whole bunch of solar panels on my house, tons of them, 40, in fact. I love renewables, and I love what's possible with those. The reason I bring that up is because there is a mechanism and there's a way to bring renewables online. We're not condemning the idea of renewables. Our issue is how you're doing it.

We all have the same goal. The endgame is the same, but the policy on how we're going to get there is arguably very different. The difference is that the way the opposition sees it is that the market and the demand for these things will ultimately determine the availability



to bring these online. If, as you say, Albertans are behind what you're trying to do, then they are going to want these things, and they are going to push the market to do that. They are going to invest in those things, all of those options that we've been talking about.

The thing that's concerning is that the government wants to put Albertans' hard-earned dollars into something that they have absolutely no idea how to roll out at this point. Where is that business plan? What we're asking for is accountability. It's not that we're anti renewables, far from it. In fact, I would argue that the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has written a tremendous amount in academia based on alternative energy production, and at any time should you want to get more information about alternative energy – the way it should roll out, the economics of it, the viability of it – I would highly recommend speaking with him because he can help many, many people understand how that is viable.

9:40

The suggestion that we're not interested is interesting because, quite frankly, this is about doing it the right way and giving the government some very, very useful and thoughtful feedback from our perspective, a different set of eyes, a different perspective, which is good, in order to help this legislation, in order to be able to make sure that you've thought about everything. There's no way everybody, one person or a group of people, can know everything. The whole point of us being here is to make sure we offer you other opportunities and solutions and examples. If that's falling on deaf ears, there's absolutely nothing we can do about that.

But at the same time, please don't assume that we're not interested. Again, you're assuming, then, that everybody that we represent also doesn't care about the earth, air, and water, and that is a slap in the face to Albertans, and it's a slap in the face to everybody that this side represents and potentially even some of the people in your own ridings as well. So keep in mind that when those comments come across, it's not relevant.

More importantly, we're asking you for transparency and accountability. These are things that you ran on. Madam Chair, this government ran on transparency and accountability, and every single member on this side is demanding that, and I would hope that if I ever had the opportunity and the privilege to be in government, that would be demanded of me also.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to A4? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a few comments with respect to the amendment to Bill 27 presented by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed. You know, there are a few things here that I think we need to take into account. I look at them as – when we're making claims with respect to particularly the jobs that we're going to create through renewable electricity, we are, through a lot of the actions of this government, going to be shutting down a lot of jobs in a lot of towns that are very concerned.

I know I heard on the radio the other day that the price of real estate in Grande Cache is one-third – not one-third less; one-third – of what it was just a couple of years ago, so even with mortgage-paying jobs today, those people have lost all their equity in their homes, and I suspect that many of them are holding mortgages worth more than what their homes are worth now. I worry about those people in places like Grande Cache and Hinton and Forestburg and Hanna and other towns that are going to lose their primary industries, Madam Chair. So when we make claims, we need to do those without them being spurious claims because for us

it's just claims, but for them it's their livelihoods and, quite honestly, the survival of these towns, which we hope we don't turn into ghost towns.

I'm hopeful that this government does have a plan and that when we make claims that we're going to create jobs in the new economy and renewable electricity, that is, in fact, something we can do. But, Madam Chair, what we've seen now, all joking aside – we teased the minister of economic development about one job. We'd like to see more than one job created or two jobs or three jobs. We'd like to see those hundreds of jobs created. You know what? To create jobs is not an easy thing. Yes, we can create public service jobs, and we can put those on paper, and we can write cheques from the government, and those can be written in red ink in many cases. But it's not that easy to create jobs. Anybody who's worked in the private sector knows that you have to invest money. You have to invest capital, and you have to be prepared to cover your variable costs and your general administrative costs and all the fixed costs that go with running a business.

You also hope to get a modest return on investment, but, again, many businesses are not getting even a modest return on their investment now. They're struggling to survive. They're looking for some stability in the marketplace. Again, we have a tough economy. There is no stability of revenue or stability of the market that they're dealing in. Even businesses that are trying to take advantage of the opportunities in the new economy in renewables are going to be very, very cautious and very reticent to risk their capital there.

So we need good plans, we need robust plans, and we need to know how those jobs are going to be created because they're only one at a time. We need that to happen not just 10 times and a hundred times; we need that to happen thousands and thousands of times to replace the jobs that we're losing. So to subitem (d) here I would say: let's make that stand for diligence. Let's be diligent in what we're doing and what we're claiming.

Madam Chair, the other thing we're talking about in this amendment, which I think is, again, to make us more accountable, is E for effectiveness. When we're talking about investments, we need to know what those investments are going to do. We need to know how much it's going to cost taxpayers. We need to know what those subsidies are going to look like to encourage investment. Again, I think, as was mentioned by many of the other members here, if you have to do too much to encourage investment, is it a good investment? Not likely. If you have to subsidize too deeply, you may not even be able to attract the private capital you need to supplement or complement those subsidies or those public investments, and if you can't do that, you really have to question: are we going down some of the roads that the member mentioned here before, where we've made bad investments in the past? We know that that has been done. Albertans have been on the hook for those, and we paid for those for years. Luckily, were able to dig ourselves out of that hole.

I think that we need to be cognizant here, again, of diligence and effectiveness in what we're doing here. I think that all we're asking for, Madam Chair, is that we be diligent and we make sure we're effective and we make sure that we provide the metrics and reporting that allow us to make those claims of what we're going to achieve. That's what we hope. We hope that this government is successful in making those claims and in moving forward in creating those new jobs. But let's be diligent in making those claims. Let's make sure we put the metrics in place to hold not just this government but your departments accountable. Let them know the metrics we expect from them. That's what I'm asking for, and that's why I would ask you to support this amendment today.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

**Mr. Rodney:** Madam Chair, the initial remarks were short. I will keep these concluding remarks short as well, especially considering the hour but also considering the substance of this amendment. I was hoping to hear from the minister on this. I appreciate that there was one member from the other side that got up. I think anybody watching on TV or reading *Hansard* would actually be pretty happy with the deliberations that just occurred, with the thoughtful speeches that I've just witnessed here, and I want to express my appreciation for everyone who stood up to speak to this.

It's a short and simple amendment, Madam Chair. It's about two of the things that this government based its election on, which are accountability and transparency. It's about return on investment and increasing jobs, green jobs. Those are both undeniably important concepts. Everyone here agrees on that. Some would say that this is an apolitical amendment. Please, folks, consider that. It doesn't cost anything, the information is very easy to collect, and it is not at all onerous. Any thought about inconsistent reporting just doesn't hold any water.

I appreciate the initiative of the hon. Member for Calgary-South East. It's in the spirit of the time when I was deputy chair of Public Accounts, before almost everyone was in this House. Those who were might remember that I was very happy to keep the feet to the fire of my own government. Almost every week I would ask the question as deputy chair of Public Accounts – I was constantly challenging my own government – can you improve these performance measures? It's better for Albertans. It's better for the government. It's better for everyone. And when it comes to green jobs and return on investment, why wouldn't you want to share, in fact, brag about your accomplishments?

Again, I would need to hear a good reason from the government why you wouldn't want to do this. I haven't heard one yet. For that reason, I'm going to pray for a little Christmas miracle and hope that this simple, short, clear amendment will pass here tonight.

With that, I'll ask to call the question. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

All right. The question has been called on amendment A4 as moved by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed on behalf of the Member for Calgary-South East.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:50 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Nixon
Clark	Loewen	Rodney
Fildebrandt	MacIntyre	Taylor
Gotfried		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miller
Babcock	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carlier	Horne	Renaud
Carson	Jansen	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kazim	Schmidt
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Schreiner

Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	McPherson	Woollard
Totals:	For – 10	Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As we work our way through this bill, it's somewhat problematic in certain sections here. I want to talk just briefly about the Market Surveillance Administrator, which is referred to in this bill. The market system administrator in the province of Alberta is akin to being the electricity police. That's what they do.

The Market Surveillance Administrator's job – well, here, I'll tell you what their vision is. "A self-sustaining competitive market that delivers fair and efficient outcomes." What a wonderful vision. "A self-sustaining competitive market that delivers fair and efficient outcomes."

The mission of the MSA is "Taking action to promote effective competition and a culture of compliance and accountability in Alberta's electricity and retail natural gas markets."

[They] are committed to excellence in all [they] do . . . and [they] are prepared to be judged by, the following core values:

One,	
Integrity	We are honest and ethical in all we do and engage in responsible decision-making that reflects the highest standards of conduct.
Two,	
Open	We strive to be accessible, transparent, objective, and principle-based.
Timely	We demonstrate a sense of urgency in our resolve and decision-making.
Four,	
Accountable	We are committed to measuring, reporting and achieving results while prudently and efficiently managing our resources.
Progressive	We value forward thinking and learning as we strive for continuous improvement and development at all levels of the organization. We embrace creative approaches to finding solutions. We value diversity and work hard to create a collaborative environment where we understand and benefit from the views of others.

This is the Market Surveillance Administrator, the electricity police in our province.

How effective have they been? How many can remember, not all that many months ago, last year sometime, when the MSA, the Market Surveillance Administrator, caught TransAlta?

**An Hon. Member:** Which time?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Exactly. Which time? The last time they caught TransAlta playing in the marketplace inappropriately, it was a \$56 million fine that was levied against TransAlta for manipulating the market inappropriately.

This is the value of having an organization like the MSA watching as a watchdog over our electricity system, to make sure that all of the players are playing by the rules all the time and not

gaming the system, not taking advantage of Albertans, that the regulations are followed. This is the value of the MSA, extremely important in our system. They have proven their worth time and time again.

As pointed out by the hon. Government House Leader, that reference I just made was not the first time the MSA has caught TransAlta and given them a whack on the hand and hurt the pocketbook. That's what the MSA is there to do partly. I mean, they have other functions to do, but they are the electricity police, a valuable, very valuable organization.

10:00

Knowing that, I was somewhat shocked when, reading through Bill 27, I come across section 16. I would encourage everyone to turn to section 16(1). It reads as follows:

- (1) Despite sections 39, 41 and 42 of the Alberta Utilities Commission Act . . .

Listen to this.

. . . the MSA is not permitted to investigate complaints against the ISO regarding the development of a proposal for a renewable electricity program.

I mean, that just stopped me in my tracks when I read that. That's exactly the same thing as telling the RCMP: "You are not permitted to investigate this particular kind of crime. You're not allowed."

But it doesn't stop there.

- (2) Despite section 26 of the Electric Utilities Act, the Commission is not permitted to consider complaints against the ISO regarding the development of a proposal for a renewable electricity program.

In other words, if I can paraphrase: don't you dare complain about a renewables electricity program under development because the electricity police under this are being ordered not to even consider a complaint regarding the development of a proposal for a renewable electricity program.

It doesn't even say that you can't listen to a complaint about a renewable electricity program. No; it actually says, "the Commission is not permitted to consider complaints against the ISO regarding the development of a proposal." So if a proposal is under development and there are discussions going back and forth and things are happening, they're not even permitted to consider a complaint. Just what kind of banana republic are we having thrust upon us here? Don't you dare complain about that renewables project. In fact, don't you even complain about the development of its proposal. This is beyond absurd.

Despite sections 39, 41, and 42 of the Alberta Utilities Commission Act, the MSA, the very organization that has so many times caught utility companies doing things they shouldn't be doing, the MSA doing its job repeatedly, is not permitted to investigate complaints against the ISO but only regarding the development of a proposal for a renewable electricity program. Here we see again, as we have discussed today, that a pattern is showing up, and that pattern is absolutely crystal clear. Renewables projects are off limits for any critiquing. Renewables projects are off limits for any measurement and verification of results. Renewables projects are exempt from being examined to deliver on what this government is promising they ought to deliver.

Here we have, right here in Bill 27, that the very agency tasked in this province with being the watchdog of our electricity system can continue to be the watchdog over all the facets of our electricity system except renewables. They are off limits for some very strange reason. Just what exactly is going on behind the scenes in this government that the very agency that is the electricity police is now forbidden by this bill to even consider a complaint?

I am absolutely justified in saying that this smacks of banana republic politics. This is terrible. Just what kind of a government

hinders a policing body? Now, granted, they're not police, like, with guns. Nevertheless, they're the agency responsible for ensuring that the good people of Alberta are not being fleeced by underhanded corporations. That's the responsibility of the MSA, and this government is tying the MSA's hands. They can't consider a complaint. They can't even consider a complaint of a proposal under development, for crying out loud.

Therefore, Madam Chair, I wish to propose an amendment – you knew it was coming – to move that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended by striking out section 16. Just take the whole thing out of there.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, if you can just wait until I get the original, please.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yes, ma'am.

**The Deputy Chair:** This amendment will be referred to as amendment A5.

Please go ahead.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The job of the MSA, the Market Surveillance Administrator, is to protect Albertans. They have done a remarkably good job over the years. I am thankful that in the original design of our deregulated system the government of the day realized that corporations like to push the envelope.

**Mr. Mason:** That's such a nice way to put it.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I was trying to come up with a nice way of putting it.

Some corporations like to push the envelope. When we're talking about billions of dollars of profit and billions of dollars of opportunity, you know, corporations will push that envelope.

**Mr. Hanson:** They hire people to push envelopes.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** This is correct; they do hire people to push that envelope.

In the day that our deregulated system was being developed, the government of the day said: "Well, we are not just going to work on the honour system here. No, no. We are going to have an Alberta Utilities Commission, we are going to have a Balancing Pool, and we are going to have a Market Surveillance Administrator to make sure that everybody's playing by the rules, to make sure that nobody in this deregulated market is taking advantage of Albertans."

The MSA has done a very good job. They have a vital role in protecting taxpayers, yes, but ratepayers, too. It is flabbergasting that this government would explicitly say that the MSA cannot look into renewables contracts or programs or developments.

Let's just remember something here: there are other provinces in this nation and other jurisdictions around the world that have gotten themselves into very deep trouble by making bad deals in their haste to force an uneconomic degree of renewables into their systems.

If you read the MSA's mandate and their mission statement, they "take action to promote effective competition and a culture of compliance and accountability." How many amendments have hon. members presented in this House today on this particular bill? I dare to suggest that every one of them had to do with accountability measures – accountability measures – protecting accountability measures that currently exist in the Electric Utilities Act from being punted right out because of this bill. Other amendments have been put forward by members of the opposition to put accountability in where accountability was lacking in this bill, and repeatedly members opposite have unanimously voted down every

accountability measure, every performance measure, one after another after another.

Now we come to the very agency that is the electricity police, and they, the agency responsible for accountability, are being denied the power to investigate. Not only is this just plain bad PR; this is just plain bad governance, very bad governance. To do away with an accountability agency like the MSA, that has been so very effective down through the years, is just crazy.

**10:10**

They are in place specifically to monitor Alberta's electricity and retail natural gas markets, to make sure that they operate in a "fair, efficient and openly competitive" manner. Which of those three elements is this government afraid of? Is this government afraid the MSA is going to discover that this government's renewables program is not fair? Remember, the MSA is only being stopped from investigating renewables; they're not being stopped from investigating any other area of our electricity market, only renewables. So what is the government afraid of? Are they afraid of the MSA discovering unfair practices going on?

Well, another one of the MSA's metrics is efficiency. Is the government afraid that the MSA is going to discover that their renewables programs are inefficient, such as the one that we mentioned a little bit earlier about Ivanpah? Ivanpah guaranteed up and down a certain level of electricity being generated from their CSA, and what happened? They only managed to crank out 40 per cent of what they promised, a \$2.2 billion project only able to muster 40 per cent of what they had promised. So if we were to actually pass this bill as it currently is, no one would ever have known that we would have an Ivanpah only cranking out 40 per cent of what they had promised the people of California to deliver.

Now, the problem with not having an MSA checking out the efficiencies of these projects is that this government is going to create artificially a shortfall in generation by taking coal-fired offline. The government is going to try to synchronize the coming online of renewables at the same time that coal is coming offline. Well, what will happen if there is no MSA there to warn the government, "Whoa, just a minute; this renewables project is not going to deliver what we needed it to deliver when we brought all that coal off"? That's called shortfall, generating shortfall.

One of three things must now happen. Either we suffer a blackout or a brownout. The other thing that we can do is phone up the CEO of B.C. Hydro and say: "Guess what? We're short. We're short a whole bunch of power." I had a conversation with the CEO of B.C. Hydro about this very thing, actually. She was a very happy lady. She had a big smile on her face. I was talking about shortfall, and she said: yup; you'll be phoning me. If we don't have a supply contract in place with B.C. Hydro, that means we get to buy that power on the spot market. Do you have any idea what that's going to cost? It's going to be a whole lot of money.

So when it comes to getting rid of something like the Market Surveillance Administrator – just think about that, market surveillance; they watch what everybody is doing. The Market Surveillance Administrator will be able to say: "Hey, just a minute. This renewables program is not delivering. We have a problem." But, no, they can't even so much as listen to a complaint. Not even a complaint about it. This is beyond absurd. This government has a solemn responsibility to safeguard Alberta from bad deals that others have made and not put this watchdog in a kennel when we are going to need it the most.

We have a province to the east of us, Ontario, that is suffering terribly in their electricity market because that government made bad deals. To compound the problem, there were corporations that

took advantage of a government that wasn't being careful. Here we had politicians making decisions about highly complex technical issues.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche . . .

**Mr. Hanson:** St. Paul-Two Hills. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You'll get that right eventually without even looking.

Just listening with great interest to your comments, you happened to mention something about – was it the MSA that issued the fine to TransAlta?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yeah.

**Mr. Hanson:** How much money was that for?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Fifty-six million dollars.

**Mr. Hanson:** Fifty-six million dollars.

Well, I'm looking at an interesting article from CBC from September 27, headline Alberta Announces Almost \$100M in Heritage Savings Fund Investments.

Alberta has announced close to \$100 million in investments as part of its stated goal to further diversify the provincial economy.

Economic Development Minister [who shall go unnamed] says the money will be used to support job creation and innovation in the renewable energy and natural gas sectors.

How much was that again?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Fifty-six million.

**Mr. Hanson:** Fifty-six million dollars.

He says almost \$46 million will go to TransAlta Renewables to expand developments in clean energy.

It's not quite \$56 million. The interesting thing is: guess who the major advertiser is on this web page?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Who is the major advertiser?

**Mr. Hanson:** TransAlta Utilities. Isn't that a coincidence?

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, first thing, if you can table that tomorrow.

**Mr. Hanson:** Absolutely. I'll print it out.

**The Deputy Chair:** And if you could please speak through me.

**Mr. Hanson:** Oh. I'm sorry, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Hanson:** I'll go on to mention the rest of it seeing as I have to table it anyway.

Another \$46 million will [go] to Calfrac Well Services . . .

Get this.

. . . to further environmental innovation in the oil and gas industry."

**Mrs. Aheer:** In fracking.

**Mr. Hanson:** In fracking. Isn't that interesting?

Another little sideline is: six days. Like, these are investments that are recommended or requested by the provincial government to our AIMCo investments. Unfortunately, Calfrac's trading was halted six days ago and then reinstated.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Why?

**Mr. Hanson:** Because they're losing \$40 million a quarter.

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

**Mr. Hanson:** I'm sorry, Madam Chair.

The next one:

Pine Cliff Energy is getting \$6 million will go to consolidate natural assets.

The investments are made through the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, better known as AIMCo.

"In the short term, these investments are helping to protect and create jobs," ...

That is interesting.

"They're also expected to provide a financial return to the fund that will contribute to the priority programs and services Albertans value."

Now, I looked at the last three-year cycle of both of these companies, and they're on a pretty steady decline. I sure hope they turn around because it would be terrible to lose a total of \$92 million between the two companies.

A year ago, [the] Premier [who shall not be mentioned] ... gave AIMCo a mandate to invest up to three per cent of the Heritage Fund, equivalent to about \$540 million, into Alberta companies with growth potential.

Well, when you see a line going down like this, that doesn't look like a lot of growth potential.

I think I'll just leave it at that. I'll be supporting this amendment. We need to stop this kind of foolishness, open up the insight. You know, the idea of shutting down any ability for anyone to investigate or complain about a huge, huge – we're talking about what? – \$3 billion in carbon tax investment per year, and Albertans can't complain about the way the money is being spent or have anybody look into it? This is absolutely ridiculous, Madam Chair.

10:20

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a brief recap. The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake had mentioned that we're looking at another piece of legislation or another part of legislation that provides no oversight of potentially billions of taxpayer dollars that are going to have absolutely zero accountability from this government.

Now, to recap, we started off with wanting to make an amendment about "fair and responsible" with regard to the ISO. Now, if I'm understanding this correctly, any company that is wanting to put forward projects for renewables now need not apply. There's absolutely zero oversight. Is that what I'm understanding?

The second part is that we asked for some accountability as to how many jobs are going to be created through the projects, but the government decided to vote against that one, too, again much to their detriment, because it would have been tremendously helpful to put this legislation through with those kinds of accountability metrics.

Then another one was a blank cheque that could go to companies, again without any oversight as to how the dollars were going to be spent: another very, very good amendment that would have created more accountability and credibility for this government, for this climate leadership action plan, specifically towards Bill 27.

On top of deleting "fair and responsible," not wanting to report on how many jobs are created, and a blank cheque, now nobody can

complain regarding any development of renewables coming online. So what does that say to the average Albertan? That this government is not going to protect them from folks that may come in and manipulate the system.

You know, there are a lot of things when you're in small businesses. I have lots of friends who open small businesses all the time, and they're selling all manner of things. I love to participate and try all sorts of new items. Sometimes they're really wonderful, and sometimes it's to my detriment. I mean, some of the sales pitches that come along with some of these products are pretty amazing, Madam Chair, like, really amazing, actually. I want to believe it, and I try it. Sometimes I love it, and sometimes I'm disappointed. But, you know, it's a couple bucks out of my pocket. Even then I'm very frustrated.

I can't tell you how – frustration doesn't even begin to describe how Albertans are going to feel when this project or projects fail or whatever it is that this government has planned for Albertans with absolutely no oversight. It is appalling to me that this government thinks that you have the ability to get away with that massive manipulation of the people in this province. You have a responsibility to the people of this province to make sure that there is oversight over projects of renewables, and now you're telling Albertans that that's okay, that they don't need to report to the electricity police, as the member likes to call them, the MSA. That is the only oversight that any of us has to make sure that governments are held accountable, to make sure that the projects that are being put through are for Albertans, not for governments, not for deals that are being made.

This holds you accountable. This is absolutely imperative. Why would you take this out of legislation? Don't you ask that to yourselves? Why would you take out accountability? I mean, the fairness and responsibility part was unbelievable, but to actually pull renewables out, for the MSA to be able to come in and say: "You know what? No, this is not a good idea" – they can't even respond, and nobody is even allowed to complain. If a project is in somebody's area, they have nobody to go to. How is that feasible? How is that possible? Is this part of some grand business plan?

You know, it's amazing to me that when I'm going to go back to my constituency on the weekend or post this session and try to explain to Albertans about what this government is doing – let me tell you, they're already frustrated and angry and do not understand what you're doing. When I go and tell them that you have deleted "fair and responsible," that you will not have any oversight as to how many jobs are being created by these projects, that you're expecting a blank cheque to just do whatever you want without the ISO and, on top of that, to have the MSA not be involved in making sure that these projects actually have oversight with regard to renewables, let me tell you – do you think that they're angry about the carbon tax? This is going to completely blow it up in ways that are unimaginable.

I would love for somebody on the government side to please stand up and explain to me how it is that renewables are off limits for the MSA to critique. How does that work? How is that good for Albertans? How is it that you can actually justify getting rid of oversight? How is that okay?

If you look at the Ontario model, for example – I mean, I'm just reading here. The Auditor General in Ontario said that Ontarians paid \$37 billion above market price for electricity over eight years. Do you want to know why? There was no oversight. Is that what your plan is for Albertans? If it isn't, I would love to see somebody stand up and defend this. If that is not your plan, defend it.

Secondly, you want to take additional risks with the rates for Albertans? They're already going to be on the hook as taxpayers now, not just ratepayers but taxpayers. You're going to take that

risk as well with Albertans? Explain to me how I'm supposed to explain that to my constituents. I actually am more concerned about how you're going to explain it to yours.

Please, I am begging you. You need to vote in favour of this amendment. This is truly to your benefit to make sure that your accountability is something you can stand on firmly with both legs, on behalf of Albertans, with the oversight of the MSA so that every Albertan can know in their hearts that you have their best interests at heart. Otherwise, without this piece in this legislation you are basically putting us down the path of other failed jurisdictions, and that would be – we are already in trouble in this province, truly.

You want to roll out a renewables program? Let's do it with a little bit of collaboration and understanding that the things that we're bringing forward are not detrimental to the legislation that you have. These are pieces of accountability that add credibility to what you're trying to accomplish. And when you legitimately put into your legislation that you do not care to make sure that Albertans are taken care of by this government for the programs that are being rolled forward, I dare say that Albertans are not going to stand for this. I am asking you as the government, through the chair, please consider this piece because – I mean, there have been multiple examples.

I would like to read an article into the record, if I may, about TransAlta specifically, just to give an example for anybody who didn't know what happened. This is from 2015.

TransAlta's argument that [the] market rules allowed it to shut down power plants during peak demand to drive up prices is simply a "back door" attempt to justify its "blatantly" anti-competitive behaviour, says the market watchdog.

That's the MSA.

In closing arguments filed before the Alberta Utilities Commission this week, the Market Surveillance Administrator (MSA) attacked the defence the utility raised at a price manipulation hearing that began in December.

"TransAlta asserts through its expert economic evidence and its own submissions that it would be beneficial to Albertans in the long run for this commission to confirm that it is perfectly acceptable ...

Now, understand. TransAlta is saying that it's acceptable.

... to intentionally and deliberately ...

These are their own words: intentionally and deliberately.

... time discretionary outages at periods of high demand and tight supply to drive up electricity prices," the administrator states in a 218-page argument filed [on] Tuesday.

TransAlta denies it breached any regulations and will respond to the administrator's filing next month.

The MSA suggests the Calgary-based utility contends it is "perfectly proper" to time multiple outages to occur at the same time to drive up prices ...

Really?

... even if such action threatens the reliability of the provincial electric system.

10:30

Understand that this is the MSA that caught TransAlta.

"Any objective economic expert properly informed of the legislature scheme enacted in the province of Alberta would readily conclude that TransAlta engaged in blatantly anti-competitive conduct," the administrator says.

The watchdog filed allegations of anti-competitive behaviour against Alberta's largest utility last year, accusing it of staging discretionary shutdowns at six power plants during peak demand periods over 11 days in 2010 and 2011.

The supper-hour shutdowns on cold winter nights increased electricity prices by 10 to 60 per cent, and forced the companies that owned the rights to the power to scramble to purchase

high ... electricity for their customers, according to administrator filings. The shutdowns in 2011 triggered an emergency alert over a short supply of power.

The administrator claims TransAlta made nearly \$16 million profit from the shutdowns by selling power it owned at other facilities after driving up prices and by trading in Canada's only deregulated electricity market.

A TransAlta spokeswoman said that the utility will make its counterarguments.

"We will be responding to the MSA's submission of inaccurate assumptions and conclusions ...

That's what TransAlta said.

... with a written statement ..."

The administrator head declined to comment.

TransAlta has argued that the "economic withholding" of electricity from the grid to reduce supply and increase prices is permitted under market rules and points out the administrator was consulting utilities on the issue when the shutdowns occurred.

But the watchdog [the MSA] disagrees.

"TransAlta's conduct was not economic withholding and it cannot legitimately claim any confusion," the administrator said. "It turned off the power it was committed to supply to its competitors at times of tight supply, principally being super peak."

It says there is no economic theory that can possibly justify TransAlta's conduct and its claim the administrator changed the rules after the fact is "an argument built on quicksand."

This is a transparent review done by the MSA with regard to a company that keeps the lights on in this province and our houses warm, and this government is trying to put through legislation that removes that accountability. Please. I can't say it enough. It is absolutely imperative. If this is an oversight, fine. It's taken care of in this House.

But if you're legitimately going to stand up to say that there's no oversight over the new renewables coming online, that to everybody in this House is going to provide all sorts of new and complicated and convoluted situations that nobody can completely understand all aspects of, and you're going to take the accountability out of it by having the MSA not be able to take complaints or be able to participate in making sure that the new companies that are coming into this are held accountable – please.

Again I ask you to vote for this amendment on behalf of all Albertans. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. Just a reminder to table that tomorrow.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yes.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you so much.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, the opposition's overwrought reaction to this is a deliberate misreading of the act. Oversight remains for the market participants. That should be clear, and the opposition has an obligation to make sure that they don't spread misinformation either because they don't get it or they don't want to get it.

Note that in the capacity market we announced earlier this week, that the opposition had some comments about, this will prevent the kind of market manipulation that TransAlta was fined for. Also, we should all be supporting an electricity system, and you should be joining us in protecting consumers.

The MSA's oversight remains for market participants. The act is very clear. The cop is still able to police the process. The only thing that this act prevents is someone using the MSA's powers for

criticizing policy direction coming from the minister or from the government. This would lead to the ludicrous scenario that someone could complain to the MSA about the minister's decision, for example, to create an REP in the first place.

**An Hon. Member:** A what?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Renewable energy program.

This section is necessary to ensure that the MSA's authority isn't abused by people who want to use it to fight against government policy, which is ridiculous. The opposition's notion of somehow leashing the watchdog is ludicrous and patently untrue. We are providing clarity and focus to the MSA to police the market participants and not be abused by those who want to fight government policy. In fact, the hon. member's speech is a good argument for why we need a capacity market.

I would ask that we vote against the arguments of our opposition. Thank you.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

**The Acting Chair:** I'd recognize the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Now, the minister just said that we're deliberately misreading it, so what I will do is read it word for word.

Investigation, consideration of complaints re ISO program proposal development not permitted

16(1) Despite sections 39, 41 and 42 of the Alberta Utilities Commission Act, the MSA is not permitted to investigate complaints against the ISO regarding the development of a proposal for a renewable electricity program.

Now, that is right out of the bill, Bill 27. I've read it word for word, 16(1).

What I will do, then, is go to sections 39, 41, and 42 of the Alberta Utilities Commission Act, and I'll read them.

39(1) Subject to regulations made under section 59(1)(a), the Market Surveillance Administrator has the mandate

- (a) to carry out surveillance in respect of
  - (i) the supply, generation, transmission, distribution, trade, exchange, purchase or sale of electricity, electric energy, electricity services or ancillary services or any aspect of those activities, and
  - (ii) the provision of retail gas services, or services provided under a default rate tariff, to natural gas customers by natural gas market participants, or any aspect of those activities.

So far it says that the Market Surveillance Administrator has the mandate to carry out the surveillance of the things I've just listed there.

It goes on to say about the Market Surveillance Administrator:

- (b) to investigate matters, on its own initiative or on receiving a complaint or referral under section 41, and to undertake activities to address
  - (i) contraventions of the Electric Utilities Act, the regulations under that Act, the ISO rules, reliability standards, Part 2.1 of the Gas Utilities Act or the regulations under that Act or of decisions, order or rules of the Commission,
  - (ii) conduct that does not support the fair, efficient and openly competitive operation of the electricity market or the natural gas market, and

- (iii) any other matters that relate to or affect the structure and performance of the electricity market or the natural gas market, including negotiating and entering into settlement agreements and bringing matters before the Commission.

(2) Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), the Market Surveillance Administrator's mandate

- (a) in respect of the electricity market includes surveillance and, where applicable, investigation and enforcement, in respect of any one or more of the following:
  - (i) the conduct of electricity market participants;
  - (ii) the structure and performance of the electricity market;
  - (iii) the conduct of the Independent System Operator;
  - (iv) the conduct of the Balancing Pool;
  - (v) the conduct of owners of generating units to which power purchase arrangements apply in meeting their obligations to provide the generating capacity set out in those power purchase [agreements];
  - (vi) arrangements, information sharing and decisions relating to electricity market participants exchanging or wishing to exchange electric energy and ancillary services or any aspect of those activities;
  - (vii) arrangements, information sharing and decisions relating to electricity market participants providing or wishing to provide retail electricity services to electricity customers, or any aspect of those activities.

I can continue to read if you would like, but I think it's very clear what this says here. It's very clear that these are all conditions that the Market Surveillance Administrator can investigate.

10:40

Now I'll go back to the bill. This bill says:

16(1) Despite sections 39, 41 and 42 of the Alberta Utilities Commission Act, the MSA is not permitted to investigate complaints against the ISO regarding the development of a proposal for a renewable electricity program.

I think it's very clear, what it says. I don't think there's any misreading going on here, unless you'd like me to continue reading everything here. I think it's very clear that this government has in this bill taken out the ability of the MSA to investigate renewable electricity programs. That's what it says. There's nothing in sections 31, 41, or 42.

Maybe I'll read 41 just for the fun of it, just because somebody suggested that something was misread.

41(1) Any person may make a complaint or refer a matter to the Market Surveillance Administrator.

(2) Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), the Independent System Operator and the Commission may refer a matter to the Market Surveillance Administrator.

(3) A complaint under subsection (1) must be in writing and must include

- (a) the name and address of the person making it,
- (b) the particulars of the complaint,
- (c) any information or facts supporting the complaint, and
- (d) the signature of the individual or authorized representative of the person making the complaint.

That's 41.

Now, it also says, "Despite sections 39, 41 and 42," so I will read 42.

(1) The Market Surveillance Administrator

- (a) may, on its own initiative, investigate any matter that is within its mandate,
- (b) unless section 43 applies, shall investigate any complaint or referral made to it that the Market Surveillance Administrator is satisfied is within its mandate, and
- (c) may investigate any event that affects the operation of the electricity market or the natural gas market.

(2) The Market Surveillance Administrator shall notify the person making a complaint or referral of the results of an investigation conducted in response to the complaint or referral.

Now, Mr. Chair, I think it's very clear. "Despite sections 39, 41 and 42," which spell out what the Market Surveillance Administrator can do – it says that despite what the Market Surveillance Administrator can do in the Alberta Utilities Commission Act, "the MSA is not permitted to investigate complaints against the ISO regarding the development of a proposal for a renewable electricity program." Am I missing something? I don't think so.

Now, we could go to 16(2).

Despite section 26 of the Electric Utilities Act, the Commission is not permitted to consider complaints against the ISO regarding the development of a proposal for a renewable electricity program.

Let's go to the Electric Utilities Act, and we'll look at what 26 says. Again, in the bill it says:

16(2) Despite section 26... the Commission is not permitted to consider complaints against the ISO regarding... renewable electricity program.

Basically, that's what it says. So renewable electricity programs are off limits for the MSA. I'll read 26.

- (1) Any person may make a written complaint to the Commission about the conduct of the Independent System Operator.
- (2) The Commission must dismiss the complaint, giving reasons for the dismissal, if the Commission is satisfied that
  - (a) the substance of the complaint has been or should be referred to the Market Surveillance Administrator for investigation,
  - (b) the complaint relates to a matter the substance of which is before or has been dealt with by the Commission or any other body, or
  - (c) the complaint is frivolous, vexatious or trivial or otherwise does not warrant an investigation or a hearing.
- (3) The Commission may, in considering a complaint, do one or more of the following:
  - (a) dismiss all or part of the complaint;
  - (b) direct the Independent System Operator to change its conduct in relation to a matter that is the subject of the complaint;
  - (c) direct the Independent System Operator to refrain from the conduct that is the subject of the complaint.
- (4) A decision of the Commission under subsection (2) or (3) is final and may not be appealed under section 29 of the Alberta Utilities Commission Act.

So, Mr. Chair, if there's any misreading done now, I guess, when you read right from the act and read right from the bill, then I'm not sure what the minister's talking about because I think it's pretty clear. Actually, she accused the opposition of deliberate misreading. Maybe I could challenge her to suggest that I deliberately misread something just now, when I read it right out of the two acts and right out of the bill. Okay. I don't hear anything yet.

Anyway, here we are with a government that obviously fears accountability. They've come up with all these grandiose ideas, taxpayer-funded to initiate them, taxpayer-backed on the back end in case they fail, and then this government doesn't want to have any

accountability. So we're using Albertans' money, taxpayers' money to bait companies in to invest and then guarantee that they're not going to lose any money and go broke on the back end with taxpayers' money, with Albertans' money. Then: "Oh, no. We don't want to be accountable. We don't want anybody to be able to complain and find out that anything went wrong."

There's an article here, TransAlta to Pay \$56M in Fines after Capitalizing on Plant Shutdowns. It says:

The Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) approved a record-high settlement between the Alberta Market Surveillance Administrator (MSA) and TransAlta.

So here it is: the Alberta Utilities Commission approved a record-high settlement with the MSA, who this part of the bill is referring to, who this part of the bill says should have no power to do anything over a renewable electricity program, for \$56 million.

... TransAlta timed outages at its coal-fired generating units such as Sundance and Keephills, located in Parkland County.

It goes on to say:

"They unfairly timed the outages to their own advantage and to their own portfolio and they engaged in insider trading because they knew what was going on and nobody else did," ...

"They engaged in manipulative conduct. They could have deferred the outages to off-peak hours, but they chose instead to take the outages during peak or super-peak hours to maximize the benefit to its own portfolio" ...

and, of course, to cost Albertans more. That's who had to pay.

The settlement includes a \$25-million administrative penalty as well as \$27 million in economic benefit penalty as well as \$4 million to cover the MSA's legal costs ...

According to the AUC, this is the first time plant shutdowns have been used in order to manipulate the market.

Here we have an instance where the MSA discovered a company trying to manipulate the market to its own benefit. Insider trading, they called it; manipulative conduct, they called it.

The MSA was doing its job. "According to the AUC, this is the first time plant shut downs have been used in order to manipulate the market." Obviously, the MSA caught this the first time it happened, obviously doing its job. But we have a government here that wants to take away the MSA's power when it comes to investigating renewable power companies, renewable electricity programs. Why would they do that? Why would they take away the power of somebody, an organization tasked with making sure that Albertans aren't ripped off? It doesn't make sense.

#### 10:50

Now look at another article here. Just listen to some of this stuff. I'm appalled but, I guess, not surprised when we have governments meddling in things they know nothing about.

Ontarians have paid \$37-billion more than market price for electricity over eight years and will pay another \$133-billion extra by 2032 as a result of haphazard planning and political meddling, a report from the Auditor General says.

Ontarians have had this problem of political meddling, haphazard planning, things like this government just wants to do on a daily basis here in this Legislature: pass bills where they can manipulate things, meddle in things, and then remove any kind of oversight.

It goes on to say:

What's more, Hydro One is in rough shape, with ever-increasing numbers of power outages and aging equipment "at very high risk of failing" that needs \$4.472-billion worth of repairs.

The investigator into this said:

"We found that the electricity power planning process had essentially broken down over the past decade" ... "The [energy] ministry has made a number of decisions about power generation that went against OPA's technical advice."



Here we have the Energy minister in Ontario making a number of decisions that went against OPA's technical advice. We've seen things in these bills where the minister has all the power, she can make all these decisions on her own, but there can be problems with that, especially if you don't have oversight.

Now, it goes on to say:

The province has doled out piles of corporate welfare behind closed doors . . . [They] found that in 2007 and 2011, OPA produced such a plan only to have the Liberals overrule it and make ad-hoc decisions on the system.

The Ontario Power Authority goes to the government with ideas and plans and then has the government overrule them.

Now, the Energy minister

defended the above-market prices as necessary.

Can you imagine? The prices of power are above market, and the Energy minister defended them.

"Wholesale market prices were not sufficient to attract much-needed investment in Ontario's electricity generation sector . . ."

Now, where have we heard this before? Market prices were not sufficient to attract much-needed investment in the electricity generation. Here we are. They need to be incentivized. In other words, there wasn't enough revenue coming to the generators, so they weren't building generating capacity. Same thing here. Nobody's building renewables. Well, in fact, they are actually building some renewables but not fast enough for the government, so what do they want to do? We'll take some tax money from Albertans and give it to these companies. That'll get them to do it.

[They] also contended that some of the higher electricity prices were a cost of weaning the province off coal-fired power and onto cleaner sources.

Here we are again. Some of the higher electricity prices were the cost of weaning the province off coal-fired power and onto cleaner sources. Where have we heard that before?

[The government] failed to take advantage of low electricity prices and instead mandated higher prices for wind and solar power companies than they had received previously. This added up to \$9.2-billion more in renewables costs.

There we are: make higher prices for wind and solar so that taxpayers have to pay more.

In another case, when the government closed a coal-fired power plant in Thunder Bay in 2013, it decided to convert the plant to biomass to keep it going. Energy experts at the OPA told the government the conversion was not cost-effective, but the government went ahead anyway.

I tell you what: this is so much like what we're seeing here it's actually scary to think about.

Okay. Where else can we go?

Some of the biomass burned at the plant is imported from Europe . . .

Doesn't that make sense?

. . . which undercuts part of the rationale for keeping it going, which was to help Ontario's forestry industry.

So they actually had to import from across the ocean for their biomass plant. But, yeah: "Let's not have anybody look at this. No way. We don't want anybody to look at this. You know, this is a renewable electricity program. Nobody can look at this. Shame on you for even thinking such."

In a third situation . . . OPA warned the province that the Lower Mattagami hydroelectric project was \$1-billion over budget, but the government allowed it to proceed. As a result, power from that plant costs \$135/megawatts per hour.

Sad, sad.

**The Acting Chair:** I recognize the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In view of the hour and despite the tremendous efficiency and effective use of time that we've spent tonight, I believe that we should maybe go home, so I will move that the committee rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am quite honourable.

The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 27. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Having heard the report, does the Assembly agree with the motion? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed? That is carried.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, with respect I will move that the Assembly now adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:58 p.m.]



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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, November 30, 2016

Day 55

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker



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# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

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Dang	Taylor
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### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
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Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Cooper	McIver
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Luff	

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Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

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Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 30, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

I must share that as I walked down the hall, I was advised by the Sergeant-at-Arms that today is St. Andrew's Day.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** School groups. The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of extremely bright young people from the incredible constituency of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. These 22 students are from Beacon Heights school, and I must say that every October I look forward to visiting them during Read In Week. They ask some of the most intelligent, thoughtful questions out of all the schools that I visit, and I'm thrilled that they can join us again in the Assembly. They're here with their teacher, Ms Meryl Roberts, and volunteer Vicki Herron. They're also accompanied by Keria Omer Abdu and Scott Gudbranson. I'd ask all the students and their teachers and volunteers to rise and enjoy the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you Miss Megan Perram. She's a constituent of Edmonton-Centre, a graduate studies student in the newly formed gender and social justice department at the University of Alberta. I would ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly this year's inductees into Alberta's 4-H Hall of Fame. It is fitting that they are here today on the last day of National 4-H Month. Helen Andrews has been a 4-H leader and volunteer for 40 years in many roles, including district treasurer and secretary, regional secretary, and was a founding member of Focus on 4-H. Mrs. Andrews is also involved in numerous community organizations, including the Round Hill agriculture society, and was a pride of Strathcona award recipient.

Corine Verbeek has been a 4-H leader and volunteer for more than 30 years, including roles as district key leader and president, northwest regional president, and provincial equine leaders forum committee member. Mrs. Verbeek is described as someone with extreme passion and enthusiasm who's always willing to do whatever is needed to make a 4-H event successful or help 4-H members learn.

Well, I'd like to personally thank both Helen and Corine for their outstanding service to their communities. They're here today with family and friends as well as Alesha Hill, 4-H volunteer development specialist with Agriculture and Forestry. Mr. Speaker, I'd like

them to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all my fellow members in the House my special guests, who contribute to the success of the micro-society in Red Deer-North: Stu Henry, superintendent of the Red Deer public school district; Cathy Peacocke, Red Deer public school vice-chair; Braden Kilpatrick, principal of Aspen Heights; Allan Baile, Aspen Heights teacher; Trent Hagerman, Aspen Heights student and micro-society owner of worm wranglers and the bottle depot, a fully licensed bottle depot; Delila Osmanovic, Aspen Heights student and micro-society member of parliament and minister of small business; Mackenzie Brown, Aspen Heights student and micro-society prime minister. I ask that my guests stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Pasquale Russo and Randeem Burr. They are here today representing Vista Housing for Seniors, a significant provider of quality affordable apartment options for seniors who live in the Edmonton region. Randeem is their chief administrative officer, and Pasquale is a facility manager. I would ask that they now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to introduce a constituent of mine, Mr. Steve Grover. I met him at an event at the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured, where he shared his passion with me for motorcycles, ATVs, and road safety. As a veteran personal injury lawyer with a practice in Calgary Mr. Grover looks forward to observing the debate on Bill 36 and seeing his MLA in action. I would ask him to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms Woollard:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to stand today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Leslie Sax. Leslie is a fellow supporter of the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta, which, most people know, provides housing for people living with schizophrenia and increases awareness of schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders. We met at an event in which there were family members of people living with schizophrenia who had written and were performing a production, a play called *Starry Starry Night*. The play illustrates how people living with schizophrenia deal with their illness in a very realistic and moving way. Leslie, if you could please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly members of the board of directors of the Chinese Benevolent Association of Edmonton. The Chinese Benevolent Association has been helping members of our Chinese community

since 1929. Their legacy includes Edmonton's Chinatown Gate, the Chinese Elders' Mansion and seniors' lodge, the Chinatown Care Centre, the Chinatown Multicultural Centre, pagodas in Beechmount and Northern Lights cemeteries, and more. They also organize major events such as the Lunar New Year Celebration, the Chinatown Conference, the Mid-autumn Festival, to name just a few. They are strong advocates and excellent representatives of Edmonton's dynamic Chinese community. Joining us today are Mei Hung, Lap Cheek Kwong, Allan Kwan, Henry Fung, and Raymond Ng. I would ask that they please rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the members of this House Bonnie Lopushinsky and Tony Bagga from the Heart Lake First Nation, just north of Lac La Biche. Bonnie is the communication co-ordinator for the First Nation. In this role she's responsible for communications between chief and council and other levels of government, specifically in the areas of investment and business, justice, social programs, and health. Tony is the consultation director and provides liaison between business and the Nation, focusing on economic development and investments, with a focus on the environment. May I please ask Bonnie and Tony to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

1:40

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly someone who has been on this journey through public service with me from the very beginning, my constituency assistant Kathryn Casement. Kathryn works incredibly hard in our constituency office every day to bring services and to help all of our constituents in Calgary-East. They're incredibly lucky to have her, as am I, so if she could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Mr. Speaker, I apologize in advance. I'll go fast because I have quite a few introductions. One of the largest privileges of being in this position is meeting some incredible people. The individuals who are here are here from AARC, the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre. They're advocating for their treatment program, which is specially designed for adolescents 12 to 21 years of age who are diagnosed with substance use disorder. As I say your names, if you wouldn't mind please rising: Byron, Tammy, Dona, Deb, Robyn, Maureen, Joan, Dennis, another Joan, Pamela, Darryl, Elizabeth, Wendy, Lexi, Linda, Michel, Melissa, Keegan, and Rudi. I hope that I haven't forgotten anybody else. If I have forgotten, please stand with the group. I thank you so much for your service to youth. Members, please join me in extending our traditional welcome to the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly an Albertan leader who is taking on the fight against adolescent addiction. Dr. Jackie Smith is currently the director of community education and research at the Alberta Adolescent

Recovery Centre. Dr. Smith has been employed with AARC for the past eight years. She completed her PhD in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary, where she explored the impact of addiction on the family through the lens of a mother. Thank you to all the advocates here today from AARC. Jackie, I ask that you please enjoy the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests, hon. members? The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some guests from the most conservative constituency in the world: Strathmore-Brooks. I'd like to introduce some people who do very great work for Alberta and my constituents. Heather Pigott is my senior constituency assistant from Brooks. She has worked for me since the 2015 election. She is here with her husband, Jo, and Doug Fenton. She is an absolute pillar of strength for the work that I do in Strathmore-Brooks. She is really the only reason anyone likes me there.

Her husband, Jo Pigott, is here. He has worked in oil and gas since 1995. He is a part owner of a small drilling company in Brooks and has been deeply affected by low oil prices. I'll not mention anything else that's hurt his business. Jo has been involved as a Wildrose volunteer and is a huge part of our constituency association.

Doug Fenton is Heather's father. He's from Edmonton. He is a retired upstream oil and gas worker of over 40 years.

Liz McConnell is here. She is my constituency assistant from Strathmore, who also does amazing work, particularly on casework like AISH and workers' compensation. She is an asset to my team.

Mr. Speaker, these people make me look good, at least as far as that's possible. I ask that they please stand and receive the greeting of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Andrew Jones. Andrew is here in Edmonton meeting – advocating for an end to homelessness. He's also famous for being the Alberta Party's Calgary-Varsity constituency association president. I'll have Andrew please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, any other guests?

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

## Pipeline Construction

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along with most Albertans I welcomed the good news of two new pipeline approvals yesterday. [some applause] I hope I get extra seconds. Line 3 on the Trans Mountain expansion will create thousands of jobs and billions in economic activity. Getting these pipelines will be a long-deserved victory for Alberta.

But as a former pipeline projects engineer I know that many challenges lie ahead. There will be fierce opposition to Kinder Morgan, specifically by those who would deny the science and engineering of pipelines. This ideological opposition will play out in the streets and in the courts.

We will need to come together as a Legislature and as a province to ensure we get shovels in the ground ASAP. As a former energy

worker and as a member of the opposition I want to do my part to make sure this happens. There will need to be firm timelines so these projects don't fall victim to schedule and cost overruns. Any delays could cause us to lose access to new markets, billions of dollars, and jobs. This is something that cannot be allowed to happen, and I'm sure we can all agree. We are here to serve the people before the party, and the pipelines serve in the interests of the people of Alberta and Canada.

Unfortunately, we are already starting to hear opposition to the pipelines from inside this government. Members of the Premier's oil sands advisory group have worked to block the Trans Mountain expansion. Elizabeth May said that she would go to jail before she would let this project happen. Let's come together and call these voices what they are: extreme and unhelpful. Let's keep fighting for the new pipelines to tidewater, like Energy East and Keystone XL. Let's demand fair value for our ethical oil. Let's write our own future today and always.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I want to remind all members of the practice we have in this House. When members' statements are made, there are no comments made from any side of the House.

#### Microsociety School Program in Red Deer

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Mr. Speaker, I am proud that my statements reflect my sincere fondness for Red Deer-North. Today I bring the unique microsociety within Aspen Heights school to the attention of the House.

Microsociety integrates our educational curriculum with a mini marketplace. The students and staff of Aspen Heights participate in the supply and demand aspects aligned with our present socioeconomic model. Students learn and experience the true essence of government and democratic process. Each student from kindergarten to grade 5 contributes their knowledge, skills, and abilities to the success of their microsociety. With a strong connection between curriculum and market activity, the fundamentals of knowledge achievement is engaged through hands-on participation. Within this unique society is a fully licensed bottle depot, where numeracy, literacy, efficacy, and inclusion are elements of the real world that are engaged.

What is truly exclusive within this microsociety is the strong support of inclusion, parity, and the simple notion that our children can dream big. There are no preconceived societal limitations that prejudice their place within their society. Their active labour market policies support that everyone's contributions are integral and vital to the success of their community.

Mr. Speaker and fellow members, within the heart of Red Deer-North is a place without bias, where our children are learning the true essence of community, which is the fabric of our great province. As their minds are fashioned to learn, they are experiencing a society that is void of division. They are introduced to the concepts of a minimum wage and health and safety at the onset and will carry these values throughout their lives. These are strong sandbox morals and lessons. They reflect socioeconomic ideologies that contribute to an economy where strong social conscience is universal.

I am proud that microsociety exists within my constituency of Red Deer-North. Thank you.

1:50

#### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### Pipeline Construction

**Mr. Jean:** Given the independent evidence-based approval by the National Energy Board for new pipeline projects, yesterday's announcements were long overdue. While the rejection of the approved Northern Gateway pipeline is a terrible politicized decision, we welcome the approval of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain and Enbridge's line 3 pipeline expansion. This decision is good for Alberta if these pipelines actually get built. We've seen pipelines approved in the past, only to be tied up in legal battles by special-interest groups. Is the NDP committed to denouncing those willing to do anything to stop Alberta's pipelines? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I don't think I've ever been more excited for question period than I am for the one today. Today is a good day for Alberta, and it's a good day for Albertans. Because of the leadership of this government, Alberta did see two new pipeline approvals yesterday. We saw what happened with Conservative governments in the past, who move forward on a do-nothing approach. Instead, we did something, and we saw yesterday that we're getting real results.

**Mr. Jean:** Of course, we also had yesterday several key NDP advisers declaring a battle against Alberta's pipelines. NDP oil sands adviser Karen Mahon is rallying opposition to Kinder Morgan, quote, in the streets, in the courts, and at the ballot box. End quote. Another member, Tim Gray, has his organization promising to, quote, dig in to stop the Energy East pipeline. Oil sands adviser co-chair Tzeporah Berman denounced new pipelines entirely. Sounds like none of them care much about a carbon tax and what that gives us. We can't have people working for Alberta and Albertans who want to destroy our energy sector. It's ridiculous. When will the Premier fire . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Hoffman:** Just to recap what somebody else said yesterday, the Prime Minister said that we could not have approved this project without the leadership of our Premier and Alberta's climate leadership plan, Mr. Speaker.

The mandate of the group that's being referred to is to look at ways we can achieve the hundred megatonne cap on emissions while respecting the work that we need to do with energy companies, environmental leaders, and those who represent workers, Mr. Speaker. We saw what happened when the member opposite was in Ottawa and we had a Conservative government in Alberta here: nothing. I see the score. It's two to nothing.

**Mr. Jean:** While the Premier claims her oil sands advisers don't approve pipelines, they declared openly that new development will actually exceed the legislated emissions cap, meaning no new oil sands development is even possible. That sends a very dangerous signal to investors and to future pipeline prospects. If president-elect Donald Trump immediately approves Keystone in January, this cap will begin constricting activity in the oil sands for the long term. It'll constrict it. Leave no question about it. This cap puts growth in our oil sands at risk. Why, then, is the NDP doubling down on this decision?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, we saw what happened when the Official Opposition spoke into an echo chamber. We got nothing

accomplished. Instead, we've brought people together who represent environmental organizations, First Nations, oil and gas. We brought them together one year ago. We all stood on stage, and we moved forward with a very thoughtful climate leadership plan, and it is seeing real results. The proof is in the pipelines.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

**Mr. Jean:** Proof isn't action, Mr. Speaker. We've seen very little action actually happen with this government.

### Oil and Gas Transportation to the West Coast

**Mr. Jean:** Wildrose was proud last spring when all parties in this House supported a motion for the government to lobby against a tanker ban and in support of the Northern Gateway pipeline. But yesterday Ottawa ignored approval from the National Energy Board. They politicized the decision-making on pipelines by saying no. They made it worse by implementing a tanker ban that will choke out any new pipeline proposals through northern B.C. Why hasn't the NDP pushed back against a decision that is blocking \$300 billion in economic growth in Canada?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. If you spend time in Vancouver, where we're going to see this pipeline expansion go to, you'll see that there are tankers there today. They're exporting Alberta honey, Alberta beef to Asian markets, and we are so proud of that. And because of the good results of this government and action on a pipeline, we're going to be able to add our oil and gas products to the Asia Pacific market, and I couldn't be prouder. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. government members, tone it down. Tone it down.

**Mr. Jean:** Policy that blocks Canadian oil from moving to the west coast but allows dictator oil to be imported on the east coast is simply ridiculous. It's disappointing the NDP hasn't lifted a finger to oppose it at all. Alberta doesn't need just one pipeline; we need several. A project like Gateway would have meant – listen to this – \$98 billion in tax revenues over 30 years. Blocking crude oil tanker traffic on the northern B.C. coast blocks a sensible route for any new pipeline projects and the jobs that will come with them for Albertans and all Canadians. Will the NDP lobby against this tanker ban? Yes or no?

**Ms Hoffman:** I said it in the first question, Mr. Speaker. I'll say it to everyone. There are tankers on the coast right now bringing our products overseas, and because of the work of this government, because of the successful work in getting two pipelines approved, we will have the ability to sell our product to the Asia Pacific markets, and the only ones talking down Alberta's economy and our great success are the Official Opposition. I wish you'd stop talking down our pipelines. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Stop the clock, please.

I can feel the emotion in the room today. There is a very buoyant feeling to the room but also a very noisy one.

Please start the clock.

**Mr. Jean:** The decision to reject Northern Gateway sets a very dangerous precedent. It shows that Ottawa is more interested in playing politics with pipeline approvals than respecting the

evidence-based work done by the National Energy Board. The result today is \$300 billion in potential economic growth that has vanished, simply vanished. It leaves all future pipeline approvals up to political calculation instead of science and what's good for the economy and all Canadians. Will the Premier denounce Ottawa's decision to reverse the approval done by the NEB, and if not, why not?

**Ms Hoffman:** Don Braid this morning in the *Calgary Herald* said, "The federal approval is a sign of hope just as the economy might be ready to rise again. Politicians who carp at such a moment start to look as intransigent as the hardline oilsands opponents. Nothing will please them." Mr. Speaker, I have to say once again that we are proud to take leadership on the international stage economically, environmentally, and Albertans sure have done a good job in sending us to Ottawa because we're getting results. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** We warn you again, hon. members: the volume. I've asked that we stop the clock again, folks. Please tone it down.

Third main question. Start the clock.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Appreciate that.

Let me be clear. New pipelines are good for Alberta and Albertans, but I don't think Albertans need to be forced to pay for a punishing new carbon tax. It's a carbon tax that isn't stopping any legal battles, any protests, or even convincing NDP appointees that Alberta has the social licence for new pipelines. The fact is that in just 32 days the NDP's carbon tax is going to come into place before any shovels are even in the ground. This tax is bad news for Alberta families and businesses right across the province. Premier, why won't you just simply cancel the carbon tax?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, if he won't listen to the Prime Minister and he won't listen to the *Calgary Herald*, maybe he'll listen to a CEO, a CEO for Canadian Energy Pipeline Association, Chris Bloomer, who said: this process would not have come to the outcome it has without Alberta's climate leadership plan. He also went on to say: so clearly it fits with the climate policy and the agenda of the government. Guess what? Our agenda is working. Protect the environment. Protect jobs. Grow the economy. I wish you'd stop being so barrel-half-empty and think about the two-thirds barrel we just got yesterday, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, do you want me to stop the clock again? Tone it down.

**Mr. Jean:** It was bad enough when the NDP imposed a \$30 per tonne carbon tax, but slipped into yesterday's pipeline announcement by the Prime Minister was a big thumbs up from Alberta for an alarming \$50 per tonne carbon tax. That's a startling amount of money that will come from charities, from businesses, and families' pocketbooks to pay for this Premier's green slush funds. The Premier has given her blessing for an even more expensive carbon tax. Will the Premier release the numbers on the full cost of this carbon tax? Yes or no?

2:00

**Ms Hoffman:** We know the price of doing nothing. We saw the Leader of the Official Opposition do that for 10 years in Ottawa, and the result was nothing. Instead, we've taken a thoughtful motion on moving forward and increasing our market access. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? Here's the result: two pipelines. We're working. It's being successful. I'm sorry. You won't wipe the smile off my face. Today is a good day for Albertans.

**Mr. Jean:** It seems, Mr. Speaker, that whenever Ottawa says, "Jump," the NDP asks, "How high?" on the way up.

On coal they're wasting billions of dollars to shut off plants. Now a carbon tax that the vast majority of Albertans don't want: the Premier has given her blessings to this, and it's wrong. Energy infrastructure should not be tied to how much we tax people. Every time Alberta asks for a new pipeline, you shouldn't come up with a new way to tax Albertans. Why, then, did the Premier go all in on yesterday's announcement while signing off on a plan that will simply hammer taxpayers at home and hurt Albertans every place across this province?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, here's another quote, Mr. Speaker, from Carolyn Dunn from the CBC: the skyscrapers in Calgary seem just a little bit taller today as Alberta's oil industry, a major driver in the Canadian economy, celebrates what it calls a new opportunity to compete globally. We're smiling. The skyscrapers in Calgary are smiling. Albertans are smiling. We're getting real results. I wish you'd just stop and smile and be grateful for the fact that we're actually getting results for Albertans instead of just trying to beat everybody up every day.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party.

#### Provincial Debt Repayment

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister complains that the price of oil has left a big hole in Alberta's finances. Nobody blames the government for the price of oil. We do blame them for their response. The NDP has promised to run the provincial debt up to \$60 billion, with no plan to pay even one dollar of it back. To the Finance minister. You've made it clear that your plan for getting through the recession is to borrow like there's no tomorrow. Will you now tell Albertans how they'll clean up your mess by paying it back when tomorrow does come?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much for the question from the third-party leader. You know, our plan is showing results. Q2 was released on Monday, and that plan talked about 2017 being a more positive experience and environment in terms of growth, GDP than this year. If we're seeing that happen and we're seeing two pipelines approved, we're going to see even more investment come back to this province. When we see more investment, we'll see a smaller deficit, and we'll get back to the plan of balancing.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Since Northern Gateway, approved when we were in government, was cancelled, you're minus one there.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the government is banking on revenue from the newly approved Kinder Morgan pipeline to bail them out of their leaky fiscal boat, so let's talk a bit more. Trans Mountain is estimated to generate \$1.3 billion in royalties a year. The problem is that by 2019 the interest payments on the accumulated debt from this government will be \$3 billion a year. To the Energy minister: since the Finance minister has borrowed so much that the pipelines approved won't even cover the interest on the borrowing, do you have a couple more pipelines to support your Finance minister's big-spending ways?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. You know, Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is that we're keeping the spending tap down. That side

over there: what they did was that they had their operational spending glued to the price of oil, so it went up and it went down. That hurt Albertans. That hurt investment. That left us in a recessionary hole. We're fixing that. You broke it.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, no Albertan believes this Finance minister is controlling spending, but he does brag that Alberta has the lowest GDP of any province in Canada. You're welcome, Minister. It currently sits at 9.7 per cent, and the government plans to grow it to 15.5 per cent by 2019. The fact is that Alberta's ratio was at 3.4 when the NDP took office. To put that in perspective, this government is going to triple the debt-to-equity ratio in one term of office. To the Finance minister. Albertans deserve to know if your department is even working on a debt repayment plan. Are you simply planning on defaulting on the mortgage?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you. I think I've said this many times over. You know, our plan is to make sure that spending stays under control, not like the previous government, where spending sometimes went up 10 per cent, went up 8 per cent, went up 6 per cent. We're far under that in terms of growth plus CPI. I will tell you that if they had put more money away in the good years, we would have a lot more today. They spent it like drunken sailors. Now we're having to deal with it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

#### Pipeline Construction (continued)

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Breaking Alberta's land-lock and accessing new markets is a significant step towards a stronger economic future for Alberta. Given the economic impact an additional 1 million barrels of oil sold per day will have on our province, to the Minister of Energy: how will the government engage with the federal government and ensure the Trans Mountain and line 3 pipeline projects are built?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we're going to keep working. We haven't been the cheerleaders on the sideline hoping pipelines would get built. We have rolled our sleeves up. We're going to continue to roll up our sleeves and do the work that it takes to support the companies who are trying to build these pipelines. We're going to keep on talking about our climate leadership plan, we're going to keep on working with our First Nations and communities, and we're going to keep talking about how to get pipelines built.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Prime Minister singled out the Premier's leadership and our government's climate leadership plan as the reason why pipelines were approved, to the Minister of Energy: what role did our climate leadership plan have in building a national consensus on these projects?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, you know, within a week of us announcing the climate leadership plan, I started hearing from our stakeholders that the conversation was changing, and it has continued to change throughout the year. The

results of that climate leadership plan and talking about it were proven yesterday, when we got two pipelines approved.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the approval of these projects was premised on Alberta's strong environmental policy, to the Minister of Energy: how will these pipelines support the work of our climate leadership plan?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we've said all along that there isn't a disconnect between being environmentally responsible and extracting our resources. We're going to continue with that message. By getting pipelines to tide-water, we are going to have more money kept in Alberta. We don't have to be at the mercy of our one customer, who is now our competitor, down south. We can get better prices for our product, and that money in Alberta will help to work us towards a greener economy.

### Government Spending

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, this week the second quarterly fiscal update was released, containing projections for a record deficit and a record \$14 billion of new debt this year alone. The only silver lining is a \$100 million rounding error from the last quarterly update, which the minister called a modest improvement. That's .007 per cent of the deficit. Modest indeed. At that rate it will take 35 years to balance the budget. Does the minister have a credible plan to balance the budget before his 95th birthday?

**Mr. Ceci:** I just wonder how he knows how old I am, Mr. Speaker.

I do have a plan. We do have a plan, of course. If he was reading the Q2 report, he also knows that next year there's going to be 2.3 per cent growth to our GDP in this province. Twenty-five thousand jobs over the last three months have been added, and the deficit is coming down. They would have thrown kids out to the street by not having them in schools. They would have closed hospitals. They would have made life less stable for Albertans.

2:10

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, we can go back to the comment you made at a later time in the agenda, but I must tell you that you looked much younger when you arrived here than you do today.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, it's going to be Albertans who throw them out on the street.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that the government has already blown their budget for this year, overspending by \$600 million – in addition, the government has already dropped its commitment to find \$250 million of in-year savings just halfway through the year. Is the minister so unconcerned with the out-of-control spending and deficit of this government that he couldn't keep his commitment to find .004 per cent of the budget in in-year savings?

**Mr. Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, we take our promises in terms of the budget very seriously. We have found those in-year savings and more, so that's a really good thing. You know, we are working, of course, to bend the curve on spending. That is happening as well.

You know, the other side is: spend some weeks, cut other weeks. We're focused on one thing. Delivering good programs and services, diversifying the economy, getting Albertans back to work: those are the things that are needed now as our economy is starting to come up again.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, every week is a spending week for the NDP.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that on Monday the minister was asked if 2024 was still their rough, shot-in-the-dark target for a balanced budget, despite there being no plan whatsoever to get there, and the minister confirmed that this was still their rough target with an unenthusiastic verbal shoulder shrug – based on the current projections, a child born this coming March would owe \$22,500 of provincial government debt by the time the NDP actually balances the budget, when that child turns seven years old. Does the minister believe that it is moral to saddle young Albertans with the reckless borrowed money of today?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, what Albertans were unenthusiastic about was the platform of that party in the last election. What we're doing with regard to children is that we're making sure there are schools so that they can get an education. We're making sure there are hospitals so that when they go to the doctor, there's somebody to see them. I welcome the time when there'll be those children on this side of the House, pointing back to you and saying: you would have broken it for us.

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

### Pipeline Construction (continued)

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Credit where credit is due. Trudeau Liberals bless Kinder Morgan seven months after NEB approval. Flash back to Northern Gateway, approved over two years ago. But not everyone is celebrating. Vancouver's Gregor Robertson called it a huge step backward for the economy, environment, and for climate change while he used the terms "fraudulent," "ugly," and "insurrection" in reference to his position that pipelines should never get built. To the Minister of Energy: to the rhythm of NDP chest beating, will you commit to Albertans when we will see shovels in the ground?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. In past conversations with Ian Anderson of Kinder Morgan I understood that shovels will be in the ground within the year.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll hold the minister to that timeline.

Given Mayor Robertson's steadfast opposition, Elizabeth May's vow to risk jail, and trusted NDP advisers Berman and Mahon suggesting protests, lawsuits, and flaunting defiance of the rule of law, again to the minister: did you not promise to bring our opponents onboard with regard to market access through trade in the magical currency of social licence?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, you know, some of our colleagues elsewhere: I respectfully disagree with some of their stances, but I totally support their right to do so. There is a great deal of people in the middle who love what we're doing and love that we got the pipeline. There will always be people on the extremes that do that, and if they wish to protest, I support their right to do that all the way to jail if that's what it takes.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Always good to have the NDP world view.

Given this government's gloating over pipeline approval despite a lack of any reasonable expectation of timely construction due to opposition from their friends and given that Northern Gateway was approved in 2014, only to be killed yesterday by the PM, and given that the same foreign-funded groups who managed to block Northern Gateway will now shift protest to Trans Mountain, again to the minister: how long will this project sit in courts and the lawless court of public opinion before your government accepts that the groups opposing pipelines care not for social licence?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, you know, there is a fundamental difference between the two pipelines. Enbridge did everything they were asked for Northern Gateway, but who failed that process was the Conservative governments, who did not do their due diligence. The process for Kinder Morgan is fairly solid. It may go to court, but if it does, I think there's been a solid consultation. They have done everything right, as has the government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

#### Addiction Treatment Services for Adolescents

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Addiction is a disease where an individual seeks to escape through substance abuse and other behaviours. This disease affects the lives of everyone around these individuals, and it can happen to anyone, especially young adults, who face many forms of societal pressures. But there is hope, especially with excellent treatment programs which focus on the family unit as a whole. To the minister: what is your government doing to support adolescents and their families who are struggling with addictions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. Our hearts go out to anyone who has a family member dealing with the disease of addiction. We know that there are great struggles amongst families trying to find the right supports for their family members. We also know that when someone is ready for treatment, we need to do everything that we can to make sure that they can access that treatment as quickly as possible, which is why I'm really proud of the work our government has done around expanding access to children and young adults, especially in the Calgary area. We've seen wait times go down from two weeks to same day and next day.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre, or AARC, was formed in Calgary in 1990 as a not-for-profit Alberta company with the mission to provide semiresidential placement components which provide training and support to the entire family and given that today they have participated in nonpartisan discussions with all parties here and given that this is a cost-effective program requesting provincial government support to allow their life-saving work to continue, to the minister: will you consider this funding request, and when can this organization expect an answer?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We agree that working with family members to support loved ones with addictions is critically important as well as ensuring that those wraparound services are available for people who are moving through the treatment system. That is why our government

is proud to support work through Human Services and other services – mental health and the like – to ensure that those are available. I'm going to be meeting with representatives from the organization later this afternoon, and I look forward to the conversation with them.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, the families, health professionals, and support staff at AARC understand that addiction is a chronic illness. Given that we all know that when we fail to treat chronic illness properly, we put strain on our acute systems, and given that failing to treat addictions properly at all stages of the process can result in merely going from crisis to crisis instead of encouraging health and well-being, does the minister agree that this program can form part of an overall approach to the treatment of chronic illness at the primary care level?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. One of the things that we heard loud and clear through the mental health review panel was the importance of implementing and embedding primary care networks as well as mental health supports and addiction supports. We've been working very closely with our partners in the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta as well as with the primary care network groups to see how we can expand access to those services as well as make sure that those referral networks are there, because so much of the good work done in our communities around mental health and addiction is done by groups operating in the community.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

#### Pipeline Construction (continued)

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Announcing pipelines is one thing; building them is another. Anti-Alberta activists are already getting ready to battle against Kinder Morgan. What's worse, however, is that many of the naysayers are inside the NDP government. Karen Mahon, an adviser for the Premier, swore on Monday that Kinder Morgan will never happen and that this project will be stopped in the streets and in the courts. How can Albertans expect to see the project become a reality when this government is vowing to destroy it?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really unfortunate the partisan games that the opposition is playing today. Almost a year ago the Leader of the Opposition asked: "Can the Premier give us one single example of a pipeline – any pipeline – that is closer to construction or approval as a result of her quiet diplomacy?" The answer is yes. We heard that yes yesterday.

**Mr. Taylor:** Given that Kinder Morgan is going to face loud opposition from ecoradicals like Mike Hudema, who himself penned the how-to guide on destroying pipelines along with the help of this environment minister, and given that Alberta needs pipelines going west, east, and south to tidewater, will this Premier also be supporting Energy East in order to ensure the pipeline's future isn't left in the hands of a few ecoradicals and the Leap Manifesto friends of this government?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Again, it's unfortunate that you're pitting politics against doing the right thing. In fact, their friends at the



conservative think tank prosperity fund called a pipeline approval a doomsday scenario for their own selfish political gains. Again, they're fearmongering today and trying to continue that. That progress is being made because of leadership that this government has shown. We've shown that we can create jobs, protect jobs, and take care of the environment at the same time.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, the Vancouver mayor has already promised to deliver protests like we've never seen. We need to keep working on accessing tidewater.

Given that the incoming U.S. administration has already pledged to support the Keystone XL pipeline, a project that would create thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic activity, and given that the common-sense project is already almost built, will the Premier reject the Leap Manifesto elements of this party and pledge her support here today for the Keystone XL pipeline?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. During the election the President-elect did say that he was looking to renegotiate that pipeline deal, so it's up to us to see what TransCanada feels about the pipeline. We will sit back and wait until those negotiations are done.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### Government Advertising Expenses

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week the government declared that they were getting big money out of politics, so in the spirit of doing exactly that, can the minister responsible for democratic renewal provide all Albertans with the number of dollars spent on major advertising campaigns since the NDP took office and whether that figure falls within the proposed spending limit of \$2 million per party during an election?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are so proud that this government is getting big money out of politics. Our first act as government was to ban corporate and union donations, and I was very proud to introduce the Fair Elections Financing Act, which is going to continue that and make sure that we have a fair elections financing system. We've always said that government advertising should not be used to influence election campaigns, and currently government advertising during elections is banned by policy. Rules on government advertising are currently addressed in the Election Act, and we look forward to discussing them in the future when we revise the Election Act.

**Mr. Rodney:** Except the minister took it out of the bill.

Given that this government spent \$4.4 million on advertising the climate leadership plan, \$750,000 for Budget 2016, \$330,000 for a coal phase-out, \$210,000 for Bill 6, and a hundred thousand dollars for the PP lawsuit and given that these five campaigns alone cost \$6 million, which could have been spent around wellness campaigns, for example, again to this minister: if you are sincere in wanting big money out of politics, why does your government insist on spending millions of dollars of taxpayers' money articulating the NDP world view on contentious issues?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, Albertans have told us that they want big money out of politics. We are working to that effect. Albertans have not said that they want a government that never speaks to them and doesn't tell them what's

happening. It is our responsibility to communicate to Albertans the important leadership like the climate leadership plan so that they understand that when two pipelines are approved, it is because of this government.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that we all agree that there is a need to communicate government policy to citizens and given that a number of aforementioned advertisements went far beyond communicating government policy and given that spending money on partisan advertising offers an enormous advantage going into an election, especially given the new spending limits, again to the minister: when will you introduce restrictions regarding what types of advertising the government can and cannot engage in preceding an election campaign? When will that happen?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Modernizing elections and elections financing should be a nonpartisan issue. Our government banned corporate and union donations, and we formed the Select Special Ethics And Accountability Committee. The opposition members took advantage of that committee to play partisan games rather than being able to discuss things like government advertising during an election. Instead, they filibustered, and they walked out. This government and I as the minister responsible will be reviewing the Election Act in due time. It's unfortunate that they could not work with the government on that committee.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

#### Trade with Asia

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday it was announced that – wait for it – two new pipelines are going to take Alberta oil to new markets, including in Asia, thanks to the outstanding leadership of our Premier and this government. That means that finally our world-class energy producers will be able to sell at world-class prices. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what other types of trade are increasing with Asia?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Earlier this month I led Alberta's largest ever trade delegation to China and Japan. More than 80 Alberta businesses and economic development associations accompanied me on this mission. I can tell you that we were met by hundreds and hundreds of Chinese participants, businesses that are interested in partnering with Alberta businesses. They are interested in investing in our province. I can tell you that our trade with China increased by 16 per cent last year, and that is going to continue growing because of the efforts of our government.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Given that Statistics Canada recently reported that Alberta small businesses created more than 90 per cent of the 25,000 new jobs in Alberta over the last three months, to the same minister: how is this government supporting small businesses who are looking to start or increase trade in Asia?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our small businesses are leading the way in helping to build a stable, diversified economy for the future. Through our jobs plan we've increased supports for small businesses that are looking to or beginning to export and

looking to diversify into international markets. I can tell you that I'm very proud of our Alberta export expansion program, which provides support, both financially and also with mentorship, to help Alberta companies access international markets, which will open the doors to creating more jobs back here at home.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my constituency of Strathcona-Sherwood Park is home to the Industrial Heartland and that businesses there are looking to expand trade opportunities, again to the same minister: how did the Chinese and Japanese companies respond to the recent trade mission, and what are participating local businesses and organizations saying?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that our businesses and Asian companies were thrilled that we led this delegation. Face-to-face, government-to-government interaction is absolutely critical for Asian markets. I can tell you that I'm proud that on our mission there were eight agreements signed between Alberta businesses and Chinese companies, with many more in the works. Let me tell you that one of the things that every single Chinese official asked me about was the status on pipelines and where it is. I can tell you that I was very proud and am proud today to stand here to say that we've got two new pipelines.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

2:30

#### Deaths of Children in Care

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Fifty-three: it's not a very large number until you consider that it's the number of cases of death and severe injury reported to the Alberta Child and Youth Advocate in 2015-16, with 22 deaths happening while children were receiving designated services and 29 deaths happening within two years of receiving intervention services. To the Premier. These crimes against our most vulnerable Albertans were all reported in the last year. When you consider that this includes three homicides, how many criminal charges have resulted from any of these reports?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, I wouldn't want to speak on investigations that are ongoing because it wouldn't be appropriate, but we can certainly look into closed investigations and charges that have been laid and get back to him with those numbers.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you. Given that nine kilograms was all that four-year-old Serenity weighed when she was killed in 2014 and given that reports show this poor little girl stole food because she had been starved and given that the report detailed her having been beaten and raped before she eventually succumbed to her death from abuse and given that the death of Serenity is being investigated by the RCMP but people want answers, to the Minister of Justice: why has nobody been charged with the rape and murder of this child?

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Nothing could be more tragic than the

death of any child, particularly in circumstances such as these. That is why we thought it was so important to ensure that the RCMP were able to complete their investigation in the way that they saw fit and to protect the information in the report from the Chief Medical Examiner in order to ensure that they could complete that investigation. When they have completed that investigation, I'm sure that they will be happy to share that information.

**Mr. Hanson:** Given that 51 is the actual number of deaths of children and youth in care reported in 2015-16 and given that these are deplorable numbers that we should all be ashamed of and given that we have heard from the government that work is being done and that they have accepted the recommendations of the Child and Youth Advocate and since we lack specific information, to the Minister of Human Services: have any of the people responsible for oversight on any of these cases been fired, suspended, or held accountable? Anybody?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the important question. It's a deeply concerning issue, and I share in the devastation that members of this House and all Albertans are feeling. As the Minister of Justice indicated, it's an issue still under active investigation, so we will work with the RCMP and all involved to make sure that we get this right. At the same time, we are absolutely committed to making improvements to avoid similar incidents from happening in the future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

#### Job Creation

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I spoke to students in my constituency who are graduating. These students have put time and money into training for professional jobs, but despite this government's job-creation plan, which promised thousands of jobs, they have been unable to find jobs that would provide a solid base for their future. They have been having to make do with minimum wage, part-time, unstable jobs instead of participating in this wonderful vision put forward by this government. To the minister of economic development: when can tens of thousands of students graduating in Alberta each year expect to find rewarding and fulfilling and sustainable jobs that add to the economic diversity of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. I will direct the member to look at our Alberta jobs plan and the fact that through our new infrastructure projects, through the capital plan it's estimated that it will sustain or create 10,000 jobs for the next three years. I can tell the member that between March '15 and '16 through the Alberta Enterprise Corporation there were over 800 jobs created. Because our government restored the STEP program, 2,700 students had jobs this summer whereas the previous government had decided to cut that program.

**Mr. Gill:** Given that there has been a net loss of 5,000 jobs since last October, which was when the government announced their first jobs plan, which has since been cancelled, and given that the Q2 update from earlier this week shows that revenues from income taxes have declined, that indicates that these jobs pay less, that Albertans are being employed in marginal and part-time positions.

This job-creation plan promised to create 25,000 jobs. Even if it's working, it's not building the right bright future for Albertans. To the same minister: how do you actually plan to get the other 75,000 unemployed Albertans back to work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to let the hon. member in on a little secret. The price of oil hit an all-time low and stayed there for a very long, long duration, which is having a significant impact on Alberta jobs and businesses. What I can tell you is that our government is taking action. There are a number of initiatives: increasing access to capital, supports for start-up companies. We've also as of January 1 reduced the small-business tax rate by one-third. We are the second-lowest jurisdiction in Canada. I can tell you as well that through a number of initiatives, from our export expansion program to the petrochemical diversification program . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Gill:** Given that these kinds of jobs that have been created are in entry level fields, are not mortgage-paying jobs, don't add to the diversity of our economy, and will not help Albertans support their families and given that the wages alone for 25,000 Albertans at the average wage of \$50,000 per year would cost \$1.25 billion, none of your unco-ordinated job plans come close to the growing economy by that much. While this government would love to talk about the unbuilt pipeline, what is it doing to restore the Alberta advantage now?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I will point the member to our Alberta jobs plan.

I want to congratulate the Minister of Energy. With her new, modernized royalty framework there are over 200 wells that are now being drilled because of our early adoption. Those 200-plus wells create 135 direct and indirect jobs. The two tax credits being debated in this House are forecast to create thousands of jobs and ensure that Albertans invest in Alberta businesses to help them grow. These are our job creators. As well as leading trade missions, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and I . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

### Election Financing Legislation

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's actually try talking about elections financing. On Monday the minister responsible for democratic renewal introduced Bill 35. Like Bill 1, that banned corporate and union donations to political parties, this bill also proposes to get big money out of politics by capping individual donations at \$4,000. To the Minister of Labour: why is this government moving forward with a \$4,000 single aggregate limit?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Rodney:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The one aggregate contribution limit will apply to all political entities, candidates, and constituencies receiving contributions. This means that in a calendar year an individual Albertan can choose to contribute a maximum of \$4,000 in any combination. It also means that the one aggregate

limit will apply to elections, by-elections, nomination contestants, and leadership contests.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the bill also limits what we can spend on an election campaign to \$50,000 per constituency . . .

**Mr. Rodney:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A second point of order.

**Mr. Nielsen:** . . . and \$2 million per party, can the minister explain what expenses are not counted toward this limit, and why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question as the bill is not up for debate today, so the opportunity to speak to it is appreciated. We recognize that not all candidates and constituencies are the same. As such, the spending limit would not apply to a candidate's or contestant's reasonable travel costs, child care, or expenses related to a disability. These exceptions from the spending limit will help level the playing field for candidates with larger ridings and will help remove barriers for those with children or disabilities.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it's not only political parties who spend money on campaigns for elections, can the minister explain how this will apply to groups other than political parties?

**Mr. Rodney:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** I've noted your points of order, sir.

**Mr. Rodney:** Three of them.

**The Speaker:** I've got all three, sir.

2:40

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During an election third-party advertisers, if this bill is passed, would be subject to a spending limit of \$150,000 overall, with no more than \$3,000 being spent in relation to any one particular riding. This is similar in other jurisdictions. Between elections third parties would have to register with Elections Alberta and disclose contributions on a sunshine list. As well, they will be required to disclose contributions over \$250 weekly during an election. Disclosure of those contributions would in turn be published by Elections Alberta. Albertans would then know who was paying to influence their opinions.

**The Speaker:** You have 20 seconds if any members would like to leave the House.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

### Pipeline Construction

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, let me offer congratulations to the Premier for yesterday's pipeline approvals because, in truth, if we were in government, we would be happy,

too. But, Premier, I caution you against cracking the champagne just yet. Approval is a good first step, but it's only one step of many, something our former PC government was well aware of because we were pleased when the Northern Gateway got cabinet approval on our watch. We were cautious, however, after protests and court challenges, and now because of a new decision by a new government that project is but a memory.

On behalf of all Albertans we sincerely hope the same fate does not befall Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline. Let me remind you that this new federal government put 157 conditions on the project. Northern Gateway had 200. Opposition to Northern Gateway was muted compared to the campaign that has already risen up against Trans Mountain. Let's look at a few of the early vows to block this pipeline, starting with – and this is incredible – people on the Alberta government's own payroll, two members of the oil sands advisory group. I will be looking for confirmation that the Premier has fired both of them by Friday. [interjections] Otherwise her commitment to reaching tidewater is a weak promise indeed.

In your own ND Party federally and in British Columbia a friend of the NDP, Green Party leader Elizabeth May, has said that she'd rather go to jail than see the pipeline built. Holy Leap Manifesto, Batman. [interjections] This is on top of the mayor of Vancouver . . .

**The Speaker:** Please stop the clock a second.

Hon. members, this is the third time today that I've asked you. Don't make comments when a member is speaking, both sides of the House.

Start the clock again.

Please proceed.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the NDP federally and in British Columbia is fighting against it. On top of this, the mayor of Vancouver and a litany of radical envirogroups are rallying as we speak. Premier, we're cheering for you and for the good of Alberta, but we have seen approvals before, and we have seen them fall away.

Premier, what you promised Albertans in return for your misguided climate change plan is a social licence, and so far you have not delivered. So don't sit on you political laurels and do a victory lap quite yet. [Mr. McIver's speaking time expired] Mr. Speaker, can I finish, please?

**The Speaker:** Go ahead.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you.

The work is just starting, and your promise of a clear social licence path is still broken.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I think that represents the time as I am advised. [interjections] I'm advised that there is no time left, and that's the clock that we follow.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

### Pipeline Approval

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy has been too reliant on a single market for our resources for too long, and this has led to a roller-coaster economy that affects every Albertan. For too long Conservative governments in Alberta and in Ottawa were too busy being cheerleaders for pipelines instead of rolling up their sleeves and getting down to work. They did nothing on climate change, and they did nothing to work with provinces and communities across these pipeline routes.

That changed yesterday, Mr. Speaker. As the proud daughter of a pipeliner I realize how critical the oil industry is to Alberta's economy . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, point of order.

**Ms Babcock:** . . . and, more importantly, to the families and communities whose loved ones work in the industry. Today we continue to see the effects of the global drop in oil, but yesterday's approval of pipeline projects will provide our province with an opportunity to access new markets at better prices. This is another step towards economic independence and another step towards ending Alberta's roller coaster economy and landlock.

Mr. Speaker, our government is paving the way for a new economy based on both economic and environmental sustainability. These two aspects are linked with each other, and Albertans should not have to sacrifice the province's environmental health for a strong economy. Our government's economic and environmental direction is exciting for all Albertans. Many people have told me that they are delighted to see our government work collaboratively with provincial and federal partners to ensure that Albertans' concerns are being heard. More importantly, there's enthusiastic support for our Premier's leadership, which is putting working families first.

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, Mr. Speaker: "We could not have approved this project without the leadership of Premier Notley and Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan." As the Deputy Premier stated: "The proof is in the pipeline." Yesterday was a win for Alberta workers, a win for Alberta's economy, and a win for Alberta's environment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [some applause]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, would you please be seated.

**Mr. Clark:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** What are we at now, six?

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

### Coal Industry

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are different kinds of coal. Bituminous coal is commonly used to produce electricity in Alberta. Metallurgical, or met., coal is used for steel production and is mainly exported to countries like China, Korea, and Japan. Alberta's met. coal is some of the best in the world and is highly sought after. The coal mines in Grande Cache and Hinton produce met. coal.

I spoke with Gary Taje, the international representative for the United Mine Workers of America's Canadian branch last week. Gary lives in Grande Cache and is a tireless supporter of the local mine and the mineworkers who live there. When I asked Gary if the Alberta government's climate leadership plan was responsible for the closure of the Grande Cache coal mine, his adamant reply was: no, and you can quote me on that.

The Wildrose insists that the free market has all the answers for the economy, but Gary Taje told me that this same free market, not Alberta's climate leadership plan, is responsible for the closure of Grande Cache Coal. The absence of regulation drove the international met. coal price down so far that the mine in Grande Cache was no longer economically viable.

Meanwhile the government of Alberta remains a strong supporter of this mine and is working tirelessly to support this important employer. Now, in spite of continual opposition from the Wildrose and PC members of this House, a plan is moving forward to reopen

the mine, and we are hoping that the miners in the community will be back at their jobs sometime this spring.

The bituminous coal industry, which markets to coal-fired electrical generator plants, will be impacted by both the federal and the provincial climate action plan. They will have the support of this government as we help them with moving on to greener and more sustainable industries.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

### Carbon Policies

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To understand what's going on outside the dome, all you have to do is go talk to the people who are losing their jobs to really understand the damage the government is having on this province, the hard-working men and women who are quickly losing hope as the government looks to destroy our coal industry and the communities that depend on them. I hear it almost every week, the desperation people have as they try to figure out how to take care of their families. They watch as the value of their homes drop, and they don't know where to turn to next.

2:50

Of course, no one from this cabinet has actually taken the time to step foot into a community like Forestburg or Hanna, to look people in the eye whose livelihoods are destroyed by the NDP. This carbon tax will kill jobs here at home and hurt our ability to compete against the United States, a country opposed to any carbon tax.

I can tell you that the people in my riding do not share the same fascination with the carbon tax as this government does. In fact, they think the carbon tax is just another way to punish people for having the nerve to drive to get their groceries, to commute to work, to take their kids to hockey practice. This tax will hurt everyone. It means less for a family budget. It means less to invest in the construction industry. It means farmers' bills will go up at a time when they can least afford it. Towns and schools will be paying more. And, unbelievably, charities will lose out big time. This is going to especially hurt towns like Forestburg, Hanna, Killam, Hardisty, Wainwright.

If only this government would learn from the mistakes made in other countries like Germany and Australia or, closer to home, in Ontario, with the out-of-control power costs and job losses. Until then Albertans can trust that the Wildrose has their back.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

#### Bill 33

#### Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (No. 2)

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that it's my pleasure today to request leave to introduce a bill being Bill 33, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (No. 2).

Mr. Speaker, this bill has been circulated to the opposition parties, and I believe that there is consensus on all of the clauses of the bill. Bill 33 contains a number of noncontentious provisions. I'll just briefly list those acts that are affected by this particular bill: the Family Law Act, the Hospitals Act, the Insurance Act, the Notaries and Commissioners Act, the Police Act, the Public Service Act, the Public Service Employee Relations Act, and the Vital Statistics Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 33 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have here a screenshot of tweets by Tzeporah Berman from the oil sands advisory group slugging the Kinder Morgan program.

I also have here an opinion poll printed this week, authored by Karen Mahon from the oil sands advisory group entitled Trans Mountain Pipeline, Even If Approved, Won't Be Built.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table two documents that I read into the record yesterday, the first one being Failure: Barack Obama Blew \$150 Billion to Increase Renewable Energy Generation By 1%.

The second one is Power Market Watchdog Attacks TransAlta Defence in Price Manipulation Hearing.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of a letter from Dr. Brent Humphrey indicating that Bill 207 "is unreasonably directive and places an obligation on Council which is inconsistent with the principles of self-governance." There is much more coming.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table the requisite number of copies of three of the articles I referred to today, which said such glowing things about the great progress we've made. I quoted these, including Chris Bloomer, Mr. Braid, and the *Globe and Mail*. [interjection] Just like the leader of the third party prefaced what was in his tablings, that's what I'm doing. I'm happy to present these to the House for tabling.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, this morning when we were debating Bill 30 and the amendments . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, this morning when we were debating Bill 30 and the amendments, I quoted a letter from the Calgary Chamber of commerce, so I'm submitting that letter.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the requisite number of copies of a letter from the Calgary Chamber of commerce that was addressed to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, sent this morning, expressing support for Bill 30 as it is currently written.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and table a document that includes hundreds – hundreds – of signatures expressing concern about the closure of the cardiac rehabilitation centre at the Didsbury hospital. I'm sure the Health minister will have a great opportunity to review the signatures from these concerned residents.

**The Speaker:** Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last night during debate on Bill 27 I mentioned that the Market Surveillance Administrator had fined TransAlta \$56 million for meddling in the electrical market. I have the article showing that the government then invested \$46 million of taxpayer money into TransAlta.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a media release from the government of Saskatchewan where they say that they're number two in this country. The best debt-to-GDP is right here in Alberta. We're twice as good as Saskatchewan, we're four times better than Ontario, and we're five times better than Quebec in terms of having the lowest GDP. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please.

I believe we have numerous points of order raised today. I believe the first was by the Opposition House Leader.

#### **Point of Order Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. Cooper:** I believe it was, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today in question period, what was a very robust opportunity to express opinion in the House, the hon. Minister of Finance used language that was likely to create disorder, imputed false motives of the opposition, used abusive or insulting language likely to create disorder, imputed false motives of another member, and made allegations of another member. While I don't have the benefit of the Blues, I believe that the statement was something very similar to: well, that side of the House would have thrown children out in the street. I am certain that that sort of allegation is unlikely to create order.

It's very simple. The minister just needs to apologize and withdraw, and we can all move on to what I'm sure will be a number of other very important points of order today.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm very familiar with 23(h), (i), and (j), including having produced a how-to video with regard to that. I don't believe that in this case it's suitable.

3:00

The minister was using, perhaps, some hyperbole, which is not disallowed by the rules. He was talking about the policies of the Official Opposition, in that they were not prepared to support adequate funding for schools. You know, it maybe went a little bit beyond what actually would be the case, which would be massive increases in class sizes, should that side's policy be put in place. But it was not directed to any individual members; it was directed to the political approach of the other side. However, I would concede that the hyperbole used in this case may have contributed to a certain amount of disorder on the other side. Not the first time today, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's easier to do than one might think.

With regard to that, I would on behalf of the hon. Finance minister withdraw that particular remark.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. You are correct. It was the first, but it was not the last.

I believe – I'm going to look to the table – Calgary-Lougheed, there were two or three points of order.

#### **Point of Order Anticipation**

**Mr. Rodney:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were three. I'm happy to roll them all into one for the sake of the table officers and members of the House, yourself. Standing Order 23(e) reads: "A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that Member . . . anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day." It says "or" in between.

Mr. Speaker, all three questions from the Member for Edmonton-Decore were clearly in violation. Bill 30 is on the Order Paper. All three questions had everything to do with that, so I think it's a *prima facie* example of a point of order. If something is sub judice, you would rule it out of order. The same thing applies here.

I do say that for the folks up in the galleries today – I mean, we've got to ratchet up a notch when it comes to the decorum. I can tell you that during opposition questions we saw a number of members cupping their mouths, yelling. Christmas is coming. Let's tone it down. I implore you, Mr. Speaker. This would be a great example, a good time to make sure that we increase decorum in this House, and I ask you to rule accordingly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Well, with respect, I fail to see the connection between lack of decorum, where the member may have a bit of a point today in particular, and whether or not anticipation was used when a member was asking a question about something, about a bill that's on the Order Paper. The member is quite correct. Section 23(e) does indeed say that something that "anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day." It does say that. However, if you dig a little more deeply into the rules – and I'm looking at *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, at page 496 – it says:

In 1997, many questions and even points of order were raised on the issue of questions anticipating Orders of the Day. Previously, questions in anticipation of an Order of the Day were disallowed to prevent the time of the House from being taken up with business to be discussed later in the sitting. After one such point of order, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs recommended that questions no longer be ruled out of order on the sole basis that they anticipated Orders of the Day. Shortly after, although the House had not yet adopted the [practice], Speaker Parent stated that he would follow the Committee's advice. The practice of allowing questions anticipating Orders of the Day has been continued.

Mr. Speaker, you also ruled on this matter on May 26, 2016, and I will just quote from that ruling.

Hon. members should be aware that the rule against anticipation has been interpreted to apply when questions pertain to the specific content of a bill that is up for consideration later that same day. This rule is not violated when there is a question about government policy in relation to the bill.

I have ruled a number of times on this subject.

You go on to refer your members to a number of points in *Hansard* where you had so ruled, Mr. Speaker.

I would submit with the greatest of respect that the questions were in order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The House leader for the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm almost hesitant to rise for what's about to happen. I think that my hon. colleague

across the way is in fact correct in this point of order. The only real reason that I would rise today is to point out that should you rule on the question of anticipation today, it would put a number of real challenges for us going forward because then the government could basically put any bill on the Order Paper, leave them there for extended periods of time, make bills up, for Pete's sake, because they didn't want to answer a question about pipelines, although they might want to today. Perhaps that was a bad example.

In order for us to be able to continue to ask questions in question period that are robust, perhaps it would have been better if the member referred not specifically to the bill but to the content of the bill. That probably would have been a little more helpful. But in this case I side with my colleague and ask that you don't rule these questions out of order.

**The Speaker:** Any other members with additional information on the matter? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't need to make recitations because the recitations have been made by the previous speakers, but I would say that it occurs to me, referring to those recitations, that the intention of anticipation is that if a member of the House wants to get clarification on a bill or some information, that's okay, but to use the speaking about a bill on the Order Paper in order to only have unopposed opposition is probably the reason why anticipation is there in the first place. That was clearly what the government was doing today. I mean, I will wait for your wisdom on this, but I would suggest to you that if you let the floodgates open on this, I think you're going to have a whole pile of anticipation coming forward and referring to today's decision should you rule this in order. I will leave it to your wisdom.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, on this particular point I, too, remember the rulings that were made back in May of this year. Technically I agree with the point made also by the House leaders for the government and for the opposition that the matter must be scheduled for consideration on this afternoon. In fact, technically, under the point of order that bill is not on the Order Paper today, and I would concur with . . .

**Mr. Rodney:** It is. It's page 2.

**An Hon. Member:** Not today. It's for consideration tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I don't believe that what happened today was in contravention of the points of order. However, to the hon. member, your questions were getting quite specific. It's related to policy, I believe, rather than particular clauses, and I would ask that the government in future and particularly the hon. member frame your questions in a much more general nature and not to leave an impression that you want a specific matter and you are in fact addressing an issue that will be discussed tomorrow. I thank you for that.

Just to confirm, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, you had three into one, and I think there was one from the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. Is that correct?

**Mr. Cooper:** I think it was Calgary-Elbow.

**The Speaker:** Oh. Calgary-Elbow.

#### Point of Order

#### Referring to a Member by Name

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order. I will say that it's rare for me to rise on a point of order, but

this is something I've observed in the House on too many occasions. I will reference *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, page 613, references to members. "During debate, Members do not refer to one another by their names but rather by title, position or constituency name in order to guard against the tendency to personalize debate." It goes on to say, "Other party leaders are identified as the leaders of their respective parties," which is a slightly different focus but something worth noting, I would say.

**3:10**

The Member for Stony Plain in her member's statement did refer to the Premier by name. I have to say that I've noticed this often from the government side, in particular in members' statements and in some questions as well from the backbench, although it certainly happens occasionally here as well. I think it's very important that we, whoever writes our questions or members' statements for us know our parliamentary procedure. Getting information, Mr. Speaker, on the record, I think, is important and okay – of course, that's our job here – but naming names in this House is not. I know often a member's statements – and I admit it's certainly often inadvertent.

Should it be something referenced in a written form, I just want to reference page 614. It's noted:

The Speaker will not allow a Member to refer to another Member by name even if the Member speaking is quoting from a document such as a newspaper article. As the Chair once noted, a Member "cannot do indirectly what cannot be done directly."

Again, Mr. Speaker, I think there's an opportunity here just to remind all members of the House not to refer to other members by name, only, please, to the ministerial position they hold or to the seat that they represent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know anything about people naming names in this House. I don't recall at all a situation last week where I needed to apologize for using the name of someone in the Chamber. I think my hon. colleague the independent Member for Calgary-Elbow, or perhaps more aptly the leader of the Alberta Party, according to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, has raised a very important point around the use of names.

However, just very briefly with respect to members' statements, obviously, we came into a little bit of a rocky patch there around members' statements. It's been a long-standing tradition in this House for members' statements to be uninterrupted, and I think we saw what happens when they can be interrupted. I would encourage both the member to withdraw and apologize and all members of this House to be reminded of what members' statements have been agreed to be for.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, I think there is much being made of something that occurs fairly frequently in this House – and admittedly it shouldn't – which is the use of names. In this particular case the member was reading a direct quote from the Prime Minister in which he attributed their ability to approve the pipelines that were approved yesterday to the leadership of the Premier – and that included her name – and the climate leadership plan of the government of Alberta. He was giving credit to our Premier and to our government and to our climate leadership plan very specifically as something that allowed

the government of Canada to approve the pipelines, including the Kinder Morgan pipeline, which will increase our access, potentially, to Asia and allow the government to get a higher price for the products that we produce. In doing so, the member inadvertently read the name, and people who had written the member's statement on her behalf ought to know that you can't use these names.

It's a good reminder, hardly the most serious transgression that has ever occurred in this House, even today, but on behalf of the hon. member I will withdraw that statement because clearly we are not supposed to use the proper names of members in the House even when reading a document. That much is clear. So, Mr. Speaker, with regard to this matter I will concede the point of order.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

To the principle that the Member for Calgary-Elbow raised, I think it's up to all of us to be conscious of that into the future.

I think the word "robust" would be an understatement with respect to this afternoon. I urge you all to consider your words and actions in this place and whether or not they are always consistently in the best interest of our public that we serve. So I want to remind you that good policy requires good debate.

Were there any other points of order?

**Mr. Rodney:** The Member for Calgary-Hays had a point of order today.

**The Speaker:** Okay. I thought he just spoke to one.

**Mr. Rodney:** No. He was speaking to a different one. He raised a different point of order.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, do you have another point of order?

**Mr. Rodney:** Yeah. It was on behalf of my hon. colleague. Parliamentary practice dictates that members' statements are uninterrupted in this House, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for reiterating that. Unfortunately, you had to do it a number of times. Unfortunately, my hon. colleague from Calgary-Hays, the leader of the third party, was unable to finish his statement today, and he raised a point of order in the statement following. That being said, I'm happy to withdraw on his behalf.

**An Hon. Member:** And so you should.

**Mr. Rodney:** I just did.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 36

#### An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Why, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's a real honour for me to rise today to move Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety, for second reading.

Mr. Speaker, this government has made a commitment to improving safety on Alberta's transportation network. By amending and updating the Traffic Safety Act, we are taking the next step in that commitment. For many years Albertans have been writing

to their government asking for laws which would make the use of off-highway vehicles safer. We have heard from off-highway vehicle associations, from victims fortunate enough to survive, and, sadly, from families who have lost loved ones to head injuries from off-highway vehicle accidents.

There have been many media stories over many years, several within the last few months, calling on the government to require helmets for people who ride off-highway vehicles. Mr. Speaker, too many Albertans are suffering needlessly, and the government can take action. It is taking action. As a government its job is to regularly revisit and update legislation to ensure it encompasses the evolving needs of our changing society.

Some people may ask us, Mr. Speaker, if we believe that a change in the law will impact behaviour and old habits. To answer that question, I would point out Alberta's history with seat belts. In 1986 seat belts were not required in this province. That's not that long ago. At that time only 28 per cent of Albertans used a seat belt. The government of the day, under Premier Getty, introduced legislation in 1978 to improve safety for drivers and passengers alike. Today more than 95 per cent of Albertans buckle up, and the result is more parents making it home to their families and children arriving safely to soccer practice, music lessons, and dance recitals.

The proposed amendments that I will speak about today come from the latest phase of my ministry's review of the Traffic Safety Act. They are the result of consultation with many Albertans, with our stakeholders, and with our traffic safety partners, and they reflect the changing attitudes of off-highway vehicle users and the public.

In Alberta the authority to create laws regarding helmet use for OHVs has been the exclusive responsibility of municipalities. Some municipalities have created such bylaws and were taking steps to manage this issue, but the majority, Mr. Speaker, have not. This inconsistent approach has left uncertainty and inequality in the application of the law, and too many have moved away from safety as a result.

Our first amendment to the Traffic Safety Act today will remove the bylaw-making authority from municipalities and place it where it should be, with the provincial government. This will pave the way for a standard approach to helmets on public land province-wide.

Our second amendment to the Traffic Safety Act today will address the definition of a safety helmet. The off-highway vehicle regulation, or OHVR, will contain standards for safety helmets. This section will clarify that helmets required under the act will be the ones that comply with the standards to be set out in the off-highway vehicle regulation.

The next section will be the actual requirement for helmets to be used when driving, operating, riding in or on, or being towed by an OHV when it is on public land. Public land is any land owned by the public. This will entrench the requirement in provincial law and encourage helmet use province-wide.

3:20

The next section, Mr. Speaker, will address helmet requirements on private property and indigenous lands. The Traffic Safety Act contains an exemption to the requirements for registration and insurance for OHVs operated on private property, and the requirements for helmets will remain consistent with this approach. An individual who is using an OHV on private property that they own or who is doing so on the private property of someone who has granted them permission will not require a helmet. An individual operating an OHV on First Nation or Métis settlement lands will also be exempt from this requirement.

The next section addresses farming and ranching work, Mr. Speaker. Requirements for helmet use on OHVs will not apply to a



person performing farming and ranching work in instances where the Occupational Health and Safety Act or regulations or codes of rules under that act do not require it. This ensures consistency under occupational health and safety law.

The next section grants the Minister of Transportation the authority to make regulations around the use of helmets more generally. For example, this will allow the minister to amend the off-highway vehicle regulation to prohibit people from allowing children to ride an OHV without a helmet. In this example, a parent or guardian who allows a person under 14 to drive or ride an OHV without a helmet would receive a separate charge for that offence. Amendments to the procedures regulations under the Provincial Offences Procedure Act will specify the fines for such offences.

Section 129(d) will grant ministerial authority to make regulations under the OHVR concerning the standards for safety helmets. The next section, 129(e), will grant ministerial authority to create exemptions to the helmet requirement for persons or groups of persons. This will allow regulations to be created, for example, which would exempt individuals using an OHV with both approved seat belts and rollover protection. Further consideration will take place with various groups of people to ensure that the exemptions listed ensure inclusivity. If considered, it would be allowed by this section. This section would also grant the Minister of Transportation the ability to create authority for the registrar of motor vehicle services to create exemptions on a case-by-case basis. If an individual, for example, is physically unable to wear a helmet, the registrar may consider granting an exemption.

Now, the final amendments, addressing regulation-making authority, include a section that would allow for ministerial authority to create regulations under the OHVR which would make the selling of helmets which do not comply with prescribed standards an offence. Amendments to the procedures regulation under the Provincial Offences Procedure Act will specify the fine for such an offence. In the final amendment section 157(1)(a) will give the necessary teeth to the other amendments. This will make the failure to comply with or contravention of the new OHV helmet requirement an offence under part 8 of the Traffic Safety Act.

Mr. Speaker, ATVs and other off-highway vehicles are a part of everyday life for many Albertans. The amendments proposed under Bill 36 will allow this recreational pastime to be enjoyed more safely and will remove ambiguity from safety requirements. We have taken an approach that has been greatly informed by the individuals and stakeholders who know the world of OHVs the best. Our future regulations will ensure that fairness and tradition are honoured. By standardizing the laws and requiring helmets on public land across the province, we are telling the families and loved ones of those affected that we hear their concerns and that we are working to make Albertans safer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to debate, and I encourage members to support Bill 36.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward. I must say that it looks fairly familiar, but I'm glad you brought it forward. I and my caucus, I know, will be supporting this bill wholeheartedly. I hope it passes through the House smoothly and quickly.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I have some experience with this. I lost my son at 21 because of a brain injury from an OHV. He did have on the best helmet money could buy, so this bill does not guarantee that every life will be saved. But I definitely understand what it's about, and I support it all the way and hope all the members in the House support it.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who wish to speak to the motion? The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety. There are a lot of things that need to be improved in the Traffic Safety Act, some that would improve business and some that would improve safety. I'm not sure this is at the top of my list, but here we are. I always get a little reluctant around nanny-state laws because while they will perhaps reduce a few injuries, I am generally supportive of adults taking care of themselves and deciding for themselves the balance in how to keep themselves safe.

The vast majority of off-highway vehicle drivers are a responsible lot. Some already wear helmets; some do not. Others use them when they are going on aggressive rides but not for casual ones. But even the responsible drivers, like the reckless drivers, can have accidents. In Alberta alone, on average, 19 people are killed every year operating OHVs. Between 2002 and 2013 there were 185 people killed; 74 people, 40 per cent, died from head injuries. Nearly 80 per cent of those fatalities involved people not wearing helmets. Each year in Alberta there are close to 6,000 OHV-related emergency room visits, and in 2015 more than 1,000 children under 16 were injured while riding off-highway vehicles. The costs to Alberta Health Services are estimated up to \$50 million annually, Mr. Speaker.

It's true that Alberta is the last Canadian province to legislate off-highway vehicle helmet laws, and this is now it. It is interesting to note that neighbouring American states, however, largely do have OHV laws like this.

Helmets are already mandatory for motorcycle and moped drivers in Alberta, and curiously enough off-highway vehicles can reach the same speeds as motorcycles and mopeds. Cyclists aged 18 and younger are required by law to wear an approved bicycle helmet.

Bill 36 is a compromise, giving a nod to rural Alberta, the family farm, and the freedom-loving enjoyment of our private-property rights. This is just common sense. Farmers and ranchers will be exempt from wearing helmets on their own land or land they lease, like the grazing leases, or lands they have implied consent to be on or even crossing a provincial highway to get to the other side. Bill 36 will only apply to Crown lands, but the moment a farmer takes his OHV to go riding on forestry trails, on Crown land, in the eastern slopes, or the great Athabasca sand dunes, helmets will apply. Even those involved in the operation of market gardens will get an exemption.

Bill 36 is really not much different from the OHV laws in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, that protect private-property rights. In Saskatchewan helmets are not required if the land is owned or occupied by the operator or the passenger or by a member of the immediate family of either of them. In British Columbia helmets are only needed on prescribed private land, and since there is no prescribed private land, helmets are not really required.

Manitoba is a bit odd all around. Helmets are mandatory. Helmets are not mandatory if the off-highway vehicle is being used in the course of farming, commercial fishing, hunting or trapping operations, or if the vehicle has a roll cage with seat belts. If you are in a remote community in Manitoba and are the owner or operator or a Manitoba Hydro employee working north of the 53rd parallel or an employee working under the Provincial Parks Act, you are also exempt. A driver's licence is required to operate an OHV in Manitoba unless in a remote community. Hunting and trapping operations are exempt in Manitoba. There might be an opportunity

here to squeeze another exemption into Bill 36, and I'd like to hear from the minister what he thinks of that opportunity.

3:30

Up in the Northwest Territories municipal bylaws in Inuvik mandate that all persons involved with an OHV wear a helmet. Over in Yellowknife the municipal bylaw mandates helmets for children under age 18 and that they must be at least 14 years old to operate an OHV on the road. Now, wouldn't it be nice if we could legally drive our quads in Alberta on the shoulder of a provincial highway?

Going into the United States, in Montana helmets are encouraged, but there is no law. All riders who are under the age of 16 and over the age of 11 are required to complete an approved safety course, though, and carry the Montana safety certificate with them while riding on public roads open to full-sized vehicles. Over in Alaska municipal bylaws in various communities like Anchorage and Valdez mandate helmets. OHVs also cannot operate on private land unless they are registered.

North Dakota requires those under age 18 to wear a helmet. All riders who are under the age of 17 and over the age of 12 are required to complete an approved safety course and carry the North Dakota ATV safety certificate with them while riding on public lands. Idaho also mandates under-18s to wear helmets.

Washington state has no rules for those operating on their own land. There are also exemptions for an OHV used in production of agricultural and timber products on and across lands owned, leased, or managed by the owner or operator of the off-road vehicle or the operator's employer.

Oregon mandates that under-18s must wear a helmet. Exemptions to the law exist when the OHV is used exclusively in farming, agricultural, or forestry operations or for nurseries or Christmas tree growing operations, is being used on land owned or leased by the owner of the vehicle, or that has a roof or roll bar.

Mr. Speaker, I cite legislation from these neighbouring jurisdictions to help this House recognize that there are many differing pieces of legislation and different forms of OHV legislation used throughout Canada and in the northern states. I think we see common themes here across Canada and neighbouring American jurisdictions that have been incorporated into Bill 36. Under Bill 36 all ages, whether driving, riding as a passenger, or being towed while on Crown land, will need to have a helmet on. Under Bill 36 hunting and trapping operations will not be exempt.

Mr. Speaker, knowing Alberta Transportation, I know that stats are going to be kept, and I can only hope that the results of this bill will be a reduction in fatalities and injuries requiring hospital visits. To the Minister of Transportation: the safety requirement could be done a little better.

I look forward to debate in Committee of the Whole, but right now I am in support of Bill 36. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any members under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A brain injury happens in an instant, but it changes lives forever: that is a quote from ARBI, the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured. They go on in that same quote to say that every day they see the survivors. "We see that every day, the incredible toll on both the individuals and on the family unit after an accident happens. ATV helmet legislation is such a great initiative, and it is my view that if it helps prevent even one person from serious brain injury, it will be worth while." That quote was from Mary Ellen Neilson of ARBI.

Another quote, Mr. Speaker: "I've dealt with dozens of traumatic brain injuries in my career, and I have seen first-hand the devastating effects that they have on individuals, their families, and their communities. Requiring ATV operators to wear helmets will not only save lives but will reduce the burden head injuries place on families and on our health care system. Any law that would prevent even one of these devastating injuries has my total support." That's from a constituent of mine as well, who is here, actually, watching the proceedings right now. Those quotes of support just show the devastation to come from an off-highway vehicle injury.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti has experienced that first-hand, and, you know, I feel sorry for his loss as well. That is why I am so proud, Mr. Speaker, to be cosponsoring this bill and so proud to have been able to work with the hon. Minister of Transportation as well as all my caucus colleagues on this particular bill. I believe that the bill in its current form has done a great job of balancing the needs for safety as well as having appropriate exemptions that Alberta has been used to in the past, as the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock had pointed out.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will mandate the use of helmets for all off-highway vehicles except that there are going to be a couple of notable exceptions. One of them would be for private land. As many members of the House would know, when you're on your own private land, it is impractical to enforce a helmet law in that particular case. There would also be an exemption for ranching. If you are using your ATV for ranching purposes, we would not explicitly put on any sort of mandatory helmet use. However, we would use it consistent with occupational health and safety. As well, First Nations and Métis land would also be exempt. That's to respect our aboriginal peoples. Just like with the private land before, that land is theirs, and we respect their ability to legislate on their land as well.

We also, Mr. Speaker, are going to have the ability to allow regulatory exemptions by the Ministry of Transportation into the future so that as technology moves forward with potential safety improvements to ATVs that we have not thought of yet, it would allow the minister of the day to take that into consideration and be able to make a quick change to perhaps not require helmets in those particular scenarios.

I'm sure that if any members of the House have any particular exemptions, the minister would open to looking at them. A perfect example of what that might be is if an ATV has a roll bar and seat belts. I could see making an exemption in that particular scenario. Of course, we will be further consulting with outdoorsmen as well as members of the off-highway vehicle community for other possible exemptions.

But do not let these practical exemptions take away from the seriousness of the issue. We would all like Albertans to wear a helmet. As was mentioned, 19 deaths a year, 768 hospitalizations, 5,885 ER visits: 220,000 people answered the survey. Those are all examples where, even if the helmet was able to help in some of those, it would have been of great benefit to our province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are some questions that I'm sure will come up, and I believe that the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock sort of alluded to them. I'm going to talk first, though, about the enforcement of this particular legislation, the practical bits. The RCMP, local police departments, conservation officers, and other agents of the office of the Solicitor General would be responsible for enforcing the use of helmets for ATV riders as they go about their business out in the wilderness. We don't expect that there will be any extra resources needed to enforce this legislation as those law enforcement agencies are already out protecting the public in rural areas and other areas where ATVs are used.

Also, we plan that if this bill were to pass the House, we would also put forward an advertising blitz to make sure that all Albertans who partake in using off-highway vehicles, whether it be ATVs or motorcycles, are aware of the new requirement and the exemptions as they may relate to them. The penalty, of course, for not wearing a helmet would still be \$155, as it currently is.

3:40

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fairly clear what public land is and what private land is. I just want to clarify, of course, that public land is all Crown land, and that includes areas that have been designated for public off-highway vehicle use: public roadways, highways, rights-of-way, and the like. I'd like to point out that certain municipalities have in fact already mandated that you have to have a helmet while using off-highway vehicles. Where it was left up to each individual municipality to mandate helmet use, this legislation would provide a blanket requirement across the province, which I think makes enforcement a lot easier and gets the message across that we do want users of ATVs to wear helmets.

One more clarification is that, of course, some of us like to go off-roading as well with vehicles such as your favourite, you know, four-by-four, be it an F-150, a Dodge Ram, or your other favourite super ultra mega cab-type pickup truck. In that particular case, Mr. Speaker, if it is a plated vehicle, the safety requirements as if the vehicle was an on-road vehicle would apply. So if you happen to be out in your Dodge, your Ford F-150, or your Chevy, whatever it may be, assuming that you are wearing your seat belt and that your vehicle otherwise meets the rest of the Traffic Safety Act, then you would of course not need to wear a helmet in that particular case.

However, Mr. Speaker, if you are a real four-by-four enthusiast and have built a homemade off-road rock crawler, for example, that you could not plate and insure, then you would most definitely need to wear a helmet, and having seen those in person, with the roll bars that are everywhere, you would probably really want to as well.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, this bill is not about stopping the fun or about limiting activities of those Albertans who enjoy going out for an ATV ride, whether it be in the rural parts of Alberta or those of us who live in big cities who enjoy Alberta's outdoors with some motorized fun. This is not at all about stopping that. It is about making sure that we all go home to talk about the good times from a ride and not about the tragic injury that may happen during it.

With that, I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate. That is all.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions of the Member for Calgary-Currie under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, Government House Leader, do you wish to close debate?

**Mr. Mason:** To close debate, Mr. Speaker, yes. Thank you very much. I want to thank all of the hon. members for their contributions in talking about many of the aspects of safety, the impact on our health care system, the impact on families.

I want to extend my condolences to the member. That's a very sad thing, that I was not aware of. It really brings home, I think, for me, what we're trying to do with this bill.

I just left out one piece that I think is so important. It's not related directly to the bill, but it's the whole question of public education. That's something that's part of our program around this bill, Mr. Speaker. There's going to be an effort to educate people about the need to wear helmets even where we've not made it mandatory. We've taken a fairly conservative approach with respect to the

application of this bill. [interjection] It's a small "c"; sometimes it's even a good thing.

What we wanted to do was use this bill to move towards public education, to move towards the situation where in almost every instance people choose to wear a helmet.

You know, it's a difficult philosophical piece that the hon. member has talked about, the people's choice. We're all part of a bigger community, Mr. Speaker. If a father doesn't wear a helmet but has children, is there a role, then, for the rest of the society to have some say, especially since the society as a whole has to bear the health care costs or the costs of supporting a family without a breadwinner?

These are complicated and difficult issues, Mr. Speaker, and I think we've struck the right balance. We've struck the right balance in this particular piece of legislation, and we recognize the important role of education, that has to go side by side with legislation as we move toward trying to make sure that people and families are protected as they enjoy Alberta's outdoors, as they go about the work that is the backbone of this province, whether it be in agriculture or ranching. All of those things are important.

I want to thank all members who've spoken from the different parties for their support of this bill. I'm looking forward to hearing some amendments when we get to Committee of the Whole because this is by no means the final answer, in my opinion, but I think it is the right balance for now for Alberta. I encourage all members to support this bill at second reading.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 36 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms. Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 21 Modernized Municipal Government Act

**The Chair:** We are at amendment A1. Are there any further amendments or questions or comments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was cut off halfway through my speech the last time, so I thought that everybody would want to hear the rest of it.

**An Hon. Member:** It was a riveting speech.

**Mr. Cyr:** It is actually quite riveting. I will say that. I will have to reread a part of it so that I kind of catch you up to where I was.

**An Hon. Member:** It can't be a long part.

**Mr. Cyr:** It won't be a long part. I agree with the member there.

The Alberta Assessors' Association also provided comments I'd like to read into the record. Quote: the association has completed a careful analysis of this issue and does not support the creation of a central agency to prepare industrial assessments; we do recognize that stakeholders, including the association, have identified a number of problems that should be addressed. Unquote.

I believe that part of my responsibility as an elected member is to ensure that these positions from different stakeholders are a part of the government's considerations, especially on a bill that is as large and omnibus as Bill 21.

3:50

Based largely on the feedback from stakeholders I have compiled in conjunction with my colleagues a number of recommendations on centralizing industrial property assessment. Point 1: add clear language that exempts municipalities from paying the requisition to fund the centralized assessment body if an industrial property owner does not pay their property taxes. The next point: ensure that assessors are based throughout the province and are not centralized in Alberta's metropolitan centres. Point 3: allow municipalities the right to appeal assessments on industrial properties assessed by the province. The next point: create an independent third-party audit function so that the province is not auditing its own assessments. Next point: require annual updates to regulated assessment rates. Another point: allow municipalities to apply to opt out of the centralized assessment. The final point: the creation of an assessment commissioner with the mandate that includes training assessors and industry representatives.

Again, the MGA review and this discussion have been an enormous undertaking by the ministry, their staff, elected officials of all varieties, and many other stakeholders. I want to thank everyone who's been involved with this review and its broad implications on local government, everyone who has worked to put this extremely important act together.

Now I would like to go into the amendments a little further. The government has come back with serious amendments on the topic of centralized assessment. For the most part these seem pretty standard such as amending the act to correctly spell "modernized." It's ironic that they don't have spell-check. Nonetheless, we do need to review them.

Line 34 on the duty to provide information, section 27. This subsection stipulates that it's the taxpayer's obligation to provide assessors with information for assessing property and performing other duties under parts 9 to 12 of the act. The government has provided us with the rationale that this amendment broadens the assessor's access to information, ensuring that the assessor can get any information needed to perform the duties of assessors as per the act or regulations. We want to be sure that we are providing the provincial assessor with the appropriate power, and I think companies, municipalities, and Albertans as a whole are looking for assurances that we are not providing them with overreaching powers. Subsequently, item 35 is where the bulk of the details for these powers are going to be defined in the regulations. This is something that we will need more clarity on.

I do want to say that with the input that we have had from our municipalities, overall Bill 21 is something that I see as moving Alberta in the right direction, but we have had some concerns that our municipalities have brought forward, and not all of them have been addressed.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A1? The hon. member.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll be fairly brief on this. I just wanted to get up and speak a little bit to municipally controlled corporations. We had a few discussions with the folks from AUMA and AAMD and C regarding this. I look at the new House amendments, and it looks like most of their concerns have been addressed.

I'd just like to urge a little bit of caution when it comes to municipal governments getting into corporations. That being said, municipalities have to be free to pursue other sources of reliable funding, especially in these times of economic decline and uncertainty, but at the same time we need to have adequate consultation

with residents to make sure that we're not getting into a situation where we're putting taxpayers at risk and the municipality at risk.

Specifically, one action that we had was an article by a *Herald* reporter in the *Elk Valley Herald* that just came out last week. It's dated November 23. I'd be happy to table that if it's required.

Harvey Steblyk and Don Hughes representatives from Fortis met with council at a budget meeting on Thursday, Nov. 10.

On April 19, council passed a motion to proceed with the sale of the community owned electrical distribution system to FortisAlberta.

The motion ends the community engagement phase of the sale process and gives Fortis the signal to draft the terms and conditions of an agreement.

Mayor Blair Painter and council were unanimous in their decision.

"Our system is tired and it's time we passed it on to someone who knows how to run it," said Councillor Bill Kovach. "Especially with the shape it's in. So I'm in favour of this resolution."

"As a municipality, we don't have the capacity to run an electrical system," said Councillor Char Cartwright.

Council considered selling the municipally owned electrical distribution system after Fortis undertook a review of the municipal utility system, at council's request.

Now, one of the amendments that was made was the control of corporations, section 13. This section lays out the requirements for the establishment of a controlled corporation. This section is amended to indicate that a council must be satisfied that the legislated process of the MCC as outlined in this section has been met. The wording requires that the purpose of the MCC includes that "the profits and dividends of the controlled corporation will provide a direct benefit to the residents of the municipality or group of municipalities that controls it." Now, that's a very important statement. We don't want people getting into corporations just for the sake of raising funds. It should have some net benefit to the municipality.

The second one I'd like to talk about was item 6, control of corporations. The MGA includes a requirement for both due diligence study and business plan prior to the establishment of a controlled corporation. The proposal is to remove the requirement for due diligence study as well as the accompanying regulation-making authority for it in section 75.5(1)(c). The rationale given for that amendment is that stakeholders indicated that the requirement for a due diligence study in addition to a business plan was an overly onerous and unnecessary requirement. Any significant elements of the due diligence study that are not captured in the business plan can be made a requirement in the accompanying regulation. That puts us over to the control of corporations regulations. I agree. I think that if you do a proper business plan, you are going to cover most of the due diligence in that. Again I would caution that they have to make sure that they have the buy-in from the residents and ratepayers in their municipality.

As always, while we have to consider what's best for the municipal government in place – and those people are elected to make those decisions – we also have to be very cautious about the taxpayer. I would caution the minister and her department. While, like I say, municipalities need to be free to exercise what they think is best, I would caution getting involved in any corporation where the significant losses could bankrupt the municipality.

Now, we talk about for-profit corporations. There are a lot of for-profit corporations out there that during these downturns have become not-for-profit corporations, and they end up in liquidity and bankruptcy. It's a terrible thing for a municipality to go through. I would just exercise caution. Like I said, I support municipalities

being able to pursue getting into corporations if it's something that's going to help them provide stable funding for their municipality, but at the same time we have to be very, very careful that we don't overextend ourselves, get into a situation like they did in the Crowsnest Pass, where you have a community that's in a corporation and just does not have what it takes to maintain that corporation and keep it profitable.

That being said, I will sit down and leave it to the next speaker. Thank you very much.

4:00

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** You got it. Appreciate that. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm once again happy to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, today. For the last time, I think, I'll be speaking about municipal development plans and intermunicipal development plans. I'm sure everybody will be happy to hear that this may be the last kick at the cat.

Now, as a former councillor of a rural municipality I do have an opinion about the Modernized Municipal Government Act. I think it likely is time to update the document. This project started many years ago. The previous government determined that the act probably needed to be upgraded, and today's government has agreed that that should be so, and it has been continuing. It is a good thing.

There's certainly been a lot of information gathered in that amount of time. In fact, input toward the Municipal Government Act update has passed from one government to another, as I said, so it's been in the works for a while. Ideas by municipalities and by citizens about changes to the Municipal Government Act are probably the same no matter who's running the show. I would suggest that it's about municipalities and how they govern themselves and certainly not about any particular ideology.

At any rate, municipal governments have a profound effect on people's everyday lives. The government that has to live by this document is the government that is closest to the people. They make decisions that affect their municipalities and those that live within their borders, and of course it's important that municipal governments meet residents' needs.

It is also clear, I hope, Madam Chair, that the document that we have been debating here for the last few weeks is a very important piece of legislation. Municipalities across the province must live by the words written into this document. This particular legislation determines their day-to-day function, and I sincerely hope that everyone in the room thinks about that as they are making decisions on changes that are proposed within these walls. What we discuss here today is not governance for ourselves. The decisions made for this document are governances for our hometowns and communities that we like to visit during the summer months for farmers' markets and on and on. Those are the places that we make decisions for when we change the Municipal Government Act. Once again, this is important.

Now, I've already talked to members of the House about intermunicipal collaborative frameworks, or ICFs, and I'm going to leave that one alone. Municipal development plans and intermunicipal development plans, with Bill 21 introduced, are now tied in with intermunicipal collaborative frameworks.

**An Hon. Member:** It's a mouthful.

**Mr. Schneider:** It's not a mouthful; it's just a matter of being able to keep it all straight.

A municipal development plan, or MDP, is something that was previously only required for municipalities with a population of

3,500 or more. The municipal development plan is a long-range statutory planning document that serves as a guide for the future growth and development of the community. Think of it as a document that relates to a municipality from its borders inward. The municipal development plan guides the community on its path forward towards greater sustainability by integrating the community's vision with municipal planning and decision-making. The municipal development plan sets the municipality's overall policy direction for community land-use decisions.

Aligned with the MDP are generally all planning documents such as area structure plans and land-use bylaws of the particular municipality. Now, the other thing about stat plans such as the municipal development plans is that at the end of the day they must align with the Alberta Land Stewardship Act's regional plans. In no way, shape, or form can the plans not be consistent with each other.

Okay. An intermunicipal development plan, or IDP, on the other hand, is a plan adopted by two or more municipalities to address land-use and development issues in an area of mutual concern. Think of it more as a municipality's fringes meeting with another municipality's fringes. Those municipalities now would have to think a little bit more outside of their borders in a thoughtful manner to determine what is best for that particular region as a whole. An IDP recognizes that the fringe area of an urban municipality is subject to different pressures, different problems, and different opportunities, more different than those of a strictly urban or strictly rural setting. With the passing of Bill 21, which I have no doubt will actually happen, all municipalities are now required to undertake the preparation of an intermunicipal development plan, which should help to avoid future land-use conflicts and create rational, sustainable land-use practices.

Now, as we continue to discuss this bill and municipal development plans and intermunicipal development plans in particular, I would ask us all to bear in mind the diverse municipalities within this province, especially in terms of size. Just for an example, we have the city of Calgary, with 1.2 million people, and the city of Edmonton, with about a million. We have other cities such as Red Deer and Lethbridge with around 100,000 residents. Then there are large counties like Parkland county with a population of 30,000, smaller counties like Vulcan county with around 4,000 residents. This province has more than 100 towns and around 100 villages, too, which might only have a couple of hundred people. Carmangay, for instance, in my riding, has 367 people. Milo, another village in my riding, has 122 people.

The reason I'm saying these numbers is because I want to point out that government tries to put legislation together that will treat all municipalities in the same way – "have the same outcome," I guess, would be a better way of putting it – but municipalities have vastly different levels of capacity. Small villages, obviously, don't have the same number of staff to deal with administration and planning the same way a larger municipality may. Small municipalities and communities have their place in Alberta just like the large ones, so we must always keep that thought in our minds when we make decisions that affect all municipalities in the province.

I think that is why the AUMA and AAMD and C, while they do support the requirement for all municipalities to have a municipal development plan, for example, wanted to see the municipalities given five years to complete them. They also were hoping that the province was on the cusp of offering them support of some kind to assist the municipalities with capacity challenges. Madam Chair, some villages often have one member, one person that does just about everything, from answering the phone to making up the agenda for council meetings, hiring the part-time help, and on and on. That one staff member is going to be pretty busy also taking on a municipal development plan, an intermunicipal development

plan, and an intermunicipal collaborative framework. Some of these statutory planning documents require significant resources and co-ordination with other municipalities.

I took a look at the Internet last night, as I was making up this edge-of-your-seat speech, for municipal development plans for small communities like I've described. I also looked for inter-municipal development plans for small communities, and I couldn't find any. Now, I don't want to stand here and say that there's not such a thing in Alberta. I'm prepared to say that there may indeed be statutory plans for smaller municipalities somewhere. I would suggest that they're probably few and far between.

4:10

I guess my point is that I have found lots of municipal development plans and lots of intermunicipal development plans for towns all across Alberta, but these things are rather large documents. The town of Coaldale and Lethbridge county's intermunicipal development plan was put together by a consultant. Brazeau county and the town of Drayton Valley's intermunicipal development plan was put together by a consultant. The town of Cochrane's municipal development plan was also pieced together by a consultant. I'm sure everybody can see that there's a bit of a trend here.

I guess the point is that from what I can see, the government's discussions about municipal development plans being small, one-page documents and intermunicipal development plans being rather small as well aren't something that's happened very much before in Alberta. I can't find any of those small municipal statutory plans anywhere that I looked on the Internet. I'm not saying that they're not there, but I didn't come across any that had been made on behalf of a 300- or 400-person village.

There are a lot of consultants that have made these documents for larger municipalities. Not many have for smaller municipalities or communities, which leads, I guess, to the big concern: how will the Carmangays and the Milos and the Big Valleys of Alberta pay for these documents? I'm hoping that the government will soon come out and say how it is that they'll be helping smaller municipalities comply with these requirements. If each village has to hire consultants to help them put together an ICF, an MDP, and an IDP, where does that money come from? It's kind of clear that nobody has built their own stat docs yet. It sure looks like they are all done professionally from what I can find.

I think the minister said yesterday that the government is not planning to provide financial support to municipalities but will instead provide assistance by posting instructions and templates online. Something like that. Something somewhere along that line. "Will the government be setting up a helpline that municipal staff can call when they need support?" is another question. I have no doubt that these things would help, but I'm sure that municipalities are hoping for more. Another question, I guess: is the government going to offer some financial assistance along with the proposed templates and, hopefully, some support help in the offices as well? Madam Chair, municipalities need these details as soon as possible, of course, so that they can start making arrangements, especially since the government is giving municipalities only two years to get some of these documents, certainly, close to fruition.

I would say that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties wants to know: will there be flexibility in how detailed a plan must be to account for different municipal sizes and capacities? To give you an idea, because municipalities with more than 3,500 people already have a municipal development plan, the city of Calgary's MDP is 182 pages long, a city with a population of 1.2 million. That's 6,500 residents per page. Vulcan county's MDP is 44 pages long. That's around 90 residents per page. Of course, I'm being a little bit tongue-in-cheek as I run those numbers

by you, but I'm trying to illustrate how municipalities have varying capacities. You know, Milo, with 122 people: there are several villages like that, that continue to keep their charters. What's the minimum required length of these stat docs?

Big cities might pay more for their planning documents in absolute terms, but I'm talking about what proportion of their revenue municipalities will need to spend. This is concerning to the small municipalities that make up rural Alberta.

I guess another question is: will the provincial government reject inadequate planning documents? I believe that the government needs to properly express and manage expectations. Small towns and, certainly, small villages are concerned about these things.

Madam Chair, the AAMD and C consulted with its members – the Minister of Municipal Affairs certainly has the same documents that I have access to – and it says that while members recognize that benefits can result from collaboration, these new requirements for intercollaborative frameworks – IDPs and MDPs – may push smaller communities closer to dissolution. Don't get me wrong. I know everyone here would say that that is something that they certainly don't want to see.

If the government announces meaningful supports to help create these ICFs, MDPs, and IDPs, certainly for those municipalities that are small and are hanging on to their charters, I would think that would be a good start. Just as households should think ahead and plan for their future, it is important for municipalities to consider how they will grow and develop over the long term. I think a community or a municipality would agree with that.

Just one more thought from AAMD and C and AUMA. Both of those municipal associations are intricately involved with municipalities all across the province. They are constantly interacting with those that they support. They believe that they may very well be positioned better than anyone to offer the help required by municipalities as they transition into a time in their history where they need to have three statutory documents lined up within three years.

Those associations are prepared to help, and they believe that the province should allow them to continue their involvement with municipalities by being given the wherewithal to provide templates that are aligned with the Modernized Municipal Government Act requirements so that they can help their smaller communities that sorely lack capacity for something like this. That would of course take some funding but also may provide the government the ability to shift some funding from the Municipal Affairs office. I guess the point is that potentially it could happen with no new funding.

While I'm generally in favour of municipalities developing IDPs and MDPs, I do think that we need to recognize that these visioning exercises have limitations. I hope that this government will soon provide us and municipalities with more details and address the concerns that are consistently being expressed by those associations that represent those municipalities.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**Mr. Westhead:** Are you going to make an amendment or just keep yapping?

**Mr. Cooper:** Did you say: are you going to keep yapping? I'm not entirely . . .

**The Chair:** Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, did you wish to speak to the bill?

**Mr. Cooper:** Oh yeah. Sorry. I was just speaking to the member across the way who was making accusations of the opposition

yapping. I'm not sure that that's very helpful to the conduct of the Assembly.

**Mr. Hanson:** A point of impoliteness.

**Mr. Cooper:** A point of impoliteness, yes.

You know what? I am going to speak to a couple of issues, and I hope to move an amendment. I will bring it to the House shortly. Specifically, I wanted to chat on the issue of council training. Bill 21 speaks specifically about council training and the need for that. I know that AAMD and C and AUMA both spoke about this particular issue in their feedback to the government.

There is a wide range of opinions around council training as to whether it should be mandatory or not. Now, I know that in this bill it isn't mandatory, but when we have reached out to a lot of municipalities, they have expressed some concern around the possibility of those who might be elected who would choose not to take that training. That certainly presents a concern for many municipalities, so I think that's certainly something that we should consider. The training that ought to be provided – and I know that municipalities have varying degrees of ability to provide training. I also know that there is some good work that's done by each of the associations with respect to training.

4:20

The one thing, though, that we do have the opportunity to do is try and assist municipalities in creating a similar training opportunity. The AUMA and AAMD and C also support training for folks. I certainly know as a former municipal councillor that in the early days of a term and particularly in that first term there is a significant amount of information to be received. That includes a wide swath around the operations of the municipality, the finances of the municipality, the different types of documents, planning documents that one needs to get up to speed on, the areas in which a municipal councillor has influence or ability, the areas in which a municipal councillor can act or vote, and the areas in which they ought not act or vote. A lot of these things, if a municipal councillor isn't appropriately trained, can present a lot of very significant concerns to both a municipality as well as to that councillor.

I think that it is imperative not just that we ensure that councillor training is available, which is what the bill does. It says that training should be offered and, as a result, that there would be the opportunity for a councillor to object and not get the training. I know that the government is trying to strike a balance here, and I appreciate that balance, but in the vast majority of municipalities that have reached out to us, they have asked that the provincial government ensure that the training would then be mandatory.

I will just briefly take a seat and then in a few moments propose an amendment to that. Then we will get back to this amendment that we'll be proposing in just a couple of minutes with respect to mandatory training. Then also I intend to provide some comments about the role of the ombudsman and a couple of other issues, and then I hope that we are able to move this piece of legislation forward.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, or amendments? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Actually, Madam Chair, I was very interested in hearing what the hon. member from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills was saying about this and would love to be able to have him carry on with his comments in due time, of course. [interjections] It's good to hear that the members opposite are now awake and listening with rapt attention to what we have to talk about today.

Anyways, again, I'd like to yield my time to the House leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Oh. Thank you. Incredible job on behalf of my hon. colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner. I would like to move an amendment on behalf of the Member for Little Bow.

**The Chair:** This will be subamendment SA6.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I know that everyone is so keenly interested in the issue of mandatory training versus optional training. I think that the impassioned speech that I gave just moments ago should speak for itself, but I'll read the amendment. Mr. Schneider to move that amendment A1 to Bill 21, Modernized Municipal Government Act, be amended in clause (a) of part D, in the proposed section 201.1, by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) A councillor must attend orientation training that meets the requirements in the regulations within 90 days after taking the oath of office.

If I might just add a brief comment, it is that this amendment has been inspired by the vast number of municipalities who have reached out to us and said that they would prefer councillors that are elected to be required to receive training, not that training would be available. Training has been available over a long period of time. When I was first elected in 2010, the training was available but not mandatory. Subsequently, municipalities have said that they would much prefer to see that this would be mandatory as opposed to optional.

I have listened to members of the municipally elected community from across the province, and I simply ask that the members of the House do the same.

**The Chair:** Just a comment before we move on to the next speaker. I remind you that earlier today we already had the issue of using members' names in the House even when reading from a document. So just a reminder, please, hon. members, to respect that.

Are there any members wishing to speak to subamendment SA6? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon, everyone. I appreciate your attention this afternoon to one of the more interesting topics, perhaps, that we deal with from time to time in the House. Councillor training is something that's near and dear to my heart. That's for sure.

In the early 2000s I was able to go to the association convention with the AAMD and C members and have the opportunity to take a lot of the courses and various sessions they had there. It was certainly extremely helpful for my new role. As well, we had an awful lot of sessions that our municipality sponsored and held within our premises from time to time, and we had various sessions of training that were provided by various solicitors and other counsel that came in to provide us with some very, very good background on how to do things, not only as a councillor but also as a member of an appeal board and on a committee, et cetera, et cetera. This is just the basic foundation of what a person really needs to do that job effectively.

I have to say that it is always amazing to me that in the past, prior to getting a lot of experience here, I looked back on that and wondered: how in the world did a lot of municipalities carry on without that benefit? How could they possibly judge what would happen to people? How could they deal with serious matters without some sort of training? It seemed just so ridiculous. I like to compare it, often as not, and sometimes I draw this analogy, and I'm thinking of the Justice minister, who's here in the House today, actually. When you look at the judicial system, you have to be someone that has passed the bar exams and everything to be a

lawyer, and then they have to have those qualifications to be a judge. They are judging the lives of people, just like councillors are. What a contradiction that these people are not required to have this basic training.

4:30

I would urge the members in the House to please have a look at this amendment. I realize that the department had quite a good amount of discussion on it and consultation, I realize that a lot of people spoke their mind on it throughout the summer, and I realize that we did talk about it in the briefings, but I do believe that just having to offer it doesn't really meet the bar. It doesn't really get you where you need to go. I think we need to make it mandatory.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the members for bringing up this issue because I certainly heard a lot of feedback as well about it over the summer. Certainly, Albertans across the province have expressed their keen support for the need for training for elected councillors after every election and by-election. Everyone values the important work of our elected representatives and wants them to be properly armed with knowledge and skills to carry out the responsibilities of running their municipalities. I would say that no one in this room is in doubt of that.

However, the provincial government believes strongly in the principle of local accountability and does not want to step in as big brother holding the stick to mandate councillors to take the training. These councillors were chosen by the people through the democratic vote, and we do not want to compromise that very important choice.

Instead, we want to ensure that decision lays at the proper level of governance on that, and we want to empower local councils and their citizens to hold their elected representatives to account through the new codes of conduct that will be required. These codes of conduct will reflect the needs of their communities and may include sanctions against councillors who choose not to take the training. The only thing a council may not do is dismiss a councillor.

We believe that all municipal councillors want to do the best work possible for their citizens and will be eager for more opportunities to learn about their vital role in Alberta. However, the choice as to whether to mandate them to attend the session: that decision does not rest in this House but in the decisions of the individual councils across this province.

With that, I will not be supporting this subamendment. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers?

**Mr. Hunter:** I actually do have something to say about this, Madam Chair. I have to say that when we first took a look at this – and I understand the intent of this amendment – the first thought I had was that this will be an opportunity for the government to add more bureaucracy and more layers to the government, where municipalities would be responsible and forced to pay for this training. I have to say that at first I was not in favour of it. I'm quite surprised to hear that the government is not in favour of increasing the size of government. You know what? This is a very interesting day.

But I do have to say that I see the value to making sure that these councillors receive the necessary training and that they receive the proper training so that they can represent the people to the best of their ability. That's why I actually will be supporting this subamendment. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to subamendment SA6?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on subamendment SA6 lost]

**The Chair:** We are now back on amendment A1 to Bill 21. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this amendment?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on the amendments?

[Motion on amendment A1C carried]

[Motion on amendment A1E carried]

[Motion on amendment A1K carried]

[Motion on amendment A1X carried]

[Motion on remaining parts of amendment A1 carried]

**The Chair:** We are now back on Bill 21. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today to speak on one of the largest pieces of legislation this government has introduced, Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act. With regard to the overall consultation process my colleagues and I were pleased that it included multiple stakeholders that all had a wide variety of experience and expertise. The consultation process was robust and included a wide range of stakeholder engagement. The government didn't just leave the consultation process until after the bill was written. They engaged stakeholders throughout the development, and this was encouraging to see. We heard a variety of positive remarks about the consultation process from many of the stakeholders, and the government should be commended for their diligence in this regard.

Our team has been very thorough with this piece of legislation, and we have reached out to major industry groups, municipal advocates, taxpayer groups, think tanks, small-business owners, nonprofits, and every municipality in Alberta. We think that a piece of legislation this comprehensive and one that impacts so many people's lives should be given the proper time and consideration. Bill 21 affects the roads we drive on, where we live, what type of home to build or buy, and the taxes we pay. It is crucial that we get this legislation right the first time. After so many years of work it's easy to lose focus as we enter into the home stretch, but as elected officials we have a duty to our constituents and to Albertans to give this bill the proper scrutiny.

One concern of mine is that with all the hours that have been already poured into this bill, the good work that's already been completed will be unravelled by this government's attempt to meet its own narrow timeline to proclamation. I worry that in order to meet this self-imposed summer 2017 deadline, too many details are being left to regulations, continuing in the previous government's bad habit of backroom deals done around the cabinet table and out of earshot of those who will be affected by them most.

There are a number of issues that I do take some exception to, however. For starters, I was disappointed, albeit unsurprised, that the government is refusing to reconsider its misguided and ill-conceived carbon tax, which will be an increased burden to municipalities. This means that municipalities will have to increase taxes on their citizens just to keep up with costs. I have heard from many of the municipalities in my riding, and this has been by far the biggest complaint. Places like Provost, Forestburg, Hanna, Killam, Hardisty, and Wainwright are already suffering and will be in desperate need once this carbon tax comes into force. And I



won't even get into how this government has not done an economic impact study and is, rather, leaving it after the fact for municipalities to deliver.

Furthermore, I am disheartened to see that the government is refusing to address the broken funding model, which so desperately needs updating and attention. Municipalities need a stable, predictable funding model. We need to ensure the success of all Alberta's municipalities. We know that without stable, predictable funding, these municipalities cannot budget properly. For many smaller communities their long-term viability is beginning to come into question.

4:40

To add to that if I may, while I feel that the preamble and the niceties are a good step in the correct direction, inaction from the government is really just a verbal political parade. This government needs to talk less and act more, say less and show more. Stop political grandstanding because great talking points followed by no action is the worst type of hypocrisy.

I'd like to switch focus, if I may, to another very important issue and one that affects nearly every municipality in Alberta, specifically brownfield properties. Section 57 of Bill 21 deals with brownfield property tax incentives. A brownfield is a site that is underutilized and where past activities on the site may have caused environmental soil and groundwater contamination. As a realtor and a broker I've had to work with properties or, as the case may be, not work with brownfields. You see, Madam Chair, I have often had clients come into my office and ask me if I can help them find some vacant land or land that they can redevelop. They'd often come in and say: hey, I noticed there was a piece of land over on the west side of town, and I wondered if that was for sale. I would have to tell them the facts and provide them full disclosure about the property. I had to let the client know about the environmental concerns.

Other times when selling commercial property, I'd ask the seller if they had done an environmental audit as this could hold up the sale and buyers would undoubtedly ask for it. The property owner would then have a phase 1 environmental study completed. This is essentially a historical study. It looks at what has been on the property as far back as the records go. If there was nothing on the environmental, there were no consequences there, then we could move on to listing it, essentially looking at selling the property.

If, however, a phase 1 study does find that there was, for instance, a gas station on that property at one time, then the process moves to phase 2, the testing, delineation, remediation, exposure-control planning phase. Basically, phase 2 is where field tests are conducted to see if there are any actual contaminants present. If none were found, great. We can move on to listing and eventually selling the property. But if contaminants are found to be present, we move to phase 3.

Phase 3 is remediation. This is the let's get this thing cleaned up phase. Phase 3 can take years to complete, and until the remediation is achieved, the land is effectively unusable. Brownfield properties regularly languish in phase 3 for years, often decades or more. I've seen it.

I'm glad that section 57 is being added to the MGA, which will hopefully provide some incentive for brownfields to be developed. Municipalities support the amendments that this government has put forth regarding developing the incentives for brownfield developments, providing them with a capability to be able to allow property tax cancellations, deferrals, or other reductions for multiple years to identify and promote redevelopment of brownfield properties. Municipalities have requested that the government consider exempting brownfield properties from paying education

taxes during the redevelopment process. This would provide even more incentive for brownfield redevelopment and continue on with the good work the government has done here.

While the bill is far from perfect, I feel confident that it at least strikes the right balance and should be supported. For this reason I will be voting in favour of the bill, and I encourage all members from either side of the House to support it as well.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 21? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the main bill now. I'd like to take an opportunity to talk about something that's near to my heart and has been for probably 25 or 30 years, and that is the topics to do with planning. I spoke a little bit about this the other day, and I wanted to get into it a little bit deeper today on the main part of the bill to make sure it was properly covered.

The other day I think I spoke in second reading on a more global perspective of the bill overall, and today I'd like to get into one of the areas that is probably the most controversial aspect of this bill, and that is the confirmation of the amendment to the MGA that will legislate the creation of mandatory growth boards near the city of Calgary.

Just to explain, currently the Capital Region Board, as some of you may know in the House here tonight, is the only mandatory growth management board legislated by the MGA. Now Bill 21 proposes a mandatory growth management board for the greater Calgary urban and surrounding rural region, possibly comprised, although not yet confirmed, of 17 municipalities, which is made up of 14 urbans and three rurals.

Now, despite the fact that the municipalities in the greater Calgary region had already reached a reasonable solution to their future collaborative efforts in the spring of 2014, this new, sudden change in government policy mandating a growth board was actually unexpectedly announced without prior consultation with affected municipalities in September '15 by the former Municipal Affairs minister, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Since that time, although consultation was finally conducted, the most negatively impacted municipalities, being the municipal district of Foothills and Rocky View county, remain staunchly opposed to this legislation we're dealing with now.

While the details, including membership, mandate, and scope, have yet to be addressed, this presents a significant change in how municipalities around Calgary will interact and relate with one another, regardless of whether we have those details or not. In fact, it removes some of the flexibility and autonomy from those municipalities' ability to govern themselves.

As I have said many times – and this goes back for several years – as a former municipal councillor I do understand the importance of regional collaboration and I am a strong believer in regional co-operation. But I do have some serious concerns and questions regarding the growth management boards, including: which municipalities will be members; will any member municipality hold an actual de facto veto; what type of voting structure will be used; will member municipalities be able to abstain from voting; is there a dispute resolution process, and if not, why not; what is the mandate and scope of the growth boards?

Unfortunately, until these questions are answered and the rules around the growth management boards are established by the government, it's really impossible for me to remain anything except really skeptical and very concerned about this proposal. I had hoped – and I said this the other day, and I repeat myself a little bit here,

but I think it's important – that the government's details would have been included in the bill. However, as one of my colleagues has said: so much is left in regulations, so much in the backroom talking between the department and cabinet.

All the stakeholders remain very confused on the change. For such a major policy proposal I would have hoped the government would have embraced transparency and included a little more detail in the legislation itself. When you go through the act – and I have it here on my desk today; it's a pretty thick document – there's lots of detail in other portions of the act, but this one does not include the detail that I'm seeking.

You know, Madam Chair, this type of forced regionalization was problematic in the '80s and '90s. I was there. I lived it. Unless the adverse effects are properly addressed, this form of centralized control will remain problematic. I would like to say that in those days they had regional planning commissions. They had taken a map and drawn a big circle around the major cities and said: those are your areas of control. Local municipalities had a very difficult time in having any kind of proper planning of growth and development during those times because a lot of times when they tried to get something going in the outlying areas, the regional planning commission would vote it down because there was not a fair voting system.

4:50

It was cancelled in '93 – thank goodness – and with the new MGA at the time they decided to have intermunicipal development plans and local municipal development plans, and they were encouraged to talk to each other. I think for the most part it has gone quite well, and we see these two major cities today. Even though I admit that in the last eight years there has been a capital board here in the Edmonton area, the major city of Calgary and surrounding areas have had all kinds of great growth, and there always has been a lot of co-operation between the various municipalities there. Sure; there's been some rough points. But for the most part now Calgary is over a million, almost a million and a half strong. They've been expanding in leaps and bounds, and it seems to have been working reasonably well.

Anyway, this is a situation which I think needs to be explored a little more here tonight. I mean, the situation they're now facing is something that has been called, and should be called, "forced regionalization." It's an unwanted attack on the independence of local municipalities, in my view. You know, the independence of local municipalities is guaranteed in the MGA. Local councils are elected to make decisions in the best interest of the municipality, and any artificial, any imposed governance model that supplants that obligation I think should be opposed and abandoned.

Madam Chair, this is a drastic step that's being attempted here. This is going to be a very big change, and I don't think there's any solid evidence for this to go ahead in this regard. It's difficult to see, really, any legitimate reason for the application of such a forced regionalization plan in the Calgary region by the province as the existence of one or more of the following conditions that I'm going to talk about are not necessarily, readily, or even remotely apparent very often.

There seems to be little evidence of frequent conflict or the potential for conflict among municipalities in that region. Constant reluctance is not there either to participate in regional solutions. As I said before, certainly there are some times that people have differences of opinion. There's little potential for outcomes that aren't going to be beneficial for regional services and regional service delivery, and there's little evidence that there isn't progress towards a solution. There always seems to be. If you're going to resort to such a huge change, you would think that you would expect to see

an awful abundance of conflict, but that is not apparent, I don't believe.

Instead of this type of a forced regionalization tactic, I think it should be known that Wildrose believes in solid, bona fide planning principles involving local autonomy, regional co-operation, and collaboration, as I said before, that I believe in. I think it should be left as a voluntary membership system, not mandated as mandatory.

These principles would include voluntary participation. Municipalities could choose to join or resign from the partnership at their discretion.

I think that it also should be the case where the partners can define their region. Let the participating municipalities determine which municipalities will be part of the regional partnership.

I think there should always be political autonomy. Municipalities should be able to remain independent, and their ability to make decisions in the best interest of their municipality should remain intact.

I think there should be a nonhierarchical governance model. The regional structure should not create another level of government, that this proposes to do.

I think there should be voting equity, where each municipality has one equal vote.

I think that there should be a good consensus of decision-making, where major decisions that require a vote are approached on the basis of reaching a good overall consensus on every decision.

I think that there should be the user-pay cost-sharing model, where for the most part the cost of delivering a regional service is borne in proportion to the use of that service, not to try to help out the major population centre.

I think there should be transparency in the region, that the operation of the governance of the regional entity is essentially easily observable and understood.

I think there should be accountability of individual municipalities. When a municipality chooses to become a member of a regional service partnership, the individual municipality is accountable to its community for the value of that service.

I think there should be the allowance for opting of programs. When a municipality is a member of a regional service partnership and the partnership addresses more than one service, each partner should have the ability to opt out of one or more of the service delivery programs should they choose that to be in the best interest of their municipality and their people.

As one of the larger municipal associations has stated, conflict among neighbouring municipalities is neither new nor is it unusual, and it's naive to expect that simple solutions are available off the shelf to resolve differences. The current MGA already makes provisions for municipalities to address their differences through a variety of formal and informal mechanisms. Historically, municipalities have been able to effectively use these mechanisms to resolve their differences and to put a solution in place.

In contrast, though, forced regionalization in this province has a history, as I've said before, of creating as many problems as it solves. The potential good that results from the application of this approach to regional service delivery has to be balanced against the damage that results from the limiting of the ability of municipalities to satisfy the purpose of that municipality under the MGA.

To conclude, Madam Chair, to some degree here, I think I've tried to make some points where we've had a good discussion on the pros and cons of how forced regionalization could be better replaced by our policy of more local autonomy and a voluntary type of system.

I'd like to point out, too, before I do wrap up, that it should be noted that the AAMD and C, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, has had a lot to say about this particular

subject over the years, and they have sent in some comments to us, when I talked to them here recently. The bottom line is that they, too, understand that there should be local collaboration. They understand that there should be regional co-operation. They agree with that.

They understand, though, that if the government decides that they have to go with this kind of a situation, the decision-making situation or the governance model should be addressed very carefully. They think that in the interests of trying to maintain some sort of fairness in that situation, any decisions should have a couple of criteria, one of them being the support of at least two-thirds of the municipalities for a decision to go ahead and, secondly, that the support of the member municipality whose land would be adversely affected by the proposed amendment is involved in that as well. That was their discussion, and those were their suggestions.

Lastly, I'd like to point out, too, that the AUMA did comment about that. They do support the growth board in general as well, and they do encourage that the alignment of IDPs and MDPs be carefully looked at where deemed appropriate.

At the end of the day, we don't have an amendment to this growth board situation, Madam Chairman, but we would like to strongly suggest that the government look at modifying the growth board model that they may be pursuing to set up in Calgary so that it is not mandatory, it is voluntary. We would also like to recommend that a more fair governance model be pursued than what exists in the capital region.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 21? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I had stood just a little while ago, talking specifically about centralized industrial assessment and my concerns and the concerns that were brought to me. I have got a lot of concerns, especially in my riding, specifically about that. But I'm going to move on to something else that, actually, was very alarming to me when I first read it and heard it within the town halls and the literature that the Alberta government had put out, and that's specifically about 5 to 1, the linking of nonresidential to residential tax rates.

5:00

Now, whenever you're hearing about the government putting caps on things, you always need to sit down and say: are we interfering in a place that maybe could cause more damage than helping? The best thing to do is to actually go to the people who are being, I guess, impacted by this. Myself, I went. I do have both the members of AAMD and C as well as the AUMA within my riding, and I got to get a little bit of feedback from them. Now, I do have a municipality within my riding that does have a higher than 5 to 1 ratio, and I was able to hear from them that they're comfortable with the grandfathering clause that has been put through. So I think that the government has found a compromise here that works, maybe not perfectly, with both my rural and urban municipalities.

But I do want to bring up some of the concerns that were brought forward, and maybe the government can have more consideration in this area because, in the end, what this is about is to make sure that we've brought forward all of the ideas, and it could be that an idea that was brought forward to myself may not have actually been brought forward to the government. Or maybe I've got a unique perspective on a particular subject that the government wouldn't have thought about and will reconsider or do an amendment on or, in our case, do an amendment ourselves to this.

I will say that something that surprised me on this specific one was that we have the AAMD and C that have put forward that they are comfortable with the 5 to 1 ratio. They have concerns, but they're comfortable with the ratio. If there was a group that was going to be uncomfortable, it would be the AAMD and C because this group is the one that has all the different tax rates that are involved and the assessment tools that we've got. If they were to bring forward concerns, this is the place that would most likely see it. When I heard the concerns being brought forward by the AAMD and C, they were more specifically about: maybe we need to be looking at a few exclusions.

The thing here is that the AUMA, who also came forward with this, is not supporting the linkage. So the group that I thought probably may look towards supporting it, which was the AUMA, has got a lot of concerns whereas the group that probably will have the greatest impact from all of this would be the AAMD and C, and they're more comfortable with this.

We start looking at both sets of reasoning behind their concerns, and maybe we can flesh some of these things out. The one thing that I see that both groups fully agree with is that maybe what we need to be looking at is that some of the subclasses need to be excluded from these calculations. This is something that the government may want to consider. Brownfields, affordable housing, vacant and nonresidential properties, just to list a few, are the things that they both brought forward saying: we need to address that maybe with the 5 to 1 ratio. Even though it appears that there is some comfort with one of the important groups, there are important things that maybe we need to ensure, that certain areas are reviewed to ensure that this isn't disproportionately hurting any one municipality. So that's the area that both of those groups would agree to.

Now, when we've got the grandfathering clause, in the case of the AAMD and C what we're looking for is a fair balance of making sure that our municipalities can continue running in the same direction that they're going. The question is always that when there's a grandfathering clause – and I'm not advocating for a grandfathering clause, but I am saying that this was a concern that was brought up – possibly this would be something that would be phased out over time. This is an idea that was brought forward, and I think that overall I do understand exactly where they're going with this because in the end we all need to be playing by the same rule book.

But when it comes to these rural municipalities that have incredibly large growth like in Bonnyville-Cold Lake, they have to still continue to be able to adapt to this growth, and this growth is something that we can all say is a big benefit to all of Alberta, not just my local riding. I would say that that same benefit would be up in Fort McMurray as well. There are other parts of the province where there's high growth, where there's exploration, and we need to take that into effect. At some point these ratios can impede the growth of the riding. It is never the intent of any government, I would hope, to impede the growth of a riding. This is an important fact that we need to consider, whether or not grandfathering clauses should be phased out or should be left alone. This is something that was brought up and that I do believe the government should have deep consideration on.

Now, when it comes to the 5 to 1 ratio, exactly how is it that the government came up with this ratio? This is a question that was asked to me in a couple of places. In the end, I'm sure that the government has a wonderful scientific approach to how they came up with the 5 to 1. Possibly they came up with a compromise between both of these large groups. So one of the questions I would like to ask is: exactly how did you come up with the 5 to 1, and where exactly do you see this 5 to 1? Do you see this as something

that is going to stay consistent through time, or is this something that you will be adjusting through time? Now, it is in legislation; it's not through regulation. So it's probably not something that's going to be easily changed. But are we looking for stability here? Is this something that the government will address later on, or are they comfortable at 5 to 1 and just leaving it going forward?

What we've got here is that both groups have put a lot of effort and many stakeholders have put a lot of effort into helping improve the MGA review. It is encouraging that we are hearing and that we saw that the government did some town halls during the summer. I do know that at the town hall that I was at in Lac La Biche, this was also an important part that came up. They may not have come up with how they came up with the 5 to 1 ratio, but the big question was: exactly how will it be implemented? Is this something that the government will be going in and reviewing for the different municipalities to ensure that they are following this? Is this something that the government has got the ratio police, if you will, going out to enforce? Is this something that the government will be watching like a hawk? Because, obviously this is going to be an important piece that could mean thousands if not millions of dollars if a municipality makes a mistake with this 5 to 1 ratio.

5:10

The minister can correct me if I'm wrong, but is there somewhere in the legislation – and I have read it over, and if I missed it, I will apologize. If they go over this 5 to 1 ratio, is the government going to be requesting a return of that money to the property owner? Is this going to be something that's going to be put into trust? How exactly is it that the government is going to deal with a problem? Usually what happens is that these things get identified later on. So how exactly is it that they're going to enforce this if a municipality intentionally or unintentionally breaks this 5 to 1 ratio? Will the government work with them? Let's say, for instance, that it's a smaller municipality that makes this error. They may not have the resources that some of the larger municipalities have so that this could be a true hardship on that smaller municipality. We need to make sure that as we're going through this, we have good, clear answers to these questions.

I think that the government has done a good job with the town halls, again, and I will be voting for Bill 21. My job here is to help make this better. Some of these concerns that I've got, I've heard, and if the answers are there, I would appreciate it if the minister could bring that forward.

In conclusion, when it comes to 5 to 1, I would like to just say that a few more answers around 5 to 1 would be appreciated. Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

**The Chair:** Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise just to speak about a couple of issues of particular note, of interest, more so to just touch base on the record on a couple of issues that I've heard a lot of people reaching out to me on, a significant amount of public comment around. I'd just like to provide some remarks. With respect to those here at Committee of the Whole, you know, I would never want to presume what's happening in the House, but it's my sense that we're getting down to the short strokes, if you will, of Bill 21, in particular with respect to Committee of the Whole.

I'll just briefly chat a little bit about the issue of the Ombudsman, an issue that has been a topic of public debate. Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, proposes to expand the authority of Alberta's Ombudsman to include municipalities. This

change would allow for members of the public who feel that their municipality has acted inappropriately to write the Alberta Ombudsman asking them to undertake a nonbinding review of their municipality to ensure they practised procedural fairness.

Of course, Madam Chair, you'll know the current process. Individuals only have one real opportunity, and that is the petition process, which can be fairly confrontational and divisive. We also from time to time see a municipality get just about to that level, and the department winds up splitting hairs over whether or not they've reached the threshold, if the individual was a resident or they weren't, and it doesn't necessarily reflect the fact that the municipality may in fact have acted inappropriately.

The Ombudsman, though, comes with a certain amount of benefit and a certain amount of concern. Of course, the benefits include an additional avenue for concerned citizens to seek procedural fairness with their municipality. Another pro, if you will, would be that there is the likelihood that it will create more municipal accountability. The Ombudsman, being focused on procedural fairness – it's not a council decision – provides an independent avenue for review.

Now, there also are a number of concerns, and certainly we've heard concerns from AUMA, AAMD and C in terms of their local autonomy and their ability to address ratepayers' concerns or constituency concerns. It also has the risk of creating another layer of bureaucracy. The current Ombudsman has little or no experience when dealing with local government, so there is a new area that oftentimes a municipality, in fact, may be more experienced in than the Ombudsman. It will quite likely require the expansion of the Ombudsman's office. This, in many respects, is about striking that right balance.

I know that if you connect with some of the larger municipalities, in particular the cities of Calgary and Edmonton or areas where they already have an Ombudsman in place – perhaps the minister could have considered and perhaps they did consider an exemption for larger cities that already have an Ombudsman or a similar role in place, like they do in Calgary or Edmonton. I know that the mayor of Calgary has spoken at length with significant concern about how the provincial Ombudsman may in fact interact with their Ombudsman. Is there a risk that some of these decisions may in fact impact councils' ability to continue to govern or to continue to make a decision in a certain area? There's no doubt that it is a concern for municipalities, particularly the ones that have them.

Additionally, municipalities that don't have an Ombudsman: there is an inherent amount of concern around the loss of local autonomy. But the truth of the matter is that there have been a lot of members of the public that have reached out both to us, the Official Opposition, and, I'm certain, to the minister, expressing a lot of support, feeling that they don't have the same sort of avenues to hold councils accountable as they do in a larger city or in other areas. I know from personal experience, from people contacting my office that have contacted the Ombudsman, that are frustrated and concerned, that they haven't felt like their concern has been heard by someone independent.

5:20

I also think that there is a significant amount of education that could take place that would help people understand the different areas they do have available to them in terms of appeals and certain different types of appeal boards that they could engage prior to needing to go to the Ombudsman anyway. So I think that the Ombudsman is going to have a significant amount of work, and he's going to wind up doing a lot of that education. Certainly, there will be an expansion of that office, or he'll have an inability to actually deal with the influx of constituents who are concerned.

With that said, it is about striking a balance. It appears that the government is not going to provide exemptions for larger municipalities and that they are going to listen to the majority of Albertans who've spoken out in favour of having an Ombudsman and that they are unlikely to provide anything different.

I might just add, though, as we look at some of the other jurisdictions, that British Columbia's office of the Auditor General for Local Government conducts performance audits. The Saskatchewan Ombudsman had its authority extended to municipalities this year as well. Manitoba, in their Ombudsman Act:

- 15 The Ombudsman may, on a written complaint or on his own initiative, investigate
- (b) any decision or recommendation made, including any recommendation made to a council, or any act done or omitted.

So we do see that there are a number of different ombudsmen across the country.

If we look at some of what folks are saying, I'd just like to reiterate that AUMA and AAMD and C do not support the expanded oversight of the Alberta Ombudsman. The city of Edmonton recommends that Bill 21 apply only to municipalities that do not have another form of oversight such as the city auditor, as in the case of Edmonton. The Calgary mayor, Naheed Nenshi, isn't pleased with the government's move to give the Alberta Ombudsman the power to investigate municipalities. But, again, we see organizations like the Canadian Home Builders' Association saying, "We fully support the expansion of the Ombudsman to enforce the MGA," and, of course, other organizations like the Parkland Institute: "The biggest win for accountability, however, is the move to extend the authority of the Alberta Ombudsman to include municipalities."

I just wanted to make sure that we had some concerns voiced of some of those stakeholders and let them know that we were listening to their concerns, that we heard their concerns. It appears that the government is going to pursue this role of the Ombudsman.

I'd just like, as I see the hour, to briefly touch on a couple of quick issues with respect to inclusionary housing, that is also inside this particular piece of legislation. There are a number of pros with respect to inclusionary housing. There are also a number of concerns that have been highlighted around inclusionary housing and ensuring that the cost of the inclusionary housing isn't passed on in such a manner that creates less affordable housing, generally speaking.

Certainly, increased volumes of affordable housing for more Albertans to have safe and affordable access to housing is of critical importance to all. The Alberta government's housing first strategy calls for various levels of nonmarket housing to be provided in all geographic regions and municipalities, not only in the inner city. These are positives for our province. Affordable housing has the opportunity to increase the effectiveness of other social organizations. We all know that having a home is one of the most critical steps in the upward mobility of all, and of course affordable housing is so critically important for our key fundamentals when it comes to people's most basic needs.

The decision, the efforts to have some inclusionary housing, of course, are a positive. It does come with some potential risks. AAMD and C highlighted a few of those when they supported the amendments to improve inclusionary zoning, but they have sought some clarification. I'm certain that the minister is aware of these, but I think it's important that we voice some of their concerns. I know, on behalf of the minister, not that I would speak for her, that the regulations will be posted online for 60 days, where all Albertans, individuals or AAMD and C, will be able to review and

provide feedback on those regulations. She would encourage everyone to do that.

With that said, AAMD and C and AUMA are looking for a definition around affordable housing. These are AUMA's comments.

Developers and the province should contribute towards the offsets [of] the cost of affordable housing . . .

As affordable housing is a provincial responsibility, the costs should not be downloaded on municipalities and should [in fact] be borne by the province and the developers who are earning profits.

It will be important for the regulations to outline how [to require the] offsets for developers [to] be determined so that the possible benefits derived from this tool can better enable the provision of affordable housing in [communities].

The Capital Region Board will advocate for the changes to the provincial legislation.

- Changes to the MGA . . . would give municipalities explicit authority to adopt inclusionary zoning for both Market Affordable Housing and Non-Market [affordable] Housing, including the authority to accept . . . contributions in lieu of housing units.

The Edmonton health trust fund – now, there are areas of concern for some individuals. The Urban Development Institute: inclusionary housing remains a potential area of concern for our industry – depending on the method of implementation, the additional tools and supports that will be acquired to address the provision of affordable housing. The UDI supports the principle of inclusionary and diverse communities. However, the concern is with costs and how those may get allocated to other homes and the lack of practical offsets providing the development.

There's certainly a wide range of opinion on inclusionary housing. I think that's a little unfair, to say "a wide range of opinion on inclusionary housing"; it's more that there are many pros and certainly some cons that I think need to be addressed. I know that in regulations people will be able to provide their feedback.

I'd like to thank members for their attention. I know they've been riveted this afternoon by the amendments and the inspiring comments that have been made by so many on this side of the House, and I look forward to third reading of Bill 21.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that the committee rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

5:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinstaub:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed, say no. So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

(continued)

#### Bill 32

#### Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016.

Alberta's credit unions are a vital part of the economy, with more than 620,000 members and \$24 billion in assets under management. As stated in the Speech from the Throne earlier this year, our government is committed to making sure Alberta's credit unions "have the business tools necessary for their work and to encourage them to support small and medium-sized businesses in their communities." The proposed changes in this bill will modernize aspects of the legislation, provide additional business powers to credit unions, and clarify membership rules to make it easier for credit unions to lend to small and medium-sized businesses. The amendments before you would improve consumer choice, encourage economic growth, and strengthen governance and accountability to the credit union system.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

On improving consumer choice, this legislation would give credit unions the ability to apply to establish subsidiaries separate from the credit union itself, the building, to act as a broker for all types of insurance. Consumer choice would be expanded for regular Albertans while maintaining a level playing field for existing insurance providers and brokers.

With regard to economic growth, as part of our plan to encourage economic growth and support job creators, we are clarifying membership rules to create more opportunity for small and medium-sized businesses to access loans. Allowing small and medium-sized businesses to become credit union members will increase their access to borrowing opportunities to help grow their businesses.

With regard to governance and accountability, governance and accountability in the credit union system have been enhanced through the introduction of compensation disclosure requirements for the highest paid executives of the largest credit unions to improve accountability to shareholders and stronger governance measures to ensure that the interests of smaller credit unions continue to be represented on the board of Credit Union Central Alberta. Also, increasing transparency, facilitating access to information, and enabling all shareholders to better influence the direction of these entities will enhance the governance and accountability of credit unions and Credit Union Central Alberta.

Finally, some technical changes are being proposed to update provisions and promote the flexibility necessary to keep the framework current. Generally speaking, these changes are consistent with best practices as well as with what other jurisdictions are doing. Some differences will exist because of the differences in the needs of Albertans, Alberta's marketplace, the government's policy goals, risk appetite, and financial capacity.

In closing, credit unions are an important part of Alberta's financial industry and our communities. The proposed bill covers amendments that will modernize and strengthen the credit union legislation to facilitate their ability to continue to be a viable alternative for Albertans well into the future.

I would like to ask all members of this House to support this bill. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I rise to speak on Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016. I'm always excited when I see a bill that will not spend more money come forward from this government. I know that, at the very least, this bill will not put Alberta further into debt. Thumbs up.

While this bill does deal with banks, I'm glad to see that it encourages transparency, strengthens governance, and creates competition for Albertans. It's also nice to see the government keep a promise that they had made in the past. In March in the Speech from the Throne the Lieutenant Governor told Albertans that this government would

work with leaders in Alberta's \$23 billion credit union system to ensure they have the business tools necessary for their work and to encourage them to support small and medium-sized businesses in their communities.

It's good to see that this government has worked with credit unions to craft this bill. The stakeholders that we reached out to were almost unanimously in favour of this bill. In fact, Central, the governing body for credit unions, had this to say about the consultations:

The Alberta government undertook consultation with the Alberta credit union system to determine amendments to the Credit Union Act that would best support credit union competitiveness, Albertans, and Alberta small and medium-sized businesses.

This is a far cry from the infamous Bill 6, where, really, no consultation was done, similar to Bill 25, Bill 203, Bill 207, Bill 22, Bill 27, and Bill 202 from last session. But we are glad this bill was consulted on, so good on you. We're glad that this government is learning, albeit slowly, that to govern the province, they must listen to the people and consult with them.

I would like to talk about some of my favourite parts of the bill, namely the transparency aspect. I'm glad that a sunshine list for the larger banks is being published. Now, I'd like to clarify that statement. Normally I would not be happy that the government is forcing a private organization to publish details, but since Central is happy with the change, then I'm happy as well, as they are directly affected by this bill.

One thing that I'm concerned about, though, is the implementation part of the sunshine list. At the end of the bill, page 11, it says that section 9 does not come into effect until January 1, 2018. Perhaps there is a good reason for this to be put off, but I cannot see why this would be necessary. I would appreciate it if in further speeches or in Committee of the Whole the minister would be able to address why this is included in the bill and, additionally, if he could explain why other parts are not coming into effect right away. That would be helpful, too. We have an understanding as to why the other two will be put off, but we would like to hear from the minister the reasons he has put them there.

Another aspect I'm happy with is the competition aspect of the bill. This bill allows credit unions to sell home and auto insurance in the same manner as other financial institutions. This is great for Albertans. More competition generally means lower prices, better service, and increased access. There are many Albertans, especially rural Albertans, who deal solely with a credit union. They know their bank very well – sometimes the bank manager, their financial adviser, the teller that happens to be their neighbour – in these small rural towns, and they want to deal with their neighbours and their friends because they trust them.

Now, with this legislation small rural towns can get their home and auto insurance from their local credit unions. There are even

towns that do not even have a local insurance broker in the town. That means additional costs for travel for those products. This is going to help with that. This will create, you know, a lot of convenience for many people in these rural parts of Alberta. Unlike Bill 6, that reduced competition for insurance for farms and ranches, this bill increases competition for insurance. Sometimes I don't understand the government. Some days it's more competition, some days less competition. This time it's more competition.

5:40

On one hand, they tell us that the insurance company knows best, being the WCB, and that they will do the best and provide the best and that no one else can give the quality of that insurance. Then almost a year later to the day they extend the insurance sales for home and auto to more retailers, to the credit unions. I really hope that we can get some good quotes from the government side saying that competition is good. It would be entertaining if they said that competition would be bad while putting forward legislation that increases competition.

Now, if I was a betting man, you know, I'd have no clue which way to bet on this one. Which way? Competition is good? Competition is bad? Our caucus strongly supports competition. We are for competition, whether it's for homeowners, vehicle owners, farmers, ranchers, for, frankly, all Albertans. I'm pleased that the government some of the time is for competition, once in a while.

I would like to encourage this government to ensure that as credit unions take on the new role of selling home and auto insurance, they provide the necessary oversight. There are many new rules that credit unions will have to follow, and we do not want Albertans to be hurt by a credit union unintentionally or intentionally not following the rules set out for insurance. We don't want to see any Albertans subjected to tied selling or unethical sales techniques. I see you're in agreement, too. Excellent.

We want to ensure that private information is stored and used in a proper, safe, and ethical manner. I encourage this government to provide as much oversight and assistance as required to ensure that the legislation is implemented in the best manner possible.

Again, I'm glad that this government has put forward a bill that we, hopefully, can all agree upon. I'm glad that this government is in favour of competition. I'm happy that this government is learning how to properly consult with stakeholders, and I hope this trend continues.

I will be voting in favour of this bill in second reading. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

**Ms McKittrick:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016. I am a proud member of a credit union and have been so for many years. I have seen the power of credit unions supporting communities and economic development in various provinces of Canada, in Europe, and in Asia.

Credit unions are financial co-operatives that provide deposit, chequing, and lending services to their member owners. They are not banks. Owned locally and operated under provincial jurisdiction, they jointly own provincial central organizations. In Alberta it is Credit Union Central Alberta.

Credit unions are part of the co-operative movement, that has a long history. Robert Owen began a consumer co-operative among unemployed weavers in Rochdale, England, in 1844, and co-operative principles of buying and selling were applied to borrowing and lending in an experiment in Germany. The original

credit unions were not only mutual self-help societies but a strong moral and spiritual force in communities.

The first successful credit union in Canada was the *caisse populaire*, started in Lévis, Quebec, in 1900 by Alphonse Desjardins. In the 1930s the organizers of the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia, two Catholic priests, Moses Coady and Jim Tompkins, began study circles to help farmers and fishers to organize credit unions and co-operatives to have greater economic control. They associated themselves with the American Credit Union National Association and established a credit union in Broad Cove in Nova Scotia in 1932. Credit unions grew rapidly in Atlantic Canada during the Great Depression, and by the early 1940s they were being established across English Canada.

I think it's important to understand the history of credit unions and why they have been so important in our communities in terms of economic development and as job providers.

To facilitate the exchange of savings and to help local credit unions become more efficient, credit union leadership in all the English-speaking provinces organized provincial centrals. During the 1950s and 1960s credit unions, which are generally smaller than *caisses populaires*, grew rapidly, largely through using members' savings to provide mortgages and short-term loans. They were able to compete effectively with banks because of low administrative costs, inexpensive premises, and convenient service hours. In the same period they gradually acquired the legal right to offer most of the financial services provided by banks such as chequing.

I just wanted to point out that credit unions are owned by members and are for members. They are very different from the bank system, which is owned by shareholders. In many areas, particularly on the prairies and in B.C., anyone in the geographic area can join, not just members of a specific group or a specific community.

Now the Alberta credit unions. The Alberta credit union system consists of 23 credit unions, with combined assets exceeding \$23 billion, that serve over 625,000 Albertans. Credit unions operate in 208 branches in 129 communities throughout Alberta. One example of a credit union is Vision Credit Union. Over the past 66 years Vision Credit Union has evolved from one branch in Camrose, with assets of \$178, serving 21 members, to 11 branches serving the Battle River region, with over 17,000 members and \$579 million in assets.

Another credit union, Connect First, a Calgary-based credit union, has worked with the government to provide alternatives to payday loans. All the credit unions such as Servus will also be offering alternatives to high-interest loans. Approximately 80 per cent of the Alberta credit union system has committed to offering small-dollar credit products by the end of 2016. Credit unions are real assets in our communities.

Credit unions also employ 3,400 full-time Albertans and contribute significantly to local communities and to the broader provincial economies. There's an average of about \$5 million in donations, gifts in kind, sponsorships, scholarships, and bursaries each year. I'm sure that in each of our ridings we have seen the power of credit unions in helping our communities.

The Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation is a Crown corporation of the government of Alberta and provides strong credential and regulatory oversight of Alberta credit unions. This regulatory oversight in conjunction with nearly \$2 billion in credit union system capital and deposit insurance funds in excess of \$258 million and a hundred per cent guarantee on deposits positions Alberta credit unions as one of the safest financial institutions to do financial business with.

Credit unions are provincially regulated financial co-operatives. This means that every credit union customer is also a member and

owner. Credit union members elect a board of directors from among their membership in a one-member, one-vote system. They are democratically controlled. Unlike banks, credit unions work for their individual members, not corporate investors or institutional shareholders. This is why credit unions are so powerful in our communities. After expenses are paid and reserves set aside, credit unions' surplus earnings are returned to members in the form of profit-sharing. In the last five years alone Alberta's credit unions have returned more than \$34 million in patronage dividends to members.

The Alberta credit union system was very pleased with the Alberta government's throne speech commitment to modernize credit union legislation. It was something they had been asking for for a long time, but it never happened under the former government. In support of modernizing credit union legislation, the Alberta credit union system provided the Alberta government with a comprehensive legislative submission with recommendations to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of credit unions.

I am pleased to be speaking in support of Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016. This act will reinforce credit unions' support of communities and will help to reinforce the credit union advantage. As a credit union member, Madam Speaker, I thank the Minister of Finance for introducing this bill, which will be supporting my local credit union to be better equipped to serve my needs and that of local businesses.

5:50

I would like to read from a letter that was sent to all Members of the Legislative Assembly on November 24 by Credit Union Central Alberta. This is what the letters says, and I'll be tabling it tomorrow.

On behalf of the Alberta credit union system, I would like to take this opportunity to express our industry's support for Bill 32: Credit Union Amendment Act, which was introduced in the Alberta Legislative Assembly [this week].

Alberta Central is the industry association and central liquidity provider for the Alberta credit union system . . .

The Alberta credit union system believes that Bill 32, in its present form, will serve to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of Alberta credit unions, which in turn will provide further benefits to Albertans and the provincial economy . . .

Subsequent to this commitment, [made in the throne speech], the Alberta government [entered into] consultation with the Alberta credit union system to determine amendments for the Credit Union Act that would best support credit union competitiveness, Albertans, and Alberta's small and medium-sized businesses.

In response to the Alberta government's credit union system consultation, Alberta Central collaborated with credit unions to develop a comprehensive submission with legislative recommendations for the consideration of the Minister of Finance. This industry submission was submitted to the Alberta government . . . in April, 2016 . . .

A key component of the credit union difference is our strong commitment to ensuring consumer protection rights for Albertans. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that with the legislative changes proposed in Bill 32, ensuring consumer protection will continue to be a fundamental aspect of how credit unions serve Albertans . . .

In closing, the Alberta credit union system would like to express its appreciation to the Alberta government for fulfilling its commitment to enhance credit union legislation. Credit unions are confident that the legislative amendments proposed in Bill 32 will assist credit unions in continuing to effectively serve Albertans and the Alberta communities in which we operate.

In closing, I would like to urge all members of the Assembly to support this bill and especially to be proud of the credit unions that

you have in your communities and to ensure that your credit union can best serve you and the other members through these amendments.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on the bill? The Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Earlier this year, on March 8, our government revealed an ambitious visionary plan. It was the 2016 Speech from the Throne. Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor said in the speech that

the government of Alberta will do more to promote economic development in Budget 2016 . . . [and our] government will work with leaders in Alberta's \$23 billion credit union system to ensure they have the business tools necessary for their work and to encourage them to support small and medium-sized businesses in their communities. After a careful consultation with the credit union system my government is aiming to modernize and strengthen Alberta's credit union legislation in the fall sitting of the Legislature.

Here we are, Madam Speaker, the fall sitting of the Legislature, and our government, true to our commitment, has introduced Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016.

The bill proposes changes that will affect three main areas of the legislation. First, changes will allow credit unions to broker insurance. The credit unions that pursue this option will apply to establish subsidiaries and act as brokers for all types of insurance. Through this change our government is giving the public more product options while maintaining a level playing field for existing insurance brokers. I think many members of this Legislature would agree that additional customer choice is a good thing.

Second, this bill will allow credit unions to remain strong as they move forward and should encourage them to support small and medium-sized businesses. Since being elected, this government has made it a priority to help grow and diversify Alberta's economy. We believe that improving access to financing for small and medium-sized businesses through access to loans and membership in credit unions should help accomplish these goals.

Madam Speaker, the final changes to this bill relate to improving governance, accountability, and transparency. These amendments would require compensation disclosure for the highest paid executives of the largest credit unions. In addition, we are proposing stronger governance measures to ensure that the interests of smaller credit unions continue to be represented on the board of Credit Union Central Alberta, CUCA. There would be a requirement that CUCA include at least two unaffiliated directors. CUCA would also need to implement a dispute resolution process should one credit union obtain a majority representation on the board. Also, with regard to governance general meeting quorum requirements would be updated based on the size of individual credit unions. This is because many credit unions have grown significantly since the legislation was last updated.

Our government believes that these amendments will put stakeholders in a better position to influence the direction of their credit unions while ensuring that smaller credit union interests are still being represented on the board of Credit Union Central Alberta. Madam Speaker, I have no doubt that modernizing this legislation will encourage economic growth, entrepreneurs, and help build a more vibrant Alberta. As Graham Wetter, the president and CEO of Alberta Central, said in a statement:

Bill 32, if passed, will serve to further enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of Alberta credit unions, which in turn will



provide further benefits to Albertans, Alberta small and medium-sized businesses, and the provincial economy.

This is why I support this legislation, and I encourage others to do the same.

With that, I wish to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been a pleasure doing business with you today, and I move that we adjourn the House until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m.]





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**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

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Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (ND)  
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Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
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Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
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Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
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Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
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Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
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Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
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David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
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Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
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Dang	Taylor
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### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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### Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
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Coolahan	McPherson
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### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, November 30, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect on the power of our words. Our words can build hope, encourage, inspire, motivate, and comfort. Our words can also tear down, incite fear, destroy hope, and damage relationships. We've been entrusted by Albertans to speak on their behalf. Let us always use our words responsibly and in a way that benefits and encourages the constituents we serve.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 30

##### Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. We understand that this bill is about tax credits and trying to spur investment in Alberta. We understand that this is going to be a discussion that revolves around how we can perhaps level the playing field and allow business in Alberta to progress and diversify. Of course, in the economic times that we face today, that's always a very important discussion to have.

Madam Chair, we understand that history is littered with failed government programs that were designed to diversify and grow the economy. I don't think we have to look too far to realize that we've got all sorts of examples that we could point to in Alberta in the past. Perhaps we could remember that 30 years ago in Alberta we had a government that provided loan guarantees to Gainers and that the province still has an unsatisfied judgment of approximately \$13 million against Gainers and Mr. Pocklington for a program that really was not very effective. Sometimes the funds from these loan guarantees help businesses in question to maybe pad their bottom line but don't actually create more investment and more jobs in the economy.

Now, I understand that this bill is not about loan guarantees, that it's about tax credits, but I bring that forward just to say that we need to discuss this issue with an understanding that there are failed attempts that we should remember and that we should consider before we go down a path where we take taxpayers' dollars and abuse them, with no real benefit to the Alberta people. We need to remember that government is not there primarily to do business. There's a role for government at times, and this bill addresses that. We must be careful.

To its credit, I believe that this bill does not provide loans or grants or guarantees, but it provides tax credits, so that's worthy of having discussions, Madam Chair. When we take a look at a tax

credit, it's a deduction. It's a deduction from tax owing. Provided the credit can be used, the same tax relief occurs with the tax credit regardless of the company's tax bracket or his or her particular tax bracket.

Bill 30 has received some support from some of the major stakeholders in Alberta. We do see that Adam Legge, president and CEO of the Calgary Chamber of commerce, supports this, the first investor tax credit program to help try to get equity and capital flowing to small businesses in our province. We see that British Columbia and Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and Manitoba and some of the U.S. states have investor tax credit programs. This is a discussion that, to a degree, is about levelling the playing field and trying to make sure that Alberta businesses don't lose business and that Alberta doesn't lose new business to provinces like British Columbia and other provinces that have an investor tax credit program.

Well, according to Alberta Economic Development and Trade over the last 10 years Alberta has consistently lagged behind British Columbia and Ontario and Quebec in terms of venture capital dollars, so this may be an acceptable way of addressing this issue. You know, that might have been acceptable in the hyper economy that Alberta had a few years back, where the energy sector encouraged large amounts of capital to be invested in Alberta, but in today's economy we need to consider how we can actually attract capital into Alberta. This is perhaps one way of doing that. Now, I would suggest, though, that we do need to be careful with any of the programs that we provide through the Alberta government.

I just look at my own constituency and see how the entrepreneurs of Drayton Valley are addressing this dire economic situation that we find ourselves in, where they are actually pursuing venture capital outside of government's help. I look at a company in Drayton Valley that just the other day was able to sign a contract for \$25 million worth of investment in a company in Drayton Valley. So we see that venture capital can come in through private sources and through the private sector, but that doesn't necessarily mean that in the context of the economy that we have today this bill doesn't need support or shouldn't be supported.

There is merit in taking a look at how we can induce and encourage venture capital into this province. We know that that's important because a lack of venture capital actually limits the growth of businesses in Alberta. Businesses, small businesses and start-up businesses, need that commercialization capital in order to be able to grow and provide jobs and encourage the economy in this province. Venture capital is a very important thing, and an investor tax credit may be the incentive that we need to consider to build a market and to build a community of enterprise for venture capital in Alberta.

Well, the government is going to provide, it's my understanding, about \$165 million in tax credits over a three-year period, and it's going to be distributed through two programs, one called the capital investment tax credit and then a second one, the Alberta investor tax credit. It's my understanding with this bill – and I'm new at this, so I'm learning lots as we go through the various bills that we bring before this House – that the capital investment tax credit is meant for large capital investment by companies that are deemed by the minister to be able to diversify the Alberta economy.

It's hoped that this capital investment tax credit, or CITC, will encourage up to somewhere around \$700 million in new investment in Alberta. I believe that that's going to be broken down. In this capital investment tax credit there's going to be about \$70 million for capital investment tax credits over two years, and it's going to be targeted. It's going to be targeted towards manufacturing and processing and tourism. Then I understand that there's going to be another \$5 million of capital investment tax credits for culture and

tourism above that. We're looking at about a 10 per cent nonrefundable tax credit of up to about \$5 million for Alberta companies involved in manufacturing and processing and tourism infrastructure.

These tax credits will be provided on a competitive basis to companies that make eligible capital investments of \$1 million or more. So we're looking at a situation where these tax credits are going to be provided through the government and through the minister on a competitive basis. In other words, we'll look at the merits of the companies and the merits of the programs that are being done, and those tax credits, that money, will be applied to the various companies based on the merits of their business ventures.

9:10

The second program that's going to be brought forward is the Alberta investor tax credit. This is designed to attract and to bring investors and small businesses together in Alberta to be able to produce more jobs and a wider tax base for municipal and provincial governments. You know, that's one of the things that we do have to look at, I believe, in this province. We do need to look at diversifying our economy, and we do need to look at attracting new businesses into this economy in Alberta.

This Alberta investor tax credit is going to have about a \$90 million budget cap over three years. It's going to be available for investments in companies that are engaged substantially in things like proprietary technology research, development, or commercialization; interactive digital media development; video postproduction; digital animation; or tourism. Now an investor in a small business venture in one of these areas will have an opportunity to deduct up to \$60,000 per year.

You know, I think many of the members in this House were at a digital BioWare event last night, and for an old dog like me – yeah, I know; I'm not really into the digital animation and video games – it was an education, being able to see not only that Edmonton has one of the premier digital animation video game companies in the world but that we're looking also at a series of new companies, that were highlighted last night, that are trying to do a start-up. This might be an example of the kinds of businesses that we would be bringing forward or that could apply through this Alberta investor tax credit and could then see some capital placed their way to begin to develop and increase and grow their business and to provide jobs with their business.

Now, having said that and understanding that there's a role to be played here and that this has got some potential, there are some concerns. There are some concerns here that we need to consider in Committee of the Whole and as we go forward on this bill. Specific requirements about eligible investors and companies and the limits to the amount of the investment credits that may be awarded and are being developed: we need to have some discussion on that. You know, the programs: will they be offered on a first-come, first-served basis? How are we going to decide how these credits are being handed out to various businesses through the two programs?

The application processes for the CITC and the AITC programs, you know, are going to be announced pending the passage of this legislation, and that does lead to some concerns because we probably need to have some discussion about: what is that application process going to look like, and is it going to be fair and equitable? How are we going to make this a situation where we are actually helping to diversify the economy and that doesn't just become a pet project of a particular bureaucrat or minister? Is this going to lead to the minister picking favourites?

You know, the money that we're handing out is taxpayers' dollars. It's tax credits that are being given, tax monies that would not necessarily be collected by the Alberta government, so we need

to make sure that this isn't being done on an ad hoc basis but that it's looking at the merits of the investments and the merits of the companies and the diversification of the economy and the jobs that are being provided. This can't just simply lead to ministerial oversight of the program. I suppose we could argue that that's what it's going to be, but we have to make sure that it's not going to lead to ministerial interference in the give-and-take of the economy and the ebb and flow of free enterprise.

We can see that there is the potential for tax credits to increase capital investment in Alberta, but this program is not a replacement for strengthening economic opportunity by keeping taxes low across the board. That is what will really bring investors into this province. That's what really will bring venture capital into this province. At the end of the day, when we're trying to increase investor confidence, when we're trying to bring in venture capital and we're trying to diversify our economy, it has to make economic sense. Companies have to be able to see that they're coming to a province where, because they have a low tax regime, because they see that the government is business friendly, they have the ability not only to just provide jobs but to make a profit. That's going to be very important. That is the best long-term strategy. That is better than any tax investment program that we could put out there.

This is not theory. We can point to many examples and to many jurisdictions, even to our recent past in the 1990s, where keeping taxes low and having a government by its actions send out a message to business that the province is open for business does attract huge amounts of venture capital. We can see that that is not just something that is an opinion; it is something that can be borne out in fact. We can see that there are case study examples of where keeping a low tax regime does help the economy to grow and to diversify.

This modest program is not going to jump-start the entire Alberta economy. It will not offset the general chill on investment of some of the decisions that this government has made in the past year and a half. But it's a program that does merit consideration, so I thank you for allowing me to share some thoughts on it today.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to speak with you today about Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. I'd like to begin with a brief overview of the legislation.

Bill 30 would establish two tax credits that promote innovation and economic diversity and help create new jobs. The Alberta investor tax credit, or AITC, would offer a 30 per cent tax credit for investments in small Alberta businesses made between April 14, 2016, and December 31, 2019. With a budget of \$90 million over three years the AITC would be provided on a first-come, first-served basis starting in January 2017. The AITC is expected to support up to 4,400 new jobs over three years and contribute up to \$500 million to the province's GDP.

The capital investment tax credit, or CITC, would focus on encouraging large-scale capital investment in the province. With a budget of \$70 million it would offer Alberta companies a 10 per cent nonrefundable tax credit, up to \$5 million. The CITC is expected to support \$700 million worth of investment and create up to 4,600 direct and indirect jobs in Alberta.

Second reading of Bill 30 was held last week, and I'd like to thank all of the hon. members for their support and for sharing their questions on the legislation. During debate several opposition members asked if the current form of the legislation allows too

much interference by the overseeing minister for the AITC and the CITC. Let me assure you that under the legislation the government will not be endorsing any particular investment or company. Instead, investors are required to do their own due diligence to determine which businesses to invest in.

Eligibility requirements for the AITC are clearly set out in the act and the AITC regulation to prevent political interference. The approval process is transparent and ensures that venture capital corporations, or VCCs, and eligible business corporations, or EBCs, meet the requirements of the act and the AITC regulations. Only VCCs and EBCs that meet the eligibility requirements will be approved for the program, and the program requirements ensure that eligible entities support the diversification of Alberta's economy.

For the CITC publicly available competitive criteria based on government economic development and diversification objectives will be used to evaluate and rank applications. Applications for the CITC are accepted based on how well they meet the competitive criteria, demonstrating the greatest economic return to the province. The budget for the AITC will be made publicly available online and will be updated on a regular basis to ensure that applicants are aware of the status of the remaining budget.

9:20

In addition, several members wanted more information about what would happen if either the AITC or the CITC were oversubscribed, because they are great. In the event that the AITC is oversubscribed for a particular year, investors who invested before the program was oversubscribed will receive the tax credit, but no further investors will be queued or tax credits issued. This is in line with the first-come, first-served principle of the tax credit. On the other hand, if the AITC is undersubscribed for a particular year, the surplus amount may be transferred over to the following budget year.

The CITC uses publicly available competitive criteria based on government economic development and diversification objectives. Applications for the CITC are accepted based on how well they meet the competitive criteria. There are four application intake windows planned over the two years of the program. If the CITC is oversubscribed in a particular intake window, unsuccessful applicants would then be able to apply in future windows. We will also be evaluating both programs to assess their effectiveness.

The scope of the tax credits was another area where members wanted more information. To help determine the criteria for both the AITC and the CITC, we reached out to other ministries such as Culture and Tourism, Agriculture and Forestry, and business and investment leaders in the province. From these discussions we have developed criteria for both tax credits that I truly believe will help us achieve our shared goals.

First, I'd like to provide some additional clarity on the scope of the AITC. The AITC is very broad. It would offer a 30 per cent tax credit to investors who provide capital to Alberta companies doing research, development, or commercialization of new technologies, new products, or new processes in sectors like, but not limited to, renewable energy; manufacturing or processing; agriculture, agribusiness, and agri-food; transportation and logistics; financial services technologies; and creative industries. Eligible activities and sectors were selected in consultation with internal and external stakeholders with an aim to encourage investment in nontraditional sectors as part of our efforts to diversify the economy. These nontraditional activities have more difficulty gaining access to capital than traditional activities in Alberta such as oil and gas extraction.

The small businesses supported by the AITC often represent high-risk investment and lack the ability to attract capital through traditional means. While traditional sectors like agriculture, oil and gas are already well established and supported, it's important to note that the oil and gas sector investment would be eligible under the AITC as long as it supports activities by a small business substantially engaged in research, development, and commercialization of proprietary technologies, products, or processes. Investment in nontraditional agriculture activities such as specialized small crops, livestock, poultry production, and high technology enterprises are also eligible under the program.

When it comes to the CITC, a tax credit that supports capital investment in manufacturing and processing is very common in other jurisdictions. The CITC supports the value-added activities of manufacturing and processing which occur across many sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and the energy services and supply sector. The CITC lets us support industries that have the potential to grow in the near future in spite of the low oil price environment and a weak Canadian dollar while building on our strengths in natural resources and encouraging investment in nontraditional sectors.

I also believe that including tourism infrastructure allows the province to build on our international and domestic tourism, a sector that's often countercyclical to the rest of the economy. Tourism often increases for both domestic and international tourists when oil prices and the Canadian dollar are low.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Like I said in my last speech on this bill, we understand the spirit of this bill. That's why in general we are supportive of the bill although the Wildrose believes in bringing an economic environment that's good for all businesses so that businesses can thrive in Alberta and grow the economy and create jobs.

Of late we have seen so many other government policies that were very difficult to send a message that Alberta is open for business. In fact, many businesses were closing. After all this bad news people were looking for some good news, and recently we started seeing some good news like the pipeline approval yesterday. We all should be celebrating that.

Also in this bill we see these investment tax credits. In fact, I consulted a lot of stakeholders like the chambers of commerce, economic development, postproduction companies, manufacturing associations and whatnot. We consulted all chambers of commerce, including the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce and whatnot.

A few things my stakeholders told me were that while the intent is good, you know, they still prefer the government bringing in policies that will remove red tape and create an economic environment where every business can compete with other businesses out of Alberta, within Canada, and overseas. Having said that, I also heard that, you know, other provinces like British Columbia and others have tax credits that are not helpful for Alberta businesses.

That's why in spirit we agree. But in the bill, Madam Chair, the minister did not specify who will be the recipients of this funding both under the CITC and the AITC when it is started. It's not in the bill, but then the minister did some press releases, and now we are hearing government members clarifying in the House what the scope of this bill is. It would be nice if all that information was in the bill, which is missing.

That's why we're trying to bring in a series of amendments to make this bill better. We just want to clarify: which businesses can

actually apply for funding? What's the criteria? Another thing is: how do we measure the success of this bill? You know, it shouldn't be another boondoggle. Otherwise, people will think that the government is picking winners and losers. So we should also make that clear in this bill through our amendments.

One of those amendments I'm bringing here this morning. With your permission, I have a number of copies and I can circulate them. If you permit, I can actually read it.

**The Chair:** If you will just wait until I get a copy.

**Mr. Panda:** Okay.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A1.  
Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. Madam Chair, like I said before, this amendment will clarify that, at a minimum, businesses that meet the qualifications of these enumerated sectors will be eligible. Also, to be clear, this list excludes no one. When I consulted the chambers of commerce, they said: well, we don't know who are all included. They also said that it's not universal. Why are only certain sectors targeted in this bill? To bring more clarification to that, we are proposing that we should include – I'll read the amendment here.

I move that Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, be amended in section 35(1) by striking out clause (c) and substituting the following:

- (c) the small business is or will be substantially engaged in Alberta, as determined in the prescribed manner, in at least one of the following business activities:
  - (i) manufacturing or processing;
  - (ii) research, development and commercialization of proprietary technology, products and processes;
  - (iii) agriculture, agri-food or agri-business;
  - (iv) transportation and logistics;
  - (v) financial services;
  - (vi) interactive digital media development;
  - (vii) video post-production;
  - (viii) digital animation;
  - (ix) tourism;
  - (x) any other prescribed business activity.

9:30

With that, we're trying to bring in some clarity. We're not trying to exclude anyone, but at least it establishes the minimum set, and the minister can add from there in regulations if he considers it necessary. If he gets representation from businesses, then he can hear them and, based on the merit, he can expand the list. But, at the same time, we should also make sure that eligibility is based on the effectiveness of the program in terms of growing the economy and creating jobs. There should be a way to measure that effectiveness. I'm sure that not only me but other opposition parties will also bring those amendments. I mean, people may still say that it's a somewhat limited list, but there is also something to be said that the minister is not picking any industries. That's why we need to clarify this.

Also, the minister made some nice points during the press releases about who will qualify for the tax credits, but when we talk to the stakeholders, we hear a different story. There is nothing in the existing bill that will actually clarify who is eligible for this funding. Also, we just don't want to let the minister pick the winners and losers on an ad hoc basis. That's why more clarity is requested by the business community. Like I said, I consulted the manufacturers' association. They have 9,000 manufacturers in their association, and they were a little bit disappointed that they may not be eligible for some of these tax credits.

Madam Chair, another good thing happening is that the Legislature's Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future is doing a study on growing and diversifying the agrifood and agribusiness sectors in Alberta. There may be some more recommendations coming out of that standing committee later on. But, you know, we saw that government members wanted to champion the diversification in the agrifood and agribusiness sectors, and then some of those businesses contacted us asking how come they are not included in this bill to be eligible for these tax credits. Particularly, the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce said that agrifood processors are interested in these investments and that they want to benefit from these tax credits.

As you know, Calgary is an inland distribution hub in the logistics sector, and they want to help expand that cluster to develop businesses in Calgary and to participate in this economic activity. Edmonton's Port Alberta would also benefit from having the logistics sector be eligible for this tax credit. Also, Alberta is a hotbed for creative financial services, particularly for our niche industries, so by including them, we could actually help them to bring in more business. That's why we support expanding this and including the financial sectors if they prefer to take advantage of these tax credits. Also, the commercial real estate vacancies in Calgary would help them move their head offices to Calgary if we extend these tax credits to them as well.

But the minister was also very clear about the eligibility for interactive digital media development, video postproduction, and digital animation, and when I spoke to them, they were very happy that they were consulted and included in this.

Also, obviously, tourism has more potential in a province like Alberta, which has natural beauty, and it's also stable, both politically and somewhat economically. Another industry is the hotel industry. We actually look forward to having the hotel industry refurbish their tired and worn-out facilities and attracting world-class tourism.

Based on that, I think it's a good amendment to be considered by all parties in the House to make this bill better. As I said, you know, when we had all the bad news, we started hearing some good news, so let's work together and make this bill better and work it for all businesses.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in enthusiastic support of this amendment, brought by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills. You know, he's done a lot of work in this area, as have, I know, many members on this side of the House here. In fact, I know that the minister has as well and I think deserves credit for a couple of things.

The first is that this tax credit, in and of itself, is a change in direction from this government and a change in direction from what the campaign promise was in the NDP platform. I want to just be on the record and clear that I very much appreciate and respect the fact that the government has looked at the evidence, looked at the data, and said: "You know, a job-creation tax credit may sound good in an election platform, but in practice, now that we sit on the government side, maybe that doesn't make sense. We've heard from stakeholders that a tax credit makes more sense, so that's the direction we're going to go."

I want to be very clear and on the record for all to hear that I do have a great deal of respect for the government in making that choice and would sincerely encourage the government to continue on down that path of taking good evidence when it is presented,

looking at the data, and making solid, evidence-based decisions and not relying purely on just exactly what was said in an election platform or based on ideology. The minimum wage comes to mind as one good example of that, but we're not here to talk about minimum wage. We are here to talk about tax credits and Bill 30.

I'm in favour of this amendment, and I really do hope that the government will seriously consider accepting this amendment because the spirit in which it is brought is a very positive and helpful one. It is one that is based on consultations with key stakeholders, particularly in the business community, particularly in the small-business community, small and medium enterprise, chambers of commerce around the province, and that's where this comes from. In fact, it's such a brilliant amendment that I have a very similar version to this. The Member for Calgary-Foothills was able to get to his feet before I was, and had I beaten him to it, I think I'd be presenting an amendment very similar to this one.

That is one of the reasons that I rise to speak so passionately in favour of it, but most importantly I think this is good for Alberta. I think that we in this House ought to remember that our primary objective, our goal number one, ought to always be to do the right thing for Alberta.

What I like about this list is that it broadens the definition of what an eligible organization is. It also simultaneously, to some degree, restricts the minister's ability to pick winners and losers. But the reason I think the government really ought to consider including this amendment is that, rather generously, I think, the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills has included subsection (c), clause (x), which is "any other prescribed business activity." That actually allows the minister a tremendous amount of latitude, and that actually is something that you'll often see from this side of the House. We're trying to restrict what the government can do.

9:40

I think it's actually quite generous and allows the government flexibility to continue to choose or, I suppose, again taking a positive view of this, allows the minister to say: "Well, gosh. You know what? Here's a list. It's prescriptive to a degree in that it's in the legislation, and we send now a signal to investors saying that these are the sorts of things that this tax credit is eligible for. But you know what? Maybe we missed something, or maybe there's a misinterpretation, or maybe we found that the administration has interpreted a certain term in a certain way to exclude certain business that, on reflection, you know, ought to be included."

So instead of coming back to the Legislature, the minister can prescribe another business activity. That is actually, I think, a tremendous flexibility, which I would hope the minister would appreciate and would realize allows him and his ministry and any subsequent ministers to administer this legislation as they see fit.

If there are concerns specifically with any of the items – I wonder about perhaps something like "manufacturing or processing." Is that too broad? Maybe. Maybe it is, and if the minister feels that way or if the minister has a concern with any other of these individual items, again, I'd love to hear the minister's perspective on this or from anyone on the government side. I certainly don't presume to speak on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Foothills, but perhaps if there are specific aspects of this you have concerns with that you feel would make it better and something that you could pass, I do wonder if a subamendment may be in order if there are certain aspects of this that you don't like.

When we talk about "research, development and commercialization of proprietary technology, products and processes," that absolutely ought to be a prescribed area. Agriculture, agrifood, agribusiness I think is perhaps one of the greatest untapped potentials in this province. If there's anything we

have in Alberta, it's tremendous arable land and the opportunity for us to diversify our economy and to meet the world's growing demand for foodstuffs, processed foods, and beyond simply raw product, and agriculture, agrifood, agribusiness absolutely is it.

I think of lentils. There's a tremendous market for lentils emerging amongst the growing middle class in India in particular. Saskatchewan and Manitoba are far ahead of Alberta in lentil production. Now, there are probably a lot of reasons for that, but I'd really like to see Alberta start to move in that direction. There's a great opportunity here for farmers and ranchers, farmers in particular. If there's any better definition of a small-business person in Alberta than a farmer, I don't know what it is. Also, people perhaps don't realize the level of technical skill required to operate a modern farm business. This ought to absolutely explicitly include that.

Transportation and logistics: that's something that Alberta has emerged as a leader in. It's something where we can pivot off what we already do very well in oil and gas. We have a tremendous trucking fleet and experience, but also we have the land, and geographically we're in a good spot to lead in transportation logistics.

Financial services: the same thing. Clearly, Calgary in particular but Alberta generally has probably the second-largest hub of financial services in Canada, behind our good friends in Toronto.

Interactive media development, video postproduction, digital animation, or what is often referred to as creative industries: we saw from BioWare yesterday the amazing work that's already gone on. That's not only an area that is growing, but it's an area that Alberta can lead in if we have the appropriate tax treatment.

Tourism: there are very few places in the world better to come visit than Alberta. That includes the mountain parks, but it certainly expands beyond that. There are a lot of opportunities in things like guest ranches. That's something that we have an opportunity to really grow.

Again I come back to the other prescribed business activities. Those are things that the minister can decide that perhaps have not been captured here. Again, I would really love to hear from the minister, from the government side, as to their feelings on this. I would hope that they would be willing to entertain this amendment. I think it improves the bill. I think it provides clarity for investors. Most importantly, Madam Chair, it is good for Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll thank both the previous speakers, the Member for Calgary-Foothills for moving this amendment and the previous speaker, for their enthusiasm for this bill, and I appreciate their intention and where they're coming from as far as wanting more details or more specifics when it comes to eligible sectors.

However, having said that, a couple of different points. First of all, throughout the whole process of this bill we've been consulting very closely with different chambers of commerce around the province and especially working with the Calgary Chamber of commerce on the investor tax credit. They recently sent me an e-mail that – well, first of all, they wrote to me last week seeking assurance that the tax credit would be applied as broadly as possible to provide the greatest possible benefit to the most industries possible. My office immediately contacted the chamber and worked with them to ensure that the bill and the tax credit would work for not only their members but all Albertans.

Now, last week the MLA for Edmonton-Centre, who is a cosponsor of this bill, made a couple of statements clarifying this exact topic, that it's kept as broad as possible because this is what industry and businesses have asked for. Putting out a specific list very much constrains the ability, one, to be nimble, but also, for sectors that fall outside of this list, that means they're ineligible, and that's not what we want to do. That's not what chambers have asked for. They want it as broad as possible.

You know, our tax credit will offer a 30 per cent tax credit to investors to provide capital to Alberta companies doing research, development, or commercialization of new technology or new processes in any economic sector, so sectors like, well, manufacturing and processing, which, again, is extremely broad. That applies to agriculture, agrifood. That applies to our forestry sector. That applies to tourism, to energy. That applies to our oil and gas sector as well. It applies to the list; I mean, whether it's transportation, logistics, financial services, et cetera.

The reason that I cannot accept this amendment is that we want the legislation to be as broad as possible to provide the greatest benefit to investors, to job creators, and their employees. The legislation as it's written will keep the eligibility criteria as broad as possible and allow investment and business leaders to make the best decisions to help diversify our economy and create good jobs for Alberta families.

Again, I thank the member for this amendment and for his intention on it, but I will not be supporting this amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'll recognize Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to rise to respond to the minister's comments just for a second here. Let's start by looking at the things that we can agree on here. I would speak in favour of this amendment. I think that it's important that we do have as broad a spectrum of businesses and industries across the board in the sectors of the economy of Alberta. It's important for us to incentivize and to allow the Alberta investor tax credit to be able to speak to the entirety of Alberta. I'm not sure that I truly understand the minister's argument that by expanding the list, we are creating a problem of limiting. That doesn't make sense to this individual here.

You know, I would draw the minister's attention to the very last bullet point there, (x), "any other prescribed business activity." This would be something that the minister would have control over, so I would argue that this amendment truly does lead to an expanded ability for us to be able to speak through this Alberta investor tax credit to all the areas of the Alberta economy when the minister can, under this amendment, prescribe any business activity as being applicable to this particular tax credit.

9:50

But I think we can agree and speak to this portion of the bill, that it's important to be able to speak to the various sectors in the economy of Alberta. You know, I take a look at one that is bringing a huge amount of excitement in and around the Drayton Valley area. I think we've talked about this before with the minister. We have an opportunity to grow and to diversify an agricultural sector in this province through hemp. It's an absolutely exciting opportunity that we have in this province to diversify, and this program could really speak to the ability to diversify and to create jobs and to create wealth for Alberta farmers, for processors, and for manufacturers with regard to hemp.

We know that there is a company in Drayton Valley that's called BioComposites Group, that has started to produce out of hemp and

flax the very first auto parts in the history of Alberta. They're going to be making the inside door panels for various automotive companies and one in particular. We can see that that's going to start to spur the demand for hemp, so we have to start thinking as a province about how we're going to be able to create the venture capital that's going to be necessary and that's going to be important in diversifying this part of the agriculture and manufacturing sectors of the economy in Alberta.

You know, something that people perhaps don't understand is that hemp is one of the most versatile products. It's the strongest natural fibre in the world, and its versatility is just immense. We can use hemp to create makeup, it's a part of the pharmaceutical industries, and it's involved in textiles and the production of cloth. We can have automotive parts.

The processing of hemp is going to create jobs in this province. We're going to have to have decortication plants. There's only one decortication plant in all of North America, and that's found in Vegreville, and that was, again, started by the Alberta government. We need to have more decortication plants if we're going to grow this industry in Alberta.

We're going to need to have producers and farmers. I was talking to a farmer here just this past fall down in southern Alberta, and he grows hemp. We grow 30,000 acres of hemp in this province, and he's one of the farmers that grows hemp. I asked him: "Well, what did you get from your hemp crop? Like, how much did you make per acre?" He goes, "I made \$1,300 an acre just off the seed from the hemp plant."

The stalk is a waste product. It's burned in Manitoba. We can take that waste product and we can add, people are telling me, another \$700 an acre to a farmer's profit margin if we start to encourage this industry in Alberta. That's \$2,000 an acre for a farmer in Alberta. Those are rural jobs where they're needed in Alberta. This is important, and I think this bill speaks to this, and this program can speak to trying to get the investment capital that we need in this particular agricultural investment.

I know that the town of Drayton Valley and the CETC and BioComposites Group are going to be meeting with the minister's office a little later this month, and we're going to be having these kinds of conversations. With a bill like this, if it's passed and if it's broad and we have the list that's out there that's broad, Madam Chair, we can do some good for businesses in Alberta.

I know that when I get looking at this, I can see in this particular sector of the economy that we're going to need farm equipment that can be used to harvest the hemp crop. We're going to need businesses that will be investing in the processing and the decortication plants. For every plant that we have, a facility that can use the hemp product, we're going to be producing and needing at least one to two decortication plants.

It's not just textiles. One of the things, the erosion control matting that they're producing from the plant in Drayton Valley, is only one product.

If we take that hemp stalk and we process it, it's going to create two kinds of fibres. The long fibre will be used by the plant in Drayton Valley, but the shorter fibre, the woody fibre, what they call the hurd, is going to be used down in Calgary. There's a plant down in Calgary and there are others around the province that can use this product to produce cement blocks. It takes a traditional cement block from 25 pounds down to about 15 to 18 pounds, which saves on the transportation costs. It's stronger. It's fire resistant. It's got a two-hour fire rating. It's got better sound qualities, deadening the sound better.

You know, we can use this kind of a bill to be able to help. I'm showing you just one little industry, one sector. That little industry, that little sector of the economy: if we play our cards right and if

we create the investment capital and the desire in this province to move forward in this industry, within the next 10 years it could be between an \$800 million and \$1 billion industry in this province. That's why we need to make sure that this list is as broad as possible.

I would speak to this amendment. I believe that it's a good amendment. I believe that it allows the minister to be able to not limit but to expand. As it says in point (x), the minister can be able to address "any other prescribed business activity." I would encourage the minister and the members on the opposite side of the House to consider this amendment. It's a good amendment. It will help Albertans. It will help business in Alberta, and it will help drive Alberta's economy by allowing investment in this province through this tax credit system.

To be clear, this list excludes no one. It merely establishes a minimum set, and we can see that by the addition of point (x). We would just encourage that this amendment be supported because I believe it does allow us to speak to as wide and as broad a set of sectors in the economy, and we can then encourage investment into this province and the jobs and the tax dollars that go along with that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be very brief. I just want to address one of the specific concerns raised by the minister in his comments. He had talked about the objective of it being as broad as possible – and I think that's a good objective – but said, you know, that by enumerating a list, perhaps that somehow makes it overly restrictive. Again, I remind the member that the last item, item (x), is "any other prescribed business activity." That allows the minister to prescribe an additional business activity, which is the definition of breadth. The minister could choose to do anything.

Again, I just remind the minister and the House how rare a thing that is, that this side of the House would suggest that we allow the government to prescribe something later. Again, I would say that a statistically significant portion of our amendments on this side of the House are about constraining what the government can do. We had some robust, thoughtful discussions last night about exactly that. I would remind the minister that the Member for Calgary-Foothills has done precisely that, and that is to leave that in. It's broad, but at the same time, in listing these specific areas, it's not overly broad.

I think the objective, clearly, is diversifying Alberta's economy. Why, it's the very title of the bill, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. Now, while this unicorn of diversification seems to be something that Alberta has pursued for many, many years and by many measures, if we read Trevor Tombe of the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy, in fact, Alberta's economy by employment is the most diversified in Canada, so I think we need to be mindful of what we're defining as diversification. Perhaps what the government seeks is more diversified revenue as opposed to the actual economy of Alberta being diversified. A different topic for another day.

You know, the objective here is to essentially, really, by my reading of it, explicitly say: we'd like folks to invest in things that aren't directly oil and gas. It's remarkable that it takes nearly a hundred pages to say that. I guess that's the way legislation works.

10:00

Again, I understand the minister doesn't like this amendment, and I think that's unfortunate. I would encourage the minister to perhaps reconsider. It would be a surprise if he did, a happy

surprise, but I think that it really does improve the bill. It addresses a pressing public policy issue and also, I think equally important, addresses the direct concerns of stakeholders. I don't suggest for one second that the minister has not consulted with stakeholders. In fact, I think other ministers perhaps could take some example from this minister in his work with stakeholders. He does very good work. I know that he's out in communities often. I know that he's just come back from overseas. So I'm not questioning in the slightest the minister's commitment, but again this is what I've heard loud and clear from stakeholders. I know that the mover of the amendment has done the same. I just wanted to address the specific issues raised by the minister and would hope that perhaps – there's a faint hope – he would reconsider.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake on the amendment.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am very discouraged by the comments that the minister has made. I would like to discuss the minister's opening speech on Bill 30. It's in *Hansard*, page 1774, on November 8, 2016, specifically the second paragraph.

This bill will enable government to establish two tax credits that, taken together, will drive innovation, diversify our economy, and create jobs. One credit will bring Alberta investors and small businesses together while the other will help ensure that Alberta is attractive and competitive for larger capital investments. By encouraging investment in new products and services and capital projects, the tax credits will offer increased opportunities for more economic activity, diversification, and employment growth. Introducing these measures at a time when businesses are facing challenges will make Alberta more competitive in attracting and retaining investments while creating much-needed jobs. Together these tax credits provide significant support to Alberta businesses when they need it most.

I will mention right off the bat that it doesn't say all of that and then: dictated by the minister who will be chosen or blessed with the tax credit.

Now, I would like to be clear here that in section 35(1)(c) it says: the small business, if required by a condition of the Minister, is or will be substantially engaged, as determined in the prescribed manner, in Alberta in a prescribed business activity that is specified by the Minister in the condition.

I wanted to know exactly what prescribed means. The definition on page 4 says, "prescribed" means prescribed by regulation."

In the end, we're going to see a specific bill go through the House. We are going to see – is that \$100 million in tax credits? I can't remember the exact number. You know, when it first came through – I will state for the record that I've been very critical of the direction this ministry has been going. My riding has been having large, large losses of jobs, and I was hoping to see that our Ministry of Economic Development and Trade would start to actually see some growth in my riding. We haven't seen that so far. We have seen failed programs go through.

The big concern that I have with this bill going through is that it's tax credits, which means that you actually have to have taxable income. Now, when I pull up the forecast for this last quarter, we're seeing that corporate tax income is going to be going down by approximately \$900 million. I do believe that we're going to continue to see that revenue starting to slide because in my riding right now we've got people bidding on jobs just to keep work going, to keep cash flow going.

I will tell you that when I had talked with my local chamber, they were encouraged by this, and I thought: "Well, you know what? This is a move in the right direction." I will commend the minister

that this is actually a piece of legislation that I will support, but I will say that we should never be giving a minister the discretion on exactly what is a part of a small business, and that's what we've done here.

Now, the minister got up and said: well, gee, Wildrose wants to limit what you can put into this tax credit. Let's be very clear that the amendment that we are moving forward does have a list of industries that we would like to see there. It's specific to make sure that they're included and not left out intentionally or unintentionally.

Now, to go to the final clause, (x), "any other prescribed business activity," we still have got the ability for the minister to go in through regulation to be able to add businesses. We still have the ability. So the minister using, "Well, we're going to limit exactly what it is that businesses are able to continue to be able to put forward in their claim for this tax credit" has no validity, in my opinion, and to state that we're trying to leave people out I think is unfortunate.

I will say that it's good to hear that he's out consulting with chambers. Did the minister actually tell the chambers, specifically ask the question: do you want a tax credit that only I have discretion over who's going to be in and out? I would say that the chambers, whether it's the Calgary chamber, Edmonton chamber, or any chamber across Alberta, will say: "Well, this seems to be a little disproportionate. What about all these industries? We've got manufacturing and processing, research. Like, we've got a lot of different things here to make sure that we capture a broader range, not just the pet projects that are being put forward by this government."

We need to ensure that all industries are getting the ability to be able to grow, and that means that there are businesses within my riding that will be able to qualify. That's where I'm tying it back to jobs in my riding because we've had so many job losses and so many failed actions by this ministry. We have seen that there's been no movement forward. I am actually now hoping that this will diversify something within my riding, and to have, possibly, parts of my riding not allowed to get into this tax credit because of regulation, which we don't know, is discouraging for me. I will tell you that agriculture, agrifood, agribusiness: that is my riding. Oil and gas businesses are my riding. We need to ensure that we stimulate these businesses to grow, and it is really hard right now. Jobs right now are the biggest concern in my riding.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I really do have to also chime in on my complete misunderstanding of what the minister seems to think this amendment is all about. I mean, the point of this amendment, actually, is to bring clarity to their bill. People may not realize, actually, that they qualify in these various kinds of industries for the investment tax credits. This is intended to expand awareness. Now, either the minister doesn't understand what "any other prescribed business activity" means, that it in fact leaves it wide open, or he's playing games here, political games.

Part of this amendment might also serve, as the previous member has hinted at, to protect industries from being arbitrarily excluded. Is it the intent that the minister may in fact restrict certain industries by arbitrary choice just by leaving it vague and not being clear? The actual adding of specific sectors allows the opportunity for these sectors to say, "Hey, I do qualify; I do fit into this," and the minister can't just arbitrarily say, "Oh, well, I don't think you qualify; we're looking for something else." This really is about clarity. It's not

about playing political games. I would like the minister just to explain how he thinks that any other prescribed business activity in any way limits this, please.

10:10

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. Madam Chair, like my colleagues on this side said, you know, the minister keeps saying that it's broad enough, but in 35(1)(c) he's saying that he wants to prescribe. It's contradicting what he's saying. He should remove that clause to keep it broad enough so that he won't be picking and choosing the winners in this.

The other reason we brought this amendment is to give that certainty to businesses. Now nobody knows because there isn't enough money for everybody, but at the same time nobody knows who can apply. Madam Chair, I listed all the schemes so far announced by this hon. minister, and I would like to sit with him at his convenience and give him feedback. Even in your riding, when I travelled a month ago or so, people were asking – first of all, they don't know all these schemes like this. Second, they don't know who can apply, and by the time they figure out and they try to apply, they say: well, it's already oversubscribed. Nobody knows.

At the same time, it's not our intent, like the Member for Calgary-Elbow tried to explain, to limit the ability of the minister to approve these tax credits. We said: at least let's pick the sectors which he and his colleagues announced, which was not in the original bill. They are making it up as they go.

The minister said that he consulted the Calgary Chamber of commerce. The Calgary Chamber of commerce told us that they clearly asked the minister to be prescriptive up front, which was missing. That's why we brought this. So when the minister says, "It's broad enough," what if tomorrow, you know, somebody comes and says, "Oh, I'm opening a Subway" or "I'm opening another small business"? We don't know whether it will create enough jobs or whether it will be effective or not. Nobody knows, so now if you leave that confusion in the bill, it's not going to be effective. His intent is to help businesses. At least businesses should know whether they're eligible to apply or not.

So I would request that the minister reconsider and support this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment?

**Mr. Bilous:** Once again, Madam Chair, I'll thank the members for raising certain points. You know, with this amendment the last line saying "any other prescribed business activity" then nullifies or makes listing each specific one – there's no purpose in listing them if it's: and everything else. I appreciate the intention of this amendment. It is not necessary.

Later on today I will table an e-mail that I received this morning from the Calgary Chamber of commerce in which they are completely supportive of the bill in its current form because it is broad and wide ranging and isn't restrictive as far as which sectors. It is very, very broad, which is exactly what the chamber was asking for.

For those reasons, I will not be supporting this amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to speak to the amendment that was introduced by my colleague from Calgary-Foothills. I'm prompted to speak largely because of what I view as being some mixed messaging that comes from this government. I just want to make sure that the minister in his very fair commentary on the amendment is aware of this.



You know, I read what it says in section 35 as well. I guess it depends on how you interpret the discretion that is being applied by the minister to the eligible corporations that would apply for the investment tax credits, that I'm very much in favour of. I guess my concern is what I call the mixed messaging. I hate to keep on reminding the government of some of the mixed messaging that we've received from their communications people, but it really reminds me very much of some of the mixed messaging that went out to farmers and ranchers with regard to Bill 6, and that is that some of what was communicated to Albertans in the course of the press releases and other information with regard to this bill was not a match with what actually appeared in the bill.

I'll share with the minister that earlier this month I attended a seminar that was sponsored by Athabasca University that talked about venture capital, and it talked about the small capital markets in Alberta, the investment capital markets. Two people that I think are, you know, certainly very knowledgeable about those areas, Dave Mowat, the CEO of ATB, and Leo de Bever, the former chair of AIMCo, were both talking about the investment tax credit program. They both praised it. They both said that this was a good idea because what it would do is that it would move money that currently is sitting in savings accounts and is, I wouldn't call it "trapped," but let's just say "inactive" as far as being part of the investment world in Alberta. It would move money out of those accounts. Certainly, we know that investment dollars are very much necessary to create jobs and to create economic activity.

They were praising the idea of an investment tax credit, but their criticism was that the program was too restrictive. Their criticism was that based on the information that had been put out by the government, the program was too restrictive in terms of what qualified for those investment tax credits. Now, I'll think you'll agree that both of these gentlemen are very knowledgeable with regard to the investment world in Alberta, yet the information and communication from the government has led them to believe that the program is simply too restrictive.

Now, I would to a certain extent agree with the minister's interpretation that under section 35(1)(c) it does appear to be very broad, you know, really saying, "the small business, if required by a condition of the Minister, is or will be substantially engaged, as determined in the prescribed manner, in Alberta in a prescribed business activity that is specified by the Minister in the condition." I would agree with what he says as long as the minister is applying a broad range of criteria, and as long as the minister of the day – and we know that from time to time ministers do change – is prepared to prescribe a very broad range of industries and corporations and business activities that would qualify, then certainly it is true, what the minister says, that it is very broad.

But it could also be very narrow. This is, I think, the issue here. I mean, I agree with what the minister says about it being broad and that, you know, the Chamber of commerce would be in agreement with that. Of course the Chamber of commerce would be in agreement with that. But it all depends on the discretion of the minister, and if the minister changes, if the direction of the government changes, if the decision is made that some industries are perhaps subscribing to this program more than the government would like to see at the time, then the minister can suddenly become more restrictive. This bill gives tremendous discretionary power to the minister.

I mean, to a certain extent I kind of agree with what the minister says with regard to the amendment. The amendment also gives tremendous discretionary powers to the minister, so I think that's the level of nervousness. I guess, you know, what I'm concerned about and what I want to make sure that I drive at and that the minister understands is that the communications that have been put

out regarding this program to the general public, including prominent members of the investment community in our province, are such that they believe that this bill will be very restrictive in terms of the activities.

Now, clearly, the minister has been able to communicate to the Calgary Chamber of commerce that that's not the case, but, Minister, you have to broaden that communication because Albertans in general, including prominent members of our investment community, don't believe that that's the case. If that is the situation across our province and if that is what people believe, perception, unfortunately, in some cases is reality. I think, Minister, that while I understand your concerns with regard to the amendment, I actually rather like the amendment because it does make it very clear that there are a number of different business activities that could be included. I think you're right in saying that the final subclause of the amendment kind of throws it wide open all over again.

**10:20**

I am, you know, concerned that under the current legislation there are no specified areas of business activity, yet the communication from your government, the communication that your department has put out very clearly specifies a very restrictive list of business activities. There are mixed messages here. Clarity is something that I think we have to strive for as legislators, and if we're writing and crafting good legislation, I think that's something that we need to look for. So I'm in favour of the amendment. I think the amendment does try to provide a broadened basket of business activities that would be eligible, and I think that to a certain extent that is what the investment community is looking for.

Certainly, from the seminar that I attended earlier this month, that was the main criticism. The entire idea of an investment tax credit, both for business activity as well as for capital, is one that the investment community supports. It is patterned after what has been done in other provinces and has been very successful, you know, specifically in British Columbia. This has been a very successful program in British Columbia, but the British Columbia situation has not been restrictive. The British Columbia situation has not specified certain areas, so it's a little bit confusing to me – and I'm sure it's confusing to the investment community – why this government on the one hand says that it's wide open, it's very broad, yet on the other hand they've communicated a very short and restrictive list of business activities that would be eligible under the investment tax credit.

I support the amendment, and I would ask, actually, the minister to provide some clarity as to what seems to be a disparity between what his department and his government have communicated about this bill and what is written in section 35(c).

**Mr. Clark:** Again, Madam Chair, I just want to rise briefly in response to the – frankly, the only word that comes to mind is "disingenuous" – comments by the minister, who claims that listing the prescribed areas and then saying "any other prescribed business activity" somehow negates the purpose of the prescribed list. The current bill itself, under 35(1)(c), says:

The small business, if required by a condition of the Minister, is or will be substantially engaged, as determined in the prescribed manner, in Alberta in a prescribed business activity that is specified by the Minister . . .

That's what the bill already says. Again, this amendment is being quite generous to the minister by including that, allowing him and his ministry the flexibility they need to administer this program, but it also sets out in the bill itself, not just in a government news release, what those prescribed areas are.

The other question I would have to the minister – and I know he’s paying rapt attention to what I’m talking about here – is: if these are not the areas in which you will allow the investment tax credit to be eligible, as you’ve said in your news release or you’ve said in your public comments, what are the areas that will be eligible? How will you define those things? They’ll come out in regulation at some point, so clearly this is, I would hope, something you’ve given some thought to. You’ve said some nice words in public which, frankly, are broadly consistent with this list here.

What I can’t understand is what the hesitation is to enumerate these things in the bill as opposed to creating them in regulation, because what are we going to see in regulation if not a list not dissimilar to this? These are things that the minister has talked about in public as a result of his extensive consultations with industry and with stakeholders. You know, I suppose it’s maybe a he said, she said. Maybe stakeholders are telling us one thing and telling the minister another, or perhaps the minister is hearing different things.

The stakeholders I’ve talked with – and I’ve had extensive consultations and discussion particularly with chambers of commerce but with business owners and investors themselves, those that seek to actually take advantage of this program; one company here in Edmonton that I know in particular has great interest in taking advantage of this – have been very clear that they would like a very specific set of prescribed areas where it will be eligible; otherwise, how will we know what is eligible?

I can assure you that very few people actually read bills.

**Mr. Cooper:** What?

**Mr. Clark:** Look, no one is more shocked than me.

I for one read every bill that’s come out of this Assembly cover to cover. Most people – I can assure you that very, very few, even fewer people than read bills, read regulations.

Again, there’s some dissonance here. There’s some disconnect between the minister’s words and his actions. It appears that he wants the ability to just prescribe these things. That’s what the bill currently says, but again that’s what the amendment says as well. This amendment doesn’t take anything away from the minister. It adds clarity.

With that, I again would really encourage the minister to reconsider this amendment and support the thoughtful amendment from the Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah, Madam Chair. I’d just like to clarify to the minister that I actually met with the Chamber of commerce. I have a letter from them, and I met them together with our finance critic, the MLA for Strathmore-Brooks. This letter was copied to the members for Calgary-Elbow and Calgary-Fish Creek as well. It was addressed to the minister.

The Calgary Chamber actually told us, you know, that they will withdraw their support for this bill unless the minister clarifies who all is going to be eligible for this funding. Like the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster said, there seems to be some mixed messages. Also, I mean, if the minister says that it’s broad enough and then he goes to the media and he says, “Oh, I’m going to select a certain number of sectors” and names them and the Member for Edmonton-Centre gets up in this House and he gives another four, five sectors that are eligible, that creates a lot of uncertainty for the investors.

Everybody’s in a holding pattern. They started looking at Alberta now, thinking, “Okay; maybe this government is opening Alberta for business,” but by rejecting reasonable amendments like this

common-sense announcement, they are not helping the certainty for businesses. If the minister thinks that it’s prescriptive enough, then he shouldn’t be doing these media conferences, or his colleagues should not be telling the businesses. I would ask him: either he deletes section 35(1)(c), or he should tell us from our amendment which sectors he doesn’t like. If you don’t like certain sectors, you tell that now and clarify. That will help the businesses.

Our amendment says that these are the minimum list of sectors that we are recommending based on the stakeholder consultation. I said that I consulted a variety of stakeholders in all sectors, and based on their input, I put forward this amendment. If the minister doesn’t agree with any of them, he should clarify that. I would ask him to either clarify that and then delete 35(1)(c) or support our amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I’ll call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:29 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Ellis	Smith
Barnes	Gotfried	Starke
Clark	Orr	Swann
Cooper	Panda	Taylor
Cyr		

Against the motion:

Babcock	Hinkley	McPherson
Bilous	Horne	Miller
Carlier	Jansen	Miranda
Carson	Kazim	Nielsen
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Payne
Dach	Larivee	Piquette
Dang	Littlewood	Renaud
Drever	Loyola	Rosendahl
Feehan	Luff	Sabir
Fitzpatrick	Malkinson	Schmidt
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Goehring	McKitrick	Sucha
Gray	McLean	

Totals:	For – 13	Against – 38
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is my pleasure to rise in support of Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. There were some concerns or, I would say, some questions raised in regard to certain aspects of the bill which I would like to highlight points about. I would like to begin, first, with economic impact analysis. The members opposite have asked multiple times if economic impact analyses were completed for both tax credits. Economists in the ministry completed comprehensive economic analyses for both tax credits.

In the case of the AITC the program is anticipated to increase economic activity in the sectors involved in the activities of

research, development, and commercialization of proprietary technology, products, and processes; development of interactive digital media and game products; video postproduction, visual effects, digital animation; and tourism. The activities would not occur at the same level without the support of this program. Over the three-year period AITC will support a total of 2,200 to 4,400 new jobs. Our analysis forecasts that more than half of those jobs come from the businesses directly supported by AITC. The remaining jobs are created in the sectors that support these industries. The increased investment and job-creation support by the AITC would result in a \$200 million to \$500 million increase in GDP over the program period. The model used in the assessment uses data from Statistics Canada.

The CITC is expected to increase economic activity in the sectors related to manufacturing, such as value-added agriculture and energy, as well as tourism. They anticipate that the activities would not occur with the same timeliness without the support of this program as the CITC encourages businesses to make their investment within the program time frame. Manufacturing and processing business exports are projected to increase by \$10 million to \$40 million. Over the two-year period CITC will support a total of 2,200 to 4,600 new jobs. Our analysis forecasts that roughly half of those jobs come from the businesses directly supported by CITC. The remaining jobs are created in sectors that support these business activities, and this increased investment and job creation would result in a \$300 million to \$700 million increase in GDP over the program period.

The relationship between the company and investor is important. What would happen if the relationship between company and investor does not work or a business becomes ineligible? That was something also brought to our attention, so I would like to talk about this as well. Several members also wanted to know what would happen in the case of the AITC if the partnership between the investor and the small business did not work. They also asked if there are provisions in place if a business becomes ineligible for the AITC.

**10:50**

In designing the program, we have taken this possibility into account and included provisions in the legislation to address this issue. For example, the act enables eligible businesses to request to cancel their registration with the program. The eligible business would be required to pay back the total tax credit or a portion of the tax credit. Additionally, should a business become ineligible for the AITC, the act enables their registration to be suspended or revoked. Depending on the nature of their ineligibility or noncompliance, the business may be suspended until they meet the requirements or their registration may be revoked outright.

The other thing I would like to highlight is the case of when a VCC has a controlling stake in a company under the AITC. A very important question that was asked last week was: why can't a venture capital corporation have a controlling stake in a company under the AITC? The intent of the legislation is to ensure that the program is not used to allow a venture capital corporation to acquire a company and receive a tax credit for that acquisition at the same time. The legislation ensures that the program is not being abused or manipulated.

Another question posed by the opposition was: what would happen if a small business grew beyond the 100 full-time employees outlined in the AITC program? Larger businesses often have more capacity to raise funds through traditional financing methods such as loans based on collateral or business track records. The main purpose of the AITC is to support the growth of small businesses. Industry Canada defines a small business as having no

more than 100 full-time equivalents. Because small businesses that develop relationships with venture capital corporations often receive mentorship that helps the business to expand, grow, and become more successful, investment in an eligible small business that grows beyond 100 employees is allowed if the VCC made the original investment when the small business had 100 or fewer employees. This is in line with similar tax credit programs in other jurisdictions.

Some members in the Chamber have expressed concern about the administrative burden of the AITC and CITC. Rest assured that the administrative steps proposed are there so that we can ensure the program is not being abused and that it is doing what it was designed to do: create jobs and diversify the economy.

Opposition members wanted to know if government could change the rules around the tax credits. The CITC and AITC are structured as two- and three-year programs respectively to meet this government's objectives. There is no reason to revoke tax credit certificates from businesses or investors unless there is fraud, misrepresentation, or other violations of the program as described in sections 27, 42, and 64 of this bill.

It was asked if we looked to other jurisdictions when designing the tax credits. Let me assure you that the AITC includes many of the proven aspects used in other jurisdictions, including British Columbia and Nova Scotia. For example, British Columbia's venture capital tax credit program has seen a positive impact on the increase in equity available to small businesses, job creation, and economic return. For every dollar spent under British Columbia's tax credit program, \$1.98 is received back in taxes.

That said, it's important to note that not everything that works in other jurisdictions is appropriate in the Alberta context. Various jurisdictions support venture capital in different formats, which has allowed them to maximize the effectiveness of their approach. Manufacturing or processing investment tax credits are common in many jurisdictions around the world and within Canada. You can look to Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, the Atlantic provinces, and Nova Scotia for similar programs. The tax credit value ranges depending on the jurisdiction. The most common credit rate is 10 per cent, but in some cases the credit is worth as little as 5 per cent and as much as 25 per cent of the investment value.

In developing the CITC, we had to take into consideration our limited budget for the program. This drove some program features that are unique to Alberta, namely the competitive process. I must emphasize, however, that these decisions were supported and even suggested by industry stakeholders. In many case scenarios chambers of commerce, multinational corporations, local business owners were all consulted throughout this process.

Talking about the jurisdictions, I can highlight more details and some specific information related to certain jurisdictions when it comes to investment tax credits. For example, our neighbouring jurisdictions offer a variety of tax credits to specific industries, including a preferential tax rate for manufacturing and processing and an investment tax credit.

A good international example would be the United Kingdom, that has two investor tax credits, the seed enterprise investment scheme and the enterprise investment scheme. The seed enterprise investment scheme is a 50 per cent tax credit with a maximum annual tax credit of 50,000 pounds. It also provides capital gains tax relief if all or part of the capital gains were reinvested. The SEIS is only eligible for investments made in companies with fewer than 25 employees. On the other hand, the EIS is a 30 per cent tax credit with a maximum tax credit of 300,000 pounds. It is only eligible for investments in companies with fewer than 250 FTEs and fewer than \$15 million in gross assets. Similar to B.C. and Manitoba, the U.K.'s schemes exclude activities in developed industries such as

coal and steel production, farming or market gardening, and shipbuilding.

That was an example of something that's happening on the international level, as I mentioned about the U.K., and locally we have other provinces, as I mentioned, other jurisdictions that have some incentives to diversify and promote the economy.

Madam Chair, interestingly, I was able to write a poem to describe how this particular bill is going to be helpful to the province of Alberta, so I would like to have the pleasure of reading the poem.

The economy of Alberta has been like rolling hills,  
Raising concerns for Albertans to pay their bills.  
Reliance on one market and industry is full of risks,  
Diversifying and investing locally are the tricks.  
Alberta investor tax credit will help drive innovation,  
Be it technology, research development, and commercialization.  
Supporting small and medium-sized business expansion,  
Be it tourism, digital media, video postproduction, and animation.  
The capital investment tax credit will advance big enhancements,  
Facilitating companies' large-scale investments.  
Be it manufacturing, processing, tourism, and infrastructure,  
AITC and CITC are great for our future.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** This is to speak on the bill, right?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Taylor:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have a poem, but that was a good poem. Very interesting. You captivated me.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. Alberta is truly facing a crisis when it comes to the economy, and, yes, the province needs to find new and innovative ways to attract new businesses to the province. Attracting investors to Alberta is something that the Wildrose has campaigned on and still rallies on. However, Madam Chair, the ways and means that Wildrose would work to get to this goal, I must say, are different from this government.

Simply put, the path that this government has taken is taking us further away from a balanced, sustainable approach, never mind restoring the Alberta advantage. When this government took over on May 5, 2015, from the previous government, Albertans were in debt approximately \$12 billion if you don't take into account the Alberta heritage savings trust fund.

**11:00**

We finally did get to see the government's budget. That was not to be seen until late November of 2015. That's when we finally got to see the first budget, a stunning six months after being elected. The government wanted to borrow up to 15 per cent of GDP. That's somewhere in the neighbourhood of about \$48 billion. At the same time they promised that they would never need to borrow that much, that that capacity was far more than enough, that they would never have to go beyond that borrowing. But they needed to in order to weather the storm because the oil prices were low. Predictably, you should be looking at the forecast to be able to tell how long oil prices would be low. That was for the downturn in oil.

At the same time, the government promised that they wouldn't be coming back to borrow any more, but just four months later: a new budget. In this budget what did we find? Lo and behold, a new

bill, Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016. This act, against the government's word, is far from responsible. Some might say: as far as the moon is from the Earth. It's true. Those descriptions cannot even capture what the bill entailed or its repercussions in its entirety. Because there is no limit to how much they can borrow – to infinity and beyond – they would have to have a better name for the bill, like the unlimited debt ceiling. As a result of Bill 10, we are now looking at a situation where we will be in debt to the tune of \$60 billion, and at the current rate of interest we'll have to pay about \$2 billion every year just to service that debt.

What does this all mean, and what kind of investment will we be missing out on because of the debt and the deficit? When I looked on paystub.com to see what the average teacher in Alberta made, it said that the average teacher made around \$70,000 a year. Well, if you take the \$2 billion that we're going to be in debt and divide it by \$70,000, you're somewhere in the neighbourhood of a little over 28,000 teachers that could be hired from those interest payments alone. The schools that are being built or have been built in the past couple of years in Paradise Valley and Bashaw, for example: they cost around \$10 million. You could have 200 schools built each and every year – each and every year – for that \$2 billion.

That's a lot of industry. That's a lot of economics that we could have in this province, a lot of jobs. Instead, this government would like to create more profit for the banks. They like the big banks, and they will have to hire more people to count all the cash. I guess that's where this is going. Why is the government so interested in paying all kinds of interest to big banks?

Think of how many jobs could be created just from those payments. Those payments are 28,000-plus teachers. My goodness. This government could repave 3,000 kilometres of highway – think of all the jobs on 3,000 kilometres of highway – that we desperately need across this province. They are in poor and decrepit condition. This could save lives, create tons of jobs. The point I'm trying to make is that you're looking at ways to diversify the economy, but with the loss of billions of dollars already this year and then \$2 billion under this government's plan before voters get a say, you know, it sure is tough to be hopeful about the economic recovery with the jobs.

I've listened to the government, and they said that the oil prices are not their fault. In fact, the Deputy Premier just recently said, to be exact, on Thursday, November 24, at about 13:55, "The market we inherited was broken." She said that the market is broken. I agree that these current oil prices are not their fault, but how they've dealt with the economy is their fault. Putting a Band-Aid on the situation is not going to fix it.

Now, the key to economic diversification is having an overall investment advantage over competing jurisdictions. How do we know this? Alberta's economy diversified a lot more under Klein than it did under his predecessors. Before him governments were backing loans and picking the next big thing for investments. That's what this government seems to be doing, trying to pick the next big thing, and we're looking at them trying to pick the next big thing.

We had a reasoned amendment that came from the Member for Calgary-Foothills, and it was a good amendment, not just reasonable. It was a very good amendment, and it specified many of the areas that could be included. Well, this got shot down by this government. Shame on them. You know, we could be looking at something that adds some clarity and gives assurance to Alberta companies on this bill that we're bringing forward.

However, I do think that Bill 30 is certainly better than the previous job diversification bill they introduced last year, Bill 1. That didn't do anything. It's hopeful to see that 18 months after this NDP government came into power, they have now come to the

realization that Alberta is facing an economic crisis and that steps must be taken to fix it. They're finally coming to that realization.

On a positive note, this is a nonrefundable tax credit, not a borrowed handout, loan, or grant. Unfortunately, this bill does extremely little to cancel out all the other bad ideological policies that they have put in place, policies like the carbon tax, increases in taxes to businesses and individuals, the dramatic minimum wage increase, shutting down coal, suing Alberta-owned companies, and record deficits and borrowing. This bill will hardly fix this, Madam Chair. Hopefully, this will somewhat increase competitiveness with other jurisdictions and help Alberta's 9,000 manufacturers compete with foreign businesses. Hopefully. Taxes and regulatory costs are hurting and killing businesses, and we all know that introducing a carbon tax is not helping the problem, but maybe this bill will fix some of that.

I'm almost certain – and it was alluded to – that the minister has done an economic study on the ramifications of the bill, but what's going to happen with the ramifications? I would like to actually see the economic study, not just hear some of the highlights. I'm not sure that I like the sound of giving the minister the discretion to refund the excess amount of the tax credit over Alberta tax. It sounds too much like the previous government's cronyism. I think we should add an amendment to the bill to mandate an independent review of some kind to ensure that there is no cronyism and that the program is actually creating investment in the province and not just lowering revenues.

It's bad policy that has gotten us to where we are today, and if we look closely to our neighbour to the east, we can clearly see that they're not suffering to the same degree that we are, with job stats and drilling stats.

**An Hon. Member:** Are you talking about Saskatchewan?

11:10

**Mr. Taylor:** Right next door, in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Saskatchewan is not trying to spend their way to prosperity. Rather, they put policies in place that are clearly more attractive than Alberta's. Saskatchewan has been paying off most of its debt, and its budget has a projected deficit of about half a billion dollars – \$427 million is what I read – in 2016-2017. But when you look at Alberta's deficit forecast, we just heard that it was \$10.8 billion. That's almost \$11 billion. You know, that's about 20 times the deficit that they have in Saskatchewan.

We have the same oil, the same farms, the same forestry industry. Hey, we even have the Rockies for tourism. That's something Saskatchewan doesn't have. We have tourism. You would assume that when we have the same oil, the same farms, the same industries, virtually, and we have tourism, we should be doing way better than Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, we're not. A deficit of \$427 million is what they've projected. Unfortunately, we had to borrow and go into a deficit of \$10.8 billion.

Listen, folks. Despite this Bill 30, for the most part this government's plan is all wrong. We need to lower taxes and regulatory costs, lower costs for consumables like electricity and gas. That's how you can signal to investors that this is a place to invest. When you want to bring people to the province, you've got to have signals to bring people in. Jobs will follow when companies and businesses invest in our economy. That's what happens. If they want to come to our province, jobs follow.

Next, work with different levels of government and postsecondary institutions to help steer the ship towards a diversified economy, one that actually works, one that has an Alberta advantage.

Alberta plans to bring in over the next two years higher carbon taxes than any other jurisdiction in Canada bar none. [interjection] Yeah, in the world. Carbon taxes don't work. Just ask Australia. Ask Australia how the carbon tax worked for them between 2011 and 2014. Rather, work with research and industry to develop innovative solutions to create even more sound techniques to extract oil in a cleaner manner. We have the ability here. Why not work with what we've got, what we know? We know oil, and we know agriculture. Then sell these innovations across the world, thereby creating jobs, attracting the best here to Alberta, and creating the cleanest environment in the world. If your action plan is so sound, can you please show me the economic study on how this works?

Why does this program only target certain industries? We are known around the world for our oil and our agriculture, yet why was there originally no plan or clear plan for the agrifood sector, as was brought up in this amendment, to get tax credits for them? We are either punishing our oil sector or we've forgotten our agriculture sector. The government is out of touch and needs to begin to work with what we've got and learn how to expand it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am honoured and quite excited to speak as a cosponsor in support of Bill 30, the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. Establishing the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit will encourage innovation, further diversify the Alberta economy, and create new jobs. Many provinces in Canada have similar programs, as my colleague was alluding to earlier, including British Columbia. The B.C. investment tax credit program is a well-established program and has been very successful in British Columbia, with a return of \$1.98 for every tax dollar invested. I would invest in that.

Last summer I spoke to the A100. Madam Chair, they are an Alberta organization comprising entrepreneurs, founders, and C-level executives that are dedicated to lasting diversification of Alberta's economy, and they do this by supporting up-and-coming tech entrepreneurs by sharing their networks and their experience. A number of technology companies have been founded in Alberta. We've recently seen a 48 per cent jump in the number of technology companies with headquarters in the province according to a recently released survey, the Alberta Enterprise Corporation 2016 deal flow study. We don't currently have the strength of the B.C. tech industry, which is very successful, so successful that there have been efforts to recruit Alberta tech workers to B.C. Three days ago the *Globe and Mail* reported how B.C.'s tech sector is growing so fast that it's hard to measure.

The possibilities of the new economy are really exciting, and it's equally exciting that the AITC will enable our tech sector to take advantage of the myriad opportunities. So how would investors be able to take advantage of this initiative? Well, the program will give investors a 30 per cent tax credit on investment in new ventures, up to \$30 million from 2017 to 2019, and it covers investments made in Alberta companies from April 14, 2016, to the end of December 2019. The AITC would be provided on a first-come, first-served basis for individual investors, which for start-ups are often family and friends. The maximum tax credit would be \$60,000 a year. This translates into a maximum \$200,000 investment. The tax credit is refundable for individual investors and could be carried forward up to four years if it isn't required in the tax year of the investment. That allows investors to create a long-term strategy for their investment dollars. For corporate investors there would not be a

maximum tax credit. It would also be carried forward and is nonrefundable.

I spoke to an A100 member earlier this month. The organization is very excited about Bill 30, and they're actively working on multiple initiatives to support the bill and encourage deal flow in the province.

The start-up culture in Calgary and Alberta is strong. There are a number of incubators in Calgary and Edmonton, with environments that help connect founders with mentors. They offer networking opportunities, and they encourage collaboration among the start-up community. Investment that would be encouraged by the AITC will strengthen this culture, providing more opportunity for innovation by people who are passionate about technology. I find this really exciting.

The capital investment tax credit gives Alberta companies a unique opportunity to further benefit from investing in the tangible assets, like machinery and buildings, that make their businesses more competitive. The CITC will make a 10 per cent nonrefundable tax credit available for capital investments up to \$5 million.

I recently visited a company in my riding that's looking to invest in equipment. This is a CNC machine shop, and they manufacture components for customers from a number of industries like aerospace, oil and gas, and remote-controlled vehicles. They have a pretty diverse client base. In talking to the owner, I learned that he's planning to invest in new equipment for his business. Madam Chair, high-end CNC machines that manufacture precision parts are worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, and investing in this equipment will allow this company to grow and take advantage of opportunities they wouldn't be able to access otherwise.

The new business generated by this capital investment will also generate new jobs for skilled workers and have a positive effect on Alberta's employment rate.

For these reasons, Madam Chair, I encourage all of my colleagues to vote in support of Bill 30. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to move that Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, be amended, and I have the requisite copies here for the desk. The original is on top of those, just for your information.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

11:20

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, be amended as follows. In part A section 3(3) is amended by striking out "may" and substituting "shall." In part B section 34(3) is amended by striking out "may" and substituting "shall."

Madam Chair, this amendment seeks to clarify the approval process for registration to be eligible for these two programs. It is important to note here that these amendments deal with the entity being approved to be eligible for these programs. It does not mean that an individual or corporation would automatically receive tax credits from the government, so purely a clarification. They would simply be eligible for those programs as deemed appropriate by the minister.

By making a slight wording change in two sections of the legislation, I feel the approval process would be much more transparent and understandable to the public. It has been noted earlier that some of the press releases that have gone out have been somewhat prescriptive in their nature, and I know that the minister's intention is actually for it to be much more broadly accepted and

that those opportunities for businesses to subscribe to it are much more broadly written. This is because with the legislation as currently written, an applicant investor or corporation could meet all of the designated criteria, and the minister "may" approve this individual or entity. We would like this to be "shall" approve if they meet all the conditions. So if the individual investor or company, depending on the program, meets all of the criteria as laid out by the minister, the individual investor or company would automatically be approved as eligible, again, meeting all those criteria as outlined.

Our caucus feels that this removes headaches for the minister. I know that he's going to have his hands full – we hope he's going to have his hands full – with many applicants for the program. The day the person will actually automatically approve investors and companies who are eligible I think is a better way for them to know, as they meet all the criteria, that they will need to go through the process, but there is a high likelihood and, in fact, a guarantee that they will be moved through the program if all conditions are met.

If it is left the way it is, it opens the door for a company which checks all the boxes and is, for whatever reason, not approved to claim after that the minister was somehow biased against them. I'm sure the minister would not want to have any further opportunities for people to say that there was a bias for or against any sectors or individual companies, again not picking any winners or losers, particularly within the criteria prescribed. By changing one word in two sections, we can remove this potential headache and administrative burden for the minister, and I would ask that the House accept this and support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As I've expressed in the past to members of this Chamber, amendments that are reasonable, that strive to improve the bill: I'm completely open to and our government is open to accepting them. This is one such amendment. It's a very reasonable amendment, moving the word "may" to "shall." For those reasons, I will be voting in favour of this amendment.

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** I just have a technical question for the minister. By moving "may" to "shall," does this mean that you're going to be overshooting the limits that you've set for the tax credit?

**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Chair, the short answer is no. Should a corporation meet all the other requirements and be eligible, then it means that they will be registered once they satisfy all of the others as opposed to: they possibly would be registered.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

**Mr. Gotfried:** Madam Chair, I would just like to rise to thank the minister for accepting this. It's a very small change, but I think it could be a meaningful one. I think that, in the spirit of co-operation on the legislation, again I'd like to extend my thanks for being open to improving the legislation albeit in a small measure at this point in time – there are other amendments to come – and I'd like to thank him for that.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 carried]

**The Chair:** Are there any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 30? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Dr. Starke:** You're on a roll.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Well, now that we're on a roll here, we'll try this again.

Thank you again to the minister.

Madam Chair, I'd like to rise again to move an amendment to Bill 30. I have the requisite copies here. The original should be on top.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A3.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move today an amendment to Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, that it be amended in section 65(3) by striking out "as soon as is reasonably practicable after making the decision" and substituting "within 30 days after making the decision to rescind, vary or confirm under subsection 2."

Again, I'd like to thank the minister. This is a very detailed and very involved bill, and these are just some small opportunities we see for some clarification. This amendment seeks to clarify the approval timeline for the capital investment tax credit program. By changing the language that's currently in place, which may be considered to be somewhat vague or not as clear as we would like to see, and replacing it with a 30-day timeline, we feel the decision-making process becomes somewhat more definitive for applicant companies who may need to either move on or find other forms of financing which may be affected by the decision.

The 30-day timeline is consistent with portions of this legislation which deal with an applicant company's ability to appeal a decision made by the minister. Again, a clarification of some of the terms within it. While we all have faith in the minister and his staff and their ability to respond as quickly and efficiently as possible to all applications – and we know that that will be the case. Obviously, they want to move the applicants through as quickly as they possibly can to find those that are eligible. We simply want to formalize those timelines within the legislation in order to give potential investment companies greater clarity in their ability to take advantage of this opportunity hopefully to invest, to support the economy, and to create jobs.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In addition to looking at other jurisdictions, I think this is a reasonable amendment that, you know, I would encourage people in our House to support.

**Mr. Cooper:** Two in a row.

**Ms Babcock:** I know.

I think that we should all work together to accept this one because in addition to looking at other jurisdictions which we have lagged

behind for much too long, both in terms of venture capital dollar invested and deal flow, members opposite have asked about measures to evaluate these tax credits. There are checks and balances in place to evaluate the success of both programs. For the AITC, a venture capital corporation, any eligible business corporation, must prepare and file a report to the minister within six months after its fiscal year-end. This report must include their most recent financial statements, and for venture capital corporations this report must also include information on the investments their VCC has made. For the CITC, before the tax credit certificate is granted, conditionally approved applicants must show that the investment has been made and describe the economic, social, environmental, and employment impacts of the investment.

The transition away from coal-fired electricity generation has caused concern for many, and members have asked if the tax credits will help with the transition. We understand that this transition will affect communities and workers surrounding coal-fired generation facilities and associated mining operations such as in Stony Plain. That's why we've established a strong panel of experts that will meet with workers and stakeholders in the new year and provide government with advice and options for supporting community transition.

The members opposite wanted to know how much diversification has happened since the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade was created in October 2015. The economy is the ministry's top priority, and our government is working to ensure that the province sees sustainable job creation and diversification long into the future.

**11:30**

In August, three months after the introduction of the Alberta jobs plan in Budget 2016, the provincial economy began adding jobs, a trend that has continued. Between August 1 and October 31, 2016, the provincial economy added 25,000 jobs. The programs implemented through the Alberta jobs plan are building infrastructure, diversifying the economy, driving business growth, and increasing investment in Alberta companies. By encouraging local investors to invest in Alberta, we will see Albertan companies expand, innovate, create jobs, and show small-business success during our current tough economic situation. In this way, Madam Chair, the AITC is a de-risking tool that makes investing in Alberta more attractive and encourages the private sector to see the benefits of investing in nontraditional sectors, resulting in a more diversified economy.

Our small and medium-sized businesses are one of the pillars in our communities. Having programs that are designed to benefit them will support our rural communities as they supplement existing programs and address existing gaps. I encourage you to learn more about the actions we have been taking, all of which have been outlined in the document that was released earlier this month on alberta.ca, and I would like to thank all the members for their comments during the debate that we've had so far this morning.

The Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit are important components of the Alberta jobs plan. Introducing these tax credits at a time when businesses are facing challenges will make us more competitive in attracting and retaining investments while creating these much-needed jobs. Moving forward with this legislation will ensure the government has the right tools in place to promote economic diversification, support employers and entrepreneurs in creating jobs, and encourage investment in the province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

**Mr. Bilous:** I'll just make my comment very brief, Madam Chair. I want to thank the member for introducing this amendment. I appreciate where he's coming from. I think 30 days is reasonable. It puts it a little more clearly for companies. For those reasons – we are on a roll – I am pleased to accept this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to the amendment?

**Mr. Gotfried:** I'd be remiss in not thanking the minister again for accepting this very modest amendment. It does put some onus on his department, but I know that they will try to meet those types of turnaround in any case. It does hold them a little more accountable to the people that are applying, and I think that any respect that we can give those businesspeople who have the interest in investing in this province is, I think, well positioned.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 carried]

**The Chair:** We're back on the bill. Are there any further amendments, questions, or comments with respect to this bill?

**Mr. Panda:** Madam Speaker, in the spirit of give-and-take from the minister, I'm trying my luck now. I have a reasonable amendment which I hope the minister will consider. I have the requisite copies, and I'll give them to you for distribution.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A4.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Panda:** Madam Chair, the Official Opposition is on the record as saying that we support the intent of the bill and that we just want to make it better and that we want to understand the effectiveness of this program. It's one thing to say that we want to bring in investment tax credits and help the businesses to grow in Alberta, but we have seen many such programs before. They may not be exactly the same but with similar intention, and the results were not up to satisfaction.

That's why we have to measure the effectiveness of this program to see that it is delivering the intended results. Otherwise, if we don't measure and track, you know, it's like giving away free money without any accountability. That's why we need to make sure that the tax credits are exactly delivering the results like encouraging investment and increasing jobs beyond the status quo that we are in now. That's why I'm asking the Auditor General. Anyway, he will be involved one way or another.

I'll read this amendment, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, be amended by adding the following after section 80:

Review by Auditor General

80.1(1) One year after the coming into force of this Act, the Auditor General shall prepare a report [to the Assembly] on the total costs associated with the administration, distribution and tracking of the tax credits provided for in this Act . . .

(2) A report prepared under subsection (1) shall be presented by the Auditor General to the Speaker who shall lay a copy of the report before the Assembly if it is then sitting or, if it is not sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Madam Chair, by the time the Auditor General's report is in, it will be the middle of the second year, so not too late to improve the AITC for its last year. Hopefully, we'll be the government by then, anyway, but we want to help this government to put in some checks

and balances and to have some ways to measure the success or failure of this program and make it more efficient. Also, we want everyone here to make sure to give a shot in the arm to investment, particularly when we need those investments in the current economic environment.

That's why I think it's a good idea to get the Auditor General to measure and give his report on whether this program is on track, whether it is delivering the results or not, or if it is wasting the money. In that way, we can course-correct and make sure this program is successful.

I ask all members to support this amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in speaking to this amendment, I'm not going to support it. It's already under the Auditor General's purview to evaluate the expenditures of all ministries, so for that reason this amendment is redundant. As well, the act is going to be evaluated by the ministry on an ongoing basis, so there really is no reason to amend the act in order to ensure that this happens.

I would encourage all members to vote against this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to speak in support of the amendment and address a couple of the comments. Of course, all expenditures that the government makes are under the Auditor General's purview. However, the Auditor General isn't required to report on certain sections of spending on an annual basis. You know, the Auditor General only has so much time and resources, and this is a new program, and it would be very beneficial if we could be assured that the AG would be reporting on it.

11:40

Certainly, we have proposed a number of amendments that would require accountability around this minister's office. I'm sure you'll remember Bill 1, where the minister voted against reporting back to the Assembly. He assured us that we would have regular updates on the successes of that bill and that those would be in the House. I continue to wait for those.

All that the member is suggesting is that we provide a certain level of accountability and transparency, and one of the great ways to do that is a tool that's already at our disposal in the form of the Auditor General. I'm a little disappointed to see the government continually voting against accountability to the Assembly. It's a track record that they are establishing for themselves that is similar to the previous government's track record with respect to reporting to the Assembly and things being done behind closed doors. Now, it's my hope that the Auditor General will undertake this on his own initiative, but we certainly had the ability to pass this piece of legislation, that would have required him to do that.

I hope that the members across will reconsider. We could have had three positive amendments moved and then three positive amendments passed. I look forward to the ongoing debate.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, you know, when it comes to spending large sums of money, we need to make sure that taxpayers are always at the centre of every dollar that we're responsible for. Now, by adding this amendment, we will ensure that there is transparency and accountability and ensure that some



things that may have happened in the past don't happen in our future.

Now, the problem here and the danger is that unless we have somebody just take a quick look at exactly what is happening and how the tax credit is functioning, there is a potential – and I know that no member here would take advantage of this – that we could end up with a tax break or cronyism for those who are either good at navigating or are friends. I am concerned that whenever we open up one of these tax credits, we need to be very sensitive to the fact that we just voted down a Wildrose amendment trying to broaden and ensure the fact that all of the areas are included within this bill and opening it up so that it's not just at the minister's discretion. When we start bringing stuff forward like this, I believe we try to work with the minister by saying: let's put in some definition of exactly who's going to be here, but we still will allow you the opportunity to add different industries should you need it. Well, the government voted that down, so this is our second step to try to add accountability to where this bill is going. Somebody needs to make sure that this goes.

Again, it comes to jobs at this point. I do believe the minister is looking to create jobs with this bill, which is why I plan on supporting this bill when it goes to vote. But it's the checks and balances, the transparency and accountability that bring the government awareness that there's somebody that's going to be checking to make sure that it is doing what it's intended to do. We have heard repeatedly from the government that they are open to transparency and accountability, yet in this case we're trying to bring that to the government, and it sounds like they're going to deny us on that. That is very tragic.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to bring an amendment which also seeks to compel the minister to bring a report but not to include the Auditor General. I will hand this to a page and await your response.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A5.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Clark to move that Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, be amended to add after section 80:

Annual Report

80.1(1) The Minister must annually prepare a report by December 31 that includes the following:

- (a) the total costs associated with the administration, distribution and tracking of the tax credits provided for in this Act; and
  - (b) the economic impact associated with the tax credits provided for in this Act.
- (2) When the report is complete, the Minister must make it available to the public and shall lay a copy of it before the Legislative Assembly if it is sitting and if it is not, within 15 days after the commencement of the next session.

The rationale for this amendment, of course, is similar to the one previously brought by the Member for Calgary-Foothills, the

difference being that it is the minister, in fact, who must prepare the report, not the Auditor General. In fact, I agree with the minister that it is not appropriate, I think, to ask the Auditor General to prepare this report. I don't believe that is the role of that office. Ultimately, everything the government does will at some point be audited by the Auditor General.

A program as important as this one – I think that good data makes good decisions. I'm sure you've heard me say that many times in this Assembly. I believe that compelling the minister to prepare an annual report on the efficacy of this program will allow Albertans to know whether or not the program is, in fact, effective. That reporting will happen, not at the political whim of the government, whether it is to their benefit or not, but it will in fact compel the minister to do so annually.

The principles of transparency, of openness, of good data making good decisions I think ought to be paramount for any legislation that we pass in this Assembly. For something that could potentially be as beneficial as this is to Albertans, this could be a good-news story for the government. They get to prepare an annual report and let Albertans know whether or not it's being effective. Frankly, if it is not effective, I think we should know that as well. I would imagine the government would like to know that as well and also what the costs are of this program. While there may be benefits, I think it's also important to know what the costs are.

That's why this amendment is balanced in that it both seeks to compel the minister to provide a report associated with the costs of administration, distribution, and tracking but also the economic impact and to let all Albertans know that in a systematic, structured, predictable, and regular manner. I believe that is most appropriate to be done from the minister's office, not necessarily from the Auditor General.

With that, I look forward to hearing the minister's response, and I would encourage all members to support this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks very much, Madam Chair. I'll be brief. One of the big questions about this government's policies has been accountability. There's a lot of spending, a lot of borrowing, and a lot of investments that need transparency and need accountability. Given what I've seen from this minister so far, I'm very encouraged that he will indeed want to both say that he stands for transparency and accountability and demonstrate that he stands for transparency and accountability.

It's one of the constant bugbears of governments everywhere that there's a difficulty in showing us the books and demonstrating both the costs and the benefits to Albertans and, in this case, small businesses, employment, diversification. Show us the impacts of these what look to be, on the surface, excellent incentives, excellent investment stimuli.

I'll certainly be supporting this, and I'm hoping to see a positive response on the other side as well. Thanks, Madam Chair.

11:50

**Mr. Panda:** Madam Chair, I am rising in support of this amendment for the reasons explained by both members from Calgary, Calgary-Elbow and Calgary-Mountain View. I mean, like the previous speaker said, the devils are in the details. Most of the time, you know, it's all great on paper – it all looks great – but the effectiveness of these programs is hard to measure unless we have thorough checks and balances. We should have periodic reporting by the minister. I know he didn't want the Auditor General – he didn't support that – but at least this is reasonable. The minister's

department should be able to support him with this report every year, with the results of this, whether we are spending taxpayers' dollars wisely or are wasting the money.

I hope the minister will consider it. It's a rare occasion today, actually. The member for Calgary-Mountain View, in fact, supported my reasonable amendment earlier this morning to bring clarity to this program, but the minister said no. I hope he will listen to all concerns raised by the opposition and consider this one. It doesn't cost him anything.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?  
The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will thank the member for this amendment. I appreciate, you know, the intention of this amendment, although I can assure this House that it is my job to on a regular basis update Albertans as far as how our programs are doing, the number of jobs that are being created, investment that's being attracted into the province. I will continue to do that on a regular basis and, therefore, will not be supporting this amendment.

Again, this is something that Albertans are very interested in knowing. We will be doing an ongoing review of both tax credits to ensure that not only are we getting maximum value but, also, that there is a decent amount of uptake and that it is in fact supporting our small to medium-sized businesses, helping them grow. Of course, they then increase their number of employees, hire more Albertans, which is exactly what we're looking to do.

For those reason, I will not be supporting this amendment.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's more than a little bit disappointing that the government members are about to vote against accountability, vote against providing information to this Chamber that is vitally important. A significant, substantial report is different than the minister just coming and saying: "Don't worry. The sky is blue, and everything is perfect." It's more than about disappointing, but I do look forward to the government continuing down this path of a lack of accountability and a lack of respect for the Assembly.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A5?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:54 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Clark	Gotfried	Smith
Cooper	Orr	Starke
Cyr	Panda	Swann
Drysdale		

Against the motion:

Babcock	Jansen	Miller
Bilous	Kazim	Miranda
Carson	Kleinsteuber	Nielsen
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Payne
Dach	Littlewood	Piquette
Dang	Loyola	Renaud
Drever	Luff	Rosendahl
Feehan	Malkinson	Sabir
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Schmidt
Goehring	McKitrick	Sucha
Hinkley	McLean	Turner
Horne	McPherson	

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

**The Chair:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report progress.

**The Chair:** It's automatic under Standing Order 4(3).

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Dach:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 30. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:59 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, November 30, 2016

Day 55

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
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Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
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Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

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Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
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Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
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Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk

Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House  
Services

Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and  
Legal Research Officer

Aurelia Nicholls, Sessional Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services

Nancy Robert, Research Officer

Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms

Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 30, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good evening. Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

#### Bill 32

#### Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016

[Adjourned debate November 30: Mr. Kleinstuber]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 32? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise and speak on Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016, but I must say that I probably have more questions than I do comments, so I'll begin.

There are many themes that I'm interested in addressing. I guess in one way I'm interested in the motive for Bill 32 and how that relates to stakeholder feedback and consultation. I'm looking, hopefully after I speak, to get some assurance from somebody on the government side that they spent enough time with the credit unions in Alberta to know that they're in favour of what the government is about to do.

We're not opposed to making sensible changes to the way credit unions operate, but I think the government ought to clarify their rationale for the act. In saying this, I'd urge the minister responsible to ensure that the bases have been covered with consultation. I'm looking for some assurance that there will be no unintended ill effects on the hard-working Albertans and, of course, the credit unions and their employees, who are indeed amongst the hard-working Albertans. Of course, with consultation comes the assurance that other stakeholders that do business with the credit unions won't get any unpleasant or unexpected consequences either as a result of the legislation. Again, I'm hoping that the government will give the House some assurance that adequate back-and-forth consultations have taken place. Albertans deserve no less. The credit unions are an important part of the financial framework that makes our province work.

It looks like the government is attempting to expand the role and exposure of credit unions throughout Alberta, and in recognition I'd like to turn my attention for a minute to section 5 of the legislation, which repeals section 48 of the original act. Section 48 mandates that

a credit union shall report

- (a) the establishment of a branch of its business,
- (b) the relocation of any of its branches, or
- (c) the establishment of an automated banking machine.

I think most members of the House would probably agree with me that that's a fairly rudimentary and unsophisticated list of things to report on, particularly in the realm of financial management and financial legislation.

By repealing the section, we are decreasing reporting of what I've already said is a fairly rudimentary piece of the credit union legislation, so I guess I'm looking for assurance also that the government is going to require adequate reporting on the more sophisticated and more risky pieces of financial reporting. It just seems logical to me that the information for the public should be published, that, you know, those financial pieces, like having adequate financial reserves and the other basics, are there. Hopefully, the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort will have an

opportunity to stand up to talk about how that consultation was done and what some of the rationale is for the legislation that's before us.

Now, on the expanded scope of authority and ability given to credit unions through Bill 32, it's my understanding that the legislation will give small and medium-sized businesses greater access to lending. On the face of it, that's a good idea, and ensuring the stability of a lending institution that's doing that is paramount to providing that healthy, vibrant economy and is the cornerstone of a market economy. I'm hopeful that the sponsor of the bill will talk a little bit about that because, obviously, maintaining that stability means that the credit unions will be around to serve Albertans for a long, long time. I hope all members of the House will agree with me that that could only be a good thing.

We know that

the purposes of a credit union are to provide financial services on a co-operative basis . . .

- (a) for its members, and
- (b) for non-members, with loans to and deposits from non-members being restricted to what is prescribed as allowed, and its principal purposes are to receive deposits from, and to make loans to, its members.

Madam Speaker, while I think that expanding the ability for the credit unions to provide services and to offer financial services to Albertans is a good thing, in an attempt to be brief I will just say and hope that the sponsor of the bill will stand up and talk to it. If I could get some assurance that the credit unions were adequately consulted, that some of the credit union's major stakeholders have been adequately consulted, and that the basic financial building blocks have been talked about in terms of having adequate reserves and the ability to carry on providing those services on a long-term basis.

There it is. I don't think I've really challenged the legislation. I hope I've asked some reasonable questions, and I finish hopeful that the sponsor of the bill will stand up and make some attempt to answer those questions.

Thanks, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) comes into effect should anybody have comments or questions. The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to address some of the questions posed by my friend across the aisle and current colleague in this Legislature and also the questions that were posed by a member of the opposition party who is not here. Sorry. [interjections] I didn't say who it was. All right. I didn't say who it was, and I apologize to him in absentia.

Maybe I'll start this way. In answer to some of the questions that were posed, the introduction of one part – I think it was section 9 – is being delayed until January 1, 2018. It's with regard to the disclosure of the five highest paid people who are in credit unions that have more than 2.5 per cent of the total percentage of the amount of money that collectively all the credit unions have. The amount of time that's being asked for them to put that in order is really because they need to look at their policies. If they don't have disclosure policies in place, they need to put those in place, and then they need to have the membership review them.

As was said earlier by a cosponsor, you know, there are 620,000 Albertans who are a part of the 23 credit unions that exist in Alberta. The members of those credit unions that have the five highest paid people who have to be asked to disclose have to put those policies in place, and they have to vote on them. So we're ensuring they make those policies and giving them some time to put them in place. That's why there's a bit of a delay between now and the passage of

this bill and when it comes into force on January 1, 2018, with respect to that one piece only.

Other questions that were asked – and I apologize that I didn't hear all of them personally, but I got a little bit of a sense of what I was being asked to rise and speak to. You know, I want you to know that the amendment act that we're bringing in was something that the credit union system, CUCA, has been pushing for for a while. For whatever reasons, the act didn't get amended by the previous government, and they reached out to this government early on and said that they would really appreciate a lot of the things that they've been pushing for for a number of years to get addressed in an amendment brought before this House.

The president and CEO of Alberta's largest credit union, Servus Credit Union, Garth Warner, I introduced here in the House last week when we were introducing the bill. He has been engaged in the discussions around all of this for a great long time, and I've met with him personally a couple of times myself. He's met with members of Treasury Board and Finance that deal with credit unions.

7:40

Steve Friend, the CEO of Vision Credit Union, was also introduced here, as was a gentleman that I was on the Calgary library board at one time with, Graham Wetter. Graham and I go back a ways, and he is the CEO of the CUCA. They have brought forward through their members, both the 23 credit unions and the association of credit unions, a number of recommendations for us to address here as a government. We looked at a substantial number of those. Not all of them could be addressed. One of them, frankly, was a challenge for us. They were looking for half a billion dollars to go out and be able to loan, you know, capital liquidity to Albertans to help get them through this downturn. Because the province of Alberta 100 per cent guarantees the deposits on credit unions, we felt that that was not possible, so we didn't do it, but we did a number of other things, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there hon. members wishing to speak? Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his comments. I didn't hear anyone concerned about whether there were questions or comments in 29(2)(a) and how much time he was taking, but I thought he did a great job of answering some of the concerns of the member.

I'd just like to very briefly rise and speak in favour of the bill. I had the opportunity to spend some time with – I can't remember his exact title – Bob Marshall at the Mountain View Credit Union this summer in support of a charity event that they run down there in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. At that time they had heard rumblings of the bill coming and certainly had some reservations just in terms of whether or not the government would be responsive to the needs of the credit union system, raised some concerns about some of the issues in that marketplace that create some unlevel playing fields, if you will, and just highlighted some of the successes of the credit union systems generally and the great work that Mountain View Credit Union does in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and I know also in the constituency of Rimbe- Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and also in the constituency of Drumheller-Stettler. They really do understand the unique and important role that rural Alberta has to play. They understand the unique and important role that the banking industry and the credit unions play in ensuring that our rural Alberta friends can have access to capital, build relationships with their banks, and really be local solutions to local concerns and problems.

So I was pleased when Mr. Marshall reached out to me and expressed his support for the legislation and expressed that the government had been able to check a number of the boxes on behalf of the credit union system. I also had the opportunity to hear from Alberta Central and some of their comments and points around, really, this bill doing a number of things that will continue the ongoing success of the credit union system, which does play such an important role not in just rural Alberta, but certainly the context that I know it in is in rural Alberta. I look forward to being able to support this piece of legislation on behalf of the thousands and thousands of members of the Mountain View Credit Union and the others who benefit from the credit union system.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

The hon. Minister of Finance to close debate.

**Mr. Ceci:** Vote.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a second time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 30

#### Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Sure. Okay. Thank you, Chair. Actually, this is a really great day for me because I get to talk about one of my favourite subjects in the Legislative Assembly, and that is the power of community investment. Earlier on we discussed the powers of the co-operative sector, especially around the credit unions, as to the achievements that they have had in terms of the economy, especially in small communities, and the power that they have had in providing farmers and others with the needed credit and financial services.

What I would like to do this evening is to put my support towards Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. But I especially want to talk about a part of the bill that we haven't discussed in the Assembly yet, and that is the part that talks about enabling the government to establish community economic development corporations, or CEDCs. I know that many of my colleagues in the Assembly are probably wondering what a CEDC is. CEDCs are for-profit investment funds that invest equity in locally owned businesses recognized for their positive social, economic, and environmental returns to communities.

The minister is engaged currently in consultation with targeted stakeholders to ensure that the program that is built into the bill will be successful. The proposal in this bill is that the CEDC portion of the program will be implemented in the summer of 2017. If you're wondering why the minister decided to incorporate this into this bill, it's because this is something which is very prominent in other parts of Canada. For example, there are precedents for enabling local investing in Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick. Actually, Nova Scotia led the way in 1999 with the creation of CEDIF as an investment tax credit. Since its launch 70 CEDCs have been established, mobilizing 7,500 investors, and more than \$70 million in assets contributed.

7:50

Can you imagine, as I have often done, how I can use my RRSPs and the money that I have to benefit communities? This is what CEDCs are. CEDCs mobilize local capital for local entrepreneurs to help local businesses in Alberta, thereby growing and diversifying our economy, creating jobs, and growing businesses, with positive social and environmental returns as well as economic.

Locally owned businesses, including social enterprise and co-operatives, are critical job creators, and they are also very wise in terms of their environmental impact on business decisions and are more likely to employ vulnerable Albertans, more likely to pay a living wage, and more likely to invest in community. Those locally owned businesses are often recognized for their positive social, economic, and environmental returns to communities.

I'm sure you're wondering if this has happened already in Alberta. I'm going to have the pleasure of telling you about what already exists here in Alberta. In Alberta we already have a number of such places to invest your money, your RRSPs and any money that you might want to invest. One of these investments is in a little town called Sangudo, where the community has gotten together to ensure that the local abattoir would remain. Instead of the abattoir leaving the community, the community invested over \$200,000 to make sure that the abattoir stays in the community and provides a place for local ranchers and farmers to have their chickens, their pork, their beef, and so on killed and prepared for the community market.

This kind of investment vehicle is really going to strengthen our rural communities. It's going to enable our RRSP money and our other investment dollars to remain in the community and to remain in Alberta and to grow it.

I'm also wondering if anybody has ever had the opportunity to be part of such an investment vehicle. One of the wonderful things about putting your money into such a locally owned and locally invested enterprise is that you're basically putting your money to work to support local people and the local economy. Basically, your RRSP money and your savings are going to help local businesses grow and prosper and to offer jobs in your communities. This is why I was so pleased when I found out that the minister had built this as a possibility in Bill 30 so that instead of having the investments of Albertans go away from Alberta, they would remain and build their communities. I have a lot of examples of how this is already happening in Alberta.

I would like to also encourage you to see the real story of what happened in Atlantic Canada when this kind of instrument was part of the government program. It has really provided for new enterprise all through the Maritimes.

You may also be wondering why this is different from the other investment and capital credit that the minister has introduced in the bill. This is very different because this is aimed at small investors. This is saying that for people like you and I, that may have some RRSP money but don't have the millions to invest in a new oil refinery or new pipelines, this is for you to invest in the abattoir in your local community. It has been very successful in places in the Maritimes.

You can invest in your grocery store. So instead of your grocery store going away because the current owners want to retire – they're old or something – you can invest in your local grocery store and maintain the grocery store in your community with your money, and because you have invested your money in the grocery store, you are more likely to shop there and use it. It's your community resource.

I think this is going to be a huge benefit for our rural communities. It's going to enable grocery stores. It's going to

enable things like, as I just mentioned, the abattoir. I know a huge concern in rural Alberta is: how do you maintain the abattoirs for farmers who want to have their animals killed in small factories rather than sending them to the big factories? I have a lot of examples. For example, the Westlock Co-op, that maintains the grain terminal there in Westlock, was started by this kind of investment by local people wanting to maintain the grain terminal in their community.

I'm going to end by encouraging all of you to do some reading on the possibility of this investment vehicle, that the minister has built into Bill 30, and to encourage stakeholders that you might know to participate in the discussions that the minister will be having so that by the spring of 2017 the proper procedures and regulations can be put in place so that we can all start investing locally the money that we have in our savings to build local communities and make sure that in rural and urban areas we don't see the small businesses leave and communities being without grocery stores, abattoirs, and whatever communities need.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to present an amendment to Bill 30. I have the requisite number of copies here. I will ensure that it reaches you before I start speaking.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A6.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I will read the amendment for the record. I move that Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, be amended as follows.

- A. Section 2 is amended
  - (a) in subsection (1) by striking out clause (o) and substituting the following:
    - (o) "small business" means a corporation that has no more than 100 employees calculated in the prescribed manner;
  - (b) by striking out subsection (9) and substituting the following:
    - (9) For the purposes of the holding of an investment referred to in sections 13 to 15, a small business does not cease to be a small business by reason only that, while the investment is held, the number of employees of the small business and its affiliates is more than 100 employees calculated in the prescribed manner.
- B. Section 12 is amended
  - (a) in subsection (1) by striking out clause (a) and substituting the following:
    - (a) subject to subsection (2), the small business, together with its affiliates, has no more than 100 employees calculated in the prescribed manner;
  - (b) by striking out subsection (2) and substituting the following:
    - (2) Subsection (1)(a) does not apply in respect of a small business in which a venture capital corporation previously invested at a time when the small business had fewer than 100 employees calculated in the prescribed manner.
- C. Section 35(1) is amended by striking out clause (a) and substituting the following:
  - (a) the small business, together with its affiliates, must have no more than 100 employees calculated in the prescribed manner.

I don't know if much more needs to be said than that, Madam Chair, but I will just provide some rationale for this amendment. As I'm sure you can all understand by hearing that amendment – hopefully, now it's on your desks – the current bill reads in the

various sections that the business may have “no more than the prescribed number of employees calculated in the prescribed manner.” I read that and was intrigued to know how we would prescribe the number of employees and the manner in which they would be prescribed. The intent here is to seek to define small business.

8:00

Now, I’ve had many, many conversations back and forth with the hon. minister on this topic today, and I do want to make sure that it’s stated loud and clear how much I appreciate the minister’s willingness to entertain this amendment, his flexibility in including this in the bill. Of course, also, thank you to the minister’s staff for their very quick response to my staff’s request for feedback and collaboration on this amendment earlier this afternoon and to the table officers as well for their quick work. I suppose I should wait until this amendment is actually accepted before I heap too much praise on everyone, but I live forever in hope.

In all sincerity, I think it’s important that we define the number of employees that is considered a small business, and the reason that I think 100 makes a lot of sense is that when we’re talking about investor tax credits, a small business may want to grow to be a medium-sized business. Often small business is defined as fewer than 50 employees. One of the biggest challenges for business in Alberta and elsewhere is growing from small to medium. A lot of companies, while they may have been successful as a small company, have challenges taking that next step and breaking through the small business to medium-sized business threshold. If this investor tax credit can enable the creation of numerous successful companies that can grow quickly, of course, we’re going to create employment for Albertans, we’re going to create opportunity, and that’s a very good thing. I think 100 is a reasonable number.

Companies larger than that have means, have infrastructure, and also have different requirements for financing, have access to different pools of capital. A company larger than 100, generally speaking – it depends, of course, on the operation – will quite often have access to bank financing or venture capital financing in a way that smaller businesses don’t.

So I think it’s appropriate and in keeping with the intent of this legislation to restrict it to fewer than 100 employees, but at the same time that then gives much greater clarity to any prospective applicant for this tax credit. I understand from the minister that this was the intention in the regulations to begin with, which is why we, I believe, have some agreement here in the House that we’ll move ahead with this amendment.

Again, thanks to the minister for collaborating and for your work on this. I look forward to further debate and discussion. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I’ll thank the member for putting forward this amendment. He’s quite right; the intention was to frame this or to define this within the regulations. There is a formula that’s used to ensure that there’s no way to overstate or change the number of employees that a business has. That’s where “the prescribed manner” comes from. I appreciate the member’s interest in getting this clarification within the legislation.

I, too, echo his thoughts and want to give a big thank you and a shout-out to my ministry staff for working very diligently on this back and forth with the member throughout today in order to get this amendment prepared.

Again, I’m always in favour of providing more clarity where clarity is possible. So having this stated at 100 or fewer employees does just that. It makes it black and white for all of our businesses throughout the province and ensures that businesses that we are targeting, which are, you know, small and medium-sized enterprises, recognize that this is for those who have 100 or fewer FTEs.

I will thank the member for this amendment, and I’m happy to support this amendment. Thank you.

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

Seeing none, I’ll call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A6 carried]

**The Chair:** We’re back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, everyone. Good evening to all. I also am going to move a further amendment. With the indulgence and support of the minister, I’m shooting for a hat trick today to follow my esteemed colleague from Calgary-Elbow. I have the original here, which I’ll send to you as well.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A7.

Go ahead, hon. member. The page can pick up the original.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I’m pleased to move an amendment, that Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, be amended as follows: (a) section 21(7) is amended by striking out “promptly give notice of the refusal” and substituting “give notice within 30 days of that refusal,” and (b) section 39(4) is also amended by striking out “promptly give notice of that refusal” and substituting “give notice within 30 days of that refusal.”

Thanks to the minister’s office we have been able to ensure that this amendment was comprehensive, and we thank him and his staff for ensuring that we covered all the bases with the appropriate language.

Madam Chair, this amendment seeks to clarify the approval timeline for the Alberta investor tax credit. By slightly altering the language which is currently in place and replacing it with a formal 30-day timeline, we feel that the decision-making process becomes, again, more definitive for applicant investors. The 30-day timeline is consistent with portions of this legislation which deal with an applicant investor’s ability to appeal a decision by the minister. This allows now also for a timeline for them to have certainty with respect to responses. Our caucus feels that by introducing a firm timeline on notice of refusal, we are simply asking the minister of the day and their staff to follow the same timeline set forth for investors applying to this program, which I think is a fair and reciprocal arrangement.

I hope everyone in the Chamber this evening will consider supporting this amendment. Thank you, all, for your indulgence.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I’ll thank the member for his work on this amendment. Again, I’m happy to speak in favour of amendments that provide a little more clarity. I appreciate the member flagging that. The bill in its current form talks about how the minister will “promptly give notice.” The member flagged that and said: you know, maybe we should look at framing it out with a little more clarity. I think that 30 days is a reasonable amount.

I, too, again want to echo the appreciation for the staff in my ministry, the staff in my office, Katie most notably, who have worked diligently with the member and his team to ensure that this amendment does exactly what it's intended to do.

For those reasons I am more than happy to speak in favour of this amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7?

**Mr. Gotfried:** Madam Chair, I don't think you can say thank you enough, so I'd like to thank the minister for his co-operation in doing these little minor tweaks to improve the bill as it stands, with hopes that it will meet the needs of Albertans in achieving its desired results.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A7 carried]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Today I rise to speak on Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. You know, going over the debate up until this point, I've not heard a lot of comments regarding – sorry. I'll back up here. This is the opportunity for all of us to work together, which we've seen with the last two amendments, to move forward better legislation. How exactly it is that we have been able to move all of these amendments forward is just another example of government working with opposition, and that's very admirable at this point. We do have some additional amendments that the Official Opposition will be moving forward, and I hope that the government is just as open to working with the third party and the fifth party as they are, hopefully, to working with us.

8:10

Now, for decades Alberta was a leader in almost all respects of our economy: resources, retail, the service industries. Business was booming across the country. Essentially, the entire world was moving to Alberta because of the wonderful opportunities that we have here in Alberta. Some of the former advantages were because of our respect for the economy and innovation, that was reflected in the tax rates that didn't seek to punish success and policies that encouraged investment across the board. We need to question if this is the same direction that we are going now, but I will tell you that when you start looking at bills like this that encourage businesses to move forward, it is good to see that the government is backtracking on some of its policy, and it may be that government itself believes that the direction it's going in seems to be the route that Albertans want to see our government go.

I would say that when it comes to Alberta, we need to start looking toward consultation and actually moving that stakeholder information forward, and we haven't seen much of that with this NDP government. Now, having said that, I will say that it is encouraging to see that today, for instance, we had the credit union act go through, move forward. That does seem to have had some consultation with stakeholders, and it does appear that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has spoken with at least some stakeholders.

Right now we are trying to find favourable economic conditions for certain companies, causing barriers to entry and, in essence,

picking winners or losers. Wildrose did try to correct this with one of the past amendments, and unfortunately that amendment was voted down by the government because they felt that it was prescriptive even though it says the same thing. It just defines the industries that we feel, that Albertans, especially the Calgary Chamber, feel are important and then moves those forward to ensure that each one of those industries gets a place within these tax credits.

Now, the problem here isn't with the idea of offering financial incentives to encourage certain types of economic activity. Every government does it. Alberta has many tax breaks, deductions, subsidies, and incentives in place. As a former worker in the accounting industry I was encouraging my clients to take advantage of all the credits and incentives that were available to them through their personal taxes and corporate taxes, and by working with my clients through tax planning, we were able to identify these credits and move them forward. I'm sure that we've got accountants across Alberta that will be looking towards taking advantage of these coming credits on a go-forward basis. I am hoping that my past accounting colleagues are watching this with interest, trying to figure out exactly what industries will be moved forward.

However, it is a quarter after 8.

Now, the problem within the legislation – and this is becoming typical for bills presented in the House – is that there is little information or context, and what happens is that we are planning on moving stuff forward through the regulations that the Alberta government feels best fits what they're looking to do.

Now, it's unfortunately very sad that this is not transparent, that this is not something that Albertans are looking to move forward, and I'm hoping that it's not surprising to all of the chambers across Alberta exactly how limited the scope is that could be placed by the minister.

I am hoping that we can get some answers to questions that have been asked tonight. When we start looking at the fact that the minister is – and I've already mentioned part of this – specifically able to direct a specific industry but leave others out, that is a concern. Whenever we've got the ability to be able to pick winners or losers, that always seems to end up where the taxpayer ends up paying, and then we end up hearing of a scandal. That is why we actually moved forward the amendment that stated that it is important that we have somebody look further than the minister to ensure that this program is fulfilling a mandate and that it is actually moving forward, which is why we are asking for the Auditor General to be looking into this program after a year. Again, the government decided that that amendment wasn't for it.

Now, from a first glance at the bill, it looks like the minister will have substantial say in things like registration, approval to change share structure, approval to raise – well, let's back up. Approval to change share structure: that one there is definitely something that's shocking. I did read the bill, and whenever we start looking at going into private entities and structuring them the way we want them, we end up with problems.

Approval to raise capital and that the minister may impose conditions: "We will give you money if you do this" rarely ends well for the business community. I would argue that when it comes to any direction the government puts on private industry, it always needs to be with the understanding that private industry needs to be looking towards creating profit, which in turn will recycle into creating more jobs, which will create more profit. It's a cycle that we are hoping to continue forward.

If it is – and I'm hoping that the minister can answer that question specifically – is the government able to impose conditions that could potentially be a detriment to a company? Is the government able to change the share structure or force a change in the share

structure of a company? This is a question that I've got. Are we able to put restrictions on who a company can hire or how the company hires or how many people the company hires? These are important things because, again, we're looking for stability in business. We're also responsibly looking to make sure that taxpayers' money is being used wisely.

Again, when it looks like the fact is that this is a tax credit, that means profit needs to be accumulated before the credit can be paid out. This seems to be something that would be a concern for me, and I would hope that we get further clarification on that.

There is something else I'd like to see where this will help. The AITC could allow studios to be built for postproduction of films that are being made in Alberta right now. Digital animation focus will help spur more growth in Edmonton's video gaming industry.

Productivity is a big problem with manufacturing. The CITC will help Alberta's 9,000 manufacturers compete with foreign businesses, especially now that we've got a carbon tax coming into place and we will have carbon leakage as a real problem for our local business community. This is a huge concern, and we need to make sure that our businesses can now compete at a different level because we've put more burden on them. Alberta investors need some kind of good news given with all the bad news they're getting from this government and the economy. The lack of access to foreign capital and investment capital limits the growth and commercialization potential of local small and medium-sized businesses in Alberta.

8:20

I will say that the Member for Calgary-Elbow putting a definition on what exactly is a small business does help because when we start leaving these terms very loose, what ends up happening is that we end up defining it after the fact, and we find that we are actually putting money into businesses that we never intended to. By saying that, at least these businesses that are going to be getting the tax credits in this case are meant to be the ones that are getting them.

We also have the fact that with the past two PC amendments they're adding accountability on the filing times and the answering times. It's good to see that the PCs are putting amendments forward.

Again, I hope that my colleague from Calgary-Foothills, who is putting amendments forward, is going to be considered by the minister. I'll tell you that Wildrose has good ideas as well as the third party and the independents.

There should be solutions other than just handing out money for corporations. This is something that we need to work on. I believe that this is a step in the right direction. Right now, when we're starting to see that Alberta is hemorrhaging jobs – and this is a concern for my riding – this is a step that will help. As I said in a previous speech, that I was giving when I went to my local businesses and asked them, "Is a tax credit something that will help you?" with them having no profits, it's unlikely that this is going to be something that's going to help them directly at this moment.

But it is important to say that when we start looking at job-creation programs that the government put forward and that have failed in the past, that is why the regulations are so important and why I myself am hoping that the minister gets this right even though the minister has shown that he will not add more definition to the industries that are available.

Now, when we start hearing exactly what we're looking for – I'm hoping that the minister has answers. I am hoping that the minister isn't going to start to tailor our private businesses or corporations into kind of a project that will move Alberta in a different direction than private businesses are already going in. Obviously, losing money is a direction that we want to change for our businesses, our

local private businesses. We want them making money. We want them employing people. We want a healthy Alberta, and that is something that I do believe the government is trying to work towards. I, unfortunately, feel that we may not agree on exactly how to end up at that destination.

At this point what we need to be looking towards is: exactly how do we move Alberta forward? When we look at Bill 30, tax credits do seem to be the area that is something we can work with. This is the first piece that I've seen come out of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade's office so far that is something that I think could potentially help my constituents, maybe not today, but hopefully we will get something additional to this.

Madam Chair, I thank you for your indulgence, and I will end there. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I also rise with a further amendment to Bill 30 for today, and I have the requisite copies here to pass to you, the original on top this time.

**The Chair:** This will be amendment A8.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the House again for your indulgence. I'd like to move that Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, be amended as follows:

- A. Section 35 is amended
  - (a) in subsection (1) by striking out clause (c);
  - (b) in subsection (2) by striking out "or (c)".
- B. Section 42(1)(e) is amended by striking out "or (c)".
- C. Section 48 is amended
  - (a) in clause (c) by striking out " , referred to in section 35(1)(c).";
  - (b) in clause (d) by striking out "to (c)" and substituting "and (b)".

Madam Chair, this amendment seeks to expand the scope of the Alberta investor tax credit program in order to increase the opportunities for the success of this program. We're in support of this program and its intent to stimulate economic activity and investment, thereby creating jobs. In developing this program, it appears that the minister has looked to British Columbia, where they have a very similar program, which has shown some marked success in recent times. That program has been successful, and of course we'd like nothing better than to see that success replicated here in Alberta. If I recall correctly, the statistics were that in British Columbia for every dollar invested, there was \$1.98 in tax revenues created by that program, a fairly good return on investment, I think all in the House would agree.

My concern is that by limiting the scope of the AITC, the minister is limiting the potential success of this program as well. Minister, I think that, really, what I'm talking about here is that it costs us nothing unless it's successful, and if it's successful, then we'll have achieved the objectives of this. Quite frankly, if it is successful and we create the kind of return on investment we've seen in British Columbia, I don't think we'd have any problem supporting further investment in a program like this.

While we all support diversifying the economy, the government needs to set the right conditions for diversification and let the market decide what diversification initiatives will succeed and what will fail. Ultimately, Madam Chair, it's the market that decides how to allocate rare, in a shortfall, investment dollars. These programs are meant to incentivize that in some small way, but the economics still do need to be in place.

By limiting which industries and businesses can access this program, the minister, in essence, certainly could be or may be choosing winners and losers before the program even begins, and we recognize that the scope of the program is directed towards some of those sectors which they feel need some special attention. However, in this economy let's just say that all sectors actually need some special attention.

Justin Smith, the director of policy, research, and government relations for the Calgary Chamber, noted in his letter to the minister:

The evidence suggests, however, that investor tax credits work best when the government adopts a hands-off approach, and instead places the onus on private investors to make the final decision on risk, efficiency, and ultimately where to deploy their capital

even with the incentives thereby offered. I couldn't agree more, and that is exactly what this amendment seeks to do, to broaden the scope, to make it accessible to all Alberta businesses and investors, and to ensure that we attract investment across all industries to create the jobs we so dearly need.

I encourage all members to support this amendment, and I thank you for your indulgence.

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

Seeing none, are you ready for the vote?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion on amendment A8 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

**Mr. Panda:** Madam Chair, I have another amendment to be moved, so I'll pass along the requisite copies to you.

8:30

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A9.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you. I move that Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, be amended in section 78 by striking out "2 years" and substituting with "3 years."

Madam Chair, the reason I'm moving this amendment is that, you know, if the beneficiary of this funding in the future is found to be fraudulent, the government of the day should have the ability to prosecute tax cheaters. Instead of two years, it gives us an additional year. That gives us the flexibility to go after the tax cheaters, so I hope the minister will consider that and accept the amendment.

Thank you in advance for consideration.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A9?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[Motion on amendment A9 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

**Mr. Gotfried:** Of course, there are, Madam Chair, but a few short and brief ones.

Madam Chair, I have the requisite copies of an amendment to move.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A10.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, be amended in section 56(1)(e) as follows: by striking out "primarily for" and by striking out subclauses (i) and (ii).

Madam Chair, this amendment is similar in nature to my last amendment in that it seeks to expand the scope this time of the capital investment tax credit program. Again, by expanding this program outside of an extremely narrow scope of industries, recognizing that there is some ability for the minister to expand that at his own discretion – our caucus feels this program would be better positioned for success with a very broad scope of applicability.

As we know, capital investment is a key component of any successful economy. We should be doing so – really, anywhere and everywhere in our power to attract any and all kinds of capital investment to the province, especially given our current fiscal climate. As I often say: it's very hard to create any job until a dollar of capital is invested, and we need to encourage those at every turn. Of course, we've seen this government investing billions and billions of dollars into infrastructure spending for that very reason, to stimulate the economy, to create jobs, both short term and long term, and we believe that this principle carries through with the expansion of the scope of the capital investor tax credit program.

Again, if you truly believe that stimulus is something that actually works by investing that capital, it would make sense to improve Alberta's attractiveness for any type of capital investment as a way to stimulate the economy through the private sector. There are many people sitting on the sidelines or cautiously waiting for something to happen, and maybe such an opportunity as this capital investor tax credit might be what will take some of the money off the sidelines and put it to work for those companies and, more importantly, for Albertans.

Madam Chair, I applaud the minister for bringing forward this program. I do wish, however, that he had not limited the potential success, which we've heard may not be as limited as it is, but it has been positioned that way, and perception is reality. So let's take this opportunity to expand that program, not only here in the words of the legislation but in terms of spreading that word out to Albertans so that it's not viewed as being a few hand-picked industries and that it is accessible to all Albertans who wish to invest, again, those dollars that may be sitting on the sidelines or which may be in the hands of people looking to invest, catching the bottom of the market and helping us to climb out of it.

Madam Chair, by expanding the scope of this program, I think we would be able to expand that success, and I would encourage the minister and all the members on that side to consider that this is an opportunity to take a really good, solid piece of legislation and expand the scope. The worst that can happen is that people actually react to it, they invest, and we create some jobs in this province.

I therefore encourage all members to vote for this amendment in support of creating jobs for Albertans. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister for economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll thank the member for the amendment and the spirit of his amendment.

I will state a couple of things. Number one, not only did we do robust consultations over the summer, speaking with businesses and industry, looking at how we can frame this capital investment tax credit to spur investment now, today, to encourage companies to pull the trigger, to invest today as opposed to waiting for some time; we came up with a collective solution – that companies had asked to have set criteria for the capital investment tax credit to know in

advance if they are going to get conditional approval, to then start building.

That's exactly what we did, and I'll direct the member, actually, to page 49 of the bill. There is a list of the different categories on how companies are going to be scored, so to speak, so that they know exactly what the criteria are and they know what we're looking for. As you can see, it's a number of things, from timeliness to employment impacts. We want to ensure that all Albertans have access to benefit and we have inclusion of underrepresented groups, we have supply chain impacts, we have community impacts, environmental performance. There's a list of different categories on how companies will be evaluated. For those successful – this is something that industry has applauded us for, and for that reason the member's amendment, although I appreciate the work put into it, is unnecessary. For that reason I will not be supporting it.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise in support of the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek's amendment. I guess I would appeal to the government minister to reconsider the position he just took and only for reasons that I think the amendment actually supports what the government's intention is. I haven't tried to invent the government's intention but rather to discern it. I've actually read the title of the bill, and the title of the bill is: Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act.

What the amendment before us intends to do is actually widen the scope of the bill, or make the diversification more diverse as opposed to less diverse, and since I think the government's stated intention is to make the economy more diverse and this amendment indeed widens the diversification of what could fall under the scope of the legislation, it just seems perfectly logical and natural and something that the government should probably embrace in making their diversification bill more diverse.

I would respectfully ask all members of the House to support this and for the minister in charge of it to think about the government's stated goal of creating diversification and how this might happen to that, and indeed I guess I'm appealing for the minister on the government side to make the diversification bill more diverse.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A10?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A10 lost]

**The Chair:** Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

8:40

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. At the risk of diluting my success rate today, I'm going to champion on here. I have one additional – no; I have two more, but here's one amendment here, the requisite copies with the original on top for the table.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A11.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, be amended by adding the following after section 80:

Annual report

80.1(1) The Minister must annually prepare a report by December 31 that includes the following:

- (a) the total number of eligible business corporations and venture capital corporations registered in the previous calendar year under this Act; and
- (b) the total number of tax credit certificates and their total dollar value issued under sections 21 and 39 in the previous calendar year.

(2) When the report is complete, the Minister must make it available to the public and shall lay a copy of it before the Legislative Assembly if it is then sitting and if it is not, within 15 days after the commencement of the next session.

Madam Chair, this amendment seeks to formally instill a reporting mechanism into the legislation for both the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. This report would be prepared by the end of the calendar year and would include the total number of businesses and venture capital corporations which were registered under this act. To be clear, this would simply be the companies which were registered as being eligible for each respective program. It would not list the businesses and venture capital corporations with the amount of tax credits that each respective entity received. This would assuage any fears that these entities would be required to provide intimate financial details which would constitute business secrets.

The second element of the annual report would require the report to list the number of total tax credit certificates and their total dollar value issued for both the AITC and the CITC. I feel that this is important because it would show the uptake in the program, the success of the program, and allow for adjustments as we go forward with respect to how much money is allocated not only in the initial years but in subsequent years. It would also show if the opposite were happening and most of the money had not been allocated, which would allow the minister of the day to adjust not only the approval process but possibly some of the qualifications and the scope of the program.

Once this report is complete, the minister must make it available to the public and present the report to the Legislative Assembly. Again, accountability and transparency, Madam Chair. Public reporting is important whenever tax money is being spent and allows all members of this Assembly to see the report as well as presenting it to the public ensures the highest level of transparency and commitment to the proper use of the tax dollars.

Madam Chair, I would encourage all members of the House to support this amendment. It is, again, meant just to tweak and improve what is a good bill and what is meant to bring capital and investment to the table, to create jobs in Alberta, and to ensure that we do all possible to address some of the challenges within our current economy.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any others? The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll thank the member for this amendment. I appreciate the spirit of this amendment. I can assure the House that there will be an ongoing conversation or dialogue between myself and the people of Alberta giving them regular updates on the successes of this program. We will be monitoring it very, very closely, in fact, both tax credits, to ensure that we are getting the uptake that we need.

At the moment, again, pending passage of this legislation, first and foremost, we will be trying to educate businesses in all corners of the province that, again, should this pass successfully, these tax credits are available to businesses. But I can assure the member and the House that these are two programs that have been very thoughtfully constructed and designed based on a significant



amount of feedback from companies and industry in all corners of the province. We are absolutely accountable to them and will ensure that they are receiving the appropriate amount of feedback, and we'll continue to be engaged with them on this program.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A11? Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment, which I will be speaking in support of.

The hon. minister will know that I have the utmost respect for the member. I know I've said that on more than one occasion in this House, about the respect that I have for this member. I seem to remember telling a very nice story, in fact, that used this member in an analogy before he had an opportunity to travel to Asia. So he knows that I'm genuine in my respect for him.

But, you know, there's a famous politician who once said, "Trust, but verify." And while I appreciate the member rising in his place, saying, "Honest, we're going to be accountable. We're going to tell you everything you want to know. We're not going to hide anything," you know, I think that some level of requirement of accountability is important even though we've heard from the minister, who's promised that everything would be okay.

I know that this minister proposed a piece of legislation that he spoke at length about, about how awesome everything was going to be, how incredible this revolutionary plan to create jobs was going to be. He said: don't worry; I'll reassure the House. Well, that plan never came to be. In fact, the initial tax credit was cancelled, and now we see version 2.0. Hey, listen: a speech that I made not that long ago spoke specifically about this, about a swing and a miss, and now here we are. Like, listen, I believe that this program is better than the last. I believe that, you know, we've heard from a lot of stakeholders who are looking forward to the passage of this bill. Frankly, the opposition will be pleased to provide safe passage of this bill.

But what we would love to see is just a small level of accountability, an annual report. It happens regularly in this place, that the House will receive reports; in fact, it happens so often that in the daily Routine it's included, Tabling Returns and Reports. This is a reasonable compromise. We've seen other opportunities for accountability today in the form of, you know, asking the Auditor General, requiring the Auditor General to provide some accountability. This government voted that down. We saw another amendment that also would have provided just a small amount of accountability, and the government's position, this minister's position is: I promise to be accountable. Well, this government has a track record of promising one thing and doing another.

So what my hon. colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek is proposing is reasonable. It's not extremely onerous. It literally costs very, very little in terms of staff time. This is all information that the department surely will have. They can keep a little sheet on the wall and just keep all the information right close together so that they can report to the Assembly.

8:50

I don't see any reason why the minister is avoiding being open and transparent and accountable because what will likely be the next step is that the opposition will either have to FOIP this information or the opposition will have to provide a written question, and then quite likely they will dodge answering those questions. We saw on Monday, Madam Chair, a significant amount of ducking and weaving by this government, and there's no reason why they ought not just deliver what the House deserves, requires, and should be eligible to receive.

While I heard the minister promise, I hope that he will provide some verification – trust and verify – and I hope that all members of this House will vote in favour after an impassioned plea for accountability, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any further speakers to amendment A11?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A11 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:52 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	Hunter	Panda
Cyr	Loewen	Stier
Drysdale	McIver	Yao
Gotfried		

Against the motion:

Babcock	Feehan	Malkinson
Bilous	Fitzpatrick	McKittrick
Carlier	Ganley	Miller
Carson	Goehring	Piquette
Ceci	Hinkley	Rosendahl
Connolly	Hoffman	Sabir
Coolahan	Horne	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Schreiner
Dach	Kleinsteuber	Shepherd
Dang	Larivee	Sweet
Drever	Littlewood	Turner
Eggen	Loyola	Westhead

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 36
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[Motion on amendment A11 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the bill. Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise tonight to speak to Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. This is a bill that is good news for business and investment in Alberta.

**An Hon. Member:** As are these pipelines.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Yes, as are the two pipelines. Absolutely.

Madam Chair, I had the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill last week, and at that time I shared a little bit of the story of how I attended the Startup Canada awards recently and had the opportunity to speak with many people there regarding the start-up community here in Alberta. I shared how I spoke with Dr. Randy Yatscoff of TEC Edmonton and how highly he praised the Minister of Economic Development and Trade for the work that he's done on behalf of the start-up community and investors in the province of Alberta. In fact, the phrase he used specifically was: this is a minister who gets it.

9:10

I was very pleased to hear that and very pleased to have the opportunity to sponsor this bill and be able to speak to the benefits that I believe this is going to bring to many constituents and businesses in my community. In fact, Edmonton-Centre, of course,

is home to much of our local start-up community, including Startup Edmonton, an organization that supports entrepreneurs and product builders by providing community networking, training, and workspace in the historic Mercer building on the 104th Street promenade.

Just one block over from there, in Enterprise Square, is TEC Edmonton itself, which provides people, networks, and facilities that are dedicated to developing our region's reputation for innovation. They help with commercializing technology from private university and public spaces, they help build successful innovation-based companies here in our province, and they foster and promote innovation and new enterprise development.

It's wonderful to see this bill coming forward, a bill that I think is really going to help with putting Alberta's technology sector on a level playing field at last by providing the same sorts of investment credits that we've seen be so successful in other jurisdictions. We've seen the boost that it's given to economies in B.C. and other provinces where these credits exist. They provide a boost to the innovators and entrepreneurs who are working to diversify our economy by capitalizing on the creative energy that Edmonton and Alberta are so rich in.

Madam Chair, I've been very happy to see how responsive the minister has been in designing these credits and bringing them forward. In fact, shortly after these were first promised in our budget this past spring, I received a message from the chair of the A100, the A100 being a respected local community of seasoned technology founders. They expressed very strong support for the credits and indicated the importance of making sure that these credits be retroactive to ensure that they would be able to incent investment as quickly as possible. I was happy to pass that feedback on to the minister, and I'm very happy to say that he heard and he ensured that this legislation provides that credits for any eligible investments made after April 14 of this year will be included. So thank you to the minister again for his consultation with that.

I was also very happy to see the inclusion of digital media companies in this bill. In January of this year I had the opportunity to meet with representatives from GameCamp Edmonton, some folks who have been working very hard with the local gaming community and app developers. They came to see me because they saw that our government was looking to invest in diversification. They came to see me because they recognized that there are many jurisdictions across Canada that offer credits that are very helpful to game development and game companies. Some of these are employment credits. Some of these are tax-based credits. But they recognized that Alberta did not have these sorts of incentives.

Now, Edmonton is home to some fantastic game developers, of course, BioWare being the most famous. I know many of our members had the opportunity to attend an event with them just the other night and see the great work that this company is doing. This is a company that has provided work for software developers here in our city, for many people that I know in the music industry who have gone on to work for them as recording engineers, as music producers. Many people from our theatre community work for them and have the opportunity to get work there as voice actors. This is something that has genuinely created diversification and jobs in our city.

It's wonderful now that this tax credit, the Alberta investor tax credit, will allow for growth in that industry here in our city. I know that the folks at GameCamp Edmonton and many of the other local development companies are very excited for this opportunity now and that step towards diversifying our economy and providing greater opportunity.

I'm also very excited about, as the Member for Sherwood-Park talked about earlier, the community economic development

corporation provisions that are in this bill. I know that over the last year and a half I've had the opportunity to meet with many people in the local African communities and with many other cultural communities here in our city. One of the biggest concerns that they've mentioned to me is that they are looking for opportunities to build economic capital and opportunity for the members of their community. They're looking for opportunities to create new jobs and to be able to support those in their community when they first come to Canada and as they are establishing their lives here.

I'll tell you that they are excited for the possibilities that are available through these community economic development corporations. They are looking forward to having the opportunity for those who have been successful and who have built good businesses here in our province, who have contributed to our provincial economy, to now take the profits they have made and be able to invest that back into their local community, to be able to create jobs and opportunity for the members of their community, to be able to help provide for some of the social needs that are there in their community. That's another wonderful aspect of this bill, which I greatly thank the minister for bringing forward.

Also, I've had the opportunity when I met with some of these folks, with some of their business associations, and recently again when the minister joined me for a business town hall with over a hundred leaders, a hundred business people from the African and Caribbean community here in Edmonton – he had the opportunity to share with them about these credits and many of the other wonderful programs that are available to support small businesses here in our province. There was great excitement for the capital investment tax credit and the opportunity that's going to give for many of these individuals who have companies to be able to upgrade their equipment, upgrade their facilities, and again be able to continue to do work that is supporting our economy, that is supporting jobs in our province, and continue to support the members of their community.

I've appreciated the feedback that we've heard from the members. I appreciate the amendments that have been brought forward tonight that we've had a chance to incorporate to make this a better bill. I think that this is very good news for the province. It's something that's finally coming into place after years of this being requested. It's finally being brought forward by this minister, by this government. I think this is going to do good things for the province. I look forward to supporting Bill 30.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One last amendment to present on Bill 30.

**The Chair:** This amendment will be known as A12.  
Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Great. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, be amended by adding the following after section 82:

Review of the Act

82.1 Within three years of this act coming into force, a special committee established by the Legislative Assembly shall begin a comprehensive review of this act and shall submit to the Legislative Assembly within one year after beginning the review a report that includes any amendments recommended by the committee.

Madam Chair, this amendment would ensure that programs presented within this legislation are reviewed after they are

scheduled to expire. The CITC as it is currently presented is a two-year program, and the AITC as it is currently presented is a three-year program. We would, of course subject to success, like to see these programs extended beyond their initial lifespan if they are working. To determine if they are working and being utilized by Albertans to both invest capital and to invest in the growth of our economy, a special committee would be established by the Legislative Assembly to review these programs.

Madam Chair, it's important when we have programs in place from various levels of government – the experience I've had is that sometimes they sound good, but if they're not being utilized and if they're not actually achieving the desired results, there's usually a reason behind it; hence, the opportunity for a comprehensive review.

This committee would have a maximum of one year to deliver a report in which they would make recommendations on the future of the program. This committee would be able to determine what worked, what didn't work, and what needs to be either scrapped or amended or what changes can be done to enhance or improve the program and its efficacy with Albertans. It could also recommend that the programs not be brought back in their current form if it is determined that they do not produce the expected results. Again, the legislation is only as good as the results that it achieves.

However, without this formal review mechanism we may not get a fulsome picture of the success or lack thereof with respect to these programs. Again, with all due respect, I know that the minister has spent a lot of time consulting with industry so that, I'm hoping, we will come out of the gate with this program with a lot of uptake and a lot of success and a lot of uptake from industry, creating jobs and investing in our industrial capacity and other capacities. Not having this evidence would mean that making a decision on the potential extension or the collapse of these programs would be simply done in-house without the fulsome review of this Assembly.

9:20

Madam Chair, we simply hope that all members of this Assembly would be able to come together at the end of these programs to review it in support of the minister and his team, to work collaboratively, and to openly determine whether or not these programs are working effectively for this House and for Albertans.

I'd like to thank the members of this House for their consideration this evening of this amendment, of this opportunity for us again to not only put in place a solid piece of legislation but to review it and to ensure that we take every opportunity to improve it. I thank them for their consideration, and of course I'm hoping that the minister that gets it gets this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and I'll thank the member for his work on this amendment. Again, I agree with him on the spirit of this amendment, but I can assure the member and all members of this House that we will be in regular dialogue with Albertans. As far as not only the uptake but the success of this program, we will be monitoring it very, very closely month by month, not even year by year, to ensure that we get the proper uptake but as well to monitor very closely the injection of new capital into our economy, working with companies that will provide them with the dollars they need to grow, to increase in size to hire more Albertans.

I am excited to get these programs out of the gate and hopeful that we'll have a unanimous passage of this piece of legislation, but regarding this amendment, I will not be supporting it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to Amendment A12?

[Motion on amendment A12 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 30? Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you. I have one very quick question for the minister. I heard him speak glowingly about the amount of work that he's going to do to let businesses know across the province. I'm just curious to know if he'd be willing to share the costs of that work and if there was a significant advertising project planned for this particular legislation once it is passed, if that would be coming out of the total amount of the grants or if that would be paid for through other means.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and I'll thank the member for the question, a very good question. Thus far we've been working with local business associations and organizations, from chambers of commerce to economic development associations, to help spread the word. As well, you know, the companies that joined me on my trade mission to Asia: there were over 80 companies, over 150 Alberta participants whom I spoke to about these two different tax credits, pending passage of the legislation, of course.

At the moment we've been using a variety of different means, through social media and other ways, to get the word out through our REDAs as well as NADC. We will continue to work with organizations. Frankly, Madam Chair, this is part of the reason why we initially introduced our intention back in the spring: in order to give time to get the word out to all companies in all corners of the province. We didn't want to just introduce this, you know, late fall, pass the bill, and then hope for uptake.

As far as the member's question that if there will be dollars spent, will they come out of the two tax credit buckets, I can tell the member that the answer is no. If there is some advertising, that would come from my ministry, again pending passage of this legislation.

**Mr. Cooper:** Okay. Thank you. Appreciate the answer to the question.

It sounds to me like there has been significant interest already. Quite likely, given the extensive work that you've done with stakeholders already through REDA economic developers, the 80-some members in the largest trade mission that has ever happened in the history of the universe, it sounds like there are lots of people who are interested. Will the minister commit that no advertising dollars will be spent because, clearly, the people who need to know already know?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, there are, obviously, some administrative fees in order to administer these two programs that will be coming out of the allocated funds. Again, we are wanting to ensure that as many dollars as possible go toward these programs and toward the outcomes of these programs, so we will continue to work through all of our channels to ensure that word gets out.

I can tell you, Madam Chair, that part of the reason that we – in this bill the investor tax credit is for three years. It was initially proposed for two years, but upon consultation with business and industry over the summer and to ensure that all businesses get the word and understand and know about this program and then have an opportunity and time to apply for this program, we decided to extend it to three years.

As far as the capital investment tax credit there are four windows over two years when companies can apply. As I mentioned earlier today, if a company is unsuccessful – well, first of all, they will see the criteria upon which they will be scored, and if they're unsuccessful, my ministry will be working with them. They will be encouraged to apply for the next window. Again, the purpose of this is to try to support as many businesses as we can, as many different capital projects as we can, but at the same time we want to make sure that we are getting full value for every tax dollar that is being spent and that there is a return to Albertans through job creation and supporting our businesses to help them grow.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 30?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 30 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** That's carried.

### **Bill 21 Modernized Municipal Government Act**

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. On Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, I have an amendment, and with your concurrence I will send it over so that we can begin.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. This amendment will be referred to as A2.

**Mr. McIver:** May I continue?

**The Deputy Chair:** Please go ahead.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Fellow members, I move that Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, be amended, part A, in section 13, in the proposed section 75.5, by adding the following after subsection (2):

- (3) Before the Minister makes a regulation under this section, the Minister must ensure that appropriate consultation has been carried out with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and consider the input acquired from the consultation.

And part B, in section 131, in the proposed section 708.52, by renumbering it as section 708.52(1) and by adding the following after subsection (1):

- (2) Before the Lieutenant Governor in Council makes a regulation under this section, the Minister must ensure that appropriate consultation has been carried out with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and reports on the results of the consultation to the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Now, folks, I think this is fairly straightforward. This just really says that in the future, when regulations are going to be made, we talk to the main municipal groups in the province of Alberta. I believe it's a common-sense amendment, and I hope that members of the House will be supportive.

**9:30**

Madam Chair, the intention of the amendment, of course, is to reinforce the notion that the government should consult with stakeholders before changes to regulations occur. There has been an unfortunate trend in many cases with a lack of stakeholder consultation related to legislation, a pattern that I believe is an opportunity for the government to improve. This has been evident through a number of bills: 6, 20, 25, and 27. This amendment seeks to ensure that municipalities through their chosen associations, AUMA and AAMD and C, are consulted appropriately before any regulatory changes, haphazard or otherwise or carefully considered, are made by the NDP government and, of course, especially pertaining to municipally controlled corporations and ICFs.

Madam Chair, I'm sure that the minister may consider saying: well, of course I'll consult. But I would ask the minister to consider that legislation is a long-term endeavour, and in the future there may be a different minister in that chair, perhaps one less willing and able to consult with people than today's minister, and for that reason I think this is a good prompt, a good requirement for future governments and future ministers and this government and this minister, but we need to consider this and future governments and ministers to make sure that they talk to the main partners, which indeed are the municipalities in Alberta.

With that, I will listen to the debate. I sincerely hope that the government and all members of this House can see the wisdom in this commitment to consult and, in fact, will consider just how happy it will make the municipal organizations to know that the government has stood up in this Legislature and said: we commit to consult. What a positive message that would be and one that I hope the minister and the government will embrace.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I'd love to speak on this because it is about consultation. I'm going to tell everyone a little bit of a story about a little place up north called Fort McMurray. First, let me clarify. The MGA here: there are a lot of changes being made to that. It is impacting different municipalities in different ways because Alberta and its municipalities have evolved in such different ways because we do have a diverse province. Some areas are industry, some areas are white collar, some areas are government, and they all have to deal with a lack of attention by the previous government.

Let's talk about the previous government and how they treated Fort McMurray, shall we? Back in the '80s and '90s they were giving all these leases out to all of the oil companies. They were putting out hectares and hectares of these leases and really promoting the oil industry, and God bless Ralph Klein for that. But they forgot a little bit of something. They forgot the support that these industries need. Fort McMurray is a landlocked community, just so everyone understands. They're landlocked by Crown land.

They're not surrounded by a bunch of farms that a developer can just buy and turn into a housing division. It is literally locked by provincial land, and it had no space to grow.

As the oil companies grew and grew and they invested more and more, they realized that they didn't have enough housing, so they started giving these little subsidies to all the people that were working up there: 800 bucks, right off the top, on top of your paycheck every month, just so you could find a place to live in Fort McMurray. People literally started renting out bedrooms for 800 bucks. That's a substantial chunk of change anywhere. Before you knew it, everyone's yards and houses were just filled with vehicles. Everyone was renting out, everyone was paying off their mortgages, but again because of that lack of housing and lack of ability to grow, that's when house prices started to escalate.

If I might say, at one point you could buy a house lot in Fort McMurray for \$35,000. In this day and age it's \$400,000 for a lot. It was a really tough situation to be in, and that is what drove house prices up in Fort McMurray. It took many, many years before the previous government finally – finally – figured out that: oh, maybe we should give the city some land to grow.

I remember talking to a girl who worked in forestry for the government here about 15 years ago. I remember asking her: how come you don't release any land to Fort McMurray? She talked about how they had to protect the boreal forest, which I found to be really ironic or even hypocritical because they were offering up so much land to these leases for these oil companies, but they weren't allowing the community, which only required a small area, to grow.

Anyways, it was that poor decision-making that drove the house prices up and made it a very difficult place to live. When housing goes up, then the impacts are enormous everywhere else. Salaries have to go up to compensate. The oil companies started flying people in. Our fire department: we started to lose our members to the oil companies because they had the opportunity to make over a hundred thousand dollars a year as a firefighter, and the municipality could not keep up with this. The impacts of a lot of these things were pretty bad.

Also, the municipality had outgrown its facilities, so we didn't have enough facilities, whether it was a recreational facility, whether it was schools or anything to even address the current population there. As that community grew, we had no place to go.

It's little things like these, where the province was literally not supporting a community, that the municipality had to make some hard decisions on, and that is about the time when they went from the city of Fort McMurray to the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo. They took a page out of the county of Strathcona, Sherwood Park, if I might add, when they became the county, and they were able to absorb all the industry and use that taxation money to help them.

**Cortes-Vargas:** A specialized municipality.

**Mr. Yao:** Yeah. Anyways, the point is, though, that that's when they became the municipality of Wood Buffalo, and that's how they were able to get the taxes they needed to build our community.

It's important to understand with each jurisdiction across our province why they have these different tax rates, as an example, and that's about consultation. This amendment is about consultation. I can appreciate that coming from somebody in the third party because that means they've learned their lessons, that they also know to consult and look around.

With that, I do agree with this amendment. I think it's a fair amendment to make, that they do consult, that this government does consult, and that we can learn from all the communities, understand their individual issues, and work with them as we move forward.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for providing the opportunity to speak about this amendment. I have to say that we are very proud of the relationship that we have built with the AUMA, AAMD and C, and municipalities across Alberta. I firmly believe that growing our province is a collaborative venture, and as government one of our most valuable connections is the partnerships we have with Alberta's municipalities and their associations. Now, as a matter of fact, AUMA and AAMDC are already at the regulatory development table because I believe in robust consultation with our municipal stakeholders.

9:40

It was interesting to hear the member speak about a history of a lack of open and transparent consultation with the municipal associations when it came to legislation that directly affected them although I have to say that we have changed the course and moved away from those days. My ministry has been steadfast in holding consultations with all stakeholders, including AUMA and AAMDC, and I believe that our record on this issue is beyond refute.

I've talked with representatives of both AUMA and AAMDC. We've heard this. We've had conversations about it. And there are many reasons why there are unintended consequences and many reasons why it's not practical. But I think the simple message out of this is that you cannot legislate relationships. Good governance is about respecting all of the people that are affected by your legislation. There's no way that every piece of legislation can ever incorporate and assume that we meet with all the stakeholders who are affected by it. So it's important that in terms of doing good governance we know who the people are that are affected by it, that we deliberately reach out to them. You don't build relationships with regulations; you build them by working together collaboratively and working hard on those relationships.

So, Madam Chair, for those reasons I will not be supporting this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Any hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. I appreciate the remarks from the Municipal Affairs minister, but I might remind of her some very recent history, particularly in light of the fact that she said that her relationship is without refute. I hope she's not right about that because if it's without refute, I think the minister is in big trouble because the last time that there was a big municipal meeting of the AAMD and C – and the minister was right there, so I know she knows that I'm right about this – when her ministers were talking to the group, they were booed . . . [interjection] No. More than one time by, essentially, the whole room. Hundreds of municipalities booed this government's ministers.

So when the Municipal Affairs minister says that their reputation is without refute and the most recent evidence is a mass booing and someone coming to the microphones when we opposition leaders were there and asking each of the opposition leaders to explain to the room what each of us was going to do to move the NDP government out so that they could get a better government and all of the answers were warmly received, yes, maybe the relationship is without refute, and that unrefuted relationship indicates that you need to do more consultation, Minister.

There's very solid evidence, very recently delivered not by me but by hundreds of municipalities at the same time sending a very clear message that they're not happy with the consultation. This amendment, frankly, should be very helpful to the government. [interjections] Now, Madam Chair, I understand that the government members are embarrassed that their ministers were booed, which is why I think I'm hearing from them now. I think this would be a good time for them to acknowledge that there's a shortcoming in the consultation and probably a very good time also for them to agree that it would be wise for this ... [interjections] I can hardly hear myself talk because the government can't stand the truth.

Again, I'm only stating what these members heard first-hand at the AAMD and C: hundreds of Alberta municipalities booing the NDP ministers, hundreds of NDP members actually asking the opposition leaders what we were going to do to move the NDP along and receiving our remarks warmly. Now, that indicates a consultation gap, and this amendment would go a long way towards indicating that the government was prepared to work to repair that relationship, which is why this is very helpful, which is why I'm very hopeful that the government will see the wisdom in saying: "Yeah. We got a clear message. We've fallen short, and this is a real opportunity to send a positive message to Alberta municipalities that we're prepared to move forward and repair those relationships."

I hope the government and all members of this House will see their way clear to supporting it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just had to take a moment to clarify for the House the misrepresentation of the events at AAMDC by the member across the floor. Certainly, when it comes to the carbon levy, I understand that there are a lot of misunderstandings with many Albertans in terms of what our climate leadership plan was about although I think the announcements of two pipelines yesterday helped them understand a little bit more about what it was about.

However, what I had stated and somehow you missed is that my ministry and myself have been steadfast in holding consultations with all stakeholders, including AUMA and AAMDC. I believe that our record was not refuted. Without doubt, I have heard from many of you that the consultation in this particular case was excellent. I have to say that during the opening ceremonies of AAMDC or shortly after, when I was doing my speech, Al Kemmere chose to introduce me and made a point of stating what a great relationship they had with their minister and how I was just a text message away at any moment in time and how responsive I was and that I took great pride in the relationships that we've built there.

Also, at the recent AUMA convention I took great pride in the fact that Lisa Holmes introduced me as the minister that we all know and love. I've worked very hard to cultivate those relationships, to have incredibly close consultation. I'm seeing the fruit of that in many ways. So while certainly we have some work in terms of clarifying some information regarding the carbon levy – and that's exactly what you're referring to at the AAMDC – certainly I stand by the work that my department has done. I have amazing staff in Municipal Affairs. I could not do what I do without them. They worked together with myself and my staff to create an amazing consultation plan that worked right through the legislation and will continue to work through the regulations and to be open and transparent consistently. I stand on that record and continue to say that we will not be supporting this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Seeing as this is full disclosure that we're looking for here – and I've often heard the government say that they are looking for feedback and that they want to know what Albertans are thinking – I want to make sure that the members opposite know what I'm hearing. The people from my riding, the municipal leaders from my riding are telling me that they have a very difficult time getting a hold of ministers, that they have a very difficult time when they come up to these events up here. Both AUMA and AAMD and C members are telling me that they have had a very difficult time being able to get in front of ministers, and they are frustrated with the lack of consultation that they're able to get with these ministers.

Now, you can take that and you can say: well, we need to make sure that we're going to do better. I hope you do. But this motion here is about addressing these issues so that consultation will happen. There should never be a question of whether or not we should do better at that, whoever it is. We're about representing the people of Alberta, and we need to make sure that we don't ever, ever say that we're above that. This is what I just heard, and to tell you the truth, it shocked me to hear that.

So I think, Madam Chair, that if the government is truly interested in listening, I will tell you that I have heard it over and over and over again from the leaders in my riding that they are struggling to be able to build a relationship with you. They want to build a relationship with you, and they have very little opportunity to be able to get a hold of you, first of all, and they have very little opportunity of being able to get hold of you especially at these events.

So if you are willing to take it, I give you that advice. I know we're talking about this amendment, but what I just heard there was almost sticking your head in the sand and saying: we are doing perfectly out here. It's just ridiculous that you would say something like that. I hope that you would consider what you said and, second of all, that this would be able to help this bill be better. This is why I will be supporting it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**9:50**

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Just a couple of very quick points here. The first one will echo some of the comments of my colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner in that in discussions with municipalities, not specific to the Member for Lesser Slave Lake, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, but just more generally and broadly, many municipal leaders have contacted my office and me about a general frustration about getting meetings with ministers right across the board. I don't have a barometer to judge that, but they certainly have expressed some significant concern. I will say "right across the board" because I'm not intending to pick out certain ministers although I have heard larger complaints about some departments than other departments. I just highlight that as a general concern that comes to my office from municipal leaders with respect to the relationship they have with the government.

The last thing I will add is that I heard the Municipal Affairs minister say that you can't legislate relationship, and while I agree with that statement, the contrary is true, or at least that's what they effort to do when they are creating situations of forced collaboration

through legislation. So those terms don't jibe one hundred per cent where on one hand they're saying that you can't force relationship, yet the legislation clearly does effort to force relationship in a number of different circumstances.

I just leave those for comments and look forward to voting in favour of the amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I want to address a couple of things. The first thing is: thank you for your comments. While, certainly, I really do believe you can't legislate relationships, what you can do is ensure that people work together to do land-use planning, to do service planning in the interests of individuals. If relationships happen to come out of that, that's wonderful, but certainly it is expected that people work together in the interest of the people that they represent.

You know, I did briefly state that there are many reasons it's not practical and that there are unintended consequences with pursuing this, and I have talked to both AUMA and AAMD and C on this. But the truth is that it's just not practical. If we had to bring every regulation before them, for every regional service commission a change in membership would have to be consulted on with them. I mean, those are done by regulation. The updates on the Canmore undermining regulation, the ability to be responsive quickly in terms of issues: if we had to do consultation, what does consultation mean?

We also would open ourselves up to potential legal challenges if there was any kind of implication that we hadn't consulted appropriately on any decision if it was embedded in legislation. I mean, we already consult. No responsible government would do this. We have to govern, and we already consult fully. Good governance means talking to the people that you need to talk to about it, but putting it in there and binding it in specific legal language would create many unintended consequences.

I do not reject consulting with AUMA and AAMD and C. I consider them very valuable partners, and I do not move forward any policy without talking with them, which is the reason that both Lisa and Al are very happy with it and know that I'm very accessible and willing to talk with them. We've worked very hard to build up relationships in that way. However, this particular approach to embedding it in legislation would really embroil the government in a number of challenges in terms of being able to move forward and to govern properly.

So we will consult. We will always consult. We value our partners. We just can't put the wording in the legislation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you. I wouldn't want the hon. Municipal Affairs minister to think that I doubted the nice words that she said she heard. I'm sure she's telling the truth about that. So let me be clear. I don't think I doubted it before. Nonetheless, what I said was also true, that the hundreds of municipalities made it clear there's a problem with the relationship. How those things coexist I guess I can't fully explain. All the more reason why the government should spend time and commit to consulting with the municipalities.

To be fair, the government is forcing the municipalities to consult with each other on intermunicipal development plans and ICFs, so this would really be saying to them: we are not going to ask you to do something that we won't do ourselves. That's what this would

be saying to the municipalities: we're not better than you; we're the same as you; we're forcing you through legislation to make a bunch of arrangements with each other, and as part of that we'll commit to talking to you before we change regulations.

I would just only ask, I hope politely, the minister to reconsider her words just now when she said: I can't talk to the municipalities every time I make a change that affects them. Madam Chair, one of the reasons there is a Ministry of Municipal Affairs is to be a conduit from municipalities to the government. If the minister in charge of being that conduit doesn't have time to talk to them – and I don't think that's her intent, but that's kind of what she said: I don't have time to discuss every change. So I would say that this would be a very good way to say to the municipalities: we won't make changes without talking to you; we commit to that. I would think that would be accepted quite warmly by the municipalities and may actually make that relationship more favourable, more positive, more productive in the future. The amendment is my way of helping.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now on the original bill. Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. This evening I wish to move an amendment. I'll ask the pages to come by to pick up the amendment. I'll wait until they've had an opportunity to distribute it, but I will talk very briefly. I'll preface my remarks before the amendment is distributed to talk a little bit about the subject matter of the amendment. The subject matter has to deal with something that actually has been on the books of the Municipal Government Act since it was last rewritten, in 1995. It is under section 357, and it is under the subject of a minimum tax.

What, essentially, is given purview to municipalities, something that they are empowered with that was not in place prior to 1995, is the ability of a municipality to set a specific dollar figure as a minimum tax on a piece of property regardless of the assessed value of the property. That has created a problem. That has created a distortion in our system.

Madam Chair, you have the amendment now, and I can read it into the record?

**The Deputy Chair:** Yes. Please go ahead. Thank you very much.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Chair, at this time I would like to read the following into the record. I move that Bill 21, Modernized Municipal Government Act, be amended in section 53 by striking out proposed section 357.1 and substituting the following:

**Tax Rates**

357.1(1) The tax rate to be imposed by a municipality on residential property or on any sub-class of residential property must be greater than zero.

(2) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Division, a tax rate imposed by a municipality pursuant to section 357 must not result in a property tax on an assessable property which exceeds 2.5 per cent of the assessed value of that property.

Madam Chair, what does all that mean? What is the purpose of this amendment? Well, in Alberta we have a fairly significant number of municipalities, that are mostly small municipalities, that have exercised the power that is given to them within section 357 to allow for the levying of a minimum tax; in other words, a

departure from the normal methodology for calculating taxation on property.

**10:00**

Now, I'm going to quote from the Guide to Property Assessment and Taxation in Alberta. On page 29 it states:

Under the Municipal Government Act, municipalities are responsible for collecting taxes for municipal and educational purposes. Property taxes are levied based on the value of the property as determined from the property assessment process. Property taxes are not a fee for service, but a way of distributing the cost for local government services and programs fairly throughout a municipality.

Madam Chair, that word "fairly" is the word that is at the crux of this. Currently a large number of municipalities charge a minimum tax on property. In some cases that minimum tax is a relatively nominal \$50 or \$100, but in some cases the minimum tax that is charged is considerably higher. In over 60 Alberta municipalities there is a minimum tax, and the amount charged sometimes ranges to \$800, \$900, \$1,000, and in some cases the minimum tax, in fact, is more than the actual assessed value of the property.

Now, this creates a significant distortion. It creates a distortion, really, in two directions. The first distortion it creates is, obviously, that the people that own these relatively lower assessed value properties have a situation where they're paying a tax bill, in fact, that is greater than the assessed value of the property. Well, you can imagine that those properties then become very difficult to keep, you know, if you're having to pay more than the assessed value year after year after year.

Furthermore, it becomes difficult in small rural villages for there to be economic development and housing to be developed because in many cases more-modest homes that would stand on these properties, more-modest homes that would be taxed at a rate that should be considerably lower, are in fact subject to minimum tax. The minimum tax is used by the municipality to raise a certain amount of funds. By doing so, they are allowed to lower the overall mill rate, and that benefits properties of greater assessed value. In a way, it's a little bit of what I call a reverse Robin Hood: you're actually taking from the poor and providing a benefit to the rich.

Now, that certainly is contrary to most NDP philosophies, I believe. For the last 20 years, while there's been a different government in place, this was on the books. Certainly, I would have expected that now that there's an NDP government that is committed to wealth redistribution in many different forms, this would be a very logical place where an NDP government could step in and correct an inequity within our property taxation system, whereby under section 357 municipalities are permitted to charge a minimum tax.

Minimum tax is punitive. Minimum tax is fundamentally unfair, and it is fundamentally unfair to the most vulnerable within our communities. When I look at the list of communities that charge a minimum tax, minimum tax is charged in some of our smaller communities that are already perhaps struggling with being able to remain viable, yet they're not charging the taxation that should be charged on some of the higher value properties. The mill rate is in fact being subsidized by lower valued properties.

In one village in particular in my constituency some 47 per cent of the properties within that village are actually charged the minimum tax. If you multiply the assessed value by the mill rate that should be getting charged, they should have a much lower tax bill, but in fact they are charged a much higher rate because they are charged a minimum tax that is higher than what they should be paying. What it effectively does is subsidize those owners of properties of greater value.

This is an inequity. This is a fundamentally unfair situation, and it is a fundamentally unfair departure from what I just read from the guide to municipal taxation and assessment in the taxation guide. Taxation is supposed to be based on the value of the property, and in most Alberta municipalities that indeed is what happens. But in a percentage of Alberta municipalities that is not what happens, and section 357 of the current Municipal Government Act allows for this. This is, in my view, an unfair distortion of our taxation system, and it is unfair, as I've said before, for Albertans that are disadvantaged, for Albertans that are vulnerable. It creates a distortion that, in my view, also affects the ability of small rural communities to develop because there is this anchor on development, especially an anchor on development of lower value properties.

Madam Chair, while I know it's not habit for the government to approve opposition amendments, we did see it happen this afternoon, and we were very encouraged by that. This is an amendment that, in my view, brings a measure of fairness to a taxation system, and it corrects an inequity that has been present in the Municipal Government Act for the last 20 years. I think that it's a measure of fairness, and I think it's something where this government can demonstrate that it understands the need for fairness.

Now, I would have liked to have been able to completely eliminate minimum tax entirely. On advice from Parliamentary Counsel it was found that we couldn't do that, so that's why I have suggested – and it is somewhat arbitrary – the 2.5 per cent cap on the minimum tax. That means that at that level it would take 40 years of paying that minimum tax until you have paid the assessed value of the property, unlike the current situation, where in some situations you actually pay more than the assessed value of the property in minimum tax. You can imagine that that creates significant distortions in the real estate market in those communities.

Madam Chair, I would encourage all members of the Assembly to take a look at this amendment. I would ask for their support in voting for this amendment because I do think it corrects a very basic inequity in the current legislation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Chair. I'll keep my remarks short. I'd just like to rise and speak in favour of the amendment. My hon. colleague has done an incredible job of putting a lot of time, thought, and attention into this particular amendment. It's important for small rural communities, and I think . . . [interjections] I don't see what's so funny. I'm not sure it's becoming of you to laugh at a member. I think he's done a very good job of putting together some comprehensive reasons why this amendment is so important. It respects small communities. It respects property owners who own a property. The minimum tax is clearly an unfair taxation policy, and I would strongly recommend that the minister heed the advice of the member, and we can move forward this evening.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the third party for sharing this amendment. I did work with my staff and look at it very seriously. We looked at it and realized that the amendment does not actually fit within this section. Section 357(1) was



intended to ensure that a tax rate ratio can be calculated and has nothing to do with the minimum tax. Having said that, I appreciate the intent of the amendment and have looked into this particular issue before.

The proposed amendment would cause, unfortunately, viability concerns for some small municipalities with large numbers of low-value properties. The MGA authorizes minimum taxes to recognize the basic cost of service to all ratepayers in a municipality regardless of their assessed value. In fact, Madam Chair, almost 20 per cent of Alberta's towns and villages have a minimum tax in place, all but one of those at \$1,000 or less, which for someone who can afford to own property is actually a reasonable cost.

So I'm not prepared to support this amendment tonight out of concern for the viability of Alberta's small communities. I've committed to helping them be sustainable and viable, and I'm certainly not prepared to support an amendment that would do the opposite.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

10:10

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the minister for her comments. Certainly, I understand her concern about viability for small communities, and that indeed is the challenge here with minimum tax.

I think the issue that I have and the difficulty that I have in allowing these 20 per cent of Alberta communities to charge minimum tax, especially to the degrees that they are, in some cases \$800, \$900, \$1,000, is that it bears no relation whatsoever to the value of the property. You know, it's interesting. The minister says that anybody who can afford to own property should be able to afford to pay a minimum tax of \$800 or \$900 or \$1,000. I submit to you that in many cases this causes a hardship, especially when the property itself is not valued at that high a level. I mean, if the value of the property – and in some cases we're talking about properties that are unimproved – is scarcely higher than the minimum tax that's being levied, why would the property owner even hang on to the property?

Minimum tax is something, again, that was brought in – and I understand it. In fact, if we look under the fundamentals of the property taxation system – and this is from the AUMA website – it states here on page 4 of 15, under Minimum Property Tax:

A municipality may levy, by bylaw, a minimum amount of tax on each property. The minimum property tax is not a fixed surcharge; it is a tax floor amount. The minimum tax only applies to a property if the calculated tax rate multiplied by the assessed value of the property is lower than the amount set as the minimum tax.

The problem that this creates – you know, again, I acknowledge and I recognize and I agree with the minister when she talks about viability of smaller communities in our province. I think that is something we all need to be concerned about. But to prop up those municipalities by charging an inordinate sum of taxation to the people in the municipality that own the lowest value properties is completely counterintuitive. Taxation works based on the value of the property, and in every village, in every town there will be people who have higher value properties. They have properties and homes that are of higher value. Their property taxes are being subsidized by people who own lower value properties.

Once again, this is a complete reverse Robin Hood, and it runs completely contrary to NDP philosophy. It just, you know, strikes me as stunning that the NDP would defend a policy that essentially

takes dollars out of the hands of the poor and the vulnerable and subsidizes those who are wealthier. Think about that for a second. That's not what you believe in. I mean, it's not what I believe in either, but it's certainly not what you believe in.

You know, to suggest that this has to be in place in order to keep these municipalities viable, I think it is becoming for many municipalities, in fact, a crutch. It is becoming something that they have come to depend on, and it has become something that has allowed them to tax at a higher and higher rate and certainly a rate that has no bearing on the property value, lower value properties within a community and, in fact – once again I say it – subsidize those properties that have a higher value. It's fundamentally unfair.

So while the minister can say, you know, that they're doing this for the sake of the viability of communities, these communities could be viable if they simply applied a tax rate as a tax rate is intended to be applied and that if there is a greater requirement for revenue, they apply a mill rate appropriate and that that mill rate be applied on the properties of higher value according to their assessment. That's a fair system. That's how our assessment system is supposed to work, and that's how it works in roughly 80 per cent of the municipalities in this province.

I do once again state that I think the minimum tax provision within the current Municipal Government Act is unfair. It is not something that we should continue to have in place, and given that we don't amend the Municipal Government Act very often, we should take this opportunity to remove what is an unfair provision within the current act and restore some sense of fairness to taxation and assessment within all of our communities in Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 21?

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to move an amendment, and I will wait for the pages to distribute said amendment before speaking to it. Now, in terms of the general topic of this amendment, which I'll address while the pages are distributing the amendment to my colleagues, this amendment has to do with the issue of centralized assessment, which has come up in debate before. I have some significant concerns about the movement towards centralized assessment. We have certainly heard from a number of people in the profession of assessment, but we've also heard from a number of municipalities, and I've heard from the counties that are in my constituency and I've heard from some of the towns and villages and cities in my constituency that they're concerned about the move towards centralized assessment. While its goals are laudable in terms of creating some degree of standardization, the movement in that direction will actually create a lot of problems in terms of service to local ratepayers.

Now, Madam Chair, that you have the amendment, I'll read it into the record. I move that Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, be amended in section 25(c) in the proposed section 292(2.1) by striking out "and" at the end of clause (a) and by adding the following after clause (a):

(a.1) the most recent municipal assessor's assessment of the designated industrial property, if available, and

Madam Chair, this amendment is reflective of what stakeholders have told us that have come forth with concerns regarding the centralization of industrial assessment into Municipal Affairs. Now, the concerns are based on the premise that centralized assessment will decrease local autonomy and local knowledge of the properties being assessed. The local autonomy extends as well to local responsiveness to issues.

Just a couple of weeks ago I was in a meeting along with my colleague the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville with members from Minburn county council, and they indicated to us why they're concerned about this. In their case their assessments are done by a contracted assessor. They do not have an assessor on staff, but that contracted assessor provides the county with excellent service. If there are appeals to an assessment or questions about an assessment, they have found that that contracted assessor can provide the ratepayer with very prompt service. That is something that comes forward, and they're very satisfied with the service that they receive from the assessor. They're concerned that if that is centralized, if that service is pulled into the central government, they have lost control over it and they have lost the ability to monitor, for the sake of the ratepayers, whether any appeals or any questions about the assessment are being answered and dealt with in a clear and rapid manner.

The other problem with centralized assessment, or the reason, I should say, that's often given with regard to centralized assessment is because of inconsistencies within assessment from county to county. You know, some would argue that, for example, an installation, a specific industrial installation in one county that is largely similar to one in another county, should be assessed exactly the same. Well, there are variations from county to county, and those variations have to be taken into account, but some of that variation, if it's excessive, could easily be brought closer together simply by applying assessment guidelines that are present within the current guide to assessment in the province of Alberta. This is not a reason. This variability, which could easily be corrected by applying the assessment guidelines as they exist currently, is not a reason to remove local authority over assessment and centralize it into government.

10:20

In my view, Madam Chair, this reflects a disturbing trend on behalf of this government, once again, to centralize a great deal of what goes on in government into a larger and larger centralized government bureaucracy rather than allowing local councils, that are accountable to their own ratepayers, to their own electors, to deal with these issues on the ground in the communities where they live. Certainly, I've heard consistently from many of the municipalities that I represent that they would prefer to maintain the current system of either using an on-staff assessor or a contracted assessor rather than having a centralized assessor over which they would have no influence and no control. If there were problems with the service that was provided by that centralized assessor, they're not confident that those problems would be addressed or dealt with in a prompt manner. Currently, if they have any problems with the assessment services that they're receiving from either the contracted or staff assessor, they can deal with it in a short period of time.

Madam Chair, this particular amendment deals with that. It deals with the need to provide for municipal assessments that are consistent but, in fact, still have local control or local autonomy. I would ask all members of the Assembly to support this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The amendment will be referred to as A4. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the original bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 21?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 21 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

### Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to what I'm sure will continue to be an issue of robust debate here in the Chamber over the next number of days around what really amounts to capping the future of our province. I know that the government will point to all sorts of reasons why this is a good idea. I understand that there may or may not have been a pipeline expansion approved in the last couple of days, and I'm certain that there will be some discussion from them on that. But the fact remains that on Bill 25, an act that will ultimately cap our ability to expand our future growth in this province, this is not a step in the right direction. We have some significant problems around capping our oil sands production, and the problem that we're going to face is a significant inability on a go-forward to ensure that we are providing the strong, stable economy that our province deserves.

I look forward to hearing from my colleagues. I know that there are a number of amendments that I think can provide some very, very good changes to this bill although ultimately the bill is not ideal. I know that I've said in this House prior that the best thing about this particular legislation is that it's a cap, and that cap can easily and quickly be removed. I look forward to doing that in the future, but in the meantime I look forward to being able to provide some very reasonable amendments that I hope the government will accept.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 25? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today to move an amendment that seeks to strike out everything after "upgrading emissions" from section 2(2)(b) . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Member, before you read it into the record, if you could just wait till I have a copy, please.

It is amendment A2.

Go ahead.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This amendment will remove the 10-megatonne cap constraining upgrading. Limiting emissions from upgrading is not going to help Alberta in achieving

what we would think is our shared goal of increasing the amount of value-added production in Alberta. Now, we've had many, many discussions in the past over the 100-megatonne cap, and this is another cap that is going to cap prosperity.

Madam Chair, I would like to use a bit of the time today just to speak to my colleagues about what upgrading actually means for our oil sands industry and what this 10-megatonne cap will actually mean once it actually hits. [interjections] It's important for the members in this House today . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Members. Thank you.

Go ahead.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

. . . to recognize what is actually accomplished by the upgrading process in our oil sands and the technology. I mean, this is brilliant technology. Everybody in the government always talks about made-in-Alberta solutions. Well, here is one of the best ones that I can even think of and imagine, that has been created by Albertans for Albertans in Alberta. Upgrading technology is actually used to increase the quality of our oil sands so that it's able to flow. Ultimately, by putting a cap on upgrading, you're actually stopping the flow of our products. Upgrading processes are extremely energy intensive in nature because you're decreasing the viscosity of our raw oil sands, and the product requires a system that breaks down the larger oil molecules into small molecules through the application of pressure and heat.

The actual difficulty in processing bitumen comes from its composition as bitumen is composed of very, very long, large molecules, and the long molecules have to be broken before the product is usable for conversion into diesel, gasoline, or other products. So in order to get the product into the line and to flow down, we absolutely have to make sure that this process is happening. With that application of heat and pressure our oil sands products are improved and become synthetic crude oil.

The reality is – and I don't know if anybody here has actually ever held bitumen. It's an extremely heavy product and will not flow without intervention. It's impossible. So it actually needs this process to happen to flow through pipelines, which are very important.

**Mr. Nixon:** You remember pipelines.

**Mrs. Aheer:** I know. If you're pro pipeline, you're going to be pro upgrading.

The problem is that the cap on this becomes quickly an issue of market access. If we can't upgrade and if you're capping upgrading, we will not be able to get our product to market, especially in these very, very important pipelines, that seem to be very important to this government. Well, the pipelines aren't going to be useful if we have nothing to put into them, so we want to make sure, as we've said many, many times in the past, that we are producing here and that we are able to make sure that our bitumen is upgraded to be able to get it into the pipeline.

You are putting a cap on this production. It doesn't make a whole lot of sense considering that the government has spent all day talking about how important pipelines are to them, and now all of a sudden you're going to put a 10-megatonne cap on the product that is actually going to flow through that pipeline. It doesn't make a whole lot of sense, does it?

**10:30**

If you're looking at the bitumen flowing through it, what we normally use to upgrade bitumen is costly diluent. It significantly reduces the energy density of the product so that it can flow. The

alternative to upgrading is to ship the bitumen mixed with condensate, but that adds volume – right? – which means, actually, that less product gets to go through the pipeline, and you're losing value-added.

The flip side of that is that the diluent that is in that condensate – we have a shortage of that in western Canada, and the oil sands companies actually use approximately 350,000 barrels per day in upgrading. One barrel of dilbit, or diluted bitumen, is made up of three parts bitumen and one part condensate. So in terms of capacity and utilization this is low on the side of utilization of our pipeline capacity. The whole point of this discussion is to understand why it is important to upgrade here, why it is important that this government is not putting a cap on our ability to create capacity within our pipelines. Actually, the government has acknowledged in the past that relying on condensate also means that upgrading jobs are moved elsewhere. I'm assuming that that is not what this government wants, because once it's sold – right? – it will get upgraded in one place or another.

What the government is proposing is that regardless of economics in the future we should increase emissions, which I think is contrary to what I've been hearing here over and over again. But you're actually going to push to increase emissions by forcing companies to transport raw product and create upgrader jobs at the other end of the pipeline or the rail line instead of it being done in Alberta. I'm pretty sure that that's counterintuitive to what it is that this government wants to do because – guess what? Why would you cap that process? It's a good question, isn't it? Why would you cap that process? You're actually sending it down the line to other places that may create way more emissions than we do by capping our ability to do it in this province, where we do it better. It makes zero sense, especially for people who supposedly care about pipelines.

Given that the significant bottlenecking of pipelines is resulting – we already have massive congestion in our pipelines. The fact that this is a secondary cap – so let's recap. We have a 100-megatonne cap on our oil sands emissions. Then, on top of that, you put another cap on upgrading, which supposedly was important to this government, but now you're going to cap that. Then what it actually does, too, is cap jobs. It caps jobs. You're actually sending jobs to another jurisdiction because if you're not going to upgrade it here, it's going to happen somewhere. I'd much rather do it in our jurisdiction, where we have control over our environmentally responsible processes here in this province. It doesn't make a lot of sense. You're going to cap jobs and then create more global emissions. It makes no sense.

You need to remove the cap. The cap is going to move it elsewhere. Somebody else is going to do it. I don't quite understand it. I'd love to have this explained to me. Again, 10 is another interesting number that seems to be pulled out of thin air, so it would be lovely if somebody on the government side could explain that to me, too.

Alberta is already in the position where we do not even have enough pipeline capacity, not even close. The cap will not only prevent – oddly enough, that pipeline is not going to be ready tomorrow. I know it's there. I know. But right now, as we stand right now, we do not have pipeline capacity. We don't have even close to enough, and the cap itself, even without changing capacity, will prevent bitumen from entering the pipelines. Also, the upgrading jobs, that could increase energy density and improve pipeline use across the industry: why would you cap that? You're capping jobs, capping production, capping prosperity into a pipeline that supposedly is important to you and stopping the flow of prosperity to other jurisdictions, that are going to finish off the product. It makes no sense at all, absolutely no sense.

The bill exempts and potentially experiments with not-proven techniques. Not even proven techniques, while maybe energy intensive, that greatly increase the energy density of the products shipped and reduce overall emissions will be allowed. Why would the bill exempt that? We're not sure. We would love an explanation as to why you would do that. Ultimately, if in this province we are responsible for upgrading, there are innovations and incredible technology here that will allow changes in how we create bitumen.

The conversion of bitumen to synthetic crude oil is a process that allows for transportation of our oil sands product. But, then again, let me recap. They're capping the emissions from oil sands. The 10-megatonne cap is talking about capping that process that allows for transportation of bitumen through pipelines, that, evidently, at least this morning were important to this government. So it doesn't make any sense. The 10-megatonne cap on upgrading could put Alberta into a position where we are unable to effectively transport our products to market. Why would you do that? Why would you cap prosperity? It doesn't make any sense.

Syncrude Canada has processes that fully upgrade mined bitumen and actually eliminate impurities – the impurities we're talking about are nitrogen, sulphur – and that happens through a process called coking. The end result of this process is refinery-ready synthetic crude oil shipped without diluent. This synthetic crude can be distilled into other products with little or no additional treatment. But if you're capping that, we're not going to be able to do some of these processes. The upgrading is so much more than just upgrading. It's jobs. It's about actually being able to get our bitumen into the space that it needs to be in to flow through pipelines.

When upgrading occurs in a jurisdiction that takes the utmost care, like we do, to mitigate its impact on the environment, like we do, it doesn't seem to make any sense that you would cap a jurisdiction with as high regulatory processes as we have. Less upgrading means fewer jobs and – guess what? – a hundred per cent carbon leakage. What does that mean? That means somebody else is going to do it. Why wouldn't you want to produce it here, right? I think that's a reasonable question.

The government is saying that it's wanting to create jobs, right? The government is saying that it cares about making sure that we have diversification. The government is always talking about how they want to make sure that they're getting Albertans back to work. Yet you're going to put a 10 per cent cap on something that is actually a job creator. You're going to put a 10 per cent cap on something that actually creates prosperity for us. And, actually, a hundred per cent of that goes to some other jurisdiction, right? It doesn't make a lot of sense. I mean, this is a real opportunity for you guys to stop this. You can end this. You can take off this 10-megatonne cap.

Again, just to reiterate, we have to upgrade in order to get our product into the pipeline, so why don't we talk about legitimately taking this cap off so that we can do that, do it to our full capacity and in a way that we're in control of being able to do that? I think the government would have to admit that they would much rather be in control of the environmental aspects of being able to make sure that what we're doing is putting that bitumen into the pipeline the way it should be, right? I mean, we're the most environmentally regulated petrochemical jurisdiction in the world. Madam Chair, we should be producing more here and not allowing other, less regulated jurisdictions to take business away from Alberta and Canada. So why would you cap that? Why would you cap our ability to do that?

I think the facts are fairly simple. Other jurisdictions do not take the same care to produce with less or to protect their air quality or to protect their workers' safety. Those are things we take a

tremendous amount of pride in here in Alberta. In fact, I've heard the government say that, right? So I would assume that the government would think that this would be a good thing to make sure that we are producing more here.

**10:40**

I mean, we in our caucus, in the Wildrose, have always stated that upgrading needs to be led by the market and private investment. It's a core belief that we hold on this side. But we're already restricted by the economics of our ability to upgrade, so it makes no sense that you would cap that further. It makes absolutely no sense that a government would hamstring the viability of the upgrading that is already taking place unless it's purely for PR. It doesn't make any sense.

The government can keep talking about value-added, but that is a complete contradiction of your very own statements, especially during the royalty review. As I understand it, the royalty review kept touting value-added, value-added. Well, now you're capping your ability to do that. It makes absolutely no sense. How is that value-added to be achieved if you're going to limit production where it's actually economically viable? I mean, we're all talking today about having access to tidewater, pipelines, right? Yeah. We want to make sure we actually have the capacity and the products to be able to put in those pipelines, so don't cap it. Don't cap it. We're just asking you to make this legislation a little bit better by taking off that 10-megatonne cap. It's good for everybody here.

If the private sector doesn't see that there's availability to create upgrading opportunities, how are you going to bring investment in, especially if we move beyond the cap, right? What are you going to do then? How are you going to bring investment in if you're capping something that might have opportunities for the private sector to be involved in? Not a very good idea, not a good business idea.

Now we have even more severely hampered the ability of the private sector to become involved in responsible production. I mean, I would assume that we'd want the private sector coming into this and investing in something that we create here in Alberta, that we're able to put into the global market, but you're actually stopping production. You're stopping the flow of our products. The government has been preaching on and on and on about value-added and now seems to think it's in the best interest of Alberta and investor confidence and global competitiveness to slow down the economically viable, value-added upgrading that actually already exists. It doesn't make any sense.

I'm left with the question of the exact reasons why you added a separate 10-megatonne cap over and above the 100-megatonne cap for upgrading. Why does this legislation seek to cap upgrading at all? Why? I mean, I don't see anything written anywhere within the climate action plan about what that would do, how that helps, what the purpose is, especially when we're the most environmentally responsible people here. I would assume that the government would want to make sure we're producing here more.

The energy sector and its ability to innovate and create new and more efficient ways to produce and upgrade creates markets, and those are going to be further undermined by this 10-megatonne cap on upgrading emissions. I mean, don't we want to reward good behaviour? If they're doing a good job, let the market decide. Let innovation happen. Let's, you know, court this private sector to come back in and work with us to produce the most environmentally responsible products that we can. Don't put a cap on prosperity.

The government is also not taking into consideration that this industry is constantly looking to improve its footprint. Again – and I'll say it at least a thousand more times, I'm sure, while I speak to

this bill – we should be producing more, not less. We should be producing more. Our competitors are going to be jumping for joy as our government leads in ways to keep our resources in the ground. I'm sure they're just scratching their heads and just laughing, just ecstatic about the fact that somebody else is going to be able to produce this when we should be producing here. They're going to be jumping at every chance to grab our part of the market, to take that production, and the government is destroying any opportunities for the industry to get ahead. You're destroying production.

And it's not just one thing. I mean, the cumulative aspects of all of these caps are massive to the industry, and you seem to be joyfully watching as the sector falls to its knees and watching as other countries blast past us in innovation. And forget even about the environmental standards elsewhere. Forget about workers. Forget about ethical development. We should be producing here. For a government that stands up . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any others members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak in support of the amendment brought in by my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View. I'm actually surprised because in the past, when the Government House Leader was the leader of the NDP, they used to blame the Progressive Conservatives, that they're shipping jobs south of the border because they're not upgrading enough here. Now they're trying to cap upgrading, so I don't understand what they're trying to do here. They're very inconsistent on that.

It's not only that. You know, I can also bring up other contradictions. The NDP this time campaigned on this, saying that they'll bring more jobs by upgrading in Alberta, but they didn't campaign on bringing in a carbon tax. They do what they didn't say, and they don't do what they did say that they will do, so I'm really confused.

Also, you know, I want to make it clear. We're not saying here, Wildrose is not saying that the government should make investments into upgrading. We are saying that if private investors take the risk, if they come forward to invest in Alberta in upgrading, then that's good. They're going to take the risk, and they're going to create the jobs. So why are you capping the investments? Why are you capping the jobs? Why are you capping the tax revenue for Alberta?

If we don't do it here, if there are economic reasons on the Gulf coast of Mexico, they will upgrade it there, but we are not taking the risk. If the market demands the product shipped to the south, it gives them better returns on their investment. That's up to them.

In Alberta now most of the mining leases were already taken, so for most of the resource, mostly in Athabasca, it's all, you know, surface mining along the Athabasca River. So all those leases were already taken, Madam Chair. All those companies like Suncor, Syncrude, Shell, CNRL already have their mining leases, they're producing, and they have upgraders on their sites, so it's unlikely that they will add more upgrading capacity there.

But 90 per cent of the resource that the governing party wants to leave in the ground can only be extracted using SAGD technology or other thermal projects because it's deeper. So there is an opportunity there for investors to put upgraders on-site to make that an integrated facility. It's also called backward integration.

Some of this is already happening, like Suncor's Firebag, if you take that. They have added a sulphur-recovery unit at the Firebag site. They also have diluent recovery. Like my colleague tried to

explain here, you need to make it viscous to flow in the pipeline. That's why you add dilbit. But by adding dilbit, it's taking up pipeline capacity. We already have a shortage of pipeline capacity, and then we are using it up for shipping diluent. We are paying more transportation costs, and then we have to ship that back. It doesn't make sense. If private investors want to take the risk and then they want to build upgraders here, we should encourage that. All these companies we talked about here actually create jobs. They support charities. They support communities. So this government, by bringing in the cap, are capping the investments, and they are also discouraging the investors. They want to punish these industries who are supporting the communities and creating the jobs here. That doesn't make sense to me.

**10:50**

That's why I'm speaking in support of this amendment. If you guys don't know, you can ask somebody and get to know how this process works. I'm sure, if you look at your previous manifestos, you supported upgrading in Alberta. I strongly encourage you to support this amendment. You can boast yourself about the two pipelines, but it's a different subject. Here we are talking about upgrading the bitumen to make it refinery ready so you can free up your pipeline capacity. The logic tells you to support this amendment. It has nothing to do with pipelines, what you're talking about. Those pipelines could still be filled with the product if you allow extraction. You're trying to cap production here. You're trying to cap job creation. You're trying to cap economic development, which doesn't make sense.

Also, the minister of economic development has been talking about diversification. This is another opportunity for diversification. You can produce a value-added product here, and that fits in your philosophy of diversification. I don't understand why you still want to cap that. There are many reasons I can give if you are willing to hear and actually want to create jobs here. We know we lost a hundred thousand jobs here, and the minister of economic development keeps talking about the job action plan. This is a slam dunk. This is an easy one. Remove the cap on upgrading, and if the investors come forward and invest in Alberta, it will ultimately create jobs. But don't put restrictions on them for job creation.

I would urge all members of this House to support this amendment for the reasons I gave. If you want to go back and consult your constituents on the weekend, they'll tell you the same thing. They'll remind you that your party was supporting upgrading projects before, and you'll have to explain to them what changed from then to now. You haven't told us any reason why you changed your mind. You still have time. We are giving you an avenue to fix this bill. This is one of the good amendments. We'll bring in many more amendments, but you have the opportunity to make this bill better by removing the cap on upgrading.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to rise in support of this amendment tonight. First of all, something that I think ought to be noted here is that on January 17 of this year, 2016, our hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade was quoted in the *Calgary Herald* as saying, "The value-added (sector) really does mean high-paying, quality jobs that stay here in the province. If we have a choice between shipping raw resources or shipping a more upgraded or value-added product, we'll take the latter." "We'll take the latter," he said.

That was back in January of this year. It wasn't all that terribly long ago, so you can imagine, Madam Chair, my surprise when Bill 25 lands on our desks and we see a cap on upgrading. It seemed to me that someone did not talk to the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade when they were drafting Bill 25 because I'm quite sure, had they done so, the hon. minister would have said: "Well, just hold your horses. The value-added sector does mean high-paying, quality jobs that stay in this province. If we have a choice between shipping raw resources or shipping a more upgraded or value-added product, I'll take the latter." I'm quite sure the hon. minister would have told them that.

That leaves me to suspect that this amendment is going to receive support from the hon. minister. I'm quite sure he's going to be supportive of this amendment because it is entirely and exactly – I will say even: exactly – in keeping with the hon. minister's previous statement made in January and as quoted by the *Calgary Herald*.

To remove that 10-megatonne cap means that we will not be constraining upgrading, and let's be really clear about what constraining upgrading does. It constrains jobs. It constrains jobs, it constrains development, it constrains revenue for our province, it actually constrains innovation, and it constrains diversification. It constrains all of the things that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade stands for. All of his efforts are constrained by having a 10-megatonne cap on upgrading.

Let's be really clear about upgrading. That product being pumped down that pipeline is going to be upgraded by somebody before it hits the refinery. It must be upgraded. It's not an option. That upgrading can take place in the province of Alberta, providing Albertans good-paying jobs, providing revenue for our economy, providing taxation revenue for the government. That upgrading will either take place here, or it will take place somewhere else. This is, again, the very same situation, the very same concept as carbon leakage. This is exactly the same thing. We're sending something of value someplace else, and they're going to do that work on that product. It's not going to be Albertans doing that work. It's not going to be Albertans making those paycheques. It will be somebody else, some other families that will be getting that revenue and some other government getting the taxation stream from that.

Now, there's another concept here, and that is that we already have in place a 100-megatonne cap on extraction. That's what that really is. That 100-megatonne cap is a cap on extraction. It only makes logical sense. My esteemed colleague from Calgary-Foothills, who happens to come from the resource sector, who has a long history of experience working for one of the largest oil sands developers in our province, knows what he's talking about when he says that it's only logical – it's only logical – that if we're going to have a 100-megatonne cap on extraction, then, for goodness' sakes, maximize all of the value-add that you possibly can from the product that you extract under that 100-megatonne umbrella.

#### 11:00

It makes no sense whatsoever to take all of that bitumen that is going to be extracted under the 100-megatonne cap and then not do anything with it but, instead, cap even what we could do with that. That is not providing a value-add opportunity. In fact, what you're doing by capping it is that you're capping innovation, you're capping an expansion of diversified industry, you're capping jobs, you're capping revenue, you're capping GDP, you're capping taxation revenue. You've already got a 100-megatonne cap on the extraction. All right. Maximize everything that comes out of the ground under that cap. That is logical, and I'm sure my esteemed colleague would agree with me. That makes perfect sense.

Now, I'm not in favour even of the 100-megatonne cap, but since you're insisting on having it, for goodness' sake, don't then hamstring the industry by saying to the industry: well, you can extract all kinds of stuff up to a 100-megatonne cap, but don't you go upgrading it beyond 10 megatonnes. That just makes no sense whatsoever. This is an excellent amendment, an excellent amendment to remove the cap on upgrading, because the actual extraction has already got a cap on it. So there you've achieved your 100-megatonne cap. You can wave your orange flag over that, but now let's not go and cap all of the value-added that we could possibly be getting from what we extract under that cap.

Part two. As I said earlier, if those oil sands products are not upgraded in this province, they're going to be upgraded someplace else in the supply chain. Now, I want to talk a little bit about those companies that are involved currently in the upgrading industry within our province. I think we should be very proud of the environmental record of the upgraders that we have, the partial and complete upgraders that we've got. They are the most environmentally conscious bunch of upgrading specialists in the world. You can go to a lot of places on this planet – and I've been very blessed to be able to travel to different places. Some of them are resource-based economies. Madam Chair, I will tell you what: we've got nothing to be ashamed of about our environmental record here. You go to places in the Middle East, you go to places in Africa, and you look at those resource-based economies and the stuff that's going on over there. We are not embarrassed about our oil sands industries or our upgrading industries. They're doing a very good job on the environmental and on the safety side of things.

We have an industry that is absolutely full of innovative people, men and women who have taken something from earth – I mean, just think about this. This is sand that is surrounded by an oil product, and they have taken this stuff, and it's like the oil sands is the largest environmental cleanup project in the world. Really. It really is. It's just miraculous what innovators have done up there. They have taken this sandy product and turned it into a crude that any refinery can utilize. This is amazing. It is, in my estimation, just as amazing as that turkey processing plant down in the United States that takes all of the by-product of turkey slaughter and turns it into crude oil. Like, that's miraculous. It's just amazing. I think it may be owned by Cargill, something like eight million turkeys a month or some crazy number. It's just massive.

The things that man can do through innovation. We should not be capping the innovative and creative power of the people involved in the upgrading industry. You know, we're aware of things that that industry is doing such as water recycling. They have so significantly reduced water consumption in that process over the last 15 years. It is amazing. That is an environmentally conscious industry.

Trash reduction. I don't know of a company up there that hasn't got some kind of trash reduction strategy, and not just trash from the guys, you know. It's not like our trash at all but just the waste from construction, the waste from processing, the waste that is just a fact of an industry. They've done massive amounts of work on trash reduction strategies up there, especially on the remote sites because, obviously, anything that you create on a site that's waste has to be trucked out. That means money. It costs money. It takes time. It takes people. It takes resources to deal with it. So they've done everything they can to try to minimize that.

These are just a couple of the very responsible environmental measures taken by that industry.

Workers. I don't think you're going to find anywhere in any resource sector economy a place where workers are treated more like partners than right here in Alberta, in our oil sector. Most of the companies that I've had anything to do with – and granted, I haven't

had dealings with all of them – have a process a by which every employee is encouraged to contribute creative ideas to doing things better, to doing things more efficiently, creating new processes. It's an amazing group of people. We have hundreds of thousands of men and women in this province, and these companies are taking that massive amount of creative power and talent inherent in every human being and maximizing it. They're treating these employees as though they are partners in the development of these resources for the betterment of our society, for the betterment of their families, for the betterment of our GDP, for an increased and improved quality of life. We should applaud these people for the good work that they have done and applaud the management of these companies who treat their workers that well and pay their workers an appropriate wage.

Those are good-paying jobs with excellent benefit packages, tremendous support packages for their families. I'm familiar with some of the families whose breadwinners work for CNRL. They have an amazing health package, absolutely amazing health package for families, for the children. Good on them. They're treating their workers so excellently.

You talk about safety standards, the workplace environment from a safety point of view. Again, during the Fort Mac fire we saw those kinds of safety measures and training that the companies provide their employees. That training saved lives during the Fort Mac fire. It saved lives. Those workers did not panic. They were trained in safe evacuation techniques and methods from work sites. All that same training kicked in during the Fort Mac fire, and as the fire encroached on the city and actually went through the city, you weren't seeing panicking people, not at all. These were professional people from the patch, from the oil sands. They knew exactly what to do. And this is a direct result of the kind of care – the kind of care – that our companies show to their employees and have for the environment those employees have to work in.

When we take a sum total look at the enormous amount of innovation and creativity that is available to us as a province, I will encourage each and every member in this Assembly to vote in favour of this amendment to remove the cap on these upgrading

emissions simply for the fact that the enormous number of jobs that can be created here and the enormous amount of economic activity that comes with this are well worth it.

Thank you very much.

**11:10**

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to move that the committee rise and report with respect to Bill 21, Modernized Municipal Government Act, and Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, and report progress with respect to Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills with some amendments: Bill 30, Bill 21. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 25. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur with the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to move that the House adjourn until 9 tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:13 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, December 1, 2016

Day 56

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

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**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, December 1, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect. Today is World AIDS Day, which gives us an opportunity to raise awareness, improve education, fight prejudice, and unite in the fight against HIV. Let us continue to support people who are living with HIV and remember and commemorate those people who have lost their lives in the battle.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

#### Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

**The Chair:** We are currently on amendment A2. Any speakers to this amendment? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for allowing me to rise and speak today in favour of my colleague's fine amendment to Bill 25.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you.

This amendment seeks to eliminate the secondary 10-megatonne cap that would constrain upgrading done right here in Alberta. Of course, much has already been said about how ridiculous it is to limit our excellent, gold-standard energy extraction here by putting artificial constraints on the upper limit of production. We know that our locally operating producers are safe, they are reliable, and they are very respectful of world-class environmental standards. The oil sands are truly a marvel of engineering and skilled trades and labour and efficient management.

You know what? On that note, I saw Rex Murphy speak up in Fort McMurray very recently, and he compared the oil sands to the national railway. It was a massive feat of engineering to build, and it took people from British Columbia all the way to the Maritimes and everywhere in between. It was an effort that required all Canadians to work on and endeavour. For some reason it doesn't get the same recognition as the national railway, and that is unfortunate, but it accomplished the same feats. It brought all of Canada together, and it provided us with something that really boosted our economy.

It's absurd to be talking about more limits at a time when our economy needs to be unleashed – that much is already known – but then we've come to the matter of this little 10-megatonne side cap on upgrading. This 10-megatonne cap is every bit as absurd and perhaps even more so. You guys have to realize that we're talking about limiting the opportunity to take this product, that has already

been taken from the ground – it's already extracted – and upgrade it here in this province, in this country.

Value-added production to the energy sector used to one of the few areas that even the NDP would support. I seem to recall watching many previous elections and debates, going back to the days when the current Infrastructure minister was the NDP leader, and there was always this theme that we needed to be doing more value-added production here in Alberta.

Now, I don't know if perhaps some of the more ecoradical elements have since seized control of this party across the way, but this 10-megatonne cap on upgrading strikes directly at this, and it truly does not make sense after taking the product from the ground. It is going to be consumed. We know that. It's not going back into the ground. This product will be taken and upgraded elsewhere. It is the ultimate carbon leakage policy. It creates conditions that will see our product taken to other jurisdictions, jurisdictions that are not always as stellar as ours – certainly, China would be a prime example of that – and it will be upgraded there, perhaps in conditions that are not as stringent.

Of course, we could also talk about how essential it is for the transportation of our product to upgrade it to a state that is easier to flow through a pipeline. There are companies here – right here in Alberta – that made tremendous strides in processing our raw product. It cannot be overstated how much this upgrading adds to the efficiency of existing pipeline infrastructure because the more upgraded you can get, the less supplemental products you have to add to get it to flow nicely. You see, this bitumen, when we're pulling it up from the ground, is a thick, thick product. As it is, we mix it with a lot of water to make it truly flow. We have to add a lot of solvents and a lot of other ingredients that make it more fluid, less viscous. But you need to spend money to buy those solvents, and they do use up capacity in the line.

Upgrading is about increasing the energy density per barrel shipped. It is about moving our product easier and more efficiently. It is also about a spinoff industry. It's easy to be tempted into thinking that the success of our oil industry is in the amount of royalties collected by the provincial government, but that's a very narrow way of looking at things. The strength of our energy industry has always been the tremendous economic activity that it generates in the private sector.

That spinoff activity is what is directly at stake with this 10-megatonne cap. These upgrading enterprises employ skilled trades, labour, engineers, chemists and on and on. They require the services of fabricators, oil service companies, suppliers, quality inspectors and more, and all of these groups are based right across this province. Not all of this is built in Fort McMurray or Cold Lake or Grande Prairie. A lot of this is developed right here, right around Edmonton, throughout our province here. There is no conceivable reason why this should be done in any other jurisdiction, by people other than Albertans. We have the expertise to do it here, the standards here, and we do it better than anyone. If the market has determined that there is a need for upgrading here, whether it is because it is more efficient or cost-effective or because it is needed to increase the energy density of our exports, there is no good reason it should not be done here.

We should also keep in mind that when we upgrade our raw products, we are essentially removing some of the heavier carbon products. These hydrocarbons that industrial processes sort out and remove have other applications, including asphalt, for instance. I'm sure I don't need to explain why something like asphalt would be important in Alberta, where there are tens of thousands of kilometres of paved roads.

I think I've touched on a couple of overarching themes here: first, the importance of keeping upgrading in Alberta to prevent further

carbon leakage over and above what the NDP's policies will already cause; secondly, to keep spinoff benefits here, where market forces have deemed it economical to do so.

I've also mentioned that upgrading is about capacity. It's about using existing pipeline capacity more efficiently by creating a more fluid, energy-dense, and easier to transport product. Caps and other measures that limit production are diametrically opposed to increased export capacity. In fact, even the vocal anti-oil members of the NDP's oil sands advisory group know that. They know that building pipeline capacity when you have hard caps in place is contradictory.

9:10

Here's a perfect case in point. OSAG member Tzepporah Berman took to Facebook immediately after the Kinder Morgan decision to argue that Trudeau's linking of the approval to Alberta's cap is "disingenuous." This is a woman that is on the government payroll right now. She argues that we do not need the increased capacity because the long-term goal of capping and limiting production makes pipelines unnecessary. Ms Berman, in fact, claims that she has studied the numbers for hours and cannot find a need for the Kinder Morgan expansion. Just to clarify, she's on the government payroll. I suppose that, if nothing else, there's a certain consistency among the NDP's ecoradical wing. They know that a policy of increased pipeline capacity to ship our product abroad is wholly incompatible with the limiting policies here at home.

In closing, of all the policies crafted by this government to limit our energy development, this is perhaps one of the most bizarre and inappropriate. If I might provide a different comparison: our lumber industry. You know, right now we're selling a lot of raw lumber to Asia and whatnot, and I appreciate that. I appreciate the fact that they want our lumber. But the unfortunate thing is that here in Canada and Alberta we don't create a finished product with this. We don't make that furniture in a factory into that stuff we buy at IKEA. We're selling the raw product. This secondary 10-megatonne cap would be like if Alberta did have the factories to build finished wood products, putting a limit on that and saying: you know what; you can only use 10 per cent of your lumber to build chairs and other finished products, and the rest you've got to ship out as entire logs. That's a really sad thing here.

I urge you to vote in favour of this amendment that would at least make this bill slightly more palatable by eliminating the secondary 10-megatonne upgrading cap. It will only benefit us all.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in support of this amendment. We have some issues with Bill 25 that this amendment can repair. In addition, this amendment actually is in keeping with statements made by the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

As I mentioned last night but not all the members may have heard, on January 17 of this year the minister was quoted as saying, "The value-added (sector) really does mean high-paying, quality jobs that stay here in the province. If we have a choice between shipping raw resources or shipping a more upgraded or value-added product, we'll take the latter." We'll take the latter: this is what the NDP's own minister has stated, that he would prefer to see the high-paying, high-quality jobs in the value-added component of our bitumen. We have an amendment before the House right now that actually allows that to happen.

Just to reiterate a little bit, we already have a 100-megatonne cap. It only makes sense to maximize all of the value-added possible

beneath that 100-megatonne umbrella. Putting a 10-megatonne cap on emissions from upgrading is actually counterproductive.

In addition, what we're going to have happen here is that this bill is going to stifle investment in innovation as new entrants have absolutely no certainty that emissions-limit space is going to be available to them once their technology is brought to market. Given that they are not going to have that certainty here in this jurisdiction, it only makes sense that they will take that technology someplace else. We have to make space for new entrants. We have to make space for new innovators, new companies coming into the market beneath that 100-megatonne umbrella, and we should not be limiting that innovation, that value-add by this 10-megatonne cap on upgrading.

Now, if we go to the executive summary entitled Alberta at a Crossroads, that was commissioned by this government right here, and we look at some of the recommendations that were made by the panel, the very first recommendation has the following statement under the heading Guiding Principles for Alberta's Royalty Framework. Point 3: "Supports downstream value-added industries. The framework encourages investment in activities and technological advancements that add value to Alberta energy resources such as upgrading" and a list of other items.

In the recommendations from the royalty review, in the statements made by the hon. minister of economic development and jobs, people are recognizing upgrading as a significant factor in the ability to value-add, to build jobs, to increase GDP, to improve even the amount of revenue coming into the government, which, Lord knows, this government needs. It only makes sense, I think, that this amendment be passed because it does these very things.

Furthermore, again from the royalty review report, recommendation 4:

Seize opportunities to enhance value-added processing.

Recommendation in brief:

- Develop a value-added natural gas strategy for Alberta.
- Examine opportunities to accelerate the development and commercialization of partial upgrading and alternative value-creation technologies for bitumen.

Here again the royalty review panel recognizes the enormous value in promoting value-add.

They go on to say:

Our abundant resources and infrastructure offer a strong case for expansion of value-added industries that use natural gas as a feedstock, including the conversion of bitumen to lighter products, petrochemicals, fertilizers and consumer products.

Our Panel recommends that Alberta develop a strategy to seize the opportunity presented by our shale gas resources and literally "bring the market to Alberta" by strategically setting the stage for the establishment of more downstream industries here in the province. Over time, we can reduce the longstanding competitive disadvantage that Alberta has faced by being located far from markets. This approach involves a long-term strategic plan that would span a number of decades but would ultimately diversify Alberta's industries with downstream uses for our hydrocarbons, offering more employment and economic stability. Our Panel recommends the Government of Alberta enlist the advice of experts to examine many questions that need to be addressed in determining Alberta's potential in this area.

Partial upgrading of bitumen offers another opportunity unique to Alberta's resources. It removes various proportions of the heaviest fraction of the bitumen barrel, allowing the partially upgraded bitumen to flow in a pipeline with little or no diluent.

This, in effect, increases the capacity of export pipelines . . .

Get this.

. . . by as much as 30%.

The panel recognized that using the innovative technologies specific to upgrading could increase the current pipeline capacity by 30 per cent. It's almost like having another pipeline without having to go through all of the hassle of getting the approval for a pipeline. Simply take upgrading, apply it to that bitumen, and less diluent is needed. Therefore, that oil can flow in that pipeline without the assistance of diluent, increasing the capacity of the pipeline. Increased capacity is increased jobs. Increased jobs is increased taxes.

9:20

I'll go on.

Our Panel recommends that the Government of Alberta, as a significant owner of bitumen through in-kind royalties, provide financial support to accelerate the commercialization of partial upgrading technologies.

In Summary:

Our recommendations, including the implementation of a Modernized Royalty Framework for Alberta, address the new realities that we face in getting value for our oil and gas resources in a highly competitive world. It's a world where a return to higher prices is not a given, because global competitors (in particular the United States) are fighting for our markets. From the research and input we received, it became clear to our Panel that our recommendations had to encourage innovation on many fronts – to reduce costs, to enhance efficiency, to improve environmental performance, and to attract investment to the province.

There we have it from the experts themselves, the royalty panel, who looked into this in detail, and here they are making a very strong and very clear case that upgrading provides an enormous potential, a potential that we must not limit through a 10-megatonne cap.

Some other statements made by the panel in setting the context:

Low prices may be a powerful attraction for "value-adding."

We hear this government complaining all the time about how low oil prices are, in their opinion, the only reason Alberta's economy is hurting. Well, then, what we need to do is really go after every value-add opportunity possible. The panel says:

Going beyond simple upgrading, refineries and petrochemical plants use oil and natural gas as feedstocks. These feedstocks represent a very high portion of the overall cost of the facilities, so refineries and petrochemical plants are attracted to places with abundant, cheap supplies of oil and gas. While low prices will limit the amount of value in our resources that can be collected through royalties, our Panel believes they could facilitate an expansion of processing capacity in the province, thereby creating additional jobs and sources of tax revenue for Alberta.

So here we have the experts saying what we've been saying for some time. When you've got low prices like this, use it to your advantage because it creates an opportunity for someone – and the value-add chain is that someone – and upgrading and partial upgrading is a significant player in that value-add package. It's something we need to strongly promote and not limit through a 10-megatonne cap.

Furthermore, from the panel again:

Our traditional sense of upgrading and refining is bounded by the processing of bitumen into Synthetic Crude Oil or refining it into transportation fuels. While the economics have not been kind to those activities, it is more the renaissance of U.S. light unconventional oil production in startling quantities that now makes traditional upgrading a challenging prospect.

However, our Panel has identified two other areas which we believe have significant promise and may deliver the benefits Albertans aspire to – that is, to add value to the products we extract here in the province.

Both of these opportunities are in keeping with Alberta's long history of taking strategic actions to maximize the benefits Albertans can derive from our province's natural resources. Ever since the Province obtained ownership of its natural resources in 1930, government has played an active role in encouraging value-added processing of oil and natural gas.

Over and over again the panel is coming to the same conclusion in their remarks, that we have an opportunity in this province, because of the resources we've been blessed with, to take it beyond just shipping raw, unprocessed product.

You know, Canada for generations – I remember that when we were studying history in grade school, Canada was known as carriers of water and hewers of wood. In the day when I was working in the lumber industry, we were shipping logs off the coast of British Columbia to Japan except that the logs never made it to Japan. The Japanese had plywood plants just outside the international limit, and they would gather the logs out there in the ocean, process them into plywood, put it on another boat, and ship it right back to us as finished product. We were giving away our logs and then paying a premium for plywood. This was back in the '60s and the '70s.

Well, fortunately, the government clued in, and we started seeing some plywood plants built. We were not benefiting from the value-add at all. Here we have another scenario where we've got an opportunity. We can take this low price of oil right now and turn that into an opportunity, an opportunity to upgrade, to attract investment. It's a sustainable investment. It's going to significantly improve the job situation here, significantly improve the tax revenue picture as well, and put some of our hundreds of thousands of men and women from the patch back to work into things that they understand and know, good-paying jobs.

I strongly urge each and every member in this House to support this amendment. It is very worth while. It provides everything that we're going to, you know – it's an attempt, rather, to fix this bill, that has a terrible component in it, where it's limiting Alberta, limiting development, limiting investment, limiting jobs. Well, let's not do that. Let's not limit ourselves like that.

I would promote this amendment strongly. I hope that everyone will please vote for it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to stand and speak in support of this amendment also. I think we've heard a lot about the desire to have more value-added products right here in Alberta. Of course, there are many benefits to having value-added products right here in Alberta, having that value added here. Of course, one of the biggest things is jobs. Right off the bat, you know, we're sitting with a hundred thousand fewer jobs here in Alberta, not including the loss of contractors and the contractors that are underemployed.

We have a government here that's promised to create a hundred thousand jobs. Obviously, they've got a 200,000-job deficit in what they've got planned and what is the reality today. Now, we sit here with a bill, Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. It has a 10-megatonne cap on upgrading. Now, upgrading is a process that could take place right here in Alberta, and that will create jobs right here in Alberta, Madam Chair. I can't understand the reasoning behind a cap on jobs, really. It really is a cap on jobs. So we have a problem here with a bill like this, that is capping jobs.

Now, another thing: upgrading technology is used to increase the quality of our oil sands products. It also helps it flow down pipelines. It increases the value of our raw product, and it increases

its ability to flow down pipelines. Another thing it does is that you can flow more oil down existing pipelines.

9:30

Now, obviously, there is a great desire here in Alberta to have more pipelines to new markets. Recently we've seen the federal government approve the expansion and replacement of two existing pipelines, one going to the U.S. and the other one going to the B.C. coast in the south. That's great. Increased capacity flowing out of Alberta is good. But, Madam Chair, if we're capping upgrading which can increase the amount of oil to flow out of Alberta, we're actually capping pipelines, the ability for pipelines to take our product out of our province to market. So not only are we capping jobs, but we're capping pipeline capacity.

Now, some of these pipelines are designed to take our bitumen away, our oil away, but also they have to return the diluent. So there's waste here as well, a waste factor, where these companies are spending extra money to transport two products, one one way, out of Alberta, one back, just so they can get their oil to flow down these pipelines. This upgrading would reduce that need. We'd have fewer products having to be trucked or pipelined back to Alberta because this process would replace that.

Right now we ship our bitumen mixed with condensate. Of course, that adds volume to our bitumen, which means less product gets into the pipeline. Of course, then, what do you do with this condensate afterwards? Now, there is a rising demand for diluent, and that's led to a condensate shortage in western Canada. The oil sands companies use approximately 350,000 barrels per day of this. One barrel of dilbit, or diluted bitumen, is made up of three parts bitumen, one part condensate. That means that the pipeline capacity is not being used efficiently. It's being used to flow something that isn't needed at the end. It's only there to allow the oil to flow.

Now, another factor here is that this oil is going to have to be upgraded somewhere. That's a no-brainer. It has to happen. So why can't this happen in Alberta? I don't understand why it can't happen right here in Alberta. By putting a cap on this, companies will sit and look at this and decide: okay; do I want to invest any more money in upgrading in Alberta when there's a cap on emissions? Probably not, because they don't have an opportunity to fully expand their business to where they might want to take it. Madam Chair, I mean, it's a cap on jobs, a cap on pipelines. It has to be done somewhere. Companies, of course, are forced now to make a decision: do we invest here in something like this or not?

This is a very classic example, a very common-sense, classic example of carbon leakage. We're going to restrict the ability for this to be upgraded here, knowing full well that this is going to have to be upgraded somewhere else, quite possibly and most likely in a jurisdiction that doesn't have the environmental standards we have here or even the social standards: taking care of its people, employees, work standards, things like this. This makes no sense at all.

Now, we have significant bottlenecking in pipelines resulting from congestion, and we're trying to get our oil to the markets. We only have limited capacity right now. That's why we want pipelines. That's why we want pipelines in every direction. It's because we need to get the oil to market. There's no need to cap the opportunity to transfer our oil to the end market. We're lacking in capacity.

We know that members of the government caucus protest pipelines. We know they've hired antipipeline activists that are still actively campaigning against pipelines. Can you believe it, Madam Chair? This government suggests that they support pipelines. Meanwhile they hire anti-oil activists that are still to this day actively campaigning against pipelines – does that make sense? – paid for by Albertan taxpayers' money. They're going to sit here

and suggest that this cap on upgrading is somehow helpful. It's not helpful. It's damaging. This 10-megatonne cap on upgrading could put Alberta in a position where we are unable to effectively transport our product to markets.

Madam Chair, the end result of this process, the process of upgrading, is refinery-ready synthetic crude oil shipped without diluent. That's what the end result of this process is. It allows us to create a product from our raw product that's refinery ready and can be shipped without diluent. Diluent is expensive, it has to be taken care of at the other end of the transport, and there's a shortage of it. If you have a government that's apparently against pipelines, because they hire people that are against pipelines, then why would they be putting in a bill like this to cap a process that would reduce the need for a pipeline to transport the diluent back? I don't know. Maybe somebody could tell me, but I don't know. There seem to be lots of comments flowing back and forth, but I don't see anybody standing up to talk.

Clear and simple, upgrading means jobs. Upgrading means pipeline capacity, getting our product to market. That's what upgrading means, and a cap on that is a cap on jobs, a cap on pipeline capacity.

9:40

It also means one hundred per cent carbon leakage. What doesn't happen here will happen somewhere else. Now, we're the most environmentally regulated petrochemical jurisdiction in the world, and we're proud of that. We should be proud of that. We should be the most environmentally safe jurisdiction in the world. We should be, and we are. Sending our product to be upgraded somewhere else is the classic definition of carbon leakage. That's what it is: carbon leakage. This process is going to happen somewhere else regardless, and it's going to happen somewhere where the environmental regulations aren't as safe or restrictive as ours.

Now, this upgrading needs to be led by the market, by private investment. And it can be if you remove the cap. Like I said, these companies are going to have to make a decision: am I going to invest in Alberta in upgrading? It's a big investment. The returns on it, I'm sure, are very tight. But it makes less sense when they realize that they're up against a cap.

The government keeps talking about value-added, so this is a contradiction of their very own statements. What if the private sector sees the ability to create upgrading opportunities beyond the cap? Now we've even more severely hampered the ability of the private sector to become involved in responsible production. The government preaches on and on about value-added. They preach about jobs. This creates a problem with investor confidence, and global competitiveness will slow down an economically viable value-added upgrading that already exists here, that could be expanded. Now, our energy sector has the ability to innovate, and they have the ability to create new and more efficient ways to produce, to upgrade, to create markets, but this 10-megatonne cap on upgrading emissions doesn't help that. It hinders it.

Now, there are multiple reasons, of course, why we want pipelines. We need to get our product to market. We need to get more of our product to the markets and to new markets. By doing so, that increases the value of our product. If you have more competition for the purchase of your product, you'll get full value for it. If you only have one market to sell it to, you're going to get less. This cap, that reduces the opportunity for our product to flow, not only restricts the opportunity to sell volume but the price we get for it in return.

Now, in the Wildrose we believe in pipelines to get our product to market, to increase its value, to increase the amount that we can get to the market. It's not about politics. It's about jobs; it's about

our economy; it's about social programs that we pay for with the taxes that we get from this product. None of the government programs can survive without a strong economy, without tax dollars coming in. That's why we need things like value-added production right here in Alberta. That's why we need upgrading here. We need upgrading here so that we can create jobs, so that we can have a strong economy, so that we can get our product to market.

We must allow the industry the ability to be competitive and create an environment for investment and an environment to be innovative. This cap on upgrading is extremely short-sighted. It doesn't show any leadership. It doesn't help emissions on a world-wide scale because it's going to happen somewhere anyway. Shouldn't we be concerned about all emissions? This attacks our prosperity.

The government would need to be able to predict where long-term market demand lies and what technological advancements are pending to decide whether the economics support this cap, but I'm going to suggest that this government has not done any sort of study on this. I don't know that we've seen a study that this government has done, either an economic study, any kind of cost analysis, any kind of return-on-investment study, any kind of environmental study, to see what results their legislation is going to have.

**Mr. Nixon:** We saw one on minimum wage that leaked.

**Mr. Loewen:** Oh, that's right. We did see one, but it was leaked.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I'd like to thank the members for speaking about this amendment. I'd like to read a few little things here. Karen Mahon: there will be mass protests; there will be lawsuits; this will become a hotly contested issue in the coming B.C. election, and this pipeline will never be built. Now, let me see. What else do I have? Ms Tzeporah Berman: I don't support this pipeline; I am going to do hard work to develop policy recommendations in the boardrooms, and if it comes to it, I am going to stand on blockades. These two folks are on the OSAG panel. They are paid for by Albertan dollars but are vehemently opposed to pipelines.

Now, the interesting part of that is that we're talking about the 10-megatonne cap on upgrading. Last night I went over some of the aspects of upgrading and the necessity for upgrading. As it's been said previous to me today, we have had members of the government, when they were sitting in opposition, fighting for upgrading, and the reason is because it gives us more control over our market. When we upgrade, we have flow through pipelines.

Now, if we're looking at the 100-megatonne cap, we're already capping production, so this cap, just to reiterate, is going to stop us from being able to upgrade in our province, where we do it better, where we can control the environmental. So much amazing innovation and technology has come from our folks here in this province in order to do better because, believe it or not, they actually care about that. They actually care about the footprint. They actually care about making sure that they are reasonably and responsibly developing our products and putting them into a pipeline and getting them to the global market, which is why I thought the government was excited about pipelines. It was to get to tidewater, no? But now you want to put a cap on actually putting products in a pipeline.

9:50

If you look at some of the other comments that were made by these OSAG panel folks, they're talking about limiting capacity.

That's completely counterintuitive and contradictory to what this government said yesterday.

Upgrading technology is used, actually, to increase the quality of our oil sands products, and by doing so, we will be able to save money on the value-added side of things. We're actually going to be able to create jobs here in Alberta. This cap is not just a cap on production. It's not just a cap on upgrading. You're capping jobs.

Again, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade talks continuously, and rightly so, about creating jobs in this province, about who those job creators are. There are all sorts of things that are coming out from government about job creation. Well, here's a real easy fix. How about not capping a sector that actually creates jobs? Just a thought. How about actually looking at the sector that is part of the fabric of what made this province great in the first place and not capping that either on the side of the 100-megatonne cap or – I mean, this 10-megatonne cap on upgrading is ludicrous. I would love to have somebody on that side of the House stand up and tell me my why. In fact, I'd love to know where the number 10 came from. Why 10? Whose idea was that? I'd love to know, and I'd love to have that conversation if somebody could tell me why.

I mean, upgrading is intensive. We are breaking down large molecules. This is an incredible, miraculous development. Again, the government talks all the time about made in Alberta. Well, there you have it. Why are you capping a made-in-Alberta energy sector job-creating industry? Why? Somebody please stand up and tell me why.

You know, there are many, many, many interests outside of this province that are laughing at us and applauding this government for keeping our oil in the ground. Now we're going to add to that. Now they're going to also clap because you're going to keep it out of the pipeline too. Well, that's intelligent. Let's think about this. You're going to cap production, and you're going cap capacity. Really? How does that work? It's interesting. There are competitors everywhere globally that are going to be so unbelievably grateful to this government for stopping production here because, as the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky said, we are going to leak jobs, and we are going to leak production elsewhere.

Is that really what this government wants? Really? Yes. Okay. Good. You're nodding. That's wonderful. At least you're being truthful to Albertans that that's what you want. Somebody stand up and say no, then. Tell me, then. Somebody on that side stand up and say: no, we don't want to leak jobs; we don't want to leak our products to other jurisdictions that are actually going to produce when we don't. I'd love for you to say that you don't want to do that. Please do.

**An Hon. Member:** We don't want to leak jobs.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yeah. You can have your turn. I would love to hear that. And I'd like you to tell me: if that's the truth, then why are you capping production? It seems a little counterintuitive. You are giving our piece of the market to somebody else, and on top of that you're giving it to markets that do not do it as well as we do. Produce here. Market here. Bring the jobs here. Be on the side of Albertans. Stop the capacity caps. Stop the production caps. You have every bit of power to do that. You have every ability to do that. So why not do it? Remove the caps. See how things are going to go with the pipelines and allow the industry to do what it needs to do. Do you know that even with the pipelines that have been approved, we still don't have enough capacity? We need all five of those pipelines. I'm sure you know that.

I'm telling you right now that it doesn't make sense to Albertans that you're saying that you're in favour of pipelines but that you

would be reducing capacity into those pipelines, that you're actually stopping that.

There was another interesting point that was brought up here. We talk about the private sector. What if the private sector was interested in investing in this? Right? When the Minister of Transportation and of Infrastructure was on this side, he talked about that, not even about the private sector necessarily but about creating upgrading jobs in this province. If the private sector is interested and the government has said that it's going to need \$10.6 billion of investment, why would you stop investment from coming into the province? Albertans are looking to you to make good decisions. This is bad policy. It's policy that doesn't make any sense. It's counterintuitive to production.

We have all been saying here in this House, even on the government side, that we are the most environmentally responsible. We've heard that come out of the government side in the last few months. Thank goodness for that. That's wonderful. But you've got to back those words up with actions. That's the only part of the climate leadership action plan that is actually happening, the actions part, but it has no changes in climate. There are no emissions changes with this at all. None. So that's gone. Where is the leadership? I'd like to know that. And no plan. None. How are you rolling this one out? That's going to be interesting to see. I'm going to be interested to watch how that happens.

Canadian oil is the best, most ethically and environmentally produced in the world. And you, the government, are hiring people on panels to actively campaign against our oil in this province, actively campaign against our industries, our people, the people you represent. How is that okay in anybody's world? You are actively hiring people to actively campaign in our province against our sector.

You know, people like Tzaporah Berman and Karen Mahon: don't you think that they maybe should be removed from the panel? They've said their two bits. The funny thing is that the panel is not even going to give us any information until after this legislation is rammed through.

**Mr. Nixon:** Who put them on the panel?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yeah, that would be interesting. I'd love to know who put them on the panel.

If you think about that, if you just think about that one little aspect, then the other interesting part is that you have all of these anti oil sands activists coming online right now and tweeting and facebooking about all of the things that they're going to do to stop the good work that's been done. Why is the government not actively standing up for Albertans and going: "Whoa, whoa, whoa. You know what? We brought these people, a diverse group, onto this panel to have a discussion, but these guys are actually going against the people that voted us to represent them."

Can you honestly tell me that Tzaporah Berman and Karen Mahon represent your interests? Please stand up, then, and tell me that they represent your interests. Say it to Albertans. Say it to Albertans, by all means. You appointed her, so stand up and defend her. Defend Karen Mahon and defend Tzaporah Berman and what they're saying. Please do. It would be wonderful if you can do that because then maybe Albertans will understand. The average Albertan is looking at these tweets and looking at this Facebook stuff and they're just shaking their head. They know how you feel. Do something proactive: remove those folks and bring somebody else on that actually understands Alberta and understands what we're trying to accomplish here. That's not too much to ask. I think that's a very reasonable request. They've had their opportunity, and they have stepped out and put their ideas forward about what they

felt, and it's counterintuitive and contrary to the Alberta way of life, to what we're trying to accomplish here. If you actually are wanting to change emissions, if you're actually wanting to change the footprint, there are ways to do that, but you have to be involved with the innovators. Like, honestly.

**10:00**

If you have good reasons why these folks should be there and that they're doing their job representing Albertans, please stand up and defend them because I cannot, for the life of me, come up with any good reasons why those two should be on that panel, especially if they're not willing to at least give good feedback as to what it is that we can do better. There have been no releases of that. Actually, everything that has come out from them is anti oil sands, keeping it in the ground, that we are Mordor, that we have dirty oil, that we are going to kill animals along the route, that Albertans don't care about their earth, air, and water. Really? Is that how you want to be represented?

You are the voice of Albertans and a petroleum-producing jurisdiction. You are the voice. You're the government. Your voice, going forward, is that you don't support Alberta industry, the energy sector, and you would rather side with environmental activists who want to keep our products in the ground. I don't understand. I can't reconcile that. I would love to hear how it is that you defend these two that are actively campaigning against Canadian oil. You know, like, really, it would do so much service and give so much credibility for the government to be able to do that or at least reappoint other people that might actually have that ability to be able to bring the environmental aspects together with what is better for Alberta.

You keep talking about balance, right? This feels very unbalanced to me. It's a very unbalanced panel, so bring balance. You have the ability to do that. You are the government. You are, and you have the ability to do that. It takes strength, and it takes leadership, so do that.

Remove this cap. Remove both of the caps, actually. Removing that 10-megatonne cap would show that you're listening to Albertans, that you're listening about the importance of this industry, that you're listening to how much capacity we actually need and what it means to actually get those products into the pipeline and what it means to upgrade here in our province instead of leaking jobs and carbon into other jurisdictions, where we cannot keep an eye on what's going on, especially not with our incredible regulatory process. If we're doing it here, the government has every opportunity to be able to monitor and watch that and actually be the cheerleaders of this industry, actually be the ones that say: "Look, here is what we are planning to do. Here's the leadership plan we're going to do with our folks in this province under our auspices of what we're trying to accomplish."

Instead, you're literally, with these policies, allowing other jurisdictions to come in and produce where we're not. I don't know how you reconcile that, especially when we all know we do it better here. Alberta is the place. Honestly, everybody should be, like, just jumping for joy, loud and proud about how well we do it here, and bringing those folks in and embracing investors to come into our province and embracing those people to come in and have faith with what we can accomplish here together, but you are actively pushing these folks away.

I mean, that's in my discussions. I have the privilege of being part of this portfolio, so I talk to a lot of people in this sector. I know the government keeps talking about the large corporations that have stood up with you, and that's fine. But there are a lot of folks that work for those corporations – regular, average, everyday Albertans like the rest of us – that are very concerned about the policies of this

government because, at the end of the day, no matter what the corporation is saying, when there's attrition within those companies because they're not able to create capacity and they're not able to create jobs, guess who gets the axe? It's the workers.

You know, the truth is that every time a policy comes in that caps prosperity, you're looking at destroying jobs. It's completely related. I know that the government doesn't want to destroy jobs, but you're actually going to do that with jobs in this province by destroying the industry with really terrible policy.

We're asking you to take a look at this. Please don't ram this through. These are really, really reasonable requests, and the thing is if you can take the time to look at it and look at what it's actually going to cost in the long term, by 2025 to 2040, and the billions and billions of dollars that you're going to take away from Albertans, from our children, all of our grandchildren, infrastructure, everything else that is going to build this province in the future, even moving toward other types of alternative energies. All of these industries are interested in all of those things, so why are you capping their prosperity and their availability to do that? Shouldn't we be rewarding good behaviour? I mean, I don't know. That would be my thought.

Did you know that there's a rising demand for diluent? That has led to a condensate shortage in western Canada, and the oil sands companies use approximately 350,000 barrels per day. I said this yesterday. One barrel of dilbit, or diluted bitumen, is made up of three parts of bitumen and one part condensate, so you're actually lowering your ability to utilize all of your pipeline capacity. If you realize that by limiting upgrading, you're relying on condensate, that also means upgrading jobs are going to get moved elsewhere. That's what we're talking about with the jobs leakage. If we're upgrading here, that means less of that goes into the pipeline, and you have more product actually going into the pipeline, and you can take credit for being job creators, which would be wonderful. It adds so much to the credibility of the government to understand that this is so short-sighted. We don't have enough capacity here at all, and upgrading jobs could increase, like, the energy density, and they improve pipeline use. These are all really, really good things, but you're going to cap that.

Did you know, too, that the bill exempts experiments, potentially, and not proven techniques? Like, even the proven techniques are energy intensive, you know? But they actually increase the energy density of products that are shipped and actually end up reducing overall emissions. Isn't that interesting? Why would you want to cap that? At the end of the day, the payout is not what you think it looks like on paper.

**The Chair:** Innisfail-Sylvan Lake on amendment A2.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We have actually quite an interesting situation occurring here in this House today. We have a number of members on the government side of the House that are refusing to speak in support of their government's own position on a number of fronts. It's creating a credibility problem again for this government.

We haven't had anyone on the other side of this House stand to justify the appointment of three panel members to OSAG who are actively to this very day promoting a leave-it-in-the-ground agenda, promoting the stoppage of construction on pipelines. So three of the members that this government appointed working actively, yet not one of the members on the other side of this House this morning is standing in any attempt to justify those appointments.

The second credibility problem we have is that this panel, albeit stacked somewhat with antipipeline activists – this government is trying to pass Bill 25 without even hearing from OSAG. We have

yet to receive a report. It's a complete waste of taxpayers' money, and it certainly gives evidence to the theory out there that the OSAG panel was really nothing more than window dressing. Yet we have no one on the other side standing up today to get their words into *Hansard*, on the record, justifying ignoring the reality that we haven't heard from OSAG. There's been no justification from the other side whatsoever why we should pass Bill 25 now and not wait for a report from this OSAG panel.

**10:10**

Credibility problem number three: no one on the other side here is willing to stand in this House to get on the record to justify contradicting the words of their very own Minister of Economic Development and Trade, who specifically said on January 17 of this year that "the value-added (sector) really does mean high-paying, quality jobs that stay in the province. If we have a choice between shipping raw resources or shipping a more upgraded or value-added product, we'll take the latter." Those are the words of this Minister of Economic Development and Trade, yet no one on the other side of this House has stood to get on the record any kind of justification for contradicting those words through this 10-megatonne cap.

Credibility problem number four: no one on the other side of this House has stood in this House to get on the record to justify contradicting the royalty review panel's own recommendations regarding upgrading. I read into the record the words of that panel. Albertans paid for that panel. The government said that this was going to be the panel of experts to guide the government in its policy direction regarding resource development in this province. Here we have a bill before us that contradicts the very words of that panel, yet not one person on the other side of this House has the backbone or intestinal fortitude to stand up and justify why you're ignoring the recommendations of the royalty panel, that the taxpayers of Alberta paid good money for.

Over and over again in this debate on this particular amendment we have heard nobody from the other side willing to stand up and get on the record. We've heard a lot of chirping, a lot of empty-headed chirping, but we have had no one stand up, Madam Chair, with the guts to defend their position, where they are contradicting the royalty review panel; contradicting the words of their own minister; contradicting plain sense, common sense; refusing to wait for the OSAG report; and refusing to justify having three antipipeline activists on the OSAG panel to begin with.

Madam Chair, this government and this caucus over here have no credibility with the good people of Alberta. They've been watching. They are not ignorant people. They know full well what's going on. This government and that caucus say one thing one day and another thing the next. They run from crisis to crisis to crisis of their own creating, trying to solve this crisis and that crisis, when, in fact, it is this government and this caucus that are putting the holes in the dike and trying to plug it with all their fingers and toes. They can't keep up to the damage that they themselves are doing.

Madam Chair, this is a perfectly wonderful amendment that is an honest-to-goodness attempt to solve a problem that this government has created. Out of one side of their mouth they're saying: we believe in value-add. But their actions speak louder than their words. They introduce a bill that is absolutely contradictory to the concept of value-add by putting a 10-megatonne cap on upgrading, and they are not heeding a perfectly good amendment.

I believe that we have heard a great deal about the value of this amendment. We have heard nothing from the other side but chirping. I believe, Madam Chair, it's time to call the question.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to take the opportunity to rise in the House today and speak against this amendment. I want to take the opportunity right now to reiterate that the oil sands industry came to us and they asked for this 100-megatonne cap. They asked for this 100-megatonne cap because they knew that in order to get pipelines, we need to act on climate change. The 100-megatonne limit . . . [interjections] I'll wait, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you. The 100-megatonne limit in addition to the 10-megatonne cap on upgrading shows that Alberta is serious about limiting their emissions. I think it's absolutely clear from comments by the Prime Minister yesterday and from interactions between our government and Ottawa at a host of levels that Ottawa's willingness for the first time in decades to approve new pipelines to move products from Alberta to offshore markets and increasing value for Alberta and Alberta companies . . . [interjections]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, Calgary-East has the floor. Please.

**Ms Luff:** . . . was significantly based on the climate leadership plan.

I've heard this quote before but will say it again. This is from the Prime Minister of Canada.

Let me say this definitively: We could not have approved this project without [the Premier of Alberta] and Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan – a plan that commits to pricing carbon and capping oilsands emissions at 100 megatonnes per year.

It's abundantly clear that this cap is one of the reasons that we got pipelines to tidewater, and if you oppose the 100-megatonne cap, you are functionally opposing pipelines, and you are functionally opposing our ability to have jobs here in Alberta. [interjections]

**Mr. Westhead:** Point of order, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** A point of order has been raised.

Go ahead, hon. member.

#### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes, Madam Chair. Thank you very much. I just rise on a point of order under 23(j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." I want to point out the fact that it's pretty rich that the opposition, who just asked for us to get up and explain our point of view – and the Member for Calgary-East is doing that – don't seem to be listening, so I would suggest that maybe they should be quiet and actually listen to what we have to say if they've asked us to do that.

**Mr. Hanson:** I hesitate to rise to even respond to that ridiculous point of order. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to the point of order? Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yeah. Madam Chair, I believe that stating that members of the opposition side of this House oppose pipelines is language likely to cause disorder.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to the point of order?

Hon. members, when I sit here in the middle and I listen to both sides, I try to find a balance. As you are well aware, I do try to give a fair amount of leeway in the give-and-take, back and forth. I did notice, though, an escalation when the latest member tried to speak. You did, as the hon. member pointed out, request that somebody from this side speak, so let's try to find a better balance and tone it down just a little bit. Show respect on both sides. I'd appreciate that.

Go ahead, hon. member.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will continue to make my points, and if it gets so loud that folks in the House can't hear what I have to say, then perhaps they can read it in *Hansard* later.

All right. My point so far is that without this cap, we wouldn't have been able to have the success that we had two days ago in getting pipelines to tidewater.

Now, in terms of the 10-megatonne cap, when the oil industry came to us and asked for a 100-megatonne cap, they didn't say anything about having extra room for upgrading. Because we do want to incent upgrading, we chose to include this extra 10-megatonne exemption specifically for that purpose. This wasn't something that was included in the original proposal, but we chose to include it because we wanted to add incentive for upgrading.

Now, I was at a U of C breakfast just the other day, where – I'm paraphrasing – a preeminent professor stated that the foremost challenge of this century is climate change and decoupling energy production from carbon production. The members opposite continuously say that we're capping production, capping capacity when, in fact, what we're doing is that we're capping emissions. Capping production and capping emissions are not the same thing.

We've seen continuously all over the world right now that for the first time economic growth is becoming decoupled from emissions growth. For a long time emissions growth meant economic growth and vice versa, but we're seeing a point in the world where that's not the same anymore, where we're realizing that we can't continue to grow our emissions and continue to grow our economies. If we want the world to be how we want it to be and if we want to move forward, we really have to make sure that we're decoupling those two things.

10:20

Now, I'm sure that you speak with the same folks that we do, and the sector people and scientists I speak with are confident that we can continue to grow our industry while reducing our emissions. The way the opposition is arguing sounds to me like they don't believe in the ability of our industry to innovate. This cap, the 10-megatonne cap, incents upgrading while at the same time incents innovation. If you believe that we have to do our part to reduce emissions, if you believe in the innovative capabilities of our sector, if you believe in pipelines that just got approved, I would suggest that you vote down this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:21 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]



For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Schneider
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Orr	van Dijken
Gill	Panda	Yao
Hanson	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Nielsen
Babcock	Hoffman	Payne
Carson	Horne	Renaud
Ceci	Kazim	Rosendahl
Connolly	Kleinsteinuber	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	Luff	Sigurdson
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	McKittrick	Swann
Feehan	McPherson	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Goehring	Miranda	Westhead

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 36
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, we gave the hon. members on the other side an opportunity to deal with their credibility problem, and they chose to deal with their credibility problem by having a rather famous pipeline activist stand up and try to give us some NDP logic, which kind of goes like this: we realized the 100-megatonne cap would hurt upgrading, so we put another cap on upgrading. That's quite logical, isn't it? It does nothing whatsoever to answer their credibility problem about having three panel members on OSAG opposing pipelines, not waiting for the OSAG report, not answering the contradiction of their own Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and not answering the justification for contradicting the royalty review panel.

However, not one to give up easily . . .

**Mr. Schneider:** Never let it be said.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Never let it be said that I gave up easily. . . . I have another amendment that I would like to offer.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A3.  
Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In the world of carbon pricing, carbon taxing, dealing with carbon all over the globe, there are governments and organizations that have been wrestling with this issue. It would appear that around the world there are two predominant methods by which some governments are choosing to deal with this issue. One of them is carbon taxation, which, until this point, has been this government's weapon of choice. In other places in the world they use a system known as cap and trade. As I was reading through Bill 25 and getting into the fine print of it and the details of it, I started noticing some remarkable similarities to a set-up that will no doubt lead to something very similar to cap and trade.

10:40

Now, in the world, governments have been choosing either carbon taxation or cap and trade or nothing, and some of them have

chosen to undo some of those experiments because of the horrific damage they've done to their economy and to their competitive advantage in a globalized economy such as Australia and France. We just got word yesterday that France is in fact scrapping their carbon tax. Yeah. Good job, Australia, or, rather: good on you, mate. [interjection] Is that how they do it down there? You would know.

Madam Chair, here we have a government whose weapon of choice has been carbon taxation, but now in Bill 25, not satisfied with carbon taxation, we're also going to have cap and trade. I'm not aware of another jurisdiction where they hammered their economy with both, but here it is. There is very clearly a cap-and-trade mechanism built into Bill 25. It's going to require either a system where the government will issue permits by allocating them – we're talking about the remaining 32 megatonnes of emissions in the 100-megatonne limit. So the government is either going to issue permits by allocating them or perhaps by selling them, but whether we see allocation or selling of these emissions allocations, it is riddled with a series of very different potential risks to our economy if it's handled incorrectly. I will say at the outset that if you're going to compound our economic situation with carbon taxation and a cap-and-trade mechanism in any sector of our economy, you have compounded the problem.

As I see it, there are three serious pitfalls to the scheme mentioned in Bill 25 – I'm going to call it cap and trade even though it isn't called that – and that is the politicized permit allocation system. In some jurisdictions around the world – I can think of, you know, off the top, Germany and the system that they had in place – it became so politicized that it eventually led to corruption charges. Even in jurisdictions where they haven't gone that far, the politicization of the permit allocations is huge. I'm not just talking about politicians politicizing it but corporations using their allocation as a lever in order to manipulate the market, in order to manipulate smaller corporations and manipulate their ability to continue to work, to continue to expand, and, in this particular case, to manipulate their ability to develop the leases that they've already paid for. There is a very real risk of the politicization of the cap and the trading of allocations between developers.

Then there is the issue of economic strangulation between the haves and the have-nots. When you have corporations in the patch up there, in the oil sands leases, who have yet to develop their leases, those who have allocation hold a hammer. They really hold a hammer. And it being the nature of business, often dog eat dog, I have no doubt whatsoever that we could see things like, you know, economic strangulation.

In addition, under the heading of economic strangulation there are many, many subheadings. For example, the very fact that we're going to be allocating emissions does directly impact development. While the hon. member across the way tried to divorce those two, when you're talking about a window of only 32 megatonnes, there is a direct connection. There is a proportional connection between emissions and development. It's a very real potential for economic strangulation not only of the businesses involved but of our economy provincially.

Then there is energy price volatility that can happen with cap-and-trade schemes, where we've capped emissions, we've damaged our economy, and now we've got energy price volatility or price volatility within the components of our energy sector.

In 2009 the United States was considering a cap-and-trade bill – and it was named Waxman-Markey – which, like the Ontario plan, counted on giving away most carbon permits to energy producers. At the time U.S. budget director Peter Orszag observed that giving away emission permits would enable politicians to game the system, playing favourites with freely allocated permits. In

Orszag's words, giving away permits "would represent the largest corporate welfare program that has ever been enacted in the history of the United States."

It was claimed that households, particularly poorer ones, would not feel the pain of the new regime because the government was going to give them some of the money paid in by better-off households and help them improve their energy efficiency. Well, that really transforms an emissions control initiative into a wealth transfer initiative.

Now, Harvard economist Gregory Mankiw stated:

Economists recognize that a cap-and-trade system [with free permit allocation] is equivalent to a tax on carbon emissions with the tax revenue rebated to existing carbon emitters . . . That is, Cap-and-trade = Carbon tax + Corporate welfare.

Here in Alberta, with a carbon tax already killing jobs and causing an economic retraction, this government in this bill is going to add insult to injury, adding a GDP-shrinking cap-and-trade system to a GDP-shrinking carbon tax. Again we see a serious lack of understanding and a very real need for much more study before this legislation becomes law.

Another economist, a specialist in cap-and-trade systems, Ian Parry, commented, "Freely allocated tradable emission permits may actually hurt the poor the most, as they transfer income to shareholders via scarcity rents created at the expense of higher prices." Now, I should point out that the Ontario government made the choice to politically allocate the permits rather than using an auction approach, tripping right into the pitfall that I just mentioned a moment ago.

On the subject of economic strangulation this government is already taking Alberta down that road. Economic strangulation is exactly the result of stranding leases in the oil sands, stranding assets in the power industry, trashing assets in the greenhouse industry, destroying local economies in Hanna, Keephills, and Forestburg. That is economic strangulation happening right now, and a cap-and-trade system is going to add to it.

The third pitfall listed by the cap-and-trade specialist is, of course, price volatility. Now, given the government's plan under Bill 27 we are most certainly headed for volatility, upward and with debt. As we've already noted, that simply means that Albertans pay and pay and pay. In short, Madam Chair, there are way too many unanswered questions about this issue. Of specific concern: this section piles a cap-and-trade system upon Albertans in addition to a carbon tax, and that is simply unacceptable. It is simply unacceptable to empower the cabinet to create a profoundly harmful cap-and-trade system on our already overburdened people without fulsome debate in this House, without hearing from Albertans in legislative committees.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

10:50

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to speak in favour of this amendment, which is, regarding Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, to amend section 3 by striking out clause (h)(ii). Now, when I read this portion of Bill 25, in section 3 it says:

Without limiting the authority of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations in respect of this Act under the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations . . .

And it goes on to list these regulations. Now, the Lieutenant Governor in Council is the cabinet of the government. It's not an individual or anything like that or any other group other than the

cabinet of the government. So what this regulation does is that it allows the government cabinet to make the following regulations.

Now, in particular we're talking about (h), which says:

establishing and governing mechanisms to keep greenhouse gas emissions from oil sands sites within the limit established by section 2(1), including, without limitation, regulations . . .

And then it goes on to list a couple. But if we look back to section 2(1), it says:

Subject to subsection (2), the greenhouse gas emissions limit for all oil sands sites combined is 100 megatonnes in any year.

So what it's doing is that it's allowing the government cabinet to make regulations in regard to the 100-megatonne cap of oil sands emissions.

I'll read what it says under h(ii). It says:

establishing a system of greenhouse gas emission allowances and governing the purchase, auction, trading or retirement of greenhouse gas emission allowances or any other matter related to a system of greenhouse gas emission allowances.

Obviously, this bill here is a cap, a 100-megatonne cap, and here we have an opportunity for the government cabinet, without coming back to this Legislature, to go into these parts where it says, "purchase, auction, trading or retirement of greenhouse gas emission allowances." So it's very clear, with the word "trading" in there, that both cap and trade are allowed under this bill. Now, I think that's alarming because, as the previous speaker mentioned, there are no jurisdictions that do both. Most do none, but nobody does both.

Ontario's cap-and-trade program will cost the province's consumers and businesses \$8 billion in its first year of operation . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** How much?

**Mr. Loewen:** Eight billion dollars in its first year.

. . . and get minimal greenhouse gas reductions. That's what the Ontario Auditor General reported, so that wasn't some think tank that may have or may be accused of having some agenda. This is the Auditor General: \$8 billion in the first year. And I think what's most alarming is the minimal greenhouse gas reductions, which is why we quite often in this House ask the government for some sort of cost analysis. I'm pretty sure that if the people of Ontario had had a chance to vote on this or have any kind of discussion on this and it was suggested that they would pay \$8 billion and get next to nothing, they would probably say no. I'm pretty sure about that.

Now, it says that households will pay an average of \$156 next year in added costs for gasoline and natural gas, rising to \$210 plus another \$75 that year in indirect costs. Madam Chair, we sit here and talk about the effects of these bills that this government is bringing forward, and over and over again we see that in other jurisdictions they just didn't work. They were expensive and didn't work.

It says that the government also earmarked \$1.32 billion out of the expected \$8 billion in projected cap-and-trade revenue to help offset the cost of residential and business electricity bills, but it doesn't say how. Does that sound familiar, Madam Chair? I think so. There are all sorts of plans and all sorts of talk but no real description of exactly what's going to happen. It goes on to say that the impact will likely be marginal. It says that even with a subsidy the average household electricity bill is projected to increase 23 per cent. Again here we hear the word "subsidy." This government is talking about subsidies, but it's still going to cost.

Now, it goes on to say, "Such increased electricity costs may make natural gas, which is responsible for significantly more greenhouse-gas emissions than cleaner energy sources like solar, hydro, nuclear and wind, an even more economical option." Yes,

natural gas: where have we heard that before? Yes, in the Wildrose plan to use more natural gas.

This carbon-pricing scheme will likely achieve fewer than 20 per cent of the emission reductions the government wants to see. So here they are. They made this big plan costing billions of dollars, and what they plan to reduce – this was only going accomplish 20 per cent of that.

Madam Chair, I could go on and we could go on on this, but I think it's safe to say that this type of language in this bill is not helpful. It adds a potential to hurt the economy even more here in Alberta, to hurt Albertans more, to cost Albertans more. Again, we have no analysis to discover what the end result might be as far as the reduction of emissions. I know the government likes to talk about science. The science is clear. Well, where's the science in a cap-and-trade system in Alberta? Where's the science on how much it'll reduce? What will it help? How much will it cost?

Madam Chair, I'm going to suggest that all members of this House support this amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise, and – I'm sure it will come as a big surprise to the opposition – I cannot support this amendment. I find it a bit interesting that the opposition is so keen to talk about increasing production, gaining access to markets. Those are all noble goals, and I'm sure every party in this Chamber can agree on that. I find it fascinating that the opposition refuses to listen to our federal counterparts. When the Prime Minister approved two pipelines this week... [interjections] I'm being asked to clarify how many pipelines, so I'll repeat that: two pipelines. The Prime Minister specifically mentioned this bill. He said that this emissions limit is the reason that he could justify two pipelines. I can't support this because we need to continue on with our climate leadership plan because that is the reason that we can get pipelines built.

For the hon. members, I urge everybody to oppose this amendment and support the climate leadership plan. Let's get moving on with pipelines.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** Are there any other speakers to the amendment?  
Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

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

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Drysdale	Loewen	Pitt
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Strankman
Gill	Orr	van Dijken
Hanson	Panda	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Miller
Babcock	Hinkley	Miranda
Bilous	Hoffman	Nielsen
Carson	Horne	Payne
Ceci	Jansen	Renaud
Connolly	Kazim	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Shepherd

Dach	Loyola	Sigurdson
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Eggen	Malkinson	Swann
Feehan	McKittrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McPherson	Westhead
Totals:	For – 12	Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Chair:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 25. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed, say no. So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 30

#### Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to rise and move third reading of Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act.

There are a few points that I want to make, Madam Speaker. There's been some great debate over the past couple of weeks here in the House. First of all, I'll begin by mentioning a few thank yous. I'd be remiss if I didn't start by thanking my ministry staff, who have worked so diligently on this bill to ensure that it captures not just the essence of what business and industry have been asking for, but what makes me so proud of this bill is the fact that this is a made-in-Alberta solution. We looked to other jurisdictions like British Columbia, which has enjoyed an investor tax credit for decades, which has left Alberta and Alberta businesses at a disadvantage, quite frankly. We looked to them as far as some of their best practices with theirs, but we've also looked to other jurisdictions.

I know the hon. Member for Sherwood Park is a strong advocate of co-operatives and, as well, community economic development corporations. The jurisdiction of Nova Scotia enjoys a tax credit for businesses that provide social benefits, not just businesses that are completely or solely driven by profit. I'm quite proud that we're opening up opportunities for communities, for businesses that are not just for-profit but also provide either social or community benefits.

You know, this bill has been on quite a journey as far as the number of consultations and conversations that not just myself but

my colleagues throughout government have had in their communities with business leaders and industry leaders, again identifying: what are the ways and tools that government can provide to help spur investment?

This bill, should it pass final reading today, will do a number of things, Madam Speaker. First of all, this is a great tool to diversify our economy. These two tax credits will not just incent investment into Alberta companies, but they also will incent investment into companies which may traditionally have struggled to get the capital that they need to grow, to expand, to hire more people. You know, this has been a tool that we've seen work extremely well in other provinces, in other jurisdictions. Not only will it help companies to grow; these two tax credits will also help create thousands of good-paying jobs and also foster innovation. Again, many sectors outside of traditional oil and gas are looking to expand or looking to grow but are struggling, especially in industries that may not have physical assets that they can borrow from.

#### 11:10

The investor tax credit really provides an incentive for Albertans to invest in Alberta-based businesses by derisking the investment. Providing a 30 per cent refundable tax credit is a great way to incent Albertans to invest in their own backyard. We know that we have incredible businesses, incredible companies, entrepreneurs here in our province. They just need sometimes the support of their neighbours and investors, and this tax credit will do just that.

The other thing that I'm quite proud of with this bill is that we have not only the community economic development corporations, but these tax credits are available to individual investors. They're also available to venture capital corporations, so groups of investors also would be eligible or will be eligible for this tax credit, which I think is significant. That has definitely come from many business leaders, especially in Calgary, who have asked for this to ensure that it's not just for individuals or for community economic development corporations or funds but also for venture capital funds.

Madam Speaker, you know, this is a bill that very much is part of our Alberta jobs plan. This bill is just one more tool and one more way that our government is supporting the business community within the province. This is a great tool to diversify our economy and, again, to provide opportunities for Albertans to participate in companies right here in Alberta. Ninety-five per cent of businesses in our province are small businesses. We know that small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and this bill will really provide them with the tools they need to grow and expand. Quite frankly, the time to do this was probably decades ago, but the next best time is today.

I'm quite proud of the work that my colleagues and our friends in business and industry have done on this bill. It's also a testament to the fact that, you know, our government is in continuous dialogues and conversation with the business community and identifying ways that we can support them. We recognize that with the international price of oil being where it is for as long as it's been, it's had a significant impact on workers and families and communities across this province, so this will definitely help create jobs, help companies get back up on their feet. I'm quite looking forward to sharing with Albertans when we see not only the uptake but also the outcomes of these two tax credits. For the most part, right now I've been focusing on the investor tax credit.

The capital investment tax credit. In fact, I was just over at the Alberta Chambers of Commerce the other day talking about the fact that initially we were looking at a minimum of \$10 million of capital investment. Over the summer, in consultations with business and industry, they said: "You know what? That bar is a little bit too high. You're going to cut out a lot of different sectors and

companies who may not have access to \$10 million to invest in a capital project." So they asked for it to be lowered to a million. We listened. That's exactly what we've done.

We've also opened it up to where there is a set of criteria. This is what companies have asked for. They want to know in advance: "Are we going to qualify? What are the criteria? How will we be ranked?" Then we're going to go one step further, Madam Speaker, and make sure that we work with companies that apply that maybe don't qualify in the first window and encourage them to apply in the second window.

Again, this capital investment tax credit is cross-sector, so this will be applicable, you know, to any industry that deals with manufacturing or processing. We're talking about agriculture, agrifood, our forestry sector, our tourism sector, our clean tech sector, even our energy sector. This is exactly the tool that we need to use. This is one tool in our tool box of the Alberta jobs plan, which I'm quite proud of.

I look forward to the debate here in third reading and want to thank all of my colleagues on all sides of the House for their input and debate thus far. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. Yeah, another positive step for Alberta. I think this government has been listening. Small and medium-sized businesses have been calling for this for years. This investor tax credit will offer a 30 per cent tax credit for investments in Alberta small businesses between April of last year and 2019. It'll have a budget of \$90 million over these three years and will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis and will be available for investments in companies that are engaged substantially in development or commercialization of proprietary technology, interactive digital media, and video postproduction as well as tourism. Additionally, the capital investment tax credit will offer a 10 per cent nonrefundable tax credit. That's progress on both levels.

I think the Conference Board of Canada was pretty clear back in 2013 in saying that Alberta lagged way behind other jurisdictions in this area and gave Alberta a grade of D in this regard, near last in terms of venture capital investment. Presently six provinces have some form of tax incentive for those who invest in local small businesses, so we're approaching the B.C. program, which is considered the gold standard by business groups. It provides a tax credit equal to 30 per cent of investments made into eligible small businesses. Research out of UBC found that between 2001 and 2008 \$250 million worth of tax credits helped attract 10 times that value in equity investments, creating more than 4,000 jobs.

So the only concern might be that it's going to be, perhaps, short lived. It's a two-year time frame, but I can understand that we need to see how it works, what the impact of it is, and presumably there will be some modifications before this gets significant change.

I think the only other concern is what has always been expressed with respect to government handing out money, and that is that we don't pick winners and losers, that we actually allow the market to decide where the proven track record is. The examples of the past have come back to haunt us even now with continued challenges, so we do need to be very careful about what the criteria are. Obviously, all of us will be waiting with bated breath to see the follow-ups, the outcomes, the results. I think it's a positive step forward given those caveats, but we need to see an honest reporting of what works, what doesn't work, where we invested successfully, and where we have lessons to learn.

There's no silver bullet, but this is progress, and I certainly will be on behalf of the Liberal caucus supporting this bill. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance, followed by Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Ceci:** With regard to 29(2)(a), is it?

**The Deputy Speaker:** No. Standing Order 29(2)(a) doesn't come into effect until after whoever speaks now.

**Mr. Ceci:** Oh, okay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Okay. Then I'll hear from Calgary-Foothills.

11:20

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This morning I rise to speak to Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. Bill 30 is not perfect, but it's the first step in the right direction, so I would like to compliment the minister and his team on bringing this bill to give at least some relief to the businesses in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, the Official Opposition and other opposition parties in this House tried to make this bill better by bringing in reasonable amendments with respect to clarity about the scope of funding, accountability, and measuring the effectiveness of the program, to put in some metrics. I'm a bit disappointed because the minister, who is titled to be the minister that gets it, unfortunately, didn't get our common-sense amendments for whatever reason. As I said, I do give him credit where it is due, and I appreciate them working hard to bring this bill forward.

I just wanted to give some constructive feedback. Going back to the process of how this bill was developed, they say that they consulted people, but selective consultation is not fully helpful. I want to bring up some of those points, and if the government wants to use it as constructive feedback, that's up to them.

Madam Speaker, if I'm permitted to use common man's language and analogy, it's like sucking and blowing because, on one hand, we are driving out investments with risky economic policies, and on the other hand this government is saying: oh, we need to give relief to businesses. Businesses want overall certainty by reducing overall taxes and creating an economic environment where businesses can bring investments here and grow the economy and create jobs.

Now, this bill is titled Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. One way of diversification is upgrading our bitumen here to refinery-ready synthetic crude, which would help us free up pipeline space and which would get us a premium price for our product. There are so many reasons I can give why we should be doing it, but one single reason we should remember is that in the past the NDP were saying that we should do more upgrading here in Alberta and that we shouldn't be shipping jobs south of the border, which they conveniently forget now.

Then the ministry is talking about creating a competitive environment here as opposed to our neighbouring provinces, but there are reasons why businesses are going away. It's not just the world oil price. It's beyond that. We get that. We don't hold the government to account for the world market price, but we do hold them accountable for their policies, which are not helping stabilize the economy.

Madam Speaker, I'll put this in context, and I'll give you some background on this. The minister promised that the funds in the Alberta investor tax credit will go to proprietary technology research, development, or commercialization; interactive digital media development; video postproduction; digital animation; and

tourism. None of this was initially in the bill. Then we consulted many stakeholders, and we tried to amend the bill based on their input. Those sectors we included in our amendment but that it was not limited to were agriculture, agrifood, or agribusiness; transportation and logistics; financial services; and manufacturing or processing. But the NDP voted against adding these sectors to the legislation.

The minister says: trust me. It doesn't work like that in business. The minister says: the credit will be broad; just trust me. Well, I think the government knows that investors don't really trust anything other than what's written in the bill, and it's too bad they aren't giving them that certainty by establishing a minimum set of industries. By having that minimum set of industries, at least they'd know they're eligible to apply. There is no confusion. But now no one knows.

Madam Speaker, it's really strange that the NDP's own Member for Leduc-Beaumont got the Legislature's Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future to focus only on how to grow and diversify the agrifood and agribusiness sectors in this province and that the scope of the study be focused on value-added production and small-business opportunities and local food production and promotion, which is a great initiative. I support that, and I look forward to working with him on that. To grow the economy through agrifood processing is a great way to diversify. We all agree on that, yet the minister's announcement left out agrifood entirely from the investor tax credit.

Then on November 23, last month, the Member for Edmonton-Centre – not the minister, the private Member for Edmonton-Centre – stated something very different in this House during the debate on this bill. I'll quote what he said.

It's our intention that this legislation be as broad as possible to provide the greatest benefit to investors, job creators, and their employees. Our proposed Alberta investor tax credit would be applicable across sectors and would offer a 30 per cent tax credit to investors who provide capital to Alberta companies doing research, development, or commercialization of new technology, new products, or new processes in sectors including but not limited to renewable energy, manufacturing or processing, agriculture, agribusiness and agrifood, transportation and logistics, financial services, and the creative industries.

That was his quote.

Yes, Bill 30 is broad and gives broad, sweeping decision-making powers to the minister of the day, but if the statement from the Member for Edmonton-Centre is true, this is a lot different than what is written on the government's fact sheet on the government's website, which says:

Eligibility will be limited to Alberta investors who pay taxes in Alberta and invest in small and medium-sized Alberta businesses in sectors such as information technology, clean technology, health technology, interactive digital media and game products, and post-production, visual effects and digital animation.

That's what it says on the website.

Madam Speaker, this communications issue causes mistrust of the NDP government, and it's not the first time. We saw that during Bill 6. Thousands of farmers came here protesting because they were not consulted and they were not communicated with properly. So that's another focus area for the government to look at.

I'll give you another example. The list given in this House by the Member for Edmonton-Centre leaves out some of the industries in the ministry's press release. What are the film production, postproduction, or digital animation studio people supposed to think now? You know, they're included in some; they're not included in other announcements. Lots of confusion, Madam Speaker.

In addition to this, stakeholders like the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce are concerned about the winners-and-losers aspect of this bill. They gave me that feedback. They actually sent me a letter. I'll submit that this afternoon.

That being said, Madam Speaker, Alberta's small-business community needs help to grow in these tough economic times. We agree on that with the government. We are all on the same page that businesses need to grow and they need some help. Alberta is facing an unprecedented jobs and economic crisis. I was not here in the '80s, but I'm told that this one is much worse than that. It's a much deeper and broader recession, depression, whatever you want to call it. Proprietary research and commercialization are a challenge in every sector, and the more research and commercialization Alberta does, the better off we all will be. The creation of the register of venture capital corporations, VCCs, is a plausible way to promote these corporations to others seeking investment.

11:30

According to Alberta economic development, over the last 10 years Alberta has consistently lagged behind British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec in terms of venture capital dollars. This lack of venture capital has limited the growth and commercialization potential of small and medium-sized businesses in Alberta. With so many other provinces and American states offering successful investor tax credit programs, Alberta needs to compete. That's the situation. Every one of our neighbouring provinces in Canada and the states along the Canada-U.S.A. border: they're all competing for the same capital. Alberta's technology sector asked for this tax credit, and have it they shall.

The AITC could allow studios to be built for postproduction of the films that are being made in Alberta now, unless they were dropped when the list in the House was given. That's the concern that they expressed when I met with some of them. They are on the list one day; they are not on the list the next day. There is confusion. Digital animation like from BioWare, where we all attended recently, will help spur more growth in Edmonton's video gaming industry. I had the opportunity, Madam Speaker, to attend an event this week hosted by BioWare, who is very interested in this AITC. I saw many members from the government there, and they also interacted with them, which is good. That would help them in updating this bill if they wish. I met with someone from postproduction as well, as I said before, in Calgary recently. He emphasized how this could help create stable, full-time jobs. Although there are not many, at least there will be some jobs.

Productivity is a big problem in manufacturing, Madam Speaker, and the CITC will help Alberta's 9,000 manufacturers compete with foreign industries. That's another good aspect of this investment tax credit program. Alberta's investors need some kind of good news finally. They need some kind of good news given all the bad news they keep getting from this government and also because of the economy.

For the reasons I explained, Madam Speaker, although I'm quite disappointed that the minister didn't accept reasonable amendments from us, it's still the first step in the right direction, and that's why I'm going to support Bill 30, and I encourage all my colleagues on this side of the House to support this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) comes into effect if anyone has questions or comments for the previous speaker. The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, it's an honour to speak to this bill regarding investment tax credit presented by the

minister of economic development. I want to ask my colleague a question because of his experience in the energy industry. How does he feel these investment dollars can spur investment? It's my understanding that these dollars are pretax dollars and that they allow people to incentivize their investment. I just wanted my previous colleague to enlighten us further, from his life experiences, on how that can benefit the economy and, therefore, society as a whole.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thanks to the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. It's a good question. With respect to the energy sector, for the type of work we do here in the oil sands program, there isn't enough money from this program for major players in the oil sands. Some of the service companies: if they want to use this money for manufacturing processes or for innovation, for research and development, they can utilize this. As I said before, the intention of this bill is really good, but the problem is that we can't selectively choose programs like this and think that with Band-Aids like these, we can prop up the economy. They may be a temporary relief, but in the long term we have to create business conditions where we can have a higher impact in terms of job creation.

When the minister talks about diversification, there are many opportunities in building on our strengths. Particularly, you know, we have cheap natural gas here; we have bitumen. If investors really have confidence in this government, if they feel that stability, they can actually invest billions of dollars based on the strengths we have in the energy sector.

You know, the companies I worked with before: many of them actually got involved in backward integration. For example, if you have crude oil here, you can extract ethylene from that through upgrading and refining, and you can use that ethylene to polymerize and make polyethylene, polypropylene. Similarly, you can make many other polyester intermediates; for example, PTA and other stuff to produce textiles. You can make linear alkylbenzene, LAB, which can be used for soaps and other chemicals. Some of that is happening in the Industrial Heartland, in that area, but if this government creates industrial infrastructure in the northwest of Alberta – recently I was there. If we could connect Fort Mac to Peace River, in that corridor they can actually have some ancillary industries.

Coming back to this program, I don't think there is enough money for all of them, but something is better than nothing. That's another concern I have. When I travelled during the summer and spring, I met with many chambers of commerce and economic developments and mayors and local leaders. First of all, they don't know what programs exist. We have to do a better job of communicating with these people that these funds are available. That's why we brought in amendments to clarify the scope – who can actually apply and who can benefit from these programs – because in most cases, first, they didn't know that these programs exist, and then by the time they figure it out, there's a long process to apply for this funding, and when all this is done, by the time they say okay, the fund is exhausted now; there's no money left. That's not helpful. We could do a better job through the department, or we can take help from others.

**Ms Babcock:** Madam Speaker, I'm honoured to stand up today and support this bill. I think it's a very important initiative here in Alberta, that brings us up to the standards of our counterparts in other jurisdictions. There were some valuable amendments brought forward, and I'm glad to see that we have accepted a few that will

make this bill better. I believe in using all the tools in our tool box to improve the lives of Albertans. We know that small businesses are the pillars of our communities, and especially our rural communities will benefit by incenting this investment in our small and medium-sized businesses.

Madam Speaker, no longer can we depend solely on petroleum products, which have driven our economy in good times and created hardships in bad. During an upward cycle everyone wants a piece of Alberta, but when the price of petroleum products drops, everybody heads for the hills. Albertans need and deserve better than this. That is why this bill is aiming to encourage investment and growth in industries that Alberta has not traditionally sought: research, development, and commercialization of proprietary technologies, products, and processes; interactive digital media development; video postproduction; digital animation; and tourism. Those are important industries for us to support. On the CITC side, manufacturing or processing and tourism infrastructure: those are going to help incent this investment in our rural communities, where we would like more people to be able to invest.

**11:40**

Madam Speaker, we can't continue to embark on the same path of boom and bust that has been the history of this province. Challenging times call for creative solutions, and Bill 30 will provide solutions that will make Alberta more competitive. Bill 30 will allow the government to establish the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. Together these tax credits will drive innovation, diversify our economy, and create new jobs here in our province. There must be 75 per cent of wages and salaries – or 50 per cent for exporting companies – to employees who regularly report to work here in Alberta. They must have 80 per cent of their assets in Alberta to qualify for this program, the Alberta investor tax credit.

The CITC will encourage large-scale capital projects by offering a 10 per cent nonrefundable tax credit of up to \$5 million, which is expected to incent \$10 million to \$40 million worth of exports province-wide. Due to these challenging economic times and the global drop in the price of oil here and around the world we see lower cash flow, which can be boosted by investor confidence and timely investment decisions. Because the capital investment tax credit is not sector specific, it will be available to companies across the province. Industries such as manufacturing, processing, and tourism that are making investments need to be supported here in Alberta.

The activities identified have strong potential for growth in this current economic environment and over the long term. This includes much of the oil and gas supply chain as well as industries that have the potential to grow in the future. Through the short-term nature of the CITC we have the opportunity to re-evaluate the program as the economic situation evolves. By continuing to promote diversification of our economy, supporting our employers and industry, and enabling entrepreneurs and job creators as well as encouraging investment here in Alberta, we are demonstrating meaningful action on the economy all over Alberta for all of our people.

This bill is very broad, Madam Speaker. Any company engaged in development or commercialization can qualify for the AITC, including sectors that traditionally are not included in this type of bill. The evaluation will be ongoing, and it will be focusing on the outputs of the program, including process efficiency to identify approaches for implementation enhancement and course correction. After the program is over, there will be an independent outcome evaluation conducted upon the program's completion. It will

examine the program in terms of its success and incenting policy goals of investment, diversification, and job creation.

One of the things that I really love about this bill, Madam Speaker – I'm a community builder, and I believe that whether our community is the people in our parties, whether it's the people that we have in our homes, whether it's the people in our towns, whether it's the people in our province, we are communities. This bill enables the government to establish community economic development corporations. I think that's so important, that we're not just investing money into Alberta; we are investing into our social licence here in Alberta. For-profit investment funds that invest equity in locally owned businesses recognized for their positive social, economic, and environmental returns to communities – these are the places that we go as a family, these are the places where we meet our community members, and these are the kinds of places that I want to see more of in our communities.

The department will be engaged in targeted stakeholder consultations to ensure that the program is designed to be successful, and the CITC's portion of the program is going to be implemented, hopefully, by next summer if this bill passes third reading. The registration process for the AITC will be announced pending the passage of this act. Madam Speaker, these tax credits offer the right support for Alberta businesses at the right time. Introducing these measures now, when businesses are facing challenging times, will make Alberta more competitive in retaining and retraining, so we are creating much-needed jobs. Together these tax credits provide significant support to Alberta businesses when they need it most and when we need them most.

Madam Speaker, I would encourage all of my colleagues on all sides of this House to support this bill. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments for the hon. member under 29(2)(a)? Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for this. The member's comments there were excellent. I'm looking on page 30 of the bill under division 2, where it talks about a community economic development corporation. I was pleased to hear the minister, as he introduced the bill here, talking about derisking the investment. I was wondering if the member could explain to us how she feels that this type of an investment or the assistance would derisk an investment, whether it be community and/or even private, because further on in the legislation it talks about: "The small business must meet any other prescribed requirements for registration." I was wondering if the member could enlighten us on how those benefits would be derisking Albertan taxpayer dollars.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question. You know, it's a very important derisking tool that we can have in our tool box. As you know, in using one tool, if you have a hammer, it doesn't work for everything. Sometimes you need a screwdriver. So let's use this as a tool. Derisking our small and medium businesses means that people are more willing to invest and more able to invest because they know that the tax credits are there at the end of the day for them.

Part of that, for me, Madam Speaker, is being able to invest in our small and rural businesses and having people that are willing to come into our rural communities, which should be important to everyone in this House, being able to diversify in those economies in our small towns, in our villages, where people aren't always staying because they don't have the opportunity. The more often that we can get people to come to our small towns and our villages and our rural communities – it is more important for us to be able

to make them stay and give them the tools they need to stay. A derisking tool for our small businesses, especially in our rural communities, is one of the most important things that we can do for them and be able to help them know that we will have this available to them and that that investment has less potential to be lost.

Investment is important. We know that investment is coming back here in Alberta, but we know that it's been challenging times for our small and medium businesses. We know that the global drop in the price of oil has impacted every business in Alberta, and we need to do everything we can and use every tool we have to help incent the investment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak at third reading in favour of Bill 30. I think an investor tax credit is seeing Alberta catch up with other jurisdictions. It's good for Alberta entrepreneurs, and it's good for Alberta.

I also want to acknowledge and give credit to the government for realizing that an investor tax credit makes a lot more sense than their original job-creation grant program. That, I think, is something we don't often see from a government that ran on a certain platform. They've discovered that something may have looked good in a campaign platform that doesn't actually make sense in practice. Any time that happens, a government making a good decision based on good data, I think we ought to recognize that and acknowledge them for doing that.

I also appreciate the minister's willingness to accept reasonable and thoughtful amendments from a couple of different opposition parties, myself included. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek had presented several amendments that were accepted, and I sincerely hope that those amendments have made the bill better.

Sadly, life is not perfect. We didn't get all the amendments that we would have liked to see approved. One of the most important amendments that I would have liked to see would be defining which sectors are included in the investor tax credit in particular. The wording in the bill as it stands now and as it appears will be passed into law is very vague and gives, really, all of the power to the minister to define the eligible areas.

**11:50**

We have a news release from the government here that talks about allowing investment in small and medium Alberta businesses "in sectors such as information technology, clean technology, health technology, interactive digital media and game products, and post-production, visual effects and digital animation." That seems like a reasonable area. I would like to see more in the way of agriculture, agrifood. The world of agriculture is a tremendously technically advanced area and certainly could benefit from some investment as well.

My concern is that we don't know what those parameters will be to determine those industries, and it has been left vague and left up to the minister to choose. Now, the minister assures us that these are the areas, broadly speaking, that will be included, and of course we have to take him at his word on that. I would have liked, though, to see that actually enshrined in the legislation so investors and Alberta entrepreneurs and businesses could know what exactly is included.

I think it would be better if this bill is as broad as possible, if the tax credit is as broad as possible, and I also think that bigger is better. I would like to see more money, frankly, applied to investor

tax credits. On one level \$30 million a year sounds like a lot of money – and I think it will be leveraged to create tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of dollars in investment in Alberta business; a very good thing – but I think I'd like to see that be even larger than it is.

Also, while there is a reporting provision in the bill, the specifics of when the minister will report, how often the minister will report, have not been amended into the bill. We tried to put that in, and that was not accepted. I think it's very important that we have proper reporting so that we know if, in fact, this is a success. If it is a success, how many jobs have been created? How many millions of dollars have been invested in Alberta that may not have otherwise been? Or conversely, if it's not working, are there monies being invested that, frankly, were going to be invested anyway and now we as taxpayers have simply subsidized that? Now, I don't think that's likely to happen to a large extent. Other programs like this in other provinces have shown to be quite effective, but if we don't measure, we can't manage and we don't know. I think that's an important role for us here in this Assembly, and I would know that in the minister's office it's an important role for them as well. Once we have that data, we can then decide whether or not the \$30 million a year allocated is an appropriate amount, if it should have been more or, frankly, could be less.

With all of those concerns aside, I still will happily support this bill. I think it's good for Alberta. I think it moves us forward. Again, credit to the minister for taking this approach. I really look forward to seeing positive results for Alberta business and Alberta entrepreneurs and Alberta jobs.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you. Just a quick question: in reference to Bill 30 and the timing of it, I was wondering if the member could enlighten us on his opportunities to consult with people in his constituency, businesses, and maybe chambers of commerce on this?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. I've had an opportunity to talk to a lot of stakeholders on this. Calgary-Elbow is very fortunate to have a high number of entrepreneurs. I've talked with stakeholders on this, of course, and chambers of commerce. I've been actively engaged with them, and I give a lot of credit to the Alberta chambers of commerce, to Edmonton, Lethbridge, and Calgary in particular, for being very active on this file. They, in fact, were a real driver for the move towards an investor tax credit, away from the job-creation grant. Credit to them for their hard work in advocating and credit to the minister for listening to that advocacy.

I think they are probably not perfectly happy with the outcome. I would have liked to see this broadened, perhaps the numbers a little higher, and some definition in terms of the specific sectors that will be included. I think that would be a fair statement.

I've also talked with stakeholders here in Edmonton. One company in particular that I know of in the geothermal industry is very keen to take advantage of this program and has already started that work by engaging with the ministry and trying to find out what the application process will look like for them. It has already allowed them to attract some capital that perhaps they may not have otherwise been able to attract in an area that I think is a growing one and something that I would hope could be part of diversifying Alberta's economy.

Interestingly, Alberta's economy, really, is already quite diverse. We have the highest level of diversity measured by job type, career



type, anywhere in the country. The challenge that we face in this House and with our provincial budget is not perhaps an economic diversification challenge but a revenue diversification challenge, with a lot of revenue concentrated from one source and overreliance on that nonrenewable resource revenue to fund ongoing operations and a lack of discipline in really reining that in.

That said, the objective, to add to Alberta's economic base through targeted tax incentives, is a good one. I know that my constituents in Calgary-Elbow will certainly take advantage of it, and I hope that constituents from all 87 constituencies will be able to take advantage of that as well.

On the consultation side I've certainly heard from chambers of commerce that they are pleased in general. Probably this didn't go exactly where they would have liked to have seen it go, but at the end of the day I think that, on the whole, it is a good thing.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Member for Calgary-Elbow alluded to the limits with regard to being possibly hurdles that restrict the ability for this to expand and do even more good in the investment climate in Alberta. The limits: I'd like to hear some of his thoughts on how those limits force the government to pick and choose and how that can be dangerous as opposed to regular market forces being able to drive what's going to be successful or not successful. So if he could maybe share some of his thoughts on that.

**Mr. Clark:** Happily. You know, one of the things I like about the general structure of the bill is that the intent seems to be to pick winners and losers by sector, so there are sectors that can benefit from this tax credit and sectors that cannot. That's a step better than picking winners and losers along an individual business level, so I think that's a good thing.

Where I'm concerned – and I think we'd all agree – is with someone who opens up a fast-food franchise, for example. They probably ought not be eligible for an investor tax credit. I think

that's something that we wouldn't say is meaningful economic diversification. But a traditional oil and gas company that perhaps spins off a new technology that is an environmental technology that allows for enhanced oil recovery with less carbon footprint: is that diversification? Is that eligible for the tax credit? I don't know. Is that green technology, or is that oil and gas? I don't know. You know, that's something that the minister is going to have to grapple with. That's why I would have liked to have seen the definition in the bill, so that we know. There's too much that happens in government that's by regulation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers to the bill in third reading? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I see we have a limited amount of time left this morning, but I do wish to speak to Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. Bill 30 strikes closer to the mark as opposed to the other NDP job-creation proposals that we've seen in the last 18 months. It's been over 18 months since the NDP came into power without a competent policy to promote job creation. They had to scrap the previous job-creation initiatives, and we in the Official Opposition hope this one can be effective.

I do believe that tax credits have been effective in the past on certain initiatives. There are some dangers with them also with regard to the government picking and choosing winners and losers, so we have to be aware of that danger. This tax credit, if it works, won't do nearly enough to cancel out all of the other poor policies that we've seen the NDP put in place and roadblocks in the business environment that we're working with in Alberta at this time, policies such as a carbon tax and tax increases on both businesses and individuals. We see dramatic minimum wage increases, suing Alberta . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]











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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, December 1, 2016

Day 56

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne (ND),  
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Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
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Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
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### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 1, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Chief of Staff to the Speaker Bev Alenius

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if I could have your indulgence for just a moment. Someone who has dedicated a lifelong career to this Assembly, Mrs. Bev Alenius, in the Speaker's office as chief of staff, is seated in my gallery yet again for another day. Beverly has made the decision to retire after a truly remarkable career of some 43 years. She began her career with the government of Alberta and found and worked her way into that neutral and austere office of the Speaker. In almost 20 years of being in the Speaker's office, Bev has proved herself a loyal, dedicated, and passionate person with a unique and witty sense of humour, which I'm sure some of you, like me, may have suffered the wrath of.

I want to sincerely thank her for her dedicated service. Bev has served with three Speakers and numerous Legislatures, with some being various shades of blue and the last with some little slight shade of orange. Bev was neutral to colour. I know I speak for all of you when I say that we could not have done our jobs without her support and guidance.

On behalf of all of the members I want to congratulate you, Beverly, for your retirement and thank you for your public service. [Standing ovation] Thank you very much.

Now, I heard a word used this morning which helped to describe yesterday's events in the House, and the word was "buoyant." I'm sure we will have a buoyant and positive ride on the river today.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Ms Caroline Saunders, the consul general of the United Kingdom. Ms Saunders is a career diplomat with diverse experience overseas. It's a great pleasure to host her here today on her first official visit to Edmonton. The United Kingdom is one of Alberta's oldest friends and allies, and I'm pleased to say that our jurisdictions continue to benefit from a very robust trade and investment relationship. The consul general's visit is a great opportunity for us to strengthen our established ties while exploring new areas of co-operation in a variety of sectors such as clean energy, low-carbon solutions, health care, agrifood, and more. Our esteemed guest is seated in your gallery. I see that she has risen. I ask all members to join me in giving her the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. It's a pleasure to meet you.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members, I would like to recognize approximately 100 constituency assistants in the gallery today from across Alberta. These fabulous people are key

to the democratic process in Alberta. They allow us as members to provide nonpartisan services to our constituents. They are often the first point of contact in our communities. Their jobs are demanding and difficult, and we would like to take a moment to thank them for their dedication to all Albertans. This group is here today to participate in the annual winter constituency employee learning and development seminar, which was developed specifically for their unique roles, with the requirements that they have in mind. We're pleased to be holding this seminar in Edmonton so that following their professional development sessions, they were able to come to the Chamber and join us and see the democratic process unfold. Among this group of wonderful people are your assistants from Medicine Hat, David and Laura; my assistant from Peace River, Ada; and Page, who is from Edmonton-Manning and supports our Deputy Chair of Committees. Could I please have all of them rise to get the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome to all of you. That, I think, was a vote of thanks and appreciation.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Dianne Balon, who is with the Alberta Blue Cross. Dianne's career with Blue Cross spans over 30 years, and she is currently vice-president, government. Alberta Blue Cross is familiar to most people for its role as a benefit provider, but I want us to remember that they also oversee programs aimed at promoting health and wellness for all Albertans. For that work and partnership I commend Dianne and her colleagues at Blue Cross. I ask that Dianne please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Rotary Club of Edmonton Northeast. These folks celebrated their 50th anniversary this past February. The face of the club has changed considerably over the past 50 years, but much has remained the same. The Rotary Club of Edmonton Northeast is still known as the friendly club and as champions for children. This year they made a very generous, significant donation to the Beverly memorial cenotaph. This donation played a major part in ensuring that the oldest cenotaph in Alberta received much-needed renovations. Today the club members come from all over the capital region but are very committed to northeast Edmonton.

I'm going to ask my guests to rise as I say their names, and I'll try to do this as quickly as possible as the list is significant. Loie Unwin, Pieter Zeeuwen, Brenda Tyson, Shirley Lowe, Garry Sigmund, Christine Downey, Elaine Grant, Sean Draper. Mr. Speaker, one of our very own pages is also a member of northeast Rotary, and that's David Draper. John Younie, Amanda Slugoski, Jan Preece, Darrell Holowaychuk, Dave Birkenhagen, Kelly Baker, Shirley Smith, and Lautaro Amiune. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Advanced Education minister I have the pleasure of leading the finest department in the public service of the government of Alberta. I'm pleased to introduce 21 of the public servants from that department who are visiting us today. These are all people who work to ensure

our higher education system is one of the best in the country, and I welcome them from the apprenticeship and student aid division, advanced learning and community partnerships, strategic and corporate services as well as the deputy minister's office and the ministerial correspondence unit. They work in a variety of roles from administrative duties to co-ordinating policy and protection of critical information. As a former public servant myself I know the tremendous pride they take in their work on behalf of all Albertans.

Today we have visiting with us Francis Marte, Raeesa Merali, Iona Neumeier, Launa LeBeau, Fahim Hassan, Diane Wishart, Sandra Poole, Michelle Ranger, Deb Ridley, Chris Winton, Cindy Holowach, Carolyn Fewkes, Guy Germaine, Kerri Hill, Melissa Kean, Corey Bodnarek, Claire Tunney, Carmen Diep, Sue Gadag, Taylor Wynn, and Evan Richet. I'd ask them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions for you today. It is a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three individuals from a not-for-profit called HomeFront. I'll be speaking about HomeFront later today in my member's statement. With us today we have Lauretta Enders, board chair; Maggie MacKillop, executive director; Tracy Neumann, director of development and communications. I would also like to introduce Staff Sergeant Rob Davidson from the domestic conflict unit with the Calgary Police Service. These individuals were instrumental in helping me craft my private member's bill, the Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act, 2015. I greatly appreciate their support and all the work that they do to help victims of domestic violence. Please join me in welcoming them, and let them please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to introduce to you and through you my wonderful constituency staff from the magnificent constituency of Calgary Bow. Harrison Clark studied clinical massage therapy at the West Coast College of Massage Therapy in Victoria, B.C., and now is happy to be back in his hometown of Calgary, Alberta. Heather Erlen studied a double major in women's studies and political science at the University of Calgary and also works with the constituency office of Calgary-Acadia. Harrison and Heather are invaluable not only to me but also to the constituents of Calgary-Bow. I would like them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A distinct pleasure for me to introduce to you and to the House an extraordinary group, with two representatives of the group, Parents Empowering Parents. This society was founded as a result of the crystal methamphetamine crisis that plagued the province in 2005. In 2006 their work and the work of this Legislature made Alberta the envy of other provinces when the protection of children act was unanimously brought into law. Their society is now on the front lines of our opioid epidemic, and they are working hard to present solutions for individuals, families, and this government. With us today are the vice-chair, board of directors, Mr. Craig Wehner, and the executive director, Larena Greig. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, it's my great honour to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly my part-time constituency assistant, Arie deValois. I am so proud and thankful to have him as part of our team. He is a person who is understanding and truly empathetic to the situations brought to us by our constituents and whose patience is greater than that of Job. I ask Arie to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms Woollard:** Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my cousin Valerie Tootosis Bull. Valerie was born and raised in Medicine Hat, Alberta, and she was the first member of our family to earn both a bachelor's and a master's degree from the University of Alberta. Subsequently Valerie was a dedicated and inspiring teacher for many years, teaching in different First Nations schools such as Stand Off and Maskwacis and, finally, in Little Pine, Saskatchewan. Valerie worked tirelessly to promote literacy in her students and always enthusiastically supported students in recognizing, celebrating, and being proud of their culture and heritage. If Valerie and her granddaughter Kakike could please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly half of my constituency assistance team, Jocelyn Saskiw from Athabasca. Jocelyn is primarily responsible for handling my events planning and co-ordinating my schedules. Quite literally, without her assistance I wouldn't know whether I was coming or going. Due to her passion and dedicated work our constituency is very well served. I'm hoping she's in the House here. If she is, if she could please rise and receive the customary warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of staff and parishioners from Annunciation Catholic church. My guests here today are Father John Louis; Sharon Smith, fundraiser lead for the annual Annunciation gala; Paul Cavaliere, chair of the parish pastoral council; and Julien Bilodeau and Bob Smith, both co-chairs of the Annunciation fundraising committee. These very active and engaged members of Annunciation church in my constituency of Edmonton-Meadowlark do a great deal to serve their congregation and families in our community. I look forward to speaking to some of this work in my member's statement later today. I would now ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce two young men – well, they're a little older now – that I met while I was the executive director of Lo-Se-Ca Foundation. I've known these two gentlemen for many years, and I'm so proud that I've been able to be part of their lives. I'd ask them to stand: Scott Vodola, Dan Huising, and their staff Aminata. Dan Huising,

by the way, was my climbing partner on Kilimanjaro. Please give them the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you two of my staff from the Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills constituency. These two ladies keep things flowing smoothly in my constituency and do all the paperwork. That saves me a whole bunch of time. Also, I'll take this opportunity to introduce my lovely wife, Donna, who's also up in the stands. If Sharon Christensen and Nancy Pratch-Wiebe and Donna would please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you Mr. and Mrs. Steve and Cheryl Christie. Steve served for four years on the AUMA board – and included with that is vice-president of cities under a half million – and many other provincial committees. Steve is currently the chair of the Red Deer waste-water commission. He was first elected to town council in 2004 and as mayor in 2010. He's currently in his second term as mayor of the city of Lacombe. His lovely wife, Cheryl, a very efficient wife, is also my constituency office assistant. I think I'm the third or maybe the fourth MLA that she's worked for over the years, so she knows how to manage an office and sometimes me as well. Anyway, will you please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through Shauna McHarg, Nick Dira, and Ali Abraham. You may remember that Nick suffered a spinal cord injury last year, and I'm sorry to report that despite having a great attitude and tremendous perseverance, he is still having difficulties accessing the system through AHS as well as his own health files. He has run into numerous AHS roadblocks despite working with a health advocate. I will be tabling this later. For now please wave and please accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the greatest introduction that I will ever make in this House. It is my honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my family: Molly, Brady, and my husband, Kent. Now, they're both here today, missing a little school, but they have learned some things, and they're here to witness the live question period. They do watch us online quite a bit, and they even pound on the tables, usually only when the Official Opposition does something right. They have great respect for us all.

Now, my daughter, Molly, is in grade 3, and she's very successfully reading chapter books – we actually couldn't get her away from one last night – and this year she joined the swim club. She's trying to beat my 22-year-old record for girls' 50-metre backstroke, and she's got two more years to do it, but I'll be very proud when she's the one that replaces me on that board. Molly also has the gift of debate, and I think she just might be the future representative for Airdrie. Please pray for me in her teenage years.

Brady is in grade 1, and he is a sight word machine, very brilliant and working hard. Just this last weekend he was awarded the heart-and-hustle award at his hockey game. Now, he might have it in his back pocket, Mr. Speaker. We've caught him sleeping with it, brushing his teeth with it. He's got it everywhere. So we're very, very proud of him. I'm happy to report that Brady is a very good negotiator, which adds much to our family dynamic.

Lastly, my lovely husband, Kent. We've been married for 10 years, and he is a proud electrician who has recently actually developed our basement. Words of advice: don't let an electrician actually develop his own basement because it is brighter than the sun in there. Now, Mr. Pitt is the glue that keeps our family together, and I'm so grateful. Now I just need him to pay attention to us during the Roughrider games.

Thank you very much for being here today. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:50

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, I have requests for a couple of other introductions. I would seek the guidance of the House.

The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes?

**The Speaker:** Could we have unanimous consent to go beyond 1:50 for some more introductions?

**Mr. Mason:** If you would like me to move that, Mr. Speaker, I will now do so.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my constituency assistant, Nina Karimi. Nina is, of course, instrumental in providing the constituents of Calgary's greatest constituency, Calgary-Klein, with top-notch provincial representation. What's also equally as important is that she's really able to keep me in line. Nina, I'd like you to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise and introduce to you and through you two members of our office up in Fort McMurray. They are the brains of the organization. Without them I could not function. Laila Goodridge and Carol Christian, if you'd please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House. Both of these folks have worked very hard as we've been inundated by concerned citizens that dealt with the fire. Ms Christian also lost her home in the great fire, and she continues to persevere. I thank them both for that.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if there are no additional introductions – Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. However, I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly one of my constituency assistants. She runs my office in Vulcan. She also keeps me in line, and that's what I let her do. Her name is Lisa Ludwig, and if she would please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### Carbon Levy Rate

**Mr. Jean:** It seems the NDP's desire to raise carbon taxes has no end. Here's what the Premier said: "We have never outlined that \$30 was where it was going to stop." The Premier sure talked a tough game about opposing increases a couple of weeks ago, but now there's no limit to where this government is willing to go to make Albertans pay to heat their homes, drive their cars, or pay for groceries. How much money does the Premier think Albertans need to pay in carbon taxes before enough is enough?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier. [some applause] We might need to give a little extra time to the clock after.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, you know, it's very clear that Alberta's climate leadership plan played a critical role in the decision that is going to help Albertans that we heard about last Tuesday. It is really unfortunate the partisan games that the opposition is playing again today. Almost a year ago the Leader of the Opposition asked, "Can the Premier give us one single example of a pipeline – any pipeline – that is closer to construction or approval as a result of her quiet diplomacy?" The answer is yes, but the problem is that I have to give him two.

**Mr. Jean:** I'm sure that the 100,000-plus Albertans that are unemployed find that comforting.

The Premier said that she consulted the power industry about jacking up the carbon tax, but like just about everything the government says these days, that's not true. Enmax, the company that the government is suing, says that that's complete nonsense. They know that this is going to hit consumers extremely hard, but the NDP doesn't seem to care at all. They don't care that it will make Alberta less competitive, and they don't care that it will hurt Alberta families a lot. How can you justify this massive tax increase to the millions of Albertans who will be much poorer as a result of it?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I understand today that the member opposite outlined what they would do differently. Let me just review to make sure I have it clear. First, they'd burden Albertans with the power company market losses of up to about \$2 billion. Then they would subject consumers to a 900 per cent increase in electricity bill volatility. Then they'd stop \$10 billion of private investment into renewables. Then they'd replace a made-in-Alberta climate plan with a made-in-Ottawa plan, and then they'd deny the need to act on climate change. But you know what else they forgot? Number six, they'd make sure we undid the Kinder Morgan approval.

**Mr. Jean:** Under the NDP's plan it actually means that families will be forking out \$2,500 a year in extra taxes to pay for tens of billions of dollars in corporate welfare handouts and green slush funds for this government. Parents will be seeing busing fees jacked up for their kids, municipalities will be dinged big time – and that means higher property taxes for all Albertans – charities will be picked dry by the millions, businesses will be forced to pass their losses on to consumers, and families will be crushed by the weight of all of this NDP legislation. This will hurt people's lives. Why won't the Premier put an end to this ridiculous NDP carbon tax?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite seemed to fail to notice that the federal government is moving ahead with pricing carbon, so we have two choices. We can go forward with our made-in-Alberta climate change plan, that is a result of extensive consultation with industry, with communities, with stakeholders, because that's what Albertans need and want, or we can hand the whole thing over to Ottawa, cover our ears, and shout angry tweets out east. But you know what? That doesn't help Albertans. We're going to do the right thing.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

#### Electricity System

**Mr. Jean:** It's very clear that the NDP cares more about impressing elites than doing the right thing by Alberta's working families. When Ottawa says, "Jump," the NDP says, "How high?" as they go up. Our shutdown of coal is becoming a multibillion-dollar boondoggle. The cost of shutting down coal: \$1.4 billion. The cost to cover NDP-made losses in the power system: over \$500 million, and it won't stop there. They've made a complete mess of the whole power system in Alberta. When will the Premier put an end to this mess that she's created?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite really doesn't get it. What this government is doing is that we are putting an end to price volatility. We are protecting consumers. We are moving forward on phasing out coal in order to protect the health and safety of Albertans, and we are injecting stability into our economy, which is allowing more investors to come back in. You know what? I'm quoting investors when I say that. Our government had a lot of heavy lifting to do, and we got to work, we got it done, and I'm very proud of that.

**Mr. Jean:** The NDP raised prices on power companies, and Albertans will pay for that. Now this government is asking taxpayers to bail them out. It's this government that kick-started dramatic losses in our Balancing Pool by raising taxes. They only have themselves to blame, and Albertans know it. The government continues to be in litigation against Calgary-owned Enmax, a lawsuit that is simply a lose-lose for Calgarians. Will the Premier then take the easy step of reversing the carbon tax increases on our power companies and end this ridiculous lawsuit? Yes or no?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, we are going to move forward on the plan that we have put in place, that we know is going to get results for Albertans. We inherited an electricity system that was broken. We inherited an electricity system that was about to increase costs dramatically for consumers. The members opposite want us to retain a system that would have the upper price go up 900 per cent. It is jaw-dropping that they continue to advocate for this approach. We're standing up for Alberta consumers, and we're proud of that.

2:00

**Mr. Jean:** By shutting down coal power, this government is taking billions of dollars of generation offline. With their new changes the NDP has created a \$25 billion gap in our system and through new legislation and new regulations will leave taxpayers vulnerable to pick up a big part of that tab. This is billions of dollars the government is experimenting with, and it's causing serious uncertainty in Alberta. Has the Premier done any assessment about how much money taxpayers are on the hook for under her new NDP plan?



**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said before, but I'll say it yet again, what we knew is that under the plan that we inherited, Alberta consumers were looking forward to a 900 per cent increase in the volatility of their electricity bills. Ignoring that for the sake of maintaining a risky, failed ideological experience is not good governance. We decided to go for good governance, and we're very proud of that.

**The Speaker:** Third main question.

#### Deaths of Children in Care

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, for two weeks we've been asking questions about Serenity and children in care in Alberta, and the answers have in no way been satisfactory. By now the minister should have some detailed talking points in his binder in front of him, and I will ask him a simple question, which Albertans are hoping he can answer with some detail. Will the minister tell us of two or three specific things that his ministry does differently now so that Albertans can be reassured that this government has actually learned something from the tragic death of Serenity?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I certainly recognize that it's a deeply concerning issue for everyone in this House, for me. I met Serenity's grandmother at the door of the Legislature steps last night. I can tell the member that the Premier has asked me to establish a committee, which will include members from across the aisle. We will look into this issue, and we will make sure that we have enough safeguards in place that we can prevent similar incidents from happening in the future.

**Mr. Jean:** The lack of answers, any action, and specifics is very disturbing.

Let's try another minister on the same matter. Last week I asked the minister how many cases had been delayed for two years because of the mess at the office of the Chief Medical Examiner. I didn't get an answer. The Human Services website actually says that 13 children who died in care over two years shockingly had their cause of death listed as pending. Can the Justice minister please explain why five child deaths in 2014 and eight from 2015 still don't have autopsy reports or causes of death specified? Why?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Nothing could be more tragic than the death of a child, particularly in care. We take these things very seriously. I obviously can't speak to the specifics of any one case, but we can look into those and get back to him. The office of the Chief Medical Examiner does take these cases seriously. In some instances, as is the case here, the RCMP may ask us to withhold the report. In other instances we may be awaiting a specialist medical report. So there are a number of factors that can play into these things.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, eight questions, not one real answer.

The care of vulnerable children is one of those issues that Albertans would have thought the NDP government could actually get right. I expected that it would have been one of those places where we would have seen some real progress. Instead, we have a Human Services minister who simply doesn't get it, and we have a Justice minister that only continues to make excuses for the mess

that is the coroner's office. Is the Premier proud of the performance of these two ministers on the one issue that Albertans might have actually expected this NDP government to have gotten right?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, our government is working very hard to improve the work that we do to support vulnerable children across our province, and we have done a number of significant things. We introduced a child tax benefit, which pulled about 300,000 children out of poverty. We've introduced a school nutrition program. We've increased funding to children's intervention services by \$37 million. We increased funding to the children's advocate so that the transparency that the members opposite are looking for could be assured and grown. We have taken specific action. We will take more action. We are convinced of this, and the members opposite . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

Hon. members, if we could stay at buoyant and not explosive, it would be really helpful.

The leader of the third party.

#### Carbon Levy Rate (continued)

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our Premier once told Prime Minister Trudeau that a \$50 carbon tax was too steep for Alberta's economy. Then she told the CBC, "We don't think it's economically responsible to commit moving to \$50 a tonne when the province of Alberta is struggling as much it is right now." This week the Premier folded like an umbrella on the issue and agreed to the \$50 tax. To the Premier: why didn't you stand up to Alberta like Peter Lougheed instead of throwing us under the bus like Bob Rae?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would not stand up "to" Alberta. I would stand up for Alberta, and that's exactly what I'm doing.

You see, here's the thing. The federal government has the authority to put a \$50 carbon tax in place, so we can either accept their rules or we can implement our rules. We have put in place our rules. We said that this was something that we could move on should we get progress on pipelines. On Tuesday we got progress on two pipelines, and I know that Alberta is ready to move forward by being a responsible energy producer, getting the best price for our product . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. Alberta taxpayers and corporations are used as pawns for political posturing by the NDP. The government's own figures say that moving to \$50 will raise \$4 billion a year. That's \$20 billion over five years. Agreeing to this much higher carbon tax when Alberta hasn't even started recovering from the recession is destabilizing. The Premier has even suggested that there's no ceiling. Surely the Premier can't mean that. To the Premier: what is your upper limit for a carbon tax that Albertans will be forced to pay?

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly recommend that the member opposite read, oh, the TD Bank report on carbon pricing, read the recommendations that were made public last week by CEOs from across Canada on the value to our economy of finally

moving forward on carbon pricing, or read any of the many other reports that actually suggest that if it is done carefully, that is exactly the most effective way to reduce carbon while at the same time supporting economic diversification. That is what we're going to do. It is the responsible way to go, and the price that the member across the way is talking about doesn't come into effect until five or six years from now.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier initially announced that \$20 or \$30 would be fine enough on carbon. Now she's happy to accept Prime Minister Trudeau's \$50 price tag. Oddly enough, the Finance minister has been unable to articulate a debt repayment plan even though interest payments from this government's debt will be \$3 billion a year before the next election. That's the government numbers. To the Premier: is an unlimited price on carbon your way of paying for the out-of-control spending of your government?

**Ms Notley:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the member opposite read our climate leadership plan, and he will see exactly what it is that we are paying for. We are paying for transitioning our economy to a more progressive energy-producing province, to more renewables, to more diversification. That's what it does, and that gets results. You know, over there we have Team Do Nothing for 44 Years, Team Angry, and Team Get Results right here.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am a proud Albertan, and I will never cheer against the province that I love. The approval of two pipelines is great news, and I will give the government their due. But lost in all the celebration is the fact that this government is making the same mistakes as governments before it. Alberta remains on the resource revenue roller coaster, with no meaningful plan to get off. We don't have an economic diversification problem; we have a government revenue diversification problem. To the Premier: do you have any plan to get off the resource revenue roller coaster, or will you simply cross your fingers and hope that the price of oil goes up?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure exactly what the member opposite is asking for, but we have laid out a clear and careful plan forward for the people of Alberta. As we all know, our government was left with an economy that was deeply vulnerable to the drop in the price of oil. As a result, there were two different approaches you could take: you could cut services, or you could cut more services. What we decided to do was support Albertans, have their back, and map out a careful plan to balance, which is exactly what we're doing, and we're doing it while we're supporting Alberta families, Alberta businesses, and Alberta's future.

2:10

**Mr. Clark:** Your careful plan to balance relies on the price of oil going up and nothing more.

It is pretty clear that the NDs think the previous government must have managed finances pretty well because they haven't found any real savings since taking office. Now, the Alberta Party knows that it is possible to find at least \$2 billion in savings without firing teachers, nurses, or other front-line workers. Every sector in Alberta

has to do more with less, Mr. Speaker, every sector except the provincial government. Again to the Premier: will you commit to working with the great people in Alberta's public service to find real savings without sacrificing front-line . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to report to the member opposite that under the great leadership of our Minister of Finance that's exactly what we are doing. We are getting off the roller coaster, we are not tying our spending to the price of oil, and we are carefully bringing our spending into line while protecting important public services, while protecting Alberta businesses, while protecting Albertans, and that's what we will continue to do.

**Mr. Clark:** A plan to maybe, possibly balance the budget by 2024 is no plan at all, Mr. Speaker.

The budget needs to not only be balanced, however. We need to actually get to surplus to pay back the debt that the NDP have accumulated. Now, the Alberta Party has a plan to eliminate Alberta's deficit while getting Alberta off the resource revenue roller coaster. It starts with capping the amount of resource revenue that we would use for operational expenses and allocating the rest to debt repayment and to the heritage fund. To the Minister of Finance: will you accept this plan of capping the amount of nonrenewable resource revenue we assume we're going to use . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you for the question. You know, what this Minister of Finance will do is that I'll continue to move forward with the plan we had been elected on, the plan that we are moving forward with. That plan controls spending, diversifies our economy, and invests in capital infrastructure throughout this province. That plan is the right plan. Their plan would have brutally cut the services. Their plan would have cut more. I don't think the Alberta Party plan has a great deal to teach us on this side.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Bovine Tuberculosis

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ranchers in southeastern Alberta have been going through an incredibly stressful time since the case of bovine TB was detected in a cow slaughtered in the U.S. Some of these ranchers get one paycheque a year for their calf crop. It happens during the fall calf run. This means the CFIA quarantine of these cattle could not come at a worse time for these producers. It has caused substantial hardship and stress for the ranchers that . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to helping producers through this tough time. I've been very committed to ensuring that our government is doing what we can to support our farming families. I raised the issue with the federal agriculture minister in October and again when we were together in China a few weeks ago. I ensured that officials from my department have met with producers in the region to provide an update and address concerns related to finances, mental health, and the status of investigation. I've been in close contact with beef producers, who understand what they need in terms of resources and responses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Given that these ranchers likely did not plan for the extra feed and yardage for these calves this late into the fall and given these extraordinary costs to producers already in a tough cattle market, to the same minister: will there be any financial supports for these producers?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to helping producers through this tough time. Producers know that both the federal and provincial governments are stepping up with support. We'll continue to work with Alberta Beef Producers and individual ranchers to take steps to ease their financial burden. Alberta Beef Producers have said that our commitment is a bright spot in what's been a very gloomy fall and that they appreciate the steps we've taken to ease the financial burden on producers. We will work to ensure AgriRecovery funds flow as simply and quickly as possible. We will continue to listen to beef producers and affected parties.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard from this minister that Alberta beef is in high demand across the world, including developing markets in Asia. Given that exports are vital to our beef producers, again to the same minister: what is the government doing to assure markets that Alberta beef is safe, healthy, and the best tasting in the world?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government supports our farming families and is incredibly proud of the beef industry in this province and the product we export to the world. We do not anticipate any market disruptions as a result of this situation. Isolated cases of bovine TB are periodically reported in Alberta and other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta beef continues to be the best in the world. We all know that. I will continue to be a proud advocate to ensure that our beef is able to reach the consumers that want it. While members on the other side deride us for going on trade missions, I will always be proud of our beef and will continue to open markets abroad so that our farm families can continue to prosper.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### **Electricity System** (continued)

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP have bitten off more than they could chew when it comes to the electricity file. Now, to make matters worse, they are legislating from crisis to crisis in an attempt to cover up mistakes. The NDP are lending the Balancing Pool hundreds of millions of dollars to cover losses from cancelled power purchase arrangements, but these losses could go on for years, so the bill has no limit. I'll give the Minister of Energy a chance to not be completely irresponsible. Just how much is this mistake of yours going to cost Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. You know, our government inherited a volatile electricity system, and from the get-go in deregulation things weren't set up properly. The Balancing Pool was created but was not given the ability to borrow money, and it was not given the ability to stretch it out over

time, and that's the legislation we've brought forth to give the Balancing Pool some tools to manage this situation.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, I've got breaking news for the minister. It doesn't matter if it's a ratepayer or a taxpayer that's footing this bill for your mistakes. It's all the same hard-working Albertans.

Given that the NDP like to use a make-policy-now, pay-for-mistakes-later approach and given that this is likely to be just the first big cost coming our way on account of the NDP's mishandling of the electricity file, has the Minister of Energy done any sort of economic study of the total cost her government's electricity plan is going to cost Albertans, and will she publicly release it?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. You know, doing nothing was going to cost Albertans a lot. It was going to cost over \$8 a month on their utility bills and over \$300,000 on small utility bills. We are going to settle the other PPAs. When we do have all those figures in place, we absolutely will be releasing those figures.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** This is just another tumbling domino in the series of changes that have had to be made since the NDP foolishly raised the carbon tax on specified gas emitters. Given that another domino is the ongoing battle with Enmax because the NDP didn't know their file and given that the NDP have yet to confirm they won't make their lawsuit go away by forcing legislation, can this Minister of Energy clarify: are you set to turn Alberta into a banana republic by enacting retroactive legislation? Yes or no?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. You know, we've come up with several announcements over the last week which tell the province about our plan. What we aren't going to do is follow a five-point plan that is going to lead to the creation of no more pipelines ever.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### **Drywall Tariff**

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In September this year the federal government imposed a tariff on drywall being imported from the United States to western Canada. This was based on eastern Canadian drywall companies lobbying the federal government to ensure that western Canada paid more for its drywall. Overnight the price of drywall went up in Alberta. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what are you doing to work with the federal government to get these tariffs lifted and ensure that Alberta builders have access to affordable drywall?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

2:20

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the very pertinent question. First of all, I want to begin by saying that, like all Albertans, I'm concerned about the potential impact of this trade dispute on the costs for families, especially those rebuilding from the Fort McMurray wildfire. However, the local industry here in Alberta and across Canada has suggested that their competitors in the U.S. are not dealing fairly, and governments have an obligation to follow up on that. So our interest is in ensuring that both producers and consumers have access to an impartial system where competing claims can be . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that even during this period of economic hardship Albertans are still building new homes and given that the rebuild of Fort McMurray will require great amounts of building supplies, to the minister: if this government is not successful in having the tariffs removed, how will this affect the cost of building new homes in Alberta?

**Mr. Bilous:** Again, Mr. Speaker, you know, we recognize that this is a very unfortunate situation. We have two different interests going on here. The federal government has an obligation when a claim has been made that there's been an unfair dumping of gypsum into the Canadian economy, so that's where they initially imposed the tariff. I can tell you that they are trying to fast-track hearings and trying to get to a resolution very quickly.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the federal government is working to not have the U.S. government put tariffs on softwood lumber from Canada and given that the federal government put tariffs on U.S. drywall coming into western Canada, to the same minister: will you stand up for the forest and construction industries in Alberta and work with the federal government to be fair with our major trading partner?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost, both the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and myself have been working very diligently on the softwood lumber file, and I've been in regular conversation with my federal counterpart, Minister Freeland, on this issue and also on the softwood lumber issue. I just want to say that, first of all, there's nothing contradictory between pursuing a remedy for softwood lumber and issuing antidumping tariffs on drywall. Both are about ensuring that Alberta businesses and consumers have fair, equal, and undistorted opportunity in markets here and internationally.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Carbon Levy and Education Costs

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. School boards are using their reserve funds to provide inclusive learning environments, and I know at least one that has had to lay off education assistants because their reserve funds have run out, so students with special learning needs are being left without critical supports that they need. Now the government with its carbon tax is making the situation much worse. Can the minister please explain to Albertans how taking money from educational priorities like inclusion by imposing a carbon tax on schools is going to help address the needs of Alberta students?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Schools are a very, very good and appropriate place to work on the climate leadership plan because, of course, not only are we building a way by which we can help to diversify our economy, increase efficiencies in the public institutions which we own such as schools, but we are teaching important lessons. You know, I was just at a couple of school boards in the last couple of days. They're very pleased to both work on

renovations around their energy use and provide the important lessons that our children need.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if those lessons are at the expense of inclusion.

Given that Edmonton public reports that the carbon tax will take \$1.2 million this year and another \$1.8 million next year out of funding that could have gone towards inclusion and given that one school board reported to me that they receive approximately \$3 million per year in inclusion funding yet spend closer to \$7 million to address special needs, can the minister explain to the school boards across the province how they will be able to continue to support all children when the carbon tax robs them of millions of dollars that should be going to our students?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, school boards are very happy to work with us in order to work with our climate leadership plan, and they have been doing so already. To connect one program with another is entirely spurious, and it does not speak to the way that either the school boards or Education operate. It's maybe the way the opposition's logic operates, but it certainly has no bearing in reality in my schools.

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, given that the congregated learning disabilities program in Calgary for students with special learning needs is shutting down in part because of transportation and since those students will be transferred to regular classrooms in larger schools throughout the city as satellite programs and given that these students will no longer have the safety and security found in a responsive and flexible learning environment that can adapt to their changing needs, is the Minister of Education willing to meet with these parents and explain why their children's education must be sacrificed to the ideological NDP carbon tax.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, if this is a trend, where the opposition is going to try to attach anything that happens to be going on to the climate leadership plan, it's going to be very, very long until the Christmas break. We're working very hard for responsible decisions for our school boards. They're working together. Certainly, I'm aware of that specific question, but to even suggest that it somehow is tied to a carbon price is not only misleading, but I think it does a disservice to the way the opposition should be operating in a responsible manner.

### Renewable Energy Contracts

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, a solar power company proposed in my riding illuminated some disconcerting information. This company indicated that it can produce electricity at a whopping 15.4 cents per kilowatt hour whereas the Balancing Pool is currently buying electricity at around 1.2 to 1.6 cents. I learned that this government is offering to subsidize this company at a rate of 11.4 cents per kilowatt hour or else it could not be viable on its own. Will the minister please explain how increasing the cost of electricity to taxpayers by an astonishing 863 per cent is actually in the best interests of Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually not entirely sure at all what the hon. member is talking about. However, what we can say is that, of course, the government of Alberta put

out a request for proposals to procure our government electricity that is currently being procured via wind. We put out a proposal to see what the competitive market might offer us in terms of solar. We've made no decisions on that matter. What I will say with respect to the economic benefits of renewables in rural areas is that a 300-megawatt project, for example, will create 300 jobs and 1.5 . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, given that this government has trumpeted the notion that companies like Enmax were engaged in contracts that were not in the best interests of Albertans and given that this government now is proposing to guarantee loans for unviable green-energy products and given that I was informed that these contracts will be for 20 years, will the minister confirm to Albertans how long these contracts will be that they are saddling Albertans with?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, it really depends on what the hon. member is inquiring about. First of all, we have said, on advice from the ISO, that we shall in fact move forward with a contract for differences of competitive procurement model for our utility-scale renewables that will make up 30 per cent of Alberta's energy for electricity, and the other 70 per cent will be natural gas, which will be procured in a capacity market situation, which we are now consulting with industry on. As for the other request for proposals that we indicated, we asked the market how much they would be able to provide to the government of Alberta in terms of our ongoing electricity . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Hunter:** Only the NDP government would ask those guys what they want.

Mr. Speaker, given that projects of this nature have been colossal failures in other jurisdictions – for example, the Solyndra solar project in the United States, that left taxpayers on the hook for \$535 million in government guarantees – and given that someone needs to pay for the cleanup of these epic boondoggles, to the minister: who in Alberta will be liable for the cleanup costs should these unviable companies go under? The landowner who leased the land, the municipalities, or the taxpayer?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, only the Wildrose, the Party of No, would stand up in this House and, first of all, indicate that we don't want a market-based solution to bring renewables into this province, that we want to slam the door on those jobs, not even just Alberta-wide but in his own riding. It is shocking that they would want to slam the door on the renewables revenues for the municipalities, for the local landowners, for the entire regional economy, both in southern Alberta and in northern Alberta. This side of the House is going to create jobs and look forward to the economy of tomorrow. [interjections]

2:30

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

You may have passed the buoyant stage.

The Member for Calgary-West.

### Phoenix Sex Offender Treatment Program

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Phoenix program for treating sex offenders is world renowned. While rehabilitating sex offenders may not be politically popular, ensuring the safety of

citizens is popular, and it's the job of government. The Phoenix program helps to prevent these offenders from recommitting crimes when they are released, yet we have learned that AHS is planning to end this critically important preventative program. To the Health minister. You said that the decision about the Phoenix program took you by surprise because you don't – and I quote – make decisions about specific programs. Minister, what is your stance today on cancelling this program?

Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** The assertion that the member opposite tried to share here couldn't be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. Our top priority is the safety of our communities. I understand that the Phoenix program has been very successful, and if there are ways to strengthen or improve the program, I think that we deserve the opportunity to have that review and determine how it might be able to move forward in an even better way. The program has been very successful, and it will continue to be very successful.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has confirmed that public safety is a very high priority and given that the offenders accepted into the Phoenix program are motivated to learn skills to help them function in society and given that if they are not treated, they will be back on our streets without the tools to avoid reoffending, which puts the public, including children, at risk, again to the Health minister: since you were not initially aware of AHS's plan to cancel the Phoenix program, what are you doing to ensure that the Health minister always knows about these kinds of decisions?

**Ms Hoffman:** Let me be very clear. The member opposite knows nothing about the program or its future. There was a very clear point in time, at the end of the current program, to do a review and find ways to improve it. The determination on how the program is going to move forward hasn't been determined yet because AHS is in the midst of doing the review. The program will continue to exist, it will be here, and if there are ways that it can be even better and serve more people and protect an even greater population, I think we owe it to them to give them the opportunity to do that exploration. But the assertion the member opposite makes couldn't be further from the truth.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that cancelling an effective treatment program for sex offenders in a secure facility like Alberta Hospital seriously compromises public safety and given that Alberta's Solicitor General should have been aware of the plans of AHS to cancel the program, to the Solicitor General: when did you hear of the threat to the Phoenix program, and what actions did you take to stop this plan upon learning of it?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, as the hon. Minister of Health has now said twice, there never was a plan to cancel the program. There is no plan to cancel the program. The program is very effective. We intend to continue the program. I never learned of it because there was no such plan.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

### Door-to-door Sales

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard horror stories from constituents, especially seniors, who got a knock on their door and were misled into signing expensive furnace leases by unscrupulous salespeople. Now I'm hearing how pleased they are that this government introduced a plan to ban door-to-door sales of household energy products. My own mother may now be able to remove the sign she has posted on her front door prohibiting long-term energy contractors from ringing her doorbell. To the Minister of Service Alberta: who does the ban cover, and what motivated this decision? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I certainly listen when Albertans raise concerns about consumer protection. I find it disheartening to hear that the opposition is heckling such that they don't find this an important issue. Since 2010 well over 1,000 Albertans have complained about aggressive, unsolicited door-to-door energy sales. After alarming spikes in complaints this year alone, we took action. We banned unsolicited door-to-door sales of furnaces, natural gas and electricity energy contracts . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've also got independent contractors and installers in my riding, who go into homes to conduct their business, to the same minister: how will the government's ban on door-to-door energy sales impact these small businesses?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thanks to the member for the question. I am still deeply concerned that the opposition is laughing at this issue. I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to protecting Alberta's families from unsolicited, high-pressure sales tactics, but we still want to encourage good business practices. Albertans can still invite contractors and salespeople into their homes to discuss and sign a contract, certainly. In fact, many successful energy companies do not . . . [interjections] Mr. Speaker, if I could have my time back.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, with respect, I decide the time.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that since the government introduced the ban on door-to-door energy sales, I've heard complaints about other kinds of door-to-door sales, again to the same minister: will the government be banning door-to-door sales on other products?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll continue. I'm pleased that ATCO, Enmax, and EPCOR all joined the RCMP, the Better Business Bureau, and seniors' groups because vulnerable seniors have been the target of this particular misleading practice. I'm proud of our ban on these misleading practices. We are committed to taking action and to continue listening to Albertans. If there are other concerns about other kinds of door-to-door sales, we would be happy to hear those concerns. I encourage any Albertan who has

experienced misleading or aggressive sales at their door to contact my office, and certainly I hope . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.  
The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

### Carbon Levy Rate (continued)

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Imagine Albertans' surprise to learn that one of this government's orders of business was to implement a carbon tax. This is interesting as at no time was this part of their election platform. In the retail industry this is known as a bait and switch, and it's considered a reprehensible way of doing business. Now we find out that \$30 a tonne was never the ceiling. They are now using a sliding scale, and the top end is currently to be \$50 a tonne. To the Energy minister: why are you and your colleagues enacting crippling legislation that will hurt most the very communities you were elected to represent?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our carbon pricing policy architecture is designed to ensure that we have rebates and so on. If the federal government does move forward with their plan, it will reach \$50 per tonne by 2022.

Now, of course, we have five steps from the opposition, unveiled earlier today. Step one, of course, no climate leadership plan, meaning no pipelines. Slam the door on that. Step two, have a plan imposed on us by Ottawa. Step three, continue with \$300 million in health care costs and pollute the air while not supporting the natural gas industry. Step four, make sure you slam the door on billions in renewables. Step five, don't . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Loewen:** No answer to why they're entering into crippling legislation.

Things are bad in northern Alberta, Mr. Speaker, and they're getting worse. Given that the Member for Peace River made a member's statement expressing concern around northern Alberta travel issues and given that she expressed concern that those communities pay nearly 20 cents more a litre for gasoline and given that this \$50 a tonne tax will cost families an additional \$2,500 a year when implemented, how do you propose that these northern towns, one of which quoted over \$125,000 in tax increases – that's for a school division – and these counties and especially the rural school boards, who are suffering from high transportation costs, absorb the millions of dollars of increased . . .

2:40

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, if the hon. member would like to consult the budget, we have put \$2.2 billion of reinvestment into communities over the next five years. We have moved forward with a very robust rebate program covering 65 per cent of Albertans, 60 per cent with a full rebate. Those cheques will be issued in January. In addition, we are making sure that we're moving forward with a thoughtful plan to reinvest in technology and so on to make our oil and gas industry resilient for the carbon-

constrained future, and all the while that whole climate leadership plan is getting us two pipelines.

**Mr. Loewen:** No answer on how these school boards are going to absorb these costs.

Mr. Speaker, given that no one gives like Albertans – we donate more to charities per capita than any other province – and given that charities primarily rely on our goodwill through fundraisers and donations and given that the increased cost of heating, gasoline, and other expenses, estimated by one Peace Country nonprofit to be as high as \$75,000, will greatly diminish the great work that these good people will be able to do, to the minister: how do you propose that we help the thousands and thousands of Alberta's most vulnerable, that may be turned away due to lack of funding stolen away by what amounts to an ideological sin tax on charities that . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the opposition or the folks who would like us to not move forward with energy infrastructure would like to slam the door on a carbon-constrained future, would deny the science behind it and all of the new opportunities. I mean, that's just not how we're doing business on this side of the House. We have moved forward with a round-table for nonprofits to ensure that we've got the right investments of our energy efficiency dollars, which are numbering some \$645 million over the next five years, making sure those are properly invested. We've got the right programs in place for nonprofits. We have stabilized funding to schools, which the other side of the House would have cut by billions . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Calgary-Lougheed.

### Indigenous Peoples' Health

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the recently released aboriginal peoples survey one-third of Canadians did not report excellent or very good health, but alarmingly that figure rose to 50 per cent for First Nations people living off-reserve. Chronic conditions, including high blood pressure, arthritis, asthma, mood disorders, and diabetes, affect almost two-thirds of off-reserve First Nations people. To the Premier: when will indigenous Albertans enjoy levels of health and wellness that are comparable to Albertans in the general population?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for what I think is an excellent question because it really reveals the fact that the government of this province and the government of Canada have failed to address the issues of the indigenous community for, well, essentially a hundred years in this province. We have finally come along to address some of the structural issues that are causing these problems, and we are doing so not only on-reserve but off-reserve by increasing child tax credits, by having school programs, and by working very closely with the First Nations communities to make true differences in their communities.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that the same study found that off-reserve First Nations females were significantly more likely than males to report having one or more chronic conditions and given that poor health outcomes are linked to smoking, incompleteness of high school education, unemployment, low household income, and other unmet health needs, to the minister: what is the government doing – please

be specific for Albertans, sir – to strengthen Alberta's nonprofit agencies that provide support for women to address these very factors?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. I want to identify that we've done a number of things specifically for women in the indigenous community. This year for the very first time we gave core funding to the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, something that was never done by the previous government. We've also increased the amount of money being given to the friendship centres, which work with the women. We've been working across the board in every one of our ministries to institute the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples to ensure that there are changes in our curriculum, in our health programs, and in our employment programs, all of which changed the structural indicators.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that the Child and Youth Advocate recommends making mental health programs more accessible in First Nations communities and given that the advocate also recommends that Alberta's mental health services incorporate cultural components in treatment strategies for young people and that Human Services, Education, and Health require professionals to have adequate training about the history of indigenous peoples, to the Minister of Advanced Education: sir, what steps are you taking to ensure that educational opportunities to achieve these competencies are available to Alberta's current and future professionals?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we continue to support the work of Advanced Education by providing predictable, sustainable funding, which we've done in two consecutive budgets, with 2 per cent increases each year. Of course, we continue to make sure that all Albertans have opportunities to achieve high-quality, affordable education by keeping tuition costs low through a third year of a tuition freeze. We continue to work with the presidents of the universities and colleges to look at the issues of access for all Albertans, particularly the rural and indigenous people of this province, and we continue to find ways to improve the system.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Members' Statements

#### Official Opposition Policies

**Ms McPherson:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a brand new party, the Party of No. On a day when Albertans were breathing a sigh of relief, when surely we could all be united in feeling just a little bit more hopeful, the Party of No made an appearance. To the news that two pipelines were approved, the Party of No said that they wouldn't get built. To the news that respect and consultation with diverse voices led to cabinet approval, the Party of No said that consultation should end. To the news that approval wouldn't have come without climate leadership, the Party of No demanded that we scrap the climate leadership plan.

But that's what we've come to expect from the Party of No. No to the climate leadership plan. No to any climate change plan even if it gets us a pipeline. No to letting people speak their minds even

if we disagree with them. No to investing in front-line health care instead of privatizing. No to new child care spaces. No to farm safety. No to ensuring that all kids feel safe in school. No to corporations paying their fair share, and the only thing that a flat tax flattens is nurses and teachers. And last week they said no to banning scam artists who target the elderly.

The Leader of the Opposition has gone so far as to say that he would get rid of every piece of legislation, every piece of regulation, every single thing this government has done. Mr. Speaker, you know you might be taking your job too literally when you vow to repeal the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act. So I guess we shouldn't be surprised when even just for one day the Party of No can't put Albertans before their pride and rally behind these pipeline projects and what they'll do for our province.

But no matter, Mr. Speaker. The opposition can keep being the Party of No. With this government and with this team, Team Get Things Done, we will keep moving Alberta forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### **Bovine Tuberculosis Quarantine**

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fifty Alberta ranchers continue to face an uncertain future due to the bovine tuberculosis quarantine in east-central Alberta. The poor communication exhibited by government agencies has left ranchers with more questions than answers. Government officials assure us that timely communication is the standard while producers are adamant that they are being left out of the loop. This must be fixed ASAP. With no long-term and only partial measures being proposed to compensate for over 10,000 head of cattle currently under orders to be destroyed, producers are left wondering what the future holds for them and their livelihoods.

2:50

While the source of the outbreak is still unknown, we have learned that it is of a strain previously unknown in Alberta. That is cold comfort to those affected, and the lack of answers compounds the problem. Every rancher in Alberta knows that they, too, could have been the victim of poor government policy, and unfortunately good people's lives are disrupted because of that.

Additionally, we know that the CFIA plans to set up a high-risk quarantine feedlot for the affected ranchers. That will alleviate some concerns, but it would further ease them if the ranchers had a firm idea of not only the timeline but accurate details for setting this feedlot up. This government needs to make sure that they have a plan to ensure that the CFIA follows through with their proposals, and I look forward to timely, comprehensive updates from our agriculture minister as well.

This unfortunate incident has been going on for over two months now, Mr. Speaker, and we have been fighting to get answers and results for our affected constituents. We will continue to do so until this crisis has passed. With 50 premises currently under quarantine, people's futures are at stake. It is our responsibility here in this House to ensure that these operations remain financially viable for generations to come.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

### **Annunciation Catholic Church in Edmonton**

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very grateful to have opportunities in Edmonton-Meadowlark to build relationships and engage with many of the exceptional members of the Annunciation Catholic church, a few of which I had the pleasure

of introducing today. Annunciation church has a fascinating history as part of the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Edmonton. It is one parish among 125 that stretch from the Rocky Mountains in the west to the Saskatchewan border in the east and from Olds in the south to Mayerthorpe in the north, covering over 80,000 square kilometres.

The parish in Edmonton-Meadowlark was established in 1959, officially opening in 1963. Today, serving a congregation of about 2,000 families, the mission statement of the Annunciation Catholic church includes being a welcoming, multicultural parish that connects people with their faith. Their recent sponsorship of a Syrian refugee family set to arrive in Edmonton later this winter is just one example of the initiatives that Annunciation takes part in to help support families and our community. I was honoured to be a guest at their recent gala, held on October 21 at the Hotel MacDonald, to raise funds for this Syrian family of four. The decision to provide this support was very timely as 2016 was declared to be the Year of Mercy for the Catholic Church by Pope Francis.

Annunciation church serves the community in many ways, whether it's providing for those in need through their weekly emergency food bank, collaborating with other churches in the food for good gardening project, or providing community support to charitable organizations such as the Bissell Centre, the Marian Centre, and the Canadian Wheelchair Foundation. I have great respect and deep appreciation for the members of Annunciation and their commitment to bringing their values to life through acts of benevolence. Their dedication, compassion, and collective generosity to our community truly make it a better place.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

### **HomeFront Services for Domestic Violence Victims**

**Drever:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to the accomplishments and dedicated work of HomeFront, a not-for-profit organization in Calgary whose mission is to "create a safe community by eliminating domestic violence through direct client services, justice coordination and facilitated community action." For 16 years this Calgary-based agency has confronted the cycle of domestic violence in the home. HomeFront utilizes a unique model of integrated services that work alongside police, justice, child and family services, probation, treatment, and community agencies. This model has proven to be very successful and has gained attention across Canada and around the world.

Helping nearly 6,000 families a year, HomeFront can celebrate the fact that 83 per cent of families who receive their outreach intervention see an end to domestic violence in their homes, and 75 per cent of charged files are resolved in docket court, with only 25 per cent advancing to trial. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, HomeFront's approach to domestic violence saves lives and has consistently proven to be a valuable model of service that is necessary in helping break the cycle of family violence.

While crafting my private member's bill, Bill 204, Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act, 2015, HomeFront CEO Maggie MacKillop and Staff Sergeant Rob Davidson, head of the domestic conflict unit of the Calgary police department, were instrumental in bringing the voices of Albertans that were directly impacted by family violence to the legislation. I am greatly appreciative of their support and their efforts to curb the epidemic of family and domestic violence in this province.

Thank you.



### Racism

**Mr. Dang:** “Hey, white person.” “Tired of political correctness? Questioning when immigration will stop?” “Tired of antiwhite propaganda?” “It’s only racist when white people do it.” These messages were plastered across Edmonton for the world to see. These messages were what passed for public discourse. Mr. Speaker, a former MP and current PC leadership candidate stated: “Our national railways would not have been built if we had been governed by ‘social licence’ rather than rule of law.” These are racist statements. I have a fairly thick skin, but one of the messages that I’ve received on social media stung a bit more than the rest. It read loosely: grow a bleeping brain and some ethics, you dumb chink.

When we hear politicians talk about screening people for barbaric cultural practices and screening for anti-Canadian values, we all suffer. When we let ourselves forget that this hate and vitriol affects real people, we all suffer. We cannot sit idly by and comfort ourselves by saying that this is nothing more than a fringe minority. We cannot sit idly by and believe that we have nothing to be worried about. Because we should be worried, Mr. Speaker. We should be worried and know that this type of politics is not just coming to Alberta and Canada, that this kind of politics is already here.

Mr. Speaker, for all hon. members in this House, for every single Albertan who believes in equality: speak out, make noise, and make a difference. This can’t wait.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

### Judicial Appointments

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we received news that the inquiry committee of the Canadian Judicial Council made the recommendation to remove Justice Robin Camp from the federal bench. This develops from a tragic ongoing story that involves the sexual assault case of a 19-year-old woman who was subjected to language where Justice Camp repeatedly referred to her as “the accused” and asked, “Why couldn’t you just keep your knees together?” and “Why didn’t you just sink your bottom down into the basin so he couldn’t penetrate you?”

The inquiry determined that Justice Robin Camp demonstrated “antipathy towards laws designed to protect vulnerable witnesses, promote equality, and bring integrity to sexual assault trials” and “relied on discredited myths and stereotypes about women and victim-blaming.” Albertans must have confidence in the judicial system. The mere perception that sexual violence is excused or explained by blaming victims undermines a safe, free, democratic society and could further disempower victims from coming forward with these sorts of allegations.

I should know. This fall on the steps of my city hall in Fort Saskatchewan, as part of the White Ribbon Fort Saskatchewan campaign, I decided to share my own story of being raped, how I didn’t want to tell anyone for fear of judgment, slut shaming. Like many women, I believed it was my fault. I share this story in the House because the women in my home constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville need to know that they are not alone, that I believe you.

I stand with a government who gets it, who is increasing diversity in all areas of government, including the judicial bench, so that Albertans can see themselves in those that interpret and apply our laws and have confidence in them. Mr. Speaker, Albertans need to

know that our justices are qualified. I do not want to hear again a quote that says: my colleagues knew my knowledge of Canadian law was very minimal; it was nonexistent. Albertans need to know that our government is committed to supporting survivors and ending victim blaming or excusing it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent to waive section 7(7) to go past 3 o’clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

3:00

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Member for Cypress- Medicine Hat to table a letter that was sent to the Minister of Health. I have the requisite copies.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Calgary-West I’ve got five copies of a report from the *Red Deer Advocate* talking about how trial lawyers were concerned that the Phoenix program was going to be unfunded and shut down.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We’ve heard in this House recently some accusations of inaccessibility, and I’m happy to table a letter in this House – it’s from the *Strathmore Standard* – in which the mayor quotes about just how accessible and impressed he’s been with this government’s engagement, particularly on the issue of the hospital improvements in this riding that have been long awaited.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I’m rising today to table five copies of the letters sent out to all Members of the Alberta Legislative Assembly by the Credit Union Central Alberta, which I referred to in my Bill 32 speech on November 30, 2016. The letter notes that the Alberta government consulted with the credit unions and that the proposed changes to the Credit Union Act are keeping in line with what credit unions need to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of Alberta credit unions while providing further benefits to Albertans and the provincial economy.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague from Calgary-Foothills I table a letter from the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce that he referred to in the House this morning in the Bill 30 debate.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies to table of a letter sent to myself from the town of Vegreville by Mayor Myron Hayduk. It is a letter that just details a further request for advocacy on behalf of Vegreville and the immigration, refugee, citizenship case processing centre, asking the federal government to reverse their decision.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe we may be at points of order.

The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today. Given that it's Thursday afternoon and the first day of December, I felt a wave of the Christmas season come over, so I thought perhaps it would be best if I just withdrew the point of order.

**The Speaker:** On behalf of all members of the House season's greetings to you, sir.

**Mr. Cooper:** And a Merry Christmas to you, sir.

### Orders of the Day

#### Transmittal of Estimates

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, I have received a certain message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order!

**The Speaker:** The supplementary message is that the Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the Legislative Assembly for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on behalf of the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the 2016-17 supplementary supply estimates on behalf of the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. When supplementary estimates are tabled, section 4(5) of the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act requires that an update to the consolidated fiscal plan be tabled. The quarterly fiscal update tabled this past Monday provides the larger context for requests for additional spending authority from the general revenue fund.

Mr. Speaker, these supplementary supply estimates will provide additional funding for support to the Legislative Assembly for the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. When passed, the estimates will authorize an approximate increase of \$1.5 million in expense funding.

#### Government Motions

27. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2016-17 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

**The Speaker:** Are there any members who wish to speak to Motion 27?

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to what is a very important motion. I rarely have the opportunity to rise and say something nice about the government, but when I do, I think it's warranted. Oftentimes in this House we see supplementary supplies ranging in the hundreds of millions of...

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if I could interject just a second. We have copies of the motion that are being circulated.

**Mr. Cooper:** I would love to see it.

**The Speaker:** I'm corrected. They will stand.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Cooper:** I was just about to praise you and I almost stopped myself, but thank you.

Often we see this in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Today we see one for a significantly smaller sum. I know that the opposition has supported the use of these resources for the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I hope that the boundaries commission doesn't make any significant changes to the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills because my colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and I have agreed that we would arm-wrestle to see what happened after that, and we all know what will happen if it came to that.

I might just say that I look forward to safe passage of the supplementary supply estimates.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to Motion 27?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader to close debate?

[Government Motion 27 carried]

28. Mr. Bilous moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2016-17 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund for three hours on Monday, December 5, 2016, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

[Government Motion 28 carried]

3:10

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Third Reading

#### Bill 30

#### Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act

[Debate adjourned December 1: Mr. van Dijken speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to Bill 30, the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, I will continue from where I left off. This is the first policy that has received some positive feedback from economic development groups and chambers across the province although they are not pleased at the final result because there is confusion over how narrow the Alberta investor tax credit appears and who is eligible. But we need to create jobs. It's a very serious issue facing our province, and we need to try and generate growth, investment, and jobs. The Nisku industrial park, just south of Edmonton, the largest industrial park north of Texas, is looking like a ghost town these days.

The capital investment tax credit is meant for large capital investments, the kind that hopefully could bring some life and productivity to manufacturing areas like Nisku. I know that the minister hopes to encourage up to \$700 million of new investment in Alberta with this tax credit. The capital investment tax credit offers a 10 per cent nonrefundable tax credit of up to \$5 million to Alberta companies involved in manufacturing, processing, and tourism infrastructure on a minimum capital investment of \$1 million. That means that somewhere between 14 and 70 businesses will be assisted in creating jobs.

With a budget of \$70 million over two years, I can see this program becoming very popular and therefore oversubscribed. This is a concern moving forward as to who is going to be chosen to be able to qualify for this tax credit. Now, I know that an additional \$5

million is dedicated in the capital investment tax credit to Culture and Tourism to develop supports for Alberta's cultural industries. I will be watching very closely to see which cultural industries are funded. These are nonrefundable tax credits, not grants or loans or loan guarantees, and this, in my mind, is the next best way to help business over a major income tax cut.

Now, the Alberta investor tax credit is meant to bring investors and small businesses together. This is a 30 per cent tax credit for share investments made in small Alberta corporate businesses between April 14, 2016, and December 31, 2019. Again, I too can see this program, with a budget of \$90 million over three years, becoming oversubscribed.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that during Committee of the Whole we heard from a number of the members from the governing party that spoke with great excitement about the prospect of receiving a return of \$1.98 on every dollar refunded under this program. One thing we should take into consideration is that if the government truly believes in a tax credit program to drive investment, diversification, and growth in this province and if the 98-cent return is considered acceptable, why are we putting limits on the program? If the programs have been proven to generate growth, to generate diversification, and to generate investment and the return is acceptable, it would make sense to then expand the program and make it available to all those that would be willing to invest in the province of Alberta and in processing and manufacturing.

The maximum amount that can be raised by an eligible business is \$5 million directly through investors or \$10 million through Alberta venture capital corporations in every two-year period. The maximum tax credit for an individual other than a trust will be \$60,000 per year, meaning qualified investments of \$200,000 per year. The Alberta investor tax credit is available for investments in companies that are engaged substantially in proprietary technology research, development, or commercialization; interactive digital media development; video postproduction; digital animation; or tourism; or so says the minister's fact sheets.

Another government member has suggested that things like agrifood and agribusiness will also be included here. I would note that this is definitely a way where we have the opportunity with the renewable products that we produce in this province to gain, diversify, and value-add on those products and create even more growth and investment in the province, and this is a good thing. So to include agribusiness in this program would be very much advisable, I believe.

I can only hope that the minister knows what his government members are saying on his behalf because he rejected our attempt to confirm that all these sectors are covered. But he has assured us that it will be broad enough to include those key sectors, so we will hold him accountable to that.

With that understanding, Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this bill and trust that we will be able to measure the growth of the economy as a result of this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) of the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock?

Are there any other members who wish to speak to the motion? The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to raise just a couple of issues. I am in support of the bill generally, of course, because it does reduce taxes for Albertans, and that's always good. I guess I do just think that Albertans need to also realize, though, that there's a bit of sleight of hand here in some ways. Even the title of the bill, I guess, is a bit of a shift of understanding. We're calling this a bill to invest in a diversified Alberta economy.

We've heard the members across the way say a number of times that we shouldn't be relying on a one-market economy, as if this is a one-pony show in Alberta. I would suggest that they either don't understand the nature of Alberta's economy or that's a deliberate misrepresentation because the Alberta economy is, in fact, much, much more diversified now than it has been in our past. I would encourage the government members opposite to actually read the government's own report on that, the 2015 report on the economy, in which it's very clearly pointed out that, in fact, the oil and gas sector in 1985 was 36 per cent of our GDP. Listening to the government members, you would think that it's higher than that now or maybe, at the very least, only marginally lower.

The reality is that the oil and gas sector in Alberta now is no longer 36 per cent of our GDP, but in fact it is half of that. As a percentage of our GDP it has declined by 50 per cent. So to say that we are in an economy in Alberta that is overly reliant on one industry, that we have this one-market economy, that we need to diversify as if it has never been happening is absolutely not a clear statement. If any other sector of our economy were to decline by 50 per cent, we would be extremely alarmed. Here we're saying that now that oil and gas is only 18 per cent of our entire GDP, somehow we rely on a one-market economy, that we need to diversify, as if we haven't been, as if we aren't — there's just not a correct representation of the facts there.

The other areas that are strong — and I guess you could ask: "Where did the other 18 per cent of what used to be 36 per cent for oil and gas go? What is it?" Well, business and commercial has grown, finance and real estate has grown 15 per cent, and construction is 12 per cent. These are things that have grown tremendously, and to say that we are overly reliant on only one industry when we have several industries that are actually very close to it and it's only 18 per cent of the total is just simply a misrepresentation of reality.

3:20

I do understand, though, that if you have the goal to keep oil in the ground and you want policies that cap the oil sands and you want to tax everything in order to somehow change behaviour and suppress our best income, then it makes a nice storyline — don't ruin a good story with the facts — but it's just not a right representation.

The other part of this that I think is important is that these other growth industries will in fact contract if oil and gas declines even lower than the current 18 per cent that it is because, truthfully, it is the big wages of oil and gas that have supported the growth in those other industries. It's oil and gas that have provided the capital and the liquidity that have fostered the very diversification that we've been looking for.

Take the construction industry, for instance. I don't have detailed numbers, but if you took the growth caused by oil and gas out of construction, construction would not have grown as it has.

Finance and real estate. The same Alberta government 2015 economic report states very clearly that the reason the financial sector has grown in Alberta is because of the oil and gas investment. So if we are bound and determined to diversify oil and gas into nonexistence, then finance and real estate will suffer substantially and will go down, as the report indicates.

Same thing with business and commercial. Much of that has been driven by both the wages and the capital and the liquidity that oil and gas have provided.

Prior to the oil and gas boom in Alberta, Alberta, quite frankly, was a very poor province, and our growth in these other areas was very, very minimal. So to try and say that somehow we're a one-pony show in Alberta, that we haven't been diversifying and we're

not diversified I think is entirely a misrepresentation to the citizens of Alberta.

Another aspect of this is the implication that somehow we need to have investment in other industries in Alberta. I find that fascinating because we, in fact, have almost the highest per capita investment in this province already. The three highest areas in the country for investment are Newfoundland and Labrador, first of all; Alberta, second; and Saskatchewan, third. Now, where does that money come from? It comes from the oil and gas industry.

We can go ahead and diversify down to zero our oil and gas industry, and we will discover that we have extremely reduced per capita investment in our province. Are we now having to create some sort of artificial means of investing in our province? I think investment is great, but to give the implication that there's been no investment is entirely incorrect, again. The sector where Canada can compete in our world, where it is and was receiving great levels of investment, is exactly the one where we're trying to destroy here. Are we trying to incentivize non-profitable sectors? Is that what this is about? So often government programs to create business end up becoming ways in which smart business guys game the government and walk away with piles of money.

Every country has niche advantages. We need to take advantage of our niches. By the very money that we're depreciating now, we have been able to grow, to diversify, to expand in other areas. The truth is that oil and gas is the one that has helped us in these other areas, and now we have policies that impede our most successful wealth-creating industry in the nation, I would say, not just Alberta.

Some of you may be familiar with the StrengthsFinder book and inventory assessment of personal strengths. The point of that whole thing, that's been fairly popular over the last few years, is that you need to find out what your strengths are as an individual and focus on your strengths in order to succeed. Here I find that we are not focusing on our strengths; we're trying to focus on our weaknesses and somehow pull ourselves up by our bootstraps while we ignore our strength, our strongest industry. Canada's Olympic team concentrates on improving athletes' strengths, not trying to make them into something that they aren't. We need to improve our economic strengths, not withdraw from our best opportunities to succeed.

I support the bill, but I find a lot of it disingenuous, and the communication to Alberta I don't think is fair or realistic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments to the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have another opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 30 today. Overall, this bill has met many of our expectations in terms of economic stimulation. Investor and capital tax credits can be extremely effective tools when appropriately applied. Further, we are pleased and in fact thankful for the minister and his team's thoughtful consideration of our amendments and in particular his support of three of our motions for amendment, a rare and appreciated hat trick that we will savour but not become accustomed to. Our caucus always endeavours to offer productive solutions when the opportunity arises, as do our colleagues beside us as well, and I thank the minister for recognizing our constructive intent, supporting these three amendments, and embracing the spirit of developing the best possible legislation for all Albertans in as nonpartisan a way as possible.

While it has been mentioned time and time again during debate on this bill, we need to look no further than British Columbia to see

the positive impact investor tax credits can have on the government when they take a hands-off approach and allow the market to determine where capital and investment dollars will flow. This is perhaps an area where we could have been grateful for more consideration of a few more of our amendments, but, alas, we will not be greedy, if only on behalf of struggling Albertans who are desperate for capital and investment flow in the areas of creation of economic activity and jobs – a very desperate situation for us here in Alberta, indeed.

Our caucus's sentiments are such that we believe that if both of these programs were opened up with greater latitude and more clearly prescribed within the legislation, it would increase the effectiveness of the proposed tax credits and the potential for broader cross-industry uptake and hence an even greater diversification of investment and much-needed job creation.

I do appreciate the minister's best intentions in that he has noted that he will exercise the discretion afforded him within the bill to ensure the program is as successful as possible. We look forward to seeing that discretion in action as he addresses potential applicants from diverse sectors and across Alberta: urban, suburban, and rural. I am encouraged through his actions and collaborative spirit that the minister's heart is in the right place with this legislation, and I have no doubt he will work extremely hard to ensure private industry turns these tax credits into real economic growth and mortgage-paying jobs.

As much as we trust that the minister has the best intentions, we would have liked to see a more formal reporting structure within this bill. Accountability and transparency are key whenever hard-earned tax dollars are being spent, and we would have liked to see a formal public report published each year and presented to this Assembly to ensure the program is working as intended and that dollars are being allocated as efficiently and as effectively as possible.

The minister has committed to ongoing communications with this Legislature and with Albertans around the impact of this program, so we look forward to being kept apprised to provide further positive input from our caucus and to giving kudos as kudos may be due.

We intend to hold him to his word on transparency. It is not that we do not trust his or the government's best intentions on this legislation; it is just that disclosure and analysis of hard data allows for transparent and unbiased review and reflection for all of us in this House in search of the best possible outcomes.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would once again like to express our caucus's support for this bill. No, it's not perfect, and we would have liked to have seen a few more changes, a few more acceptances of some well-thought-out amendments, but this is a solid step in the right direction, and we appreciate and applaud the work by the minister and his hard-working staff on this legislation and the programs contained within it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other questions or comments to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek?

Seeing none, are there other members who would like to speak to the motion? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to rise in support of this legislation and thank the government for it. I'll try not to repeat too much of what my colleague just said, but I will say that this is important. As someone who made his living as an entrepreneur for over a decade before I first got elected, I know how much this might mean to a lot of businesspeople.

3:30

I'll say, Mr. Speaker, that one of the sayings that I and some of my friends who are also entrepreneurs used to have in the day is that everybody has the right to lose their life's savings in their own business, and I stand by that. But, of course, nobody goes into a business with the intention of losing their life's savings. They go into business with the intention to make the world better, to make a good living, to row their own boat, to set their own course, to maybe create something new that hasn't been created before. These are the aspirations that really make Alberta and Canada and the world better: people that put themselves out there at their own risk.

In many cases people that do that, of course, will put a mortgage on their very home, talk to their husband, their wife, or whomever they live with and agree to put the biggest asset that they have or a portion of it on the line to start that new business because sometimes you just need help. I will say that this bill that the government has brought forward may provide help for entrepreneurs to either get started or get to the next step. I want to thank the government for providing the one vehicle where that may well happen.

I think we really need to appreciate those people that go into business. My experience is that they're not greedy, they're not selfish. They're hard-working people. You know what? Lots of people go into business, Mr. Speaker, because they can't get a job, so they essentially buy themselves a job. They decide they're going to provide a service, whether it's a personal service in the construction business, sales and marketing business, whatever it happens to be. These are people making their way in the world, the same as people with jobs, only they have more on the line. In many cases, instead of having one boss, as people often do if they have a job, they have many bosses. Every one of their customers is their boss. If they have money borrowed from the bank, the banker is their boss. Even their suppliers are sometimes their boss because the suppliers can choose to supply them or not.

When you get to the point where some of these entrepreneurs have a chance to be successful with support from programs like this legislation puts in place, I'll be proud to sit down and vote for it in a few minutes, Mr. Speaker. I hope that the minister will be diligent in trying to make sure that the money gets to the right place to create success. I hope he is diligent in reviewing the legislation on a regular basis to make sure that it doesn't need to be improved or tweaked or upgraded or even cut back in some areas based on the experience that Albertan companies have. Based on the good work that the minister and his staff have done until now, I am prepared to give him that chance and wish him all the best and indeed Albertans all the best that involve themselves with the results of the legislation that we're talking about here today.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Hays?

Seeing and hearing none, are there any other members who wish to speak to the motion?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader to move closure.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll keep my comments fairly brief as I think we've had some fairly robust discussion on this bill in the House. What I want to indicate is how extremely proud I am of this piece of legislation, not just myself but also our government. It sounds as though we're going to have support from all parties in the House, which is fantastic.

I want to begin by thanking all of my cosponsors. These are government MLAs who have worked hard to provide not just

feedback and input as well but to bring together input and feedback from organizations, businesses, entrepreneurs that they've met with. I'll give a shout-out to the MLA for Edmonton-Centre, the MLA for Stony Plain, for Calgary-Glenmore, for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

As well, a very big thank you – I appreciate, you know, hearing members thank the ministry staff for all of their hard work on bringing together a program like this. It took an incredible number of hours. You know, I often say that Economic Development and Trade is the best ministry and has some of the best civil servants although I'm sure my colleagues would argue that each of their ministries, in fact, have the best. I know that they've worked very, very hard on this.

Last but not least, really the most important group to thank are the very people who helped us design this bill, which are the small-business owners, the entrepreneurs, industry leaders, chambers of commerce, venture capitalists, economic development associations across the province as well as municipalities that provided input. Again, you know, a very significant piece of legislation which I'm confident will help our small businesses grow. It will help build on our strengths.

You know, on the topic of diversification, those that have heard me speak around the province know that when I talk about diversification, I talk about building on our strengths, and Alberta has a significant number of strengths. Some of our industries outside of oil and gas may not have been given the attention that they deserve, and this bill will help them to grow.

We know that there have been significant supports in the past for certain segments of the oil and gas sector although I'm proud to say that this does apply to companies that are looking to innovative, creative solutions, new technologies that apply to the oil and gas sector. This fits hand in glove with our climate leadership plan and with the direction that our government is taking the province, to invest more in renewables and find innovative solutions to drive down our greenhouse gas emissions and really be the clean energy hub or clean energy producers of the world. This bill really embodies our government's commitment to supporting small businesses, to supporting entrepreneurs around the province and working with our industry leaders.

The last point I'll make: I appreciate that some members of the House have said that they thought the program should have more money. Others have talked about how maybe it's too much, how long the program is. I feel that this is a great start. I am going to be monitoring these two tax credits very carefully over the next couple of years, and again, if the program has as much success as we believe it will, then I will be championing a 2.0 in a couple of years from now and looking at either extending it or tweaking it or whatever we need to do.

I think this definitely will give Alberta and Alberta enterprises and entrepreneurs a real leg up. It will support them. I know industry and entrepreneurs are excited. So without further ado, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and be hopeful that we will pass this today, and then we can share this with Alberta businesses and get them back on their feet.

Thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 33

#### Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (No. 2)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Government House Leader I move second reading of Bill 33, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (No. 2).

Mr. Speaker, as I think all members of the Assembly know, miscellaneous statutes typically reflect provisions that are very straightforward and noncontentious. This bill has been circulated to the opposition parties, and I believe that there is consensus on all of the clauses of the bill. I would encourage all members to please give their support to Bill 33 and its provisions.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing that I love more than moving a few commas, punctuation, and just overall grammar, so I, too, was thrilled to review the clauses of the bill and, as the Deputy Government House Leader mentioned, did have the opportunity to review the bill prior. There certainly are no objections on behalf of this side of the House, so I look forward to a quick passage as well.

3:40

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, very briefly, without repeating every word the hon. official government House official, the Leader of the Official Opposition or the House leader of the Official Opposition said, I just want to say – I'm not sure what I just said, but thank you to the previous speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the government side for sharing this with us. When there's something that's in many cases housekeeping and other things overdue, long-term things that we all agree on, it's actually a nicer way to do business in a co-operative fashion. There. I've taken up enough time. I think I just said thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other members who would like to speak to second reading of Bill 33?

[Motion carried; Bill 33 read a second time]

#### **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

#### **Bill 33**

#### **Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (No. 2)**

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you. I'd like to continue my ongoing impassioned support for the bill.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to this bill?  
You're ready for the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 33 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.  
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Sweet:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 33.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur on the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.  
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing as information I've received recently is that roads in southern Alberta are actually not in very good shape and seeing as how we've had a very, very productive week with robust conversation, we want to ensure that all members of the Assembly get back to their homes and families safely. For those reasons, I move that we adjourn until Monday, December 5, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:46 p.m.]

## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to Thursday, December 1, 2016**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1 — Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading — 5 (*Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 685-91 (*Apr. 20, 2016 morn.*), 732-36 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft.*), 749-60 (*Apr. 21, 2016 aft.*), 825 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 987-95 (*May 18, 2016 morn.*), 1019-24 (*May 18, 2016 aft.*)

Third Reading — 1172 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1174-79 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cP-26.3 ]

### **Bill 2 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 96 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 162-67 (*Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 239-49 (*Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 251-59 (*Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1 ]

### **Bill 3 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 156 (*Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 157-62 (*Mar. 15, 2016 morn.*), 201 (*Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 239-49 (*Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 259-66 (*Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2 ]

### **Bill 4\* — An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading — 180 (*Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 285-88 (*Mar. 17, 2016 aft.*), 349-66 (*Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 378-84 (*Apr. 6, 2016 morn.*), 399-409 (*Apr. 6, 2016 aft.*), 415-28 (*Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 428-33 (*Apr. 7, 2016 morn.*), 450-55 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c10 ]

### **Bill 5 — Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading — 398 (*Apr. 6, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 455-56 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft.*), 491-505 (*Apr. 12, 2016 morn.*), 532-38 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 539-56 (*Apr. 13, 2016 morn.*), 570-77 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 577-83 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 cS-7.1 ]

### **Bill 6 — Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*), 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 519-27 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 527-32 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 583-85 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c13 ]

**Bill 7 — Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**

First Reading — 518 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 585-86 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft.*), 649-51 (*Apr. 19, 2016 morn.*), 682-84 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 820-24 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 902-903 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**

First Reading — 568 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 669-71 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft.*), 684 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 824-25 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 903-904 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c8 ]

**Bill 9 — An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**

First Reading — 568 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 640-49 (*Apr. 19, 2016 morn.*), 728-30 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 979-81 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1180-81 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c11 ]

**Bill 10 — Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 599 (*Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 671-82 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft.*), 691-703 (*Apr. 20, 2016 morn.*), 730-32 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 950-51 (*May 17, 2016 morn.*), 1041-49 (*May 19, 2016 morn.*), 1077-81 (*May 24, 2016 morn.*), 1103-13 (*May 24, 2016 aft.*), 1115-23 (*May 24, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1124 (*May 24, 2016 eve.*), 1197-99 (*May 26, 2016 morn.*), 1263-85 (*May 30, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c17 ]

**Bill 11 — Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016 (Bilous)**

First Reading — 773 (*May 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 907-908 (*May 12, 2016 aft.*), 971-79 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1012-18 (*May 18, 2016 aft.*), 1024 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1068-69 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c4 ]

**Bill 12 — Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Feehan)**

First Reading — 802 (*May 3, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 904-907 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 985-87 (*May 18, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1069 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c3 ]

**Bill 13 — Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016 (Gray)**

First Reading — 872 (*May 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 965-71 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1024-25 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1069 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c15 ]

**Bill 14 — Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**

First Reading — 872 (*May 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 983-85 (*May 18, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1076-77 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1077 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c9 ]



**Bill 15 — An Act to End Predatory Lending (McLean)**

First Reading — 901 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1062-67 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1153-57 (*May 25, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1172 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2016 cE-9.5 ]

**Bill 16\* — Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**

First Reading — 921 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1067-68 (*May 19, 2016 aft.*), 1071-75 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157-63 (*May 25, 2016 aft.*), 1197 (*May 26, 2016 morn., adjourned*), 1219-23 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1223-25 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c14 ]

**Bill 17 — Appropriation Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 950 (*May 17, 2016 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 995-1000 (*May 18, 2016 morn., adjourned*), 1025-29 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1031-41 (*May 19, 2016 morn.*), 1070 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1096-1103 (*May 24, 2016 aft.*), 1113 (*May 24, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c5 ]

**Bill 18 — An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring (Phillips)**

First Reading — 964-65 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1125-35 (*May 25, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1191-97 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1199-1205 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 30, 2016; SA 2016 c7 ]

**Bill 19 — Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1011 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1135-40 (*May 25, 2016 morn.*), 1153 (*May 25, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1171-72 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1173 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cR-8.5 ]

**Bill 20\* — Climate Leadership Implementation Act (\$) (Phillips)**

First Reading — 1095 (*May 24, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1163-70 (*May 25, 2016 aft.*), 1173-74 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1181-90 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1288-98 (*May 31, 2016 morn.*), 1311-21 (*May 31, 2016 aft.*), 1338-56 (*May 31, 2016 eve.*), 1357-72 (*Jun. 1, 2016 morn.*), 1405-07 (*Jun. 1, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1408-24 (*Jun. 1, 2016 eve.*), 1425-42 (*Jun. 2, 2016 morn.*), 1458-61 (*Jun. 2, 2016 aft.*), 1479-91 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft.*), 1493-1541 (*Jun. 6, 2016 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1541-43 (*Jun. 6, 2016 eve.*), 1545-57 (*Jun. 7, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c16 ]

**Bill 21\* — Modernized Municipal Government Act (Larivee)**

First Reading — 1310 (*May 31, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1583-96 (*Nov. 1, 2016 morn.*), 1624-28 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft.*), 1634-41 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1939-41 (*Nov. 22, 2016 aft.*), 2009-24 (*Nov. 24, 2016 morn.*), 2091-2100 (*Nov. 29, 2016 morn.*), 2192-2202 (*Nov. 30, 2016 aft.*), 2218-24 (*Nov. 30, 2016 eve., passed with amendments*)

**Bill 22 — An Act to Provide for the Repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Ceremonial Objects (Miranda)**

First Reading — 1219 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 23 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**

First Reading — 1454 (*Jun. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1478 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1478 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1479 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016; SA 2016 c18 ]

**Bill 24\* — Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016 (Carlier)**

First Reading — 1571-72 (*Oct. 31, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1609-24 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft.*), 1629-34 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1786-91 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft.*), 1797-1806 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1849-54 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn.*), 1915-22 (*Nov. 22, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 25 — Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act (Phillips)**

First Reading — 1606 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft., passed.*)

Second Reading — 1641-43 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn.*), 1677-89 (*Nov. 3, 2016 morn.*), 1703-13 (*Nov. 3, 2016 aft.*), 1754-61 (*Nov. 8, 2016 morn.*), 1776-86 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft.*), 1806-09 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn.*), 1826-35 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft.*), 1854-60 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn.*), 1971-77 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn.*), 1994-2006 (*Nov. 23, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2115-33 (*Nov. 29, 2016 aft.*), 2224-29 (*Nov. 30, 2016 eve.*), 2231-41 (*Dec. 1, 2016 morn., adjourned*)

**Bill 26 — Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act (Littlewood)**

First Reading — 1659 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1660-69 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1669-73 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1673-76 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

**Bill 27 — Renewable Electricity Act (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)**

First Reading — 1701 (*Nov. 3, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1747-54 (*Nov. 8, 2016 morn.*), 1835-42 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft.*), 1944-57 (*Nov. 22, 2016 aft.*), 2038-47 (*Nov. 24, 2016 aft.*), 2077-86 (*Nov. 28, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2086-90 (*Nov. 28, 2016 eve.*), 2135-55 (*Nov. 29, 2016 eve., adjourned, amendment introduced*)

**Bill 28 — Public Health Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**

First Reading — 1726 (*Nov. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1793-97 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1843-47 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1941-44 (*Nov. 22, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 29 — Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act (McLean)**

First Reading — 1774 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1823-25 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1847-48 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1959-60 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 30\* — Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act (\$) (Bilous)**

First Reading — 1774 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1873-81 (*Nov. 10, 2016 aft.*), 1922-26 (*Nov. 22, 2016 morn.*), 1992-94 (*Nov. 23, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2157-74 (*Nov. 30, 2016 morn.*), 2208-18 (*Nov. 30, 2016 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2241-47 (*Dec. 1, 2016 morn.*), 2262-65 (*Dec. 1, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 31 — Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1960-66 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1966-71 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 2007-09 (*Nov. 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 32 — Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1990 (*Nov. 23, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2203-06 (*Nov. 30, 2016 aft.*), 2207-08 (*Nov. 30, 2016 eve., passed*)

**Bill 33 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (No. 2) (Mason)**

First Reading — 2186 (*Nov. 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2265-66 (*Dec. 1, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2266 (*Dec. 1, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 34 — Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016 (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)**

First Reading — 2114 (*Nov. 29, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 35 — Fair Elections Financing Act (Gray)**

First Reading — 2060 (*Nov. 28, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 36 — An Act to Enhance Off-Highway Vehicle Safety (Mason)**

First Reading — 2060 (*Nov. 28, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2189-92 (*Nov. 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 201 — Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading — 92 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 119-32 (*Mar. 14, 2016 aft.*), 303-304 (*Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 202 — Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**

First Reading — 92 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 305-16 (*Apr. 4, 2016 aft.*), 470-73 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 203 — Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**

First Reading — 280 (*Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 473-83 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities*)

**Bill 204 — Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**

First Reading — 468 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 616-30 (*Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 205\* — Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 707 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 839-50 (*May 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 924-31 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 931-34 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2017; SA 2016 c12 ]

**Bill 206\* — Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (Goehring)**

First Reading — 902 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1241-49 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1249-55 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1255-57 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016; SA 2016 cP-19.7 ]

**Bill 207 — Veterinary Profession (Clear and Timely Price Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2016 (Cortes-Vargas)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 208 — Occupational Health and Safety (Protection from Workplace Harassment) Amendment Act, 2016 (Coolahan)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 209 — Active Schools Week Act (Shepherd)**

First Reading — 2060 (*Nov. 28, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill Pr1 — Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**

First Reading — 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1171 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1197 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1219 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 ]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, December 5, 2016

Day 57

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Government Whip  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
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Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
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Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
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Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
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Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
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Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

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Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
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Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
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McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)  
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Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
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Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
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Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
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Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk

Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House  
Services

Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and  
Legal Research Officer

Aurelia Nicholls, Sessional Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services

Nancy Robert, Research Officer

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*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms

Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, December 5, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us reflect or pray, each in our own way. On December 3 it was International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Let us take a moment in this Assembly to recognize the accomplishments and significant contributions of people with disabilities to this province. Their diligence, their courage, their perseverance ought to serve as a model for all of us on the need for recognition of all persons.

**Mr. Halvar De La Cluyse Jonson**  
August 14, 1941, to December 2, 2016

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute on our first day to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met. With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of the families who shared the burdens of public office and public service that we all understand.

Halvar De La Cluyse Jonson was with us from August 14, 1941, to December 2, 2016. Mr. Halvar Jonson was first elected as the Member for Ponoka in 1982 and was re-elected five additional times in the constituency of Ponoka-Rimbey, serving for a total of 22 years.

Over those years Mr. Jonson served as Deputy Chair of Committees from 1989 to 1992, Minister of Education from 1992 to 1996, Minister of Health from 1996 to 1999, minister of health and wellness from 1999 to 2000, minister of the environment from 2000 to 2001, and minister of international and intergovernmental relations from 2001 to 2004. In 2006 the brain injury ward of Alberta Hospital Ponoka was renamed the Halvar Jonson Centre for Brain Injury in his honour and for his long-standing community and public service.

Let us each take a moment of silence to reflect on Mr. Jonson as you may have known him.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark. I invite all participants to sing in the language of their choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with our collective admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of the families who shared the burdens of public office and public service. Today I would like to welcome on your behalf members of the Jonson family, who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your names and remain standing until all are introduced: Tamara Jonson Shepherd, daughter of Halvar Jonson; Trent Jonson, son of Mr. Jonson; and

the important people, grandchildren of Mr. Jonson, Solomon Shepherd, Cyrus Shepherd, and Sloane Shepherd. On our collective behalf thank you for your service to the province.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** I believe that you have a guest, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've got a couple of guest groups to introduce. The first that I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly are 15 hard-working Treasury Board and Finance staff members. These TBF staff join us from a variety of business areas and professional backgrounds. They keep everything running smoothly in my department. I cannot thank them enough for the work they have done and their expertise in getting the job done. I would ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, I may have jumped too quickly. Were there visitors or just guests today?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the public gallery we have 24 students, a teacher, and three parents from the nicest riding in Edmonton, Edmonton-Whitemud. The students are from Earl Buxton school. They're accompanied by their teacher, Laura Wenger, and their chaperones, Ruth Olson, Joel Gehman, and Maged Sabry. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Finance, you had additional guests?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. For the introduction of some special guests it's my pleasure to introduce to everyone a couple of groups of guests. They're the people accompanying them and then the actual guests they have with them. It looks like it's from a crosscultural background. Ms Shelly, Mr. Rob, Ms Andrea, Miss Belinda, Miss Stephanie, Mrs. Inna are the chaperones; and then Karina, Kimberley, Danielle, Sarah, Lois, Jessica, Lan, Travis, Darlene, Christine, and John. If they'd all stand up, we'll give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

1:40

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly five guests from Canadians for a Civil Society who are visiting the Legislature today in recognition of Human Rights Day. First of all, Dr. Kristopher Wells, who is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Education and faculty director for the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta; Doug Stollery, who is the chancellor of the University of Alberta and is currently serving as a member of the legal team challenging certain discriminatory criminal laws in Jamaica; Dr. Mona Nashman-Smith, who is the principal and CEO at the Edmonton Islamic Academy and who led the development of the Global Women's Leadership Forum and through her work in international education received the most excellent order of the British Empire from Queen Elizabeth II; Judge Robert Philp, QC, who is the chief commissioner of the Alberta Human Rights Commission; and Charan Khehra, who is a director for Canadians for a Civil Society and the proud cofounder of Daughters Day, which celebrates the lives and achievements of all women. I see they have all risen, and I would

ask that they receive the warm welcome of this Legislative Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you a group of medical students who are here from both the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary. This morning I had the pleasure of meeting with Amy Li, Kieran Steer, and Adom Bondzi-Simpson. They are all going to be fantastic doctors one day. Just for your information, since 2009 students from the faculties of medicine at the U of A and U of C have held annual advocacy days here at the Legislature. Today the primary topic that we spoke about was their hopes for greater integration and intervention of mental health supports in primary care through complementary health practitioners, including psychologists. These leaders make me very excited about the future of our physician workforce. I ask that Amy, Kieran, Adom, and the nine colleagues that they're here with today please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. I believe they're behind me.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll complement those that the minister has introduced. This is Alberta medical student political action day. Even the medical school has learned about advocacy.

It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you some remarkable medical students from the universities of Calgary and Alberta, talking with MLAs in support of the Alberta medical students action day and focusing on the need for greater intervention and primary care as well as addictions support and the need for stronger curriculum in medical school to enable family doctors to take on some of these challenging cases. I can only hope that their efforts are as successful as last year, when they were here to advocate for improved vaccination rates, Mr. Speaker.

With us today are Sina Marzoughi, Joshua Nash, Kieran Steer, and Amy Li. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane. I believe you have some brief introductions.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Stephen Legault. As program director of Crown, Alberta and Northwest Territories and founding member of the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative Stephen has advanced protections for some of the most ecologically important mountain landscapes in North America, including the Castle watershed. Stephen and Y2Y are valued partners in our government's work to conserve wild spaces and were instrumental in helping me craft Motion 511, regarding managing and conserving public lands to ensure Alberta's water future is secure. I'd like to ask Mr. Legault to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, there is a long list of guests that I have here today. I'm going to encourage brevity.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of individuals from an organization called *Diversity* magazine. Joining us here in the gallery today are Frankline Agbor, Gisèle Ndoungo, Albert Fernando, Jud Dudley, Mary Thomas, Ibraheem Kolawole, and Monika Siepietowska. *Diversity* magazine was the fantastic idea of Frankline Agbor in December 2014. The purpose of the publication is to highlight inspiring activities of various ethnic communities in Edmonton, of which Edmonton-Decore has many. I would like my guests to please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Cynthia Lazarenko and Beryl Scott. Cynthia is a former social worker and a strong advocate for the rights of seniors. Beryl is a retired registered nurse with 40 plus years of service and a vice-president of the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation. I would ask that my guests rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three sets of introductions today, but I will be efficient. First, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Barb Burgemeister, who is here today from Hanna. She is receiving the 2016 Stars of Alberta award. She will be one of six recipients of this award this year for her work at the Hanna Food Bank and the Center Street Thrift Store as well as the community garden. Through you I extend the congratulations of this entire House to her and ask that she receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you today Charlotte Preston and Richard Preston along with their grandchildren Chance Scott and Colby Scott. They hail from the Hanna area. If you ever meet anybody from Hanna, just ask if they know the Prestons. I assure you that they will. Richard is currently a councillor in Hanna and was a long-time employee of Sheerness power. Colby and Chance are great hockey players and have excellent 4-H projects that I always enjoy seeing when they send me pictures. I ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Last, Mr. Speaker, with the Preston family is Charlene Preston, who is my senior constituency assistant in the great riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. She used to work for the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler until she was stolen by the former Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I'm happy to say that right after the election in 2015 I managed to convince her that Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is the greatest place in Alberta to live. I would ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three local community advocates: Leo Campos-Aldunez, an adult educator, community animator, and media consultant who provides leadership and support to nonprofit organizations; Paula

Kirman, who is well known for both her photography and her work in human rights, reconciliation, and peace with the Edmonton Coalition against War and Racism and the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action; and Brenda Requier, who was diagnosed with MS 23 years ago and has been a strong advocate for the health care needs of persons with multiple sclerosis. I would ask that all three guests rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Government House Leader with a request for unanimous consent? I have a list of other guests.

**Mr. Mason:** You read my mind, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Colleen Ring and Curt Clement. Colleen is a long-time social justice and peace advocate, and in 1995 she introduced the Random Acts of Kindness Week initiative to Canada. Curt is a vice-president with KPMG, and he supports various community organizations and serves on the board of directors of the YMCA of Northern Alberta. I would ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions to make. First, I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Paul Finkleman. Paul is the only Calgary recipient of this year's 2016 Stars of Alberta award. Paul has been active for decades as a volunteer, from organizing Calgary's first Earth Day activities as a high school student in the '70s to being the president of the Weaselhead preservation society. I would ask that Paul please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we mark Human Rights Day, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you some extraordinary members of Canadians for a Civil Society. I'll ask that they rise as I say their names. Ruby Littlechild is a strong advocate for indigenous inclusion in the economy and empowerment of women. Amrita Gill is an educator in the area of immigration and settlement and played a key role in co-ordinating the 2015 Daughters Day. Carrie-Lynn Rusznak is vice-president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and chair of the Human Rights Committee. She is a strong advocate for human rights and increased participation of women. I'd ask that everyone please extend the warm welcome of the House.

1:50

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

My apologies, Member for Calgary-Glenmore. I believe you had some other introductions.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Dr. Amrita

Mishra and Vasant Chotai. Dr. Mishra is a sociologist by training and public policy analyst by vocation and is currently a project director at the Indo-Canadian Women's Association. Vasant is the vice-president of Canadians for a Civil Society and a director of Public Interest Alberta. I would now ask if my guests could rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Renée Vaugois, the executive director of the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights. She is also the president of Alberta Hate Crimes Committee and a director for Women in International Security Canada. She has spearheaded many initiatives to strengthen community-based human rights advocacy and systemic change, including a coalition of individuals and organizations under the banner of racism free Edmonton. I ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming Ms Renée Vaugois here in the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Environment and Parks and the climate change office.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the executive director of CPAWS, northern Alberta, Alison Ronson, and 60 grade 3 students from Elmwood elementary school and their three teachers and several parent chaperones. These students have been studying wildlife, and they joined us today to present a postcard campaign asking the government to continue their work preserving caribou herds. Minister Eggen and I were happy to see their hard work earlier today. Please extend to these special guests the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly, and I'll ask them to rise.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly advocates and family members of the residents of the Good Samaritan Mountain View Centre in Hinton. They are here today in support of long-term care spaces in Hinton. Please rise and remain standing as I call out your names: Lynda Jonson, Ron Jonson, Jim Chell, Marilyn Carling, and Brendalee Raketti. Can you please join me in welcoming my guests so that they receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests for introduction today? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Sandra Azocar, executive director of Friends of Medicare, and Joel French, executive director of Public Interest Alberta. They've been working with bloodwatch.org to support the voluntary blood and plasma system in Alberta and across Canada. Can the Legislature please provide them with the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In honour of Human Rights Day I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all

members of the House Dr. Shyamala Nagendran. Dr. Nagendran is a professor specializing in computing sciences in informatics on medical education. She passionately supports women's education and is a mentor to many. She serves on the boards of the YMCA of Northern Alberta, Visions Global Empowerment, and Lifelong Learners Association. On top of this, she is the founder of Natya-Size Fitness/Wellness Club, the club's focus being holistic health and wellness. Dr. Nagendran is seated in the public gallery, and I see that she's standing, and I ask now that she receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### Child Protective Services Review

**Mr. Jean:** Children in care in Alberta are being very badly served by this government. For weeks we have been asking questions, and we get platitudes but no real answers. Now the NDP has announced an all-party committee. I will remind everyone that the previous PC minister struck a special panel to review these same matters, and they reported back in the spring of 2015. It appears nothing at all has changed under this government. Will the minister commit today that he will appear before the all-party committee and actually give answers to questions on what has changed since Serenity's death?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the important question. I recognize that it's a very important issue for all members of this House and all Albertans, and the Premier has asked me to move forward with a committee with members from all sides of the House. We are working on the terms of reference, and I will have more to share within a matter of days. We will work with everyone to make sure that we get this right.

**Mr. Jean:** Every piece of information we have suggests that what happened to Serenity broke all sorts of Human Services' policies and rules. We know kids in care are supposed to get a visit every single quarter. But, outrageously, indigenous children are more than one and a half times as likely to have gaps of seven months or more between face-to-face contact with their caseworkers. In Serenity's case it was 11 months of negligence that led to her death. Will the Premier commit that Human Services' executives, managers, and caseworkers will appear before the committee to explain how things went so tragically wrong?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the important question. I share the devastation that all Albertans are feeling on this issue. Once we have the committee, we will make sure that we look into all aspects of intervention and make sure that we put enough safeguards in place so that we can avoid similar incidents happening in the future. It will be a thorough look at the intervention system in the case before us.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jean:** This issue matters to Albertans, and it used to matter to the NDP, but now when we ask the minister what has improved, we get no actual answers, and we get the indigenous affairs minister ranting about right wingers as if he hasn't been part of the government for over 19 months. If things need to be changed, the minister

needs to change them. That's his job. Will the Premier guarantee that any and all front-line workers or managers in children's services that want to speak to the all-party committee will be given full whistle-blower protection at the committee?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We take this matter incredibly seriously. That's one of the reasons why we've implemented a number of efforts to make sure that not only do we protect the children who are in care, but we provide supports to families to enable them to care for their own children in the safest way possible. We are going to continue to work with members of all parties in this House to make sure that we get this right. This is a matter far more significant than political games or partisan attacks, and that's why we're working with all parties, to make sure we can move forward collaboratively.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

**Mr. Jean:** Political games, Mr. Speaker? This was disclosed by a reporter because nobody came clean with the facts.

#### Prescription Drug Coverage for Rare Diseases

**Mr. Jean:** In early November I asked the Premier questions related to drug coverage for an Alberta teen, Haley Chisholm, who suffers from a very rare kidney disease. At the time the Premier committed that she would have the minister look into the matter and get back to me with respect to the particulars. It's been over a month, and Haley continues to wait for answers about receiving funding. To the Premier: what is the answer for Haley about this drug, that would improve Haley's quality of life and potentially extend it?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. In terms of this specific case we respect the privacy of individuals, and I will not be discussing specific medical conditions in this House. But I can assure all members that this matter is one that is in the best hands of medical professionals. Doctors and other qualified health professionals should be making questions and determinations about the best mode of treatment, not political individuals. That's why we're making sure that medical professionals have the ability to make the best determinations when it comes to medical conditions.

**Mr. Jean:** The Premier previously stated: "Our regulations are designed so that health care professionals are making decisions about what is in the best health outcome for people." That's not the case for Haley, who continues to see her quality of life decline. Now, speaking of medical professionals, Haley's doctor has clearly stated that this drug is the best course of treatment for Haley's extreme, rare kidney disease. Will the Premier commit to following the advice of the health professional who knows Haley's case best and fund this drug?

2:00

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, my heart goes out to Haley and her family at this very difficult time, as it does to other Albertans who are hoping to have opportunities to access potential treatments that may be of benefit to them. There is a very special panel that is set up to determine the best medical course when it comes to these types of special applications. I commend the physician for doing what he believes is in the best interest, and I respect the panels, that are full of health professionals, to make the best determination when it comes to moving forward.



**Mr. Jean:** The current regulations that surround the short-term exceptional drug treatment program have meant nothing but roadblocks for Haley's family. The Chisholms chose to come forward, and I'm very thankful that they did because they shone light on this program and the shortcomings of the program as it currently stands. I sincerely hope that Haley will receive the funding that she needs for this drug. But what about other families like the Chisholms, who have met so many obstacles in the system and continue to meet those obstacles? Will the Premier commit to reviewing the exceptional drug treatment program regulations? Yes or no?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I stand by the fact that medical professionals, not politicians, are in the best position to be able to make determinations about how to move forward. This is a very sensitive case, as are the others that have been referred to in this question. It's important that we give support to our medical professionals when determining the best course of action rather than trying to make political attacks. I know that I'm not in the best position to be able to make a determination, and it's important to make sure that doctors have the ability along with other health professionals to make the best course-of-care decisions. I feel for Haley and for all others who are in this position, and I trust our physician community to make the best determinations.

**The Speaker:** Third main question.

#### Electricity Costs

**Mr. Jean:** Seven billion dollars: is that the final price tag for incompetent NDP policies on our electricity grid? Let's see. The cost to kill coal jobs, \$1.4 billion; subsidies for new power, up to \$8 billion; raising taxes and forcing losses in the Balancing Pool, add another billion dollars. What does this mean for the average Alberta household? Well, higher power bills and higher taxes to pay for subsidies and a stunning amount of government borrowing. Will the Premier confirm how many billions of dollars taxpayers will be on the hook for, or has she simply not done her homework?

**Ms Hoffman:** What I will confirm is that the Official Opposition is lobbying for a 900 per cent increase, potentially, to power bills for Alberta consumers. [interjections] That certainly is not in the best interests of Albertans, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I'm incredibly proud of the work that our department and our lead minister have done on making sure that we can have stable, predictable, reliable, and as affordable as possible electricity for Albertans. [interjections] I won't back down from standing up for ordinary Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I just want to remind you that this is the season of festive celebrations and that we want to be kind to each other. So please remember that. Think of that Christmas tree.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's also a place where the NDP make the rules and make the laws that add these taxes to Albertans. First, the NDP raised taxes. Those tax increases caused massive losses for power companies. These companies used the law and gave their contracts back to the Balancing Pool. The Balancing Pool is now losing hundreds of millions of dollars directly because of an incredible level of incompetence from this government. Now the government wants to give themselves a blank cheque to cover their losses. That's at least \$500 million today and will lead to higher power costs for Albertans for the next decade. Will the Premier admit, finally, that she's made a mistake . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The member may not be aware, but there is a plan to move a phase-out of coal across Canada. Instead of standing by and saying, "Ottawa, you solve our problems for us," we have a government that isn't afraid to tackle difficult issues. We're moving forward with leadership, and – guess what? – being good leaders is not only good for us at home, but it's good for us in terms of getting our products to tidewater. Last week there were two pipelines approved, and it's been made very clear that that wouldn't have happened if it weren't for the climate leadership of this government.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, unemployment is at 9 per cent; 74,000 full-time jobs vanished in the past year under this government and their policies. But the NDP continues a lawsuit against Enmax that could lead to 4 per cent property tax increases to Calgarians. They are asking taxpayers to fork over \$7 billion for changes and experiments, NDP experiments, in our electricity grid. To top it off, the carbon tax comes into effect in just 26 days. How can the NDP justify asking Albertans at this time to pay \$2,500 a year to help fund the NDP's multibillion-dollar boondoggle?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member's questions are all over the place today, and I'll tell you where he was on Saturday. He was leading a rally that called for the personal and private information of Albertans to be hacked into – that's not leadership – and also for our Premier, who's working today to address very valid concerns with regard to our access to tidewater, to be locked up. That's shameful, and I really wish the Leader of the Official Opposition would do more justice to Albertans in standing up for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

#### Child Protective Services Review

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This House did valuable work on November 21 when it held an emergency debate to discuss the deaths of children in care. The appalling death of four-year-old Serenity brings all members together to encourage a lasting solution to these tragedies. I would thank the government for accepting my recommendation to establish the all-member committee. To the Human Services minister: will you make sure that the committee's terms of reference have a broad scope of authority so it's able to root out systemic problems with the child intervention system?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I would begin by thanking the member for bringing up that suggestion. That's certainly a very heartbreaking issue, and all Albertans share that devastation. I'm deeply concerned about this issue. I will make sure that when we set up the committee, it looks into all aspects surrounding this case so that we can have enough safeguards in place that we can avoid similar incidents happening in the future. We are absolutely committed to making sure that children get the support . . .

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the yes.

The relentless work of the Child and Youth Advocate in investigating deaths of children in care has prompted, amongst other things, the formation of this committee. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank Mr. Graff and his staff for the valuable work, which, undoubtedly, takes a personal toll. The involvement of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate will be critical in the committee's review of the child intervention system. To the minister: will the committee have the ability to invite expert witnesses, including Mr. Graff, to get the best information possible to make the best decisions for children?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Again I can assure the House and all Albertans that this issue is the most concerning one. It's a priority for our government and it's a priority for me that we get this right, so I will make sure that we have the committee set up in a way that can work and that can identify opportunities that we can provide to our children going forward and make sure that similar incidents don't happen.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like two yeses, so we'll continue.

The Standing Committee on Legislative Offices is in the midst now of reviewing the Child and Youth Advocate Act, with oral presentations beginning in mid-January. As the standing committee is looking at updating the four-year-old act, its review offers a window of opportunity for the minister's committee in case it has changes to recommend to that act. In the spirit of timeliness, Minister, do you foresee this committee meeting in the next month so that its work can coincide with the standing committee's review of the Child and Youth Advocate Act and add to it if possible?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. The standing committee is an all-party committee, and they set their own schedule, but I will make sure that whatever work the committee I establish does, it doesn't replicate the work of other committees and other initiatives across the GOA so that instead of replicating, we are learning from past reviews what's available and making sure that we get that done in a timely manner so that we have changes that we can implement as soon as possible.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Mountain View

### Addiction and Mental Health Strategy

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In June of 2015, shortly after taking office, the Premier announced a review of mental health and addictions here in Alberta. She recognized that the current system was not good enough and announced that her government would act on the matter. The committee reported the Valuing Mental Health report one year ago. Hundreds of front-line workers and families who participated and continue to participate and offer input are still waiting for an update on the 26 remaining recommendations to fix our inconsistent and fragmented mental health and addictions system. To the associate minister: what progress has been made beyond the six initiatives?

2:10

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would thank the member not just for his question but for his tireless advocacy on this issue as well as his service on the review committee. Our government recognizes that mental health and addiction treatment are a priority not just for Health but across ministries and within the community as well. We've been working very closely with community leaders and service agencies on the implementation of the report, and we'll have more to report in the coming weeks.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's been almost 12 months. I think we're expecting more timely reporting.

Given that the panel itself identified primary care and primary care network reform as essential for these health providers in order for them to play a stronger role in addiction and mental health, what reforms have occurred in primary care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his question. The role of the primary care networks and primary health more broadly within our health system is a very critical one, and we've been working very closely with the PCN leads not just around how we're incorporating mental health services but also how we can include interdisciplinary teams throughout the system and throughout our province so that Albertans know that they are getting the best quality care that they can and so that we're able to make the best use of the resources available.

**Dr. Swann:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we're looking for progress. Can the minister provide evidence of progress? Given that the opioid crisis continues unabated, now over one death per day in Alberta, and a wide range of professionals need to know how this crisis is changing, when will we see public reporting monthly to assess ER wait times, ER visits, wait times for treatments, naloxone use, and deaths so we can assess whether things are getting worse or better?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. This is data that our department is tracking through the chief medical officer of health. I'm pleased to update the House that as of October 31 over 7,200 naloxone kits have been distributed to Albertans through nearly 900 registered sites, which include local pharmacies and university campuses. We know that because of this we are seeing a decline so far in the number of overdoses but also that patients are able to access life-saving medical interventions because that naloxone dose is able to reverse . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

### Public Transit in Calgary and Area

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's widely known that investment in transit helps to create jobs, protects the environment, and gives additional options in mobility to the public. I know that many Albertans and residents in Calgary-Northern Hills currently struggle to find efficient public transit options in their communities, whether smaller towns or north-central Calgary. Can the Minister of Transportation tell us what investments the government is making in public transit?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you for that question, hon. member. I'm very pleased to say that this weekend I announced nearly \$250 million in provincial support for public transit in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, from Medicine Hat to Fort McMurray. Thanks to the partnership and collaboration of all orders of government the announcement included more than \$500 million total for transit projects in our province. Transit is increasingly becoming the way that people can get to work, can get to appointments, can visit their family in an affordable and environmentally responsible way. We're glad to support it.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Kleinstaubert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that enhanced public transit can help municipalities with land-use planning by easing pressure to continually expand road networks and parking lots, which is especially important to growing urban areas, to the same minister: how is the government investing in transit in Calgary to support efficient transit-oriented urban planning?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the provincial funding for transit announced this past weekend includes more than \$147 million for the city of Calgary. I'm very proud of that. These public transportation investments will stimulate economic growth, transit-oriented development, and an environment for innovation like electric vehicle technology. Our government is committed to major infrastructure spending to meet the needs of all Albertans and Calgarians as well, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Kleinstaubert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Calgary region has long been an economic centre in western Canada and given that Airdrie is a rapidly growing part of that future, again to the same minister: how is the government investing in transit in that community?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much for that question, Mr. Speaker. This member is on the ball. On Saturday we announced that Airdrie will see new transit investment of more than \$9 million, and more than \$6 million of that will be from our government. This will support design work for construction of a north transit terminal, which is expected to include an off-street platform for customers, parking for up to 200 vehicles, and amenities such as heated shelters and on-site security cameras. We'll also support a new mobile fare payment system and an integrated transit system alert. Airdrie is on our map.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Such enthusiasm.

### Provincial Borrowing

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** In June 2015 the government repealed Alberta's already weak debt control legislation with a cap of 10 per cent on GDP, allowing the government to once again borrow for operations. Just months later they repealed their very own legislation, leaving no limit whatsoever on their ability to borrow. Now the government intends to borrow money to fund their incompetent management of the electricity Balancing Pool. We are literally borrowing to keep the lights on. Will the minister tell us how much additional debt the government will accrue for their electricity debacle?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With regard to borrowing, I want to say that the amount of debt that we're going to be taking on I think I tabled with the fiscal plan. It's about 10 per cent debt to GDP by the end of this fiscal plan – that's where we'll be – which is the lowest of any province in this country. The second lowest is Saskatchewan. They're behind us. We are the lowest, and that's what we'll be keeping with, the fiscal plan that we tabled.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Not answering the question, as usual.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that the original \$30-a-tonne carbon tax was going to cost taxpayers \$3 billion, with the funds going to the green slush fund, the government is now increasing the tax to \$50 a tonne, costing taxpayers \$5 billion. Last week we asked the minister if he had a plan to balance the budget before his 95th birthday. His only response was to accuse the opposition of wanting to throw children out onto the street, and still he didn't answer the question as to how we'd balance the budget. So I'll ask a simple question: does the government intend to put any of the carbon tax revenue against the deficit?

**Mr. Ceci:** We've been extremely clear with that. We are not using any of those monies. You know, the monies that the carbon levy will bring in are going to be going back into the pockets of Albertans through a rebate, they're going back to Albertans with innovation across this province, and they're going back to companies, who will become more efficient. Agencies, nonprofits, everybody will use that money. It's not going to the deficit.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** They're going to use the money to stuff the pockets of corporate slush funds, Mr. Speaker.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that the government is borrowing \$14 billion a year right now with no plan to stop, the revenue from the expanding carbon tax must look awfully appetizing to the minister right about now. This is concerning because the government has said that its \$3 billion carbon tax was never a ceiling. Albertans want to know: is the new \$5 billion carbon tax a hard ceiling, a soft ceiling, or a trampoline?

**Mr. Ceci:** I just want to reiterate for everyone that the carbon levy monies will not be going against the deficit. It will not go to pay off the debt. It is going to diversify this economy, something that that side is not focused on. They're focused on boom and bust. They're focused on backward-looking policies. They're not focused on the future like we are. They're focused on everything that Albertans don't want.

2:20

### Electricity Costs (continued)

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as Albertans are merrily turning on Christmas lights for their last carbon tax free holiday season, many are wondering just how much more power will cost once they finish singing *Auld Lang Syne*. The government has unleashed a veritable blizzard of power-related announcements in recent days, and Albertans are wondering just what size of shovel they will need to dig out from the avalanche of increased NDP costs. To the Energy minister: including loans to the Balancing Pool and subsidies to renewable energy generators, what is your best estimate of the additional cost of implementing all facets of the NDP power plan?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there is no carbon levy on electricity. What there is, however, is a series of rebates to lower and middle-income folks for their use of

transportation fuels and heating fuels and a variety of programs that Albertans can avail themselves of – some \$650 million worth of efficiency programs – that will apply to reducing transportation fuel use, heating fuel in homes, and electricity use. In addition, the renewables contracts will be dealt with through a competitive procurement process.

Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that there are many contributors to the overall price tag and given that this complicates the exact amount that Alberta taxpayers will end up shelling out, to the Energy minister. Let's just look at one phase of the cost. Given that considerable subsidies will be required to bring the increase to the 30 per cent target for renewable energy set by this government, what is the government's best estimate of the total cost of subsidies for renewables between now and 2030?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are undertaking a competitive auction process as recommended by the Alberta Electric System Operator. We are in the middle of that process right now. What we do know is that renewables are now competitive with natural gas. However, they do have different economics to them. With natural gas coming on, we'll be looking at the capacity market, as the minister explained to the public a couple of weeks ago, and for the renewables we will do a contract-for-differences model because we know that this is the lowest cost procurement for both types of power.

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans would like to know what the cost is. Given that this NDP government is trying to encourage new renewable energy production, which we support, and given that Alberta already has over 10 per cent of its existing generation from renewable sources, including wind and solar, and given that the government has yet to indicate to existing generators of renewable energy as to whether existing infrastructure will be eligible for subsidies, to the Energy minister: can you clarify? Will companies who already have existing renewable generation infrastructure be eligible for subsidies on both existing as well as newly constructed renewable infrastructure?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As for overall costs, whether it's the rebates, the investments in efficiency infrastructure, renewables, or technology, those were contained within the budget that we passed earlier this year. As for existing renewables, that is part of the conversation with the capacity market and part of the consultations that the minister announced for the 30 per cent goal. That competitive procurement process and that contract-for-differences model apply to new generation.

Thank you.

### **Municipal Tax Maximum Ratio**

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, the Legislature has been debating Bill 21 and last week passed it at Committee of the Whole. Currently Bill 21 is clear. Certain municipalities that exceed the new 5 to 1 tax ratio can continue to exceed that ratio until such time as the municipality may decide to lower it. But then last week a new government discussion guide indicated that all municipalities may now be expected to conform to the new 5 to 1 ratio at some unspecified time. To the minister: if this change was under consideration, why was it not included in the government's amendment to Bill 21?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm incredibly proud of the fact that the discussion around Bill 21 has been incredibly open and transparent, and we will continue that. The fact that concerns came up during the consultation that perhaps we needed to have a conversation around gradually bringing the outliers into compliance: that conversation needed to happen with all the people affected by that. Rather than putting something into the legislation based on that conversation, without talking to everyone, we put it in the discussion guide so we can continue to have conversations about what the best interest of Alberta is going forward.

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, given that the uncertainty the government has now created by reconsidering the grandfathering clause around the 5 to 1 ratio is creating concern in those communities that are exceeding it and given that the residents of Fort McMurray that have suffered unprecedented devastation from this summer's wild-fire are now being faced with the prospect that their property taxes will make their living situation completely untenable, to the minister: what are you doing to ensure that the residents of Fort McMurray and the other nonconforming municipalities do not receive a devastating property tax increase in the near future as a result of this uncertainty?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, the importance of consultation on this issue cannot be overemphasized. We will work with the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo to help them achieve the ratio in a way that is reasonable and responsible. Currently there is no timeframe in the legislation as to when municipalities would have to comply. We're looking forward to hearing the feedback from Wood Buffalo residents and all Albertans on the tax ratio ratio. I promised the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo that I would stand with them after the fire, and I have not stepped back from them. I was with them then, I'm with them now, and I will be in the future.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, Mr. Speaker, despite what we just heard, given that the 19 municipalities and their residents that currently exceed the 5 to 1 ratio thought they had a commitment from the government that would see their property taxes remain affordable over the long term and given that now these same communities are discovering that all is not what it appears and that the government is considering imposing the 5 to 1 ratio on municipalities even before it's completely passed Bill 21, to the minister: is this a fair way to treat our municipal partners, or is it just current government practice?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the idea that somehow this was a big surprise: this came up, there were many questions across many of the sessions across the province, and it was my responsibility to take that feedback, that came from multiple sources, and to engage with the people of Alberta on this issue. We will work with all of those communities. We look forward to hearing the feedback from those municipalities and all Albertans on the linked tax ratio from our discussion guide that we released last month.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the work I do in engaging with municipalities, and I look forward to the conversations we'll have to come forward with a reasonable, responsible way to move forward for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### Health Care in Central Alberta

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Sylvan Lake urgent care centre issue, which is a community priority and a common-sense, cost-saving measure, is still waiting for a public commitment from the Minister of Health. The government has had the final proposal on urgent care for Sylvan Lake since September 30. We've been made aware of some voice mode indications that the government may be moving forward on this, but my constituents would like a firm answer. To the Minister of Health. The good folks of Sylvan Lake are waiting for an answer on urgent care. Can the minister confirm for us today that she has approved their proposal?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the fact that I'm speaking with the community, and we continue to work in partnership. After some productive meetings over the summer we were pleased to see Alberta Health Services participate in a local joint task force with community leaders and health care providers on: what are the needs for the Sylvan Lake area? We received that feedback at the end of September. We've asked AHS to look into how they can best deliver after-hours care and the community's needs to be addressed as we move forward in partnership. I look forward to continuing to have ongoing dialogue with the community as we roll out next steps.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, Minister, summer is coming, and Sylvan Lakers and the tourists that enjoy it as their summertime destination would like some answers.

Given that the cost of urgent care in Sylvan Lake is significantly lower than what this government spends in their advertising of rotten policies and given that this urgent care centre is a common-sense, cost-saving measure supported by the community, including partial financial support, will we see this urgent care facility financed and rolled out in the next budget?

**Ms Hoffman:** Today summer feels pretty far away, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that it was pretty chilly this morning when I warmed up my car, but I'm glad to hear the optimism from the other side of the House.

I'm glad that the opposition has raised this question in the past. It's given us an opportunity to reflect on some of the back and forth that they keep talking about today. It's about spending money. I am really committed to making sure we find a way to best serve the needs of the local community whereas the Official Opposition continues to push for privatization, outsourcing, and cutting services as well as laying off nurses, Mr. Speaker. That's not the government we have today, and I'm proud of that.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Given the speed with which this government moves, we need to start now for something in the summer.

While my constituents are being asked to go without this desperately needed urgent care centre, they're also observing a general neglect of health services in central Alberta. Given that Red Deer cardiac catheterization has been overlooked, the Didsbury hospital is facing service reductions, and response times for ambulances across central Alberta are abysmal, Minister, Albertans are tired of the rhetoric. They want committed timelines. When will central Alberta finally be prioritized by this government as the right place for the right care at the right time?

2:30

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, I have to say that I agree with one thing that the member opposite just said. I'm tired of the rhetoric from that member and that caucus when it comes to our priorities, Mr. Speaker. We have worked diligently with the communities, communities across Alberta, to make sure that we have the right rollout. We are happy to sit down. I've toured many of these communities and met with local leaders first-hand, and they themselves are very pleased that we're sitting down and focused on solving problems whereas the members opposite keep throwing mud. We'll get results.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

### Carbon Levy and Agricultural Costs

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've talked to chicken producers, and they're telling me that natural gas is one of their biggest costs. Now, because of the carbon tax starting in January, when the tax is fully implemented, the costs for natural gas to heat their barns in the winter will almost double. To the minister: does this government expect Albertans to pay more for chicken, turkey, and eggs, or do they just expect producers to have to eat this huge loss?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I personally have listened to the farming community – farmers, ranchers, producers, processors – right across the province. We have taken a stand, taken a leadership role on varied aspects; for instance, being able to exclude marked fuel from the carbon levy as well as having a climate leadership plan for producers specifically on intensive livestock operations, greenhouses, and other farming operations right across the province.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that natural gas is a huge part of the expense of producing fertilizer and given that the carbon tax is going to almost double the costs of natural gas and given that the price of fertilizer is going to take a huge jump and given that grain producers don't get to set the price at which they sell their product – they're just price takers – to the minister: does this government just expect grain producers to eat this huge loss?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are in active engagement with many of our energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries right now, working out a set of output-based allocations that work for all industries, including the fertilizer sector. I had the pleasure of meeting with them last week. We are examining ways that we can both set levels that encourage the best performance and the best-in-class across the continent to ensure that we don't open up our trade-exposed industries to competition from areas where we don't see carbon pricing such as the United States and, finally, ensure that we've got . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also, given that the price of natural gas is going to jump and given that beef producers have to heat huge shops to keep their feeding equipment in and given that

this will create a loss for beef producers as well, to the minister: has this government really done a thorough analysis of how this carbon tax is going to affect our second-largest industry in Alberta, agriculture?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the member's question. It's important to note that we have had the opportunity to listen and talk to producers from right across the province. That's why we've had the opportunity to hear them and implement different programs that are going to help them with the carbon levy. Farmers know that climate change is real, and they're willing – not only willing – able to do their part, and do so. We're proud that this government has taken plans, taken programs that will prioritize agriculture as we go forward in this climate future.

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

### Service Dogs

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Service dogs are vital supports for people with disabilities, and today there are only approximately 80 to 100 active, licensed service dogs in Alberta. Given that service dogs enable people with disabilities to live in their communities and successfully navigate the challenges of daily life, to the Minister of Human Services: what is the government doing to increase access to much-needed and life-saving service dogs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government has heard from veterans advocates and members of the disability community across the province who have called for more service dogs to be available. The service dogs qualifications regulation expires March 31, '17, and prior to this expiration we are exploring potential changes to the regulation to increase Albertans' access to qualified service dogs. We are committed to upholding the safety of persons requiring service dogs while ensuring they receive the supports they need.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's service dog legislation is very restrictive in terms of approved accrediting and testing bodies for service dogs and handlers compared to other jurisdictions, to the same minister: what is the government doing to expand Alberta's service dog community and expand the scope of accreditation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member. Given the important role service dogs play in the lives of those they serve, we want to work with people who use service dogs and who are involved in training to make sure that we have high standards while increasing the number of service dog teams. Service dogs that successfully complete a training program by an institution accredited by ADI have qualifications under the current legislation. As we review these regulations, we will be exploring ways to expand access to service dogs through the testing and accreditation system, and I look forward to sharing more details.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that Alberta is home to many skilled and educated people who use service dogs in order to navigate life, to the same minister: what is the government doing to create inclusive environments for people with disabilities who choose and are able to use service dogs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member. I want to assure the member and all Albertans that we will take a thoughtful, thorough approach as we explore potential changes to the legislation, and qualified service dogs will continue to meet high standards to protect the health and safety of the public. Under the existing legislation a number of qualified service dogs can apply for a government identification card that can be shown when their right of access is denied or questioned. As we explore changes to the regulations, we will make sure that we work to improve the public . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Deaths of Children in Care

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In April of this year the NDP unveiled their business plan for Human Services. This included an overview and the key strategies by which this minister intends to govern. In their overview they blame the low price of oil and the economic downturn for most major problems. Shockingly, their key strategies failed to even mention the crisis situation with children dying in our foster care system. Given the seriousness of the situation, why is safety of children in care not explicitly listed as a priority while children continue to die in the province's care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Children dying in our care is certainly the most concerning issue facing my ministry and facing our province, and that was the reason that even despite the falling oil prices, we increased the funding for Human Services – and we increased by \$37 million – so that we are able to support the children in our care. That wouldn't happen under their plan.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order.

**Mr. Nixon:** Given that the tragic death of Serenity has served as a major wake-up call for all of us in this Assembly and for all Albertans and given that there are many more tragic stories just like this, with incidents of children enduring physical and sexual abuse while in care and, in the most drastic cases, sometimes death in care, and since the Minister of Human Services was asked last week, he should have an answer today: what specific actions has the minister taken to protect children in care since the Child and Youth Advocate and the Auditor General released their reports?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's a deeply concerning issue. We have taken action. We have added \$37 million to child intervention so that we are able to support our intervention staff, and we have developed a new kinship assessment tool after the death of the child in question so that we are able to support our kinship care providers. We are absolutely committed to making

sure that our children have the right supports and they have resources to thrive in our province.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Nixon:** Given that we have heard no details on the NDP government's plan to prevent the tragedy that happened to Serenity from happening again and given that there have already been many reports and round-tables on this very topic with clear direction about what needs to change and since the minister has said that he's accepting the recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate and the Auditor General, why haven't these changes been implemented, and how much longer do Alberta's children have to wait for this minister to take action?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As I said, it's an important issue, and we are taking action. That's why we have increased funding for the child intervention system. But I want the member and everyone to know that the causes of these issues are complex. They relate to poverty, they relate to addiction, they relate to the devastating impact of residential schools, and that's why the Minister of Indigenous Relations is working with indigenous communities so we can be there for our indigenous communities and we can get this right.

Thank you.

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

### Renewable Energy Strategy

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is aggressively phasing out coal in favour of as yet undetermined taxpayer subsidies on renewables. Renewables, when executed appropriately, provide a positive green addition to the energy grid. However, outside of hydro, renewables do not provide a reliable round-the-clock baseload. Coal conversions to natural gas are a good way to add relatively efficient baseload, but these plants may not be as environmentally friendly as new builds. To the Minister of Energy: what is your government doing to incent new natural gas plant investment to ensure long-term grid stability?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The hon. member cites one of the reasons that we announced last week a capacity market. We need to ensure that Alberta's electricity market will provide our power needs in the future. We made this decision to move to a capacity market based on advice that we received from the ISO. In fact, more than three years ago the ISO was looking into this, and they advised us that the capacity market was the best way to balance a stable grid with renewable electricity.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, given that the aforementioned coal to natural gas transition requires a significant amount of capital investment and given that the only capital committed thus far is government – or should I say “taxpayer” – money and given that investor confidence in Alberta is at an all-time low following the government's repeated disregard for signed contracts and threats of retroactive legislation, again to the minister: why would anyone invest significant capital in Alberta when your government has repeatedly demonstrated contempt for those very same investors?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, in addition to the ISO being consulted, we consulted with industry, electricity companies. We did research across North America and discovered that Alberta was an outlier and, in fact, the only other jurisdiction is Texas that had an energy-only market. So we made the decision to move into the capacity market, and investors told us immediately upon announcement that they were prepared to invest in Alberta.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Trust is paramount, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government is heavily subsidizing new renewables with taxpayer dollars and given that despite this government's statements to the contrary there are already significant renewable assets in Alberta and given that this government is doing absolutely nothing for the sustainability of these existing renewables, making them uncompetitive and unviable compared to new renewables, again to the minister. It seems your government is trying to take credit for all renewables by excluding pioneering investors. Why aren't you supporting these producers in continued viability of existing renewable assets?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be clear, our electricity grid has not seen a major final investment decision since 2009. Jurisdictions around the world are moving to a capacity market, and so are we. That is why the ISO's independent operators said in this report that Alberta's wholesale market is not attractive to investors. Dawn Farrell, CEO of TransAlta, said that this decision was necessary. She went on to say that the fact that we have this capacity market enables us to convert some of our coal plants to gas, keeping our markets working, keeping those communities strong.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Energy Industry Diversification

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. Today I was pleased to be at the announcement when the government announced two projects that will benefit from the petrochemicals diversification program. Good news for Alberta. One of these projects, the Inter Pipeline project, will receive up to \$200 million in royalty credits to build a \$1.85 billion facility and will directly benefit my constituents in Sherwood Park and those in Alberta's Industrial Heartland by creating full-time jobs during the construction phase and for operations once the project is online. To the minister . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Quiet, please.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Our government has been clear that the \$500 million to the two projects will not be expended until the projects are built. The incentives were enough to create these projects and have the companies consider Alberta as opposed to the Gulf coast. We need to take our diversification plans seriously now because we need jobs in Alberta. During peak construction there will be 4,000 jobs and 1,400 direct and indirect jobs once they are running.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the program received 16 applications from investors locally and globally but was only able to approve two, to the same minister: what will happen to the 14 applications that government did not accept?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. These applications show that companies here and across the globe want to invest in Alberta. There were many good proposals, and between my ministry and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade we'll be working with those companies and seeing if there are other options that they can avail themselves of. They will also have the opportunity to speak to the economic diversification advisory committee.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the current economic challenges that my constituents and all Albertans are facing, what other steps is this government taking to diversify Alberta's energy industry?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the questions. This is the first announcement today of energy diversification in Alberta. We created the energy diversification advisory committee to work with Albertans on how to do just that, and there will be opportunities for industry, investors, and everyday Albertans to engage with this committee. The committee is based on a group of business, labour, and First Nations leaders, and on October 18 Deborah Yedlin from the *Calgary Herald* said that this committee has the experience to get the job done.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I know that some of you may want to get out and wrap presents for each other, so in 30 seconds we will move to Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

#### Human Rights Day

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. International Human Rights Day, celebrated on December 10 of every year, commemorates the day in 1948 when the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the universal declaration of human rights.

It's one thing to talk about human rights, and it's another to work diligently towards making sure that these rights are observed. Far too often the social rights enshrined in the declaration are ignored, but this government, of which I'm proud to be a part, is ensuring that we put these fundamental rights front and centre in our work as we move Alberta forward. A fine example is the building of a permanent dialysis unit in Lac La Biche, and we're working with communities to do the same.

Additionally, our government is investing \$1.2 billion in affordable housing capital projects over the next five years, like the Parkdale project here in Edmonton, that will provide affordable homes for 70 families.

This government is protecting the right of everyone to work and the right to education by providing funding for enrolment, hiring a thousand teachers, 250 support staff, and making schools the number one employer in many small towns during this current economic downturn. Because education doesn't end when you become an adult, we've frozen tuition fees as well.

These may seem like talking points, Mr. Speaker, but each one of these examples describes the changing reality of Albertans, the

people we are here to serve, due to this government's action. As legislators we share an enormous responsibility to ensure that every Albertan is treated with respect and dignity. Ultimately, we must accept our true duty as members of the Legislature, to clear away systemic barriers that keep Albertans from living up to their full potential, so that everyone who calls Alberta home may have access to the same opportunities. Mr. Speaker, I'll be the first one to state that we are far from being done, but we have made considerable progress.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

2:50

#### Charity at Christmas

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Christmas is fast approaching, the time when we remember the birth of Jesus, born in Bethlehem to a young couple who did not have a place to stay when they were forced to register for a census, by the way, so they could be taxed.

On the weekend I, a left-footed Baptist not known for his ability to dance, participated in Shakin' n Drayton, a twist on *Dancing with the Stars*, to help raise funds for Humans Helping Humans. Humans Helping Humans is a typical response by the people of Drayton Valley. This amazing group raises money and builds houses for those who would not likely have a chance at home ownership. On the weekend eight dance couples and hundreds of citizens and volunteers raised approximately \$65,000 for Humans Helping Humans. This is from a community where businesses have been shutting down, hotels have been empty, people have been laid off or are working only part-time.

About a month ago I attended the CT4DV gala, sponsored by the Drayton Valley health foundation. This group has worked hard for a CT scanner over the past four or five years, and in that time they have raised over \$1 million for a scanner and renovations to the hospital.

The people in my constituency have never let the roadblocks of life stop them from supporting their community and taking care of those that are less fortunate. Across the constituency, whether it was the chili fundraiser for the John Maland high school band program or the opening of the Devon Christian school playground, the people in the Drayton Valley-Devon constituency dig deep into their pockets to help their neighbours.

A wise pastor of mine once said: in this life we only take turns; sometimes you help me in my distress, and at other times I help you. So during this Christmas let me encourage all of us to look outside of ourselves and see how we can help the people in our community. You never know the impact of your generosity, just as a certain innkeeper had no idea how a young homeless couple ready to give birth would change the world.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

#### Social Work

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The beauty of our political system is that we draw people from all spectrums of our society not only in terms of political ideology but in work and life experience, and having the chance to have these people influence decisions that our government can effect in these specific fields is a rare opportunity indeed.

If I might give an example, I experienced a career spanning two decades in emergency services. When the government's report on the Fort McMurray fire is released, I guarantee you that I will be drawing on every resource that I have to evaluate that report and



make recommendations that will ensure that this will never happen again.

Our society is dealing with increased hard-drug use, so much so that we're going to allow safe needle injection sites. We have a high percentage of indigenous women who live in poverty and are involved in the sex trade. There are mothers and children involved in abusive relationships. We have a high proportion of seniors living in poverty. There are people with developmental disabilities and substance abuse issues who are living in the streets. And we had a child die after a year of neglect and abuse.

In our society there is one career that is the toughest job of them all. These folks are tasked with helping the people in these brutal conditions. They are tasked with taking care of our most vulnerable. They are social workers. A social workers has to deal with people in their lowest, saddest of times, and the fix is never a quick fix. It's a long and arduous process that sometimes never resolves. I have no doubt that the negative exposure of this job weighs very heavily on those that take on this profession.

I have high hopes that our people, my brothers and sisters across the way in this Legislature, will consider using their vast cumulative experience in social work to at least investigate the possibilities as to how we can do better, how we can unshackle those that are tasked with this very tough job. I have no doubt that we will hear about impediments like confidentiality, privacy, personal freedoms, professional code, underfunded, overworked, laws, and courts, but, Mr. Speaker, we have to try.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

#### Human Rights

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The universal declaration of human rights is about that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Everyone has a right to life, liberty, and security. Unfortunately, with all our advanced education and awareness there are still some in this world who do not believe in these fundamental values. Horrific human rights violations continue around the world across the spectrum of race, colour, sexual preference, religion, gender, and political views.

In Alberta our understanding of basic rights might be different than the horrors such as the 1984 genocide of New Delhi Sikhs, the Rwandan genocide of 1990, the Bosnian genocide of 1995, and Darfur in 2003. We should all look up to leaders like Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr., the Dalai Lama, Calipah Mirza Masroor Ahmad, and Sardar Jaswant Singh Khalsa, who fought for human rights. We can all learn from their teachings.

The citizens of our province were recently enlightened and outraged by the personal stories of residential school survivors, who survived our own nation's attempt at cultural genocide. We still don't live in a perfect world because shocking racial incidents continue to occur in Alberta daily. I am proud to note, however, that more and more citizens feel empowered to confront it when it arises. For example, when racial slurs were hurled at an African-American who was simply walking down an Edmonton street, a movement sprung up in Alberta called Make It Awkward. This campaign formed the basis of a community backlash when antiturban posters were slapped up at a local campus. In a smart twist to Make it Awkward citizens were invited to rock a turban. The wildly popular event turned racism on its head.

Because Albertans are doing their part to combat discrimination, misogyny, and bullying, it is especially incumbent on us as legislators to play a public role for these efforts. That is the commitment we can all make . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on Standing Order 7(7) to ask for unanimous consent of the House to extend the daily Routine past 3 p.m.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, you will note that there are many, many words that need to be heard in this House, and it is with some trepidation that I interrupt the thoughts that are being shared. Again, I remind you to stay within the two-minute time limit.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

#### Pipeline Approval

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week was a good week for Albertans. You wouldn't know it, though, listening to the opposition. Last week two pipelines got approved. That announcement represents thousands of good-paying, family-supporting jobs for Albertans, or at least that's what it represents to most of us. To the opposition two pipelines meant failure.

In the announcement of the decision the Prime Minister said that the pipeline approvals were due to our Premier's leadership. The next day the Leader of the Opposition picks up the phone to a columnist to say that – and I quote – she didn't do any of the hard work. The federal cabinet even stated, clear as day, that were it not for the climate leadership plan, they could not have approved the pipelines. Right on cue the Leader of the Opposition heads to a rally to dismantle that very climate leadership plan. Then at the rally to scrap the plan that got us the two pipeline approvals, people start chanting: lock her up. What is the response from the Leader of the Opposition? Crickets. Sometimes silence can be deafening, and sometimes it's defining.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that conservatives like the Alberta Prosperity Fund believe pipeline approvals under an NDP government are a doomsday scenario, but it's anyone's guess why the opposition can't put Albertans' needs ahead of their own desire for power.

Today with the Premier in B.C. fighting for pipelines, I know that I'm standing on the right side of this House: the side that gets things done, the side that works with others, and the side that's moving Alberta forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Poppy Cultivation and Processing

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Little Bow active pharmaceutical ingredients labs incorporated is a southern Alberta company which has spent nine years pursuing a commercial poppy cultivation and processing industry. Poppy possesses molecules that provide an important pharmaceutical value in the management of pain and treatment of addiction.

Earlier this year the federal government specifically banned the cultivation of culinary varieties of poppies in Canada despite providing over \$1 million in support to poppy research. Recently API Labs asked the Canadian government to permit this cultivation, with no success. API offers a new crop to diversify and strengthen our economy and ultimately create an export success that could mimic Canada's success in canola. If API Labs Inc. were to receive approval by 2023, it's seed sales would be 14,000 tonnes, a value of \$25.1 million. It would mean the creation of many new jobs and more diverse opportunities for local farmers.

3:00

API is on the cusp of making a critical decision on the construction of a multimillion-dollar processing plant. A federal ministerial exemption would allow this investment to proceed. However, regulatory delays put this investment at risk, and the viability of the company is in jeopardy. It is unclear why the government of Canada prohibits this industry when the other G7 countries, including the United Kingdom and Australia, commercially cultivate poppies on an annual basis.

I hope every member of the House can picture what three simple initials, API, can come to represent to Albertans. The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that this company is close to bringing significant value-added economic benefits to Alberta. I hope that this provincial government will support companies like API and continue to advocate on their behalf to the federal government. This government needs to work hard during this downturn to stand up for Alberta businesses.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Presenting Petitions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to table five copies of a petition sponsored by Friends of Medicare and CUPE Alberta. No Paid Plasma is a province-wide campaign calling for prohibiting the operating and/or opening of any private paid blood and/or plasma donor clinics.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with the Gaming and Liquor Act I am tabling the appropriate number of copies of the 2015-16 Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission annual report. In addition to ensuring high social responsibility standards, over \$855 million earned from liquor was transferred into the GRF, and \$1.5 billion in gaming revenue went into the lottery fund to support thousands of community initiatives and charities. Lastly, Alberta consumers continue to enjoy unparalleled choice in the liquor market, with nearly 22,000 products now available for sale. That's 22,000 beer, liquor, and wine products.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a memo from the Chief Medical Examiner to myself in response to questions raised by the Leader of the Official Opposition on December 1, 2016, which I undertook to look into. I have the requisite number of copies.

**The Speaker:** I think we have two points of order. Is that correct? First of all, the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Point of Order Oral Questions

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will be as brief as I can. I'm rising on a point of order under *Beauchesne's* section 408(1)(a), page 120, for those following along at home. In reference to members asking oral questions, 408(1) says:

Such questions should:

- (a) be asked . . . in respect of matters of sufficient urgency and importance as to require an immediate answer.

I couldn't help but notice that the hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills and subsequently, in fact, the Member for Sherwood Park were asking questions that are colloquially known as puffballs. These ones were puffier than most.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, if I look at section 409(5) of *Beauchesne's*:

The matter ought to be of some urgency. There must be some present value in seeking the information during the Question Period rather than through the Order Paper or through correspondence with the Minister or the department.

If you'll indulge me, 410(5):

The primary purpose of the Question Period is seeking information and calling the Government to account.

Those questions were the furthest thing from that. Both questions were the subject of information that was released publicly by the government. In the case of the question from the Member for Calgary-Northern Hills that information was released, pretty much verbatim in the question that he asked, in a beautiful news release on Saturday, and the question from the Member for Sherwood Park was released barely hours ago.

Finally, I'll just end with page 501 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009. There are four guidelines, following principles established by Speaker Bosley in 1986. The first is:

Time [in this House] is scarce and should, therefore, be used as profitably as possible by as many as possible.

And perhaps even more important, the third point:

While there may be other purposes and ambitions involved in Question Period, its primary purpose must be the seeking of information from the government and calling the government to account for its actions.

With that, I would ask that perhaps you would encourage members on the government side to ask questions that legitimately hold their own government to account, Mr. Speaker. I think it would increase the perception of Albertans of the work that we do in this House. In all sincerity, it's very important that there are other means and other ways, especially for government members, to seek that information. One, perhaps, would be writing a letter to the minister, and I have found that that's very effective. Ministers are very good about responding to letters. But there are other ways of getting that information out there rather than valuable time in question period.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that the member opposite pointed out that one of the main purposes of asking questions is to derive information. That is exactly what both members, when they were asking the ministers respectively their questions, were looking at, getting further information. I find it quite shocking that the Member for Calgary-Elbow finds that Infrastructure spending announcements are not very important. You know, it's quite shocking to hear that the member finds that they have no value. I think Albertans would argue oppositely.

But, Mr. Speaker, the reason that I rise is that this is not a point of order. Question period is used to either hold the government to account or, also, to derive information. That's exactly what the two members asking questions were doing, asking further information than what was announced previous to this afternoon. With that, I think there are numerous examples of questions that derive information. The members opposite can call them what they want, but Albertans have a right to know not only what's going on but what's

going on in different ministries. That's the purpose of Oral Question Period.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I too have noticed on occasion in this House that – I think the phrase that the hon. member used was “puffballs.” That has occasionally happened in this House. If one looks up closely, I am sure that you will see some feathers still stuck to the ceiling. I do, however – well, I also noted the minister's enthusiasm with his answer today, which was significant.

But, respectfully, hon. member, I'm not sure that this is a point of order. I would just ask – I know that the government backbenchers will reframe their questions so they have much more substance to them.

The hon. member.

### Point of Order

#### Allegations against Members

**Mr. Cooper:** Yeah. Thank you. I rise on behalf of the Member for Airdrie to speak to a point of order today. For a point of reference for you, my good Mr. Speaker, I will be referencing 23(h) and (i). During question period the Minister of Human Services made an allegation against this side of the House that we ran on a platform of cutting and that we would have cut the budget for child and family services. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is a wild allegation against this side of the House that clearly created disorder amongst my hon. colleague from Airdrie, who felt so concerned about such an allegation that she rose in her place to call a point of order. That the member had been alleging that we would have in fact cut that budget is categorically untrue.

Now, I know that there has been some dispute of the facts because the only side of the House that's doing any cutting to child and family services is that side, but it still remains the same that this sort of allegation creates disorder and ought to be withdrawn and apologized for.

3:10

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to point out to the Opposition House Leader that 23(h) is “[making] allegations against another Member.” The minister did not make any allegations against a member of the House. The minister merely pointed out that in last year's platform the Official Opposition had proposed slashing \$2 billion from the operating budget and a further \$9 billion over the course of five years from capital spending. What the minister was saying was that it would not have happened under their plan due to all the cuts.

I find it fascinating that during Human Services' budget estimates the Member for Airdrie called the importance of investing in front-line services for families a waste of money, so I find it interesting that today this is a point of order. Again, this is not a point of order. This is merely ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you. I wish you'd have got to that last statement sooner.

Hon. members, both of you must have read different Blues than I have because you both introduced new information. The Blues that I have: I would not consider it a point of order here; it was a difference of opinion.

I believe we are at Orders of the Day.

## Orders of the Day

### Motions for Returns

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

#### Legal Aid and Self-represented Litigants

M25. Mr. Cyr moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of any studies or briefing notes prepared for the government between January 1, 2012, and February 29, 2016, regarding legal aid or self-represented litigants in Alberta.

[Debated adjourned November 28: Miranda speaking]

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. I'll continue on where Minister Miranda left off. He was speaking on behalf of our colleague the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** We have a point of order? Is that right?

**Mr. Rodney:** He was just using names.

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. Opposition House Leader, did you say: point of order?

**Mr. Cooper:** No, it was not me.

**The Speaker:** Minister of Finance, please proceed.

**Mr. Ceci:** I apologize.

I rise to speak on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. I want to start by thanking the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for recognizing the government's investment in legal aid. As the member noted, our government has made significant investments, increasing Legal Aid's budget by 20 per cent since we were formed as a government 19 months ago. That's a commitment to access to justice that the previous, Conservative government simply failed to provide.

Last week the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake also mentioned that he had heard – he didn't cite where he had heard it – that you have to go several times before being accepted by Legal Aid. While some cases may be more complicated than others, it is not typical for an individual to have to apply multiple times to be accepted. In fact, in working with Legal Aid, we've actually reduced some of the inefficiency around applications. Prior to last year, courts were seeing climbing Rowbotham applications, applications where an individual had been rejected by Legal Aid for coverage. This was taking up court resources. By increasing the financial eligibility guidelines and bringing in an appeals process within Legal Aid, we've been able to provide more coverage at the start to take these applications out of the courts. That saves resources for Albertans and allows the courts to focus on serious matters.

That said, as we noted last week, we will have to reject the motion as it is overbroad, which could result in inadvertently waiving privilege and, where related to self-represented litigants, could involve important advice on security that needs to remain confidential. But we will happily table several studies on legal aid that may be useful to the member.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Is there another member who wishes to speak to Motion for a Return 25?

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake to close debate.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It saddens me to hear that we can't bring forward copies of the studies or briefing notes. I do understand that the government has concerns about being overbroad. When this has happened, they have made amendments or adjustments to the motion for a return, but in this case they just decided to outright reject it.

[Ms. Sweet in the chair]

I will say, though, that it's encouraging to hear that the Minister of Finance has said that he's going to have the Minister of Justice put forward some of the studies that have been put forward. I thank the minister for that. It is something, and I'm glad to hear that.

But in the end what we're trying to do is say that – and I heard the minister say that they've added a whole bunch of resources to legal aid. My concern here is that what we're not clear on is exactly how these resources should have been applied. A briefing or a study is a good route, to be able to go that route. I'm not sure if the studies that the Minister of Justice will be tabling are all going to be public studies that we would have had access to anyway, but I am hopeful as I put more requests for information for legal aid, because this is something that I am impassioned on. Once I go through the studies, I will be more focused in my requests. I want to make sure that our most vulnerable have access to being able to defend themselves in the courts. Right now I've heard the minister saying that they're bringing down the number of requests. Without any information on my side to be able to verify that, again I will accept that the minister has information that is clear to that answer that he's given.

Again, I'm very saddened to hear that they're rejecting it, but I am glad to see that the ministry is at least making an effort to get something to my office. So thank you, Minister.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 25 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:18 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Starke
Barnes	Loewen	Strankman
Cyr	Orr	Taylor
Gotfried	Smith	van Dijken

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	Payne
Babcock	Goehring	Piquette
Bilous	Hinkley	Renaud
Carson	Horne	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Schreiner
Connolly	Littlewood	Sigurdson
Coolahan	Loyola	Sucha
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Sweet
Dach	Malkinson	Turner
Dang	McKittrick	Westhead
Drever	Miller	Woollard
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	

Totals:	For – 12	Against – 35
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[Motion for a Return 25 lost]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

## Bill 6 Draft Document

M28. Mr. Strankman moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the three-column document used in the drafting of Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and speak about the motion that I had submitted for a return. Simply, what I was trying to do was achieve more information for the electorate of Alberta going forward. I simply and wholeheartedly believe that it's important that Albertans affected by this legislation understand the rationale behind how and why the bill was developed. I think it's important that internal legislative communications be presented to Albertans in an open fashion.

Many Albertans believe that the presentation of this legislation was flawed from the very beginning. At one point we saw significant numbers, well beyond 1,500, on the steps of the Legislature, and we had seen several demonstrations against the legislation throughout the province in many forms. Albertans were passionate about the government moving forward with what they believed was quite probably more of a labour bill than a bill for agriculture. So it's with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, that I was asking the question: was this always intended as an agriculture safety bill, that morphed into a labour relations and employment standards bill? That's part of the rationale behind the questioning, trying to learn about what was concerning Albertans and primarily constituents that I represent.

Mr. Speaker, given the confusion last year when concerned Albertans who wanted information were shunted back and forth between the ministry of jobs, skills, training, and labour and the ministry of agriculture, providing us the documents used to develop the bill, I believe, is crucial so that we have the opportunity to view this internal rationale so that Albertans, including those of us in opposition, can understand the presentation of it.

There were numerous instances where the government's own web pages changed and contradicted previous positions throughout the process. Now, I'm willing to be compassionate to miscommunication and misrepresentation of potentially proper information, but in this case it deals with business acumen for agriculture, the second-largest industry in the province. As I said earlier in my preamble, we saw a massive number of demonstrations against the legislation throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve answers from a government that passes legislation and then determines the regulations. That was one of the frustrations that we saw demonstrated by Albertans coming forward. They had no knowledge or understanding of the regulations that were going to be encompassed in the legislation. It's a process that should be properly adhered to as government brings forward legislation in the House.

So I'd like to hear the government's response to that. I understand that the request has been simply rejected. I'd be anxious to hear the government's response to our submission.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ceci:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This motion for a return asks for a copy of the three-column document in relation to the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act. The three-column document used in the drafting of Bill 6 is a document of cabinet. Cabinet confidentiality prohibits us from sharing cabinet documents with anyone who is not a member of cabinet.

Thank you.

3:40

**The Speaker:** Are there any members who wish to speak to the motion?

Seeing and hearing none, closing comments?

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I heard the member speak in that regard, but it is also an instance of obfuscation by the government to allow further education and understanding of what the rationale for their legislation is. Through this whole process, demonstrated to by thousands of Albertans, there's no methodology coming forward for the rationale for the legislation. Even though we may have chosen the exact words that the minister is relying upon to refuse our request, I think it's incumbent upon a government compassionate to Albertans to help them understand the rationale for their legislation.

[Motion for a Return 28 lost]

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

### Bill 6 Correspondence

M29. Mr. Strankman moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all correspondence relating to the change in responsibility for the regulations for Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, from the Ministry of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was simply waiting for *Hansard* here. It's imperative that we try and record some of our conversations for the Assembly.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am adamant about proof of an open and transparent government. Initially the bill was presented as a labour bill and then was transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. I believe it opens numerous acts, and the public needs to understand, again, the rationale for the presentation of what some initially believed to be a labour bill rather than an agriculture bill.

During the opening days of the public consultations they were shunted back and forth between the jobs, skills, training, and labour and the Agriculture and Forestry ministries, and that caused a lot of confusion amongst Albertans. In fact, the initial presentations in the community of Grande Prairie were done by the jobs, skills, training, and labour people, and then they were moved over to agriculture. So it bodes some confusion within the departments, and I'm anxious to try and provide information to Albertans.

While Bill 6 was described as legislation supporting agricultural safety, the published table topics included elements of labour and employment standards, and as we go forward with the round-table discussions, I understand that those discussions have been somewhat stymied or stalled or actually not even coming forward. So it's difficult to understand if this is still being dealt with in a labour fashion or an agricultural fashion and not brought forward.

The government claims that they are taking the time, Mr. Speaker, to get this bill right. It's unequivocal that Albertans and Alberta agriculture folks, many of them who have volunteered their own time and such to represent their organizations, came together with an agricultural coalition of many of these agricultural organizations to turn out for the round-tables that were to be promoted. But the government only allowed something less than one-third of the number of chairs that were available at the table to actually be represented by agricultural organizations. It's frustrating.

These organizations, these occupational health and safety round-tables, have not even finished meeting, and Albertans are wondering where the regulations are for this bill. As mentioned with Motion for a Return 28, there were numerous instances where the

government's own web pages changed and contradicted previous positions throughout the process.

Mr. Speaker, we're simply trying to get at, again sounding repetitive, the rationale for the government bringing forward a bill with regulations that haven't even been written yet without consequence. We saw in the final days of our 28th Session people and members and members of the government talking about fierce reactions from Albertans – and it was very emotional in the final days – that this government didn't understand how they had to relate to the constituents that they serve.

Mr. Speaker, given the government's opposition to amendments and, seemingly, taking this bill through the House, we aren't surprised that there's been little information given up from the freedom of information requests that we've made as well, the opposition, and even the media. We've learned that the media made serious requests to learn the information as well. So I'm anxious to hear what the government member has to say in response to this motion for a return that would appear to have been flatly rejected. Can we continue on with that discussion?

Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act repealed exemptions for paid agricultural workers from existing protection and compensation legislation. The government is currently consulting with a broad cross-section of stakeholders regarding changes to the occupational health and safety standards. Consultations have concluded for employment standards and labour relations.

Mr. Speaker, the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act in no way made changes to the minister responsible for these important worker protection laws. The Minister of Labour is the minister responsible for the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Employment Standards Code, and the Labour Relations Code. This has not changed; therefore, copies of all correspondence the member requests do not exist. Because these records do not exist, we're rejecting this motion for a return.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Motion for a Return 29. While I appreciate the Finance minister's comments, we are very, very familiar with what Bill 6 did. I appreciate the recap, but we have a pretty good working understanding of exactly what it did, and we're not looking for that. What we are looking for is access to information.

**Mr. Ceci:** It doesn't exist.

**Mr. Cooper:** I hear the minister saying, "It doesn't exist" – and that wouldn't surprise me – which is the exact problem, that the information doesn't exist or there was no correspondence relating to the change in responsibility because they don't even know how it happened. There was a significant amount of confusion in the government of the time, and it appears that there still is confusion with respect to who did what and how it was done. I think that Albertans should be very concerned and particularly those in rural Alberta should be very, very concerned that there was apparently no correspondence or communication related to the change in responsibility for the regulations for Bill 6.

3:50

We clearly saw the minister of jobs, skills, labour, and training at the time going around the province speaking about this. That

ministry was definitely the one responsible. I know that my hon. colleague from Drumheller-Stettler had personal correspondence – albeit I believe it was in voice mode, a phone call – between himself and the minister of agriculture’s staff speaking about the minister’s taking over that rollout. Clearly, he was informed somehow that he would then be leading this file, and now we’re being told by the minister that there is no correspondence.

Some might say that that’s difficult to believe because this is a very significant file – a very significant file – that, you’ll remember, Mr. Speaker, created a significant debate in this House both day and night. You’ll remember literally thousands of people on the steps of the Legislature, concerned about the future of agriculture. You’ll remember an amendment that was proposed in this House that was longer than the legislation. The reason why those things happened was because Albertans from pillar to post, from corner to corner expressed significant concern about the direction of this government. Somewhat to their credit, they introduced the amendment. They also rolled out a consultation process that, I’m sure you would agree, probably should have taken place prior to the passing of that legislation.

But this wasn’t just a moving of one small issue from one department to another. This wasn’t a scheduling error. This wasn’t a small communication piece between the ministers of agriculture and of Labour; this was a massive undertaking, that the government engaged in. And it’s only reasonable, Mr. Speaker, that those same people that came and rallied at the Legislature and expressed concern should be able to have access to the information, that is their information, about how and why that happened, about how and why it was in one department and then it was in another.

If it never actually changed, why did the lead spokesman become the minister of agriculture? Why is it that the minister of agriculture is the one responsible for the rollout of the tables? Frankly, it’s a little unfortunate that we didn’t realize way back when we asked this question about the ongoing efforts of this government and require them to table some of the work that’s taking place in that consultation work that’s currently ongoing.

I know that in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, Mr. Speaker, there are members of the community that are on those tables and have expressed some significant concerns about how the government is still handling this file. Now, there are multiple people from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills on those tables. Some are more positive than others with respect to the direction that it’s going, so I want to be fair with my comments. But the challenge that we face is that this government continually, week in and week out – the opposition comes and says, “Please allow Albertans to understand what’s going on inside the government,” and we hear the Minister of Finance saying that that correspondence doesn’t exist.

Well, it is a challenge. It is a stretch to believe that there was no correspondence around this issue, and it seems to me – it’s my guess, Mr. Speaker, that the government’s effort is to use the wording of the question to not actually answer the intent of the question. It’s more than a bit disappointing that this government chooses to not provide information to the thousands of Albertans that would have liked to know what happened way back last December. We must be very close to the one-year anniversary of that. To say that I’m disappointed would be an understatement. To say that I’m surprised – well, very little surprises me about this government’s lack of desire for openness and transparency nowadays.

So I will be supporting this question. I encourage all members of the Assembly, particularly folks like the Member for Leduc-Beaumont, who, during that period of time, I remember advocating on behalf of his constituents and expressing some of the same sort

of concerns – here’s an opportunity for him to vote in favour of this question because I know that there are folks in Leduc-Beaumont that would like to understand how these sorts of things took place and why that happened. I encourage all members, all private members to support this very important information. It is virtually impossible for it to not exist.

**The Speaker:** Are there other members who would like to speak to Motion for a Return 29?

Seeing and hearing no one, the Member for Drumheller-Stettler to close debate.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I can tell by the riveting attention by the members of government that this is first and foremost on their minds. So I’m looking for a robust debate or a robust turnout by voters to learn more information about what government does going forward.

Mr. Speaker, there are still staunch beliefs in rural Alberta that this legislation going forward, Bill 6, which my member for the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills talks about, was a partisan piece of legislation simply trying to increase the government’s political base, and unionizing workers was part of that mandate. However that may go, whether that is or isn’t accurate, I know that there is a lot of concern.

Also, following up on the comments made by the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, the emotions, as you might recall, Mr. Speaker, in the last days of the fall session, particularly as exhibited by the Minister of Energy at that point in time, were very extensive. The Minister of Energy had great concerns, bringing forward that Albertans were voicing their opinions inappropriately, possibly, at some point in time. With that, my compatriot from Leduc-Beaumont also was subject to some of that vitriol of, you know, people bringing forward their opinions. It’s part of the democratic process that we’re allowed to achieve here and come forward.

I’m anxious to have the vote go forward on this motion for a return. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 29 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:59 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Strankman
Barnes	Orr	Taylor
Cooper	Starke	van Dijken
Cyr		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Phillips
Babcock	Hinkley	Piquette
Bilous	Horne	Renaud
Carson	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Littlewood	Schreiner
Connolly	Loyola	Sigurdson
Coolahan	Luff	Sucha
Cortes-Vargas	Malkinson	Sweet
Dach	McKittrick	Turner
Dang	Miller	Westhead
Drever	Nielsen	Woollard
Fitzpatrick	Payne	

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 35
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[Motion for a Return 29 lost]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government Opposition House Leader.

### Bill 8 Draft Document

M30. Mr. Cooper moved on behalf of Mr. Smith that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the three-column document used in the drafting of Bill 8, Public Education Collective Bargaining Act.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Motion for a Return 30.

I'd just like to provide a little bit of background on the question with respect to the three-column document and how we sort of got here. Bill 8 introduced a new model of collective bargaining between school boards, teachers, and the Alberta government. Until the passing of Bill 8 the history of collective bargaining in education in Alberta had been based on a model of local bargaining. Each school board would enter into bargaining with their local ATA and through negotiations arrive at a locally bargained agreement. Each school division would have the ability to negotiate a unique agreement surrounding wages, benefits, and local issues like professional development.

Prior to 1994 school boards had the power to requisition tax dollars by setting a local levy on municipal property taxes in order to pay for the negotiated settlements with teachers, aides, et cetera, and to fund their other costs of providing an education in their school divisions. This created a problem, that school divisions with a strong tax base could requisition more funds, and therefore some school divisions could provide more funding for education than could some others. With local bargaining some school divisions sometimes suffered when wealthier school boards would settle early, and with a collective agreement that was seen by some as too generous, this would place the poorer school divisions in a bit of a bind.

In the 1990s the then Premier tried to control government spending, and he recognized the inequity of the bargaining process of the day, so he moved to change the process by taking the money requisitioned through the property tax levies and pooling it into the government coffers and then distributed the money back to school boards using a per-student funding formula. This new process ensured a more equitable distribution of the education dollars back to school boards and at that time had an overwhelming support of divisions and teachers.

The problem that was created by the 1994 process revolving around bargaining: now, once the government has set their budgets and decided on the increase or decrease to the Education budget, this allocation of funds pretty much decided the range of monies that a school board had to negotiate within. From a school board's perspective, many felt that they were placed in an untenable position. They were able to negotiate in good faith, yet the largest negotiation piece, teachers' salaries, had already been decided by the government's budgeting process.

Teachers at the ATA were often unhappy with the new process for two reasons. Firstly, the decision on wages had already been decided in the budget before the local bargaining had even begun. Second, they were unable to bargain directly with the government, who was the direct funder. The result of these issues was a breakdown in the bargaining process.

4:20

It is because of this history that the Wildrose understood the desire of the present Minister of Education to address this bargaining model. Bill 8 formalized a province-wide two-table bargaining

system, where there are now local and provincial bargaining tables. The provincial table now addresses broad issues in common to all boards while the local table addresses issues that were best dealt with between the individual school boards and the ATA. The intent of having the provincial table is to ensure consistency across the province with respect to the big-picture issues in education such as wages and benefits. The intent of having the local table is to allow for flexibility for school boards to address issues that directly affect schools, teachers, and students.

Bill 8 established an employer bargaining association, the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association, or TEBA, to emerge in contract negotiations for school boards. Both central and local negotiated agreements must be ratified by the parties involved through their collective agreement.

Mr. Speaker, our request is to review the three-column document. It's well known that when the ministry begins preparing to draft a piece of legislation, a three-column document is used to help bring clarity to the creation of the bill. A three-column document is an instrument used to help plan and focus the preparation of the bill. A three-column document outlines the current legislation in one column. A second column outlines the proposed changes that will be incorporated into the new bill, and a third column provides the rationale or perhaps the goals that the government hopes to achieve by passing the bill into law. We have seen a fairly similar three-column document released recently with respect to MGA consultations on Bill 21.

We are in the middle of the most important set of negotiations, the government and school boards, represented by the TEBA, and the ATA, that represents the teachers. As the negotiations proceed, we will need to judge the effectiveness of the new negotiating model. Has the two-tiered system of negotiation been effective? Has the two-tiered system of negotiation been fair to stakeholders? Has the new negotiation model arrived at a contract that is fair for the taxpayers? Has the new model of negotiation successfully achieved the goals set out in the rationale? Is this what the government wanted to achieve?

Having the three-column document would provide a level of clarity and transparency that would ensure all Albertans would be able to see if the new model of negotiations should continue under the terms of the current legislation or whether the Legislature should consider amending Bill 8 in order to better achieve the intended purpose of the bill as expressed in the three-column document.

The Ministry of Education is planning on spending \$7.9 billion in the 2016-17 Education budget. The Minister of Education is responsible for the second-largest expenditure of public funds in the 2016-17 budget. The teachers' salaries make up the single largest portion of public funds within the Education budget, almost \$2.4 billion. When we start talking about these incredibly large sums of money, it is prudent to make sure that the new model of bargaining is achieving the goals of that legislation. Was it achieving what it set out to do?

By providing the three-column document and comparing the rationale to the results of the new bargaining model, Albertans will be better served as a result of transparency that occurs when a three-column document is available for all to see. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the government's prompt delivery of the three-column document.

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Motion for a Return 30. What I can tell members opposite is that my response will be fairly prompt. I'd like to thank the member opposite as well

for Motion for a Return 30, respecting Bill 8, the Public Education Collective Bargaining Act. Three-column documents which are used in the drafting of government bills are privileged and confidential to cabinet and Executive Council. I'm pretty confident that members opposite are aware of this. Cabinet privilege is a substantive rule of law with roots in the Constitution, and as such it's my responsibility to ask this Assembly to reject the motion for a return.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who wish to speak to Motion for a Return 30?

Seeing and hearing none, I will call on the Opposition House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a bit of a shame that the Deputy Government House Leader has chosen to use cabinet confidentiality as an excuse. He knows that members of this Chamber, through the long-standing traditions of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* – and I know that I've raised this on a number of occasions here in the House with respect to the ability of the Legislature to summon documents and produce papers. A three-column document: it is a historical document. It doesn't reveal any secrets that would be important to the security or the safety of Alberta. Merely, it would provide information to this side of the House.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I know that I've said this over the last number of weeks, but it's not just about that this side of the House gets the information. It is about Albertans that want to understand how this government works and why they do what they do and what their actual motives are or aren't. I see no reason why the government wouldn't want to clearly communicate why. I don't see a reason why the government would not want to reach out and set the record straight. I hear from time to time members of this side of the House or the public make the suggestion that the government's intent is one thing, and the government's response is: oh, no, no, no; honest, that's not our intent. Well, providing information just like this, that we're asking for, would be proof positive of what their intention is. So it is more than a little disappointing that they've chosen not to provide this information, and I hope that they will reconsider in the future.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 30 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:27 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Cyr	Starke
Barnes	Gotfried	Taylor
Cooper	Orr	van Dijken

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Payne
Babcock	Hinkley	Phillips
Bilous	Horne	Piquette
Carson	Jabbour	Renaud
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Connolly	Littlewood	Sabir
Coolahan	Loyola	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Sucha
Dach	Malkinson	Sweet
Dang	McKittrick	Turner

Drever	Miller	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Woollard
Totals:	For – 9	Against – 36

[Motion for a Return 30 lost]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

#### Public Trustee Review Documents

M32. Mr. Cooper moved on behalf of Mrs. Pitt that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of internal working documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government from May 22, 2015, to March 7, 2016, pertaining to the review conducted by the Minister of Human Services to improve the management of the Public Trustee common fund as well as the reporting processes of the Public Trustee, as referenced in a government news release issued February 10, 2016.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today with respect to Motion for a Return 32 and move this on behalf of my colleague. I think that the Public Trustee provides a very, very important service to many Albertans. I think that it's reasonable that we find out exactly what is included in the review that clearly took place. The government issued a press release on February 10, 2016. It seems reasonable that members of the public would be able to receive the information that was put together for that review so that we could have a sense of exactly what transpired there.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member. In February of 2016 the Auditor General made two recommendations resulting from the conclusions of the December 2015 audit of the office of the public guardian and trustee. The recommendations related to surplus management, and they related to results reporting. The office of the public guardian and trustee agreed to those recommendations and has undertaken work to improve those two areas.

They are working with Aon Hewitt, an independent consultant, along with the Investment Advisory Committee to discuss these issues. Once a decision is made with respect to reporting, that will be public reporting. So that information will be public, how we report the OPGT's progress. The second thing, surplus: we certainly do report what the surplus is at, and if there will be any changes to that surplus, that will be reported publicly.

However, the hon. colleague for Airdrie has requested confidential and privileged documentation. Those internal documents provide advice to government; hence, I'm not in a position to release those documents. But I can assure the member and all Albertans that the changes that will be made as a result of our review will follow and will be public in terms of reporting surplus management. Therefore, I must reject this motion for a return requested by the MLA for Airdrie.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other members who would like to speak to Motion for a Return 32?

The hon. Opposition House Leader to close?

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 32 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:49 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]



[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Cyr	Taylor
Barnes	Gotfried	van Dijken
Cooper	Orr	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Phillips
Babcock	Horne	Piquette
Bilous	Jabbour	Renaud
Carson	Kleinsteinuber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Littlewood	Sabir
Connolly	Loyola	Schreiner
Coolahan	Luff	Sigurdson
Cortes-Vargas	Malkinson	Sucha
Dach	McKittrick	Sweet
Dang	Miller	Turner
Drever	Nielsen	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Payne	Woollard
Goehring		

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 37
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[Motion for a Return 32 lost]

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

#### Adoption Regulations

510. Ms Luff moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to review section 85(1) of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and section 25(2)(d)(iii) of adoption regulation AR 187/2004 with a view to removing the prohibition on prospective adoptive parents that currently prevents them from advertising and publishing a profile.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to rise to speak to my motion, Motion 510. This is an issue that has been brought to my attention by several prospective adoptive parents in my constituency and, actually, around Alberta. These are people who have been trying to adopt in Alberta for some time and have been frustrated by the legislative provision that prevents Albertans who wish to adopt from publishing an online profile.

There are several websites out there now that allow couples seeking to adopt babies to post profiles of themselves, which can make it easier to find connections between birth parents and adoptive parents. This is a process that's allowed in several provinces: B.C., Manitoba, Ontario, and the Yukon. It can be frustrating for people here in Alberta to look elsewhere and see that people are able to post these profiles. It could make the adoption process less cumbersome and expensive, and folks here in Alberta aren't able to do this.

The people that I've spoken with make the case that everything is done online these days and that this piece of legislation is out of date. The only way for a prospective birth mother to make a connection is to reach out to an adoption agency, most likely by a phone call, and then go into an office to view copies of paper profiles. This can be an intimidating and time-consuming process, and having the ability to look at profiles online could make the process easier. Adoption is a wonderful thing that the government should be encouraging, so we should be looking to remove barriers wherever that's possible.

The people I have spoken to cite an opportunity to post a profile as something that could reduce discrimination due to age or income and something that provides hope to prospective adoptive parents. One parent that I spoke to said that as an adoptive parent, having the ability to post your profile online would be so helpful. It can be viewed by a birth mother or father in privacy across the province and can be shown easily to friends and family. Every method of getting the word out can count. Having an adoptive parent profile online increases awareness for open adoption for families, birth parents, and adoptive parents. It increases communication, knowledge, and would reduce wait times for many families. For those adoptive parents who are concerned about their privacy, it's no more public than paper profile copies we create for these agencies. There are settings or options where, if you don't want your profile shown online, it won't be shown.

One other constituent that I spoke to said the following:

I called all the private agencies in Calgary and as soon as I told them our ages the energy went down on the other [side] of the phone. My heart broke, and I felt like saying we have so much to offer a little one. There has to be [another] way other than going out of country to adopt which can be . . . 20,000-60,000 . . . [This] is why I have told you my story, can this law be changed. Many other provinces have recognized that this law was based on the past and that our society has changed as a whole which has become more informed. Can you please speak for us and help us expand our amazing little family?

I've heard many stories like this from people across the province who are waiting, who are waiting to expand their families and to be able to accept new children into their lives.

I'm very happy to be able to bring this issue to the Legislature today because I know that adoption has touched many lives. I myself am an adopted child, and I find that there is still a lot of stigma and misconception that can surround this issue. When I tell people that I'm adopted, I often get questions. They want to ask me all of these questions, and it's always preceded with: are you okay talking about this? There's some assumption that being adopted means that, you know, you weren't wanted or you were abandoned. But I always tell them: no, that's not true, and yes, I'm happy to talk about it. I'm happy to talk about it because adoption is really one of the greatest acts of love that somebody can be involved in.

5:10

My mom got cancer shortly after she was married, and she had to have a hysterectomy, which made it impossible for her to have children. An adoption provided her and my father with the ability to have a family. I'm adopted, and my brother is adopted, too. I was adopted in B.C. and my brother was adopted from Bolivia, so we have this wonderful family of different roots. We get along fabulously, and it's really been a fantastic experience. My brother and I, from as far back as we can remember, always knew that we were adopted. We never felt out of place, and we always felt loved and wanted.

As an adult I've had the opportunity to get to know my birth mom, which has been a really great experience as she's a pretty amazing woman in her own right. To choose to have a baby and to give it away to others is one of the bravest and most loving things that somebody can do. In getting to know my birth mom, I've discovered that politics are, in fact, genetic. It wasn't something that I talked about growing up with my family, but my birth mom was apparently out door-knocking for the NDP in the 1980 federal election, when I was in the womb. So, clearly, there's something that goes on there.

I've also found out through talking to her that options were pretty limited in terms of choice at the time. She was provided with some profiles to look at, and the main thing that she said that she looked

for in a prospective adoptive family was signs of feminism, so that's pretty fantastic also.

I can imagine how different that might have been today, being able to be in contact with prospective adoptive parents and being able to ask them questions. You know, children these days have the opportunity to be in contact with their birth parents and their families growing up so that you have all of that richness and love that comes with that. Adoption is a very different thing these days than it was when I was adopted. I can imagine that my life might have been different had I had the opportunity to know my birth parents growing up.

Since adoption is modernizing, we should be looking to modernize our laws as well. Adoption agencies are also open to this opportunity. They say that more and more birth parents are reaching out by e-mail and text and that being able to provide them with online profiles in the comfort of their own home would help to improve this process.

Now, all of this being said, what I'm asking for is a review of the legislation, and I want there to be lots of input from adoptive parents, adopted children, social workers, and people who work in adoptive agencies to make sure that whatever changes do come to this legislation, we get it right. I certainly see where limits and safeguards have to be in place that ensure the safety and well-being of children, and I think some of my colleagues who have more experience in this area will be speaking to this. Where special-needs children are concerned, for instance, it's crucial to ensure that prospective families are well suited and prepared so that any match made can be a permanent one.

In any review of this legislation I think there needs to be careful consideration of where online advertising works, where it's appropriate, and where it might not be. Overall, however, I feel that adoption is a wonderful thing, and we need to modernize this legislation to be more responsive to the needs of families.

I'm looking forward to more debate on this motion. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I continue to feel privileged to hear so much from the members in this House, these kinds of stories.

The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a few days, I understand, in a political career that you'll look back upon with real pleasure in the sense that good things have happened. There are a lot of days in the work that we do that aren't joyous occasions and sometimes can be very frustrating, and oftentimes we don't see eye to eye on issues in this place. So on a day like today I just want to say thank you so much. Thank you to the member for bringing this very important issue forward.

Mr. Speaker, in the name of full disclosure, you know that I have a particular passion for adoption. You know that I have three children. Each of them has a very special place in my heart, and two of them came to our family through adoption. Each one just brings such great joy. Around this issue of adoption there's often such joy and such pain, and it's just so important that we all use our voices to elevate the cause of adoption. So I want to thank the member for doing that today.

Many people in this House will know that recently, in conjunction with my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View, who I know is going to have the opportunity to chat a little bit about it, we made an announcement of our intention in the upcoming session, or after prorogation, of introducing a private member's bill that will reflect much of what is reflected in this motion. It's my hope that we'll be able to work collaboratively through the review process

that the member has hopefully initiated today and that the government acts upon it and that we'll be able to deliver a piece of legislation that does just that, that addresses some of her concerns with ensuring that we advertise where appropriate and we don't otherwise and that the removal of the prohibition on advertising around adoption is done in a way that reflects all stakeholders.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, more important than what the motion does today, assuming that there is broad support for it, with respect to actually removing the prohibition or reviewing the legislation around removing the prohibition on adoption profiles is that it allows us an opportunity to speak about this very important issue around adoption. While this motion has a wonderful intent, this certainly isn't going to solve all of the problems around adoption, nor will the piece of private member's legislation that we intend to introduce in the spring, but it will really initiate a conversation about ways that we can talk about this critically important issue and talk about it in a way that reduces stigma, talk about it in a way that celebrates birth parents, talk about it in a way that minimizes the shame of pregnancy loss, and talk about it in a way that really builds up our families and builds up communities. That's so important to the future of our province.

Mr. Speaker, you've heard me speak about strong families creating strong communities and strong communities building a strong family, and that's really what adoption is about. It's about building strong families no matter what the face of that family is, but about building a strong family.

The department and adoption professionals all across this province – and I've spoken to lots of them – have identified some key concerns and needs that they have. I think it's wonderful that we have the opportunity to speak about that, things about breaking down stigma, things about breaking down the stereotypes that come along with adoption, things about breaking down the silos that exist between the Department of Human Services and the wonderful adoption professionals that exist in our province through private agencies, finding ways to have these organizations communicate better so that the adoption community can expand, because at the heart of all adoption professionals, be it in the department or private, is this unquenchable desire to make the best available decision for the needs of a child. There's no place better for a child than in the most ideal scenario, with their biological family, but where that's not possible, in a family that's going to be theirs forever.

So with everything that we can do, whether it's better training for front-line department workers with the available options around adoption or better training for them to work more collaboratively with the department, today is really the start of a conversation with respect to working together and championing a cause that's so critically important to our future.

I'm proud to be able to rise today and speak about that. I look forward to the passing of this motion and look forward to speaking about this during private members' business, hopefully in the spring.

5:20

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the motion brought forward by my colleague the MLA for Calgary-East. I would like to begin by acknowledging the critically important role that adoptive families play in promoting the health, safety, happiness, and well-being of so many of Alberta's children. I have had the opportunity to meet with several adoptive parents in my role as Minister of Human Services. I also have heard from

prospective adoptive families, many of whom are very excited to nurture a child and provide for their well-being and healthy development. I appreciate the members advocating for these families and for raising this important issue for debate in the Legislature.

I would also like to acknowledge the advocacy of the Official Opposition members, in particular my friend the MLA from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I know this is an issue that many members and many Albertans feel passionately about. Our government shares a deep concern for this issue, and we are always looking for ways to improve core supports and programs, including the adoption system, in our province. We will continue to listen to all parties as well as families and business partners and all relevant groups as we consider this issue.

Adoption is an important part of supporting strong families and building resilient communities. I want all members of this House and all Albertans to know that we are committed to ensuring that when children are no longer safe in their own homes or when a parent wishes to voluntarily put their child up for adoption, that those children have safe, loving, nurturing homes to grow up in. We will continue to support adoptive families and prospective adoptive parents. Part of this work includes removing barriers to adoption when removing those barriers is in the best interests of children and their families. It is critical that the adoption process provides children with the best outcome and meets the needs of families.

Choosing an adoptive family is a significant decision for any birth parent, and we should work to strengthen and support their decision-making when we can. We recognize that online advertising may support options for birth parents; however, we know that any decision regarding the well-being of children must be taken only after careful consideration and examination. Every case is different, and we need to look at these cases on a case-by-case basis.

There are several approaches to this issue across jurisdictions in Canada regarding online advertising for potential adoptive parents, and my ministry will be looking to see what can be learned from the debate today in the House and from these different approaches as we explore how we best support children and families with respect to the adoption process. We have flagged this issue for examination when the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act is reviewed next.

In the meantime I support this motion from my colleague. I appreciate this opportunity to hear more from the members on this issue, and I look forward to the debate today.

As well, I would like to thank the Member for Calgary-East for sharing her story with us today. Thank you very much for bringing forward this motion, and thank you, everyone, for sharing your views on this important issue.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to start out by thanking the Member for Calgary-East for sharing her story. It just gives such tremendous perspective, and it's greatly appreciated, so thank you for sharing that with us. It's wonderful.

Also, thank you to the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for your story. Because I have the privilege of knowing your beautiful family, it makes me extremely proud to be able to rise and speak to supporting this motion and, hopefully, moving forward further on the legislation through a private member's bill.

Eventually this motion is going to review section 85(1) of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and section 25(2)(d)(iii) of adoption regulation AR 187/2004 with a view to removing the prohibition on prospective adoptive parents that currently prevents them from advertising and publishing a profile. As has been said, many of the Members of the Legislative Assembly know that the

Wildrose on November 18 released recommendations to guide new legislation modernizing the adoption system in Alberta as well, which is very in line with the member's motion, the fact that the first recommendation we made was directly in line with this motion before the House today, updating current advertising legislation to reflect the use of modern technologies, especially allowing prospective adoptive families to be able to post profiles online.

The legislation protects children from being posted in advertisements on private websites, but what has happened is that it has unintentionally prevented Albertans from posting potential adoptive parents' profiles online. This is something that has probably led to less than ideal outcomes in these situations. What we're seeing is that other provinces in Canada have already allowed for this practice of posting potential adoptive parents' profiles, and it's received great success, so we would like to be able to catch up to that.

We've also recommended, on top of that, to implement mandatory visits by adoption professionals for adoptive families to ensure that they are aware that there are so many community resources that are available to them. We want to make sure that along with making sure that these profiles are updated and available, we're also making sure that we're following through with that. I had an opportunity to speak, actually, with Albertans as well on our second recommendation, on the importance of ensuring through regulations that this proper support is available to new and adoptive parents. It's just going to make the whole process flow better.

It's also our belief that a mandatory visit by adoption professionals for all types of adoptions, including direct-placement adoptions, would certainly ensure that the adoptive families are equipped with all of the important tools to raise their children. Currently a person can actually place a child for adoption through direct placement, but a home visit is not required at this point. The main purpose of the visit, obviously, would be to ensure that the adoptive parents are fully informed of all resources available through the adoption process. Through extensive consultation we believe that having a trained worker provide a list of available community resources is that next important step to making sure that the adoption process is lasting and successful for adoptive parents and for these children to find their forever homes.

The third recommendation from our plan on modernizing Alberta's adoption framework is to also strengthen the public health postnatal services, which, again, I think, falls very much in line with this motion. It removes the mandatory use of child and family services when a birth parent expresses interest in adoption. What that means is that we can help those front-line workers with expertise in the field. We can make changes to improve the adoption process for the parents, children, and the birth families, and then what will happen is that the strong communities and families can rally around these folks. We can do more to make the system responsive to modern needs of the adopted child, the guardian, and the birth families.

I'm so honoured – so honoured – to be able to rise and to have the opportunity to talk with all members about this important issue in the House today and to discuss the changes, the motion that the member has brought forward as well as some of the points that we'll be bringing forward on modernizing adoptions. It will provide a foundation for the private member's bill that will be presented during the next legislative session. I'm so hopeful that all members of the legislative body will obviously support this very positive motion and this common-sense initiative and, by doing so, in the same way will support upcoming legislation that will help to modernize these policies.

Thank you so much.

5:30

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and speak in support of this motion, conversation that I would like to have just around some of the potential options that could be discussed when the review occurs around adoption. Obviously, I was a child protection worker before I was elected. I actually worked as a kinship support worker for a while doing home assessments and placing children with kinship families, so I have worked through permanency, looking at PGAs, permanent guardianship agreements, and permanent guardianship orders through adoption. I've worked my way through the process with families in different capacities. As well, I have some personal experience with my extended family around international adoptions as well as adoptions within Alberta.

In saying that, I do have some cautions around online profiling. It's not that I'm against it. I believe that an adoptive family should have as much opportunity to be able to connect with biological families and to be able to have those conversations, but there is a process that has to come along with that. I hear the Official Opposition talking about: why does children's services need to be involved, and is there a way that we can look at modernizing the legislation so that that doesn't happen?

I mean, there is capacity for direct placements, where there is limited involvement with children's services. But part of the reason why children's services is involved on more occasions than not is the fact that it is ultimately the government's responsibility to ensure that children are safe, that we are doing all of the assessments that are required to ensure that the home is safe, that the family that they're being placed with is appropriate, and that all of those needs are being met.

So when we look at adoption websites and see biological families reaching out to adoptive families, my only caution is that there's a potential for vulnerable parents who may not have the cognitive capacity to understand what the adoption process looks like or really understand what adoption means in the context of permanency and the fact that, you know, it isn't an option to place a child for a short term and then want to have them back at some point. So it sets up the biological family as well as potentially the adoptive family to have an extremely hard and painful experience when either the biological family, you know, starts going through the process of adoption and then changes their mind or the child is placed with the adoptive family permanently and their forever home is set up and they are experiencing all of these positive things, and then all of a sudden the biological family comes back and says: well, I've changed my mind.

It's extremely important that children's services help with that process so that they can, you know, provide the counselling that's required for the biological parents. We can ensure that the biological parents understand when their child is going to be adopted that it is a forever home and that they can't come back in a year or six months and say, "Well, I've changed my mind; I would like my baby back" or young adult or, you know, any child, really. I mean, it's not just babies that get adopted. There are lots of different ages.

The other piece of that as well is that there is potential for supports through children's services. So if we're talking about the supports for a permanency program, which is financial plus emotional support for adoptive families or families with PGAs – if a child goes through the children's services system and has a permanent guardianship order and then becomes adopted, the government still has a responsibility to support that adoptive family. By choice; it's voluntary. I mean, it's not a requirement that we would go in and see that family, but

there is that capacity to provide that additional support for counselling, for special equipment, if required, if the child has a special need, and talk about sibling counselling. I mean, there are a variety of different things that can be supported not only for the child but for the adoptive family.

These are important things, definitely, I think, as we move forward and we review the legislation, that we look at the motion that is before us today. Those are things to consider. How do we do those things so that we're ensuring that we're protecting both the biological family as well as the adoptive family and the little person in between while still promoting a very important, long-term, forever home for children? Again, I have personal experience. I know how important this is. I also know the struggles that come with it through the process, so I just want to make sure that when we are doing it, we're doing it in a way that we're supporting more adoptive families and allowing this opportunity to occur but also making sure that everybody is safe.

I do support the motion. I just have some cautionary statements.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to stand today and thank the Member for Calgary-East for bringing this motion forward. I have a friend in my town of Bonnyville who, when I first was elected, said that this is a problem for him and his wife. His name is Curtis. I asked him to write me an e-mail, and I'd like to read the e-mail really quickly into the record because I think it's important to show that this reinforces where Calgary-East is going with this.

It says, "Good morning" to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

My wife and I are currently going through the process of adopting a child in Alberta. We are working with Adoption Options and we are now on the waiting list for a child. The wait for a child is approximately 2 - 3 years and the wait is completely out of our control as we have to await a birth parent [or parents] to select us.

Something that surprised my wife and I when we were going through the approval process is that we found out that waiting adoptive parents are not allowed to make it known on social media that we are looking to adopt a child nor are we allowed to announce that we are on the "approved list." This to us seemed archaic, and runs counter to other provinces/territories (namely BC, Ontario and Yukon) in Canada where these provinces/territories allow adoptive parents to make such announcements on social media. This puts potential adoptive parents in Alberta at a disadvantage to other prospective adoptive parents in other parts of the country. Often birth parents in Alberta will end up connecting with prospective adoptive parents in other provinces simply because they have online profiles.

Per the below email, it appears some of your fellow [Wildrose] MLAs [from Airdrie and High River] are already aware of this situation and as our MLA [I am] asking if you can also look into this and see if there is any way that this regulation can be altered [or] updated. Given how much society now utilizes social media, it would be beneficial to be able to use that tool to get the word out for potential adoptive parents.

I've included a link to the CBC news articles about this issue for your review [and] reference.

This article was Alberta Adoption Publicity Ban Challenged.

Thank you for your time and look forward to talking with you again.

From Curtis.

This is reinforcing exactly the concern that the Member for Calgary-East has brought forward. I take great pride in the fact that

one of my constituents also identified this as being a concern and that we are actually moving forward, it appears, as a group to correct, possibly, this unfortunate circumstance that is revolving around adoptive parents.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the time that you've given me to speak. I look forward to seeing the vote today.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion. I have heard from many of my own constituents in Lethbridge-West on this matter, and I am very pleased that the government has heard them. In particular, I am pleased that the Member for Calgary-East has been able to bring forward this motion on the matter of the online profiles given that it is something that prospective families in southern Alberta have been asking for for some time. It's always very gratifying when government can be responsive to some of these issues that have been happening for some time.

5:40

Now, certainly, issues related to adoption go back many years. My own older sister was born in 1967 to my parents, who were not married. Not really by choice that sister of mine, who I didn't know for the first 20 years of my life, was put up for adoption. Life has changed a lot in the almost 50 years – she's not going to like that I just indicated that she's almost 50. But there it is, Mr. Speaker; the math doesn't lie. You know, what that has really taught me is, first of all, that personality is very much genetic. I apologize to the members across the way, but, yes, there are two of us. The friendship as an adult that I have been able to form with my older sister, who is from both of my parents – what an honour it was to get to know her as an adult and certainly for my parents as well and for my dad, before he passed away, to get to know his own other grandchildren. What it really underlined for me is that adoption, in many of the first instances, is a women's issue because anyone can adopt a child, but only women, at least so far, can have babies.

So on the side of the folks who are moving forward with adoption as a choice, we need to make sure that these laws keep pace for them as well. I don't believe, Mr. Speaker, that in 1967 they supported my mother very well. A lot has changed so much for birth parents and for the better, but we know that we can make those changes work even more for families. I think the ability to look at these laws is important, the legislation, so that we can ensure that family reflects where we're at as a society. Family is defined broadly, and the more broadly it is defined, essentially, the more love we have access to in this world. I have certainly learned that about my own family, and as a New Democrat what I desire for myself, I wish for all.

I think it's important to remember, too, that adoption is also an LGBT issue because so many same-sex couples now move forward with adoption as a choice, and it's important that we make sure that we have those choices and, again, that family is defined as broadly as possible.

Finally, I believe that it's important for us to get it right on adoption because adoption is an important part of reconciliation and moving forward with intact families for indigenous peoples, Mr. Speaker. What we know about the tragedy of children in care, what we know about the foster system, what we know about many of these issues is that a large number of these children are indigenous. Having a family, no matter who that family is, is so important, and the legislation that we put around these issues is so important to that.

Now, I support this motion on the part of the Member for Calgary-East. I believe that these are very delicate matters, Mr.

Speaker, and as with all things related to family and to choice, whether it's in vitro fertilization, whether it's reproductive freedoms, whether it's adoption laws, we must proceed carefully, understanding the very human impacts of our actions as legislators, but we can and we should start with this matter of the online profiles. I know that I have heard it loud and clear from my own constituents. We should make sure that we do it right, and we should make sure that in this province family is defined by love, it is defined by caring, and it is defined by ensuring that we have the broadest interpretation possible of what it means to grow up in a family.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise and to support this motion, brought forward by my colleague the MLA for Calgary-East, to facilitate finding forever homes for children who need one. Speaking about adoption is not easy. For many, be it the birth mothers and fathers, their family, the child of the adoptive parents, this brings forth strong emotions and often painful memories and ongoing pain. I would like to acknowledge this as we discuss the motion today.

Mr. Speaker, as an adoptive parent I am thankful for my two boys' birth parents, who put the boys as babies in an orphanage so that they could have a loving home that they could not provide. My husband and I did not select adoption as an easy solution. After years of monthly disappointments we realized that if we wanted children, we needed to consider adoption. Infertility is a devastating illness, an emotionally and physically draining monthly occurrence. By the time couples consider adoption, they often have had expensive in vitro procedures, drugs, and operations. They also most often have drained their savings. The birth of nephews and nieces, friends' children, and babies generally is an emotional minefield. I know that pain, and I understand the importance of facilitating putting together birth parents and prospective adoptive parents.

As intense as the pain of infertility, for birth parents there's a pain of a different kind. I want to honour birth parents and the difficult decisions that they make when they decide to seek an adoptive family for their child: thank you. I am glad that laws and policies have now made it possible for birth parents to keep in touch with the adoptive parents and their child and sometimes to be actively involved in their life through an open adoption.

Mr. Speaker, my husband and I did seek to adopt a child through a private agency in Canada, but as this proved to be a wait of a number of years, we ended up adopting in Thailand, where we worked for a number of years, adopting two toddlers through the government's social service department. We took our boys back to the orphanage when they were teenagers, and we were thankful for them to meet some of their original caretakers but also, most importantly, to witness the difficult decision that a mother made to entrust her child to the government orphanage.

The intent of this motion is to support local adoptive parents in matching children with parents with appropriate measures. Currently Albertan adoptive families are not able to advertise online, and we need to modernize this to facilitate adoption and to ensure that children have a forever home. Choosing an adoptive family is an important choice for birth parents, and online advertising allows access to options. Both sides face so many hurdles as it is, and making the connection process as straightforward as possible is going to go a long way. Adoptive families go through a thorough home study before adoptions are finalized, so any online profile is not the final word or knowledge of the prospective adoptive parent.

Posting a profile online is more the beginning of a conversation that facilitates finding a home for a child.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to vote on this motion that urges the government to review the relevant sections of the mentioned legislation and, through consultation with stakeholders, to remove the prohibition on online posting by prospective adoptive families.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Seeing and hearing no other members who wish to speak to the motion, I would give the opportunity to Calgary-East to close.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was wonderful tonight, one of these rare nights that we get in the House where both sides agree on an issue. It's always nice to be here on those nights.

Adoption really is something that has touched so many lives. I think that talking about it more and removing barriers and educating people is something that is really worth our time here in the Legislature, both to talk about how great adoption can be as well as how heart-wrenching and painful it can be to be a waiting adoptive family. I do thank the Member for Sherwood Park for sharing her story from the other side, myself as an adopted child and hers as an adoptive parent.

5:50

I also want to thank the folks who took the time to come forward

and share their stories with me. This is what can happen when concerned citizens get out and talk to their MLAs about issues. So I thank the folks who brought this to me, particularly April Boettcher, who first brought this to my attention, and also Valerie Bielenda, who is here in the gallery tonight with her husband, Mark, and her mom, Noelle, to watch the debate.

So I just want to take this opportunity to say thank you to all the people who brought this forward for the opportunity to talk about how wonderful adoption can be. I guess I should thank both my moms, also, for, you know, helping me get to where I am today and my dad, too, and my brother and everyone who made our family as wonderful and loving as my family was growing up.

I would encourage everyone to support this motion. I think everyone is on board. Let's do what we can to reduce barriers to families and people who are waiting to welcome babies and children with love into their families right now.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 510 carried unanimously]

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising because I think we've had some very positive, robust discussion this afternoon, and seeing the time, I will move that the House stand adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:52 p.m.]











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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, December 5, 2016

Day 57

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

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Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, December 5, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Committee of Supply

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order. Hon. members, before we begin this evening's consideration of supplementary supply, I would just like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which is as follows:

- (a) the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (c) for the next 20 minutes, the members of the third party, if any, and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (d.1) for the next 20 minutes, the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent Members and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (e) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak, and
- (f) for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply with the speaking times set at 5 minutes as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

During the first rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. Once the first rotation is complete, speaking times are reduced to five minutes. Provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking times, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined period.

Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 28, approved by the Assembly on December 1, 2016, the time allotted for consideration is three hours.

### Supplementary Supply Estimates 2016-17 General Revenue Fund

**The Chair:** I will now recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move the estimates.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to move the 2016-17 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund. When passed, these estimates will authorize a single funding request of \$1,451,000 to support the Legislative Assembly to provide administrative and other support for the activity of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. This is the amount requested by the Speaker as recommended by the Standing Committee on Members' Services at its meeting on September 26, 2016.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If it's okay with you, I'll combine my time with the minister. I'd just like to rise briefly. As a member of the Members' Services Committee we had some very good discussions around this while, at the end of the day, I think it may have been advantageous to wait for the Electoral Boundaries Commission until the following election given the close proximity that we've had in a couple of elections being a little bit closer to each other. We had some discussion around that particular issue, among others, the very fact that the committee has recommended that we move forward on the commission and that the commission has been now appointed.

I might just add that I think it speaks to the quality of the folks in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that the government saw fit to appoint a member of the community in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills as well as did the Leader of the Official Opposition in consultation with the third party and through the Speaker, another member to the commission.

Given that that is well and truly on its way and that the Members' Services Committee has recommended this to the Assembly – and, Madam Chair, you'll know that I have a passion for respecting committees of this Assembly – as such, I'll look forward to supporting the estimates.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? I'll recognize the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, very much. I'd like to thank the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board for bringing this forward. I do have a few questions, though, as relate to the amount that was presented, and perhaps he could expand upon it a little bit. I am somewhat concerned or at least require some additional explanation as to the amount that has been allocated, some \$1.451 million dollars, for the work of the boundaries commission. There is no question that the work the boundaries commission will be doing is extremely important. It's part of our democratic process. I think that it's also important to note – and I'm sure that the minister is aware of this – that these activities are causing some concern and are certainly causing some nervousness, especially in areas of rural Alberta, where population growth has not been as robust as it has been in urban Alberta or, more specifically, in some of the suburban areas of Alberta.

Indeed, Madam Chair, some of the greatest degree of population growth in our province has occurred on the outskirts of our larger urban centres, to the extent that some of our existing constituencies in those areas have a population that is, in some cases, 30 or 40 per cent greater than the arithmetic mean of the average number of electors. Of course, we know that the Electoral Boundaries Commission will have to take these differences into account.

The other end of the scale is also a very great concern, and that is that we do have some of our constituencies that are relatively sparsely populated, whose populations are not growing to the same extent and for whom representation is indeed a real challenge. Madam Chair, I mean, I know that, for example, the constituency of Peace River, that you represent, is one of those constituencies that has a huge geographic area to cover, many, many communities that you need to interact with, and that's not unlike a lot of other communities in rural Alberta whose populations are not growing. So, you know, there is concern, and I'm sure that the minister is aware of that. I'm sure that the Minister of Justice is aware of it as is the minister responsible for democratic renewal. These are portfolios that will all interact with the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

I would appreciate, perhaps, some additional information from the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board as to how the \$1.451 million was arrived at. How does this compare to the allocation for previous Electoral Boundaries Commissions?

I guess part of the reason why I ask that question is that not too long ago, about two years ago, I was involved in another cross-Alberta committee, that functioned for about six months' time and was conducting the rural health services review. We had seven committee members that travelled across the province. We also had administrative secretariat support from the Department of Health. We met with over 100 municipalities as we travelled across the province. We advertised our meetings. We had a considerable amount of conversation and discussion. I know that the total price tag of doing that process was approximately \$200,000. That's certainly a large sum of money, but I think it was money that was well spent, especially if the recommendations are acted upon, you know, as we go forward.

So I am very interested in hearing from the Finance minister on how the \$1.451 million was arrived at and if he could perhaps give additional information to the Chamber as to how that compares to the allocation for previous Electoral Boundaries Commissions.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

7:40

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Chair. It's just an honour to rise as the deputy chair of Members' Services to provide some information on the questions of the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. As he noted, there is a difference between the cost of the previous commission, which was actually \$1.2 million. I'm just going to provide a little bit of the information as to what led to that, of course, noting that the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission was in 2009-10, so there is an increase. There are several things that have contributed to this. One, the number of households in Alberta has increased; therefore, the number of houses to reach through advertising has also increased. The householder document providing information on the commission is generally sent to each Alberta home. The postage costs have also substantially increased from 2009. The cost of advertising has also increased considerably since 2009-10.

This one brings a different part, which is that the commission must also purchase two new maps plotters to do its work, so there are some technical purchases that need to be made.

In addition, the commission has traditionally travelled to a number of communities in Alberta to hold public meetings. This is something that they're going to continue doing, and one of the things that reduced their costs in that was the charter planes as well. Adding those travel costs has also increased their overall costs. In certain situations they need to fly into communities to complete the work more expeditiously, and this does increase that. Those charter air services costs didn't happen in 2009-10, so there's a discrepancy in travel costs there.

That provides a little bit of an overview of the changes between the last one and this current one. I'm happy to answer any more questions if you have any.

**The Chair:** Any other comments, questions?

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah. Just to follow up a little bit on the previous line of questioning, I was thinking in the same direction. Maybe if you could just add a tiny bit for us there. Was

the \$1.2 million budgeted last time adequate? Was it all spent, or was there excess?

And I guess my second question would be: could you give us an indication, maybe, of the top three expenses that will make up the \$1.451 million?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you. I don't have that information at my fingertips, but, you know, what we do know is that there is the increase, and those increases are mainly due to the costs of charters and postage.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Yes, Madam Chair. You know, forgive me. I'm not trying to belabour the point a little bit, but just something the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park said sort of stuck out to me, and that is that you mentioned that there was a purchase of two additional map plotters for the work of the committee. I have no doubt that the committee will absolutely be plotting out maps and be requiring that, but I guess I'm puzzled as to whether, for something that is going to be a very finite period of time, perhaps six months to a year that this commission is actually going to be in effect, in fact, purchasing new pieces of equipment that after a year – I question where that equipment then goes. By the next time the Electoral Boundaries Commission is constituted, for the next set of electoral boundaries, I'm going to assume that plotter technology will be such that the plotters that are purchased for this round will probably be obsolete and will have to be replaced again.

I guess there are two questions that I would have. First of all, what is the cost of these two plotters? Secondly, was it looked into in terms of either renting or perhaps leasing these plotters from a firm that has them in regular usage and could perhaps spare them? I would suggest – if I'm not correct, I'd be surprised – that there are a lot of surveying firms around the province that are currently less busy than they typically have been in the past, and they may well have exactly the equipment that the boundaries commission is needing and looking for and would be happy to make those plotters available to the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

I'm just questioning: is this the best way of, you know, keeping an eye on things? I recognize that everything else that you mentioned – with regard to an increase in postage, absolutely, that's gone up. Increased number of households: yes, that, too. I'm going to assume – I could be wrong on this – that there is also going to be a robust effort to reach out to Albertans using platforms other than direct mail, which, as we know, is something that we become more and more reliant upon as we do communications out there, although I certainly hope it doesn't turn into a 4 and a half million dollar exercise.

But I would like to ask specifically with regard to these two pieces of capital purchase that you mentioned because it just strikes me that, you know, perhaps that's an area – and maybe it's a very small amount of funds. That could be. I've never bought a map plotter in my life, so I really don't know what these things are worth, but I can imagine that they aren't cheap. Perhaps we could just have more information as to what these plotters cost and why they're being purchased. Was leasing considered, and if it was, why was that option rejected?

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to provide a little bit more information, I did mention the map plotters. In fact, they did have one from the previous commission. Of course, they use them quite a bit, and because they are aged, they are looking to replace them, and some of them are failing. The cost for the two new plotters is \$54,000. They would be able to use them in the next one as well.

In addition to that, some of the other questions of the figures that we are wanting, too: actually, those figures were presented during Members' Services Committee when this went through Members' Services. Again, I almost want to say that some of the discussion on how we are approving the budget was actually discussed within the Members' Services Committee. That's why this is being brought forward after having been approved through Members' Services.

That being said, I just wanted to make sure that the number was out there, that the map plotters do cost about \$54,000. I don't have the information on the lease, if that was looked into as an option, but I know that this information was presented to Members' Services as a line item that is increasing.

**The Chair:** I should just point out that the process we're following for this supplementary supply is a little bit unique in that the request is coming from the Legislative Assembly to the House, which is why the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park is a designate on behalf of the Members' Services Committee, and it's a fairly straightforward, single request. The timing is a little bit more fluid, and I've been, in who I'm recognizing, just a little more generous.

Any other members wishing to speak?

Then I shall put the following question.

### **Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2016-17 General Revenue Fund**

Agreed to:

Support to the Legislative Assembly

Expense \$1,451,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

The Committee of Supply shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Sweet:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again. The following resolution related to the 2016-17 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, has been approved.

Support to the Legislative Assembly: expense, \$1,451,000.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

I did want to alert hon. members that Standing Order 61(3) provides that immediately upon concurring on the report of the Committee of Supply, we do revert to Introduction of Bills.

7:50

### **Introduction of Bills**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

### **Bill 37**

#### **Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2)**

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 37, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2). Thank you to the members opposite for their questions to clarify the substance of the act and what it'll be spent on. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 37 read a first time]

### **Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole**

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### **Bill 32**

#### **Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016**

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

**Dr. Starke:** Madam Chair, I'd just like to declare that I have a pecuniary interest or at least that my spouse does as she sits on the board of directors of a major credit union here in the province and therefore request that I may recuse myself from discussion and have that recorded in the Orders of the Day.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016. As I've mentioned before, the credit union system is a vital part of the Alberta economy; \$24 billion in assets are under management across the system. It is incredible, then, that this act has not been renewed, reviewed in at least 20 years and possibly 30 years. This bill is about modernization. It's about bringing the credit union system into the 21st century. It is about cutting red tape from the system and making it easier to do business. The legislation will modernize the system by providing additional business powers to credit unions and clarifying membership rules, which will make it easier for credit unions to lend to small and medium-sized enterprises.

The changes to the act have been well received by the credit unions themselves, who have been waiting for a long time for many of these changes. Graham Wetter, the CEO of Credit Union Central of Alberta, stated in a letter received by our government, quote, I would like to take this opportunity to express our industry's support for Bill 32. End quote. Further, he goes on to say, "Bill 32 . . . will serve to further enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of Alberta credit unions, which in turn will provide further benefits to Albertans . . . and the provincial economy." Mr. Wetter praises the government for engaging with and consulting credit unions when developing this proposed legislation.

I am proud of this work and firmly believe that it ensures the resilience and viability of the credit union system and that of Alberta families and businesses as a result. Credit unions are an important part of our communities. They are local-minded and play leading roles at the local level. They are innovative and develop

many key products that would never be dreamed of by the banking system.

One that sticks out for me is the partnership between First Calgary Financial and the Calgary nonprofit Momentum, which provides an alternative product to the payday loans that many people get involved with. First Calgary's product provides access to credit at well below the triple digits charged by payday lending companies. This allows First Calgary members to access credit quickly and easily without the fear of spiralling into unending cycles of debt. This is innovative.

I ask that all members stand with the credit unions and their endorsement and provide their support for this bill.

At this time, Madam Chair, I'd like to propose an amendment. I propose a minor amendment to the bill as follows: section 3 is struck out, and the following is substituted:

Section 37 is amended by adding the following after subsection (6):

- (6.1) Where a bylaw under section 45(4)(j) does not provide for access to the list of members, or does not provide for reasonable access to it as referred to in subsection (3), the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations
  - (a) establishing the right of a member to direct the credit union to distribute to all members the information specified by that member and to direct the method of distribution, and
  - (b) with respect to any such direction, establishing the rights and obligations of the credit union, including the right to impose on the member a reasonable charge for distribution.

Madam Chair, I'd consider this a clarifying amendment. It simply seeks to clarify the authority which a credit union has to recover reasonable costs from a member. It clarifies the purview government has to regulate the distribution of credit union member lists and how credit unions distribute information at the request of the member.

At this time I'd like to move this amendment and encourage my colleagues to support this amendment as well as the whole bill. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have two copies of the amendment.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A1. We're going to take a moment to give members a chance to have a copy of it, have it circulated.

I believe we're ready to continue. Did you have any further comments, hon. Minister of Finance?

Go ahead, hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to amendment A1. I'd like to thank the member for bringing it. I always have some reservations when it comes to the government putting itself in a situation where it needs to amend its own legislation. Previously and even mere moments ago the Minister of Finance stood up and praised the completeness and the awesomeness of the bill, you know, went on record with the letter that he spoke about. In fact, I had the opportunity to receive the same letter.

8:00

Last week I rose in the House and spoke at some length about the great work that the Mountain View Credit Union does in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and also expressed their support that they'd provided in the form of their chief officer and their discussion around the bill.

It sometimes is concerning that the government would need to amend its own legislation a mere three or four days after

introduction, particularly when the government has said such glowing things about their own legislation. I have read through the amendment now, but I'm wondering if the Minister of Finance might just provide some context as to what happened, why it was that, you know, they introduced the bill and now they believe that they need some clarification with respect to this amendment. Like, I get what it's going to do, but how did we wind up here? Is this the only amendment that he's anticipating needing for this particular bill?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much for the questions. Yes, it is, with regard to the number of amendments. This is all I'm contemplating. If you look at 3, section 37 in terms of the original in the bill and then look at this amendment, the amendment is more expletive. [interjections] No. That's not the right word – explanatory in terms of the kinds of direction that we're taking, working with credit unions, recognizing that many credit unions already have provisions in their bylaws. Those provisions in their bylaws we are acknowledging, but we are also indicating to members who wish to utilize this provision in any credit union that they're a member of that they have to underwrite these costs.

We're being more explanatory, we're being clearer with regard to who bears the costs of this engagement with members of credit unions, and we're recognizing that the bylaws in place, where they're reasonable, where they're already taking place for members in credit unions, that those would be of course acceptable. The previous unamended part that was in the original bill took too heavy a hand at trying to address these things. The amendment is more about working together with credit unions, and that's probably the way credit unions work best: they work for their members, and we're trying to work with the credit unions.

**The Chair:** Any other questions or comments with respect to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am proud to have a credit union within two of my communities, the Lakeland Credit Union. It's a credit union that I actually served on the board of until I was elected. I sat as the finance chair, and I actually have a humorous story to share.

**An Hon. Member:** From accountants?

**Mr. Cyr:** I know. I know. I had two committees that I could be a part of – actually all of the committees, but two of them that I was interested in. One was the audit committee, and one was the finance committee. I was like: "Well, you know what? I do audits all the time. I think I want to move on to something a little different, so I am going to join the finance committee." It makes sense. [interjections] Right. So I went in, and I find out that my duty on the finance committee is to be in charge of the audit, so what they meant was governance, more or less, with the audit committee. In the end, I ended up doing a lot of the finance and working very closely with Shirley, Pierre, Garth, Amber, and Ronda.

You know, the fact is that the staff at the Lakeland Credit Union are wonderful. They're people that I got to know very well, as well as the board members, and I'd like to get them recognized because what we need to understand is that credit unions are member driven,

very similar to political parties – very similar to political parties – and it is decisions that are being made by the members at AGMs that actually influence the direction of a credit union. I'd like to say that in my case here, working with Charmaine, Judy, Mitch, Wayne, Kelsey – I didn't work with Chantal, and I didn't work with Lionel or Dean or Denis, but I did work with a few others that I really did enjoy working with.

You know what? The fact is that when it comes to credit unions, at the time when I decided that becoming a director was something that I had some interest in because in the end I wanted to be a part of my community, and what better way to be a part of your community than joining as a director to hear exactly how to help? The one thing I will say about our local credit union: what it's well known for is its contributions back to the community, its donations back to the community, giving back to the community, volunteering with the community. That is something that attracted me to the credit union.

Now, here it is that I sat on the finance committee. I was able to work with the staff and work out what the dividends should be along with the board, and, you know, through that I had a really good understanding of exactly how credit unions work.

I also will say that the one thing about credit unions is that they actually have their own training program. You go through CUDA training – I don't remember what the acronym stands for off the top of my head, but I'm sure I can probably guess what it is – and here it is that they put you through a series of courses to prepare you for running a credit union.

Now, why is this important? Credit unions were started in our community because they just couldn't get financing or be able to build up within our community. On January 25, 1940, for instance, is where they actually did their creating of the Lakeland Credit Union. It wasn't called that way back then, but it is now. We actually had our 75th anniversary, which was quite remarkable, and I'll tell you that it gives me great pride.

Now, I will tell you that when I first started as a businessman in Cold Lake, it comes down to that when you're starting to work with some of the larger banks, it is more difficult to get a loan so that you can get a building and get going. In my case it was the credit union that was the only one that was willing to take a chance, and the members were able to put their consideration behind me, which is why it is so important that we move something forward that adds to the ability for credit unions to be able to compete on a provincial level. We need to make sure they're competitive because if they lose that I guess not competitive advantage but being able to compete at a provincial level, this is bad for all of us.

Now, I will tell you that when it comes to our local credit union, I went and I reached out to our CEO right now, and I said, "What do you think about this specific act that's being brought forward?" My CEO said, "This is something that we can get behind." You know what? Just because the two largest credit unions say that this is good doesn't necessarily mean that it's good for all credit unions.

**8:10**

Now, he was able to go forward and say: "Scott, you know what? This is good for us. This is something that I believe is good for our credit union and good for our communities." And you know what? It's that stakeholder outreach. I had heard our Finance minister doing the same thing with credit unions. We actually had them up in the gallery and at first reading, coming forward. That's something, I've got to say, that is good to hear, that we actually have some stakeholder outreach when it comes to our credit unions because they're such an important part of our finance system.

Now, to get back to our story here, where I was going through and trying to find a loan but wasn't able to with the major banks. I

was looking to start a business. We didn't quite fit that one little narrow gap that they have. You know what? I'm not putting the banks down or the ATB. I will tell you that our banks in Bonnyville-Cold Lake are all wonderful. ATB: wonderful. But in the end, it was the member-driven credit union that was able to give me the flexibility I needed to get that loan and start my small business. This is something that is important to recognize: small businesses are what employ Albertans. So giving them the ability to compete is good for all of us, and I commend the Finance minister for moving this forward.

The fact that we have a piece of legislation that is helpful for the credit unions and has done the stakeholder outreach is a positive thing, in my books. We have seen in the past where this government hasn't done its due diligence when it comes to stakeholder outreach, and that truly is a shame. I will say that when it comes to being able to work with the stakeholders and being able to create a piece of legislation that everybody can agree on, that truly is a piece of legislation that will be good for all Albertans. We need to reinforce that this, as far as I'm concerned – and I've read through this legislation – is good for Albertans. We need to reinforce this.

I encourage everybody to move this legislation forward to make sure that in the end we are reinforcing all businesses within Alberta, and I would like to encourage everybody to support this bill. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to make comments or questions or amendments with respect to Bill 32? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This will be brief. I'm going to agree with the former speaker's comments, but I'm going to come at it from a slightly different way. I had the opportunity to talk to a couple of people I know that are in the banking business about whether they had any complaints about this – and I mean the chartered banks – and they didn't seem to have any particular concerns. So while this is in accord with what the previous speaker says, it comes at it from a different angle, not whether the credit unions liked it but whether the noncredit unions hated it. I didn't hear a lot of hate. There has been no hate from the banks on this. I don't speak for all the banks and would never pretend to, but a couple of people that I know that are in that business that I talked to didn't express any strong dislike for the legislation.

I suppose the people who are the biggest competitors and I think clearly aware of it are not jumping up and down. There's a reasonable chance that the legislation is good. Consequently, I think there's a pretty good chance that I'll be supporting it. We've heard from previous speakers that the credit unions think it's good, and we haven't heard anybody stand up in this House and say that anybody from the banks have said that it's bad. So when you add that together, maybe you've got something good here.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Yeah. I wanted to, first of all, thank the members opposite who spoke in support of credit unions, especially the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, who really emphasized that the power of credit unions is that they are owned locally by members, with members' involvement, and they benefit that community. I think that's a very important part of who credit unions are and why the act needed to be modernized to actually make credit unions even more of a force in the community.

I think the bill, with the amendment that has just been introduced by the Finance minister, is really going to encourage member involvement through governance because they'll be able to access

the membership for a fee, as was pointed out in the amendment. Very often what happens in the credit union system is that to keep the credit union system truly as member owned, then you really need to make sure that members have a chance to get involved in the governance and really feel the participation. So I think the amendment is going to clarify how information can be shared to members, and I think that is important.

I also think this bill is really going to be important to our communities and will support communities, as was so well explained by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, because it's going to give credit unions more choice to have businesses as members and to serve those businesses and to also provide options around having insurance brokers in separate facilities.

I think the support for this bill by members throughout the House is really good news for our communities, and also, for me, it's good news for the locally owned credit union system, where all the profits and all the benefits stay within Alberta to strengthen our communities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the bill?  
Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 32 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

### Bill 36

#### An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak on Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety. This bill is very much a compromise that the NDP and the Minister of Transportation have come forward with in order to find the right balance for Alberta, for all of Alberta.

For the most part, I think the hon. minister has gotten this right. Rural Albertans who like the quiet enjoyment of their property will continue to enjoy that right. It also recognizes that fish and wildlife officers, Alberta sheriffs, and the RCMP would have much difficulty coming onto a private property to issue a ticket or an enforcement action for not wearing a helmet.

Bill 36 also recognizes the right to self-government for First Nations and Métis settlements, and I do hope local laws within those jurisdictions will be updated on the reserves and settlements to adopt this new standard. It is very much about protection of all people throughout Alberta.

Madam Chair, Bill 36 will allow the minister to make regulations to allow exceptions to the law. That being said, with considerations given to rural Alberta already in the bill, I do believe that one group was missed in this bill. Hunting and trapping are a vibrant part of rural life. Hunting and trapping allow people, including nonreserve indigenous people, to exercise traditional land-use rights. Some hunters and trappers have mobility issues and require the use of off-highway vehicles to check their trapline and track and hunt animals. When engaged in hunting and trapping, hunters and trappers travel at relatively slow speeds. They are not travelling at very high speeds

when they're engaged in tracking animals. The wearing of a helmet while hunting will affect the hearing and the sightlines as hunters and trappers try and track their animals. It dulls the senses and makes the activity more difficult, and I would suggest it also makes it less enjoyable.

8:20

When an animal is identified, the added time to remove a helmet can spook that game animal, and therefore the hunt resumes, frustrating and trying the patience of the hunter. If a hunter is trying to use a hunting rifle or a crossbow while wearing a helmet, the sights will not be correct, disproportionately affecting the targeting, aim, and accuracy.

I would let the House know that the province of Manitoba has an exemption for the wearing of helmets for hunters and trappers in their provincial law. We have an active outdoorsmen community here in Alberta and even members of this Assembly like the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin, the Leader of the Official Opposition, who has a trapline that he is engaged with.

On that note, I wish to move an amendment, and I have copies here, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. van Dijken:** I didn't keep one for myself, Madam Chair, so I'll wait till I get one so that I can read it into the record. Sorry about that.

I move that Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety, be amended in section 3, in the proposed section 128.1, by adding the following after subsection (4):

(5) Subsection (2) does not apply to a person travelling to engage in hunting or trapping within the meaning of the Wildlife Act.

I think it's important, Madam Chair, to recognize that hunters and trappers are most often travelling at very slow speeds when tracking animals and that a helmet can affect their ability to properly track and to properly take down their game. With the added time to take off the helmet and possibly spook the animal away, if they try and use their firearm while wearing a helmet, it can quite often result in injured game rather than actually properly taking down the game.

So I encourage the House to consider this. We see in the province of Manitoba that this has become an exemption there, and I would suggest that it is quite reasonable and very easy to encompass within our bill here.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just like to respond to the four justifications given by the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. One of the justifications for this amendment was that hunters and trappers would be travelling at a slow speed when tracking animals. That may be true, that there would be some moments of slow travel, but there's no research to indicate that it would always be slow. It may be slow, but there could just as likely be times when they're going fast, and speed is a factor here. We would not say that going slow could be guaranteed at all times. Therefore, that justification is not valid. Also, under the Wildlife Act, section 33, a person is not allowed to carry a loaded firearm or to discharge a weapon from an OHV or any other vehicle. They would have to get off the vehicle, so it's irrelevant whether they're travelling to that point fast or slow.

The second justification was that hearing and sightlines would be a problem in tracking animals, but both the CSA and DOT standards for helmets do exist, and they can be purchased. So the consumer actually has a choice in the kind of helmet that they have, and that choice could be for hunting, and the visibility could be adjusted for that specific need.

The third justification is that there may be a spooking of the game by removing the helmet. But how did they get there? They got there by an ATV or a quad or something that's probably much noisier than removing a helmet, so it is unlikely that the time that a person would have to take to remove the helmet would spook the game any more than they've already been spooked by the arrival of the hunter. I guess, just to go on, the OHVs are intrusive by their size, by their noise, and the hunters have to get there. If they're walking, of course, they wouldn't need a helmet, but if they're on the OHV, not important.

Then the fourth justification: targeting, aiming, and accuracy. Well, again, I'll refer back to the Wildlife Act, section 33. The person is not allowed to carry a loaded firearm or discharge from the vehicle. So they would have to be off anyway, and that leads me to believe that the helmet requirement should be there on the vehicle. They should not use that as an excuse for taking it off and riding without it.

Now, it is important to note that any exemption would only apply to those recreational hunting or trapping. Currently in Alberta workers employed by provincially regulated commercial hunting, fishing, and trapping organizations, the professional hunters, are required already to wear an OHV helmet under the Alberta occupational health and safety laws. It already exists for the hunters, and we should not make that exemption.

Now, I do appreciate the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock looking at this important legislation. Safety for Albertans remains the minister's primary concern, and we believe that the proposed amendment does not improve safety for OHV users. Bill 36 has taken into account extensive consultation with the public, and that public did include hunters, trappers, and the industry shareholders.

At this point I would like to simply say that we are not supporting the amendment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just speaking to the first item that I outlined earlier, with regard to hunters and trappers travelling at relatively slow speeds, the member opposite brought forward that there's no real documentation to suggest that they will be.

One thing: we were unable to find if there was any documentation that there were injuries happening within the recreational hunting and trapping industry. I'm not sure if he was able to come across any statistics that would suggest that there are incidents of injury to hunters and trappers that we need to be concerned with. We did ask that of the library in Transportation, and we could not get any definitive answer that there were any registered injuries for those types of individuals. So if the member opposite could allude to whether or not they were able to find any documentation with regard to those people.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Yes. Just to respond to that, no, we do not have any research either indicating what the average speed would be. However, it could be fast. So because it could be fast or it could be slow, regardless of the research we are saying no to the exemption.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thanks, Madam Chair. I'll be brief. This is really about establishing a culture of safety. Whether or not older people, including hunters and trappers, are fine operating their vehicles, we're setting a standard for kids, for young people.

8:30

A culture of safety starts with adults modelling behaviour that says: my head, my body, my machine; the people around me matter, and I'm going to do everything I can to prevent injury and death and cost to the health system. A minor inconvenience or a minor cost like a helmet or even age restrictions would be, to me, no-brainers, if I can use that term, if we're really trying to establish a culture of health and safety and model it for our kids. That's precisely what needs to happen if we're actually going to get to less injuries.

There's been a 30 per cent increase in injury rates from ATVs over the last 10 years. That's just involving children. I'm most concerned about children. A 30 per cent increase over 10 years in children's injury rates associated with ATVs suggests that we need to do more. My view would be similar to that across the building here, to say, "Let's do everything we can to set standards that are not the worst in Canada," which they are in Alberta today. The Canadian Paediatric Society has rated Alberta the very lowest standards of ATV safety anywhere in the country, and it's reflected in some of the statistics.

It may not be specifically statistically relevant to say that hunters and trappers are not injured any more frequently whether they wear helmets or not, because they're going slower or faster. We don't know the data. That's the fact of the matter. What we do know is that a culture of safety is established by the adults in a society, what's important is visible, and when children see adults taking care of themselves, taking care of their vehicles, taking care of their speeds, acting responsibly, wearing helmets, children grow with that culture.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. I appreciate the comments from the previous speaker. While I agree with his comments, I'm not sure they necessarily apply very directly to this particular amendment because children of a young age I don't think are allowed to hunt, certainly not by themselves.

You know what? This amendment actually deals with an interesting choice, in my view, Madam Chair. At the point of somebody getting off their ATV because they see an animal, which is the greater risk? Is the greater risk from what they do on their ATV, or is the greater risk from using their firearm a little bit faster because they have to take a helmet off as compared to if they didn't?

Of course, they're going to say: well, you should never hurry. I think that's a fair comment, but in the real world lots of times when people are hunting, they're out sometimes for hours or days, and then they see an animal that they legally have a tag for, that they're allowed to take. Of course, if they've been out for hours and they haven't seen that animal until now and the animal may be headed for the bush where they can't see it anymore, they're in a hurry. That's not an excuse ever to not be safe, and I'm not going to make an excuse for anybody to not be safe. But the fact is that what this amendment weighs, in my view, is the safety difference between the risk from being on the ATV as compared to the risk in handling your firearm just a little bit faster because you've got to get a helmet off.

I think it's a reasonable amendment. I understand some of the other arguments. The only one I probably didn't understand is on fast and slow because I don't think legally there's really a definition of fast or slow. What's fast for me might be slow for you, Madam Chair, or slow for other members of this House or vice versa. I'm not sure that any fast or slow argument particularly carries a lot of weight but, rather, what's safer. I think that's what we're really talking about here, and I think it's a legitimate thing for us to think about, whether the risk is greater from riding the ATV without a helmet or the risk is greater from having to be that little bit faster with your firearm because you're taking the helmet off. I think that's something that members of the House could legitimately think about before they vote on this.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to rise and speak about this because I have talked to a number of different hunters and members of fish and game associations in my constituency. There are different arguments to be made when it comes to wearing a helmet, whether they think it's just best practice or they think that it's something that should actually be instituted as legislation in the province. I think that we do need to remember that Alberta is the last to bring in this sort of legislation, so we are lagging behind.

It is an important conversation to have to see, you know, what should be left up to the individual and what responsibility and leadership the province should be taking. Really, I mean, all of the different validators on this piece of legislation – it's not the province that's taking the leadership; it's people like the woman who actually suffered the brain injury that support this. It's different, incredibly important stakeholders that see the importance. You know, they're waiting for the province to do something. They're waiting for us to get onboard to make this change.

I can table this later, but there is an article from *Field & Stream* magazine from 2012. *Field & Stream* magazine recommends using a helmet because it reduces the risk of fatality. Their quote is that helmets “reduce the risk of fatalities . . . by 42 percent” and that it reduces the risk of “non-fatal head injury by 64 percent.”

When we're talking about taking care of Albertans, as legislators in this House we need to think about what the costs are to society when people are hurt or injured or, even worse, tragically killed. We bear the costs not just as all Albertans but as communities. If we have someone that is injured and can't work anymore, we bear that cost as a society. We bear those health costs. If we have someone that is lost that is the breadwinner in a family, we all bear that cost. While it is always tragic to lose a person for any reason, in any circumstance, the thing that we can do that can substantially protect the public good and protect public safety I think is something that is of import to each one of us in this House.

I understand that there is a question of personal choice, and I think that that's been left in this piece of legislation where the minister is not asking for this to be applied to private lands. However, we all need to take responsibility for each other when we are out on public property, and this is a means of doing so through the use of helmets. That's why I am rising to speak against the amendment.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to compliment the government on the way that they have constructed this bill. I think that they got it about right. Please don't take that as a half-hearted compliment. It's a sincere one. It seems on the one hand a straightforward issue, but on the other hand there is more than one thing to think about.

I know that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View harassed me incessantly on this issue when I was Transportation minister, and I know that he was sincere and honest when he was harassing me. I think he knows that I was sincere when I said: “You know what? We're talking to the folks from the Alberta associations of off-road vehicles, the responsible groups, on doing this.” Of course, as time went on, my colleague from Grande Prairie was the Transportation minister, and I think that had things gone differently for us in the election last year, he may have brought forward a piece of legislation that's pretty similar to what's before us today.

So I am in favour of it, Madam Chair, but my concern or my caution, if you will, is that no one should think that this is going to solve all the problems and prevent all the deaths. If you look at the statistics that are available on ATV deaths today, there is a good percentage of them from head injuries, but in a good percentage of those the riders were wearing helmets, and that didn't keep them alive. There's a good percentage of those. There's no doubt that there will be a lot of circumstances, a lot of places where it either saves an injury or saves a life, and that's a positive thing, but I wouldn't want anybody to think that it will be a cure-all.

8:40

I say this advisedly. I'm a motorcycle rider, which I understand isn't the same as an ATV. I've been down to the States, riding in states where you're not required to wear a helmet, and I always wear mine. My personal bias has always been that anybody that doesn't wear a helmet on a motorcycle doesn't actually need one. [interjections] It took a minute, didn't it? I know. That's why I choose to do that. It's just a risk that I choose not to take. Other people choose to take it; I choose not to.

The other issue that this bill doesn't address – and that's not really a shortcoming in the bill but, rather, something to be considered down the way – is that a lot of those deaths on ATVs, whether it's from a head injury or not, whether the person killed or injured dies or not, whether they were wearing a helmet or not, what's not addressed in this bill and probably shouldn't be in this bill but is something that we ought to think about is how many people killed and injured on ATVs were impaired, a serious consideration because, obviously, someone who's impaired, whether they're wearing a helmet or not, is more likely to have a mishap or a crash, whatever you want to call it. I don't call it an accident because if you're impaired, it's not an accident. You took an unreasonable risk, and you paid for it. As one member across the way says, that's true, but society in many cases pays for that risk, too. When somebody needs long-term care and a family is without a breadwinner and a child is without a mother or a father, then those are other concerns as well.

While I think the government has done a good job of putting together this piece of legislation, the one issue that really hangs out there with red flashing lights for me is the issue of the impaired operation of ATVs. I'm not sure what legislatively I'd recommend on that, but that's something worthy of our thoughts as we go forward because a large percentage of the deaths and injuries, helmet or not, head injury or not, are attached to people operating



these machines that ought not be because of their state of impairment.

**The Chair:** Any other questions or comments or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question? Oh, in that corner, Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Yeah. Sorry I'm so far away.

Madam Chair, I'd just like to summarize. I will be short, just four or five minutes. I rise in support of Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety. First, I would personally like to express my condolences to the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti and his family. On behalf of all my colleagues and everybody in the Assembly our sincerest sympathies. Even though a helmet was worn in that tragic fatality and as much fun as off-highway vehicling might be, it was a severe reminder that it can be risky and dangerous. We must participate with safety in mind. Helmets, even though they don't eliminate all, do reduce the risk of injury.

There is a history of need for this legislation and a history of desire to amend and update the Traffic Safety Act. In my previous career over the last two decades various school groups would come in and talk about safety to the students for all-terrain vehicles, quads, snowmobiles, and they would also come in with petitions for the adults to sign to promote and advocate for changes in the law. They would tell us stories of injury and death, and they would indicate that they are advocating for updated legislation.

Possibly members in this Assembly personally know people who have been severely injured or affected by off-highway vehicle mishaps and deaths, or they've read newspaper articles of the carnage that can happen when there are accidents. But, then again, you may have read the article last week where the heading was Alberta Government Deserves Credit for Taking Action on Helmets. It's been a long time in coming. As a result, there have been calls for the government to require helmets for people who ride off-highway vehicles. Up to this point municipalities have been responsible, and they could choose to create laws if they wanted. The result was that some municipalities did, and some did not. Laws from municipalities were varied and inconsistent. Now the provincial government, we, have the chance for a standard approach on helmets on public lands province-wide.

Why do people want helmet laws, and why do we need safety regulations? As the members for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock and Calgary-Currie have stated – and I want to reiterate this for the record and for emphasis – approximately 19 people are killed while operating off-highway vehicles every year. Seventy-four of 185 people between 2002 and 2013 died from head injuries sustained while riding ATVs, one form of OHVs. Eighty per cent of those head injuries involved individuals that were not wearing helmets. Nearly 6,000 off-highway vehicle related visits to the emergency room occur every year. Just last year, 2015, more than 1,000 children were injured as a result of off-highway vehicle activities.

With these medical and safety concerns it is incumbent upon us to investigate and consult Albertans. Public and stakeholder engagements were held in September of this year. The result was that Albertans clearly supported safety. Albertans clearly support and recommend change. The Minister of Transportation has positively responded to that data and consultations, and now we have before us Bill 36. It respects the values and Alberta tradition of off-highway vehicle use, it respects individual choice for use on private property, and it respects choice during farm and ranch operations by a farmer or farm worker on private property.

It adds Alberta to the list of the rest of Canada as one of the jurisdictions with some type of OHV helmet law. I was always

curious as to why we had to be the last. It takes action to keep Albertans safe, and it will save health care costs, reduce injuries and deaths. In fact, the costs per year tally about \$50 million, but that \$50 million is nothing compared to the grief that individuals and families have when there's a death.

Therefore, I'd like to close in supporting this legislation, and I call upon all members to support this bill. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Dr. Swann:** I'm assuming that we haven't closed or adjourned at this time.

Well, I'm pleased to speak in support of what I've heard across the floor. This is a first step in what I hope we could extend further around age limits. About 18 per cent of the deaths from ATVs are under the age of 16. There's good physiological and psychological and other cultural data in the country to show that children under the age of 16 aren't physically or psychologically able to handle the power and the weight that is associated with an all-terrain vehicle. Almost all other provinces in Canada have age 16 as the limit for driving an ATV. In fact, 14 is the age limit in many provinces for being a passenger on an ATV. So I'm hopeful that we could also consider some of these age limits if we're really serious about trying to reduce injuries and deaths in children.

A thousand injuries in children in a year: I mean, that's phenomenal. Or was it a thousand in a year that you quoted? I didn't have that data. But our own injury control and prevention centre has some data up until 2013. I've been pushing them to give me more data since 2013, but suffice it to say that the rate has increased by 31 per cent in Canada between 2001 and 2010. A 30 per cent increase: surely, we need to look at some ways to reduce that carnage.

8:50

I know that there are other measures being taken, including licensing. Why would we allow people to drive a motorized vehicle at significant speeds without a licence, without proof of training, without some sense that they know what they're doing? We don't do that with motorbikes. We don't do that with motor vehicles.

Again, it may seem like overkill to some, but what is our culture about if not moving towards higher levels of safety and prevention? Part of the criticism I've had of our health care system for many years is that we spend 3 per cent of our budget, almost \$20 billion, on prevention. No wonder our hospitals are overflowing. No wonder that in our emergency rooms you have to wait six to eight to 10 hours to get seen. It's because so many opportunities for prevention are being ignored, and this is one of them.

We need to develop a stronger culture of prevention in this province. It's perhaps the last vestige of frontierism and free enterprise, I guess, and free will and individual choice. We were the last ones, I think, in Canada to bring in seat belts, and that was a fight. But now I think we've all accepted that there is something besides individual freedom that's also important, and that's social responsibility, the cost to society.

Those two areas, I think, I wanted to highlight. I would still hope to be able to bring forward a couple of amendments tomorrow, one on age restrictions and one on licensing and requirements for training.

So I'll adjourn debate, with your permission, Madam Chair.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Chair:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report Bill 32 and rise and report progress on Bill 36.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Sweet:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 32. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 36. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed, say no. So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 34 Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you. I am pleased tonight to rise to move second reading of Bill 34, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016.

Over the last two weeks our government has taken bold steps to modernize Alberta's electricity system, a modernization that was long overdue. We announced a series of measures that will ensure reliable electricity in Alberta and stable prices for consumers. We have announced, first, a four-year, 6.8 cent per kilowatt hour cap on electricity rates for consumers on the regulated rate option. Second is a plan to transition to a capacity market which offers a tried and tested solution to the energy price spikes that were built into the energy-only market we inherited. Third, we've come to agreements with companies to phase out coal by 2030 and also to settle the PPA disputes. We've also announced a ban on the door-to-door sale of energy products.

As you can see, it has been a busy fortnight for this government on the electricity file and an important two weeks for protecting electricity consumers. Taken together, these actions will address the price volatility that has been a symbol of our electricity system past but not future. These changes set the stage for a more reliable system and one that is more attractive to investors. What's more, they will provide consumers with steady, more reasonable electricity costs, and most importantly it puts consumers first. Bill 34, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, is the next step in our package of efforts to protect consumers. It would allow the Balancing Pool to borrow money in order to manage its funding obligations.

Before I outline the specifics of our action, let me provide a refresher to members of the House about the Balancing Pool and the financial situation it faces. This context is important to understand why I'm proposing this legislation. The Balancing Pool was created in 1999 to deal with the government's deregulation experiment; specifically, government's relinquishing of the public's interest in stable, contracted electricity rates.

As we all know too well, the PPAs were created with sweetheart provisions that the buyers could use to get out of all losses, even those caused by volatility of the energy market that deregulation brought us. This was, after all, the deregulation craze of the Enron era that Alberta's government was only too happy to jump on board with, taking Alberta consumers along for the bumpy ride. But the government failed to provide the necessary tools for the Balancing Pool to manage the potential losses from this roller coaster. Its primary duties were to manage the PPAs it holds in a commercial manner. This worked fine so long as power prices

kept spiking every few months, as was built into the design of the energy market.

The return of the PPAs by the companies that held them has increased the amount of generation capacity that the Balancing Pool is responsible for. But with our prolonged period of low prices and the return of the PPAs, the Balancing Pool cannot sell the electricity generated by these assets for enough money to cover its expenses. As with all our efforts, we chose to draw a line in the sand between this old system and our new approach. In the face of raucous opposition from across the aisle we chose to stand up for consumers.

Some others would have us continue on a system that no longer works for consumers or investors. They would have us incur the PPA costs and pass them on to consumers. But we chose to take action to defend consumers. As a result, we have protected Albertans by getting PPA buyers to shoulder more of the PPA business losses than they first wanted to. We are doing this by entering into reasonable settlement agreements with PPA buyers, something we have accomplished already with three of the four PPA buyers. These are agreements that strike a sensible balance to protect consumers while moving forward with our electricity transition.

Given the low market prices the Balancing Pool still faces deficits. This is a problem as the Balancing Pool was not designed to turn a profit or a loss. It is required to ensure that its accounts net to zero over its life cycle, returning the money in times of surplus and charging money in times of deficit. It was intended to do this by setting an annual consumer allocation of costs or surpluses to consumers.

When the Balancing Pool was running a surplus under the oft-high prices of the energy-only market system, it made sense for it to manage these costs, but the tools provided to the Balancing Pool when it was established are no longer sufficient for it to properly manage the impact on consumers now, certainly not when the costs required to meet their financial obligations are at today's levels. One reason for this is that the life cycle of the Balancing Pool was not clear. While the PPAs all expire in 2020, the period over which any remaining costs could be recovered from consumers was never set. Some assumed that the end date would be December 31, 2020, when the PPAs end.

**9:00**

The bottom line is that without any changes to the Balancing Pool's rules, consumers were facing a large and abrupt change to pay these obligations off by 2020. This is not fair to Albertans and not consistent with our commitment of a stable and affordable electricity system.

Our government, with this proposed legislation and supporting regulations, is now providing the Balancing Pool with the flexibility and tools it needs to cover its financial obligations in a way that does not adversely affect consumers. Without legislation and policy changes, the Balancing Pool would have to apply a substantial monthly consumer charge to residential and industrial bills to cover its costs through to 2020. Bill 34, however, would allow the Balancing Pool to borrow money from the province or a lender to manage its funding obligations. In conjunction with amendments to the Balancing Pool regulations, this provides the tools to minimize costs to consumers. Together these changes would allow the Balancing Pool to smooth the price volatility, helping to ensure that consumers' electricity costs are reasonable and stable.

An important change to the regulations is clarifying the end date for the Balancing Pool. Providing a clear end date of 2030 provides a longer period of time over which consumer costs can be spread. This allows for the impact on consumers to be better managed.

Currently the average residential consumer receives a Balancing Pool credit of \$1.95 on their monthly bill. Without this legislation, the Balancing Pool would not only have to remove that credit but apply a charge of \$8.40 per month beginning January 1, 2017. This works out to \$100 per average consumer. Similar charges would apply annually until the end of 2020. Bill 34, along with the supporting regulations, would reduce this charge to just 67 cents for the average consumer. Savings for heavy industrial users would be even more significant.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

As members can see, our government is committed to protecting Alberta's electricity consumers. Madam Speaker, this plan, which involves providing a loan for the Balancing Pool, extending the operations of the Balancing Pool, and setting the initial consumer charge of 67 cents per month, is a structured plan that puts Albertans first. It follows the two-step approach that we are taking to protect consumers on this file, first, by defending consumers against undue costs by entering into reasonable settlements with PPA buyers and, second, by taking action here to provide the tools to the Balancing Pool to manage their finances under the current market conditions. It provides stability and reasonable costs to consumers while allowing the Balancing Pool to meet its obligations. This is why I encourage all members to support Bill 34.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to this bill, a critically important bill not only for us but for our children, I would say. This is a bill that arose as a result of the out-of-court settlements that the government has reached with some of the power purchase agreement companies. Settlements with TransCanada, for example, and AltaGas are tentative, and the government apparently is still negotiating with one of the parties, Enmax.

Under the terms of those settlements the companies will each pay the Balancing Pool an agreed-upon sum of about \$39 million in the case of capital, and in exchange they will be permitted to return their money-losing electricity contracts to the Balancing Pool. As a result of that, we have all recognized, I think, that this will result in all of us paying the true cost of electricity. I guess one of the philosophical questions that we're wrestling with here is whether we allow people to experience the true costs of electricity or whether we protect them from the true costs by capping the costs and giving the false impression that we are paying our way rather than passing on what could be up to \$500 million to our children and our grandchildren to pay for the way we're making decisions today.

I guess I have some practical and some very philosophical resistance to this. Maybe it's because I'm not opposed to market signals, to cost signals, and that the public, you and I, should really see the true cost of our electricity and adjust our lives accordingly, either try to find ways to reduce our use or find ways of developing new technologies, investing in new technologies.

I'll have another recommendation in relation to another bill, that perhaps an innovative way for all of us to participate would be a public offering on renewables, that we could all invest, as citizens of Alberta, in renewable energy in this province. We could all share in the risks or the benefits and move our province forward and be part of the solution instead of waiting for the big investors to come

in when it may not be the right time for many of them. They may not see the opportunities that we as Albertans must start to take hold of and must start to take responsibility for, I guess.

So I have some real difficulty in simply hiding the true price of electricity from consumers. It is going to cost more, and I for one have difficulty suggesting that we should allow the Balancing Pool to borrow whatever it needs to protect, I guess you'd say, consumers from the true price. I would call it paternalism at its worst, to decide for the people of Alberta: "You can't handle the price of electricity, so we're going to give you some kind of a Santa Claus approach to the costs. And oh, yes, eventually you'll have to pay for it, but it'll be much more in terms of interest payments by the time 2030 comes around."

If we're not there yet, then it'll again be falling more and more on future generations, when we're already asking future generations to take on a heck of a lot of debt and other expenses related to environmental concerns, obviously, some of the social deficits, some of the infrastructure. And, to be fair, the infrastructure investments that we're taking on, I support fully.

But the idea of giving the Balancing Pool the power to do all of this simply to give the impression and to protect people – if there are people that are vulnerable and can't pay their power bills, let's give them rebates. Let's give them the supports they need to keep the lights on. There's no question that some people will not be able to handle increased rates, but keeping it to 67 cents extra in a month: that's a false kind of message, to me, to be giving to all of us, that everything is cool; electricity isn't changing much; don't be concerned about the carbon levy, which I support; don't be concerned about the new charges, the borrowing that's going into the Balancing Pool; we're going to cover it for you. As if we as government can cover anything that isn't paid for by taxes.

The irony, of course, is that the government itself triggered the return of these unprofitable power purchase agreements to the Balancing Pool by announcing the changes without being fully aware of what the impact might be as a result of the contracts that were there and that, it's my understanding, a full level of research would have shown to be a problem and a potential out for the power people. The fact that we're now settling out of court kind of confirms that, that the government realizes it's not going to win and has gone back and paid these folks with out-of-court settlements.

I guess I would question the notion that we can't have clear market signals for people and that we have to hide the true cost from people, and I would question the right of this government to pass along even more debt to future generations and to take on more interest payments simply because we can, because you're in a majority position and you can make that decision. I don't think that's in our current best interests, and I don't think it's in our future generations' interests to not start to pay our way as we go.

**9:10**

The government has taken a number of steps to ensure low prices and system stability. This is all in the name of system stability. Well, at what cost, I guess I have to ask. Stable prices at what cost? It looks a lot like political opportunism when you look at it in that light, if you're not really thinking about the longer term and the importance of market signals for all of us. We all make decisions on the basis of price. Well, if the price is being hidden from us, we stop using common sense and we stop making longer term, better decisions in our own personal lives.

I think those are the main issues, that have been said before by others, but I needed to say them as well. While the aim of Bill 34 is laudable on one level, the reality is that there is no free lunch. There is no free lunch. Eventually we're all – and I'm particularly

concerned about our children – going to have to pay it. For that reason, I'll be voting against this bill.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I must say in response to the hon. minister's narrative that we just heard that it was an amusing work of fiction. I think it's called historical reconstructionism.

Anyway, I rise today, Madam Speaker, to outline my concerns regarding Bill 34, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016. The bill before the House is as short as it is irresponsible. This bill outlines that "the President of Treasury Board, Minister of Finance may, on the recommendation of the Minister of Energy, make loans to the Balancing Pool and guarantee the obligations of the Balancing Pool." No checks, no accountability, no public forum required to explain the minister's request for the funding, just a blank cheque to the Balancing Pool for an undisclosed and unlimited amount of money thus far.

Now, let's be clear. The Balancing Pool already has built-in mechanisms to cover their losses. They can put a rate rider for Balancing Pool allocations on consumers' bills. Now, for the benefit of the Energy minister, who, unsurprisingly, doesn't understand all the existing options in the electricity market, rate riders are temporary charges or refunds that apply when the actual costs incurred by a regulated transmission or distribution utility differ from the rates that were approved based on cost forecasts. These riders must be approved by the appropriate regulatory authority. Rate riders are designed to collect or reimburse a specific amount over a period of time, and consumers see them as credits or debits on their monthly bills.

Now, the Balancing Pool allocation rider is value owed to consumers from the regulated generating assets covered by power purchase agreements. I should make a note here that Albertans were paid something in the order of \$2 billion in the initial PPA offerings and another billion since that time on these rate riders, so something in the order of \$3 billion has come back to us. Customers, the consumers, have benefited by receiving this allocation but remain responsible for any outstanding risks associated with these generating plants, and for convenience the Balancing Pool allocations are flowed through to consumers as part of the provincial transmission tariff.

Let's have a little review for clarity. Rate riders must be approved by the appropriate regulatory authority. That would be a check on the system. That means that experts in the electricity market, a market that the minister has demonstrated some lack of aptitude for, are the ones tasked with reviewing or approving rate riders. That means that these are consumer expenses that are needed, not just in the opinion of the Balancing Pool, a formerly independent body that has recently seen its board members resign en masse amongst allegations of an unacceptable level of political interference by this government, but that these are expenses needed, in the opinion of experts outside the Balancing Pool, who must review this request. With this legislation in place, offering a blank cheque to the Balancing Pool, and with the pending replacement of Balancing Pool members, certain to be filled by NDP cronies, in my opinion, we have no doubt that any mindfulness for the bottom lines of Alberta families and businesses will soon be lost by the Balancing Pool. That is why I will stand up again and again defending the interests of Albertans, interests that do not now or ever include writing a blank cheque with taxpayers' money.

Here is another great part about rate riders. Customers see them as credits or debits on their monthly bills. That is what transparency looks like, Madam Speaker. As the hon. member previous mentioned, it is important that our customers, or our ratepayers, understand the full cost of electricity. Now, I know it's been a long time since the NDP were concerned with the requirements of running a transparent government, but during the election that provided them with their current mandate, that was a big issue for Albertans. It was one of the reasons that the third party was reduced to a handful of seats. It was the reason for the overwhelming swing in votes in the last election. This issue of transparency is huge to Albertans, and since this government was elected, it seems like they've almost forgotten how to spell the word. We don't see a lot of transparency.

The government has made a huge mistake due to either gross ineptitude or what some would call misleading Albertans. Now, your internal estimates for the mistake put the estimated monthly rate rider at less than \$1, but independent estimates put together by Dr. Andrew Leach and PhD candidate in economics Trevor Tombe put these costs just above \$2 per consumer per month. Given that the option to put forward the rate rider already exists and that all available estimates place the costs of this rate rider at just a few dollars, Albertans are left wondering: why are we passing this bill? It's entirely unnecessary.

The Balancing Pool has a mechanism for recovering these costs already, and now instead of following through with the system put in place for events just like this, we are being asked to remove some needed checks and balances that protect Albertans, one of them being transparency and understanding the true cost of government policies. What is the government hiding when we're only talking about a few dollars a month here? There is no sensible reason not to proceed with the existing mechanism at the pool's disposal, especially given that it's going to place the cost to consumers at just a few dollars. What is being planned in the future that would require such a wide-sweeping, irresponsible change that doesn't have a limit on the amount of money the government can backstop the Balancing Pool for? What is the government really afraid of here? This government has a terrible track record on the electricity file, and the one thing that is clear to Albertans is that they cannot be trusted.

Another important point of review is that customers benefit by receiving this allocation but remain responsible for any outstanding risks associated with these generating plants. Now, this is probably the most significant fact that the NDP prefer to ignore when talking about the PPA mess they've made, the debacle that they created that put us in the position where the NDP is asking this House to pass this senseless bill today. For years Albertans have been the benefactors of low electricity costs from our energy-only market, and more importantly Albertans received, as I mentioned, \$3 billion in credits from the Balancing Pool after the transition to our deregulated market over 15 years ago. Now, that \$3 billion in rate rider credits greatly exceeds the estimated losses for the Balancing Pool today over this PPA mess they've made, and estimates so far have come in around that \$500 million or \$600 million range.

The truth is, Madam Speaker, that our energy-only market was working just fine until the NDP got their fingers in it in July 2015. It was working in the best interests of consumers. The AESO was an arm's-length, independent body. The Balancing Pool was an arm's-length, independent body. The Market Surveillance Administrator was doing its job just fine as the electricity police, policing all of the participants in the system and catching them when they were doing wrong, as we have seen repeatedly from the MSA.

9:20

In other words, the system really wasn't broken. Did it need some fine-tuning? Absolutely, it did. Was it really that volatile? For the consumers it was not volatile, Madam Speaker. Consumers all the way along could have locked down their electricity rates simply by getting a contract with any of the many retail providers across this province, completely eliminating the volatility that this government claims was so bad that they had to take step after step after step to bring our deregulated energy market into a fully regulated, government-run, government-controlled market.

Now, Madam Speaker, we have as a reality that the volatility that the government claims was on the backs of retailers was actually on the wholesale side of things. The volatility was in the Balancing Pool. It wasn't on the retail side at all. The volatility that the government is throwing up as some sort of a big, bad, scary thing and that that's why they had to get their fingers involved was on the wholesale side. That was not for the retailers' sake. That was for a few corporations' sake who didn't like the low prices. So for whatever reason we have an NDP government climbing in the sack with corporations, probably for the first time ever in socialist history. I don't know. But, you know, as they say, politics makes very strange bedfellows, and we're seeing some of those shenanigans going on here in this bill.

Low power prices are the cornerstone of economic growth in Alberta; 78 per cent of our grid is used to serve industrial and commercial purposes. That means that power prices are key – they are absolutely key – input for our job creators.

We have an Energy minister standing up in the House on puffball questions and telling us that no investment has been made since 2009. One, that is absolutely not true. Enmax, the company this government is suing, presumably because the coal phase-out didn't do enough to create uncertainty in the electric markets for the NDP's liking, broke ground on Shepard in 2013. They didn't make any meaningful financial commitment to Shepard until well after 2010, long after the economic downturn this minister claims was the reason for stuff.

Two, Alberta has a huge reserve margin. No new investment has been needed because of that large reserve margin. It's approximately 31 per cent. You cannot create an artificial need for renewables investment and then sue power generators, phase out coal, and then blame the market for not supplying you with the energy that you need.

Three, we have companies citing regulatory uncertainty caused by this government as the reason why they have pulled planned investments into Sundance 7 and Genesee 4 and 5, two projects planned well after the 2008 financial collapse. So this claim on the part of the government telling us that no investment has been made since 2009: I can't use the L word, so I will say that they've been economical with the truth. How's that? Acceptable.

It is unreasonable, absolutely unreasonable, for this government to create uncertainty to the extent that it has and then call out the market, as if the lack of money for their renewables scheme is in any way the fault of the free market. Try being less radical, and that investment will come.

Madam Speaker, I have grandchildren, and I fully intend to use my time as a legislator to make sure that they are left better off and not worse. This bill does not accomplish that, and it will never accomplish that. Not only this bill, but it appears to me that bill after bill after bill, especially money bills put forward by this socialist government, are impacting not only us and our children but our grandchildren. Generational theft, I believe, is the appropriate description.

This government is borrowing to keep the lights on, literally borrowing to keep the lights on in this province, and you want me

to vote in favour of proving it with an unneeded blank cheque? I cannot do that. I will not do that. I will stand against this Bill 34 and bills like it for the sake of children, grandchildren, and the future of our province.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Questions or comments? No?

All right. Seeing no one under 29(2)(a), I will recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I've been listening to the brief debate and the couple of speakers who have gone before me, and I continue to be partly baffled and, I have to say, disappointed in the rhetoric from both sides. You know, the minister stands up and talks about the risky deregulation experiment; the sweetheart provisions, which, by the way, are still up before the courts with at least one of the lawsuits that the government has filed against PPA holders; deregulation through the, quote, Enron craze – craze; we don't want crazes; my goodness, that's pretty scary – and talking about borrowing money to fund operations. Well, that sounds benign. Who wouldn't want to fund one's operations? That sounds pretty good.

I understand and have been told from those who've been in the House somewhat longer than me that occasionally politics has been known to break out in this place. It's a sad truth, and I've learned it. I've learned it not just here tonight, but I've learned it at other times. You know, that part I find profoundly frustrating because, really, what we're talking about here is pretty important stuff. What we're talking about is a government that is again asking this House to approve literally a blank cheque. That is the kind of deal that I would love to get in my personal or business life. That would be great, being backstopped by the powerhouse Alberta government.

The massive changes that have been wrought by this government in the past 10 days or so to the electricity market make your head spin. You know, I've endeavoured to follow along as best I can, and I'm sure most of the members of this House, I'll assume, have been reading this stuff as closely as I have as well. It's complex stuff, but what it comes down to is a government that is committed to a minimum of \$7 billion in costs to Albertans. One way or the other, Albertans pay those costs. Seven billion dollars. My goodness, it could be more than that. It could be a lot more than that.

All right. My first question to the government is: of that \$7 billion, where does the money come from? The answer to that question seems to be: don't worry; it comes from the carbon tax on large emitters, the specified gas emitters regulation. Okay. Let's unpack that a bit. Where does the SGER payment come from? Well, that comes from big companies. Problem solved. That's great. Big companies pay the carbon tax on large emitters because they're large emitters. No big deal. Who pays the big companies? Uh-oh. Madam Speaker, we pay the big companies. Albertans. Ultimately, all of this money flows from Albertans through our power bills, through the gas pump to those companies, which then remit a portion of that in either the specified gas emitters regulation or carbon tax payments.

So this money is not an unlimited pool of money. This is a mistake that I see this government making over and over again, overreaching, taking what is a pretty good idea – I've been on the record previously and I will get on the record again supporting the principle of renewable energy and bringing that onto the grid, supporting the principle of expanding gas-fired power in this

province, of getting the province of Alberta off coal-fired electricity for a number of reasons. We want a cleaner environment. We want cleaner air, less NOx and SOx in our environment. We want to reduce our carbon emissions. I think that we have a connection between pipeline approvals and our action on climate change, and I think that's a good thing. We want those things.

9:30

But you've taken a good idea, and you've taken it way too far and made massive, massive changes that so few people in this province actually understand. It's so complex and so technical and so interconnected that it's very difficult to get your head around all of the things that are happening here. This bill comes across — perhaps this is the record for the shortest government bill in the history of government bills. I don't know. Certainly, as we're dealing with one of the largest bills, if not the largest, Bill 21, the municipal government amendment act, and Bill 34 in the same session, perhaps that's some sort of record in terms of range of size of legislation.

It feels like an afterthought. This bill feels like: "Oh, right. We've kind of bankrupted the Balancing Pool, so does anyone have any ideas? Oh, right. Well, what we'll do is that we'll just authorize some borrowing from the Balancing Pool. How much? How much borrowing should we authorize from the Balancing Pool? We don't know. We have no idea. What we'll do is go to the House, create a money bill, and we'll just ask for unlimited backstop." Right? To answer the question from the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, it's not a good idea. No. No. It's a terrible idea, in fact, so I've got some real concerns.

Now, why is the Balancing Pool out of money in the first place? Well, it's part of this raft of massive policy change that's been brought by this government. One of the most fundamental mistakes this government made right at the outset was not understanding the "or more unprofitable" clause, not doing the homework to know it was there in the first place, not listening to administration, who clearly told them that it was there, and then, once they knew about it, blindly proceeding anyway.

Once that happened, they were committed, and then they doubled down on a, frankly, dumb idea. I don't know if that's unparliamentary; if it is, I withdraw it, and if not, I keep it in the record. They doubled down on this idea, and instead of accepting back the PPAs — what would have happened had they done that? Well, the Balancing Pool would have been able to run them as economically as possible, and by some analyses that would be, at the absolute worst, a \$600 million cost, which sounds like a lot of money, and it is. I'm not denying that that's a lot of money. But if they were allowed to run those PPAs economically, then there's a good chance that that number could have come down.

The other thing that would have happened is that at least two of those PPAs would have been cancelled. Then what would have happened? Then the generators would have said: "You know what? There's no market for our generation facility." Those coal-fired plants very likely would have been taken offline. Guess what would have happened then? Alberta's carbon emissions would have dropped; NOx and SOx emissions would have dropped.

This government tells us constantly that they are trying to get Alberta off coal. Why, my friends, would they have not done that in the immediate term? Because they need the money. They need the money. That's this government's dirty little secret. They need the money from all those coal-fired plants, all the way through 2020 at least, to generate money into the carbon levy, if that's what you'd like to call it, to fund all of the changes that they want to bring to the system. It's scandalous, actually, because it is fundamentally

environmentally irresponsible. This government has kept coal-fired plants humming to fund their electricity plan.

I do just want to correct the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I hesitate to do this, but I think you'll like the correction. I think you referenced \$2 billion and then another additional billion that the PPAs had returned to Albertans. It is, in fact, \$4.4 billion that power purchase agreements have returned to Albertans. So the debate and the discussion around the energy-only versus capacity market is not a simple debate and discussion. There is something to be said for the fact that Alberta is one of only a couple of energy-only jurisdictions in North America, if not the world, and that maybe some changes were needed there. But, frankly, there's so much change going on all at once that it's very difficult to get your head around that. So again we're being asked to approve unlimited borrowing to no end. The questions I have are: how deep is that hole? How big is this debt going to get? Where is the money going to come from? What's that going to cost Albertans? How many more hundreds of thousands, millions, tens of millions of dollars is that going to cost in debt servicing?

The biggest issue of all, I think, is that this government has not done an adequate job of explaining to Albertans why all of this is necessary. Now, I believe climate change is real and human caused. I believe we ought to do something about it. I believe we need more wind power and solar and geothermal and hydro and biomass and renewables of all kinds. I believe those things because I think they're fundamentally the right things to do. But this government, sadly, has not done a good enough job of explaining to Albertans what's in it for them to go down this path. As a result and as we see in the polling numbers, Albertans are not happy with the carbon tax, and Albertans are not happy with the changes in renewable electricity. That's something that has got to be a big concern to this government. You've not done a good enough job, and then turning around and asking for literally a blank cheque to backstop your changes, changes you brought about through some grand plan, which is still unclear to me how it all hangs together, you're causing even greater anxiety amongst Albertans.

So I would really, in the best interests of this government and ultimately in the best interests of this province, ask you to please take it back about a half-step, think really hard about the what's-in-it-for-me question for Albertans. I would really encourage the Minister of Energy to work with her staff in however we pull together our talking points and to tone down the rhetoric. I think that'll help all sides of the House tone down our rhetoric, and we can hopefully have a thoughtful conversation about how we're going to manage Alberta's electricity sector going forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you hon. member.

Are there any hon. members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Madam Speaker, after hearing the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and the Member for Calgary-Elbow, for the first time ever in my life I'm so scared now. They're talking about billions and billions of dollars. What we're hearing here is that this government is addicted to tax and spend, and they could justify anything, so they're asking us to write blank cheques. What is next? Are they going to ask us to let them print money so then there is no limit on anything? I think it won't be too long before we see that, that they want us to let them print money so they can spend endlessly and irresponsibly.

Bill 34 is just another in a long list of bills that the NDP have brought forward tinkering, meddling, interfering, and messing with Alberta's electrical system. The NDP have a reputation, Madam

Speaker, of sticking their finger where it doesn't belong. Sooner or later they'll be like that little boy who tries to stick a fork in an electrical socket. We all did that when we were young.

**Mr. Yao:** But the NDP are notorious for that.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. So they're going to get shocked soon. They're really going to get shocked. They have to wake up before they get an electric shock.

When 4 out of 5 members of the board of directors of the Balancing Pool resign, you know that the NDP is doing something wrong here. There are many, many advance warnings for them to tell that they are making a lot of mistakes, but they're not getting the message. The Balancing Pool was independent. It was at arm's length from the government of the day. The minister did not get involved with the day-to-day decision-making.

The Balancing Pool was established in 1999 by the government of Alberta to help manage the transition to competition in Alberta's electric industry. I'm just going to talk about the responsibilities and the current obligations in the Electric Utilities Act and the Balancing Pool regulations that are gone. I'm not going to go into the statistics because the Member for Calgary-Elbow has already tried to educate us on that risky path we're on.

9:40

Let me talk about these legislative duties as per the Electric Utilities Act and Balancing Pool regulations:

- To manage generation assets in a commercial manner, specifically any Power Purchase Arrangements . . . held by the Balancing Pool that include the right to exchange electric energy and ancillary services, and any arrangements or agreements derived from these assets;
- To hold the Hydro PPA and manage associated payments;
- To forecast revenues and expenses (incorporating estimates of Pool price and potential expenses related to risk backstop activities) and allocate the forecast surplus or deficiency to consumers through a Consumer Allocation or charge;
- To participate in appropriate regulatory, dispute resolution and other proceedings and processes to protect the interests of the Balancing Pool and the value of its assets; and
- To manage risks prudently in all aspects of its operations.

Those are the obligations and responsibilities under the original Electric Utilities Act and Balancing Pool regulations.

Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, along with the other misguided government policy have together wreaked havoc on our electricity market and damaged the Balancing Pool. This pool of money, used to pay the PPAs, was in balance and had enough coming in and enough going out. Now that the PPAs have been cancelled and lawsuits from companies like Enmax endure, the Balancing Pool is not bringing in enough money and will run out of the \$700 million surplus it had unless this Bill 34, another money bill, is passed. That's the actual purpose of this Bill 34.

At the rate the Balancing Pool burns through money now, it will be broke and unable to pay its obligations in the new year. Bill 34 is a backdoor way to funnel government of Alberta money, which is ultimately taxpayers' money. Like the Member for Calgary-Elbow explained, it's all taxpayers' money or taxpayers' debt because the government is in deficit now. They'll funnel government money into the pool to help it meet its payment obligations. That sounds like a nice idea, only the truth is that Bill 34 is to paper over and cover up the mistakes and hide the true cost of the electricity from people's monthly electricity bills.

Bill 34 will ensure that there is no consumer allocation, which is a line on people's electricity bills. The NDP is out there pulling the wool over the eyes of Albertans. They are just trying to, you know,

mislead people and hide the actual costs on their electricity bills. As long as Albertans do not see the power prices going up, the NDP believes that all is well, that there won't be any rallies on the steps of the Legislature. That's what they're trying to avoid. The taxpayer will pay for it with mounting debt. One way or another taxpayers are going to pay, Madam Speaker.

I can tell you that the bankers loaning Alberta billions of dollars are looking at this province and counting their profits already. They think that the NDP is a good partner for them because they can make tons of money out of Alberta as long as the NDP is the government. Money, money everywhere, Madam Speaker, and it will all end in higher taxes in the long run to pay for it. Somehow we have to pay for it. Those higher taxes to cover the interest payments, they could have gone to building schools and hospitals and other social services. Also, we could have used that to build infrastructure, pave roads, and keep waste water out of rivers. But now we won't be using that money for any development projects or anything. We'll be using that money to pay higher taxes because of this government's irresponsible governance.

Really, the most disappointing element of all of this is that it is an unforeseen error. It's one thing to borrow for operational spending, as the NDP has us doing today – it's the first time in the history of Alberta that we are borrowing money to pay for operational costs, and that is unsustainable and damaging enough to our future. Madam Speaker, my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake mentioned that future generations will be mortgaged by this government. However, it is even worse when we are putting our future in jeopardy to pay for the mistakes of this NDP government.

Today we are discussing writing a blank cheque, that future generations will have to pay back, to cover totally unnecessary mistakes. This is not acceptable. Worst of all, Madam Speaker, there will be no limit on the amount of debt the Balancing Pool can borrow off our falling double-A credit rating in this province. We have seen many credit downgrades, and it's not helping because the borrowing rate will go up, and we'll end up paying higher interest, to infinity and beyond, as Buzz Lightyear would say. I sure hope we're not going into infinite debt. I'm hoping.

**Connolly:** Infinity and beyond.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. I'm hoping.

Now, I'm told that the Balancing Pool will have 14 years to pay back the money, but we don't know if they can. Whether 14 years is enough or not, we don't even know. We don't know if electricity prices will rebound so that the Balancing Pool can make the money back to pay off the debt.

The NDP needs to end their tinkering and toying with Alberta's electricity system. It needs to stop now. I call on all those backbenchers that were heckling to make a difference by voting down Bill 34. One mistake begets another which begets another, and it's the taxpayers being soaked all the way, Madam Speaker.

I ask all of us to act responsibly and stop the debt accumulation for the sake of future generations, our children and their children. Stop the higher taxes to pay the debt interest. They make one mistake, and they bring in another bill to pay for the mistake of the other bill, and it goes on and on and on. Stop the dishonest billing.

Madam Speaker, I implore all members of this House to vote against the bill. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I always listen with great interest when the Member for Calgary-Foothills

speaks. I do have a question for the member. Given your long history in business, you know, in many different levels of business, I imagine you've gone through negotiations, perhaps even been involved in a lawsuit or two. One of the real concerns that I have is that this government has overplayed its hand or perhaps not played its hand tremendously well by coming to settlements with some of the defendants in the lawsuit but not coming to settlements with all of them at the same time. So I guess the question is: in your experience does this leave the province of Alberta and, by extension, the people of Alberta at more risk or less? Is the province of Alberta now, in the PPA lawsuit with Enmax, in a stronger bargaining position or a weaker bargaining position? And are we potentially at even greater risk than we would have been prior? I'd be really interested in your insights on that.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Elbow. Yeah, he's right. In my long career in the energy industry we had a few lawsuits, that I had to deal with, but not this kind of lawsuit. Here the questions are basically about the sanctity of the contract. Will we be in a strong position to negotiate with Enmax? I don't think so. You know, some of Enmax's power plants have a good environmental record and all, and they're owned by a set of Albertans, Calgarians, who own Enmax. Enmax has been very accountable to the taxpayers in Calgary, where I and the Member for Calgary-Elbow live. They have very sound management, so they have their ducks in a row. They know how to fight this lawsuit.

9:50

I don't think the government is in a position to win that unless they really arm-twist other levels of government and make some behind-the-scenes deals. I don't know how that works. It could work, potentially, because they are a senior level of government and Enmax is owned by a junior level of government, so there are ways to deal with that. But it's not fair, and it's going to send the wrong signals to other investors in Alberta.

I mean, today the ministers were saying, actually, that international investors are looking at Alberta, to invest here, after their announcement about the petrochemical diversification program results. They were pumped up, and they were saying that investors from all across the world are coming here to invest. That's not really so because they are scared about these tactics, you know, of taking those businesses to court and disregarding the written contracts. A written contract is a contract. From my past experience it's the sanctity of the contract. No one should tinker with that. That will be dangerous, and that creates lots of uncertainty in the minds of the businesses.

Coming back to the question that the hon. member asked, like him, I also like renewables and all that, but this is not the way to implement it. You know, it's not just this bill. Bill 34 is necessitated because of the other mistakes they made, so they are trying to now cover up those by bringing in Bill 34. That's why I said before: what is coming next? Are they going to just procure a money-printing machine and start printing money here? I don't know.

But my take on this whole thing is that government should negotiate with the people who had these PPAs signed before. I mean, they can talk about an Enron clause and all that, so they're looking backwards, but now we have to look forward and make sure that we negotiate with them in good faith and settle those lawsuits in an amicable way and in a way that we don't scare other investors.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Before I recognize any other members to speak, just a reminder that we are in second reading, not Committee of the Whole, so if we could please not switch chairs and not move around House, that would be appreciated. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, this is a surprise. The aspect of the blank cheque is concerning, to say the least. This utilities act – since taking power in 2015, the government has done a whole lot to make mistake after mistake on this file. Just weeks, actually, after being elected, the NDP made the expensive and poorly informed change in law – change in law – to raise the SGERs levy without checking for the legal implications, without determining if this would negatively impact their existing contractual obligations to the electricity generators. By raising the SGERs levy, the NDP set off a series of events that would result in a mass return of the PPAs. We've heard all of this before, a mass return of the PPAs to the Balancing Pool.

You know, the reason that we are here debating this is because it is an irresponsible piece of legislation. There is so much evidence – it's significant – pointing to the fact that this government knew. They knew about the risk of the mass PPA cancellations, and the NDP claimed to not know about the risks of the PPA terminations until mid-March of 2016. Some would say that that's patently untrue. Despite ample warning, including public submissions to the climate action panel by Capital Power and TransCanada, that the minister claimed inside this House to have read, the NDP is still claiming that they didn't know until March 2016. It is way too late to go back now.

There have been extensive FOIPs obtained and released by the Wildrose clearly showing that in November 2015 a briefing was prepared, and it outlined the potential impacts on Alberta's coal-powered companies. Because of the NDP government's climate change policies, a document explicitly mentioned PPAs. Again, the NDP are still claiming that they didn't know until March 2016. Again I say that it's way too late to go back now. Despite extensive lobbying on behalf of Enmax and other power companies involved in this PPA debacle, the NDP are still claiming that they didn't know until March 2016. It's repeated again that it's too late to go back now.

Now, Madam Speaker, Albertans are starting to see the pattern that this government is falling into: deny, deny, deny, then legislate; cover it up. The pattern certainly does not fit with any level of accountability that this government was elected on.

On the 9th of December 2015 Enmax notified senior bureaucrats and political staff that they were considering terminating the Battle River 5 PPA under article 4.3(j). We've heard that a few times. Enmax alleges that they directly informed Grant Sprague, Deputy Minister of Energy; James E. Allen, the assistant deputy minister of electricity and sustainable energy; and Allison Hansen, senior policy adviser to the Minister of Energy. An e-mail was sent from the Minister of Energy's chief of staff to an issues manager in the Premier's office stating, "Attached is a draft briefing note that has yet to be finalized but I believe provides the context that you need for question period . . . Should something arise."

The thing that no one seems to understand and that, quite frankly, no one in Alberta believes is that a minister made responsible for the energy file could read their electricity 101 briefing and see that PPAs could be terminated if made unprofitable and not ask any questions even without the word "more" in front of unprofitable. If anything – if anything – the absence of the term "more," Madam Speaker, makes the ability of these companies to terminate their PPAs due to contractual violations way broader. Had the minister



asked one question, just one – we know through FOIP that the minister's staff had already been briefed by Enmax and knew all about just how much trouble this government was getting us into. And I mean us, all of Alberta. Congratulations. This is nothing short of gross incompetence, at best, and, some would say, misleading Albertans, at worst. The reality is that the minister responsible for that file and the Premier have issues managers that watch for evolving situations in the energy industry.

I have here an interesting article published on January 18, 2016: Enmax Terminates “Unprofitable” Coal-fired Electricity Contract. This is from Darcy Henton.

City-owned Enmax has terminated its contract to buy electricity from the coal-fired Battle River power plant, saying historically low . . . prices and . . .

Well, isn't this interesting.

. . . the NDP hike in the carbon tax for heavy carbon emitters has made the deal unprofitable.

Very interesting, isn't it?

10:00

Madam Speaker, Darcy Henton goes on to say:

With low power prices in the wholesale market and changes to the Specified Gas Emitters Regulation announced in June 2015, the Battle River PPA (Power Purchase Arrangement) became unprofitable for Enmax . . .

Based on these market conditions, Enmax made the business decision to exercise its right under the PPA to terminate the agreement, effective Jan. 1.

It goes on to say:

The contract will be returned to Alberta's Balancing Pool – a government-created agency which sells power from electrical generation contracts that were not sold at auctions when the province deregulated the electricity market 15 years ago.

It continues, explaining that

profits and losses in the Balancing Pool are allocated to power consumers on their monthly power bills.

It's very transparent.

Since 2006, it has refunded consumers more than \$2 billion,

As the hon. member mentioned, it's \$4.4 billion.

The article goes on to say:

Enmax said the Balancing Pool will make decisions on the future of the PPA, but in the interim the utility has agreed to continue to dispatch power from the facility.

Hmm.

The Alberta Utilities Commission said the transfer did not require regulatory approval.

Alberta Energy spokesman Chris Bourdeau said the Balancing Pool may hold the PPA, resell it or terminate it. But if it opts for termination, it must consult –

consult –

with consumer representatives and the energy minister about the reasonableness of the termination.

Now, it goes on. It becomes even more interesting.

The Balancing Pool must also give the owner of the Battle River facility, ATCO Power, six months' notice of its intention to terminate and pay ATCO “an amount equal to the remaining closing net book value of the generating unit.”

It continues on to say that

if the agency terminates the PPA, ATCO would then make a business decision to operate the unit or decommission it.

Industry watchers said in this article that

it's [extremely] difficult to assess how the move will impact consumers,

something that this government has not taken into consideration, the consumers. They keep saying that they have the consumers' backs. This proves otherwise.

You know, Jim Wachowich of the Alberta Consumers Coalition said that he doesn't know what it means in the grand scheme of things. They've never seen anything like this before.

Then

electricity consultant David Gray, formerly executive director of the Utilities Consumer Advocate, said the transfer of the agreement to the Balancing Pool means the money sitting in the pool to be allocated to consumers . . .

So that's the money for consumers.

. . . “will be drained” if it continues an unprofitable contract.

That's consumers' dollars, just to restate.

“It will be unprofitable if power prices stay low,” he said.

To be clear,

“The proposed carbon tax will exacerbate that.”

Pembina Institute's Ben Thibault was also fearful Enmax's move could ultimately cost consumers.

“The Balancing Pool will be picking up a liability,” he said.

“If the market price is lower than the contract price, then in theory, at least,

at the very least,

this would impact on consumers.”

However, another electricity consultant, Rick Cowburn, who sat on Alberta's retail power market review in 2012, doesn't think there will be any major short-term ramifications from the move.

Interestingly, we know, of course, that this claim from Rick Cowburn is not the case. The Balancing Pool cannot cover this liability.

The Battle River Generating Station has been operating since 1956 about 200 kilometres southeast of Edmonton on the banks of the Battle River.

And this is published information.

Units 1 and 2 were retired and dismantled in 2000. PPAs for Unit 3, which went into service in 1969, and Unit 4, which went into service in 1975, expired in 2013. Under federal regulations, Unit 3 is slated for shutdown in 2019 and Unit 4 in 2025, according to a Pembina Institute report.

Unit 5, which went into service in 1981, has a PPA that expires in 2020 and is slated for shutdown in 2029 . . . But the province's existing \$15-per-tonne carbon levy on coal plants increased to \$20 a tonne this year, and rises to \$30 in 2017.

I mean, this article is very telling. That article was dated January 18, 2016, and quite clearly outlines Enmax's more unprofitable claim, but here we are today, and the NDP is still claiming that they didn't know until March of 2016 and it's too late to go back now. This is unfathomable to Albertans, that the Energy minister or any minister, for that matter, could have been that unaware of the PPA situation. It is unbelievable that stories like this, when published in a major newspaper last January, didn't strike enough of a nerve with the Energy minister that she felt it appropriate to go on and at least ask a few more questions.

It's also evident that her staff had already been briefed by Enmax and that they actually knew what was going on. That's worse actually. And the evidence is undeniable. The incompetence shown on our province's Energy file is unjustifiable. This government was elected on a mandate of increasing accountability and transparency. They have failed Albertans. The longer the NDP government continues down the road of changing the story and being less truthful about the facts surrounding PPAs, the more taxpayer dollars are going to be wasted on this mess. What the government is doing to Albertans in this House is appalling. But the best case alternative to what they're doing is just that the government is inept, and that, quite frankly, scares me. Our province is in the hands of leaders who refuse to do their homework before implementing their radical, ideological agenda, and now we have this bill.

Convention would have it that when an error like this is made in the Balancing Pool, they would be permitted to put on a rate rider. The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake gave us a very good description about the rate rider, and this covers Albertans' losses. It is so interesting to me and the rest of my caucus and on the Opposition side here that we are here today passing a bill that is entirely unnecessary. The government is claiming that the rate rider would be minimal, just over \$1 a month actually. In fact, Andrew Leach put out a report estimating that this rate rider could be just over \$2.

So why is this bill needed? I would love somebody to explain this to me. It makes absolutely no sense. Of course, Andrew Leach was tasked with reviewing submissions that clearly outlined the risks of PPA cancellations, so maybe he's even wrong about the cost of this, for the rate rider. Anything is possible. But I would love somebody to explain this. Albertans are left wondering what this government is hiding in this unnecessary blank cheque to the Balancing Pool if the cost...

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks to my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View for her impassioned words. One of the things that you said reminded me of something I heard a week or so ago. You said that, quite frankly, this scares me. I had breakfast a week or so ago with some oil and gas executives, and they said: quite frankly, this scares me, the fact that the Alberta government would back out of binding contracts, would break and sue their own people. And they said in response, partly because electricity is a bigger component of their operations than the cost of labour is, that what they've decided to do is stay out of Alberta. When they have an opportunity to buy an oil or gas field that straddles Alberta and Saskatchewan or straddles Alberta and B.C., they ensure that they sell the Alberta side off before they start.

**10:10**

So I'd like to hear your thoughts on what this type of thing has done to destroy business confidence, has done to raise the costs of our wealth providers, and has done to drive opportunity out of Alberta. On another side, while you're at it, you know, quite frankly, this scares me for the next generation. This government in their inability to control spending is already billions of dollars over. Debt repayment and interest are going to greatly reduce services in the future. My goodness, our children are going to have huge repayments.

If you could touch on those two, I would appreciate it.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the comments. I think one of the things that we've been talking about in this House extensively is what it looks like to any investors coming into our province. We can go back to so many parts of not only this bill but other bills right now as well with regard not only to torn-up contracts but the nature by which these contracts were torn up and how the government is actually blaming companies that have set prices that made us much more competitive for companies to come in and produce here.

As you said, we are energy intensive, so for companies to want to be able to produce here – and they had that ability to do that with our low costs for electricity. If you consider that along with the increasing rates of what's going to happen either with the carbon

tax or through the SGERs right now and then on top of that you add in the instability of not knowing whether or not, if you decided to have a contract here – will that be honoured? We don't know, and we can't even say on behalf of the government whether or not they would be able to do that because the justification is that they know better than we do. The justification is that they are going to make a decision to go to a capacity market that supposedly stabilizes electricity.

All the while the taxpayer now has another added component to that cost. So we have the ratepayer, and then on top of that they also become the taxpayer in this whole decision. So we don't even know what that's going to cost Albertans at the end of the day, Madam Speaker. We don't know, and that's why it's terrifying, because they don't know.

How is it that you attract investment when you can't guarantee that the contracts that you've set in stone, even for companies within Alberta – they don't matter. You're just willy-nilly able to tear them up because either you don't understand it, you didn't read the briefing, or you didn't do your outreach and consultation appropriately. So as an investor if you were looking to do this or if you're an oil and gas company now and you have the option of where to choose to do business, you're certainly going to look at jurisdictions that lay out very clearly for you what your responsibilities are as far as that goes. Quite frankly, nobody would know what they were walking into here at this point in time.

The puzzle pieces of these bills coming together are terrifying. It is not just one aspect; it's the cumulative aspect of all of these things coming together. Capping production, capping upgrading, keeping things in the ground and out of the pipeline, tearing up contracts: I mean, the list goes on and on and on. If I was one of those companies, I'd certainly be looking elsewhere as well, to be truthful, and it's a shame because we all love this province so much – everybody in this House does – and there is so much talent and tech here to be able to do all of the things that this government professes that it wants to do.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 34, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016. I find it interesting that the Minister of Energy in her opening statements identified several milestones of the last 18 months. These milestones clearly show the NDP's mishandling of the electricity file.

I can point to some of the things that the NDP government is downloading on this file onto the backs of Alberta taxpayers: the cost of an early shutdown of coal generation, \$1.36 billion onto the backs of the Alberta taxpayers; capping of the consumer cost of electricity with the balance of the actual price of the electricity being downloaded onto the backs of the Alberta taxpayer. Now, instead of letting the Balancing Pool function normally – the Balancing Pool does already have built-in mechanisms to cover their losses. They can put a rate rider in for Balancing Pool allocations on consumers' bills. It's very easily done and was designed to manage the system quite capably.

This government decides that now we are going to take on more debt, put more on the credit card and more onto the back of the Alberta taxpayer. I'm concerned that this is the path we're going down, and every time the NDP puts in policy that creates a consequence they never foresaw or they just arrogantly went forward in the way they're doing it, they try to hide it on the back of the Alberta taxpayer. I'm concerned that this is just the beginning

of what we will see more and more of, NDP mistakes and bad policy that drive up, in this case, electricity prices, and then they try to hide it from our power bills by shifting it onto the back of the Alberta taxpayers through taxpayer debt. We should all be concerned with the way this file is being handled and all the debt that's being racked up. Sooner or later the Alberta taxpayer gets stuck with that bill.

This is the latest and greatest in a long line of NDP bills making radical changes based on ideology – ideology – to the province's electricity system in the hopes of fighting climate change. Bill 34 is about covering the cost of the power purchase agreements debacle, that this government created when it raised the price of the specified gas emitters regulation levy only a few weeks into their mandate, and they did this without properly doing their homework on the consequences of such a decision. Raising the specified gas emitters regulation levy resulted in power purchase agreements across this province acting on their contractual right to return their assets to the Balancing Pool and, thus, the current debt that the Balancing Pool needs to be bailed out of. The fight over the power purchase agreements from Enmax, TransAlta, Capital Power, Canadian Utilities, and ATCO has resulted in these power producers deciding to take their ball and go home. The result: 4 out of 5 members of the board of the Balancing Pool have resigned.

The NDP are currently suing Alberta-owned companies because the NDP did not know their own laws, that have been publicly known for over 15 years. No one forced this government to make a rash change to the specified gas emitters regulation levy just weeks into gaining power. The NDP should have gone back on this change, but, no, the NDP are holding true to form and not turning around. It is full pedal to the metal on that electric car accelerator. Rather than launching a lawsuit to cover up the poor planning done to date by the NDP government on the electricity file, they should be sitting down with energy companies to find a collaborative pathway towards a sustainable electricity market that works for everyone. It's not unreasonable for Albertans to expect their government to work together with industry to find a sustainable solution.

This government cannot ignore the terms of a binding contract. This lawsuit shows the NDP government's blatant disregard for covenants, business sense, and a lack of respect for taxpayer dollars and knowledge of how our electricity system actually works. Investor confidence in the electricity sector is extremely important to Albertans. As this government continues to pursue their plan of phasing out coal and reaching 30 per cent renewables by 2030, goodness knows, we need investor confidence in order to actually accomplish those goals. We need to be able to attract companies here without having to attract them with unnecessary subsidization just to get them to invest.

**10:20**

The government is losing this case in the court of public opinion, and they are trying to divert attention from the consequences of their own ill-considered tax increases. The result is that Enmax, a Calgary-owned power company, possibly may never pay a dividend to the city of Calgary again. This also will be downloaded, in this case, onto the back of the Calgary taxpayer as higher property taxes. But the NDP government had to interfere with an arm's-length body, and it has resulted in disastrous consequences.

Bill 34 is entirely unnecessary as the Balancing Pool already has the power through the use of an approved rate rider to recover its losses. But in the NDP world view we are now capping everyone's electricity bill in order to prevent the Balancing Pool's consumer allocation charges from showing up on people's bills, a way to hide the actual costs of the mismanagement of this file right from the very beginning. These are \$1 to \$3 charges. They are negligible, and there is no reason to get rid of accountability and write a blank

cheque to the Balancing Pool. The Balancing Pool has the ability to charge a levy already.

It is entirely unclear why it is necessary to write a blank cheque to the Balancing Pool, but it is worrying. Albertans believe that the costs are far higher than the government is letting on. By writing a blank cheque, the debt that the Balancing Pool could take on is unlimited. There is no upper ceiling to this. It's just a matter of the minister deciding that there's a need to have a loan to the Balancing Pool and approaching the Finance minister: we'll get 'er done. No limits.

The debt that the Balancing Pool has to take on to keep the lights on literally is going to cause consequences to the province's balance sheet, more debt on the back of Alberta taxpayers. Meanwhile we also have Bill 27, which allows the minister to financially backstop the construction of renewable electrical generation of private-sector businesses: even more debt. The NDP plans to keep that debt on the public books in the name of ideology and not pass it on to consumers on their power bills, essentially putting it, again, on the back of the Alberta taxpayer. Economics do not matter to this government, it appears. In the NDP world view they are doing what they are doing to accomplish their goals, and all Albertans will be paying for it. This is the NDP showing another side of their antibusines agenda.

I encourage all members to vote this down at second reading and prevent the government from racking up even more debt and putting this onto the back of the Alberta taxpayer.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on the . . . [interjection] Oh, 29(2)(a). My apologies. Any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak?

**Mr. Cooper:** Sorry. I was busy talking to the minister.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure – a pleasure – to do one of my favourite things in this Assembly. I might as well just cut right to it. I know that members on the other side of the House are waiting with bated breath as to what might be coming next, procedural zigging and zagging, shall we say? I would like to propose an amendment. [interjections] Thank you. Thank you. It's nice that my mom has joined us in the Assembly this evening to cheer me on like that.

I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

I know that members are shocked and awed at such an unexpected turn of events, you might say, a little to-ing and fro-ing.

You know, this bill is not lengthy. This bill is unreasonable. The bill can be found in about – I haven't done the actual counting, but I think that it's about eight to 12 sentences, I believe. One might ask the question: well, the bill is so small; what could we possibly talk about in committee? Well, if there's one thing that I'm certain of . . . [interjections] The hour is late, and comments that are being made would give an indication that the hour might be late.

One thing I'm certain of is that there is a significant number of people that would like to be able to provide feedback on some of

the concerns around this particular piece of legislation. My colleagues this evening have outlined a wide range of challenges, a wide range of concerns, significant problems that this government has created. Now they're trying to find workarounds and other opportunities to fix a problem that, let's be clear, Madam Speaker, was created by this government.

What this particular amendment does: I know that you're very familiar with it, but for the thousands of people watching at home – and by thousands I mean dozens or maybe a handful. I am certain of this: they would like to have the bill referred to committee so that extensive discussion, including stakeholder feedback, including expert testimony – like, you know, at the end of the day it might be a positive for the Minister of Energy to be able to bring some of the officials that have provided her such guidance on Bill 34 so that they might be able to defend the position of the government, and Albertans would have a better understanding and a more robust grasp of exactly why we need to give a totally blank cheque to the Balancing Pool to potentially borrow hundreds of millions, billions, multiple billions of dollars, all on the back of what some day will wind up on the taxpayer.

I won't go on and on, much to the delight of the minister. I think that I have spoken about the need for referral motions, the need for government to utilize committees in a fashion that is helpful to the Assembly as well as helpful to Albertans as well as helpful to the legislative process. I know the minister of economic development has moved these very types of motions on numerous occasions in his very storied political career. So I can only imagine that he'll be rising in his place in just a few moments to support this, and we can move through this amendment quite quickly. But for now I will leave it at that and encourage all members of the Assembly to go ahead and support such a strong amendment.

10:30

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, would anybody like to speak to the referral? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been an interesting evening. The words that come to mind are: petulance, envy, jealousy. I've been sitting here listening to this discussion, and I'm sorry, but that's the impression that I'm getting over here on this side. The other side is actually quite envious of the fact that this government, through its climate leadership action plan, has actually achieved two pipelines – two pipelines – that we would not have achieved without acquisition of social licence, a concept that is completely foreign to those folks on the other side. Social licence has been very positive for this province. Our Premier has been a leader, and she has demonstrated to the world that Albertans are capable of stewarding their resources, and we are finally getting credit for that.

I'm speaking against the referral motion. I'm speaking against it largely because the rest of the world expects that Alberta is going to get on with its climate leadership.

I mean, there's been a lot of quoting of various articles here, but one that came out just a few days ago says: Flipping the Switch to New Electricity System Makes Sense for Alberta. Makes sense. This was in the *Edmonton Journal*, and similar headlines were in the *Globe and Mail*, in the *Calgary Herald*, in the Vancouver papers, where we do need to get some social licence so that we can get the Kinder Morgan pipeline completed. You know, I'm also pleased that it's even made papers like the *New York Times* and the *Guardian* from London, England. Social licence is an important concept, and this bill is essential as part of the integrated work that

this Legislature has to do to achieve that social licence along with the renewables bill and other bills.

I was disappointed in the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake's comment that this was a senseless bill. Flipping the Switch to New Electricity System Makes Sense for Alberta: a direct contradiction to that member. He says that this is a senseless bill. We've got this great system that has been working so well. It's been working so well that our consumers in this province have been hit by massive changes in their month-to-month electricity bills. Those that hadn't basically bought into the contracts, which were actually costing consumers a lot of money, were subject to very massive changes in the regulated rate option.

I don't know if the members over there really care about consumers. It sounds from the discussion here tonight that they don't. Why wouldn't we protect farmers and residential owners and not-for-profits and make sure that they are going to know for the time being what the cap is on their rates?

There were other people quoted by the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View from stuff that was written about a year ago, including David Gray, who just last week said on Facebook that this change to a capacity market is the wisest thing that this province could have done. The Pembina Institute says that putting it all together is a good idea.

You know, I do want to quote from Flipping the Switch to New Electricity Makes Sense for Alberta. "The elephant in the room was Alberta's broken electricity market. The province had the most volatile electricity market in the world. Financiers were reluctant to lend money to Alberta projects." This is one of the things that we're going to fix with the capacity market. The capacity market is basically making sure that we Albertans have a stable supply of power, that companies are going to compete with each other to provide that. The companies are going to guarantee that, and we're basically going to benefit from that.

The Dominion Bond Rating Service – again, I think it's a fairly credible resource – says that we are not getting in bed with the corporations. In fact, companies like Capital Power and TransAlta and AltaGas are going to have to compete with each other. Dominion Bond Rating Service actually says that they're most likely to get into wind and renewables and will be adding to the resources that we've got in this province. The capacity market also ensures that we aren't going to be at the vagaries of economic withdrawal.

I'm surprised that the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake loves that system that allowed these corporate giants to basically shut off their power plants at will, jacking the price up well over the 15 cents, maybe sometimes to 99 cents a gigajoule. He's happy with that. He must love these corporate guys. Economic withdrawal is going to be impossible in the capacity market. The capacity market is what we're all excited about here, and it's the basis for the need of this bill.

You know, the other thing that the opposition, I think, forgets about is that this is 2016. By 2030 the federal government has mandated that we've got to be out of coal-fired electricity generation. What is their solution to that? They want to put their heads in the sand and say: well, we've got to basically maybe do a constitutional exemption then and not follow what the feds are telling us. Nonsense. Nonsense. There was also a comment about: well, this is like a nanny state. Why wouldn't we want to protect consumers? Why wouldn't we want to make sure that the individual homeowner, who does not have elastic demand for their electricity rates, is protected and put a cap on it? It doesn't say that we're going to be up at the cap, but they're not going to pay anything more than the 6.8 cents. [interjections] You know, they're chirping over there, Madam Speaker, and I think you really should put a stop to it.

Who is going to pay for it are the companies. We're going to make sure, through the capacity market, that the various private companies are the ones that are going to be bearing the burden of providing electricity to this province in a safe and reliable, efficient manner.

"Settling three of the four PPAs is just the cherry on top," is the quote from Flipping the Switch to New Electricity System Makes Sense for Alberta. "The government has (mostly) settled a thorny issue that could have potentially held up" the reform of the electricity market. "We're better off for it," is the final statement there.

So, Madam Speaker, I would implore all members of this House to reject the referral motion. Let's get on with this bill.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

#### 10:40                    **Government Bills and Orders** **Committee of the Whole**

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### **Bill 27** **Renewable Electricity Act**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect of this bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** You're surprised. I know you're surprised that I would stand to speak to this bill.

Madam Chair, when we're talking about legislation, especially something that is as intrusive as this particular piece of legislation is – and I believe that we have at least begun to try to establish the very real need for some amendments to Bill 27. In its current form it is woefully inadequate and needs a tonne of help.

I was somewhat amused by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud's statements a little while ago regarding economic withholding. It's interesting to note, Madam Chair, that the economic withholding that the hon. member was talking about was caught by the MSA, the Market Surveillance Administrator. It is the very same administrator that Bill 27 is attempting to shut down when it comes to renewable projects. I thought it rather amusing that here we have the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud extolling the virtues of the MSA in catching producers doing naughty things like economic withholding, and at the same time the hon. member is supporting a bill, Bill 27, that effectively denies the MSA the right to even consider complaints against renewable projects. I find it a significant inconsistency, hypocrisy, name it what you want, deception. I don't know quite what to call it, but it's skulduggery. That's what it is.

You can't have it both ways. You cannot extol the virtues of the MSA on one hand and then try to gut the MSA on the other. Either the MSA is a good organization that does good work and they should be investigating everything, or they shouldn't. The fact of the matter is that we need the MSA, and when it comes to renewables, we're going to need the MSA even more, especially given some of the nonsense that went on and is still going on in Ontario.

Secondly, the hon. member tried to tie suing Enmax to wining two pipelines, which is just really overreaching there. That's a stretch.

Further, we've got in this particular bill some places where we can attempt to make improvements if the government will consider making improvements. So at this moment in time I would like to introduce an amendment to Bill 27.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I have to apologize. I believe that we're still on amendment A5, which was the amendment that you moved, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** It's which?

**The Deputy Chair:** Amendment A5.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Great. Then we will carry on because I'm still on topic. It's on the MSA.

**The Deputy Chair:** I apologize. It was my mistake for not reminding everyone that we are on A5.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I certainly forgive you, Madam Chair. I realize it's late, and we're all getting older. That might be unparliamentary.

Okay. Here we are, Madam Chair. We're talking about the Market Surveillance Administrator and the value of that organization in policing. It is a reality that had the MSA not been doing their job, TransAlta would have gotten away with a \$56 million bit of skulduggery last year. That was only one of a series of such things, but it was the biggest. The other issues the MSA has caught have been in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. I believe that this was one of the larger bits of economic withholding and nonsense that went on. Of course, the MSA did their job and did it in a stellar fashion, and they protected Albertans.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was talking about protecting Albertans and protecting consumers. Well, that is the function of the MSA. That is their job, to make sure that everybody is playing by the rules. Yet here we have the hon. member on the one hand extolling the virtues of the MSA and on the other hand in Bill 27 totally removing the MSA's ability to do their job when it comes to renewables. All the other parts of our utility system: yes, the MSA can still investigate. But when it comes to renewables, for some strange reason this government does not want the MSA poking their nose into the renewables situation.

That, of course, does not speak to transparency very well, something this government campaigned on. Neither does it speak to accountability, something this government campaigned on. On the transparency issue and on the accountability issue so far when it comes to the renewables world, this government gets a failing grade because the very agency that is mandated to protect Alberta consumers is being told: you can't do that when it comes to renewables. Somehow renewables are protected.

When this subject was brought up, the minister suggested that, well, there is going to be ministerial oversight. Well, guess what? That didn't bring a lot of comfort to the good people of Alberta because now we have a politician providing the policing and the ministerial oversight. The good people of Alberta just turfed a party out of power because of the political oversight of politicians who ended up not doing a very good job of policing themselves.

Now, here we are. An arm's-length agency, MSA, that is supposed to be devoid of political interference, is being interfered with. Then we also have the Balancing Pool, that was supposed to be arm's length. There wasn't supposed to be political interference there, yet the political interference has been so intense that we now have 4 out of 5 board members resigning. Then we have AESO, Alberta Electric System Operator, that is supposed to be at arm's length, nonpolitical, that exists and has a mandate to be dealing at arm's length and managing our electricity system at arm's length to

keep it free from political interference, and what do we see? Bill 27 and to some extent Bill 34 are getting right into the inner workings of what were supposed to be arm's-length agencies responsible for utilities in our province. Every single one of them is being interfered with.

I will submit to you, Madam Chair, that if there was ever a time when we needed the Market Surveillance Administrator, it is now. If there was ever an issue where we needed the Market Surveillance Administrator, it is on the subject of renewables. If there was ever a time when we needed the MSA to be looking into things, it is when this government, who has not demonstrated adequate understanding of our electricity system, is meddling with this. We need the MSA and what they can do. They are a market surveillance administrator. They are the watchdog, and we are going to need that watchdog.

**10:50**

We have already had situations here with regard to renewables where the minister told us that the renewables industry told her that they needed this and this and this in order to come to our province to invest, a shopping list, and it sounds like the minister has granted them their shopping list. Do we know that that was in the best interests of Albertans? No, we don't. We don't know because we have not been permitted to bring this bill to committee and invite those same people to come to a standing committee of this Legislature and explain their wish list, to invite all sides in this. We have not had that discussion, yet the minister seems just quite fine with doing things behind closed doors, talking to the renewables industry, the big multinational corporations who have a vested interest in making sure that this government ensures their profits regardless of the impact on Albertans.

Let's remember that this government can claim that they're going to be attracting 10 and a half billion dollars to \$20 billion worth of investment into this province, but that investment is going to come into this province, and we're ultimately going to be paying that money. It doesn't just come in here to us, and we get that money. That's not how that works. They're going to come, they're going to build renewables, and we're going to end up paying for it. Yet there are discussions taking place in the minister's office with renewables corporations who came here with a shopping list, and part of that shopping list is a guaranteed return on their investment, and the only way that's going to happen is that either our prices for electricity go up or this government forcibly keeps electricity prices low and hides what we're going to have to pay in debt and taxation.

Ultimately the taxpayer and ratepayer are going to be on the hook for whatever this government does. Though this government, strangely enough, was charging earlier this year that the PPA holders entered into some sort of nefarious deal with Enron, the fact of the matter is that what we've already seen is some very creative Enron accounting on the part of this government. Even in Bill 34 they're attempting to shift an expense column from one place to another place, and that was what Enron got taken to court for by the Securities and Exchange Commission, attempting to hide the real financial health of their corporation, just like this government is attempting to hide the real financial cost of their mismanagement of the electricity file.

They're attempting to cloud the eyes of Albertans to the fact that in July 2015 this government made their first mistake in increasing the carbon tax under the specified gas emitters regulation. Rather than admitting their mistake, they doubled down and sued Enmax when Enmax got permission from the Balancing Pool to return their PPA because of a change in law.

But that wasn't enough, no. The government had to double down again, Bill 27, and double down again, Bill 34. It's been one

mismanagement mistake after another: another crisis, crisis management, trying to solve this problem, creating another problem and solving that problem, they think, but creating another problem. It's been crisis management from the get-go, and this government hasn't had the humility to go back to the very first mistake they made, in July 2015, and start unwinding all of the things they did wrong. The interesting thing is, Madam Chair, that the industry was more than willing to sit down and find a solution that was amenable to all parties, and this government refused to sit down with them. Instead, they chose litigation. Then, on top of that, once this government realized their court case was an absolute sham, they decided: "Well, we will retroactively legislate the PPAs out of existence then. We'll go back 16 years and legislate it away and solve the problem."

The heavy-handedness with which this government has handled this file on account of their own mismanagement is astounding. It is absolutely, profoundly irresponsible. This government has been running roughshod over Albertans time and time again, and we're seeing it now. They're trying to hide their mistakes with things like Bill 34. They're trying to hide future mistakes by putting blinders on the Market Surveillance Administrator so the administrator cannot so much as entertain a complaint against a renewables project development. This government campaigned on transparency and accountability, but they are going the same route as we have seen with almost every socialist government around the world. They are less transparent, more secretive. They've been radical in their policies, dictatorial in their style of dealing with people. They do not accept sound amendments over and over again. Now we've got a situation where this government wants to blind the Market Surveillance Administrator, commonly known as the electricity police. The electricity police. This government doesn't want anyone to know what's really going on in the world of renewables, and that's why they're trying to blind the MSA.

**An Hon. Member:** Shame.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** It is shameful.

Now, I would hope that this government will reconsider. I hope that this government will seriously reconsider this amendment, that they will empower the MSA rather than pull the plug, so to speak, on the MSA. That's a good one, pulling the plug, yeah?

**An Hon. Member:** Ha, ha.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Ha, ha.

So at the end of the day, Madam Chair, I think it's going to be very important, very important to Albertans, very important to the people in this Legislature that an organization like the MSA be given the power to surveil the system. We are begging for problems. We are begging for serious things to go amiss, just like we have seen in the past. We need the MSA very badly. I would hope that all members will support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5?

Seeing no other members, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak on the bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I know you're shocked that I . . .

**An Hon. Member:** You're organized now, is that right?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Hey. We got it. We're ready to go.

Well, next up I would like to take this opportunity to give the House another opportunity to accept an amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** This amendment will be referred to as A6. Please go ahead.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This amendment is to move that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended in section 3(2) by striking out "may establish" and substituting "shall establish and make public".

11:00

Now, one of the things that I believe is very important for the government to do is to be very concrete in the things which pertain to our utility system by substituting "shall establish and make public," "shall" being a word that is a requirement. It's mandatory. We believe that it is important that the government establish and then make public these things. Again, it comes back to transparency, and it comes back to accountability. Being that we are a democracy, I believe that it is very valuable that we have a system in place where we are creating an environment of trust for the people of Alberta.

Now, when it comes to ministerial direction, objectives, criteria for programs and proposals, this is how it currently is worded in section 3(2) of the act.

The Minister may establish

- (a) renewable electricity program objectives that promote specific goals, including environmental, social or economic goals.

Now, the word "may" is not compulsory. In other words, the minister may or may not establish renewable electricity program objectives. Look, you cannot manage what you do not measure. I've said that before. We have a situation here where the minister is being given permission under this bill to maybe or maybe not establish program objectives. Well, if you don't set objectives, if you don't set goals, I guarantee you'll hit them. You will. If your goal is nothing, if your objective doesn't exist, you're going to get there. That's just a fact. It seems to me that it is only responsible of a responsible government that you do set program objectives. That's why the amendment reads that we want to strike out "may establish" and substitute "shall establish."

Now, it isn't good enough that the minister shall establish electricity program objectives that promote specific goals. I realize this government really doesn't like specific goals, including environmental goals. How about that for a novel idea, setting some specific environmental goals? How about some specific social goals? How about some specific economic goals? How about we make it so that the minister must do that, shall do that, and make it public? Not good enough to just create these goals. Make them public. Let the good people of Alberta know what the goal is. How on earth can we get somewhere when we don't even know what the goal is?

It makes no sense at all to have a bill before this House that's going to become law but the law says: the minister may or may not do such and such a thing. If they feel like it that day, they will. Well, that's not really good enough. We're talking about a multibillion-dollar ministry here, a multibillion-dollar renewables program, and the government says that the minister might or might not establish goals.

Then we have:

- (b) specific evaluation criteria to be used by the ISO in developing a proposal for a renewable electricity program and in implementing a renewable electricity program to meet the objectives,

except that the objectives that part (b) refers to are optional. So why in the world do we even have part (b) here? If the minister may or may not establish such goals, then part (b), to have specific evaluation criteria to be used by ISO in developing a proposal for a renewable electricity program and in implementing a renewable electricity program to meet the objectives, makes no sense whatsoever.

Now, it's interesting to note that renewable electricity programs are not going to be overseen by the Market Surveillance Administrator. I come right back to the MSA again. So the minister may or may not establish goals and objectives, but one thing we know that is certain, the one thing we do know out of Bill 27 that is absolutely certain because they just voted that down, is that they don't want the MSA watching. That, we know, is a certainty.

**Mr. Cyr:** And they're going to spend money.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yes. The other certainty is that it's going to cost us billions of dollars. Unless this amendment goes through, the other certainty, Madam Chair, is that the minister may or may not even establish specific environmental goals, specific social goals, specific economic goals, and specific program objectives. This is, frankly, lazy. It's just lazy that a minister of the Crown isn't going to have to create goals; hence this amendment.

This amendment makes sure that the minister has a very clear job description. I do remember a problem with this government and job descriptions before. That would have been Bill 1. Bill 1. I remember the job description Bill 1 problem the government had, that the minister had to be mandated to do his job. Now I'm simply following in that same vein, making sure that the minister knows what the job is, that the minister shall establish specific goals. This is a job description. Take it as a job description amendment. That ought to fit okay with the NDP world view.

Madam Chair, in short, this is another attempt to make an improvement to a really bad piece of legislation. I am hoping that every member in this House will agree with me that the minister needs to have clearly established program goals, fully fleshed out, with economic, with social, with environmental goals clearly, clearly fleshed out and stated and that they will be made public.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As fascinating as this amendment has been thus far, I will leave comments to another day and move that we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, and good evening, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 27. Madam Speaker, I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official record of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.  
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a certain feeling, so I'm going to move a motion for unanimous consent for one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think that tonight there's been a great amount of robust debate and exchange of ideas. Seeing the time, I move we adjourn until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

[The voice vote indicated that motion to adjourn carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:10 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	Miller
Babcock	Goehring	Miranda
Bilous	Gray	Nielsen
Carlier	Hinkley	Phillips
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Connolly	Jansen	Schmidt
Coolahan	Kazim	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinsteinuber	Shepherd
Dach	Littlewood	Sigurdson
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	

Against the motion:

Aheer	Cyr	Orr
Barnes	Loewen	van Dijken
Cooper	MacIntyre	Yao

Totals:	For – 35	Against – 9
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[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:15 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, December 6, 2016

Day 58

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Horne	

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Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, December 6, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning. It will be a long day today.

Let us pray or reflect, each in our own way. Today is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women in Canada. This day marks the anniversary of the 14 young women who were killed at l'école Polytechnique de Montréal simply for being a woman. Let each of us reflect on all of the women and girls for whom violence is a daily reality. We as elected officials have a responsibility to continue to speak up against this violence and work to ensure that all women – our wives, our daughters, our mothers – feel safe in their workplace and in their homes.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

##### Bill 21 Modernized Municipal Government Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly an honour to rise today to move third reading of Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act.

Bill 21 would amend the Municipal Government Act to make it a more responsive piece of legislation that gives municipalities and businesses the tools they need to build strong communities and a more resilient, diversified future for Alberta's families. A key focus of the act is on working together, growing together, and making Alberta better together.

Instead of duplicating costly services, the revised MGA would require municipalities to come together through municipal partnerships to find new and innovative ways to integrate services, manage growth, and use land to become better environmental stewards. It would also give municipalities new tools to build better, more complete communities by enabling inclusionary housing and expanding off-site levies to include community recreation facilities, fire halls, police stations, and libraries.

Supporting Alberta business is one of the four key pillars of the Alberta jobs plan, and the modernized MGA would support this initiative by empowering municipalities to create a more flexible property tax framework between small and large businesses and by linking nonresidential and residential tax rates.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would also enhance municipal accountability by expanding the mandate of the Alberta Ombudsman to create an additional accountability mechanism for municipalities and another resource for Albertans to have their local concerns addressed in a fair, efficient, and transparent manner.

We are very proud of how robust, transparent, and accessible our consultation has been on the MGA. Over the summer my team and I travelled all across the province to meet with Albertans, hear their thoughts, and gather their feedback on the bill. More than 2,400 Albertans attended 21 different sessions in communities, both large and small. We also received over 2,300 survey responses and 122 written submissions from municipalities, businesses, industry, civil society groups, and members of the public. It has been a privilege

to discuss the future of our municipalities with thousands of Albertans, people who care about their communities and who serve them in so many significant ways.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everyone who took the time to provide their input so that together we can get this important piece of legislation right. It's because of their thoughts and feedback that a number of amendments were proposed to this bill during Committee of the Whole. These amendments would make the policies proposed in Bill 21 even stronger and more effective.

Colleagues, as you know, the last major review of the MGA was completed more than two decades ago and does not reflect the new economic realities, changes in technology, or evolving municipal roles and relationships. It is time to move forward and provide municipalities with robust, forward-looking legislation so that they can meet the changing needs of Albertans. I would ask all hon. members for their support in moving Bill 21 through third reading.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Yes. Good morning, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak in third reading of Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act. I'll be starting out by reading into the record a lot of stuff that we've talked about, as the minister did allude to already.

I'll start with the intermunicipal collaboration frameworks. As she said earlier last week, the municipalities outside the growth management board areas must adopt an ICF within two years, with an additional year for arbitration should municipalities fail to find agreement. We believe that these will include regional land-use planning mechanisms and cover the planning, delivery, and funding of regional services. This will be a big change for a lot of municipalities, and we do have some concerns.

One of the other more controversial aspects of Bill 21 is the centralized industrial assessment. The government has decided to take over assessment responsibilities for all designated industrial property and will now be responsible for issuing assessments to municipalities, which will maintain the ability to set the mill rates. Once again, this was a controversial issue that was raised by municipalities, but it's proceeding as such anyway.

Bill 21 also allows municipalities to split nonresidential property classes into subclasses, which will have differing mill rates. We don't have a lot of concern about that. They are going to be probably addressed in regulations. Of course, regulations are not dealt with by the House, so we are looking forward to seeing how that turns out. However, the class rates must comply with the maximum link of 5 to 1, and we have a lot of serious worries about that 5 to 1 ratio situation. We're going to be discussing that here in a few minutes, Mr. Speaker.

Another topic was the Alberta Ombudsman, which was mentioned by the minister just now. It is being given the authority to investigate complaints against municipalities, apparently as a way of increasing oversight. Although there is a system in place for that sort of thing, Mr. Speaker, apparently we're going to be continuing on with this. We'll be monitoring this constantly to ensure that this is being conducted fairly and properly. We may have some questions to raise in the House as it unfolds.

Another controversial topic was the expanding scope of off-site levies. Municipalities will be able to now levy charges on developers for extra things that they haven't done before such as recreation facilities and fire halls and police stations and libraries. Just recently we saw in a new document, released by the government about a week and a half ago, that they're going to even

dig deeper into that with adjacent infrastructure and provincial infrastructure, it appears. So we have some concerns there.

There's also the ability to grant municipalities the ability to include inclusionary housing provisions for new developments. This new legislation will, again, probably be fairly controversial, especially with the speculative industry in the housing industry, and developers have expressed their concerns to us. We'll continue to advocate for them on that end of the scale.

They'll also be able to establish controlled for-profit corporations. This, again, is something where the controls are kind of being lifted off. We have some concerns about that. We won't know what changes will be in the regulations, but there's certainly stuff that we think should be monitored more carefully than just having a complete open door on that topic.

Last week I spoke on another important issue, and I think it deserves a second if not a third mention, and that was the growth management boards that are being proposed for the city of Calgary region. As I'm sure everyone here is well aware, the Capital Region Board is currently the only mandatory growth board legislated by the MGA. Changes with the passage of Bill 21 will increase the number of growth management boards in the province. We'll now have two, and that will be the greater Calgary area that will now be included with getting a mandatory growth board.

#### 10:10

Although it's not officially known yet which municipalities will be included in the membership, it's likely to number around 17 or more perhaps – we don't know – and that would be, more or less, 14 urban municipalities and three rurals from what we can gather. It could be four. We really are worried about these details. We don't know what details are going to be included. We've had a call from one of the urban centres even as late as this morning with regard to how this board is going to be made up, one of the major urban centres, I might acknowledge. So we need to look at this very carefully. We haven't been able to get a lot of information.

I want to underline that we're strong believers in regional collaboration. Again, as I've said in the past couple of weeks on this bill, as a former municipal councillor I do understand the importance of regional collaboration and regional co-operation in how communities will grow and govern themselves in the future, but there are still those questions that I mentioned the other day. I've just alluded to them, but I just want to enumerate them again, Mr. Speaker. Which municipalities will be members? Will any member municipality actually hold a veto? What type of voting will be used? What type of structure? Will member municipalities be able to abstain from voting? Is there a dispute resolution process, and if not, why not? And what is the mandate and scope of these growth boards?

As I've said, Mr. Speaker, those are extremely important questions. This is a big change. A lot of the municipalities in the Calgary region will suddenly be impacted in a very unique way. They are actually going to have some of their current authorities no longer being in place. This is going to be a drastic change for them. They need to know these answers so that they can at least get comfortable with what is being intended.

I remain, as I've said before in the past few days, extremely skeptical on how this is going to go. When Premier Klein cancelled the planning commissions years ago and moved towards increased local autonomy, it was decided then that they could have intermunicipal development plans and local municipal development plans, and they were encouraged then to talk to each other. As I said the other day – and I'll say it again – although I know that there are some people on the other side that may not agree with this, for the most part I think it's gone quite well.

We have seen these two great cities in Alberta grow in leaps and bounds. They did so in the Edmonton area before the Capital Region Board was formed, and they've been doing so quite nicely down in the Calgary region. Certainly, there have been some squabbles and issues that have been dealt with, but for the most part it has been a very successful past two and a half decades in terms of regional growth.

Again, I'd like to say that this is a drastic step. This is going to be a very big change. And I don't think that there's really good, solid evidence for this to go ahead without perhaps a little bit more of an interim kind of a change or something else that would be not quite as large of a planning model change.

You know, there are good, solid planning principles that respect local autonomy, and I believe in them. I believe that we can have them and we can promote regional co-operation and collaboration. That's the best way forward. I think it should be left as a voluntary membership system, not mandated as mandatory. Municipalities should have the choice to join or resign from the partnership at their discretion.

I'd like to close my comments on the growth management boards, Mr. Speaker, by repeating what I said during my speech at Committee of the Whole because I think it's so important that it deserves to be on the record twice if not more.

I think that the municipalities should be able to define their region. Let the participating municipalities determine which municipalities will be part of the regional partnership. Municipalities should be able to remain independent, and their ability to make decisions in the best interests of their municipalities should remain intact, not be taken away.

I think that there should be a nonhierarchical governance model. The regional structure should not create another level of government.

I think that there should be voting equity, where each municipality has one equal vote.

I think that there should be a consensus of decision, and I think that where there are major decisions that require a vote, that is approached on the basis of reaching a good overall consensus.

I think that there should be a user-pay cost-sharing model, where for the most part the cost of delivering a regional service is borne in proportion to the use of that service.

I think that there should be transparency in a region, that the operation of the governance of the regional entity is, essentially, easily observable and understood.

I think that there should be accountability of individual municipalities. If a municipality chooses to become a member of a regional service partnership, that municipality must be accountable, first and foremost, to its community for the value of that service.

And I think that there should be allowance for the opting out of programs should they choose that to be in the best interests of their municipality and their people.

Mr. Speaker, now I'd like to change direction a little bit and move into the issue of linking residential and nonresidential property tax rates. We've talked about this in the past few days and as late as yesterday. The proposal would limit the amount a municipality could charge a nonresidential property to no more than five times the lowest residential tax rate.

Presently only 19 municipalities in the entire province exceed that proposed ratio, but for those communities the proposal raises some legitimate concerns that a significant increase in residential property taxes from having to meet the ratio would result in home ownership being completely untenable in some of these communities, and certainly Fort McMurray is a prime example of that. The law will allow nonconforming municipalities, those that exceed the ratio, to maintain their current tax ratios, though they

will not be allowed to go higher. I think that's fair and a balanced approach that balances local taxpayers with property tax stability for Alberta businesses.

There is currently no timeline by which nonconforming municipalities will have to come into compliance, and we are very supportive of the grandfathering measure that that talks about. The government, though, has left the door open to bringing in some sort of deadline by which nonconforming municipalities will have to come into compliance with the 5 to 1 ratio, but they have committed to further consultations, thankfully, specifically with those municipalities that exceed the ratio. We will be watching closely to ensure that they hold robust consultations. That is a good thing.

Apparently, the government received much feedback over the summer on issues that were unrelated to the proposed amendments in Bill 21 albeit important issues. While we were working on Committee of the Whole debates on the 5 to 1 ratio, suddenly the government released last week a new discussion guide and survey to gather feedback on a number of issues and specifically on the 5 to 1 ratio. We did not see that. It was not in the bill. It was not in the amendments they had brought forward, and suddenly they've released this, and now they're saying, Mr. Speaker, that they are moving towards making this mandatory and thinking about having some feedback received on that new change. It doesn't hardly seem fair that we were debating a bill and talking about a lot of things and suddenly they at the last minute pull the rug on the whole idea and then say that they're going to talk about imposing it later on.

Nonetheless, a few of the proposed issues in the discussion guide beyond that are the ability for municipalities to enter into ICFs with neighbouring indigenous communities. They're going to be talking about strengthening the minister's authority to enforce municipal orders. They're going to be talking about providing for municipalities to create a bylaw allowing for parental leave for municipal councillors. They're going to be talking about improved notification of amalgamation and annexation requests to include local authorities that operate or provide services in the affected municipalities such as school boards. They're also going to be talking about apparently requiring municipalities to enter into joint-use agreements with school boards within their municipal boundaries, although I know some of those types of things already occur. They're going to expand the scope of off-site levies, I note now, suddenly including intermunicipal levies for infrastructure that provide benefits across municipal boundaries, a new thing that we were not aware of.

Clarifying details around the proposed conservation reserve sounds like a fine idea. Provide municipalities stability to levy a specific tax bylaw on intensive agricultural operations. We have seen some of these concerns in the past, and frankly I am glad that we are going to be discussing that.

They're also talking about clarifying the details around a municipality's right to access assessment information related to designated industrial properties that will now be centrally assessed by the province. Certainly, with the amount of industry that we have in some areas of the province, that is something that most municipalities are going to be concerned about.

There's a lot more in the discussion guide that's coming up, and I look forward to talking to municipal stakeholders. We're going to be calling out for feedback on those, Mr. Speaker.

If there's one thing, though, that's become apparent during the course of this review, it's that the Municipal Government Act is a living document, as has been said, and it requires ongoing dialogue to ensure that we are creating an environment where our municipalities can thrive. I look forward to meeting with municipalities, as the minister and her staff are doing, to garner the feedback and hear what their concerns may be.

Finally, in closing, Bill 21 isn't perfect from our standpoint, Mr. Speaker, but overall I believe it struck the right balance. For that reason I will be supporting Bill 21 at third reading, with some reservations, of course, and I encourage all of my hon. colleagues to do the same.

Thank you very much.

10:20

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would speak to third reading of Bill 21? The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fort McMurray is a community that continues to demonstrate its resolve in what has been its most challenging year. Neither the price of oil nor the wildfires are enough to dampen the spirits or the strength of our community. Now more than ever Fort McMurray needs the province to be a partner who will work with, listen to, and understand them.

We have heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs espouse at length about her MGA consultations and her willingness to work with, listen to, and understand Alberta's communities. I personally spoke with the minister prior to sending out a message to my community emphasizing a grandfather clause that the minister had continually referred to all summer long. This clause would allow the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo and communities like it to maintain its ratio of nonresidential to residential tax revenues. This is an important feature of our community that has allowed our homeowners to have reasonable property tax rates and allowed our community to develop recreational complexes, road infrastructure, and schools. Unfortunately, there are concerns that we will not be able to maintain this system, that has worked so well for the people and businesses in Fort McMurray.

As we discovered this last weekend, the minister stated that the nonconforming municipalities must address these issues in an undetermined period of time, which means that this government could be downloading thousands of dollars of taxes onto the backs of the people of Fort McMurray. First came the carbon tax, then the emissions cap, and now the NDP is fixated on raising homeowners' tax bills by 260 per cent. They're happy to reap the benefits that my community provides them but kneecap the way that we provide it.

This tax structure that is in Fort McMurray evolved because municipalities had to make decisions to address unique local challenges and issues. To understand why Fort McMurray is in this situation is to understand how the previous government demonstrated a lack of support to my community. The PCs didn't invest in our region's infrastructure till too late while supporting oil sands growth. For years the previous government failed to twin highway 63, arguably one of the most dangerous roads in the province. For years the PCs refused to rezone Crown land for the development of real estate, and that drove the local housing market right up through the roof. It was then that our municipality rightly took steps to ensure the viability of our community.

I thought that perhaps this NDP government would be more pragmatic after it took them eight months to recognize that our resource industry is important. So, Minister, I ask that you continue conversations with Wood Buffalo's mayor and council and that your government will not force through punishing tax increases for Fort McMurray's homeowners and that you emphasize the message that you gave us all year long. A one-size-fits-all policy does not work, plain and simple. There needs to be a provision that recognizes unique revenue structures that municipalities like the RMWB have put in place.

As the minister well knows, the people in my community are going through an unparalleled upheaval, and what they need and

what they're asking for is the ability to maintain a level of continuity so that we can rebuild in a responsible, efficient, and sustainable manner. Engage the people of Fort McMurray, and you will find that you have a collaborative partner that has unparalleled experience and knowledge.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions for the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, are there members who wish to speak to the motion from the Minister of Municipal Affairs?

Seeing and hearing none, hon. minister, would you like the opportunity to close debate?

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to take this opportunity once again to say thank you to the amazing team in Municipal Affairs, who have spent years assisting with the consultation piece as well as creating wonderful ideas in terms of legislation and providing support to me in ensuring that we had the very best piece of legislation possible.

I also want to thank the opposition for their support of this bill, recognizing that, you know, I'm proud of the work that I did, consulting with so many thousands of Albertans on this. I really do feel that it's a good piece of legislation, so I'm thankful for the support on that.

Mostly, I did just want to take a moment to also remember the challenges that the community of Fort McMurray is going through right now. It was a challenging time back in May. It was truly my privilege to be there with them at that time, and I cannot say enough how committed I continue to be to the well-being of that community, that I certainly promised to be with them then. I promise to be with them now, and I promise to make sure that they will have the tools they need to be successful and grow in the future.

I certainly look forward to ongoing conversations in the future with Albertans from right across this province regarding possible future changes to this legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has moved third reading of Bill 21, Modernized Municipal Government Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

### Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

**The Chair:** Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Madam Chair, I have an amendment I'd like to present. Would you like me to wait until you get it? Probably.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A4.  
Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Madam Chair. On behalf of my colleague from Calgary-South East I would like to move that Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended as follows:

- A. Section 3 is amended by adding "Subject to section 3.1," before "without limiting the authority";
- B. By adding the following after section 3:  
3.1 Before the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations under section 3, the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall consult with the public with respect to the content of proposed regulations under section 3 and make public a report of the finding of such consultation.

You know, I'll speak to it now if that's all right. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I rise today to propose an amendment to Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. This act, an act that we have discussed at length in this House, is a piece of legislation that has the potential to greatly impact many, many Albertans. We know that the energy industry has played a major role in shaping the province and indeed helping to create and build the Alberta advantage. It is important to a great many Albertans that we support the industry that has been the primary source of prosperity for so many.

I think this legislation could be greatly improved if we give more Albertans the chance to provide their feedback on the actions being taken because one major issue with this bill is that there is so much that isn't contained in the text of the bill, which means that we're being asked to pass a bill, to pass legislation, when we aren't even able to say confidently what the impact of the bill is going to be. There's so much latitude being given to the government to change the impacts of this bill through regulations, so the bill that we're debating in this House does not give us the full picture.

10:30

The amendment I'm proposing today would not solve all the issues with this bill, not by a long shot, but I believe that it will address one major shortcoming. I believe that it'll address the problem of regulations being developed with no input from anyone but those in the NDP inner circle. We really want to see input from the affected parties. We want to see input from industry, from Alberta workers, and from environmental groups. We need that variety of experience, the depth of opinion to ensure that these regulations are going to be in the best interest of all Albertans.

This amendment would enshrine the idea within this act. It would require that when the government begins developing the regulations, it would actually have to consult with these stakeholders and interested parties. They would need to bring their ideas out into the light of day and share them with the public before they go ahead with changes. Hopefully, this will help them to do their homework so that they don't have to go back to the drawing board every time their ideas spark a massive backlash from Albertans.

So I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in supporting this amendment, and I hope the government takes this opportunity to apply these principles of transparent and accountable government in making regulations around this bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Just to clarify, hon. member, you are moving this amendment on behalf of the Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Drysdale:** That's correct, yeah.

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it is vitally important that public consultation take place on everything that we do. We have legislative committees that were originally designed to be part of this Westminster parliamentary system, with which we

are sometimes feeling like we're saddled. We have these different avenues for the public, the people of Alberta, to come and talk to us about the very things that we are doing in this room, that impact their lives so profoundly.

When we have something like a bill like this, that is so far-reaching, so broad in scope that it is going to actually impact generationally – it's not just for now, and it's not just for next year. Because of the nature of this bill we are going to see its impact for generations. It is going to impact our development in the north. It is going to impact jobs. It is going to impact new companies coming to this province. Given the significant impact that this bill is going to bring upon our province, I think it is only appropriate that the government of the day take the time to really consult with the public.

Now, I'm going to point out again that the oil sands advisory group was supposed to be a body that this government put together to advise it on these very issues. Although I could go on at length – and maybe I will – about certain appointees that are on this panel, nevertheless, Madam Chair, the reality is that the taxpayers are paying for a panel. The taxpayers are paying for a panel that this government says is a panel of experts that's going to advise this government on the pathway forward for the future, yet I see no report. I see no report. Has anyone seen a report from OSAG in this place? No. It's not here. Yet this government is in an all-fired hurry to get Bill 25 through this House and out before Christmas.

Well, for a government that campaigned on transparency, for a government that claims to have learned from the lessons of the previous administration, that was turfed out of office because they would not listen to Albertans, it just seems to me rather odd that this government isn't even waiting for a report from their own panel unless, of course – unless, of course – the outcome of that report has already been predetermined even before they have filed the report; unless, of course, that panel is nothing more than window dressing; unless, of course, that panel is nothing more than a rubber stamp on a predetermined outcome.

I would hope that that is not the case. I'm sure Albertans are hoping that that is not the case. I'm quite sure Albertans are hoping that this government is going to act in an honourable way and not give the OSAG panel what the outcome ought to be but, rather, wait – wait – upon the panel for their report to come to us.

This amendment that we have before us gives the government an opportunity to demonstrate some accountability and some transparency and some genuine consultative attitude in that it asks the government, "Before the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations under section 3, [they will] consult the public." We're supposed to be a democracy, and that means government by the people, for the people, and of the people. There are three parts to that. Leave any one of those parts out, and you don't have a right to claim you're being a democracy. We are of the people – we've got that covered off – but it's supposed to be government for the people. This government hasn't done so well in that regard.

This amendment is simply asking the government to consult with the very people of Alberta who pay the bill, consult with the very people who are going to be impacted by Bill 25, consult with them before the Lieutenant Governor in Council goes and makes regulations because, as we have seen, there is a pattern from this government where time and time again, in bill after bill the details in the regulations are not known to this House. Yet it is on those details – as they say so often, the devil is in the details – that the government comes in with sweeping, often vague generalizations in a bill, and when the opposition or the press or stakeholders ask the government regarding specifics, we are all given a similar phrase: stay tuned.

That, frankly, is disrespectful to the people of Alberta. They have a right in this democracy to know what this government is about to do to them, a right to know fully what this government is about to do to them. This particular amendment is not in any way constraining the Lieutenant Governor in Council. It is simply saying: talk to Albertans before you go and make some sort of arbitrary policy decision or regulation here, talk to Albertans, talk to the specialists out there, talk to the very people that you are going to impact, potentially adversely.

Again I will state that this government has a pattern. They have a record of doing things, and then the people of Alberta respond negatively. They responded negatively to Bill 6. They're responding negatively to the carbon tax. Again and again it's over the same issue. You did not talk to Albertans. A government in a democracy needs to be very good at communicating, and part of that is listening. Elected persons in a democracy are to listen and represent the will of the majority of their people. That is definitely not happening with this government.

I wholeheartedly support this amendment. I wholeheartedly encourage every democratically elected person in this room to support this amendment. This is a very excellent way for this government to demonstrate that they are interested in listening to Albertans, and I would suggest that if the government votes this amendment down, as they have so many others, they're sending a very strong signal to Albertans again that they're not interested in what Albertans have to say. They're not even interested in what their own OSAG panel has to say.

**10:40**

The politicians, who are not experts in much and especially not in something to do with Bill 25, have come up with a bill, Bill 25, and they need to listen to everyday Albertans, hundreds of thousands of whom are the experts in the patch, hundreds of thousands of whom are the experts in the oil sands field, hundreds of thousands of whom are the experts out there. They're the ones with the boots on the ground, dealing with this stuff. They're the ones engineering these things, and it's their jobs that are being impacted, their futures that are being impacted by Bill 25. It only makes sense to provide an opportunity at every step of the way for those people to have some sort of input into what the government is going to do to them. That's really what this amendment is all about. I encourage everyone to support it. I will be standing in support of it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to continue to speak a little bit about what the hon. member brought up and also in support of this amendment. There are a few things. You know, as government and opposition we have a lot of opportunities to wade heavily into the weeds of all of these issues, and there's many a night where I know we sit personally looking at a lot of this information, trying to wade through it, and trying to understand it, and we have access to a lot more than the average Albertan, even in opposition. We have a small but mighty team, but, boy, they sure work hard trying to get us updated on a lot of this information.

I know that when I'm out explaining what's going on, obviously I have a specific direction that I believe is appropriate for the way that this province should go, and, granted, I have access to a lot more information than a lot of people, too. So the reason that myself and my caucus would have for wanting to make sure that

accountability comes in is because we're actually getting asked those questions every day.

If you consider that average Albertans, the ones who aren't marinating in this the way that we are, are reading about OSAG panels and then they're going to read about what the government is saying about wanting to bring together all sorts of different people to have a discussion on a panel to bring legitimacy to the decisions but then the opposition, rightfully so, in my opinion, is pointing out that that panel isn't actually going to bring forward information necessary to legitimize the decisions of the government – that conflict could so easily be resolved by government, actually. In fact, it would take away any ability for us to stand up here and talk about it at all. It's interesting to me. I mean, that's one little tiny thing.

If you consider just an average person walking around out on the street: you're reading about the OSAG panel, and you're reading about environmental activists that are on there that are not willing to actually contribute information to everyday Albertans who are struggling right now trying to understand how to move forward – right? – how to put food on the table, how to talk to their grandfather, who is 60, who hasn't got a job in oil field services right now, or talk to their dad, that was a pipefitter or in oil field services, that all of a sudden has changed his job to something else that's probably far out of the scope of his education or expertise, or even just watching the slow and steady and very sad move of people out of this province to other jurisdictions.

Even the average investor – and in Alberta we have a lot of people who invest not just elsewhere but who are heavily invested even in our province, lots of average, everyday people. Everyone is taking a look at those portfolios and wondering if they can actually keep that money here in the province that they love. Can you imagine being an Albertan, having invested in this province, having faith in what it is that brought this province to, I mean, a very, very good state of life for people and also a very ethical and thoughtful group of people? Those of us in this province who have invested time, hours, energy, and everything into something, into the oil sands, into the oil sector, into the gas sector, into the energy sector all of sudden being told that everything that we've done under the regulatory process that was there – and may I also remind the House that we were the first province that actually had a price on carbon for anybody. So imagine all of that for the average Albertan out on the street every single day looking at that. And that's just the OSAG panel. That's just that.

What the member is asking for in his amendment, again, will help bring legitimacy and credibility to policies that this government is trying to bring forward.

Again, I really believe the government has the power and the ability to be able to align those two things a little bit closer together to at least bring forward panel discussions. Also, may I remind the government that the government didn't pay for that panel; Albertans did. That panel answers to Albertans, not you. That panel is paid for by Albertans, not you. What a privilege to have the ability to use taxpayer dollars towards something that you truly believe in. Well, stand up for yourselves, and bring forward needed information that Albertans shouldn't have to demand. It's the responsibility of government to do that and to bring that forward, especially when you promised them information that could help bring things together. That's the responsibility of government.

Then if you add on top of that the PPAs – and, again, for an average Albertan looking at that, I'm sure that they never thought that the words "OSAG panel" and "PPAs" would be dinner talk around their tables. Thank goodness they are.

I want to thank the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for bringing so much of that information to light and shining a light on it. Even if we disagree in this House and even if we disagree out on

the street, thank goodness we live in a country where we can actually do that. Thank goodness. But if he hadn't shone the light on that, the discussion would never have happened, and Albertans would not be allowed to bring forward needed pressure to this government to do the right thing.

It's been one mistake after another, and all of a sudden there's this shemuzzle of puzzle pieces that are not making sense. How is it that those of us who are speaking to Albertans every day are justifying that and those losses and the inability of the government to be able to explain how power is going to work for people or about the subsidies that are going to be there in order to compensate for this very, very big move that the government is making?

Again I'd like to restate for the record that we are – the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, especially, made his living with renewables. He's written textbooks on alternative energy. We are onside. But the discussion isn't about whether or not to do renewables. The discussion is about how we get there. Our outcomes are similar, but the policy that's being created on how we get there: that's what's different. What we're asking for is not unreasonable. We're asking the government to apologize to electricity companies or take back what they've done. But we've gone too far to do that. They can't reverse what they've done at this point. Instead, what we're asking for, then, is that in the future, with more decisions, which I'm sure this government will make, there's accountability in place not just for this government but for future governments as well.

Everybody is going to have issues. Everybody is going to make policy that doesn't make everybody happy. It happens. But when you add accountability and you add credibility to that by making sure that those consultations are firmly in that space, even if you're making an unpopular decision, you've really done the work to be able to justify that. That's so important, and I really feel like that's been forgotten in these discussions. It's not about one consultation or two. I'm sure everybody in this House has had more than an earful about the direction, good or bad. It depends on who you're speaking to, and it also depends on where they lie in the line of how this policy should come online.

**10:50**

Let me say for the record as well that Albertans care about their environment, and they care about their earth, air, and water. Please don't forget that. When we're talking about this, Madam Chair, please, please give Albertans their due respect that they do care about these things. Even though our paths towards policy and the end result might be slightly different, that does not in any way make us climate change deniers on this side or mean that we are speaking against any environmental changes that may need to come down.

As it's been pointed out to us, there are many large corporations that have stood up with the government – and, you know, with all due respect, I understand why – because there is work that needs to be done, for sure. There are thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of people that work for those fellows, that work for those people, those people who work in those companies, regular, everyday people that are actually going to be impacted by the policies that are being put through by this government in their homes, in their own other businesses, their children's businesses, the schools, the charities they support. What about those guys? What about all of the other smaller companies as well, Madam Chair? What about those folks? Those are the fabric of what has made up this province. That's the economic engine.

If you're looking for diversity – and, I mean, we talk about diversification all the time, too. Just last week I had the absolute privilege of meeting with a group at the Schulich School of Engineering. Did you know that they have a process whereby they

can upgrade underground? They actually take the coking materials – right? – and they actually take it underground. They blast it underground, and they're able to use less than one and a half barrels of water in a SAGD process and have an immense amount of recovery of product coming up. Did you also know, Madam Chair, that millions and millions of taxpayer dollars, Alberta and federal, have actually already been put into this program? It's already there, and it's been shelved. But isn't that a great solution to some of the problems that we've all been talking about in terms of recovery, right? We try and offer some solutions. I would love the opportunity to bring some of these folks or give them the opportunity to come and talk to the government about their opportunities. These are shelved pieces of diversification.

The dollars have already been spent there, Madam Chair, already. There are Alberta taxpayer dollars already in this diversification, and that's one of probably hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. There's absolutely no way, even in the 19 months that I've been here, that I could possibly talk to every single one of those people. Literally, like, I have 10 or 15 e-mails a week about ideas in diversification.

There's another group that has fibre-optic technology that can be placed in with pipelines and especially with the two pipelines, right? We have a right-of-way being built, and we have line 3, which is being fixed up. There is technology to lay fibre optics along with pipelines that can tell, like, to several metres about breaches in pipelines right away. You could literally feel the press of a hand or the movement of walking if you wanted it to be that sensitive. Brilliant, brilliant technology. I can't believe that these are made-in-Alberta solutions that actually exist here already. I literally go into these meetings – as you all know, this is not my background, not by a long shot. I'm the farthest thing from an expert in this House, for sure, especially in this portfolio, but I have a desire to learn, and I have a desire to listen, and I have a desire to listen to the experts that actually live here, the ones that have actually worked in this field, the ones that actually know this information, so you can imagine from my eyes going into that situation and seeing those things.

Well, we do have experts amongst us that could look at this innovation and this diversification and weed out what works and what doesn't, but at least let's look at it. We have opportunities here. That's a solution. It's a wonderful solution to the fear of pipeline breaks, breaches, weather, all of those things.

Think about, just for a minute, the miracle of being able to bring oil out of sand. That's incredible. If you had talked about it 50 years ago, you know, and when people first started talking about this – my father is a chemical engineer, and I remember us talking about this, and it was such an interesting thought, interesting table talk around our house. Then when it actually was feasible and then to be able to actually find out how to pull this immense resource out of our ground – it's incredible.

The other incredible thing is the environmental research that has come along with that as the process has gotten better, as innovation has gotten better.

These sorts of amendments, these accountability amendments, Madam Chair, are specifically there to protect all people, making sure that government policy is doing what it's saying it's going to do. I would certainly want that, and I would certainly hope that if government is willing to put in accountability measures now, it shows that that homework is done. It shows to Albertans that it's a thoughtful process, and it moves away from ideology. It moves into common-sense practicality, from model to form, from paper into model, all of these important steps that are imperative for everybody, especially for us in here to understand but also to be able to take home with us to our constituents.

You know, the constituency of Chestermere-Rocky View is a really diverse constituency, and it hugs the entire outside of Calgary. We have everything from, you know, oil sands workers to farmers, executives downtown in oil field services, all sorts of different technologies, not just oil and gas but many sectors and spinoff sectors as a result of oil and gas. Then in the city of Chestermere and little places like Langdon we have these little communities that have sprung up and become beautiful, viable communities as a result of this industry, beautiful little bedroom communities that have sprung up as a result of being able to work in the field to be able to bring these products out of the ground and then spring up these little communities that have, you know, coffee shops and businesses and restaurants and all of these things that are spinoffs as a result of this incredible industry that we have.

So when we're asking for accountability, we're not only asking for it of the government but also of ourselves, for everybody that's in this House, so that we can breathe easier knowing that the government cares about Albertans and that they're willing to give that information, that they're willing to stand up for their policy and say: this is why and this is how we're going to measure it, and this is what we're going to do to show you that what we're doing is right and that this is our policy. Like I said, that bears so well for any future governments that may come into this House because that would be the expectation of any government, I would think.

I think, too, that when a person is willing to take responsibility for their policies and what they are going forward, that really, really brings forward an air of collaboration which means, then, that in the spirit of what the environment minister had mentioned about the OSAG panel, bringing forward a whole bunch of different people to work within this group collaboratively – well, let's say that that's the right thing to do on that panel. Well, why wouldn't you want to do that in this House as well, right? You have a panel. Granted, it's not going to report in time because this legislation will – I could stand here and talk about it probably until next Tuesday quite easily, but we all know that this is going to be through before Christmas, right? So where's the collaboration?

You know, we are always told that we should look for solutions. Well, the solutions are in collaboration. The solutions are in actually listening to each other, right? The solutions are in listening to the sector, and the solutions lie in being able to take advice even if it's not the advice you want to hear, even if it goes against what you initially had, what compelled you to put policy together in the first place, and acknowledge the missteps, make amends, and go forward.

We make amendments here in order to try and make legislation better, and agreeing to some of those amendments is the government's way to show collaboration with the opposition parties. There just hasn't been a whole lot of that, so whatever solutions we could bring forward like some of these innovative styles, like at least stepping back from this just a little bit.

**11:00**

I mean, if the federal carbon tax is going to come in in 2018, why not take a step back for a moment and allow us the opportunity to do some metrics, to do some cost-benefit analysis and see how this is going to impact everyday Albertans, not just us, not just our policies, not just our relative ideologies but actual Albertans and their families and the sector? Why are we attacking this sector?

Madam Chair, I highly, highly recommend that the House vote in favour of this amendment, and I would like to thank the member for bringing this amendment forward. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to speak to this amendment. I think that it's actually quite a brilliant amendment because it addresses something that I think is wrong with our Westminster system, and that is that we pass a bill and then we create the regulations. Those regulations aren't really vetted by this House. They're not vetted by Albertans. It's just what you get. I think that that's one of the concerns that I have with the system that we have in place right now and maybe something that frustrates Albertans.

The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, in bringing this forward, I think addresses one of the systemic problems that we have with our program and what we're trying to do here. I really like that he's trying to address that by saying that "the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall consult the public with respect to the content of proposed regulations." Again, this whole idea that we pass a bill, that we identify whether the bill should be passed or not, and then we get into the details – as my hon. colleague has said, the devil is in the details. Knowing that, I think that this addresses the fundamental problem with the way that we do pass bills in this House in that we don't really understand or know what those regulations are going to be. We don't know what the details are going to be.

So I'm very intrigued by this, and I hope that the members opposite recognize that this is an opportunity for all of us to be able, again, to step back from the desire to be able to pass this bill because we think that it's right or wrong and take a look at how it will affect Albertans and how it will affect the people who are in the industry in the trenches – the businesses, the small businesses – and then be able to have that report open and transparent for Albertans to be able to say: well, this is the outcome or this is how the effect of these regulations and how they're developed is going to affect this sector.

You know, I have to say that I'm surprised that there hasn't been an amendment coming forward to change the name of this bill to something like The NDP's Approach to Keeping the Oil in the Ground without Saying that They Want to Keep the Oil in the Ground.

**An Hon. Member:** I think it's too long.

**Mr. Hunter:** Yeah, it is a little too long, and I think that it probably wouldn't sell.

In reality, when the Leap Manifesto group said, "We want to keep it in the ground," I was actually very happy to see this Premier stand up and say: "No, no. That's not what we believe." In reality, Madam Chair, this bill is saying exactly the same thing: we just want to keep it in the ground. It's just not saying: we want to keep it in the ground. So the bill itself I'm opposed to because of that very fact.

We have for some strange reason been blessed with that kind of a resource in our province. We should be focusing on how to be able to extract it efficiently and effectively, in an environmentally friendly way. We should be focusing on the technology part of it because that technology has made leaps and bounds. I'm not in the industry, to tell you the truth, Madam Chair, but I've been able to read lots about the industry, and it's exciting to see the kind of technology and innovations that they've made in that industry. We have this resource, yet this bill that we have before us, Bill 25, is saying that we want to keep it in the ground. That's what it says.

You know, we've talked about consultation with Albertans, consultation with people in the industry. The problem is that when you consult with them, you may get an answer that you don't like, and perhaps that's the reason why we're really not getting this consultation. Is there an economic impact study? If there is, we'd love to see it. How is this going to affect the industry? How is it

going to affect jobs? People in our province are hurting right now. How is it going to affect them?

I am pleased to stand in support of this amendment, and I hope that all of my colleagues, on both sides of the House, will do so as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today to speak against this amendment to Bill 25, that was moved on behalf of the Member for Calgary-South East. I think that the motivation behind this amendment is one of fear on the part of opposition that the oils sands advisory group will have a preordained outcome and that it won't provide advice that has been freely arrived at through robust debate, and nothing could actually be further from the truth.

Critically, when the climate leadership plan was released last year, our government made a commitment to the health of Albertans, their economy, and their environment. As the Minister of Environment and Parks has outlined, this legislation puts a 100-megatonne limit on Alberta's production. Critically, Madam Chair, this limit was established by a diverse group of stakeholders from Alberta's oil sands industry as well as national and Alberta-based environmental nonprofit organizations.

This legislation provides a framework for the oil sands advisory group to engage with stakeholders and the public on the regulatory details for the implementation of this limit. Let's be clear on this. While this legislation establishes the limit, the details regarding the application and implementation through regulations will be left to the experts in the oil sands industry after they engage and consult with industry and the public. The outcome will not be preordained.

On one hand, the opposition argues that the membership makeup of the OSAG has got extremists on either end of the spectrum and won't be able to reach consensus. On the other hand, they argue that the OSAG is simply going to rubber-stamp a government preapproved wish list. They can't have it both ways. The makeup of the OSAG was designed specifically to ensure that there was a robust debate and that all spectrums of the arguments would be considered so that government receives a very carefully and robustly debated analysis of the issues at hand.

What we're looking at is to ensure that our resources are protected long term. This government is looking long term to ensure that we actually are able to get our oil sands to market. The results of this type of consultation and very considered response to those who might oppose the development of our oil sands has been evidenced very, very recently in the fact that we had two pipelines approved as a result of very, very significant efforts on the part of our government and our Premier to discuss in a very reasoned way what requirements there will be in order to gain public approval for pipelines to be built.

One of the things that was required was that we put a 100-megatonne limit on Alberta's production in order that there is some knowledge in the world of the environmental side that we really respect the fact that the environment has to be considered.

**11:10**

By the same token, this lack of trust for the OSAG is unwarranted. We're looking long term at being able to extract this resource, develop it. Moreover, the limit will be linked to the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act in order to maintain consistency with the existing greenhouse gas regulatory framework. This linkage to the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act is critical as it is the existing legislative framework in place to manage greenhouse gas emissions, which



sets out the intensity-based reduction targets for all large emitters in the province.

Madam Chair, let me make something perfectly clear. This limit on oil sands emissions will promote the long-term sustainability of Alberta's economy. This limit along with the new output-based allocation approach on carbon pricing will help drive innovation and reduce emissions per barrel while still allowing for production growth and development of the oil sands resource, including moving our product through two pipelines, which, hopefully, will be built as they have been approved to be.

Innovation, Madam Chair, also facilitates job protection and job creation. We will reinvest in new, innovative emissions-reducing technologies here at home to ensure that Alberta is successful and that jobs are protected and created. Our government is extremely proud given that the energy sector has significantly contributed to both provincial and national revenues. I'm proud that when our Premier presented Alberta's climate leadership plan at last year's United Nations climate negotiations in Paris, it received positive international recognition. It's also a step forward in protecting the long-term investments in the industry.

Let's be frank: carbon is an input cost. Not surprisingly, oil producers have asked our government and previous administrations to provide them with a carbon and climate framework so they can make decisions about long-term investments, and that's what this government is all about, the long-term investment, the long-term future, something that's very difficult for governments to plan for because most governments focus on a short four-year cycle. We know that in order to protect Alberta's interests, protect that resource, ensure that we can actually get that to tidewater, sell our product, sell our oil overseas at the best possible price, we do have to make changes to gain the public approval that will allow those pipelines to be built and that price to be achieved.

This is leadership, Madam Chair. Albertans should not be susceptible to a boom-and-bust economy that has many of Alberta's families and communities in difficulty, and that's one of the reasons I rise to oppose this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

**Mr. Hunter:** Just one more point, Madam Chair. I appreciate what the hon. member was saying, but the problem with this bill, in saying that we're going to keep it in the ground, is that other jurisdictions are ramping up production. We are actually saying that we're going to restrict our ability to increase our production while every other jurisdiction in the world is ramping up their production. We live in the same world. If we're going to have this social licence, this ability to actually say that we've gained social licence because of this, in reality we breathe the same air. They're ramping up production. We're decreasing production. How are we actually helping Albertans with gainful employment? This is the problem.

The members opposite don't seem to understand that, in reality, we're shackling our abilities. This is restriction of supply – that's all it is – and when you restrict supply, you create a higher equilibrium price. It's simple economics, and these guys don't seem to understand that. I want them to make sure they understand that this is a restriction of supply when everybody else is increasing supply in the world market. This is the reason why this is fundamentally wrong. This whole bill is fundamentally wrong, and this is not the idea of being able to gain access to foreign markets. Foreign markets would love to get our product. We just need the ability to get it there.

I actually do applaud the government for being able to get those two pipelines approved. I would like to say that on the record, that I do approve of them doing that, and I'm grateful that they were able to work hard to do that. I would also like to say that if there's anything we can do as the opposition to help them get them built, we will do everything we can to do that. Everything we can. We have been very supportive. We've said it on the record. We are very supportive of the government building pipelines to all tidewater, and we want to make sure that they realize that, but this approach that they have is going to restrict supply. Simple. If they don't understand that, getting it to tidewater isn't really going to help us as much.

These are the things that I wanted to point out, and I appreciate the opportunity to be able to just make that clarity. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's important for us to continue to wrestle with this issue. The issue for Alberta today is whether we lead or whether we follow. It's been probably 50 years since we began hearing about some of the impacts of increasing carbon in the environment and the growing evidence that temperatures were associated with it, that extreme weather events and changes and floods and droughts and these sort of issues were coming forward.

It's difficult to make change, especially when you're a leader. It does mean that you take some hits. As the Stern report said 10 years ago, a very voluminous discussion, the best experts in the world on climate science: we can spend 2 per cent of our GDP on trying to mitigate and reduce greenhouse gases now, or our children will pay 20 per cent of our GDP dealing with greenhouse gases. That was 10 years ago. Even former Bank of Canada chief Mark Carney said that we're going to have to leave something in the ground, or we will not achieve any control over the climate.

Of course, leadership means not being necessarily fully competitive with other jurisdictions. That's what leadership means in this context. We do have to pay. If Alberta is not willing to pay a little bit, who is willing to pay?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** No one else is.

**Dr. Swann:** Right. So are we going to accept that we can't be leaders? Are we going to say that we can't be leaders?

I want to applaud the government for the exemptions that it has put in place. Cogeneration is going to be exempt, and that's coming from the oil sands. All cogeneration is exempt. There's a limit of 10 megatonnes. Exceptions for new methods that result in low emissions such as experimental projects in primary production which extract bitumen through drilling without the use of heat or steam: these are stimuli for new technologies in the oil sands. That's going to take us to a new level.

Can the environment take ever-increasing levels of carbon? No. There's a cap that has to go on that, and the cap is associated with a 1.5- to 2-degree increase that's projected in our climate temperature. We're at 400 parts per million now. Some say 350 or 375 was kind of associated with that 1.5- to 2-degree increase in our temperature over the next hundred years. That carbon, that greenhouse gas is staying up there for 100 to 150 years. We're not going to turn things around in the next hundred years regardless of how dramatically we change things here, but we have to start. We have to show leadership. This will actually stimulate new

technologies. It will stimulate new business. It will stimulate a new economy.

As much as I have concerns about how this is going forward, I have to say that I can't support this amendment because it's not recognizing the need that leadership always presents. Not all of the population is ready to go along. If you ask people if they want an increased tax, they will say: no, thank you. Actually, what is needed is strong leadership and a willingness to put a cap on what we're doing to show not only Canada but the world that Alberta, the most privileged, the most wealthy, the most well-resourced place on the planet, recognizes its responsibility to show some leadership. Yeah, it's going to cost us something. We need to make provisions for people who are transitioning from coal. We need to provide new technologies and jobs and opportunities for them; we need to financially support them if they are in distress. That's what a good government does.

We have to make sure that we stimulate with research and technology not only better ways of extracting our main resources, which are fossil fuels, but research the new technologies around geothermal and solar and wind that could help us actually make the transition and show the world that we're not dragging our feet, that we're not staying back in the fossil fuel age of a hundred years ago. We're recognizing that there are limits. We're acknowledging with the rest of the climate science and the rest of the international community that we have to put a cap on what the planet can take. The planet cannot continue to take increases every year. Yes, leadership does mean that we're sticking our necks out.

11:20

**Mr. Hunter:** Other jurisdictions are increasing.

**Dr. Swann:** Yeah, they may be increasing. Well, are we just going to follow that blindly right over the edge of the cliff and leave our children to deal with the crisis? I'm saying that it's time to show leadership. It's time to show leadership.

I spoke against the unlimited borrowing of the Power Pool. I speak for this bill. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A4? Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It seems to me that in this discussion there is a philosophical issue that has surfaced, and that is: who leads? The last time I checked, the good people of Alberta seemed to think they should be leading. Last time I checked, the people who in this province cast their ballots every now and then when there's an election seem to be under some misconception that they're in charge when, in fact, this government and the hon. member seem to think that they can be ignored.

The real leaders in the province of Alberta are Albertans, and that needs to be established in everything that happens in this House. When any government ignores those people – even totalitarian governments that ignore the people eventually come down. Any governments and political parties that do not listen to the people ultimately suffer the wrath of the voters on election day, and they are reduced to seven or eight seats, reduced or held to a single seat, or completely lose their seats, as has happened many times. As the saying goes, Canadians don't elect governments; they unelect governments.

Now, we have leaders in this province, and their names are the Albertan people. They're the people who are supposed to be leading, and contrary to what the hon. member just said, if the good people of Alberta really don't want to be taxed, then we should not tax them. They are adamantly opposed to the carbon tax. They are

adamantly opposed to a number of the taxes that this province has been saddled with.

We have news releases coming out that Alberta's ranking as a place to invest in oil and gas, which used to be, like, in the top three consistently, has now plunged to the basement, and it has to do with government policies. It does not have anything to do with the price of oil. Just next door, in Regina and Saskatoon those oil companies and gas companies are very busy. They're posting job increases, not just part-time jobs. They're posting significant job increases, and I will say that some of those new jobs are for people from the magnificent riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I know there are some young guys that are heading on over to Saskatchewan. We are down to the 43rd position out of 96 oil and gas jurisdictions in the world. That's how far our province has fallen as a result of this government not listening to the leaders in the province, the people.

We are getting further and further away every week from being a genuine democracy in this province. We have a government that isn't listening again. Here we have an amendment giving an opportunity for this government to start reversing that trend and start listening to Albertans, and the government sounds like they are not interested, which is no great surprise. Nevertheless, it is our place as Her Majesty's Official Opposition to point out where the government is going amiss, and we will continue to do that faithfully because the leaders in this province, Albertans, expect us to do this.

I wholeheartedly support this amendment for the multiple reasons that others have stated and that I have stated, and I would hope that everyone in this House would consider it. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:26 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	McIver
Drysdale	Loewen	Panda
Ellis	MacIntyre	Stier
Hanson		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miranda
Bilous	Hoffman	Nielsen
Carson	Horne	Phillips
Connolly	Jansen	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Renaud
Dach	Larivee	Rosendahl
Dang	Littlewood	Sabir
Drever	Loyola	Schmidt
Feehan	Luff	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Swann
Ganley	McKittrick	Turner
Goehring	Miller	Westhead
Gray		

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 37
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[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Chair:** The Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 25. I wish to table copies

of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed, say no. So ordered.  
The Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In honour of the memorial event occurring in the Federal building this afternoon, I would like to move that we rise and resume at 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:45 a.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, December 6, 2016

Day 58

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (ND)  
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
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Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
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Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
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Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House  
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Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and  
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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 6, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. It's very cold outside. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you a group of entrepreneurs and community leaders who are part of the vibrant constituency I represent, Edmonton-Glenora. Here with us today we have Marie-Laure Polydore, who is the executive director of the Inglewood Business Improvement Area, along with board members Marc Tellier and Denise Beaupre as well as Dan Barsotti. The Inglewood BIA is seeing a surge in growth. It really is one of Edmonton's hidden treasures, with 118 businesses now part of this thriving shopping area. I want to encourage all of my colleagues to spend their money here while they're in Edmonton and all Albertans as well. I ask that our guests from the Inglewood BIA please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, I have three introductions to do today. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly my friend and former colleague at the Edmonton parole office and now professor of the criminal justice program at Grant MacEwan University, Tim Williams. If you would please rise, Tim, and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

For my second and third introductions, Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to stand and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a long-time friend and colleague, Stan Stapleton, the president of the Union of Solicitor General Employees, my former union, and a fellow Newfoundlander, Nancy Peckford, a well-known political name in Newfoundland, who is currently USGE's director of policy, projects, and media relations and works with Equal Voice. They are here in Edmonton this week to meet with me as a former member and local president and, in particular, to meet with USGE members at Edmonton Institution in light of the sexual harassment allegations which came to light recently at the institution. Today is certainly the perfect day for them to be here in this Legislature as I will read my statement.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, do you have an introduction to make?

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Yes. I ask Nancy and Stan to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some of the outstanding members of the Women's Committee from UFCW local 401. The committee members are here today to listen to my member's statement about their shoe drive. Joining us here in the gallery, led by Sheena Thomson, the co-chair of the provincial Women's Committee, are Heather

Pocock, Colleen Ewen, Charmaine St. Germain, Petra Garbe, Starla Valentini, Sue Michael, and Sandy Novak. I would ask them now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a real pleasure to introduce to you and through you a group of Liberal stalwarts here in Edmonton. These men and women are committed to and passionate about the issues facing our province today. At our recent policy convention in Calgary many of them were involved in the policies on small-business protection, community assistance, pipelines, transparent government, and LGBTQ issues. They're hopeful these policies will one day end up on the floor of this House, and they've come to see the Legislature in action. Would they stand as I introduce their names: Kerrie Johnston, Dylan Chevalier, Nichole Batienko, Greg Reid, and Eric Fadden. I don't think Dan Cochrane is with us today. Please give them the warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Of course, I would remind all of us as we move forward – I think I might have said the same thing yesterday – about brevity, brevity with respect to the introductions, hon. members.

### Members' Statements

#### Violence against Women

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, 28 years ago the lives of 14 young women were taken simply because they were women, women who had chosen to study engineering at l'école Polytechnique de Montréal. The perpetrator apparently felt he was entitled to be in that program and that women were not. There are over 1,200 murdered and missing indigenous women whose cases have not yet been resolved. Public threats, abusive language have been flung at our Premier, some of my colleagues, and myself. Even here in the Legislature disrespect is seen. I see the statistics on the number of women and children here in our province running for their lives. I am sick at heart. This really is a national tragedy, in fact an international tragedy. This is epidemic, and we have to take action.

I have identified and speak to the things which I believe are critical in changing this path. From my own experience, I know that when we speak to and treat one another with respect; when we value all that each person has to offer; when we call abuse, bullying, harassment, demeaning behaviour what it is; when men stand up and call on those who are behaving in this manner to stop; when women will not tolerate being disrespected, demeaned, or not valued for everything that they bring to a relationship – I have taken a stance against violence, and I have both in word and action participated in the United Nations 16-day campaign. We can all choose to be part of the solution, or we can continue to be part of the problem. Are you standing up to stop violence against women through your words and action? Yes or no?

#### Unemployment

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, Calgary's unemployment rate now stands at 10.3 per cent. In Alberta as a whole unemployment stands at a whopping 9 per cent. Albertans are not used to this many people being out of work. Over 13,000 people lost work just last month. That is 74,000 full-time jobs lost since last November. In September weekly earnings dropped to \$1,100 and are down 1.7 per

cent year over year. These are Albertans. These are family members, friends, and neighbours, but all they see are damaging NDP policies making things worse. The carbon tax will make them poorer, it will damage local businesses, and it takes money away from the charities. These NDP policies are cold and uncaring towards the tens of thousands of Calgarians suffering today.

When I tour Alberta and speak to Albertans, it's clear that the cap on production will contribute to layoffs across the province. Since January 2016 Calgary's working-age population has increased by over 16,000 residents, and the labour market cannot keep up. Calgary's growing population is putting pressure on its unemployment rate. The NDP is setting up Calgary's economy for low wages and higher unemployment in the long term.

1:40

An unemployed couple in their early 50s living in Calgary-Foothills went looking for retraining. Alberta Works referred them to a third-party agency, and when they got there, Mr. Speaker, the agency told them that in order to get retraining, they must have a job first or be an immigrant of two years or less or need English as a second language or other roadblocks. We must do better to ease . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

#### Renewable Energy Initiatives in Wetaskiwin-Camrose

**Mr. Hinkley:** Mr. Speaker, my constituency of Wetaskiwin-Camrose is taking a positive, progressive leadership stance on environmental stewardship with the use of renewable energy. For example, at the local hardware store constituent Ken Koob has bought all the solar panels and equipment he needs to utilize solar energy in his apartment. City councillors Bill Sears in Camrose and Bert Horvey in Wetaskiwin have had solar panels installed on their homes to show green energy leadership before any residential rebates are in place. The city of Camrose's Recreation Centre has the second-largest installation of solar panels in Alberta. The Lougheed performing arts centre on the U of A Augustana campus has installed LED lights in their new theatre and is the first in Canada to use photovoltaic cells not on but in their exterior walls. The county of Camrose uses biomass to heat their administrative centre.

The city of Wetaskiwin uses geothermal heating for city hall, has an electric car charging station, uses solar panels on the drill hall and swimming pool, and has replaced every street light with LED lighting. Both Montana and Louis Bull Cree nations have installed solar panels on their administrative buildings. Dairy farmers Susan and Evan Schuurman have taken part in the farm solar panel program, as have hundreds of Albertan farmers. Parkland Fertilizers installed 300 solar panels when they built their new buildings. Bruce Ganske and the Solar Energy Society of Alberta are looking to open up a school in Wetaskiwin to certify solar panel installers. Entrepreneur Greg Arend's company, Solar Harvest, exemplifies the future found in the renewable energy industry.

Mr. Speaker, progressive leadership is happening at the grassroots level. It is happening in my constituency and across Alberta. I am very proud of my constituency. Renewable energy will produce enough energy and grow despite the naysayers. The renewable energy future is happening now.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

#### Support for Victims of Gender-based Violence

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. December 6 is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women. We remember this day because 14 female engineering students were murdered at l'école Polytechnique in Montreal on December 6, 1989. This was clearly an act of gender-based violence.

Today we also commemorate the missing and murdered aboriginal women, trans women, and each and every woman across the world whose lives have been harmed or lost to gender-based violence.

Mr. Speaker, it is astounding that in the 21st century there are some in society that can't figure out that violence and intimidation of any kind toward women is simply not acceptable. Until we solve this, women and children that are forced to flee this violence need our help.

Last year the United Food and Commercial Workers local 401 started a shoe drive by collecting gently worn and new women's and children's shoes because often they are fleeing with merely the clothes on their backs. They collected 35 pairs of shoes last year in Edmonton, but we all know that there are far more women and children fleeing violence than that.

My office and those of my colleagues in collaboration with UFCW local 401 are again collecting gently worn and new women's and children's shoes. You can arrange a drop-off of your donations by calling any one of our Edmonton offices. Until everyone realizes that violence against women is not acceptable, the least we can do is to help them walk away from it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

#### Women's Political Participation

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in the Alberta Legislature we have 33 per cent women sitting in our House; 97 per cent of those members sit on the government side. This is something that I am, of course, very proud of. But this is not the case even here in Canada, where only four of 13 jurisdictions have achieved the minimum 30 per cent participation of women as outlined in the 2011 UN resolution on women's political participation.

In Alberta we have much to be proud of, not only with our female legislators but also with three open LGBTQ members and ethnic minorities represented. We have almost reached parity as a caucus but not quite as a Legislature.

There is still much work to be done. I believe in using all tools available to achieve a successful result. Studies from MIT and Carnegie Mellon, among others, point to some diversity being good, to more women being important, and that to encourage this is imperative. In this way, supporting women and minorities may be a tool in the tool box to encourage participation of marginalized groups, but it cannot be the only tool implemented. It does not accomplish enough. Today less than 19 per cent of legislators world-wide are women, and it's much lower for minority ethnic groups.

Mentorship, pairing younger women with experienced women leaders, I believe, is one of the best strategies to encourage female participation in our legislative system. This type of role modelling can make the difference for our daughters, teaching them that being assertive does not mean you are not feminine, that it takes strength to show emotion, and that you can be respected as a person while rejecting misogyny. We must show our sons that this is the norm.

Mr. Speaker, let us work toward a structure and a society where neither gender nor ethnicity are determinants of success. Thank you.

### **National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women**

**Mrs. Pitt:** On this day 27 years ago 14 women were killed and 14 others were injured at l'école Polytechnique in Montreal. Armed with a rifle, he entered into an engineering classroom, pointing his rifle at the women in the class, and said: you're all a bunch of feminists; I hate feminists. In his suicide note he blamed feminists for ruining his life, saying that he believed women had no place in engineering because they would take jobs from men.

Today, on this most sombre anniversary, it is important that we reflect on the events of that day and the lives of the victims and take a stand against senseless, gender-based violence. Even today, in 2016, it remains a reality that women and girls are still victims of gender-based physical and psychological attacks.

I know that here in Canada and Alberta there are many important conversations taking place and much important work being done, for example, supporting women's shelters and transition houses for those fleeing domestic violence. I am proud to say that in my constituency of Airdrie a dedicated group of volunteers known as Airdrie P.O.W.E.R. has set out to fill the need and provide these shelters. There is something I know we all recognize as progress.

Today and every December 6 Canadians remember the 14 victims and recognize the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women because there is still a need to ensure our daughters, sisters, mothers, and friends can live in an Alberta without tolerance for any type of violence.

1:50

### **Notices of Motions**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time I intend to move the following notice of Standing Order 42. The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to propose the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly:

1. Appoint a select special child intervention review committee to review the safety and security of children in government care by examining Alberta's child intervention system and related systems, including but not limited to the Department of Human Services and the Department of Indigenous Relations, and the committee will further review the recommendations for the child intervention system made over the past five years and may for the purpose of systemic improvement inquire into specific cases;
2. The committee shall be chaired by the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, or Deputy Chair of Committees and consist of seven members from the government members' caucus, three members from the Official Opposition, two members from the third party, the Member for Calgary-Elbow, and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, with the names of all members to be submitted to the Clerk by no later than December 15, 2016;
3. In carrying out its duties, the committee may travel throughout Alberta and undertake a process of consultations with all interested Albertans;
4. In carrying out its duties, the committee may solicit written submissions from experts in the field and may compel the appearance of witnesses with specific and relevant knowledge on matters being investigated;

5. The committee is deemed to continue beyond prorogation and may meet during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
6. Reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid, subject to the approval of the chair;
7. In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may, with the concurrence of the head of the department, utilize the services of the public service employed in that department or the staff employed by the Legislative Assembly Office and the officers of the Legislature;
8. The committee must ensure that any and all front-line workers and managers in children services and any delegates or contractors for children services that wish to speak to the all-party committee are given full whistle-blower protections;
9. The committee must submit its report within one year after commencing its review;
10. When its work has been completed, the committee must report to the Assembly if it is sitting, or if the Assembly is adjourned, the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

### **Oral Question Period**

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### **Student Assessment**

**Mr. Jean:** Education is the one part of what government does that if it is done well, everything else the government does gets easier. If the government screws up the education file, everything else gets harder in the long run. The previous government and this government have been screwing up education here in Alberta. We used to be the best in class in Canada and world class. The new PISA results are out, and Alberta is less than average in math in Canada and failing with respect to the rest of the world. Will the Premier admit that the obsession with fads in the Education ministry is actually harming this generation of Alberta's students?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The results that were released today were the 2015 results, and we share the concern that has been highlighted through these scores. That's one of the reasons why there was action taken today, actually – this sounds a little bit like it could have been a caucus question – to make sure that we're moving forward on providing the right supports to ensure that Albertans have the very best support when it comes to moving forward in a concrete way with math and literacy skills. Numeracy and literacy are areas that we're absolutely committed to strengthening as we move forward.

**Mr. Jean:** In math Alberta used to be world class, but over the last decade our scores have been steadily dropping. Our PISA math results show that we have fallen behind British Columbia and Quebec, both of which have rejected the discovery math fad that has so harmed our elementary school students. Standardized tests like PISA allow us to measure what works and what doesn't work, like how we teach math, but this government and its ally the ATA don't like standardized testing. Alberta parents, on the other hand: they recognize the value of testing and want it to continue. Will the

Premier commit that this government will not do away with standardized testing in Alberta? Yes or no.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I'm getting pretty fed up of the fact-free question-asking in this House. The fact is that we are absolutely committed to making sure that parents, teachers, and students have the best information to be able to assess their growth, their areas for improvement, and move forward with progress. Today some of the changes we announced are reinstating a written portion for the math diploma exam, something that we think is very important and that it was a mistake because of past budget cuts to take that portion out. We think that's a valuable tool. Creating a no-calculator portion for the math grade 9 provincial achievement test – I wish the Official Opposition would stop being so barrel half empty . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** We're thinking about the kids, Mr. Speaker, and that's important, and for some reason the educrats in the Education ministry decided we needed to teach basic math in a new way. The PISA national and international test scores show that the new math experiment was simply a failure, but the ATA today called for the government to stop participating in the PISA tests. The ATA rejects all standardized testing, and the NDP has put them in charge of rewriting Alberta's curriculum. Will the Premier assure Albertans that the ATA won't be allowed to kill standardized testing, which allows Alberta moms and dads to assess our education system here in Alberta, what's best for the kids?

**Ms Hoffman:** I noticed that the Leader of the Official Opposition tripped on the words coming out of his mouth, because he knows they're not true, Mr. Speaker. We're working to create bursary programs to support preservice teachers and help strengthen their knowledge and skills and confidence in teaching math. Investing in education, the funding we had to provide in Budget 2015 and '16, which I believe the members opposite voted against, means that we'll be able to support 1,100 new teachers and protect more than 800 teaching assistants and hire almost 260 more. You want to talk about moving forward in a thoughtful, reasoned approach, hiring staff, and supporting those staff to make sure kids get the best start in life.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order.  
Second main question.

### Child Protective Services Review

**Mr. Jean:** For weeks all opposition parties in this House have been uniting and asking questions about improving our child intervention system, following the death of young Serenity in care. I'm thankful that it appears that ministers of this government also want to take action. That's a good thing. When you were asked by the leader of the third party to form an all-party committee, you actually agreed. Today the Wildrose is presenting terms of reference to create that special select committee. To the Premier: will you be directing your caucus to provide unanimous consent to this motion? Yes or no?

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, obviously, this was a very, very serious and sad tragedy that's affected all of us here and all of us in the province of Alberta. The government is very serious about doing something about that, and the Premier has made that

clear. We're working very hard to do the work necessary in order to create a committee that represents this House, that can actually find out what we can do better.

**Mr. Jean:** I have a world of respect for the front-line social workers assisting children in care. Many of them have high caseloads and are trying to navigate a very broken system. The system clearly broke down when it came to Serenity. In the 11 months before her death there were no visits from any child intervention workers at all. We can't fix a broken system if we don't know exactly what's wrong. Will the Premier commit to providing full whistle-blower protection status for any and all workers appearing before an all-party committee? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I said in the answer to the first part of the hon. member's question – and I thank him very much for it – we're very much interested in resolving these questions to improve the services that we provide and to protect children in care. No child in care should be put in a place where their health or their safety or their very lives are jeopardized, and this government is committed to making sure that we fix this so that doesn't happen.

**Mr. Jean:** We're asking for action, Mr. Speaker, and all we hear is platitudes.

Our failure of children in care spreads further than just the actual child intervention system. We have seen a troubling lack of information and a lack of answers from the office of the Chief Medical Examiner when it comes to young Serenity's death. We have also seen the office of the Child and Youth Advocate not receiving all files while conducting this investigation. Unacceptable. Will the Premier ensure that an all-party committee would be able to compel testimony from all witnesses related to the safety and security of children in care in Alberta? Yes or no?

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Premier has been clear in this House that because of an ongoing RCMP investigation not all the information was released when it might otherwise have been released. That's a very important thing, that we get to the bottom of this and we not interfere or in any way disrupt this critical police investigation.

With respect to the work of this committee in due course the government will be showing just how this committee will work and how we can get to the bottom of this issue.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Third main question. The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Energy Industry Competitiveness

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 74,000 Albertans have lost work since last November under the NDP. Let's be clear. Saskatchewan uses the same price of oil as Alberta does, but their fortunes are on the way up. For the first time ever they're expected to drill the most oil and gas wells in Canada, and now a new report today shows that global energy executives see Saskatchewan as the fourth-best oil and gas jurisdiction to invest in while Alberta has plummeted to 43rd. Why, then, is the NDP determined to destroy our ability to compete?

2:00

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.



**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're doing no such thing. I'll reference somebody from the University of Calgary, Jack Mintz, who said that Alberta's new royalty framework will be significantly more attractive for investment. [interjections] I think "more attractive for investment" is absolutely the right direction. Because of our changes in the royalty framework we have 140 new rigs right now, each generating 135 direct and indirect jobs in the province of Alberta. This is the right direction. They want to go backwards.

**The Speaker:** In the mystical quiet I'm having difficulty hearing jingle bells, so keep the tone down, folks.

First supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Well, the Global Petroleum Survey said this, quote: the Alberta government has introduced policies that are confusing, create uncertainty for the oil and gas industry, which can invest elsewhere. End quote. That is just a nice way of saying that a massive new carbon tax, caps on emissions, and suing Alberta power companies may not be the best ideas. If Alberta can't compete with Saskatchewan, Texas, and North Dakota, that means less jobs and money and services here in Alberta. Does the NDP not understand that?

**Ms Hoffman:** Here are some real numbers that are worth taking a moment to reflect on and understand. Our rig count is up 6 per cent in the month of November. That's a sixth consecutive monthly increase, Mr. Speaker. Our oil production surpassed 2015 levels, and in September oil production was up 12 per cent compared to the same time last year. Even with the carbon price Alberta still has a \$7.5 billion tax advantage over Saskatchewan, and Alberta recorded \$38 billion in capital spending in oil and gas. That's five times greater than Saskatchewan. I wish we'd start talking about the facts. This side is. I wish that side would, too.

**Mrs. Aheer:** The facts are that Alberta used to be ranked 13th in the world, but after 19 months of this NDP government we're now ranked at 43rd of 96. None of our competitors in the United States have a carbon tax any time soon, and right now the NDP has committed to a \$50-per-tonne carbon tax. This tax will not lower global emissions. It won't even lower our emissions, but it'll send billions of dollars of investment out of Alberta. Will the Premier even admit to the damage that these policies are creating in our energy sector? Yes or no?

**Ms Hoffman:** The energy sector sure seems to be seeing a lot of progress, Mr. Speaker. They're the ones who asked us to bring in this cap because it helps strengthen their international reputation. Let's reflect on the latest episode of *The Twilight Zone*. Alberta just got two pipelines approved, and the Leader of the Opposition wants us to scrap that plan and those approvals and move backwards. We're not going to do that. We're going to move forward.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At \$20 or \$30 per tonne the carbon tax will raise between \$1.1 billion and \$2.6 billion. At \$50 the carbon tax will raise \$4 billion a year. Interestingly, a 4 per cent provincial sales tax would raise \$4 billion annually as well. Clearly, the carbon tax is a PST wolf in sheep's clothing. To the Finance minister: will you admit the carbon tax is a PST in disguise, and if not, at least tell us how high you're willing to go on the carbon tax?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, what I'll admit to and what I'll always admit to is that the climate leadership plan will drive innovation in this province. It'll cause rebates to go back to Albertans, that are going to be addressing better and better efficiencies in their home, in their autos. What I'll admit to is that we're moving forward. You would have pushed us backwards.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about that. There's \$9.6 billion in carbon tax to come in in the next five years. Household and consumer rebates, \$2.3 billion; renewable energy products to replace coal, \$3.4 billion; a new provincial agency, \$645 million; transitioning coal, \$195 million: in other words, \$6.6 billion of the \$9.6 billion is only to undo the damage that the climate change scheme is doing in the first place. To the Finance minister: when two-thirds of the carbon tax is to undo the damage, don't you admit that you're at least two-thirds wrong?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, if the third party had their way, we would be spending 10 times that amount on carbon capture and storage. I have heard them say over and over and over again that they would prefer clean-coal technology and so on. Well, we ran those numbers. That's between \$9 billion and \$10 billion for our post-2030 plans. They would prefer that kind of approach. Our approach is around \$10 per tonne of GHG in order to transition our coal-fired electricity into renewables, so that's . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. That was quite a spacewalk, Mr. Speaker.

Now let's look at the government-funded services that will be hammered by the carbon tax: municipalities, school boards, hospitals, social service agencies, postsecondaries, correctional services, road maintenance, police services, cultural centres, and the list goes on. To the Premier. You promised that you won't lay off nurses and teachers. What about police officers, social service workers, correctional staff, road maintenance workers, wildlife officers, and Crown prosecutors? Should they be worried about layoffs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. He may have missed the announcements last week, but our carbon plan, our climate leadership plan, is working. We are moving forward on creating two new pipelines, a major economic driver in this province. We're taking the money that's generated through the price on carbon and reinvesting it in Alberta families. Two-thirds of families get a direct rebate. And we are working to make sure that we acknowledge the reality of climate change, build a stronger, diversified economy. They had 44 years. They didn't get the job done. We've stepped up to the plate, and we're not scared to tackle these issues.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Education, PDD, and Health Program Reviews

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, yesterday I rose in this House to challenge the government on their use of

backbench questions, so today I am going to show Albertans what it looks like when an MLA holds the government to account for their constituents. To the Minister of Education. A constituent asked me why the curriculum survey was so long, technical, and complex and if the questions were designed to elicit the government's desired outcomes. Can you tell the House how many surveys were abandoned partway through and whether this exercise is just cover for curriculum changes that have already been decided?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think there was a little question at the end there. The curriculum survey was the biggest interaction that Alberta Education has ever engaged in with the Alberta public in the history of this province. We had more than 32,000 respondents, of which 25,000 filled out part A and part B. Part B gives us valuable information that will then come back to us in the spring, and then we'll go back to the public again. It's a very transparent process because we take curriculum development very seriously.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So fully a quarter of people didn't finish the survey.

Another important issue in Calgary-Elbow is the PDD safety standards consultation report, which was released in late October. My constituents want an update on the progress of some of the key recommendations, specifically recommendation 1, for a neutral and independent body external from government to undertake a review of the PDD program. To the Minister of Human Services: has the review started, who is involved, what are the terms of reference, and when will they file their report?

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. PDD safety of the person with developmental disability: we took it very seriously. That's why we consulted Albertans, and 2,000 Albertans raised their voices, and they felt heard. We will be working on the report as a whole with a view to making this province inclusive and giving opportunities to persons with developmental disabilities to contribute meaningfully to the province and live as independently and as safely as possible.

**Mr. Clark:** Sadly, Mr. Speaker, that is nowhere near an answer.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we saw two more tragic signs of the public health crisis caused by fentanyl and opiate addiction: statistics were released showing 15 deaths from highly toxic carfentanyl, and the heartbreaking story of two parents who likely died of a drug overdose in my constituency of Calgary-Elbow, leaving four children orphaned. To the Minister of Health. You are the NDP. You are supposed to care for people in need. Will you stop parroting talking points written by bureaucrats, do what you know is right, and declare a public health emergency?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. You know, our hearts really do go out to all of those who have lost a loved one to fentanyl, and we know that the best thing that we can do to support them and their loved ones' memories is to expand access to opioid treatments that work. That is why we're working diligently to expand community-based access to opioid

dependency treatment as well as working with community partners across the province to open supervised consumption services, which we know will make a difference in saving lives.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

## 2:10 Energy Efficiency Programs

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We keep hearing that Albertans will start saving money while reducing their greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency programs. My constituents know that we all need to do our fair share to address climate change, but they have many questions about the climate leadership plan. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: when will Albertans start to see energy efficiency programs for their homes?

**The Speaker:** The minister of the environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three programs will be delivered in early 2017: direct install, consumer rebates, and business and institutional programs. There will be more programs introduced throughout 2017 based on the advice that we got from our energy efficiency expert panel and as we create the Energy Efficiency Alberta agency. We did have to start from scratch on this because, of course, the previous government left Alberta as the only jurisdiction without energy efficiency in North America. But we're looking forward to putting people to work and saving families money on their bills starting in 2017.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government plans to help consumers reduce their household energy cost, to the same minister: can you give us any specific details on what opportunities consumers will have through these energy efficiency programs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we're moving forward in early 2017 with direct install of free or low-cost products, that we've already announced. We are moving forward with the consumer rebate program, and throughout 2017 we'll have more to say about audits, incentives for small-scale renewables as we set up those programs and deliver them.

You know, a recent study by the state of Michigan showed that every dollar that the state invested in energy efficiency programs led to \$4 in savings for ratepayers, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we're going to do the right thing. We're going to help folks reduce their bills and reduce their emissions while they're doing it.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. I would avoid standing up in the future.

Second supplemental.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans are eager to hear more about the job opportunities that will come from the implementation of energy efficiency programs, can you explain the impacts that these programs will have on jobs for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, recent studies in B.C., for example, have shown that every million dollars invested in efficiency led to 34 direct full-time jobs. In Ontario every million dollars invested led to 38 direct full-time jobs, and that's why Kevin

Lecht from the international association of heat and frost insulator workers said of our approach that it'll create jobs and diversify our economy. Those are jobs that the Wildrose calls a slush fund. They'd cancel those programs and throw those folks out of work. But we're looking forward to making Alberta more efficient. We're looking forward to putting Albertans to work while we do it. The Wildrose wants us to be stuck in the past. That's not the approach we're taking.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

#### NorQuest College

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In March 2013 NorQuest College fired its IT manager when it was suspected that he massively defrauded taxpayers and illegally retained the personal information of his colleagues. NorQuest did not fully disclose this in 2013, and employees found out in the news this fall when Charles Rusnell and Jennie Russell broke the story. Will the Minister of Advanced Education commit to ensuring that privacy breaches like this are immediately disclosed to those affected in the future?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister responsible for the legislation I'm happy to answer your questions. It's very important to our government that Albertans have access to the information that's important to them and that there is transparency in the way that this legislation is executed. We are certainly working on improving our processes with all of our partners and ensuring that our best practices are followed by all institutions, all arm's length from the government . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Taylor:** Given that when NorQuest College appeared before the Public Accounts Committee in April 2013, at the height of the investigation into the worker, the college was directly asked if its protections against fraud and IT privacy breaches were adequate but it didn't say a word about what was happening at the time and given that NorQuest College appeared at the Public Accounts Committee again today, is the minister comfortable with the testimony at both meetings given the apparent discrepancy in the facts? [interjections]

**Mr. Schmidt:** I'm so glad that I'm making such good friends on the opposite side, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, they're not the kinds of friends that I would bring home to meet my mother.

With respect to the testimony that was given today at Public Accounts, of course, you know, we know that NorQuest College had some issues identified with how they handled their protection of privacy information. They've taken steps since that issue occurred, and I'm convinced . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Taylor:** Sounds like you're defending privacy breaches.

There are new concerns about proper financial management at NorQuest College. Given that the president of NorQuest, who earns over \$400,000 a year, which is well above normal for a vocational school, is accused of taking ridiculous perks like a month of paid sabbatical for every 12 months worked in addition to vacation and all-expense-paid trips to Mexico to take Spanish lessons, all courtesy of the taxpayer, can the minister explain how this could have happened under his watch, por favor? [interjections]

**Mr. Schmidt:** It sounds like it's paternity test day on *The Jerry Springer Show* on that other side.

Mr. Speaker, each institution is governed by a board of governors. It is up to the board of governors to determine the appropriate compensation. We trust them to do their work faithfully while protecting the interests of taxpayers and students.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### School Fees

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP campaigned hard on removing school fees, a promise which likely influenced a number of parents with school-aged children. Two school years have begun since the minister took office, and still school fees remain. Now, a Calgary *Metro* article, which I am happy to table, indicates that the government won't even look at scrapping school fees until 2018. To the Minister of Education: is the scrapping of school fees another broken NDP promise, or when will parents no longer have to pay school fees?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the hon. member. Certainly, it is our full intention to reduce school fees as per our campaign promise, and certainly we have been working to build a thoughtful plan to ensure that we are focusing specifically on instructional fees. These last two budgets it's been a difficult economic circumstance. Our caucus and cabinet chose to reinstate funding for enrolment, which allowed us to hire 1,100 teachers, 800 support staff, and to keep schools functioning at a high level.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that the *Metro* notes that the minister is considering eliminating school fees for the school year starting in 2018, soon after which Albertans expect the next election, again to the minister: we've known each other a long time, sir. Surely, you of all people would not use the elimination of school fees as a cheap campaign trick again – surely, you would not – to cover up any broken promises from the past, present, or future. Please assure Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

2:20

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and for the question, I guess. I mean, the issue is around making sure that the integrity of our public school system is intact. Certainly, the very first decision we made in K to 12 education was to reverse the third party's decision to not fund for enrolment and to restore the jobs of more than 800 support staff and hire a further 1,100 teachers. We are reducing school fees as part of our campaign promise, and we are going to do that in a timely, thoughtful manner, as the article did suggest in the . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Rodney:** A lot of words. We just want to know if it's a broken promise.

Given that in the same article, Mr. Speaker, the Calgary Association of Parents and School Councils noted that they had reviewed the resource allocation method documents from the Calgary board of education schools and given that CAPSC expressed serious concerns that school fees are not even staying in the schools, again to the minister: can you confirm for us that all school fees do remain in the schools, where they belong? To ensure transparencies for

Alberta parents, please tell us: when will your ministry publish detailed records of the total dollars collected in school fees and where that money is indeed going?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I work with the Calgary board of education and all other 60 school boards across the province to ensure that they are demonstrating financial transparency and making proper use of all funds that they do collect and do receive from the province of Alberta. On an ongoing basis but as part of the rationalization, as I said, a thoughtful plan to reduce school fees, taking instructional fees and then other fees that might be for field trips and so forth, we will have a rational approach by which we can in fact reduce school fees over the next couple of years and fulfill a campaign promise.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Health Care System

**Mr. Barnes:** At year end it's a good time to review where our health system stands. On performance it's been more of the same: lagging wait times for hip and knee replacements, cataracts, and scores of other procedures worse than where the NDP found them, worse than most other provinces. On cost control the minister has talked a big game but can't get her budget to obey her will. Albertans suffering on wait lists and paying more into a broken system don't want overcharged, untrue rhetoric about the opposition. They want results. Can the minister deliver?

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm happy to share some more facts, Mr. Speaker. Between 2015 and 2016 we've significantly decreased wait times for specialists to treat a number of different specialties, including a 20 per cent wait time decrease for general surgery, a 21 per cent wait time decrease for internal medicine, a 14 per cent wait time decrease for specialists focusing on ears, noses, and throats. I think these are moves in the right direction. At the same time, we are decreasing the rate of spending in terms of the 6 to 8 per cent we saw on a regular basis by members across the aisle, but we're doing it thoughtfully.

**Mr. Barnes:** As the Supreme Court said, access to a waiting list is not access to health care. So given that, for instance, we now see children's province-wide mental health access worse than with the previous government and looking at the long list of worsening wait times for surgical and medical procedures, it seems that waiting to access rationed health resources is a universal NDP theme. Will the minister uphold her commitment to universal, publicly covered healthcare by ensuring that everyone can access it in a timely fashion?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, we know what proposals they're bringing forward from the opposite side for queue jumping and for people to get treatments in for-profit, private institutions. Mr. Speaker, that, to me, is not universal access. Universal access is restoring the \$800 million that was cut by the last government on their way out the door. We've restored that funding. Universal access is moving forward. You mentioned mental health. We did. We supported PCHAD growth in beds, and we've seen a dramatic improvement in that area. Instead of waiting 13 days in Calgary last year, it's same-day access today, and instead of eight days in Edmonton, it's either the same day or the next day. That's great improvement.

**Mr. Barnes:** Given the problems with our hospital sector, whether the fact that the cost of a stay is \$2,000 higher than the national average or that the time EMS spends bottlenecked in emergency departments is once again spiking or that more people than ever before are waiting in acute care for placement into continuing care, AHS still continues with weak targets that they hardly ever achieve. Will the minister step in and actually uphold some accountability in this costly, inefficient, and complacent administration?

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm so proud to step up as the first NDP Health minister in the province of Alberta and, arguably, one of the first to actually believe in public health care and the Public Health Act, Mr. Speaker. That's why we move forward in making sure that we're supporting reinvestment where it's necessary, but it's also why we were able to successfully get the doctors to come back to the table, big contract, negotiate a new term of agreement for the next two years moving forward. It will see savings for the province of Alberta upwards of \$500 million in just two years. That's responsible, that's thoughtful, and I won't be afraid to tackle other challenges.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Hospital Chaplains in Central Alberta

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Chaplains in central Alberta hospitals were valued members of the health care team up until last Thursday. In multiple central Alberta hospitals certified chaplains were funded through contracts that were up for renegotiation. These chaplains were told that they were no longer needed. Central Alberta is now lacking multifaith spiritual care for suffering, dying patients, their grieving families, and nurses and doctors. The government says that they want to protect front-line workers. Do chaplains count as front-line workers? Yes or no?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I was trying to figure out whether they were calling for a cut day or a spend day. It's both, and fair enough. We're trying to find ways to be efficient and effective and support local communities. With regard to the very specific case that the hon. member has just raised, I'd be happy to follow up with him. I don't work in the specific hiring of every individual in every hospital, but I'll be happy to follow up on that member's behalf.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that physician-assisted dying is being implemented, Albertans should not be losing their spiritual counsellors. Multifaith chaplains help dying patients and those seeking to end a life of pain to resolve their faith questions, find forgiveness, console family members, and prepare for their final journey. Given the significant role chaplains play in end-of-life decisions, they are trusted members of the health care team. Will chaplaincy care be provided in central Alberta when requested in cases of physician-assisted dying?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Certainly, for any Albertan who is contemplating their end-of-life care options, we want to make sure that wherever they are in the province, they have access to a full range of services and supports, be that palliative care or access to medical assistance in dying. Currently that system is run through the care co-ordination service, which includes access and referrals to doctors as well as other supports.

**Mr. Orr:** Mr. Speaker, not only do chaplains help patients; they are also an important resource for staff. Given that the Public Health Agency of Canada recognizes the need to care for the caregivers because without it their effectiveness and ultimately their health will suffer and given that care providers have to deal with trauma and high-stress situations and also that the minister says that linen staff are a critical part of patient care, then surely chaplains are critical as well. Why are you cutting front-line jobs that will reduce the quality of care provided to central Alberta hospitals?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Supporting all of our front-line health workers with their mental health and other supports is a critical issue for our government, which is why we set up the valuing mental health panel and are working forward on those recommendations. We know that people throughout the health care system require supports because they often deal with families and with patients through very difficult times. Making sure that those front-line workers are supported is very important to us.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

### Capital Infrastructure Planning and Funding

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week this government promised \$258 million for the Calgary green line LRT. Given that Calgary and the feds have each committed \$1.5 billion in funding and given that previous Alberta governments have consistently contributed its one-third share to major municipal infrastructure projects and given that delaying full funding until 2019 would be a blatantly self-serving partisan political move, to the minister: will this government give money to Calgary now to start the green line LRT to support the economy and jobs instead of in an election year, in 2019?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for his question. I was very pleased on Saturday to stand with the federal minister of infrastructure and the mayor of Calgary and many municipal leaders from around southern Alberta to talk about the great contribution that both the provincial government and the federal government are giving towards transit in this province, including in Airdrie, in Banff-Cochrane, in St. Albert, all around the province, and a significant contribution towards the green line in Calgary. We're certainly looking to . . .

2:30

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Gill:** It would be nice to have it now, but anyway.

While in opposition the member of the current government demanded increased attention to deferred maintenance for Alberta's infrastructure. However, very little action has been taken. Given that jobs are needed and construction costs in Alberta are also low now and given that this government has failed to produce a detailed infrastructure sunshine list, to the minister: will this government disclose to Albertans when it will start aggressively working on deferred maintenance, or was it just one of those feel-good, make-good speeches?

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we always try to feel good and to do good.

I want to tell the hon. member, in case he hasn't read the budget, that the amount of money in our capital plan and in this budget for capital maintenance has been increased dramatically. It's hundreds of millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, and I'm surprised the hon. member doesn't know that.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This budget says that they're spending more money with poor results, but anyway.

Given that the David Dodge Alberta infrastructure investment report suggested \$7 billion in capital investment and given that on page 44 the report stated that the highest return on investment would come from public-use infrastructure such as highways and given that Albertans have been left wondering why there were no highway improvements announced in this set of transportation funding, to the Premier: what other expert reports and recommendations will this government ignore to pursue its incoherent plan, that shows no evidence of working together?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you. I'm surprised the hon. member didn't ask the question to the Minister of Education because he clearly needs to go back to school, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] You know, this is a very important . . .

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

Proceed.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, very clearly, it's an important question from the hon. member, but I don't think he's really got the picture. We are making very substantial contributions towards transportation in all areas.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

### National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women

**Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women. This day is to remember the massacre of the 14 young women at l'école Polytechnique de Montréal who died because of their gender. To the Status of Women: what is your ministry doing to remember these women?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Status of Women.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for her question. At noon today the Status of Woman ministry held a vigil in the lobby of the Federal building to remember the victims of this tragedy in Canadian history. I thank those in the public, my cabinet and caucus colleagues, as well as my colleagues from across the aisle who came to commemorate the 14 female students, who lost their lives far too early, and to raise awareness about the distressing numbers of violence against women and girls in this province, because it's on all of us to end violence against women.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wearing my 16 Days, 16 Ways orange button. Again to the Minister of Status of Women: how does this campaign fit with today's event?

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the insightful question. Today's vigil comes near the end of our 16 Days, 16 Ways campaign against gender-based violence. The 16 Days campaign is to raise awareness of all forms of violence. People often think of violence as only physical. This was definitely the case for the event that stemmed today's vigil. However, violence can take many forms and manifest in many ways. We are working to end all forms of violence. This includes verbal harassment, emotional abuse, and understanding that so-called locker-room talk is not tolerated. Please join me by sharing what you can do to end violence against women using the hash tag 16 days.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the 16-day campaign is to raise awareness on how to prevent violence; however, given that Alberta has the highest rate of violence against women in the country, double the national average, to the Minister of Status of Women: what are some concrete steps Albertans can take to end violence against women and girls?

**The Speaker:** The hon minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Every Albertan deserves to live free of violence and without threat of the same. We know the facts, that women are 11 times more likely than men to be the target of violence. Some things that we can all do are to shut down comments about bragging and glorifying any form of violence or comments that shame or insult women's bodies or successes. Words matter in this arena. For more actions I encourage everyone to follow @Alberta\_Women. We are tweeting an action a day for our campaign. I believe in respect for all Albertans, and this includes the women and girls of this province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Calgary Cancer Centre

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, tenders issued for the Calgary cancer centre in 2014 identified the project as a design/build/finance/maintain, or P3, model. Now the NDP government is issuing tenders that are just design/build. Calgarians and Albertans have been waiting a long time for the new cancer centre. Can the Minister of Health explain why the Calgary cancer centre will not be like the Calgary courts project and include the long-term, cost-saving maintenance component to the contract?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. If it is more detailed around infrastructure, I may call on my colleague to support as well. I want everyone to know that we are moving forward with investment in the Calgary cancer centre, something that was long overdue. It is the largest and most advanced centre in the country. We are building the infrastructure that Calgary needs, creating good jobs and expanding access to this important public health care. I look forward to being able to deliver on this commitment, that is so important and long overdue.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Minister. Given that the NDP government's five-year capital plan calls for \$1.2 billion over five years for the nine-year build-out of the Calgary cancer centre and given Alberta Infrastructure's reputation for cost overruns and delivery delays on hospitals, as was the case with the south Calgary campus,

what guarantees will the minister give that the Calgary cancer centre will open on time and on budget in 2024, 18 years after Ralph Klein promised it to Calgary?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, the hon. member is trying to create the impression that the 18-year delay has something to do with this government. When this government took office a year and a half ago, it immediately moved to clarify where this cancer centre would be built and to move to get it under construction. Any suggestion that our government has held up that cancer centre is not only wrong, but it's disingenuous.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, cancer patients need treatment. They don't care who is in government; otherwise, they will cure the cancer here.

Given the NDP has chosen to do maintenance on this facility in a piecemeal fashion, similar to bringing laundry and Edmonton lab services in-house and unionized, and given that government's job is to provide services in a cost-effective manner, in a timely basis, what is this NDP government's blind ideology all about, forcing taxpayers to pay more and more for everything?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I simply don't understand what the basis of the hon. member's question is. We're proceeding to build infrastructure at a time when the economy is on a downturn. That means lower costs for us. It means that taxpayers' money goes farther. We can get more infrastructure built for the same amount of money. It makes far more sense than the approach of the previous government, which was to compete with the private sector at peak times and pay a premium for public infrastructure. We're not going to do that. We're smarter than that.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-West.

### 2:40 Registry Service Electronic Notifications

**Mr. Ellis:** Great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last spring the government announced that Albertans would no longer receive notices in the mail when their vehicle registration was expiring. At that time, I urged the Minister of Service Alberta to have more of a transition program for e-reminders rather than a full stop on them. We are now eight months into the transition and the ministry will have collected statistics on the new program, so to the minister: how many Albertans have signed up for the e-reminders, and what percentage of owners missed the deadline?

**The Speaker:** Madam Minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I'm happy to provide an update. Our new system is certainly working. We have a very large number of the population signed up. It's difficult to say what exactly the percentage of the population is at any given time given the fact that we've got new licences coming on, but I can tell you that we know it's worked because we've had an increase of 62 per cent of registrations renewed over the same time period as the previous year. That's 1.4 million driver's licence and vehicle registrations that have been renewed, increasing . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that chances are that tens of thousands of Albertans have not signed up for the electronic

reminders and this places them at risk for unintentionally letting their registration expire and given that Albertans who would never think of breaking the law are inadvertently doing so and they face fines in excess of \$300 because they did not know about the change in policy, again to the minister: what are your plans to improve the communications about the online reminders?

**Ms McLean:** Mr. Speaker, we launched a very progressive campaign that was digital, including sending out automated calls to more than 2.2 million holders of Alberta motor vehicle documents. This cost very, very little for us to do. We're rolling out a plan to reach all Albertans, and we've been successful. As I've said, we've had an increase in the number of registrations compared to the same time period last year, so clearly our campaign to notify Albertans has worked.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that your ministry chose to provide paper reminders to Albertans over 70 for this year only and given that this transition program ends in April and given that in our constituency offices we are hearing from seniors complaining about the failure of receiving notices, which they have relied on for decades, to the same minister: with April quickly approaching, which means the end of all paper notices, will you consider re-establishing notifications to all seniors for at least one more year?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will continue to take every opportunity possible to notify Albertans about this change. However, the renewal reminders have gone online. We are in a tough economic time, so we found efficiencies, as the opposition has asked us to do, and this is one of those efficiencies. There are still many avenues open to Albertans to find out what date their licences or registrations come up for renewal, including looking at the sticker on the back of their plate, marking it on a calendar, or signing up through an online renewal reminder. Many of our partners, including the AMA, have . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

#### Point of Order Stopping the Clock

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker it's the practice in this House that during question period when a member stops because of disorder in the Chamber, because he or she can't be heard, the clock is stopped. I waited at this time for the Chamber to settle down so that my answer could be heard, and I would ask if the clock was indeed stopped or not.

**The Speaker:** Let me consult with the table.  
Hon. members, I'm advised that the clock was stopped.

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, could we just hold on with the departure? We're getting confused with the members who are leaving and the members who have something to table.

The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of four studies regarding the needs of self-

represented litigants in the justice system. This is in response to the debate on Motion for a Return 25. The reports are titled Self-represented Litigants in Family Law Disputes: Views of Alberta Lawyers; Opening the Dialogue: the SRL Phenomenon; Addressing the Needs of Self-represented Litigants in the Canadian Justice System; and The National Self-represented Litigant Project: Identifying and Meeting the Needs of Self-represented Litigants: Final Report.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Aheer:** I would like to table an article that I read from yesterday in the House: Enmax Terminates 'Unprofitable' Coal-fired Electricity Contract. I have the five copies.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** You have a tabling, Member for Calgary-Lougheed?

**Mr. Rodney:** Yes. I have two. Yesterday I promised to hand this in. It's from Leah Auramenko, a registered veterinary technologist and ABVMA member, and simply states at the end:

It is my opinion and [that] of the ABVMA that Bill 207 and the resulting proposed amendment to the VPA represent an infringement on the veterinary profession's privilege of self-regulation.

It goes on, but it's tablings, so I won't make a speech.

This refers to my question. I promised I would table it. Now, it has the name of the minister. Shall I just say, "Minister," Mr. Speaker, instead of the name of the minister, or shall I read the headline? It has the name of the minister.

**The Speaker:** I would prefer that you'd simply table it.

**Mr. Rodney:** That's why I'm asking the question. It indeed is from *Metro* Calgary. I'll replace the name: [Minister of Education] Sets School Fees on Back Burner until 2018.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an article that was from 2012 from *Field & Stream* titled Save Your Brain! Helmet Makes a Difference in ATV Crash. I was speaking in relation to Bill 36, and I would table them now.

Thank you.

#### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Minister Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office, pursuant to the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act the environmental protection security fund annual report 2015-16.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I understand we have three points of order, I believe.

The Opposition House Leader.

#### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today under 23(h), (i), and (j), language likely to create disorder, unparliamentary language, a whole smattering of offences that certainly were perpetrated by the Minister of Health when during question period, at approximately 1:53, she used – without the benefit of the Blues, it is something very close to this – with respect to speaking about

the Leader of the Official Opposition: he is stumbling over the words coming out of his mouth because he knows the words coming out of his mouth are not true.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, there are a very significant number of rulings around making an accusation that a member is lying, around using the words “truth” and “true.” I’m sure that you can find a significant number of references where, by making an allegation that the Leader of the Official Opposition is not telling the truth and by saying the words “not true,” it clearly is likely to create disorder, just as it did today. It is unbecoming of a minister of the Crown to imply that a member of the opposition would be lying in the Assembly. That’s exactly what took place today at 1:53, and a very simple way of dealing with this issue along with many other references is to have the member apologize and withdraw.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Health I will apologize to the House and to the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition and withdraw those comments.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Government House Leader, you too had a point of order.

### Point of Order Supplementary Questions

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, I did, Mr. Speaker. It was during the questions being asked today by the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow. During that question the Member for Calgary-Elbow, after claiming that he was going to demonstrate how to hold the government accountable in question period, proceeded to ask a question, then followed it by another supplementary question on an entirely different subject, and then the second supplemental was on a third subject.

Now, the authorities on this are a little bit convoluted and contradictory, but I am going to make the case. If you look at *Beauchesne’s Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, on page 122 under 414 – wait a minute. Where are we now? Here we are. Sorry. There are so many marks in my book now that it’s challenging. It says:

Although there may be no debate on an answer, further questions, as may be necessary for the elucidation of the answers that have been given, within due limits, may be addressed to a Minister. The extent to which supplementary questions may be asked is in the discretion of the Speaker.

Now, I was also looking in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, at page 506. It says here:

Members may seek to clarify the answer to a question or solicit further information through the use of supplementary questions. A supplementary question is posed immediately following a response to an initial question. In conformity with parliamentary tradition, the Speaker retains the authority to determine when supplementary questions may be permitted. The same guidelines which apply to initial questions apply to supplementary questions. They are to be constructed as “a follow-up device flowing from the response and ought to be a precise question put directly and immediately to the Minister, without any further statement.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, here’s where it gets a little bit dicey. It says:

In the past, Speakers have used their discretion to insist that a supplementary question be on the same subject and as a general rule be asked of the same Minister. However, at the beginning of the Thirty-Sixth Parliament in 1997, Speaker Parent allowed the practice to be modified by not insisting that an additional question be, strictly speaking, supplementary to the main question. He indicated that he would find it acceptable for a party to split a round of questioning between two Members, with each

one asking a different question to a different Minister. This practice remains in effect today.

It goes on, though, and says:

As a supplementary question is meant to flow from or be based upon the information given to the House in the response of the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary to the initial or preceding question...

In this particular case that did not happen because they were on completely different issues.

... the Speaker has indicated that supplementary questions should not be permitted when a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary, in responding to the initial question, informs the House that the question will be taken under advisement.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, what page was that?

**Mr. Mason:** I’m sorry; that is pages 506 and 507.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what the two authorities agree on is that this is a question to be at the discretion of the Speaker, and a precedent set in the federal Parliament is not necessarily binding for us here.

I refer, then, to a previous ruling by the Speaker made on May 12, 2004. The Speaker at that time said:

Hon. members, I feel that I must make a clarification. *Beauchesne* 409, dealing with questions in question period, says that in order for a question to be in order, “It must be a question, not an expression of an opinion, representation, argumentation, nor debate.”

Now, there’s also a tradition we follow here that if an hon. member is recognized, they raise a first question and then they’re allowed two supplementals. It has always been understood that supplementals must have something to do with the first question. I’m sorry; I just cannot find the connection between crop insurance and automobile insurance.

Mr. Speaker, I would submit that it is actually the practice and the precedent in this House, as opposed to a recent tradition in the House of Commons, that supplemental questions must be related to the answer received to the primary question in the first place. That is how the Speaker ruled in this matter in this Chamber, and that is, in my experience, always the practice that we have attempted to follow in this House. So I’d ask you, then, to rule on the point of order.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to what may be a historic point of order, wherein the Government House Leader seems to have made my argument for me. I appreciate it very much when he refers to his own arguments as convoluted and contradictory. I will not pass judgment as to whether or not that is, in fact, the case here.

But I will refer to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, page 501, under Principles and Guidelines for Oral Questions. I just want to speak primarily about the principle of what question period is for. We raised this yesterday, and I find it somewhat ironic that we are being pressed again on it today, being, really, the main tool that the opposition has to hold the government to account. This text says:

- While there may be other purposes and ambitions involved in Question Period, its primary purpose must be the seeking of information from the government and calling the government to account for its actions.

Very clearly, I satisfied that. Most, I think, relevant, Mr. Speaker, to my questions was:

- Members should be given the greatest possible freedom in the putting of questions that is consistent with the other principles.



Now, the hon. Government House Leader has made exactly the point that I was going to bring up from page 507 of the same text, being Speaker Parent's ruling in 1997 that "allowed the practice . . . by not insisting that an additional question be, strictly speaking, supplementary to the main question." If we go back to page 502, the questions must be questions, in fact. They must seek information, be brief, be within the administrative responsibility of government.

But specifically to the question, Mr. Speaker, of the connection of these questions to one another, I was asking questions that are of deep and pressing concern to my constituents in Calgary-Elbow, questions that were within the purview of the government and are, very clearly, important issues to the people of my constituency, seeking new information and pressing the government to action within areas of their competence.

While I have the floor, Mr. Speaker, the practice this stems from is the issue I raised yesterday around the quote, unquote, puffball questions. That is how things have evolved in this Assembly over the last number of decades. We have a new government, and I would hope that this new government would understand the importance of allowing the opposition to do its job, allowing their own private members to do their jobs on behalf of their constituents, which allows them to hold the government to account, not simply read government press releases back to *Hansard*.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you rule that this is not a point of order and that opposition members be given the largest possible leeway in standing up for our constituents. Thank you.

3:00

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I was distracted by my colleague the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre because at the beginning of the point of order I missed the citation in the Standing Orders that would lead us to believe that this was a point of order to start with. I was a little bit confused that the Government House Leader would choose to do that.

Perhaps what I'm about to say I will regret a little in the future because my hon. colleague the independent Member for Calgary-Elbow – I often like to refer to that he is the independent Member for Calgary-Elbow, but sometimes to my chagrin it is a fact of the matter that he is the leader of the Alberta Party. As such, we traditionally in this Assembly have given a certain amount of latitude to leaders of parties with respect to the questions that they ask. So I think it's more than reasonable that that latitude be given to the independent Member for Calgary-Elbow, the leader of the Alberta Party, and that he receive the same as Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Hays and, in fact, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

As much as that pains me to say, I think he ought to be. I must admit that it does feel a little bit like a revenge point of order on behalf of the Government House Leader from yesterday.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Opposition House Leader, I'm sorry. I missed your point. Are you saying that you're in favour? It was unclear to me what you said, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** There's no standing order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, you don't need a standing order to make a point of order in this house. If you cite authorities, that's fine. The point that I really wanted to deal with since I was present . . .

**The Speaker:** You know, I'd like to move on. We have a long day. I think that the case is – with all due respect to the Member for

Calgary-Elbow I didn't hear you cite the case, the precedent in this particular House in your argument. You certainly did with respect to the federal government.

As I understand it from an earlier Speaker in this House, and what I've understood in terms of the connection, the line, if you will, between the main question and the two supplementaries has long been a standing practice here. When I heard your question earlier in the day, I didn't see an order being – well, I soon saw an order being raised. But I was grasping to find – I think crop insurance was cited in the standing order. That was not the substance. There were two unrelated topics that you addressed in your question, so in this particular situation and, again, its context, I would submit that there is no point of order and would like to move to the next point of order if I could.

I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### Point of Order Insulting Language

**Mr. Rodney:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with respect to Standing Order, for the sake of the table and all members, 23(h), which reads,

a Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that Member . . . makes allegations against another Member,

and (j), which reads,

uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder,

and (l), which reads,

introduces any matter in debate that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I would leave it up to you. You could have one or two or all three if you so choose.

Thirty-five minutes ago, sir, at approximately 2:30 p.m. the hon. Government House Leader took a personal swipe at the intelligence of the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway, who, by the way, has earned a degree in agriculture, is a member of the Appraisal Institute of Canada, PGCV from UBC, and also has successful careers in real estate, oil and gas, AISH, and IES boards. I think it's a prima facie example, and I have a feeling the Government House Leader may simply want to stand, apologize, and withdraw his remarks. Please and thanks.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I want to clarify, first of all, that I did not question the intelligence in any way of the hon. member. I said that he needed to go back to school, and because of the disorder in the Chamber, I was not able to finish my response to the question.

The hon. member asked me why there were no roadway or highway projects included in the announcement on Saturday, which we made with various municipal and federal officials. Mr. Speaker, the announcement was to do with the final and third call for GreenTRIP applications. GreenTRIP is a program that was created by the previous government to fund transit. So I was quite taken aback that the hon. member would ask me why there were no road projects in a transit program announcement, and hence my dismay and suggestion that he needed to go back to school. If that's the kind of question that we're getting – why didn't you fund roads from a transit program? – then I think there's something lacking in the question.

However, if hon. members opposite felt that that personalized the question too much – and they do – that was not my intention, Mr. Speaker, and I will apologize for that.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### **Motions under Standing Order 42**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, under Standing Order 42 I remind you that only one member is allowed to speak, and that is the mover of the motion.

Speaking to this matter, the Official Opposition House Leader.

#### **Select Special Child Intervention Review Committee Appointment**

Mr. Cooper:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly:

1. Appoint a select special child intervention review committee to review the safety and security of children in government care by examining Alberta's child intervention system and related systems, including but not limited to the Department of Human Services and the Department of Indigenous Relations, and the committee will further review the recommendations for the child intervention system made over the past five years and may for the purpose of systemic improvement inquire into specific cases;
2. The committee shall be chaired by the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, or Deputy Chair of Committees and consist of seven members from the government members' caucus, three members from the Official Opposition, two members from the third party, the Member for Calgary-Elbow, and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, with the names of all members to be submitted to the Clerk no later than December 15, 2016;
3. In carrying out its duties, the committee may travel throughout Alberta and undertake a process of consultation with all interested Albertans;
4. In carrying out its duties, the committee may solicit written submissions from experts in the field and may compel the appearance of witnesses with specific and relevant knowledge on matters being investigated;
5. The committee is deemed to continue beyond prorogation and may meet during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
6. Reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid, subject to the approval of the chair;
7. In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may, with the concurrence of the head of the department, utilize the services of the public service employed in that department or the staff employed by the Legislative Assembly Office and the officers of the Legislature;
8. The committee must ensure that any and all front-line workers and managers in children services and any delegates or contractors for children services that wish to speak to the all-party committee are given full whistle-blower protections;
9. The committee must submit its report within one year after commencing its review;
10. When its work has been completed, the committee must report to the Assembly if it is sitting, or if the Assembly is adjourned, the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Standing Order 42:

A motion may, in case of urgent and pressing necessity previously explained by the mover, be made by unanimous consent of the Assembly without notice having been given under Standing Order 39.

Mr. Speaker, during Routine and before question period I gave notice of a motion. I did not move that motion, but I hoped that unanimous consent would be granted so that I may be able to. In the name of time I won't read back into the record all of the 10 points of the motion. I would only just like to take a moment to discuss the urgency of why today myself in conjunction with members of the Official Opposition chose that it was important enough to move this Standing Order 42, that the Assembly debate this issue.

Mr. Speaker, you know that over a number of weeks, north of four weeks now, the Official Opposition in conjunction with others has been shining light on this very, very important issue of the death of children in care and, in particular, a case that we've all become very familiar with. The minister responded to the Member for Calgary-Hays when he asked a question about a committee that would look into reviewing this very important challenge that we have in our province. He asked if an all-party committee would be struck, and the minister had responded that it would be. But one of the challenges is that the minister, while he's committed to this committee, has provided little detail as to what the committee will be made up of. He has provided no detail to members of the Assembly when the committee will begin its work.

**3:10**

There is little that we do that is more important than this, Mr. Speaker, and this is a matter of significant urgency. You know that the business of this Assembly could be completed at any moment, really. When the government decides that the business of the House has concluded, this House will rise, and in order for a committee such as this to be struck, the best way for that to happen is for the House to be in session and for a motion to be made, which is exactly why I have done that today. There is a significant amount of urgency that it is dealt with today, for it is unknown if the House will be in session tomorrow. It is possible that the government could choose to rise today. We already are past the allotted amount of days inside the sessional calendar, and while one could assume that the government would like to have some additional pieces of legislation passed, it is certainly at the Premier's discretion when the House will rise. As such, dealing with this motion today will ensure that it will be done prior to the rising of the House.

Mr. Speaker, this is an urgent and pressing matter because it needs to be done in public. The makeup of this committee is very important. The information that is shared about how this committee will be formed and the terms of reference ought to be done in public. It's why I took some thought about the makeup of the committee, including seven government members, three members from the Official Opposition, two members from the third party, and one of each of the independent members. That would make for a total of 14 members.

Mr. Speaker, it's imperative that this issue be dealt with with the children at the fore, not the politics of this issue, but the children at the fore. That's why I've proposed a balanced committee being chaired by yourself, the Deputy Speaker, or the Deputy Chair of Committees, who certainly are amongst the most impartial in this House. I think it's important that we focus solely on solving the problems and not the politics of it, which is why this needs to be done in public and needs to be done today.

There are many details about the case that we have heard that I shall not debate today, but this is a matter of urgency. The Child and Youth Advocate did not receive all of the important information

in the Serenity case. We need to get to the bottom of these things as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition called and the government granted an emergency debate on November 21. It has been four weeks from then. We have received very little information from the Minister of Human Services about what actual changes have taken place. There's been a commitment to this committee, yet we continue to wait for it. Today is the day to sort this out. Today is the day for the government to act.

This matter is of significant urgency, and I would ask all members of this Assembly to provide unanimous consent so we can debate the finer details of the motion. I recognize that it may not be perfect and am willing to work with the government to find a compromise so that we can move forward on this issue today.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, under Standing Order 42 I would remind you that only one member is allowed to speak, having provided the oral notice earlier. Standing Order 42 states that a motion may, in case of urgent and pressing necessity previously explained by the mover, be made by unanimous consent of the Assembly without notice having been given under Standing Order 39.

So, hon. members, I now ask whether the Assembly grants unanimous consent to allow the debate to proceed.

[Unanimous consent denied]

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

#### Bill 36

#### An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

**Mr. Mason:** I understand that the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View may have an amendment or wish to speak to that, and I am just basically covering till he gets in his seat, Madam Chair.

**Dr. Swann:** It's a pleasure to rise on this important Bill 36 and offer to strengthen it in terms of public safety. I have the amendment here, and we'll proceed once it's distributed or at your request, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A2.  
Go ahead, hon. member.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety, be amended at two levels. Section 3 is amended in the proposed section 128.1(2) by adding: "and has received safety training in accordance with the regulations" after the section that says, "unless the person is properly wearing a safety helmet." Section 4 is amended in the proposed section 129 by adding the following after clause (f): "(g) respecting standards for safety training, including the proper use of helmets, to be completed prior to a person driving, operating, riding in or on or being towed by an off-highway vehicle."

Madam Chair, this is an important move forward, this whole bill, towards safety, especially for children but for all riders of ATVs. I'm particularly focused on those under the age of 16 and will remind this House that across Canada we're almost the only province that allows 14-year-olds to drive ATVs independently. Everywhere else it's 16. Virtually everywhere else. That's a concern to me, so I had hoped today to also offer an amendment to raise the age of appropriate driving of an ATV, but it's been ruled out of order because this is a helmet bill. So I'll encourage the minister to examine the whole age question at another time and hope that at some other point in the next year we could revisit the age restrictions and ensure that we try and reduce the carnage with children.

3:20

To bring out the latest data from the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research, there were 1,053 emergency room visits in the last two years from ATVs, a 9 per cent increase in the off-highway vehicle emergency department visits; 84 hospital admissions per year in the last two years; and 33 of the ATV deaths in the last 10 years – that is about three per year – were children under the age of 16. About three per year, then, of our children under the age of 16 died with ATVs. The rest of the country has said that you should be 16 or older to drive an ATV. We're still accepting 14. I leave that under advisement since that's not the substance of our amendment here.

What I'm passionate about is that, at the very least, anyone who drives an ATV should have a proficiency test, should be trained in the mechanical and the physical aspects of managing safely, understand some of the forces and the speeds that they'll be going at, understand what happens on irregular terrain, understand how to deal with a rollover, understand how to deal with someone else who's involved with some kind of an ATV incident. In other words, every motorized vehicle that we have authorized in Alberta has a training program associated with it, a mandatory training program and licensing for things like motorbikes and cars, at least. We don't necessarily have a licensing requirement for young people who are driving these vehicles.

So I think there needs to be some further work on this bill, but at the present time this amendment is simply requiring all new drivers or any drivers under the age of 16 to take a proficiency training examination. Sorry. It's not under the age of 16; it's any driver to have given some evidence that they have taken a proper safety course before driving this vehicle.

I'll open it up for discussion, Madam Chair, and welcome the debate.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View for his interest and advocacy in this matter, that goes back a number of years. I want to commend him for that. Indeed, his advocacy is one of the reasons why this particular bill is now ready to come forward.

Madam Chair, the hon. member has made a couple of very good points. First of all, with respect to age: in Alberta individuals 14 years and older are allowed to operate an off-highway vehicle unsupervised on public land, but supervision is required for individuals less than the age of 14. This is, I think, an interesting question that has been put. I guess that my view of this particular amendment, like the age issue, which was not in order, is that there is merit to considering these matters, but these are not the subject of the bill and, particularly with regard to both age and the requirement of training, would require additional consultation.

One of the things we've really tried to do, Madam Chair, in developing this bill is to proceed carefully and to make sure that

we've developed the maximum amount of public consensus on what can be contained in the bill. We do not have and have not conducted the extensive public consultation that I think would be necessary to proceed in these matters. They are not without merit, and I want to indicate that. But if we want to go further, as the hon. member would like, we need to go back and do more consultation.

Madam Chair, I want to say that this is not a final answer to this difficult question, but more consultation needs to happen, and, more importantly, more education needs to be done with respect to safety on off-highway vehicles. We're hoping to step that up. Safety is, of course, the bottom-line concern. The various groups, associations of off-highway vehicle riders are very supportive of this legislation, and they do a great job in terms of educating their members and the general public about safety on off-highway vehicles. We need to continue to support that, and we will.

There's a group called Trail Masters, that I just wanted to mention. A group of youth spend a weekend at a camp learning off-highway vehicle safety skills, including why they need to wear proper safety gear and how to ride safely and responsibly. After that camp each camper becomes a safety ambassador by presenting what they learned about off-highway vehicle safety to the grade 4 students in their schools and other community groups by request. These are the kinds of initiatives, Madam Chair, that we are supporting and we need to continue to support and to extend. Public education, in my view, needs to precede legislation. I think that we can make significant gains in safety by continuing to enhance that public education and public awareness.

At this time – and I regret to say this because the hon. member's support for this bill means a great deal to me – we are unable to support these amendments. As I said, not without merit, but I must recommend to the House that this amendment be defeated.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 36 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

3:30

**Ms Woollard:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 36. I wish to table copies of all amendments

considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 33

#### Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (No. 2)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move third reading of Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety. The bill was proposed following years of requests for action from individuals and our safety partners.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. minister, I believe we're on Bill 33, as was announced.

**Mr. Mason:** Oh, I'm sorry. Miscellaneous statutes. A critical piece of legislation. We've consulted widely, Madam Speaker, with opposition House leaders, and I understand that they're okay with it.

Thank you.

I move Bill 33, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (No. 2), for third reading.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to this bill?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 33 read a third time]

### Bill 36

#### An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. I'm sorry. In my excitement I jumped the gun, but I'm now pleased to move third reading of Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety.

Madam Speaker, this bill was proposed following years of requests for action from individuals and our safety partners. The Injury Prevention Centre at the University of Alberta has been collecting data on off-highway vehicle safety for years. Their data shows that an average of 19 Albertans are killed each year while operating or riding OHVs. The largest group of injuries and fatalities is that of riders who were not wearing helmets. It's time for the government of Alberta to take action to reduce the injuries and fatalities to the citizens of this province's off-highway vehicle community, and that's what we've done with Bill 36.

Madam Speaker, we heard from other members of this House, and I've been very pleased to have their support. With that said, some amendments were put forward, and we have dealt with them. I think that with regard to some of the exemptions that were proposed, we know that research on motorcycle helmets, which would follow most of the same standards, has shown that any impairment is negligible.

Madam Speaker, I want to just indicate that I would like to thank members of the House for their support for Bill 36. It's been noted that this bill has been a long time in the making, and I believe that the work done to make it happen has struck the right balance. As I indicated to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, we're not done with education; we're not done with consultation. I believe that we have the support of the off-highway vehicle community. I believe we've consulted widely, including with the agricultural community, and we have, I think, arrived at a sensible bill that will protect people, particularly children, from being injured, permanently impaired, or killed in accidents involving off-highway vehicles.

I want to thank all members for their support. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 36, third reading, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety. Come May 2017, when it comes to off-highway vehicles, all drivers, riders, and persons being towed, of any age, will wear a helmet when on public lands, with the passage of Bill 36.

Now, last night Wildrose was trying to be helpful. We do that from time to time to help the government make bills a little better. We tried to get an exclusion for hunters and trappers, and we made our argument. That argument was weakly responded to by the NDP Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, who said, "Regardless of the research we are saying no to the exemption." And the amendment was defeated.

Fortunately, though, Bill 36 is a compromise that allows the minister to make regulations to allow exemptions to the rules. Perhaps some future government will find a way to allow an exemption for hunters and trappers when they are engaged in their work. But until then, Bill 36 at least respects the property rights of rural landowners, farmers, and ranchers on their own land, leased land, or lands with the implied consent to be on, including grazing leases, and exempts them from this requirement to wear a helmet. Bill 36 also recognizes that fish and wildlife officers, Alberta sheriffs, and the RCMP would have much difficulty coming onto private property to issue a ticket for not wearing a helmet. This is the compromise, and it is one I am able to concur with.

Helmets are already mandatory for motorcycles and moped drivers in Alberta – all drivers, no exceptions – and off-highway vehicles can reach the same speeds as motorcycles. According to the government 74 people died over a 10-year period in Alberta from head injuries related to OHV accidents. Madam Speaker, that is too many.

Although the government has granted an exemption here for First Nation reserves and Métis settlements, I trust their councils will be responsible and adopt the appropriate bylaws to encourage helmet use on reserves and settlements.

For many riders the \$150 fine will be too steep, and for others it will not be steep enough. If this is the case, then maybe it is the appropriate fine. We will also see how regularly it is enforced.

I am pleased the minister conducted consultation on this law, unlike so many other laws the NPD has brought forward since the election. I have also had the opportunity to speak to people in my constituency with regard to the law, and I am pleased that Bill 36 has the support of the Alberta Off Highway Vehicle Association.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would encourage my hon. colleagues to vote in favour of Bill 36, and I thank you for your time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak in support of Bill 36. I think it's certainly legislation that is long overdue in this province given some of the remarkable statistics that we've seen. An average of 16 ATV deaths in a year is far too many, many of which are preventable by wearing helmets, with children under 16 making up nearly 20 per cent of all ATV deaths, or on average at least three per year.

Given that, it would have been good, I think, to see the amendments proposed by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View pass. I recognize that the government was sympathetic to the general principle that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was talking about, but I'm not sure I can think of many better examples of preventative measures than wearing a helmet in any activity that involves speed.

3:40

Certainly, this bill is going to go a great distance, a great way, towards helping to reduce injury and death from off-highway vehicle use, but I think it could have gone even further. Given that, I certainly do still support absolutely the bill. I know some of the concerns raised by stakeholders certainly are not without merit, but on balance the risk to public safety has not only a great impact on the lives of the people who are injured or their families if those people are killed but of all Albertans who fund our health care system. There is a substantial economic cost involved for those who are unfortunate enough to suffer injury, and that is something that I think is clearly in the public benefit. We know that in many – sadly, not all, but certainly many – cases a helmet does make all the difference between serious injury and walking away unharmed.

Madam Speaker, with those brief comments, I would certainly encourage all members of this House to support this important legislation. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) comes into effect should any members have questions or comments for the previous speaker.

Seeing none, I recognize Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yesterday the Wildrose brought forward an amendment to exclude hunters and trappers from this legislation. The reasoning was simple. Hunters and trappers use off-road vehicles to get to a hunting area or to retrieve game. They aren't running all over at loud, excessive speeds as it would be contrary to what they are trying to accomplish. I can understand the desire to protect children under 16 or 18, like the bike helmet regulation does. I can also understand to a certain extent the off-highway recreational users – we've all seen the fail videos online where speed and radical driving cause some horrific accidents – but the hunters and trappers are a completely different user group. To paint them with the same brush is ludicrous.

Now, the government voted down this amendment. They said things like, "Regardless of the research we are saying no to the exemption." Had they done proper research, they would have found that exemptions like this do exist in other jurisdictions. Manitoba, for instance, has made allowances for hunters and trappers.

Looking at the summary of off-highway vehicle engagement results the government produced, of the people who suggested that exemptions are needed, 31 per cent suggested hunting, fishing, trapping; 22 per cent said travelling at low speeds; 15 per cent said work; and 10 per cent said farming and ranching. I would think that should have had this government considering it before bringing in this wide, sweeping legislation.

Now, the Minister of Transportation said:

The proposed amendments that I will speak about today come from the latest phase of my ministry's review of the Traffic

Safety Act. They are the result of consultation with many Albertans, with our stakeholders, and with our traffic safety partners.

The Member for Calgary-Currie said, "Of course, we will be further consulting with outdoorsmen as well as members of the off-highway vehicle community for other possible exemptions."

The Minister of Transportation also said, "I'm looking forward to hearing some amendments when we get to Committee of the Whole because this is by no means the final answer, in my opinion, but I think it is the right balance for now for Alberta."

From those comments, you would think that there was consultation and a willingness to accept amendments. But, Madam Speaker, I've reached out to a few of the major stakeholder groups. I have to say that I was really disappointed to hear what they said. One said that they received an e-mail survey. They felt afterwards that the results of the survey were biased based on the results. They said that they went to the info session last week and that it was basically: the bill passed first reading; it is what it is, and you were consulted. Another group said that they were definitely not consulted. Another said that they got one phone call in which they informed the caller that they would oppose the legislation. They were told that they would be part of a formal consultation, which did not happen. None of these groups supported this legislation.

I hate to say this, but once again we have to bring this House information on the failures of this government. For once I thought that maybe – just maybe – this government would have it right. They said that they consulted and produced a document in regard to the consultation. Unfortunately, when you exclude detractors from your consultation, your consultation is just window dressing. This is how it was put to me by one of the groups: they come up with an idea, they present it with predetermined outcomes and then tell you that what they consulted on was what you wanted. Again, this is very disappointing.

They do have an opportunity to fix this oversight by taking the time to address these groups' concerns and to make the exemptions in regulations. I myself and my colleagues will be consulting closely with these groups and verifying that their voices are heard.

Madam Speaker, you can't simply ignore opinions just because they run contrary to your preconceived notions. Consultation should be genuine, meaningful, and definitely not predetermined. I do applaud this government in attempting to reduce harm to the people of Alberta by bringing forward legislation like this, but it would have been good to see a full and comprehensive consultation with the stakeholders involved.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. I have a couple of questions for the hon. member. He's talked about groups that weren't consulted or felt badly consulted or ignored, but he hasn't named them. We did go rather extensively, and the main groups that are involved in this sport or this activity are extremely supportive of what we're doing here. I wonder if the hon. member can tell us which groups they were, and I wonder if he could also talk about his connection to the hunting and outdoor activity industry.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks for the question and comments there. Yes. The groups that I discussed with were all related to the hunting and trapping industry here in Alberta. They're all organized groups. As far as my involvement, of course, I in my previous job was an outfitter and guide in the

hunting industry, so I spent a lot of time on four-wheelers and a lot of time, myself and employees, working with four-wheelers. I have spent a lot of time in the forest.

Of course, the ATVs that I've seen running in the woods by hunters and trappers: they're driving responsibly. They're using the land properly, and they're enjoying themselves out there in the great outdoors, enjoying what they love to do, which is hunt and trap. That's why I take a particular interest in this. I don't think I have anything to be ashamed of in taking a particular interest in this either, Madam Speaker. I think that when I visit the forest and I see the many people out there enjoying it – again, I believe that there should be an exemption for hunters and trappers.

I know this government considered it but somehow, in the end, decided not to do that. It applies in other jurisdictions around us, so I think that that was an opportunity that was missed by this government, taking that amendment and passing that into legislation. I think this government has an opportunity to consult with these organizations fully and talk to them and see what their feelings are and how they can represent their views and their concerns. Obviously, they didn't feel properly consulted.

Now, there are different groups, obviously, that they did consult with, and that's fine, and that's great. Like I say, I was really hoping that this would be that one-off chance that this government would do things right. I reviewed the document that they produced. I thought that was all great, but I thought I would reach out to some of the stakeholders that I thought maybe were missed. I think it's a great opportunity for this government. They can have that opportunity to do that. I know the one organization, the Alberta Fish and Game Association, represents hunters from across Alberta. It's a big organization. I know also that the Alberta Trappers Association was not consulted on this. So there are a couple of them for you, Madam Speaker.

These groups here, I feel, were left out of this process, so I would like to encourage the government to reach out to these organizations, talk to them, and have a fulsome conversation with them on their concerns. I think there's plenty of opportunity for this government to make good ground with that, and I don't see why there's any problem with that. I would hope that there's no problem with that, anyways. When I looked at the results of the survey they had and I realized that not everybody was consulted, then it concerned me. Who else was left out? Who was included? Who wasn't included? I think there are just a lot of unanswered questions now.

3:50

Madam Speaker, again I applaud this government's looking at safety concerns of Albertans. That's one of the most important things we can do here. I would hope that they look at all the different aspects of safety that would protect Albertans from harm, so I would encourage the government to reach out to all these organizations. Maybe they were in a bit of a rush. I noticed that the consultation process happened in the month of September. That's what it said in the report. Of course, September is prime hunting season in Alberta, so I'm not sure if some of these organizations, you know, didn't have an opportunity to respond or, since it was a busy time for them, they couldn't.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky for his remarks. I've seen the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky driving an ATV before, and he

is perhaps the most gifted ATV driver I have seen in my life, driving through forest with fallen trees in a spring snowstorm. He's certainly someone who brings a lot of experience and personal knowledge to this debate.

I'm rising to speak against Bill 36. I do appreciate the intent of the bill. I applaud the government for attempting to put forward a piece of legislation to improve the safety of Albertans. That is a legitimate goal of public policy, and we should all be supporting that as an intent, but I think the bill fails to meet the mark on a few different fronts.

Now, when I use an ATV, the vast majority of the time I wear a helmet. When I ride an ATV, if I'm doing any kind of serious speed whatsoever, I wear a helmet because that's just smart. It's good practice. You know, we've seen what happens when people use ATVs at high speeds without using a helmet, and it is a very dangerous thing to do. I think that's something that we should encourage through education and advocacy, but I'm hesitant to believe that that should be legislated in the law.

I think that there is a very real need to make helmets mandatory for people who are not yet adults, setting that age at either 16 or 18. I remember using an ATV at 12 at speeds I probably shouldn't have been. I think that it's responsible that we require young people to wear helmets on ATVs. That's a legitimate role of government, I believe.

The opposition put forward a very reasonable and well-thought-out amendment to exempt hunters and trappers, and the member for Grande Prairie-Smoky made the argument quite eloquently on this point. Most hunters and trappers are not driving at high speeds. They're not going off jumps. They're not trying to do stunts or tricks in any form. They're generally moving at slower speeds, accessing a hunt site or looking for game. You know, someone riding an ATV, if they're hunting, if they see a target, generally has to respond pretty quickly. They dismount their ATV, but you can't really shoot with a traditional ATV helmet on. Unless you're wearing an infantry helmet, you're not going to be able to raise a rifle and hunt correctly with most ATV helmets.

We put forward a reasonable exemption for hunters, who use ATVs for very different purposes than some other purposes for ATVs, and that was, unfortunately, rejected. That's an amendment that, if it had been accepted by the government, I think, would have gone a long way to reaching out to those of us who have hesitations about this bill.

I also believe the bill is largely unenforceable. We're talking about this on Crown land. In most of the cases they're going to be quite remote areas, where there's simply just not going to be a lot of law enforcement around or where they have bigger priorities. I'd like law enforcement to be dealing with poachers, to be dealing with criminal activity, not dealing with policing adults, full-grown men and women, who are possibly riding at slower speeds while they're hunting. It is largely unenforceable. Most of the areas where this is taking place are going to be very remote areas. This is not talking about riding on-road or in populated areas. It's going to be Crown land.

I think we would be better suited to focus on education, encouraging people of all ages to wear helmets when they're using ATVs, particularly at higher speeds, where the purpose is recreational; that is, not hunting and trapping. I think we'd be much better focused on supporting education for this rather than legislating to protect adults from themselves, who in many cases are already behaving responsibly. For that reason, I must oppose this bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to get up and speak on this bill. I feel that we've had very robust debate as this bill has moved through the House. We've had a chance to actually discuss many amendments, as the last speaker alluded to. I mean, we spoke about amendments for hunting and trapping as well as for mandatory vehicle training. I think we had a robust debate on both of those amendments.

I'd like to take a moment to thank those who brought forward those amendments and were involved in that debate. I know that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has been a long-time advocate on this particular issue. As well, I'd like to thank the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock as well as Grande Prairie-Smoky for his work on this bill and bringing forward the amendment related to hunting and trapping. I know we had a robust discussion on that particular amendment, and I appreciate the member reaching out to me on that amendment as well. I do want him to know that we gave that particular amendment some serious thought, and I appreciate him bringing it forward a little bit ahead of time so we had a chance to look into it further. I'd also like to thank the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, who, you know, has shared some of his stories regarding accidents and ATV use. I'd also like to thank my colleague from Wetaskiwin-Camrose, who is also a cosponsor of this bill and spoke very eloquently on a variety of issues as well during debate, and, of course, the minister for bringing this forward.

You know, at the end of the day, this helmet law combined with public education, I think, will go a long way to increasing safety. One of the previous speakers did mention that when you are out in the wilderness, perhaps there is not a police officer around every tree to check on whether individuals are wearing helmets. However, this law does set a precedent that there is the expectation that you should be wearing a helmet. It sets a positive example for youth who are coming up to using off-highway vehicles. That combined with public education, I think, will have a positive effect on helmet use and will go a long way to preventing injuries where a helmet would help prevent that particular injury.

I know I have at least one constituent of mine in Calgary-Currie who has come into my office several times and is a passionate advocate for this particular bill – I was happy to have him bring it forward – as well as the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured, who are strong advocates for this bill as well. I was happy to support this bill and work with the minister on this bill. I think that's good work to do as an MLA.

To conclude, I'm going to be voting in support of this bill. On average there are 19 deaths a year from ATV use, and if a helmet could prevent even one of those, I think that we have done good work in this Legislature. With that, I encourage all to support this bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), questions or comments?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, I'm disappointed, to be sure, that the government couldn't take it further than simply helmets, but it is progress. I can assure you that I will be on the minister's case in the new year. I expect that he will get both letters and appeals from those in the community that see an opportunity to reduce suffering, handicaps, and hospitalizations, up to 1,000 a year. Three children under the age of 16 die every year, partly from a lack of parental oversight, I presume. But I guess one has to say that if need be, children deserve the state trying to protect

children where parents aren't there for them, aren't requiring good training, aren't requiring them to be supervised, aren't requiring them to learn the basics of how to deal with an emergency situation on their all-terrain vehicles. Age is a critical factor in their capacity to manage a thousand-pound transportation device, and training is a critical factor. I don't think we need to know that. We have established that in respect of motorbikes and cars and other vehicles.

4:00

I don't think that this is also applying to snowmobiles. Are we going to have to bring forward a separate bill for snowmobiles? It's not clear to me, but they are managed in the same way as ATVs in some legislation. It's clear that that's the next step. If this helmet law doesn't apply to ATVs and snowmobiles, I think we're missing an opportunity, and I think we've missed a crucial opportunity to put more age restrictions on those who are operating what can be very serious weapons for injury both to self and others.

I will leave my comments there. The minister has known for some months that these were areas that we both agreed upon, and I expected more from this bill, but I will continue to press for those changes. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety, is a pretty interesting bill, one which I rise today to speak in favour of. I know that as teachers we often would have our kids look at the question: when should safety trump freedom? We would look at that in the context of many different forms of sport and activity in society, and I think that this bill falls under that kind of a discussion, that we're having in this House today.

You know, when trying to figure out whether safety should trump freedom, you have to ask yourself a few questions. I know that one of the points that people have brought up is that Alberta is the only province without helmet laws for off-highway vehicles, and I suppose that's maybe a fact. I'm not sure that it's a very persuasive reason for whether we should trump freedom and individual choice because, you know, life is about choices. That's a really important part of life: the ability to be free to make your own choices about how you're going to live your life, the kinds of recreational activities you're going to have, the kinds of things you're going to do.

I mean, freedom is what makes life worth living. It's a very important thing, to be allowed to make those kinds of choices. We don't have to look too deeply in our history of law to understand that much of the law that we have in our society is about ensuring that a big government can't unduly or unreasonably restrict the freedoms of its citizens. That's a very important concept to uphold.

We also know that safety is a primary consideration in our society. We want to ensure that individuals in our society, as they exercise that freedom of choice, are not unduly bringing harm to themselves, that they are making wise choices because we understand that with a public system of health care – often my students would bring up the point that in exercising their freedom, you know, it's up to the public sometimes to have to pay for the consequences of those actions. That's a reasonable argument, and it's a reasonable thing to be thinking about.

I said that when I rise today to speak in favour of this bill, it's weighing those pros and cons. It's weighing that reasonable expectation that we would try to protect people sometimes from

their own poor choices and that we would not place a burden on society with regard to the consequences of poor choices and safety while, on the other hand, trying to make sure that we do allow people to make their own free choices in life and to pursue and enjoy life as they see fit.

You know, skiing is a dangerous sport, and when I first started skiing as a young boy, I never even thought about wearing a helmet. It just wasn't around. Now when I get onto the slopes at 56 years old, I'd better wear a helmet because I'm often face-planting into the snow. Is it a reasonable expectation for somebody to wear a helmet? I think it probably is when you're skiing. Should the state be enforcing it? I don't know.

I know that one of the kids, when we were having these debates in my class, asked if he could go on the Internet, and for the first time in my life I saw somebody that was crazy enough to wear one of those chipmunk flying suits and jump off the side of a mountain and think that they were going to be able to use the flaps on their suits to be able to guide themselves safely down onto the ground. I'm going: you have got to be crazy. So we had that conversation: should we ban that? Should we say that that's just too risky an exercise and that the people that are participating in that kind of event, you know, maybe shouldn't have access to health care if they're going to do something that risky?

**Mr. Barnes:** Or at least wear a helmet.

**Mr. Smith:** Or at least wear a helmet.

You know, these things are being discussed by society and by our students. I think that when I look at this bill, I see that it brings a measure of reasonableness to it. It brings a measure of safety with regard to the discussion we're having for off-highway vehicles, but it doesn't shut down the activity. It still allows the individuals to experience the great outdoors, to experience the great outdoors on the back of an ATV, but it does provide a measure of safety.

I probably wish the House had made an amendment for hunters and trappers. I think these are the people that are in the outdoors probably more than most people in our province. They have shown, from my experience in my constituency, that they have control over what they do. They're making wise choices. They understand how dangerous being outdoors can be, out in the wilderness a long ways away from any help. I have a great deal of respect for the experience and the decision-making of the hunters and the trappers of the province of Alberta, and I think it would have been a reasonable measure and a reasonable amendment for this House to support, so I'm disappointed that we didn't do that.

Overall, I see some checks and balances here. I can see that it applies to public lands, that there are exemptions to the helmet-wearing laws on private lands and lands that are on Métis settlements and First Nations reserves, for farm and ranch operations, and if you're a farmer and you're crossing a public highway, you're exempt from having to wear a helmet when crossing that provincial highway. You know, there are some reasonable steps that are being taken in this bill to ensure that it's not an onerous thing, but it is about public safety.

With those thoughts, I guess I would suggest that this bill, although not perfect, is worth supporting, and I will be voting in favour.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry. Is this under 29(2)(a)?



**Mr. Nixon:** Oh. Sorry, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?  
Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will rise and briefly speak about this. I have a couple of concerns, not with the bill itself but with some of the impacts that the bill may have, particularly in my community, that I just want to be able to say on the record and hope the minister hears.

Before I say that, I will say that I do support this bill. My younger brother Tyler – I have five brothers. I talk about them all the time. I like them. They're the only people in this world, Madam Speaker, that can look me in the eye usually, so I feel more comfortable around them, I think. He's the fifth of the six boys; I'm the oldest. About 12 or 13 years ago Tyler came camping with my wife and me and our youngest son. He was still a teenager. I'm about 10 years older than him or so. He got in an ATV accident. He was wearing a helmet, but he was driving up a hill, and he was very inexperienced with the bike. The bike came up, and he hit the thumb throttle, and the bike slammed him on the ground.

If he hadn't been wearing a helmet, he would have died. As it was, he almost died. All the right side of his face is metal, and part of the left side of his face is metal. He's okay, fortunately, but can't get through airport security very well anymore. It's always a pain. But if it wasn't for that helmet, he wouldn't be here. So I certainly understand that.

**4:10**

I also spent several years working for the Mustard Seed at one of their rural facilities in an area that has a lot of ATV use and have had to respond to lots of ATV accidents, being some of the only people that are out there and far away from emergency services, so I certainly do know that helmets can help. I myself never do any serious trail riding without a helmet, particularly after witnessing my brother's situation.

I do have to thank the government for recognizing that ATV use on private property is often different than trail riding. I know, for example, that when I'm clearing my driveway from snow with my ATV, if I wear the helmet, I often run into the garbage can or the side of the garage or stuff because I have trouble seeing as I'm removing snow. You know, if I'm moving hay for the horses, that stuff, I'm clearly not operating at that speed. The minister and the government recognized that, and I thank them for that.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon and several members on both sides of this House and I represent areas that include a large amount of what we affectionately call in our constituencies the west country, which is the eastern slopes of Alberta and Alberta's backyard, their playground. We have a lot of ATV use inside those constituencies, particularly at certain times of the year. Sadly, I can't remember the last long weekend when I have not read about a fatality inside my constituency on a long weekend, which emphasizes the importance of this legislation.

My community is already taxed often with the work that they have to do with what is going on in Alberta's west country, particularly on long weekends, with that type of stuff. Our fish and wildlife officers are already extremely taxed, I believe, often to the detriment of our fish and game in our constituencies. Our forestry officers are often taxed already with other stuff. I think, you know, there's a clear pattern over the years of not enough enforcement officers to deal with the issues that we already have to face inside our constituencies that are important to all Albertans: environmental issues, fish and game issues, dealing with trappers, that type of stuff.

I just want to emphasize again that we are bringing on another enforcement duty to these individuals who are already very, very taxed inside our communities. I know it overlaps the different ministries, but I think it's important. I feel I need to rise on their behalf just to say that this will continue to add to their burden, and it's going to continue to emphasize the need to finally deal with the funding for fish and wildlife and forestry inside our constituencies once and for all.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

**Dr. Swann:** I'm interested in hearing the member's comments about age-appropriate limitations on ATV use.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, you know, when I'm on my boat, Madam Speaker, it's not the law that I have to wear my life jacket. I have to have a life jacket on the boat in Canada, but I always wear my life jacket when my kids are on the boat because I want to be a good influence on them as a dad, and I think that teaches them a lesson. My kids are so well trained now that as I'm coming in towards the dock, I often like to pop off my life jacket in advance of jumping off, and they get on me right away, so they know that it's a safety issue.

Kids can't make decisions for themselves. Well, they can make decisions for themselves, but sometimes they could be put in situations where, you know, their level of maturity does not allow them to necessarily make the safe decision. They're influenced by the adults that are around them. Certainly, we want to make them safe.

You know, we already have manufacturers' recommendations on bikes. As far as I'm aware, most bikes that I have ever owned recommend that anyone 16 years or older use them. My children have used bikes since younger, but we've always bought ATVs that are age appropriate for them. We reduce the power capacity and all that stuff. I've got to say that my experience is that most of the parents I have ever ridden with in the ATV community were doing that for their children to make sure they didn't put their children in an inappropriate spot. I have not witnessed a tremendous number of problems. I think that's what the hon. member has asked me about, children or younger people being put on bikes that they weren't capable of handling. I personally haven't witnessed much of that.

I'll be honest. Most of the accidents that I have witnessed in my time working in the forest reserve involved alcohol and not very young people. People between, you know, 18 and early 20s are the ones that I witnessed the most, certainly not kids that ride on a regular basis with their families. My experience has been that the families are making sure to put them on appropriate machines.

Again, I think we want to try to make everybody safe, and I think this bill goes a long way to at least making sure that everybody is wearing a helmet. I know they save lives. As I said earlier when I stood up, I think that's important. I also trust Alberta parents, though, to make the best decisions for their children.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I don't want to get too in-depth on this, but I've been a motorcyclist myself since about the age of 12. With good fortune and good luck and probably a little bit of skill, I've managed not to have any accidents in that period of time. However, my older brother at about the age of 16 did have an accident, and since that day I've worn a full-face helmet. In fact, I

don't feel comfortable hopping onto a motorcycle until I put a full-face helmet on for self-preservation.

I know that there's some controversy around this bill. It might be a bit heavy handed, but my concern really is for the safety of the majority of people here. If we can save one life – my wife has a cousin who was in a motorcycle accident. You know, these accidents occur in the backcountry, and he was riding what probably was a motorcycle that may have been a little bit overpowered for him at the age of about 13. He's now getting close to 40 years old, and he's had a brain injury for that entire period of time. It has deeply affected his life and his family's life, and I'd like to think that we would do everything possible to avoid that happening to anyone.

We can argue about decisions and freedom and whatnot, but I think it's a good precedent and a good habit to set. Even if we were to allow adults to have discretion, I would hope that they would be wise enough. I think some previous members have said that those who don't wear helmets will suffer the fate of Darwinism, but I think that maybe we need to be a bit more responsible than that. We need to protect and set precedents here and set legislation in place to protect people under these circumstances.

Again, there are the exclusions on private land, so if it is a rancher or a farmer and they choose to do that. I know that there are some issues around hunters. I'm hoping that they can find a way through possibly using, you know, some of the little . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Infantry helmets.

**Mr. Gotfried:** . . . infantry helmets or whatever, the flat helmets that allow them still to hear.

There could be some safety issues around hunting that should be taken into account, but you know what? We live in a world where there's lots of innovation, and maybe there will be a certain innovation which will meet the requirements of having that helmet safety that they require while not, you know, overly encumbering their opportunities to take part in different types of recreation.

So with some caution, I intend to support this bill because I think that the lives of anyone – again, as mentioned by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, you know, we hear about it, it seems, every long weekend, and if we can not hear about it or we can hear about it less on long weekends, I think that's a positive move on behalf of Albertans to protect their safety and to protect health care, that is having to be delivered in many cases for decades because of breaches or incidents that occur because of it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek's comments. I do appreciate him bringing up hunters. I would like to just briefly ask him a question about trappers. I know that he represents a constituency in the great city of Calgary, where I was born. It's a great place. I do not know – and I don't want to presume – whether he's had experience on a trapline or knows any trappers.

I represent a constituency that has a lot of trappers, and I've had the privilege of spending lots of time on traplines with them. It is a unique environment, and there are some safety concerns with restricting how you can hear and how you can see. You're also stopping constantly at low speeds, working traps or removing trees or debris that are along the way on the trail. Now, I was listening to the hon. leader of the Liberal Party. I don't know. Maybe snowmobiles won't apply to this, and most trappers are on snowmobiles

as they work their traplines. I don't know where that's at, to be honest.

I do wonder, for a member from a riding that doesn't have trappers as a regular thing coming into the coffee shops or stopping by the office to visit, what his thoughts are about some of the concerns that have been brought up by some of our members on possibly getting an amendment or at least encouraging the government to maybe work with the Alberta Trappers Association going forward, to try to get this right during the regulatory stage to make sure that they're safe as they do their work on the traplines, recognizing the uniqueness of them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Calgary-Fish Creek, did you wish to respond?

**Mr. Gotfried:** Madam Speaker, you know, I think that the opportunity. . .

**Mr. Rodney:** It's Fish Creek. You've got trappers.

4:20

**Mr. Gotfried:** It's Fish Creek.

Interestingly enough, of course, my constituency borders Fish Creek, where none of these vehicles are allowed. I'm actually quite happy that that's the case, that we don't have to face that. It is the most heavily visited provincial park in Alberta and does not include the use of any types of recreational vehicles on the site.

**An Hon. Member:** Or traps.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Or traps.

Again, I think that you raise some good points, that there are some challenges here. There are going to be challenges, but there are with any legislation in terms of how we address doing the right thing versus that some people may or may not be pleased with all of the outcomes of the legislation. But I think, again, there will be some innovations that will allow people to have the recreation that they prefer to have while riding on these vehicles.

You know, I think that there's an opportunity here for responsibility, for individuals to act more responsibly, to protect themselves, and to protect Albertans, really, because we end up bearing the health care costs for injuries and brain injuries that are long term. Again, none of us would wish that on anybody, but it is a public cost that is borne, which may be driven in some cases by responsible and in some cases irresponsible behaviour. Sometimes it's just that incidents and accidents do occur. That's life, and we face that every day.

I think that the concerns that some of the members have raised against this legislation and those that are in support of it are all valid, but I think that this is probably the right approach for us to take, to support this and to protect those that may be irresponsible. We maybe just need to have some legislation to protect them in the instances of the inevitable accidents that do occur.

Thank you to the member for the question. I think that many of us are on the same page on this, and I respect those who have some concerns about it as well.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Calgary-Mountain View under 29(2)(a).

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd be interested in the member's comments about whether age 14 is an appropriate age or not to limit access to independent driving of an ATV.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you to the member for the question. You know, having started riding motorcycles myself at the age of 12, I

think it's – back in my day at the age of 14 you could ride a motorcycle of 100 CCs or less, and of course I made sure that I had one on the day that I turned 14, so I started riding one a little bit before that. You know, to the member: I'm not sure that the age restriction is going to deliver the right outcome because you're going to have families in the backwoods and you're going to have some opportunities. Quite frankly, because I learned to drive at a young age, maybe that contributed to the fact that I have not had accidents many decades later, because I had made mistakes when I was younger in situations that were not critical and learned a lot about how to handle a motorcycle. I would like to think that learning at a young age is something that is a good thing, but it doesn't necessarily mean that we . . .

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

The hon. minister to close debate.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much. I want to thank all members for their comments and their contribution to this debate. I think that there have been a number of very thoughtful comments that have been made.

We certainly are open to consulting, and we certainly did consult with organizations like the Fish and Game Association. We respectfully disagree with their perspective, but I want to say that they were consulted, and we are aware of their views with respect to that. Nevertheless, the overwhelming number of organizations, particularly ATV-user organizations, were very supportive of this particular direction.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the amendments, for example, for recreational hunters, trappers, and so on. It is the case that people who work professionally in those industries do come under occupational health and safety regulations. I don't know what it's like out in practice there. I have not been out on a trapline. I'll admit here in the House today that it's a deficiency in my experience. There is a requirement that commercial hunters and trappers do wear helmets. That doesn't come from this legislation or from the transportation safety act, but it comes from the Occupational Health and Safety Act and code.

What we're really talking about, then, are recreational hunters and trappers, and there are a few points I'd like to make on this piece. We did do consultation on this, including with our own fish and game officers. It has been suggested that a helmet impairs hearing, sightlines, targeting, aim, and accuracy. I just want to indicate, first of all, that it is illegal to carry a loaded firearm on a motorized vehicle. You are not allowed to shoot from a motorized vehicle, and the motorized vehicle itself potentially provides some considerable disturbance to the game, more so than the act of taking off a helmet would do. I think that it was for those reasons we felt that the particular amendment was not necessary.

We recognize that people use ATVs, that they use them responsibly, and that they don't travel necessarily at high speeds. Nevertheless, at least according to the letter of the law, it would seem that people would use ATVs to get to the area of a hunt, and it would not interfere with their ability to actually do hunting because they're going to have to get off the vehicle, they're going to have to load their weapon, and so on. So the simple act of removing a helmet is not going to interfere nearly as much as some of the other activities. I think we need to make that distinction between how ATVs are used. People may shoot from a moving vehicle or be on a vehicle and carry, but that's certainly not legal, and we're proceeding on the basis of the law as it is. I know that members have these concerns, but I think the important point is that we need to deal with safety.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, I think, made a very good speech in talking about the balance between freedom and safety, you know, and this is a question that we have wrestled with. I don't think that they're always in direct contradiction. Sometimes they can both be accommodated. In any event, it's a balance, and depending on your political philosophy, you might be 60-40 or you might be 40-60, but nobody in this Chamber is 100-0, I think, and that's important.

Nevertheless, we wanted to take a careful approach and to have consensus. I think that was my objective in this matter. Having learned from some previous pieces of legislation the hard way, I think we're trying to adapt those lessons in order to move towards a safer Alberta that respects people's rights and respects communities and traditions. We have certainly recognized the traditions that exist in this province for off-highway vehicles as part of the recreational and occupational lives of people in our province.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I believe that this legislation does strike the right balance, Mr. Speaker. I do want to indicate that I appreciate the support, not just from the government side but from the opposition side as well. I think that moving forward in some degree of unity on these questions is the best way to advance the safety of the public and to show respect to all citizens of the province.

4:30

So thank you very much for your support and to those that aren't supporting for their thoughtful comments as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 36 read a third time]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 35 Fair Elections Financing Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly my honour and definitely a privilege to rise today and move second reading of Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, on behalf of the minister of democratic renewal.

These changes, Mr. Speaker, build on Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta, our government's first piece of legislation after taking office. Bill 1 put an end to corporations and unions making political donations and was our first step in strengthening the democratic process.

This bill, Bill 35, is our second step. It would rein in election spending by political parties and reduce an individual's contribution limits. Third parties would also no longer be able to fund their agendas through anonymous contributions for political advertising.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a forward-thinking province, and our election laws must reflect that. What we all want are fair elections. To our government, fair elections means that Albertans decide elections, not big money and special interests. Fair elections mean a transparent, level playing field for all candidates and parties. I believe this bill would improve our system and give democracy back to Albertans. These amendments would assure that ideas and not money would determine success or failure at the polls. They would mean that Alberta's political leaders would be chosen based on what they stand for and not be influenced by how much money was spent during political campaigns.

The bill sets limits on how much political parties, candidates, constituency associations, and nomination candidates can spend. Political parties would have a \$2 million spending limit starting at the drop of the writ and to the close of polls. Candidates would also need to follow spending limits of \$50,000 in an electoral division.

For by-elections, Mr. Speaker, parties would only be able to spend \$23,000, which is \$2 million divided by 87, the number of electoral divisions in Alberta. Some expenses would not count towards these limits. These include travel costs reasonably related to the election or contest, care for children and other dependants, expenses related to candidates living with a disability, audits and professional fees necessary for compliance with the act, and incidental expenses such as parking and gas incurred by volunteers.

Nomination contestants would also be subject to a spending limit of \$10,000, 20 per cent of the spending limit for each electoral division. Both nomination contestants and leadership contestants would be required to register and report to the Chief Electoral Officer when they either announce their intention to seek a nomination, begin incurring costs, or accept contributions. Mr. Speaker, we are long overdue for the increased transparency these changes would provide.

Bill 35 also changes contribution limits so that individuals can only contribute a maximum of \$4,000 per calendar year. In addition, the bill ensures that unions and corporations can no longer offer paid staff to work on campaigns. Services provided to candidates and campaigns by volunteers like providing office space or graphic design services would be considered a financial contribution.

Third-party advertising, another area addressed by this bill. During the writ period third parties, whether they are individuals, corporations, or groups, would be limited to \$150,000 for advertising, and no more than \$3,000 of that amount can be used to promote or oppose the election of one or more candidates in any one electoral division. Albertans would also know who is paying for third-party advertising through a sort of sunshine list. Third parties must disclose contributions received for political advertising to Elections Alberta through public reports available for anyone to view.

Mr. Speaker, democracy is really an amazing process, and processes can always be improved. That said, we should keep striving for that next improvement. Alberta's election and spending contribution laws currently lag behind other Canadian jurisdictions, and that's unacceptable. Albertans deserve a fair and modern system. We deserve a political environment that fosters and expands political participation for all candidates in every constituency in our great province. We deserve an even playing field free of influence from those with deep pockets. As the great late Jack Layton said, "Democracy matters, because all of us need to be able to make a difference." The Fair Elections Financing Act would ensure that we can all make that difference.

I certainly look forward to the debate that will probably be ensuing once we get going on this, and I look forward to hearing comments from all members of this House, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The chair would recognize the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to declare that I am going to be recusing myself from further participation in the discussion and voting on Bill 35. I am a guarantor on a loan to the New Democratic Party of Alberta, and the Ethics Commissioner has advised me that I should recuse myself out of an abundance of caution although it is not essential.

**The Speaker:** Given that, I think you should leave the House, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about Bill 35. I do want to start off by talking about contribution limits. My party, the Wildrose Party, the Official Opposition, has long had concerns with the contribution amounts that were available to people within our political system in this province, something I think that we shared often along the way with members from the current government party, particularly when they were in opposition. The amount of \$15,000 for one individual times two when you enter into a general election would mean during most cycles that one individual could spend upwards of \$75,000, roughly, donating to one particular party. We think that's too much.

I also want to point out, though – I might be anticipating a little bit, Mr. Speaker – some of the government's reaction to some of the things that we'll have to discuss shortly as we debate this bill. I do anticipate, because this is what I have witnessed so far in regard to talking about this particular legislation or issues associated with this legislation, that the government is going to get up and they're going to say: all the opposition parties want to put big money in politics. That's what they have done the whole way. Hopefully now, because we've gotten in front of that issue, we could clear it up right away so that they won't waste their time with that, and we'll be able to discuss some of the important issues around our democracy and Bill 35, that they've brought forward in this House today.

4:40

Let me again be very clear, Mr. Speaker, because I believe that it is important. We believe very much in keeping big money out of politics. In fact, every opposition party in this Assembly voted with the government to do that during committee and agreed that that was an important and valuable thing for the people of Alberta and for our system. In fact, if you look at some of the motions that were brought forward during the all-party committee, this party, the Wildrose Party, the Official Opposition, often tried to lower the limits more than the government wanted to lower the limits.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** That's ridiculous.

**Mr. Nixon:** It's on the record. We could check *Hansard* if the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville would like to.

It's clear that there were some discussions during the committee and that the concept of lowering the limits was shared by all parties. There is absolutely no doubt about that. The record is clear. That's where the Wildrose Party stands, and I'm sure you're going to hear that from other members as they rise to speak about that.

With that part of this legislation there, we think that the numbers in general that are being brought forward in this bill are a compromise, particularly the number around \$4,000. If you look at the debate through committee, that was a compromise by all parties. You know, this party, for example, wanted \$1,000 for constituency associations, not \$4,000. That is lower. I know the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville is laughing about that, but that is lower, and there is a clear record of that.

But there are other things now. If we're understanding, Mr. Speaker, we all agree on dealing with the contribution limits. We should celebrate that. Every party agrees on dealing with that going forward, and that probably means that we got something right. But there are other issues inside this legislation that are concerning, and I am looking forward to talking about it as we move on with the different stages of this bill, particularly when we get to Committee of the Whole. Hopefully, we may be able to work on all sides of the aisle to try to make this legislation very good because it has to do

with all of our democracy. It has to do with the democracy of Albertans. We will sincerely be bringing forward some stuff, and we do hope that the government listens to that with some sincerity and at least evaluates that from their perspective.

One of the big areas that I want to talk about in second reading, though, is the concept that big money will now be out of politics with this bill. With Bill 1 we got union and corporation donations out. Again, all parties agreed on that, and we got it done. With this bill we'll be able to get limits on how much people can contribute to political parties and the candidates, and we'll be able to get that done. But we have not dealt with the last piece of big money in politics, and that is the fact that the government can still do whatever they want with their advertisement budget.

There's nothing in this that deals with the private member's bill that was brought forward by my good friend the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler that at the time was stopped in the Legislature, and then the government changed their mind – to their credit, I thought at the time – brought it back, and then referred it to committee. Nothing has been done on that issue. In fact, there is stuff within this bill that removes some of the language around government advertisement that I think is concerning. I do look forward to talking about that in Committee of the Whole.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that while we do agree that we should lower the limits, if we lower the limits for every other political party except the governing party, that can still use their government resources to influence by-elections in particular and to influence other things during election processes, big money is still in politics. It's just taxpayer-funded money now, which is a shame. Just a shame. Hopefully, we can address that issue.

Another issue that caused a lot of friction within the committee process was around the fact that this side of the House, every political party on the opposition side of the House, uses constituency associations. Constituency associations are a big part of this bill. They play a major role within this legislation and are very relevant. But the NDP, while they do have constituency associations, during the 2015 campaign according to their own reports never got one donation to those constituency associations. In fact, it's been pointed out by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster that some of those constituency associations have the same CFO for a large number of them. I don't remember the number but definitely over two dozen. He's a really busy CFO.

Now, there's nothing wrong, Mr. Speaker, with the NDP not wanting to use constituency associations. That's the way they structure their party. I believe that's their right, and all the power to them. But every other party in this Assembly uses constituency associations and during the entire process has made very clear that this will cause serious problems to the grassroots structures of our parties. It's going to cause conflicts. It's going to cause people, volunteers, who make our political process work – we have to all agree on that. Volunteers are what make our political process work. It's going to cause them to accidentally be in situations where they may be breaking the law and not even know it. It's going to cause parties to have conflicts with each other on donations. They aren't going to be able to communicate. In our view, in the view of the executive committee in my party, the exact words are: this is going to kneecap the structure of our party at a time that it advantages this government, the incumbent government, because they don't use that structure.

Instead of working with all of the parties to understand how different parties work within our democracy, to accommodate it within the limits, it appears, certainly, now that we see the legislation come forward, that the NDP wants to continue to try to handicap the opposition parties to benefit themselves. That's what

it appears like to us. So I certainly do look forward to talking about that in Committee of the Whole.

Now, lastly, I am disappointed that the all-party committee on ethics and accountability, that was brought forward to look at this bill, was not allowed to complete its work. I think that has a bearing on the trouble that we will see with this legislation. The parts that the government has gotten wrong are because they never allowed that process to finish.

Now, the government will get up and they'll say: the opposition was filibustering, and they were trying to stop the whole process. But let's be clear, Mr. Speaker, that during that process the government members that were on that committee spent most of their time trying to get motions passed that would require taxpayers to pay for political parties' campaign expenses. Yes, if you want to ask if I was arguing about that, darn right I was arguing about it because my constituents have made it very clear to me that that is inappropriate. So because the government did not like the fact that we were arguing back and saying, "This is wrong; Albertans don't want to pay for your political expenses," they continue to try to use it as an excuse that the opposition was filibustering. We didn't even get to the point of filibustering. We were talking about the wrong decision the government was going to make.

In the end the government made the right decision, and it's a darn good thing for Albertans that all the opposition parties continued to fight for them, or the government would have made a terrible decision. They would have paid for their campaign expenses with the taxpayer dollars of the great people of this province.

Then, lastly, in anticipation because I already hear it coming from the heckles, they're going to accuse the opposition that the reason we didn't get to finish the committee was because we walked out one evening. But let's talk about the facts of that. This government never called more than half a dozen meetings for the first nine months or so of that committee. So the opposition parties stood up and said: "This is wrong. You won't schedule meetings. You're not taking this seriously, not taking it seriously at all, not calling meetings despite the opposition repeatedly, both in the press and in person, saying to call the meeting, that we've got important work to do." They stood up in their right to protest what the government was doing. That is different.

Over the summer my colleagues from every party on the opposition side of this Assembly participated with the government members in many, many committee meetings as they worked towards this. In the end, Mr. Speaker, the government disregarded the work that committee did and did not let it finish its work because they were frustrated because this side of the House was calling them out for trying to use taxpayer dollars to pay for their expenses. That's a fact. That's a fact. They were very frustrated by that, so they stopped the work that would happen on that despite the fact that in the end they agreed with us. In the end they agreed with us. They said: yeah, that was a terrible decision. In the end they agreed with us. To me, that shows that we were doing good work and that they should thank us for that, though I have mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, that never has the government risen and said, "Thank you for stopping us from making that terrible mistake," and recognized that the opposition was doing its job.

Now, I will close with this. While we agree with the contribution limits and we do hope that we can fix this bill to make it right for Albertans, the parts that we are bringing up often are inside baseball for most people who don't participate in the political process, but they are very, very serious. They can damage the way the opposition run their parties in this province. The governing party could be opposition again one day. They should think about that. Any time that you have the Alberta Party, the Liberal Party, the PC Party, and the Wildrose Party one hundred per cent in agreement, the people

of Alberta should be asking what their government is up to, and they should be having a look to see what is going on.

With that said, I do look forward to hearing some of the comments and having some discussions in Committee of the Whole to see if we can get some of the serious problems with this bill fixed for the people of Alberta. I also, Mr. Speaker, look forward to hearing from the government members and to them recognizing the mistake that they were making in committee and the waste of effort that they put into their committee in trying to bring forward legislation and motions that would allow their campaign expenses to be paid for by the people of Alberta.

4:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've got a lot to say about this bill. As you know and as members know, I spent a lot of time on the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee. In fact, I attended every single one of 20 meetings in person, and a lot of work went into that process. It started with such optimism. It was in June 2015 that the Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition got together to announce the creation of an all-party committee to review four bills: the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, the Election Act, and the Conflicts of Interest Act. Later Bill 203, which dealt with government advertising, was also referred to the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee.

Now, as much as we started off with some optimism, it became fairly clear early on that there were going to be some challenges. One of the things that I pushed very hard for early in the committee was proper consultation, to take this committee around the province to talk about democracy with Albertans where they live. There was great push-back from the government side on this. They adjourned my motion. They turned it down. I made a motion to consult Albertans, and they turned the motion down using their majority. Let's just unpack that for a minute, Mr. Speaker. A committee set up to review four, soon to be five, of the most important laws governing our core democratic institutions in this province is going to sit in a windowless room in Edmonton, and they're going to talk about democracy in the ultimate ivory tower by ourselves. That was the plan.

Now, we pushed back very hard on that, and ultimately the government acquiesced and said: "Well, you know what? Maybe we'll do kind of an online consultation. We'll invite submissions. We'll perhaps ask some people in." I wasn't happy with that, Mr. Speaker. I find it remarkable that as we stand in this House ready to debate Bill 37 – and what is Bill 37? Bill 37 is supplementary supply, funding of \$1.45 million for the Electoral Boundaries Commission to travel the province, to eight different locations not once but twice, to solicit input from the people of Alberta on electoral boundaries. Electoral boundaries are very important. I would suggest to you that they are in no way one one-hundredth of 1 per cent as important as the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, as the Election Act, as the whistle-blower protection act, or as the Conflicts of Interest Act. This is the legislation that governs how Albertans elect the people who represent them. That is fundamental, at the core of democracy.

Now, I'm not suggesting we shouldn't travel the province and spend a million and a half dollars doing that, but I note the tremendous irony that this committee was allowed almost exactly 10 per cent of that amount of money. We are going to spend in this province 10 times what we spent on reviewing democracy, Mr. Speaker, on electoral boundaries.

We had an opportunity to engage Albertans in a way that they'd never been engaged before. That is something that I know while in opposition this government advocated for very strongly from this exact spot where I stand on the floor of this Assembly. But we were profoundly disappointed how quickly things change. There's something that happens, clearly, in the two-and-a-half sword lengths between here and the other side of the House. There's some mindset shift. I don't know what it is, and it baffles me. I hope someday to try to fight that off, the scourge of being dragged into thinking like a majority government that you not only can but must impose your will.

Now, let's talk about the scale of the project that we undertook when the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee was struck. I want to be really clear about some of the things I've heard from the government side, from the Government House Leader, in particular, about exactly what happened near the end of the committee. To understand that, let's understand what happened earlier on. Early on Senior Parliamentary Counsel was asked: has any committee of the Alberta Legislature ever considered four pieces of legislation in a single year? Her answer was: not only has it never been done in Alberta; it's never been done in Canada and, to the best of her knowledge, it's never been done anywhere in the Commonwealth.

That is remarkable. Do you know why that is, Mr. Speaker? This is where I will give the government their due. It is not the government's fault that it takes more than a year to review four pieces of legislation. It isn't. It simply takes time. How long did it take us to get through the whistle-blower protection? Well, we started off, and we invited submissions. We got our feet under us in the committee. People came and gave us thoughtful submissions in person. Many dozens of Albertans, stakeholder groups and individual Albertans, wrote to the committee and gave us their feedback. We then deliberated thoughtfully on that.

Now, we only had about half a dozen meetings in the first seven months, but in the last five months of the committee we had 13 meetings, for a total of 20. We worked through the summer. We worked full days, multiple days in a week. Let it not be said that anyone on that committee did not work hard because every single person – and I have a tremendous amount of respect for the work the chair did in wrangling a pretty unruly bunch. There were challenging times, unquestionably. But we all worked hard. The government worked hard. The opposition worked hard. Everyone worked hard.

We got through whistle-blower protection on July 6. Our next meeting was July 26, almost two months to the day before the end of the mandate of the committee. We didn't start debating and deliberating changes to the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act until the 26th of July 2016. There's absolutely no way – and I can only imagine and would hope in my heart of hearts that the Government House Leader would agree with me – that it is possible to give thoughtful, thorough consideration to a bill as complex as the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act in a month or less and then in time to actually put together a report.

This committee unanimously – that includes the NDP members – agreed to request from this Assembly an extension of the committee given the scale of that work. The fact that that has not been granted and that the committee was not allowed to finish its work is shameful, Mr. Speaker. There's a tremendous amount of work that was undone on the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. Some was done – a lot was done – but we barely touched on third parties. Yet we see third-party advertising in this bill.

Lets also talk about how things went once we did get to deliberation. Quite often; in fact multiple times, government members

brought in motions that they read into the record. Parliamentary Counsel went: "That motion is out of order. Hang on. Give me a minute." They worked on it back and forth, and we would spend 15, 20 minutes. Sometimes we'd take an adjournment just to get the motion right. Fine. The motion is read. Then an opposition member invariably would say, "Have you thought of this?" and there'd be this sort of rustling on the other side, and they'd go: "Oh. We hadn't thought of that. Okay. We're going to have to adjourn." Then they'd come back and propose a subamendment.

Then the same process would repeat. Parliamentary Counsel would finally get the wording correct, and after a bit of debate an opposition member would say, "Well, had you thought of this?" and the government would go: "Oh. We hadn't thought of that. Okay. We'd better adjourn." And this would happen again and again and again. Nine times the NDP amended their own motion.

If we want to talk about adjournment, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government members adjourned debate on their own motions 23 times. That has nothing – nothing – to do with the opposition. Nothing. So to claim that the only reason this committee took long, that the only reason this committee went long was opposition intransigence and silly games is disingenuous and offensive. That is not factually correct for what happened.

I'm running short on time. I will run through some of the specifics on the bill. I want to get big money out of politics. I always have. I believe eliminating corporate union donations is good. The \$4,000 limit: I think that's fine; \$15,000 to \$30,000 was far too much. I think a \$2 million limit on campaign spending by a party, with reasonable exceptions, makes sense. A \$50,000 constituency spending limit with fewer reasonable expenses makes sense.

5:00

But I want to pick up on what the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre said earlier. There are certain parties in this Assembly, certain parties in this province who operate using constituency associations as a means of channelling the desire for grassroots democracy, and those are the Alberta Liberal Party, the Wildrose Party, the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta, and the Alberta Party. That is the way we choose to operate.

The way the NDP chooses to operate is to exercise their right to tell Elections Alberta that their constituency associations cannot accept donations. What that means is that everything is done centrally within the party, and the party doles out money to the constituency associations or the candidates as needed when an election comes. That's legitimate. That's allowed, but that is not the way the rest of the parties work. As a result, any changes that burden constituency associations with additional quarterly reporting have a disproportionately negative impact on parties that choose to use constituency associations as a way of channelling grassroots democracy. That is especially problematic for smaller parties and emerging parties. Larger parties at least have the option of paying a staff member to make sure that all that filing is done properly.

The committee recommended – unanimously, I will note – to eliminate quarterly reporting for constituency associations. What has the government done? It's increased the amount of effort required for constituency associations to report. For anyone who's ever sat on a board, you know that the hardest position to fill is the financial position. The NDP has found that. Their solution is to have one person, the CFO, for 34 of their constituency associations. That's legitimate and allowed within the bounds of the rules; it's not the way other parties choose to do it. We, especially those of us in emerging parties, are going to have a very difficult time getting enough volunteers with the capability to co-ordinate all of that effort. We're not quite sure what it means yet, but it's likely going to force us to start to operate more like the NDP, which gives people

fewer on-ramps to participate in grassroots democracy in this province.

That's not, I think, a desirable outcome, nor is the overreach of involving a party nomination contest in the disclosure process. This party on the government side claims that they want to involve more women, more indigenous people, more people of colour, more people in poverty in politics, but you've created a barrier where people who choose to seek a nomination, perhaps just to see what the process looks like, give it a try, possibly prevail, possibly not, now have to fill in complicated Elections Alberta paperwork. That creates a barrier.

These are not people who are going to put themselves before the people of Alberta. Only one of the particular candidates who are nominated will actually seek election for this Chamber, and once they do, they will fall within the rules. I have a significant concern with that, not only the fact that it will create a barrier for people who do not have the wherewithal to fill in the required paperwork, but it also creates a barrier for people who just say: "Ah, forget it. It's a headache. I don't want to bother." And like some of the changes we've seen with AISH, it's going to reward people who are good at filling in paperwork as opposed to the people that perhaps we'd like to see in here.

Other concerns I have: the \$4,000 limit to a constituency association. That means that conceivably one MLA or one candidate could find three friends, each of them giving \$4,000 once a year over four years. That's \$48,000 of the \$50,000 you need to raise. You want to get big money out of politics? If you want the influence of a small number of people over the overall process out of politics, you will do what the committee recommended unanimously, which is to reduce the contribution limit back to \$1,000. What this bill does is that it increases the contribution limit to constituency associations four times. Perhaps it's accidental in drafting the bill and not having paid attention to the thoughtful deliberation from the committee, but I would really encourage the government to reconsider that.

As we finish, then, on the changes that have an impact on those smaller parties, I just want to be really clear about what I worry is happening here. What I see happening is an attack against emerging and smaller parties. The larger, established parties have the wherewithal to work the system, to actually comply, and it reinforces their position. What I fear is trying to be set up here is a two-party state in Alberta, where the only choices are on two poles. Alberta is not traditionally a two-party state. Canada is traditionally not a two-party country. Our system does not work well when there are only two parties. We see what happened in the United States when there were only two parties. Albertans are having to make a choice between two bad options. Our system works well when the opportunities arise for other parties to rise up. The changes in this bill will constrain the ability of our party to grow and constrain the ability of emerging parties, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), a question to the Member for Calgary-Elbow? Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Yes, if you don't mind. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciated the remarks from the Member for Calgary-Elbow, but I am concerned by some real misinformation that he seems to have about how constituency associations operate within the New Democratic Party of Alberta.

Now, I put my name up for nomination with the Edmonton-Centre NDP in February of last year. At that time I had the opportunity to meet with the members of that EDA, who have been part of that EDA for many, many years. I assure you, Mr. Speaker,

this is grassroots, local, community democracy. These people live in Edmonton-Centre. They ran a campaign on behalf of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade when he first ran to be an MLA. They supported the Minister of Education when he first ran to be an MLA. They have been part of this, they live in the community, and there are a large number of people in this community who have been part of that EDA and supported multiple candidates. So let's be clear. Our constituency associations offer all of the same opportunities.

**Mr. Nixon:** How much money is in the account?

**Mr. Shepherd:** In terms of how we operate our accounts, the Edmonton-Centre NDP Constituency Association operates its own bank account. I regularly accept contributions from people who want to support our constituency association. We take in money from fundraising events for our constituency association. We choose to process those payments through the central party, who then remits back to us the portion of it which we retain for our constituency association and keep in our own bank account.

To be clear, the constituency association operates independently. We look after our own campaign financing. We co-ordinate some aspects of that with our central party; however, we are independent and work as a fully functioning grassroots-level association. We invite people from the community to join us. We're very happy to have many people from the community come out to join us. I can tell you that through my work, in my work out in our community we continue to grow that association, an association that, I repeat, existed long before I came along, with whom I met and discussed things before I even put my name forward to be a candidate and whose approval I sought and whose membership I reached out to in working to become the candidate and now have the honour of serving as the MLA for Edmonton-Centre on behalf of the Alberta NDP.

I can appreciate that the member may have some concerns about certain approaches. I understand that he may have some concerns about the way some other constituencies may have been run, perhaps in other areas. But I can tell you that there are multiple EDAs on behalf of the Alberta NDP that have the same kind of history as Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Nixon:** We don't have EDAs, David. Welcome to Alberta.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, whatever term you want to use to call it.

The fact is that our constituency association operates in the same way. It has grassroots, it has people from the community, we choose our candidates according to those votes, and we handle our own finances for our own campaigns. So by all means, I appreciate that the member may have some concerns about other aspects, but I felt it was important to make some comments, as is allowed under 29(2)(a), to clarify the manner in which we operate and to be clear that he should not be impugning all constituency associations with one broad brush.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:10

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, I've got the Elections Alberta reports up here, and I see zero receipted contributions for number 31, Edmonton-Centre NDP Constituency Association, zero funds. Oh, sorry. I apologize: \$2.42 of other income.

Look, the fact is that, you know, to the point, everything in the NDP happens centrally. That's their choice. It's allowed within the rules. That's fine. They're the only party that works that way. So

when you create rules that support your party, you are not doing something in the best interests of Alberta; you are doing something in the best interests of the NDP. Albertans will see through it, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing that Albertans hate more than someone who wants to tilt the playing field to their advantage to disadvantage someone else. All that Albertans want is a fair fight. There was a tremendous opportunity here to build something, and they've squandered that opportunity.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I certainly have enjoyed the discussion thus far, and I appreciate the comments that have been brought forward. You know, I will tell you that my participation in the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee was an interesting experience and one that, regrettably, has not been decided by this government to be extended, as was unanimously requested by committee members.

But I want to make a few statements directly from the outset. First of all, the Progressive Conservative caucus is in favour of electoral finance reform. I want to be very clear on that.

Secondly, I want to make it very clear for those who perhaps have forgotten that the record will show that we voted in favour of Bill 1 to restrict union and corporate donations to political parties. We are also in favour of decreased contribution limits. As the Member for Calgary-Elbow has stated, the limits that were in place before were very high, and I don't think they were appropriate. We were in agreement with the reduction of those limits. The \$4,000 limit that is in the current legislation: we're, I think, in general in favour of that. We're also in favour of some mechanism for placing a limitation on spending with the proviso that that spending limitation has to be applied fairly. When I say "applied fairly," it means it has to be applied not just to political entities, but it has to be applied to an extent to third-party advertising, and it has to be applied to entities that are not covered under the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act.

It also has to be applied fairly to the government. We've seen a government that has just finished spending 4 and a half million dollars promoting a climate leadership plan, which would be more than double the amount that a political party is allowed to spend in an entire election campaign. I think that is something that needs to be dealt with.

Now, there's been a lot of discussion, both here in the Chamber and also outside, and the Member for Calgary-Elbow gave, I think, a very good summary as far as the work of the committee. You know, I will say that I don't think we're going to come to any sort of consensus here within this Chamber about the work that the committee did, and I think it's more valuable for us to move forward and decide and have some debate on the legislation in front of us. To start finger pointing and blaming as to what happened during the course of the committee discussions I don't think is terribly productive.

But I will say that I was concerned by the number of recommendations from the committee, some of which were approved unanimously by the committee, that have now been changed inexplicably in this piece of legislation coming forward. I will give you an example. The initial recommendation for the limit on campaign spending for a constituency association was \$40,000 and \$50,000 for certain designated northern Alberta constituencies. Now, there was some concern expressed about that. At the next meeting, after an adjournment of the debate by the NDP committee members, quite inexplicably and quite arbitrarily that number was increased to \$70,000 and \$80,000, but there was no explanation.



There was no rationale given for that. In fact, it looked very much like a number picked out of thin air. That was the new number that was recommended, and that was the number that, in fact, was passed by the committee. Now, quite inexplicably, that number in the legislation has been changed to \$50,000. We don't know why. It hasn't been explained what the rationale for that is.

Furthermore, a second area that was changed was the maximum contribution, not the \$4,000 part but the part that could be given to a constituency association. Now, the previous limit was \$1,000 per year. That \$1,000 per year was very practical in terms over the course of an election cycle that it meant a single donor could not fund a significant portion of a campaign, especially given that the campaigns did not have a spending limit. Now, we in the committee pointed out that a \$4,000 limit, even when applied to a \$70,000 campaign, meant that if you had five relatively wealthy donors over the course of an election cycle, they could fund the entire campaign expenses. This, of course, sent the NDP off scurrying to their backrooms to determine some way that they could correct this obvious oversight, which they even said was an oversight on their part.

So now we have a situation where we don't have the limitation of \$1,000 to the constituency association. They've reverted to the \$4,000 to the constituency annually, which means that rather than restricting the donations allowed, they've in fact quadrupled the allowable constituency annual donation, which seems to me to run counterintuitive to getting big money out of politics. But now we're in a situation where literally, as the Member for Calgary-Elbow pointed out, three donors over the course of a four-year election cycle could completely bankroll a \$50,000 election campaign. Mr. Speaker, I think that that flies in the face of the stated goal of getting big money out of politics.

Many constituency associations spend a lot of time and effort engaging constituents, engaging donors, having annual or sometimes twice a year fundraising events that are dedicated towards building up, if you will, a campaign war chest for a political campaign. Now, basically, all you really need are three relatively generous friends. To me, that, I think, defeats the purpose of trying to get as many people engaged in the process as possible. I think it's a significant flaw.

Now, I will give the government credit or whoever in the government backrooms took a look at the committee's recommendations and decided to alter them; that is, whoever that mysterious person is or persons are. They did drop the rebates of 50 per cent of campaign expenses to both parties and candidates who receive 10 per cent of the vote total. That was a good move, and I'm glad that that is not part of the current bill. Certainly, that is something that was not supported by Albertans, and I would suggest that it was the single most opposed decision made by the committee during the entire time.

The final one in that exchange – and there are others, but the final major one was with regard to reporting by the chief financial officers of constituency associations. We had asked that that be moved from a quarterly requirement to an annual requirement. The Chief Electoral Officer, in fact, agrees with that. The Chief Electoral Officer has indicated that one of the things that they spend a great deal of time with in their office is processing these quarterly returns from constituency associations and that, in his opinion, it does not add to the transparency of the overall process and to the transparency that we're trying to strive for in electoral financing. So we agreed as a committee that that should move to annually.

Now, inexplicably, it's been moved back to quarterly, and when we ask, "Well, why quarterly, and what would that require?" we're even told that the quarterly reporting would become more meaningful. I'm not entirely sure what "more meaningful" means, but it

concerns me that it does create an onerous amount of work for constituency associations that actually have active fundraising events and have active fundraising.

The lack of restriction on government spending either during or before the writ period is something that I've already mentioned. Mr. Speaker, this is a concern. Now, I asked a question to the Chief Electoral Officer during the course of things. I said: if greater restrictions are placed upon political parties, constituency associations, and other entities over which the Chief Electoral Officer has purview, will that result in more of it going to other entities? And he told me that, without any doubt, the experience in other constituencies and other jurisdictions has been that it absolutely does drive it into other areas where it's not controlled, not monitored. So one of the unintended consequences of putting too high a level of restriction on both spending as well as donations is that it simply forces that into areas that are no longer being monitored by the Chief Electoral Officer. We have seen that in other jurisdictions, and I don't think it is something that we want to see in Alberta.

#### 5:20

The second area that I have a tremendous amount of concern with, that resulted in a rather spirited debate on September 9, is this government's decision that the state should become involved in internal party affairs. It's stunning to me that they think that's a good idea. Mr. Speaker, that is a level of overreach that everyone who loves democracy, everyone who feels that political parties should at least have the freedom to operate without interference from the state should be very concerned about. It is a principle that is of great concern when we talk about the nomination process. The NDP members of the committee felt that it was important now for the government to step into an arena that it has never had any involvement with before; that is, regulating nomination contests. This is a concern for a whole long list of reasons. The principle of doing that is wrong. It also creates a significant increase in costs in the Chief Electoral Officer's office. In Elections Alberta, he suggested on questioning, it would cost approximately \$400,000 more per year.

In addition, there's a practical aspect. Nominations typically occur shortly before an election. If we have 87 constituencies and if we say that there are four nomination contests per constituency and there are, say, four candidates running per nomination contest, this would result in over a thousand returns having to be processed by the Chief Electoral Officer's office and approved in the time, then, before the next election comes. Since many nominations contests, in fact, happen shortly before the writ is dropped, in some cases even after the writ is dropped, how are we to know that the Chief Electoral Officer has properly done the due diligence that is required on these nomination returns? The short answer, of course, is that we can't.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, this level of overreach may not even be constitutional. In 2007 the Ontario Court of Appeal in the case of Longley versus Canada specifically dealt with this. A quote from the judgment was read into the record by the Chief Electoral Officer, that:

it deals with discussing the Chief Electoral Officer's restraint from involvement in political party affairs and specifically states that "any regulatory regime governing political parties must interfere as little as possible with the autonomy and internal affairs of political parties."

How political parties choose their candidates, how they conduct their nomination contests is no business of the state. Once the nominee is chosen, then they become part of the overall electoral process, but how they make that decision of a candidate is certainly not the purview of the state.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to move an amendment. I would ask the pages to come and get the amendment from me. I have the requisite number of copies, and the original is on top for the Clerk's table.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that there needs to be some additional work done on this bill. Electoral financing is very important, and we did achieve some measure of agreement on a lot of different aspects of this, but there's still a lot of work to be done.

In that regard, Mr. Speaker, it's regrettable that the Ethics and Accountability Committee was not chosen to be reconstituted in some way, but we do have other committees that can take a look at this. With that in mind, I'd like to read into the record that I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 35, Fair Elections Financing Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2."

Mr. Speaker, it's my statement, and I put forward that there is still a great deal of work to be done here and that it is important that the committee, a new committee in this case, take the opportunity to review some of the deliberations that were taken by the Ethics and Accountability Committee. I think this referral motion would give them the opportunity to do that. I think that it's important that as we discuss electoral financing, that we look at some of the changes that were made from the time that the committee spent literally hours and hours and hours on this to some backroom, some mysterious person, who has decided to change those recommendations. That, to me, is a concern, how those changes could be made.

Mr. Speaker, it is with that that I would encourage all members of the Chamber to support this referral motion, and I certainly look forward to the debate both on the referral motion and on Bill 35 in general.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, we are on the amendment as proposed by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. It'll be identified as REF1.

The chair would recognize the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 35 and the amendment moved by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. I thank him for his substantive contribution to this debate. I think he has a firm grasp of these issues, and I think he served ably on the committee. I think most members of that committee on all sides, at least initially, tried to find common ground across the aisle. I did not serve on that committee, but I've heard from members who did – the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, the Member for Calgary-Elbow, and others – who talked about the, I won't say nonpartisan, but let's say multipartisan nature or constructive partisan nature of that committee and the great work that it started off doing.

I support this amendment for several reasons. First, I believe that all bills should go to a committee. All bills should be heard by the public. They should be heard by experts in their fields and allow for testimony. We do this in Ottawa, and most of us do not hold up Ottawa as a particularly functional model of Westminster democracy. Most of us do not hold up Ottawa as a particularly open and transparent democratic body, but in so many aspects the House of Commons operates on a more democratic basis than this Legislature. They have a real committee system, not just the COW,

Committee of the Whole. They have a real committee system that all bills go through, and they can hear from witnesses, people who support a bill, people who do not support a bill, people who want to see thoughtful and reasoned amendments to a bill. We have no opportunity for that here. The all-party Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee did have that opportunity, and it did for a time achieve, I think, some very positive results for Albertans and some positive recommendations, but that committee did eventually go off the rails.

We saw that committee over time become increasingly partisan, that the work across the aisle between the government members, the Official Opposition, the third party, and the two independents, that worked together for a time on some issues, but then it devolved into a much more partisan and aggressive way of doing things. There is a time for aggressive partisanship. I'll be the first to admit that, Mr. Speaker, but an all-party committee dedicated to reforming our democratic institutions is not one of those places.

We saw, unfortunately, the chair of that committee act as a whipped member of one particular side, consistently voting with the government on tie votes to get to ram the government's agenda through at every single stage.

5:30

You know, democratic reform is not like most other pieces of legislation that we deal with. When we deal with a budget, we expect that there will generally be sharp divisions between the government and the opposition. When we deal with many bills, in fact, there will be sharp divergence between government and opposition, and we accept that 50 per cent plus one of the votes in a Legislature is a good enough margin by which to pass legislation. For most pieces of legislation that is true even if we very much disagree or are on the 49 per cent side, if we could get up to 49.

But democratic reform, fundamental alterations to our democratic institutions, is different. We expect a higher bar to be set. When governments bring in sweeping changes to the way we elect our government, to the way we govern ourselves in Alberta, it is expected that there will be a degree of all-party agreement or, at the very least, one other major opposition party, a single opposition party, supporting them.

Ottawa is running into this issue right now where the Liberals are trying to ram down a single way of democratic reform against the opposition of the other opposition parties. There's no consensus on how to reform our institutions federally, and as such, federal reform will not have a real degree of legitimacy. Our democratic institutions need to be respected by more than just the party that happens to have the levers of power on one particular day. It has to be respected by all Albertans. There needs to be a broad degree of consensus that the rules are fair when we're making sweeping changes like this.

We saw the all-party committee descend from its very noble original goals where we saw the Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition standing shoulder to shoulder, something unprecedented in the modern history of Alberta, in a genuine, hopeful attempt to reform democracy in Alberta. We worked with the government to get big private money out of politics, corporate and union donations.

But then that all-party committee got away from that objective. They were okay with leaving big government money in politics. Advertising during elections with taxpayers' money for partisan purposes is something that members of the government voted to leave in. They fought tooth and nail. Now, I remember when the Government House Leader sat in opposition in a lonely corner of the Legislature, on this side. He was dead against this kind of stuff. Even though he and I had very different opinions on matters of

fiscal policy, we generally shared, I believed, a genuine interest in reforming our democratic institutions and getting rid of the unfair advantages that governments have in partisan contests like elections. They believed in that, and they no longer do.

That committee became hijacked by a clear partisan agenda. The committee voted disgustingly to bring in taxpayer subsidies for elections. Now, when we are borrowing \$14 billion a year, it is unconscionable that taxpayers would have to support a political campaign, that taxpayers would have to open up their wallets even more to fund the campaign of a party they may or may not agree with. In Strathmore-Brooks just last week we had a fundraiser, and we did it the old-fashioned way. We went to the Patricia Hotel, and we had a nice steak. We raised money the old-fashioned way, Mr. Speaker. We raised money by inviting people in and asking for voluntary contributions. We didn't point a gun at anybody and say: you owe us your . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Oh, I'm fine with their chirping, Mr. Speaker. I love it. It's okay.

You know, we raise money the open and honest and transparent way, and we raise that money for our constituency association.

Now, I know the Member for Edmonton-Centre stood up and talked about the NDP still using constituency associations. They're shell organizations. They're mere constructs for purposes of nominations and nominations alone. They actually don't raise money. They don't perform the same grassroots function as constituency associations do for the Official Opposition or the third party or the two independent members.

While we are sitting here, Mr. Speaker, I pulled up the Elections Alberta filing for the last quarter for Edmonton-Centre, and do you know what it said? "Nil report." There was nothing to report. There's practically no money in that account because the NDP operates on a centralized model of control very similar to how they like to run governments. Just as the central party of the NDP runs their constituency associations effectively as empty shells, they also like to run their committees that way.

The NDP-dominated committee forced through a series of policies that, thankfully, were not reflected in the final bill. Now, I'm wondering about the section on the votes in the report of the committee that recommended taxpayer subsidies for campaigns. Where did that end up in this bill? Where did that go? I'm certainly glad that it's not here, but we haven't had an answer from the government members as to why that isn't in the bill. Could it perhaps be that one of their political staffers imported from NDP central headquarters in Ottawa, Toronto, or Vancouver moved to gut it because it was politically unpopular? Is it that the cabinet overruled their backbenchers who voted to bring in election subsidies?

We don't know why that was pulled out of the bill. I'm glad that it's not here at all. Taxpayers, I believe, would be outraged if we are using taxpayers' money to support their own election. I know people in Strathmore-Brooks, Mr. Speaker, have no interest in seeing their tax dollars go to seeing these guys re-elected, but you know what? I don't think any amount of money is ever going to see these guys get re-elected in the history of Alberta.

Electoral reform is not a decision for one party, Mr. Speaker. It's not a decision. If we were on the government side of the Legislature, it would be not adequate enough for myself or the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre or the current Leader of the Opposition to stand up and say that we're going to impose a complete reform of the system, and we're going to rig it in our

favour and not have the support of a single opposition party. That would be inadequate.

When the federal Conservatives made relatively small changes to the Canada Elections Act, relatively small changes compared to what they're doing here, the federal NDP stood up and cried bloody murder, Mr. Speaker. They called it the Unfair Elections Act. Their federal cousins, who run this party, stood up and called it . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order is noted.

#### **Point of Order Allegations against Members**

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, 23(h), (i), and (j) on that one. The federal party does not run this provincial party or the government. I find that offensive. I certainly think that the hon. member, you know, may be trying to bait members in this House since he enjoys being heckled so much, but the fact of the matter is that he is completely besmirching this government and these members and our party, and I won't stand for it. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise in regard to the hon. Government House Leader's point of order. To be clear, the record is clear. The NDP provincially and the NDP federally are the same party. There's the same membership there. It's all there. With that said, I am most interested in the debate. [interjection] I know the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity really wants to stand on the point of order. I hope she does after, but I would like to finish, if that's okay. Thanks.

The hon. member, the Government House Leader, we would not want to see him offended. I don't know why he would be ashamed about his relationship with his federal party, but with that said, I'm happy to withdraw the comments on behalf of the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much.

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks. Please continue.

5:40

#### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was referring to the federated nature of the NDP. We are looking at an electoral overhaul here imposed by the backrooms of the government, obviously, without at least the original support of the backbench members on the government side on the all-party Ethics and Accountability Committee. Obviously, it does not reflect even the government side members because that committee's report, as unsatisfactory as it was, is not reflected fully in this bill.

It is important, when we have a massive overhaul of the electoral system, that there be at least some degree of consensus between parties. When a single party tries to force its will against every single other opposition party in this House – four different parties, Mr. Speaker, represented here – then, clearly, something is wrong. Clearly, they're trying to game the system in their own favour.

There are too many examples here to ignore, Mr. Speaker. This is an important piece of legislation that governs who gets to form government in Alberta. It is governing government. It is too important to allow one party a monopoly on designing a system explicitly designed to favour their own interests.

This is not a bill to get big money out of politics. This is not a bill to make things more fair. This is a bill designed to ensure the re-election of a government that is desperately afraid that it will not be re-elected, Mr. Speaker. That is why we need to send this to a committee. That is why we need to refer this to witnesses and people who can give testimony, and we can hear from people who can give us a more objective and clear-sighted view of how we should properly do electoral reform in Alberta. That's why I will be voting for this motion.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments to the Member for Strathmore-Brooks under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow. You're speaking to the amendment REF1, are you?

**Mr. Clark:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am speaking in favour of the amendment as proposed by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. In addition to the fact that this committee did not have sufficient time to complete its important work, that was especially true of the review of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, which Bill 35 seeks to amend.

It's very important, I think, that we have an opportunity to continue our work in certain areas. We spent a lot of time on this bill on certain things. A lot of time. We spent a lot of time on donation limits. There were amendments and subamendments and all sorts of different ideas. At the end of the day we came up with, I think, a general consensus.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** That you say were passed?

**Mr. Clark:** I'm being prodded by the chair here. My memory is being jogged as to whether or not we actually passed the \$4,000. The only reason I could think that was is that it was adjourned four separate times by the NDP.

Donations limits were certainly a topic of debate in discussion, as was the most controversial topic of all, which was using Alberta taxpayer dollars to subsidize political parties. Not my political party or the Member for Calgary-Mountain View's political party; the structure was only going to support bigger parties.

In their wisdom, I will give the government credit for realizing the error of their ways and pulling back on that very poor idea. We talked a lot about that. We talked a lot about loans, and we talked quite a bit about nomination contests, which, again, as we've said, I feel is an overreach. But one of the most important aspects of this bill, as we see emerging in Alberta politics and Canadian politics, is restrictions or lack thereof on third parties.

What's a third party? Well a third party is not the PCs in this house. No. A third party is what is often referred to in the U.S. as a PAC, a political action committee, or a super PAC. That's a real concern. When we have a restriction on what we're able to do within the political sphere, what political parties are allowed to do either in terms of fund raising or in terms of expenditure or where more restrictions are placed on reporting or on nomination contests, money is going to flow outside of the political process. That's a terrible, tremendous concern, I think, to all of us in this House but, far more importantly, to the people of Alberta. The implications of that are that we're going to see more American-style, polarized politics, where you stand up, the I Don't Like This Particular MLA PAC, I Really Love This Particular Party PAC.

**Ms Jansen:** Alberta Can't Wait.

**Mr. Clark:** Alberta Can't Wait is one of them. I'm not sure what it is that Alberta can't wait for, precisely.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Me.

**Mr. Clark:** No one has ever asked that question. I don't think it's the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. I don't think that's what Albertans can't wait for. No.

Regardless, Mr. Speaker, those are really important questions. What sorts of restrictions are even possible in a country that values free speech like the province of Alberta? Are the provisions in this bill the only way to deal with that? I don't know.

The reason that we want to dig deeper into these sorts of questions is so that we can get some answers for the people of Alberta and not simply have something imposed upon us, you know, even if the government will claim that they have done some work on it. I don't doubt that they have. But the purpose of a committee is to think through these things, to do so in a public way, and to hear all different perspectives on that.

Do we want more or less restriction on the political action committees? What is the give-and-take between what we want to see happen within the political process and what we want to allow or see happen outside the political process? Have we restricted it too much? I don't have clear answers to these questions because the previous Select Ethics and Accountability Committee didn't have an opportunity to consider them. One of the many reasons why I think a committee is warranted in this case and sending this bill to committee is so that specific area can really be delved into in a lot more detail.

You know, the other aspect of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee we haven't really talked much about, although Strathmore-Brooks did touch on it, is: why is it that the only legislation we see on the floor of the Assembly in this fall sitting is Bill 35, that deals with the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act but not the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act, which is something the committee actually reported on? I'm happy to note that the committee was able to come to, I believe, if not entirely unanimous, nearly unanimous support on pretty much every one of those 19 recommendations. So the committee itself I think functioned very well. Again, I want to remind the House that the committee was actually quite a functional group for the vast majority of its time. I'm curious why we don't see that bill on the Order Paper, Mr. Speaker, yet we see election finances on the Order Paper.

Just while I have the floor, there was a point made by the Member for Edmonton-Centre about the NDP constituency associations. When you do no filing, no financial filing, you have no burden. It's straightforward. There's no work to be done, and you also don't risk deregistration, nor do you risk facing in this bill a \$500 fine. That burden is substantial on the volunteers who run constituency associations. That responsibility is great.

Again, in terms of the committee and the referral motion made by my hon. colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster, I think it's important that we consider those sorts of things as well. How much time and effort is it going to take for volunteers on the constituency association to deal with that, and what is the impact on Elections Alberta? They've already said that they're going to need more money, in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, substantially more money.

The question that has not been answered for me at any point is: what problem are we trying to solve? Do we have rampant abuse of constituency association funds that we're unaware of? Is this something that Albertans are clamouring for? Do we see rallies on the steps of the Legislature? Mr. Speaker, I think the answer to those questions is: most certainly not, because the committee recommended unanimously, with the support of the ND government majority, to recommend only annual reporting for constituency associations to

reduce the burden on volunteers. By reducing the burden on volunteers, you create an on-ramp for more people to get actively involved in politics. That, I would hope, would be one of the objectives of the hon. members of this House. We want more Albertans engaged in politics, not fewer Albertans. That, unfortunately, is a consequence of this bill, intended or otherwise.

5:50

I'll give the government the benefit of the doubt. I would hope that they're not trying to tilt the playing field in their direction, but it sure looks that way, Mr. Speaker. It certainly feels that way based on my reading of the bill and my experience in working within constituency associations previous to being an elected member and now working with my own constituency association, just knowing the burden and the amount of work that it takes to file that paperwork as it is now.

I'll also emphasize that the amount of work that's required is no longer just simply a two-page form. I don't know what Elections Alberta is going to come up with, but it's certainly going to be much more complicated than what we deal with now. That is within the bounds of the rules; the NDs have chosen to do it differently, and that's fine. That's absolutely within their right to do so. Other parties do it differently, not just some other parties but all other parties. So it's very difficult for an objective person who was perhaps unfortunate enough to find themselves in the galleries this afternoon to hear arguments on both sides.

To just look at it on the face of it, it feels wrong. It feels wrong to have one party in charge that does things a certain way that's different from everyone else change the rules to fit the way they work rather than the way others work or some combination of the two. That not only feels wrong, Mr. Speaker. I think that is wrong.

So it's very important that we refer this bill to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities to allow for some more thoughtful consideration of all of the different aspects of this bill, including but certainly not limited to the aspects that I have raised. I think that it's not simply about the next election. It really is an opportunity to update and refresh core legislation that governs Alberta's democratic institution. That is something that ought to persevere beyond the next four-year election cycle.

Really, what I worry about, Mr. Speaker, is that once this government takes the approach of tweaking election legislation in a way that favours them, the next government that comes in in 2019 may be tempted to tweak that election legislation in a way that suits that government, and now we get into this cycle. [interjection] I hear the Government House Leader there asking for my assurance that when I am Premier in 2019, I won't do that. I can assure you, Government House Leader, that I will not do that.

**Mr. Mason:** Mark that down.

**Mr. Clark:** You've got it in *Hansard*. It's in *Hansard* for all time, Mr. Speaker. The world loves and Albertans love an underdog. It's going to be quite a *Cinderella* story, if I can quote one of the greatest films of all time.

In all sincerity, Mr. Speaker, if we do get into this cycle where we've got a government in charge saying: "Hey, it's our turn. We're going to change election laws and perhaps a raft of other legislation to suit our own political agenda" – in this case it's a very narrow definition of political agenda. It's about how we get elected, how we fund campaigns. So it has a direct impact on the political party of the government of the day. I would really hate to see this just ping-pong back and forth, that every time we change a government, all of a sudden the rules get changed, and things get entrenched to suit the way they work.

I'm not suggesting for a second that it wasn't that way previously because I think there certainly were quite a lot of rules that were put in place that suited the previous 43-year majority government. But let's be clear, Mr. Speaker, there was a real opportunity here and some genuine optimism in creating an all-party committee to review the core legislation that governs Alberta democracy. There was a real opportunity. I would love to be standing on the floor of this Assembly and saying: "You know what? We came up with a report. Not every aspect of that report was unanimous, but we had broad agreement on many aspects. Here we are, and we can debate a bill that reflects that." Gosh, that would have been nice, but unfortunately that didn't happen.

So here we are, and I think the only way out of that hole we find ourselves in is to refer this bill back to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities so that we have an opportunity to finish that important work. I will say, Mr. Speaker, that the good news is that a lot of the work is done. A lot of the work is done, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities would have the opportunity to unearth all of the good work that has already been done by the previous committee. They would be able to review that work, and they would be able to accept many of those motions, I would hope, unanimously and very quickly and then get into simply breaking new ground. That would be, I think, very beneficial for democracy in Alberta. Perhaps they would even consider consulting Albertans on any changes they may like to see.

I'm sure that all those of you who are political watchers, as I am, have noticed that there's a debate and discussion going on on the federal scene about proportional representation and how we elect our MLAs or our MPs. That's a live discussion. There was a committee there that presented a report. Not every one of those recommendations was unanimous. There were certain recommendations that were made by certain groups of MPs. But I will note that that committee was not a government-majority committee. It was at first, and under pressure from Canadians – I think rightly so – the federal government decided to strike that committee in a way that balanced out opposition and government members. And I think that would be very helpful.

Now, the Standing Committee on Families and Communities does not have balance. It is a government-majority committee, but regardless I think there's an opportunity there to really dust this off, perhaps even consider other aspects, including the Election Act, and as that moves forward, I would hope that we have an opportunity to consolidate the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act and the Election Act, which is something that the Chief Electoral Officer had asked of the committee, and the committee had unanimously accepted his recommendation to do so, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I will return to my seat. I would really encourage all members of the House – although I've been here long enough and I'm not so naive as to think that we're going to see a sudden change of heart, one can live in hope, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), hon. member?

**Mr. Hanson:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I'd just like to ask the Member for Calgary-Elbow – I had the privilege of standing in for one of the members on the committee this summer. I took a day from my constituency, drove two hours, and sat in the committee. I believe that day the government members adjourned debate three times in one meeting. It just seemed like every time they got backed into a corner, got knocked off their talking points, it was just immediately: oh, let's adjourn debate on that topic. So I was very, very frustrated. I basically felt like it was a real waste of my time. I shudder to think what all these meetings over the summer

cost Alberta taxpayers. [interjection] Sorry. I will speak through the Speaker.

I'd just like the member, if he would, to comment on his frustration, if he felt the same way during these debates.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Look, some of the adjourned motions were legitimate, and I think we need to recognize that. I also want to recognize that it wasn't just the opposition in the room. The government were there as well and almost always in person. So everyone had travelled and had done a lot of work.

But you're right. My personal observation of how things worked was that every government member had their computer screen up, and as soon as an issue would come up, they would sort of pause, look at whatever somebody had typed on the computer screen, and often would adjourn debate. I have no way of knowing what was on those computer screens and what they said, but it certainly didn't feel like it was an organic discussion amongst private Members of the Legislative Assembly. Now, again, I'm not so naive as to think that everything will be.

What it seemed, Mr. Speaker, in response to the question, was that there was someone somewhere else telling them what to do and that even the committee itself was not as free and open as it could have been, and that was disappointing. The number of adjournments: 23 motions were adjourned by the NDP in the course of the

deliberation of election finances and contributions disclosure alone. That's a tremendous number of adjournments and often in response to good questions posed by the opposition, with no answer coming from the government side.

It's unfortunate, but what it shows is that there's work to do, and that's why I think it's important that we take this bill, review it more thoroughly in committee.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Does anyone else wish to speak under 29(2)(a)? Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gottfried:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the insights from the Member for Calgary-Elbow, particularly since he sat on the committee and saw some of the machinations that were going on there and some of the concerns he had. I'd like to hear from him a little bit more about the needs of Albertans in terms of our responsibility as legislators to address some of the concerns to ensure that we have the best possible legislation in place and to ensure that the transparency that is being requested by Albertans . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the Assembly stands adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, December 6, 2016

Day 58

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk

Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House  
Services

Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and  
Legal Research Officer

Aurelia Nicholls, Sessional Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and  
Committee Services

Nancy Robert, Research Officer

Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms

Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

# STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

## Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

## Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

## Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

## Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

## Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

## Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

## Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

## Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

## Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 6, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good evening. Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 37

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2)

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

**Mr. Ceci:** I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 37, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2).

The supplementary amount provided by this bill is required for support to the Legislative Assembly to fund the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Anyone wish to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's just my honour to state that this is the first time the Minister of Finance has ever tabled a bill that I'll be voting for. Mike drop.

[Motion carried; Bill 37 read a second time]

#### Bill 35

#### Fair Elections Financing Act

Dr. Starke moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 35, Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 35, Fair Elections Financing Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment December 6]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to stand and speak to the motion to refer the bill. Of course, what we did for the last year was that we struck the committee to deal with a number of pressing issues that, really, are still before Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, to clarify, you're speaking to the amendment?

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Yeah, to the notice of amendment to Bill 35.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you.

Bill 1 was passed last year to take corporate and union money out of political campaigning in this province. There was much work to be done, and a lot of that work was part of what we campaigned on, to have electoral reform. In this part we are talking about election financing. Really, why are we doing this now? Why was the committee struck last year, and why was it given a year to get that

work done? Well, the answer, Mr. Speaker, is that Albertans want this work to be done now, and the committee undertook to do that.

The committee met, admittedly, you know, a couple of handfuls of times by the time that March rolled around, but that was because the committee was doing the work of putting four acts out to the public to get consultation and submissions back from stakeholders such as Public Interest Alberta and universities and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, who wanted to have input into Alberta's financing of how we conduct our politics here in the province. That took a fair amount of time. I don't think anyone wanted that part of the process to be rushed. So that piece was done.

Then, of course, I was asked to chair that committee back in April. We were waiting to get the reports back from the Legislative Assembly Office. They did great work. They gave us summarizations of what Albertans had to say about election financing and the Election Act and the whistle-blower act and the Conflicts of Interest Act as legislation in Alberta. I think that to minimize that part of the process actually does a disservice to the Albertans that took the time to actually engage in that part.

At any rate, the committee came together and did a lot of work, really put their noses to the grindstone from April to September. It's because Albertans want to see the power of their democracy and the political process put back in the hands of Albertans, not in the hands of special interests, not in deep pockets, where it currently is, where you can donate \$105,000 to a political party over the course of four years, Mr. Speaker. What we have before us now is a set of recommendations. I guess you could say, you know, that there is a synthesis of government direction as well as committee direction into what the bill is, which is what the government is supposed to do.

The idea that we would have spent something like 25 hours talking in the committee about contribution limits and coming to no agreement at the table in committee and then to send it back to a committee I think does a huge disservice to Albertans. They want to see this change now. They do not want to wait. I had a number of conversations with people who called me because I was chair – they saw my name connected with the committee – to ask me questions. I was able to share with them what the committee was doing. There were things that they did not like. Some of them did not support the idea of having public financing in Alberta. However, there were ideas that they did like that some of the opposition members did not want. They wanted things like having spending caps on parties during elections.

So I told that person, you know, that was referred to me by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, that the idea of having spending caps came from NDP members. He said that good ideas can come from all sides of the table, and I think that that's a good thing. I told him that perhaps when the election finance legislation was finally tabled, maybe the people that opposed it would finally see the light. You know, after hearing all of the conversation and debate around the table, as I was able to as chair, I see that there are things that are a difference of opinion and a difference of ideals, of how different political parties conduct themselves.

Then there are things that I have found that I believe are just wrong. The things that are just wrong are the things that Albertans wholeheartedly agree with: lowering contribution limits, putting spending caps on campaigns. Their ears get bombarded and their eyes get bombarded during election campaigns when there are no reins put on what political parties can do during campaigns. So I think that what's really important to remember is that those are the things that Albertans want to see fixed. They see that as being a problem. It's not something that is just: we're adjusting. It's something that has not seen huge change for a long, long time because you had one political direction in this province for 44 years.

When you have one political direction for almost four and a half decades, you end up with your legislation looking one way.

7:40

So it behooves us, coming in as new members and as part of a different caucus, to look at things from a fresh perspective. I am so proud that I could be part of this and that I get to represent the constituents of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, who want to see these things amended and fixed. There are things that are, quite simply, not working, and that is why I stand to speak against this amendment. Albertans want us to get to work. They want us to get on with it, and that is why I am speaking against the amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Elbow under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Clark:** Yes, please, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief. Yes, Albertans do want change. They do want contribution limits. They do want spending limits. They do want to get big money out of politics. Those are things that we all agreed on in the committee.

I have an observation and a question for the hon. member. Part of the challenge with this committee is the very quick change from it being a genuinely open, all-party committee to one that certainly gave the perception that the NDP was simply driving through whatever it was they wanted to drive through.

I have to say that it is ironic that it is the committee chair who, in her capacity as MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, is absolutely within her rights to stand in this Assembly and talk about anything she wants to.

**Cortes-Vargas:** She absolutely is.

**Mr. Clark:** She absolutely is. However, when you are the chair of a committee, you are meant to be seen as being an objective observer of the proceedings. Certainly, that was an issue that came to a head within the committee, and I think that it just continues that perception. It's very difficult.

If we were to switch spots and you were to ask me, "Can you make a case as to why the NDP ought to be able to be given a pass on this bill? It's okay," well, the first thing that I would probably do is say: "Let's not have the chair of the committee speak to the bill. Let's have someone else speak to the bill, because that's an unfortunate perception that is reinforced by the fact that we have people who were apparently objective not being objective on this."

The reason it needs to go back to committee is that that's the only option that we have. We in the opposition are very limited in what we can actually do, and we agree that it's important that we get election financing right. We believe so strongly in it that we want to get it right.

So I would just ask the member: do you recall exactly how many meetings it was that we spent talking about the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act in total? Over the course of the year at how many meetings did we actually talk about it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. You know, I did my level best to get five parties around the table to make sure that everybody's voices were heard. There were many, many meetings that were spent on the election finance act, and you would know because you were there. And do you want to know why the Member for Calgary-Elbow was there? Because I ensured he was there. As the chair I ensured that I polled, through the committee clerk, to make sure that all of the parties were represented and part of the conversation.

**Cortes-Vargas:** And rescheduled most of them.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Absolutely. I rescheduled meetings to accommodate schedules. There were retreats that I changed meetings for for the Wildrose Party. There were conversations that I knew that members of the Progressive Conservative Party wanted to be a part of, so I ensured that when we picked our time to take lunch, we took lunch at a time that would allow members to be a part of it, because I believed in all of the parties having the ability to have their voices heard at that committee. I'm not going to apologize for that.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow is asking for me to apologize for ensuring that everybody was around the table and that everybody was heard around the table, and I did that. I don't have to actually stand here with any sort of idea that I didn't. The idea that a member would not be able to be a part of something outside of this Chamber and then not be able to stand up and speak in the House about it is incredible. You know, does that mean that I shouldn't speak about health care because I was a nursing attendant? Does that mean that if I were a hunter that was owning a business that I shouldn't be speaking about the need for helmets on off-highway vehicles? No. I am saying that everyone that is a member of this Assembly should be able to speak.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

You're speaking to the amendment?

**Mr. Nixon:** To the referral amendment. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Yes. Thank you.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really wish I had a chance to ask the last speaker a question, but unfortunately we ran out of time, so instead I will speak to the referral motion, the motion that's before this Assembly. I thank the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster for bringing forward the referral.

I think the point that the last government speaker tried to raise on why this should not go to committee, Mr. Speaker, I think, quite frankly, is ridiculous. The evidence clearly shows that the committee was not allowed to complete its work. The evidence clearly shows that the good work from the committee that was done, that was agreed to by all members from all parties at the time of that committee, has not been included in the bill.

We've just had a government member, Mr. Speaker, rise in this Assembly and say that the opposition tried not to bring in contribution limits.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** No, I didn't.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yes, she did, Mr. Speaker. The record is clear in the committee that not only did we support bringing in contribution limits – in fact, we fought for that longer than this party on this other side even thought about fighting for it. Not only did we do that; we brought in lower limits than they did. We wanted to bring in lower limits than they did.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, while we were fighting to make limits lower for Albertans, that member, the chair of the committee – this is why it should go to committee again, because clearly it didn't get done – was over and over and over breaking tie votes to bring in a taxpayer-funded subsidy for her campaign and her party's campaign. That's what she was doing. She wants to rise in the House and say that we didn't want to lower contribution limits? We did. In fact, we even tried to lower them.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** I didn't say that. I said spending limits.

**Mr. Nixon:** Now, let's talk about spending limits because I hear the member raising spending limits. Every party agreed during that process on the spending limit amount compromise. Some had different ideas on both sides of the aisle. The committee came up with a compromise that would fit and agreed to cap spending limits. Total opposite of what that member just accused us of. Those are the facts.

Now, while we were doing that, the process was being derailed by government members who were trying to bring forward amendments to – get this, Mr. Speaker, it's shocking – make taxpayers pay for their political campaigns, to make taxpayers pay for their expenses. At a time when over 100,000 people in our province are out of work, when people inside my constituency are losing their houses, their businesses, their jobs, these members on that side of the House spent their summer trying to pass motions getting those same people to pay for their political expenses. That's what happened inside that committee.

7:50

That's why this needs to go back to committee, because the work could not be done because the government members of that committee spent their whole summer trying to make my constituents pay for their political campaign expenses. That's what happened. That's what derailed the process. [interjections] They get frustrated by that because they somehow now magically want to forget what they spent their summer doing. Now, Mr. Speaker, if I spent my summer doing that, I'd want to forget it, too. But there's this cool thing called *Hansard*, as you know, and it's on the record.

The cool thing about this committee, Mr. Speaker, is that we called division on all those votes. We roll-called them all, and that member over and over broke the tie over and over, trying to get campaign expenses paid for by my constituents and by the people of Alberta. That's the record that happened in this committee, and that's what every government member who participated in that committee spent their summer doing. Now, is that good work for the committee? I don't think so.

Then at the time they'd get up and say: "Oh, no. The opposition, Mr. Speaker, they're derailing the process. They're arguing with us." Darn right, I was arguing with them when they're going to ask Albertans to pay for the campaign expenses. Darn right, I was arguing with them. I argued with them every day, and in the end they agreed with us, so I guess our arguments were effective. Maybe if they had spent a little less time trying to make Albertans pay for their campaign expenses, there would have been more work done in the committee. They want to forget that. They want to stand up and forget that. That is their legacy on this committee.

Now, the reason that this should go back to committee right now on the referral is – again here I'm going to give you one right now. A member of the NDP said in that committee:

I'm a little discouraged when we sit here and we see amendments brought forward and arbitrary amounts thrown out that don't appear to come from anywhere but someone's imagination. We never . . . got an answer that actually told us someone was sitting down and thinking these things through, so I find that discouraging.

That was the Member for Calgary-West. She sat in that committee with the rest of us. Now, to her credit, she voted against her colleagues who were trying to bring in campaign subsidy by taxpayers.

**An Hon. Member:** Calgary-West?

**Mr. Nixon:** Calgary-North West. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

That's what this committee was doing. Their own member is questioning what the committee was up to, that they were

imaginarily picking numbers out of the sky. Should it not go back to committee? Albertans expect us to get this right, and the government just wants to come and say: "Oh, look. We're going to totally change the way political parties operate. We're going to manipulate the new law to make it really an advantage to the governing party. You know, basically, the act to re-elect the incumbent government. We're going to attack every opposition party, and we really would like you guys just to come to committee and sit there and agree with everything we say.

Well, we don't, and the people that I work for, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, didn't send me here to agree with everything that you say. They sent me here to defend them. What you spent your summer doing and what he spent his summer doing, Mr. Speaker, through you, is passing motions and fighting over and over and over to try to make the people of Alberta pay for his campaign expenses. I kind of wish that he would run against me in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre because I'd sure love to talk about that on the debate floor during an election. It's crazy.

To say that the committee completed its work is not true, in my mind. To say that the opposition stopped the process and the reason that we haven't finished the work on this important bill is because the opposition was stopping the process: no. The reason we never got worked done on this act, in particular, though it was almost done, was because the government members spent their summer wasting our time trying to pass stuff to make sure that their campaigns could be paid for, something that every opposition party in this Assembly was concerned about.

Now, what's most interesting, Mr. Speaker, is I think the number one reason – the number one reason – why this should go to committee is . . .

**Loyola:** You lack integrity, sir.

**Mr. Nixon:** I heard the hon. member say that I lack integrity. No. When you asked Albertans to pay for your campaign expenses, you lacked integrity, sir.

Now, Mr. Speaker, every member of the committee voted unanimously – unanimously – to ask the Legislature to return this committee to do its work. Every member, including government members. Only after it was out, they all of a sudden started to say all of this weird stuff that nobody could understand exactly what they were talking about. The record will show that that is just not what happened during the summer. That is just not what happened.

Instead, the facts are that government members continue to use their majority through the chair, who broke tie after tie after tie to try to force things through that would cause taxpayers to have to pay for their campaign expenses, that would cause trouble for every other party's constituency associations, all that under the guise of trying to lower contribution limits, something that everybody had already agreed to and passed. We were already through that. The government couldn't just take the win and say: "Yup. You know what? Every party agreed we should lower that." We compromised on the amounts. It could have been a great win.

Instead, the focus became: how do we get the NDP and the NDP candidates' campaign expenses paid for? The opposition did its job, which, in the end, the government agreed with and did the right thing. The question, of course, Mr. Speaker, becomes: during that committee why did the members spend so much time trying to get their campaign expenses paid for? I don't know. I'd be interested to hear that.

This just shows why this should go back to committee because, clearly, the focus that was happening from the government members on this act and that committee was on something that they now agree was wrong. So why would we not refer something like

this to committee? Why would we not get this right for the people of Alberta? It's about our democracy. An extra little bit of time before the act comes – we're well away from an election – would not have made a difference, a drastic difference in the process. It would have made sure that we got it right. It would make sure that Albertans got the best deal possible for their election system.

We don't want to mess up the election system for any party. The idea of using a majority to try to make things harder for the opposition is fundamentally wrong to democracy, and the fact is that you forget that this party, Mr. Speaker, that sits across from me right now used to be in opposition and more than likely one day will be in opposition again. In fact, if you're going to spend your summers trying to get Albertans to pay for your expenses, you're probably going to be back in opposition a lot sooner than you think, which is probably why you decided to pull that ridiculous idea from the table. I thank the government again for that.

I think that instead of rising in this Assembly and blaming us for doing our job and saving you from a terrible mistake, for saving the government, Mr. Speaker, from a terrible mistake, they should rise and recognize that the opposition was right to fight for that, was right to fight for Albertans, and should then stand up and say: yeah; let's get this committee, and let's get this fixed for the people of Alberta.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, what we see is the continued behaviour, the continued pattern of behaviour that we see from the NDP government, that the people, certainly where I live in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, are extremely frustrated with and have had enough with, and that is political games. All that this has been, over and over, are political games, which is why you send this to committee. You let the parties work on a compromise, many of which passed with votes from everybody from every side of the House – many of which passed – and in fact the majority passed with the support of members from every party trying to make our democracy better. But the process derailed again when the hon. members for the government who were on that committee tried to do something so ridiculous, to try to get taxpayers to pay for their expenses. That's where the problem is.

Now, how do we get this right? There are serious problems with this. You're dealing with third-party advertisement, third-party advertisement, Mr. Speaker, right now. That work certainly wasn't complete, and it's pretty serious. I know. I sat on the committee. You see the reports that we've seen from elsewhere in the country. There's some pretty serious stuff that happened with PACs that we had to get right, but we're just going to move on. How do I know, unlike what the Member for Calgary-North West says, that it looks like all the numbers are just being picked out of the air? How do we know that's not still happening if we don't go to committee?

There were many things that were raised by the Chief Electoral Officer that are not covered in this legislation, many concerns that he raised in all this stuff that are not being dealt with, again, because the process got derailed so that you could fight to try to get your campaign paid for at the same time as a hundred thousand or more people are out of work, at the same time that Albertans are seeing unprecedented suffering all across our province. This government's focus all summer was to get their campaign expenses paid for.

Well, shame on them, Mr. Speaker. It's not acceptable to the people of Alberta, and it's not acceptable for them to continue to rise in this House and try to justify their behaviour this summer and try to ram through legislation. It is completely ridiculous, and they should hang their heads in shame.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Hays, 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. McIver:** Yes. I appreciate the debate from my colleague from the Official Opposition, and I'd like to get his perspective on why the committee chair stepped down and what were the circumstances around that because I think that might give us some good perspective on what happened this summer. I'd like to also have him highlight, if he's able, some of the decisions that the committee agreed on, including the government members, that aren't included in this bill because it might help shine the light for this House and all Albertans both on why some people want to support this referral and others do not.

8:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to the hon. member for the question. I think the biggest thing that is glaring that everybody agreed to during that committee was the fact to continue the committee. Every member voted to continue the committee to complete the work.

**Mr. Rodney:** Every member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Every member from the NDP and from every other opposition party voted to continue the work, showing that, yes, there were some difficult conversations – there should be; we were talking about something serious. But most of the stuff coming out – and you can check. I mean, as you know, Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. member, *Hansard* is tracking . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Through you, of course, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'd like you to look at me occasionally.

**Mr. Nixon:** Okay. I'm happy to look at you, Mr. Speaker, of course.

*Hansard* is tracking the votes. They know what happened. It's on the record. It is clear, without a doubt, that most things were being done co-operatively. The biggest things besides the vote to continue the work of the committee were around how much we thought people should be allowed to donate. There was a tremendous amount of compromise and agreement in the end about where the cap on the donations should be. There were also amendments to the government's ideas on how much campaigns could spend, and there was a compromise done on that. In the end, all parties agreed on those two major issues, which is what the government wants to hang their hat on, but the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we're already in agreement on all that.

So then the question is: why couldn't we finish the rest of work? Why couldn't we get the rest of the stuff done? Well, there were some problems. Of course, there was the point of privilege against the chair. I'm not going to get into that, but the hon. member is correct about that. That derailed the process, and there were some accusations made, which have never been properly answered by the chair, but we'll leave it at that.

In the end, the focus, which I think I've made very clear, of the members from the NDP that were on that committee was on getting Albertans to pay for their political expenses. What happened is that every opposition party – the Alberta Party, the Liberal Party, my friends in the PC Party, and the Wildrose Party – were fundamentally in disagreement about that because it's not an ideological issue. It is just plain wrong to go to the people of Alberta and say: you have to pay for my political expenses. Over and over and over we warned them how wrong that was. If you go back and



read *Hansard* – I did this morning because I was curious – it is ridiculous the arguments that they were putting forward to us to try to justify their decision to try to make our constituents pay for their political expenses.

I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, that I have never met anybody in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre that wants to pay for their political expenses. There are a couple of people that voted NDP there, but even those ones don't want to pay for their political expenses. Certainly, the people that support my party don't want to pay for the NDP's political expenses, and I assume that the people that support the NDP don't want to pay for our political expenses. That would make sense. That would make complete sense, I think.

Anyway, to the hon. member through you, Mr. Speaker, there were many great things agreed on, but in the end the committee broke down because of the hon. NDP members' decision at the time to try to make Albertans pay for their campaign expenses. That derailed the entire process. They like to stand up and say to us that, like, we did something wrong. I can tell you that I am proud that we stood up against you trying to take Albertans' money for your campaign expenses. I don't feel any shame for that.

I go back to my constituency now, Mr. Speaker, just like you, and I see people that are hurting, families right now at Christmastime. I was talking to the Santas Anonymous people in Sundre, and they can't keep up already. People are hurting. My colleagues and I had to come up here all summer. We were happy to be here and fight against the government of this province, who was trying to take their money to pay for their campaign expenses. And they wonder why their committee didn't finish its work.

They also ignore, I think, to the hon. member's point, all the good work that the committee did. The committee completed the work on one act – large agreement across the board on that act. It was almost done the work on the elections finance legislation except for the big arguments primarily around them trying to have their campaign expenses paid for.

Then there were two other acts that were very, very serious, that a lot of people from across Alberta submitted things on, took the time to submit and to participate in the process, and this government totally disregarded what they had to say and moved on with it. Again, Mr. Speaker, they should hang their heads in shame.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the amendment to refer this bill on election campaign financing to the committee. I have to say that I was a little astounded to hear the former committee chair stand up here and explain to this House that she granted the Member for Calgary-Elbow his democratic rights, that she allowed him to be on the committee, that she allowed him to speak for his constituents, that she allowed him to take a lunch break. I had no idea that the chair of a committee actually has the right to allow a member of this House to live up to their democratic rights that they were elected for or to take them away. But we heard here tonight that that committee chair personally – personally – had more authority than the people that voted for the Member for Calgary-Elbow and granted him his democratic rights.

I'm sure he is just dying to send a thank-you note across the aisle for that tremendous gift provided by the committee chair when this was being discussed, and I'm sure he will be forever grateful because of the fact that that decision, that carried more weight apparently than those people that elected the hon. member, was granted. For my part I will add my thank you, too, because I think

that all members of this House deserve to be able to stand up and speak for the people that elected them in the constituency that they came from.

Certainly, the people of Calgary-Hays: I hope they know that they're my bosses, they're the ones I work for, and they'll always be the ones I work for. I always try to make it clear that I am not confused about who I work for. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that many other hon. members in this House feel the same way. The only ones, I guess, that we have to wonder about are the ones that think they can grant those rights to other members of this House.

Now, what I find interesting, unlike the previous speaker, my colleague from the Official Opposition – and I thank him and all members that were on the committee, including government members, including our Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster and our former Member for Calgary-North West, who spent a lot of their summer on this committee. I think we can all agree that there are other things you can do in the summer. We can think of those, right? You can go to barbecues and talk to your constituents. You can have them in your office and find out what's important to them. You can meet them at the coffee shops. Mr. Speaker, members of the House could go for the odd bicycle ride, maybe take a vacation, maybe sit on the patio and put their feet up talking to constituents. These are all things that are pretty popular to do during the summer.

But, you know what? This summer 15 members of this House spent a lot of their summer on this issue, and I thank all of them, government and opposition – all of them – because, Mr. Speaker, that was sometimes two, three times a week that they were up here talking about election campaign financing rules. For them to take that much of the summer away from their home constituency, that much of the summer away from their families, that much of the summer away from opportunities for vacation and the personal time that we don't get when we're up here, I think that they all deserve a thank you from all members of this House and, frankly, from all Albertans. That was a big commitment, I have to say.

I wouldn't be surprised if members of this House that were not on that committee were thinking to themselves, as I did a few times: man, I'm glad I'm not on that committee because there are other things than that to do this summer. So I think all members deserve our gratitude. I really do. I do thank them personally for the commitment that they put in during times of the year when they could have been doing so many other things.

Having kept track of the comings and goings from my viewpoint and both from media accounts and from listening to my colleagues in caucus and from reading some of the *Hansard* of the discussions, I'm left with a few questions that, frankly, leave me thinking that the amendment before this House is a good one and one that should be supported by all members. I have to say that I'm just a little taken aback that many of the decisions that the committee made – the recommendations, pardon me. Committees make recommendations; this House makes decisions. I'm happy to correct myself on that. Of the recommendations that the committee made, several were unanimously accepted by all members, yet those decisions supported by members of the government and every one of the opposition members are not reflected in this piece of legislation.

**8:10**

Well, Mr. Speaker, if the elected people that were on the committee representing the people that sent them to this Legislative Assembly are not the ones that made the decisions that are reflected in the legislation that's before us, one is left to wonder, as I do: who actually made those decisions that are in the legislation? If not elected people, then who? If someone's decisions are overriding the decisions of elected people, I think that's unsettling in itself. That's

very unsettling in itself. Only the people, I suppose, on the government side that authored the legislation can answer that question. I'm asking it because that, I believe, under the circumstances is a very fair question. If somebody other than the elected people are making the decisions that appear in the legislation, one really needs to ask: who are those people who are pulling the strings? There are so many questions.

I will say that in terms of the title of the legislation, taking the big money out of—hang on. Let me get this right.

**Mr. Clark:** Saving kittens and puppies.

**Mr. McIver:** It's not saving kittens. Sorry, hon. member. It's about campaign financing.

**Mr. Clark:** Fair elections financing.

**Mr. McIver:** Fair elections financing. As the government members are so fond of saying, taking big money out of elections.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what the big print giveth, it appears to me the small print taketh away when it comes to this bill. There are many things, I think, left hanging out there that the committee should probably talk about. The committee should probably talk about the lack of limits on government spending leading up to and during election campaigns. The committee should probably talk about the lack of adequate limits on third-party spending leading up to and during campaigns. The committee ought to talk about the limits on public-sector union spending leading up to and during election campaigns.

You know what? They should probably talk about what the right number is for the spending limits. I think it's been well established here that the government and all opposition parties agreed that donation limits to campaigns need to be reduced. I think the committee ought to look at the recommendations that they all agreed to when the committee was meeting that don't appear in the legislation and talk about where they went. I think that the spending caps in the legislation for elections don't match what the committee agreed on, including the government side. So what happened? Why did that change? The committee talked about it. They hashed it around. They came up with some agreement, yet the numbers in the legislation don't match what the committee said.

One of the biggest reasons to go back to the committee is to respect the members of the committee and not disrespect them, which the legislation does. When you've got 15 members of a committee, the majority from the government side, and they bring—I don't know whether the government members brought the opposition members onside or the opposition members brought the government members onside or whether there was just a mind-meld of some kind, where everybody said that this is a good idea. The fact is that the idea that they all agreed on isn't actually represented in the legislation. I think that is something that I'm concerned about and that Albertans who look at this process could legitimately be concerned about. If it's not the elected people making the decisions, then who is? [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, I can see by the fact that I'm hearing from other people that they're feeling tender about this question. They're feeling so tender that they can't be quiet about it. [interjections] Again, we've got ministers of the Crown that can't keep quiet. I think they're feeling very tender about this question. [interjections] Consequently, they can't seem to give the time to me to talk about it, and they feel like they have to talk over me right now because, I believe, they're feeling very tender about the answer to the question of who's making the decisions if not the elected people on the committee.

I believe that Albertans should be asking the same question, too, and demanding the answer. The best way to get it is to put the 15 people on the committee in the room and have them continue the work that they started, that, let me say, for the most part good was work with probably—not probably but definitely—the notable exception, that the hon. member from the Official Opposition raised, about who's going to pay for the election. That was not good work when a committee tries to decide that the taxpayers should pay.

Look, Mr. Speaker. Let's be clear. They're trying to get the taxpayers to pay for me to get elected. I don't want the taxpayers to pay for me to get elected. If I can't go out and talk to people and say, "I'm going to do a good job for you; I'm going to represent your interests, and I'm going to take your interests to Edmonton and not Edmonton's interests to you," then they shouldn't vote for me or they shouldn't give me money. But to actually force it out of people's wallets, hard-working Alberta families—some can afford it, and some can't—to actually force it out of the wallets of the poorest people in Alberta to pay to re-elect any of us in this House is disgraceful, shameful, beyond the pale. Anybody—and I appreciate it was the government's side—should be ashamed. It's actually too bad because it's a real black eye on the government members that, as far as I can tell, in so many other areas did good work on this committee. Yet they chose to go down this shameful road for reasons that I can't explain.

So far I haven't heard any of them pop up and try to explain why they think it's a good idea. I'd love to actually hear them at some point in this debate stand up in this House and explain why they thought in the committee, on *Hansard*—so it's not even like it's a matter of debate; it's record. I'm sure everybody here is too smart to suggest that the government members didn't try to push that through because it's right there in black and white and completely undeniable. But I would love to see them pop up in this Legislature and explain to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all members of the House through you, of course, because we only speak through you, that it's a good idea to have hard-working Alberta families and individuals, rich and poor, pay to get us elected. I'm of the opinion that they would find themselves wanting if they think that they can actually make the case to Albertans in such a fashion that Albertans would accept that they think it's a good idea to have hard-working Albertans pay for their re-election.

So, Mr. Speaker, that one is hanging out there, and I guess I'll leave it to the government members to explain why they gave themselves a black eye by asking Albertans to pay for their election.

The other question that I'm interested in hearing from the members of the committee and particularly government members on is why the committee chair chose to remove the chair herself from the proceedings. It's particularly interesting when it's a committee with a majority of government members on it, including the chair from the government side, and the chair is removed. I think there is probably a public explanation that needs to be given there, and I would be very interested to hear any of the government members pop up to talk about how that situation arose.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, outside of the notable black eye of the government members trying to make hard-working Albertans pay for their own elections, there was good work done there, work that was not completed, work that as I understand it—and I'm prepared to be corrected on this—the committee was prepared to come back and complete. We should let them. We should let them because, for the most part, opposition members did a great job and, for the most part, government members did a great job. Why not let them continue the great job that they began? Why not even let them correct any mistakes that they think they might have made?

8:20

**The Speaker:** Any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Hays? The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciated hearing the comments from the member who has spoken and all members who have spoken to the amendment for referral up to this point. To the member who was just speaking, we've been talking quite a bit about the work of the committee and the results of that committee and the engagement from Albertans and the work of that committee being the basis of the bill that we have before us today, which ensures that there are no more loopholes or backroom deals that can be allowed for well-connected friends or insiders, something that is going to implement a transparent and level playing field for all parties, to make sure that through things like contribution limits, which I heard the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre speak to earlier – that we'll lower the contribution limits.

Today someone can donate \$15,000. Today someone can make that donation and be able to contribute a significant amount of money to a single political party. In an election year, under the current rules, someone can contribute \$30,000. In this piece of legislation that we have put forward, that limit, that cap, has been lowered to a much more reasonable \$4,000, which is much more in line with other jurisdictions. The significant change of that item: I'm curious to know what the speaker who was just speaking thinks of that.

As well, there's the spending limits change, which is going to make sure that there are reasonable amounts that allow parties to communicate during an election to get their message out to all constituents, to run a full and proper campaign, Mr. Speaker, making sure that there's a \$2 million cap for parties, a \$50,000 cap for constituencies, with that constituency cap allowing for variations so that in a large rural riding, for example, travel costs are exempt, or in a very small, dense urban riding the parking that a volunteer may have to pay in downtown Calgary or Edmonton is something that can be exempt from those spending limits.

I'm curious to know what the previous speaker might think of these things as well as the changes to third-party advertising, which this legislation that we've brought forward really focuses in on, making sure that Albertans are able to identify who is speaking to them, who is trying to influence their opinions during an election. Knowing who is trying to sway them may have an impact. I think that giving people that information in a time when, federally speaking, we saw a five-times increase in third-party advertising just between the previous election and the one before is really important.

We are looking at a bill that will allow ideas and not donations to really determine the success or failure of political parties. So in the speaker's discussion about the potential to refer this to committee, I'm interested in knowing, through the Committee of the Whole, that we have available to us here, through the process of discussing this bill, seeing the work that was previously put in, the input that Albertans have given us, the number of people who said to us that they wanted to make sure that the elections were fair, that wanted to make sure that big money was taken out of politics, and the urgency that we heard about that because of the impact of a \$15,000 donation each year. We are just towards the end of a fiscal year, Mr. Speaker, so any delay – the impact that could have in the amount that parties are able to raise, because \$15,000 is a lot of money, and for someone who is able to donate \$15,000 to a political party: I think most Albertans would call that big money. I know that when the committee was getting input from not only the other parties but

from Albertans themselves, there was a great deal of agreement on that.

We are looking at that sunshine list for political donations as well as for third-party advertising so that we can make sure that we have an election system that we can all believe in and that we know is going to be reasonable, making sure that that process can be discussed fully in this House.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Anyone who wishes to speak to the amendment? Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to speak briefly to the referral amendment, and I want to encourage the government members to take advantage of this opportunity to send this bill away because we're going to get many more opportunities over the next couple of days to speak to this in Committee of the Whole and third reading and to possibly have some amendments. I think this a great opportunity for the government to just take a step back and refer this bill to committee, where it belongs.

As I said before when I was talking on 29(2)(a), I had the privilege of sitting in on one of the committee meetings over the summer for the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. As I said, you know, a two-hour drive in, spend the day in the city, and then a two-hour drive home: it's all good, sir. You know, it's part of the job. But when you get into a committee meeting and the government members literally get backed into a corner and fall off of their talking points, then pull back – and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie on at least two occasions in that meeting adjourned debate right in the middle of a conversation. He just: oh, adjourn debate; adjourn debate.

On two occasions that day when we voted on those adjourn motions, we called for a counted vote. Twice that day the vote was tied. Now, rather than the committee chair doing what a committee chair is supposed to do, which is to encourage debate, she actually voted with the government members to adjourn debate and stall debate on those issues both times, Mr. Speaker. This happened twice that day. I was very disappointed, to the point where I myself and the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster actually called a point of order on the chair that day. That's all in *Hansard*. It's all on record.

You know, we've heard from every member that's gotten up on this side and talked about the proceedings of that committee. It's almost an embarrassment. This is an opportunity for this government to do something right. Vote for this referral amendment. Get this out of the House because I guarantee you that in the next two days and a couple of days next week that when we get opportunities for the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to stand up and give his speech again, he's going to do it. How much abuse do you want heaped on you? This is a perfect opportunity for you to vote for this referral motion, get this bill out of the House, get it back to committee, where it belongs. Let's get it right.

There are a few things that were done correctly when it comes to setting limits. Everybody agreed on that. We did have some really good agreement from the committee there. But this is an opportunity to send it back, get it off the debate floor here today and tomorrow and Monday and Tuesday and Thursday of next week. I just think that this a great opportunity.

Personally, when I look at my constituency, I don't think I've got anybody that donates \$4,000 a year. We count on \$100 here, \$250 there. On the recommendation of the Member for Drumheller-

Stettler we actually had a pie sale. It went very well. We actually sold a pie for \$600, sir. It's a wonderful way to raise money.

**Mr. Sucha:** Was it apple?

**Mr. Hanson:** No, it was actually cherry. It was very, very nice.

**An Hon. Member:** Was it your wife's?

**Mr. Hanson:** It wasn't my wife's, no. Actually, I made two apple pies for that very sale, Dutch apple with a crumble top. Delicious.

Anyway, our constituencies, especially out in rural areas – you know, it's small. People that are devoted to our cause are contributing to our campaigns.

8:30

They say that they want to get big money out of elections. Well, I've looked at the last election's finances. There were ridings in this province where one party spent \$83,000, and the party that won only spent \$2,000. Getting big money out of politics? I don't think it's big money that wins elections. I think it's hard work, and I think that's what we need to do in our constituencies. I'm very proud. My CA is fourth in the province up to this point for fundraising this year.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Who's number one?

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Who's number one?

Anyway, it's part of the grassroots movement in the province. It's people donating \$20 here and a hundred dollars there that gets us to where we have to be, to get to that \$25,000 or \$30,000 that we need to run our campaigns.

I will end with this, Mr. Speaker. This government has an opportunity right now to get the debate on this bill off the floor. All they have to do is vote for this referral motion.

Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for his comments. I think they were well thought out and well organized and something that all members of this House should take under consideration. But I have some questions that I'm hoping that the hon. member will address here. I want to ask him his opinion on the minister for electoral reform's comments just before him, where the minister refused to answer questions or chose not to answer questions about, for example, whether the committee chair could give people their democratic rights to speak in the committee, refused to answer questions about who's making the decisions that are in the legislation that are contrary to what the committee agreed on, of course leading to the obvious concern that Albertans could reasonably and rightly have, that if the elected people aren't making the decisions, who really is?

I would like his opinion on the adjournments that he talked about. During the committee there were a whole bunch of places where issues were adjourned when the government-side MLAs were essentially losing the argument. Rather than continue the argument, they, using the majority on the committee, essentially adjourned debate on those issues because they were losing the argument.

**An Hon. Member:** Twenty-three times.

**Mr. McIver:** I wasn't there, but a rumour that I heard is that that occurred 23 times.

When that occurs, Mr. Speaker, 23 times, I'm interested in asking the hon. member what he thinks about the fact that 23 times, when the government-side members were essentially losing an argument because they were potentially on the wrong side of it, they chose, rather than to continue with the reasoned debate – why does he think that they chose to adjourn debate on those issues and withhold the conclusion to a reasoned debate from Albertans? I think Albertans would be happy to hear those things.

I will say that the minister of electoral reform made mention of limits on third parties, but I'd like to ask the hon. member what he thinks about the fact that now there could be an unlimited number of third parties jumping into an election, each with \$100,000 or \$150,000, and for the public to try to keep track of that. You know, the argument was made: now we'll know where the money is coming from. I want to ask the hon. member whether the hon. member agrees: when you've got an unlimited number of third parties, each able to spend \$150,000, is it reasonable in any way, shape, or form for Albertans to know where all that money came from and to be able to keep track of it?

Since, as the government likes to say, it's about taking big money out of politics, when you can actually have an unlimited number of third parties, each able to spend \$150,000, I want to ask the hon. member whether he really believes that that's taking the big money out of politics when, in fact, there is an unlimited amount of money that could be spent by third parties advertising, whether that's truly taking the big money out of politics. Since the hon. member did great work on that committee, I think his opinions on those things would be very interesting.

I would also be interested in whether the hon. member thinks that when there is an unlimited number of third parties that can each spend \$150,000, that will potentially drive donations underground or open up the temptation for people to try to influence the outcome of an election without actually making it clear who indeed is trying to affect the outcome of the election.

I want to ask the hon. member as well, Mr. Speaker – and I continue to direct questions to the hon. member, which I think is in order – whether he thinks this is more or less clear . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the amendment to Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act. You know, there are many reasons why we would take a bill and bring it back to committee. I can think of few that are more important than the bill that we're talking about right now and why it should go to committee.

I think one of the things that I still believe is that every member in this Legislature is a committed democrat. I believe that every member of this Legislature values the rights that we have to free speech, to run for different political ideologies and beliefs, to represent those values and those beliefs in an open forum, that democracy is a competition of ideas, that those ideas are to be considered carefully by the electorate, by the constituents that we represent, and that anything that stands in the way of that exercise is incredibly important for us to debate and to discuss and to consider with great seriousness.

I think we can see by the comments of the members that have spoken to this referral motion that there are some really important issues that are being discussed here. This bill sets limits on contributions to political parties. It sets limits on spending. It deals with election campaign finances, and that's an integral part of our democratic process. It's a very important part.

I would agree with the member from the government that stated that elections should be about ideas and not donations, and I think

that probably just about every member in this House would agree with that. I don't see any member in this House disagreeing with that. Of course, it's a complicated thing because often ideas need to be expressed, and they need to have a vehicle by which they can be expressed. That can be through advertising, and that can be through events, all of which come down to sometimes the size of your pocketbook.

8:40

When we think of this debate that we're having and whether we send this to committee, I think we need to take the time in this committee to have those conversations. I think there would be agreement, and I think we've already said that that Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee agreed on many things. I think one of the things they all did agree on was that we need to reduce the influence of wealth and wealthy individuals in the democratic process. I think that Bill 1, that we spoke to at the very beginning of this government, taking donations from corporations and unions out of the process, was something we could all agree on. Anything that we talk about with regard to this referral amendment and with regard to this Fair Elections Financing Act is important because it strikes at the very heart of our democracy in this province of Alberta.

I will defend this parliamentary form of democracy and the way that we do things in this province because I've seen how it doesn't work in other countries that call themselves democracies. I have the privilege on occasion of travelling down to California, and I had a conversation with some individuals down in California. They were so disillusioned with their democratic system, and I think it all came down, after an hour-long or so conversation, to the fact that in the United States money has corrupted their democratic system.

I'm not a wealthy individual.

**An Hon. Member:** Agreed.

**Mr. Smith:** That is the truth. And with three kids in university, I think that maybe some of you can understand why.

**Ms Hoffman:** Good thing we froze tuition.

**Mr. Smith:** He had to go to Montreal, actually.

But one of the realities was this. One of the conversations, one of the points that they brought up was that in the last state election for Governor they said that the loser of that election spent over \$65 million trying to become the Governor of California. I think we can take a look at our neighbours to the south and see that money has corrupted that system, whereby the only people that can seem to be able to get elected in the American system are people that come from the economic elite of that society, and it is not healthy.

So please do not think that on this side of the House we do not understand the importance of controlling money in politics. We've stated very clearly that \$15,000 was too much to be able to donate to any provincial party. We would prefer to have a limit of \$1,000 rather than \$4,000 at the constituency-wide level.

But there are serious problems in this bill that need to be referred back to committee. I think we've seen even tonight from some of the conversations that the parties on this side, the opposition parties, function very differently in the way they operate their political parties than does the government. That's a reality. I'm not saying that one is right and one is wrong. I'm just saying that that's the way it works. This bill will seriously disadvantage how we choose to run our political parties and the way that we seek donations and the way that we fund ourselves. The state should not be intervening and deciding that we should adopt an NDP way of running our parties. That's wrong. If you choose to run your party that way,

that's fine, but our membership does not. You should not have the ability and the state should not have the ability to intervene in internal political matters.

A \$2 million cap on political parties, \$50,000 for constituency campaigns: we can have those conversations. They're reasonable conversations to have. We must shepherd and we must take care of this democratic system that we have. It's too important for this to become a partisan exercise, where amendments like this, a reasonable amendment that would take it to committee, are rejected simply for partisan reasons. This bill, this committee needs to look at advertising by the government.

Section 44.1 of this act exempts "advertising by the Government in any form" from the definition of election advertising and political advertising. The government's own definition of election and political advertising is an advertising message "that takes a position on an issue with which a registered party or registered candidate is associated."

Advertising by governments has been used in the past and I'm sure will be used again in very suspect ways to try to take an idea and give it credence by putting money behind it so that when we start looking at elections coming down the pipe, all of a sudden advertising dollars by the government on pet ideas and campaign promises that they're going to campaign on suddenly appear on the airwaves.

In the last little while the NDP has spent \$750,000 advertising their spring budget, \$4.4 million to advertise the carbon tax in 2016, and \$700,000 to advertise it in 2015. What's to stop the largest organization in this province, the government, with billions and billions and billions of dollars behind it, from abusing taxpayers' dollars to influence elections? And it's not in here.

You want to take big money out of elections? Let's start looking at governments and how they advertise leading up to elections. That should be discussed by a committee. If that doesn't distort our democratic system, then I think you'd better start thinking again.

Spending limits. All of us understand that there is probably some sort of a link between the spending of money and your ability, perhaps, to get elected. But it's not universal, and we all know that. Every single MLA in this Legislature understands that. I've been in too many elections where money has not been the primary reason for a person winning or losing the election as a candidate.

I spent \$22,000, more or less. I think I raised \$29,000, and I think I spent \$22,000. I believe there are some in this Legislature who won on less than \$1,000 or \$3,000. If money was the only reason for people winning elections, many of us wouldn't be here. Last election the Progressive Conservative Party reported that they spent \$4.3 million in campaign expenses while the NDP spent \$1.6 million. Money is an important issue to talk about, and donations and spending limits are important to talk about, but let's also understand that in a democracy ideas and personalities also play a huge, huge role.

8:50

I guess one of the things that I would like to have this committee study, Mr. Speaker, is: if we're going to have uniform spending restrictions, how does that acknowledge the realities of the differences in our constituencies? The members that come from urban constituencies face a very different kind of an election than somebody from Drayton Valley-Devon, and the things that they will need to spend their monies on and the things that I will need to spend my money on are very different. I had to have at least two campaign offices. When you're in a constituency of seven or eight or 10 square blocks, you don't need two.

**Ms Sweet:** Ten blocks?

**Mr. Smith:** Well, some of you guys have got very dense populations, okay?

**An Hon. Member:** Like New York.

**Mr. Smith:** Could be New York.

Okay. The reality is that sometimes a one-size-fits-all policy doesn't work. We need to consider the differences in our constituencies. A committee could look at that. Presently I think that's a flaw in this bill.

I've already said that there's no limit on government advertising leading up to elections. I think a committee needs to look at how they could restrict that.

I think that there's a problem – and we've seen other members talk about this in great detail – with the reporting practices for their CAs and how they now have to start reporting \$50 donations every quarter. We have to remember, Mr. Speaker, that the people that run mostly in our political parties don't do this for a living. They're volunteers. We have to ensure that the reporting practices, while holding political parties accountable . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Nixon:** Of course, Mr. Speaker, under 29(2)(a). Thank you very much. I appreciate the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, my good friend and neighbour to the north. I know his constituency well. We share lots of similar areas. I do go to Drayton Valley often to visit with the member and, particularly, the school board that we share up there. I can tell you that Drayton Valley is a great place but a place that's going through a tough time.

With that in mind and given the hon. member's presentation, it brings three things that I would like to ask him about, Mr. Speaker, through you, of course. I think it was great that the hon. member brought up the situation regarding PACs as well as the situation regarding government advertisement and then, of course, his concerns about why this would need to go back to committee given the actions of the government when it was in committee previously.

First is PACs. Barely was the issue of PACs discussed at committee. Again, Mr. Speaker, as I was telling you earlier, the process was derailed because the government members were trying to rein in campaign subsidies, and that kind of slowed things down. But it hasn't been talked about. As the hon. member pointed out, our neighbours to the south – I think we can all agree that the spending that's happening in U.S. politics is ridiculous. There's some evidence about what's taken place with PACs inside Ontario that is alarming. So for the government to bring forward this bill with no evidence that they've been able to work through that particular issue, third-party advertisement, particularly the constitutional issues that surround that and those types of things that have happened in other jurisdictions – I'd like to hear a little bit more from the member on that.

I also appreciate that the hon. member brought up government advertisement. The government of the day right now just recently spent \$750,000, as he mentioned, Mr. Speaker, advertising the spring budget; \$700,000 advertising the carbon tax in 2015; and another \$4.4 million advertising the carbon tax in 2016. That sounds like an awful lot of big money in politics. In fact, this act that we're debating right now in section 44.1 exempts "advertising by the Government in any form" from the definition of election advertising and political advertising. Well, that's interesting. So I'd

like to hear what the hon. member thinks about, essentially, the government bringing forward legislation, after trying to get their campaign expenses paid for, that doesn't deal with the fact that they are the only big spender left in politics. The government is the only big spender left in politics. Everybody else won't be. That's great. So why aren't they dealing with that?

I mean, the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has brought forward a bill that there were some political games with, of course, as you know, Mr. Speaker, and it's still not been dealt with. It still hasn't been dealt with, and it died now at the committee that they haven't continued. So I'd like to hear a little more about his concerns about government advertising in politics and how we're going to make sure that we get big money out of politics that way.

Lastly, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the great riding of Drayton Valley-Devon, a place that has seen significant consequences because of the economic downturn – I mean, if you drive into Drayton Valley, you feel it just as you're driving in – how his constituents feel about the fact that the government used this committee to attempt to use their money to pay for their campaign expenses, and then when they got caught and got under political pressure, they forced it back to the Legislative Assembly without doing their job properly. How do his constituents of Drayton Valley-Devon feel and respond to that?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is absolutely correct when he says that my constituency has been hit very, very hard. When I look at the people in my constituency, they're very generous with their donations. They're very generous with their funds, but often those funds are set aside for people that are truly in need.

People, as a part of our democratic system, should have the choice as to whether or not they're going to donate to a political party. That should not be something that they are expected to have to pay towards. When you pay your taxes and when your taxes go toward funding a political party and to refunding them for their expenses, I don't believe that they have that choice any longer. The foundation of democracy is freedom, and freedom is about choices. At the most fundamental level in a democracy we should have the freedom of choice about which political parties we choose to support. That is a foundation of democracy.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to the referral motion. From what I've been hearing and from what I understand, there seem to be multiple problems still with this act. In a reasonable world and with the ability to do so, it would make sense to refer this back to a committee. I think this is truly something that all members in this House want to see, to get this right. And as much wrong that's been done in the committee prior to, that appears to be not quite finished yet but brought into this House to be debated, I think it would be a really good, smart idea for all members of this Legislature to agree to put it back to committee to fix this bill, to clean it up. There are a lot of really great things in this that I think all members certainly agree on and that Albertans certainly agree on, but there are still some really contentious issues in this bill that need to be dealt with.

Let's just do something really good in here, that's really right. Send this back to committee so that we can do some cleanup work and do right by Albertans. At the end of the day, that's what we're here to do. I think we have that opportunity, and we're almost there. Like I said, there are a lot of really great things in here that are really going to do some good things for democracy here in Alberta.

However, there are some really damaging things in here for democracy here in Alberta. I have many concerns, as have been expressed by many members in this Legislature, and those need to be addressed.

We have an opportunity to make some really poor choices with the passing of this legislation. But right now, with this amendment, we have an opportunity, and I think it's a great opportunity. I encourage all members of this House to support the amendment to send it back to committee, do some cleanup work. It's possible. It's probably not even going to take that much time.

I do have some concern about what happened in the previous committee. The motions that were voted on and agreed to by all parties, when presented in this Legislature, actually don't reflect the wishes of that committee. Perhaps it's just an oversight. This was a mistake, but we have an opportunity with this amendment to make it right.

9:00

When we try and take big money out of politics yet allow third-party advertisers to have such a large space in the political sphere, we need to pause there because there are some concerns, some serious concerns, in fact, creating an environment within politics that's sort of this shady, grey area. We need to go back and look at that.

When it comes to donation limits, I can't even imagine the amount of work that is required by Elections Alberta and by the volunteers within the constituency associations to keep track of all of the donations that are going here and there and everywhere. When we're trying to reach out to our members and engage them in the political process and we're having multiple events in our constituencies – you know, 20 bucks here, 50 bucks here, 75 bucks there; there are dinners; there are some items that are contributions, and there are some that are not – those create actually a bit of a nightmare to keep track of for the volunteers in our constituency associations. This isn't to mention the additional monies that are probably going to be needed just for the bureaucracy within Elections Alberta to track on their end as well.

These are reasonable concerns that I have and that the people of Airdrie have. These are reasonable concerns that have also been presented by other members of this Legislature. There is a wonderful place where we can talk about this, go back in, do the cleanup work, and then come back and pass a piece of legislation that everyone in this House can be proud of, because this isn't just for the people in this room, but this is for who may be in this room in 2019 and for subsequent election years afterwards. You may think that you're stacking it in your favour, and there are some ways in which it appears that that is being done, but the members in this House may change, and it would really be in everyone's best interests, in Alberta's interests, if we make this a clear, level playing field and it's fair across the board.

I don't have, you know, a couple of friends with \$4,000 sitting around in their bank accounts to finance my campaign. I don't know if other members in this Legislature do. I'm sure that is available. But when you allow only a couple of people to participate in the political process – where you can actually go out and engage a larger quantity of people to be involved, that's a good thing. That's a very good thing.

I implore this Legislature to take a sober second thought at this opportunity, with the amendment before us, to refer this to committee so that we can get this right. That's what this is about. Please, let's get this right. This is a win for all of us, to go back and just clean it up. Make this a good bill. That is my ask here today, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much for the time to express my concerns, certainly, on behalf of the people of Airdrie. I hope that all members of this House vote for the amendment.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Airdrie?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:05 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	MacIntyre	Schneider
Clark	McIver	Smith
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Starke
Hanson	Pitt	Yao
Loewen	Rodney	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Piquette
Bilous	Hoffman	Rosendahl
Carson	Horne	Sabir
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Coolahan	Larivee	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Shepherd
Dach	Loyola	Sigurdson
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Eggen	Malkinson	Westhead
Feehan	McKittrick	Woollard
Ganley	Miller	

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Acting Speaker:** We are back on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 35 read a second time]

## Bill 34

### Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016

Mr. Cooper moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment December 5: Dr. Turner]

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the referral? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know that this referral motion was late last night; it happened around 10:30. Maybe the government members were feeling tired, so I'd like to take us back to where we left off on Bill 34.

I must say that it is very difficult to have a productive conversation and debate when the other side can't be bothered to read the bill before commenting on a referral motion. This is exactly why this needs to go to committee. You know, there have been 16 bills brought to the Legislature that have been debated over five and a half weeks. That is approximately one bill every two days because we're only in the House for four days a week. Plus we had a constituency break. So believe me when I tell you that we on this side of the House are aware of the mountain of work and time and study that it takes to be able to come into this House and debate these bills. It would do us a tremendous courtesy to have the other side read the bill before coming into the House and having a debate with us.

To my point, last night the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud made it clear that he does not support our referral amendment. Madam Speaker, I think it's worth looking at why for all members of this House. Let me start by reading Bill 34 for you. It's only one line, so it won't take a whole lot of your time. "The President of Treasury Board, Minister of Finance may, on the recommendation of the Minister of Energy, makes loans to the Balancing Pool and guarantee the obligations of the Balancing Pool."

In response to the referral motion that we put forward to send this bill to committee – this bill, Bill 34 – the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud gave a speech that I would like to take a moment to review because I have a few corrections to make. We are talking about in this bill, Bill 34, an unchecked loan. Just in case the members on the other side are wondering, it's about a loan. The member, however, started with a tangent about pipelines, and that's fine, because if you ask what colour the sky is right now, the answer from the other side is going to be: two pipelines. There you go. But he said "that we would not have achieved [that] without acquisition of social licence, a concept that is completely foreign to those folks on the other side. Social licence has been very positive for this province." These are the member's words.

Well, according to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud this loan, the PPA lawsuit, the suing of Enmax, hiding the costs from Albertans of suing Enmax, which is what the bill is really for, got us two pipelines. Really? Okay. I don't recall the government's mismanagement of the PPA file receiving a shout-out from Trudeau. So that was interesting to learn. Apparently, in the NDP world view suing Enmax is the reason Alberta has been granted permission by the folks in Ottawa to repair line 3 and expand an existing pipeline. That is an interesting definition of social licence. Here I was thinking that the NEB did all the heavy lifting. Silly me. Well, hopefully, there are still power companies left around for us to sue the next time Alberta needs a pipeline.

At this point in the member's speech last night I was still, however, completely lost. Had the member bothered to read the 50-or-so-word bill before standing up to school the opposition last night, he would know, again, Madam Speaker, that this bill is about an unchecked loan.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud went on to say, and these are his words: "I'm speaking against the referral motion. I'm speaking against it largely because the rest of the world expects that Alberta is going to get on with its climate leadership." Oddly enough – and again maybe the member can point it out to me, and I apologize if I got this wrong – I do not recall reading, "Give blank cheque to Balancing Pool," in the climate leadership plan. Maybe you could point that out to me, or maybe that report received just a quick lookover as well.

Then the member went on to go after my colleague by saying:

I was disappointed in the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake's comment that this was a senseless bill. Flipping the Switch to New Electricity System Makes Sense for Alberta: a direct

contradiction to that member. He says that this is a senseless bill. We've got this great system that has been working so well. It's been working so well that our consumers in this province have been hit by massive changes in their month-to-month electricity bills.

9:30

The government member doesn't support our referral amendment on Bill 34 because of the regulated rate option? This bill has nothing to do with the RRO, Madam Speaker. Again, did you read the bill? Fifty or so words. There's still time to read it now. This bill is giving a blank cheque to the Balancing Pool.

Madam Speaker, our problem with the bill is that the Balancing Pool can already cover its losses with a rate rider that does not compromise the principles of fiscally responsible governance. Fiscal responsibility is a thing where you actually care about the taxpayers, so you don't irrationally remove the checks that are in place to protect them. Then again, the government did remove "fair and responsible" and a whole bunch of checks and balances that would actually keep you accountable, things, I might add, that we have given ample opportunity to amend on your behalf for your credibility.

The member went on last night to say:

I don't know if the members over there really care about consumers. It sounds from the discussion here tonight that they don't. Why wouldn't we protect farmers and residential owners and not-for-profits and make sure that they are going to know for the time being what the cap is on their rates?

Again if I could ask: did the member read the bill, Madam Speaker? It is not about the RRO. It's not about the regulated rate option.

I find it immensely amusing that a government currently in a lawsuit with a power company owned by Calgarians accused us of not caring. That is laughable.

You know, the regulated rate option was not an NDP invention. It's been around for a long, long time. The same person that pays an electricity bill: you know they pay taxes, right? It's just one of those things. You can't just shift a cost to a taxpayer and then wipe your hands of it and claim that somehow you've protected Albertans.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud didn't stop there. No, no, no. When he was finished talking about the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, then he went at me in a state of outrage, saying, "There were other people quoted by the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View from stuff that was written about a year ago." That's correct. You're absolutely right. And I think he said: why are you standing up, responding to a speech – oh, that's what it was. I was asking why the member would stand up, responding to a speech that he couldn't be bothered to listen to.

In my first speech on Bill 34 I was highlighting a timeline of the PPA lawsuit that was resulting in the Balancing Pool needing the funds that we are being asked to provide the Balancing Pool through Bill 34. The article that I read, Madam Speaker, was emphasizing the date that it was published in order to show that the government knew about the mass PPA cancellations before they claimed to or, at the very, very least, they should have. So the one and only response we've gotten so far on Bill 34 came from a member that didn't read the bill, didn't listen to our objections to the bill, and I really don't believe, with all my heart, that Albertans would be pleased.

Then because the member wasn't done going after the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, we got this beauty of a line.

I'm surprised that the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake loves that system that allowed these corporate giants to basically shut off their power plants at will, jacking the price up well over the 15 cents, maybe sometimes to 99 cents a gigajoule. He's happy



with that. He must love these corporate guys. Economic withdrawal is going to be impossible in the capacity market. The capacity market is what we're all excited about here, and it's the basis for the need of this bill.

Again, Madam Speaker, did the member read the bill? This bill is not about the capacity market.

It's fascinating that we didn't get support from the member or any other government member when we actually asked to amend Bill 27 to protect the MSA's ability to investigate a said market from withholding on behalf of Albertans. That's what that one was about. I would have loved to have seen the member stand up on that; that would have been fantastic. What's even more fascinating is that our MSA amendment came up during the debate on Bill 27, not Bill 34. That is because, unlike Bill 34, that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud rose to speak to, Bill 27 actually has something to do with the MSA.

Madam Speaker, the government owes it to stand up and address Albertans' actual concerns about Bill 34 because it's in the best interests of Albertans. I'm just going to outline my objections one more time just in case you didn't get them the first time.

All right. Bill 34 is about covering the cost of the PPA debacle that this government created when it raised the SGER levy only a few weeks into their mandate without doing their homework on the consequences. Raising the SGER levy resulted in PPAs across this province acting on their contractual right to return their assets to the Balancing Pool, thus the current debt that the Balancing Pool needs to be bailed out of.

Bill 34 is irresponsible. There are no checks, no accountability, no public forum required to explain the minister's request for the funding. Like we've said, a blank cheque to the Balancing Pool for an undisclosed amount of money: that's what this bill is about. This bill is entirely unnecessary as the Balancing Pool already has the power through the use of an approved rate rider to recover its losses. Madam Speaker, government estimates put the needed rate rider at just over a dollar per month per bill while independent estimates from Andrew Leach has estimated this cost to be under \$3 a month per bill. Whether the higher or lower estimated cost is correct, this low cost will in absolutely no way ever be able to justify the removal of important checks on government spending.

If we take a look at so many – I don't even know how many amendments, how many opportunities this side of the House has given the government side to be able to look at what they're doing, provide Albertans with the accountability that they so deserve, especially on things like this. A blank cheque? I mean, does the government not realize that these are not their dollars? We have an immense responsibility in this House to taxpayer dollars. As was pointed out in earlier debates, in other debates and other speeches, we are in a province that is suffering right now. We are in a province where families are unable to find work. My own family: I have family members right now that are leaving this province for other provinces.

We have people that are not investing in this province. We are seeing one thing after another. We are seeing investors leave. We are seeing caps on production, caps on upgrading, keeping it in the ground and out of the pipeline, and then, on top of that, to have members come in here to debate a bill and not understand that which we are talking about and, worse than that, to not even understand that what we're trying to do is actually – we're not even amending this. There is nothing to amend here. Never. This bill needs to go.

There will be no amendments from this side of the House, but let me also add that we are giving an opportunity . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak in favour of this referral for a number of reasons that I would hope to make obvious. We have before us a bill, and for every bill that comes before this House, of course, there's always a reason in back of it. The government, I would hope, doesn't just bring legislation to this House for the sake of bringing legislation here. When we consider the background that led to the reasons for this bill, Bill 34, even coming before this House, we see that there are some reasons why the government would want this kind of a bill to come into play.

9:40

We had a government that came to power and immediately took it upon itself to start meddling in our electricity system, and it appeared as time went by that the meddling continued, that it was I will call it a plan to so break our system that they could at some point as part of their plan stand up and say: well, we're the saviour of this broken electricity system, and we are going to reregulate what was a deregulated, free-market system. I believe that, ideologically, this government doesn't really like a lot of things free market, not really, and I believe that when they came to power, there was definitely an agenda to do what they could to mess with a system that, albeit it needed some repair, certainly did not need to be destroyed, a system that needed repair but certainly did not have to have the government come and so destroy it that we are now talking daily in this place about billions of dollars, tens of billions of dollars. It's not just growing on trees around here. This is tens of billions of dollars that ultimately will have to come from the pockets of hard-working Albertans not just in this generation but in future generations.

We have before us right now another bill regarding money, bill after bill coming before this House regarding money in the billions, and coupled with the deficit, coupled with the provincial debt, which is all in billions, it's just adding up and mounting up. That's why I say that it's like generational theft. We have a situation where future generations are going to be paying for a very long time for the mistakes of this government.

What has baffled a lot of people in the magnificent riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake who have talked to me – they ask the question: why? Why doesn't the government just hit the pause button? Why don't they see that borrowing and borrowing and borrowing and borrowing isn't going to lead to prosperity? You can't borrow your way and you can't tax your way to prosperity for the people of Alberta. The people in my riding understand that very well. The moms and dads that are there that are out of work: they come to our constituency office. They are genuinely afraid. They're afraid for themselves, but they're very afraid for their children and their grandchildren because it appears to them that the government doesn't really grasp the overwhelming burden that their fiscal policies are going to have on our children and our grandchildren.

**Mr. Rodney:** Then you should hear this amendment I have.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I'm looking forward to it.

We have a government in place that came into power with an agenda, and part of that agenda was, of course, to vilify coal, and immediately they attacked the carbon tax under the old specified gas emitters regulation. It was the first in a series of mistakes that just kept going and going and going. Rather than have the sense to stop, back up, admit their mistake, no, they pressed on, and they doubled down and tripled down and quadrupled down on mistake after mistake after mistake. I referred to it as Whac-A-Mole policy

because the unintended consequences just keep popping up. Sadly, Madam Speaker, some of the unintended consequences aren't going to be felt necessarily by our generation, but they shall definitely be felt by our children and our grandchildren.

History will not be kind to this government. History will not be kind to this government's legacy. If you look back through Alberta's history, there are a couple of Premiers that our province has had that stand out. They're in the history books, and their popularity and notoriety go far beyond the borders of our little province here. I'm talking about Premier Peter Lougheed and Premier Ralph Klein, and whether people on the other side of the House agree with their policies or not, the fact of the matter is that both were fiscally responsible Premiers. Both of them made transformational changes in the fiscal policies of our province, and whether you like how they accomplished it or not, there were governments all around the world that wanted to talk to them and ask them: "How did you do it? How did you do that?"

They wanted to know the process because many jurisdictions around the world are and were mired in debt, mired in politics that were continuing to mount up into debt to the degree that, of course, you know, since the mid-2000s we have had whole nations declare bankruptcy. Whole nations. Yet some of those nations, even having gone through what they've gone through – and those generations now of children are experiencing the mistakes made by their predecessors – still press on in the same way. Take Greece, for an example. The solution that was put forward by the Greeks, of course, was: let's borrow more money from the EU, and that'll solve our problem. Tragically, the EU agreed.

Bringing it back to our current situation, we have a government that has made a number of mistakes, and I'm going to give credit where credit is due. The hon. interim leader of the third party stood in this House one day. I remember it still. I think I will always remember it. It's Calgary-Hays, I believe, that the hon. member is from. He stood in this House and acknowledged the errors made by his government, apologized to the people of Alberta for the mistakes made by his government, acknowledged that they had received their just reward by the voters of this province, and, in humility, that member acknowledged all those mistakes.

I have a great deal of respect for a man that does that, a great deal of respect for that. It demonstrates humility, and humility is simply defined as having a right estimation of one's self. That hon. member stood and tried to make amends for what was done wrong and, furthermore, did not stop there but pleaded sincerely and, I believe, from his heart with this government. He said, and I hope I quote him right: learn from our mistakes. He said: learn from our mistakes; don't make those mistakes, because the voters will not be kind.

Madam Speaker, this government is going down the very same road that the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays tried to warn them about and that we in the Official Opposition have tried and tried and will continue to try to warn this government about.

It would be very beneficial for this government to have a dose of humility and go back to the very first error that was made under the specified gas emitters regulation and simply start unwinding all of the steps that have been taken from that point that lead us to this bill currently before the House. Part of the process of correcting the mistakes of the past is to acknowledge them, first of all. It would be helpful indeed for this government to take Bill 34 and refer it and allow Albertans to come and have a say. Albertans, who are the people who will be saddled with the debt: allow them to speak.

9:50

It is interesting to note that this government has a penchant for unlimited borrowing. Unlimited borrowing. This government came into power and changed the spending cap, then eliminated it

entirely, then eliminated the law on borrowing for operations. Now we have another bill, and the government is saying: "Well, Balancing Pool, you know what? We're not sure how big the damage is going to be to you from our mistakes, so we're just going to backstop you to however much you will ever need." Unlimited. Unchecked.

What's strange, Madam Speaker, is that estimates out there from independent analysts peg the amount of loss that the Balancing Pool may experience somewhere in that \$500 million to \$600 million range. What I don't quite understand here is that if that's so, why isn't there a cap on the amount of borrowing? Why is it open ended? What do we not know? What other kind of impact is this government going to bring on the Balancing Pool that could possibly have motivated them to bring a bill before the House with no limit on the amount the Balancing Pool can borrow from the government?

When you look at the numbers – and let's just take for a moment that the \$500 million or \$600 million is a reasonably accurate guesstimate from the independent analysts. All right. Divide that by four years or so, divide that by, you know, a million or so subscribers to the system, plus the commercial and the industrial users, and the actual amount that shows up on the electricity bill, if they would allow it to show up on the electricity bill, isn't going to be thousands of dollars per household. And since it's not a big amount of money and the government has an estimate that it's, you know, less than a couple of bucks, why is the government attempting to cloud the issue and not allow that charge to show up on electricity bills under the rate rider? Why are they pulling an Enron accounting deal and moving that column off our electric bills and onto the taxpayers' burden, to be hidden in the great mass of provincial debt?

I submit to this Assembly that there is more yet to come that is going to so adversely impact the Balancing Pool. The government knows it full well, and rather than back up and correct the mistakes that they've made, they simply use the solution that they apply to almost everything, and that is: tax Albertans, borrow more money, throw more money at the problem, and that'll solve it. Well, that doesn't work. It doesn't work when you've got a systemic problem, and this government has got a systemic problem. Our children, our grandchildren are going to be paying for a systemic problem from a government that will not back up and undo the damage that it has done to our electricity system.

You know, what's kind of odd to me is that the amount of extra revenue brought into this government by increasing the tax under the specified gas emitters regulation is only in the tens of millions, but that mistake that they made is costing us billions. That's a really shocking return on investment here. We're going to go broke with that kind of investment advice.

We've had one colossal mistake after another. This government knew full well the impact of changing the tax on the specified gas emitters. This measure that's before us, as I said, is really just a mess.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who would like to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any members wishing to speak to the referral amendment?

The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to request unanimous consent of the House to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Acting Speaker:** There are no other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment REF1 on second reading of Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, as proposed by the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:56 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	MacIntyre	Schneider
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Smith
Hanson	Pitt	Yao
Loewen	Rodney	

10:00

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Phillips
Babcock	Hoffman	Piquette
Bilous	Horne	Rosendahl
Carson	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Ceci	Larivee	Schmidt
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	Luff	Sigurdson
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	McKittrick	Turner
Feehan	Miller	Westhead
Ganley	Nielsen	Woollard
Gray		

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 37
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[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Acting Speaker:** We are back on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm rising today to move a reasoned amendment, a bit of a safety net, if you will, for the government. That, of course, is to Bill 34, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016. It's on behalf of my hon. colleague from Calgary-West. I do have the requisite number of copies for distribution available for the Assembly. If you would like, I will take my seat until it is circulated.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Hon. member, the amendment will be referred to as amendment RA1. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As you can plainly see, it reads:

Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill does not adequately address and minimize the adverse long-term financial implications of changes to the Electric Utilities Act with respect to debt financing.

Madam Speaker, Bill 34 allows the Minister of Finance to make undefined and unlimited loans on recommendations from the Minister of Energy to the Balancing Pool in order to cover what will be, naturally, impending deficits. It is worth pointing out for every member in this Assembly and all Albertans that never in the history

of this province has such a borrowing practice occurred. I find that absolutely alarming. Now, since 2006 the Balancing Pool has always had a positive balance at the end of each and every year. Simply put, what has been proposed is a request to spend more money and, in turn, generate more debt, if you can believe that, as if the NDP was not deep enough already.

Now, since taking office, the NDP have exhibited a complete and utter disregard for the taxpayer and public purse. The numbers speak for themselves. We've seen nothing but reckless and profligate spending habits to compound what I have heard termed by many of my constituents as unconscionable spending habits. The NDP have raised taxes on all Albertans – that cannot be argued – during what could be argued is the worst recessionary period that almost every Albertan has ever seen. It includes, of course, a carbon tax. I firmly am convinced that people will not realize what it's all about until it actually happens, and it hits them in the pocketbooks starting next month. It was never campaigned on, was it? Anyone? It is destined to increase given the Premier's comments: we have never outlined that \$30 was where it was going to stop. How high will it go? Nobody knows. All of this on top of something I'd never thought I'd see here in Alberta: downgrades, downgrades after downgrades of what used to be our impeccable credit rating.

Madam Speaker, it can't be argued. This is the opposite of a catalyst for growth. Simply put, you do not increase taxes during a recession, especially when families are having an increasingly difficult time meeting their basic needs due to record unemployment levels. I don't know how many members on that side of the House are talking to their constituents. I can tell you that it is making me physically sick to talk to so many of these people who tell me – not just stories; these are realities – of losing family businesses that took generations to build, careers that took decades to build. It's not just about the money. It's not just about sending Johnny or Jane to hockey. It's about: how do I pay for my home? This isn't fair, in my humble opinion.

Madam Speaker, unemployment is reaching an area I'd never thought I'd see in this province, double digits. GDP growth is going in the exact opposite direction it has been for decades. To make a bad situation worse, we can add – I'm going to phrase this nicely, as nicely as I can – a lacklustre NDP jobs plan compounded by tax increases. I've had constituents ask me: "What are they trying to do over there, really? Are they trying to dismantle the very economy, the very culture, upon which this proud province was built?"

**An Hon. Member:** It's a nightmare.

**Mr. Rodney:** People call it a nightmare.

This scenario relates to the theme I mentioned at the beginning, Madam Speaker: a lack of regard for the taxpayer, a lack of regard for the public purse. The fact that the government has to table such legislation simply illustrates not only an inability to budget properly but an inability to understand the true cost of their policies.

Their constant meddling with the electrical system is proof of this and has manifested itself in Bill 34. The NDP's haphazard actions to overhaul the electrical system are putting Albertans at a risk they never would have imagined before, Madam Speaker, and these failed policies are driving Albertans further into debt. This will cost Albertans for years to come because the NDP don't have a clue with respect to how this money will be repaid – they've said it themselves – nor do they seem to understand the concept of accrued interest. Over \$1 billion in debt financing alone: that's like a Calgary South Health Campus down the drain every year. It's like huge sections of ring roads every year. How does this make any sense at all to anyone? I don't know.

But I do know this: at this rate, royalty from pipelines will not even cover the interest payments. How does it make sense? I hope someone over there can explain it to all of us. If we think about that for a moment – well, I'll just ask this, Madam Speaker: do we have more pipeline announcements coming? We would need two more to even work our way towards the black some day.

Now, if the NDP had any semblance of a plan, if they had an ability to budget properly, if they had respect for the taxpayer, they would not table Bill 34. It's a short-term solution to artificially insulate Albertans from the NDP world view. When will the cycle end? It's a vicious cycle. I don't see it ending. By moving forward with Bill 34, we're continuing the disturbing trend of burdening future generations with debt.

Hon. member, what did he call it a minute ago?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Generational theft.

**Mr. Rodney:** Generational theft. Thank you, sir.

Through the Speaker to the member and to all Albertans: no matter how you slice it, this is debt for future generations, and they're going to have to repay it. They had nothing to do with it. They didn't ask for this. The people over there did. The NDP asked for this, and they don't have a plan to repay it. The government is, whether they choose to admit it or not, destroying future livelihoods, future opportunities, future chances of prosperity. That's the reason why the size of Red Deer used to move to Alberta, because jobs were waiting for them here. Now we see the opposite, well over 100,000 jobs – that's people's jobs – lost in the last year alone. We're going the wrong direction here, folks.

It's one thing to borrow money with a plan to repay it, but it's another thing to borrow unlimited amounts of money with no plan to repay it and essentially throw caution to the wind. That, Madam Speaker, again in my humble opinion, is irresponsible borrowing, and it is a practice that does not resonate with any Albertan I've ever met. It's a practice that this government is exhibiting not only in Bill 34 but in other policies and pieces of legislation.

**10:10**

It's for that reason that I'm very pleased to table this amendment. By their own admission from before the election the NDP need to be transparent with Albertans, and here with respect to how borrowed monies of the Balancing Pool will be repaid, they need to have a plan to refinance their debt, and that concept simply goes hand in hand with good governance.

Madam Speaker, for the sake of all Albertans I hope all of the members of this Assembly will take a deep breath, vote for this amendment, and do so so that the NDP can come back with a responsible borrowing plan and re-evaluate what is currently, to put it mildly, a poor piece of misguided legislation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, anyone wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As much as I would love to engage and remind the member, appreciating his comments, that the Minister of Finance laid out a clear path for our government to go back to balance, I will save those arguments for another day and would like to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect of this bill? [interjections]

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I know you're surprised. I know you're surprised.

Well, Madam Chair, we have before us, of course, what is becoming one of my favourite bills to oppose. There are a number of amendments that we are bringing forward, and I am going to be proposing an amendment in a jiffy here. We're on A6 right now.

**The Deputy Chair:** We are on amendment A6 still.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Can you read the amendment, please, ma'am?

**The Deputy Chair:** You're testing me now. Just one second. My apologies. We have a lot of amendments.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** We're on the main bill right now?

**The Deputy Chair:** No, we're on amendment A6. I'm just going to clarify the amendment. My apologies, hon. member.

Amendment A6. Mr. MacIntyre to move that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended in section 3(2) by striking out "may establish" and substituting "shall establish and make public."

**Mr. MacIntyre:** May and shall. This comes back again, Madam Chair, to this issue of being completely unable to manage something you do not measure. We have a situation here where "the Minister may establish renewable electricity program objectives." As I mentioned before – I'll just remind the House again – when you've got a situation where a minister of the Crown may or may not do something, especially when it concerns something of the scope of our electricity system, we have a situation where literally billions of dollars are hanging in the balance. Under the terms of this particular bill, strangely, the Minister of Energy has an enormous amount of discretionary authority when it comes to the development of renewables projects, to the point, Madam Chair, where the Minister of Energy doesn't even have to demonstrate need. There is no – no – compulsion on the minister to demonstrate need, yet the minister has the discretionary authority to insist that these renewable projects be built.

That said, it only makes sense, then, that the minister provide the people of Alberta, first and foremost, but also industry with clearly defined objectives. What this amendment attempts to do is make sure that the minister does the appropriate thing, that the minister shall establish and make public program objectives that promote specific goals, including specific environmental goals and specific social goals and specific economic goals. Without these specific goals being clearly enunciated to not just the people of Alberta but also the investment community, how in the world is anyone going to even understand that what the minister is doing is the right thing? We're talking about a multibillion-dollar industry, a multibillion-dollar infrastructure build-out between now and 2030 to build 5,000 megawatts of generation and another 80 per cent of that as backup for it. It only makes common sense, maybe not so common sense anymore, that the minister ought to have specific program

objectives and that the minister shall establish them and shall make them public.

First of all, what kind of program is this section talking about? Well, it's promoting large-scale renewable generation. There are a number of persons involved in the process of getting renewables generation actually up in the air or built in some way. We're talking about municipal governments that are going to be involved, various agencies like the Alberta Utilities Commission, the Alberta Electric System Operator, electricity companies like TransAlta, Fortis, ATCO, rural electricity associations, and so on. There's a massive amount of industry out there that needs to know the direction that the province is actually taking so that they can plan and plan appropriately. But under the terms of this bill, Bill 27, the minister is not under any compulsion whatsoever to establish specific objectives. None. None whatsoever. The minister may, if she feels like it today.

10:20

**An Hon. Member:** Or not.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Or not.

Maybe it's an oversight on the part of the government, and if that's the case, then fine. Here we have an amendment that's very clear. We're going to fix it. We're going to make it a little better. The minister is actually going to have a very clear mandate that the minister must establish, shall establish – “shall” in legal terms is a compulsory word. The current language needs to be fixed. Secondly, if the minister is going to ask the ISO to do something like this, there had better be some very clear objectives and specific evaluation criteria in place. Otherwise, why do we even have this section? Why even bother saying, “The minister may establish”? Why even have section 3(2) in existence in this bill? It doesn't make any sense the way it is currently worded.

If the minister doesn't want to – think about putting “shall” in here, Madam Chair. It doesn't mean that the minister, the person, the politician, necessarily has to be the individual that comes up with the plan, but she has the responsibility to make sure that it is done. I understand how things would work. That minister would delegate that responsibility to experts. Hopefully, the minister would bring in many, many experts to advise the minister on what would be the very best objectives, what would be the very specific goals, the environmental goals, the social goals, the economic goals of a particular project. The minister would then publish what these are and issue RFPs or RFIs, and away we go with that project. But as it currently stands, the minister has no compulsion whatsoever to do that. Is the government really saying that we need a section like this in the legislation to let a minister decide these things?

You know, from the get-go, from the election in 2015, one of the things that maybe the government has heard me ask for time and time again is economic analysis. I don't know. The word “economic” seems to be a common word that my lips ask for. Economic analysis. Economic analysis. There's a reason for that, Madam Chair. The good people of Alberta need to know the numbers. The good people of Alberta need to know what it's going to cost. We just debated a bill where the government hasn't taken the time to figure out what it's going to cost the Balancing Pool, so just give them a MasterCard with no limit. But then that's how the government seems to be operating everything, including the provincial budget. Just give the Minister of Finance a MasterCard with no limit.

Well, my request under this amendment, of course, is that the minister have some specific guidelines that the minister must follow, and that is to clearly enunciate the environmental, social, and economic objectives – the objectives – and then make that

public for people. Get the good people of Alberta involved in the process. As I will say repeatedly, I expect until the next election, there are a couple of things that this House is going to hear from me time and time again. It's: where is the economic analysis? The second thing is: you cannot manage what you do not measure. Economic analysis is part of that.

Without really clear program objectives and clear evaluation metrics the government is going to be flying by the seat of its pants. We've already seen the disasters that this leads to. If you don't have clear objectives, if you don't have clear evaluation criteria, if you don't put a goal out there, you're going to hit it. You're going to hit your nongoal every single time, and it leaves our entire province like a ship without a rudder.

There are a ton of examples around the world of failures both of government and in industry when corporations, when governments, and even families, for that matter, don't have clear objectives. You know, without a clear vision people perish. It's true. Without really clear objectives in place it's hard on people. People get hurt. Can anyone on the government side get up and say why this particular section should even be here without this kind of amendment? Is it really the case that on the government side of this House they want to have a minister that doesn't have clearly defined goals, clearly defined objectives?

We've asked repeatedly in a number of bills – Bill 25 specifically, Bill 27 here, and other bills – for performance criteria, measurables. When we were in the debate on the carbon tax bill, Bill 20, we were repeatedly asking the government to put in place measurables to determine that in fact carbon taxation was resulting in a net decrease in global greenhouse gas emissions. It was very surprising to us over here that the government voted down such key performance indicators. If you don't have those key performance indicators in place, then you really don't know whether the measures you're putting in place are doing what you want them to do or not. It's impossible to know whether carbon taxation is going to result in any net decrease in greenhouse gas emissions if the government isn't putting into place even something to measure that, yet we have the government already talking about going to \$50 when they have absolutely zero evidence and zero measurables in place to determine if the current rate is going to do any good. It's really, really irresponsible and reckless.

Here we have this Bill 27. We have a minister clearly being given an enormous amount of power under the terms and conditions of Bill 27, yet that same minister doesn't have any requirement for specific goals, either environmental goals – what about those environmental goals? Why under this bill, where this bill is supposed to be the Renewable Electricity Act, establishing the framework for getting 30 per cent by 2030, is the minister not required to make any environmental goals, no specific goals on the environment? Isn't the reason why we have this act all about the environment?

Here again there is no requirement for the minister to have any program objectives, specific program objectives, for the social impact. Here again, Madam Chair, one of the rationales behind getting to 30 per cent by 2030 was to improve health, to improve the health of Albertans, yet the minister is not required to specifically make any objectives regarding the social aspect of this act. It's a little bit odd when we have the minister of the environment, the Minister of Energy, the Deputy Premier, the Premier herself, and multiple members over there standing up, you know, beating the health care drum, saying, “We've got to have this because people are getting sick,” yet the minister is not required to establish any clear program objectives regarding the health of Albertans. Yet that is part of the justification for this bill's existence, getting to 30 per cent by 2030.

10:30

Then let's take a look at the economic goals. This government has claimed time and time again that the drive to 30 per cent by 2030 is going to provide thousands and tens of thousands of jobs to Albertans and that the drive to a carbon-constrained economy is going to be prosperous for us all. We've heard this time and again: thousands of jobs, that all those oil patch workers and all those coal miners and all those coal generating plant workers are going to find employment in this new green industry. Yet the very act that is bringing renewables to 30 per cent of generation by 2030 does not require the minister to create any program objectives regarding the economy. None whatsoever.

What this actually says, Madam Chair, in its current form, Bill 27 unamended, is this. One, the minister has the power to insist that renewable generation be constructed regardless of whether we need it or not to answer our demand load. Two, regardless of the impact on our economy the government is prepared to borrow whatever money is necessary to make it happen. Three, the Market Surveillance Administrator cannot be the watchdog over how this rolls out when it comes to renewables. Four, the minister, with all of that discretionary power, doesn't even need to create any program objectives to promote specific goals, including environmental, social, or economic.

In other words, Madam Chair, here we have someone given an enormous amount of power and zero accountability. Zero accountability. The minister doesn't need to create specific goals, no specific objectives, and this government is removing any ability to even measure the performance. They don't want to be measuring, don't want to be watching, don't want to be seeing if, in fact, the government's claims actually come true. There are no specific criteria, and there's no compulsion for the minister to make them.

This is another blank cheque. This is another situation where we have one individual being given an enormous amount of authority and power in our province. The watchdog can't watch, and Albertans cannot measure their performance. Is that the kind of transparency the NDP campaigned on? That's not transparency. That's not even opaque. That's a brick wall, and it's a protective brick wall where the minister is protected. The Market Surveillance Administrator can't even so much as accept a complaint, and even if they could, they can't investigate it.

This is not transparency, Madam Chair. What this amendment is trying to do is make the minister accountable for some achievement of clearly identified objectives. Now, I realize that's going to take some work. It's going to take some work on the part of the minister and the minister's department to actually develop clear, specific environmental goals, economic goals, and social goals for this particular bill. But a responsible government should do that. I guarantee you one thing. Any business or businessman or board of directors worth their salt would conduct these kinds of things and provide their company with these specific goals. You take any business course you want to take. Goal setting is always one of the key – key – elements to a successful business.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm sure it will come as a surprise to the opposition that I rise tonight to speak against this amendment as it is unnecessary and unhelpful given the full context of the bill.

The member opposite is endeavouring to create a problem out of section 3 where no problem currently exists. Section 3 simply allows the minister to direct the AESO to develop a program with

specific objectives for that one round of the program. These would be objectives over and above the general objectives that exist for every program in this bill. The member opposite suggests that without his amendment we might develop programs without objectives. However, clearly stated objectives are ubiquitous in the bill itself, with no need to require the minister to set additional ones.

The Legislature sets objectives by enacting this bill itself. I'm sorry that the members opposite don't support these objectives. Opposing renewable energy and the opportunities it brings for Alberta is certainly their prerogative. However, the government is setting the objectives in law. Let me take this opportunity to put them on record and to list some of them. Some of the objectives included in this bill are promoting the growth of renewable electricity generation in Alberta; reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality; ensuring that at least 30 per cent of electric energy produced in Alberta, measured on an annual basis, will be produced from renewable energy sources; promoting large-scale renewable electricity in Alberta; employing a fair, transparent, and competitive process that does not jeopardize the safe, reliable, and economic operation of the interconnected electric system. So right there we have half a dozen objectives for renewable electricity programs in the legislation. It's black and white. The minister need not necessarily set out more.

Now, section 3(2) is purposefully discretionary. What section 3(2) does allow for is that it allows the minister to set additional objectives or criteria. Say you wanted to incent a program that was based on community ownership or was based on inclusion of indigenous communities or was based on particular, specific technologies or specific rural or urban economic development objectives. This discretion will allow us to seek specific outcomes that are important to Albertans as we continue to hear from them and solicit their feedback. But to require the minister to set more objectives than are already in the act is unnecessary. For example, the first program procurement will be decided on price alone. Would the opposition require us to add other objectives rather than focusing the first program on one that ensures lowest cost?

Functionally this is why we oppose the amendment. It creates extra red tape and duplicates elements that are already in the bill, so I would recommend that everyone oppose it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I definitely want to speak about this. I'm just making some notes in response to the Member for Calgary-East. Unfortunately, I wish so much that what is laid out in this part of the bill was black and white. What we're actually asking for is exactly what you just said. We are asking that it "shall establish and make public." All that means is that it adds credibility to the minister's ability to bring forward programs. As you've said in your own speech just now, if it's best for Albertans, then Albertans should know. Right? We want to make sure that the words "shall establish and make public" add credibility to parts of this legislation so that, as the Member for Calgary-East just said, if the minister so chooses to bring forward programs, you have the capacity to do that.

Right now, as it stands, the minister has power over power and on almost every aspect. Not even almost. We're going to find everywhere in this bill the lack of oversight, the lack of metrics, the lack of desire to show transparency, which I believe was in the member's brief statement, too. How is it that members can justify transparency without legitimate words like "shall" and "must" and

“shall establish and make public” versus “may”? How can you even say the word “transparent” without making sure that the responsibility of that minister is to be transparent? Are we supposed to just trust that that’s what’s going to happen? I guarantee you that Albertans are not going to go for that.

10:40

The whole reason for putting these words into legislation is to protect Albertans, and governments shouldn’t be afraid of those words because ultimately it shows a government’s desire to make sure that they’re doing right by Albertans and are protecting Albertans. As the member stated, there may be ideas that the minister wants to bring forward, and he or she may think it’s a great idea, but without actually having those words in the legislation to make sure that they are managing the oversight on this, that minister could end up in a whole bunch of trouble.

This is actually protective. This is a protective mechanism not only for Albertans but also for the government because you have to go through the process of making sure that you’ve followed: shall establish and make public. Any time that you have to do something in public, the person is going to do their very best, and they’re going to make sure that they’re prepared and that, when they are standing in front of folks or they are presenting, they’ve gone to the work and the effort to make sure that all of those avenues have been checked.

It’s like anything. I could compare it to music even, doing a performance. You’re not going to just go and do a half-baked performance of something that’s very important to you in front of people that have either hired you or are having you there to do that job. That’s just in my little world of what I did before I was here. I can’t imagine not feeling that sense of responsibility. Sometimes you sign contracts for those things. Well, this is just a continuation of what a normal businessperson would do in a normal, everyday life when you have contractual obligations. I mean, putting in the words “shall establish and make public” should be something that we would demand from our government to make sure that they’re following through with their obligations. I would be proud to put that on something that I put forward because I know I would follow through with that. Even if, let’s say by accident, something happens, this wording that we’re actually wanting to put in will protect those folks that are doing that.

I also want to speak just on the enormous responsibility in what is going to come forward here with programs. You know, we see all sorts of information about particular types of renewables and alternative energy that’s gone wrong, pieces of massive infrastructure that have been left and not reclaimed all over the world. At the very least, we are asking the minister to make sure that this is public information. I mean, we’re dealing with municipalities here. Those municipalities don’t have the right to know what’s coming onto the lands in those areas? You were saying about indigenous folks and other things, Member for Calgary-East. Well, I would assume – I mean, maybe we’re the only ones who are seeing this – that consultation would be key. I would assume that those folks as well as anybody else whose land that these projects may be built on would want you to make sure the words “shall establish and make public” were in there. How else are we going to make sure that we have a check on a system where the only requirement is: well, maybe today I feel like doing that.

I mean, if feelings are going to determine legislation, we are in big trouble. Feelings are not going to justify bad decisions from this government. You’re in big trouble if you’re going to try and defend this one. I would suggest that everyone in this House vote in favour of this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, I just want to respond a little bit to some more on this amendment, this fine amendment, and some of the comments from I believe it’s Calgary-East.

The Member for Calgary-East pointed out in her rejection of this amendment that there are all kinds of program objectives already contained within Bill 27 – I believe that’s a fair paraphrase; would it not be a fair paraphrase? – which then leads to the obvious question: then why in heaven’s name do we have section 3(2)? Why do we have section 3(2)?

(2) The Minister may establish . . .

(b) specific evaluation criteria to be used by the ISO in developing a proposal for a renewable electricity program and in implementing a renewable electricity program to meet the objectives.

Why do we have this, then, if it’s already been done elsewhere in Bill 27? The logic falls down a little bit there, which is not uncommon. If we’re going to have this section in this bill where the minister may or may not do something, at least let’s make sure that the minister shall.

A second comment that I take exception to is that the hon. Member for Calgary-East seemed to think that members on this side of the House are somehow against renewables. That’s a really interesting comment given that, you know, for myself at least, that’s how I earned my living for many, many, many years, on alternative energy projects and teaching alternative energy curriculum at NAIT in the alternative energy program in the school of sustainable building management, and I’m still on faculty there. You know, that was my dream job. Someday, when I’m either worn out from beating on you guys or tired of talking in this place, maybe I’ll go back to that. I don’t know. You may want me to go back to that.

Here we have a situation where, you know, people on this side of the House actually do really appreciate renewables. The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View’s house is plastered with solar panels all over the roof. Anybody on that side got something like that?

**An Hon. Member:** No.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** No? Oh. See, in the world of renewable technologies one of the things that you really have to do is that you’ve got to put your money where your mouth is. In the industry that I came from, one of the questions that people always asked was: well, what have you got on the go yourself? I mean, our engineering people were being asked that all the time.

You know, taking that under advisement in the early days, it was kind of incumbent upon all of us to actually have these sorts of things in our homes and in our lives. Being a renter and not owning a home, of course, the landlord would frown terribly if I went up and started hammering solar panels on the roof. However, I spent the summer off grid, which was an enjoyable experience, in the middle of Sylvan Lake on a sailing vessel, off grid, solar powered, when the wind didn’t blow. As you may know, sailboats need wind, just like a wind turbine does. But living off grid with solar power was a fun experience for me. I know many people who do live off grid, who have various alternative forms of energy generation. Some of them are colleagues from industry. Some of them are just do-it-yourselfers.

You know, out west towards Edson and that way there are a number of people that are off grid. Some are grid tied, but many are off grid, people that I know. They’re experiencing what it’s like with renewables and the different changes to lifestyles that they have to incorporate in order for renewables to actually function for them given some of the constraints that we experience here such as minus 40, such as snow, ice, such as, you know, really huge demand loads,

things like that. We're really going to put some stress on the old batteries when the children come home and flip on every light and every electronic device, the television and everything else. These are some of the constraints you experience with renewable technology.

So over here on this side we are actually very pro renewables. One of the fundamental differences, though, between how we see to promote them and how the government sees to promote them is that we want renewables to be able to stand on their own two feet. We're not willing to sacrifice taxpayers. We're not willing to sacrifice Alberta's taxpayers or ratepayers in pursuit of something, especially as rapidly as this government wants to pursue it. Albertans have a right not to be disrupted.

**10:50**

As I think I've stated before in this House, one of the principles of sound energy management is to do no harm, and the reason why in industry, when we're incorporating energy management principles and energy efficiency measures, we do no harm is because the company is going to have to pay for these changes somehow. These energy efficiency measures cost money. These changes that we're going to incorporate take a lot of money. So if you start bringing in changes for the sake of renewables or the sake of energy efficiency and it hurts the bottom line of the company, you're actually gutting the company's ability to pay for the changes they want to incorporate when it comes to energy efficiency and renewable technologies.

This government came into power and immediately gutted, began and continued to gut, our economy, which ultimately has to be able to afford these very changes that they want to bring in. Right from July onward this government gets a failing grade when it comes to how one ought to roll out these kinds of things. The government has quoted me as being in support of some of the government's energy efficiency measures. I would love to, but unfortunately what has happened is that you've gutted the economy's ability to actually do them. The thing to do is to bring in measures that do no harm, and you bring them in slowly, and you do them bit by bit, here and there, here and there. You do pilot projects, and you prove that they work before you make these wholesale, sweeping, grandiose plans. This government has not done any of that.

This government has gone straight for the grandiose plans, thinking that they know best, and now we're talking about \$10 billion here and \$5 billion there and \$6 billion there. This is our people's money. This is our taxpayers' money, our ratepayers' money, and we don't have the minister being required to even create any specific economic goals. It's an option. I would hope that every member in this place would see the importance of making sure that the minister, with this much power in the minister's control – I would hope that they would appreciate helping Albertans by providing something like this, where the minister actually has some work to do, to create some specific goals.

As I have mentioned, we are very pro renewables over here, but it's going to have to be competitive, and it's going to have to stand on its own two feet, and it cannot constantly be living with both feet in the trough at the expense of Alberta's taxpayers.

I would hope that ultimately we see this government, government members, approve this very responsible amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Good evening, and thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 27. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed, please say no. So ordered.

**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent for one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Seeing the time and the progress and the robust debate that we've had this evening, I move that we adjourn until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:56 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms. Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Phillips
Babcock	Hoffman	Piquette
Bilous	Horne	Rosendahl
Carson	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Ceci	Larivee	Schmidt
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sigurdson
Eggen	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	McKittrick	Westhead
Ganley	Miller	Woollard
Gray	Nielsen	

**11:00**

Against the motion:

Aheer	MacIntyre	Schneider
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Smith
Hanson	Rodney	Yao
Loewen		

Totals: For – 35 Against – 10

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:01 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, December 7, 2016

Day 59

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (ND)  
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Government House Leader  
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)  
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition  
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
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McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)  
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House  
Services

Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and  
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Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
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Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

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Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

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Jabbour	Woollard
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Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Babcock	McKitrick
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Hanson	van Dijken
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Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning.

As we go about our work on behalf of the province and the people we serve, let us meet each new challenge with determination as we work to enrich the lives of the people of today, and let us strive to make good decisions for the people of tomorrow. Let us always give thanks to those who came before us.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

**The Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and good morning. Well, we have before us this bill, Bill 25. I'll call it the Limiting of Development bill. We have talked at length about the impact that this bill is going to have on development in the north. We have a situation where, by some estimates, the lost opportunity cost of following through with this bill as it currently stands is going to amount to hundreds of billions of dollars in lost opportunity. The actual cost of that lost opportunity translated into costs per tonne is estimated to be in excess of \$800. I believe the figure was \$863 a tonne of emissions. That is the lost opportunity cost that this government is attempting to force upon that sector and upon the people of Alberta.

Of course, what dollars and cents often do is that they miss the human factor. We talk in this House so much about a billion here and a billion there and now \$250 billion in development that's going to be capped, and really I think sometimes we lose the human element in those discussions. We have a sector, the oil and gas sector, in this province that is experiencing one of the worst economic downturns in the history of Alberta. We have a population province-wide that is also in that same problem. We have downtown Calgary, that according to reports has seen the loss of over 11,000 businesses, 11,000 businesses gone down. They've either shut down or moved.

Again, we talk about these statistics, and we forget to put a face to them. Those 11,000 businesses that are shut down represent moms and dads and children and futures, and those futures are at risk because of the policies of this government during, as I said, the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.

We have a government here that, unfortunately, doesn't understand that you do not kick people when they're down, and that's what this government has been doing from day one. They came into power knowing full well we were in an economic

downturn, and they immediately started raising taxes and fees, following in the footsteps of the government that they replaced.

This is really sad, that this government would continue on in that kind of a way to hurt the people of Alberta, impacting entire communities. It's been policy after policy, legislation after legislation attempting to somehow re-engineer the most resource-wealthy jurisdiction in all of North America to some sort of NDP utopia when, in fact, if we were to follow through unchecked in the methodology and the vision of the NDP world view, they will essentially drive us back to the Stone Age. We'll be driving around in windup cars in their so-called carbon-free environment that they want to try and create here, not realizing that in a carbon-free environment they won't be able to talk to one another on their cellphone. In their carbon-free vision they won't be able to paddle around in their plastic canoe. They won't be able to wear their synthetic shoes, wear their synthetic clothes in their synthetic house.

Madam Chair, this bill that we've got before us, just to put a face to it, represents a bill that is going to be hindering jobs for people. We've seen numerous pieces of legislation from this government that are attacking different sectors in this province. There was the agricultural sector, the agricultural sector that didn't meet the NDP world view. Numbers of us have had e-mails from greenhouse operators who are looking at the carbon tax and can't see a future for their business in this province, a carbon tax that this government justified by saying, "Well, we're going to really do something and provide leadership, global leadership, on the reduction of greenhouse gases," not realizing that for every greenhouse you shut down in this province, that's another truckload of produce coming out of Mexico: jobs that are lost in this province, taxes that won't be paid in this province, moms and dads whose children have a future at risk because of this government's illogic.

Now we have a bill before us that is capping emissions, but really it's a cap on development. It's another in the drive towards leaving it in the ground at a time, even, when for some crazy reason this government refuses to wait for a report from their own panel on this very subject, insisting that, well, we've got to get Bill 25 passed just as quickly as we can. Are we afraid to see what's in the report? I'm not afraid to see what's in that report. Let's have it, but let's have it before the legislation gets passed. There is a proper order to things here, and when you strike a panel, you wait. You wait until you hear the report from the panel. I remember we waited and waited and waited for the royalty review panel, and the government certainly didn't like that outcome very much. It was kind of embarrassing. The review panel came back and said: well, actually, it ain't that broke; it doesn't need fixing so much. In the meantime the very fact that we were having a royalty review resulted in investment fleeing this province to the tune of some \$40 billion. It seems to me the government dropped the ball there, too.

Now, when we come to this Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, we have before us an act that is going to cost the province again in lost opportunity. We're going to have stranded assets once again, just like we're having stranded assets in our electricity sector. Over and over again we see this government failing to do proper, thorough analysis, independent analysis by people outside their NDP bubble. Of course, even those who are inside the NDP bubble aren't going to get their day. We're not going to listen to what OSAG has got to say before this bill gets pushed through this House. That's, I think, an embarrassment to this government.

9:10

Now, again we come back to this issue that capping development in any way in a resource-rich province like this means capping jobs. It means capping futures. It means capping the prosperity of our

province, and I will say again that when it comes to the development of our resources, whether they be oil and gas, whether it be agriculture, whether it be forestry, each and every sector in this province is a sector we Albertans should be very proud of. You will not find another resource-rich jurisdiction anywhere in the world that has done such a good job of developing resources in a responsible manner as you will find right here in this province.

Some of us in this room have travelled to other nations in the world that are resource-rich nations. We've got nothing to be embarrassed about in this province. We should be holding our head up high because our industrial sector in this province has done a remarkably good job in developing the resources that we have.

In our agricultural sector are the stewards of the land, and they have done a remarkable job in increasing food production year by year by year and maintaining the quality of our land. Our resource sector has some of the best reclamation and remediation practices in the world, Madam Chair. In the world. As I've said, some of us have been to those other places that don't have those kinds of things. We have nothing to be embarrassed about. We should be holding our head high. We have been leaders on the environmental front when it comes to resource development from the get-go.

This government came to power, and by some of the rhetoric that you would hear, environmentalism in Alberta was somehow unheard of till they came to power, and that is simply not true. We have a remarkable legacy already. We have recycling programs here. We have waste reduction programs in our industries, in the construction industry and the resource development industry. They all had waste reduction strategies for years before this government came to power. We have had remediation and reclamation processes that were invented in this province long before this government came to power. Let's be clear: the NDP did not invent environmental responsibility, like they like to have everyone think is the case. Not true.

Albertans right across this province that are proud wearers of hard hats and gloves and workboots and Nomex: they have been responsible. They have been the leaders on the environmental front all the way along, and I am proud of them.

Now we have a government that is antibusiness, anti everything that could possibly lead to a recovery out of this economic problem that we're in. We have neighbours just to the east of us, in Saskatchewan, that are posting job growth, that are posting growth in their resource sector. They are doing remarkably well facing the very same global economic issues that we are facing, yet here we are stuck. We're not stuck on account of the economic situation globally. We are stuck because of the policies of a government that does not understand basic business. We're stuck with a government that has policy after policy that is based on the ideologies of tax, tax, tax, take that money and spend, spend, spend, and if government doesn't do it, then obviously it isn't going to get done. That is simply not true.

Government is just about the worst at doing everything, the best at taxing, and the most profoundly impactful in destroying economies. It's when government gets out of the way that economies flourish. Take a look around the world where you have had heavy-handed government, and what do you see? Poverty. Corruption. Harm. The vulnerable falling through the cracks. Governments that don't listen to their people. We have government after government taxing their people into the ground, and now we have one of our own right here in this province. I long for 2019, and so do millions of Albertans, because ultimately Albertans are going to have their day. They're going to have their day, and it's going to be glorious.

Here we've got this bill before us, Madam Chair. Overall a cap on emissions like this one is a cap on development and a cap on

prosperity, a cap on the future of our province and a cap on pulling us out of this deep recession that we're in. I do not support this bill. I'm not sure you could possibly offer up enough amendments to improve it, but we're going to try. That is our job, to come up with alternatives in an attempt to improve bad legislation like Bill 25, and we will continue to do that. My colleagues and I have a number of amendments in an attempt to improve this bad legislation, and I would hope that the government will listen to reason and listen to the sensibility of these amendments as we attempt, through these amendments, to improve the opportunity for our oil and gas sector to grow and to prosper and to provide badly needed jobs right across that sector.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for enduring me once again. I look forward to the next speaker.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Today I'm proud to stand here in this House as an Albertan, and I'm proud that Alberta is blessed with natural resources. But there is another thing we should all be proud about: having a legislator like the one from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. We are truly blessed to have a legislator like him, who can actually educate all of us so eloquently. It's up to us whether we want to use that information or not. At least he's working day and night to bring all of us up to date. It's unfortunate if you choose to close your eyes and ears, but I mean, we can't help that. I was quite impressed, and this file I understand a bit because I spent my life in this sector.

As I said, Madam Chair, I believe that climate change is real, and I do want to support any bills that would actually reduce emissions. In this case the intent is good. Like with many other bills this government has brought, the intentions are good, but the outcomes are nowhere close to what they say. The reason I oppose this bill is because of the hidden agenda of this government, and the hidden agenda came out yesterday when the Member for Edmonton-McClung got up and said: it's a cap on production. It's in the *Hansard*. You can look at that. The truth comes out once in a while. Yesterday he said many good points, but he also spoke the truth, that this is a cap on production. That's why I can't support this bill.

This bill is not only a cap on production; it's a cap on economic development and a cap on prosperity. Most importantly, actually, it's a cap on immigration. People like me, economic immigrants, move to this province because this province has the third-largest petroleum resource in the world, which means it's an opportunity for new immigrants to come here and have well-paid jobs and have quality of life. But this bill is going to actually cap those opportunities for new immigrants.

**9:20**

You know, Madam Chair, when economic immigrants come to this province, when they work in well-paid jobs, and when they contribute to innovation and all, they actually pay taxes here, and that contributes to the economy of the province. This bill is going to restrict that movement of economic immigrants across the country or across the world.

Madam Chair, the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake talked about the prosperity and the resourcefulness of other countries. I came from a country where I personally experienced energy hunger and energy poverty. I've travelled a lot in China and Europe and other provinces that also experience this energy hunger and energy poverty. But I came to Alberta, which has natural resources like coal or gas or oil, and it's unfortunate that we have a government here who wants to strand that resource. They want to leave it in the

ground. So all other things they say – they said before that they don't want pipelines. Now they say they do want pipelines. They talked about those two pipelines. I appreciate their efforts now. I congratulate them. In spite of them, we got that. Even if there was any little contribution from the NDP in obtaining approval for those pipelines, I appreciate them. Albertans salute that. But we are all looking forward to getting them built, actually. The Premier was in B.C. for two days, and she couldn't convince her own cousins in B.C., and she couldn't convince her own cousins in Manitoba a few months ago. We'll see how that goes.

Our Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner actually offered yesterday constructive co-operation. We'll do everything we need to do to help this government, to work with them to get those pipelines built. But, on one hand, they say that we want additional capacity to transport the oil; on the other hand, they want to keep the oil in the ground. There is no consistency here, so I don't know how to take them seriously. They say that they consulted the people of Alberta before they brought this bill in. I don't know who they consulted. They talk about those four CEOs. What about the people working in those companies, thousands of them, those employees who are Albertans, who actually own this resource? Those CEOs are big oil. They don't own the resource. Albertans own the resource.

I used to work for big oil. I don't now, because I work for Albertans. Albertans own this resource, and this government is elected to represent Albertans, hard-working Albertans, not the elites overseas and not the elites that oppose Alberta from Ottawa. We are here to represent everyday hard-working Albertans, but this government just called those four CEOs. They don't talk about the employees that work in those big corporations.

Funnily enough, they don't even want to consult CAPP. This is not the cap they are talking about, a cap on emissions. I'm talking about CAPP, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, who are the voice for upstream oil and gas in Canada. Their job is to promote the growth of the oil industry here in a responsible manner and to help them to become competitive and to advocate for the industry. This government conveniently chose not to consult them. I understand the minister told them that they will only have a seat at the table of the OSAG if they blindly support Bill 25. That is really appalling, Madam Chair. They say that they consult. With all the transparency they talk about, they don't even consult the main stakeholder, I mean, who is representing the producers in Canada. This government doesn't want to include them because they don't want to rubber-stamp this government's bill. It's so unfortunate. That's why I can't support this bill.

Also, you know, there were reports that we're going to strand \$250 billion of wealth in the ground. That's \$250 billion. They may not agree with that report, but the government should have done some economic impact analysis, which they have never shown to anybody. No Albertan knows what the economic impact of this policy is. These bills they're talking about, whether that is Bill 25 or Bill 27, will have far-reaching economic impacts for Alberta. That will impact future generations, too, but this government doesn't want to share that economic impact, if they have done it, and they don't tell us that they didn't do it. And when we are asking them to do it, they just don't listen because of their hidden agenda. Their hidden agenda is to leave the resource in the ground, and they've said that loud and clear many, many times.

**Mr. Eggen:** Then it's not hidden.

**Mr. Panda:** Then share the economic impact analysis with us.

Like I said before, you are not elected to solve the world hunger problem. You are elected to solve the problems of Albertans, who

are looking for work every day. There are people on the streets in Calgary waiting for this government to help them. This government seems to be talking about the elites of the world and the stars and, you know, celebrities, but they don't want to care about regular Albertans. This NDP is supposed to be the champion of everyday Albertans, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, the premise of this bill is to reduce emissions, so let's put that into context. The whole of Canada is only contributing 1.6 per cent of global emissions. Should we be complacent? No. We should do everything to reduce that to zero emissions, and the way to do it is through technological innovation and adopting the latest technologies. What about other countries, though, who are emitting 98.4 per cent of greenhouse gases? What about them? How can we help them without killing ourselves here, without strangling ourselves here? No other country in the world is leaving the resource in the ground. No other country in the world is giving away wealth of \$250 billion. Only Alberta wants to do that under the NDP. I can't understand that.

Like I said, all other countries are looking for the natural resources they don't have. Countries like China and India have hundreds of millions in a young workforce looking for work, but they can't put them to work because they don't have this kind of natural resource industry. Here we do have it, and we are stupid enough to say that we want to leave that in the ground because of our ideological policies. I don't get that. We can help those countries who are the major polluters by giving them the support they need with the latest technologies, whether it is clean coal technology or other tailings technologies that we use in mining or even water and vapor recovery technologies that we use here, the latest ones. We can support other countries so that they can reduce their emissions. Otherwise, even if we close all of our industry here, all we are going to contribute is not even 1.6 per cent. We have to look at it from that point of view.

**9:30**

I'm not saying that we shouldn't take leadership, but that leadership should not be at the disadvantage of the people that elected us. We're saying that this government is attacking the prosperity of the Albertans who elected them. It's biting the hand that feeds.

There is another thing, Madam Chair. This country is the second largest by area in the world, behind Russia, so that means we need some carbon dioxide here to grow the trees and plants and forests and whatnot. You know, I'm just talking here. I'm a science student. Don't call me a climate change denier; I've already said that a hundred times. We need to do a study for the supply and demand of carbon. Carbon is required to some extent. So have we done that study, whether we are net positive or net negative in the supply and demand of carbon? I haven't seen that from this government or from the minister of environment. That's the other thing Albertans are looking for. What if we determine after the study that we are actually negative in carbon supply?

If that is the case, then we can brand our petroleum products as the greenest on the planet, and we should be getting a premium for our product. Once we determine that we are actually low in the supply of carbon in this country, we can market our products with a branded advantage. Has this government thought about that? Nobody talked about that. Nobody wants to talk about that from the NDP. So that is the other thing we need to look at. In that case, if we could prove that it is not dirty oil – it's the greenest oil – then we can brand our product, and it won't be called dirty oil anymore. That will help us actually to diversify the market and diversify market access. This government doesn't want to talk about that. I encourage them to talk about that.

Like I said, Madam Chair, this CLAP, climate leadership action plan, doesn't achieve the intended results because we can't control other countries. There is no way we can isolate our country from those emissions coming from other polluters, whether it is south of the border or from Asia or Africa, from anywhere, because there is no technology yet to build walls in the sky to isolate ourselves. I don't know if the NDP is thinking about that. Today we're trying to control emissions here, but other countries they can't control, and we can't prevent the wind blowing to our side, bringing all the emissions from other countries. [interjection] Yeah.

Madam Chair, another thing is that, you know, technologies evolve over a period of time. Like, 60 years ago nobody thought we would have the technology to separate oil from the sands. So one day there could be a technology, and we may not need oil to run our cars or heat our homes. Tomorrow somebody might discover a technology wherein you can actually run your automobile with water or air. What happens then? Then this resource that we own will become redundant, so you have to leave it in the ground permanently anyway when we discover those technologies.

Before that happens we have to market the product we own. We have to get the best value for it. So leaving that in the ground is not a solution. Imagine that. If there is no demand for our product because of a new technology wherein you don't need oil to run your vehicles or heat your home, your product becomes redundant, so it's prudent on our part to market the product when there is still demand for our product in the market. It would be stupid for us not to take advantage of that.

Madam Chair, for those reasons that I said, I can't support this bill.

And this government-appointed oil sands advisory group: they haven't given a seat on that committee to CAPP, which is the main advocacy group for the oil and gas sector in Canada. Also, like the previous speaker said, there were people on this committee representing OSAG who are actually paid by this government, and they're actually working against Albertans' interests. They're doing fundraising to protest against the Trans Mountain pipeline. How is that going to help Albertans when taxpayer money is used to pay the protestors to sit on OSAG? I don't get that.

For all those reasons that I explained and, as I said before, as the government hasn't shown us yet the economic impact analysis for this file, I'm going to bring an amendment, Madam Chair, with your permission. I hope that with all the explanation I gave and the other members on this side gave, the members on the government side will support this common-sense amendment to make their bill better. I have the requisite copies. If you'll permit me, I'll start reading the amendment.

**The Chair:** If you could give me a moment for the amendment. However, you're going to run out of your speaking time.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just wondering if the Member for Calgary-Foothills might like to expand on how this is such a common-sense amendment.

**The Chair:** This amendment will be known as amendment A5.

You can go ahead, hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, and speak to your amendment.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is a common-sense amendment because Albertans are looking for the economic impacts of this reckless policy. This government talks about being progressive. There is nothing progressive about this bill. It's regressive, and it's all ideological, and it's so radical. There is nothing progressive about this bill. When you want to strand the

resource and leave \$250 billion worth of prosperity in the ground: so reckless.

That's why it's a common-sense amendment, asking you to look at the economic impact of this bill and tell your families, your neighbours, your friends, the people that you represent, and the world that we actually did this economic impact analysis and this is what we found. If you come out and say, "Well, we are not leaving that much resource in the ground," we'll change our minds. If you're saying that it is going to reduce emissions substantially, we'll support that. It's on you to prove that. But you're not sharing that information with us.

That's why I'm bringing this amendment, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended by adding the following after section 4:

**Economic impact assessment**

5(1) One month after the date on which this Act receives Royal Assent, the Minister shall prepare a projection of the impact of the oil sands greenhouse gas emission limit established in section 2(1) on Alberta's economy.

(2) The Minister shall lay a copy of the projection prepared under subsection (1) as soon as practicable before the Assembly if it is then sitting or, if it is not sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

**Coming into force**

6(1) This Act comes into force 60 days following the date on which the Minister lays the projection prepared under section 5(2) before the Assembly.

**9:40**

Madam Chair, I'm truly convinced that this is a reasonable amendment. This gives the government an opportunity to address the issues and concerns we've raised, particularly when they haven't consulted Albertans on this bill. It's accountability for the government to educate people on the economic impact of this reckless, regressive, ideological bill, and that will give them a real opportunity to step back and to do some economic impact analysis and convince Albertans that this bill is the right bill to pass in this Legislature.

With that, Madam Chair, I ask all members of this House from both sides of the aisle to please, please consider this amendment in the interests of Albertans and in the interests of the people we represent and for the benefit and prosperity of not only our generation but the generations to come.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for being able to speak to, I guess, A5, the amendment that was proposed here today. Really, what we're doing is an economic impact study. An economic impact study is probably the most important thing that they could be doing at this point in time. When you're looking over what has been said up to this point in time, for Alberta we need to have an economic impact study done. This is our main industry. Frankly, this is the number one industry in our province. Then we have our agricultural sector. Because this is such a huge industry, if we don't, that's the most irresponsible thing that we could be doing, limiting what we could be potentially seeing for what kind of production we could have.

You know, if you look at this, our oil: we have the most ethical oil in the world, and we have probably the cleanest environment for people to produce oil, and they get a fair price for their work while they do this extraction. So if you don't do an economic impact study, you are limiting all those different areas.

Again, going back to my first point, being the cleanest oil extraction, that we have, when you look at this extraction, if we limit our extraction to the 100 megatonnes, then other places, other jurisdictions in the world, as the demand for oil increases, will pick up and be able to supply that. We have no control over which countries will be picking up the production. If it's from countries that, frankly, have bad environmental policies, bad human rights policies, countries that don't pay their workers well, well, shame on us. Shame on us here in Alberta for doing that. That's just a wrong thing, a wrong approach, and it's a bad approach that we're going down. You know, that's the direction that we seem to be going.

The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake said that a better name for this bill would be the Limiting of Development bill. Well, I think this could also be called the Lost Opportunity bill – that could be a very good name – or the Antibusiness bill. These are things that are happening, and it's really limiting what we're doing.

He's asked for very simple requests.

Economic impact assessment

5(1) One month after the date on which this Act receives Royal Assent, the Minister shall prepare a projection of the impact of the oil sands greenhouse gas emission limit established in section 2(1) on Alberta's economy.

(2) The Minister shall lay a copy of the projection prepared under subsection (1) as soon as practicable before the Assembly if it is then sitting or, if it is not sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Coming into force

6(1) This Act comes into force 60 days following the date on which the Minister lays the projection prepared under section 5(2) before the Assembly.

I think that's a very, very reasonable request because we need to know what it's going to cost Alberta. You know, the Fraser report had a price on this, basically just an estimate. If we go with the Fraser report, it's going to be \$150 billion to \$250 billion. That's huge. That in itself is antidevelopment. We've lost the potential for that kind of money to be in our economy. This is antibusiness, anti our main industry.

As I mentioned before, it does not make our environment cleaner when the rest of the world will be producing oil and extracting oil and using oil, not clean like we are here in Alberta but under their terms. If we're able to produce oil and extract oil the way we have been doing and progressing with cleaner technologies – frankly, we always keep going with cleaner technologies. It's just been that way. I remember the 1970s. I'm going to go back and do a little history. When I remember the '70s, I remember seeing the stacks that were puking out all sorts of fumes, et cetera. There were fish that were, frankly, being killed in the Great Lakes because they were not using proper technologies.

So we didn't have to restrict. We didn't have to do this. We've come from that in the 1970s to now without having these antibusiness kind of bills that are happening. We need to make sure that we are looking at this. We have been able to go from poor extraction to great extraction to the cleanest extraction in the world. We did that without having to limit ourselves, and we were able to see a great amount of money and a great amount of prosperity in this province. Without an economic impact study, we don't know what that is going to mean for Alberta. How much will we lose in potential development that we could be doing? What is the lost revenue? How many jobs are lost? How many people will be left out of work because of this? An economic impact study would show that.

You know, we've got hard-working men and women in our oil sands industry right across this province. They get up each day to work and to make sure that it's done in a clean, safe manner. Right now with this bill, like I say, we are limiting ourselves. We need to

know for those men, women, and the businesses that are in this province what that is going to mean to them. How much money will they be losing as a result, like I say, of this, frankly, bad bill? To me, this is the most practical kind of solution, to have an economic impact assessment done.

You know, contrast that right now with what they've got going in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is seeing an uptick in their industry while we are going backwards. We are going downhill. That's telling me a lot. That's telling me that investors are now trying to change from where they're looking at Alberta – that's the economic impact that's already starting to happen – and they're moving over to Saskatchewan. Do we want to limit ourselves so that we are not going to be able to take care of the men and women that have these good-paying jobs, ones that can look after their families and help out our province?

9:50

In the meantime they're always developing new, cleaner technologies. That's part of what we can do through our universities, supporting the universities and supporting the industry and providing directions. That's what we as a government should be doing, providing direction, not saying that you are absolutely limited to this cap, this 100-megatonne cap. It's irresponsible, and I'm definitely opposed to that. Frankly, this cap is an arbitrary cap. I've asked the government, but I've not heard a clear answer as to why a 100-megatonne cap is the cap that we should be at. How did you determine that? Was it just because 100 a nice, round number?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** It's a prime number.

**Mr. Taylor:** It's a prime number. Yes. Thank you. I mean, that's a good reason, perhaps. I don't know.

Why 100? Why not 200? How did you come up with this number? It's going to affect what happens in this province. It's, frankly, antibusiness because when you have 100 megatonnes, what other players are going to want to come to our province when they know they have that limit? They know that they may be pushing up to that cap, so all of a sudden: "Well, I guess I'm not going to go into Alberta, but Saskatchewan is business friendly. Let's go to Saskatchewan. I like the idea of Saskatchewan."

We're just shifting the business from Alberta to Saskatchewan. You know, we're shifting that business over there. You're saying that you want to make it so that it's a cleaner environment here, but if Saskatchewan is producing more – well, the winds kind of blow. You've figured that out. I mean, that's been a basic scientific fact. Whether it blows from Venezuela or it blows from Chile or it blows from Saudi Arabia or from Saskatchewan or North Dakota, those carbons still move, and they'll be moving around into Alberta. If you limit how much we can produce, they're going to blow into our province regardless, but if we can be responsible and make it so it's clean technologies that are coming out of our province, we kind of stifle some of that development that still goes on in the rest of the country, the rest of North America, the rest of the world. Frankly, I think that's the most responsible thing that we could be doing, and this is the most irresponsible part of this.

To be able to get to a point to have this clean oil extraction and to be able to make it so that people want to have clean oil extraction – if you limit it, we're not getting new players into this province. They're not going to be excited about having to develop new technologies for Alberta because, frankly, you're limiting the business.

The first thing we need to do is find out: how much money will we lose in this province as a result of this bill? For that reason, I cannot support this bill. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It isn't a surprise that I will be supporting this amendment, that's asking for an economic impact study. Instead of going into the actual specific amendment and reading this out, what I'm trying to do is give it some sort of perspective that people can relate to.

Now, I'm going to actually give this a smaller scope. I'll go to an article written on September 7, 2012, in the *Atlantic*. The title is *If You Build It, They Might Not Come: The Risky Economics of Sports Stadiums*. Now, right under the title we've got, I guess, a little bit of a breakdown of what exactly it's about, and it says: "The trials of the Phoenix Coyotes, the least popular hockey team in the NHL, offer a lesson in public debt and defeat." We're looking at, specifically, a lesson that's been learned by a municipality within the United States that has actually done an economic impact study. The problem here is that even with impact studies, you can still be sent down the wrong direction, but at least you've done some due diligence to be able to decide exactly where the public is going.

Now, I'm going to read a part of this. There are three paragraphs of this article that I'm going to read.

To put the deal in perspective, Glendale's budget gap for 2012 is about \$35 million. As the city voted to give a future Coyotes owner hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, it laid off 49 public workers, and even considered putting its city hall and police station up as collateral [to get] a loan, according to the Arizona Republic. (The latter plan was ultimately scrapped.)

Overall, Glendale is not only on the hook for \$15 million per year over two decades to a potential Coyotes owner, but also a \$12 million annual debt payment for construction of its arena. In return, according to the Republic, the city receives a measly "\$2.2 million in annual rent payments, ticket surcharges, sales taxes and other fees." Even if the Coyotes were to dominate the league like no other in recent memory and return to the Stanley Cup Finals year after year, the city would still lose \$9 million annually.

This is an altogether too common problem in professional sports. Across the country, franchises are able to extract taxpayer funding to build and maintain private facilities, promising huge returns for the public in the form of economic development.

Now, in our case we are promising huge returns for Albertans by putting a cap on our ability to do business. In this case, they were at least putting money towards something that could potentially bring money into their community. In the end what happened is that the council, instead of using reasoned thought to move this forward, decided to go all-in without doing enough research into exactly the impacts to their community. Now, we're looking at this example and saying: well, this seems to be a lot smaller example, according to what we're dealing with, which is, from my honoured colleague here saying, the potential of limiting us from bringing forward the opportunity cost of about \$250 billion.

Now, in this case here they're going to be bringing in a little bit of money, but they're spending a lot of money to get it. This is exactly where we're at right now. We're running massive deficits in Alberta. Now, you would say: "Okay. In this case we've got a sports team. We think that it's going to bring growth to the community. It's going to bring recreation." What we're saying with the debt cap is that it's going to give us the authority to be able to bring our oil to markets.

10:00

Now, I guess I'm confused, and I would love to hear from a member from the other side. How is it responsible for us to not put forward an economic impact study on something that is going to radically impact all of our constituents? The answer is that they

don't want the answer. If they vote this down, they want to keep Albertans in the dark. They want Albertans to understand that in the end the intent of this government isn't the well-being of Albertans but an ideology that is moving forward.

I'm going to move on to my next article. The next article came out on December 7 in the *Calgary Sun*. This is an article by Gunter: *Fraser Institute Survey Shows Alberta is Headed Down with a Bullet*. Now, what we're looking at is that when Albertans brought in a new government, I truly believed that Albertans were wary but willing to hear what the NDP were going to do. We all know that there is some radical side or ideological base that comes with the NDP, but that's not what they campaigned on. They didn't campaign on harming Alberta. They didn't campaign on a carbon tax. They didn't campaign on unlimited debt. But here we are. The point is that – to go back to this article, because I am referencing this article – as soon as they were elected, according to the Fraser Institute we dropped from 13 to 25 as a good place to do business within the industry. Since these last 19 months we've actually seen it drop consistently further down, and now we're looking at this new report that shows that we're actually 43 out of 96. That is truly shocking.

Now, I'd like to put some perspective to this again. I'd like to put this forward. That means that Alberta now ranks behind Malaysia and Vietnam, and we're only slightly above Egypt, Gabon, and Pakistan. The only one that is really showing strength in this report is our neighbour Saskatchewan, which is ranked fourth place. How can we move so radically downwards? The question always comes down to government policy. Saskatchewan has been able to maintain its ability to show investors that they're a good place to invest. We are next door, and we have been leaders and stewards, which we heard from my colleague, leaders and stewards of our environment, yet somehow we've demonized our own oil and our own businesses that are doing the oil extraction and our own environment by our government. They're saying: we're going to fix something that's broken, and we're going to do it on the backs of Alberta taxpayers. This is truly shocking. This is truly a concern that I've got, and I can tell you that this is a concern that my constituents have as well because they're the ones that are going to end up paying this tax bill if the government gets this wrong.

We're seeing these warnings. These warnings are consistently being brought out by the Alberta people, the Alberta business community, and – guess what? – Canada and the rest of the world. We're seeing that we're starting to drop. It's because we're not listening to how the market works. We're not listening, and we're not moving in the direction that is a positive direction for Alberta. What we need to be doing is that we need to be actually moving stuff forward, and without an economic impact study how do we know that this isn't going to be a move that will debilitate us for generations, like in the first example that I had?

They have actually put 20 years of payments on the backs of their taxpayers when there was not enough work put into the ground game to make sure. They were even willing to bet the house on it, I mean, their wonderful town hall and their police station. That's how much they believed in that, and this is where the NDP government is going. They believe that they're going in this direction. They're not willing to listen to anybody. They're not willing to do economic impact studies. They're not willing to be connected with Albertans, and that, Madam Chair, is what the real problem of this is. It's that in the end it's the opposition that is trying to bring forward a positive move, saying: let's slow this down; let's wait until OSAG comes back with some of its review decisions. I am sure that this government is rushing through this because they know that they're not going to like the answers that are coming from that group because we have board members on that group that are actually

trying to work against us, trying to get pipelines into the ground, and that seems to be exactly what the NDP are saying.

Now, I will commend the NDP on moving forward these two pipelines. This is good for Alberta. I am glad to see that the NDP are actually moving forward a goal of moving this forward. I will say that I'm uncertain, and I will always be uncertain. I think Albertans will be uncertain if this social licence played the role in this. I think that in the end what we're looking at here is a government that was able to move two replacement pipelines in and was able to move this forward. I am looking forward to the Minister of Energy being able to honour the commitment of shovels in the ground within a year, which she committed to in the House, because the big problem that past governments have had is being able to get the approval but not actually getting the shovels in the ground. I want and I know my caucus wants to help the government in any way possible to get the shovels in the ground.

I know that we're trying to work with the government, and the way we can do this is by showing Albertans, showing Canadians that there is actually some sort of good reason to be able to support these pipelines, and an economic impact study is the way to do that, by showing everybody that Canada itself will be improved by moving forward with this. But by ignoring the numbers, we are ignoring all the consequences that come along with this. How can we convince people that this is the right decision for anybody when we can't even come up with how it's going to impact us as Albertans? I can tell you that it is frustrating that we continue to bring forward the concern that impact studies should be done.

I'll tell you that when it comes to Bonnyville-Cold Lake, it is jobs, lack of investment in my riding. The one big thing that I am hearing day after day is: how can we get more investment happening? To hear that the oil companies are waiting until 2019 to do a lot of their investment is an unfortunate coincidence that it will probably line up with the election. I am very concerned that should we get another term with this government, it will continue along with these policies that will end up with another four years of lack of investment in my riding, which will eventually mean that I'll end up, unfortunately, on the side of the coal towns that we're seeing that are being shut down, and I don't want that for my riding. Bonnyville-Cold Lake deserves better. We deserve to make sure that we responsibly take these resources out of the ground, and by putting a cap, we are ensuring that there's going to be less and less investment, fewer jobs, and that means that we're going to really harm my riding.

I don't know if the government has even considered the people that are going to be affected by this cap, and this cap will definitely – definitely – impact my riding. It will definitely impact Fort McMurray. It will definitely impact Calgary. It will definitely impact Edmonton. Whether they see it directly impact: well, that's up, again, to how the markets go. I'll tell you that right now I am very dissatisfied with the fact that we continue to go down this road blindly when there are clear signs of warnings. How many more warnings do we need to have before this is just plain negligence on our government?

Thank you, Madam Chair.

10:10

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member for Calgary-Foothills made a statement that I would just like to add on to. One of those things is being absolutely grateful for having the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake on our team. He's certainly been a mentor for me, and it's given me a great deal of information and places to

go to learn about this portfolio and about where we've come from and where we're going. I just am extremely grateful for the amount of intelligence and the academia that he brings to this file. It's been a tremendous, tremendous help over on this side of the House for my learning curve, anyway.

One of the other things I wanted to say, too – a couple of things really stuck out from what the Member for Calgary-Foothills said. You know, this is a humongous number: \$250 billion in wealth. This government has a ton of things that they want to accomplish, a lot of goals, lots and lots of goals, and capping production would seem very counterintuitive to a lot of the programs that the government wants to bring forward. I mean, if you're able to actually help Albertans benefit from that, you're going to have to tax them less, and you'll have those dollars put in some really incredible programs that the government has brought forward, very thoughtful ideas. But you don't have to go to the taxpayer for that; \$250 billion of wealth is a potential.

Instead of the government actually developing this amazing resource that we have literally under our feet, it's going to the next resource, our human resource. We're going to the people to somehow come up with the dollars that are needed to run programs that this government wants to put through. First of all, that's not sustainable, and, second of all, we actually have the ability to bring those dollars here even with low oil. Even under the circumstances we are in now, why would the government at this point in time choose to cap? I'm going to go into some of the numbers because I think the numbers are important to determine, especially over on this side, to show that this is about environmental. This is about making sure that the diversification that is so important to this government actually has legs and has the availability to do that.

My father also came from India, in 1963, close to the area where the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills came from. He came in 1963 as a young chemical engineer, and he actually studied at the University of Alberta and met my mom here in Edmonton and married her and then moved to Calgary. He had a lot of different options coming from India as to where he could have gone to pursue this degree, but he came here. You know, he is such a true Albertan and loves this province and is so completely grateful for the opportunities that were provided to him and how he has been able to raise his family and put his stamp on this energy sector. He worked mostly with sour gas and came up with several processes, actually, that were able to transform and change sour gas into sweet gas.

It was one of those things where as a small child growing up, he used to take me out to the field. I've been out to Drayton Valley and Devon many, many times, not realizing what it was that I was seeing because I always got to sit in the little trailers with these, you know, burly oil guys that would make me hot chocolate and sit down and play cards with me while my dad was going out and checking his valves on his sites. One of the things that I remember immensely was the tremendous love that these folks had for their industry, and so many of them actually were immigrants, so many of them. Equally so, we had these incredible Albertans, this embracing community of people that worked together to bring subsurface up to create prosperity for Albertans. I mean, it's incredible. Again, as a little girl, like, I would look at these little dials and stuff coming out of the ground. It didn't make any sense to me, but I thought it was just amazing to be part of that process as a young person.

When the member also talked about energy poverty: I've also been in India when that happens in the middle of some of the hottest days, the hottest days in southern India, when you have a brownout in the middle of the day because the hydro has run out, and you are seeking any shelter that you can. For those of us who had the

privilege of coming from families that were privileged, you are so grateful that you can go into a space that is at least concrete in the middle of your house or into some area while millions of people were seeking shade outside in intense heat. I mean, you cannot imagine that until you've actually been there.

On the flip side, we live in a country where we have to heat our homes. I mean, I'm the coldest person on the face of the earth. I freeze every single second of my life. I am so, so completely grateful to be able to warm my hands at a heater. It's one of those things that when you have the privilege, again, of being in this portfolio, you realize at a visceral level how lucky you are. Can you imagine if you didn't have the availability of that?

Now, I'm not saying that that's what this government is doing, not by a long shot. But what we're trying to compare is that we've seen in other countries where the mechanisms are not there for consistency, the mechanisms are not there to even be able to supply to the people who live there. In a place where we are so fortunate to have so much and the availability to develop it and, potentially, get that to global markets and, potentially, be able to provide energy, ethical energy, environmentally responsibly developed energy, to other countries, why would we cap that? The win-win of that isn't just for our own country, but it's for other countries and also for our own prosperity.

I've said this before, and I'll say it again, and I want to be extremely clear. The government talks about environmental impact. Well, the most conducive way to reduce environmental impact is to produce here. The more that we produce here and the more that we're able to get on the global market, the more that we take a bite out of the markets that do not produce the way that we do. Now, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't do better. A hundred per cent agree. There is so much amazing innovation that is out there that will help the government get to their goals in ways that are actually salient, that actually work with the energy industry, that actually allow production to happen but in a way that is even becoming more environmental.

I was just reading that there are two groups, actually, that are working specifically towards that. There are two organizations, Carbon Management Canada and the Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance. These groups are already working towards innovating within the oil sands to become better and to produce fewer emissions. These were already on the docket long before this climate action plan came into being. The curiosity always comes down to that in a country and especially in a province like ours, as the government has said, there's definitely room for improvement, but even without those things there, these industries have already gone there. They have already succeeded in so many ways to become more environmentally conscious, and imagine, given the opportunity to continue on that, what is possible.

You know, we've been asking about this 100-megatonne cap. Where did it come from? Well, if you look at the numbers, the oil sands output would have only reached 125 megatonnes by 2045 anyway. So that random number of 100 was just – I mean, all you had to do is look at the reports and look at the numbers to see where they actually would have been at. I mean, I've got lots of numbers to share with you.

I was also wondering if the government was aware that emissions have actually levelled off in recent years, and that was actually reported by Environment Canada in 2015. That report was actually sent to the United Nations framework convention on climate change. We've levelled off even though production has increased. Isn't that amazing? That's already happening.

**10:20**

The other thing – and I'm going to be talking about this a little bit later as well. There are provisions on the 100-megatonne cap for

cogen, and we've already talked about upgrading. Well, what does that mean? Why would you cap upgrading – we've already talked about that – especially when there are jobs here and we do it more environmentally responsibly here? Why would you cap cogeneration, especially on electricity, when that increases efficiency in situ? Why would you do that? It makes absolutely no sense.

There are many, many changes and improvements that have been made in the performance of the oil sands, and a big part of that has to do with increasing efficiency. If you consider the business model, it makes sense that the oil sands would want to be as efficient as possible. Every time they're inefficient, they lose dollars, they lose on all sides of that. It would make sense from any business perspective to be as efficient and as environmentally responsible as possible.

You know, if we're looking at the emissions cap, under the worst-case scenario, if nothing changed with emissions, we would only change it by about 25 megatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, and that's without any efficiency changes. If we had efficiency changes, which we're assuming and hoping will happen from these groups, that's going to go down to 15 megatonnes. So what does that mean globally? Point zero three five per cent at the max and .021 per cent in the global scenario. It's teeny tiny.

One of the things that I would like to – and going back to the member's amendment, we want to see this material quantified. The government owes it to Albertans to quantify the effects and to make sure that we have adequate metrics to show what it is that we're looking for and to make sure that we have an economic impact analysis which takes all of the things that I've been talking about into account because that shows transparency on behalf of the government.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? I'll recognize Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I really appreciate the opportunity to rise this morning and speak to the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills. I'm constantly amazed more by what the opposition members speaking to this amendment omit rather than what they actually speak about. They speak about stranding assets, and they speak about lost economic opportunity, and they speak about us being enemies of the oil sands and that we're going to put ourselves in jeopardy of losing the opportunity to develop the asset when, in fact, what the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act itself does is the opposite. It protects our ability to develop the asset over time. It has gained us the opportunity to develop the asset. What it has done, if you want to really know what the economic impact of the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act is, are two pipelines. That's what it's gotten us: the ability to export the material in a pipeline.

Now, the opposition may not want to recall this, but the Prime Minister was very clear when he said that it was because of our government's leadership and our climate leadership plan that he was able to confidently say yes to both of the recently approved pipelines. He said that "we could not have approved this project without the leadership of Premier Notley, and Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan – a plan that commits to pricing carbon and capping oilsands emissions at 100 megatonnes per year."

Industry knows that this cap will make our oil and gas sector more competitive. The CEO of Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance praised our cap when he said, "With the technology being developed in Alberta we are confident Alberta can continue to grow its industry while reducing emissions."



As far as economic impact goes, the climate leadership plan is directly responsible for the federal approval of two new energy infrastructure projects, the Trans Mountain expansion and Enbridge line 3, that are critically important to Alberta's economy. TMX provides access to tidewater, allowing Alberta's oil sands industry to sell traditional energy products at better prices to new markets. This project alone is estimated to lift Alberta's GDP by about 1 per cent by 2022. These are facts that the opposition tends to conveniently forget because they allow us to actually develop our oil sands over the long term.

If you really are looking to protect that asset, if you really want to make sure that that asset doesn't get stranded, if you're serious about getting our oil products to market, to tidewater, to receive full price, world price, for them, then indeed you have to know that protection of that right comes with responsibility. That responsibility is to ensure that the pipelines get built, and they get built by properly respecting the fact that there are two sides of the coin to the arguments regarding pipelines. There's definitely respect for the environment and those who want to preserve the environment. There's also the economic impact that not building those pipelines would have, and those have to be balanced.

This is the thing that is conveniently forgotten by the opposition when they're asking for an economic impact assessment, thinking that the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act is something that would strand an asset. Exactly the opposite happens, Madam Chair. What happens is that, as a result of the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, we get access to tidewater, we get two pipelines approved, we get our product to market, we put people to work, we build pipelines, and we end up using that asset over the long term to benefit the economy of Alberta in a way that the opposition would have us forget about. We're not going to do that. We're not going to be looking in the rear-view mirror driving the car. We're going to be looking forward because that's what we were elected to do, and we'll continue to do so every day that we're here in this House.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Before I recognize the next speaker, just a reminder not to use individuals' names. Be cautious of that and aware of that. Thank you, hon. members.

Go ahead, Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to rise and, you know, speak about this amendment from the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills. I think it's a common-sense amendment, and it shows that the minister should prepare a projection. It's an old saying, you know: if it doesn't get measured, it doesn't get done. If the government is so confident that this Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act is going to make our Earth a better place, then maybe we should have a projection on it.

I don't see anything in this bill that's going to improve our industry, the industry that has been a backbone of our province, that industry that has been a backbone of our country. We can see that in, you know, the equalization payments coming from this province. Limiting this industry: it's not a good thing. I don't think we're doing a favour to our province, to Albertans, and our future generations. I don't see any good thing that's coming out of this. It's killing the competition. It's killing the development and, you know, giving a limit of 100 megatonnes to only four bigger corporations, leaving all the smaller corporations out of the picture.

The minister is basically saying that she's not willing to talk to the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. It's not a very good time because they would have told the hon. minister: look; this emissions act is not a good act.

You know, I spent a lot of time in oil and gas, and definitely we all know that the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills spent his entire working career in oil and gas. This is coming from, you know, the horse's mouth. We cannot punish the industry that has been a backbone of this country and our province and our future generations.

I just want to ask the members from across the aisle: I mean, how many members have worked in this industry? I don't think very many. One or two. That's fine. Good. You should be supporting this amendment, and you should be voting down this bill. Let's rise above the party line. Let's rise above the ideological movement and, like, the world view and stuff like that and do what is right for our future, do what is right for our future generations.

**10:30**

I'm supporting this amendment. I think the minister should prepare a projection and should give it to Albertans, share that with them and tell them, like, how it's going to impact industry, how it's going to impact the revenue stream.

That's all, Madam Chair. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A5? Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to rise for a minute or two. I want to thank my colleague from Calgary-Foothills for this excellent amendment. I, too, will be supporting it. It's just a chance for a little reflection on where the government is headed. It's just a chance for understanding further what the unintended consequences are going to be and a chance to maybe make some adjustments and help those that are going to be affected by this.

Madam Chair, I think there are three key areas that this economic impact assessment needs to look at. First of all, this managed reduction, this slowdown, is going to have huge negative impacts on jobs, on our local economy, and not only in the north but, my goodness, in Medicine Hat, Redcliff, Bow Island. There's tons of production for our good oil sands producers in Quebec and everywhere, throughout Alberta and throughout Canada. So let's take a look at what that difference will be and how we can ensure that Albertans and Canadians have an opportunity to participate and have an opportunity to find the best social program, a job, somewhere else.

The second area of impact is that if there's a lower economy, there's going to be less tax revenue, impacts of \$150 billion to \$250 billion over approximately a 20-year period for that much smaller economy at a 10 per cent provincial corporate tax rate, not counting what all the spinoff would be. They say that money can expand at seven or nine times through the private economy. The amount of government services and government programs, the front-line workers that this is going to reduce or has the potential to reduce: it should be analyzed.

You know, when I hear the number that we'll be \$3 billion in interest payments just two, two and a half years from now and I'm sitting here reading in the news today that the average Albertan family is almost \$25,000 in debt before this, this is going to have huge impacts on government services and where that leads us to. And as so many other countries and provinces are borrowing at the same time, that may have some unintended consequences of higher interest rates.

Madam Chair, I think the third thing an economic impact assessment has to look at is where our biggest customer, the United States, is at. My goodness, in the last several years they've been very aggressive, they've been very efficient, and they've become darn near self-sufficient in producing oil and gas at the same time

that we are managing our decline. I was shocked the other day. I was reading how during the time we've been debating the Keystone, American interests have built more pipelines longer than the Keystone by two times. What is the economic impact on our producers? How are our competitors treating things? What is this going to do to the average family that needs to send their son or daughter or a family member to university or care for their community or keep their parents or grandparents in some form of home care or assisted living?

Again, you know, what is this going to mean when we can't sell oil and gas to America? While we've been managing our decline, they've been aggressively expanding their market. While we've dithered and had 157 conditions on every pipeline we've thought about, they've actually built the things.

Madam Chair, in closing, economic impact assessments are not necessarily saying that, you know, it's a way to fight the bill. It's a way to get it right. I would ask all my hon. colleagues to support our colleague from Calgary-Foothills' amendment. Let's try to get this as right as we can for Albertan families.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to speak in favour of this amendment and speak in favour of it based on the fact that we need investment to come to this province. We need investment to come here to do the custom harvest work that the energy industry does in harvesting our natural resources. These companies come here, invest in our province. They provide jobs. They give us the benefit of a standard of living that is the envy of the world, and here we are putting in policy that would limit our ability to realize that potential.

I think it needs to be recognized that what's being asked in this amendment is that we do an economic impact assessment after the fact, that we get an economic impact assessment, available to Albertans, available to investors, on what impact this act is going to have on our industry. I think it's prudent to measure that, and it's prudent to allow investors to have the information they need to feel confident to invest in this province. To do otherwise would be essentially to leave those investors in the dark, to leave those investors wondering: what's the next move this government is going to do, and what is the value of our investment once this plan is put into place?

I have great concern with the fact that this cap on development will essentially be a hardship for the smaller players within our industry, the players that have done a lot of the work to drive the innovation within our industry, and that we are handing this over to a few large players because of the restriction on development.

With that, I would encourage the entire Assembly to recognize the value of an economic impact assessment for the investment that we are needing into the future of this province and the jobs that it will provide and the standard of living that it provides not only in this province but right across this country.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A5?

Seeing none, I will call the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:38 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gill	Smith
Barnes	Loewen	Starke
Cooper	MacIntyre	Taylor
Cyr	McIver	van Dijken
Ellis	Panda	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miller
Babcock	Hoffman	Miranda
Bilous	Horne	Payne
Carlier	Jansen	Phillips
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Schreiner
Dach	Littlewood	Shepherd
Dang	Loyola	Sigurdson
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	McPherson	Woollard

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 36
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[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I've been listening to this discussion. You know, when the government brought this bill forward, as I've discussed here before, it was obviously ill considered and not well thought through. But what has become more obvious now and made it even less of a good idea and more of a bad idea is that the federal government has just approved two pipelines. So the government is now limiting production, essentially nullifying all or some of the benefit from the very pipelines they're so excited about. I don't know why they would undo what's just been done that's good. It just doesn't make sense. If the government is truly happy about the pipelines being approved – I'm sure they are; all members of this House are – why would they undo the good that's just been done? It makes no sense.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to bring forward an amendment. This one is to move that Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended as follows. Section 2(2) is amended by striking out clause (a) and substituting the following:

(a) cogeneration emissions.

And section 3 is amended by striking out clause (d) and substituting the following:

(d) prescribing a method for determining cogeneration emissions excluded under section 2(2)(a).

I have the copies.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A6.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much. The reason why we're bringing this amendment forward is that we want to make sure that the cogeneration emissions that are related to the power sector, that all emissions from cogeneration are exempted. Cogeneration has actually reduced emissions in the oil sands by as much as 50 per cent. Some excellent numbers there. The oil sands actually need

more heat than power, so we want to make sure that all cogeneration emissions from the oil sands limit in this amendment support a continued adoption of cogen in in situ facilities.

If you don't mind, Madam Chair, I would like to read an article into the record . . .

**Mr. Cooper:** Portions of it.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Portions of it. Sorry.

. . . that states probably much better and more eloquently than I could regarding the necessity. What I love about this article is that it's actually very well rounded. It takes into consideration the government's point of view, and it also takes into consideration where things should be changed, certainly, towards where this amendment is going. This article is called *This Is One of the Most Efficient Energy Sources Out There. So What's Holding It Back?* It's dated September 9, 2016, so some of the numbers are a little bit out because things have changed since then, but in order to read the article correctly, I will try and alter those things as I go along.

In the article it actually starts to begin to discuss about cogeneration. It states in here that cogeneration

is clean power's unsung hero. And the oil sands are its ground zero, supplying about 50 percent of Alberta's 4,821 megawatts of electrical capacity, and pushing the province to the top of Canada's "cogen" table. It's not just ultra-efficient.

In the article it also states that it has an opportunity to be very lucrative as well.

Oil sands operators have earned as much as \$2.43 per barrel from power sales to the electricity grid. They have in their hands a powerful tool to slash the power sector's greenhouse gas emissions.

**11:00**

They can actually cut those emissions "by 46 percent if cogen is used to its full potential," according to a report by the Oil Sands Community Alliance, OSCA. I had mentioned this group before. They could do so by displacing coal-fired power. "Market uncertainty" – and this is where I think the government really needs to listen – "and a lack of supporting infrastructure are currently holding them back from upping their game." The chance right now is to give these guys a real push forward.

Alberta started championing cogen decades ago. Oil sands companies invested heavily in cogen and transmission lines [way back] in the 1970s as the northeast region severely lacked infrastructure. The deregulation of the power market in the late 1990s [actually gave them] further stimulus. Suncor, for example, sells about 250 MW into the power pool. According to one analysis, cogen helped reduce electricity generation-related GHG emissions in Alberta by 50 percent between 1996 and 2006, long before this plan came into play.

Cogen plants really come into their own when they're built next to a host building that needs both power and heat, the latter of which is lost in . . . gas-fired plants. The most efficient gas-fired power plant is a combined cycle plant, which operates at up to 60 percent efficiency compared to a coal-fired plant [which is] at 40 percent, typically.

The highest efficiency still comes from gas-fired plants, hitting about 80 to 90 per cent efficiency. A typical cogen plant "captures exhaust heat from the gas turbine in a boiler or steam generator, sending low-pressure steam to a neighboring bitumen plant." The one thing about this, obviously, is that the electricity is transmitted so much more efficiently than any standard utility power plants because of proximity, obviously, and the source avoids line losses that plague long-distance power generation. The article actually goes on to say that the host building and power plant can also share cooling water, compressed air, and water treatment, which also

boosts efficiency even more. We would think the government would be very, very interested in all of these aspects. The typical oil sands cogen plant captures exhaust heat.

Mr. Terry Abel, who is the oil sands director at CAPP, says that both mining and in situ operations need a lot of heat for their processes, especially if they're connected to an upgrader. "They [actually] need way more heat than power, and it's this heat that creates the surplus power . . . that could be exported to the grid."

One of the things the article talks about is that most oil sands cogen units connect to the power grid to provide backup electricity during maintenance, but some of them lack transmission lines and distributors' permission to hook up. So that report from OSCA, a group of 25 industry and community organizations – that group actually helps to develop infrastructure, communities, and workforces in the oil sands. Actually, the unreliability of the grid is the prime driver behind oil sands operators building cogen plants and actually keeps their prices down, obviously, for power. AESO actually projects that "the cost of electricity – the commodity plus the transmission charges – for large industrial users will rise an average of five percent per year for the next 10 years."

The article goes on to state:

The previous government planned these hikes to pay for its buildout of power capacity and transmission infrastructure.

So it's already organized within that.

The transmission tariff is the part that's squeezing buyers the most as it soars from \$21 per megawatt hour in 2013 to \$37 by 2023 – a leap of almost 75 percent. "If on-site cogeneration can be developed and operated for a lower [dollars-per-megawatt-hour] rate than the delivered price of power, projected to reach almost \$135/MWh by 2023, there would be [a massive] economic incentive to build cogeneration." Furthermore, by 2020 there will be a significant transmission build, including two new 500kV lines from the Edmonton area to Fort McMurray, widening the export gateway.

With the current carbon tax and the cap on carbon emissions from the oil sands, there's a powerful push, then, to cash in on carbon offsets. Now, one of the issues with that is that those have yet to be defined by this government. We don't really know how that's all going to work. It's one of the impacts that need to be considered in the regulations going forward in this.

The government is targeting oil sands operators, which account for roughly one-quarter of Alberta's annual carbon emissions, pumping out about 70 megatons per year, which the government is capping at 100 MT per year.

It says in the article that the government is working out provisions for cogen, but that's actually one of the factors that is holding up this immediate investment, because even though this action plan has been put together for some time now, we have no working numbers for these companies to be able to look at what's going to be feasible here. I mean, this is such an amazing opportunity to actually bring forward changes.

Keep in mind, too, that there was already introduced by the previous government a tax on emissions. There were already SGERs in place. That was actually based on historical emissions and didn't take into account any new efficiencies since then. If the government is boosting the levy to \$30 a tonne and now \$50, did you know that some of those results are already being achieved by some of those high-performing facilities? It's pretty incredible. The cogen plants also earn carbon credits, and that was a formula established by the environment ministry.

The article also says, Madam Chair, that under federal rules that were actually set by our former Prime Minister in 2011, "coal-fired power plants must meet GHG emissions standards matching the most efficient conventional gas-fired power plant, or retire once they've been operating for 50 years." So that would have been 12

out of the 18 that would have been offline by 2030. Obviously, we've been having lots of chats about closing the remaining six as well.

One of the things that we have to consider is the efficiency that can happen with cogen here. We have to look at making sure that we make that as available to them as possible by removing any chances of them not being able to produce the energy that they need.

I also want to state that the Minister of Energy had stated that "cogeneration will likely be one of the topics of interest as part of the government's public and stakeholder engagement on energy efficiency through the recently formed Energy Efficiency Advisory Panel." Now, I understand that that panel was supposed to report this fall to the minister responsible for climate change. I don't know if I've seen that report, if that report has come forward. If I'm mistaken about that, I do apologize, but I don't recall ever having information coming forward from that report. It certainly would give a great deal of information and help in deciding going forward, and I highly recommend with this amendment that we do that, especially if that panel has not reported yet. We're going to want to make sure that we're giving as much availability to these folks as possible.

Also, the policies decided by this government on price impact: is the cost of supporting renewables picked up by the taxpayers or the consumers? That's also in that energy efficiency panel report, which, like I said, we certainly haven't seen. I may have missed that, but I would certainly appreciate any information coming forward from the government side if something has been reported, especially since it states right in this that it was supposed to come forward in the fall of 2016. That's yet another panel that has not reported to this House based on legislation that's coming forward and will be passed by next week. So I personally think that that would be a very important piece of information to have.

**11:10**

Just to go on, each of the three main oil sands regions – Peace River, Athabasca, and Cold Lake – has its own supply-demand balance that determines whether it's a net importer or exporter. Athabasca has the most oil sands projects and is, actually, the biggest net exporter. They sell about a quarter of their cogen power into the northeast region, helping its development. It's pretty incredible.

Suncor, already one of the top five power generators in the province due to its cogen plants, plans to build wind and solar in southern Alberta. Its facilities include five cogen systems. That is at its Firebag in situ operations and at its base plant and MacKay River in situ facility. Suncor swapped assets with TransAlta, exchanging Suncor's 20-MW Kent Breeze plant in Ontario and its share of the Wintering Hills facility and related infrastructure.

Another company, MEG Energy, also exports cogen electricity, sending about 85 per cent of the power produced from its 170-MW cogen capacity. Its power sales slumped to about 82 cents per barrel in Q1 of 2016 but have recovered as high as \$2.43 over the years. I think they're also looking at the potential to add a new unit.

Again, the issue here is that the industry is capital constrained. It doesn't seem to be on the immediate radar of the government, and we want to make sure that it is.

Oil sands operators can offset the risk of plummeting electricity prices by signing up for long-term power contracts without investing in plants. Shell has a cogen plant that provides steam and electricity to the Athabasca oil sands upgrader at Scotford, northeast of Edmonton in Alberta's Industrial Heartland, ATCO Power. All of these folks would be able to bring it onstream. These are wonderful, wonderful opportunities. Like I said, the article states it much more eloquently than I ever could.

The point of that was, hopefully, to illustrate the importance of exempting all cogeneration emissions from the cap instead of only those that are connected to electricity. As you can tell from what we've just said, most cogeneration produces heat, and if you're planning on capping that, this is going to have a significant impact on the cogeneration ability to actually reduce GHGs in an industry that I know we're all supporting here.

Voting in favour of this amendment would show government support for all of those imperative actions that will bring our resources out of the ground in the most responsible way and provide opportunities for these companies to continue to do better.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I wish to speak to amendment A6 with regard to providing cogeneration opportunities within our industry and within Alberta and the benefits that it brings towards not only development of our industry but also the benefits that it brings towards the investment certainties behind projects like these. You know, when we exempt cogeneration emissions from the limit, we can bring a certain level of certainty that would allow for increased investment. I would like to hear from the government, from the Energy minister, if this was even considered in the development of Bill 25.

Cogen is a very effective way and efficient way of baseload power generation, and we're always looking at creating efficiencies within the production of our energy resource, our electricity resource. Again I'll say it: by exempting the cogeneration emissions from oil sands – cogen emissions are related to the power sector, except when the heat is used for oil sands production. Then it is included in the considerations on the limits on emissions within the hundred megatonnes.

To remove that out allows us to create an environment for investment in these cogen facilities, which will create baseload electricity that will help the certainty in the future of our baseload power, and we do that in a very efficient manner. When we look at the fact that the heat is required in these situations and when we look at gas-fired plants, where a lot of that heat is essentially lost, that's where our efficiencies are gained, by actually being able to use the heat that has been lost.

I would like to hear from the Energy minister if this was even considered and looked at as an exemption within Bill 25. We have a responsibility to do things as efficiently as possible as we power our communities and power our province. To disincentivize this production of electricity baseload power generation would, I suspect, be detrimental to the actual emissions that we are creating through natural gas fired generation. Consider that the most efficient gas-fired power plant is a combined cycle plant, which operates at up to 60 per cent efficiency because, like we've said, they're after the power more than the heat, whereas the cogen plant can surge past that, hitting the efficiency rates of 80 to 90 per cent.

I think this is a very reasonable amendment that has been brought forward, and I would look forward to answers to that question: has the government even considered this in their considerations under Bill 25?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to the amendment? Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This particular amendment provides the government with kind of like a two-for-one sale, and hopefully the government will take advantage of the

sale. It's a very efficient amendment in that regard, in that it's attempting to accomplish something for the government. I would definitely call this a friendly amendment. It's a friendly amendment in that it's attempting to include cogeneration emissions.

Now, to get into the reason why this is a two-for-one is that if you take a look at the Canadian Energy Systems Analysis Research group from the University of Calgary – and I want to highlight “Analysis Research Group.” I realize this government has an aversion to analysis; nevertheless, the University of Calgary's CESAR group did a study. This goes back a little bit, to April 2016:

Scenario modelling found that adding a lot more cogeneration capacity to provide the heat and power for steam-assisted gravity drainage (SAGD) operations would not only reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from SAGD, but have an even larger impact on emission reductions associated with the province's electrical grid.

11:20

That's the two-for-one nature of using cogeneration for SAGD. Not only does cogen reduce SAGD emissions, but according to their research it has an even larger impact on emissions reductions associated with the province's electrical grid. That is significant, and as my esteemed colleague from the wonderful riding of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock and points in between has just mentioned, the reason for the two-for-one here is because of the enormous increase in efficiencies when you start talking cogeneration. It comes simply from the fact that you are using all forms of energy that are created by that particular unit.

Combined heat and power works the same way, where you've got, basically, a heat engine that is operating to create electricity and heat energy, and both of those forms of energy are being maximized. Their utility is being maximized whereas if you were to take conventional electricity generation right now, either coal, natural gas, or some other fuel, you're going to get somewhere in that 40 per cent to 60 per cent efficiency range. You're only using the electricity. There's all this heat energy – and it's energy, too – but it's not being utilized. But in combined heat and power situations, you're utilizing the heat also, and it is a form of cogeneration.

To give you an example of what I'm talking about, here in the province of Alberta most of the new Royal Bank buildings in this province have within them a combined heat and power unit. The banks have put them in as a cost-saving measure. They actually are saving money by having a unit, an engine that is generating electricity and heat energy, taking care of the heating and the cooling demands inside their building. Also, because banks have so much sensitive material and electronic data stored, they cannot have a situation where they would suffer data loss. That means they must protect their electricity system within the bank, so they have the capability of actually being off grid with these units, completely off grid. As long as there's natural gas in the pipe, that building is going to be warm, it's going to have cooling when it needs cooling, and it'll have all the lights, and all the computers have all the electricity that they need from these cogen units.

Hole's Enjoy Centre out by St. Albert: a lot of people don't realize that that centre has cogeneration powering it up, massive engines sitting down in the basement. You can take tours if you book them. We have a number of places across this province where there is some sort of a cogen plant just humming away. The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association building right here in Edmonton has cogen. I believe it's on the third or fourth floor, but you wouldn't know it. Even when that thing is wound right out, people that have their offices on either floor above and below that engine wouldn't even know it's there. They're just extremely well

balanced. This is not like an engine in your car. These things are very expensive, very well balanced, and very highly efficient, running on natural gas, producing heat and electricity for AUMA's building, again, saving them a ton of money.

Out in the patch that same technology has an enormous opportunity. It's – sorry, hon. member. This was the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills' very career, was it not?

**Mr. Panda:** Yes.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** So I'm stealing his thunder. Sorry.

Here we have a situation out in the oil sands where we've got an opportunity to use cogeneration to not only improve the GHG footprint out there on SAGD operations but also improve the footprint GHG-wise for our province's electrical grid by utilizing the electricity that can come from these units.

Further on in CESAR's study I'll quote them again. This is a report from October 20, 2016. “Alberta could simultaneously achieve two of its biggest energy objectives – accelerating the phase-out of coal-fired power and reducing [GHG] emissions from oil sands crude production – using a readily available, proven technology,” cogeneration at SAGD operations. Those reports are both available at CESAR's site.

CESAR has gone into significant analysis, and the analysis that they're doing is like a living document. As situations change in the technologies being deployed out in the patch, CESAR is amending their research. They have a very excellent modelling program that they're utilizing for this. Of course, being at the University of Calgary, this is a significant initiative from that university. I believe it's something this government should be looking at. It is analysis that is being done that the government isn't doing, obviously. We just had an amendment voted down that would have required some analysis from the government. But here's a freebie. The University of Calgary is doing it for you. It's a two-for-one; we can have both an improved GHG footprint out in our SAGD operations and significant reductions in our GHG footprint from electricity production if we were to utilize the available opportunity that's out there.

In addition to that, this is actually an opportunity for oil sands companies to be part of the solution and contribute in a significant way. The innovations that have been used out in the patch have been so significant and globally applied. I remember in the '80s and '90s colleagues going over to Russia and taking our technology that we invented and perfected right here in Alberta over to their oil fields for development of their resources in those nations. On and on, Albertans who have this incredible creativity in industries exporting our brainpower, exporting our technology and our knowledge and our industrial processes all over the world to impact the world. We have always been a leader. There has never been a time when Alberta has not been leading out there in the oil and gas resource sector, whether it be drilling technologies or environmental remediation technologies and so on.

When it comes to this particular amendment, given the friendly nature of it and given the significant impact that cogen could bring in emissions reduction, it makes perfect sense, to me, at least, and to members here, to have this amendment regarding cogeneration emissions. It would provide a significant incentive to having more cogeneration operating out there, where the cogeneration is also providing electricity and reducing GHG emissions on our grid. It's a very friendly amendment. It carries a significant amount of punch to it simply because of the efficiencies that we're talking about being able to achieve with cogen.

I would hope that all members in this House would see the benefit, the significant benefit, of this amendment to have

cogeneration emissions not capped and that industry would be encouraged through this to employ even more of cogen out in the patch and other places, too. Hopefully, my hon. colleague can expand on even other places where cogen could possibly be utilized to maximize the enormous benefit this can bring to our GHG footprint.

I will be fully supporting this amendment and trust that all members in the House will follow suit. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

11:30

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in support of this great amendment from my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View. I was a bit late in standing up, and my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, as usual . . .

**An Hon. Member:** He gets too much time.

**Mr. Panda:** I know.

. . . was very effective in explaining the benefits of this cogeneration. He also explained different types of processes and tried to educate us again. This morning I said that we are lucky to have a knowledgeable and experienced academic in this House who taught renewables. He can talk on any subject. We are fortunate to have him in this House, and I'm proud to call him my colleague and work shoulder to shoulder with him every day.

Well, I will be brief, Madam Chair. This arbitrary cap of 100 megatonnes: we all talked about how it's a cap on development, a cap on prosperity, and a cap on many things, but it's definitely not a feather in the cap of the government, and it's definitely not a feather in the cap of Albertans.

With this cap that we're talking about here, this 100-megatonne cap, it will be a good idea to exclude emissions from cogeneration being counted as oil sands emissions for a few reasons, Madam Chair. There are two processes in the oil sands, that we have at Athabasca and Cold Lake and Peace River, where the resource is. The shallow one is easy to do, surface mining along the Athabasca River. Those are all mining leases, and it's only 10 per cent of the resource.

The remaining 90 per cent of the resource we have is much deeper, whether it is in the Athabasca region or Peace River or Cold Lake. Incidentally, Madam Chair, it's in your area, Peace River, too. That resource is deeper, so we need to employ thermal technologies like SAGD, steam-assisted gravity drainage, wherein we have to pump in steam to make the reservoir viscous so that we can pump out bitumen. It's an energy-intensive process, and we need lots of steam, and since most of the resource is deeper, we have to use SAGD technology.

With all the SAGD projects nowadays the costs for developing those SAGD plants and the costs for a flowing barrel are very high. We have to bring down the cost of a flowing barrel for SAGD projects, and one way we could help them is to exclude these greenhouse gas emissions from cogeneration.

I'll read this for the benefit of the members here, Madam Chair. I'm reading an article here from the *Globe and Mail* by David Layzell and Manfred Klein.

Large-scale SAGD-integrated cogeneration is a better alternative. Natural gas is burned in gas turbines that convert about 36 per cent of the energy in the fuel to electrical power. Much of the residual heat can be captured to make steam for SAGD, resulting in the use of 80 per cent or more of the fuel energy.

That means lower fuel use – a major input cost for both SAGD and power generation – and lower overall greenhouse gas emissions.

Like my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake explained, it's a good deal. It's dual purpose. It reduces the input costs for the SAGD process, and it's generating power which we can put onto the grid and which can provide reliable power, and it helps the baseload power. In this kind of weather today, when everyone is freezing outside across the province, we need reliable power which also has lower emissions. That's why it's a good idea to exclude emissions from cogen from this arbitrary cap of 100 megatonnes, Madam Chair.

I was fortunate to work on both mining and SAGD projects when I worked 11 years at Suncor Energy. I was on the Firebag project for seven years, and I worked on cogen plants when we built cogen plants in the stage 3 and stage 4 expansion of Firebag. Each one is an 85-megawatt GE 7EA frame, and we sourced heat-recovery steam generators from the U.S.A. Those two are the main equipment, and the other one will be the high-voltage transformers. In this cogen power those are the heart of any cogen plant. Those are the key equipment: steam generators, heat-recovery steam generators, and the transformers.

I was also lucky to work on combined-cycle power projects when I worked 16 years for Reliance Industries, where we built the world's largest petrochemical and refining complex. The reports suggest that efficiencies are 30 per cent better in the case of cogen as compared to combined-cycle generation, Madam Chair.

Another advantage is that by building cogeneration at industrial sites like Firebag or MacKay River or Kirby Lake or Christina Lake, all of those projects, you don't have to build transmission lines. In that way, we can reduce the cost of power generation.

You know, in this current environment, because of this coal phase-out Albertans are going to be on the hook for higher power bills. By producing more power through cogen processes, we can help Albertans with reliable power, with lower emissions, and reduce the power bills directly or indirectly, Madam Chair.

That's why I support this amendment. As I said before, this whole idea of capping oil sands emissions at 100 megatonnes is arbitrary, it's not good for Alberta's economy and prosperity, and it's not achieving the purpose of reducing global emissions. We can make this bill better. That's why my colleagues brought a few amendments. The previous one was about . . .

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I actually have some experience when it comes to the oil sands. I had been brought into one of the local Cold Lake oil companies about 15 years ago. One of the benefits of working at the oil company was that I was able to get to see exactly how these oil sands boilers worked, and I actually got to see the cogeneration units for this oil company.

11:40

Now, for those who don't know what cogeneration is, I think it's important to kind of bring some understanding here of the importance of going down this direction. What happens here is that most people don't realize that what we're trying to do is to push natural gas into a turbine, take that turbine, turn it into heat, take that heat, and create steam out of it. It's always been the big problem: what do you do with the by-product? The by-product itself is heat. So what you're trying to do is, I guess, utilize this excess heat that's created with this. This is cogen.

Now, the oil sands have got something else. There are probably hundreds of different ways of creating heat to be able to make

steam, but of the two that I saw, one was that they had this great big tube. We called it a generator. What they did was that inside of this tube they had pipes, and they had a big flame that would shoot into this tube. It would heat these pipes and shoot down, I guess, the water into it and create steam as it comes out. Now, this is simple. That literally is how simple that is, just tubes in there, big pipes, right? Very, very simple.

Now, cogen is not simple. That isn't something that comes up, I guess, easily. The reason this is important is that the cogen units that I had worked with actually came from Germany, very well engineered, but any time something would happen, we'd have to bring German experts in to fix these cogen units or go around and get any extra parts or any maintenance, anything like that that came for these cogen units. The generator is what we'd use primarily. The cogen units were great. What happened is that we used the cogen units, this by-product of heat, to also generate power. They used this power to be able to power the plants, and they used this power to power the pumpjacks. They used this power to power the screw pumps that were in the ground.

What we're looking at here is that because of the cost of these cogen units, we have oil companies that are saying: let's just get to the business that we know, which is extracting oil. Electricity is not their highest priority. I know that's shocking, but in the end what they're trying to do is to extract the oil for the cheapest amount of money they can because this is business. This is business, environmentally responsible – right? – but they're still trying to do this effectively.

What happens here is that these oil sands companies will create enough cogen just to be able to power their own little area. They won't go and create it so that they can actually start to market it out to the grid. Actually, it's well known that a lot of these oil sands companies, when they do sell their excess to the grid, are bidding it right at zero, just shipping it out and taking whatever they can get for it in the market. They're not trying to compete. They're just trying to ship it out because it's a by-product of what they're trying to do.

What we've got here is one of the new projects that's going to be brought forward by one of my local oil companies. It's an expansion project that actually, I'm thrilled to hear, is being moved forward, possibly by 2019. Under their proposal here – and I'm looking at their proposal for bringing this forward – we've got technology considerations. In about the third paragraph of these technology considerations it says, "[Cogen] was considered and rejected for the project as [this project] has sufficient power generation to supply the project." So we've already got enough power from other facilities that have cogen to be able to make this expansion.

Now, I sit hear and I'm going, like: I understand why they're moving in this direction, because it appears that our government is actually moving away from responsible energy when it comes to natural gas. What we're looking for as a government now is wind power and solar power. So instead of incentivizing something that is responsible for us, which is cogen, we're incentivizing things that have proven to fail in other jurisdictions or other provinces. Something that is uniquely used within Alberta isn't even being considered, which is shocking in itself because not very many jurisdictions can use mass amounts of steam. This is the key here. Our oil sands can use mass amounts of steam. It just makes sense. Cogen makes sense.

Why am I bringing this up? Well, what we've got here is a government that said: let's put a 10-megatonne cap on cogen. One of the questions that I have got for the Minister of Energy is: how much of this 10-megatonne cap that we've got is already used with just existing operations? Are we at two? Are we at nine? Where are we at with the cogen? This is important. This is probably why we are starting to see where it could potentially be something that oil

companies would look into, but in the end, if they're going to be fighting off a cap of 10 megatonnes, well, how exactly can they justify putting billions of dollars into cogen when they can't even fire it? They'll go to the simpler method. They'll go to that generator I was talking about before.

Now, I think that we should be responsible when it comes to energy. I think that we should be trying to utilize it as much as we can. I will say that when it comes to natural gas, what's unique, especially with the Cold Lake operations, is that another by-product is natural gas. So what we've got here is natural gas that comes from the wells and feeds the cogen units that feed the steam, which goes down and extracts the oil – it's a nice circle; it's a circular thing – and as a by-product what we get is electricity, which can go back out to the grid. This just makes sense. It just makes sense. Why would we cap that? Why would we cap that with a 10-megatonne cap? It doesn't make any sense to me.

What I will say is that when it comes to gas before, when I was working in the oil fields – this is conventional, going way back to my early 20s – gas as a by-product used to be flared off. Useless. We just flared it off into the sky. In my dad's time – my dad was also an oil field worker way back when – he said that it used to flare so bright, it was like daylight outside. That's how much we would flare off this gas. It's just unfortunate that we went down that road, but that's where we're at. So it went from oil that was being brought up along with the gas – gas would be a by-product that we couldn't use, so we'd flare it off. It was the safest way to deal with the H<sub>2</sub>S that would come up with it.

What we've got here is a nice enclosed system when cogen comes along. We get to utilize all of the products that come up. Why are we not taking a more proactive approach when it comes to this? I'll tell you that my riding is one of those ridings – when you start talking about surface extraction, you're looking at further north in Alberta, but Bonnyville-Cold Lake, my riding, is the perfect spot to be looking at cogen. Why is this government not doing more research or economic studies on how to utilize this? We just put in artificial caps, which are going to hurt my riding. It's going to hurt investment. It's going to hurt jobs. That's on you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

11:50

**Mrs. Aheer:** I just have a couple of minutes, just a few things to speak about. One of the most important aspects of this amendment is that it supports something that's really neat. Cogen is actually on the cusp of economic viability. Now, that's huge because these are tremendously expensive pieces of equipment. These generators don't go into this as the business of electricity. It's a by-product of what they're doing, and they bid into the grid at zero. They have their own baseload, but they are suppliers. That is so good for Alberta. From the fact that it's so close to being economically viable, this government should most certainly be promoting, supporting, and moving that forward. By exempting all emissions from cogen, you will actually be doing that and contributing to the economic viability of this process.

The companies, actually, that are producing this cogen also pay for royalties of the product, for the heat as power, so they have an input cost as well. They're not power generators first; it's a secondary source. You have to think about the economy of scale for these folks. They're not in the business of producing, you know, 150,000 megawatts of energy at a facility with a couple of natural gas plants or coal-fired units. These are little distributed units, and they're small, but they have a tremendous amount of impact on the grid. We should completely be supporting that.

But the most important part of this entire discussion: cogeneration makes environmental sense. It just makes complete

sense to support it, and I could not imagine a reason why this government would penalize that. It makes amazing environmental sense. So I would really, really like to see this government not make it harder for these companies to be able to do right by Albertans in the responsible development of these products.

Thank you.

**Mr. Panda:** I just wanted, Madam Chair, through you, to briefly request that the hon. minister please consider this amendment. It's a good one. Even the previous one that we brought in about upgrading in Alberta – we talked about that – you rejected that, but this is a common-sense one. This is really good for Alberta.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** It's a friendly amendment.

**Mr. Panda:** It's a very friendly amendment.

We're trying to make this bill better. I would urge that you consider and ask your colleagues to vote in support of this amendment in the interests of Alberta and in the interest of reducing costs for SAGD producers. If you think differently, at least please give us the benefit of how you see that differently and why you wouldn't support it. But I would request that you please consider this amendment or at least respond to us why you won't.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to take – I know we have only a few minutes. I want to talk in support of this amendment because I spent a fair amount of time on SAGD projects at MacKay River, Fort MacKay. Brion Energy: my colleague for Calgary-Foothills is very well aware of that project. It's state-of-the-art technology brought from China by PetroChina. I saw the benefit: the cost went down. You know, I think this amendment will make this bill stronger, it'll make the energy industry efficient, so I ask all the members from across all parties to support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are you ready for the question on this amendment?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:55 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Smith
Cooper	MacIntyre	Taylor
Cyr	Panda	van Dijken
Gill		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miller
Babcock	Hoffman	Miranda
Bilous	Horne	Payne
Carlier	Jansen	Phillips
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Loyola	Sigurdson
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Westhead
Goehring	McPherson	Woollard

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 36
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[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

**The Chair:** Pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee shall now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 25. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, December 7, 2016

Day 59

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
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Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
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Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
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Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 55      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

## Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Aurelia Nicholls, Sessional Counsel	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you David James, my assistant deputy minister for electricity and sustainable energy. David is a committed and hard-working member of the public service. With David today is his wife, Alana, and their three children: Kaitlin, Emily, and Tyler. They are using their PD afternoon off from school to attend QP today and learn more about our government. Kaitlin, in fact, is interested in being a teacher and getting into politics one day. I would ask that David and his family please receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, were there any school groups today? The Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Edmonton Christian northeast school. Accompanying them today are their teachers, Elaine Junk and Greg Gurnett along with their chaperones, Tibor Hungler, Tanya Mudge, Janet Verlinden, Virginia Esteves, Joy Abesigwa, Marcia Kasapu, and Christina Miketic-Ketsa. If I could ask all of the students to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, when we're having introductions, if you'd avoid the dialogue amongst yourselves, I'd appreciate that.

Are there any other school groups?

The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Salimah Walji-Shivji. Salimah is a practising lawyer with a distinguished career. In 2004 she started practising law with AHS and is currently working with an AgeCare group. Salimah is involved with many boards, nonprofits, and community organizations which provide very essential services in Calgary and across this province. I would request Salimah to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to my colleagues in the House, I'd like to introduce Sheila Aitken and Stephanie Sabadaska. They are my two constituency assistants in Stony Plain. They attempt to keep me organized and the constituency running smoothly in spite of the fact that I keep them running in all directions. I'd like all of my colleagues in the House to help me welcome them with the traditional warm welcome of this House as they stand.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today in the House to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Katherine Spencer. Katherine works as an applied tree physiologist for the government of Alberta and, in her spare time, volunteers and acts as the heritage sports promoter doing wood chopping, logger sports, and dogsledding. She recently made Team Canada for the 2017 dogsledding world championships. Could Katherine please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Dogsledding. Wow.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Gord and Marilyn Elliott. Gord formerly served for six years on the National Council for the Conservative Party of Canada. He's now a member of the Wildrose Executive Committee, and we're so happy to have him. He is joined by his lovely wife, Marilyn, who was also elected to the National Council for the Conservative Party of Canada. Gord and Marilyn are two passionate Albertans who are dedicated to making our province an even better place for future generations. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests today, hon. members? The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my very great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two young people who are supporting me on a recent political adventure I became involved in. I'd like to first introduce Sierra Garner. Sierra was born and raised on an award-winning quarter horse operation near Waterton in southwestern Alberta and is currently living in Lethbridge, working in the tourism sector. She's also vice-president south for the Progressive Conservative Youth of Alberta.

My second guest is Mr. Thomas Ockley, who's familiar to many of us as being a steely-eyed research man for the PC caucus and has recently also joined me in my political adventure. They're both seated in the public gallery, and I'd like all members of the House to join them in the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

#### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans are suffering. They're losing their jobs. They're losing their homes. This is a tragedy. But this NDP government doesn't think they share any of the blame. For anyone who doesn't share their enlightened views of the world, they just need a better education, apparently. When they're criticized for their ridiculous, job-killing ideas, they have one excuse: just blame the opposition. They did this during Bill 6. Now, like clockwork, they say that it's the opposition's fault that Albertans are upset about the carbon tax, and they refuse to take any responsibility whatsoever for the damage it's causing.

Mr. Speaker, when I look across the aisle, I see people who don't know the value of a dollar, who don't understand the fears of working families across this province, people who don't know how hard it is to work a real job and make ends meet. For some of these members this is their first job ever. They are completely out of

touch with the consequences of their actions and what life is really about. They make bad decisions after bad decisions, that hurt Albertans. Then they ignore those same Albertans when they go back to their ridings, or, when they ignore frustrated Albertans, well, they jet off to Paris and Morocco. We know this because we constantly hear from Albertans who say: my family can't afford this carbon tax, and my NDP MLA won't talk to me.

The Premier did have something to say this week, however. She wants Albertans to, quote, make better choices. Last time she said: buy a different car. They actually think ordinary people earn the same salaries that they do. Take it from me, someone who's raised kids and owned businesses, life is hard. This carbon tax is going to ruin families in Alberta.

In 2019 Albertans know they will have a better choice, and in just two years the party is over for this NDP government. Then they'll see what real life is all about.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

### Official Opposition and Government Policies

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a person who raised kids and ran businesses, I was disappointed when I opened the paper last week and saw the Leader of the Opposition tell the story of our government and the little red hen. For those who may not remember the tale, the little red hen did all the work: planting the wheat, harvesting it, milling it, and baking the bread. Her friends didn't help with any of the work; they only volunteered to help eat the bread.

Mr. Speaker, I call fowl. In fact, I have my own fowl story to tell. It's the tale of Chicken Little. Chicken Little really liked to go on walks, long, big walks, sometimes all the way across the Legislature Grounds. On these walks Chicken Little occasionally saw things that bothered him.

One day Chicken Little saw the lowest paid workers get a raise. What did he say? "The sky is falling," he declared, and he ran off to tell the press gallery all about it. Then Chicken Little saw farm workers get covered under WCB. "The sky is falling," he insisted to any journalists he could find. Chicken Little saw the government phase out coal and take action on climate change. "The sky is falling," he bellowed to one and to all. Chicken Little saw the government cancel big corporate tax giveaways. "The sky is falling," he recited over and over on Twitter. Chicken Little saw the Prime Minister announce two new pipelines. "The sky is falling," he said, bewildered.

1:40

But, Mr. Speaker, the sky wasn't falling on Chicken Little's head. We know from the story that what fell on Chicken Little's head was little more than an acorn or perhaps a wild rosebud.

Mr. Speaker, in Alberta the sky isn't falling. In Alberta the sky is the limit. We got two new pipelines approved, our jobs plan is working, our infrastructure plan is putting Albertans back to work. Our government is working hard to get results for Albertans, and we will not stop, no matter what Chicken Little says. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, quiet, please.  
Calgary-Fish Creek.

### Economic Development

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is the UN's International Civil Aviation Day, near and dear to my heart after a two-decades-long career with Hong Kong based Cathay Pacific airways, the inspiration for my honoured Chinese name Gaoferi, or fly high.

One of the organization's stated goals is to recognize aviation as an engine of global connectivity and a fundamental enabler of global peace and prosperity. Lofty ideals indeed for an industry that started with a rather inauspicious 12-second flight at Kitty Hawk.

I tip my hat to Alberta's aviation pioneers, including high-flying entrepreneur Clive Beddoe, the man behind Alberta's current flagship success story WestJet. Mr. Speaker, to me aviation, trade, commerce, and tourism are the foundation of bridges we build between people and nations that allow us to pursue global aspirations and a chance to share ourselves, who we are, our rich natural resources, beautiful landscapes, hospitable natures, and the expertise and opportunities within our borders with the world in a mutually beneficial, wealth-building manner.

Mr. Speaker, therein lies the opportunity for a better, more prosperous Alberta. But to achieve success and prosperity, we must demonstrate to the world, through these bridges, that in addition to being ethical, sincere, and moral as well as the conscientious stewards of the environment, we are also open for business.

I've learned from places like Hong Kong, as the most free-enterprise economy in the world 22 years running, that we are indeed in control of our destiny. With just over 7 million people, Hong Kong's GDP, with no natural resources to refine or export, is just one-quarter of Canada's GDP while its per capita GDP exceeds ours by approximately \$5,000 U.S. dollars per person. Unemployment is at 3.4 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the PC vision for the future of Alberta is to be the most business-friendly jurisdiction in North America and, dare I say, to take on the likes of Hong Kong for global status in the years ahead. I challenge this government to lay down their misguided, job-killing, investment-repelling policies and do what is right in building this great province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, I've had a request for unanimous consent to introduce a late guest.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the gallery we have Jamie Leong-Huxley. She has been instrumental in our payday loans legislation. She's worked diligently behind the scenes to help us get community organizations together and really create an initiative that has helped so many Albertans. She has worked tirelessly and been an extremely beneficial partner to the success of our legislation. I would ask that she rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

### Job Opportunities

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I came to Alberta on a Greyhound bus from B.C. What brought me here were the opportunities Alberta offered. The prosperity of this province allowed my employer to take a chance on a new arrival. I found

success here, and now as the MLA for Calgary-Currie I want that success for every one of my constituents.

But right now those same people that gave me a chance are hurting, and it pains me to see that because without their support, I wouldn't be here today. That is why I am so proud of the work this government did to get two pipelines approved. They will boost the economy while allowing us to continue the much-needed work of diversifying our economy and creating new jobs that will come from leading on climate change. These pipelines will help those who helped me.

There are those who say that we should forgo these economic opportunities, leave all the oil in the ground, move instantly to green jobs, and a diversified economy. Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, you can't diversify a ghost town. Conversely, I take offence when I hear those from the Wildrose claiming 140-character, instant budget solutions that would take us backwards, cutting teachers and nurses. When they say things like, "Axe the tax," what they actually mean is to axe the pipelines, axe the jobs. Well, I will not stand for that either.

I want my neighbours in Calgary-Currie to have the same opportunities I did. Male, female, LGBTQ, or disabled: pipelines and a strong economy support whatever field you want to succeed in while we diversify the economy. If my neighbours, working hard to support themselves, should fall, becoming disabled or unemployed, we will be there to help pick them back up because that's what neighbours do, Mr. Speaker.

I am darn proud of my government's record of standing up for jobs, environments, and pipelines. I will happily take my work to the doorsteps of Calgary-Currie. I will put my record of action against the opposition's deep-as-a-tweet plan any day of the week.

People elected me to focus on leading Alberta's economy into this century. Alberta is watching, Mr. Speaker, and I will more than happily show them what I've done.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

#### Katherine Spencer and Heritage Sports

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this job I get to meet exceptional people doing exceptional things, which definitely applies to Katherine Spencer. A tree physiologist by trade, Kat volunteers as a heritage sports promoter. Working with cultural and historical groups, she uses modernized versions of historical jobs and activities to teach about our culture and land settlement history. Through exciting and interactive demonstrations and competitions such as the logger sports competition she organizes during Saint-Jean-Baptiste days in Morinville, Kat exhibits sports as history in action.

Two-thousand seventeen is a year of celebration for Canada's 150th birthday, and what could be more evocative of Canada's heritage than dogsledding, well, maybe besides being a lumberjack, or should I say a 'lumberjill'?

Kat Spencer is part of a group of amazing women who have turned the world of professional lumberjack sports upside down. She was on the Canadian women's wood-chopping team and will represent Alberta and Team Canada in the dogsledding world championships in January of 2017, after which she will have competed at the highest level, representing Canada internationally in both sports.

What better place for a world-class log splitter, axe thrower, and dogsledder to be than beautiful and historic Smoky Lake? Kat chose to locate to Smoky Lake because of its heritage, strong sense of community, and wonderful trails, of course. A community-minded

person, she has organized a sled dog race for February 18 to 19, 2017, to share her knowledge and passion with others. The race will provide many opportunities to volunteer and will benefit all that reside in Smoky Lake and the surrounding area. These activities encourage people to get active and learn about an historic transportation method that has contributed to Canadian settlement.

I admire Kat's dedication to reviving heritage sports in our province. What better way to keep the past and our rural roots alive? I hope all members will join me in wishing Kat well in her endeavours and providing our support wherever we can.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

#### Health Care in Central Alberta

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people of central Alberta would like to know if they have any place in the centralized planning of Alberta Health Services. Specifically, there are doctors who are concerned with Alberta Health Services' top 20 priorities for Alberta. Not one of the top priorities is for central Alberta. All are focused on Edmonton and Calgary. This is not equality.

Let me list some of the issues in the central Alberta health region. AHS tried to close the Sundre hospital but kept it open only after their MLA and the minister – thank you – intervened. The Didsbury hospital heart rehab centre and lab was closed. Chaplain services across the central region have been reduced. The Red Deer hospital has yet to be approved for a catheterization lab even though the viability has been demonstrated and the need is so great that the local citizens have raised \$10 million for it. Wait times are still getting longer.

With these problems plaguing central Alberta, it's clear that they are not very central in the centralized bureaucracy of AHS. The tax dollars raised in central Alberta for central Alberta citizens are being siphoned off to priorities elsewhere. This is one of the systemic problems with a centralized health care system. The previous government demolished local health care regions, creating one massive, centralized health bureaucracy where everything comes from the top down, the ultimate pyramid, a relic of Egyptian archaeology. The people at the top of the pyramid are so far removed from the problems on the ground that the system no longer reflects citizens' needs. Centralized power and control are for the benefit of big government, not the people.

This centralized system is not working for my constituents and the surrounding regions. We need local decision-making because centralized planning does not include central Alberta.

Thank you.

1:50

**The Speaker:** Table officer, hold the clock, please.

#### Speaker's Ruling Supplementary Questions

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have had the opportunity to read *Hansard* and would like to clarify a ruling that I gave yesterday concerning a point of order raised by the Government House Leader, the arguments for which can be found on page 2340 of the December 6, 2016, *Hansard*.

The point of order had to do with questions posed by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, which can be found on pages 2333 to 2334 of yesterday's *Hansard*. To be clear, the member's main question had to do with surveys concerning school curriculum while the first supplementary question pertained to persons with developmental

disabilities, and the second supplementary related to a public health matter, namely fentanyl. The Member for Calgary-Elbow's questions were not linked together as they ought to have been. I wish to clarify that the rule of our Assembly is that supplementary questions must relate to the subject matter of the main question.

As Speaker Kowalski ruled on May 12, 2004, a ruling which was quoted yesterday by the government House leader and which can be found on page 1390 of *Hansard* for that day:

Now, there's also a tradition we follow here that if an hon. member is recognized, they raise a first question and then they're allowed two supplementals. It has always been understood that supplementals must have something to do with the first question.

Similarly, on March 30, 1998, Speaker Kowalski ruled that there is a consistent rule that there should be some flow with the questions and they should be in a similar type of subject.

This ruling can be found on page 1200 of *Hansard* for that day.

Accordingly, the Member for Calgary-Elbow's questions were not linked together as they ought to have been.

In the future I would ask and encourage and expect that all hon. members would ensure that supplementary questions are connected to the main question. Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Government Policies

**Mr. Jean:** You just have to listen to how the Premier talks about Albertans to get an idea of what she really thinks of them. It's clear that she thinks that the vast majority of Albertans, who oppose her carbon tax, should be grateful that they just have an opportunity to, quote, make better choices. She calls farmers who oppose Bill 6 the anger machine. She doesn't hesitate to call Alberta the embarrassing cousin. When will the Premier stop showing such contempt for the majority of people in this province, who don't agree with her agenda?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that what our government has been doing has been standing up for Albertans ever since we got elected, and we do that because we value Albertans and we care about their situations. For instance, we did not come into office and move ahead with \$2 billion in cuts to the very services that those families rely on. We didn't do that because we have their backs. We invested in them. We said: we will work with you through this economic downturn. We will not make up pretend solutions while we slash and burn and put nurses and teachers out . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, over two-thirds of Albertans don't support the carbon tax. There are no good choices when families have to pick between heating their homes or driving their kids to school. The only message Premier Notley has for families, businesses, and charities across the province . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you used an individual's name. I think that might have been an oversight on your part.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The only message that this Premier has for families, businesses, and charities across the province who are suffering is to make better choices. Albertans don't like being talked down to. They're upset

with the NDP for bringing in a carbon tax with no mandate, so why doesn't the Premier, for once, respect Albertans by at least giving them a referendum on the carbon tax?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what we are doing instead is ensuring that 60 per cent of Albertans, every household that makes \$90,000 a year or less, will get a rebate on the carbon tax, so, in fact, we'll be giving even more support to low- and middle-income families than they would have gotten otherwise.

You know what else, Mr. Speaker? Do you know what Albertans are really in favour of? Pipelines. You know what the Prime Minister said last week? It would not have happened without our climate change plan. Would the members opposite like us to go backwards to the point where we do not have those two pipelines approved?

**Mr. Jean:** I know that the carbon tax makes members of the NDP backbench, earning comfortable six-figure salaries, feel important at parties, but it will force Albertans to make better choices between whether to heat their homes or buy groceries. That's the choice they face. Charities will need to make better choices on how to serve those in need. Businesses will have to make better choices on whether or not they keep their doors open and keep Albertans employed. This isn't funny. There are only 24 days until the carbon tax comes into effect. Why aren't you listening to the majority of Albertans, who don't want this carbon tax?

**Ms Notley:** Well, the member opposite failed to hear the last answer to the question. Sixty per cent of Albertans, which is actually the majority of Albertans as opposed to the group he's talking about, will in fact get a rebate. So the Chicken Little scenario that the member opposite is outlining is not actually accurate, Mr. Speaker. Now, I appreciate that not everybody on this side can look back to, oh, 10 years having received an MP's salary either, but what we do know is that we are standing up for Albertans, and that's why we put the rebate in place, and that's why we are building our economy on behalf of Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, on one thing we do agree. This carbon tax will help Albertans put this NDP government in the dustbin of history in 2019. Albertans see what the NDP government is doing to Alberta, and they don't like it. I don't blame them. They see Alberta's energy sector plummeting to 43rd in the world, and the NDP laugh and shrug it off. Hundreds of thousands of people are out of work. This is a big deal. Why doesn't anyone in the NDP seem to get it?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, it is so unbelievable how much the members opposite seem to want to see Alberta fail. They think that if they claim it's happening enough, maybe it will. You know, it is so unfortunate how the opposition is putting politics ahead of doing the right thing. In fact, conservatives at the Prosperity Fund meeting talked about getting the pipelines as a doomsday scenario. That is shameful. I implore the members opposite to stand with this government, stand up for Alberta, and help us promote the pipelines.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, to be clear, I love pipelines, all pipelines going from Alberta in every direction. When people who invest billions into the oil and gas industry think Saskatchewan, B.C., Manitoba, North Dakota, Texas, Oklahoma and don't think Alberta, we have a problem. Are the NDP worried? No. They're happy to cap our emissions and put a crippling carbon tax on our economy while our competitors in the United States laugh at us. This is a

serious issue, especially because you don't get it. Can the Premier please name one tax or one regulation she's put into place that has made Alberta a friendlier place to invest?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we recently announced that the small-business tax is going to be cut by one-third, so there's one. We also announced tax credits for businesses, investment tax credits, so there's two, and there's three. But the big one is that although the member opposite claims he loves pipelines, after 10 years in the federal government: zero pipelines built, and we just got two approved.

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

**Mr. Jean:** If the NDP want to talk pipelines, here's a simple question. Just about every one of the Premier's advisers come from the B.C. NDP. They have a long history of working on their campaigns as well. We know that the B.C. NDP are taking the advice of one of her oil sands advisers to fight Kinder Morgan "at the ballot box." Will the Premier mandate that any of her staff or staff of the Alberta government will not help in the election bid of the B.C. NDP? Yes or no?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that every member of this House is going to do what they were elected to do, which is to work on behalf of the people of Alberta. We are going to do that by repositioning our energy economy as the most progressive energy economy in the world, and we are going to do that by being a leader on climate change in North America, and we are going to do that by getting two pipelines built and bringing jobs back to the province of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

## 2:00 Agriculture Financial Services Corporation Board

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past summer, based on information from the Auditor General's report regarding the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, this government suspended several senior AFSC executives with pay. Six months have passed, and the government has spent over \$500,000 in wages. To the minister: how does this government justify still paying these substantial salaries, and how much longer must the taxpayer bear the cost of this outrageous boondoggle?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We had the opportunity this past June to dismiss the AFSC's board after examination of some very serious irregularities. That process is continuing on the investigation. These allegations will be investigated thoroughly by the law, by the RCMP, by us to ensure. In the meantime, we have had the opportunity to have an interim board, and I'm very proud of the work they're doing.

**Mr. Strankman:** Mr. Speaker, it's costing the public purse more than \$3,000 a day to pay these people for doing absolutely no work. This is a blatant slap in the face to the thousands of Albertans who have lost their jobs. Minister, how is your agency achieving accountability for taxpayers with these huge salaries paid for no job performance? Or is this simply a way to avoid possible litigation for a wrongful dismissal?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important to note that recruitment is under way for a new board of directors. I'm very proud to say that we had a very large list of knowledgeable, qualified applicants. We are going through that. It takes some time to go through that because we had such a large number. We're close to getting a short list on that. We'll have a new board of directors very shortly.

**Mr. Strankman:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the suspended president's annual salary is over half a million dollars, complete with a government car and a gas card. Another suspended senior staffer makes over a quarter of a million dollars annually. When will this government finally settle this matter of being paid for no work, indicative of how this government will manage other agency, board, or commission executives in the future?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People right across the province congratulated us on taking action on something that was very serious. We took that action, Mr. Speaker. In the interim we've hired an interim CEO, Ed Knash from ATB, to take that. He's been very competent. This is a human resource matter, and it would be highly inappropriate to discuss it in this House at this time. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I know that many of you will be expecting and wanting gifts under the Christmas tree soon, so you need to be nicer to each other if you're going to get any of those presents.

The leader of the third party.

## Carbon Levy

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The Premier was in B.C. to sell the Kinder Morgan pipeline to her teammates in the B.C. NDP. That went poorly. The Premier told CBC news that the carbon tax "is a tremendous opportunity for [Albertans] to make better choices." Alberta families: all they have to do to see their household finances, crippled by this carbon tax, get better is to "make better choices." Who knew? To the Premier: if your advice to Albertans worried about the impacts of your government's carbon tax is simply to make better choices, is it fair to say that you think Alberta families up till now have been making poor choices?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I have to say it's very encouraging to see that the members opposite are sharing question writers today. That's an interesting choice. That being said, we are very proud of our climate leadership plan. We know that pricing carbon is what experts and economists and business leaders around the world say is what is needed to reduce emissions and to build the economy at the same time, so that's exactly what we're doing. At the same time, we are supporting low- and middle-income families by ensuring that 60 per cent of Alberta families get rebates starting in January, and we will not apologize for that.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. McIver:** The Premier should apologize for her arrogance. It's condescending to respond to the very real anxieties and fears of Albertans by telling them to make better choices. For champagne socialists across the aisle making better choices might be as easy as buying a new car, as the Premier suggested last April, but struggling families can't afford that. To the Premier: your carbon tax rebates will not cover the full cost of a household: electricity, natural gas,

gasoline, food, groceries. When Albertans are told to make better choices, is that a choice between filling up the gas tank and buying groceries? That's what it seems to be.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the members opposite have finally learned that there are lower and middle-income families that actually need their support. It's nice to hear them finally talking about them. That's why our government very intentionally determined that there would be a rebate provided to low and middle-income families so that this would not have a disproportionate effect on them. In fact, the less income families have, the less greenhouse gas emissions and the less carbon pricing they would be subjected to. In fact, they will come out ahead because we are standing up for middle-class families.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, low- and middle-income Alberta families have to make better choices every day by managing their expenses, something that this government has failed to do. Telling them to make better choices is as arrogant and condescending as anything I've heard for years in this Legislature or Alberta. I thought I would give this Premier an opportunity to make better choices, too. Premier, will you direct your Finance minister to make better choices and give Albertans a plan to someday pay back the debt that Alberta families are saddled with?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we are going to do is make the kinds of choices that have the backs of Albertans. We are not going to move ahead with the kind of flat tax that these folks wanted to go ahead with in terms of health care premiums. We are not going to go ahead with laying off nurses. We are not going to go ahead with laying off teachers. We are going to support low-income families. We're going to bring in progressive taxation. We're going to support working families with better child care. We're going to do all those things because we support working families.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

#### **Petrochemicals Diversification Program**

**Mr. Piquette:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents in Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater were excited to hear the recent announcement of projects approved under the petrochemical diversification program, but they have questions. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what is the expected economic impact of these projects?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Alberta has Canada's highest concentration of petroleum refining, chemical processors, and petrochemical manufacturers. These are the people who add value to our resources right here at home. Yesterday the Energy minister and I were proud to join some of the world's best petrochemical leaders to announce two projects approved under the petrochemical diversification program. The projects represent a total investment of up to \$6 billion that will be invested right here and create more than 4,000 jobs in the construction phase and 1,400 indirect and direct jobs.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our economy has for far too long relied . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Piquette:** . . . on exporting our raw resources and given that Albertans want to see more jobs in the value-added sector, to the same minister: when are the projects expected to begin, and what new products will the facilities enable Albertans to produce?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first project is a joint venture between Pembina Pipeline Corporation and Petrochemical Industries Company, or Pembina PIC. They're going to process about 22,000 barrels per day of propane into polypropylene. The company estimates that the value of what they create is worth 700 per cent more than the propane that they start with. Construction is expected to start in 2019, the facility to be operational by 2021. The second project is Inter Pipeline, which will produce another 22,000 barrels per day and is expected to start next year, in 2017.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Piquette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Excellent news.

To the same minister: what is the response from community leaders and industry about the government's plan to support the petrochemical sector and to diversify our economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member. This is excellent news. I can tell you that what we're doing on this side of the House is working with Albertans and companies to create jobs here at home as opposed to expending a lot of hot air, which the opposition seems to do a lot of. I'll tell you this much. Mayor Don Iveson said: "This is superb news for the [Edmonton] economy . . . Real value-added petrochem jobs we need." Strathcona county Mayor Roxanne Carr said, "Thank you Ministers . . . for your support in moving [Alberta's] economy forward." Ed Gibbons, who's the chair of AIHA, said that this program will help position Alberta as a competitive location for investment.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order.

#### **2:10 Child Protective Services Review**

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, when we hear stories of how child and family services has failed innocent children, we are right to seek ways to fix it. To date we have received zero details on concrete measures the Minister of Human Services has taken to stop these tragedies in the future. They say that they want a committee, but they voted against terms of reference to give the committee tools and teeth to help fix the problem. Will the House leader commit that this committee won't be a public relations exercise, and when will we see the rules for this committee?

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The death of any child in care is a very tragic situation indeed. This government has done a great deal to try and improve the conditions for children. More needs to be done. The Premier has committed to reaching

across the aisle and working with opposition members in order to find additional solutions to this very difficult problem, and that's what we're going to do.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, we all know the system needs to be and can be fixed, but we also need accountability. That means taking the partisanship out of the committee and giving it the independence to do its work to help give the government concrete advice. Will the NDP commit to working with all opposition parties to form the terms of reference for this committee before the House rises? If not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my answer to the first question, the Premier has committed that we will be working across the aisle to try and work and find solutions to this very difficult problem. We've done a great deal already, and more clearly needs to be done. We want to reach out to everybody, and in due course we're going to be having conversations about how we're going to be doing that. I think the hon. members just need to stay tuned.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, given that we have seen dozens of reports, recommendations, and investigations over the past several years into the child intervention system and given that I have personally spoken to foster families that already feel intimidated by this government from speaking out on this very issue, will the NDP commit to giving front-line workers, managers, and foster care providers full whistle-blower protection at this committee, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the questions. Foster parents play an important role in the child intervention system. This year alone I was present at their event here in Edmonton, in Calgary, and in Jasper. So I have been in touch with them, and we are working closely. As far as the front lines, we value the work they do. At the heart of what we do at Human Services is the hard work of the front lines. Even this week I have sent out a survey to hear the feedback from the front lines.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

### Carbon Levy and Seniors

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some Albertans will have hangovers while others may need a stiff drink as they wake up to an Alberta NDP carbon tax on New Year's Day, but all will be subject to higher costs and additional financial burden in this sobering attack on the lives of Albertans. Nonprofit seniors' care providers share significant concerns due to the impact of the carbon tax and their ability to deliver the levels of care, nutrition, and comfort rightly expected by Alberta seniors. To the minister of seniors: how will you respond to these deserving seniors and their compassionate care providers, and what choices would you like them to make when their lives and budgets are negatively impacted by the burden of your misguided carbon tax?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Environment and Parks minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. You know, we heard from the nonprofit and voluntary sector. They told us that they want to be part of the

transition to a lower carbon future. We're working with them to get there. We convened a nonprofit and voluntary sector working group to hear from them, brainstorm the efficiency programs that will help defray many of these costs and ensure that it keeps money in folks' pockets and make sure that we've got the right investments in efficiency. We'll have more to say about that in early 2017.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Their clock is ticking while yours isn't.

Given that the government also owns and/or operates seniors' affordable housing across the province and given that these facilities will also face difficult choices around the burden of the carbon tax and that a portion of current funding will automatically be redirected away from seniors' care towards paying this mandatory tax, without rebate or compensation, again to the minister: what are your department's estimates for the total cost of the carbon tax for government-owned or -operated seniors' housing in fiscal 2017? Can you share those details with us?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it's very important for us to ensure that seniors are well housed in Alberta, and we're completely committed to that. Our government has put \$1.2 billion in our capital plan over five years. We know that climate change is real, and we want to make sure that we have a healthy economy and healthy citizens. We've increased the operating budget by 2 per cent, and we are working with those housing management providers to support seniors. We are very pleased with the work that we've done. The opposition would be cutting billions of dollars from the budget instead of investing, and that's what we're doing. We're working with people right now.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There goes the salad off their plates and the foot care that they probably need as well.

Given that the government touts its bare-bones rebate program as a cure-all for the ills of the carbon tax and given that many seniors who still live in their homes actually exceed the income thresholds because of effective retirement planning combined with additional benefits such as modest pensions, again to the minister: what is your government doing to assist these seniors, who have serious concerns about the impact of the carbon tax, and what better choices do you expect them to make to protect this modest retirement lifestyle that they have worked so hard for their entire lives?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, 60 per cent of Albertans will receive a full rebate; 66 per cent of Albertans will receive a full or partial rebate. That's two-thirds of the population. In addition to that, there will be \$645 million worth of investments in energy efficiency programs to make it easier for folks to make their homes more comfortable and to reduce their bills even more than the \$30 per tonne. Now, in addition to that, there will also be \$2.2 billion worth of investment in green infrastructure, and in many cases that will be for some of our . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Education Review

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Education minister has appointed members to a secret expert working group that will spearhead the rewrite of the entire kindergarten to grade 12 curricula. The minister has in the past stated that he will not proclaim the Education Act until he is sure that it reflects NDP values, and this NDP government has a long history of appointing individuals to panels with backgrounds in NDP ideological activism. Why will the minister not release the names of the committee to the public and assure Albertans that the working group is not just another NDP think tank?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Education minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. The expert working groups that we have working on the curriculum – which is the most ambitious curriculum rewrite/reform in the history of this province. There are more than 300 individuals from the Alberta Teachers' Association, from the Department of Education, from universities, from different other groups, and the only reason that – certainly, we have issues around sensitivity around these individuals. They can choose to put their names forward, you know. Making attacks on people that are making choices to help us to build a curriculum is entirely inappropriate.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Smith:** Well, I guess those details will remain secret for now. Given that this minister has named the Alberta Teachers' Association as a primary partner in the curriculum rewrite and since the ATA has loudly and consistently been opposed to funding for anything but one monolithic school system, can the minister ensure that parental choice in education will be protected when he's partnering with a group so opposed to funding diversity in our education system?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, may I remind you again about asking questions. The last couple of speakers have given preambles in the supplementals.

The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we are working with the widest diversity of groups to build new curriculum and to strengthen all forms of education. So for people to suggest that somehow we are limiting choice around education is simply misleading. We are working very hard with a wide range of people to strengthen the curriculum, as evidenced by the excellent math progress we made yesterday in terms of building curriculum.

2:20

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given this massive curriculum rewrite is going to be one of the most ambitious undertakings in Education history and since this government claims to support the rights of parents to make decisions with respect to the education of their children, will parents and parent organizations be participating in the expert working groups, or will the NDP activists be deciding the outcome of the curriculum rewrite?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, for this member to somehow suggest that our expert working groups or the many thousands of people who are contributing to building curriculum are somehow activists is not only demeaning to the professionalism

of the work that they do but also to the general outcomes that we want to see for our children. I invite everyone. We had 32,000 people participate in the last survey, the largest, and we will have many more of those groups. We have public meetings. It's the most transparent exercise ever conducted in Education history in this province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

### Nonprofit Social Service Providers

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the summer I met with various stakeholders in a wide range of different not-for-profit service sectors, and what I heard loud and clear is that there appear to be major issues with the new government granting and funding models. According to the stakeholders they are worried that the minister has implemented a system which will pit social service agencies against each other when it comes to funding, in a perpetual race to the bottom. Is the minister implementing a contract bidding process meant to undercut long-standing funding agreements for not-for-profit agencies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that Albertans have been receiving services for many years from nonprofits, and as we move forward, they will continue to receive those services. That's not the case. We are not putting services up for bidding. Period.

**Mrs. Pitt:** That's not what we hear, Mr. Speaker.

Given that these not-for-profits in some cases have been operating for many decades and given that we are talking about the services that provide support to front-line staff and individuals with developmental disabilities and given that this new model allows for for-profit service providers to bid for funding from out of province and country, what is the minister doing to keep the community aspect in community-run social programs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our priority is to make sure that Albertans with disabilities continue to receive the support they need. That's why we have provided stable funding and we have increased that funding. As I stated earlier, there will be no bidding for any front-line services. Whoever they were receiving services from, they will continue to receive those services, and they will have the choice to select the service provider they want to receive services from.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that this new process forces individual community services agencies to apply through the Human Services online contracting system and given that these agencies, who are already stretched pretty thin, report that these applications are taking enormous resources to complete, how do you expect small local community agencies to be able to complete these onerous applications and compete with the larger for-profit companies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our priority is that Albertans with disabilities should have a choice and should be able to get the services from a wide range of service providers. These cases are complex. These service providers are unique, and we are supporting Albertans. Whoever they choose to get services from, we are



providing the supports. That's why we have maintained stable funding. The information that you are spreading is simply misleading and incorrect.

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

#### Police Street Checks

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago I urged the Justice minister to halt the unlawful practice of carding, or street checks, which sees police randomly stop citizens and ask for their ID. When police randomly card citizens without reasonable suspicion that they have committed an offence, they are breaching section 9 of the Charter, and it's really that simple. The minister has said that she's working with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police to establish guidelines, and I was certainly pleased to hear that. To the Justice minister: when do you expect to have guidelines in place, and what will be your advice to law enforcement in the interim?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. All Albertans deserve to feel safe and respected in their communities. That's why we'll continue to work with the police services to ensure that they can do their job while fulfilling their commitment to bias-free policing. I have found police services to be very open to having these discussions and ensuring that these techniques are only used in places where they're appropriate and they're not used in a biased way. In terms of section 9 of the Charter I don't think it's really appropriate to be pronouncing on individual cases here in this House.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that you also told the House that you want to ensure all people in Alberta feel respected and given that you also indicated that you want to ensure everyone can be onboard with guidelines that provide parameters for police when asking citizens for their ID and given that members of communities who feel carding is a form of racial profiling would like to be part of any form of consultation, again to the minister: how and when will you consult with these stakeholders?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We've been working very hard. We've heard some concerns rolling in from community groups already, and we've been having those discussions with them, but we will continue to go out and have those discussions. We will be having a more formal consultation around specifically, you know, when these practices – you're talking about a range of behaviours – are appropriate and when they're not appropriate and what's appropriate to do and what isn't appropriate to do. We will continue to have those conversations.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. Given that Ontario has developed strict regulations for carding that come into effect on January 1 and given that these regulations require officers to provide a reason for stopping citizens, to let the person know that they do not have to answer the questions or provide ID, and to provide citizens with a way to follow up after the fact, to the same minister.

Very simply, this is one of many choices. What do you think of Ontario's solution to this issue?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Well, we think it's important to have a made-in-Alberta solution, and that's why we're working with community groups here in Alberta and we're working with the chiefs of police here in Alberta to ensure that we have a model that works for us here. Certainly, it's the case that we have some different policing concerns here in Alberta than they do in Ontario, so it's important that we have a made-in-Alberta solution to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our communities and our police here.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

#### Affordable Housing in Red Deer

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year the city of Red Deer proposed a locally developed delivery model to provide affordable housing and other support services for clients. I know that this delivery model was developed in consultation with local agencies and stakeholders such as Safe Harbour Society, Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter, and Youth & Volunteer Centre. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: how is the government supporting this initiative?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Red Deer-South for her strong commitment to affordable housing. This summer I had the pleasure of visiting Piper Creek Lodge with her, which was built in 1956 and was one of Alberta's very first lodges, and it's still operational. I support this initiative in principle because it has the potential to deliver better outcomes for people who need these supports. I understand that the groups involved have held an initial working session and are planning to do further work. I look forward to seeing the results that come from these sessions.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that clients and taxpayers expect best practices for housing and service delivery models, if this initiative is successful, is it an approach the government would support in other regions of the province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although I don't want to speculate, I'm very interested in the developments in Red Deer and how they can benefit clients. I believe that these initiatives need to be driven at the local level. Local housing and support services providers are in the best position to decide what works in their individual communities like facilities in Sundre, Crowsnest Pass, and other places across the province. My ministry will continue to provide advice, support, or information as required to help with these initiatives.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the need for new affordable housing, the need to fix units that are in disrepair, and the need for elder abuse suites in my constituency, to the same

minister: what specifically is the government doing to address these needs?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve a safe and affordable place to call home. Just like many other municipalities in the province, Red Deer has a substantial number of families on wait-lists, and many buildings are showing their age. That's why our government is taking action and investing \$1.2 billion over five years across the province. We'll continue to work with the local housing management bodies and examine their business plans to see what projects we can support.

We also are committed to addressing the issue of elder abuse. That's why we invested \$1.2 million in grants to establish community response models, bringing in law enforcement and financial institutions, to eliminate elder abuse.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Carbon Levy and Agriculture Costs

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, in 24 days the carbon tax starts. In my riding there are all kinds of agribusinesses that use electricity or natural gas for secondary processing. A well-known greenhouse in my riding is estimating that the carbon tax will cost them \$1.5 million in '17 and \$2 million in '18. Another agribusiness owner told me that his expenses for natural gas will increase \$700,000 to \$800,000 next year. To the minister: has your government considered what the economic impact of this tax will be on agrifood and agribusiness in this province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We have been listening to the agricultural sector right along. We had the opportunity to meet with producers and processors from one end of the province to the other. We've been hearing them. We heard them to the point where we have had the opportunity to have an exclusion on marked fuel.

We've also listened to the member who brought up greenhouses in particular. I want to have an energy efficiency program. The Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association wishes to extend thanks on behalf of the sector to the government of Alberta for expansion of existing on-farm energy programs. The greenhouse operators, like all other farmers and producers in this province, know what we're doing.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Schneider:** Given that the carbon tax raises production costs in agribusiness and given that a lot of Alberta companies are price takers and can't pass on additional costs to the consumers, whether they're selling the products to struggling restaurants or having to compete at a farmers' market with sellers from somewhere else that don't have a carbon tax, to the minister. Agribusiness stakeholders are telling me something completely different than what we're being told in this House. Are you willing to table specific details on your outreach to these businesses and what these stakeholders are telling you? I know that they've talked to you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I know that farmers have been stewards of this land for

generations. They continue to be so. I know that farmers also believe in the science of climate change. They're looking for opportunities to lower their greenhouse gas emissions, and there are economic benefits of doing so as well. I'm continuing to work with farmers and ranchers and processors and producers right across this province as we go to a carbon-neutral environment.

**Mr. Schneider:** Given that this government claims to be fostering a diversified economy and given that I'm hearing the news of greenhouses shutting down south of Calgary and given that one greenhouse owner pointed out to me that the NDP say that they want locally grown food but in reality are making it very hard to operate in Alberta, to the minister. My constituents are watching right now. Will you stand and tell us what this government is doing to ensure that companies in agrifood and agribusiness can operate successfully in Alberta and compete with their counterparts in other jurisdictions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I can highlight what we have been doing. I've already mentioned the exclusion of farms on the carbon levy. We have an expansion of \$10 million in the efficiency grants for farms. Alberta Pork: "The efficiency programs in Alberta have been very valuable to pork producers." The Alberta Chicken Producers: "We appreciate this increased investment and shift in the government's cost-shared portion of these programs." The Irrigation Council: by extending the cap under irrigation programs, we are able to do more, make our operations more efficient.

Mr. Speaker, farmers right across this province recognize climate change and are willing to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Government Agencies, Boards, and Commissions

**Mr. Rodney:** Mr. Speaker, before the last election the Balancing Pool was working just fine, thank you very much, with all five members on board. I've been asking why this government did not make a better choice when they did not report that since then they've dropped to three and then, alarmingly, to just one member. We still have no answers to this critical question.

So let's try the WCB. Recently they had no less than six vacancies on their board. Is this government even committed to them? To the Minister of Labour: why have you not announced newly appointed members for these vacancies?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government remains committed to working with all our agencies, boards, and commissions to make sure that we're appointing appropriate individuals and working with them. We have just gone through a process of posting the positions on the new ABC board appointment website. We are working with the WCB to make sure that they get the appointments they need and doing so in a way that makes sure we involve all Albertans to get the best representatives possible.

Thank you.

**Mr. Rodney:** But you're still six members short.

Given that a recent *Calgary Herald* article is entitled There Is a Governance Crisis in Alberta, partially because the U of C, ACAD, MacEwan U, and the U of L, just to name a few, were still awaiting the appointment of board chairs and given that diversity on ABCs

along with corporate knowledge and skill sets are something that we can all agree on and given that there's a huge amount of work to do to fill board vacancies and ensure that ABCs can function as efficiently as possible, to the Premier: what better choices are you instructing your ministers to make regarding the escalating problem of ever-increasing numbers of ABC vacancies in this province?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We are happy to let the sunshine in and Albertans of any background, experience, and expertise put their names forward so that they can have an opportunity to serve this province. We're not going to repeat what happened for decades, where friends and insiders only had the track to have opportunities for leadership. Everyone is welcome. We are opening up the application process, and we're pleased to move forward in appointing a variety of Albertans to serve this province.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that in this same article there are significant questions regarding government interference with the structure of the board of the Alberta Energy Regulator and given that there is also grave concern outlined that the government may interfere with the structure of the Alberta Securities Commission as well as AIMCo, again to the Premier: what so-called better choices will you be making to the board structure and makeup of ASC and AIMCo prior to 2019?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much for the question. You know, we are currently involved – last week I was at a supper for AIMCo, and two new board members, very talented and excellent people, came on to join that board. We have a process where some time out, and we're consistently finding people to put on those boards. We are working so that this is not just an insiders', old boys' club, like happened in the past over there. We're looking for talented Albertans and other people and bringing them on. We'll do that because that's the best for Alberta. You didn't do it. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.  
The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

### Climate Change and Agriculture

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is leading with a plan to address climate change. Climate change adversely impacts our health, our environment, and our economy. Rural Alberta is particularly vulnerable on the front lines, including the constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, where we have seen two forest fires in the last seven years. To the minister of agriculture: what are the numbers actually showing of what these impacts are?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, as stewards of the land our province's producers know first-hand the impacts of climate change. Over the last hundred years or so producers and their families have seen an average of a two-degree Celsius increase to surface air temperatures across the province. They've also seen that first frost has come much later. They've also seen changes to precipitation across the province, with increases in some regions, decreases in others. Of course, these changes affect agriculture production. We see increased occurrences of extreme weather, increased threats from pests due to milder winters, and changes to crops that tolerate these occurrences.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Given that producers will need to consider new or adapted crops to address these changes because of increased pest persistence and infestations due to milder winters, to the same minister: what is the government doing to prepare Alberta's agriculture industry for the realities of climate change?

**Mr. Carlier:** Mr. Speaker, we will help producers adapt to climate change by continuing to invest in research and technology. The province has two crop diversification centres, one in the north, another in the south, to provide applied research, special crops, crop varieties and to diversify production. Similarly, on the livestock side we support investments in projects that support research, innovation, market development and that improve competitiveness. We've also invested in the Farm Stewardship Centre in Lethbridge to use applied research to improve whole farm sustainable practices.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:40

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that farmers and ranchers are the stewards of the land and see first-hand the impacts of a changing climate and given that these producers want to invest in energy-efficient options for their operations, what is the actual uptake of this government's on-farm efficiency programs, that were rolled out for the agricultural community?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. We recently announced a \$10 million expansion to energy efficiency and renewable energy programs for producers. I'm happy to report that these programs have been very well subscribed. We've approved projects that produced 350 kilowatts of solar energy, and there are applications for another 586 kilowatts received by the department. Applications for the on-farm energy programs are through the roof. Usually we get 15 applications a month; we got 250 applications in November alone. The numbers don't lie. There's a great appetite for programs that help producers become more efficient and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. I look forward to our continued . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Student Assessment

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By this minister's own admission the 2015 PISA results are a valuable snapshot of how our students are performing relative to the rest of Canada and the world. He said that it provides some valuable information for both schools and the ministry and Albertans to see how we're performing in these subject areas. Yet the value of the provincial achievement tests, which also provide a snapshot of student learning, is being undermined by this government. Will the minister please explain why he will not end the failed student learning assessment experiment and reinstate the grade 3 PATs?

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we are certainly working hard. We're very proud of our international results. In reading and in science Alberta was the very number two on the entire planet Earth. We certainly are working hard on PATs. I instituted the no-calculator portion for grade 6, and yesterday I instituted a no-calculator portion for grade 9 mathematics, so we are strengthening those exams as well in consultation . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, given that this minister has undertaken a, quote, collaborative system-level discussion regarding standardized testing and given that the ATA recently passed a resolution stating, “Until such time as the ministerial review of international benchmarking tests is completed, we urge our members to protest to the minister their forced participation in these international benchmarking activities,” can the minister assure Albertans that this review of the international assessments will include Albertans who are supportive of standardized testing and that he will not simply bow to ATA pressure?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this gives us a great opportunity to look at some of the programs that we’re doing to strengthen education generally and mathematics specifically in light of the use of some of the assessment tools we have available to us. Yes, we continue to use those assessment tools because, yes, they give us an opportunity to see where we’re at at any given time. I think that it’s important for us to always work together on curriculum and assessment, work with our teachers, with parents, and so forth. Look at the wonderful results we have accomplished together.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the president of the ATA is quoted as saying that cancelling PATs “would be good for students and for teachers” and that “it’s well past time to kill this zombie” and given that the ATA is a full partner in the curriculum rewrite and given that we are hearing from many Albertans that they want the PATs because of the information they receive about their own child’s learning, can the minister assure Albertans that he will not end provincial achievement tests?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I made it pretty clear that we are in fact working together, with different assessment models. We use PATs in grade 6 and grade 9. I recently just strengthened both of those exams in mathematics to include no-calculator sections. I’ve strengthened the program of studies to work on basic math skills as well. We are working with these tools along with teachers and so forth and will remind the hon. member that, of course, we make the decisions here in the Legislature. We are carrying on with these exams along with other programs that we use. He can read the newspaper all he wants to find . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of the tale of Chicken Little, which I referred to in my member statement earlier today. It’s a story I’ve used to teach my children that words have power and consequences. I encourage the members of the opposition to read it.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, I’m tabling the requisite copies of the interim report of the Senate Committee on Transport and Communications titled Pipelines for Oil: Protecting Our Economy,

Respecting Our Environment. I had the opportunity to appear and testify before this committee of senators who ordered this report.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As promised, I’m tabling five copies of the *Calgary Herald* article dated November 8, 2016: There Is a Governance Crisis in Alberta. You’re going to want to read this one.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a newspaper article from the *Financial Post* dated Wednesday, December 7, that I anticipate referring to in my point of order. The title is Beware of Fake News Reporting That Liberals Are Better than Tories on Pipelines.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe there were two points of order today. In fact, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre’s was one of the first ones.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order Factual Accuracy

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to the point of order that my younger, smaller brother rose on during question period today – the reference for your sake and for those in the House will be Standing Order 23, imputes false motives to another member – when the Premier made a statement that was untrue. The Premier said of the Leader of the Official Opposition that during his time in Ottawa representing the good people of northern Alberta very admirably, there were zero pipelines approved. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, there were three or four major pipelines approved, including twice as much capacity as was recently announced this week.

Now, make no mistake, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased with the 600,000 barrels of oil that are now going to be able to be transmitted through pipelines or the expansion of pipelines that the government recently announced. I am very pleased by that. But to say that the Leader of the Official Opposition was in Ottawa during a time when zero pipelines were approved is absolutely not true and is an allegation that is likely to create disorder in this House, as it did today. I simply ask the member to withdraw the comments and apologize, and we can move on with what can be a very productive day.

2:50

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is very obviously a matter of debate and, therefore, not a point of order. The challenges facing our energy sector getting market access – I myself am contemplating a pipeline from my house to my garage. We’re not going to take credit for a third pipeline getting built. There are pipelines being built all the time. The matter here is that the only way . . . [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

. . . the only way to do that is to get Canadian pipelines to Canadian tidewater. In that respect, the opposition parties failed

over the past decade despite being in government both here in Alberta and in Ottawa. In doing so, they failed workers by denying them jobs, they failed families by denying them larger royalty revenue, and they failed every Albertan with lost economic opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any other members?

Hon. members, I'm not sure that this is anything more than a disagreement about the facts in terms of the types of pipelines that are being discussed. In this particular situation I would rule that there is no point of order.

However, let me remind you yet again that we should be cautious about the remarks that are passed across this very famous aisle in the middle.

The second point of order, I believe, was raised by the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Point of Order

#### Oral Questions

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, first, while I'm on my feet, to your earlier ruling about my question yesterday, I will just accept your ruling, apologize to you and to the House for my error in my line of questioning, and I will be more careful in the future.

But I will keep at this. My point of order is under *Beauchesne's* section 408(1)(a) and (b), when speaking about questions.

Such questions should:

- (a) be asked only in respect of matters of sufficient urgency and importance as to require an immediate answer.
- (b) not inquire whether statements made in a newspaper are correct.

The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, again, asked a question specifically about the petrochemical diversification program. Remarkably, Mr. Speaker, on December 5, which is scarcely two days ago, there was a government news release entitled *Petrochemical Plants Will Diversify Economy, Create Jobs*.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker – and I mean this in the truest sense – we don't have the Blues, because I was hoping to be able to quote directly from the answer provided by the minister. I recall words to the effect of:

projects that would . . . process propane extracted from natural gas resources into value-added plastics products that people all over the world use every day. The projects have been approved [and] receive royalty credits under Alberta's Petrochemicals Diversification Program, which was announced and began receiving applications in February 2016.

That's a direct quote from the government news release, Mr. Speaker, and words almost exactly to that effect were spoken by the minister for economic development. The news release also says:

The first project is a joint venture between Pembina Pipeline Corporation and Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC), which has been approved to receive . . . royalty credits.

Et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, again, those are words that were spoken almost exactly verbatim by the minister of economic development in this House. That information is readily available in a government news release, as is information about the amount of product processed by the facility, as is information about data, about investments that would be made over the course of the life of the project.

I just want to quote a ruling made by Speaker Zwozdesky, which I hope will illuminate some of this. I also just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that my purpose for bringing this point of order up now for a second time this week is not simply to slow down the

proceedings of the House, not simply to get my words on *Hansard*. I believe there's a very important principle here that has been established through history in Legislative Assemblies. There are tools available to private members of this House, tools available on the opposition side, and there are greater tools available to government private members to seek answers from their own ministers, from the front bench, in response to constituent questions.

The opposition side, Mr. Speaker, has rare and limited opportunity to hold the government to account. The purpose of question period as laid out through the decades in *Beauchesne's*, in parliamentary practice, and in our own standing orders is for the opposition to be allowed to use that time. When the government side uses that time frivolously, which I believe has been done here a couple of times this week, it reduces the ability of the opposition and all private members, frankly, to hold the government to account.

In other jurisdictions, Saskatchewan most notably, there are no government backbench questions allowed during question period. None. Now, question period is shorter. That may be something we want to consider in this Assembly. It's an issue for another day and another committee.

The principle that I'm arguing here, Mr. Speaker, I think, is a very important one. I do now want to quote Speaker Zwozdesky as the then Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock asked a question. In response, before the minister answered her question, Speaker Zwozdesky on December 6, 2012, *Alberta Hansard* page 1344, said:

Hon. members, as you all know, the purpose of question period is to seek information and to hold the government to account, so let's see how you do with your supplemental.

The government answered, and in response, then, to her supplemental, before the government minister answered the question and following the first supplemental, Speaker Zwozdesky said:

Hon. member, really? Frankly, I've never heard that sort of question before, but given that it's been asked by a new member, I will allow it this one time.

Now, historically, December 2012 was the fall sitting immediately following a provincial election, and members were brand new, so the Speaker allowed that very government-friendly question, let's say, one time. A point of order was raised, and in *Alberta Hansard*, page 1352, also on December 6, 2012, Speaker Zwozdesky said:

In this particular case I could have and should have at the time reminded Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock that questions in question period not only ought to seek information and hold the government to account, but they must also not be hypothetical, and they must not seek opinion. On that point, I would uphold where you were coming from, hon. member.

That was in response to the member who raised the point of order.

With that, I will return to my seat, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to your ruling on this matter. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** You used the word "principle," that the practice, in your interpretation, has been that the private members on the government side have a better advantage than opposition members. Is that the point you were trying to make?

**Mr. Clark:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there are . . .

**The Speaker:** I don't need any other. I just wanted to make sure that was the point.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it very disappointing to see this member yet again belittling the very real issues and

concerns raised during question period by any member of this Assembly.

On page 501 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, it states as follows:

There exists a vast body of traditional guidelines, many of which are no longer valid or have fallen into disuse. Because of the difficulty in distinguishing between valid and outdated precedents, Speaker Bosley addressed this question in 1986, stating that the appropriate rules for Question Period should recognize the following principles . . .

- While there may be other purposes and ambitions involved in Question Period, its primary purpose must be the seeking of information from the government and calling the government to account for its actions.

Mr. Speaker, what we had today in question period was the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater asking the Minister of Economic Development and Trade about a project that has a direct impact to his constituency. The member sought information, including information about when projects are expected to begin, just as the citation that I read says can be done during Oral Question Period.

Just two days ago, on December 5, 2016, on page 2281 of *Hansard*, the member raised a very similar point of order. You yourself ruled that they did not have a valid point of order. In an excerpt from that *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, you say, "I know that the government backbenchers will reframe their questions so they have much more substance to them." We have done just that.

3:00

Not only is this similarly not a point of order, but I think the member opposite should refrain from raising repeated points of order that have previously been ruled on, and the member opposite raising this should be more considerate of the rights and privileges of all members of this Assembly. Those rights and privileges extend to our members on the backbench here, Mr. Speaker, and I do find it offensive that he would suggest that our members for some reason cannot ask questions. I am proud of all our members on this side of the House, and I encourage them to continue asking their questions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'd like to defer a decision on this one till tomorrow. I'd like to read some of the points being made.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 35

##### Fair Elections Financing Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any questions, comments, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As we're just moving into Committee of the Whole, I just wanted to start off with some introductory comments about the bill, and then I'm looking forward to discussing the details with my colleagues and looking at any amendments that might be suggested. If passed, this bill will ensure that political parties are focused on earning the support of all Albertans, not just a select wealthy few. It will also bring Alberta's

election financing laws in line with the rest of Canada. The bill is aimed at making changes to three major areas: specifically, contribution limits, spending limits, and third-party advertising.

To speak briefly about each of those, the amendments around contribution limits are going to ensure that no individual can donate more than \$4,000 per calendar year. The contribution limit involves money going to any combination of political entities, be they candidates, constituency associations, political parties, leadership candidates, or nomination candidates. Let me clarify that this contribution limit would not be retroactive or apply to any ongoing leadership contests. With this exception, in the bill, if passed, the contribution limits would be effective as of November 28, the day the bill was introduced. This contribution limit will help prevent contributors from attempting to buy influence at the last minute by not having that introduction date or that change date be January 1.

This limit is very reasonable and is in line with other jurisdictions in Canada to ensure that no single individual has significant influence over a political party, candidate, or contestant. The aggregate limit that we are suggesting is a made-in-Alberta solution as a way of ensuring that affluent donors and special-interest groups do not have a back door through which to gain influence.

The bill is also going to change the definition of contributions. For a self-employed person who normally charges fees for their services, if they offer those services to a candidate or campaign, that would be considered a contribution. The normal value of the services they would provide would count toward their contribution limit. Nonmonetary contribution services such as this will be included in the definition of contributions to political entities. Volunteer services are not included in the definition of services, provided that the person providing the volunteer labour is not compensated by their employer or is not being given paid time off to volunteer. Audit and professional services provided free of charge relating to compliance with the act would not be considered a contribution.

All other Canadian jurisdictions include nonvolunteer services in their contribution limits, and this was something that we discussed at length when we were discussing Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta. That change has been brought forward here to bring Alberta in line. It also precludes unions, corporations, and other third parties from giving employees paid time off to volunteer for a political campaign.

Bill 35 will ensure that corporations, trade unions, and employee organizations are no longer able to guarantee loans, again something else that came up during our Bill 1 debate. Only individuals ordinarily resident in Alberta would be able to guarantee loans to a political entity or make a payment on a loan or guarantee to a political entity, and that amount would count towards their contribution limits. In this way, loans and contributions go hand in hand, neither being used to gain undue influence.

The second major part of this bill is around spending limits, establishing campaign spending limits of \$2 million for political parties during the writ period and including spending prior to that writ period for items used during the writ period. For by-elections party spending limits would be roughly \$23,000, which is \$2 million divided by 87, approximately. In an electoral division there would be a spending limit of \$50,000 for each candidate. Expenses incurred by the party or constituency association on behalf of the candidate will count as election expenses. Nomination contestants would be subject to a spending limit of \$10,000, 20 per cent of the spending limit for each electoral division.

They would also be required to register with and report to the Chief Electoral Officer when they announce their intention to seek the nomination, begin incurring costs, or accept contributions,

whichever occurs first. These registration and reporting requirements would also apply to leadership contestants.

Spending limits will promote fairness and ensure parties can have a healthy exchange of ideas with voters during election campaigns. I would note that with the exception of the Yukon all other jurisdictions in Canada have spending limits, and they have been found to level the political playing field. Our aim is to effectively ensure that the strength of the parties' ideas are the deciding factor in an election rather than the depth of pockets.

Election expenses will be defined as expenses reasonably incurred by or on behalf of a candidate or a party during the campaign for the purpose of promoting or opposing a party or candidate, so election signs, office space, staff. We do recognize that not all constituencies and campaigns are the same and that urban candidates face different challenges than rural candidates, so spending limits would not apply to candidates' or contestants' travel costs reasonably related to the election contest: transportation, meals, accommodation, care for candidates' or contestants' children or other dependants, expenses related to the disability of the candidate or nomination contestant, audits or other fees necessary for compliance with the act, and incidental expenses like parking and gas incurred by volunteers. Most of these expenses would still need to be included in financial statements and reports to the Chief Electoral Officer. These exceptions are going to help level the playing field for candidates, particularly those in larger ridings or those with children, dependants, or disabilities.

Finally, third-party advertising is the third major focus of our bill. From the dropping of the writ to the close of the polls third-party advertisers would be subject to a spending limit of \$150,000. Of this, no more than \$3,000 could be used to support or oppose candidates in a particular electoral division. This is the same model adopted by both B.C. and used at the federal level. We think that these limits strike a balance between ensuring third parties can express themselves and ensuring smaller voices are not drowned out.

Third parties who are currently eligible to advertise during elections will still be able to share their views but could not make advertising buys that overwhelm the public discourse. When it comes to third-party advertising, focusing on the money they spend is a much more hands-on approach than focusing on the money they receive. No other jurisdiction in Canada uses contribution limits for third-party advertising, and the existing contribution limits that Alberta has operated under will be repealed.

As is currently the case, third parties will be required to register with Elections Alberta when they incur \$1,000 in election advertising expenses, receive \$1,000, or plan to do either. Third parties will be subject to these same registration requirements between elections. Between elections they will also be required to identify themselves in their advertisements, which is already the case during elections. These amendments would require third parties to disclose contributions over \$250 weekly during an election, and those disclosures will be in turn reported to Albertans through Elections Alberta. Between elections third parties would be required to report quarterly, and those contributions would also be made public.

3:10

These amendments are intended to avoid hindering any robust political discussion in Alberta while also providing important transparency. Bill 35 continues the improvements that were started with Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta. It also takes into account the recommendations made by the Chief Electoral Officer. We believe that the proposed changes would give Albertans back confidence in their electoral process, and we're committed to

ensuring that parties are earning the support of Albertans and not catering to big money and special interests.

I'm pleased to stand in support of this bill, and I look forward to hearing the contributions of my colleagues in this House. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, this has been a very interesting process from the very beginning because there's a lot of what the minister has just spoken about that I agree with. I'm absolutely in favour of getting big money out of politics, I'm in favour of getting undue influence from those of financial means out of the political process, and I think there are a lot of things in this bill that I can agree with and that I like. But there are many things in this bill. It's really unfortunate because we went through a committee process – we talked about this at length last night at second reading – that started off with such promise and, unfortunately, devolved into some challenging times. Now, I would not in any way term that committee a failure. The work that we did, especially on the whistle-blower protection act, was very good work, really thoughtful work, a lot of hard work by all sides, by all parties who were members of that committee.

When it came time to talk about money, as I suppose it so often does, things broke down. There are things that are done in this bill that go far beyond satisfying a public interest. They go far beyond solving a problem that Alberta has. Those of us in this House pay close attention to politics. We surround ourselves with dedicated Albertans who care passionately about our province, and those people put in tremendous amounts of work.

Rarely, if ever, have I heard that one of the big problems we have in this province is constituency associations not reporting frequently enough, not having enough work to do, and Elections Alberta saying: gosh, we need more rigour, more controls over those rogue constituency associations. In fact, one of the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer to the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee was to eliminate quarterly reporting entirely, not just for constituency associations but for parties as well. Now, the committee, in its wisdom, decided unanimously, with votes of all members of the committee, including the NDP, that in fact it's probably worth keeping the quarterly reporting for parties so Albertans can keep an eye on what each party is earning on a quarterly basis but to eliminate quarterly reporting for constituency associations.

The rationale at the time was the amount of work that volunteers are expected to do to keep their constituency associations up and running. I will note, again, now for the record that there is only one party in this House that does not have active constituency associations that file financial reports and that collect donations directly from Albertans.

**An Hon. Member:** Which one is that?

**Mr. Clark:** That is the NDP.

So there are two interpretations of why the changes have been made in this bill. One is a generous interpretation. I'm a generous person. My generous interpretation would be that the crafters of this bill sat down and said: "Well, this is the way things work. This is the way we do things, so this shouldn't be a problem, should it?"

Now, a cynical person might say that there was a committee that addressed this at length and that the committee said: "You know, folks, there are other parties that do things differently. In fact, every other party does things differently. So would you mind if we just

eliminated quarterly reporting for constituency associations in its entirety?" And the committee said: "You know, that makes sense. Let's do that." Yet here we are with a bill that not only retains quarterly reporting; it quadruples the amount of work that volunteer financial officers are required to undertake, at the very least quadruples, perhaps even more.

With that, Madam Chair, I will move an amendment to Bill 35, and I will hand this to a page and await your receipt of the amendment before I continue.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. The amendment will be referred to as A1, the first amendment to be received. I'm just waiting for the original copy.

Please go ahead.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 35, Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended as follows:

- A. Section 5(c) is amended in the proposed section 4(1)(e) by striking out "and a registered constituency association".
- B. Section 28(c) is amended in the proposed section 32
  - (a) in subsection (3) by striking out "and registered constituency association";
  - (b) in subsection (3.1) by striking out "3(a)(ii) and (b)(ii)" and substituting "3(a)(ii), 3(b)(ii) and (3.2)(b)";
  - (c) by adding the following after subsection (3.1):
 

(3.2) Every registered constituency association shall file with the Chief Electoral Officer, in the form and manner approved by the Chief Electoral Officer, within the period during which an annual financial statement must be filed under section 42, a return setting out for the previous year

    - (a) the total amount of all contributions received that did not exceed \$50 in the aggregate from any single contributor, and
    - (b) the total amount contributed that, together with the contributor's name and address, when the contribution of that contributor during the year exceeded an aggregate of \$50.

All of that legalese, Madam Chair, means that constituency associations, if this amendment is accepted – and I would certainly encourage and hope that all members of the House would accept this amendment – would no longer be required under the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act to remit quarterly filings. Now, I touched on it in my earlier remarks, but the reason that is important is that for those of us that have parties that have active constituency associations, this legislation is going to require each chief financial officer for each constituency association to remit quarterly not simply the top-line revenue and bottom-line expenses, as is currently the practice, through an online system. They're going to be required to catalogue actively every single donation that exceeds \$50, to take the name and address of each donor, to remit that to Elections Alberta to ensure that Elections Alberta can disclose any contributions that exceed \$250 to that constituency association in the year and then also, of course, co-ordinate with their party to ensure that the amount that that donor has donated does not exceed \$4,000 in the aggregate between the constituency association and the party and, presumably, co-ordinate with other constituency associations to ensure that those donations do not exceed the limit.

Now, the challenge with that, Madam Chair, is that those parties that – shall we call them emerging parties? – do not have the resources, certainly the financial resources to hire someone to . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Did you say merging or emerging?

**Mr. Clark:** Emerging with an "e" at the beginning, yes. Not merging with an "m" yet, at this point. That's for somebody else in the House to deal with, other parties.

But those of us in emerging parties are especially at a disadvantage. A generous interpretation of that, as I tend to be a generous person, would be that that is simply an oversight or a misunderstanding by the crafters of the legislation, that it didn't occur to them. So this amendment offers us an opportunity to fix that oversight or that perhaps misunderstanding. We had that discussion in committee, and it was great.

3:20

A perhaps less generous interpretation is that the government doesn't want to see a party rise up in the middle. They want to see polarization. They want to see a party that purportedly cares about people and the environment be a choice on one side and a party that cares about only money to be a choice on the other and that Albertans will have to make a choice between two bad options. They have to give up something.

I, Madam Chair, believe in both. The Alberta Party believes in both. We believe in strong fiscal discipline and managing money, and we believe in taking care of people and looking out for the environment. That's what we believe in. That's the centrist position. That's what we believe in, but we're in a position where we are an emerging party, and we do not yet have the financial resources or the human resources to easily comply with the rules. We absolutely will should this become legislation, but I can tell you that it will have a significant impact on our volunteers. It is a roadblock that the government is trying to put up to stop the growth of parties that may take some or all of the centrist supporters who held their nose and voted NDP last time or just thought: well, you know, we'll send a message by voting NDP. They're going to try really hard to do everything they can to retain their position, and that's my problem with this particular aspect of the bill and other aspects of this bill.

The government has taken, the NDP have taken what is otherwise a good idea – getting big money out of politics, reducing donation limits, putting campaign spending caps in place: those are good ideas, and they should have stopped there. Those are good ideas. Albertans are onside with that. I think that had they done that, they would have found unanimous support in this House for those ideas. But no. They had to take this good idea and they had to take it too far. They had to lock in their advantage, put their thumb on the scale, tilt the playing field to the NDP while they have the chance.

**An Hon. Member:** Shameful.

**Mr. Clark:** That is shameful, Madam Chair. That is shameful.

There is an opportunity, however, for the hon. minister and the government side to prove me wrong about all of those things, and I sincerely hope I am wrong about those things, and if they accept this amendment and perhaps some others coming from the opposition side this afternoon, then we will find that I am wrong. I will be the very first person to stand up and say: "The government was right. They have done the right thing. I give them credit." I will praise them up and down. I'll put it on Twitter, social media. I'll do whatever I need to do. I'll write the minister a nice note. I will do all of those things. I will put it in *Hansard*. All those things will happen. I won't cross the floor. That would be a step too far, Madam Chair. That would be a step too far.

You know, in all sincerity, this amendment genuinely improves the bill. It makes a substantial difference to all parties in this Assembly and outside of this Assembly who have constituency associations that actively collect donations from Albertans to fund their operations and actively receive those donations as an expression of



Albertans' interest in true grassroots democracy because that is what a constituency association is.

With that, Madam Chair, I would really encourage all members of this House to support this amendment. I do hope the government accepts it. I'd be very interested to hear what they have to say.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A1? I will recognize the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Speaking to the amendment, I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Elbow for raising this issue. You know, my connection with this particular question of quarterly versus annual filing actually started back in the last Legislature, when we passed the current Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, and there was a disagreement about quarterly versus annual filing. At that point we did land on quarterly filing. However, it was raised at that point, and some of my colleagues who were in the previous Legislature may remember that it was argued at that point that quarterly filing for the volunteers that are CFOs within the constituency associations may be overly onerous and that it may create a burden whereby these volunteers would be hard to recruit. It's hard to find people to do this particular job because of all the jobs within a constituency association it's the CFO's job that has the most legislation to keep track of and the most requirements as far as quarterly and annual reporting.

Some years later, in the spring of 2015, when I served on the Legislative Offices Committee, the Chief Electoral Officer came to the committee with a request for an increase in his budget. One of the questions I asked was, you know: are there functions that are currently being provided within the purview of the chief electoral office that you view as being excessive, you view as being beyond the requirement for providing the necessary transparency and accountability that our democratic system expects? The Chief Electoral Officer was very clear. He said that the quarterly reporting by constituency associations was, in his view, excessive. It tied up a lot of time and effort and resources in the Elections Alberta office and, in his view, did not add value to the process. He indicated at that time that if that could be reduced from quarterly to annual filing, it would indeed reduce the workload within Elections Alberta. That was something that I filed away.

So when we came to the committee, in fact, we had a rather large number of recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer and from others who had recommendations on the EFCDA. One from the Chief Electoral Officer, or the CEO, was to move from quarterly to annual filing for constituency associations. On August 10, 2016, our committee, on a hot summer day, which I recall very specifically because I was calling in that day, not attending in person, because I was attending the annual Innisfree fair – if you haven't been there, you're certainly missing something. But I called in that day just before the parade was about to kick off and I was to climb aboard the chuckwagon that was going to take me around the streets of Innisfree not once but twice – that's the way we do things.

**An Hon. Member:** A double parade.

**Dr. Starke:** It's a double parade, indeed. You have to buy twice the candy.

On that day, at around 10:20 in the morning, this suggestion was moved. It was moved, and the discussion started about changing from quarterly to annual filing. I remember that day very specifically because although I only phoned in, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, who's certainly a passionate spokesman on behalf of democracy and transparency, indicated at about 10:20

a.m. that he was opposed to that suggestion because it was moving in the opposite direction of the transparency that was to be provided by the recommendations for the committee, and therefore he was opposed to moving from quarterly to annual filing. I respect that opinion. There was some more debate.

A little bit later the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw chimed in at about 10:25 or 10:30 – actually, it was closer to 10:30 – and said a similar sort of an argument.

Now, a little bit later the Chief Electoral Officer was asked: what additional benefit is there to quarterly versus annual reporting? This is interesting, and I think this is something that we have to take into account. It is in fact the Chief Electoral Officer whose office has to deal with these reports and who listens to or hears from the various constituency associations across our province. Our Chief Electoral Officer said on that date:

We have heard quite loudly from constituencies that it is taxing on them. The reporting period isn't a month; it's only 15 days, meaning that after the end of the quarter the CFO has 15 days to file the report.

It's actually a reduced timeline than that.

But part of the issue that they encounter is that it does add a disclosure component, not complete disclosure in a sense, because the information as far as the contributions isn't aggregated throughout the four periods, the four quarters.

He goes on to give the details behind that, but at the bottom of his statement he says:

Part of the reason why we're recommending the recommendation that we have [is] if you choose otherwise, we have recommendations in which I think the quarterly reporting would have to be enhanced . . . to make it functional for the CFOs and for our office.

He doesn't agree with that. He says:

There's confusion for the public, who are looking at the quarterly reporting and say: "Well, you're reporting this [but] the numbers are different at year-end. How can this be?"

At the conclusion of his remarks the Chief Electoral Officer says:

All the work that we perform throughout the year on these quarterly reports is pretty much thrown out other than posting on the website for disclosure. That's the only [key] function it provides. It does not assist us whatsoever in the financial review of contributors.

3:30

The Chief Electoral Officer is telling our committee that there is really no added value to all of this additional work that the chief financial officers of all of these constituency associations, who are volunteers, are performing, and that's, you know, a pretty compelling argument.

You know, we had some additional discussion. There was some additional debate, and right around just before 10:40 – and I remember this as clearly as a bell because the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, with whom I've had many spirited discussions on other committees, said, and I would like to quote because I think this is telling:

I'd like to say: never let it be said that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is a hard-headed individual. Never. You've all made some compelling points. I mean, I think that my comments earlier in terms of responsibility I would echo here, but I can understand how this would be a burden on volunteers. Therefore, I retract my previous comments, and I will support this motion.

In the space of 20 minutes through some good, strong debate at committee the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, also the Member for Calgary-Shaw, and all the other members who at one point were against this motion changed their minds. The vote was held, and it was passed unanimously. That's how committees are supposed to work. It was a great day. Perhaps a surprising day but still a great

day. So you can imagine my surprise when we were briefed on this bill a week and a half or so ago and we're told: no; quarterly reporting is back.

**Mr. Rodney:** What?

**Dr. Starke:** You heard it right.

Quarterly reporting is back, against the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer, against the recommendation of the committee, against what makes sense for our volunteer CFOs in all these constituency associations. For some unknown reason, for some unknown rationale, quarterly reporting is back. Well, Madam Chair, I don't see why that change was made. I don't see why the recommendation and the discussion that was so compelling that within a matter of 20 minutes it changed the minds of a number of members who were originally against the recommendation, why that is not part of the current legislation.

To my way of thinking, the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, who has proposed this amendment, a reasonable amendment, an amendment that is in keeping with the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer, who I would suggest knows best about some of the pitfalls of elections financing – I think this is a very reasonable amendment. I think it is the kind of amendment that we should be proceeding with, and I certainly hope that it finds support on all sides of the House.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**The Deputy Chair:** Oh, I missed the House.

**Mr. Nixon:** That's okay. I'm just giving you a hard time.

Thank you very much for recognizing me today. I'm excited that I get to work on Bill 35 in Committee of the Whole. I know, Madam Chair, you were able to be in the Chamber yesterday as we discussed this important bill during second reading, and I'm sure that you were fascinated and sometimes even shocked by the things that you heard in regard to this legislation.

Specifically to the amendment that's been brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, the independent Member for Calgary-Elbow, my friend, I have to first say very clearly for the record that I completely agree with this amendment and will be supporting it and highly encourage all of my colleagues to seriously look at this amendment and consider voting for this amendment. I think that it will make this legislation better.

Now, the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster did a great job of articulating some of the debate that happened in the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee over the summer, which I sat on with him, particularly around this issue associated with this amendment in regard to the quarterly reports.

We need to step back briefly, though, Madam Chair, to recognize and to re-address the fact that for much of the committee, the committee was derailed on two issues. The big issue we discussed last night in great detail – we may discuss it more later – was in regard to the government members trying to get their campaign expenses paid for by the taxpayers of Alberta.

The second issue was around what was perceived, certainly by the opposition parties, as an attempt to tilt the playing field in the direction of the incumbent government to benefit the NDP, who, as we have discussed in great detail already as we debated this bill, do not use constituency associations the same way that every other political party in this Assembly does. They do not use constituency

associations to manage finances. They were very, very clear about that yesterday. If you look online, you'll see that the reports that are filed by the NDP make it clear that they do not use constituency associations for their finances. This was discussed in great detail in committee because of the concern that manipulating or moving the rules in a way that would advantage the party not using constituency associations and to hurt or to restrict the ability of constituency associations working for other parties to be able to do their job would automatically advantage the governing party, who do not use constituency associations.

Now, we talked about this quarterly reporting at length with the Chief Electoral Officer. The Chief Electoral Officer made it clear that this was not needed, was probably overkill when it came to constituency associations and created an unnecessary expense to taxpayers to be able to manage that situation.

The second thing that was talked about in committee in great detail in regard to this was the burden, the unnecessary burden, that it puts on the volunteers in our political system. As you know, Madam Chair, in our political system the core of what makes it work is not the elected MLAs. Quite frankly, it is not our staff, though they are very important, but it is the volunteers that go door-knocking and put up signs. It is the candidates that aren't successful and able to come to this place but are able to put their name forward on the ballot that make our democracy work. Any excess burden that we put on those people for unnecessary reasons just restricts their ability to do their job, makes people not want to participate in the process. It frustrates them.

When you look at that and then take into context the comments that were made by the Chief Electoral Officer that this was probably not needed or was overkill and is costing taxpayers money unnecessarily, then the question would be: why would we want to make constituency associations have a whole bunch more burden that is making it harder for them to do their role when there is no benefit that has been brought forward by any member during the committee to show why they would need to do that? I suspect there will be no benefit brought forward, though I do look forward to hearing from the minister in Committee of the Whole.

The only reason, Madam Chair, I could see – I think it just reinforces what we said in committee, that this is nothing but an attempt to punish the constituency associations or punish the parties that use constituency associations in an attempt to manipulate the rules or to tilt the playing field to the advantage of the governing party. Now, I do hope to hear from the minister that I'm wrong on that. But it just proves – again, by not listening to the advice of the Chief Electoral Officer and not taking into account the advice of every other party that participated in the committee and to disregard the votes of their own members in the committee, who agreed after lengthy discussion that this was the best way to handle situations for volunteer CAs.

Now, the worst part about this, though, Madam Chair, is that this does not impact larger parties nearly as much as it will impact small parties. As the Member for Calgary-Elbow pointed out in his speech, this will cause trouble for our constituency associations and I suspect for the third party's constituency associations. It's disappointing to see the government, you know, interfering and attempting to cause trouble for independent political parties, but it won't stop our parties. We're big enough. We have enough donations and resources that we could hire staff to help our constituency associations. I promise you that we will be there despite maybe some hopes in 2019, and we will replace this government in 2019 even if they want to try to tilt the system in their favour.

But there are other parties that are smaller and trying to grow within our political system, and the party that I sit in today, that I am with today, used to be there. The independent Member for

Calgary-Elbow is the leader of one of those parties. They do not have nearly the amount of resources that some of our other parties have in the system to be able to help those volunteers. Is our goal not to try to make the democratic process as accessible as possible for everybody, to make sure that everybody's views could be heard in the process?

With this amendment we can take a step towards making it easier for everybody to be able to participate in the process, to make it easier for smaller parties, to make it easier for constituency associations. By not supporting this amendment, I would suggest to you, Madam Chair, that this just proves again the opposition's point that during the Ethics and Accountability Committee and so far during the debate on this legislation the NDP are just appearing to be trying to stack the deck in advantage of their political party.

3:40

They get frustrated. They really got frustrated in committee, Madam Chair. I know that you know when we would point that out. We were also at the same time dealing with debates to try to get taxpayers to pay for their political expenses, so there wasn't a lot of trust between the two parties or between the opposition and the government. But I'm hoping that as we work through Committee of the Whole, we'll be able to have an opportunity to restore trust in the government's intentions with our democracy, and to support this obvious motion would be a great first step. It's in line with what the Chief Electoral Officer has suggested. It's in line with what every member, including the NDP members, voted for during committee. It would help protect smaller parties within our system. It would help encourage people to participate in the political process at all levels, all the while saving the taxpayer money and making life easier for the Chief Electoral Officer.

Now, I recognize that we do need accountability in our system, Madam Chair. As you know, I have spoken about it at length already on this bill. But if the government can't show one example of how passing this amendment would make it not accountable, if they can't show that once, then clearly they should support this amendment and make it easier for the political process.

With that, I am going to yield the floor, Madam Chair, in eagerness to hear what the minister feels about this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Just before we move on to the next speaker, I would just like to remind all members of this House that when we are speaking to the debate in Committee of the Whole, we are speaking to the content of the bill. I do recognize that we were in a committee that dealt with many of these issues, but if we could make sure that we're actually speaking to the issues within the bill and not bringing in other things, please.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be brief. I think the arguments have been well expressed, and I have already congratulated the government on getting rid of large donations from corporations and unions. They have made decisions around levelling the playing field on many levels.

This is an example of a really common-sense amendment that I think, as the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre has said, would be a win-win-win: a win for government, a win for opposition parties, and a win for the public purse. I, too, would support this amendment and look forward to the minister's comments.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I will now call on the hon. Minister of Labour and responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you very much to the members who have spoken, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Elbow for putting forward this amendment. I certainly appreciate the arguments put forth in the discussion, but I would suggest that we do not have a situation where either the government accepts this amendment or the government hates democracy.

In fact, we have in this amendment a bit of a slight misunderstanding. The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster was absolutely correct in recounting some of the conversations that happened with the Chief Electoral Officer. The Chief Electoral Officer did come to the committee and did present on the current state of quarterly financial reporting and did talk about the fact that it was causing a lot of work for different areas but also that it wasn't providing the value that he needed in his office. As the Member from Vermilion-Lloydminster said, he asked for it to either be removed or be enhanced. What we've done with this bill is that we've actually enhanced the quarterly reporting, as per the request from the Chief Electoral Officer, to make it more valuable, for two reasons. When it was originally discussed at committee, at that point the committee had not come to a decision on any changes to contribution limits.

The Chief Electoral Officer was speaking within the context of \$15,000 per year donations, but that has changed. We are now looking at \$4,000 as a contribution limit, and we've heard concerns from the members of the opposition about the difficulty in tracking that between constituency associations, parties, and whatnot, meaning that it's going to be more important going forward that we have the reporting through the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Alberta to know when people are reaching closer to that \$4,000 cap.

It may be that someone is donating to more than one party. It is not the case that the parties all need to talk to each other and find out who's donated to whom or even for constituency associations to talk to each other because the reporting through a quarterly mechanism is going to be available at Elections Alberta. Hopefully, we can catch anyone who's getting close to that \$4,000 limit ahead of them crossing over, or if someone does donate more than \$4,000, we're not having to deal with anyone who's overdonated all at once at the end of the year in a huge amount of work.

Constituency associations are going to need to catalogue donations – who donated them and when they made that donation – anyway. Whether it's reporting quarterly or reporting yearly, that information needs to be logged and submitted. By doing it on a quarterly basis, we will be more able to catch inaccuracies earlier in the process, and we will be able to monitor whether or not someone is getting close to that \$4,000 limit.

I would just like to repeat that the Chief Electoral Officer asked us to remove it or enhance it, and we've enhanced it. Under section 28(e)(4.1) on page 32 of our current printed Bill 35 is the new section that the Chief Electoral Officer requested be added to give quarterly reporting the value that we need.

I will not be supporting this amendment. I completely respect the members involved and the discussion that was had at committee, but the situation has changed. The contribution limits have been lowered. The quarterly reporting does have value, and it has been enhanced as per a request by the Chief Electoral Officer. I certainly appreciate the discussion on this item, but I will not be supporting the amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Nixon:** I'll be very quick, Madam Chair. I know that the Member for Calgary-Hays would like to speak, and I'm interested in hearing his comments. I do just want to point out to the minister that I listened with interest to her comments, but let's be clear for

the record here today. This government raised donation limits for constituency associations, did not lower them the way that she just indicated there. That's a fact. They've raised them from \$1,000 to \$4,000.

I would also submit, through you, Madam Chair, to her that this shows exactly why this needs to go back to committee, because now she's presenting to this House that the Chief Electoral Officer has changed what he said to us during committee. You know, I think that every member would deserve an opportunity to be able to discuss that with the Chief Electoral Officer.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you. I've been listening to the remarks from all the members of the House. There was one thing, Madam Chair, that seems incredibly clear to me, that the goal of the government with this piece of legislation is to tip the electoral field in their favour. It's obvious. It's as obvious as the day is long. And this is only one example. I'll have more to say later because I'm going to try and stick to this amendment that's before us.

It's pretty obvious that when the government is the one political party that doesn't raise money at their constituencies and really raises it through the central politburo model, everything in the centre, and that they're the only ones that won't suffer from this and when the Chief Electoral Officer has made it clear that there is no real value to getting these quarterly statements, this is clearly designed to slow down other parties from raising money, to tilt the scales in the favour of the current governing party. It's as clear as day. I don't know how anybody hearing this, the same thing that I just heard in the last 10, 20 minutes, could come to any other reasonable conclusion.

When I hear the minister stand up and make the most convoluted, nonsensical excuses to try to cover why the government is doing this to tilt the scales in their favour, it's really embarrassing. A government that determined to essentially cheat and push things in their own favour and make it obvious by the light of day that they're doing it: frankly, it's despicable. I think that, for me, this should be on the front page of every paper and every newscast tomorrow because this is a barefaced attempt to tip the electoral scale in one party's favour.

3:50

You know what? I'm going to stop here soon except for the fact that – and I'll talk about this later – this isn't the only thing in the legislation that does that. I will talk more about it later. I won't do it now because, as you know, I think you made a request for us to talk to the amendment before us. This is not the only example where the government has tried to tip the scales in their favour and against everybody else's in this legislation, and I will be only too pleased to expand upon that later on in the debate. Unfortunately, entirely contrary to what the minister said, it really is as simple as that. Either the government supports this, or they don't care about democracy. Clear as day.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, I am profoundly disappointed that the government won't even consider this amendment. I find it remarkable that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who stood with the minister at her own news conference to announce this legislation, realizes this is a good amendment. What's the downside in accepting this amendment? What's the downside?

I also note other government members, in particular the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie and the Member for Calgary-Shaw, who were part of that committee and, as the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster had referenced earlier, had started on one side of this debate and discussion, heard the arguments that were made at committee, and changed their minds. Well, that's good. They realized that, in fact – you know what? – it didn't make sense to have quarterly reporting. I find it remarkable how quiet those members are, and I'd really like to hear the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie's rationale as to why he's changed his mind on this and what his perspective on this is. In fact, I'd like to hear some other government members, the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. I'd love to hear your perspective on this as to why you think this is a good idea.

There are lots of members on that government bench who were on that committee and who we have yet to hear from on this issue or any other. How is it that you can stand idly by while your party does exactly the same thing that you railed against the PCs for doing back in the day? It's amazing what happens, what magical terrible things happen when you become the government. It is remarkable how quickly you abandon your principles in pursuit of power and how willing you are to adapt legislation, to reject thoughtful amendments that would make legislation better, that would level the playing field for all parties. I promise you, government members, that you will be in opposition again one day very soon, frankly, not many of you, but your party will be in opposition again one day very soon.

I'll put this on the record right now. When I am in government, I won't tip the scales to favour my party. It's not what Albertans want. Albertans want a fair playing field, Albertans want a fair fight, and when Albertans see that you have put your thumb on the scale and are tilting the system to your advantage, they're going to punish you at the ballot box. That's what's going to happen. That is what's going to happen.

You know, to pick up on the minister's words, this is, quote, unquote, going to provide for enhanced reporting. Enhanced reporting. You wonder if the minister of truth is the 20th minister on that side. Enhanced reporting: really, all that does is burden parties that don't operate like the NDP. That's another word for it, burdening parties that don't act like the NDP. This amendment seeks to level the playing field amongst all parties.

You talk about transparency. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has said that this is about transparency. If it's about transparency, can you tell me the number of times that we've had an issue from Elections Alberta that has accused or reported upon or fined a constituency association or sanctioned any sort of constituency association for malicious or incorrect reporting? Has that ever happened? I don't know if it's ever happened.

This bill, this particular section of the bill, seeks to solve a problem that doesn't exist. That is the very definition of tilting the rules in your favour, using your advantage to bully through changes that advantage your party. This is another brick in the wall. This is exactly the kind of thing that over time Albertans get tired of. This is not the number one issue that Albertans are going to ask about in the next election, but it's yet another in a series of examples of the NDP using their advantage to impose their will and impose their views on the entire system.

And it's not just in elections. It's in electricity. It's in climate change. It's in all sorts of different areas. It's in small business. It's in the minimum wage. There are all kinds of areas where the NDP is applying their world view to tilt the scales in their direction, in their supporters' direction. This amendment seeks to fix all of that. Not just this section of the bill but the whole bill seeks to rig the system, to rig the system in favour of the NDP. It's patently,

fundamentally unfair. I won't stand for it, and I know for a fact that Albertans won't stand for it, Madam Chair. I really encourage everyone in this House to support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks to the Member for Calgary-Elbow for the comments, of course. I do think that it's probably time to vote on this shortly. I suspect, I think, that most members will agree with us.

But I do think it's really important to make clear what the Member for Calgary-Elbow said. This clearly just shows that the government continues to intend to do what they were doing in committee, and that is to manipulate the system, rig the system, and try to kneecap the competition to make it easier for them in the next election. That is extremely disappointing, and they should hang their heads in shame. If they think for a minute – a minute – that Albertans won't see through that, they're kidding themselves, and they should get out of the capital and go talk to some real people.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Having been to a lot of these Ethics and Accountability Committee meetings, I think that it's interesting that we're hearing that the CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, is saying that we need to enhance quarterly reporting. I would say, if my memory serves me correctly, that I asked this question in different ways to hear how it would impact my local constituency association because I have helped file these financial statements in the past. I specifically asked him: how many days do we have for these quarterly reports after the quarter? The Chief Electoral Officer specifically said that there were 15 days. Now, one of the concerns that I brought up specifically about this was that by the time you get the bank statement to do the reconciliation to be able to do that final quarter, you're usually a week if not more into the quarter. This is a concern because a lot of times what happens is that you just don't have the time to be able to get that quarterly report done. I don't see that problem fixed here or that enhancement being done.

I also never heard him say: by the way, \$250 is too high, so let's go down to \$50. I haven't heard that one as a suggestion either. I did hear him say that this was a burden on his office and that they would prefer annual reporting just because of the fact that we're standardizing it along with the parties. Now, I specifically also asked the CEO: is it possible to be able to track this at that time theoretical \$4,000 through the quarterly reports? I believe he said no, that this isn't possible. It would have to be done when the parties file their final returns, and in that way we would have been able to go through this. So the justification saying that we're going to be using quarterly reports to be able to check to see if people are over this \$4,000 limit is, in my opinion, ludicrous.

What we've got here is an amendment that is supposed to enhance it when all it does is to actually put more of a burden on our poor CFOs that are in our constituencies. This is nothing at all like an enhancement. If anything, it is the opposite of an enhancement. I'll tell you that it is frustrating.

4:00

I had identified during the committee meetings that the government, by not allowing us to complete the committee meetings and bring forward motions so that Parliamentary Counsel can build an

elections act that has all parties putting contributions in there, if they don't do that, then what we're going to end up with is the government cherry-picking what it liked and didn't like. That's exactly what we've got today, that they're cherry-picking. They're getting specific words and saying: well, he must have meant this.

Now, I understand. You know what? *Hansard* has got a lot happening here on what we had talked about because we actually sat quite a bit on this act. I spent a lot of hours in my car driving to Edmonton to contribute what I thought my constituents wanted me to do for strengthening the elections act. I fully agree that we needed to reduce contributions by individuals, and this is something that our party, the Wildrose Party, has been very consistent on.

Now, when we were going forward with this, I said, "Well, okay; if we continue with this quarterly reporting, then we at least should go back to the bucket system," the one thing that you're trying to eliminate because you're creating complexity here. Now what happens is that we've actually got to work with the party, and we also have to work with the constituency association together.

You've got to remember that the party has paid staff whereas our constituency associations are all volunteers. I have heard our members here specifically saying that the difference between us and the government is that we have constituency associations. We actually have volunteers that are in place to be able to strengthen our ability to get those grassroots out, get them involved, get them fundraising, and create activities within our riding, and through those activities we're able to build our grassroots.

Now, again, it appears the government doesn't seem to feel that the grassroots is as important to them as it is to the Wildrose. That is a very distressing point. We continue to bring up as well that in these meetings we really want to be involved in this. The fact is that when we had four pieces of legislation go through this committee, which was labelled as unprecedented – unprecedented – by legal counsel, we're told we're filibustering. I think we did remarkable work, and I will still stand by that.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

We went through the whistle-blower act. Usually we take a whole year for one act. We got one full act completed. Then what happened was that we got, I would say, at least 80 per cent through the Election Act. So then we're starting to move forward – and I see that the minister wants to say something. If she's going to correct me, then I welcome that.

What we need to say is that when we're moving forward with this kind of important restructuring of our elections finance act, why wouldn't you want all parties to be contributing to that? We all have constituents that are wanting to voice their concerns on the direction our government is going.

I have heard that we had too high a limit. I have heard that in the end what we are looking for is to make sure that it's a fair system. To be honest, that is something that I wanted to strive for. I truly feel that in the end what we're looking to do is move Alberta forward. We're trying to ensure that there's no undue influence.

I would like to hear the minister at least say how exactly it is that enhancement equals what we've seen here.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you. I will be brief, speaking to the amendment specifically. The Chief Electoral Officer presented to the committee and suggested that quarterly reporting should be removed or enhanced. The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake is correct that he told the committee that they couldn't use the quarterly reporting to accurately track when someone was going to go over the contribution limits. That is the enhancement that the Chief Electoral Officer

asked us to put in, and that is exactly what section (4.1) does. It adds that year-to-date information so that, specifically, the quarterly reporting will be of value in helping all parties, candidates, constituency associations, leadership contestants, and nomination contestants know on a quarterly basis where an Albertan's political contributions are in relation to that \$4,000 cap.

There is a marked improvement within the context of lower contribution limits and wanting to help the parties involved, to not cause difficulty or have overcontributions all being sorted out at the end of the year for a contribution that maybe took place in February. I know that this formulation here will serve Albertans and will serve transparency. I thank the member for his comments, but that is how it directly addresses what the Chief Electoral Officer had talked about at that committee.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I think I saw the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster stand first. Go ahead.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I have to say that the comments from the minister, as was stated by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, are extremely disappointing, and I will also say that they don't jibe with what is happening with this new bill that has come out, that bears only partial resemblance to the discussions which happened at committee. I think that's the concern, especially the concern of the members of the committee who were there, who discussed this, who debated this, and remember quite well the discussions at committee. And if we didn't remember the discussions at committee, we certainly have them here on *Hansard*.

Now, specifically, what we are talking about is contributions to constituency associations. Under this bill the contribution limit to constituency associations has been raised, not lowered. Let's be really clear on that. The contribution that an individual can make to the constituency association used to be \$1,000 per year, \$2,000 in an election year. This bill makes it possible for one person to give a constituency association \$4,000, so if indeed these enhancements that the minister speaks of are put in because of lowered contributions, that's just not true. The contribution limit hasn't been lowered; it's been raised. It's been raised from \$1,000 to \$4,000, so that explanation just absolutely does not hold any water whatsoever.

Furthermore, Madam Chair, I'd like to point out that the idea that the Chief Electoral Officer somehow changed his mind at some point after the committee's discussions concluded and that somehow this recommendation made on August 10 was based on a higher level of contribution but now that the level was lowered, oh, it meant things were different, well, that's not true either. The old contribution limit was \$1,000. The new contribution level is not lower; it's higher. It's \$4,000. It's specifically talking about contributions to constituency associations.

Now, I will also point out that the Chief Electoral Officer and others in his office were extremely helpful throughout the discussions that we had on this. They were there at every meeting, not just the CEO but his assistant and legal counsel from the CEO's office. They were there, and they were extremely helpful as resources, answered a lot of questions that members had.

4:10

He was there right until September, when we concluded our deliberations. So to suggest that somehow because things changed, something that the CEO said on August 10 was now changed strikes me as odd. If, in fact, that recommendation had changed, I would have expected that he would have said at one of the many meetings we had after August 10: "Oh, just a minute. Things have changed.

Remember when I said on August 10 that quarterly reporting really doesn't help?" To me, this comment just does not hold water. There is something fundamentally out of whack here. [interjection] Well, that's one way to put it.

Now, it has also been also suggested – and I think this is also important – that this requirement puts additional stress and additional reporting requirements on the CFOs of constituency associations right across our province, for all constituency associations. But, specifically, it puts a burden on those constituency associations that actively fund raise, that actively solicit donations. When we look at the very helpfully provided disclosure documents, the financial disclosure documents on the Elections Alberta website, we find that, in fact, the constituency associations of the Alberta New Democrats are particularly inactive in that regard.

In fact, they're so inactive that earlier this summer the young gentleman I introduced earlier discovered that one person is the CFO of some 36 constituency associations of the NDP.

**Mr. Clark:** How many?

**Dr. Starke:** One person. One person files 36 quarterly... [interjections] Well, in a lot of cases – quite frankly, I've looked at the reports – they're just filed blank. The zeros aren't even filled in. So there are a whole lot of zero reports. One person is the CFO of 36 NDP constituency associations.

Yet the minister tells us here how this is levelling the playing field and how this is enhancing democracy, enhancing transparency within our system. Madam Chair, I simply do not believe that. I simply do not believe that there is anything within here. And if indeed it is true, if indeed her statements are true, then why did they vote down a motion to refer this motion to committee, where we could ask the Chief Electoral Officer directly: so why have you now decided that quarterly reporting is something that should happen?

This is a reasonable amendment. This is an amendment that has the support of all four opposition parties. It used to have the support of all of the government members of this committee as well, including a couple of members who admitted in our committee meetings that they had changed their mind, that they originally had a different mindset but that they had changed their mind.

Madam Chair, to me, it is totally baffling that this minister can take the recommendations of the committee, that were passed unanimously, that had the support of the Chief Electoral Officer, and now come back to speak of some discussions that she's had with the CEO that happened as a result of a so-called reduction in contribution limits where, in fact, the contribution limit has quadrupled, gone up by four times, and that that somehow now means that this is a good idea. It is not a good idea.

It is very clearly – very clearly – designed to unfairly advantage parties that do not have active fundraising activities within their constituency association. If you look – and perhaps some of you haven't looked at your own constituency association fundraising or financial statements and financial reports to the Chief Electoral Officer. I suggest that you do. It's very instructive. It won't take you long. It won't take you long at all, and you probably don't even need an auditor.

In fact, if you look at those reports, Madam Chair, you will find that the workload of the chief financial officer – officers, I should say. There's more than one although one does take care of 36 different constituency associations. The chief financial officers that file reports on behalf of that party, the governing party, that is suggesting quarterly reporting is a good idea, have a pretty easy workload whereas over on this side, for those parties that have constituency associations that actively fund raise, that actively solicit donations, they've got a lot more work to do. Now they're going to make that

workload even harder. It only benefits the governing party, and it is unfair. It is completely unfair.

Madam Chair, speaking from a certain degree of experience, hard-earned, I can tell you that Albertans have a tremendous sense of fairness, and when they see something that is unfair, they don't treat it kindly. There has been fundamental unfairness done in the past by governments, and some of it was done by our party when we were in government, and we were rightly punished for doing that. That's fine. I acknowledge that, and we have received what we deserved.

But, Madam Chair, this government promised to do better. This government was, as was coined by my former colleague – well, she's still a colleague – the Member for Calgary-North West, the Doing Things Differently Gang. That's what it was. That was a great phrase: the Doing Things Differently Gang. So the Doing Things Differently Gang rides again. Sadly, you're not doing things that much differently. Really, Albertans expect better. Albertans expect much better.

This is fundamentally a fair amendment. It is an amendment that follows a recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer as it was stated to the committee, not in some mysterious discussions that happened after the committee finished its work. I think that if indeed the Chief Electoral Officer has had a change of heart, then it is only fair that this matter be referred to a committee that can ask the Chief Electoral Officer why he's changed his mind. But that was suggested and was voted down last night by the government majority.

Madam Chair, I'm in favour of this amendment. The arguments made by the minister are, to me, absolutely invalid. They completely fly in the face of what we know to be the truth, that was presented at committee. In addition to that, it suggests that the Chief Electoral Officer's mind was changed, and I would like to be able to confirm that directly by having a conversation with him before we consider defeating this amendment, as the minister has suggested.

So I would urge all members of the Legislature to vote in favour of this very reasonable amendment for the sake of the fairness to all political parties that operate in the province of Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair, I appreciate that. Now, since we've been in opposition, since May 5 of last year a lot of things have changed, believe me. But one of the things that's changed is that we've had supporters and donors to our party fall away, some because they don't support us. But – I'll tell you what – a disturbing number have said, "You know, we're not going to go on your boards anymore. We're not going to give you money anymore." Even though the NDP doesn't raise any money at the constituency level, what they do is read the reports very carefully, and then people say that if they find them on a PC board or giving money, they and their companies won't be welcome to do business with the government. We hear that a lot. Now, I know that doesn't sound nice, but I'm telling you the truth. We've heard this from people.

That, actually, unfortunately, leads to a more nefarious conclusion on what the government's position is on this because if the government is using their power as government to intimidate people and pressure them to not support, certainly, our party – and I assume that if it's our party, it's other parties that are in opposition to the legislation as well – then of course they would have an interest in having a year of that same intimidation before an election instead of just three months. Think about that. Think about that. People are right now afraid to give money and be on boards and stuff for

opposition parties, you know, and some of them say: we'll support you at the time when we can, but right now we can't do it because this government is here. Well, right now this adds to that intimidation period, from three months to a year before the next election. In my mind, this really puts a big exclamation mark on the fact that the government, by not supporting this particular amendment, is interested in tilting the scales in their favour.

4:20

**The Chair:** Any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Sure, Madam Chair. Yeah. I'm speaking in support of the amendment from the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, but I do have some serious concerns here because some of the points raised today by the Member for Calgary-Elbow and the Member for Calgary-Hays are really concerning. The Member for Calgary-Elbow said that the system is being rigged to tilt in favour of the NDP. This is a serious matter, rigging the system by a party which is all about accountability, transparency, and all that. Before they got into government, when they were sitting on this side of the House, those were their values, and now I don't know what happened to that.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow is saying that they're seriously attempting to tilt the balance, which is very undemocratic and very unfair to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who most often worked with that side of the House although he sits on this side of the House. He's being targeted now. His party is being targeted. When I say "targeted," that's this bill reducing the ability of his party to survive. Both leaders, from the Alberta Party and the Liberal Party, happen to be from the same city I come from, so my entire Calgary Wildrose caucus is sympathetic to them.

The point, you know, that the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster said: they made mistakes. Nobody's perfect. They said that they made mistakes, and they were punished, and they feel remorseful about that, which is great, and they're willing to improve.

We're not perfect. We're willing to learn from our mistakes, too, but we are grassroots driven, so that means that the NDP has no respect for those common, regular Albertans who spend hundreds and thousands of hours to participate in this democratic process and keep the democracy alive. It's not fair to those volunteers when the NDP is trying to rig the system.

What the Member for Calgary-Hays says, if that is true, if the donors are feeling intimidated by the ruling party, is not good. I don't know how these members in the front row there on the government side can, you know, take it easy when there are serious allegations like this. It's really important. They have to at least apply common sense when they work in this House, when these kinds of reasonable amendments come from members who usually, actually – you know, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View most often is very sympathetic to them. At least when he's talking about fairness, they should pay attention and listen to him.

That's why I'm going to vote in favour of this amendment, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I actually thought that we were getting close to possibly voting on this. Then some of the comments I heard from the minister in regard to what the Chief Electoral Officer may or may not have said in committee I found alarming, so I quickly went and had a look. I, of course, was present when this discussion was happening in the committee as a member of the committee. The discussion that happened in the committee about

the content of this amendment happened in great detail, and several conversations took place with the Chief Electoral Officer present.

He gave some comments on this very issue, and I'm going to quote him. He said:

Yes, we have heard quite loudly from constituencies that it is taxing on them. The reporting period isn't a month; it's only 15 days. It's actually a reduced timeline . . .

But part of the issue that they encounter is that it does add a disclosure component, not complete disclosure in a sense, because the information as far as the contributions isn't aggregated throughout . . . the four quarters. So you can contribute \$200 each quarter. [When you do that] you're never captured as far as public disclosure. At year-end you're captured because it's over the \$250 contribution limit for public disclosure. As a result, when you look at it from an accounting perspective, when you're completing the financial statements, what you report on a quarterly basis does not reconcile with what you're reporting on an annual basis. So there's confusion for the public, who are looking at the quarterly reporting and say: "Well, you're reporting this. The numbers are different at year-end. How can this be?" The same thing is happening with the CFOs.

Volunteer CFOs, I might add.

They're performing all this work, but it doesn't complement what they're doing at the end of the year.

That's part of the reason why we're recommending the recommendation that we have. If you choose otherwise, we have recommendations in which I think the quarterly reporting [could be maybe] enhanced in order to make it functional for the CFOs and for our office. All the work that we perform throughout the year on these quarterly reports is pretty much thrown out . . .

Madam Chair, thrown out.

. . . other than posting on the website for disclosure. That's the only function it provides. It does not assist us whatsoever in the financial review.

To me, particularly the last line, "does not assist us whatsoever in the financial review": that's the Chief Electoral Officer, not me, saying that.

He also said that all the work they do that has to happen because of this reporting is thrown out, completely useless, has no benefit. The Chief Electoral Officer said very clearly that it has no benefit, and the minister wants to rise in this Assembly and indicate that the Chief Electoral Officer is saying something different? I certainly would like to hear from the Chief Electoral Officer because right there in *Hansard* – and I'd like to do a shout-out to the good people at *Hansard* because they usually get it right – it's very, very clear that, no, that's not what's happening. They're throwing out the work that these poor volunteers have to do because it has no benefit to the process whatsoever. No benefit.

The minister tried to indicate that it was because we are now lowering contribution limits, that for some reason this would all of a sudden have benefits when, in fact, this government is getting ready to increase the contribution limits to constituency associations. So that argument doesn't hold water.

When we look at it, the Chief Electoral Officer says that there is no need for it, it has no benefit, and it puts a tremendous burden on volunteers who participate in the electoral process. Then we have to ask ourselves: why would the government want something like this that just costs taxpayers money, has no benefit? The Chief Electoral Officer says they just throw out the information, so it's essentially just a waste of everybody's time. Why, Madam Chair, would the government want to waste people's time?

When you start to look at the situation, you realize that they don't use constituency associations for fundraising. They don't have CFOs wasting their time on this, so the only reason that they would disregard what the Chief Electoral Officer said is to make opposition parties of every stripe and on every side of the political

spectrum have to waste their volunteers' time so they could benefit. The minister wants to rise and try to convince us that this is not being done to benefit the New Democratic Party of Alberta after reading that?

The explanation that the minister provided in regard to that, Madam Chair, is ridiculous. It's ridiculous. It is clear when you read this that the governing party, the NDP, is attempting to stack the deck, rig the system, fix it for themselves, tilt the playing field to their advantage, manipulate the rules, and kneecap the competition. They're forgetting that they used to be a small party in our political system, and I can assure you that they will be a small party again in our political system if they continue this behaviour.

The minister should rise and explain . . .

**An Hon. Member:** There is no explanation.

**Mr. Nixon:** There is no explanation for it, I don't think.

. . . why she thinks that she can change what the Chief Electoral Officer said and how she can justify to this House that the information is just being thrown away, that it's costing taxpayers money and has absolutely no tangible benefit for accountability in our political system except for wasting good volunteers' time and trying to kneecap the competition to advantage the incumbent government. Again, shame on you guys. It's ridiculous.

4:30

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I also went and found the place in *Hansard*, like my colleague. You know, he did a really good job of moving that one section that the Chief Electoral Officer brought forward, but I want to go a little bit ahead to what was said. I'm going to go partway through. I was talking about these annual returns, and I said:

So this is a true hardship put on constituency associations. That's the real point here, that it's not easily done in those two weeks. These are volunteers. We need to be flexible, and we're not flexible right now. I think that the past government who brought this in tried it to see if it would add to transparency, and I would argue that it's done the exact opposite.

Then we have the Member for Edmonton-Decore:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you to the CEO, just a couple of really quick questions, then. Have you found that constituency associations, then, are struggling with this whereas if we had gone to yearly reporting, that would probably make it a little bit easier for them?

This is where our Chief Electoral Officer goes:

Yes, we have heard quite loudly from constituencies that it is [quite] taxing on them.

And he goes on as through my past colleague, so I don't want to go into that entire dialogue.

But I do want to go, after that dialogue, back to the Member for Edmonton-Decore. He goes on to say, after the Chief Electoral Officer had made all of those comments:

Okay. I guess, Madam Chair, just a quick comment, then. I mean, I guess, you know, if you quickly look at what's being proposed here, maybe on the outside it's possible that it would look like disclosure is being reduced when in actuality it's not. I certainly appreciate the member's concerns, and I'm hoping that maybe we've managed to clarify things a little bit. I'm happy to support this motion,

which was the motion to make it annual.

I guess for folks that are more interested in seeing it on a quarterly basis, maybe they're just going to have to stay tuned a little bit longer.



That is the truth because we're going quarterly, still. I guess we're going to have to wait until the next government.

But let's go back to what my colleague had said. I will say that what's important here is the last part of his comments. Just from the CEO:

That's part of the reason why we're recommending the recommendation that we have.

His recommendation was to go to annual.

If you choose otherwise, we have recommendations in which I think the quarterly reporting would have to be enhanced in order to make it functional for the CFOs and for our office.

Now, it's important to say that he threw that in, saying that quarterly just isn't working – this is a burden; it's just not working – but if you have to have it here, you at least should maybe change it up some. He didn't ever say that enhancement is the route to go. That is cherry-picking what the CEO had to say from these comments.

Again, bringing back my original concerns that the government would go through this and pick and choose what they want even though the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee had brought this motion forward by way of one of my colleagues. The motion was debated to go from quarterly to annually. The committee came to a decision that this was the right move to take. We had members from the government agreeing that this was the route to go, yet here we are. We've got a government pushing through quarterly even though it is very apparent that the only people that will be benefiting by leaving it a little bit longer or staying tuned is the government.

They have not justified this well enough. That is why Calgary-Elbow has brought forward a very good amendment that we need to consider. Even though this amendment originated as a motion from the Wildrose and he is carrying this flag into this House, we will support this because it is the right thing to do. Volunteers need to be respected, and it appears that this government is not taking in the thoughts of the volunteers in any regard, shape, or form. They're just going and ramming things through.

They're saying that because we're adding input to this, we're against reducing the contribution limits, and that is totally false. We need to establish that we can make this better. We can actually make this nonpartisan, but it's the government that is making this partisan.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:36 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Clark	Loewen	Starke
Cyr	McIver	Stier
Drysdale	Nixon	Swann
Gotfried	Panda	van Dijken
Hunter	Rodney	

Against the motion:

Bilous	Gray	McKittrick
Carlier	Hinkley	McLean
Carson	Horne	McPherson

Connolly	Kazim	Miller
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Phillips
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Piquette
Dach	Littlewood	Renaud
Drever	Loyola	Rosendahl
Eggen	Luff	Shepherd
Feehan	Malkinson	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Sweet
Goehring	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Totals:	For – 14	Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** Back on Bill 35. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to move an amendment. I have the appropriate number of copies for the pages, which I will hand to them, and I'll wait till they get to the table.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Chair. The amendment I'm bringing forward is that I move that Bill 35, Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended in section 28(c) in the proposed section 32 by striking out subsections (3) and (3.1).

It is a very simple amendment, Madam Chair. As we just witnessed in this Chamber, the last amendment brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow was voted down, unfortunately, by the government in their clear process to continue to tilt the playing field to their advantage. But in the spirit of recognizing that the government has already made their decision in regard to quarterly filing, I do want to point out as I talk about this amendment that this amendment will still maintain the current provision for quarterly filing by constituency associations though we still fundamentally disagree with that.

Madam Chair, the current act means that volunteer CFOs for constituency associations only have to file the total amount of contributions received during the quarter and at the end of the year that did not exceed \$250. The government's proposal is to lower that amount to \$50, to lower the amount from \$250 to \$50. This limit will make it incredibly difficult for the volunteers who make the constituency associations operate. It is very similar to what we discussed in the previous amendment. A good reminder I think for all of us as we continue to debate these important issues around Bill 35 is that we are talking primarily about volunteers that deal with the party finances, particularly around constituency associations, except, as has been pointed out – it's very relevant again to this amendment – not by the governing party.

One of the members in this House yesterday pointed out that the hardest position they have to fill on their constituency association board is their CFO, and I completely agree with him. It is a tough job. If you're sitting there for any board, not just on political boards, it's often the one where people are often most volun-told or really, really begged to be able to participate in it because it's tough. Making it harder for these volunteers will force people out of that position. I can guarantee you that, Madam Chair.

Fifty dollars a quarter and \$200 a year is not big money in politics. It's not, and we all know that. There is not one credible argument that could be brought forward by the government – though I suspect they're going to try to invent a credible argument, and I look forward to watching that – that \$50 or \$200 is big money

in politics, particularly, Madam Chair, when this minister is bringing through legislation right now to raise the donation limit by 400 per cent on constituency associations. Four hundred per cent on constituency associations. Four hundred per cent. Taking the donation limits on constituency associations from a thousand dollars to \$4,000 is a significant increase. A significant increase.

Then to put forth the argument to take what volunteers across the board are currently reporting at \$250 and bring it down to \$50 cannot be justified by the NDP as taking big money out of politics. Again, similar to the last discussions that we had on the last amendment, the only benefit that it will have is to make things harder for volunteer CFOs who work – and I think you’re going to see a theme throughout the evening, Madam Chair – for constituency associations for the opposition parties because the government does not use constituency associations when it comes to financial management, which is their right. But it surely is not appropriate for them to continue to try to manipulate the rules and kneecap the competition on the other side that does use constituency associations.

Again, the government keeps rising and saying: no, that’s not what we’re trying to do; we’re trying to make it more transparent. You know, they’ll tell you everything. But when you come and you look at it, it doesn’t add up. That dog doesn’t hunt. It is so obvious what is being done here, and it’s so wrong and in some ways sad. There was so much common ground on this legislation between all the parties that we actually could have had a bill passed that would have been supported by all parties inside this Assembly, which, I would argue to you, Madam Chair, is what Albertans would have liked to see when we’re talking about something as fundamentally important as their democracy.

Having to record the name, the address, and the date of the contribution by every contributor that gave over \$51 for a year, in my view, is ridiculous. It’s not big money in politics. It doesn’t make anything more transparent, and it does nothing but punish volunteers for putting their hands up and saying: “Yeah, I’ll help. Yeah, I’ll help make the political process work. I’ll help participate. I’ll give up a night a month to work on the books for a constituency association. I’ll skip, you know, one of my kid’s events that I may want to go to because I believe in the political process, I believe so much in the political process.” You know, in my constituency my CFO believes so much in the political process that she often gets in a car and drives upwards of an hour and a half to a constituency association meeting, sometimes on the other side of my constituency, which is 25,000 square kilometres and a big job for those volunteers. A big job for those volunteers. And not once during committee did anything come forward that would justify this silliness, Madam Chair.

At the same time, I want to make it very, very clear that we’re going to take it from \$250 a year to \$50 a year at the same time that this government is now increasing – increasing – contributions to constituency associations by four times the previous amount. They’re the ones trying to get big money out of politics? I don’t think so, Madam Chair. I do not think so.

Well, and the hon. minister is laughing, but, again, four times the previous limit is increasing contribution limits.

5:00

**Mr. Feehan:** You’re misstating the truth.

**Mr. Nixon:** He’s telling me that I’m not telling the truth. Through you, Madam Chair, I am telling the truth. This bill increases it to \$4,000 a year. Try reading your brief, sir. I am telling the truth.

**Mr. Feehan:** No, you’re not.

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order, Madam Chair. The minister wants to keep telling me that I’m not telling the truth. I think that’s completely against all of the tradition of this Assembly.

**The Chair:** You wish to raise a point of order? What is your citation on this point of order?

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Nixon:** The minister keeps telling me that I’m not telling the truth, referring to and implying that I’m lying. First of all, it is completely – completely – ridiculous, when their own bill says that they increased it to \$4,000, to say that we’re lying about quoting their bill.

That aside, Madam Chair, you know and I know that there’s a long tradition in this Assembly to not use the word “truth” or imply that somebody is not telling the truth in this Assembly. That’s disappointing coming from a cabinet minister, and the cabinet minister should rise and apologize and withdraw those comments.

I’m referring to 23(i). Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I don’t think I can consider this a point of order as the minister did not have the floor and did not speak those words on the record. It’s heckling.

I would, however, caution the House to be careful in the words that you say when heckling, to not create disorder.

**Mr. Nixon:** You know, heckling can be a point of order, Madam Chair, but I will respect your ruling. I do hope that my colleagues note that they can now heckle that ministers aren’t telling the truth, because that’s ridiculous.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I just reminded the House not to heckle those kinds of things.

**Mr. Nixon:** Excellent. I agree. They shouldn’t heckle those kinds of things. I agree with you, Madam Chair. It’s very disappointing to see that from a cabinet minister, I must say.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Nixon:** Let’s be clear, then, because he raised it. The old rules, that will go away after we pass this legislation, cap the donation limits at \$1,000 for a constituency association. This government is raising that limit to \$4,000. To the minister: that is not lying. It is a fact that you are raising that. Thank you very much.

Why would we lower it to \$50 on the other side when they’re already raising the limit for constituency associations? The only argument that could be brought forward for that is that, again, it’s another example of the NDP Party trying to fix this process for themselves, trying to use their majority in the Legislature to rig the system for themselves.

Now, sadly, it’s not going to hurt the bigger parties. It’s going to be tougher, but we’ll get through the process. We’ve got pretty big teams, and we’re able to do it. It’s going to hurt the smaller political parties. It’s going to hurt the start-up political parties that want to get into the process, the ones, I would submit to you, Madam Chair, they’re most scared of because they’re on their side of the political spectrum.

To manipulate our democracy through legislation to advantage the governing party is shameful. Shameful. So by bringing forward this amendment, we’re giving them the ability to say: “Whoa. We made a mistake, just like we did when we tried to get our campaign expenses paid for. Whoa. We made a mistake. Thank you,

Opposition, for saving us again from this terrible mistake. Thank you."

Rise, and do the right thing, and vote for this to make it easier. Stop the silliness of trying to stack the deck to the advantage of that political party.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre states that the only possible reason for the lowered limit would be that the government is trying to rig the process. I can assure him that is not true. In the submission that the Chief Electoral Officer made to the committee on October 19, 2015, recommendation 34 states, "if the Legislature retains quarterly reporting, section 32 should be amended to include details of the under-\$250 [donations] and include receipts – then get to year-end, [you] only have a quarter left. It will be more functional." This lowered limit is following the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer.

I will not be supporting this amendment. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** I wish I could say that I was surprised by that. I'm not surprised, yet still disappointed. You know, the hon. minister has read a portion of *Hansard*, and the portion of *Hansard* she read started with the word "if." The "if" refers to, as we've heard from a couple of hon. members here in reading out the full content of what the Chief Electoral Officer talked about – and I won't read the full *Hansard*. Instead, I'll give the gist of what he said, which is: well, I guess if you're going to keep it, make it meaningful, but my strong preference is to get rid of it entirely. That was the essence of what the Chief Electoral Officer said. In fact, he was so persuasive that he convinced the government members of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee to change their votes and change their minds on quarterly reporting. So the committee unanimously said that they wanted to get rid of quarterly reporting. For the minister to cherry-pick the little bits and pieces she wants is disingenuous in the extreme.

The argument that we need this provision – and I am rising on the amendment, to speak strongly in favour of the amendment from the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. The government is saying: "Well, this way we're going to know. This way we know when someone crosses the \$350 threshold." We will still know, Madam Chair, but every constituency association's financial officer will now need to do the work four times a year – that's four times the amount of work – not just once a year. The result of that is that parties are going to have no choice but to take that accountability away from their constituency association's chief financial officer, which means that all fundraising will funnel through the party, which means that grassroots democracy is sacrificed. [interjection] I missed that, Calgary-Hawkwood. What was that? I didn't hear what you had to say. I'm always interested in what the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood has to say.

Again, as said many times this afternoon and many times yesterday and many times in the committee, every single party in this Assembly works a certain way except for one. We have the one that has the ability to ram through legislation using their majority, and that's what they've chosen to do. It's disappointing in the extreme that they've done that, but that's what they've chosen to do. It seems to be: "Well, I guess that's just what we do as a majority government. Hey, we're in charge now. Let's just impose our will."

That is not what Albertans wanted when they elected this government. Albertans had higher expectations. Albertans had high hopes that things would actually be different, that they would have

a government that actually listened to the people. But I understand now why they're not, because this isn't a government of the people, because they don't have connections with their communities, because they don't have strong constituency associations. [interjection] My friend from Calgary-Klein asks me how I know that. Well, I know that because I've looked at the financial reports for each and every one of your constituency associations, and your constituency associations have no connection to community.

Now, I will acknowledge that there are certain members on the government side who have strong connections to their communities. It's not a universal statement in the slightest, but it really does speak to a philosophy and a way of governing and a way of operating which is highly centralized and: we're going to tell you what to do. The best way for this House to operate and for democracy to work is for the grassroots, the people of Alberta, through each one of us, to tell us what to do.

We throw this word "grassroots" around. You heard my eloquent and wonderfully passionate point of order earlier today about the importance of backbench questions. The essence there – and this ties to the amendment, because I can see the Chair wondering where I'm going with this. What this speaks to in this amendment is the restoration of grassroots democracy. The point of order that I made earlier today was about the importance of government members having the flexibility and freedom to ask a truly meaningful – truly meaningful – question of the front bench. That is the job of each one of us in this House who are private members. This provision in the bill takes away the connection to our community because it centralizes everything. That'll be the only choice parties have. So it imposes that we must work, all of us, in the same way that the NDP works. That's not why Albertans elected this government.

I want to see the backbench members on that side have more power. I want to see them have a stronger voice. I want to see them stand up and hold the government accountable, genuinely do that. You do that when you have better connection to community. If we pass this amendment, we will have a bill that enables stronger and better connection to community. That is what Albertans elected all of us to do.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

5:10

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. This is a good amendment. It just brings some common sense to things. If the government won't support it, it's just one more example of how they're trying to tilt the scale in their favour in the next general election. This whole piece of legislation is scaled that way. They have a \$2 million per party spending cap but no realistic caps on what the government could spend.

Today we know that the government is up there spending \$9 million on the carbon tax plan, more than four parties will be allowed to spend combined in the next general election, and they're spending it out of taxpayers' dollars to support propaganda for this government on one policy. Now, if ever there's an indicator that this government, through this piece of legislation, is trying to tilt the scale in their favour using taxpayers' dollars – they contact members of our party saying: don't be on their list of supporters or on their board or you will not be doing any business with our government.

You know what, Madam Chair? This is the government indicting themselves on bad behaviour, on using taxpayers' dollars to tilt the electoral scales in their favour. I'm not a lawyer, but there's a part of me that's surprised this is legal.

I will be supporting the amendment but, I can assure you, not the legislation attached to it.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do have two questions, specifically. My honoured colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre was putting forward some compelling arguments on why this is such a good idea. One of the members from across the aisle continued to not go through the chair, but she did mention something, and I'm curious where she was going with it. She continued to say: CRA, CRA. I would love to hear how CRA has anything to do with this. I'm assuming that she's meaning the Canada Revenue Agency and not some other agency. So if she could answer what exactly she means by CRA and how this specific amendment will – I'm very curious where that member was going with it.

Secondly, we heard the Minister of Labour get up and say that this is a great idea and that the CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, recommends this. I guess it's a matter of debate. I would say that the CEO adamantly disagrees with it. To be clear, I would love to hear a reason from the Labour minister, other than a pitched sentence from a report from the CEO, on why she believes that it should be reduced from \$250 to \$50. I think that's a reasonable concern. The fact is that I believe that the government doesn't have any idea why they're doing it. No idea. That's why I'm saying that we need to hear from the minister, other than a statement produced by the CEO, on exactly what it is, how going from \$250 down to \$50 is going to help with accountability and transparency at a constituency level or even in filing their annual return.

Now, the one thing I will mention, that brings another question, I think, that should be answered, is that we raised the level that you could donate to a constituency from \$1,000 to \$4,000. We quadrupled – we quadrupled – the amount you could donate to a constituency, but we divided by five what the constituency is required to report. That is the strangest thing that I've ever heard. The two in no way, shape, or form seem to work with each other.

Again, why is it that the minister feels that \$250 is a number that seems to be not reasonable in this case? I guess she's enhancing it. Again, I am agreeing with my members that it is taking something out of context because I actually was at that meeting, like many of the Ethics and Accountability Committee members, and they were saying that we are trying to make sure that we're moving forward in a clear and transparent method, yet we're cherry-picking – and I'll continue to use the word – sentences and phrases that are out of context that I don't believe the actual CEO meant or wanted to derive from there.

Now, the thing that it does do, this lowering it down, is that it is going to create a lot of work for our local constituency associations. Again, it puts a burden on the volunteers, which is something we had mentioned before, with the past amendment.

Now, I'm going to say that we already talked specifically about the quarterly reporting. That is an important one that we need to derive. In the end, I don't think the government has made a very good or compelling case on why we shouldn't go to annual, but we voted on it, and – fair enough; the government does have the majority of votes – they voted down our CFOs being able to reduce the amount of burden that's on the volunteers. It seems to be that, I guess, they have more volunteers than they know what to do with at their constituency levels. It explains why they have so many of them without any actual formed boards.

I am going to read another quote from Calgary-Shaw.

Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, you know, I want to echo that the initial concerns I heard from [the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie] I shared . . . For myself, I come from sort of a corporate background, so to speak, so quarterly reporting is a very common practice, especially for transparency and to make sure that your practices are being obliged properly. But I did hear some very compelling arguments from the members of the third party and other political parties as well that this isn't a business . . .

This is a key word: this isn't a business.

. . . that these are volunteers, and that there's a lot of anxiety that comes from quarterly reporting as well.

So by reducing this from \$250 down to \$50, we are actually creating more anxiety for these volunteers. It was acknowledged that this is a problem yet ignored again by this government. That is frustrating when it comes to the fact that this all-party committee debated it, moved it forward, and nowhere in that all-party committee did we actually really mention why we would be reducing this from \$250 down to \$50. There were no compelling arguments from the government when they had the opportunity during that time frame, but what we do have is some legislation sitting in front of us that is going to cause some grief to my local constituency association.

Yet here we are, another government making another decision, and they had the actual consultation from the CEO, but they chose to ignore it, and that does seem to be a common practice of this government.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

5:20

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to speak in favour of this amendment. It's been kind of a strange day, I think, when we look at what we've discussed today based on the government's name of the bill, Fair Elections Financing Act, and we also look at what the government's intent was, which they say over and over and over again was to get big money out of politics.

The last amendment we worked on was about quarterly reporting. Now, I don't know what's unfair about doing annual reporting, and I don't know where that comes in to getting big money out of politics, but it was bizarre to hear the minister say that the Chief Electoral Officer said that it needed to be enhanced, so it needed to be done. But, of course, when we read exactly what the Chief Electoral Officer said, he said, "That's part of the reason why we're recommending the recommendation that we have. If you choose otherwise, we have recommendations in which I think the quarterly reporting would have to be enhanced." So he's made a recommendation, clearly, and he's saying: if you don't take my recommendation, then we're going to have to do something different.

When the Chief Electoral Officer makes a recommendation, it's probably a good idea to take it, especially when he goes on to say, "These quarterly reports [are] pretty much thrown out other than posting on the website for disclosure. That's the only function it provides. It does not assist us whatsoever in the financial review." We just went through that process, and somehow the government thinks there's something in fairness about that. Obviously, the Chief Electoral Officer has no problem with it, in fact, is suggesting the opposite. There's nothing about big money there. It's not even any dollars we're talking about. We're just talking about the quarterly reporting.

Now, it was also interesting to hear the Minister of Indigenous Relations spouting off in a heckle, accusing somebody, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, of not telling the truth

when he suggested that presently you can donate \$1,000 to a constituency association. That's a fact. That's clear. With this new act, the Fair Elections Financing Act, you can now donate \$4,000 to a constituency association a year.

**Mr. Nixon:** I think that's more, isn't it, Member?

**Mr. Loewen:** I think that might be a little more. I think that's very clearly more, and for somebody, especially a minister, to accuse another member of not telling the truth when the facts clearly point to the opposite: I find that – I can't even think of a word for it, Madam Chair. It's appalling. It's deeply disappointing.

Now, here we are with another amendment, and we're talking about whether the constituency associations need to do extra paperwork for \$50 donations. Right now it's \$250. This bill, this act, is suggesting that we go from \$250 down to \$50 for this extra recording paperwork. I don't know what's unfair about a \$250 recording. I can't see anything unfair about that, but if we're going on to the government's other excuse for doing all this, if it's getting big money out of politics, well, we're going from \$250 down to \$50. That makes no sense at all either.

Madam Chair, I've worked in a constituency association before. The people responsible for doing the filing within the constituency association: good, hard-working, honest volunteers doing their best. Every quarter they get stressed out about filing these papers because they know these papers have to be done properly, and they don't want to make any mistakes. They want to do it to the best of their abilities. They want to make sure that they don't bring any harm to the party. They want to make sure that everything is just right. So it creates a lot of stress. Now, what we're doing here today with this Fair Elections Financing Act, getting big money out of politics, is that we're increasing the work, we're increasing the stress of volunteers when all they want to do is to be involved in the political process and help out and have their opportunity in the political process and help out the party that they believe in.

These two amendments are purely common-sense amendments. There's no good reason why this government doesn't accept them. One the government has already voted down. It's shameful – shameful – to think that this government thinks that annual reporting, just like us doing our taxes annually, is somehow unfair or somehow gets big money out of politics. That's not the case, Madam Chair. Members on all sides need to support this amendment and bring back some common sense to the discussion on this bill altogether because so far common sense has been lacking here.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I'll ask the question.

[The voice vote indicated that that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:28 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Clark	Loewen	Rodney
Cyr	McIver	Starke
Hunter	Nixon	Stier

5:30

Against the motion:

Bilous	Hinkley	McPherson
Carlier	Horne	Miller
Carson	Kazim	Phillips
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Coolahan	Larivee	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Dach	Loyola	Sabir
Drever	Luff	Shepherd
Eggen	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Sweet
Goehring	McLean	Westhead
Gray		

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 37
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I am going to move another amendment, and I will send the copies up with the page and wait for you to give me permission to continue.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A3.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The amendment is quite long, so I won't read it unless you require me to read it. The core of what it does is that the amendment triggers most of the act to come into effect on January 1 instead of having three different timelines, where different parts of the act are triggered by different rules.

I would submit to you, Madam Chair, that this is a common-sense amendment which will let every party and their volunteers maintain the reporting rules that are currently in place until the end of the quarter that we are currently in. In no way does this amendment change any of the proposals that have been brought forward by the government in this current legislation, even the ones that we disagree with.

Having a successful system where volunteers can make an impact without unreasonable changes I think is important to our democracy. I'm sure that you would agree with me, Madam Chair, and I think all members of the House will. This amendment will allow the Assembly to bring this act into effect in a timely manner, and it will avoid the avalanche of reporting errors that will punish volunteers and make the work of Elections Alberta unreasonable going forward.

I would submit again, Madam Chair, that it is a completely reasonable amendment designed to simplify the process and to make the dates line up and be more appropriate for the people involved.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment because of the simple fact that it simplifies things and clarifies matters as well. It is something that would reduce the burden on volunteers, which has been a theme for this afternoon's debate. It is something, I think, that is absolutely merited. I would

really hope that the hon. minister would genuinely and truly consider accepting this amendment because I believe it does improve the bill, adds consistency, and makes life easier for those dedicated volunteers that run our constituency associations and our parties.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you very much to the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre for putting forward this amendment. I am in agreement that this amendment, which will make sure that the third-party components of the bill come into effect on the day that the Fair Elections Financing Act received first reading, is a good amendment. It brings this in line with other areas of the act that are brought in line on the day of first reading and I think contributes to what we are trying to do with this bill, which is encourage fair participation and transparency in the democratic process, because making sure that we have a transparent and level playing field for all parties and candidates are the goals of this act.

I appreciate the amendment put forth by the hon. member from the Wildrose. That will contribute to and support making sure that we are moving forward with a fair, democratic, and modern electoral system. I support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:37 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Horne	Miller
Carlier	Hunter	Nixon
Carson	Kazim	Phillips
Clark	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Connolly	Larivee	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rodney
Cortes-Vargas	Loewen	Rosendahl
Cyr	Loyola	Sabir
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Starke
Feehan	McIver	Stier
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Sucha
Goehring	McLean	Sweet
Gray	McPherson	Westhead
Hinkley		

5:40

Totals: For – 46 Against – 0

[Motion on amendment A3 carried unanimously]

**The Chair:** Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Madam Chair, thank you for recognizing me. I'm following up on some conversation that occurred last evening. It's interesting because it involves the Member for Edmonton-Centre, who rose under section 29(2)(a) after the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow spoke, and it had to do with clarifying a position of how his constituency association operated compared to what the Member for Calgary-Elbow was speaking about.

It was interesting because the hon. member stated – and I'm quoting here from *Hansard*, page 2356 – that

in terms of how we operate our accounts, the Edmonton-Centre NDP Constituency Association operates its own bank account. I regularly accept contributions from people who want to support our constituency association. We take in money from fundraising events for our constituency association. We choose to process those payments through the central party, who then remits back to us the portion of it which we retain for our constituency association and keep in our own bank account.

To be clear, the constituency association operates independently.

There was some additional discussion to that. It was very interesting.

You know, I said, "Well, my goodness, we should take a look at that," so I did. For the period from December 1, 2015, to December 31, 2015, according to the documents filed with the Chief Electoral Officer at Elections Alberta, the Edmonton-Centre New Democratic Party Constituency Association, in point of fact, received zero contributions. Zero. The fundraising of the Edmonton-Centre constituency association was also zero. I should say that there was reported \$2.42 in other income.

**Mr. Rodney:** Sorry. Does that stand for thousands?

**Dr. Starke:** No; \$2.42.

The member also mentioned about, you know, processing and transferring funds back and forth, but it's puzzling because there were zero funds transferred to the central party.

You know, I also looked at the period from January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2015, to see the contributions that had been taken in that were described by the hon. member. In fact, the grand total for that calendar year was zero. I then looked for the period January 1, 2016, to September 30, 2016, and I found that that was also zero.

So I said: well, you know, let's maybe take a look at the financial statements, the reporting for the Alberta New Democratic Party for the calendar year January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2015, and let's look at fundraising functions. The hon. member described fundraising functions, and I said: well, if they're processed through the central party, then it'll show up in that record. The total fundraising functions for the Alberta New Democratic Party for the period January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2015 – the total amount that was raised from all fundraising functions – was zero.

You know, I'm certainly puzzled, Madam Chair, at how the financial recording and the financial reporting to the Chief Electoral Officer and the statements of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre that were made last night in reference to comments made by the Member for Calgary-Elbow could jibe. Certainly, some of what the hon. member described doesn't seem to really correspond to what's been reported to the Chief Electoral Officer.

Madam Chair, I guess the point that I'm making here is that, yes, there are different ways that different parties operate. It is most disconcerting to me as a member who respects how different political parties operate, because there are, certainly, differences, that the current legislation is very clearly, in my view, being brought forward in such a way that it favours the operational model that exists within the Alberta New Democratic Party, the governing party, the party that currently has a majority in our Legislature. To

have rules brought in that are very clearly in support of the model that is there and then to have an hon. member indicate here in the Assembly that, “Oh, no, no, no; it’s different” and “Oh, no, no; we do fundraising at the constituency level” and “Oh, no, no; you know, the fundraising goes through the central party” and then to in fact have that information not be corroborated by the official reporting that has been submitted to the Chief Electoral Officer is troubling.

Now, Madam Chair, I want to say directly that I have a great deal of respect for the Member for Edmonton-Centre. He works very hard for his constituents. We’ve had many conversations on a number of subjects. We don’t always necessarily agree . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Sharp dresser.

**Dr. Starke:** He’s a sharp dresser.

We don’t always agree on a lot of policy matters. I’m not doing this, Madam Chair, in any way to try to impugn his reputation, but I certainly would appreciate somebody providing some clarification as to how the comments that were made under 29(2)(a) last night, which, certainly, from what I am reading and unless I’m misinterpreting things – what I am reading here and what has in fact been reported to the Chief Electoral Officer I think most people would agree are quite different.

Now, if there has perhaps been an error made and these reports have to be amended in some ways to reflect what is actually happening and what was actually described by the hon. member, then, you know, by all means, that should be done. Errors can be made. But I’m in fact concerned that, you know, there’s some issue or some other problem.

Now, earlier in debate this afternoon I pointed out how a single person is the CFO, chief financial officer, for 36 different NDP constituency associations. Fortunately, for that individual, who would otherwise be a very, very busy person, the amount of financial transactions that he has to keep track of is relatively small. That’s certainly good because the workload that he would be undertaking would, I would suggest – you know, I think of the CFO in my constituency association. It’s a big job, and I’m very fortunate to have someone who is a former bank manager to do that job. Someone who is a chief financial officer for a major oil company in Lloydminster does that job for me.

You know, different political parties operate in different ways. I think the one thing that we need to be cognizant of because I think it is going to come up as we continue to debate this particular issue is that the rules that are set out need to be able to accommodate the different approaches of different political parties in our province. At the time that we were in government, had we introduced rules that were specifically punitive to the way the New Democratic Party operates its system within its party, I would tell you that we would be rightly called out for that. That would be fundamentally unfair to do that. Yet now that we have, you know, sort of a turnaround and the shoe on the other foot, we see a government that is putting through legislation that is, very clearly, punitive to parties that operate with a constituency association structure, and that, to me, is most disturbing.

5:50

Throughout the discussions that we had over the course of the summer at our committee, we pointed out some of those differences and, in some cases, why those were punitive to parties that had a different structure and a different function. In some cases those arguments were accepted and were thought about by the members on the committee, and I appreciated those thoughts. And I appreciated the fact that minds were changed. You know, that happened

more than a couple of times during the course of the committee because in a committee structure we were able to have these kinds of discussions as to how different parties work. We learned a little bit about, you know, some of the different things that we do within our own constituency associations right across the board, and it was very instructive.

But I for one am most concerned with the direction these amendments are headed. In many cases these amendments are being turned down, with the exception of the last one, which is good. But the fact that amendments that are very specifically designed to repair inequities that have been brought as a result of this legislation, amendments that are designed to correct a situation where the committee’s recommendations have been ignored by the legislation as it now sits, I can tell you, is profoundly disappointing.

I think it is profoundly troubling that the committee did good work – and all members of the committee I think put in a great deal of effort into the committee’s tasks that we had – and that work is summarily being swept aside by someone in the minister’s office, perhaps the minister herself. I don’t know. That’s troubling to me, and that makes me question what the benefit or what the use of having the committee was in the first place.

You know, I think, as has been pointed out by other members, that we did excellent work on the whistle-blower protection act. I think that once those recommendations are brought forward in terms of amendments to the legislation, they will strengthen the whistle-blower protection act, and that is a good thing. I think that’s part of the job that the committee was tasked to do. I guess we don’t know yet, because we haven’t seen them, what those amendments will be, but I’m certainly hopeful and optimistic that when those amendments come to the House, we will see a reflection of the recommendations that came from the members of the committee.

I’m puzzled and very concerned about the number of recommendations that went from the committee – in some cases they were unanimous; in some cases it was a split vote. Regardless, I’m concerned about the number of those recommendations that are different now that they come to the floor of the Assembly. That, to me, is something that’s troubling, and that, to me, is something that suggests a disregard for the effort of the multiple members that sat on that committee. So I’m certainly disappointed by that.

Madam Chair, I will tell you that I am concerned about the direction that this debate is headed. I know that there are a number of other issues that are still being reviewed by Parliamentary Counsel in terms of other amendments that are to be brought forward, and I’m looking forward to the opportunity to debate those amendments as well. But for now I wanted to make the comments and have them on the record indicating that I have grave concerns about the direction that this discussion is going and especially the direction in which the government has chosen to take this in terms of benefiting specifically the Alberta New Democratic Party’s methodology and the way that they operate as a political entity, which, as we’ve stated before, is quite different from the other parties in our province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 35. I wish to table copies of all

amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Having heard the report, does the Assembly concur?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to move that we adjourn the House until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]







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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, December 7, 2016

Day 59

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
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Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
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Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
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Gotfried	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
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Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
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Cooper	McIver
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Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
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### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

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Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Cyr	Malkinson
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### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** Please be seated.  
The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to request unanimous consent to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

**The Acting Speaker:** Please go ahead.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Thank you. It is my pleasure to introduce to you from our grassroots, incredibly strong EDA in St. Albert, Vice-president Tom Genore and his lovely girlfriend, Amanda Archer, who is also a member.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 37

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2)

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

**Mr. Ceci:** It's my pleasure to rise and say a few words about the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2). As all members of this Legislature know, the \$1.45 million provided by this bill is required to support the Legislative Assembly to fund the very important work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I think all members of this Legislature agree that this is important, and on that note I would ask all members of this Legislature to support the bill.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?  
Seeing none, I shall call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 37 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** I am. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I will move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 37.

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

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So ordered.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 34

#### Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016

Mr. Rodney moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill does not adequately address and minimize the adverse long-term financial implications of changes to the Electric Utilities Act with respect to debt financing.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment December 7: Mr. Bilous]

**The Acting Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak to the bill?  
The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on such a lovely Christmasy evening. A very Merry Christmas to you. It was nice to hear the carollers this evening on the steps of the Legislature. I know that visitor services does such a wonderful job at this time of year bringing the best of the season here to the Assembly. It's my hope that we'll be able to bring the best of the season here to the Chamber tonight. Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, that the best of the season for Albertans would be that this government would take a pause, just like my colleague from the third party has asked them to do by moving this reasoned amendment earlier in the session. The best Christmas present that Albertans could have is this government actually listening to Albertans.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that when I am in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills talking to folks about the direction that this government is taking, they are alarmed. They're alarmed that in a bill like Bill 34 the government would be willing to write themselves a blank cheque, a blank cheque of unlimited borrowing opportunity for this government. You know, I'm going to tell you a lot about how they're frustrated this evening, but one of the things that they're most frustrated about is that this government created a problem, and now they're creating legislation to solve the very problem that they created. This government acted quickly, without thought or care or consideration with respect to the PPAs. They acted without doing their homework, without checking the facts, and as a result they got themselves in a pickle. The worst part about that is that the people who are holding the pickle jar are Albertans.

**Mr. Nixon:** Their hand is stuck. Their hand is stuck in the jar.

**Mr. Cooper:** And that is exactly the problem. Their hand is stuck in the pickle jar.

Madam Speaker, now they're in a bind, just like this government was in a bind, so they started looking around for answers. They started looking around for answers, and the only one that they could

come up with was that the government create legislation that would give them unlimited borrowing power to the Balancing Pool. Now we see the Balancing Pool losing significant amounts of money while the PPAs are returned to them, and essentially they need a bailout.

Now, this isn't the only problem that this government has created with respect to PPAs. At the first of it, they started attacking corporations that are owned by Calgarians.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. They don't really like corporations.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, you know, it's interesting. They sometimes like corporations, and other times they don't.

**Mr. Nixon:** It's confusing.

**Mr. Cooper:** It is confusing.

Sometimes they stand and make accusations about the opposition, how we don't like companies like Suncor.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, through the chair, please.

**Mr. Cooper:** Madam Speaker, you know that what I am saying is absolutely the truth. Sometimes they attack. In fact, they sue corporations. They're in multiple lawsuits. Multiple lawsuits. I know that I've heard from the third party on numerous occasions about some of their concerns around the type of lawyers that they hire in these types of situations. Let me tell you that what's happening right now is more than disappointing for Albertans; it's frightening, because they're spending hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars to sue companies that had legal contracts in this province that are owned by Calgarians. Calgarians are likely to see, if it proceeds, quite possibly a 4 per cent hike in their property tax, which is what we've heard the mayor of Calgary say.

7:40

At every single turn with respect to our energy market and our electricity market this government has acted recklessly. I can tell you that the members on the other side believe that there's no trouble on the horizon, but we are headed to a big wreck. This is a \$7 billion gamble on our electricity market, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Nixon:** How much?

**Mr. Cooper:** Seven billion, with a "b."

In fact, those weren't just my words about the \$7 billion gamble; those were respected columnist Chris Varcoe's words. It is really quite something else to see this government that has this train on a track that's headed towards a bridge that is on fire. What is quite likely to happen – and I can tell you that this isn't the holiday train they're driving. It's a train wreck they're driving. It's a train wreck. [interjections] I've got all night, Madam Speaker. Remember to tip your waitress.

Let me tell you that it's unfortunate that the government is committed to putting Albertans at risk, because what Bill 34 does is exactly that. What Bill 34 does is exactly that. It is writing a blank cheque for the Balancing Pool to try to cover the mistakes of this government.

I can tell you that if you've been in the House at all lately, Madam Speaker – and I know that you have because I would never refer to the absence of a member – I know that you've been here when my hon. colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has spoken at length efforting to get through to the government. It's not just about talking; it's about letting Albertans know exactly the problems that are being created by this government.

As we move towards the end of this session, I hear from more and more Albertans and more and more folks in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that are just asking this government to put a pause on legislation just like this. The good news is, Madam Speaker, that right now, this evening, this government has a chance to do that.

We've seen a very reasonable amendment from the third party that would require the government to do an economic impact assessment, to provide information to Albertans on just exactly what the costs are going to be. But, like we've seen time and time and time again, this government isn't interested in listening to concerned Albertans. They're interested in heading headlong over a cliff, some, like my hon. colleague – or at least my colleague – from Strathmore-Brooks, might say a fiscal cliff, a fiscal cliff that ends in disaster, with the tax burden on Albertans skyrocketing, with the debt on Albertans skyrocketing, with power bills of Albertans skyrocketing.

Madam Speaker, I don't know what got into the government during the break. I don't know what happened between 6 and 7:30, but it sounds like for the very first time in a long time they're listening. They're listening, and they're paying attention, and they're hearing and acknowledging that what we are on is a path that doesn't end well for taxpayers. It doesn't end well for Albertans.

**Mr. Nixon:** How does it end?

**Mr. Cooper:** It ends with every single Albertan having a significantly higher amount of debt. You know what, Madam Speaker? I would love to give you what that number is, but you know what the problem is? They don't know because in this piece of legislation, Bill 34, they've written themselves – what? – a blank cheque. That blank cheque provides an incredible amount of latitude to the Balancing Pool. I'd just like to remind you: do you know why the Balancing Pool needs a blank cheque? They need a blank cheque because this government created a mess. This government has been in power for long enough to at least read contracts and didn't. So now they're suing the people of Calgary. They're borrowing unlimited amounts of money for the Balancing Pool. It's more than a bit disappointing; it's frightening. And the Government House Leader knows it.

Madam Speaker, I know that when I look across the dinner table at my children, certainly my nine-year-old – and many in this House will know my children. From time to time I like to share a story about them. Every time I share a story about them, it's true. I know that at Halloween I was teaching my kids about taxes, obviously, which every good dad – I was also teaching them about socialism when I took all of the nine-year-old's candy and then gave a bunch to the littlest. He's, like: "Whoa. I went out and did all the trick-or-treating. How come she gets some?" And I was explaining the concept of socialism, where even though one person does all the work, you can divide up all of those, say, revenues so that everyone has it equally. He was a little concerned about this principle.

But, you know, I want to make sure that I'm being relevant to Bill 34 tonight, so let's get back to the very important issue of taxes and how taxes are going to be going up because of this government. I mean, we've seen it at every turn. They haven't seen a tax that they don't want to increase, with one exception. I will give them that. With one exception. They listened to a recommendation from the Wildrose about reducing small-business tax, and for that, we say thank you.

**Mr. Nixon:** They didn't thank us for that.

**Mr. Cooper:** No. They didn't thank us, but we've thanked them. We've said thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Sometimes I wonder who's on first, but that's fine.

Speaking to 29(2)(a)? Please go ahead.

7:50

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah, absolutely. Great. That went by very, very fast, that 15 minutes, Madam Speaker. I thoroughly enjoyed the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I particularly liked the concept of pause as he was referring to this reasoned amendment, you know, and the need to pause. Sometimes pausing is a good thing. I think you can think of examples in your life where if you paused for a few seconds, you ended up not making a worse mistake. [interjection] I know that maybe the postsecondary minister is used to making mistakes, but I'm not.

Earlier today I was calling my twins, 10 years old today.

**Mr. Cooper:** Speaking of which, isn't it their happy birthday today?

**Mr. Nixon:** That's right. I called them when we had the supper break to wish them a happy birthday, and if they're watching, I will through you, Madam Speaker, say happy birthday to Austin and Chyanne Nixon. We were talking about how cold it was on the farm, back home by Sundre. It's well below minus 30, so I was concerned for my favourite horse, Tank, which I've talked about in this Chamber many times.

Now, I know everybody laughs. I know that the Sergeant-at-Arms' staff love to hear stories about Tank, and I haven't talked about Tank in a while. Let me first assure you, Madam Speaker, in case you do not know, that Tank has earned his name. He's a big guy, okay? He carries me, and he's a great horse. I love him very much. I wanted to make sure the kids had given him extra feed today when it was that cold.

The reason I think about it when I hear the concept of pausing is that Tank knows where you are in the house. I don't know how he knows that. He comes up to the fences with his grain bowl, and he shakes it. If you're on the living room side of the house, there's lots of room, but if you go to the bottom of our house on the walkout side, what we call the family room, if he goes in there, he gets stuck in this kind of side fence thing. He'll sit there shaking his grain bin, convinced that we're going to come outside. Now, my daughter is convinced that she's trained him to do that. What happens is that my daughter goes out to give him grain, and I tried to explain to her that, actually, Tank has trained her to come outside and give him grain. Then he gets so excited that he's in this thing that he doesn't pause to figure out how to get out of it, and he keeps running at the dead end on the fence, and he's stuck in there.

**An Hon. Member:** He's a horse.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. But when you manage to whistle at him and get him to just stop for a second, then it dawns on him that all he has to do is take two or three steps back and back out, and he's not stuck in the corner anymore. Then the now 10-year-old will give him as much grain as he wants, and Tank is happy. When Tank is happy, I'm happy because I like Tank.

I think the hon. member had a valuable point. Just like Tank, it might be time for the government just to go: "Whoa. Wait a minute. Seven billion dollars. Whoa. Whoa. Just take a few moments."

**An Hon. Member:** Where's the wheat?

**Mr. Nixon:** He doesn't like wheat, Madam Speaker.

Just like I whistle at Tank and say, "Whoa," and he stops, the government should take the hon. member's comments and go:

"Okay. Wait a minute here. What's going on? What is going on? What is this \$7 billion going to do to the people of Alberta?" So I wonder if you can expand a little bit more on the need to go: whoa.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you. I was thinking to myself that Bill 34 and whoa-ing are virtually the same thing. Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague has a very good point. This reasoned amendment – you know, you remind me a little bit of Penn and Teller, I think. Sorry. I got a little sidetracked there.

This is a chance for this government to say, "Whoa," to put the brakes on, to step back from the edge, to allow all Albertans to provide feedback. This is a very reasoned amendment on why Bill 34 should not proceed, and I encourage all members present and all members that may or may not be to vote in favour of this amendment and say whoa to Bill 34.

I look forward to hearing from my hon. colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre because I'm sure he has some comments as well.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to the reasoned amendment? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is going to speak to the amendment.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. It's great to have the opportunity to rise this evening and talk about Bill 34, in particular the reasoned amendment that we're here to discuss. I thank the hon. member from the third party for bringing forward this important amendment. I think it is a very reasonable amendment. I think it's important that this House takes the time to consider why the member brought forward this amendment, what the need is for a reasoned amendment. I think that as we look at Bill 34, it's pretty clear that this bill is just basically coming forward because the government has to cover its tracks in the debacle that they made out of the PPA situation, that we've seen over the last little while.

The biggest problem I have with Bill 34, and the reason I think that we need a reasoned amendment on it, is that the bill itself is completely and utterly irresponsible to the people of Alberta, the people that have sent us here to protect them, to stand up for the people of Alberta and to manage the business of this province. Of course, the cabinet, that sits across from me, Madam Speaker, has the ultimate responsibility for that. Because of the mess that they've made with the PPAs at the beginning of their term and throughout their term, they've ended up in a situation now where they've essentially got to come up with, you know, upwards of \$7 billion just to begin to fix that situation, using a bill that puts in place no checks, no accountability, no public forum required to explain the minister's request for funding, just a blank cheque to the Balancing Pool for an undisclosed amount of money.

Now, I think that, first, that is what we should start with, the concept of a blank cheque. We've seen with the NDP government, since they've taken power, that over and over and over they have come to this Assembly and have asked for blank cheques. Bill 6 would come to mind, the idea that they just wanted to pass that and remove exemptions for certain farmers and ranchers and that, in exchange, they wanted the opposition just to trust them that they would get the regulations side of that right later. And the people that we represent in our communities – our friends, our neighbours, our family members, often some of our other hon. colleagues – should just trust them that they will get that right. "It's going to be okay, Opposition. Don't worry. Don't worry; it's going to be all right."

I will note now that last year at this time we were discussing Bill 6. Right about now. We might have been just done, Madam

Speaker. We're now a year later, and we still don't have the regulations situation fixed. We're still hearing complaints about the panels that have been put forward. We're still hearing concerns from the farmers and ranchers inside our province. That was as a result, again, of a blank cheque request from the NDP government trying to govern and put rules in place, in that particular case, for people and, you know, not including the people that they wanted to legislate in the process.

Now, here we are again, back here in this House about a year later, and again the government has come here and said to the opposition: give us a blank cheque.

**Mr. Cooper:** A blank what?

**Mr. Nixon:** A blank cheque. Give us a blank cheque, with no accountability, no controls in place, no proper explanations, all of it being put in place to try to be a stopgap or try to fix the problem that was created by this very government.

Now, I have to ask myself, and I think that you would, too, Madam Speaker, on behalf of your constituents: why would you want to give another blank cheque to this government? What has this government done to show that they could be, quite frankly, capable of dealing with another blank cheque? They still haven't fixed some of the things I just raised from the last time that they asked about a blank cheque.

The concept, though, of that is extremely important because they're asking Albertans to just trust them with a blank cheque, an unlimited amount of money, no clear rules or regulations put in place from this House to hold the government accountable for how they spend that money or how much of that money would be used, all this at a time when the government, in regard to this area that now requires all this money, is suing Alberta-owned companies, is suing Alberta municipalities.

8:00

The concept of trust: I have to say, Madam Speaker, that with the constituents I represent in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, I don't find a lot of people left there that trust the government. The idea is that they would want us to stand up and say: "Yeah, it's going to be okay although you didn't provide us, really, with any reports or justification why you want this. You've created the problem, and you've shown no ability in the past on other legislation to be able to handle a blank cheque." To say, "Opposition, just stand up and give us another blank cheque; it's going to be okay this time," I don't know about you, but I certainly don't feel very comfortable doing that. I just don't.

The NDP raised taxes on power companies with no regard for the consequences both in the law and on the ratepayers across the province. Our responsibility, Madam Speaker, is to the people of Alberta. They're the ones who pay the bills for this place. They're the ones who keep the electricity on while we're here debating late at night. They're the ones who pay the bills for the needs all across this province.

When we're dealing with this issue of power, if we look at other provinces in our country, we are already seeing significant problems in other jurisdictions that have gone there before us. Recently we saw the Premier of Ontario apologize – and to her credit, I think – for the mess that got made with their power system, and the ultimate consequence of that mess was to the people of Ontario, who have outrageous power bills because of the decisions of the Ontario Premier.

So we have to ask ourselves as we're debating these bills here: what happened in that other jurisdiction? What went wrong? How is this government, who's shown no ability to handle a blank cheque

and who's suing corporations, trying to break contracts that were made by previous governments, going to ensure that our ratepayers, our taxpayers, the good people of the province of Alberta, are not going to get stiffed with outrageous power bills, just like they did in Ontario?

That is not an unreasonable question, and lots of people are asking it. I suspect people that voted for the NDP are asking that. I certainly know that people who voted for the opposition parties are asking that. Definitely the Wildrose members are getting asked that. I assume members of the third party, through you, Madam Speaker, are getting asked the same question.

It's concerning – it's concerning – because ultimately we need to know what the costs to our constituents will be over the long term for the decisions that we make inside this Chamber, particularly when we're already seeing a situation where so many people in our province have lost work, where people are losing homes and jobs and are facing tough times because of the economic downturn. They're already facing drastic tax increases because of this government's ideological policies. They're already seeing the energy industry suffering because of concerns about investing in our energy industry in Alberta because of this government's policies.

Again, now they're going to go to the opposition, who represent those people, and say: "It's going to be okay. Just give us a blank cheque. Give us a blank cheque." I've got to say, Madam Speaker, that I don't think you would be comfortable giving the government a blank cheque either given that in the last few months they've attempted to or are ripping up existing contracts between the province and corporations. How does that give trust to the people of Alberta? I don't know. I can't see in those actions any trust from the people of Alberta.

I don't see any reason why the opposition should support this amendment from a government that has already shown, as I've said before, that it can't be trusted with a blank cheque, that has shown itself not capable of following through on other legislation that they forced on the people of Alberta, that is now suing people and corporations and municipalities in our province that are associated with stuff associated with Bill 34, who have provided no research or documentation or evidence on the amount that this will cost the people of Alberta in future years. Instead, they expect the members opposite to just take their word for it.

Now, I'm sure that in some cases it may be fair that opposition members may just take the government's word for certain things but certainly not on a bill that's going to cost at least \$7 billion, by some estimates, at the same time that we're going to see property taxes go up in the city of Calgary because of the carbon tax, that we're going to see the cost of fuel go up in my constituency because of the carbon tax, that we're seeing businesses in my constituency shut down because of the minimum wage mess, that we're seeing youth unemployment go up because of the minimum wage situation.

So if you take that and then you put in this reasoned amendment, we have to ask ourselves, I would say, Madam Speaker: why would we stand up and vote for this legislation? Instead, it clearly needs to go back to the drawing board. It clearly needs to go back, to hold up, take a pause, have a look at the situation, and go from there.

The reason this is relevant to this reasoned amendment, Madam Speaker, is that there are other situations that we've had already in this Legislature, in the 29th Legislature, when the opposition has said, "Whoa; hold up; let's talk about this a little bit," and the government has listened and had a discussion and a dialogue with the opposition, and the government ended up making situations less bad or ended up stopping what would have been, clearly, a mistake and an affront to the people of Alberta.

We've talked lots in the last few days about the government's decision not to proceed with a campaign funding subsidy, which was a good decision. That's a decision, again, where they heard from the opposition, and they went: okay. Granted, it took a while, Madam Speaker. I think it took several months of long discussions between the opposition and the government, but in the end the government made the right decision on behalf of the people of Alberta. That's because the opposition did their work. If the opposition didn't do their work over the summer, the government in this case would have brought in motions and legislation that would have put in a campaign subsidy.

So now here we are back with another bill. We're back with another bill, and you've got opposition members from all parties saying: "Okay. Hold on. Let's talk about this. Let's make sure that we're not making a mistake or that we're not making things worse for the people of Alberta." I don't think that's unreasonable. I don't see anything unreasonable about that. I can think of situations in my life where I have paused or my family has taken a pause and looked at the situation and went: "You know what? That's probably not the best idea. Maybe we should adjust that. Maybe we should talk a little bit more with the people that are involved in it, the people that are going to be impacted by it."

Maybe we should gather a little more evidence on what the consequences may or may not be to the people of Alberta because, ultimately, we're entrusted by the people of Alberta to get this right. You would agree with that, Madam Speaker. I think the government members would agree that that is our responsibility. I certainly know that my hon. colleagues would agree with that as our primary responsibility.

Instead, though, time and time again, Madam Speaker, I find myself having to rise in this Assembly and caution the government to slow down the legislation that they keep moving through. More often than not they don't do the right thing, like they did with the campaign subsidy, and they bulldoze right through it. They proceed with the legislation, and then we end up with the drastic consequences on the people that I represent and on people all across this province.

Maybe when the government can finish some of the projects they've already started, maybe when they can get the panels done with Bill 6 and they can make sure that farmers and ranchers aren't having to deal with the terrible situation that's been created now for over a year, maybe when they stop suing corporations, maybe when they stop bringing forward taxes that are putting a tremendous burden on the people of our province, the people who I know, Madam Speaker, just like in my riding and in your riding, people that are losing jobs, that are struggling to make ends meet – they are now about to face drastic increases in their heating costs, drastic increases in their vehicle costs, drastic increases in the cost of everything from the indirect costs.

Often this government forgets that when they're raising the cost of fuel, this raises the cost of everything in our society – everything – from the care to the grocery stores to the iPads that the members are enjoying tonight or laptops or earphones or whatever we use tonight, the binder I use. I don't want to use a prop, of course, Madam Speaker. It raises the cost of everything. And now the legislation that we are debating in the final days of this sitting has the real risk, with the true evidence from other jurisdictions, in our province of raising the cost of Albertans' power bills.

8:10

Madam Speaker, the reason we need a reasoned amendment on this and that this should pass is that this government has to start to acknowledge that their policies are putting a tremendous burden on the people of Alberta. They are putting a tremendous burden on the

people of my constituency and your constituency and their constituencies. They are raising the cost of everything.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Please go ahead, hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think it's been a very lively and totally interesting discussion. It reminds me of a couple of years ago. We had a different team in here, and there was a similar type of event that took place. It was quite interesting to watch, and a lot of people were getting a lot of entertainment out of it.

I know that the hon. member here has mentioned something that's near and dear to my heart, and that's horses. He's got some great things to say about horses. Earlier on we were talking about "whoa," and I'm thinking "whoa," too, because I know for my operations that I'm going to be paying more for power bills and so on and so forth in the next few weeks. I know the hon. member will be paying more to maintain his horse, to heat the trough and keep things from freezing up. I wonder if the hon. member would like to talk a little bit as well about the power company he deals with and how much more he expects that he's going to have to pay in the ensuing months and years because of this bill. [interjections] Perhaps he can enlighten us on how much more he's going to have to pay to water his horse than what he is now.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. I did hear some great comments as he was speaking. Well, I don't know about great comments but interesting comments from the government as he was speaking to the effect that, to answer his question, I should get solar panels on my place. I already have a couple of solar panels, to be honest. They help with my electric fences, with the heater I put in the water for the horses, although at this time of year even that can't quite keep up when it's this cold. I think it was well below, as I said, minus 30 at home today. But that, I think really shows – that comment from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is concerning because it's very similar to what the hon. Premier said today, and that is that the carbon tax essentially will force Albertans to make better choices. That's a little bit insulting.

Over time we may see things change. I actually think my house is fairly efficient. I do own a large property, so there's more stuff. There are more shops to heat, that type of stuff, watering facilities to heat for livestock. But I don't have a full-fledged farm operation like most of my neighbours do and, of course, that will even increase that. They're pretty concerned, back in my community, about how much power bills are going to go up, particularly when they see what is happening to our cousins in Ontario. They're certainly asking themselves right now: is this government putting in policies that are going to force us into the same situation, with astronomical electricity costs?

They already are putting us in a situation where our fuel costs are going through the roof. Our fuel costs are going to go through the roof. Our heating costs on our homes are going through the roof. And some of our communities – Hanna, for example; the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler represents the great community of Hanna – is almost being wiped out, when you go down there, absolutely petrified people because of this government's coal policy.

So that's all happening in many communities that we represent, but not just to us. Many members on the other side of the aisle

represent communities that are suffering because of the decisions of this government. If the power bills are now going to go up on top of that, how much more do we want Albertans to take? Are the Premier and her members suggesting, by her comment to make better choices, that the people back in Sundre or Rocky Mountain House should just turn the heat off to their houses today, in minus 30? I mean, I can't see her suggesting that, but that's what it sounds like when she says that we should make better decisions. Should we not put heaters in the water for our livestock and let their water freeze over? Of course not.

We're still going to have to use energy. Some of the members represent very different constituencies than I, and that's fine. You might be able to use different types of vehicles in that constituency, but you're not driving down the driveway at my house in a Smart car. You're just not going to get down it, particularly at this time of the year. I'll have to come and push you the rest of the way down the driveway so that you can get there, and then you're going to come into my warm house, that I'm heating while paying the carbon tax.

I think that the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has a very fair question of what this is going to mean, you know, not just for us in this House but for the people of Alberta, who are often currently suffering terribly because of some of the government's decisions. Increased power bills and the consequences from the decisions that could come from these pieces of legislation that we're debating right now in this House will make life worse for many Albertans. It will take money out of many Albertans' pockets. It will prevent vacations and certain things that they will do with their kids. It'll will prolong retirement. It'll raise the cost of raising livestock. It'll raise the cost of bringing 4-H calves to sale. It'll raise the cost of everything.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the reasoned amendment? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, any time we in this Legislature have a bill come before us, unless, of course, that bill is completely frivolous, there's always a reason for it, and it behooves us all as legislators to ask the question: why? Why are we even looking at any particular piece of legislation that comes before us? The last thing Albertans need is laws for the sake of laws. They've got quite a few, and not all of them are real good.

We have before us right now Bill 34, which is essentially going to give the Balancing Pool unlimited financial resources to cover losses that the Balancing Pool is going to experience.

One of the things that I have come to understand from the responses from the other side of the House is that the members opposite either have not read their electricity bill or don't understand what it's telling them. We've heard repeatedly from the other side: well, Albertans are protected now because there's a cap on the regulated rate option, the RRO. Well, news flash: the cost that shows up on your electricity bill for consumption is just one of many line items on your electricity bill, and some of those line items are not directly related to your consumption whatsoever.

So having a cap on the RRO does not protect Albertans from price volatility in the all-in price of electricity, especially when we have a situation occurring in our Balancing Pool where it is hemorrhaging money. Some estimates are in the neighbourhood of about \$70 million a month. It wasn't all that long ago that the Balancing Pool had a net balance of over \$700 million. If memory serves me correctly, it was \$709 million – \$709 million – and because of this government's mishandling of the PPA file, that has been eroding to the tune of some \$70 million each and every month.

Now, as it goes, of course, the Balancing Pool by mandate is not in a position where they can just absorb losses to infinity. Those losses are going to have to be passed along to Albertans at some point in time. The government, of course, does not want to have Albertans see their electricity bills go up, so thinking that they were going to protect themselves – that is, the government – from the embarrassment of seeing electricity bills go up, they've capped the RRO at 6.8 cents for the next four years.

But what they then had to do was to somehow protect the Balancing Pool and keep it whole. That brings us around to the reason for the bill that we have before us right now, Bill 34. To protect the government's image in their claims, their repeated claims, that their climate action plan, their renewables electricity plan of 30 per cent by 2030 are not going to result in increased electricity bills, in order to maintain that narrative, the government capped the RRO. However, all those other line items still come into play. The Balancing Pool has to account for its losses in some manner.

**8:20**

Again, the government – and I've got to hand it to them – did some very creative Enron accounting here. They simply said: look, we are going to backstop the Balancing Pool with an unlimited line of credit to the Balancing Pool. Now, in the world of bookkeeping this is how it will look: the Balancing Pool will have a debt that they owe, but on the government's books a debt owed the government is an asset. So whatever the debt is that the Balancing Pool runs up, it doesn't show as a debt to the government; it actually shows as an asset. Brilliant. It's going to be raising the net assets of the government. All the while the government is in reality sinking Albertans deeper in debt. Brilliant.

Andersen accounting would be proud of this government. How many of them ended up in prison, hon. member? It was two or three, I think, from those shenanigans. The American Securities and Exchange Commission did more than just slap them on the hands. Here's the reason why that method of accounting became known as Enron accounting, because it presented an untrue picture of Enron's health as a corporation. And that's precisely what this measure is going to do. Because the government of Alberta can show this as an asset, it's going to present an untrue picture of the net assets of the province; in other words, the health of the province. Not only is it brilliant; it's also skulduggery in the true sense of the word.

**An Hon. Member:** Skulduggery?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Skulduggery, yes. It's a pirate term. For those of you who . . . [interjections] No, I was not a pirate, but don't look real hard.

Madam Speaker, the result is that this government has very creatively attempted to pull the wool over the eyes of the Alberta public by extending an unlimited, uncapped amount of money to the Balancing Pool to cover whatever debts the pool is going to incur. Yes, the pool will have now a debt on its ledger, a debt owed.

But the government has even gone a step further and said to the pool: look, guys, we're going to give you 14 years to pay that back. In other words, that's going to be 14 years of having an asset show on the government's books. Quite frankly, the reason why that thing has no cap on it is because, I believe – and, granted, this is conjecture, but I haven't been far off as I've been following what this government has been doing. I and my colleagues have pegged it all the way along. We were charging that this government was going to go to a capacity market a way, way, way long time ago, and here we are today.

**An Hon. Member:** What's wrong with that?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** There are lots of things wrong with that, and we will get to that later. Stay tuned. Stay tuned.

Back to Bill 34, that we have before us. Fourteen years the Balancing Pool will have to pay that debt back, a debt that has at this moment no limitations. It makes me wonder: what more is this government going to do to the Balancing Pool that they would have to give the Balancing Pool a lending limit with no limit? What else is coming down the pipe here?

**An Hon. Member:** Oil.

**An Hon. Member:** Bitumen.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Not to the Balancing Pool, no. That doesn't work in the Balancing Pool, hon. member. Read your electricity bill.

Madam Speaker, it is deeply concerning to myself and to others that we have a situation where the government is extending an unlimited amount of credit, which does provide the government with an asset offsetting the government's books, making them look a lot healthier than they really are. As brilliant as that bookkeeping might be, in the United States that would not be allowed, but here in Canada in this government, of course, that would be allowed. It's very unfortunate. Nevertheless, it is still a questionable practice to be doing this, especially when the Balancing Pool already has in place a mechanism that has been there from the beginning.

**An Hon. Member:** That sticks it to consumers.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Does the hon. member think that the consumers and the ratepayers and the taxpayers are three different people? It matters not how you stick it to them. You are sticking it to them. If you're not sticking it to them on their electric bill, you're sticking it to them as a ratepayer, or you're sticking it to them as a taxpayer. But one way or the other, Member, you're sticking it to Albertans. There's only one person in Alberta that pays the bill.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I know where you should stick it.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Point of order. Madam Speaker, that is definitely a point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Would you like to speak to the point of order, Member?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** He's not even in the room.

**The Acting Speaker:** All right. We were having such a good start to our evening. If we could please try to control our comments back and forth to each other and the tone of the evening so that we can move forward on these discussions in a more positive manner, I would appreciate it.

Hon. member, if you would like to continue with your debate, please.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** There was a point of order, madam.

**The Acting Speaker:** Please, go ahead.

#### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Unfortunately, we have a minister that is on his way out of the Chamber. I probably need to say sorry for referring to the absence of the minister, but here we are.

The minister said: you know where you can stick it. I don't have the Blues available to me, but that is pretty inflammatory, and I will

say that, if anything, it definitely is 23(h), (i), and (j). How exactly is it that a sitting minister thinks that's appropriate language in the House, especially at this time of evening? I'm hoping that the minister is able to speak on the fact that this is just something that – we want to have lively debate, there's no doubt, but this is not lively. This is not constructive. This is very unfortunate, that the minister feels this is the right way to go with it. We are trying to make sure that all Albertans are hearing our concerns, and this is taking up time of debate, when we can be actually dealing with something that is important like Bill 34 and explaining how bad this bill is.

Madam Speaker, I encourage you to rule that minister out of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Madam Speaker, I retract my statement.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, would you like to continue?

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To continue, as I began, with why we have this bill before us and explain some of the reasons why we have this bill before us, it is abundantly clear that the government is attempting to cloud from the people of Alberta a reality, a reality that this government's mishandling of the electricity file is going to be costing Albertans hundreds of millions of dollars.

It is abundantly clear to me that the government is terrified to have that charge show up on our electricity bills because, as opposed to perhaps some members on the opposite side who may not read their electricity bills, there are lots of Albertans who do, especially commercial users and industrial users, whose electricity bills are massive. They pay very close attention to their electricity bill. It's in the tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars each and every month, and they watch those bills closely, looking for every and any opportunity to save money, to make their businesses more efficient.

**8:30**

Here we have a bill before us that will effectively cloud from Albertans a sobering reality that this government doesn't want Albertans to face. What's rather strange is that by the government's own estimations, on residential bills at least, the charge that would be indicated may only be less than \$3. Some independent estimates are in the \$2 range as well, but it's not particularly a great sum of money, yet the government wants our people to not know that, that their mistake is costing them anything.

Now, up until recently Albertans were receiving a credit on their electricity bill. That credit has been there for a very, very long time. The total amount of money returned to Albertans is in the many hundreds of millions of dollars through that line item as the Balancing Pool was being profitable in its operation and passing the profit on to you and to me. Now for the first time Albertans are going to start seeing a charge, or they would ordinarily have seen a charge, but the government doesn't want that. So we have this bill where the government will lend the Balancing Pool all the money they need, but: do not show losses on Albertans' power bills.

Now, I would surmise that because the charge on a residential customer is actually going to be so low – I can't see that that would have been necessarily a motivation for the government to attempt to hide that reality from Albertans, but then when I was looking at some of the commercial and industrial bills that constituents of mine have, that painted a very different picture. Now we're looking

at a situation where the Balancing Pool would have to put on a commercial customer's or an industrial customer's bill thousands and thousands of dollars that weren't there before. Now I can understand.

All right. We come back again to the reason for this bill. This government doesn't want to appear antibusiness, so they are afraid of showing the true cost of their mismanagement to the business community and the industrial community, which would show up on their bills. Instead, the Balancing Pool is going to have an unlimited supply of borrowing, and they can amortize this thing out over 14 years. I believe this government is hoping and praying that the Balancing Pool will get back into the black again and be able to pay down over time the debt that they owe the government.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Very interesting. You know, it's an honour to serve with a gentleman that has the knowledge that our friend from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has. He knows more about electricity than a lot of people, I've got to say, probably a lot of people in this House. We're honoured to have him here, and we're lucky to have him here. He is able to speak about just about anything that can go on with electricity without a note in front of him.

You know, there are some things with Bill 34 that we have heard over and over and over, but I really would like to hear the member's take on PPAs if he would be interested at all in talking about PPAs: a lot of issues going on there with the government suing many companies over contracts, not a position that we like to see a government in, and maybe the consequences of their actions.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, of course, the whole reason that we have Bill 34 before us is because of the mismanagement of the PPAs to begin with. What is rather interesting about those PPAs is that they had a fixed life to them, and we were approximately 16 years along in those PPAs with, give or take, about four years to go, just four years left to run them out.

The consequence of the government moving ahead as quickly as they did is that what would have taken care of itself in just four years is now stretching out beyond a decade. Had the PPAs just kind of trucked along and run their natural course, it would have been done, and it would not have resulted in this mess that we are faced with right now. It would not have amounted to the multibillion-dollar fiasco that we currently have before us, with all of the different ramifications we are now seeing, on account of the mishandling of the PPA file to begin with. Had the government just cooled their jets when they got into power and let the PPAs run their natural course, it would have saved Albertans billions and billions of dollars. Billions of dollars. We would not have issues with stranded assets. We would not have issues where we've got to lend the Balancing Pool money. We would not have an issue with the Balancing Pool hemorrhaging like they have been. All of that could have been prevented.

That's the frustrating part of this entire mess the government has made of our electricity system. It was all entirely preventable. Industry experts and myself and other people who were watching this, consultants that I know, colleagues of mine, everyone was saying to the government: "Stop. Whoa. Hold it. You're making an enormous mistake here. Just let things run their natural course." But no. No. The government really thought they knew better, better than the people who have been in this business for a long time, experts

who've forgotten more than I'll ever know, the guys in the industry that live with this each and every day. This government refused to listen to any of them and just pushed on ahead anyway.

Now here we are, one mistake after another, causing a crisis. Like they say, crisis management: you're running from crisis to crisis to crisis, and the solutions you put in place to deal with one crisis actually cause the next crisis. That's crisis management. It results in businesses and governments crashing to the ground. Here we have Bill 34, and I've got to say that we're not done yet. This government is not done messing with the electricity system. There's going to be more. Every time they make another move, it's another billion, another two billion.

They don't seem to care that the reality is that those great big numbers fall on the backs of just one population: Albertans. You can call them consumers, you can call them ratepayers, you can call them taxpayers, but ultimately it's the moms and dads of this province.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the reasoned amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, this is a very saddening bill that's being moved forward. I'd like to start with exactly how it was brought into the House. I would like to start with *Hansard*, November 29, 2016, page 2114. This is when it was introduced for first reading.

Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 34, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

The proposed bill would enable the government of Alberta to manage the impacts of the coal power purchase arrangements on the Balancing Pool and provide consumers with stable electricity prices.

I didn't see anywhere in there where it said unlimited borrowing. That actually sounds really good. I want that. I don't want this.

**8:40**

I'll tell you, it comes down to the fact that when we're looking at the Balancing Pool, it was something that was working before. Now we've got a government that decided that they know how to do this better, that they know how to do it better than Ontario. Yet here we are. We're looking at an unlimited line of credit with the government.

Now I'd like to go to the Balancing Pool website. It's [balancingpool.ca](http://balancingpool.ca). This is where I'm getting a lot of my information from. Specifically, I would like to go to the 2014-2019 strategic plan, but let's start off with a few things first. Let's start off with the mission statement, which is right on the website.

The Balancing pool supports the transition to a fair, efficient, and openly competitive electricity market in Alberta by performing the duties and responsibilities set out in its mandate including managing the risks and maximizing the value of the assets held on behalf of Alberta's electricity consumers.

There are a few things here that I would be nervous with being on the board. I don't think it's a coincidence that we had 4 out of 5 board members resign because, in the end, this mandate no longer is achievable. We're never going to see, in my opinion, this Balancing Pool back in an asset position, just a liability position.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, I apologize for interrupting, but we are speaking on the amendment.

**Mr. Cyr:** Absolutely.



**The Acting Speaker:** I just want to make sure that you're talking about the amendment and not debating the actual contents of the bill right now.

**Mr. Cyr:** Absolutely, the reasoned amendment, Madam Speaker.

When we start reviewing exactly what it is that we're moving forward, is this Balancing Pool still doing what it's been mandated to do? That is the big question here because this is not what it was set up to be, a great big bank for the government.

I know that I'm uncomfortable with ABCs having unlimited ability to borrow money because we're starting to move away from the government taking it upon itself to have unlimited borrowing to now giving it to its agencies. This is frightening because, in the end, we're not going to know exactly how much the government owes. The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has been very clear that this is a practice that is avoided in other jurisdictions. Why would we want to practice that here? I'm uncertain.

When we start looking at the rest of the website here, I would like to say that on the website what we've got – this is something that is important because this is something that they are striving towards. “Avoid a consumer charge”: that's one of the things they wish to do. Okay. Okay. This unlimited debt will avoid a charge. That does seem reasonable here. “Maintain a stable consumer allocation”: well, that will be zero, so that's pretty stable if you've got anything here. “Avoid mid-year adjustments to the allocation”: well, with unlimited debt, there's no reason to. It does seem that when we look at this, the mandate seems to be out, but they do seem to be going through some of the things that they wish to move forward on.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Now, I would argue, going back to the mission statement, that this direction that we're going in is not fair, efficient, or openly transparent. We are looking at new markets, it says here. Well, what does that mean? I guess that we're looking at banking markets. It'll be TD or CIBC or somebody that's borrowing money. There are not going to be any assets to maximize, so it's going to be how much we can prevent debt, which seems to be something that is unavoidable with the government. Lastly and most importantly: responsible to Alberta's electricity consumers. Well, it seems like we have to trash the entire mandate. We have to go – and I'm thinking off the cuff – and get unlimited debt into the incredible future. That's more of a vision statement, I guess.

You get my point that this really isn't responsible. This isn't something that I would consider Albertans to be wanting to move forward. I do understand why the government is hesitant to go with debt caps because it failed once already with the government themselves.

Let's talk about the Balancing Pool when it faces the different concerns that we've got here. They've got three areas of concerns on the website that are in their strategic plan. The first one is “uncertain wholesale power prices.” Now, this is something that the government has been bringing up consistently, saying that the radical adjustments in the power price mean that we should go down this road. Well, that does seem to be a risk. I will say, though, that when it comes to power on my bill, it's never my kilowatt usage that seems to be the problem. It does seem to be the distribution and transmission fees.

The second one is “potential PPA liabilities.” Well, that does seem to be a big concern for this government as now they're suing everybody to get out of their liabilities. That seems to be a good reason to be putting that as a risk.

Uncertain performance of the investments within their portfolio: well, they can get the wrong people managing the money within the

accounts, and then they could lose money. That does seem to be reasonable.

Those are the three. I think that what we need to add is a fourth, though. There should be a fourth point: unstable government or NDP government. That needs to be a risk that is identified by these guys because that seems to be the biggest risk that the Balancing Pool has got, and it's not here.

Moving forward here, they go into extraordinary events. Extraordinary events. Now, I will tell you that through my experience working as an accountant, there are different types of events that happen. Extraordinary events are something that would happen once in a generation.

**An Hon. Member:** Extraordinary.

**Mr. Cyr:** Extraordinary. That's right. This is exactly what it is.

They do have some strategic initiatives here: “Assess and verify extraordinary events using internal and external expertise. Dispute as required.” Well, it appears that the experts, who are government now, making decisions, are deciding that the PPAs are not the direction we want to go in.

We've got, “Maintain financial reserves to cover potential liabilities,” which seems to be – well, why even bother having that point anymore now that we're going to unlimited debt?

8:50

But the last one, this one here, is the one that strikes me as interesting: “Reduce the consumer allocation or invoke a charge should a ‘black swan’ event transpire.” I actually have never heard of a black swan event. I had to look it up. I assumed that I knew what it was. Well, this, I would argue, in this case would be the NDP winning the 2015 election. That would be categorized as a black swan event.

I have a lot more to say about this area, especially about the strategic plan, but – you know what? – I think I'll wait for my next speech. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other speakers under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Clark:** Actually, I'm going to move one-minute bells, Mr. Speaker. It looks like we may be inching ever closer to a vote, and I would ask for unanimous consent, please, to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other speakers to RA1?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:52 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gill	Nixon
Clark	Hunter	Panda
Cyr	Loewen	Schneider
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Stier

Against the motion:

Babcock	Hoffman	McPherson
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Carlier	Horne	Miller
Carson	Jansen	Phillips
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Renaud
Coolahan	Larivee	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Sabir
Dang	Loyola	Schmidt
Drever	Luff	Schreiner
Feehan	Malkinson	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Turner
Goehring	McCuaig-Boyd	Woollard
Gray	McKitrick	
Totals:	For – 12	Against – 38

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

**The Acting Speaker:** We are back to second reading. Are there any other members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 34?

Having heard none, the hon. Minister of Energy to close debate.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I now move that we close at second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 34 read a second time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole (continued)

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

**The Acting Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

### Bill 35 Fair Elections Financing Act

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to move an amendment. I have the appropriate number of copies, and I will provide them to the pages and wait until you tell me to proceed.

**The Acting Chair:** Okay. This will be referred to as amendment A4. Please proceed, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to move that Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended in section 43 in the proposed section 44.1(1) as follows: (a) in clause (d) by striking out the word "or" at the end of subclause (v) and by striking out subclause (vi); and (b) in clause (g) by striking out again the word "or" at the end of subclause (v) and by striking out subclause (vi).

Mr. Chair, during the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee the government whip, a member who I enjoy working with in this Assembly, introduced a motion similar to this very amendment that I am introducing today. The member's motion in that committee read as follows:

That the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee recommend that [the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act] be amended to ban government advertising during general elections with the exception of ads required for government business that are certified in accordance with a process similar to [Ontario's].

**9:00**

Well, Ontario's rules are more relaxed than I would be comfortable with and, I think, most of my colleagues would be comfortable with. At least they don't have an exemption which writes the government of the day a blank cheque to spend on advertisement as much as they want. That's exactly, Mr. Chair, what the NDP government of the day in our province is proposing with Bill 35, a blank cheque.

Again, Mr. Chair, I know you probably have seen the pattern, that I have described many times inside this Assembly, of this government over and over asking for blank cheques. But here we are again, government again asking the opposition to provide them with a blank cheque on behalf of the people of Alberta. I think you know – and I know you would agree with me – that you certainly would not want to provide a blank cheque to this government in particular. I think you would agree with that.

I think what's important, though, about my first comments on this is what the government whip said in committee. The government whip moved a motion similar to this motion, which, I would argue and submit to you, shows that the government whip agreed with the opposition caucuses that this was a good direction to go. So I certainly would expect, Mr. Chair, through you to the government whip, and I eagerly await her rising and speaking in support of my amendment. I can't see why she would move an amendment for it in committee and then come to this House only a few short weeks later and say: "No. I changed my mind. I didn't like that." I can't see the member doing that.

With that said, though, Mr. Chair, the last time I sat in committee, the government whip and her fellow colleagues on the NDP side were fighting to get their campaign expenses paid for by taxpayers, and then when we got back after the committee, they had changed their minds about that. So maybe, you know, I'll let the government whip certainly speak for that member's self shortly.

Now, the Ontario Government Advertising Act of 2004, which is what the government whip cited during that debate, reads as follows:

Despite notice or deemed notice that an item meets the standards, a government office shall not publish, display, broadcast, distribute or convey the item during the period beginning with the issue of a writ under the Election Act for a general election and ending on polling day.

Now, unsurprisingly, the government whip then immediately adjourned the member's motion. Immediately. Now, we've talked about it many times in the last couple of days. That was pretty much what happened in the committee: 23 times the government adjourned their own motions.

Now, what happened, of course, Mr. Chair – and I know that you know because you were present at some of those meetings – was that the government would come forward with something, in fact, that was often described by the Member for Calgary-North West as pie in the sky, just numbers that they were reaching for in the air. They would bring it forward, and then good questions would start coming from all over, from all the parties, and then very quickly the government members would look at their laptops, and – I don't know – maybe because the government whip was in there, nobody was giving them instructions on what to say, so then they would adjourn debate. How many times? Twenty-three times. Twenty-three times they adjourned debate – 23 times – one short of two dozen. I'm shocked. I'm sure you are shocked.

Now, I've got to ask, Mr. Chair: how disconnected is the backbench of this government from its front bench? How disconnected is it? Quite frankly, can we even call the government whip really a backbench member? A member of the leadership of

her caucus? Clearly, it appears that only the Premier's office is calling the shots. It's shocking: 23 times.

When the government whip brings forward a motion, a good motion, I support it. It's a good idea that we should deal with this issue, and we're going to give the members an opportunity to follow through on what that member proposed right now and do the right thing for the people of Alberta and make sure that we truly, once and for all take big money out of politics. Big money out of politics: I believe in that. I've long said it, many times, in this Assembly. I said it before I was even elected. It's been a big part of the member-driven policy of the Wildrose Party, and the NDP, to their credit, have often pushed for that as well.

I mean, usually we lead; they follow. I like that. So today we're giving you an opportunity again. We're going to lead, and you should follow. If you don't take my word for how good this amendment is, I think you should take, through you, Mr. Chair, to the members across the way, the chief government whip's word for it because I just think that what the member, the chief government whip, brought forward is excellent, and it's what we're going to consider today. We're going to, with this amendment, truly give an opportunity for the government to actually follow through on what they keep saying they're going to do, which is to take big money out of politics.

Let's look at what they've done so far. We've lowered the \$15,000 limit, something all parties agree with. Parties on this side of the House tried to lower it to \$1,000 at the constituency level. This party raised it to \$4,000. A thousand dollars to \$4,000 is a drastic increase. A drastic increase. That doesn't sound like they're getting big money out of politics. They like to rise and say: hey, it's the opposition that didn't want to get big money out of politics. Well, we wanted to go to \$1,000. You guys wanted to go to \$4,000, and that's the legislation that you've brought forward.

But the most glaring amount of big money that is left in politics right now is what this government is spending, is the ability of the government to use the taxpayer purse to attempt to influence elections, to attempt to slant the system in favour of them. Now, in the case of this government it's not going to work. Albertans are wise to them, and when they finally drop the writ, Albertans will deal with that at the ballot box, and I think that they will deal with it in a very drastic way. They're the ones who should. They're the boss.

But is the NDP more interested in entrenching its own advantage than properly managing provincial finances, than properly managing our democracy? This party used to be in opposition. It used to be a relatively small party compared to the opposition parties that are here now. They could be back in that position one day. That's not unreasonable. Governments change. The party across the way knows that governments change. They should be thinking ahead, in my mind, not only to how this will impact their party when they're in opposition but to how this impacts other parties in opposition. If they truly want to take big money out of politics, they should stand with the government whip, like I'm about to, and they should say: let's do this.

Now the difference, Mr. Chair, between the chief opposition whip and the government whip is that I'm not going to adjourn my motion. We are going to vote on the motion, so the members across the way are going to have to stand at some point on the record and make a decision on what they want to do. In committee they adjourned and waited for more feedback from the Premier's office or wherever it comes from on the computers during that. I don't know. I'm giving a little bit of warning, I guess, for the word from the top to come if that's what you guys choose, but I would suggest instead that you stick to the principle that you have articulated, that you have put forward, that the government whip has put forward,

rightly so, and that is: let's once and for all take big money out of politics.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Madam Chair, great to see you.

The government has come so close – it has come so close – but along the way it's been distracted. It's been distracted with trying to force through motions in committee to get their campaign expenses paid for, to get their political party campaign expenses paid for. But now we're here in a situation where they don't have to be distracted anymore. They're going to have to make a decision on behalf of their constituents if they truly want to take big money out of politics.

Now, Madam Chair, I know without a doubt that you want to take big money out of politics. I think you share that goal with all of us. I know the government whip clearly shares that goal with all of us and recognizes the importance of dealing with government advertisements in our political system. You know, the NDP spent \$750,000 advertising their spring budget. Did you catch that? Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars advertising their spring budget.

**An Hon. Member:** How many nurses is that?

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. How many nurses is that?

The NDP spent \$700,000 advertising the carbon tax in 2015 and another \$4.4 million in 2016 advertising a tax that they were putting on the people of Alberta that is going to raise the cost of every product that they buy. That's big money in politics. Now, with this legislation, when it passes, Madam Chair, do you know how much a political party will be capped to spend inside a general election? Through you: does anybody know? I can tell you that it isn't \$4.4 million. That sure sounds like big money in politics.

**9:10**

The members across the way have talked a big game on this, and they have had many opportunities to do the right thing, and they will have another opportunity shortly. The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler gave them a great opportunity with a private member's bill, which was sabotaged inside this Assembly. Then when the press started to ask questions about why the government was making decisions like that, the government used some procedural things to get it back into this Chamber and then, ultimately, put it back to a committee, that voted to be returned and then has not been returned by the majority in this Assembly.

Now, why has it not been returned? Because the members across the way got caught with their hands in the pickle jar, this time – this time – trying to get money for their political campaign expenses, trying to get my constituents and your constituents to pay for the campaign expenses of members across the way. Shocking. It's shocking.

But here we go now. We have another opportunity, an opportunity to do the right thing, an opportunity to stand up and show that you truly believe in getting big money out of politics. If you truly believe in getting big money out of politics – if you truly believe in getting big money out of politics – you will show it right now.

The question that will be asked, specifically on this amendment, at the end is: is the NDP more concerned about the ballooning debt in our society right now, or are they more concerned with using electoral legislation to stack the deck? Is the NDP more concerned about running deficits on operational expenses, or are they more concerned with stacking the deck? Is the NDP more concerned about addressing double-digit unemployment in Calgary or stacking the deck? Is the NDP more concerned about restoring our

advantage so that we can now stop losing out on new drilling projects to our neighbours, or are they more concerned with stacking the deck? Is the NDP more concerned about finally fixing our broken FOIP system or stacking the deck?

That's what this amendment gives them, an opportunity to show that they aren't, that they are actually concerned with getting big money out of politics. But so far, each time that they have had the opportunity, even one given to them by their own whip, they have not taken that opportunity. They have not taken that opportunity.

Is the NDP more concerned about trying to improve Alberta's terrible track record on stayed charges and backed-up court rooms, or are they more concerned with this legislation on stacking the deck? Is the NDP more concerned about protecting our wildlife and fisheries? No. What are they concerned about?

**Mr. Cooper:** Stacking our deck.

**Mr. Nixon:** It's obvious.

This is the problem that we have here. I want, Madam Chair, to give the government members an opportunity to stand up and prove once and for all that they truly want to get big money out of politics instead of what it certainly appears like, over and over and over, both in committee and today, as they voted down each and every amendment, except for one, that has been brought forward by the opposition. In committee, when they spend all their time trying to get their campaign expenses paid for, to Albertans and to this side of the House it looks like this side of the House is only concerned with stacking the deck. Only concerned with stacking the deck.

Is the NDP more concerned about training more apprentices and journeymen or stacking the deck? Is the NDP more concerned about articulating how they will bring 2,000 new long-term care beds or stacking the deck? Is the NDP more concerned about university grads entering the workforce or stacking the deck? The hon. members across the way are starting to see a pattern.

Why don't we today, led by the government whip and the Government House Leader – I encourage him to lead the way as a leader in his party – stand up and show the people of Alberta that you truly want to get big money out of politics and that you're not attempting to rig the election system and stack the deck in favour of the incumbent government? Stacking the deck.

Is the NDP more concerned about getting unemployed oil field contractors back on the road, or are they just concerned with stacking the deck? Is the NDP more concerned about making the government leaner and more efficient and stop putting debt on my great-grandchildren or – what are they concerned about?

**Some Hon. Members:** Stacking the deck.

**Mr. Nixon:** Stacking the deck, Madam Chair.

Is the NDP more concerned about helping our law enforcement keep our families and communities safe or stacking the deck?

This is their opportunity, with this amendment, to show that they are truly concerned about the people of Alberta. So far, as we have dealt with electoral reform in our province, what I have seen from the government is: attempting to get their campaign expenses paid for, attempting to get individual MLAs' campaign expenses paid for, changing the system to punish opposition parties' political structures to the advantage of the incumbent party, making things harder for volunteers to participate in our political process, and getting mad that we won't rubber-stamp them for doing what? Stacking the deck.

It's so obvious to the people of Alberta, Madam Chair. I just don't understand why the NDP won't stand up once and for all and truly show that they are with the government whip, that they are going to stand with the government whip and say: we want big money out

of politics, and we expect our party, the governing party of the great province of Alberta right now, to follow the same rules as everybody else.

Is the NDP more concerned about keeping Alberta seniors united or – what?

**Some Hon. Members:** Stacking the deck.

**Mr. Nixon:** Stacking the deck.

Is the NDP more concerned about improving transportation and infrastructure or stacking the deck?

This is the opportunity to show that your number one priority is not to stack the deck in an effort to try to make the situation better for you in the election of 2019. I don't know when you'll call it. I'm not sure if you're going to stick with the fixed election law or not, but we'll see.

Is the NDP more concerned about helping our teachers in the classroom, something they say is important – and I agree with them – or their priority to stack the deck?

**Some Hon. Members:** Stack the deck.

**Mr. Nixon:** Stack the deck: get their campaign expenses paid for, change the rules to make it hard for political parties, and keep them with the biggest purse in all of politics, the government purse, taxpayer dollars, in an attempt to buy votes. Or they could stand with the government whip and stop stacking the deck.

I'm happy to see, Madam Chair, that the Government House Leader is finally starting to see the pattern. I feel like I'm being listened to tonight. I might be getting through to him. I know that we got through to the government whip during committee. I hope that the government whip is still with us on this important thing, in fact. But, you know, the motion did get adjourned, so maybe the government whip changed their mind when they adjourned the motion for the 23rd time in the committee.

Is the NDP more concerned about encouraging more tourism to our province or stacking the deck? What are you more concerned about: rigging the system, manipulating the law to your advantage, stacking the deck, getting taxpayer money for your campaign expenses, or standing with the opposition and the government whip and getting big money out of politics?

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is an honour and a privilege to rise on Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, on a night that we're getting such a poetic conversation going. There's rhythm in the way he's speaking. Of course, I'm honoured to rise and to speak after the opposition whip and to speak a little bit about what we talked about in committee. [interjection] It is dream work. It's a dream to be here because we are making history by putting the democratic process back into Albertans' hands. That's what we're doing here. We're renewing the democratic process, and we have been doing this for over a year. Of course, the committee has worked really hard to get us there.

You know, even in opposition our party has always stood for looking at ways to limit government advertising, and we will continue to do that because we believe it's an important step to making sure that the electoral process is protected.

Of course, what we need to remember, though, is that if we played out this amendment that the member brought forward – this is under the Election Act, so it really doesn't apply to the election finances one. If you were to pass this and to put this in place, then

you'd have to ask yourself: who are the contributors, who are the donors to the government advertising, and how would you list those people? It just wouldn't work.

9:20

I believe, you know, that the member has a point and has a shared interest with the government in making sure that there are limits put in place, and we're looking forward to working on that. I'm sure the minister responsible for democratic renewal will be looking at this issue as we move forward with the Election Act, because that's where it sits, in the Election Act.

I believe that not only are we looking at that today, but it's also an honour to talk about the fact that we are introducing a bill today that has contribution limits, has spending limits, and introduces items for third-party advertising. Of course, at the end of the day, we want to make sure that these rules apply equally to all parties, and we want to make sure that we're closing the loopholes that allow for big money to influence the political process.

Again, I won't be supporting this amendment from my friend across the aisle, not because we won't be working on this . . .

**Mr. Nixon:** Whip to whip.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Whip to whip. But, unfortunately, the whip needs to think about this a little bit more carefully.

We need to look at doing this within the Election Act. It's something that, of course, we have talked about. When we were in opposition, I know that our party talked about how we were going to limit government advertising during election periods, and we will continue to bring that conversation forward because it is important.

I really want to thank the members for their participation in this debate. It's been a lovely evening, and I'm looking forward to our late night together.

That's all, Madam Chair. I'm happy with those statements.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the comments from the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. For those of us on this side it's a pretty tough act to follow Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. It's a tough act to follow, but I agree with absolutely everything he said. This government is . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Stacking the deck.

**Mr. Clark:** . . . stacking the deck. I won't try to pull off what he did.

There's no question that they are tilting the scales to their advantage, that they have a thumb on the scale on this. There's no question.

You know, in all sincerity, Madam Chair, I want to just pick up on a couple of things that the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park said.

She talked about renewing the democratic process. Really, what we're doing is making the democratic process the New Democratic process. Everything in this bill, especially when you see the better part of \$10 million spent by this government not to advertise programs that are available to Albertans but to try to convince Albertans that government policy is a good idea, things like the carbon tax – there's nothing that Albertans can do to take advantage of the carbon tax. All they can do is that they may get a rebate. There's no program to be taking advantage of. There's no public benefit. It's not about reducing drinking and driving, curbing smoking, encouraging helmet use. It is only about the best political interests of government.

So I'm an enthusiastic supporter of this amendment because the government uses their tremendous weight of taxpayer dollars to influence the opinions and views of Albertans, and that's fundamentally wrong. I can tell you that, being on the receiving end of some of that in the 2014 by-election, it's unacceptable. I know that this government knows it's unacceptable in their heart of hearts. Why, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, the hon. Government House Leader, sat in this very spot and railed against nonmajority governments. And if he were here today, I promise you that he would do the same thing. I absolutely promise you. It makes me wonder. How quickly things change when you find yourself on the government side. I am profoundly disappointed that you've done that. It doesn't need to be this way. It does not need to be this way.

The other thing that the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, the chief government whip, had talked about and, in fact, had yelled across the way at me was that one of the reasons it took so long and that the government had to adjourn 23 times was that I had the audacity in the committee to move that we actually step through each one of the recommendations brought to that committee by Albertans through the admittedly not very comprehensive consultation process. But such as it was, we had many, many recommendations from Albertans, and we on that committee owed it to Albertans to consider each and every one of those recommendations.

The ND government side, however, would rather that we had cherry-picked about a half-dozen or so of those, just gone through those and then just completely ignored any of the other recommendations. That included dozens of recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer.

The job of that committee – that is why that work takes time. Yes, it takes time. Yes, democracy takes time. But it's worth it. It's absolutely worth it. And it is shameful that the government majority on the committee would have thought that we would somehow just be able to cherry-pick through a few recommendations and completely ignore the rest of them, not give them any consideration. I can tell you that we passed many thoughtful motions unanimously as a result of having gone through that. So, yes, it took time, but it took time because it's important work.

What's interesting is that this government agrees that we need to reduce government advertising and eliminate it, certainly, during a campaign period. At least they say that they agree. But the amount of money spent on government advertising by this government in particular reminds me of another government they don't like very much. How many tens of millions of dollars did the Harper Conservatives spend on advertising? How did you folks feel about that? Like the Canada jobs action plan.

Every time you went by one of the old building Alberta plan signs, how did you feel about that? Did you think that was a good idea? Did you go: "Hey, I am thrilled that my tax dollars are being used for this noble purpose. This is wonderful. I think this is great." How many of you, in your heart of hearts, in the last campaign sat in an all-candidates meeting or talked at the doors about the fact that government advertising is wrong? "Doesn't it bother you that these Building Alberta signs show up in empty fields and promise a school that's never going to be built? Yeah, that drives you insane." I know that many of you did that.

But now you find yourself on the government benches, and somehow it's okay. "Oh, it's okay because it's us. It's okay because it's our plan." The amount of money that your government is spending on the carbon tax advertising greatly exceeds the amount of money that was spent on the building Alberta plan signs. You know what? That was one of those bricks in the wall that brought down the previous government. Don't think for one second that

Albertans don't see right through that, and they're going to bring you down as well as a result.

This is an opportunity to stop doing that. It's a thoughtful amendment. It's entirely reasonable, and it removes that locked-in government advantage. So I really encourage all members of the House, the government side in particular, to really think hard about supporting this amendment. I know that the front bench likely doesn't want to, but I encourage those of you on the backbenches, those government private members, who have a tremendous amount of power. I don't think you maybe realize sometimes how much power you have. Your job is to represent the views of your constituents, and I think that if you were to ask your constituents if they want you to reduce or eliminate money spent on frivolous government advertising of purely policy programs, not programs or services that Albertans can take advantage of, not truly public service, but trying to convince Albertans that a policy position taken by the government is somehow the right one, that that somehow is an appropriate use of government dollars – it isn't.

This amendment seeks to end that. That's in the best interest of Alberta, that's in the best interest of democracy, and that's in the best interest of the bottom line of this province as well.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I will now recognize the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's a privilege to talk this evening on this amendment. I won't even begin to attempt to mimic the southern Baptist, Bible, revival-tent preacher style of the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, with his marvellous antiphonal style of delivery, you know, with the chorus coming back and forth across the Chamber. I think that's a performance that won't soon be repeated, perhaps to the betterment of us all.

9:30

Madam Chair, I will say, though, on an entirely serious note, that this is a very important topic. Indeed, it is sort of the issue that when this Bill 35 was first announced, it was the issue that was perhaps first identified by the media as being a critical issue; that is, one that is important, that needs to be dealt with. It needs to be dealt with because, once again, it speaks to the issue of fairness. Now, unfortunately, the government has had a couple of opportunities already to demonstrate that it understands the concept of basic fairness and has failed. Nonetheless, we will continue to try to point out – and especially in this case. I think the Member for Calgary-Elbow makes a very good point.

The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, whom we miss, is now in a situation where no longer does he righteously rail against these injustices but somehow now has acquiesced to being part of the government caucus. And that is a sad statement. I miss him. I miss him, and I miss his consistent demand for social justice, that was once in this House, that once spoke with such clarity and such passion on issues such as this, and now that voice is somehow muted, somehow muzzled. It is so sad.

While I didn't necessarily agree with the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, nor do I agree with him much even today, I do have a basic respect and admiration for the fact that he was always consistent in his statements defending the right of fairness. That was something that I admired. In fact, the other three of his colleagues that now form part of the government caucus and are part of cabinet – all four of them I always admired because from their position here, where the Member for Calgary-Elbow is now

ensconced, those members were always consistent in terms of their ability to articulate a position that demonstrated a basic grasp of social justice. I think that that social justice was something that was an important sort of balancing that we needed here in the Chamber.

So, indeed, it is now disappointing to me that on an issue as fundamental as government advertising during election campaigns, something that is fundamentally unfair, that is fundamentally tipping the scales in the favour of the governing party... [interjections] Well, one might say that. I'm not going to because I think it's been repeated altogether too often. Nonetheless, I would say that this is an issue of fundamental fairness.

Now, some may say that the government needs to communicate with the people of Alberta. I agree one hundred per cent. The government must communicate, and that is important. But at least during the election period that sort of advertising needs to halt for the writ period, for the 28-day period.

I think the Member for Calgary-Elbow correctly points out that the use of advertising can be misused and abused. Once again, it seems like it's mea culpa day over here in the third-party caucus. When that particular bit of advertising went on during the by-elections in October 2014, that was not a proud moment for our party, and that was not a proud moment for democracy. To say it in another way, it was wrong. It was wrong, and it should not have been done. These are the sorts of things that when you're in government, you're sometimes – I won't use the term "blinded to." Let's just say that sometimes you perhaps don't have the clarity of vision to see that it's not the right thing to do. The ends for some reason sometimes justify the means, and that is fundamentally wrong. That cannot be used as a reason for doing something that is fundamentally wrong.

This amendment, this very reasonable amendment that indeed addresses the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act very definitively and addresses what is in Bill 35, seeks to remedy that situation, and it seeks to remedy a situation that is fundamentally unfair. It is fundamentally unfair for a government, that has the keys to the treasury and unlimited use of that treasury, to access those taxpayer dollars to assist with its campaign during an election. This is especially true when there has been a restriction or will be a restriction placed on the advertising that can be done within the bounds of that campaign.

Now, don't get me wrong. I think that \$2 million is a reasonable figure to be spending on an election campaign. Goodness knows, in the last one the two parties that were the most successful both spent considerably less than \$2 million, and the one that, arguably, got the fewest votes per dollar spent spent considerably more than \$2 million.

You know, it's interesting. We heard repeatedly during the course of debate in the committee about how important it was to get big money out of politics because ideas should matter and not who has the most money. Yet we are seeing that the constitution of the current members of the government caucus puts that statement completely to a lie. Most of these members were considerably outspent by other candidates running in their constituencies, yet they were victorious, and they won. They are, in fact, living embodiments, proof – walking, talking, sneezing proof – that big money does not necessarily carry the day. They showed that somebody could spend less money and, in fact, be successful, something which I myself sort of take a certain amount of personal hope from at the present time.

Nonetheless, I think that it is incredibly important that we recognize that the government's access to the treasury, that the government's ability to advertise – and we've seen, certainly, this government's ability to advertise – can be misused, and it should

not be. That is a concept that, I would suggest, my friends that sat over here in the former, somewhat smaller New Democratic Party caucus would have recognized, and I do so miss them. I say that perhaps to a certain extent tongue-in-cheek, but, Madam Chair, I do agree with the Member for Calgary-Elbow. There is something in that now that they are there, I've yet to have demonstrated to me, certainly in the course of debate on this issue, that they still have those ideals, that they still aspire to those lofty ideals of democratic socialism, of social justice. I'm not seeing it, and that indeed is disappointing because while I didn't necessarily agree with those policies, I always had respect and admiration for them.

I think that as far as a balanced society goes, it is critical that there are voices that articulate those positions. I think that is part of a just and overall balanced society. It's something that I believe in strongly because most of the issues that we deal with, whether it's here in the Chamber or out there in what I call the real world – this Chamber can be somewhat of a departure from the real world – most of the issues we deal with are not black and white. Most of the issues are many, many, many shades of grey in between.

With that, Madam Chair, I wholeheartedly support this amendment. I would certainly like to see, I hope to see that members of the government caucus who are actually still listening will vote in favour of the amendment because I think it establishes a basic sense of fairness and justice. If the members opposite decide to vote against this amendment, I would suggest that they are going to have some explaining to do. They will need to explain to their constituents, they will need to explain to the media, and they will need to explain to Albertans why they think that it's okay for the government, when it's restricted the amount that can be spent by political parties, can continue to spend in an unfettered and unregulated manner during the course of an election. That is fundamentally wrong. For that reason, I support this amendment.

9:40

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I know it's getting late. Certainly, as we were discussing just a few minutes ago, when I had the opportunity to rise and talk for 20 short minutes, stacking the deck is a concern. But the reason I rise again is in response to the hon. government whip, whom we started out this conversation with discussing the amendment that she moved forward at the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee.

I do appreciate hearing from the government whip tonight, Madam Chair, and her response to my questions in regard to her motion in that committee and where she stands today, now, and whether or not her colleagues in the government caucus across the way were going to stand with the government whip and support getting big money out of politics, just like she moved inside the committee, because the amendment that I am moving tonight is basically identical to the amendment that she chose to move at that time in the committee. I was happy to support it. I wish that I had an opportunity – I know many other members in the Assembly wish they had the opportunity, but of course, as I discuss, the government whip then adjourned that amendment, just like they adjourned 23 other amendments during the process.

The government whip's response today, through you to me, Madam Chair, to this side of the House, was that this has nothing to do with this act and then seems to indicate that possibly at some later date the government may address this very, very serious issue to get big money out of politics, the last portion of that that has to

be dealt with, and that is the government using taxpayer dollars. However – and I've already quoted this, but I'm going to quote it again – the government whip introduced a similar amendment, as I've told you, in committee that said that

the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee recommend that the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act be amended to ban government advertisement during general elections with the exception of ads required for government ... that are certified in accordance with a process similar to [Ontario's.]

Now, earlier, when I was speaking, I described to the House Ontario's process, so I don't think I will do that again. The point of me reraising it through you, Madam Chair, to the government whip, is that very clearly, in her own words, she makes it clear that it's for the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act and now will rise in this Assembly and indicate to us that, no, what she meant had nothing to do with this act. That seems, to me, like a great contradiction, certainly.

We also have an amendment that has been approved through the process, fits within the legislation that we are debating today, and quite clearly, Madam Chair, there is no doubt – the facts are clear – that the government has the opportunity in the next few minutes to stand up and prove once and for all that they really want to get big money out of politics. But as we've seen over and over as we debate this important legislation in this Assembly, the government clearly is not indicating to Albertans that they truly want to get big money out of politics because their pattern has been to actually raise it in the case of constituency associations from \$1,000 to \$4,000. That's the opposite of lowering it. I know we've heard from some ministers today that they didn't agree with that, but in my world \$1,000 to \$4,000 is an increase. Maybe it's different in the NDP cabinet ministers' worlds. I don't know.

Then, when we come forward with an opportunity to once and for all limit the last big loophole that we have for opportunities for parties to use big money in politics, the government indicates that they want to do it at a future date. Madam Chair, this is a government that spent \$4.4 million advertising a carbon tax, that spent \$750,000 advertising their spring budget. Madam Chair, \$4.4 million on the carbon tax: let's think about that for a second. We've capped parties at \$2 million, and we're for that. But just on one issue this government has over doubled that cap.

Their own whip, the government whip, has indicated and moved forward, though she did adjourn it, that there is support for this from the NDP backbenchers, so how disconnected is the NDP backbench with cabinet? All of a sudden they get here and their beliefs in that issue are not valid anymore? Similar to when they were trying to pass stuff in committee to get their campaign expenses paid for – and then, ultimately, that was stopped, fortunately in that case, by the cabinet.

When I stood up earlier, I talked in great detail about the fact that clearly this government is just indicating to Albertans that they want to stack the deck in favour of them in the next election, that truly most of this does absolutely nothing to get big money out of politics in our system, that this is truly about trying to re-elect this government, that this is truly about trying to hamstring the opposition parties, particularly the small opposition parties. It's truly about stacking the deck and not dealing with the big issue of getting big money out of politics because if it truly was, Madam Chair, about getting big money out of politics, these government members would stand up and vote with us, vote with their whip, stand with their whip, and make it very, very clear.

Now, Madam Chair, you know my party. We don't have whip votes. We believe in free votes. Normally I stand in this Chamber

and I say to the government members: ignore your whip. I have spent so much time in my elected life standing in this building saying: please ignore your whip, and do the right thing for your constituents. But tonight I'm saying: listen to your whip, and do the right thing for your constituents. It's a win-win for the whip on the government side today. It's a win-win for the whip.

Now, in some ways it's funny – and it's late at night – but truly, at the end of the day, it isn't funny that we have to keep coming here to try to get the government to do the right thing, to try to get the government to stand up for the right thing, to try to get the government to follow through on what they promised to do. They promised to get big money out of politics.

When they started the process of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, stuff like this amendment was exactly what we were supposed to be working on. During that committee, before it was derailed by the members trying to get their campaign expenses paid for, the members agreed with us on this.

**Mr. Cooper:** Remember when Drumheller-Stettler proposed this bill?

**Mr. Nixon:** That's right. And then Drumheller-Stettler proposed this almost exact same type of bill. It was through procedural stuff by the government that they tried to shove it aside, but then the media caught them and didn't like it, so then they brought it back, the first time, I think, that that's ever happened in the Alberta Legislature, that they managed to get a bill that was dead and bring it back. It was kind of neat. It was like magic.

Then they decided to take it and send it to committee, so we said: okay; let's go to committee. Then the government whip sat in committee and said, as I've read to you, Madam Chair: yeah, that's a great idea; that's what we should do. Then – I don't know – an e-mail or text message came, and they had to emergency adjourn the debate on it. There may be another level of whip in the government. I don't know what happens there, but they had to adjourn debate on that.

Here I am today giving the government the opportunity to prove once and for all that when I stand in this Assembly and I say, through you, Madam Chair, to them, that they are trying to stack the deck, trying to kneecap opposition parties, and trying to make sure that we can't spend money – rightly so; we want to get big money out of politics – but that they, the governing party, still have the ability to use taxpayer monies to manipulate campaigns and to use to their advantage, that's wrong.

Just like when we warned you and begged you not to use taxpayer money to pay for your campaign expenses, that's just like this. When we begged them all summer and they worked all summer, Madam Chair, to try to get their campaign expenses paid for and, in the end, somebody finally had a second thought and went, "Oh, that's a real bad idea; I guess we should listen to the opposition," I suspect that's because we talked to Albertans more than them. I don't know why it took them so long to realize how bad of an idea that was.

Here I am today telling you that if you truly want to get big money out of politics, if you're truly not trying to use this bill to hamstring the opposition and rig the system for you, then in a few minutes stand up and support your whip's comments in committee, stand up for Albertans, and get big money out of politics once and for all. If not, you are trying to stack the deck, and Albertans will remember that. I promise you that, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is very hard to follow my colleague through his very, very focused speech on trying to convince the government. I am sad to hear that the government whip has brought this forward and that it is appearing that she's not going to be supporting ours after supporting it in the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee.

9:50

It's important to note that we heard a member from the past government say that they had made mistakes in this area and would like to correct those. I think that's very admirable. I heard that same member say that he knows the House leader very well, and he's hoping that the House leader would go back to the man that he knew before he got into government. Right after our chaos that happened with Bill 203, which our Member for Drumheller-Stettler put forward, all of that, we just heard that some really incredible circumstances moved around, and what happened is that they referred that bill to the standing committee.

But what happened here is that the deputy House leader said that – now, I'm going to read a quote from a newspaper, from Matt Dykstra. I should start there. It was an article on November 2, 2015: Alberta NDP Government Votes Down Bill Prohibiting Government Advertising During Elections. That member, who is a cabinet minister, explained that

the government "absolutely agrees with" the bill but voted it down in order to refer the issue to the all-party Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee which has already been appointed to review the Election Act, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, the Conflicts of Interest Act, and more.

We've got the House leader, the deputy House leader, the whip. Who else could be more influential to make sure that we remove government advertising? It seems like we have a disproportionate number of members on the other side that believe this, but – wait – I actually have another person.

**An Hon. Member:** Oh.

**Mr. Cyr:** I know. This is shocking.

You know what? It's starting to add up. This is an important topic. It is. On December 9, 2014 – so before the election, before the election that made the decision to form this government, on May 5, 2015 – we had a press release from the NDP. A press release from the NDP. What we've got here is: [Premier's last name] Introduces NDP Accountability Priorities. I'd like to read the first part of this. It's a December 9, 2014, press release.

In response to PC legislation claiming to increase government accountability, NDP Leader [the now Premier] called for a series of changes that would effectively protect Albertans from several forms of inappropriate behaviour demonstrated by the PCs over the last several years.

"This PC party has continually flouted the basics of accountability and trustworthiness in government," [the Premier] said.

That sounds pretty familiar.

"We thought, at the very least, that [the former Premier's] widely-touted Accountability Act should fix the most obvious problems of recent years."

Let's be clear: "most obvious problems."

The New Democrats are proposing a number of necessary clauses . . .

I marked that word, "necessary."

. . . for [the past Premier's] upcoming Accountability Act.

This includes – there are lots of them here, and many of them have actually come up. I am, actually, very surprised that our government has been fighting on a lot of these things already.



The [past Education minister] clause . . .  
I can't use his name for obvious reasons.

. . . fixing the Elections Act to prohibit MLAs from using government resources during elections or by-elections."

Wow. Isn't that what we're doing with this amendment? We've got the deputy House leader, House leader, whip, Premier. That is a stunning number of their cabinet that suddenly don't believe in government accountability. This is truly shocking.

I will tell you that for something that has been a passion of my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler, when he brought forward Bill 203 – it needs to be understood that when it comes to these private members' bills, because we sit so few days, you really don't get a lot of opportunity to pass a bill, which is why it is so saddening that the government was hoping to change the sound bite away from their irresponsibility in this area. They wanted to stop the story with political manoeuvring, that in the end was to send it to a committee. We talked about it with the committee. The whip put forward this motion, and then it died. Now the government has the opportunity to bring it back, and – guess what? – it sounds like they've given up on this, too. They believed in it before the election, they believed in this after the election, but now, when it's actually time to actually move forward with something that is going to take big money out of government advertising, they fall short. They fall short. This is a common practice of this government.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:58 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Gill	Panda
Clark	Hunter	Schneider
Cooper	Loewen	Starke
Cyr	Nixon	Strankman
Drysdale		

Against the motion:

Babcock	Horne	McPherson
Carson	Jansen	Miller
Ceci	Kazim	Phillips
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Piquette
Coolahan	Larivee	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Dang	Loyola	Sabir
Drever	Luff	Schmidt
Feehan	Malkinson	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Shepherd
Goehring	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Gray	McKittrick	Woollard
Hoffman		

Totals:	For – 13	Against – 37
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[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back now on the original bill. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments in regard to the bill? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to move an amendment to Bill 35. I'll wait for the pages to distribute the same and provide you with the original copy of the amendment before reading it into the record.

Madam Chair, I will say as a preface that this amendment attempts to address what has appeared, at least, to be a very arbitrary setting of the spending limit for constituency associations or at the constituency association level. You will recall, when I spoke to this at second reading, that there is a certain amount of inconsistency in the setting of the maximum allowable spending from the time it was discussed at committee to what the committee eventually landed on to what has now ended up coming back in the form of a bill. This, I think, demonstrates that the government and the minister have not really landed on a number, and the number that they have landed on is completely and totally arbitrary. Certainly, something as important as this should not be left just to an arbitrary methodology – pick a number out of the air, throw darts at a dartboard – for determining spending limits.

So, Madam Chair, I move that Bill 35, Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended in section 36 as follows, (a) by striking out the proposed section 41.3(1) and substituting the following:

Election expense limits – registered candidates

41.3(1) No registered candidate and no chief financial officer of a registered candidate shall incur election expenses in respect of an election in an electoral division that exceed in the aggregate the greater of:

- (a) \$50 000 as adjusted in accordance with section 41.5, or
- (b) 50% of the amount established pursuant to section 39(1)(a) of the Legislative Assembly Act for the establishment and maintenance of a constituency office by a Member for that electoral division.

(b) in the proposed section 41.5(2) by striking out "41.3" and substituting "41.3(1)(a)", and (c) in the proposed section 41.5(3) by striking out "41.3" and substituting "41.3(1)(a)".

Madam Chair, what this amendment endeavours to do is to bring some rhyme or reason to the spending limit for a candidate in a specific election. You know, we looked at this, and at committee the initial recommendation was to have a \$40,000 limit for candidates except to have it at \$50,000 for certain northern constituencies. The rationale for having a higher limit for northern constituencies was to cover travel expenses, which, most people representing northern constituencies were quick to point out, is not necessarily a major contributor to the expense of running a campaign. Nonetheless, that \$10,000 differential was felt somehow to be a rational thing to do.

Then when it was stated that \$40,000 and \$50,000 seemed rather low, again, as this committee often did, there was an adjournment of debate, which happened a number of times. Later on a new proposal was brought forward where the limit should be \$70,000 and \$80,000, again with a \$10,000 differential for northern constituencies, again with no strong rationale for why that differential should be in place.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Nonetheless, the committee eventually landed on those figures: \$70,000 and \$80,000. You know, when you look at what most candidates who ran in the last election actually spent on their campaigns, that was a limitation that most candidates should be able to comfortably stay under. Now, there were some candidates who spent more than that. For the most part, interestingly, those

candidates were not successful in winning the election, which lends even more credence to the argument that big money didn't decide, certainly, the last election.

But that was the limit that was decided upon, and it was voted upon by the committee. Then, somewhat inexplicably, when the bill comes to the House, we now are back to a \$50,000 limit with some exemptions, certain exemptions on travel expenses and for certain other certainly very reasonable sorts of expenses that can be incurred during the course of an election campaign. I was personally somewhat disappointed to see that kennel fees were excluded from that list, but nonetheless.

10:20

Mr. Chair, I do look, though, at that number and consider it to be entirely arbitrary. There's no rhyme or reason to it: \$40,000, \$70,000, \$50,000. How do we come up with those numbers? I got to thinking to myself. You know, it's interesting. The gentleman that occupied the chair you're sitting in right now for over three decades, Dr. McNeil, recently retired, was perhaps known as the dean of clerks of certainly all the Legislatures in Canada and maybe perhaps even in the British Commonwealth.

One of the things that we were all as members familiar with is that Dr. McNeil developed the formula for the member's services allowance, the MSA. That formula takes into account a number of factors, including the number of electors, the population, the size of the constituency, and the distance of the constituency from the city of Edmonton. Using a formula that Dr. McNeil, an engineer, developed was how they arrived at the MSA. You know, it's interesting because I think most of the members in the Legislature will agree that the MSA is eminently fair in terms of taking all of those factors into account in determining what amount should be allocated to the budget to run our various constituency offices.

So I thought to myself: well, we have this model already. We have a model that is workable, that is generally agreed upon by most members as being fair and equitable, and that takes into account the fact that 87 different constituencies are in fact very different. To apply a one-size-fits-all \$50,000 limit to all 87 constituencies, some of which may have a population in the 50,000, 60,000 range and others which have a population that is barely 15,000 or 20,000, some which cover an area that is massive and cannot even be reasonably driven across in one day with a vehicle, whereas others are small enough that they could be comfortably walked across – we have a considerable diversity of constituencies: size, shape, population.

You know, in terms of the population, the ethnic mix in the population, the backgrounds, whether it's rural, whether it's urban, the point of it is that these constituencies are not all the same. So why should the spending limit be the same for all constituencies? It just simply doesn't make sense. To have something that is in fact a rational way of determining a constituency spending limit, we already have the formula in place. It is a formula that was worked out by Dr. McNeil, and I think it is a formula that has some rhyme or reason to it. It takes into account some of the different factors that are involved.

Rather than trying to reinvent the wheel, my suggestion is that we simply take that formula and that we take one-half of the amount that is designated by the MSA and that that be the spending limit for that constituency, except in cases where one half of the MSA would be less than \$50,000, and that's the reason why it says in the amendment the greater of \$50,000 or one-half of the MSA.

I think that this provides an acknowledgement, at least, that not all constituencies are the same, that different constituencies will require different types of campaigns, and that in some

constituencies, by virtue of their geography or by virtue of their population mix, you'll have to campaign in a different way. I think that this particular amendment allows for that. It provides for that. I think it is a rational and reasonable amendment. It also provides for the fact that it's not just an arbitrary number. It is a number that will be very clear because it's set annually by the Legislative Assembly Office, so candidates will know exactly what their spending limit is, either \$50,000 or some number greater than \$50,000, and that will allow them to spend an amount that is comparable to the needs of their constituency.

Mr. Chair, I would encourage my colleagues in the Legislature to seriously consider this amendment. I think it provides for a level of flexibility within the spending limit, and that spending limit then has some relationship to the complexities and to the diversity of constituencies within the province of Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? The hon. government whip.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Thank you, Chair. I was just looking over the amendment that was put forward by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. Of course, the main objective in bringing in the spending limits is levelling the playing field. When we look at levelling the playing field, we also have to acknowledge that there are things like differences in regions and in the amount of space you have to cover, which is of course why we also brought in an exemption for kilometres that wouldn't be included in the \$50,000 spending limit.

The proposal here is to link it to the Legislative Assembly Act. Of course, there's a matrix within the Legislative Assembly Act that determines how much money goes to each constituency office. That matrix uses the electoral count, and it takes different things into perspective. But, of course, in doing so, it's giving a certain set of monies for a year. It's doing that for a year. It's hard right now, just from seeing this, to give you a range of how much that is. I know that it's \$140,000 in some cases. I know that it's a little bit higher, it's a little bit lower depending on the electoral count, depending on what matrix score your constituency falls under. Of course, that does leave a variance.

What it does is that it moves away from this idea of levelling the playing field. What we wanted to do was to make sure that there is a number that we have the spending limit at but also take into account that, yes, absolutely, in certain situations there are MLAs, in this case candidates, that will have to travel more in their constituency to reach their electorates. In this instance I would say that it moves away from that. For that reason, I'm not supportive of this amendment.

I mean, it gives an option, right? The proposal is to move to \$50,000 or to 50 per cent of the matrix of the Legislative Assembly, which is an inconsistent way of establishing a level playing field, especially when you have this range that isn't easily accessible. You can't even determine what's going to be 50 per cent at a quick glance. In certain instances other members here might have a different number, so 50 per cent of that would be different.

Of course, because that is one of the main objectives, bringing something in like spending limits, and not only are just the candidates travel costs and transportations and meals not counting towards the spending limit, but the care for the candidate's or contestant's children and dependants, expenses related to disability of the candidate or contestant, all those things are not included, as well as audit and certain professional fees necessary for legal compliance and incidental fees like parking and gas. Those are examples of things we're exempting from the spending limit to

make sure that we do take into account the differences that candidates have when campaigning in different regions of the province.

Of course, we go back to the idea of how we're going to do this, and I think it's actually been very thoughtful, putting in these things, because we want to make sure that being a candidate is accessible for everyone independent of their personal circumstance. That is how we make sure that we have diverse representatives that are being elected. For that reason I very much support the proposal that is in the current bill, not amended, which is \$50,000 with the exceptions. For that reason I will not be supporting this amendment.

Thank you.

10:30

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Chair, I appreciate the comments from the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, but I have to say that there are a number of flaws in what was said. Firstly, I have absolutely no issue with the carve-outs that are contemplated within the bill with regard to exemptions for travel costs and meals and that sort of thing, but, you know, I can tell you that this is reflective, in my view, of a significant lack of understanding of what constitutes the major expenses in a campaign.

I can tell you that even in a rural constituency like mine, that takes two and a half to three hours to drive across, my travel costs, my lunch costs, all of the things that fall into the basket of things that are exempted would constitute an extremely small percentage of my overall costs. So the fact that they're now exempted really makes very, very little difference, and the fact that they're exempted makes very little difference in terms of creating the level playing field that the member speaks of.

You know, the other thing about the level playing field: what matters is that all candidates within a given constituency are allowed to spend to the same limit. It doesn't have to be the same amount in each constituency around the province. In fact, it shouldn't be, because each constituency around the province is different and unique. This cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach that is applied in this bill is reflective of the whole sort of attitude of a lot of items in legislation that this government has brought forward, where it's demanding that everybody be treated exactly equivalently, in fact, when it doesn't make sense because representing a riding like Peace River or Lesser Slave Lake, with huge geography, is very different from representing a riding like Edmonton-Centre or Calgary-Buffalo. There are massive differences in doing that.

You know, just as an example, at committee – and you were there – you heard some of the discussion about expenditures on signage. In rural areas you have to have four-by-eight signs. You don't have to, but it's certainly helpful to have four-by-eight-foot signs. These things are expensive. These things cost a lot of money, and in a typical campaign in a rural area you buy quite a few of these signs, that sometimes cost in excess of \$35 to \$40 each. And that's to say nothing of the wood that you have to mount it on or the signposts that you have to build and the lumber and all that. That costs an awful lot more, I can tell you from experience, than the tanks of gas or the lunches or the things that are exempted.

In point of fact, constituencies are different. Where the need for a level playing field is is that all of the candidates running within that specific constituency should have the same spending limit. I absolutely support that. That's an issue of fairness. If you're going to have spending limits, that same spending limit has to apply to all of the candidates running in that constituency. But to suggest that the same spending limit should be applied to Cypress-Medicine Hat as is applied to Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood simply makes no sense – it makes absolutely no sense – and to suggest that it does is a little bit, I think, naïve. I think it points out that there is a lack of

understanding of the fact that campaigns operate and run differently in different parts of the province.

Now, the closest thing that I could find that acknowledged and made a calculation for the differences in constituencies around the province was the matrix developed by Dr. McNeil for the calculation of the MSA. In fact, he was teased a little bit at the time of his retirement that only an engineer would develop a mathematical matrix and a mathematical calculation for determining an MSA. But, in point of fact, it was a formula that he developed in order to provide some fairness, not that every constituency be treated the same, because they're not all the same. But within that constituency should all candidates have the same limit applied to them? Of course they should.

When we talk about a level playing field, the playing field has to be level for everybody within the same contest. To suggest that the playing field has to be standardized for all 87 constituencies across our province I don't think is realistic, and I don't think that it's reflective of the diversity of the constituencies in our province. That's why I feel that a one-size-fits-all limit, a \$50,000 limit, albeit with the carve-outs and the exemptions that are put in this legislation that, personally, I don't have a large issue with: I don't have a big issue with those, especially some of the ones for things like child care and things like, you know, care if the person running is a caregiver for a disabled relative, that sort of thing. No issue with those. I think that's actually a good step forward.

But to suggest that this \$50,000 figure – and, again, some of this comes from: where did the \$50,000 number come from? It was \$40,000, then it was \$70,000, and now it's \$50,000. I mean, if we wait another few weeks, is it going to be \$60,000 and then \$35,000? It just strikes me as being exceedingly arbitrary. I think that our limits have to be based on something a little bit more based in and grounded in fact. The MSA calculation certainly is grounded very much in fact. It's formulaic. It's not hard to figure out. Well, it's maybe a little hard to figure out, but the beauty of it is that somebody's already done that for you. We know that the LAO does the calculation, and anyone who's thinking of running will have that number provided to them to say: "Okay. This is what the MSA calculation was for the previous fiscal year. You can spend up to one half of that." That's not that difficult, and I have absolute confidence that the LAO, working together with the Chief Electoral Officer, could provide that information to prospective candidates very, very easily. I've no question about that whatsoever.

What it does do is allow for the variation between constituencies that is a fact of life in Alberta. To suggest that every constituency should be treated the same and that that somehow is an issue of fairness when you have these kinds of diversity in population, in size, like you say, in population makeup, in background that we have within the 87 constituencies, or whatever the number the Electoral Boundaries Commission decides on once they are done their deliberations, I just think is an unreasonable and it's a naive expectation. That's why this amendment, I believe, addresses that. I think it addresses it in a very nonpartisan way and in a way that is acceptable to members once they are elected in terms of funding their constituency offices. So I would suggest that we apply that same rule of fairness to constituency spending limits for election purposes.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5?

Hearing none, are we ready for the question?

**An Hon. Member:** Question.

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 35?

**Mr. Cyr:** Well, again, when we start talking about elections, I get heated up. I will say that I really think that we all need to be reconsidering where we're going. It's disappointing that we spent so much time in the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, and we actually debated this point. I worked with the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, and we were able to discuss this with the group, that not every riding is the same. So I'm very sad to see that the government has voted down that amendment.

**The Acting Chair:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I will present an amendment. I will hand this to the pages and wait for the table to receive it before I continue.

**The Acting Chair:** This will be amendment A6.

Please proceed, hon. member.

10:40

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. My amendment reads as follows: Mr. Clark to move that Bill 35, Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended as follows.

- A. Section 17 is struck out and the following substituted:
  - 17 Section 15.1 is amended by striking out "of a limit prescribed by 17(1) or 18(1)" and substituting "of the limit prescribed by section 17(1), 17(1.1) or 18(1)."
- B. Section 19 is amended, in the proposed section 17, as follows:
  - (a) in subsection (1) by adding "Subject to subsection (1.1)," before "contributions by";
  - (b) by adding the following after subsection (1):
    - (1.1) Contributions to a registered constituency association shall not exceed in any year \$1,000 in aggregate, as adjusted in accordance with section 41.5.

What that means, Mr. Chair, is that no constituency association may collect donations in total more than \$1,000. This solves the fundamental flaw of the bill, which was addressed and fixed by the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, of potentially only three people contributing enough funds over the course of a four-year period to finance an entire election campaign. As the bill is currently written, three individuals of some means could contribute \$4,000 each to a constituency association over four years; \$12,000 a year times four is \$48,000, almost the \$50,000 donation limit. Of course, the \$4,000 that they would donate is reduced substantially by the tax credit that is applicable to the donation.

This is one of the issues that the committee grappled with as it appeared that \$4,000 was going to be the limit as the government took away the buckets, constituent associations being isolated as a donation from the parties, and this bill does that as well. But this fixes a fundamental problem with the bill. It doesn't increase the \$4,000 limit. It's very important to note that the \$1,000 as proposed in this amendment is not additional, over and above the \$4,000 limit. It's still retained within the \$4,000 total aggregate cap. So we're not trying to get around the \$4,000 limit, which I support and agree with. What we're doing, though, is restricting a constituency association or any aggregate group of constituency associations from receiving more than \$1,000 from a single donor in a year.

Now, I think this is an important amendment, one that the committee dealt with, which was supported unanimously by members of the government side as well as all members of the committee and therefore representing all parties in the House. I think it's important. There have been some amendments that I, frankly, was not expecting the government to support but would

have made the bill much better had they done so, but this, I think, would make the bill fundamentally stronger, would make the legislation fundamentally stronger.

I would really encourage and would hope that the government would be willing to support this amendment. I know that it's something I've talked about with many members on this side as well as the government members. I think there's a general agreement that if one of the ideas of this bill, as I believe I've heard a couple of times, is that we're trying to get big money out of politics – I believe I've heard that. This amendment seeks to do precisely that, because as the bill stands, three wealthy individuals – three – could elect a single MLA, could ultimately support the entire campaign of a single MLA. In doing that, if you want to find influence, that would be the dictionary definition of influence, having an MLA beholden to three people who financed their entire campaign. It is also the exact inverse of grassroots democracy.

I would encourage all members of the Assembly to support this. In all sincerity, I would like to hear what the government side has to say and hope we find support for this, I think, reasonable and thoughtful amendment.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As always, it's a pleasure to get up in this House and speak to legislation that we are considering. I want to say that what we have proposed here in the fair elections act – I want to remind people that under the current legislation individuals could contribute \$15,000 to a registered party in any year, and that would actually double in an election year. In total over a four-year election cycle you could have a rich, wealthy individual give up to \$105,000 to a political party of their choice. I'll repeat that: \$105,000 to the political party of your choice.

When I go out and I talk to constituents, when I go out and I talk to people – never mind the \$105,000 – I would ask them first: how many of you could afford to give a political party \$15,000? You know, not one person told me, at least in my circle of friends and people that I was consulting with regarding this legislation, not one of them – not one of them, Mr. Chair – said that they could afford \$15,000. Not one of them.

You know, when we talk about getting big money out of politics, we're talking about exactly that. We're talking about lowering the contribution of one individual from \$15,000 to \$4,000. When we say we're getting big money out of politics, that's what we're talking about, reducing that contribution from \$15,000 in a year, which would double in an election year, to now \$4,000 with no double up in an election year. That, I would say, is a considerable difference. A considerable difference.

Now, the other thing that I want to say in terms of this particular amendment is that we felt that it was absolutely necessary to give the choice to the person making the contribution. We've lowered it now to \$4,000. That's not big money at all. Not big money at all. You know, that contribution of the maximum of \$4,000 per individual per calendar year: that applies to any combination of the party, the constituency association, the candidate once an election has been called. It also applied to leadership contestants and also nomination contestants.

Therefore, the constituent, the contributor, the donor now has to ask themselves: "Okay. My cap is \$4,000. Where am I going to put my \$4,000? I can put some of it in a constituency association. Oh, there's a leadership race coming up. I'd better think about how much I want to give to that leadership race. Oh, and don't forget, I want to participate in the actual nomination process of the person that I believe will be the best to represent my community from my

political party in this area. I may want to contribute to that person's nomination race if they were to have one."

So you see, Mr. Chair, although the contribution limit is \$4,000, we're providing constituents with a choice. Let me tell you that it is absolutely amazing to me that we have a political party on the other side of the House that normally gets up in this House and adamantly makes arguments for choice, yet on this issue they're not standing behind that. We want to provide the constituent, the contributor the freedom to make the choice of where they're going to put their \$4,000. You know what? That, to me, is how we get big money out of politics because now the individual has to think about all the other options that I just finished describing.

10:50

**Mr. Cooper:** But they can't choose one.

**Loyola:** Absolutely. They could choose one, and that would be their choice. That would be their choice if they wanted to. You know, I'm willing to bet that when constituents, when contributors to the political parties are told, "Hey – you know what? – you could give money to your constituency association, you could give it to your candidate, you could give it to a leadership contestant, your nomination contestant," when they're explained that they can do that and that they have the choice, well, then, we leave it up to them.

**An Hon. Member:** They don't have that choice now?

**Loyola:** They have the freedom to decide where they want to put their up to \$4,000. They could decide where they want to put that.

Mr. Chair, just to summarize and go back, the fact that we're proposing in this bill to move from \$15,000 a year down to \$4,000 – oh boy. Let me tell you that when I went to constituents in my riding of Edmonton-Ellerslie and I explained that we were lowering the amount from \$15,000 to \$4,000, they were saying: good job. They were impressed. They were, like: "Why didn't the previous party look into this? Why didn't they make that change?"

Let me remind everybody that's sitting in the House right now that when this government first came in, the first bill that we passed got rid of union and corporate donations. Why wasn't this proposed earlier by the other party? [interjections] Yeah. You know, that's a good point, Member. That's a good point, Member. I only know of one political party that wouldn't accept corporate donations in the past. So we found that it was absolutely necessary to follow through with this idea. Let's get corporate and union donations out of our electoral process.

Mr. Chair, I want to thank you for the opportunity to highlight these very important factors that I've discussed. For that reason I want to recommend to all of the members of this House that they not support this amendment. Give Albertans the freedom of choice.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Chair, I have to say that the comments by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, if they weren't so ridiculous, would be funny.

But in terms of choice he says that with this \$4,000 limit now we've given people choice. Now, that would imply that currently that choice doesn't exist.

**An Hon. Member:** Does it?

**Dr. Starke:** Well, I think it does. That choice certainly exists, and in fact that choice is broader now than it will be under the proposed bill.

I want to be very clear. I said this yesterday, but perhaps some folks have short memories. We were in favour when it was moved last year to eliminate corporate and union donations, and we voted in favour of that. We are similarly in favour of a reduction in donations to political parties. We can debate here whether that number should be \$4,000 or \$5,000 or \$1,000, but \$4,000 is the number that's been landed on.

This notion, somehow, that the \$4,000 as an aggregate limit and that that is somehow superior to the choice that is available now is of course totally ridiculous. Currently you have the choice of giving up to \$15,000, as was stated, to a political party. Now, that number is too high, and that number should be reduced, and it will be. That's a good thing.

You also have the choice of giving up to \$1,000 to your constituency association. But now we have the choice of giving up to \$4,000 to that constituency association, which is interesting for a party that professes to want to get big money out of politics. I'm going to come back to the calculations that the Member for Calgary-Elbow referenced before.

The third thing you have the choice on is to support a nomination candidate. You have the choice to do it, and it is not included with any restriction. You have the choice of giving up to an unlimited amount to a leadership candidate because in fact there are no current limits to contributions to leadership candidates. Nomination contests are not even included under the electoral financing act. So, Mr. Chair, to suggest that somehow this \$4,000 limit enhances choice is ludicrous, totally, completely ludicrous.

What this \$4,000 limit does do – and this was pointed out in the course of the committee debate. I am surprised that the hon. member has completely forgotten about this aspect of debate, but it was pointed out that even at the \$70,000 spending limit, that was at one point the spot on the dartboard that the dart hit when they were trying to decide on a limit, when that was the number, we pointed out that over a four-year cycle it would only require five donors to completely bankroll a \$70,000 campaign. We pointed this out.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

It was interesting because at that time the members of the committee said: "Oh my word, that's a flaw. That's something we didn't see. That's something we didn't realize. Oh my goodness, that's a problem." So within the next meeting all of a sudden, then, came this carve-out, this \$1,000 carve-out, actually very similar to what the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow's amendment is contemplating. That meant that even at the \$70,000 level and even over a four-year cycle you needed a lot more donors to come up with enough money to finance a campaign.

But let's be very clear. Under this piece of legislation somebody who wishes to run for office and have a \$50,000 campaign bankrolled can do it with the contributions from three people over the course of a four-year election cycle. Three people. If you're wanting to get rid of big money and the influence of wealth, I would suggest that this is exactly the opposite of doing that.

You know, to be honest, I think that the strategy of having constituency associations do fundraisers and solicit campaign donations and solicit donations on a year-to-year basis, something which, based on the filings of the various constituency associations of the New Democratic Party, doesn't happen on that side but certainly happens over here, that whole process can be eliminated. Well, that won't create too much of a ripple on that side of the House because it's not happening now, but it certainly happens on this side of the House. It is a way for us to engage with constituents. The idea is not so much to have a fundraiser. A lot of the time we

end up calling them friend-raisers because we don't raise that much money, but we just have a lot of fun doing it.

**11:00**

I was up in Grande Prairie earlier this year and for the first time in my life went to a skeet shooting fundraiser. It was sponsored by my colleague the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Cooper:** Pull.

**Dr. Starke:** Pull. Exactly.

The only thing I accomplished that day was a big bruise on my shoulder. I did blast a few targets, though. But it was fun. I don't know what we raised. What did we raise? Not a lot of money. But we had a lot of fun. Certainly, I think . . . [interjections] We'll have to work on the aim part of things.

All joking aside, what we have now is a scenario with a \$50,000 limit. Basically when you're elected, you go to three people, three people who are well heeled. You know, \$4,000. I mean, it used to be \$15,000. Four thousand dollars. You can go to them and say: I want you and you and you to give our constituency association \$4,000 per year for the next four years. So they're making a commitment of \$16,000 over the course of the four-year period. Those three \$16,000 contributions will aggregate out to \$48,000 and will completely bankroll the campaign in that four-year election cycle.

You know, I guess I should be happy with that because it's going to make life in the constituency association a whole lot easier. All you really need to do is find three people who are reasonably wealthy and can afford to give \$4,000 a year.

**Mr. Cooper:** I've already found three.

**Dr. Starke:** Good for you. Perhaps they have friends and relatives in Vermilion-Lloydminster. That would be lovely. I'm not sure that they would bankroll me, but if they bankroll you, that's great.

The bottom line, Madam Chair, is that it's completely opposite to the goal of what this government is saying that it's trying to do. It's allowing a small group of relatively wealthy people to have undue influence over candidates.

**An Hon. Member:** Let's put big money back into politics.

**Dr. Starke:** Let's put big money back into politics. That's exactly what this does. It puts big money back into politics, so it completely defeats the purpose of the bill.

**An Hon. Member:** What was the old limit?

**Dr. Starke:** The old limit was \$1,000.

**Mr. Clark:** How many times is \$4,000? More than quadrupled.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, quadruple it seems to me. Yeah. Four hundred per cent.

Madam Chair, this amendment addresses that. This amendment is very similar to something that was discussed at committee and was approved at committee after considerable debate. I think most people will call it the bucket debate because we talked about different envelopes or buckets for donations to go into. And there is a rationale behind that. At least at the committee . . . [interjection] I see that my friend from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has found his voice once again. I'm delighted to hear that.

At least at committee the basic logic behind that was able to be understood by members of the committee. They saw the logic even when it was at the \$70,000 threshold and you needed five friends.

Now you only need three friends. Three friends will bankroll your entire campaign.

You know, I really think that when you look at this, it's completely counter. And to suggest that this is all in the name of choice and that somehow choice is now enhanced over what it was before is, of course, ridiculous. The idea that this \$4,000 limit, a quadrupling of the previous limit of contributions to constituency associations, is somehow getting big money out of politics, that that is somehow reducing the influence of a certain specific small number of wealthy individuals on elected officials is patently untrue. Completely untrue.

If in fact this bill passes, I will be on the lookout to find three well-heeled friends that will completely obviate the need for my constituency association to do any fundraising at all for the next election because it will simply . . . [interjection] Excellent. Excellent. All we need to do is find those three people that are prepared to bankroll the constituency. [interjections] I may be part of the way there already.

Madam Chair, it just points out the flaw here. My colleague the Member for Calgary-Elbow, who sat through the bucket debate, who was there as well and heard the arguments and saw members of the government see the basic flaw in the one-size-fits-all approach, has proposed a rational and reasonable amendment to correct this flaw. That's our job. As legislators we should be interested in crafting better legislation that doesn't create flaws, that doesn't create unintended consequences.

Clearly there's an unintended consequence here. Three people can bankroll a \$50,000 campaign. Now, if you're comfortable with that over there, if you're good with that, then vote this down – then absolutely vote this down – but we'll know that members of the NDP caucus are just fine with three individuals having that much sway over their elected official because of three individuals that the elected official, the MLA, is beholden to for having essentially bankrolled their entire election campaign. Unbelievable.

So, Madam Chair, I certainly concur with this. I am quite stunned, actually, that the government members can't see that this amendment solves the same flaw that was there when we discussed this in the dog days of summer, in August and September. Now we have a situation where the flaw is right back into the legislation, and that's unfortunate. I would encourage members to vote for this reasonable and rational amendment on behalf of the member.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just want to maybe make a few comments with respect to this. You know, the hon. members opposite have argued that a \$4,000 donation is big money. Well, you know, the previous legislation of the former government, of which the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster was a member, had in an election year a donation limit of \$30,000. Not only did they have \$30,000 as a donation, but they allowed, in fact they encouraged, in fact they absolutely depended upon donations of a very significant amount of money coming from their corporate friends.

Of course, we got rid of that, and they were shamed into voting for that bill because originally their leader was not going to support that bill. Eventually something happened inside their caucus, and they decided that they had to support it, so they did, and good for them. Better late than never. A deathbed conversion I think you might call it, Madam Chair.

You know, now they're claiming that a \$4,000 donation is big money. Well, I beg to differ. The fact that we've lowered the spending limits in individual constituencies to \$50,000 does not suddenly proportionally make \$4,000 become a really big money donation. They've made a great deal about, well, how a handful of people could hypothetically and theoretically fund a campaign if they gave the full amount, four people or three people over four consecutive years giving the amount, and then this is a huge, huge problem in their minds. In actual practice, Madam Chair, that is very, very likely to not occur or, if it does occur, to be a very rare event.

The fact of the matter is that the real issue is reducing the amount that can be donated from \$30,000 to \$4,000 and putting spending limits on campaigns, something that's never happened in this province before. Under 42 years of Conservative rule that's never, never happened. Well, it's happening now.

Now, I just want to suggest that, in fact, this amendment is attempting to tell donors, just to reiterate in case we missed it, that they're only allowed now in a year to donate a total of \$4,000 for everything. They can divide it up however they wish. It's a bit like – I don't know – if you've ever been in any of those meetings where you get to make decisions by putting little dots on things that they hang up on the wall. I'm sure we've all been subjected to that.

**11:10**

**An Hon. Member:** Dot-mocracy.

**Mr. Mason:** Dot-ocracy. It's going too far to call it a nightmare.

Anyway, this is a bit like that. They can put one dot here and another dot here and another dot there. It could be a leadership campaign, a nomination meeting, the actual election, to the central party, or to an individual candidate. They can put their dots wherever they want, and they can put all their dots on one thing if they want. As much as I don't like being subjected to a dot-ocracy procedure, the fact of the matter is that it maximizes the choice available, Madam Chair, to individuals.

What they want to do, for some reason of their own devising, is to limit the ability of individuals to decide how their relatively small \$4,000 will be allocated. They want to take away that choice from those people and say: you can only give \$1,000 to this constituency. I don't really understand why. The argument that they're making that, you know, three people could finance this is a bogus argument and makes no sense, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**Mr. Mason:** A point of order? Madam Chair, I can save you a lot of trouble. Saying "bogus" is not a problem.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, speak to the point of order first.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I know that it's late, but I am pretty certain that if I had my list of unparliamentary language in front of me, we would see on numerous occasions where the word "bogus" has been ruled to be unparliamentary. It would be easy – easy – if the member would just apologize and withdraw.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, that's very unlikely to happen. He's got no citations, and it's not unparliamentary.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, it is getting late. I know we are really engaged in this debate, but if we could please listen to the speaker, if we could just try to keep the decorum in the House so that we can move on.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, thank you very much. With that, I'll conclude my remarks, and I will move that the committee rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 35. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Do you concur with the report? Those in favour, say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed, say no. So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In light of the hour and the enjoyable debate this evening I will move that we adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:15 p.m.]









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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, December 8, 2016

Day 60

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect. Hon. members, on December 10 it will be international Human Rights Day. This day recognizes when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the universal declaration of human rights. Let's take some time today to reflect on the significance of this day and be resolved to never stop defending the freedoms and rights of all human beings.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

#### Bill 35

#### Fair Elections Financing Act

**The Chair:** We are currently on amendment A6. Are there any further speakers to this amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just want to wrap up my comments on this amendment by talking briefly about some of the things that the hon. Government House Leader had spoken about last night in his speech. He had talked about choice and the fact that the way the bill is structured allows for Albertans the choice of where they put their money, be it a constituency association, a party, a nomination candidate, a leadership candidate, an actual election cycle candidate. I'm baffled by that because those are all choices that Albertans have right now, so this bill does nothing to enhance those choices.

What this amendment seeks to fix and to address is a fundamental flaw in the bill which puts big money into politics. I've heard a couple of times in this House that the objective here is to take big money out of politics. What this does is put big money into politics by allowing as few as three individuals to finance an entire election campaign for a single candidate. That's what this bill allows for. It's a problem that was fixed at committee. It's baffling to me why it hasn't been fixed in the bill. I think it shows the disdain that the government has shown for the process of that committee, and it is profoundly disappointing.

Madam Chair, that is why we brought this amendment, and I'm actually surprised that the government is not choosing to support us on this because I think it is in fact a very reasonable amendment. It helps achieve what is the stated goal of this government's legislation, which is to get big money out of politics. Would anybody here love to tell me who here would not like to get big money out of politics? Hearing none. Of course we do. Of course we do. Of course we do. We all want to get big money out of politics. So it's a fairly straightforward amendment, and I would very much appreciate and love to see this government support it.

You know, what they've done is that they've got their thumb on the scale here with this bill. They've got their thumb on the scale. Some would say that they're stacking the deck against opposition parties. Some would say that they're stacking the deck. They've got 53 cards. Fifty-three cards. They've got an extra joker in their deck of cards, Madam Chair, and they have stacked the deck against opposition parties.

Albertans will see right through it. Albertans will see through it, they will know what this government has done, and they will reward them accordingly at the ballot box by voting for someone else because they'll see that the government has taken the opportunity as a majority government to tilt the scales, to stack the deck in their favour, and that is not how we do things in Alberta, Madam Chair. That is not how we do things. Albertans like a fair fight. They don't like it when the bigger kid uses their advantage and takes advantage of the smaller. That's what's happening here.

Madam Chair, I would encourage everyone to please support this very reasonable amendment, and I look forward to other comments. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, good morning, Madam Chair. It is a pleasure to be back in the Chamber with you today, of course, and with my hon. colleagues in all the other parties in the Assembly on this fine, cold morning. Welcome to Thursday. I hope that everybody has a safe trip back to their constituencies later today.

I do want to talk a little bit about the amendment that has been brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, the independent member for Calgary-Elbow, my good friend . . .

**Mr. Clark:** The next government.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. I'll even give it to him today because I'm feeling Christmasy.

. . . the leader of the Alberta Party.

Last night as we finished our work in the Chamber for the evening, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie and the hon. Government House Leader rose, and it was nice to hear from the NDP on this important piece of legislation. They tried to focus their comments – not tried to. They focused their comments primarily around the concept of choice. Particularly, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie felt that it was important to point out that the Wildrose Party, the party of the Official Opposition, my party, was all about choice.

I do want to confirm through you, Madam Chair, to him that, without a doubt, this is the party of choice that is in the Assembly and his party across the way is not the party of choice. I do appreciate him bringing that to all of our attention. We've been mentioning that to the people of Alberta for a while and him helping to reinforce our message is appreciated, certainly by me. When it comes to things like parental choice, we stand with parents; his party doesn't. When it comes to things like farmers' property rights and the choices around their land, we stand with them, and his party doesn't. I do appreciate him pointing that out as we went home for the evening. It was certainly appreciated.

However, when we go to talk specifically about the amendment that we're debating right now, that has been brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, I think the argument falls short and, to be quite frank, is a little bit confusing and appears to be almost smoke and mirrors to a certain extent. Madam Chair, it's trying to, you know, in my mind, distract us and the people of Alberta from the fact that this government, the members across the way, are actually trying to raise the contribution limits inside constituency

associations. They want to gloss over that fact and then just get to the fact that with this legislation we're going to lower the ridiculous \$15,000 amount to \$4,000. That's something that all parties agree on in the Assembly.

As the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow just articulated in his comments, during the debate in the Ethics and Accountability Committee – and I will note that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was a member of that committee – this concept was debated in great detail. And the committee as a whole decided, with unanimous votes if I recall from all parties inside that committee, that we needed to deal with the issue of making sure that we did not accidentally raise constituency associations at the same time as we were trying to get big money out of politics on the party side.

Now, this has been pointed out by many members in the last few hours as we have debated this important piece of legislation, Madam Chair, but by raising the amount from \$1,000 to \$4,000, four times the current amount in the legislation, we are putting in a situation in constituencies, you know, where three people can essentially finance one MLA's campaign. The main reason for getting big money out of politics, that has been stated by all parties, is an attempt to make sure that small groups of people can't influence political parties more than others or influence candidates more than others. The idea is that we want more people to participate in the process and to make sure, you know, for lack of a better term – and I don't think that anybody who is currently in this Chamber would allow this to happen to them – that one or two or three people can't buy a tremendous amount of influence with one political party or one political candidate.

9:10

Now, if three people inside a constituency can pay for an MLA's entire campaign, that means, I would say, that they could certainly be perceived as buying influence. Given that throughout this debate the government has really focused on and hung their hat on the fact that they want to get big money out of politics – something, again, Madam Chair, I agree with them on – the opposition, including myself, continues to point out that when you dig into this bill in more detail, it clearly shows over and over and over that most of the bill has nothing to do with that. It's truly about rigging the system to the benefit of the members across the way.

Now, that probably is because – I mean, at least from what I hear when I'm talking to everyday Albertans – this government is in deep trouble in 2019, so they need to try to get as much of an advantage as they can for themselves to try and get their MLAs re-elected. But when we make decisions in the House, particularly around democracy, it shouldn't be about our jobs or our re-election chances. It should be about protecting our democracy. We all came here and took an oath or affirmed our dedication to our democracy and to our constituents to make sure that we protect them. So when we're debating something as fundamentally important as democracy, I suggest, through you, Madam Chair, that we need to remove any attempt to try to make an advantage for any one political party.

At any time over the years the current government could become opposition again. The opposition could become government, or vice versa, and things will move around. What is most important is to protect democracy, to make sure that Albertans can continue to have choice, continue to participate in the system, and to make sure that small groups of special interest or small groups of people with access to more resources can't have undue influence over top of the rest of the people of Alberta.

Now, I think that's a noble goal. It's a goal that the government says that they have, but then at the same time they bring forward legislation increasing contribution limits by 400 per cent and then

have the nerve to stand up in this Assembly, Madam Chair, and say: "No. We're lowering it. We're lowering it." We even had cabinet ministers yesterday calling us liars when we pointed out that they were going up by 400 per cent, though their own bill shows without a doubt that they are raising contribution limits on constituency associations by 400 per cent. Four times the amount. Two or three individuals can now fund one campaign, particularly now because we put contribution limits in to try to get that situation in some sort of relative control, but the consequence of that is that fewer people will participate when we make the donation limit so high.

Now, I will note that as the Government House Leader and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie presented last night, particularly the Government House Leader spent a lot of time talking about stickers on poster boards. I was a little confused, to be honest, but it was late at night. Maybe this is some sort of NDP ritual at their constituency associations – I don't know – where they put stickers on boards.

**An Hon. Member:** It's a religious thing.

**Mr. Nixon:** I don't know what it's all about. It was quite fascinating, about putting stickers on the boards.

I think his core point, though, was something to do with choice. It was late, so it was a little bit confusing. But, again, we've established that this side of the House is fairly committed to protecting Albertans' choice, particularly when it comes to democracy. The other side of the House, the NDP side of the House, clearly, as we've seen this legislation progress, are dedicated to attempting to rig the system to their advantage and probably don't care about Albertans' choice. To put forward the argument of choice in regard to the amendment that the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow has brought forward is ridiculous because the choices that were presented in the argument by the hon. Government House Leader and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie about what choices the people of Alberta would get as a result of the legislation that the government has brought forward already exist.

Already inside our province you can donate to a leadership campaign. I suspect some members inside this Assembly have already donated to leadership campaigns in the past. I know I've donated to leadership campaigns in the past.

**Mr. McIver:** I've collected donations for leadership campaigns.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. I know that my good friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, I'm sure, has collected leadership donations in the past as he pursued leadership. I know that the leader of the opposition certainly has collected donations for his leadership campaign in the past, and I know I have donated to leadership campaigns in the past. I have that choice. So do all of you, and so does all of Alberta. There's a good choice that already exists. I don't really know what that has to do with the amendment, but that's what the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie brought forward.

Nominations. I have had small donations for my nomination in the past. I don't know about all members of the Assembly because nominations sometimes are different, depending if you're in a heavily contested nomination. I was in a heavily contested nomination against a sitting MLA, so there was a little more action than in most nominations, so a little closer to a campaign. Some people are just appointed or acclaimed to a nomination, depending on what's going on there, so they may spend less. Certainly, they or anybody else in Alberta has the option to donate to their campaigns, to their nomination campaigns, and to participate in that process. I don't know about all of you, but that sounds like a second choice that Albertans have, and again, Madam Chair, it was an argument

that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie used against this amendment.

Parties. I donate to my party. I know many members across the way donate to their parties. Many Albertans donate to our party. This year more Albertans donated to our party than any other party in the Assembly. I do know that if I look at every party in the Assembly, Albertans are donating to them, and they're allowed to. There are generous tax benefits that are associated with that, and currently that is taking place. You can see every quarter that parties are taking in money from their donors. Certainly, if you're a member of a political party on all sides of the spectrum, both federally and provincially, you're getting the e-mails asking you for money or the phone calls asking you for money. Clearly, people have the choice to be able to participate with their party currently under the system.

Again – now we're on the third thing – I don't understand what this has to do with this amendment and why the member would bring it forward: candidates. During my election to come to this place with all of you here today, I received donations. I donated to my own campaign. Many people in my community and family members did. They certainly had the choice to donate to my campaign. I appreciate that they did, all of my donors. They had a choice to donate to the NDP candidate that ran against me in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, a nice young lady. I enjoyed the campaign with her. She was from Edmonton, so I suspect most of her donations probably came from Edmonton, not Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. But they had a choice. The people in Sundre could have chosen to donate just to the NDP candidate, to the Wildrose candidate, to the PC candidate that was in our constituency, just like they had the choice of who to vote for. Again, choice already exists in our system on that issue.

Now, if the core of the argument being brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is that \$15,000 a year to a party, doubled in an election period to \$30,000, was too high, I agree with him. I have always agreed with him on that. This party has been on the record for that a long time, and quite frankly, Madam Chair, the governing party has been on the record for that a long time. It is something that these two parties shared long before this party was in power. We have done that. Through the committee process we got that done immediately. The idea that the number had to come down was agreed upon very, very quickly. There was lots of discussion on what that number should be, trying to determine, in looking at other jurisdictions inside the country and around the world, what the appropriate number should be for Alberta based on its economy, population, size, those types of issues. We wanted to make sure that we had the right number to make sure people could participate in democracy but, at the same time, get undue influence out of the process.

Where the process derailed – and the amendment that the Member for Calgary-Elbow is bringing forward is an attempt to deal with that – was the idea of raising constituency associations up at the same time that you're trying to drive party donations down. This was debated in great detail. The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie participated in the debate, and I enjoyed his comments during that debate. I certainly participated in that debate. In the end, all parties, including the NDP Party, the governing party, agreed that \$4,000 for constituency associations was too much. Increasing them by 400 per cent at the constituency level was not appropriate, and it was counterproductive to what we were trying to do with this legislation. So we passed an amendment where everybody agreed, and we said that it would be \$1,000 for constituency associations and that we felt that that amount was appropriate.

Then we arrive in this Chamber and we see the legislation. The government has decided to bring it to \$4,000 and then has the nerve

to keep rising and pretending like they're lowering contribution limits when the evidence shows that they're not. So the amendment the hon. member has brought forward is an attempt to deal with that. The question then becomes: what has changed in the few short weeks since the members across the way were in committee? It would be nice if the members would rise and explain what has changed, not try to cast the illusion that there was not choice already where to donate and that for some reason now, by passing this piece of legislation, Albertans get a whole bunch more choice where to donate. They already had the choice to donate to all of those places before. This legislation does nothing to change that, and this amendment brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow certainly does nothing to prevent choice.

9:20

What it does is that it prevents one or two or three people from having a tremendous amount of influence on any one MLA or any one political candidate, which is the stated goal by this government, Madam Chair, on what they're trying to do with the legislation, though the evidence from the legislation that they brought forward clearly shows that maybe that's not really the goal.

When you look at some of the other amendments that have been brought forward during debate in Committee of the Whole here in the Chamber and the government's arguments against those, it clearly becomes, without a doubt, so obvious to everybody that we know that this is about stacking the deck for the NDP government. This is about rigging the system for the NDP government. This is about tilting the process in favour of the NDP government. If it was truly about contribution limits, you would stand with the opposition, who is truly trying to get the contributions low, and you would get them out. You would stand with the opposition and you would make sure that governments can't abuse the taxpayer dollar during by-elections and elections, just like your government whip proposed during committee.

Instead, we're back here again, with the Government House Leader and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie rising and talking about stickers and confusing everybody and trying to make it sound like they've brought choice for the first time into our electoral system, that already existed for as long as I have participated in politics.

The reason that the members across the way have fought so hard for this I think is obvious; some people may not see it. I was confused during committee as the members fought so hard to line their campaign pockets with taxpayer dollars to pay for their campaigns and for their party campaign and spent their whole summer trying to get constituents to pay for their bills. I didn't understand that, particularly because when I talked to Albertans, they were appalled by it. They were very, very upset about it. As I've said to you before, Madam Chair, I suspect that it just shows again how much more our side of the House actually talks to rural Albertans and doesn't hide in the bubble of the Assembly, because we knew that was wrong. It took them a lot longer to get there, but they got there, and I appreciate having the opportunity to help them get there.

But at its core the reason that you're seeing the other stuff, Madam Chair, and the reason you're seeing the government want to vote against this particular amendment, again, is because we have established, without a doubt, through the Committee of the Whole process that this government's primary goal is to rig the election, to beat up on democracy, to kneecap opposition parties, to make things harder for this side of the House – to make things harder for this side of the House – to attack our volunteers, to attack the people that participate in the political process, to make it harder for volunteer CFOs who are trying to do it, to make it harder for people to enter

politics, to help protect incumbents, to make things easier for the incumbents, to make things easier for them. I don't know. Are you guys so scared during your nomination process coming up that you need to make it so much easier for yourselves or what? It's confusing.

Now, as I've said before, Madam Chair, it won't work against the bigger opposition parties. There are enough resources currently in the bigger opposition parties to allow us to survive the direct attack by the government on democracy. But there are some smaller parties that participate in our political process. Those parties: I personally disagree with their ideological ideas, but I do support their right to participate in the election system. I do support their right to participate in democracy.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow leads one of those smaller parties. I don't agree with him on everything. I agree with him on many things, but I don't agree with him on everything. But what I do agree with him on is that his party, his members, his voters have a right to participate in our election system. They have a right to expect the government of the day not to attack their democratic rights. They have a right to expect the government of the day to make sure that they can participate in the political process the way they want to.

There is not an Albertan I've ever met that says that they want their government to come here and mess with the democracy that is currently inside our province in an attempt to make people, to make smaller parties that are closer to the political spectrum than the government not be able to succeed in order to give an advantage to the government.

We see it happening federally right now. It's a big deal in federal politics right now with some of the stuff that has been brought forward on democratic reform, where the people of Canada have categorically rejected the idea of one government of the day attempting to rig the system to make things easier for their re-election. This is Canada. We're a democracy. The governing party does not attack small political parties inside our political arena. They attack them on policy, certainly, they attack them on where they stand and what the government would do differently, and they attack them on the differences in the views and the hopes for the province and the ideas that we have for the province, but they do not attack other political party structures in an attempt to make them not be able to participate in the system. Dictators do that, Madam Chair, not in the Canadian democracy and not in Alberta.

We don't stack the deck. We spent a lot of time talking about that last night, and the members across the way need to own this, their attempt to stack the deck. We left the committee after a whole summer where we watched members – I'm not going to name them all; they're all in *Hansard*, though – over and over and over vote shamefully to try to get their campaign expenses paid by the taxpayers of Alberta. Then as we brought that up . . .

**The Chair:** Are there other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A6? Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise again and speak on Bill 35 and particularly on this amendment. You know, on the government side yesterday one of the members used their statement to give his version of a children's rhyme, something about the sky falling or something to that effect. That was cute. I'm not sure how clever it was, but it was definitely cute. I enjoyed the entertainment value of it. But the reason I raise this is not to critique, good or bad, the member from the government side yesterday but as a lead-in to the fact that a more recent and current tale is one that the government-side members ought to pay attention to. It's not nearly so cute, and it's not nearly so funny, but it's very pertinent to what we're doing here today and

much more recent in context. It is that the people of Alberta really believe in the concept of fairness. They want everybody to do their best. They don't demand perfection. They would like it, but I think they accept from amongst their elected people their best efforts.

They don't like mistakes, and they criticize them, but if they believe the best efforts are there, lots of times they'll give people second chances. What I use as an example of that is that our party was in government for 12 or 13 elections in a row, and no one thinks we were perfect. I'm sure we could all agree on that. No one thinks we were perfect. But they kept re-electing us because I think that underneath it all they believed we were doing our best and that we were mostly amongst the good ones. At least, intentions were good. Let me say that. At least I will say this: enough of them believed it that they kept re-electing us for 12 or 13 elections.

Where that changed last year was when they stopped believing we were the good ones. I believe that what we did to cause that, one of the big things we did to cause that, was that we called an election a year early. We called an election a year early, when the party who was the Official Opposition then and is still the opposition now was in disarray. Nobody argues with that. We called the election when the Liberal Party appeared to be in disarray. We called it when we had a year left in our mandate.

**Mr. Clark:** How did that work out?

**Mr. McIver:** That's my point. Hey, I'd appreciate a little patience, Member for Calgary-Elbow. I'm coming to that. You're just jumping ahead a little bit, if you don't mind.

When the people of Alberta saw that, they decided we were no longer the good guys and good ladies, that we were no longer doing the best for them, and they rewarded us the way they reward people that they don't believe are doing their best anymore. They fired us.

Now, the reason I raise this – and you can only imagine, folks in here, that it gives me no joy to raise this, but I'm actually, government members, the best friend you've got right now – is because I am reminding you that what you are doing with this legislation is very similar to what was done to get the last government that I was part of fired. With this legislation there's no way, if you pass this legislation, that you could possibly tell Albertans that you have their best interests at heart. You've got lots of policies I disagree with, and I'm sure that in every case you can make some excuse or some argument why you think it's good for Alberta. I may disagree with every one, but you could at least make some argument.

**9:30**

On this piece of legislation you have crossed that chasm. This is as self-serving, as biased a piece of legislation, designed to tip the electoral scales in your favour, as you could almost possibly do. There's just nowhere to hide. You know what? You can't look your constituents in the eye after passing this piece of legislation and expect any of them to believe that you have Albertans' best interests at heart and not only your own. Now, it's a little disappointing that you've come to this point after 18 months or 19 months instead of 40 years, but it appears that you have. There's still time to save yourselves by either rejecting this piece of legislation or making some amendments to it that would make it more balanced.

Now, we established in talking last night in the House the fact that you are going ahead and making it so that quarterly reports have to be done by constituencies, when you're the only party who doesn't really raise any money at your constituencies and that you're loading administrative burdens onto every party but your own, costing every party but your own a bunch of money, completely tipping the scales.

I pointed out in this House last night, and I will do it again today, that since this government has been in place, Madam Chair, they have told people – because people have told us. We keep hearing from supporters of ours that they're afraid to give us money, afraid to be on our boards because the government has said: if we find you on any PC list, we won't do business with your company; we won't employ you on any boards.

**An Hon. Member:** Shameful.

**Mr. McIver:** You know what? That is shameful behaviour. So there are two examples.

Now, what's before us here now is just one more example. In committee all parties, including the government party, agreed that \$1,000 was a good number, yet here you are at \$4,000. We had a supporter of ours do some research on this, and here's what's interesting, Madam Chair. Of all the parties, the NDP has the least amount of donations over \$4,000. Again, talk about self-serving. They talk about taking big money out of politics, but what they're really doing – and to be clear, you know, for full disclosure, our party had the most donations over \$4,000. The Official Opposition had a good number of them, and the governing party I think had less than 10.

Here's another example – if it was only one example, it would be bad enough – another in a long string of examples in this legislation where the legislation is not designed to be fair and is not designed to take big money out of politics, especially if they turn down this amendment, because they're actually raising the donations from \$1,000 to \$4,000 per year, which would, I think, by some definitions, be called: putting bigger money back into politics. What they're doing here is cutting off donations for every party but their own, another example of the governing party trying to tip the electoral scales in their favour, against everybody else, and they're doing it with legislation that they can ram through with the majority they have.

**Mr. Nixon:** To stack the deck.

**Mr. McIver:** To stack the deck, to tilt the playing field, to put their thumb on the scale. There are a whole bunch of ways to describe it, but it is essentially taking democracy and abusing it from a government majority standpoint. It's shameful and despicable, and the government ought to be ashamed. They ought to be ashamed. No credibility on this. No integrity on this because they are going against even what their own members agreed to in committee, which was to keep the donations for constituencies at \$1,000. I can see that they've done the math. They've realized that, they've looked at the numbers, and they've said: what number will hurt the other parties the most and hurt our party the least? If you do a mathematical examination, you'll find that number is pretty close to \$4,000. Shameful. Shameful.

You know what? I get it. You got the majority. You get to do what you want. But what I don't think the public will stand for is twisting democracy in your favour because democracy, by definition, is equal. Everybody's voice has to be equal. This is a bold, barefaced attempt to make democracy more advantageous for the government side than for any of the opposition sides. It's as plain as day, and this is only one example in the legislation.

You know what? What's interesting is that the Member for Calgary-Elbow has offered the government an opportunity to save some face and say that, at least in this example, in this one section only of the legislation: we will do what the title says. As I've said before – and I'll say it again – you call the legislation the Fair Elections Financing Act. The government members always say: taking the big money out of politics. Well, apparently, what the big print giveth, the small print taketh away, and that's exactly what's happening here.

You're actually adding money in. You are making it, with the rules that you have, as pointed out by several of my colleagues in the House, including our Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, that I've heard say it a few times, so that with a \$50,000 limit for a campaign in a constituency, when you take \$4,000 per year from a donor, if the donor gives you \$4,000 a year for four years, that's \$16,000, okay? And you just multiply that by three, and you get to \$48,000 out of the \$50,000. Three members, three people from your constituency, or three Albertans can finance \$48,000 out of the \$50,000 that you're allowed to spend in a campaign. Yet the government is going to turn to the cameras and say: "See? We made it even." Nonsense. Absolute nonsense.

They've picked a number at \$4,000 that's the most disadvantageous to all the opposition and the least disadvantageous to the government. It's good for the government, bad for the opposition, and they expect Albertans to believe that they are defending democracy. They're crapping on democracy. They are offending anybody that believes in democracy. That's what this government is doing with this piece of legislation in black and white. Folks, when it's in black and white, you can't really hide from it because people can go on the website and see it.

You can stand up in front of the cameras all day long and tell people that you're taking the big money out of politics, but those that pay attention will know that you're increasing the donations from \$1,000 to \$4,000. It doesn't actually twig on you that it's just a little inconsistent with what you and your Premier and your front bench have been saying to the cameras? You're not telling Albertans the truth. Albertans know it. They'll bust you on it. You know what? If it was about policy, they could say: well, you know, I kind of like it. But it's not about policy; it's about democracy. You're dumping on democracy. You are dumping on the thing that makes the country what it is, our province what it is, the only thing that makes it great. You're dumping all over it. It's a shame. Absolutely shameful, Madam Chair. Absolutely shameful.

You know what? I tried to start off with a tale about how our government ended up not being in government. This is the type of thing that will cause Albertans to fire a government. There is an old maxim that I believe in, that people don't hire governments; they fire governments. There's no doubt that last year on May 5 they fired ours. I get that. The government members, Madam Chair, ought to actually pay attention to that and think about how that happened. When the public no longer believes that the government they have are good people and have their interests at heart – this is a piece of legislation that will really twig Albertans to understand that this NDP government does not have their best interests at heart. I'll tell you what. When the election comes, I will have this in my hand, and I will be out campaigning, because this is a reason to fire a government. This is a reason to fire the government right here.

You know what? I will sit and listen for a little while right now, but government members ought to actually think about this. You ought to be ashamed to look your constituents in the eye if you don't vote for this amendment because while this won't fix the whole piece of legislation, this will make the one small piece of it at least somewhat consistent with what you're telling the public. If you can't support this – you know what? – then the emperor has no clothes, folks. Then you actually have no credibility, and you have dumped on democracy. Don't do that.

#### **Chair's Ruling Relevance**

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I've tended to give a great deal of latitude in the subject matter that we talk about, but in the interests of greater efficiency I'd remind members that during committee

stage, we need to be debating the clauses of the bill. In this case we're debating the amendment itself, so if you could try to keep your comments a little bit more directed, that would be helpful.

Thank you.

9:40

### Debate Continued

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Certainly, Madam Chair. We are talking about an amendment that attempts to stop the government from rigging the system with the bill they brought forth, an amendment that will help protect constituency associations from this government's headlong approach to attack constituency associations, an amendment that will help protect smaller parties from this government's approach of attacking constituency associations.

There are choices in this life, and the government is making choices. You know, I had a call late yesterday afternoon from Rocky Mountain House's radio station. They wanted me to go on the air, and they have me on quite often, so I came on. You know what the opening question was? It was about choices. It was about the comments from the premier of Alberta, who said that Albertans should make better choices.

Now, I had a lot to say about that to the people of Rocky Mountain House, and I can assure you that the people of Rocky Mountain House will have a lot to say about that next time at the ballot box because, let me tell you, the people in my community do not deserve to be told by the Premier to make better choices when they are fighting for their jobs, their homes, and their livelihoods because of the policies of this government. This amendment right here is about saying to the government: "You should make better choices. You should bring forward better legislation. You should stop attacking the opposition parties. You should stop trying to rig democracy and, instead, make it fair for constituency associations, make donation limits appropriate for constituency associations, to keep it separate, to make sure that we don't see \$4,000." That is what this amendment is about, Madam Chair. This is exactly about different buckets for different constituency associations.

The government wants to avoid that. I get it, Madam Chair. I get it. They spent their summer trying to stack the deck, and now they're in the Legislature trying to stack the deck. The Member for Calgary-Elbow with this amendment is giving them an opportunity to stop that behaviour, to make different choices, to make a different choice and, instead, stand with the Member for Calgary-Elbow, have a serious look at the amendment that he has brought forward, recognize that as the legislation currently stands, if we don't pass this amendment, there will continue to be an attack on smaller parties. It will continue to prevent other parties from being able to participate in our democracy, it will continue to attack volunteers in our democracy, and it will continue to kneecap the opposition.

Now, Madam Chair, I certainly think that you're probably just as appalled as I am about the move by this government to try to rig democratic rules to make things easier for them in the next election. This amendment that we are debating right now gives them an opportunity to not do that.

Now, with some of the amendments that they voted against, there will still be a tremendous amount of rigging, but at least in this case we can empower constituency associations all across the province to be able to participate in democracy how they always have, to have, like, grassroots participation in democracy. You know, "grassroots" is a word that all parties in the Assembly often use. It's something that I know is very, very important to the Wildrose Party. I've watched the NDP members stand up and raise this issue in the

past and say that grassroots is important to their democracy. I would note that the way the grassroots participate in the democratic process for the New Democratic Party is different than the way they probably participate in our party, but I would also note that the legislation as it currently stands – and this is what the amendment is trying to fix – only attacks the way the grassroots participate in the parties on this side of the House.

Think about that. Madam Chair, it only attacks the way the grassroots participate in the opposition parties, not in the way that the grassroots participate in the government side. Now, some people would call that stacking the deck. There is no way around that. This amendment is about stacking the deck at its core. The amendment is about stacking the deck at its core. Stacking the deck.

The opportunity is here for the government to stop stacking the deck, take the member up on the offer – opportunity, I guess, would be a better way of saying that – and vote or help work to make the amendment better. That's an option that is before the government. If they don't quite like some of the wording and they want to do something a little different, we'd like to hear about that. But to be able to make sure that they are actually not bringing big money back into politics, that they aren't increasing constituency donation levels by 400 per cent, that they are not crippling opposition parties' political structures and that, by doing this, they'll be able to keep buckets within the system, to be able to protect the integrity of the political system that we all enjoy. That's a choice, Madam Chair, that the government has before them.

I will close with this because I am eagerly awaiting the vote on this amendment. We have choices. All of us make choices on a daily basis. We have choices in politics, we have choices in our personal life, and this government certainly has choices. Rather than say to my constituents and the people of Alberta that they should make better choices – let's be honest today, Madam Chair – this government should make better choices.

This government should stop rigging the system. This government should not waste their summers trying to line their pockets with taxpayers' money and instead should stand up and support the Member for Calgary-Elbow and protect our political system. If they do not, Madam Chair, they one hundred per cent prove to the debate about this that all this government is about is rigging the system to their advantage. It's trying to get taxpayers to pay for things to make them feel better or pay for their campaign expenses. It's trying to attack political parties, and that is shameful. As I've said before, they should hang their heads in shame and . . .

**Mr. Carlier:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, we have a point of order. One moment. Go ahead, Deputy Government House Leader.

### Point of Order Repetition

**Mr. Carlier:** Yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. I heard, you know, earlier, before the member stood up to speak: try to keep on topic, on task. This member, in particular, should be called to order because he has persisted in needless repetition, raised matters that have already been said in the current session. It's my understanding that he stood up and spoke for a third time, which, for sure, is his right, but he hasn't added anything to the debate. He is just repeating over and over again the same things he already has. I do believe it's a point of order.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I would say that, unfortunately, the Deputy Government House Leader made the argument against his own point of order. Before he stopped speaking, he pointed out correctly, just for the record, that there is no limit to the number of times people can speak in Committee of the Whole. For that reason there is no point of order.

**Mr. Nixon:** As was pointed out by the leader of the third party – and I appreciate his pointing it out – this is not a point of order. It is categorically offensive that the government of the day would attempt to stop members from speaking about important amendments. I get why they are ashamed of what they are doing and why they would want to, but that is not what this is. This is democracy here. This is exactly what we're talking about, trying to stifle the opposition from being able to speak on behalf of the people of Alberta.

**The Chair:** Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is not a point of order. The minister of agriculture is saying that repeating what we have to say here somehow makes this illegitimate debate. Every day we listen to the same minister read the exact same notes repetitiously in question period over and over and over. If that was so, then practically fourth-fifths of his answers in question period would be ruled out of order.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is making very valid points about democracy, the fundamentals of what we're talking about here. The fact that they would bring a point of order to try and stop him from speaking on this really speaks to the point of what we're doing here, protecting democracy. This is not a point of order. The government is just ashamed that they have to sit here and listen to people who do not agree with them, Madam Chair. There's no point of order.

**The Chair:** Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. This is Committee of the Whole. This is an opportunity for members to get up and speak on numerous occasions and even on the same bill or on the same amendment. The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre has been speaking on different amendments. You may think that he is repeating himself. That's unfortunate.

There was an amendment earlier this week that offered you the chance to send this to committee and you wouldn't have to sit here and listen to this for three days. So now sit here and listen to it for three days.

**The Chair:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Yeah. Madam Chair, I just want to make some comments on what the Member for Strathmore-Brooks talked about: repeating answers. You know, often if you get the same question, you get the same answer. Answers don't change just because the question is the same. I'm not sure exactly where his argument was there. Often in question period in particular: same question, same answer.

9:50

**Mr. McIver:** I have different comments to make, Madam Chair. My, I hope, very respectful advice to you is to rule against this point of order based on the fact that what the government does not get to do is stifle debate and stifle dissension. If you are to make a ruling that allows government to stifle debate and stifle dissension, you

are making everything we're doing here irrelevant, and I think you are much too wise to do that.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, given that it's committee, I've given a little more leeway than normal, but once you've spoken to a point of order, generally that's enough. I think we're starting to run into repetition on the points of order, so let's settle that piece.

Again, it is committee. Members are allowed to speak as often as they like and even if it involves repetition at times. It happens. My kids always accuse me of repeating myself, but that's what happens. I would encourage members that it's important that we stay focused on the amendment, focused on the clauses of the bill, and let's try to be a little bit more efficient in how we conduct business here in the House.

Please continue, hon. member.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. As I said, I was actually close to finishing my comments, but I think I'm going to have to recap them now because I don't exactly know where I was at before I was interrupted by the point of order.

I think the reason that we're seeing some repetitiveness in the comments about certain amendments is that at the core the bulk of the amendments that are being brought forward by the opposition are an attempt to stop a couple of key issues. We've discussed them, but obviously the government by their comments, through you, Madam Chair, are not fully understanding what we're bringing forward. So maybe we need to try to do a better job of being able to articulate what we're trying to say, and I will try to do a better job. My colleagues on this side of the House seem to know what I'm talking about, but maybe that's because we actually have grassroots democracy in our parties. Maybe that's what it comes down to.

At the core here's what we're dealing with. First, on this bill we're trying to get big money out of politics. The Official Opposition has agreed with that. The third party has agreed with that. Both independent members have agreed with that. So here we are. We're trying to get big money out of politics, which is what this amendment refers to. This is specifically to that amendment. We're going to lower the limits from \$15,000 a year to \$4,000 a year, very much part of this amendment. There you go. We're on the amendment, and we're at \$4,000 a year. I agree with that. I think that taking it from \$15,000 to \$4,000 a year is a good idea. I don't know for sure that \$4,000 was the right number, but it's a compromise. We had to get out of \$15,000, so we're passed that.

There's a second component of this. In our system currently, until this bill passes, a constituency association can receive \$1,000. Now, unfortunately, this government again has brought forward retroactive legislation in the middle of a quarter, which has created a whole bunch of accounting problems, and as we can see from the state of the province's books, that side of the House is not very good at accounting. We'll digress on that for right now.

The core of this bill then turns around and raises the constituency donation level from \$1,000. So I want everybody to be clear on that because there seems to be some confusion, Madam Chair, to the members across the way: \$1,000 is what their constituency associations can receive right now. As has been established in great detail during debate, their constituency associations do not receive any money because they're controlled by a central authority, and they take all the money that is raised at the constituency level. That's what they choose. On our side, to myself or any of the members on this side, our constituency associations can receive a maximum of \$1,000 a year.

With this legislation that is being brought forward by this government, the NDP government, they can now receive \$4,000 a year. Now, this amendment that has been brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow is specifically about that at its core, the fact that for a constituency association we're now going from \$1,000 to \$4,000, which, Madam Chair, I think you will know, obviously, that \$1,000 is significantly less than \$4,000. In fact, it's \$3,000 less. To get very, very specific to help the members across the way: constituency associations donation limits have now increased by \$3,000. Three thousand dollars. Now, if they're wondering how I got to that: I minused \$1,000 from \$4,000. So now we have an increase of \$3,000. That seems significantly higher than \$1,000. Again, to the amendment brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, this is what he's trying to fix.

Now, on top of that, with this bill we cap the amount that any individual candidate could spend during an election at \$50,000. So once you cap the amount at \$50,000, that that's the only amount that could be spent during that campaign, and you raise the donations up to \$4,000, any one person can donate \$4,000 a year each year or one person and their spouse can donate upwards of \$8,000 a year from one family or a family associated with one business, you only need two or three people to be able to fund an MLA's campaign.

Now, at it's core the bill that has been brought forward by the government – the government has attempted to say that it's all about getting big money out of politics, which we agree with. We have shown over and over throughout the last couple of days that truly at its core the government's goal is about rigging the system. There's absolutely no doubt about that now as each amendment goes through. Specifically to this amendment, the hon. member is trying to say: "Hey, we don't want just two or three people to be able to influence a campaign. If the goal of this bill is to take influence out of politics, this is counterproductive."

In response to the reasonable questions brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, the government, when they're not trying to raise pointless points of order and stifle the opposition from speaking, are rising and saying: "No. No. This is just about taking big money out of politics. That's all we're about." But they won't answer the question about the 400 per cent increase on constituency associations. Four hundred per cent. Four times. That's important, and it is the core of what this amendment is about. It is the core of this amendment, which is to say: "No. Whoa. Back up. Let's have a look at this. Are we really accomplishing the goal of getting big money out of politics?"

Now, it's made categorically worse in my mind, Madam Chair, when we point out the fact that during the committee that was struck by the Leader of the Opposition and the leaders of the other opposition parties in the Assembly and the Premier on ethics and accountability, the members that were sent there from the governing party supported that concern. I could pull out *Hansard* and quote it all, but they're not going to stand up and deny it because they know they supported it, so I won't waste our time with that. They supported taking it to \$1,000. We've already seen that they've been overruled by the government front bench. I guess that's how they run their party. It's particularly interesting that the government whip was actually on that committee and fought to get that limit lower. I digress on that, too. That was the decision that they made.

But the government can't continue to then rise in the Assembly under the guise of getting big money out of politics, trying to defend the actions that they're taking to attack political parties or to kneecap political parties or to make things worse for political parties on the other side of the spectrum to make things easier for them under the guise of getting big money out of politics because

the core of the disagreements on this bill comes down to constituency associations and how parties manage themselves.

The core of the disagreement on this bill, Madam Chair, is not around lowering from \$15,000 to \$4,000 for any one political party. The core of the disagreement is how the governing party is treating other political parties that are in the spectrum. This amendment brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow gives them an opportunity to say: "Okay. You know what? We got caught with our hands in the cookie jar." Or the pickle jar, as the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills likes to say. "We got busted. We're caught, just like we got caught on political donations or on campaign subsidy when we were in committee." That's okay. You got caught, so rise up and do the right thing and say: "Okay. You know what? We had a majority, and we thought it would be cute to try to rig the system to attack smaller political parties, but, hon. member, you got us. I'm sorry, Albertans. We'll move on."

Instead it appears, based on about two or three days of debate on this piece of legislation – three days, I think – that the governing party is going to continue down the road of attacking other political parties.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Why?

**An Hon. Member:** Because they can.

**Mr. Nixon:** Because they can. You know what? They can. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays pointed out that they have a majority. You don't have to stand inside this Assembly for too long to understand that this side doesn't have enough votes to be able to stop it. We will in 2019, I assure you of that, something that the other side of the House should remember because this amendment will impact them when they're on that side. At that time, when the governing caucus is back down to four or five members sitting on this side of the House, they might be saying: "Whoa. We kind of wish that we'd listened to the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre because this legislation is still hurting us."

**Mr. McIver:** We often say that.

**Mr. Nixon:** Absolutely. I mean, as the leader of the third party says, they often say that in their caucus meetings. It doesn't surprise me. I do wish that he would call my spouse because she doesn't. We need to get this right. All I am sincerely doing, Madam Chair, is trying to give the governing party an opportunity to do the right thing.

**10:00**

**An Hon. Member:** We're helping you.

**Mr. Nixon:** I'm helping you. I'm helping you.

And it's applicable to this amendment, the thing of help, because that is the point of amendments. The opposition is attempting to make the legislation the government brought forward better, trying to fix things that they may not have seen. That is our job. I know the hon. agriculture minister is hoping that we would come here on behalf of our constituents and just sit here and rubber-stamp everything he does or everything his party does. That's not what the people I work for tell me to do. My job is not to come here and say: "Oh, yeah, go ahead. You can rig the whole system to your advantage. It's all right." I sure wouldn't want to go home to Sundre tonight to the A&W and say: you know, the agriculture minister said that I'm just supposed to do whatever he says. That's not our job. Our job is to do exactly this, and that's what we're doing. We're saying: "Look, there's a mistake here. You're making a terrible error."



The reason this matters is because of what happened in committee on this exact legislation. There were, clearly, mistakes made, which show that as we debate this legislation with this amendment, it is our job to say: "Hey, look, we have an amendment here that will fix the legislation that you're bringing forward. We have an amendment here that'll stop the errors that you're making." We've done this so much as we've gone through it – and I will close shortly, Madam Chair – in our time together in this Assembly, when over and over and over and over this government has attacked the people of Alberta with their legislation – attacked them – attacked communities, people's livelihoods, their homes.

Here they are again now, but what's worse is that this time they're attacking democracy. They're attacking democracy. This amendment brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow will help stop or at least blunt the attack that is coming from the NDP government. By not voting for it, the governing members, I would submit to you, Madam Chair, are showing that they have no interest in protecting democracy and that their own interests are nothing but the self-interest of re-election.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 35 and the amendment put forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow. The Member for Calgary-Elbow's amendment is, I think, well thought out and a valuable contribution towards making the so-called Fair Elections Financing Act a little less unfair than as proposed by the government. I think it seeks to address some of the genuine flaws in the bill which are meant to stack the deck in favour of the government.

I really appreciated the comments from the leader of the third party. I think he gave the government an opportunity for some self-reflection, to perhaps look in the mirror, if you will. The leader of the third party's comments, I believe, were humble and genuine. He talked about the problems of the previous government, the arrogance that had set in, and how the previous government wanted to rig the election in its favour.

It called an election a year before a fixed election date when it believed the Official Opposition, the Wildrose, was dead. Rumours of our demise turned out to be significantly exaggerated, but incapacitated and disorganized we were for some time, and the government attempted to take advantage of that and seek re-election in its own selfish interests and not the interests of the public. The Liberal Party was in disarray, and that surely fed into the former government's decision to call an early election for its own selfish advantage.

I want to thank the leader of the third party for being honest about that. I think these were humble and genuine comments and some lessons learned. I know that that's probably difficult for the leader of the third party to say. I know he's proud of his party and his record in public service, and to be able to recognize when your party is wrong about something is difficult. We all struggle to do that because we think we're all right all of the time. I assure you, Madam Chair, that I am right all of the time, but theoretically I might be wrong from time to time. Theoretically, at least. The leader of the third party recognized that they were wrong in doing what they were doing, and Albertans punished them for that and rightfully so. I'm hopeful that some lessons have been learned.

The leader of the third party is trying to share some of those lessons with members on the government side. That is something they should not ignore lightly. It's something they should take to heart as they try to rig an election in their favour. The NDP are now

doing the same thing. The NDP are trying to rig the system in their favour. They've seen the polls, they've talked to their constituents, and Albertans are planning to fire them in two and a half years. They know – they know – that the vast majority of members on the government side stand a very, very real chance of losing their seats in the next election. They know that they stand a very real chance of being thrown out on their petard in two and a half years, and they know that if they're going to have any hope of staying in power, they're going to have to rig the system in their favour. They're going to have to stack the deck.

You know, Madam Chair, when you stack the deck, normally you want to slip a couple of aces in there, but we have got 55 cards of jokers right now. It's a deck of jokers because it makes no sense to the democratic processes of this province. If this government was actually interested in getting big money out of politics, they would accept the opposition's recommendations to get big government money out of politics. They would have accepted our amendments that would have banned government advertising during elections.

You know, just the other day – just the other day – this government shamefully put millions more taxpayers' dollars towards government advertising, government advertising for partisan, political propaganda in support of the carbon tax, that 80 per cent of Albertans oppose. Eighty per cent of Albertans want nothing to do with the CLAP, the so-called climate leadership action plan, of the government. Albertans do not like the CLAP. They do not like the carbon tax. And this government knows that Albertans do not want the CLAP, so they're trying to sell it to them in government advertising with millions of taxpayers' dollars. They're spending millions.

You know who this sounds like? Well, let's talk about lessons from the previous government. This is mirroring the actions of Alison Redford at the most depraved and corrupt point of the most corrupt government in the history of this province. They are following in their footsteps right now. Alison Redford, we remember, the former Premier Redford, would spend millions of taxpayers' dollars to put her name on billboards and advertise failed and poor government policies that Albertans didn't want. Redford took this province into debt. She began to destroy the legacy of Ralph Klein and the great conservatives who built this province. Albertans didn't want to go there, so to sell Albertans on those policies, she spent millions of taxpayers' dollars on government ads to sell her unpopular policies. Well, in the end it didn't work.

But I remember the NDP. They sat in the nosebleeds of this House for decades – they sat in the nosebleeds – and when the Redford government spent taxpayers' money on partisan political advertising, they stood up rightfully and condemned it. I thought that we agreed. I was at the Canadian Taxpayers Federation at the time, and I genuinely thought there was real agreement between myself and the Wildrose and the Liberals and the NDP that this was a bad thing to do, that regardless of your views on the larger, philosophical role of government, the left versus right stuff, none of that mattered on this stuff. This was about basic ethics, that it is unethical to take taxpayers' money to fund political campaigns.

And what have the NDP done? As soon as they got over there, they put their snout in the trough. They put their snout in the trough because it's their turn to do it. I expected them to be better, Madam Chair. I expected them to perhaps govern according to their ideology, but I expected them to govern more ethically. I expected them to govern more democratically. I expected them to hold themselves to a higher standard, but now they have gone far beyond the worst excesses of the former Redford government's abuse of taxpayers' money for government advertising in favour of their partisan political agenda.

10:10

**An Hon. Member:** Shame.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** It's shameful. It's shameful.

You know, corruption is not just lining your own pockets with money, Madam Chair. It's not just forging flight manifests and whatnot. It's also taking taxpayers' dollars and putting them towards your own partisan or personal reasons. It involves abusing taxpayers to further your own partisan political interests in ways that have nothing to do with your principles or your policies and is just about your re-election, and that's what we're seeing. This is a corruption of government policy designed to favour the re-election of the members opposite because they know that they're in big trouble in two and a half years. They know that they're in big trouble with the voters in their constituencies, so they have to try and rig the system – they have to try and rig the system – in their favour to give them every possible advantage, and it's shameful.

You know, just the other day the Premier said that Albertans have to make better choices. Well, speaking of lessons from the former government: Albertans have to make better choices. What does that sound like? That reminds me a lot of telling Albertans to look in the mirror. That reminds me of telling Albertans to look in the mirror because they're at fault for the poor choices of the government. Well, the Premier seems to think that she knows better than Albertans. The Premier seems to think that she can make better choices than regular Albertans, that she can make better choices than families and small-business owners and taxpayers, that the government needs to tell them how to make better choices. Well, you know, I would tell this government to look in the mirror themselves.

If this government, if these members sat back in the nosebleeds, as I'm sure they will again in two and a half years, what would they say? What if the Wildrose sat on that side of the House? If the Wildrose sat over there and brought forward a bill designed to rig the system in favour of our re-election, do you think that they would do what the minister of agriculture has done and try to silence us, or do you think that they would do what we're doing right now? Do you think that the members sitting on the government side right now, if they were in opposition and we brought forward a bill to rig the system in our favour, would sit silent and just rubber-stamp a bill like that? Or do you think that they would stand up and fight against it with everything they have? Would they stand up and speak against the bill at every stage? Would they put forward reasonable amendments to try to make this bill actually fair for the election process of this province?

I know that there are four members on that side of the House who sat in opposition, and I genuinely believed that they cared about democracy, that they cared about a fair and reasonable and open and transparent process. Then they got over there, and everything changed.

Well, I really hope that if the members on this side of the House right now are honoured to sit on the government side, we do not fall into that same trap. I hope that we will hold ourselves to a higher standard than the members in that government who used to sit in opposition and used to bellyache about the undemocratic and untransparent and unfair actions of the former government. I hope that if we are honoured to sit on the government benches of this House in two and a half years, we will hold ourselves to a higher standard, that we would not be such hypocrites as to speak in favour of democracy in opposition and run roughshod over it in government. I hope that we would hold ourselves to a higher standard, Madam Chair.

The NDP know that they have to rig the system because they have no other way to get re-elected right now. In rural Alberta they are about as unpopular as the flu. In rural Alberta virtually everyone wants the NDP gone. There was just a federal by-election in Medicine Hat-Cardston-Warner, where the NDP proved that they are the new 1 per cent. They proved that they are literally only 20 per cent more popular than the Rhinoceros Party, Madam Chair. The Rhinoceros Party. Frankly, the Rhinoceros Party is a significantly more electoral option, I think, for more Albertans. If there was a two-party system in this province and the NDP was one and the Rhinoceros Party was another, my money is on the Rhinoceros Party right now.

In rural Alberta people want this government gone almost unanimously. I can't find a New Democrat in my riding anymore. They're gone. In Calgary the NDP support is less than half of what it was on election day. Calgarians know that this government is not governing in the best interests of Albertans. It's not governing in the best interests of Calgary. Even in Edmonton, where this government enjoyed tremendous support during the last election, Edmontonians have begun to turn against this government, too, because they see that this government is not governing for Edmonton. It is not governing for Alberta. It is governing for themselves.

That's what this bill is, Madam Chair. This bill is purely meant just to seek the re-election of this government. It's not meant to cut taxes. It's not meant to improve health care. It's not meant to improve education, to improve our roads, our environment. It's not meant to improve the finances of the province. It's not meant to improve the democracy of this province. It's meant for one thing and one thing only, and that is to rig the system in favour of a government that knows it's going down in defeat in two and a half years if they don't change the system.

Madam Chair, the Premier said that Albertans need to make better choices. Regardless of what this government does here trying to rig the system, no matter how much they rig the system, we're still going to have an election in two and a half years. The Premier says that Albertans need to make better choices. I'm confident that in two and a half years, no matter how much they rig the system, Albertans are going to make a better choice, and they're going to throw them out of office.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow on the amendment.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be very brief in what I hope will perhaps close debate on this. I just want to make two points, two very important points.

The government shouldn't care whether this amendment passes because it has no impact on their party, because they raise zero dollars through their constituency associations. Now, I suppose I almost hesitate to bring this point up because what I'm really saying is: hey, NDP, here's actually an opportunity for you to kind of stick it to the other parties again because every other party here raises money through constit associations and therefore could conceivably raise up to \$4,000 per person in a constit association every year. That actually is an advantage should we choose to use that.

Now, some parties, perhaps ours, may say that we're going to impose our own limit because we think it's wrong. Maybe I should go quickly and call this vote so you guys can vote it down because, actually, it's to the advantage of the parties on this side, but I'm not going to do that, Madam Chair. That would be wrong. It's not about locking in our advantage. We're not here – I'm not here, I can tell you that – just to find ways of maximizing advantage for the Alberta

Party. I am here to do the right thing for the province of Alberta, to do the right thing for democracy. I hope that's why each and every one of you is here as well. I hope that's why you sought election in the first place.

This has no impact at all on the NDP. What it does is that it puts big money back into politics. You have created a loophole, deliberately or inadvertently, that will allow us to raise more money in constituency associations, four times as much money. That's not right. It's not right, Madam Chair. It's absolutely not right.

The other thing I want to emphasize, which I don't know if I've emphasized enough, and then I'll return to my seat and we can vote on this: the amount of work this creates for Elections Alberta has already caused them to say that they need an increase in their budget, a substantial increase in their budget. Elections Alberta is going to have to add staff. Now, maybe that's part of the NDP's job-creation plan. That's, I suppose, possible. It's going to create at least two, three, four, five jobs, full-time jobs for people just to manage constituency quarterly reporting data and all of the different administrative burdens that this bill imposes upon Elections Alberta. The shameful part of all of that is that it solves a problem we don't have. This is not a problem that we currently have in the province of Alberta, so why have you come up with a solution in search of a problem?

10:20

I think you're being a little too clever for yourselves. You've out-thought yourselves on this one. You're trying to disadvantage others, and in so doing, you may have actually disadvantaged yourself. That's because you're not trying to do the right thing. You're not trying to make this bill right for democracy. You're not trying to make this bill right for Alberta. You're not trying to pass legislation that will stand the test of time and go unchanged for decades. You're not trying to leave a legacy that you can look back on in five, 10, 20 years from now with pride. You're trying to stack the deck. You're trying to put legislation in place that the next government, that comes in in 2019, will be forced to change, setting off this chain of events where the next government changes it to tilt the playing field to their side, and then you come in many decades later and tilt the playing field to your side. That's not what Albertans want. Albertans expected better from you. That's why they elected you. That's the kind of stuff they got rid of the PCs for, and you're doing the same damn thing. Not okay. Not okay, Madam Chair. Albertans will judge. Albertans will judge.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:22 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Schneider
Clark	MacIntyre	Strankman
Fraser	Nixon	van Dijken
Gotfried	Orr	Yao
Hanson	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Fitzpatrick	McPherson
Babcock	Ganley	Payne

Carlier	Gray	Phillips
Ceci	Hinkley	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Drever	Malkinson	Westhead
Eggen	Mason	Woollard
Totals:	For – 14	Against – 33

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** I'm very excited to be back on the bill, Madam Chair. With so much robust debate over the last few days, I look forward to moving another amendment. I do note that out of all the amendments that have been passed so far, we've been successful in passing one amendment. Unfortunately, we'd like to see some more amendments, and I suspect we may be able to get something done on another amendment. Let's see if we can.

I do have the appropriate number of copies, Madam Chair. I will send them up to you and will await your permission to proceed with this amendment.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A7.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am moving that Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended as follows. In part A section 39 is amended in the proposed section 43.02 by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) An audited financial statement and a copy of the auditor's report shall accompany each financial statement of a registered leadership contestant required to be filed under subsection (1) if the campaign expenses of the leadership contestant exceed \$25,000.

In part B section 44 is struck out, and the following is substituted:

44(1) Part 6.2 is repealed.

(2) Part 6.2 continues to apply to leadership contests occurring when this section comes into force, and in addition, an audited financial statement and a copy of the auditor's report must accompany each financial statement of a registered leadership contestant required to be filed under section 44.96(1) if the campaign expenses of the leadership contestant exceed \$25,000.

10:40

This amendment is being brought forward because, in my view and in my colleagues' view, I believe there must be reasonable financial limits and thresholds for auditing that are not too tough, not too restrictive on potential leadership candidates but maintain transparency, openness, and accountability in our electoral system. Leadership contestants can generate a lot of money in some cases, and in other cases they don't generate a lot of money, so we want to make sure that the cost of the audit is appropriate to the amount of money that is being raised. We wouldn't want to see a leadership contestant that participated in a leadership race that would only cost a lower amount, like \$10,000, compared to a leadership contestant that may spend upwards of three-quarters of a million dollars.

We felt, after some discussion across the aisle, that \$25,000 was the appropriate number although I would be, of course, open to any feedback from any members of the Assembly if they feel differently. But the concept is that at a certain amount it becomes

appropriate for an audit to be completed and is not overburdensome on leadership campaigns.

With that said, I would be happy to sit down and hear from the government side of the House where they are at on this amendment and see if there is some bipartisan support for it.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic reform.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to thank the member for bringing forward this amendment. I think that he is absolutely correct that it adds to accountability and transparency, that it is not going to be something that is burdensome to leadership contestants because the requirement is that there must be at least \$25,000 of expenses incurred before an audit is required.

I will be supporting this amendment, and I thank the member for bringing it forward.

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

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A7 carried]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments?

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, Madam Chair, we appear to be on a roll. It's very exciting to see an amendment pass in Committee of the Whole. I think that that alone deserves recognition. Let's see if we can get going on a couple more. I think we're disproportionately out a little bit. You know, I would imagine it's something like 180 to 1 or somewhere along there. I would not state that as a fact, though. I've not done a count on that.

Madam Chair, we recently discovered that the NDP has at some point in the past created what I would refer to as a shadow party. It appears, in our mind, when we look at this shadow party that it's been built to get around the rules that are regulating political parties or certainly is set up in a way that could get around the rules of political parties or at least skirt the spirit of the laws that this current government is bringing forward.

They, they being the NDP, have created an unregulated and unaudited, secret version of their party which can do things that the NDP as a party is not allowed to do. Now, I call it a secret shadow party because I believe most of the members sitting on the government side don't know about it, or at least what it truly is. I know that Albertans have never been told about it, and I certainly suspect that the bulk of the members of the NDP Party are not aware of the secret shadow party that they are automatically members of.

Now, I suspect that the government members don't know that they are members of this secret party automatically. I suspect – I don't know for sure – that they never asked to join it, but by being members of the NDP government, members, including you, Madam Chair, are automatically members of this shadow organization.

Now, this leads to some weird issues that I think we need to discuss in Committee of the Whole. Two days ago the MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud rightly recused himself from the debate on Bill 35 since he has signed loan guarantees for the NDP. Now, that member participated in the committee associated with those loans, but specifically for us here on Bill 35, he did recuse himself from the process, rightly so. I commend him for recognizing the potential conflict and working with the Ethics and Accountability Committee and declaring that conflict and taking the appropriate steps. I think we all should recognize that, and we recognize that the Speaker properly at that point asked him to leave the Chamber while we

were debating this bill, so he was not in conflict. Again, I commend the member for doing the appropriate process.

But the fact is that every single member of the NDP, whether they know it or not, is a member of the shadow party. This shadow party exists to guarantee the debts of the NDP that are in its official registered bylaws. Now, this organization is doing exactly what the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is doing, and he honourably recused himself from this debate, rightly so. But every single member of the NDP is automatically a member of this secret organization that I'm referring to.

Now, it's an interesting question as to whether every member of the NDP caucus might also need to recuse themselves from the Bill 35 debate as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has rightly done for backing loans. Every member across the way, Madam Chair, including yourself, is a member of the organization who is backing substantial loans, the shadow party for the NDP.

We know that one of the government ministers is married to the president of the shadow party. That minister, certainly, should recuse herself from this debate if the traditions of this Assembly are to be followed.

Now, Albertans don't know where this organization got its property. They don't know where it got its money. Who gave it money in the past? Who pays its bills now? Is it getting union money that would be illegal for the NDP to take in? How much union money is it getting? What activities is this organization undertaking that benefit the NDP? We know that the president and treasurer of the NDP are automatically on the board of this shadow party.

Unlike a legitimate political party, the shadow party isn't independently audited with the audit being disclosed to Elections Alberta. We've talked a lot about the need for transparency in our political process, but here we have a shadow party of the NDP that is not accountable to the audit process currently in our election system. Let's be clear. This organization is only audited – only audited – by the executive of the NDP. Madam Chair, I think that at the very least, this smells bad. It's awkward. It raises a whole bunch of questions, and Albertans, when they find out about it, will not be impressed.

That brings me, Madam Chair, to my amendment, that I will be moving shortly. We wanted to move amendments to Bill 35 to prohibit off-the-books political wings. That's what we want to move. There needs to be a prohibition on any political party from having an off-the-books shadow party similar to what the NDP has. I am looking at some of the hon. members across the way, and it appears, based on their reaction, that they don't know about the shadow party. We'll talk about it more in detail as we proceed.

Now, the ability to create an unregulated and unaudited shadow party is an affront to the intentions of the first bill that this Legislature passed unanimously, by every party in this Assembly. The first thing that we did together as a group in the 29th Legislature: this shadow party is an affront to that. I was proud to support the government's first Bill 1, to get union and corporate donations out of our political system. Some of the first votes that I passed in my public life were for that, but now I have to question whether the government was truly sincere about this issue.

When everyone is concerned about PACs and third-party advertisers, rightly so, the NDP now needs to explain to this House and to Albertans why it owns an off-the-books shadow party, which may be acting as a PAC. These types of shadow parties cannot be allowed to exist. That is clear.

Unfortunately, we are now told that the government has crafted Bill 35 in such a way that it's making things harder for political parties, and we as the opposition as a whole, not based on ideological beliefs or political bent of individual parties but as the

opposition that represents the majority of Albertans but the minority inside this Legislature have to ask questions about whether this shadow party has been set up in such a way to continue to benefit the NDP going forward at the same time that they're using the legislative process to cripple the opposition as a whole.

**10:50**

We must be able to close this 747-size loophole. It is deeply concerning to the people of Alberta. It is deeply concerning to the opposition party that it even exists. But mostly and why it is applicable here today inside the Assembly, it is deeply concerning that Bill 35 has not been dealt with.

Now, I'm afraid that if a loophole continues to exist, then other parties will have to consider taking advantage of the loophole if only not to fall behind the NDP. Quite frankly, that would not be a good thing – that would not be a good thing – and it would be counterproductive to what we are attempting to accomplish with Bill 35.

With that said, Madam Chair, I would like to move an amendment. I do have the appropriate amount of copies, and I will send them up with the pages and wait for your permission to continue.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A8.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment states that I will move that Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended in section 43 in the proposed section 44.1(1)(i) by adding the following after subclause (v):

- (vi) an organization with a board of directors, executive or senior management that includes persons who belong to the executive, board of directors or leadership of a registered party.

I certainly hope that all members, including the members from the governing side, will support our attempt to close this giant loophole that is in the legislation that has been brought forward. I also certainly hope that the members on the other side will explain what is going on with the NDP's secret shadow party. It certainly is troubling and against the spirit of the legislation that this Assembly is currently working on, Bill 35. It is against the spirit of the first bill that this government brought forward and often touts as part of their legacy.

If you look at the NDP's 2015 audit, a footnote cites that the NDP's \$400,000 operating line of credit is guaranteed through a related nonprofit association. That nonprofit association which I am referring to: every member across the way is automatically a member.

While we will have a lot of discussion about this as we debate this amendment, I think the first question that we must ask ourselves in this Chamber, particularly the members who are members of an organization which is guaranteeing political donations for their party, is if they would prefer at this point to contact the Ethics Commissioner, like the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud did, to see if they need to recuse themselves, similar to what he did, or at the very least to rise and explain to Albertans why they can proceed in this debate in clear conflict but the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud cannot.

The nature of this organization is troubling, and there are many questions that need to be answered before we are able to complete the work on Bill 35. But the first question of the utmost importance is whether or not the government members across the way need to recuse themselves from this process. I highly encourage members to consider that, and I look forward to having more discussion in the future about the NDP's secret shadow party.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. There is no shadow party. The way that the member opposite is describing something that Elections Alberta and the Chief Electoral Officer are completely aware of and have been working with the Alberta NDP on is dramatic but incorrect. There is no loophole to do with this society of which we mention, and there is no conflict in this case. Again, this is something that the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Alberta are fully aware of, and it is not something that gives the Alberta NDP an advantage through Bill 35.

Regarding the amendment that the member has proposed, I actually would really appreciate more clarification because what he has done is added to the exclusions of third party – third party “does not include,” and then he's added “an organization with a board of directors, executive or senior management that includes persons who belong to the executive, board of directors, or leadership of a registered party.”

The amendment that's been tabled I'm not sure even attempts to do what the member is describing. With all due respect, the member does not fully understand and does not have the details of this issue. There are no financial benefits provided by the entity that they are talking about. Again, the Chief Electoral Officer is fully aware and has no concerns about this. We will be working with the Chief Electoral Officer to make sure that our party complies fully with the acts that we have brought forward to get big money out of politics and to make sure that there is transparency and accountability in all things that we do.

I certainly would like to thank the member for his concern, but I do want to stress that there is no issue here. Unless he can explain how this exclusion from the definition of third party does what he is talking about, I will not be supporting this amendment because, again, I think it shows that the member does not fully understand or have the details on this issue.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for rising. I do have to first point out in regard to the comments that the minister started out by saying that the shadow organization that I'm referring to did not exist, but then in the next sentence said that the Chief Electoral Officer is aware of it. So which is it? Does it not exist, or is the Chief Electoral Officer aware of it? That is a big difference.

Second, I will be writing to the Chief Electoral Officer and to the Ethics Commissioner, and I have been in contact with their office, and I would strongly suggest that the minister contact them as well before making statements on behalf of the Chief Electoral Officer and where he or is his department may or may not stand in regard to this organization.

Now, we'll talk about the details and how they apply to the amendment in reference to the minister's questions. But I do note, Madam Chair, the core of what I brought forward immediately to start was the fact that this organization that I refer to, the NDP's shadow party, is backing loans associated with the governing party. I'm going to show that in a second. It is backing loans of the governing party.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud rightly recused himself because he was backing loans for the NDP. Good for him for talking with the Ethics Commissioner and doing the right thing. I think it's always hard to figure that out, and that's what the Ethics Commissioner is for.

That question needs to be answered, Madam Chair. If all members of the NDP are backing loans just like the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, why they would not need to recuse themselves from this process is a legitimate question. I would also note that at no time in the minister's comments does she say that she has been or that her party has been in contact with the Ethics Commissioner about that potential conflict, similar to what the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was.

Now, as for no financial benefit, again, a footnote in the NDP's 2015 audit cites that the NDP's \$400,000 operating line of credit is guaranteed through a related nonprofit association. That begs the question: who is the related nonprofit association, and what is their relationship to the New Democratic Party? Is it the Calgary housing society or the Calgary house society that is mentioned in another footnote as being related through common directors? We went looking for the Calgary house society, and we didn't find it, but we did find the Calgary & District New Democrat House Society. As we looked, it does have interlocking directors with the NDP. The NDP's first vice-president, the NDP's treasurer, a former NDP provincial secretary, and an NDP labour VP and southern Alberta caucus director are on the house society's board of directors.

#### 11:00

Scott Payne is the president of the house society, and he is one of the NDP's two labour vice-presidents and the southern Alberta director of the NDP caucus. He is also the spouse of a minister of this government. Chris O'Halloran is the treasurer of the house society and a former NDP provincial director and stakeholder relations manager in the Premier's office. Siobhán Vipond is a director of the house society, and she is currently the NDP treasurer and co-chair of the Premier's economic advisory council and the secretary treasurer of the Alberta Federation of Labour. The four others are also long-time NDP activists. Anne Wilson is currently first vice-president of the New Democratic Party.

The house society does own an industrial condo in Calgary, unit 321, 3132 -26th Street N.E. in Calgary, Alberta. Now, if you go to that location, the space is the NDP's Calgary office. It also seems to host the Calgary & District Labour Council. There seems to be a connection.

We looked up the objects of the society, and there's nothing special there, to be honest. Now, in 2011 the society amended its bylaws so that the society could guarantee the debts of the Alberta New Democratic Party with property of the society. Guarantee the debts of the New Democratic Party. It's right in the society's bylaws. It's current executive is completely tied to the executive of your party, and every member across the way is automatically a member of it.

So what exactly is the house society? These are questions people don't know the answers to, the minister doesn't seem to know the answers to, and certainly Albertans don't know the answers to. But, clearly, it's backing loans for the NDP Party, the same thing that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud recused himself from this debate for.

How did the society come to own an industrial condo with a clear title? Where does it get its current money? Who gave it money in the past? Who pays its bills now so that they can pledge the condo's title as security on the NDP's debts? Is that what's going on? It's a fair question. What part of its bills are paid for by the Calgary & District Labour Council, which appears to also be located in the house society condo, if any?

The house society, Madam Chair, isn't related to the NDP; it is the NDP. They are the same organization with the exact same membership. The only difference – and this is why this matters to this debate and this amendment – is that this house society is not

regulated or audited by Elections Alberta or anyone except for by the NDP. According to the minister it doesn't exist. She has said that the government has talked to the Chief Electoral Officer about an organization that doesn't exist.

Their membership rules make it so that every member of the NDP is automatically – I want you to get this. This is very important. This is very important. The membership rules of the shadow organization make it so that every member of the NDP is automatically a member of the house society, and if a member quits the NDP, they cease to be a member of the house society. This begs a couple of questions.

The first and the most important I think right now, Madam Chair, is that because we know from the documents that this shadow organization is backing the debt of the NDP Party, we know that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has rightly recused himself from the debate, we know that every member across the way is automatically a member of the party, the question first and foremost is: why have they not recused themselves from debate?

We also have to ask: first, have the NDP members as a whole, have the members across from me right now been told that they're automatically a member of this and that they're backing debts for the NDP Party? But even more important, I think: have the members of the NDP Party been told that they are automatically members of an organization backing the debt of a political party? We don't know. We don't know if NDP members have ever been told this.

This leads again to weird things. Again, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud rightly recused himself from the debate on Bill 35 since he has signed as a guarantor of loans for the NDP. He properly did it. He properly removed himself from the Chamber. But if every single member of the NDP, including the cabinet, whether they know it or not, is a member of the house society automatically and the house society also guarantees NDP loans – guarantees NDP loans, something the minister has indicated in her comments, from what I can tell, wasn't happening, but clearly the documents show that it is guaranteeing NDP loans, without a doubt – it is an interesting question as to whether every member of the NDP caucus has to recuse themselves from Bill 35.

I certainly think that, at the very least, they should adjourn debate on this and contact the Ethics Commissioner for themselves. That is our responsibility as elected members, to make sure we're not in conflict. I will not presume to speak for the Ethics Commissioner, and I encourage through you, Madam Chair, that the hon. minister not speak for the Chief Electoral Officer. They are independent officers, and that's what they are here for. I will be contacting them to get their feedback on this. My office has already spoken to them verbally. They're aware that that letter is coming.

They rise in this Assembly and say, "No; that organization doesn't exist," when, clearly, it exists, and clearly the minister is a member of that organization, and clearly that organization backs loans to the party. The president and the treasurer of the NDP Party are automatically on the board of the house society, documents show. Unlike a political party, the house society isn't audited by Elections Alberta. The house society is audited by the NDP. Three members of the NDP Party – or the New Democrat Party, would be a better way of saying that – finance committee are the only people who audit the house society. They're the only people who audit the house society. So there is no independence in its financials, which only the NDP members can see and then only once a year at their AGM and only if they know where to look.

Given the blank stares from half of the government caucus as I started to speak about this, most of them probably aren't even aware that they're backing loans in part of an NDP shadow party. The fact that the minister has admitted that they have even started to reach out to the Chief Electoral Officer in any way shows that they are at least

very aware that there may be potential conflicts here, that there may be a situation where they have at least had to seek advice. I would note again: no contact with the Ethics Commissioner, as far as I'm aware or from what the minister has indicated, despite the fact that this organization is backing loans and that every member of this government caucus is part of it.

As I said, Madam Chair, we will be writing to the Chief Electoral Officer. When everyone is concerned about PACs and third-party advertisers, the NDP needs to explain to the people of Alberta, they need to explain to this House why it owns an off-the-books shadow party that may be acting as a PAC. The Calgary & District New Democratic House Society isn't regulated. It isn't independently audited. It is allowed to receive unlimited corporate and union donations. It has no limitations on the activities it undertakes, and we have to take the NDP's word for it now for what the house society is or is not doing despite the fact that it is a complete mirror of their political party. Complete mirror. Same membership automatically, same leadership of the party across the way from me as in the leadership of this organization.

The NDP are telling us that they've been upfront with Elections Alberta about the house society, but we can't believe that Elections Alberta has said that the society and the NDP, which have the exact same membership – I suspect they might not even know that the society and the NDP have the exact same membership or that the society is only being audited by the NDP. I suspect they don't know how many loans may be being guaranteed. It would be interesting to know that. I can say that when we checked with Elections Alberta, they did not characterize it the same way that the minister did. Now, we'll have to talk to them in more detail, and I look forward to their response.

We will ask the Chief Electoral Officer to order the NDP's auditor to audit the Calgary & District New Democrat House Society going back for at least seven years. For all practical purposes, since it has exactly the same membership, the house society is the NDP, and it has never been properly audited or properly disclosed to the people of Alberta. We will also be asking the CEO when the NDP disclosed the details of the house society's peculiar structure to him. Albertans deserve to know where the house society got its money, where it spends the money, and what activities it undertakes. They also deserve to know why the house society has not been transparently disclosed. Albertans deserve to know when this government finally decided to talk to the Chief Electoral Officer about this shadow organization.

#### 11:10

The reason that we bring this amendment forward is that clearly there needs to be a prohibition on any political party having an off-the-books shadow party. I don't think that we want to see that across the board. The ability to create an unregulated shadow party is an affront to the intentions of the first bill of this Legislature, a bill that was passed unanimously with the support of every party. Fortunately, the government has crafted Bill 35 in such a way that we are able to try to make an amendment to deal with shadow parties and make that glaring loophole the size of a 747 go away. We have an opportunity to do that. I'm afraid that if the loophole continues to exist, other parties will have to consider taking advantage of that loophole, quite frankly, Madam Chair, not because they want to, but because they'd have no choice because they would fall behind the NDP.

Putting transparency into our political process is a noble goal and something that I support. Having shadow parties that make people automatically the members of it, that exactly mirror a political party, and then using that organization to back the loans of that political party and then not disclosing what's going on, the same

leadership, the same membership, having people automatically become members of an organization that they may not even know they're members of – do they know that they're backing your loans? Does all of your membership know that they've automatically been made members of the Calgary house society and that they are backing massive loans to the New Democratic Party? Do they know that? That is a very important question.

I believe that there are concerns on whether the members across the way from me, Madam Chair, can even participate in this debate, and I think that those concerns should be addressed with the Ethics Commissioner. I think that the easiest way to handle that, of course, would be to adjourn debate and let that process go through. I want to make sure that if the members are in conflict, they be given an opportunity to be able to address that properly. And I will not presume how that should be dealt with. We have an Ethics Commissioner for that.

I eagerly await feedback from the Chief Electoral Officer on some of the questions that we've raised. But I strongly urge the government to show that they are truly interested in closing loopholes, that they are truly interested in making our political process better, that they're not going to keep using shadow parties on the side that have exactly mirrored membership between both parties – the minister kind of skirted over that in her remarks, exactly mirrored membership – and, according to the documents from the NDP Party and the secret shadow organization, have a financial relationship in the loans. This is a serious issue.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud recused himself, rightly so, because he was backing New Democratic Party loans. He recused himself, and good for him. I have some questions on why he didn't do that in committee, but he did recuse himself in this Chamber. He recused himself. He stated the conflict, and it was clear that it was about backing loans for this party. And then we come to find out that every member that is across from me right now and every member of the New Democratic Party is backing loans as well.

So, Madam Chair, how can this government justify continuing to participate in this debate until they know what is appropriate and until they declare all of their conflicts and check with the Ethics Commissioner of Alberta on whether they're in conflict? Certainly, the second part of it, what's really relevant for the debate that we're having here today, is: what are they going to do to make this better for Albertans? What are they going to do to make sure the legislation won't allow shadow parties to continue? What are they going to do to fix the conflict that currently exists? And then, lastly, are they going to tell their members that they have automatically made them members of an organization that is backing large amounts of loans to their political party?

Our number one goal with the electoral reform legislation that we have dealt with in the 29th Legislature of Alberta is to get big money out of politics and to make the process more transparent. And here we come to find, at the very least, an organization that is controlled and, you know, owned by the New Democratic Party, that nobody knows about except for maybe some of the hon. members in the government.

Its own documents show that there is a financial connection between the parties, that, at the very least, according to the minister there were concerns enough in the party across the way that they're trying to communicate with the Chief Electoral Officer to address those concerns and to check where the concerns were at, but they're not communicating with the Ethics Commissioner. [interjections] Well, it's not about that; it's about making sure, one, that you're not in conflict and then, two, that we close these loopholes in the future. We don't want every political party all of a sudden to start making shadow parties that are the exact mirror of them, completely

controlled by the political party but off the books, unaudited, unaccountable to the people of Alberta. That goes exactly against everything these members say that they stand for, Madam Chair, exactly against everything these members say that they stand for.

I will yield the floor shortly, Madam Chair, and close with this. I highly encourage all the members who are members of the secret society – and some of them may have just found out today – the secret shadow party, to consider whether they should vote for this legislation or whether they should at least adjourn and contact the Ethics Commissioner.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Again, the member does not understand and does not have the details on this. This is something that we have worked with the Chief Electoral Officer on. I would like to thank the member for his concern because we are equally concerned about making sure that there are no loopholes; that there are no undeclared goods, services, costs; that there are no benefits to other parties that are not equally available to all and transparent to the people of Alberta. The Calgary house society does not fulfill the purpose that the member opposite appears to think it does. The amendment that he has put forward does not address any real or existing problem with elections financing, so I will not be supporting his amendment. I thank the member for his concerns.

**Mr. Nixon:** Madam Chair, the documents that I referred to in my comments on this are audit documents associated with both societies. The minister has risen now twice, and at no time has she referred to the fact that loans are being guaranteed. We can't skirt over that fact. There are tremendous other questions with what's going on with the society. I'd like to hear the answers so that, at the very least, Albertans can know what's going on because it looks fishy, without a doubt.

The facts produced in their own audit documents say that this nonprofit group, or society, is backing the loans of the New Democratic Party – backing the loans – and one of the members has already recused himself from the debate for doing the same thing. So that conflict – at the very least, there are many other serious issues that will have to be addressed, and we'll use the independent officers of the Legislature for that. But specifically to the bill that we're on right now, this organization is backing the debts of the New Democratic Party, and judging by the minister not wanting to comment on it or not commenting on it, obviously, then, their audit reports are correct. I assume the audit reports of the party are correct. I think that if the audit reports of the party are not correct, then we would have a completely other issue that we would have to deal with.

You have one member who recused himself and the rest of the members that are in this Assembly participating in a debate on the same thing that that member had to recuse himself for. Rising up and over and over saying, "Oh, no, it's not like that; it's not like that," when their own reports show that there is a financial connection between the two organizations, at the very least for backing debt. At the very least for backing debt: an organization that is completely and one hundred per cent controlled by the governing party.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Regardless of the fact of whether the members opposite knew about this previous to this morning or not, we are now going to be voting on this amendment. You now have knowledge of that, so it's going to be

up to you to decide how you vote on this and whether you actually vote on this amendment. Think very carefully before you do.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A8?

**Mr. Nixon:** The last thing I will ask, Madam Chair, through you to the minister, is: will the housing society at the very least make its books transparent immediately to the people of Alberta?

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A8?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A8 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:20 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Schneider
Fildebrandt	MacIntyre	Strankman
Fraser	Nixon	van Dijken
Gotfried	Orr	Yao
Hanson	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	McPherson
Babcock	Gray	Payne
Carlier	Hinkley	Phillips
Connolly	Hoffman	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Dach	Larivee	Schreiner
Dang	Littlewood	Shepherd
Drever	Loyola	Sucha
Eggen	Luff	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Malkinson	Woollard

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 33
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[Motion on amendment A8 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move to adjourn debate on Bill 35 and that when the committee does rise and report progress later this morning, they do so on Bill 35.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act

**The Chair:** We are on amendment A6. Are there any members wishing to speak to this amendment? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity this morning. When we are talking about an act such as Bill 27 and the significant impact that such an act is going to have upon our province, it is important that we take into account a very fulsome and thorough consultation process and that that consultation process not just be left to chance but that there be some prescription contained within the act to ensure that proper consultation is carried out with all stakeholders that are responsible.



One of those stakeholders, of course, is the landowner. The landowners, especially when it comes to utility-scale renewable projects such as wind and solar, become an extremely important part of the process here. Landowners are going to be required or asked at least, hopefully asked, in a voluntary way to participate in the development of utility-scale renewable projects that are going to require massive amounts of land area and, quite literally, thousands of landowners. I believe that it is vitally important that when we have a bill such as this, that is going to be requiring that 30 per cent of our electricity come from renewables by 2030, which is only a few years away, really – in the grand scheme of massive projects 14 years isn't that far away, not really. It's kind of almost tomorrow already when you're talking about really massive infrastructure builds. I believe that it's extremely important on the front end of this bill that we get some things very right, and one of those is consultation, specifically consultation with landowners.

So I would like to propose an amendment.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, we are already on an amendment.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** We are? Which amendment?

**The Chair:** We're considering amendment A6, moved by yourself.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, as you can tell, I have a few more. We're on A6: unless the minister is satisfied that reasonable consultation in respect of the proposal is taking place with any affected municipalities.

**The Chair:** No. That's not the amendment.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** No? Can you read the amendment that you're on?

**The Chair:** The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake to move that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended in section 3(2) by striking out "may establish" and substituting "shall establish and make public."

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Right. Thank you, Madam Chair. The "shall" instead of "may."

Well, here we have a situation, as I mentioned, I believe, yesterday, where the minister is not under any compulsion to actually do the minister's job in ensuring that something takes place specific to proposals and the objectives and goals of those proposals. I would hope, Madam Chair, that the members of this House would realize that it's vitally important, when we're talking about this scale of project, that the minister set out specific goals and specific criteria. For example, if you have very large corporations that are going to be involved in these projects and municipalities as well, who are going to be asked to participate in a very real way, especially when we're talking about utility scale, it's going to be vitally important that the minister has laid out the specific goals and objectives for this particular development. If we don't have those, if the minister is not required to make those specific objectives and make them public, then what exactly are we going by?

**11:30**

Does that mean, then, that developers are just going to be throwing proposals at the minister and that the minister is going to somehow choose the best one? We have a process here that is going to be incorporating the consultation of municipalities, possibly user groups. It only makes sense that the minister actually be required. I realize that in some pieces of legislation you don't want to be really overly prescriptive in the legislation, but when it comes to something like this, where the minister doesn't even have to set

forth a specific target, it just seems to me that that is a hole in that piece of legislation.

Now, we have some other bits of legislation that this government has run through this House. Specifically, I'm referring to Bill 20, where we attempted to put forward a couple of friendly amendments from this side of the House requiring a certain measure of measurement to quantify results. It met with significant opposition from the government side. The government did not want to actually have measurement and verification of verifiable greenhouse gas reduction on account of Bill 20 before increasing the carbon tax in 2018.

If you remember that particular debate, I said something in the order that we have a carbon tax coming into play in January 2017. The government claims that that carbon tax is going to result in greenhouse gas reductions. Okay. Furthermore, in 2018 that carbon tax is going to increase substantially and result in even more greenhouse gas reductions. However, for the alleged greenhouse gas reduction the government claims is going to take place as a result of the carbon tax coming into play in 2017, the government balked at any idea of actually measuring and seeing if, in fact, that initial carbon tax results in any genuine greenhouse gas reductions.

I will say this also, Madam Chair. It's one thing to say that your carbon tax is going to result in greenhouse gas emissions within the borders of the province of Alberta. However, we have at great length explored the reality of carbon leakage and that carbon leakage is the Achilles heel of carbon taxation. Carbon leakage does result in no net greenhouse gas reductions globally. When we are talking about measurement and verification of results, it's going to be very important that this government prove their climate action plan and, specifically, carbon taxation because that is the mechanism they claim will result in a change of behaviour amongst us Albertans, to the point where we will be reducing our greenhouse gas footprint. All right. Fine. Prove it. Put some measurements in place. Demonstrate the truth of that allegation.

Furthermore, is it actually resulting in a net global reduction? Frankly, carbon leakage has a unique phenomenon to it in that in the alleged reduction of greenhouse gas emissions here in this province, carbon leakage has a unique ability to actually increase the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in another jurisdiction beyond the level of greenhouse gases that would have been emitted here had we kept that business here. That's why in some cases you're going to see carbon leakage resulting in higher greenhouse gas emissions globally than if the government in question would have simply left things alone. That is a very real reality in the phenomenon of carbon leakage, and this government refuses to acknowledge the reality of carbon leakage and has proposed nothing whatsoever to address the reality of carbon leakage.

In fact, when members from this side of the House attempted to shield our greenhouse industry in this province, the government side of the House unanimously voted that amendment down. That one little industry proves my point in that every greenhouse operator in this province cannot survive this government's carbon tax in 2017 and 2018.

That lost production of locally grown, fresh, often organic produce is going to be replaced by produce from jurisdictions as far away as Mexico and Central America and Florida, and those items are going to be trucked all the way up here – all the way up here – emitting greenhouse gas emissions all the way here. We put a bunch of greenhouse operators and their staff out of work, there are going to be no taxes paid by those people, and now we're having to buy food from another jurisdiction. We're actually creating jobs somewhere else, creating carbon emissions somewhere else on account of an act and a tax that was supposed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but, in fact, does not.

I think I kind of understand why this government is so shy of measurables. They haven't done their homework to actually do the analytics on the impact of this carbon tax throughout a very complex economy like Alberta's. It's like they're denying the science of economics and economic realities. If they would simply perform those analytics, they would come to a similar conclusion, I believe, to what the government of Australia and the government of France have come to that has led them to cancel their carbon tax. Just one reason they're cancelling it is the adverse economic impact and the adverse greenhouse gas emission impact of carbon taxation.

I would hope that at the very least this government would not be so shy of putting their money where their mouth is, so to speak, and allow for some actual measurable objectives that the minister has to put in place so that we can see what the targets are and that the minister not be simply given an option to do those sorts of things but that the minister be required to provide that and make it public. Transparency is a problem with this government, and this is a friendly amendment to help that situation and to give Albertans at least something they can look to, something that they can see. They can see a public document that says, "Here are the targets; these are the specific objectives of what the minister wants to accomplish" rather than just saying: well, the minister may or may not.

I would hope that every member in this House will support this I think friendly amendment.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:39 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Orr
Drysdale	Hanson	Schneider
Fildebrandt	Loewen	van Dijken
Fraser	MacIntyre	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	McPherson
Babcock	Gray	Payne
Carlier	Hinkley	Phillips
Connolly	Hoffman	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Dach	Larivee	Schreiner
Dang	Littlewood	Shepherd
Drever	Loyola	Sucha
Eggen	Luff	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Malkinson	Westhead
Ganley	Mason	Woollard
Totals:	For – 12	Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

**The Chair:** Pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee shall now rise and report progress on bills 35 and 27.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 35 and Bill 27. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed, say no. So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to move that we adjourn this morning and reconvene at 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:57 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, December 8, 2016

Day 60

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
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Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
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Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
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Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
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McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,  
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Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

## Party standings:

New Democrat: 55      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 8      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

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Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Fraser	Strankman
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Kazim	

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Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
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Kazim	

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Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a distinguished guest representing the Swiss Confederation, Mr. Pascal Bornoz, consul general of Switzerland in Vancouver. The consul general brings a wealth of experience and perspective to Canada from postings in places as diverse as Santiago, Bangkok, and Riyadh.

Mr. Speaker, Swiss people are counted among the earliest of European newcomers to the treaty lands of Alberta. In fact, two of the earliest Alberta communities, Stettler and Blumenau, were founded by the Swiss pioneer Carl Stettler. Also, the famous Swiss mountain guides were instrumental in growing the tourism market in our world-renowned mountain parks. Their legendary climbing and guiding skills opened up the Rocky Mountains for thousands of Albertans and tourists from around the globe. I'm happy to say that we continue to advance our relationship with Switzerland through educational exchange programs, tourism, and trade. We welcome every opportunity to build our relationships with valuable international partners like Switzerland.

I'll now ask Consul General Bornoz to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. Minister of Labour, you have a guest?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Ryan MacIsaac. Mr. MacIsaac is a litigation lawyer practising in the Calgary and Toronto offices of McCarthy Tétrault. He is visiting Edmonton for a hearing regarding the importation of gypsum drywall from the United States into western Canada, a matter of great importance for this province, particularly as the rebuild continues in Fort McMurray. I would now like to ask Mr. MacIsaac to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, on your behalf I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature Mr. Adam Fuñe. Adam is a constituent of yours, Mr. Speaker. He graduated from Monsignor McCoy high school in 2016 and was a recipient of the prestigious Governor General's award. He is now attending the University of Alberta, pursuing a bachelor of science with a biochemistry specialization. I would ask that Adam rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the honour to introduce to you and through you someone that I've worked with

since I've been a minister in the government of Alberta, David Breakwell, who is the assistant deputy minister of the corporate strategies and services division in the Infrastructure department. After an accomplished public service career and having made many important contributions in the departments of Energy, Health, and Infrastructure, he has decided to retire from his role in leading strategic corporate services in Alberta Infrastructure. His willingness to help others, his competence, and his kind-natured personality will be truly missed by me and by his colleagues across the government. Public servants like David are a vital part of our society and help us deliver the services that Albertans need. David is joined today by his wife, Debbie, his daughter Jodie Dearden, his son Landon Breakwell, and his daughter-in-law Lauren Breakwell. I would ask David, Debbie, Jodie, Landon, and Lauren to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you our newest member to the Alberta Health Services Board. I'm excited to say that I recently appointed Heather Hirsch, who is a 19-year veteran front-line health care worker. I know that her experiences as an indigenous woman and a mom will serve us very well as we think about the families of the citizens that we have so much work to do for to continue to provide the very best health care for. I ask that Heather along with her daughter Amelia Crowshoe, who are both present here today, please rise and receive the warmest of welcomes from our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A real pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to the House Harpreet Gill, another stalwart Liberal from Edmonton, also a Sikh community organizer and co-organizer of the Sikh parade and a progressive activist. He's also co-organizing a seminar on opiates and fentanyl at the Sikh temple in Mill Woods this coming Sunday at 11:30 with Councillor Moe Banga, with the help of the gurdwara executive committee. With him are his mother and sister, Chhinderpal Kaur Gill and Jaspreet Kaur Gill. I'll ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you for accommodating a second introduction. My pleasure to introduce to you and through you two courageous and historic individuals, Darlene Dunlop and Eric Musekamp. Please stand and be recognized by the Legislature. Eric and Darlene have been here many, many times in their long 15-year fight for the fundamental rights of farm workers. Today they're in Edmonton to attend the launch of a book, *Farm Workers in Western Canada*, a collection of essays about the farm worker experience, to which Darlene is a major contributor. The launch will be at 3 o'clock at the Common, and I invite all in the Legislature to join us, especially the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, who's still puzzled as to why Bill 6 is a legal necessity. Let's give Darlene and Eric a warm welcome to the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly two very special people.

The first is Dr. Audrey Reid, who is originally from Vermont and is now a lecturer at the University of Alberta in the department of biological sciences. Next is Dr. Aaron LeBlanc, who is a Killam postdoctoral fellow at the University of Alberta and just happens to be my son. I knew that he was going to be a scientist when he decided at age five to glue himself and his friend to the carpet face down to test the strength of white glue. If they would please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three distinct introductions today. I am pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Diane Walton, Ann Marston, and T.K. Boomer. Diane is a writer and the managing editor of *On Spec* magazine, which is an award-winning magazine and was founded in Edmonton. *On Spec* is probably English Canada's longest running print journal of science fiction, fantasy, and other speculative literature. Ann Marston has had a very eclectic career. She's been a bush pilot, a flight instructor, a literacy co-ordinator, a college instructor, and is now a published fantasy writer. T.K. Boomer, or, as he's also known, Greg McKittrick, is a science fiction writer, with his first book of a trilogy, *Planet Song*, just published. He is also the reason I am sitting here as an MLA as he has been a wonderful support to my activism in our 33 years of marriage. I would like to ask Diane, Ann, and T.K. Boomer to please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome from the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a constituent of mine, Tracee Collins. Tracee spends her time helping children, families, seniors, and vulnerable populations in Calgary. She served for six years in the Palliser-Bayview-Pumphill Community Association, most recently as the president, and she currently serves as board director for the Calgary Homeless Foundation. I would request Tracee to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly quite a large group of folks who work in my Ministry of Advanced Education. They work in various departments, including the apprenticeship and student aid division, advanced learning and community partnerships, and the strategic and corporate services division. Their roles vary, of course, but one thing they all have in common is that their work ensures the success of our higher education system for the students of this province. They take tremendous pride in their work on behalf of Albertans, and I take tremendous pride in working with them and representing them as the Minister of Advanced Education.

I'd ask them all to rise as I read their names: Guy Germain, Ailish Goldie, Matthew Cox, Robert Rock – please stay standing as I read your names – Maria Morgadinho, Mavin Kaur, Michelle Hutchinson, Bose Lampejo, Laryssa Talanchuk, Katrina Sholdice, Debra Tworek, Sarrie Ling, Charlotte Balding, Kayla Olyan, Nicole Sawatzky, Joana Apreku, Aimee Galick, Mira Quintin, Terri Curtis, Lindsay Salloum, Alfred Appiah, Razvan Catrinescu, Megan van

der Linden, Erin Reynar, Kerri Hill. If there's anybody else that I missed, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly five individuals dedicated to building Edmonton's brand by telling our authentic story: Todd Babiak, director of Story Engine and one of the earliest supporters of Make Something Edmonton; Carmen Douville, programming/community manager; Shayne Woodsmith, digital storyteller with Make Something Edmonton; Cheryl Watson, VP; and Joseph Pedrola, activation manager with the Urban Economy team at the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation. I'd like to ask that all my guests rise as I thank them for their hard work on behalf of our city and as I ask that we all provide them with the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my guest, an outstanding Calgarian and Albertan, Jeff Callaway. I've known Jeff for many years. We lived in the same neighbourhood, and we worked in adjoining buildings in downtown Calgary. Jeff is the president of Wildrose, working hard every day to bring Alberta back on track and bring all conservatives together. In his spare time Jeff works for Canaccord Genuity Wealth Management. I ask my guest to rise, and I ask all of you to give him a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome to you and through you Cynthia Watson, the chief evolution officer of Vivo, a sustainable charity on a mission to raise healthier generations, which is located in Calgary-Northern Hills. The organization is committed to creating evidence-based solutions to get Alberta moving more and sitting less, something we can all attest to in this House.

Also, I'd like to introduce David Watson. He just received from the Governor General this morning the sovereign's medal for volunteers for his work with veterans. In the last 16 years he's created 1,000-plus unique memorial prints as an act of remembrance, and they are displayed in over 48 countries around the world.

I'd ask my two guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the House Elizabeth Roberts. Liz has been a practicum student at the Lethbridge-West constituency office since September and is completing her social work degree at the Lethbridge campus of the University of Calgary. Liz has been very helpful these past four months to my two constituency assistants, who join her here today, Lisa Lambert and Natasha Fairweather. I ask them now all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests for introductions today, hon. members? The Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure to introduce to you and through you today staff from Service Alberta who represent the residential tenancy dispute resolution service, better known as the RTDRS. This October the RTDRS office in Edmonton reached the milestone of 50,000 applications for tribunals. I know that not everyone could attend today, but I'll mention everyone who we know was able to attend, and I'll ask those in attendance to please stand as I mention their names so we can celebrate them and their important work: Martin Roy, Shelley Johnson, Narinder Sidhu, Colleen Wing, Reyila Dilixiati, Beth McKinley, Angela Wesley, Brendon Hewitt, Andrew Herriot, James Lambert, Michael Baron, Jim Young, and Meghan Woo. I'll ask that this House please join me in providing my guests with the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

#### Make Something Edmonton

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of my city. Edmonton is a city of innovators. Edmontonians created Canada's first mosque, opened the first food bank, and started the North American fringe theatre movement. They founded successful national and international companies and gained international recognition for their art, music, literature, and film, and like the First Nations who once met here on the Rosedale Flats, they are open, welcoming, and collaborative.

That's the story that Make Something Edmonton has been dedicated to telling since 2013, and that's the story that propelled them to win the City Nation Place award for best expression of place brand identity in London last month, beating out campaigns from Sweden, Costa Rica, and Russia. Make Something Edmonton is an initiative supported by the city of Edmonton and the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, an agency tasked with cultivating the energy, innovation, and investment needed to build a prosperous and resilient Edmonton economy.

Together with a number of community stakeholders they developed a unique idea to tell our story in an authentic way, not with logos and slogans but by inspiring Edmontonians to pursue their passions and ideas to make their city even better. Edmontonians responded, launching 1,500 individual community-driven projects and making Make Something Edmonton the platform of choice for city builders and city shapers. Edmonton Economic Development Corporation continues to build on this success, leveraging our identity and branding to lay a solid foundation to market and promote investment in trade, attract new tourism, conferences, conventions, and major events.

I personally have a page on Make Something Edmonton, and I've had the privilege of seeing many of its projects come to life. I'm a firm believer in the power of citizens collaborating and contributing to build a better city, and I encourage everyone in the Edmonton region to explore Make Something Edmonton's site and take part as a city builder or as a supporter in making a new idea real, in making something Edmonton, and in making our city a better place.

### Government Policies

**Mr. Nixon:** I've never seen a government so removed and out of touch with the people they're supposed to govern. They've shown gross incompetence and failed to be honest about the death of children in care. After emergency debate in this House about the life of little Serenity, they continue to make a mess of the file. It took the Human Services minister weeks to pull Serenity's file and give it to the RCMP. The minister should resign, but the Premier owns this. She told Albertans that she was serious about fixing this but dropped the file completely. But that's just where it starts.

The NDP has the nerve to stand here and tell everyone that their carbon tax is good for families. They are indifferent about the pain it will cause families. They stand up and are completely indifferent that the carbon tax will pillage charities across the province. They are shutting down coal, literally destroying whole communities, and they brag about it. But they refuse to look those people whose livelihoods they are destroying in the eyes or even bother to meet with them. They are smug, they are arrogant, and they are condescending. They look down on farmers, they're embarrassed of our industries, and they call small-business owners selfish as they are forced to close their doors because of NDP policies.

Worst of all, the Premier now has the nerve to call Albertans worried about her agenda Chicken Little. Tell that to over 100,000 people who've lost their jobs under the NDP. Tell that to Albertans who are dealing with the worst unemployment in two decades. Go into my riding and look at the climbing rates of crime and suicide and tell them that they're just being Chicken Little. This is not a joke, Mr. Speaker. This government's policies are hurting people's lives. Albertans are sick and tired of it.

The next election is just two years away, and it cannot come fast enough for the majority of Albertans. Albertans are ready to wipe this NDP government from the map.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### Investigation of Death of Child in Kinship Care

**Mr. Jean:** I know that we all want better for kids who go through government care, but the level of incompetence from this NDP government on this file is breathtaking. In September 2014 Serenity died while in kinship care. She was beaten, malnourished, and sexually assaulted. No one deserves justice more than this little girl, whose life was cut cruelly short and who lived in unimaginable and unacceptable pain. We were told that there was an active RCMP investigation, but the RCMP said: this investigation is on hold, awaiting more reports. It turns out that they were waiting on this NDP government. How can the Premier possibly justify these delays?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. First, I would like to clarify some dates. On September 15 the OCME sent the final file to the RCMP, and they were investigating at that time with the RCMP. They are mixing two investigations. On October 24 the RCMP asked the DFNA in question for the case file. On October 27 the DFNA reached out and started discussing the release. On November 18 Human Services got the written request, and on November 22 Human Services provided the file.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jean:** In mid-November we held an emergency debate in this House. It was an opportunity for the government to stand and justify and explain what they were doing to help Serenity's case, but they failed. For weeks we've asked dozens of questions into her death, with no real answers and zero accountability from this minister. It wasn't until late last night that it was discovered that the Human Services minister delayed giving an important report on Serenity's case to the RCMP for weeks. Why did the Premier and multiple ministers keep Albertans in the dark in relation to Serenity and her death?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The death of Serenity or any kid in the child intervention system is a deeply concerning issue, and we do care about that. On November 18, 2016, Human Services got a written request for the case file. Two working days later, on November 22, the case file was transferred to the RCMP. These are the facts. They can have their opinion but not their own facts.

**Mr. Jean:** There is only one set of facts. This government failed Serenity and many children in care. At every corner of this story there's gross negligence from all levels of government, and it failed a little girl. Without substantial changes nothing will improve. The Premier, the Justice minister, the Deputy Premier, and the Human Services minister all said that they could not comment on an ongoing, active investigation, but it turns out that the investigation had stalled, and the only thing stalling it was this NDP government. Why did all departments of this government mislead Albertans about the state of this investigation, and when will it stop?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying that there's nothing more concerning than death of children in our care. The RCMP was working with the office of the Chief Medical Examiner. There was an investigation. We received the request on November 18. Two working days later I provided the file. That's what we are doing. I also today announced a panel to look into these issues. We have been failing these kids for the last decade. Serenity was not the first case. We have an obligation to fix . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second main question, hon. members.

**Mr. Jean:** Secrecy continues to shroud our entire children in care system, and it's simply a disaster. In the final 11 months of Serenity's life no care workers checked in on her despite numerous complaints and warnings. The Child and Youth Advocate's office had been investigating this case for over two years, but at every turn he was blocked from further information. How is it that during these two years and this past month no one in the NDP pushed and asked the RCMP simply what more they needed to complete their investigation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member. We have failed our children, Serenity for decades, and now it's time for action. That's why the Premier committed to considering making a panel, and today we released the terms of reference for that panel. That panel, which will include . . . [interjections] If they care about these issues, which I believe they do, they will work with me to find solutions to all these issues going forward. Those terms of reference are broad enough to fix . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, this is a very sensitive topic. I want you all to remember that we're going to have a lot of travel ahead of us tonight, and I hope we can calm down the mood.

Yes, I will give five extra seconds to the clock for that.

I think that we are at first supplemental.

**Mr. Jean:** The best action this minister could do right now is to resign. That would help Albertans. The minister has called this – I quote – an unfortunate error. Most Albertans, I believe, would call it gross incompetence and totally unacceptable not just by the minister but by the cabinet and by the Premier. This case wasn't a secret. The Child and Youth Advocate had been investigating. We were all here during the emergency debate, but nothing was done for weeks and months. If the Premier or anyone in this government were serious about doing all they could to get Serenity justice, why didn't they just simply pick up the phone and call the RCMP?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this case we have done everything and we will do everything that's needed to be done. We will work with the RCMP. At the same time we will make sure that their investigation remains independent. There were Human Services ministers before me. There will be after me, but changing faces doesn't change anything. Changing policies changes things. Changing practices changes things. That's what I am inviting everybody to join me in.

**Mr. Jean:** I asked this question on November 21, and I'm going to ask it again. The only reason we know what we do today is because a reporter dug and asked the tough questions. She found answers while the Child and Youth Advocate got requests for information blocked at every single turn. A system that operates in secrecy, like this NDP government is doing, will fail Albertans. Premier: where was the report from the medical examiner's office? Where was the report from the Justice department? Where was the report from Human Services? And why did it take so long to complete an autopsy on this little girl?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reporter certainly is very passionate. I respect that, but she didn't have all the facts. Let me clarify. On September 15 the OCME sends the final file to the RCMP. On October 24 the RCMP asks the DFNA for the case file. On October 27 the DFNA reaches out to Human Services. On November 22 Human Services receives the formal written request. Two working days later we provided the answer. Those are the facts.

**The Speaker:** Third main question.

**Mr. Jean:** Quote: it is an issue still under active investigation, so we will work with the RCMP and all involved to make sure we get this right. End quote. That was the Human Services minister on November 22. Turns out that was completely false. The investigation was on hold. The RCMP wasn't being worked with. They were waiting to get the documents from the ministry that they needed to do their investigation. The minister failed to hand over that report until Tuesday or Wednesday of this week. This minister's best before date is long overdue. He needs to go. Why hasn't the Premier demanded his resignation?

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.  
The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to echo the comments that have been raised by members on both sides of this House that this is a very tragic situation. What kids deserve is somebody who's got their back, and I have to say, with all confidence, that the minister has their back. I don't think that anybody in this House campaigned on defending the system. The system needs to be fixed, and today the minister brought forward a recommendation for a panel to do just that.

We take the opposition at their word that they want to help us fix this. Please do roll up your sleeves and help us. All of our children deserve an opportunity to have the very best life, and I challenge everyone to help us do that.

2:00

**Mr. Jean:** That minister has had 19 months on this file to fix it and get it right. "We are committed to working with [the RCMP] in ensuring that they have the tools that they need to continue their investigation." That was the Justice minister on November 24. Clearly, the Justice department never took that direction seriously because it took weeks for the government to hand over a critical report to the RCMP. The Justice minister failed to do her job, and what she told this Assembly wasn't right. She can't be trusted on this file anymore either. Will the Premier demand her resignation, and if not, why not?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I have full confidence in every person sitting on this front bench, and I think that all of us in this House should know that we all step forward to try to make the system better, not defend the system. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I can't hear the speaker.  
Please proceed.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Official Opposition brought forward a recommendation. We've taken their recommendations very seriously, and we do want to work with them. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Keep going.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you. We want to work with all members of this House, and that's why the announcement was made this morning. Our children deserve better, Mr. Speaker, and we're committed to that.

**Mr. Jean:** The announcement does not include transparency or whistle-blower protection. It's a sham.

If the Premier won't hold any of her ministers accountable for this mess, she needs to start giving Albertans some real answers. The fact is that Albertans expected better from the NDP on this file, but they failed and failed miserably. They failed to do their homework, they failed to do their due diligence, and it's meant the delay of justice for an innocent young girl. Will she tell Albertans on what date she knew this RCMP investigation was put on hold and why she didn't take any actions whatsoever to ensure the police got every single document they needed to investigate and solve this issue?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to reinforce that the timeline that was outlined is, in fact, the true timeline. On November 18 the written request was received. On

November 22 a secure link was provided to the files that were requested. It's my understanding that there were some issues on the side of those who were trying to access the report. Those issues in terms of the file format were remedied, and they have their report now. I have to say that the timeline is the fact. The other fact is that we want to work with every member of this House to make life better. Children deserve somebody who's got their back. They don't deserve a minister who throws up his hands and not . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier.  
The leader of the third party.

### Child Death Review Ministerial Panel

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government promised to establish an all-party committee to examine Alberta's child intervention system in public. The Human Services minister today announced something far from that, a ministerial panel that will hide behind closed doors, chaired by the minister responsible. It's like asking a turkey to vote for Thanksgiving. To the Premier: since for Serenity there is no justice if there is no blame, will you now keep your promise of a public all-party committee?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We did take the recommendations that were brought forward and have agreed to have all parties in this House represented in helping us move forward in solving these challenges. There is some very specific information that must remain in confidence, and we will make sure that we protect children's and families' rights to privacy. But there will be a public-facing piece of this. The committee will report publicly, and the committee will be involved in developing next steps to make sure that the public can be involved and have full protections.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, they lost me when they went behind closed doors.

Multiple systems failed Serenity before and after her death, including the child intervention system, the RCMP, the medical examiner's office, and the minister's office. Cracks in these vital systems are evident, and Albertans have a right to know precisely what happened in Serenity's tragic case. Since the ministerial panel won't be conducting its business in public, will the minister call a public inquiry into what happened to Serenity so that we can place blame and get some justice?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, we all want justice. We want justice for Serenity and all of the other children in the system. Again, I'm not here to defend the system; I'm here to fix the system. This is why we have moved forward with creating a committee. I want to clarify that the minister is not chairing the committee. This is going to be a committee that has participation from all parties within this House, and the committee will have the opportunity to engage with the public. I want to warn everyone that some of this information is very difficult, and we need to all be prepared and respect the privacy and integrity of these children. They deserve that, and they deserve a better system.

**Mr. McIver:** No blame, no justice.

I've been a minister. I know that you can't keep track of all your files all the time, but I know when a terrible case like Serenity's comes to light, you have to make it a priority. I always understood then that I was renting my seat as a minister by the day. When you're a minister and you let a crisis languish for three weeks, you

have failed to pay the rent. So both the Human Services minister and the Justice minister haven't paid the rent, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: how soon will you replace these two ineffective ministers?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to confirm that two days after the request was received, a file was uploaded. I understand they had difficulty accessing that file, and that has been corrected.

I have to say that children don't deserve a minister who flips up his desk and walks out; they deserve a minister who is going to stand beside them and fix the system, Mr. Speaker. We want every person in this House to stand up and help this minister and make the system better. That's exactly why we've moved forward with creating this panel and look forward to seeing everybody – I believe it when they say that they want to make the system better, so please do work to help make that happen.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to go on record calling for a legislative committee on this issue as well.

### Chronic Wasting Disease

**Dr. Swann:** I'm shifting topics to the Alberta prion institute, that just received \$11 million from Genome Canada to trace chronic wasting disease in deer, elk, and moose in Alberta. We need to act now to prevent a catastrophe not only in wildlife but in our agriculture community. CWD is a fatal brain disease like mad cow disease. It's spreading across western Canada since its introduction in game farms, and 15 years ago, the experts said that BSE, mad cow disease, would never cross species. Now, several hundred people have died from BSE.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. [interjection] Your time is allocated, hon. member.

Is there a minister who would like to announce . . . [interjection] Hon. member, your time is up.

Please proceed, hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. You know, as a government we absolutely recognize the importance of keeping our livestock – our tame livestock, our domestic livestock, wild livestock – safe from any form of disease. It's important for biosecurity reasons, for our markets, for everything. We're continuing to work with the industry – the farming industry, the wildland farming industry, other livestock industries right across the province – on all our biosecurity issues and continue to be working with the member with the question as well on making sure we can do all we can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Dr. Swann:** It's been a decade since I started raising these issues. When will you ban the movement of all potentially wasting-disease-infected carcasses, live animals, products, equipment, or other sources of infectious materials across this province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the member for the question. The odd time that, you know, those biosecurity issues do come up in the province, the department takes it very seriously and reacts very quickly. Those operations do happen not that often, but we do take action on it. Continuing to work with the member, we

welcome the member's input in going forward to do much more if we could.

**Dr. Swann:** No action. No action in 10 years.

Given there's now evidence that thousands of citizens are unknowingly consuming infected animals, including First Nations, will the minister mandate and implement now convenient, cost-free testing of all animals harvested in the CWD-affected areas?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The member I think does realize that there is testing going on. It is true that we have over the past few years, you know, picked up a couple of incidents when this has happened. It isn't the doomsday scenario that he's trying to make us believe. Incidents do happen. We have control of it. We continue with those controls. I have all the confidence in our public servants to do what they do best, and that is to make sure that we're all safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

### 2:10 Investigation of Death of Child in Kinship Care (continued)

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a former worker with children's services, as a mother, and as an Albertan, I, too, am heartbroken when any child dies. Minister, did the department of Human Services fail to give the report of Serenity to the RCMP?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. The reporter is certainly very passionate and vocal on these issues, but she didn't get all the facts right. So I will clarify that Human Services received a written request on November 18. A few days later, on November 22, we provided the file, the password, a secure file. There were some issues. As of yesterday the RCMP has confirmed that they have received the needed material. We are doing everything that needs to be done.

**Ms Goehring:** For two years the office of the Child and Youth Advocate asked the office of the Chief Medical Examiner for their report. They never heard back. What happened?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you, Member, for the question. The OCME is changing its practice as to how it communicates with the OCYA. Until now standard practice had been that when the office of the Child and Youth Advocate contacts the OCME about a specific case, a note is added to the file to indicate that request. Going forward, a reply will be sent to the OCYA to ensure they are aware of any current investigations.

**Ms Goehring:** Most autopsies take a few days. This one took two years. Why?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The office of the Chief Medical Examiner determined the cause of death within a few days and notified the RCMP immediately. The autopsy report took additional time to complete due to its complexity and as a result of the ongoing investigation. The medical examiner has remained in contact with the RCMP as the investigation has continued. The

RCMP requested that the OCME not release its findings as publication of the details of the death could be detrimental to the ongoing police investigation. That's what we confirmed from the OCME.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

### Child Death Review System

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, two years ago the government formed an expert panel to provide recommendations on reforming and streamlining Alberta's child death review system. The panel provided a number of common-sense recommendations, including providing the office of the Chief Medical Examiner direct access to the government's intervention services information system and investigating the deaths of all children in care in Alberta. There have been 71 children die while receiving protective services. Minister, how many of these deaths have been reviewed and by whom?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are two death review processes: one is internal; one is external, the office Child and Youth Advocate if he chooses to do so. It's at his discretion. That is the reason that we have brought forward this proposal of a panel so that all deaths of children can be investigated. If they are serious about it, which I believe they are, they need to work with us to get this right, to fix the system, to have a system in place that we can look at all deaths and learn from those deaths and avoid . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that this government has had 19 months to take action on this important recommendation and given another recommendation of an expert panel, that has been endorsed by the chief medical officer, was the creation of a multidisciplinary child death review committee and given that Alberta's chief medical officer of health stated, and I quote, that the current review processes do not meet the standards recommended by the Canadian Paediatric Society and that the chair of the panel has stated, and I quote again, that there was no evidence of change; nothing happened, end quote, to the minister: what are you waiting for, and how long do the people have to wait for you to do your job?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, I just want to reinforce that nobody is here to defend the system. I believe we're all here to fix the system, and we want you as colleagues of ours in this Legislature to help us do that. So I want to say thank you for bringing forward a recommendation around a committee moving forward.

I have to say that in terms of what's moving forward, all parties will be included. The outside experts will be consulted and invited to present to the public. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order, please. [interjections] Excuse me, maybe you didn't hear me. Order, please.

Please proceed, Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that we can move forward on the following pieces, including that all parties will be included, outside experts will be consulted. There will be assurances.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, I know that this minister and this party want to distract from the fact that this file has been grossly mismanaged and our children in care are suffering. This new panel does little to address any of our concerns. Given that the government has failed to even meet several of its past recommendations and given that the minister has stated that he will absolutely not resign because, I quote, "we have work to do," why doesn't the minister just do what Albertans want, what Albertans expect, and hand in his resignation?

**Ms Hoffman:** Albertans expect every one of us to step up and do what's right for children, Mr. Speaker. That's why we invite the members opposite to participate with us in receiving presentations from the public – from the public – and in ensuring that information about children is protected. The publication will be made public. There will be pieces involved throughout that are very traumatizing, and the members deserve to have the opportunity to be able to process that information in a way that's safe. But the committee will have an opportunity to engage with the public, relevant stakeholders and will have a public-facing manner while protecting the privacy of children and their families.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

### Investigation of Death of Child in Kinship Care (continued)

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday our PC caucus, like many other Albertans, was devastated to learn that this NDP government failed to hand over a critical report to the RCMP regarding child intervention. It is clear that this government has trouble understanding when a crisis is affecting Alberta families, even when it's right in front of their faces. We're seeing this same thing with fentanyl, and we're seeing it again with the child intervention system. Premier, why do you continue to double down and not address crises that are hurting and impacting Albertans today?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. That's one of the reasons why we have moved forward on having two pieces to the panel. One is very short-term, action-focused, immediate actions. The panel itself will be involved in determining next steps because the panel, all of us in this Chamber owe it to roll up our sleeves and make sure that we're doing everything we can to fix this.

Then afterwards there will be a longer piece that involves, Mr. Speaker – the panel members themselves will be involved in developing the outward-facing pieces of that to ensure the safety and protection of the children and that public accountability is provided.

**Mr. Gill:** Given that we know the Human Services minister and the Justice minister fall back on empty key message promises of looking into certain issues and that the Justice minister's response was that the matter was being investigated by the RCMP and she cannot share the important progress, we aren't buying it anymore. The Minister of Human Services was not actively following up on this heartbreaking case, and the Minister of Justice was not ensuring her department was working collaboratively with the RCMP. Premier, do you have confidence in the ability of both of these ministers to ensure that we don't lose any more children?

**Ms Hoffman:** The Justice minister and the Human Services minister absolutely have my confidence and the confidence of our entire caucus, Mr. Speaker. We are working with them to provide supports and opportunities to help them improve the system. Everyone knows the system needs to be fixed, and it is our responsibility to step up and do that. You have two options: you defend the system and ask for an individual to take responsibility; you fix the system and have an individual taking responsibility. Our minister is doing just that, and he's stepping up to fix the system, and I hope that all members opposite do just that as well.

**The Speaker:** The second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Premier, you're out of touch with Albertans because they have lost confidence in your cabinet. Given that the Minister of Human Services and the Minister of Justice have not done their job and are holding up an RCMP investigation into the death of four-year-old Serenity, to the Premier. My question is very simple. Will you do the right thing today and replace these two ministers so we can move forward with an all-party committee to address this issue in this child intervention system and start saving lives?

2:20

**Ms Hoffman:** We are moving forward with an all-party committee, Mr. Speaker, and we want the committee itself to be involved in just that. That's why we're moving forward with making sure that we have opportunities to fix the system, and we are committed to doing just that. The two individuals that are being called upon are standing right there. They're working to make the system better. Instead of flipping over a table and calling for everyone to start from scratch, I encourage everyone to come to the table, sit down, work on the system, and make it better because every child deserves that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In November several ministers in this NDP government, including the Justice minister, stood up and told the House that there was an ongoing investigation into the death of Serenity. The RCMP just received the files that they need to continue a full investigation this Tuesday. To the Minister of Justice: can you explain to Albertans what happened, and do you agree with the Minister of Human Services that nobody will be held to account for this tragic death of children in our care?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. My understanding is that the RCMP are actively investigating this case. The RCMP have the relevant documents that they require. The office of the Chief Medical Examiner notified the RCMP of the cause of death as soon as it was determined, which was within a few days of the death. The RCMP requested that the OCME not release the findings as publications of the details of the tragic death could be extremely detrimental to the ongoing investigation. Absolutely, the RCMP are moving forward with their investigation, and we are supporting them in that, and if they require additional information, we'll be happy to comply.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is saddening to hear that this government isn't taking our children in care seriously.

Given that we've learned from the RCMP officials this morning that this government waited until Tuesday to submit Serenity's report despite weeks of pressure from the opposition, why didn't

the Justice minister take action when the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, the media, and the opposition raised the issue?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. That timeline is troubling, and this started far before the questions that were raised in this House, but the timeline is the truth: September 2016, the office of the Chief Medical Examiner completed the report; October 24, the RCMP asked for the report; October 27, DFNA reached out to Human Services. It goes on: November 22, the report was uploaded. I understand now that there were some challenges that the receiving party had with downloading that file. Those have been fixed, and the file is in the hands of those who require it.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government looks like it's over its head. We've seen this issue with FOIP obstruction persisting at the Ministry of Justice, and considering that the Serenity case raises new issues around secrecy within this government, will the Premier admit that the minister is incapable of managing her department and restore the trust that has been broken under this government's watch and actually hold somebody responsible for the tragic death of Serenity?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll say again that we are absolutely committed to fixing the system, not one system but many systems. We are inviting members from the government caucus as well as each other party that's in this House to step up and help us in doing that work. We have a table that we are asking you to come join us at, and our children certainly deserve to have the opportunities that will be presented in that committee, both the shorter term piece as well as the longer term piece, to make sure that the system does improve. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

To the two House leaders, government and opposition: try and manage the communications with each of yourselves through me, please. Yes. Thank you.

Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

### Protection of Indigenous Children in Care

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government has made commitments to indigenous Albertans yet has failed to come through on those promises. Children are dying while this government does nothing to stand up for them and advocate for their health and safety. Maybe Serenity is only one horrible example of the lack of oversight that this minister is providing in the care of our most vulnerable citizens. This government needs to start doing something substantial for indigenous Albertans instead of making empty promises. To the minister. This case is clearly criminal. What has your ministry done to work with the Minister of Human Services? Why hasn't someone been held responsible?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Certainly, the circumstances in which Serenity died break my heart. There is still an investigation going on, and criminal investigations are done by the RCMP and police. We will co-



operate with that investigation and make sure they have all the needed and necessary information.

**Mr. Hanson:** Given that the Child Intervention Implementation Oversight Committee presented their final report to the Minister of Human Services in February 2015, nearly 22 months ago, and since this report strongly recommended that the minister support the creation of a multidisciplinary child death review committee within the office of the Chief Medical Examiner and that this would be part of the Fatality Inquiries Act review, to the minister. You have shown zero leadership to protect indigenous children in care under your watch. How have you participated in the Fatality Inquiries Act review, and what steps have you taken to protect innocent indigenous children?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. This is one of the reasons why, with a panel, there is a two-part piece. The first part is very short term, and it's focused around making sure that all parties in this House have an opportunity to bring forward specific action items and make sure that they've been implemented properly. That's the short-term piece.

The longer term piece will be many other pieces around the public-facing component, working with front-line service providers. I think that that's an excellent recommendation, that is exactly one of the pieces that the panel will be reviewing.

**Mr. Hanson:** Mr. Speaker, there are children in care that do not have another 22 months.

Given that the AG report states that Human Services "does not have clear, coordinated processes for providing early support services to Indigenous children and families" and given that the Indigenous Relations minister is supposed to be supporting other ministries in fulfilling their duty to protect vulnerable indigenous Albertans yet obviously both ministries failed Serenity and her family horribly, what has the minister done to support Human Services in developing processes that will meet the needs of babies such as Serenity before more children are killed while in care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Forming that panel is just one thing. Since becoming the government, we have accepted and acted on the Child and Youth Advocate office's recommendations. We have increased intervention funding by \$37 million, which was voted against by all that side. We strengthened additional support for child care such as increasing the advancing futures bursary. We have developed assessment tools for kinship caregivers. We have dealt with front-line staff caseloads with . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-West.

#### **Investigation of Death of Child in Kinship Care** (continued)

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have had enough. We have a little girl who has died, and there are numerous questions surrounding her death that need to be answered and need to be answered now. The terrible case of Serenity's abuse and subsequent death is indicative of a problematic investigation involving the RCMP. To the Solicitor General. Everyone is accountable here. Will you ask the RCMP on behalf of the people of Alberta to perform an inquiry

into the perceived botched investigation into Serenity's death, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm aware that the member has been a member of the armed forces as well, and the RCMP certainly do have an important . . . [interjections] Sorry. City police and the RCMP in partnership with other law enforcement agencies have a very important role to play in this. My understanding is that the RCMP is investigating this case, and the questions that have been raised are the questions that are being raised by the public as well as by the minister to make sure that Serenity, her family, and all children in the system have justice.

2:30

**Mr. Ellis:** Everything needs to be public in this situation, Mr. Speaker.

The medical examiner's office also falls under the authority of the Solicitor General. There are lots of perceived concerns with the procedures of that office. I believe the Solicitor General should be asking: where did the autopsy report go off the rails? Again to the minister: will you launch a public inquiry into the procedures of the medical examiner's office to determine where it failed Serenity so that it does not fail other children, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Just to reiterate, the RCMP requested that the OCME not release its findings as publication of the tragic death materials could have a detrimental impact on the ongoing investigation. That investigation is still ongoing. The medical examiner has remained in constant contact with the RCMP as the investigation has continued.

We do absolutely want to ensure and now all parties in this House can work to ensure that we absolutely make sure that everyone gets justice in this case. This is something that rests on all of our shoulders, and we all feel . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. The entire system failed Serenity and her mother possibly due to their lower socioeconomic status, and this is unacceptable. It is wrong to treat people differently because of their perceived status. This is what I have been fighting against for years. To the minister: will you and your government initiate a public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding Serenity's death, and if you don't, will you resign so that Alberta can have somebody who cares take that necessary action?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The poverty of children is something that we've been working to address every day in this House. That's why we moved forward on bringing forward the Alberta child benefit as well as working with the federal child benefit, to make sure that families get the supports that they need to be able to stay strong and resilient and together whenever it's safe for children. That, of course, is our ultimate goal. And that's why we are working on both sides, around addressing the system changes once children are in the system but also keeping families strong and resilient and together.

I'm proud to be part of a government that's standing up for families, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Child Death Review Ministerial Panel**  
(continued)

**Loyola:** Thank you. I believe that I speak for all the members of this caucus when I say that we take this issue very, very seriously, and that is the issue of children in care. I'm hoping that we can get a little bit more clarity on the ministerial panel. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister on the ministerial panel: can you please let us know if that will be a public or private committee? [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member. [interjections] Hon. members.  
The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the important question. The chair and the committee members will have the discussion, and they will decide their work plan. As was suggested, I'm not the chair, but I will certainly consider the Wildrose proposal for the chair. This is no different than other panels that have preceded this: the royalty review 2014 panel, the mental health review panel. There is absolutely good reason for the panel to have public meetings, to hear from the front lines and hear from the public. And if they choose to have . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Loyola:** Again, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister. I know that it's important for us to collaborate with all parties in the House. Did you consider any of the opposition's terms of reference when coming up with the terms of reference for the panel?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member. I absolutely did. The public will be invited to make presentations, the front line will be able to participate, and families will be engaged. When we write the terms of reference, they will look at the review process, they will look at root causes, they will look at resources, staffing, training. We have framed those terms of reference in the broadest possible sense to get this right.  
Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, what do you hope that the panel will accomplish?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are two things that are expected of the panel. In six to eight weeks it is expected that the panel will come with concrete recommendations around our death review process. In the next six months it is expected that the panel will come up with concrete recommendations to address root causes of these issues, to address resources and staffing needs, to suggest what changes can be made to avoid similar incidents from happening again, and to strengthen support for families and communities across this province.  
Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Protection of Children in Care**

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. This NDP government failed to protect Serenity, and it breaks my heart to know that there are other little

ones out there right now being sexually abused, beaten, and starved. Today the Human Services minister admitted that the NDP government has failed children in kinship care and announced a government panel that will deliver predetermined outcomes, no powers to subpoena, no public record, and a minister who himself should be investigated is sitting on this panel. How ridiculous is this NDP panel, and how is it a better solution than an all-party legislative committee that this Wildrose has been asking for for three weeks?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We have been moving with the information that we received and the recommendation from the Official Opposition around their terms of reference . . .

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** . . . with the recommendation that came forward from the leader of the third party around creating this in the very first place. We do believe that every single person in this House wants to make life better for children, especially children in care who are suffering. That's why we are wanting to work with all parties in this House to make sure that we can move forward with the best interests of children always as the guiding lens. We want to solve this together, Mr. Speaker, because we know that for more than a hundred years we certainly haven't solved . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier. Thank you.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Again, Serenity was sexually abused, starved, and beaten. It is unimaginable what that child went through. And she represents systemic issues in kinship care. Given that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate has repeatedly detailed that there is insufficient training practices for kinship care providers but, much worse, Mr. Speaker, that there is inadequate training for case-workers and given that these recommendations for improvements are years old, how is it acceptable to this minister that his staff are inadequately trained?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We certainly have taken steps to strengthen the kinship model by coming up with assessment tools. We are also helping staff to deal with caseload issues. There are 27 pilot projects going across the province to ensure that kinship caregivers have the right support, to ensure families have the right support. We have added \$37 million into the system. Across Alberta there are 1,700 kinship homes providing services to children across this province, and one incident doesn't reflect . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing: "Supports. Supports. Supports. We're doing this. We're doing that." Well, the friends and family of Serenity are devastated, and they deserve justice. Given that this family has suffered, they've been betrayed by the government, they've been betrayed by the system, Serenity's mother is finding out about this case in the news, and this minister keeps saying that they have support, I would like to hear from this minister: what supports are they offering Serenity's family, the siblings, and everybody else that has been involved in this case?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A week ago there was a vigil on the Legislature's doorstep. I along with my colleague the Minister of Indigenous Relations participated in that. I have spoken directly to Serenity's family. I have provided them with my information and offered every support whatsoever they need to deal with this. That is what I have done specifically for this case. Going forward, I have established this panel to look into these systemic issues to make sure that we can avoid similar incidents.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member . . . [interjections] Order, please.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

## 2:40 Forest Industries and the Environment

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They call us the do-nothing government, yet mitigating climate change has been a significant priority for the forest sector for many years alongside the former PC government. The forest industry has reduced their carbon footprint and produced green electricity from biomass. To the minister: since 1990 Canadian pulp and paper companies have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 66 per cent. How much is your carbon tax going to reduce emissions in your term in government?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The truth is that we can act now or be left behind. This government took the position that we're going to act now. The member is absolutely right. The forestry sector has taken this seriously. They will continue taking it seriously. From the Forest Products Association of Canada: Canada's Forest Products Industry Is Part of the Solution to the Climate Change Challenge. From the Alberta Forest Products Association: "Mitigating climate change has been a significant priority for the forest sector for many years." They are doing their part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants, and we're going to continue working with them to find those solutions.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that forest companies have invested in renewable and sustainable electricity and have been successfully generating green energy from biomass since long before the government's climate leadership plan and given that this government is incenting new green energy production, to the minister: what is your government doing to recognize the green energy production that's already been built because of the forest industry?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We're reviewing the bioenergy credit program. It was a program that was started by the previous government, had sunsetted. We're reviewing that program, looking to incent the forest industry yet further. It's important to note that the Canadian corporate executives who urged the federal government and this province to take action on climate change included the Forest Products Association of Canada. We're taking their advice along with that of executives from across Canada, continuing with the climate leadership plan because that's the right thing to do.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government's climate leadership plan looks at how much carbon is produced in Alberta, but there are two sides of the equation, and given that a healthy forest is a carbon sink and that investing in the health of forests is the best defence against climate change, to the minister: why doesn't your climate change leadership plan recognize the carbon sequestering that is amplified by healthy forest practices by our forest industry?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, this matter of offset protocols is ongoing. We need to make sure that our offset protocols are verifiable, measurable, and reportable and that they conform to what is happening in other jurisdictions, which is exactly why we are doing that. I had the opportunity to meet with the International Emissions Trading Association at the United Nations' meetings on climate change when this matter of forestry, agriculture, and waste offset protocols was raised. We'll have more to say about that in 2017.

Thanks to the hon. member for the question.

## Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

### Calgary Rotary Challenger Park

**Ms McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the far southeast corner of the incredibly diverse riding of Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, past the longest runway in Canada, is Calgary Rotary Challenger park. The barrier-free park was established in 2003 with a mission to provide accessible sport and recreation facilities where everyone can play.

I recently had the chance to tour the park with executive director Jim Zackowski, and he explained the unique partnership between the rotary clubs of Calgary and Airdrie, the Calgary Airport Authority, and the Calgary Parks Foundation that helped the park become home to baseball fields, tennis and basketball courts, picnic areas, football and soccer fields, and a 400-metre synthetic surface track.

Tenants of the main building include Renfrew Educational Services, BAPS temple, and the park's administration team, which is currently evaluating expansion plans for the park.

The organization has just signed a long-term lease with the Calgary Airport Authority for just over five acres of land adjacent to the park's west boundary, where the CRCP is hoping to expand its operations to include a new barrier-free, environmentally friendly 110,000-square-foot centre for all abilities. The centre is intended to be a co-location facility that would house a number of not-for-profit organizations. Focusing on integration, inclusion, and collaboration, the centre will be a hub that provides a multitude of community services to our youth, seniors, and other more vulnerable populations in our communities.

I encourage everyone who hasn't had the opportunity to see the park to attend the family fun day next June 24 and see what a remarkable facility it is. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

### Culture Days

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2008 Alberta Culture Days began as a one-day event celebrating our province's

arts and cultural communities. From September 30 to October 2 of this year Alberta Culture Days covered three days of festivities in over 70 communities across the province, cultivating a sense of belonging and pride through celebration of our vibrant culture and diverse heritage.

Calgary-Northern Hills served as a 2016 host site, with Vivo for Healthier Generations, north-central Calgary's recreational hub, holding its sixth annual cultural expo. Vivo's cultural expo featured traditional songs by Chantal Stormsong Chagnon and Cheryle Chagnon-Greyeyes of Muskeg Lake Cree Nation 8; martial arts demonstrations by the Mo Fan Taichi & Wushu Academy; a tribute to carnival by the Brazilian Community Association and Quilla dance; the *Afghan Jalebi*, performed by Nazma Nanji; performances by groups such as the Young Bhangra, Angela's hip hop dancers, the Mexican dance and art association, the Métis Nation of Alberta region 3; as well as a visit and opening remarks from our Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Displays at Vivo's cultural expo featured explanations of various cultural practices, information for new residents, and local newspapers in languages other than English. Free food samples were provided by EthniCity Catering, a local company employing new Canadians.

I'd like to congratulate Vivo for Healthier Generations for bringing together performers, artists, and delicious foods from our diverse community to celebrate, through arts and culture, who we are as Albertans.

As a resident of the Calgary-Northern Hills community I am proud of our province's commitment to Alberta Culture Days. Through participation in cultural activities we honour our past, understand one another in the present, and undertake building our shared future together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Serenity

**Mr. Barnes:** In this House we speak a great deal about policy, about administration, about systems, but there are times when such cold, dispassionate terms fail us. There are stories that brutally remind us that every single thing we do here is about people. We represent people. We serve people, not systems. Four-year-old Serenity's life and death is that story.

It's been said many times that there is nothing more tragic than the death of a child, but what about when that death becomes another distant and impersonal statistic? What about when the story behind the death is forgotten and the same mistakes are made again and again and again? Serenity was a person, a child with dreams and desires, a child who could feel joy and sorrow, a child who laughed, played, and cried. She wasn't a number. She wasn't a failing of a process. She wasn't a blip in the system. She was a human.

From the beginning of this horrendous story the entire government system has failed by forgetting that humanity is at the centre of everything it does. The system ignored a mother's anguish and a child's torment. The Human Services minister, having failed to do his part to get justice for Serenity and pass along information to the RCMP, now calls it an unfortunate error.

No, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely reject this cold, uncaring, sanitized language. I'm sick and tired of hearing about processes and bureaucracies and unfortunate errors. We can no longer hide behind reviews and reports and panels and recommendations. For too long nobody has cared enough at a human level to do anything about it. A child died, starving, neglected, abused physically and sexually. We demand justice for this poor girl, peace for her family, respect

for every other life in the hands of a sprawling government apparatus that protects itself before our children.

2:50

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice of the following. Under Standing Order 15 of the Legislative Assembly I am providing you with written notice of my intention to raise a point of privilege at the appropriate time. It concerns misleading statements that were made in the Assembly by the Premier, the Minister of Human Services, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, and the Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

Also, Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I intend to give notice under Standing Order 42 that I propose the following motion.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly:

1. Appoint a select special child intervention review committee to review the safety and security of children in government care by examining Alberta's child intervention system and related systems, including but not limited to the Department of Human Services and the Department of Indigenous Relations, and the committee will further review the recommendations for the child intervention system made over the past five years and may for the purpose of systematic improvement inquire into specific cases;
2. The committee shall be chaired by the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, or Deputy Chair of Committees and consist of seven members from the government members' caucus, three members from the Official Opposition, two members from the third party, the Member for Calgary-Elbow, and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, with the names of all members to be submitted to the Clerk no later than December 15, 2016;
3. In carrying out its duties, the committee may travel throughout Alberta and undertake a process of consultation with all interested Albertans;
4. In carrying out its duties, the committee may solicit written submissions from experts in the field and may compel the appearance of witnesses with specific and relevant knowledge on matters being investigated;
5. The committee is deemed to continue beyond prorogation and may meet during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
6. Reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid, subject to the approval of the chair;
7. In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may, with the concurrence of the head of the department, utilize the services of the public service employed in that department or the staff employed by the Legislative Assembly Office and the officers of the Legislature;
8. The committee must ensure that any and all front-line workers and managers in children services and any delegates or contractors for children services that wish to speak to the all-party committee are given full whistleblower protections;
9. The committee must submit its report within six months after commencing its review;
10. When its work has been completed, the committee must report to the Assembly if it is sitting, or if the Assembly is adjourned, the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to give oral notice of a motion for the next Order Paper, the motion being as follows:

Be it resolved that the following changes to

- (a) the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be approved: that MLA Miller replace MLA McPherson
- (b) the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be approved: that MLA Drysdale replace MLA Jansen
- (c) the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be approved: that MLA Drever replace MLA Jabbour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I have five copies of the ministerial panel on child intervention handout that the Minister of Human Services distributed at his media conference ever so recently.

**The Speaker:** I believe we have three points of order.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Excuse me. The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I think the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills has got lots of stuff to say this afternoon, so I will rise on his behalf for this point of order. I rise on 23(j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." A member that I have tremendous amount of respect for, the Government House Leader, during, you know, what was an emotional question period, I do recognize, did tell this side of the House to shut up. I think you would find that that is certainly abusive language and definitely language that would create disorder.

With that said, I do recognize that sometimes during question period things can get a little bit heated, and I'm sure the hon. member recognizes that. I would just ask that he rise and do the right thing, withdraw and apologize.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, during the discussion, which was very heated and very emotional, which I recognize, I became increasingly concerned that opposition members were calling on the Minister of Human Services to be accountable but were not listening and were shouting at him to resign instead of listening to the answer. At one point I called to the other side and called for order – in no way did I mean to usurp your position – to ask them to try and pay attention. The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre yelled across to me: you're not the Speaker. I, unfortunately, used the words that he said. I met rudeness with rudeness – I should have taken the high road – for which I apologize and withdraw my comments. It was unworthy of me.

**The Speaker:** The second point of order.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j). During question period on numerous occasions the Minister of Health, the Deputy Premier, made a number of statements that were likely to create disorder, particularly when she continually and regularly referred to a committee which is not a committee. It's a panel. There's a very big difference in the facts between a panel and

a committee, and on numerous occasions the Deputy Premier said that that's why they were taking action with this committee. That's not a fact. The fact is that it is a panel. The Deputy Premier also made numerous – numerous – statements about how they took into consideration all of the recommendations that the Official Opposition had made, and that also is not a fact.

When ministers of the Crown make statements in question period that are clearly devoid of the facts, that will create disorder every time. I ask not only that she withdraw and apologize but that the government refrain from spreading misinformation in the future.

3:00

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I've been in this place a long time. Sometimes it feels maybe too long. I'm sure that hon. members opposite might agree with that.

Let's look at 23(h), (i), and (j).

- (h) makes allegations against another Member;
- (i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member; [and]
- (j) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.

Now, the hon. Opposition House Leader cited all three, but he basically directed his arguments to (j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder."

Mr. Speaker, what we have here is a difference between a panel and a committee, a semantical difference. Well, I mean, here's the *Oxford* dictionary. A committee is "a group of people appointed for a specific function by a larger group and typically consisting of members of that group." A panel is "a small group of people brought together to investigate or decide on a particular matter." Now, there are some slight differences in those definitions, but I have never heard of a semantical difference creating disorder.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition and most of the opposition were very, in my view, disorderly in the conduct of this question period. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Hon. member, I'm trying to listen to the House leader's arguments.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, let's hear the arguments.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you don't get to talk back to me. The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Amazing, Mr. Speaker. It's amazing.

So we have a semantical difference. It's a matter of semantics, which the Opposition House Leader claims creates disorder on their side. Well, Mr. Speaker, if they're going to be so disordered when you have a semantical difference, then what happens if you have a real difference of opinion on something substantive instead of something trivial like the definition of a panel or a committee, which apparently causes the members opposite to jump up and call points of order?

Mr. Speaker, if you read (j) carefully, it's not just: creating disorder. The opposition is fully capable of being disorderly without our help; there's no question about it. But (j) requires the use of abusive or insulting language to create disorder, and the hon. Deputy Premier and Health minister did not insult them by calling it a committee.

I have never seen a more frivolous or trivial or contrived point of order in all the years that I've been in this House, Mr. Speaker. I have been on both sides of points of order many times, but frankly I think this is beneath the Opposition House Leader.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, I think I've heard enough.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Let me remind all of you again that we've all been working very hard in this House, long hours, on some very sensitive and important topics that I know all of you care about. I do sense the emotion at a particular time like this.

With respect to the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, in this particular instance I don't believe that was a point of order.

Oh, I missed Calgary-Hays. My apologies. I didn't see you.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker. I will try to be brief. Let me say that I heard the recitations made, and I'll try not to repeat them. The Government House Leader's whole argument is whether it's a trivial difference or not. The disruption that you saw in the House today was entirely based on that difference, which was in no way small. While the *Oxford* dictionary may cover the basic meaning of the words, in this House the meaning of those words is quite a bit bigger.

For example, Mr. Speaker – and this is what this is all about today – the government promised us a committee which has members from all sides of the House and does their business in public, reported in *Hansard*, so that there is no doubt about what happens and the public can see what happened and decide whether they like it or not without having to get a second opinion on exactly what was said.

A panel: no small difference, I think you'll agree, Mr. Speaker. Completely different. The panel has five NDP members, gets to decide what's in the report with their majority, and can hide anything that's said. So it's not a trivial difference. It's a massive difference and the whole source of the outrage today in the House. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please.

Thank you for your additional information. In this particular instance I don't see a point of order.

There's another point of order, number 3. The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** We combined them.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

## Point of Order Oral Questions

**The Speaker:** I want to deal with a point of order from yesterday, which was concerning the Member for Calgary-Elbow's point of order. The arguments for the point of order are found on pages 2411 and 2412 of December 7, 2016. It has to do with the question that was asked by the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, which is on page 2404. In his arguments the Member for Calgary-Elbow reinforced *Beauchesne*, paragraph 408. That paragraph indicates amongst other things that oral questions should – two things:

- (a) be asked only in respect of matters of sufficient urgency and importance as to require an immediate answer;
- (b) not inquire whether statements made in a newspaper are correct.

I would note for all members that the provision in *Beauchesne's* is no longer applicable.

Specifically, paragraph 410(2) states:

While some previous guidelines remain valid others have fallen into disuse, e.g. that it is out of order to ask about matters reported in the media or statements by Ministers outside the House or "certain questions [concerning] government policy".

I would note that only a few days ago I ruled on a very similar point of order raised by the same member. On Monday I admonished the private members from the government caucus to be careful, use questions of substance, but I ruled that there was no point of order. You can find my remarks on page 2281.

I note to all members that the ability for private members of the government caucus to ask questions of the government is a long-standing practice and tradition in this House, and it certainly has been in the period of time that I have been in this chair. In other words, all private members have the opportunity to hold the government to account. All private members have the opportunity to seek information. I would conclude by saying that all private members should continue to do exactly that. I find that there was no point of order.

3:10

There is a question of privilege. I would call upon the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

## Privilege Misleading the House

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to a point of privilege. As you know, points of privilege should not be taken or entered into lightly. Points of privilege are a serious matter. You'll know that throughout today there was a lot of very serious discussion. We've had a lot of very serious discussion in the House over a number of weeks. I want to make a number of references and then point to a number of facts that will lead to my belief that a number of members on the government side provided answers to questions in this House that misled the House and, in fact, made misleading statements.

With respect to privileges and issues of contempt you can find in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, chapter 3, page 83, where it speaks of breaches of privilege, a list of a number of those breaches, one of which, the third bullet point – and I'll spare the House from reading all of the bullet points today – is: "Deliberately attempting to mislead the House or a committee (by way of statement, evidence, or petition)."

You'll also find in Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, 24th edition, page 254, section 15, under Misconduct of Members or Officers, Members Deliberately Misleading the House: "The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt."

Mr. Speaker, as was indicated in my notice of the breach of privilege, which, I might add, met the requirements of providing the appropriate written notice as laid out in Standing Order 15(2):

A Member wishing to raise a point of privilege shall give written notice containing a brief statement . . .

as I did,

. . . to the Speaker and, if practicable, to any person whose conduct may be called into question, at least 2 hours before the opening of the afternoon sitting.

You'll notice that the written notice that I provided was stamped by your office at 11:15, providing more than the additional two hours' notice.

Mr. Speaker, on November 22, page 1930 of *Hansard*, the Premier made the following statement. I'll read the whole answer for you.

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is correct in that the final report was not completed until much later because of the complexities that he alludes to. But he should also know that the medical examiner was in touch with the RCMP with respect to preliminary findings within days of receiving the information and [that he] has been in touch with them throughout.

In terms of the progress of the investigation, that is a matter for the police to deal with independently from those of us in this House.

The Premier clearly identified that this was a matter for the police to deal with independently of the House, but last night we found out that the police had been hindered from that independent investigation because the Ministry of Human Services had not provided the information to the RCMP.

Now, subsequently, I have heard in question period today that the government attempted to provide that information but that what they did not do was ensure that that information had been received.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Human Services, the Premier, and others had a responsibility to provide information to the RCMP for them to independently investigate this horrific tragedy. That is exactly what the Premier said that they did, but the facts are contrary to that.

On November 24, page 2029, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General said the following:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. There is nothing more heartbreaking in the world than the death of a child. In this particular case the autopsy report wasn't forwarded because the RCMP still has an ongoing investigation, and they've asked us not to release this information at this time.

This is the important part.

So we are committed to working with them in ensuring that they have the tools that they need to continue their investigation.

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that the information that the Department of Human Services had was a very important tool for the RCMP to continue their investigation, yet they did not provide that information. As such, the statement she made in the House is clearly in contempt of this House because it seems they were not committed to working with them, particularly with getting them the most important information with respect to this horrific tragedy. Let me be clear. This government and the Minister of Justice showed contempt for the Assembly with how they chose to answer the question, just as is highlighted in *Erskine May*.

On November 30 the Minister of Justice, page 2183 of *Hansard*:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Nothing could be more tragic than the death of any child, particularly in [these] circumstances . . . That is why we thought it was so important to ensure that the RCMP were able to complete their investigation in the way that they saw fit and to protect the information in the report from the Chief Medical Examiner in order to ensure that they could complete that investigation.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that providing the information that is paramount and critical to the investigation was probably job one. The government led this House to believe that that had been completed. That was not completed for whatever reason, whatever circumstances, be it an unfortunate error or otherwise, until December 6, which was confirmed by the RCMP today in a 12 o'clock press conference at K Division.

On November 30, page 2183, the Minister of Human Services:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the important question. It's a deeply concerning issue, and I share in the devastation that members of this House and all Albertans are feeling. As the Minister of Justice indicated, it's an issue . . . under active investigation, so we will work with the RCMP and all involved to make sure that we get this right. At the same time, we are absolutely committed to making improvements to avoid similar incidents from happening in the future.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, they said that they would work with the RCMP to make sure all involved get this right. That wasn't true. They didn't

ensure that the RCMP had the information until seven days later, on December 6. On December 6, page 2332 of *Hansard*, my colleague the Government House Leader said the following:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Premier has been clear in this House that because of an ongoing RCMP investigation not all the information was released when it might otherwise have been released. That's a very important thing, that we get to the bottom of this and we not interfere or in any way disrupt this critical police investigation.

With respect to the work of this committee in due course the government will be showing just how this committee will work and how we can get to the bottom of this issue.

Now, I will reserve my comments around the committee and how it's not going to work or how it's certainly different than what they proposed in this House prior to the Standing Order 42 that will follow. But let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. The Government House Leader said that "that's a very important thing, that we get to the bottom of this and we not interfere or in any way disrupt this critical . . . investigation." I can assure you that not providing the information to the RCMP has created disruption. It has created a significant delay. The RCMP asked for the information, and they did not receive it. They did not receive it in a form that could be utilized by the RCMP until the 6th of December.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear to me and I hope that it is very clear to you that the government and ministers of the Crown have misled this Assembly. They have misled Albertans and, as such, it's my hope that you, too, will find this government, as you have before, in contempt of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, are you prepared to make arguments today, or do you wish to defer?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I did not have the advantage of the arguments by the Official Opposition House Leader. I am prepared to proceed, however. We may wish, if that is agreeable to you, to supplement this information. I don't know if that's acceptable or not acceptable. There are some additional points that I don't think we have prepared for. That's all.

**The Speaker:** We'll take a moment, please.

Hon. member, if I understood your point correctly, you indicated that you would be making some arguments today and possibly additional arguments on the next day of the sitting. If, in fact, that's correct, I just want to make it clear to you that you're going to get one opportunity to make the case. If you do not have the information for the points you've raised earlier, then I would suggest that you defer. You're not going to get a second shot at it.

**Mr. Mason:** That's clear. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm prepared to proceed.

**The Speaker:** Okay.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you. Now, Mr. Speaker, allegations of misleading the House are very serious. A point of privilege and a contempt of the House is one of the most serious allegations that can be raised in this place, and it needs to be dealt with with the utmost seriousness, and I think all of the authorities are clear on that fact. I believe I've heard every Speaker since I've been in this place reiterate that point. So they ought not to be entered into for anything but the most serious reasons and certainly not to try and make political points.

Mr. Speaker, it is my contention that this does not meet the test of privilege in the procedural manuals or the test that has been applied in this House over the years.

On page 86 of the *House of Commons Procedures and Practice*, second edition, it's stated:

The following elements have to be established when it is alleged that a Member is in contempt for deliberately misleading the House: one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement, the Member intended to mislead the House.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are three very, very significant thresholds that have to be reached before it can be established that a point of privilege has taken place.

In this Chamber on a number of occasions we've had allegations of misleading the House. On March 12, 2014, a similar matter was brought forward, and Speaker Zwodetsky made a ruling that can be found on page 215 of Hansard for that day, in which he stated:

Now, if the member who raised the point of privilege is alleging that the minister deliberately misled the Assembly, then that indeed is a very, very high bar and is almost never made out according to the many rulings that you will have researched as part of your preparation for this point of privilege. In order to constitute a contempt and to conclude that a member deliberately misled the Assembly, three elements must be met, and members have referred to this in their own words. First, the statement must in fact have been misleading; secondly, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time the statement was made that it was incorrect; and three, in making such a statement, the member must have intended to mislead the House. . . . We must accept that the members who spoke, spoke, I hope, with honour and with their own conviction and their own belief.

In this case I do not find there to be a *prima facie* case that would constitute a point of privilege. So that will conclude this matter today.

Mr. Speaker, very similar rulings were previously made on February 19, 2003, and on December 3, 2012, which I will not repeat here.

To the matter specifically at hand earlier today, the Minister of Human Services outlined a detailed action plan on how he proposes to move forward, working with members of the Opposition as well as experts. He has also provided information, including a timeline, regarding the case in question.

He has indicated that on September 15, 2016, the office of the Chief Medical Examiner completed its report, which was then provided to the RCMP. On October 24 the RCMP asked the delegated First Nations agencies for the child and family services case file. On October 27 the DFNA reached out to Human Services and started discussing co-ordination of the file. On November 18 the DFNA provided a written request to Human Services for the case file. On November 22, two working days later, Human Services provided access to a secure link to download the file.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, we have since understood that the documents were retrieved, due to some problems reading the files, on December 6, in which case the minister has provided that information. We've confirmed with the RCMP again today that it is an ongoing and open, active investigation, so that particular allegation is incorrect.

I just want to go back a little bit. It's not enough even if the Official Opposition House Leader was correct in his assertion that there was not an active investigation going on. Members on this side would have to meet the second and third tests as well. They would have to have known that in the first place, and secondly, we would have had to intentionally be misleading the other side. Mr. Speaker, with respect to that particular allegation none of the three tests are passed. First of all, it was a true statement. Secondly, we

didn't know that it was false. It was true, and we knew it was true. Finally, we were not attempting to mislead the House. On that particular piece I think the Official Opposition's case falls apart.

The office of the medical examiner notified the RCMP of the cause of death as soon as it was determined, which was in a few days of the death, Mr. Speaker. The RCMP requested that the office of the Chief Medical Examiner not release its findings as publication details of the death could be extremely detrimental to the ongoing police investigation, and the medical examiner has remained in constant contact with the RCMP as the investigation has continued.

Mr. Speaker, the House has not been misled. Members on the other side may well believe that errors were made. They may be dissatisfied with the structure of the panel that we have put forward. These have been put forward by the Opposition House Leader as reasons to support his point of privilege. None of that is material to this point of privilege. The question needs to be resolved as to: what particular pieces of information did ministers provide that are named in this point of privilege that were incorrect? Then they would need to establish that the ministers knew they were incorrect. Thirdly, they would need to be able to show that the ministers intended to mislead the House.

Mr. Speaker, there's nothing but differences of opinion on how this case should have been handled, and that's fair, and that's legitimate, and it's the obligation of the opposition to bring those forward and to demand accountability from the government and from the ministers on that side. That is fair game as far as we're concerned. But the point that needs to be satisfied that they have not satisfied is whether any of the statements made by ministers in this House were untrue. That's the very first test, and I don't believe that they have shown that anything was untrue. They certainly haven't shown that the ministers knew them to be untrue, and they certainly haven't shown that the ministers intended to mislead the House.

So, Mr. Speaker, with the greatest respect, I would ask and argue that there is no point of privilege here, in fact far from it. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. I rise because this point of privilege addresses and touches on the privilege of all members, not just the members of the opposition party or any party who may have asked the questions that are up for discussion here today. I do want an opportunity as well – and thank you for that opportunity – to address some of the points made by the hon. Government House Leader.

I believe the Opposition House Leader has made a very clear case in quoting from the direct words used by the ministers in question in this House: "We are committed to working with them in ensuring that they have the tools that they need," "they" being the RCMP in this case. That is a direct quote.

Today RCMP Inspector Gibson Glavin said, quote: we did ask for the information, but we did not receive it in a format we could access until December 6. That is, I believe, clearly different than what the minister had said on I believe it was November 22 or 24, and I believe that it was the Minister of Human Services that was quoted as saying, "We are working with them in ensuring that they have the tools they need" in addition to the words of the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General on November 30. I believe that that is, in fact, misleading. So that satisfies the first test.

Whether the minister knew it was incorrect or not, he should have known. He either knew or ought to have known, and I believe that is a fair and well-established test. That is his job, to know or ought



to know what is happening within his ministry, especially when something is as urgent and as public as this case. Whether it's intentional, Mr. Speaker, as difficult as it may be for the government to hear, you know, on a day when we've had some very high emotion in this House – the question of intent concerns me greatly. When a party is concerned, when government members are concerned about their reputation in the eyes of Albertans, it certainly gives them a lot of motive to intentionally hide information from the House and therefore from Albertans.

So I believe that you should find that the information that was presented in this House was in fact misleading, that the minister either knew or ought to have known that it was incorrect, and that they had sufficient motive for them to do so intentionally. That is not, as the hon. Government House Leader has said, something to be taken lightly. But it certainly seems to me that that is exactly what we are dealing with here, Mr. Speaker, and I would hope that you would consider those points as you make your ruling.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who wish to speak to the matter?

Thank you. When I received the letter, I already started the research. I will be dealing with the matter, and I will be coming back to the House with a ruling next week.

### Motions under Standing Order 42

**The Speaker:** Under Standing Order 42 I want to remind you that in making arguments, only one member is allowed to speak and that that is the member who has given notice of the motion, the Official Opposition House Leader. The House leader having provided oral notice of his motion pursuant to Standing Order 42 earlier this afternoon, I would now recognize him.

### Select Special Child Intervention Review Committee Appointment

Mr. Cooper:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly:

1. Appoint a select special child intervention review committee to review the safety and security of children in government care by examining Alberta's child intervention system and related systems, including but not limited to the Department of Human Services and the Department of Indigenous Relations, and the committee will further review the recommendations for the child intervention system made over the past five years and may for the purpose of systemic improvement inquire into specific cases;
2. The committee shall be chaired by the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, or Deputy Chair of Committees and consist of seven members from the government members' caucus, three members from the Official Opposition, two members from the third party, the Member for Calgary-Elbow, and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, with the names of all members to be submitted to the Clerk no later than December 15, 2016;
3. In carrying out its duties, the committee may travel throughout Alberta and undertake a process of consultation with all interested Albertans;
4. In carrying out its duties, the committee may solicit written submissions from experts in the field and may compel the appearance of witnesses with specific and relevant knowledge on matters being investigated;
5. The committee is deemed to continue beyond prorogation and may meet during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;

6. Reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid, subject to the approval of the chair;
7. In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may, with the concurrence of the head of the department, utilize the services of the public service employed in that department or the staff employed by the Legislative Assembly Office and the officers of the Legislature;
8. The committee must ensure that any and all front-line workers and managers in children services and any delegates or contractors for children services that wish to speak to the all-party committee are given full whistle-blower protections;
9. The committee must submit its report within six months after commencing its review;
10. When its work has been completed, the committee must report to the Assembly if it is sitting, or if the Assembly is adjourned, the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Standing Order 42, the waiving of notice.

42(1) A motion may, in case of urgent and pressing necessity previously explained by the mover, be made by unanimous consent of the Assembly without notice having been given under Standing Order 39.

(2) If the Assembly grants unanimous consent to proceed with the motion, each Member who wishes to speak in the debate shall be limited to 20 minutes, and the debate shall conclude

- (a) when all Members who wish to take part have spoken . . . or
- (b) at the normal hour of adjournment in the afternoon on that day, at which time the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the matter.

Mr. Speaker, as we established just a couple of days ago, what we are currently asking for is unanimous consent, unanimous consent to debate the motion that I provided oral notice of during the Routine. For the benefit of the House and the time this afternoon, I will not repeat the full context of the motion. What I will do is make note that there were some small changes from earlier in the week to this week that make a significant impact, particularly in the timeline of reporting. As we indicated earlier this week, the timeline was recommended as one year, and in this motion it is recommended as six months.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of my remarks is to express the urgency of why this matter should proceed, and while there are many similar reasons to earlier this week, significant things have changed since then, the urgency of which we now are faced with. While some similarities remain in terms of the government being able to conclude the business of the House as early as this afternoon and as late as the passage of the rest of the bills on the Order Paper, one could presume, although I would never presuppose a decision of the Assembly, that that would be some day next week.

The urgency before us is that the government has made some significant remarks, both in the press and here in the House today, that they intend to work with the opposition on a panel even though the government had agreed to an all-party committee that would be on the public record, that all parties would be involved. It had been recommended by the Official Opposition that that would include whistle-blower protection, that it would include all of the things that were laid out in the motion. Now, unfortunately, earlier in the week

the Government House Leader chose not to provide unanimous consent, which was more than a bit disappointing. What we could have done is worked together then to come to an agreement on the terms of reference of the committee, which is exactly why, in the most nonpartisan way possible, two days ago that's exactly what we did.

Now, today we saw the government introduce a panel of their own, making claims that they took into consideration all of our recommendations, which is devoid of the facts. They claim that they've accepted our recommendations, yet there is virtually nothing inside the panel that was included in our document. So all that I would like to do this afternoon and the reason why it's so urgent, because clearly the government is taking steps on some form of panel, is have a discussion here in the Chamber about how we can come to an agreement that works much better for all parties in the House.

Mr. Speaker, their panel includes a government member chairing it. It includes five members. It includes one member from the Official Opposition, one member from the Alberta Party, one member from the Alberta Liberals, and one member from — this does not reflect the face of this place. It does not reflect the face of this and presents significant challenges on a go-forward basis for the panel.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm providing the government an opportunity to do — and as I mentioned two days ago, I'm willing to discuss this. It's why I provided it to the government in advance two days ago. I'm willing to discuss it. I'm willing to accept amendments to the terms of reference that are provided here. I think that a lot of good could be done this afternoon by the government choosing to provide unanimous consent to work out the terms of reference for the betterment of members in this House, for the betterment of our members of the media, who I know are interested in what may or may not be happening at these meetings, and for members of the public.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Standing Order 42 states:

- (1) A motion may, in case of urgent and pressing necessity previously explained by the mover, be made by unanimous consent of the Assembly without notice having been given under Standing Order 39.

So, hon. members, I will now ask whether the Assembly grants unanimous consent to allow debate to proceed.

[Unanimous consent denied]

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Third Reading

##### Bill 37

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2)

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and move third reading of Bill 37, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2).

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to close debate.

**Mr. Ceci:** Close.

[Motion carried; Bill 37 read a third time]

### Government Motions

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

#### Statutes Repeal

29. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to section 3 of the Statutes Repeal Act, SA 2013, cS-19.3, the Legislative Assembly resolves that the following statutes, appearing on the list of statutes to be repealed which was tabled in the Assembly by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General on April 13, 2016, sessional paper 82/2016, not be repealed:

1. Black Creek Heritage Rangeland Trails Act (2004 cB-2.5);
2. Energy Statutes Amendment Act, 2009 (2009 c20) ss9(2)(b), (d), (15), (18);
3. Forest Reserves Amendment Act, 2004 (2004 c9) s8;
4. Health Professions Act (RSA 2000 cH-7) ss155(1)(c), 156(n), 156(u) and 156(aa) and scheds. 1 and 13;
5. Health Professions Amendment Act, 2008 (2008 c34) ss12, 13, 15;
6. Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act (RSA 2000 c24(Supp));
7. Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Amendment Act (RSA 2000 c34(Supp)) s8 "8.1(3)".

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. These statutes will be extended by one year. During that time, if it hasn't already begun, each of these will undergo further review, with more work being done in a variety of areas and with ministers and their offices engaging and consulting with stakeholders regarding the relevant statutes.

Thank you very much for your indulgence, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, the hon. Government House Leader to close debate.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Close.

[Government Motion 29 carried]

3:50

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 27

#### Renewable Electricity Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** You're surprised, I know. Would you mind letting the House know where we are on this bill, please?

**The Deputy Chair:** We are on the main bill. There are no amendments currently.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Wonderful. Well, Madam Chair, there are a number of issues surrounding renewables development. This government has chosen to focus in on wind turbines and solar power. Of course, there are many, many other forms of renewable and alternative energy forms. I'm not entirely certain why the government wanted to focus in on two of the renewables with the worst dispatchability of any of them, frankly. Both of them require backup.

We have other forms of renewable and alternative technologies that are stand alone, geothermal being one of them. We even have technology today, Madam Chair, where there are these mini units, geothermal units, that can actually use the heat from a flowing well, and we have literally hundreds of thousands of such flowing wells in this province, and a number of these flowing wells – it depends on the organization you're talking to, but anywhere from 20,000 to 40,000 of our flowing wells actually have enough heat energy and pressure and rate of flow to generate electricity.

Of course, these flowing wells have been flowing for some time. The heat energy contained in the products flowing from that well can be used to generate electricity. Energy is energy, you know. We measure energy in many different forms of measurement, whether it be British thermal units or kilowatts or whatever, but energy is energy. We can always transform energy from one form to another. Now, we do have some efficiency loss. It's just a reality of changing the form of an energy from heat energy to electrical energy. Nevertheless, we have a number of wells right across this province that would qualify for that kind of a thing.

Some of the other issues that we have here regarding this particular bill, of course, are not only the two kinds of renewables that the government seems to be focusing on but just that, in addition, Madam Chair, those two particular renewable technologies, photovoltaics and wind power, also require massive amounts of surface land, surface area.

Of course, when we're talking about wind turbines and converting the force of the wind into electrical energy, the higher we put a wind turbine, the more efficient that turbine will be. But, of course, we have roads that need to get there. We have subsurface infrastructure that needs to be put in place to support it. Massive amounts of concrete there. We also have utility corridors to reach those turbines just literally, you know, to run the wires from the turbine to our main trunk. Things like this. Massive amounts of land that are used there.

When we're talking about photovoltaics, again, when we're talking utility-scale photovoltaics, large amounts of land are needed. Again, we need roads. Again, we need infrastructure for supporting the racking and, you know, many hundreds of thousands of tonnes of concrete in footings. We also are going to need rights-of-way, easements, and corridors for wire to carry the electricity from the utility-scale solar farm, we'll call it, to our main trunks again.

All of this infrastructure, the roads and the equipment itself, is going to be parked on someone's land. As a result, when it comes to the consultation process, when it comes to the decision-making by this government for the siting of these particular renewables – specifically, I'm talking about wind and solar now because, as I said, that is the focus of the government – landowner consultation is going to become paramount.

Now, as you probably know, Madam Chair, the Wildrose does have some history with property rights. I believe that if you go back to the very foundation of the Wildrose movement, it was property rights that kicked it off, and property rights are today still a platform in the base of our party, in our movement. Property rights are a big thing to rural Albertans, and property rights are going to be a big thing when it comes to reaching 30 per cent renewables by 2030.

So I would respectfully like to propose an amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Please go ahead, hon. member. The amendment will be referred to as A7.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you. I move that Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, be amended by adding the following section after section 5:

*Landowner Consultation*

5.1 A proposal under section 5 shall not be approved by the Minister unless the Minister is satisfied that reasonable consultation in respect of the proposal has taken place with any affected municipalities and landowners.

Now, there is a reason why we've included municipalities in this, and hopefully it's an obvious reason. We have a number of rural municipalities around this province who could very much benefit from the use of renewable technologies on certain plots of land that are within the municipality, owned and controlled by the municipality. I am speaking, of course, of things like brownfields. Brownfields in our province – and we do have a few – pose a significant problem for a county or a small town in that this is land that the town can do nothing with. That land is next to useless as any form of revenue for the town. The town cannot grant a development permit on that brownfield because it is contaminated in some manner, so there it sits.

In a number of our communities around this province they have been struggling of late to realize significant commercial and industrial tax revenue. For those communities that have brownfields, I believe it makes an enormous amount of sense for them to take those brownfields and put them to good use in generating some form of revenue. Because of the limitations that a brownfield presents in what kind of commerce or industry you could put on something that is classified technically as a brownfield, renewable projects – and let's use solar as an example – are excellent projects to park on a brownfield. And, as I said, we have quite a few of them. I would hope that the government would take the time to actually do a full-on inventory of brownfields across Alberta, locate them, add them up, and use that information, arm our municipalities with that.

4:00

Now, one of the things about this particular amendment – you know, Madam Chair, it's rather easy for a government in Edmonton to just sit there and insist that all of this renewable infrastructure be built. It's relatively easy to sit there with a map of Alberta and draw circles on it and say, "Well, we're going to do it here, and we're going to do it over there, and we're going to locate it in this municipality," and away we go.

Realistically, though, Madam Chair, because of the enormity of this – I don't know if members can even wrap their minds around the size, the scope of the massive amount of infrastructure we're talking about in building 5,000 megawatts of renewables. I think that I may have to produce some sort of a graphic on a map of Alberta just to show you how big a chunk of ground this is going to take to do. It would be helpful, I think. I see the Government House Leader agreeing with me. That would be a good thing to do, to give us a visual as to just the sheer scope of this, an enormous amount, and I will say that thousands of property owners across the province are going to be impacted by that scale, thousands of them. We're going to have a massive amount of people to deal with in this.

As I said, it's relatively easy for some people up in Edmonton to sit down with a map of Alberta and start plunking down renewable projects. We really need to have a fulsome consultation with the owners of land out in rural Alberta where these things are going to go. This is not something to take lightly. Far be it from me to point out that some of those rural landowners are still a little bit hot about Bill 6. They may not be in exactly the most co-operative frame of

mind right now, so I would really strongly recommend that the government join with me in approving this particular amendment to save them some grief later. There is a significant amount of consultation with landowners out in rural Alberta that this government is going to have to do before we dare go down a road of putting 5,000 megawatts of renewables out there.

Now, smaller communities around Alberta are actually going to have to live with this. Some of the members from southern Alberta where we have massive wind farms already in existence have made it very clear to me that NIMBYism is a significant, growing phenomenon in southern Alberta. There are whole communities of people down there that are just fed up to here with wind turbines. I believe that as the government attempts to build more or approve projects for more, that NIMBYism isn't just going to go away. I am fully anticipating that it is going to grow, that it's going to be organized, and there's a significant amount of consultation that this government is going to need to do.

From our perspective, the Wildrose is on the side of Alberta's families. Those families out there in rural Alberta where all this infrastructure is going to get built deserve to be listened to, not just heard, and there is a difference. We have had a lot of rallies and petitions and phone calls into MLA offices. We've had letters to the editor all across this province regarding the carbon tax, how Albertans are so adamantly opposed to more taxation and specifically this carbon tax. Now, the government says that they're hearing, but giving heed is a different thing. What I'm recommending is that we need to have this amendment in place with this bill so that this government will not only hear what Albertan landowners have to say but heed it.

The wording proposed is that the minister will not approve a project "unless the Minister is satisfied that reasonable consultation... has [in fact] taken place with any affected municipalities and landowners." So both. It's important that it be both. The reason why both is also because we have some municipal governments that really want to have commercial development taking place in their municipalities for the purposes of revenue generation, tax revenue generation, but that doesn't mean that the people within the municipality are all onside with this. So it's important that consultation take place with not only the municipalities but the landowners, too. It's just basic common sense.

Now, it is true that the former government failed to address the concerns of Albertans by improving property rights in Alberta, but I will remind the NDP that this was also something the NDP campaigned on during the election, and right now you could probably use something that you did campaign on. There are an awful lot of bills before this House and bills that have been passed that you did not campaign on, so here's one you did campaign on. You did campaign on improving property rights. Many of us here in the Wildrose were hoping to see dramatic improvements made for landowners, to return to a very fair compensation process for landowners, and there's still a significant amount of legislation that remains that is an irritant to landowners; for example, Bill 2, the Responsible Energy Development Act; Bill 24, the Carbon Capture and Storage Statutes Amendment Act, 2010; most importantly, Bill 36, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act.

Just to remind hon. members of what some of these acts mean, Bill 2 from 2012 takes away some of the important notification and appeal rights that landowners previously had. Just think about that for a moment, Madam Chair. Bill 2 actually removed important notification and appeal rights for landowners. What kind of a democracy is this where landowners are neither notified nor do they have recourse to the courts? If you will remember, the NDP fought against that. So here we have an amendment before the House that

is starting to go down the path of remedying this. We are still waiting for this government to really get onto the property rights issues that the NDP campaigned for. We're being patient, kind of.

In Bill 24 we had the government ignore the common law ownership of pore spaces and simply declare that the government owns it all and has access to it to pump carbon dioxide, just an arbitrary ownership swap here. Bill 24 is another one of those bills that I am confident the NDP are well aware of and, hopefully, will take to task and repair.

**4:10**

Then we come to Bill 36, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act. It is still a gigantic concern because under this particular act it grants cabinet significant power for vast central planning with no adequate checks or balances. It gives cabinet the power to do so much without proper consultation with the people of Alberta. It comes back to that business I started with, of some folks sitting down in Edmonton with a map of Alberta and just drawing things out. Under Bill 36 the government has an enormous amount of power to do just that, Madam Chair, to sit down with a map and draw things out and let 'er rip.

This is wrong. This has to be remedied. Part of the remedy process, I believe, is this little friendly amendment right here. The minister has got to be satisfied at least that some reasonable consultation has taken place rather than just arbitrary decision-making being done. Then, frankly, the government has got to acknowledge...

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any members wishing to speak to amendment A7? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do want to take a moment to support the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake on his amendment here, asking for reasonable consultation with respect to the proposals that take place, and this reasonable consultation would be with municipalities and landowners. Now, I really believe that today we will have an opportunity – it doesn't happen that often – where the government and the opposition will be able to see eye to eye on something.

One of the reasons why is because I have several quotes from the Government House Leader in the past where he is so strongly in support of property rights. I'll read this for you here.

I want to assure the hon. member opposite that our party has always believed in due process, in proper notification, rights of appeal. All of the fundamental rights of property owners are things that we support, and we're going to make sure that in the fullness of time those continue to be protected.

Right now I believe we're in the fullness of time. It's taken, I guess, 18 months to get to the fullness of time, but here we are. We have this glorious opportunity here today.

He goes on to say:

We led the fight on behalf of the rights of property owners in this province against the draconian legislation of the previous government.

So here we are. We're looking at the draconian legislation of the previous government. He admits fully that some of these bills that were passed back then were draconian.

He goes on to say:

It was the NDP opposition that led the fight for a balanced and fair approach to property. What that means to me is that people have the right of appeal, they have the right of due process.

Here we are with an amendment that's talking all about due process, so I believe that we have an opportunity here, Madam Chair.

He goes on to say:

We do insist on making sure that people's rights to their property are protected so that fair compensation is provided and there is a due process for people, including a right of appeal. Those will be things that we will be considering in the future.

And here we are in the future considering them.

He goes on to say:

We're especially disappointed that the Electric Statutes Amendment Act, amended by a controversial Bill 50 in 2009, has not been addressed. By failing to address that bill, the government continues to prioritize the interests of industry, in this example electricity, over landowners and Alberta families.

It's very interesting that we're sitting here talking about that very thing, electricity, and we're talking about this controversial Bill 50, that had not been addressed and still hasn't been addressed. I would think that this is the perfect opportunity for the Government House Leader to jump up and support this amendment wholeheartedly.

He goes on to say:

With respect to the help that the opposition is offering in this particular regard, I think that it is not necessary, but we will make sure property rights are protected.

Well, unfortunately, I guess our help is necessary because this government has done nothing in its 18 months for property rights. In fact, they left it out of this bill, and we're helping by putting them in there.

Now, we could go on to one of these campaign brochures from the NDP.

Alberta's NDP stands for . . .

- Due process with respect to rights of landowners.

That's what we're here talking about, the amendment, due process.

- Power customers must not be required to pay for utility projects of for-profit companies.

I think that's probably what's happening here, that power customers are going to have to pay for utility projects of for-profit companies. That's a little unusual, but I guess things change when you become government.

NDP in opposition submitted two private members' motions to the Legislature, demanding action. One of them said,

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Government to introduce legislation to protect the rights of landowners, ensuring property rights cannot be arbitrarily violated or extinguished without consultation and fair compensation.

Without consultation. All we're asking for in this amendment is consultation. It's the stuff that Alberta's NDP at one time at least believed in.

Now, it goes on to talk about three bad Tory bills. It talks about that the Government House Leader

has been a leading voice opposing three laws that look after government friends instead of Albertans. "Bills 19, 36, and 50 are clear proof this is the most secretive government in Canada, a government that can't be trusted to look out for the rights of ordinary families and property owners."

Bills 19, 36, and 50. The most secretive government in Canada.

When we look at his comments on Bill 19, it says that this is one of the most ill-advised pieces of legislation this government has brought forward.

That's Bill 19. Well, I guess, with all due respect, the previous government actually rescinded that one.

He goes on to talk about Bill 36:

This is yet another example of the government's own trend toward centralizing power in the political leadership of the province.

What has the government done about Bill 36 since it's been in power?

**An Hon. Member:** Nothing.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yup, exactly that. Nothing.

It goes on to talk about Bill 50:

Landowners know this law is a disgrace, and they're furious.

Government interference with property rights shows a lack of respect.

We agree.

So that's why I believe that we will be agreeing on this amendment. I would think that the Government House Leader would have to support this and encourage all the members of his caucus to support this. It only makes sense after all these comments.

I could read more, but I think I've read enough to make the point that this government has had a year and a half to do something about these draconian laws – their words – and have done nothing. They said that they didn't need the help of the opposition, but obviously they do need some help because they've done nothing yet and keep bringing forward legislation that doesn't respect property rights.

It's a simple amendment. It's incredibly simple. Let me just read it here:

A proposal under section 5 shall not be approved by the Minister unless the Minister is satisfied . . .

I mean, that's being pretty generous. The minister is satisfied. There's nothing wrong with that.

. . . that reasonable consultation in respect of the proposal has taken place with any affected municipalities and landowners.

Reasonable consultation and that the minister is satisfied with that. I think that's pretty simple stuff, pretty straightforward.

I would expect that the Government House Leader would be encouraging all the NDP caucus to support this amendment, a very good amendment. There's nothing wrong with supporting reasonable consultation with municipalities and landowners, but we will see. We will see. We've been disappointed before.

Hopefully, this is one of those opportunities when we will join together in this House across the aisle and support property rights. I think it would be a pretty good gift here on the last day of this week that we sit here in this House to join together, support this amendment, and help in protecting landowners' rights and respecting municipalities. Very simple, straightforward.

I would encourage everybody in this House to support this amendment. Thank you very much.

4:20

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I will now recognize the Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you. I'd like to rise to speak in opposition to this amendment. This amendment demonstrates a remarkable failure to understand the full scheme of the regulatory and approvals process applicable to renewable energy projects and, also, how renewable energy projects are developed in co-operation with landowners who receive revenues from the projects.

Now, let's review a few of those. In the municipal district of Pincher Creek, for example, the Summerview wind farm phase 1 and 2 highlights – and these are the highlights. There's \$12 million into the local economy during the construction – that's pretty good – plus \$5.8 million annually. TransAlta's Summerview phase 1 and 2 wind projects, which have a combined capacity of 136.2 megawatts, provide enough electrical energy to power 55,000 Alberta homes and to offset more than 257,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year. Isn't that remarkable? They also provide the municipal district of Pincher Creek with \$1.2 million in annual tax revenue. That says a lot. And it helps fund new community services and infrastructure and local landowners with over \$500,000 a year in royalty payments. That's pretty good, I'd say.

They argue that there are issues with landowners and stuff. Let's look at what's already in place to protect landowners. Processes are

already in place to ensure that renewable energy projects are also subject to public scrutiny under the Alberta Utilities Commission's strict regulatory processes and reviews of new generation projects. It does that. The AUC's processes include reviews with local communities, in consultation. Okay. This also . . . [interjections] A lot of arguing over there.

**The Deputy Chair:** I know we're in Committee of the Whole, but let's bring the tone down a little bit, please.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** This can include full hearing processes, where the AUC deems it necessary, to decide on the best public interest. As a result, the AUC can put conditions on the project to require certain mitigations of various concerns. So there is consultation. You can't say that it doesn't occur.

This is no different from the processes applicable to other forms of generation. In fact, recently approved wind farms have gone through full public hearings which resulted in certain conditions on the projects. Well, we have a process in place to consider and review these concerns.

**An Hon. Member:** Read the act.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** They're there.

**An Hon. Member:** Read the bill.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** We are reading the bill. Okay?

Let's look at the process a little bit. Prior to making an application, the proponent would be required to consult with landowners, municipalities, and other stakeholders to identify

potential adverse impacts and work to mitigate them. There is consultation. Applications to the Alberta Utilities Commission have very detailed requirements. As set out in their rule 007, applications for power plants, substations . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt; however, given the time we will now rise and report progress on Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 27. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur with the report? Please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed, please say no. So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Madam Speaker, I'm sure we can find something very productive to do in the last four minutes, so I suggest that we adjourn as quickly as possible and return next week.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:27 p.m.]

## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to Thursday, December 8, 2016**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1 — Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading — 5 (*Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 685-91 (*Apr. 20, 2016 morn.*), 732-36 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft.*), 749-60 (*Apr. 21, 2016 aft.*), 825 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 987-95 (*May 18, 2016 morn.*), 1019-24 (*May 18, 2016 aft.*)

Third Reading — 1172 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1174-79 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cP-26.3 ]

### **Bill 2 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 96 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 162-67 (*Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 239-49 (*Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 251-59 (*Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1 ]

### **Bill 3 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 156 (*Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 157-62 (*Mar. 15, 2016 morn.*), 201 (*Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 239-49 (*Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 259-66 (*Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2 ]

### **Bill 4\* — An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading — 180 (*Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 285-88 (*Mar. 17, 2016 aft.*), 349-66 (*Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 378-84 (*Apr. 6, 2016 morn.*), 399-409 (*Apr. 6, 2016 aft.*), 415-28 (*Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 428-33 (*Apr. 7, 2016 morn.*), 450-55 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c10 ]

### **Bill 5 — Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading — 398 (*Apr. 6, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 455-56 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft.*), 491-505 (*Apr. 12, 2016 morn.*), 532-38 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 539-56 (*Apr. 13, 2016 morn.*), 570-77 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 577-83 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 cS-7.1 ]

### **Bill 6 — Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*), 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 519-27 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 527-32 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 583-85 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c13 ]

**Bill 7 — Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**

First Reading — 518 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 585-86 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft.*), 649-51 (*Apr. 19, 2016 morn.*), 682-84 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 820-24 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 902-903 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**

First Reading — 568 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 669-71 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft.*), 684 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 824-25 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 903-904 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c8 ]

**Bill 9 — An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**

First Reading — 568 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 640-49 (*Apr. 19, 2016 morn.*), 728-30 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 979-81 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1180-81 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c11 ]

**Bill 10 — Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 599 (*Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 671-82 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft.*), 691-703 (*Apr. 20, 2016 morn.*), 730-32 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 950-51 (*May 17, 2016 morn.*), 1041-49 (*May 19, 2016 morn.*), 1077-81 (*May 24, 2016 morn.*), 1103-13 (*May 24, 2016 aft.*), 1115-23 (*May 24, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1124 (*May 24, 2016 eve.*), 1197-99 (*May 26, 2016 morn.*), 1263-85 (*May 30, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c17 ]

**Bill 11 — Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016 (Bilous)**

First Reading — 773 (*May 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 907-908 (*May 12, 2016 aft.*), 971-79 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1012-18 (*May 18, 2016 aft.*), 1024 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1068-69 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c4 ]

**Bill 12 — Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Feehan)**

First Reading — 802 (*May 3, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 904-907 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 985-87 (*May 18, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1069 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c3 ]

**Bill 13 — Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016 (Gray)**

First Reading — 872 (*May 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 965-71 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1024-25 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1069 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c15 ]

**Bill 14 — Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**

First Reading — 872 (*May 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 983-85 (*May 18, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1076-77 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1077 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c9 ]



**Bill 15 — An Act to End Predatory Lending (McLean)**

First Reading — 901 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1062-67 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1153-57 (*May 25, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1172 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2016 cE-9.5 ]

**Bill 16\* — Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**

First Reading — 921 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1067-68 (*May 19, 2016 aft.*), 1071-75 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157-63 (*May 25, 2016 aft.*), 1197 (*May 26, 2016 morn., adjourned*), 1219-23 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1223-25 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c14 ]

**Bill 17 — Appropriation Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 950 (*May 17, 2016 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 995-1000 (*May 18, 2016 morn., adjourned*), 1025-29 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1031-41 (*May 19, 2016 morn.*), 1070 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1096-1103 (*May 24, 2016 aft.*), 1113 (*May 24, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c5 ]

**Bill 18 — An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring (Phillips)**

First Reading — 964-65 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1125-35 (*May 25, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1191-97 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1199-1205 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 30, 2016; SA 2016 c7 ]

**Bill 19 — Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1011 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1135-40 (*May 25, 2016 morn.*), 1153 (*May 25, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1171-72 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1173 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cR-8.5 ]

**Bill 20\* — Climate Leadership Implementation Act (\$) (Phillips)**

First Reading — 1095 (*May 24, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1163-70 (*May 25, 2016 aft.*), 1173-74 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1181-90 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1288-98 (*May 31, 2016 morn.*), 1311-21 (*May 31, 2016 aft.*), 1338-56 (*May 31, 2016 eve.*), 1357-72 (*Jun. 1, 2016 morn.*), 1405-07 (*Jun. 1, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1408-24 (*Jun. 1, 2016 eve.*), 1425-42 (*Jun. 2, 2016 morn.*), 1458-61 (*Jun. 2, 2016 aft.*), 1479-91 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft.*), 1493-1541 (*Jun. 6, 2016 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1541-43 (*Jun. 6, 2016 eve.*), 1545-57 (*Jun. 7, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c16 ]

**Bill 21\* — Modernized Municipal Government Act (Larivee)**

First Reading — 1310 (*May 31, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1583-96 (*Nov. 1, 2016 morn.*), 1624-28 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft.*), 1634-41 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1939-41 (*Nov. 22, 2016 aft.*), 2009-24 (*Nov. 24, 2016 morn.*), 2091-2100 (*Nov. 29, 2016 morn.*), 2192-2202 (*Nov. 30, 2016 aft.*), 2218-24 (*Nov. 30, 2016 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2317-20 (*Dec. 6, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 22 — An Act to Provide for the Repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Ceremonial Objects (Miranda)**

First Reading — 1219 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 23 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**

First Reading — 1454 (*Jun. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1478 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1478 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1479 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016; SA 2016 c18 ]

**Bill 24\* — Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016 (Carlier)**

First Reading — 1571-72 (*Oct. 31, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1609-24 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft.*), 1629-34 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1786-91 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft.*), 1797-1806 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1849-54 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn.*), 1915-22 (*Nov. 22, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 25 — Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act (Phillips)**

First Reading — 1606 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft., passed.*)

Second Reading — 1641-43 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn.*), 1677-89 (*Nov. 3, 2016 morn.*), 1703-13 (*Nov. 3, 2016 aft.*), 1754-61 (*Nov. 8, 2016 morn.*), 1776-86 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft.*), 1806-09 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn.*), 1826-35 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft.*), 1854-60 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn.*), 1971-77 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn.*), 1994-2006 (*Nov. 23, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2115-33 (*Nov. 29, 2016 aft.*), 2224-29 (*Nov. 30, 2016 eve.*), 2231-41 (*Dec. 1, 2016 morn.*), 2320-27 (*Dec. 6, 2016 morn.*), 2383-98 (*Dec. 7, 2016 morn., adjourned*)

**Bill 26 — Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act (Littlewood)**

First Reading — 1659 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1660-69 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1669-73 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1673-76 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

**Bill 27 — Renewable Electricity Act (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)**

First Reading — 1701 (*Nov. 3, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1747-54 (*Nov. 8, 2016 morn.*), 1835-42 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft.*), 1944-57 (*Nov. 22, 2016 aft.*), 2038-47 (*Nov. 24, 2016 aft.*), 2077-86 (*Nov. 28, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2086-90 (*Nov. 28, 2016 eve.*), 2135-55 (*Nov. 29, 2016 eve.*), 2313-16 (*Dec. 5, 2016 eve.*), 2378-82 (*Dec. 6, 2016 eve.*), 2470-72 (*Dec. 8, 2016 morn.*), 2490-94 (*Dec. 8, 2016 aft., adjourned, amendment introduced*)

**Bill 28 — Public Health Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**

First Reading — 1726 (*Nov. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1793-97 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1843-47 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1941-44 (*Nov. 22, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 29 — Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act (McLean)**

First Reading — 1774 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1823-25 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1847-48 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1959-60 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 30\* — Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act (\$) (Bilous)**

First Reading — 1774 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1873-81 (*Nov. 10, 2016 aft.*), 1922-26 (*Nov. 22, 2016 morn.*), 1992-94 (*Nov. 23, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2157-74 (*Nov. 30, 2016 morn.*), 2208-18 (*Nov. 30, 2016 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2241-47 (*Dec. 1, 2016 morn.*), 2262-65 (*Dec. 1, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 31 — Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1960-66 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1966-71 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 2007-09 (*Nov. 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

**Bill 32\* — Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1990 (*Nov. 23, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2203-06 (*Nov. 30, 2016 aft.*), 2207-08 (*Nov. 30, 2016 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2295-98 (*Dec. 5, 2016 eve., passed with amendment*)

**Bill 33 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (No. 2) (Mason)**

First Reading — 2186 (*Nov. 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2265-66 (*Dec. 1, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2266 (*Dec. 1, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2344 (*Dec. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 34 — Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016 (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)**

First Reading — 2114 (*Nov. 29, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2302-13 (*Dec. 5, 2016 eve.*), 2373-78 (*Dec. 6, 2016 eve.*), 2431-40 (*Dec. 7, 2016 eve., passed*)

**Bill 35\* — Fair Elections Financing Act (Gray)**

First Reading — 2060 (*Nov. 28, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2351-62 (*Dec. 6, 2016 aft.*), 2363-73 (*Dec. 6, 2016 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2412-30 (*Dec. 7, 2016 aft.*), 2440-53 (*Dec. 7, 2016 eve.*), 2455-70 (*Dec. 8, 2016 morn., adjourned, amendment agreed to*)

**Bill 36 — An Act to Enhance Off-Highway Vehicle Safety (Mason)**

First Reading — 2060 (*Nov. 28, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2189-92 (*Nov. 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2298-2301 (*Dec. 5, 2016 eve.*), 2343-44 (*Dec. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2344-51 (*Dec. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 37 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2) (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 2295 (*Dec. 5, 2016 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 2363 (*Dec. 6, 2016 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2431 (*Dec. 7, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Dec. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 201 — Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading — 92 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 119-32 (*Mar. 14, 2016 aft.*), 303-304 (*Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 202 — Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**

First Reading — 92 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 305-16 (*Apr. 4, 2016 aft.*), 470-73 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 203 — Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**

First Reading — 280 (*Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 473-83 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities*)

**Bill 204 — Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**

First Reading — 468 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 616-30 (*Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 205\* — Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 707 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 839-50 (*May 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 924-31 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 931-34 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2017; SA 2016 c12 ]

**Bill 206\* — Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (Goehring)**

First Reading — 902 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1241-49 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1249-55 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1255-57 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016; SA 2016 cP-19.7 ]

**Bill 207 — Veterinary Profession (Clear and Timely Price Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2016 (Cortes-Vargas)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 208 — Occupational Health and Safety (Protection from Workplace Harassment) Amendment Act, 2016 (Coolahan)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 209 — Active Schools Week Act (Shepherd)**

First Reading — 2060 (*Nov. 28, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill Pr1 — Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**

First Reading — 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1171 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1197 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1219 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 ]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, December 12, 2016

Day 61

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
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Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
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Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
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Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
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Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
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Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
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McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
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Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
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Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),  
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Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House  
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Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

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Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
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Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Hinkley	Pitt
Horne	Rodney
Jansen	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

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Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, December 12, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Season's greetings to you.

Let each of us reflect and pray, each in our own way. During this festive season many of the people of this province celebrate Christmas and the birth of the Christ child. The birth of the Prince of Peace in a stable because there was no room at the inn might serve as a symbol to all of us of our need to share with our brothers and sisters and celebrate our good fortune with our friends and family.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark. Feel free to sing in the language of your choice.

**Hon. Members:**

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 37 students from Afton school in the wonderful constituency of Edmonton-Meadowlark. The students are accompanied today by their teacher, Mr. Scott Slatter. I would ask them to now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?  
Seeing none, the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Robbie Kreger-Smith. Robbie is the Alberta Party's Edmonton regional organizer as well as being the constituency association president in Edmonton-Decore, and I can tell you that as the Edmonton regional organizer Robbie is a very busy guy these days. I'd ask you to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 16 hard-working staff from the marvellous Department of Treasury Board and Finance. I can't thank these staff members enough for their dedication to their work and for making sure everything runs smoothly. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House 26 members representing the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Calgary and Edmonton. This year marks the 50th year of the establishment of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Canada. I was fortunate to have been part of that celebration when the head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at world-wide visited Calgary last month. Alberta, especially Calgary, is home to several members of the Ahmadiyya Jama'at, and Baitun Nur, one of Canada's beautiful mosques, is also located in Calgary in my constituency. I would request the distinguished guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House as I call their names. There are 26 names, but I can just introduce the first five.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. The first five. We have a deal.

**Mr. Sabir:** Majeed Ahmad Tariq is the president of Ahmadiyya Jama'at Calgary, Shahrukh Abid is imam of the Baitun Nur mosque, Nasir Mahmood Butt is imam of the Edmonton Ahmadiyya mosque, Humayun Hafeez Ahmed is the regional president, and Sultan Ahmad Mahmood is the director of public relations, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Calgary.

Thank you very much for being here. I guess they're already seated.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Welcome.

The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Samuel Williamson and his mother, Christine Williamson, who've been active in my constituency for quite awhile now. This holiday season Christine asked Samuel what he wanted for Christmas, and Samuel said: I want a pass to the government. He has some great ideas, starting with a guaranteed annual income of \$6,000 per person, so I will have to consult with him a bit after this. In light of this young man's great desire for an all-access pass I would ask them to rise and please accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Nice tie.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to rise today and introduce three constituents from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Amanda Hawman and her children, Alessandra and Bennett, have joined us today. Amanda is a passionate advocate for women's issues and an advocate for those who have been abused, and she does a wonderful job in the constituency. She is a super-fantastic mom. She also has the misfortune of working for me.

**The Speaker:** Welcome, and good luck with that.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions today. I'll be brief. As the members across the way know, I'm famous for being brief. First, I do look up today and see that the family of the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is here today, specifically Ms Tanya Cooper, who is, of course, my good friend the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills' wife. I have to say to the Assembly that they did not travel with him last week, and he was absolutely miserable to live with up here. So I do want to say to Tanya: thank you for coming, and please do not send

him up here anymore by himself. With that, I'd ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Second, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Paul and Brenda Chisholm from the wonderful community of High River. Paul and Brenda's daughter Haley has been fighting a severe kidney disease for seven years. Haley's doctor says that a rare drug could prevent further damage to her kidneys and may stop her from needing a transplant. The province is refusing to provide the needed medication to Haley, so her parents are here today to fight for her and do whatever they can to give their daughter the best chance at treatment. A little bit later my good friend the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat will ask some questions about that, but for now I would ask that Paul and Brenda rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you today two constituency workers from my constituency, the most wonderful constituency of Edmonton-South West. Marta Szylo and Amelia Van Hoffen join us in the members' gallery today. They do the great work of ensuring that I get to the right place at the right time most of the time. On top of that, they are the front line for my constituents to have access to this government. I do want to also point out that Amelia is going to be leaving me very shortly as she is due with her second child on February 27. If they'd please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Adrienne Webb and her service dog, Jellybean. She uses this important dog to navigate life. She deals with PTSD as well as other issues. Her problem sometimes is getting access to places because the laws and regulations are somewhat restrictive if a dog doesn't come from an ADI-accredited kennel. Please join me in welcoming Adrienne and Jellybean.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests for introduction today? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour along with the Member for Calgary-Greenway to introduce to you and to all members of the House Majeed Ahmad Tariq of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Calgary and Humayun Hafeez Ahmed, regional president of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Alberta. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at has been a very active member of the Alberta community, and their mantra is Love for All, Hatred for None. I would ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

### Mathematics Education

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As someone who taught math in junior high, nothing angers me more than reducing the concept of math education to one extreme or the other. I do not know a single math teacher who thinks about it in terms of discovery math or back to basics nor one who teaches to only one of these two extremes. All people learn differently, and what works for one child does not work for every other child. Most teachers I know use a variety of methods to ensure each child in their class understands a concept, be it multiplication or algebra, to the best of their abilities.

It is clear to me, however, that a return to the methods of our youth is not the solution. How many people do you know who tell you, "Oh, I'm just not that good at math"? This is common in our society and accepted, but it isn't okay. How would you feel if someone told you, "Oh, I'm just not that good at reading"?

It was with much excitement, then, that I read the report of the Mathematics Curriculum Review Working Group. The members of the group are mostly postsecondary educators who teach mathematics and are ideally suited to identifying gaps in knowledge of students who are taking math in university. The members identified key themes: that students need to have a more positive attitude towards mathematics, to develop perseverance, and to learn from their mistakes. "If we want students to be comfortable with messiness, then we [must] assess with messiness as well. Multiple choice doesn't allow for this."

I'm pleased to see our government moving on recommendations from the report last week. One key issue that was identified is that teachers themselves do not always feel comfortable with math, particularly in the elementary grades. The bursary program introduced by the government will allow current and preservice teachers to access up to \$2,000 to help cover tuition costs for postsecondary courses designed to strengthen their knowledge, skill, and confidence in teaching mathematics.

Math is important, Mr. Speaker, and we are moving forward to ensure that we are teaching it well so that in the future we won't have to hear about people who just don't like math.

### Protection of Children in Care

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, the safety of our children in care should be of paramount concern for all of us. I wholeheartedly believe that we have no time to lose and that now must be the time for action.

Last week the Deputy Premier said that she believes all parties want to see the system fixed, so why does this NDP government need to do another panel when we already have a plethora of recommendations from previous studies? In a report of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, which detailed the tragic death of Serenity, the advocate renewed its call for the ministry to provide cultural, relevant support services for kinship caregivers. Kinship care means that the children are placed with someone who has a special family connection to the child. According to past studies these caregivers often receive less training and fewer services. Mr. Speaker, how has this not been rectified to date?

The advocate noted that potential kinship caregivers are self-vetted to determine their own suitability. In this self-vetting process caseworkers conducting the home study simply review a take-home assessment completed by the potential caregivers. How does this lend itself to objective evaluation and doing our proper due diligence when, literally, children's lives are at stake? In the case of Serenity she was neglected and abused in the kinship care program. How can time and time again no one be held responsible when these deaths occur?

Mr. Speaker, it's been two years now, and, that we know of, no one has been charged or fired. Children who are the responsibility of the state deserve to have someone who is accountable for them. Workers and the minister must start being held responsible. The system has failed Serenity, and it is still failing other children. We need to get to the root of this problem. The government needs to make sure that this ministry's priority is protecting the safety and well-being of our children, not absolving anyone of blame: unions, legislators, RCMP, or Justice. We all need to do better.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

### Carbon Levy Rebates

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to questions from constituents I've met while door-knocking in one of Alberta's most diverse ridings economically and culturally, Edmonton-McClung, I rise today to speak about our government's carbon levy and the rebates that will apply to 60 per cent of Albertans. Putting a price on carbon is a most cost-effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. Alberta's carbon levy will reward families, businesses, and communities that take steps to lower their emissions. The levy will also help to diversify our energy industry and create new jobs and is already improving access to new markets and better prices for our traditional energy products.

Full rebates will be provided to Albertans who earn \$47,500 or less and couples and families who earn \$95,000 or less. An additional 6 per cent of households will receive a partial rebate. The rebate is solely tied to income and not energy use, so eligible recipients will have a financial incentive to reduce household emissions. You do not need to apply. You'll automatically receive a rebate if you file a tax return and meet the income criteria. You're not required to answer questions over the phone or give access to your home to determine eligibility. For a family with two children the carbon levy's total estimated costs in 2017 are around \$338, while the full rebate that will be provided to families earning \$95,000 per year will be \$360.

The carbon levy is the key tool that will pay for the transition to a more diversified economy. Over the next five years the levy is expected to raise \$9.6 billion, all of which will be reinvested in the economy and rebated to Albertans. Mr. Speaker, the carbon levy is good for Albertans, good for our environment, and good for our resilient economic future.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

### Mental Health Supports

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are compassionate people who believe that when our friends and relatives are experiencing a mental health issue, either a mild and short-term or a more serious mental illness, they need our help. Some of the ways we can support good mental health are contained in the Psychologists' Association of Alberta's position statements regarding essentials of mental health.

One of the most important points presented is that Albertans have a right to work in psychologically healthy workplaces. Working in an environment in which people are not bullied or harassed but are valued and treated in a respectful manner is essential in enabling people to work productively and effectively.

As well, mental and behavioural health publicly funded services should be on par with funding for physical health publicly funded

services. The stigma against psychological illness often prevents people from accessing help, leading people to suffer longer than needed. All Albertans, regardless of income, should have access to psychological services. To address both these issues, the services of psychologists for the assessment and treatment of mental health problems and disorders require continued and improved supports.

Finally, as a former school psychologist I've heard from students that all Albertan students should have timely access to school counsellors who are able to support students in dealing with their concerns. School counsellors are able to assist students and link students to psychology services when needed. Many schools no longer have school counsellors on a regular basis, and some students have noted that there are few mental health resources available for youth.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Investigation of Death of Child in Kinship Care

**Mr. Jean:** The NDP know that our children-in-care system is broken, but they have dropped this file altogether. The result is that Albertans are still waiting for a girl who was beaten and starved to death to receive justice. For years we've seen panels, committees, reports, inquiries, and recommendations sit on the shelf gathering dust, and now the minister in charge failed to give the RCMP critical documents on time and when asked. Premier, how can Albertans trust this government to fix this file when the minister who's been responsible for the last 19 months has failed so badly?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. They can trust this minister and this government because this minister and this government are committed to making progress on this very, very difficult file. Quite honestly, people who care about this issue know that it is complex and long-standing. The legacy of residential schools, the legacy of the '60s scoop, the legacy of firing social workers in the '90s, the legacy of fracturing our service delivery, the legacy of cutting funding to the OCYA: all these things contributed to the systemic problems that those providing services face. We are committed to working on them diligently.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** The incompetence, secrecy, and negligence on Serenity's file is stunning. It's beyond belief that the death of a child has taken over two years to investigate. The Child and Youth Advocate got requests for information blocked at every single turn. I've asked this before, and I'm going to ask it again, Premier. Where was the report from the medical examiner's office, where was the report from the Justice department, where was the report from Human Services, and why did it take so long to complete an autopsy on this poor little girl?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this matter has been discussed at great length, and as we know, there are complexities to this file and complexities, more importantly, to this tragedy and to the whole challenge that this matter presents us as legislators in Alberta. Our government has begun to take action; our minister has begun to take action. We brought in a \$340 million child tax credit to reduce

poverty, the very thing that threatens families at risk. We brought in additional funding to FCSS to help agencies that work with these families who are at risk. We've increased funding for women's shelters to help . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** The Chief Medical Examiner took a full two years to complete Serenity's autopsy. Two years, Mr. Speaker. If a child death review committee had been established to review the deaths of all children in Alberta, as recommended by the 2014 implementation oversight committee, this may have actually been prevented. The chair of that committee, Tim Richter, says that this should have been a top priority of this NDP government. To the Premier: why have you allowed your minister to ignore this for 19 months, and when will you actually make the changes recommended by the last review committee over two years ago?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as has already been indicated, we are establishing a panel with the very view to making changes to the child death review process in time for the next legislative session in the spring, so that is action. But – you know what? – not every recommendation is created equally, and it is important for us to look at these recommendations clearly to determine which are going to work best. Not every recommendation that was made in the 2014 report is one that we think is helpful, but we do know that we need to make changes. We will be working with members opposite to bring those changes forward in the spring.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

#### Prescription Drug Coverage for Rare Diseases

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, Haley Chisholm is a vibrant teenager who has been living with a very rare kidney disease for seven years. Today I met with the Chisholm family, and I thank the Health minister for doing the same. The Chisholms are doing everything they can to secure funding for Soliris, a drug that has shown promise in treating Haley's rare disease. Her own specialist physician has said that this drug could help Haley's rare disease, but Alberta Health disagrees. Will the minister please review this file, the input of the specialist physicians, and available evidence to ensure that this drug is covered?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question as well as to Haley's family for their ongoing strength and advocacy on behalf of their daughter. I commend them, and I would probably do exactly what they're doing if I were in their shoes. As a politician I'm certainly not in the best position to be able to make determinations about a course of care. That's why we entrust physicians to bring forward recommendations to the physician panel that determines exceptional drug coverage, and that's exactly what's to happen in this case. We'll continue to monitor the science and the evidence, but I trust doctors to make the best decisions to support patient care.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, time is very sensitive for Haley. She currently takes 18 pills per day to slow the advance of this disease, but the next step will be an experimental plasma-substitution therapy requiring constant appointments while she tries to complete her studies and live her life. Beyond that, she could require a kidney transplant. We only request short-term coverage to see if her disease

responds to the drug. Can the minister assure us today and the Chisholms that she will review this file and provide the information to them as soon as possible?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I am absolutely committed to making sure that the Chisholm family maintains contact with our office if we can be of support in that process. At the end of the day, politicians are certainly not in the best position to make determinations about care, and that's why we've created these systems, to make sure that they continue to move forward. Our office is happy to help connect the Chisholms' doctor, to provide the very best information and up-to-date information about ways that he might be able to continue to move forward in his advocacy and the parents as well. At the end of the day, we do have to trust that the health professionals make health determinations.

**Mr. Barnes:** We have been told that Alberta Health cannot approve funding this drug for an off-label use because there is a lack of clinical trial evidence. However, given the extreme rarity of her disease it is no wonder that full clinical trials to test this particular drug have not and cannot be done. The evidence that does exist is limited but very promising. If the short-term exceptional drug therapy program cannot handle this truly unique case, will the minister commit to reforming an unresponsive process?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I want to commend the family for their ongoing work in supporting the very best possible health outcomes for their daughter. I'm proud of the fact that I was able to meet with them and share the frustrations that they shared around some of the concerns with regard to the drug manufacturer and some of the processes there. Certainly, in terms of the short-term exceptional drug therapy program, I'm proud to rely on the expertise of physicians. None of us on the floor is in a better position than the physicians on this panel to make the best determinations. Health Canada does determine what's on-label and not on-label. The trials continue to move forward, but I've been informed that there is an adult trial under way that . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Third main question.

#### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's been another record-breaking week for Alberta under the NDP's economic mismanagement. Sales of Crown drilling rights in Alberta have fallen to the lowest level in 39 years. Here are some other records that the NDP has broken this year: highest unemployment rate in two decades, record deficit, record debt, piles of credit downgrades, and record job losses. Congratulations. How many more records does Alberta have to break before this Premier realizes that this carbon tax she's trying to implement will just make things so much worse for Alberta families?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the record that we will and indeed have broken is the record of the number of pipelines approved here in Alberta, and we are very proud of that. We are working to build the economy. We are not tearing down the economy. We're not criticizing Albertans. We're working with them to build our



economy on every layer. Instead of doom and gloom, we are looking forward to improvements, and we're already seeing them.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, two-thirds of Albertans who do not want a carbon tax were relieved to see a Premier in Ottawa last week tell Ottawa that their province will never sign on to a carbon tax. Unfortunately, that Premier was from Saskatchewan and not Alberta. Alberta's Premier was busy championing a \$50-per-tonne carbon tax for Albertans that will pillage charities, hurt businesses, and take \$2,500 every single year out of the pockets of Alberta families. Why was the Premier championing Ottawa's carbon tax instead of joining the millions of Albertans who don't want this carbon tax from the NDP?

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, if we look at the thousand people at the rally yesterday and then subtract the thirty grandmothers who were thrown out, that does not amount to a million people.

But to be clear, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Premier fought for the right to have a made-in-Ottawa plan imposed in Saskatchewan. He fought for a right to make political points, and that is all. What we fought for was to have a made-in-Alberta plan, working with industry, moving forward with Albertan business because that's the way we build a progressive, effective . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Over 100,000 Albertans have lost their jobs in the last year and a half, and that's her answer?

The Premier can't ignore the millions of Albertans upset by this carbon tax. Albertans are hurting. They're anxious and frustrated that every level of government seems more concerned about how to tax them than getting Albertans back to work. Seeing as the Premier gave the thumbs-up to Ottawa's carbon plan, will she release her government's economic impact study, how much it's going to cost Alberta's families, how much indirect costs will go up, and how much money it will take out of our economy?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the members opposite are capable of reading in the newspaper the number of reports that have been produced which talk about how many economists believe that pricing carbon is actually the way forward, because there are a lot of them. In addition, we know that the pipeline that just got approved – which, by the way, happened because of our climate leadership plan, the very plan these folks would want to walk away from – will create 22,000 construction jobs. It will add at the very minimum \$3 per barrel. This is going to grow Alberta's economy, and we are proud to have made that happen. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I'm not sure if you've shared season's greetings with each other or not today.

The leader of the third party.

#### Child Death Review Ministerial Panel

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, the veil of secrecy over the ministerial panel promised for Serenity's death is wrong. The Deputy Premier patting your government on the back for a public-facing piece, which is a final report, while keeping everything else behind closed doors is pitiful. All panel deliberations except necessary confidential information must occur in public. To the Premier. Legislative committees regularly move in camera when the need arises, but otherwise they do their work in public. Will you please direct this panel to follow the same procedure?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, when the member opposite first asked us to consider this, he began it by premising it with reference to the work that had been done by the former Minister of Human Services Mr. Bhullar. As we know, the work that he did and the panel that he created was not an all-party committee. It was a party that consisted primarily of experts, and it was a panel to which opposition members were invited to come to observe. What we are proposing instead gives tremendous opportunity for engagement of members opposite. It will allow for excessive public opportunity, high levels of transparency, but it will also not provide a platform for politicians . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, the Premier promised an all-party committee in public, and she's broken that so far. The terms of reference for the ministerial panel are narrowly focused on the death review process in the child intervention system. While those issues are critical, the lack of protection and follow-up for Serenity runs into an abysmal depth. It includes looking at the ME's office, the RCMP, Human Services, and the minister's office itself. To the Premier. Serenity's case points to a failure of multiple agencies, offices, and public employees. Under the Public Inquiries Act you can order a public inquiry. Will you do so, please?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member opposite ought to read the terms of reference more carefully. In fact, it is within those terms of reference that the issue of the death review process will be addressed. It will address all the actions of all the agencies that the member opposite just spoke of. That's the way to go forward. That's the way to get to a solution quickly. That's the way to get to a point where next spring we bring in legislation to remove a lot of the barriers and to streamline this process and to ensure that there is a much higher level of transparency in terms of how these investigations proceed.

**Mr. McIver:** The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that the minister could throw a blanket over all that information if he wants to under the terms of reference. Serenity's abuse and subsequent death suggest a shocking lack of concern for the welfare of our indigenous children. All of Alberta has seen in recent weeks the Minister of Human Services fail to use the authority of his office to take control of a terrible situation. They no longer have faith in him. Premier, when you were in opposition, you called for resignations based on what you saw as a lack of ministerial accountability. This case is clear cut. Will you replace your two ministers?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, our minister has worked diligently – diligently – on supporting the work of his ministry and supporting child intervention. You know what was the first thing he did when he became minister? He looked at what had been proposed under that member opposite's proposed budget. You know what it was? It was \$600 million a year coming from child protection; \$600 million per year was proposed to be taken out of child intervention by those folks over there. This minister over here said no. He restored that funding. He brought in a \$37 million increase because he is committed to making this . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

#### Protection of Children in Care

**Mr. Clark:** I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nearly two years after Serenity's death major problems persist in Alberta's child welfare

system. These are not new problems. Report after report after report have identified the issues. A committee chaired by Tim Richter was established to implement past recommendations, but this work has been ignored by the minister. It's clear we don't need another panel. We need action. To the Minister of Human Services. We all know what's wrong; we all know the answers. How can you justify yet another repetitive panel?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The stories of Serenity and other children are tragic and can't help but make you recommit to take action. That is why we are taking action. As we move forward with the committee, we will look at the work that has been done previously. In the short term, for spring session, we will bring in a process that will look over the death review, which was ignored by the previous government. We will bring that legislation next spring. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** This is on you, Mr. Minister. I expect you to have implemented the damn changes. That's what's needed here, Mr. Speaker. Some of the recommendations made by the implementation committee include benchmarking outcomes for children in care, creating a joint child death review panel, conducting and releasing internal reports into all child deaths. These are just a few of the many clear, actionable recommendations you have had on your desk for more than 18 months. Again to the Minister of Human Services. You've been in charge for a year and a half. Why haven't you implemented a single one of Tim Richter's recommendations? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I want to remind all of the House. You've been very good at it, but, again, particularly on sensitive topics like this, please direct your comments through the chair.

The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The death of Serenity represents the systemic issues that have been there for decades, and there is no simple solution. There is the legacy of residential schools, there is the legacy of '60s scoop, there is a legacy of laying off social workers, there is a legacy of fractured systems . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order is noted.

Minister, your comments through the chair. Are you finished your comments?

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, this minister is responsible for two catastrophic failures. First, his inaction means that whoever murdered Serenity is walking free today, and second, we have no assurance that other Serenities aren't at risk in the system right now. I do lay blame, and I have no faith in this minister. The Richter report says that, quote: at the end of the day no amount of external review, oversight, policy, or process can replace leadership. To the Premier: will you immediately replace this minister with someone willing and able to fix the system?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said before, not all recommendations are created equal. There were a number of elements of that previous report which, quite frankly, will not help us move forward in terms of dealing with the problems that were reflected in the case of Serenity. For instance, the idea of having the OCME investigate every death of every child in Alberta will result

in the critical issues that impact children in care being lost. It would result in us failing to make the kinds of focused changes that we need to move on. That is why we are reviewing this. We will move forward . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

2:10

## Energy Industry Update

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past few weeks there have been calls for optimism in Alberta's oil patch; however, I'm still hearing from my constituents in Calgary-Glenmore that they're concerned about jobs. They still can't find work and are having a hard time paying their bills. To the Minister of Energy: what will the production cuts from OPEC mean for working families here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We certainly are cautiously optimistic about the OPEC production cuts. More balance between supply and demand is going to lead to oil price increases, and we will continue to monitor that situation. Higher oil prices will make it easier for industry to make those investment decisions and to create jobs. It will also mean more revenue for Alberta to put towards the social programs that our families rely on. There is still work to be done, and that's why we're moving into diversifying our economy with our petrochemical industry.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that OPEC cuts may be good news but many oil and gas projects are still on the shelf, to the same minister: when will companies here in Alberta start announcing capital investments?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Certainly, many companies are showing cautious optimism. Last week Cenovus did announce that it would proceed with the expansion of their Christina Lake oil sands project. Recently CNRL announced it would resume its Kirby North oil sands project, and to date we have over 140 wells that are being drilled on the new modern royalty framework.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that so many Albertans are struggling due to the drop in oil price, again to the same minister: when will families in Alberta start to see real benefits from the approval of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there's been lots of good news lately with two pipelines. The CEO of Kinder Morgan expects that shovels will be in the ground within the year in 2017. Trans Mountain has announced also that there will be 22,000 new construction jobs. That means that once it's completed, there'll be at least \$3 a barrel more to Albertans, and without this additional pipeline access, the companies would be losing between \$8 billion to \$13 billion annually in revenue by

2022. Without additional pipelines we would lose \$1 billion annually in revenue to the government.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Airdrie.

**Protection of Children in Care**  
(continued)

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week we heard of yet another review panel into the current state of our children in care. Multiple reviews have been done on this issue, hundreds of recommendations authored, countless reports, several official panels and committees, and reviews of reviews of reviews. Albertans are sick of hearing of tragic and avoidable stories like Serenity's, and they want action. To the minister: what are you doing in the meantime to take action on the hundreds of already existing recommendations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. What we are doing: we have put forward an action plan of which we will see the changes in the immediate future.

At the same time we have taken steps to address the root causes. We are dealing here with historical injustices, generational trauma, residential schools, the '60s scoop, and the firing of social workers in the '90s. That's why we are making important investments, like investing \$340 million so that families can bear the costs of raising the child. We have invested \$25 million in FCSS so preventative measures can be put . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

My apologies to the hon. member. I called you Calgary-Airdrie. I meant to say Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given that this panel was announced last week and was flaunted as the action being taken and given that everyone in this Assembly granted an emergency debate because the safety of the children in government care must be addressed now and given that the minister cannot even be bothered to post the details of this panel on the government website, is the Premier still proud of this minister? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for highlighting the important work that we're doing as we move forward . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Quiet, please. [interjection] Hon. member, quiet, please.

The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite said that they wanted to be a part of the solution, and we certainly take them at their word when they say that. That's why we've moved forward with a ministerial panel, and we look forward to seeing the work that they do. Absolutely, we have the full confidence in our minister, and we continue to have his back because he has the backs of children.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that the NDP's only answer to children dying in care is a minister-run panel and given that this leads to serious questions of trust, that the minister will ignore valid

ideas in favour of an NDP world view, and given that this side has called for a fully independent committee of the Legislature, will someone please tell me why the government wants to put the fox in charge of the henhouse?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said repeatedly, we are committed to establishing a committee that involves people – a panel that involves experts on the matter so that we can come up with the best solutions, the best distillation of the many recommendations that have proceeded over the last many years, and bring it forward in an effective way in time for this spring. We have invited members opposite to be part of that committee. We are not going to create a platform on which they can score political points, like they are trying to do today, rather than trying . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier. Thank you. [interjections] Could we have a little order, please.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that an all-party panel has been established to fix Alberta's child intervention system and given that the Minister of Human Services said in question period last week that if the panel members "care about these issues, which I believe they do, they will work with me to find solutions," to the hon. Premier. Albertans care about all of the Serenities out there. How are you going to protect them in the interim while this panel does its work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I'd like to first take this opportunity to correct a piece of information I gave in answer to a different question when I was talking about the proposed budget cuts of the last government. It was roughly a \$30 million cut to a \$600 million child intervention budget, one that was expected to happen over a couple of years, that was reversed and, in fact, increased. I needed to correct that because I was incorrect previously.

As I've said before, the minister and our government are doing a number of things to try to work to prevent the risks that are presented to children at risk throughout our province every day. One of the key issues, Mr. Speaker, is poverty. We have worked quickly to ameliorate that, and we will continue . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. Given that I have a proposal for Serenity's law, which amends the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act to make it the lawful responsibility of adults to notify police of a child who needs intervention – and I will table this today – and given that this is my private member's bill but that because it is at least a year away, I recommend that we act on it now, to the Premier. More Serenities are being victimized as I speak. Are you willing to ask for unanimous consent of this House to stay one more day to pass legislation that can start saving children's lives immediately?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member's effort to put forward a substantive recommendation like that. Indeed, that's exactly the kind of thing that I anticipate having

us work on with the panel to bring forward legislation in the spring because that's exactly the kind of practical solution that could help close some of the gaps and loopholes that we know exist. I look forward to working with him should he be the nominee from his caucus on the panel. It's exactly the kind of idea that we need to move forward on, and I thank him for it.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is so simple. We could do it today.

Given that last Thursday the Deputy Premier made the following statement in QP, "All of our children deserve an opportunity to have the very best life, and I challenge everyone to help us do that" – Mr. Speaker, I took that challenge – and given that I cannot go home for Christmas knowing that more Serenities are out there being victimized while we wait for a panel to start its work, to the Premier: please put the politics aside for the love of Alberta's children. Do not allow this House to recess before Serenity's law is passed.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, it is really kind of rich to hear the member opposite talk about putting the politics aside. I think it is a good idea, but for the member to come in today 10 minutes or 20 minutes before the House begins with a request for somebody else to draft a bill that is not yet drafted and to then suggest that we should somehow change the rules to run it through today in one go when it's not ready and it's out of order, after 44 years of failing to address it in the past – I have committed to having these kinds of . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier. Thank you.

#### Minister of Human Services

**Mr. Loewen:** In 2007 there were reports of foster children kept in unsafe or inappropriate foster homes because there was nowhere else to place them and that alleged sexual abuse victims were left in homes with their alleged attackers. That's horrible, but unfortunately it sounds familiar. It sounds familiar to the failure of this government with Serenity. I'm going to ask the Minister of Human Services the same thing our present Premier asked the minister in 2008. "You clearly have no idea what's going on inside your ministry. You failed your staff. You failed Albertans. You failed these children. Why won't you resign?"

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I have stated that we have failed these children for decades. Folks over there are the only ones who think it's time to step down. I think it's time to step up. That's why I came with an action plan, and we will move forward with that.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that at that time the Premier said, quote, I think the minister has to take responsibility for not fully keeping the advocate accountable, for keeping her ministry accountable, and for keeping the children of Alberta who are in the government's care safe, end quote, and given that the Premier asked at that time, "So Albertans have no reason to have any faith in your assurances. You've lost all credibility. Why won't you resign?" to the Premier: what message does this send to Albertans if this minister is not held accountable?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the minister has been working diligently since taking over this file in May 2015. There have been a number of issues that he has had to deal with, and he has done them well. In addition, he has moved forward on a multiplicity of initiatives that

are helping children in care. He has moved forward on funding women's shelters, absolutely fundamental to ensuring that kids are kept more safe. He has increased funding to FCSS. He has moved forward on child poverty funding. He has . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Loewen:** Say one thing; do another.

Given that at the time the Alberta NDP leader, who is now serving as the Government House Leader, said, quote, it is our view that she should resign immediately from her position as children's minister and that if she doesn't resign immediately, the Premier should fire her, end quote, and given that these questions are as pertinent now as they were when the Government House Leader asked them, to the Premier: what makes this situation any different?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to get into a detailed comparison of the three situations, but I would commend a detailed comparison of the three situations to anyone who is interested in this matter because I will tell you that they are not remotely comparable. This minister has worked to protect children since he was first elected. He will continue to do so. We will bring in legislation in the spring to deal with the matter of child death reviews. We will continue to work on how to improve the system overall and to prevent these things in the future, and we will . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier. Thank you.

#### Government Advertising

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** In 2014 the Premier characterized ad spending of the Redford government as pre-election campaigning. She labelled Redford's 214 communications staff as a waste of taxpayers' money. In the same year the now Government House Leader on multiple occasions accused Premier Redford of excessively spending taxpayers' dollars to, quote, control the message. He passionately denounced wasting taxpayers' money on advertising the policies of the party in power. Does the Premier still agree with herself?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I guess I could ask the same question of the member opposite because – you know what? – while his leader was in the federal government, over 10 years they spent \$750 million on advertising. [interjections] In one year they spent \$115 million on advertising for a political plan. It's jaw dropping how much money the member opposite's government spent on political advertising, yet we spent \$4 million. I assume that their real concern is that we're not spending enough. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Folks. Calm it down, folks, please.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The inability of the Premier to answer a question is jaw dropping, Mr. Speaker.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that the most corrupt Premier in the modern history of Alberta spent \$4 million over three years on self-serving partisan propaganda while the new boss is just like the old boss, actually nearly three times worse than the old boss – to date the NDP have spent \$10.5 million in half the time – and given that Albertans were disgusted by this waste of money when Redford did it and they're disgusted now, will the government do the right thing and put an end to this taxpayer-funded partisan propaganda?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, speaking of bosses, the member opposite's boss was part of a government that in one year spent \$113 million on political advertising. I believe that's – ah, let's see – 30 times more than we've spent. Thankfully, we will not be following their example.

2:30

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** More non answers from the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the overwhelming majority of Albertans oppose the carbon tax. The NDP didn't dare put it before Albertans in the last election because they knew that they would lose. The NDP don't have the guts to put it before Albertans now in a referendum because they know that Albertans will reject it. The writing is on the wall. The Premier told Albertans that the carbon tax would help them make better choices, and in 2019 I'm sure they will. Is the Premier so incapable of convincing Albertans to support her carbon tax that the only option is to outspend Alison Redford on partisan political propaganda?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's boss was part of a government that spent \$5 million on the War of 1812. Five million dollars advertising the War of 1812. What our advertising does is that it informs Albertans about the single biggest public policy change that's been made in this province in years. It will tell them about the rebates that over two-thirds of Albertans will be receiving soon, it will tell them about the energy efficiency grants that they'll be eligible for, and it will tell them about how the plan helped to get them a pipeline.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

#### **Dental Profession Oversight Amber Athwal**

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been two weeks since the Alberta Dental Association and College referred Amber Athwal's case to a hearing tribunal. The ADAC is blocking her family from knowing what happened to their daughter. Other parents are concerned about the safety of dental services for their children. Dentists have told me that they're concerned that a hearing tribunal will take years to complete. Dentists and patients are still waiting for decisions about complaints filed in 2012 or earlier. To the minister: what will this government do to ensure that the Athwals and all Albertans can learn from this tragedy to prevent similar future incidents?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I, too, share with all Albertans in wanting to make sure that we get to the bottom of this. That's why I was so pleased, when we were announcing the dental fee review outcomes on Thursday, to stand beside the incoming president for the association and college, who said that this is why it's important that we have a fair process to make sure that everyone is held accountable and, at the end of the day, that we make sure we're doing everything we can through the college and association to make sure that Albertans are protected and that best practices are guiding the industry as we continue to move forward.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that dentists have reached out to me demanding separation of the Alberta Dental Association and College into two distinct professional and advocacy bodies and given that such separation is required for a profession to be both transparent and accountable and given that the same dentists have also requested whistle-blower protection so that they can address serious gaps in the regulation of dental professionals in Alberta, to the Minister of Health: when will Alberta's dental professionals receive the same protection, accountability, and independent advocacy as professionals in Alberta's other health professions?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of professions which have both a college and association combined. The teachers, for example, come to mind and the nurses. There are a number of different professions where it works well together, and there are a number where they've been separated. I think that we have an opportunity as we move forward in reviewing this process and watching how it unfolds. The president of the association and college said that his college hat is the biggest, that public interest is always his number one priority. We'll be able to see that unfold through this review and determining the next steps.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the family of Amber Athwal is continuing to experience a full fallout from the tragedy and that providing care has become a full-time job for both parents and given that they are now facing a \$2,800 per month bill to rent a wheelchair-accessible vehicle to transport their daughter to much-needed medical and other support services and given that this is yet another high-profile tragedy where Albertans expect their government to be there for them, to the Minister of Human Services: why is your department letting yet another Alberta child fall through the cracks by not providing enough support when the Athwals need it most?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I continue to be committed to working to support the family in helping them liaise with the system and making sure that we provide opportunities for Amber to live as inclusive a life as possible as she continues to progress in her recovery. We'll continue to work side by side with the Athwal family to do everything we can to connect them with the important programs and supports that exist both through the government and through the not-for-profits in our province.

Thank you.

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

#### **Student Achievement in Mathematics**

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2015 OECD PISA results were released last week. Alberta is known for an excellent education system, and this is something that we are all very proud of. However, my constituents were very concerned with the declining math scores that our students were receiving. To the Minister of Education: how did Albertan students do on these tests overall?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, overall Alberta students did quite well on the PISA exams. Where we saw that we needed improvements, we've taken immediate action. In science, for example, Alberta did the second best in the world, behind Singapore, and in reading we were third best in the world. We know that we will not rest, however, to ensure that we've learned from where we've made these marked improvements but also learn from where we can make specific gains in a place like mathematics.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parents in my riding of Edmonton-South West view the education of their children as a top priority, and we are very concerned about the math results that are going on. To the same minister: what is the ministry actually doing to address parental concerns and improve achievement in math?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three points. We are reinstating the written portion of the diploma exam for 30-1 and 30-2. This was removed as a cost-saving measure by the previous government, and we believe that it should be there. We also are adding a no-calculator portion to the grade 9 PAT exam, which I already did for the grade 6 PAT exam. Finally, perhaps most interestingly, we are introducing a bursary program for current and preservice teachers to help cover tuition costs to help strengthen their knowledge and confidence in teaching mathematics in our schools.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that math and math skills are increasingly important in this technology-driven world, to the same minister again: how does the ongoing education review address concerns around math?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Well, thank you very much. Further to the announcement last week we are looking to develop new curriculum, of course, in all subject areas but specifically for mathematics and looking for the continuity of instruction, let's say, with fractions or linear equations right through the different grade levels. So you'll see continuity there, and people can move from one strength to another. Of course, we built a very large public survey and feedback on our curriculum in general, the largest of its kind in the history of Alberta Education. We have our working groups. We have people consulting in the consortium with public meetings. I believe we've built a strong case to build a strong curriculum.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

#### **FireSmart Community Grant Program**

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, when I toured northern Alberta this year, one thing I noticed was that very few communities had fully implemented FireSmart. Winter is here, the muskeg is frozen, people are unemployed and need jobs. It is time to get out there and cut trees and brush. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what have you done to implement FireSmart, and can you name specifically in which communities?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the devastating Fort McMurray fire reminded us of the importance of continuing to invest in programs that help reduce the risk of wildfire to Albertans, like the FireSmart program. Certainly, Wood Buffalo has received \$465,000 in grants to work on things like clearing out vegetation that can fuel fires and education for the community. We'll be working with communities to help with more vegetation management and educational programming. We've allotted more than \$1 million to the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta to allocate for just such programs.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, whereas sources indicate that the beast is sleeping, as in that the Horse River wildfire has gone underground

into the peat of the muskeg, and will surface again at the right time, Minister: with so many people unemployed, what's being done to ensure Fort McMurray and other vulnerable communities across Alberta have FireSmart completed in time for the spring 2017 fire season? Not just Fort McMurray, all of the communities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The safety and well-being of our communities and our forests are of utmost importance. FireSmart has made significant progress to reduce the fire risk in communities across Alberta. Many recommendations of Flat Top, including additional resources like more firefighters, are well under way. Again, we will continue to work with communities. We will continue to provide funding for FireSmart programs. The opposition's reckless cuts would have meant fewer resources for communities to prepare for wildfires and fewer resources to fight these fires when they happen.

**2:40**

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, given that the holdouts of forest management agreements like Tolko and Al-Pac are partners in making sure that FireSmart is implemented and given that the forest management agreements require 10-year plans signed off by the minister, to the minister: how many forest management agreements and plans are being held up, waiting for authorization to allow timber cuts and the continued implementation of FireSmart, and is the caribou management plan holding them up?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, due to the profuse amount of noise coming from the other side, I actually had great difficulty hearing that conversation. However, I have to stress once again that the safety and well-being of our community forests are of utmost importance, which is why we've continued to provide funding. We've allocated more than a million dollars to the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta, which ensures that funds for FireSmart programs are disbursed across this program, ensuring that the government continues to work with the communities of this province to not only ensure the safety of our communities and forests but ensure those important jobs during these tough times. I'm proud of the work we do in supporting those programs.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

#### **Members' Statements**

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

#### **Sturgeon Foundation Seniors' Housing**

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For many families in our province access to services for our seniors is one of the biggest challenges. Whether finding affordable housing, independent or supportive living options, many families are forced to look outside of their communities. This is especially true in our rural areas, where the nearest opening may be in the city.

Many communities respond to this problem with a variety of solutions, but I would like to highlight just one of the solutions found in my community. Established in 1962, the Sturgeon Foundation is governed by a board of directors composed of officials from St. Albert, Sturgeon county, Bon Accord, Gibbons,

Legal, Morinville, and Redwater. Together these are the supporting communities.

The Sturgeon Foundation is only one of the ways that these communities come together in co-operation. Currently operating at least one facility in each community, the Sturgeon Foundation is continuing to see growth. Phase 2 of the North Ridge Lodge in St. Albert began construction in November of this year.

Earlier this fall I had the opportunity to attend the Sturgeon Foundation's Better Living Fundraiser, where we were entertained by none other than former Senator Tommy Banks. This fundraiser saw widespread support from the community, and it was truly an honour to attend.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans owe a lot to our seniors. They built this province. As we look forward to returning to our communities, let us all remember that and do what we can to return the favour.

### Official Opposition Sessional Retrospective

**Mr. Loewen:**

'Twas two weeks before Christmas and all through the land,  
The NDP were passing legislation getting way out of hand.  
The Dippers were all proud of their world-saving bills,  
But Wildrose was worried about the jobs they'd kill.  
They meddled with oil sands by installing a ceiling.  
Our fragile economy, it will be left a-reeling.  
They couldn't resist twisting their electricity act.  
They had no good excuses, so they made up the facts.  
Now, messing with something you know nothing about,  
Can leave Albertans and investors with nothing but doubt,  
Not to mention the costs that surely will rise,  
Proven by an electricity price cap twice the original size.  
Now phasing out coal has Santa upset.  
Naughty children rejoicing, you surely can bet.  
Now these young 'uns who have been misbehaving,  
When they hear of no coal, they'll surely be raving.  
The joy they feel will have them hopping,  
But renewable options will be reindeer droppings.  
Now the reindeer had heard what the caribou plan did.  
Many forestry and other jobs, it surely will rid.  
The millions of dollars they have spent on their cousins,  
And killing hundreds of wolves, just to save a few dozen.  
Now there were some things upon which we could agree:  
Ukrainian day, economy, health, fires, and ABCs.  
Now the elves are feeling all smug, of course,  
As minimum wage the NDP did endorse.  
But Bill 6 was tough for Santa's reindeer farm,  
Because it will cost him a leg and an arm.  
Elections financing act or re-elect the government law,  
Has opposition parties feeling like they've been rubbed raw.  
Nine million bucks wasted to sell carbon tax spent,  
So no one was surprised when they were found in contempt.  
Now, a big part of the problem is the people they've hired.  
A history of anti-oil activism should have them fired.  
So in order to bring sanity to this great place,  
We need to solve the problems, right from the base.  
So off, Premier, off, ministers, off, backbenchers, too.  
Goodbye, radicals like Tzepporah, Karen, and Topp's B.C crew.  
You're no help to Albertans because of the things you do.  
Pipelines might be built, but no thanks to you.  
[interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two notices of motions. The first motion that I will make is as follows.

Be it resolved that the following changes to

- (a) the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be approved: that MLA Miller replace MLA McPherson, that MLA Aheer replace MLA Smith, that MLA Aheer replace MLA Smith as deputy chair;
- (b) the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be approved: that MLA van Dijken replace MLA Hunter, that MLA van Dijken replace MLA Schneider as deputy chair, that MLA Smith replace MLA Panda, that MLA Drysdale replace MLA Jansen;
- (c) the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be approved: that MLA Drever replace MLA Jabbour, that MLA Pitt replace MLA Cooper;
- (d) the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved: that MLA Cyr replace MLA Fildebrandt as chair, that MLA Panda replace MLA Hunter;
- (e) the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services be approved: that MLA Orr replace MLA Fildebrandt;
- (f) the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship be approved: that MLA Hunter replace MLA Aheer, that MLA Hunter replace MLA Loewen as deputy chair.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to give oral notice of a motion for the next Order Paper, the motion being as follows.

Be it resolved that:

- (1) a special select Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner search committee of the Legislative Assembly be appointed, consisting of the following members, namely MLA Shepherd as chair, MLA Horne, MLA Littlewood, MLA Malkinson as deputy chair, MLA Kleinstaubler, MLA Woollard, MLA Ellis, MLA Pitt, and MLA van Dijken for the purpose of inviting applications for the position of Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner and to recommend to the Assembly the applicant it considers most suitable to this position;
- (2) reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid subject to the approval of the chair;
- (3) in carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may with the concurrence of the head of the department utilize the services of members of the public service employed in that department and of the staff employed by the Assembly;
- (4) the committee may without leave of the Assembly sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
- (5) when its work has been completed, the committee shall report to the Assembly if it is sitting. During a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued, the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, is this the time for your requesting a notice of motion on a question of privilege?

**Mr. Mason:** Sorry? Points of order and points of privilege now? What do you wish, Mr. Speaker?

2:50

**The Speaker:** Government House Leader, did I understand correctly that you rose on a point of privilege during the discussion earlier today?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, I did.

**The Speaker:** Would you like to do a notice of motion with respect to that matter now, that you will be dealing with it at the end of the Routine?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to do that. How much information do you require?

**The Speaker:** Just the notice of motion that you will be speaking to a point of privilege, as I understand it, at the end of the Routine.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Is that for the record clear enough? Yes?

I'm being asked, hon. member, the substance of the question, the point of order.

**Mr. Mason:** Three points of order, one point of privilege.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, the substance of the point of privilege.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, the point of privilege is directed against the Member for Calgary-Elbow and his allegations that the negligence of the Minister of Human Services resulted in a murderer walking free. I believe that that transgresses the privilege of the House and of that member.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

#### Bill 210

#### Protection of Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Protection of Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2016.

I'd like to begin by thanking Parliamentary Counsel for their assistance with this bill. It wouldn't have been possible without them.

This bill is a culmination of years of advocacy dating back to 2009, when the Alberta Land Stewardship Act was introduced. The legislation limited property rights without notice or adequate compensation. Bill 210 proposes to correct this by amending the Alberta Land Stewardship Act and the Responsible Energy Development Act to ensure that Albertans will once again have the right to a fair hearing if their rights are affected and have recourse through the courts when their lands or interests are affected by a regional plan.

I look forward to discussing this bill with my colleagues in the House, Mr. Speaker, and ultimately winning their support for this important piece of legislation.

[Motion carried; Bill 210 read a first time]

#### Bill 212

#### Employment Standards Code (Volunteer Firefighter Protection) Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod on behalf of the hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Stier:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Highwood is currently suffering a medical setback, but I'm honoured to rise on his behalf today to request leave to introduce a bill being Employment Standards Code (Volunteer Firefighter Protection) Amendment Act, 2016.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin by thanking Parliamentary Counsel again because without their assistance this bill would not have been possible.

I was surprised and disappointed, actually, today to discover that volunteer firefighters can lose their jobs for responding to emergencies. It's my hope that this bill will close that loophole and prevent anyone who volunteers their time and energy to protecting their communities from having to worry about whether or not they will have a job to come back to.

I look forward to discussing this bill with my colleagues in the House and ultimately winning their support for this important piece of legislation. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 212 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a peer-reviewed journal article which I expect to refer to in debate of a motion this afternoon.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a report submitted on February 4, 2015, by the Child Intervention Implementation Oversight Committee, which was formed to guide action on Human Services' five-point plan to improve outcomes for children and ensure action on priorities and recommendations for improving the child intervention system. I referred to this report in my question earlier today.

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, I have the requisite number of copies of seven articles and letters from producers that refute the statements that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry made last week when I asked him about agribusiness and the impending carbon tax legislation. Unlike the government, the Chicken Producers did an economic analysis of how the carbon tax will affect their bottom line.

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of the request for a private member's bill that I referred to in my question earlier to make it the lawful responsibility of adults to notify police if they are aware of a child in need of intervention through the following amendments to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I believe we have two points of order. The Government House Leader.

### Point of Order Interrupting a Member

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All of my points had to do with the disorder created in the House today by various opposition members who were loudly interfering with the answers to questions



that they themselves had asked of the Minister of Human Services. I would ask that in future this disorder restrained and ended. It doesn't fit the dignity of the House for members to ask questions and then shout so loudly that they cannot hear the answers.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise to speak to the point of order, which clearly isn't a point of order. There have been some very, very sensitive and passionate topics that have been discussed in the House this week, including the death of children in care, particularly the case of young Serenity. Obviously, members on this side of the Chamber feel passionately about this particular issue. I know that the Government House Leader has a track record of trying to call the House to order, but clearly that job resides in your chair.

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. members, I know that the pages get a lot of exercise when I stand up and sit down and, it seems to me, far more often than necessary. They're all very healthy people, and they don't need the kind of exercise that the other people in this room do.

However, I have from the outset reminded each of you – and I hear both sides of the House talking to me in individual meetings about your desire to exchange across the hall. Some might even call it heckling, but the requests seem to be a shared desire. My request is simply with respect to volume and, of course, at specific times the use of certain words. If I've learned anything in this House, it's context. Today and last Thursday was one of context, a very sensitive matter that I think virtually everyone in this House is concerned with, but short of sending a number of people to take a turn outside of this Chamber, I think that the responsibility for the volume and for the substance of your words rests with each of you individually. Noted, and I'm sure that as we all take this long-overdue break, you'll remember those words and begin to practise this as we come back in the future.

Does that cover two points of order?

3:00

**Mr. Mason:** That was all three of my points of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Was there a point of privilege that you were making as well?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** I'll seek guidance from the table. I have a point of privilege from last week that I would like to rule on.

**Mr. Mason:** Go ahead. I'm waiting for my notes. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** You're not ready to make your point of privilege now, hon. member?

**Mr. Mason:** I can, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Well, I'm being suggested that we should do it that way.

The Government House Leader.

## Privilege

### Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to raise this matter of the House. I'm citing *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, and I want to refer you to page 108. It says:

Members of Parliament, by the nature of their office and the variety of work they are called upon to perform, come into contact with a wide range of individuals and groups. Members

can, therefore, be subject to all manner of interference, obstruction and influences. *Maingot* states:

Members are entitled to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed. The assaulting, menacing, or insulting of any Member on the floor of the House or while he is coming or going to or from the House, or on account of his behaviour during a proceeding in Parliament, is a violation of the rights of Parliament. Any form of intimidation . . . of a person for or on account of his behaviour during a proceeding in Parliament could amount to contempt.

O'Brien and Bosc state that members should be free to perform their duties free from intimidation. Today, Mr. Speaker, in question period the Member for Calgary-Elbow made a comment, a very offensive comment, which could impact the ability of members and specifically the Minister of Human Services to dispose of their duties. The member made a comment that the minister's negligence had allowed a murderer to walk free or was allowing a murderer to walk free. It is completely inappropriate for members to make such allegations in this Assembly. I would suggest, first of all, that the use of a murderer walking free presupposes the decision of an investigation and a court proceeding that has not yet taken place and could therefore have impacted people outside this House.

In particular, I am concerned about the member's reference to the minister and the impact that such a statement made in the public could have on the minister and his ability to conduct his business. If, in fact, the public believes this nonsense that is spewing from the Member for Calgary-Elbow, that his negligence allowed a murderer to walk free, then that in fact places that minister in a very, very difficult position and may in fact threaten his very safety, Mr. Speaker. There's an ongoing RCMP investigation. My understanding is that no charges have been laid at this point, and the investigation is very much alive. It is inappropriate and wrong to assume which charges may be laid and, in particular, to state that a murder has occurred and that it was directly the fault of a member in this Chamber.

Members of the Assembly are expected to be well informed of the matters of which they speak. Comments such as these could impact or influence the RCMP's ongoing investigation, including impacting witness statements or later in the trial, if there is one, jury decision-making or test bias, Mr. Speaker. It is completely offensive and inappropriate as members opposite ramp up the rhetoric in this place, each trying to outdo the other in making wild accusations and grossly exaggerating the situation and pointing the blame at one person for their own political benefit. It's unacceptable, and the statements of the member, in my view, represent a direct interference in the ability of members on this side of the House to do their job and I believe must be treated as a contempt of Parliament and a matter of privilege.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, I will ask for your indulgence in deferring my detailed arguments until tomorrow on this matter.

I will just say today here that it does surprise me that the Government House Leader feels that a single MLA from not even a recognized party in this House . . .

**The Speaker:** Could I ask you to sit a moment, please? I'd like to consult with the table officer.

Hon. member, you may recall a point of privilege that was dealt with last week, and at that time the Government House Leader was asked the question as to whether or not he was prepared at that time. He did prepare. So I want to say the same thing to you that I said to him last week, that you either speak now, or you speak your argument tomorrow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will defer until tomorrow. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The House leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Without the benefit of the Blues and passions being high, I think it would be advantageous if I could also defer till tomorrow, but I would like to provide comment then.

**The Speaker:** Any other members? The House leader for the third party.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, sir. We would also like to defer until tomorrow.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, I, too, would choose to defer until tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** I'm advised that the government has spoken in terms of the Government House Leader. I don't believe I have the prerogative of recognizing another representative of the government.

I'm sorry. What did you say, Government House Leader?

**Mr. Mason:** I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that you do in fact have that discretion although you may have been advised not to use it.

**The Speaker:** Well, I will go back and do further study, and at the time that I deal with the point of privilege, I will indicate whether or not, in fact, it is admissible for another member of government to speak.

Are there any other matters today, any other points of order? We've got a point of privilege.

### Privilege Misleading the House

**The Speaker:** I would now like to deal with the point of privilege from last week. I am prepared to rule on the purported question of privilege raised last Thursday, December 8. I'd like to start by stating that I concur with all my colleagues in this Assembly who have commented on the tragic and horrible nature of this young child. We, I believe, all need to remember that phrase that we have heard, that it takes a village to raise a child.

With respect to the formalities of the purported question of privilege my office received notice from the Official Opposition House Leader on December 8, 2016, at 11:16 a.m. of his intention to raise a question of privilege under Standing Order 15; therefore, the member satisfied the requirement for two hours' notice as per Standing Order 15(2).

The debate on this matter occurred on December 8. The arguments can be found on pages 2486 to 2489 of *Hansard* on that day. In his arguments last Thursday the Official Opposition House Leader alleged that on a number of occasions from November 22 until December 6, 2016, the Premier, the Minister of Human Services, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation made statements that deliberately misled the Assembly with respect to the tragic death of the child in care.

3:10

He stated in his arguments that the government led the Assembly to believe that it had provided all information vital to the investigation to the RCMP when he knew it had not been done so. He stated

on page 2487 of Thursday's *Hansard* that the government "didn't ensure that the RCMP had the information until . . . December 6."

Both the Minister of Human Services and the Government House Leader made statements on Thursday outlining the timing of events concerning the communication of that information to the RCMP. The details of the events can be found in the December 8 edition of *Alberta Hansard*. Therefore, I will not go into these details except to say that both the Minister of Human Services and the Government House Leader indicated that the Ministry of Human Services sent the case file to the RCMP on November 22. In the words of the Minister of Human Services as found on page 2478 of the December *Hansard*:

Human Services received a written request on November 18. A few days later, on November 22, we provided the file, the password, a secure file. There were some issues. As of yesterday the RCMP has confirmed that they have received the needed material.

Hon. members, this is the first time during the 20th Legislature that a purported question of privilege concerning an attempt to deliberately mislead the Assembly has been raised. This type of question of privilege, which purports that members made a statement to deliberately mislead the Assembly, is treated as a contempt of the Assembly. *Erskine May's Treatise on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 24th edition, on page 254 states with respect to the United Kingdom: "The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt."

The second aspect to be noted is that there is a test for deliberately misleading the Assembly. The test was referenced last Thursday in the arguments made by the hon. Government House Leader, and it is found in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, on page 86. It's a three-part test, first articulated by the former Clerk of the New Zealand House of Assembly, David McGee. It can be found in the third edition of his book, *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, at pages 653 to 654. The three parts of the test are: firstly, "it must be proven that the statement was misleading"; secondly, "it must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect"; finally, "that in making the statement, the Member intended to mislead the House."

In the words of the former Speaker Kowalski of this Assembly, which are found on page 1367 of *Hansard* from November 24, 2011, "Deliberately misleading the Assembly is an extremely serious allegation, which seldom satisfies the test for constituting a prima facie [case] of privilege."

Similarly, in his November 20, 2014, ruling with respect to meeting the test of deliberately misleading the Assembly, Speaker Zwozdesky quoted a 2002 ruling by former Ontario Speaker Carr. Those comments can be found on page 88 of *Hansard* for that day. The ruling by Speaker Carr summarizes the issues surrounding allegations of meeting the test of deliberately misleading the Assembly. This ruling also explains the role of the Speaker in adjudicating such purported questions of privilege.

On June 17, 2002, at page 996 of the Ontario *Hansard*, Speaker Carr said:

The threshold for finding a prima facie case of contempt against a member of the Legislature on the basis of deliberately misleading the House is . . . set quite high and is very uncommon. It must involve a proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature. In the absence of an admission from the Member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct, independently proved, a Speaker must assume that no honourable Members would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or honest mistake.

Hon. members, in the matter that our Assembly has before it, I must apply the test. The question is whether the statements made by the Premier, the Minister of Human Services, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation were in fact deliberately misleading. I have reviewed the statements that the government made in this Assembly from November 22 to December 6 with respect to this issue. Hon. members, I can find nothing in these statements to indicate that the minister did not provide the file to the RCMP on November 22, 2016, and conclude that the ministers in question did not deliberately mislead the Assembly. There is no *prima facie* question of privilege here. This concludes the matter.

Orders of the Day. The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Before that, I would like to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8(1) such that Motion 511 be called at the beginning of Orders of the Day and that following the conclusion of 511 Government Bills and Orders be called.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Orders of the Day

#### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

#### Downstream Water Security

511. Mr. Westhead moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to increase its efforts to conserve and manage public lands in Alberta's headwater regions to optimize downstream water security for future generations of Albertans.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to move Motion 511. Before I begin, I'd like to start by thanking everyone who has written to my office expressing their support for the motion and those who helped me craft it. I'd also like to thank the members of this Assembly for granting unanimous consent to discuss this very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, it is a true honour to be discussing the topic of water here in the Legislature again today. Previously in this Chamber, I described water as a common denominator. The United Nations has declared that clean drinking water "is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity . . . [and] is a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights."

Mr. Speaker, here in Alberta most people would say that our water comes from rivers originating in the majestic Rocky Mountains, but, more accurately, as author and naturalist Kevin Van Tighem points out, water doesn't come from the river; it comes to the river, which is an important distinction that the motion we have before us is predicated on. That is, a river is a product of its watershed. It is the landscape that produces the water, which in turn determines water quantity, quality, and its rate of discharge. Therefore, the way we manage our public lands has a direct relationship to Alberta's water security.

The eastern slopes of our province are where nature lives and also where the water we all rely on begins its journey. Indeed, the gravel-bed river is the ecological centre of nature, and its resilience relies on the degree to which this ecosystem remains intact. Members can refer to the research paper that I tabled earlier today on this topic for more information on the importance of gravel-bed rivers.

One of the world-leading experts on water security is Bob Sandford, a constituent of Banff-Cochrane. Mr. Sandford is the EPCOR chair for water and climate security at the United Nations

University Institute for Water, Environment and Health. For many years Mr. Sandford has clearly and unequivocally articulated that in order to effectively respond to a changing climate, we must take the domain of water management seriously; that is, climate change mitigation is about carbon, but climate change adaptation is about water, and therefore we must follow the water. When I spoke to Mr. Sandford about this motion, he also suggested that not only does the way we manage and conserve public lands relate to water security; it also relates to climate stability.

3:20

Our opposition colleagues across the aisle remain skeptical about the scientific consensus of anthropogenic climate change, but there is a significant cost if we were to accept the Wildrose's do-nothing approach. You see, Mr. Speaker, water and climate are reflections of one another. Management of one of these aspects effectively means we are managing the others. The energetic processes involving climate are intimately coupled with the water cycle. A case in point is the way in which our glaciers act as a thermostat for North America.

Alberta is fortunate to have some of the most significant headwaters in western Canada, with many of those located in Banff-Cochrane. This presents Alberta with an unparalleled opportunity to demonstrate leadership not only in taking action to confront climate change but also in terms of following land-use management best practices. These crucial watersheds also represent a massive responsibility that we owe to future generations, who will judge us by the decisions we make today to ensure their water supply is secure in the future.

During my consultation on this motion I had the opportunity to meet with Dr. John Pomeroy, who conducts his research in Kananaskis Country. Dr. Pomeroy is the Canada research chair in water resources and climate change, professor of geography, and director of the Centre for Hydrology at the University of Saskatchewan. The basis of Dr. Pomeroy's research is that alpine catchments receive and produce a disproportionately large fraction of global precipitation and runoff. Given that snow and ice dominate the behaviour of alpine hydrology, these indicators are especially sensitive to climate warming. The significance of his research is based on the understanding that the sensitivity of alpine hydrology to changing high-elevation climate is of disproportionate importance to downstream water resources.

Indeed, Dr. Pomeroy has demonstrated that the ongoing climate change in mountain climates has resulted in shorter snow cover duration, earlier spring hydrographs, greater rainfall as a fraction of total precipitation, glacier volume decline, ground thaw, and woody vegetation increase in many alpine catchments, with some alpine catchments contributing to a higher frequency of floods and/or droughts. A conclusion that can be drawn here is that a concerted global effort is needed to address how changing high-mountain hydrological processes will mediate the influence of atmospheric change in alpine catchments. Furthermore, mountain streamflow is shifting in timing and magnitude due to complex interactions of climate change with hydrological processes governed by vegetation, geology, and topography.

A valued partner in the stewardship of Alberta's mountain ecosystems is the nonprofit organization Yukon to Yellowstone, with its headquarters located in Canmore. Y2Y does this work in part because they know that Alberta's mountain headwaters provide water for millions of people, deliver important natural services such as flood and drought control, provide critical habitat for wildlife, and offer abundant recreation opportunities. Y2Y points out that while some of our headwaters and surrounding habitat are protected, many are not. Y2Y founder Harvey Locke and Alberta

program director Stephen Legault would like to see the Alberta government increase its efforts to keep our mountain watersheds healthy and intact.

Mr. Speaker, as the world experiences and prepares for the effects of a changing climate, it is also critical for our continued economic prosperity that we ensure that Alberta's supply of freshwater can meet our future demands. To illustrate the importance of this in a global context, I'd like to once again turn to the work of Mr. Bob Sandford, who points out that the primary response to climate change has been to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Of course, while this is necessary, it is also inadequate by itself. In concert with reductions in greenhouse gas emissions we must also make efforts to adapt to the current and anticipated effects of climate change as it relates to water.

Mr. Sandford goes on to describe that the convergence of trends relating to both global food shortages and water scarcity will have implications for Alberta's economy. Climate change impacts can extend rapidly far beyond ranges of variability and can also become permanent. The term to describe hydrological patterns in relation to geography is known as stationarity. The lesson for Alberta in all of this, Mr. Sandford proposes, is that "we should take neither water demand nor hydrological stationarity for granted." In the future the favouring of virtual water exchanges in the form of food exports could greatly advantage Alberta's agricultural sector but – and this is the crucial point – only if we are able to address issues relating to land-use practices as they relate to water. Clearly, this is an important policy matter whereby we can position Alberta to continue to be a leader in agricultural exports in addition to taking action on climate change and water security.

To do that, we must ensure that our decisions are consistent with long-term water security in order to respond to a changing climate. "What is required, however," Mr. Sandford implores, "is proactive, well-informed, and visionary political leadership." Mr. Speaker, we have the opportunity to provide that type of visionary political leadership here in the Chamber today. Climate change is real. This government has positioned itself as a leader in taking action against climate change through our climate leadership plan. That is something to be proud of, but there is more that we can do to ensure that our province remains prosperous as our climate changes. We simply must ensure that Alberta's water future is secure. There's no question that our public lands and watersheds play a key role in determining water quantity and quality. Therefore, conserving and managing our public lands in Alberta's headwater regions with a view to optimizing downstream water security for our future is a critical and worthy pursuit.

I look forward to the debate on this motion this afternoon and urge all members to support the motion. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As members of this Assembly know, water security is vital to the health and well-being of Albertans and to our long-term environmental sustainability. The mission of our watershed resiliency and restoration program is to build "long-term watershed resiliency for flood and drought mitigation by improving natural watershed functions and engaging stakeholders in the conservation, restoration, enhancement, and stewardship of priority watersheds."

The grants will go towards such projects as the restoration of riparian areas, creation of wetlands, installation of rain gardens in urban locations, soil bioengineering, implementation of agricultural best management practices, and the increased use of beaver structures. This program has provided \$18.5 million in funding to 35 projects which support healthy watersheds, many of which are

located in Alberta's headwaters and help to optimize downstream water security for future generations of Albertans.

The program has supported Western Sky Land Trust's Bow and beyond initiative to meet with over 200 riparian landowners this year in the Bow River basin upstream of Calgary, which has led to 1,660 acres of riparian land being secured for conservation in the Ghost watershed; 4,565 acres are in the stage of negotiation and will be secured for conservation; and an additional 11,700 acres are being considered for conservation by riparian landowners. Over 12 kilometres of riparian lands are being restored and enhanced in the Jumpingpound Creek watershed and in the headwaters of the Oldman River basin.

Through Cows and Fish and forest research institute research we are assessing the riparian areas in the southeastern slopes, which will help us target effective land restoration and conservation in future grant rounds. Through the ALCES watershed simulation model we are identifying areas where conservation and restoration will have the best results for watershed resiliency. Further, our drinking water safety plans address risk associated with source water. Mr. Speaker, a healthy watershed is our first and, arguably, best defence against flood and drought. If appropriately managed, Alberta's natural watershed systems will help mitigate severe natural events and will provide many other ecological benefits.

Improving natural watersheds is an important part of our plan to help vulnerable communities like Calgary and others across the province adapt to a changing climate. These projects will enhance our natural environment and reduce the impact of both floods and drought. The director of water resources at the city of Calgary affirms:

The City of Calgary is pleased to hear that the province is moving ahead with additional Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program projects in the Bow and Elbow River watersheds. We are grateful for the support Calgary received in the previous round of funding, which recognizes the important role riparian areas play in the health of the rivers, streams and creeks we all depend on.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, our government is working to ensure that Albertans have confidence that amidst a changing climate our most essential water resources are protected and managed for current and future generations. I think that regardless of whether we believe in man-made climate change or not, we can't deny that the world's supply of water is dwindling. Our lakes, rivers, and aquifers are getting lower and lower, and there is extreme drought all over the world, especially in areas that didn't cause climate change, like Africa. There are areas in Africa where people have been living for thousands of years, and now because of the lack of water their families can't live there anymore. It's not sustainable. The land is like sand or ash. Nothing will grow there, and it just blows away in the wind. What this also does is cause massive climate migrations, hundreds of thousands of people who have to leave their homes because they can't survive on their traditional lands.

Mr. Speaker, we are lucky because we live in a land that has a lot of fresh water. We have an abundance right now, but we need to be careful. We need to manage our resources properly, and I think that this motion speaks to that. I am very much in favour of it. It's a balancing act when humans are dealing with our watershed issues. It's something that we need to conserve over time. It's not just about us. It's about all the species that we have, to be honest, under our care in this province and in this country.

Thank you very much for your time, and thank you to the member for his motion. I support it wholeheartedly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Very pleased to rise in support of this motion. It's an easy motion to support. It's our lifeblood, after all. The eastern slopes provide all the water to Alberta and to the rest of the prairie provinces, in fact, and it's the source of all life and productivity, whether it's agricultural or industrial. So it's very clear that this really should be a higher priority than it has been for decades.

Peter Lougheed back in the '70s established an eastern slopes policy that actually restricted industrial and commercial activity on the eastern slopes. Somehow over time that has gradually fallen away, and we're in a state now where the designated areas for protection have not only become – what would I say? – thwarted or incompletely implemented but certainly misunderstood and certainly violated by past governments since Peter Lougheed. All manner of development has gone on now on the eastern slopes that not only threatens the quality of our water and the cost of cleaning the water, in Calgary for example, but all urban areas downstream of the mountains have to spend more and more dollars to clean the water because of not only more depositions from erosion but also from industrial and agricultural, even recreational use up there. Certainly, logging has added to the erosion and the loss of capacity to control high levels of flow or, as the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane mentioned, control the flow for drought circumstances as well.

Dr. Brad Stelfox is a neighbour and has been an adviser to me for a decade. He has visited most environment and agriculture ministers since I got into this Legislature and has presented his ALCES model, which is recognized around the world as a wonderful visual indication of cumulative impact over many decades of development and has helped us get a sense of just how the pace of our development is threatening not only our water supplies but our industrial activities and all manner of activities that we are associating with economic development. By failing to manage the eastern slopes, we are failing to manage our economy in a very fundamental way. It's a reminder that the economy is a subset of the environment. It's not the other way around. If we don't preserve the environment, we do not have an economy, and certainly we do not have our health.

Three levels of importance to water: not only the quality, not only the quantity of water but the in-stream flow needs, the so-called adequate volume that has to be maintained in streams and rivers for life to be supported there. Fish life, plant life, animal life: all of these require a minimum in-stream flow, which is threatened every fall. With the glaciers being limited further and further as years go by, there is a real threat, especially in southern Alberta, which has been known as the desert part of Alberta in past generations. The area that early explorers felt was uninhabitable and potentially desert has been close to that, especially through the Depression. We cannot assume anything for our future, especially with the unpredictability of climate change and the extremes that we can expect in terms of rain and water loss.

Those are some of the key elements of this. It's one thing, though, to pass a motion that is motherhood; it's another thing to actually put in place clear limits to activities and zones of development and protection against development. I applaud the hon. member's efforts to highlight this yet again. In my time, 12 years in the Legislature, this is probably the fourth or fifth time that it's been highlighted. It needs now to move on to much more substantive protection measures: bills, I would argue, regulations.

Off-highway vehicles have been a big issue in the eastern slopes that continue to be a damaging factor, especially in southwestern Alberta. But I think that on up the eastern slopes it's going to be a

growing problem as we get – I think Alberta has the most off-highway vehicles per capita of anywhere in Canada if I'm not mistaken, perhaps not including the Northwest Territories. We are increasingly using off-highway vehicles for recreational use in the mountains, and it's causing very substantial impacts.

I would welcome the chance to move this forward in the next phase to some very clear guidelines, beyond what the South Saskatchewan River basin plan has done. It has made some steps towards limiting development and identifying protection areas like the park and wildland that have been established in southwestern Alberta, but I think it's clear that we have to do more in relation to better logging practices, designating trails for off-highway vehicles instead of letting people go wherever they want, wherever there's a trail, and designating recreational use, which is a tremendous possibility for our future economic development. Recreational tourism and the film industry out in the mountains have to be long-term economic drivers for us, which will have that as a side benefit, the primary benefit being, of course, protection of quality and quantity of water for all of us and indeed for recreational activities such as fishing and so on.

If any area of the province is absolutely dependent on better eastern slopes management, it's the south part of this province. We don't have a lot of water here. Most of our water is in the north. Most of our population and demands are in the south. It's very clear, from all the reports that this member has referred to and others, that we neglect this at our peril. There have been no new water licences issued since 2006. It's 10 years ago that we realized we'd reached the limit of our water capacity. Surely that's the writing on the wall that says: folks, we've gone too far too fast. Especially in southern Alberta, what has to be the primary focus of policies on the eastern slopes is water protection for the future.

With that, I'll take my seat. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

3:40

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to rise to speak to Motion 511 as brought forward by the Member for Banff-Cochrane. On the surface this motion seems fairly innocuous. Everyone wants to protect public lands, and water security is extremely important. I think we can all agree to that.

However, the concern of our caucus and Albertans beyond these walls is that unintended consequences are once again quite reliably rearing their ugly heads. While I expect that the member has the best intentions in mind – and I truly believe that – there are serious implications if the government starts to go down a road such as this, and that's because a motion such as this, if acted upon and turned into government policy, could have serious implications for the mining of metallurgical coal in Alberta. This is because the eight metallurgical coal projects in Alberta are primarily along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. I'm sure everyone in this House and beyond knows that there's a huge difference between metallurgical coal and thermal coal, at the feet of which this government lays many societal ills.

Metallurgical coal is used in steel making and is a significant export product sold around the world to economies that are growing and urbanizing at an increasingly rapid rate. Ironically enough, because metallurgical coal is needed to make steel, it's also needed to make wind turbines, which this government would so desperately like to see in every field across Alberta.

These eight metallurgical coal projects on the eastern slopes have the potential to generate between \$10 billion and \$13 billion in government revenue. Now, along with these dollars, which are obviously significant, these projects are able to directly employ

between 3,000 and 4,000 people, and there's a potential for an additional 8,000 to 12,000 indirect jobs as well. Like so many Albertans who care about both the economy and the environment at the same time, I feel that we can balance these by enforcing very strict environmental standards while also creating the jobs that Albertans so desperately need now and on an ongoing basis. Mr. Speaker, these are thousands of good, mortgage-paying jobs, and these projects often form the main source of direct and indirect employment in their respective communities.

I just wonder if the member has taken the opportunity to speak with any of the companies which mine metallurgical coal or perhaps the Coal Association of Canada to inquire about the impacts that this motion potentially has on their operations. I'm wondering this, Member: what is not currently being done that the member would like to see being done going into the future? I know that companies that work in headwater regions are already subject, as they should be, to very stringent regulations, sets of them, which govern how they're allowed to operate in these areas. By stating that the government should "increase its efforts to conserve and manage public lands," the member is clearly calling into question what is being done at this moment in time. Has the member indeed consulted with the ministry of the environment? I would have thought that it would have been within her purview to act upon this already within regulations currently set. What additional steps need to be made that are not already being made? I think we need to know that. We all want to protect the water.

Again, Alberta has very strict environmental regulations. Albertans expect that, and they have every right to, Mr. Speaker. So I am interested to know what additional actions the member is calling for and what specific problems he is looking to remedy. If there are instances of compromised water quality, Albertans already expect that the Department of Environment and Parks is doing everything that is in their power – and they have great powers – to remedy these situations already. Now, these individuals, who up until May 2015 included an individual who is now a minister of the Crown if I'm not mistaken, do great work – that's an honest, sincere compliment – and I have the deepest of confidence in their abilities, as I had confidence in their abilities when they were with the previous government, to take action when it was needed and to suggest policy and legislative changes when they were deemed necessary.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this motion – definitely, credit where credit is due – is well intended, but the problem is that it has potential to prevent the creation of thousands of jobs in Alberta at a time when our province desperately needs them while respecting the environment with the regulations that are already in place.

Metallurgical coal, as I've said, is required around the world, especially in economies that are growing at an accelerated rate, and this motion has the potential to cut all of that off at the knees, selling a high-quality product into a market that already has an increasing level of demand. That is nonsensical in my understanding, Mr. Speaker, and when I say the word "redundant," it is not meant as an insult at all. Some would say that the motion is redundant because there is all sorts of great work that's already being done by ministry officials with the capacities that they already possess.

So for these reasons and more, Mr. Speaker, the motion falls short. I can't support it, and I encourage all other members of this Assembly to vote against it and do something different and better on a different occasion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that well-managed land and water systems will help our communities and industries to adapt to a changing climate where severe weather will be more common. I've had the privilege to see a lot of the world's great rivers. I've seen how destroyed and how polluted the Chao Phraya River going through Thailand has been, how the Mekong is becoming a cesspool, and how the Ganges is already polluted. I've also seen what happens to some of our great rivers in the north like the Mackenzie River and how we fought really, really hard to protect its source and all of its riverbank.

Water is one of the most important resources that we have. Alberta has some of the most significant headwaters in western Canada. Protecting those headwaters will ensure our environmental and economic prosperity well into the future. Alberta's three top industries – oil sands, agriculture, and forestry – rely on having a stable and secure source of water. If we put our water security at risk, then we are putting our most important industries at risk as well, and we just can't afford to do that.

I think that all MLAs were gifted with a book called *Living in the Shed*, authored by Billie Milholland, which details the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan River within Banff national park to its watershed up to the border with Saskatchewan. I would urge all MLAs to read the book and to discover the importance of our agricultural, forestry, and oil and gas industries along this river. The book also details the fauna and flora, the important settlers, the indigenous settlement, and trading and trapping areas that have depended on the river. I personally learned a lot about the importance of this river through this book and how important the preservation of our public land and watershed is through the research by this author. I also know how important the river is to industry and how they value the preservation of water through the action that they take in how they build the industries along the North Saskatchewan River.

Along with three other MLAs I was privileged to go down the North Saskatchewan headwaters. The trip was organized by the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance Society. We were asked to meet in Rocky Mountain House so that we could meet our hosts and guides. I was looking forward to a wonderful day, drifting down the river in a canoe powered by the river and my guide. Instead, myself and the other MLAs had a wonderful day learning to paddle, ride rapids, learn about the currents, the conservation challenge for the river and its watershed, and the work of community groups who watch out for the river.

We learned also the way the river changes year by year and the erosion of the cliffs. The MLA for Edmonton-South West and myself had a very close call with finding out how cold the river was when a tree, whose roots had been eroded from the cliff, started to fall just as we were underneath. There were some jokes among the canoes. We were wondering if someone, maybe from the opposition, had been watching our canoes and had caused the cliff to fall.

The importance of the trip was that we learned about the history and the importance of its watershed and we discovered who had been the first settlers down the river. I know that I can speak for the other MLAs who were on this trip about how impressed we were with community groups' initiatives to preserve the watershed. In particular, Clearwater county has begun a program to limit the use of OH vehicles in sensitive areas by using the sasquatch program to indicate which areas were off limits to OH vehicles. On the canoe trip we also met with Environment and Parks staff who talked about ongoing planning to manage conservation of our water source and the river watersheds.

3:50

The motion will support local counties' and municipal governments' ongoing efforts to preserve the headwater regions in their area. It will also support the work of groups like the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance Society, whose mandate is to ensure our water security in areas like the capital region. There is also a group called RiverWatch that works hard on our river, working with youth groups and the education sector to make sure that all young people understand the importance of the headwaters and the river and how to preserve water for our use.

Mr. Speaker, I would really like to urge all members to support this motion and to support the government in increasing its efforts to conserve and manage public lands in Alberta's headwater region to optimize downstream water security for future generations of Albertans. I think that this motion is going to go a long way toward supporting groups like the watershed alliance, RiverWatch, Clearwater county, and all of the groups that have worked really, really hard to preserve the headwaters and our rivers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Motion 511, brought forward by the Member for Banff-Cochrane. Our government is committed to building long-term watershed resiliency for flood and drought mitigation by improving natural watershed functions and by engaging Albertans in the conservation, restoration, enhancement, and stewardship of our priority watersheds.

Water is one of the most important resources, and Alberta has some of the most significant headwaters in western Canada. Our eastern slopes watersheds are the source of water for three prairie provinces. Water flows from the Rocky Mountains eastward to the Hudson Bay, with legal agreements between our provinces for how we share this life-giving natural resource. Water connects us all.

Mr. Speaker, we depend on our eastern slopes watersheds to provide water of good quality in sufficient quantity with suitable timing of flow. Timing of flow relates to the right quantities of water arriving at the right time rather than a flood of too much or a drought of too little. Water is the common denominator for life, and timing of flow is of special concern to millions of Albertans.

When we speak of headwater conservation, we typically think of water as being in our rivers. Yet the water in our rivers actually comes from the landscape. Precipitation makes its way over and through the landscape on its way to our rivers, and this water runs off the surface or percolates through soils. It picks up traces of whatever is occurring on that landscape, delivering the effects of land use into our rivers, where they can be carried downstream to millions of Albertans depending on this water supply. Whatever we do to the landscape, we do to the water. And whatever we do to the water, we do to ourselves. This is the reason for headwater protection.

Our watersheds are under increasing pressure to serve a growing population, a population that uses more water for domestic and industrial purposes than ever before while that same population frequents our headwater landscapes with a heavier footprint than ever before, a footprint that includes both industrial and recreational uses. Most of our headwater landscapes are found on Alberta's public lands, lands heavily used by Albertans in three main industries, lands also heavily used by Albertans seeking recreational opportunities. Public lands are held in trust by the government for all Albertans. Activities on this landscape matter, particularly as they relate to watershed health. The management of human

behaviour in headwater regions has a direct connection to securing our water quality, water quantity, and timing of flow.

The government of Alberta is currently taking action to care for our public lands and, in a way, our headwater landscapes through an increased enforcement and educational presence upon public lands, an increased commitment of fire risk management, investment into campgrounds and other much-needed infrastructure on public lands, recreational trail repair and bridge-building, management of linear densities, recreational management planning, subregional land-use planning, completion of a biodiversity management framework, and ongoing oversight of forest management planning activities. Our government continues to fund the watershed resiliency and restoration program, providing \$18.5 million for 35 projects furthering healthy watersheds, many located in Alberta headwaters, to help optimize downstream water security for Albertans.

At a time when climate change threatens to disrupt our reliance on known precipitation patterns, it is especially prudent to optimize the health of our headwaters. Well-managed landscapes with healthy watershed systems will help Albertan communities adapt to climate change, in which severe weather and unexpected precipitation patterns become more common. Protecting our headwaters and ensuring our future water security is absolutely necessary for us, the residents in Calgary-Northern Hills, the ridings downstream from the eastern slopes, and, in addition to that, our economic prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be voting in favour of this motion because protecting our land and water is the right thing to do for ourselves and for future generations. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this, and thank you to the Member for Banff-Cochrane for bringing it forward.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Motion 511 reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to increase its efforts to conserve and manage public lands in Alberta's headwater regions to optimize downstream water security for future generations of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree that managing water is a very important issue and that we can always strive to be more effective in how we manage our water. Now, the suggestion from the Member for Banff-Cochrane that the Wildrose has a do-nothing approach on this matter couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, it is of such great importance that it is something that the Wildrose has always stood for.

I will be only too happy to outline how so; namely, our caucus's existing environment policy, which includes the following points under the heading Clean Water:

- Implement independently conducted water quality testing for all industrial projects to ensure downstream water quality is unaffected . . .
- Ensure all groundwater connected to fracking and other drilling is independently tested before and after to ensure landowners are not adversely affected
- Develop a comprehensive on and off-stream fresh water plan to ensure Alberta's agricultural producers, developers and residents have access to the clean water needed for quality of life and economic growth
- Promote improved water conservation by eliminating regulations that make it impossible for developers to implement new conservation technologies such as grey water recycling for residential or commercial use

- Design and implement a “Water Use Strategy” that ensures adequate supplies of water for food production and enables our small urban and rural communities to develop and grow as they see fit
- Ensure that all Alberta municipalities are able to provide safe and reliable drinking water to their population and that proper sewage treatment practices are followed.

Now, the crux of the motion is to urge the government to optimize downstream water security, and that’s good. In our caucus quite a few MLAs are active in the outdoors. We have a love of fishing and hunting and believe that, like us, the tens of thousands of Albertans that support fish and wildlife through the purchase of hunting and fishing licences are strong stewards of the land. This point has been reiterated by government members many times over the last 18 months as well. All of us know that protecting our headwaters is not only crucial for maintaining healthy fisheries and their ecosystems but for clean water for our communities and the businesses that rely on it.

While our position seems to closely align with what I believe the member opposite is trying to achieve with this motion, I would be remiss if I was to neglect bringing up some of our concerns. Several of my colleagues have expressed a certain unease with some of the vagueness in the language in this motion, in particular where the motion speaks to government increasing “its efforts to conserve and manage public lands in Alberta’s headwater regions.”

As I said at the outset, we can always improve the effectiveness of our efforts, but too often with this government their approach to every issue is to throw red tape and more bureaucrats at it with no regard for what it does to kill jobs in Alberta. I’ll note at the outset that, in general, current environmental regulations, the Alberta land-use framework, and even the federal Fisheries Act are world leading, and I would certainly like to hear what exactly this member finds deficient.

4:00

Now, if you look at the Alberta Water Act, it says:

- 2 The purpose of this Act is to support and promote the conservation and management of water, including the wise allocation and use of water, while recognizing
  - (a) the need to manage and conserve water resources to sustain our environment and to ensure a healthy environment and high quality of life in the present and the future;
  - (b) the need for Alberta’s economic growth and prosperity;
  - (c) the need for an integrated approach and comprehensive, flexible administration and management systems based on sound planning, regulatory actions and market forces;
  - (d) the shared responsibility of all residents of Alberta for the conservation and wise use of water and their role in providing advice with respect to water management planning and decision-making;
  - (e) the importance of working co-operatively with the governments of other jurisdictions with respect to trans-boundary water management;
  - (f) the important role of comprehensive and responsive action in administering this Act.

That’s all under the Alberta Water Act.

Now, the federal Fisheries Act says this on ecologically significant areas.

- (1.1) If a person proposes to carry on any work, undertaking or activity in any ecologically significant area, the person shall, on the request of the minister – or without request in the manner and circumstances prescribed by regulations made under paragraph

3(a) – provide the Minister with any prescribed material and other information relating to the work, undertaking or activity, or to the water, place or fish habitat that is or is likely to be affected by the work, undertaking, or activity.

Now, in the same federal Fisheries Act under the powers of the minister:

(2) If, after reviewing any material or information provided under subsection (1) or (1.1) and affording the persons who provided it a reasonable opportunity to make representations, the Minister or a person designated by the Minister is of the opinion that an offence under subsection (40)(1) or (2) is being or is likely to be committed, or that the work, undertaking or activity results or is likely to result in harm to fish in an ecologically significant area, the Minister or the designated person may, by order, subject to regulations made under paragraph 3(b),

- (a) require any modifications or additions to the work, undertaking or activity or any modifications to . . . plans, specifications, procedures or schedules relating to it that the Minister or the designated person considers necessary in the circumstances, or
- (b) restrict the carrying on of the work, undertaking or activity.

The minister or designated person may also direct the closing of the work or undertaking or the ending of the activity for any period that the Minister or designated person considers necessary in the circumstances.

So we can clearly see there’s already a pretty good amount of regulation and restrictions on things happening that could affect the water in Alberta. Yes, we can always be more effective, but effectiveness means doing better for both the environment and jobs. We know how crucial access to water is for our farming and ranching communities. Any changes that may come forth from this motion cannot mean breaking existing grazing leases or water licences, and it must be said that we will fight hard against any attempt by the NDP government to take any such action.

While on the subject of business I should point out that we also have a tremendous amount of resources in our mountains, and there is no reason we can’t develop them responsibly and be responsible stewards of our headwaters. Let me be perfectly clear. I hope this motion does not mean any kind of future blanket ban on development near the headwaters, be it agriculture, forestry, or industrial. There must be a proper balance between the environment and Alberta’s economy at all times. This government is already killing jobs every time they announce a new economic policy, and I certainly hope that any policies developed from this motion are cognizant of that fact.

Our forests in particular need a responsible management plan, and that plan includes harvesting trees even if it is a select harvest in conjunction with FireSmart or even pine beetle strategies. Protecting a forest from responsible harvesting is not protecting a forest. It’s quite the opposite. The pine beetle population in B.C. exploded because it was in a protected forest. The trees got old and weak and were vulnerable to infestation. In addition, our mountain forests are vulnerable to forest fires. Old forests that are not harvested will burn eventually and will burn big, not only just as we’ve seen in that fire in Fort McMurray and in Slave Lake but in the eastern slopes near Hillcrest and the Crowsnest Pass. That happened not too long ago also. This could be devastating to many of our most vulnerable areas, and forestry should be based on proper modelling and not ideology. As we have seen in the Castle area not far from the Crowsnest Pass, we have a case of logging companies being forced out of contracts with little recourse at the whim of government.

Any future strategies should not mean turning wilderness areas into parks. We have a lot of protected park areas in our mountains.



Companies also need to have access to parts of the mountains to responsibly develop our natural resources. For instance, the Alberta export of metallurgical coal is some of the best in the world. It's essential for steel and an export that we need to responsibly develop. There are concerns that this motion is but a prelude to further actions against Alberta's already reeling coal industry. I hope that this is not the member's intent.

Development of resources and the environment can occur in concert. In fact, a business in my area is exploring new techniques to make sure that in any encroachment sensitive ecosystems are impacted in a less intrusive way. We can develop resources and maintain healthy headwaters. The place that I've discussed, I'm talking about here is the Evergreen Centre for Resource Excellence and Innovation. Here they have a part of the area just outside Grande Prairie set apart just for studying the effects of industry on stream beds, on wetlands, and on soils.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who would like to speak to Motion 511?

Seeing and hearing none, I would offer the Member for Banff-Cochrane five minutes to close debate.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In closing debate today, I'd like to thank members for their input on this critical policy issue. I'd also like to thank all of those who helped me fully appreciate the way that land-use practices affect water quantity and quality and assisted me in crafting this motion. These are people like Sharon MacDonald, Kevin Van Tighem, Bob Sandford, Dr. John Pomeroy, Harvey Locke, Stephen Legault, Gord MacMahon, Bill Motherwell, Heinz and Marilyn Unger, Fritz and Hanna Seidel, Hugh Pepper, Judy Stewart, and groups like Yukon to Yellowstone, the Nature Conservancy, the Ghost Watershed Alliance Society, the Bragg Creek Environmental Coalition, the Elbow River Watershed Partnership, and all of the others who I haven't mentioned who have made water their life's work. These individuals and groups worked tirelessly to raise awareness that the way in which we manage our landscape affects the common denominator that is water.

Just in response to some of the comments that were brought up during the debate today, people asking what kinds of things that I would like to see as a result of this motion, I can name two that are quite salient. I think one would be the protection of Westslope cutthroat trout, which are an endangered species, and there is a federal protection order for those fish. You know, some of the practices that occur in our headwaters can place those fish at risk, and I would like to make sure that we don't lose another species that's at risk here.

Another one is that there is an international goal for countries to reach 17 per cent of their land base as protected spaces. Alberta is quite short of that. We know we're doing good work, and we have a little ways to go. Looking at some past reports, I'm surprised to hear the Member for Calgary-Lougheed say that he won't support the motion, but it's not surprising to me because the action of his government, when they were in government, was described as dismal when it came to conserving protected spaces, so we've got a long way to go there. I know that the previous government really watered down their commitment to protecting spaces, but we've shown action on this file. We've protected the Castle wilderness area, and there are lots of other activities that we can make sure that we're doing to add and work towards that 17 per cent goal.

I'd like to just talk about the way that water is a prerequisite for a strong economy. I know the Member for Calgary-Mountain View pointed this out, that if we're not managing our water, we're not managing our economy. I think that's a very powerful statement, Mr. Speaker. One example that we can turn to here in Alberta that

demonstrates that quite clearly is the example of the town of Okotoks. Now, I know that the town of Okotoks has done a very good job in managing the water that they've got, but they have reached the limit of their water allocation. They're worried that their economy can't grow, so they've taken real concrete steps to address this issue. They're looking at solutions, and I applaud them in their work, but this is a situation that illustrates to us that if water is restricted, we can't grow our economy. That's a state that I don't want to see Alberta in, which is why I proposed this motion. I'm hoping that down the road, 100 years from now, someone will say: Hey, I'm glad we took water seriously because our economy and our environment are better for it today.

4:10

I also think that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View mentioned the side benefits of this motion, and one of those is tourism. Tourism is one of our top economic drivers in the province, and the type of places that tourists like to go are these protected spaces and national parks and provincial parks. This is something that we can be very proud of, Mr. Speaker, that we have these places that people from all across the world want to come to Alberta to see. Not only does this help in terms of water, but it also helps our economy in terms of tourism.

With all that said, Mr. Speaker, I think we've had some really good debate here today. I'm a little bit surprised to see that the Official Opposition isn't going to be supporting the motion, but it doesn't surprise me because the Leader of the Official Opposition when under Stephen Harper – they took away protection from hundreds of lakes and rivers across Canada. It doesn't really surprise me that they don't take water seriously, and there's certainly not any kind of advice that I want to take from them.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the debate today. I look forward to voting on this.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 511 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 32 Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills on behalf.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move third reading of Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016.

As noted by other hon. members in this House's previous readings, this legislation was developed using input from stakeholders of Alberta's credit union system. This government is committed to ensuring that Alberta's credit unions have the business tools necessary for their work and to encouraging them to support small and medium-sized businesses in their communities.

By modernizing aspects of our province's credit union legislation, consumer choice will be expanded for regular Albertans. Membership rules are being clarified to create more opportunity for small and medium-sized businesses to access loans, which supports job creators and encourages economic growth in our province. Increasing transparency, facilitating access to information, and enabling all shareholders to better influence the direction of credit unions will enhance governance and accountability within the credit union system.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Finally, some technical changes are being proposed to update provisions and promote the flexibility necessary to keep the framework current. These changes have the support of Alberta's credit union system and are generally consistent with best practices and directions in other jurisdictions.

In closing, our credit unions are a vital part of Alberta's economy, and these amendments will modernize and strengthen this legislation so that these important institutions can continue to be a viable alternative for Albertans. I would ask all members of this House to support third reading of this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I will ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills to close debate.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** I move to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a third time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 35 Fair Elections Financing Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move an amendment to Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, and I have the appropriate number of copies to circulate before I speak to it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as A9.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Let me know when you'd like me to proceed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Please go ahead.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the bill be amended in section 43 in the proposed section 44.1 by striking out subsection (1)(c)(i) and substituting the following:

- (i) the production of an election advertising message or political advertising message in the format in which the message is to be transmitted, and

by striking out subsection (1)(d)(iv) and substituting the following:

- (iv) the transmission by a person, corporation or group, on a non-commercial basis on the Internet, of the political views of that person, corporation or group,

next, by striking out subsection (1)(g)(iv) and substituting the following:

- (iv) the transmission by a person, corporation or group, on a non-commercial basis on the Internet, of the political views of that person, corporation or group,

and by adding the following after subsection (2):

- (3) The Chief Electoral Officer may issue guidelines respecting the application of this Part and shall publish any guidelines on the Chief Electoral Officer's website.

Madam Chair, I think this amendment is helpful for clarifying what should be captured under third-party advertising by doing three things. First, the amendment would clarify that the definition of production of election advertising should be focused on expenses that are directly associated with the making of a third-party political or election advertisement. The reason I believe this is necessary is that I don't think we want to hamper organizations who perform work that is not meant to be captured. Civil society is important, public discourse is important, and these things should be protected. I also believe in making sure that we provide as much clarity as possible within our legislation, and I hope the government will agree with this approach.

Second, this amendment offers clarity to ensure that third-party advertising does not include the noncommercial transmission of political views expressed by individuals or organizations on the Internet, where there is no paid expense. We don't want to inhibit that. We know that regulating third-party advertising helps improve transparency and confidence in the electoral system. However, we do not want to restrict individuals or organizations from engaging in public discourse through the Internet where election or political advertising is not in fact taking place. Some may argue that this intent is already clear in legislation, but I would submit to the House that we should be as strong and clear as possible in our language. This amendment clarifies that we intend to capture paid advertising where the third party, an individual or organization, is engaged in an advertising buy that comes in an expense, whether the expense is in-house or from a hired individual or firm.

The third rationale, Madam Chair, is that in order to ensure that third parties understand fully the letter, spirit, and intent of the legislation, I'm proposing that we make a change to allow the Chief Electoral Officer to issue guidelines with respect to this part from time to time. This will follow the common practice in federal elections financing, which allows the Chief Electoral Officer to work with the parties and issue important guidelines from time to time with respect to the application of these new rules.

4:20

Madam Chair, these are big changes, and I believe these amendments will help to ensure the smooth transition to a more transparent system, which will provide clarity and balance to our electoral system and public discourse. I encourage all members to consider this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A9? The hon. Member for Rimbe- Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to rise today. Actually, I probably have a couple of questions for the hon. member through you about his amendment. I do think that this emphasizes the concern that the opposition has had the entire way through this piece of legislation. As you know, Madam Chair, the work that the government members did during the Ethics and Accountability Committee to try to bring forward amendments to be able to get their campaign expenses paid for and the party expenses paid for ultimately derailed the entire process before it could complete its work on third-party advertisement.

Now, third-party advertisement was one of the most important things that the committee was undertaking. There are some constitutional issues with that. As well, there are some clear examples across the country and across North America, for that matter, where things like PACs have had some serious issues that we have to make sure that we get right. I think the member is touching on some of

those areas that it would've been nice to have seen completed to make sure that we did get it right and that we were understanding the issue completely.

I probably will have some more to say in a second, but first I would like to ask through you, Madam Chair, to the member if the intent of this is to make sure that individuals could protect their right to free speech on concerns they have through things like social media and mechanisms that they may have on this. First, I would support that intent, and I believe the committee made it clear that they support that intent. But my concern in the way that I'm reading this right now – and I've only had it for a short time – is that this would allow a PAC to complete their \$150,000 cap on billing content of some sort for a general election, let's say, and then we allow something like a trade union or a corporation to be able to unlimitedly use social media and their resources to push that content out across the sphere, which I think would be counter-productive to what we're trying to do on third-party advertising.

If the member is trying to make sure, again, that an individual or an individual corporation could share something on Facebook or say that they agree with something, that would be freedom of speech, something that I think we should protect. But the way I'm first reading this right now, Madam Chair, is that this will leave a bit of a loophole and allow trade unions and corporations to be able to use their financial resources, et cetera, to push this out on social media.

So I'd like to get a little feedback on that, and I'll probably have a few more comments to make after that, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm puzzled as to why that would be the interpretation. I think it's relatively clear in the amendment that what we're trying to do is ensure a level playing field for all in a nonwrit period, especially, to express themselves, their views, their political views, their economic views freely. This amends the original bill in order to ensure that we include corporations and not exclude them from their rightful role in society, again limiting that role in the writ period but allowing it in the prewrit period so that everyone is indeed on the same level playing field, social media notwithstanding.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to the proposed amendment to the Fair Elections Financing Act. Let me just begin by saying that I appreciate the Member for Calgary-Mountain View's amendment and consideration on this. This bill, as we know, aims to provide a system of transparency and fairness to the electoral system, and in that spirit I believe this amendment actually helps clarify what will be considered an advertising expense and what will not. I think, as all of us understand, the progression of the way our technology is moving has quickly surpassed the lack of movement in election financing and updating election financing, so it doesn't include things like social media and the possible considerations there.

In terms of Internet usage we need to be careful, and I agree with that. The Internet is a powerful tool for public discourse and conversation, and we need to respect that. This amendment, from what I'm reading, will make clear that third parties are able to express themselves on the Internet in a normal way, just like average Albertans do. In short, it clarifies that individuals and organizations can indeed feel free to use social media. We want to be clear that if

a third party posts something on their website, this would not be considered advertising because they did not incur advertising expenses. That is the distinguishing piece: where you incur advertising expenses.

Finally, I would like to speak on the proposed new subsection (3). This seems to be well reasoned as it allows the CEO to provide clarification when issues arise around third-party advertising. Providing these guidelines will also assist with the nature of communications as it's evolving. In general, the amendment helps and adds clarity and assurances to Albertans that we are striking a balance between transparency and encouraging a healthy participation in the democratic process. I believe that we definitely have to look at ways of making sure that the guidelines are continuously upgraded as social media moves forward but making sure that we're also protecting the capacity for organizations to engage in the same ways Albertans do.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Again, I agree with the need to make sure that people can use their ability through social media and things along those lines to exercise their right to free speech, including corporations. We've only had this amendment for a short time, unfortunately, but what I'm receiving feedback on is that this amendment would provide an exemption that would allow unions and companies to circumvent the reporting rules that are currently under the EFCDA by having third-party advertisers produce content, let's say a \$100,000 video. This amendment means that the union or corporation could then promote this content via social media without accounting for the costs incurred to produce the video. This exemption should only be limited to individuals, in our view, rather than corporations and unions, who can use their particular reach and their significant financial resources to be able to reach multiple thousands of people.

Again, during committee this was discussed in great detail, the need to make sure that people can still exercise their ability over social media to free speech. The question now becomes between commercial and noncommercial. Clearly, I would think, Madam Chair, through you to the hon. members across the way, commercial would be something like TV advertisement or something along those lines, which this amendment would clearly not allow. The question then becomes: is Facebook commercial? The different social mediums that we use in our political world: are those commercial? It probably depends on whose hands they're in. If an individual at home or throughout their day is sharing their political thoughts on Facebook, that probably wouldn't be commercial. But our political organizations, when they're spending thousands of dollars promoting Facebook ads, promoting content on Facebook, unions when they're doing that, that starts to come into the realm of political advertisement. That ultimately is my concern with this amendment.

Again, I want to clear. We're all for protecting free speech. I think that's really, really important. It's one of the important issues that should have been dealt with in committee with regard to third-party advertising, stuff like this, so we could discuss it in detail and make sure we get it right.

At this point, at first glance, without a doubt it appears that this is just another attempt by the NDP government to continue to stack the deck to their advantage during the next election, and that's unfortunate.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A9? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. When the hon. member from the government side was speaking, she used an interesting phrase, that I did my best to write down. I hope I got it right or close to. She said that this is about “protecting the capacity for organizations to engage.” I’m sure that the hon. member was sincere about that. Part of the problem with this legislation is that some of the organizations that are being licensed and enabled to engage are third-party organizations, and right now under this legislation there is the ability for an unlimited number of third-party organizations to spend \$150,000 each. Of course, that leads to a whole bunch of other issues about: what if those organizations know each other or are related to each other and have reason to work together on common grounds? Then, of course, you multiply that \$150,000 worth of influence by an unlimited number when the political parties are only allowed to spend \$2 million, and what you have is injecting big money into the elections.

4:30

What you have is allowing exactly the opposite of what the government wants: organizations whose donors, I’m sure, will be known, but likely not well known until after the votes are counted, to influence the results of an election. This just adds more flexibility for that to happen, and it is, as my worthy colleague from the Official Opposition said, one more way in which the government is trying to tip the scale in their favour.

Madam Chair, it’s why I won’t be supporting this. What this legislation is doing, while it tries to tip the scale in the NDP’s favour, is actually going to make it less transparent. It’s going to make it harder for Albertans to know who’s giving money to elected parties and elected people. It’s actually building a maze, a whole matrix, of inconvenience for people who want to know who’s supporting elected parties rather than keeping it simple and straight-forward.

This is, unfortunately, one more sad example of how this government is misusing their majority in this House to tip the political scales in their favour, and as such, I can’t be supporting it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A9?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A9 carried]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment that I would like to introduce, but there’s a certain volume to the amendment, so I’ll perhaps wait until the pages have had an opportunity to distribute it in full, and then I’ll discuss both the subject matter of the amendment and the actual gist of the amendment.

**Mr. McIver:** Does it include pictures?

**Dr. Starke:** No, sadly, it does not include pictures.

**Mr. McIver:** Crafts?

**Dr. Starke:** No crafts either, to answer the question of the interim leader.

Madam Chair, the amendment, which is now being distributed, is somewhat voluminous, as you note. It’s four pages long, and that’s not typical for an amendment, but in this case an amendment of that length is required . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, if you could just stop for two seconds to make sure we have the appropriate . . .

Hon. member, please go ahead.

**Dr. Starke:** We’re good?

**The Deputy Chair:** Yeah. You’re good. Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you.

Madam Chair, this amendment is an attempt to correct what I felt was one of the most egregious parts of the bill. I mentioned it in the debate on second reading, and I mention it again here now. During the course of our committee’s discussion – and, specifically, most of this discussion happened on September 9 – the government members on the committee put forward the notion that the state should become involved with the process of how political parties decide who their candidates are. That is something that the state has never become involved with before.

While some may view the placing of both contribution limits and spending limits on nomination contestants as being a small step or a small entry into the overall process of choosing political nominees that represent political parties in our system, I would suggest that it is representative of something considerably more onerous and considerably more dangerous to our democratic system. Political parties should run relatively independently of the state, and government should not become directly involved with the internal operations of political parties. That principle was, in fact, upheld in a decision which was quoted by the Chief Electoral Officer on September 9 in our committee hearings, in which he quoted from the 2007 decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal in Longley versus Canada. I’ll quote this again.

It deals with discussing the Chief Electoral Officer’s restraint from involvement in political party affairs and specifically states that any regulatory regime governing political parties must interfere as little as possible with the autonomy and internal affairs of political parties.

Now, Madam Chair, I object to this particular inclusion of nomination contestants into the EFCDA on two bases. One, on principle: I don’t think the state, the government, should be getting involved with how political parties run their internal operations. We’ve talked at length in this House about how there are different models for how political parties operate. The NDP operates on a centralized model. That is fine. The NDP has a system whereby one person is the president of 35 different constituency associations and the CFO of 36 different constituency associations. I don’t think that’s a model that I would necessarily support, but it doesn’t really matter what I think. What matters is that that is the way they choose to run their party, and they have the right to do so. I especially don’t think it is the right of the state to decide that that shouldn’t happen. If that’s how they decide to run their party, that is just fine.

But, by the same token, Madam Chair, other parties may decide to run their parties and run their nomination processes completely differently. For the state to specifically get involved with fundraising by nomination contestants and for the state to come out and say that they are going to set specific spending limits for nomination contestants opens the door to the state becoming involved in a wide variety of other parameters that are decided by political parties in terms of how they decide who their nominees are going to be. I can say that, for example, in the Progressive Conservative Party our different constituency associations all have specific

guidelines and rules that they abide by in terms of advertising requirements, in terms of a deposit that is required to be put down by a candidate in order to help defray some of the costs of running a nomination meeting, the requirements for the number of ads, and the number of signatories they need for nomination papers.

There are a wide variety of different parameters that are involved in the nomination process. To become involved in any aspect of that, to me, is a gross overreach of the state into the internal operations of a political party. Personally, I think that should send a shiver down the spine of anybody who is interested in a free and democratic society.

Now, I try to avoid, Madam Chair, wherever possible, some of the hyperbole in the description of the NDP in terms of them being so far to the left side of the political spectrum that they could be in any way equated with some of the more leftist totalitarian regimes that we have seen in the history of the world. So I'm not going to go to that extent, but I am really concerned when we see a government that sees absolutely nothing wrong with delving into nomination contests.

In fact, during debate on this issue on September 9 the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, who was in attendance on that day at the committee meeting, made a passionate argument as to why it is indeed the state's business and that it is indeed the state's business to get involved right from the earliest stages of the electoral process. I think that is something we should all be very, very concerned about because if they can get involved with the nomination process in terms of spending limits and in terms of donation limits, how long before other parts of the nomination process are dictated by rules from the state? I think that's a question that we should legitimately ask ourselves.

So, to begin with, on principle I don't feel that the state has any role whatsoever in terms of regulating or legislating nomination contests. That is an issue that is completely up to the political party, not up to the state, and different political parties will decide on it in different ways.

4:40

Let's perhaps turn the tables on this. Before the last election many of the nominees that ran for the New Democratic Party did not face nomination contests. In fact, they were appointed or acclaimed. What if, in the next Legislature, we were to decide that, no, all candidates, all nominees should have to face a contested nomination and that acclaimed candidates would be disqualified? What if we decided to do that? I think that that would be complete overreach. I think that would be completely out of bounds, and I'd be a little upset myself because I was acclaimed for both of my nominations.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that it is a complete and total overreach on behalf of the state. The state has no business in telling political parties how they are to choose their nominees. None. Once a person becomes a nominated candidate, then the state has a right to get involved with ensuring that there is equity in the playing field between the various representatives of different political parties, but up until that point that is the sole purview of the political party, and the state should have no involvement with it.

My second objection to this is one of practicality, and that is that I asked, specifically, the Chief Electoral Officer at committee whether this is something that they currently have the resources to take care of, whether they currently have the resources within Elections Alberta to take care of the extra workload that would be required. The Chief Electoral Officer unequivocally said no. They don't do any of this right now. This is completely new. They don't have the resources to handle this right now, and it would require the hiring of additional staff. And I said: "Well, how much? You know,

how many additional staff?" His estimate was that it would include five new full-time equivalents at a cost of about \$350,000, new office space, and that it would require developing a new platform for the reporting of these expenses and also for the monitoring of these expenses.

You know, to start something that would require additional expenses at a time when we're running close to an \$11 billion budgetary deficit seems to be very counterproductive, especially when we have to ask ourselves a question: what problem are we trying to solve here? What is the burning issue that we need to bring this rather dangerous measure into our democratic system? In reality, there is no answer to that because there is no problem being solved here.

In addition to the cost, estimated by the Chief Electoral Officer at something in excess of \$350,000, the other one is a very practical consideration. If we have 87 constituencies and if each of, say, four or five political parties runs five candidates in each nomination, we could be looking at upwards of 1,300 nomination returns that require auditing, and on many occasions the nominations happen almost immediately before the dropping of the writ. In some cases the nomination even happens after the dropping of an election writ. How on earth are 1,300 forms, 1,300 returns, going to be completely audited to ensure that whatever problem some people feel seems to exist out there, that whatever problem is in fact detected by the excellent people at Elections Alberta? There would have to be a period of time set out whereby after a nomination contest is completed, the provincial election could not be held simply because of the required processing time for these 1,300 forms.

I ask the question: what would happen if in the processing of these forms it was determined that a nominee had in some way violated the rules within that are set out? Would that candidate then be disqualified? What if the form hadn't been audited until after the election and that candidate had now been elected? Would that candidate now be required to withdraw and resign the seat that they won in the election and force a by-election?

You see, these are all questions, Madam Chair, that I think are legitimate. They are all questions that very much speak to the impracticality of including nomination contestants in this bill.

The amendment I've proposed – and it's long because "nomination contestant" appears several times throughout the course of the legislation – would remove nomination contests from the purview of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. We should be doing this if for no other reason than that it may not even be constitutional. It may not even hold up in court. In Ontario it was very clearly stated that the state should interfere as little as possible with the autonomy of political parties. This very clearly interferes with that autonomy. To pass a piece of legislation that includes clauses that may not even be constitutional I think is a dangerous thing for us to be doing.

But beyond that, even if we say, "Well, no, that is a principle we want to get into," I would urge members to pass these amendments because of the cost saving. We simply don't have an extra \$400,000 lying around to hire extra staff at the Chief Electoral Officer's.

The second issue is the practicality of it, that because of the timing of a nomination contest, generally happening shortly before a general election, there simply won't be time for the processing of some 1,300 returns or thereabouts prior to the dropping of the writ and prior, in fact, even to the election being held. There would be some requirement for a nomination period, then, sort of a cooling-off period, of maybe three to six months while all of these nomination contestant forms are audited and reviewed to ensure that none of the nomination contestants, in fact, violated the rules, and then the election could be held.

I think you'll agree, Madam Chair – and I hope members agree – that this is a gross overreach of governmental authority into the affairs of political parties. In order for our society to have a functioning democracy, we should have as little interference with the function of those parties as possible. I would encourage members on all sides of the House to support these common-sense amendments to remove nomination contests from the purview of the state.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The amendment will be referred to as A10.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of the amendment brought forward by my colleague from the third party, and I do thank him for bringing it forward. I think he did a good job of articulating the concerns around the silliness and the gross overreach of reaching into individual political parties' nomination processes, the fact that this may not even be constitutional, and that this may not hold up in court.

I rise, actually, just to add two more points to what he spoke about, and I think he touched on them a little bit. The first is around the fact that just the very idea of this will make it harder for certain people to enter into our political process. That's something that concerns me very, very much. Something that the government members in the committee said, as you know, Madam Chair, because you were there often, was that they were concerned about making sure that people from all different walks of life inside Alberta could participate in the political process.

Most people, the large majority of people, that seek a nomination, even the large majority of people that win a nomination, are not fortunate enough to be able to come to this Assembly here, but they still have a tremendous amount of value to our political system. To put your name forward on a ballot for any political party in any constituency takes a tremendous amount of courage, and it is absolutely essential to our process, so that we can have an active democracy, that people are willing to put their names forward and stand up on the ballot to discuss what they believe in.

By making the process more restrictive for people to be able to seek a nomination and to receive a nomination inside a party will actually just make it harder. Fewer people will probably want to participate in certain circumstances, particularly candidates that run for and get nominations for parties to run in ridings where they really often do not have a significant opportunity, where their parties traditionally have gotten a low percentage of the vote, and they're truly just running to be able to make sure that they can voice the views of the party.

The last thing I want to bring up is the taxpayer, who seems to have been forgotten in this process. As you know, Madam Chair, the governing party often forgets the taxpayer, which is greatly disappointing. I know it's disappointing to my constituents and many of the constituents that belong to the members on this side of the House.

4:50

The fact is this. During committee not one example was provided by the government members on why this was needed, not one example of a situation that took place in the past or any sort of situation that would justify why this was needed. When asked – and the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster discussed this briefly – during that committee about this, the Chief Electoral Officer made it clear that this will cost the taxpayer a lot of money, significant,

significant increases that will have to continue not just for one year, though there will be some capital upgrades required to computer systems and that type of stuff to track it, but it will be an increased cost to staffing and an increased cost to their budget.

Now, from sitting on the Legislative Offices Committee, I could tell you that we're already seeing and hearing from the Chief Electoral Officer that as a result of this bill there will be drastic, drastic increases of 12 per cent to 25 per cent or more to that budget because of this bill. This is one section of the bill, as the Member for Calgary-North West spoke about passionately in committee, that is not needed, and there was no example at all provided to justify taking taxpayer dollars to pay for this.

This will not stop one thing that the government has presented that needs to be stopped. There is no problem to be solved. All it will do is make it harder for certain people to be able to participate in the political process, which is a shame and something that these members say that they were concerned about. It will cost the taxpayers more money, and it will not prevent anything except for making it harder for parties that use constituency associations and a more detailed nomination process, which I know that you know, Madam Chair, as a general rule the governing party really doesn't do. They just appoint their candidates. I don't know if it's because nobody wants to run for them or what the situation is. You may know. I don't know.

The fact is that this will make things harder for people that participate in the process, and again, Madam Chair, it's sad. It's just another example of this party across the way trying to stack the deck in their favour, as was passionately pointed out by the Member for Calgary-North West during committee. I think we should stand and support what she said and vote for this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I, too, stand in support of this amendment. You know what? There are a lot of things we know about this. We're about as sure as you can be without actually testing it in court that this won't stand up to a Charter challenge. Government members particularly should be worried about this because with all this paperwork in the middle of a nomination it would make it almost impossible – almost impossible – for people to become accidental MLAs in an accidental government. Maybe not impossible, but it'll make it a lot harder for people to be accidental MLAs in an accidental government. You would think, knowing that, that members of the current government wouldn't even consider voting against this amendment because this would actually make it possible in the future for accidental MLAs to become part of an accidental government.

The other thing that I think is really important . . .

**Connolly:** So people accidentally voted for me just like they accidentally voted for you?

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, if we could just listen to the speaker, please.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that.

Madam Chair, the other thing that I think will occur to . . . [interjection]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** The member on the other side: I invite him to get on his feet at some point and actually defend why he's going to vote

for or against this rather than chirping from the sidelines constantly. But I'll try to continue despite the racket.

Madam Chair, what occurs to me when I look at this piece in the legislation – and I thank my colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster for bringing this really important amendment up – is that the government is sticking its nose into the business, essentially, of a private club, of several private clubs called political parties. Now, I realize they're public facing, but in terms of the point of nominating people, it's figuring out members of a private club.

You know, members of the public might, if the government won't support this amendment, be looking forward to the government having the next piece of legislation deciding on whether the chess club pieces are made of plastic or metal or stone. They may be looking forward to the government passing legislation to determine what colour of soccer balls the soccer club uses and how long the sleeves are on their uniforms because that's about as much business of the government as these pieces on the nominations. They might look forward to the government deciding how long the needles can be in the quilting club and what colour and what type of thread it could be because that's about as much of the government's business as it is getting into the minutiae of a political party's nomination.

I like the fact that the government members are rolling their eyes because I think they're starting to realize just how ridiculous these sections of their legislation are, and I think they're thinking: "Wow. How did we let that get in there? This is none of our business." It's (a) none of their business, and (b) they already know that it probably won't stand up to a court challenge. So they could probably keep a lot of egg off their faces, save themselves a lot of embarrassment, and save the taxpayers a lot of money if they were to support this amendment.

On that basis, I think that there's probably room for this if the government goes ahead with this. You know, they had #trudeauologies. I could think of NDP government club advice or things that they could legislate for private clubs because this is very much along those same lines.

**Mr. Nixon:** Have you ever been to an NDP club meeting?

**Mr. McIver:** I have not been to an NDP meeting although I'm sure they're wonderful.

Madam Chair, particularly for the government members that want to keep it open for accidental MLAs to become part of an accidental government in the future, they should absolutely be supporting this amendment, as I shall, and I hope all members of the House do the same.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, as I'm listening to this conversation, I really reflect on how we got to this point. I think all of us can agree that Albertans want transparency and accountability. They know it; we know it; everyone knows it. The way we do that is by making sure that information is accessible to Albertans, especially in the democratic process, and one of the very first ways that that starts is a nomination.

As the legislation currently sits and by keeping it as it is, we're making sure that backdoors where big money can come through are stopped. We're not getting involved in internal nomination matters. However, if you want to flip a coin to pick your nominee, you can still do that. What this includes is that nomination candidates have to register with Elections Alberta, and this goes back to my first point. Albertans want to see a transparent process for their democratic processes and their political system, and one of the ways in

which we do that is by reporting. I believe that, you know, to make claims that we're getting involved in internal party matters when we're asking for reporting and information is quite inaccurate. I think we need to continue moving forward with the bill as it is.

It was four pages, but the premise was simple: just remove that. Having read the amendment, it doesn't go with what was originally presented and the intention of the bill, and it doesn't take into account the ability to have these loopholes built into our democratic process. That's what our government is committing to closing. We are committing to Albertans that we will make sure that they have the information they need in order to understand who is making donations to nomination candidates, to leadership candidates, and we will continue doing so, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

I'll recognize the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and then Calgary-Elbow.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I, too, remember this discussion in committee and felt at the time that this was a solution in search of a problem. I don't think we've really seen the evidence that the cost of this relative to the benefits of this is really a reasonable approach. I'm quite convinced by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, with his very passionate and clear argument, that this a step too far, that this is a bridge too far. We have not seen this as a significant problem. It's going to cost very substantially in terms of manpower and dollars, and as far as I'm aware, no other jurisdiction is following this guideline.

5:00

Yes, indeed. After someone is nominated, after someone is running for election, we have every right to know everything about where this potential new member of the Legislature or Parliament is receiving their support, but I think it's just a step too far. And I hope the members in the government will consider this in terms of the balance between the right to know everything and the costs to the public purse and the relevance of nomination processes. In the vast majority of cases for Albertans it's simply not substantive enough to require this, what I would also echo as an overreach in terms of what is a legitimate concern about transparency and accountability. I have yet to see the evidence that it is a problem that requires this magnitude of intervention and solution.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak in favour of this very reasonable, thoughtful amendment brought forward by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. Yes, I also remember the conversations we had in committee on this. I would concur with the member who brought this amendment forward that the role of the state is to govern our democracy and to disclose information relevant to the continued functioning of democracy. I think government has no place trying to control matters which clearly belong internally to parties.

I do have a concern that this may not withstand a court challenge. That will require individuals, parties, and the government to spend a tremendous amount of money on something that solves a problem we don't have. I've seen very little evidence presented, if any, from the government as to what problem this provision of the bill seeks to solve.

What I'm curious about is perhaps their fear that some of what they perceive to have happened in the past with nomination contests

will happen again. Does that mean that they feel that we're going to return to some form of one-party state in this province, and if so, do they believe that they would be the ones who would be in charge of that one-party state? I suspect they wouldn't because this doesn't impact the NDP because they rarely have party nominations. I'm not sure there were any contested nominations. Perhaps there were some in the provincial NDP in the last general election, spring of 2015. Probably not.

They seem to be seeking to solve a problem that perhaps by perception, if not reality, existed in the past, but I certainly have seen very little evidence of it. Even if there were challenges in the past, those are challenges to be dealt with by the political party in question, not the government, because anyone who wins a nomination is then subject to disclosure rules. Albertans have an opportunity to know who has donated to a political candidate who seeks elected office.

Now, I want to raise another very important point as to why I believe it's very important that we all support this amendment, and that is that the NDP talks constantly about removing barriers for women, for people of colour, for indigenous peoples, for people with lower incomes, people who are underrepresented in the political process from participating in the political process.

Well, I know many people who will seek a party nomination in perhaps a contested nomination to learn about the process, to just give it a try, to see what it means to go out and campaign, to find out what it means to go door-knocking, to find out what it means to raise a bit of money, to put a platform together, to give a speech in front of a church basement full of people. They may or may not prevail in doing that, but what this does by forcing these folks to register with Elections Alberta, to file all of their paperwork is that it creates an administrative barrier that people who are underrepresented in the system already have a difficult time overcoming.

For the NDP – the NDP – of all people to be putting this in place is unconscionable. They are disadvantaging minorities, women, indigenous people, people of colour. The impact of this change is exactly what's happening. This change means the NDP are skewing politics to the elite and those who can follow processes because they already know how. That is not in the spirit of democracy. That is not in the spirit that I would expect this government to be following.

Those are things, Madam Chair, that I believe passionately in. I believe that we as legislators need to ensure that this place is truly representative and to remove barriers from people running for office, not to increase and add barriers. This adds barriers, so by supporting this amendment, we remove those barriers.

I think it's a very important and essential point that I would in all genuine sincerity ask the government private members to think very hard about, whether you believe that this, in fact, makes it easier or more difficult for people to seek office. The answer is that it makes it more difficult. That is an indisputable fact. So I would ask you, please, to really consider that. If you believe that this amendment is consistent with your values of representative democracy, I would ask you to consider supporting this amendment. Irrespective of what your party whip may say or may tell you to do or what the message on your computer screen may say, look in your heart and decide whether you think this is a good idea or not. I think you'll find it is.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A10? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was fortunate to be able to be part of the Ethics and Accountability Committee and to

participate in discussions all summer long with regard to the elections financing act. I remember this meeting in particular very clearly based on the fact that technology had allowed me to participate in this meeting from a distance while I was harvesting my crops. I was in the combine, and the GPS was allowing me to participate in a committee meeting while harvesting my crops.

I find it interesting that the NDP are delving deep into political party business here. I do understand that there is a need for transparency and accountability within our electoral system. We have processes in place that once you become an MLA, once you become a candidate even, you are then covered by the processes in place to address any unethical behaviour that could arise. I do believe that moving in this direction, where we create barriers that stand in the way of individuals wanting to possibly get involved in the process and wanting to test the waters, is a negative impact of this part of Bill 35.

In that meeting I remember very clearly – and I looked it up here – the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster asking the Chief Electoral Officer:

Now that, you know, this has been changed around a little bit, we have a clearer picture as to what is being proposed, and this is a completely new area of involvement for Elections Alberta. Elections Alberta previously has had no involvement whatsoever in the nomination process at the party level. Sir, if you'd be able to outline for the committee what your estimation will be of the required additional resources in your office to administer these stipulations in terms of personnel, in terms of things like support staff, IT, reporting mechanism, that sort of thing.

The Chief Electoral Officer essentially replied: on an annual basis we'd be probably looking at an additional five staff members.

**5:10**

Also, having to accommodate that, there would be capital costs of upgrading the IT and all that goes along with it and, likely, in excess of a million dollars for at least the first year trying to implement this and in continual costs for what I believe is an issue where the government, the governing members have not been able to identify that there is a problem. I believe that it would be prudent for the governing party members to identify the problem and let us know where the problem actually exists and show us that there truly is a problem that Albertans need to be concerned with. If they're not able to actually identify that, then, if there's no problem identified, there is no solution that is necessary.

I stand in agreement with the MLA for Vermilion-Lloydminster, and I will be supporting this very reasonable amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I feel I do have to rise in support of this amendment. I think it's carefully thought out. I think the reasons for it are very well stated. You know, as we look at the actual bill itself and the need for these amendments, the truth of the matter is that this is a bill that's meant to try and manipulate the system, and the amendment is an attempt to somehow try and reduce the impact, or the effect, of that. The truth of the matter is, though, that as Albertans see how this Bill 35, I think, questionably called a Fair Elections Financing Act – when they begin to discover how entirely unfair it is and how much it's intended to actually stack the system in favour of one party, Albertans will not be pleased.

This is an act that utterly disrespects democracy. It's an act that has no respect for the freedom of the people to create political parties and then put themselves forward as they feel they should.



This really is an act that seeks to dismantle the constituency associations that we have, to dismantle their structure and their function and somehow bring it under the control of a single socialist idea. The people of Alberta are not going to be in favour of this. It is disgraceful. It is legislative interference with political parties in our province. As already has been stated, the courts of Ontario have been very clear that this kind of interference is inappropriate, it is not to be supported, and it in fact could be challenged in court, not to mention the very practical issues of the fact that it won't work.

Elections Alberta is not able to accomplish these numbers of audits in the amount of time that's provided. They don't have the staff; they don't have the space. We are going to end up in a complete disaster in the next election if we go through with this.

What this bill presents is the reality that the NDP don't care about the people in Alberta. At this very moment there's not a single minister opposite even here to pay attention to any of this. [interjections]

**Mr. Westhead:** Point of order.

**Mr. Orr:** Oh. Pardon me. I'm sorry, deputy whip. My apology. I retract that. Definitely no one on the front bench.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, if you could please sit down while we address the point of order. Please sit down while we address the point of order.

Thank you.

#### Point of Order

#### Referring to the Absence of Members

**Mr. Westhead:** Madam Chair, I just have to point out that the member has indicated the presence or absence of members. It's against parliamentary tradition, and I would ask him to cease and desist from doing that and apologize.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.  
Please continue.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Orr:** The reality is, though, that we need this amendment because the bill, quite frankly, makes it very clear that the NDP are not democratic, that this is not a level playing field, and that it doesn't create equal opportunity. I think Albertans will not appreciate that when they are given the time to vote on it. It really is an attempt to solve a problem that doesn't exist, and I think the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has brought forward a very important amendment to this bill which, in fact, everybody in this House should support.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A10? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Yeah. The only, last point I'd like to make on this, Madam Chair – and thank you for recognizing me – is that this again goes back to the fact that we have supporters of our party that say that they've been told by the government that if they get seen on a list of supporters giving money or on our boards, they won't be considered for government contracts for being on their boards. This reach into the nominations is just one more way for the government officials to try to intimidate supporters of other parties, one more reason to support this amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A10?

Seeing none, I will put the question on the amendment.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A10 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:16 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms. Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	MacIntyre	Rodney
Barnes	McIver	Starke
Cyr	Nixon	Swann
Drysdale	Orr	van Dijken
Loewen	Panda	

Against the motion:

Babcock	Gray	McLean
Bilous	Hoffman	McPherson
Carson	Horne	Miranda
Connolly	Kazim	Payne
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Renaud
Dach	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Dang	Luff	Sabir
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Eggen	Mason	Sigurdson
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Ganley	McKittrick	Westhead
Goehring		

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 37
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[Motion on amendment A10 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the original bill. Are there any other amendments, comments, or questions to be offered in respect of the bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I believe we're back in Committee of the Whole.

**The Deputy Chair:** We are.

**Mr. Nixon:** Excellent. I have listened to and participated in the debate over the last several days in the Legislature in regard to this important piece of legislation. I discussed in great detail, as have many of my colleagues, both the positive and the negative portions of this bill, particularly the negative effects that this legislation will have on certain other people within our political process, negative effects which I strongly believe are being purposely done by the government. We talked a lot about what is clearly the effort of the government to use this legislation to stack the deck in favour of themselves during the next election.

We talked a lot about the campaign subsidy situation and the reason that this bill should have stayed in committee. We should have got the work done, just like all the members from the NDP that were on the committee voted to do. The reason that it derailed in committee was the fact that government members continued to try to put forward motions that would get their campaign expenses paid for and the party campaign expenses paid for . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Shameful. Just shameful.

**Mr. Nixon:** . . . which was shameful. You know, that was the main reason, of course, that this process derailed, as you know, Madam Chair. You were there to witness that unfortunate behaviour.

We also talked a lot about the attack on the political structure, that the NDP are going out of their way to be able to rig the system to make it better for them and to hurt other political parties. What's so disappointing about that, Madam Chair, is that it's going to hurt volunteers, people that participate in our political process that don't make money off it, that just do it for the good of our democracy. It's going to hurt smaller parties, not the large parties. I know the government is probably hoping that it'll hurt the larger opposition parties. I can assure you that they're wrong and these parties will replace them in 2019, but there are other, smaller parties that will struggle because of this. I can't help but wonder why the government would do that.

Now, we've talked about that in great detail. We've even brought forward amendments during Committee of the Whole that were the exact amendments brought forward by members opposite during committee, one of which was brought forward by the government whip, who somehow have changed their minds since committee, from a few short weeks ago till now, similar to, as you know, Madam Chair, all the hard work that was spent over the whole summer by the government whip and other members that were on there trying to get their campaign expenses paid for, which is extremely disappointing.

Now, I have said from the very beginning that I suspected that this legislation was about stacking the deck in favour of the government. I talked about that in great detail, my concerns with this legislation and the fact that it was clearly, in my mind and in many people's minds, designed to try to give the incumbent government an advantage over the opposition in the next election. I've seen their poll numbers. I understand why, but it does not make it right to be able to do that. Now, members opposite, Madam Chair, as you know, each time that I rose in this Assembly and talked about that, would heckle back and say no. They would rise in their seats occasionally and say no to that.

I and members from all parties in this Assembly have given them opportunity after opportunity after opportunity to rise up and do the right thing and show that I'm wrong and that this is not about stacking the deck to the advantage of the government. But each time as those amendments came forward, the government got up and gave often very ridiculous arguments to try to defend their position and clearly proved over and over and over that this is not about making the election system fair, that it's not about getting big money out of politics because that has already been done and everybody is in agreement about this. At its core, this is about giving the government an advantage during the next election because the government is concerned, obviously, about their election chances.

Now, this summer they got caught with their hand in the cookie jar trying to manipulate the system to get their campaign expenses paid for by taxpayers, which was appalling.

**An Hon. Member:** I thought it was a pickle jar.

**Mr. Nixon:** Maybe it was a pickle jar, Madam Chair.

Now here we are. After days of debate inside Committee of the Whole, with many reasonable amendments being brought forward, many of which, just previously, members across the way, before they were told that they weren't allowed to support them, did support and actually, in some cases, even moved inside committee, it is clear now that they have been caught again. It is without a doubt

to anybody watching this that this is about the government and making things easier for the government, and it's extremely disappointing.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

It makes me think about the name of this piece of legislation. Mr. Chair, welcome. I do note that there is long history in this Assembly of naming bills not for political purposes, of not using political stunts to name bills, and it is disappointing, as we look at the names of bills that we've seen so far from the government, that members that sit across from me, in their legislation, over and over and over use the act, the name of the bill for political purposes.

It's extremely disappointing, you know: Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act; Bill 4, An Act to Implement the Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services; Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences; Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending. That's not political at all, Mr. Chair. An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring, Bill 18; Bill 19, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act; Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act; Bill 21, Modernized Municipal Government Act; Bill 22, an act to provide for reparation – no, that's a different one. Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act; Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety; Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta; Bill 2, An Act to Restore Fairness to Public Revenue; Bill 4, An Act to Implement Various Tax Measures and to Enact the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act; and Bill 6 – this is one of my least favorites – the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act. That is not political at all.

Now, I look at this, and I look at the situation that we've seen over the last few days inside this Chamber, where over and over my point has been proven by the members across the way, that this has absolutely nothing to do with the people of Alberta, this has absolutely nothing to do with making our elections better, and it has everything to do with them attempting to stack the deck at the expense of Albertans. It is extremely important. That is all that this bill has to do with. I know that you know that, and I know that you, Mr. Chair, are just as concerned as I am with that. Now, I thought, when I looked at it, that maybe what I should do – it should be probably named the unfair elections act, or how about the kneecapping the opposition act, or the incumbent election act, or the NDP election act, or the act to stack the deck? But I would not want to do the same as the NDP and use political purposes in names. It's disappointing that they continue to do that.

As such, I am going to move an amendment. I have the appropriate copies of the amendment. Can I continue, Mr. Chair, or would you like to see the amendment first?

5:40

**The Acting Chair:** I just need to see it first. This will be amendment A11.

**Mr. Nixon:** Clearly, we have reached, you know, the stage with this bill, during Committee of the Whole, where it is clear that the government is not prepared at all to work with the opposition. It is not prepared to try to prove us wrong, to make the system work better, and is going to continue down the path of rigging the system to their advantage. I will tell you, Mr. Chair, that Albertans will remember that during the next election. They will not be successful. This government will not be the government after the next election. They know it, and this last-ditch attempt to manipulate the election system to their advantage is shameful.

With that said, I would encourage every hon. member of this Assembly to at least rename the bill for what it is and to remove the

name that has been put in place by this government to continue their political propaganda.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A11?

**Cortes-Vargas:** I'm reading the amendment. Absolutely, it looks like the change that he wants to do is really to make a point, that he's in disagreement with the bill. But what we know is that the previous government really has mentioned on the record multiple times that they didn't do anything about election financing, that it was there beforehand, and therefore it wasn't them.

Really, what we're doing here today is making sure that we're introducing the Fair Elections Financing Act, and the part about that that we need to remember is that this act is giving Albertans Alberta back in their hands and taking it out of corporations and unions that have been part of this democratic process in a way that allows pay-to-play. That is something that Albertans know and Albertans want to see changed. The statement that is being made by calling it the Fair Elections Financing Act is a statement to enhance that this is about Albertans. This is about increasing accountability and transparency. This is about making sure that we get big money out of politics, and it is time for change.

Mr. Chair, at the end of the day, we want to make sure that elections are about ideas and not about money. What we need to make sure of is to put the things in place that will allow that to happen, and that's what we mean when we say, "Fair Elections Financing Act." This is about Albertans. This is about contribution limits, about introducing campaign spending limits. All of that contributes to a fair election process.

I am strongly in agreement with the fair elections act, and unfortunately I won't be supporting the amendment.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, Mr. Chair, what the hon. member for the government, the last speaker, has right is that I am one hundred per cent in disagreement with the government on their attempt to rig and to fix the next election, in 2019. They do have that a hundred per cent correct.

Again, every member of the government who rises on this bill continues to rise and say that this is about contribution limits, about donation limits, about spending caps. Mr. Chair, they will continue to gloss over the fact that every party has already agreed to that. The argument that has happened in Committee of the Whole over the last few days is over their attempt to rig the system to the advantage of the NDP – that's where the argument is at its core – their attempt to attack the structure of opposition political parties, their attempt to attack our volunteers who make our political process work. They want to gloss over that every time that they rise, just like they want to gloss over the fact that the committee was derailed by them as they continued to try to get their campaign expenses paid for. That's a fact. It's disappointing.

Now, the title of this bill is one hundred per cent political. It is disappointing that the government continues to do that with their bills. This bill is far from fair. The facts have been completely established on that, and the government should be ashamed of itself for continuing this sham.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A11?

**Mr. McIver:** I just wanted to stand and say how much I support this amendment. I appreciate – even a government member suggested, and I agree with him on this much – that this is symbolic. But this is an important symbol because the title of this act suggests

that somehow this is going to make things fair when we all have demonstrated through our debate and our discussion that exactly the opposite is the truth. This is the government's attempt to put themselves in a position to intimidate other parties' supporters and donors. It's an attempt to put themselves in an advantageous position. It's an attempt to actually disguise who the different political parties are getting their money from by making it so there's an unlimited number of third parties that can spend \$150,000 each when each party can only spend \$2 million in total.

The government hasn't put limits on government spending. As we've talked about, they've spent \$9 million selling a carbon tax that nobody likes, which is more than four parties can spend combined during the next general election under their legislation. They didn't even wait till the ink was dry. They didn't even wait until we voted on this to start abusing their own legislation and taking unfair advantage of everybody else in the House.

You know what? Taking the word "fair" out of the title is obvious, and any government member that is the least bit honest about how they feel about their legislation should be voting for this amendment, as I intend to do.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A11?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A11 as proposed by the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A11 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:48 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Panda
Barnes	MacIntyre	Rodney
Cooper	McIver	Starke
Cyr	Nixon	Taylor
Drysdale	Orr	van Dijken

5:50

Against the motion:

Babcock	Gray	McPherson
Carson	Horne	Miranda
Connolly	Kazim	Payne
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Renaud
Dach	Luff	Rosendahl
Dang	Malkinson	Sabir
Drever	Mason	Shepherd
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Feehan	McKittrick	Westhead
Goehring		

Totals:	For – 15	Against – 31
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**The Acting Chair:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 35?

Having seen none, are we ready for the question on Bill 35?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 35 agreed to]

[The voice vote indicated that the title and preamble were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:52 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

For:

Babcock	Gray	McPherson
Carson	Horne	Miranda
Connolly	Kazim	Payne
Coolahan	Kleinsteinuber	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Renaud
Dach	Luff	Rosendahl
Dang	Malkinson	Sabir
Drever	Mason	Shepherd
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Feehan	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	McLean	

Against:

Aheer	Loewen	Panda
Barnes	MacIntyre	Rodney
Cooper	McIver	Starke
Cyr	Nixon	Taylor
Drysdale	Orr	van Dijken

Totals:	For – 32	Against – 15
---------	----------	--------------

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

**Mr. Mason:** I would move then, Mr. Chair, that the committee rise and report on Bill 35.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 35. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All in favour, say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** All opposed, say no. That is so ordered.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, in view of the progress that we have made and the proximity of the time to our adjournment time, I'll move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 7:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, December 12, 2016

Day 61

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (ND)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),  
Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
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Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
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Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)  
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)  
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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
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Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
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Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
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van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
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Chair: Ms Goehring  
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Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
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Luff	

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Babcock	McKitrick
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Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
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Kazim	

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Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

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Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
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Gotfried	Westhead
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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, December 12, 2016

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 34 Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I think it's rather obvious to everyone here that we have before us a problematic bill. It's very troublesome. A couple of things, I think, should be mentioned about Bill 34. This government doesn't seem to want to put caps on spending. It doesn't want to put caps on borrowing. It doesn't want to put a cap on lending borrowed money to the Balancing Pool. But, of course, the one thing this government will do is cap development. They'll cap emissions in the oil sands, but when it comes to borrowing money, this government just doesn't want to have any limits whatsoever, and even the limits that they originally put on they then removed. Kind of telling, I think.

So here we have Bill 34, and the situation with Bill 34, of course, is that there isn't really anything to amend. It's something like 50 words long. It is problematic from a number of points of view, one of which, of course, is that it isn't necessary in the first place. We have before us a bill that is completely unnecessary unless, of course, there's something else we haven't been told, and I'll get there.

But first let's talk about some of the things that we do know. Bill 34: some people might consider it the culmination of a series of errors, a comedy of errors except that the comedy is not so funny. It's going to cost Albertans nothing but money. We have before us this bill that is an attempt by the government to make sure that Albertans don't fully, clearly realize the cost of this government's mistakes. It's about covering the cost of the PPA debacle that this government created when it raised the price of the specified gas emitters levy only a few weeks into their mandate without doing any homework on the consequences.

It wasn't very long after that, as you all well know, FOIPs being the wonderful thing that they are – we know that the government was in fact warned repeatedly through 2015 from different sources about the impact that their meddling in the specified gas emitters regulation was going to potentially have, that PPAs could come back to the pool under section 4.3(j), the famous change-in-law clause. So raising that specified gas emitters tax resulted in the first of a series of dominoes that started to flip over, and the government then started to run from crisis to crisis to crisis to crisis trying to fix it.

Now, I'm going to dwell just a moment on the lack of necessity for this bill. The Balancing Pool already has and has had the power through the use of an approved rate rider to recover any losses experienced by the pool. Historically, if you look at your electricity bill, you will see that you've been getting a credit on that rate rider for years now. For years. The Balancing Pool has been run

profitably by the people running that pool, so any profit that they have made, of course, they pass on to you and me.

Conversely, should the Balancing Pool suffer any losses, those too must be passed on to you and me in that same line item on our bill. We believe that the government is somewhat afraid of showing Albertans the true cost of their mess, the mess that they've created in the Balancing Pool.

Now, the government estimates put the needed rate rider at just over \$1 a month per bill. Independent estimates from Andrew Leach have estimated this cost to be under \$3 per month per bill. It isn't like we're talking about a great deal of money per bill, per household, which leads to the question: then why? Why unlimited borrowing to the Balancing Pool to cover this? I mean, it's three, four bucks on our bill. What's the big deal over that? That's why I believe there's more to this that we're not being told than what we are being told.

Whether the higher or the lower estimate that we've been told is correct, the fact of the matter is that that low cost does not justify the removal of an important check on government spending. When I talk about an important check, it is simply the transparency to Albertans that they can see on their electric bill that the government has messed with the electricity system and that now it's costing me and you and all other households \$3 or \$4 on our electricity bill. The government doesn't even want us to see that on the bill.

Instead, in extending an open-ended line of credit to the Balancing Pool, the Balancing Pool now won't have to show that on our electricity bill. Furthermore, the pool is being given 14 years to pay back whatever it is that the government has to extend to them in the form of credit to cover the losses. What that means, then, as I have mentioned before in this House, is that the Balancing Pool will have a liability. That's a debt owed the government. The government on their books will show that liability that the pool has as, actually, an asset to the government. Such very creative bookkeeping. Lovely.

But the reality is, Madam Chair, that Albertans are still going to have to pay for that somehow. Now, if I was to conjecture just a little bit, I think the government is betting that electricity prices are going to climb high enough so that the Balancing Pool is back in a profit situation again and that the Balancing Pool is going to be able to pay that loan off. Still, here again, if prices in the pool go high, you and I still pay that. There is no way of escaping the reality that Albertans are going to be paying more money.

Whether we're paying it through increased power prices because prices are going up in the pool, whether we're paying it on a rate rider where the Balancing Pool is billing us for their loss, whether we're paying it in taxes as the government pays that debt down, any way you want to slice this, Madam Chair, Albertans are going to be on the hook for hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars, all because a stubborn government refused to listen to the industry and take the industry up on some very good offers the industry put forward back in the late part of 2015.

This government stubbornly increased the taxes under the specified gas emitters regulation and wouldn't back off from that position. Then, to make matters worse, they decided to sue Enmax in some kind of a crazy attempt to appear to be battling on behalf of Albertans when, in fact, Enmax is owned by Albertans. So the press correctly said in one of the headlines: the government of Alberta is suing Albertans. Here we are. The government is suing us, the people, specifically the good people of Calgary, taking them to court because the company that they own was well managed.

7:40

We have some lawyers that are going to be making some good bucks out of this whole deal. Calgarians, unfortunately, are going

to be on the hook. And, of course, the government's lawyer isn't even from Alberta. They couldn't find a lawyer in Alberta, had to bring in a lawyer from outside of Alberta. Here we have the NDP currently suing Alberta-owned companies because this government did not know our own laws that have been publicly known for nearly 17 years, and somehow that's grounds for a court of law to go back and undo that contract. It is the most frivolous lawsuit, I believe, that any government could possibly have ever launched against anyone.

Furthermore, we've got a government that is not being fully honest with Albertans about what they knew, when they knew about power companies being allowed to return their agreements to the Balancing Pool because of the change-in-law provision. This government has been somewhat economical with the truth. The NDP government has got to come clean with Albertans about what they knew and when they knew it regarding the PPA issue and the change in law.

Evidence continues to mount that the NDP government's claim of not knowing about the risks of PPA terminations until March 2016 is patently not true, which means they could have done something about this before they raised the specified gas emitters tax and created the excuse for the power companies to turn back their PPAs. Now, Capital Power and TransCanada both outlined their concerns about PPA cancellations for this government in their submissions to the climate action panel, reports that ministers in this government have repeatedly claimed to have read. If you read TransCanada's and Capital Power's submissions to the climate action panel in the fall of 2015, they clearly delineate the nature of the potential risk, that if the government continues down this road of taxing carbon, they run the risk of PPAs coming back to the Balancing Pool. It's very clearly stated in those submissions, which ministers in this government claim they read. So they knew full well.

FOIPs that were obtained and released by the Wildrose clearly show that in November 2015 a briefing was prepared outlining the potential impacts on Alberta's coal-powered companies as a result of the NDP government's climate change policies, and though heavily redacted, the documents explicitly mention PPAs. On the 9th of December Enmax notified senior bureaucrats and political staff that they were considering terminating Battle River 5 under article 4.3(j), and Enmax alleges in documents they filed in the court that they directly informed Grant Sprague, Deputy Minister of Energy; James E. Allen, assistant deputy minister of electricity; Allison Hansen, senior policy adviser to the Minister of Energy.

Furthermore, an e-mail sent from the hon. Minister of Energy's chief of staff to an issues manager in the Premier's office stated, "Attached is a draft briefing note that has yet to be finalized but I believe provides the context that you need for question period . . . Should something arise." The title of that draft, of course, was "Change in Law" provision.

The evidence is quite undeniable, Madam Chair. The incompetence shown on our province's Energy file is unjustifiable. This government was elected on a mandate of increasing accountability and transparency, and it has completely failed Albertans on this particular note.

Now we have this Bill 34, a completely unnecessary extension of credit to the Balancing Pool, that already has a mechanism for recovering losses, losses that will only amount to a few dollars on our bills. But the longer this government continues down the road of changing their story and being less than honest about the facts surrounding PPAs, the more taxpayer dollars will be wasted on this mess. This government is either, as I said, being really economical with the truth or grossly inept. Economical with the truth: it's because I can't use the L-word.

No one forced this government to make any rash changes to the specified gas emitters regulation just weeks after getting into power. That was completely within their hands to do or to not do. Rather than take the time to see what kind of impact this might have, what kind of implications this was going to have throughout our electricity system, the government just forged right on ahead anyway.

The energy companies' claims are legitimate. Under section 4.3(j) the PPA explicitly outlines the right of a company to return its contract on the grounds of a change in law. This government attempted to convince the people of Alberta of the narrative that this was some secret backroom deal. They tried to get Enmax confused with big, bad, old Enron in order to paint a picture of Enmax as being a greedy, underhanded, shady, backroom-deal type of company when, in fact, Enmax is one of the most respected and well-run companies in this province. They run well on behalf of their owners, the people of Calgary. They are a stellar company, and it's shameful that this government attempted to tar them with the same brush as Enron. That was shameful.

Furthermore, the government's narrative was absolutely false. This was not a backroom deal. PricewaterhouseCoopers was watching over the entire proceedings in the development of the PPA contracts and the auction. PricewaterhouseCoopers reviewed the requests for inclusion of the more unprofitable clause, and their response was very simple. In writing they stated clearly that that was the government's intention all along, so, yes, include that clause. That is not a backroom deal. Everyone who was a player in the auction knew about that clause, knew about the letter from PricewaterhouseCoopers. The whole thing was being done above board. There was no backroom deal in spite of what this government has tried to suggest to the good people of Alberta.

Calgary's power company, all the power companies, the players in the auction, the Balancing Pool, and the creation of the PPAs: everything was above board. But there was somebody who didn't know. That would be the nondemocratic party members. They didn't know. And when they took power, they still didn't know. It's simply because they did not do their homework.

It's interesting to note, Madam Chair, that when this government took power and they started appointing ministers, one of the first things that happened was the doing away of mandate letters. Do you remember that? It wasn't very long after this government took power. Ministers were appointed to different ministries, and for the first time, I think, in generations ministers of the Crown were not given mandate letters by the Premier. In other words, they didn't have their job description. They didn't have a list of expectations that the Premier had for them as ministers of the Crown.

I should point out that the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition gave those of us that have portfolios a mandate letter. In fact, it was a mandate binder, frankly. It was a mandate binder. He had specific expectations for each and every one of us to fulfill with regard to the portfolio we were responsible for, but the Premier didn't seem to think her ministers needed mandate letters. So what was one of the first things that happened? Along comes Bill 1, the job description bill for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Had he had a mandate letter, we wouldn't have needed a piece of legislation to tell him what to do. This government's handling of things is just terrible.

Had they had a mandate letter, maybe the Minister of Energy would have had a little note in there somewhere saying: "You should probably read up on our electricity system that you're responsible for. You should maybe find out about what's going on there, what some of the issues are." It's just crazy how things have been going along here. So now we have the consequences of the government's actions. Their mishandling of the electricity file is

upon us, and I guarantee you that Bill 34 is not going to be the end of it.

7:50

The other interesting thing about Bill 34 being an open-ended loan to the Balancing Pool is that the unnecessary facts of this bill, like that we don't need this bill, tell me that something else is going to happen to the Balancing Pool. Look, the Balancing Pool is not run by a bunch of dummies. They understand. They are professionals. They've been in this for a very long time, and if they believe that they need an open-ended line of credit from the government, then I guarantee you that it is not simply to cover the losses from the PPAs coming back.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** I was so enthralled with the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I would like to hear more about the PPA arrangements, especially when it comes to how the government feels it has a mandate in this area to move in this direction even though they hadn't campaigned on it. Please, member, I would love to hear some more.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak? Seeing none, the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you.

Well, it's interesting where this government has been taking this province compared to what they campaigned on and what they did not campaign on. They did not campaign on a carbon tax. Neither did they campaign on completely destroying our electricity system. They did not campaign on completely undoing a relatively good energy-only market in our electricity system and going to a regulated capacity market. These are things they did not campaign on but, you know, shockingly, both those items, the carbon tax and what we see them doing in the electricity system, are going to amount to tens of billions of dollars. Maybe that's why they didn't campaign on them. They were too chicken to tell Albertans what was really going to happen.

Is it possible, Madam Chair, that all along the government knew that they were going to seriously meddle with our electricity system? I believe that they did, and the reason I believe that is because within just six or eight weeks of coming to power, they started the attack. They meddled with the carbon levy under the specified gas emitters regulation right out of the gate without doing any analysis of the impact. I don't believe any government would come to power and do something so dramatic, so impactful if they hadn't actually had a plan to do that all along.

I will state here on the record, Madam Chair, that I believe this government knew they were going to do that, and they were too afraid to tell Albertans the truth. Now that they see what the impacts are going to be, the unintended consequences that they're now seeing, they're attempting to cover up the facts.

**Mr. Cyr:** With debt.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** With debt.

They're attempting to move the facts off the Balancing Pool and onto taxpayer debt to hide the reality, even a couple of dollars, even three dollars or so. Although, I will say this, and I was getting there. Because the Balancing Pool and the government probably know full well there's more stuff coming down the pipe here that is specifically going to impact the Balancing Pool adversely, I believe

the government knows they're going to have to give the Balancing Pool an open line of credit to cover something else that's going to hit the pool. I believe that that something is directly tied to the renewables program of 30 per cent by 2030.

I believe that the Balancing Pool is going to be experiencing so much volatility, so much financial adversity that they are going to need tons of money to cover it off, and the government doesn't want that showing up on our electric bill either. So they're going to lend the pool the money, and it's simply going to be shifted over onto our taxes. I believe this government is doing what became known as Enron accounting. If somebody is doing an Enron deal around here, it isn't the people that were the players in the Balancing Pool. It's this government right here, shifting things around from the pool to the taxpayer, from the ratepayer to the taxpayer, but it's the same Albertan. The same Albertan.

This Bill 34 is not necessary. It's covering up the truth from Albertans. It's a shameful piece of legislation. You'll note that we haven't put any amendments forward on it. There really is no point. There's nothing to amend. It simply needs to die.

I will not be supporting Bill 34. I would encourage all members of this House to not support Bill 34. This bill is not necessary, and it's simply going to be another government attempt at masking what's really going on with the people of Alberta's money.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 34?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 34 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? So carried.

## Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered on this bill? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to bring forward an amendment, please.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, this amendment will be referred to as A7. Please go ahead.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move that Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended as follows. Section 1 is amended by adding the following after clause (h):

- (h.1) "partial upgrading" means processes that remove various proportions of the heaviest fraction of bitumen to allow for either a low diluent ratio or diluent-free transportation of bitumen.

Section 2(2) is amended by adding the following after clause (a):

- (a.1) partial upgrading emissions as determined in accordance with the regulations.

Section 3 is amended by striking out clause (e) and substituting the following:

- (e) prescribing a method for determining partial upgrading emissions and upgrading emissions excluded under section 2(2)(a.1) and (b).

Madam Chair, I'd like to talk a little bit for a moment about the aspects of partial upgrading. As the House knows, we've brought forward several amendments with regard to this bill, several very good amendments that we thought would help the government to actually have policy that will help us to make sure that jobs stay in the province, that we create the best products here in our province most environmentally and keep carbon leakage out of the process at least to the point that our portion of the market is not being snatched up by other people who do not produce as ethically and environmentally compared to what we do.

I would like to speak for a moment about an article. This is a little bit older article from 2014, just to clarify in case anybody mentions that this is an old article. It is, but the whole purpose of reading parts of this article and bringing it into the House is to keep in mind that these numbers were during peak times and peak prices, so it's just to give you some comparative information. The article is called *Field Upgrading Is Making It Possible to Pipe Bitumen without Thinning Agents*.

8:00

Now, when we're talking about pipelines and about bitumen flowing through pipelines, one of the bigger issues we have is that a good chunk of the capacity is taken up with diluent. I would hope that most of the members in the government would understand that diluent is expensive and that it's a hot commodity in this province and in Canada.

I'm just going to read some information into the record if that's okay. Natural gas condensate, which is sometimes referred to as natural gasoline, is an extremely necessary component in western Canada as the oil sands companies turn out more and more bitumen and diluent, and condensate thins that lovely, gooey bitumen so that it can flow through the pipelines and get to market. Now, the government has repeatedly told us about their two pipelines. Well, this is how we make sure that everything flows through the pipelines. The rising demand for diluent has, however, led to a condensate shortage. In fact, oil sands companies actually use about 350,000 barrels of this stuff per day, and we actually only produce, at least in 2013, around 145,000 barrels. So that supply-demand imbalance has condensate trading, as you can imagine, at a very, very hefty premium to heavy oil blends like western Canadian select.

Condensates help to move bitumen, but they hog space in the pipeline. This is extremely important when we're talking about capacity and actually making sure that we're getting as much product to tidewater or to refineries as possible. Industry might even be able to find a way to eliminate it. In fact, many companies are well on their way. One barrel of dilbit, which is diluted bitumen, is made up of 3 parts bitumen to 1 part condensate.

Again, if I could reiterate the importance of knowing the utilization of pipeline capacity. You are moving a ton of diluent around, and actually it has absolutely no real gain or benefit other than to move this heavy oil. If you could move this without diluent, which would mean encouraging partial upgrading, you would eliminate that cost, and that would be huge to these companies. I have some numbers to show what the difference would be in terms of efficiencies and costs. If you're able to remove that diluent from the pipeline, again, you have a lot more capacity in your pipeline. This would solve a humongous oil sands industry, as they call it, condensate conundrum.

The aspect of what we're talking about today: what we'd like to see happen here is the emissions that are coming from partial upgrading be exempted. This particular aspect that we're referring to is called partial upgrading. There are a couple of companies that I'd like to cite: Ivanhoe's heavy-to-light – HTL is the acronym.

They have an idea, and this again was in 2014, so depending on where they're at with this process right now – they've found a cost-effective way to upgrade bitumen so that it not only flows through the pipeline without diluent, but, even more importantly, it fetches a higher price at the other end.

I think this is something that we could all agree on because, at the end of it, that means more for Albertans, which means that there is more for – these are our minerals and our resources. The more that we can get from these, the better off all of us are going to be. They're going to fetch a higher price, and you don't need to build multimillion-dollar upgraders, so this is a fantastic opportunity. It bears the question: why would the government decide that they would like to cap emissions or not exempt emissions from a process that actually fetches us higher dollars, gets more of our product into the pipeline, and produces jobs here with an ethical and environmental method that, I think we can all agree, we do best? Albertans are amazing at this. Let's give them the opportunity to do what they do. It's in their DNA.

If we're talking about bitumen production, did you know that even in 2014 it was projected to dramatically increase from at that time 1.9 million barrels per day? Then the Canadian Energy Research Institute forecast oil sands production at that time, 2014, to reach 3.1 million barrels per day by 2020. As you can see, we need to be producing. It needs to be us. It needs to be done here. CAPP had seen at that time, too, that production could reach as high as 3.8 million barrels per day and 4.5 million barrels per day by 2025. I mean, the numbers are obviously going to vary, and the forecast will change as well.

There are increases, and by extension, obviously, without partial upgrading, that means a lot more diluent. Again, I need to reiterate that diluent is massively expensive. We either lose it, or we have to pay to get it back. It is a very hot commodity, and it is extremely expensive. But we need some way to change the API of bitumen in order to get it into the pipeline, so if the industry has developed ways to alter the viscosity so that it is pipelineable without diluent, why would the government want to stop that from happening? This is a great idea, isn't it?

Again, to reiterate, it frees up a whole bunch of space in the pipeline networks. Believe me, they are currently facing bottlenecks, and even with the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and the upgrading of line 3, without Northern Gateway we are without a ton of capacity. It is imperative, without that extra pipeline at this point in time, that this government is upgrading to the best of their ability or partially upgrading to make sure that we're not bottlenecking the capacity that we have right now, which isn't even close to being enough.

Again to go back to Calgary-based Ivanhoe's technology, they have, as they call it, cracked the code on partial upgrading and were planning to use this technology in its two heavy oil projects. The two projects are Tamarack in the Athabasca region and block 20 of the Pungarayacu field in Ecuador. They have, you know, interests everywhere. The government is always talking about Alberta-made. Well, here's a technology that's Alberta-made, and it looks like it might happen outside of the country first before it happens here. Together with Ivanhoe, another group, MEG Energy, who is actually on the OSAG panel, is another company with a high-profile plan to roll out partial upgrading in the field, and these are just a couple of the initiatives. There are also Fractal Systems Inc., Petrosonic Energy, Value Creation. They are all looking to commercialize partial upgrading technologies.

Let me state again that the world's oil supply – the need is bigger. We're not reducing. Again, you know, if we're looking at GHGs and we're looking at reducing the footprint, obviously if we're keeping it in the ground and not producing, we're going to change



our footprint. But wouldn't it be nice if the footprint was changed because we actually put in the technology to alter that, giving us a lot more product to take to tidewater, which obviously helps out Canada, Alberta? It makes complete sense to me. I'm assuming this must be an oversight by the government.

One of the things I want to mention before I go on with this is that when we were reaching out to stakeholders, which were many, the industry was asking for clarity with regard to partial upgrading. Is it even included in the cap? The stakeholders are actually requiring and asking for clarity. They have actually asked for this amendment. As stated by oil and gas companies, partial upgrading is the technological Holy Grail for the oil sands industry because it actually enables producers to achieve considerably more value for their bitumen, which I've already said.

There's just no downside to this, and if the government is going to choose to not exempt these companies for their emissions, then what are we saying? That we're just going to fill the pipelines with diluent at a capacity that is not as good as with these technologies, potentially, and not get our full economic benefit from what is in the pipeline and still talk about capacity yet not allow capacity to happen? This in-the-ground, out-of-the-pipeline movement has to stop.

**8:10**

The full upgrading uses like Syncrude's take the mined bitumen, and it eliminates the heavy ends, the impurities like sulphur, nitrogen through coking. The result is the synthetic crude, and that can be shipped without diluent through pipelines and is essentially refinery ready. It can be distilled into other products with little or no additional treatment. That is a very good-quality material, and it will get very good value. It is generally shipped down from Canada to the U.S. Light oil refineries love this material. Again, why are we stopping this? I'd like to know. How is this helping the climate leadership action plan? I'm not quite sure. It seems counterintuitive when the whole point is to change the footprint, yet we're allowing other jurisdictions to produce in much, much worse situations than what we have here.

I would like to go on to talk a little bit more about partial upgrading. As the name implies, it doesn't go as far as the full upgrading, like we were talking about with synthetic crude oil, that is done by Syncrude. It does not eliminate all the impurities and the residuals. But, at the end of the day, the whole purpose is to be able to send it diluent free. Even if it's not fully upgraded, there are still so many opportunities for jobs and for those dollars actually to stay here in our province and in our country.

Even with partial upgrading, some of the companies that are working on this want to go even further. They've actually said that it "misses the point if it's just about getting it to the end user without the requirements for diluent or for pipeline capacity." There are actually even more opportunities to take responsibility for those heaviest, carbon-rich portions of the barrel.

On top of that, Ivanhoe again has talked about how they economically process volumes as low as 10,000 barrels per day, and that actually makes it extremely well suited for the steam-assisted gravity drainage products in the oil sands, where the daily production could run to 20,000 to 30,000 barrels per day. These are wonderful changes, that we would be able to produce at that level and produce well and have the dollars to support that.

HTL, which is Ivanhoe's – that is, their framework with which they work – is a very straightforward matter. The way that it works is actually really neat. They put it in a cylinder. The bitumen has coke and gas molecules, and they blast it out with the application of intense heat. The lighter end product can be shipped in the pipeline without diluent. But the partial upgrading process does lead to a loss

of about 10 per cent of that bitumen. However, they do have the benefit of generating coke and gas by-products, which actually can be reused and converted to steam for the power of the operations and the purpose of developing the field.

And then another fellow, whose name is Kuhach, was talking about the HTL as well, that it improves the net-backs from Alberta heavy oil production by 65 per cent. That's massive if you think about the dollars that are associated with that, not to mention the amount that we can get into a pipeline. That's tremendous. There is a humongous difference in the profit for the barrel that you're producing, he says.

I must state again that we have to try and avoid or at least alleviate some of the pipeline bottlenecks that we're dealing with right now with western Canadian heavy crude. We're trading at steep discounts to the global benchmark. Having partial upgrading will help us make sure that we're getting our product to the markets that it needs to go to without losing that extra value-added.

In 2014 CAPP was talking about these bottlenecks. Again, we don't have Northern Gateway, so even with the two proposed pipelines, the expansion and the upgrade of line 3, we need to figure out ways to make sure that we're getting as much capacity into these pipelines as possible. In 2013, actually, CAPP listed 12 proposed pipeline projects, which did include the Northern Gateway at that time. If you can imagine, if we can up our capacity – and much of it is in the Gulf of Mexico refining hub – we could actually eliminate the bitumen bubble discounts. That would be massive.

I mean, if I remember correctly, when the minister and the Premier were in opposition, they talked about this all the time, about value-added and about the difference and about the discounts. But the fate of some of the bigger projects such as Northern Gateway and all of those is uncertain, so we really have to work toward what we have with capacity at this point in time and make sure that we're doing our very best. I mean, depending on when these actually get in the ground, even right now with what we have, we need to get as much capacity into pipelines as possible. If you look at transportation constraints, we don't know what's going to happen with Keystone XL, and if we're talking about that transportation, until we know that that's improved, again, we need to get as much capacity into the pipelines as possible.

If we're talking about more profit per barrel and we're talking about the ability to do it in Alberta, where we can create jobs and do it more environmentally and economically, and we're talking about actually being able to get our product to tidewater, which is talked about in this House on a regular basis, we need to be on the same side of this. We need to make sure that we are exempting the emissions for partial upgrading.

MEG Energy actually has their own proprietary partial upgrading technology. Now, this is called Hi-Q process, and it's like the HTL by Ivanhoe. It cuts the diluent out of the transportation equation. A presentation states that diluent adds \$12 to each barrel. Twelve dollars. We're talking millions of barrels of oil a day. Twelve dollars is huge in the cost of producing a barrel. Actually, in 2013 MEG Energy was producing about 35,000 barrels per day, give or take a couple of hundred, but it is hoping to have an installed production capacity of 260,000 barrels per day by the end of 2020. So imagine.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak to this amendment. This is just, I think, a fantastic amendment. I think everybody here should agree that this is a fantastic

amendment. You know, partial upgrading just makes sense from all the points that were previously brought up. Less diluent is needed, and in a lot of cases virtually no diluent is needed. That's going to save literally millions and millions of dollars, and now we'd have the ability to have more space on our pipelines. We can send more product down there. If we're sending more product down the line, well, we're going to be creating more jobs, and we'll be creating more taxes for this province, which is more revenue for the government. It's something I think the government should be happy and excited about.

Really, this increases jobs. This partial upgrading, like I say, just increases so many different jobs and revenues for the province. You know, if you look at that, if we're busier working with these, then we've got more people in the hotel industry. They're busy. You've got people with more vehicle sales because now those things are going to be back up and active again. They're busy. You've got people – I guess part of the vehicle is your tires. Well, they're going to be running up and down the roads a little bit more. The people that are selling tires, people at the convenience stores, restaurants, all sorts of jobs right across Alberta, are now busier. It's got this effect that keeps flowing. It just, like I say, frankly, helps our province to no end.

8:20

So there's more money, more taxes, more jobs, more exports. It just makes, like I say, a lot of sense. And the NDP ran on this. They ran on the idea of more jobs and being able to get more from the product. So I'm excited. This is something that you should be able to embrace because it's something that you ran on, the idea of having more jobs, and this will help make sure that that happens.

Last week they had a puffball kind of a question on that one, and it spoke to it, but you were embracing the idea, it seemed, on that question – I don't have it in front of me – of having partial upgrading. Like I say, it's just good for our province.

You know, Reagan talked about this in a kind of way. He had a quote on big government attempting economics. Reagan said: "If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it." That's what the NDP is trying to do with our oil industry right now. They're subsidizing it, but we need to be able to use practical, sensible approaches that our stakeholders, the people in the oil industry, are asking for.

This one just absolutely makes more sense. You know, it's more environmentally friendly. When you think about it, if you're reducing risks to the environment by reducing the well-to-wheel greenhouse gas emissions – where you have to move it by the train, if you've got a pipeline, then you don't have to have it from the well to the wheel.

You've got so many ways to look at this. It's more environmentally friendly. You don't have to worry about some products maybe contaminating water or soil because it's going to be more of the pure product, so you eliminate the risk of a dilbit spill and eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. Long transportation of dilbit is eliminated. There are so many different ways that you could look at this. Probably about 30 per cent fewer export pipelines are going to be required, so we don't have to go and ask as many times for more pipelines.

Lower costs, value-added for petrochemicals – and we want value-added. We want to be able to have some more money stay in this province. If we have these things happening with this partial upgrading, you're producing more jobs that are going to stay in this province. Then, frankly, we're not shipping that money down to the United States. If we're keeping our money here, well, that's better for us. I'm standing up for Alberta. Whenever I have a chance, I'll do what I can to stand up for Alberta, and this stands up for Alberta, for Alberta jobs, for our values that we have.

So, frankly, I'm all for this one. I truly think that all members should be able to agree that this is, I guess, the far superior way to go. With that, like I say, I'm in favour of this amendment, and I hope that all the members here will vote in favour of it, too.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to rise to speak to amendment A7. I do wish to encourage all members to oppose the amendment, as I do. We've got nothing against partial upgrading. In fact, partial upgrading is a technology that's well on its way to being a reality on a large commercial scale. The caucus is extremely familiar with this process and looks forward to seeing it adopted on a large scale so that indeed we can increase pipeline capacity by not requiring diluent to be added to the bitumen. And it flows without diluent. It is definitely a game changer, and it's almost here. In fact, about a quarter of the caucus was up visiting MEG Energy's Christina Lake project and had this explained to us there, letting us know that they were looking very closely at upscaling to a commercially larger demonstration project so that the process could be confirmed. That definitely is something that will be happening.

What this amendment seeks to do is, really, to just simply create an exclusion of the emissions cap, which is totally unnecessary. This process is on the way, and it's going to be out the door. It's a prime example of companies competing to get a process in place that will benefit the whole industry, but each of them is looking to claim the process for themselves. It's an example of what can be done when companies do compete with each other to improve their capacity to let oil flow more quickly and without diluent in our pipelines and to improve the bottom line for the companies and also the revenues for the province. So, definitely, we certainly champion the technological improvements that we see in partial upgrading of bitumen to the point where it will flow without diluent. It's a great thing, it's almost a reality, and we look forward to its implementation.

This exclusion to the emissions cap, that this amendment seeks to create, is an unnecessary benefit, and I look forward to opposing it. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was really surprised by the comments from the previous speaker because of his partial knowledge and because of these partial facts he brought up, and I'll tell you why. The Member for Calgary-Fort may be an expert in finance, but I can call myself an expert on upgrading and refining and extraction mining. It may benefit you if you let me just bring you the facts, unlike the partial facts brought up by our colleague from Edmonton-McClung.

You're right when you said that large scale is happening. When you say "large scale," large scale is a full-scale upgrader like what Suncor has or Syncrude has or CNRL has, with full-scale operations like cokers, hydrotreaters, hydrocracking, and all that, which, to build that upgrader, will cost something like \$15 billion. To have 150,000 to 200,000 in upgrading operations, it will cost something to that tune. So that's full scale. It's happening. It's happening on the major sites where we have mining operations. But the fact is that mining operations are limited in terms of the resource availability. Eighty per cent of the resource is deeper, which has to

be extracted using thermal technologies like SAGD. That said, those facilities, you know, like the SAGD facilities and the cyclical steam facilities do have partial upgrading on-site.

Let me take you back to the full-scale operations of upgrading. When we talked about the Voyageur project at Suncor, for example, we did the engineering for that project three times, three different times. A hundred per cent of the equipment was ordered, the foundations were even built for the cokers, and the cokers were on their way. Four years ago that project was shelved because of the cost differential between WCS and synthetic crude oil. There was a reason why they did it, because it's not economical anymore because the difference was too low to invest \$15 billion in an upgrading facility when you have pipelines which can take it to the Gulf coast of Mexico, where the refineries are upgraded to handle our heavy crude. That's a fact. That's why they shelved that project.

**8:30**

That's the time when the previous Premier of the province was talking about the bitumen bubble, if you remember that. That was because of the differential and whatnot. At that time, conveniently, when the Government House Leader was the NDP opposition leader, when he was here, sitting on this side, they used to cry aloud every time: "Oh, the PC government is shipping jobs and prosperity to the south. We should do more upgrading here, more upgrading here. Keep the jobs here." Now that they're the government, they've changed their minds. We brought in an amendment to at least exempt upgrading our cogen from this arbitrary 100-megatonne cap, which government members have generously voted out. They speak from both sides of their mouths now in this House. I don't get that. I don't get that. If you're not a technical expert, please do consult the industry.

You mentioned MEG Energy, that your caucus has visited, probably the bus tour to show you the facility, which is good. But then did you consult them about this amendment before you asked – Madam Chair, I'm asking the Member for Edmonton-McClung: when he quoted MEG Energy, had he consulted them before opposing this amendment? No, I don't think so. If he consulted them, they probably would have told him the difficulties of shipping the bitumen, which is not viscous, which is not easy to flow in the pipeline.

Either they have to partially upgrade and have a diluent recovery facility there, so they can build another hot bitumen pipeline so they can straight away ship it to an upgrader, or if they don't have partial upgrading, they'll be spending more money using diluent and shipping it to the terminals which are located in Hardisty, which is represented by the most hard-working member on this side.

You know, when he spoke about partial upgrading, at least, you know, he knows what he is talking about because Hardisty is there, in his riding. That's where most of his operations are happening. They have to recover the diluent and send it back. That means they are incurring additional costs. That's why SAGD facilities' economics are not in their favour when the bitumen price comes down. That's a fact. Having said that, Madam Chair, it's a common-sense amendment to help improve the economics of these SAGD producers because 80 per cent of the resource has to be extracted using thermal technologies like SAGD.

Today the Minister of Energy during QP to one of the puffball questions said that, you know, it's important to ship the oil through pipelines so we can get the \$3 premium for our product when we get it to tidal water. She's absolutely right. That's why we needed those pipelines. She said that by not having the pipelines, we're going to lose \$13 billion, or something to that extent, which, again, she's right. She doesn't need to convince me of that, not even my colleagues on this side of the aisle. She has to convince the people

on the OSAG committee who are opposing pipelines, not us. We agree with her. If there is anything we could do to help her, we are happy to do it.

One way of helping her to get some credibility with her stakeholders is to approve this amendment. That way she can actually help the companies the previous speaker mentioned, MEG Energy and those kinds of companies. Partial upgrading really helps them. I'm sure they would have, you know, contacted the government members to speak for that. If not, maybe they're really scared of the government. I don't know what's going on because they didn't stand with them at the climate change plan announcement.

There are maybe some reasons that they are not speaking about that, but if the Energy minister takes time to call them tomorrow, I'm sure they'll say that this is the right amendment. I would encourage her to take time and do the right thing: talk to the stakeholders and get the facts straight. Not partial facts; get them fully correct. That's how we should operate in this Legislature. We shouldn't base our decisions on ideology or half-cooked information. We should have the full information.

That said, Madam Chair, I support this amendment brought in by my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View. There are so many reasons to support this amendment. By partially upgrading, we are going to improve the economics of SAGD projects. That will help us to free up the pipeline capacity, which is really crucial. Also, that would actually bring in more investment from the existing SAGD operators. I can give you a few examples. For example, Firebag stages 3 and 4 of Suncor operations are already doing kind of partial upgrading. They have a diluent recovery unit there. They take out diluent there. Then the bitumen is still at 300 degrees centigrade, so they built a hot bitumen pipeline. Instead of shipping it to the terminal, they're shipping it directly to the upgrader. So they're reducing their costs.

There are other SAGD operations where they can actually do partial upgrading, like sulphur recovery units or vapour recovery units. Those are all called partial upgraders. But now if you count the emissions from them in this overall cap of 100 megatonnes, that will restrain investments in those SAGD facilities for partial upgrading.

You know, in the first place, this cap itself is very arbitrary. They just pulled in that number from thin air because it's round and nice and an easy number. But there is no impact analysis done by the Department of Energy or the department of environment to show to us. If it is done, please show it to us. Convince us that 100 megatonnes is the right number to cap at. If not, at least apply common sense and support reasonable amendments like that.

You talk about creating jobs. These are the projects. There are so many SAGD projects approved. They're not going into construction because of all these problems. We have about 1.7 million barrels worth of new SAGD projects approved by regulatory authorities. Taking that, if we approve partial upgrading, at least some of them may go into construction and production, which will in turn create jobs and improve our overall economics.

I don't know what else to say, Madam Chair. These are the basic facts. Anyone who wants to actually apply their mind to that will easily understand that. They will easily make the right decisions. So I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to please talk to the stakeholders and do the right thing by supporting this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**8:40**

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that. Let me just say that I want to thank the hon. member for the amendment that's before us because I think it's well thought out, and I think it's logical for us to support it.

There was a time when some of the government members were over on this side of the House, and one of the things that I remember several of them saying when they were over here is: pipelines just ship jobs to somewhere else. Well, that's partially true. It's not completely true, but it's surely partially true. It was true when they said it then, and it's still true now. It's not a hundred per cent true, but there is some wisdom to that that I actually believe is true. What you're talking about here, this amendment, is to (a) provide all the benefit that we can get out of the pipeline and (b) actually look for opportunities to do some further processing here so that you keep more of the jobs here. That's why I think this amendment makes very good sense.

Again, the mover talked about diluent-free upgrading or partial upgrading of bitumen, that would make it more friendly for pipelines, and I think the logic of that is absolutely inescapable and wise to think about. If the technology is there and can be developed, I think that's very, very insightful and thoughtful thinking. As the hon. member said, there are people actually working on that technology and some that think they have – I think the phrase used is “the code cracked.” They think they have found a way to actually make it happen. So, Madam Chair, I think that's a good thing.

The other thing, too, is that it actually provides some more room for production of our oil and gas industry. There are lots of troubling things about Bill 25, but one of the most troubling things about it – and the government should be more troubled about it than I am and that members on this side are – is that they're very happy that the federal government has approved two pipelines while they've been in government, and I would think all members of this House are happy about that, but then the government side continues with Bill 25, which essentially may at some point nullify one or both of the pipelines by making it to the point where you can sell more product, but you actually can't produce it to get it to market because you're on some artificially invented emissions cap.

Let's face it. If you actually care about the environment and you care about emissions, one thing that we all share in this world is the air. We share the air with every other country in the world, with every other city in the world, with every other citizen in the world because, of course, it moves. So if we don't put our oil and gas in a pipeline, get it to the coast, and sell it to somewhere else, you know where they're going to buy it from, at least some of it? They're going to buy it from Venezuela. They're going to buy it from Russia. They're going to buy it from OPEC countries that have a lot lower environmental standards than Canada does. In other words, this artificial cap will probably have a negative net effect on the environment over time, and it will have eventually a net negative effect on Alberta's economy and Canada's economy for a whole number of reasons.

Listen, Madam Chair, the government should be happy about the two pipelines. They should be happier when they get built. But they need to bear in mind, the government, that they have spent so much money – so much money – that by the time the next election comes, even when they fill this pipeline up with everything that it can take, the one to the west coast, the royalties that come from that actually won't even pay the annual interest payments on the money that this government has in loans. This government, in order to turn the corner in a positive way for themselves, actually needs another pipeline or two yet to keep up with their incredible spending habits.

When they put a cap on the emissions, they're actually cutting off their own governmental opportunities for success. Wouldn't it be a shame – and it may actually come to pass at the next election

– if one or both of these pipelines are under construction, everybody believes they'll get done, and people do the math, and they say: “Well, you've got two pipelines, but we're still going backwards because you have borrowed so much money that the royalties from the pipelines won't even pay the interest payments”? So with the cap on the emissions the government is kind of shooting itself in the foot. On the best news that they could have in getting pipelines, they're actually making an effort now with Bill 25 to nullify that. This amendment actually gives the government a chance to partially save themselves from their own lack of planning, their own lack of foresight.

The other thing that I think is true is that with the emissions overall – and this would help with some of that, too – right now the large oil sands companies seem to like Bill 25, of course, because they've made it incredibly uneconomical for anybody else in the oil sands to put in a large installation and compete with them. Who wouldn't be happy if the government gave them a virtual monopoly with the four players that are there. Between the four, the government has given them a monopoly because somebody else, to make it economical, would have to put in the same level, essentially, of investment that they have – \$8 billion, \$10 billion, \$12 billion – and feel assured that they could recoup their investment over 50 or 60 years. How could they possibly be confident of that with Bill 25 in place and this artificially manufactured limit on emissions?

The interesting thing is that many of the innovations that are good for the environment, many of the innovations that are good for competition come from small oil and gas companies. The Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act essentially cuts those small companies out from getting into the oil sands because with the emissions cap there, again, they won't feel confident that they can put the large investment in that they have to and then feel confident that they can fully exploit those large investments for 50 or 60 years because if they bump up along the emissions cap along the way, then, of course, why would you start? You know, investors are smart enough to ask these questions of companies, and this NDP government has put conditions in place with this legislation that the investors may not like the answer.

Madam Chair, what that adds up to is that this amendment from my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View actually kind of bails the government out of something that they missed and didn't think of when they put this legislation in place. As much as it's not our job to help the government out, it is our job to help Albertans out, and if the government was wise, they would support this because by helping Albertans out, they may actually reap the benefit for it at some future election date.

Again, while this is bad politics for me to suggest that the government approve this, it's good for Alberta. That's who I really get paid for and we all really get paid for, Albertans. We should be thinking and acting in their best interests, and from what I can see and understand, this amendment is in Albertans' best interest, which is why I'll be supporting it and why I recommend other members in this House to do the same.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Now, I had spoken on one of the past amendments, the cogen amendment, and I spoke in favour of that one because it was actually a good route to go. It was doing something very similar, trying to remove a cap that would prevent possible cogeneration being built in the future. That, specifically, in my discussions in front of the government was saying that this is

actually going to affect my riding and the ridings around me because when we're not actually going out there and utilizing all of the resources at hand, we have a real problem.

Now, this specific amendment, because I should get to this amendment – I am very distressed about what the Member for Edmonton-McClung was talking about. He was going on and on about how it's not ready yet and all that kind of stuff. You know, what I did is I actually did a little bit of research on it, and I went to Alberta Innovates. For *Hansard* that would be [albertainnovates.ca](http://albertainnovates.ca). I actually have a wonderful article here from October 27, 2016 – October 27, 2016 – so very recent. This isn't something that was written eight years ago, 10 years ago. This is something that was written months ago. I would like to read the opening statements.

8:50

The header is Enhancing Alberta's Competitiveness: National Partial Upgrading Program. Then it goes on to say:

Thanks to synergies between [Alberta Innovates] and [national resources Canada], a national program on partial upgrading was initiated in 2015. The goal of this program is to support the 2030 target that 20 per cent of in situ production will become partially upgraded to improve the quality, reduce the need for diluent and improve transportation and access to new markets.

Wow. That does seem to be a route that we are probably going in.

What is partial upgrading? You know, I always like to have a clear understanding of it. Well, in this thing here they did this national partial upgrading program. This study was

to identify the gaps in understanding and development [and] help prioritize future research focus and direction in partial upgrading – which is of strategic importance for [Alberta Innovates], the province and Canada.

Wow. How can this government vote against that? That's remarkable. This is voting against my riding. This is truly, truly remarkable.

When we go on, this is a success story within their group of success stories. They actually go in and say that partial upgrading is a success that was brought forward by Alberta Innovates. That's, again, something that our province can proudly say that we've moved in that direction. We are moving our oil production in a responsible direction, yet our government continues to put artificial caps out there so that it attacks our oil sands. It attacks our ability to be able to be competitive. It attacks our ability to be able to bring down the CO<sub>2</sub>, that we are looking to bring down across the world.

This is all that you've heard. You've heard from an expert from Calgary-Foothills, who explained the process. He is going through this and explaining how it should work. We hear from another expert from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, who is explaining exactly what is important for us and that this is an important part of Alberta's future. Yet here we are. We're hearing from the government, and they're saying that this is not the direction to go.

Now, another point that they've got here is:

As part of our leadership role, Alberta Innovates works to champion the innovations and informs the public about the importance and the scope of this work. Our publications tell stories of impact and provide accountability for our investments and activities.

Well, "champion," "innovations": this is exactly what this government has been talking about. We haven't seen it so far, and that's a true shame. What we have seen is a government running headlong into the wall numerous times.

I'll tell you that their jobs plan, that was supposed to be stellar, ended up being a total failure. In the end, they were warned repeatedly that this was not the direction to go, and my riding took the brunt of it. High unemployment: this is something that we could have prevented by bringing stable government, but this is nothing

that this government has moved forward. There's no stability here because we continue to run headlong into an ideological roof from this government. That is just tragic.

I am going to go into a bit of it. Bitumen value-added: this wasn't just something they took idly. What it is is that they

completed [a phase] of the Oil Sands Competitiveness study with participation by the Federal government, the governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan and six companies. The study concluded that partially upgraded bitumen (PUB) will increase the overall value of Athabasca bitumen and that PUB products will be broadly accepted in global crude oil markets.

The most attractive markets are refineries across this world. It also brings additional high-capacity access to tidewater, which is necessary for other markets.

Now, they do go through a whole bunch of other wonderful points – and I don't want to go through all of them – but the one that actually piques my interest is:

Managed, on behalf of Emissions Reduction Alberta (ERA) . . . two multimillion dollar/multiyear pilot projects of partial upgrading technology. Other projects managed on behalf of ERA included piloting a low cost oxy-fuel technology to capture CO<sub>2</sub> from a once-through steam generator for in situ oil sands extraction, and converting waste CO<sub>2</sub> into high value products such as Dimethyl Carbonate.

It is remarkable what we can do – it is truly remarkable – and we are planning on capping that innovation. This is a tragedy.

I can tell you that this is a move forward for my riding. This is a move forward for Alberta. I encourage every government member to vote for this because, in the end, they're harming Alberta if they don't.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The reason that we're sitting here debating this amendment to bring partial upgrading out from underneath the cap is because our motion to remove upgrading, period, from underneath the cap failed. The NDP government voted it down.

Now, I just want to quote something here from Alberta's royalty review advisory panel. It described partial upgrading as an "opportunity to diversify our product range and alleviate some of the challenges facing the marketing of our oil sands resources." The panel recommended accelerating the commercialization of partial upgrading technology. There we have the government's own royalty review advisory panel suggesting that this is a great idea.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Now, anytime I'm faced with a great idea that I would feel is something that is worthy and worth while, I think the last thing I'd want to do is to cap it, try to keep it down to some lower level. It doesn't make any sense. A partially upgraded product produces a medium to medium-heavy grade of oil, which fills a currently undersupplied demand in refineries and doesn't compete directly against U.S. shale light oil. What we're talking about here is a value-added process, a process that takes the oil that's produced in the oil sands and puts it into a form that not only is more valuable but also easier and less costly to ship.

We have a government here that seems to be all excited now about pipelines. I mean, they protest them, and then they celebrate when they get approved. I'm not sure how they justify that in their own minds. That seems to be a little bit odd. If you're celebrating pipelines and the purpose of a pipeline is to move product and the

purpose of upgrading and partial upgrading is to move product, why wouldn't you celebrate the same thing? If you're going to cap moving product based on an upgrading process, then, obviously, you're capping oil transport, so you're capping pipeline capacity.

I would laugh, but I guess it isn't really that funny to hear the Member for Edmonton-McClung get up and say that he thinks upgrading is good; therefore, he's going to vote against the amendment. Now, does that make sense to anybody – or is it just me? – that the Member for Edmonton-McClung would say that upgrading is good, so let's cap it? That makes no sense at all.

9:00

He also says that they champion upgrading – I believe that's the term he used, "champion" – champion upgrading with a cap. Well, Mr. Chair, that makes no sense to me, though I have to admit that much of what this government does makes no sense to me and probably not just me. I think that there are a lot of Albertans that are wondering what this government is doing and why.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I mean, we look at bill after bill that comes across our desks here that is damaging to business, damaging to Alberta's economy, and this government forges ahead with them. If they're not passing bills that are damaging the economy, they're passing bills to deal with the effects of the bills that they passed that are damaging the economy.

Anyway, Madam Chair, I have to support this amendment. It only makes sense. If we want to have value-added products in our province, if we want to create employment in our province, if we want to get our product to market, then it makes no sense at all to cap upgrading. There's nothing else to say.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Okay. First of all, I just need to talk about a few things that were said by the member from government on this side here. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I think the words that he said were that we are impeding it and that the government has championed it. Yeah, I'm just going to go on those two for the first little bit here. Actually, what we're trying to do is to open the door so that these processes could actually do what they've said they want to do.

Maybe I should read my amendment again because the amendment is actually reducing the red tape, that's been put in by this government, stopping upgraders and partial upgraders from actually being able to do what they've said to do. As the member so eloquently said, this is a great idea. So maybe the government would like to get out of the way and actually let these processes happen. Just saying.

Then, secondly, that you've championed it: well, again, you might want to read my amendment because the industry has actually asked for this amendment. It actually comes from them. I didn't just make this up. Again, you might want to read the amendment before commenting on it. The government has excluded industry from this process.

**The Deputy Chair:** Member, speak through the chair.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Sorry, Madam Chair. Thank you for the reminder.

The government has excluded industry from this process, not included them. If you're going to include them, how about we exempt them from the emissions cap so that they can actually do

this great work that the member said himself – speaking of members, the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater last week asked some great questions about upgrading. It says here that these are the people who add value to our resources right here at home, and he went on to say: "Given that our economy has for far too long relied on exporting our raw resources and given that Albertans want to see more jobs in the value-added sector." I mean the hypocrisy is palpable, Madam Chair.

Here we go. We have on one day the government voting down upgrading and not exempting them from the emissions on upgrading and then on Thursday talking about value upgrading. Here we are presenting another amendment to actually help with value-added, and based on what this member was saying and what the other member was saying about value-added, I would assume that actually allowing upgrading to happen would be probably the next most logical thing. I don't know. Maybe it's too late in the House, but reading the amendment would be a start. Just saying.

One of the other things needed – and maybe the government needs this, too – Madam Chair, is some clarity. The sector is certainly asking for clarity, and maybe we need some definitions here.

The more diluent that is in the pipelines, Madam Chair, the more money we lose. The more that we're able to upgrade and partially upgrade, the less diluent is in the pipeline, which increases our capacity, which helps all of us out. The more diluent we keep out of the pipeline: that is value-added material that actually increases the price of the barrel of oil for us. As the Member for Calgary-Foothills mentioned, we get ourselves out of the bitumen bubble. We bring closer the spread between western Canadian select and the cost of what that does. We're actually going to be making money.

On top of that, the added benefit to this is that we do it environmentally and we do it economically here in our province, where we should be producing more. If the government actually cares about the environment – and I'm assuming they do – then you'd want to produce here and not be exporting these jobs and these upgrading processes elsewhere.

In your own royalty review, the one that the government keeps touting – and I mirror what the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky said – the panel recommended accelerating and commercializing partial upgrading. It is worth saying again: it was in the royalty review. But then, again, there have been a gazillion other panels that haven't reported yet or that did and the government hasn't listened to them, nor will they because this bill will be put through this week without any information coming from the panel.

We have an opportunity here. Partial upgrading provides a unique opportunity for this province, a unique opportunity for the government to do right by the people of Alberta. This is their resource. We don't have to build multimillion-dollar upgraders to do this process. Come on. Can we just talk about this in a common-sense way and not have members who actually are not reading the amendment commenting on it, telling us that we're the ones who are impeding this process, when it comes from stakeholders and we're bringing forward amendments that are actually going to help out this process?

This will fill a currently unsupplied demand. Let's just talk about the economics of it for a minute. Partially upgraded products of medium and medium-heavy grade oil fill an undersupplied demand, and it doesn't compete directly with U.S. shale oil, which fully upgraded materials do. This is an immense opportunity for this province. The jobs created through this association, through being able to do this – there should be absolutely no reason to debate this. This is a no-brainer, but the government already took upgrading off the docket. We can't convince them about the 100-megatonne cap,

and we can't convince them about the 10-megatonne cap. Please consider that if this government is so behind partial upgrading, as the member has said, this actually allows the process to happen.

The minister of environment has said that the entire reason for doing this was to be able to address central issues facing the oil sands. Well, here you go. Here is an opportunity. It also is supposed to talk about investment and innovation and the developing process and to address local and regional environmental issues. Well, I can't think of a better way of addressing this issue than developing here, producing here, using our assets here, especially for the folks that live in these areas, their ability to be able to do this here. By allowing this amendment to happen, you are creating jobs, bringing forward diversification, adding dollars into this province. An Alberta-made project in Alberta, by Albertans, that is for Alberta and the prosperity of Canada. We are the economic engine. We say it all the time. It bears saying again.

Thank you.

9:10

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A7 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak?

**Mr. Panda:** What a day, Madam Chair. I'm really thoroughly disappointed that government members chose to defeat this common-sense amendment. We made so many attempts to make this bill better. I think I'll make one more attempt to get the members on the other side to understand the basics of this bill and the basics of this business.

In the words of my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake – he talked about 101 programs, so I can say that this is my oil sands 101, if you like. At least for my neighbouring ridings, members like Calgary-Northern Hills or Calgary-Hawkwood or Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill or Calgary-Varsity – I'm surrounded by government members. The people in Calgary-Foothills expect me to at least share what I know, a little bit about this business. At least that may sink in. I know it's tough to understand at 10 minutes past 9 o'clock at night, but pay attention a little bit, and you might change your mind.

Madam Chair, the reason I oppose this bill capping emissions at 100 megatonnes, like I explained so many times before, is that the way I see it and the way Calgarians and Calgary-Foothills people see it, it's an attack on the economic prosperity of Alberta. The Member for Edmonton-McClung is on record in *Hansard* saying that it is capping production. It is truly capping production. It's capping jobs, it's capping economic development, and it's capping immigration. I talked about that, too, previously. You know, people like me come here for the economic opportunities. They want to cap those opportunities for hard-working people here who want to play by the rules and pay taxes in Alberta and contribute to the economic growth of Alberta. That's why I'm disappointed.

We have a resource that nobody else has. We are blessed with the resource, and we want to strand it in the ground for no rhyme or reason. There is no common-sense logic that government members gave me to agreeing to strand this resource in the ground, which is \$250 billion, not a small amount, Madam Chair.

I talked about good reasons to not support this bill. Then we tried to make it better by bringing in common-sense amendments in line

with what the NDP used to say when they sat on this side of the House. None of those cut logic with the government members.

To take you one step back here, we are talking about the resource we have, which is the third-largest in the world behind Saudi Arabia's and Venezuela's. Unlike Venezuela, you know, which has a similar resource to ours – most of it is also oil sands, which is heavy and needs more resources and more money to make it light and sell it in the market – the Saudis have a distinct advantage because their oil is light. Ours is heavy, and we don't have access to the market; we are landlocked. So to start, although we are blessed with the resource, we are at a distinct disadvantage compared to the largest producers of the world or the countries that have the largest resource as compared to Canada.

That's why, although we have the resource, our costs are too high, so we have to make it easy for the businesses who want to develop those resources. But this government is making it too difficult for those companies that want to invest and grow jobs here. That's why I suspect, you know, that there is something beyond this because government members, on one hand, say that, yeah, they like upgrading. They say that they like pipelines. But they act differently. It doesn't make sense.

As I said before, there are projects that were already approved, SAGD projects, which, if they actually go into construction and ramp up production, can add 1.8 million barrels more. And there are mining projects which are already approved – these were all cleared by the regulatory authorities – 740,000 barrels worth of projects. Mining expansion projects were also approved. So together it's 2 and a half million barrels of additional production which can come onboard in the next 10 years if they start building those projects now and if the government is making it easy for them to do that.

On one hand, we are saying that we support pipelines, and tomorrow there will be Keystone XL, there will be Trans Mountain, there will be Energy East, whenever it comes, and we won't have enough oil to ship by capping this production, so it doesn't make sense. If you want to really, you know, be forward looking, then at least, even if you don't withdraw Bill 25, you should have accepted these common-sense amendments with respect to removing the cap on upgrading or removing the cap on cogen production or at least partial upgrading.

None of them were accepted by the government side, so, Madam Chair, today Canada is, you know, having the resource of 180 billion barrels, and we're only producing 4 million barrels per day as opposed to Saudi Arabia or Venezuela, who are producing far, far higher than what we produce. If you look at the resources they hold and look at the resources we hold and what we are producing, it's not in the same ratio. Here we're trying to strand the resource in the ground. Out of the 4 million barrels we produce here, about 2.3 million comes from oil sands, and there are another 2.5 million barrels' worth of projects already approved, cleared by regulators, but the investors are not putting in that money ever since the NDP came into power and started bringing these policies which create so much uncertainty and instability.

They say, you know, that they consult the stakeholders. They haven't consulted the main stakeholder, which is CAPP. Madam Chair, CAPP, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers: their vision is to "enhance Canada's prosperity by enabling responsible growth of Canada's upstream oil and natural gas industry." On behalf of the Canadian upstream oil and natural gas industry CAPP is "to advocate for and enable economic competitiveness and safe, environmentally and socially responsible performance." That's their vision, that's their mission, and here we have the government, who doesn't want to talk to them.

9:20

I'm asking anyone in this House on the other side if they made any effort to talk to CAPP or any other stakeholder. If you asked and if they said that these are not reasonable amendments, tell me that. I'll shut up. The Premier must have heard what I was saying. I'm happy to see her in the House. Hopefully, now some common sense prevails here.

Madam Chair, I'll talk a little bit more about upgrading. We talked about upgrading. When the Premier was in the opposition, she said that the PC governments were shipping the jobs because they were not upgrading the bitumen here. They were shipping the jobs, they were shipping the prosperity south of the border, but now this Premier, under her leadership this government want to cap the production. It doesn't make sense. That's why we brought in that amendment to exempt upgrading from the overall cap of 100 megatonnes.

Then we talked about cogen. Madam Chair, I was involved, as I said before, in building four cogen projects at Suncor. Each one of them was 85 megawatts. I talked about the advantages of building cogen because it was a deal, like, 2 for 1. Cogen combines the production of heat to produce steam and electricity so we can use that steam to pump into the reservoir in the oil patch and make the reservoir viscous so we can pump out bitumen. The government said no.

We tried to explain that cogen emissions should be exempted in their entirety from the 100-megatonne cap, and we talked about why we should exclude it: because excluding all cogeneration emissions from the oils sands limit in Bill 25 supports the continued adoption of cogeneration at in situ facilities. Why at in situ facilities? Because in situ facilities need electricity, need steam. In situ facilities, unlike mining – mining is more labour intensive, truck and shovel operations – are more energy intensive. They need more steam. If this government cares about reducing emissions, we should exempt cogen because cogen is serving a dual purpose.

As I said before, only 16 per cent of heat generated at oil sands cogen facilities is being used. Only 16 per cent. So that means that by adding more cogen units on-site, we don't have to build transmission infrastructure. That saves us that cost, that helps those SAGD producers to reduce their costs, and that gets them the steam they need. Steam plays a huge role, Madam Chair, in the SAGD operations. The cost of SAGD operations, the economics of SAGD operations is based on the steam-oil ratio. The best operators have the best steam-oil ratio – with less steam they can produce more oil – which is fewer greenhouse gas emissions. I tried to explain that, and I failed to convince my colleagues on the other side.

So if we build those cogen projects, that would bring in a lot of economic opportunities. It's an opportunity for investment, and it's an opportunity to create jobs. But government voted down the common-sense amendment, Madam Chair.

When I worked in private industry, sometimes logic helped people make those decisions. Nobody is expert in every field or every subject, but at least when somebody has some logic and valuable input, you know, that helps people with differing opinions come to a common understanding and move forward in the interest of that particular business, in the interest of the company, or in the interest of the stakeholders. Here we are representing Albertans, who are all stakeholders, and our job is to understand the bills in front of us and look at the overall economic impact of them, whether it's good in the long term or not, and do the right thing for the people of Alberta.

But this government chose not to act in the interest of Albertans, in my opinion. That's what people in Calgary are telling me, people downtown are telling me, and I'm sure if any of the government

members from Calgary go and talk to downtown businesses, they'll tell them exactly the same thing that they're telling me. As I said before, there are so many SAGD projects that are already approved, but they won't go into the business of expansion because of these government policies.

Cogen projects have so many – so many – salient features that would have helped this government tell the voters they did the right thing by excluding cogen from the overall cap. This government doesn't want coal. They don't want petroleum coke emissions because they have nasty particulates like nitrogen oxide or sulphur dioxide. You know, with cogen you won't have those kinds of emissions, and with cogen the efficiencies are 30 per cent better than existing combined-cycle generation. We talked about that, too, Madam Chair. Cogen has the lowest levelized capital cost power generation of a fossil fuel.

Madam Chair, we talked about all this in the last couple of weeks, but, you know, it's become increasingly clear to Albertans just how detached the members of this government are from the realities on the ground in our energy sector. There has been a pattern here. In this House in the last seven days we discussed the Fair Elections Financing Act, and the Member for Calgary-Elbow and the Member for Calgary-Hays talked about how the NDP is trying to rig the system, tilt the scales. The Member for Calgary-Elbow and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, actually, who most often side with the government, tried to reason with these government members that they can't do that. So there is a pattern here for the government. How they say things and how they do things are two totally different things.

Madam Chair, in democracy all we can do, being the Official Opposition or other opposition parties here, is to try and work with the government, to collaborate, and also to bring reason to the common-sense amendments. But just because government has a brutal majority, they just want to ignore common-sense, practical amendments from opposition. You know what? They can do that, but members from the third party said that when they tried to do that, people sent them to this side of the aisle. The Member for Calgary-Hays has said that a few times already: don't do that; otherwise, you'll end up sitting on this side of the aisle in two years. Now the option is yours.

Thank you.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

9:30

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 25? The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to please bring an amendment forward.

**The Acting Chair:** Just one minute for me to check the amendment. This will be referred to as amendment A8.

Please proceed, hon. member.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. This amendment is to move that Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended as follows. Section 2 . . .

**The Acting Chair:** Sorry, hon. member. I just want to make sure that you're moving this on behalf of the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yes.

**The Acting Chair:** Okay. Please continue.



**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much. On behalf of the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake I'd like to move that Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended as follows. Section 2(2) is amended by adding the following after clause (a): "(a.1) biomass emissions as determined in accordance with the regulations;" also, section 3 is amended by adding the following after clause (d): "(d.1) prescribing a method for determining biomass emissions excluded under section 2(2)(a.1)."

What we're looking for here – we're going to again assume that, potentially, there may be some oversight on behalf of the government. I'd like to just read from here. This is from the Alberta government bioenergy producer program outline from the Alberta climate change office.

The Bioenergy Producer Program (BPP) is intended to support bioenergy production capacity in Alberta in order to:

- reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the use of fossil fuel alternatives
- create value-added opportunities with economic benefits

This short-term program is meant to support bioenergy production while a bioenergy industry review is conducted to inform long-term policy options that would support a sustainable sector in Alberta.

That seems like a mandate to have biomass brought forward.

The question that we're asking and trying to amend, again, is to make sure that this is amended so that for renewables, as the government keeps talking about, the emissions are exempted. It has to be an oversight because this innovation is on the cusp of being economical, and at the very, very, very, very least, I mean, you could go buy this and subsidize it, or if you exempt the emissions, well, then the businesses may feel compelled to actually go forward with this. I've got a few very, very good programs and, actually, projects that I'd like to share with the government here at some point just to reiterate the absolute imperativeness of exempting emissions from biomass.

Let's talk about renewables for a minute. We've mentioned before that the only way the government at this point in time is going to be able to reduce its footprint is by actually keeping products in the ground, and that is by putting a cap on emissions so that only a certain amount can be produced within a certain frame – that's obvious – but, again, that's only here. Any of the market that we don't produce here will be produced elsewhere with the aspect of carbon leakage, which means that what we're not producing here will get produced somewhere else less environmentally, less ethically, and to the detriment of our own people, our province, and our prosperity here.

I would just like to go over a few things. I know that the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills has already said this, but let's go over a review of a few amendments that we've brought forward to help the government, some common-sense amendments to help this be a better bill. Let's start with what we just tried to amend, which was partial upgrading. To my great despair the members in this House who have spoken in favour of partial upgrading didn't understand that the amendment was to actually help partial upgrading come to fruition, to get out of the way so that companies can actually do these processes: partially upgrade, get the diluent out of the pipeline, increase capacity, get the dollars into this province, make sure that we're getting our full dollar value, and make sure that Alberta is prospering from this.

Then we can go backwards to fully upgraded prospects, for which we also asked that the cap be removed and that emissions be exempted. If you're capping upgrading at 10 megatonnes, that is keeping it out of the pipeline. So we've got one that is stopping us from doing it with less diluent, which actually costs us more. That makes no sense to me. Then we have another part of the bill that is

actually not allowing upgrading to occur here, which means that we are putting extra capacity into a pipeline full of value-added hot commodity stuff that is – we don't even have enough here, and we're going to have to pay to either get it back, or we don't get it back at all.

Back up a couple of days to cogen. This was explicit from stakeholder outreach. In situ is high intensity; it requires electricity and heat. Well, guess what? Cogen actually is able to do that. They produce on-site and are able to use the energy that is created in the system again and in the grid. How is that not a feasible thought process, and why would the government vote against that? I don't understand. If we just go to the whole reason that this bill came forward, the 100-megatonne cap, again it is the leave it in the ground and out of the pipeline movement. It makes absolutely no sense. We want to fill these pipelines to capacity with the best product that we can put in there and actually change the differential.

The Premier and the ministers themselves have in the past in this House in opposition talked at length about the amount of money we lose by not having value-added. When we're bringing forward amendments to actually contribute to that discussion, how is it that nobody in this House on the government side can see the value in what we're trying to bring forward? I mean, this is supposed to be collaboration, I thought. Well, our job is to actually come from a different perspective. This is based completely on stakeholder outreach.

If we're talking about reducing GHGs, we all know that the carbon tax is not going to do that. If we're actually talking about reducing GHGs, if you actually care about the environment, we should be producing here as much as possible, where we have the best regulations, where we have the best environmental records.

On top of that, given the right economic environment there is so much incredible innovation. We talk about economic diversification. The amount of available innovation and diversification is just – there's too much to talk about just standing up once here. You know, I've only had 19 months at this, and I couldn't even recap for you the amount of incredible – incredible – innovation that is in this province. I mean, some of the things that are happening in this field are just literally, like, miraculous. If we're looking at it from that point of view – and these are simple requests – we're encouraging industry to do that which the government is saying and to do better, not just keep it in the ground and out of the pipeline but actually produce better.

**9:40**

Again, let's talk about the whole aspect of biomass for a moment. Well, we have an entire boreal forest, a monster, monster amount of land, hectares and hectares and hectares of incredible trees. Now, trees die, and they rot, and we have a tremendous amount of methane coming from that, which is extremely, extremely detrimental to the environment, 25 per cent more. What biomass does on one level – and guess what happens to be in the boreal forest? That's where the oil sands are. If we allow and, especially, if we're able to exempt emissions from biomass, they're able to burn a product, a renewable resource, and create the heat and electricity that are needed for this high-intensity process of bringing these resources out of the ground.

If you think about it, it's on-site, and there is a CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. This is a neutrality thing. The carbon cycle is a self-contained circle, so you're using something that is readily available to create heat and electricity. Not only that, but just imagine: from a forestry perspective, there are opportunities for forestry also, in terms of warehousing or anything like that, to use sawdust, wood pellets. It's basically the garbage that can be used to produce heat and electricity in order to bring our resources out of the ground. I mean,

it's a fantastic idea. If the government opens the door and allows industry to be able to do this, especially if you exempt emissions, this gives a tremendous opportunity not only for the oil sands but also for forestry as well. I mean, this seems, I think, very common sense. Again, this comes from stakeholders. These are the technical experts in this field.

If you want to balance the environment and the economics, these are really, really sensible exemptions, right? If we are looking at the overall benefit, this is a renewable resource. I mean, this is what the government keeps talking about. Why would you not exempt it? It's a renewable resource. It's part of the climate leadership action plan, so it doesn't make any sense that biomass would not have this exemption on it. It falls under the auspices of exactly what the government has been asking for. On top of that, we're not quite there economically, but given this window, given the opportunity there are so many projects.

Like, there is this one project. It's called the algae project, and I'll table this. This is the neatest project. Just to give you an example of another version outside of forestry, what they can do is to take the CO<sub>2</sub>, the waste heat, and the waste water and put it in a photobioreactor with the algae in it. Basically, what happens is that they release oxygen into the air. Now, this is a ways off, but here is diversification, and this is innovation. This could be a possibility if a company was given the ability to function without having to worry about the emissions aspect of biomass, which actually is a renewable process.

This is just one idea. This is neatest thing ever. They harvest the algae, and the possibilities are that you can produce bio jet fuel, biodiesel, which could be put back into the oil sands for extraction. I mean, this could be usable fuel. Other products are nutraceuticals, livestock feed, fertilizer. I mean, that's fantastic, isn't it? Imagine. This isn't because of subsidies. These are opportunities. These are companies that are willing to put their own skin in the game to get these things brought online so that they're able to contribute viably to the industry and to the sector in a way that is being asked for but without subsidizing it. That is amazing.

I'd also like to quote from Canada's forest products industry. This is the Forest Products Association of Canada. One of the highlights in the key recommendations for government from this was to "continue to support carbon neutrality of biomass at the facility, since carbon is accounted from a full lifecycle because Canada's forests are sustainable." So here we are. We have the availability of a free resource, a local waste product like sawdust, Weyerhaeuser's wood pellets, wood chips. What is the word for that? There's an actual – it's called hog feed?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Hog fuel.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Hog fuel. That's what it's called. Thank you.

Here we are with these by-products, and we can burn them, create the heat and electricity necessary for resource extraction from a free resource, and it's a resource that's actually creating problems for us in our atmosphere. Methane is bad. You know, this is huge, that we could get these products right out of the forest, right where the oil sands are. It's not an issue of transportation. We're right there. Yet the government seeks to cap this availability, seeks to stop this door opening to this process by not exempting the emissions from biomass. It's completely counterintuitive. If you have the choice between the technology and staying under the cap, can we ask a common-sense question of where you'd like to be? Quite frankly, I think the payout on the other side will come in strides, and that's just one product.

If the government had listened to us on partial upgrading and upgrading and cogen and then, aside from that, that 100-megatonne cap on emissions – everything that we don't produce here is going to get produced somewhere else. This government takes responsibility for that. Yeah, it's not in our backyard. Congratulations. But it's in somebody else's. We still pay the price for that. Where are the talks with the other countries and other jurisdictions that are supposed to be in lockstep with Canada, right?

How are we supposed to – I mean, there are so many opportunities here. There are other companies that are able to actually upgrade underground. They're able to take the coking materials and use them underground to create heat and partially upgrade underground. This is something that has actually got government federal and provincial dollars in it and has yet to see the light of day. Is it because the government just doesn't know or it's not reading its own bill or the amendments, for that matter? I mean, we keep bringing lots of ideas. We are tasked with critiquing and finding solutions. I am offering a whole bunch of solutions here. A whole bunch of solutions.

There is a mass boreal forest here, a free resource that companies are actually showing interest in. Literally the only thing the government needs to do, at least at the beginning here, is to open the door and give these folks the opportunity to do the right thing, which they want to do. But the government is actually impeding the process. It makes absolutely no sense. I mean, it's got to be an oversight. It has to be. Like, help me out here. We should be encouraging oil sands operations to integrate biomass into their heat and electricity generation. If we have cogen and that, this is tremendous. We're utilizing the heat and energy that is coming from the oil sands.

**9:50**

The one thing that this government keeps saying is that we are Mordor, that we are dirty oil producers. There is a panel with anti-oil activists on it that is supposedly going to at some point bring us some sort of recommendations. Here are some opportunities to do exactly what the government is asking, but we can't seem to get a single amendment put forward. Why? The nonsense that we get back about why these aren't going through is coming from people who aren't reading the bills and aren't reading the amendments and are saying that we're the ones that are impeding the process. I'm sorry to remind you that we are not the government. We're not impeding anything.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. I just want to confirm that the documents you referred to will be tabled in the Routine tomorrow.

**Mrs. Aheer:** I will happily table them. Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you very much.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, I want to rise and speak in support of this amendment to include biomass as an exempted emission.

This government has at least said that they want to do something to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But, you know, actions do speak louder than words. We have a carbon tax, and the government has done nothing whatsoever to mitigate carbon leakage. We haven't heard anything from the government side at all as to how they're going to address the very real risk of carbon leakage. It will happen. Of course, if you look at the reasons why we have Australia and France and other jurisdictions looking at ditching their carbon taxes, it all comes down to carbon leakage. They have come to the

correct conclusion, that carbon taxation does nothing to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. But this government seems to think that they have some answers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Then, when we come to Bill 25 and we bring in some amendments to address upgrading and partial upgrading, both of which, by the way, have significant impact on emissions, the government votes that down. Now we have before us an amendment excluding biomass, and I want to just read in a couple of things regarding biomass and how biomass could be helping.

The truth of the matter is that it doesn't make any sense at all to include any kind of renewable emissions underneath the cap because the very nature of renewables' emissions is that they benefit us in that they are a reduced form of emissions over conventional methods. For example, residual waste streams – we're talking about organic waste streams – have very high transportation costs and are expensive to dispose of. After landfilling those, which is predominantly what's been going on, we do have some problems that occur such as leaching through the surrounding soil and, of course, the release of methane.

As has been noted in this House many, many times – I know this is known by anyone on the other side that has been paying attention – methane has approximately 25 times the impact that carbon dioxide does as a greenhouse gas. So any time we can do anything to mitigate methane, we should. This government has already talked about a methane reduction strategy. Well, biomass has the capacity to actually address methane in a big way. It is very well known that if you do not deal with the waste stream, if you simply take it to the landfill, the anaerobic processes that then come into play produce massive amounts of methane. That's just a reality. So it is very important to divert as much organic waste as you possibly can out of the landfill scenario. There are some really innovative companies right here in Alberta that have been dealing with this very issue for a number of years, and I'll get to some of them.

But I wanted to talk a little bit about some research that was done at the University of Calgary, where they were investigating how biomass such as straw and wood left over from agricultural and forestry operations could be used to clean up chemical contaminants in water from oil sands operations. This was quite an interesting research project because here we were taking agriculture and forestry residue and using that residue to actually positively enhance oil sands operations. It was like we were bringing our number one, our number two, and our number three industries in this province all together to solve a major problem; namely, toxic water. That's called synergy, when you can bring things together like that.

Now, it is a fact that when you bring all of these residuals together to help the oil and gas sector solve some of its environmental problems, there are all kinds of wonderful consequences to that. I'll just cover a few of them. For example, our current oil sands mining industry uses somewhere in the order of 100 million to 125 million cubic metres of water annually, and that ends up in tailings ponds. Now, the organic compounds in that processed water are dominated by a particular acid called naphthenic acid. This is both toxic and corrosive. But here microbes in the ponds take this naphthenic acid, and they convert that to methane gas. The microbes use it as a food, and then they convert it to methane gas. That is then emitted into the atmosphere, and as I just mentioned a minute ago, that methane gas has 25 times more potential in our atmosphere than carbon dioxide does.

But there's an interesting thing about biocarbon, also known as biochar. It is a fixed form of carbon. Microbes love some sort of fixed carbon, and here's what happens. When you use an activated biocarbon tailored for absorbing naphthenic acid in tailings pond

water, it actually prevents the formation and release of methane greenhouse gases. Very interesting, how activated biocarbon and these microbes react with one another and naphthenic acid. Then the spent biocarbon can be used either as a source of renewable energy to displace fossil fuels, or it can safely be landfilled as permanent carbon storage. In other words, you have fixed some carbon now, after it's done its job of absorbing the naphthenic acid, preventing the microbes from converting it to methane gas. Then, in addition, you can landfill the spent biocarbon.

Now, I was reading research sometime ago regarding the use of biochar as a soil enhancer. It has amazing properties if it's put into the soil. It improves crop production substantially, in the double digits. They've done tests in both Japan and Australia on biochar. It's an amazing product. Again, it's a fixed carbon. So here we are reducing greenhouse gas emissions in a couple of ways. It would give us a very low-cost greenhouse gas advantage from using a bioproduct, and it reduces the oil sands industry's environmental footprint.

As you can see, Mr. Chair, the reason why we're putting forward this kind of amendment to exempt biomass from the cap is because of the enormous potential that it presents in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Why would we ever want to cap biomass? It has the enormous capability of dealing with methane, 25 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub>, so it only makes sense to exempt something that has that powerful a potential for reducing the environmental footprint in the oil sands.

**10:00**

Given this finding, it seems to me that we need to be encouraging more and more biomass, especially more research and development in it. But when you have a cap on something, you're going to stifle innovation in that area. You're going to stifle investment in that area. Now, research and development are astronomically expensive. It takes years and years and years, especially on the scale of things like developing biochar, and hundreds of thousands of dollars. They need to know that there is going to be a market for what they do. Putting a cap on it totally takes away that incentive.

Now, I want to talk a little bit further about the benefits of biochar. I'm going to call it biochar. That's how I know it. That's how we talked about it at NAIT. I'm going to brag a little bit of a couple of students from NAIT. Two gentlemen, who graduated, I believe, from the very first group of students that went through NAIT's alternative energy program, by the names of Chris Olson and Bruce Saunders started a company to make biochar. They had been through the two-year program at NAIT, and they came out of there pumped. They were just so eager to start this little company, so they researched and researched and spent a gazillion dollars on building prototypes to create biochar, basically a system of controlled pyrolysis. In other words, it is a slow heating process with a very measured amount of oxygen being allowed in the process. You control everything, and the fuels that come off the organic matter actually are then used to heat the whole system. It's sort of creating its own gases and burning those gases. The whole system is so controlled, though, that the amount of emissions coming off this thing is very, very low.

They started a company called IRSI, and I'm very happy to report that they're working on a unit right now. They actually have this at the stage of commercialization, and they have put everything on the line. I'm so proud of those guys and the company that they have built. The unit itself is a great big beast, and it's called Ulysses. They have actually got a process from this innovation, an efficient and sustainable method for managing residual waste in an economical and environmentally friendly manner through that system.

Now, I just want to talk to you a little bit about the real numbers because they have had a unit running. Here are some real numbers for running something like this unit that makes biochar, called Ulysses. Just operating Ulysses for 300 days out of the year, 10 hours a day, five tonnes per hour – get this, Mr. Chair – landfill diversion in tonnes per year is 14,440; biochar carbon sequestration is 12,500 tonnes per year; the number of trees, carbon sequestered, grown for 10 years is 690,000. It's just amazing. As I said, that is just running 10 hours a day, five tonnes an hour, 300 days out of the year.

This system was invented, researched, developed, and commercialized right here in the province of Alberta by two graduates from NAIT. I am so proud of those guys. It's just amazing, the innovation that we have here. They are doing something that's genuinely impacting greenhouse gas emissions. I would like to see Ulysses units all over this province. Wherever there are residual wastes, we could be using this. We could be creating biochar. We could be treating our tailings ponds, reducing more greenhouse gas emissions in the form of eliminating methane production by the microbes in the ponds. On and on and on the benefits go. Yet this government comes along and caps emissions, directly impacting the ability of this particular development right here, this technology right here, invented, built right here, commercialized right in Alberta.

This is why this amendment is before the House, to take the limit off innovation. Do not limit innovation that reduces greenhouse gas emissions. If this government over here and if you members in the backbenches really care about greenhouse emissions, don't cap them. Don't cap innovation that directly impacts greenhouse gas emissions, especially greenhouse gas emissions related to methane because you're talking about 25 times the impact. It makes no sense whatsoever. I would hope that this government would see the kind of benefits that we're talking about. We're talking about a pyrolysis system that takes waste and turns it into a fixed carbon that is extremely useful in a lot of ways.

Now, just to brag of the guys a little bit more, because I'm just so proud of these guys – I mean, I've been involved in some research and development when I was a younger guy. I tell you, it's expensive, it can break you financially, and everybody around you is saying, you know, "You're not going to make it; this isn't looking real good," especially when you have some failures, and there they are, piling up. But these guys hung in there, and they kept going. Now they're at the point where they've got this process perfected. It's an amazing unit. I've seen it. It was built right here in Edmonton, down on the south side.

These units are somewhat portable. They can take and site them anywhere in the province, wherever there is waste. Now, I should point out that one of the Achilles heels of biomass is the cost of transporting the feedstock from wherever the feedstock is generated to wherever the unit is that's going to burn it. The transportation costs are really the one thing that has been problematic for biomass, specifically in the United States because that's where a lot of the original work was done. But here in our province we have such a massive boreal forest. We have such a huge forestry industry. We also have a huge agricultural industry. We have some significant feedstock, and that feedstock is available all over this province. It's not like, you know, places in the United States where they may have to truck it or places in Europe where they have to truck in biomass. It's not the case here.

We have just scads of this stuff all over, and we need to be making use of it. We need to be diverting all of it from decomposition because it is in the decomposition that we now are going to have methane gases released. Putting it into a unit like

Ulysses deals with that issue completely and creates a very valuable value-added product.

**10:10**

This government wants diversification. Well, here's a good bit of diversification right here, creating biochar plus the jobs that are created. Now, we have some statistics, even. There were some studies that were done on biomass, and as it turns out, using biomass to generate electricity is fairly labour intensive. Lots of jobs are created from it. It always has the potential for a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, though, it is a job creator because it's so labour intensive. Because we have the ability in this province to fabricate absolutely anything you can think of, those units can be built right here, putting jobs in manufacturing right here. Further research and development into advancing that technology right here in Alberta: this could be a huge diversification type of industry. Manufacturing those units here in this province . . . [Mr. MacIntyre's speaking time expired]

**The Acting Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A8? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was going to, I guess, read in part, anyways, this article here from Alberta Innovates. This is an important article. It's Biomass Innovation: Canada's Leading Cleantech Opportunity for Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Economic Prosperity. This is the executive summary. I could say that there are a lot of points here that really should be spelled out. It's important. It says:

Canada has a tremendous opportunity to build upon its inherent strengths and take a cleantech leadership position in the production of bioenergy and bioproducts produced from sustainable biomass.

It goes on to say:

This document, which identifies why biomass should be the cornerstone of Canada's greenhouse gas . . . reduction and economic growth policies, is intended to initiate a dialogue between policy makers . . .

That would be us.

. . . large [greenhouse gas] emitting sectors, and biomass feedstock and technology suppliers that will result in deployment of Canada's biomass resources to reduce [greenhouse gas] emissions. Reasons for pursuing biomass cleantech innovations . . .

These things are included, and this is what's important.

- Biomass can reduce [greenhouse gas] emissions from Canada's largest and fastest growing sources. Canada's unique [greenhouse gas] profile, dictated by a large landmass, northern climate, resource-based economy, and the 3rd lowest electricity [greenhouse gas] intensity in the G20, means deployment of electricity-based renewables, such as wind and solar, will not address the largest and fastest growing sources of emissions including oil and gas extraction and processing . . .

It will not address the largest and fastest growing sources.

. . . heavy duty transportation, and process/space heat. Deployment of biomass can.

So biomass can look after that.

- Biomass can be economically utilized in Canada's existing carbon-based infrastructure.

So it's something that can be worked into what we're doing.

Biomass is the only source of renewable carbon that can be used within the existing fossil-fuel infrastructure, including coal-fired power plants, oil sands operations, transportation fuel distribution systems, the vehicle fleet, natural gas pipelines, heavy industry (steel, cement, fertilizer) facilities, and residential and commercial building heating systems.

It can be included in all of those. It goes on to say:

This avoids stranding valuable assets and can enable market access for Canada's other natural resource products including oil, gas, chemicals . . . and minerals.

Mr. Chair:

- Biomass creates far more jobs than other renewables and builds upon human resource strengths.

Projects that utilize biomass can create 10 times . . .

That's 10 times.

. . . more operating jobs than wind and solar on an energy output basis.

That's important because, I mean, we're heading towards these things. This is a renewable, and this can mean 10 times more operating jobs.

In addition, production of bioenergy and biofuels economically complements the production of higher-value products such as food, lumber, pulp, biochemicals, and bioproducts that produce significantly more jobs than energy on a feedstock input basis.

And if we can create more jobs, especially since what Alberta needs right now is more jobs, this is very important.

Many of the skills developed by workers in the oil and gas, chemicals, pulp and paper, utility, and food processing sectors are in demand by bioenergy, biofuel, and biomechanical producers.

It goes on further to say:

- Biomass provides significant economic development opportunities for Indigenous peoples.

So it's not just one sector; this is more inclusive.

Indigenous peoples can play a major role in the development and management of bioenergy and bioproduct projects as providers of traditional knowledge of ecosystems, suppliers of biomass, operators of facilities, exporters of bioproducts, and consumers of bioenergy – particularly in remote and isolated communities.

That speaks volumes for what it can do to help indigenous peoples and create jobs.

- Biomass [also] provides immense cleantech innovation and technology development opportunities. [Development] of commercial biomass conversion technologies can create sustainable livelihoods today and form the basis for a biotechnology and cleantech innovation-based bioeconomy, replete with high-quality bioproducts research, technology development, and commercialization jobs. Management of Canada's extensive biomass resources also offers vast potential for linking high tech industry development with resource management via big data, GIS, drones, and remotely-operated/autonomous machinery and vehicles. These cleantech, high tech, and biotech innovations can become high-value exports for Canada.

So we can look at other exports because we have such a large mass. This is something that we would be missing out on. It's important for us to be able to take and use that and realize what we can make from that.

It also goes on to say:

- Canada has more biomass per capita than any other country on Earth.

Any other country on Earth. We've got it here per capita.

No other country has the combined forestry, agriculture, and urban biomass resources of Canada and others recognize the climate mitigation value of Canada's biomass resources by importing large volumes for use in heating, electricity generation, and transportation . . . ('wastes') alone could provide 20% of Canada's yearly energy supply.

That's just waste alone that can supply that much. Frankly, that's huge.

So, you know, biomass is a very important, I think, part of the overall plan for us to have sustainable energy in our province.

Canada has an opportunity to become the world leader in the use and development of clean and sustainable technologies and processes that utilize biomass . . .

What is biomass? Biomass is the only renewable source of carbon. It can be converted into transportation fuels, heat, electricity, chemicals, and materials.

10:20

It has that many different components to it. It can be used for everything, almost.

The most abundant forms of biomass . . .

as you can figure with our country,

. . . are wood, agricultural residues ([such as] straw and manure), and organic municipal waste. Canada has more biomass . . . than any other country on Earth.

So it's something that we need to make sure we're looking at. We don't want to lose that. "We don't want to limit innovation" is what the member next to me just said, so it's super important.

Meeting Canada's Greenhouse Gas and Economic Development Goals

Canada is facing significant economic and environmental headwinds, [particularly] due to the country's reliance on currently low-priced resource commodities and the greenhouse gas . . . emissions associated with recovery, extraction, processing, and utilization of those resources. Fortunately, Canada has an opportunity to become the world leader in the use and development of clean and sustainable technologies and processes that utilize biomass to reduce GHG emissions while improving the performance of the Canadian economy.

What could be wrong with that? We can improve our economy and utilize what we have.

The document goes on to describe

how biomass – forest, agriculture, and municipal waste resources – can be effectively used to meet [greenhouse gas] reduction targets and why it should be a central part of Canada's climate change mitigation plan. Canada . . .

and, I would argue, Alberta as well, specifically,

. . . has an unparalleled opportunity to utilize biomass to meet its climate leadership goals . . .

That's what you're after. You're trying to meet your climate leadership goals.

. . . while creating a large number of jobs . . .

something that this province desperately needs,

. . . and enabling market access for the country's other natural resources including oil, gas, chemicals, metals, and minerals.

It goes on to say:

Biomass is the bridge that links traditional resource and heavy industry sectors with cleantech and biotechnology. Not only are many of the skills developed by workers in the oil and gas, chemicals, pulp and paper, utility, and food processing sectors in demand by bioenergy, biofuel, and biochemical producers, but development of new technologies and processes that convert biomass into high-value bioproducts for domestic and foreign markets requires highly-qualified biotechnology and engineering personnel.

You need to get those personnel in there. We already have them. We already have so many people that are experts in the field of engineering for these.

In addition, Indigenous peoples can play a major role in the development and management of bioenergy and [bioprojects] as holders of traditional knowledge of ecosystems, suppliers of biomass, operators of facilities, exporters of bioproducts, and consumers of bioenergy.

Again, we want to make sure that there are jobs – there are so many jobs that are out there – and that they're available.

This goes on to say:

Many of the technologies that would allow [new] biomass to be utilized to reduce [greenhouse gas] emissions are commercially available and already deployed in Canadian or foreign jurisdictions. In many cases, existing infrastructure [would include] coal-fired plants, transportation fuel distribution systems, oil refineries and bitumen upgraders, cement and steel plants, natural gas pipelines, and building and heating systems.

All those are included, are already existing infrastructure that could be utilized. They can accommodate biomass products, thus avoiding stranding assets. We have the assets. We've already paid for them. They already exist. We stop and we avoid stranding those assets while attaining significant GHG reductions. [interjections]

**Mr. Panda:** There are some distractions.

**Mr. Taylor:** There are some distractions over there, yeah.

**The Acting Chair:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright has the floor.

**Mr. Taylor:** This is not typically the case with other renewables, avoiding stranding the assets – not typically the case with other renewables – however, development of a sustainable economy based on biomass, a bio-economy, does not need to be limited to existing technologies. It does not need to be limited to existing technologies. Deployment of commercial technologies to reduce GHG emissions and create operations and resource management jobs today could be leveraged to form the basis for a biotechnology, clean-tech, innovation-based economy replete with high-quality research, technology development, and commercialization jobs tomorrow. The paper, if you were to read all of it: it goes on, and it demonstrates that no other clean technology option can effectively address Canada's unique GHG profile while building upon the country's strength in resources, both human and physical.

Many other countries yearn – they would love to have what we have. They yearn to have the biomass resources of Canada while Canadian biomass is already exported in large volumes – for example, 1.6 million tonnes of wood pellets every year – to help other countries meet their GHG targets. Their domestic potential has been largely ignored. In order for Canada to be a leader in climate change mitigation, the country's economic structure necessitates that biomass form the cornerstone of plans that reduce GHG emissions while reshaping the Canadian economy for the better.

Mr. Chair, it's important that we recognize that Canada can be a leader in this, and we have the opportunity now to be able, with the bills that are being passed, to become that leader. That's why I'm supporting this amendment here, that the biomass emissions, as it says here, be excluded under the section from there. If we exclude it, we're only helping our province create new jobs and create a better place for Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. Similar to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, just ensure that you're tabling that.

As much as I'm enjoying throwback Thursday coming early, please ensure that the side conversations' volume is being kept down to a minimum as well.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it's just important to start off by noting that biomass emissions for electricity, agriculture, or

otherwise, outside of the use in the oil sands, are obviously not capped in any way. We would absolutely encourage the development of biomass, and we think that Alberta and Canada absolutely can be a leader in this area. However, in terms of biomass use in the oil sands, our government is very excited to see the ingenuity of a tremendous private sector, and as new technology is developed, we will absolutely, gladly explore any functional innovations that can take carbon out of the barrel. There's room within this bill to have these conversations about new technologies and experimental ideas as they come online.

**10:30**

I'll just point out again that this annual emissions limit was jointly recommended to government by leaders in industry and the environment. It's a limit that provides room for growth and development of oil sands resources that will be higher than any time in our past or present. The exemptions that we have included allow for expansion in cogeneration and upgrading, which are areas that industry has identified as being key areas that we need room for expansion in here in Alberta. In fact, the CEO of the Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance praised our cap and said, "With the technology being developed in Alberta we are confident Alberta can continue to grow its industry while reducing emissions."

We can obviously have conversations with stakeholders who are exploring biomass use in the oil sands going forward, and we're absolutely looking forward to doing so. However, it's an unnecessary exemption at this time, and I will not be supporting this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see some interesting movements here in the House, and the top government officials have chosen their seats for 2019, it looks like. Congratulations. I can't wait to see you, and I will be speaking from that side soon. They already got the message that Albertans have noted that this government is not listening to common-sense solutions offered by the Official Opposition, so they're already rehearsing their future roles in opposition. Good to see that.

Mr. Chair, some of my colleagues talked about the resource, where we can find it, and the abundance of it. I also talked about the resource we own here in Alberta, how fortunate we are to have that resource, unlike Saudi and Venezuela. For conventional oil you have to actually explore to find it. In Alberta we don't have to do that. We already know where it exists. It's about: how can we extract that resource, both economically and environmentally, in a responsible way? That's all we are talking about. We already know where it is.

Now this government wants to strand that resource. This Bill 25 is about capping that development and capping that production. Even if the cap is at 100 megatonnes for the time being, till the Premier, Deputy Premier, House leader move to this side and until we move to that side, assuming that they cap it at 100 megatonnes, still those operating plants in the oil sands need heat, energy. They need heat for all the operating processes in the hydrocarbon operations up north, and one way to reduce those emissions is to use biomass.

It's interesting that my colleague and the previous speaker quoted a document, Biomass Innovation, by Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions, and it's also prepared together with the Climate Change and Emissions Management Corporation. They coauthored this document. My colleague from Battle River-Wainwright quoted this document extensively, and I got curious, so now I'm just looking at

that. There are portions that I am reading out of that, and it is defining what is actually biomass, Mr. Chair.

Biomass is the only renewable source of carbon. It can be converted into transportation fuels, heat, electricity, chemicals, and materials. The most abundant forms of biomass are wood, agricultural residues (e.g., straw and manure), and organic municipal waste. Canada has more biomass per capita than any other country on the Earth.

So it's all about harvesting the resource we have in front of us, that we are blessed to have, that no other country has, which is the envy of many nations in the world.

I talked to you about the energy poverty and energy hunger I personally experienced when I lived and worked overseas. In this country we have all sorts of resources. Like my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake said, we are rich in these renewable and nonrenewable resources. When I talk about the nonrenewables, oil sands are the major resource we own. When we talk about renewables, we're talking about intermittent sources like wind and solar, which are renewables, but they need backup. So to substitute alternative energy-efficient resources in oil sands operations, biomass could be a good alternative.

The Member for Calgary-East said: oh, we like biomass; we'd like to develop that, but we want to cap it. Look at the inconsistencies there, again and again and again: "We like this, but we want to cap it. We want to create jobs . . .

**An Hon. Member:** But we'll stifle.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah.

"... but we'll stifle. We want pipelines, but we want to cap production, so we don't need to move the product to the pipeline." It's totally inconsistent, Mr. Chair. Like I said, you know, this government doesn't want to harvest oil sands resources we own to the full potential and for the full benefit of Albertans not only of this generation, of future generations, just because of ideological reasons. Again, we are blessed with these forest products.

When I was young, Mr. Chair, I saw people using wood waste products to cook food and to heat up their homes – I saw that – during the winter. They didn't have electricity, and they couldn't afford diesel generators to heat their homes or to power their homes. They were using forest waste products or municipal waste products. So it's a good opportunity here to allow oil sands to use biomass for their heating requirements. They need the heat for all the chemical operation processes to crack – first of all, in the SAGD process they need heat to heat the reservoir so they can pump out the bitumen.

I don't know why we want to not exempt biomass from this cap of 100 megatonnes. It's, again, a reasonable amendment. You want to harvest the natural resources you have, which are renewable. Okay. Other alternatives in these operations use natural gas. They burn it to make steam. But when I travelled in northern Alberta, I saw places like Al-Pac and all, who said that they have this capacity to produce 100 megatonnes of electricity with the feedstock of biomass, which we have in Alberta. Others don't have the same kinds of forest products we have.

**10:40**

We want to use that effectively, but I don't see why these government members are selectively saying that they like renewables but that they don't want oil sands operations to deploy those renewables to help reduce their emissions. I don't get that. We should actually be encouraging oil sands operations to integrate biomass into their heat and electricity generation because if we keep using natural gas in the oil sands, whether to recover bitumen or in the process of upgrading bitumen to synthetic crude oil, we'll be producing more greenhouse gas emissions. We should, rather,

exempt biomass from the emissions cap so we can incent the usage of greener resources by the oil sands operators.

**An Hon. Member:** A hundred per cent renewable.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. A hundred per cent renewable.

It's a slam dunk. It's low-hanging fruit. What's missing here is common sense. Why do you reject that? I don't get it. Yeah. It seems that common sense is short here, a scarce resource.

**An Hon. Member:** Common sense isn't so common.

**Mr. Panda:** Right.

Mr. Chair, biomass also provides a baseload of deployable power. The fact that wind and solar are just intermittent renewables – we have an opportunity here to provide constant, invariable electricity, which can be used for resource extraction or processing operations. It could be used for both purposes. If you see any of these operating plants up north, you'll see that there is a lot of equipment, whether it is heat exchangers, columns, reactors, or pressure vessels. They all need heat. Here is an opportunity to use biomass, which is a hundred per cent renewable, to help reduce their costs and also to have a renewable baseload power and to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. And it's not the Wildrose who is saying that. This is Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions, overseen by the minister of economic development. They are telling you. At least you should listen to them.

My colleague the previous speaker talked about some of the other features of this biomass. He talked about how biomass can reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Canada's largest and fastest growing sources. He talked about how biomass can be economically utilized in Canada, suggesting carbon-based infrastructure. He talked about how biomass can create far more jobs than other renewables and build upon human resource trends.

Now, speaking about creating jobs, Mr. Chair, you and I represent ridings in Calgary, and our city has lost so many jobs. Creating jobs should be the top priority of this government, and Alberta Innovates is suggesting that utilizing biomass as a resource here can create far more jobs. This creates jobs, and it provides significant economic development opportunities for indigenous people. This is interesting. Now, the indigenous minister is not here, but this government, which is supposed to be the champion of indigenous people – Alberta Innovates is telling us that this biomass can provide significant economic opportunities for indigenous people. If you care about indigenous people, then exempt biomass from the oil sands emissions cap of 100 megatonnes.

Biomass also provides immense clean-tech innovation and technology development opportunities. We heard so many times in this House, Mr. Chair, about clean tech, about innovation and all that. Here is an easy solution. All we have to do is act on that. This government seems to not be willing to act on that.

This document also went on to say: "Canada has more biomass per capita than any other country on Earth." Why can't we use it? No other country has as much biomass as Canada and Alberta, but we refuse to harvest that. Why?

Our children are going to ask us those questions, Mr. Chair. Your children, my children, my grandchildren are going to ask us: you had an opportunity to deploy more biomass in the oil sands operations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; why did you not act? When they ask, what's going to be the answer? Can the Member for Calgary-East speak about that? Or can the Member for Edmonton-McClung get up and talk about this and explain it to us?

This document also quotes:

Biomass that is degraded . . . (in the absence of oxygen), such as decomposition in a landfill, releases methane . . . a GHG 25 times more impactful than [carbon dioxide]. By using biomass as a fuel, these methane emissions can be avoided and fossil fuel consumption reduced. This is one way that bioenergy and biofuel use can reduce GHG emissions by greater than 100% from a fossil fuel baseline. The other is by combining bioenergy with carbon capture and storage . . . or utilization.

Probably, Mr. Chair, that's what the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake was talking about, how we can handle methane by using biomass.

Like I said before, Mr. Chair, intermittent renewables such as wind and solar cannot address baseload electricity GHG intensity challenges, as per this document.

Mr. Chair, we talked about cogen operations in SAGD facilities. I keep parroting that back every time because I feel very strongly about that. I was really disappointed that this government has rejected the amendment to exempt cogen operations in the oil sands from the cap of 100 megatonnes. It's very disappointing. So now we are saying: "Okay. You might have rejected that because it's a nonrenewable source. Here we have a renewable source, which is biomass. We don't understand why you don't exempt that." [interjection] I think the Member for Calgary-North West should be the next speaker to explain as to why. It seems there is some reason. I want to understand.

10:50

Mr. Chair, this document also highlights how biomass can be a great job creator. "Biomass creates by far the most long-term, operating jobs of any renewable energy: up to 5.5 per MW vs. 0.2-0.7 per MW for PV solar and on-shore wind."

I'll table this document tomorrow, Mr. Chair. There is lots of good information. This is not a Wildrose document. This is not from my shadow budget or anything. This is the document prepared by Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions, coauthored by the Climate Change and Emissions Management Corporation.

With all the good things and good intentions this government seems to have in theory, in practice they're very inconsistent, and they don't allow any of those innovations or any of those technologies they talk about. It's only for talk, not for adopting. They don't want to act on them. It doesn't make sense. Also, biomass that is degraded . . . [Mr. Panda's speaking time expired] Oops. Sorry.

**The Acting Chair:** Sorry to cut you off.

Are there any other members? The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I promise to be brief. I just wanted to applaud the members for Calgary-East and, actually, Edmonton-McClung for speaking on behalf of biomass and others. The only issue that I foresee here is that as much as the members are speaking on behalf of it, they're forgetting that without the exemptions that we're adding into this bill, the door just can't open for these things to go forward, much as we appreciate the fact that you're maybe starting to hear what we're saying. Unfortunately, one of the things that the Member for Calgary-East had mentioned is that within the bill, if I remember – and I'm sorry; I don't have the Blues – there is room to address these issues. I would like to know where that is.

Secondly, that the leaders of the industry were the ones that proposed this: well, the industry has spoken clearly to us that these exemptions would certainly help to move these things forward. That is actual stakeholder outreach.

That somehow, without adding in the exemptions that we're wanting to add in, that could promote growth: that seems counterintuitive when you are not exempting that which could open the door to actually growing these industries.

Finally, I think the most concerning aspect was that the member mentioned about going forward and talking about stakeholders in the regulatory process of this bill. Well, that should have been done previous to this bill. Stakeholder outreach needed to happen already. That doesn't happen in the regulations. I'm sure there are things within regulations that will need to be discussed, but – I'm sorry – that should have been done previous to this. That is a telltale sign that the government has not done its due diligence in stakeholder outreach.

The exemptions that are in this bill at the present do not go even close to far enough to incite companies to invest, and that's what we're actually talking about here, investing in the opportunities to actually create processes that will help to reduce GHG emissions. Diversification requires an economic environment conducive to compelling companies to invest in that development.

One thing I would like to say specifically is that biomass fuel is renewable. It is renewable. It has a sustainable, renewable availability to us. We should be encouraging its use in the oil sands, and it cannot be treated as equal to nonrenewable emissions.

Thank you so much.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A8?

Hon. members, if we could be cognizant about standing as well. It's hard for me to recognize members whenever we're opening it up for debate.

I'm just confirming if there are any other members wishing to speak to amendment A8.

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A8 as proposed by the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View on behalf of the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

[Motion on amendment A8 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** We are back on the main bill. The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Surprise, surprise. I know you're surprised.

I would like to bring forward an amendment, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Sorry, just bear with us, hon. member.

Carry on, hon. member. Sorry for the delay.

**Mrs. Aheer:** No, that's fine. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to move that Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended as follows. Section 2(2) is amended by adding the following after clause (a): "(a.1) sequestered emissions as determined in accordance with the regulations;" and section 3 is amended by adding the following after clause (d): "(d.1) prescribing a method for determining sequestered emissions excluded under section 2(2)(a.1)."

This amendment basically makes a new exemption for sequestered gases similar to our attempts with biomass and cogeneration.

This is a bit of an inquiry, too. Again, maybe this is just a mistake, but it doesn't seem to make any sense to count captured GHGs the same as GHGs that are emitted. In the definitions, at letter (g) in the actual bill, it says, "'Greenhouse gas emissions' means all greenhouse gases, expressed in tonnes on a CO<sub>2</sub>e basis, that are released from sources located at an oil sands site, including greenhouse gases sent off site." Just to clarify, I'm asking this because I need to know what that means because not all CO<sub>2</sub> that is



sent off site is just released, right? We want to know – like, it's not necessarily released. It could be sequestered for projects and for feedstock, for the algae project that I was talking about earlier, plastic, or petrochemicals.

Whether they're used in petrochemicals, enhanced oil recovery or other processes, stored underground, the government should be finding ways, I would think, to encourage activities and not discourage them. The inclusion of greenhouse gases sent off site under the cap in the definition requires some serious clarity from the government because it sounds like the emissions sent for sequestration count under the cap. I honestly believe with all my heart that you don't mean that. It doesn't make any sense.

Maybe the NDP meant to exempt sequestered GHGs in 2(2)(e), where the bill actually talks about emissions from enhanced recovery, but by enhanced recovery do you mean oil sands? I'm sure. If the government could please clarify, however, because otherwise this really doesn't make any sense. Like, if it was forgotten or was an oversight, could that please be mentioned?

11:00

We're very concerned about the gases that are separated for petrochemical processing being counted here. The government should actually take a look at a way to exclude those from the definition and make this an exemption as well. Unless you're wanting to discourage petrochemical diversification, it kind of goes against everything that we hear pretty much every day in this House.

I'd like to enter a few pieces of a document into the record, and I will make sure I have the required copies of this tomorrow: Recycling Carbon Dioxide to Make Plastics.

Why is this important?

By using CO<sub>2</sub> that would otherwise be emitted to the atmosphere, the process has the potential to cut greenhouse gas emissions while simultaneously reducing petroleum consumption and producing useful products for . . . consumers.

The PPC polymers, copolymerization – that's a fun word – of CO<sub>2</sub> and chemicals, can be tailored for applications with a broad range of material characteristics, everything from plastics to foam. It depends on the size of polymer chain. We want to make sure that if these are being sequestered and used in actually producing something, I would say that that would be very much aligned with what the government is trying to do with this act.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Secondly,

converting captured CO<sub>2</sub> into products such as chemicals, plastics, fuels, building materials, and other commodities is an important component

for any energy carbon capture and storage program. This could be especially valuable in reducing carbon emissions in areas where there's no geological storage. Just as the waste wood products can become energy in different processes such as biomass, waste emissions can become inputs for petrochemicals and plastics. I mean, as we say very often, one person's trash is another person's treasure. So let's use the opportunity within this bill to actually promote opportunities to turn waste products into something useful.

Again, this is asking for an exemption for sequestered gases, and I highly recommend that the government vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as A9.

Just in future, for the House, we need to make sure that we have an intervenor speaker between one speaker and the next speaker. I'm just flagging it for next time.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to take a couple minutes and thank my colleague for another amendment, another good idea. In the four hours or so that I've been sitting here and listening, I've heard and seen our government against biomass, cogeneration, partial upgrading, sequestration. Now this hundred-megatonne cap. When I see all of these good amendments and these ideas, what you're really against is innovation. What you're really against is opportunity for the experts, the people in the industry, the people that grow wealth, the people that create jobs, the people that give us the opportunity to have strong families and communities. You're really against giving them any opportunity to flourish. As we talked about when this bill first came to pass, your idea of managed growth is going to set us back.

It makes me think of a couple of things when it comes to being against innovation and the consequences of this government's actions and what it may have. I remember reading six months ago how scientists accidentally discovered a CO<sub>2</sub> process, turning it into ethanol, people in the field, people creating wealth and jobs, what this may lead to.

Then I look at how neighbouring jurisdictions have flourished. I'm still shocked about a breakfast I had two weeks ago, when a senior oil and gas person in Alberta told me that when they're buying oil fields now, they ensure that they sell off the Alberta portion before they go forward. My God. What does that cost us?

Then I'm seeing the other day that in somewhere called Stoughton, Saskatchewan, an Arizona company called Quantum has decided to put in a 40,000-barrel-a-day refinery, full slate. Is it because Saskatchewan has sequestration? Maybe; maybe not. I understand that sequestration is very expensive and maybe not that wholesome a process. Is it because they have biomass cogeneration and partial upgrading allowed? I have no idea. But what they don't have is a cap. What they don't have is a government that manages decline. What they don't have is a government that is all about holding back the talents, the resources of their people.

You know, once here tonight in the last four hours it would have been nice to see the Alberta government do a little bit of the same.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A9?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A9 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill. Are there any others wishing to speak to Bill 25?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 25 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

## Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act

**The Deputy Chair:** We are currently on amendment A7. Are there any comments or questions or amendments to be offered in regard to the amendment? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Would you kindly read the amendment for the House?

**The Deputy Chair:** Just one second.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Bring us all back to Bill 27, back to the future.

**The Deputy Chair:** Amendment A7 reads as follows:

[The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake] to move that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended by adding the following after section 5:

Landowner consultation

5.1 A proposal under section 5 shall not be approved by the Minister unless the Minister is satisfied that reasonable consultation in respect of the proposal has taken place with any affected municipalities and landowners.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I want to bring everyone in the House back to our last time together on this bill. We received a speech at that time from the Member for West Yellowhead, and the member stated in regard to my amendment the following:

This amendment demonstrates a remarkable failure to understand the full scheme of the regulatory and approvals process applicable to renewable energy projects and, also, how renewable energy projects are developed in co-operation with landowners who receive revenues from the projects.

Frankly, Madam Chair, this statement does demonstrate an excessive amount of unlearnedness to the realities of the Alberta Utilities Commission requirements to consult with landowners, not to mention a complete disregard for the policies that the Member for West Yellowhead ran on.

Point 1. The AUC requirement to consult can be fulfilled by simply holding a town hall without regard for who attends or who feels that their feedback was taken into consideration. The NDP should have learned this lesson during the Bill 6 rallies. Consultation requires more than a mere meeting where property owners are told how it's going to be. Consultation requires a back-and-forth conversation. It requires that these projects receive approval only after both parties are in agreement that it is mutually beneficial.

**11:10**

The reason why there has been so much anger in this province historically over the issue of property rights is because the existing processes never resulted in a win-win for both sides, and frankly both the Alberta Energy Regulator and the Alberta Utilities Commission have the ability to run roughshod over property owners, which is why we need this amendment.

The NDP and Wildrose shared, at least we did during the last election, a mutual dislike of the heavy-handed principles contained in the province's existing property rights legislation. The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky took great strides to review the hon. Government House Leader's, the former leader of the NDP's, position on property rights, and I think perhaps the government members might need a bit of a review. The hon. Government House Leader was quoted on property rights on October 27 of 2015 by saying:

Thank you very much for that question, hon. member. I want to assure the hon. member opposite that our party has always believed in due process, in proper notification, rights of appeal. All of the fundamental rights of property owners are things that we support, and we're going to make sure that in the fullness of time those continue to be protected.

There you go. During the last election we saw the NDP making promises to deal with the property rights issues, and here they are

in power well over a year and a half now, and we still don't see any action on that file. What happened to the hon. Government House Leader's stated strong position that in the fullness of time we're going to make sure that property rights are protected? Something happened here. Something fell by the wayside, it looks to me.

Furthermore, the hon. Government House Leader goes on to say:

Back when some of these bills were passed – Bill 19 and, I think, bills 36 and 50 if my memory serves well – the Wildrose didn't exist. It didn't have any seats in the Legislature, and it was the NDP opposition that led the fight for a balanced and fair approach to property.

But, again, the hon. Government House Leader has been sitting on the government side since May of 2015, and he has yet even once to put forward any kind of legislation or amendments to legislation to deal with this issue.

Then I happened to come across an interesting bit of paper. I believe it was a mailer sent out to all kinds of people in our province, and it's entitled *Your Land, Your Rights: The Alberta NDP's Stand against Tory Land Grabs*. It's an interesting document.

Alberta's NDP stands for . . .

- Due process with respect to rights of landowners . . .
- Power customers must not be required to pay for utility projects of for-profit companies . . .

The NDP opposition has submitted two private members' motions to the Legislature demanding action.

One of them says:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Government to introduce legislation to protect the rights of landowners, ensuring property rights cannot be arbitrarily violated or extinguished without consultation and fair compensation.

Well, hallelujah. You know, we're getting older by the day waiting for this. Haven't seen hide nor hair of it. But here we have an amendment that is before the House right now attempting to deal with this very thing, this very issue. We waited and waited and waited, and there was nothing coming from the government side, so here we have an amendment that actually deals with it.

The truth is that Alberta has not done enough to secure the property rights of Albertans to be implementing wide-sweeping changes to the electricity system. Here again we see the government going whole hog in a certain direction without taking care of some unfinished business with respect to property rights in this province, and it is little solace that can still be provided to protect Albertan property owners. You know, this amendment is attempting to right a wrong, a wrong that was recognized by members opposite when they were in opposition, but as we have seen repeatedly from this government, something happened to their memory.

Now, the Member for West Yellowhead went on to tell us something about what facilities brought to local economies, again missing the point entirely, stating that, and I quote, in the municipal district of Pincher Creek a wind farm brought \$12 million into the local economy. End quote. Well, I wonder what the farmers in the member's riding would say in response to the member's logic, that their property rights are secondary to financial gain. Wildrose is not opposed to privately funded wind farms. Investing \$12 million under agreeable property rights circumstances is an important part of growing Alberta's economy. What we are opposed to are draconian property rights laws that see Albertans left without solace after their properties are expropriated under this province's existing laws, laws that the NDP recognized needed to be changed, needed substantial overhaul, and to this day they've done nothing whatsoever to right that wrong.

**An Hon. Member:** Nothing?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Nothing. Lip service during an election doesn't cut it in this province. The people of Alberta are expecting this government to live up to their campaign promises to deal with the long-standing issue of property rights.

In the 2015 Property Rights Advocate report expropriation was a top-five concern. In the top five, Madam Chair. Eleven per cent of the 127 inquiries received by the Property Rights Advocate office were specifically about expropriation and adverse possession.

Here are a few more pieces of scathing information from the Property Rights Advocate office's 2015 annual report.

Compensation for those affected may not always be appropriate, likely due to gaps, overlap and fragmentation in the way laws and policies are written or interpreted. Laws may have been written with the intent of fairness but when the components are not integrated into a complete system there are challenges that prevent equity and fairness in the outcomes.

In other words, the equity and fairness is by no means guaranteed just by the wording of the specific regulation. It's how it is actually delivered that counts.

Certain activities or legislation are viewed as an invasion of property rights and Albertans want clarification on the rules when it comes to their rights . . . Ownership implies that an asset "belongs" to the owner and that it cannot be taken away unless, or until, the owner elects to release it.

That is what ownership means.

When government affects property rights in some way, owners are paid for their losses in some circumstances but in other situations are not compensated. Albertans want to know the circumstances in which the erosion of a property right will trigger compensation. Albertans want to know exactly what an Albertan owns when he or she owns a property or a property right.

The report goes on to say:

Albertans are also connecting with [the office of the Property Rights Advocate] to ask for justice – justice for intrusions on their property rights in the form of appropriate compensation and adequate appeal mechanisms. An appeal mechanism, to be adequate, must provide timely and easily accessible (in terms of process and cost), hearings by an impartial tribunal with broad jurisdiction to consider all relevant influences. Absent any of those factors, an owner can find themselves not only stripped of their property rights but also feel emotionally and financially subjected to an ineffective, time-consuming and overly-complex process.

**11:20**

Madam Chair, these are serious, serious statements being made by the advocate's office, and they are referring to what still exists to this day, terrible lacks in our laws, laws that are draconian, heavy handed, that put far too much power in the government to expropriate without appropriate consultation and compensation. So while the member might believe that policies

are already in place to ensure that renewable energy projects are also subject to public scrutiny under the [AUC's] strict regulatory processes and reviews of new generation projects. It does that. The AUC's processes include reviews with local communities, in consultation,

this is fundamentally not a true statement. It is, frankly, embarrassing to hear a member of this House make such grandiose and ill-informed statements about the state of property rights in the province of Alberta, property rights that the hon. member and his party agreed to do something about but, to this moment, have done nothing.

The member went on to say in his speech last week: "This can include full hearing processes, where the AUC deems it necessary." Oh, really? "Where the AUC deems it necessary": that is an actual quote from the member. The member believes Albertan property

owners should find some solace in the fact that the AUC has the option of listening to their municipalities or not. Shameful. The Member for West Yellowhead went on to say: "The AUC can put conditions on the project to require certain mitigations of various concerns. So there is consultation." Wow. The member actually said that the AUC can put in place conditions. Nothing whatsoever has been learned by the members of this government during the Bill 6 consultations or lack of consultations. You still do not understand how consultation works. You cannot call it consultation if it's only a win-lose situation. Genuine consultation has to end up in a win-win or it's not consultation; it is simply conformity, forced conformity. That is not democracy.

We get e-mails and letters and phone calls from concerned constituents across this province, constituents that attend these AUC so-called consultations only to find out that they do not have a choice about the construction of wind and solar farms in their area. Albertans are very concerned about the impacts on wildlife. Albertans are concerned about the impacts on human health in terms of the constant low-level vibration and sound waves, the noise, the dizziness, the sleep deprivation, the constant flicker effect of sunlight passing through moving blades. Albertans are concerned about stories coming out of Ontario about wind power inflicting injury upon their livestock. They're concerned about decreased property values, soiled water systems because of how far down the foundation supports for it have to go. On and on and on, these are concerns. If this government was really consulting Albertans, they have to answer all of these questions satisfactorily to Albertans, and one of the most fundamental roles of government is the protection and preservation of private property.

We should have repealed bills 19, 24, and 36 by now, just as promised by this government during their election, and we should be passing the Alberta property rights preservation act before trying to pass Bill 27. We should be passing legislation and amendments entrenching property rights, protection in law, and reviewing all existing laws dealing with property rights to ensure that when needed public projects are undertaken, negative impacts on affected property owners are minimized and fully compensated for.

In short, Madam Chair, we have a situation here where we've got a bill before this House that is going to potentially add fuel to the fire regarding property rights in this province that have yet to be dealt with appropriately. I would encourage this government to start doing something positive and approve this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? We will go with the Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Yes. Well, here we go. I'm going to rise and oppose the amendment, like I did last week. [interjections] No kidding. Yes. It's really interesting how the members opposite fail to understand the extent of regulations and the approval process applicable for renewable energy projects. It's amazing how you misunderstand things. It's just unreal.

You know, the involvement of municipalities. It's true that municipalities continue to have their own opportunities for scrutiny and participation in the hearing process. Isn't that good? They also continue to set and apply their own setback rules governing distances between equipment, property lines, and dwellings.

**An Hon. Member:** Imagine that.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Imagine that. Good one.

Okay. Let's look at the rural landowner concerns a little bit further. The other side also doesn't understand how renewable

energy companies work with landowners to develop projects. We have been hearing some members opposite raising concerns about expropriating property for renewable energy projects or them forcing themselves on the landowners. How silly is this? This is silly. We've heard this in this House, and we have no doubt that we've seen them write it in newspapers and that kind of thing as well, trying to support their argument. What does this show? A clear misunderstanding of the bill, perhaps. It also suggests, maybe, a misunderstanding of the development – a fellow member left – and regulatory process involved in building new renewable energy projects.

Well, let's be clear. In our legislated renewables target there is no mechanism that allows renewable companies to force development on land where the owner doesn't want them. This bill does not require that, nor does it exist in law. Why do they keep saying these things? If a landowner chooses to participate, however, in a renewable project on their land, then they would enter a private agreement with the company and be compensated over the life of the project.

**An Hon. Member:** It sounds good.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Very good.

Interesting. This is always a choice that the landowner has. Nobody is forcing it on anybody. It's a choice, right? This is always a choice, and it's important to understand that. This will continue to be the case. I don't think I want to hear any more fearmongering from over there.

You know, we talk about listening to the landowners and municipalities that have hosted wind farms. The mayor, Kym Nichols, from the village of Carmangay, near Blackspring Ridge, the largest wind project in western Canada, states:

I am honored to have been involved in such a monumental project. To see all of the wind turbines across our beautiful countryside is truly remarkable. I think the Blackspring Ridge Wind Farm shows the world the huge opportunities for untapped renewable energy in southern Alberta. The community of Carmangay is proud to be part of this project, helping to reduce our carbon footprint and offering renewable energy for generations to come.

There are other mayors that have said things.

**11:30**

Then we get to a landowner, right? Gary Sproule in Wheatland county, near Suncor's Wintering Hills wind project, said:

It's ... nice to have an idea of a pretty good [chunk] of income that you are going to have available in the next 20-25 years. You can make some plans and have a little money set aside. You're not always sure of a lot of other things when you farm, so this is kind of a nice, reliable number that you [can] work with.

What's wrong with that?

Dixon Hammond, another farmer, said:

It was ... added income for us, and it actually made it so that we could purchase our home quarter from my dad.

Keeping the family farm: what's wrong with that? Like he says:

It's important for me to have land for my family to live on and understand agriculture and the country way of life.

That's fantastic, right?

David and Flora DeCock, another farming family, said:

The income [wind turbines] provided helped us as cattle producers to get through the BSE crisis.

Well, let's look at the future. Imagine how many stories like this will come about with our plan to support investment in 5,000 new megawatts of renewable energy for Alberta. Imagine that.

And what does the other side say about this? When the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake says that people are going to flock to our

renewable energy program "like hogs to the trough," does he mean these municipalities that are gaining huge revenues from wind farms for their community services? Does he mean that these landowners want to keep their family farms? Revenue from renewable energy makes this possible because the people are partners in renewable energy. Renewable energy doesn't get forced on their land. They work with developers to share these benefits.

We oppose this amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak on amendment A7 to Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, "A proposal under section 5 shall not be approved by the Minister unless the Minister is satisfied that reasonable consultation in respect of the proposal has taken place with ... affected municipalities and landowners," essentially protecting and recognizing the natural rights of property owners throughout this province.

I think what the Member for West Yellowhead fails to recognize is that the legislation that we currently have in this province is not fully compensating and recognizing the rights of property owners when governments come forward to appropriate, expropriate land in the best interests of the common good and possibly on the backs of a few individuals without proper consultation and without proper compensation and without due course of being able to appeal to the courts. This is where the concern arises, and until this government finds a way to improve legislation with regard to property rights in this province, we will continue to have a concern that individuals will be taken advantage of by a government that decides to move in on their land.

It's easy for a government in Edmonton to insist on all these renewables. One thing that is for sure is that renewables do have a significant impact on the rural communities. Vast areas of land are necessary for solar and wind energy installations, and that's just a reality. But what's trying to be identified here by the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake is that in that reality we need to be sure to protect the property rights of those individuals.

For example, wind energy has both positive and negative impacts on our environment. We see some potential positive impacts where we have reduced environmental pollution and also less water consumption possibly, benefits to the society at large. However, the negative impacts of these types of installations – the noise pollution, the visual interference, the negative impact on wildlife, those types of impacts – are felt by the local community where those installations occur. So I think what we have to recognize here is that we need to improve property rights legislation to be protecting the natural right of individuals to be in pursuit of property.

One of the reasons I still have concerns whether or not this government truly is on the side of improving property rights in this province is an experience I had during estimates this spring with the Minister of Transportation and questioning the compensation where the Springbank dam is being proposed to the landowners there and how the government was going to be able to settle those agreements. The minister made a comment quite concerning to me. He said, "It's a negotiating process which I think would be assisted if we refrain from discussing projected prices. We want to get the lowest possible price." I responded by saying, "The landowners deserve the best price possible because we are interfering with their ability." I do believe that it's necessary to have a win-win situation in these types of discussions and these types of negotiations. The minister said at that time that he sees his responsibility as getting the best value for the taxpayer with no concern for the landowner, apparently.

Property rights are at the core of our way of life. Albertans depend on having and being able to exercise these crucial rights. They rightly and understandably wish to see their rights preserved and respected. Albertans want certainty with respect to their property rights, and good governments will protect those property rights. Bad governments trample on property rights for power.

I do believe that this is a very reasonable amendment that has been brought forward, and it will improve the protection of property rights for the people that are impacted at the local community level, many of them in the rural communities, so I will encourage the Members of the Legislative Assembly to support this amendment and improve Bill 27 with this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

11:40

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will support the amendment because I think the reality here is that this is about property rights, and the only thing this amendment seeks to introduce into the bill is just a small statement that there should be some reasonable consultation with respect to the municipalities and the landowners. Any government that will not allow that to be in print and then who tries to tell us, "Oh, it'll all happen, and it'll all work out" might be likened to a salesperson who says, "Oh, just believe me" but doesn't want it in the contract. We all know that if it's not written in the contract, it actually doesn't exist.

It's easy for government and big companies to sit in Edmonton and think about what they want to do and all the things that they want to build and how this is going to save the world and how all these things are going to happen, but the reality is that it's the smaller rural communities, the neighbourhood family farms that actually have to live with this. In some cases it works out well, but truthfully, it doesn't always work out well.

To say that this bill in itself includes property rights as the bill would affect individuals is simply not correct. The reality is that there are a number of existing bills that intertwine with this one as this will come into force and they, in fact, do already infringe on property rights. The previous government put those in place, and I do have to give some credit to some of the members of the previous government who have acknowledged that they forgot about the people. They became too aristocratic and too autocratic to remember the people. They put into place laws that have in fact eroded property rights in our province, as the members opposite a few years ago clearly understood and were willing to espouse in their own publications to the province. But now all of a sudden they changed the tune. They've forgotten all that. They've lost all that.

The truth is that Bill 2, the Responsible Energy Development Act, takes away the important right of notification and appeal. If landowners have no right of appeal, then their rights are being trampled on.

Bill 24, the carbon capture and storage act, is another one that ignores common law principles. The government just autocratically and universally declared that all the pore spaces underneath belonged to government, and the landowner has no say in the issue. They can't even question it.

Bill 36, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, which is still a huge concern, grants to cabinet the autocratic powers to decide what will happen. The landowners have no right of appeal, no right of a response. This is overstepping of government for the people.

This is not democratic rights when these kinds of bills are in force currently in Alberta, and they will impact how this bill, the

Renewable Electricity Act, is in fact applied. You know, the rights of democracy and property together were fought for in the 1700s and 1800s. It was the individual against the king and the nobility. As long as individuals could be driven from their property or have their rights of use and benefits denied by the state, then they had no democratic rights. That's what's happening with Bill 2, Bill 24, and Bill 36, that I've already mentioned. It will intertwine with this bill as long as there is no statement of landowner rights acknowledged in it at all.

We are in a very real way, over bill after bill after bill in the last years in this province, eroding the rights of individuals. We are regressing to the excessive power of the king and the state when we entrench the power of either cabinet or the bureaucracy, which is the executive and the policing enforcement hand of government. Therefore, it makes life easy for government and hard for the people. Big government is never democracy. It always is autocratic and tyrannical. When government takes more power than the people give it, then they have trampled the rights of the people. That's the bottom line. When government takes more power than the people have given it, then they have trampled the rights of the people.

I will be supporting this amendment because it is the only amendment in the bill that even gives a nod to property rights. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to remind the hon. Member for West Yellowhead that a considerable number of the statements that I made came from the Property Rights Advocate office's 2015 annual report and that I didn't make them up. So the concerns that the other side were mocking and laughing about are actual concerns from Albertans, brought to the attention of the Property Rights Advocate office, the very office created to advocate on behalf of Albertans who feel trampled by the system. The property rights legislation that we currently have in place is inadequate to protect Albertans, and the Property Rights Advocate was reporting on the feelings of our people. The mocking that was coming from the other side wasn't against me; it was against all of those people that made submissions to the Property Rights Advocate, raising their concerns about how this Alberta government tramples on them. That's who you were mocking, and you should be ashamed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A7 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Hi, Madam Chair. I actually have an amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as A8. As soon as I get the original, you can go ahead.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended in section 12 as follows: (a) by renumbering it as section 12(1); (b) by adding the following after subsection (1):

- (2) Payments from the General Revenue Fund under subsection (1) shall not exceed 10% of the total revenue of the Climate Change and Emissions Management Fund under the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act for that fiscal year.

Again, thank you, Madam Chair. It's almost midnight, and it is a pleasure to represent the constituents of Calgary-South East and Albertans as a whole and be a member in this House. Today I propose an amendment to Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act. I'd like to first say that the aim of this bill is not entirely without merit. There is certainly room in Alberta for the development of more renewable electricity options, and certainly that's what I believe. I also believe that we are blessed and privileged in Alberta with the abundance of wind and solar in this province, as anyone who has seen that that has lived in Alberta can certainly attest to.

The idea behind this bill is certainly one that I can understand, but I don't think that we're fulfilling our duty as legislators, with the duty to protect the interest of Albertans, if we allow this bill to pass in its present form because at this point there are still some rather glaring risks to the taxpayer contained in this bill. Leaving aside the fact that there are too many unknown aspects of this legislation, too much that will be decided in regulation and not without supervision of this House, there are some other issues as well.

The issue that I'd like to discuss today and the issue that my amendment is designed to address is essentially the issue of liability. That's to say: who is going to be responsible if things don't turn out as this government planned?

We know that money being handed out to renewable electricity companies is supposed to be coming out of the government's climate change fund. So all the money that they are taking from Albertans through their carbon tax, for example, is supposed to be able to support this program, but the government is hedging their bets there. They're making an allowance in this bill that if there isn't enough taxpayer money, they can start dipping into general revenue to make up the difference, and I think we can hazard a pretty good guess why the government thinks this is necessary, because they have all these programs whose funding is supposed to come from the carbon tax. I think it's pretty clear that all of these promises they are making, all the money they are handing out is going to exceed the money in their climate change fund.

They certainly don't want to admit this to Albertans, but they are going to have to pay for a lot of these programs straight out of general revenue. That isn't necessarily a bad thing, and there are some legitimate reasons why this makes sense to have a safety valve like that built into the financing of certain programs. But the problem is that once you're tapped into the general revenue, there is almost no limit on how much the taxpayer can be on the hook for.

11:50

We've seen this in other jurisdictions under other renewable and green energy products that can be successful, but we've also seen some of these projects become colossal failures. That is why I believe we need to guard against this. The amendment I am bringing forward will put a limit on how much money can be drawn from the general revenue on these programs. If we cap the amount that can be drawn from general revenue, we can protect the taxpayer from assuming this huge liability if things go wrong. So we're proposing that the payments from the general revenue shall not exceed a 10th of the total revenue of the climate change and emissions management fund. This will give the government some flexibility in dealing with shortfalls, but it will also protect the taxpayer from having to shoulder cost overruns.

I hope this amendment will find support from this House. Thanks for your time.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you very much, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A8? Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A8 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the original bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 27? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We wish to propose another amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as A9. If you could just wait until I have the original copy and then you can go ahead.

Please go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you. Another one of the issues that we have facing us with this particular act is the idea that at some point in time these projects, be they wind turbine projects, be they photovoltaic projects, all have a life to them and an end of life, and one of the issues that is not to be found anywhere in this bill is: what is going to happen at the end of life of these projects? For example, if you're talking about utility-scale solar projects that are covering very large amounts of land, hundreds, possibly thousands of acres, at some point in time those modules are going to start to deteriorate, and the rate of deterioration on solar modules is not a straight line. It's a curve, and it drops off very quickly towards the end of life.

Most of these modules have a life anywhere from 20 years to 30 years long, and then what? This bill does not deal with the "then what?" In addition, if we talk about wind turbines, we're already seeing some of the wind turbines in our province coming to an end of life. Cowley Ridge, for example, is about to be decommissioned. Because of the nature of the new wind turbines, the old concrete bases and footings for the old units are completely insufficient to be reutilized for new towers. So that means we have this enormous cleanup that is going to have to take place.

In the United States, where they have a large number of failed wind turbine projects, failed for various reasons, we now have situations where they are literally disintegrating: broken towers, broken derricks that some of them are on, broken blades, and collapsing towers. Some of these projects, of course, belonged to companies that are now bankrupt. They're defunct. They're not there anymore, and everybody's pointing fingers at who's going to be responsible for cleaning the mess up.

There's nothing in this bill that deals with the end of life of these things, and they all have an end of life.

So if you look at this amendment – it's very clear – to move that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended by adding the following section after section 7:

#### Reclamation

7.1 All renewable electricity support agreements entered into under section 7(4) shall include the requirement for reclamation of any affected lands including the following:

- (a) the removal of equipment or buildings or other structures;
- (b) the decontamination of buildings or other structures, or land or water;
- (c) stabilization, contouring, maintenance, conditioning or reconstruction of the surface of the land.

Really, Madam Chair, this isn't a whole lot different from what we require of our oil and gas developers now. Reclamation is a very

important thing. When we have orphaned wells, for example, we have an orphan well fund. It just makes perfect sense. And there are any number of ways that reclamation could be handled, either through a fund, through bonding, through all sorts of mechanisms. But in Bill 27 there was nothing whatsoever about reclamation, and I would recommend to all members in this House that reclamation is going to be something extremely important, given the thousands and thousands of acres that are going to be taken up with 5,000 megawatts of renewable power generation.

It is incumbent upon this government to make very sure that there is something solid in place that the people of Alberta can look to and say, "All right; they've got the end of life covered off here," just like we do for oil and gas. There's no reason not to have this. It's a friendly amendment. I believe it's a necessary amendment to this to bill, and it was simply an oversight or something, not thinking about the end of life. I know that a lot of people look at the beginning of these projects and don't focus on: well, what happens 25 years from now or 30 years from now when we've got to clean this thing up or they've got to be replaced or something?

So I would hope that the hon. members in this House would consider the merit of this amendment A9 and that all members in this House will support it. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A9?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A9 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the original bill, Bill 27. Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 27?

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to take a second and talk again about Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act. On behalf of my hon. colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake I have an amendment, and I have the requisite copies here.

**The Deputy Chair:** This will be referred to as amendment A10. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Barnes:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. It is moved that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended in section 7 by adding the following after subsection (2):

(2.1) The Minister shall make any advice given by the ISO under subsection (2) publicly available within 18 months of the advice being received by the Minister.

12:00

Madam Chair, we talk lots in this House about openness and transparency, and from time to time we remind each other that, you know, there is only one taxpayer and it's Albertans that matter and count. It is their province. When I look at the tremendous amount of changes being made to our electric system and the consequences and the unintended consequences that all these may have – from time to time there's been a lot of criticism about the government going around our experts, going around a lot of advice, not paying heed to other jurisdictions where costs have tripled, quadrupled, where citizens on more fixed incomes can't make ends meet and have to make the choices between eating or heating, as some journalists describe it, you know, the fact that some of these technologies aren't nearly as efficient as what is being replaced. Instances where the sun doesn't always shine and the wind doesn't always blow lead to the necessity of a very, very expensive redundancy system, a very, very expensive backup, and, jeez, maybe having to pay somebody for capacity, maybe having to pay

somebody for not producing and, heaven forbid, what that may lead to, and, you know, still adding the tremendous transmission and distribution costs on top of that for our citizens.

Again, the ones that concern me are the hardships that people on fixed incomes and families starting out may have. I know we don't always like to compare to Ontario because we're told that it's not going to be exactly the same, but when I read the other day that there were something like 1,400 Ontario families that had lived over five months off the grid because they couldn't afford their electricity bills – I've been to Ontario a few times, and maybe it's not quite as cold in Ontario as it is in Alberta, but it's not Arizona or California either, Madam Chair. This is of great, great concern to me, great, great concern as to, you know, the fixed incomes, the families starting out, the areas of our province where there's less opportunity, never mind what it's going to do to our industry, where Alberta has the highest percentage of industrial use, I believe, in all of North America, where in our natural resources, in Albertans' talents, and in our existing electricity market companies were able to take advantage of that to provide jobs, to build wealth.

Here's a little system and a great amendment by my hon. colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake to put in a little bit of transparency. I mean, I sat in here for the first three years, where we saw a 44-year-old government that seemed like every day they were forgetting to tell Albertans where they were going and where they were headed. I don't think this government wants to go down that path. I don't think that this government wants to hide from 4.3 million Albertans what experts are saying, what the consequences of their actions are. Hey, this is your opportunity to be open and transparent and show Albertans that this is the right thing to do.

People on this side of the House, many, many in social media and mainstream media have talked at great lengths about how this is going to be the wrong thing to do, how it's not going to be efficient, how it's going to cost great lengths and cost our economy jobs and opportunity. So my hon. colleague is just asking that the Energy minister make any advice given by ISO, our experts, publicly available within 18 months. The information will help the minister act with the greatest of objectivity in the knowledge that the information will be public soon.

Yeah. You know, I applauded the government on their sunshine list. Nothing like the light of sunshine to make people think about how they're spending hard-earned taxpayer dollars. [interjection] I think I applauded that, hon. colleague. I think it was a good step. For taxpayers' money openness and transparency is where it's at, so why not the same thing with our electric system? This is all we're asking for.

I understand that under the new capacity system there is still going to be a small, small element of bidding into the system, and as complex as our electrical system is with generation separated from transmission, I absolutely believe that the one component that the last government did get right was the generation part of it, the fact that many, many companies bid in at zero, especially on renewables, to ensure that they were paid something. Who benefited from that? The 4.3 million Albertans, the very people that we're here to represent, the very, very people that we're here to ensure there is competition and choice and a strong economy.

This new capacity payment system, paying for people to be ready to produce, I understand, although I don't think we've seen the regulations yet, will have a slight element of bidding instead of a full-blown robust portion, and that's a huge step backwards. But at least have ISO within 18 months show us what was happening.

You know, Albertans are tired. Albertans are tired of governments hiding critical accountability under the advice to the minister provision. They're tired of not being fully involved in their system. It's what I spoke of earlier when I talked about innovation.

If this information is out there, it will give our companies, renewable and more conventional electric generation companies, the opportunity to develop some innovation to make it more energy efficient, make it so perhaps carbon is used less and renewables happen more, which is obviously the government's goal. Of course, we're all concerned about the environment. So maybe this advice could lead to some tremendous innovation for Albertans.

Hon. colleagues, again tonight I've seen every single amendment turned down and generally not listened to, so I would just ask that you strongly consider this one just on the basis of openness and transparency. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment A10?

Seeing none, I will call the question. [interjection]

**An Hon. Member:** She wants to speak.

**Ms Luff:** Or you can call the question.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you. I'll just speak very briefly. I just wanted to note that with this bill, Bill 27, we do have a very transparent process inherent in the bill. All of the programs that are present and that will be put out will be subject to a competitive process, and the competition documents will all be published. So all that information will be readily available to members of the public to see what agreements we have entered into and under what conditions.

Also, the MSA will review the program administration and auction administration, and all of the renewable electricity support agreements will be made public. One of the things that I was really impressed with with this bill when I was reading it was its amount of inherent transparency measures that are written right into the bill that really make sure that we are getting the best value programs for our renewable energy competitions here in the province.

So I would argue against this amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you again, Madam Chair, and thank you to the hon. Member for Calgary-East for that. I'm glad to hear about some of the transparency, but then I'm wondering: why stop short? This is asking for just a greater degree of transparency, advice given by ISO, the experts.

Again, I think back to the third party now, where one of the main reasons in 2012 that led to the start of the Wildrose was the fact that under their electricity bill and building the big transmission lines, they had absolutely left out the needs assessment. Albertans were horrified at the \$16 billion, which I think may turn into \$30 billion, in the cost of these transmission lines that were built without a needs assessment, built without a competitive bid process, and now, I think, aren't even fully built. So why in the world would your government want to follow that huge mistake?

12:10

Thank you again to the hon. Member for Calgary-East and her helping clarify some of the transparency. But why stop short? You know, we saw in all the motions on Monday afternoons how anything under advice to a minister you wouldn't put forward. Again, we're all accountable to Albertans, we're all accountable to make the right decisions, so I ask the government to be fully transparent in this matter.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A10?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A10 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill, Bill 27. Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's already 10 minutes past midnight, and I'm trying my luck. The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat just said that every common-sense, reasonable, practical amendment was voted down today. Here we go. I have another amendment.

**Mr. Barnes:** Let's try one that's not reasonable.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah.

I can send the requisite copies to you and wait.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. The amendment will now be referred to as A11. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. Madam Chair, I move that Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, be amended as follows, as written in this one that everyone has. It's asking about economic impact assessments. I'm saying that the following be added after section 2.

Economic impact assessment

2.1(1) One month after the date on which this Act receives Royal Assent, the Minister shall prepare a projection of impact of the renewable electric energy targets established in section 2 on Alberta's economy.

(2) The Minister shall lay a copy of the projection prepared under subsection (1) as soon as practicable before the Assembly if it is then sitting or, if it is not sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

In part B section 23 is struck out, and the following is substituted. Coming into force

23 This Act comes into force 60 days following the date on which the Minister lays the projection prepared under section 2.1(2) before the Assembly.

Madam Chair, we presented similar amendments to all of the major bills this government has brought which have the potential to transform our system massively. This Bill 27 and other bills, like Bill 25, can transform this system, and this can have far-reaching impacts on our economy presently and also in the future. That's why it's only fair that an economic impact assessment be prepared and tabled before this act takes effect.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Before going down the track of the ISO developing proposals, Mr. Chair, the minister needs to know what the province is getting into, what they are asking us to accommodate in future. Albertans have every right to know what the impacts are of these agreements before they're developed by ISO, the Independent System Operator.

Governments often go headlong into ideological policies without first establishing what the real-life impacts will be. The case in point here, Mr. Chair, is Ontario. Ontario put their ideology and communications before economics in their quest to look green, and now we all know where they ended up. It's not a laughing matter. Ontario has ended up with \$37 billion more in electricity payments by the consumers or ratepayers or taxpayers, whoever it is. It's all the same. Ontarians ended up paying that bill.



That's why, Mr. Chair, this is a very friendly amendment. You need to know what you're doing before you do it, actually. The minister needs to know because Alberta's economy is at stake. We're talking about billions of dollars here. That's why we needed a robust debate before we start down the wrong path. Nobody can argue. This government wants to cap the electricity prices at 6.8 cents, but renewables need almost twice that to be profitable, and on top of it, the system requires major investments in backups. So how are we squaring this circle?

This government is trying to transform the whole economy. They're trying to transform how we live, how we make our living. They're attacking the jobs. There is no solid plan to create an equal number of jobs in this renewables sector. If there is, if somebody has done the economic impact analysis, we're asking the minister to present it. If they really did that, they should share with Albertans. What are they trying to hide, and why are they hiding? I don't get that, Mr. Chair. To not have an economic impact on this kind of transformation to bills, major bills, is irresponsible.

Also, Mr. Chair, we all like renewables – and we mean it – but we want the renewables to be economical, reliable, efficient, and safe. How do we know if the renewables that are proposed by this government are any of those if an economic impact analysis is not done? For us to determine that these renewables are economical, reliable, efficient, and safe, we need an economic impact study. For example, on safety we don't want solar panels turning into giant bug zappers. We don't want it. Albertans don't want it. Nor do we want wind turbines killing birds and bats, and we certainly do not want hydro turning fish into sushi.

On reliability we want the electricity there when we need it, not like in Pakistan or some other country where government says when you can have the power. I've seen that in other countries where I've lived. The government will determine when you can have power. I have seen that, Mr. Chair. There are mosquitoes in those countries, and you can't switch on your ceiling fan because the government of the day decides whether you can have power during that particular time or not. They can turn on and turn off the switch as the government chooses to in their wisdom. They may have good intentions, but they didn't have reliable power to support the public. That's why countries like India and China still have hundreds of millions of people without electricity. They're not stopping. Their priority is to electrify those villages and supply power to hundreds of millions of people. They're going to add hundreds of gigawatts of whatever power, whether it is thermal, renewable, whatever.

12:20

They're not going to take the suggestion from the Member for Calgary-East or west or north or south. They're not waiting. Their priority is to feed their population. They have to first provide shelter, food, clothing for their poor people. We can sit here and give all sorts of lectures, and we can't control those emissions that they're generating because we can't build walls in the sky. It's going to flow in our direction whether Mr. Trump decides not to have a cap on emissions or Mr. Wall decides not to have emissions. There's nothing we can do about that. We can't protect our boundaries. That's why, you know, we have to look at the big picture and we have to do the economic impact study.

Another reason, Mr. Chair, is efficiency. We want the electricity as close to the consumers as possible so there is little loss of power as it converts to heat going across power lines. Have you ever heard of Ohm's law at all, Mr. Chair? This is the Greek omega symbol in the equation where resistance equals the voltage divided by the amperage. It's what I studied in electrical technology when I did mechanical engineering. That's a requisite subject. The lower the resistance, the more electricity that goes through the lines, and

that's why there is so much research and development into superconductors.

But if we don't do an economic impact analysis, we won't figure it out, whether it is efficient, reliable, safe, or economical. We won't. And it's our job to convince Albertans that we have done all that and we are ready to implement this bill. No government member, neither the minister nor the members from the ruling party, can tell us that they have done that. If they have done it, either they are not sharing with us because of the reason that they want to hide it from Albertans – we don't know. If you haven't done it, do it. If you have done it, share it with us so Albertans know what are the economic impacts before ISO goes and does their gig and sends bills to the taxpayers or ratepayers, Mr. Chair. That's why it is quite essential to do an economic impact analysis before we get into it.

It's not too late. I urge all members of this House to support this amendment and prove to Albertans that we can work together and we can collaborate and we can make bills better. So I ask all members to consider that and vote in favour of this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A11? The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm just rising to speak to this amendment, of course, just to say that from what I've seen from the research of the ministry and in talks with the ministers themselves, I think it is very important to recognize that the economic impacts of this piece of vital legislation are most definitely positive for our province. As I'm sure we've heard in this House or has been stated before, it will bring \$10.5 billion in private investment and a conservative estimate of about 7,200 jobs. I think it's important to recognize what that means. I mean, 7,200 jobs for families and Albertans: once again, that's a very conservative number. Well, a conservative – I can't say "very."

Of course, this act will enshrine our targets in the legislation. This will bring greater clarity for companies looking to invest here in Alberta. We've heard the argument, once again, I believe, from the last speaker but often throughout this discussion that we don't want to end up like Ontario. I think it's important to recognize how our version of renewable energy here in Alberta will be different and our system as a whole.

Also, the act will provide that the program will be funded from the carbon levy payments off major emitters. It will not cost anything for electricity consumers, and the act mandates this specifically.

Once again, I think that is very clear, that this legislation will be positive for the province as a whole and our energy industry. I think it's time that we move forward on this legislation now and not later. I will not be supporting this amendment, and I do encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair:** The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just one thing. The hon. member just talked about some research that he has seen from the government convincing him of something. I would ask that he please table that tomorrow.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to – the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** I request unanimous consent to revert to tablings of documents.

**The Acting Chair:** Sorry, hon. member. That cannot be done during Committee of the Whole.

Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A11?  
Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A11 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** We are back on Bill 27. Are there any members wishing to speak? The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**An Hon. Member:** Surprise.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Surprise.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the issues, another of the many issues that we have with Bill 27, comes to the issue of fairness and reporting. So I would like to propose an amendment if I may.

**The Acting Chair:** This will be referred to as amendment A12.  
Please proceed, hon. member.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended by adding the following after section 6.

Fairness report

6.1(1) The ISO shall prepare a report at least once each calendar year on the advice provided by the fairness adviser under section 6 and, when it is complete, provide the report to the Minister.

(2) When the Minister receives the report under subsection (1), the Minister shall lay a copy of it before the Legislative Assembly if it is then sitting and if it is not, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

It is extremely important that the fairness adviser's work be effective. The issue that we have, though, is that if it never sees the light of day, it's not really going to be all that effective. This government campaigned on an issue of transparency in government, on a campaign of fairness, consultation, listening to Albertans, and doing things differently. Well, one of the things that we would hope this government could do differently is to make things public to the good people of Alberta.

12:30

Now, specific to this, in Bill 27, section 6, it currently reads:  
Fairness advisor

6 The ISO shall engage a person who is external to the ISO to serve as a fairness advisor

- (a) to provide advice to the ISO with respect to the development of the competitive process referred to in section 5 to ensure that it is a fair process, and
- (b) to ensure that the implementation of a program under section 7 is conducted fairly.

Here we have an individual that is going to be contracted, hired, or put in the position of fairness adviser to provide advice to the ISO regarding the competitive process and the implementation of the programs.

Now, one of the things about accountability is that you can't really call something accountable if everything is done behind closed doors because in ensuring fairness, it is incumbent upon whoever is involved in this – in this case, it's the fairness adviser – that that person's work to be brought to the light of day so that Albertans can see that, "All right; according to the fairness adviser's report things are being conducted in a fair and equitable manner," or, conversely, if there are issues, that they be brought to the light of day.

Now, we have a number of persons in similar positions such as the Ethics Commissioner, the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, the Auditor General. We have a number of these people in positions, very important positions in a democracy, who create reports giving a

report card on the government's activities. It only makes sense that the fairness adviser's work be brought to light as well so that Albertans can see how well the ISO is doing. Our electricity system is extremely important to every Albertan, and I believe it is incumbent upon the government to ensure that this person's work is brought out.

An annual report would give some distance from some time-sensitive items but would ensure accountability. Now, we realize that one of the reasons why we have this put out as an annual report is that there are going to be some dealings within ISO that are sensitive, some things to do with bidding processes and such like, and having a monthly report would of course compromise the confidentiality that needs to be surrounding things within that process. That's fine. An annual report would give some distance from such time-sensitive items but would still ensure accountability at some point. In other words, at some point we're going to hear about how fair the process has been.

I would hope that more thought could be put into the purposes of this position, perhaps something pertaining to landowners being treated fairly. That ought to be something that a fairness adviser should be looking at. It would be great if there was a really fulsome discussion about the mandate of the fairness adviser. What all is the fairness adviser going to be looking at?

This amendment attempts to make an improvement here by simply saying: "All right. Yes. Great. We're going to have a fairness adviser. Let's get his report out into the public annually so that we can have a look as Albertans and see if the fairness adviser is even being fair." So I would hope that all members in this House would consider this friendly amendment as a good amendment, one that will improve Bill 27.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to amendment A12?

Seeing none, I'll call the question on amendment A12 as proposed by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

[Motion on amendment A12 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** We're back on the main bill. The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to bring forward an amendment if I may.

**The Acting Chair:** That will be referred to as amendment A13.  
Please proceed, hon. member.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. On behalf of the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake I would like to move that Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, be amended in section 7(1) by adding: "and shall make information about each competitive process publicly available at least 60 days prior to the start of the competitive process."

I'll make this short and sweet. Obviously, this amendment will be something that I'm sure the government, at 12:35 in the morning, will be ecstatic to vote on on behalf of and with us. What this does: the obvious transparency gives the government the opportunity to make sure that they will not quietly open bids and have only their friends have the inside track. Obviously, you're going to want to vote to make sure that this amendment goes through because that would be transparency, and this is what this government campaigned on.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** You think?

**Mrs. Aheer:** I think so for sure.

I'm so excited to also make sure. I mean, the NDP has a ton of connections within the renewable electricity sector, so let's make this as transparent as possible and make the process competitive. What we're asking is that we want to make sure that it is made publicly available for a certain amount of time so that Albertans are aware of that and we get the best people coming forward in this competitive process, which means that you're going to get more of the best people at the best price and make sure that these contracts are in front of people and that they know what's going on.

Obviously, given the desire of the government to want to show Albertans that they're not going to just have their friends hired into these contracts, they're going to definitely vote for this amendment. I'm absolutely sure although I'm not a betting person. We would love to be able to give the government the opportunity, Mr. Chair, to keep the temptation away from them, to keep these bids open and not under the radar because we want to make sure that that transparency is the first and foremost idea coming forward with these contracts coming online. Obviously, the government is going to want to vote in favour of this.

The renewable gambit could be a complete boondoggle in the making if we're not careful. If you do not maximize the opportunity for competition, that is the road that we will head down. Obviously, the government is going to want to maximize competition. Obviously, they're going to want to post who is in the bidding for these competitive processes. Sixty days prior to the competitive process is not a lot to ask. I think it's very reasonable.

Most importantly – most, most importantly – is that we have to do everything that we can do to reduce the extra costs of some of these very irresponsible targets that have been brought in by the government and that will actually fall onto the backs of Albertans. Very irresponsible. We have numbers like 30 by '30, 100 megatonnes. We have a lot of different numbers that have kind of been pulled out of thin air.

In order to hold yourselves accountable and in order for Albertans, Mr. Chair, to make sure that the government is accountable and transparent, we would suggest and highly recommend that the government vote in favour of the amendment to hold themselves accountable by making sure that at least 60 days prior to the start of the competitive process it is publicly available.

Thank you.

12:40

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A13?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A13 as proposed by the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View on behalf of the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

[Motion on amendment A13 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** We are back on the main bill. The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, you can't say we aren't trying to help.

**Mr. Cooper:** We're here to help.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** We're here to help.

We have a situation now with this Bill 27 where it needs another amendment.

**The Acting Chair:** We will refer to this as amendment A14. Please proceed, hon. member.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended by striking out section 8. Now, section 8's heading is ISO Interest in Generating Unit. I'm just going to read this section briefly.

8(1) Despite section 9(6) of the Electric Utilities Act, the ISO may, in accordance with any commercial terms that are part of a renewable electricity program, hold a security or other interest in a generating unit, as defined in that Act, as security in relation to generator default or insolvency.

(2) The ISO shall

- (a) notify the Minister prior to enforcing a security interest held pursuant to subsection (1), and
- (b) enforce a security interest in accordance with any direction of the Minister.

(3) Any interest in a generating unit held by the ISO pursuant to subsection (1), and any ownership interest resulting from the enforcement of a security interest, shall be transferred or assigned in accordance with any direction of the Minister.

Now, we have a scheme here that is already enough of a boondoggle without the government taking over any potential money pits. If we have a situation where – well, I'll back up a minute. This section is really very vague, Mr. Chair. If the government needs some kind of transitional ability to keep these things running between private owners, they should go back to the drawing table and come back with something that is at least more narrow and certainly more prescriptive than what we've got. We don't even have a clear definition in Bill 27 as to what a security or other interest means. That's really leaving the door wide open to any definition of other interest.

It seems to me that what we've got is a situation here where – you know, under section 9(6) of the Electric Utilities Act there was a perfectly good reason why the ISO was protected or limited or hindered from holding security. Now we have 8(1) saying “despite section 9(6)”; in other words, in spite of – in spite of – a section under the Electric Utilities Act now ISO can hold a security or another interest. Then on top of that, the minister can transfer it, can assign it, can do what the minister wants with it, this security interest.

The road that we're going down with this particular section of Bill 27 is a very slippery slope. It means more or less that in the case of an insolvency or who knows what, the government of Alberta, the taxpayers of Alberta, could be in the ownership position of generation. That's not a road we want to go down. So I would hope that every member in this House will vote in favour of this amendment and strike section 8 completely. It is too vague. There is no clear definition of “security or other interest.” I mean, in other words, there's no definition whatsoever. It's just “other.”

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A14?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A14 lost]

**The Acting Chair:** The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the chance to rise one more time. On behalf of my hon. colleague and friend from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake I would like to propose one more amendment to Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act.

**The Acting Chair:** This will be referred to as amendment A15. Please proceed, hon. member.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, be amended in section 7 by adding the following after subsection (5):

- (6) The Minister shall make all renewable electricity support agreements filed under subsection (5) publicly available within 14 days of being received by the Minister.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Barnes:** Yeah.

I mean, publicly available clearly means to Albertans, to the ratepayers, to the people that build our economy, to the people that pay the bills for this electricity. Obviously, Mr. Chair, once an agreement has been entered into, both the public and competing bidders deserve to know the details. A lot of my hon. colleagues on this side of the floor have stood up on amendment after amendment, time after time, and have talked about all the benefits of openness and transparency, so we don't need to repeat those. I would hope that the government and NDP members would finally have . . .

**Mr. Cooper:** The courage of their convictions.

**Mr. Barnes:** . . . the courage of their convictions to remember that it's Albertans' system.

The last two or three little thoughts I want to leave with are about where the system is at now. I think this government is going to have one heck of a hard time taking something away from Albertans. I know this speaks particularly to any public support agreements to renewable electricity. When I think of the electric generation system now – it's on the Internet, for goodness' sake. You can see what the rate is. You can see what companies are bidding in at. You can see who's won the bid and the contract to serve Albertans, and you can see who came in too high.

Now we're going to a system where our new government, Albertans' government, is going to be hiding some of the agreements, some of the support. Whether it's taxpayers or ratepayers – there's only one taxpayer; there's only one ratepayer – it will all come out of our standard of living. It will all come out of the opportunities that we'll be able to leave for the next generation. I absolutely believe that your government will be in trouble when we back away from transparency.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

We're also going from a system where one of the strengths of it was that the people of Alberta had no public debt on electric generation. Obviously, I have seen a government love of debt and the interest payments that go with it and what you're going to do with our electricity system and how the ratepayers are going to end up being responsible for that and what that may do to our bond rating, what that may do to our credit rating, whether it's triple A or double A or A, except when it comes to building schools, except when it comes to hiring nurses, except when it comes to providing AISH programs, support programs for our seniors, and the programs that we all want to provide.

12:50

Yes, we're talking about transparency. Yeah, we're talking about within 14 days providing something that the ratepayers and the people of Alberta are going to be paying, but you're taking a big step backwards. You're taking a big step backwards in disclosure, you're taking a big step backwards in the amount of debt you're taking on, and you're taking a big step backwards in the affordability that our families and Albertans and our industries had.

So I would ask in our last try of the night for my hon. colleagues to please consider this amendment and support it. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A15?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A15 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on the original bill, Bill 27. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. What we've seen this evening is an ideological government that has no regard for the facts, an ideological government that has no regard for what Albertans are speaking about, an ideological government that has chosen to put their political interests ahead of what Albertans are looking for. It is well past midnight, 10 to 1, and what we see is this government going in a direction that isn't respectful of taxpayers. It doesn't respect landowners' rights. It doesn't respect accountability. It doesn't respect transparency. It is more than a bit disappointing. It is more than a bit disappointing that this government has chosen to put their ideological agenda ahead of the needs and interests of Albertans, and it won't soon be forgotten.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 27?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 27 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report bills 34, 25, and 27.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 34, Bill 25, Bill 27. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this day for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur with the report? All those agreed, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Considering the hour I would move that we adjourn and resume this morning at 10.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 12:56 a.m.]





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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, December 13, 2016

Day 62

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

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New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, December 13, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect or pray, each in our own way. This is a time of peace and happiness, a time of reflection, and a time of compassion. Let us reach out to those who may be struggling in this holiday season. Let us lift up, give back, and help out.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Third Reading

##### Bill 35

##### Fair Elections Financing Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

**Cortes-Vargas:** It's an honour to rise today to move third reading of Bill 35, Fair Elections Financing Act – sounds good, the title – on behalf of the minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Bill 35 proposes a number of changes that will amend the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act and modernize Alberta's election financing laws. These changes are important and valuable to our democratic process. Albertans, not big money, will be the drivers of our elections. If passed, not only will they bring Alberta's laws in line with the rest of the country, but they will also provide greater transparency and accountability.

The bill looks at making critical changes in three areas: contribution limits, spending limits, and third-party advertising. In regard to contribution limits Bill 35 proposes that an individual can donate \$4,000 per calendar year, full stop. The limit would apply to any funds going to political parties, constituency associations, candidates, leadership contestants, and nomination contestants. Mr. Speaker, some hon. members have objected to these limits, saying that they do not go far enough. We believe that these limits provide voters with choice and flexibility. Albertans can choose where their \$4,000 goes and how they want to spread it around. It's a reasonable aggregate limit that will help to ensure that no single person, deep pocket, or special-interest group has significant influence over a political party, candidate, or contestant. With the exception of ongoing leadership contestants, the contribution limit would be effective as of November 28, the day this bill was introduced.

Bill 35 would also change the definition of contributions. Services provided to candidates and campaigns by self-employed persons would be considered a financial contribution. The normal value of the nonmonetary services they provide would count toward their contribution limit. However, audit and professional services provided free of charge for work relating to compliance with the act would not be considered contributions. Volunteer services would not be included in the limit as long as the person providing volunteer labour is not being compensated by their employer or is not being given paid time off to volunteer. This would mean that the days of unions, corporations, and other third parties offering

paid staff to work on campaigns are over. Alberta's laws are lagging behind all other Canadian jurisdictions, including nonvolunteer services and their contribution limits. These changes would align our laws with the rest of Canada.

The second section is on spending limits, establishing spending limits in Bill 35. Political parties would have a \$2 million spending limit during the writ period. This would also include spending prior to the writ for items used during the writ period. Candidates would have spending limits of \$5,000 in an electoral division. Expenses incurred by the party or constituency association on behalf of the candidate will count as election expenses incurred by the candidate.

For by-elections a party's spending limit would be \$23,000 per electoral district. The \$23,000 amount is approximately \$2 million divided by 87, the number of electoral districts in Alberta. Nomination contestants will also be subject to a spending limit of \$10,000, which is 20 per cent of the spending limit in each electoral division. In addition, both nomination contestants and leadership contestants would be required to register and report to the Chief Electoral Officer when they announce their intention to seek nomination, begin incurring costs, or accept contributions, whichever occurs first.

For leadership contestants an amendment will also require that an audited financial statement and a copy of the auditor's report shall accompany each financial statement if the campaign expenses of the leadership contestant exceed \$25,000.

Mr. Speaker, no two candidates in constituencies are the same. To acknowledge this and help level the playing field, some expenses would not count towards campaign spending limits. These include a candidate's or contestant's travel costs reasonably related to the election contest, including transportation, meals, and accommodation; care for the candidate's or contestant's children or other dependants; expenses related to the disability of a candidate or nomination contestant; audits and other fees necessary for compliance with the act; incidental fees, expenses like parking and gas incurred by volunteers. Most of these expenses would still need to be included in the financial statement or report to the Chief Electoral Officer. Changes to Alberta's spending limits will align us with the rest of Canada as other jurisdictions have spending limits with the exception of Yukon.

There have been concerns from various hon. members regarding the quarterly reporting requirements for constituency associations. The Chief Electoral Officer did say that quarterly reporting was not providing value to his office. His recommendation was to either move to annual reporting or enhance the quarterly reporting. We chose to improve the quarterly reporting to put more information rather than less in Elections Alberta's hands to better assist them with catching inaccuracies or violations. Quarterly reporting becomes even more important with the changes proposed in Bill 35 due to lower limits and changes in contributions laid out in the bill.

The last major focus of the Fair Elections Financing Act is third-party advertising. Any third party, regardless if they are individuals, corporations, or groups, would have a spending limit of \$150,000 during the writ period. No more than \$3,000 of this amount could be used to support or oppose candidates in an electoral division. These limits will still allow third parties to express their views but will ensure that their advertising does not overwhelm the political discourse. Third parties will still be required to register with Elections Alberta when they incur \$1,000 in election advertising expenses, receive \$1,000 in contributions, or plan to do either, and to identify themselves in their advertising.

During an election third parties will also have to disclose contributions over \$250 on a weekly basis, which will then be published by Elections Alberta. Between elections third parties would also be required to report contributions on a quarterly basis

instead. Thanks to an amendment to this bill third-party reporting requirements will come into effect on November 28, the date the legislation was introduced.

Another amendment will help clarify what will be considered an election advertising expense and what will not. The cost of producing an advertisement will be considered an advertising expense along with the cost of buying the advertising space and any other costs associated with transmitting the message. However, any costs that may have been incurred while forming the opinion or conveying the policy position behind the message would not be considered advertising expenses. For example, if a third party does any polling, holds conferences, or consults with experts to help them decide where they stand on a certain issue prior to advertising their position, the associated costs would not be counted as an advertising expense.

**10:10**

This is a common-sense amendment. Only those costs that are directly linked to producing an advertisement will be considered an advertising expense. We are not seeking to restrict third parties' ability to conduct research or develop informed opinions. Furthermore, we have clarified through another amendment that third parties are able to express themselves on the Internet as any average Albertan might do. When the political views of a person, corporation, or group are posted on the Internet on a noncommercial basis, the rules regarding third-party advertising would not apply. This amendment better reflects how people talk to one another in this day and age and supports freedom of speech and freedom of expression while still providing transparency as to who is paying for the advertising. When big money comes into the equation, when third parties pay to transmit their message, that is when our legislation comes into play.

We have also added a provision that authorizes the Chief Electoral Officer to develop guidelines to help stakeholders understand the rules around third-party advertising. It is ultimately the Chief Electoral Officer who is responsible for administering and enforcing the act, and as such the Chief Electoral Officer will determine how the act should be applied in real-life scenarios. Guidelines could help stakeholders understand the legislation and how it applies to them. Ultimately, this may help ensure that stakeholders understand and follow the rules.

One more thing that I would like to mention, Mr. Speaker, is that Bill 35 would also ensure that corporations, trade unions, and employee organizations are no longer able to guarantee loans. Only individuals ordinarily resident in Alberta would be able to guarantee loans to a political party or make a payment on a loan guarantee to a political entity. The amount of any guarantee would apply immediately to the contribution limit of the guarantor.

Mr. Speaker, all of the changes that Bill 35 proposes will remove undue influence from special interests and help ensure that Albertans are true influencers in our political process. We began this road towards change with Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta. Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, continues that work. These are vital changes being proposed to improve our system and will lead us to a better, more modern, and more transparent democracy. It takes recommendations made by the Chief Electoral Officer into account, and it will give Albertans the confidence that their concerns are being represented.

I ask that all members support me in moving third reading. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise on third reading of Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act. I appreciate the comments made by the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park in addressing the Assembly this morning in her carefully prepared text. I will say, though, that there are a number of phrases and a number of suppositions that she makes within that prepared text that are completely and totally contradicted by the actions that have been taken within this bill, and I'm going to point out a few of those contradictions now.

The entire premise of the hon. member's speech and, in fact, the entire premise of the government side on this is that big money should not decide elections. As I stated when we debated this in committee over the summer, if there was ever a demonstration that big money does not necessarily decide elections, the last election we held should be proof of that. The candidates, the parties that spent the most money in the last election were not necessarily the ones that were successful. In fact, in most individual constituencies the candidate who spent the most money was not necessarily the successful candidate. It was a very small number out of the 87 constituencies in which the candidate that spent the most was, in fact, successful at the ballot box. To suggest that big money always decides elections and that we have to necessarily do something about that: that myth, hopefully, was put to bed by the last election. But somehow this government still thinks that we need to do a lot of things that are of questionable necessity to move into the realm.

In fact, if we were to look at the spending limits that have been proposed for parties, in the last election the party that spent the most won only 10 seats. Both the governing party and the party in the Official Opposition spent less than half of that party. So to suggest that big money always decides elections is, quite frankly, simply not true, and to take measures that are to supposedly repair that situation is questionable when in the most recent election that we had, that was clearly not the case.

Let's move forward to the specific areas. As I said in my speech on second reading – and I'll repeat it here because it seems that it has not necessarily registered with the other side – our caucus and, I would say, most hon. members and most Albertans support the concept of lowered contribution limits and the concept of spending limits in order to put some sort of parameters around the process. But the balance has to always be struck that if there is too restrictive a level of spending and of contributions, the dollars will simply find another way to influence the process.

This bill does not take big money out of politics. What this bill does is that it takes big money out of sight, and that should concern all of us. The Chief Electoral Officer was very clear when questioned on this to indicate that increasing restrictions on spending, increasing restrictions on contributions in every other jurisdiction where they've been applied has taken the money that has normally been put into areas that are reviewed and are monitored and are reported upon and moved it into areas that are not reported upon and not reviewed. It has decreased transparency rather than increased transparency. There has to be a balance that is struck.

Now, are the numbers that have been proposed within this bill the right balance? I guess time will only tell. But, certainly, the Chief Electoral Officer, especially when we were discussing what is still very much an emerging and evolving field of third-party contributions, indicated that putting too onerous a set of restrictions on those bodies and those entities, which are closely monitored and which have to report, simply means that the dollars will find their way into the system through means that are not reported. So to pass legislation that, in fact, encourages that to happen, to me, is counterproductive to the aims and the goals of this legislation.

Let's talk a little bit about contribution limits. Much has been said and much was just recently said by the hon. member who just moved third reading that the \$4,000 limit provides choice and flexibility to the donor, saying it as if under the current regime, there is no choice and no flexibility. Well, to suggest that somehow this regime provides enhanced choice and flexibility over a regime where there are only two limits – one is \$15,000, and one is \$1,000, but every other way that you can contribute to a political entity is unregulated – is simply not a true or not an accurate description of what is going on. As has been pointed out painstakingly by multiple speakers in the House, the \$4,000 limit when applied to constituency associations and coupled with the \$50,000 spending limit would allow for three individuals to completely bankroll a candidate's campaign over the course of a four-year election cycle.

You know, in her moving speech on third reading – and I don't have the exact Blues in front of me, but as I understand it, it was that no single person has significant influence over a candidate. No, not a single person, but certainly three single people could have significant influence over a candidate. Now, this was a flaw that was pointed out to the government members on the committee during the summer months, and then they immediately made some changes to bring back the \$1,000 constituency association limit to remedy that scenario. But when it was brought back to the House, all of a sudden that \$1,000 limit was gone, and we were right back to \$4,000 across the board.

#### 10:20

This is a significant flaw, Mr. Speaker, in this legislation. To suggest that this flaw has somehow been remedied by the legislation is simply not accurate, and to suggest that we have now removed a scenario where a single person could have significant influence is just simply not true. That is a concern, and it's been pointed out and clarified. Yet this government continues to maintain focus on their speaking notes, focus on their key messages, that were prepared, I would suggest, sometime ago, that they have not waived from. I guess to a certain extent we should applaud that singularity of purpose, that clarity of vision. Nonetheless, the facts fly completely opposite to that.

Let's move on then, Mr. Speaker, to spending limits: \$2 million for a party in an election, \$50,000 for a candidate, \$23,000 in a by-election, \$10,000 in a nomination. These figures are largely arbitrary, especially the one for candidate campaigns, where the number went from \$40,000 to \$70,000 to \$40,000 and \$50,000 to \$70,000 and \$80,000, and now we land on \$50,000, with a basket of exemptions that are somehow supposed to provide for the variations in the different constituencies around our province. Well, I can tell you that to single out things like travel and meals and incidentals, that's not the biggest variability of what makes different constituencies very, very different in terms of campaigning and in terms of running.

Mr. Speaker, we suggested an amendment that would tie the campaign limit to what has been worked on and what has been developed as a very careful algorithm and a very careful formula by our former Clerk to determine MSAs, and that amendment, of course, was rejected by the government.

The mover was correct in saying that no two candidates or constituencies are the same, but to single out things like travel costs as being the main variation is simply not true. For example, how many newspapers do you have in your constituency? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright, for example, has 13 weekly newspapers, I believe, in his constituency. To run even two ads in the two weeks leading up to that chews up a significant number of dollars. I have seven weekly newspapers in my constituency. One of the issues there is that if you advertise in one or two of them and

not in the others, you hear about it from the editor and the publisher, many of whom are friends. So, Mr. Speaker, to suggest somehow that removing travel costs and meal costs and other incidentals from the overall equation provides crossprovince equality and equity from candidate to candidate, from constituency to constituency simply fails to recognize some of the realities of campaigning in Alberta.

The other concern that I have, Mr. Speaker – and we spoke about it yesterday – is the invasion by this legislation into the nomination process and, therefore, into the operation of individual political parties. The fact that it is now something that this government thinks is a good idea is something that should cause Albertans grave concern. This is something that, as the Chief Electoral Officer pointed out to the committee, may not even stand up in court. It may not even be constitutional. And we know that it will cost significant additional dollars to the taxpayers of Alberta.

When the hon. leader of the Liberal Party, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, stands up, someone who has been largely in support of this bill, even signed on to the press release announcing this bill, and says in debate that this is a step too far and that this is a solution looking for a problem that has not been defined, he is absolutely correct.

To include nomination contests in this is an unnecessary additional expense, it is an unnecessary additional burden to those who wish to participate in the nomination contest, and it has a very practical problem for the Chief Electoral Officer in having to review what could be as many as 1,300 forms that have been filed and to do it in a very short period of time given that the time from nominations to the dropping of the writ for an election is often a very short span.

The government failed to answer my questions when I asked: well, what would happen if a candidate's return on their nomination report was found to be in error or there was found to be some sort of spending or contribution violation? What would happen then? Would they be disqualified from the election? What if the election had already occurred by the time the return had been processed? Would that candidate then have been disqualified? Would the results of the election in that constituency be annulled? Would a by-election be required?

None of those questions were answered, and they are legitimate questions. They are legitimate questions that are hard to answer because this has never been done in another jurisdiction. As the Member for Calgary-Mountain View said, this is a bridge too far. This is going too far into the realm of individual political parties.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, quarterly reporting. Again, this is perhaps the most egregious example of where the party in power is exercising their authority and their majority to put an undue burden on other political parties that have, in fact, active constituency associations and where, I very clearly pointed out, most of the constituency associations of the government in power are not active at all. The only thing you have to be able to do if you're the CFO of most constituency associations for the New Democratic Party is to be able to make the number zero and do it repeatedly. That's the only thing that you really have to do.

On the other hand, we have volunteers working on our boards who have to be able to file reports within 15 days of the end of each quarter, and now we're told by this government that we're going to make that reporting more meaningful. More meaningful. Now, more meaningful, to me, usually means more detailed, that there is going to be more in the report, that there are going to be additional requirements. When they know full well that that is something that has very little effect on the CFOs on their side and a great deal of effect on the CFOs on parties on this side of the House, that has a fundamental sense of unfairness.

As I've said in this House before, I believe that Albertans have a great sense of what is fair and what is unfair. Some of what happened going into the last election, some of what happened that made the amount of money spent in the last election immaterial was that Albertans felt that some of what was done by our party, the party that was governing at the time, was fundamentally unfair. It was unfair to other parties that are represented in Alberta, and it was unfair to the Alberta electorate. And the voters of Alberta spoke. They spoke loud and clear. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is also fundamentally unfair. Now, the voters of Alberta may or may not notice this as much as they did those measures, but I can tell you that this is fundamentally unfair. We will remind the voters of Alberta about these fundamentally unfair measures that were taken by this government when we go to the polls the next time, in 2019.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this bill in third reading. While I support the idea of lower contribution limits in general – and I actually think \$4,000 is not a bad compromise number – and in general most of the spending limits, I think, are a reasonable place to start, although I think we have to watch very carefully to see where the dollars will go, the intrusion into nomination contests, the fact that three people can bankroll an entire campaign over the course of a four-year election cycle, and, finally, the lack of removing quarterly reporting, which was agreed to unanimously by the committee, are all measures that we tried to amend in this bill and that the government rejected. Because they refused to listen to these reasonable amendments, that would have made this bill better and would have reflected much of the discussion that happened during the course of the summer by the Ethics and Accountability Committee, I cannot support Bill 35, and I will be in opposition to it on third reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to third reading as well on Bill 35. I listened with fascination to the government whip present that speech in regard to the moving of third reading and, quite frankly, was still a little bit shocked that even after all this time, months of debate in committee, days and hours of debate inside this Assembly, the members across the way would still have the gall to rise in this House and try to say that members of the opposition were not for lowering contribution limits, were not for fixing big money in politics.

**10:30**

Mr. Speaker, as you know and as has been established clearly, without a doubt, this side of the House has led the way on that topic, and I know I'm always excited to see the NDP follow us. That's usually when they get something right. From the very beginning of this process all opposition parties were okay with getting spending on political donations in control. This party, the Wildrose Party, fought for that long before the NDP even thought of it, again following us. I think it's great. I think the members across the way should follow us a little bit more. They would often, probably, get legislation better because this side of the House speaks to Albertans. That side of the House, as you know, rarely does.

With that said, though, we need to also recognize that the argument presented by the government, that this was all about getting big money out of politics, is ridiculous and has been shown to be just not the way that it is, Mr. Speaker. This government has brought forward legislation against the will of every member of the committee, including their own members, and has raised constituency association donations by 400 per cent – 400 per cent –

taking the donation limit in constituency associations from \$1,000 to \$4,000. It has also been painstakingly shown by all parties in this Assembly how that will allow one or two or three individuals to be able to have complete influence on MLA campaigns when it's coupled with a \$50,000 cap. In fact, that could just be one family, a husband and a wife and a child, who could do that.

That was brought up in committee, the members agreed with us at the time, and then it went to cabinet, and – I don't know – somewhere along the way the decision was changed. I would say that it was the government whip normally, but the government whip was on the committee and agreed with us at the time. I don't know if there's another level or how it works with the NDP, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if you know. But let's be clear on that, and then we move on. This party and every opposition party has stood and said that they want to lower donation limits, and we're willing to work on spending caps.

The fact is that the governing party, the NDP, has refused to get big money out of politics, not just because they've increased constituency association donations by 400 per cent but because they've left their ability to continue to use the taxpayer purse to their advantage, to continue to use the taxpayer purse for political advantage to the governing party despite the fact that every party that was on the committee disagreed with that at the time.

This government, Mr. Speaker, shockingly, has spent \$10 million in the last year advertising their carbon tax, \$10 million for probably the single most hated piece of legislation in modern times by the people of Alberta, a piece of legislation that is damaging and hurting every member of this province in devastating ways. They spent \$10 million of taxpayer money, after taxing them with an unpopular tax, to advertise the tax. So big money clearly is still in politics. The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler's motion in regard to this, that the government members said that they supported, has been completely ignored to continue to keep big money in politics for the incumbent government. I have said from the beginning of this that it appears the government is attempting to stack the deck in their favour. It appears the government is attempting to rig the process with this legislation to their advantage.

Now, I would have liked to have been proven wrong. I certainly would have liked to have been proven wrong during this debate. Mr. Speaker, we have given plenty of opportunities for the members opposite to prove us wrong. Instead, over and over and over they voted down reasonable amendments that would make it fair, make democracy fair. The name of their act, this bill, has nothing to do with fair. It's pretty clear. But they had an opportunity to do that. Instead, members continued to vote against making things fair, continued to work to stack the deck, to rig the system, to kneecap opposition parties when it comes to how constituency associations work, to increase donation limits in areas where it's beneficial to them, to make government advertisement easier during political processes, another thing that's an advantage to them.

It's extremely shocking and disappointing, stunning, particularly when you look at some of the amendments that have been brought forward that would make things easier for volunteers to participate in our political process, to make it easier for people that are not successful in being MLAs but who still want to run for parties to be able to participate in the political process. They've made things harder for people to participate in nominations. They've made things easier for incumbents to be elected on all sides, which is disappointing, something that I am fundamentally against. They have harmed democracy in our province. That will be their legacy with this bill.

Now, the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, from the third party, who just spoke, is a hundred per cent correct. We will be reminded. We will remind the people of Alberta during the next



election what has taken place here. The people of Alberta like things to be fair. The fact that this government would use their majority to attack democracy – to attack democracy. It's one thing to push through an ideological agenda with a majority. It's another thing to attack something as fundamentally important as democracy is to our province. It's shocking, and it's appalling, in my view.

Again, members from all parties on the opposition side brought forward reasonable amendments to deal with some of these things, to give every member across the way an opportunity to say: "No, we're not trying to rig democracy. We're not so scared about our election chances next time that we're going to manipulate the rules to our advantage. Instead, we're going to work to make sure that democracy works well in the future."

Mr. Speaker, they're so focused on their 2019 election chances that they're forgetting that when they are back in opposition, in the end they will hurt their own party because this legislation will hurt the smallest parties the most, not the larger opposition parties. We'll get around it, and we'll get the job done and replace this government. This will hurt the smaller parties, something that this party across from me has traditionally been in this province and, I promise you, will be again, particularly if they keep moving this type of legislation.

But the number one thing that has always concerned me is the amount of time that was spent at committee focused on something else that stopped us from getting this right, that stopped us from working on third-party issues, which is an important part of this bill, on which we now are likely going to see constitutional challenges, court cases, because of how badly the government has dropped it. Nomination issues: we also may see some court cases along the way because of how badly the government dropped the ball on this.

The reason we saw that, Mr. Speaker, is that members across from me, the members in the government, spent their time at committee trying to stack the deck and get their campaign expenses paid for, which stopped them from being able to do the important work in committee to make sure we get this right. Now we're rushing through legislation, knowing that it's probably going to end up in court, all to try to advantage the governing party, all because the work wasn't done because the governing members across the way spent their time trying to get their campaign expenses paid for. It's shocking.

What's most interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that the members across the way – and I have their voting records on this issue here in front of me – fought long and hard over the summer on this issue, and in the end the opposition, by staying in the fight as long as they could on behalf of the good people of Alberta, were able to stop that silly, ridiculous idea, and it just shows me that this government is moving too fast. They need more time. They obviously have no idea what they're doing.

With that in mind, it is pretty clear to me that the only intention that the government has with this is to rig the system to their advantage. It's absolutely ridiculous. As such, I do believe that this bill should be hoisted, and I will move the appropriate amendment.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, we will refer to the amendment as amendment HA. Please continue.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason I am moving a hoist amendment, again, is because it is clear to me the government has not taken the time to adequately look at their legislation and to take into account the consequences that this legislation will have on the people of Alberta. Instead, the government has been blindly focused on trying to advantage themselves with this legislation.

It's the same pattern that they did in committee. Mr. Speaker, in committee the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, the Member for

Edmonton-Ellerslie, the Member for Edmonton-Decore, the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, the Member for Calgary-Bow, the Member for Calgary-Shaw, and the Member for St. Albert all voted to get their campaign expenses paid for, to get their party's campaign expenses paid for.

10:40

The Member for Calgary-North West, who was an opposition member at the time and is now a government member, moved forward a motion shortly after that, a rescinding motion, to give those members an opportunity to rethink their decision. I agreed with the motion and supported the motion, but the Member for Red Deer-South, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, the Member for Calgary-Bow, the Member for Calgary-Shaw, the Member for Leduc-Beaumont, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, and the Member for St. Albert all voted against that. In fact, those members spent the remainder of the summer and the remainder of their time on committee fighting to make sure, again, that they could get their campaign expenses paid for.

Then time went by. The opposition continued to stay in the fight on behalf of the people of Alberta, and ultimately, because I think the government got caught with their hands in the cookie jar, they wanted to see the committee be able to provide them legislative cover to be able to do something so ridiculous to the people of Alberta. But they got caught. The opposition did their job and were able to stop the silliness that was going forward.

My point, Mr. Speaker, is that the same stuff is happening right now. The same stuff is happening right now with this legislation. The government is continuing to try to gloss over it, to try to distract people by saying that the opposition is not for lowering contribution limits, which is not true. They're trying to gloss over that when, really, they need more time to be able to make a decision. By hoisting this bill to a later date, we're able to provide the government with more time to do the right thing for the people of Alberta.

Clearly, the behaviour in committee, Mr. Speaker – I know you would agree with me – shows that the government has struggles to make decisions, the government members, and that their focus is often on what appears to me to be very selfish reasons, to benefit their election chances. That's not what this piece of legislation should be about. This piece of legislation should be about giving Albertans an opportunity to renew some of the democratic reforms after many, many years since that's been looked at under the previous government's rule.

The reality is that this legislation is a direct attack on democracy. It's a direct attack on the constituency associations of this province. It's deliberately being put forward in a way that will detriment smaller parties and other opposition parties and in a way that would attempt to advantage the government.

It's going to make things harder for the Chief Electoral Officer, who has already said that. Some of the things that have been brought forward in this legislation, Mr. Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer referred to as useless, so they should not be here. There's no benefit at all to the system. Some of the things being brought forward by the government members in this legislation will now cost taxpayers significantly more money, with no benefit to the taxpayer, lots of benefit to the incumbent party during elections but no benefit to the taxpayer.

In regard to nominations the members across the way have not provided one example to justify the cost to taxpayers, to justify the significant increase in the budget of the Chief Electoral Officer that will come as a result of their decision. Not one reason. The Member

for Calgary-Mountain View rightly pointed out that this is a solution looking for a problem. So why would the members continue to do that?

They also have not stood up and justified at any time being about to raise the contribution limits when we have told the public that we are here to lower the limits, when the government is doing exactly the opposite. Mr. Speaker, \$1,000 and \$4,000 are a significant increase, 400 per cent, of course, as you know, without a doubt, and that's what this legislation is doing. I think there's no way the government can continue to justify with any sort of seriousness the idea that this is only about getting big money out of politics.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, unlike committee, where the opposition fought till the very end, this process, unfortunately, is running out of time. We've given the government every opportunity to do the right thing on behalf of Albertans. We've given the government an opportunity to stop attempting to stack the deck in their favour or rig the system in their favour and to really show that this is about democracy. Unlike when they tried to line their campaign pockets with taxpayer dollars and we were able to stop it, this time it appears the government will continue down this road.

I encourage all members to vote for this hoist motion to be able to give the government an opportunity to do the right thing on behalf of Albertans. I certainly do hope that's what happens though the behaviour that I've seen from the government to date does not provide me with a lot of hope, Mr. Speaker. I think that it is very clear that this is about the government members. It's about their re-election chances. It's about trying to manipulate the system back to their advantage.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me be clear with you. It will not work. The people of Alberta will not fall for it. In fact, I actually think that in the long run, it will damage the government's reputation, certainly, across the province, and Albertans will send them a clear message in the next polls.

Honestly, Mr. Speaker, there is so much other stuff this government has done to the good people of Alberta that has damaged them, hurt their families that this will probably just be one of the smaller things in the pile that the people of Alberta will send them a message on, but we will know in this Assembly, as the Member for Calgary-West pointed out many times during the debate, that this has been done to rig the system to the advantage of the NDP government. It is extremely disappointing, and as I've said the whole time, each and every member across the way should hang their head in shame.

**The Speaker:** Are there any question or comments to the Member for Rimby-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre under 29(2)(a)?

The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie on the amendment, correct?

**Loyola:** On the amendment, or on the motion. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you're not speaking under 29(2)(a); you're speaking to the amendment, correct?

**Loyola:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please proceed.

**Loyola:** Thank you very much. Good morning to all the members of the House through you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to get up in the House and speak to bills, legislation that we're attempting to get passed. Let me say this. When I've gone out to speak with Albertans regarding the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, I've talked to people about the fact

that there has never been a comprehensive review of this act, that we had a government in place that had many, many, many, many opportunities to make changes to the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, but they never made any. Under that piece of legislation, a wealthy individual could give up to \$15,000 to a political party, and that would double when it came to an election year. People were just astounded. They just couldn't believe that we live in a democracy where that kind of money would be able to influence the electoral process.

Now, I'm happy that we as a government have decided to reduce that amount from \$15,000 to \$4,000 in a year, with no doubling up in an election year. When I go out and talk to Albertans about that, when I'm out on the doorsteps and I let them know about that, they're incredibly happy. They're incredibly happy. I also tell them about how now people have an opportunity that they can donate some of that \$4,000 to an electoral district association, to a candidate in an election year, to a leadership candidate if they so choose, to a nomination candidate that would be running for the position before the election would come. All those things are widely received because people know that if their cap is \$4,000, they can choose how they want to spend it, and the tendency would be that they wouldn't put all their money into one of those options. They would most likely spread it all around. They would spread it all around, Mr. Speaker, because they would have the choice and the flexibility to do so if they so choose. This is really important.

**10:50**

The other thing that's really important is that we're putting spending caps on campaigns. Before that, someone could run an election and spend however much money they wanted to spend. If you just look through the report of the Chief Electoral Officer about the last election, you can compare how much some of the people who ran for the third party and for our Official Opposition spent in comparison to some of the people over on this side.

Now, I've heard it said many a time: oh, so big money doesn't decide an election. In the last election people were fed up, and they decided that a change needed to happen. Historically when you look at the influence of big money in the electoral process, you will see that big money would influence the process. So I'm so happy that our government has presented this fair elections act and that we're doing a number of things to make important changes to our democracy here in the province of Alberta, things that Albertans agree with. If you go out there and you talk to Albertans about it, they agree with these changes.

Now, the other thing I want to stress is that the Chief Electoral Officer recommended that he would suggest moving to annual reporting. This is true, but he also said that you could either do that or you could enhance quarterly reporting. So we chose to improve quarterly reporting, to put more information rather than less information so that this would best help Elections Alberta in catching inaccuracies or violations. As we've heard it stated many times by several members of this House, Albertans prefer having more information than less information. Having more information during quarterly reporting will actually benefit the process because Albertans will have all the information at hand so that they can understand how political parties are being financed and who's giving that money. This is actually something that Albertans have asked for, transparency.

We've also asked for transparency when it comes to third parties and the contributions . . .

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted, hon. member.

### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Nixon:** We'd love to hear about the hoist that has been moved by me. There's nothing relevant that the member is talking about, specifically about the hoist. If the member would like to talk to the main bill when we're done debating my amendment, I very much look forward to hearing his comments on that, but there's nothing in what the hon. member is presenting in regard to the hoist or the arguments of why this should or should not be a hoist.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, this is not a point of order. This is quite absurd, as all members are given quite a bit of latitude in this House. He's clearly speaking to the bill and why members should not vote in favour of a hoist to delay this. He's talking about all the good work that's gone into this legislation and how Albertans have asked for it.

This is not a point of order, and the member is wasting the House's time.

**The Speaker:** In this particular instance I agree. The member has still got time left in his notes, and I'm sure he will be speaking to the amendment. There is no point of order.

Please proceed.

### Debate Continued

**Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So where was I? Maybe I should start from the beginning. I'm only joking.

I was talking about third-party financing and third-party elections advertising and political advertising. When I go out there and speak to Albertans, they insist that when they hear on the radio a particular advertisement . . .

**An Hon. Member:** From your government.

**Loyola:** . . . from any position out there, they want to know who's funding that particular advertisement. They want to know. So in no way are we suppressing freedom of speech, Mr. Speaker. In no way. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm sure you're getting to the hoist part.

Hon. members, please keep the voices down. Let's get this thing rolling here, please.

Get to the hoist amendment.

**Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to waste any more time of the members here, but I'm making all these assertions because – and remember that every statement that I've made I've brought back to individuals that I've spoken to personally in my constituency, on the doorstep, people that I've connected with all over this city and all over this province that have said that they want these things and that not only do they want these things, but they want them now.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I am voting against this hoist amendment, and I encourage all of the members in this House to vote against it.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre on 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Nixon:** Absolutely. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I listened with great interest to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. Particularly, the core of his argument is that the people he's speaking to inside his constituency would expect him to vote against this hoist because

they want things done immediately. It seemed to me that he was indicating that primarily around contribution limits, capping certain spending limits during the electoral process.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, it's been clearly shown that this side of the House wants the same thing. My constituents want the same thing. But I can tell you that I know without a doubt that his constituents will be just as concerned as my constituents are with his attempt and this government's attempts to rig the system to their advantage, which is the point of this hoist. This is the reason why this process should be stopped, not forever but to get back to a committee, to get back to a process where we can fix the terrible mistakes that are being made by the NDP and by this member, the attack that is happening on democracy, which I pointed out very, very clearly – and I will point out that the member never addressed that anywhere during his comments – the attack on constituency associations, and the attack on volunteers.

The core of my argument as to why this should be hoisted, Mr. Speaker, as you know from my comments from just a few moments ago, was around the behaviour of this member and other members during committee, that shows the need to slow the process down, that this government needs help to get things right. There are so many examples since this government has been elected. They often hurry, go too fast. They go headlong into things. You know what? I don't care about this government's reputation or what's left of it, but I do care about the people of Alberta. So while they're going headlong into these things and destroying their own reputation along the way, they're hurting my constituents and the people of Alberta, which is why there needs to be a hoist.

Now, this member across the way, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, led the way during committee to get his campaign expenses paid for, led the way to get his political party's campaign expenses paid for. Passionately. Passionately. Read *Hansard*. It's absolutely shocking. It's absolutely shocking, which is the core of why I brought forward the hoist.

Clearly, this government needs more time for the people of Alberta, for the opposition to be able to help steer them to do the right thing, to help make sure that they don't continue to make the terrible mistakes that they keep making, that are hurting families, hurting Albertans, hurting the people that I'm elected to represent and defend proudly inside this Chamber. Just like during committee, as I defended my constituents against the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie and his colleagues as they tried to take their taxpayer dollars and pay for their campaign and political expenses, I am doing the same here today.

Now, that member – and I'd be curious to hear his comments – has not risen once to talk about the serious issues with this bill, to talk about the serious things that this bill does to the people of Alberta. Instead, that member, like his colleagues, continues to rise in the House and say that this is about getting big money out of politics. Again, Mr. Speaker, that's something that every party has already agreed to. The question now to the member and the reason that this hoist motion should pass to give the government more time is: why all the extra stuff that's making things harder for political parties? Why the attack on the small political parties? Why the attack on volunteers in our system? Why raise the political donation amount for CAs when you told the people of Alberta that you're lowering them? The people of Alberta know the difference between \$1,000 and \$4,000. Why make it so that only one or two people can totally fund one MLA's campaign? Not once has a member risen there.

11:00

I will note, Mr. Speaker, that in committee, as we debated the ridiculous motion to get his campaign expenses paid for, he sure

had a lot to say about that. He talks a lot about talking to his constituents. I'd like to know what his constituents think about him trying to get his campaign expenses paid for. I'm sure his constituents would be extremely concerned about that and would recognize that I'm right by moving this hoist because, clearly, this government can't be trusted.

This government can't be trusted with their decision-making. Their focus is on themselves and not on the people of Alberta. Their focus is on making the process easier for them and not on the people of Alberta. Their focus is on their re-election chances and not on the 100,000 people that are out of work, not on making our election system work, not on being fair to candidates that participate in the process. Their focus is on interfering with individual political parties to try to advantage their party, not on lowering donation limits, because they're increasing them by 400 per cent.

Not once did that member, when he rose, address that. Instead, he went back to the same government talking points that we've heard time and time and time again in this House – they're getting old; you should e-mail whoever sends them to you and get some new ones – and that is that they are trying to get big money out of politics. If they were trying to get big money out of politics, Mr. Speaker, they wouldn't be raising the limits.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak. When I think of this bill, I think of it in terms of the good, the bad, and the cynical. There are some good things in this bill. Getting big money out of politics is something that I campaigned on. It's something I believe in very strongly and personally. My party members have told me time and again that they want it, and reducing the donation limit from \$15,000 to \$4,000 is a good thing. That's a positive thing, as are spending limits within the bill. That does in fact get big money out of politics. Given those two things, I did want to support this bill. I wanted to see a bill that I could support, that I could get behind.

I think we had a real opportunity to fundamentally transform how Alberta's democracy works. That was the promise of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, which was created, you'll all recall, in conjunction with the government and the Official Opposition. It was an all-party committee involving all members of the House. Had we done that, the government could have won. They could have been seen in the eyes of Albertans to have done the right thing. They could have established election laws that stood the test of time, that allowed Albertans to participate freely and actively in democracy without giving an unfair advantage to any one group and, equally, not disadvantaging one group. Most importantly, Albertans would have won in that scenario, Mr. Speaker, not just political parties. Albertans could have won.

That committee was a chance to reset democracy and to create a long-term legacy for this government, but instead they chose the cynical path. Instead, they chose to lock in their own advantage while they can, and in so doing, they have diminished democracy in this province. They have done that by reinforcing in Albertans' minds that the only thing politicians do are things for themselves, that when they get into a majority government, they just ram through whatever is best for them. That is sad, Mr. Speaker. It is troubling, and it didn't have to be this way. It really didn't.

This government had a chance. It was elected on this wave of optimism, this time for change, and they could have fundamentally changed Albertans' perceptions of politics. That would be good for not just this government; it would be good for democracy. It would

have been good for our province. That, Mr. Speaker, is why I'm so profoundly disappointed to have to vote against this bill, to vote in favour of the amendment on the floor from the hon. member, and to vote against this bill, ultimately, at third reading.

Increasing constituency donation limits from \$1,000 to \$4,000 goes exactly against what all members on the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, including eight New Democrats, voted for. They voted and accepted a very reasonable opposition amendment to continue to keep constituency donation limits at \$1,000, as they are now. As we've said many times in this House, what this change does, combined with the \$50,000 spending limit, is that it allows just three people – three people – to fund the campaign of a given MLA. If three people give \$4,000 a year for four years, that's \$48,000. That is the full cost of one MLA's campaign. If we wanted to get big money out of politics, you would have accepted my very reasonable amendment, which was accepted in committee.

I can't understand why that change happened, and I have yet to hear from any of the private members on the ND side why they changed their mind on that beyond thinking: well, I guess I just have to do what I'm told. You did what you were told in the committee. You read the briefing note you were given. You read the speaking points you were given. You read them out. You didn't offer any thought or perspective, and that, again, is frustrating. It doesn't have to be that way. As private members of the Assembly you have remarkable power. You have the most power in this entire building to represent the views of your constituents. Stand up in this Assembly and cast a vote. That is the most powerful thing you can do. Instead, you've chosen to just fall in line.

Including party nominations in campaign disclosure and spending limits not only disadvantages those of us who regularly have nominations – and I have yet to hear how many provincial NDP constituency associations held contested nominations for the 2015 election. I don't know any. Maybe there were some.

**Mr. Malkinson:** There were many.

**Mr. Clark:** I'd like to know how many. The Member for Calgary-Currie tells me there were many. I imagine you have better access to that data than I do. I have yet to hear anyone from that side stand up and tell me how many. How many of you in this room are here because you were the winner in a contested nomination for the 2015 election? How many? Hands up. There's one. Any others? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point is that other parties, including ours, regularly have contested nominations. As a result, this disadvantages those parties that do.

More importantly, though, far more important than those internal party mechanics, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that people who are underrepresented in politics – and this is the part that baffles me the most. People who are underrepresented in politics – women, people of colour, indigenous peoples, people on low incomes – are already disproportionately underrepresented in the Legislative Assembly. This creates a barrier for those people to participate in the electoral process because now they need to also be able to raise money, fill in all of the paperwork from Elections Alberta, comply with the rules. I can tell you for a fact that that is going to put people off running for a nomination, people who ought to be involved in the process, and for the NDP to be creating that situation is unconscionable.

Adding four times the amount of work for the dedicated volunteers who manage our constituency association finances is

unconscionable. That locks in the NDP's central-command-and-control model for other parties as well. We will absolutely comply, Mr. Speaker. That's who we are. Of course we're going to comply with the rules. Of course our constituency associations will file the massively increased filings that are going to be required quarterly. Of course we will because if that's the rule, that's what we will do.

But I can tell you as an emerging party that this particular provision is directed absolutely straight at us. There's absolutely no question. We don't have the resources of the larger parties to hire staff to take care of quarterly reporting for constituency associations. Now, we will comply with it. Make no mistake. We absolutely will comply. But – make no mistake – this is about short-circuiting the growth of emerging parties, the NDP locking in their advantage as government, locking in large parties. Our system works best when new parties emerge to challenge the government to reflect the views of Albertans. Albertans will see this for what it is.

They cherry-pick the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer, this one included. The Chief Electoral Officer recommended that we eliminate quarterly reporting for constituency associations, and the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, nine New Democrats included, agreed with that recommendation and voted unanimously to eliminate quarterly reporting. Instead, they've gone in the other direction and ramped that up by at least four times if not more. I made amendments on quarterly reporting and on reducing the \$4,000 constituency reporting, and those were rejected by this government.

**11:10**

When it comes to third-party advertising, better known as PACs, or political action committees, this legislation creates a fertile ground for those political action committees to spring up, with the sole purpose, unfortunately, of tearing down one party or another, tearing down one candidate or another. And they've done that by constraining the campaign financing system so much that Albertans who want to participate have no choice but to put their money outside the system.

It's not just about acknowledging that those things are going to happen and exist and disclosing – by the way, I absolutely agree with third-party donation disclosure. I absolutely do. What worries me very much is that in the rush to constrain the system to exactly the maximum that the NDs can extract from it yet disadvantage everyone else, they've created a fertile ground where third parties and PACs will rise up, will create American-style politics in this province. That, I know, is not what Albertans want, and I fear very much, Mr. Speaker, that that's what's happening here, that that is what's going to happen. I think the NDs are playing with fire. Albertans are going to see that.

The cynical, Mr. Speaker: they're locking in their own advantage, creating cynicism, and exacerbating the unfortunate perception Albertans have that politicians will only do what's in their best interest, not the best interest of Albertans. Albertans want a fair fight. Albertans want a fair fight. They don't like it when the person in charge puts their thumb on the scale to their advantage. They don't like that.

There's no question that the NDs are trying to constrain the growth of the Alberta Party, trying to constrain the growth of the Alberta Liberals and other small, emerging parties that may rise up over time. Rules are much more difficult to comply with for smaller parties. Now, we will comply, Mr. Speaker. Unquestionably, we will comply.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will vote in favour of the motion that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre has put on the floor. I wish I didn't have to. I really wish that we were here

celebrating the successful passage of an important bill, but unfortunately the NDs have taken advantage of their position in a majority government in such a way that I simply cannot support the bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments for the Member for Calgary-Elbow under 29(2)(a)?

The Member for Calgary-Hays. Are you speaking to the amendment?

**Mr. McIver:** To the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise in support of the amendment before us, put forward by the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. For a whole number of good reasons the government needs more time to actually think about what they're trying to do here. Let me give you some examples where they will be found wanting and they will be found, really, in contempt of Albertans in that they're trying to tip the playing field in their favour.

Let's start with the fact that the premise of the bill, that the government likes to talk about, is to take big money out of politics. Well, what the big print giveth, the small print clearly taketh away because, again, annual donations to a constituency go from \$1,000 to \$4,000. How does that reduce the money in politics? You know, maybe the government members need to think about that a little bit and think about how that relates to the honesty of what they're putting forward here. I think six months thinking about this would actually do them some good, Mr. Speaker.

Let's talk about that \$4,000 number for a little bit because somebody did some work on this. If anybody listening wants to know why this is clearly tipping the scale in the NDP's favour, during the 2015 election the highest donations received: the NDP received six donations over \$4,000, just six, where the Wildrose had 30 over \$4,000, and the PCs had 66 donations over \$4,000. So here's where it is. The NDP got six, 30 for the Wildrose, 66 for the PCs.

So who does this favour, Mr. Speaker? Those people listening won't have any trouble figuring that out. They are tipping the scales in their own favour in a very demonstrable, unarguable way, that the public record supports, and the public will be very unhappy if the government doesn't take six months to reconsider what they're doing here. You know what? The facts actually confirm that the NDP is trying to tip the scales in their favour. It won't be very pleasant for them when Albertans figure out that they are actually trying to mess with democracy.

They're messing with democracy in a whole number of ways. The fact that they are allowing essentially unlimited spending by third parties: I appreciate that the \$150,000 is per third party, but there's no limit on the number of third parties – anybody that can raise \$150,000, has a friend who can be up front to raise another \$150,000 and another friend that can raise another \$150,000 – yet the government has limited each of the political parties to \$2 million during the campaign period. In other words, those people actually trying to get elected and make it a battle of ideas in the public realm, which is what an election should be, will now be overwhelmed by people that haven't put their names forward in the contest. That's the risk that this government is prepared to take with Alberta's democracy. In fact, they're inviting it, Mr. Speaker.

You know what? With the rules that are in place now and have been in place, the government could make a legitimate argument, which, frankly, our party and all the other opposition parties have

agreed with, that \$30,000 is too high a limit. We've all agreed to that. What they haven't dealt with is the fact that they are now making it – I'll tell you what the other system did have. Everybody that gave money: it was reported directly by which party or which constituency they gave the money to, so members of the public could see who's supporting people and make their own judgment about whether the amount of influence was legitimate or not, whether it was too much or not enough, or whether there was something wrong there. Now you'll never be sure because people will be able to give money to third parties. Of course, you know, I appreciate that that'll be disclosed, too, but by the time people figure out which third party is giving money to whom and for what purpose and who gave money to the third party, the election will be long over, and people won't be able to make those judgments.

Mr. Speaker, again, this government is doing their best to tip the scales in their favour and their favour alone. The fact that they haven't properly limited government spending during and near the writ period: again they've demonstrated this month, this week that they're prepared to stomp all over a fair fight in the fact that they've spent now \$9 million pushing their carbon tax, that nobody likes or very few people like in Alberta. That, by what's in this legislation, is more than the four parties, the other four parties in this House, if they all spent the maximum \$2 million under this legislation – the government this month and last month spent more on the carbon tax than that combined and another million dollars on top. They are willing to overwhelm with their government advantage everybody else's voice. If that also doesn't make it obvious to anybody listening to this that they are tipping the scales, the playing field in their favour, I can't think of another. Those are two indictments that are absolutely inescapable.

Six months for the government to think about this, six months to maybe take it back to committee, where some good work was being done, six months to make sure that it's fair in the eyes of Albertans will do this government a world of good. It may even allow them to see, to have some clarity on the damage that this piece of legislation could do to the very concept of democracy.

You know, democracy is not something to be sneered at or laughed at. It's actually the difference between countries that people want to live in and countries that people fight to get out of so they can come to countries like Canada and the United States and Britain and others of the world's great democracies. People choose to go there because in a democracy there's a much higher chance that the rule of law will prevail, that you'll be safe, that your kids and your family will be safe. This NDP government wants to stomp all over and wipe their feet on democracy. That's what this legislation does. Six months for them to think about it will actually be good for them because it will give them a chance to see this with some clarity and understand what a despicable piece of legislation this is.

**11:20**

You know, I understand making the rules fair for everybody. That would be good, but this doesn't do it. Again, they've set the limits for constituency donations four times as high as they are now, and they have actually tailor-made it to do the least damage to the NDP and the most damage to their biggest competitors. Black and white. Black and white. It's so wrong, so unfair, so designed to tip the scales in their favour that no one could deny it, Mr. Speaker.

Then we get into the fact that – here's another reason why they need six months – the committee was warned that some of the changes in this legislation will not stand up to a constitutional challenge. Freedom of association, freedom of expression are issues. This is begging for a constitutional challenge, and we don't

know how much that will cost Alberta taxpayers and how much egg will be on the government's face. Yet if they had six months to think about it, maybe they would take that out.

My colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster made a very long amendment, that he tried to push through, one that was important to keeping the government out of a party's internal business because at that level, before someone's even nominated to a party, essentially they're private citizens. Yet this government is trying to reach into the lives of private citizens before they even become a nominated member of a party. They're trampling people's privacy. They're trampling the ability for private clubs to operate in a private way.

There have been things said over time about where a government's nose belongs and where it doesn't. It doesn't belong in the private business of private citizens. This legislation sticks this government's nose right in the lives of private citizens before they're nominated: another reason why thinking about this for six months more will not only be good for this government, but if they change their mind and decide to straighten up and fly right legislatively, it will be in the government's best interests, Mr. Speaker.

They may have a chance of having some credibility, when they get back to their own constituencies, that they haven't actually tried to be unfair with the democratic process, the very process that makes this country and this province a great place to live, a place where the rule of law prevails, where equality of all people prevails. Yet they want to tip the scales in their favour. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, they've been caught. They've been caught tipping the scales in their favour. My colleague who moved the amendment here – I guess it's a good thing. He's embarrassing the government. He's embarrassing the government by making them look at their own legislation and see just how damaging it is, how unfair it is, and how unworthy of this Legislative Assembly this piece of legislation is.

Again, Mr. Speaker, part of that reaching into the constituency contest actually allows the government to find out who is donating to parties, who supports them, and to intimidate them. Again, we've heard from members that are supporters of ours, that have been on boards of our constituencies that they're dropping off because they've been told by government officials that if their name is on a list, they won't be nominated to be on agencies, boards, and commissions and that it may be harder for their companies to do business with this government. This legislation actually enables that very intimidation.

Six months to think about that, Mr. Speaker, is something that may have the government come to their senses and decide to do something much more reasonable, much more fair, much more respectful of democracy, and much more respectful of the very Albertans that we should all be here to represent and to look after the best interests of, making sure that when they pick their next government by picking their next MLAs, the contest, both province-wide and in each of the constituencies, is a fair fight, not one tilted with this terrible piece of legislation, this piece of legislation that, obviously, the government has tailor-made to suit their electoral chances in the next election and tip the scales in their favour and move the playing field in their favour.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to support this amendment. I'm going to support this amendment because while I don't have a whole bunch of faith, I live in hope that the government may actually see right from wrong and make the changes that would make this right, the changes that desperately need to be made in this piece of legislation.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Calgary-Hays?

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to the . . .

**Mr. Nixon:** Question, sir.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:25 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Nixon
Clark	Hunter	Panda
Drysdale	Loewen	Schneider
Ellis	MacIntyre	Starke
Gotfried	McIver	Stier

**11:30**

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Phillips
Babcock	Horne	Piquette
Bilous	Kleinsteuber	Renaud
Ceci	Loyola	Rosendahl
Connolly	Malkinson	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	McCuaig-Boyd	Schreiner
Dach	McKitrick	Shepherd
Dang	McPherson	Sucha
Drever	Miller	Swann
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Westhead
Goehring	Nielsen	Woollard
Hinkley	Payne	

Totals: For – 15 Against – 35

[Motion on amendment HA lost]

**The Speaker:** Now on the motion for third reading of Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, as proposed by the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park on behalf of the minister responsible for democratic renewal.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:31 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Payne
Babcock	Hoffman	Phillips
Bilous	Horne	Piquette
Carlier	Kleinsteuber	Renaud
Ceci	Loyola	Rosendahl
Connolly	Malkinson	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	McCuaig-Boyd	Schreiner
Dach	McKitrick	Shepherd
Dang	McPherson	Sucha
Drever	Miller	Swann

Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Westhead
Goehring	Nielsen	Woollard

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Nixon
Clark	Hunter	Panda
Drysdale	Loewen	Schneider
Ellis	MacIntyre	Starke
Gotfried	McIver	Stier

Totals: For – 36 Against – 15

[Motion carried; Bill 35 read a third time]

## Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise and move third reading of Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act.

This is a historic occasion for our province. After years of announcements about studies, discussions, plans to plan frameworks, and even short-lived cabinet positions to pursue renewable energy in Alberta, we can stand proud and proclaim that this government, our government, is taking action that will bring more widespread renewable deployment to our province. We are introducing the first piece of renewable energy legislation in Alberta history. The idea of a policy framework to encourage the development of renewable electricity energy in Alberta goes back to at least 2005, when it was recommended to government that the province develop and implement such a framework.

Well, it's been a long decade. It's been a long 10 years for Albertans excited about the opportunity for more of our electricity to be produced cleanly here in Alberta. It's been a long 10 years for developers looking to bring their investment capital to our province to create jobs and generate clean energy, and it's been a long 10 years for landowners awaiting opportunities for supplemental farm income and for rural municipalities awaiting the considerable new municipal renewable energy projects that will bring and support the community services they provide.

But we have made it to today, and today we are enacting the framework that we need to create a series of renewable electricity programs to achieve our 30 per cent target. With our target of 30 per cent renewable energy by 2030 we are creating the opportunity for the largest market for new renewable energy investment in Canada. By legislating that target, we are maximizing the conditions for investment and economic development and jobs and for the lowest cost renewable energy projects. We are talking \$10.5 billion in private investment, 7,200 jobs. That's what we hear from the experts and stakeholders and investors that we listened to.

Also through this framework we are enacting the structures we need to maximize the amount of new, clean, renewable electricity generation we can get for our investment of carbon revenues from major industrial emitters. This bill has been carefully written to deliver the lowest cost renewable energy projects to supply our target. The provisions in this bill are the result of considerable engagement with stakeholders and advice from noted experts in electricity and renewable energy development.

With this bill we move forward with Alberta's renewable energy opportunities at last. We leave behind the myths and disproven, disparaging innuendo. We leave behind the era of inertia and inaction. We enact one of the key planks of the climate leadership plan. We are reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and curbing

our air pollution. We are diversifying our economy, and we are creating good, clean jobs in renewable energy development, operations, and maintenance while ensuring reliable and affordable electricity for Albertans. We look forward to continuing to work to bring these benefits to Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

11:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to everyone for the opportunity to speak to this in third reading. I just want to say that I know for myself and on this side of the House our key plank is for Albertans, hands down. Our key plank is about protecting Albertans, about protecting their jobs, and about making sure that there is transparency, something that is wholly lacking in this piece of legislation. As an Albertan and a mom, a sister, a wife, a legislator, a musician, a business owner, and a teacher I have to say that I have a great deal of disappointment with the lack of collaboration that I have seen in the hours and hours and hours and hours that we've stood in this House and debated on these bills. In every other role in my life there are always going to be confrontational situations. There are always going to be things that come up that people don't agree on. You can come to an understanding – maybe you agree to disagree – or you go back and forth and find some sort of middle ground, and you still remain civil and kind and thoughtful and open minded.

I'm truly appreciative of the members that actually stood up on the government side of the House and spoke to this bill. I would have preferred if they had actually read the amendments that we had brought forward before speaking on them or to the bill, for that matter, because the amendments that we brought forward were there to actually add accountability and transparency, mechanisms for metrics, mechanisms to make sure that there were reasonable ways for the government to show Albertans that what we're doing there is in the best interests of Albertans. That's my key plank. That is the key plank of the Wildrose.

I've said this before: we are small but mighty over here. I am absolutely blessed to be surrounded by people who have become my mentors and are extremely intelligent on these files, have the academic background to support the information that they bring forward. You know, we've done so much research. We've stood in this House and brought forward so many reasonable amendments to help this bill be better. The bill, in its essence, to me, is not a bill that I would want to bring into legislation, but given that it's here, we have tried at every opportunity to give some credibility to the legislation that this government has brought forward. We have spent hours talking to stakeholders, especially when some of this legislation lands in your lap and you're dissecting it, reaching out to them to try and find out what it is that we're doing here, hours and hours and hours in here trying to wade through this bill, which basically should be called an arbitrary target bill. You want to know – I'd like to know – what's really behind this bill. It's a question that I keep asking myself. The government has set arbitrary targets. Do you want to know who the target is? Albertans. Albertans are the target. Albertans, my family, your family, Mr. Speaker, everybody's family.

All I can think of is that the only reason that the government moved to a capacity model in the first place is because it's just given the government a licence to subsidize the renewable sector. I mean, you cannot get to this arbitrary target of 30 per cent with a deregulated market, or a free market. This legislation is going to cost Albertans in their pockets every day, and this government will have that legacy. Albertans are the target. They're certainly not the

key plank of this government. You know, the hard part and the part that's so sad is that the government is fine with that. It charges the taxpayer and the ratepayer. I mean, what is the government thinking? Or worse, they were thinking, and they knew that by tearing up those PPAs, it would trigger this domino effect and this ridiculous legislation. The government is going to build their green legacy on the backs of Albertans who are suffering, who are losing their jobs. We see a government that cares more about the climate leadership action plan than they do about the well-being of the people that they represent.

What about the stranded assets? The plan, as I understand it, is that the government is going to take \$3 billion from Albertans for this slush fund, this green slush fund. This resulted in the destruction of the PPAs, which is about \$600 million to \$900 million approximately plus the \$1.4 billion in losses for the coal phase-out. You add to that the cost of the massive infrastructure, the subsidies that we know are going to be going to these investors that are going to be coming into our province – that is going to be on the back of the taxpayer – and the subsidies that are going to be required to actually keep these mechanisms running. The market cannot.

Also, on top of that – and I think this is extremely striking – when you hear the words “fair and reasonable,” “fair and responsible,” I would think that at every opportunity, Mr. Speaker, this is something we would want at every phase of legislation. Doesn't that just describe to you, in a nutshell, transparency and accountability? Those two words, for me, are words we use in our household all the time. We use it with our kids. We use it in the things that we do, how we live our lives.

It's certainly a mandate that I would like to live by, yet the government feels that at any point in legislation it may be redundant. Okay. I personally would honour the fact that a government would like to be redundant in being fair and responsible. That, to me, is a good redundancy. We've seen a lot of other redundant things here that I wouldn't agree with. That is one that I would agree with. Why, why, why would you remove the words “fair and responsible” from any piece of legislation ever?

Then, on top of that, we see reduced accountability with the MSA – this is the electricity police – and oddly enough it's only in renewables. Why? Because then the MSA cannot do its due diligence in making sure that the renewables portion is actually doing what they're supposed to do. It is called economic withholding. That is what the MSA did. That is why they were able to police, Mr. Speaker, all of the other companies when they tried to overcharge Albertans during peak times. That has been removed from this legislation along with “fair and responsible.” I'm telling you: Albertans are hearing this. They know what's going on. They are not happy, and that is an understatement.

How is it that the ISO, an arm's-length portion of this, is now all of a sudden able to hold securities and interests in generation? Now, how does that work? Nobody has been able to explain that to me well quite yet, and I am extremely concerned about that aspect.

I think the simplest thing that we asked for, that got voted down as well, is that we asked that the minister's website post any upcoming projects that the government is looking at, and they wouldn't even do that. Why? Well, I think Albertans can probably figure out why. If they don't post it, they don't have to honour the entire idea of accountability and transparency to Albertans about who it is that they're bringing in on these projects.

The minister mentioned about \$10.5 billion of private-sector investment. Excellent. We love that. That would be wonderful. But I'm just curious. These people who are going to be incentivized to come in and invest in Alberta: I'm sure that you will have it on your website that this government likes to tear up contracts. When you



sell a car that's been in an accident or anything like that, you have to disclose the mistake. You have to disclose that you've been in an accident. This is an accident of mass proportions. So I'd like to know where that's going to be disclosed. Is that going to be on, like, the header: "Come invest in Alberta. We tear up contracts"?

What about peaker plants? Have you thought about that? This is an important aspect. When you're bringing renewables online, it's going to be an important aspect.

Anyway, I feel it's very important that the government understand that what we are looking at here is a lack of accountability and a lack of transparency. I'd love to count up the number of hours that we have stood up on this side of the House talking about this, trying to bring credibility to this legislation.

Again, I just have to end, Mr. Speaker, with that it's extremely disappointing to me that, at least in some instances, we couldn't come to some agreements on these amendments that would have made this very, very poor legislation better. Thank you.

**11:50**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone who wishes to speak to Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, in third reading? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we have before us a pretty significant bill with some pretty far-reaching implications, and I'm going to present an amendment this morning.

**The Speaker:** Yes. Please proceed.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day six months hence."

The reason for this hoist amendment is because of the far-reaching implications of this bill and the obvious lack of consultation and planning and analysis that this government has not done. If we go through this bill – and I have gone through this bill countless times now – we have just a few things to point out here. In the beginning of this bill we have a target that says: "at least 30%." We have no information, no analysis, and there have been no independent studies presented by the government on how they arrived at a 30 per cent number other than a suggestion from some hon. members that it sounds good to say "30 by 2030." But that's not really good enough from technical or financial points of view.

Furthermore, the act says, "At least 30%," which, of course, then leaves the door wide open for even a greater amount than 30 per cent when, in fact, technically our grid would be substantially unstable beyond that. That tells me right away that there was not, obviously, consultation done with the technical experts in the field of our grid. Otherwise, the government or whoever authored this would have known that pushing the envelope, actually, beyond 25 starts to get technically touchy.

Then we come to the issue of fair and balanced, where this bill strikes a section from the Electric Utilities Act where the ISO must act in a way

that is fair and responsible to provide for the safe, reliable and economic operation of the interconnected electric system and to promote a fair, efficient and openly competitive market for electricity.

This bill strikes the fair and reasonable, fair and balanced requirement. That, in and of itself, ought to be enough of a red flag for this bill actually to be struck down. Why in the world would any government in any democracy want to remove the word "fair" out of a bill, out of an existing act? Why in the world would any

democracy in the world want to remove "fair and responsible," "safe, reliable and economic," and "efficient and openly competitive market for electricity"? Why ditch that? Is this really a New Democratic Party that's in government here when they're striking things like "fair and responsible" out of legislation in our province?

Then we come to the lack of economic assessment. We tried to put forward an amendment that would require an economic impact assessment, but of course the government didn't want to have that. Before going down this track, ISO, in the development of their proposals, really needs to do economic impact assessments, even social impact assessments. Environmental impact assessments are done, but how about economic impact assessments? Of course, if you don't have to be fair and reasonable, then why on earth would you ever want an economic impact assessment, right?

Albertans really, Mr. Speaker, have a right to know what the impacts are of the agreements that are going to be made by this government with renewables corporations and generators in the whole development of this 30 per cent by 2030 business. This government has been proceeding headlong into its ideological agenda without a whole lot of checking the facts, doing assessments, doing analysis, talking to the experts. The purpose of this hoist is to give some time for Albertans to actually be consulted, some time for Albertans to actually speak to this government, not just experts, because I'm hoping that they would do such a thing, but also everyday Albertans.

We had a situation in this bill where we tried to put forward an amendment because there was a section in it that said that "the Minister may establish" certain program objectives. We wanted that changed to "will establish" or "shall establish and make public" those kinds of program objectives, and strangely the government voted that amendment down. They didn't want the minister to be compelled to set clear objectives and make them public. Very strange.

A total of 11 amendments were voted down, and all of those amendments had as their purpose accountability, transparency, clear objectives, performance measurement, that sort of thing. All in all, every amendment was ratepayer and taxpayer facing, making sure that Albertans knew the facts, making sure that Albertans were involved in the process, making sure that Albertans had everything that they needed. Interesting. [An electronic device sounded] That's just ducky.

Then we come to a fairness adviser, yet the fairness adviser's work wasn't even going to see the light of day. How fair is that? Not fair at all.

Then respect for landowners. We tried to introduce an amendment that would ensure that landowners' property rights were respected, and it was amazing the vitriol, I will call it, from the other side over something they also campaigned for, like we did. That was just the strangest thing. I will chalk it up to it occurring after midnight, and, you know, weird things happen after midnight in this place.

On and on we saw it. We tried to introduce some things requiring performance bonds and reclamation bonding, making sure that at the end of the life cycle of these projects there was something in place regarding reclamation specifically. No. The government wanted to vote that down, too. Very strange. Very strange.

It leads me to suspect, given the power that the minister is going to have to push renewables, given that the Market Surveillance Administrator will have no power whatsoever to look into complaints against renewable projects, the secrecy, the hiding of things, the lack of reporting required, the lack of analysis required, the lack, generally, of accountability . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if I could interrupt. I thought that for a moment you were going to have duck for Christmas dinner rather than turkey.

The House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, December 13, 2016

Day 62

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 13, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 31 students from Afton elementary in the beautiful constituency of Edmonton-Meadowlark. The students are accompanied today by their teacher Nicholas Suvanto and chaparrone Carlowin Irang. I would now ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, there are no other school groups?  
Seeing and hearing none, the Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you three community advocates and leaders from the Alberta Somali Community Centre. I have the honour of meeting with them a little bit later this afternoon. New Canadians are such an important part of our province, and I look forward to their insights into how we can improve mental health supports in their community. I ask that Habiba Abdulle, Sudi Barre, and Dhahabo Salad please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, any other introductions? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my very great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests that are in attendance. The first is Stephanie Shostak. Stephanie is the regional director for Edmonton north on PC Alberta. I ask Stephanie to rise and receive the warm greeting of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, my second guest is someone who could certainly not be called a stranger to these august chambers, perhaps has attended more sessions of question period than most of us here perhaps even combined. It's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Rory Koopmans.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

#### Cavendish Farms Expansion in Lethbridge

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, since being elected in May of 2015, I've listened to a barrage of negative rhetoric from opposition about our government. Well, I'm proud to be part of a government that gets things done. Yesterday in Lethbridge the myths that are told about this government were blown away with the announcement of a \$350 million private investment by Cavendish Farms with J.D. Irving, a Canadian blue-chip company. This is the largest private investment Lethbridge, and probably southern Alberta, has ever seen. This investment will boost the province's GDP by \$90 million a year during construction and \$26.6 million during operations.

Mr. Speaker, this investment came because of certainty and a vision of prosperity and growth for our province from this government and Cavendish Farms. I am so proud of being just a small part in the process which brought this to fruition. I'm so proud of all those involved: Mayor Spearman; Lethbridge city council; Economic Development Lethbridge, in particular, CEO Trevor Lewington; our city manager, Garth Sherwin; our provincial government; and, of course, Mr. Robert Irving and all of the Cavendish Farms staff. I know the long hours of work which have gone on for the last nine months to make this happen are worth it as we see the economic impact roll out in Lethbridge, southern Alberta, and Alberta as a whole.

Thank you to all of my colleagues for their support of all of this positive legislation this past session. I had planned as my statement today wishing a happy 50th anniversary to my former union, the Public Service Alliance of Canada. I am sure they will forgive me.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

#### Whitefish Lake First Nation Education Program

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to congratulate the elders, chief, council, and members of the Whitefish Lake First Nation. For the last three years the nation has provided members with a 16-week program offering life skills, job readiness, and safety training. They offer five entry-level trades, including carpentry, plumbing, electrical, insulating, and scaffolding. The program prepares graduates for the workforce in the construction industry, mainly oil and gas. To date there have been six successful programs with approximately 80 graduates in total. Ninety-five per cent of the students completed the program, with an 85 per cent employment success rate. That's more than 60 First Nation members who have been trained in the trades in three years. What a great accomplishment.

On Friday I had the very real pleasure to speak at the graduation ceremonies. These 14 grads started the program in September and hope to start work very soon in the new year. This is only one example of what the First Nation offers its members in support of building a solid educational foundation. They provide studies at different times to allow people facing different life experiences lots of opportunities to continue their postsecondary studies, including intersession in spring and summer, part-time, home studies, and evening courses. To paraphrase the Whitefish Lake postsecondary education philosophy statement, the program

will endeavour to provide and maintain service delivery in education, individual and career counselling for all of the band members . . . whereby education will be the means by which each student may develop physically, socially, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually so that he or she can become a competent, responsible and contributing member of the community of Whitefish Lake . . . and the society at large.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the elders; Chief Brian Favel; councillors James Jackson, Kevin Half, and Greg Sparklingeyes; and special thanks also to Rennie Houle, the program director, and the First Nation members who are taking advantage of this great opportunity.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

#### Protection of Children in Care

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to address comments made in the Chamber yesterday by our hon. Premier. Specifically, the Premier claimed that for 44 years Progressive

Conservative governments did not adequately address flaws in Alberta's child intervention system. This is true. Although not for a lack of trying, still, we fell short. While previous PC ministers, most notably late Manmeet Bhullar, made significant and well-intentioned efforts to improve the system, we know now that it wasn't enough to save Serenity from her terrible fate. If it was easy, we would have fixed it. If it was easy, the NDP would have fixed it. Because it's not easy, now is the time to work together to make it better in public. Because we did not get it right, both the PCs and the NDP will take some criticism in the process. Let's both agree to take that heat if it results in saving young lives like Serenity's.

Children in care are the personal responsibility of all members of this Assembly. We owe them our very best efforts to get this right. Let's start by passing Serenity's law today. Then, Mr. Speaker, let's take part in an all-party committee of the Legislature, where the public can watch us do our best to fix the system.

Let's face it. Both this government and the last one have been shocked into action by public pressure in the media. Keeping the public pressure on will force all of us to do our best and move forward. The choice is simple, Premier. We can do this publicly and openly and give hope of getting better results in the future, or we can bury the process for six months behind the secrecy of a ministerial panel and hope the public forgets, at least until the next scathing report from the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. I know which choice the public thinks is best.

Let's commit today to making better choices as our own Premier has advised Albertans to do. Then, and only then, will we have earned the right to go home for Christmas vacation, knowing we will have done our best and that we can dig in for Alberta's children in care. Alberta kids deserve no less.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

#### 1:40 Climate Change and Energy Policies

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am passionate about a great many things – my community, my constituents, my family, and the world we live in – and I am not alone. Albertans also have a great many passions that they feel strongly about.

This weekend I watched a National Geographic program on climate change with my kids, and the figures were devastating. Looking over at my sons, I knew that in the future I'd want them to be able to say: "Thank you for understanding and believing in the science of climate change. Thank you for working to make a difference and caring about our future." Mr. Speaker, I want my community to know that we are working towards a better plan for tomorrow for all Albertans.

I am proud to be a part of this government and the climate leadership plan, which has resulted in two pipeline approvals and is driving the new businesses that are popping up to meet the demand of this new, less carbon-intensive energy market.

Areas like the Nisku and Leduc industrial parks get hit hard when the price of oil fluctuates. We've seen thousands of job losses in our community and an entire energy park slow down. However, the importance of a pipeline is something that constituents have said again and again would help, a pipeline to help create jobs all across the country and to put skilled tradespeople and engineers back to work in Nisku, where advanced manufacturing has been a shining example of what happens when entrepreneurship and innovation meet opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are resilient, from farms taking advantage of extra funding for on-farm solar to the leadership of the city of Leduc in GHG reduction, with the rec centre having the largest municipal rooftop solar install in Canada.

We are adapting to the new energy climate, an energy climate that is about balance and a less carbon-intensive energy market. The carbon levy is an important part of this, and it shows our commitment to this new market while at the same time we are protecting Alberta families and my constituents through the rebate program.

Mr. Speaker, the changes happening to our climate are real. I want my children to look at me as a man who chose to do the right thing for this province and the world even when it was difficult. Decisions made in our backyard impact backyards across the globe. We are taking action now with our climate leadership plan, not simply because we want to but because we need to.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

#### Festival Place in Sherwood Park

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the hard work and debate that this House has engaged in over the last few months on serious issues, I would like to encourage members to get out this holiday season and throughout the year and support art and culture organizations in their communities.

In my community we have a wonderful facility, Festival Place, which offers world-famous musical acts in a perfectly sized venue where one can bring their drink in. Recent acts include André-Philippe Gagnon, and comedian Ali Hassan will be there in January.

But beyond professional acts every year this theatre presents a community musical with many community actors and singers. I look forward to the performance this year of *Anne of Green Gables*.

My favourite event at Festival Place is the summer patio series, held outdoors with food and beverages, featuring Canadian and international Celtic, blues, and folk acts. For \$8 per night it is affordable and has introduced me to the work of many wonderful musicians.

This performance space also hosts school award ceremonies, music festivals, and space for multicultural dance and music acts as well as trains young people during the summer in the circus arts.

Like all communities Sherwood Park is home to many dance studios, music schools, choirs, and school drama groups, who spark and nurture artistic talent in residents of all ages. Last year one of these choirs of older adults sang in the rotunda.

Through support from government, including the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and foundations, Albertans outside of the major cities often have access to Alberta's major performing art institutions. But even in smaller communities there are always many talented persons who nurture talent and provide opportunities for performances.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach the end of a session and the festive season, I would like to urge everyone in this House to take the opportunity to support their local theatre, symphony, ballet, music venue, attend performances of community groups, and enjoy the season through the arts. See you all at the theatre.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

#### National Finals Rodeo Champions

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is well known for cowboys and the sport of rodeo. This sport has become part of our culture and the identity of Alberta, recognized around the world. The first recognized Canadian rodeo was held in 1903 in the southern Alberta town of Raymond, near Lethbridge. Since that time we have had a great many men and women who have represented our nation in the world finals.

This past weekend the national finals rodeo in Las Vegas, Nevada, concluded with three homegrown cowboys reaching the pinnacle of success in rodeo. Unfortunately, this success has gone largely unreported by the Canadian media. Levi Simpson from Ponoka and Jeremy Buhler from Arrowwood brought home the title of world champions in the team roping event, this after becoming the first all-Canadian team to qualify for team roping at the world championships. Mr. Speaker, not satisfied with just qualifying, they put down a smoking 4.3 second run on the final go-around to seal the deal and bring home the coveted gold buckles of world champions.

Not to be outdone, Zeke Thurston from the diverse riding of Drumheller-Stettler followed up that success. Zeke, who calls Big Valley home, is now sporting his own gold buckle as the world champion saddle bronc rider. Again, Mr. Speaker, Zeke showed the grit and determination cowboys and Albertans are known for, turning in the performance of 747 and a half points on just nine head.

Today it's my privilege to stand in this House and recognize these impressive accomplishments by Levi, Jeremy, and Zeke. I invite the entire House to join me in showing our appreciation of these Canadian cowboys. They have competed and represented our nation with pride and honour at the national finals rodeo. We congratulate them on a job well done.

### Presenting Petitions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a petition today that says:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta petition, the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to take the following measures to improve the treatment and protection of the wolf population in Alberta.

- (1) prohibit the posting of bounties on wolves by individuals, clubs, special interest groups, or municipalities;
- (2) abolish the use of poison, such as strychnine;
- (3) approve humane standards for the use of snares and make documentation for all snare by-catch mandatory;
- (4) reduce the six-month trapping season and ten-month hunting season upon wolves;
- (5) keep an inventory and monitor the wolf populations of Alberta;
- (6) educate ranchers and promote the non-lethal wolf control methods; and
- (7) introduce legislation protecting wolves on public lands, including community grazing pastures.

Mr. Speaker, the petition has been approved by Parliamentary Counsel. It contains about 10,000 signatures from residents of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition. I have several hundred names that have signed a petition that has circulated, actually, throughout the province, and I'm here to table it today. The petition reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to introduce legislation to repeal the Daylight Saving Time Act and require the observance of Central Standard Time in Alberta throughout the entire year.

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition that has been signed by Albertans throughout the province. It was, I believe, started by some constituents in the town of Mannville, and I'm happy to table it at this time.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to table the appropriate number of copies of the annual report of the Appeals Commission for Alberta workers' compensation. The Appeals Commission is the final level of appeal for workers' compensation matters in Alberta. It is independent of the Workers' Compensation Board and accountable to the Ministry of Labour. The document reports on the performance of the Appeals Commission for the period between April 1, 2015, and March 31, 2016, inclusive.

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table the required number of copies of the Report of Selected Payments to the Members and Former Members of the Legislative Assembly and Persons Directly Associated with Members of the Legislative Assembly, also known as the MLA report – this is for the year ended March 31, 2016 – pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act and the Conflicts of Interest Act. As members are likely aware, the report includes such things as salary, benefits, and travel expenses while on MLA or government business.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of the Northern Alberta Development Council 2015-16 annual report as required under the act. This report contains a summary of the council's activities from April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to table five copies of the report that I was citing yesterday from Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions, Biomass Innovation, which talked about a solution for us in Canada. It has a renewable resource that we have, that we can continuously use.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Decorum

**The Speaker:** If you would hold the clock.

Hon. members, I don't choose to speak as a teacher lecturing students. It's not my intent. Yesterday was very noisy, and a very sensitive topic was being discussed. I urge all of you to treat the matter with respect and, more specifically, to control the violence. [interjections] I didn't see that part, but the words nonetheless connect. Be conscious of the words that we all use in here.

Start the clock.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Government Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Well, it's been a busy fall for the NDP. Here are just a few highlights: 13,000 full-time jobs lost in October; a \$10.8 billion deficit; and, of course, a \$1.4 billion price tag to shut down coal in Alberta. To top it all off, the Human Services minister took weeks

to get a critical report to the RCMP about the probable murder of a little girl named Serenity. What does the Premier have to say to Albertans, who will be poorer, who are out of work, and who have lost any trust in this government because of this appalling NDP government's record?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, you know, when our government was elected, we knew that the economy was going into a significant downturn as a result of the drop in the price of oil, and we committed to focusing on having the backs of Albertans, and we committed to working with them in terms of job creation. The last few weeks have actually not been so bad. Just a couple of weeks ago in Lethbridge the single biggest private-sector investment in the history of that city was made to the tune of \$350 million. The PDP announcement that we made last week will bring in 4,000 construction jobs and 1,400 long-term jobs.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** The Premier should tell that to the 100,000-plus Albertans that are out of work, Mr. Speaker.

It is bad. It is very bad, and here are some more highlights: helping Ottawa out by blocking equalization reform, caps on oil sands, caps on refining, asking Alberta taxpayers to be on the hook for billions of dollars in new generation, and an ongoing lawsuit, of course, against a Calgary-owned power company. What could be better? This lawsuit has sent a chill throughout all of Alberta. It's a lawsuit that, if the NDP is successful, will mean property tax hikes for all Calgarians. When will the Premier drop this ridiculous lawsuit and reverse the tax hikes . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we covered a number of topics there, but to go back to equalization, I would of course go back to the member opposite and ask him, when he was in government federally, which actually has some level of authority over that matter, what exactly he did with respect to the equalization issue. I believe he got up to speak over 200 times in the House during his career, and not once – not once – did he raise the matter of equalization. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Quiet, please.

**Ms Notley:** So you know what? I think he's kind of missed his opportunity.

**Mr. Jean:** Of course, the real reason, Mr. Speaker, is because it wasn't renegotiated when I was there.

Here's one surprise that is really rubbing Albertans the wrong way: a commitment to do Ottawa's bidding and raise the carbon tax by another 67 per cent. That's right, Mr. Speaker. The Premier and the NDP have shown open contempt for the millions of Albertans who don't support the carbon tax. The Premier thinks that they need to make better choices, choices like heating their homes or possibly buying groceries, perhaps. This is the largest tax hike in Alberta history. Can the Premier finally tell Albertans why she won't scrap this tax or at least put it to Albertans in a referendum?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for allowing me to go back to the issue of jobs;

for instance, two pipelines, 22,000 jobs – 22,000 jobs – billions of dollars back into the coffers of Albertans, billions of dollars back into the profits of oil and gas companies here in Alberta because of our climate leadership plan, that, as clearly indicated by the Prime Minister of the country, made that decision happen. Our government delivered for Albertans, and I am very proud of that.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

**Mr. Jean:** And not a single shovel in the ground, Mr. Speaker, employing any Albertans.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** It's just 18 days until families see their heating bills go up, pay more at the pumps, and see the price of everything else that they buy skyrocket, but the environment minister has decided, 13 months after first announcing this job-killing tax, that it's finally time to roll up her sleeves and take some phone calls. I have a better idea. Why don't the Premier and her ministers get out of their comfy offices and hold some public town halls across Alberta and look the people in the eye that they're hurting and destroying their lives? That would be a good idea.

**Ms Notley:** Well, interestingly, Mr. Speaker, it is actually the case – I'm not quite sure what the member opposite was doing, but before we introduced the climate leadership plan, there were actually a number of public consultations out there, but he must have missed them.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the renewable energy that our program will produce: 7,200 jobs. With respect to our tax credit program: 9,000 jobs. Interestingly, in just the last couple of weeks we have heard oil and gas companies announce billions and billions of dollars of increases in capital investment for just next year.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Jean:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Most of that investment is in Saskatchewan.

Two-thirds of Albertans don't support this carbon tax, and the Premier knows it. It's why they've unloaded \$9 million in taxpayer-funded propaganda. It's why the Premier is sending the environment minister on a carbon tax telethon to help explain to Albertans how to, as the Premier would say, make better choices. Instead of wasting millions of dollars trying to sell Albertans on something they don't want, why doesn't the Premier take her own advice, make better choices, and scrap the carbon tax?

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, there are two ways to approach building a jurisdiction over which you have some responsibility. You can say no to everything, or you can be the people who say yes. You can be timid, or you can be bold. You can have faith in the people of your province, or you can be xenophobic. You can ultimately decide that you want to move forward with leadership or that you want to go backwards and reject facts. We are moving Alberta forward. We are standing up for Albertans. We have their backs. We will not vote against Alberta's future for political points. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Quiet, please.

**Mr. Jean:** You can create jobs, or you can do what the NDP has done and kill jobs in Alberta.

The NDP seems content with denying basic economics. Here are the facts. Australia has axed their tax, France has axed their tax, and

now the United States will be cutting their business taxes and their income taxes and will have no carbon tax. Mr. Speaker, they will be more competitive in attracting investment, and that only hurts Alberta. This is a big deal. This is not a joke. This is a carbon tax that will hurt people's lives. Why does the Premier think Alberta should pay a carbon tax when none of our major competitors across the world will be paying a carbon tax?

**Ms Notley:** Well, interestingly, Mr. Speaker, one of the folks from whom many of the members opposite take great inspiration just nominated a Secretary of State, who made the following statement, quote: at Exxon Mobil we share the view that the risks of climate change are serious and warrant thoughtful action; we have long supported a carbon tax as the best policy of those being considered. End quote. That is the statement of the nominated Secretary of State for our neighbours to the south. The folks over there should maybe do a bit of research. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Third main question.

## 2:00 Protection of Children in Care

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the Premier why Albertans should trust this government to fix the problems of children in care which resulted, of course, in the tragic death of a four-year-old girl. She pointed to residential schools and the legacy of the '60s scoop. She pointed to fired social workers in the '90s and the actions of the previous PC government. Can the Premier explain exactly how all these events have stopped this government and this minister from changing how child intervention works in Alberta right now, and can she explain exactly how her government has messed up the investigation of Serenity's death under her government's watch?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, we have for a very long time been very, very concerned about the fate and the state of children in care and children who are at risk in the province of Alberta. This is something I think all Albertans care about. Some of the things that we have done, in the 18 months since we've gotten elected, to address the root causes of the risks that are faced by these children are an Alberta child benefit and tax credit which provides \$340 million in benefits to 380,000 children in poverty, to 200,000 families, and we went from a flat tax to a progressive tax, which every...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Jean:** Yesterday I also asked the Premier why she allowed this Human Services minister to ignore recommendations for improvements made by the previous panel to study children in care. Her reply was that some of the recommendations of previous panels weren't helpful. Can the Premier please tell us which recommendations made by the Richter panel she rejected because they weren't helpful, and can she please tell us about any specific recommendations made by the Richter panel that this Human Services minister has actually implemented for the people of Alberta?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that roughly two-thirds of the recommendations have either been implemented or are in progress of being implemented. In addition, other things that our government has done in order to prevent the kinds of tragedies like Serenity's are that we engaged in a \$25 million increase to FCSS for prevention programs which help families at risk, and we put \$15 million into women's shelters, one of the first increases in decades, which allows children at risk to be removed

from dangerous situations. That is critical prevention work. We've reversed cuts to...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
Let's all try and practise time control.

**Mr. Jean:** Yesterday I also asked the Premier why this minister's incompetence and negligence on Serenity's file goes unpunished and why it's taking more than two years to investigate what's almost certainly a murder, Mr. Speaker. The Premier deflected to talk about child tax credits. The system is broken. This minister didn't break it, but he has had 19 months to fix it and he hasn't even started. He's failed, and he needs to go. The minister says that he's done a good job. If that's the case, I would really hate to see a bad job. Why won't the Premier fire this minister?

**Ms Notley:** Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I believe I was cut off before I was able to finish. One of the other things that our government did, the first thing, was to reverse the cuts that were made to the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, who engages in these investigations, to reverse them so that he could continue to do his work. We are also moving forward on child nutrition programs and also better child care programs. All these things are focused on preventing these kinds of things because we need to do those as well. As the members opposite know, there has been an RCMP investigation in place from the beginning of this, and it continues to be in place. That work continues as...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
The leader of the third party.

## Child Death Review Ministerial Panel

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier told me in question period to read the terms of reference for the ministerial panel. Here's what it says. Panel members "will not have access to case-level information about specific children." Instead, they can interview the Child and Youth Advocate or read his investigations. The multiple agencies that failed Serenity did not give the advocate the information he needed to properly investigate her case. That's why we're here talking about this. Premier, how on earth does this keep it in the dark panel give Serenity or any child justice?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, that particular clause was taken completely from the terms of reference that were used in the work that was done by former Minister Bhullar. Nonetheless, you know, the member opposite just finished saying and taking responsibility for the fact that this is a very complex file. It is a very difficult file. It is a 44-year-long file that they admit they weren't able to fix because it's hard. Yet today they proposed terms of reference that would only have the investigation go back to May 2015. For heaven's sakes, how...

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
First supplemental question.

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I urged the Premier to throw off the blanket of secrecy she has thrown over the ministerial panel, and I got nowhere. The Premier assured me that secrecy will allow for "excessive public opportunity, high levels of transparency," and she started to say: prevent political grandstanding. That really means muzzling MLAs on the panel. Premier, isn't the real goal of the keep it in the dark panel to whitewash the inaction of your incompetent minister?

**Ms Notley:** Actually, Mr. Speaker, the real goal of the panel is to try, finally, after 44 years plus 19 months, to make more significant progress on this matter. The member opposite, as I said before, signed onto a set of recommendations that would have the panel stop looking past May 2015. That's where it would stop. Then they suggested that the minister should be called to testify and be put on trial. Then they proposed those terms of reference with a two-hour ultimatum just before question period. How in heaven's name can we believe they're . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. McIver:** The government gave no notice of that bogus media conference last week.

Because the concept of an all-party committee was my recommendation, I feel some responsibility for it. Never did I expect it to morph into a ministerial panel designed to cover up the actions of two ministers who did not take action on a key file. Even worse, the Minister of Human Services is being tried publicly, and you've made him judge and jury over his own trial. To the Premier: are you really going to let this sham go forward? If you do, you should resign with your two ministers. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Quiet, please.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I mean, honestly, the way in which these guys are going forward in terms of positioning themselves is – we are trying genuinely to reach across and develop a process that can actually create and recommend meaningful proposals. It is very, very difficult to engage in that with the kind of yelling that we're hearing right now, this kind of behaviour, very, very difficult to have this kind of conversation, and people wonder why it won't be successful . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Could you please stop the timer? I indicated at the outset: keep your volume down. You continue to do it, both sides.

Was there any time left on the Premier's comments? There was? Proceed, Madam Premier.

**Ms Notley:** As I've said before and as I said in the letter back to the members opposite, we are still happy to engage in a constructive conversation about the terms of reference. We are prepared to accommodate some of the requests that have already been made, but we will not do so in a two-hour ultimatum immediately before question period.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Premier.  
The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Opioid Addiction Treatment and Death Reporting

**Dr. Swann:** Bah. Humbug. Mr. Speaker, deaths from opiates are still increasing in year 4 of the most serious public health crisis in memory. Today I talked with a grieving mother who lost her daughter, presumably from a fentanyl overdose, in July. We still don't know. Tragically, her daughter had been succeeding in a drug rehab facility right up until the point she was thrown out before her program was ended, allegedly because she also had bulimia, which the facility couldn't accommodate. This girl, a college student without meaningful family input, was literally dropped off at a gas station to be picked up. Does the Premier feel that we are doing enough, that she is doing enough to create a sense of urgency . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As we've often discussed – but let me reaffirm – the rise of illicit opiates, including fentanyl and the more powerful carfentanyl, has created a public health crisis here in Alberta and, quite frankly, across the country. Our hearts go out to the parents, the spouses, the brothers, the sisters, and the children who have lost loved ones. This government believes in harm reduction, and we believe in offering Alberta supports, not just stigma. So we are working carefully on a number of different avenues to improve the way that, as government, we can respond to this crisis, and our members will be . . .

2:10

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
First supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that opioid death rates in Alberta now exceed one per day – public health doctors estimate that we have approximately 40,000 to 50,000 addicts in Alberta – and given that together Calgary, Edmonton, and Cardston, the main Alberta Health Services clinics, manage only 2,500 patients a year and given that four- to six-week wait times are now the norm in our treatment centres and given that many of Alberta Health Services' clinics close at 3 o'clock every day, does the Premier feel that the urgency of this matter is being addressed in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I have to say that I really do appreciate the member's compassion and advocacy on this issue. Our government is working very diligently to expand access to opioid replacement therapies, which are known as best practice, in order to address opioid misuse disorders. He listed off the number of clinics that are being operated by AHS. We're working with partners in the private clinics as well as working with doctors in the primary care setting so that stabilized patients in ODT centres can then be transferred back to the community for maintenance with their doctor.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that B.C. is managing to report on opiate deaths, emergency room visits for opiate conditions, naloxone survivors, and wait times for therapy every month but given that Alberta reports every three to three and a half months, with some families not receiving reports on their dead loved one for eight to nine months, can the Premier tell us: is she going to direct the Justice minister and the Health minister to provide more timely information on these deaths?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, in B.C. they have a different set-up than we do here in Alberta. Here in Alberta we are having the information around emergency room visits reported to the chief medical officer of health, who is leading our government's response to this very important crisis. Additionally, the reporting information that we're getting from the Chief Medical Examiner is being reported back on a continual basis to the chief medical officer of health. They're working quite closely. I look forward to talking more in depth with the member in our meeting later this week.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

### Renewable Energy Development

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While many rural Albertans are excited about the opportunities that renewable energy brings, some are concerned about renewable energy development on their land and in their communities. To the Minister of Energy: how will the government protect the rights of rural landowners?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. It's unfortunate that such a serious thing as landowner concerns get laughed at by the Official Opposition. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Quiet, please.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** In our new legislation there will be no mechanism that allows renewable companies to force development on landowners if they don't want it. Should they choose to do so, they will make their contracts with the companies and do private agreements. To suggest anything else is absolutely irresponsible.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how will this government ensure that landowners and rural municipalities benefit from renewable energy developments?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, CanWEA, who oversees wind projects, suggests that 5,000 megawatts of wind would bring in \$1.4 billion in new property tax payments to communities in rural. In the MD of Pincher Creek, for example, TransAlta's wind farm produces 130 megawatts of energy. One megawatt will power 625 homes. That puts \$12 million back into the local economy during construction and now injects \$5.2 million . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Minister.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that landowners are worried about new transmission lines owing to the build-out of renewable energy products, again to the same minister: how will the government address these concerns?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Our renewable build is not expected to require new transmission. We currently have lots of good infrastructure in Alberta. Programs will be designed to choose projects that have access to existing transmission capacity.

I want to correct one thing. I meant 425 homes per one megawatt.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

### Protection of Children in Care (continued)

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last August the implementation oversight committee, or IOC, released a report on 58 government-accepted recommendations for improving the child intervention system. The report details that they had received responses for most, but one recommendation about child abuse was not verified. To the minister: has the improved process for the child abuse case conferencing been shared with all regions? If not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Last August's report tracks the progress that has been made after those recommendations were made; 58 of them were implemented. The progress was tracked independently. On those which are remaining there is ongoing progress, which is also publicly reported on the Human Services website.

**Mr. Taylor:** Given that following the IOC assessment the only other recommendation unable to be verified was a critical response protocol for staff when tragic events occur, that the recommendation is coupled by the Child and Youth Advocate's repeated calls for more caseworker training and oversight, and that this evaluation was released under this minister's watch, will the minister tell us what critical response protocol staff is or explain why he's failed to do his job?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That report certainly was released under my watch, and the independent implementation oversight committee was tracking the progress that Human Services made. He referred to more staff training. Those things do take money. That's why we increased by \$37 million, so we can support those front lines, so we can support our staff, so we can resource our front lines with the needed resources so that they can do their job.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Taylor:** Given that the death of Serenity has served as a wake-up call for us all, that the report detailed the need to consult with front-line staff on new, reliable policies and processes, and that the minister has not outlined the consultation with front-line staff in his published plans for the panel, will the minister stop removing front-line workers from the process and provide them with the whistleblower protection they need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've said it many times in this House and will say it again. Whatever we do at Human Services, at the heart of that work is the dedication of our front-line staff. So a couple of things: one, I sent out a survey a couple of weeks ago to hear directly from the front line. [interjections] Second thing. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Stop the timer, please.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, your voice continues to escalate in volume.

Rebalance the timer.

Mr. Minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the opportunity for front-line staff to appear before the panel, certainly there will be opportunity, and I can provide assurance that there will be protection for front-line staff, that there will be no repercussions whatsoever when they appear before the panel.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, there was a correction. May I go on?

**The Speaker:** My apologies. Yes. Please proceed.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you. Unfortunately, there are more cases like Serenity's. Sadly, I can recount a number of times when I've responded as a paramedic to fatalities of children in care: once, doing a welfare check, another child who had starved to death, left alone, no caregivers in sight. I can't express in words the effects of seeing and holding these children in my arms. Ministers, members, we're not talking politics here. We're talking about defenceless children. Minister, do you understand that?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

2:20

**Mr. Sabir:** Certainly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. The story of Serenity is not just a one-off. We have been failing these children for decades. That's what I have said. In order to find a solution, we need to look at the root causes, why children come into our care. That's why the Premier yesterday mentioned that there is a legacy of residential schools, there is a legacy of intergenerational trauma, there is a legacy of the '60s scoop, there is a legacy of the '90s firing of social workers. All of these things need to be looked into. These are hard decisions.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Fraser:** You're right, Minister. We did fail. You're failing, and you're the leader right now.

An 11-year-old girl who was sexually molested over and over to the point where she hung herself with a blind cord: she seized so hard that she almost decapitated herself. Eleven years old. Minister, visualize any of these kids. Now pretend they were your children. What would you want to happen, and what does justice look like to you?

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are children in our care, and these are my children. These are Albertans' children. That's why I'm reaching out to the other side. I believe that you do care, and that's why I'm setting up this panel to work on these issues, to address these historical injustices, and to put enough safeguards in place so we can avoid similar incidents from happening in the future. It's not a partisan issue.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

**Mr. Fraser:** Minister, we failed to do it alone. You will fail to do it alone. That is why we need everybody in this House to work collaboratively.

The cutest 18-month-old baby boy, bundled in his blanket, had scabies all over his body. He was killed as a result of his intoxicated caregiver sleeping on him and smothering him in the middle of the night. Hold that in your arms. Hold that in your memories. Minister, if these were your loved ones, would you have confidence in your office, and would you have confidence in your actions to date?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I never claimed that I can do it alone. That's why I'm asking all the parties in the House, and that's why I will be reaching out to experts and Albertans and front-line staff. Having said that, we have taken steps to address these issues, including \$37 million in the child intervention system, including a new child tax benefit, including a progressive tax which can sustain these services, including \$25 million in FCSS, including \$15 million for women's shelters. These are the children that . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Openness and Transparency in Government

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Access to government information in our province has gone from bad to worse. The recent Supreme Court ruling has FOIP advocates concerned that simply CCing a lawyer will be the magic solution to avoid transparency and good governance. To the Minister of Justice: is the government abusing solicitor-client privilege to avoid transparency?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Justice minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Of course, transparency is a value that this government holds so dearly. That's why we've taken so many steps to ensure that we're increasing transparency of government, to ensure that we're increasing transparency in our agencies, boards, and commissions, and to ensure that everyone has the necessary information. It's always important to balance the rights of Albertans in certain litigation cases against the rights to information. It's a very delicate balance, and we'll continue working forward to make sure we do the best job for all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again no answer.

Given that lawyer and FOIP expert Michel Drapeau believes that the practice of simply copying any lawyer in any capacity is a way for governments to avoid transparency and accountability and given that the Justice minister has refused or failed to comply with Tobaccogate, political interference investigations, and FOIP law in general and given that this is the department responsible for enforcing our province's laws, to the minister: is transparency simply not a priority of this NDP government?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Transparency is always an important value for our government, and we think it's very important to ensure transparency in all aspects of governance. Obviously, I can't comment on the specific case, but in general there is a balance to be struck between ensuring the interests of Albertans in a multibillion-dollar tobacco litigation versus ensuring their interests in terms of access to information. So we will continue moving forward, ensuring that that balance is struck as appropriately as possible.

**The Speaker:** The second supplemental.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again no answer to the question on the CCing of documents.

Given that this problem now risks spreading to other ministries and given that the risk is a direct affront to democracy, will the Minister of Service Alberta confirm that other departments will not abuse legal privilege by unnecessarily involving lawyers from start to finish to avoid open and transparent government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, openness and transparency are important to our government. That's why some of our first actions as a government were on this issue. We post all sole-source contracts over \$10,000 online so that Albertans can be confident in how the money is being spent, and



unlike the previous government, which only posted salaries for a handful of senior staff, our government posts salaries and full contracts for every staffperson. This is very important to us. We've taken a number of actions on this front. Frankly, the assertions that the opposition are making around simply CCing lawyers on this are just absolutely absurd. Privilege is a complicated issue that they need to obviously read up on.

### **Government Policies** (continued)

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, it's Christmastime and Santa's elves are making sure that they have all the toys for all the girls and boys, but the Wildrose has real concerns about the impact the NDP policies are having on toy production and the elf labour market. According to legitimate statistics from the Fraser Institute a \$15 minimum wage will mean a huge bar for young elves entering the toy production labour market and could result in the layoffs of hundreds of elves. The NDP's plan to unionize Santa's workshop will devastate toy production levels as seniority is rewarded over merit. Will the Premier tell the House why they're willing to accept less toys for the girls and boys at Christmas?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Official Opposition seems to think with regard to the elves – we call them workers for government, or we call them the civil service – that we can break employment contracts, that it's okay to do that. Well, that's not the way we roll on this side. You may want to do that, but we're not going to break employment contracts. We're going to support workers so that they can do the best job possible for this government, whether it's in Human Services or any other ministry. You break contracts. We don't. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The subject matter has changed, but the volume is still there, folks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Well, Merry Christmas from Enmax, Mr. Speaker. For nearly 2,000 years Santa has responsibly used coal, but the NDP are demanding the phase-out of this reliable and cheap source of energy. Without coal Santa will not have anything to give the naughty children except for billions of dollars of government debt, amounting to \$23,000 for every boy and girl, naughty or nice. If the oil sands emissions cap was applied to Santa, he would have to begin scaling back toy production right now. Seeing as how it's nighttime half the year in the North Pole, solar panels won't do. Does the Grinch understand the devastating impact this will have on toy production?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, what the opposition doesn't understand is that if we don't curtail the use of coal and the emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>, the North Pole is going to melt. What will happen to toy production then?

2:30

**The Speaker:** Hon. member for Grinch, I would just like to thank you for allowing me to enjoy this.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Well, Santa will just have to move to Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

According to Ethical Ocean, Santa's reindeer will emit 54,000 metric tons of greenhouse gases; milk and cookies, 9,000 tons; lumps of coal, 230,000; wrapping paper, 290,000; his workshop, 983,000; toy production, 68 million. That all adds up to a total Christmas carbon footprint of 70 million metric tons. The carbon tax, or, since it's Christmas, levy, will cost Santa \$3.5 billion. Does

the Premier understand that if their carbon tax was applied to Santa, there would be no Christmas?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, I just want to ask the member opposite if in all of his facts and figures and numbers – and there are so many facts and figures there, so scientific – he factored in the cost of Santa's workshop occurring on an ocean liner in return for the ice cap that it is no longer sitting on because we failed to take action because we don't believe that climate change is real. Santa is very glad that we are saving him and Christmas and toys.

**The Speaker:** I do hope the hon. Premier recognized the contribution of Mrs. Claus as well.

### **Carbon Levy in Lloydminster**

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, Lloydminster is Canada's only border city, but we always strive to have our city as a singular, seamless entity, and where provincial disparities arise, our government in the city has always worked with provincial governments to minimize or eliminate them. Now, for decades the Saskatchewan government has forgone collection of the provincial sales tax from businesses on the east side of Lloydminster so that they can compete on an equal playing field with those on the Alberta side, but coming soon: the NDP carbon levy. To the Minister of Finance: did your department give any consideration of the inequities that your carbon tax will create in Lloydminster?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, the inequity of note – what we've concluded is that Alberta still will have a \$7.5 billion tax advantage over all provinces, so we believe that we still have a really great Alberta tax advantage. Lloydminsterites, Lloydminsterians, people from Lloydminster will continue to enjoy that tax advantage like the rest of Alberta because this is the lowest tax jurisdiction in the country.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, you're welcome for that thing that you inherited from us.

Given that 2017 is only 19 days away and given that Alberta fuel dealers in Lloydminster are gravely concerned that their customers will flee across Meridian Avenue to get away from the soon to be imposed NDP carbon tax and given that the Saskatchewan government has always taken action to keep businesses on their side of the border competitive, to the minister. Meetings have been held, and people are waiting anxiously. What specific actions are you taking to support Alberta businesses in Lloydminster?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We will follow up on the specifics of the questions he has asked and further point out that there is, in fact, no PST in Alberta.

Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll point out to both ministers that they've met, and people from their departments have met, and people are waiting. The businesses on the Alberta side of Lloydminster have historically had an advantage over the Saskatchewan side, and the Saskatchewan government has always stepped up to ensure that businesses on their side of the border remain competitive. Given that this NDP government has in 19 short months completely turned the tables to where it is now better to operate on the east side of the fourth meridian, to the Premier. Residents have worked hard to keep the two halves of Lloydminster joined together. Why is your government tearing us asunder?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Actually, the premise of the member's question is quite off. Number one, Alberta continues to remain the lowest tax jurisdiction in the country. As of January 1 our government has reduced the small-business tax to the second lowest in the country, much lower than Saskatchewan's. As well, we don't have a PST. As the Minister of Finance pointed out, even with our carbon levy coming in, Alberta is \$7.5 billion cheaper. I'm wondering what Saskatchewan is going to do when Ottawa imposes a carbon levy on that province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw. [interjections] Quiet, please.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you Merry Christmas to all the members in this House.

### Calgary Southwest Ring Road

**Mr. Sucha:** Mr. Speaker, Calgarians have been waiting decades for the construction of the southwest ring road. Given that construction will impact the quality of life of my constituents, to the Minister of Transportation: what is the government doing to keep residents up to date on construction milestones and road closures?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you. We're taking every opportunity to inform and engage residents on the southwest ring road project, Mr. Speaker. The contractor has been reaching out to community members to let them know about information issues. We held three information sessions last week at sites along the boundaries of the construction, and they informed local residents of the upcoming timelines and traffic impacts as well as what we're doing to minimize environmental impacts throughout the project. In addition, there's a . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister. Thank you.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that construction of the east section of the ring road dealt with heavy delays and challenges with traffic flow, to the same minister: what is the government doing to ensure that this project will remain on track and open at the scheduled time?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just mention that there is a project-specific website, [www.swcrrproject.com](http://www.swcrrproject.com), a direct e-mail address for questions, and a 24/7 phone line. We are going to be working with a selected contractor, Mountain View Partners, during design and construction to ensure that the traffic impacts are minimized and that the project is completed on time and on budget. We have staff supervising the project, and we have clear expectations of the contractor. We will hold them accountable to meet all of the guidelines that we've set.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that major transportation projects can cause impacts to neighbourhoods such as construction noise and given that Calgary-Shaw is a peaceful suburban area in Calgary, what safeguards does the province have to combat noise pollution during and post construction?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. During the construction phase we are restricting the hours of work to minimize noise impacts. Hours of work are 7 to 10, Monday to Saturday, and 9 to 10 on Sundays and statutory holidays. We're having the contractor undertake a noise modelling study to determine whether noise mitigation is required for those communities adjacent to the construction. After it's open to traffic, Alberta Transportation will do an ongoing noise monitoring study to verify that the noise levels are not exceeding the provincial guidelines.

### Oral Question Period Questions and Responses

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last session we've received plenty of stock responses from the government to our questions. The answers have become so trite and predictable that I'd like to propose a game of government policy *Jeopardy*. Quote: they are "a party full of folks who deny the science of climate change." To the minister of environment: what was the question?

**Ms Phillips:** It's quite possible, Mr. Speaker, that the question was on the value of carbon pricing. Over on this side of the House we recognize the value of carbon pricing along with a number of Canadian corporate executives, including GE Canada, SNC-Lavalin, Shell Canada, Rio Tinto, Teck Resources, the Forest Products Association of Canada, Suncor, Cenovus, CNRL, Enbridge, all large job creators in this province who have asked the Prime Minister and the Premiers to continue with carbon pricing, unlike the folks on the other side, who believe that these job creators are just "self-immolating their own industry just to get Trans Mountain twinned."

2:40

**Mr. Cooper:** Wrong, Mr. Speaker. It was on caribou.

Given that the Minister of Health responded, quote, to the members opposite, who are "proposing billions of dollars worth of cuts [in the public service] which would result in laying off many nurses [and teachers]," to the Minister of Health. The topic is NDP hyperbole. What was the question?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, I'm happy to give some more answers, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve the right care in the right place at the right time by the right provider, and that means that they have a government that's going to have their back, that's going to make sure that we protect nurses and teachers, and I'm proud to do just that.

**Mr. Cooper:** Nnnnn.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that we all know that the real money increases in double jeopardy and given that the Finance minister knows something about playing *Jeopardy* with Alberta's financial future and given that the Finance minister said, "They would have thrown kids out to the street by not having them in schools" and closing hospitals, to the Finance minister: what was the question?

**Mr. Ceci:** Well, I'm sure I'll find out in about 35 seconds. But I would like to say first: beer is good. Secondly, I'd like to implore the opposition over there to stop being nattering nabobs of negativism. Stand up with us, stand up for pipelines, and stand up for Alberta. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I wish you could just spread this out over other parts of the afternoon. It would be a lot more productive.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Joe, we'll take that beer later.

**Carbon Levy**  
(continued)

**Mr. Gotfried:** Given that the Premier has unilaterally committed Albertans to a \$50-per-tonne carbon levy, taxpayers anxiously await timely updates on the financial impact. Current estimates of the burden are based on \$20, scaling up to \$30 per tonne in 2018. To the beer-drinking Minister of Finance: as \$50 is supposedly the new ceiling, when will this government provide estimates reflecting the new impact of both costs and rebates of the Trudeau-Notley carbon tax on household budgets, excluding the beer?

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this session we released the economic impact and analysis of \$50 per tonne by 2022. In fact, Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain expansion was approved and put into place. Of course, that announcement showed a positive economic impact for Alberta, which is why we have taken the positions that we have at the Council of Ministers of the Environment table and the first ministers' meeting, which is that the environment and the economy go hand in hand and that we can be responsible oil producers while also leading on climate change.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My apologies to the beer-drinking Minister of Finance.

Given that the government's own charts show that the full rebate of 60 per cent that Alberta households will receive is based solely on direct costs of the carbon tax and given that this full rebate does not take into account indirect levies on public transportation, food, clothing, and more brought about by the carbon tax so that no Albertans will actually receive a full rebate, to the minister of environment. Your carbon tax generates enough revenue to reduce income taxes for all Albertans while investing in your green agenda. Why have your organic beer and eat it, too?

**Ms Phillips:** Okay. Thank you to the hon. member for the question on the matter of the rebates and the indirect costs and the direct costs. Analysis shows that the indirect and direct costs are still being rebated up to an approximate \$100,000 income for households, Mr. Speaker, and this is well established using StatsCan data. Now, as to the carbon price in the out-years, you know, particularly in the New Democrats' perhaps second or third term, we will have a look at the rebate levels as the federal carbon price escalates.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the clock will tell us what's happening with that.

Given that this government's 1 per cent reduction in small-business tax is based on an initial \$20-per-tonne carbon tax, if this government is sincere about helping small businesses, we should expect further decreases in the small-business tax as the carbon tax increases. To the Minister of Finance: if a \$20 carbon tax decreases the small-business tax by just 1 per cent, a \$50 tax should decrease it by 2.5 per cent. Can we expect to see further reductions in the

small-business tax, including to your brewers, as the carbon tax burden increases?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we will review the uptake of the energy efficiency programs. Of course, many of those for small businesses will be rolling out by the second quarter of 2017, the first of the \$645 million that this province will be investing in energy efficiency. We will review that. We will also review many of the new investments and new job-creation benefits in clean tech and other sectors to examine how those programs are working along with our annual review of all of our programs. We'll have more to say about that through the 2017 and 2018 budgets.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

We could allow a 20-second departure if people would like to depart.

Hon. members, please. Go on out, folks.

Now, I have sensed the feeling of the season's happiness and frivolity. I'm wondering if everyone would agree to withdraw all of their points of order, and then I would get a present. I will try and keep a . . . [interjections]

You withdraw yours?

**Mr. Mason:** If the opposition does.

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Point of Order**  
**Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. Cooper:** My apologies, Mr. Speaker. My hon. colleague from Rocky View-Chestermere has . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mr. Cooper:** Yeah, that one.

. . . asked if I would just very briefly point to one statement that the Premier made during question period – and it will be under 23(h), (i), and (j) – when the Premier implied that the opposition was xenophobic. Obviously, that particular word is not in the list of unparliamentary language; however, one thing that you certainly know, Mr. Speaker, is that language in this Chamber is all about context, and if I was to share the definition of xenophobia, it would be very clear that this sort of language is likely to create disorder inside the Chamber. It would be quite easy for the member to withdraw and apologize.

**The Speaker:** The Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to start by pointing out that the Premier didn't call any particular member xenophobic. She was simply talking about the broad choices facing the province of Alberta in this time. Additionally, I can advise that in the House the word "xenophobic" has been used in the Assembly on a number of occasions without a point of order being raised. It had been raised on Thursday, November 16, 2000, 1:30 p.m.; Tuesday, November 2, 1993, 1:30 p.m.; Friday, August 18, 1989, 10 a.m.; Thursday, August 17, 1989, 8 p.m.; Thursday, July 3, 1986, 2:30 p.m. I could go on, but I think I'll just sit.

**The Speaker:** Any comments?

Hon. members, I would agree that the word "xenophobic" – this is not a point of order. However, even as late as this afternoon I

cautioned all members, particularly at these kinds of times, on the use of certain words, and they are – sometimes a flame near fuel is not good. But there is no point of order in this situation.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader.

2:50

**Mr. Cooper:** Yes. I think that it is relevant to activities that will take place this afternoon. As such, under 23(j), “uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder” – while the words that the Minister of Human Services used were not insulting, they certainly were of a language that would create disorder, when the hon. minister said on a couple of occasions that he had reached out to this side of the House and consulted around terms of reference. Nothing could be further from the truth.

At no point in time did any member from the front bench at any time during any of this discussion around the tragic events that surround Serenity’s death reach out and speak to anyone on this side about terms of reference of a panel, about a multipartisan committee. So for the minister to say that he reached out and spoke to the opposition, certainly, was untrue. Those sort of statements are definitely going to create disorder.

I might just add that when we proposed our motion 42, while the timing may not have been perfect for the government, we reached out over an hour and a half prior. We reached out multiple hours in advance of any time that we efforted to bring forward terms of references or adding to the discussion to the government. So for them to say that they reached out to us, which absolutely isn’t true, and then imply that we were playing partisan games is unhelpful to this situation.

**The Speaker:** The Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don’t have the benefit of the Blues, so I’m going off memory, but my understanding of what the hon. Minister of Human Services said was that he was reaching out to members across the House. The committee is set up to have members of all parties on it. The suggestion was that he was reaching out for their help because he believed it to be the case that we care deeply about this issue, that members on the other side of the House care deeply about this issue. I think it’s an issue we can all be involved in, so he had indicated that he was reaching out for them to participate in this panel going forward. I don’t think that that’s a point of order.

**The Speaker:** Well, I do have the Blues, and I’ll just read it for the record. The hon. minister indicated:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are children in our care, and these are my children. These are Albertans’ children. That’s why I’m reaching out to the other side. I believe that you do care, and that’s why I’m setting up this panel, to work on these issues, to address these historical injustices, and to put enough safeguards in place so we can avoid similar incidents from happening in the future. It’s not a partisan issue.

I’m glad the Official Opposition House Leader did put your opinion on the record. This may be a difference of opinion in interpretation, but the way I read it is that it was intended as a nonpartisan event. In this particular situation, again, context, which the Official Opposition House Leader has pointed out many, many times – not really a point of order but one of opinion and shared interpretation.

**Ms Ganley:** There was a point of order called, Mr. Speaker, at approximately 2:43 p.m. by the Government House Leader with respect to comments by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for pointing that out. I had understood in his remarks that he had withdrawn that comment and apologized. Am I correct, hon. member?

**Mr. Gottfried:** You are correct, and I’ll do it again with apologies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Privilege Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, you will recall that there was a point of privilege raised yesterday. The hon. Government House Leader made his points to the points questioned – excuse me just a second.

First of all, to the question that was addressed to me by the deputy House leader yesterday, I’m of the view that in this particular situation, particularly given the decision I made earlier in the week, the point of privilege – I think there was a request to give some more information. I only allowed him that one opportunity. I think the principle applies here, so I think we have to go on the basis of what the Government House Leader said yesterday. I have a different interpretation of the events as I reviewed them than the one that maybe the House leader had yesterday.

The other reason as to why I don’t think it’s appropriate in this situation is that the point of privilege that was originally raised before was for other members, all of government. For that reason, I think the government side has had an opportunity.

I would now call upon the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate that. I will make my case here today. You know, I will start just briefly by saying that I am somewhat confused. The government, with all its power and the tools at its disposal, would choose to use this as an opportunity to go after an opposition member for doing what is our job, which is holding the government to account.

I will cite several citations here in reading my interpretation of the rules of privilege and associated precedents, and I will present today several precedents from Speakers of both this Assembly as well as Canada’s House of Commons. In doing so, I want to emphasize the key point is that there is an exceedingly stringent test to prove a breach of privilege through words spoken, especially words spoken in this House. I have to say that I find it remarkable and more than a little troubling that the government would suggest that it’s even possible for an opposition member to constrain a minister of the Crown to do their job simply with our words. If it’s an attempt to make me sit down and be quiet, I think they’ve got another thing coming, Mr. Speaker.

I will start with the citation used by the Government House Leader yesterday. He quoted *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 108.

Members are entitled to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed. The assaulting, menacing, or insulting of any Member on the floor of the House or while he [or she] is coming or going to or from the House, or on account of his [or her] behaviour during a proceeding in Parliament, is a violation of the rights of Parliament. Any form of intimidation . . . of a person for or on account of his [or her] behaviour during a proceeding in Parliament could amount to contempt.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have a number of points here that will contradict the Government House Leader’s assertions. First, I’d like to clarify that I never once accused the minister specifically of negligence. In fact, look in *Hansard* yesterday. My exact words

were: "His inaction means that whoever murdered Serenity is walking free today." First, his department and therefore the minister had not provided information requested by the RCMP in a timely manner. This inaction means that whoever is responsible for Serenity's death is walking free.

Second, in my comment I was also referring to the minister's lack of action in implementing the recommendations from the Richter report and others. Two of the recommendations were creating a joint death review panel and conducting and releasing internal reports into all child deaths. In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, had these two recommendations been implemented, the processes and investigations surrounding Serenity's death would have been expedited and the charges would have been laid by now.

The Government House Leader and I do agree that whoever is responsible for the death of Serenity has not currently been charged; therefore, by that definition they are walking the streets of this province. This statement does not in any way presuppose any investigation or future judgement but is simply a matter of fact.

We'll go to *Beauchesne*, sixth edition, section 75 on page 22. It says:

The privilege of freedom of speech is both the least questioned and the most fundamental right of the Member of Parliament.

I think that's an essential point, Mr. Speaker.

Further in section 69, page 20 in the same document, it says: Something can be inflammatory, can be disagreeable, can even be offensive, but it may not be a question of privilege unless the comment actually impinges upon the ability of Members of Parliament to do their job properly.

3:00

Again, this sentiment is echoed in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, page 109.

In order to find a prima facie breach of privilege, the Speaker must be satisfied that there is evidence to support the Member's claim that he or she has been impeded in the performance of his or her parliamentary functions.

*House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on the same page goes on to say:

In some cases where prima facie privilege has not been found, the rulings have focused on whether or not the parliamentary functions of the Member were directly involved. While frequently noting that Members raising such matters have legitimate grievances, Speakers have consistently concluded that Members have not been prevented from carrying out their parliamentary duties.

Specific to this incident at hand, Mr. Speaker, as we're talking about question period, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 111 says:

A Member may also be obstructed or interfered with in the performance of his or her parliamentary functions by non-physical means. In ruling on such matters, the Speaker examines the effect the incident or event had on the Member's ability to fulfil his or her parliamentary responsibilities. If, in the Speaker's view, the Member was not obstructed in the performance of his or her parliamentary duties and functions, then a prima facie breach of privilege cannot be found.

Further, on the same page:

The unjust damaging of a Member's good name might be seen as constituting an obstruction if the Member is prevented from performing his or her parliamentary functions.

The last point from that book, on page 112:

There have only been a few instances of the Speaker finding a prima facie breach of privilege related to the damaging of a Member's reputation.

Mr. Speaker, one of these instances was quite extreme and was very different from what is involved here, the incident that is in question

today. The incident that was found to constitute a prima facie breach of privilege involved concerted efforts by a member to distribute a bulk mailing containing inaccurate and misleading information which the Speaker at the time found clearly impacted the minister of the day's ability to carry out his duties.

The situation that we're talking about here on this point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, is categorically different. Again, I remind the House and the Speaker that it is a very high bar that needs to be met. Citing Alberta Speaker Kowalski from *Alberta Hansard*, April 19, 2007, page 679, in his ruling on the purported breach of privilege arising from a question asked of a minister in question period – and I think that this is especially relevant – he said:

The general rule in issues of this nature is found in Joseph Maingot's book, *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, the second edition, at page 254, where he states, "Language spoken during a parliamentary proceeding that impugns the integrity of Members would be unparliamentary and a breach of order contrary to the Standing Orders, but not a breach of privilege."

Speaker Kowalski goes on to say:

In this case the comments raised could have given rise to a legitimate point of order. The chair does not, however, believe that this is a case that falls into that . . .

And I'll emphasize this point: does not fall into that

. . . very small category of comments that would impede a member in performing his or her parliamentary duties.

I'm just about finished, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, I'd like to cite the May 5, 1987, ruling by Speaker Fraser, which can be found on page 5766 of the Commons debates. In this ruling Speaker Fraser says:

In the case before us certain questions were asked which, in the view of the Hon. Minister, conveyed grave implications against his integrity and were, therefore, damaging to his reputation. That is the position which the Minister took. I have carefully examined the questions, together with the interventions which took place following the Hon. Minister's statement, and I confess to be very troubled as a result . . .

Given all the circumstances in this case, I am sure that the Minister's capacity to function as a Minister and a Member of this House is in no way impaired. I point out to Hon. Members that this is the real issue of privilege.

I believe the case here is whether or not my question yesterday impeded the minister's ability to function as a member of this House. It's my opinion that this question alone in no way resulted in such an impediment, nor has the Government House Leader in raising the question provided sufficient proof of that impediment. Therefore, I would ask that you find, Mr. Speaker, that there is no point of privilege in this case.

Thank you.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the point of privilege raised yesterday by the Government House Leader. First of all, I'm not entirely sure that proper notice was given because when I checked the Blues, the Government House Leader merely raised a point of order. I certainly don't think that appropriate notice was fulfilled in accordance with Standing Order 15(2).

Having said that, breaches of privilege ought to be raised only in the rarest of circumstances and when the situation warrants it. I know that I weigh very carefully whether or not to bring forward a point of privilege. I try to take time. I rarely make my mind up in the half an hour it takes between question period ending and when the breach took place. Perhaps if the Government House Leader had taken a night to prepare, he may have realized that what he wanted to argue was a point of order. I remind you again, Mr. Speaker, that that is what he originally called it at the time.

I note that the Government House Leader read from page 108 of *O'Brien and Bosc* to lend credence to his argument, but I would suggest that we perhaps could have continued reading on page 109.

While frequently noting that Members raising such matters have legitimate grievances, Speakers have consistently concluded that Members have not been prevented from carrying out their . . . duties.

On page 111 it goes on to say:

If, in the [view of the Speaker], the Member was not obstructed in the performance of his or her parliamentary duties and functions, then a prima facie breach of privilege cannot be found.

Perhaps it also might be important for us to remember that it's only a matter of privilege if a member is obstructed in the performance of their parliamentary duties. It is not privilege when it comes to constituency or ministerial duties.

When I read the arguments put forward yesterday, I did not notice the Government House Leader's claim that the comment from the Member for Calgary-Elbow obstructed the minister in his parliamentary duties. "In particular, I am concerned about the member's reference to the minister and the impact that such a statement made in the public could have on [the minister's] ability to conduct his business." Obviously, the minister has not been obstructed in the performance of his parliamentary duties because he was able to answer the question from the Member for Calgary-Elbow. He voted in the House later that same afternoon on no less than three occasions.

Reading the statements from the Government House Leader, it would appear that he was mostly concerned about the minister's public image. Let me be clear. The moment that damaging a minister's public image becomes a breach of privilege, we will never get any business done here. Indeed, I would argue that every time the opposition does its job of holding the government to account, there is a real and substantial risk that the public will think less of the minister or of the government, and that, in many ways, is the point. Indeed, one could argue that the principle of ministerial accountability flows from the fact that the minister's conduct and the opposition's exposure of the minister's conduct will have damaged the credibility of the minister to such an extent that he can no longer command the confidence of Albertans and thus should resign to protect the public image of the government. As an aside, Mr. Speaker, I think that is where we are at here today on this minister and on this broader issue.

Mr. Speaker, it is an important point. If there is a point of privilege here, it is the privilege of the Member for Calgary-Elbow to hold the minister and this government to account, the privilege of the Member for Calgary-Elbow and all members of the opposition to ask uncomfortable questions that run the risk of damaging the minister's and the government's public image. We have a privilege of free speech that exists within the parliamentary system. We ask questions and debate topics here to make sure that the executive branch is held to account.

The executive branch may not always like being held to account, but the statements made in the question by the Member for Calgary-Elbow are legitimate points to raise in a question or in debate. If the Government House Leader wants to declare the point debatable, he can do so. If he wants to raise a point of order on objectionable language, on being inflammatory, he can do so. In my opinion, that is what he should have done yesterday.

3:10

In summary, I think that at best there was perhaps a point of order, a debatable point and quite likely a weak point around a matter of debate, but this certainly does not in any way meet the threshold for

a prima facie case of breach of privilege, and I encourage you, Mr. Speaker, to find the same.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. Some interesting information was submitted today. I need to deliberate upon that and read some of the references that are cited. I will return to you with my ruling at a future meeting time.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Motions

#### Information and Privacy Commissioner

30. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the November 2016 report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, sessional paper 347/2016, and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Ms Jill Clayton be reappointed the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the province of Alberta for a five-year term commencing February 1, 2017.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of Motion 30. I think that there is broad support for the reappointment of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. It's just my hope that the government will work closely with her. I know that she has made a number of public comments with respect to the FOIP process and some of her concerns around it. I implore the government to work as closely as possible to ensure that all Albertans have access to the appropriate information.

[Government Motion 30 carried]

#### Committee Membership Changes

33. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:  
Be it resolved that the following change to
- (a) the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be approved: that Ms Miller replace MLA McPherson, that Mrs. Aheer replace Mr. Smith, that Mr. Orr replace Mr. Smith as deputy chair;
  - (b) the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be approved: that Mr. van Dijken replace Mr. Hunter, that Mr. van Dijken replace Mr. Schneider as deputy chair, that Mr. Smith replace Mr. Panda, that Mr. Drysdale replace Ms Jansen;
  - (c) the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be approved: that MLA Drever replace Ms Jabbour, that Mrs. Pitt replace Mr. Cooper;
  - (d) the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved: that Mr. Cyr replace Mr. Fildebrandt as chair, that Mr. Panda replace Mr. Hunter;
  - (e) the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services be approved: that Mr. Orr replace Mr. Fildebrandt;
  - (f) the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship be approved: that Mr. Hunter replace Mrs. Aheer, that Mr. Hunter replace Mr. Loewen as deputy chair.

**The Speaker:** Anyone wish to speak to Motion 33? The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and present an amendment to Government Motion 33.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Notice of amendment to Government Motion 33. I move that Government Motion 33 be amended as follows. Part A is amended by striking out “that Mrs. Aheer replace Mr. Smith” and substituting “that Mrs. Aheer replace Mr. Orr” and by striking out “that Mr. Orr replace Mr. Smith as Deputy Chair.” Part B is amended by striking out “that Mr. Smith replace Mr. Panda” and substituting “that Mr. Orr replace Mr. Panda.”

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment carried]

[Government Motion 33 as amended carried]

### Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee

34. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason: Be it resolved that:

1. A Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee of the Legislative Assembly be appointed consisting of the following members, namely Mr. Shepherd, chair; Mr. Malkinson, deputy chair; Mr. Ellis; Mr. Horne; Mr. Kleinsteuber; Mrs. Littlewood; Mrs. Pitt; Mr. van Dijken; and Ms Woollard, for the purpose of inviting applications for the position of Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner and to recommend to the Assembly the applicant it considers most suitable to this position.
2. Reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid, subject to the approval of the chair.
3. In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may with the concurrence of the head of the department utilize the services of members of the public service employed in that department and of the staff employed by the Assembly.
4. The committee may without leave of the Assembly sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued.
5. When its work has been completed, the committee shall report to the Assembly if it is sitting; during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued, the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

[Government Motion 34 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

#### Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act

Mr. MacIntyre moved that the motion for third reading of Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day six months hence.

[Debate adjourned on amendment December 13: Mr. MacIntyre speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s early yet. As I was saying . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Briefly.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** You wish.

We have a number of issues with this particular bill, Bill 27, and I was delineating some of those issues. We don’t have within this bill protection, I feel, that is adequate for Albertans. We don’t have such things as performance bonding requirements. We don’t have such things as reclamation bonding requirements. These things will come to an end of life, and there’s nothing in this bill that protects the taxpayer.

3:20

Now, Mr. Speaker, to be really clear about that, we have an orphaned well situation in this province that is becoming extremely large. The orphan well fund, it appears, is not going to be adequate. Here was a situation where there was something in place, at least an attempt in place, to ensure that something could be done, that there was a pool of money available to handle such things as orphaned wells. In Bill 27 there is nothing, not a single sentence, dealing with the issue of the end of life of these massive undertakings. Across the landscape around the world we have failed solar farms, massive solar farms, we have failed wind farms, massive wind farms, time and time again. My staff has a list of a total of 64 – so far 64 – massive failed projects, and time and again it befalls the taxpayers or local municipalities who have to deal with the cleanup.

Yet in putting forward some kind of an amendment that might at least address this, this government foolishly voted it down. I have huge problems with that. That is irresponsible, and don’t tell me: oh, it’ll be in the regulations. Look, we have a bill before the House, and that is an amendment that should have been there.

It doesn’t stop there. I talked about the electricity police being totally eliminated from involvement in renewables. It’s like renewables are this sacred cow that this government is trying to protect from scrutiny, from transparency, and from accountability. To have the MSA eliminated from that process is absolutely irresponsible.

Then we have issues such as making agreements, that the minister is going to be making agreements. Of course, there’s nothing in this that talks about making those agreements public. Not a thing. You talk about backroom deals. There’s nothing preventing that in this bill.

Then we have the issue of public advertisement of the competitive process. Again, nothing in the bill about that. We heard earlier, just less than an hour and a half ago, I think, someone on the other side spouting off about how transparency is such an important thing. Well, I’m calling them out on that, Mr. Speaker. We tried amendment after amendment trying to put some transparency in Bill 27, only to see them rejected unanimously by the other side. So don’t tell me you’re interested in transparency when you keep voting those kind of amendments down. That simply is being beyond economical with the truth.

Then we come to things like advising the results of competitions. We tried an amendment there, that 18 months we felt was a reasonable time to protect the business interest of bidders, but let’s see these things.

Then, of course, there was the issue of: what happens to landowners when generators are in arrears of payment? We have that already taking place in the oil and gas sector, where companies go bankrupt, disappear, and the farmer is left with pumpjacks and

other infrastructure on his land, and he isn't being paid for that. There's nothing in this bill that protects landowners from the very same thing happening. Nothing at all.

This bill is woefully inadequate, Mr. Speaker, and this government refused helpful amendments to improve it. On and on.

Then we come to the section regarding the government holding a security or other interest in a generating unit.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions for the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, the Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move that we move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to the amendment?

**An Hon. Member:** Question.

[Motion on amendment to third reading of Bill 27 lost]

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:26 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Carlier	Kleinstauber	Payne
Carson	Larivee	Phillips
Connolly	Littlewood	Piquette
Coolahan	Loyola	Renaud
Dach	Luff	Rosendahl
Dang	Malkinson	Schmidt
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Schreiner
Feehan	McKittrick	Sigurdson
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Sucha
Ganley	McPherson	Sweet
Goehring	Miller	Turner
Horne	Miranda	Westhead
Jansen		

3:30

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Drysdale	Loewen	Strankman
Fildebrandt	MacIntyre	van Dijken
Gotfried	Nixon	Yao
Hanson	Pitt	

Totals: For – 37 Against – 14

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a third time]

### Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move third reading of the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act.

This is a bill, Mr. Speaker, that demonstrates that we believe in our oil sands companies' ability to innovate and to continue to reduce their environmental footprint. This is a bill with historic implications in firmly establishing Alberta as a world environmental leader amongst energy producers. This legislation puts into law a 100-megatonne limit on emissions from Alberta's oil sands. It is a limit on emissions, not on production. When our oil sands companies, Alberta's job creators, tell us that they can rise to a global challenge, that they can rise to the very serious consequences of climate change and limit their emissions, when they come to us and say, "Yes, let's lead the world as Albertans, as an energy producer, as a place that takes action on climate change," this government does not shout those good ideas out of the room.

This limit, Mr. Speaker, was jointly recommended to government by leading members of Alberta's oil sands industry and national and Alberta-based environmental nonprofit organizations. As you know, Alberta has under several previous administrations faced increasing scrutiny related to greenhouse gases resulting from oil sands development.

Our energy industry is unique in providing a significant amount of provincial and national revenue. It has also contributed to significant increases in emissions at a time when global pressure to lower emissions is growing. Our province faces very real negative economic consequences if we fail to access new markets for our energy and if we fail to act credibly on climate change. Already, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing the benefits from the climate leadership plan. The Prime Minister of this country specifically referenced the oil sands emissions cap and its legislation as an important reason for his government's approval of the Trans Mountain expansion and the line 3 pipelines.

The cap on oil sands emissions complements work that industry is already doing to lower costs. It internalizes the cost to emit carbon at a time when executives like Suncor's chief executive, Steve Williams, are dealing with what they call a lower for longer scenario for oil prices. Carbon, Mr. Speaker, is an input cost. Lowering it lowers the cost for producers. The emissions cap will speed the transition to lower carbon fuels, it will allow companies to accelerate their innovation efforts, and it will provide new jobs and revenue as Alberta-developed technology is applied and adapted in other parts of the world.

Instead of just talking about the issue, as some have done in the past, or wishing it away or denying that it even exists, Mr. Speaker, our government sought to find specific, credible solutions that will ensure the world looks at Alberta differently. We can either have a made-in-Alberta future for our energy or we can have a made-in-Ottawa or made-somewhere-else future, but what there isn't is any turning back the clock. There is no nostalgic previous era where no one objected to greenhouse gas pollution or the climate change it causes. With this bill Alberta makes clear to the world that energy-producing jurisdictions can establish limits and work and, in fact, thrive within a carbon-constrained future. We can be an energy producer and a world leader on climate action. The environment and the economy in the 21st century go hand in hand.

Alberta must get the most value for our resources and find new markets for our products, but we cannot do it unless we are taking credible action, which we have demonstrated just this month with the approval of two new pipelines. Alberta must get the most value for our resources, and our plan will drive innovation in the oil sands sector and allow room for growth. Alberta got the oil out of the sand, Mr. Speaker, and now we will take global leadership to get the carbon out of the barrel.



Mr. Speaker, we are doing this for all of the working people of this province because it is the right thing to do for the environment and, more specifically, because it puts our economy on a better trajectory to deal with the reality of climate change and the reality of a carbon-constrained future. That is why so many of Alberta's job creators asked us for this legislation, and that is why we are moving forward with it. It is key to ensuring that Albertans have access to good-paying, long-term, family-sustaining jobs right here in this province.

By passing this bill, Mr. Speaker, we can show the world that Alberta doesn't just do business; we mean business. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there other members who wish to speak to Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act? The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have before us this Bill 25, and let's be really clear: it is, in fact, a cap on development. It is very much a cap on development. Insofar as the minister wants to try to make statements about how we need to get the most value for our products, it's interesting that every value-add amendment that we attempted to put forward on this bill was voted down by the minister's party, so that statement, while it might sound good in a sound bite, is, in fact, patently not the truth.

This government rejected the amendments we put forward, ranging in topics from accountability to investment to encouraging greener technologies, notably upgrading and partial upgrading to expand those because they so significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but for reasons that are still unknown, the government was not really interested in reducing greenhouse gas emissions by increasing or improving the amount of upgrading and partial upgrading, instead putting a 10-megatonne cap on it. Both amendments would have increased pipeline capacity. Again, the minister's statement that we have to get the most we can for our product rather falls to the ground when you consider that partial upgrading and upgrading significantly increase pipeline capacity, yet government members unanimously voted those amendments down.

Again I say that if the minister was genuine and sincere about her statements regarding getting the most for our product, it doesn't make any sense at all, then, to cap that. Once again, the evidence would indicate that those are just empty words.

3:40

Limiting upgrading emissions means not only one hundred per cent carbon leakage but a hundred per cent value-added job leakage because anything we stick in that pipe in an unupgraded condition will have to be upgraded somewhere. It sure would be nice if it was here, but an awful lot of it will not be because, ultimately, the evidence would indicate that this government isn't really that interested in getting the most for our products, like they claim they are. Otherwise, they would not have capped something so important as upgrading and partial upgrading.

We put forward an amendment that would have removed the ability of cabinet to implement a cap and trade on the oil sands on top of the existing carbon tax and the high cost of abating these emissions by capping production. Now, the cost of abatement, which I don't think is entirely understood by members opposite, by capping production, would amount to \$1,035 in Canadian dollars per tonne of GHG emissions by 2040, but I don't believe the members opposite understand abatement and the cost of abatement and how you even calculate that. Nevertheless, that is a reality. That is what it's going to cost.

An amendment on removing cogeneration technology from the cap, again another technology that would dramatically reduce

greenhouse gas emissions, was rejected unanimously by the other side. An amendment to remove renewable biomass emissions from under the cap, again another technology significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, was rejected by the other side. Both amendments would have encouraged producers to adopt technologies on the fringe of being economical, green technologies with the potential of reducing significant levels of GHGs.

Then, of course, one of my favourites: I'm always asking for economic impact studies and have yet to see one from this government. I know that they have staff that can do it.

On and on what we've seen, Mr. Speaker, are introductions of amendments for technologies to be exempted that result in significant greenhouse gas reductions, yet those amendments were voted down by this government. I really only have one conclusion to make, and that is that they're not all that interested in greenhouse gas emissions, that this bill, Bill 25, is another bill from this government that has a name that's wrong. It's not really Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. Oil Sands Development Limit Act would be a much more appropriate name. The details of this act are really nothing more than an underhanded manner in which to keep it in the ground in some measure and not look like you're trying to keep it in the ground. Time and time again we've put forward amendments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, yet they get voted down. It's really very straightforward. The evidence is quite clear.

I'm not going to be voting in favour of this bill at all. I know you're surprised about that. It's going to result in carbon leakage. It's going to result in job leakage. We have proven that clearly. There is so much more that could be done for greenhouse gas emissions, but the other side have voted that all down. This particular bill, just like Bill 27, is woefully inadequate. It is counterproductive. It is a job killer. I can't see anyone who has even a remote understanding of this process of development voting in favour of this. We have estimates losses to Alberta's economy in terms of the cumulative value of lost production to be anywhere from \$153 billion to \$254 billion worth of development. This is indeed a cap on development.

I should also add that an emissions cap was never recommended by the climate leadership panel. If anyone in the House was to go through the leadership panel's report now, at this point in time, after seeing bill upon bill upon bill coming from this government, and read through the climate leadership plan that was developed by the Leach panel, I believe that now in hindsight everyone would be able to look back and say: "Wow. Well, the government didn't do that. Oh, they didn't do that one either."

There's probably quite a bit throughout that plan that this government isn't doing, yet this was the panel that was called to advise the government on what to do. We cannot argue that carbon taxes are a better alternative to cap and trade, but we are going to see cap and trade taking place in oil sands development with the remaining window of 32 megatonnes of emissions.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

In short, Bill 25 is being praised by people like Tzepporah Berman for forcing us to leave our resources in the ground and making more pipelines unnecessary, in her words. Frankly, to sum it up, this bill is anti-Albertan. I would prefer that it not see the light of day, but that's just my opinion.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to speak to Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. We tried to go to committee to haul witnesses in to get the expert opinion. It didn't happen. We tried to delay the bill so that we as members could go out and consult the experts. It didn't happen. This bill must be defeated. Unfortunately, this government will not let that happen.

This bill is surrounded in controversy. The oil sands advisory group, the OSAG, is chaired by ecoradical Tzeporah Berman, a signatory to the Leap Manifesto. Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein couldn't be more proud. Another member of the OSAG, Karen Mahon, is out fundraising to stop the Trans Mountain expansion pipeline. It's true. We have the e-mail.

Multiple panel members are involved with forest ethics, a group that boasts about having stopped the Northern Gateway pipeline. These are the people tasked with considering how to implement the 100-megatonne per year carbon emissions limit for the oil sands industry, and the industry is concerned that their panel members are there only as a favour for endorsing the NDP climate action plan.

OSAG will not complete their work until February 2017, yet we're being asked to pass legislation without the feedback of the panel tasked to determine the law's viability. This cap is bad policy. Global leaders like Mark Carney, governor of the Bank of England and former governor of the Bank of Canada, are talking about stranded assets occurring to fight climate change. In an article in the *Financial Times*, September 29, 2015, Carney warns that "investors face 'potentially huge' losses from climate change action that could make vast reserves of oil, coal and gas 'literally unburnable.'" He told a Lloyd's of London dinner: "The exposure of U.K. investors, including insurance companies, to these shifts is potentially huge."

This NDP policy does just that. It strands assets. Investors, people like you and me, who bought RRSs and mutual funds, who have pension plans, even the Canada pension plan: those savings are taken by financial managers and invested into assets like the oil sands. Investors demand a rate of return so they can be comfortable in their retirement. When we are too old to even work at the cash register at 7-Eleven, we will require an investment return from these investments.

Alberta has the largest free world holding of oil, and the NDP would strand it, make it undevelopable, and create capital flight to other dividend-generating assets for those investors and savers. The junior oil and gas producers are worried, and rightfully so, that they will be squeezed out of the market. As capital flees, there will be market consolidation and only the big players will remain. Murray Edwards at CNRL and Steve Williams at Suncor would love that, maybe even collect a big fat performance bonus for a job well done. This is nothing short of another example of the NDP's failure to recognize the incredible work that is done on an ongoing basis in the oil sands and the energy sector, more generally, to innovate and reduce emissions.

3:50

Innovation and technology like carbon capture and storage, to quote Mark Carney again, "would render the vast majority of reserves 'stranded' – oil, gas and coal that will be literally unburnable without expensive carbon capture . . . technology, which itself alters fossil fuel economics." Alters fossil fuel economics. Some might say that with technology we might have our cake and eat it, too. It will be costly one way or another.

Technology is also helping to find more oil. Down in the United States the U.S. Geological Survey released news on November 15 of this year.

The Wolfcamp shale in the Midland Basin portion of Texas' Permian Basin province contains an estimated mean of 20 billion barrels of oil, 16 trillion cubic feet of associated natural gas, and

1.6 billion barrels of natural gas liquids . . . This estimate is for continuous (unconventional) oil . . . and consists of undiscovered . . . technically recoverable . . . resources.

The estimate of continuous oil in the Midland Basin Wolfcamp shale assessment is nearly three times larger than that of the 2013 USGS Bakken-Three Forks resource assessment, making this the largest estimated continuous oil accumulation that USGS has assessed in the United States to date.

"The fact that this is the largest assessment of continuous oil we have ever done just goes to show that, even in areas that have produced billions of barrels of oil, there is still the potential to find billions more". . . "Changes in technology and industry practices can have significant effects on what resources are technically recoverable, and that's why [the USGS] continue to perform resource assessments . . . Oil and gas companies have been using horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing, and more than 3,000 horizontal wells have been drilled and completed in the Midland Basin Wolfcamp section.

Madam Speaker, the United States of America is heading for energy independence. They will no longer have to bring in tanker loads of oil from hostile foreign countries. But until the NDP policies are replaced, capital flight will take place, and it's going to Texas, North Dakota, Montana, and Saskatchewan. The movement of capital will take jobs from Nisku, Medicine Hat, and Slave Lake to El Paso, Lubbock, and Amarillo. There will be a brain drain from Calgary and Edmonton to Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, and San Antonio. Perhaps Albertans will have to adopt a new motto: remember the Alamo. We in the Wildrose cannot support such a devastating piece of legislation that will impact Alberta's ability to sustain its wealth and prosperity as the Texans yell: drill, baby, drill.

That brings me to my final point. Why would the NDP be doing this to the province they say that they love? The answer is found in the Alberta NDP's own constitution. I had to read to the very end of this to get the answer. It's found in appendix C under The Principles and Aims of the Alberta New Democratic Party. You might want to listen to this because I'm not sure that everybody on the other side has actually read The Principles and Aims of the Alberta New Democratic Party. They list three. The first is democracy.

Democracy is one of the most valuable parts of our heritage and recognizes that all citizens, including minorities, must receive equal civil rights with representatives elected by way of proportional representation.

It goes on to say:

The necessary role of governments must be recognized in order to build an equitable and socially just society.

That's step 1.

Step 2 talks about the economy. It says:

Socialism is essentially the application of democracy to the economy. Economic democracy, i.e. democratic socialism, assures production to supply the needs of all people. Decisions about what shall be produced, when and where, and decisions about where we shall make our living and under what conditions, are now left largely in the hands of private interests. The market economy produces transnational corporations, who give private profit priority over public interest, social justice and workplace democracy. Through the efforts of many, we have achieved a degree of social and political democracy. Economic democracy, or democratic socialism, as they call it,

demands a co-operative rather than a competitive system.

[interjections] The members opposite are saying that it sounds great. Of course, it would sound great to them. I'm starting to understand why they would be putting a cap on oil sands production.

The third part of this says:

Ecological Sustainability must permeate all economic and social policy. Meeting human material needs must not use more of Earth's resources than can be renewed within each generation.

I guess that means that they would not be able to use gas, oil, natural gas because it cannot ever be renewed within a generation. So I'm actually extremely excited about the fact that soon the NDP will be walking to work. They will not be taking any planes, and they will not be driving. This will be the final outcome of capping oil sands production.

Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent of the House to move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the afternoon.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 25 at third reading. This is an ill-advised bill, meant to cap oil sands growth and development. There are many alarming things about this bill. To start off with, this government has chosen an arbitrary number, a 100-megatonne cap. They have given us no data, no information on how the decision was reached on 100 megatonnes. Obviously, they've grabbed numbers out of the air. That's an alarming way to do business.

Now, there have been reports that suggest that this bill will cause at least 3 billion barrels of oil to be left. That represents \$150 billion to \$250 billion to the Alberta economy. We can look at that as just barrels of oil and billions of dollars, but that represents jobs. That represents families. It represents livelihoods. It's not just money and oil. It's our economy here. It's what keeps this province alive.

Now, another alarming thing is the potential for stranded assets. Companies that have invested money in good faith in the oil sands may not be able to produce the leases that they've invested in, and that will result in the government having to pay compensation. Again, that isn't the government paying compensation. That's Albertans paying compensation to these companies for their investment and their loss of opportunity.

This government has brought in the carbon tax. It's phasing out coal. It has tampered with PPAs. It's doing loans to the Balancing Pool. It has put a cap on electricity rates. All these things have created all sorts of consequences for the Alberta economy. Some of these things have been done to make up for the mistakes that previous bills had caused.

This government seems to be embarrassed about our resources here in Alberta, and that's shameful. They protest pipelines. Now they're in charge of championing our resource? Then we expect that bills like this are somehow favourable to our economy, our resource-based economy? I don't think Albertans buy that, Madam Speaker.

We brought amendments forward, in particular an upgrading exemption. When that didn't pass, we did a partial upgrading exemption amendment. These are processes that are value-added, that create jobs right here in Alberta. They increase pipeline efficiency so that we can actually get more of our product to where it needs to be. That's the point of pipelines, getting our product where it needs to be. So by voting against amendments that would allow more of our product to get to our customers, they're voting against pipelines.

4:00

Now, the Member for Edmonton-McClung says that upgrading is good and that they're champions of upgrading. So why put a cap on it? Why would you cap something that you're championing? That doesn't make any sense.

The Member for Calgary-East: a protester holding a sign, "No more dirty oil," at a pipeline rally. How does that make sense when that member stands up and says that she supports pipelines, that she supports the resource industry? How does that make sense?

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, if I could just interrupt for a second. Just a reminder that we are in third reading, which means we need to be in our chairs if we're in the House and not moving around, please.

Thank you.

**Mr. Loewen:** Now, even recently, if people want to talk about how things that were a few years back don't count, well, how about the recent appointment of anti-oil, antipipeline activists to the oil sands advisory group, that when pipelines were announced here in Alberta, they came out saying that they were going to stop them? These are people that are appointed by this government, paid by taxpayers, and they're against our industry, and they're supposed to be representing our industry.

Now, one of the members across said something that is absolutely true – absolutely true – that we produce some of the most responsible oil in the world. Agreed. So why are we wanting to ship it elsewhere to have upgrading done? Why wouldn't we do it right here? Why aren't we championing our oil right here in Alberta?

Now, they talk about these made-in-Alberta solutions, but this government has hired anti-oil activists from across Canada, I guess, to develop this made-in-Alberta solution. But the truth truly came out, Madam Speaker, when the Prime Minister came up with his plan on the carbon tax and it was \$50 a tonne. How did the Premier respond to that? She says: well, our plan was \$30, but that was never really the top; I mean, like, I guess we're kind of flexible or something.

So now this made-in-Alberta solution, as they like to call it, is automatically made in Ottawa right now. That's what it was here for. They kept saying: why would we want to have Ottawa dictate to us what to do when we've got a made-in-Alberta solution? What happened when the Prime Minister said \$50 a tonne? Basically, he said, "Jump," and the Premier said, "How high?" Fifty dollars a tonne high. That's how high.

Now, they also talk about how the President of the United States loves it. If he loved it so much, how come he didn't do it? He didn't do it. He didn't do any of this stuff that this government is doing. But he loves it, I guess.

**Mr. Hanson:** He loves that we're doing it.

**Mr. Loewen:** He loves that we're doing it because we're in competition as countries. We do business back and fourth. It's always better when you're dealing with somebody at a worse economic advantage than you are.

Now, we brought up amendments for economic assessment. They don't like them. We've never seen any. We have no idea what anything is going to cost. We don't even have any idea what the emissions will be reduced by with any of these bills that this government has brought forward. They refuse to recognize carbon leakage. Well, it's very plain. We just talked about upgrading and how this upgrading has to take place somewhere, so if it doesn't get done here, it's going to get done somewhere else. That is carbon leakage.

We know that the members opposite at least say that we have some of the most responsible oil in the world. We've got environmental standards on the top. Why wouldn't we want to do that here, where the environmental standards are higher? Why would we ship it somewhere else?

Now, a week or so ago we received the good word that the Enbridge line 3 and the Trans Mountain expansion pipelines received federal government approval. Enbridge line 3 is the replacement of an existing pipeline to the U.S. Midwest. The Trans Mountain is an expansion of an existing pipeline to Vancouver. These are not new pipelines; however, they will provide additional volume. They were approved by the NEB last spring. These pipelines were only waiting for political approval, which would have been hard to deny as these pipelines were already existing, but the government takes credit for these pipelines, and they use it to justify bills they pass in this Legislature like the one before us today.

The Premier and the Prime Minister suggest that the approval of these existing lines was because of Alberta's climate change leadership. Let's be very clear and honest. These two individuals are using these pipelines to justify their taxes. It would be shameful to think that pipeline approval was linked to anything other than its own merits based on the guidelines of the NEB. The suggestion that safe transport of oil is held hostage by any government action is extortion. The arm's-length NEB reviews these projects; government approves them based on the NEB recommendations. This government insists on taking credit for something that happened in spite of them, not because of them. What's sad is that the media buys into the false narrative purported by the Alberta NDP and the federal Liberals.

To suggest that climate change action was responsible for the approval of these pipelines and that previous governments got nothing done is false and insulting to anyone with a hint of common sense and who can see through this smoke and mirrors. Under the federal Conservative government two entirely new oil pipelines were approved and actually built: the non-XL version of Keystone from Alberta to Nebraska, completed in 2010, and the Alberta Clipper to Wisconsin, approved in 2008 and active in 2010. The changeover in line 9 taking oil west to east was also approved and activated under that federal government. In total, Alberta got an added over 1 million barrels a day worth of pipeline capacity under the last federal government. The Liberals will add just about half that much, 600,000 barrels, with the approval of Trans Mountain's expansion. That's if it actually gets built in the face of so much protest.

You see, under the previous federal government Northern Gateway, worth 525,000 barrels a day, was also approved, but the Liberals caved to protests and cancelled it, actually proving the point that a pipeline approval is a far cry from getting it done. The Northern Gateway pipeline was approved by the federal Conservative government on June 17, 2014, but due to the B.C. NDP, which cabinet ministers of this government campaigned for, and radical interventionists, some of whom this government has hired, the pipeline was delayed, and just days ago the Prime Minister cancelled it, caving in to these protesters. He also renewed his decision to ban tankers on B.C.'s northern coast, which would have provided the only new opportunity to access the Asian markets. This proves that pipeline approval is not necessarily a done deal, and these two are not out of the woods yet. We still need to actively fight for these lines.

Now, a few months ago the NDP unanimously voted for my Motion 506 to support Energy East, Trans Mountain, and Northern Gateway and "to request that the federal government not implement the moratorium on crude oil tanker traffic along British Columbia's north coast." What has this government done to represent the

motion it helped pass? Nothing. Clearly, they supported it in words but refused to support it in any practical way. This is saying one thing and doing another. They passed it for political reasons with no care for the importance of pipelines. Albertans truly deserve better than what this government is delivering.

So, Madam Speaker, I will then propose an amendment to this bill.

4:10

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. The amendment will be referred to as HA.

Please continue.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day six months hence."

Madam Speaker, I've outlined some pretty good reasons why this amendment is necessary. This amendment is necessary because I don't think the government truly realizes the damaging effects of its policies. Therefore, they need to take some time. They need to consult with Albertans. They need to do economic and environmental impact studies and come to the full realization of the damage that they are creating with these bills.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I think we've heard a lot about the government's climate change plan, and at the end of the day, often, I think, what we're realizing time and time again is that they're putting the cart before the horse. Certainly, I believe and I think many of the members on this side believe that action on climate change needs to happen, but in that, just like a reasoned amendment, we need to be reasonable how we approach it.

There is confusion around the piecemeal approach, with bill after bill after bill or a bill having to replace a mistake or an oversight. It's difficult when you're in government to always get it right. We've heard over and over again from the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake about technology, and I think there is much out there. In talking to stakeholders, we have an opportunity to take a look at this once again, wait six months, check with the industry, take a look at the technologies, wait for a new President-elect to be sworn in in the United States to see what kind of effect that has on Alberta, whether it's good or bad. Again, sitting on this for a little bit, having regular dialogue about it I think is good for Albertans. There is no rush to put this cap on emissions today but to wait six months, check again, and do what I believe would be the right thing for Albertans.

I'll be supporting this amendment. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Sure. Under 29(2)(a). Absolutely. I just want to thank the hon. member for rising to speak about this important piece of legislation. I know that my colleague from Airdrie is looking forward to speaking about this legislation, so I want to rise just to recognize what the hon. member brought forward and thank him for

supporting this important amendment. I know that he will eagerly await the comments from the Member for Airdrie, like I do.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Yes.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Really?

**Mr. Gotfried:** Well, I don't know. Just for fun.

You know what, Madam Chair? Again, this Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act is really just too controlling, I think, for the opportunities that may lie ahead in terms of our ability to maximize the opportunities in our economy. Let's keep our fingers crossed that we have those opportunities ahead that we can move ahead with.

I just would like to say that this is an opportunity for us to actually put some more sober thought into this, to not rush into something that's going to hog-tie us in the future when opportunities arise to understand where we're moving with pipelines and with capacity and with production in this province. I think a six-month period would be appropriate and would be happy to hear more on that from the member.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, we are back on the amendment. The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to this amendment. Now, this amendment is our last opportunity to make sure that we get this legislation right. We tried other amendments, amendments to support industries like biofuels. Biofuels are not only a large employer but a renewable resource. Why should it be under this cap? We tried to amend to support cogen. Cogen is a 2 for 1. Not only do you get the steam for the in situ oil sands extraction; you also get the electricity to power the grid. Since coal is being phased out rapidly from the grid, that baseload is going to need to be replaced because renewables are not always available. Don't want coal or petroleum coke emissions with nasty particulate matter and NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>x</sub> emissions? Convert to cogen. But the NDP voted that amendment down, too.

This is the last chance for the NDP backbenchers to go out there and consult with industry to get their own answers. Yes, you. Don't listen to your House leader. Don't listen to your cabinet ministers, the government, and the whips. [interjections] Madam Speaker, through you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Pitt:** I wish this government wouldn't just listen to the people inside their party but go and consult because, Madam Speaker, the NDP MLAs are also free-agent MLAs. The NDP MLAs are contractors. They are hired by their constituents to represent them. They need to think for themselves.

Madam Speaker, we want the NDP MLAs to go out there and talk to the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. Pick up the phone and call Husky, Jaco, Syncrude, Devon, MEG, ConocoPhillips and ask them what they think about Bill 25. Go and talk to the professors at the University of Lethbridge, Calgary, University of Alberta. Talk to the engineering faculties, the chemists, the geologists, the physicists – yes, even the atmospheric scientists and economists. They will give you the real deal here on Bill 25.

They will tell you that capping emissions in Alberta is going to cause carbon leakage. Carbon leakage means there is no benefit to the environment since the atmosphere doesn't care where the GHGs come from. They don't care, but to Alberta it means fewer jobs, less prosperity, less diversification. Obviously, any bitumen extracted will be upgraded somewhere, possibly with more emissions and pollution than if it were here, likely China but probably also India and now the USA, too. Donald Trump is certainly very pro-energy and will happily take whatever investment that the NDP government scares away.

Capping emissions like this is like some kind of weird Rhinoceros Party policy. Donald Trump wasn't the first person who ever wanted to build a wall. The Rhinoceros Party wanted to build a wall, too. It was going to be a great big, beautiful and very tall wall. It would be somewhere up north, across the length and breadth of Canada, and the wall's job would be to keep winter out. I know that sounds funny, but it is true. The Rhinoceros Party wanted to build a wall to keep the winter out of southern Canada. Donald Trump, eat your heart out.

Now, the NDP barely beat the Rhinoceros Party in the federal by-election, but I don't think that imitating the party that you beat is going to help you improve on your 1 per cent vote here. But, Madam Speaker, that is pretty much what we have here, a nonsensical policy to be done in the name of climate change and will have nothing to do with climate change. It will just hurt our economic development, the people in this province.

4:20

I wonder, Madam Speaker, how many of the NDP backbenchers have ever called CAPP, ever had a conversation or reached out and touched someone on the other end of the phone by calling the rest of the oil companies. [interjections] Oh, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. Please pick up the phone and call them. I'm wondering if they've called or spoken to the professors at the universities. I wonder what the investment bankers have to say. You know, the folks like the *Dragons' Den* star Brett Wilson: they will help you out. Mr. Wilson will be very helpful. Or the people that the Finance minister goes and sees on Bay Street in Toronto to sell Alberta's bonds to: what do they think?

I trust that this amendment will be adopted and that the NDP backbenchers will take the opportunity to go out there and talk to the stakeholders about this bill to make the final decisions for themselves before the final vote without government interference and propaganda adjusting their thoughts. I urge this government to do just that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none . . . [interjections] Members. Thank you.

Does anyone want to speak to the amendment? No? Okay.

[Motion on amendment to third reading of Bill 25 lost]

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:23 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Carlier	Jansen	Miranda
Carson	Kleinstaub	Payne
Connolly	Larivee	Piquette

Coolahan	Littlewood	Renaud
Dach	Loyola	Rosendahl
Dang	Luff	Schmidt
Eggen	Malkinson	Schreiner
Feehan	Mason	Sigurdson
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Ganley	McKitrick	Swann
Goehring	McLean	Turner
Gray	McPherson	Westhead
Horne	Miller	

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Pitt
Drysdale	Loewen	Schneider
Fildebrandt	MacIntyre	Strankman
Fraser	McIver	van Dijken
Gotfried	Nixon	Yao
Hanson		

Totals: For – 38 Against – 16

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a third time]

### Bill 34

#### Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to move third reading of Bill 34, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016.

Inheriting the existing system has meant dealing with two serious threats that unpredictably came together. First, the sweetheart deal struck for deregulation to allow companies to foist any market losses and all their market losses onto the public after enjoying long profits. Secondly, the recent prolonged collapse in electricity prices set off the result of the price uncertainty and volatility of deregulation.

These two consequences were built into the very design of the deregulation machinery. Together they resulted in the return of unprofitable power purchase arrangements to the Balancing Pool, posing a threat to consumers. The result was clearly unfair. That's why we took action to protect consumers, to defend consumers' interests in the proper interpretation and application of the law. Despite considerable opposition we stood up for Albertans. As a result, we entered reasonable settlement agreements with three of the four PPA buyers, extracting considerable value for consumers. We took our knocks for that decision, but I am proud of that result. I am proud that we had the courage to draw the line, and we didn't stop there.

4:30

Although the deregulation apparatus created the preconditions, it failed to provide the Balancing Pool the tools it needed to manage the consequences. With Bill 34 we are providing the tools and the flexibility that the Balancing Pool needs to cover its financial obligations. This will allow the Balancing Pool to smooth price volatility, helping to ensure that consumers' electricity costs are reasonable and stable.

In the face of opposition we chose to act to defend consumers. We chose to look forward to develop the systems and structures that will serve Albertans with reliable electricity at reasonable rates for the long run. We are assembling the full program to make that possible, one part of which is the amendments before us now. That makes me proud to vote for Bill 34 today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, I think that it might do for some of the members opposite, when they find themselves out of a job in 2019, to maybe apply as fiction writers because they're getting pretty good at it, frankly, or, you know, as historical reconstructionist or something along that line.

**Mr. Hanson:** They're not writing their own stuff.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Yeah, that's true.

There is a reason for every bill that comes before this House, and Bill 34 is no different. The real problem is that this government is afraid to own up to the reason for Bill 34's existence. This government right out of the gate started attacking our electricity sector, and the volatility that the hon. minister was talking about was at the wholesale price level. Frankly, I don't find anything wrong with a low price on electricity, and the Balancing Pool has been very low for a very long time now. That benefits consumers like you and me. I don't have a problem with that. If I can buy electricity for 2 cents or 3 cents a kilowatt, happy day.

That's what happens in a competitive market when supply and demand are allowed to move the market freely. That's called free-market enterprise. It's not supply management. The hon. member, my colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner, was reading the NDP's manifesto. It's interesting how they don't like the idea of private enterprise. They would prefer to have supply management in place. Well, how is that working in Venezuela? How did that work so well in the Soviet Union? They had really good supply management going on there. You couldn't buy bread, and when the shoe factory was making shoes, they were shoes no one wanted and sizes no one could fit. There's some really good supply management for you.

A competitive, free-market enterprise provides for people what people need at a price people can afford. That's the nature of a competitive, free market, but this government doesn't want to go that way. They absolutely detest the idea of a deregulated electricity market, where Albertans can benefit from that competition. Instead, they are going to reregulate the market under the name of a capacity market.

Then they had – it was almost silly. They were saying, you know, that in all of North America there are only two jurisdictions with energy-only markets, Texas and Alberta. It's interesting to know that the Texas energy-only market was also a pioneer in renewable portfolio standards. They pioneered it. They made a botch of it for a number of years, but you know what? Texans, being a lot like some Albertans I know, were stubborn, and they stuck with it, and they fixed it. They now have a situation wherein their energy-only market works in tandem quite well with RPSs. They didn't have to destroy free enterprise to bring in renewables. This government seems to be of the mind that you can't possibly have renewable technologies and free enterprise.

Although they want to try to distance themselves from the Ontario debacle, the reality is that they are taking us down that same road. They are in fact hurting private enterprise. As a result of their Whac-A-Mole policies, with unintended consequences popping up at every turn, we now come to Bill 34, which is nothing more than a shallow attempt at clouding the realities that Albertans are going to be facing increased costs. Whether this government succeeds in getting those costs not shown on their electric bills but hides those costs in taxation or in the great big hole called government debt, the reality is that it will be costing Albertans more money for no good reason.

Renewables should be made to compete on a level playing field, head-to-head with every other technology that is out there, and may the best man win. That is free-market enterprise, and it can be done. But this government isn't going to risk that because they have a target, their arbitrary 30 per cent by 2030. Come hell or high water, regardless of how much damage it's going to bring to the economy, we're going to have 30 per cent renewables by 2030.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I stand opposed to Bill 34 on the basis that it's going to harm Albertans. It's just more debt. This government has an answer for everything, and it is always either more debt, more taxes, or to throw more money at it, more borrowed money at it. This Bill 34 is a direct result of this government's mismanagement of the electricity file. It is just that simple.

I was very pleased to see over the weekend a number of news articles from reporters who understand this. They're reporting accurately. They have not been fooled by what this government is doing with Bill 34. I had one of those reporters call me over the weekend, and he said: "You know, this bill is only 50 words, but I've read it, and I've thought about it. Correct me if I'm wrong, but this looks like it's actually pretty dangerous given how short it is." He explained to me what his take was on it. It was excellent, and we saw articles coming out explaining it that way. So I am grateful to the news media for reporting correctly on this electricity file. They've done a great job in seeing through the government's smoke and mirrors on bills 27 and 34 and the other things that they have done.

I would say to all members in this House that you have an opportunity – not many more left, but you have an opportunity – to get it right. I don't believe it's appropriate that a government hide things from the people of Alberta, and I believe that Bill 34 is an attempt to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow. Please proceed, hon. member.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am just so frustrated and disappointed by this bill. It may go down in history as one of if not the very shortest bills in the history of our fine province, but the impact of it is far reaching – far reaching – and lacking any positive changes that I can see that will actually improve our electricity system. The minister had a choice. The minister could have chosen not to sue electricity companies. The minister could have worked with the Balancing Pool and worked with PPA owners to recoup, to accept back the PPAs, to allow the Balancing Pool to run those PPAs at market rates and avoid this whole mess.

But there is a much bigger agenda at play here, Mr. Speaker, a much bigger agenda. Despite all of our efforts in this House, I would suggest that there are still very few members in this Assembly who fully understand the magnitude of the changes that have been made and the implications of all of the changes that have been made in rapid-fire succession to Alberta's electricity system.

4:40

But what we do understand, what we understand clear as day, is that this bill gives the government a literal blank cheque to backstop any and all losses from the electricity system. The government in Alberta has got a pretty bad track record, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to backstopping losses from industry: Gainers, which is still on the books and comes up every year in the budget; NovAtel, \$600 million; MagCan; and there was an airline if I'm not mistaken.

There are many, many, many examples where the government, in backstopping private business, has run into big trouble for Alberta citizens and taxpayers.

There is already a mechanism to address any losses within the Balancing Pool. In many ways this solves a problem that Alberta doesn't have. It's not that the Balancing Pool would simply go bankrupt. They would simply put on a consumer allocation. But that would be politically unpopular, Mr. Speaker. Albertans would be able to look at that and say: why is this \$2, \$3, \$4 charge showing up on my electricity bill? Well, that would be because of NDP bungling of the electricity file. Well, gosh, we can't have that. Instead, what they're going to do is that they're going to backstop losses within the Balancing Pool with Alberta taxpayer dollars at a time when Alberta already pays \$1 billion a year in debt-servicing costs in interest alone, for which we receive no value: not a single teacher, not a single nurse, not a single seniors' residence. That is shameful.

And this is only going to make it worse. How deep is this hole going to get? We have no idea. The government could have chosen to cap this. The government could have provided estimates and said: "You know, we need \$10 million. We need \$50 million. We need \$100 million. We need \$200 million. We need a number to backstop here, so you know what? We're going to come forward. We're going to put this legislation forward, and we're going to backstop it to that number." I wouldn't have liked that either, Mr. Speaker, but what I like a lot less is not knowing how deep this hole could get. This is a literal blank cheque. It's absolutely unacceptable.

You know, the government thinks that this is just sort of magic, that magical money unicorns come and rain cash from the sky and that those magical money unicorns are in the form of big corporations. Big corporations, if you were to ask the NDP, are the ones who have all the money, and all we need to do as a government is to just go get the money from the big corporations. Well, guess what? Where do you think the big corporations get the money from? They get it from Albertans, especially when we're talking about electricity providers. Ultimately, Albertans pay one way or the other, and it is the policy choices of this government that mean Albertans have to pay more, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, it is Albertans who will pay.

All of this could have been avoided had the government accepted back the power purchase arrangements. Instead, they chose to go on offence. They chose the political path. They sat there in their ivory tower, three or four folks who are the most powerful in this province, very few, if any, of whom are actually elected, and decided: "Aha. I know what we'll do. We'll sue the big electricity companies, and Albertans will thank us. We the NDP are going to take on the big, bad corporations, and we'll be thanked for it." Well, guess what? Albertans were wise to your game. Albertans are smarter than that. They know how this all works. They like free enterprise. They like the free market.

To think that the government tried to bully companies into settling: well, it managed to succeed with three of them, but interestingly the one that's owned by the city of Calgary has yet to settle. I wonder why that is. That's because they've drawn a line in the sand and said: "No. This lawsuit is unfair. It's vexatious, predatory. You're using your power as the government to threaten the corporations that own the PPAs that maybe you might bring in retroactive legislation." That is the ultimate threat, retroactive legislation. That's the hammer that was held over the heads of all of these companies. That is absolutely the hammer. [interjection] The Minister of Justice is saying that I don't know that.

Maybe one day my FOIP will come in, Mr. Speaker, and we can prove all of this, that there absolutely were representations made

that the government may consider retroactive legislation so that, folks, you'd better settle. It's pretty tough when you're negotiating with the people who make the rules, and then they change the rules on you. The government has all the power. That's what this comes down to.

You know, what it comes down to even more essentially than that, Mr. Speaker, is a lack of oversight by this government, a lack of awareness of the contracts their government had signed, that the government was responsible for. I don't believe for one second that it was March 2016 that "or more unprofitable" or the "change-in-law" clause was known to the minister or the Premier, and if it was, that is remarkable. We know it wasn't. We know it wasn't.

If it wasn't told to the minister or the Premier, there's a bigger problem in this government because we know senior bureaucrats knew about that provision. Court documents show definitively that there are senior members of Alberta's public service working today, one of whom is in the same role that he had 15 or 16 years ago, when these contracts were signed. It is beyond imagination that this government didn't know. But if you didn't know, you should have known. You absolutely should have known. There is absolutely no excuse for it. It's poor management, poor governance.

Ultimately, at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, I absolutely cannot support Bill 34. It proves the government is following a clearly ideological agenda. They have a preconceived idea of how this is all going to work, and it doesn't matter if it ends up costing Albertans tens of millions or even more in interest and debt repayment. They have their plan. They're going to execute it no matter what we say on this side, and that is deeply frustrating.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions to the Member for Calgary-Elbow under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members who would like to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to bring forward an amendment, please.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm advised that this will be amendment HA.

Proceed, hon. member.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move that the motion for third reading of Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day six months hence."

There are some very, very obvious reasons, actually, laid out by the Minister of Energy herself as to why this bill needs to – well, I would prefer to actually get rid of this bill altogether, but if we must look at this bill, let's put it ahead into the distance a little bit here because it is obvious to this side of the House, at least, and to Albertans that this minister needs some time. She needs some serious time to consider some of the things that have been brought forward and some of the things that the minister alluded to as to why this bill came forward.

I'd like to bring those up for just a moment. One of the things that the minister had said was that they are defending consumers. Well, I find that intensely interesting because as it works right now, consumers are already defended by the mechanism that is there. Unfortunately, in the other bills that we've talked about like Bill 27, mechanisms that actually protected the consumer have been removed like on the renewables file. So I find it very interesting that those would be the first words that would come out of the minister's

mouth given that in other bills the words "fair and responsible" have been removed, that they tear up 16-year-old contracts and expect other people to come in and then all of a sudden invest in this province.

4:50

On top of that, the mechanism that is already there right now is called a rate rider. That rate rider balances things out for Albertans already. Interestingly enough, the part that the minister didn't mention in saying "defending consumers" was about transparency. Right now, as I understand it, we know exactly what we're paying for, so this is a smokescreen, a complete smokescreen. The government right now is throwing Albertans right under the bus.

I would highly recommend that the House, this Legislature, vote to push this ahead a little bit, with all my heart, given the fact that the government made the mistake of tearing up those PPAs in the first place. And there were a bazillion excuses as to why that happened. They didn't have the information. They didn't read the information. Their binders were not complete. Well, maybe the binder wasn't complete on how the Balancing Pool works either.

So maybe we should take a few minutes here and give Albertans a bit of a Christmas present and have the government actually stand up and say: "Whoa. Let's put the brakes on this one for a moment and take a few minutes. Let's breathe over Christmas and take a step back and see if there's some way, actually, that we can come forward and make this better for the very people that we represent in this House."

This bill, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow mentioned, is a blank cheque. I find it appalling that this government thinks that that is okay. How is it that we're supposed to just blindly pass this? Really. To quote the minister again, she feels confident that she's done the right thing and is okay with taking the knocks for her decisions. Well, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that those knocks are going to come in strides, in humungous numbers here in the next little while, when those bills start coming forward, on top of the carbon tax, on top of all of the other things that are coming down to all of the people in this province. Let me tell you: it is going to be one thing after another.

We have tried consistently to amend, to change, to help, to provide metrics, to provide accountability, to provide credibility to these various bills that are coming forward, and one after another: done, knocked down. No, no, no, no, no. One after another. Well, here's an opportunity. Put this one to bed for a little while. Take a step back and take a look at this. We have some amazing experts on this electricity file right in this House. I would highly recommend that the minister take a moment and speak to some of the experts, one of them being from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. But that would require something called collaboration. That would require reaching out across the aisle to people that actually have some background in this file, to actually talk about how it is that we fix this. This is a mess. And, now, 50 words? How can so few words wreak so much havoc? On top of that – I mean, we are completely dumbfounded. There is so much. Where is the mindfulness of the bottom lines of Alberta families and the businesses that are going to be impacted by this?

Rate riders. Just to re-educate, rate riders must be approved by the appropriate regulatory authority. That is the check and balance that is already provided to Albertans. This government with this bill seeks to completely cover that up. Gone is the transparency. That rate that you will see on your bill will not even begin to cover the mass proportion of infrastructure and builds and renewables coming online, that have not even been laid out yet in any regulations or forms, let alone the efficiency panels or anything. Nobody has brought forward any information explaining to this side how this is



going to work other than the fact that we're supposed to blindly sign a blank cheque, convince Albertans that somehow the advertisements that the government is putting forward about the carbon tax are in their best interest. Yet all the government cares about is the climate leadership action plan but shows no feelings or emotion towards the actual Albertans that they're representing right now.

Mr. Speaker, this bill – normally we would have brought forward amendments. There was absolutely no amendment that we could make to this bill. This government with this bill is actively hurting Albertans. Customers once upon a time would be able to see in the rate riders – they would be able to see the credits or the debits on their monthly bills. That is what transparency actually looks like. That is a concept that has been lost on this government.

What is the government up to? What is the future here that requires that such sweeping, irresponsible changes are necessary in order for some form of control, that I just don't quite understand? You know, there have been a few speakers on the other side of the House that have stood up and spoken on this. I have yet to receive any clarity on this. Every time it's just more frustrating. We keep trying to bring to the Energy minister the ideas of what this function actually is, how this actually works, and we still keep getting the same rhetoric back about how they're going to protect Albertans. Well, Albertans don't believe this. Not for a second.

I would highly recommend that the government take a moment, take a breather, take a step back, and give us six months to take a look at this. This minister needs some time, needs some serious time and some thought about this blank cheque, that ultimately will define for this minister a legacy of what is going to be left on the back of this bill. Because this is just the beginning. We don't even know how this is going to look in the next few months, let alone the next few years.

This is not the legacy I want to leave behind for my great-grandchildren, and I would highly recommend that you vote in favour of this amendment so that it is not yours as well.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View?

Then the chair would recognize the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great opportunity, I think, to speak to this bill today. I'd like to preface it by saying, again, that I have deep concern with the direction of so many of the bills that we've seen passed through the House this session. It deeply concerns me that we are seeing a decimation of yet another part of the Alberta advantage that this province has enjoyed for so many years and that we enjoyed and that we'd hoped our children and our grandchildren would enjoy as well. It's a slippery slope indeed.

I firmly believe that this bill needs to be sent back to the drawing board.

**An Hon. Member:** To the Dumpster.

**Mr. Gotfried:** To the Dumpster, in fact, yes. But six months is better than nothing, Mr. Speaker.

It's of deep concern to me that so much of what we've seen from this government is a litany of unintended consequences. Albertans cannot suffer more unintended consequences during this downturn, this unprecedented downturn in our economy.

Mr. Speaker, members of our caucus have looked at this bill from a lot of different angles, every angle we could think of, trying to come up with amendments that could serve to improve this legislation and the obvious short-circuits when it comes to the best

interests of Albertans. Our conclusion, in the end, was that this is simply a bad piece of legislation. So we agree with our colleagues to the right here that we need to push this back six months and give us some breathing room to take a look at what's happening in the economy, to get some real scientists and some real economists to take a look at the unintended consequences that could come out of this.

We've tried modest amendments which would limit the scope of the damage done to the Balancing Pool, although, I suppose, maybe we need to come up with some new names for things. Maybe we should be referring to it as the borrowing pool as there is no balance left in this pool anymore, Mr. Speaker. The balance is gone because the ability to balance is no longer there. It's really a one-sided street.

Restrictions on what the Balancing Pool could do with the borrowed money. We tried to do that and similar amendments to try and narrow the scope and the damage of what this government is attempting to do on the backs of Albertans. Those amendments were not accepted. Let's be clear. This is on the backs of Albertans. They say that it's not on the backs of consumers. It's on the backs of taxpayers. It's on the backs, sadly, of future taxpayers and future generations.

**Mr. Nixon:** Generational theft.

**Mr. Gotfried:** It is generational theft indeed.

None of these restrictions addressed the major single issue with this bill, that the Balancing Pool should not be allowed to borrow money, specifically on the public's backs, the red ink, full stop. No borrowing. The Balancing Pool was never designed to borrow money, and absent the meddling of this government, it would never have been in a position where borrowing was even considered because there was a mechanism in place. Sadly, what was once a pool, I would suggest, is going to become a sea, from a little pool a sea of red ink on the shoulders of Albertans today and for generations to come.

5:00

It's been raised in this House before, but I think the concept is so fundamental to what the Balancing Pool is supposed to be that it bears repeating. The Balancing Pool, without borrowing money, has already had a mechanism to address a negative balance over time. It was talking about time, it was talking about balance, and sometimes you need time to generate balance. That mechanism was to adjust the price that people paid for electricity, to add on a rate rider that would go towards addressing the Balancing Pool's shortfalls, again, over time in a fluctuating market, the key word being "market." I think we've heard that from some of the members here. Markets actually, given their own devices and proper tools and proper mechanisms, do work over time and create balance, not the need to borrow just because there's a hole in today's market or tomorrow's market or a deep hole. As they often say, when you're digging a hole, what's the best thing to do? Get rid of the shovel. I see a big shovel attached to this bill.

This is the point where the government would like to simply highlight the point and paint all of us who oppose this legislation as enemies of consumers, stepping on the downtrodden, those same consumers, who are the same taxpayers, out of those same wallets, that we're going to be seeing – we take our hand out of their left-hand pocket, and we put it in their right-hand pocket, or maybe it's the other way around, from the right-hand pocket into the left-hand pocket.

The first point is that the Balancing Pool, in addition to charging a rate rider when it had a negative balance, provided a rebate when it was turning a positive balance. Isn't that a unique concept? Gee,

when times are really good, we get to give you a rebate, and you pay less, which might actually happen in a time when the economy needs that rebate – wow; unique concept – a rebate that would go towards actually reducing the price that people pay for electricity during such times, which could be during tough times. Wow. Again, another way to actually put money back into the wallets of Albertans and put food back on their tables and put services back for seniors who may need them. This wasn't some pie-in-the-sky hypothetical scenario. The Balancing Pool actually had a positive balance – a billion dollars, I think we heard – for the last few years. That positive balance was only threatened when the government started to void contracts with their irresponsible and misguided environmental policies. They blew that system up pretty well, didn't they?

The first point to recognize here is that the previous government had a system that actually returned money to consumers when conditions allowed and drove the price of their electricity consumption down. Interesting. Consumers actually won in that scenario. This government has chosen to disrupt that well-functioning system. I think we could talk to people in the Balancing Pool, and I suspect that they might tell us that it was a pretty well-functioning system. I suspect that they're not really in a position to speak out on that issue right now.

This has now left consumers on the hook for increasing electricity prices. "Oh, no. Well, we'll put in a cap, so that's okay." Hmm. The same taxpayers are going to get stuck paying it in the end, right? That's what's going to happen. From consumer to taxpayer: the same people. I'm sure this is where we hear the government crying out: "Wait, wait. That's why we're letting the borrowing pool" – sorry, the Balancing Pool, but we'll call it the borrowing pool – "borrow all this money." It sounds like a big balloon, like a water balloon that's going to keep blowing up with debt, and eventually it's going to explode, and we're all going to get soaked in our wallets.

We're going to get soaked by this, which brings me to my second point. Do they really think that they're protecting consumers by making them pay through the back door? Actually, they're not making them pay through the back door. It's like: "Well, let's push it off to your kids and your grandkids. That's really what we want to do here. Let's push this down the road because everything is going to look rosy, and the consumers are going to think that this is wonderful."

By the way – I think one of our members mentioned earlier – I think it was \$24,400 per person of debt. You know, I think I remember doing some math on that about a year ago, when it was only \$14,400 per person, 2.6 people per household. It was about \$34,000. We can pay that back. Every household can pay that back, but \$234 a month for the next 25 years is what that's going to take. That's the mortgage. That's the debt, the mortgage we're taking out on behalf of every man, woman, and child in this province: 25 years to pay it back at \$234 a month. That's probably subject to low interest rates. What happens if they go up?

The government is going to loan money to the borrowing pool, our money, future money, future debt, money that comes from the same consumers, also known as taxpayers, that they purport to be protecting. That doesn't sound like very good protection to me. It's not that you won't still be paying for this shortfall; it's just that you won't see how much extra you're going to be paying or maybe future generations are going to be paying. It sounds like a lot of money to me, and it sounds like an irresponsible approach to the Balancing Pool, the borrowing pool.

The amount will be hidden amongst billions in red ink that this government is amassing on the shoulders of unassuming Albertans, who are of course going to feel good because they're being

protected by this misguided legislation. So the government can go out and spend \$9 million and convince people that their policies aren't going to have an effect on their household budgets through nice flowery and fluffy ads on the TV, which drive me crazy every time I see them. I get phone calls, and I hear from Albertans telling me: why am I being told that something is good for me that I know is not good for me or my children or my grandchildren?

And if I may briefly go on a tangent, doesn't that sort of defeat the purpose of having a price on carbon, to change people's behaviour? You say that you're going to put a price on carbon. It's going to get the people to use less so that they can, oh, make better choices, right? Make better choices. Then you turn around and hide the additional costs in government borrowing and loans, trying to leave today's wallets with the appearance – and I emphasize "appearance" – that they are intact when, in fact, you're digging a deep hole to bury their finances and their family's finances and their children's finances, perhaps for generations to come.

If this government was really interested in having people reduce the amount of electricity they use, wouldn't you want the true cost of your policies to show up on people's electrical bills, not in a carbon tax? I'll throw that in: not in a carbon tax. Maybe we can actually have the market and the people react to market pricing as it is balancing up and down. Let's not forget those rebates, that we can have sometimes when it gets tough because we built up a pool through the Balancing Pool, in the way the Balancing Pool is supposed to act and used to act. These citizens can really see how much they're contributing to your climate leadership action plan: nothing to clap about here, Mr. Speaker.

I suspect the reason that you're tucking away this cost in the borrowing pool is that you know there is only so much that people and their families can do to reduce their electricity use. Note our recent cold weather records, just this past week, and the impact of short winter days, Mr. Speaker. I do not think Albertans are interested in freezing in the dark just because you want them to make better choices. They still need to keep the lights on. They may need to do some laundry, perhaps take the odd shower, or they might even wish to cook the occasional meal. There is simply a reasonable base amount of electricity that even an environmentally conscious household needs to use.

We are bound and determined – this government is – to penalize them, not to change their behaviour, Mr. Speaker, because they do need to put food on the table, hot food, on an occasional day. They do need to take showers and do laundry. They do need to take their children to school and get themselves to work. This government is making all of that more expensive on the shoulders of struggling, hard-working Albertans – hard-working Albertans – and some of those hard-working Albertans are not going to get rebates down the road on carbon taxes and things like that. They are going to pay the price here because they're going to pay it in their taxes, and they're going to be penalized in the future even more, those same hard-working, middle-income Albertans.

So to save some political face, they'll punt the responsibility down the line and saddle whoever comes after them, that government in 2019, with the true cost and burden of these misguided policies, and that is simply wrong. This bill is about shirking the responsibility to be accountable to today's and future Albertans for their policies. Mr. Speaker, that is why at least six months – six months – is all we're asking for to start with now to bring some scientists, not just political scientists. I want real scientists here to do the work, to do the numbers and real economists that can crunch the numbers.

5:10

**An Hon. Member:** He's sitting right here.

**Mr. Gotfried:** There he is.

Nothing against political scientists, but you know what? I think even the Member for Calgary-Elbow would say that we actually need some of those real scientific scientists to be shoulder to shoulder with us because that's the way we do things in Alberta.

This government needs to take this piece of legislation back to the drawing board, they need to rewire the circuits, they need to test the resistance, they need to replace the balance, and they need to come to their senses before the real sparks fly on this irresponsible, costly, and ideologically driven piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

You know, our caucus is absolutely willing to work with this government to make legislation better, and we're willing to work with our fellow opposition here as well because to at least buy that six months might give us an opportunity to develop better legislation, or maybe we're really smart and we throw this legislation out and let the Balancing Pool get back to balancing instead of borrowing. But the only way to improve this bill, the only way to redeem this government from this electrical malfunction and meltdown is to recognize that Albertans' fuses are about to blow. To send this social and electrical – I'll call it maybe a social engineering project because I'm not sure that there are any electrical engineers or economists behind this. Send this back to the drawing board for at least the six months, for a well-reasoned, responsible, balanced piece of legislation that's not overloaded with unintended consequences and the burden of generations of public debt.

Mr. Speaker, for those very reasons, I would like to support this amendment, this hoist amendment, to put this aside for at least six months. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any members who would like to speak under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek?

Seeing and hearing none, is there anyone who would like to speak to the amendment? No.

[Motion on amendment to third reading of Bill 34 lost]

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:13 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Miller
Carlier	Jansen	Miranda
Carson	Kleinstein	Payne
Connolly	Larivee	Piquette
Coolahan	Littlewood	Renaud
Dach	Loyola	Rosendahl
Dang	Luff	Schmidt
Eggen	Malkinson	Schreiner
Feehan	Mason	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Ganley	McKitrick	Sucha
Goehring	McLean	Turner
Gray	McPherson	Westhead

Against the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Pitt
Clark	Hanson	Schneider
Drysdale	Hunter	Strankman
Fildebrandt	MacIntyre	van Dijken
Fraser	Nixon	Yao

Totals:	For – 39	Against – 15
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[Motion carried; Bill 34 read a third time]

**The Speaker:** The Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would now like to advise the House that pursuant to Government Motion 22 the business of the sitting is now concluded. I'd like to thank the opposition members for their co-operation in this expeditious end.

The House stands adjourned.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I think I have to do this officially. First of all, it's been a challenging yet rewarding time for all of you, I know. Be safe. Spend the time with your loved ones and take the rest that you all deserve.

Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 22, agreed to on November 1, 2016, this House stands adjourned until February 2017.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:19 p.m. pursuant to Government Motion 22]



## **Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)**

**Activity to Wednesday, December 14, 2016**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1 — Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading — 5 (*Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 685-91 (*Apr. 20, 2016 morn.*), 732-36 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft.*), 749-60 (*Apr. 21, 2016 aft.*), 825 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 987-95 (*May 18, 2016 morn.*), 1019-24 (*May 18, 2016 aft.*)

Third Reading — 1172 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1174-79 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cP-26.3 ]

### **Bill 2 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 96 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 162-67 (*Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 239-49 (*Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 251-59 (*Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1 ]

### **Bill 3 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 156 (*Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 157-62 (*Mar. 15, 2016 morn.*), 201 (*Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 239-49 (*Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 259-66 (*Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2 ]

### **Bill 4\* — An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading — 180 (*Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 285-88 (*Mar. 17, 2016 aft.*), 349-66 (*Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 378-84 (*Apr. 6, 2016 morn.*), 399-409 (*Apr. 6, 2016 aft.*), 415-28 (*Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 428-33 (*Apr. 7, 2016 morn.*), 450-55 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c10 ]

### **Bill 5 — Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading — 398 (*Apr. 6, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 455-56 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft.*), 491-505 (*Apr. 12, 2016 morn.*), 532-38 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 539-56 (*Apr. 13, 2016 morn.*), 570-77 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 577-83 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 cS-7.1 ]

### **Bill 6 — Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*), 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 519-27 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 527-32 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 583-85 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c13 ]

**Bill 7 — Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**

First Reading — 518 (*Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 585-86 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft.*), 649-51 (*Apr. 19, 2016 morn.*), 682-84 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 820-24 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 902-903 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c6 ]

**Bill 8 — Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**

First Reading — 568 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 669-71 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft.*), 684 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 824-25 (*May 5, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 903-904 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c8 ]

**Bill 9 — An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**

First Reading — 568 (*Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 640-49 (*Apr. 19, 2016 morn.*), 728-30 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 979-81 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1180-81 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c11 ]

**Bill 10 — Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 599 (*Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 671-82 (*Apr. 19, 2016 aft.*), 691-703 (*Apr. 20, 2016 morn.*), 730-32 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 950-51 (*May 17, 2016 morn.*), 1041-49 (*May 19, 2016 morn.*), 1077-81 (*May 24, 2016 morn.*), 1103-13 (*May 24, 2016 aft.*), 1115-23 (*May 24, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1124 (*May 24, 2016 eve.*), 1197-99 (*May 26, 2016 morn.*), 1263-85 (*May 30, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c17 ]

**Bill 11 — Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016 (Bilous)**

First Reading — 773 (*May 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 907-908 (*May 12, 2016 aft.*), 971-79 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1012-18 (*May 18, 2016 aft.*), 1024 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1068-69 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c4 ]

**Bill 12 — Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Feehan)**

First Reading — 802 (*May 3, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 904-907 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 985-87 (*May 18, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1069 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c3 ]

**Bill 13 — Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016 (Gray)**

First Reading — 872 (*May 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 965-71 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1024-25 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1069 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c15 ]

**Bill 14 — Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**

First Reading — 872 (*May 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 983-85 (*May 18, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1076-77 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1077 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c9 ]

**Bill 15 — An Act to End Predatory Lending (McLean)**

First Reading — 901 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1062-67 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1153-57 (*May 25, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1172 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2016 cE-9.5 ]

**Bill 16\* — Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**

First Reading — 921 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1067-68 (*May 19, 2016 aft.*), 1071-75 (*May 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157-63 (*May 25, 2016 aft.*), 1197 (*May 26, 2016 morn., adjourned*), 1219-23 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1223-25 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c14 ]

**Bill 17 — Appropriation Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 950 (*May 17, 2016 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 995-1000 (*May 18, 2016 morn., adjourned*), 1025-29 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1031-41 (*May 19, 2016 morn.*), 1070 (*May 19, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1096-1103 (*May 24, 2016 aft.*), 1113 (*May 24, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c5 ]

**Bill 18 — An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring (Phillips)**

First Reading — 964-65 (*May 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1125-35 (*May 25, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1191-97 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1199-1205 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 30, 2016; SA 2016 c7 ]

**Bill 19 — Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1011 (*May 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1135-40 (*May 25, 2016 morn.*), 1153 (*May 25, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1171-72 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1173 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 cR-8.5 ]

**Bill 20\* — Climate Leadership Implementation Act (\$) (Phillips)**

First Reading — 1095 (*May 24, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1163-70 (*May 25, 2016 aft.*), 1173-74 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1181-90 (*May 25, 2016 eve.*), 1288-98 (*May 31, 2016 morn.*), 1311-21 (*May 31, 2016 aft.*), 1338-56 (*May 31, 2016 eve.*), 1357-72 (*Jun. 1, 2016 morn.*), 1405-07 (*Jun. 1, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1408-24 (*Jun. 1, 2016 eve.*), 1425-42 (*Jun. 2, 2016 morn.*), 1458-61 (*Jun. 2, 2016 aft.*), 1479-91 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft.*), 1493-1541 (*Jun. 6, 2016 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1541-43 (*Jun. 6, 2016 eve.*), 1545-57 (*Jun. 7, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c16 ]

**Bill 21\* — Modernized Municipal Government Act (Larivee)**

First Reading — 1310 (*May 31, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1583-96 (*Nov. 1, 2016 morn.*), 1624-28 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft.*), 1634-41 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1939-41 (*Nov. 22, 2016 aft.*), 2009-24 (*Nov. 24, 2016 morn.*), 2091-2100 (*Nov. 29, 2016 morn.*), 2192-2202 (*Nov. 30, 2016 aft.*), 2218-24 (*Nov. 30, 2016 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2317-20 (*Dec. 6, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 9, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2016 c24 ]

**Bill 22 — An Act to Provide for the Repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Ceremonial Objects (Miranda)**

First Reading — 1219 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 23 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**

First Reading — 1454 (*Jun. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1478 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1478 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1479 (*Jun. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016; SA 2016 c18 ]

**Bill 24\* — Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016 (Carlier)**

First Reading — 1571-72 (*Oct. 31, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1609-24 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft.*), 1629-34 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1786-91 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft.*), 1797-1806 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1849-54 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn.*), 1915-22 (*Nov. 22, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 9, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 9, 2016; SA 2016 c22 ]

**Bill 25 — Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act (Phillips)**

First Reading — 1606 (*Nov. 1, 2016 aft., passed.*)

Second Reading — 1641-43 (*Nov. 2, 2016 morn.*), 1677-89 (*Nov. 3, 2016 morn.*), 1703-13 (*Nov. 3, 2016 aft.*), 1754-61 (*Nov. 8, 2016 morn.*), 1776-86 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft.*), 1806-09 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn.*), 1826-35 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft.*), 1854-60 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn.*), 1971-77 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn.*), 1994-2006 (*Nov. 23, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2115-33 (*Nov. 29, 2016 aft.*), 2224-29 (*Nov. 30, 2016 eve.*), 2231-41 (*Dec. 1, 2016 morn.*), 2320-27 (*Dec. 6, 2016 morn.*), 2383-98 (*Dec. 7, 2016 morn.*), 2529-47 (*Dec. 12, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2588-94 (*Dec. 13, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 14, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 14, 2016; SA 2016 cO-7.5 ]

**Bill 26 — Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act (Littlewood)**

First Reading — 1659 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1660-69 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1669-73 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1673-76 (*Nov. 2, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 9, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 9, 2016; SA 2016 cU-0.3 ]

**Bill 27 — Renewable Electricity Act (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)**

First Reading — 1701 (*Nov. 3, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1747-54 (*Nov. 8, 2016 morn.*), 1835-42 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft.*), 1944-57 (*Nov. 22, 2016 aft.*), 2038-47 (*Nov. 24, 2016 aft.*), 2077-86 (*Nov. 28, 2016 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2086-90 (*Nov. 28, 2016 eve.*), 2135-55 (*Nov. 29, 2016 eve.*), 2313-16 (*Dec. 5, 2016 eve.*), 2378-82 (*Dec. 6, 2016 eve.*), 2470-72 (*Dec. 8, 2016 morn.*), 2490-94 (*Dec. 8, 2016 aft.*), 2547-58 (*Dec. 12, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2569-72 (*Dec. 13, 2016 morn.*), 2587-88 (*Dec. 13, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 14, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 R-16.5 ]

**Bill 28 — Public Health Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**

First Reading — 1726 (*Nov. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1793-97 (*Nov. 9, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1843-47 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1941-44 (*Nov. 22, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 9, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 9, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c25 ]

**Bill 29 — Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act (McLean)**

First Reading — 1774 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1823-25 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1847-48 (*Nov. 10, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1959-60 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 9, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2016 c26 ]



**Bill 30\* — Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act (\$) (Bilous)**

First Reading — 1774 (*Nov. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1873-81 (*Nov. 10, 2016 aft.*), 1922-26 (*Nov. 22, 2016 morn.*), 1992-94 (*Nov. 23, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2157-74 (*Nov. 30, 2016 morn.*), 2208-18 (*Nov. 30, 2016 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2241-47 (*Dec. 1, 2016 morn.*), 2262-65 (*Dec. 1, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 9, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2017, with exceptions; SA 2016 cI-10.5 ]

**Bill 31 — Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1960-66 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1966-71 (*Nov. 23, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 2007-09 (*Nov. 24, 2016 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 9, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 9, 2016; SA 2016 c19 ]

**Bill 32\* — Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1990 (*Nov. 23, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2203-06 (*Nov. 30, 2016 aft.*), 2207-08 (*Nov. 30, 2016 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2295-98 (*Dec. 5, 2016 eve., passed with amendment*)

Third Reading — 2515-16 (*Dec. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 14, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2016 c27 ]

**Bill 33 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (No. 2) (Mason)**

First Reading — 2186 (*Nov. 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2265-66 (*Dec. 1, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2266 (*Dec. 1, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2344 (*Dec. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 9, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 9, 2016, with exceptions; SA 2016 c23 ]

**Bill 34 — Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016 (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)**

First Reading — 2114 (*Nov. 29, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2302-13 (*Dec. 5, 2016 eve.*), 2373-78 (*Dec. 6, 2016 eve.*), 2431-40 (*Dec. 7, 2016 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2527-29 (*Dec. 12, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2594-99 (*Dec. 13, 2016 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 14, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 14, 2016; SA 2016 c28 ]

**Bill 35\* — Fair Elections Financing Act (Gray)**

First Reading — 2060 (*Nov. 28, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2351-62 (*Dec. 6, 2016 aft.*), 2363-73 (*Dec. 6, 2016 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2412-30 (*Dec. 7, 2016 aft.*), 2440-53 (*Dec. 7, 2016 eve.*), 2455-70 (*Dec. 8, 2016 morn.*), 2516-26 (*Dec. 12, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2559-69 (*Dec. 13, 2016 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 14, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2016 c29 ]

**Bill 36 — An Act to Enhance Off-Highway Vehicle Safety (Mason)**

First Reading — 2060 (*Nov. 28, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2189-92 (*Nov. 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2298-2301 (*Dec. 5, 2016 eve.*), 2343-44 (*Dec. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2344-51 (*Dec. 6, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 9, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2016 c21 ]

**Bill 37 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2) (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading — 2295 (*Dec. 5, 2016 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 2363 (*Dec. 6, 2016 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2431 (*Dec. 7, 2016 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2490 (*Dec. 8, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 9, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 9, 2016; SA 2016 c20 ]

**Bill 201 — Election Recall Act (Smith)**

First Reading — 92 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 119-32 (*Mar. 14, 2016 aft.*), 303-304 (*Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 202 — Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**

First Reading — 92 (*Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 305-16 (*Apr. 4, 2016 aft.*), 470-73 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 203 — Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**

First Reading — 280 (*Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 473-83 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities*)

**Bill 204 — Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**

First Reading — 468 (*Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 616-30 (*Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 205\* — Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 707 (*Apr. 20, 2016 aft.*)

Second Reading — 839-50 (*May 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 924-31 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 931-34 (*May 16, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2017; SA 2016 c12 ]

**Bill 206\* — Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (Goehring)**

First Reading — 902 (*May 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1241-49 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1249-55 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1255-57 (*May 30, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 13, 2016 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 13, 2016; SA 2016 cP-19.7 ]

**Bill 207 — Veterinary Profession (Clear and Timely Price Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2016 (Cortes-Vargas)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 208 — Occupational Health and Safety (Protection from Workplace Harassment) Amendment Act, 2016 (Coolahan)**

First Reading — 1822 (*Nov. 9, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 209 — Active Schools Week Act (Shepherd)**

First Reading — 2060 (*Nov. 28, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 210 — Protection of Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Stier)**

First Reading — 2506 (*Dec. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill 212 — Employment Standards Code (Volunteer Firefighter Protection) Amendment Act, 2016 (W. Anderson)**

First Reading — 2506 (*Dec. 12, 2016 aft., passed*)

**Bill Pr1 — Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**

First Reading — 447 (*Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1171 (*May 25, 2016 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1197 (*May 26, 2016 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1219 (*May 26, 2016 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 27, 2016*) [Comes into force May 27, 2016; SA 2016 c30 ]

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# **Alberta Hansard 2016** **(29<sup>th</sup> Legislature, Second Session)**

## **Indexes**

The cumulative index, which provides subject access to debates of the Alberta Legislature, is uploaded on a weekly basis. It is provided for reference purposes only and is unedited and unofficial.

The table below is a list to date of *Alberta Hansard* issue numbers, dates, and page ranges, with links to the text document. The index itself starts following the table. Use the search capabilities of Adobe Acrobat to search the index and find the topic you are interested in; note the page number(s) associated with it. Then click on the page number range in the table below to open the issue.

**NOTE:** *Tabled documents are listed in the [Sessional Papers](#) for this session.*

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## Main Estimates 2016-2017

The main estimates (budget) for 2016-2017 are all being considered in the legislative policy committees. Below is a list of ministries, the schedule of debate, and links to posted transcripts. At 10 a.m. on May 17 the Committee of Supply will meet.

Meetings are scheduled for three hours and start at 9 a.m. (morning), except for Executive Council debate, which starts at 10 a.m.; 3:30 p.m. (afternoon); or 7 p.m. (evening).

Listing by date (schedule revised May 9, 2016):

<i>Ministry</i>	<i>Committee</i>	<i>Meeting Date</i>
Agriculture and Forestry	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">April 21 morning</a> (3 hours)
Justice and Solicitor General	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">May 2 evening</a> (3 hours)
Labour	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">May 2 evening</a> (3 hours)
Environment and Parks	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">May 3 morning</a> (3 hours)
Education	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">May 3 afternoon</a> (3 hours)
Treasury Board and Finance	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">May 4 morning</a> (3 hours)
Service Alberta	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">May 4 afternoon</a> (3 hours)
Economic Development and Trade	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">May 5 morning</a> (3 hours)
Human Services	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">May 5 morning</a> (3 hours)
Energy	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">May 9 evening</a> (3 hours)
Infrastructure	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">May 9 evening</a> (3 hours)
Seniors and Housing	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">May 10 morning</a> (3 hours)
Status of Women	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">May 10 afternoon</a> (3 hours)
Advanced Education	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">May 11 morning</a> (3 hours)
Transportation	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">May 11 morning</a> (3 hours)
Culture and Tourism	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">May 11 afternoon</a> (3 hours)
Health	<a href="#">Families and Communities</a>	<a href="#">May 12 morning</a> (3 hours)
Indigenous Relations	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">May 12 morning</a> (3 hours)
Executive Council	<a href="#">Alberta's Economic Future</a>	<a href="#">May 16 evening</a> (2 hours)
Municipal Affairs	<a href="#">Resource Stewardship</a>	<a href="#">May 16 evening</a> (3 hours)



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Alberta centennial, members' statements ... *Hinkley* 1812–13

**7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness**

Conference 2016 ... *Jansen* 836; *Sabir* 836

**16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence Campaign**

General remarks ... *McLean* 2026

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Members' statements ... *McPherson* 279

**A La Peche caribou range plan**

*See Caribou: Little Smoky and A La Peche range plan*

**AAMDC**

*See Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties*

**AARC**

*See Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre*

**AASCA**

Leadership conference *See Alberta student leadership conference*

**ABC**

*See Alberta building code*

**ABC review statutes amendment act, 2016**

*See Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Bill 31)*

**ABCs**

*See Government agencies, boards, and commissions*

**Aboriginal child protective services**

*See Child protective services*

**Aboriginal children**

Deaths in kinship care, Child and Youth Advocate's reports *See Child and Youth Advocate's office investigations/inquiries: Death of aboriginal child in kinship care ("Marie"/Serenity)*

Deaths of children in care, emergency debate on *See Emergency debate under Standing Order 30: Deaths of children in care*

Foster care placement *See Foster care: Placement of aboriginal children*

Health promotion ... *Rodney* 1794–95

Intervention services ... *Gotfried* 595; *Sabir* 595

**Aboriginal children's education**

Cultural programs ... *Eggen* 1010; *Luff* 1010

Funding ... *Carson* 151; *Eggen* 151–52, 1010; *Luff* 1010

Residential schools, awareness events *See Orange Shirt Day*

**Aboriginal communities**

[*See also Métis settlements*]

Climate leadership plan participation ... *Feehan* 1819–20; *Rosendahl* 1819–20

Climate leadership plan participation, members' statements ... *Loyola* 1989

Economic development fund *See First Nations development fund*

Emergency management ... *Feehan* 837; *Horne* 837

Fort McMurray wildfire evacuee reception ... *Feehan* 837; *Horne* 837

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Premier's meeting with Treaty 8 Grand Chief Steve Courtoreille ... *Feehan* 837; *Horne* 837

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**Aboriginal communities – West Yellowhead (constituency)**

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First Nations consultation capacity investment program ... *Feehan* 907

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Laws and legislation *See Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Bill 12)*

Process development ... *Babcock* 1309–10; *Feehan* 1309–10; *Horne* 194; *Loyola* 209; *Phillips* 182; *Rosendahl* 216; *Schreiner* 206; *Shepherd* 50; *Speech from the Throne* 3; *Sucha* 220–21; *van Dijken* 209; *Westhead* 13

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**Aboriginal Consultation Levy Act**

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Mental health services *See Mental health services: Services for aboriginal peoples*

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## Abuse of seniors

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## ABVMA

Veterinary technologist representation in governance, legislation on See **Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016 (Bill 13)**

## Academy of Learning College

See **Postsecondary educational institutions**

## Accommodations industry

Revenue See **Tourism levy**

## Accountability and ethics select special committee

See **Ethics and Accountability Committee, Select Special**

## Accountability in government

See **Government accountability**

## Achievement tests

See **Student testing (elementary and secondary): Provincial achievement tests (PATs)**

## Act to Amend the Criminal Code and to Make Related Amendments to Other Acts (Medical Assistance in Dying) (Bill C-14)

Provincial regulatory framework on See **Assisted dying: Regulation development**

## Act to End Predatory Lending, An (Bill 15)

First reading ... *McLean* 901

Second reading ... *Clark* 1064–65; *Fildebrandt* 1063–64; *Jansen* 1065–67; *Mason* 1065; *McLean* 1063; *Nixon* 1067

Second reading, point of order raised (remarks withdrawn) ... *Fildebrandt* 1066; *Mason* 1066

Committee ... *Cooper* 1154–55; *Luff* 1157; *Schreiner* 1153–54; *Shepherd* 1156–57; *Smith* 1155–56

Third reading ... *Clark* 1172; *McLean* 1172; *Schreiner* 1172; *Shepherd* 1172

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Financial literacy information requirements under act ... *Cooper* 1154–55; *Schreiner* 1154; *Smith* 1156

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## Act to End Predatory Lending, An (Bill 15) (continued)

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Member's recusal from debate under section 2(2) of

Conflicts of Interest Act ... *Starke* 1062–63

Stakeholder consultation ... *Schreiner* 1153–54; *Shepherd* 1172

## Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety, An (Bill 36)

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Second reading ... *Drysdale* 2190; *Malkinson* 2191–92; *Mason* 2189–90, 2192; *van Dijken* 2190–91

Committee ... *Hinkley* 2298–99, 2301; *Littlewood* 2300; *Mason* 2343–44; *McIver* 2299–2301; *Swann* 2299, 2301, 2343; *van Dijken* 2298–99

Committee, amendment A2 (safety training) (Swann: defeated) ... *Mason* 2343–44; *Swann* 2343

Third reading ... *Clark* 2345; *Fildebrandt* 2346–47; *Gotfried* 2349–51; *Loewen* 2345–46; *Malkinson* 2347; *Mason* 2344–46, 2351; *Nixon* 2349–50; *Smith* 2348; *Swann* 2347–50; *van Dijken* 2345

Royal Assent ... 9 December 2016 (outside of House sitting)

## Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring, An (Bill 18)

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- Committee, amendment A5 (replacement workers) (McIver: defeated) ... *Gray* 405–7; *McIver* 404–6; *Nielsen* 405
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- # **Act to Implement Various Tax Measures and to Enact the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, An (Bill 4, 2015)**
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- # **Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences, An (Bill 9)**
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- Third reading ... *Cyr* 1180–81; *Ganley* 1180–81; *Shepherd* 1181
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- # **Act to Provide for the Repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Ceremonial Objects, An (Bill 22)**
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- Advocate for property rights**  
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- Advocate for seniors**  
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- AEC**  
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- AEMA**  
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- AEMERA**  
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- Aerosols, atmospheric**  
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- Second reading, motion to refer bill to Resource Stewardship Committee (referral amendment) (Panda: defeated) ... *Aheer* 1708–11, 1756, 1780; *Clark* 1707–9; *Fildebrandt* 1782–83; *Hanson* 1776–77, 1780–81, 1783; *Horne* 1705–6; *Loewen* 1710–11, 1760–61, 1777–79; *MacIntyre* 1704–7, 1713, 1754–57, 1784–85; *Mason* 1759–60; *McIver* 1779–80; *McKittrick* 1706; *Nixon* 1757–59; *Orr* 1705; *Panda* 1687–88, 1703–5; *Pitt* 1777–80; *Smith* 1784–86; *Starke* 1711–13; *Taylor* 1706–7
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- Second reading, motion to refer bill to Resource Stewardship Committee (referral amendment) (Panda: defeated), points of order on debate ... *Acting Speaker (Sweet)* 1758; *Mason* 1758; *Nixon* 1758
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- Second reading, motion to not now read (6-month hoist amendment) (Drysedale/Rodney: defeated) ... *Aheer* 1976–77, 2003; *Coolahan* 1997; *Cooper* 1975–76, 1994–96; *Cyr* 2003–5; *Drysedale* 1973; *Fraser* 1998; *Horne* 1975–76; *Hunter* 2005; *Loewen* 2001–3; *MacIntyre* 1995, 1999–2001; *McIver* 1996–98; *McLean* 1996; *Orr* 1973–74; *Rodney* 1973; *Taylor* 1974–75; *Westhead* 1974; *Yao* 1998–99
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- Second reading, division ... 2006
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- Committee, amendment A2 (removal of 10-megatonne cap on upgrading emissions) (Aheer: defeated) ... *Aheer* 2224–27, 2235–37; *Loewen* 2233–35; *Luff* 2238; *MacIntyre* 2227–29, 2232–33, 2237; *Panda* 2227; *Yao* 2231–32
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- Committee, amendment A3 (section 3(h)(ii), regulations governing purchase, auction, trading, or retirement of greenhouse gas emission allowances) (MacIntyre: defeated) ... *Horne* 2241; *Loewen* 2240–41; *MacIntyre* 2239–40
- Committee, amendment A3 (section 3(h)(ii), regulations governing purchase, auction, trading, or retirement of greenhouse gas emission allowances) (MacIntyre: defeated), division ... 2241
- Committee, amendment A4 (consultation on regulations) (Drysedale/Fraser: defeated) ... *Aheer* 2321–23; *Dach* 2324–25; *Drysedale* 2320; *Hunter* 2324; *MacIntyre* 2320–21, 2326; *Swann* 2325–26
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Royal Assent ... 27 May 2016 (outside of House sitting)  
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Royal Assent ... 13 June 2016 (outside of House sitting)

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